

Economic Costs

According to the most recent estimate, the economic cost of drug abuse in the United States was estimated at \$193 billion. This value includes:

- \$120 billion in lost productivity, mainly due to labor participation costs, participation in drug abuse treatment, incarceration, and premature death.
- \$11 billion in healthcare costs for drug treatment and drug-related medical consequences.
- \$61 billion in criminal justice costs, primarily due to criminal investigation, prosecution and incarceration, and victim costs.

Labor Force

The majority (67%) of current drug users aged 18 or older were employed, either full-time (48%) or part-time (19%), with the unemployed accounting for 13% and the remaining 21% not in the labor force.

- Among full-time workers aged 18 or older, nearly one in 12 (8%) reported past-month (current) use of an illicit drug. Unemployed workers were twice as likely – one in six (17%) – to report current drug use.
- 39-50 percent of all Workers Compensation claims are related to substance abuse in the workplace, as substance abusers file three to five times as many Workers Compensation claims.
- Substance abusers incur 300 percent higher medical costs than non-abusers.
- Substance abusers are 1/3 less productive.
- It costs a business an average of \$7,000 to replace a salaried worker.

Turnover and Absenteeism

- Full-time workers aged 18-64 who reported current illicit drug use were more than twice as likely as those reporting no current illicit drug use to report they had worked for three or more employers in the past year (12.3% versus 5.1%).
- In the same period, full-time workers who were current drug users were more likely to report missing two or more workdays in the past month due to illness or injury, when compared with workers who were not current users (16.4% vs. 11.0%).
- Full-time workers who were current drug users also were about twice as likely as non-users to skip one or more days of work in the past month (16.3% vs. 8.2%).

Sources: Office of National Drug Control Policy, Employment Screening Resources