

NC-TOPPS SNAPSHOT



EMPLOYMENT AMONG ADULT CONSUMERS

Employment is an important factor in providing stability in life and is strongly related to a number of outcomes among NC-TOPPS consumers. These outcomes include living arrangements, abuse history, and mental health. Finding and maintaining employment are related to positive mental health outcomes, while unemployment is associated with a decline in mental health, for both NC-TOPPS consumers and the population as a whole.¹ Homelessness and lack of stable housing are also related to unemployment among NC-TOPPS consumers and the general population.² Likewise, both the general public and NC-TOPPS consumers who experience abuse³ or who abuse others⁴ are less likely to report full-time employment.

Table 1 presents information on employment status at intake among consumers in the three age disability groups.

- Few consumers are employed when they enter treatment and employment status is related to age/disability group.
- At 19% and 12%, SA consumers are most likely to be employed full-time or part-time.
- Consumers with co-occurring disorders are most likely to be unemployed (54%) and those admitted to MH treatment are least likely to be in the labor force (54% report that they are not working or seeking work).

Table 1. Age/Disability Group by Employment at Intake.

Employment Status	Age/Disability Group / Column Percent			
	Adult MH	Adult SA	Co-Occurring	Row N*
Full-Time	2.4	19.3	8.1	4,669
Part-Time	6.1	11.6	9.7	3,463
Unemployed	37.5	49.7	53.6	16,426
Not in Labor Force	54.0	19.4	28.7	10,001
Column N	8,025	20,858	5,676	34,559

Table 2 contains information on living arrangements and employment.

- Consumers who are employed are more likely to have secure living arrangements. Those who are employed full-time are most likely to live in a stable setting such as a private home or facility.
- The likelihood of having stable living conditions declines slightly among part-time workers, and more so among the unemployed.
- Conversely, homelessness increases among those who are employed part-time or not employed.
- Among the homeless, employed consumers are more likely to live in a sheltered environment and the unemployed are most likely to live in an unsheltered setting.

Table 2. Employment at Intake by Living Arrangements.

Current Residence	Employment Status / Column Percent				
	Employed Full-Time	Employed Part-Time	Not Employed	Not in Labor Force	Row N*
Home, Facility, etc.	98.7	97.1	91.6	93.8	32,399
Homeless	1.3	2.9	8.4	6.2	2,160
Column N	4,669	3,463	16,426	10,001	34,559
Sheltered	75.4	69.0	63.4	67.8	1,410
Unsheltered	24.6	31.0	36.6	32.2	750
Column N	61	100	1,375	624	2,160

As with the general public, employment among NC-TOPPS consumers is related to experiencing abuse as well as abusing others (Table 3).

- Being abused by others is more common among those who are employed part-time or unemployed. Around 95% of full-time employees report experiencing no abuse in the past three months; this number drops to 89% among the unemployed.
- Similarly, the likelihood of abusing others increases as employment stability declines. The incidence of reporting such abuse at intake increases from 3.6% among employed consumers to 8.6% among unemployed consumers.
- Reports of abusing others “more than a few times” follow a similar, though less extreme pattern.

Table 3. Employment and Recent Abuse History.

Abuse History	Employment Status / Column Percent				
	Employed Full-Time	Employed Part-Time	Not Employed	Not in Labor Force	Row N*
Frequency of Abuse in Past Three Months					
Never	95.1	91.9	89.3	90.4	28,825
Few Times	4.0	6.7	9.0	8.0	2,488
More than a Few Times	0.9	1.4	1.7	1.6	491
Column N	4,268	3,162	15,129	9,245	31,804
Frequency of Being Abused in Past Three Months					
Never	95.9	92.0	90.2	90.2	29,030
Few times	3.6	7.1	8.6	8.6	2,479
More than a Few Times	0.5	0.9	1.2	1.2	354
Column N	4,276	3,168	15,161	9,258	31,863

*Row N refers to the number of consumers in each category.

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Employment status shows a strong relationship with mental health and the consumer's view of his or her mental health symptoms (Table 4).

- Unemployed or underemployed consumers are notably more likely to experience thoughts of, or actions related to, self harm.
- Among those who are employed full-time, 90% have experienced no suicidal thoughts in the past three months.
- Experiencing suicidal thoughts “a few times” increases from 9% among the employed to about 19% among the unemployed.
- Consumers who are not in the labor force also show increased incidence of suicidal thoughts.
- Patterns are similar for attempts to hurt oneself in the past three months. Incidence of such attempts increases among part-time and unemployed consumers. A few or more such attempts are reported among the unemployed as well as those who are not in the labor force.
- As employment status becomes less secure, mental health symptoms intensify, based on consumer reports. A full 46% of employed consumers rate their symptoms as “not present,” compared with about 30% of part-time employees and 22% of the unemployed. With regard to all levels of ratings, mental health symptoms increase as employment becomes less stable.

Table 4. Employment and Mental Health Status.

Aspect of Mental Health	Employment Status / Column Percent				
	Employed Full-Time	Employed Part-Time	Not Employed	Not in Labor Force	Row N*
Frequency of Suicidal Thoughts					
Never	90.0	81.7	76.9	70.7	26,726
Few Times	8.7	14.8	18.6	22.6	6,234
More than a Few Times	1.4	3.5	4.5	6.7	1,599
Attempted to Hurt Self in Past Three Months					
Never	97.8	95.2	93.4	91.6	32,365
Few times	2.0	4.2	5.8	7.2	1,902
More than a Few Times	0.2	0.6	0.8	1.2	292
Severity of Mental Health Symptoms in Past Month					
Extremely Severe	1.4	2.7	4.1	5.9	1,428
Severe	7.0	12.5	16.2	23.1	5,718
Moderate	21.8	32.5	37.3	41.2	12,386
Mild	23.5	22.1	20.4	18.0	7,016
Not Present	46.3	30.2	22.1	11.8	8,011
Column N	4,669	3,463	16,426	10,001	34,559

DEFINITIONS:

- Not in Labor Force:** Persons who have no job and are not looking for one (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_hgm.htm#nilf. Retrieved 1/22/14)
- Hurt Self:** NC-TOPPS Initial Interview: In the past 3 months, how often have you tried to hurt yourself or cause yourself pain on purpose (such as cut, burned, or bruised self)?
- Abuse:** NC-TOPPS Initial Interview: In the past 3 months, how often have you been hit, kicked, slapped, or otherwise physically hurt?
- Abused Others:** NC-TOPPS Initial Interview: In the past 3 months, how often have you hit, kicked, slapped, or otherwise physically hurt someone?
- Mental Health Symptoms:** NC-TOPPS Initial Interview: In the past month, how would you describe your mental health symptoms?
- Home, Facility, etc:** NC-TOPPS Initial Interview: In the past 3 months, lived most of the time in Private or Permanent Residence, Temporary Housing, Residential Program, Facility/Institution, Other (*Note: excludes homeless*).
- Sheltered:** Living situation is a homeless shelter or domestic violence shelter
- Unsheltered:** Living situation is on the street, in a car or camp

REFERENCES:

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3. Michael L. Benson and Greer Litton Fox. 2004. *When Violence Hits Home: How Economics and Neighborhood Play a Role, Research in Brief*. U.S. Department of Justice: Washington, D.C.
4. American Academy of Pediatrics . 2010. “Unemployment Linked with Child Maltreatment.” *Science Daily*. Retrieved January 23, 2014 (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101003081452.htm?>)

SOURCE: NC-TOPPS ADULT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONSUMER INITIAL INTERVIEWS—STATEWIDE

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