

# Harm Reduction Client Survey 2022: Knowledge of Decriminalization

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 "Did you know that British Columbia has a new decriminalization policy starting January 31, 2023? Under this policy, it is not a crime to possess small amounts of some illegal drugs for personal use."

## British Columbia

### Who took part?



Communities



Sites



Participants



Health Authorities

- Vancouver Coastal
- Interior
- Island
- Northern
- Fraser

### Who was aware of decriminalization?



58% of participants had some awareness of decriminalization before it came into effect

65%

of people concerned about **LOSING HOUSING** in the past six months

43%

of people with **NO INTERNET ACCESS**

64%

of people from **VANCOUVER COASTAL**

48%

of people from **NORTHERN HEALTH**

60%

of people from **INTERIOR HEALTH**

61%

of people from **ISLAND HEALTH**

58%

of people from **FRASER HEALTH**

### Details of decriminalization

#### Drugs Included Under Decriminalization

Percent of participants aware of individual drugs included



#### Beliefs about Decriminalization

54%

correctly answered that **police cannot take drugs** if holding less than the allowable amount

54%

correctly answered that **people can be arrested for trafficking** no matter how much drug they have on them

59%

answered that **people can be ticketed with a bylaw violation if they use drugs in public**. However there is no correct answer as it depends on the municipality.

#### Allowable Amount

4.9g

On average, participants **estimated the allowable amount of substances was 4.9g.**

2.5g

The actual allowable amount under decriminalization is **2.5g**. **44%** of respondents estimated correctly

#### Sources of Decriminalization information



- Top sources of information about decriminalization were from harm reduction sites/community organizations, from friends, and health care providers.
- Ongoing education including online and local initiatives are needed to ensure the policy can equitably reduce criminalization.

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