

# Workplaces and Substance Use

## Non-Safety-Sensitive Positions\*



“ I talked about [an episode] immediately with my boss and took a week off. I felt comfortable talking to her, and there was no sanction or note on my file. We have a very good relationship with our managers. — Study participant ”

Nearly 1 in 5 (16%) people working in **non-safety-sensitive positions** reported consuming alcohol or other drugs 2 hours before or during work, or were hungover or felt high at work.



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

**4 in 10**

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

**3 in 10**

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

**2 in 10**

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

Employees are less likely than managers to trust discussing their substance use with their managers.



**47%**

of employees ...



**66%**

of managers ...



Reported thinking they can **safely and confidentially tell** their managers about substance use issues **without fear** of discrimination, stigma or discipline.

Look at the facts not the stigma. Have a support system to help your employees who are struggling with substance use .... Offer paid treatment and mental health supports. — 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 employees and managers in non-safety-sensitive positions 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: Non-safety-sensitive positions* [Infographic]. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction.

\*Non-safety-sensitive positions pose low or no risk to self, co-workers, the public or the environment (e.g., office staff, retail clerks, bank managers).