

MARISTPOLL

Marist College Institute for Public Opinion

3399 North Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 ♦ Phone 845.575.5050 ♦ Fax 845.575.5111
www.maristpoll.marist.edu

POLL MUST BE SOURCED:

PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll*

The Opioid Crisis

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, October 3, 2017

Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Griffith
Marist College
845.575.5050

This PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

Few Americans are unaware of opioid addiction in the United States. 92% have at least some knowledge of the opioid crisis, and many consider the situation to be a serious and growing problem. 64% of Americans report they have personally been prescribed an opioid medication such as Percocet, OxyContin, or Vicodin. Although 93% say they are not worried about becoming addicted themselves, 54% say they know someone who has, including 24% who mention an immediate family member. One in four Americans, 25%, know someone who has died from an overdose of prescription pain medications.

“Opioids have clearly been the prescription drug of choice for many doctors,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Although most Americans are confident that they will not become addicted, there is major uncertainty about insurance coverage for treatment if a family member does.”

Many Americans, 58%, see opioid addiction as a major problem facing the nation and an additional 26% characterize it as a “national emergency.” 52% see opioid addiction as an important issue to be included in health care reform and another 31% describe it as a top priority.

63% of Americans think the problem of opioid addiction to prescription pain medication in the United States has increased in the past year. An additional 26% say it has remained the same, and only 2% think it has decreased.

Regardless of demographic group, at least a majority of residents think opioid drug addiction is becoming more prevalent. However, Democrats, 72%, are more likely than independents, 61%, and Republicans, 59%, to perceive addiction to prescription opioids to be on the rise.

*All references to the survey must be sourced as “PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll”

Americans draw a distinction between opioid addiction nationally and opioid addiction in their own community. While more than six in ten Americans, 63%, view opioid addiction to be an increasing problem on the national level, far fewer, 36%, say the situation has become worse in their local area. Nearly half, 49%, think the problem has remained the same.

Residents living in the Northeast, 44%, and Midwest, 41%, are more pessimistic about the opioid problem in their community than those who reside in the South, 30%, or West, 34%. White residents, 38%, and Latinos, 37%, are more likely than African Americans, 23%, to see a growing opioid problem in their neighborhood.

Residents are also less likely to perceive addiction to prescription pain medication to be a major problem in their own community. 38% say the issue is a major problem and another 16% see it as a community emergency. About one in four, 26%, believe it is a minor issue.

With one notable exception, at least a majority of Americans do not think federal and statewide officials and those in the medical and pharmaceutical communities are doing enough to address the problem of prescription drug addiction. Congress, 15%, and federal health and drug agencies, 19%, are perceived by the fewest number of Americans as making headway on this issue while law enforcement officials, 53%, are the group most likely to be viewed as combatting the problem.

National Adults			
Do you think each of the following are doing enough or not enough to address the problem of opioid addiction to prescription pain medication:			
National Adults	Enough	Not Enough	Unsure
Law enforcement	53%	37%	10%
Doctors	31%	61%	8%
President Trump	26%	60%	14%
Insurance companies	26%	61%	14%
Your state government	25%	63%	12%
Federal Health and drug agencies	19%	70%	11%
Congress	15%	73%	12%

PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults October 2, 2017

“The opioid problem for most Americans is serious and growing,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “But, beyond law enforcement officials, most Americans don’t think there are enough stakeholders stepping up to the plate to address the problem.”

*All references to the survey must be sourced as “PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll”

There is little consensus about who is to blame for the problem of opioid addiction. Nearly one in four Americans, 24%, believe doctors who prescribe painkillers are the most at fault. Drug dealers who sell prescription painkillers illegally, 21%, closely follow. 18% point the finger at people who take prescription painkillers, and a similar proportion, 17%, place the onus on pharmaceutical companies that sell prescription painkillers. More than one in ten, 11%, blame the government which approves these drugs before they are sold.

A plurality of Americans, 47%, think the medical and mental health community, though, needs to take the lead and should assume responsibility for fighting the problem of addiction to prescription pain medications. The pharmaceutical industry follows with 29%, and 12% think law enforcement should be at the fore of this battle. Three percent believe all parties are responsible while 4% say none of these groups bears the responsibility.

When it comes to government involvement in combatting the opioid drug problem, there is also little consensus about who should spearhead the fight. 36% mention the federal government, 28% think it is up to state governments, and 21% believe local governments are responsible. Seven percent assert it is a group effort while 4% say government, at any level, should not be involved in correcting this problem.

What is the most effective way to stop the problem of opioid addiction to prescription pain medications? A plurality of residents nationally, 37%, say the answer is to keep track of how often a doctor prescribes painkillers. More than one in five, 21%, believe the key is limiting prescriptions of pain drugs to individuals, and 17% think making government approval more difficult is the most effective way to end the problem. Eight percent believe warning labels on prescription drug bottles to explain the risk would help, and 6% think better border security is essential. Regardless of demographic group, keeping track of how often a doctor prescribes painkillers is perceived to be the most effective way to stop this problem in the United States.

Americans are not optimistic that the issue of opioid addiction in the United States will improve in the near future. A plurality of U.S. residents, 43%, say the situation will be no different a year from now. 32% think it will be worse, and fewer than one in five, 19%, believe it will be better.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, white Americans have overdosed and died from opioids at far higher rates than people of color. A majority of Americans, 55%, do not think this fact increases the likelihood the problem will be addressed. However, a notable 35% say the problem is more likely to gain attention. Only 6% believe it is less likely to be addressed because of increased risk to white Americans versus people of color.

Majorities of white, 58%, and Latino residents, 51%, say race has no influence on whether or not the problem will be addressed. However, a majority of African Americans, 54%,

*All references to the survey must be sourced as "PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll"

believe the higher incidence of addiction in white communities makes the issue more likely to receive attention.

A majority of Americans, 53%, think someone who has an opioid addiction to prescription pain medications has an illness. 36% believe the individual has a personal weakness, and 10% are unsure. Democrats, 70%, and independents, 50%, are more likely than Republicans, 43%, to consider opioid addiction an illness. Republicans divide with 45% saying addiction is a personal weakness.

A majority of Americans, 54%, say they know someone who has been addicted to prescription drugs such as Percocet, OxyContin, or Vicodin, including 24% who say that person has undergone treatment for the addiction.

Among Americans who know someone who was treated for opioid addiction, only 39% say insurance paid for at least part of the treatment. Insurance did not cover treatment for 26%, and a notable 36% do not know if treatment was covered by insurance.

If they or a member of their family were to become addicted to prescription opioids, a great deal of uncertainty exists among Americans about whether or not their insurance would cover the treatment. In fact, 59% of Americans are unsure about whether their health insurance would pick up the cost. 29% say their insurance would cover at least part of the treatment while 11% think they would not be covered under their insurance plan.

**Complete October 2, 2017 PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Release of the United States
Complete October 2, 2017 PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll of the United States (Tables of
Adults and Registered Voters)**

Marist Poll Methodology

Nature of the Sample