

Quest Diagnostics Study Finds Highest Drug Positivity Rate in Twenty Years

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According to a new [Quest Diagnostic Study](#) analyzing workplace drug test results in 2021, employers saw the highest rate of positive drug test results in twenty years. The study was based on more than 11 million urine, hair and oral fluid drug tests collected during calendar year 2021. Of the seventeen industries tracked, all but mining saw an increase in overall positivity rates from 2017 to 2021. Although the overall positivity rates rose by only 1.8% since 2020, they were 12% higher than in 2017 and have risen steadily over the past five years.

Not surprisingly, positive marijuana test rates continue to increase. Positive urine drug tests for marijuana climbed to the highest rate ever recorded. Over five years, positivity for marijuana in the general U.S. workforce increased 50%. Positive marijuana test results doubled or more than doubled in six of the seventeen industries tracked: Transportation and Warehousing; Finance and Insurance; Utilities; Accommodations and Food Services; Retail Trade; and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. Accommodations and Food Services topped the lists with a 7.5 % marijuana positivity rate.

The Retail Trade industry saw the highest overall drug positivity rate at 7% and also saw a 55.6% increase in positive methamphetamine drug tests between 2017 and 2021.

Encouragingly, the positivity rates for heroin and other opioids over the past year decreased or stayed the same across all workforces.

The overall positivity rate for the federally mandated, safety-sensitive workforce (which includes federal employees and certain transportation industry employees) increased in 2021, with notable increases in positive rates for marijuana, amphetamines and cocaine.

Most concerning, over the last five years, all industries experienced a 17.4% increase in positive test results for pre-employment drug tests and a 26% increase in positive test results for post-accident drug tests. Similarly, in the federally mandated safety-sensitive workforce, pre-employment positivity increased 9.5% since 2017 while post-accident positivity increased 41.9% during that time.

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