

Harm Reduction Client Survey 2023: Substance Use Counselling and Treatment

Since 2012, the BC Centre for Disease Control has asked people who use substances about their health and access to harm reduction and healthcare services. Between December 2023 and March 2024, we asked participants about their experience with substance use counselling or treatment supports in the last 6 months.

British Columbia

Who took part?

 **20** Communities

 **23** Sites

 **433** Participants

 **5** Health Authorities

Participants were asked about accessing substance use counselling or treatment supports to meet their recovery goals. Examples include withdrawal management (detox), bed-based treatment and recovery services, Narcotics Anonymous, and excludes services for alcohol, tobacco or cannabis use. The results shown below do not represent abstinence-based (or bed-based) treatment services alone.

Tried to access services

 **52%** of participants tried to access counselling or treatment in the last 6 months.

People who were unemployed or who had an opioid overdose were significantly more likely to try to access services.

Received services

 **33%** of participants received counselling or treatment in the last 6 months.

Among those who tried to access services, respondents who lived in a private residence were significantly more likely to receive counselling or treatment than people with less stable housing.



- 19% of participants who tried accessing services could not get them.
- People experiencing unemployment and housing instability were more likely to seek counselling or treatment, but systemic barriers may prevent them from receiving care.

Reasons why participants tried accessing services (respondents could select more than one)

83% Wanted to seek counselling or treatment (or for health-related reasons). *Every one of these respondents also reported additional reason(s).*

Motivated by personal or health-related goals

39% Family or friends wanted them to go. **14%** To maintain housing or employment.

Influenced by outside factors

8% Related to child custody or Ministry of Children and Family Development. **7%** Required by court or parole board.

Key takeaways

 **Half of survey respondents** tried to get substance use **counselling or treatment**.

 **A variety of circumstances motivated respondents to seek services;** most people reported multiple reasons.

 Respondents who were **unemployed and unstably housed** seek services more often but encounter **barriers to receiving it**.

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 Health.

toward
THE heart.com
BCCDC HARM REDUCTION SERVICES


BC Centre for Disease Control