

# FINDINGS FROM THE 2018 HARM REDUCTION CLIENT SURVEY

## KNOWN AND UNKNOWN FENTANYL USE

Karamouzian et al. "Known fentanyl use among clients of harm reduction sites in British Columbia, Canada." *International Journal of Drug Policy* (2020): 102665.

The opioid overdose crisis in British Columbia (BC) and across North America has been largely attributed to the increased presence of the toxic synthetic opioid fentanyl in the illicit drug market. It is commonly suggested that exposure to fentanyl is unknown. Using the the 2018 [Harm Reduction Client Survey](#), a survey introduced in 2012 to assess substance use trends and service use among clients of harm reduction supply distribution sites, a study was done to describe known and unknown fentanyl use by comparing self-reported substance use to substances detected through urine toxicology screening.

The following knowledge summary outlines the main results from the study, published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* in January 2020.

OF 303



66% self-identified as male and 34% as female. 80% were 30 years of age or older, and 89% self-identified as heterosexual.

INDIVIDUALS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY



65% reported having stable housing, 82% were unemployed, and 63% lived in a medium or large urban area.

SAMPLE:

70%

reported poly-substance use in the last three days.

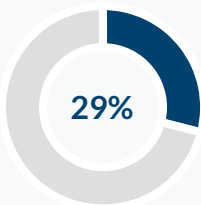
81%

reported having used substances alone in the last seven days.

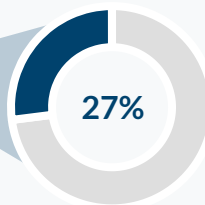
## KEY FINDINGS

In 2018, **60%** of participants had fentanyl detected in their urine. Compared to a similar study from 2015, the proportion of respondents who had fentanyl detected and knew they were using fentanyl increased.

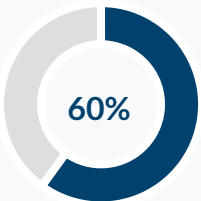
Had fentanyl detected in their urine in 2015



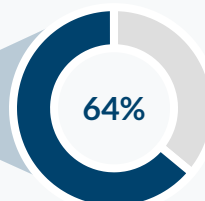
Knew they were using fentanyl in 2015



Had fentanyl detected in their urine in 2018



Knew they were using fentanyl in 2018



Other key findings:

- Recent fentanyl use was **more common** in people living in urban settings.
- People who used fentanyl were **more likely** to have also recently used heroin/morphine or crystal meth.
- Self-reported cannabis use was associated with **reduced** fentanyl use.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As more people who use drugs are knowingly using fentanyl, **increased capacity of harm reduction services and alternatives to the unpredictable and toxic illicit drug supply** are necessary to prevent harms associated with fentanyl use.

Go to [towardtheheart.com](https://towardtheheart.com) to find resources on fentanyl, overdose recognition and response training, and take-home naloxone sites across BC.