



## STUDY FINDS CRACK PIPE SHARING IS RAMPANT AMONG STREET-INVOLVED YOUTH IN VANCOUVER

### BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Sharing crack pipes is a risky drug use practice that risks spreading hepatitis C and other infectious diseases.
- This study looks at crack pipe sharing among youth.
- It also looked at what factors influence crack pipe sharing among youth who smoke crack.
- Between May 2006 and May 2012, we talked to 567 street youth who smoke crack as part of the At-Risk Youth Study (ARYS) in Vancouver.
- We asked these youth about their drug use and other risk behaviours, including whether they shared crack pipes in the past six months, as well as their housing situation and their ability to access health and social services.

### QUICK FACT

*YOUTH WHO SAID THEY HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING NEW CRACK PIPES WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO END UP SHARING CRACK PIPES.*

### FINDINGS

- 88% of the street-youth in the study reported that they shared crack pipes.
- Only 5% of youth reported getting sterile crack pipes from health-care centers.
- Youth were more likely to share crack pipes if they were homeless, had encounters with police, and experienced difficulty finding crack pipes.
- Compared to youth who did not share crack pipes, those who did were more likely to use other drugs and have unprotected sex.

### IMPLICATIONS

- There is a need for more youth-focused harm reduction services such as crack pipe distribution in places where they feel comfortable and safe.
- Distributing crack pipes through public health services may provide important opportunities to engage with vulnerable young crack smokers and connect them with critical medical care and treatment.

Cheng T, Wood E, Nguyen P, Montaner J, Kerr T, DeBeck K. **Crack pipe sharing among street-involved youth in a Canadian setting.** *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 2015; 34(3): 259-266.

