

New Poll Shows Broad Bi-Partisan Support for Improving Access to Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment

September 23, 2009 – A new survey released today shows that in a time of partisan debate over health reform, Americans across party lines agree on improving access to addiction treatment. Despite difficult economic times, most are willing to pay out of their own pocket to make alcohol and drug addiction treatment more accessible and affordable for those who need services. Large majorities see treatment as an effective, ongoing process. Yet many Americans who have personal experience with addiction report that finding affordable treatment is difficult. The poll was commissioned by *Closing the Addiction Treatment Gap*, an initiative of the Open Society Institute. The telephone survey was conducted July 25-28, 2009 among a nationally representative sample of N = 1,000 adults 18 and older. The margin of sampling error is ± 3.5 percentage points.

Key findings include:

- More than three-quarters of Americans (77%) support including addiction treatment in health reform, including majorities of Democrats (88%), independents (72%), and Republicans (72%).
- Nearly seven in ten (69%) support paying two dollars more per month in health insurance premiums to make addiction treatment more accessible and affordable, including majorities of support across political parties.
- Only one in four Americans (26%) say there are enough affordable, accessible, quality treatment centers and services in their community; nearly half (47%) reports an inadequate number of treatment centers.
- Of those who know someone who has looked for addiction treatment, 46% say it was difficult finding affordable, quality treatment services. Additionally, a poll conducted in June 2009¹ found that half (49%) of Americans say they feel they could not afford the costs of treatment if they or someone in their family needed it.
- An awareness gap exists around insurance coverage for treatment. While nearly three-quarters (73%) think health insurance plans should cover treatment for addiction, nearly two-thirds (64%) of insured Americans are not sure whether their plan currently covers treatment services.

¹ From a telephone survey conducted May 29 – June 1, 2009 among a nationally-representative sample of N = 1,001 adults 18 and older.

- Eighty-eight percent of Americans say treatment is extremely or very important to helping people get better, including 92% of Democrats, 85% of independents and 87% of Republicans.
- Eight in ten Americans (82%) believe that, like diabetes, addiction is a health condition that requires ongoing attention and support. Further, 76% of the public agrees that while it is possible for someone addicted to drugs or alcohol to stop using on their own, long-term success is unlikely without treatment and ongoing support.
- Americans (87%) see treatment as an ongoing process, sometimes needing more than one period of treatment. Only eight percent say treatment tends to be a one-time occurrence. Additionally, the public sees treatment as effective, even if individuals relapse and need another period of treatment.

Details about these and other survey results can be found on the following pages.

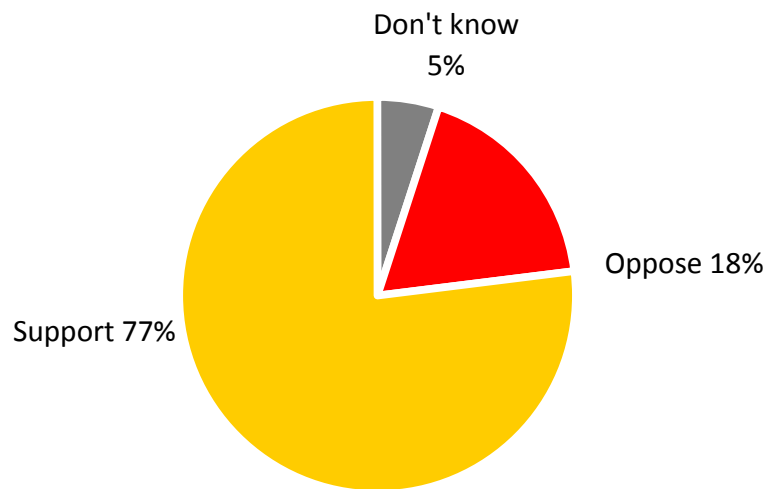
Detailed Findings

Seven in ten (71%) Americans say alcohol and drug addiction is a serious problem in our country. Twenty-two percent say it is a moderate problem, and four percent say it is a minor problem. Only one percent says it is not a problem at all. This view is shared across political parties with 78% of Democrats, 65% of independents and 71% of Republicans saying alcohol and drug addiction is a serious problem in the country.

Majorities of Americans – across party affiliation – support making alcohol and drug addiction treatment more accessible and affordable as part of health reform.

Three in four Americans (77%) support including addiction treatment in health reform once they learn that there are up to four million people seeking treatment right now but cannot get it. (See Figure 1). Support for making treatment more accessible and affordable spans party affiliation — with 88% of Democrats, 72% of independents and 72% of Republicans backing the idea. Fewer than one in five (18%) oppose, and five percent are not sure.

Figure 1: Support for Making Treatment More Accessible and Affordable as Part of Health Care Reform



Q. 23 million Americans are addicted to alcohol or drugs. There are up to 4 million people seeking treatment right now, but can't get it because the system is overloaded, their insurance doesn't cover it, or they can't afford it. Would you support or oppose making alcohol and drug addiction treatment more accessible and affordable as part of health care reform?

Majorities of Americans support a number of ways to pay for improving access to and affordability of treatment, including paying more per month in health premiums.

More than two in three (69%) say they would support paying two dollars more per month in health insurance premiums to make treatment more accessible and affordable. Additionally, majorities say they would support additional taxes on alcohol (70%) or tobacco (62%). (See Figure 2.) Support for these ways to pay for improving treatment crosses party lines, as well as income brackets. (See Table 1.)

Figure 2: Support for Paying \$2 More Per Month in Premiums to Improve Access, Affordability of Treatment

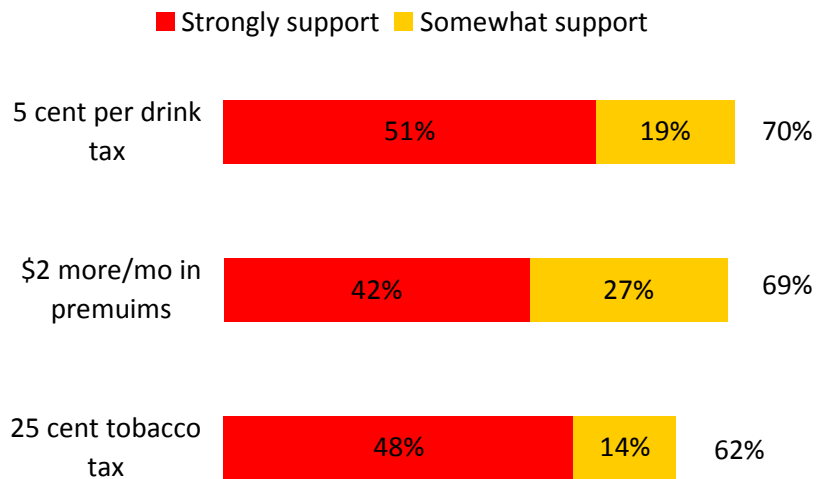


Table 1: Support for Payment Methods for Improving access, Affordability of Treatment

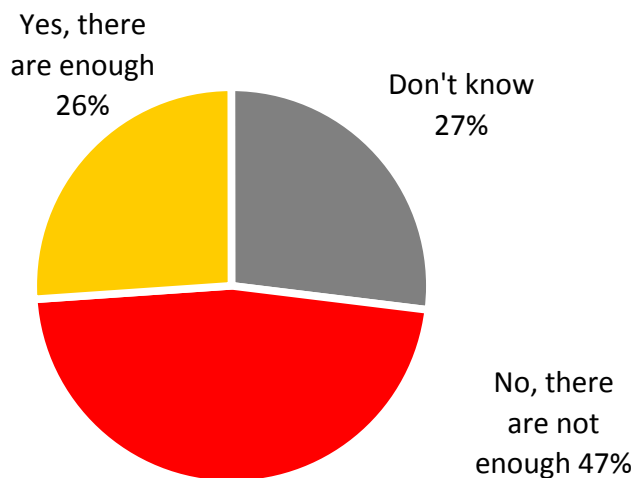
	Pay \$2 per month	Alcohol tax	Tobacco tax
<i>Total</i>	69%	70%	62%
Democrats	80%	75%	66%
Independents	63%	67%	63%
Republicans	67%	70%	59%
<\$30k household income	69%	71%	62%
\$30k-\$50k	79%	70%	59%
\$50k-\$75k	75%	73%	66%
\$75k+	75%	75%	69%

Q. Would you support or oppose improving access to and affordability of treatment as part of health reform, even if it meant: You had to pay two dollars more per month in health care premiums? An additional twenty-five cent tax on tobacco? An additional five cents per drink tax on beer, wine, and liquor?

Many Americans do not think there is an adequate number of treatment centers and services in their community, and some have had difficulty finding affordable treatment.

Nearly half (47%) of Americans say there is not an adequate number of affordable, accessible treatment centers available in their community. One in four (26%) say there are enough, and the same proportion (27%) is not sure. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Enough affordable, accessible quality treatment services in your community?



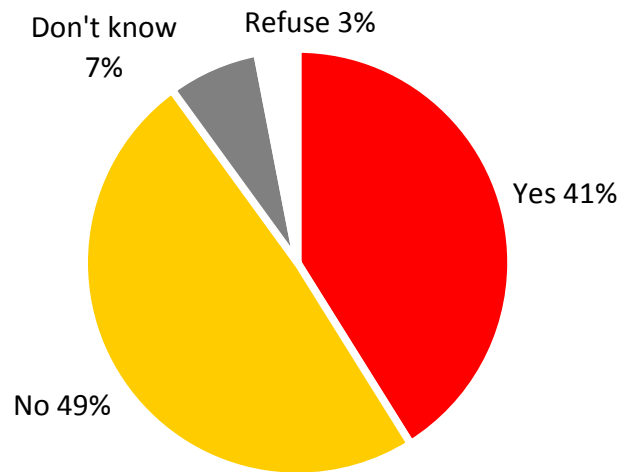
Q. What is your impression--do you think there is an adequate number of affordable, accessible quality treatment centers and services available in your community, or aren't there enough of them?

Those most likely to say there is a gap in treatment services include African Americans (67% say not enough), individuals who have been addicted to alcohol or drugs personally (58%) or someone in their family has (54%), people without health insurance (56%) and women age 45 and older (53%).

Additionally, of those who know someone who has tried to get addiction treatment, nearly half (46%) says finding affordable, quality treatment was difficult. Those with household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year (58%) and uninsured individuals (58%) are most likely to say finding treatment was difficult. A minority of Americans (23%) says finding treatment was not at all difficult.

Based on a poll conducted in June 2009, half of the public (49%) thinks they could not afford addiction treatment if they or someone in their family needed it. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: 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?

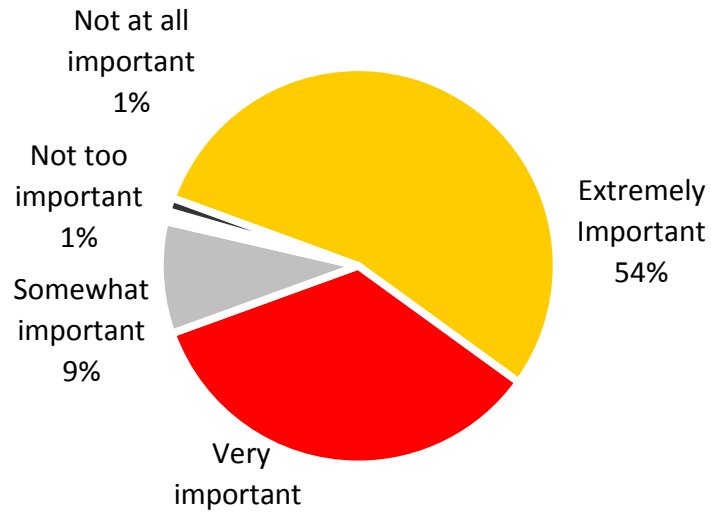
Americans want health insurance to cover treatment, but most lack awareness about whether their own plans cover these services.

An awareness gap exists around insurance coverage for treatment. While nearly three-quarters (73%) think health insurance plans should cover treatment for addiction, nearly two-thirds (64%) of insured Americans are not sure whether their plan currently covers treatment services. One in four (25%) says their plan covers treatment, and 10% say their plan does not cover these services.

Large majorities of all segments of the population feel treatment is important for helping people get better, without which, long-term success is unlikely.

Nearly nine in ten (88%) say treatment is extremely (54%) or very (34%) important for helping people get better. Nine percent say treatment is somewhat important, and only one percent say it is not too or not at all important. (See Figure 5.) Perceived importance of treatment is shared among large majorities across demographic subgroups including gender, age, education, income, region and party affiliation.

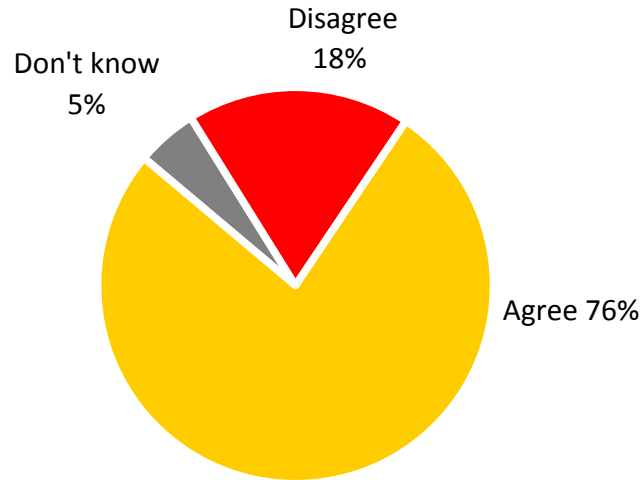
Figure 5: Importance of Treatment for Helping People Get Better



Q. How important do you think treatment is for helping people get better? Is that extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Additionally, 76% of Americans say that long-term success is unlikely without treatment and ongoing support, including majorities of Democrats (78%), independents (77%) and Republicans (77%). (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6: Long Term Success is Unlikely Without Treatment and Ongoing Support



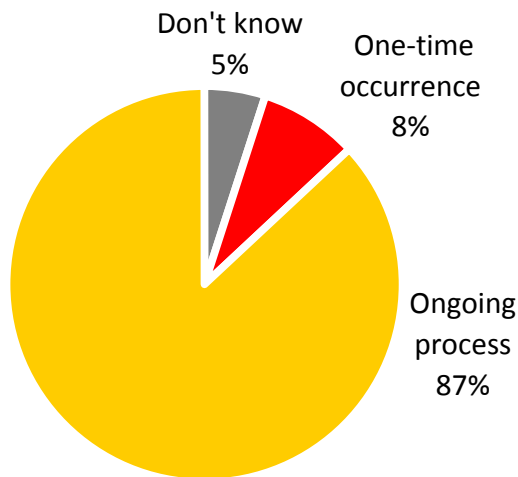
Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: While it is possible for someone addicted to alcohol or drugs to stop using on their own, long-term success is unlikely without treatment and ongoing support.

Americans see addiction as a health condition requiring ongoing attention and support, and see treatment as an ongoing process – not just a one-time occurrence.

Eight in ten Americans (83%) agree that, like diabetes, addiction is a health condition that requires ongoing attention and support. Agreement spans political affiliation — Democrats (88%), independents (78%) and Republicans (82%) agree.

Furthermore, 87% view treatment as more of an ongoing process rather than a one-time occurrence. (See Figure 7.) Again, majorities of Democrats (88%), independents (86%) and Republicans (90%) share this view. Only eight percent say addiction treatment tends to be a one-time occurrence and five percent say they are not sure.

Figure 7: Does Treatment Tend to Be an Ongoing process or One-time Occurrence?



Q. In your opinion, does treatment for addiction tend to be a one-time occurrence or is it more of an ongoing process sometimes needing more than one period of treatment?

Conclusions

The poll results show surprisingly broad agreement across diverse Americans on views toward treatment and making it more accessible and affordable as part of health reform. Additionally, majorities of all segments support a number of ways to pay for expanding treatment, including personally paying more for health insurance premiums. Driving their support is the belief that drug and alcohol addiction are serious problems, that addiction is a health condition that requires ongoing attention and support, and that treatment is an effective process.

A previous survey shows that half of the public views treatment to be financially out of reach. Additionally, data from this new survey suggest that Americans lack awareness about their own insurance coverage, and may find themselves in a difficult position to pay for treatment. This situation seems to have borne out for many with personal experiences of a friend or family member looking for affordable, quality treatment, saying they found this difficult. For these reasons, they support making sure quality treatment services are accessible and affordable for those who need them.

Methodology

This national survey was conducted by telephone July 25-28, 2009 among 1,000 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.