

# 2023 INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

## Partners' Report

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# INTRODUCTION

This Partners' Report shares results from the 2023 International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) campaign. IOAD 2023 was a multi-faceted, global campaign to create awareness and understanding around the prevalence of drug overdose, the urgency for reform and to empower positive change in the field of drug policy.

It is not enough to deliver campaigns. We need to know whether our work is effective, whether it reaches the right audience and how we can improve what we do.

The results of our evaluation are detailed in this report. Drawn from several sources, including digital marketing tools, social media analytics, and our 2023 Community Survey, this report tracks the growing impact of our annual campaign, highlights key outcomes and successes from 2023, and showcases specific IOAD events held by our global partners. It tracks campaign impact, quantifies strategic actions and documents the perceptions of our community partners.

More than 1,000 people shared their insights and ideas with us to enable this report – including email subscribers, our many wonderful supporters, partners and those who responded through social media.

Understanding how communities around the world engage with IOAD helps us shape future campaigns more effectively and enables us to track the campaign's impact year on year.

It's also critical to the success of the IOAD campaign that our partners get to see the collective impact of their actions. Whether it's sharing a campaign message on social media, hosting an event, learning how to respond to an overdose, or meeting local decision-makers to talk about overdose prevention strategies, each action contributes to the impact of our common goals.

This report is a measure of the success of IOAD, due in large part to your support. As this report demonstrates, your feedback and ongoing commitment to this vital campaign is and has been incredibly valuable – *thank you*.

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More than 1,000 people shared their insights and ideas with us. These important insights will help shape future campaigns.

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## OUR APPROACH

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There can be no doubt that overdose is a global health catastrophe.

Over the past two decades, drug overdose deaths have risen dramatically in many parts of the world.

Behind the statistics of this escalating crisis is the devastating human tragedy of loss and suffering.

More than 100,000 Americans die from overdose every year while in Australia, drug overdose is now the second leading cause of death for people aged 30-39.

Evidence-based responses and positive change is now more urgent than ever.

Our vision is of a world in which:

- Overdose is recognised and tackled as a global health crisis.
- Communities understand overdose prevention and see overdose as a critical health issue.
- People who use drugs are supported and socially connected.

Our approach focuses on activating communities around the world to raise awareness of the crisis and advocate for evidence-based overdose prevention and drug policy.

## OUR CAMPAIGN

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We work towards a world free of drug overdose through International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) - the world's largest campaign to end overdose.

First held in Melbourne, Australia in 2001, IOAD has been convened globally by Penington Institute since 2012 and is now observed by communities in more than 40 countries worldwide.

Held on August 31 each year, this global day of action and advocacy remembers those who have died and acknowledges the profound grief of those left behind.

It raises awareness about this global epidemic and campaigns for urgent evidence-based action on overdose prevention and drug policy.

It also supports families and communities, and works to break down the stigma surrounding drug use and overdose.

The not-for-profit Penington Institute champions an evidence-based and compassionate approach to building and sharing knowledge to reduce drug-related harm. IOAD is part of that work.

## OUR GOALS

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The scale and tragedy of the global overdose epidemic demands bold and urgent global action.

Our IOAD campaign goals reflect that ambition by aiming to:

- Provide accessible information about overdose response and prevention.
- Expand IOAD as a forum for open community discussion about overdose.
- Support the community to advocate for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent overdose.
- Encourage policy-makers to consider evidence-based policies and practices.
- Educate people about evidence-based strategies and initiatives that prevent overdose.
- Work with communities to build their confidence in overdose response.

## FEATURED EVENT #1

# MOMS STOP THE HARM & OVERDOSE AWARENESS EDMONTON

EDMONTON, ALBERTA  
CANADA



### EVENT OBJECTIVES:

To raise awareness of the drug poisoning crisis and to share a safe space for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

"On this day and the days to come, let's remember the lives lost, celebrate the lives saved and renew our commitment to building a world where every individual can thrive. We remember the lives lost too soon from tragic, preventable deaths due to the toxic drug poisoning crisis. It is a stark reminder that every loss is one too many. Let us unite in grief and determination as we renew our urgent calls for action to end this crisis. We see you." Angela Welz, Moms Stop the Harm member, in her speech to open the event.

### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Nearly 600 people attended this event.
- The event was supported by food trucks, live music, and Indigenous performances.
- Naloxone training was provided.
- Attendees reported that it was a wonderful evening filled with fellowship and remembrance.

# 2023 CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES

This year, we introduced a theme to IOAD: “Recognizing those people who go unseen.” We were pleased to see that the IOAD community around the world rallied behind this theme, acknowledging people in their communities who have been affected by overdose, but might have gone unseen in the crisis. The community honoured family and friends grieving the loss of a loved one; workers in harm reduction, healthcare and other support services; first responders to overdose, and many more. The response to this theme was so strong that we will continue to highlight a new theme each year which offers the community a new angle or idea from which to base their awareness and advocacy efforts.

The campaign theme was used by the community as an event theme, on printed collateral, and on social media posts using the hashtag #weseeyou, alongside our regular campaign hashtags #IOAD23, #IOAD2023, #endoverdose.

“[A HIGHLIGHT OF THE CAMPAIGN WAS] BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE HOW OUR ORGANISATIONAL POLICY POSITIONS ALIGN WITH THE MESSAGES OF IOAD EACH YEAR, AND THIS YEAR’S THEME.”

IOAD Community Member

“THE THEME OF #WESEYOU WAS WELCOMED BY THOSE WHO ARE OFTEN FORGOTTEN OR OVERLOOKED IN THE IMPACT OR PERSONAL GRIEF.”

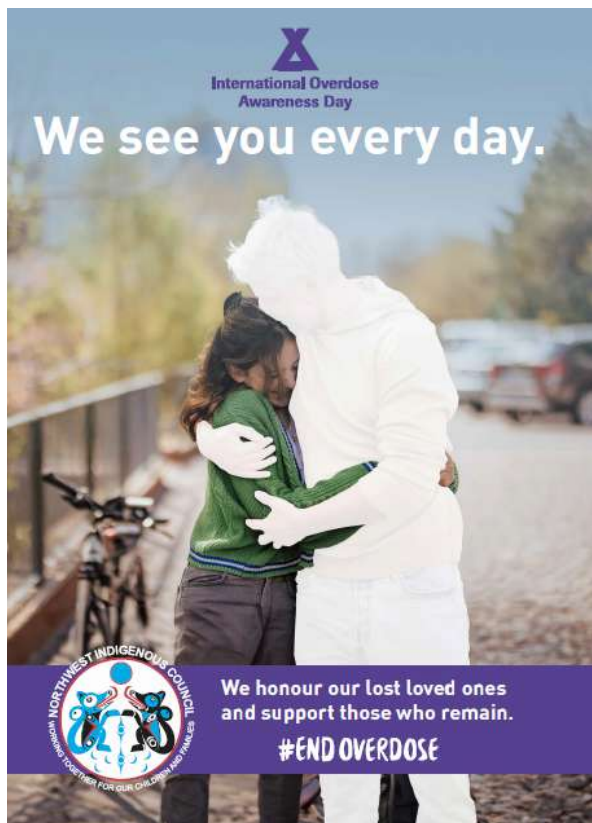
IOAD Community Member

## #IOAD2023 CAMPAIGN RESOURCES





## 2023 CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES



Credit: Northwest Indigenous Council



Credit: Pride Centre San Antonio



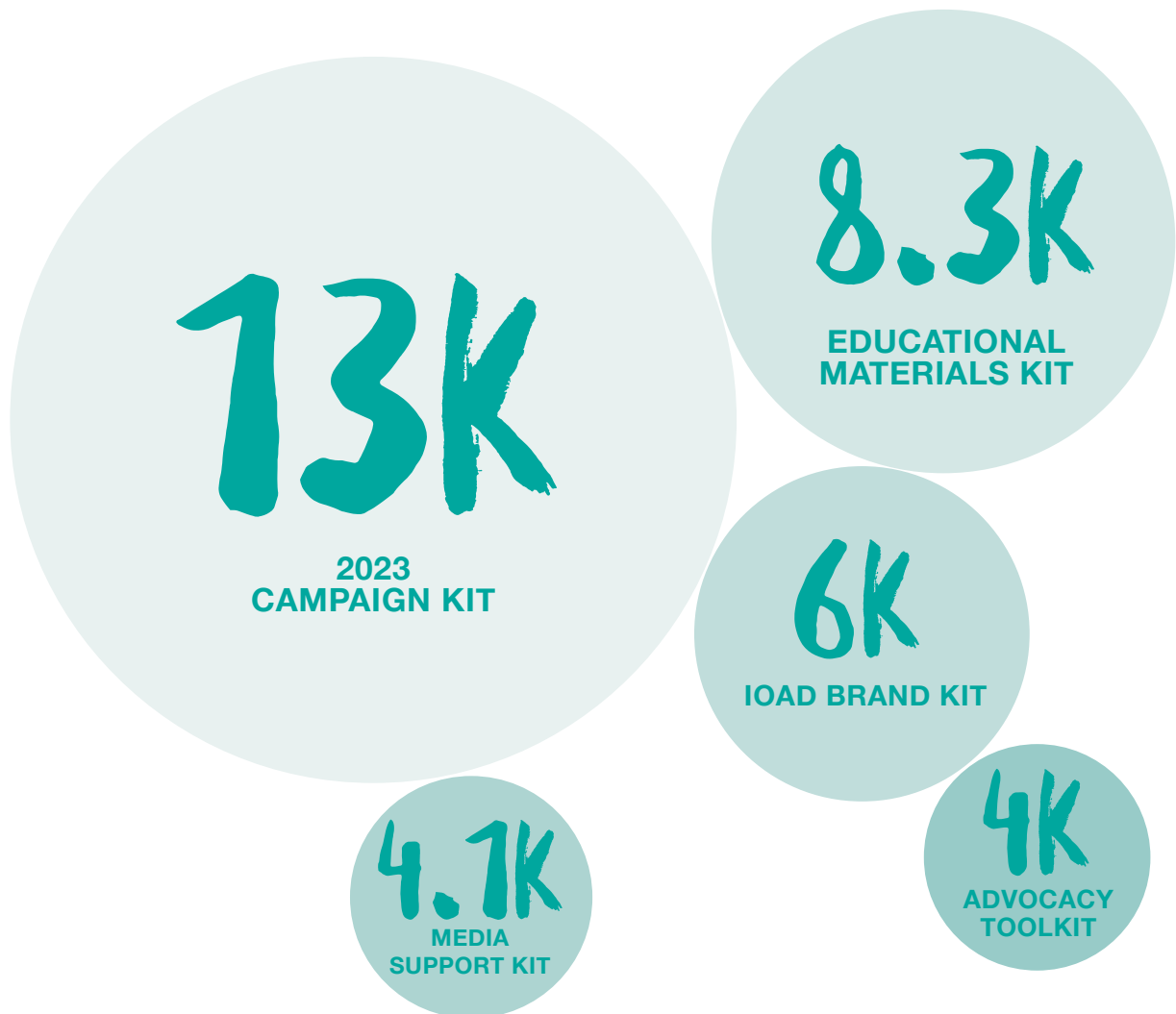
Credit: Guam National Guard



Credit: Sammi Lee, Manitoba Harm Reduction Network



# RESOURCES DOWNLOADED IN 2023:



# CHARTING OUR IMPACT

Achieving positive change and greater awareness drives the IOAD campaign and the efforts of our many partners and supporters.

Early in 2023, Penington Institute developed a new framework to better measure and demonstrate the impact of the IOAD campaign on our community and stakeholders.

That evaluation confirmed that a key strength of the IOAD campaign is its ability to activate and support communities around the world to advocate for evidence-based change and awareness.

To further strengthen that ability, education, communication and advocacy will continue to be critical components of our campaign strategy.

As part of our new framework, this year the IOAD Community Survey was, for the first time, opened to our entire community.

We were thrilled to receive responses from more than 1,000 community members which will help shape our campaign into the future.

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**"THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING  
THE WORLWIDE PLATFORM  
TO PROMOTE OVERDOSE AWARENESS  
AND ULTIMATELY HELP SAVE LIVES!"**

IOAD COMMUNITY MEMBER

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**"THANK YOU FOR DOING WHAT YOU  
CAN TO RAISE AWARENESS. DON'T  
STOP. LIVES CAN AND WILL BE SAVED  
WITH INCREASED CONVERSATION."**

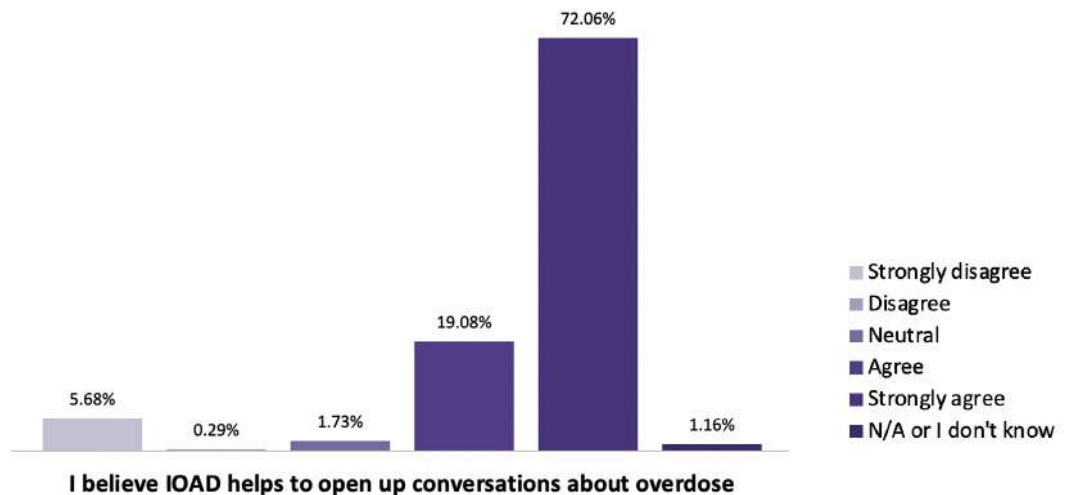
IOAD COMMUNITY MEMBER

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## CHARTING OUR IMPACT

Your feedback has provided many insights, including:

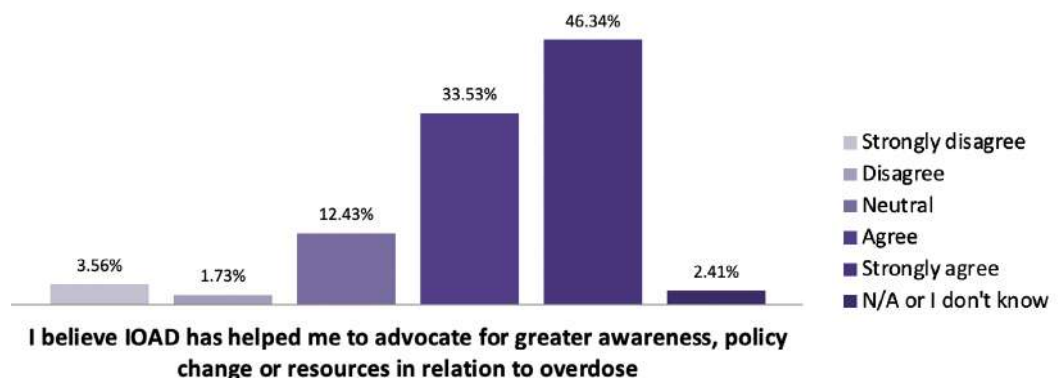
### **I believe IOAD helps to open up conversations about overdose.**



This statement yielded the strongest “agree” response in the Community Survey, confirming that one of the campaign’s key strengths is supporting individuals and communities to talk

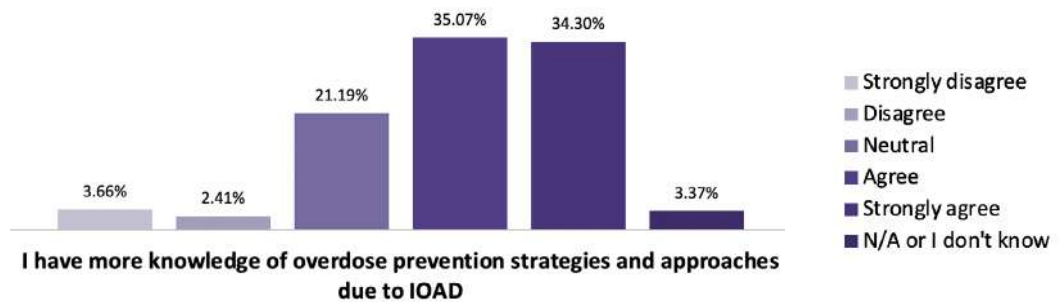
about overdose. We know that when we open up these conversations, we are on the path to positive change.

### **I believe IOAD has helped me to advocate for greater awareness, policy change or resources in relation to overdose.**

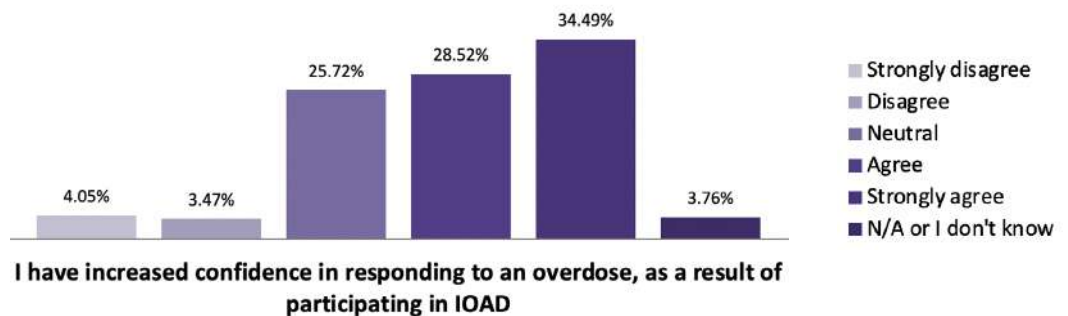


## CHARTING OUR IMPACT

**I have more knowledge of overdose prevention strategies and approaches due to IOAD.**



**I have increased confidence in responding to an overdose, as a result of participating in IOAD.**



This result tells us that we can do more to build people's confidence when responding to an overdose.

# METZINERES

BARCELONA, SPAIN



## EVENT OBJECTIVES:

To bring people who share the same mission of ending overdose together, give a voice to those impacted by overdose, and raise awareness of this pressing issue.

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- More than 50 people gathered in a square in Barcelona near the Barcelona City Council and the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia).
- Speakers included families who have lost loved ones to overdose.
- Many wore t-shirts with the message "In memory of the victims of the war on drugs".
- Organisers handed out white roses and read from this year's manifesto.
- The event was covered by local and national media outlets and on social media.
- Supported by organisations including the Catalan Network of People Who Use Drugs (CATNPUD), Metzineres and Association Reus Som Utilis (ARSU).

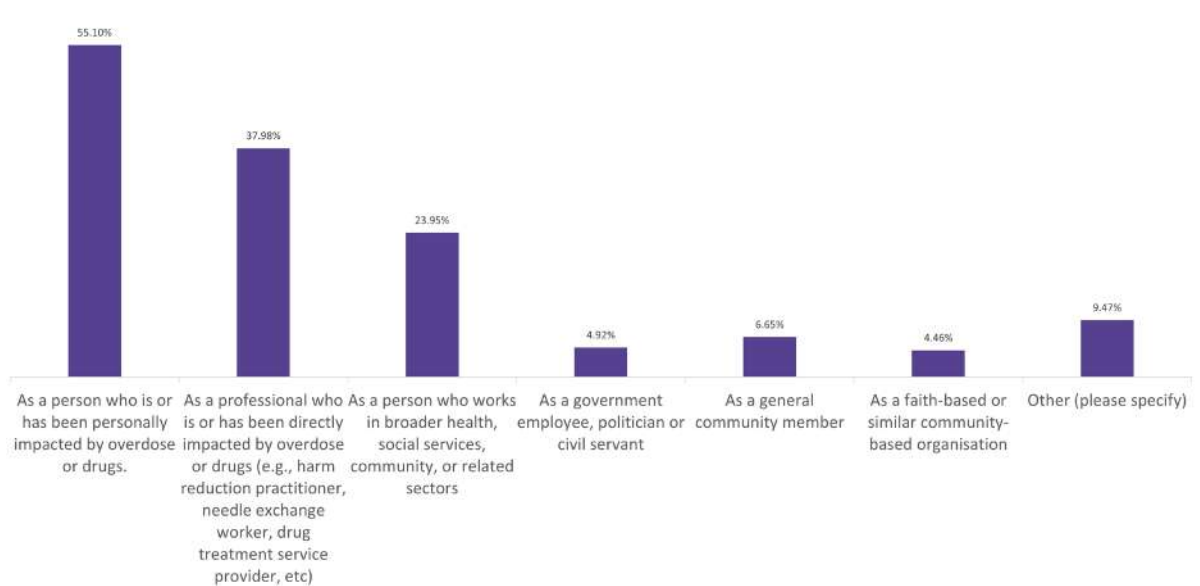
# CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION

We are very proud to have built a strong global campaign platform which brings together communities from around the world to raise awareness about the tragedy of overdose, and to advocate for change.

There are many reasons why people join the IOAD campaign.

Our Community Survey findings show that those who take part in the campaign have been either personally or professionally impacted by overdose. This includes people who have lost loved ones or those who work in harm reduction or healthcare services. We will continue to support all people who join our campaign – and in the future we hope to include more people who may be less directly impacted by overdose.

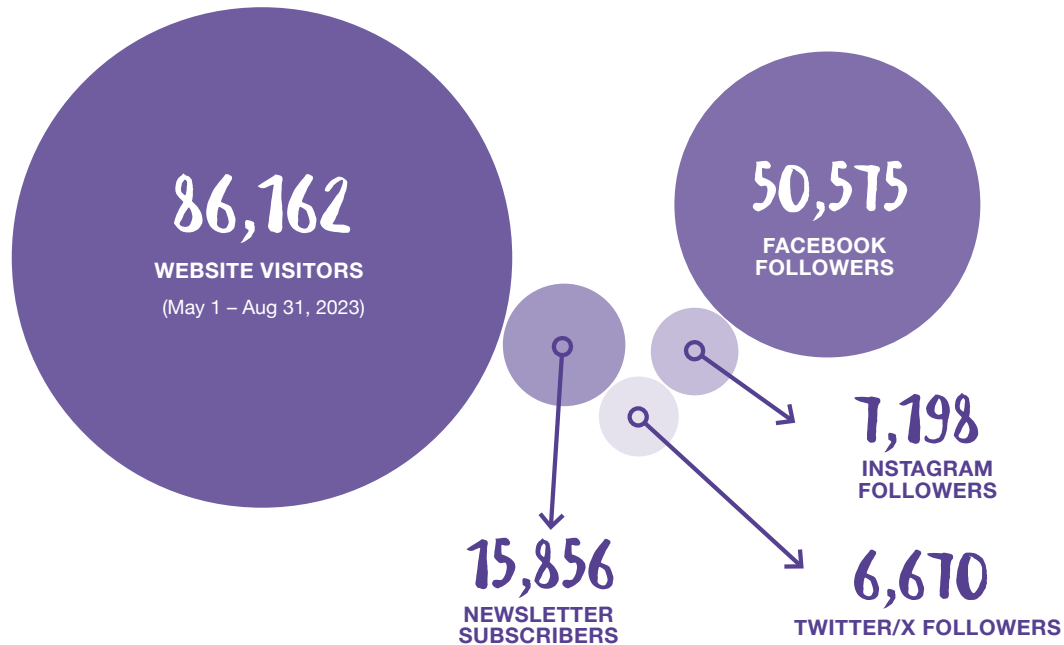
## In what capacity did you take part in IOAD this year?



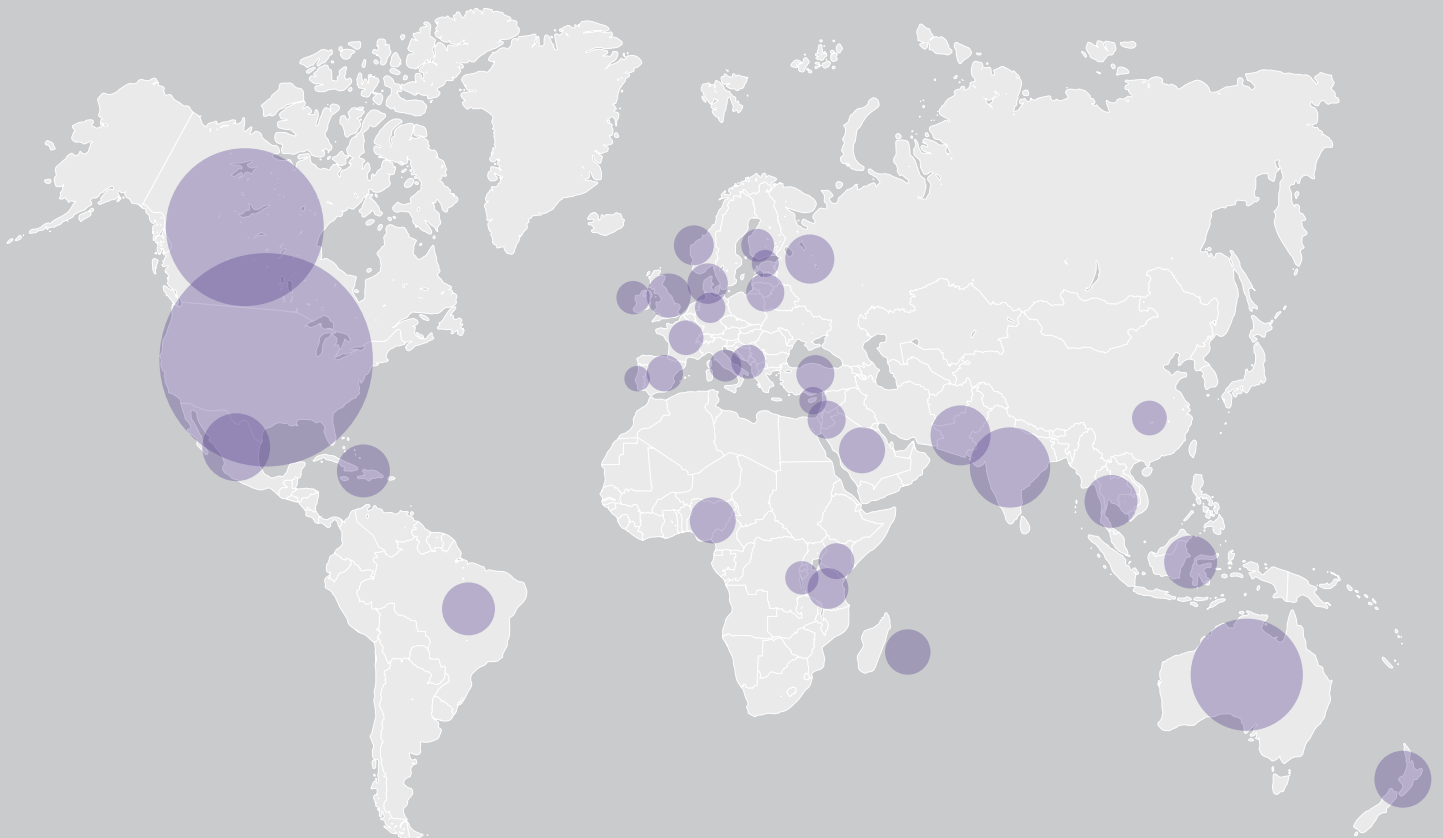


## CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION

### OUR GROWING DIGITAL IOAD COMMUNITY:



### COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE IOAD 2023 CAMPAIGN:



## CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION

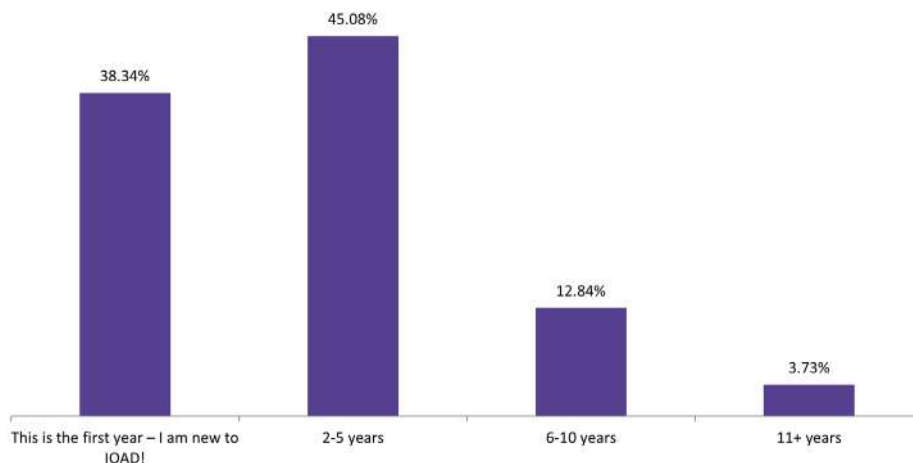
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The Community Survey reveals the exceptional commitment shown by our global community, with almost half of all respondents having been involved in IOAD for between two and five years.

We always welcome new partners to our campaign, and it's very exciting to see that 38% of survey respondents took part for the first time in 2023.

A special thanks to the 3.7% of IOAD partners who have participated for more than a decade. This dedicated group have created significant progress in raising awareness about the devastation of overdose and the urgent need for change.

### How many years have you taken part in IOAD? (‘taking part’ can be anything from following us on social media to running an event)



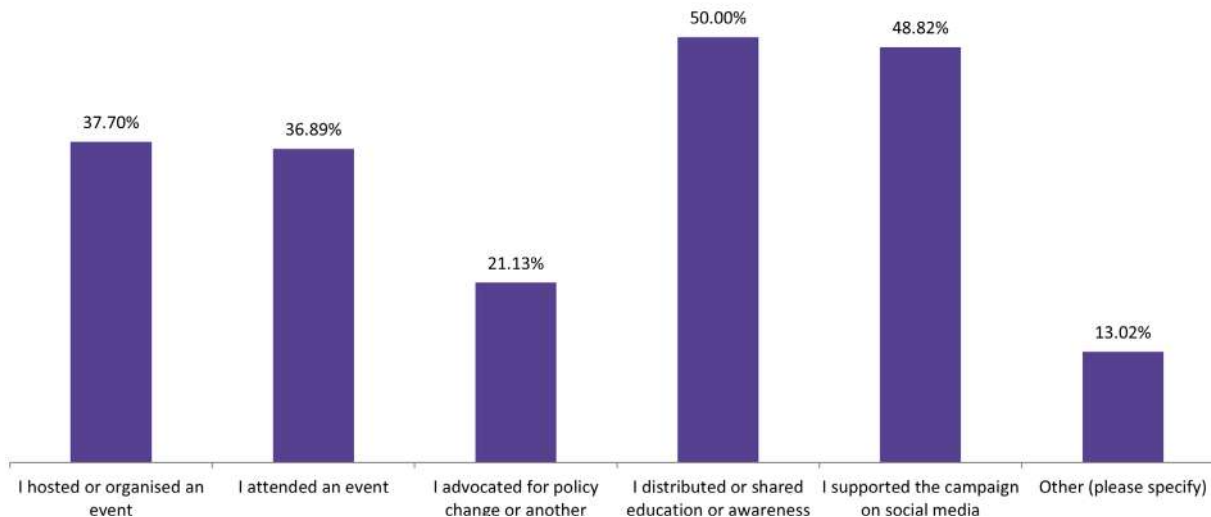
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OUR “EVENT” WAS JUST A LISTENING POST OUTSIDE OUR SUPERMARKET IN A SMALL TOWN. WE ONLY ATTRACTED A FEW PEOPLE WALKING PAST – BUT THE INTERACTION WAS EXCELLENT. PEOPLE WERE INTERESTED. IT WAS WORTH DOING – AND MORE NEXT YEAR! WE WILL ALSO TRY TO PARTNER WITH ANOTHER ORGANIZATION TO SPREAD THE WORD MORE WIDELY. OUR LOCAL AREA IS ESPECIALLY HARD-HIT BY OVERDOSE ISSUES AND WE MUST ALL LEARN FAR MORE ABOUT IT.

IOAD COMMUNITY MEMBER

## CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION

### How did you take part in IOAD this year?



In terms of IOAD activities undertaken by our community, the most popular was sharing education or awareness materials. This underlines the central role education plays in building awareness around overdose prevention and changing policy and minds.

Our campaign analysis also confirmed that social media is our most powerful campaign tool, with nearly half of all respondents supporting the campaign online.

This online component is important for inclusivity, allowing people to take part no matter where they live, and will continue to be a priority in future IOAD campaigns.

## FEATURED EVENT #3

# MONTENEGRIN HARM REDUCTION NETWORK LINK & NGO JUVENATS

PODGORICA,  
MONTENEGRO



### EVENT OBJECTIVES:

To support families who have lost loved ones to overdose, raise awareness about overdose, which remains a societal taboo in Montenegro, and express solidarity with the people who use/inject drugs (PWUD/ID) community.

### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Community members affected by overdose gathered with teams from Montenegrin Harm Reduction Network Link and NGO Juvenats to light candles, observe a moment of silence to remember those lost to overdose and express solidarity.
- With the help of local authorities, Podgorica's

Millenium Bridge was illuminated in purple as a symbol of support for those experiencing the impact of overdose.

- More than 20 people attended and the event was covered by the media, including national news agency PR Centar which produced a story picked up nationally by other outlets.
- Event participants were interviewed for television reports.
- The event has raised awareness of this crucial issue throughout the country.

# CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY

Our Community Survey results demonstrate that IOAD is a powerful platform from which many people can advocate for changes to policies and practices relating to the overdose epidemic.

More than 15% of respondents undertook formal or organised advocacy work around ending overdose, including:

- Starting a petition
- Hosting an IOAD event
- Contacting local decision-makers and elected officials
- Preparing policy platforms
- Awareness raising activities, such as information sharing and training

It was especially impressive that 68% of respondents rated their advocacy efforts as effective or very effective in terms of achieving their advocacy goals.

More than 90% of those who engaged in advocacy this year plan to do so again in 2024 – we look forward to continuing to support these partners in this vital work.

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“I REACHED OUT TO THE SENATOR THROUGH A REPRESENTATIVE WHO ATTENDS OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS... WE DID GET A LETTER FROM SENATOR BILL HAGERTY RECOGNIZING THE WORK THE COALITION DOES FOR IOAD AND PRIMARY PREVENTION. I WAS AIMING FOR HIM TO RECOGNIZE IOAD, NOT THE COALITION, BUT IT’S A START.”

IOAD COMMUNITY MEMBER

# OTHER ADVOCACY EFFORTS FOR 2023





# THE NORTHWEST SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

PESHAWAR,  
PAKISTAN



## EVENT OBJECTIVES:

The drug overdose crisis in Pakistan has had a devastating impact on local communities, families, and individuals.

The Northwest School of Medicine, Peshawar held this session to educate third-year medical students about overdose prevention.

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The event provided access to evidence-based prevention, intervention, and recovery services.
- Screening of a film about the overdose issue in Pakistan.
- 80 medical students and seven faculty members attended the event.

# EVENTS IN 2023

Our Community Survey results show that approximately 60,000 people around the world were engaged in IOAD events – and this is not even counting in the number of people who participated in the hundreds of other unsurveyed events around the world.

Thank you to everyone who is on the 2023 Global Events Map for making this IOAD successful. Next year, we aim to improve this map's functionalities to better reflect the global nature of IOAD and diverse ways the community takes part in this campaign.

The most resonated reason to hold an event was to raise awareness about overdose, followed by to reduce stigma around those affected by overdose.

This suggests that overdose remains an insufficiently discussed and heavily stigmatised topic that the general public tend to have limited understanding of.

Remembrance is, and always will be, an important focus of IOAD, and it's reflected by "commemoration and memorials" the third most chosen reason.

1000+

EVENTS HELD

60,000+

EVENT ATTENDEES\*

95%

OF EVENT HOLDERS WILL  
HOLD AN EVENT AGAIN  
NEXT YEAR\*



MANY  
LANDMARKS  
AROUND THE  
WORLD LIT UP  
IN PURPLE

40+

COUNTRIES HELD  
MEDIA EVENTS

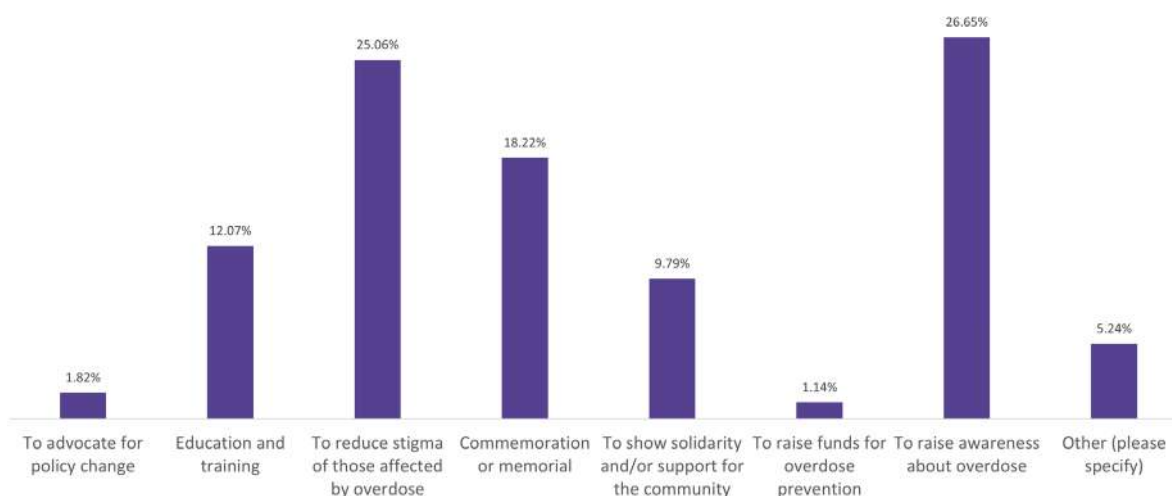
\*Data from our Community Survey 2023. 1079 respondents.

“THE INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY WEBSITE IS WHAT SPURRED ME TO START OUR LOCAL EVENT, WITH 12 PEOPLE AROUND A PICNIC TABLE. WE HAVE GROWN IN 5 YEARS TO 20 VENDORS AT OUR RESOURCE FAIR AND 150 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE. THIS HAS BEEN AN AMAZING JOURNEY FOR ME, THANK YOU.”

IOAD COMMUNITY MEMBER

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### What was the main reason you held an event or activity?



# GLOBAL HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

- In the United States, President Joe Biden tweeted about IOAD on August 31, while the White House announced more than \$450 million in new funding to tackle the overdose epidemic.
- St James's Hospital became the first hospital in Ireland with a pilot initiative to provide free naloxone kits to people at risk of overdose.
- On August 31, Scotland Police confirmed the national roll-out of naloxone was complete, and police have administered naloxone on at least 325 occasions.
- In Victoria, Australia, David Ettershank, Member for Western Metropolitan Melbourne, spoke in parliament about the state government's planned expansion of access to hydromorphone.
- St Louis County in the United States has partnered with all county libraries to make Naloxone freely available.
- Emergent announced over the counter access to the overdose-reversing drug Narcan across the United States from September 2023.
- The Salvation Army held a candlelight vigil in Melbourne to mark IOAD.
- The Cyprus Addiction Treatment Authority (AAEK) and the Nicosia municipality organised central Nicosia's Eleftheria square to be lit up in purple on August 31.
- On IOAD, Skoun Addiction Center shared an updated list of safe hospitals that do not report overdose cases to the police in Lebanon.
- In South Africa, the Deputy Minister of Social Development Mme Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu in partnership with the Central Drug Authority (CDA) and the South African Network for People Who Use Drugs (SANPUD) commemorated IOAD at JB Marks treatment centre in Potchefstroom, North West province.

“I LOVED THE TRIBUTES  
[POSTED ON THE WEBSITE]!  
I LOVE READING THEM. I  
HAVE LOST A SIBLING TO  
OVERDOSE AND IT WAS  
COMFORTING READING THEM.  
I LOVED BEING ABLE TO  
WRITE ONE FOR  
MY BROTHER.”

IOAD COMMUNITY MEMBER



# ONTO 2024...

We have seen impressive growth in the reach and scope of the IOAD campaign over the past decade, and we are incredibly grateful to everyone in our community for your support and commitment.

We know that tackling the global overdose epidemic remains an enormous challenge.

But with your help, we are determined to keep building momentum and make each year's campaign more powerful than the last.

Thank you again for all of your efforts. If you would like to support us to widen the reach of the IOAD campaign, donations are greatly appreciated and can be made here .

We look forward to working alongside you again in 2024.



Credit: Sandra Harrison, West Side Heroin-Opioid Task Force



CONTACT US FOR MORE  
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INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE  
AWARENESS DAY

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