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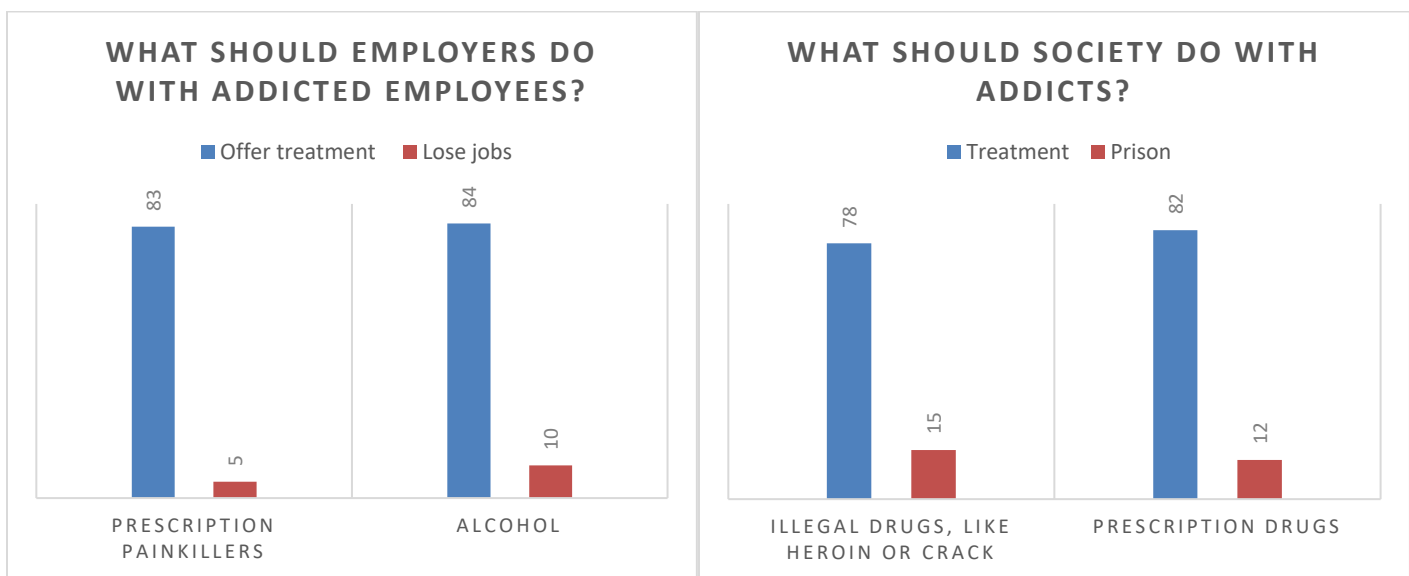
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THE OPIOID CRISIS: AMERICANS FAVOR COMPASSION AND TREATMENT FOR ADDICTS OF ALL STRIPES

Fairleigh Dickinson University, June 20, 2018 – Americans favor treatment over punishment for opioid and other addictions by sizable numbers, and many across the country believe the pharmaceutical industry should bear the brunt of the costs for helping opioid addicts recover.

In a nationwide telephone survey conducted recently by Fairleigh Dickinson University and its School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Americans were asked about a variety of options available to both the general public and employers regarding addicts. More than eight-in-ten Americans believe employers should offer treatment to employees who suffer from opioid addiction (83%) or alcohol addiction (84%). Significantly fewer believe addicts should lose their jobs, both in regard to opioid abuse (11%) and alcohol abuse (10%).

Americans also value treatment over prison for addicts who are caught breaking the law. Eighty-two percent say treatment is better than locking up opioid addicts, with 78 percent favoring the same when it comes to those caught with heroin or crack cocaine.



“The survey results demonstrate a belief among many Americans that addiction is not a crime that requires punitive action,” said Dr. Elif Özdener, assistant professor of pharmacy practice at Fairleigh Dickinson University, School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. “Compassion and assistance seem to be the way Americans want to go when treating addicts because the ravages of addiction have touched so many personally. We found that half of Americans across the country say they know someone who has struggled with an opioid addiction. [Research](#) shows that more than 100 Americans die every day from opioid overdose. This statistic and our findings speak to the severity of this epidemic.”

Based on these numbers, it should come as no surprise that a majority of Americans also favor allowing a treatment center for opioid addicts to be built in their communities. Eighty-six percent are decidedly NOT subscribers to the “Not in My Backyard” mentality.

If Americans prefer treatment over punishment, a legitimate question facing policymakers is who should pay? Although opinion is divided across a host of actors, more respondents said the pharmaceutical industry should contribute the most to treatment efforts for opioid addiction recovery. Thirty-seven percent identified drug makers, with 20 percent who want the government to pony up, and around equal numbers looking for payment from the addicts themselves (15%) and private insurers (16%).

“According to reports, more than 600 state, county, and city governments have filed suit against opioid manufacturers. The public seems marginally supportive of this approach and there’s evidence to suggest big pharma is not seen as all to blame for the catastrophe that’s unfolding across the nation,” said Krista Jenkins, director of the poll and a professor of political science at FDU.

Americans are divided over whether opioid and other addictions stem from behavioral choices versus genetic predispositions.

On the one hand, when asked if addictions to prescription painkillers represent a treatable disease, or do they simply persist because of a lack of self-control, similar numbers believe it’s a disease (45%) versus the inability to control one’s impulses (41%). However, when the question is asked slightly differently, and opioid addictions are considered alongside alcoholism, Americans are decidedly on the side of individual choice as the cause for both. Two thirds (68%) said individual choice is to blame for prescription painkiller abuse, as opposed to 19 percent who think genetic predispositions drive people to addiction. Regarding alcoholism, half (52%) believe choices drive behavior, with a third (26%) who believe genetics are what ultimately lead one down the path of becoming an alcoholic.

“Addiction is a complex disease likely caused by inherited and environmental factors. Unlike other genetic conditions, addiction cannot be attributed to a single ‘addiction gene.’ Instead, there have been multiple genes identified in human and animal studies that show that certain genes may alter response to exposure to opioids or alcohol and increase one’s inclination for addiction,” according to Özdener.

Conversely, most Americans see Type 2 Diabetes and depression as arising from genetic predispositions. Over half of Americans (58%) believe both illnesses arise from “nature” in the “nature/nurture” debate, with slightly more than a quarter identifying individual choice as the cause for Type 2 diabetes (29%) and depression (26%).

“Many people fail to acknowledge the impact of lifestyle choices in developing Type 2 diabetes. Although genetic predisposition does increase one’s tendency to develop Type 2 diabetes, lifestyle factors such as poor dietary choice and lack of exercise play a greater role in developing the disease and its severity for most people,” continued Özdener.

Partisanship and opinions on the addiction crisis

Although Democrats and Republicans largely agree on issues related to opioid addiction, it is often the case that partisanship helps to distinguish whom among Americans is the most supportive of treatment over punishment, and whether addictions occur as the result of nature or nurture.

A majority of Democrats (58%) believe a disease underlies the addiction, with a majority of Republicans (52%) who believe better self-control would solve the problem.

Partisans of both stripes believe treatment is preferable to punishment. However, significantly more Democrats offer their endorsement as compared with Republicans. On the question of what to do with those who abuse opioid drugs, 88 percent of Democrats support treatment, as compared with 75 percent of Republicans. And when it comes to those who abuse heroin or crack cocaine, a larger divide separates Democrats (86%) from Republicans (67%) regarding support for treatment over punishment.

“As the opioid and other addictions continue to wreak havoc on communities across the country, the demands on policymakers to address the growing problem will only get louder. Democrats and Republicans may not agree on much these days, but as these numbers indicate, at least there is some consensus on what should be done to address the epidemic,” said Jenkins.

Methodology - The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone April 25 – May 1, 2018 using a random sample of adults nationwide aged 18 and older (N = 1001). Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.9 percentage points, including the design effect.

Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

Interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, sex, and race. 432 interviews were conducted on landlines and 569 were conducted on cellular telephones.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

For the second year, the FDU poll received an “A” rating from statistician Nate Silver’s FiveThirtyEight blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2014. FDU’s “A” rating puts it in the top 15 of the more than 380 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. The FDU poll was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only three A-rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings.

Tables

Based on what you know, would you say that those who are addicted to prescription painkillers, like OxyContin, Percocet, or Vicodin, suffer from a treatable disease or is their addiction due to a lack of self-control?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Disease	45%	46	44	41	48	46	42	37	52	53	44	39	58	46	33
Self-control	41%	40	42	44	39	39	47	49	34	36	44	44	31	39	52
DK (vol)	12%	12	12	13	11	13	10	12	12	8	12	14	9	12	13
Refused (vol)	2%	2	3	3	2	3	1	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	2

Should employers who find out their workers are abusing prescription painkillers offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Offer treatment	83%	84	82	79	86	82	86	83	83	82	85	82	92	82	77
Lose jobs	11%	11	12	14	8	11	11	14	8	13	10	11	5	12	16
DK (vol)	5%	5	5	6	5	6	3	3	7	4	4	6	3	5	6
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	1

Should employers who find out their workers are abusing alcohol offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Offer treatment	84%	83	85	79	88	81	89	85	83	82	84	85	92	80	78
Lose jobs	10%	10	9	13	7	11	6	11	8	11	8	10	5	11	14
DK (vol)	5%	6	5	6	5	6	4	4	7	5	6	5	4	6	7
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	0	3	1

If you knew your community was considering allowing a treatment center for people seeking treatment from prescription painkiller addiction, would you favor or oppose [rotate] this center?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Favor	86%	86	86	84	88	85	89	87	85	90	87	83	91	83	84
Oppose	9%	11	8	10	9	10	9	9	10	8	9	12	6	11	11
DK (vol)	4%	2	6	5	3	5	2	3	4	2	5	5	2	5	5
Refused (vol)	1%	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

I'm going to read you some health problems that many are experiencing today. For each one, please tell me if you believe individual choices and behavior OR genetic pre-disposition [rotate] are more to blame? [ROTATE OP6A THROUGH OP6D]

<i>Type 2 Diabetes</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Individual choice	29%	34	25	30	28	30	27	29	28	29	30	28	27	31	31
Genetic	58%	55	43	56	61	55	65	60	57	59	57	59	62	53	57
DK (vol)	12%	10	33	14	10	13	9	10	14	12	13	12	10	15	12
Refused (vol)	1%	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2

<i>Alcoholism</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Individual choice	52%	50	55	57	47	51	54	59	46	48	57	51	43	52	59
Genetic	36%	38	34	33	39	39	32	30	42	37	34	38	46	35	30
DK (vol)	10%	10	10	8	11	8	12	10	10	12	8	10	8	12	9
Refused (vol)	2%	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	2

<i>Prescription painkiller abuse</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Individual choice	68%	64	73	70	66	65	74	72	64	66	71	68	58	69	77
Genetic	19%	20	18	19	19	21	15	14	23	20	20	17	26	20	14
DK (vol)	11%	14	9	10	13	11	11	12	11	12	8	13	13	10	9
Refused (vol)	2%	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	1

<i>Depression</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Individual choice	26%	22	30	32	20	27	25	30	22	28	23	27	22	28	27
Genetic	58%	60	57	51	65	59	57	54	62	56	65	54	66	54	56
DK (vol)	14%	15	13	15	14	12	17	14	14	14	10	18	11	16	16
Refused (vol)	2%	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	2

<i>In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing opioid prescription drugs without a prescription should be given treatment or prison time? [rotate]</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Treatment	82%	80	85	81	84	81	86	79	86	85	82	81	88	85	75
Prison	12%	13	11	13	12	14	9	16	9	10	12	14	7	11	19
DK (vol)	4%	6	3	4	5	5	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	3	5
Refused (vol)	1%	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	1

In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing illegal drugs, like heroin or crack cocaine, should be given treatment or prison time? [rotate]

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Treatment	78%	78	78	75	81	77	80	75	81	83	76	76	86	85	67
Prison	15%	14	16	16	13	17	12	19	12	12	14	17	9	11	23
DK (vol)	6%	8	4	6	6	6	6	5	7	4	7	6	4	3	9
Refused (vol)	1%	1	2	3	0	1	2	2	1	1	2	0	2	1	1

In your opinion, who should contribute the most to providing treatment for those addicted to prescription painkillers?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Pharmaceutical industry	37%	39	35	36	39	38	36	38	37	35	39	38	44	39	30
Private insurers	15%	15	14	12	17	13	18	13	16	15	15	14	14	12	17
Government	20%	18	22	21	18	17	25	21	19	31	14	15	25	18	16
Addicts	16%	14	19	17	16	20	11	18	15	10	19	20	7	16	26
Other (vol)	6%	8	4	7	5	6	5	6	6	5	7	6	5	8	6
DK (vol)	5%	5	5	6	5	6	3	4	6	3	5	8	5	5	5
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	1

Do you personally know anyone who has struggled with an opioid addiction?

	All	Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Yes	50%	47	52	50	49	50	49	54	50	47	48	49	52
No	50%	53	46	49	50	49	50	46	49	52	50	51	48
DK (vol)	1%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Refused (vol)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about prescription painkillers, sometimes called opioids, such as Percocet, OxyContin, or Vicodin. During the past two years, have you taken a strong prescription painkiller, like the ones I just mentioned?

	All	Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-54	55+	D	I	R
Yes	27%	24	30	28	26	28	26	28	26	28	27	30	27
No	72%	75	70	71	74	72	73	72	73	71	72	69	73
DK (vol)	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Refused (vol)	1%	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0

Question wording and order

OPI Now I'd like to ask you some questions about prescription painkillers, sometimes called opioids, such as Percocet, OxyContin, or Vicodin. During the past two years, have you taken a strong prescription painkiller, like the ones I just mentioned?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP2 Based on what you know, would you say that those who are addicted to prescription painkillers, like OxyContin, Percocet, or Vicodin, suffer from a treatable disease or is their addiction due to a lack of self-control?

- 1 Treatable disease
- 2 Self control
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Rotate OP3 and OP4

OP3 Should employers who find out their workers are abusing prescription painkillers offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

- 1 Offer treatment
- 2 Lose jobs
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP4 Should employers who find out their workers are abusing alcohol offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

- 1 Offer treatment
- 2 Lose jobs
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP5 If you knew your community was considering allowing a treatment center for people seeking treatment from prescription painkiller addiction, would you favor or oppose [rotate] this center?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP6 I'm going to read you some health problems that many are experiencing today. For each one, please tell me if you believe individual choices and behavior OR genetic pre-disposition [rotate] are more to blame? [ROTATE OP6A THROUGH OP6D]

- OP6A Type 2 diabetes
- OP6B Alcoholism
- OP6C Prescription painkiller abuse
- OP6D Depression

- 1 Individual choices and behavior
- 2 Genetic pre-disposition
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Rotate OP7 and OP8

OP7 In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing opioid prescription drugs without a prescription should be given treatment or prison time [rotate]?

- 1 Treatment
- 2 Prison
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP8 In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing illegal drugs, like heroin or crack cocaine, should be given treatment or prison time [rotate]?

- 1 Treatment
- 2 Prison
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP9 In your opinion, who should contribute the MOST to providing treatment for those addicted to prescription painkillers?

- 1 The pharmaceutical industry
- 2 Private insurers
- 3 Government
- 4 Addicts
- 5 Other (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP10 Do you personally know anyone who has struggled with an opioid addiction?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Weighted Sample characteristics

Male	49%
Female	51%
Democrat (with leaners)	37%
Republican (with leaners)	36%
Independent	22%
Other/DK/Refused	5%
18-34	30%
35-54	33%
55+	35%
Refused	2%
White	64%
African-American	11%
Latino	15%
Asian	7%
Other/refused	3%