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New Poll Shows Majority of Americans Support Efforts to Make Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment More Accessible, Affordable

June 16, 2009 – A new study released today examines attitudes toward the accessibility and affordability of alcohol and drug addiction treatment to the many Americans who need these services, including veterans. The poll shows that Americans of all walks of life are personally touched by addiction and half of them say they could not afford treatment if they or a family member needed it. They are also concerned that people addicted to alcohol or drugs may not be able to get treatment because of cost or lack of insurance coverage – a concern likely heightened by the current economic recession. For these reasons, most Americans support including access to affordable addiction treatment as part of national health care reform. This support spans all economic, age, and racial groups as well as regions of the country. Most Americans in the poll also support increased federal and state funding for alcohol and drug prevention, treatment and recovery, particularly as it relates to helping veterans and military returning from active duty.

The poll was sponsored by *Closing the Addiction Treatment Gap*, a program of the Open Society Institute. This program seeks to raise awareness around alcohol and drug addiction and its effects on family and communities. The telephone survey was conducted May 29 – June 1, 2009 among a nationally-representative sample of N = 1,001 adults 18 and older. The margin of sampling error is ± 3.1 percentage points. Key findings include:

- Three-quarters of Americans (76%) know someone personally who has been addicted to alcohol or drugs. Personal experience with addiction spans all demographic groups.
- Half of Americans (49%) do not think they would be able to afford the costs of treatment if they or a family member needed it. This concern about affordability is highest among Americans with incomes under \$50,000 (67% say they would not be able to afford treatment).
- Three-quarters (75%) of Americans are concerned that people who are addicted to alcohol or drugs may not be able to get treatment because they lack insurance coverage or cannot afford it.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) support including alcohol and drug addiction treatment as part of national health care reform to make it more accessible and affordable. This support cuts across all demographic groups.

- Two-thirds of Americans (68%) also support increasing federal and state funding for alcohol and drug prevention, treatment, and recovery services.
- Finally, more than nine in ten (96%) support providing specialized prevention, treatment, and recovery support to veterans and military returning from active duty (78% strongly support this effort).

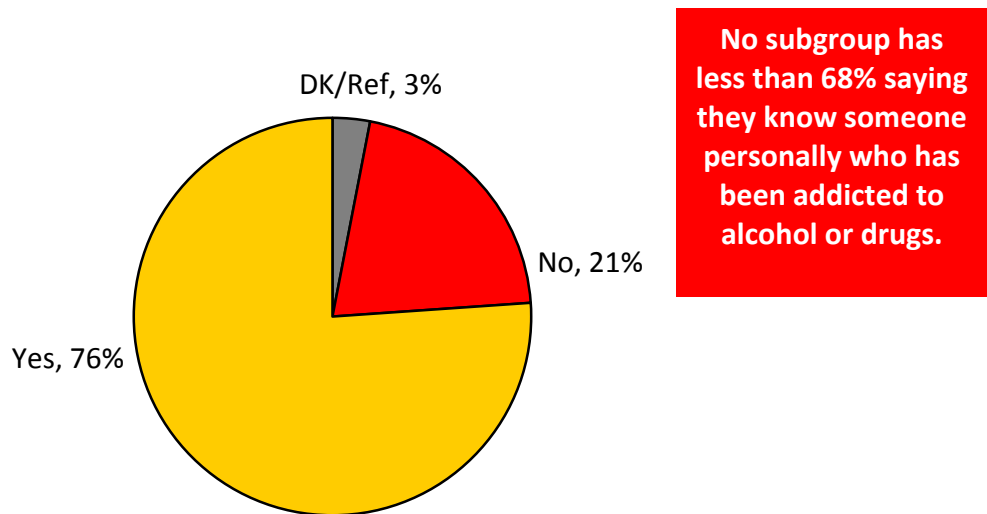
Detailed findings can be found on the following pages.

Detailed Findings

Most Americans are touched personally by alcohol or drug addiction.

Three-quarters of survey respondents (76%) know someone personally who has ever been addicted to alcohol or drugs. (See Figure 1) This direct experience with addiction cuts across all age, income, education, and racial/ethnic groups in the survey as well as region of the country, with a minimum of two-thirds of every sub-population saying they know someone personally who has been addicted to alcohol or drugs.

Figure 1: Do you personally know someone who has ever been addicted to alcohol or drugs?



Q. Do you personally know someone who has ever been addicted to alcohol or drugs?

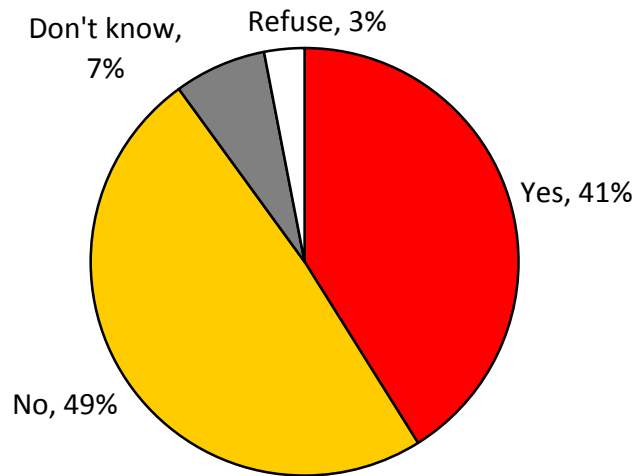
Half of Americans do not think they would be able to afford the costs of treatment if they or a family member had an alcohol or drug addiction.

In a striking survey finding, almost half of respondents (49%) indicate that if they or someone in their family needed treatment for alcohol or drug addiction, they would not be able to afford the costs of that treatment. Four in ten (41%) responded that they would be able to afford the treatment costs. (See Figure 2) Americans most likely to say they would not be able to afford treatment costs include those with incomes under \$50,000 (67%), African Americans (65%), Latinos (60%), younger Americans ages 18-34 (56%), and those living outside of metropolitan areas (56%).¹ (See Table 1)

¹ Caution – small cell size for African Americans and Latinos.

Even subgroups who might be expected not to worry about costs for treatment perceive an inability to pay for it. These include three in ten Americans with incomes of \$75,000-\$100,000 (30%) and one-quarter of those with incomes higher than \$100,000 (25%) who say they would not be able to afford the costs of treatment if they or a family member needed it.

Figure 2: If you or someone in your family needed treatment for alcohol or drug addiction, do you think you could afford the costs of treatment?



Q. If you or someone in your family needed treatment for alcohol or drug addiction, do you think you would be able to afford the costs of treatment?

Table 1: Would you be able to afford treatment costs for yourself/family member?

	No	Yes
Total	49%	41%
Those with Income <\$50,000	67%	27%
High School Education or Less	65%	26%
African Americans	65%	34%
Latinos	60%	35%
Americans Ages 18-34	56%	38%
Live In Non-Metropolitan Area	56%	30%

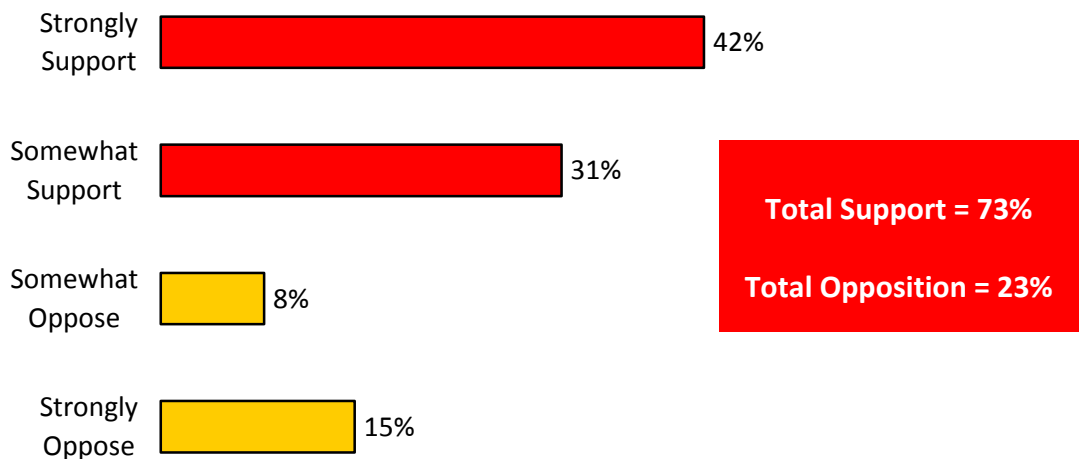
Most Americans are concerned that people addicted to alcohol or drugs may not get the treatment they need because of cost or a lack of coverage.

Concerns about the affordability of and access to addiction treatment emerge throughout the survey results. Three-quarters of survey respondents (75%) say they are concerned that people who are addicted to alcohol or drugs may not be able to get the treatment they need because they lack insurance coverage or cannot afford it. Four in ten (41%) are *very* concerned. Two in ten (22%) say they are not concerned. Once again, concerns about access and affordability span all demographic groups in the survey with at least two-thirds (67%) of all subgroups expressing concern.

Most Americans support including alcohol and drug addiction treatment as part of national health care reform.

Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents (73%) support including addiction treatment as part of national health care reform to make it more affordable once they learn that only 1 in 10 who need treatment get these services. Four in ten (42%) strongly support including addiction treatment in health care reform. About one-quarter of respondents (23%) do not support including addiction treatment in health care reform. (See Figure 3) As with other findings in the survey, support for including treatment for alcohol and drug addiction in national health care reform is broad-based. Roughly two-thirds of every demographic subgroup supports its inclusion in health care reform.

Figure 3: Would you support or oppose... including alcohol and drug addiction treatment as part of national health care reform to make it more accessible and affordable?

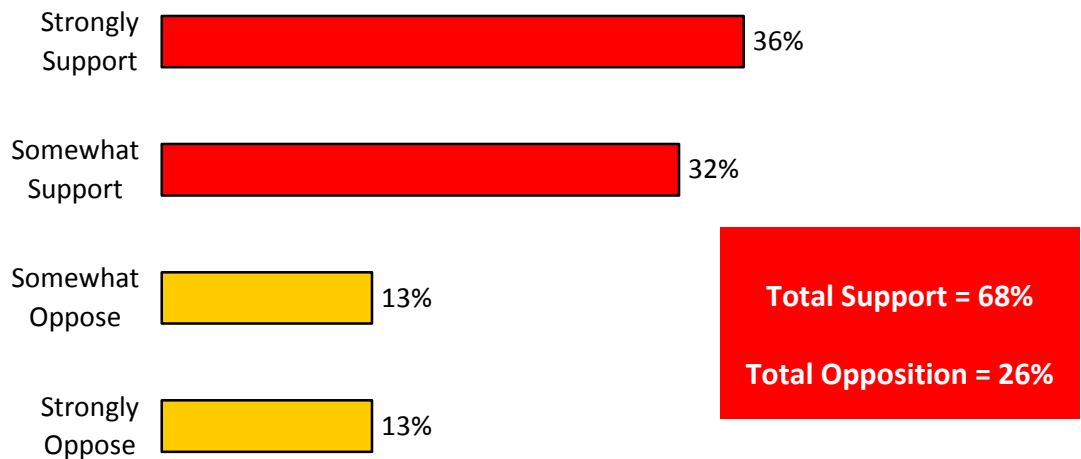


Q. Right now, only 1 in 10 people who need alcohol or drug addiction treatment get the services they need. Would you support or oppose each of the following ideas to help more people get treatment... include alcohol and drug addiction treatment as part of national health care reform to make it more accessible and affordable?

Most Americans also favor increasing federal and state funding for alcohol and drug prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

In fact, more than two-thirds of survey respondents (68%) support an increase in federal and state funding, which is high given the current economic climate and public concerns about government spending. (See Figure 4) One-quarter (26%) oppose increased funding. Support for increased funding is widespread, with majorities of all demographic subgroups in favor.

Figure 4: Would you support or oppose... increasing federal and state funding for alcohol and drug prevention, treatment, and recovery services? (n=479)

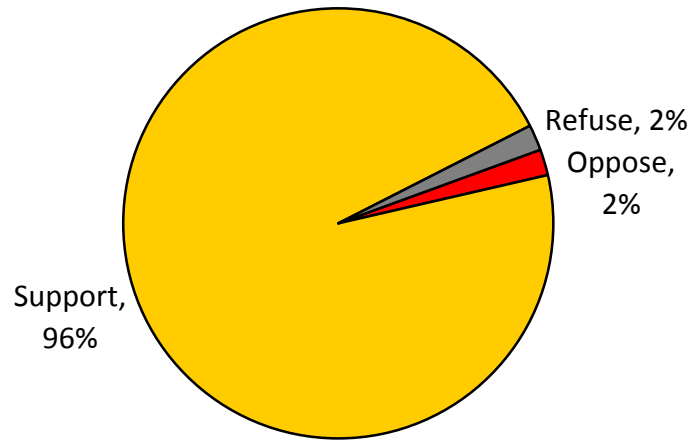


Q. Right now, only 1 in 10 people who need alcohol or drug addiction treatment get the services they need. Would you support or oppose each of the following ideas to help more people get treatment... increase federal and state funding for alcohol and drug prevention, treatment, and recovery services?

The survey finds overwhelming support for specialized prevention, treatment, and recovery services for military veterans.

When it comes to veterans and military returning from active duty, more than nine in ten Americans (96%) support providing specialized prevention, treatment, and recovery services for those addicted to alcohol or drugs. (See Figure 5) Only two percent of survey respondents oppose this idea, suggesting Americans feel a strong sense of responsibility to help veterans cope with addiction. Support for these services cuts across all demographic groups.

Figure 5: Would you support or oppose... providing specialized prevention, treatment, and recovery services to veterans and military returning from active duty? (n=522)



Q. Right now, only 1 in 10 people who need alcohol or drug addiction treatment get the services they need. Would you support or oppose each of the following ideas to help more people get treatment... provide specialized prevention, treatment, and recovery support to veterans and military returning from active duty?

Conclusions

The poll results suggest that the American public may be ahead of their policymakers when it comes to supporting expanded access to alcohol and drug addiction treatment. This issue appears to be very real for most Americans, who have been personally touched by addiction. Treatment for alcohol or drug addiction is not an abstract policy issue for them, but a real-life issue. This explains the clarity and consistency of their survey responses when asked about investing more in treatment. A chief issue is affordability – half of Americans say they would not be able to afford treatment if they or a family member needed it. This is a large segment of the American public who views addiction treatment to be out of reach financially. They are also concerned other Americans might not be able to access treatment because they lack health insurance coverage or cannot afford it.

For these reasons, they support including addiction treatment in the current health care reform debate. They believe treatment needs to be made more accessible and more affordable to those Americans who need these services. Two-thirds want more federal and state spending on addiction prevention, treatment and recovery – a strong finding in an economic recession. Finally, Americans feel strongly that veterans and military returning from active duty should be able to access special prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

Methodology

This survey was conducted by telephone May 29 – June 1, 2009 among 1,001 adults 18 and older nationwide, using RDD probability sample. Data were weighted by gender, age, race, and region. The margin of sampling error for the survey is ± 3.1 percentage points. The sampling error is larger for smaller subgroups within the sample.