

Rolling Recovery: Mobile Methadone Clinics on a Mission to Save Lives

Estrella Middle School
2024-2025 Project Citizen Submission

Introduction to the Problem



Our community is experiencing a big problem with drug addiction and overdoses. We have seen the impact of drugs everywhere we go. For example, we see people under the influence of drugs at gas stations, alleys, restaurants, and even on the side of the road. Phoenix is experiencing a significant drug abuse and overdose crisis, with a notable increase in fatalities linked to substances like fentanyl and methamphetamine. In 2021, around 107,622 people have died worldwide, in 2023 Arizona documented over 1,800 deaths and more than 4,000 overdoses due to Opioid-related substances. Overall, drugs and overdose deaths have continued to create significant challenges to our community. People from all over Arizona are influenced by drugs to the point that people are overdosing by accident in public places.

Introduction to the Problem

Why is drug addiction a problem? Why do people use drugs?

Drug addiction is a serious problem because it affects individuals, families, and entire communities. It can lead to severe health issues, including mental illness, organ damage, and even death from overdose. Many people begin using drugs to cope with emotional pain, stress, or mental health issues, while others may be influenced by peer pressure, curiosity, or environmental factors such as poverty or unstable home life. Some even become addicted after being prescribed medication.

Introduction to the Problem

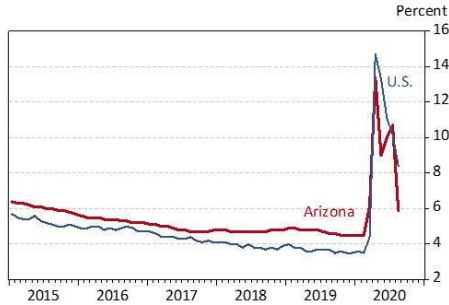
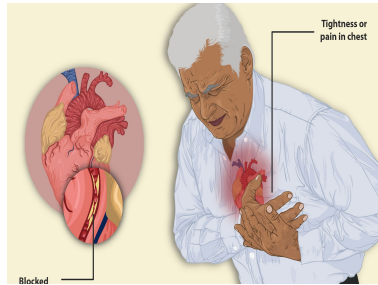
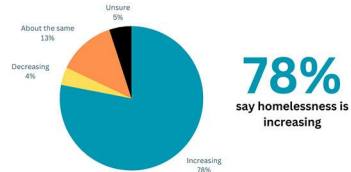


Data supports that this is not just an issue in Arizona, but also across the country.

- “Just a few grains of fentanyl are enough to kill an adult”
- “In recent years, with the rise in illicitly manufactured fentanyl, death rates have skyrocketed”.
- “In 2021, around 107,622 people have died due to overdoses”
- Fake packages of medicine laced with fentanyl.
- “Among all age groups, Arizona recorded more than 1800 opioid-related deaths and more than 4,000 overdoses in 2023”.

Community Disagreement about the Impact of Drug Use

Do you think homelessness in Arizona is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?



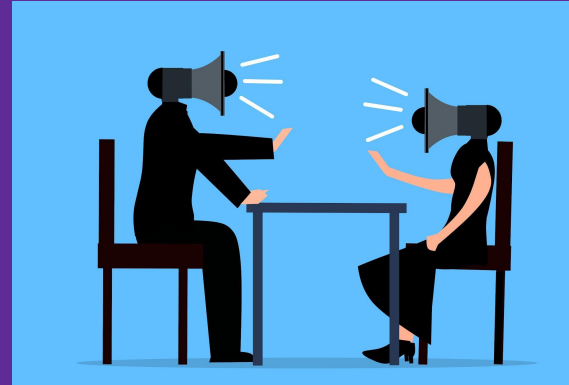
Our neighborhoods are negatively affected by those who are addicted to drugs. We experience things like:

- **Crime/ Death rate increases**
- **Drug products scattered in public places**
- **Puts individuals at risk of drug use and abuse especially children and teenagers**
- **Neighborhood poverty**
- **Increased unemployment**
- **Sense of safety and security in our community is decreasing**
- **Health complications increase**
- **Increase child abuse and neglect**
- **Increases rates of homelessness**

Disagreements about current policies

Some disagreements about the current policies:

- In Arizona's Drug Sentencing Policies Have Failed they state that "All prisoners statewide have "significant substance abuse histories." Yet less than 2 percent are receiving treatment while incarcerated, often because those programs simply don't exist."
- Drug Policy as a Health Issue says that "street drugs are often contaminated or extremely potent, causing disease and sometimes death to those who use them."
- Drug Policy as a Health Issue says that "Yet drug users share needles because laws prohibiting possession of drug paraphernalia have made needles a scarce commodity. These laws, then, actually promote epidemic disease and death.



Survey Questions and Administration

We surveyed members of our community. We offered the survey using a google form.

*Have you had experiences with anyone who struggles with drug addiction?

How do you feel when you see people using drugs in the community?

- Angry/Irritated
- Sad
- Afraid/Anxious
- Curious
- Unbothered? Don't really care

How do you think we could help our community address drug use?

- Stronger laws for people who use drugs
- Stronger laws about illicit drug sales
- More treatment centers
- More education about negative impacts
- Nothing
- Other

Survey Questions and Administration

We surveyed members of our community. We offered 6th the survey using a google form.

Do you think it influences our youth when they see drug use occurring in the community?

Do you think that it is unsafe for kids in our community to encounter people who appear to be under the influence of drugs?

Do you think that we should do more to stop drug overdoses and use in Phoenix?

Were you aware that there were 4,258 suspected drug overdoses in Phoenix last year?

Would you support a mobile facility that can bring treatment to people where they are?

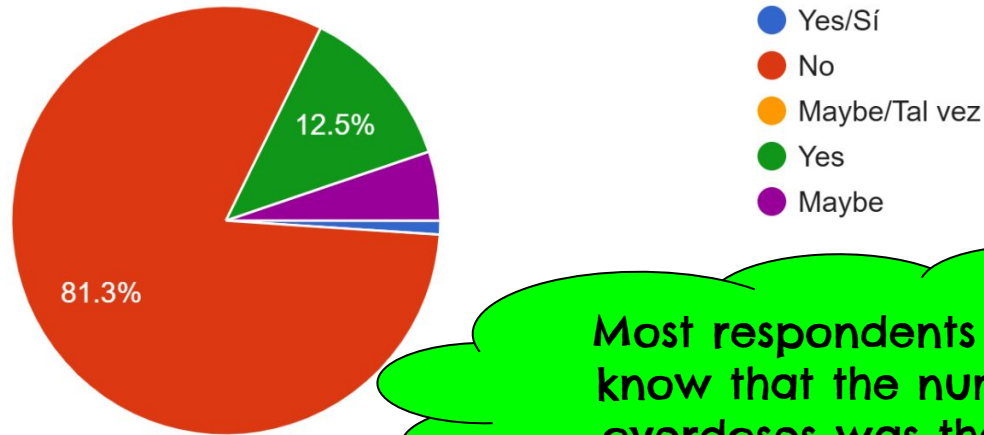
Do you feel that harsher laws against drug users will solve the problem?

Do you feel that harsher laws against those selling illicit drugs will solve the problem?

Survey Results

Were you aware that there were 4,258 suspected drug overdoses in Phoenix last year? ¿Sabía que hubo 4,258 sobredosis sospechosas de drogas en Phoenix el año pasado?

96 responses

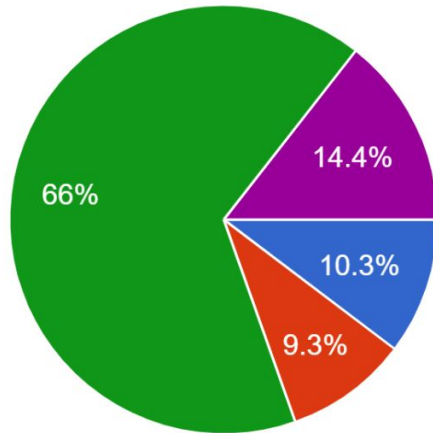


Most respondents did not know that the number of overdoses was that high.

Survey Results

Have you noticed people using drugs in our neighborhood? ¿Ha notado que hay personas consumiendo drogas en nuestro vecindario?

97 responses



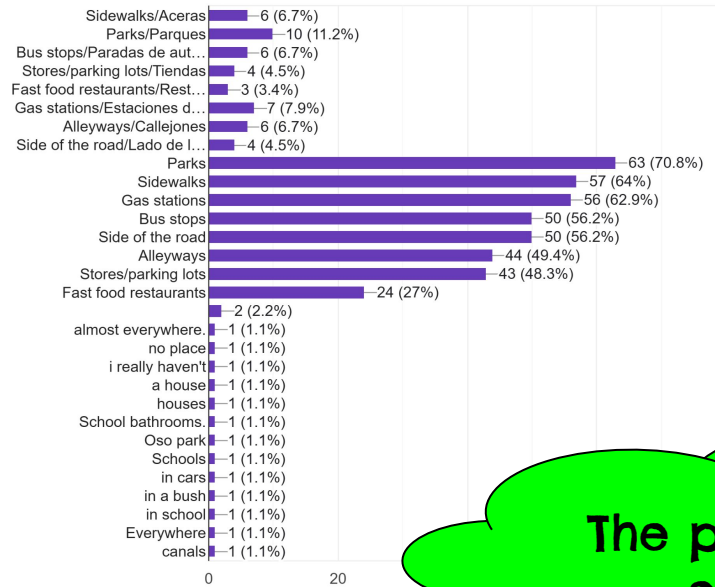
- Yes/Sí
- No
- Maybe/Tal vez
- Yes
- Maybe

76% Have noticed people using drugs in our neighborhood.

Survey Results

If yes, where have you noticed this occurring? (Please check all that apply) Si es así, ¿dónde ha notado que ocurre esto?

89 responses

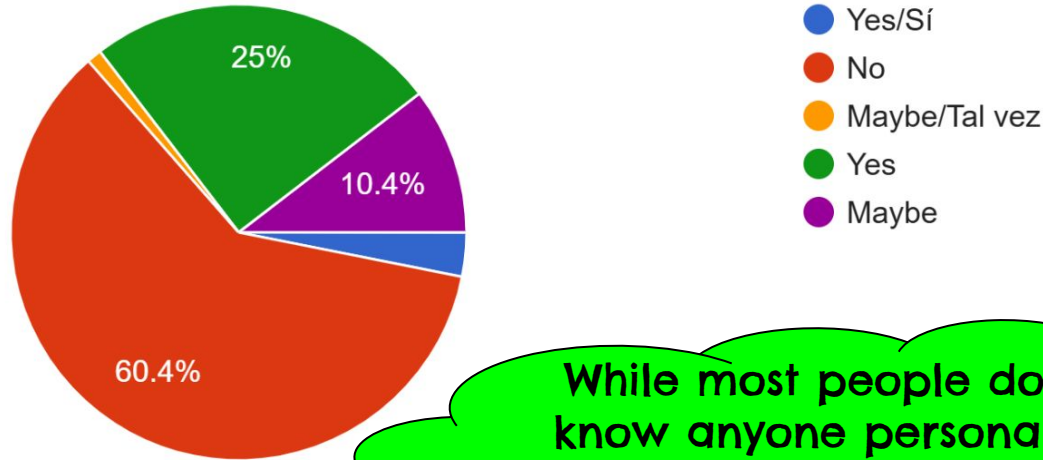


The problem is seen everywhere!

Survey Results

Do you know anyone who has overdosed? ¿Conoce a alguien que haya sufrido una sobredosis?

96 responses

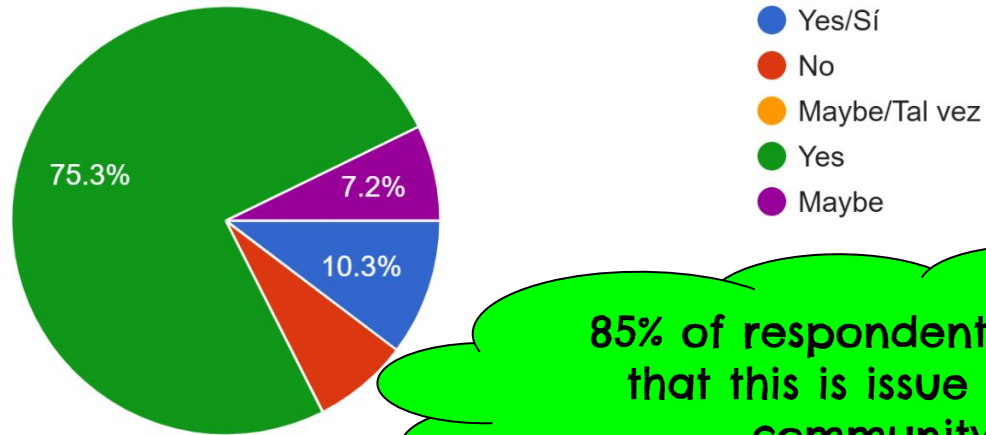


While most people do not know anyone personally, a little over 25% of our respondents do.

Survey Results

Do you feel that drug use in public spaces (bus stops, parks, sidewalks, etc) is a problem in our community? ¿Cree que el consumo de drogas en esp...ras, etc.) es un problema en nuestra comunidad?

97 responses

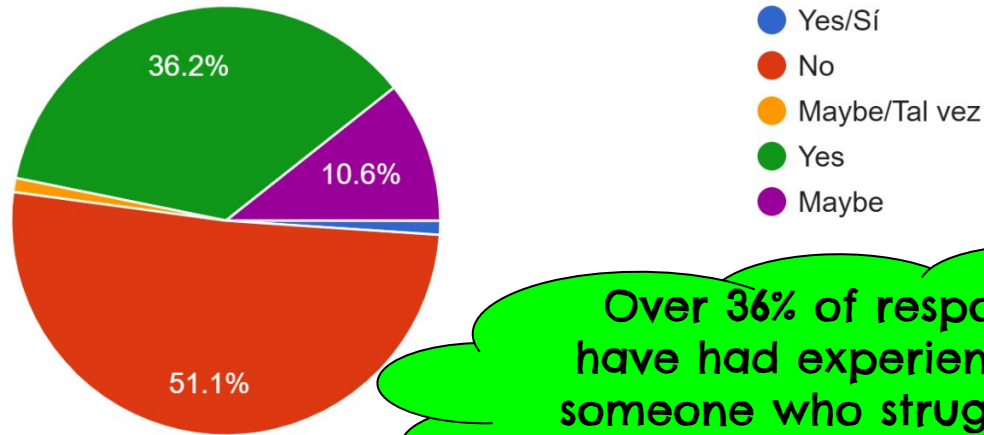


85% of respondents agree that this is issue in our community

Survey Results

Have you had experiences with anyone who struggles with drug addiction? ¿Ha tenido experiencias con alguien que lucha contra la adicción a las drogas?

94 responses

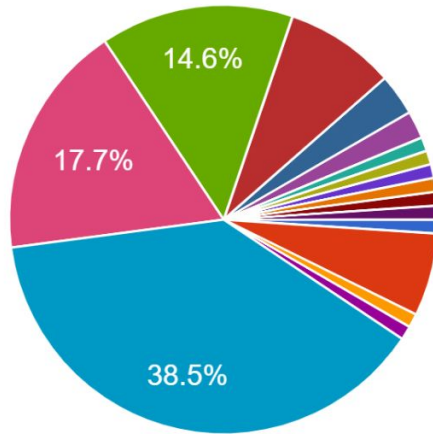


Over 36% of respondents have had experiences with someone who struggles with drug addiction

Survey Results

How do you feel when you see people using drugs in the community? ¿Cómo se siente cuando ve a personas consumiendo drogas en la comunidad? Enojado/Irritado Triste

96 responses

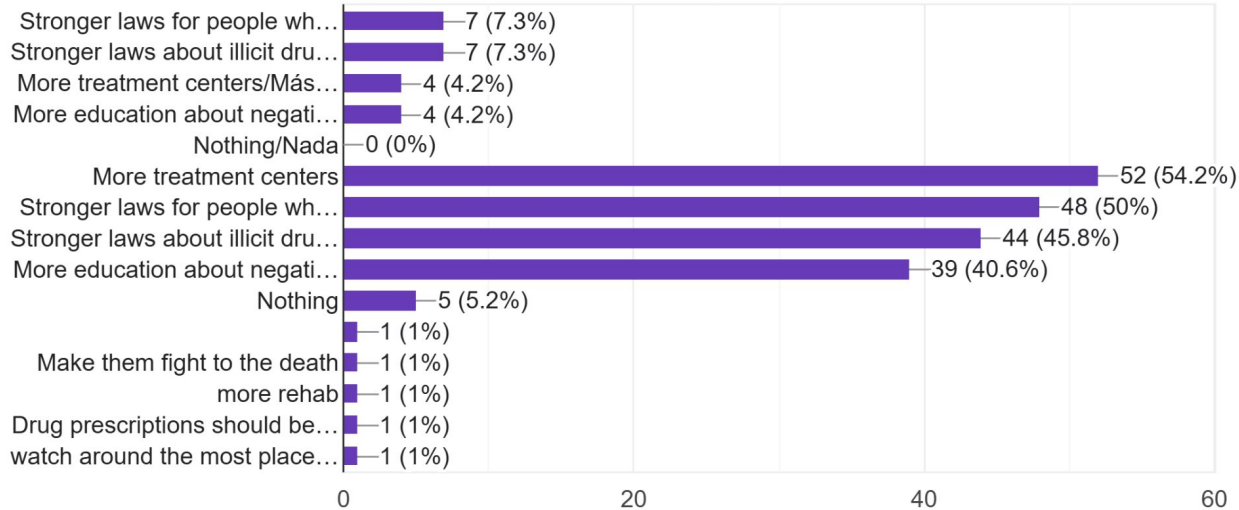


- Angry/Irritated /Enojado/Irritado
- Sad/Triste
- Afraid/Anxious/Asustado/Ansioso
- Curious/Curioso
- Unbothered? Don't really care/Indifere...
- Unbothered? Don't really care
- Sad
- Afraid/Anxious

Survey Results

How do you think we could help our community address drug use? ¿Cómo cree que podríamos ayudar a nuestra comunidad a abordar el consumo de drogas? (Check all that apply)

96 responses

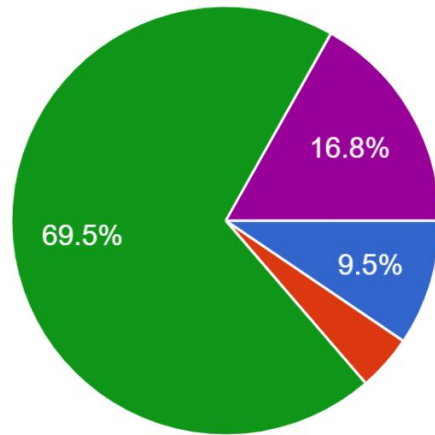


**More
treatment
centers are
desired to
combat the
issue.**

Survey Results

Do you think it influences our youth when they see drug use occurring in the community? ¿Cree que influye en nuestra juventud cuando ven el consumo de drogas en la comunidad?

95 responses



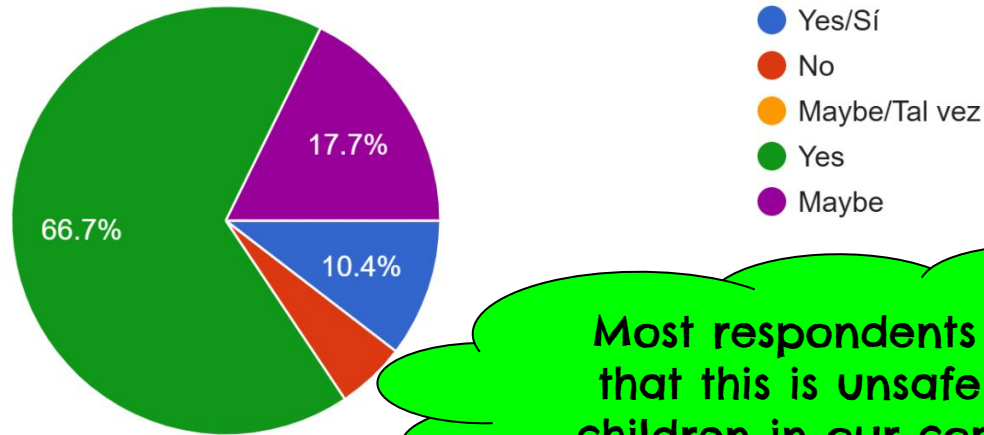
- Yes/Sí
- No
- Maybe/Tal vez
- Yes
- Maybe

80% of our respondents feel that seeing this behavior influences our youth.

Survey Results

Do you think that it is unsafe for kids in our community to encounter people who appear to be under the influence of drugs? ¿Cree que es inseguro para ...ue parecen estar bajo la influencia de las drogas?

96 responses

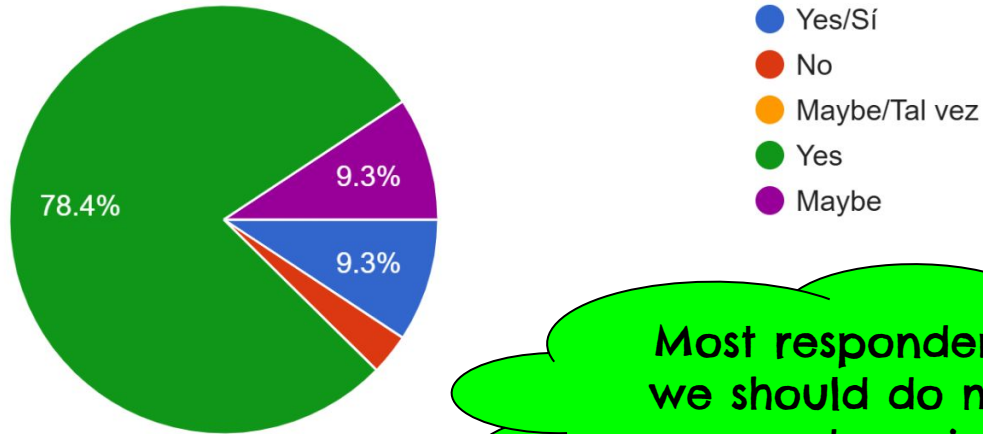


Most respondents believe that this is unsafe for the children in our community.

Survey Results

Do you think that we should do more to stop drug overdoses and use in Phoenix? ¿Cree que deberíamos hacer más para detener las sobredosis y el consumo de drogas en Phoenix?

97 responses

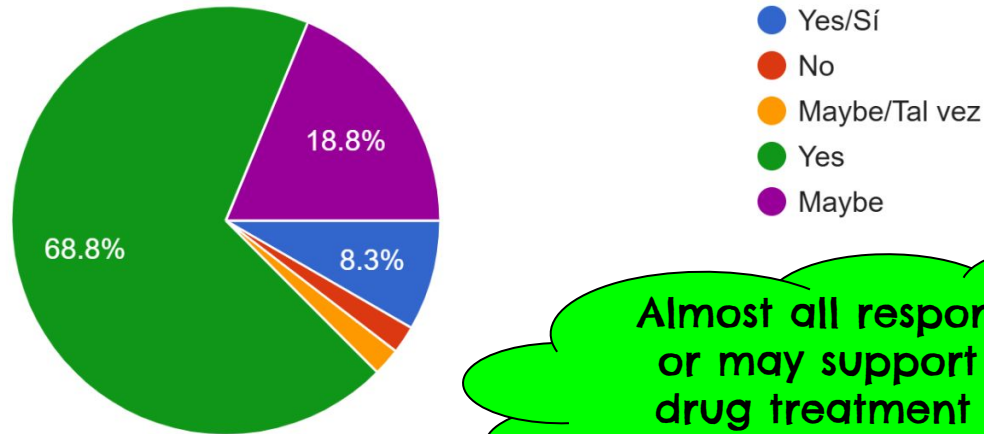


Most respondents feel that we should do more to stop overdoses in Phoenix.

Survey Results

Would you support a mobile facility that can bring treatment to people where they are? ¿Apoyaría una instalación móvil que pueda llevar el tratamiento a las personas donde están?

96 responses

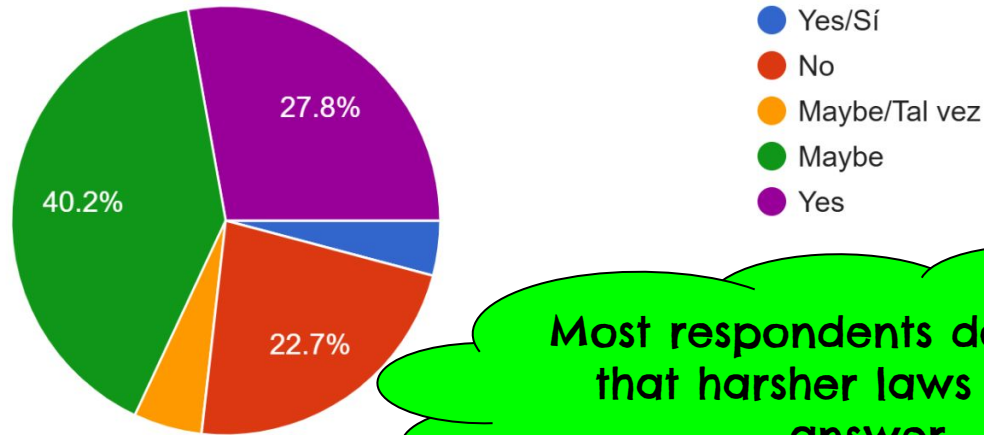


Almost all respondents can or may support a mobile drug treatment facility to treat people where they are.

Survey Results

Do you feel that harsher laws against those selling illicit drugs will solve the problem? ¿Cree que leyes más severas contra aquellos que venden drogas ilícitas resolverán el problema?

97 responses



Most respondents do not feel that harsher laws are the answer.

Current Policy on Drug use and addiction-

- There are current laws that criminalize drug possession, use and sale.
- Phoenix offers free Narcan to assist with overdoses.
- “In August 2021, 90 Arizona cities and towns and all 15 countries signed onto the One Arizona Opioid Settlement Memorandum of Understanding (“One Arizona Agreement”). The One Arizona Agreement outlines the distribution of funds that Arizona will receive over 18 years.”
- “Maricopa County Attorney’s Office Diversion Programs offer an alternative to traditional case processing so certain individuals accused of committing a crime may participate in community-based education or treatment program that addresses behavioral change, so the individual may become a productive citizen.”
- “A program is for eligible offenders, who as the parent/guardian, is charged with child abuse, neglect, endangerment, or related offense AND the circumstances of the offense are related to substance use, particularly opioids. This Pilot is an intensive, multi-collaborative partnership with MCAO, Maricopa County Public Health, SAGE Counseling, LaFrontera-EMPACT, and our drug testing provider Averhealth.”



Why should government be involved.

A city government should be involved in addressing drug problems because these issues directly impact public health, safety, economic stability, an overall quality of life for residents.



Links & Sources

- <https://www.maricopa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/92018/Maricopa-County-Substance-Use-Prevention-and-Response-Strategic-Plan-FY24-28?bidId=>
- <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/fentanyl-driving-overdoses>
- <https://www.coconino.az.gov/2040/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention#:~:text=In%20recent%20years%2C%20with%20the,fentanyl%2C%20death%20rates%20have%20skyrocketed.>
- <https://givebutter.com/MiraclesAZRecovery/2ND-Chance-Champs/normaerwin>
- <https://phoenixrescuemission.org/about/addiction-in-the-valley/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/24/arizona-excessive-heat-opioid-crisis-phoenix>
- <https://phoenixrescuemission.org/about/addiction-in-the-valley/>
- <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/a-wasteland-of-corpses-living-and-dead-a-devastating-inside-look-at-phoenixs-homeless-zone/>
- <https://www.azeconomy.org/2020/09/economy/arizona-august-unemployment-high-frequency-update-9-18-2020t-rate-drop-driven-by-declining-state-labor-force/>

Alternative Policies Introduction

We considered policies to address this problem.

- Increase Drug Treatment Centers

The Hope House, The River Source

- Community Court
 - The City of Phoenix Community Court
 - Mesa Community Court

Alternative one

Increasing the number of drug treatment centers plays a crucial role in reducing substance abuse by providing individuals with accessible, professional care and support. These centers offer a range of treatment options, including detox programs, therapy, and aftercare services, which help individuals address both the physical and psychological aspects of addiction. By expanding these resources, more people can receive timely intervention and develop healthier coping mechanisms, reducing the cycle of abuse and supporting long-term recovery. Additionally, increased availability of treatment centers helps to combat stigma and encourage individuals to seek the help they need. These treatment centers can also help the public by getting addicts off the streets.

Alternative one



Pros

- The largest advantage is the opportunity to make a positive impact on individuals that are struggling with addiction and their families. Addiction treatment centers provide a lifeline to those in need, offering support, therapy, and resources to facilitate recovery.
- A well-run addiction treatment center can become a part of the community, offering education, prevention programs, and support groups that benefit not only clients but also their families and the wider community.

Cons

- Running a treatment center requires many financial investments. Costs that include staffing, qualified professionals, maintaining the center, providing therapy resources, and ensuring your following with healthcare standards.
- Many people don't want drug treatment centers near their homes because it brings a bunch of homeless and drug users to their area that weren't otherwise there before.



Alternative Two- Community Court

<https://www.mesaaz.gov/Public-Safety/Court/Community-Court>

THE MESA COMMUNITY COURT

The Mesa Community Court is a specialized court that assists unhoused individuals in resolving legal issues while providing access to social services. Focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment, it addresses addiction, and mental health needs. Through a collaborative approach involving legal professionals and community organizations, participants receive support such as shelter, healthcare, employment assistance, and education opportunities. A separate docket serves individuals with serious mental illness, ensuring tailored support. The court's goal is to break the cycle of homelessness and justice system involvement, empowering individuals to achieve stability and independence.



Alternative 2



Pros

- The city government focusing on rehabilitation and social services, these courts help prevent repeat offenses. Programs like drug treatment, mental health support, and job training can address root causes of criminal behavior.
- It could reduce the backlog of cases because they wouldn't be going to the court system.
- Divers programs are generally less expensive than incarceration, reducing the burden on the criminal justice system and taxpayers.



Cons

- In some smaller communities, courts may lack resources or trained staff, which can lead to delays or less efficient administration of justice. Might not address the actual problem leading to crime which is drugs.
- Funding for this could be negative because taxpayers may object to the cost.
- It could lead to an illegal issue because people have to be arrested first.

Government Responsibility

Why does city government have a responsibility to intervene in drug use and overdoses.



Analysis

When we first started our project we conferred about the lack of drug treatment centers in our area. We thought it would be a good idea because it would provide more treatment to those who need it. However as we continued discussing the idea, the more we realized that it wasn't the best decision. We realized it wasn't the best decision owing to the fact that while we were researching we found out that building a treatment center is quite costly. Moreover, we decided against this idea due to the fact that many people will be against this. Many people in an around our area are against putting more facilities in place because it will bring more drug users and homeless people that weren't otherwise there before. So for these reasons we decided against the idea of putting more rehab centers up.

Another idea we had was to implement a diversion program/court. Basically what we were thinking is to, instead of letting people who get caught with drugs or under the influence of drugs just sit in jail, they could go to court and ask for help. From there if they are approved, they would go on to participate in community service, rehabilitation programs, and work towards becoming a normal, sober citizen again. The best idea was to bring treatment to those who need it where they are.



Links & Sources

- <https://www.mesaaz.gov/Public-Safety/Court/Community-Court>
- <https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/arizonas-drug-policies-are-racist-stupid-and-ineffective-for-treating-addiction-9558723>
- <https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2024/09/17/arizona-addiction-overdose-treatment-not-prison/75183151007/>
- <https://www.phoenix.gov/healthsite/Pages/Substance-Use.aspx>
- <https://ktar.com/uncategorized/new-phoenix-program-allows-users-to-get-rid-of-drugs-if-they-promise-to-get-treatment/1332565/>
- <https://www.maricopacountyattorney.org/303/Diversion-Programs>
- <https://www.acluaz.org/en/news/arizona-war-drugs>
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- <https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/arizonas-drug-policies-are-racist-stupid-and-ineffective-for-treating-addiction-9558723>
- <https://www.aclu.org/documents/drug-policy-health-issue>

Links & Sources

- <https://www.acluaz.org/en/news/arizona-war-drugs>
- <https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2019/10/20/opioids-remain-crisis-maricopa-county-because-inaction/3978961002/>
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- <https://www.aclu.org/documents/drug-policy-health-issue>
- <https://arizonadigitalfreepress.com/mesa-community-court-mcc-join-forces-to-empower-individuals-facing-homelessness-through-higher-education/>
- [Nonprofit drug treatment center for low-income Texas teens shutters amid opioid crisis](#)

Our Class Policy

Mobile methadone clinics are a good way to prevent drug abuse and overdoses in general. Mobile methadone clinics provide healthcare in vehicles that travel to different neighborhoods, cities, and towns. Offering treatment for opioid addiction. Methadone reduces cravings and withdrawal symptoms, helping individuals manage their addiction, this works by attaching to the same opioid receptors in the brain like similar drugs, by activating them slower and steadier. Medical staff offer counseling and other supportive services, making treatment more accessible for those in need. Even though some states already have the help from the mobile methadone clinics, Arizona needs the help they can get to reduce the problem of drug usage.

Examples of mobile methadone clinics



Benefits of Mobile Methadone Clinics 1

Mobile clinics improve access to care by bringing treatment to underserved communities and people facing transportation or financial challenges. They offer convenience for opioid addiction patients needing regular methadone treatment, and they reduce stigma by providing a more private option for seeking help.



Benefits of Mobile Methadone Clinics 3

Mobile methadone clinics have several benefits. They are cost-effective, lowering both overhead costs and fees for patients. These clinics provide comprehensive services, including counseling and health screenings, improving treatment outcomes. They also reduce overdose risks by ensuring regular access to methadone, preventing withdrawal symptoms. Additionally, they promote continuity of care, helping individuals maintain stability in their recovery.



Drawbacks of Mobile Methadone Clinics

Mobile Methadone clinics are what we decided on as we see that they have a lot of pros and offer easy treatment. However, while mobile methadone clinics have a lot of pros, what we failed to mention was the numerous cons. One of the drawbacks is that treatment could be quite challenging for patients. While we would be able to give them treatment on site, future and continuous treatment would be difficult. Another drawback is that this help isn't mandated. People can say no and have no repercussions. Which can be quite frustrating but you can't really do anything about it.

A few pictures of what a Mobile Methadone Clinic looks like



Constitutionality

Our proposed policy does not break any constitutional rights:

Our proposed policy does not break any of the 10 amendments. Actually, the Bill of rights state plenty of reasons supporting our case.

- Self-incrimination
- Protection from unreasonable searches
- Peaceful assemble

These are just some of the Bill of Rights supporting our case. We are not the only ones using these though, people in court cases agree with our case and can use these Amendments themselves.

:

Constitutionality

Our proposed policy does not break any constitutional rights- here are cases that support this assertion.

- In 2008 a law called Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which establishes equal opportunities in employment, and chances for drug recovery help.
- This case of Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery, supports this assertion because they allow over \$181 million each year to acknowledge prevention programs.
- The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, offers insurance with minimum out-of-pocket expenses, for drug recovery services.
- In the United States, opioid medication has been governed by Federal Regulation. This shows certification-based system for opioid treatment programs.

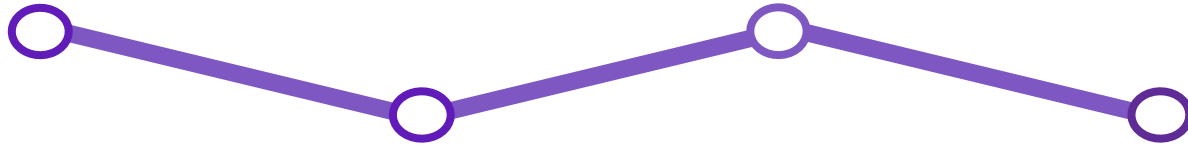
Links & Sources

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- <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/new-mobile-methadone-rules-and-they-mean-treatment-access>
- <https://www.denverhealth.org/services/mobile-health-centers/mobile-opioid-medication-assisted-treatment>
- <https://www.orienttreatmentconsulting.com/the-pros-and-cons-of-opening-a-treatment-center/>

Action Plan Introduction: Timeline of events

Conduct research

Create a solution and find
available funding sources



Survey the Community

Propose our solution to the
City Council

Step 1- Conduct Research to Identify the Problem

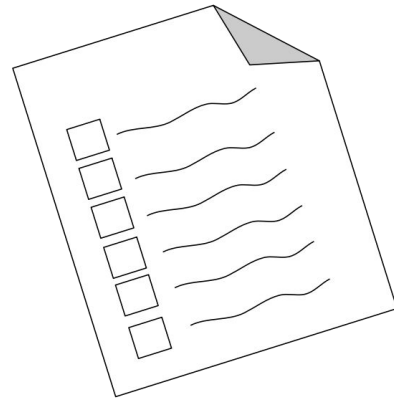
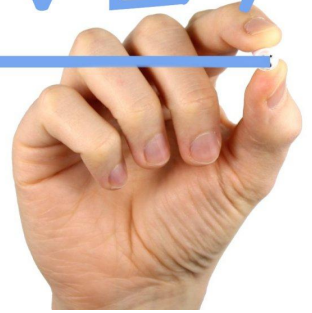
Our first step was to research the problems caused by drug addiction in our neighborhood. We used Google to find news articles that explained what is happening with drug addiction in Phoenix. We also researched what our government is currently doing to solve the problem of drug addiction. This helped us see how big of a problem drug addiction is in our community and that we need to do more to help solve this problem.



Step 2- Survey the Community

We surveyed our school and community about the problems related to drug addiction. This was done to identify the perspectives of our community on this problem. It was important to be sure that this was not just an issue that impacted us but our whole community.

SURVEY



Step 3- Funding the proposed project

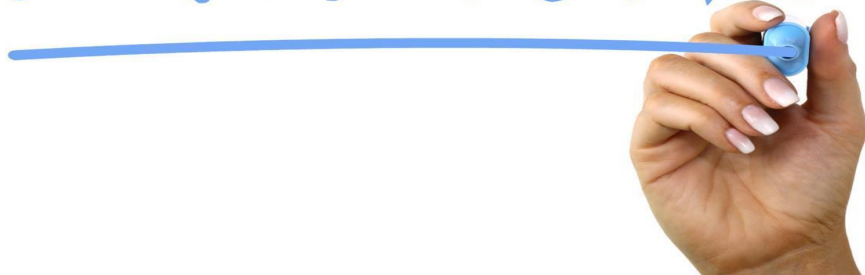
We looked for grants that could help fund this program. We did this so we can implement this project without raising taxes. People may not support this if they have to pay extra tax to make it happen. We searched for grants that would exceed the estimated cost to get our project done.



Step 4- Propose solution to the City Council

Our last step would be to present this solution to the Phoenix City Council for their consideration. We will work to contact a City of Phoenix council member to discuss how to bring this idea up for consideration by the council at a future board meeting.

PROPOSAL



Proposed Costs



- Building and equipping a methadone van costs around \$375,000, according to New York organizations that operate them. These vans must maintain the same high-security standards as clinics, including a security guard, 360-degree surveillance cameras, and a secure safe for storing the medication.
- "Health Experts Hope Mobile Treatment Programs Will Increase Access to Methadone": This article discusses the financial aspects of establishing methadone vans, noting that constructing and outfitting such a van costs about \$375,000.
- "Can Methadone Vans Deliver the Goods?": This piece delves into the security requirements mandated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for methadone vans. These include alarm systems on all doors, internal and external cameras, coded locks for nurses' areas, and specific types of safes for medication storage. Additionally, security personnel are typically present to monitor access during operation.

Proposed funding sources

One of the grants that we discovered is the state opioid response. This grants focuses on supporting communities to fight against drug abuse and misuse. “In addition, GOYFF supported the continued service enhancements and implementation of best practices addressing the full continuum of care related to opioid misuse, abuse, and dependency by distributing approximately \$3.7 million to partnering agencies to aid in the development of state, regional, and local level collaborations.” They target communities facing drug use,



Proposed funding sources

Substance Use Block Grant or known as SUBG is funding \$5 million to prevent kids, adults, and communities from getting addicted to drugs early.

SUBG Funding allow “organizations to develop and implement evidence-based drug prevention programs, screening, and behavioral health and substance abuse assessments”. Funding is also distributed to the TISAPP to prevent drug abuse by supporting and expanding the use of trauma-informed care principles.



Proposed funding sources

Grants to Expand Substance Use Disorder Treatment Capacity in Adult And Family Treatment Drug Court

The purpose of this program is to expand substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery support services in existing drug courts. The program recognizes the need for treatment instead of incarceration for individuals with SUDs. Recipients are expected to provide prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services for individuals with SUD involved with the courts. With this program, SAMHSA aims to improve abstinence from substance use, housing stability, employment status, social connectedness, health/behavioral/social consequences, and reduce criminal justice involvement.



Government Officials Needing to be Influenced

We would need to influence the City Council as their vote is needed to enact this solution.

- The current Mayor of Phoenix is Kate Gallego, and the Vice Mayor is Ann O'Brien - She oversees public services, leads our city, and acts as a representative for our community
- Our current vice mayor is Ann O'Brien - He takes our mayors place when needed, and overall supports our Mayor

And our current city council members

- Jim Waring (District 2)
- Debra stark (District 3)
- Laura pastor (District 4)
- Betty Guardado (District 5)
- Kevin robinson (District 6)
- Anna hernandez (District 7)
- Kesha hodge washington (District 8)

Supporters and opponents

SUPPORTERS

- Community members who want to see these people get the help they need.
- People in need of help getting off of drugs.
- Businesses because they won't have as much crime or health issues they need to address in the areas surrounding their businesses.
- Church/Community groups

OPPONENTS

- Taxpayers because they don't want to pay more money
- People that live near methadone clinics because it brings in lots of people on drugs and homeless people
- State news, Because they say the rules in the methadone clinic are jeopardizing the path of recovery
- [U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration](#), they say that they have concerns of potential diversion of medication.

Reflections: What was the most difficult part of Project Citizen?

The hardest part of our project was when we highlighted each other's "research" for the project, because some weren't even related. 💔

The hardest part of the project in my opinion was probably trying to find one small specific category in drug abuse.

The hardest part of the project is researching because you have to make sure its accurate and true.

The hardest part of the project for me was finding and gathering all the information. It was fun to be able to go searching for information but it was definitely challenging.

Having to reduce the topics to one.

The hardest part of project was looking for any information because there was really nothing to get information from.

I think that the hardest part of the project was trying to find money to fund raise it.

Links & Sources

- <https://www.phillyvoice.com/philadelphia-national-opioid-settlement-mobile-methadone-kensington-overdose-prevention-funds-200-million/>
- <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/new-mobile-methadone-rules-and-they-mean-treatment-access>
- <https://www.denverhealth.org/services/mobile-health-centers/mobile-opioid-medication-assisted-treatment>
- <https://www.oriontreatmentconsulting.com/the-pros-and-cons-of-opening-a-treatment-center/>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10394629/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/21/nyregion/mobile-methadone-vans-fentanyl.html#:~:text=Constructing%20and%20outfitting%20a%20methadone,a%20safe%20for%20the%20medication.>
- <https://goyff.az.gov/SORgrant>
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