

American Council on Alcohol Problems  
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# The American Issue

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## **Nationwide Survey Shows Most Illicit Drug Users and Heavy Alcohol Users Are in the Workplace and May Pose Special Problems** / <http://oas.samhsa.gov/work2k7/toc.cfm>

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration • 1 Choke Cherry Road • Rockville, MD 20857  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**Date:** 7/16/2007

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**Telephone:** 240-276-2130

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

The study, Worker Substance Use and Workplace Policies and Programs, shows that substance use can pose significant risks to workers' health and productivity. The report also says that workers who use illicit drugs are less likely than nonusers to be employed by companies that have drug or alcohol testing policies and programs.

"Substance abuse is a serious problem for the health, well being and productivity of everyone in the workplace," said SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline, Ph.D. "One important way SAMHSA is addressing this public health risk is with 1-800-Workplace (1-800-967-5752), a helpline for employees and businesses dealing with problems related to substance abuse. The helpline provides advice on programs that can make a dramatic difference to everyone in the workplace – programs such as substance abuse policy development, supervisor and employee substance abuse education, employee assistance, and drug testing."

Director of National Drug Control Policy John Walters said, "Employees who use drugs miss work more often, are less healthy, and are more prone to harming themselves and others in the workplace. We hope that employers will take note of this report and consider implementing workplace drug testing policies that can help prevent drug use before it starts, help identify drug-using employees who need drug treatment services and also reduce employers' liability from drug-related workplace accidents."

The report says the highest rates of current illicit drug use were among food service workers (17.4 percent) and construction workers (15.1 percent). Highest rates of current heavy alcohol use were found among construction, mining, excavation and drilling workers (17.8 percent), and installation, maintenance, and repair workers (14.7 percent).

Illicit drug use and heavy alcohol use are associated with higher levels of absenteeism and frequent job changes, the report said. For example, nearly twice as many current illicit drug users skipped one or more days of work in the past month compared with workers who did not abuse drugs. Drug users were also far more likely to report missing two or more work days in the past month due to illness or injury compared with workers who did not abuse drugs.

"The high rates of drug and alcohol use in hazardous industries is cause for concern," said Elena Carr, drug policy coordinator at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). "Clearly businesses can ill-afford the risk of having workers operating meat slicers, backhoes, or other dangerous equipment while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, which is one reason why DOL helps employers and employees work together to proactively prevent such safety hazards."

Substance users also had far higher job turnover rates. Among full-time workers who reported current illicit drug use, 12.3 percent said they had worked for three or more employers in the past year, compared with 5.1 percent of non-abusing workers.

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

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employers who conducted random drug testing.

Overall, approximately 30 percent of the full-time work force reported that random drug testing took place in their current employment setting. Workers in the transportation and material-moving (62.9 percent) and protective services (61.8 percent) occupational categories were the most likely to report working for employers who conducted random testing. Workers in legal occupations and arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupational categories (10 percent) were the least likely to report working for employers who tested for illicit drug or alcohol use on a random basis.

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. But because full-time workers constitute about two thirds of the 18-64-year-old population, the actual number of those using drugs was higher among the full-time workers.

The study is based on data collected during 2002, 2003, and 2004 from a nationally representative sample of 128,000 persons, ages 18 to 64, who participated in SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Illicit drug use is defined in the survey as use of marijuana/hashish, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, or inhalants, or prescription psychotherapeutics used non-medicinally. Current heavy alcohol use was defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on five or more days in the past 30 days. The survey also identified whether respondents had a substance use disorder, meaning drug or alcohol dependence or abuse, based on standard diagnostic criteria.

The study showed that an annual average of approximately 9.4 million current illicit drug users, (including 7.3 million current marijuana users) and 10.1 million heavy alcohol users were employed full-time in 2002-2004. Among full-time workers using these substances, 3 million met criteria for illicit drug dependence or abuse, and 10.5 million were dependent on or abused alcohol.

The full report is available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/work2k7/toc.cfm>. Copies of the full report are available for free from SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727). Request inventory number SMA -07-4273. For related publications and information, visit <http://www.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. The agency is responsible for improving the accountability, capacity and effectiveness of the nation's substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment, and mental health services delivery system.

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**Young Males Most Likely to Buy Alcohol for Persons Who Appear to Be Underage**

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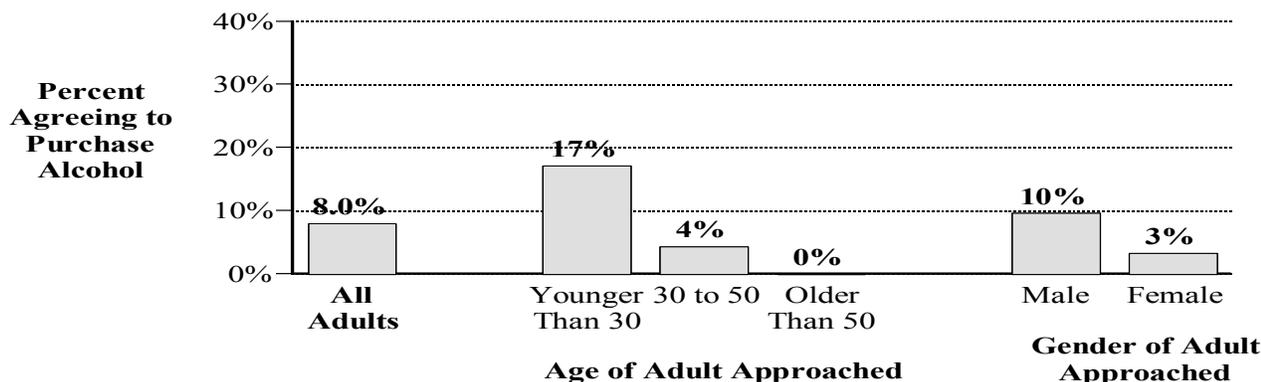
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Young males are more likely than other adults to buy alcohol for persons who appear to be underage, according to a study of the ability to obtain alcohol by "shoulder tapping." Pseudo-underage individuals (persons who appeared to be under 21 but were in fact age 21 or older) approached adults outside liquor and convenience stores in 19 Midwestern communities and asked them to buy a six-pack of beer for them (i.e., shoulder tapping). While less than one-tenth (8%) of the 102 adults approached agreed to purchase alcohol for the requestor, adults who appeared to be younger than age 30 were more likely to provide alcohol, as were males (see figure below). In a second wave of shoulder tapping attempts targeting only casually dressed, young males, 19% of the approached men agreed to buy alcohol for the requestors. In addition, the young males were 2.7 times more likely to actually return with beer (data not shown). The authors conclude that while "youth are not likely to easily obtain alcohol through shoulder tapping from a general population of adults entering alcohol establishments, they will be more likely to obtain alcohol through this method if they direct their requests toward younger male adults" (p. 1222). Thus, communities should "direct their educational and enforcement shoulder tap campaigns toward younger males rather than the general adult population" (p. 1220).

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**Percent of Adults Agreeing to Purchase Alcohol for Persons Who Appear to Be Underage, by Age and Gender (N=102)**



**NOTES:** During the first wave of this study, requesters approached the first unaccompanied adult who approached the store entrance. During the second wave, requesters approached the first male who appeared to be between 21 and 30 years old, was dressed casually, and approached the store alone. Each time the requestor said, "I don't have my ID on me and I think this store checks for age identification. Could you get a six-pack of beer for me?" If asked their age, requesters stated their real age (i.e., age 21 or older).

**SOURCE:** Adapted by CESAR from Toomey, T.L., Fabian, L.E.A., Erickson, D.J., and Lenk, K.M. "Propensity for Obtaining Alcohol Through Shoulder Tapping." *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 31(7):1218-1223, 2007. For more information, contact Traci Toomey at toomey@epi.umn.edu.

**What Edison Said About Alcohol:** Thomas Alva Edison 1837-1931 "To put alcohol in the human body is like putting sand in the bearings of an engine. I am a total abstainer from alcoholic liquor. I always thought I had a better use for my head."

**Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth: A Dangerous Mix**

"Join Together Online ([www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org))."

Join Together is a project of the [Boston University School of Public Health](http://www.bu.edu/sph).

August 3, 2007

From: Marin Institute, 24 Belvedere St., San Rafael, CA 94901

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Big Alcohol's Cross-over Brands Creating Confusion, Health Risks

SAN RAFAEL, CA -- Alcohol companies are finding increasingly dangerous ways to hook the nation's youth and fuel the underage drinking epidemic. That is the conclusion of a new report, *Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth: A Dangerous Mix*, released by Marin Institute at the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center annual conference in Orlando. The report examines the alcohol industry's youth-oriented marketing tactics promoting the consumption of alcoholic energy drinks, such as Bud Extra, Tilt, Sparks, and Rockstar 21.

"The alcohol industry is irresponsibly marketing alcoholic energy drinks to youth," says Michele Simon, JD, MPH, Research and Policy Director for Marin Institute and co-author of the report with James Mosher of Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. "They boast that their products will enhance energy and alertness, in potential violation of federal law," says Simon.

Alcoholic energy drink producers have built on the popularity of non-alcoholic energy drinks by promoting the mixing of energy drink products with alcohol and by marketing premixed alcoholic energy drinks in cans that look virtually identical to their non-alcoholic cousins. "Alcohol producers are taking advantage of the popularity of non-alcoholic energy drinks to sell

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TO:

**PURPOSE:** American Council on Alcohol Problems is the channel of cooperation through which state temperance organizations, national religious bodies and similar concerned groups and individuals in America can unite to deal with the problems caused by alcohol and other drugs.

ACAP provides the forum and the mechanism through which concerned persons can find common ground on alcohol and other drug problems and address these issues with a united voice. It is the successor organization to the American Temperance League and the Anti-Saloon League established in 1895. Membership of ACAP presently is made up of 30 local temperance organizations, 22 national Christian denominations, and other fraternal organizations that support ACAP's philosophy of abstinence.

Individuals may enroll as "Abstinence Advocates" (associate members) of the American Council on Alcohol Problems by making an annual contribution of \$25 or more. (ACAP is classified by the IRS as a 501 (c)(3) tax-deductible charity.)

Checks should be made payable to:

**American Council on Alcohol Problems**

Mail to:

2376 Lakeside Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244

**ACAP Officers**

**President:** Robert Van Komen, UT

**President-elect:** William E. Day, AL

**Secretary:** Anita Bedell, IL

**Exec. Dir.:** D.L. Dan Ireland, AL

**Office Secretary:** Cheryl Corley, AL

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Remember to send in your reservation for the annual ACAP meeting. H. Ray Newman, Ethics & Public Affairs, Georgia Baptist Convention is hosting the meeting in Duluth, Georgia, September 18-19, 2007, with the ACAP Executive Committee meeting on Monday evening, September 17. Call 205-989-8177 or email dliacap2@bellsouth.net for more information.

The theme for the annual meeting is "Alcohol—A National Crisis."

Mark your calendar for September 18-19, 2007 and plan to attend!



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**(Alcohol Energy Drinks and Youth** continued from page 3)

their products to youth," added Mosher. "They package their products so that they are indistinguishable from non-alcoholic energy drinks, confusing consumers, retailers, parents, law enforcement officers, and others who can't tell which drinks contain alcohol and which do not."

Mixing alcohol with energy drinks presents several potential health and safety risks. While young people may think that caffeine, a stimulant, masks the intoxicating effects of alcohol, research shows this is not the case. As a result, people drinking these products may mistakenly think they are less drunk than they are, and engage in dangerous activities. Youth are especially vulnerable to health and safety problems from consuming alcoholic energy drinks because they are more likely to take risks and suffer from higher rates of alcohol problems, including traffic accidents, violence, sexual assault, and suicide.

In April, 29 state attorneys general sent a letter to Anheuser-Busch expressing their concern over Spykes, an alcoholic energy drink packaged in colorful 2-ounce plastic bottles with obvious appeal to youth. The objections of law enforcement officials as well as parents, leading public health organizations and alcohol advocacy groups caused Anheuser-Busch to pull Spykes, but numerous similar products remain on the market, with more in the pipeline.

"We call upon makers of alcoholic energy drinks, including Miller Brewing Company and Anheuser-Busch, to stop selling these products." Simon said. "Our report also recommends that the federal government and state attorneys general investigate potentially deceptive marketing, particularly aimed at youth. In the meantime, local communities and state legislatures should consider banning these products to protect our youth from being targeted by Big Alcohol."