Are Welfare Recipients More Likely to Use Alcohol and Other Drugs?

A recently published report concluded that rates of alcohol and drug use and dependence among welfare recipients are comparable to rates among persons who do not receive welfare benefits (see figure below). However, it should be noted that these estimates are based solely on self-reported data obtained from in-person interviews and could be misleading if welfare recipients are less likely than others to admit to substance use and symptoms of dependence. Research utilizing both self-report and urinalysis or hair analysis results has found high rates of underreporting among disadvantaged populations. To accurately assess the level of substance use and dependence among the welfare population, researchers need to use biological-based measures of use in addition to self-reports.

![Percentage of Welfare and Non-welfare Recipients Reporting Past Year Use of Any Drug, United States, 1992](chart)


\[SOURCES: \text{Adapted by CESAR from data from Bridget Grant and Deborah Dawson, “Alcohol and Drug Use, Abuse, and Dependence among Welfare Recipients,” American Journal of Public Health, 1996, 86 (10):1450-1454. For more information, contact the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at 301-443-3860.}\]