

Fact Sheet

WORKPLACE SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Incidence of Substance Abuse in the Workplace

Eight percent of full time workers employed as adults are current users of illicit drugs. (1)

The rate of illicit drug use among full-time workers is higher for:

- Construction workers - 16%
- Food preparation, waitstaff, and bartenders - 11%
- Handlers, helpers, or laborers - 11%
- Machine operators or inspectors - 11% (1)

About 8% of the workforce are heavy drinkers, with significantly higher rates among:

- Construction workers - 17.6%
- Food preparation, waitstaff, and bartenders - 12%
- Handlers, helpers, or laborers - 16%
- Machine operators or inspectors - 14% (1)

Seventeen percent of employees surveyed across five different work sites reported situations that imply prescription drug misuse. (2)

Small businesses are more likely to have problems with illicit drugs. (3)

- Employees in companies with fewer than 25 employees are twice as likely to use illicit drugs as employees in larger companies.
- Illicit drug use among employees is linked to a lack of workplace drug policies; illicit drug users were less likely than employees from large establishments to report that their employer provided information, had written policies, or provided access to an employee assistance program (EAP).

Fifteen percent of illicit drug users and 6% of heavy alcohol users report that they had gone to work high or a little drunk in the past year. (4)

Seventy-five percent of people calling a cocaine hotline said they sometimes used cocaine on the job; 25% said they took cocaine on the job daily. (5)

In a survey of 1,200 employees at five different work sites, 18% of persons reporting alcohol use and 12% of illicit drug users reported that their performance declined due to alcohol or illicit drug use. (2)

Comprehensive data on the specific impact of workplace substance abuse are still being studied. Preliminary findings are compelling: (6)

- Drug-using employees at GM average 40 days of sick leave each year, compared with 4.5 days for nonusers.
- Employees testing positive on pre-employment drug tests at Utah Power & Light were five times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident than those who tested negative.
- The State of Wisconsin estimates that expenses and losses related to substance abuse average 25% of the salary of each worker affected.

Workplace Substance Abuse (Continued)

Cost to Employers of Employees with a Diagnosed Chemical Dependency Problem

Alcoholism causes 500 million lost workdays each year. (6)

Alcoholics are expensive to businesses in several different ways:

Workplace accident rates are two or three times higher than normal;
Alcoholics are five times more likely to file a worker's compensation claim; and
Alcoholics are 2.5 times more likely to have absences of eight days or more. (5)

Employees diagnosed with a chemical dependency problem in a large manufacturing plant were found to have:

Six times the number of absences;
Seven times the number of days missed from work; and
Higher incidence of injuries, hypertension, and mental disorders. (7)

Workplace Factors Associated with Substance Use/Alcohol Abuse

Alienating work seems to increase problem drinking indirectly through contribution to job dissatisfaction, and then only when workers believe that alcohol is "an important and efficacious coping mechanism." (8)

In data from a large assembly plant, positive team attitudes and positive supervisor relations are associated with less tolerance for drinking. Also, employees involved in teams that are more effective showed less permissive drinking norms. (9)

References

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