



# Population Size Estimates → CASE STUDY ←

## The Winnipeg Mapping Project

### The Setting

This project aimed to evaluate harm reduction and outreach services in Winnipeg and involved mapping public spaces where sex work, drug use and high risk men who have sex with men (MSM) activity was taking place, as well as population size estimates at these locations.

### Purpose

Investigators wanted to know where sex work, drug use and MSM activity were taking place, estimates of how many people were actively engaged in these activities, and aimed to better understand specific sub-groups within these populations. The overall purpose was to ensure that all these groups had appropriate access to services in convenient locations.

As some changes have been noticed in these populations, like a large increases in the number of needles and syringes being distributed, they wanted to collect population size estimates to help understand where these changes were coming from. For example, are increases in needle distribution a reflection of increased drug use, changes in drug-use methods, changes in the types of drugs being used, or something else?

### Approach

This project involved asking key informants where these activities were taking place, and mapped around 200 spots. They then went to these spots and asked someone from the community how many people would use that space in a day.

### Results

They found the numbers they got for population sizes were variable, hard to validate, and in most cases were smaller than what had been previously thought, or spoken of in literature. The methods they used here have been successful in India, Pakistan, Ukraine, and elsewhere; however, they believe for a number of reasons, the method was not quite as successful here. Contributing factors could be that resources stretched further in other locations, Winnipeg has high seasonality with few people outside in the winter, and also that compared to large urban centres, Winnipeg has a low density of people. Getting information through social networks has been suggested as a potentially more effective method in a setting like this.

### Outcomes

The mapping portion of this project has been successful in identifying gaps in harm reduction services, and has helped inform programming in Winnipeg. This information was used to reroute their mobile harm reduction van and also to engage with community organizations to provide supplies in underserved areas.