

# Help Seeking, Loneliness, and Substance Use Consequences in Individuals with Opioid Use Disorders (OUD)

Denise Fedlan, MA<sup>1</sup>; Lisham Ashrafioun, PhD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychiatry, University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry, Rochester, NY

<sup>2</sup>VISN 2 Center of Excellence for Suicide Prevention, Canandaigua VA Medical Center, Canandaigua, NY



## Introduction

### Background

- Stigma of OUD can contribute to loneliness in the workplace by:
  - Creating perceived or real distance from co-workers
  - Not seeking professional help or social support from co-workers because of fear of rejection or repercussion.

### Aims of Current study

- To test and assess the associations between Opioid Use Disorders and Loneliness on factors related to employment.

## Method

### Study population

- Data is utilized from a nationally recruited study on the association between loneliness and substance use and the effects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Loneliness.
- Inclusion: 1) must be ages 18+, understand English 2) have internet access 2) screen positive for an active OUD on the OUD Module of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-5 Research Version (SCID-5-RV), and screen positive for loneliness (at least a T-score > 60 on the NIH Toolbox Loneliness Scale).
- N = 60

### Variables

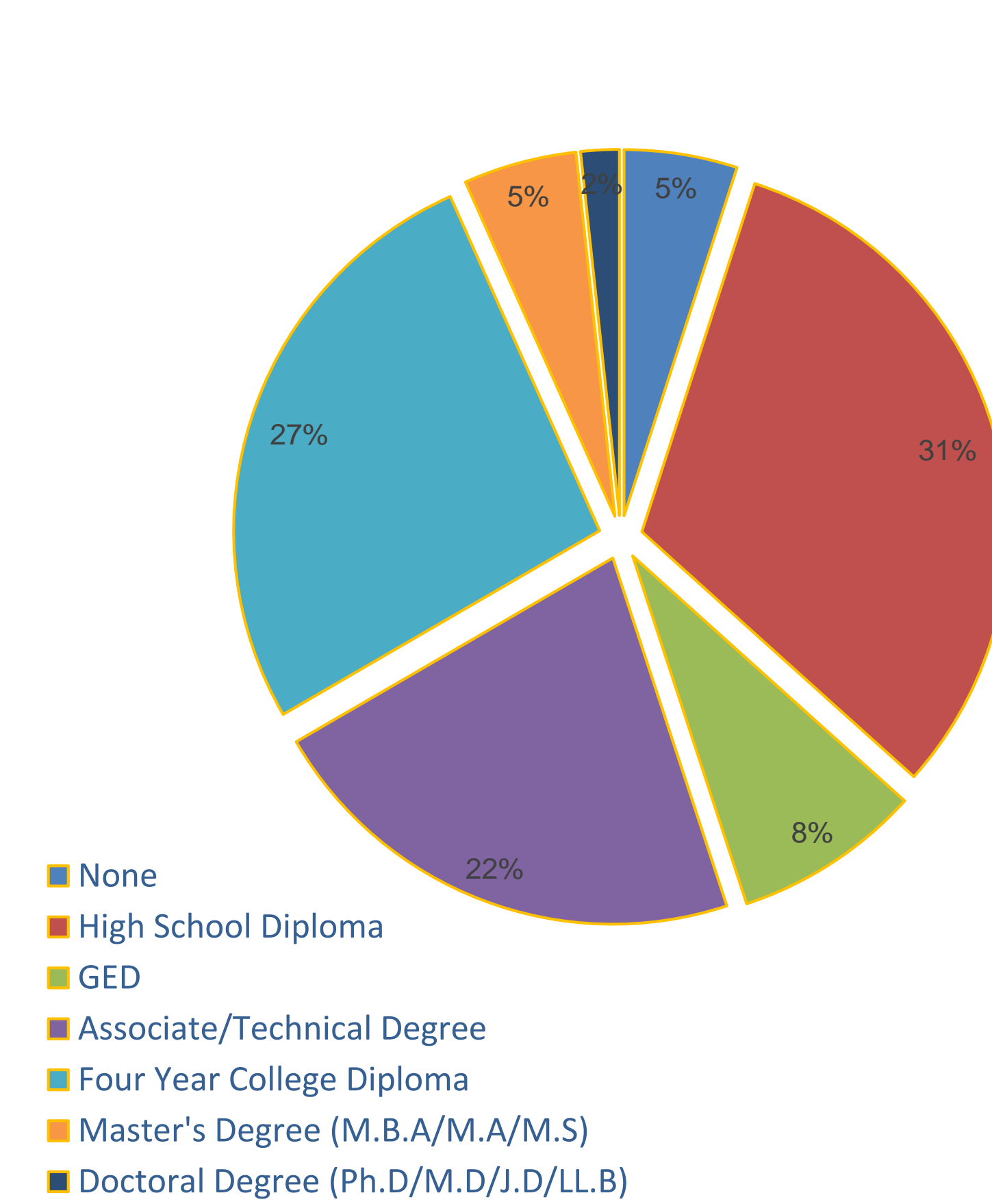
- Demographics
- Inventory of Drug Use Consequences (select questions on employment)– 0 (never) to 3 (Daily or Almost Daily)
  - I have missed days of work or school because of my drinking or drug use.
  - The quality of my work has suffered because of drinking or drug use.
- Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale – 1 (Never) to 4 (often)
- Treatment Utilization Questionnaire
- COVID-19 Question – Impact of COVID on work

Demographics	N	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	23	38.3
Female	37	61.7
<b>Race</b>		
White	43	71.7
Black	14	23.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	1.7
Asian	1	1.7
Biracial/Multiracial	1	1.7

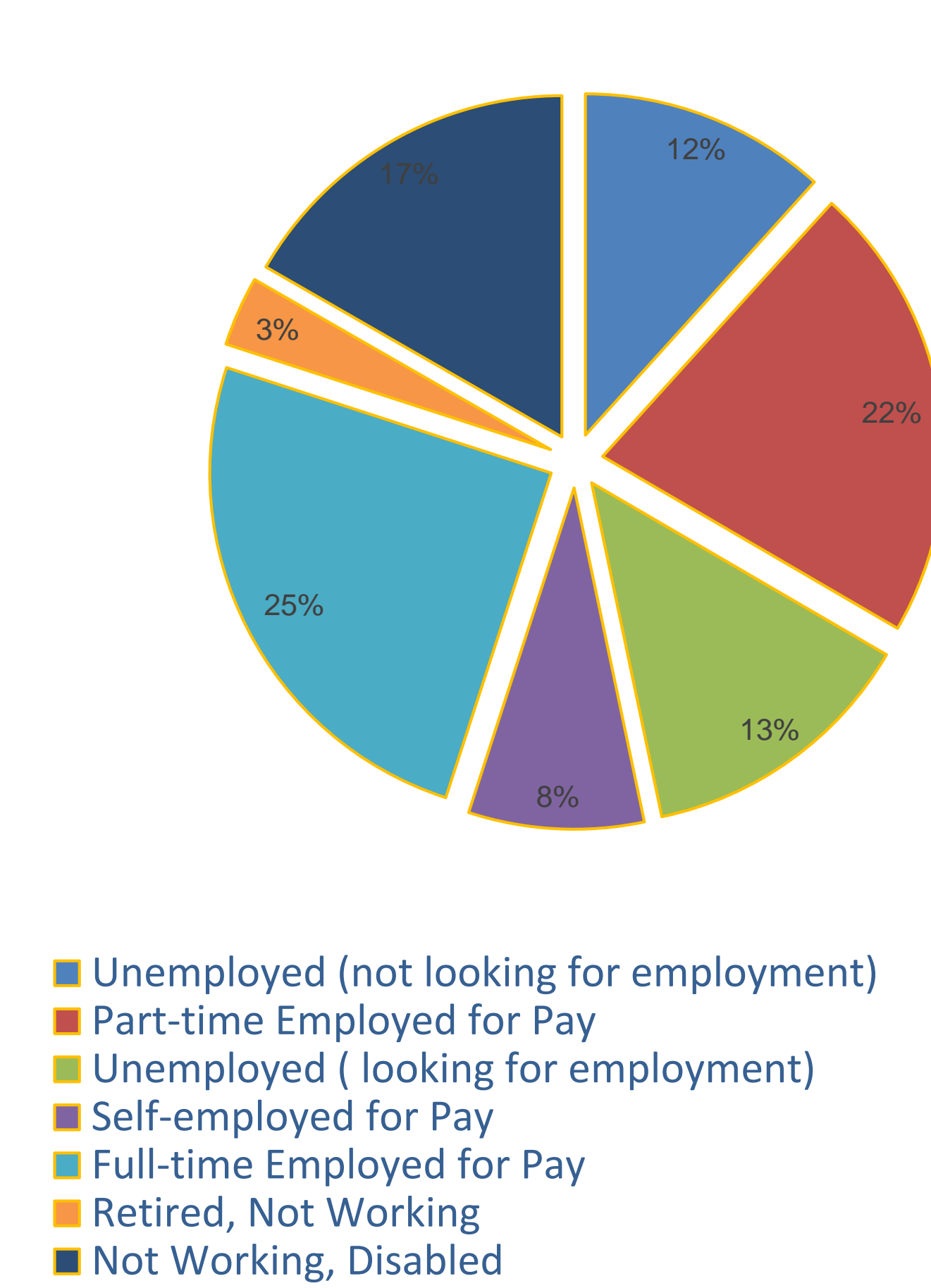
- Fields of occupations - Sales, education, administrative assistant, food services, general labor, retail, warehouse, security, arts, care giving

## Results

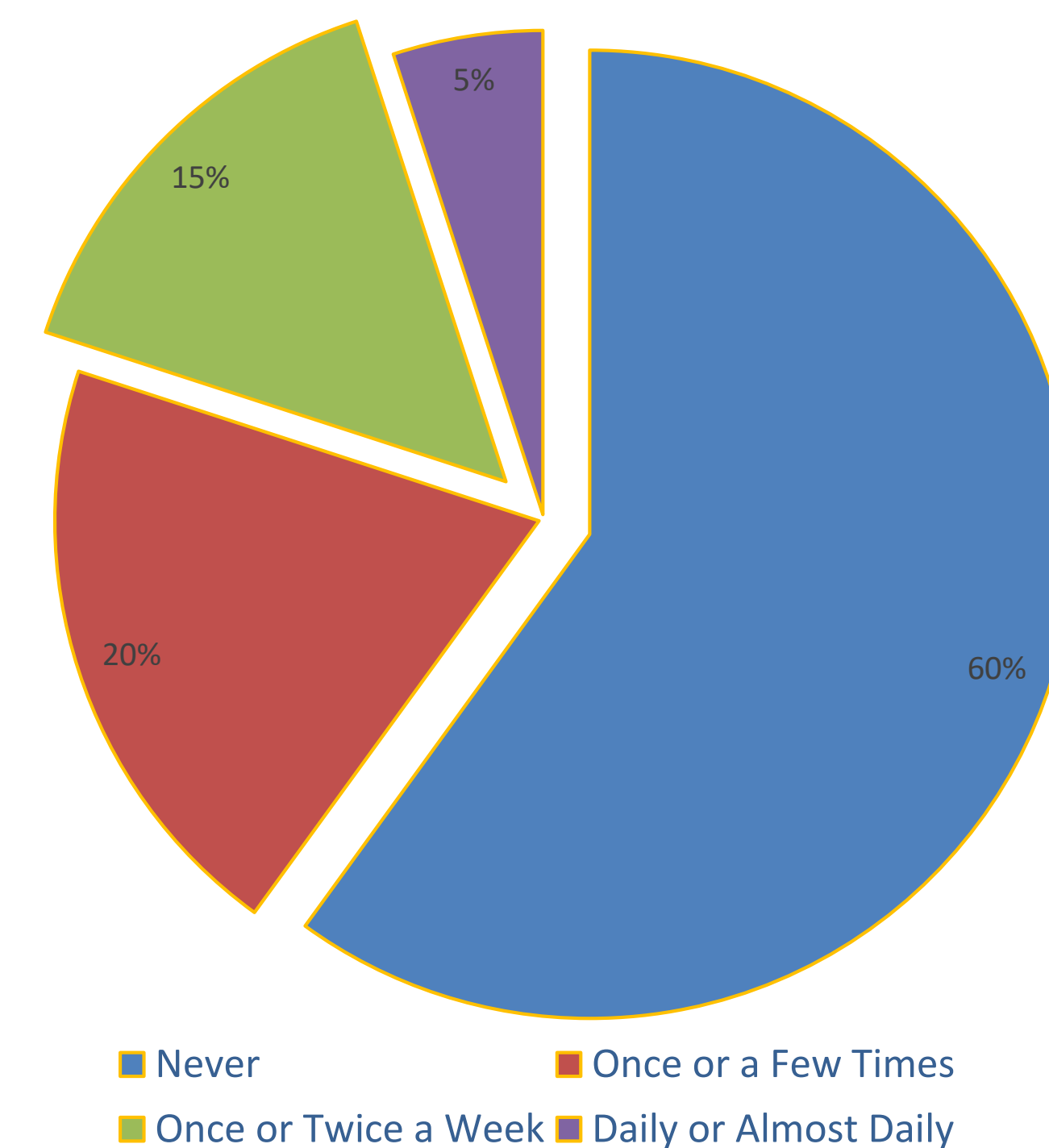
EDUCATION LEVEL



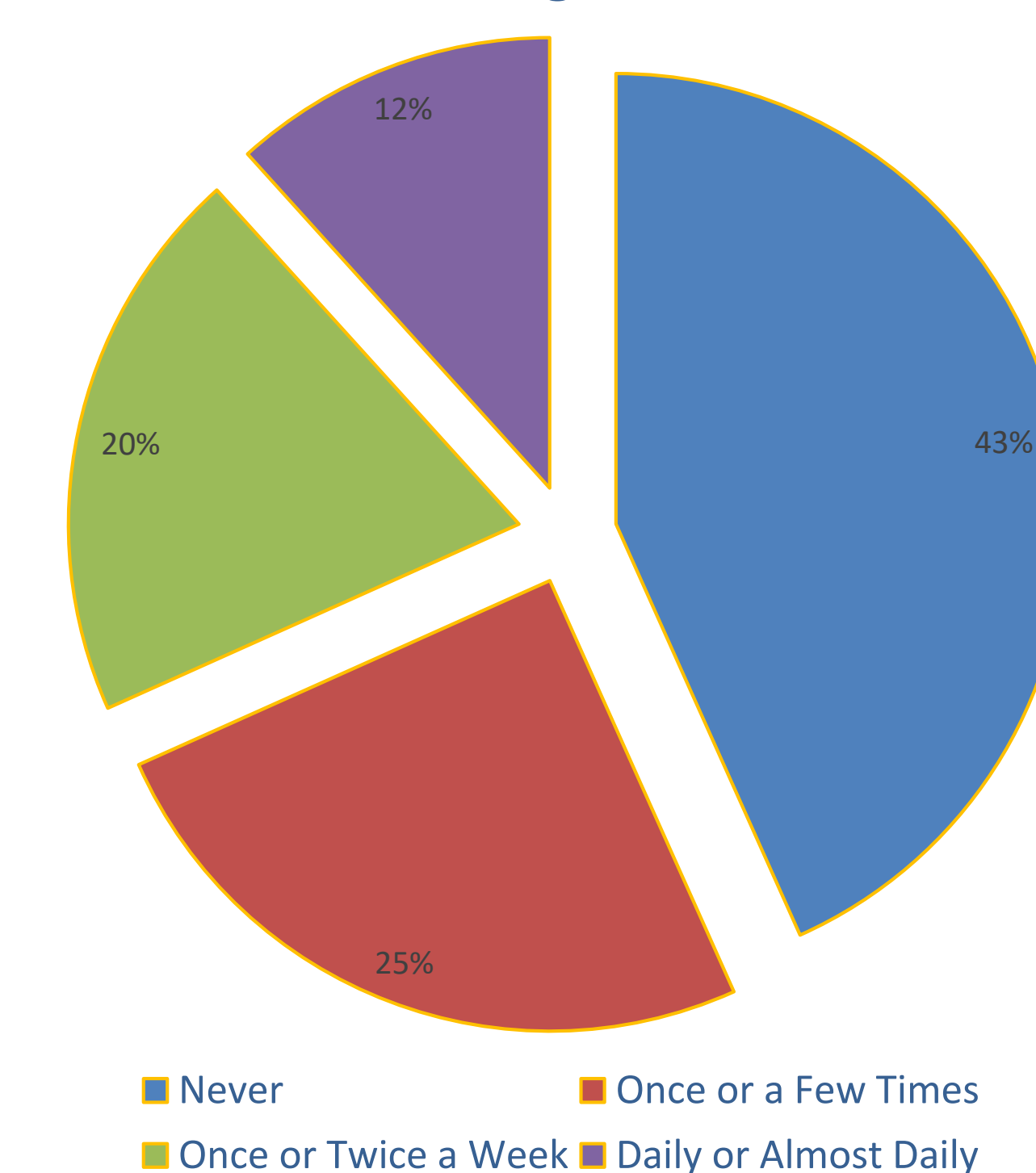
EMPLOYMENT STATUS



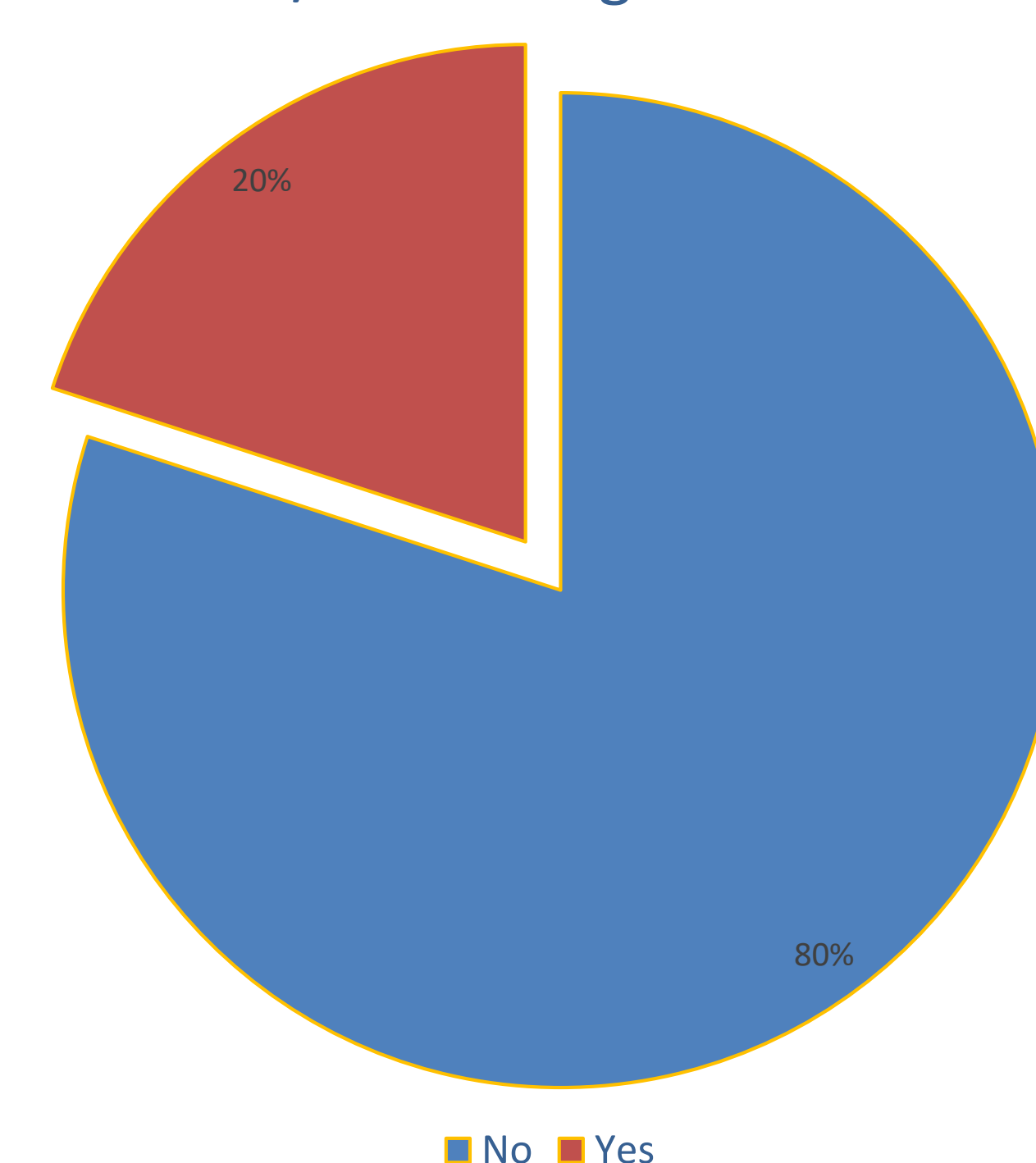
Missed Work or School Because of Drug Use



Quality of Work Affected Because of Drug Use



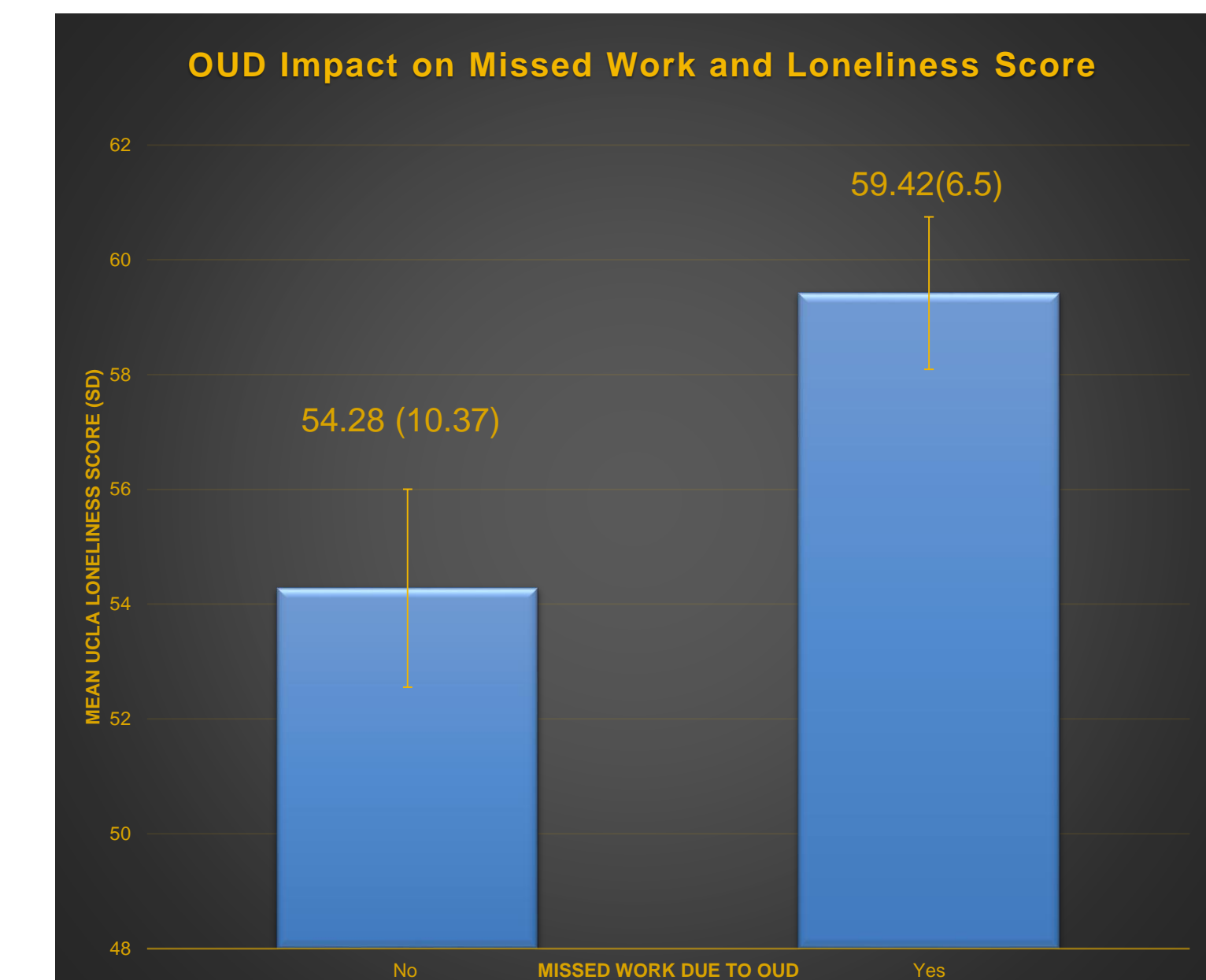
Treatment/Counseling Past 12 Months



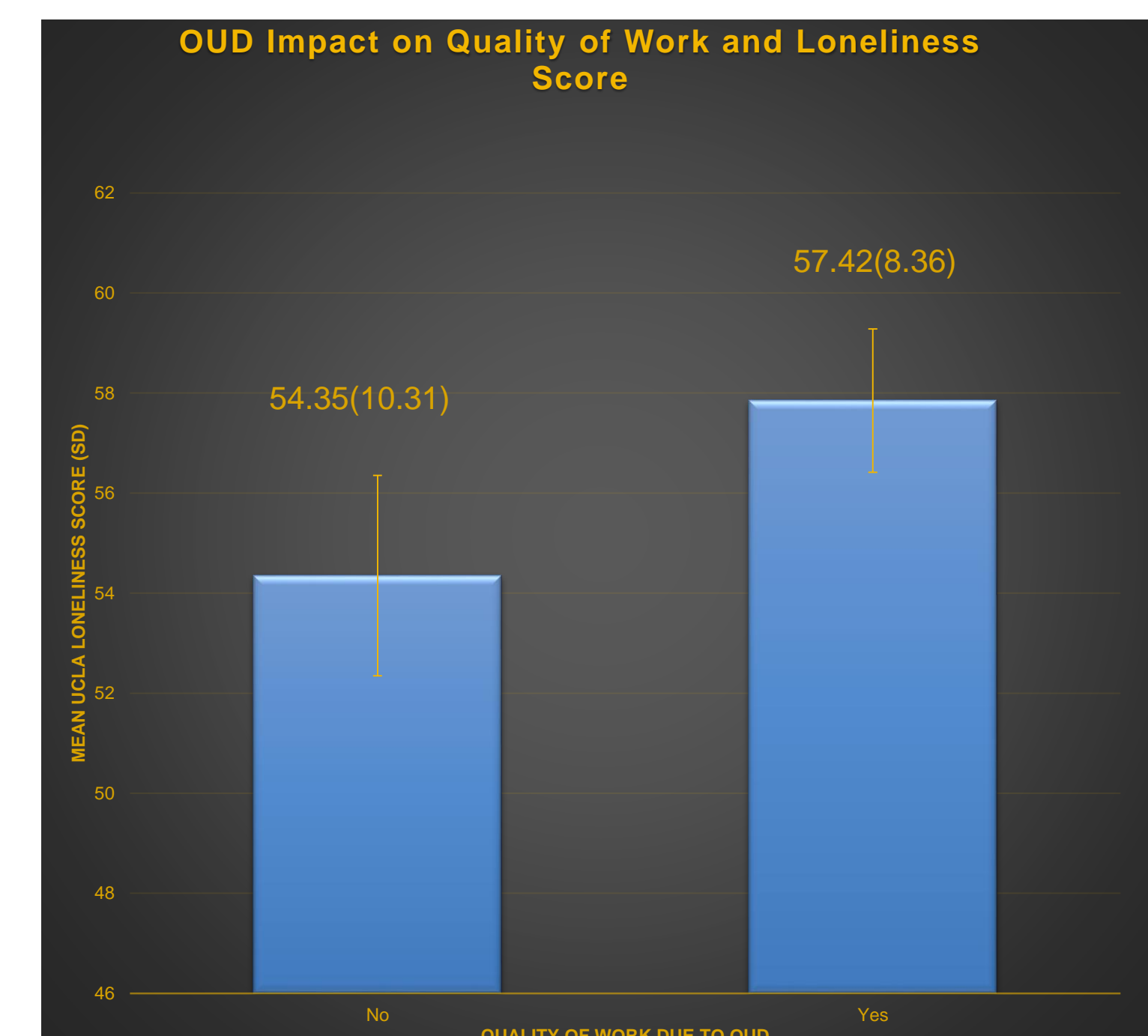
### Additional Results

- Chi Square analyses indicated no significant associations between treatment utilization and employment, missed work, and quality of work.
- Pearson correlations revealed a significant association between loneliness and the impact of COVID on work,  $r(60) = .288, p = .026$

## Results



Individuals with OUD who reported missing work as one of the consequences of their drug use, reported significantly more loneliness than those with an OUD who did not miss work,  $t(8.93) = -2.16, p = .004$ .



Individuals with OUD reporting quality of work as a consequence of drug use reported comparable levels of loneliness relatively to those with an OUD whose quality of work was not impacted by drug use,  $t(2.13) = -1.46, p = .150$ .

## Discussion & Conclusions

### Summary of results

- Loneliness in individuals with OUD was significantly higher when one misses work because of drug use, but loneliness was not associated with quality of work affected by drug use.
- Loneliness and treatment utilization were not associated with being employed, missing work, and quality of work.
- Loneliness was associated with COVID's impact on work.

### Discussion and Conclusions

- Loneliness is differentially associated with the consequences of drug use on work related factors.
- Implications of COVID in the workplace appears to further impact loneliness amongst individuals with OUDs.

### Limitations and Future Directions

- Data was limited because of a small sample size and lack of additional measures to assess a wider range of work-related factors that may be impacted by substance use and loneliness.
- Data was cross-sectional and it's unclear about causal and temporal relationships among work, substance use, and loneliness
- Additional research is needed to understand specific relationships among work-related consequences, loneliness, and opioid use.