

# Results at a glance

## Evaluation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy (February 2018)

Led by Justice Canada, the National Anti-Drug Strategy (NADS) is a horizontal initiative of 13 federal departments and agencies, which was launched in 2007 to improve Canada's response to the complex issues of illicit drug use and prescription drug abuse (PDA). It is organized according to three action plans: Prevention, Treatment and Enforcement. The Strategy's action plans were expected to contribute to a reduction in the supply of and demand for illicit drugs, in PDA, in the negative health and social impacts and crime related to illicit drug use and PDA; and ultimately, to contribute to safer and healthier communities.

### WHAT WAS FOUND

- The evaluation confirms that the Strategy is aligned with the priorities of the federal government, that federal roles and responsibilities are well aligned with the Strategy's various programming elements, and that there is a continued need for the Strategy given the continued use of illicit drugs among youth and other vulnerable populations, as well as the trends of prescription drug abuse observed in Canada.
- Under the *Prevention Action Plan*, the Strategy increased awareness and understanding of illicit drugs, PDA and their negative consequences. Problematic substance use is often symptomatic of underlying psychological, social or health issues and inequities, often referred to as Social Determinants of Health. Future strategies should consider the root causes of problematic substance use, the interaction with other issues (e.g., mental health, poverty, victimization, and socioeconomic status), and gaps in the emotional and financial resources available to at-risk populations.
- NADS investments under the *Treatment Action Plan* enhanced the capacity to plan and deliver a range of treatment services and programs to targeted populations. NADS investments supported research, strengthened the quality, effectiveness and availability of treatment services, increased consistency, and led to changes in policies and practices. With the introduction of the Knowledge Exchange Strategy, the *Treatment Action Plan* also improved collaboration among partners and agencies. Although the Strategy investments have enhanced treatment system capacity and the availability of treatment services, there remains a substantial treatment need.

- The *Enforcement Action Plan* expanded partnerships, and increased capacity and awareness of drug enforcement stakeholders. Support and valuable tools have been provided to control and monitor controlled substances and precursor chemicals to reduce the likelihood that controlled substances will be diverted to the illicit market. Despite advancements in enforcement, the extent of the impact has been limited by the need to continually keep up with innovations in the illicit drug market.
- The evaluation found that there is a demonstrated need for a national drug or substance use strategy. Evaluation results highlight the continued relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Strategy in achieving expected immediate and intermediate outcomes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- On April 1, 2017, the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (CDSS) replaced the National Anti-Drug Strategy. Led by Health Canada, CDSS reinstated harm reduction as a core pillar of Canada's drug policy alongside prevention, treatment and enforcement.
- Rather than recommendations, this evaluation provides a summary of results and noted challenges, which can be considered in the development of the new strategy.

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### ABOUT THE EVALUATION

*The Department of Justice Canada's programs are evaluated every five years to meet the accountability requirements of the Treasury Board's Policy on Results, address the requirements of senior management, and inform the renewal of programs and agreements.*

*The evaluation covers the activities of the Strategy carried out during a period of five fiscal years, from 2011–12 to 2015–16, using information collected through six lines of inquiry to assess the relevance and performance of the Initiative.*

*For the full report, please visit the Evaluation Division website: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cp-pm/eval/rep-rap/2018/nads-sna/index.html>*

*For Health Canada's Statement on the Evaluation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy, please visit the website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/transparency/corporate-management-reporting/evaluation.html>*

