

For 80% of Americans with resolved drug problem, significant personal achievements

5 April 2021, by Chris Rattan



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Addiction is associated with social exclusion, loss of access to resources, and general disengagement from civic life. Now, a study recently published in the journal *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* and led by David Eddie, Ph.D., of the Massachusetts General Hospital's Recovery Research Institute has found that the majority of Americans who have resolved an alcohol or other drug problem report achievements related to self-improvement, family engagement, and civic and economic participation since resolving their addiction. Additionally, it appears these achievements accumulate with time in addiction recovery.

Incorporating data from the Recovery Research Institute's landmark 2017 National Recovery Study, which indicated for the first time that 23.3 million Americans consider themselves to have resolved a significant alcohol or other drug problem, this study is the first to report the national prevalence of personal, civic, and economic achievements among people in [addiction recovery](#).

"Individuals in addiction recovery face numerous

challenges, yet in spite of this, findings from this study show that most individuals are able to rebuild important aspects of their lives," says Eddie. "And perhaps more importantly, we saw that these achievements were associated with greater happiness, well-being and quality of life."

These study results challenge commonly held beliefs about the nature of substance use disorders as constantly recurring disorders with little room for improvement. "The fact of the matter is that addiction is a good-prognosis disorder with significant improvement over time in recovery," says co-author John Kelly, Ph.D., director of the Recovery Research Institute. "With more years in recovery, individuals achieved an increasing number of achievements, which are then supportive of ongoing remission and [recovery](#)."

The study authors also note that there are certain individual factors associated with accrual of achievements, including (but not limited to) race, [education level](#), age of initiation of regular substance use, and co-occurring psychiatric disorders. However, Eddie cautions that this shouldn't be taken to mean there are some who can't accomplish significant personal achievements after resolving an addiction: "Recovery is achievable for everyone, and the majority of Americans who resolve their substance use problem go on to accrue numerous life achievements. At the same time, there are many individuals who face greater barriers and hardships as they attempt to rebuild their lives, and as a society we should be addressing the barriers that hamper their rebuilding efforts."

More information: David Eddie et al, Reasons to be cheerful: Personal, civic, and economic achievements after resolving an alcohol or drug problem in the United States population., *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* (2021). [DOI: 10.1037/adb0000689](https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000689)

Provided by Massachusetts General Hospital

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