



Half of Ohio adults say they favor needle exchange programs

The **Ohio Health Issues Poll (OHIP)** is conducted every year to learn more about the health opinions, behaviors and status of adults in Ohio. In 2017, OHIP asked Ohio adults several questions about their knowledge and opinions of needle exchange programs.

Needle exchange programs, also known as syringe exchange programs or blood-borne pathogen prevention programs, are an effective way to reduce the risk of an outbreak of infectious diseases. A needle exchange program allows people who inject drugs to exchange used syringes for new, sterile syringes. Research has shown that such programs can help reduce the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C¹ and do not increase the frequency or initiation of drug use.²

¹ Des Jarlais, D.C., Nugent, A., Solberg, A., Feelemyer, J., Mermin, J., & Holtzman, D. (2015). Syringe service programs for persons who inject drugs in urban, suburban, and rural areas - United States, 2013. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 64 (48), 1337-1341. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2nlK9t3>.

² Institute of Medicine. Preventing HIV infection among injecting drug users in high-risk countries: An assessment of the evidence. (2006). Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2kexBqK>.

How familiar are you with needle exchange programs?



Do you favor or oppose needle exchange programs?



WHAT DID OHIP FIND?

4 in 10 Ohio adults familiar with needle exchange programs

OHIP asked, "How familiar are you with needle exchange programs which have been implemented in a number of cities across the state of Ohio?" Four in 10 Ohio adults (40%) reported being somewhat or very familiar with these programs.

Responses to this question varied by income. Adults earning more than 138% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG)³ (46%) were more than twice as likely as those

³ In 2016, 138% FPG for a family of four was \$33,534.

earning 138% FPG or less (21%) to be somewhat or very familiar with needle exchange programs.

Adults familiar with needle exchanges more likely to favor them

OHIP asked Ohio adults if they favored or opposed needle exchange programs.⁴ Half of Ohio adults (50%) said they favor and about 4 in 10 Ohio adults (42%) said they oppose needle

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⁴ OHIP asked, "Some people favor needle exchange programs because they feel these programs help reduce the spread of AIDS. Others oppose needle exchange programs because they feel these programs send the message that it's okay to use illegal drugs. What about you ... Do you favor or oppose needle exchange programs?"

exchange programs.⁵ Just less than 1 in 10 (8%) are unsure.

Ohio adults who are familiar with needle exchange programs are more likely to favor them. Six in 10 Ohio adults who are very or somewhat familiar with needle exchange programs favor them (61%). This compares with 4 in 10 adults (43%) who are not very or not at all familiar with needle exchange programs. Younger adults and those who identify as Democrats are also more likely to favor these programs. (See graph.)

WHY DO WE ASK THESE QUESTIONS?

Research has found that needle exchange programs are an effective way to reduce the risk of infectious diseases among injection drug users without increasing drug use. Asking these questions helps us understand how widely information about such programs has spread through the general public in Ohio. The fact that adults more familiar with needle exchange programs are more likely to favor them may indicate that increased public education could be helpful when this tool is used to address the harms of drug use.

⁵ This includes strongly favor, somewhat favor and lean toward favoring, or strongly oppose, somewhat oppose and lean toward opposing.

Percentage of Ohio adults who favor needle exchange programs

By age



By political party affiliation



INTERACT
FOR HEALTH

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

The State of Ohio currently has nine syringe exchange/needle exchange programs across the state.⁶ At these sites, users are provided with access to clean syringes and testing for HIV and Hepatitis C. Other services provided may include testing for other sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy testing, education programs and drug treatment referrals.

⁶ NASEN North American Syringe Exchange Network. (n.d.). *Ohio Syringe Exchange Programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.nasen.org/directory/oh/>.