

# A HEARTFELT THANKS

Overdose is an opportunist, ready and waiting to intrude into everyday neighbourhoods, everyday networks, everyday families, regardless of where we are in the world.

Convened by Penington Institute, International Overdose Awareness Day is our global community's response to this crisis – a campaign that has ballooned into a truly worldwide phenomenon. On August 31, diverse communities unite to focus attention on the tragedy of overdose and to respond to this in a proactive way.

IOAD is a time for looking forward; for initiating the conversations that will create a society that is safer, better informed, more compassionate and more empowered to prevent overdose.

In 2021, IOAD was observed through workshops, rallies, vigils, prayer services, training sessions, speeches, exhibitions, summits and negotiations, as just a few examples. It took place in more than 20 national languages, in at least 37 countries on six continents.

I'm proud to present this *2021 IOAD Partners' Report* in the 20th year of IOAD – a year in which individuals as diverse as frontline workers in Nigeria, university students in Puerto Rico, multinational corporate executives at Google and political leaders including United States President Joe Biden have prioritised overdose awareness.

So many of you have contributed to this campaign – whether by hosting an event, calling for the development of evidence-based drug policies or sharing your thoughts publicly on social media – and deserve to feel immense satisfaction.



IOAD continues to force a rethink of the harms created by overdose, whether that results from legal pharmaceuticals or illegal substances such as methamphetamine or heroin.

This report is dedicated to Penington Institute's many thousands of extraordinary IOAD partners around the world.

## **John Ryan**

CEO, Penington Institute

Convenor of International Overdose Awareness Day

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# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

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Penington Institute took custodianship of IOAD in 2012 and has now convened the day for a full decade. The Institute connects lived experience and research to improve community health and wellbeing in relation to drugs, including alcohol and pharmaceuticals. As a leading Australian public health promotion charity, we are proud to support this campaign to save lives.

In 2021 IOAD was set for the first time entirely against the backdrop of one of the most immediate and all-consuming health crises our world has ever known. While many activity hosts in 2020 were forced to change course midstream, adapting planned events to satisfy local restrictions after the COVID-19 pandemic had been declared, in 2021 our partners prepared from the outset to manoeuvre around the inevitability of this challenge.

The adaptability, foresight, preparedness and resilience of our IOAD community is amazing, regardless of the impact of COVID-19.

More than 730 events were formally registered on the IOAD website – we believe this represents just the tip of those that took place on or around August 31, involving anywhere from only one or two up to thousands of participants.

More activities were offered online than ever before, supported by resources newly created and/or customised by our team and shared both as downloads through the [OverdoseDay.com](https://OverdoseDay.com) website and in one-on-one liaison via social media and email.

These posters, guides, fact sheets, letter templates, graphics and audiovisual slides were supplemented by material generated within local regions, provided by in-country national drug or health organisations, or developed by you and your fellow activity hosts yourselves.

Insights from those at on the front line of the campaign were collected in September through a survey of roughly one-third of IOAD partners worldwide.

In all, 94 per cent of hosts in 2021 rated their events as “successful”, and 92 per cent said they had received support from our staff at Penington Institute.

Supporters’ motivation for organising events spans the full range of IOAD goals:

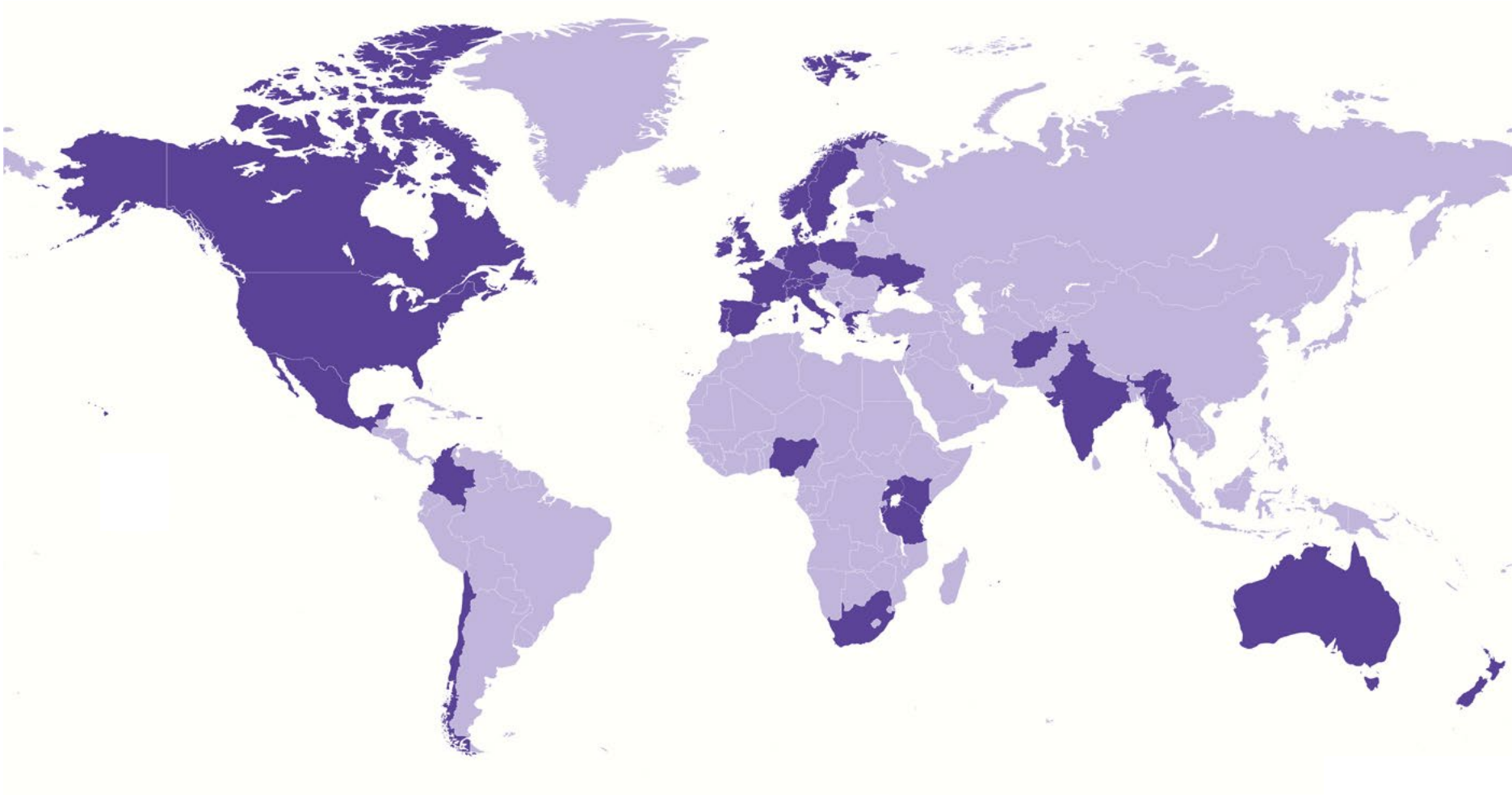
- advocating for policy change
- raising awareness of overdose
- fighting stigma for those affected by overdose
- remembering loved ones lost to overdose
- holding a commemoration or memorial service
- showing solidarity with and/or support for people affected by overdose
- raising funds for overdose prevention initiatives
- encouraging communities to respond to overdose as a local issue
- supporting evidence-based responses that save lives
- reminding people of the risks of overdose
- providing education and training, including in recognising and responding to overdose and in knowing which support services are available.







In 2021, IOAD was observed both in-country and online, delivering activities worldwide



Those attending IOAD events are also diverse, comprising:

- people who use drugs
- family members and friends of people affected by overdose
- health and community workers
- advocates and activists
- politicians and government staff
- law enforcement and emergency services personnel
- the general public.

One in every three survey respondents has now taken part in IOAD three or more times, yet at the other end of the spectrum 35 per cent of hosts surveyed held their first event in 2021, indicating robust and expanding enthusiasm for the campaign. Clearly, IOAD is attracting and accommodating new supporters while keeping regular participants fully aligned and engaged.

Our IOAD community is resourceful, innovative and frugal – based on our 2021 findings, 45 per cent of events are run on a budget of AUD\$200 or less, and only 16 per cent invest AUD\$1,000 or more.

The results produced are anything but modest, however. In the late August–early September period (peaking on August 31 and in the one-week window immediately either side of this date), IOAD earned media coverage in more than 20 national languages in at least 37 countries. Seventy-three per cent of events were reported on by at least one form of media, with print and online being the most common. Analysis shows that, globally, IOAD 2021 was mentioned almost 7,000 times in news reports.

The value of this global media impact (as measured by an independent monitoring agency) was a staggering 36 per cent higher than just two years earlier.

Social media, too, plays an ever more important role in promoting and recording IOAD and its achievements globally. Penington Institute engages, supports and informs audiences through four dedicated social media channels on three of the most popular mainstream platforms: @InternationalOverdoseAwarenessDay on Facebook, @OverdoseDay on Twitter, and both @overdoseawarenessday and @overdosetribute on Instagram. IOAD 2021 appeared in 25,000 social media posts (peaking on August 31 with a potential audience of 170 million people).

The geographic expansion of IOAD into fresh frontiers continues. In 2021, at least five countries joined the cause for the first time: Qatar, Mauritius, Colombia, the Seychelles and Burundi.

These statistics are undoubtedly impressive, but IOAD's true impact is ultimately measured by how it fulfills its mission: to end overdose, to remember without stigma those no longer with us and to acknowledge the grief of loved ones left behind. This campaign aims to save lives and transform them for the better by enhancing the capacity and resilience of communities to respond to overdose-related harms.

In 2021 the joint efforts of our IOAD community reached new heights in promoting an understanding of overdose and the actions required to end it.

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**Some of the hundreds of individual steps taken included:**

- **US** – President Joe Biden formally proclaiming August 31 national Overdose Awareness Day as part of Overdose Awareness Week
- **Myanmar** – volunteers conducting community awareness-raising to correct misconceptions based on traditional myths and to promote the use of naloxone
- **Scotland** – Banff Outreach offering kerbside outreach and education, and quantifying and evaluating all interactions with the public over the course of IOAD week to determine the activity’s depth of influence
- **Canada** – the Métis Nation of British Columbia becoming the first Indigenous nation in Canada to roll out an adaptation of the Lifeguard app, customised with culturally sensitive language to provide instant access to support services and resources
- **US** – the International Society of Substance Use Professionals, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and the US Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs collaborating to present an online event profiling overdose prevention strategies and programs
- **Ireland** – the Ana Liffey harm reduction service launching its VanaLiffey mobile outreach vehicle
- **Scotland** – the Scottish Drugs Forum creating an overdose prevention toolkit as part of its nationwide Stop the Deaths campaign
- **Australia** – First Step in Melbourne hosting its fifth annual overdose prevention training session in which more than 100 people learned lifesaving techniques
- **Afghanistan** – in Kabul, community members meeting to pay public tribute to friends and colleagues lost to overdose
- **Burundi** – celebrating progress away from condemning people who use drugs by raising awareness of overdose deaths at a public rally in Muyinga
- **Mexico** – gathering in Mexicali for a remembrance event featuring naloxone training, fentanyl detection testing, needle and syringe distribution, and peer support discussions
- **Puerto Rico** – the University of Puerto Rico presenting a theatre workshop ‘The Silent Pandemic’ and a documentary on opioids as a chronic health problem
- **Worldwide** – search engine Google in its corporate blog sharing a post about the campaign which related the experiences of two senior Google staff.











## OUR IOAD BRAND

The suite of existing resources for sharing by the IOAD community spans downloadable fact sheets, posters (in English and 12 other languages), social media tiles, how-to guides, correspondence templates and t-shirt designs, and commercial IOAD merchandise (wristbands, lanyards and badges).

The most up-to-date overdose data from around the world is provided, too, for use by you and other frontline partners in your advocacy.

These resources are all accessible through the OverdoseDay.com website. This site has just been completely refreshed to bring it into line with IOAD's universal branding ahead of IOAD 2022. As more material is generated, it will be added (including information in additional community languages).

# ACTIVITIES IN AT LEAST

# 37 COUNTRIES

# 730+ FORMALLY REGISTERED EVENTS

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## OUR NEXT STEPS

Penington Institute's focus on IOAD is year-round and ongoing and we are already well under way with our preparations for 2022.

Our commitment to supporting the bereaved families and friends of people lost to overdose remains steadfast.

We are also committed to raising overdose and policy solutions more broadly as an issue among politicians, public health officials and others who have the authority to effect real change in this space.

In 2021 we initiated more than 30 formal meetings with organisations, forums, services and national governments. These high-level conversations have the power to highlight the crisis that is overdose and underpin the establishment of policies and practices that not only raise awareness but actually make inroads into reducing the loss of life to this epidemic.

Penington Institute's engagement as a thought leader on this front is escalating yet again in 2022 through our support for IOAD partners worldwide.

20<sup>+</sup>  
NATIONAL  
LANGUAGES

DOZENS  
OF COMMUNITY  
LANGUAGES IN  
• AFRICA • ASIA  
• OCEANIA • EUROPE  
• THE AMERICAS











# BECOMING PART OF THE SOLUTION

Penington Institute proactively pursues opportunities to partner with like-minded entities to strengthen and expand the IOAD campaign globally. No idea is too big or too small, nor too far outside the square, to be welcomed.

We invite approaches from governments and their departments and agencies, the corporate world, not-for-profit organisations and individuals interested in becoming part of the IOAD effort. In the first instance, please email [info@overdoseday.com](mailto:info@overdoseday.com).

We look forward to reporting the results of these discussions and negotiations to you, our IOAD community, twelve months hence.





**45%**  
**of ACTIVITIES  
DELIVERED ON A  
MICRO-BUDGET**

**94%**  
**of EVENTS RATED  
“SUCCESSFUL”**

## International Overdose Awareness Day

A Penington Institute initiative  
95 Drummond Street  
Carlton VIC 3053  
Australia

[www.overdoseday.com](http://www.overdoseday.com)

-  InternationalOverdoseAwarenessDay
-  OverdoseDay
-  OverdoseAwarenessDay
-  Overdose Tribute Page

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