

## **Public Perceptions of Addiction and Recovery: A 20-Year Follow-Up to the Hart Benchmark (2004–2026)**

### **Congressional Op-Ed Request**

At a pivotal moment for addiction and mental health policy, we encourage Members of Congress to use their voices to inform and engage their constituents. A new national survey confirms broad, bipartisan support for treatment and recovery services—progress made possible by years of advocacy and leadership in Congress. We urge you to demonstrate that leadership by submitting op-eds in local and national media, highlighting your support for recovery and sharing these findings with the communities you represent.

#### **Other Suggested Titles**

- 1 Don't Undo What Works: Restore SAMHSA and Protect Recovery Gains**
- 2 Washington Must Not Abandon Recovery After Decades of Progress**
- 3 A Bipartisan Success at Risk: Why SAMHSA Must Be Restored**
- 4 Americans Changed Their Minds on Addiction. Washington Shouldn't Reverse Course.**
- 5 The Progress Is Real. Cutting SAMHSA Would Be a Step Back.**
- 6 They Changed the Nation. Now Don't Cut the Lifeline.**
- 7 At a Turning Point on Addiction, Don't Gut What Works**

#### **Recovery Works—and Voters Agree. Protect the Programs That Make It Possible.**

For decades, the recovery community did the work before Washington did. They told their stories, challenged stigma, and demanded recognition that addiction is a disease—and that recovery is real. Their advocacy changed policy, but more importantly, it changed how Americans think.

A new national survey from Faces & Voices of Recovery, *Public Perceptions of Addiction and Recovery: A 20-Year Follow-Up to the Hart Benchmark (2004–2026)*, confirms just how profound that shift has been. Over the past twenty years, the share of Americans who see addiction as a moral failing has been cut in half. Concern about access to treatment has surged. And more than 80 percent of voters—across party lines—support policies like Medicaid coverage for addiction treatment, recovery programs for youth, and employment support for people in recovery.

This didn't happen by accident. It reflects decades of work by people willing to share painful truths, backed by science and public health innovation. It reflects communities organizing, researchers advancing evidence-based care, and advocates ensuring those tools are accessible. Even as overdose deaths reached devastating levels, public understanding grew—and now, early signs show those deaths beginning to decline.

We are at a critical inflection point. Public will, science, and policy are finally aligned. Which is why recent efforts to dismantle the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are so deeply misguided.

SAMHSA is the backbone of the nation's response to addiction and mental health. It connects people to care, funds recovery support services, and helps states scale what works. Its programs were shaped by years of advocacy from organizations like Faces & Voices of Recovery—bringing real-world solutions into federal policy.

Cutting SAMHSA now would do immediate harm. It would strip communities of resources, disrupt proven programs, and undermine decades of bipartisan progress.

Because make no mistake: addiction and recovery have never been partisan issues. Democrats and Republicans alike support treatment access and recovery services. Voters across the political spectrum reject policies that take support

away from people working to rebuild their lives. This is one of the rare areas where consensus still exists—and it was built by advocates, not politicians.

Congress should act accordingly. Restore SAMHSA's funding and staffing. Protect the programs communities rely on. And honor the progress that people in recovery fought so hard to achieve.

Americans have already changed their minds. The recovery community showed them how. The question now is whether Washington will keep up—or turn back at the moment it matters most.

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