

## **New Report Identifies Opportunities for Change to Address Widespread Stigma Towards People Who Use Drugs or Are In Recovery in the U.S. Healthcare System**

*Almost 6,000 American Healthcare Professionals Surveyed on Perceptions of Stigma Using Bias Minimizing Technology; Healthcare professionals believe the healthcare system is not the place for people with problematic drug and/or alcohol use to seek help.*

**READ THE REPORT (February 14, 2023) - [Report Link](#)**

**Philadelphia, PA** - In April 2022, Elevyst and PRO-A released a report highlighting the results of their large-scale survey of over 30,000 Americans' opinions regarding perceived social stigma against People Who Use Drugs or are In Recovery (PWUD/IR). The full report is linked [HERE](#).

This new report presents findings from the largest online survey to date of over 24,000 Americans and almost 6,000 healthcare workers assessing endorsed and perceived substance use and recovery stigma expressed by U.S. healthcare workers, as compared to non-healthcare workers. The survey polled respondents on various questions regarding personal perceptions of drug use and recovery stigma, and attitudes towards the integration of harm reduction measures into healthcare settings. Healthcare workers in this study include: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, paramedics, and healthcare systems support staff. Healthcare workers are important to study in this context because they frequently encounter PWUD/IR in a professional setting and are a reflection of the system in which they work. There is also an inherent power dynamic between healthcare workers and their patients especially PWUD/IR who often expect and receive substandard medical care.

The report shows the totality of negativity surrounding drug use and recovery in the healthcare setting is complex and vast, impacting attitudes that circumscribe the professional practice of many healthcare workers who care for PWUD/IR. It also demonstrates a number of opportunities for change.

“Drug use and recovery stigma is deeply embedded in our healthcare systems. It fractures the sacred relationship between practitioner and patient and is a barrier to help-seeking, equity, and improved policy and practice. Using population level data to understand and address stigma opens up a world of exciting possibilities to improve the lives of people who use drugs and those in recovery,” said **Sean Fogler, MD, EMBA, a co-founder of Elevyst and one of the researchers on the report.**

### **Findings include:**

- **27% of healthcare worker respondents spend at least 50% of their typical day working with patients that have a drug or alcohol use disorder or are in recovery.**
- **40% of healthcare professionals surveyed use drugs, have a substance use disorder, or are in recovery.**
- **Healthcare workers who see PWUD/IR patients the most (75-100%) have much higher rates of belief in prospects of recovery and the importance of external factors (social/family dynamics, traumatic life experiences)**
- **Over 80% of healthcare workers support some form of harm reduction in the places where healthcare is delivered.**
- **Over 90% of healthcare workers believe the healthcare system is not the best place for PWUD/IR to seek help.**

“Acknowledging we have a problem is the first step in fixing it. We see this survey as contributive to moving our systems in that direction. It is time to seize the opportunity to change we we have in front of us,” said **William Stauffer, LSW, the executive director of PRO-A.**

**For more information and/or to be put in touch with one of our experts, please contact:**

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**About Elevyst:** Elevyst is a comprehensive public health consulting group specializing in helping organizations further their initiatives through research, education, and advocacy.

**About PRO-A:** Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance (PRO-A) is a statewide nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to supporting individuals in recovery and educating the public on addiction and recovery.

**About RIWI:** RIWI is a leading provider of real-time global citizen sentiment data. RIWI's patented Random Domain Intercept Technology (RDIT) made the collection of mass anonymized opinion data possible.