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New survey shows key voter groups break for candidates with mental health solutions

Results align with previous polls showing mental health a top issue among voters

Washington, D.C., May 16, 2024 – Two new surveys released today suggest that U.S. political candidates who endorse concrete solutions to major mental health issues will attract support from key voting blocs: suburban women and people directly affected by mental illness.

The survey participants reflect a highly motivated subset of voters across the country who could help decide key races in battleground districts. In an election year where races may be decided by razor-thin margins, the results send a message to candidates: support real solutions to the nation's mental health challenges.

The polls differ from previous surveys on mental health issues in that they asked participants' opinions on specific policy solutions to current mental health challenges – and whether a candidate's positions on these solutions would affect the survey participants' votes. They align with previous polls in showing that mental health is a key concern among U.S. voters.

The surveys were conducted among 35,000 suburban women across the United States (conducted by Women2Women) and 6,100 people living with schizophrenia or a related disorder and their family members (conducted by the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance).

 Key results from the new surveys include:
- ➢ Overwhelming support (78% among suburban women, 84% among the schizophrenia community) for the use of tax revenue from marijuana/cannabinoid legalization to fund new treatment programs for addiction and mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. (Cannabis use is known to significantly increase the risk of developing schizophrenia.)

- ➢ Broad endorsement (83% of women, 82% of the schizophrenia community) of providing housing for homeless people that includes on-site treatment services for people with mental illness.

Many people with mental illness have few independent housing options, and 65% to 90% of homeless people have mental illness. Of those, 30% suffer from severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia.

➢ Strong support (72% of women, 76% of the schizophrenia community) for changing laws to allow judges to consider a person's ability to understand they have a mental illness – as well as the likelihood of harm to themselves or others if not treated – in deciding whether court-ordered treatment is necessary.

Less than half of those with schizophrenia are receiving any sort of treatment – in many cases because of a common disease symptom called anosognosia, in which a person is unable to understand they have the disease. Anosognosia is a major barrier to lifesaving medical care and can lead to homelessness, incarceration and suicide.

➢ 78.8% of suburban women and 89.6% of the schizophrenia community said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who makes treatment of serious mental illness a high priority.

"The data speaks for itself," said Sarah Chamberlain, Founder and CEO of Women2Women, an organization dedicated to amplifying women's voices in Washington. "Suburban women, a key to the 2024 election, are invested in treating mental illness. The prioritization of mental health underscores a growing recognition of its impact on overall wellbeing and its importance in shaping policy agendas."

The tandem surveys were conducted May 9-12 among the following audiences:
- The survey of 35,000 suburban women across the United States was conducted by Women2Women; 306 women responded.
- The survey of 6,100 people living with schizophrenia or a related disorder and their family members was sponsored and conducted by the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance; 384 responded.

Schizophrenia and related psychosis disorders affect at least 1 in 100 people in the United States – or about 2 million adults. However, that prevalence is believed to be dramatically underreported, as barriers to care have resulted in many people with the disease ending up on the street, in homeless shelters and in jails and prisons.

With proper treatment and support, many people with schizophrenia can achieve recovery. But this requires care that our siloed healthcare system does not often provide, and equitable access to services that many public policies do not support.

"Our policymakers must support laws and policies that enable people living with schizophrenia to access the care they need and deserve," said S&PAA CEO Gordon Lavigne. "Our current discriminatory, siloed systems cannot be permitted to continue."

The new surveys align with other recent polls on mental illness and the need for action:

➢ In an October poll of 2,048 people sponsored by the National Alliance for Mental Illness and conducted by Ipsos, a bipartisan majority (86%) of those surveyed said their elected

officials need to do more to improve mental health care; only 7% said Congress was doing enough on the issue.

➢ A February [Axios/Ipsos poll](#) of 1,247 U.S. adults ranked poor mental health as one of the biggest threats to public health – outranking firearms and cancer.

About the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance
The Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance works to shatter the barriers to treatment, survival and recovery for people living with schizophrenia. Every day without treatment can mean the difference between life and death. Our mission is to advance systemic change and promote recovery through Research, Education & Care and Advocacy & Public Policy.

We envision a day when the understanding of schizophrenia as a brain disease allows every person living with it to be treated with respect, access appropriate treatment and have the opportunity to live a meaningful, satisfying life. To learn more, please visit www.sczaction.org.

About Women2Women
Women2Women is a non-partisan group dedicated to amplifying women's voices in Washington. Women2Women meets with and polls women nationwide to fully understand the issues they care about most, including healthcare, equal pay, education, childcare and access to capital.

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