2019 BC Harm Reduction Client Survey

The B.C. Harm Reduction Program administered a survey to harm reduction supply distribution site clients across BC from October to December 2019 to assess regional differences in drug use and inform harm reduction planning and service quality improvement. Key findings from the survey are presented here. The total number of respondents for each question may differ.

Who took part?

20 communities 22 sites 621 participants

Self-identified gender

Man: 64%
Woman: 35%

Trans: gender non-conforming, and other genders: 2%

Substance use patterns

Past 3-days self-reported drug use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Meth</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fentanyl</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crack</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The median number of substances reported used in the past 3 days was 3.

Mode of substance use

Among those that reported heroin use:
  • 50% injected; 73% smoked

Among those that reported fentanyl use:
  • 48% injected; 67% smoked

Overall, 63% of respondents identified SMOKING or INHALATION as the preferred method of drug use, while 28% preferred injection, and 4% preferred snorting.

Potential harms

Of 497 people that used glass pipes to smoke drugs in the past 6 months:
  • 32% used a second-hand pipe
  • 20% injected instead when they couldn’t find unused smoking equipment

Of 283 people that injected drugs in the past 6 months:
  • 10% had trouble getting unused needles
  • 8% had fixed with a needle used by someone else

Of 334 people that had tried to access opioid agonist therapy (OAT) in the past six months:
  • 80% did not report difficulties while 20% reported difficulties, including:
    • unable to find a prescribing physician
    • were not offered preferred OAT
    • worry about being stigmatized at clinic
    • prescription stopped due to use of positive urine test
    • had no pharmacies nearby

Overdose

17% experienced an OPIOID OVERDOSE in the past six months

12% experienced a STIMULANT OVERDOSE in the past six months

Potential harms

Of 497 people that used glass pipes to smoke drugs in the past 6 months:
  • 32% used a second-hand pipe
  • 20% injected instead when they couldn’t find unused smoking equipment

Of 283 people that injected drugs in the past 6 months:
  • 10% had trouble getting unused needles
  • 8% had fixed with a needle used by someone else

Overall, 63% of respondents identified SMOKING or INHALATION as the preferred method of drug use, while 28% preferred injection, and 4% preferred snorting.

Keeping safe and harm reduction

69% of participants owned a Take Home Naloxone kit, but less than half (46%) owned a cell phone.

Of those that injected drugs, 55% had used drugs at an Overdose Prevention Services site in the past 6 months.

Of 334 people that had tried to access opioid agonist therapy (OAT) in the past six months:
  • 80% did not report difficulties while 20% reported difficulties, including:
    • unable to find a prescribing physician
    • were not offered preferred OAT
    • worry about being stigmatized at clinic
    • prescription stopped due to use of positive urine test
    • had no pharmacies nearby

Updated: September 11, 2020