



## **New Survey on American Attitudes Toward Substance Abuse Finds Few Who Say Their Communities are Doing Enough to Address the Problem**

A majority supports legalization of marijuana, but only a third of respondents endorse legalization with no restrictions.

**March 24, 2016 Chicago, IL.**—In a nation where more Americans die every year from drug overdoses than in motor vehicle accidents, a new survey conducted by [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) indicates popular support for policies designed to address the problem, including more affordable and accessible treatment programs, more research on effective treatments, and increased law enforcement.

"There is mounting evidence that drug abuse is having a serious impact on communities across the U.S. We found that Americans want to see improvements to treatments for users but also punishment for drug dealers," said [Trevor Tompson](#), director of The AP-NORC Center. "This survey provides policymakers with specific information about how the American people understand the problem and the solutions they support."

The nationwide poll of 1,042 adults used [AmeriSpeak](#), the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Interviews were conducted online and using landlines and cell phones between February 11, 2016 and February 14, 2016.

### **Key Findings Include:**

- Most Americans (62 percent) say at least one type of substance use is a serious problem in their community. Forty-three percent have a relative or close friend with substance abuse issues.
- The public says more should be done to address the problem of substance use in their area. Seven in 10 Americans say their community is not doing enough to find improved methods of treating addiction (68 percent) or to make accessible treatment programs more available (69 percent). Nearly as many, 61 percent, want to see more effort made to crack down on drug dealers. Just over half (53 percent) say their community should do more to go after the users themselves.
- A majority of Americans, 61 percent, support the legalization of marijuana, but only a third of them endorse legalization with no restrictions. Forty-three percent say there should be restrictions on the purchase amounts. And a quarter of those who support legalization only approve of its use when prescribed by a doctor.
- The public perceives racial, socioeconomic, and geographic imbalances in conviction rates for drug possession. More than half of the public reports that black, Hispanic, poor, and urban substance users are at least very likely to be convicted of drug possession. Significantly fewer, about 3 in 10,

say white, middle class, suburban, and rural substance users are likely to be convicted, and only a quarter think rich drugs users are likely to be convicted.

- Only 21 percent say all or most doctors and dentists regularly prescribe painkillers more than is necessary. But of those who think even a few doctors and dentists overprescribe, the vast majority (89 percent) believe this practice contributes to drug dependence and overdoses.

### **Survey Methodology**

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using [AmeriSpeak®](#), which is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect.

### **About the Survey**

The nationwide poll was conducted Feb. 11-14, 2016, using the [AmeriSpeak](#) Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cellphones were conducted with 1,042 adults.

### **About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research**

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

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NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business, and policy decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Today, government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

### **About AmeriSpeak Omnibus**

AmeriSpeak Omnibus is a once-a-month, multi-client survey using a probability sample of at least 1,000 nationally representative adults age 18 and older. Respondents are interviewed online and by phone from NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel—the most scientifically rigorous multi-client household panel in the

United States. AmeriSpeak households are selected randomly from NORC's National Sample Frame, the industry leader in sample coverage. The National Frame is representative of over 99 percent of U.S. households and includes additional coverage of hard-to-survey population segments, such as rural and low-income households, that are underrepresented in other sample frames. More information about AmeriSpeak is available at [AmeriSpeak.org](http://AmeriSpeak.org).

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