NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Ten Percent of American Adults Consider Themselves in Recovery From Drug or Alcohol Abuse

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Ten percent of American adults consider themselves to be in recovery from drug or alcohol abuse problems, according to a new survey released today by The Partnership at Drugfree.org and the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). The findings indicate there are 23.5 million American adults who are overcoming an involvement with drugs or alcohol that they once considered to be problematic.

The nationally representative survey found 10 percent of adults answered yes to the question, "Did you once have a problem with drugs or alcohol, but no longer do?" – one simple way of describing recovery from drug and alcohol abuse or addiction that was devised by Dr. Alexandre Laudet, a leading researcher in addiction recovery, now at National Development and Research Institute (NDRI).

"Bill White, a treatment and recovery champion, has said that there is 'a science of addiction, but not a science of recovery,'" explained A. Thomas McLellan, PhD, Former Deputy Director, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. "That statement is completely correct. With the survey conducted by The Partnership at Drugfree.org and OASAS, we now have a very strong beginning to developing that science. Through past initiatives, we established some sensible definitions of what 'being in recovery' actually means – and this additional work provides fundamental information on how many people are in recovery. These are not only the building blocks for the 'recovery science' that have been called for, but they are the foundation for public understanding, acceptance and ultimately, the celebration of recovery."

The survey also uncovered some basic demographic information about those saying they once had a drug or alcohol problem, but no longer do: more males say they are in recovery than females (12 percent of males vs. 7 percent of females). More adults ages 35-44 report being in recovery, compared to younger adults (18-34) and adults who are 55 years of age or older. The Midwest has a higher prevalence of adults (14 percent) who say they are in recovery compared to adults in the South (7 percent). In other regions of the country, the percentage of adults (not statistically significant) who say they are in recovery is 11 percent for the West and 9 percent for the Northeast.

"This research marks a vitally important step for those who are struggling with addiction by offering clear evidence to support what many know experientially – that millions of Americans

have found a path to recovery," said New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez. "It is my hope that this new evidence will strengthen and inspire individuals and those that provide treatment and recovery services to help the broader community understand that treatment does work and recovery is possible."

The survey was conducted in 2011 by Opinion Research Corporation for The Partnership at Drugfree.org and OASAS via phone (landline and cell) among a nationally representative sample of 2,526 adults.

"The OASAS study is an important contribution to the public's understanding of recovery, as it represents the actual voices of millions of Americans whose lives have improved because they are living free of alcohol and other drug problems," stated Steve Pasierb, President and CEO of The Partnership at Drugfree.org. "This new learning provides a big reason – more than 23 million reasons – for all those who are struggling with their own, or a loved one's substance use disorder, to have hope and know that they are not alone. These findings serve as a reminder that addiction is a treatable disease and recovery can be a reality. We are just scratching the surface here and more research is needed in this area, but we are proud to collaborate with New York OASAS in this meaningful process."

To learn more about NCADD's Recovery - A Vision of Hope, Help and Healing, click here.

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