

The NSDUH Report

August 23, 2007

Worker Substance Use, by Industry Category

Substance use in the workplace negatively affects U.S. industry through lost productivity, workplace accidents and injuries, employee absenteeism, low morale, and increased illness. The loss to U.S. companies due to employees' alcohol and drug use and related problems is estimated

at billions of dollars a year.^{1,2} Research shows that the rate of substance use varies by occupation and industry.³ Studies also have indicated that employers vary in their treatment of substance use issues and that workplace-based employee assistance programs (EAPs) can be a valuable resource for obtaining help for substance-using workers.^{4,5}

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older to report on their use of alcohol and illicit drugs during the past month. NSDUH defines *illicit drugs* as marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.⁶ *Heavy alcohol use* is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on 5 or more days in the past 30 days. NSDUH also asks respondents about their current employment situation and the type of business or industry in which they worked. NSDUH defines *full-time* employed respondents as those who usually work 35 or more hours per week and who worked in the past week or had a job despite not working in the past week.

This issue of *The NSDUH Report* uses data from the combined 2002 to 2004 surveys to present estimates of current (i.e., past month) heavy alcohol use and illicit drug use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 by industry category. The data are abstracted from a more extensive report available online at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/analytic.htm>.³

In Brief

- Combined data from 2002 to 2004 indicate that an annual average of 8.2 percent of full-time workers aged 18 to 64 used illicit drugs in the past month and 8.8 percent used alcohol heavily in the past month
- The highest rates of past month illicit drug use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 were found in the accommodations and food services (16.9 percent) and construction (13.7 percent) industries
- The highest rates of past month heavy alcohol use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 were found in construction (15.9 percent); arts, entertainment, and recreation (13.6 percent); and mining (13.3 percent)

Table 1. Past Month Illicit Drug Use and Heavy Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 18 to 64, by Employment Status: 2002-2004 Combined

Employment Status	Illicit Drug Use		Heavy Alcohol Use	
	Percent	Number in Thousands	Percent	Number in Thousands
Total	9.2	16,363	8.4	15,017
Full-Time	8.2	9,413	8.8	10,113
Part-Time	11.9	2,903	8.6	2,094
Unemployed	18.6	1,405	13.6	1,028
Other*	8.3	2,642	5.6	1,783

Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

Substance Use, by Employment Status and Worker Characteristics

Combined data from 2002 to 2004 indicate that the prevalence of alcohol and illicit drug use among adults aged 18 to 64 was higher among unemployed persons than among persons in other employment groups (Table 1). Among adults aged 18 to 64, an estimated 18.6 percent of those who were unemployed used illicit drugs in the past month compared with 11.9 percent of those employed part time, 8.2 percent of those employed full time, and 8.3 percent of those in other employment statuses. Approximately 13.6 percent of unemployed adults aged 18 to 64 drank alcohol heavily in the past month compared with 8.8 percent of those employed full time.

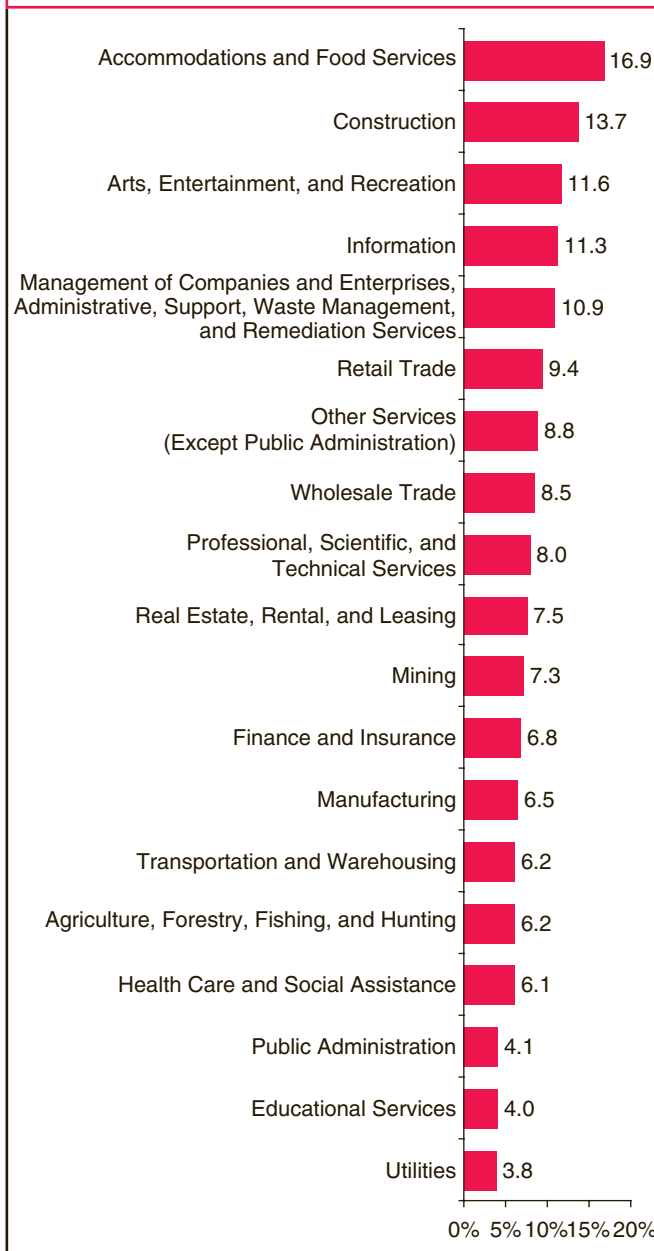
Reflecting the fact that almost two thirds of the adult population (64.3 percent) were employed full time, a majority of past month illicit drug and heavy alcohol users also were employed full time. From 2002 to 2004, over half of all past month illicit drug users (57.5 percent) and past month heavy alcohol users (67.3 percent) aged 18 to 64 were employed full time.

Substance Use, by Industry Category

Among the 19 major industry categories, the highest rates of past month illicit drug use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 were found in accommodations and food services (16.9 percent) and construction (13.7 percent) (Figure 1). The industry categories with the lowest rates of past month illicit drug use were utilities (3.8 percent), educational services (4.0 percent), and public administration (4.1 percent).

Among full-time workers aged 18 to 64, the highest rates of past month heavy alcohol use were found in construction (15.9

Figure 1. Past Month Illicit Drug Use among Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64, by Industry Categories: 2002-2004 Combined



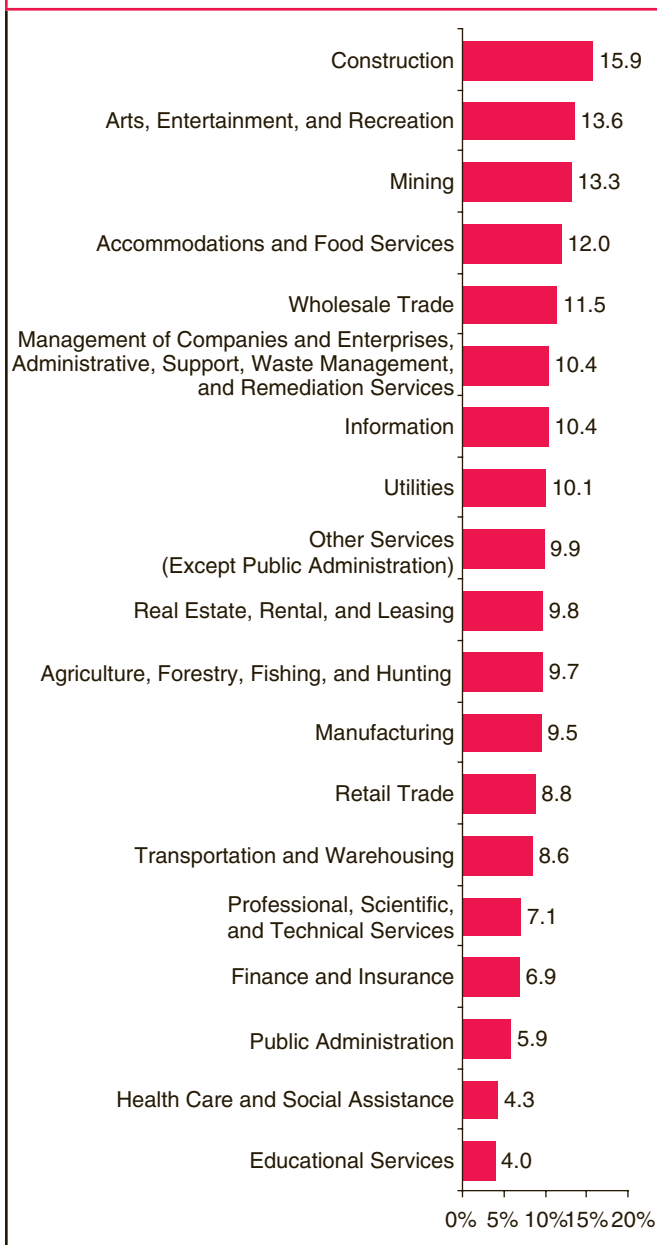
Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

percent); arts, entertainment, and recreation (13.6 percent); and mining (13.3 percent) (Figure 2). The industry categories with the lowest rates of heavy alcohol use were educational services (4.0 percent) and health care and social assistance (4.3 percent).

Workplace Substance Use Policies and Programs

Among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 who had used an illicit drug in the past month, 32.1 percent worked for an employer

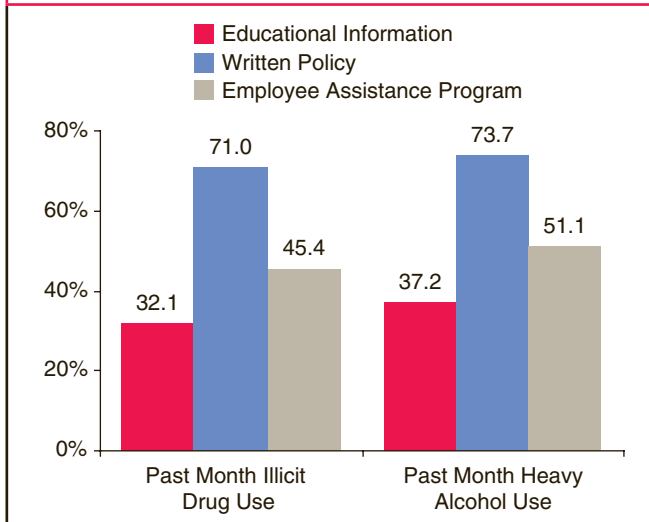
Figure 2. Past Month Heavy Alcohol Use among Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64, by Industry Categories: 2002-2004 Combined



Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

who offered educational information about alcohol and drug use, 71.0 percent were aware of a written policy about drug and alcohol use in the workplace, and 45.4 percent worked for an employer who maintained an EAP or other type of counseling program for employees who have an alcohol- or drug-related problem (Figure 3). Among full-time workers who used alcohol heavily in the past month, 37.2 percent worked for an employer who provided educational information about drug and alcohol use, 73.7 percent were aware of written policies about drug and alcohol use, and 51.1 percent had access to an EAP at their workplace.

Figure 3. Workplace Provides Educational Information, Prepares a Written Policy, or Maintains an Employee Assistance Program Concerning Drug or Alcohol Use among Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64, by Past Month Illicit Drug Use and Heavy Alcohol Use: 2002-2004 Combined



Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

End Notes

- 1 Division of Workplace Programs, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (n.d.). *Drugs in the workplace: What an employer needs to know*. Retrieved July 23, 2007, from http://workplace.samhsa.gov/DrugTesting/Files_Drug_Testing/FactSheet/factsheet041906.aspx
- 2 U.S. Department of Labor. (2007). *elaws® - Drug-Free Workplace Advisor: How does substance abuse impact the workplace?* Retrieved July 23, 2007, from <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/asp/drugfree/benefits.htm>
- 3 Larson, S. L., Eyerman, J., Foster, M. S., & Gfroerer, J. C. (2007). *Worker substance use and workplace policies and programs* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 07-4273, Analytic Series A-29). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies.
- 4 Delaney, W., Grube, J. W., & Ames, G. M. (1998). Predicting likelihood of seeking help through the employee assistance program among salaried and union hourly employees. *Addiction*, 93, 399-410.
- 5 Reynolds, G. S., & Lehman, W. E. (2003). Levels of substance use and willingness to use the employee assistance program. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 30, 238-248.
- 6 Nonmedical use is defined as the use of prescription-type drugs not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used only for the experience or feeling they caused. Nonmedical use of any prescription-type pain reliever, sedative, stimulant, or tranquilizer does not include over-the-counter drugs. Nonmedical use of stimulants includes methamphetamine use.

Table Note

* Retired persons, disabled persons, homemakers, students, or other persons not in the labor force are included in the "Other" employment category.

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2002, 2003, and 2004 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

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The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2002, 2003, and 2004 data used in this report are based on information obtained from a total of 127,976 persons aged 18 to 64. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

The NSDUH Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, and by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.)

Information on NSDUH used in compiling data for this issue is available in the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2005). *Results from the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4062, NSDUH Series H-28). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Office of Applied Studies. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964, NSDUH Series H-25). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NSDUH Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available online: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov>.

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002 through 2004 surveys should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.



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