



Public Support for Addiction Treatment

Surveys and ballot referenda, at the state and national level, indicate that the general public understands the importance of treatment for drug and alcohol addiction and abuse and of treatment alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders with addictions.

Illinois Polls – Illinois voters prefer political candidates and policies calling for substance abuse treatment and supportive services in prison and upon release (2007)^{1,2}

Illinois voters from around the state were surveyed to discover their views on the criminal justice system and drug policies.

- 62% would prefer a political candidate whose focus is on drug treatment programs over building new prisons as a response to large numbers of non-violent drug-involved offenders. Only 25% favored increasing penalties and incarceration.
- 79% disagree with the statement that prison should be treated as punishment and government should not offer rehabilitation services during and after prison stays.
- 65% believe that, instead of prison, treatment with court supervision is the best response for non-violent drug offenders.
- 70% believe that spending money on rehabilitation services for adults in prison will save tax dollars in the long run.
- 87% believe that children of incarcerated parents have the right to speak with and see their parents, and 86% believe that these children have the right to supportive services during their parents' incarceration.
- Voters have the following beliefs about the major factors contributing to high rates of recidivism (re-arrest and re-incarceration) after release from prison:
 - 65% believe that a major factor is the fact that people have no more life skills than they had before they entered prison.
 - 51% believe that people returning to society after prison experience too many obstacles to living a crime-free life.
 - 56% believe that the experience of prison reinforces criminal behavior.
 - 60% believe that “once a criminal, always a criminal” is NOT a major factor contributing to high recidivism rates.

National Poll – Addiction is a treatable disease (2006)³

Adults across the country with an immediate family member addicted to drugs or alcohol were surveyed to discover their beliefs about addiction.

- 76% believe that addiction is a disease (either physical, psychological, or both).
- 75% believe that those with a drug addiction can make a full recovery.

- 50% believe that those with a drug addiction can make a full recovery only if they get professional help.
- 81% believe that those with an alcohol addiction can make a full recovery.
- 48% believe that those with an alcohol addiction can make a full recovery only if they get professional help.

Cook County (Illinois) Referendum – Electorate votes overwhelmingly in support of funding for addiction treatment on demand (2004)⁴

On November 2, 2004, more than 1.2 million voters in Cook County – 76% of the electorate – voted “yes” on a ballot referendum asking whether the state should provide funding for substance abuse treatment for any Illinois resident who requests it.

The non-binding referendum on the Cook County ballot was worded as follows:

“Shall the Illinois State Government provide adequate funding for comprehensive and appropriate substance abuse treatment for any Illinois state resident requesting services from a licensed provider, community-based organization, or medical care facility within the state?”

National Poll – Lack of addiction treatment and recovery programs is a community problem, and political candidates who favor prevention and treatment programs are preferred (2004)⁵

Adults across the country were surveyed to discover their attitudes and beliefs about drug policies and addiction treatment and recovery.

- 61% believe that a lack of addiction treatment and recovery programs is a problem in their community, including 32% who believe it causes a major problem.
- 81% would be more likely to vote for a candidate who favored reallocating what the government spends on the war on drugs to place more emphasis on drug prevention, education, treatment, and recovery programs.
- 81% would be more likely to vote for a candidate who expanded programs to get treatment for drug users rather than locking them up.

Illinois Poll – Addiction is a disease and a public health problem best handled through prevention and treatment (2002)⁶

Illinois voters around the state were surveyed to discover their attitudes and beliefs about addiction, drug policies, and addiction treatment and recovery.

- 95% recognize addiction as a pervasive illness that affects people from all communities, income levels, social status, and races. Only 3% view addiction as an isolated problem that primarily affects low-income citizens, high crime communities, homeless people, or minorities.
- 74% believe that substance abuse treatment is the best response for dealing with drug users who commit non-violent crimes.

- 73% found it to be a very high priority (43%) or a somewhat high priority (30%) to provide treatment for people who commit crimes to support their addictions.
- 85% strongly agree (60%) or somewhat agree (25%) that drug and alcohol addiction is a public health problem that is handled better by prevention and treatment programs than by the criminal justice system.

¹ *Statewide telephone survey of 450 registered voters, conducted April 2-10, 2007, with a confidence interval of +/- 4.5%.* Renner, T. (2007a). Attitudes of Illinois Voters Toward the Criminal Justice System. Illinois Wesleyan University, for Community Renewal Society. Civic Action Network. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www.communityrenewalsociety.org/index.php/c/Criminal_Justice/d/Attitude_of_Illinois_Voters_Towards_Criminal_Justice_System.

² *Statewide survey of 395 registered voters, conducted October 15-18, 2007, with a confidence interval of +/- 5%.* Renner, T. (2007b). Illinois Statewide Survey – Political Attitudes. Illinois Wesleyan University, Department of Political Science. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www2.iwu.edu/CurrentNews/newsrelease07/news_VoterPoll_1007.shtml.

³ *National survey of a random sample of 902 adults, conducted by Gallup for USA Today and HBO.* Join Together. (2006). Gallup Poll Finds Support for Disease Concept of Addiction. News Summary. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from <http://www.jointogether.org/news/headlines/inthenews/2006/gallup-poll-finds-support-for.html>.

⁴ *Non-binding referendum placed on the ballot through the efforts of U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-IL), Citizens Activated to Change Healthcare (CATCH), and numerous organizations and individuals who support increased access to treatment for those who need it.* Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association [IADDA]. (2004). Voters say "yes" to state funding for substance abuse treatment. Springfield, Illinois: Author.

⁵ *National telephone survey of a representative sample of 801 American adults, conducted April 19-22, 2004, by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and Robert M. Teeter's Coldwater Corporation for Faces and Voices of Recovery.* Hart Research Associates. (2004). Faces and Voices of Recovery, A Survey among 801 American Adults. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/ppt/2004-05-24_hart_survey.ppt.

⁶ *Statewide telephone survey of 500 likely Illinois voters conducted from September 8-14, 2002, by Fako & Associates for IADDA.* IADDA. (2003). Press Release: Survey Finds Illinois Voters Believe Addiction is a Public Health Issue. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from www.iadda.org/survey.pdf.