



Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services

## Survey: Ten Percent of American Adults Report Being in Recovery from Substance Abuse or Addiction

STATE OF NEW YORK  
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### **Survey: *Ten Percent of American Adults Report Being in Recovery from Substance Abuse or Addiction***

*Data Show More Than 23 Million Adults Living in U.S. Once Had Drug or Alcohol Problems, But No Longer Do*

Survey data released today by [The Partnership at Drugfree.org](http://ThePartnershipatDrugfree.org) and [The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services](http://TheNewYorkStateOfficeofAlcoholismandSubstanceAbuseServices) (OASAS) show that 10 percent of all American adults, ages 18 and older, consider themselves to be in recovery from drug or alcohol abuse problems. These nationally representative findings indicate that there are 23.5 million American adults who are overcoming an involvement with drugs or alcohol that they once considered to be problematic.

According to the new survey funded by OASAS, 10 percent of adults surveyed said 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.

“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,” said 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.”

“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.”

Other self-reported findings from the new data conclude that:

- More males say they are in recovery than females (12 percent vs. 7 percent).
- 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<sup>1</sup> who say they are in recovery is 11 percent for the West and 9 percent for the Northeast.

The study also found no significant difference between parents and adults without children who say they are in recovery. This demonstrates that parents are as likely as non-parents to be in recovery.

“This new research also supports findings from a groundbreaking survey done for Faces and Voices of Recovery by Peter Hart Associates that provided the initial evidence that there was a large population in recovery in the United States,” said Tom Hedrick, Senior Program Officer and one of the founding members of The Partnership at Drugfree.org. “Those 2004 findings concluded that ‘38 percent of adults have a family member or close friend (or both) who is in recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs.’”

### ***Insights from Experts in the Field of Substance Abuse and Addiction:***

“I’ve learned that there is ‘a science of addiction, but not a science of recovery.’ 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.” -- ***A. Thomas McLellan, PhD, Former Deputy Director, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy***

“Every American is acutely aware of the negative impact of drug and alcohol addiction; it's impossible to ignore. Yet we have somehow missed a very positive story about addiction that is right in front of our nose: Tens of millions of our fellow citizens come out the other side to live substance-free, healthy and productive lives. This study is a wake-up call to the reality of recovery in America, as well as a source of hope for the millions of American families who are currently struggling with drug and alcohol problems.” -- ***Keith Humphreys, Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine***

“As these findings demonstrate, recovery is everywhere. All across our country people are living healthy and productive lives in long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, benefiting themselves, their families and communities. Recovery is our best kept secret. It’s time to invest in understanding the solution to alcohol and other drug problems, advocate for the right resources to recover and demonstrate the power and proof of long-term recovery, offering hope to the over 23 million Americans who have yet to find recovery.” -- ***Pat Taylor, Executive Director, Faces and Voices of Recovery***

"This research is vitally important - it shows that, until now, even addiction experts have been unaware of how many people across the country are in sustained recovery. We often hear about the latest celebrity's bad behavior, but it's rare for the public to see people overcome their addictions, achieve their goals, and go on to become great parents, employees, citizens, etc. The public won't know these success stories unless we tell them, and that's what this research does. It breaks new ground and provides tremendous inspiration for those who are currently struggling with drug and/or alcohol problems and their families." -- **Deni Carise, PhD, Chief Clinical Officer, Phoenix House Foundation**

### ***Resources for Those in Recovery and for Families Facing Addiction***

The Partnership at Drugfree.org is reaching families directly through its transformative campaign, [You Are Not Alone](#), which calls on all those affected by addiction – individuals, families, communities and organizations – to take action and help our loved ones in need. You Are Not Alone comes to life in [a collection of visual stories](#), each one a message dedicated to the families of the 11 million teens or young adults who are struggling with substance abuse.

This public storytelling – stories of hope and healing – puts a face to the disease of addiction and brings together the millions directly impacted with those who currently know someone who needs help.

For those families who are currently struggling with addiction or have a loved one who is in recovery, please visit The Partnership at Drugfree.org's online resource, [Recover](#) at drugfree.org.

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### ***Survey Methodology***

The nationally representative survey from The Partnership at Drugfree.org and OASAS was conducted among 2,526 adults, ages 18 and older, living in the United States. Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) conducted the survey in 2011, with a sample consisting of 1,272 male and 1,254 female respondents and with a margin of error +/- 2 percentage points.

ORC CARAVAN® random-digit-dial omnibus survey is conducted among adults 18 years of age and older living in private households in the continental United States. It is a multi-client nationally

projectable study and the sample includes both unlisted and listed landline telephone numbers and is fully replicated and stratified by region. All national telephone surveys are weighted to U.S. Census data for age, gender, geographic region, education and race in order to improve the projectability and reliability of the random telephone sample. The survey is enhanced with a sample of cell phone interviews to reflect the growing importance of adults who do not have landlines or rarely use them. This captures the best representation of the adult population, especially among younger adults 18-34.

**Survey Question:** “Did you used to have a problem with drugs or alcohol, but no longer do?”

### ***About The Partnership at Drugfree.org***

*Ninety percent of addictions start in the teenage years. The Partnership at [Drugfree.org](http://Drugfree.org) is dedicated to helping families solve the problem of teen substance abuse. Bringing together renowned scientists, parent experts and communications professionals, this public health nonprofit translates research on teen behavior, parenting, addiction and treatment into useful and effective resources at [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org). Its [You Are Not Alone](#) campaign is dedicated to supporting families of the 11 million teens and young adults who need addiction treatment, while the organization’s [community education programs](#) reach families at the grassroots level. The Partnership at Drugfree.org’s mission to help parents prevent, intervene in and find treatment for drug and alcohol use by their children depends on donations from individuals, corporations, foundations and the public sector. We are thankful to SAG/AFTRA and the advertising and media industries for their ongoing generosity.*

### ***About OASAS***

*OASAS oversees one of the nation's largest addiction services systems dedicated to Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, with more than 1,550 programs serving over 110,000 New Yorkers on any given day. To get help for someone in need, call the toll-free, 24-hour, 7-day a week HOPEline at [1-877-8-HOPENY](tel:1-877-8-HOPENY). For more information, please visit [www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov). Follow OASAS: [www.twitter.com/nysoasas](https://www.twitter.com/nysoasas) / [facebook profile: NYS OASAS](https://www.facebook.com/NYS.OASAS) / [www.youtube.com/nysoasas](https://www.youtube.com/nysoasas) / [www.flickr.com/photos/nysoasas](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nysoasas)*

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<sup>1</sup> not statistically significant