

# Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on benzodiazepine use among youth

Benzodiazepine dispensing to youth  $\leq 24$  years old in Ontario, Canada

 **Benzodiazepines:** A class of drugs most commonly used to treat insomnia and anxiety



**Pre-Pandemic Period:** Jan 1, 2020 to Mar 31, 2020  
**Post-Pandemic Period:** Apr 1, 2020 to Jun 30, 2022



**256,270**

youth were dispensed a benzodiazepine

**63%** were female

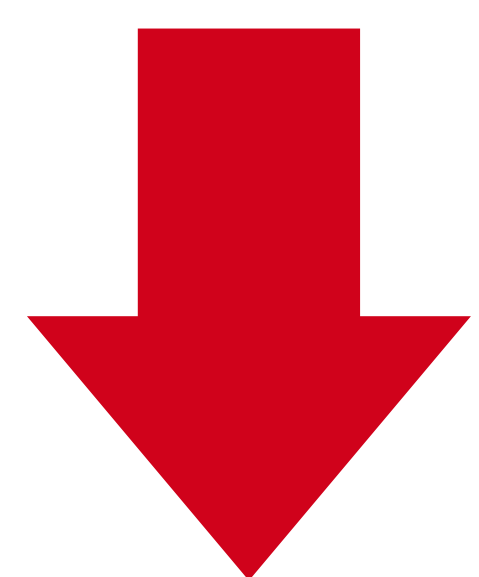
Median age was **20** years



Characteristics did not change significantly between the pre- and post-pandemic periods

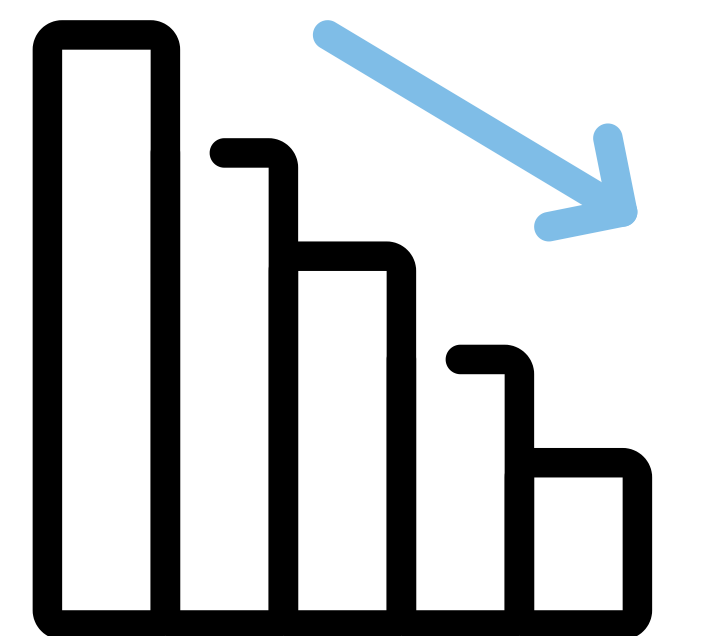
## Trends in the Post-Pandemic Period

**Immediate decrease** in benzodiazepine dispensing

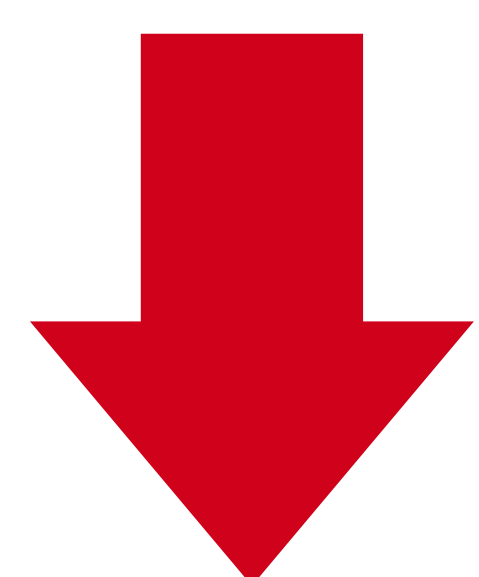


Decline of **23.6 per 100K** in **April 2020** (the month following public health emergency and school closures)

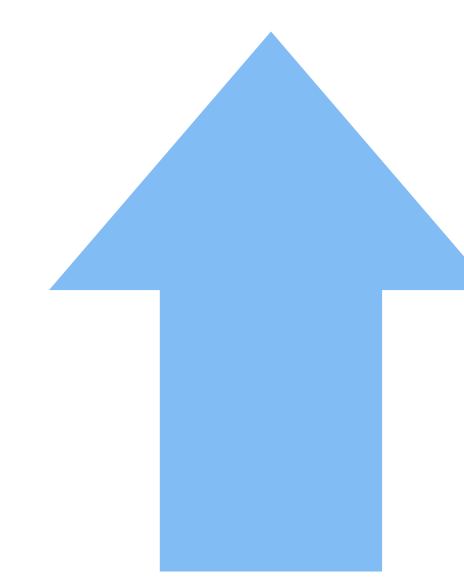
From April 2020 onward, there was a **monthly decrease of 0.3 per 100K**



Overall **lower than expected** benzodiazepine dispensing rates each month



Percentage **decrease** ranged from **7.4% to 21%**



From June 2021 onward, dispensing rates for youth aged **10 to 14** were **higher** than expected

### For more information:

Antoniou, T., Pajer, K., Gardner, W., Penner, M., Lunsky, Y., McCormack, D., Tadrous, M., Mamdani, M., Gozdyra, P., Juurlink, D., & Gomes, T. (2024). Brief Report: A population-based study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on benzodiazepine use among children and young adults. *Eur. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry*.