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# **A Police Education Program to improve the implementation of drug policy reform in Mexico: *Initial findings from a longitudinal assessment***

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# Overview

- Background
- Objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion



Source: Jaime Arredondo

# Law and the Risk environment

- Law enforcement gap between the “law on the books” and “law on the streets,” policy transformation process (Burris et al, 2004).
- Police enforcement (formal or informal practices) can drive risk behaviors, directly or indirectly (Beletsky, 2012).
  - Syringe confiscation discouraging carrying clean needles.
  - Harassment increases risky practices like rushed injection, shooting gallery use
  - Police interference with “harm reduction” outreach and other programs
  - Police “crackdowns” displaces PWID, spreading risk and infection (Brouwer, 2012).
- Unstable legal and policy environment (arbitrary policing) undermines public health (Beletsky, 2015)

# Structural Interventions: Police Education Programs

- Police education programs (PEPs)
  - Communicate laws and policies
  - Synthesize police to social service and public health approaches and programs
  - Improve occupational health knowledge and practices
- Promising evaluations from US, Kyrgyzstan, etc.
  - Positive shift in legal knowledge
  - Improved attitudes towards harm reduction, public health
  - Intended practices related to referral to services
  - Improved occupational safety knowledge and self-efficacy
- Impact on police behavior has not been evaluated
- Never applied in Latin American setting

# Case Study: Tijuana

- Street drug users between 6.400 and 10.000 (Strathdee et al, 2008).
  - Major route for drug trafficking and consumption of heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamines. (Bucardo et al, 2005).
  - High-risk populations - sex workers, PWID and deportees.
  - HIV prevalence among PWID was 4.5%, higher for women than males (10.2% vs 3.5%).
- In 2013, UCSD Global Public Health signed MoU with the Ministry of Public Safety in Tijuana.
  - Facilitate academic research from local police databases.
  - Promote training of police officers.

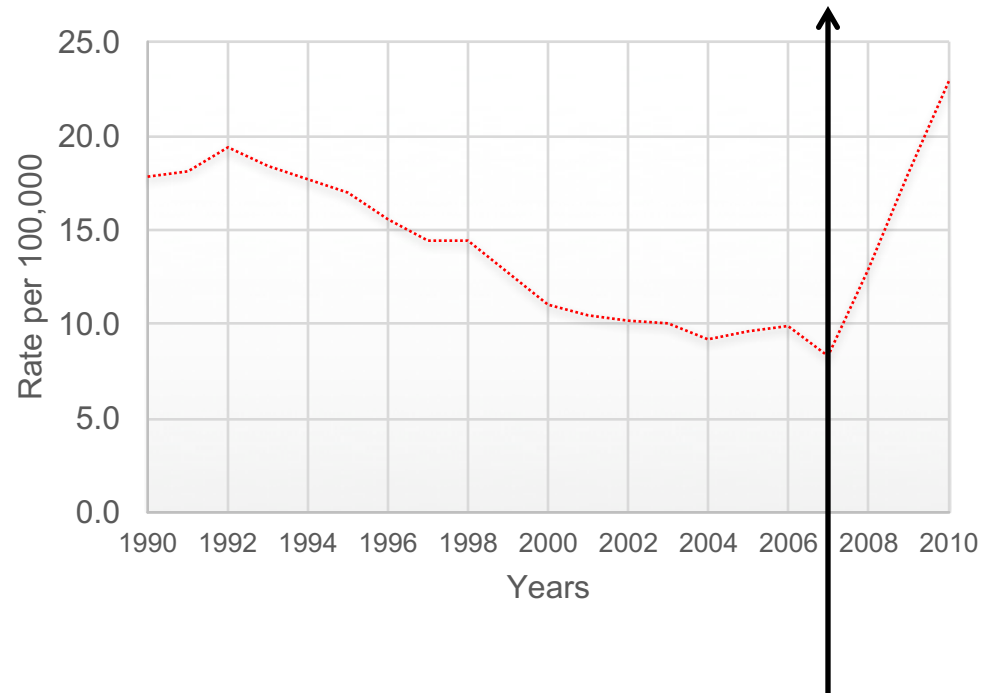


Source: <http://www.frontera.info/>, 2013

# Mexican War on Drugs

- Army mobilized to fight drug cartels (Shirk, 2011).
- High incarceration rate due to drug crimes (Correa, 2014).
- Explosive drug-related violence.
  - Doubling rate of homicides (SINAIS).
  - Higher than the national average in municipalities with military intervention (Espinosa et al. 2014).
- Gradual consolidation of police forces (Arredondo, 2012).

National Homicides Rate.  
Mexico. 1990-2010.



In December 2006 president Calderon implemented the military intervention in Michoacan.

# Mexico's “Narcomenudeo” Reforms

- Created a table of maximum amounts of drug possession.
- Shifted the legal prosecution of small-scale drug possession (Narcomenudeo) to the state.
- Individuals possessing less than legal threshold should be released.
  - “3 strike rule,” diversion to mandatory treatment.
- Narcomenudeo/trafficking penalties increased.

Guidance Table of Maximum Personal and Immediate Consumption		
Narcotic	Maximum level of personal and immediate doses	
Opium	2 gr.	
Diacetylmorphine or heroin	50 mg.	
Cannabis Sativa, Indica or Marihuana	5 gr.	
Cocaine	500 mg.	
Lysergide (LSD)	0.015 mg.	
MDA, Methyleneoxyamphetamine	Powder, granular or cristal	Tablets or capsules
	40 mg.	1 Unit with weight not greater than 200 mg.
MDMA, dl-34-metilendioxi-n-dimetilfeniletilamina	40 mg.	1 Unit with weight not greater than 200 mg.
Methamphetamine	40 mg.	1 Unit with weight not greater than 200 mg.

Table 1. General Health Law, article 479.

# Aims and Hypothesis

- Objective
  - Determine if a Police Education Program (PEP) impacts self-reported knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of police officers on Mexico's laws on drug possession and harm reduction strategies.
- Hypothesis
  - There will be an increase in the knowledge, positive attitudes and behavior change among police officers after their participation in the PEP to reduce the risk environment for PWID



# Police Education Program: ESCUDO

- In partnership with Tijuana Police academy (ICAP)
  - Train the trainers model.
  - Pilot training to refine intervention.
  - Saturday classes 40-50 officers.
  - Culturally adapted by the instructors.
- 3-hour PEP course divided in three modules:
  - Basic epidemiology, prevention and treatment of HIV, HCV, and tuberculosis.
  - Relevant national and state drug policies (“Narcomenudeo” law).
  - General elements of harm reduction; drug use and public health perspective.

Programa de Educación Policial

Prevención del VIH y Seguridad  
Ocupacional

Módulo 1 - Salud Ocupacional

Información básica sobre transmisión y  
prevención del VIH y hepatitis viral



# Survey Design

- IRB approved by US and Mexican institutions
  - All information is private and there are no consequences of their decision to participate
  - Officers receive compensation (movie tickets) for the completing surveys.
- Survey was designed using previous studies with police officers (Chan, 2012; Beletsky, 2012).
- Translated from English to Spanish with the participation of officers.
- Self-administered paper survey immediately before and after the PEP.

Survey Framework

Pre Survey	Post Survey
Study ID	Study ID
Demographics	
Basic Disease knowledge (HIV, HCV)	Basic Disease knowledge (HIV, HCV)
Occupational Safety Knowledge	Occupational Safety Knowledge
Law knowledge	Law knowledge
Harm Reduction Knowledge	Harm Reduction Knowledge
Law Attitudes	Law Attitudes
Harm Reduction Attitudes	Harm Reduction Attitudes
Past Behavior: Occupational Risk (last 6 months)	
Past Behavior: Drug Law enforcement (last 6 months)	
Self-efficacy, support, norms and motivation	Self-efficacy, support, norms and motivation

# Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Total Quantitative (n= 1,750)	
	N	% (IQR)
<b>Sociodemographics</b>		
Gender Male	1499	85.90%
Age, Median (IQR)	38.5	(32-44)
Married (N= 1,226)	947	77.24%
Education (N= 1,473)		
<i>Less than High School</i>	283	19.21%
<i>High School completed</i>	882	59.88%
<i>more than High School</i>	308	20.91%
total years in law enforcement	11	(8-18)
Rank (N= 1,749)		
<i>District Chief</i>	17	1%
<i>Deputy</i>	73	4.20%
<i>Supervisor</i>	115	6.60%
<i>Officer</i>	1473	84.20%
current assignment (patrol)	1410	81%

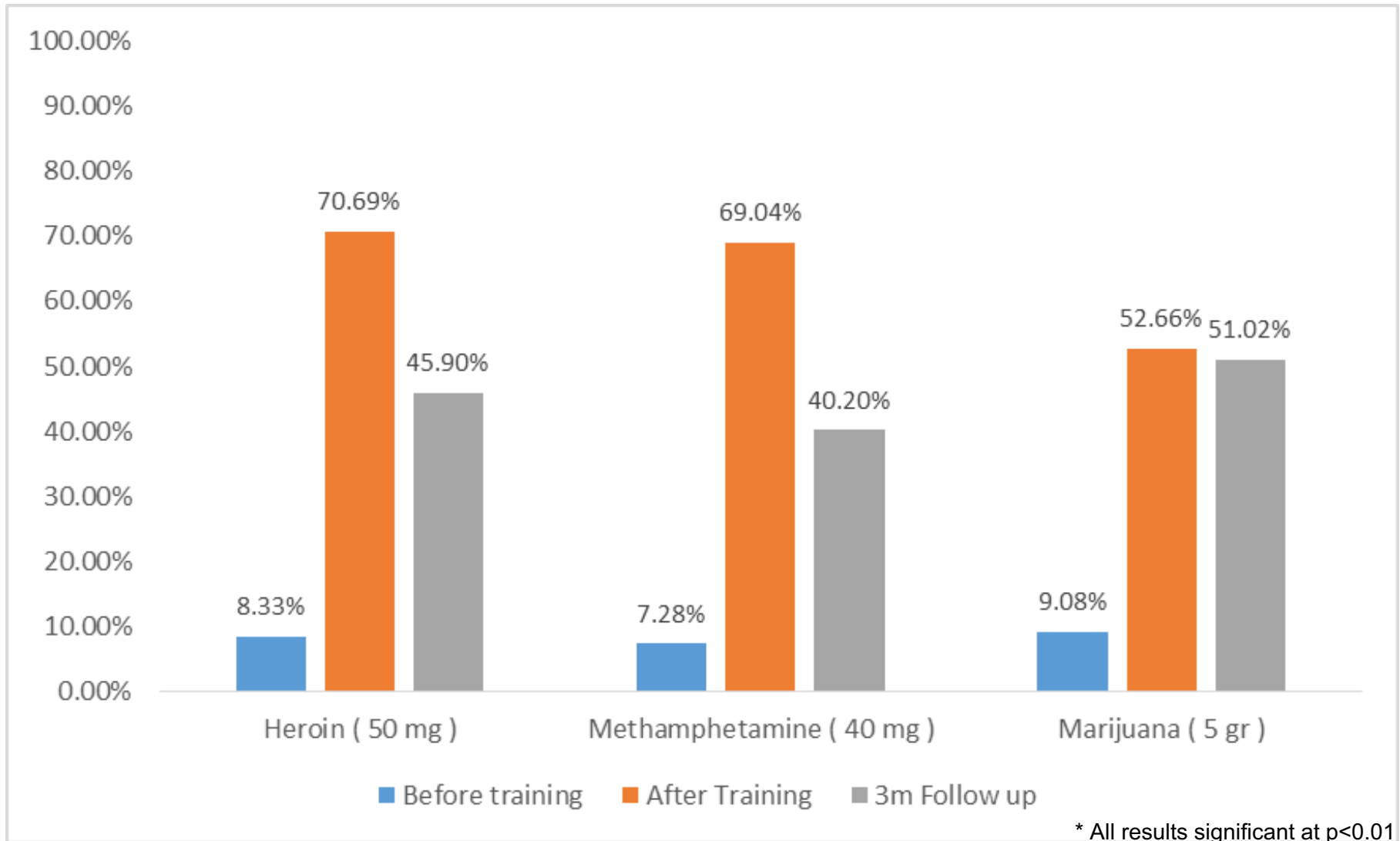


- Follow up cohort (744 officers).
  - 89% consent
  - 98% follow up rate at 3 months

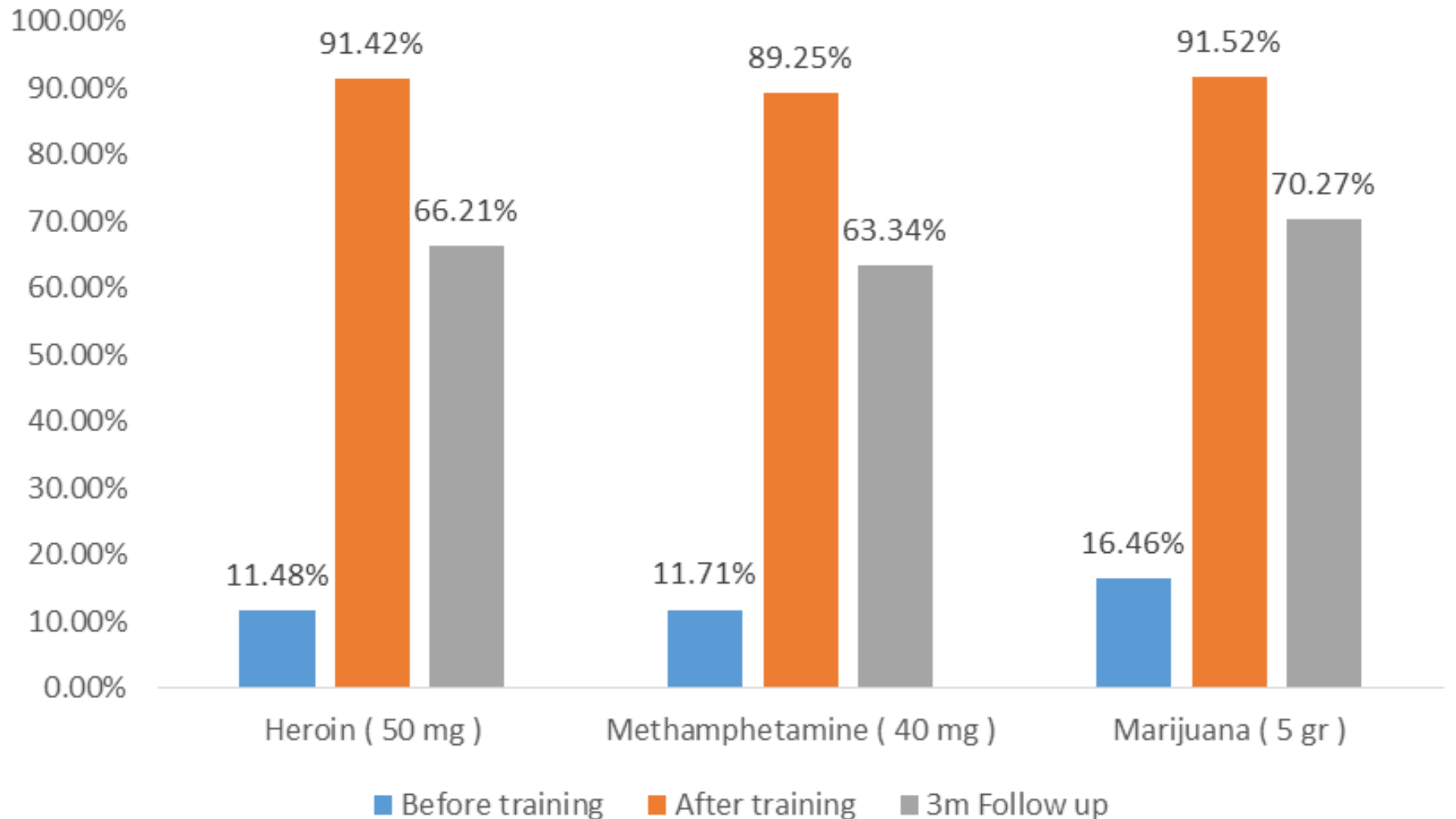
# Occupational Safety

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Total Quantitative (n= 1,751)</b>	
<b>Occupational Safety</b>		
how often do you typically come into contact with needles or syringes (frequently, sometimes)	1543	88.30%
have you EVER been accidentally stuck by a needle	210	12.03%
in the last 6 months, have you EVER been accidentally stuck by a needle (N= 201)	30	14.93%

# Change in Knowledge of the law: what a suspect can currently possess under the law of Baja California (exact)

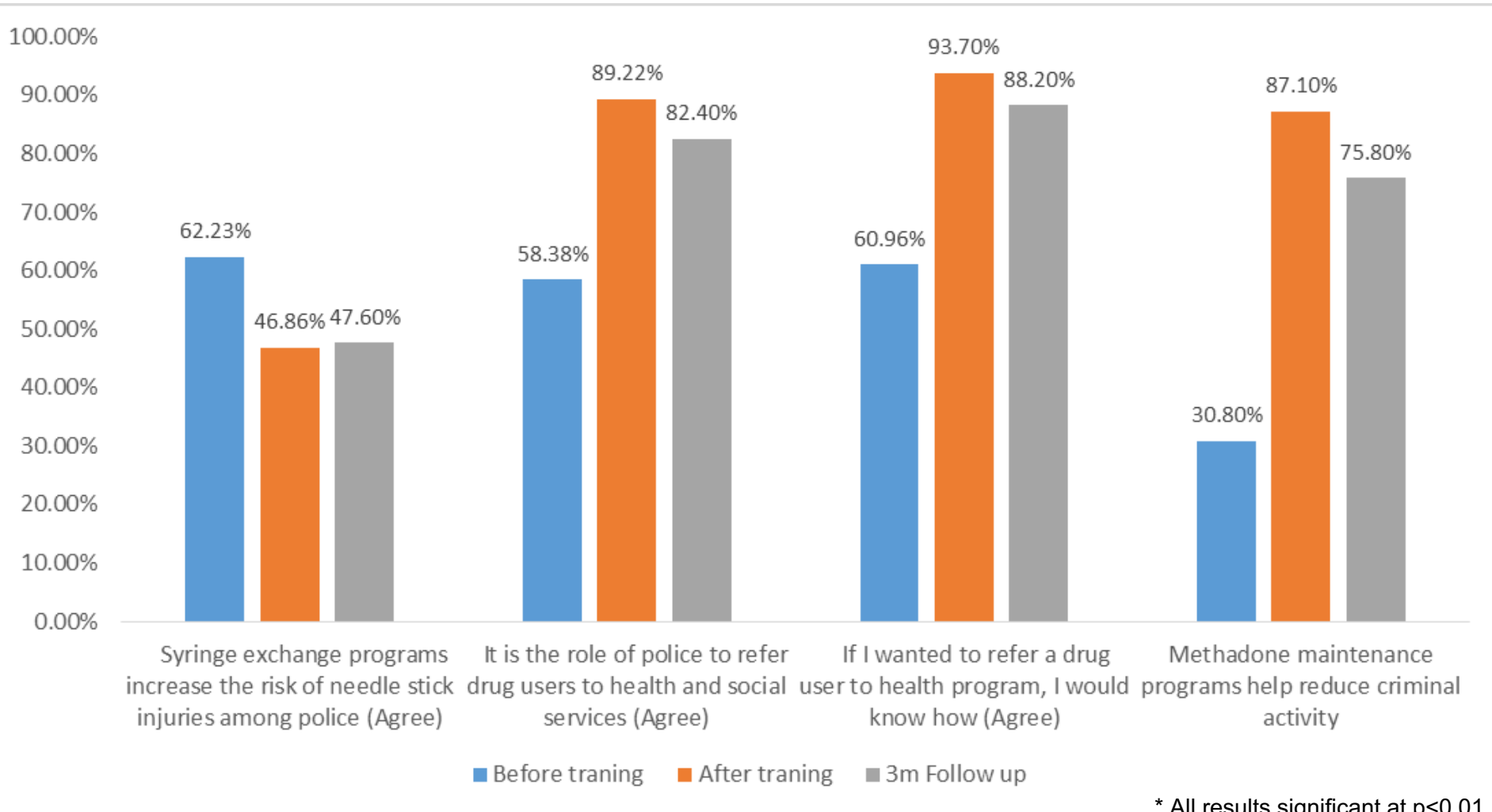


# Change in Knowledge of the law: what can currently possess (any quantity) “Decriminalization concept”

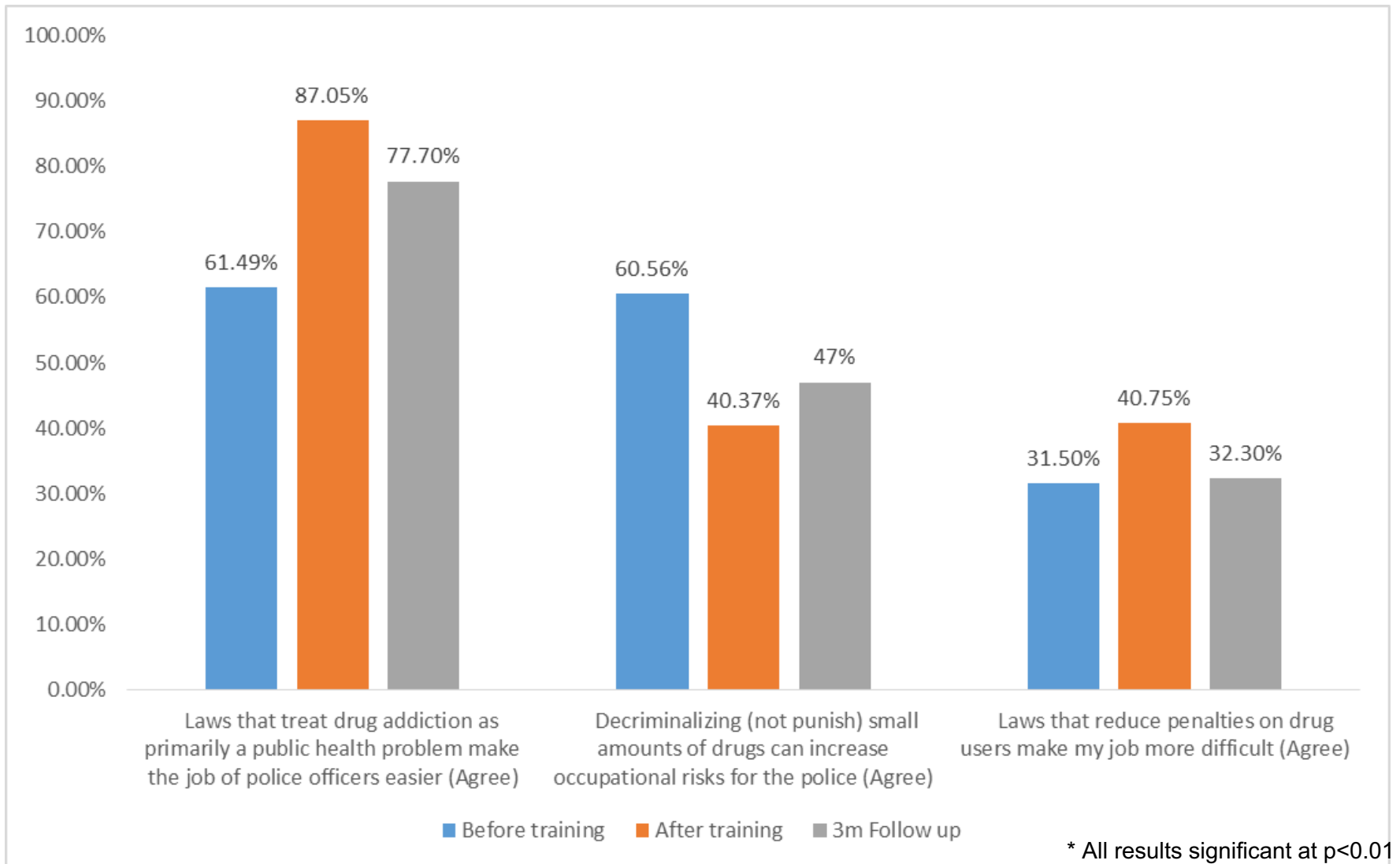


\* All results significant at  $p < 0.01$

# Alignment with Public Health goals

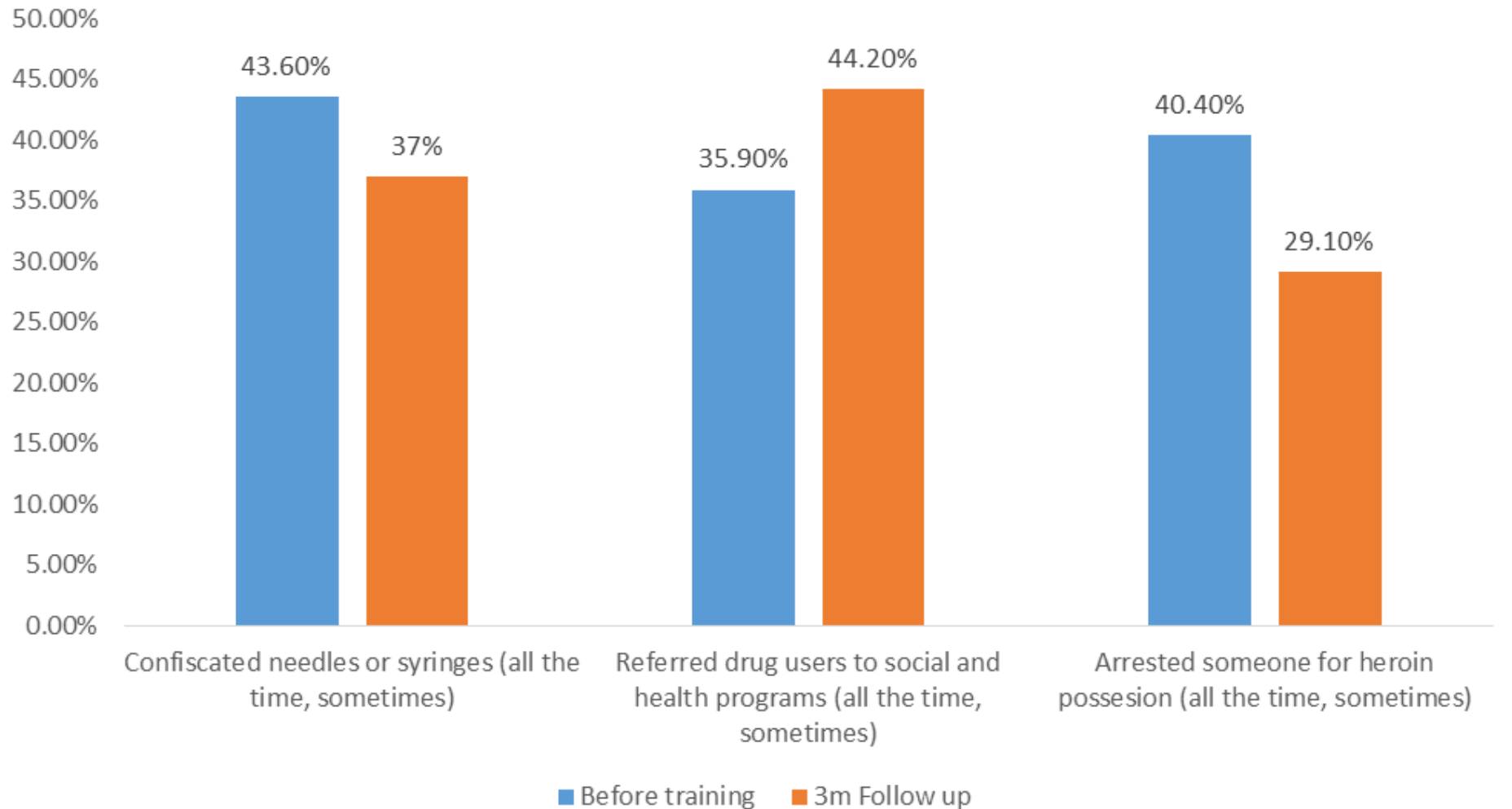


# Decriminalization Attitudes





# Changes in Behaviors Police Cohort



\* All results significant at  $p < 0.01$

# Discussion

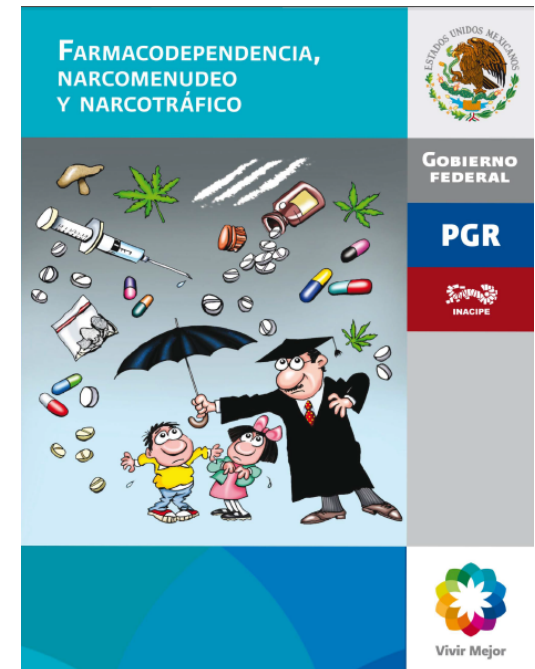
- Low level of Knowledge of the Law underscores need for enhanced training and other strategies in Tijuana and elsewhere in Mexico.
  - The “law on the books” is not properly implemented on the street.
  - Need to focus on those 15% that in spite of the training don’t learn the decriminalization concept.
- Imperative to align policing practices with Narcomenudeo reform and public health services.
  - Create a synergy between two areas that have traditionally operated in isolation.
  - Transform public debate by viewing drug problems as a public health issue rather than a public safety one



Source: SSPM Tijuana

# Discussion

- Opportunity to study a police structural intervention program
  - Modify HIV Risk environment and improve public health goals.
  - Provides street-level officers with information regarding harm reduction strategies through a cost-effective training tool.
- Positive results could lead to less HIV risks for PWID and Police officers.
  - Could lead to increased access to drug treatment.
  - Lower rates of HIV risk behaviors such as syringe confiscation and police victimization.



Source: INACIPE, 2010

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