Most believe addiction is a disease; half know where to find treatment

The 2019 Kentucky Health Issues Poll asked Kentucky adults several questions about substance use and addiction and whether they believe addiction is a disease. KHIP is sponsored by Interact for Health and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

Uptick in prescription pain reliever abuse

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, substance use disorder is a public health crisis.¹ This is true both in the nation and in Kentucky. The 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that, in the past year, nearly 10 million Americans ages 12 and older had misused prescription pain relievers, nearly 2 million had used methamphetamine and more than 800,000 had used heroin.² In 2017, the most recent year for which data are available, Kentucky ranked fourth in the nation in drug overdose death rates.³ KHIP asked Kentucky adults about their knowledge of substance abuse among their family members and friends.⁴

Nearly 4 in 10 Kentucky adults (38%) reported knowing someone who has problems as a result of abusing prescription pain relievers. This has increased since 2018. Two in 10 Kentucky adults (20%) know someone who has used heroin. About 2 in 10 (22%) know someone who has used methamphetamine.⁵

⁴ KHIP asked, “Do you have any family members or friends who have experienced problems as a result of … abusing prescription pain relievers? … using heroin? … using methamphetamine?”
⁵ These findings, unless otherwise noted, are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and Interact for Health. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Oct. 16-Dec. 6, 2019, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,559 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 468 landline interviews and 1,091 interviews with cell phone users. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to ±2.5%. There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as nonresponse, wording or context effects that can introduce error or bias. For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit www.healthy-ky.org or www.interactforhealth.org/about-khip/.

Percentage of Kentucky adults who know someone who has experienced problems as a result of...

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<tr>
<td>Abusing prescription drugs</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<td>Using heroin</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using methamphetamine</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>17%</td>
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* The methamphetamine question was not asked on KHIP in 2014 and 2015.

SOURCE: 2019 Kentucky Health Issues Poll (released January 2020)

Released: January 2020
methamphetamine. Knowledge of heroin and methamphetamine use are unchanged since 2018.

**Nearly 7 in 10 Kentucky adults believe addiction is a disease**

Research has shown that addiction is a chronic but treatable disease of the brain that affects millions of Americans. KHIP asked, “Do you believe addiction is, or is not, a disease?” About 7 in 10 Kentucky adults (66%) reported they believe addiction is a disease, unchanged from 2017 (70%), the last time KHIP asked this question.

KHIP asked those who believe addiction is a disease, “Do you believe addiction is a physical disease, a psychological disease or both a physical and psychological disease?” Among adults who believe addiction is a disease, about 8 in 10 (82%) believe it is both a physical and psychological disease, more than 1 in 10 (14%) believe it is a psychological disease only, and fewer than 1 in 10 (4%) believe it is a physical disease only. This has not changed since 2017.

Do you believe that addiction is — or is not — a disease? (Percentages do not add to 100% because the response ‘don’t know’ is not included.)

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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Do you believe that addiction is a physical disease, a psychological disease or both a physical and psychological disease?

- Physical and psychological: 82%
- Psychological: 14%
- Physical: 4%

**Half know about treatment referral**

Addiction treatment exists and is available in Kentucky. However, as noted in Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health, there is a need to continue to develop more effective practices and policies for prevention, treatment and recovery from substance use disorder. KHIP asked Kentucky adults, “Suppose a family member or friend asked you for help finding services or treatment as a result of using drugs. Would you know who to contact to help them find services or treatment?” Just more than half of Kentucky adults (56%) reported they would know whom to contact.

For information on how to access addiction treatment in Kentucky, visit [https://findhelpnowky.org/](https://findhelpnowky.org/). The site includes a real-time locator to find available substance use disorder treatment providers. Or for help by phone, call 1-833-8KY-HELP (1-833-859-4357). A live specialist will conduct a brief screening assessment and connect callers with the most relevant treatment services.

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