

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE – NEW JERSEY
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Eagleton survey commissioned by NCADD-NJ shows state's broad concern over alcoholism, drug addiction issues

MERCERVILLE ... (August 21, 2002) – An Eagleton Institute survey commissioned by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey to gauge statewide attitudes on addiction issues underscores that most New Jerseyans consider addiction to alcohol or drugs a pressing concern. Ninety percent of state residents view alcoholism and drug addiction as a serious problem, but the poll also reveals misconceptions about treatment availability along with some inconsistencies indicative of stigma.

NCADD-NJ Director of Public Affairs and Policy John Hulick said the survey offered good news but also reflected how much work remains in terms of addiction advocacy. “NCADD-NJ is both heartened and challenged by the Eagleton findings. We’re heartened that the public clearly identifies alcohol and drug addiction as a serious problem in New Jersey and is solidly behind the policy solutions advanced by NCADD-NJ to address this problem. Yet we remain challenged to educate the public that addiction treatment is not as readily available as it believes and to address the continued presence of stigma, which undermines acceptance of addiction as a health issue,” Hulick said.

The survey shows nearly three in four residents know someone with an alcohol or drug problem, including 2 percent who identify themselves as having experienced difficulties resulting from alcohol or drug use and 28 percent who say a family member had such a problem. Forty-six percent of those who know someone with an alcohol or drug problem say that the person is in recovery; 38 percent say the person they know with an addictive disorder is not recovering.

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The importance of the general public seeing and hearing from individuals in recovery from alcoholism or other drug addiction is reinforced by the survey, in which 85 percent of New Jerseyans feel it is valuable for the general public to be exposed to people who were successfully recovering from addiction and were living productive lives. Nonetheless, almost half of New Jerseyans indicate they would be more guarded meeting someone in recovery than they would be in general. This finding reflects how stigma continues to introduce doubts where addictive disease and recovery from it are concerned.

In examining the issue of stigma, residents are divided nearly evenly on whether addiction should be recognized as a health problem (41 percent) or as a consequence of personal weakness (40 percent). The closer the relationship the subject has to an addicted individual, the likelier that individual is to regard addiction as a health problem.

Access to treatment is another area the polling explores, an issue that has particular resonance with a proposal for insurance parity to be considered by the Legislature in the fall. Almost two-thirds of residents believe they could access treatment if they had an alcohol or drug problem. In fact, treatment for addiction is not easily available, which was documented in a 2001 report by the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Advisory Task Force, commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services, showing that more than half of the adults (71,000) and two-thirds of the adolescents (9,400) who sought such care could not obtain it.

The task force directly linked the shortfall in treatment capacity to the “managed care revolution” and urged that insurance parity for addiction be legislated as a remedy. According to the survey, almost four in five residents (79 percent) believe that health insurers should cover alcohol and drug treatment to the same extent as illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease (like addiction, these infirmities are defined as chronic and relapsing). A majority (58 percent) state that health coverage for addiction should last “as long as is medically necessary to achieve recovery.”

A majority (53 percent) favor the state increasing funding for alcohol and drug treatment and recovery programs, while 30 percent think it should remain at current levels. New Jerseyans solidly (70 percent) support a tax increase on alcohol provided the revenue would be dedicated to addiction prevention and treatment programs. A majority (54 percent) also favor an increase from the nearly 14 percent of the state alcohol tax that currently goes to treatment and prevention of alcohol and drug addiction.

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This survey was conducted by telephone from May 14 to 21, 2002, with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to think the state was in good economic condition, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) had all New Jersey residents been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by race or age, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is reproduced in this memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows. This study was conducted by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling ("Eagleton Poll") at Rutgers University.

A1. Now, I have a couple of questions about alcohol and drugs, but want to assure you that we aren't interested in any specific personal information. First, do you know anyone who has ever had a problem with alcohol or drugs?

(n=803)

72% Yes → ASK Q.A1a
 27 No → **GO TO Q.A2**
 1 Don't Know/Refused → GO TO Q.A2

A1a. Would you describe this person as currently being in recovery, or not?

(n=580)

46% In recovery
 38 Not in recovery
 4 Both (VOL)
 8 Deceased (VOL)
 4 Don't Know/Refused

A1b. Is this person someone in your family? [If "Yes": Is this person you?]

(n=803)

2% Self
 28 Family member
 43 Other person, not a family member
 28 Don't know anyone with alcohol or drug problem (from Q.A1)

A2. How serious do you think the problem of alcohol and drug addiction is in New Jersey – very serious, somewhat serious, or not at all serious?

(n=803)

50% Very serious
 40 Somewhat serious
 5 Not at all serious
 6 Don't Know/Refused

OVERALL MUNICIPAL SES				
A2	Poor Towns	Low-Mid Class Towns	Upper Towns	Wealthy Towns
Very serious	61%	48%	43%	44%
Somewhat serious	28%	44%	47%	44%
Not at all serious	5%	3%	4%	9%
(VOL) Don't Know/Refused	6%	6%	5%	3%
Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%

PARTY ID: LEANERS AS INDEPENDENT				
A2	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep
Very serious	50%	54%	48%	48%
Somewhat serious	40%	35%	42%	43%
Not at all serious	5%	4%	4%	6%
(VOL) Don't Know/Refused	6%	6%	5%	4%
Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%

A3. For the sake of argument, imagine that you or a member of your household were to develop a problem with alcohol or drugs. How easy do you think it would be for you or a member of your household to get the treatment needed to help with this problem – very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult?

(n=803)
 27% Very easy
 36 Somewhat easy
 22 Somewhat difficult
 9 Very difficult
 7 Don't Know/Refused

A4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement -- HMO's and other health insurance plans should cover drug and alcohol treatment to the same extent they cover treatment for diseases such as diabetes or heart disease? [**PROBE:** Do you (agree/disagree) with this strongly or somewhat?]

(n=803)
 60% Strongly agree
 19 Somewhat agree
 8 Somewhat disagree
 9 Strongly disagree
 4 Don't Know/Refused

A5. Which of the following statements comes CLOSER to your point of view [**ROTATE ITEMS CHOICES**]:

(n=803)
 58% health care plans should give people with alcohol and drug addictions access to treatment for as long as it is medically necessary to achieve recovery
 -- or --
 34% alcohol and drug addictions aren't like other chronic illnesses – so health care plans should be able to place limits on addiction treatment?
 4 Depends (VOLUNTEERED)
 4 Don't Know/Refused

A6. Thinking about all the programs the state pays for, do you think that state funding for alcohol and drug addiction treatment and recovery support programs should be increased, decreased, or stay the same as it is now? [**PROBE:** Is that (increased/decreased) a lot or only a little?]

(n=803)
 35% Increased a lot
 18 Increased a little
 30 Stay the same as now
 2 Decreased a little
 2 Decreased a lot
 13 Don't Know/Refused

A7. Do you support or oppose increasing the state tax on alcohol in order to fund additional programs for alcohol and drug treatment and prevention? [**PROBE:** Do you (support/oppose) this strongly or somewhat?]

(n=803)
 47% Strongly support
 23 Somewhat support
 10 Somewhat oppose
 15 Strongly oppose
 5 Don't Know/Refused

A8. Currently, about 15 percent of the New Jersey state alcohol tax goes to the treatment and prevention of alcohol and drug addiction. Should this percentage be raised, lowered, or stay the same?

(n=803)
 54% Raised ----->
 5 Lowered
 37 Stay the same
 4 Don't Know/Refused

What percentage of the state alcohol tax should be spent on alcohol and drug treatment?	
(n=803)	
5%	100%
5	51-99%
9	50%
10	26-49%

A9. Which of the following statements comes CLOSER to your point of view: [**ROTATE CHOICES**]:

(n=803)
 41% alcohol and drug addiction is mainly a health problem - or -

40% alcohol and drug addiction is mainly a personal weakness?

15 BOTH (VOLUNTEERED)
2 Neither/choices not appropriate (VOLUNTEERED)
2 Don't Know/Refused

A10. Some feel that it is valuable for the general public to see and hear about people who are successfully in recovery. Others feel that it is better if people in recovery only discuss these matters with their immediate family and friends. How valuable do you think it is for the public to see and hear about people who have had addictions in the past but are now leading productive lives – very valuable, somewhat valuable, not too valuable, or not at all valuable?

(n=803)
59% Very valuable
26 Somewhat valuable
7 Not too valuable
6 Not at all valuable
2 Don't Know/Refused

[ROTATE Q.A11 and Q.A12]

A11. Imagine you met someone who you knew to be recovering from an ALCOHOL problem. Would you definitely feel the same about this person as you would anyone else, do you think you might feel a little differently about this person, or are you not sure how you would feel about this person?

(n=803)
56% Definitely feel the same
18 Might feel differently
24 Not sure how would feel
2 Don't Know/Refused

A12. Imagine you met someone who you knew to be recovering from a DRUG problem. Would you definitely feel the same about this person as you would anyone else, do you think you might feel a little differently about this person, or are you not sure how you would feel about this person?

(n=803)
50% Definitely feel the same
20 Might feel differently
27 Not sure how would feel
3 Don't Know/Refused