

# Do Drugs Contain What People Think They Contain?

## Results from the Community Urinalysis and Self-Report Project

### ABOUT THE PROJECT:

- **Participants:** 1,526 people who use drugs in seven regions across Canada.
- **Measures:** Self-report of substances used in the previous three days and urine sample to detect actual substances used.
- **Objective:** Compare reported and detected substance use.
  - Expected = detected and reported used; Unexpected = detected but not reported used.

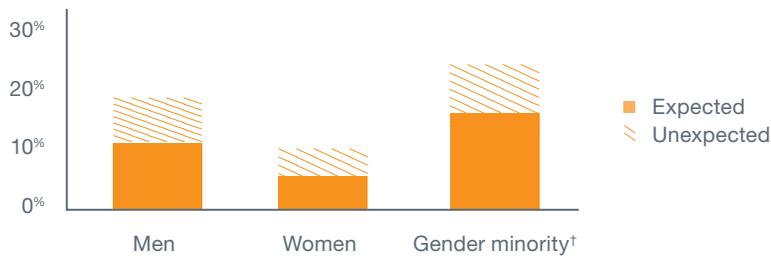
Percentage of participants who had benzodiazepines detected in their urine, broken down by expectation



\*Results for 2019 may be underestimated as certain benzodiazepines could not be detected in urine until 2020.

**Unexpected benzodiazepine use was found in all regions. Overall, it was found among 1 in 3 participants.**

Percentage of participants who had benzodiazepines detected in their urine, broken down by expectation and gender (all sites)



Unexpected benzodiazepine use was found most often among women.

†Gender minority includes trans men, trans women, gender nonconforming, nonbinary or no gender indicated.



### POSSIBLE RISKS

Unexpected benzodiazepine use can lead to:

- **Greater overdose risk when combined with opioids**
- **Complicated overdose: After administering naloxone, people may resume breathing but stay unconscious**
- **Unknown tolerance to benzodiazepines and, if use stops, unexpected withdrawal**



### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The unregulated drug supply contains unexpected, often toxic substances. This unpredictability causes harm to people who use drugs.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Improve drug predictability by expanding access to a safer drug supply that meets the needs of people who use drugs.
- Improve responses to unexpected benzodiazepine use by updating overdose response protocols and making low-barrier harm reduction services available.
- Respond to co-use of opioids and benzodiazepines by equipping clinicians to address dependence and withdrawal for both.

**Listen to, engage with and compensate people who use drugs as experts and the people directly affected by these actions.**

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction thanks the Community Urinalysis and Self-Report Project Working Group, all partner sites and participants for their contributions.

Additional findings are presented in: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2022). *Community Urinalysis and Self-Report Project: Cross-Canada report on the use of drugs from the unregulated supply, 2019-2021 data*. Ottawa, Ont.: Author. <https://www.ccsa.ca/community-urinalysis-and-self-report-project-cross-canada-report-use-drugs-unregulated-supply-2019>. For more information, see <https://www.ccsa.ca/urinalysis-and-self-reporting>