

Santa Cruz County Syringe Services Program Statistics from 2014-2018

Summary:

Both Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties operate harm reduction programs intended to stem the spread of hepatitis and HIV by providing intravenous drug users with clean needles and means to properly discard used ones. The programs also offer **counseling and assistance referrals** to those struggling with drug addiction.

In Santa Cruz County, large supplies of needles are obtained for **secondary distribution** to third parties. The indirect recipients are **not accounted for**, and they are **not** offered other services by county health officials.

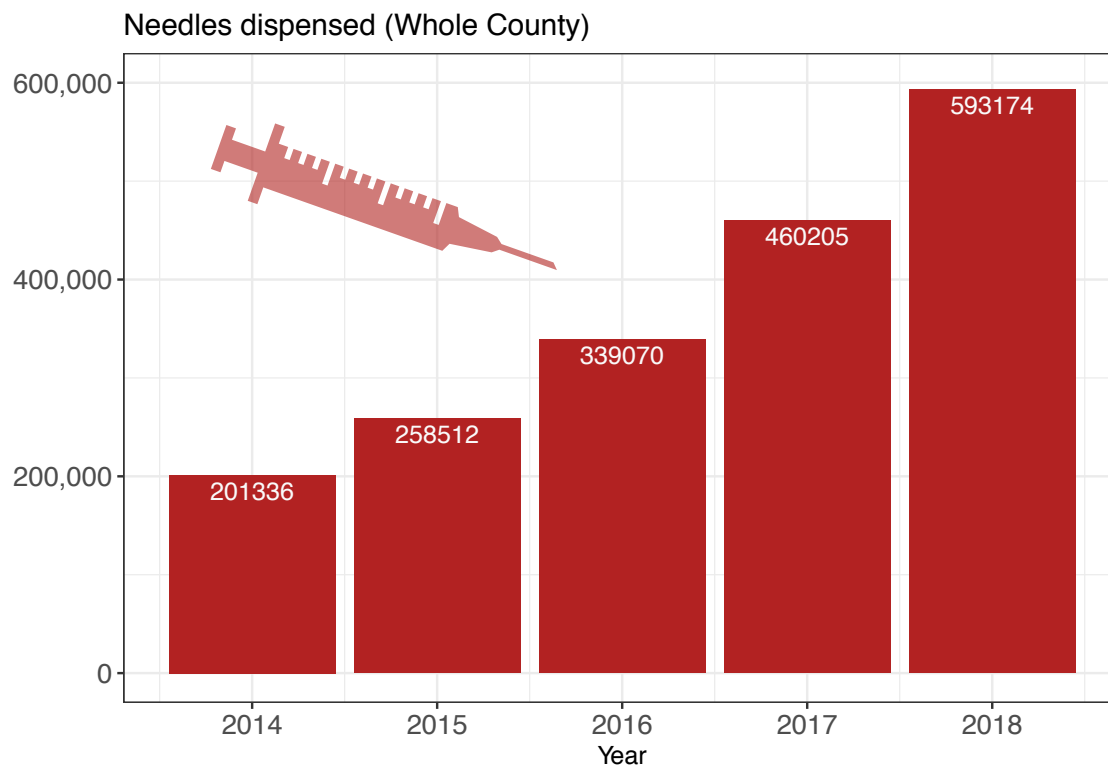
In contrast, in Monterey County the 2018 needle distribution served **six times as many visitors** with **five times fewer** needles: 114,000 to over 3700 clinic visitors.

The syringe-services program attempts to mitigate a health problem for one segment of the community (disease transmission), without addressing the underlying cause (addiction and illegal drug use). In the process, these activities are putting the vast majority of residents and visitors at risk from hazardous materials. Six hundred people served by the program are being entrusted to manage 600,000 items of biohazardous waste for 300,000 county residents and 3 million annual visitors.

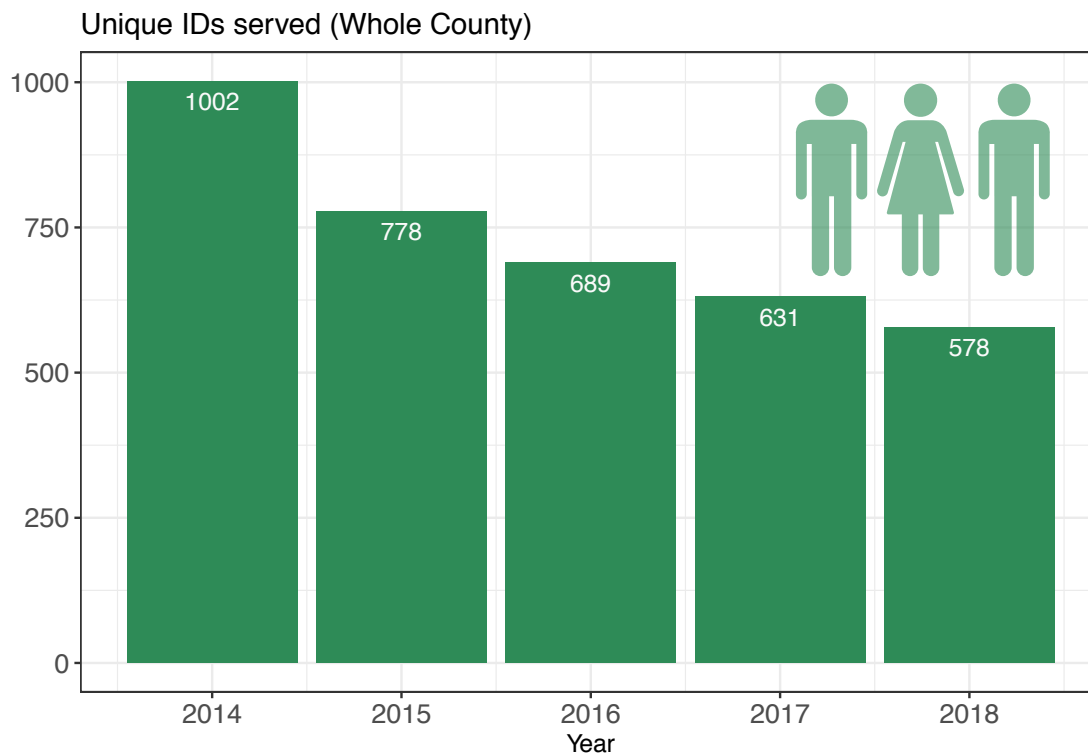
The program is challenged by polarized community perception about policies and procedures. Rather than trying to fly under the radar, more information from the SSP could help address the questions and concerns that continually arise.

Analysis: <https://github.com/beroe/SantaCruzNeedleStats>

All data from: <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/HSAHome/HSADivisions/PublicHealth/SyringeServicesProgram.aspx>

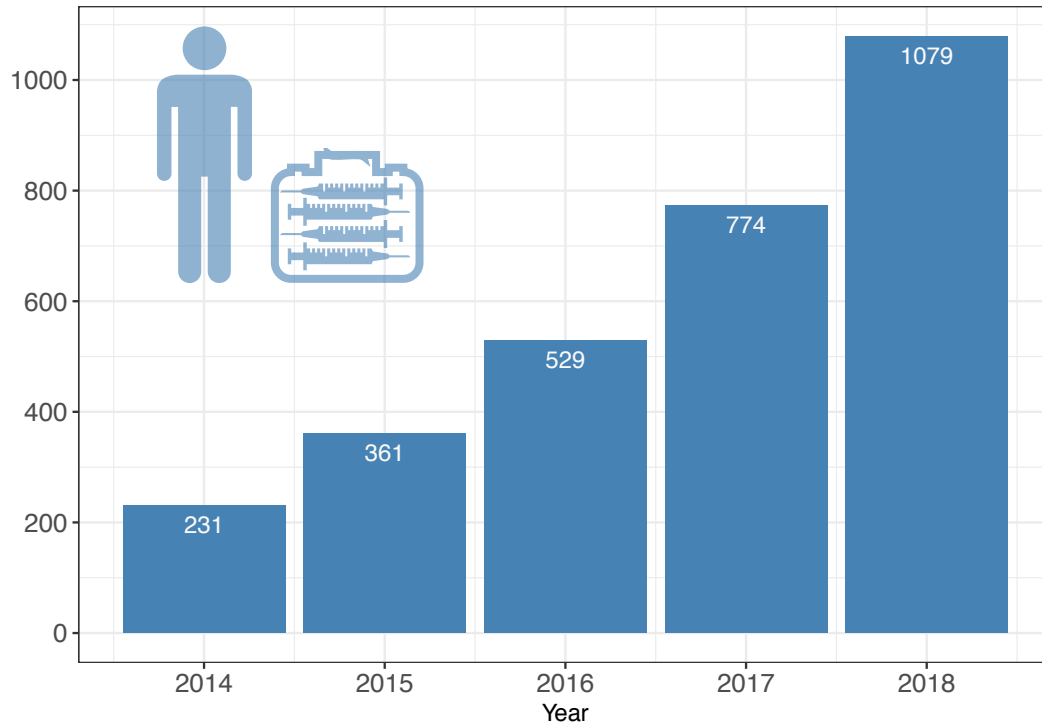


In Santa Cruz County¹, needle distribution has **tripled** from 200,000 in 2014 to nearly 600,000 in 2018.



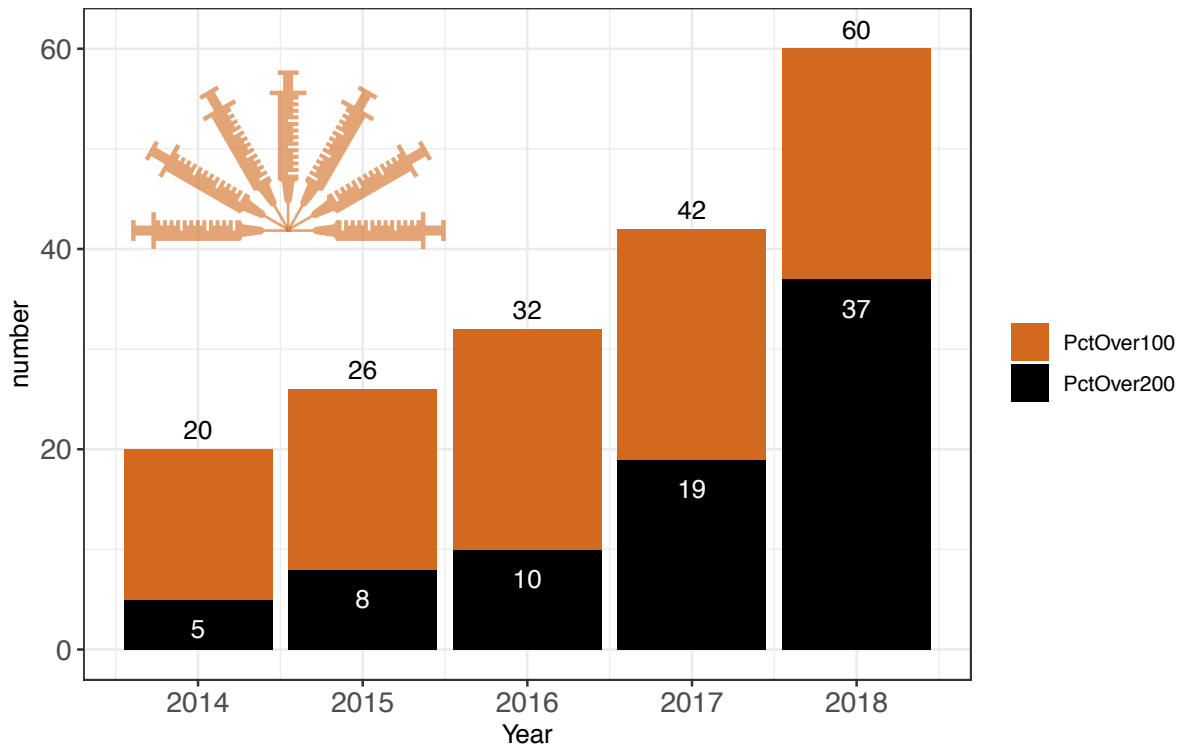
However, in the same period, the number of people directly served by the program has **declined** from 1000 to fewer than 600.

Needles per Individual per Year (SC Only)



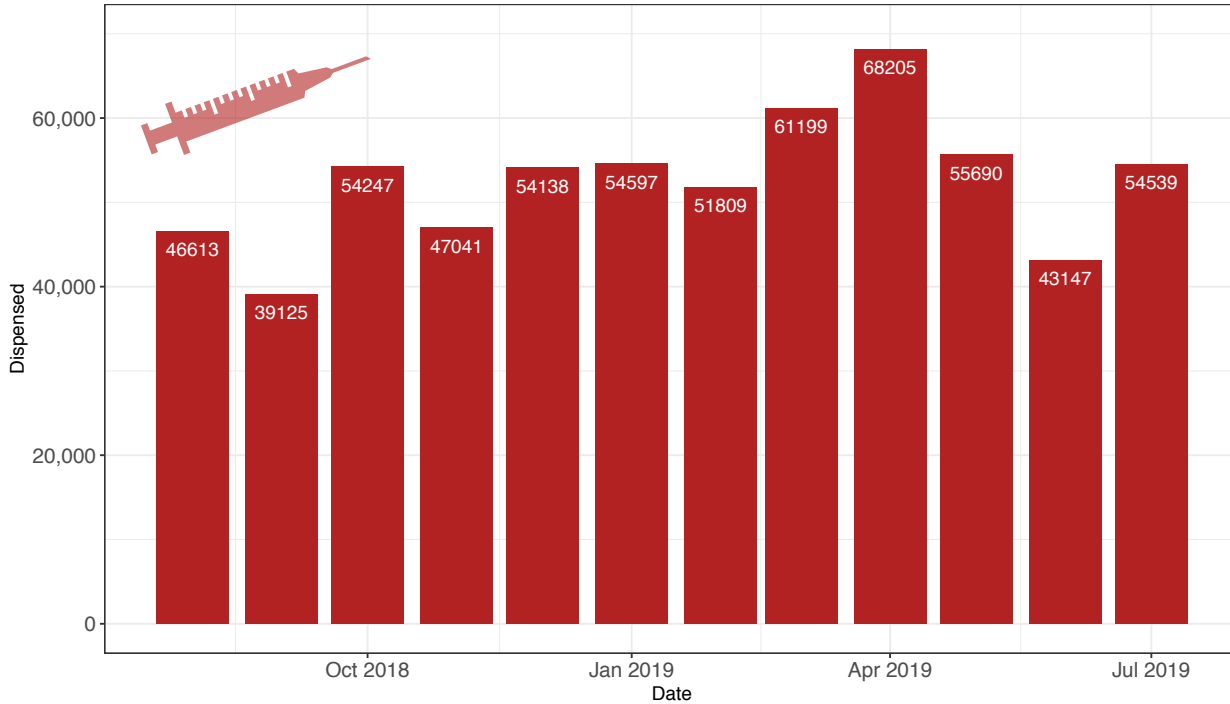
The number of needles given to each ID per year has risen from 200 to more than 1000.

Percent Receiving More Than 100 Needles (SC Only)



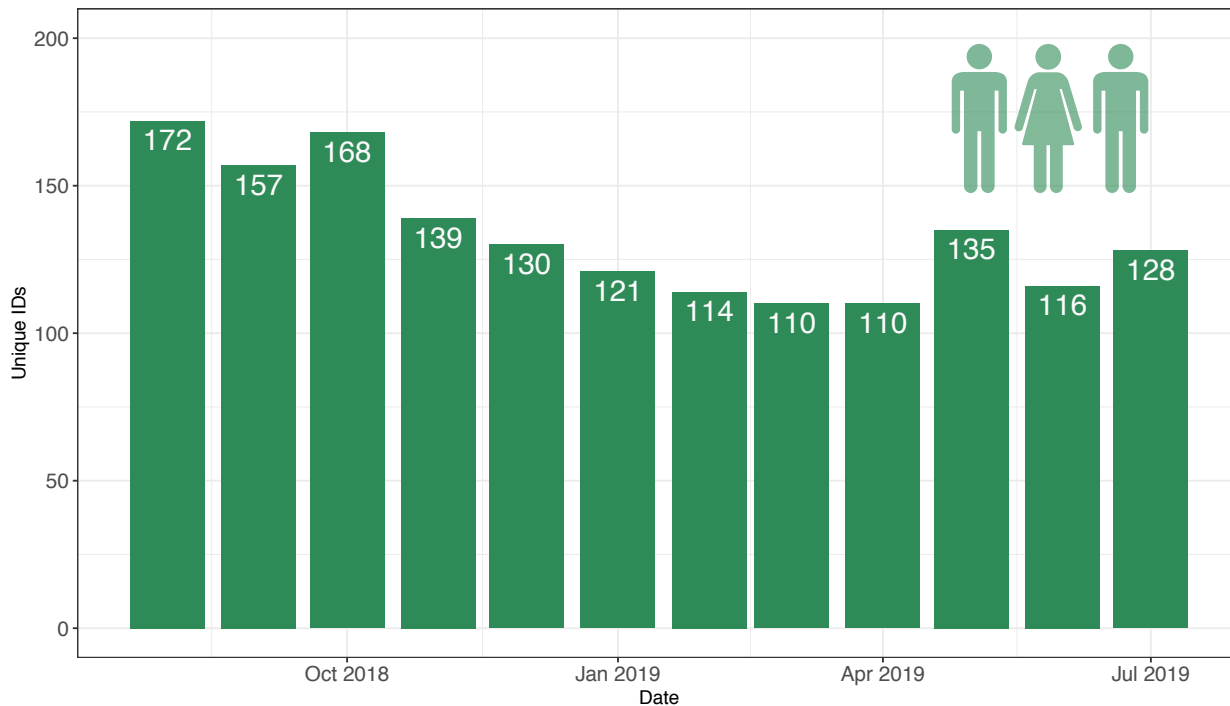
In 2018, 60% of visits were to obtain needles “**for others**”, receiving more than 100 needles in a visit. 37% got more than 200 needles per visit.

Needles dispensed per month (SC only)

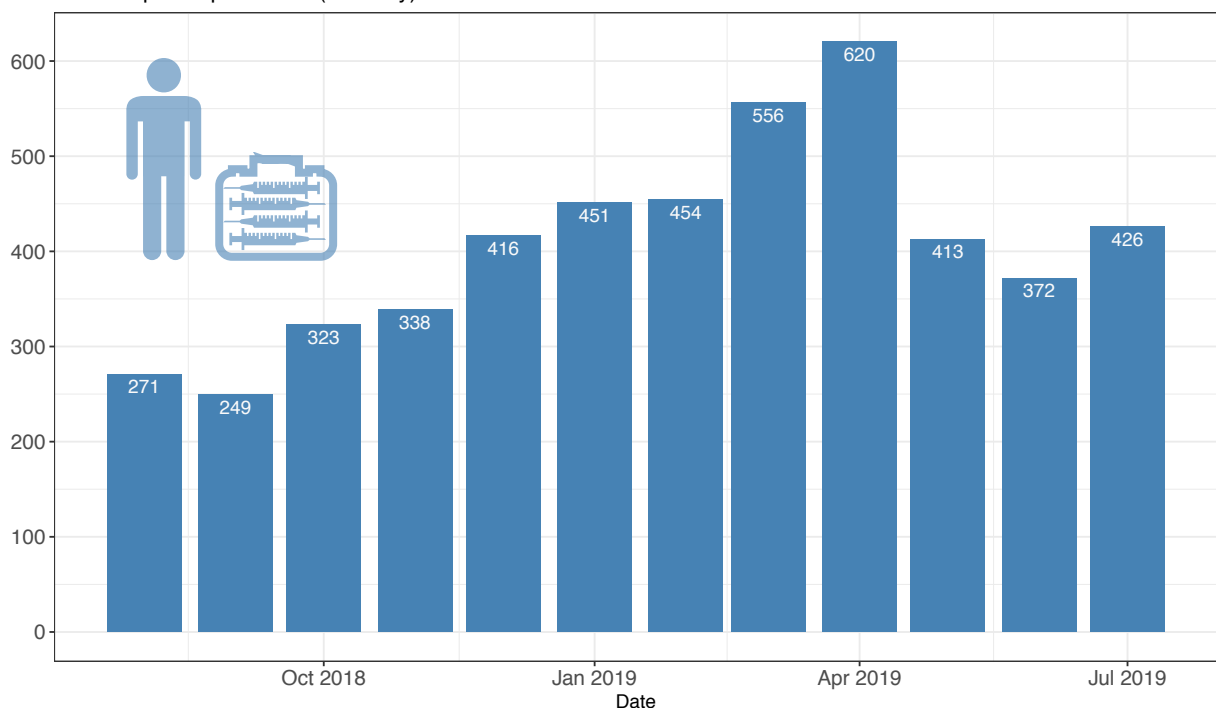


Monthly rates are even higher: In March 2019, only 110 people received 61,000 needles. In other words, 110 people got 2000 needles per day.

Unique visitors receiving syringes

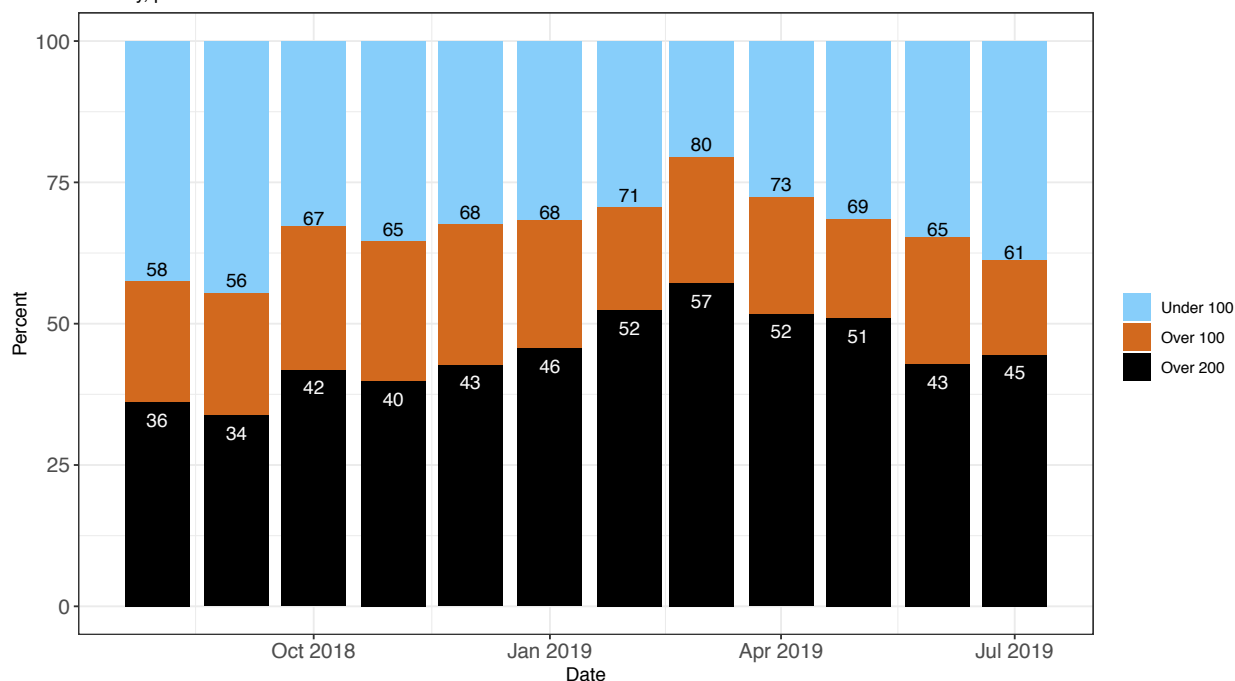


Needles per ID per Month (SC Only)



In recent months, the average number of needles per ID was more than 400 in a month — over **13 needles per day** per person.

Percent receiving more than 100 needles
SC only, per month



In Spring 2019, between **60 and 80% of visits got over 100 needles** per visit, and more than half got over 200 needles. (Contrast this with 5% in 2014).