

What Ohioans Think About...

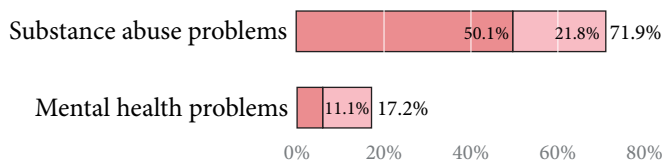
Substance Use Disorders

Results from The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Ohio Health Issues Poll—May 2005

Substance use disorders (which include improper use of, abuse of, or addiction to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) affect many people. These disorders are biologically based brain disorders and are chronic conditions like heart disease or diabetes. They are treatable, but relapses can occur.

Despite the mounting evidence that substance use disorders are brain disorders, public opinion still holds that people with substance use disorders are largely to blame for their own condition. About 7 in 10 Ohioans (71.9%) agree that people with substance abuse problems are to blame for their condition, compared to only 2 in 10 Ohioans who agree that people with mental health problems are to blame for their condition.

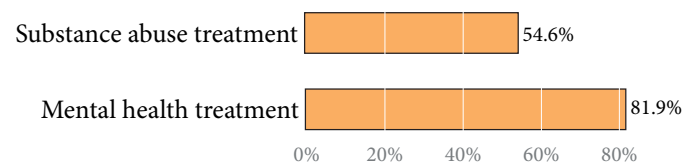
*% of Ohioans reporting that they **strongly agree** or **agree somewhat** that people with substance abuse or mental health problems are largely to blame for their own condition*



A few decades ago, most people believed that a person with a mental illness was to blame for their condition. Since then, wider sharing of research about the biological causes of mental illnesses has helped shift public opinion. As our understanding of substance use disorders continues to grow and research becomes shared more widely, public opinion of what is to blame for substance use disorders will most likely change, as it did for mental illnesses.

Substance use disorders are treatable conditions, and just over half of Ohioans (54.6%) are willing to pay more for health insurance to see insurance companies cover these conditions at the same levels as physical health treatment. In comparison, 81.9% of Ohioans are willing to pay more for health insurance to see insurance companies cover mental health treatment at the same levels as physical health treatment.

% of Ohioans reporting that they feel insurance companies should cover substance abuse and mental health treatment at the same levels as they do physical health treatment even if it means the amount they pay for health insurance goes up



Currently, most insurance plans have stricter limits on substance abuse and mental health treatment than on physical health. For example, for \$35,000 per year in physical health care expenses, the average family with health insurance pays \$1,500 out-of-pocket. That same family would pay \$12,000 out-of-pocket for \$35,000 in substance abuse or mental health treatment under the same insurance plan.

Treatment is key to saving money in the long run. For every \$1 spent on mental health and substance use disorder treatment, about \$7 are saved in other healthcare costs, lost productivity, criminal justice system costs, and other costs to society.

These findings are from The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Ohio Health Issues Poll, part of the Ohio Poll conducted March 21–April 10, 2005, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 846 adults from throughout Ohio was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to ±3.4%. In addition to sampling error, there are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects that can introduce error or bias. For more information about the Ohio Health Issues Poll, please visit www.healthfoundation.org/ohip.