

For release April 30, 2024

**21 people experiencing homelessness have died between June 1, 2023 and November 30, 2023.**

[HAMILTON, ONTARIO, April 2024]. Today, we release our fifth dataset on deaths among people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton that occurred between June 2023 to November 2023. Since our last report, we have learned of an additional 21 deaths. The cumulative mortality from June 2021 to November 2023 now includes 91 recorded deaths - this represents 1 death every 10 days on average. These deaths are preventable and demand our immediate attention.

The average age of death among the individuals we learned about was 46, which is markedly lower than the expected lifespan of 81 years for housed residents in Hamilton. The significant difference in age of death between Hamilton's housed and unhoused population reinforces that living without housing is itself connected to increased risk of mortality for people without housing. We are reminded that people are better positioned to access and maintain contact with social and healthcare supports when they have a fixed, permanent address in the community.

Overdose was cited as a cause of death in 52% of deaths reported in this 6-month period. This is a stark reflection of the harms associated with toxic drug policies. We reiterate long-standing calls for safe and supervised consumptions, safer supply, and other harm reduction strategies aimed at health equity.

In this latest cohort, 19% of those who died are listed as cause unknown. Unknowns related to cause of death reinforce the need for responsive accountabilities through partnerships with the Coroner's Office. The data also reveals that several people died within 30 days of accessing one or more social and/or healthcare services. As care providers, we are concerned and believe these numbers support a need for inquiry and intervention to improve service sector and system responsiveness and accountability to people without housing and the broader Hamilton community.

Canada's homelessness crisis has reached a critical point, and we invite other jurisdictions to characterize local mortality figures as well. Policy makers at the municipal, provincial, and federal level must understand these deaths as premature, preventable, and connected to conditions of housing deprivation. To reduce mortality, we must immediately provide permanent rights-based housing to people who need it.

Full data is available at:

<https://hamiltonhomelessmortality.weebly.com>.

Please direct media enquiries to:

Suraj Bansal  
[bansas14@mcmaster.ca](mailto:bansas14@mcmaster.ca)

Gessie Stearns (MSW)  
[stearnge@mcmaster.ca](mailto:stearnge@mcmaster.ca)

Dr. Inna Berditchevskaia (MD)  
[inna.berditchevskaia@medportal.ca](mailto:inna.berditchevskaia@medportal.ca)