

ADDICTION IN THE WORKPLACE

21% of Canadians meets the criteria for a substance use disorder

Alcohol is the **#1 most abused substance**, accounting for **19 percent of SUDs**, followed by nicotine at **#2**



While **32 and 19 percent** of Canadians who use **cannabis and stimulants** report **problematic use**, respectively

HOW ADDICTION IMPACTS THE WORKPLACE:



EFFECTS ON THE EMPLOYEES

Studies have shown that substance misuse can lead to:

- Cognitive impairment
- Weakened immune system
- Decreased coordination & slowed reaction times
- Higher likelihood of accidents, injuries, illnesses, and fatalities
- Higher likelihood of co-occurring mental illness
- Heightened or worsened symptoms of co-occurring mental illness

In Canada, more people are hospitalized for alcohol-related harm than heart attacks



EFFECTS ON THE WORKPLACE

Still, research shows that **more than 70 percent of individuals with SUDs continue to work** because they remain "functioning." However, such "functioning" still comes at a cost, including:

- Decreased productivity
- Reduced work quality and performance
- Weakened morale
- Higher turnover
- High absenteeism
- Frequent accidents or injuries
- Increased healthcare costs
- Greater misconduct

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

 **Reminder: Addiction is not a choice**

But rather, it's a disorder that anyone can develop, in which case some might be more susceptible to developing the illness due to the presence of various risk factors

Individual risk factors for addiction:

- Family history of substance misuse
- Genetic predisposition
- Exposure to trauma; early childhood trauma
- Poverty; poor access to economic resources
- Family history of mental illness
- Minority status; violence and discrimination

Social & environmental risk factors:

- Stigma (self, social, and structural)
- Peer pressure
- Shift work; working long hours
- High-stress or high-risk jobs (injurious labor)
- Remote work; lack of supervision
- Bullying or social exclusion
- Lack of support

Thankfully, studies have consistently proven that there is a list of **protective factors** that can prevent or fight against addiction, including:

- Being motivated and having goals
- Connection with others
- Involvement in meaningful work
- Self-efficacy and social competence

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN RESPOND TO ADDICTION AT WORK:

1

Set clear expectations through policymaking, including a **drug and alcohol policy**, an **anti-discrimination policy**, as well as a **reasonable accommodation policy** to demonstrate an intolerance for substance use but also a willingness to help those struggling with an SUD

2

Train and educate employees on how to spot and report substance use at work; on how to identify and support struggling peers; about the risk factors, warning signs, symptoms, and dangers of substance misuse; and about the protective factors that can be leveraged to prevent misuse

3

Address the stigma by paying attention to the way substance misuse is talked about at work, opting to use **person-first and neutral, medically accurate language**. This includes refraining from using terms like "addict," "junkie," or "abuser," and using words that express concern, not judgment

4

Invest in expansive benefits and support resources, including addiction support programs (which a **third of Canadian employees say their organizations lack**), return-to-work and rehabilitation programs, flexible schedules to attend appointments/meetings, and therapeutic interventions