

New Polling Details North Carolinians' Support for Prioritizing Care Over Criminalization When It Comes to Substance Use

Respondents nearly universally view substance use disorder (SUD) as a problem (**98%**), and more than two-thirds (**67%**) personally know someone impacted by substance use.

When asked how the government should adjust current spending on programs to prevent and treat SUD, **60%** of respondents said the government should spend more, including 52% of Republicans, 71% of Democrats, and 58% of Independents.

Further, **78%** of respondents shared that they agree with the statement, "We need to treat substance use more as a health problem and less as a criminal problem," including 67% of Republicans, 92% of Democrats, and 77% of Independents.

Below is a table detailing demographic breakdowns in North Carolinians' support for actionable policy proposals to expand access to SUD prevention, treatment, and recovery services, both in communities and carceral settings, as well as other health-first strategies to reduce substance use-related harms and promote care over criminalization.

Would you be more likely or less likely to support a candidate who favors the following policy proposal?	More Likely					Less Likely	Makes No Difference
Party affiliation	Republicans		Democrats		Independents		
Ethnic background	Latino/ Hispanic	Asian	Black	White	Mixed/ Other		
Geographic location	Urban		Suburban		Rural		
Make SUD treatment readily available and affordable to all who need it	83% of all North Carolinians					4%	11%
	76%		89%		87%		
	73%	96%	90%	81%	87%		
	91%		82%		81%		
Expand the number of SUD treatment professionals, so care is available in all communities - urban, suburban, and rural	76% of all North Carolinians					6%	17%
	65%		84%		80%		
	75%	86%	81%	74%	85%		
	84%		73%		74%		
Ensure people taking medications for opioid addiction are not discriminated against when seeking health care	70% of all North Carolinians					6%	22%
	61%		79%		73%		
	69%	74%	83%	67%	86%		
	84%		65%		71%		

Ensure opioid settlement funds are used solely for substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery services	75% of all North Carolinians					5%	18%
	65%		86%		75%		
	84%	76%	82%	74%	72%		
	88%		71%		71%		
Increase number of facilities that provide services to prevent overdose, including Naloxone	71% of all North Carolinians					8%	18%
	62%		83%		71%		
	81%	61%	85%	68%	78%		
	81%		70%		66%		
Increase number of facilities that provide health and syringe services to prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases among people who inject drugs	69% of all North Carolinians					11%	18%
	51%		86%		72%		
	71%	64%	82%	65%	77%		
	84%		69%		55%		
Protect confidentiality of SUD treatment records to prevent discrimination	73% of all North Carolinians					5%	20%
	62%		80%		78%		
	58%	92%	68%	72%	96%		
	75%		72%		73%		
Ensure health insurers cover SUD care at levels equal to coverage for other health conditions such as cancer or diabetes (parity)	74% of all North Carolinians					8%	16%
	65%		81%		78%		
	74%	79%	87%	72%	63%		
	86%		73%		67%		
Ensure Medicare recipients have access to affordable, comprehensive SUD treatment	79% of all North Carolinians					6%	14%
	68%		93%		78%		
	78%	94%	88%	77%	69%		
	89%		79%		72%		
Change federal Medicaid rules to allow states to provide health coverage for people nearing release from jail/prison to initiate and sustain community-based SUD care	67% of all North Carolinians					12%	19%
	46%		86%		71%		
	70%	77%	74%	65%	63%		
	77%		66%		59%		
Regularly screen individuals in jail or prison for SUD and provide treatment to all who need it	72% of all North Carolinians					5%	20%
	64%		80%		74%		
	76%	68%	81%	70%	87%		
	72%		69%		78%		

Expand alternatives to incarceration for crimes involving substance use and mental illness, including community-based treatment	69% of all North Carolinians					12%	16%
	53%		84%		72%		
	46%	74%	71%	67%	94%		
	52%		75%		66%		

Relatedly, below is a table detailing demographic breakdowns in North Carolinians' support for actionable policy proposals to support the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into our shared communities.

Provide legal programs that help individuals leaving incarceration reenter society and secure employment, housing and educational opportunities	76% of all North Carolinians					7%	15%
	66%		83%		80%		
	78%	90%	81%	73%	94%		
	83%		75%		72%		
Restore full voting rights to individuals who have completed their jail or prison terms	53% of all North Carolinians					19%	23%
	42%		76%		43%		
	52%	52%	72%	47%	55%		
	68%		52%		43%		
Automatically seal criminal records for those who have completed their sentences and had no additional convictions for an appropriate period of time, so they are better able to reenter society and secure employment and housing	63% of all North Carolinians					17%	15%
	45%		80%		68%		
	75%	54%	85%	57%	78%		
	75%		61%		57%		

The online nationwide survey of 313 respondents was conducted by Prime Group and fielded June 13 – 28, 2024. The credibility interval for the sample is +/- 5.7 percentage points. [See the associated slide deck here.](#)