

# Harm Reduction Client Survey 2023: Awareness of Decriminalization

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 awareness and knowledge of BC's decriminalization policy.

British Columbia

## Who took part?

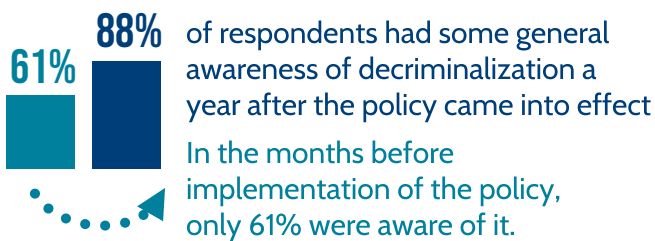
 **20** Communities

 **23** Sites

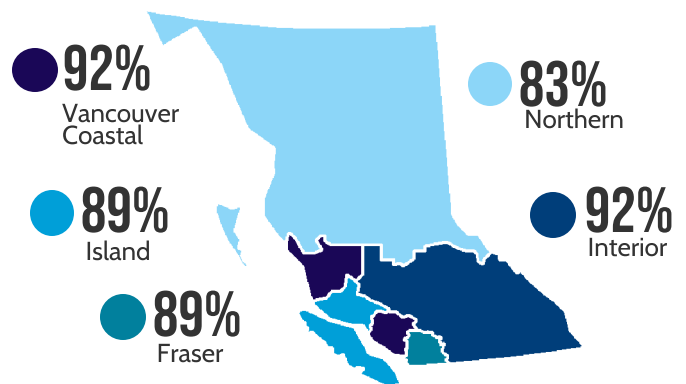
 **433** Participants

 **5** Health Authorities

## Were people aware of decriminalization?



## Awareness across health regions:



## Understanding the details\* of decriminalization

General awareness has increased; however, respondents did not know all of the policy details.

**80%** Knew that people can have their drugs confiscated if they are holding any amount on school grounds.

**71%** Knew that people can be arrested for drug dealing no matter how much they are selling or trading.

**64%** Knew that police can charge you with breach of substance-related release conditions, no matter how much you are holding.

\*The decriminalization policy has been amended twice since coming into effect in January 2023. Participants were asked questions about details that have not changed since its implementation.

## Key takeaway

People who use substances need timely communication and educational materials so they understand the current scope of decriminalization.

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.

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