

# What Ohioans Think About...

## The Importance of Care for People with Mental Illnesses

Results from The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Ohio Health Issues Poll 2006

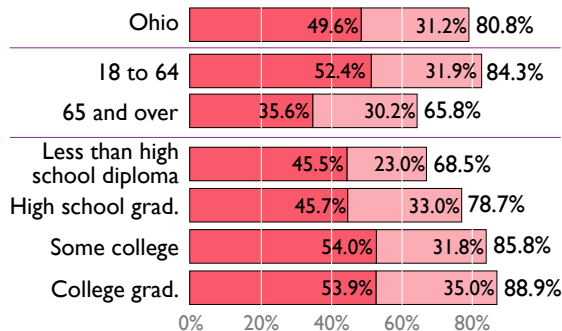


Ohioans agree: it is important for people with mental illnesses to get treatment and the government and insurance companies have some responsibility to help people access mental health treatment. To understand why Ohioans feel this way, it is helpful to look at how Ohioans think about mental health problems.



According to the 2005 *Ohio Health Issues Poll*, 80.8% of Ohioans disagreed with the statement “People with mental health problems, such as depression or nerves, are largely to blame for their own condition.” There was minor variation among responses of different demographic groups with two exceptions. Ohioans ages 65 and over were less likely to disagree with the statement than Ohioans ages 18–64. As education level increased, the likelihood that Ohioans disagreed with the statement increased.

% of Ohioans reporting that they **disagree strongly** or **disagree somewhat** that people with mental health problems, such as depression or nerves, are largely to blame for their own condition.



### Insurance coverage for mental health treatment

Having health insurance that covers mental health treatment does not ensure that people can afford treatment. Many health insurance plans apply higher copayments and deductibles or more restrictions on the number of covered treatment visits to mental health treatment than they do for physical health treatment. This can put mental health treatment out of financial reach even for people with health insurance.

Mental health treatment depends on the mental health problem the person is experiencing and may include short-term counseling from a social worker or counselor; sessions with a psychiatrist or psychologist; long-term inpatient or outpatient treatment; hospitalization; and/or medication.

The term “mental health problem” covers a wide spectrum of problems, such as:

- short-term issues related to everyday life, such as grief and depression or worry due to life changes;
- mental illnesses, such as minor depression and some anxiety and mood disorders; and
- severe mental illnesses, such as major depression, bipolar disorder, manic depression, and schizophrenia.

According to the 2005 *Ohio Health Issues Poll*, 81.9% of Ohioans said that insurance companies should cover mental health treatment at the same levels as physical

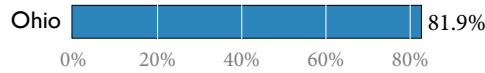
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These findings are from The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Ohio Health Issues Poll, part of the Ohio Poll conducted May 9–21, 2006, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 841 adults from throughout Ohio was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to  $\pm 3.4\%$ . 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.html](http://www.healthfoundation.org/ohip.html).

health treatment, even it meant that the amount they'd pay for health insurance went up. There were minor variations among responses of different demographic groups.

% of Ohioans reporting that they feel insurance companies should cover 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.



### Government responsibility to help people with severe mental illnesses get treatment

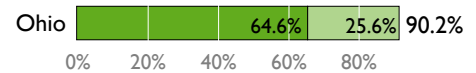
While Ohioans support equal insurance coverage for physical and mental health treatment of all types, Ohioans also believe it is the government's responsibility to help people with severe mental illnesses get the medication and treatment they need.

Severe mental illnesses were described to survey participants in this way:

*Severe mental illnesses are serious chronic illnesses that affect the brain. People with these illnesses may hear voices, have hallucinations or serious delusions, experience profound depression or paralyzing anxiety, or have uncontrollable mood swings. These disorders can profoundly disrupt a person's thinking, ability to relate to others, and ability to cope with the demands of life. When the illness is active, a person may lose touch with reality or may not be able to process information normally.*

Almost all Ohioans (90.2%) agreed that the government is responsible for making sure that people with severe mental illnesses receive medication if they can't afford it. There were minor differences among different demographic groups.

% of Ohioans reporting that they **agree strongly** or **agree somewhat** that it is the government's responsibility to make sure those with severe mental illnesses receive medication if they are unable to afford it.



The majority of Ohioans (79.6%) also agree that it is the government's responsibility to provide people with severe mental illnesses the treatment they need to function in the community. There were minor differences between demographic groups with one exception. More African Americans (95.3%) than whites (77.5%) agreed that the government is responsible for getting people with severe mental illnesses the treatment they need to function in the community.

% of Ohioans reporting that they **agree strongly** or **agree somewhat** that it is the government's responsibility to provide those with severe mental illnesses with the treatment they need to be able to function in the community.

