



## **New report reveals increase in global uptake of harm reduction solutions to HIV and overdose epidemics**

**Life-saving harm reduction services such as medically supervised drug consumption rooms remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic**

### **Methamphetamine use on the rise in African countries**

**Tuesday, 1 November 2022 (London, UK)**– The number of countries implementing harm reduction services which prevent overdose deaths and the spread of infectious diseases has increased for the first time since 2014, according to the [Global State of Harm Reduction 2022](#), a new report released by Harm Reduction International today.

The report tracks the availability of services including drug consumption rooms (also known as overdose prevention centres or supervised injection facilities), needle and syringe programmes, and opioid agonist therapy such as methadone and buprenorphine – all of which have increased since 2020, after stalling for six years. For instance, there are now 16 countries with legal and operational drug consumption rooms, including new sites in Greece, Iceland, Mexico and United States. Today 92 countries deliver needle and syringe programmes. All new services opening up in the past two years are based in African countries: Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Uganda.

While many service providers were forced to close down or reduce their hours of operation during the height of the pandemic, the report finds that harm reduction services remained open in over 90 countries, largely due to the efforts of local community groups and civil society organisations.

“Public health is the winner here. Despite the tough challenges of COVID-19, some extraordinary efforts on behalf of local communities and civil society have saved the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our community,” said **Naomi Burke-Shyne**, Executive Director of Harm Reduction International.

“The best public health responses during the pandemic were rooted in compassion and based on scientific evidence. The growing implementation of harm reduction services around the world is also a victory for health policies predicated on fact, not fiction.

“The inclusion of harm reduction in the United States Administration’s Federal Drug Strategy earlier this year and the more recent pronouncements by President Biden pardoning federal

cannabis possession offences in the U.S. are also encouraging signals that the tide is turning for the better on evidence-based public health responses to drug use,” she added.

**Winnie Byanyima**, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) said, “It is time for laws that criminalise drug use and possession for personal use to come to an end. As long as countries continue to criminalise drug possession for personal use, we will not end AIDS.” She added, “Change is possible and within reach, as long as governments and donors invest in community-led solutions that work.”

### **War in Ukraine**

The *Global State of Harm Reduction 2022* tracks the extraordinary efforts of community and civil society organisations in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, that have provided shelter, food, medication and harm reduction supplies to the Ukrainian regions that were cut off from supply chains or where people could not leave their homes. The same civil society groups have also provided funds to evacuate people who use drugs from Donetsk and Luhansk, and ensured that community and civil society organisations could continue providing harm reduction services in Donetsk.

### **Methamphetamine use in African countries**

The use of methamphetamine is rising in regions around the world, including parts of Asia and Africa. South Africa is now estimated to be one of the largest methamphetamine consumer markets in the world, and significant methamphetamine markets also exist in Botswana, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Harm reduction services are still working to adapt to support the needs of people who use methamphetamine, and require state support.

### **Key highlights of the *Global State of Harm Reduction 2022* report include:**

- There are 16 countries with legal and operational drug consumption rooms, also known as overdose prevention centres, including new sites in Greece, Iceland, Mexico and United States.
- There is a changing drug use patterns as people are shifting from using opioids to stimulants such as cocaine and methamphetamine. As a result, more people are using drug consumption rooms for non-injecting drug use.
- Services were severely disrupted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic but drug consumption rooms in many cities reopened at the beginning of 2021 and have stayed open since, including in Athens, Barcelona, Lisbon, Paris and Zurich.
- There are 92 countries with needle and syringe programmes. All the new needle and syringe programmes which opened in past two years are in African countries (Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Uganda).
- There are 87 countries offering opioid agonist therapy, up from 84 in 2020.
- Harm reduction services are innovative public health interventions, pivotal in reaching marginalised populations and are key to addressing overdose, HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis crises.

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- Heroin-assisted treatment for drug dependence is available in seven countries, an increase since 2020 (Norway, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom)

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**Further information:**

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**About the *Global State of Harm Reduction 2022* report:**

The *Global State of Harm Reduction 2022* is a coordinated effort of over 100 harm reduction practitioners, academics, advocates and activists from around the world, and is the only report to provide an independent analysis of the state of harm reduction globally.

Harm Reduction International will present the findings of the *Global State of Harm Reduction 2022*, during the report's online launch on 1 November at 12PM GMT. Register at [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Y-Cq5RsmRsyFMiN4MhckyA](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Y-Cq5RsmRsyFMiN4MhckyA)

**[About Harm Reduction International](#)**

Harm Reduction International (HRI) is a leading NGO using data and advocacy to promote harm reduction and drug policy reform. We show how rights-based, evidence-informed responses to drugs contribute to healthier, safer societies, and why investing in harm reduction makes sense.

HRI will be holding their conference, [HR23](#), in Melbourne, Australia 16 to 19 April 2023. HR23 is the main global forum for the exchange of information at the intersection of human rights, public health and drug policy. It attracts over 1,000 international delegates, including service providers, policy makers, UN officials, researchers, advocates and networks of people who use drugs, among others.

