

How has COVID-19 impacted access to STBBI-related services, including harm reduction services, for people who use drugs or alcohol in Canada?

Findings from the *Survey of the Impact of COVID-19 on access to STBBI-related services, including harm reduction services, for people who use drugs or alcohol in Canada*.

The Public Health Agency of Canada, in a collaboration with community stakeholders, conducted an online survey from January to February 2021.



Who participated?

1034 people who used drugs or alcohol in the 6 months prior to the survey



- 53% under the age of 40 years
- 85% had more than a high school education
- 85% white
- 5% reported currently living with HIV
- 61% cisgender female
- 6% reported ever been told to have hepatitis C infection

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic...

- | Mental health | Food security | Financial security |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| 60% felt their mental health was worse | 42% experienced food insecurity | 56% reported an impact on ability to pay bills |

Substance use & access to STBBI-related services since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

Among participants who used only alcohol and/or cannabis (n=451)

- 57% reported an increased use of cannabis
- 56% reported an increased use of alcohol

Among participants who used illegal drugs (n=845)

Reported changes in use of illegal drugs

- 57% increased use of heroin, fentanyl or other non-medical opioids
- 45% increased use of cocaine or crack

Reported changes in substance use behaviours

- 75% increase of different triggers for using
- 66% increase in using alone

Accessed, considered accessing or wanted to access

- | 26% STBBI-related services | 39% Harm reduction services | 30% Substance use & treatment services |
|--|---|--|
| Experienced difficulty accessing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">HIV, HCV and other STI testingPrEP and/or PEPmental health counselling referral | Experienced difficulty accessing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">needle and syringe distribution programsdrug checking servicesdrug consumption rooms | Experienced difficulty accessing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">drug treatment in therapeutic communitiesdrug treatment in outpatient mental health care centresdrug treatment in psychiatric hospitals |

Among all participants

Reasons why participants were not able to access STBBI, harm reduction, substance use and treatment services:



Reduced hours/ service closure



Difficulty getting appointment/referral



Difficulty contacting doctor/nurse



COVID-19 public health measures



Fear of, concern about or experienced stigma, discrimination, violence



Fear of, concern about COVID-19 exposure

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the valuable input and contribution of the survey participants. For more information, look for the [Data Blog](#) and the full-length report titled: *National Report: Findings from the Survey of the impact of COVID-19 on access to STBBI-related health services including harm reduction services for people who use drugs or alcohol in Canada*



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