

# Survey Highlights Attitudes and Understanding of Mental Illness and Addiction

Ohio Association of  
COUNTY  
BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH  
AUTHORITIES

OF  MIND

JANUARY 2010

*It continues to be clear that there is a great deal of stigma related to addiction and mental illness. Many of Ohio's citizens, including state and local leaders, still do not understand that mental illness and addiction are diseases of the brain, and that treatment of these diseases should be considered a part of mainstream healthcare. In order to gain more insight about Ohioans' opinions regarding addiction and mental illness, the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities conducted a statistically valid phone survey in early December. This newsletter explains how the survey was developed and highlights many of the survey's significant findings. We hope that as you review these results you begin to have a better understanding of how Ohioans view addiction and mental illness and that you join us in our fight to break down the walls of stigma as we create a shift in public opinion to increase support for alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services and recovery supports.*

## OF-1-MIND Pre-Survey Executive Summary

**Orman Hall, MA**, Executive Director, Fairfield County ADAMH Board and  
**Cheri L. Walter, MA, LICDC, CEO, OACBHA**

with Rhonda Myers, MA, MSW, LISW-S, Associate Director, Fairfield County ADAMH Board and  
Trent Hall, BS, OACBHA Intern

### Introduction

The objectives of this study were to 1) determine the extent to which mental illness and addiction affect Ohio citizens and to 2) assess the degree of stigma and misperception that exists about these diseases. A random phone survey of Ohio adults was conducted in December of 2009 to meet these objectives.

### Methodology

Staff of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities completed 414 phone surveys of Ohio residents from December 12<sup>th</sup> through December 16<sup>th</sup> 2009. Five surveys were excluded because the respondents were less than 18 years old.

Household phone numbers were randomly selected from a database of Ohio phone numbers. Separate call lists for households with senior citizens and persons between 18 and 65 were used to assure the sample was proportional by age cohort. The margin of error for the survey was +/- 4.85% for results based on the full sample.

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used to analyze survey data.

### Summary of Important Findings

- More than two out of five of the survey respondents (45.5%) reported they had a friend or family member who has substance abuse problems.
- Almost one out of two respondents were aware of a friend or family member with mental illness (49.4%).

- When combined, three out of five respondents (63.3%) indicated that a friend or family member had either a substance abuse or a mental disorder.
- Forty-three percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that "Alcoholism and addiction are a weakness in character."
- Thirteen percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that "Mental Illness is a weakness in character."
- The research team found that rural and urban respondents were more likely to agree with both of these statements than suburban respondents. Respondents between the ages of 18 through 25 and those who were 65 and older were also more likely to agree with the statements. Therefore, it may be that these groups harbor higher levels of stigma and could benefit from additional information about substance abuse and mental illness.
- Alcohol was perceived to be the most serious addiction problem (38.6%) followed by prescription drugs (22.0%), marijuana (11.6%), crack cocaine (9.4%), methamphetamines (9.4%), heroin (5.8%) and cocaine (3.3%).
- Prescription drug use was more likely to be identified as a serious problem among rural and suburban respondents than urban respondents.

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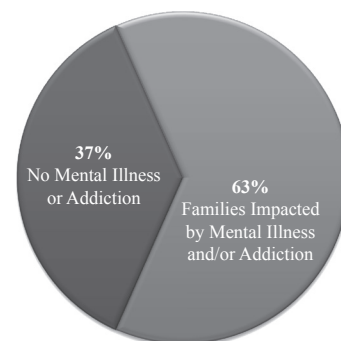
## Why We Need to Be OF-1-MIND

Cheri L. Walter, CEO  
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities

When we decided to conduct this survey, I knew that many people still did not understand the many intricacies of addiction and mental illness, and I knew that many people were impacted on a daily basis by addiction and mental illness. This impact can come from having an addiction or a mental illness or by having a friend or family member with an addiction or mental illness. As an individual recovering from addiction and a family member of someone recovering from addiction and mental illness, I know all too well the impact of these diseases as well as the stigma related to both.

Knowing all of this, I was still surprised to see that 63% of all of the survey respondents said that they were impacted by having a friend or family member with either a mental illness and/or an addiction. Think about that, that's two out of every three Ohioans whose lives have been affected by someone with a mental illness and/or an addiction. If we break these numbers down a little further, 45.5% stated that they had a friend or family member with an addiction, and 49.4% said that they had a friend or family member with a mental illness.

### Ohioans Impacted by Mental Illness or Addiction



This new survey shows us, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we all need to ensure that individuals who have an addiction and/or mental illness and their families have access to treatment and recovery supports. We know that individuals and families throughout Ohio are fighting daily battles with mental illness and addiction, and I, for one, am going to do everything that I can to support them. We've all heard the numbers before. One in four adults have a diagnosable mental illness in any given year (National Institute of Mental Health: Statistics) and that 9% of persons 12 or older need treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol abuse problem (SAMHA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2008), but have we spent the time to think about what that means for our families? Our communities? Our economy?

On January 26, 2010, the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities Foundation kicked off the OF-1-MIND campaign. OF-1-MIND is a campaign that will be educating Ohioans about addiction and mental illness and will be leading the advocacy efforts to increase understanding and support for all of the individuals and families throughout Ohio who are impacted by these diseases. Please check out the back page of this newsletter for more information about how you can become part of the OF-1-MIND campaign and join the fight!

# Survey Results

The phone survey used questions that were developed to gather opinions about how Ohioans view addiction and mental illness in a number of ways. The next couple of pages include the questions asked and further analysis of some of the survey responses, including some breakdowns by demographic categories.

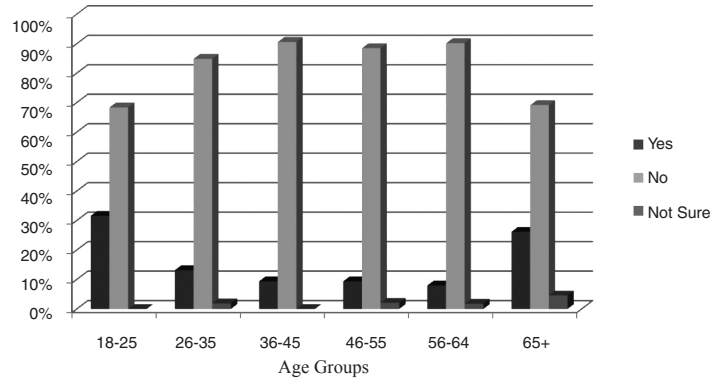
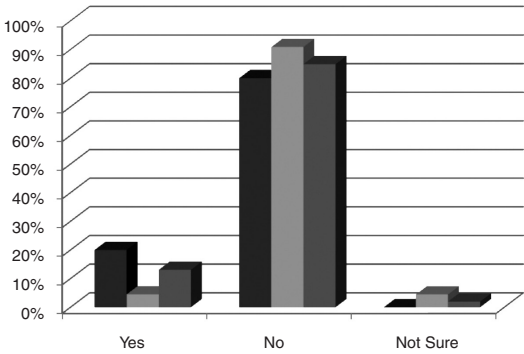
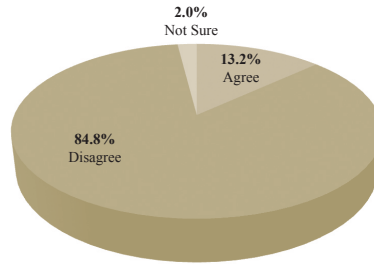
Survey Questions	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Alcoholism and addiction are a weakness in character.	43.5%	53.3%	3.2%
An alcoholic or addict who completes treatment can become a productive citizen.	96.3%	2.2%	1.5%
Drug and alcohol addiction is a disease of the brain.	58.8%	27.2%	14.0%
Health insurance should cover the cost of treating alcoholism and drug addiction.	74.1%	17.8%	8.1%
A non-violent, first time criminal offender who is addicted to alcohol or drugs should receive treatment instead of going to prison.	68.9%	21.0%	10.0%
An individual with a severe mental illness has the same expected life span as someone without a mental illness.	29.3%	54.3%	16.4%
Mental illness is a weakness in character.	13.2%	84.8%	2.0%
Mental illness is a disease of the brain.	83.4%	9.5%	7.1%
People with mental illness are unable to work.	6.8%	87.8%	5.4%
People with mental illness can recover with treatment and medication.	84.1%	7.8%	8.1%
Health insurance should cover the cost of treating mental illness.	93.6%	2.9%	3.4%
I have a family member or friend with substance abuse problems.	45.5%	54.0%	0.5%
I have a family member or friend with mental illness.	49.4%	48.7%	2.0%

*“One of the things that I was most astounded by was the number of people that refused to take the survey and made comments like, ‘this issue doesn’t affect me’ or ‘I don’t care about those people.’ In some cases, the fact that people adamantly refused to take the survey based on the topic was more telling than the survey itself.”*

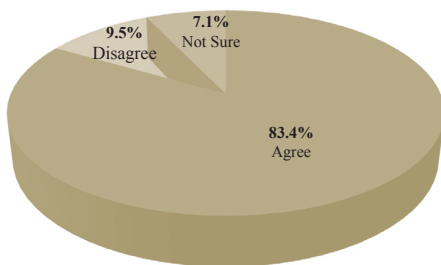
*~ Cheri L. Walter, CEO, OACBHA*

# Mental Illness Responses

## Mental illness is a weakness in character.

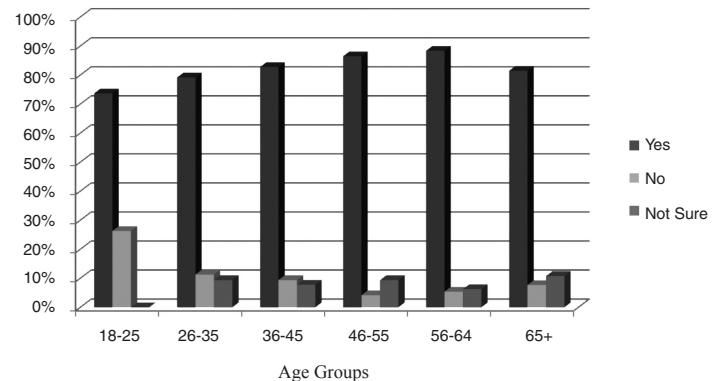
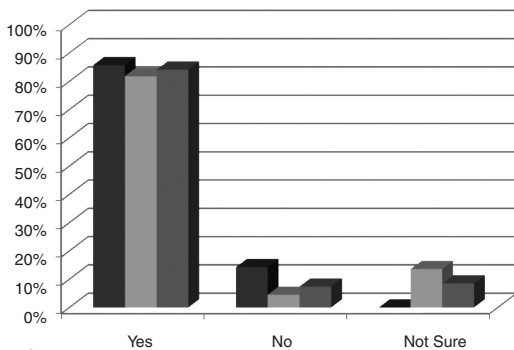
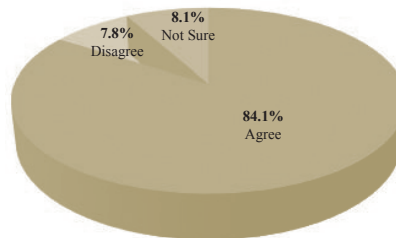


## Mental illness is a disease of the brain.



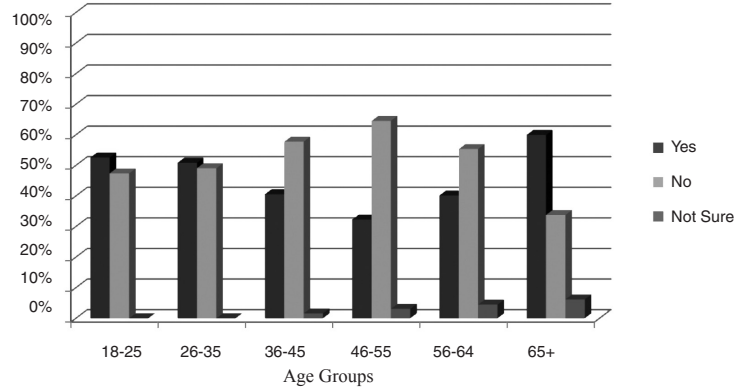
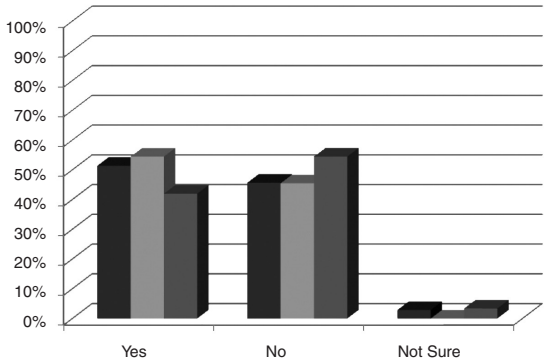
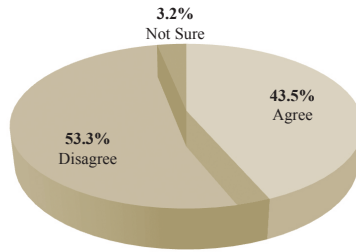
As you can see, 13.2% of respondents agreed that mental illness is a weakness in character, 83.4% agreed that mental illness is a disease of the brain, and 84.1% agreed that people with mental illness can recover with treatment and medication. One of the most significant findings of this survey was that individuals between the ages of 18 through 25 and those who were 65 and older are more likely to have negative opinions and attitudes about mental illness.

## People with mental illness can recover with treatment and medication.

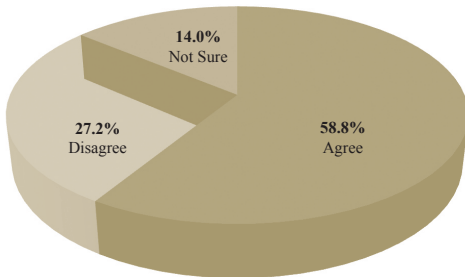


# Alcoholism and Addiction Results

**Alcoholism and addiction are a weakness in character.**

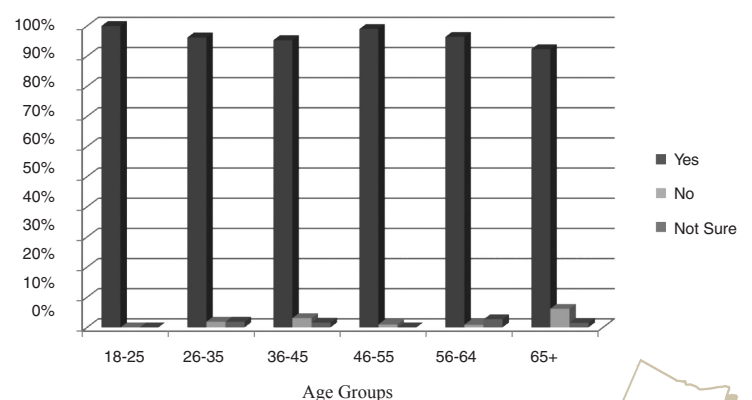
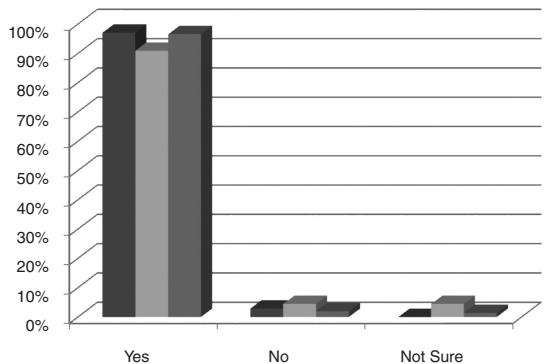
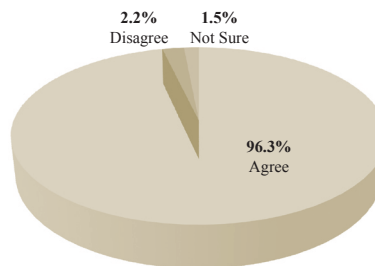


**Drug and alcohol addiction are diseases of the brain.**

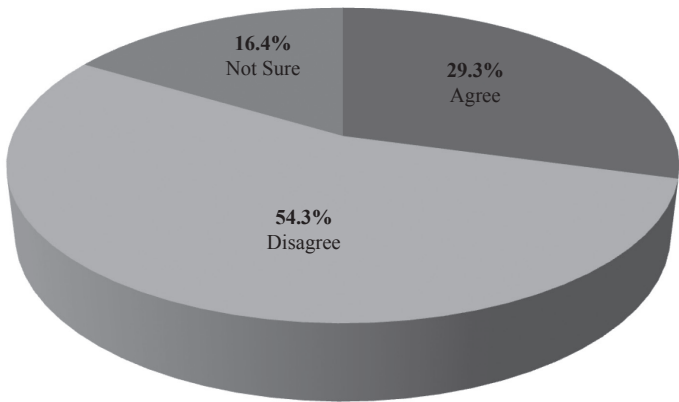


These graphs show that 43.5% of respondents agreed that alcoholism and addiction are a weakness in character, 58.8% agreed that drug and alcohol addiction is a disease of the brain, and 96.3% agreed that an alcoholic or addict who completes treatment can become a productive citizen. These numbers show that while more people believe that alcoholism and addiction are a weakness in character as opposed to mental illness, fewer people believe that alcoholism and addiction are diseases of the brain when compared with mental illness. Here again, individuals between the ages of 18 through 25 and 65 and older are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of negativity towards alcoholism and addiction.

**An alcoholic or addict who completes treatment can become a productive citizen.**

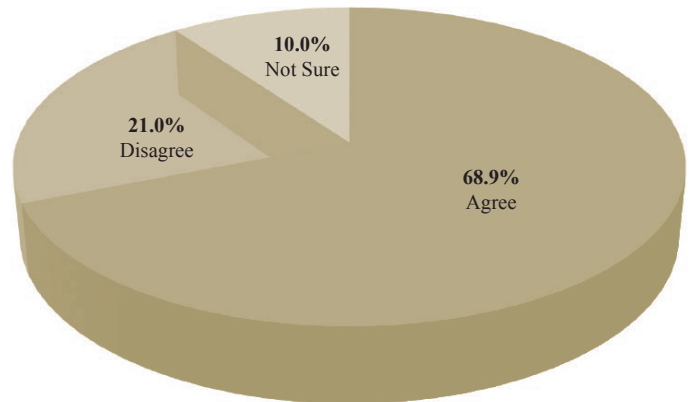


**An individual with a severe mental illness has the same expected life span as someone without a mental illness.**



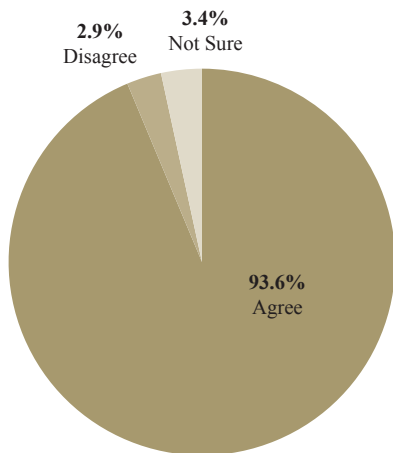
As the chart above shows, more education is needed on the fact that according to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors' report on *Morbidity and Mortality in People with Serious Mental Illness*, on average, **people with severe mental illness die 25 years earlier than the general population.**

**A non-violent, first time criminal offender, who is addicted to alcohol or drugs should receive treatment instead of going to prison.**

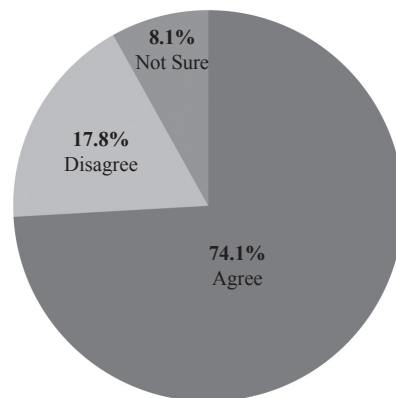


As you can see by the chart above, 68.9% of respondents stated that they agree that we should be treating first time, non-violent offenders not incarcerating them. In a state where our prison system has over 50,000 individuals incarcerated, this is an important finding.

**Health insurance should cover the cost of treating mental illness.**



**Health insurance should cover the cost of treating alcoholism and drug addiction.**



As you can see based on the charts above, the majority of Ohioans believe that insurance should cover the treatment of mental illness (93.6%) and alcoholism and addiction (74.1%). While at the national level total mental health and addiction parity has been achieved, in Ohio, parity only includes the seven major biologically based mental illnesses without any parity in coverage for addiction or alcoholism.

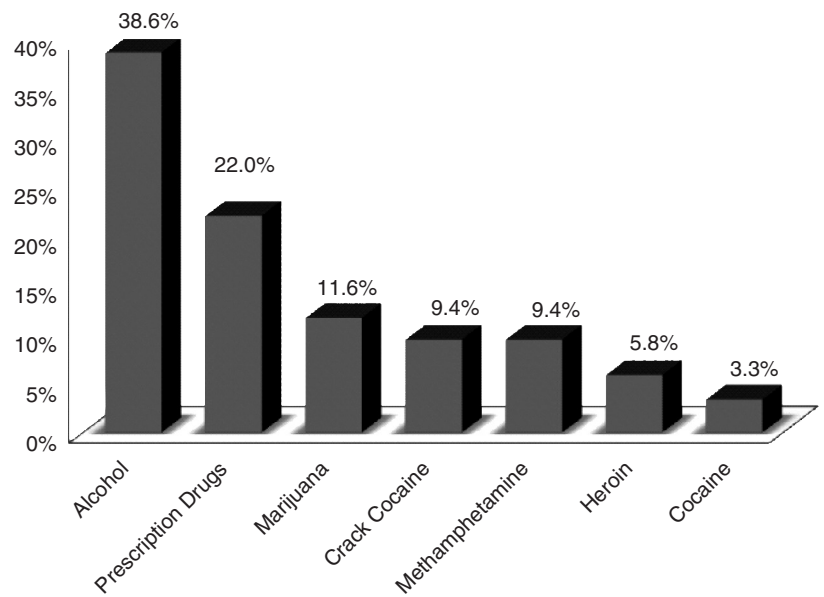
*“It was clear that most Ohioans agreed that health insurance should cover mental illness and addiction; however, what surprised me was the number of people who added the qualifier, ‘to a limited extent’. This was particularly true related to coverage for addiction.”*

~ Stacey Frohnapfel-Hasson,  
Director of Communication and Outreach, OACBHA

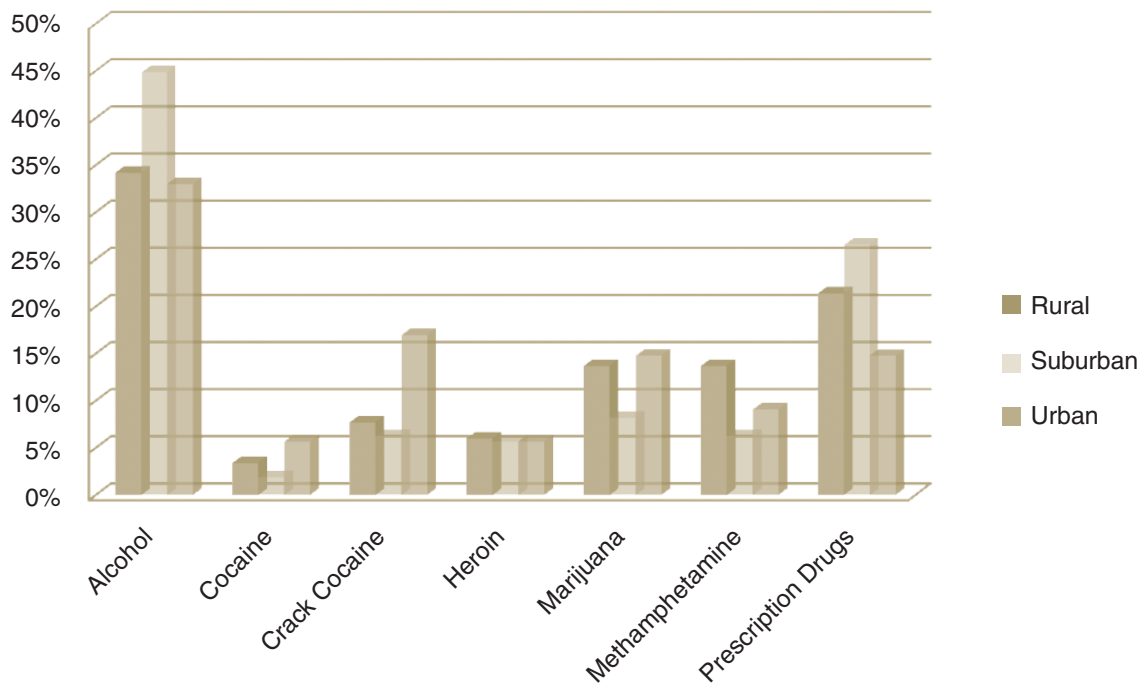
# Most Serious Drug Problem Responses

While headlines indicate that illegal drug use is an epidemic in cities across the U.S., the OF-1-MIND survey showed that Ohioans have a very different view of what the most serious drug problem is in their communities. By far, the most prevalent drug problem was seen to be alcohol at 38.6%, with prescription drugs coming in second at 22.0%. It is interesting to note that neither of the top two “serious drugs” is illegal. You will also note that the responses differ dramatically depending on where the respondent lives - urban, suburban, or rural. This data demonstrates that more than half of all Ohioans, when asked about the damage to their communities caused by drugs, decided that the real danger lies – not in illegal substances – but in the legal ones, readily available to youth and adults.

What is the most serious drug problem in your community?



Most Serious Drug Problem by Area



Most Serious Drug Problem by Area	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Alcohol	34.2%	44.9%	33.0%
Cocaine	3.4%	1.9%	5.7%
Crack Cocaine	7.7%	6.3%	17.0%
Heroin	6.0%	5.7%	5.7%
Marijuana	13.7%	8.2%	14.8%
Methamphetamine	13.7%	6.3%	9.1%
Prescription Drugs	21.4%	26.6%	14.8%



With a commitment to reducing stigma and increasing access to high-quality and affordable treatment and support services for underserved Ohioans, the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities Foundation kicked off the OF-1-MIND education and advocacy campaign on January 26, 2010.

OF-1-MIND is an action-oriented advocacy and education campaign designed to create a shift in public opinion and to increase local and state support for community-based mental health and addiction services and recovery supports. OF-1-MIND will play an important role in mobilizing Ohioans to articulate and communicate that mental illness and addiction are diseases of the brain and the knowledge that *treatment works . . . people recover*.

As we work to educate Ohio’s citizens, decision makers, and local leaders and to mobilize Ohioans to become advocates active in the fight to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and addiction, we hope you will get involved!

**TREATMENT WORKS . . . PEOPLE RECOVER**

Recovery rates with treatment and medication:

- Bipolar Disorder 80%
- Major Depression 65-85%
- Schizophrenia 60%
- Addiction 70%

(Report of the National Advisory Mental Health Council, March 1998)

**To learn more about and join the OF-1-MIND campaign, please visit:  
[www.of-1-mind.org](http://www.of-1-mind.org)**

*We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the members serving on the OF-1-MIND Advisory Council. All of the members of the Advisory Council have demonstrated a tremendous commitment to actively fighting the stigma associated with mental illness and addiction and working tirelessly on behalf of individuals and families fighting daily battles with these diseases. These individuals bring with them a vast array of professional experience in a number of fields, as well as their own experiences as consumers, family members, and friends battling mental illness and addiction.*

**OF-1-MIND ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Ann Fidler**  
Ohio University

**Fred Frese, Ph. D**

**Terre Garner**  
Ohio Federation for Children’s Mental Health

**Carolyn Givens**  
Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation

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Heritage Community Baptist Church

**Carole Harwood**  
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**Lon Herman**  
Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy

**Gregory Jefferson**  
Community for New Direction

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**Linda Pickenpaugh**  
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**Senator Robert Spada (retired)**

**The Honorable Jimmy Stewart**  
The Ohio Senate

**Precia Shenk Stuby**  
Hancock County ADAMHS Board

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**Stacey Frohnappfel-Hasson**  
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