

# CANNABIS USE AS HARM REDUCTION AMONG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

We analyzed data from the VIDUS, ACCESS and ARYS studies that include people who use unregulated drugs in Vancouver, Canada. We found that:

**1 in 4** participants report using cannabis as a form of harm reduction<sup>8,10</sup>.

**50%** used cannabis as a substitute for **stimulant** use<sup>8</sup>.

**30%** used cannabis as a substitute for **opioid** use<sup>8</sup>.

We found that frequent (daily) cannabis use was common (27%) and was associated with:

**50%** decrease in the odds of **opioid use** among people living with chronic pain<sup>3</sup>.

**16%** increase in the odds of **injection cessation** among people who inject drugs<sup>7</sup>.

**40%** decrease in the odds of **hospitalization** among male youth<sup>2</sup>.

**34%** decrease in the odds of **injection initiation** among ARYS participants<sup>9</sup>.

**9%** decrease in the prevalence of **fentanyl exposure** among people on opioid agonist therapy<sup>5,6</sup>.

Among cannabis users from these three studies

**58%** report use to manage **opioid** cravings<sup>1</sup>.  
**45%** report use to manage **stimulant** cravings.

Both were linked to **over 50%** decreases in the odds of **opioid** and **stimulant** use<sup>1,4</sup>.

## NEXT STEPS FOR POLICY-MAKERS AND RESEARCHERS

1. Evaluate the impact of cannabis use on risk of **overdose** during the drug toxicity crisis;
2. Identify the **which cannabis products** are preferred and effective for harm reduction among people who use drugs;
3. Establish **non-criminalized spaces** for cannabis use among people who use drugs, particularly those who are unstably housed;
4. Reduce social and structural barriers to **cannabis access** among people who use drugs and engage in therapeutic/harm reduction uses of cannabis.

# WHAT ARE VIDUS, ACCESS, AND ARYS?

**VIDUS, ACCESS and ARYS are ongoing open prospective cohort studies of community-recruited people who use unregulated drugs in Vancouver, Canada.**

**The harmonized cohorts have contributed to advancing health policy and programming in Vancouver and beyond.**

## FIND OUT MORE:

### VIDUS

Vancouver Injection Drug Users Study  
604-685-6355  
Toll Free: 1-888-338-4387  
439 East Hastings  
Mon – Fri, 8:30 am – 5:00 PM  
[vidus@bccsu.ubc.ca](mailto:vidus@bccsu.ubc.ca)

### ARYS

At-Risk Youth Study Project  
604-687-2797  
Toll Free: 1-877-244-5744  
1265 Granville St.  
Mon – Fri, 8:30 am – 5:00 PM  
[arys@shaw.ca](mailto:arys@shaw.ca)

## REFERENCES

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