

# New Survey Reveals American Workers Want Help with Substance Use




**Substance use is crushing the American workforce, taking a personal and professional toll on today's workers.**

A survey of working Americans demonstrates the high cost of substance and alcohol use – and highlights employers' role in solving America's substance use crisis.

Nearly half of U.S. workers have experienced personal or family problems involving substance or alcohol use, with a staggering impact on their personal health and professional productivity, according to the Pelago 2023 Annual Substance Use Management Survey.

The new study by Pelago, the leading digital clinic for substance use management, makes clear that misuse of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco is not simply a personal issue, but a workplace problem that can – and must – be managed at the organizational level.

### KEY FINDINGS:

 **46%**

**Nearly HALF of American workers have a problem with substance use.**

**46%** of American workers – about 72 million, regardless of job function, location, or employment type – have experienced personal or family problems involving substance or alcohol use. This includes **more than 1 in 3 workers** who report having a family member struggle with substance use.

**1 in 6** workers report missing work because of personal substance or alcohol use challenge.

**1 in 6 U.S. workers report missing work** because of a personal substance or alcohol use problem, with the consequences felt equally across all major job categories (blue collar, white collar, outside home, remote, full time, part time).

**2 in 3** workers believe their employer should offer support for substance use management.

There's a worrying divide between what employees want and what employers offer. **Nearly 2 in 3 workers** believe their employer should offer support for substance or alcohol use management; yet **only 17% report having this benefit.** (In comparison, only 39% of respondents thought widely offered fertility benefits were important, vs. 62% for substance or alcohol use support benefits.)

**7%**

Only 7% of workers feel they can ask their employer for substance use help.

Fear and shame around substance use hurts employees. **Fewer than half (43%) of the U.S. workforce feels they can ask their employer for help** in general, and when it comes to substance use and co-occurring mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, it's even lower: 7% and 11%, respectively.

**39%**

Nearly 40% of workers think that rehab is the **ONLY** way to treat a substance use disorder.

Most employees don't know that there are accessible options for treating alcohol and substance use. **39% believe that rehab is the only way** to treat a substance use disorder, and even fewer (25%) agree that there are effective medications to treat substance misuse.



# Pelago

Recent research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention demonstrates the fiscal tab of inaction, finding that the annual cost of substance use disorders is \$15,640 per affected employee enrolled in employer-sponsored insurance, totaling \$35 billion.

The Pelago 2023 Annual Substance Use Management Survey further underscores the need for employers to expand their benefits programs to include support for substance use disorder and related mental health problems – and assure workers they can ask for help without shame or fear of losing their livelihood. (The survey is based on a representative sample of 500 working adults and was conducted online from February 22 to 24, 2023. If this were a random sample, the margin of error would be 4.4% at a 95% level of confidence.)

Employers have a vital role to play in solving the substance use crisis, making a positive impact in the lives of their employees, and managing the associated costs.



## MEDIA CONTACT

Natalie Barta  
[nbarta@influenceandco.com](mailto:nbarta@influenceandco.com)

## SALES CONTACT

Ed Daley  
[ed@quitgenius.com](mailto:ed@quitgenius.com)



## Pelago is the world's leading virtual clinic for substance use management.

We are transforming substance use support—from prevention to treatment—delivering education, management skills, and opportunities for positive change to members struggling with substance use, most commonly tobacco, alcohol, or opioids. Our solution gives employers the means to offer on-demand, personalized support to workers seeking to live healthier lives. Pelago's cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) programs deliver convenient, accessible, and effective support that seamlessly integrates with health plans, pharmacy benefit managers, and wellness platforms. To date, Pelago has helped more than 750,000 members manage their substance use and improve their lives.