

FINDINGS FROM THE 2018 HARM REDUCTION CLIENT SURVEY

REASONS REPORTED FOR USING DRUGS ALONE

Papamihali K, Yoon M, Graham B, Karamouzian M, Slaunwhite AK, Tsang V, Young S, Buxton JA. *Convenience and comfort: reasons reported for using drugs alone among clients of harm reduction sites in British Columbia, Canada.* Harm Reduction Journal. 2020 Dec;17(1):1-1.

In British Columbia (BC) and across North America, drug overdose deaths occur primarily among people using drugs alone and in private residences. Understanding factors that influence people who use drugs to use alone is important in determining effective public health interventions for preventing overdose. To assess frequency of using drugs alone and reasons for doing so, a study was conducted using data from the 2018 [Harm Reduction Client Survey](#), a survey introduced in 2012 to assess substance use trends and service use among clients of harm reduction supply distribution sites.

The following knowledge summary outlines key results from the study, published in the *Harm Reduction Journal* in December 2020.

OF 414 INDIVIDUALS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY SAMPLE:



63% self-identified as men and 35% as women. Half of participants were 30–49 years old; 19% were 19–29 and 26% were 50 or older.



63% reported having stable housing, 79% were unemployed, and 73% lived in a medium or large urban area.

65%

reported poly-substance use in the past week.

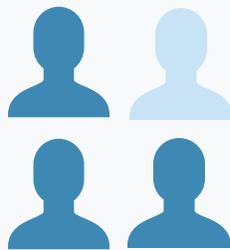
23%

reported experiencing an opioid or stimulant overdose in the past six months.

KEY FINDINGS

3 in 4

participants reported using drugs alone in the past week



Reasons reported for using drugs alone

44%

convenience and comfort of using alone



14%

facing stigma and not wanting others to know about drug use



12%

being alone or having no one else to use with



10%

feeling safer when using alone



9%

not wanting to share drugs with others, as it was often costly to do so

Other key findings:



Poly-substance use with stimulants, opioids, or benzodiazepines was common (69%) among those that used drugs alone.



Unstable housing and self-reported crack/cocaine use were **associated** with using drugs alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to providing a spectrum of harm reduction services, interventions that address the toxic illicit drug supply, including provision of a safer supply of drugs, are necessary to support people who use drugs to be safe, **even when using alone.**

Visit [towardtheheart.com](https://www.towardtheheart.com) for resources on overdose recognition and response, and to find observed consumption sites and take-home naloxone sites across BC.