

Nearly one in three people know someone addicted to opioids



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The opioid crisis continues to weigh heavily on the minds of Americans, according to a new national poll released today by the American Psychiatric Association, (APA). Nearly a third of Americans say they know someone who is or has been addicted to opioids or prescription painkillers. Nearly half feel it is extremely or somewhat easy to access opioids for illicit use. Americans strongly favor improving access to treatment over imposing stricter punishments to address the problem.

An estimated 2 million people in the United States have a substance use disorder related to prescription opioid pain medication and the number of overdose deaths from prescription and illicit opioids doubled from just over 21,000 in 2010 to more than 42,000 in 2016.

More Americans say they know someone who is or has been addicted to opioids or prescription painkillers compared to this time last year (31 percent today versus 27 percent in 2017). Nearly half (46 percent) say the opioid crisis is impacting people like them, up from 37 percent in 2017. And nearly one in 10 say they have taken an opioid or prescription painkiller without a prescription. Five percent of U.S. adults say they have abused or been addicted to opioids or prescription painkillers, up from 1 percent in 2017, possibly reflecting a greater awareness and willingness to talk about the problem.

The poll also found a growing percent of Americans say it would be easy for someone to access opioids for illicit purposes (46 percent in 2018 versus 39 percent in 2017). People who misuse opioids often get them from a family member or friend who has a prescription. Millennials (52 percent) are more likely to believe it's easy to get opioids than baby boomers (41 percent).

More Americans believe people can recover from an opioid addiction. Four in five Americans believe people can recover, up from 73 percent in 2017. Three-quarters of U.S. adults (74 percent) say they "understand how someone accidentally gets addicted to opioids," up from 69 percent in 2017.

When asked about how policymakers should address the problem, Americans strongly favor improving access to treatment (62 percent) over imposing stricter punishments and enforcement (26 percent).

"Our poll findings show that Americans are increasingly aware of the problem of opioid addiction and increasingly believe people can recover, said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A. "The crisis has become personal to many and they want to see treatment available for those affected. We are ready to work with the Administration and Congress to curb this national epidemic."

These findings are from an APA-sponsored poll conducted online using ORC International's CARAVAN Omnibus Survey. The surveys were collected from a nationally representative sample of 1,004 adults during the period March 22-25, 2018 and from a similar poll of 1,019 adults in April 20-23, 2017. The margin of error is +/-3.1 percentage points.

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Provided by:

American Psychiatric Association