



TWO-THIRDS OF DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE INJECTION DRUG USERS HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- It's well known that HIV epidemics and violence are closely linked. By learning more about this relationship, especially as it pertains to injection drug users in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, it may be possible to establish more effective policies, programs, and interventions aimed at this population.
- From 2000 to 2005, researchers asked more than a thousand injection drug users about their encounters with violence.

QUICK FACT

VIOLENCE WAS ESPECIALLY COMMON AMONG PEOPLE WHO WERE HOMELESS, PEOPLE LIVING IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE, AND PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE DRUG TRADE.

FINDINGS

- What they found was that attacks and assaults were experienced by 66% of the women and 70% of the men.
- Violence was especially common among the homeless, those currently living in the Downtown Eastside, and those involved in the drug trade.
- Homeless people were 50% more likely to recount being victims of violence as compared to people who had stable or marginal housing.
- Women who said they dealt drugs were twice as likely as those who didn't to report having been attacked or assaulted.
- The researchers also found that women were more likely to be assaulted by acquaintances, partners and sex trade clients, while men were more likely to experience violence from strangers and the police.

IMPLICATIONS

- Clearly, the expansion of supportive housing and emergency shelter services is urgently needed to diminish the risk of violence among homeless injection drug users.
- As well, income support and vocational training to reduce reliance on drug dealing may lower the high rate of violence against economically disadvantaged women who use injection drugs.

Marshall BDL, Fairbairn N, Li K, Wood E, Kerr T. **Physical violence among a prospective cohort of injection drug users: A gender-focused approach.** *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 2008; 97(3): 237-246.

