



Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Substances

What is decriminalization?



Source: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2018

Groups endorsing drug decriminalization

- United Nations
- World Health Organization
- Canadian Public Health Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Toronto Board of Health
- Toronto's Medical Officer of Health
- Montreal Public Health
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
- Provincial Health Officer of British Columbia
- Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- American Public Health Association
- Human Rights Watch
- American Civil Liberties Union
- Movement for Black Lives
- NAACP
- Latino Justice
- National Latino Congreso
- Organization of American States

Then & Now Portugal's Drug Decriminalization

Key developments since Portugal decriminalized drugs in 2001

Overdose deaths

1999 369

2016 30

New HIV diagnoses due to injecting

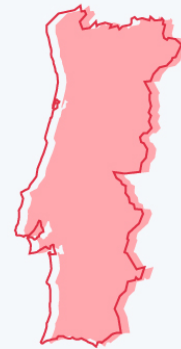
2000 907

2017 18

Number of people incarcerated for drug offences

1999 3,863

2017 1,140



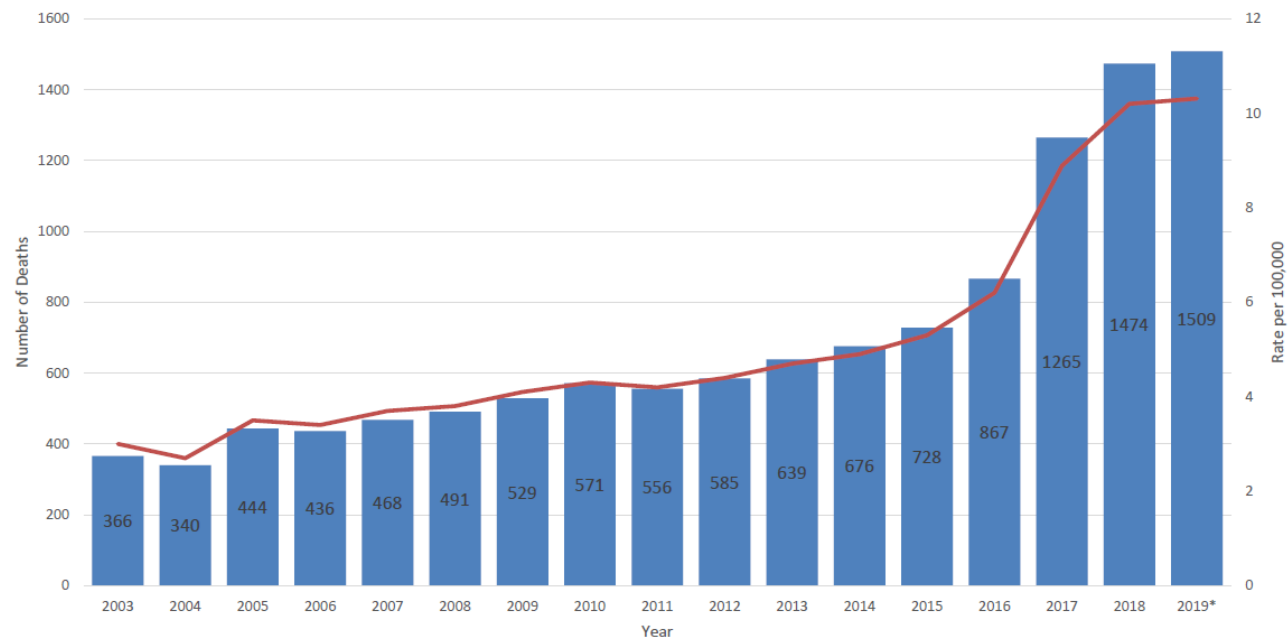
Sources: TheLancet, drugpolicy.org, EMCDDA, VHPA



statista

Ontario

Opioid-related Deaths in Ontario, 2003 to 2019



* 2019 data is preliminary, includes 60 probable cases

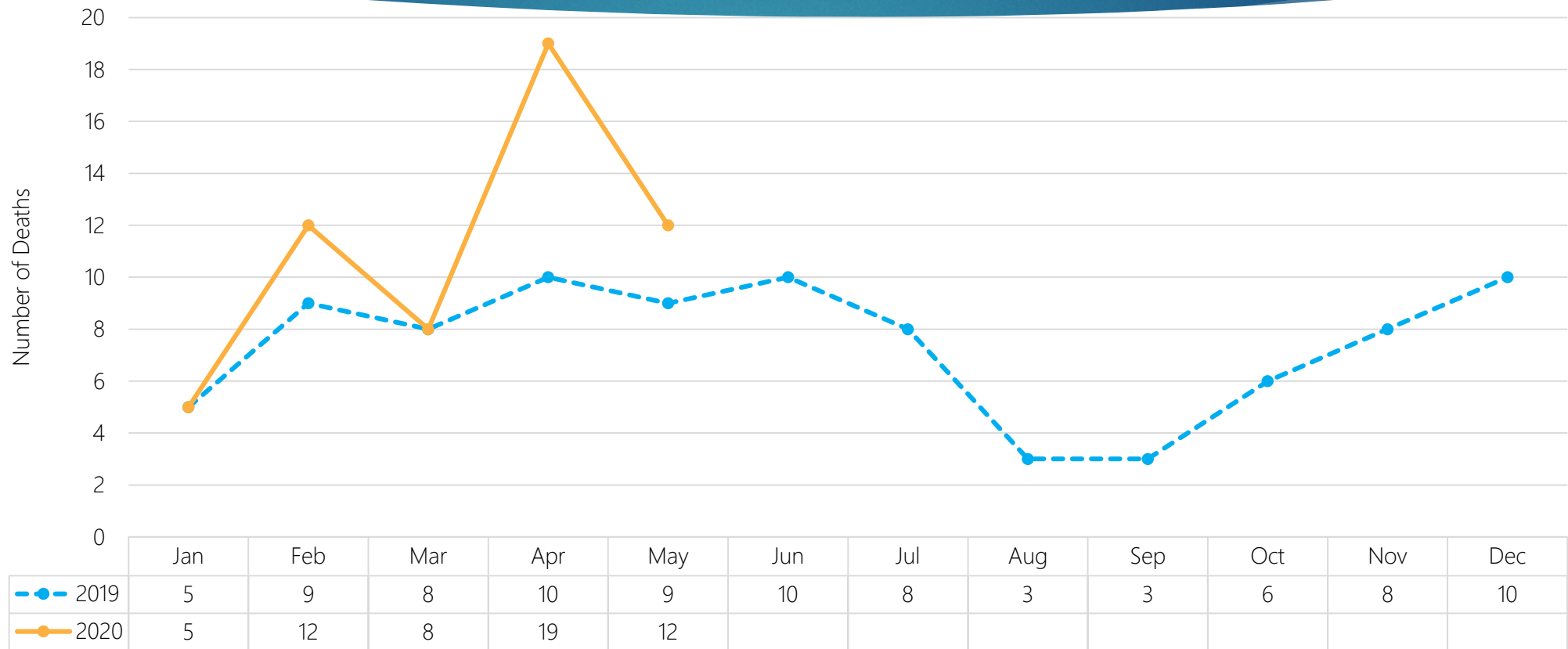
3 Note: See Appendix for case definitions

Niagara Region

- ▶ Monthly, Niagara Region averages
 - ▶ 7 opioid deaths
 - ▶ 50 calls to EMS
 - ▶ 54 Emergency Department visits
- ▶ 2020
 - ▶ 141 overdoses reversed at the CTS
 - ▶ 560 naloxone kits reported used between January and June

Data Sources: https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/alc-sub-abuse/drugs/opioids.aspx;
Positive Living Niagara

Opioid deaths in Niagara residents, 2019-2020



Data Source: Office of the Chief Coroner 2020.

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

- ▶ Acknowledge that arresting people for simple possession has been ineffective
- ▶ Recognize substance use as a public health issue
- ▶ Agree that decriminalization for simple possession “is an effective way to reduce public health and public safety harms associated with substance use”
- ▶ Part of a broader approach that includes other harm reduction measures like supervised consumption sites and safe supply programs

What does it mean for Niagara?

- ▶ Reducing stigma around substance use therefore providing increased comfort in accessing services
- ▶ Reduced infection rates resulting in a healthier community
- ▶ Reduce strain on over-burdened hospital system
- ▶ Saves money within justice and health care system
- ▶ Fewer deaths