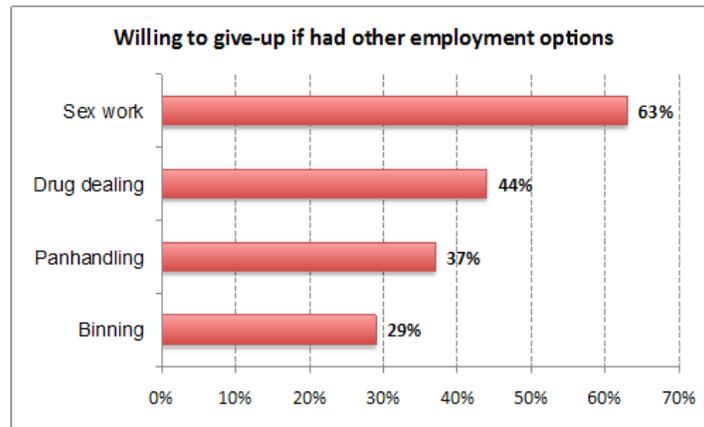




LOW-THRESHOLD EMPLOYMENT COULD REDUCE INVOLVEMENT IN HARMFUL INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES AMONG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Many people who use injection drugs (IDU) struggle to generate income and frequently resort to risky activities, such as drug dealing and sex work, to make money.
- Although the requirements of a regular job often don't work for many IDU, alternative or 'low-threshold' employment may provide a feasible alternative.
- We undertook this study to find out if there was a demand for low-threshold employment among high-risk IDU, and whether creating low-threshold employment opportunities might limit their involvement in harmful income generation activities such as drug dealing and sex work.
- Between November 2008 and July 2009 we asked 874 people in the Vancouver area who use injection drugs about their income generation, including activities such as drug dealing, sex work, recycling (binning), and panhandling. We also asked these individuals: "If you were offered casual work that did not interfere with your welfare, would you take it?"



QUICK FACT

THERE IS A HIGH DEMAND FOR LOW-THRESHOLD EMPLOYMENT AMONG IDU WHO ARE INVOLVED IN SEX WORK, DRUG DEALING, AND PANHANDLING.

FINDINGS

- The most common forms of harmful income generation were drug dealing (25%), binning (19%), and sex work (9%).
- Among individuals who made money through drug dealing, sex work, binning, and panhandling overall, 47% reported that they would stop these activities if they had opportunities to earn money through low-threshold employment.

IMPLICATIONS

- Creating low-threshold employment opportunities could significantly reduce involvement in risky income generation practices such as sex work and drug dealing.
- Increasing the capacity and availability of low-threshold employment programs for high-risk drug users should be a public policy priority.

DeBeck K, Wood E, Qi J, Fu E, McArthur D, Montaner J, Kerr T. Interest in low-threshold employment among people who inject illicit drugs: Implications for street disorder. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 2011; 22(5): 376-384.

