



## STUDY FINDS YOUNG SEXUAL MINORITY MEN FACE SEVERAL BARRIERS WHEN ATTEMPTING TO REDUCE OVERDOSE RISK

### BACKGROUND & METHOD

- As the opioid and non-opioid (e.g., stimulant) drug supply is becoming increasingly contaminated with fentanyl, the opioid overdose crisis continues to worsen.
- Little is known about how the overdose crisis is affecting young sexual minority men – including gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men – who often use substances recreationally and with sex.
- Between January to December 2018, we talked to 50 young cisgender and transgender sexual minority men who use substances and who live in Metro Vancouver to learn about their perceptions and experiences related to substance use and overdose risk reduction.

### QUICK FACT

*MANY YOUNG SEXUAL  
MINORITY MEN PERCEIVE  
HARM REDUCTION AND  
OVERDOSE PREVENTION  
SERVICES AS NOT  
INTENDED “FOR THEM.”*

### FINDINGS

- ***“It’s like you’re playing Russian roulette”***: Overall, young sexual minority men described being very aware of and deeply impacted by the contaminated drug supply.
- ***“I’m definitely a lot more cautious”***: To reduce overdose risk, they used several harm reduction strategies, including testing their substances for fentanyl, not using alone, and only accessing substances from “trustworthy” suppliers, such as peers and sexual partners.
- ***“Am I gonna get in trouble for being safe?”***: Opportunities for safer substance use were restricted by many key barriers, including the lack of a safe drug supply, criminalization, and a limited availability of non-judgmental and inclusive services for young sexual minority men.

### IMPLICATIONS

- Despite taking steps to reduce overdose risk, young sexual minority men continue to be greatly affected by the contaminated drug supply.
- Efforts are urgently needed to address existing barriers to safer substance use.
- Specifically, we call for greater access to low-barrier and queer-friendly harm reduction services, the decriminalization of drug use, and the provision of a safe drug supply.

Goodyear T, Mniszak C, Jenkins E, Fast D, & Knight R. (2020). “Am I gonna get in trouble for acknowledging my will to be safe?”: Identifying the experiences of young sexual minority men and substance use in the context of an opioid overdose crisis. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 17(23), 1-14.  
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