

Why Isn't Drug Addiction Considered A Social Issue In The USA?

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Drug addiction has been classified as a serious crime in the US since as far back as the 1970s when a 'war on drugs' was declared to eradicate the issue. Global military and police efforts have since been launched in attempts to curtail drug addiction and trading, with maximum life sentences now not unusual for the possession of as much as 1KG of a heavy drug like heroin.

These high sentences, though offset by minimum sentences that can be as short as five or ten years, can seem shocking to many who learn about them, but societies on the whole still do little to address this problem and work to ensure the **treatment** that, in so many cases, could altogether transform the safety and function of society overall.



Here we consider why exactly drug addiction isn't considered a social issue in the USA as it stands, and how individual societies could potentially change that often isolating reality.

The 'War On Drugs' Narrative



Ever since the declaration of a war on drugs, media narratives have created a stigma around drug usage that's largely behind the lack of social understanding. Admittedly, this so-called 'war' has had the benefit of somewhat minimizing potential levels of drug abuse, but it's also had a detrimental impact on levels of incarceration fueled by the public perception that drug addiction is a 'bad,' 'criminal' act that's outside of personal remit.

This level of removal has meant that, for individuals not directly impacted by addiction, those who do fall on the wrong side of the tracks are considered as others, and to be avoided. This is incredibly detrimental considering that, when society turns its back on addiction in this way, addressing the true roots of the problem becomes far harder, ultimately perpetuating an issue that even high crime sentences have yet been unable to curtail. By instead working together to improve not only access to treatment at a societal level but also opportunities and more positive outlets for the spare time of these individuals, it's far more likely that drug addiction will truly start to recede. And, this can make a huge difference not just for those 'other' addicts, but also for every single one of us living within these otherwise compromised societies.

The Stigma Of Secondary Crime

Strong links are often drawn between crime and drug addiction, with studies continually revealing that as much as 20% of all crimes are committed by drug users. Of course, according to current US laws, all drugs (apart from marijuana in some areas) are considered illegal in their own right, but it's often the secondary crimes that see society scorning and even disregarding the behaviors of addicts. Specifically, crimes including theft, violence, and beyond, create a societal fear that, in many cases, feels better left to legal entities than handled by communities overall.

The problem is that it's precisely these issues that make drug addiction a social issue in the first place, especially as higher crime rates in any area can impact everything from personal safety to the value of properties and beyond. By simply turning their attention to creating a safer environment for everyone, and by taking the time to truly understand the societal impact that these crimes are having, societies overall would be far better poised to create a safer, more inclusive place for everyone, all while minimizing the need for a high police presence.

A Lack Of Understanding About What Improvements Look Like

Predominantly, drug addiction isn't considered a social issue because there's very little education out there about what rehabilitation and true, effective **outpatient treatment programs** look like or require in terms of funding, etc. What's more, with the law continuing to clamp down on drug addiction overall, there's no real call for these changes at a societal level. But, as the opioid epidemic fuels a society in which drugs are far more prevalent than those of us who are unaffected could ever realize, it's never been more important to change that outlook.

With even prison sentences rarely resulting in lasting recovery for most addicts, especially, societies need to come together to not only address existing issues with **intensive care programs** or **partial hospitalizations** for those individuals currently in need, but to also put in place long-term solutions to prevent the ongoing prevalence of drug usage in the area, including simply understanding these problems better, and providing a more positive, opportunity-filled environment in which even young people are far less likely to fall in with the 'wrong' crowd.

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