



**Decriminalization
Data Report to Health Canada
February 2023 – January 2026**

Submitted: May 2026

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1. Introduction

As part of the subsection 56(1) exemption granted under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA)* by Health Canada (“decriminalization”), BC is required to produce quarterly reporting on implementation and early outcomes. This data report provides insight into the early outcomes of decriminalization from four key dimensions: health service utilization, wellbeing of people who use drugs (PWUD), law enforcement, and public awareness and understanding of decriminalization.

Second s.56 Exemption: May 7, 2024 – January 31, 2026¹

The original s.56 exemption came into effect on January 31, 2023, decriminalizing simple possession of small amounts of illegal drugs across BC with some place-based exceptions (e.g., school and childcare premises, airports, motor vehicles). In September 2023, the exemption was amended to add additional exceptions for child-focused spaces. On May 7, 2024, due to concerns about substance use in public settings and at the request of BC, Health Canada replaced the exemption with [a second s.56 exemption](#) which decriminalizes possession of small amounts of illegal drugs only in specific locations, including:

- Private residences
- Places unhoused individuals are legally sheltering (indoor and outdoor locations)
- Overdose prevention, drug checking, and supervised consumption sites
- Places that provide out-patient addiction services like rapid access addiction clinics.

The intention of the second exemption was to balance goals of public health, public safety, and other community interests by prohibiting the possession (a pre-condition to use) of illegal drugs in public spaces, and reinstating police authority to address problematic substance use in public spaces with a possession offense. As outlined in the [Letter of Requirements](#), Health Canada supported a discretionary model that ensured people who were simply in possession of drugs with no associated public safety risk were not subject to arrest or seizure of drugs.

¹ Previous reporting referred to the second exemption implemented on May 7, 2024 as the “new exemption.”

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On January 14, 2026, BC announced that it would not seek a renewal of the s.56 exemption enabling decriminalization. The exemption expired on January 31, 2026.

This report is the seventh and final quarterly report presenting data following implementation of BC's second s.56 exemption. Law enforcement and health service utilization data have been refreshed to include November 2025 to January 2026.

Background

Harms of Criminalization

Substance use is criminalized in various ways that negatively impact PWUD. Forms of criminalization include formal police interactions (offences), police seizure of drugs, arrests, criminal charges, and convictions. A significant and growing body of research shows that these forms of criminalization do little to deter drug use and instead perpetuate harms to PWUD.^{i,ii,iii,iv,v} Interactions with police may deter PWUD from seeking emergency services or calling for help during overdose situations. Being arrested, charged, or convicted of simple possession negatively impacts an individual's ability to seek and hold employment and housing. Drug seizures are well documented to have negative impacts on PWUD.

Research demonstrates that drug seizures²:

- Are associated with increased overdose risk. A 2024 literature review concluded that most research found an association between police seizure and elevated overdose risk. Studies from the US and Vancouver found an increase in overdose events following drug seizure.^{vi,vii,viii,ix}
- Prevent people from accessing life-saving services, from calling police in unsafe situations, and from calling emergency services during overdoses.^{ii,x}
- Increase harms experienced by PWUD by putting them in unsafe situations to replace their supply (e.g., drug debts, property theft, or sex work).^{i,ii,xi}
- Disproportionately impact equity seeking groups (i.e., Indigenous and other racialized groups, unhoused individuals, people engaged in sex work).^{i,ii,vi}

² See In 2023, BC launched a pilot program to decriminalize people who use drugs. It intended to make it easier for people struggling with addiction to come forward for help. The exemption expired on January 31, 2026 and was not renewed.

With this final quarterly data report, BC has fulfilled its reporting requirements set by Health Canada. Reporting on health service utilization metrics will continue through BCCDC's Unregulated Drug Poisoning Dashboard and BC Coroner's Service Unregulated Drug Toxicity Deaths Dashboard.

Moving forward, BC will continue to work with all partners to improve the lives of people who use drugs and to address the toxic drug crisis.

Appendix A: Synthesis of Key Evidence on Police Drug Seizure Harms.

National Policy Landscape

In recognition of this emerging evidence, governments and organizations across Canada and globally have pursued measures to reduce the harms of criminalization and recognize substance use as a health issue. Key examples of this include:

- In 2006, Vancouver Police Department adopted a policy that provides officers with a broad range of discretion when dealing with possession of illegal drugs. The policy directs police officers to consider an individual's behaviour and risks to public safety when deciding to recommend a criminal charge.
- In 2020, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC) established [Guideline 5.13](#) that recognizes drug possession as a health-related issue and requires prosecutors to consider alternatives to charges unless there are serious manifestations of harm (e.g., risk to the safety or wellbeing of children or young persons).
- In 2022, the Government of Canada introduced amendments to the CDSA. Under [section 10.2](#), police officers must consider pre-diversion measures, including whether it would be preferable to take no further action, to warn the individual, or with consent of the individual, refer them to a program/service provider that could assist the individual when attending to an alleged simple possession offence.
- In 2023, PPSC amended [guideline 2.3](#) ("Decision to Prosecute") to increase consideration of the background and personal circumstances of an accused individual in the determination of whether it is in the public interest to prosecute. These factors include Indigenous identity, membership in a racialized or marginalized community, homelessness, poverty and substance-use disorder.

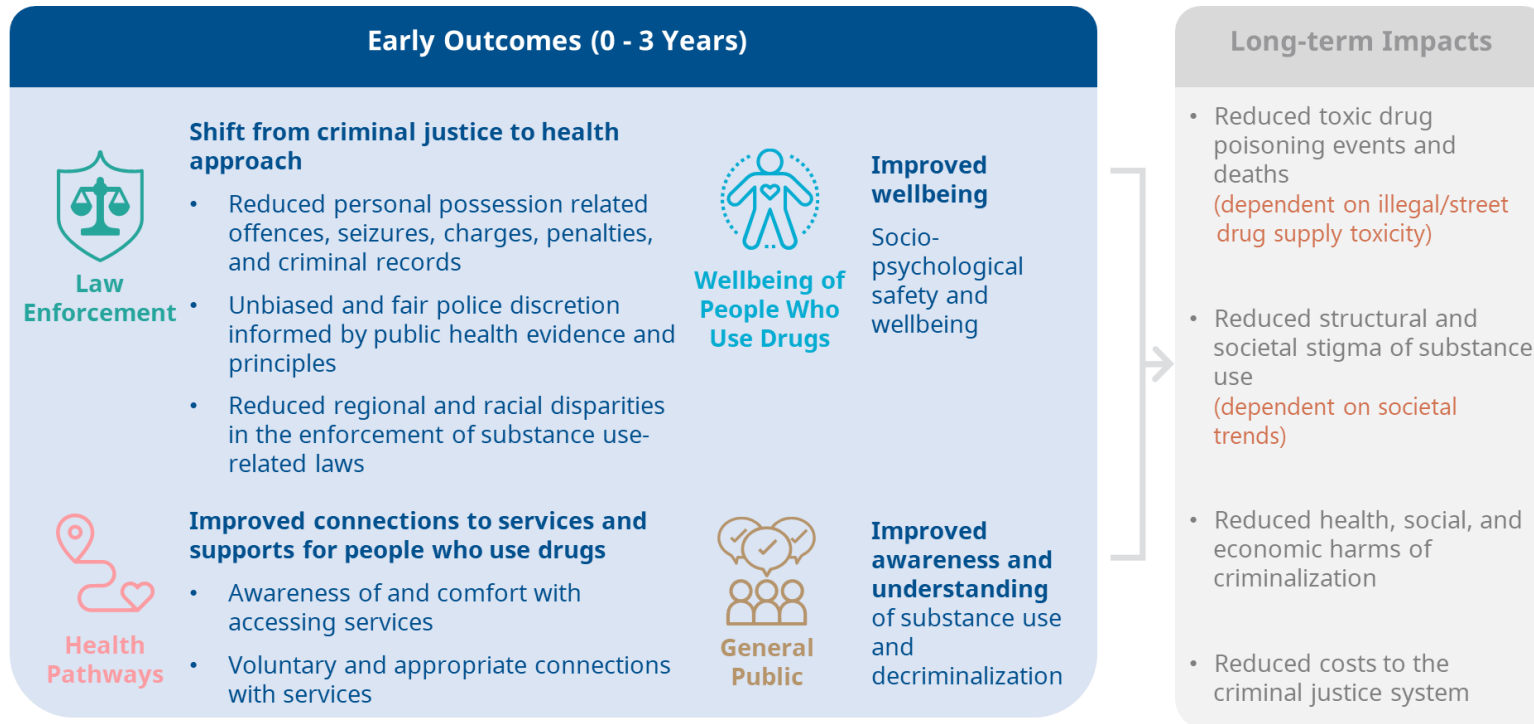
Decriminalization in BC aligned with these broader national trends. It aimed to shift PWUD away from the criminal justice system and towards health and social supports.

Intended Early Outcomes

Within the three-year exemption period, BC monitored four key dimensions of early outcomes:

• Law enforcement	Decriminalization aimed to shift PWUDs away from the criminal justice system towards health and social services. Key metrics for monitoring and evaluation included personal possession-related offences, drug seizures, and charges.
• Wellbeing of people who use drugs	Decriminalization aimed to improve the wellbeing of PWUD by mitigating the harms of criminalization, including formal police interactions and drug seizures due to personal possession.

- Health pathways Decriminalization intended to improve connections to services and supports for PWUD. Health outcomes were medium- and long-term impacts.
- Public awareness and understanding Decriminalization aimed to raise awareness on substance use, with the goal of reducing stigma that prevents PWUD from accessing services and supports.



Evidence from other jurisdictions suggests that it takes years for many health and other outcomes to fully emerge. In Portugal, for example, following decriminalization, drug related deaths and newly diagnosed HIV infections decreased significantly over five years.³

³ [Drug Decriminalization in Portugal: Setting the Record Straight](#). Drug Policy Foundation, 2021.

The evolving toxicity in the illegal drug supply, primarily with fentanyl and its analogues, is the key driver of drug toxicity deaths. Between 2017 and 2024, fentanyl was detected in 79% to 87% of unregulated drug deaths in BC.⁴ In recent years, illegal drug toxicity has been driving drug related deaths across Canada. From 2022 to 2023, BC experienced a 5% increase and Alberta experienced a 17% increase in drug-related deaths. Both provinces reported a decrease in drug-related deaths in 2024.⁵

Current Trends in Toxic Drug Crisis in BC

The Ministry of Health (HLTH), the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), and other partners continue to regularly monitor health events and service utilization indicators as part of BC's overall surveillance of the toxic drug crisis. While these indicators are highly dependent on external factors (e.g., the increase in illegal drug toxicity), they provide additional context for understanding the early outcomes of decriminalization.

The rate of drug toxicity events and deaths has remained high since decriminalization; however, unregulated drug deaths decreased slightly starting in early 2024 and more markedly starting in October 2024. Paramedic-attended opioid overdose events are more variable and have increased sharply between June 2025 and January 2026.

- There were 1,826 unregulated drug deaths in 2025, a 21% decrease compared to 2024 (n= 2,320). There were 150 unregulated drug deaths in the first month of 2026, a 9.6% decrease compared to January 2025. Despite this overall decrease, deaths are not decreasing in all areas or among all demographic groups.⁶
- A statistical analysis led by the Ontario Node of the Canadian Research Institute in Substance Use Matters found that the unregulated drug death rate in the first 11 months of decriminalization (February 2023 to December 2023) was not statistically different from the unregulated drug death rate before decriminalization (January 2015 to January 2023).^{xii} Drug toxicity deaths decreased across much of North America in 2024 and 2025. The Public Health Agency of Canada conducted an analysis suggesting that declines in Canada were most likely due to changes in the drug supply, naloxone availability, and a declining population at risk of opioid-related overdose.
- The number and rates of paramedic-attended opioid overdose events remain high and showed an increasing trend in late 2025 and in the first month of 2026, reversing a previous declining trend between July 2024 and March 2025.

⁴ [BC Coroners Service Dashboard](#)

⁵ [BCCDC Unregulated Drug Poisoning Dashboard](#) and [Alberta substance use surveillance system](#), Government of Alberta.

⁶ [BC Coroners Service Dashboard](#) Accessed May 14, 2026

Paramedic-attended opioid overdoses show geographical variations and fluctuations year over year.⁷ Between November 2025 and January 2026, there were 6,845 paramedic-attended opioid overdose events, a 64% increase from 4,171 events one year prior (November 2024 to January 2025).

- The number and rate of paramedic-attended events for people under 19 remain stable, but there has been an increase in unregulated drug deaths in this age group. In 2025 there were 25 unregulated drug toxicity deaths in BC of persons younger than 19 years of age, a 25% increase from 20 deaths in 2024. Since the absolute number of youth deaths is small, more variability is expected. As such, this trend requires further monitoring.
- The presence of fentanyl, new analogues, non-opioid sedatives (medetomidine), and non-medical benzodiazepines contribute to the toxicity of the unregulated drug supply.⁸

⁷ [BCCDC Unregulated Drug Poisoning Dashboard](#) Accessed May 14, 2026

⁸ [BCCSU Drug Checking Project Dashboard](#) and [SUBSTANCE](#). Accessed January 30, 2026

2. Health Pathways

Key Findings

- As part of the implementation of decriminalization, proactive outreach positions across regional health authorities (RHAs) and the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) were hired and have been facilitating connections to services. These positions will continue beyond the end of decriminalization.
- Visits to overdose prevention and supervised consumption sites for observed consumption have remained high since decriminalization, despite a recent decline.
- The number Take Home Naloxone (THN) intramuscular kits shipped to sites declined starting in October 2024 and began to increase again in late 2025, likely due at least in part to a pilot program making nasal naloxone more available through select THN sites. Further monitoring is required.
- The number of OAT clients appears to have peaked in 2023 and has been in decline.

One of the aims of decriminalization was to encourage connections to health and social supports by reducing stigma and fear associated with criminalization. In addition to broader investments in mental health and substance use (MHSU) services, BC funded the creation of decriminalization proactive outreach positions in RHAs and the FNHA. The objective of these positions has been to facilitate connections to care.

Intended early outcomes of decriminalization included increased awareness of and comfort with accessing health and social services for PWUD, and increased connections to health and social services. The health pathways metrics presented in this report relate to the utilization of low-barrier services. These services tend to be an entry point for PWUD into the broader system of MHSU services, including treatment and recovery, and so are indicative of PWUD comfort and connection with services and supports. Health outcomes of decriminalization are medium- to long-term impacts and are more appropriate for long-term studies.⁹

⁹ Service utilization is impacted by factors outside decriminalization and takes time to change after an intervention. Data needs to be interpreted carefully alongside other factors, including service availability. Evaluations of decriminalization will consider all lines of evidence and analyze decriminalization's contribution to the changes.

Health System Implementation Activities – Proactive Outreach Positions

As part of its decriminalization implementation activities, BC funded proactive outreach positions in each RHA, as well as the FNHA, for a total of 24 full-time positions. The purpose of these positions has been to support new connections to care for PWUD and liaison activities with law enforcement in communities. These positions will continue beyond the end of decriminalization.

RHAs have taken a range of approaches to ensure that these positions best meet community needs.

First Nations Health Authority 5 FTEs	Vancouver Coastal Health 4 FTEs	Fraser Health 4 FTEs	Interior Health 4 FTEs	Island Health 4 FTEs	Northern Health 3 FTEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 per FNHA Region • Virtual peer coordinators and substance use navigators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outreach workers in local overdose outreach teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Regional outreach workers in interdisciplinary teams • 1 Coordinator to support law enforcement liaison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCMP liaison positions embedded in existing crisis teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 part-time and 1 full-time (3 FTEs) virtual addiction and recovery workers • 1 full-time proactive outreach nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social work/peer outreach workers, embedded in existing harm reduction or specialized service teams

RHAs are required to provide quantitative reporting on new connections to services facilitated by proactive outreach positions as part of their funding agreements. These metrics include:

- # of client interactions and # of unique clients served
- % of clients connected to another service
- Qualitative reporting on successes/challenges with reaching new clients and connecting them to care.

Some of the FTEs are also reporting on community engagement/knowledge translation activities. FNHA is also reporting engagement connections with community members and system partners, to reflect their unique role and the community engagement mandate of their funded positions.

Health System Implementation Activities – Proactive Outreach: Activity Highlights

Proactive outreach activities vary across each RHA and the FNHA. These positions have taken a range of approaches to best meet their community needs. Proactive outreach workers made approximately 30,044 connections between 2023 to January 2026. These positions will continue beyond the end of decriminalization.

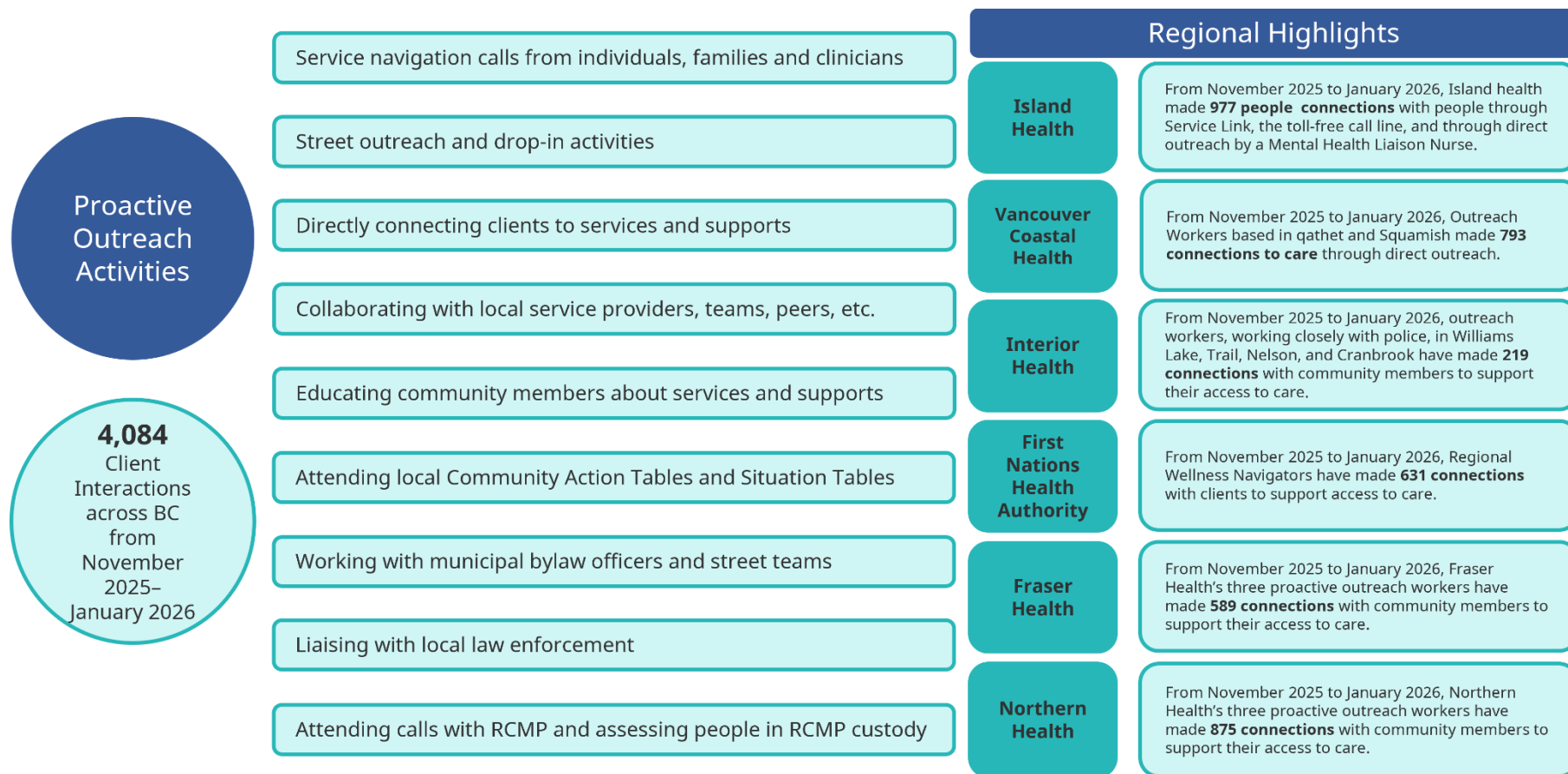


Figure 1. Proactive Outreach Activities and Regional Highlights, November 2025 – January 2026

Health Service Utilization: Visits to Overdose Prevention Sites and Supervised Consumption Sites

Overdose prevention service (OPS) and supervised consumption site (SCS) service utilization continues to trend upward since the implementation of s.56 exemption. BC experienced a high number of visits in March 2025 with 98,380 visits.

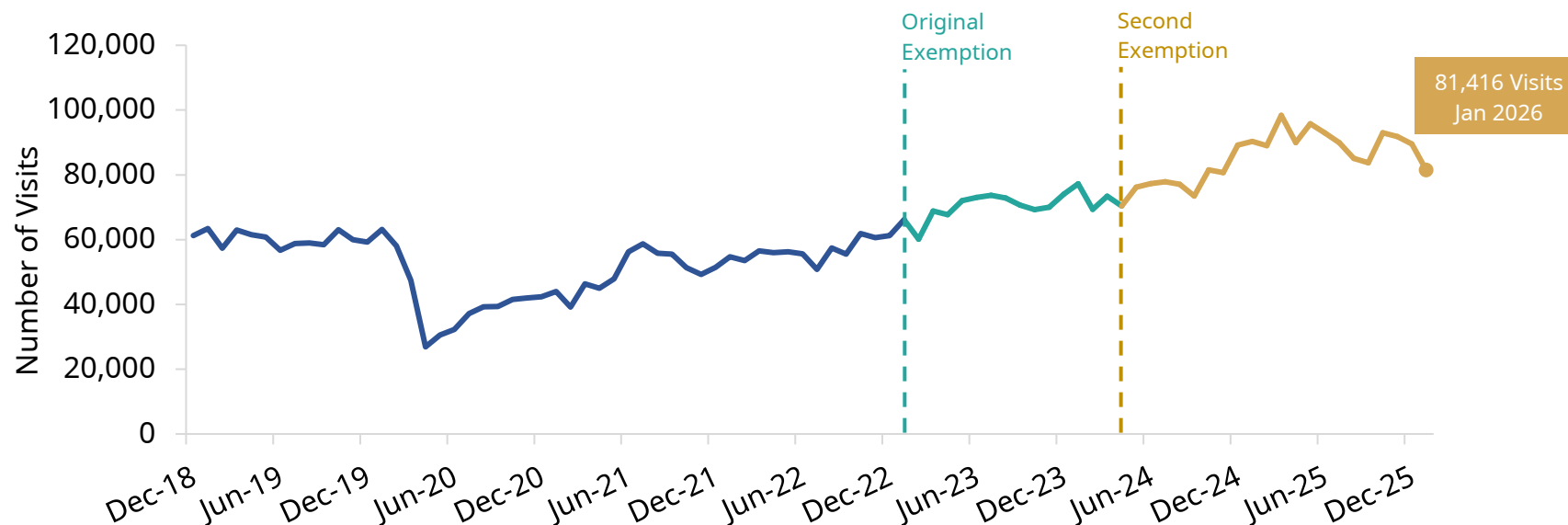


Figure 2. Visits to Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) and Supervised Consumption Services (SCS) in BC (December 2018 – January 2026)¹⁰

- OPS and SCS provide life-saving services by preventing and responding to illegal drug poisonings.
- In January 2026, there were 81,416 visits to OPS and SCS in BC for observed consumption. The number of OPS and SCS sites in operation have increased since December 2018.
- Utilization of OPS and SCS remain high since the implementation of BC’s original s.56 exemption. The number of monthly visits for observed consumption peaked at 98,380 in March 2025 and has been trending downwards.

¹⁰ OPS/SCS visits may be limited by service availability (e.g., number of sites and hours). Numbers include both injection and inhalation OPS/SCS. Source: <http://www.BCCDC.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/substance-use-harm-reduction-dashboard>. Accessed on April 27, 2026.

Health Service Utilization: Demand for Take Home Naloxone (THN)

The monthly number of THN kits shipped to sites has increased since January 2019 but has decreased in 2025. In 2025, a total of 383,204 kits were shipped, a decrease from 2024 (498,028 kits). In January 2026, there were 2,490 active distribution locations for THN kits.

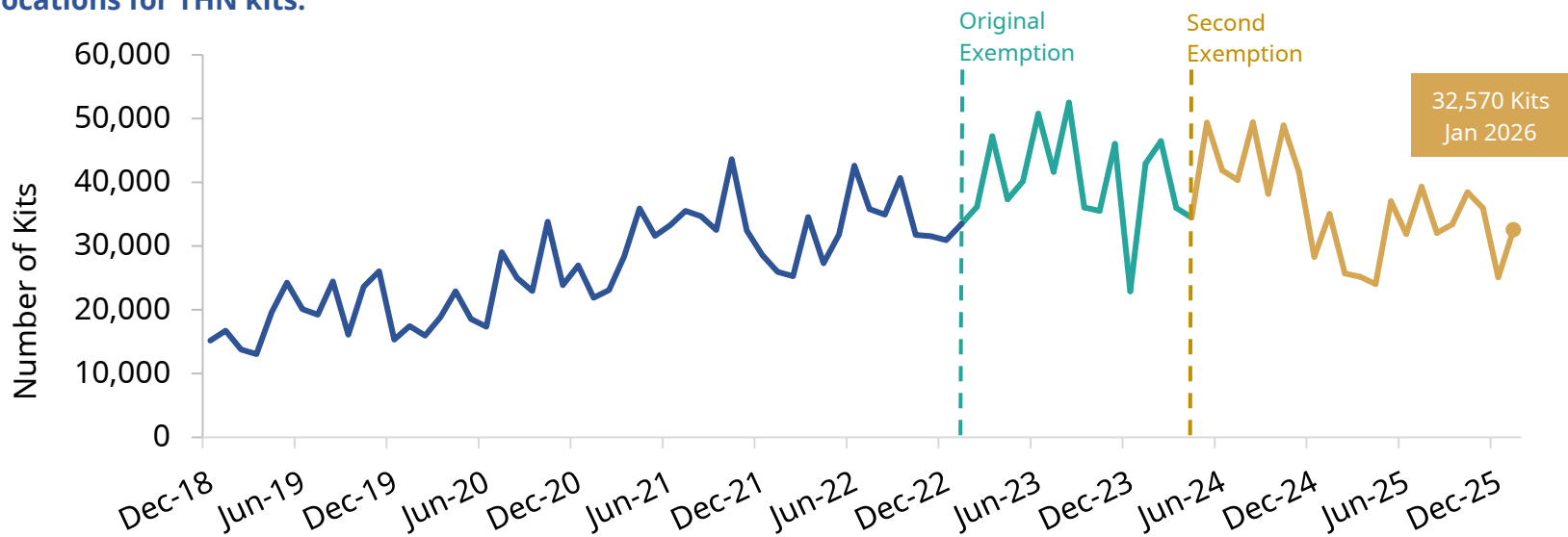


Figure 3. Number of THN kits shipped to sites (December 2018 – January 2026)¹¹

- BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) started the THN program in 2012 to provide training and kits to people at risk of an opioid overdose.
- In January 2026, 32,570 kits were shipped and there were 2,490 THN sites across BC.
- According to BCCDC, THN intramuscular kits shipped to sites declined starting in October 2024 and began to increase again in late 2025. This was likely due at least in part to a pilot program making nasal naloxone available through select THN sites and may also reflect changes in the toxicity of the drug supply. Further monitoring is required.

¹¹ Month-to-month variation of demand is expected due to the different number of processing dates, certain sites ordering for more than one month's supply each time, drug alerts, and other factors. Source: <http://www.BCCDC.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/substance-use-harm-reduction-dashboard>. Accessed on April 27, 2026.

Health Service Utilization: Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) Uptake

The number of people receiving OAT appears to have peaked and has been in decline.

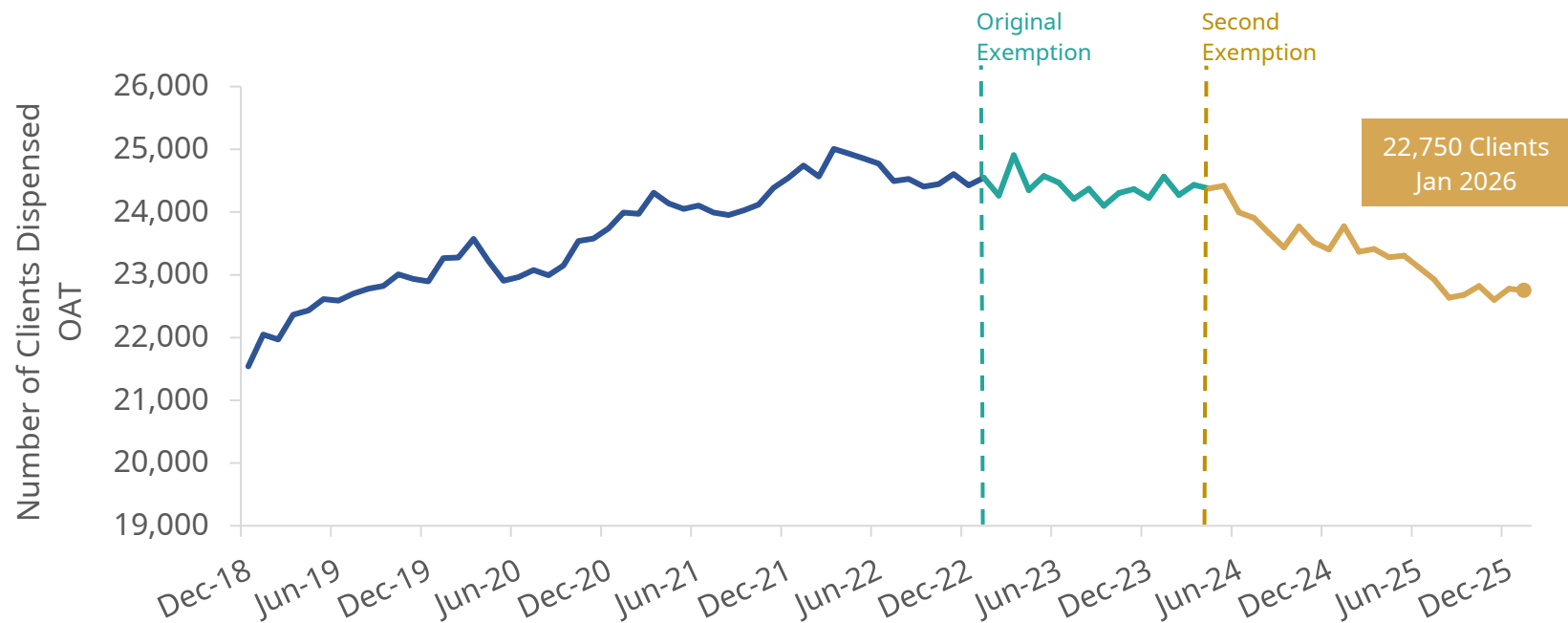


Figure 4. Number of people receiving OAT by month (December 2018 – January 2026)¹²

- Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) refers to a medication-based treatment for people with opioid use disorder.
- In January 2026, there were 22,750 OAT clients in BC.

¹² BC PharmaNet data are provided by Pharmaceutical Analytics, Community & Cross Sector Analytics Branch, Corporate Services Division, British Columbia Ministry of Health. Data represent clients who filled prescriptions at community pharmacies within BC, not all clients who received prescriptions. Recent data may change slightly due to prescription reversals/data quality improvements. Source: <http://www.BCCDC.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/substance-use-harm-reduction-dashboard>. Accessed on May 13, 2026.

Health Service Utilization: Drug Checking Utilization

The number of drug samples tested in BC has increased since 2019. The number of samples tested has remained stable since the implementation of the original s.56 exemption. In January 2026, BC tested 2,612 samples.

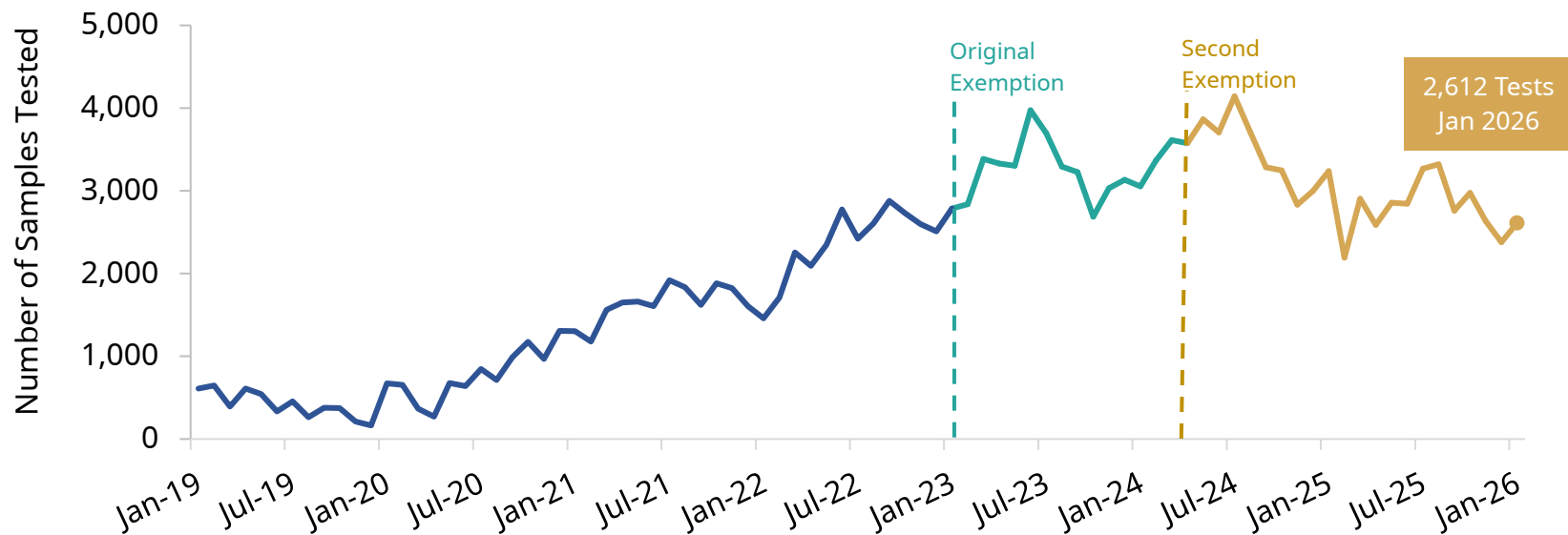


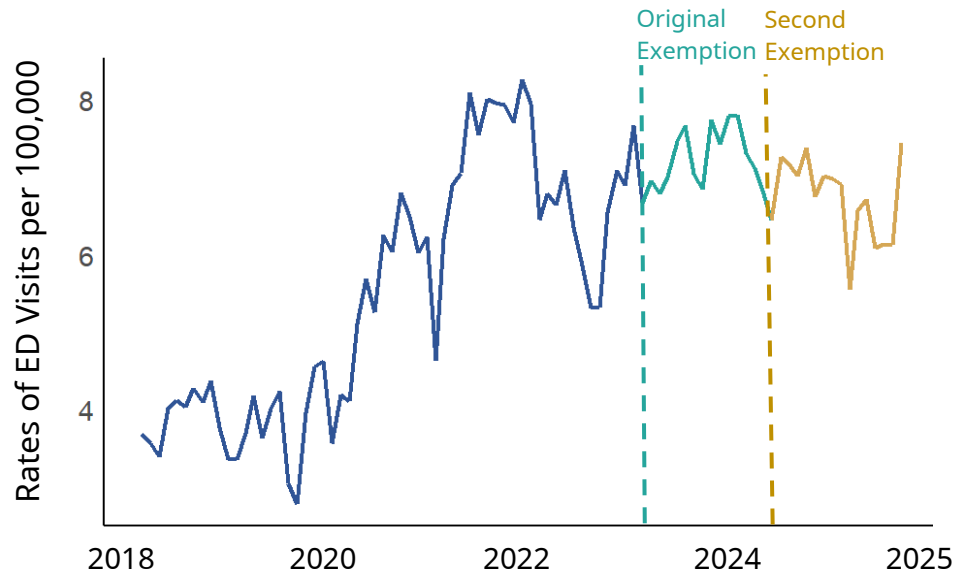
Figure 5. Number of samples tested using FTIR spectroscopy at drug checking locations in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)

- Drug checking using Fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy is a harm reduction service that allows people to check what is in their drugs.
- There are 113 locations around the province where one can drop off a drug sample for analysis, 48 of which offer immediate point-of care testing.
- The number of drug samples tested in BC vary according to service capacity (e.g., number of access points, staffing and hours). BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) suggest the decrease in drug checking in the first quarter of 2025 could be related to operational issues on Vancouver Island and normal seasonal variance. Further monitoring is required.¹²

¹³ Source: [BCCSU drug checking reports](#) and [Vancouver Island Drug Checking project reports \(SUBSTANCE\)](#). Vancouver Island Drug Checking Project reporting did not start until September 2020. Accessed on April 27, 2026.

Health Service Utilization: Emergency Department Visits for Decriminalized Drugs

Rates of monthly emergency department (ED) visits per 100,000 of the population for substance use health conditions related to decriminalized substances have been slowly increasing since 2018. Rates during the exemption periods were comparable to rates in the year before decriminalization (2022).



Year	Median Count of ED Visits	IQR Count of ED Visits ¹⁴
2019	191	35
2020	284	82
2021	399	65
2022	354	38
2023	400	41
2024	401	20
2025	362	37

Figure 6. Rates (per 100,000 of the population) of emergency visits for substance use health conditions related to decriminalized substances across BC (April 2018 - August 2025).¹⁵

- In August 2025, there were 424 emergency department visits related to decriminalized substances in BC.

¹⁴ Interquartile range

¹⁵ This report provides monthly rates of emergency department visits for clients with a substance use diagnoses related to the use of decriminalized drugs. See page 49 for methodology.

3. Law Enforcement

Key Findings

- Possession offences and drug seizures under 2.5g gradually decreased from 2019 to 2022, and to a much greater extent during BC's original s.56 exemption.
- BC's second s.56 exemption prohibited possession of illegal drugs in public spaces. Early data shows that possession-related offences and drug seizures have increased since the second exemption.
- Since the second exemption, possession-related offences and drug seizures have been higher than the original exemption level, but lower than the pre-exemption level:
 - There was an average of 446 possession offences per month during the second s.56 exemption period (May 2024 – Jan 2026) compared to an average of 165 per month during the original exemption (Feb 2023 – Apr 2024), and 509 per month in the year before decriminalization (Feb 2022 – Jan 2023).
 - There was an average of 63 possession seizures under 2.5g per month during the second s.56 exemption period (May 2024 – Jan 2026) compared to an average of 7 per month during the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2023 – Apr 2024), and 135 per month in the year before decriminalization (Feb 2022 – Jan 2023).
 - There was an average of 186 possession seizures, regardless of weight, during the second s.56 exemption period (May 2024 – Jan 2026) compared to an average of 61 per month during the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2023 – Apr 2024), and 253 per month in the year before decriminalization (Feb 2022 – Jan 2023).
- Of the possession offences reported during the second s.56 exemption period (May 2024 – Oct 2025), most of the reported location types were in public spaces.
- The difference in monthly possession offence and seizure rates between health authority regions in BC were gradually reducing from 2019 to 2022 and to a greater extent since BC's original s.56 exemption; since the second s.56 exemption (effective May 7, 2024), the difference has increased.

Decriminalization aimed to shift PWUD away from the criminal justice system and towards health and social supports. According to BC Corrections data (Table 27 and Table 28), in 2023, less than 1% of community corrections clients and 0% in provincial custody were for drug possession as the most serious offence. As such, selected core metrics in this report focus on other forms of criminalization in policing, including personal possession related offences, defined as formal police interactions, and drug seizures.

Possession Offences in Canada

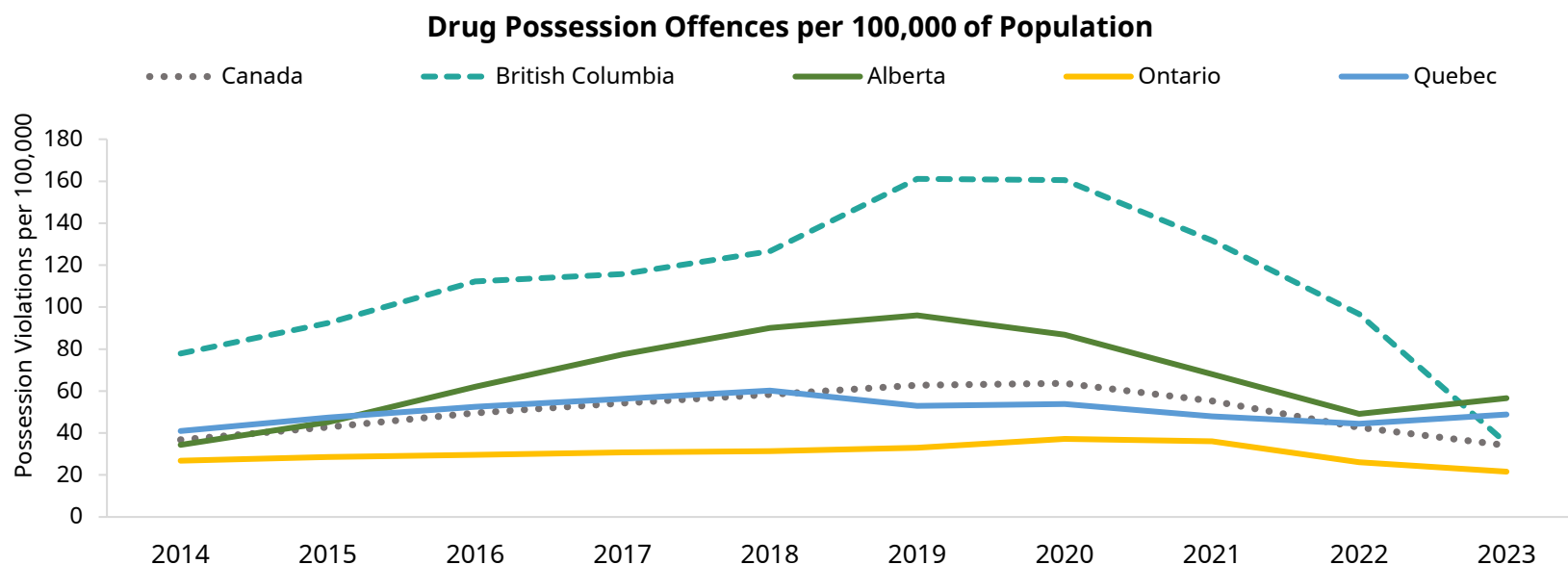


Figure 7. Rate of possession violations/offences (per 100,000 population) of other CDSA substances, 2014 – 2023

According to Statistics Canada, BC had the highest CDSA personal possession offence rate (not including Cannabis Act, trafficking, production, and distribution offences)¹⁶ among Canadian provinces (not including the territories) from at least 2014 until 2022 (Figure 7). BC's CDSA personal possession offence rate of certain s.56 exemption eligible substances began decreasing in 2020 and was at the same level as the national average by 2023. Statistics Canada suggests that the decrease may be due to changes in policing practices and the introduction of BC's s.56 exemption from the CDSA on January 31, 2023.¹⁷

The following section provides an overview of key law enforcement metrics that capture progress towards decriminalization's objectives. Data from this section is derived from BC's Police Records Information Management Environment (PRIME-BC).

Regional analysis is based on health authority regions to align with public health reporting.

¹⁶ The StatsCan category used in Figure 7 is "Other Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, possession [4130]". This category does not include cocaine possession [4120] or cannabis possession [4140].

¹⁷ Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0177-01 Incident-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, Canada, provinces, territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Canadian Forces Military Police](#), Footnote 18. Accessed: 2024-10-03

Law Enforcement Data – Analysis Methodology

BC has been monitoring key law enforcement metrics indicating progress towards decriminalization’s objectives:

- **Offences**

Offences are police recorded suspected violations of the CDSA. They represent formal police interactions and/or investigations that occur when police suspect there is a crime being committed. An offence may or may not involve an arrest and does not mean that there is a charge or a conviction. In BC, police decide after their investigation if there is sufficient evidence to recommend Crown counsel to charge a suspect. Their recommendation informs a report to Crown counsel (RCC).

Offences are recorded in PRIME-BC. When police respond to, or initiate, a call for service, a file is generated in PRIME-BC and assigned a standard code from UCR to describe the offences and other activities associated with the incident.¹⁸

There are two groups of UCR codes relating to the CDSA relevant to the monitoring and evaluation of decriminalization:



- Possession
 - CDSA incidents involving personal possession (section 4(1))



- Trafficking
 - CDSA incidents involving possession for the purpose of trafficking (section 5(2))
 - CDSA incidents involving trafficking of illegal drugs (section 5(1))

BC is monitoring relevant files in PRIME-BC to determine the number of CDSA offences. For incidents associated with possession, BC monitors both incidents where possession is the most serious offence (MSO) and incidents where

¹⁸ The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) was designed by Statistics Canada to measure the incidence of crime and its characteristics. An offence is used as a unit of count for the purposes of the statistical reporting.

possession is not the MSO but a secondary offence.¹⁹ This report focuses on incidents where possession is the MSO as it most accurately captures interactions/investigations initiated by a simple possession offence.

This report refers to incidents where possession is the MSO as “possession offences” and incidents where trafficking is the MSO as “trafficking offences.” Information on whether drugs are seized during a call for service are also recorded in PRIME-BC. Other recorded details include (if available) the type of location where the offence takes place, drug type involved in the offence, and amount for each type of drug seized.

Possession offences include specific UCR codes police officers use to describe the perceived types of substances involved. The codes, however, are broad and do not exactly align with the types of substances exempted as part of BC’s s.56 exemption. Using this information, analysts are able to classify offences into three categories: (1) offences involving *only* s.56 exemption eligible substances (opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine or MDMA, as set out in the Annex to the s.56 exemption), (2) offences involving *both* s.56 exemption eligible substances and non-s.56 exemption eligible substances, and (3) offences involving *only* non-s.56 exemption eligible substances. For reporting clarity, analysts grouped category (1) and category (2) into a new category (4) offences involving, at minimum, s.56 exemption eligible substances.²⁰

- **Drug Seizures**

Some offences may involve the confiscation of drugs (“drug seizures”) from an individual. Drug seizures can cause harm to PWUD.²¹ Under certain circumstances, possession of certain illegal drugs under a cumulative weight of 2.5g is

¹⁹ When there are two or more violations of the law in a single incident, the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey specifies that “the most serious offence” is published for the purposes of statistical reporting. For example, violent offences (e.g. assault) are more serious than non-violent offense (e.g. CDSA violations).

²⁰ Data analysts from Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and RCMP analyzed a sample of possession offence files identified as having *primarily* s.56 offences and found that approximately 80% of the files contained only s.56 exemption eligible substances.

²¹ See In 2023, BC launched a pilot program to decriminalize people who use drugs. It intended to make it easier for people struggling with addiction to come forward for help. The exemption expired on January 31, 2026 and was not renewed.

With this final quarterly data report, BC has fulfilled its reporting requirements set by Health Canada. Reporting on health service utilization metrics will continue through BCCDC’s Unregulated Drug Poisoning Dashboard and BC Coroner’s Service Unregulated Drug Toxicity Deaths Dashboard.

currently exempted from the CDSA, including drug seizure. Possession over the 2.5g threshold, as well as trafficking, regardless of the location or amount of drugs involved, remains illegal.

To effectively monitor the implementation of decriminalization, it is essential to calculate the *cumulative total amount* of exempted substances in each seizure incident due to the cumulative nature of the threshold policy. In a CDSA offence, multiple seizure records are associated with the same offence file if multiple drug items are seized. Each type of drug and each packaged item seized are recorded as separate items. HLTH collaborated with its policing partners to develop a methodology of offence-based drug seizure analysis where all seizure records related to an offence are aggregated to calculate the cumulative weight of exempted substances seized in each offence. This methodology better represents the total amount of exempted drugs held by individual(s) in each offence and enables quality monitoring on the implementation and outcomes of decriminalization.²²

BC is monitoring this cumulative seizure dataset to determine the number of drug seizure incidents initiated by a CDSA offence. For this report, drug seizure incidents where possession is the MSO are called “possession seizures” while drug seizure incidents where trafficking is the MSO are called “trafficking seizures.”

- **Charges**

After an investigation and review of available evidence, police in BC may recommend to the Crown Counsel to charge an individual for a specific crime. Crown counsel may choose to accept or decline police recommendations based upon their review of evidence and prosecution guidelines.

Policing partners have recommended assessing charge-related data on an annual basis. In this report, offences that have been cleared by charge—defined as offences where at least one suspect has been identified and either a charge

Moving forward, BC will continue to work with all partners to improve the lives of people who use drugs and to address the toxic drug crisis.

Appendix A: Synthesis of Key Evidence for a synthesis of key evidence on the harms associated with the criminalization of substance use.

²² Previous seizure datasets relied on seizure records as a unit of analysis and therefore, did not provide detailed information on the cumulative total quantity held by the individual(s) involved.

has been laid, or recommended to be laid, against the suspect in connection with the offence—are provided by Statistics Canada’s incident-based crime statistics.^{23,24}

PRIME-BC

PRIME-BC is a live case management environment that updates as investigations are being completed. As such, coding for some offences could change between possession and trafficking as investigations progress. Further, some privatized files may become available or vice versa.

Police-reported crime statistics are released by Statistics Canada on a routine and scheduled basis. Metrics in this report are only intended to satisfy the requirement under BC’s section 56(1) CDSA exemption. The offence data presented in this report is not considered complete and may be subject to changes in UCR classification. Changes to numbers are expected, especially for recent reporting periods.

Limitations

In practice, formal police interactions/investigations involving possession for trafficking are sometimes coded as possession until further investigations are completed. This means that the number of possession offences could overestimate the number of actual possession incidents. As investigations are completed, minor updates to the data will be reflected in future reporting.

²³ Offences cleared by charge are [defined as offences where at least one accused has been identified and either a charge has been laid, or recommended to be laid, against the accused in connection with the offence](#). The charge may or may not align with the most serious offence recorded for an incident. Accessed 2025-04-23 Accessed on April 23, 2025

²⁴ See Table 24. Number of Offences, Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs (regardless of amount), and Offences Cleared by Charge, where possession is the most serious offence, by police in BC (2019 – 2024). Data from Statistics Canada are from [Table 35-10-0177-01 Incident-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, Canada, provinces, territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Canadian Forces Military Police](#). The indicator used to represent “recommended charges” are the number of incidents “cleared by charge” for the following offences: heroin, possession [4110]; opioid (other than heroin), possession [4170]; cocaine, possession [4120]; Methamphetamines (crystal meth), possession [4150]; Methylenedioxyamphetamine (ecstasy), possession [4160]; Other Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, possession [4130].

Possession Offences

Possession offences gradually decreased from 2019 to 2022, and to a much greater extent during BC’s original s.56 exemption. Since the second s.56 exemption (effective May 7, 2024), the average number of monthly possession offences increased to approximately 88% of the pre-exemption level in 2022.²⁵

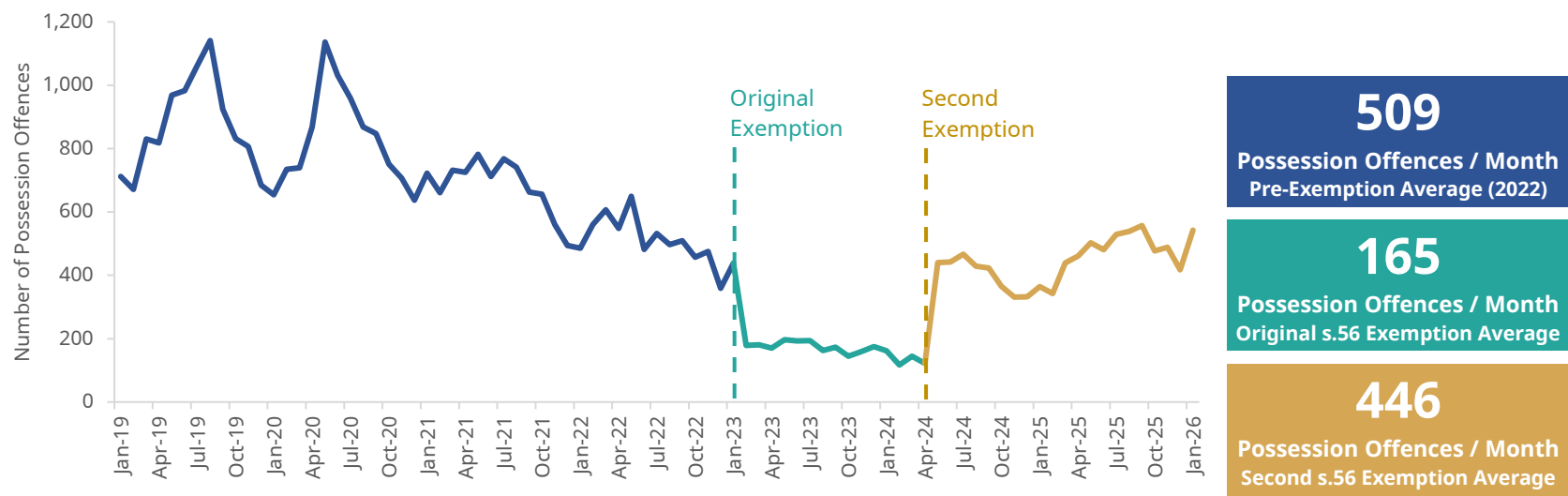


Figure 8. Number of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)²⁶

²⁵ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

²⁶ An offence represents a formal police interaction or investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence may or may not involve an arrest. It is not a charge nor a conviction.

²⁷ Due to the methodology of accounting for unique persons in possession offence files between the RCMP and municipal police, some unique persons may be double-counted and therefore overestimated.

- There was an average of 446 possession offences per month during the second s.56 exemption period (May 2024 – Jan 2026).
- Approximately 295 unique persons per month were involved in a possession offence over this time.²⁵
- The second exemption average monthly count of possession offences (446 possession offences per month) was lower ($p < 0.05$) than the average monthly count in the year before decriminalization (509 possession offences per month in Feb 2022 – Jan 2023).
- According to data analysts from the Vancouver Police Department (VPD), there was a significant increase in the number of police-reported possession offences in VPD's jurisdiction starting February 2025. This increase can be partially attributable to VPD's dedicated task force in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood that launched on February 13, 2025 (called "Task Force Barrage"). The task force involved the deployment of additional policing resources to improve public safety in the Downtown Eastside by preventing crime, increasing police visibility, and addressing street disorder.²⁵

²⁸ [VPD News release on "Task Force Barrage"](#) from May 22, 2025 accessed on July 8, 2025.

There were 1,447 possession offences in BC between November 2025 and January 2026. This is 192% higher than the average counts of the same November 2023 – January 2024 period (n=496) during the original exemption (2023-2024), and 14% higher than counts from the November 2022 - January 2023 period (n=1,272) in the year before decriminalization (2022).

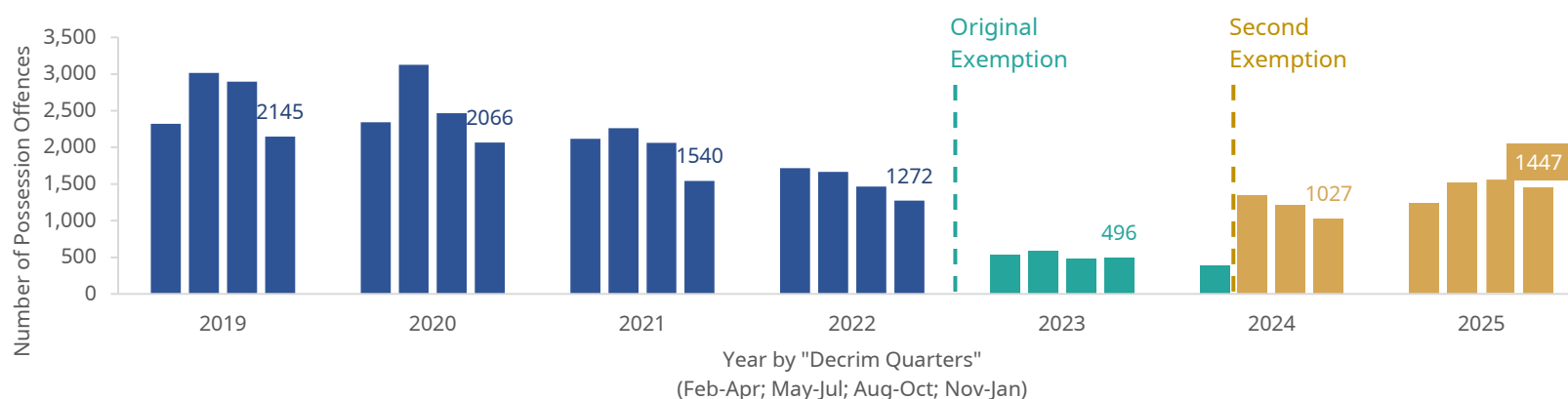


Figure 9. Offences per “Decrim Quarter”, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (February 2019 – January 2026)^{29,30,31}

- 75% (n = 1,084 of 1,447) of possession offences reported over November 2025 – January 2026 involved at least one exemption eligible substance.²⁹
- The increase in possession offences for this reporting quarter can be partially attributed to the increase from VPD jurisdiction due to “Task Force Barrage.”

²⁹ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

³⁰ An offence represents a formal police interaction or investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence may or may not involve an arrest. It is not a charge nor a conviction.

³¹ “Decrim Quarters” refer to Feb-Apr, May-Jul, Aug-Oct, Nov-Jan. These quarters enable ease of analysis and align with when the original s.56 exemption came into effect on January 31, 2023.

³² These offences could include substances not exempted by the s.56 exemption.

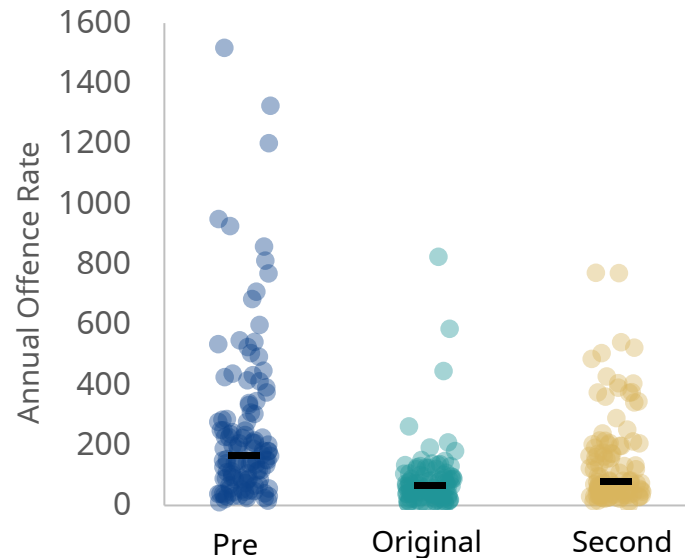


Figure 10. Annual offence rates per 100,000 adult (18+) BC residents, where possession is the most serious offence, by policy period (February 2019 - January 2023; February 2023 - April 2024; May 2024 - January 2026) and policing jurisdiction³³

- Each dot in Figure 10 represents the average annual possession offence rate for an individual police jurisdiction during the specified policy period. Black lines indicate the median group rate per policy period.
- Variability can be observed by how clustered or dispersed dots in the plot appear. Average monthly possession offence rates varied more between policing jurisdictions before the implementation of decriminalization.
- The variability between policing jurisdictions decreased during the original exemption and to a lesser extent during the second exemption.

³³ Rates are normalized by the number of months in each policy period and then multiplied by twelve to annualize.

For each possession offence, a location type of where the offence took place is identified and recorded by the reporting police officer. Of the possession offences reported during the second s.56 exemption period (May 2024 – January 2026), most of the reported location types (77.1%) were in public spaces.

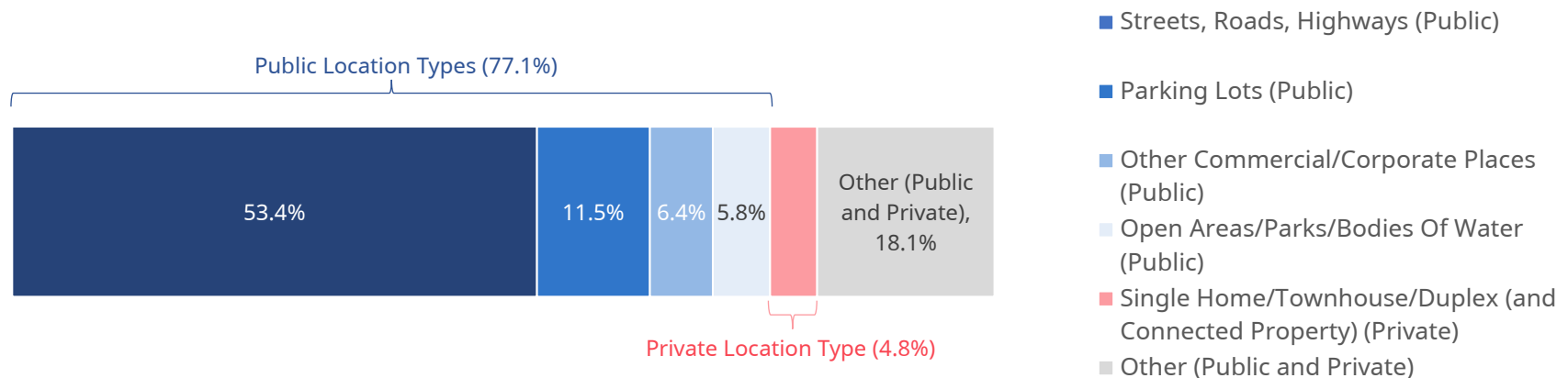


Figure 11. Proportion of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, by officer-reported location type during the second s.56 exemption (May 2024 – January 2026).^{34,35,36}

³⁴ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023, to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

³⁵ An offence represents a formal police interaction or investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence may or may not involve an arrest. It is not a charge nor a conviction.

³⁶ Location types are identified in each offence from a pre-determined list by the reporting officer. Categories are defined by the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics (CCJCSS) and are used by all police services.

Possession Offence per 100,000 Residents Over Time, by Health Authority Region

The difference in possession offence rates between regions were gradually reducing from 2019 to 2022 and to a greater extent since BC's original s.56 exemption; since the second s.56 exemption (effective May 7, 2024), the difference has increased.

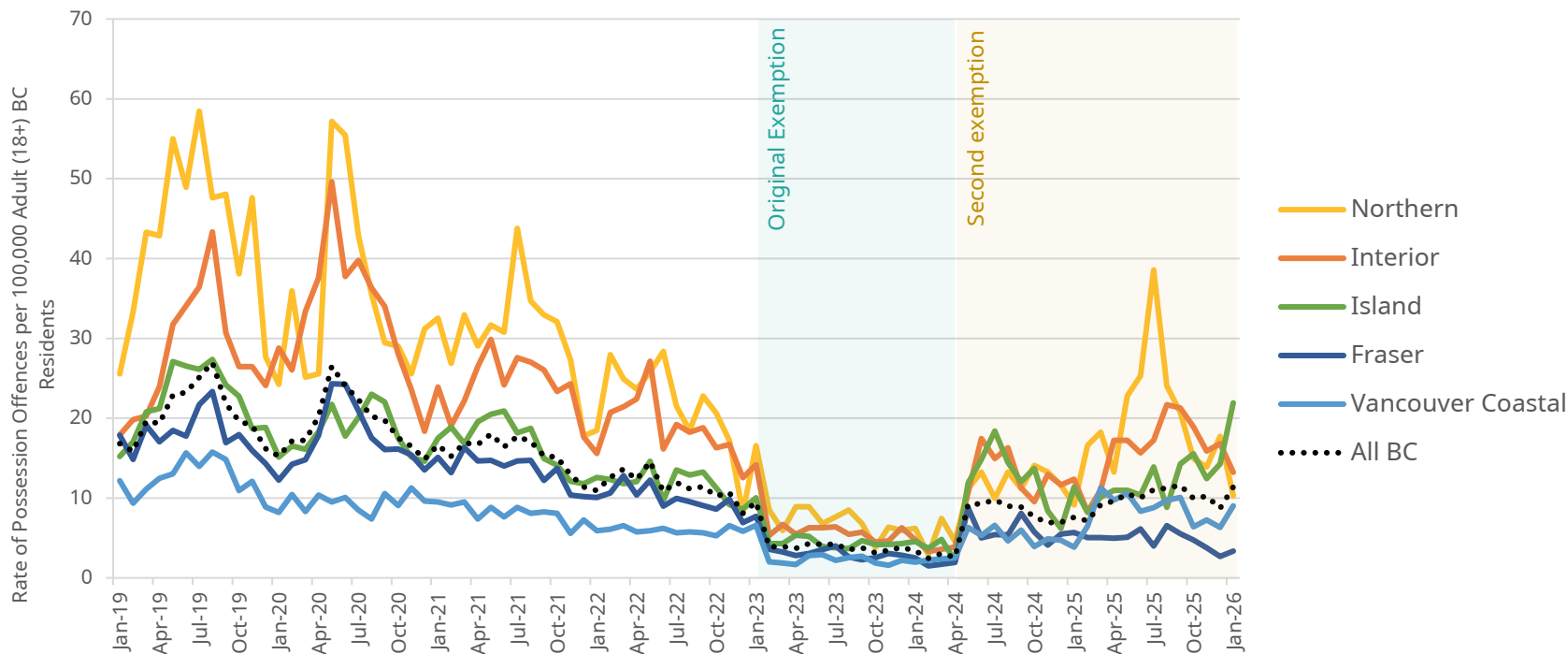


Figure 12. Offences per 100,000 Adult (18+) BC residents, where possession is the most serious offence, by health authority region (January 2019 – January 2026)^{37,38}

³⁷ Rates were calculated using population estimates from BC Stats: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates>. Population estimates extracted on April 13, 2026.

³⁸ Rates do not include RCMP Highway Patrol, RCMP District and E-Division Units, RCMP Combined Forces Special Enforcement Units, RCMP West Coast Marine Detachment, and RCMP Integrated Homicide Investigation Team.

- During the original s.56 exemption, rates of possession offence decreased significantly in all health authority regions of BC. Since the second exemption, rates of possession offences increased, although to different extents for each health authority region.
- During the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2023 – Apr 2024), the average monthly rate of possession offence in BC was 3.6 per 100,000 adult residents. This rate increased to 9.3 per 100,000 adult residents during the second exemption (May 2024 – Jan 2026).
- The average monthly rates of possession offences during the second s.56 exemption increased in BC from the rates during the original s.56 exemption ($p < 0.05$).
- The average monthly rate of possession offences during the second s.56 exemption in Fraser, Interior, and Vancouver Coastal health authority regions are different ($p < 0.05$) from their respective average monthly rate in the year before the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2022 – Jan 2023). This indicates that possession offences in these regions are not comparable to average pre-decriminalization levels in 2022.
- The average monthly rate of possession offences during the second s.56 exemption Northern and Island health authority regions are not different ($p > 0.05$) from their respective average monthly rate in the year before the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2022 – Jan 2023). This indicates that possession offences are comparable the average pre-decriminalization levels in 2022.
- Overall, the average monthly rate of possession offences during the second s.56 exemption in BC is lower ($p > 0.05$) than it was in the year before decriminalization.

Average annual possession offence rates became more consistent between policing jurisdictions in all health authority regions during the original decriminalization period. Rates became more disperse between policing jurisdictions in all regions with the implementation of the second exemption.

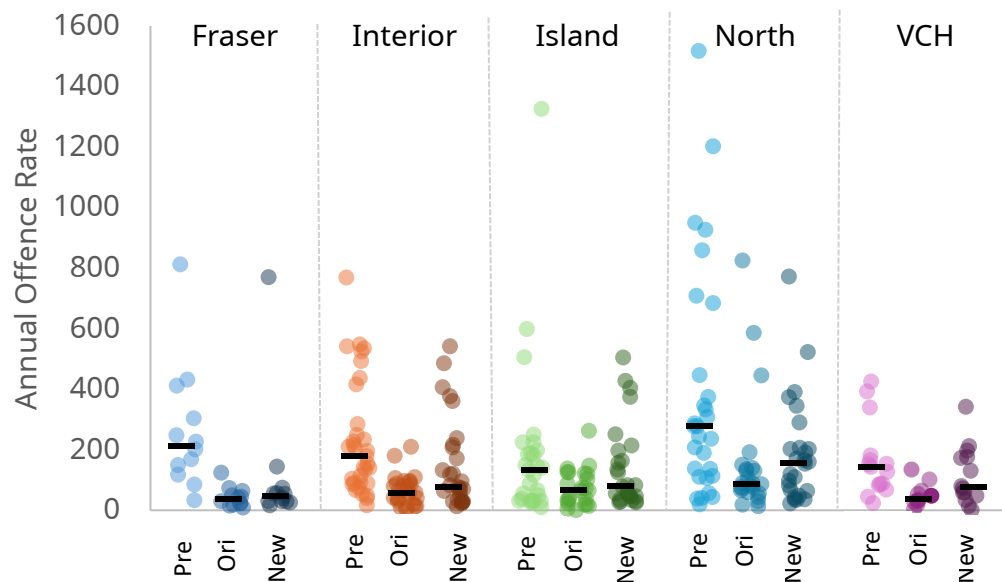


Figure 13. Average annual possession offence rates per 100,000 adult (18+) BC residents, where possession is the most serious offence, by policy period (February 2019 - January 2023; February 2023 - April 2024; May 2024 - January 2026), policing jurisdiction, and health authority region.

- Each dot in Figure 13 represents the average annual possession offence rate for an individual policing jurisdiction during the specified policy period. Black lines indicate the group median annual rate per policy period.
- Policing jurisdiction in the Northern and Interior health authority regions have the greatest variability, whereas policing jurisdictions in the Vancouver Coastal health authority region have more similar offence rates.

Drug Seizures below the Threshold (2.5g) due to Possession of Exempted Substances

Possession seizure under 2.5g of exempted drugs gradually decreased from 2019 to 2022 and to a much greater extent during the original s.56 exemption. Since the second s.56 exemption (effective May 7, 2024), the average monthly possession seizures below 2.5g increased to 46% of the pre-exemption level (2022).^{39,40}

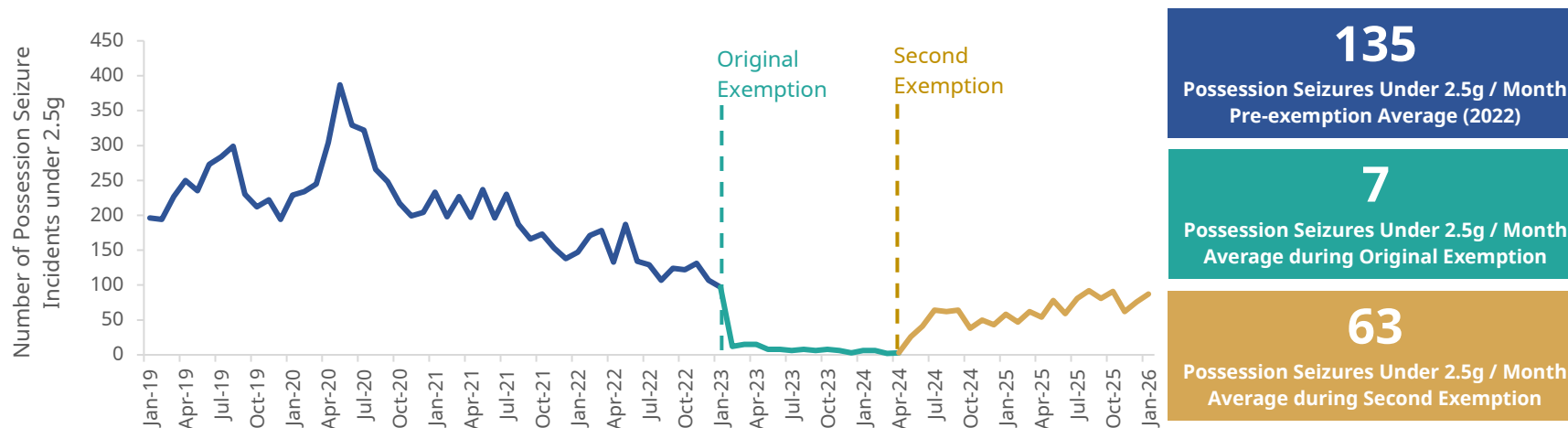


Figure 14. Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs, under 2.5g, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)⁴¹

- There were an average of 63 possession seizures incidents of amounts under 2.5g during BC’s second s.56 exemption (May 2024 – Jan 2026).
- The second exemption average monthly count of possession seizures (63 possession seizures per month) is lower ($p < 0.05$) than the average in the year before decriminalization (135 possession seizures per month).

³⁹ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

⁴⁰ Possession drug seizures are drug seizures made by police where the most serious offence on record is simple possession. Number of drug seizures do not include amounts that were unquantifiable (i.e., no weight on record).

⁴¹ The seizure amount in this dataset represents the cumulative total amount of exempted drugs seized.

There were 225 possession drug seizures under 2.5g in BC between November 2025 and January 2026. This is 1,400% higher than the average counts of the same November – January period (n=15) during the original exemption (2023-2024), and 33% lower than counts from the November - January period (n=335) in the year before Decriminalization (2022).

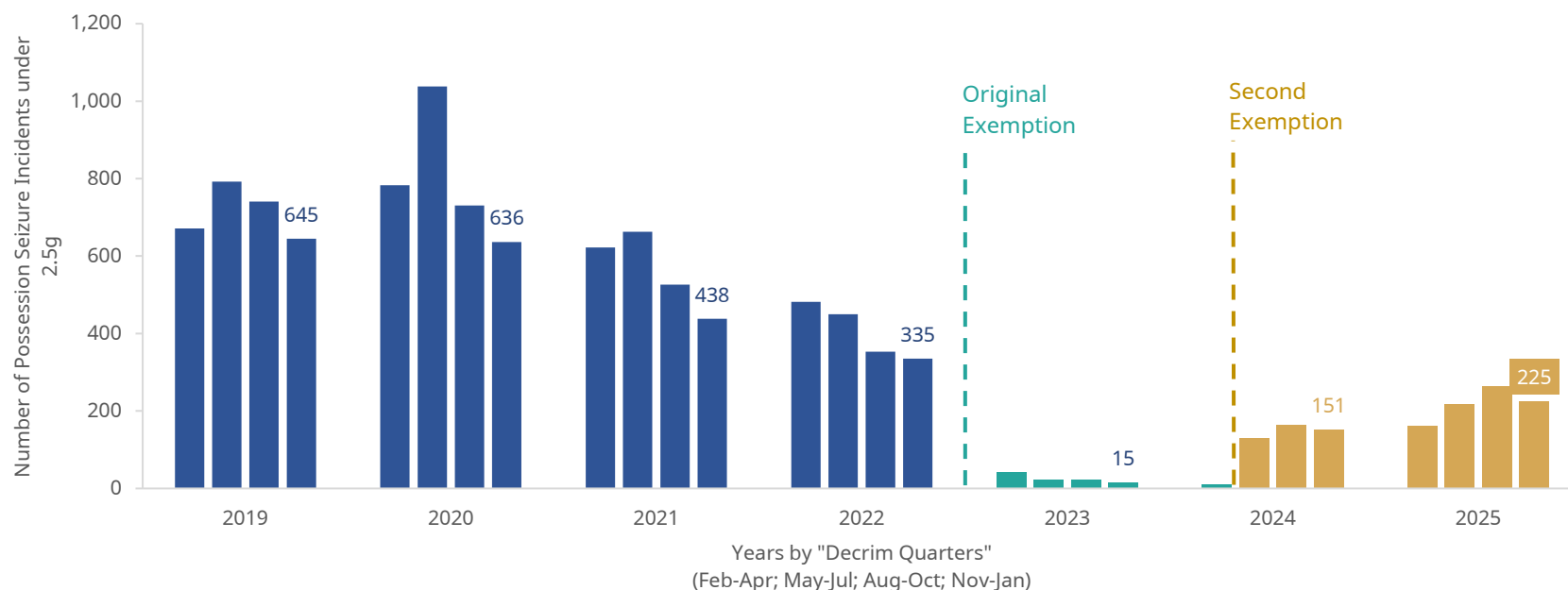


Figure 15. Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs per “Decrim Quarter”, under 2.5g, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (February 2019 – January 2026)^{42,43,44}

⁴² “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second Exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

⁴³ The seizure amount in this dataset represents the cumulative total amount of exempted drugs seized.

⁴⁴ “Decrim Quarters” refer to Feb-Apr, May-Jul, Aug-Oct, Nov-Jan. These quarters enable ease of analysis and align with when the original s.56 exemption came into effect on January 31, 2023

Drug Seizure, Regardless of Weight, Due to Possession of Exempted Substances

Possession seizure overall gradually decreased from 2019 to 2022 and to a much greater extent during BC’s original s.56 exemption. Since the second s.56 exemption (effective May 7, 2024), the average monthly overall possession seizures have increased to approximately 73% of 2022 levels.

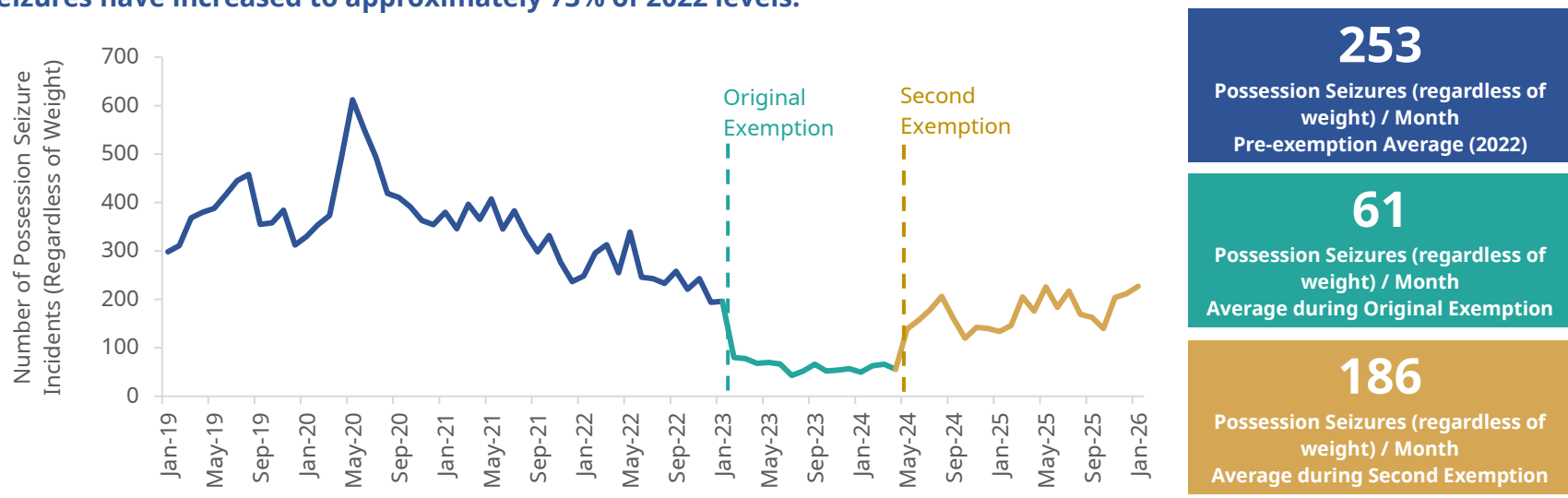


Figure 16. Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)^{45,46}

- During BC’s second s.56 exemption (May 2024 – Jan 2026), there were an average of 186 possession seizures (regardless of weight) per month.
- The second exemption average (186 possession seizures per month) is lower ($p < 0.05$) than the average in the year before decriminalization (253 possession seizures per month).

⁴⁵ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

⁴⁶ Possession drug seizures are drug seizures made by police where the most serious offence on record is simple possession.

There were 643 possession drug seizures (regardless of weight) in BC between November 2025 and January 2026. This is 299% higher than the average counts of the same November - January period (n=161) during the original exemption and 1.6% higher than counts from the November - January period (n=633) in the year before Decriminalization (2022)

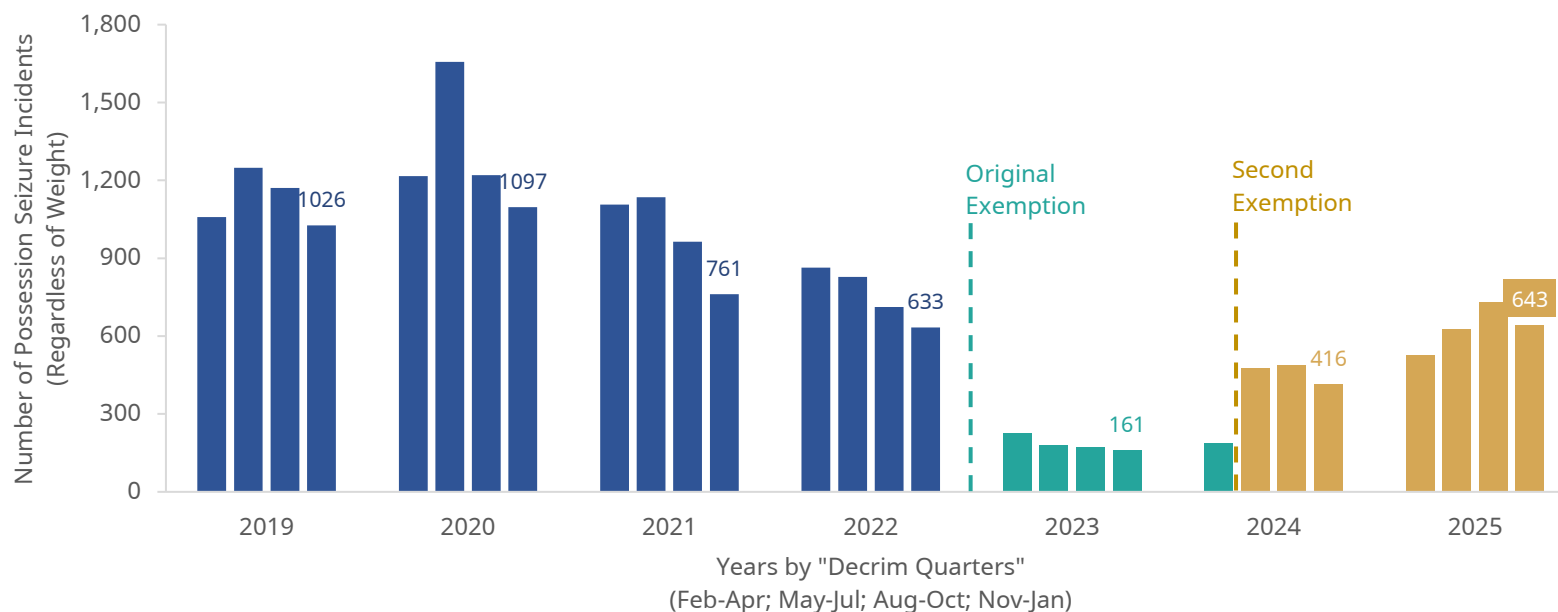


Figure 17. Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs per “Decrim Quarter”, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (February 2019 – January 2026)^{47,48}

⁴⁷ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

⁴⁸ Decrim quarters refer to Feb-Apr, May-Jul, Aug-Oct, Nov-Jan. These quarters enable ease of analysis and align with when decriminalization came into effect on January 31, 2023.

Possession Seizures by Weight Range

The dominant weight range for possession seizures shifted from 0.01-2.5g before decriminalization to >10.0g after the implementation of BC’s original s.56 exemption. Since the second s.56 exemption, 37% of measurable possession seizure incidents were under 2.5g, and 40% have been over 10g.⁴⁹

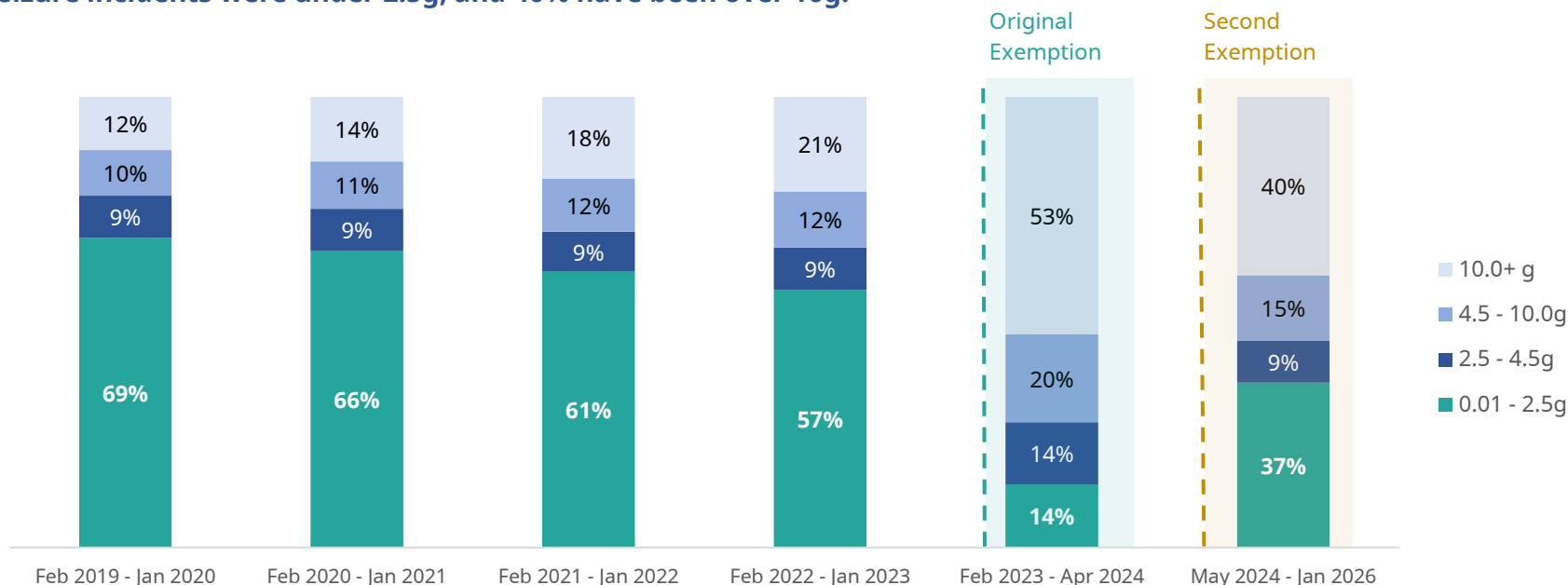


Figure 18. Proportion of seizure incidents involving exempted drugs, in various cumulative weight ranges, where possession is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (February 2019 – January 2026)^{50,51}

⁴⁹ Possession drug seizures are drug seizures made by police where the most serious offence on record is simple possession.

⁵⁰ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

⁵¹ The seizure amount in this dataset represents the cumulative total amount of exempted drugs seized. Incidents with no recorded weights are not included.

- The median amount seized for a possession offence was 1.90g in Feb 2022 - Jan 2023 (pre-implementation) and shifted to 10.10g in Feb 2023 – Jan 2024 (first year of original exemption).
- The median amount seized decreased to 6.87g in Feb 2024 – Jan 2025 (last 3 months of original exemption; first 9 months of second exemption). In the second year of the second exemption (Feb 2025 – Jan 2026, the median amount seized was 5.06g of cumulative substances.
- See Table 18 for more information on annual statistics.
- From Nov 2025 to Jan 2026, 37% of measurable possession seizure incidents were under 2.5g, and 38% were over 10.0g. See Table 17 for detailed counts of seizures by weight range.

Possession Seizures per 100,000 residents, Regardless of Amount, Over Time, by Health Authority Region

The difference in possession seizure rates between regions was gradually reducing from 2019 to 2022 and to a greater extent since BC's original s.56 exemption; since the second s.56 exemption (effective May 7, 2024), the difference has increased.

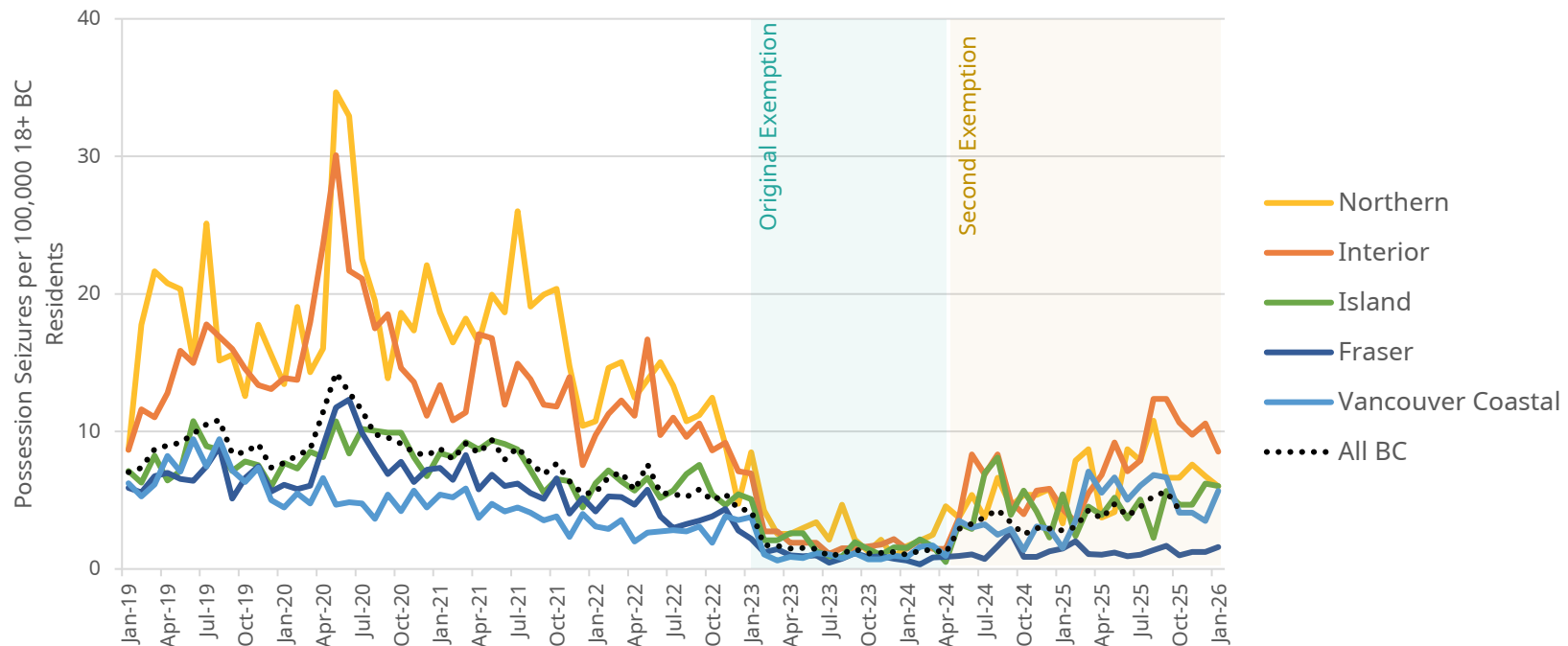


Figure 19. Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs, regardless of amount, per 100,000 adult (18+) BC residents, where possession is the most serious offence, by health authority region (January 2019 – January 2026)^{52,53}

⁵² Rates were calculated using population estimates from BC Stats: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates>.

⁵³ Rates do not include RCMP Highway Patrol, RCMP District and E-Division Units, RCMP Combined Forces Special Enforcement Units, RCMP West Coast Marine Detachment, and RCMP Integrated Homicide Investigation Team.

- After the implementation of BC's original s.56 exemption, the average monthly rate of possession seizures (regardless of weight) decreased in all health authority regions of BC. The average monthly rate of possession seizures increased for all regions after the implementation of the second s.56 exemption ($p < 0.05$), although to different extents for each region.
- During the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2023 – Apr 2024), the average monthly rate of possession seizure in BC was 1.3 per 100,000 adult residents. This rate increased to 3.9 per 100,000 adult residents during the second exemption (May 2024 – Jan 2026).
- The average monthly rate of possession seizures during the second s.56 exemption in all health authority were different ($p < 0.05$) from their respective average monthly rate in the year before the original s.56 exemption (Feb 2022 – Jan 2023). This indicates that possession seizures were not comparable to average pre-decriminalization levels in 2022. The direction of this difference; however, was not the same for each region.
 - For Fraser, Interior, Island, and Northern health authority regions, the average monthly rate of possession seizures during the second s.56 exemption period was observed to be lower than the average pre-decriminalization levels.
 - For Vancouver Coastal health authority region, the average monthly rate of possession seizures during the second s.56 exemption period was observed to be higher than the average pre-decriminalization level.

Trafficking Offences

Trafficking illegal substances of any amount is and has remained illegal during all policy phases.⁵⁴

Trafficking offences decreased from 2019 to 2022 before decriminalization. Average monthly trafficking offences during the original s.56 exemption were consistent with 2022 levels. Average monthly trafficking offences during the second s.56 exemption has exceeded average monthly levels in 2022.

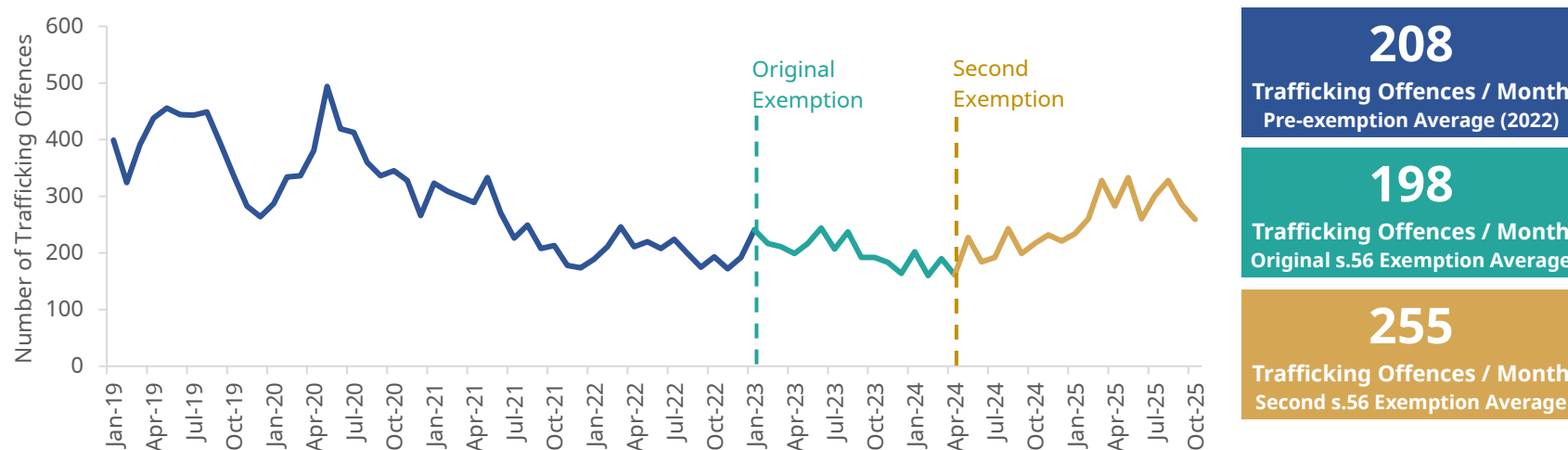


Figure 20. Number of offences, where trafficking is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)⁵⁵

- During BC’s second s.56 exemption, there has been an average of 255 trafficking offences per month.
- The second exemption monthly average trafficking offence (255 trafficking offences per month) is statistically greater ($p < 0.05$) than the average in the year before decriminalization (208 trafficking seizures per month).

⁵⁴ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024.

⁵⁵ An offence represents a formal police interaction or investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence may or may not involve an arrest. It is not a charge nor a conviction.

4. Additional Metrics

Drug Impaired Driving

Decriminalization did not appear to increase drug impaired driving. There were no significant differences in the proportion of injured drivers testing positive for opioids and/or stimulants post-decriminalization in BC.

Drug impaired driving is a public health and safety issue that is important to monitor after the implementation of decriminalization in BC. Dr. Brubacher and his team at the University of British Columbia have been monitoring the prevalence of various substances in injured drivers across Canada and have conducted an analysis looking at the prevalence of opioids and stimulants in injured drivers in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario before and after the implementation of decriminalization in BC.

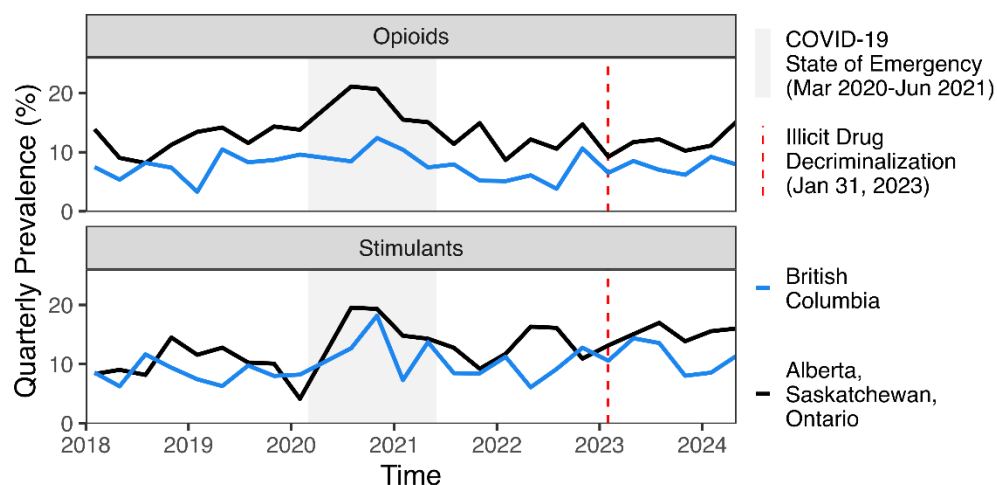


Figure 21. Quarterly prevalence of drivers testing positive for opioids and stimulants in BC compared with Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario (2018 – June 2024) ^{56,57}

⁵⁶ BC sites: Royal Columbian (New Westminster), Victoria, Vancouver. Sites in other provinces: Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Toronto, Ottawa

⁵⁷ There was no data collected between April and June 2020. Data for 2024 is only up to June 2024. As such, the analysis represents findings during the original exemption period.

- Decriminalization did not appear to increase drug-impaired driving.
- There was a small increase in injured drivers testing positive for opioids (6.4% to 7.5%) and/ or stimulants (9.3% to 11.8%) in BC between the year prior to decriminalization and the year after implementation.
- However, there were no significant differences between the changes in prevalence of injured testing positive for opioids and/or stimulants drivers in the post-decriminalization period in BC compared to other provinces after adjustment for relevant factors.⁵⁴ For study methodology please see [Brubacher et al., 2025](#).
- These results are consistent with Statistics Canada policing statistics that report that all impaired driving violations have decreased in BC by 4% from 2022 to 2023 and 14% from 2023 to 2024.

⁵⁸ *Adjusted for: age, sex, residential postal code, injury severity, detection of opioids stimulants, depressants, and alcohol, province of ED visit (BC vs. Other), season, day of week, time of day, crash type, linear time trend, and COVID-19 state of emergency (Mar 2020 to June 2021). Time trend and COVID-19 effects were allowed to vary by province.*

5. Next Steps

In 2023, BC launched a pilot program to decriminalize people who use drugs. It intended to make it easier for people struggling with addiction to come forward for help. The exemption expired on January 31, 2026 and was not renewed.

With this final quarterly data report, BC has fulfilled its reporting requirements set by Health Canada. Reporting on health service utilization metrics will continue through BCCDC's [Unregulated Drug Poisoning Dashboard](#) and BC Coroner's Service [Unregulated Drug Toxicity Deaths Dashboard](#).

Moving forward, BC will continue to work with all partners to improve the lives of people who use drugs and to address the toxic drug crisis.

Appendix A: Synthesis of Key Evidence on Police Drug Seizure Harms

Police seizures are associated with increased overdose risk.^{vi,vii,viii,ix}

- A 2024 literature review paper found that the vast majority of research found an association between police seizure and fatal overdose.^{ix}
- In the United States, 2023 and 2024 studies found an increase in both fatal and non-fatal overdose events in the immediate geographic area of a police seizure of opioids or stimulants.^{viii,xiv}
- In Vancouver, researchers found that PWUD who experienced a police seizure were more likely to report a non-fatal overdose.ⁱⁱ
- With the prevalence of strong synthetic opioids in the illegal drug supply, turning to unfamiliar sources or suppliers to replace the seized drugs increases the risk of overdose.
- Stimulant or psychedelic users who are opioid naïve might obtain replacement drugs that are contaminated with opioids like fentanyl, increasing their overdose risk.
- Opioids users' tolerance could be reduced by the unexpected disruption from police seizures. Therefore, their overdose risk is elevated when they consume their normal amount of drugs.

Police seizures increase harms experienced by PWUD by putting them in unsafe situations to replace their supply (e.g., drug debts, property theft, or sex work).^{i,ii,vi}

- Withdrawal symptoms including vomiting, depression, tremors, hallucinations, and seizures are debilitating and can be life-threatening.^{xiii} Therefore, people with physical dependencies often must quickly replace the drugs that were seized.
- People struggling with addictions and poverty are likely to turn to risky behaviours to obtain replacement drugs. In a Vancouver-based study, 12% of participants engaged in illegal or dangerous activities such as theft, selling drugs, and sex work following police interaction.ⁱ
- Police drug seizures created additional need for PWUD to interact with the illicit drug market where violence and predatory behaviour is common.ⁱⁱ

Fear of drug seizure prevents people from accessing life-saving services, from calling police in unsafe situations, and from calling emergency services during overdoses.^{ii,x}

- In Vancouver, research found that drug seizure was associated with having administered naloxone to reverse an overdose.ⁱⁱ
- PWUD in BC perceived drug seizure as commonly occurring at overdoses, preventing some participants from calling 9-1-1 during an overdose event.^x
- 12% of respondents to the 2022 Harm Reduction Client Survey reported fear of their drugs being taken away as a barrier to seeking healthcare and treatment services.^{xiv}

Appendix B: Additional Tables and Figures

Proactive Outreach – Full Reporting by Health Authority

FRASER HEALTH AUTHORITY			
	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026
# clients served	191	195	203
# unique clients	70	44	47
% connected to other service	100%	100%	100%

INTERIOR HEALTH AUTHORITY			
	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026
# clients served (through police referrals)	73	49	97
# unique clients	56	38	79
% connected to other service	50%**	38%**	34%
<p>*Note: this is a new indicator, tracking connections where repeat clients are reconnected to a service/services. This is being reported by 2 of 4 FTEs in IH to more accurately reflect how their case management system tracks clients.</p> <p>**Partial reporting</p>			

ISLAND HEALTH AUTHORITY

	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026
# clients served	71	126	780 ⁵⁹
# unique clients*	25	92	112
% connected to other service	100%	94%	84%

*NOTE: Only one ISLH FTE (outreach nurse) reports unique client data. This data is not available for Service Link call line.

NORTHERN HEALTH AUTHORITY

	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026
# clients served	182	334	359
# unique clients	59	86	80
% connected to other service*	41%	38%	40%

*Note: Only 2 FTE reported connection to service data.

⁵⁹ The increase in number of clients served in Island Health over January 2026 is related to the implementation of [Access Central](#), a new phone service connecting PWUD with additions medicine and substance use care. The Island Health FTE was rolled up into the Access Central program.

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY

	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026
# clients served	192	194	245
# unique clients	59	45	48
% connected to other service	87.5*	50*	75*
#conversations/engagements with community members/partners re: decrim	132	37	104

NOTE: HLTH has been working with FNHA to ensure data collection reflects their work and mandate. FNHA is reporting an additional metric on engagement, to reflect the unique role of FNHA and these positions, which includes significant community engagement.

VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026
# clients served	246	258	289
# unique clients served	59	53	59
% connected to another service	94%	88%	88%

Methodology: Counting Emergency Department Visits for Decriminalized Drugs

- Substance use health conditions were defined by primary substance use diagnosis based on ICD-9/10-CA coding across the following databases:
 - BC Medical Services Plan (MSP)
 - Discharge Abstract Database (DAD)
 - National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS)
 - Mental Health and Addiction Minimum Reporting Requirements (MHA MRR)
- In databases/situations where diagnostic codes are not available, the following criteria were used:
 - PharmaNet – Clients flagged for Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT), Safer Alternatives, and Plan S (Smoking cessation).
 - MHA MRR – by clients’ community mental health and substance use (MHSU) service type
 - The purpose of including these databases is to include clients that did not appear in MSP/DAD/NACRS data
- Data from MSP and NACRS were extracted for clients diagnosed with substance use conditions (coded under ICD-9 and ICD-10 diagnoses in MSP and NACRS respectively). See Table 1 and Table 2 or complete list.
- Decriminalized drug related diagnoses were grouped under the following: Cocaine, Opioid, and Stimulant.
- Provincial population estimates were from BC Stats.
- Out of approximately 90 hospitals with EDs in BC, 30 hospitals (1/3) reported in NACRS for this data. Remaining clients were bridged through MSP data.

Table 1. ICD-10/DSM-V codes and relevant diagnosis fields in Discharge Abstract Database (DAD), National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS), and Mental Health and Addiction Minimum Reporting Requirements (MHA MRR) databases

Database (s)	Condition	ICD_10/DSM_V codes
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Alcohol related disorders	F10
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Opioid related disorders	F11
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Cannabis related disorders	F12
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Sedative, hypnotic, or anxiolytic related disorders	F13
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Cocaine related disorders	F14
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Other stimulant related disorders	F15
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Hallucinogen related disorders	F16
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Nicotine dependence	F17.2
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Inhalant related disorders	F18
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Other psychoactive substance related disorders	F19
DAD/NACRS/MHA MRR	Abuse of non-psychoactive substances	F55

Table 2. ICD-9/DSM-IV codes and relevant diagnosis fields in Medical Services Plan (MSP) and Mental Health and Addiction Minimum Reporting Requirements (MHA MRR) databases

Database	Condition	ICD_9/DSM_IV codes
MSP/MHA MRR	Alcohol-induced mental disorders	291
MSP/MHA MRR	Drug-induced mental disorders	292
MSP/MHA MRR	Alcohol dependence syndrome	303
MSP/MHA MRR	Drug dependence	304 304.0 Opioid type 304.1 Barbituate type 304.2 Cocaine 304.3 Cannabis 304.4 Amphetamine and other psychostimulant 304.5 Hallucinogen 304.6 Other 304.7 Combination of other with opioid 304.8 Combination of other w/o opioid 304.9 Unspecified
MSP/MHA MRR	Nondependent abuse of drugs	305

Possession Offences

Table 3. Offences, where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)^{60,61}

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	712	671	830	818	969	983	1,062	1,141	924	831	807	684
2020	654	735	739	868	1,136	1,031	958	868	847	751	707	637
2021	722	661	732	725	782	712	768	741	663	656	560	494
2022	486	560	607	548	649	482	532	497	509	457	475	359
2023	438	179	181	170	197	193	194	163	173	145	159	175
2024	162	117	145	122	440	442	467	429	423	365	331	332
2025	364	343	439	461	503	481	529	539	557	477	488	417
2026	542	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁶⁰ An offence represents a formal police interaction and investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence is not a charge nor a conviction.

⁶¹ Offences could be due to possession above 2.5g, possession of non-exempted substances, possession of any amount of exempted substances where the exemption does not apply, and operational complexities (e.g. trafficking offences coded as possession until investigations are complete).

Table 4. Offences, where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC – Offences involving, at minimum, s.56 exemption eligible substances (May 2024 – January 2026)^{62,63}

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2024	-	-	-	-	304	312	315	310	298	256	243	257
2025	250	226	312	333	371	341	364	412	423	341	364	323
2026	397	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 5. Offences, where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC – non-s.56 exemption eligible substances only (May 2024 – January 2026)^{64,65,66}

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2024	-	-	-	-	136	130	152	119	125	109	88	75
2025	114	117	127	128	132	140	165	127	134	136	91	61
2026	85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁶² Offences listed as predominantly involving s.56 exemption eligible substances (via its UCR code) are counted in this table. Counts in this table could include a small number of files that have both s.56 exemption eligible and non-exempted substances. Refer to the [methodology](#) section for more details.

⁶³ Historic data (from before May 2024) is not available for this indicator.

⁶⁴ An offence represents a formal police interaction and investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence is not a charge nor a conviction.

⁶⁵ Offences listed as involving non s.56 exemption eligible substances (via its UCR code) are counted in this table. Counts in this table do not include any files that involve a s.56 exemption eligible substance. Refer to the [methodology](#) section for more details.

⁶⁶ Historic data (from before May 2024) is not available for this indicator.

Table 6. Offences, where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC – Top 10 Location Types during baseline observation period (February 1, 2019 – January 31, 2023)^{67,68}

Baseline (Feb 2019 - Jan 2023)		
Location	Count	%
Streets, Roads, Highways	13769	40%
Parking Lots	5020	15%
Other Commercial/Corporate Places	3299	10%
Single Home/Townhouse/Duplex (and Connected Property)	2585	8%
Open Areas/Parks/Bodies of Water	2201	6%
Other Non-Commercial/Corporate Places	1389	4%
Residential Dwelling Unit (Apartment/Condo/Rooming House/Dorm)	1145	3%
Bar, Restaurant	663	2%
Homeless Shelter/Mission	589	2%
Commercial Dwelling Unit (Hotel/Motel/B&B Room)	515	1%
Other	3289	10%
TOTAL	34464	100%

⁶⁷ An offence represents a formal police interaction and investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence is not a charge nor a conviction.

⁶⁸ Location type data were extracted later than offence files. As such, there are some expected discrepancies between the number of possession offence files and number of location types. Data analysts from VPD and RCMP note that this is expected given the 'live' nature of the data environment from which these data are extracted.

Table 7. Offences, where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC – Top 10 Location Types during original exemption period (February 1, 2023 – May 31, 2023)^{69,70,71}

Original Exemption Period (Feb 2023 - Apr 2024)		
Location	Count	%
Streets, Roads, Highways	1196	45%
Parking Lots	269	10%
Other Commercial/Corporate Places	235	9%
Single Home/Townhouse/Duplex (And Connected Property)	208	8%
Other Non-Commercial/Corporate Places	131	5%
Open Areas/Parks/Bodies of Water	130	5%
Residential Dwelling Unit (Apartment/Condo/Rooming House/Dorm)	78	3%
Homeless Shelter/Mission	52	2%
Bar, Restaurant	42	2%
Jail/Penitentiary/Corrections Institution	39	1%
Other	295	11%
Total	2675	100%

⁶⁹ “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026. Law enforcement data

⁷⁰ An offence represents a formal police interaction and investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence is not a charge nor a conviction.

⁷¹ Location type data were extracted later than offence files. As such, there are some expected discrepancies between the number of possession offence files and number of location types. Data analysts from VPD and RCMP note that this is expected given the ‘live’ nature of the data environment from which these data are extracted.

Table 8. Offences, where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC – Top 10 Location Types during original exemption period (February 1, 2023 – May 31, 2023)^{72,73,74}

Second Exemption Period (May 2024 - January 2026)		
Location	Count	%
Streets, Roads, Highways	5808	53%
Parking Lots	1251	12%
Other Commercial/Corporate Places	696	6%
Open Areas/Parks/Bodies of Water	633	6%
Other Non-Commercial/Corporate Places	614	6%
Single Home/Townhouse/Duplex (And Connected Property)	522	5%
Residential Dwelling Unit (Apartment/Condo/Rooming House/Dorm)	168	2%
Bar, Restaurant	139	1%
Other Public Transportation and Connected Facilities	123	1%
Hospital	107	1%
Other	812	7%
Total	10873	100%

⁷² “Original exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption in place from January 31, 2023 to May 6, 2024. “Second exemption” refers to BC’s s.56 exemption that came into effect on May 7, 2024 and concluded on January 31, 2026.

⁷³ An offence represents a formal police interaction and investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence is not a charge nor a conviction.

⁷⁴ Location type data were extracted later than offence files. As such, there are some expected discrepancies between the number of possession offence files and number of location types. Data analysts from VPD and RCMP note that this is expected given the ‘live’ nature of the data environment from which these data are extracted.

Possession Seizures (Regardless of Weight)

Table 9. Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs (regardless of amount), where the most serious offence is possession, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)⁷⁵

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	298	311	368	380	388	416	445	458	355	358	384	312
2020	330	354	373	489	612	550	494	419	410	391	363	354
2021	380	346	396	365	407	345	383	334	298	332	276	237
2022	248	296	313	255	339	246	243	233	258	221	243	194
2023	196	80	78	68	70	67	43	52	66	52	54	57
2024	50	63	66	56	139	157	179	206	161	120	142	140
2025	134	146	205	176	226	184	217	254	270	206	204	212
2026	227	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁷⁵ Number of seizures, regardless of amount, include both incidents with quantifiable amount and incidents with unquantifiable (e.g., “bag”) amount.

Possession Offences Over Time, by Health Authority Region^{76,77}

Table 10. Count of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, Fraser Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	276	229	295	263	285	274	335	360	261	277	246	221
2020	192	223	232	280	381	380	328	275	252	253	241	212
2021	240	210	260	233	234	223	233	234	194	218	165	162
2022	166	175	211	171	202	148	164	157	149	142	162	114
2023	133	62	56	48	53	61	69	45	39	44	53	49
2024	45	27	31	35	158	90	98	97	146	104	74	99
2025	104	92	92	91	93	112	73	120	101	87	70	50
2026	63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁷⁶An offence represents a formal police interaction and investigation based on a particular type of suspected crime. An offence is not a charge nor a conviction.

⁷⁷Rates do not include Stl'at'imx Tribal Police, RCMP Highway Patrol, RCMP District and E-Division Units, RCMP Combined Forces Special Enforcement Units, RCMP West Coast Marine Detachment, and RCMP Integrated Homicide Investigation Team.

Table 11. Count of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, Interior Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	122	135	138	163	216	232	248	295	209	180	180	164
2020	199	180	231	260	343	261	275	251	235	194	163	127
2021	168	134	156	186	210	170	194	190	183	164	171	124
2022	112	149	154	161	195	116	138	131	135	117	120	90
2023	104	39	49	40	46	46	47	40	42	33	34	46
2024	36	25	27	29	81	132	113	123	85	72	98	88
2025	94	63	84	131	131	119	131	165	162	144	117	124
	96	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 12. Count of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, Island Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	109	122	149	152	194	190	187	196	173	163	134	135
2020	110	120	117	133	158	129	146	167	160	127	110	106
2021	129	139	124	144	151	154	134	138	110	104	89	87
2022	95	93	89	91	110	73	102	97	100	85	69	65
2023	77	33	33	41	40	30	29	28	36	32	32	33
2024	36	29	38	17	94	117	145	114	95	108	66	49
2025	90	65	80	87	87	82	110	70	113	123	96	110
2026	167	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 13. Count of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, Northern Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	59	77	100	99	127	113	135	110	111	88	110	64
2020	56	83	58	59	132	128	99	82	68	67	59	72
2021	75	62	76	67	73	71	101	80	76	74	63	41
2022	43	65	58	55	60	66	50	43	53	48	40	19
2023	39	20	14	21	21	16	18	20	16	9	15	14
2024	15	7	18	11	27	32	24	32	27	34	32	28
2025	22	40	44	32	55	61	93	58	50	36	33	42
2026	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 14. Count of offences, where possession is the most serious offence, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	129	99	118	132	138	166	148	167	157	116	128	94
2020	88	112	89	111	102	108	91	79	113	97	121	103
2021	102	98	102	79	95	82	95	87	89	87	60	78
2022	65	67	72	63	65	68	62	63	62	58	72	64
2023	75	23	21	19	32	33	25	29	31	21	18	25
2024	23	26	28	29	74	62	77	54	70	46	57	55
2025	45	76	132	114	124	98	103	114	118	75	85	74
2026	105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Trafficking Offences

Table 15. Offences, where trafficking is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	399	324	392	438	456	444	443	449	394	337	283	264
2020	287	334	336	381	494	419	413	360	336	345	328	266
2021	323	309	299	289	333	270	226	249	208	213	178	174
2022	189	211	246	211	220	208	224	199	175	193	172	192
2023	241	217	211	199	217	244	207	237	192	192	183	164
2024	202	160	190	161	227	184	192	243	199	217	232	221
2025	234	260	328	283	333	260	301	328	286	259	282	227
2026	261	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Trafficking Seizures of Exempted Substances, Regardless of Amount

Table 16. Seizure incidents (regardless of amount), where trafficking is the most serious offence, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)⁷⁸

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	124	96	148	113	179	159	154	154	141	103	109	110
2020	99	112	106	133	192	183	167	144	130	153	145	128
2021	163	141	135	138	142	126	103	111	106	115	81	91
2022	100	107	125	88	117	97	114	100	86	90	78	87
2023	117	96	100	88	50	70	61	90	64	66	69	62
2024	59	80	93	71	132	97	99	93	63	66	80	88
2025	81	96	138	103	136	100	124	127	99	100	107	92
2026	97	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁷⁸ Number of seizures, regardless of amount, include both incidents with quantifiable amount and incidents with unquantifiable (e.g., “bag”) amount.

Distribution of Quantifiable Possession Drug Seizures by Cumulative Weight Seized, Exempted Substances Only, Over Time

Table 17. Distribution of seizure incidents involving exempted drugs, where possession is the most serious offence, where the amount is quantifiable, by all police in BC (January 2019 – January 2026)^{79,80}

0.01 – 2.5g												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	196	194	227	250	235	273	284	299	230	212	222	194
2020	229	234	245	304	387	329	322	266	248	217	199	204
2021	233	198	227	197	237	196	230	187	166	173	153	138
2022	147	171	178	133	187	134	129	107	124	122	131	107
2023	97	12	15	15	8	8	6	8	6	8	6	3
2024	6	6	2	3	26	41	64	62	64	38	50	43
2025	58	47	62	54	78	59	81	92	81	91	62	76
2026	87	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁷⁹ Table 17 includes only possession seizure incidents with quantifiable amount. As such, totals are different from Table 9. The upper range is inclusive.

⁸⁰ Counts between May 2024 – Apr 2025 were adjusted on the advice of policing data analysts.

2.5 – 4.5g												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	21	29	41	45	46	32	39	30	26	22	30	31
2020	20	37	26	49	54	53	40	26	39	39	35	31
2021	19	22	40	29	25	30	26	28	25	34	25	19
2022	21	28	26	18	29	23	24	17	19	19	26	20
2023	19	12	16	7	6	9	4	4	9	12	7	8
2024	8	2	5	2	11	15	12	18	14	8	11	15
2025	12	16	18	18	17	15	19	12	26	18	17	21
2026	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

4.5 – 10.0g												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	28	33	35	28	33	38	51	41	30	35	45	25
2020	26	24	36	35	57	57	45	50	48	44	36	35
2021	41	42	42	40	35	43	45	40	34	37	31	18
2022	29	29	30	35	33	33	37	36	37	17	25	18
2023	23	13	10	13	14	14	11	10	16	5	13	12
2024	7	6	6	7	19	15	15	30	20	16	13	23
2025	17	19	35	28	37	26	26	40	32	20	30	37
2026	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

10.0 - 15.0g												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	7	14	7	12	16	17	10	19	20	6	16	12
2020	9	12	15	23	25	26	23	8	15	13	27	13
2021	16	18	11	14	19	18	17	10	15	11	11	9
2022	6	10	18	11	19	12	11	11	11	9	10	7
2023	14	11	9	5	6	6	6	5	12	6	5	9
2024	8	1	4	1	12	11	14	13	8	5	13	11
2025	5	10	23	14	18	21	19	25	24	17	16	23
2026	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

15.0 - 28.0g												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	10	10	11	8	18	14	20	20	16	16	17	17
2020	10	9	13	18	19	27	20	18	13	16	20	20
2021	21	20	24	25	24	15	19	23	10	20	18	13
2022	15	16	14	11	20	13	11	22	23	16	12	12
2023	9	14	10	7	14	11	5	5	9	8	2	8
2024	5	6	10	7	14	20	18	8	15	10	24	20
2025	18	22	25	21	31	28	29	41	49	21	31	17
2026	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

>28.0g												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	11	9	11	8	12	16	12	21	8	19	17	12
2020	10	17	19	29	24	22	14	19	19	30	20	24
2021	25	23	26	22	37	17	22	23	21	30	19	20
2022	19	21	23	25	24	15	16	23	30	20	25	25
2023	26	13	14	19	15	15	10	14	8	8	15	14
2024	10	20	18	15	30	31	28	27	19	15	25	21
2025	13	26	31	35	37	26	33	41	46	32	31	28
2026	39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Distribution of Quantifiable Possession Drug Seizures by Cumulative Weight Seized (in Percentiles), Exempted Substances Only, Over Time

Table 18. Distribution of seizure incidents (in percentiles) involving exempted drugs, where possession is the most serious offence, where the amount is quantifiable (in grams), by all police in BC (February 2019 – January 2025)

	Weight (in grams)										
	Min	10 th Percentile	20 th Percentile	30 th Percentile	40 th Percentile	Median	60 th Percentile	70 th Percentile	80 th Percentile	90 th Percentile	Max
Feb 2019 – Jan 2020	0.01	0.10	0.20	0.42	0.70	1.00	1.59	2.80	5.08	12.09	688.00
Feb 2020 – Jan 2021	0.00	0.10	0.25	0.50	0.80	1.03	1.96	3.07	6.28	15.00	3000.00
Feb 2021 – Jan 2022	0.00	0.10	0.30	0.59	1.00	1.40	2.22	4.35	8.70	20.24	5261.34
Feb 2022 – Jan 2023	0.00	0.10	0.48	0.87	1.00	1.90	3.00	5.00	10.32	25.88	2400.00
Feb 2023 – Jan 2024	0.08	1.58	3.16	4.54	6.74	10.10	14.00	20.82	33.36	62.01	881.00
Feb 2024 – Jan 2025	0.00	0.50	1.00	2.10	4.00	6.87	11.70	18.63	29.15	54.93	2260.60
Feb 2025 – Jan 2026	0.01	0.29	1.00	1.70	3.00	5.06	9.51	15.28	24.48	48.36	1237.50
Original s.56 Exemption Period											
Original s.56 Exemption (Feb – Apr 2024) AND Second s.56 Exemption (May 2024 – Jan 2025)											
Second s.56 Exemption (Feb 2025 – Jan 2026)											

Possession Drug Seizures, Regardless of Amount, Over Time, by Health Authority Region^{81,82}

Table 19. Count of seizure incidents, where possession is the most serious offence, Fraser Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	91	86	104	108	101	99	115	137	79	102	115	87
2020	96	91	95	140	184	193	155	131	108	122	99	113
2021	117	103	132	92	109	96	99	88	81	105	64	82
2022	69	87	86	77	95	63	49	54	58	63	72	46
2023	38	21	25	17	16	17	8	13	20	15	16	13
2024	11	6	15	16	17	19	13	30	48	16	16	23
2025	27	37	20	19	22	17	19	25	31	18	23	23
2026	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

⁸¹ Number of seizures, regardless of amount, include both incidents with quantifiable amount and incidents with unquantifiable (e.g., “bag”) amount.

⁸² Rates do not include St’at’l’imx Tribal Police, RCMP Highway Patrol, RCMP District and E-Division Units, RCMP Combined Forces Special Enforcement Units, RCMP West Coast Marine Detachment, and RCMP Integrated Homicide Investigation Team.

Table 20. Count of seizure incidents, where possession is the most serious offence, Interior Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	59	79	75	87	108	102	121	115	109	99	91	89
2020	96	95	124	163	208	150	146	121	128	101	94	77
2021	94	76	80	120	118	84	105	97	84	83	98	53
2022	70	81	88	80	120	70	79	69	76	62	66	51
2023	51	20	20	14	14	14	8	11	11	12	13	16
2024	11	16	11	11	28	63	52	63	37	30	43	44
2025	33	26	42	52	70	54	60	94	94	81	72	78
2026	62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 21. Count of seizure incidents, where possession is the most serious offence, Island Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	51	45	59	46	51	77	64	62	51	56	54	43
2020	56	53	62	59	78	61	74	73	72	72	59	49
2021	62	60	68	64	69	67	64	53	41	48	47	33
2022	47	54	48	43	50	39	43	52	57	41	35	41
2023	39	16	16	20	20	10	7	7	15	11	8	12
2024	12	17	13	4	26	23	55	64	31	45	33	18
2025	43	19	36	31	41	29	40	18	45	37	36	48
2026	46											
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 22. Count of seizure incidents, where possession is the most serious offence, Northern Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	20	41	50	48	47	35	58	35	36	29	41	36
2020	31	44	33	37	80	76	52	45	32	43	40	51
2021	43	38	42	38	46	43	60	44	46	47	34	24
2022	25	34	35	29	32	35	31	25	26	29	21	11
2023	20	10	6	6	7	8	5	11	5	3	5	2
2024	4	5	6	11	9	13	9	16	11	13	13	14
2025	8	19	21	9	10	21	19	26	16	16	18	16
2026	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Table 23. Count of seizure incidents, where possession is the most serious offence, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Region (January 2019 – January 2026)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	66	56	65	87	75	100	79	100	76	67	78	53
2020	48	59	51	71	50	52	51	39	58	45	61	48
2021	58	56	63	40	51	45	48	44	38	41	25	43
2022	34	32	39	22	29	30	31	30	34	21	42	39
2023	43	12	7	10	9	13	12	9	13	8	8	11
2024	10	19	20	11	41	35	38	29	34	16	36	34
2025	18	41	83	65	78	59	71	80	78	48	48	41
2026	66	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Original s.56 Exemption Period												
Second s.56 exemption Period												

Simple Possession Offences, Seizures, and Offences Cleared by Charge Over Time

Table 24. Number of Offences, Seizure incidents involving exempted drugs (regardless of amount), and Offences Cleared by Charge, where possession is the most serious offence, by police in BC (2019 – 2024)

	Offences	Seizure Incidents (Regardless of Amount)	Offences Cleared by Charge ^{83,84,85}
2019 (Full Year)	10,432	4,473	1,932
2020 (Full Year)	9,931	5,139	1,845
2021 (Full Year)	8,216	4,099	1,044
2022 (Full Year)	6,161	3,089	710
2023 (Full Year)	2,367	883	325
2024⁸⁶ (Full Year)	3,775	1,479	393

⁸³ Data from Statistics Canada: [Table 35-10-0177-01 Incident-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, Canada, provinces, territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Canadian Forces Military Police](#). Accessed 2025-07-23.

⁸⁴ The indicator used in this table are the number of incidents “cleared by charge” for the following offences: heroin, possession [4110]; opioid (other than heroin), possession [4170]; cocaine, possession [4120]; Methamphetamines (crystal meth), possession [4150]; Methylendioxyamphetamine (ecstasy), possession [4160]; Other Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, possession [4130]. Incidents could involve more than one person. This indicator includes counts from Canadian Forces Military Police, a jurisdiction that is excluded from this report and not included in counts of offences or seizure incidents.

⁸⁵ Offences cleared by charge are [defined as offences where at least one accused has been identified and either a charge has been laid, or recommended to be laid, against the accused in connection with the offence](#). The charge may or may not align with the most serious offence recorded for an incident. Accessed 2025-04-23.

⁸⁶ The original s.56 exemption was effective until May 6, 2024. On May 7, 2024, the second s.56 exemption was implemented and replaced the original exemption.

BC Population (2019 – 2025)

Regional analyses completed in this report are based on health authority boundaries. Disaggregation by health authority regions, which was not previously available, enables improved alignment with health service utilization statistics.

Populations for each health authority region are derived from BCStats.⁸⁷ Numbers reflect BC’s total population and are used in calculating regional crime rates.

Table 25. BC Adult (18+) Population by Health Authority Regions (2019 - 2025)⁸⁸

	Fraser	Interior	Island	Northern	Vancouver Coastal
2019	1,542,951	680,763	716,179	230,959	1,059,555
2020	1,567,035	691,400	726,420	230,825	1,072,116
2021	1,591,509	703,043	736,834	230,623	1,074,509
2022	1,648,783	718,807	754,086	232,630	1,098,801
2023	1,734,233	734,638	767,409	236,952	1,143,204
2024	1,825,135	745,846	779,934	240,503	1,179,931
2025	1,855,602	737,463	771,755	237,215	1,174,259
2026	1,870,048	726,902	761,325	233,019	1,162,752

⁸⁷ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates>

⁸⁸ Population estimates updated on April 15, 2026.

Police Agencies and Health Authority Regions

Table 26. Police Agencies and Health Authority Alignment

Fraser	Interior	Island	Northern	Vancouver Coastal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abbotsford Police Department Burnaby RCMP Coquitlam RCMP Delta Police Department Integrated Road Safety Unit - Fraser Valley Langley RCMP Mission RCMP New Westminster Police Service Port Moody Police Department Ridge Meadows RCMP Surrey Police Service Surrey RCMP Upper Fraser Valley Reg RCMP White Rock RCMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 Mile House RCMP Alexis Creek RCMP Ashcroft RCMP Barriere RCMP Boundary RCMP Castlegar RCMP Central Kootenay RCMP Chase RCMP Clearwater RCMP Clinton RCMP Columbia Valley RCMP Cranbrook / Kimberley RCMP Creston RCMP Elk Valley RCMP Golden RCMP Kamloops RCMP Kelowna RCMP Keremeos RCMP Lillooet RCMP Logan Lake RCMP Lytton RCMP Merritt RCMP Nelson Police Department North Okanagan RCMP North Okanagan Rural RCMP Penticton RCMP Princeton RCMP Revelstoke RCMP Salmon Arm RCMP Sicamous RCMP South Okanagan RCMP Summerland RCMP Trail & Greater District RCMP Williams Lake RCMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert Bay RCMP BC Highway Patrol - Vancouver Island Campbell River RCMP Central Island Traffic Services Central Saanich Police Service Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (Island Region) Comox Valley RCMP E Division (Vir) RCMP Gabriola Island RCMP Integrated Road Safety Unit - Capital Regional District Integrated Road Safety Unit - North Island Island District Ladysmith RCMP Lake Cowichan RCMP Nanaimo RCMP Nootka Sound RCMP North Cowichan/Duncan Det North Island Traffic Services Oak Bay Police Department Oceanside RCMP Outer Gulf Islands RCMP Port Alberni RCMP Port Hardy RCMP Quadra Island RCMP Saanich Police Department Salt Spring Island RCMP Sayward RCMP Shawnigan Lake RCMP Sidney - North Saanich RCMP Sooke RCMP South Island Traffic Services Tofino RCMP (Ahousaht) Ucluelet RCMP Victoria Police Department West Shore RCMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Atlin RCMP Burns Lake RCMP Chetwynd RCMP Daajing Giids (Queen Charlotte) RCMP Dawson Creek RCMP Dease Lake RCMP Fort St James RCMP Fort St. John Fraser Lake RCMP Houston RCMP Hudson's Hope RCMP Kitimat RCMP Lisims/Nass Valley RCMP Mackenzie RCMP Masset RCMP McBride RCMP New Hazelton RCMP Northern Rockies RCMP Prince George RCMP Prince Rupert RCMP Quesnel RCMP Smithers RCMP Stewart RCMP Takla Landing RCMP Terrace RCMP Tsay Keh Dene RCMP Tumbler Ridge RCMP Valemount RCMP Vanderhoof RCMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anahim Lake RCMP Bella Bella RCMP Bella Coola RCMP Bowen Island RCMP North Vancouver RCMP Port McNeil RCMP Powell River RCMP Richmond RCMP Squamish RCMP Sunshine Coast RCMP University RCMP Vancouver Police Department West Vancouver Police Department Whistler/Pemberton RCMP

BC Corrections Drug Related Offence Clients

Table 27. Average daily count (ADC) of **community corrections clients** whose most serious offence (MSO) was a charge and/or conviction for a drug related offence. (2019 - 2024)⁸⁹

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ADC of individuals with drug related MSO	1,220.6 (6%)	1,013.2 (5%)	879.5 (5%)	804.9 (5%)	695.8 (4%)	574.8 (3%)
Drug Trafficking	510.1 (2%)	433.5 (2%)	377.4 (2%)	327.1 (2%)	252.6 (1%)	199.8 (1%)
Drug Possession	157.8 (1%)	100.6 (1%)	64.6 (0%)	48.7 (0%)	32.1 (0%)	13.9 (0%)
Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking	552.7 (3%)	479.1 (2%)	437.4 (2%)	429.1 (3%)	411.1 (2%)	361.1 (2%)
Overall ADC- Community Corrections	20,835.3	19,575.2	17,670.4	17,124.4	17,051.6	17,102.3

Table 28. Average daily count (ADC) of individuals in **provincial custody** whose most serious offence (MSO) was a charge and/or conviction for a drug related offence. (2019 - 2024)⁹⁰

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ADC of individuals with drug related MSO	135.6 (6%)	73.1 (4%)	76.7 (5%)	64.1 (4%)	57.7 (3%)	46.1 (2%)
Drug Trafficking	68.4 (3%)	43.0 (3%)	40.0 (3%)	29.5 (2%)	22.2 (1%)	16.8 (1%)
Drug Possession	0.2 (0%)	0.0 (0%)	0.2 (0%)	0.0 (0%)	0.0 (0%)	0.0 (0%)
Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking	67.1 (3%)	30.1 (2%)	36.6 (2%)	34.6 (2%)	35.5 (2%)	29.3 (2%)
Overall ADC- Custody	2,286.5	1,656.0	1,525.9	1,659.6	1,828.9	1,861.4

⁸⁹ Data extracted from Cognos BI on July 29, 2025. Data represents individuals whose most serious offence for which they were charged and/or convicted was drug related. Therefore, individuals with both drug related charges and charges more serious in nature are not included. Due to rounding, percentages may not total as expected.

⁹⁰ Same as above.

Appendix C: Additional Contextual Indicators

Information related to the contextual indicators will be provided as appendix when they become available and appropriate for reporting.

Indicator	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of clients accessing prescribed alternatives 	BCCDC Unregulated Drug Poisoning Emergency Dashboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of paramedic-attended overdose events 	BCCDC Unregulated Drug Poisoning Emergency Dashboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of paramedic-attended overdose events: First Nations people 	FNHA – Toxic Drug Crisis Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of unregulated drug deaths 	BC Coroners Service – Unregulated Drug Deaths Dashboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of illicit drug toxicity deaths: First Nations people 	FNHA – Toxic Drug Crisis Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in drugs implicated in fatal overdoses 	BC Coroners Service – Unregulated Drug Deaths Dashboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth substance use trends 	BC Adolescent Health Survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population level substance use trends 	Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjacent crime statistics 	Statistics Canada Incident-based Crime Statistics

Appendix D: References

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