



# The Opioid Epidemic and Unused Prescriptions

Survey Results from April 2018

We protect what matters.

 Stericycle®

# Survey Parameters

- When:** Conducted April 6, 2018
- Who:** 1,200 U.S. respondents age 18+ with no demographic targeting
- What:** 15 question mobile survey
- How:** Direct to mobile users via Pollfish
- Why:** Designed to assess:
- Consumer knowledge of the opioid epidemic
  - Past consumer practices around drug disposal
  - Consumer interest in drug takeback

# Executive Summary

## Americans agree that opioid addiction is a problem

- Outside of gun violence (41%), more than one in four (27%) Americans are most concerned about the government addressing the opioid epidemic, which is higher than concern over social equality (15%) and Russian interference (8%).
- While 52% of Americans believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic, one in four (27%) do not believe it can be stopped and two in ten (21%) don't know.

## Americans keep (and share) unused prescriptions

- Americans hold on to their unused prescriptions for future use, for fear of their illness returning or because they don't know how to get rid of them.
- In fact, 42% of Americans currently have 1-3 bottles of unused prescriptions in their medicine cabinet followed by 9% with 4-6 bottles, 3% with more than 10 bottles and 2% with 7-10 bottles.
- Nearly 15% of Americans *have offered or given* their unused prescription drugs, including opioids, to a friend or family member, and one in four Americans admit *they've been offered or given* unused prescription drugs by a friend or family member – for either medical or recreational use.

# Executive Summary, Cont'd.

## **Unused prescriptions aren't properly disposed**

- Fifteen percent of Americans admit they hold on to unused prescriptions because they don't know how to dispose of them.
- With no knowledge of safe disposal practices, one in four (25%) Americans admit to flushing leftover/unused prescription drugs down the drain, and another 25% toss unused prescriptions in the trash.
- Despite nearly half of all Americans admitting to flushing or tossing out unused prescriptions, the majority of Americans (61%) are concerned that flushing painkillers pollute their drinking water and public waterways.
- However, 69% agree that having a safe and secure way to dispose of leftover/unused prescription drugs would help combat the opioid epidemic.

## **More involvement and funding is needed to help collect unused drugs**

- The majority of Americans (78%) believe their pharmacy, hospital or doctor should help collect unused prescriptions from patients.
- Nearly four in 10 (39%) would be most comfortable giving back unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist for disposal; however, the majority of Americans (66%) would not be willing to pay a fee to safely dispose of an opioid they have been prescribed.

# Question 1 Results

If you had to pick one of the following options below, which U.S. issue are you currently most concerned about our government addressing?

Answers		Percent
Opioid epidemic	—	27.00%
Gun violence	—	40.58%
Russian influence	—	8.33%
Social equality	—	15.33%
I don't know	—	8.75%

- After gun violence (41%), more than one in four (27%) Americans are most concerned about the government addressing the opioid epidemic.

# Question 1 Additional Findings

**Baby Boomers and Millennials are aligned on top concerns for U.S. government to address: gun violence and the opioid epidemic. Gen Z prioritizes social equality over the opioid epidemic.**

- Gen Z (age 18-24) are most concerned with gun violence (45%), social equality (21%), opioid epidemic (20%) and Russian interference (4%).
- Millennials (age 25-34) are most concerned with gun violence (41%), opioid epidemic (24%), social equality (20%), and Russian interference (6%).
- Baby Boomers (age 54+) are most concerned with gun violence (41%), opioid epidemic (28%), Russian interference (14%) and social equality (12%).

**Men are 20% more likely than women to be most concerned about the opioid epidemic.**

- Women are most concerned about addressing gun violence (44%), the opioid epidemic (25%), social equality (17%), Russian interference (5%).
- Men are most concerned about address gun violence (35%), the opioid epidemic (29%), social equality (14%) and Russian interference (13%).

# Question 2 Results

In the past, what have you done with leftover/unused prescription drugs from your home medicine cabinet?

Answers		Percent
Placed in the trash	—	25.08%
Kept for future use	—	29.83%
Flushed down the drain or toilet	—	24.58%
Gave to a family member or friend	-	2.17%
I don't know	-	4.25%
Other	—	14.08%

- One in four (25%) Americans admit to flushing leftover/unused prescription drugs down the drain.
- Nearly one in three (30%) keep leftover/unused prescriptions for future use.
- Two in 100 (2%) Americans give leftover/unused prescription drugs to a family member or friend.

# Question 2 Additional Findings

## **Baby Boomers are more likely to flush unused prescriptions down the drain or toilet compared to Millennials and Gen Zs.**

- Nearly two in 10 (18%) Gen Zs (age 18-24) admit to flushing unused pills down the drain or toilet.
- Almost one in four (24%) of Millennials (age 25-34) admit to flushing unused pills down the drain or toilet.
- Twenty-eight percent of Baby Boomers (age 54+) admit to flushing unused pills down the drain or toilet.

## **Millennials are more than twice as likely than Baby Boomers to give unused prescriptions to a friend or family member.**

- Four percent of Gen Zs gave unused prescription pills to a family member or friend.
- Three percent of Millennials gave unused prescription pills to a family member or friend.
- One percent of Baby Boomers gave unused prescription pills to a family member or friend.

## **Women are nearly 20% more likely than men to flush unused prescription pills down the drain or toilet; men are more likely to place in the trash than women.**

- Twenty-two percent of men flushed unused prescription pills; 27% placed in trash.
- Twenty-six percent of women flushed unused prescription pills; 24% placed in trash.



# Question 3 Results

What reason would best describe why you would keep unused prescription drugs?

Answers		Percent
I paid for them, I don't want to waste them	—	21.50%
I would use them recreationally	-	1.92%
I'm afraid my illness or pain would return	—	32.17%
I don't know how to get rid of my unused prescription drugs	—	13.75%
I would not keep unused prescription pills	—	30.67%

- Nearly one in three (32%) Americans keep unused prescriptions because they're afraid their illness or pain would return.
- Almost 15% of Americans hold on to unused prescriptions because they don't know how to get rid of them.
- Nearly two in 100 (2%) Americans admit to keeping unused prescription drugs for recreational use.

# Question 3 Additional Findings

**Baby Boomers are 34% less likely than Millennials and 50% less likely than Gen Zs to keep unused prescription pills.**

- More than one in four (26%) Gen Z (age 18-24) admit they would not keep unused prescription pills.
- Nearly three in 10 (29%) Millennials (age 25-34) admit they would not keep unused prescription pills.
- Almost two in five (39%) Baby Boomers (age 54+) admit they would not keep unused prescription pills.

**The fear of illness or pain returning and cost of prescriptions are the two top reasons why Gen Zs, Millennials and Baby Boomers would keep unused prescriptions.**




- One in three Baby Boomers (33%), Gen Zs (31%) and Millennials (31%) would keep unused pills because they were afraid their illness or pain would return.
- Fifteen percent of Baby Boomers, 22% of Millennials and 29% of Gen Zs would keep unused pills because they paid for them and didn't want to waste them.

**Men are 57% more likely to admit to keeping unused pills for recreational use than women.**

- A higher percentage of men (2.44%) compared to women (1.55%) admit to keeping leftover pills for recreational use.

# Question 4 Results

Are you concerned that flushing unused painkillers, like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, etc., could pollute your drinking water or public rivers and lakes?

Answers		Percent
Yes		60.92%
No		23.33%
I don't know		15.75%

- Even though 25% admitted to flushing leftover/unused prescription drugs down the drain, the majority of Americans (61%) are concerned that flushing painkillers, like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, etc., could pollute their drinking water and public waterways.

# Question 4 Additional Findings

## **Baby Boomers are more concerned than Millennials and Gen Zs about the environmental effects of flushing painkillers.**

- Fifty-five percent of Gen Zs (age 18-24) are concerned that flushing unused painkillers could pollute drinking water and public waterways.
- Fifty-seven percent of Millennials (age 25-34) are concerned that flushing unused painkillers could pollute drinking water and public waterways.
- Seventy-one percent of Baby Boomers (age 54+) are concerned that flushing unused painkillers could pollute drinking water and public waterways.

## **Men are almost 50% more likely than women NOT to be concerned about the environmental effects of flushing painkillers.**

- Twenty percent of women compared to 29% of men are NOT concerned that flushing unused painkillers could pollute drinking water and public waterways.

# Question 5 Results

Currently, how many bottles of leftover/unused prescription pills do you have in your medicine cabinet?

Answers		Percent
0	———	41.17%
1-3	————	42.17%
4-6	—	8.83%
7-10	-	1.92%
More than 10	-	2.75%
I don't know	-	3.17%

- While 41% of Americans say they currently have zero bottles of leftover/unused prescription pills in their medicine cabinet, 42% have 1-3 bottles, nine percent have 4-6 bottles, three percent have more than 10 bottles and two percent have 7-10 bottles of unused prescriptions in their medicine cabinet.

# Question 5 Additional Findings

## **Gen Zs have more leftover bottles of prescription pills in their medicine cabinet than Millennials and Baby Boomers.**




- Nearly half (46%) of all Gen Zs (age 18-24) currently have 1-3 bottles of leftover prescriptions in their medicine cabinet, 8% have 4-6, 3% have 7-10 and 3% have more than 10 prescriptions. Thirty-five percent have zero unused bottles of prescription pills in their cabinet.
- Forty-four percent of Millennials (age 25-34) currently have 1-3 bottles of leftover prescriptions in their medicine cabinet, 10% have 4-6, 2% have 7-10, and 2% have more than 10 prescriptions. Forty percent have zero unused bottles of prescription pills in their cabinet.
- Thirty-five percent of Baby Boomers (age 54+) currently have 1-3 bottles of leftover prescriptions, 8% have 4-6, <1% have 7-10, and 3% have more than 10. Fifty-two percent have zero unused bottles of prescription pills in their cabinet.

## **Almost half of all men (43%) are likely to have zero bottles of leftover/unused prescription pills, compared to nearly half of all women (45%) who are likely to have 1-3 bottles of leftover/unused prescription pills.**

- Men admit zero bottles (43%), 1-3 bottles (37%), 4-6 bottles (11%), 7-10 (2%) and more than 10 (3%).
- Women admit zero bottles (40%), 1-3 bottles (45%), 4-6 bottles (7%), 7-10 bottles (2%), more than 10 (3%).

# Question 6 Results

Have you ever offered or given your unused prescription drugs, including opioids like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, etc., to a friend or family member (for either medical or recreational use)?

Answers		Percent
Yes		13.58%
No		84.25%
I don't know		2.17%

- With more than 68% of Americans admitting to currently keeping bottles of unused prescriptions pills in their medicine cabinet, nearly 15% said they've offered or given their unused prescription drugs, including opioids, to a friend or family member – for either medical or recreational use.

# Question 6 Additional Findings

**Gen Zs and Millennials are twice as likely than Baby Boomers to offer or give their unused prescription drugs to a family or friend for medical or recreational use.**

- Fifteen percent of Gen Zs (age 18-24) have offered or given their unused prescription drugs, including opioids, to a friend or family member for medical or recreational use.
- Fourteen percent of Millennials (age 25-34) have offered or given their unused prescription drugs, including opioids, to a friend or family member for medical or recreational use.
- Seven percent of Baby Boomers (age 54+) have offered or given their unused prescription drugs, including opioids, to a friend or family member for medical or recreational use.

**Men are 54% more likely to have offered or given their unused prescription drugs to a family or friend for medical or recreational use.**

- Eleven percent of women compared to 17% percent of men admit to offering their unused prescriptions to family or friends.



# Question 7 Results

Have you ever been offered or given unused prescription drugs, including opioids like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, etc., by a friend or family member (for either medical or recreational use)?

Answers		Percent
Yes		23.42%
No		74.33%
I don't know		2.25%

- Nearly one in four Americans (23%) admit they've been offered or given unused prescription drugs, including opioids by a friend for family member – for either medical or recreational use.

# Question 7 Additional Findings

## **Baby Boomers are three times less likely than both Millennials and Gen Zs to be offered or given unused prescription drugs by a friend or family member.**



- One in four (26%) Gen Zs and Millennials (27%) have been offered or given unused prescription drugs, including opioids, by a friend or family member.
- Eight percent of Baby Boomers have been offered or given unused prescription drugs, including opioids, by a friend or family member.

## **Family and friends don't discriminate when it comes offering or giving unused prescriptions.**

- Similar percentages of men (25%) and women (22%) admit they've been offered or given unused prescriptions drugs by a friend or family member – for either recreational or medical use.

# Question 8 Results

Do you believe that people sharing or selling their unused prescriptions, including opioids like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, etc., is contributing to growth of the opioid epidemic?

Answers		Percent
Yes		73.83%
No		15.50%
I don't know		10.67%

- Despite nearly one in four Americans (23%) admitting they've been offered or given unused prescription drugs, including opioids, by a friend for family member and 14% having offered their unused prescriptions to friends and family members, the majority of Americans (74%) believe that people sharing and selling their unused prescriptions is contributing to the growth of the opioid epidemic.

# Question 8 Additional Findings

**Millennials are 68% more likely than Baby Boomers to think that sharing or selling of unused prescriptions is NOT contributing to the growth of the opioid epidemic.**

- Two in 10 Millennials (21%) and Gen Zs (17%) do NOT believe that sharing or selling their unused prescriptions, including opioids, is contributing to the growth of the opioid epidemic – compared to just 12% of Baby Boomers.

**Men compared to women are more likely NOT to believe that sharing or selling of unused prescriptions is contributing to the opioid epidemic.**

- Seventy-two percent of men believe people sharing or selling unused prescription drugs, including opioids, is contributing to the growth of the opioid epidemic. While 18% of men say no, it's NOT contributing to the growth of the epidemic.
- Seventy-four percent of women believe people sharing or selling unused prescription drugs, including opioids, is contributing to the growth of the opioid epidemic. While 14% of women say no, it's NOT contributing to the growth of the epidemic.

# Question 9 Results

In the last six months, have you used an opioid recreationally (e.g. Percocet, Vicodin, Codine, Oxycontin)?

Answers		Percent
Yes	—	8.08%
No	—————	89.75%
I don't know	▪	2.17%

- Almost one in 10 (8%) Americans admit to using an opioid recreationally in the last six months.

# Question 9 Additional Findings

**Gen Zs and Millennials are 33% more likely than Baby Boomers to have used an opioid recreationally.**



- Nearly one in 10 Gen Zs (8%) and Millennials (8%) admitted to using an opioid recreationally in the last six months, compared to 6% of Baby Boomers.

**Men are 42% more likely than women to have used an opioid recreationally in the last six months.**

- Ten percent of men compared to 7% of women admitted to using an opioid recreationally in the last six months.

# Question 10 Results

Do you believe that having a safe and secure way to dispose of leftover/unused prescription drugs would help combat the opioid epidemic?

Answers		Percent
Yes		69.08%
No		19.50%
I don't know		11.42%

- The majority of Americans (69%) believe that having a safe and secure way to dispose of leftover/unused prescription drugs would help combat the opioid epidemic.

# Question 10 Additional Findings

**Gen Zs are slightly more convinced safe drug disposal methods would help fight the opioid epidemic.**



- Nearly three in four (73%) Gen Zs believe having a safe and secure way to dispose of leftover drugs would help combat the opioid epidemic, compared Millennials (71%) Baby Boomers (71%).

**Men and women are evenly matched with 69% admitting safe and secure drug disposal methods would help combat the opioid epidemic, while 20% said it would not help.**



# Question 11 Results

Do you believe that your pharmacy, hospital or doctor should help collect unused prescriptions from patients?

Answers		Percent
Yes		77.92%
No		13.42%
I don't know		8.67%

- The majority of Americans (78%) believe their pharmacy, hospital or doctor should help collect unused prescriptions from patients.

# Question 11 Additional Findings

**Gen Zs – compared to Millennials and Baby Boomers – are more likely to believe their pharmacist, hospital or doctor should NOT help collect unused prescription drugs from patients.**

- Sixteen percent of Gen Zs compared to 14% of Baby Boomers and 13% of Millennials do not believe their pharmacist, hospital or doctor should help collect unused drugs.

**Slightly more women than men do NOT believe that their pharmacist, hospital or doctor should help collect unused prescription drugs from patients.**

- Fourteen percent of women compared to 13% of men don't believe their pharmacist, hospital or doctor should help collect unused prescription drugs from patients.

# Question 12 Results

If you had to choose from the list below, who would you be most comfortable giving back your unused prescription(s) for disposal?

Answers		Percent
My local police department	—	14.83%
<b>My pharmacist</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>39.00%</b>
My doctor	—	16.17%
Non-profit in my area that disposes of drugs	—	10.08%
My local hospital	—	9.92%
I don't know	—	10.00%

- Most Americans (39%) would be most comfortable giving back unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist for disposal.
  - 16% are most comfortable giving back unused prescription(s) to their doctor
  - 15% are most comfortable giving back unused prescription(s) to their local police department
  - 10% are most comfortable giving back unused prescription(s) to a local non-profit or hospital

# Question 12 Additional Findings

## **Baby Boomers are 23% more comfortable than Gen Zs and Millennials giving their unused prescription(s) to their local police department.**

- Gen Zs (age 18-24) would be most comfortable giving their unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist (32%), doctor (19%), local police department (13%), local non-profit that disposes of drugs (12%), and local hospital (11%).
- Millennials (age 25-34) would be most comfortable giving their unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist (38%), doctor (17%), local hospital (13%), local police department (13%) and local non-profit that disposes of drugs (11%).
- Baby Boomers (age 54+) would be most comfortable giving their unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist (43%), local police department (16%), doctor (13%), local hospital (10%), and local non-profit that disposes of drugs (9%).

## **Women are 14% more comfortable than men giving their unused prescription to their local police department.**

- Women would be most comfortable giving their unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist (38%), local police department (16%), doctor (15%), local hospital (11%) and local non-profit that disposes of drugs (9%).
- Men would be most comfortable giving their unused prescription(s) to their pharmacist (40%), doctor (18%), local police department (14%), local non-profit that disposes of drugs (12%), and local hospital (8%).

# Question 13 Results

How much would you be willing to pay to safely dispose of an opioid you have been prescribed?

Answers	Percent
\$0	65.50%
\$2	8.83%
\$4	4.00%
\$6	6.75%
Other	2.50%
I don't know	12.42%

- The majority of Americans (66%) would not be willing to pay a fee to safely dispose of an opioid they have been prescribed.
  - 9% would pay \$2 to safely dispose of an opioid they have been prescribed
  - 7% would pay \$6 to safely dispose of an opioid they have been prescribed
  - 4% would pay \$4 to safely dispose of an opioid they have been prescribed

# Question 13 Additional Findings

## **Gen Zs compared to Millennials and Baby Boomers are more willing to pay a fee to safely dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed.**

- While 54% of Gen Zs (age 18-24) aren't willing to pay to dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed; 9% would pay \$2, 5% would pay \$4 and 8% would pay \$6.
- Sixty-six percent of Millennials aren't willing to pay to dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed; 11% would pay \$2, 5% would pay \$4 and 6% would pay \$6.
- Sixty-five percent of Baby Boomers aren't willing to pay to dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed; 10% would pay \$2, 4 percent would pay \$4 and 6% would pay \$6.

## **Men and women are similarly aligned in the prices they're willing to pay for safe drug disposal. However, men are 33% more likely than women to pay \$6 to dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed.**

- Sixty-five percent of women aren't willing to pay to dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed; 9% would pay \$2, 4% would pay \$4 and 6% would pay \$6.
- Sixty-six percent of men aren't willing to pay to dispose of an opioid they've been prescribed; 8% would pay \$2, 4% would pay \$4 and 8% would pay \$6.

# Question 14 Results

Have you ever given back unused prescriptions drugs as part of a "drug takeback program"?

Answers		Percent
Yes	—	14.25%
No	—————	82.50%
I don't know	-	3.25%

- Despite the majority of Americans (69%) believing that having a safe and secure way to dispose of leftover/unused prescription drugs would help combat the opioid epidemic, 83% of Americans have never given back unused prescription drugs as part of a "drug takeback program."

# Question 14 Additional Findings

## **Baby Boomers are nearly 60% more likely to have participated in a drug takeback program than Millennials and Gen Zs.**

- Just 13% of Gen Zs (age 18-24) have given back drugs within a takeback program, and 81% have never participated in a drug takeback program.
- Twelve percent of Millennials (age 25-34) have given back drugs within a takeback program, and 84% have never participated in a drug takeback program.
- Nineteen percent of Baby Boomers (age 54+) have given drugs back within a takeback program, and 80% have never participated in a drug takeback program.




## **Slightly more men admitted to participating in a drug takeback program than women.**

- Fifteen percent of men have given back drugs within a takeback program, and 81% have never participated in a drug takeback program.
- Fourteen percent of women have given back drugs within a takeback program, and 83% have never participated in a drug takeback program.



# Question 15 Results

Do you believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic?

Answers		Percent
Yes		51.67%
No		27.17%
I don't know		21.17%

- While 52% of Americans believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic, one in four (27%) do not and two in ten (21%) don't know.

# Question 15 Additional Findings

## **Baby Boomers compared to Millennials and Gen Zs are more likely to believe the U.S. can NOT stop the opioid epidemic.**

- Fifty-four percent of Gen Zs (age 18-24) believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic, while 22% say no and 24% don't know.
- Fifty-six percent of Millennials (age 25-34) believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic, while 23% say no and 21% don't know.
- Fifty-one percent of Baby Boomers (54+) believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic, while 29% say no and 20% don't know.

## **Men are 20% more likely than women to admit they do NOT believe the U.S. can stop the opioid epidemic.**

- One in four women don't believe and don't know if the U.S. can solve the opioid epidemic; almost one in three (30%) men don't believe the U.S. can solve the opioid epidemic and 16% don't know.



**Thank you.**

We protect what matters.

 **Stericycle**<sup>®</sup>