

# Workplaces and Substance Use

## Construction Industry



“ I think ... a shift in the [work] culture [is needed].... Not being afraid to go see an on-staff nurse or speak to somebody or get yourself set up with some mental health help would go a long way.” — Study participant ”

About **3 in 10** construction participants working in **safety-sensitive\* positions** reported **consuming alcohol or drugs** 2 hours before or during work, or were hungover or felt high at work. Nearly **2 in 10** participants in **non-safety-sensitive\* positions** also did so.



**33%**



**18%**

Of the people who reported consuming alcohol or drugs ...

**5 in 10**

usually worked and tried to **hide their use**

**4 in 10**

told their manager they could **not work for a different reason** (e.g., calling in sick)

**4 in 10**

told their manager they were **not fit to work** because they consumed alcohol or drugs

**6 in 10 people** reported thinking they can **safely and confidentially tell** their managers about substance use issues **without fear** of discrimination, stigma or discipline.

Some workers reported **feeling pressure to hide** their struggles with pain and to “be tough,” by using substances instead of seeking help or medical advice.

In construction, the guys tend to stick together. No one's going to snitch on a friend unless things are really bad [with their co-worker]. — Study participant ”



For some, fear prevents them from telling others that they have used a substance that might affect their work, if they are experiencing a substance use issue or seeking help.

Some businesses have improved approaches to managing substance use risks, such as developing comprehensive policies, training staff, offering accommodations, fostering peer support programs, and setting up mental and substance use health supports.

Contact us at [workplace@ccsa.ca](mailto:workplace@ccsa.ca) for training or for more information and resources such as our [trades toolkit](#).

**Background:** The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction conducted a national study about workplace policies and practices related to substance use and working in various industries. The information presented here is from construction employees and managers who participated in a survey and focus groups, and individuals affected by substance use.

**Suggested citation:** Meister, S., Barker, B., Dassieu, L., Wood, S., Beirness, D., & Cragg, S. (2025). *Substance use and the workplace — stigma: Construction industry* [Infographic]. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction.

\*Safety-sensitive positions pose potential physical risk to self, co-workers, the public or the environment (e.g., heavy equipment operators, medical practitioners); and non-safety-sensitive pose low or no risks (e.g., office staff, retail clerk).