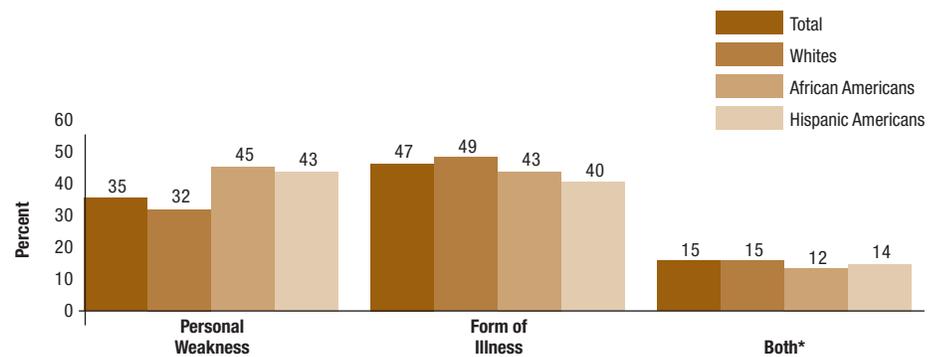




Background

Understanding the perceptions of the American public is important as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) strives to improve the quality of addiction treatment for all Americans by the year 2009. To accomplish this, the Harvard School of Public Health and RWJF surveyed 1,112 adults over the age of 18 on various issues related to alcohol and drug addiction.

Americans' Perceptions of Addiction by Ethnic Group

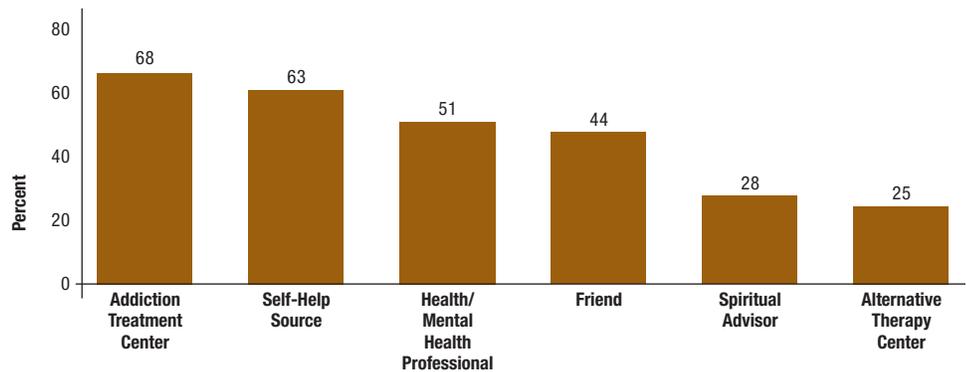


*Volunteered Response

Key Findings

- **A majority of Americans view addiction as a form of illness and something individuals cannot remedy alone.** Nearly half (47%) reported that addiction is a form of illness. African Americans and Hispanic Americans were significantly more likely than whites to view addiction to drugs and alcohol as a personal weakness. Two-thirds of the overall sample (66%) reported that addiction is something that individuals cannot solve on their own.
- **Most Americans report having personal experiences with drug and alcohol problems.** A majority of those surveyed (69%) reported knowing someone who has a problem with drug or alcohol use. Of those who know someone with a drug or alcohol problem, 59 percent reported that the individual received treatment for his or her problem. About two-thirds reported that treatment was either very successful (38%) or somewhat successful (28%).
- **Addiction treatment centers and self-help sources represent the leading forums for treatment.** Of those who reported knowing someone who received treatment for a drug or alcohol problem, the three most common treatment locations were an addiction treatment center (68%), self-help source such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous (63%) or health or mental health professional (51%).

Location of Treatment



- **Americans want better drug and alcohol treatment and are willing to support increases in state taxes to pay for it.** Approximately half of the sample indicated that not enough high-quality treatment programs exist for teens (52%) or adults (45%) with drug addictions in their communities. Similarly, about half of those surveyed felt that too little is spent on treatment (52%) and prevention (53%), and 45 percent reported that they would favor an increase in state taxes to improve alcohol and drug treatment programs.
- **Most Americans view religious and spiritual guidance as effective treatment options for alcohol addiction.** Three-fourths of those surveyed reported that religious and spiritual guidance alone is very (33%) or somewhat (42%) effective as a form of treatment for alcohol addiction.
- **Three-quarters of those surveyed would recommend a pill as a way to stop drinking or using drugs.** Seventy-five percent of those surveyed reported that they would recommend a pill that could stop drinking or drug use to a close friend or family member if such a pill were available.

Methodology¹

This study was prepared by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Design and analysis of the study was conducted by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health. Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D., served as the project director. The research team included John M. Benson, Chanttal Fleischfresser, Tami Buhr and Kathleen Weldon of the Harvard School of Public Health and Melissa J. Herrmann of ICR/ International Communications Research.

Fieldwork was conducted via telephone by ICR/International Communications Research (Media, PA) between April 11 and April 15, 2006, with a nationally representative sample of 1,112 adults age 18 and older. Of those, a total of 108 were African-American respondents and a total of 122 were Hispanic-American respondents. The margin of error for the total sample was plus or minus three percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Possible sources of nonsampling error include nonresponse bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Nonresponse in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different

1 Harvard School of Public Health/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/ICR, May 2006

subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases, sample data are weighted to the most recent U.S. Census data available from the Current Population Survey for gender, age, race, education, as well as number of adults and number of telephone lines in the household. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, callbacks staggered over times of day and days of the week, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.

—Deanna Lewis

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