

For release August 8, 2023.

14 people have died in Hamilton while homeless between December 1, 2022, and May 31st, 2023.

[HAMILTON, ONTARIO, August 2023] Today, we release our fourth set of data on deaths among people experiencing homelessness. Today's release includes deaths that occurred from December 2022 to May 2023, and the numbers continue to be staggering and unacceptable. In the months since our last report, we have learned of 14 individuals who died prematurely.

In the latest cohort, the average age of death was again an alarmingly low 43 years of age. 57% of the individuals we learned of died of an overdose. This time, we unfortunately received a record amount of reports with unknown causes of death, 42%, which limits information important to the creation of policy to prevent mortality. We continue to look forward to potential partnership with the provincial Coroner's office as well as with workers and organizations in Hamilton's housing and homelessness sector to fill these gaps in knowledge about a population being pushed to the margins.

We continue to see the harms of toxic drug policies reflected in the high number of overdose or drug poisoning deaths. While mental illness and substance use continue to be common among the individuals who died, the continued and dramatic difference in age at time of death between those experiencing homelessness and the general population makes it clear that homelessness itself is a contributor to mortality. We are reminded that people are better positioned to access and maintain contact with chosen health supports when they have a fixed, permanent address.

It is imminently important that death as it relates to living without housing be a top priority acknowledged at every step of housing policy and planning at all levels of government including in the Hamilton community. Housing is a harm-reducing, life-saving resource. Premature death associated with living without housing as a basic human necessity is unacceptable. Acknowledging death as connected to the conditions of being unhoused is needed for inclusive, life-saving, public health and housing development policy meant to meet people's housing and health needs.

Full data can be found at: <https://hamiltonhomelessmortality.weebly.com/>

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