



What Ohioans Think about *Treatment vs. Incarceration for People with Substance Use Disorders*

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Results From The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati



According to The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), 25% of inmates in federal, state, or local prisons and jails are there because of drug law violations, and another 4% because of alcohol law violations.¹ These include people convicted of possession or use; substance trafficking; driving under the influence; drunkenness, vagrancy, or disorderly conduct; or liquor law violations. In addition, 43% of inmates were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time they committed their crime.

People who are incarcerated for illegal drug and alcohol violations are also more likely to have been arrested previously. CASA found that people incarcerated for a drug law violation had been arrested an average of 4.6 times previously, and people convicted of an alcohol law violation had been arrested an average of 5.4 times previously.

The study by CASA also found that only 11% of inmates with an alcohol or other drug use

¹ All CASA data come from *The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (2010). Behind Bars II: Substance Abuse and American's Prison Population. Available at: www.casacolumbia.org/articlefiles/575-report2010behindbars2.pdf.*

Would you favor or oppose replacing prison sentences with mandatory drug treatment and probation for... (graph presents only the percentage who responded "strongly favor" or "favor somewhat").

...people convicted of nonviolent illegal drug use?



...people convicted of committing nonviolent crimes under the influence of alcohol?



■ Strongly favor ■ Favor somewhat

How important do you think it is that society... (graph presents only the percentage who responded "very important" or "fairly important").

...increase the addiction treatment and recovery support services available to people who are seeking treatment?



...strengthen enforcement of current drug laws for people who use illegal drugs?



■ Very important ■ Fairly important

disorder had received any type of professional treatment in prison. For many people convicted of illegal drug or alcohol violations, community-based treatment can be more effective than prison for addressing their needs and preventing repeat run-ins with the law. Community-based treatment can also be more cost-effective than prison, and offenders can be diverted to court-mandated treatment rather than to prison or jail.²

² Collins, T. (2009). *The State of Corrections Today. Available at: www.oceaonline.org/pdf/home/State_Of_Corrections_Today.pdf.*

3 in 4 Ohioans Favor Treatment over Incarceration for Nonviolent Offenders

Just under half of Ohioans (46%) strongly favor and another one-third (30%) somewhat favor replacing prison sentences with mandatory drug treatment and probation for people convicted of nonviolent illegal drug use.³ Strongly favor was the most

³ This refers to people who were convicted of using illegal drugs, not people who committed other crimes—including violent crimes—while under the influence or to get money to pay for illegal drugs.

(continued on back)

frequent response given by Ohio adults regardless of age, sex, race, education, or income.

Responses were similar for people convicted of nonviolent crimes while under the influence of alcohol, with 43% of Ohioans strongly favoring and 28% somewhat favoring replacing prison sentences with mandatory drug treatment and probation for people convicted of committing non violent crimes under the influence of alcohol. Strongly favor was again the most frequent response given by Ohio adults regardless of age, sex, race, education, or income.

7 in 10 Ohioans Say More Treatment and Enforcement of Current Drug Laws Are Very Important

The majority of Ohio adults (71%) say that it is very important that society increase the addiction treatment and recovery support services available

to people who are seeking treatment. Some groups responded more frequently that this was important, including Ohioans with less than a high school education (89%), African Americans (87%), young adults ages 18-29 (86%), and Ohioans living below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG⁴; 82%).

The majority of Ohio adults (67%) also say that it is very important that society strengthen enforcement of current drug laws for people who use illegal drugs. Some groups responded more frequently that this was important, including Ohioans with less than a high school education (85%), African Americans (82%), Ohioans living below 200% FPG (81%), and young adults ages 18–29 (77%).

⁴ 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG) in 2008 was an annual income of \$42,400 for a family of 4.