

Cheque Day Study: Initial Results

Income assistance is a critical resource in helping reduce the harms of poverty. However, in British Columbia income assistance is paid once a month, all on the same day and every month there are sharp spikes in drug use as well as individual and community-wide harms around that day known as Cheque Day.

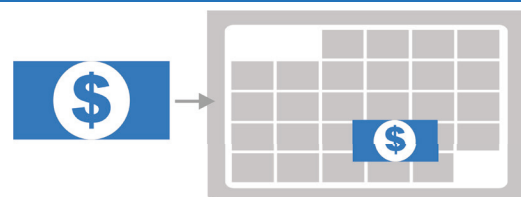
There have been calls from community, service providers, first responders and other stakeholders to look at changing the schedule of payments, however alternatives to synchronized once-monthly payments has not previously been studied. The Cheque Day Study was designed to test whether changing the timing and/or frequency of payments could reduce drug use and related harm.

The Study

Volunteers for the study were randomly assigned to one of three study groups.

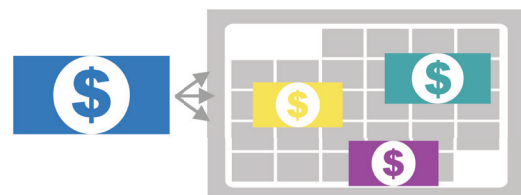
1 Control

Everyone was paid on **government cheque day**



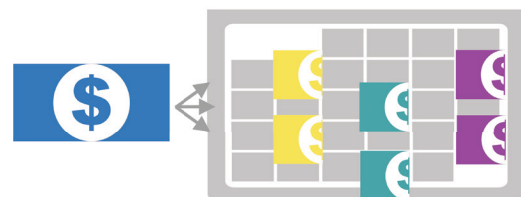
2 Staggered

People are paid **once** a month on **different days**



3 Split & staggered

People are paid **twice** a month on **different days**

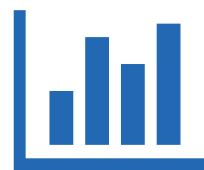


People were asked every two weeks for six months about their drug use, income generation, access to health and social services and experiences of being paid on a different schedule.

Study participation



194 people participated in the study
101 identified as men, **89** as women and **4** as transgender
111 identified as white, **79** as Indigenous and **4** as belonging to another ethnic minority

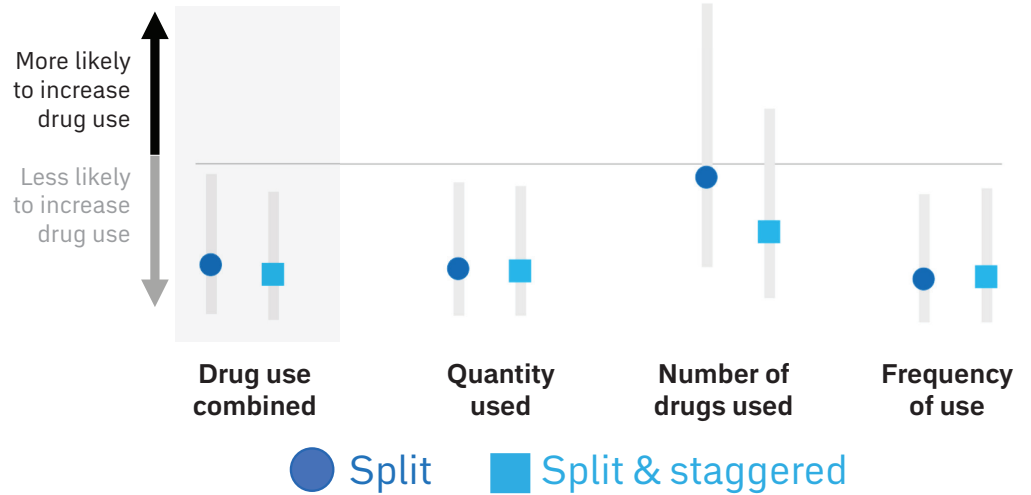


75.7% of follow up visits were completed
29 people completed the full 6 months on a different schedule
6 participants died during the study for reasons unrelated to participation

How was drug use affected?

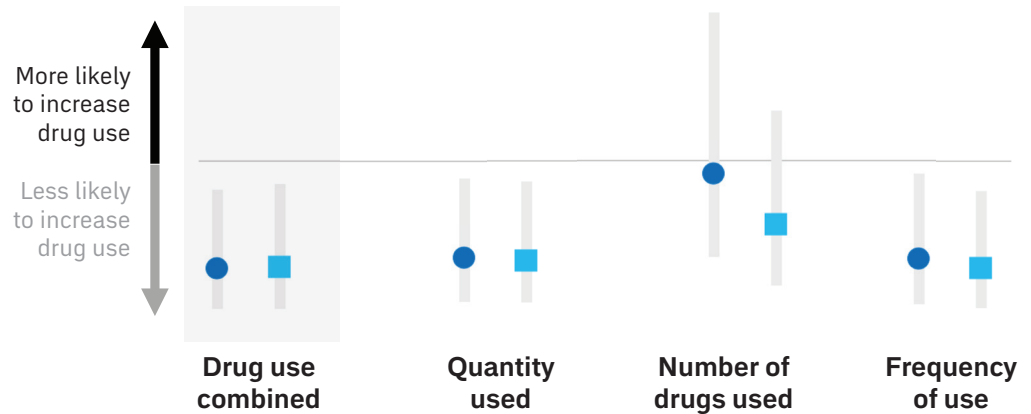
Around government cheque day

Participants in both study arms were around **one third** as likely to increase their drug use **around government cheque day**



Around individual payments

Participants in both study arms were around **half as likely** to increase their drug use **when they received their payment**



Vertical grey lines are confidence intervals, representing the level of certainty in estimates

How were other outcomes affected?

Unexpectedly, in **some analyses** some risks were seen to **increase**



Violence (committing and receiving)



Non-fatal overdose



Negative police interaction



Health care interruption

For more information about the study or these results please visit bccsu.ca/cheque-day-study