Context

Injecting drugs in public spaces such as parks, streets, alleys, or public bathrooms can increase the risk of drug-related harms.

- Public conditions are often not as sterile, so drug preparation is riskier
- Increases the risk of blood-borne infections such as Hepatitis C and HIV
- Increases the risk of fatal and non-fatal overdose

Supervised Consumption Services (SCS) provide a safe place for people to use pre-obtained drugs with trained staff present. SCS have been associated with improvements in individual and public health outcomes, but less is known about their relationship with public injecting rates.
We examined the association between SCS use and public injecting in Toronto.

Methods

- We looked at data from 700 participants in our cohort study of people who use drugs in Toronto, from 2018-2020.
- 87% of participants reported using an SCS in the last 6 months.
- High-frequency injection was defined as participants reporting “usually” or “always” injecting in public (compared to “sometimes” or “never”) in survey responses.
- Participants reporting frequent public injecting were disproportionately experiencing housing instability.

Supervised Consumption Service use and high-frequency public injection among people who inject drugs in Toronto

Results & Discussion

- Among factors associated with high-frequency public injecting, housing instability was the strongest link.
- Among people experiencing the greatest housing instability, the estimated likelihood of high-frequency public injecting was 44% for those who had not used an SCS in the past 6 months, compared with 22% for those who had used an SCS.
- Recent SCS use was associated with **51%** lower prevalence of high-frequency public injecting.

Conclusion

- Maintaining accessible, low-barrier SCS may help address public injecting and related harms to people who use drugs and communities.
- Access to supervised consumption services may reduce public injecting, particularly among people experiencing housing instability.

Want to read the full publication?
Access it here: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395926003269

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