

**Press Release**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516-676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

**SAFE Coalition: The Opioid Epidemic and the U.S. Labor Force**

In 2016, Princeton economist Alan Krueger made headlines with an alarming finding that nearly half of prime age men (ages 25 to 54) who are not in the labor force take pain medication on a daily basis. This is estimated at about 2 million people.

In 2017, Krueger published a follow-up to that research, looking more closely to the labor force implications of the opioid epidemic on a local and national level and makes a strong case for looking at the opioid epidemic as one driving factor of US declining labor force participation rates. Krueger suggests that the increase in opioid prescriptions from 1999 to 2015 could account for about 20 percent of the observed decline in men's labor force participation during that same period, and 25 percent of the observed decline in women's labor force participation. The labor force participation rate—the proportion of people employed or looking for work in the U.S.—has been declining since the early 2000s, reaching a near 40-year low of 62.4 percent in September 2015.

Krueger's findings suggests that, though much of the decline can be attributed to an aging population and other trends that pre-date the Great Recession (for example, increased school enrollment of younger workers), an increase in opioid prescription rates might also play an important role in the decline, and undoubtedly compounds the problem as many people who are out of the labor force find it difficult to return to work because of a substance use disorder.

Krueger's research indicates that regional differences in medical practices affect the share of the population taking pain medication, even controlling for the population's health and disability status. A 10 percent increase in the amount of opioids prescribed per capita in a county is associated with a 1 percent increase in the share of individuals who report taking a pain medication on any given day, holding health and other factors constant.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting a opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE" to educate and update the community regarding the risks opioid use and its consequences. To read more about Krueger's research please visit Brookings Papers on Economic Activity [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/1\\_krueger.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/1_krueger.pdf). To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please visit [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org), or follow them on: [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition).

