

# The NHSDA Report

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## Substance Use, Dependence or Abuse among Full-time Workers

In order to promote substance abuse prevention, early intervention, and health care in the workplace, it is important to understand the extent of substance use among US workers. The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) includes

questions about the respondent's work status and type of work. The NHSDA also asks questions that indicate substance dependence or abuse. The classification of dependence or abuse is based on the criteria specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV).<sup>1</sup> In 2000, the NHSDA reported 107.3 million persons aged 18 to 49 years in the labor force, of whom 81.7 percent (87.7 million persons) worked full-time.<sup>2</sup> This report presents data on the prevalence of heavy alcohol use, illicit drug use, dependence or abuse of alcohol, and dependence or abuse of illicit drugs among full-time workers aged 18 through 49.<sup>3</sup>

### In Brief

- Among full-time workers aged 18 to 49 years in 2000, 8.1 percent reported past month heavy alcohol use, and 7.8 percent reported past month illicit drug use
- In the past year, 7.4 percent of these workers were dependent or abusing alcohol, and 1.9 percent were dependent or abusing illicit drugs

### Differences by Gender and Age

Among workers, 8.1 percent reported heavy alcohol use in the past month, and 7.8 percent reported illicit drug use in the past month. 7.4 percent were dependent or abusing alcohol in the past year, and 1.9 percent were dependent or abusing illicit drugs in the past year. (Table 1). Rates of

**Table 1. Prevalence of Substance Use, Abuse or Dependence among Full-time Employed Workers Aged 18 to 49: 2000 NHSDA**

	Estimated population (000s)	Rates of use (%)			
		Past month heavy alcohol use	Past month any illicit drug use	Past year dependence or abuse of alcohol	Past year dependence or abuse of illicit drugs
<b>TOTAL</b>	87,672	8.1	7.8	7.4	1.9
Male	50,466	11.4	9.2	9.9	2.4
Female	37,206	3.6	5.9	4.0	1.2
Age groups					
18-25	15,190	13.5	14.9	13.5	5.3
26-34	24,464	8.7	7.9	8.2	1.8
35-49	48,017	6.0	5.5	5.1	1.0
<b>By type of occupation</b>					
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	14,822	6.5	6.5	6.9	1.1
Professional specialty	13,222	4.9	4.7	5.3	1.4
Technical and sales support	13,239	8.9	8.0	8.2	1.8
Administrative support	10,714	4.9	6.9	5.5	1.9
Services	10,047	7.7	9.7	8.0	2.3
Precision production, craft & repair	10,786	12.6	11.2	9.2	2.5
Operators, fabricators, and Laborers	12,428	11.2	8.6	9.3	3.0
<b>By type of industry</b>					
Construction & mining	8,267	15.7	12.3	10.9	3.6
Manufacturing	14,610	9.4	6.7	6.7	1.7
Transportation, communications, and other public utilities	6,541	7.6	7.2	8.2	1.4
Wholesale and retail	15,881	9.2	10.8	10.5	2.9
Service – business & repairs	7,883	9.4	9.0	8.7	1.9
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and other services (personal and recreation)	8,320	5.9	7.7	7.4	1.7
Services – professional	19,125	4.0	5.0	4.4	1.3
Government	4,252	6.3	3.7	3.3	0.6

**Table 2. Percentage of Full-time Workers Aged 18 to 49 Reporting Workplace Outcomes, by Substance Use, Abuse or Dependence: 2000 NHSDA**

	Past month heavy alcohol use		Past month illicit drug use		Past year dependence or abuse of alcohol		Past year dependence or abuse of illicit drugs	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Worked for more than 3 employers in the past year	3.6	2.4*	5.7	2.3*	5.1	2.3*	6.6	2.5*
Missed work more than 2 days in past month due to illness/injury	8.4	6.8	11.6	6.5*	8.7	6.8	12.9	6.8*
Skipped work more than 2 days in past month	3.9	1.7*	4.4	1.6*	5.7	1.5*	8.3	1.7*

dependence and abuse were higher among males than among females. Prevalence of past month heavy drinking among males (11.4 percent) was more than three times the prevalence among females (3.6 percent). The rates of past month substance use were highest among workers aged 18 to 25 years, and declined with older age groups. Past year rate of dependence or abuse of alcohol (13.5 percent) and illicit drug use (5.3 percent) were also highest among the workers in the youngest age group.

### Differences by Occupation and Industry

The rates of substance use and dependence or abuse were generally higher among workers in precision production, craft and repair jobs, and those who were operators, fabricators, and laborers – occupations that are dominated by males, who have reported higher rates.<sup>4</sup> Prevalence of past month heavy alcohol use was 11.2 percent among operators, fabricators, and laborers, and 12.6 percent among workers in precision production, craft, and repair, compared with 4.9 percent among workers in professional specialty. The prevalence of past year dependence or abuse of illicit drugs was 3.0 percent among operators, fabricators, and laborers, compared with 1.1 percent among workers in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations.

Workers in the construction and mining industries reported the highest rates while workers in professional services and in government had the lowest rates. This pattern is partially explained by the higher concentration of males in the construction and mining industries.<sup>5</sup> Workers in wholesale and retail industries also reported high rates of past month illicit drug use (10.8 per-

cent) and past year dependence or abuse of alcohol (10.5 percent).

### Workplace Outcomes

Workers who reported past month illicit drug use were more likely than those who did not report such use to say that: they had more than three employers in the past year (5.7 percent vs 2.3 percent), they had missed work for more than two days in the past month due to illness or injury (11.6 percent vs 6.5 percent), and they had skipped work more than two days in the past month (4.4 percent vs 1.6 percent). (Table 2).

### End Notes

1. Questions on abuse ask about problems at work, home, and school; problems with family or friends; physical danger; and trouble with the law due to substance use. For more detailed description about abuse and dependence in the NHSDA, see *Substance Dependence, Abuse, and Treatment: Data from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, NHSDA Series H-16, DHHS report no. SMA 02-3642, J. Epstein (2002)*.
2. The 2000 NHSDA consisted of over 71,000 persons aged 12 or older interviewed. Of these persons, 24,215 persons aged 18 to 49 years

(representing 87.7 million persons) were employed full-time. A *full-time worker* is a person working 35 hours or more per week. In comparison, the Current Population Survey (CPS) reported 87.3 million persons aged 18 through 54 worked full-time in 2000. (See Labor Force Statistics from the CPS, Tables from Earnings and Employment, Annual Average Data, Table 8 Employed and unemployed full- and part-time workers by age, sex, and race, available at <http://stats.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat8.pdf>)

3. *Illicit drugs* refers to marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, and inhalants and non-medical use of prescription-type pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives. *Heavy alcohol use* is defined as five or more drinks on the same occasion, on at least 5 different days, in the past 30 days. The NHSDA does not ask questions about substance use at the workplace.
4. The proportion of male full-time workers aged 18 to 49 in the occupation groups were: 76 percent among operators, fabricators, and laborers, 92 percent among precision production, craft and repair occupations, 49 percent among professional specialty occupations, and 24 percent among administrative support occupations.
5. The proportion of male full-time workers aged 18 to 49 in the industry groups were: 92 percent among construction and mining industries, 30 percent among professional service industries, 58 percent in government, and 56 percent in wholesale and retail industries.

### Table Notes

\* Indicates difference between users and non-users is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.  
Source (Tables 1 and 2): SAMHSA 2000 NHSDA.

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2000 data are based on information obtained from nearly 72,000 persons aged 12 or older. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

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Information and data for this issue are based on the following publications and statistics:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2001). *Summary of findings from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Series: H-13, DHHS Publication No. SMA 01-3549). Rockville, MD: Author.

Also available on-line:  
<http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

Additional tables available upon request.