

ILLICIT DRUGS OVERDOSE CRISIS

WHAT WE HEARD

What was the goal of this member engagement?

Doctors of BC recognizes the severe impact that the illicit drugs overdose crisis has had on British Columbians. To advocate for effective policy solutions, we wanted to understand your perspectives on several policy approaches currently being discussed in the literature and by stakeholders, including decriminalization of drug use and safer supply.

How did we seek member input?

Representative Assembly

100+ members of the RA discussed the merits and risks of developing policy on decriminalization and safer supply and voted on whether or not Doctors of BC should consider developing policy on each issue.

All-member engagement

Building on what we heard from the RA, we sought broader member input to understand your views on potential policy recommendations and Doctors of BC commitments.

Who participated?

80

 surveys completed

Type of practice

Family physician: 51%
Specialist: 44%
Other: 5%

Practice setting

Community-based: 31%
Facility-based: 34.5%
Both: 34.5%

Geographic setting

Urban: 82.5%
Semi-urban: 10%
Rural: 7.5%

What did we ask?

Our online engagement asked you for input on:



Potential policy recommendations related to programs and services across the full continuum of addiction and substance use care, decriminalization, and safer supply.



Potential Doctors of BC commitments related to improving physician education and training in addiction and substance use care.

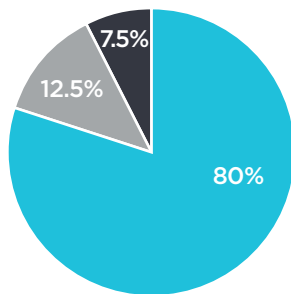
WHAT DID WE LEARN?

There was strong support for advocating for the provincial and federal governments to work together to decriminalize simple possession of small amounts of illicit drugs. However, doctors strongly believe that harm reduction approaches alone will not solve the illicit drugs overdose crisis and that increased funding and resources are urgently needed to improve access to treatment and recovery-oriented services. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on prevention and addressing underlying factors related to substance use and addictions, including trauma, chronic pain, mental illness, homelessness, poverty, and unemployment.

Member perspectives on proposed policy approaches

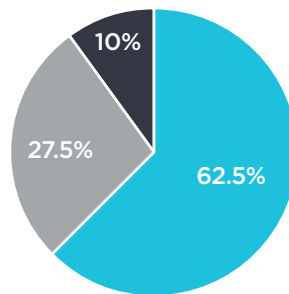
Decriminalization:

The provincial and federal governments should work together to decriminalize simple possession of small amounts of illicit drugs for personal use. In the absence of prompt federal action, the provincial government should develop a made-in-BC solution.



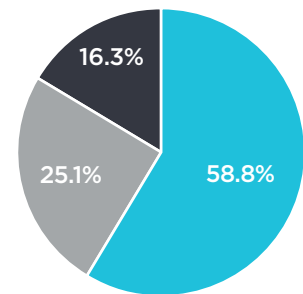
Prescription safer supply:

There is a need for improved access to safer alternatives to street drugs as part of a harm reduction approach through expansion of existing prescription safer supply programs.



Non-prescription safer supply models:

There is a need for improved access to safer alternatives as part of a harm reduction approach through exploration and evaluation of non-prescriber models, such as a compassion club.



■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral

Key themes:

- While many agree that access to pharmaceutical safer alternatives to street drugs is needed, many believe that physicians should not be the “gatekeepers” to these drugs.
- There are concerns related to safer alternatives being diverted.
- More information is needed on non-prescription safer supply models.

WHAT'S NEXT

Doctors of BC's Working Group will use these findings to inform actionable policy commitments and recommendations to government and stakeholders and to advocate for systems level changes that are urgently needed.