Marijuana and Cocaine Now Account for Smaller Proportion of Positive Employee Drug Tests

Of the more than 6.7 million workplace urinalyses conducted by Quest Diagnostics in 2012, 3.5% tested positive for at least one illicit drug, slightly lower than the rate of 4.4% in 2002. While marijuana continues to be the drug most frequently detected, the percentage of positive drug tests containing marijuana has decreased over the past 10 years, from 58.4% in 2002 to 44.4% in 2012. The proportion containing cocaine also decreased, from 14.8% to 6.3%. At the same time, those containing amphetamines nearly tripled, from 7.2% to 21.1%. The percentage of positive drug tests containing opiates and those containing sedatives increased moderately (from 11.9% to 15.4%, and 7.2% to 12.1%, respectively) over the period.

Drugs Detected in Positive Urine Tests Among U.S. Workers, 2002 and 2012

*The category “opiates” comprises methadone, propoxyphene, oxycodone, and other opiates. The category “sedatives” comprises barbiturates and benzodiazepines. The category “other” comprises PCP, MDMA (only tested for in 2012), and 6-AM (only tested for in 2012).

NOTES: Data are from workers employed by companies that use Quest Diagnostics’ drug testing services, including federally mandated, safety-sensitive workers. Reasons for testing include follow-up, for cause, periodic, post-accident, pre-employment, random, and returned to duty. Figures do not include acids/bases, adulterants, substituted urines, or invalid specimens.