



# ADDRESSING DRUG USE + RECOVERY STIGMA IN HEALTHCARE

**Sean Fogler, MD, MBA**

# CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I have no relevant financial relationships to disclose.

# INTRODUCTION: WHO WE ARE

“Laws, policies, and practices deployed to address drug use must not end up exacerbating human suffering.”

– Volker Turk, United Nations  
Commissioner for Human Rights

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

01. Stigma and Healthcare

02. Research and Data

03. Solutions

04. The Future



## Substance Use Disorder

# Drug Use Disorder | Opioid Use Disorder | Alcohol Use Disorder in the Past Year

NSDUH asked respondents aged 12 or older about the effects of their drug or alcohol use on their lives in the 12 months before the interview.



### Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

**48.7 million (17.3%)**

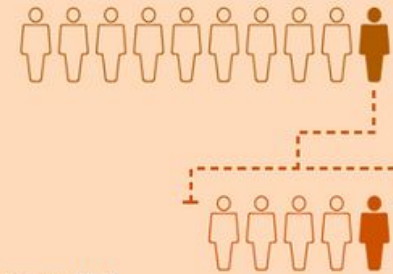
Among people aged 12 or older, about 17% had an SUD in the past year.



### Drug Use Disorder (DUD)

**27.2 million (9.7%)**

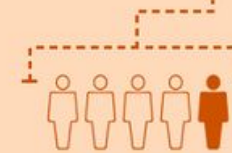
About 1 in 10 people had a DUD in the past year.



### Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

**6.1 million (2.2%)**

Among people aged 12 or older with a past year DUD, a little over 1 in 5 had an OUD, or about 2% overall.



### Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

**29.5 million (10.5%)**

About 1 in 10 people had an AUD in the past year.



**Substance use disorder (SUD)** is characterized by impairment caused by the recurrent use of alcohol or other drugs (or both), including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. Respondents were classified as having an SUD in the past year if they met criteria specified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition.<sup>2</sup> Respondents who used marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, methamphetamine, or prescription psychotherapeutic drugs were classified as having a **drug use disorder (DUD)** if they had a disorder related to any of these substances that they used in the past year. Respondents were classified as having an **opioid use disorder (OUD)** if they had a disorder related to their use of heroin or prescription pain relievers in the past year. Respondents who used alcohol in the past year were classified as having an **alcohol use disorder (AUD)** if they met criteria for an AUD in the past year. Respondents were classified as having an SUD if they had an AUD or a DUD in the past year.

# CHALLENGES

These intersections create a dangerous climate for people who use drugs.



# STIGMA

An Introduction to its Impact on Substance Use



# STIGMA: WHAT IS IT?

01.

An attribute, behavior, or condition that is deeply discrediting

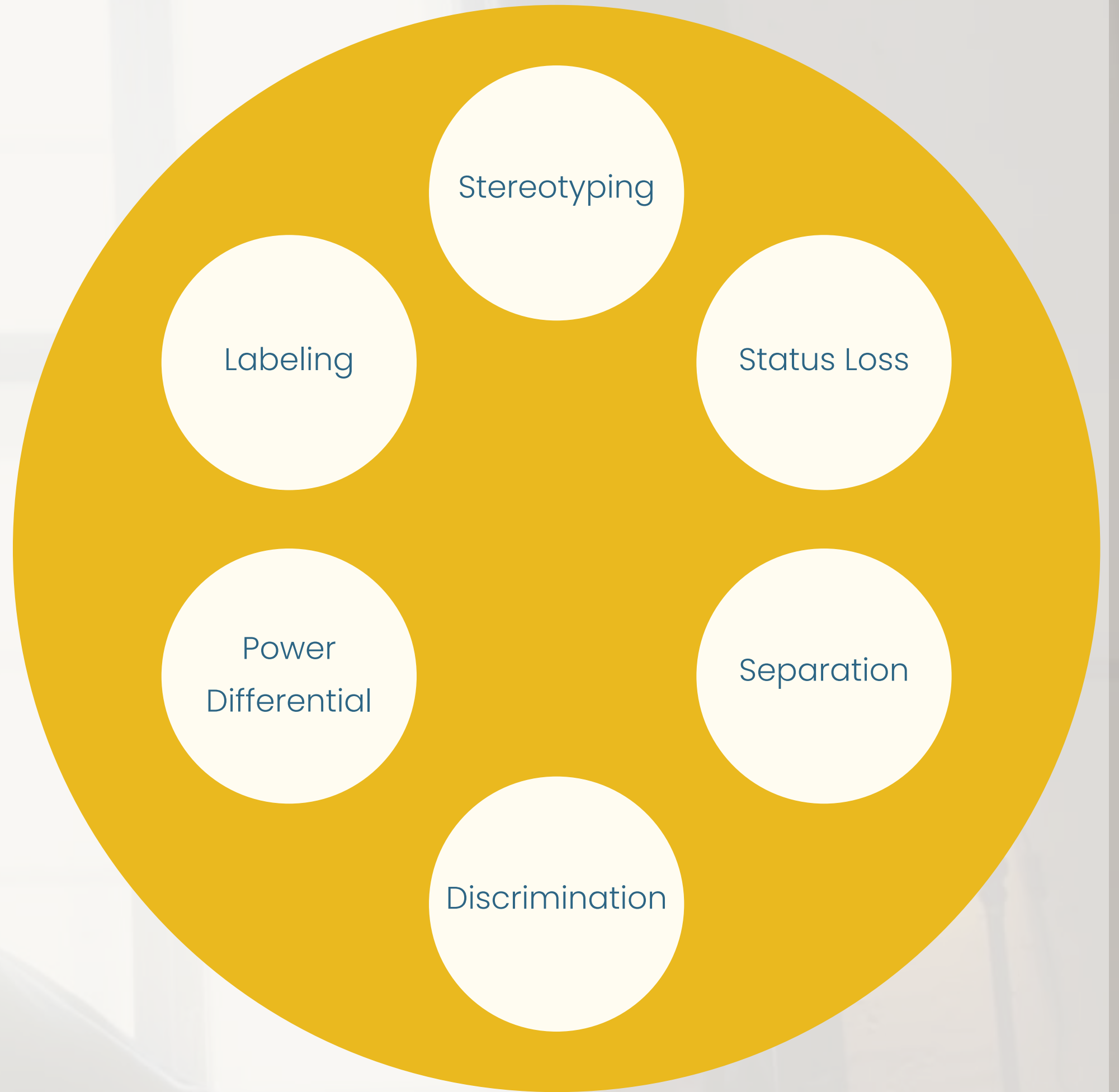
02.

A mark of disgrace

03.

A language of relationships

# STIGMA



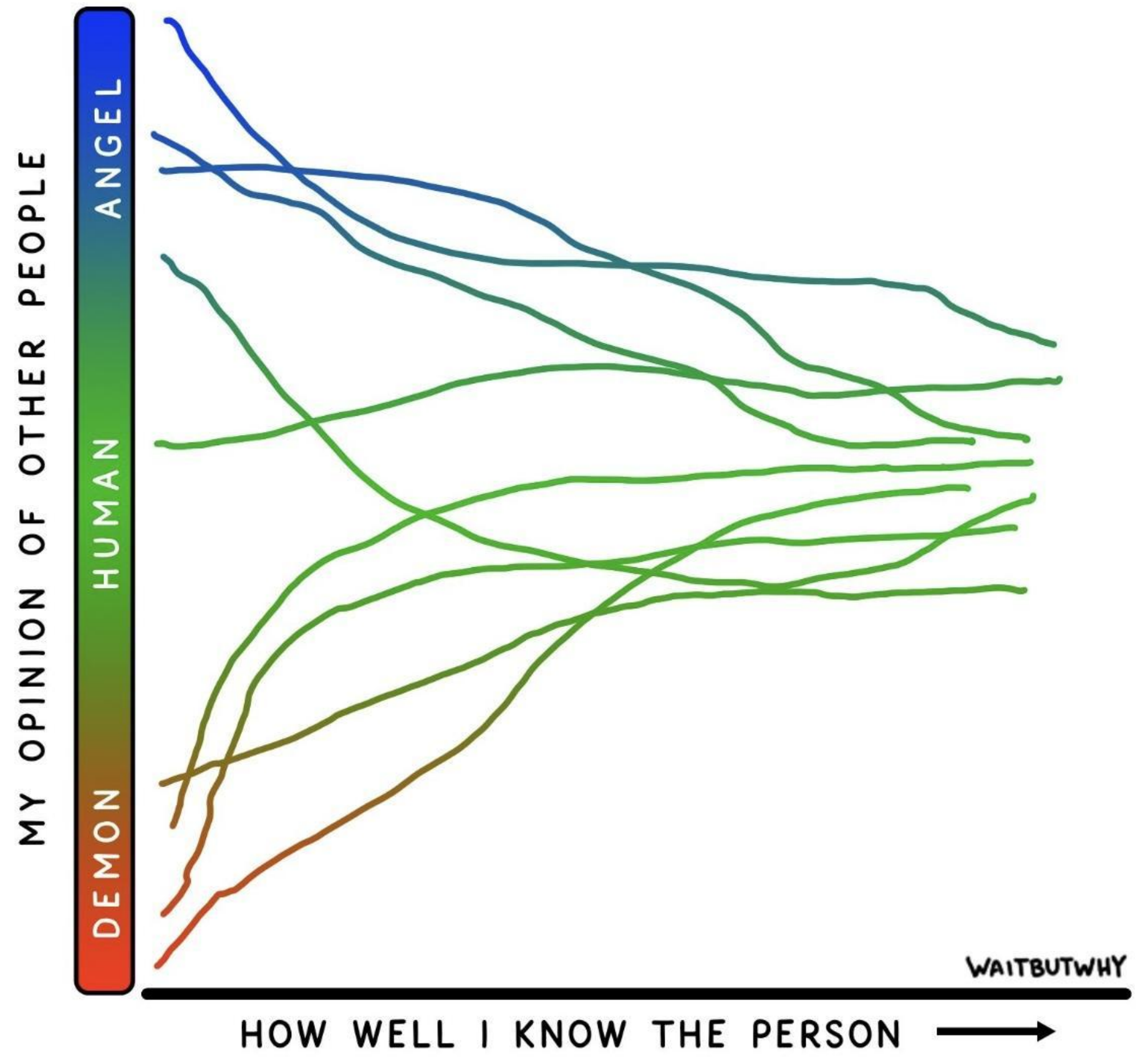
# TYPES OF STIGMA

PUBLIC

STRUCTURA  
L

SELF

PERCEIVED



# Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation



2023

---

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the  
Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

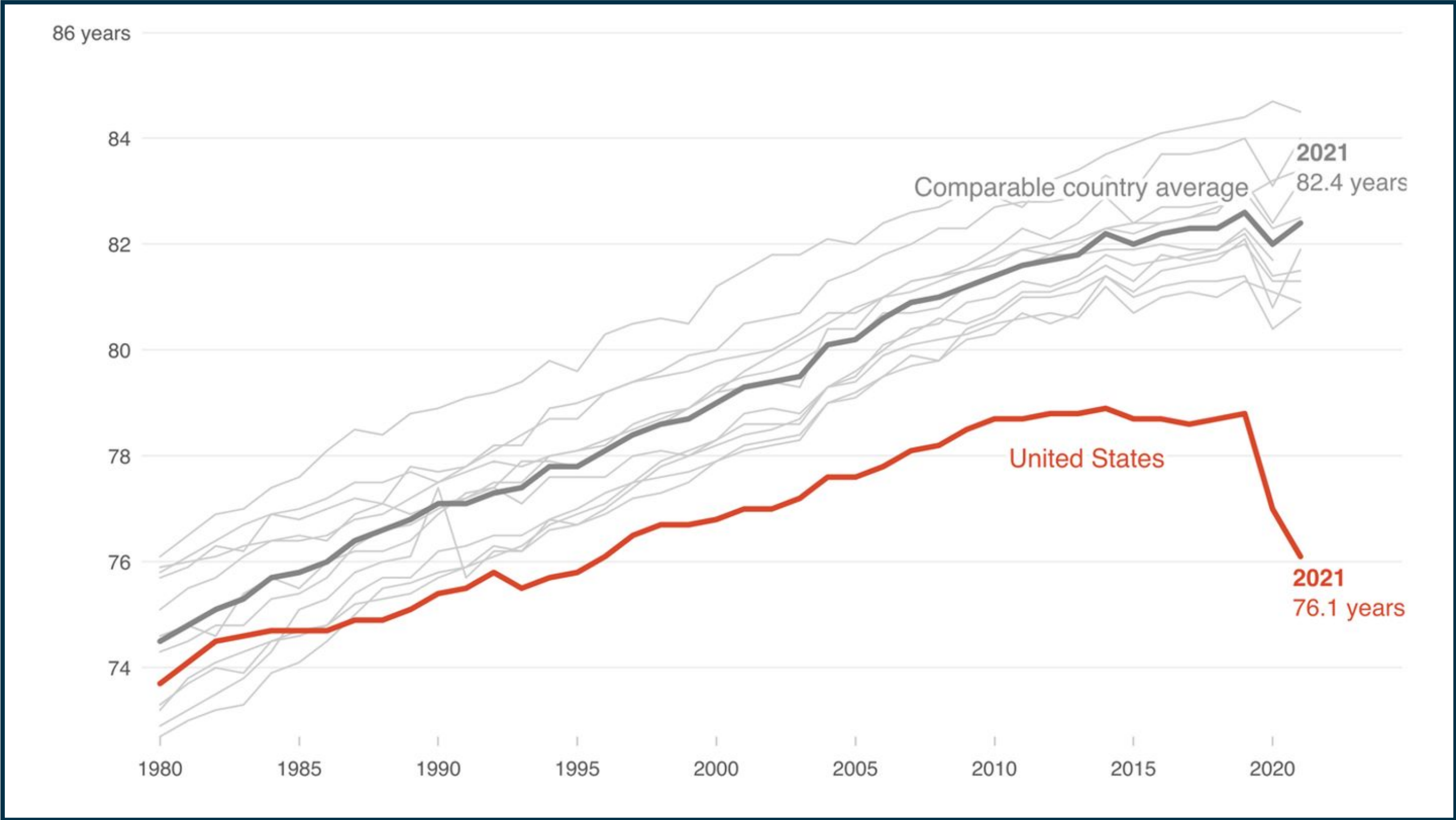
# PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERGRATION AND DISLOCATION

The interdependence between the individual and society

The vital need for social belonging with need for autonomy and achievement

The inward experience of identity and meaning and the outward social relationships

Lack of psychosocial integration is dislocation, a painful and destructive experience



# ADDICTIONS ARE AMONG THE MOST HIGHLY STIGMATIZED CONDITIONS GLOBALLY

- Cross-sectional survey
- 14 countries
- Included 18 most stigmatized conditions
- Drug addiction ranked #1
- Alcohol addiction ranked #4

*Drug and Alcohol Review*, (March 2005), 24, 143–155

 Taylor & Francis  
healthsciences

## **Stigma, social inequality and alcohol and drug use**

ROBIN ROOM

*Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden*



# PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

**FIGURE 3:** VICIOUS CYCLE OF PERCEPTIONS  
OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS



**Imagine you are a person who uses drugs or is a person in recovery.**

- What might that experience be like?
- How do you imagine society sees you?
- How do you think you will be treated?
- Would you feel safe sharing your use or asking for help?

“Every addiction starts with pain and  
ends with pain.”

– Eckhart Tolle

“If I had to design a system that was intended to keep people addicted, I’d design exactly the system we have now.”

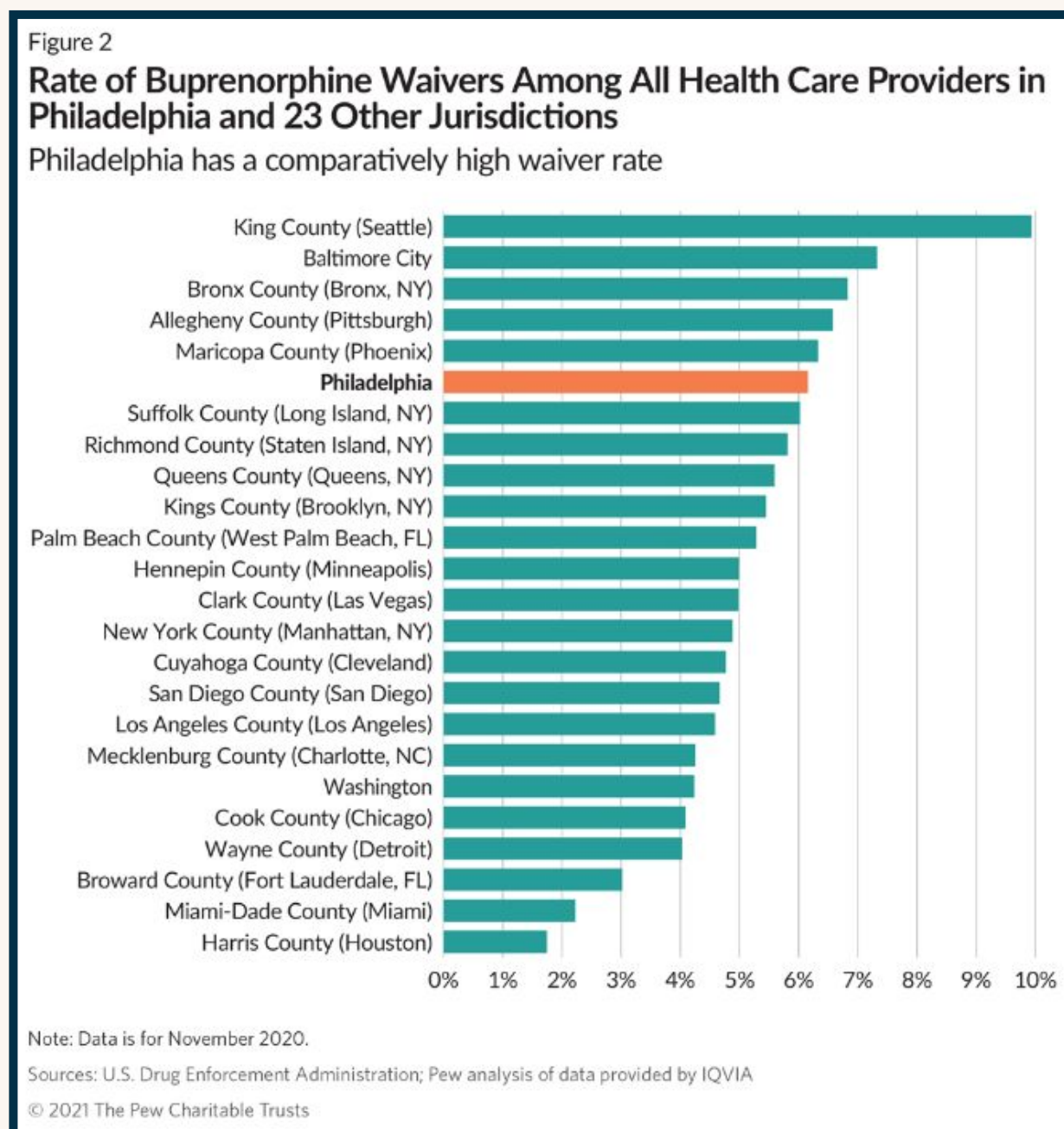
– Gabor Mate

# THE IMPACT OF STIGMA

- Discrimination
- Avoidance and Secrecy
- Delayed Help-Seeking
- Shame
- Diminished Self-Worth
- Label Avoidance and Denial
- Criminalization
- Poor engagement, delivery, and outcomes in healthcare
- Engagement in the criminal legal system

IN 2021, JUST 22% OF THE 2.5 MILLION PEOPLE WITH OPIOID USE DISORDER (OUD) IN THE U.S. RECEIVED MEDICATION FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER (MOUD).

# BARRIERS TO MEDICATION: SPECIAL WAIVER AND OTHER REGULATIONS



**Patient Slots and Prescribing Among Philadelphia Health Care Providers With Waivers, by Patient Cap**

Most prescriptions were written by providers with the highest cap

Patient cap	30	100	275	Total
<b>Waivered</b>	800	153	61	1,014
<b>Slots</b>	24,000	15,300	16,775	56,075
<b>Waivered and prescribed</b>	120	72	51	243
<b>% prescribed</b>	15%	47%	84%	24%
<b>Average number of prescriptions</b>	1.7	13.3	96.9	9.2
<b>Average number of prescriptions (prescribers only)</b>	11.6	28.2	115.9	38.4
<b>Total prescriptions</b>	1,392	2,032	5,910	9,334

Note: Data is for September 2020.  
 Source: Pew analysis of data provided by IQVIA  
 © 2021 The Pew Charitable Trusts



**SUBSTANCE USE**

# It's Not 'Magic': Ending the X-Waiver Alone Unlikely to Fix MAT's Access Problem

By **Chris Larson** | March 3, 2023

**Filter**

POLITICS + LEGALIZATION   USE + HARM REDUCTION   INTERSECTIONS + INJUSTICE   DRUGS + MONEY   MEDIA + CULTURE

## Ending the X-Waiver Doesn't End OUD-Meds Stigma in Health Care



BY SEAN FOGLER & RORY FLEMING MARCH 1, 2023

## *More Doctors Can Now Prescribe a Key Opioid Treatment. Will It Help?*

The federal government loosened regulations for buprenorphine, but health experts warn that entrenched problems around training and access could stall efforts to get people the medication.

 Share full article    104



For over a decade, Randall Lambert has used buprenorphine, which has eased his opioid cravings as he managed an otherwise chaotic life. *Kenny Holston/The New York Times*



# BARRIERS TO MEDICATION: FILLING A PRESCRIPTION

Results from a telephone audit of 921 pharmacies:

- 30% of pharmacies reported limitations to filling buprenorphine
- 1 in 5 pharmacies would not fill buprenorphine prescriptions
- Limitations are more common in the south and with independent pharmacies






Drug and Alcohol Dependence

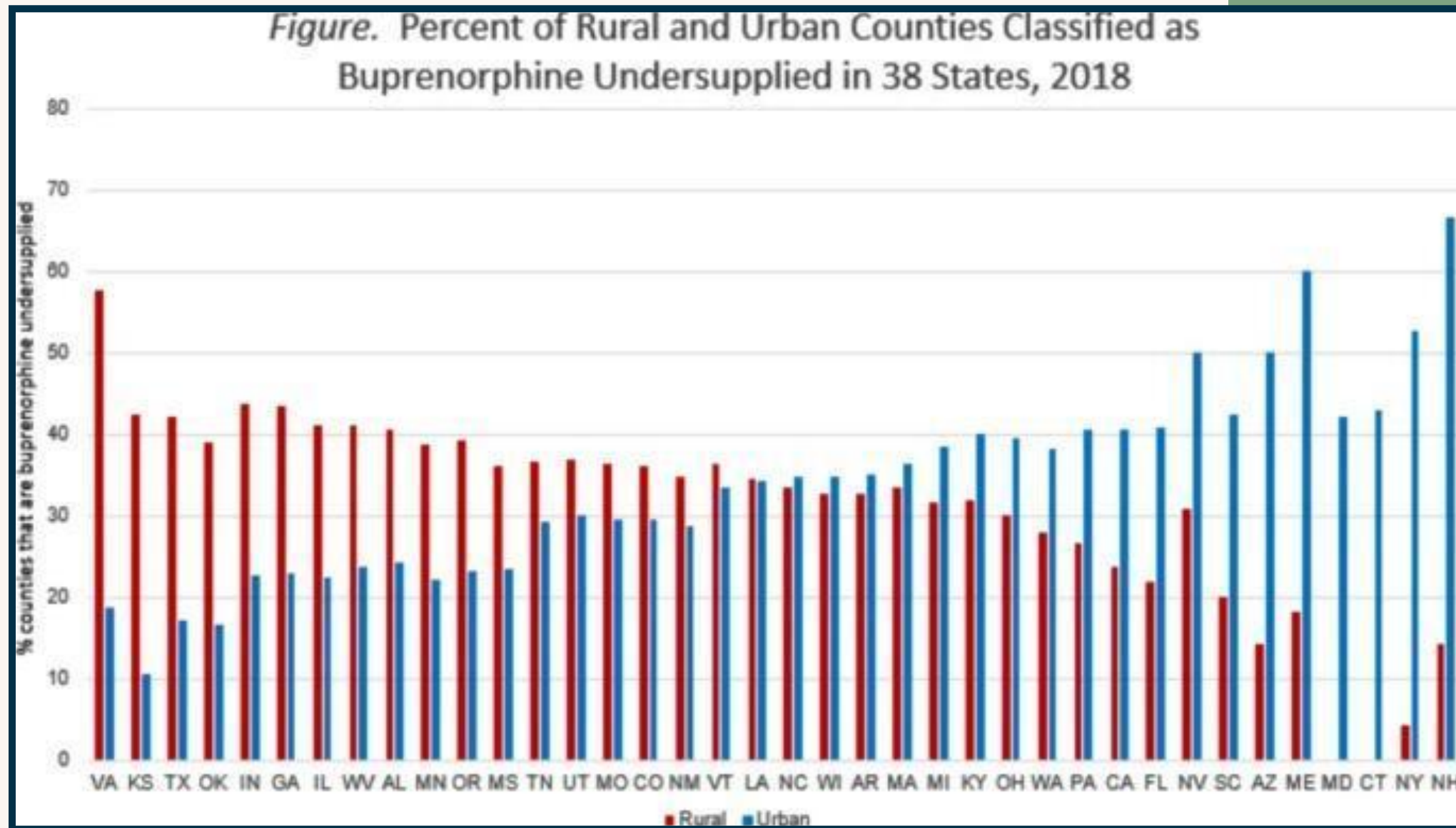
Volume 224, 1 July 2021, 108729



## Pharmacy-related buprenorphine access barriers: An audit of pharmacies in counties with a high opioid overdose burden

Neda J. Kazerouni<sup>a</sup>, Adriane N. Irwin<sup>a</sup>, Ximena A. Levander<sup>b</sup> , Jonah Geddes<sup>a</sup>,  
Kirbee Johnston<sup>a</sup>, Carly J. Gostanian<sup>a</sup>, Baylee S. Mayfield<sup>a</sup>, Brandon T. Montgomery<sup>a</sup>,  
Diana C. Graalum<sup>c</sup>, Daniel M. Hartung<sup>a</sup>  

# BARRIERS TO MEDICATION: GEOGRAPHY



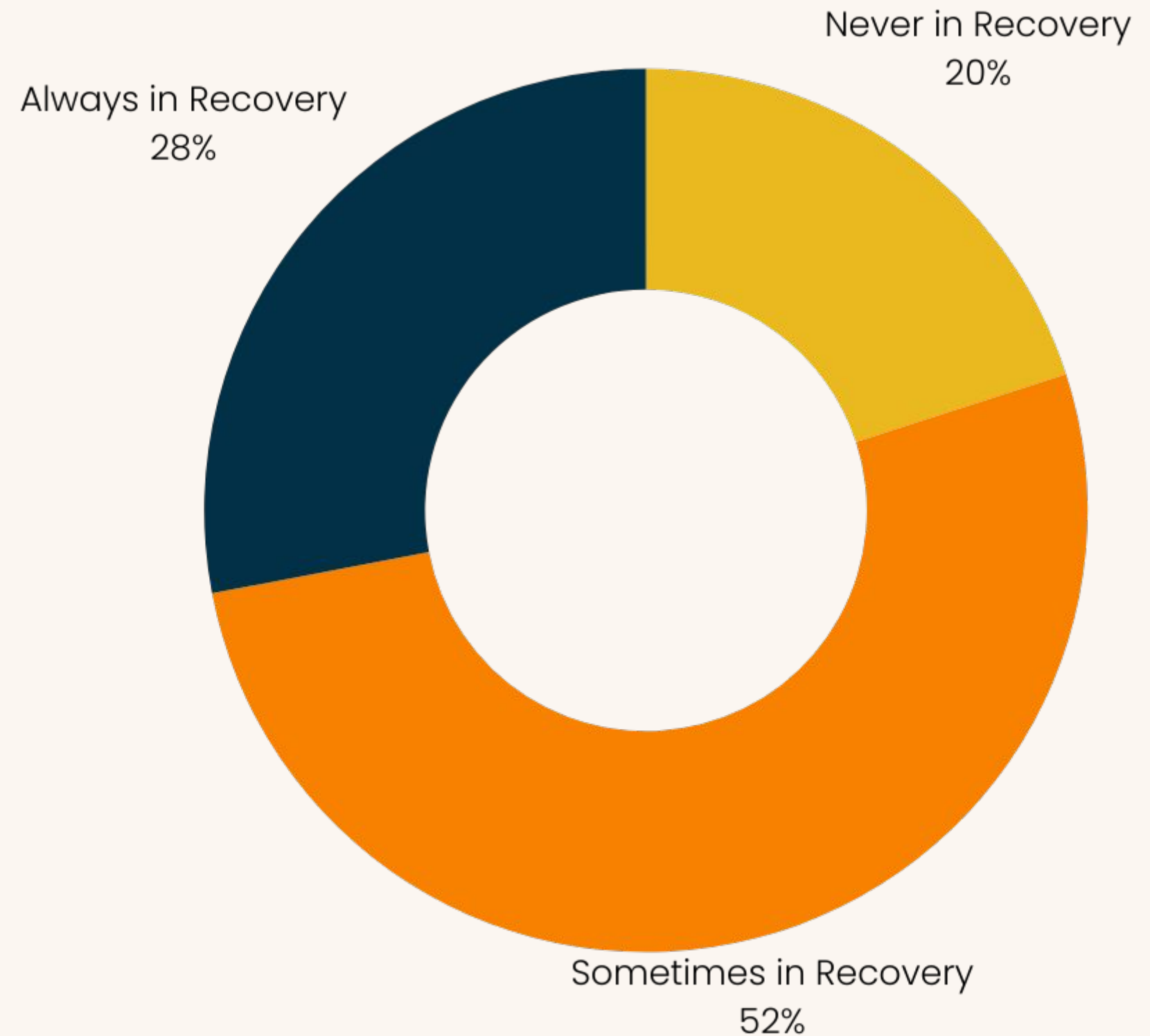
Barriers occur in rural and urban areas:

- Transportation
- Provider knowledge and attitudes
- Prescribing limits
- Stigma

# STIGMA AROUND MEDICATION-ASSIS TED RECOVERY

Is a person who takes medications for their addiction (i.e., to reduce cravings or withdrawal symptoms) considered to be in recovery?

N= 5498



# RIWI METHODOLOGY

## How It Works



**Random Web user  
lands on an otherwise  
inactive domain**



**RIWI validates area of  
interest and delivers  
appropriate survey or  
message test**



**Users are anonymous  
and can safely choose  
whether or not to  
respond**



**Data are delivered in  
real-time via an  
interactive Web-based  
dashboard**

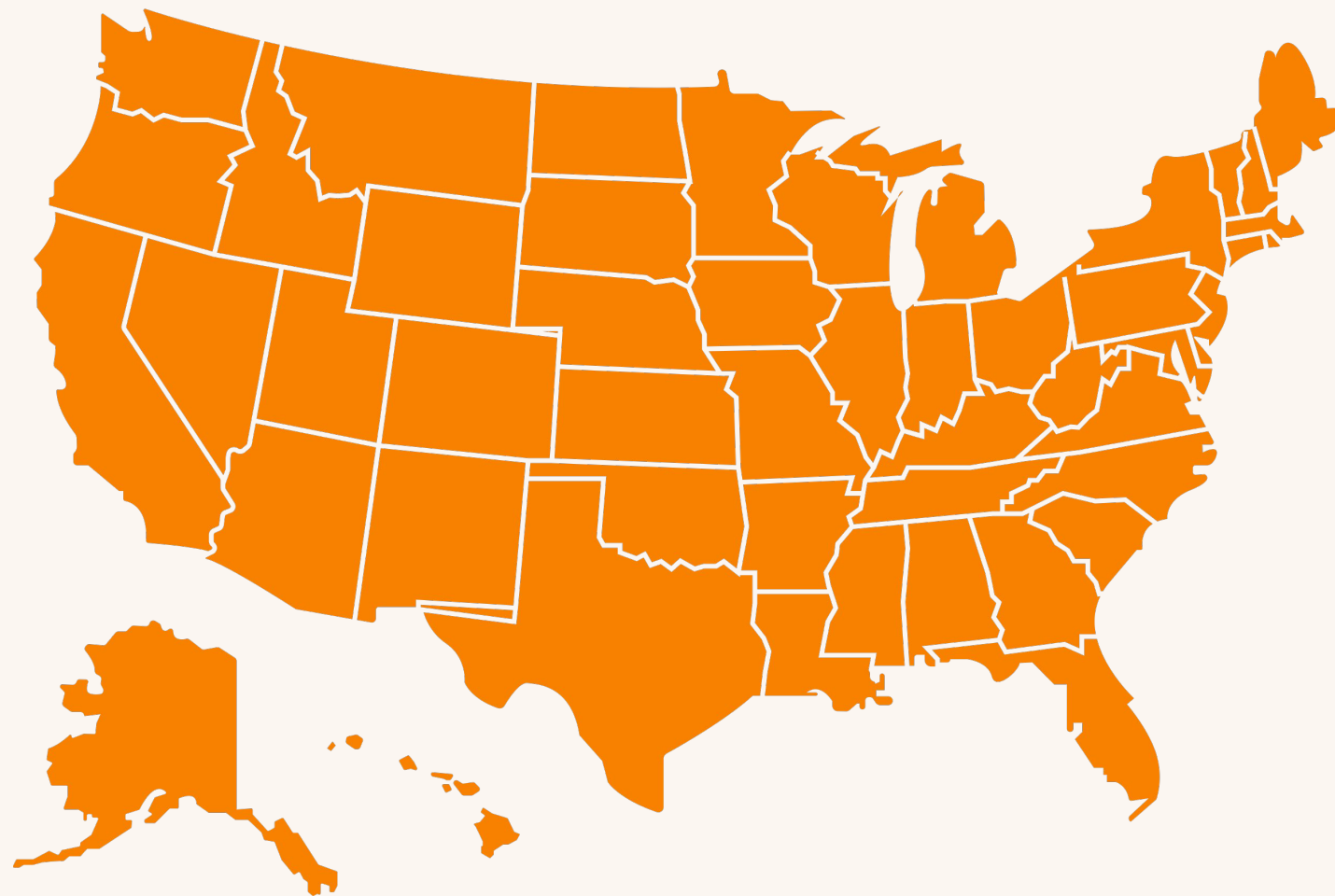


# **THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

**An analysis of perceived substance use and recovery stigma in the  
United States among the general public**

# STUDY BACKGROUND

The largest study looking at perceived SUD stigma expressed by the general public



\*Over sample in Pennsylvania

**Eligibility:** 13+ years old

**Language:** English

**Duration:** June 17, 2022 to July 16, 2022

**Length:** 26 questions

**Total N:** 26,890

**Complete N:** 4,484

**Design weights:** Age, gender, state population

**Unweighted:**

- Opt-in: 30,057
- Complete: 4,901

**Weighted (excludes non-binary respondents):**

- Opt-in: 26,890

# COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

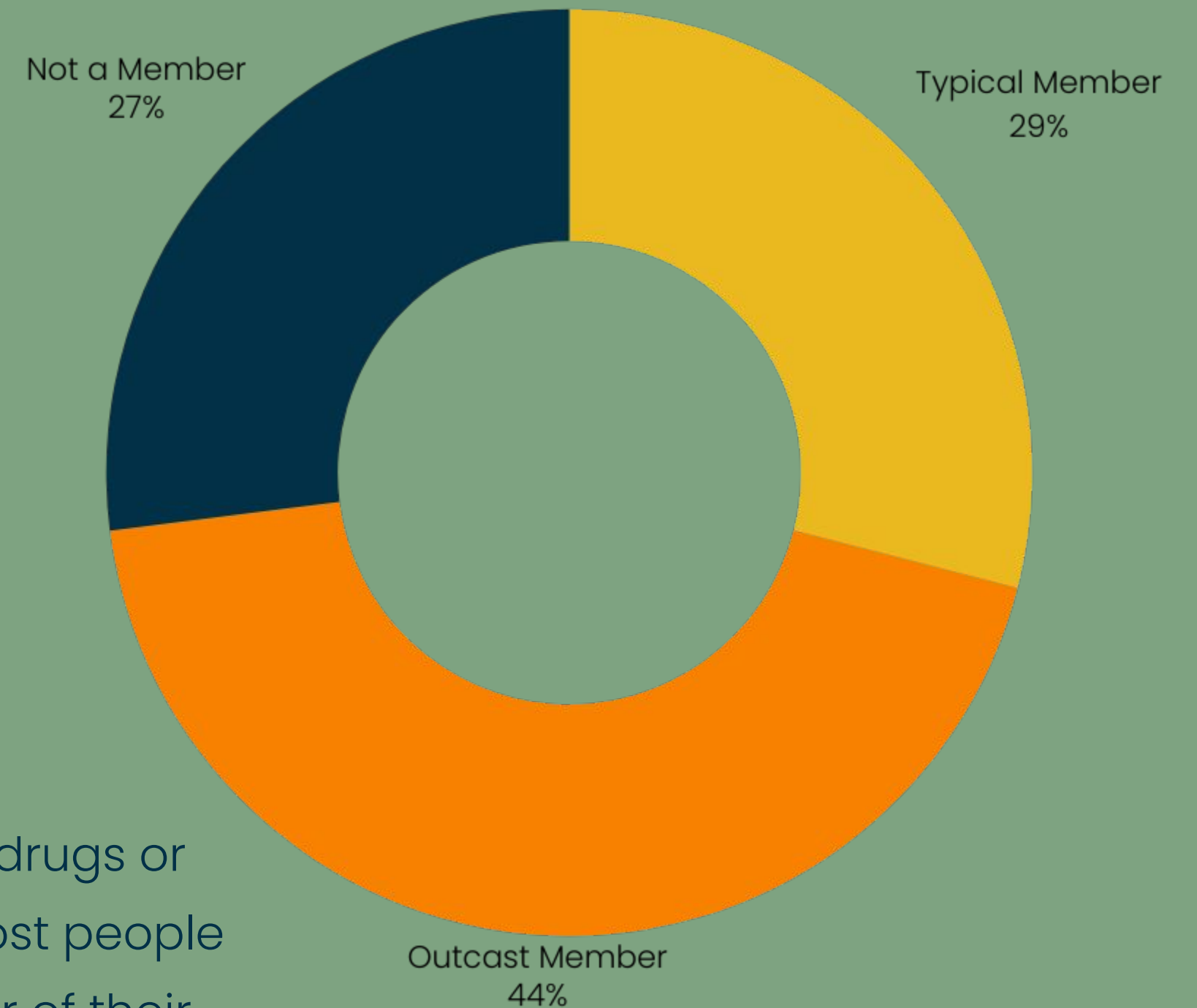
## In-Group/Out-Group Status

71%

believe that society at-large considers those who use drugs problematically to be **outcasts** or

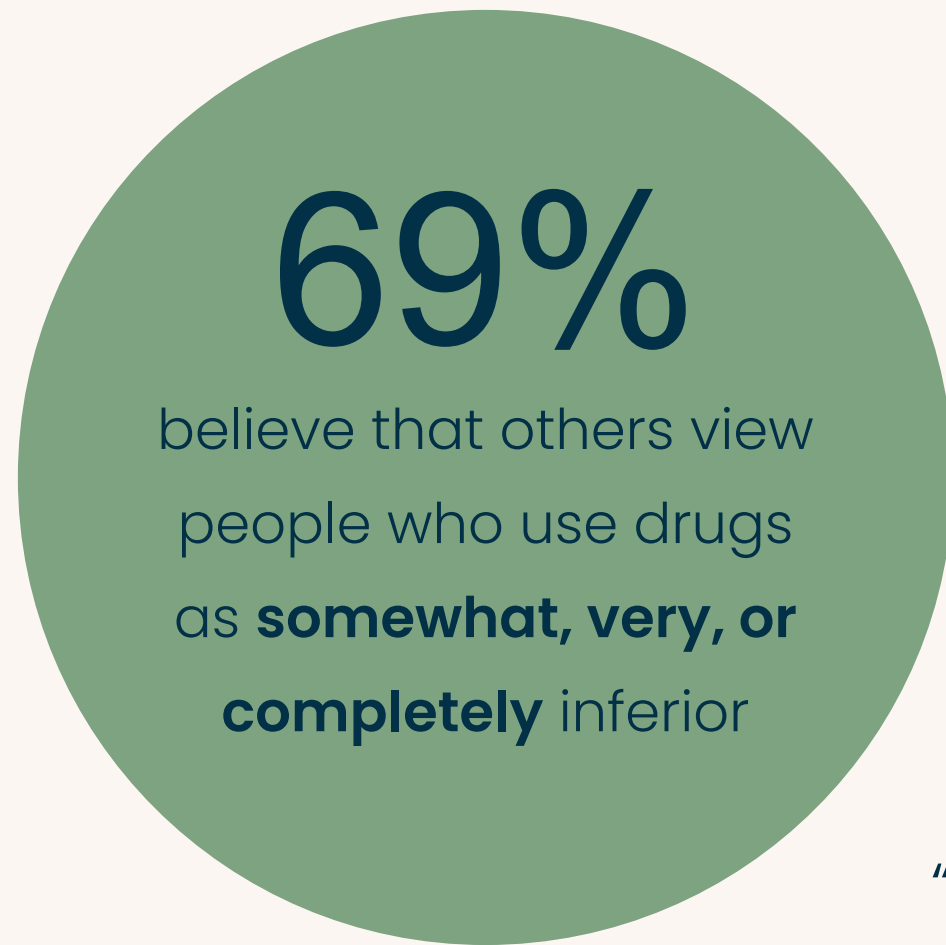
**non-community members**

“Imagine a person who uses drugs or alcohol problematically. Do most people view this person as a member of their community?”

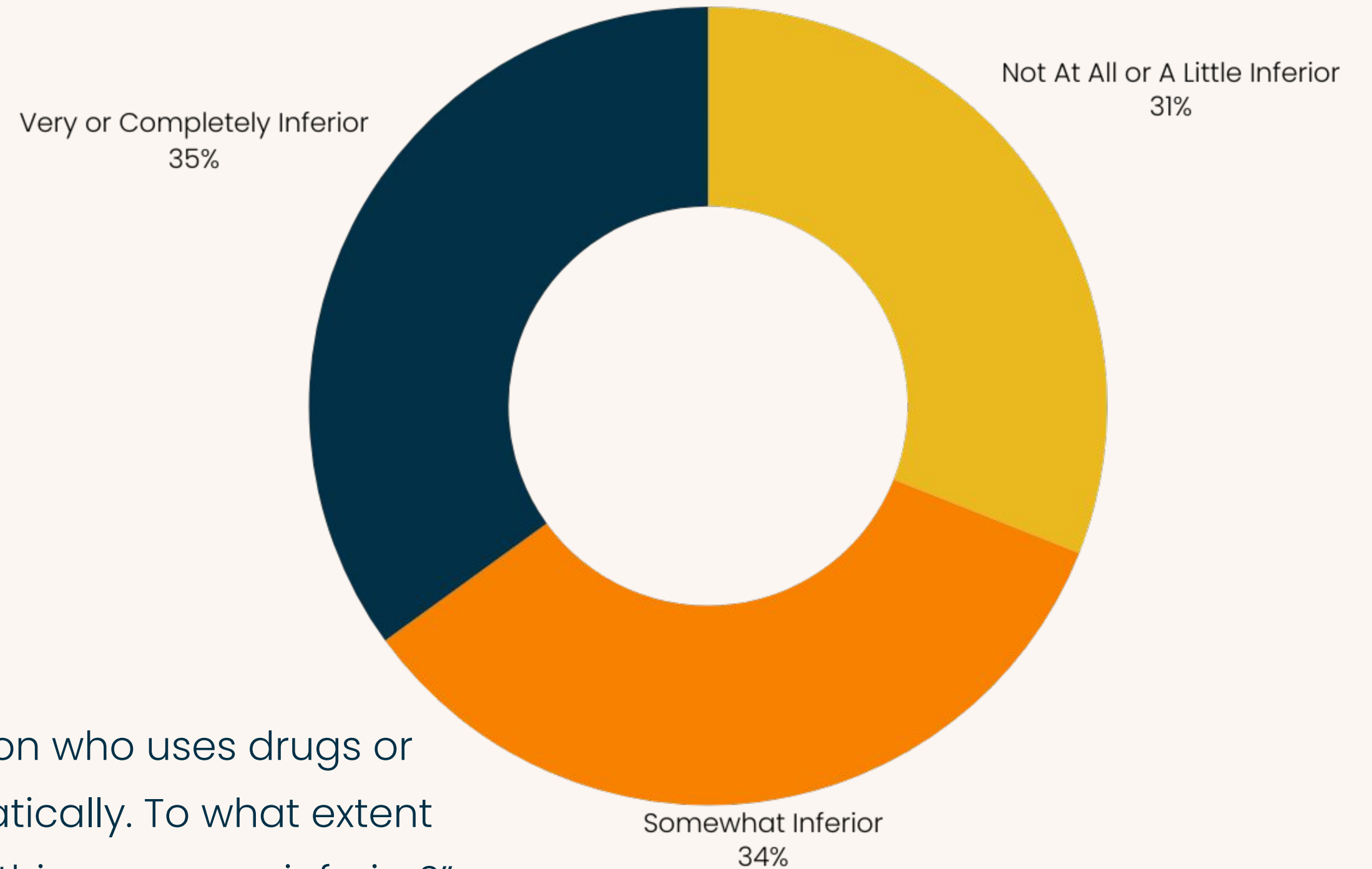


# SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA

## Inferiority



“Imagine a person who uses drugs or alcohol problematically. To what extent does society view this person as inferior?”





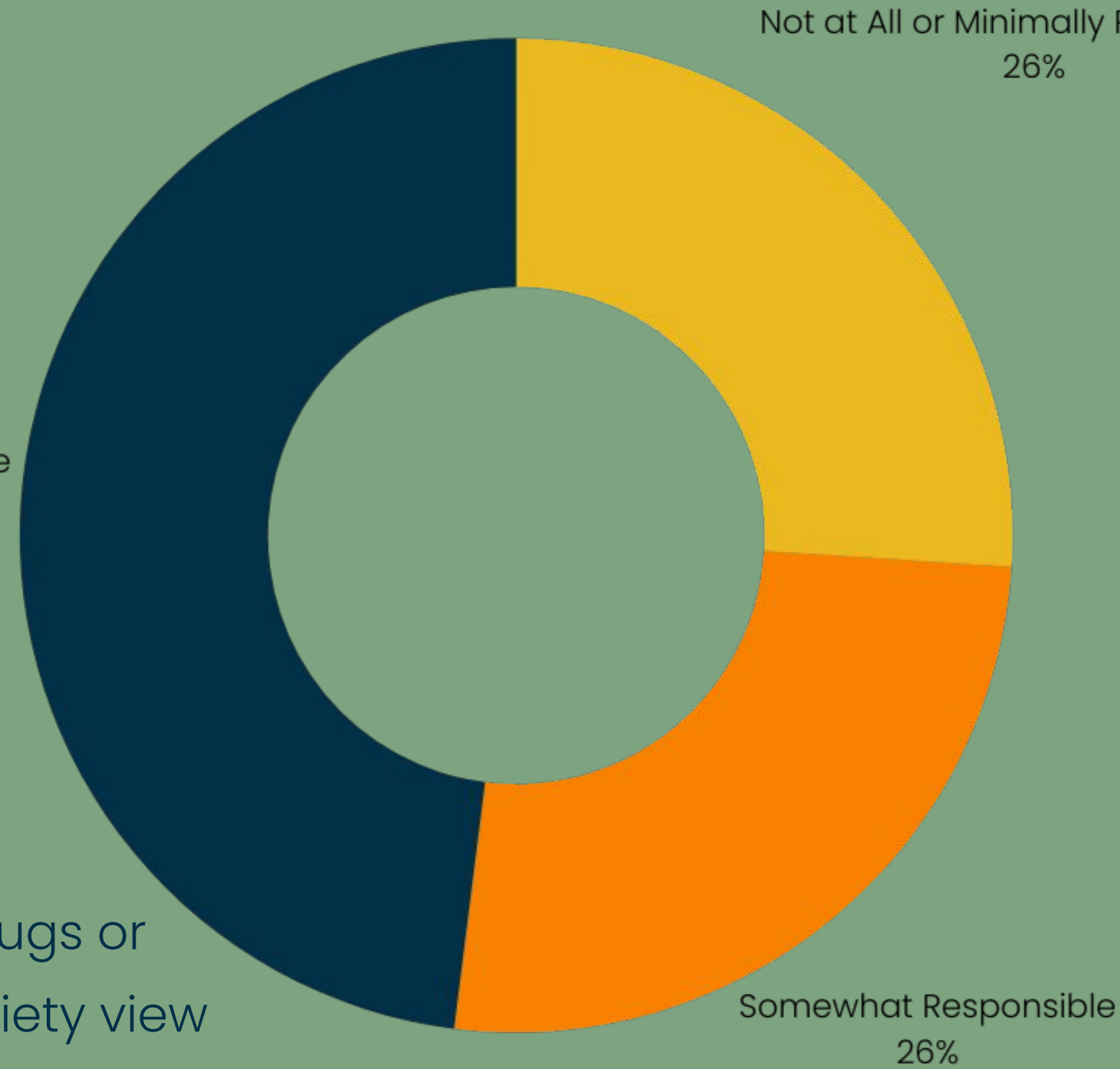
# SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA

## Responsibility/Blame

**74%**  
believe that others view people who use drugs as **somewhat, very, or entirely** responsible for their drug use

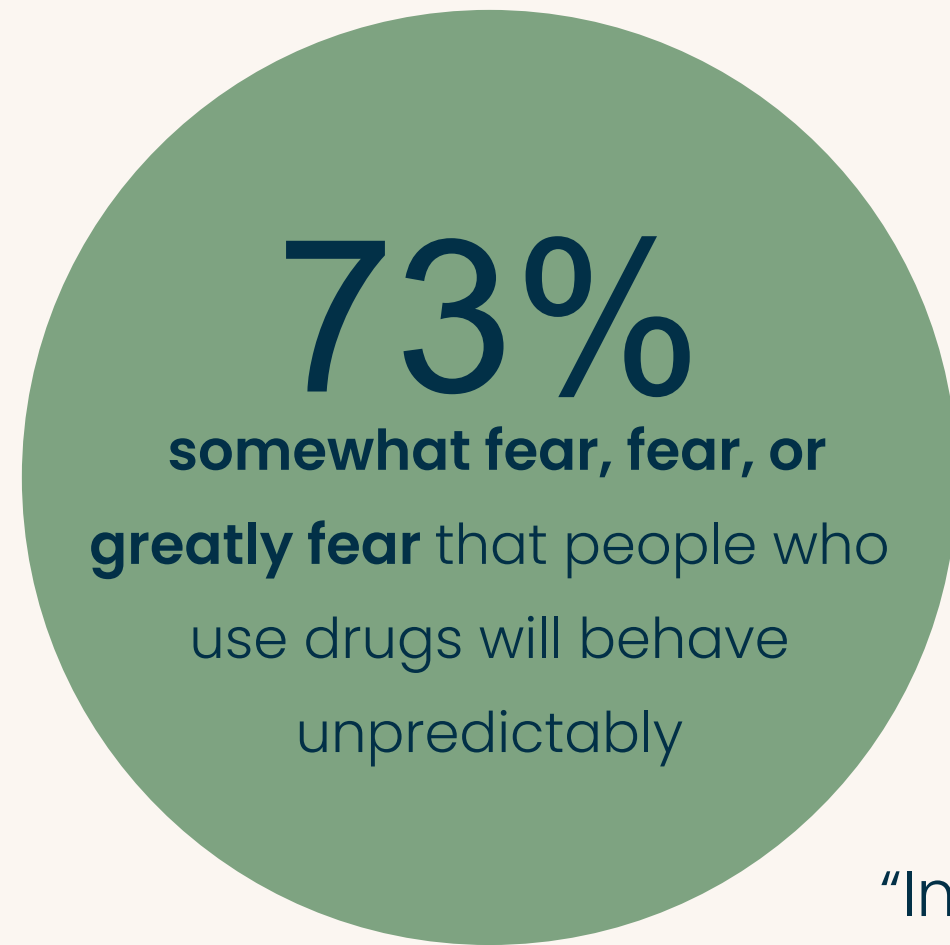
“Imagine a person who uses drugs or alcohol problematically. Does society view this person as responsible for their substance use?”

Mostly or Entirely Responsible  
48%



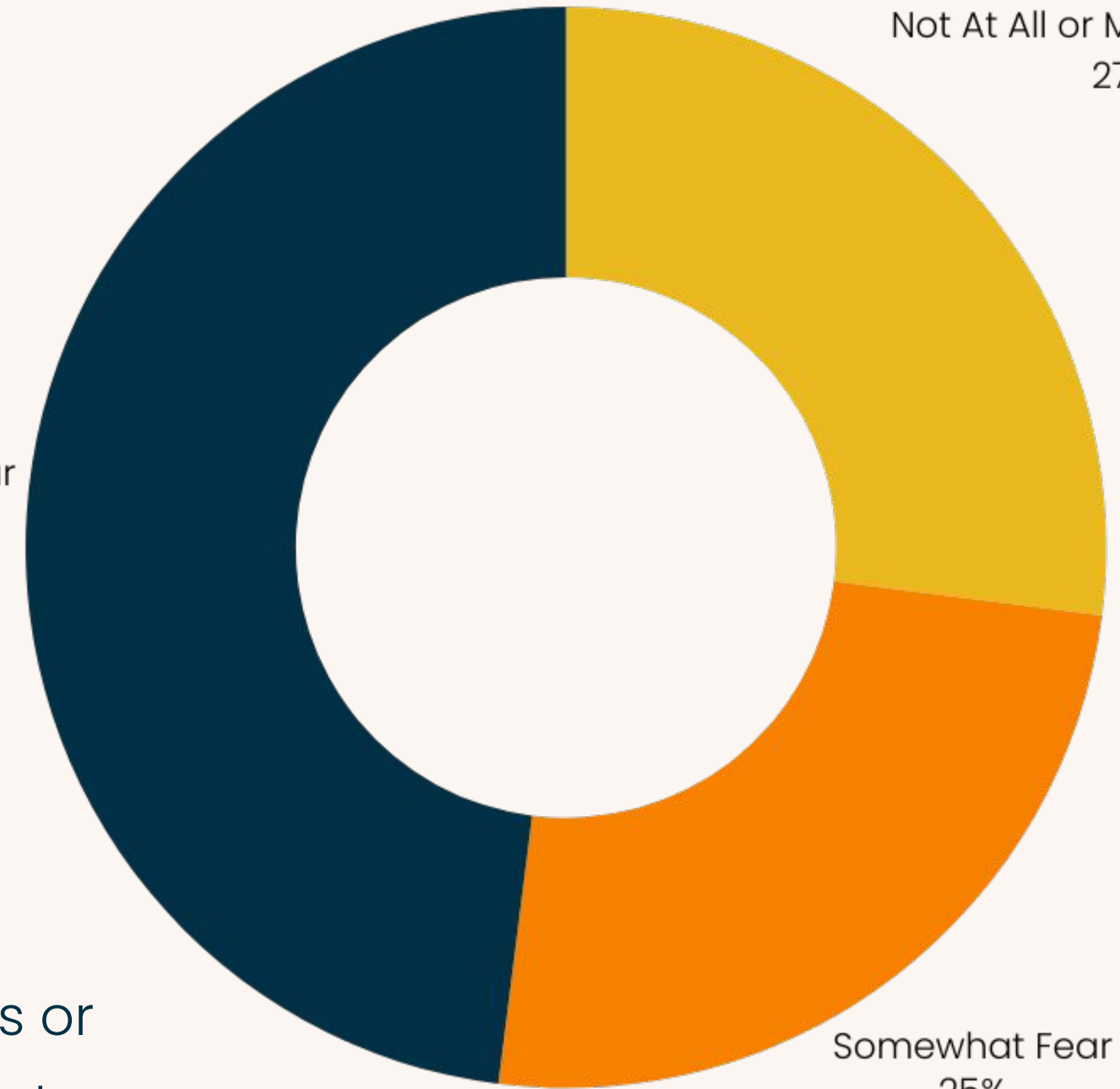
# SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA

## Unpredictability



“Imagine a person who uses drugs or alcohol problematically. How much does society fear this person will behave unpredictably?”

Fear or Greatly Fear  
48%



Not At All or Minimally Fear  
27%

Somewhat Fear  
25%

# SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA

Passing

79%

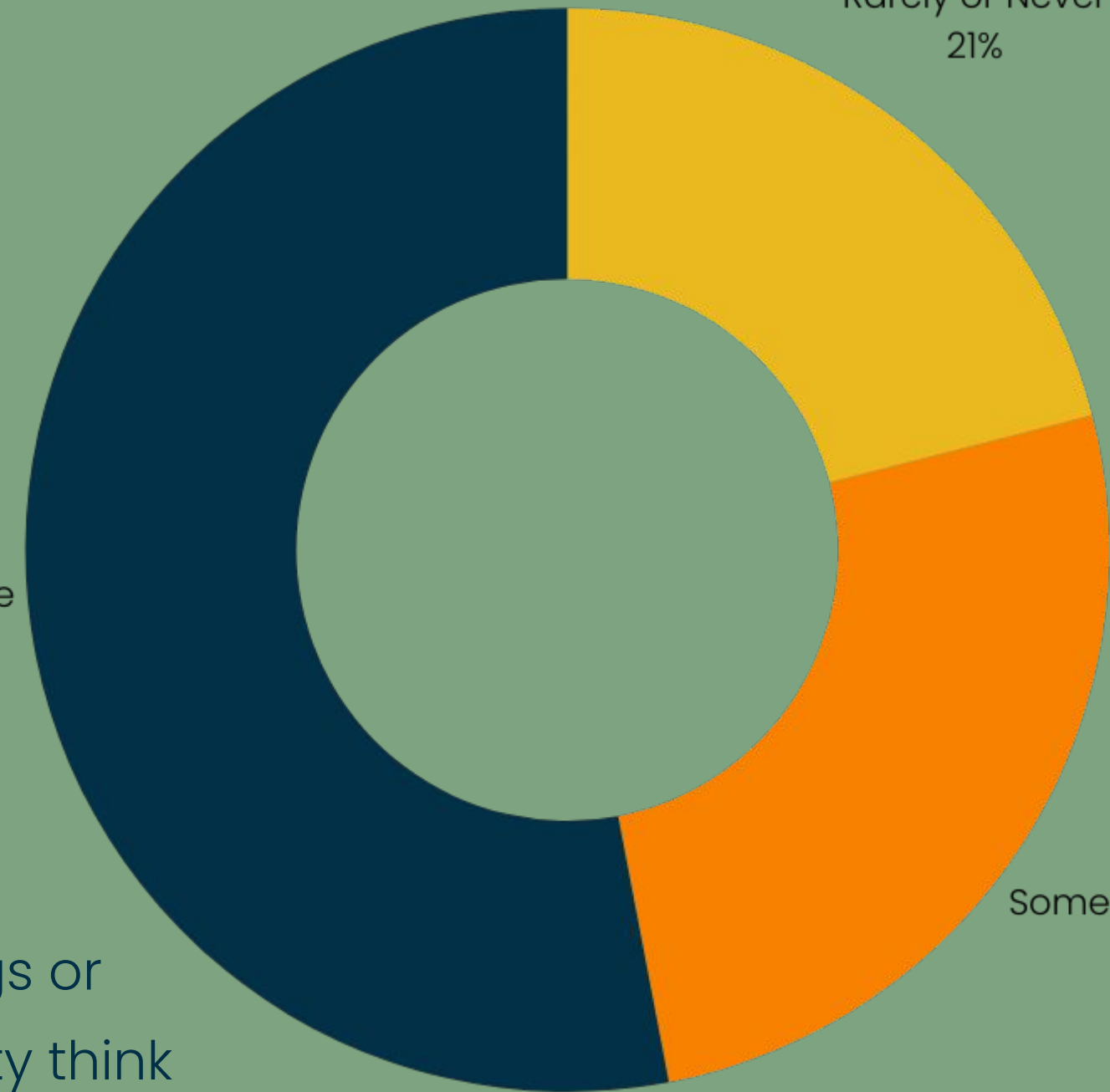
believe that others view people who use drugs as hiding signs of addiction **some of the time, most of the time, or always**

“Imagine a person who uses drugs or alcohol problematically. Does society think this person will try to hide signs of addiction?”

Always or Most of the Time  
53%

Rarely or Never  
21%

Some of the Time  
26%





# HEALTHCARE

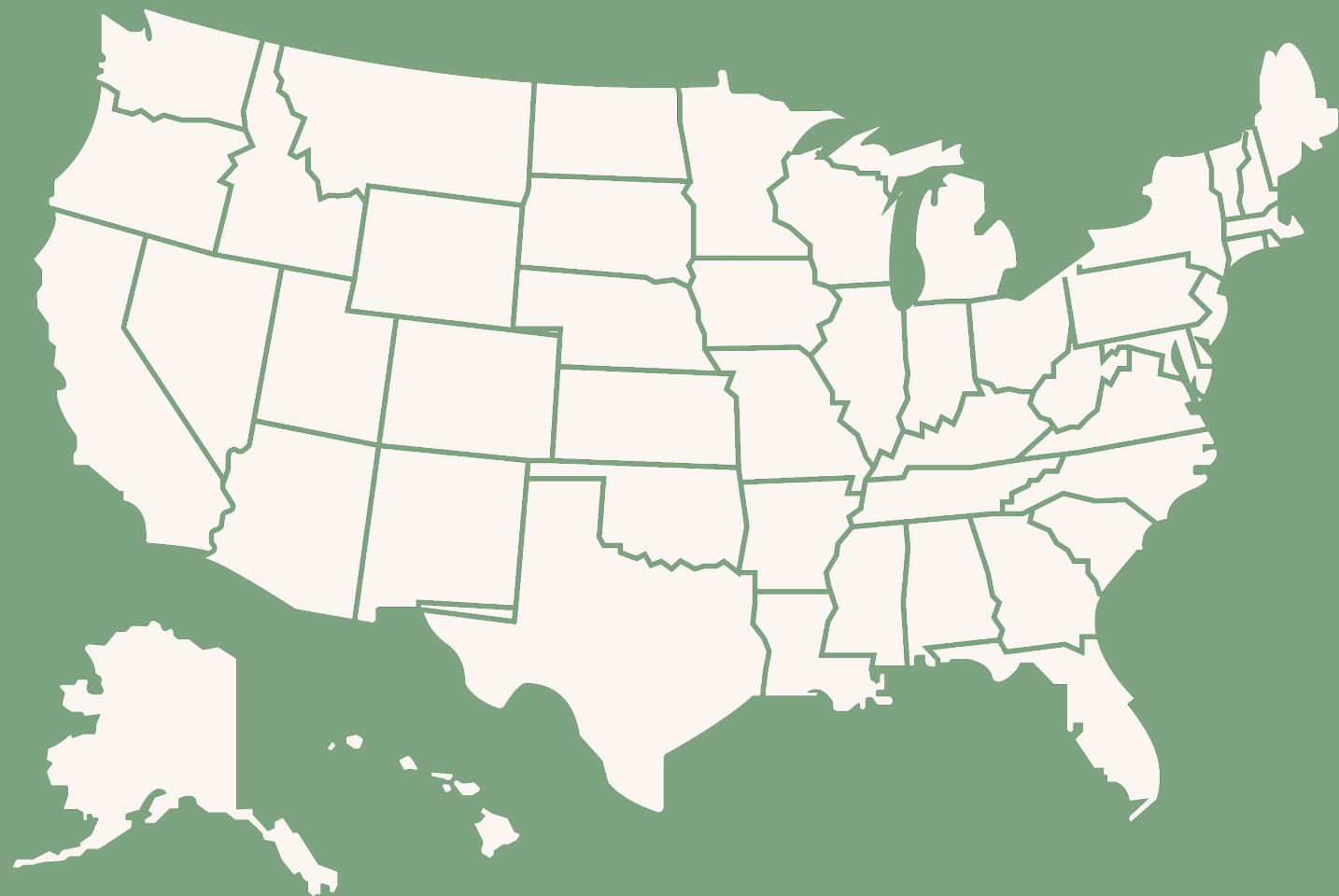
**An analysis of perceived substance use and recovery stigma in the United States among healthcare providers and those with a history of substance use**

# DESPITE DECADES OF ACKNOWLEDGING ADDICTION AS A MEDICAL CONDITION:

- Healthcare professionals receive **little training** on drug use and addiction.
- Research has demonstrated that as medical trainees progress through training, their attitudes towards people with addictions **deteriorate**.
- Stigma, judgement, dismissive attitudes, discrimination, shame, and the refusal of care is **often the norm** for patients.
- People who use drugs, those with addictions, and even people in recovery are **hesitant or refuse** to engage with our healthcare systems to receive care.

# STUDY BACKGROUND

The largest study looking at perceived SUD stigma expressed by US healthcare workers compared to non-healthcare workers



**Eligibility:** 18+ years old

**Language:** English

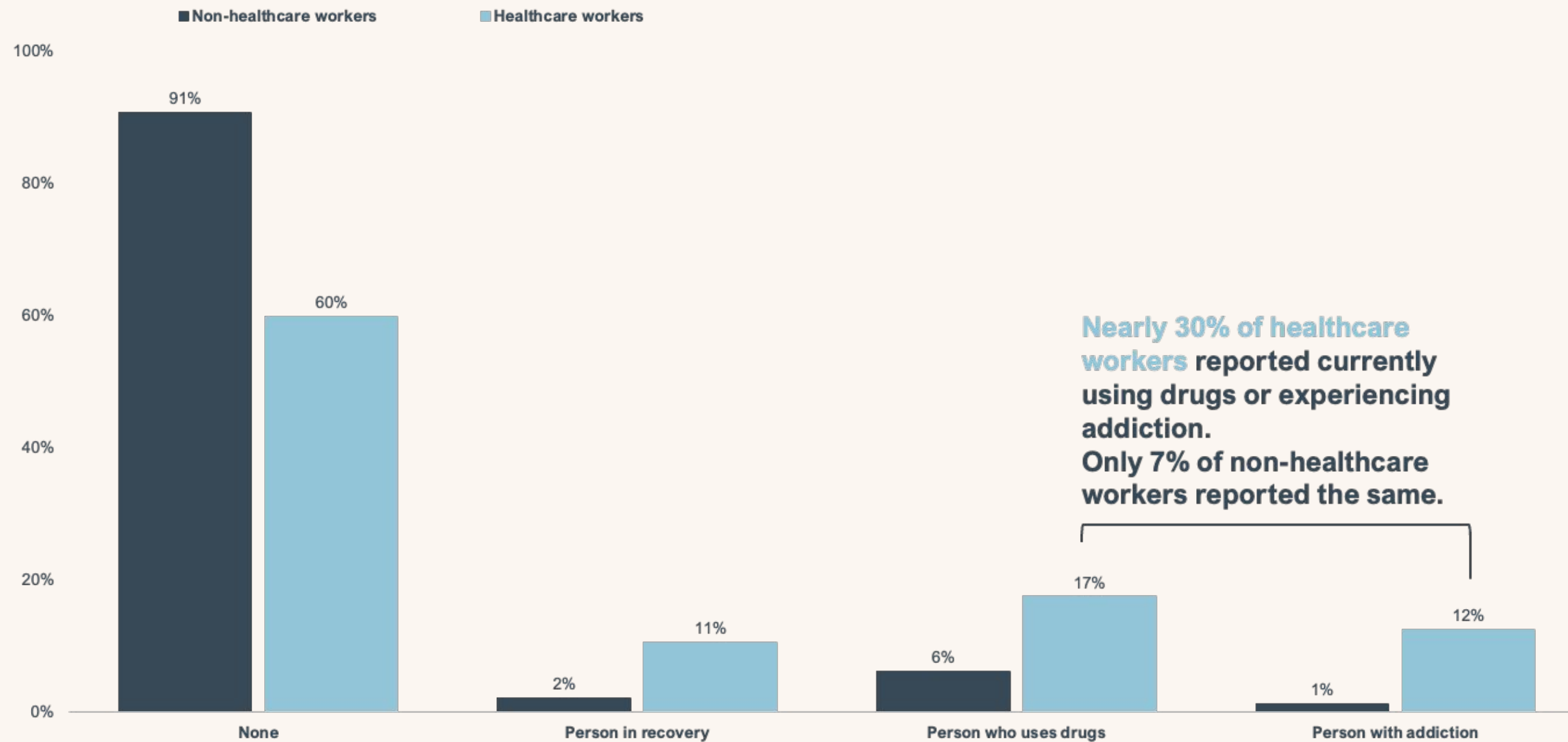
**Duration:** June 9, 2022 to June 24, 2022

**Length:** 22 questions

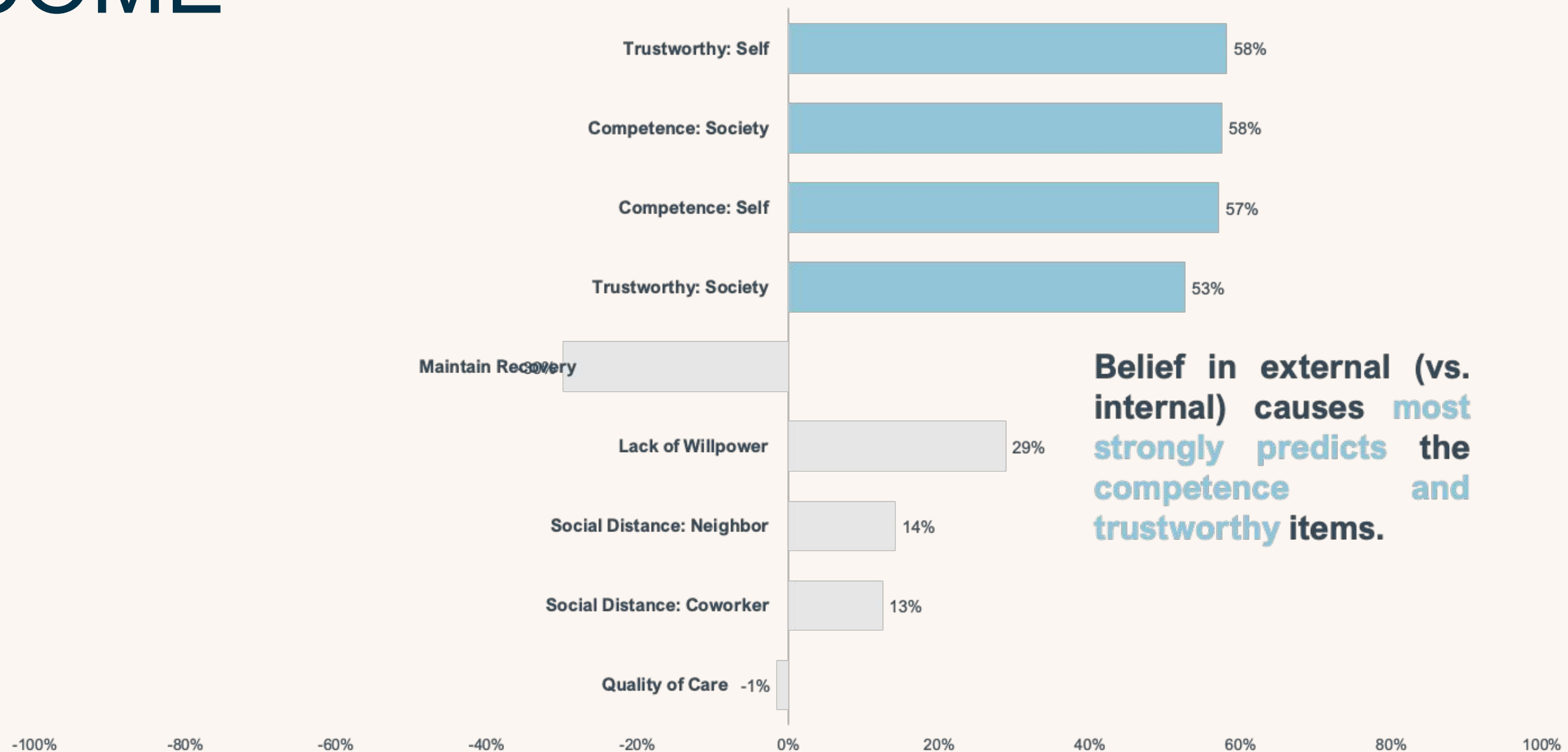
**Total N:** 24,733

**Complete N:** 3,340

# RATES OF PWUD/IR BY HEALTHCARE WORKER IDENTIFICATION



# PREDICTION STRENGTH OF BELIEF IN INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL CAUSES BY OUTCOME





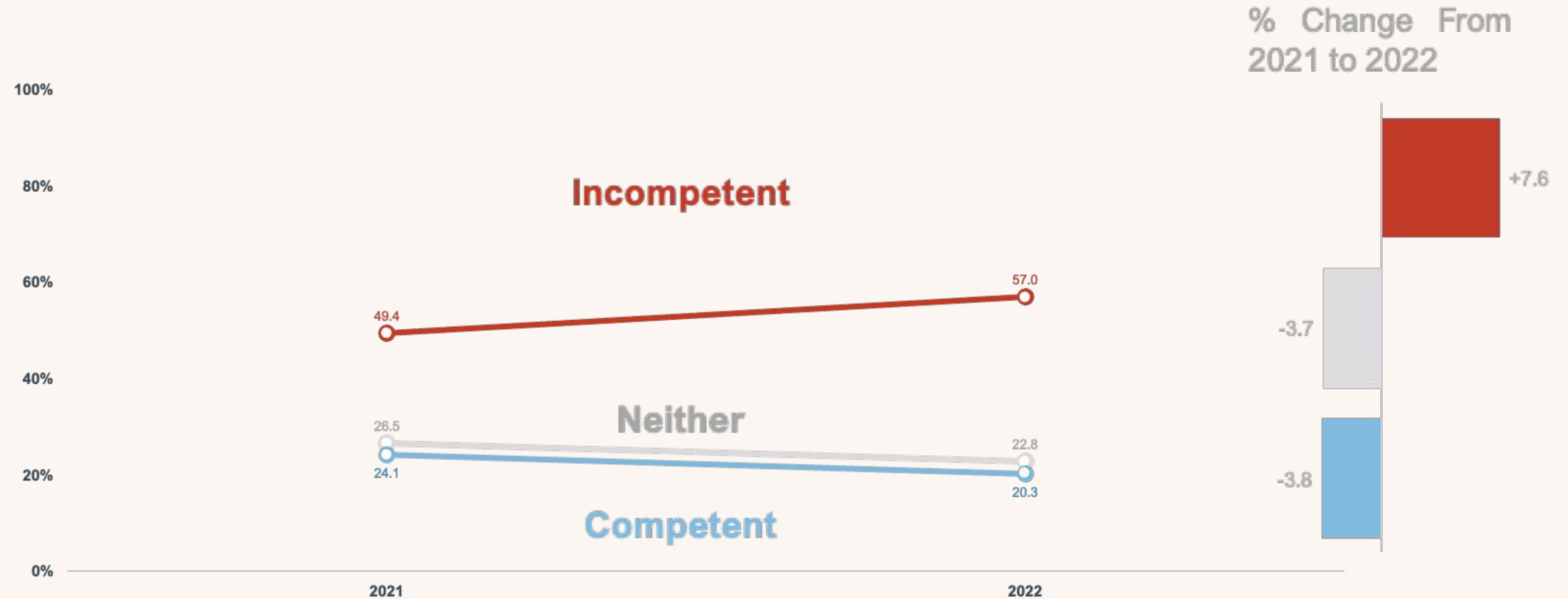
# PREFACE

**Wave 1**  
**Summer 2021**

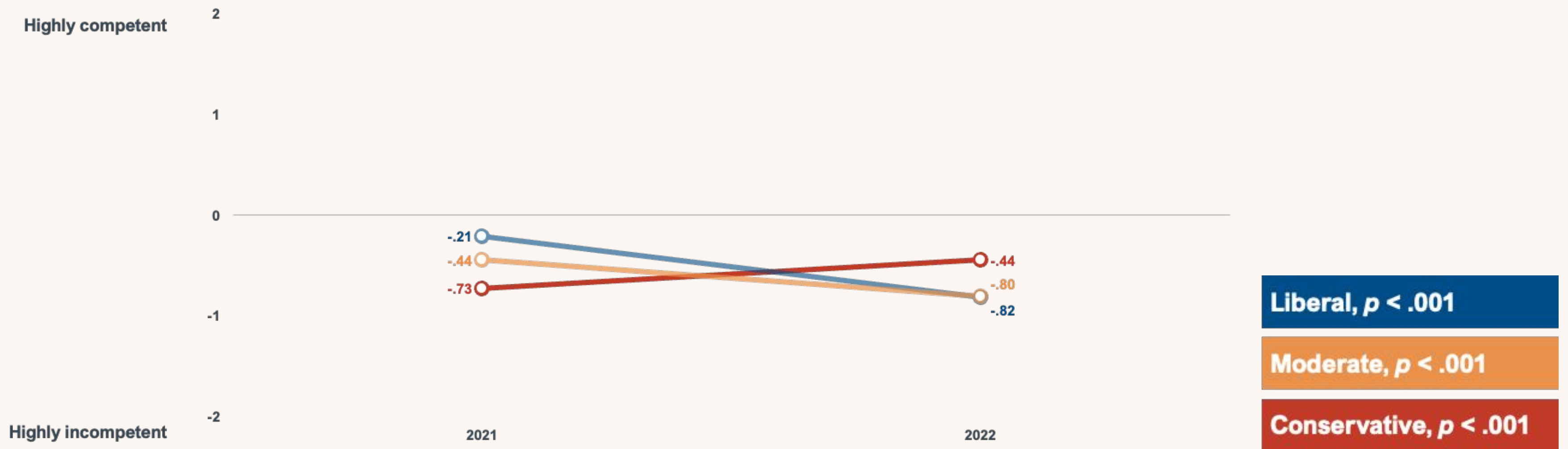
“Imagine a person who uses drugs or alcohol problematically. How competent would you say society judges this person to be?”

**Wave 2**  
**Summer 2022**

# PERCENT WHO BELIEVE SOCIETY BELIEVES PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS OR ALCOHOL PROBLEMATICALLY AS:



# MEAN DIFFERENCE ON PERCEIVED (IN)COMPETENCE FROM SOCIETY BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION: 2021 V. 2022



Summer 2021: Liberal  $n = 1,500$ , Moderate  $n = 2,000$ , Conservative  $n = 1,665$

Summer 2022: Liberal  $n = 1,103$ , Moderate  $n = 1,266$ , Conservative  $n = 1,062$

Collection Year by Political Affiliation Interaction Effect:  $F(2, 8590) = 83.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .019$

LOCAL NEWS >

## City council essentially bans safe injection sites opening in Philadelphia

### Advocates say bill to involuntarily hospitalize people who overdose may do more harm than good

Lawmakers proposing the legislation say it's aimed at offering encouragement to seek long-term treatment for substance use disorders.

BY: CHRISTINA BAKER - DECEMBER 1, 2023 6:00 AM



## Two Years Later, Oregon's Drug Decriminalization is Not Going Well | Opinion

Sep 29, 2022 at 6:00 AM EDT

### Senate Committee Advances Mastriano Bill to Enact Harsher Penalties on Drug Dealers Responsible for Overdose Deaths

Posted on June 27, 2023

# SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE

---

01 Use de-stigmatizing language

---

02 Expand access to medications for  
opioid use disorder

---

03 Improve naloxone distribution

---

04 Integrate harm reduction practices  
into public health

---

05 Evaluate and improve perceptions  
and practices of healthcare  
professionals

---

06 Improve integration and care  
coordination

---

07 Increase parity for mental health  
and substance use disorders

---

08 Expand access to treatment

---

09 Develop metrics to measure and  
evaluate structural stigma

---

10 Integrate people with lived  
experience into systems at every  
level

---

11 Address discrimination and enforce  
protections

---

12 Adapt accordingly to the ultimate  
metric, defined by the experiences  
of people who use drugs, in  
addiction, and in recovery

---

# SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE

# HARM REDUCTION PRINCIPLES

## Harm reduction principles for healthcare settings

Mary Hawk <sup>1</sup>, Robert W S Coulter <sup>2</sup>, James E Egan <sup>3</sup>, Stuart Fisk <sup>4</sup>, M Reuel Friedman <sup>5</sup>,  
Monique Tula <sup>6</sup>, Suzanne Kinsky <sup>7</sup>

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 29065896 PMCID: [PMC5655864](#) DOI: [10.1186/s12954-017-0196-4](#)

[Free PMC article](#)

Humanism

Individualism

Incrementalism

Pragmatism

Autonomy

Accountability  
Without  
Termination



# LiveWell Physicians

A weekly peer-led support group for mental health & living well

Develop positive coping skills for  
stress, anxiety, burnout, depression, substance use, and more...

## **Your privacy & safety matter to us!**

All support groups are anonymous (first names only), confidential (no reporting or records kept); and facilitated by trained volunteer peers with shared experience of managing mental health issues, recovery, and living well.



# About the Alignment for Progress: A National Strategy for Mental Health & Substance Use Disorders

The National Strategy exists as one element of the Alignment for Progress Movement. The Strategy is the first-of-its-kind, comprehensive set of policy recommendations for federal policymakers. No matter which congressional committee or federal agency, every part of the federal government has a role to play as demonstrated by the recommendations in the National Strategy.



The Alignment for Progress is a 5-year initiative that is bringing together policy makers, insurers, clinicians, consumers, industry, academia, and other stakeholders to unify for meaningful Federal policy and systems change to transform mental health and substance use care in our country. At the heart of this movement is the bold goal to achieve “90/90/90 by 2033”:

90% of all individuals will be screened for mental health and substance use disorders

90% of those screened will be able to receive evidence-based treatment

90% of those receiving treatment will be able to manage their symptoms in recovery

# REAL-TIME CONTINUOUS POPULATION LEVEL STIGMA SURVEILLANCE

- National continuous real-time population survey assessing drug use and recovery stigma and harm reduction acceptability
- Examine the impact of policy and practice change on societal perceptions
- Identify challenges and opportunities nationally to improve the lives of people who use drugs and those in recovery

# JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

General Mailing List

on our homepage

[www.elevyst.com](http://www.elevyst.com)

Physician Coalition

[elevyst.com/](http://elevyst.com/physician-coalition)

[physician-coalition](http://physician-coalition)

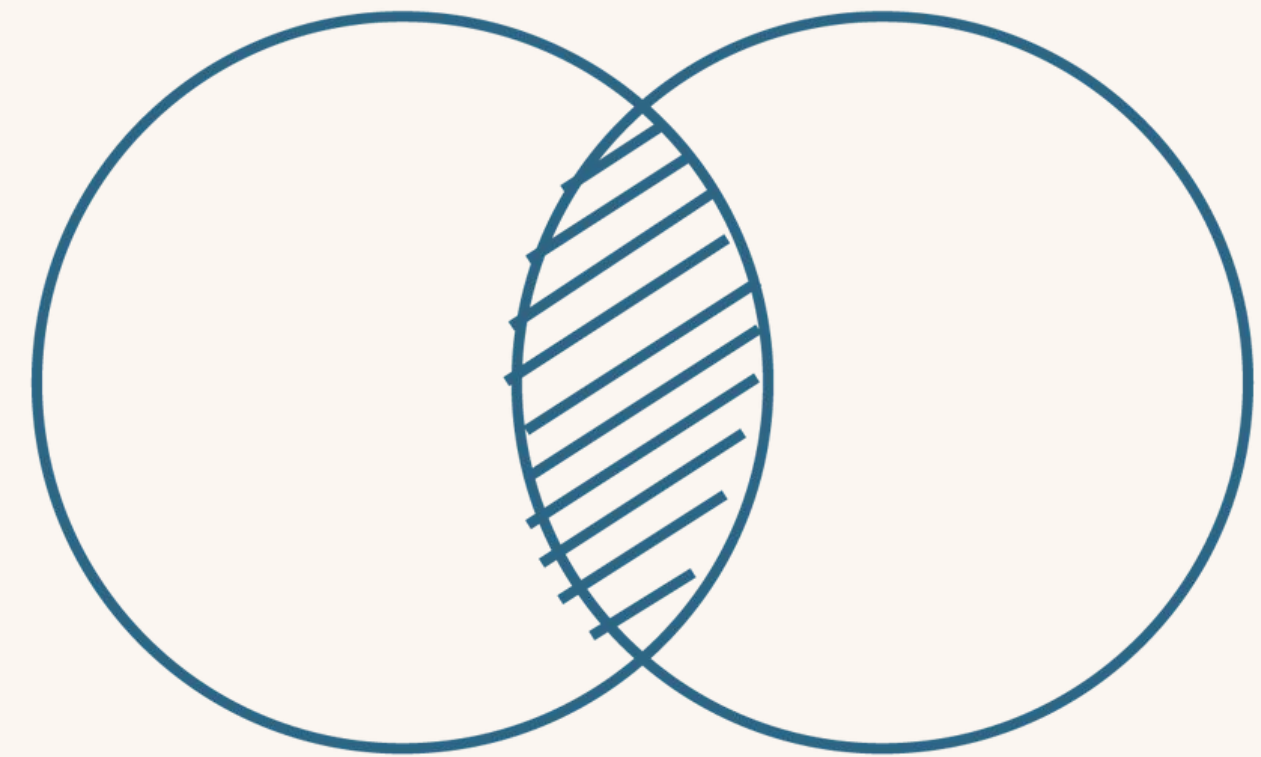
# CONTACT US

Sean Fogler, MD, MBA

[sean@elevyst.com](mailto:sean@elevyst.com)

[WWW.ELEVYST.COM](http://WWW.ELEVYST.COM)

THANK  
YOU VERY  
MUCH!



ELEVYST