

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Overdose Prevention Centers **Do Not Increase Crime**



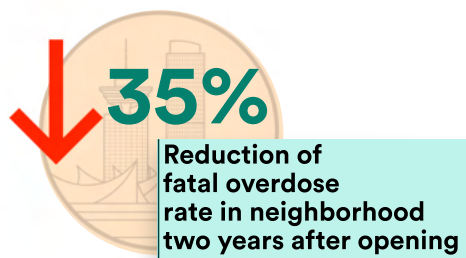
OPCs provide an indoor, supervised space to consume pre-obtained drugs, which has safety and social benefits that impact crime and violence. Some studies show OPCs **reduced robbery and property crime** in the area surrounding an OPC,¹⁵ while studies out of Vancouver and Sydney found **no significant changes** in upticks of crime or assault.² Research from two OPCs in New York found **no significant increase in crime and a decline in arrests** for drug possession in the surrounding area.¹⁶

An ethnography out of Canada found that OPCs are a ‘**safe haven**’ from the everyday physical and sexual violence that occurs in the drug scene for women who use drugs, particularly marginalized women and trans women. Women in the study noted that, in the era of fentanyl, public drug use and doing drugs around strangers or acquaintances who are men are high risk environments for violence.¹⁷ Fentanyl’s quick and strong intoxicating effects leave them vulnerable to harm from others. By having a place to do drugs with staff available to help prevent violence, **OPCs create safer environments for women who use drugs**. A female participant from an OPC in Canada noted, “**It is where I know everybody, where I feel safe.**”¹⁷ Despite being a safe haven, gendered and racialized dynamics can be present in OPCs, which can reproduce power dynamics present in the larger society that prevent women and LGBTQIA+ people from seeking services.¹⁷

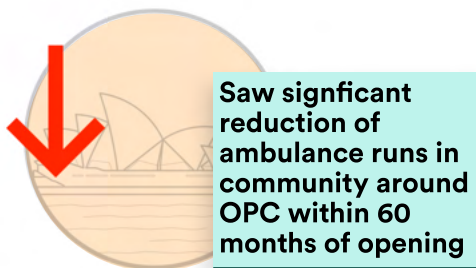
Overdose Prevention Centers **Have Positive Health Impacts**

By preventing overdoses and overdose deaths, overdose prevention centers can have positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of the surrounding community.

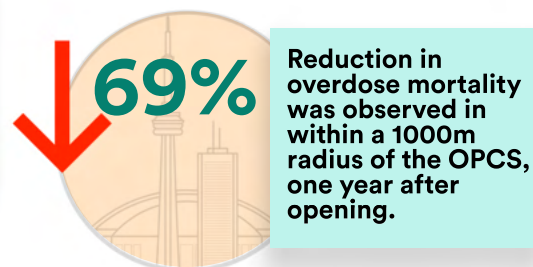
Vancouver, Canada¹⁸



Sydney, Australia¹⁹



Toronto, Ontario²⁰



References can be found by scanning the QR code or by visiting opcinfo.org/factsheetref



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Overdose Prevention Centers Reduce Drug Related Litter



OPCs result in positive community impacts through a reduction in drug related litter. International longitudinal studies over 5 years demonstrate a significant reported reduction of publicly discarded needles and syringes.⁸ Other studies also show reductions in litter from publicly discarded syringes and drug related litter in Vancouver, Australia, and Spain.^{6,9,10,11,12} OPCs provide a safe place to dispose of drug equipment on site, reducing rates of publicly discarded syringes.¹⁴

As one participant in an OPC noted: **“I can get rid of my needles like correctly ... I feel great. Yeah, I feel like I’m not dirtying up the unit that they have there.”**¹⁴

Overdose Prevention Centers Improve Community Relationships



People who use drugs face stigmatization that can prevent them from accessing health and social services. Research shows OPCs address the social determinants of health that act as a barrier to care for people who use drugs.

OPCs have been shown to help keep people experiencing homelessness living in shelters, as they provide a place for people to do drugs which prevents them from getting kicked out of shelters for drug use. OPC participants report feelings of non-judgemental care and compassion from staff.

The non judgment and compassion reported at OPCs can improve relationships between service workers and participants by creating an environment of trust where people who use drugs feel safe and supported. Ultimately, this may help OPC users establish connections with community services such as housing and healthcare.¹⁴ Further, participants report greater social connectedness and a better sense of community from using an OPC. However, feelings of connectedness can have gendered limitations as women report a lack of safety in some circumstances.¹⁴

As one participant noted in a qualitative study out of Canada, the staff at the OPC **“...make you feel normal. You know?”**¹⁴



Supportive environments



Trust



Community Services



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Overdose prevention centers (OPC) are places where people can use pre-obtained substances on site, and access drug harm reduction services like drug checking and clean drug use supplies. OPCs offer connections to resources for healthcare, drug treatment, and other social services. OPCs confer positive health and social benefits for individuals, which extend into the broader communities they serve. **The presence of an OPC in a community:**



Reduces Public Drug Use

Reduces Litter

Has Positive Health Impacts

Improves Community Relationships

Does Not Increase Crime

Overdose Prevention Centers Reduce **Public Drug Use**

Public drug use is linked to environmental and health problems including disease transmission, wounds, and overdose.¹ Within communities, public drug use can create perceptions of a lack of safety, as well as increase police presence in neighborhoods. **Research shows OPCs help reduce public drug use.**²

In a study from Sydney, Australia, researchers found that residents and business owners reported less public injection over the five years after an OPC opened in the area. Reports of public drug use from residents and business owners decreased from **33% and 38% in 2000 to 19% and 28% in 2005.**³ In a study done in Copenhagen, Denmark, the opening of an OPC was associated with a **56% decrease in self reported public injection use of drugs.**⁴ In Spain, frequent users of the OPC in Catalonia had a **61% lower chance of public drug use.**⁵

A study in Vancouver, Canada found similar results: public drug use **dropped by around 50% just 12 weeks** after the opening of an overdose prevention site.⁶ Additionally, research from the first sanctioned overdose prevention centers in the US in NYC showed a similar trend in the first two months after opening, however this finding is limited by the short period of the study and lack of control group.⁷ While further study is needed and underway in the United States, international longitudinal results support the efficacy of OPCs as a critical intervention in decreasing public drug use.



Sydney, Australia

Public drug use reported by residents and businesses drops from 33 and 38% reported before OPC opening in 2000 to 19 and 28% by 2005.



Vancouver, Canada

Public drug use dropped 50% in 12 weeks after OPC opening.



Copenhagen, Denmark

Public drug use dropped 56% after OPC opening.



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