

Harm Reduction Client Survey 2022: Patterns of Drug Purchasing and Possession

The B.C. Harm Reduction Program administered a survey to its distribution site clients across BC from November 2022 to mid-January 2023. We asked participants how and for who they obtained their drugs, if they travelled to obtain their drugs, how much and how often they get drugs, as well as if they have a space to stash their drugs before decriminalization in B.C.

British Columbia

Who took part?



Communities



Sites



Participants



Health Authorities

- Vancouver Coastal
- Interior
- Island
- Northern
- Fraser

How do you get drugs?



About **half** of participants bought drugs for themselves while **half** bought drugs for themselves and others

91%

of people bought drugs*

43%

of people traded services for drugs*

40%

of people had drugs given to them*

*respondents could select more than one option

Proportion of people who have a stash spot for drugs*



48% of people from NORTHERN HEALTH

60% of people from INTERIOR HEALTH

58% of people from FRASER HEALTH

61% of people from ISLAND HEALTH

64% of people from VANCOUVER COASTAL

*Having a stash spot means that a person can store their drugs, rather than carry the full amount at all times.

Frequency of acquisition in the last 30 days

2x a week



median frequency for getting powder cocaine

4x a week



median frequency for getting crack cocaine

7x a week



median frequency for getting opioids* or meth

*down, heroin, or fentanyl

Quantity of a single drug per transaction

0g

0.3g

0.5g

1.0g

median quantity of opioids

median quantity of meth

median quantity of crack cocaine or powder cocaine

How people decide how much to buy*



People buy smaller amounts if:

- it is all they can afford
- the dealer only has small amounts,
- they do not want to be caught with large amounts
- they have feelings of stigma or shame



People buy larger amounts if:

- they have the money (cheaper to buy in bulk)
- they want to share with others
- they know they can get something they want
- they have to travel
- they have a safe stash spot



*Collected from post-survey consultations with people who have lived and living experience of substance use who shared their interpretation of the results

Over 70% of respondents obtained more than one type of drug in the last 30 days

Participation was limited to people who access harm reduction sites, and results are therefore not representative of all people who use substances in BC. As of 2022, this project is made possible with funding from the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions