



WINDSOR-ESSEX
COMMUNITY
**OPIOID &
SUBSTANCE**
STRATEGY

WECOSS Harm Reduction Working Group Meeting – Project Update

**Thursday, May 22nd from
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction: Community Survey Results

Background

- ❖ On April 22, 2025, the HRWG launched a survey to assess service provider knowledge and perceptions of harm reduction and substance use.
- ❖ The survey aimed to identify opportunities to enhance education and organizational policies related to harm reduction and substance use that foster inclusive, non-judgmental, and supportive environments across Windsor-Essex.
- ❖ The survey examined three evaluation categories – **Knowledge & Attitudes, Program Support, and Organizational Policy & Practice.**

Community Survey

Method, Scoring, and Analysis

Method

- The survey examined respondent agreement with 9 items across three categories: Knowledge & Attitudes, Program Support, and Organizational Policy & Practice
- 5 demographic questions were also asked to identify sector and lived experience
- Open-ended questions were used to assess opportunities to improve policy action around substance use and harm reduction

Scoring

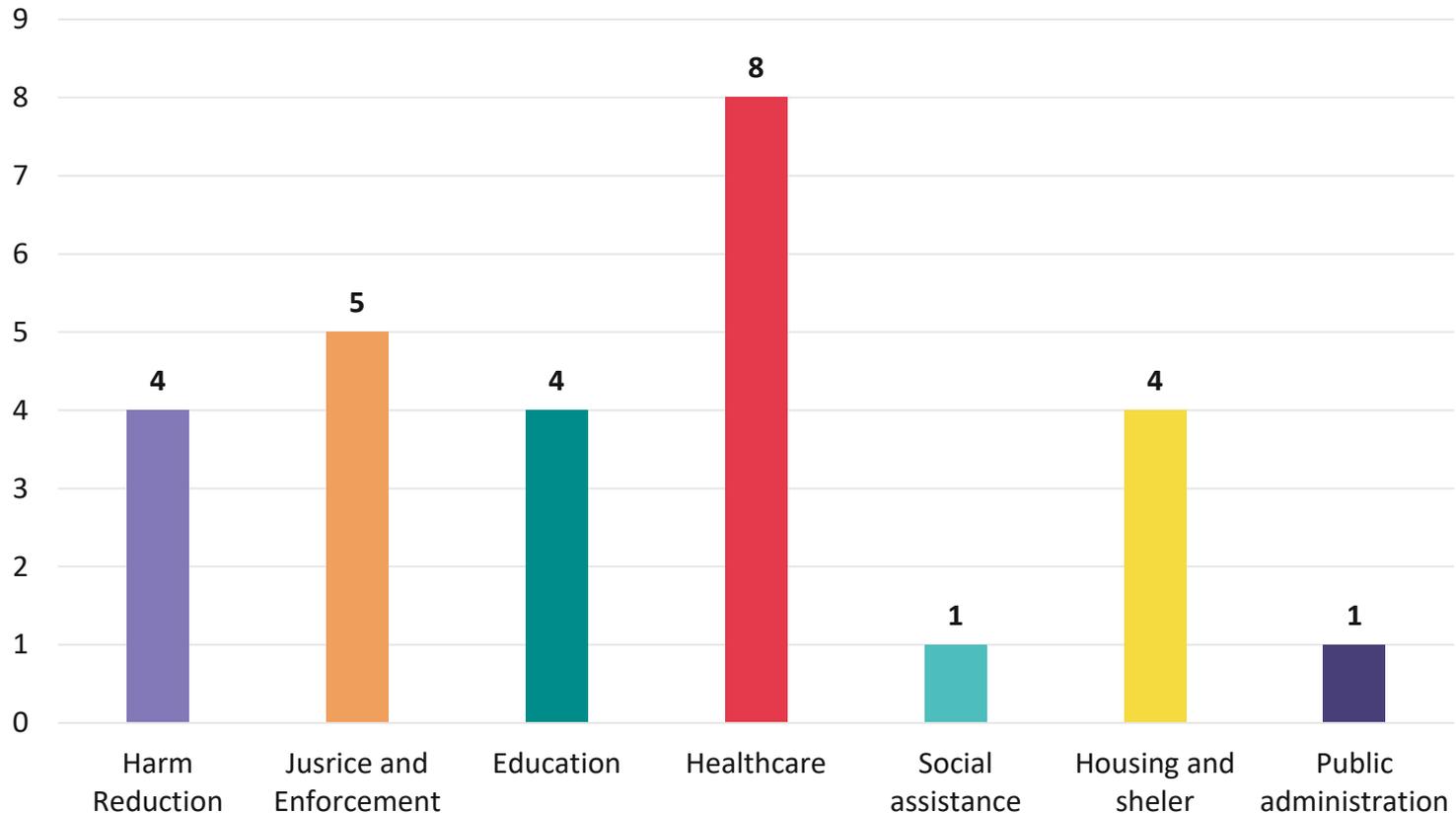
- Levels of agreement with the 6/9 items were assessed using Likert-scaled response options ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”.
- For scoring, responses were converted to a Likert-scaled scoring system ranging from 1-5, with 1 equaling “Strongly Disagree” and 5 equaling “Strongly Agree”.

Analysis

- Using the numeric scoring system, average scores for each dimension were computed.
- Open-ended responses were also summarized for discussion.

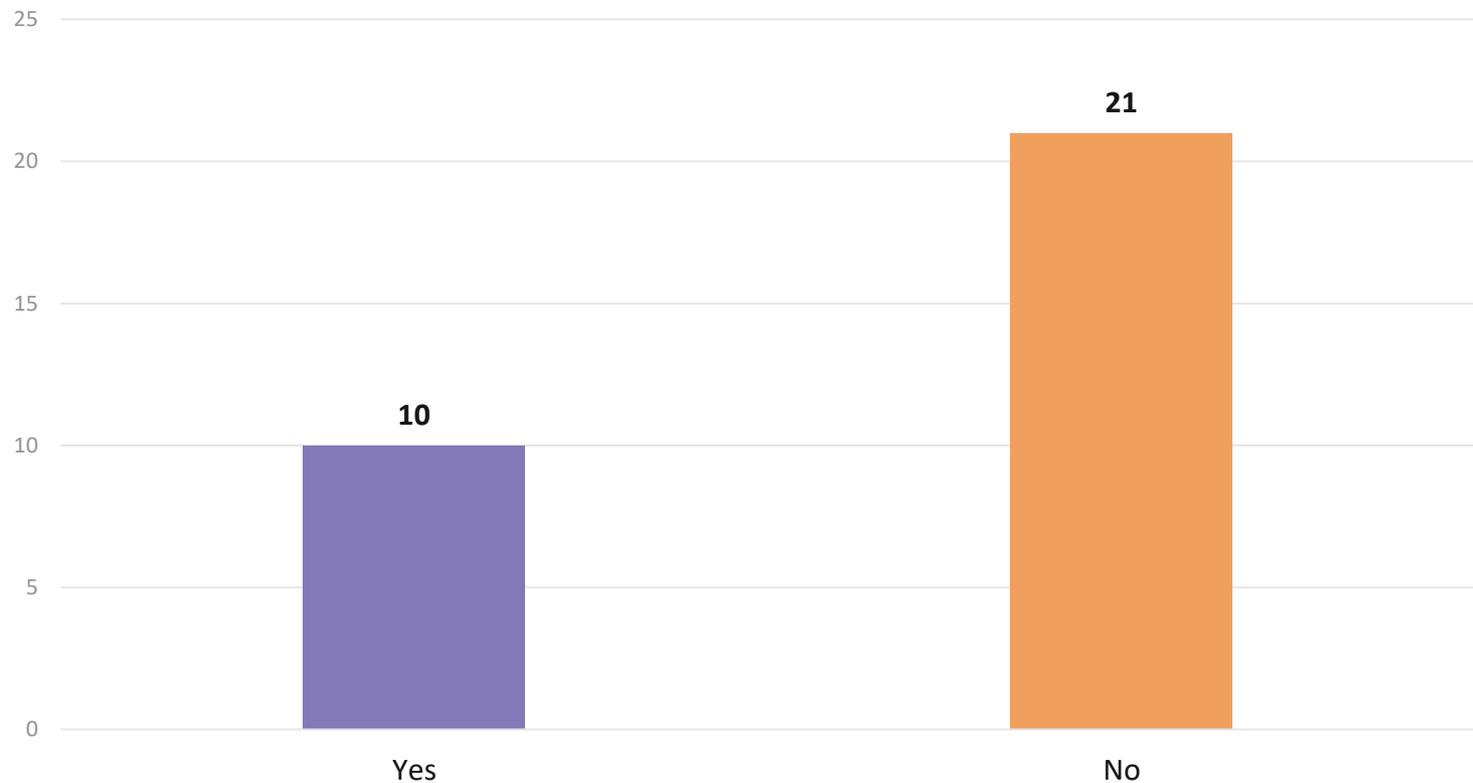
Demographic Results

What Type of Sector or Industry Do You Work In?



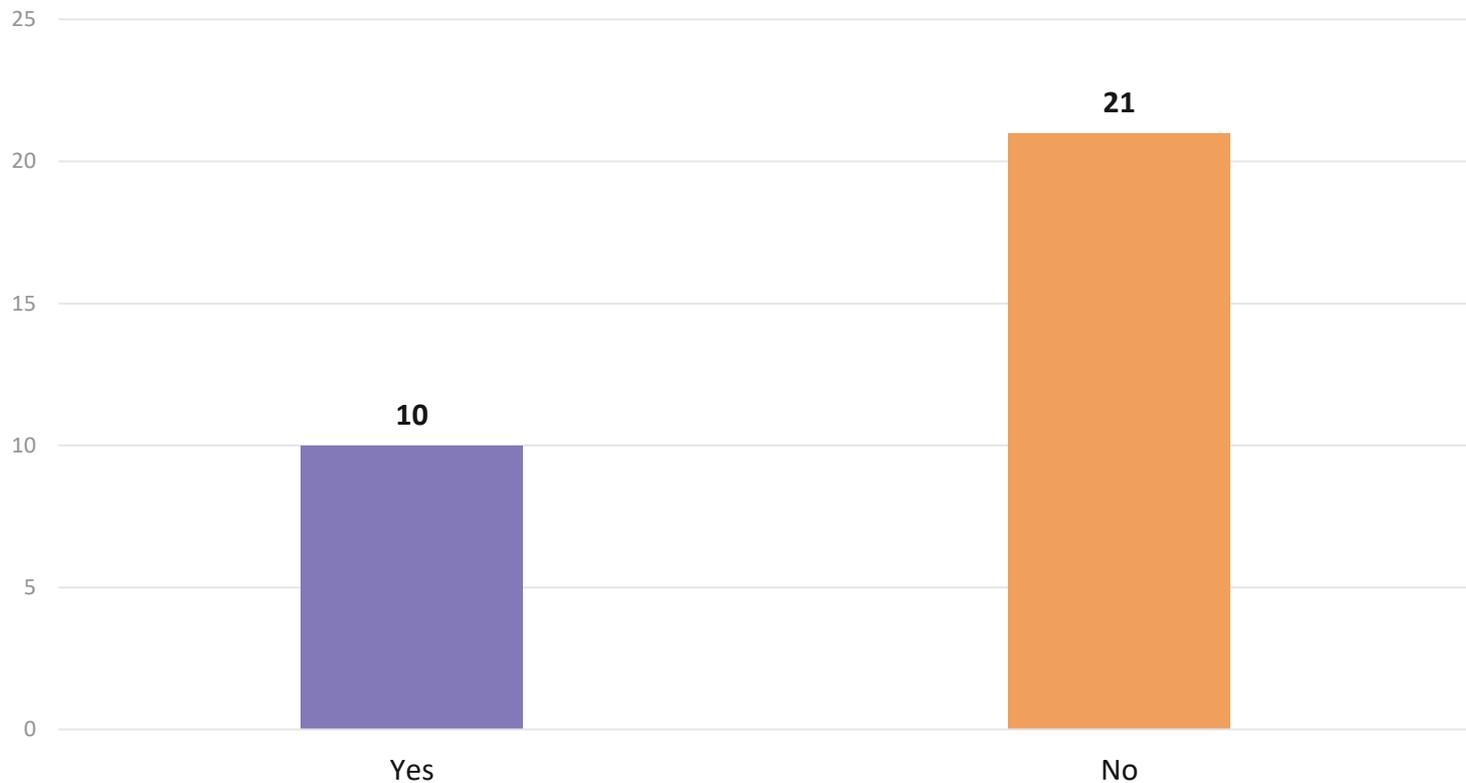
Demographic Results

In your life, have you had friends, family members or colleagues who substance use has negatively impacted their lives?



Demographic Results

Are you currently accessing or have previously accessed any substance use treatment, harm reduction or support services?



Evaluation Results

Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Survey Results

*Total Responses = 31**

Evaluation Dimension	Average Score
Knowledge & Attitudes	4.5
Program Support	4.2

***Incomplete responses were excluded from the analysis.**

Evaluation Results

Evaluation Dimension: *Knowledge & Attitude*

Assessment Item	Average Score
I feel confident in my understanding of harm reduction and its value as a best practice approach for reducing substance-related harms	4.41
Having received naloxone training in the past, I feel confident administering naloxone to someone who has overdosed	4.45
Substance use disorders are not attributed to moral character	4.61
Medication (e.g., methadone, suboxone) can be an effective option for treating substance use disorder	4.12
People who use substances and choose to reduce rather than eliminate their use are taking an important step toward improving their well-being	4.52
Harm reduction measures are valuable in supporting individuals' health and well-being, regardless of whether they lead to abstinence.	4.64

Evaluation Results

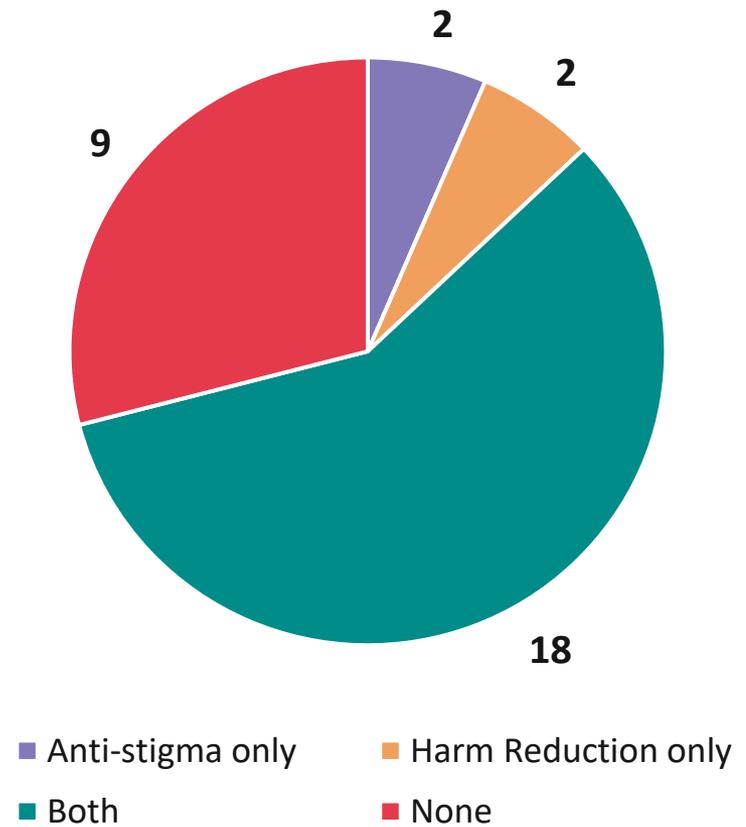
Evaluation Dimension: *Program Support*

Assessment Item	Average Score
Harm reduction programs (e.g., supervised consumption services , naloxone programs) aim to minimize drug-related harm, reduce deaths, and prevent disease transmission while connecting individuals to healthcare and recovery services. Do you support these strategies?]	4.32
Needle syringe programs provide education surrounding wound and abscess care, safer injection information and risk reduction strategies, while also providing clients with new, unused supplies that can support safer use of substances (e.g., glass pipes, cookers, needles, plastic tubing, etc. Are you in support of the existing needle syringe program in your community to help people who use substances?	4.26
A safe supply program provides prescribed, pharmaceutical-grade alternatives to toxic street drugs for people who use substances. The goal is to reduce the risk of overdose, illness, and death caused by contaminated or unpredictable drug supplies. Would you support the implementation of a safe supply program in Windsor-Essex County?	3.97

Evaluation Results

Most service providers (18) reported having both anti-stigma and harm reduction policies, while 9 reported having neither, indicating room for policy development

Which Policies Do Organizations Have?



Evaluation Results

Assessment Item

Are there areas where the current policy could be improved?

Response Themes

General Policy Improvement

- Policies need to be updated to reflect current practices/language

Training needs

- More training on stigma and addiction-related stigma
- Yearly harm reduction trainings/refreshers
- Staff stigma despite anti-stigma policies

Equity & Inclusion

- Enhance anti-racism/anti-oppression policies for greater impact

Evaluation Results

Assessment Item

What are some key policy and practice issues within your organization that may contribute to the stigmatization of people who use substances, preventing them from receiving optimal service delivery?

Response Themes

- **Variable staff knowledge, values, and attitudes (i.e., implicit bias):** Differences in education, personal beliefs, and role (e.g., enforcement vs. support) lead to inconsistent approaches.
- **Insufficient lived-experience representation:** Too few staff with personal or professional experience of substance use undermines trust and rapport.
- **Stigmatizing language and documentation:** Outdated or judgmental terminology in policies, intake forms, and communications reinforces bias.
- **Abstinence-only expectations:** Programs requiring abstinence can exclude or discourage actively using individuals from seeking help.
- **Inadequate formal policies on stigma reduction :** Without clear directives, stigma can be perpetuated unintentionally.
- **Limited collaboration with harm-reduction agencies:** Reduced partnership and referral pathways hamper a truly integrated, non-judgmental service model.
- **Emergency services interactions:** Negative treatment of clients by police or EMTs during on-site incidents damages community trust and reinforces stigma.

Discussion

What topics should educational workshops focus on to improve attitudes and perceptions around substance use and harm reduction?

What policies are needed to foster inclusive, non-judgmental environments for people with lived/living experience of substance use?

Should policies developed be universal or tailored to individual and community specific needs?

Which outreach modality would be most effective for engaging service providers in substance use and harm reduction topics?

For example: webinars, in-person training, policy roundtables, community of practice sessions.