

SAFE INJECTION SITES IN THE LOWER MAINLAND

Six-in-Ten (61%) Support a Safe Injection Site in the City of Vancouver; Majority (55%) Thinks Site Will Improve Drug Problem in Downtown Eastside

Six-in-Ten (63%) Prefer Multiple Sites to a Single Site (19%)

Strong Majority (81%) Supports Mandatory Treatment; Much Lower Support for Age Limits (39%) or Providing Free Drugs (41%)

Half (50%) of Lower Mainland Residents Outside City of Vancouver Would Support a Site in Their Own Municipality



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Vancouver, BC – A new Vancouver Sun/Ipsos-Reid poll finds Lower Mainland generally receptive to the City of Vancouver’s plans to establish a safe injection site. Six-in-ten (61%) residents say they support the establishment of a site in the City of Vancouver and a majority (55%) think a site will improve the drug problem in the Downtown Eastside.

Multiple safe injection sites (63%) are preferred to a single site (19%). As for the location of these multiple sites, four-in-ten (40%) would like them across the entire Lower Mainland, compared to 10 percent who would like them restricted to the City of Vancouver and 13 percent who would like them restricted to the Downtown Eastside.

As for restrictions if these sites go ahead, a strong majority (81%) support requiring drug users to enter into a drug treatment program. At the same time, there is much less support for implementing an age limit on access to the site (39%) or providing drugs free of charge so that users don’t resort to crime to obtain the drugs (41%).

The poll also reveals some NIMBYism outside the boundary of the City of Vancouver. Even so, fully one-half (50%) of Lower Mainland residents outside the City of Vancouver say they would support the establishment of a safe injection site in their own municipality.



These are the findings of a BC Ipsos-Reid/Vancouver Sun poll conducted between December 2nd and 9th, 2002 among a representative cross-section of 800 British Columbian adults. These data are statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age and sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 2001 Census data. With a provincial sample of 800, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within ± 3.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult BC population been polled. The margin of error will be larger for population sub-groups

Six-in-Ten (61%) Support a Safe Injection Site in the City of Vancouver; Majority (55%) Thinks Site Will Improve Drug Problem in Downtown Eastside

Six-in-ten (61%) residents of the Lower Mainland say they support the establishment of a safe injection site in the City of Vancouver, including three-in-ten (32%) who strongly support this initiative. A safe injection site was described as “a legally sanctioned facility that provides an environment where drug users can inject illegal drugs under the watch of health professionals”. One-in-three (35%) residents opposes the establishment of a safe injection site, including 26 percent who strongly oppose a site.

- Support for the establishment of a safe injection site in the City of Vancouver is consistent across demographic groups. Support is highest among residents with a university education (71% vs. 56% high school or less and 53% some post-secondary).

By a two-to-one margin, Lower Mainland residents think having a safe injection site in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside will improve (55%) rather than worsen (27%) the drug problem there. Two-in-ten (18%) residents say it will make no difference (12%) or express no opinion (6%).

- University graduates are the most likely to think a safe injection site will improve the drug problem (63% vs. 48% high school or less and 52% some post-secondary).



Six-in-Ten (63%) Prefer Multiple Sites to a Single Site (19%)

If a decision is made to have a safe injection site in the Lower Mainland, residents generally prefer a multiple site implementation (63%) to a single site implementation (19%). From a list of four choices, the most preferred option (40%) is to have multiple sites across the entire Lower Mainland. The next best choice (19%) is having a single site in the Downtown Eastside. Other choices include multiple sites in the Downtown Eastside (13%) and multiple sites in the City of Vancouver (10%). Eighteen percent of Lower Mainland residents express no preference for any of the four options.

Strong Majority (81%) Supports Mandatory Treatment; Much Lower Support for Age Limits (39%) or Providing Free Drugs (41%)

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their support or opposition to three specific restrictions if a decision were made to establish a safe injection site in the Lower Mainland.

Eight-in-ten (81%) residents say they would support requiring drug users to enter a drug treatment program, including 65 percent who strongly support this requirement. Only 15 percent oppose this requirement, including 8 percent who are strongly opposed.

Four-in-ten (39%) support an age limit on access to the site, including one-quarter (25%) who are strongly supportive. A slim majority (53%) of Lower Mainland residents opposes an age limit, including 38 percent strongly opposed. Among those supporting an age limit, the average suggested age limit is 17.1 years.

Finally, four-in-ten (41%) support providing drugs free of charge so that users don't resort to crime to obtain the drugs, including 18 percent who strongly support this idea. Meanwhile, about half (52%) of residents oppose providing free drugs, including four-in-ten (39%) who are strongly opposed.



- Support for mandatory treatment is consistent across demographic groups.
- Support for age limits is highest among younger residents (45% vs. 30% older) and those with high school or less education (44% vs. 32% university graduates).
- Support for providing free drugs is highest among lower income residents (52% vs. 38% higher) and middle aged/older residents (46% vs. 34% younger).

Half (50%) of Lower Mainland Residents Outside City of Vancouver Would Support a Site in Their Own Municipality

There is a limited degree of NIMBYism on this issue. Half (50%) of Lower Mainland residents living outside the City of Vancouver say they would support the establishment of a safe injection site in their own municipality. This is lower than the 61 percent support across the Lower Mainland for the establishment of a safe injection site in the City of Vancouver.

Just less than half (46%) of Lower Mainland residents living outside the City of Vancouver say they would oppose the establishment of a safe injection site in their own municipality, including 37 percent who are strongly opposed.

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