15% of U.S. Workers Report Workplace Alcohol Use or Impairment in Past Year

An estimated 19.2 million U.S. workers (15.3%) reported using or being impaired by alcohol at work at least once in the past year, according to recently released data from the National Survey of Workplace Health and Safety. The most common alcohol-related workplace behaviors were being hungover at work (9.2%) and using alcohol during the workday (7.1%), primarily during lunch breaks (see figure below). Despite the relative magnitude of the problem, most workplace alcohol use or impairment occurred infrequently—70% of workers reported using or being impaired by alcohol on a less than monthly basis, 19% reported it on a monthly basis, and 11% reported doing so weekly (data not shown). According to the authors, “the prevalence of alcohol use and impairment in the workplace was sufficiently high to suggest that employers need specific policies directed at alcohol use and impairment at work and employees need to be aware of these policies” (p. 154).

**“Use Before Work” is defined as use within 2 hours of starting a work shift.**

NOTE: The National Survey on Workplace Health and Safety was a random digit dialing telephone survey conducted from January 2002 to June 2003 of noninstitutionalized adults (ages 18 to 65) who were employed in the civilian labor force and residing in households in the contiguous United States.