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 in Vancouver Coastal?

- 3 communities
- 4 sites
- 138 participants

Gibsons: 3 communities, 2 sites, 36 participants
Powell River: 3 communities, 2 sites, 32 participants
Vancouver: 3 communities, 1 site, 70 participants

Self-identified gender

- Man: 69%
- Woman: 26%
- Trans, gender non-conforming, and other genders: 4%

Drug use

More than half of respondents (58%) identified SMOKING or INHALATION as the preferred method of drug use, while 31% preferred injection, and 4% preferred snorting.

Past 3-days self-reported drug use

- Crystal Meth: 69%
- Fentanyl: 43%
- Heroin: 43%
- Crack: 32%
- Cocaine: 18%

Potential harms

Of 124 people that used glass pipes to smoke drugs in the past 6 months:
- 35% used a second-hand pipe
- 15% injected instead when they couldn't find unused smoking equipment

Of 75 people that injected drugs in the past 6 months:
- 3% had trouble getting unused needles
- 9% had fixed with a needle used by someone else

More than half of participants (51%) reported using drugs alone often or always. Reasons for using drugs alone included:
- convenience and comfort;
- not having anyone else around;
- not wanting to share drugs; and,
- not wanting others to know.

Overdose

- 20% experienced an OPIOID OVERDOSE in the past six months
- 9% experienced a STIMULANT OVERDOSE in the past six months
- 61% witnessed an OPIOID OVERDOSE in the past six months

Keeping safe and harm reduction

- 72% of participants owned a Take Home Naloxone kit; less than half (49%) owned a cell phone.
- Of those that injected drugs, 77% had used drugs at an Overdose Prevention Services site in the past 6 months.
- Of 82 people that had tried to access opioid agonist therapy (OAT) in the past six months, 83% did not report difficulties while 17% reported difficulties, including:
  - were not offered preferred OAT
  - unable to find a prescribing physician
  - worry about being stigmatized at clinic

Updated: September 11, 2020