

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

Summary taken from  
pamphlet: Key Indicators for Policy

by: Institute for Health  
Policy, Brandeis University

Oct. 1993.



## A Summary

*file - substance abuse*

**C**IGARETTES, ALCOHOL ABUSE and the use of illicit drugs are responsible for destroying families, crippling U.S. businesses, terrorizing entire neighborhoods, and choking the education, criminal justice and social service systems. Substance abuse is a problem in all segments of society. No population group is immune to substance abuse and its effects.

Furthermore, the costs of substance abuse to the health care system frustrate any attempt to curb health care costs. Of the \$238 billion the nation spends each year on substance abuse, \$34 billion is spent on unnecessary health care. A heavy smoker will stay 25 percent longer when hospitalized than a nonsmoker, a problem drinker four times as long as a nondrinker. Without a reduction in substance abuse, health care costs cannot be curtailed effectively.

This special report, "Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem," documents for the first time in a single volume the devastating impact of substance abuse on American society. (The page numbers referenced in the following material refer to the main text.)

### The toll of substance abuse can be measured in lives

Each year, there are more deaths and disabilities from substance abuse than from any other preventable cause. Of the two million U.S. deaths each year, one in four is attributable to alcohol, illicit drug or tobacco use.

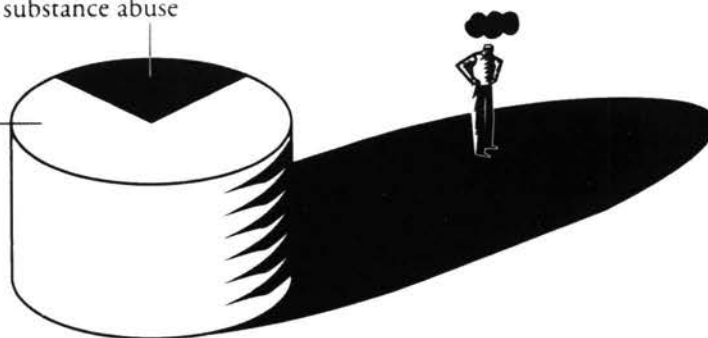
- More than 400,000 people die due to tobacco (page 33);
- 100,000 people die as a result of alcohol (page 33);
- Illicit drug abuse and related AIDS deaths account for at least 19,000 deaths (page 37).

### A half-million substance abuse deaths yearly

Substance abuse deaths as a percentage of all deaths

520,000 deaths due to substance abuse

1,630,000 deaths  
due to all  
other causes



Source: Indicator 8, (pages 32-37)

## Substance abuse takes its toll in dollars, consuming over \$238 billion annually

- Every man, woman, and child in America pays nearly \$1,000 annually to cover the costs of unnecessary health care, extra law enforcement, auto accidents, crime and lost productivity resulting from substance abuse.

### Wasted dollars

Per person cost of substance abuse



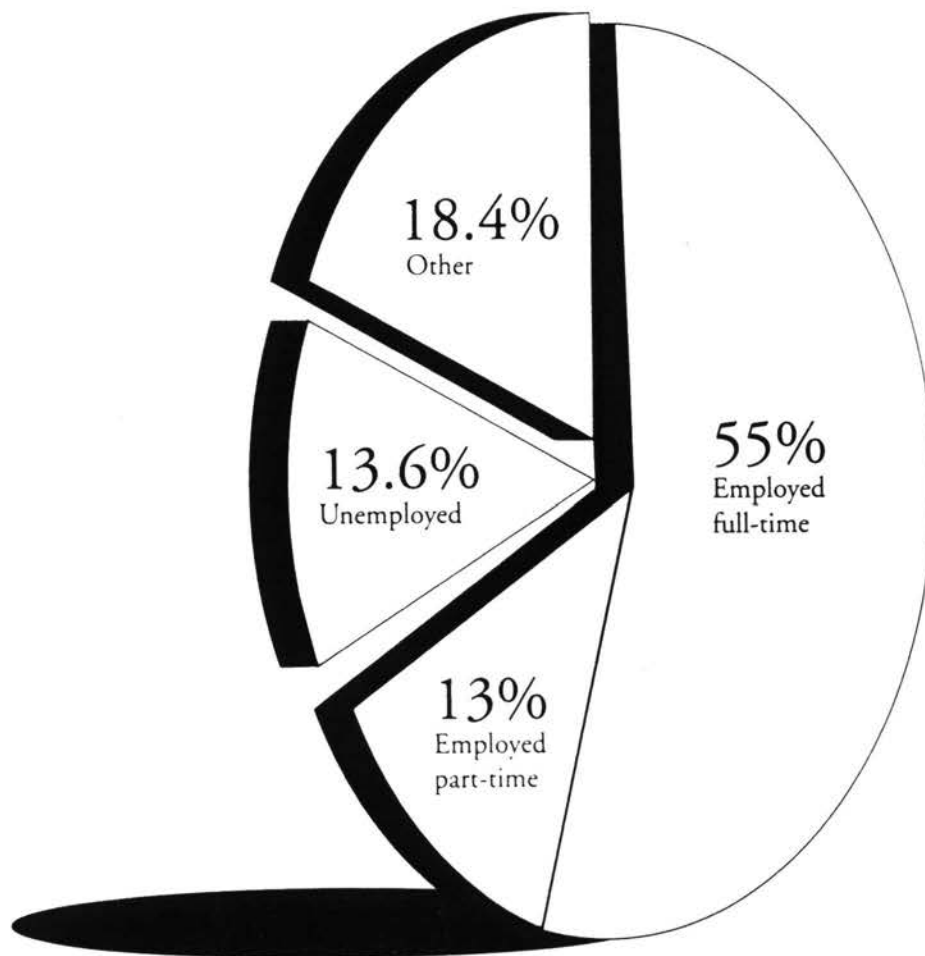
Source: Overview (page 16)

## Substance abuse erodes worker productivity

- One out of three Americans in the workforce smokes, 8 percent drink alcohol daily, and 15 percent have used illicit drugs in the past year (page 44).
- Most illicit drug users are employed (page 44).

### Most illicit drug users are employed

Employment status of (past year) illicit drug users, 1991



*Note: "Other" includes retired, disabled, homemaker, and students.*

*Source: (Page 44)*

## Illicit drugs and alcohol are partners in crime

- One-half to two-thirds of homicides and serious assaults involve alcohol (page 42).
- About half of men arrested for homicide and assault test positive for illicit drugs (page 42).

### Half of male arrestees test positive for illicit drugs

Percent of male arrestees testing positive for any drug at time of arrest, 1991



Source: Indicator 12 (page 43)

## Substance abuse rips apart families

- One out of four Americans experiences family problems related to alcohol abuse (page 40).
- Alcohol abuse plays a part in one out of three failed marriages (page 40).

### Alcohol is a cause of family problems

One in four Americans say alcohol has been a cause of trouble in their family



Source: (Page 40)



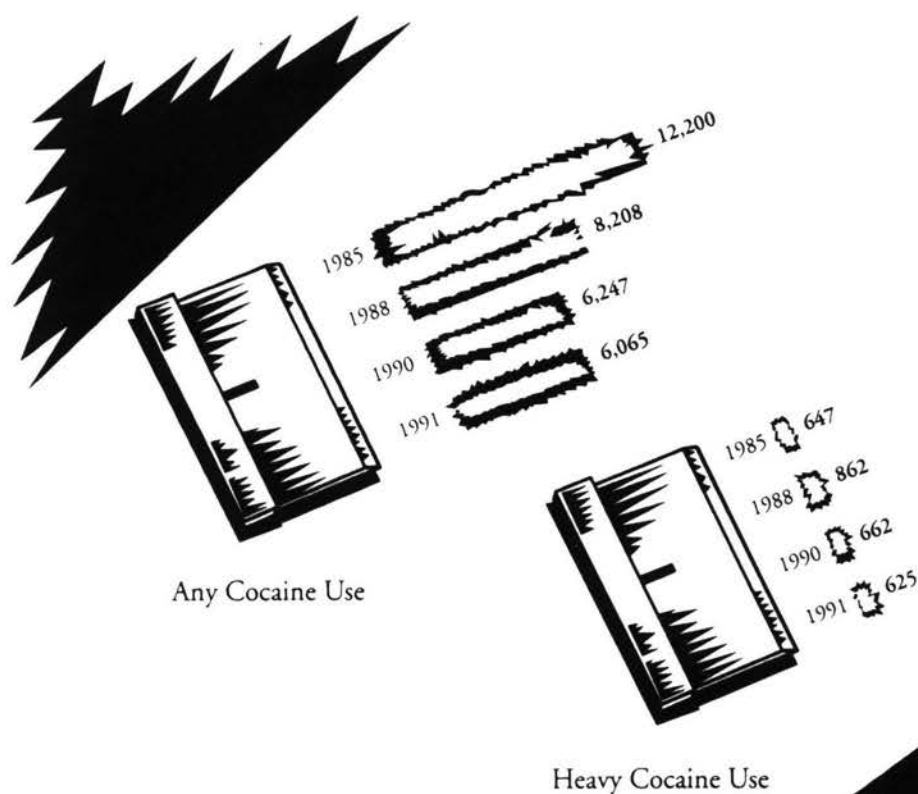
## Four Sources of Optimism

Source #1. Though heavy use of some substances is unchanged, substantial decreases have occurred among casual users

- Cocaine use is down among casual users, but steady among heavy users (page 25);
- Cigarette smoking overall has declined dramatically—from 42 percent of the population in 1965 to 26 percent in 1991. Again, rates of heavy smoking have not changed much (page 24);
- Since 1988, the number of heavy drinkers has declined somewhat (page 24), and many fewer auto deaths are attributable to drunk driving (page 35).

### Casual cocaine use is down markedly

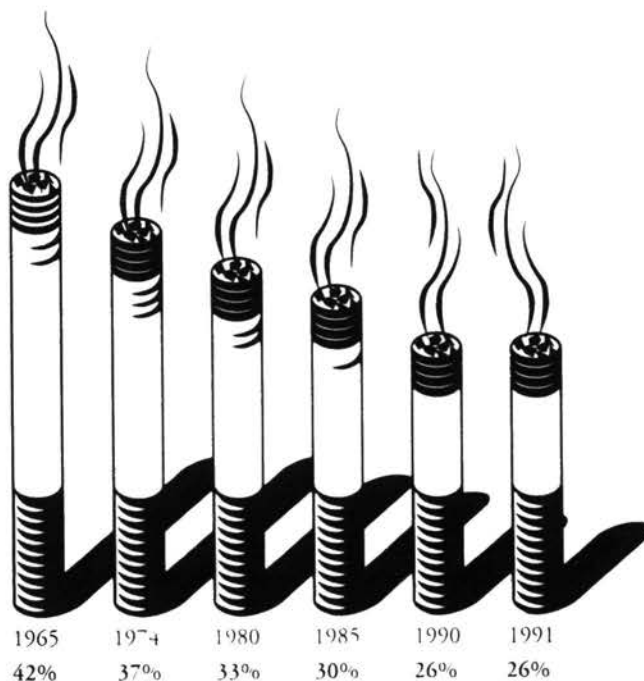
Number of users (number in thousands)



Source: Indicator 5 (page 25)

## Smoking's sharp declines level off in 1990

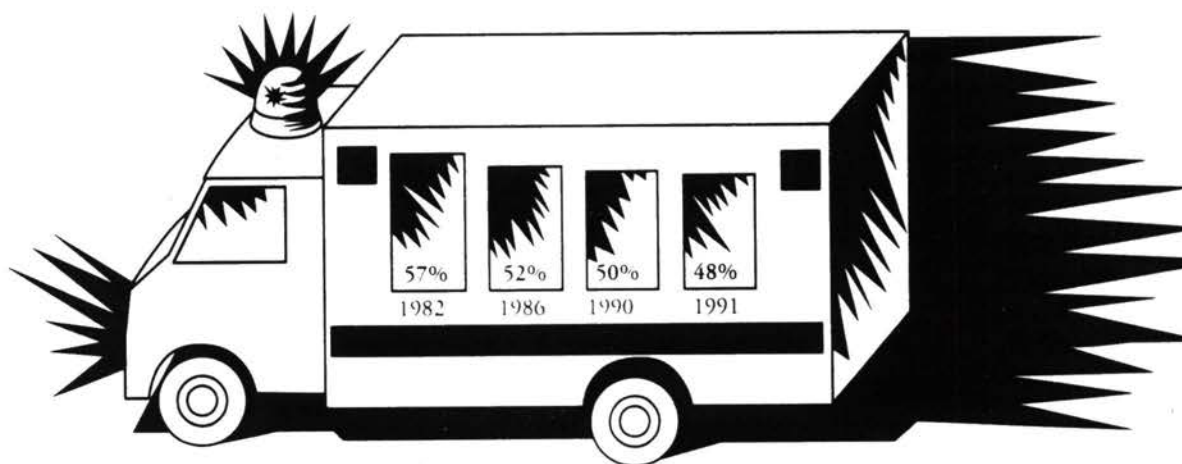
Percent of the U.S. population that smokes



Source: National Health Interview Surveys 1974-1991. Data compiled by the CDC Office on Smoking and Health; 1965 data from page 24.

## Deaths from drunk driving have fallen substantially

Percent of traffic injury deaths related to alcohol



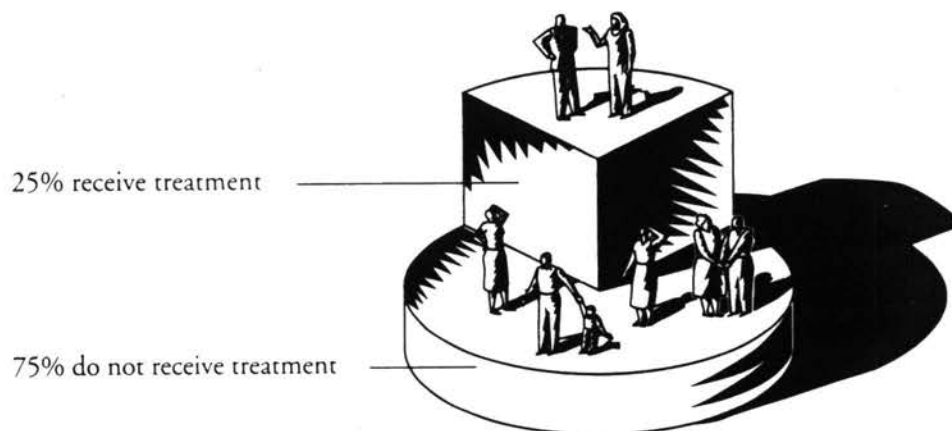
Source: National Highway Transportation Safety Administration

## Source #2. A great many Americans want treatment for their substance abuse problems

- 800,000 people each day receive services in a special alcohol or drug program (page 60).
- Nevertheless, only about one-fourth of those needing alcohol and drug treatment get it (page 60).

### Unmet need for alcohol and drug treatment

Percent of those needing alcohol and drug treatment

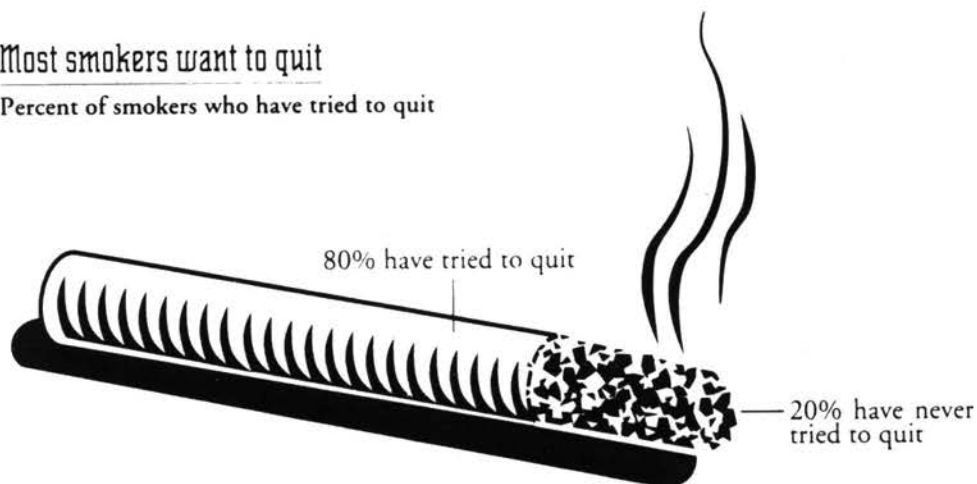


Source: (page 60)

- Most smokers make multiple attempts to quit, yet few succeed on their first try.

### Most smokers want to quit

Percent of smokers who have tried to quit



Source: (page 28)

### Source #3. The American people increasingly recognize the risks of substance abuse and want public action

- Major media campaigns have raised awareness and contributed to a shift in public attitudes (page 48);
- 64 percent of Americans want tougher enforcement of drinking-age laws (page 48);
- nearly 90 percent want tougher sanctions on people who drive drunk (page 48);
- substantial efforts are under way in schools and workplaces to combat substance abuse—with some success. At least 30 percent of U.S. workers have access to an Employee Assistance Program, and 20 percent work in firms with drug testing programs (page 44).

#### Americans recognize substance abuse risks

Percent of adults 35+ who think heavy use is very risky



Source: National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1991

### Source #4. And, Americans are taking action themselves

- More than 2,000 communities have launched community-wide coalitions dealing with the problems of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs (page 52).