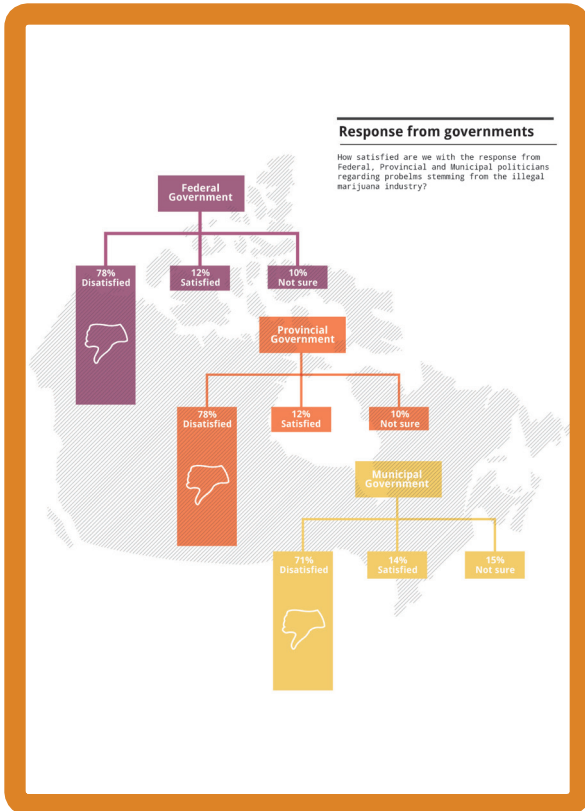


About the Stop the Violence Coalition

Stop the Violence BC is a coalition of law enforcement officials, legal experts, public health officials and academic experts from universities across the province, including the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, and the University of Northern BC. Coalition members have come together to engage British Columbians in a discussion aimed at developing and implementing cannabis-related policies that improve public health while reducing social harms, including violent crime and gang activity.



From September 7-9, 2011, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 800 British Columbian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. See other diagrams for more.

Driving discussion

Stop the Violence BC encourages the public, media, politicians, academics and law enforcement to engage in an open dialogue about this pressing public safety issue. Public forums with academic and law enforcement experts continue to be held and prominent British Columbians - including politicians - are regularly asked to acknowledge and/or support the call for policymakers to adopt a public health approach. This entails legalizing and strictly regulating cannabis to reduce gang-related violence in BC by effectively ending the cannabis cash cow for organized crime.

To facilitate an evidence-based discussion among media, policymakers, and the general public, Stop the Violence BC has already released two reports with the latest in scientific research, crime statistics and poll data.

Call for regulation of cannabis

Guided by the best available scientific evidence, Stop the Violence BC is calling for cannabis to be governed by a strict regulatory public health framework aimed at limiting use, while also starving organized crime of the profits they currently reap as a result of cannabis prohibition.

Political leaders have been largely silent on this urgent public health and safety issue. Ongoing gang violence and other organized crime concerns associated with the cannabis trade in BC must be addressed by getting to the roots of the gang violence. BC needs to be a leader in starting a conversation on cannabis regulation that will lead to action.

Involving the community

The public can show their support for addressing this pressing public policy area by attending the STVBC forums, sharing their views and questions with the Stop the Violence Coalition members, and by making their voices heard in other public forums, including writing to their local media, mayors, councilors, MLAs and MPs to let them know that they support the coalition and its efforts.

To engage directly with the Stop the Violence community by sharing information, asking questions, or to easily access STVBC's materials, people can find us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/StoptheViolenceBC

Twitter: www.twitter.com/stvbc

YouTube: www.twitter.com/stoptheviolence

Updates will also be posted regularly on our website at: www.stoptheviolencebc.org.

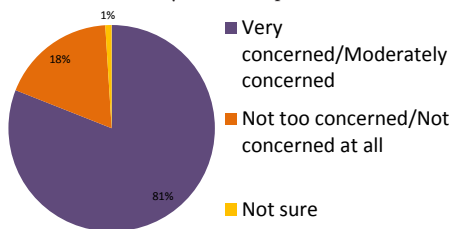
First report

This detailed report, the first in a series from the Stop the Violence BC Coalition, outlines the links between cannabis prohibition in BC, the growth of organized crime and the expansion of related violence in the province. The report also defines the public health concept known as “regulation” and sets the stage for a much-needed public conversation around alternatives to cannabis prohibition.

A regulated market for cannabis specifically refers to a legal market for adult cannabis use, with strict regulatory controls placed upon it. These controls could include prohibitions on advertisement and public promotion as well as age restrictions and restrictions on where cannabis could be consumed. These regulatory tools have proven effective at reducing rates of tobacco use. Taxation allows for proceeds from the cannabis market to be used for programs that benefit society.

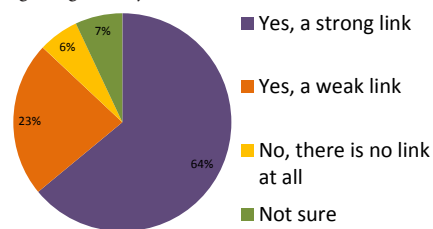
Concern with Organized Crime

All things considered, how concerned are you with the way that gangs and other organized crime groups have been increasingly involved in shootings and other violent activity across the province?



Gang Violence and the Marijuana Trade

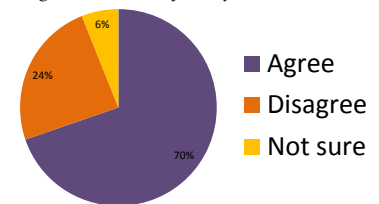
All things considered, do you think there is a link between gang-related violence in British Columbia and organized crime's efforts to control the province's large illegal marijuana trade?



Statements About Marijuana

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? -

“Chasing and arresting marijuana producers and sellers is ineffective - we would be better off taxing and regulating the adult use of marijuana.”



For more poll results visit: www.stoptheviolencebc.org/tag/poll/

Second report

The second report by the Stop the Violence BC Coalition focuses on the impact of drug law enforcement on cannabis availability and the expansion of organized crime in BC. Although increased funding for anti-cannabis law enforcement naturally leads to more cannabis-related arrests and seizures, research shows that these investments do not make cannabis less available or more costly to obtain.

Although Canada has seen a 70% increase in the number of cannabis-related arrests annually, from roughly 39,000 in 1990 to more than 65,000 in 2009, this increase in anti-drug law enforcement expenditures has not made cannabis less available to teenagers and young adults in British Columbia. According to the 2009 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey, 27% of BC's youth (aged 15-24) used cannabis at least once in the previous year. The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey reported that annual cannabis use among Ontario high school students has doubled since the early 1990s, from under 10% in 1991 to over 20% in 2009. In fact, existing scientific evidence indicates that the enforcing of cannabis prohibition laws does not have a strong bearing on rates of cannabis use.

The prohibition of cannabis has shown several limitations and unintended consequences: in the United States, the potency of cannabis has increased and cannabis has become more readily available over the past two decades. At the same time, the cannabis trade's unfettered growth in British Columbia has increased levels of violence, which are directly linked with the massive profits connected to the industry.

These reports demonstrate that current approaches to controlling cannabis have failed to reduce supply and are now contributing to a climate of lethal drug-related violence in BC.

What our supporters say:

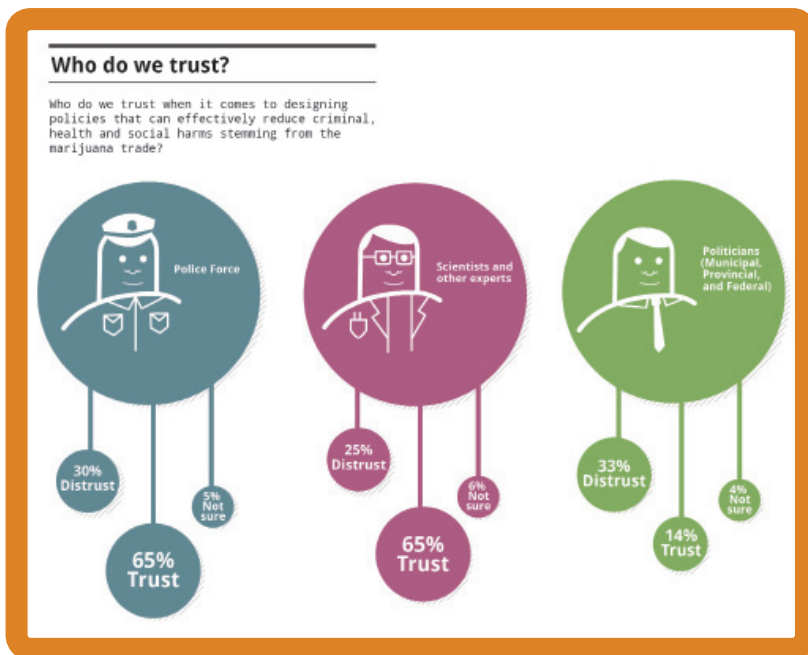
Sam Sullivan, Michael Harcourt, Larry Campbell, and Philip Owen, Four former mayors letter of endorsement:

“Marijuana prohibition is - without question - a failed policy. It is creating violent, gang-related crime in our communities and fear among our citizens, and adding financial costs for all levels of government at a time when we can least afford them. Politicians cannot ignore the status quo any longer, and must develop and deliver alternative marijuana policies that avoid the social and criminal harms that stem directly from cannabis prohibition.”

Health Officers Council of British Columbia: “From a scientific and public health perspective, we urgently need to pursue alternatives to the blanket prohibition of marijuana which are based on evidence. Strict regulation, guided by a public health framework, is clearly the logical way forward.”

Gregor Robertson, Mayor of Vancouver: “Good to see 4 Vancouver ex-mayors calling for end of cannabis prohibition. I agree, we need to be smart and tax/regulate.”

Geoff Plant, BC Attorney General, 2001-2005: “It’s time for our political leaders to accept and act on the overwhelming evidence linking marijuana prohibition to organized crime and gang violence. Punitive laws such as mandatory minimum sentences are clearly not the solution. Instead, taxation and regulation under a public health framework is the best way forward.”



For more poll results visit: www.stoptheviolencebc.org/tag/poll/

Dr. Evan Wood, Director - Urban Health Research Initiative, STVBC Coalition member:

“From a scientific and public health perspective we know that making marijuana illegal has not achieved its stated objectives of limiting marijuana supply or rates of use... Given that marijuana prohibition has created a massive financial windfall for violent organized crime groups in BC, we must discuss alternatives to today’s failed laws with a focus on how to decrease violence, remove the illicit industry’s profit motive and improve public health and safety.”

Dr. Thomas Kerr, Director - Urban Health Research Initiative, STVBC Coalition member:

“This report should ring alarm bells for political leaders who have been unwilling to acknowledge what the vast majority of British Columbians already understand - cannabis

prohibition is a costly failure... With ongoing gang warfare over massive profits from the illegal cannabis trade and government data clearly showing the easy availability of cannabis despite decades of prohibition, our elected officials must revisit prohibition and tell us what they plan to do to decrease gang violence and protect the health of young British Columbians.”

A partial listing of Stop the Violence Coalition members

Law enforcement and legal experts

John Anderson, PhD
Former Correctional Officer
Chair, Dept. of Criminology, VIU
Vice President, Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (Canada)

David Bratzer
Police Officer
Board of Directors, Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

Vince Cain
Former Chief Coroner
Former RCMP Chief Superintendent

Ross Lander
Retired Justice, Supreme Court of British Columbia

Walter McKay
Former Police Officer
Consultant, WM Consulting
Founder/Director of International Affairs, Asociacion Mexicana de Reduccion de Riesgos y Danos

Academics

Neil Boyd, PhD
Professor and Associate Director, School of Criminology, SFU

Benedikt Fischer, PhD
Professor & CIHR/PHAC Applied Public Health Chair, Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU
Director, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addictions

Thomas Kerr, PhD
Associate Professor, Dept. of Medicine, UBC
Director, Urban Health Research Initiative, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

Josee Lavoie, PhD
Associate Professor, School of Health Sciences, UNBC
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Community Health Sciences, UManitoba Research Affiliate, Manitoba First Nations Centre for Aboriginal Health Research

Cornelia Zeisser, PhD
Post-doctoral fellow, Centre for Addictions Research BC

Health professionals

Jane Buxton, MBBS, MRCGP, MHSc, FRCPC
Associate Professor, School of Population and Public Health, UBC

John Carsley, MD, MSc, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer

Paul Hasselback, MD, MSc, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer
Clinical Associate Professor, School of Population and Public Health, UBC

Julio Montaner, MD, FRCPC, FCCP, FACP, FRSC
Director, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS
Immediate Past President, International AIDS Society

Evan Wood, MD, PhD, ABIM, FRCPC
Professor, Dept. of Medicine, UBC
Director, Urban Health Research Initiative, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

For a full list of coalition members, please visit: www.stoptheviolencebc.org/about-us

For a copy of the media release, poll data and to arrange interviews, contact:
Crystal Reinitz | Edelman | 604.623.3007 ext. 301 | crystal.reinitz@edelman.com