



9.4 Million Drug Users Hold Full-Time Jobs

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Most of the nation’s approximately 16.4 million current illicit drug users and approximately 15 million heavy alcohol users hold full-time jobs and are affecting productivity, according to a new study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The study showed that an annual average of approximately 9.4 million current illicit drug users, and 10.1 million heavy alcohol users were employed full time in 2002 to 2004. Among these workers, 3 million met criteria for illicit drug dependence or abuse, and 10.5 million were dependent on or abused alcohol. The report says that workers who use illicit drugs are less likely than non-users to be employed by companies that have drug or alcohol testing policies and programs.

The report states that illicit drug use and heavy alcohol use are associated with higher levels of absenteeism and frequent job changes. Nearly twice as many illicit drug users skipped 1 or more days of work in the past month and were far more likely to report missing two or more workdays in the past

month due to illness or injury when compared to workers who did not abuse drugs.

Another major finding was that current drug users were more likely to work for employers who did not conduct drug or alcohol testing programs. Nearly a third of current illicit drug users said they would be less likely to work for employers who conducted random drug testing.

According to the study, unemployed people had higher percentages of current illicit drug use and heavy alcohol use than those with full-time, part-time, or other employment statuses. However, because full time workers constitute about two-thirds of the 18 - to 64 - year-old population, the actual number of those using drugs was higher among full time workers.

SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline said, “One important way SAMHSA is addressing this public health risk is with 1-800-Workplace **(1-800-967-6752)**, a help line for employees and businesses dealing with problems related to substance abuse.