

# Americans favor treatment, not enforcement, to address opioid crisis

23 May 2017

Many Americans have been directly touched by the addiction and the number is even higher, more than opioid crisis—more than a quarter of Americans and 80 percent, among people who know someone who more than a third of millennials, report knowing someone who has been addicted to opioids or prescription painkillers. More than two-thirds of Americans, 69 percent, say they "understand how someone accidentally gets addicted to opioids," according to [a new national poll](#) released today by the American Psychiatric Association.

An estimated 2 million people in the United States have a substance use disorder related to prescription [opioid](#) pain medication and more than 33,000 Americans died from an [opioid overdose](#) in 2015.

The APA poll reflects the view of easy access to opioids and painkillers. More than one-third of all adults (39 percent) and nearly half of millennials (46 percent) say that it would be extremely or somewhat easy for someone in their community to access illegal opioids/painkillers.

People who misuse opioids often get them from a family member or friend who has a prescription. The APA poll found that the vast majority of the U.S. population (87 percent) believes it is bad to take a prescription drug without a prescription. However, the poll shows differing perceptions among different generations.

- 10 percent of baby boomers say taking a prescription drug without a prescription isn't that bad
- 14 percent of Gen X'ers say it isn't bad
- 18 percent, nearly 1 in 5, millennials say it's not that bad to take a prescription drug without a prescription

Most Americans believe people can recover from opioid addiction, but most do not believe the country is moving in the right direction to address the problem. Three out of four Americans (73 percent) believe people can recover from an opioid

has been addicted. People who do not know someone who has been addicted are less likely to believe that people with an opioid addiction can recover.

Regardless of gender, age or income, only 20 percent of Americans believe that when it comes to addressing the opioid crisis, the country is headed in the right direction. A majority of Americans (58 percent) believe policymakers should prioritize access to treatment over stricter punishment (26 percent). Among Republicans, 51 percent, say treatment should be prioritized, 34 percent say that punishment should be prioritized. Among Democrats, 67 percent favor treatment and 18 percent punishment.

Provided by American Psychiatric Association

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