

The NSDUH Report

May 17, 2007

Work Absences and Past Month Cigarette Use: 2004 and 2005

In the United States, cigarette smoking imposes substantial health and economic costs on society. For example, from 1997 to 2001, cigarette smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke resulted in 438,000 premature

deaths and \$92 billion in lost productivity annually.¹ Smokers miss significantly more days of work than those who have never smoked, and absenteeism decreases when employees stop smoking.^{2,3} However, smokers who quit smoking do not reduce their absences immediately after quitting. Instead, the length of time since quitting is associated with a significant decline in absenteeism.⁴

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older about their past month use of cigarettes. The survey also asks persons aged 15 or older about their employment status during the past week.⁵ Persons aged 15 or older who were employed in the past week are also asked about the number of days of work they missed in the past month due to injury or illness.

This report examines the number of days of work missed in the past month among the U.S. civilian population aged 18 to 64 who were employed full time in the past week (i.e., currently employed) according to whether they smoked cigarettes during the past month (i.e., current smokers). Estimates from the 2004 and 2005 NSDUHs indicate that

In Brief

- Among adults aged 18 to 64 who were currently employed full time, 29.1 percent smoked cigarettes during the past month
- Females aged 18 to 64 who were employed full time were more likely to have missed at least 1 day of work in the past month due to illness or injury than their male counterparts
- Among adults aged 18 to 64 who were employed full time, past month cigarette smokers were more likely to have missed work on 5 or more days in the past month due to illness or injury than those who did not smoke cigarettes in the past month (4.2 vs. 3.0 percent)

64.2 percent or 116.6 million adults aged 18 to 64 were currently employed full time. All findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2004 and 2005 NSDUH data.

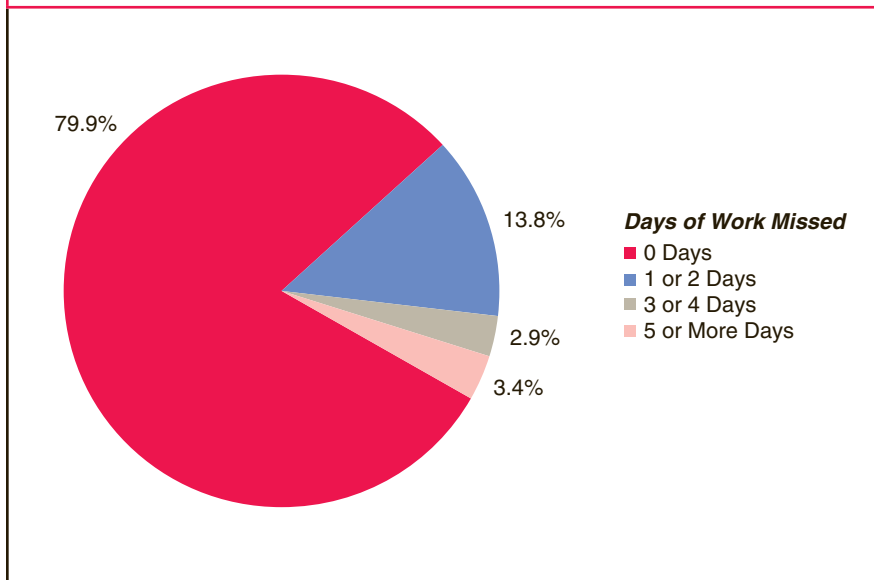
Prevalence of Past Month Cigarette Use among the Currently Employed

In 2004 and 2005, 29.1 percent of adults aged 18 to 64 who were currently employed full time smoked cigarettes during the past month. Among adults employed full time, past month smoking decreased with increasing age and also decreased with higher levels of education. Cigarette use in the past month was reported by 42.8 percent of full-time employed adults aged 18 to 25 compared with 33.1 percent of those aged 26 to 34, 28.8 percent of those aged 35 to 44, and 22.3 percent of those aged 45 to 64. Among adults aged 18 to 64 who were currently employed full time, those with less than a high school diploma were more likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past month than those with a high school education, those with some college, or those who completed 4 years of college or more (43.7 vs. 36.0, 31.1, and 15.2 percent, respectively). Male adults who were currently employed full time were more likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past month than their female counterparts (30.9 vs. 26.5 percent).

Days of Work Missed in the Past Month

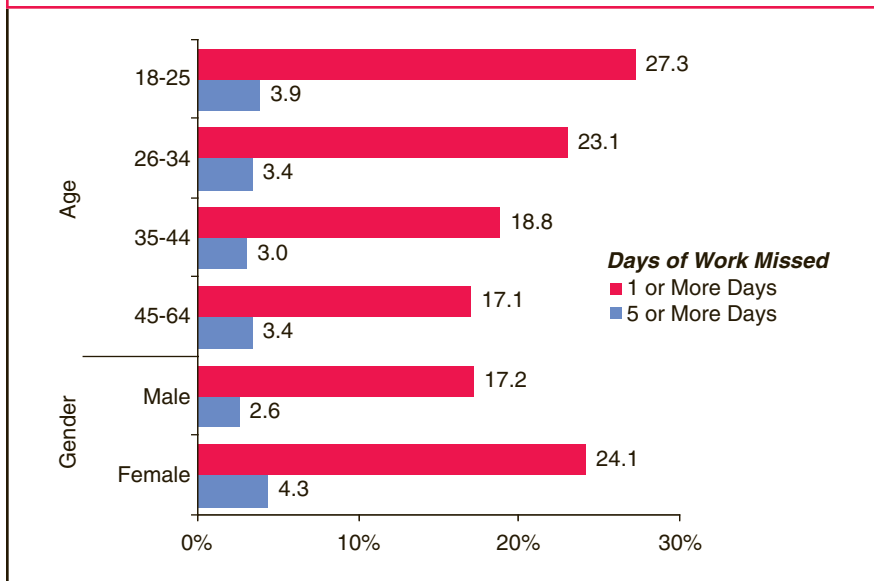
Among adults aged 18 to 64 who were employed full time in the past week, 20.1 percent missed at least 1 day of work in the past month due to illness or injury (Figure 1).⁶ The

Figure 1. Percentages of Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64 Who Missed Days of Work in the Past Month Due to Illness or Injury: 2004 and 2005



Source: SAMHSA, 2004 and 2005 NSDUH.

Figure 2. Percentages of Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64 Who Missed Days of Work in the Past Month Due to Illness or Injury, by Age and Gender: 2004 and 2005



Source: SAMHSA, 2004 and 2005 NSDUH.

percentage of currently employed adults who missed at least 1 day of work in the past month due to illness or injury declined with increasing age, with 27.3 percent of workers aged 18 to 25 missing

1 or more days compared with 17.1 percent of those aged 45 to 64 (Figure 2). However, there was no significant difference by age in the percentage who missed 5 or more days of work in the past 30

days. Females aged 18 to 64 who were employed full time were more likely to have missed at least 1 day of work in the past month due to illness or injury than their male counterparts; they were also more likely to have missed 5 or more days.

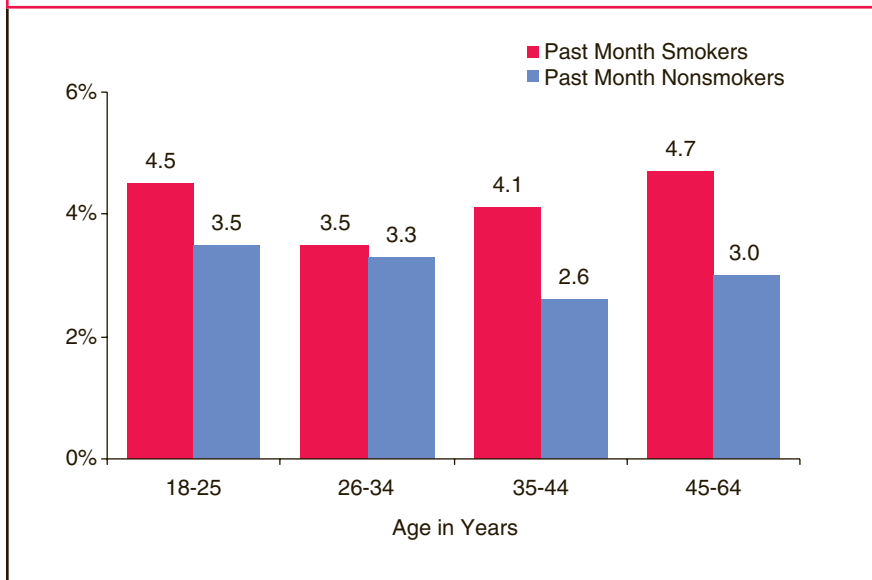
Days of Work Missed among Past Month Cigarette Smokers

Among adults aged 18 to 64 who were employed full time in the past week, past month cigarette smokers were more likely to have missed work on 5 or more days in the past month due to illness or injury than those who did not smoke cigarettes in the past month (4.2 vs. 3.0 percent).⁶ This relationship held for employed adults aged 18 to 25, 35 to 44, and 45 to 64 (Figure 3). For both males and females, past month smokers were more likely than past month nonsmokers to miss 5 or more days of work in the past month due to illness or injury (Figure 4).

End Notes

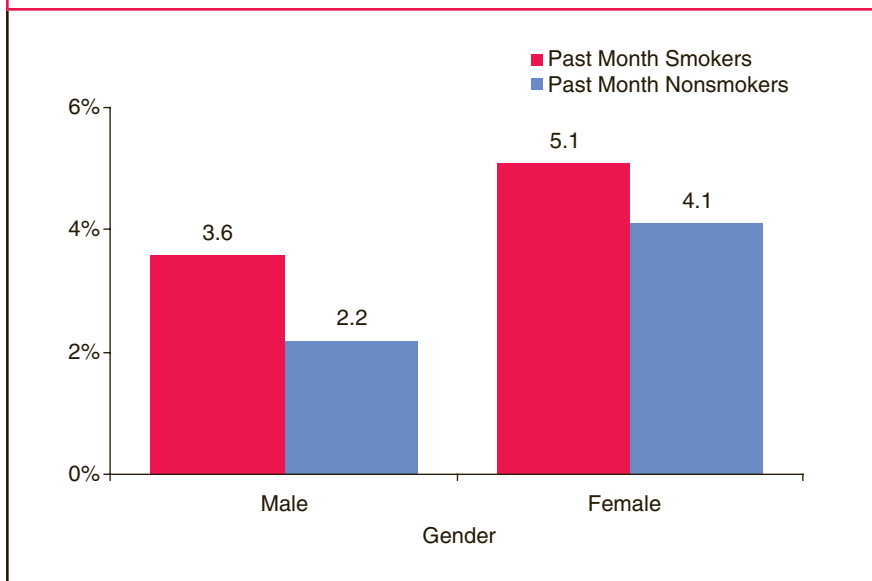
- ¹ Armour, B. S., Woollery, T., Malarcher, A., Pechacek, T. F., & Husten, C. (2005). Annual smoking-attributable mortality, years of potential life lost, and productivity losses—United States, 1997-2001. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 54(25), 625-628. [Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5425a1.htm>]
- ² Bunn, W. B., 3rd, Stave, G. M., Downs, K. E., Alvir, J. M., & Dirani, R. (2006). Effect of smoking status on productivity loss. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 48, 1099-1108.
- ³ Halpern, M. T., Shikar, R., Rentz, A. M., & Khan, Z. M. (2001). Impact of smoking status on workplace absenteeism and productivity. *Tobacco Control*, 10, 233-238.
- ⁴ Sindelar, J. L., Duchovny, N., Falba, T. A., & Busch, S.H. (2005). If smoking increases absences, does quitting reduce them? *Tobacco Control*, 14, 99-105.
- ⁵ Respondents were asked to report whether they worked during the week prior to the interview and, if not, whether they had a job despite not working in the past week. If respondents had a

Figure 3. Percentages of Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64 Who Missed 5 or More Days of Work in the Past Month Due to Illness or Injury, by Current Smoking Status and Age: 2004 and 2005



Source: SAMHSA, 2004 and 2005 NSDUH.

Figure 4. Percentages of Full-Time Workers Aged 18 to 64 Who Missed 5 or More Days of Work in the Past Month Due to Illness or Injury, by Current Smoking Status and Gender: 2004 and 2005



Source: SAMHSA, 2004 and 2005 NSDUH.

job but did not work in the past week, they were classified as employed. Unpaid work was reportable as employment if it usually involved a family farm or business and totaled more than 15 hours each week. Volunteer work was excluded, as were stipends given to students.

⁶ Respondents with unknown days of work missed were excluded from the analysis.

Suggested Citation

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2004 and 2005 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). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2004 and 2005 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 86,367 persons aged 18 to 64 who were currently employed full time. 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 report is available in the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2006). *Results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-4194, NSDUH Series H-30). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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.

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

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 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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