Findings from the Survey of the Impact of COVID-19 on access to STBBI-related services, including harm reduction services, for people who use drugs or alcohol in Canada.

The Public Health Agency of Canada, in a collaboration with community stakeholders, conducted an online survey from January to February 2021.



## Who participated?

1034 people who used drugs or alcohol in the 6 months prior to the survey

53% under the age of 40 years

85% white

**61%** cisgender female

**85%** had more than a high school education

5% reported currently living with HIV

6% reported ever been told to have hepatitis C infection

## Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic...

mental health was worse

food insecurity

impact on ability

to pay bills

## Substance use & access to STBBI-related services since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

Among participants who used only alcohol and/or cannabis (n=451)

reported an increased use of cannabis

56%

reported an increased use of alcohol

Among participants who used illegal drugs (n=845)

Reported changes in use of illegal drugs

increased use of heroin, fentanyl or other non-medical opioids

increased use of cocaine or crack

Reported changes in substance use behaviours

increase of different triggers for using

66%

increase in using alone

# Accessed, considered accessing or wanted to access

26% STBBI-related services

39% Harm reduction services



HIV, HCV and other STI testing



PrEP and/or PEP

**Experienced difficulty accessing:** 



mental health counselling referral

**Experienced difficulty accessing:** 



needle and syringe distribution programs



drug checking services



drug consumption rooms

Substance use & treatment services

## **Experienced difficulty accessing:**



drug treatment in therapeutic communities



drug treatment in outpatient mental health care centres



drug treatment in psychiatric hospitals

### **Among all participants**

Reasons why participants were not able to access STBBI, harm reduction, substance use and treatment services:



Reduced hours/ service closure



Difficulty getting appointment/referral



Difficulty contacting doctor/nurse



COVID-19 public health measures



Fear of, concern about or experienced stigma, discrimination, violence



Fear of, concern about COVID-19 exposure

#### **Acknowledgements**

The authors gratefully acknowledge the valuable input and contribution of the survey participants. For more information, look for the <u>Data Blog</u> and the full-length report titled: National Report: Findings from the Survey of the impact of COVID-19 on access to STBBI-related health services including harm reduction services for people who use drugs or alcohol in Canada

