

News Brief

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Positive Workforce Drug Tests Reach 20-year High

Recent drug test rates show that positive workforce tests from 2021 [climbed to the highest level since 2001](#), according to a new analysis released by Quest Diagnostics, a leading provider of preemployment and post-accident drug and alcohol testing.

Quest Diagnostics' study was based on a total of more than 11 million deidentified urine, hair and oral fluid drug test results from its testing index collected between January and December 2021.

In 2021, the rate of positive drug test results among America's workforce was found to be 4.6%, up from 4.4% in 2020. 2021's positive test average is Quest Diagnostics' highest recorded since 2001 and is up more than 30% from the all-time low of 3.5%, recorded 10 years ago.

Notably, positive test rates for marijuana increased in 2021, continuing a recent trend. According to Quest Diagnostics, the positive test result rates for marijuana for the general U.S. workforce have gone up over 50% in the past five years. Other key takeaways include:

- Retail trade had the highest positivity rate among key industries.
- Positivity rates increased in several federally mandated, safety-sensitive workforce testing categories including marijuana and cocaine after years of decline.

Employer Takeaway

Drug usage can have a wide-reaching impact on the workplace, and as such, it's worth monitoring these changing trends and considering what drug use means for a work environment.

“Employers are wrestling with significant recruitment and retention challenges as well as with maintaining safe and engaging work environments ... Our Drug Testing Index data raises important questions about what it means to be an employer committed to employee health and safety.”

-Keith Ward, general manager and vice president, Quest Diagnostics

Employers should continue to prioritize the health, well-being and safety of employees, although the manner in which this is accomplished will vary by employer. In addition, employers should also continue to stay apprised of legislative developments. They should note that laws and regulations regarding drug usage and policies may vary by state and city. When creating or updating workplace policies, employers should seek out local legal counsel.

Contact MST Insurance Solutions, Inc. today for more resources.

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