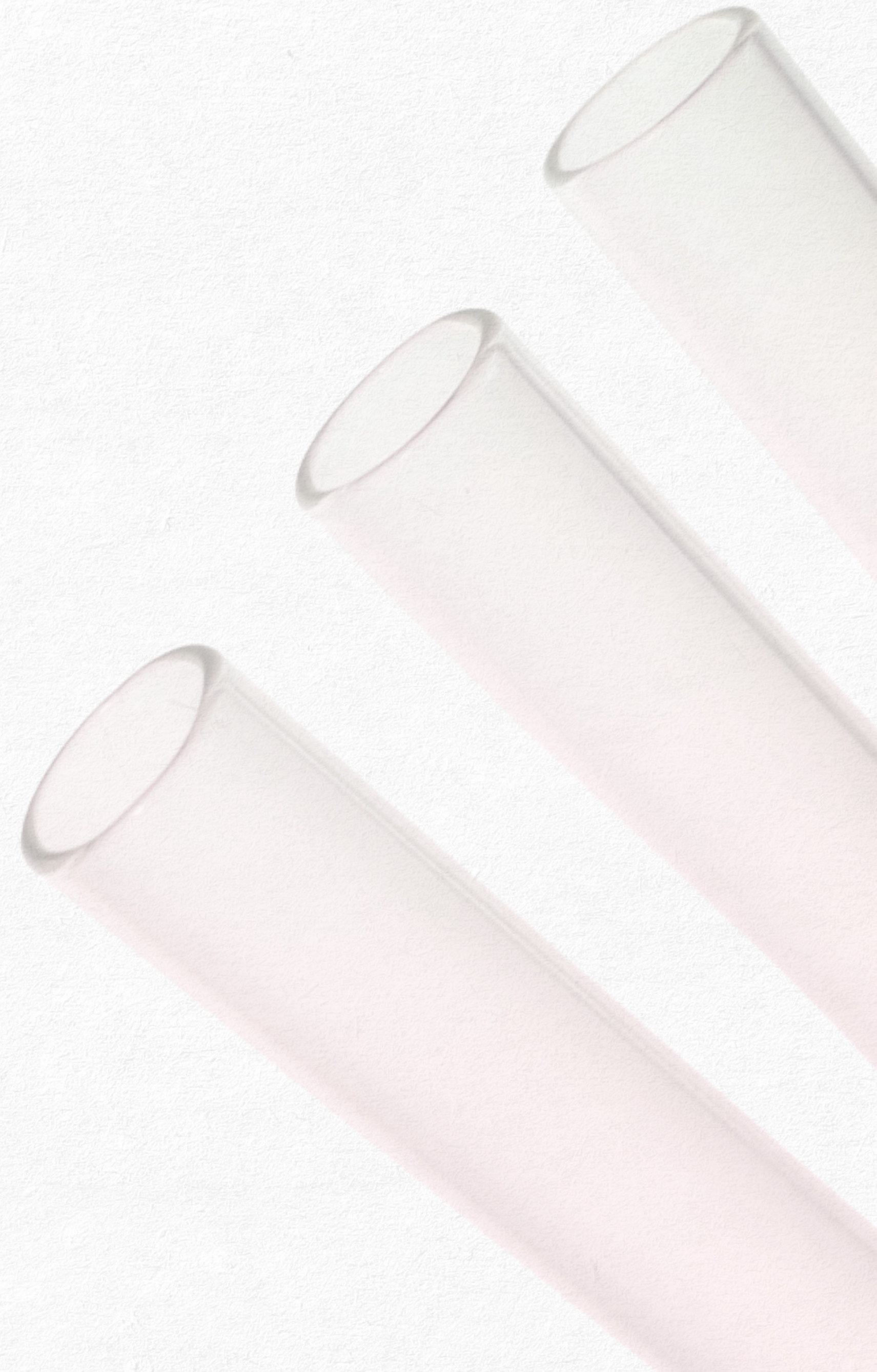




Smoke Works Harm Reduction Annual Report: 2023

smokeworks.org



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Mission statement

Smoke Works advances health equity in harm reduction by making injection alternatives accessible at traditional syringe access points, and beyond. While provision of materials is paramount, we further dismantle barriers to injection alternatives through research, advocacy, consumer, and provider education.

Procurement

Creating avenues for underfunded programs to access pipes, often in the face of legal & budgetary challenges.

Research & Advocacy

Publication and program evaluations to illustrate the efficacy of pipe distribution.

Material Aid

Recirculating funds spent on harm reduction supplies, to meet the needs of underfunded, independent outreach programs operating in harsh environments.

Executive summary

1 of 2



Nate Miklos
Co-Founder

Smoke Works was the brainchild of two needle exchange workers who believed injection alternatives – pipes – were necessary for the success of their harm reduction outreach.

In our work, we journeyed with individuals through many different situations. Diagnoses of HIV/HCV, overdose, and death were all too common. Each of these situations accentuated the need for more than just what we were providing at the time. It was not easy as we were both working full time, demanding jobs. Not only had we never started a business, but we were also trying to figure out how to connect with other harm reduction organizations, along with considering the legal ramifications for something like this.

Ideas and strategies started to coalesce when we reached out to other harm reduction agencies. It started with organizations nearby and quickly expanded to other states. As we spoke with people, it became apparent that

not only was there a need for pipes, but that most of the organizations were in the same situation: overwhelming need and underwhelming financial backing. Many embraced us with kindness, and trusted two ‘crazy strangers’ who were starting a buyers’ club to reduce the costs of injection alternatives.

And so, it began: Receiving shipments of products at work and at home, hand sorting pipes and repackaging them to ship out; Coming up with potential merchandise ideas to help generate income for the business. Before long, we had our first pallet of inventory delivered and the rest is history.

As we connect with individuals and organizations, we are constantly reminded of how great the need for innovation is. While working from Massachusetts, it was easy to forget there are communities without access to basic harm reduction needs; providers unaware of advancements in HIV prevention like Pep & Prep; tools that can improve lives, often withheld by budgets and bureaucracies. If we don’t help push the envelope, we wondered, who will? This is why we continue to do the work that we do.

Executive summary

2 of 2



Jim Duffy
Co-Founder & Director
jim@smokeworks.org

At the time of this writing, it is hard to be optimistic about harm reduction: Police executed raids on two Midwest syringe service programs, triumphant legislation in Oregon faces roll-back, and programs in Philadelphia are being threatened with eviction.

While policymakers still struggle to understand the impact of Fentanyl, the threats of xylazine and nitazenes increase, and one would be hard-pressed to find a single region with adequate harm reduction services. It is our national vantage point that provides hope. Smoke Works was designed to support radical harm reduction efforts: Individuals and groups working on their own, often without funding, to support their own community.

Having created something that supports individual efforts that affect entire communities, I can sincerely say

there is hope. Barely a week goes by without my hearing from drug war survivors facilitating change in their hometowns. Time again, my dismay turns to excitement as I trust that no pushback or legislation will prevent our harm reduction community from doing everything possible to keep people safe.

Watching other burgeoning harm reduction and outreach efforts begin helps me reflect on Smoke Works' success. If I could glean one bit of advice from my experience, I would shine a light on the seemingly impossible feats a team can achieve. Our work, for example, has grown many-fold thanks to **Sarah Fite, Dan Jeannetti, Tom Regan, Alexis Meucci, Abby Tapper, Katie Ahern**, and others who have joined the team. Smoke Works has never been just one or two people, and I would like to thank our team, past and present, for making Smoke Works what it is today.

Thank you to **Phil, Joe, Tatjana, Eliza & Maya, Points of Distribution, Next Distro, the AHOPE & BHCHP teams**, and countless others who supported myself and Smoke Works through the last four years. We don't do this alone.

Our story

Founding 2020

Jim & Nate, working at the AHOPE Needle Exchange, see the effect of pipe distribution, despite having no consistent source of them. Determined to secure pipes for their clients the team looks to other Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) for guidance on funding for injection alternatives.



Photo by Jim Duffy

Buyers' Club 2020–2021

Upon learning that most SSPs rely on donations to purchase pipes, Jim & Nate begin the first of three Buyers' Clubs. Over twelve independent harm reduction groups join, allowing the buying groups to get more pipes for less through a program called "Smoke Works."

Sales 2021–2022

Group purchases could not support growing demand, and Smoke Works pivoted to direct sales. Our distribution began to support harm reduction agencies of all sizes.

Mutual Aid 2021

Not having infrastructure in which to invest (shipping out of their homes!), Jim & Nate recirculate profits back into the underfunded groups that supported early Buyers' Clubs. Donations of cash helped shelter, clothe, feed, and care for people – all funded by the sale of pipes!

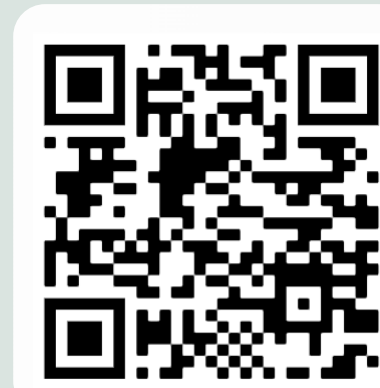
Open Discounts 2021–2022

While growing, the SW team realized *most* buyers faced budgetary challenges, preventing them from buying

pipes. The mutual aid branch of SW was leveraged to create a needs-based pay model.

Research 2022 – 2023

To overcome a lack of data on the efficacy of safer smoking as a public health intervention, Smoke Works assembled a research team. Katie & Abby began a detailed synthesis of literature, published in the Harm Reduction Journal in 2023.



The utilization and delivery of safer smoking practices and services: a narrative synthesis of the literature

Technical Assistance & Advocacy 2023

The SW Team develops staff training and technical assistance (TA) for programs launching safer smoking initiatives and helps frame the use of pipes as part of harm reduction practices for, well, anybody who will listen!

Mission and vision

“

Since we began distributing pipes we have had reports from a significant amount of our participants that they have greatly reduced or completely stopped injection drug use.”

Wiley Shearhart
Confluence HRKC

Smoke Works advances health equity in harm reduction by making injection alternatives accessible at traditional syringe access points, and beyond.

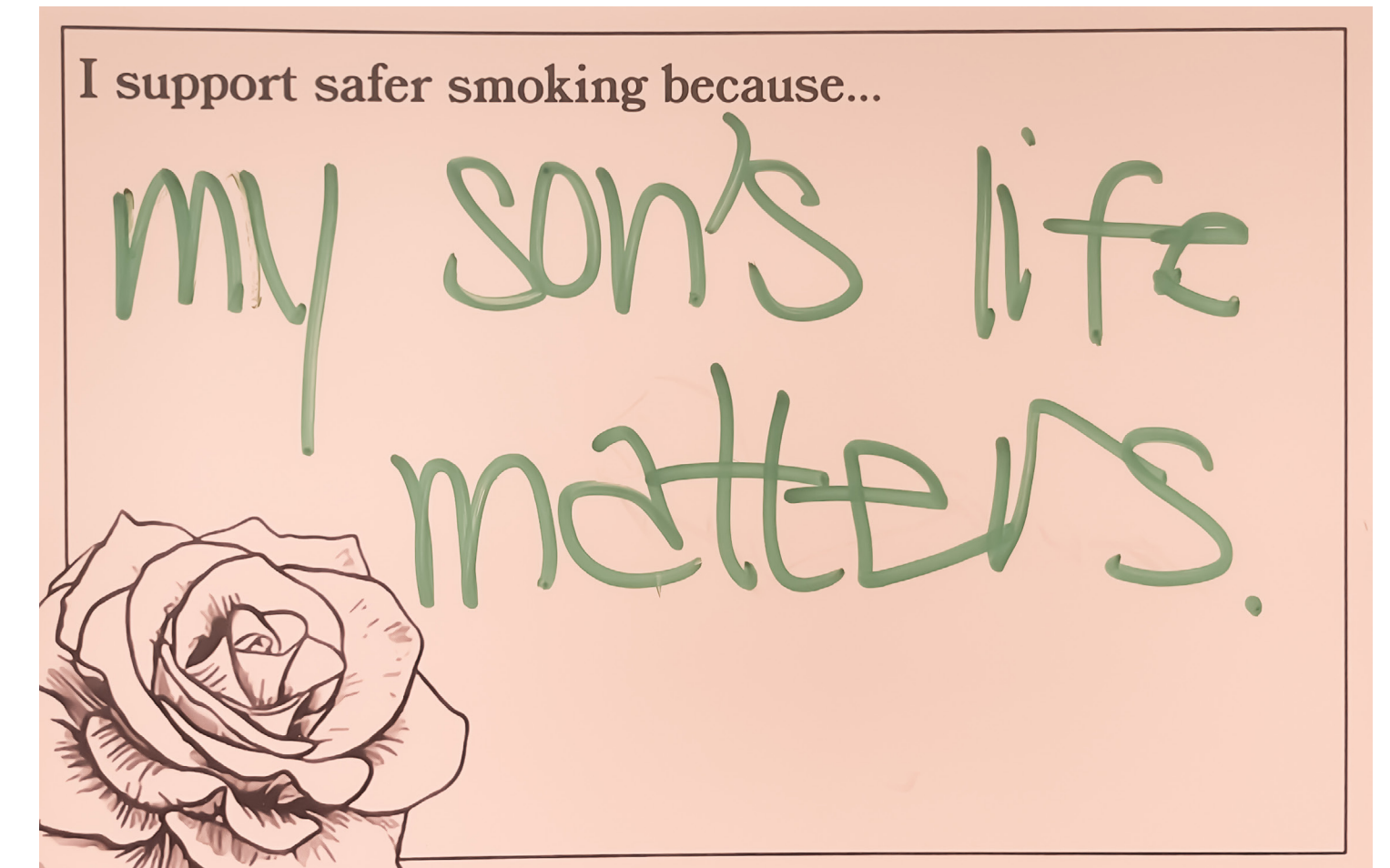
While provision of materials is paramount, we further dismantle barriers to injection alternatives through research, advocacy, consumer, and provider education.

Seeing once radical interventions like needle exchange institutionalized gives hope for progress. As many say, “this is what we fought for.” However, the transition of harm reduction from community-based response to public health intervention can come at a cost. All too often growth comes with compromise, which can deplete harm reduction’s largest assets: Interpersonal, unconditional relationships, and a stop-at-nothing approach to keeping loved ones safe. Our goal is to advance access to harm reduction in all forms for as many people as possible, while keeping it cutting edge.

We envision a world where harm reduction resources and treatment for stimulant use are on par with those available for people who use opiates. The imbalance

in response to the “opioid/overdose epidemic” and decades-old “crack epidemic” highlight inequities in social determinants of health inexcusably rooted in racism.

Our work is in response to needs identified by Harm Reductionists long before the inception of Smoke Works. Our progress is the success of earlier Harm Reductionists who fought to keep their communities safe, and who continue to push the envelope on what is possible. It is our honor and main goal to be part of that fight.



Why pipes?

HIV/HCV

- + Concerns of HIV/HCV among People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) are specific to but not limited to injection. Reduce injections, reduce risk.
- + Injection rates among people who inject drugs (PWID) continue to increase in proportion to Fentanyl saturation in the drug market. The significantly shorter half-life of fentanyl, as opposed to longer lasting effects of heroin, commonly results in more frequent injection needed to obtain the same high/result.
- + Each individual injection that is avoided is one fewer opportunity to contract or spread a blood borne illness like HCV or HIV.

Engagement & Equity

- + Harm Reduction programs (e.g. needle exchanges and other drug user health programs) offer robust services above and beyond sterile supplies, though focus tends

to be limited to opioid injection. This leaves stimulant users with no reason to visit.

- + Providing pipes creates an opportunity for all people who use drugs to access a program's services, including HIV testing, drug checking, medical referrals, etc.

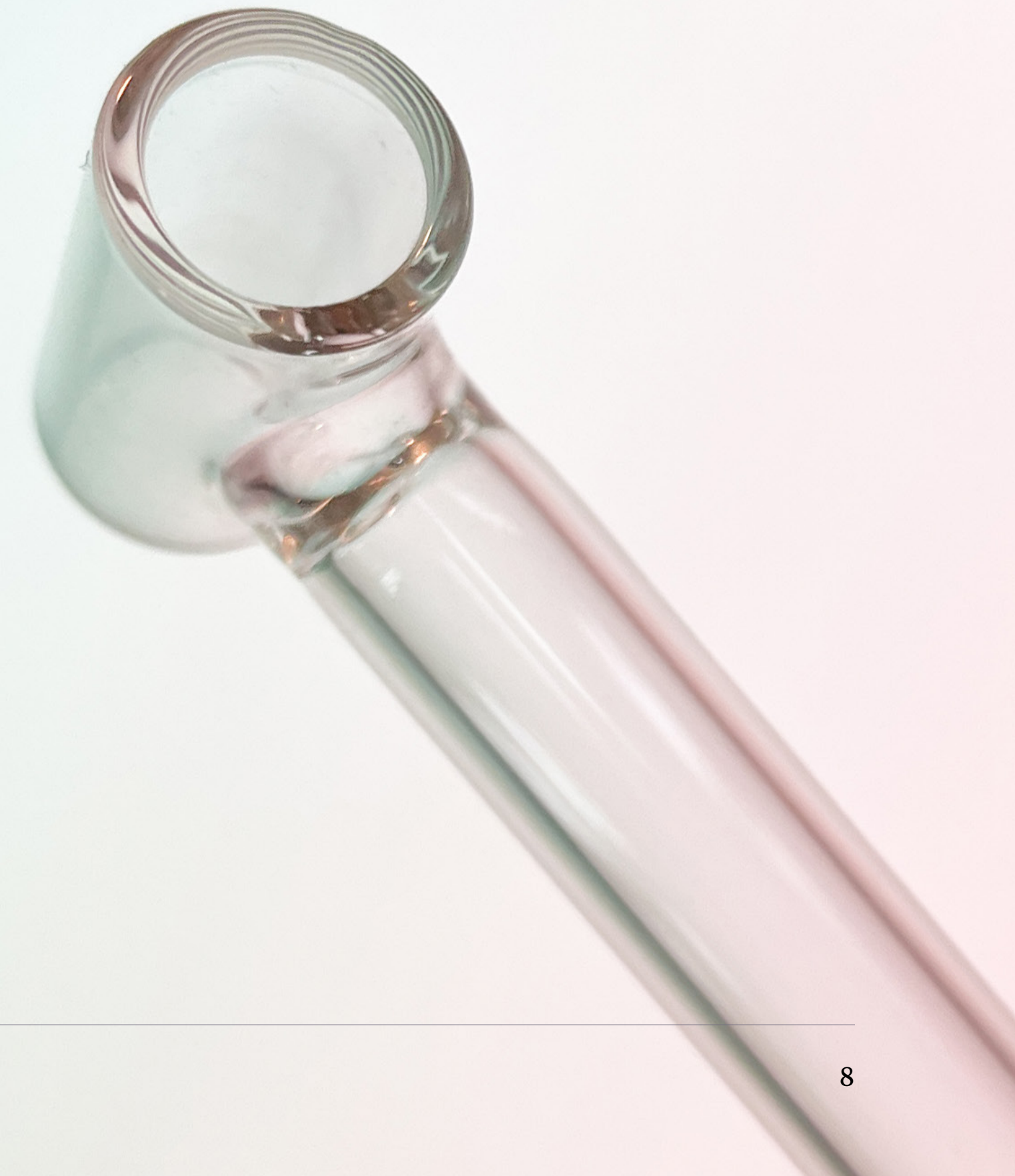
Overdose Prevention

- + Smoking, as opposed to injecting, provides the opportunity to pace use. The simplicity and intuitiveness of pipes reduces the likelihood of over-consumption.
- + SSPS and harm reduction programs are the most common access points for naloxone. By bringing in additional participants who may not otherwise access naloxone, we can ensure equitable delivery of the lifesaving overdose reversal agent.

Stimulant Use

- + Stimulant users face a unique threat posed by contaminated supply: Even if not engaging in opioid use, reports of fentanyl-contaminated stimulants (cocaine, methamphetamine) and benzodiazepines

continue to emerge with increasing regularity. No illicit supply is safeguarded or monitored appropriately enough to fully explain stimulant supply contamination. This leaves stimulant users at additional risk for opioid overdose.



Methods in action

1

Low threshold procurement of pipes

Smoke Works provides pipes to any organization working with people who use drugs. This includes MOUD/Bridge clinics, multi-site nonprofits, mobile outreach, HIV/AIDS prevention programs, traditional SSPs, and community/mutual aid organizations.

It has become increasingly clear to the Smoke Works team that international efforts to support safer smoking and harm reduction are most successful when launched by community-based organizations promoted by peers rather than traditional public health institutions. Smoke Works prioritizes support to these smaller community partners, with reverence to all people who use drugs, their preferences, safety and autonomy.

Our Open Discount program provides needs-based pricing, offering every account holder the opportunity to take a percentage off pipe purchases. Those paying full price underwrite discounts and donations of pipes to independent, underfunded programs.

When Open Discounts aren't enough to secure pipes for a program, we field requests for material aid on a case-by-case basis. Donations of pipes are possible based on revenue. Our unique system makes higher-funded harm reduction programs support burgeoning efforts in often hostile environments.

2

Research and Advocacy

When Jim & Nate began distributing pipes in Boston, the effect was exactly what they expected *and more*. Both wanted to engage with more people, possibly put Naloxone in some more hands. What surprised the team were peoples' preference for smoking over injecting, and their relief in having a simple, reusable, safe and discreet way to consume drugs. Clearly these results needed to be documented.

Katie Ahern and Abby Tapper formed Smoke Works' research and evaluation team in 2022, with the goal of documenting the efficacy of injection alternatives within the harm reduction sphere. Realizing the availability of existing literature was limited, the team focused on synthesizing existing literature into a paper that was available to all.

3

Community Aid 3

In addition to the Open Discount Program, which allows flexible pricing for all, we extend larger discounts and complimentary aid (comps) to community-based programs working without budgets, often reliant on fundraising for revenue to run their programs.

All organizations get access to open discounts, but for our community aid participants, we do whatever we can to provide materials regardless of the programs' ability to pay. Our ability to do this comes from all our purchasers; those who can afford to pay full price subsidize these discounts and donations.



“

We wouldn't have been able to supply folks with smoking supplies if it weren't for Smoke Works' commitment to supporting grassroots mutual aid orgs”

Anon

SW Partner Program, 2023

2023: Accomplishments

The year in numbers

Over 1.1m

pipes distributed

Over \$60,000

in discounts and donations of goods

300+

programs servicing 46 States
and U.S. Territories

~5%

of all sales with Smoke Works
supported material aid to independent,
underfunded harm reduction groups



Research publication and internal evaluation

The Smoke Works team has made great progress advancing research in the harm reduction field. In October 2023, we published our first peer reviewed article, entitled “The utilization and delivery of safer smoking practices and services: a narrative synthesis of the literature”.



The utilization and delivery of safer smoking practices and services: a narrative synthesis of the literature

This first research project took a total of 16 months between development of ideas and research strategies, writing, and the publication process itself. We learned just how much work goes into creating this type of review.

We are proud to have contributed to the academic side of harm reduction, but especially excited that we did so with no external funding. Our research leads and assistants’ salaries were supported by sales, making our entire project funded by the sale of injection alternatives!

Special thanks to our research team:

Katherine Ahern, Abby Tapper, Zoe Graveline-Long, Noam G. Newberger and Jaclyn M. W. Hughto, and congratulations to all on this fantastic publication!

Consumer Feedback

Smoke Works' most useful feedback comes from the programs we serve. In Spring 2023, we asked for feedback on our performance, our products, and the pros and challenges of pipe distribution.

Here's a snapshot of what we heard from our partner programs.

Figure 1.

What effects are you seeing as a result of pipe distribution?

Consumers selected all that apply.

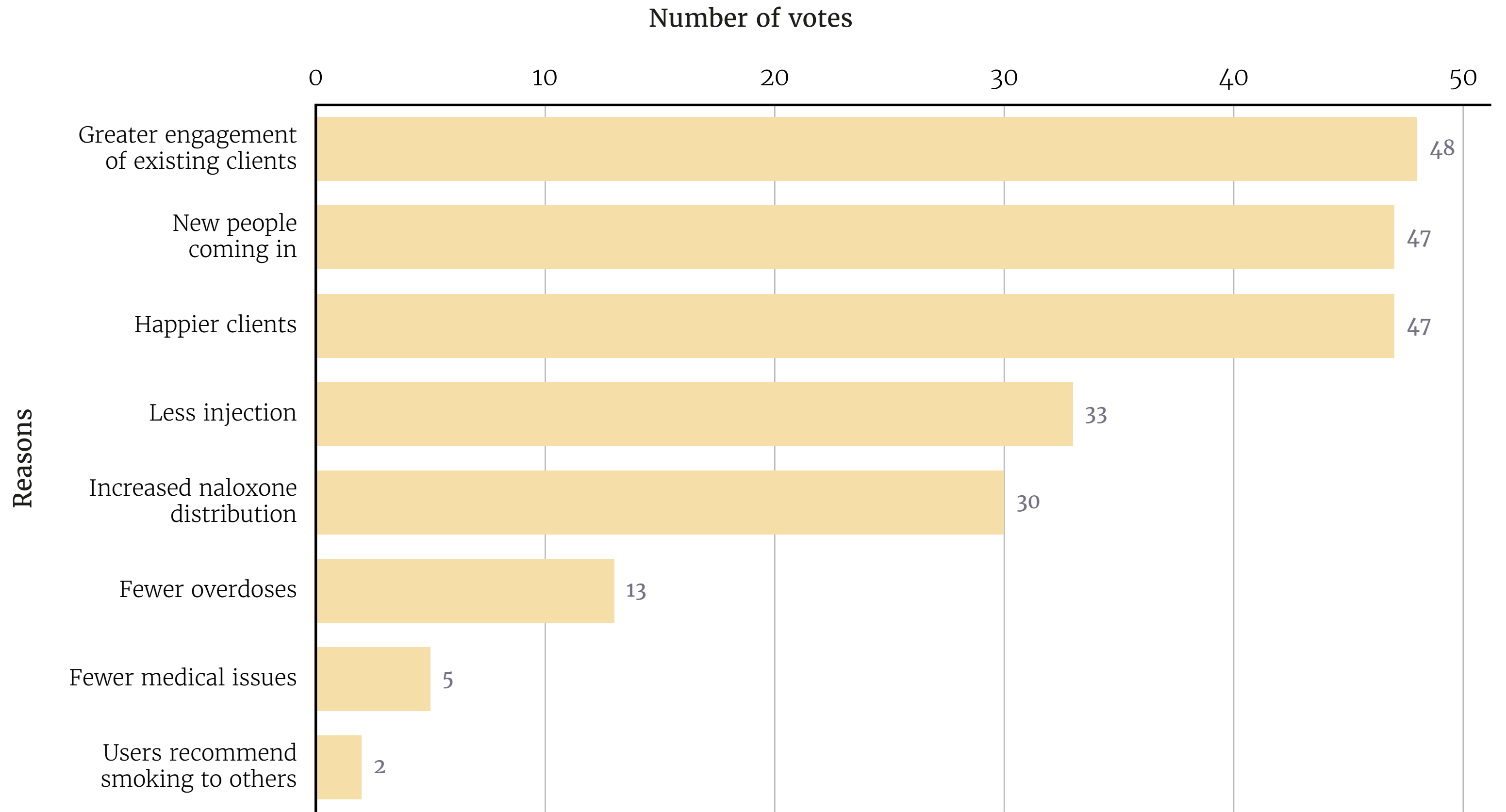


Figure 2.

Are you ever unable to purchase injection alternatives from any source?

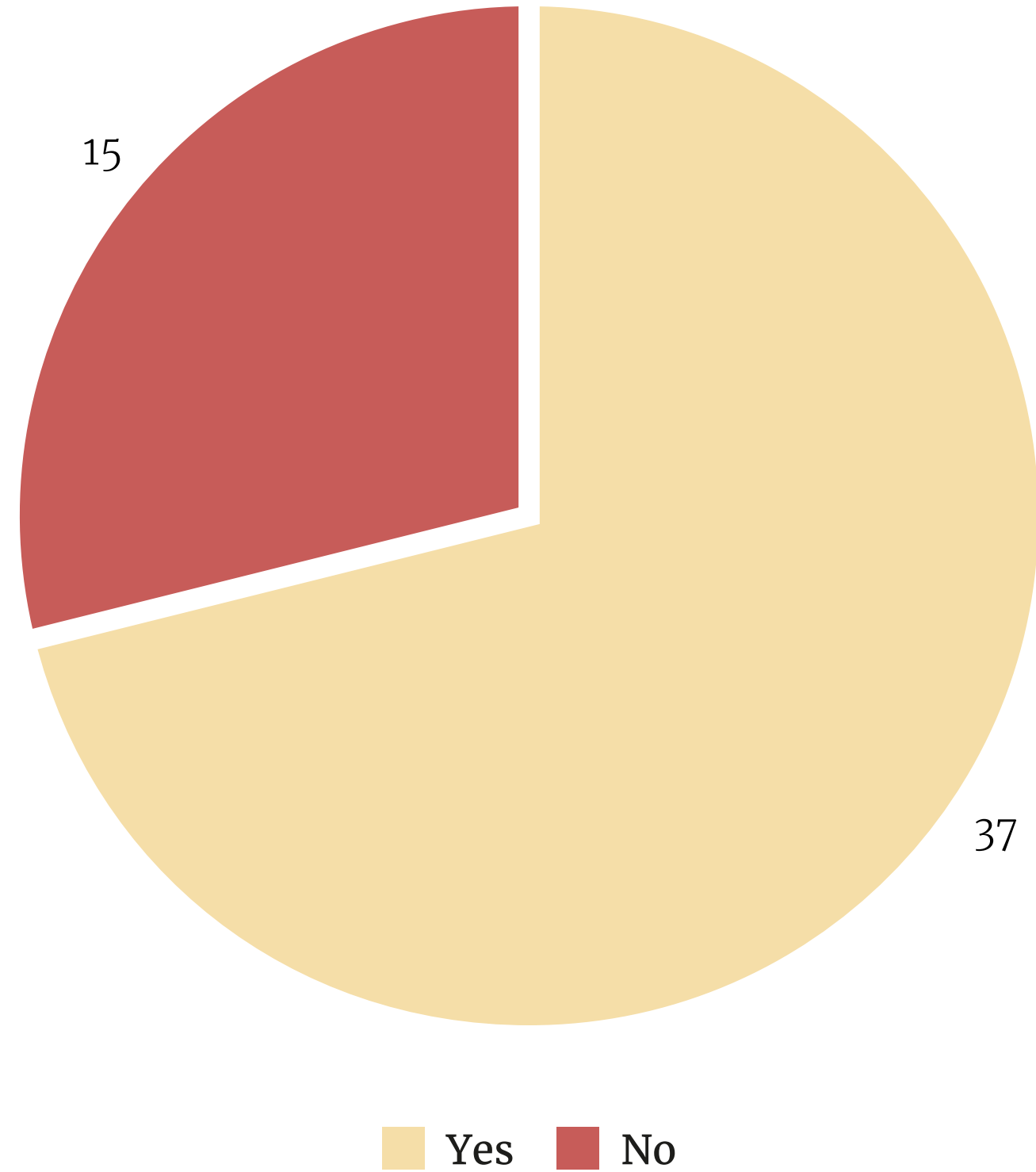


Figure 3.

Barriers to purchasing supplies

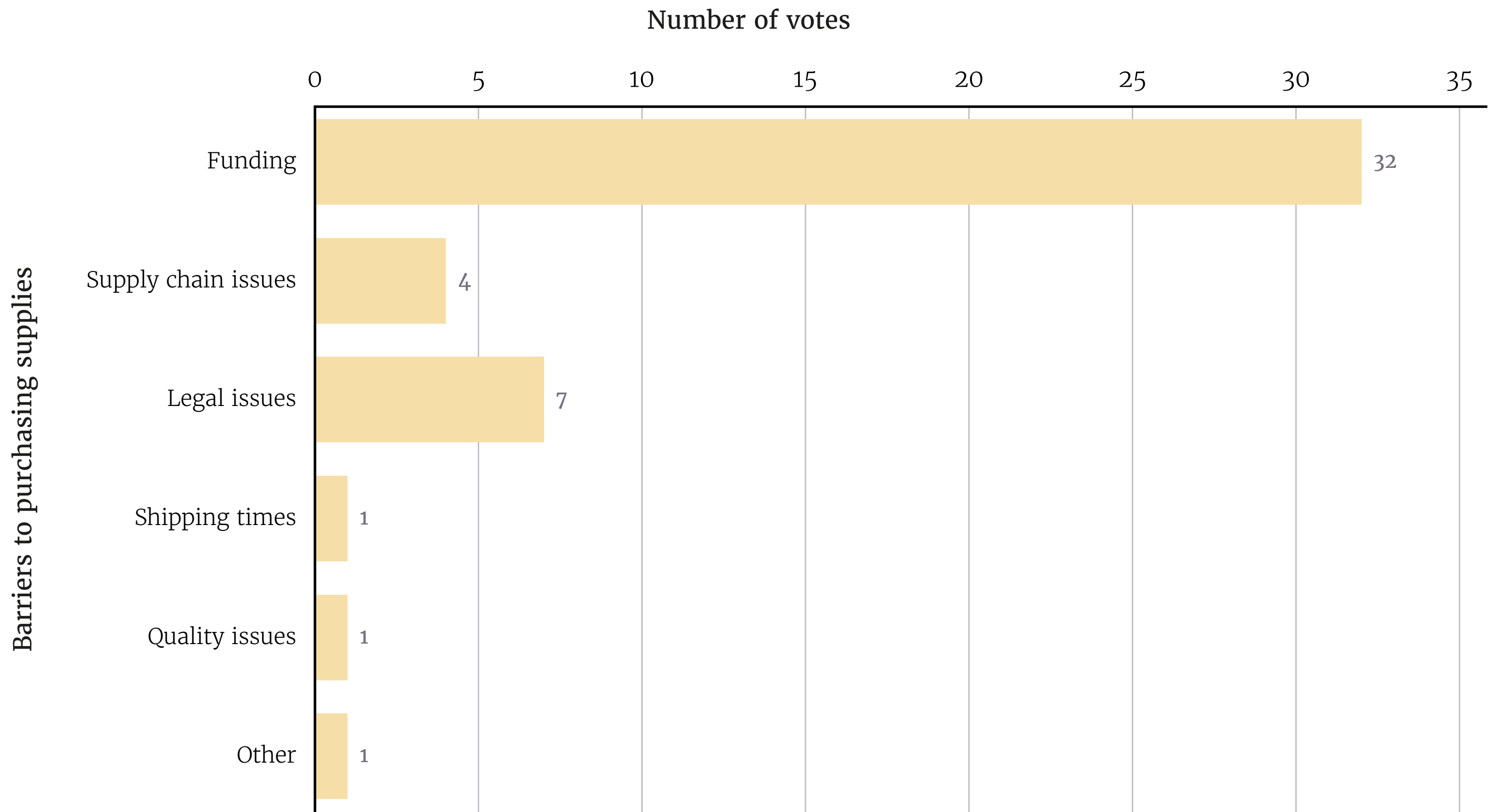


Figure 4.

Has your program encountered any barriers to distributing injection alternatives?

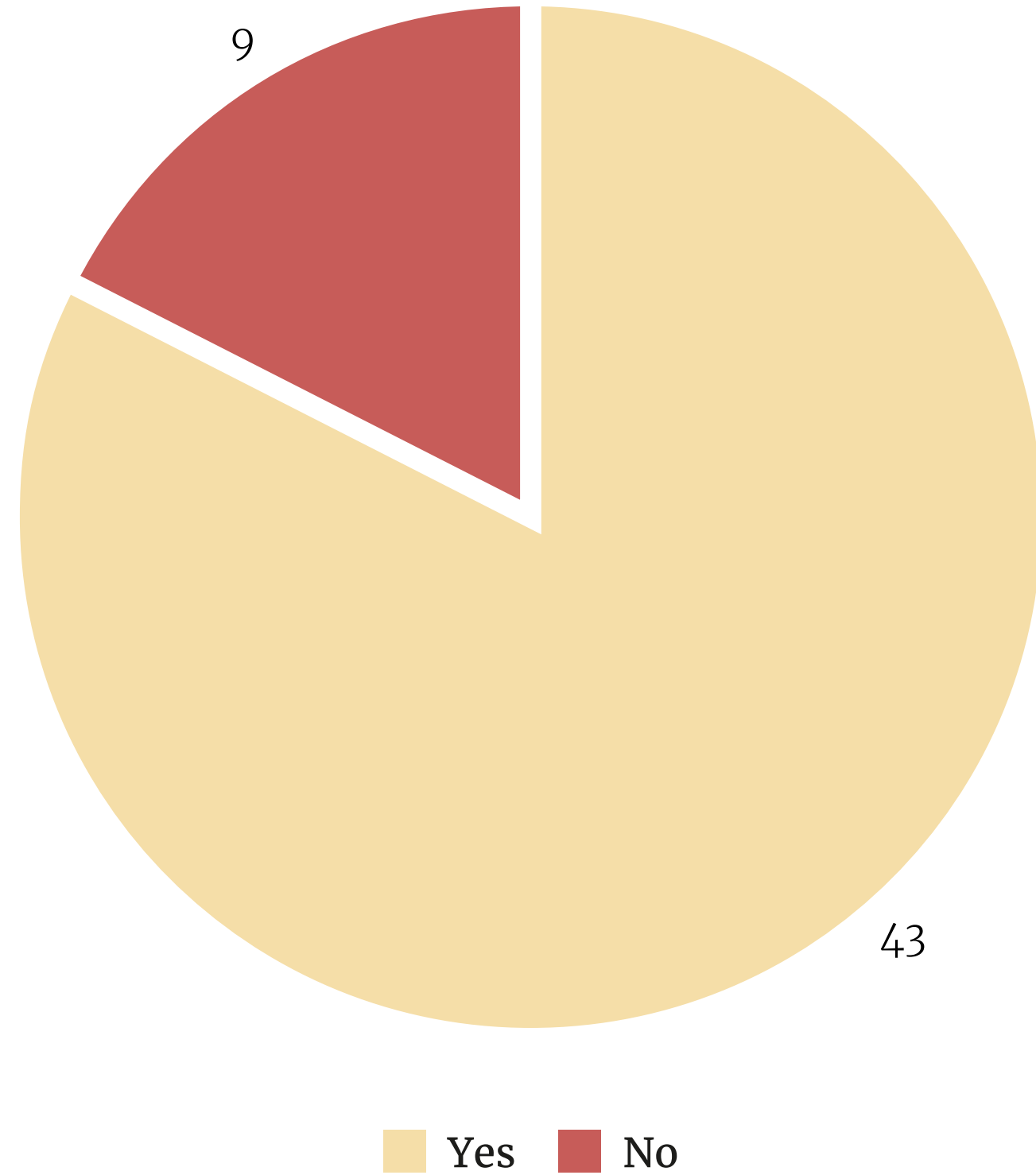
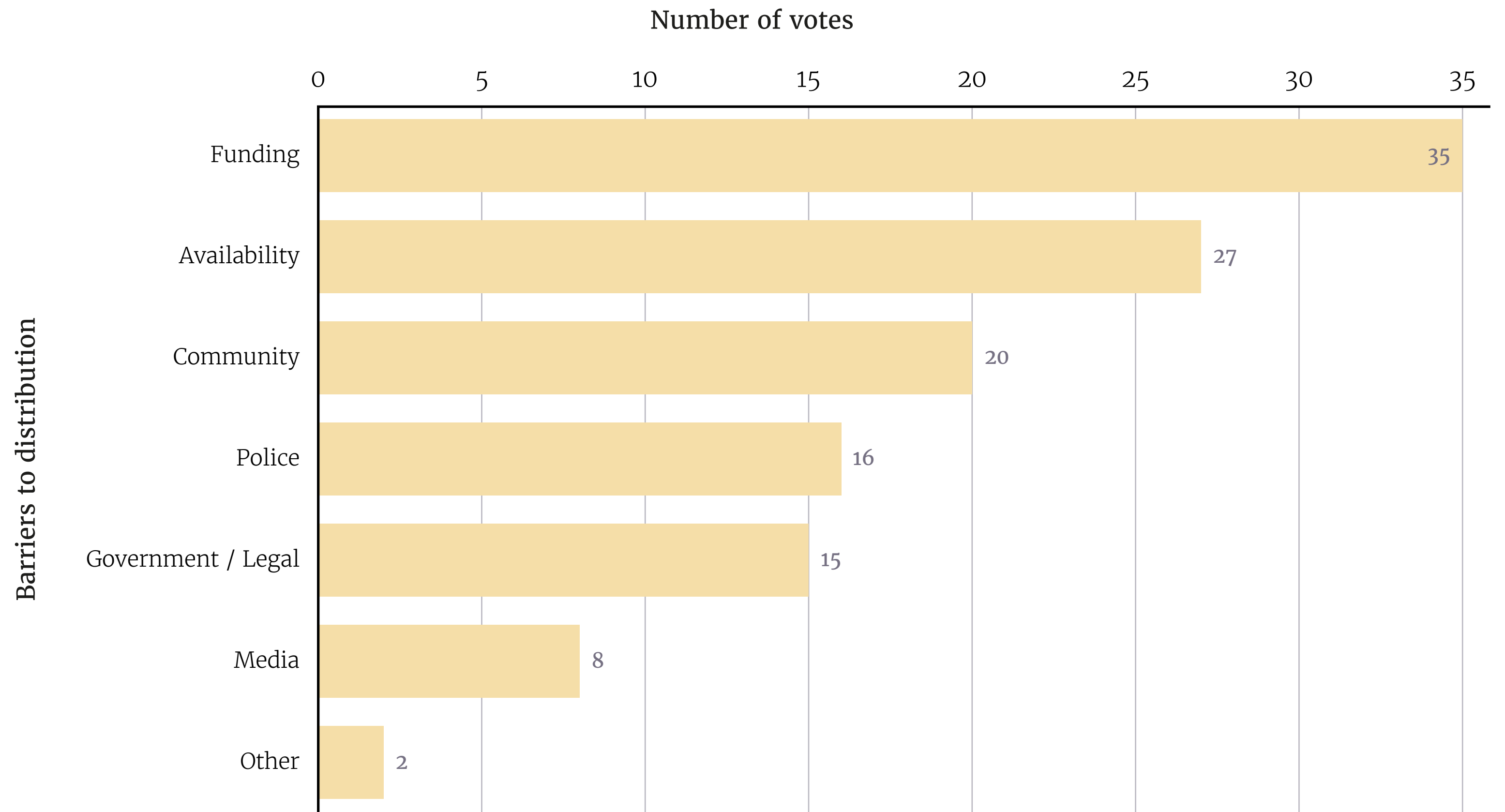


Figure 5.

Barriers to distribution



Advocacy

2023 brought us to conferences near and far, where we brought our work, and results as shared by partner programs:

- SOS R.I.C.H Conference, New Hampshire with Kenneth Washington.
- AMERSA D.C.
- NIHB at White Earth Nation with Steven Dondero.
- Massachusetts Society of Addiction Medicine with Ruchi Shah.
- Impact Life, Delaware.
- BU School of Medicine.

Smoke Works Director Jim Duffy was presented with AMERSA ‘Best Workshop’ award along with Kenneth Washington, Arlene Brown, Steven Dondero, Dinah Applewhite, Josh Luftig, Hannah Snyder, and Marlene Martin for their 2022 “Meeting People Where They Are At (With Equipment): Providing patients with safer use materials in medical settings.”

We embrace any opportunity to inform, educate, and extinguish myths around harm reduction – specifically the positive effects of pipe distribution.

Got a conference coming up?

Smoke Works offers workshops and accepts speaking engagements! All sessions are led by people with corresponding lived experience info@smokeworks.org

Obstacles & Solutions

No organization is without its challenges, and we experienced several in 2023.

As evident from our springtime Customer Survey, extended shipping time was frustrating for our partner programs. Increased by delays in supply lines and rising demand, Smoke Works fell short of our 7-10 day turnaround goal for much of 2023.

We’ve instituted safeguards against problems that caused delays in 2023.

Shipping

Immediate split shipment of all items in stock regardless of something on backorder. Smoke Works absorbs extra shipping costs.

Expanded Warehouse

We’ve upgraded to a much larger space, allowing for greater inventory on hand, and some much-needed elbow room!

Payment Processing

Our inability to accept credit/debit payments in Q1 2023 had a lingering effect on inventory, receivables, and delivery times. Due to the nature of our business, we struggled to find processing services, but now run with backup and no interruption.

Budgets

Nobody’s favorite word, but necessary for longevity of an organization. Once faced with over-extending our resources, we will now handle requests for larger discounts and donations of pipes on a case-by-case basis.

Advancement of harm reduction

Like Smoke Works, the larger harm reduction community is no stranger to adversity. With that in mind, we'd like to spotlight progress in several areas that directly impact our ability to expand access to injection alternatives:



Since the Legalization of Drug Paraphernalia and Drug Residue in 2023, Minnesota has recorded exponential increases in public health participation. Per the Minnesota Board Of Pharmacy Minnesota has lower syringe litter, and our SSP's partners have seen higher numbers of syringe returns. With the state of Minnesota now funding smokables, Minnesota has also noticed a substantial switch from Syringe Use to Smoking their medicinals. Minnesota is also registering lower violent crime and lower possession arrest and Minnesota substance users are sharing their willingness to seek treatment and support services. Our first-in-the-nation bill has been widely regarded as a needed pivot to public health and compassionate care, and the data is backing it up its success. We're not stopping there, realizing, more work needs to be done to support our Black, Brown and Indigenous populations, as well as our rural communities."

Edward Krumpotich

Founder and Policy Chair of the Minnesota Harm Reduction Collaborative and Grassroots and Government Affairs Consultant.

www.networkforphl.org/news-insights/repeal-of-paraphernalia-laws-minnesota-leads-the-way

Providence, Rhode Island is on track to open the nation's third safe injection site, carrying a torch lit by the On Point team in NYC, which has struggled to gain ground in states like California, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia. We eagerly await the results of a several-years-long struggle and wish our RI neighbors the best as they embark on this life-saving venture.

www.nytimes.com/2024/02/04/us/ri-opiod-safe-injection-site.html

We're proud to have partnered with several organizations which operate harm reduction vending machines. Many have included safer smoking supplies alongside Naloxone, condoms, syringes, and emergency contraceptive. Inclusion of pipes is noteworthy at all access points, especially when done publicly and unapologetically.

www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2023/health-department-launches-first-public-health-vending-machine.page

Look forward to 2024

- + We'll be presenting on our work and recent publications at conferences through Fall 2024
- + Our catalog is expanding to offer a more robust line of injection alternatives, (not just pipes!) fully assembled smoking kits, and more

Research & technical assistance

- Our Research Team will be designing program evaluations to further document the efficacy of injection alternatives in harm reduction!
- Smoke Works is developing technical assistance packages for organizations facing barriers to pipe distribution.

Engagements

We're looking forward to conferences in New England and beyond!

Products

Our catalog is expanding to offer a more robust line of injection alternatives (not just pipes!) and fully assembled kits for meth, crack, sniffing, and boofing. we continue to explore manufacturing of hard-to-find harm reduction items to create greater access to supplies at lower cost.

Remedy Alliance & Points of Distribution Partnership

Smoke Works has partnered with friends Remedy Alliance and Points of Distribution to streamline support services for independent and burgeoning harm reduction programs.

Expanded needs based pricing and material aid

In our dedication to expanded access to safer smoking, we'll be launching initiatives to better support programs of all sizes:

1. Open Discount Program

Smoke Works' Open Discount Program will remain accessible to all account holders, regardless of program size or budget! This allows anybody purchasing to utilize needs-based pricing.

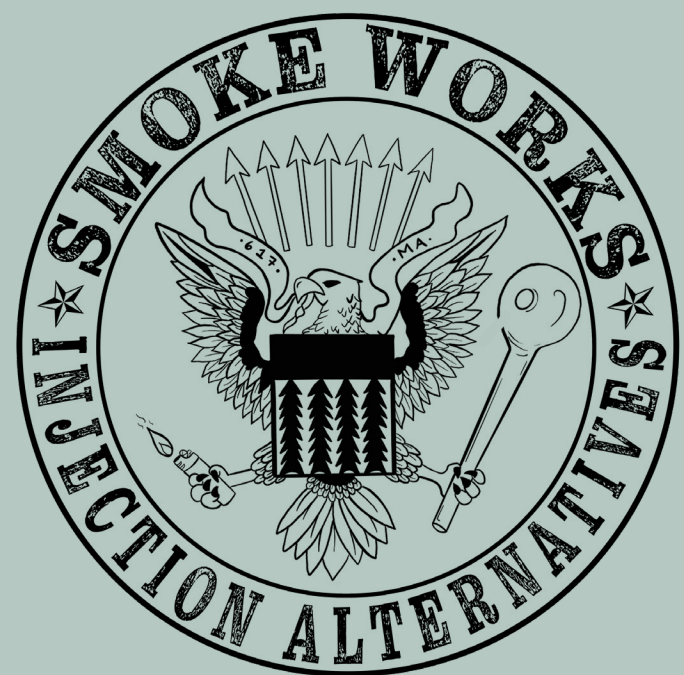
2. Step Program

Independent harm reduction groups can apply for our Step Program which offers an extra 5% off pipes, above our Open Discounts. Step Program participants will be supported with technical assistance and reduced pricing.

3. MAP Program

All account holders will have access to our Material Aid Program, where they can submit requests for items outside their budget.

Our ability to extend larger discounts and donation to burgeoning harm reduction programs is fully supported by sales. When you spend with smoke Works, you support independent harm reduction groups nationwide!



smokeworks.org

We would like to take this opportunity to thank and remember two friends without whom there would likely be no Smoke Works.

Khrissy Marie Dinsmore

September 25, 2021

Chris Alba

September 23, 2023

You are missed every day,
and countless lives are
better thanks to you.
No more dead friends.