

# "LIFE IN RECOVERY"

## Report on the Survey Findings

Prepared by Alexandre Laudet, Ph.D.  
for **Faces & Voices of Recovery**



**FACES &  
VOICES**  
**OF RECOVERY**

[FACESANDVOICESOFRECOVERY.ORG](http://FACESANDVOICESOFRECOVERY.ORG)

APRIL 2013

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Key Findings .....	1
<b>Survey Objectives .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methods.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Survey Items Development .....	3
Survey Administration .....	3
<b>Results .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Description of Survey Participants .....	3
Sociodemographics.....	3
Physical and Mental History and Quality of Life .....	4
Substance Use of History.....	4
Addiction Recovery .....	4
Recovery Paths: Treatment, 12-Step, and Other Support Groups.....	4
Life Experiences in Active Addiction .....	4
Subgroups Analyses .....	5
Life Experiences in Recovery.....	5
Subgroups Analyses .....	5
Life Experiences in Recovery as a Function of Recovery Duration .....	6
Comparison of Experiences in Addiction and in Recovery .....	7
Survey Limitations .....	8
<b>Conclusions and Implications for Services and Policy .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix I: Survey Results as Graphic Charts .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix II: Tables.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Table 1. Individual Characteristics of Survey Participants	
Table 2. Life Experiences in Active Addiction and in Addiction Recovery	
Table 3. Life Experiences in Active Addiction: Gender Comparison	
Table 4. Life Experiences in Addiction Recovery: Gender Comparison	
Table 5. Life Experiences in Addiction Recovery as a Function of Recovery Duration	
Table 6. Life Experiences in Active Addiction and in Addiction Recovery: Change Over Time	
<b>Appendix III: Life in Recovery Survey Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>23</b>

## **Faces & Voices of Recovery**

1010 Vermont Avenue NW

Suite 618

Washington, DC 20005

202.737.0690

**[www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org)**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Recovery” from addiction to alcohol and other drugs is a human experience as old as the human race itself. However, it was not until the past decade that federal agencies, policy makers, service providers, and clinicians have begun considering recovery as a desirable outcome that is gradually supplanting mere reductions in drug and alcohol use as the goal of addiction treatment services. This shift in emphasis was in no small part spearheaded by a growing grassroots movement of persons in recovery, a [community recently estimated at over 23.5 million adults in the United States](#) i.e., 10% of U.S. adults, their families, friends, and allies. In spite of this number, little is known about the recovery experience as research on this population, often hidden in plain sight, remains in its infancy. With full implementation of the Affordable Care Act in sight, and given its emphasis on health and wellness, services and supports that make it possible for people to sustain their recovery for the long term are of growing importance.

As a first step to documenting the benefits of recovery to the individual and to the nation, Faces & Voices of Recovery (Faces & Voices) conducted the first nationwide survey of persons in recovery from alcohol and other drug problems. The survey was developed, conducted, and analyzed in collaboration with Alexandre Laudet, Ph.D., Director of the Center for the Study of Addictions and Recovery at the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc.

The online survey, conducted in English and Spanish between November 1 and December 31, 2012, collected information on participants’ sociodemographics, physical/mental health, substance use, and recovery history, and 44 items representing experiences and indices of functioning in work, finances, legal, family, social, and citizenship domains; the items were asked for both “in active addiction” and “since you entered recovery.” A total of 3,228 surveys were completed<sup>1</sup>. Respondents represented a broad range of individual characteristics and recovery durations.

## KEY FINDINGS

- On average, participants had been in active addiction for 18 years and entered recovery at age 36. Over half had been in recovery for 10 years or longer at the time of the survey.
- **Survey findings document the many heavy costs of addiction to the individual and to the nation** in terms of finances, physical and mental health, family functioning, employment, and legal involvement. For example, two thirds of respondents reported having experienced untreated mental health problems, half had been fired or suspended once or more from jobs, half had been arrested at least once, and a third had been incarcerated at least once.
- **Recovery from alcohol and drug problems is associated with dramatic improvements in all areas of life:** healthier/better financial and family life, higher civic engagement, dramatic decreases in public health and safety risks, and significant increases in employment and work. Following are specific findings comparing recovery experiences with active addiction:
  - Paying bills on time and paying back personal debt doubled
  - Fifty percent more people pay taxes in recovery than when they are in active addiction
  - Planning for the future (e.g., saving for retirement) increases nearly threefold
  - Involvement in domestic violence (as victim or perpetrator) decreases dramatically
  - Participation in family activities increases by 50%
  - Volunteering in the community increases nearly threefold
  - Voting increases significantly
  - Frequent utilization of costly emergency room departments decreases tenfold
  - The percentage of uninsured decreases by half
  - Reports of untreated emotional/mental health problems decrease over fourfold
  - Involvement in illegal acts and involvement with the criminal justice system (e.g., arrests, incarceration, DWIs) decreases about tenfold

- Steady employment increases by over 50%
- Twice as many people further their education or training
- Twice as many people start their own businesses

When looking at life experiences as a function of how long people have been in recovery, the overall conclusion is: ***Life keeps getting better as recovery progresses***. Reports of negative life experiences, a proxy for the costs of active addiction, generally decline as recovery gets longer, and conversely, the percentage of respondents reporting behaviors/circumstances reflecting healthy functioning (i.e., the benefits of recovery) increases as the duration of recovery increases.

Following are examples:

- The percentage of people owing back taxes decreases as recovery gets longer, while a greater number of people in longer recovery report paying taxes, having good credit, making financial plans for the future, and paying back debts.
- As recovery progresses, civic involvement increases dramatically in such areas as voting and volunteering in the community.
- People increasingly engage in healthy behaviors such as taking care of their health, having a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and having dental checkups, as recovery progresses.
- As recovery duration increases, a greater number of people go back to school or get additional job training.
- Rates of steady employment increase gradually as recovery duration increases.
- More people start their own businesses as recovery duration increases.

There were several marked ***differences between men and women*** in their reported experiences, especially during active addiction—notably, the following:

- More men than women have financial and employment problems and involvement in illegal activities and with the criminal justice system while in active addiction.
- More women than men experience disruptions in family life, frequent use of costly emergency room services and other health care services, and untreated emotional problems while in active addiction.

In summary, Faces & Voices of Recovery conducted the first nationwide survey of persons in recovery from drug and alcohol problems about their experiences in active addiction and in recovery. Survey findings document the many costs of active addiction to the individual and to society in terms of health, finances, work, family life, and criminal justice involvement. Most notably, the survey is the first to document the dramatic improvements people experience in all areas of life once they are in addiction recovery, and that improvements continue over time as recovery is maintained. Contrary to the stigmatizing stereotype society has of the individual in active addiction or recovery, survey findings show that people in recovery are employed, pay bills and taxes, vote, volunteer in their communities, and take care of their health and their families. ***These findings underline the fact that recovery is good not only for the individual, but also for families, communities, and the nation's health and economy.*** The findings emphasize the call for policies, services, and funding to help more people initiate and sustain recovery, and for additional research to identify effective and cost-effective recovery-promoting policies and services.

## SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The many costs of active addiction, over \$350 billion annually, are well documented. *Virtually nothing is known about the changes occurring in key life areas as a function of entering and sustaining recovery, or when they occur.* Documenting the experiences and benefits of recovery to individuals and to the nation is critical to disseminating the message that recovery is attainable and desirable, to informing policy makers about the benefits of policies that promote rather than hinder recovery, to advancing research on how people get well, and to reducing stigma and discrimination.

## METHODS

### SURVEY ITEMS DEVELOPMENT

Based on the experiences of persons in recovery and on the extant scientific literature, items were developed that reflect events and experiences in key life domains typically affected by active addiction: finances, family, social and civic functioning, physical and mental health, legal status and involvement, and employment/school. A large pool of items representing both positive and negative experiences in each domain was developed; a set of 44 items was retained at the end of an iterative process of review by the Faces & Voices' board of directors and other stakeholders. To minimize reporting bias, positive and negative items were presented in mixed order. Participants first answered about their experiences in active addiction, using a dichotomous (yes/no) format; then they answered items on a parallel list for "in recovery." In addition to these two sets of items, the survey included basic sociodemographic questions for classification purposes, a short series of questions about substance use and treatment history, and questions about participants' recovery (e.g., duration and self-labels such as "in recovery" and "recovered"). These sections used standard items typically used in National Institutes of Health-funded studies where feasible. A copy of the survey can be found in the appendix.

To maximize the representation of Spanish-speaking individuals, who are typically underrepresented in research, the Life in Recovery Survey was translated into Spanish and administered in Spanish through a separate web link.

### SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey was administered online through SurveyMonkey® and took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. Individuals completing the survey were offered a 10% discount at the Faces & Voices' online store. Survey data were collected between November 1 and December 31, 2012. The survey link was disseminated via Faces & Voices' website and social media sites, with postings "shared" (e.g., retweeted) by individuals and organizations with an interest in addiction recovery. A total of 3,208 surveys were completed in English and 10 in Spanish.<sup>1</sup> Survey data were imported into a statistical software package for analysis.

## RESULTS

### DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

#### ► Sociodemographics

The sample is described in detail in Table 1; participants were 57% female and mostly middle aged: 15% under 35, 32% aged 36 to 50, and 54% over 50. Eight percent were African American, 82% were Caucasian, and 10% selected a different racial category including Native American (9%) and Asian and Native (under 1% each); 5% reported being Hispanic (Latino/Latina). Thirty-three percent live in urban settings, 39% in a suburb, and 26% in a rural town or area. The sample reported a high level of education with only 9% having a high school education level or less; 56% have a bachelor's or postgraduate degree. Half (50%) are married and two thirds (66%) have children. Consistent with a high level of education and participants' age groups, 71% are employed, 7% are students, 2% selected "homemaker," 8% are retired, and 5% reported another employment status. Fifteen percent have served in the military.

### ► Physical and Mental Health, and Quality of Life

Almost half of survey participants (48%) are under a doctor's care for a chronic medical condition (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, asthma). Yet, the majority of respondents considered themselves in good health: 40% rated their physical health as good, 31% very good, and 12% excellent; 15% reported being in fair health, and 2%, in poor health. Notably, 33% of participants reported using tobacco products, nearly twice the rate of the general U.S. adult population (19%) according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>3</sup>. Note that the survey did not ask specifically about cigarette smoking, but the bulk of tobacco products use is cigarette smoking.

Nearly two thirds of the survey participants (62%) have been treated for an emotional or mental health problem at some point in their lives (e.g., therapy, counseling, medication). Yet, as with physical health, survey participants generally consider themselves in good mental health: 22% rating it as good, 43% very good, and 28% excellent; 12% reported being in fair health, and 2%, in poor health. Respondents also reported a very good quality of life, with few rating it as poor or fair (1% and 6%, respectively). Almost one quarter (22%) reported having a good quality of life, 43% very good, and 28% excellent.

### ► Substance Use History

Participants were in active addiction for an average (mean) of 18 years; the duration of active addiction across respondents ranged from 1 to 55 years. With respect to the primary problem class of substances, 29% reported alcohol only, 13% drugs only, and the majority (57%) drugs *and* alcohol.

### ► Addiction Recovery

On average, the sample initiated recovery at age 36 (mean); and the age at recovery initiation ranged from 12 to 73. Because we were interested in how participants would describe their status in relationship to their former use of alcohol and/or other drugs, the survey provided four standard options that have been used in previous federally funded studies.<sup>4</sup> The majority (75%) selected "in recovery"; 14% chose "recovered," 8% "used to have a problem with substances and no longer do," and 3% chose "medication-assisted recovery." The vast majority of survey respondents were in what is considered "stable recovery" (i.e., over three years). Overall, reported recovery duration was as follows: 1 year (9%), 1 to 3 years (13%), 3 to 5 years (10%), 5 to under 10 years (16%), 10 to 20 years (19%), and over 20 years (32%).

### ► Recovery Paths: Treatment, 12-Step, and Other Support Groups

Most respondents (71%) had received professional addiction treatment at some time in their lives, and 18% had taken prescribed medications to deal with a substance use problem (e.g., buprenorphine or methadone). Most respondents also reported high rates of participation in addiction recovery mutual aid self-help groups: 95% had attended 12-step fellowship meetings (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous), and 22% had participated in non-12-step recovery support groups (e.g., LifeRing, Secular Organizations for Sobriety (S.O.S.)).

## LIFE EXPERIENCES IN ACTIVE ADDICTION

Survey findings document the heavy costs of active addiction in all areas of life. Data bearing on life experiences in active addiction for the total sample are presented in Table 2. In the finance area, while the majority of participants had a bank account (83%) and a place to live (75%), 70% experienced financial problems (e.g., debts or bad credit), only a quarter (28%) planned for the future, and 40% had no health insurance (Table 1 health section). Only half of respondents (52%) had a primary care provider, and a third or fewer took care of their health or reported healthy habits (nutrition and exercise). Notably, two thirds (67%) experienced untreated mental health problems. The nefarious consequences of addiction on survey participants were especially notable in the legal area, with 53% reporting one or more arrest, and a third, one or more episode of incarceration. In addition, 35% had their driver's licenses suspended or revoked and 29% had one or more driving while intoxicated (DWI) charge. Employment was negatively affected as well: while half were steadily employed and received good job performance evaluations, half (51%) had been fired or suspended once or more, and 61% frequently missed work (or school); in addition, 33% dropped out of school.



### ► Subgroup Analyses: Gender Differences in Life Experiences in Active Addiction

There were several significant differences ( $p \leq .05$ ) between men's and women's life experiences during active addiction (see Table 3 for detailed results). In terms of finances, men were nearly twice as likely as women to have owed back taxes (29% vs. 17%). Gender differences were especially pronounced in the areas of family, health, and legal functioning. As may be expected given women's role as primary child caregivers, twice as many women as men lost custody of a child to Child Protective Services (16% vs. 9%) while in active addiction. Women were also twice as likely as men to report having been a "victim or perpetrator of domestic violence" (53% vs. 25%). The item regrettably did not separate victimization from perpetrating domestic violence, although it is likely that women are more often the victims of domestic violence rather than the perpetrators.

In terms of health, a greater percentage of women than men reported frequent emergency room visits other than for treatment of a chronic condition (24% vs. 19%) and frequent use of health care services (29% vs. 25%). There are, of course, several possible reasons for these findings that do not necessarily reflect the consequences of addiction. Health care utilization among women may be related to pregnancy and related occurrences; this hypothesis is supported by the finding that significantly more women than men had primary care providers (56% vs. 50%). Especially notable in the area of health is the finding that significantly more women reported experiencing untreated mental health problems relative to men (72% vs. 63%).

As can be expected based on general U.S. population figures, men reported significantly greater involvement with the criminal justice system and with illegal behaviors than did women; this includes arrests (64% men vs. 44% women), incarceration (41% vs. 28%), and DWI charges (38% vs. 22%). Conversely, more women than men had had no legal involvement while in active addiction (43% vs. 33%). Finally, more men than women reported frequently missing work or school while in active addiction (63% vs. 59%).

### LIFE EXPERIENCES IN RECOVERY

Life experiences in recovery for the total sample are presented in Table 2 (second column) and document, for the first time, *the significant benefits that people in recovery experience when they get their lives back on track*. In terms of finances, although 4 out of 10 participants had experienced financial problems (e.g., debts or bankruptcy) since being in recovery,<sup>5</sup> almost all participants reported strong signs of financial stability including having their own place to live (92%), paying taxes (including back taxes: 83%), paying bills on time (91%), and paying back personal debts (82%), as well as having a bank account and good credit (93% and 76%, respectively). Notably, 88% plan for the future (e.g., saving for retirement and vacations). Most participants reported taking part in family activities (95%) and engaging in acts of "good citizenship" in recovery including voting (87%) and volunteering in the community (84%). Turning to health, most participants take care of their health (e.g., getting regular medical and dental checkups—91% and 73%, respectively) and have a healthy lifestyle including healthy eating habits and regular exercise (83% and 62%, respectively). Few reported untreated emotional/mental health problems (15%) while in recovery, and almost all (88%) reported having a primary care provider. The fact that one out of five survey participants in recovery (20%) have no health insurance is regrettable but not atypical of the general population under the current (i.e., pre-Affordable Care Act) system. Six percent or fewer reported any involvement in criminal behavior, and almost two thirds (62%) have had no involvement with the criminal justice system. Similarly, 10% or fewer reported employment problems (e.g., getting fired or suspended, attrition from work or school), and most (83%) have been steadily employed while in recovery. Notably, over three quarters of participants (78%) have furthered their education or training while in recovery, and over one quarter (28%) have started their own businesses.

### ► Subgroup Analyses: Gender Differences in Life Experiences in Recovery

Life experiences in recovery reported by men and women were compared (Table 4). Fewer gender differences emerged than in active addiction, and many of these differences are likely related to gender differences during active addiction (see the preceding section and Table 3) or reflect gender differences prevalent in the general population. For example, significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more men than women reported paying taxes or back taxes

(84% vs. 78%), which is likely due to the fact that more men than women owed back taxes while in active addiction. In terms of family functioning, three times as many women as men were victims/perpetrators of domestic violence while in recovery (12% vs. 4%), a difference observed in the active addiction section as well. Twice as many women as men regained custody of a child while in recovery (12% vs. 6%), a difference that likely results from more women having lost custody of a child while in active addiction.

Numerous gender differences emerged in the legal area that are likely due to strong gender differences reported in that domain in active addiction, reflecting the fact that more men than women have criminal/legal involvement. For example, twice as many men as women got arrested (8% vs. 3%), more men than women expunged their criminal records (13% vs. 8%), got their driver's licenses back (56% vs. 38%), and got off probation or parole (31% vs. 21%). In terms of work and school, more men than women started their own businesses (32% vs. 24%). No gender differences were found in the area of health.

## LIFE EXPERIENCES IN RECOVERY AS A FUNCTION OF RECOVERY DURATION

Recovery experiences were examined as a function of how long respondents had been in recovery (or the label they used to self-describe in an earlier question, as described in Table 5). Overall findings from this subgroup analysis can be summarized as: ***Life keeps getting better as recovery progresses.*** In the aggregate, the percentage of respondents reporting negative experiences (which can be regarded as the costs of active addiction) decreases from the shortest (<3 years) to the longest recovery subgroup (>10 years) across domains. Conversely, the percentage of respondents reporting behaviors/circumstances reflecting positive/healthy functioning (i.e., the benefits of recovery) increases from the shortest to the longest recovery subgroup. In this report, the three recovery duration subgroups shall be referred to as Group 1 (<3 years), Group 2 (3 to >10 years), and Group 3 (>10 years).

Specifically, significant differences were observed in the financial domain: fewer respondents in longer recovery (Group 3) reported owing back taxes (from 18% in Group 1 to 14% in Group 3), and healthier finances were increasingly reported as recovery progressed (67% of Group 1 paid taxes or back taxes vs. 84% of Group 3; 58% of Group 1 had good credit or restored credit vs. 84% of Group 3; 72% of Group 1 paid back personal debt vs. 86% of Group 3). Almost all of Group 3 (92%) plan for their financial future vs. 77% of Group 1.

Social/family life and civic involvement similarly improves as recovery progresses: 71% of Group 1 volunteered in the community vs. 89% of Group 3; 71% of Group 1 voted vs. 94% of Group 3. Differences in health behaviors as a function of recovery duration were also noted. For example, while 85% of Group 1 reported taking care of their health and 56% got regular dental checkups, 93% and 81% of Group 3 did, respectively. More people have a primary care provider as the time in recovery gets longer (from 81% in Group 1 to 93% in Group 3), and more have healthy habits: 78% of Group 1 had healthy eating habits and 56% exercised, compared to 86% of Group 3 who reported healthy eating habits and 64% who exercised. Note that the percentage of uninsured decreased from 27% in Group 1 to 16% in Group 3, which is likely associated with the employment rate across subgroups (see later discussion).

Legal problems that were highly prevalent in active addiction in this sample decreased as a function of recovery duration: 59% of Group 1 reports no legal involvement, compared to 64% of Group 3. Note, however, that while legal status improves for some in recovery, these findings mean that over 40% of Group 1 and 35% of Group 3 continue to face legal problems as recovery endures. Employment also generally improves as recovery becomes longer. Functioning on the job improves and job difficulties decrease as recovery progresses: 76% of Group 1 reported getting good job performance evaluations, compared to 94% of Group 3; and fewer people in Group 3 frequently miss work or school than do people in Group 1 (4% vs. 7%). Of note is the percentage of respondents reporting furthering their education or training and starting their own businesses in Group 3 (88% and 39%, respectively) relative to Group 1 respondents (55% and 10%, respectively).



## ► Comparison of Experiences in Addiction and in Recovery

Table 2 presents data for life experiences in active addiction and in recovery side by side. Table 6 compares experiences in active addiction with experiences at various stages of recovery. *These data represent the first empirical demonstration of the improvements that occurs in individuals' lives as a function of being in recovery, and of the benefits of supporting recovery to the nation's health and economy.* All of the findings are statistically significant and span all life areas included in this survey. What follows are highlights of the changes and life improvements experienced by those in recovery, as illustrated by the data in Table 2.

**GREATER FINANCIAL, FAMILY, AND CIVIC FUNCTIONING IN ADDICTION RECOVERY.** The percentage of participants reporting having financial problems (e.g., debt, bankruptcy) in active addiction is almost twice that of their report in recovery (70% vs. 38%). Conversely, over twice as many people reported paying bills on time in recovery relative to while in active addiction (91% vs. 41%), as well as paying back personal debt (82% vs. 40%). In recovery, 83% pay taxes (vs. 55% in active addiction), and nearly twice as many have good credit compared to when in active addiction (76% vs. 41%). Notably, nearly three times as many people in recovery plan for the future (e.g., saving for retirement) as those in active addiction (28% vs. 88%).

Involvement in domestic violence (as victim or perpetrator) decreases dramatically, from 41% in addiction to 9% in recovery. Family life also benefits greatly from individuals being in recovery: for instance, twice as many participants regained custody of a child while in recovery relative to when they were in active addiction (9% vs. 4%), and participation in family activities increases from 68% to 95%. Life in recovery for survey participants also includes being “good citizens”: volunteering in the community more than doubles, from 31% for those in active addiction to 84% for those in recovery, and voting increases significantly as well (from 61% to 87%).

**DRAMATIC DECREASE IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK IN ADDICTION RECOVERY.** Turning to health, recovery clearly benefits individuals, families, communities, and the nation. Frequent utilization of costly emergency room departments (other than for a different chronic condition) declines by a factor of nearly 10, from 22% in active addiction to 3% in recovery. Being in recovery is also associated with dramatically lower rates of contracting infectious diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS (from 17% in addiction to 4% in recovery).

Notably, the percentage of uninsured decreases by half from active addiction to recovery (from 39% to 20%). One of the key findings of this survey in the health domain is the *decrease by a factor of over four of reports of untreated emotional/mental health problems: from 68% in active addiction, to 15% in recovery.*

Another benefit of recovery to the nation is the *dramatic decrease in involvement in illegal acts and with the criminal justice system*: Overall, twice as many participants reported no involvement with the legal system in recovery as they had in active addiction (62% vs. 38%). Specifically, rates of arrests decrease by a factor of more than ten (from 53% to 5%) as does damaging property (from 59% to 6%). Incarceration declines sevenfold, from 34% to 5%.

**INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT AND WORK PERFORMANCE IN ADDICTION RECOVERY.** The survey also documents very significant improvements in employment and work performance as a function of being in recovery. Overall, the rate of steady employment in recovery is over 50% greater than in active addiction (83% vs. 51%). All indices of poor job performance decrease dramatically in recovery (e.g., getting fired or suspended drops from 51% to 10%), and frequently missing work or school shows even greater improvement, from 61% to 4%. Conversely, nearly twice as many people reported good job performance evaluations in recovery than they did while in active addiction (89% vs. 49%). While over twice as many survey participants furthered their education or training (e.g., by going back to school) in recovery than in active addiction (78% vs. 37%), the rate of dropping out of school decreased by a factor of ten: from 33% in addiction to 4% in recovery. Finally, almost twice as many respondents in recovery started their own businesses than did those in active addiction (26% vs. 15%).

## SURVEY LIMITATIONS

This is the first large-scale nationwide survey of individuals in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. The survey sought not only to document the numerous costs of active addiction but also to take a first step in examining the many benefits of recovery to individuals, families, communities, and the nation. As such, this is a landmark study. The findings provide clear empirical documentation of the heavy costs of active addiction in all areas of life and to society. More important, they provide a rigorous first look at the dramatic improvements in people's lives when they are in recovery, representing the saving of lives and taxpayer dollars.

As is always the case, a few cautionary notes are warranted when interpreting survey results. The survey was conducted exclusively online over a relatively short period (two months); racial minorities are underrepresented as are individuals without a college education or who are unemployed. At this writing, we regrettably lack the empirical knowledge base to characterize people in recovery in the United States, so we cannot definitively assess the representativeness of our sample relative to the recovery community at large. As an indication, according to U.S. Census data, the U.S. population consists of 65% non-Hispanic Whites (vs. 82% in this sample), and 43% of adults have no college education (vs. 9% in the current sample). Note that the survey was translated into Spanish, and a link to the survey in Spanish was maintained and disseminated in the Spanish-speaking media on the Internet and through organizations working with Spanish-speaking persons in recovery; yet only 10 surveys were completed in Spanish.

Another potential limitation of this survey centers on reporting bias—namely, the possibility that respondents overreported negative experiences in active addiction and/or positive ones in recovery. We were very mindful of this and took several steps to minimize this potential bias while designing and disseminating the survey. First, we used a parallel list of 44 life experiences in active addiction and in recovery and, within each, randomly ordered the positive and negative items. Second, in describing the purpose of the survey when disseminating the web link, we did not state that we sought to document the benefits of recovery but rather, “key aspects in the lives of people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs.”<sup>6</sup> Findings are consistent with the few scientific studies that examined broad changes in functioning as a result of ceasing drug and/or alcohol use,<sup>7</sup> affording us a strong level of confidence that the results reported here are minimally subject to reporting bias, if at all. Finally, this is a cross-sectional survey—that is, a “still shot” of participants’ lives, whereas the self-reported experiences that bear on active addiction are retrospective. Therefore, we cannot infer causation between participants going from active addiction to recovery and the dramatic improvements observed in every functioning domain we examined. Again, however, current survey findings are consistent with smaller, geographically constrained scientific studies, lending a high degree of confidence that findings can be interpreted with a fair degree of confidence.

---

1 Only 10 surveys in Spanish were completed and are excluded from this report.

2 Total percentages reported here may sometimes sum to slightly over or under 100 as the number were rounded for ease of interpretation

3 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6144a2.htm>

4 E.g., Laudet, A. (2007). What does recovery mean to you? Lessons from the recovery experience for research and practice. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 33(3), 243-256.

5 Data were collected in late 2012, a few years after the most severe recession in modern U.S. history, and many U.S. adults, regardless of recovery status, have recently experienced credit problems and/or declared bankruptcy.

6 “Faces & Voices is excited to conduct the first nationwide survey designed to document key aspects in the lives of people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. While much is known about the many costs of addiction, we know very little about what happens in a person's life in recovery. We are gathering this information to inform the public, policy makers, service planners and providers, and the recovery community about the milestones that people achieve in recovery. The information will contribute to educating the public about recovery and to address discriminatory barriers facing people in or seeking recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs

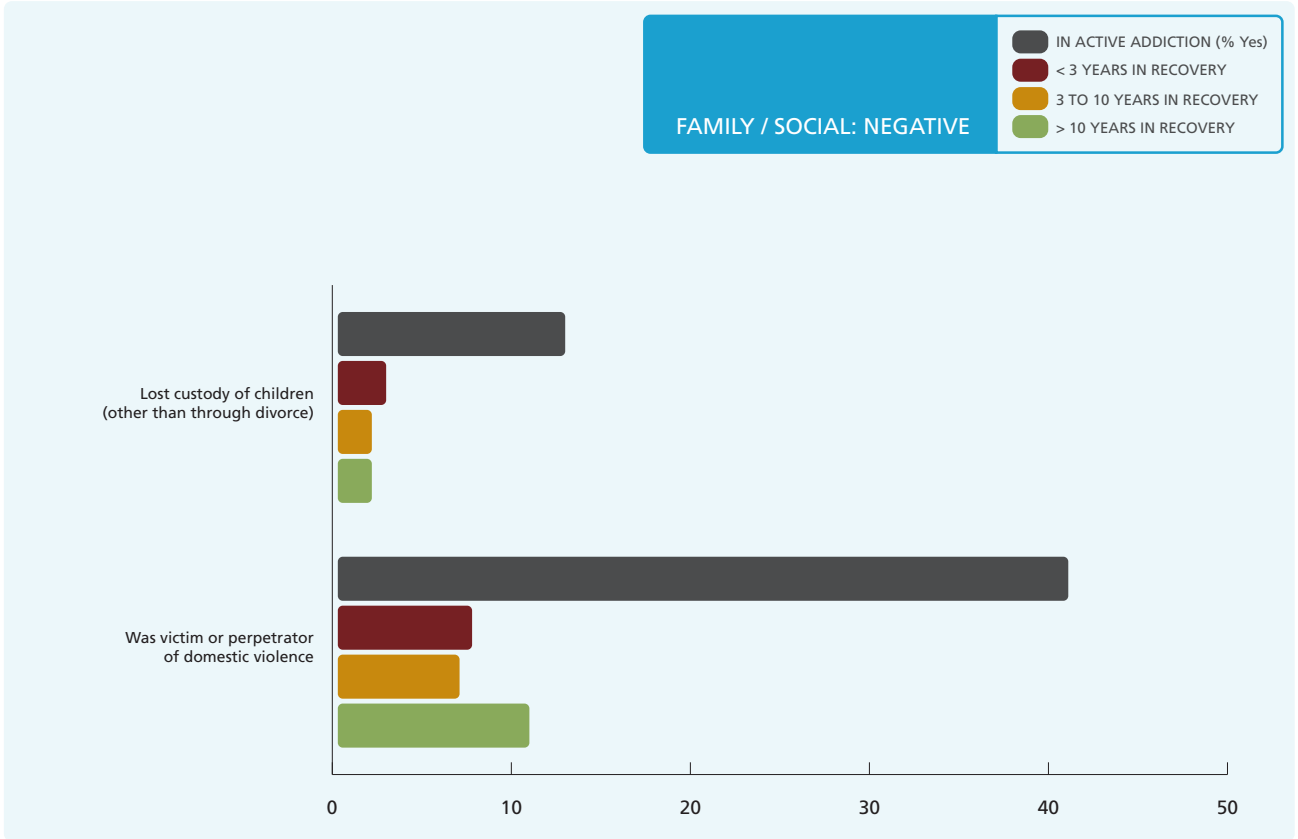
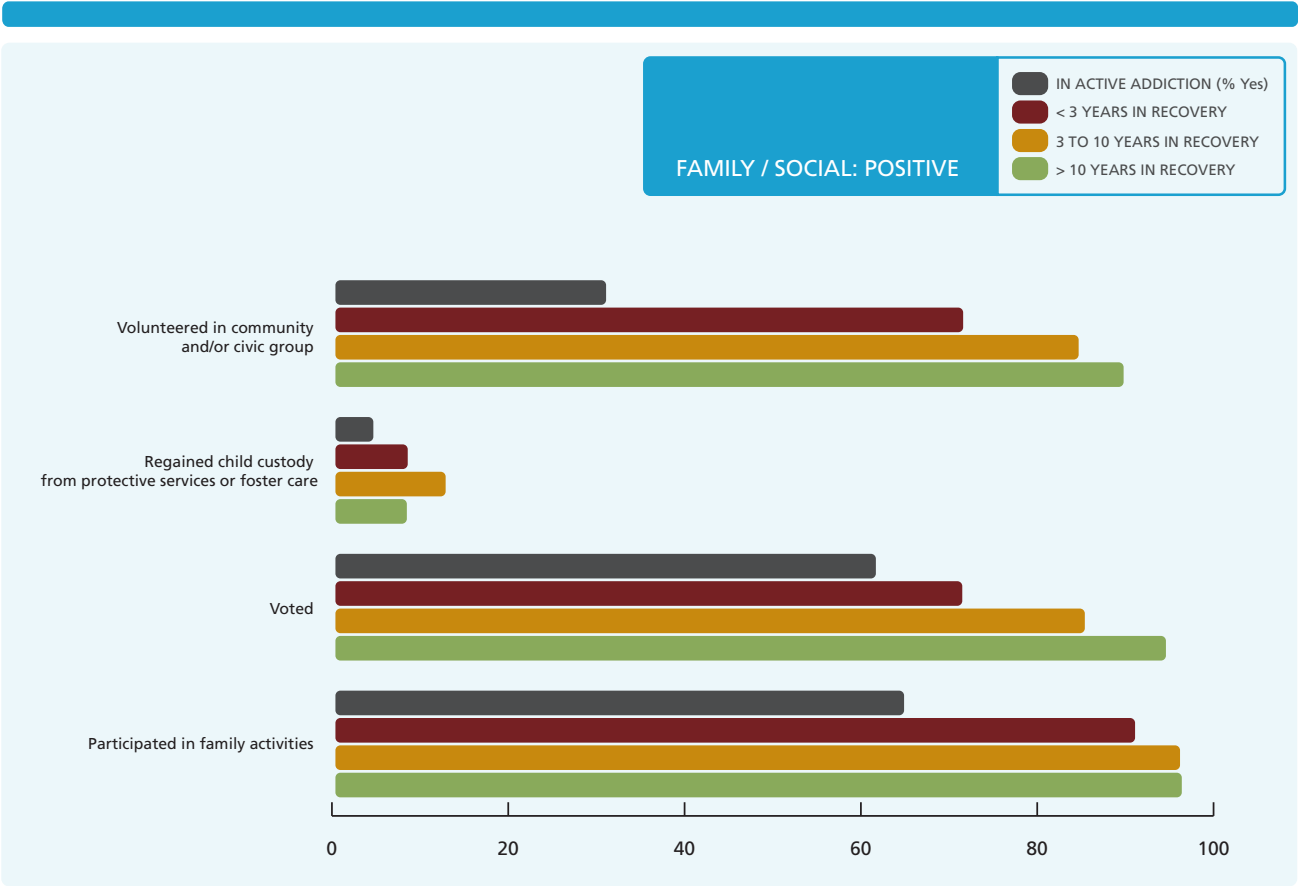
7 Laudet, A. B., & White, W. L. (2008). Recovery capital as prospective predictor of sustained recovery, life satisfaction, and stress among former poly-substance users. *Subst Use Misuse*, 43(1), 27-54; Dennis, M. L., Foss, M. A., & Scott, C. K. (2007). An eight-year perspective on the relationship between the duration of abstinence and other aspects of recovery. *Eval Rev*, 31(6), 585-612.

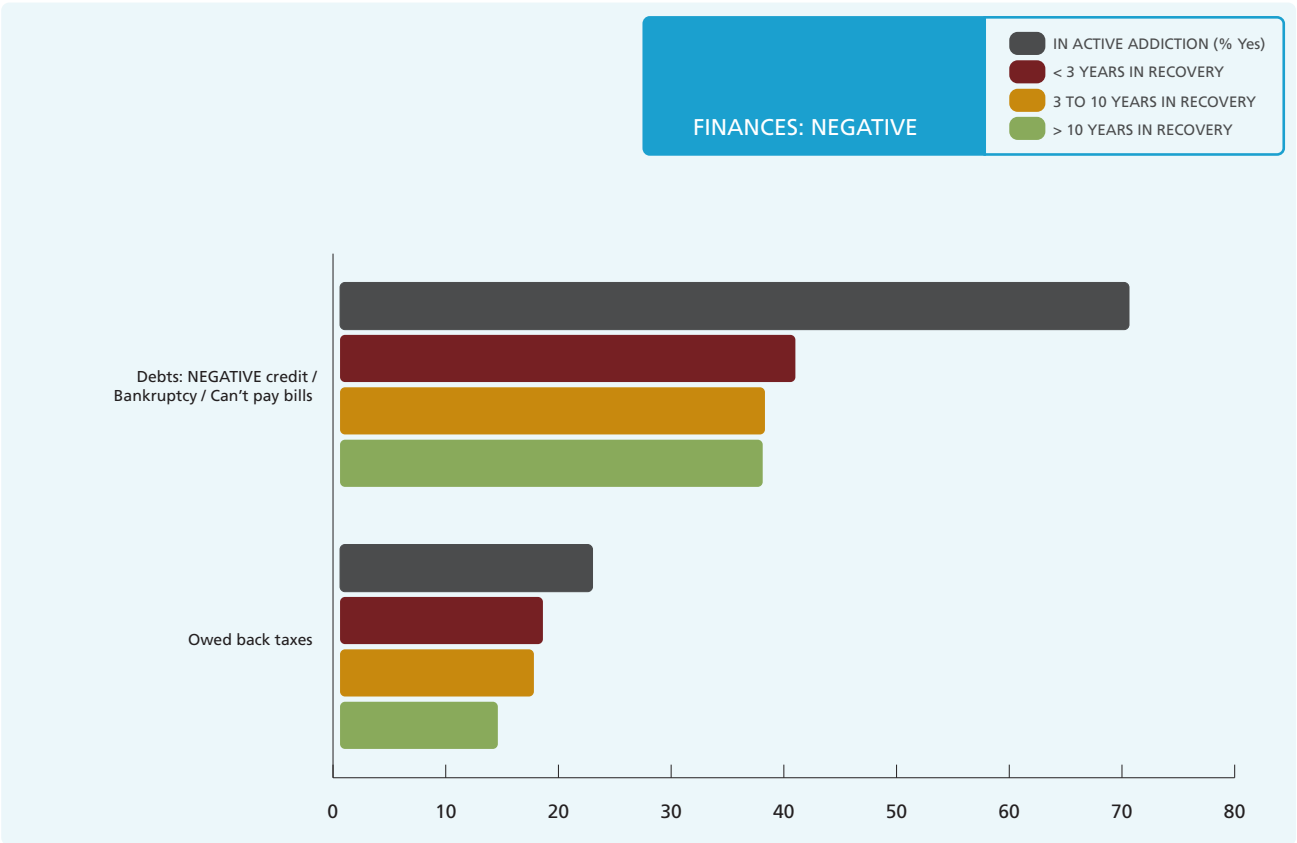
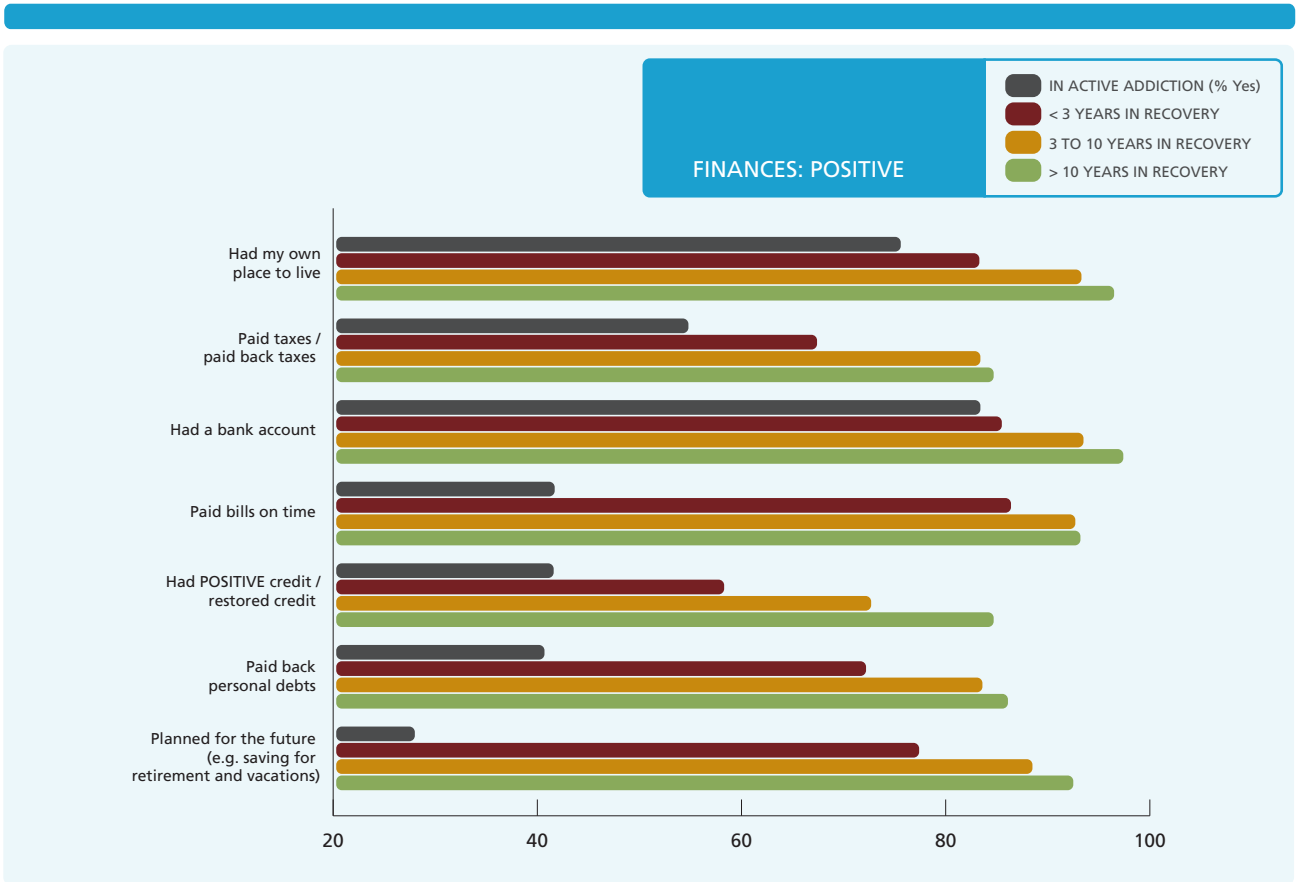
## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES AND POLICY

Faces & Voices of Recovery conducted the first nationwide survey of persons in recovery from drug and alcohol problems about their experiences in active addiction and in recovery. The survey findings document the many costs of active addiction to the individual and to society in terms of health, finances, work, family life, and criminal justice involvement. Most notably, the survey is the first to document the dramatic improvements people experience in all areas of life once they are in recovery, and that improvements continue over time as recovery is maintained. Importantly, survey findings are a clear empirical demonstration that ***recovery is not only possible for the over 23 million Americans still struggling with addiction, but also that in recovery, people lead full, productive, and healthy lives.*** This is counter to many of the stereotypes of persons in addiction recovery prevalent in the media, and shows that people in recovery are employed, pay taxes and bills, vote, volunteer in their communities, and take care of their health and their families. Survey findings also underline the fact that recovery is good not only for the individual but also for families, communities, and the nation's health and economy. These findings emphasize the need for policies, services, and funding to help more people initiate and sustain recovery, and for additional research to identify effective and cost-effective recovery-promoting policies and services. The findings are consistent with and provide empirical support for the broad policy agenda of Faces & Voices of Recovery, including the following key points:

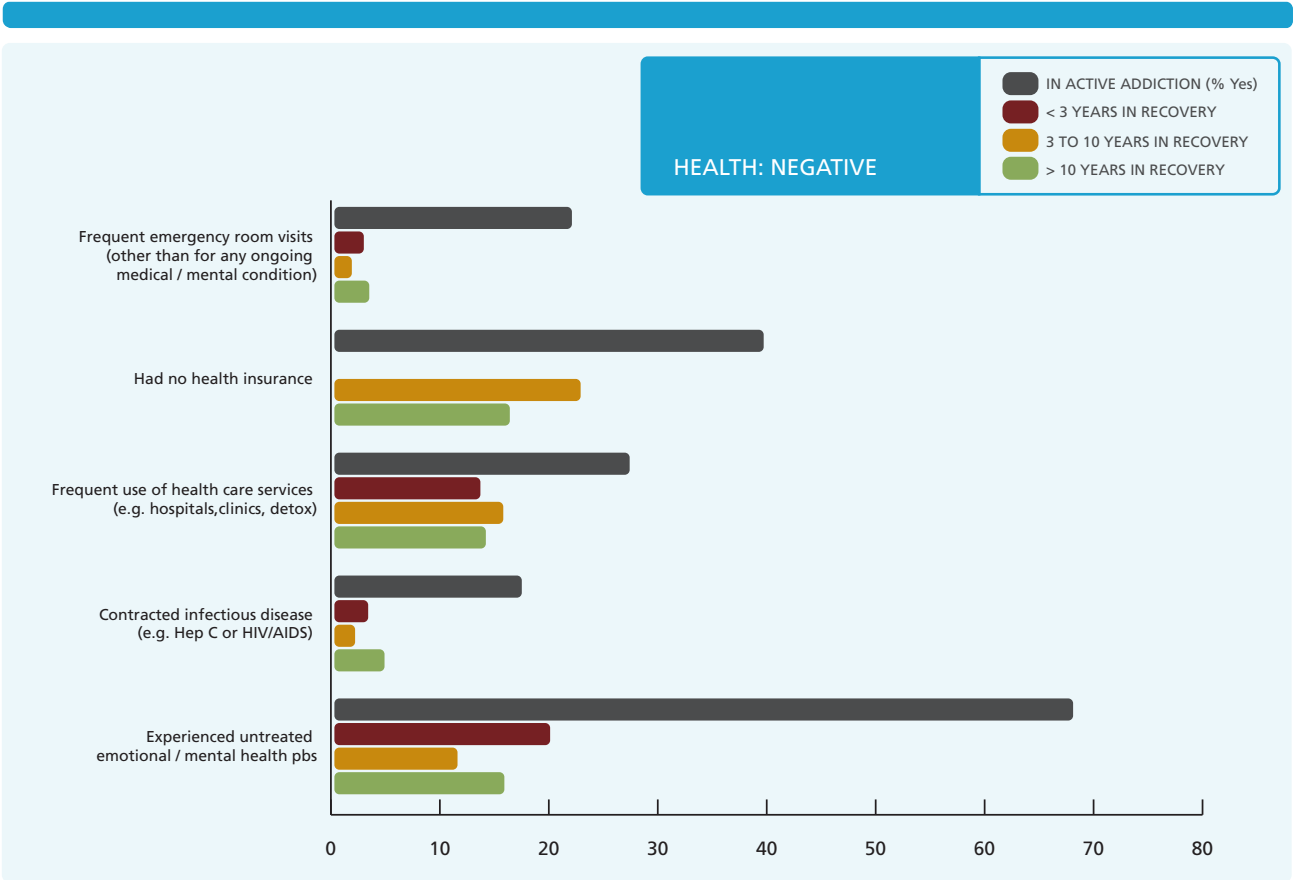
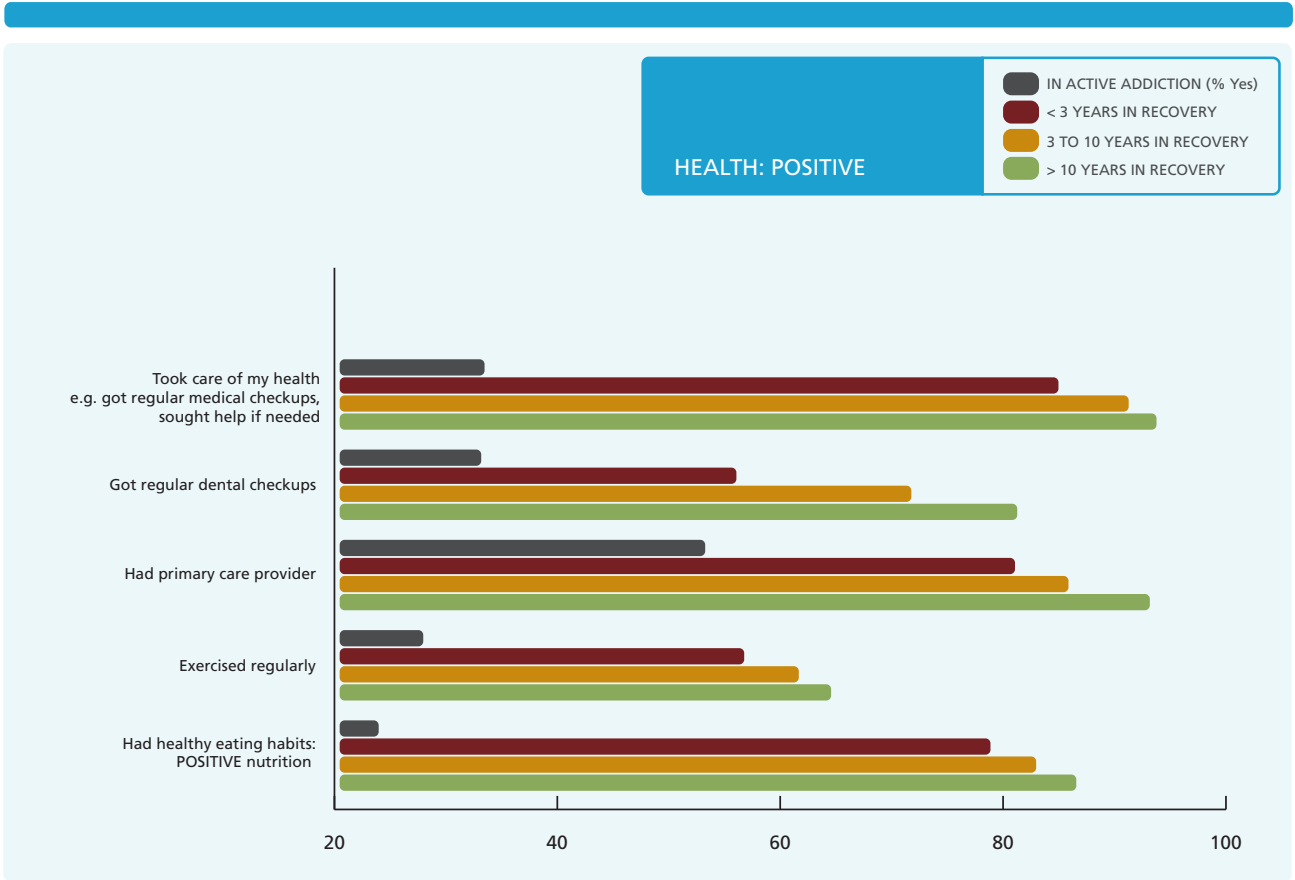
- Address and remove discriminatory policy and regulatory barriers in the areas of jobs, housing, health care, education, civic participation, and transportation at the state and federal levels. Many people in recovery who have been formerly incarcerated face legal barriers and discrimination when seeking services and employment. Employers are increasingly dependent on conducting criminal background checks and exclude from consideration individuals who have been arrested and/or convicted of misdemeanor and felony crimes.
- Ensure access to and financing for a full range of health care and other services to support individuals in managing their recovery under the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, the Substance Abuse and Prevention Treatment Block Grant, and other financing streams. Total health care costs are actually reduced, in the near and long term, when appropriate physical and addiction recovery support services are available.
- Incorporate the principles of recovery-oriented care into the missions and activities of local, state, and federal addiction-related departments and agencies.
- Implement a national public health awareness campaign on addiction recovery, including the ways that people are getting well, and encourage people to enroll in, participate in, and stay connected to the health system, thereby staying out of the criminal justice system.
- Invest in a robust recovery research portfolio at the National Institutes of Health. As National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) director Dr. Nora Volkow recently noted, "Most of the research that has been done up to now has focused on that immediate intervention that would allow a person to stop taking drugs. Much less is known about recovery." NIDA and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) should set aside funds specifically for this underserved area of research to signal to researchers and reviewers the importance of understanding the whole person, addressing the full range of peer and other services and supports that allow people to get their lives back on track, and determining outcomes and measurements for long-term recovery.

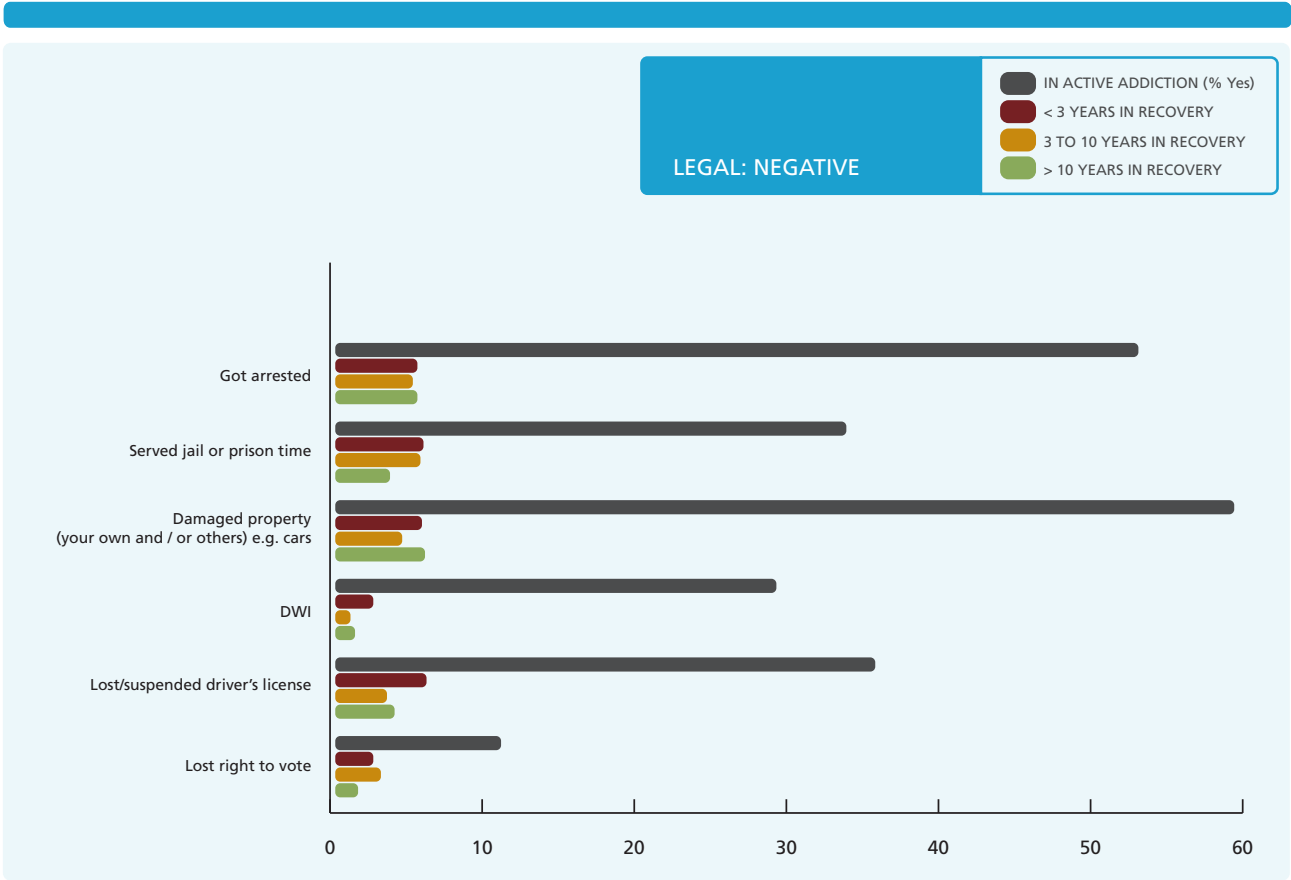
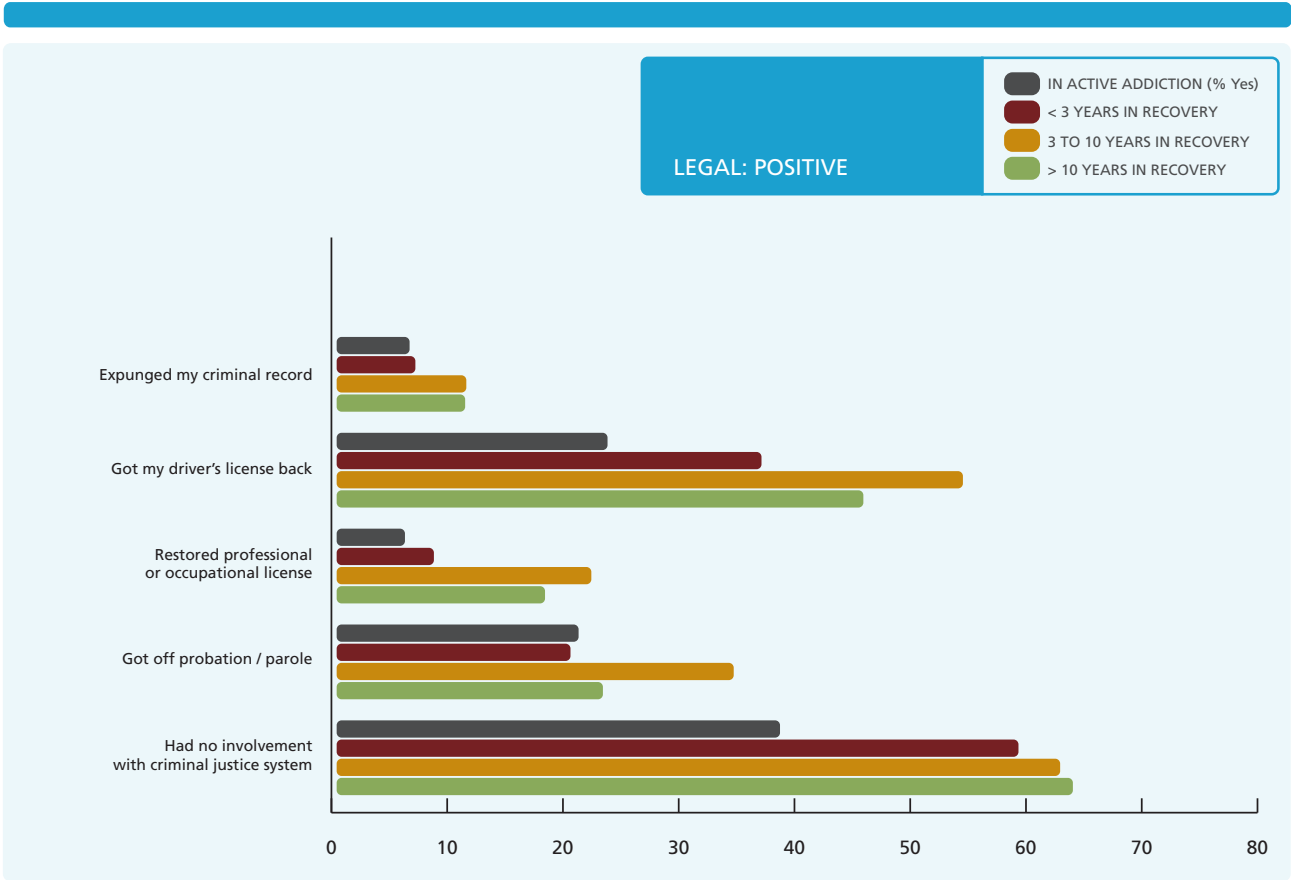
**Appendix I:  
Life In Recovery Survey Results  
as Graphic Charts**

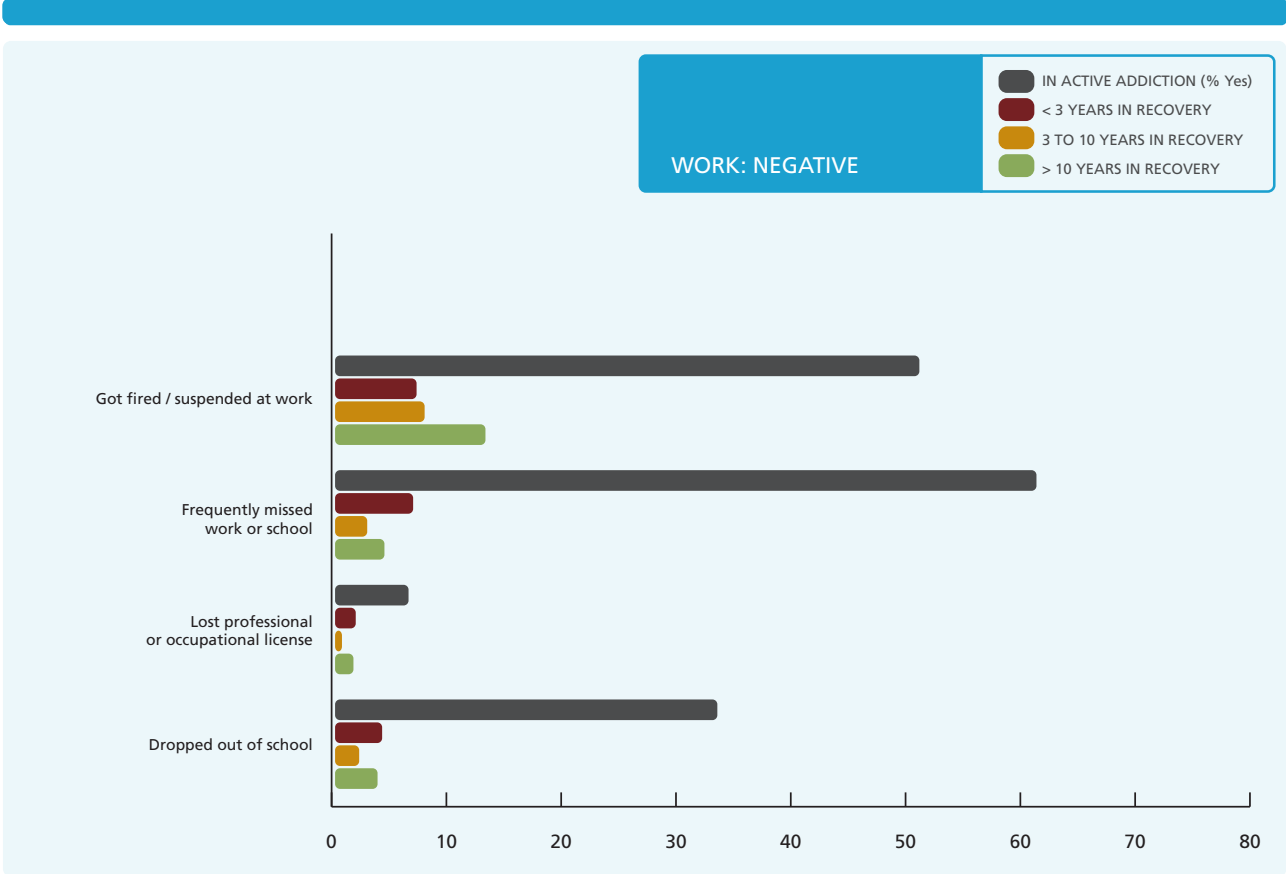
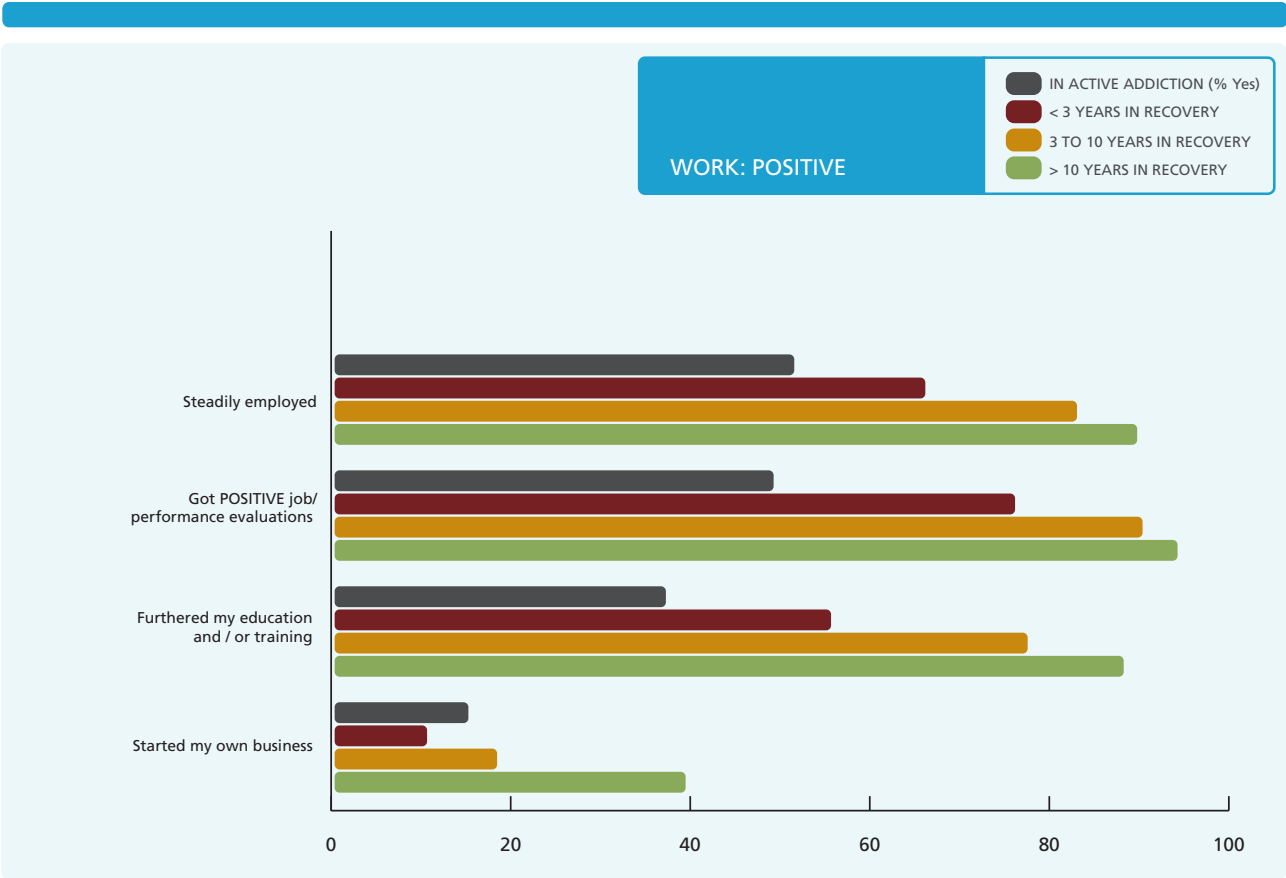












## Appendix II: Tables

**Table 1**

Individual Characteristics of Survey Participants

**Table 2**

Life Experiences in Active Addiction and in Addiction Recovery

**Table 3**

Life Experiences in Active Addiction: Gender Comparison

**Table 4**

Life Experiences in Addiction Recovery: Gender Comparison

**Table 5**

Life Experiences in Addiction Recovery as a Function of Recovery Duration

**Table 6**











Life Experiences in Active Addiction and in Addiction Recovery: Change over Time

**Table 1. Individual Characteristics of Survey Participants**

Domain		PERCENTAGES	Domain		PERCENTAGES
Gender	Female	56.8	Currently treated for chronic medical condition	Yes	47.6
Age	18-20	0.6	Use of tobacco products	Yes	32.9
	21-35	14.1	Mental Health [SR]	Poor	1.8
	36-50	31.7		Fair	11.7
	51-65	46.5		Good	31.7
	66 and over	7.0		Very good	36.4
Race	American Indian	9.5		Excellent	18.5
	Asian	0.4	EVER treated for chronic mental health condition	yes	62.4
	Pacific Islander/ native group	0.3	Currently treated for mental health condition	Yes	38.6
	African American	8.0	Quality of life [SR]	Poor	1.1
	White	81.8		Fair	5.8
Residential Setting	Urban	34.3		Good	22.2
	Suburban	39.3		Very good	42.6
	Rural	26.4		Excellent	28.4
Education	Some HS or less	1.5	Primary substance problem	Alcohol only	29.4
	HS or GED	7.6		Drugs only	13.4
	Some college	27.7		Drugs AND alcohol	57.3
	Vocational	7.5	Active substance use	Mean/range in years	18 (1-55)
	Bachelors	25.6	Age initiated recovery	Mean and range	36 (12-73)
	Graduate degree	30.0	Recovery [SR]	In recovery	75.2
Marital Status	Married/common law	50.3		Recovered	13.7
	Divorced, sep. or widowed	30.2		Used to have problem, no longer do	8.0
	Never married	20.0		In medication assisted recovery	3.1
Has Children	Yes	66.0	Recovery duration	under 1 yr	8.5
Employment	Employed	70.8		1-3 yrs	13.4
	Unemployed	7.6		3-5 yrs	10.4
	Student	6.6		5-10 yrs	16.3
	Homemaker	1.9		10-20 yrs	19.3
	Retired	8.1		20 + yrs	32.1
	Other	5.0	Recieved addiction treatment (yes)	Yes	70.5
Veteran Status	Military service	15.1	Took prescription for substance use problem (yes)	Yes	18.1
Health [SR]	Poor	2.3	Attended 12-step	Yes	94.6
	Fair	15.0	Attended non-12-step	Yes	22.4
	Good	40.2			
	Very good	30.7			
	Excellent	11.9			











\*[SR] : Self Rated

**Table 2. Life Experiences in Active Addiction and In Addiction Recovery**











	IN ACTIVE ADDICTION	IN RECOVERY
<b>FINANCES: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>		
Debts: NEGATIVE Credit / Bankruptcy / Can't pay bills	70.0%	38.0%
Owed back taxes	22.4	15.7
Had my own place to live	75.3	91.8
Paid taxes/paid back taxes	54.5	80.3
Had a bank account	83.1	93.4
Paid bills on time	41.4	91.2
Had: POSITIVE Credit / Restored credit	41.3	75.5
Paid back personal debts	40.4	82.0
Planned for the future (e.g. saving for retirement and vacations)	27.7	87.8
<b>FAMILY/SOCIAL: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>		
Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	12.7	2.1
Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	40.8	8.9
Volunteered in community and/or civic group	30.7	84.0
Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	4.3	9.2
Voted	61.3	86.7
Participated in family activities	64.5	94.6
<b>HEALTH: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>		
Frequent Emergency Room visits (other than for any ongoing medical / mental condition)	21.8	2.6
Had no health insurance	39.4	19.8
Frequent use of health care services (e.g. hospitals, clinics, detox)	27.1	14.2
Contracted infectious disease (e.g. Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	17.2	3.5
Experienced untreated emotional / mental health pbs	67.8	15.2
Took care of my health e.g. got regular medical checkups, sought help if needed	33.0	90.6
Got regular dental checkups	32.7	72.8
Had primary care provider	52.8	88.0
Exercised regularly	27.5	61.8
Had healthy eating habits: POSITIVE nutrition	23.5	83.4
<b>LEGAL: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>		
Got arrested	52.8	5.3
Served jail or prison time	33.6	4.6
Damaged property (your own and / or others) e.g. cars	59.1	5.5
DWI	29.0	1.5
Lost / suspended driver's license	35.5	4.3
Lost right to vote	10.9	2.1
Expunged my criminal record	6.3	10.4
Got my driver's license back	23.4	45.9
Restored professional or occupational license	5.9	16.6
Got off probation/parole	20.9	25.4
Had no involvement with criminal justice system	38.3	62.1
<b>WORK: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>		
Got fired / suspended at work	50.9	10.3
Frequently missed work or school	61.1	4.4
Lost professional or occupational license	6.4	1.4
Dropped out of school	33.3	3.5
Steadily employed	51.2	82.5
Got: POSITIVE job / performance evaluations	48.9	88.9
Furthered my education and / or training	36.9	78.1
Started my own business	14.9	27.5



**Table 3. Life Experiences in Active Addiction: Gender Comparison**

	IN ACTIVE ADDICTION	MALES	FEMALES
<b>FINANCES: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Debts: NEGATIVE Credit / Bankruptcy / Can't pay bills	70.0%	70.9%	69.3%
Owed back taxes	22.4	29.2	17.1
Had my own place to live	75.3	74.2	76.1
Paid taxes / paid back taxes	54.5	55.6	53.7
Had a bank account	83.1	83.0	83.2
Paid bills on time	41.4	42.9	40.1
Had: POSITIVE Credit / Restored credit	41.3	45.1	38.2
Paid back personal debts	40.4	44.1	37.4
Planned for the future (e.g. saving for retirement and vacations)	27.7	28.8	26.9
<b>FAMILY/SOCIAL: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	12.7	8.7	15.8
Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	40.8	24.8	53.2
Volunteered in community and / or civic group	30.7	31.7	29.8
Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	4.3	3.0	5.3
Voted	61.3	62.6	60.3
Participated in family activities	64.5	64.1	64.9
<b>HEALTH: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Frequent Emergency Room visits (other than for any ongoing medical/mental condition)	21.8	19.1	23.9
Had no health insurance	39.4	40.5	38.6
Frequent use of health care services (e.g., hospitals, clinics, detox)	27.1	25.4	28.5
Contracted infectious disease (e.g., Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	17.2	17.2	17.2
Experienced untreated emotional / mental health pbs	67.8	63.0	71.6
Took care of my health (e.g. got regular medical checkups, sought help if needed)	33.0	30.7	34.8
Got regular dental checkups	32.7	31.8	33.3
Had primary care provider	52.8	49.5	55.2
Exercised regularly	27.5	28.6	26.7
Had healthy eating habits: POSITIVE nutrition	23.5	25.1	22.3
<b>LEGAL: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Got arrested	52.8	64.0	44.1
Served jail or prison time	33.6	41.1	27.6
Damaged property (your own and/or others) e.g. cars	59.1	67.4	52.7
DWI	29.0	38.0	22.0
Lost / suspended driver's license	35.5	44.3	28.6
Lost right to vote	10.9	13.2	9.1
Expunged my criminal record	6.3	7.9	5.1
Got my driver's license back	23.4	30.2	18.0
Restored professional or occupational license	5.9	7.6	4.6
Got off probation / parole	20.9	26.6	16.4
Had no involvement with criminal justice system	38.3	32.8	42.6
<b>WORK: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Got fired / suspended at work	50.9	56.0	47.0
Frequently missed work or school	61.1	63.3	59.4
Lost professional or occupational license	6.4	7.3	5.7
Dropped out of school	33.3	33.6	33.0
Steadily employed	51.2	55.4	47.8
Got: POSITIVE job / performance evaluations	48.9	49.5	48.5
Furthered my education and / or training	36.9	35.6	37.9
Started my own business	14.9	19.6	11.3

**Table 4. Life Experiences in Addiction Recovery: Gender Comparison**

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
<b>FINANCES: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Debts: NEGATIVE Credit / Bankruptcy / Can't pay bills	38.0%	37.1%	38.7%
Owed back taxes	15.7	18.3	13.6
Had my own place to live	91.8	90.4	92.9
Paid taxes / paid back taxes	80.3	83.6	77.8
Had a bank account	93.4	93.6	93.2
Paid bills on time	91.2	92.7	90.0
Had: POSITIVE Credit / Restored credit	75.5	77.2	74.3
Paid back personal debts	82.0	83.0	81.2
Planned for the future (e.g. saving for retirement and vacations)	87.8	87.1	88.3
<b>FAMILY/SOCIAL: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	2.1	1.7	2.3
Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	8.9	4.3	12.4
Volunteered in community and / or civic group	84.0	84.4	83.6
Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	9.2	6.4	11.5
Voted	86.7	86.3	87.1
Participated in family activities	94.6	93.9	95.2
<b>HEALTH: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Frequent Emergency Room visits (other than for any ongoing medical/mental condition)	2.6	2.3	2.9
Had no health insurance	19.8	19.2	20.2
Frequent use of health care services (e.g. hospitals, clinics, detox)	14.2	13.9	14.3
Contracted infectious disease (e.g. Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	3.5	3.9	3.2
Experienced untreated emotional / mental health pbs	15.2	15.5	15.1
Took care of my health (e.g. got regular medical checkups, sought help if needed)	90.6	90.3	90.8
Got regular dental checkups	72.8	71.6	73.8
Had primary care provider	88.0	86.9	88.8
Exercised regularly	61.8	63.5	60.5
Had healthy eating habits: POSITIVE nutrition	83.4	83.8	83.1
<b>LEGAL: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Got arrested	5.3	7.9	3.3
Served jail or prison time	4.6	5.8	3.7
Damaged property (your own and/or others) e.g. cars	5.5	6.3	4.8
DWI	1.5	2.0	1.0
Lost / Suspended driver's license	4.3	5.1	3.6
Lost right to vote	2.1	2.6	1.7
Expunged my criminal record	10.4	12.9	8.4
Got my driver's license back	45.9	55.9	38.0
Restored professional or occupational license	16.6	20.2	13.7
Got off probation / parole	25.4	30.6	21.3
Had no involvement with criminal justice system	62.1	62.4	61.9
<b>WORK: NEGATIVE  AND POSITIVE </b>			
Got fired / Suspended at work	10.3	11.2	9.6
Frequently missed work or school	4.4	3.6	4.9
Lost professional or occupational license	1.4	1.5	1.3
Dropped out of school	3.5	3.2	3.8
Steadily employed	82.5	84.9	80.5
Got: POSITIVE Job / Performance evaluations	88.9	90.5	87.7
Furthered my education and / or training	78.1	78.6	77.7
Started my own business	27.5	31.9	24.0

**Table 5. Life Experiences in Addiction Recovery as a Function of Recovery Duration**

	TOTAL	< 3 YEARS in Recovery	3 - 10 YEARS in Recovery	> 10 YEARS in Recovery
<b>FINANCES: NEGATIVE ▼ AND POSITIVE ▲</b>				
Debts: NEGATIVE Credit / Bankruptcy / Can't pay bills	38.0%	40.4%	37.7%	37.5%
Owed back taxes	15.7	18.0	17.2	14.0
Had my own place to live	91.8	83.0	93.0	96.2
Paid taxes / Paid back taxes	80.3	67.1	83.1	84.4
Had a bank account	93.4	85.2	93.2	97.1
Paid bills on time	91.2	86.1	92.4	92.9
Had: POSITIVE credit /restored credit	75.5	58.0	72.4	84.4
Paid back personal debts	82.0	71.9	83.3	85.8
Planned for the future (e.g. saving for retirement and vacations)	87.8	77.1	88.2	92.2
<b>FAMILY/SOCIAL: NEGATIVE ▼ AND POSITIVE ▲</b>				
Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	2.1	2.7	1.9	1.9
Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	8.9	7.5	6.8	10.7
Volunteered in community and / or civic group	84.0	71.2	84.3	89.4
Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	9.2	8.2	12.5T	8.1
Voted	86.7	71.1	85.0	94.2
Participated in family activities	94.6	90.7	95.8	96.0
<b>HEALTH: NEGATIVE ▼ AND POSITIVE ▲</b>				
Frequent Emergency Room visits	2.6	2.7	1.6	3.2
Had no health insurance	19.8	25.6	22.6	16.1
Frequent use of health care services (e.g. hospitals,clinics, detox)	14.2	13.4	15.5	13.9
Contracted infectious disease (e.g. Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	3.5	3.1	1.9	4.6
Experienced untreated emotional / mental health pbs	15.2	19.8	11.3	15.6
Took care of my health	90.6	84.5	90.8	93.3
Got regular dental checkups	72.8	55.6	71.3	80.8
Had primary care provider	88.0	80.6	85.4	92.7
Exercised regularly	61.8	56.3	61.2	64.1
Had healthy eating habits: POSITIVE nutrition	83.4	78.4	82.5	86.1
<b>LEGAL: NEGATIVE ▼ AND POSITIVE ▲</b>				
Got arrested	5.3	5.4	5.1	5.4
Served jail or prison time	4.6	5.8	5.6	3.6
Damaged property (your own and/or others) e.g. cars	5.5	5.7	4.4	5.9
DWI	1.5	2.5	1.0	1.3
Lost / Suspended driver's license	4.3	6.0	3.4	3.9
Lost right to vote	2.1	2.5	3.0	1.5
Expunged my criminal record	10.4	6.8	11.2	11.1
Got my driver's license back	45.9	36.7	54.1	45.5
Restored professional or occupational license	16.6	8.4	22.0	18.0
Got off probation / parole	25.4	20.2	34.3	23.0
Had no involvement with criminal justice system	62.1	58.9	62.5	63.6
<b>WORK: NEGATIVE ▼ AND POSITIVE ▲</b>				
Got fired / Suspended at work	10.3	7.1	7.8	13.1
Frequently missed work or school	4.4	6.8	2.8	4.3
Lost professional or occupational license	1.4	1.8	0.6	1.6
Dropped out of school	3.5	4.1	2.1	3.7
Steadily employed	82.5	65.8	82.7	89.4
Got: POSITIVE job / performance evaluations	88.9	75.8	90.0	93.9
Furthered my education and / or training	78.1	55.3	77.2	87.9
Started my own business	27.5	10.3	18.1	39.1

**Table 6. Life Experiences in Active Addiction and in Addiction Recovery: Change over Time**

	IN ACTIVE ADDICTION	IN RECOVERY	< 3 YEARS in Recovery	3 - 10 YEARS in Recovery	> 10 YEARS in Recovery
<b>FINANCES: NEGATIVE ⬇️ AND POSITIVE ⬆️</b>					
Debts: NEGATIVE Credit / Bankruptcy / Can't pay bills	70%	38.0%	40.4%	37.7%	37.5%
Owed back taxes	22.4	15.7	18.0	17.2	14.0
Had my own place to live	75.3	91.8	83.0	93.0	96.2
Paid taxes / paid back taxes	54.5	80.3	67.1	83.1	84.4
Had a bank account	83.1	93.4	85.2	93.2	97.1
Paid bills on time	41.4	91.2	86.1	92.4	92.9
Had: POSITIVE credit / restored credit	41.3	75.5	58.0	72.4	84.4
Paid back personal debts	40.4	82.0	71.9	83.3	85.8
Planned for the future (e.g. saving for retirement and vacations)	27.7	87.8	77.1	88.2	92.2
<b>FAMILY/SOCIAL: NEGATIVE ⬇️ AND POSITIVE ⬆️</b>					
Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	12.7	2.1	2.7	1.9	1.9
Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	40.8	8.9	7.5	6.8	10.7
Volunteered in community and/or civic group	30.7	84	71.2	84.3	89.4
Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	4.3	9.2	8.2	12.5	8.1
Voted	61.3	86.7	71.1	85	94.2
Participated in family activities	64.5	94.6	90.7	95.8	96.0
<b>HEALTH: NEGATIVE ⬇️ AND POSITIVE ⬆️</b>					
Frequent Emergency Room visits	21.8	2.6	2.7	1.6	3.2
Had no health insurance	39.4	19.8	25.6	22.6	16.1
Frequent use of health care services (e.g. hospitals, clinics, detox)	27.1	14.2	13.4	15.5	13.9
Contracted infectious disease (e.g. Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	17.2	3.5	3.1	1.9	4.6
Experienced untreated emotional / mental health pbs	67.8	15.2	19.8	11.3	15.6
Took care of my health	33.0	90.6	84.5	90.8	93.3
Got regular dental checkups	32.7	72.8	55.6	71.3	80.8
Had primary care provider	52.8	88.0	80.6	85.4	92.7
Exercised regularly	27.5	61.8	56.3	61.2	64.1
Had healthy eating habits: POSITIVE nutrition	23.5	83.4	78.4	82.5	86.1
<b>LEGAL: NEGATIVE ⬇️ AND POSITIVE ⬆️</b>					
Got arrested	52.8	5.3	5.4	5.1	5.4
Served jail or prison time	33.6	4.6	5.8	5.6	3.6
Damaged property (your own and/or others) e.g. cars	59.1	5.5	5.7	4.4	5.9
DWI	29.0	1.5	2.5	1.0	1.3
Lost / suspended driver's license	35.5	4.3	6.0	3.4	3.9
Lost right to vote	10.9	2.1	2.5	3.0	1.5
Expunged my criminal record	6.3	10.4	6.8	11.2	11.1
Got my driver's license back	23.4	45.9	36.7	54.1	45.5
Restored professional or occupational license	5.9	16.6	8.4	22.0	18.0
Got off probation / parole	20.9	25.4	20.2	34.3	23.0
Had no involvement with criminal justice system	38.3	62.1	58.9	62.5	63.6
<b>WORK: NEGATIVE ⬇️ AND POSITIVE ⬆️</b>					
Got fired/suspended at work	50.9	10.3	7.1	7.8	13.1
Frequently missed work or school	61.1	4.4	6.8	2.8	4.3
Lost professional or occupational license	6.4	1.4	1.8	0.6	1.6
Dropped out of school	33.3	3.5	4.1	2.1	3.7
Steadily employed	51.2	82.5	65.8	82.7	89.4
Got: POSITIVE job / performance evaluations	48.9	88.9	75.8	90.0	93.9
Furthered my education and / or training	36.9	78.1	55.3	77.2	87.9
Started my own business	14.9	27.5	10.3	18.1	39.1

**Appendix III:  
Life In Recovery Survey  
Questionnaire**

# Life in Recovery Survey

## Life in Recovery Survey

Faces & Voices is excited to conduct the first nationwide survey designed to document key aspects in the lives of people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. While much is known about the many costs of addiction, we know very little about what happens in a person's life in recovery. We are gathering this information to inform the public, policymakers, service planners and providers and the recovery community – about the milestones that people achieve in recovery. The information will contribute to educating the public about recovery and to address discriminatory barriers facing people in or seeking recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

**WHO SHOULD TAKE THE SURVEY?** Anyone who considers themselves in recovery from alcohol and other drugs problems is encouraged to take the survey. If you know other people who may also be interested in sharing their experiences for this important project, please send them the survey [link](#) and encourage them to participate. Thanks so much!

**ABOUT THE SURVEY.** The survey is available in English and in [Spanish](#). It takes just about 10 minutes to finish. All of your answers are completely confidential – we don't ask for your name or any other identifying information. You can take the survey between November 1 and December 31, 2012.

**NEED TO CONTACT US?** Email us at [info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](mailto:info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org).



## ABOUT YOU

### \*1. Are you male or female? (choose one)

☐ Male

☐ Female

### 2. What is your age? (choose one)

☐ 18-20

☐ 21-35

☐ 36-50

☐ 51-65

☐ 66 and over

### 3. What type of setting do you currently live in? (choose one)

☐ Urban (large city)

☐ Suburban (near a large city)

☐ Rural town (not near a large city)

☐ Rural area (where homes and buildings are far apart)

### 4. What is your highest level of education? (choose one)

☐ Some high school or less

☐ High school graduate or GED

☐ Some college

☐ Vocational degree

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Graduate degree

### 5. What is your current marital status? (choose one)

☐ Now married or living in a marriage-like relationship

☐ Divorced, separated, or widowed

☐ Never married

## Life in Recovery Survey

### 6. What is your ethnic background? (choose one)

- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Non Hispanic or Latino

### 7. Which racial background best describes you? (choose one)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ White

### 8. Which one best describes your employment status? (choose one)

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Homemaker
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

### 9. Have you ever served in the US military (active or reserve)?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

### 10. Do you have any children?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

### 11. If you answered Yes to Question #10, otherwise skip to question #12: How many of your children are under 18?

Number of children under  
18

## Life in Recovery Survey

### 12. Overall, how would you describe your physical health right now? (Choose one)

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Excellent

### 13. Are you currently under a doctor's care for an ongoing ('chronic') medical condition? (e.g., high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, asthma, arthritis)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

### 14. Do you use tobacco products (e.g., smoke cigarettes or cigar, snuff)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

### 15. How often do you drink coffee (caffeinated or decaf, hot or iced)?

- ☐ Never or less than once per month
- ☐ 1 - 3 per month
- ☐ 1 per week
- ☐ 2 - 4 per week
- ☐ 5 - 6 per week
- ☐ 1 per day
- ☐ 2 - 3 per day
- ☐ 4 - 5 per day
- ☐ 6+ per day

### 16. Overall, how would you describe your mental health right now? (Choose one)

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Excellent

## Life in Recovery Survey

**17. Are you currently receiving help or treatment for emotional or mental health problems (e.g., therapy, counseling, medication)?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

**18. If you answered No to question #17, otherwise skip to question #19: Have you ever been treated for an emotional or mental health problem?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

## ABOUT YOUR ADDICTION AND RECOVERY

**19. When you were in active addiction, which substance(s) was your primary problem? (choose one)**

- ☐ Alcohol only
- ☐ Drugs only
- ☐ Both drugs and alcohol

**20. For how long did you use drugs and/or alcohol?**

years (under one year: enter 1)

**21. When is the last time you drank alcohol or used drugs? (if you do not know the exact day enter '15', if you do not know the exact month enter '6')**

MM DD YYYY  
Please Enter Date:  /  /

**22. How old were you when you came into recovery?**

age when initiated recovery

**23. Which category best describes how you define yourself now, with respect to your prior alcohol and/or drug use? (choose one)**

- ☐ in recovery
- ☐ recovered
- ☐ used to have an alcohol or drug problem, but don't any more
- ☐ in medication-assisted recovery

**24. Thinking of the answer you provided to the previous question, how long have you been in recovery/recovered etc? (choose one)**

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ Between 1-3 years
- ☐ Between 3-5 years
- ☐ Between 5-10 years
- ☐ Between 10-20 years
- ☐ 20 years or more

## Life in Recovery Survey

**25. Have you ever gone to a treatment program such as detox, methadone clinic, DUI program, in- or outpatient to deal with drugs and/or alcohol problems?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

**26. Have you ever taken medications prescribed by a health care professional to deal with drug and/or alcohol problems (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine, Vivitrol – DO NOT INCLUDE MEDICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH)?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

**27. If you answered YES to Question 26, otherwise skip to question #28: Are you currently taking prescribed medication to deal with drug and/or alcohol problems/support your recovery?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

**28. Have you ever attended a 12-step addiction recovery meeting such as Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

**29. If you answered YES to Question 28, otherwise skip to question#30: Are you currently attending 12-step addiction recovery meetings regularly (once a week or more often)?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

**30. Have you ever attended a NON 12-step addiction recovery support group (e.g., LifeRing, SMART Recovery/Rational Recovery)**

☐ No

☐ Yes

## Life in Recovery Survey

**31. If you answered YES to Question 30, otherwise skip to question #32: Are you currently attending these NON 12-step addiction recovery support groups regularly (once a week or more often)?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

## ABOUT YOUR LIFE THEN AND NOW

**32. Please indicate which of the following events/situations you experienced/engaged in WHILE IN ACTIVE ADDICTION (if NOT APPLICABLE please check NO)**

	No	Yes
fN1 Debts/bad credit/bankruptcy/Can't pay bills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP4 Had a bank account	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP7 Had good credit /restored credit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP1 Had my own place to live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fN2 Owed back taxes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP8 Paid back personal debts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP6 Paid bills on time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP2 Paid taxes/paid back taxes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSN1 Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP7 Participated in family activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP9 Planned for the future (e.g., saving for retirement and taking vacations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP2 Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSN3 Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP1 Volunteered in community and/or civic group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP6 Voted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN7 Contracted infectious disease (e.g., Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP7 Exercised regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN8 Experienced untreated emotional/mental health problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN1 Frequent Emergency Room visits (other than for any ongoing medical/mental condition)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN6 Frequent use of health care services (e.g., hospitals, clinics, detox)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP3 Got regular dental checkups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP6 Had primary care provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP8 Had healthy eating habits/good nutrition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP1 Took care of my health e.g., got regular medical checkups, sought help if needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN3 Had no health insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN1 Got arrested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Life in Recovery Survey

LN3 Damaged property (your own and/or others) e.g., cars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN5 DWI	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP1 Expunged my criminal record	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP2 Got my driver's license back	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN8 Lost right to vote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN6 Lost/suspended driver's license	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP5 Had no involvement with criminal justice system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP4 Got off probation/parole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP3 Restored professional or occupational license	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN2 Served jail or prison time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN6 Dropped out of school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN2 Got fired/suspended at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN4 Frequently missed work or school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP4 Furthered my education and/or training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP2 Got good job/performance evaluations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN5 Lost professional or occupational license	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP5 Started my own business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP1 Steadily employed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**33. Did any other significant event, good or bad, happen to you while in active addiction?  
(250 characters or less)**

## ABOUT YOUR LIFE THEN AND NOW CONT'D

**34. Please indicate which of the following events/situations you have experienced SINCE YOU CAME INTO RECOVERY (if NOT APPLICABLE please check NO)**

	No	Yes
fN1 Have debts/bad credit/bankruptcy/can't pay bills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP4 Have a bank account	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP7 Have good credit /restored credit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP1 Have my own place to live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fN2 Owe back taxes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP8 Pay back personal debts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP6 Pay bills on time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fP2 Pay taxes/paid back taxes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSN1 Lost custody of children (other than through divorce)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP7 Participate in family activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP9 Plan for the future (e.g., saving for retirement and taking vacations)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP2 Regained child custody from protective services or foster care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSN3 Was victim or perpetrator of domestic violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP1 Volunteer in community and/or civic group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FSP6 Vote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN7 Contracted infectious disease (e.g., Hep C or HIV/AIDS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP7 Exercise regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN8 Experience untreated emotional/mental health problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN1 Frequent Emergency Room visits (other than for any ongoing medical/mental condition)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN6 Frequent use of health care services (e.g., hospitals, clinics, detox)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP3 Get regular dental checkups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP6 Have primary care provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP8 Have healthy eating habits/good nutrition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HP1 Take care of my health e.g., get regular medical checkups, seek help if needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HN3 Have no health insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN1 Got arrested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Life in Recovery Survey

LN3 Damage property (your own and/or others) e.g., cars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN5 DWI	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP1 Expunged my criminal record	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP2 Have my driver's license back	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN8 Lost right to vote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN6 Lost/suspended driver's license	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP5 Have no involvement with criminal justice system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP4 Got off probation/parole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LP3 Restored professional or occupational license	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LN2 Served jail or prison time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN6 Dropped out of school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN2 Got fired/suspended at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN4 Frequently miss work or school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP4 Furthered my education and/or training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP2 Get good job/performance evaluations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WN5 Lost professional or occupational license	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP5 Started my own business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WP1 Steadily employed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## ABOUT YOUR LIFE THEN AND NOW CONT'D

**35. Has any other significant event, good or bad, happen to since you entered recovery? (250 characters or less)**

**36. Overall, how would you rate your quality of life?**

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Excellent

**37. Is there anything you would like to add about the costs of addictions and/or the benefits of recovery to your life? (250 characters or less)**

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING OUR SURVEY!!!**

**EACH VOICE COUNTS – PLEASE TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THE SURVEY BY SENDING A LINK AND ASKING THEM TO PARTICIPATE.**

**Thank You!!!**

**P.S. As a special gift for completing the survey, you can receive a 10% discount on our [webstore](#) by using the discount code “survey” before December 31, 2012.**