

# Factors Influencing Canadian Public Attitudes Towards Safer Supply Programs

Category: Oral Presentation

## Abstract Body

The opioid overdose crisis, fuelled by the illicit drug market, is considered a public health emergency in Canada. As a result, a newer form of harm reduction, safer supply programs (SSPs), have been implemented. Public attitudes, and the factors that influence attitudes towards SSPs are important to consider, as they impact policy decision making and funding of these services. However, there is little research that examines attitudes towards SSPs specifically. This study examined the role of personality, stigma towards people who use drugs, and demographics (e.g., age, educational status), on attitudes surrounding SSPs. A total of 384 participants were recruited from the New Brunswick general population (n = 160, 41.7%) and the University of New Brunswick (n = 224, 58.3%) to complete an online survey. The majority of the sample was supportive of SSPs (n = 316, 82.3%). Caucasian ethnicity and a younger age were predictive of more positive attitudes towards SSPs. Higher levels of openness as well as reduced stigma towards people who use drugs were also independent predictors of more positive attitudes towards SSPs. The main themes that emerged regarding negative attitudes towards SSPs were cost concerns and doubts surrounding the effectiveness of SSPs. For positive attitudes, the safety of people who use drugs emerged as a key theme. The findings of the current study suggest that when developing public awareness campaigns on harm reduction initiatives like SSPs, it is important to consider the impact of social and psychological factors as these influence attitudes.

## Key Words

- Caring in Crisis
- Policy
- Prevention/Harm Reduction
- Safe Supply
- Stigma

## Learning Objective # 1

To assess the current attitudes of the public towards safer supply programs, and the factors that influence these attitudes.

## Learning Objective # 2

To gain knowledge on the reasons that individuals support or do not support these programs.

Reference # 1

Kolla, G., Touesnard, N., & Gomes, T. (2022). Addressing the overdose crisis in North America with bold action. *Addiction*, 117(5), 1194–1196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15844>

Reference # 2

MacQuarrie, A. L., & Brunelle, C. (2022). Emerging attitudes regarding decriminalization: predictors of pro-drug decriminalization attitudes in Canada. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 52(1).  
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