



Substance Use Disorders and Employment

Current National Figures in Substance Abuse and Employment

Employment of Drug Users

A 2003 national survey found that most illicit drug users were employed.

- Among the estimated 16.7 million adults classified with illicit drug use, 74.3% (12.4 million) were employed.
- Among the estimated 19.4 million adults classified with substance dependence or abuse, 76.8% (14.9 million) were employed.

Illicit Drug Use by Different Employee Groups

The same survey found that rates of current drug use and dependence/abuse were higher among unemployed persons compared with those from other employment groups.

- Among adults employed full-time, 7.9% were classified with illicit drug use and 10.2% were classified with substance dependence or abuse.
- Among adults employed part-time, 10.7% were classified with illicit drug use and 10.3% were classified with substance dependence or abuse.
- Among unemployed adults, 18.2% were classified with illicit drug user and 17.0% were classified with substance dependence or abuse.

Employment of Binge Drinkers and Heavy Users of Alcohol

A 2003 national survey found that most binge drinkers and heavy alcohol users were employed.

- Among the estimated 51.1 million adult binge drinkers, 79.5% (40.6 million) were employed.
- Among the estimated 15.5 million adult heavy drinkers, 79.9% (12.4 million) were employed.

Alcohol Use by Different Employee Groups

The same survey found that rates of current alcohol use were higher for full-time employed adults than for their unemployed peers. However, the rates for binge drinkers and heavy alcohol users were higher for unemployed persons than for full-time employed persons.

- Among adults employed full-time, 61.2% reported current alcohol use, 28.9% reported binge drinking, and 8.6% reported heavy use.
- Among unemployed adults, 57.0% reported current alcohol use, 35.0% reported binge drinking, and 13.3% reported heavy use.

Binge drinkers have had five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the past 30 days; heavy drinkers have had five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least five days in the past

month; individuals classified with current alcohol use have had at least one drink in the past 30 days.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-25, DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964). Rockville, MD. Retrieved January 11, 2005, from <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda/2k3nsduh/2k3Results.htm#toc>.

Employment as a Measure of Treatment Success in Illinois

Responding to an increased need to demonstrate effectiveness of social services, the State of Illinois conducted the Illinois Statewide Treatment Outcomes Project (ISTOP). Nearly 2,000 clients were recruited from 40 treatment programs across the state. Recruited clients came from three levels of care: residential rehabilitation, intensive outpatient, and outpatient. Data collection started in the fall of 1998 and ended in August of 2000. Follow-up data were collected six months after clients were assessed and accepted into treatment. Roughly 65% of clients participated in the follow-up interviews. Clients experienced the following results:

- The average number of days for which individuals receiving treatment were paid for working in the previous 30 days increased from 7.1 days to 10.7 days, using baseline and six-month follow-up data.
- The percentage of clients reporting employment problems in the previous 30 days improved, dropping from 47% before treatment (19.0 average number of days with problems) to 30% after treatment (11.6 average number of days with problems), using baseline and six-month follow-up data.

Source: Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse. (2001). *The Effectiveness of Substance Abuse Treatment in Illinois: Results of the Illinois Statewide Treatment Outcomes Project*. p. 42. Retrieved December 27, 2004, from <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/oasa/Documents/oasaesati.pdf>.

Drug Treatment Stigma Affects Employment Opportunities

A 2003 study found that 89% of surveyed human resources professionals stated that they believe chemical dependency treatment programs are effective in helping employees beat addiction to alcohol or other drugs. None the less, 26% said their companies would be less likely to hire a job candidate who was in recovery from drug or alcohol addiction.

Source: Hazelden Foundation. (2003). *Workplace Addiction Survey—2003*. Survey conducted by Ipsos-Insight. Retrieved January 11, 2005, from http://www.hazelden.org/servlet/hazelden/cms/ptt/hazl_7030_shade.html?sh=t&sf=t&page_id=27247