

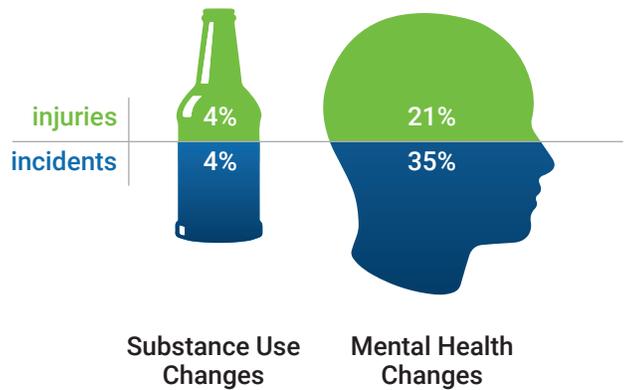
NSC RESEARCH SNAPSHOT:

Workplace Substance Use & Mental Health During COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic raged, so too did mental health issues and substance use. A recent public opinion poll found that many adults are experiencing significant mental health concerns due to worry and stress over the coronavirus, such as difficulty sleeping (36%) or eating (32%), increases in alcohol consumption or substance use (12%), and worsening chronic conditions (12%). Among employees, these issues are even more pronounced, with one in four employees showing signs of PTSD and a 63% increase in anxiety among employees in December 2021 vs. pre-pandemic. The risk of addiction among men in particular was 80% higher than the prior three months. Perhaps the most troubling reflection of the pandemic’s potential impact on substance use and mental health is the increase in overdose deaths – more than 107,000 people died from an overdose in 2021. Substance use and mental health can be underlying causes of workplace impairment and can lead to injuries, incidents and even fatalities. NSC surveyed its members to learn more about their perceptions of substance use and mental health changes during the pandemic.

Did incidents and injuries increase during the pandemic because of substance use or mental health?

The majority of survey respondents did not think so. However, more NSC members perceived an increase in both injuries and incidents due to mental health changes (21% and 35% respectively) compared to substance use. Just 4% of respondents perceived an increase in incidents and injuries due to substance use changes.



Did substance misuse change during the pandemic?

Most members were unsure whether there were any substance misuse changes at their workplaces. Cannabis and alcohol were perceived to have had the greatest increases.

	alcohol	cannabis	opioids (legal & illegal)	stimulants
increased	35%	22%	7%	7%
unchanged	23%	26%	34%	32%
decreased	2%	1%	1%	2%
unsure	41%	50%	56%	58%

Survey Background

Total Surveys Analyzed: 154

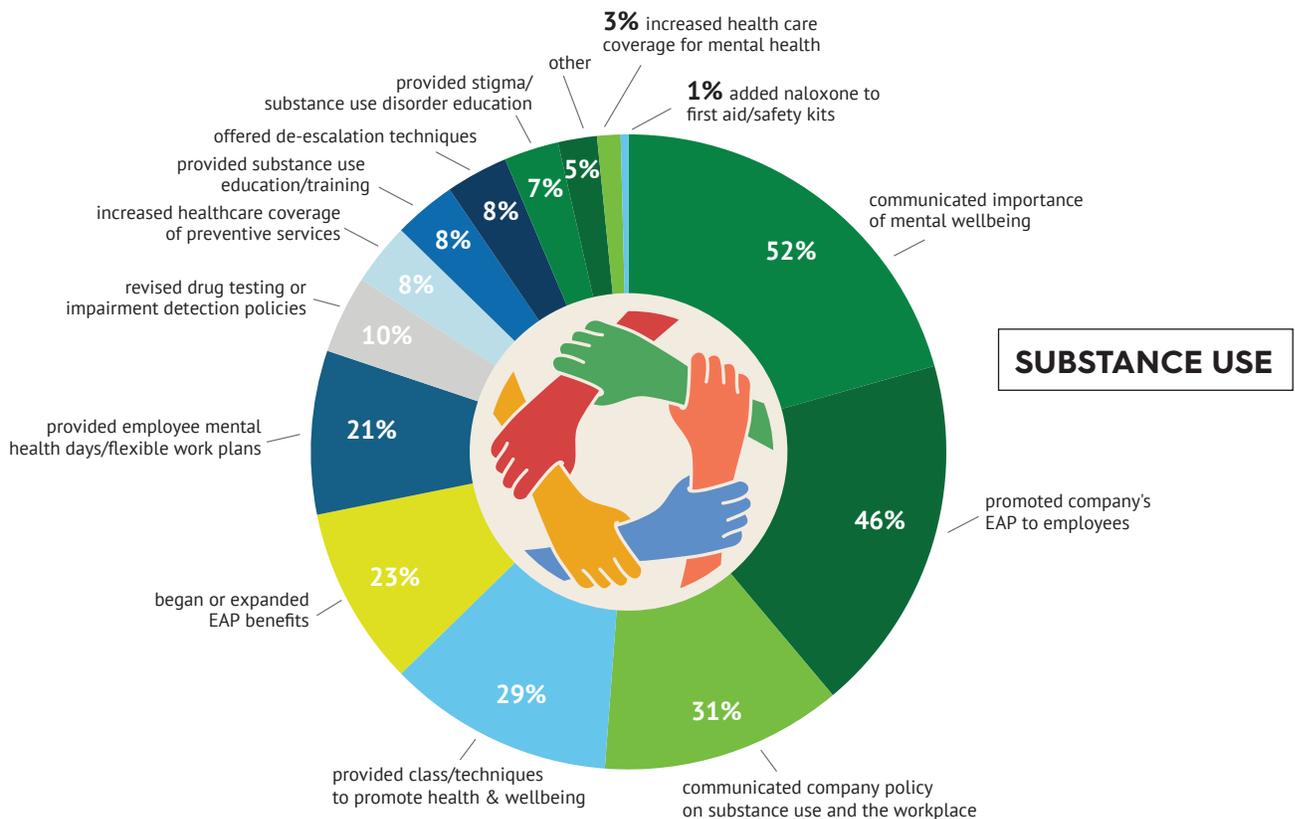
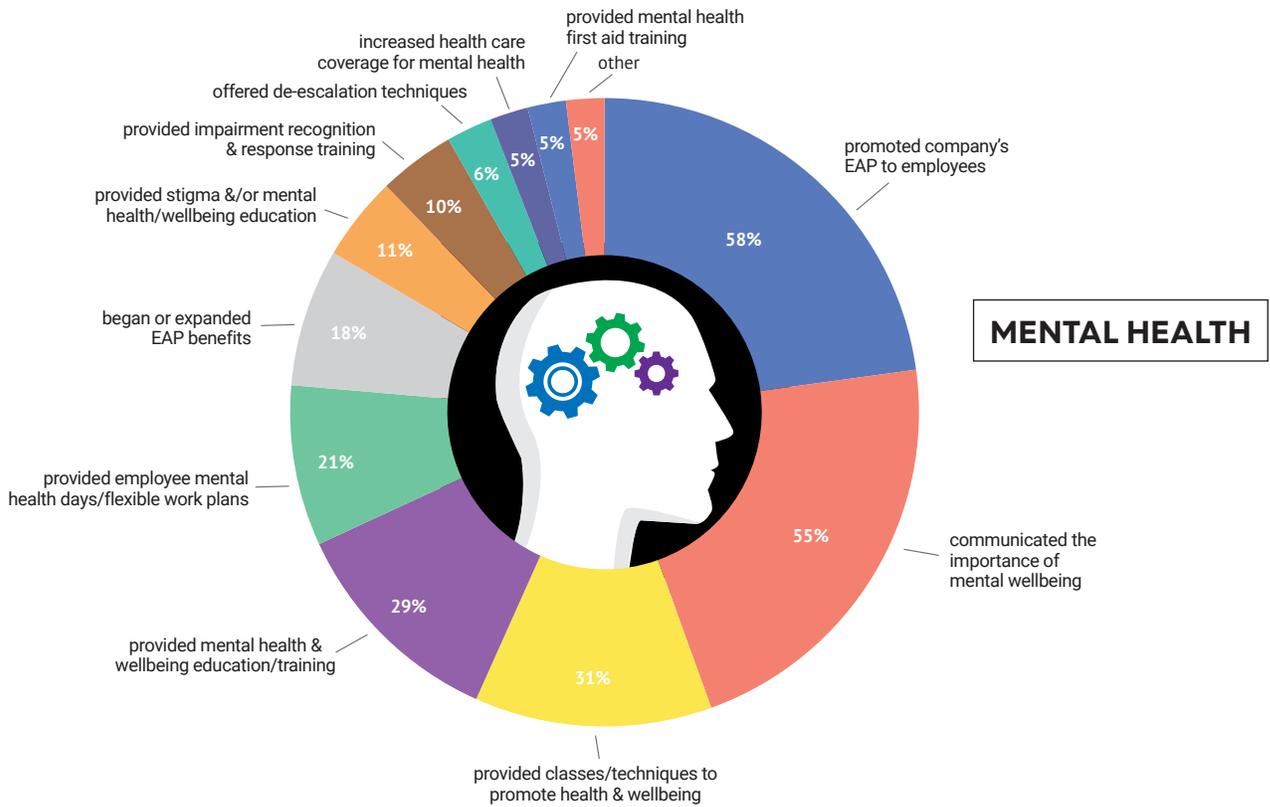
Pandemic Timeframe Defined as March 2020 – Jan/Feb/March 2022

NSC Member Respondent Demographics:

- Primary Job Category: EHS professionals (27%), HR professionals (18%) and Manager/Directors (12%)
- Primary Industry: Construction (23%) and Manufacturing (21%)
- Primary Size: 101 – 500 Employees (41%); <50 – 100 Employees (28%); 501 – 5,000 Employees (23%)
- Primary Location: South (34%) and Midwest (32%)

How did NSC members respond to substance use & mental health during the pandemic?

The majority of members reported promoting EAPs to employees and communicating the importance of mental wellbeing as a way of addressing substance use and mental health. About a quarter of members reported beginning or expanding EAP benefits and/or providing flexible work plans. Around 30% of members reported offering some type of trainings, education or classes to support employees.



Looking for ways to address mental health and substance misuse in your workplace?

- [Opioids at Work Toolkit](#)
- [Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Impairment Recognition and Response Training](#)
- [SAFER](#)

i Panchal N, Kamal R, Orgera K, Cox C, Garfield R, Hamel L, Chidambaram P. The implications of COVID-19 for mental health and substance use. Kaiser family foundation. 2020 Apr 21;21. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

ii Mental Health Index, U.S. Worker Edition, Q4 2021 Update, January 2022

https://info.totalbrain.com/hubfs/resources/MHI%20Data%20Reports%20Q4%20December%202021.pdf?utm_medium=email&_hsmi=201435608&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8lQ4wrvHiw7jPhnfeBDRvDhhdMFQpR2wGtfcdwkyjazU5vPJPo3wblQZPz_hjc-D2Qb_m7yukl8unNMNFZ2Zp6Yry4S9g&utm_content=201435608&utm_source=hs_automation

iii <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.html>

