

Impact of Drug Abuse on the Forest Products Industry

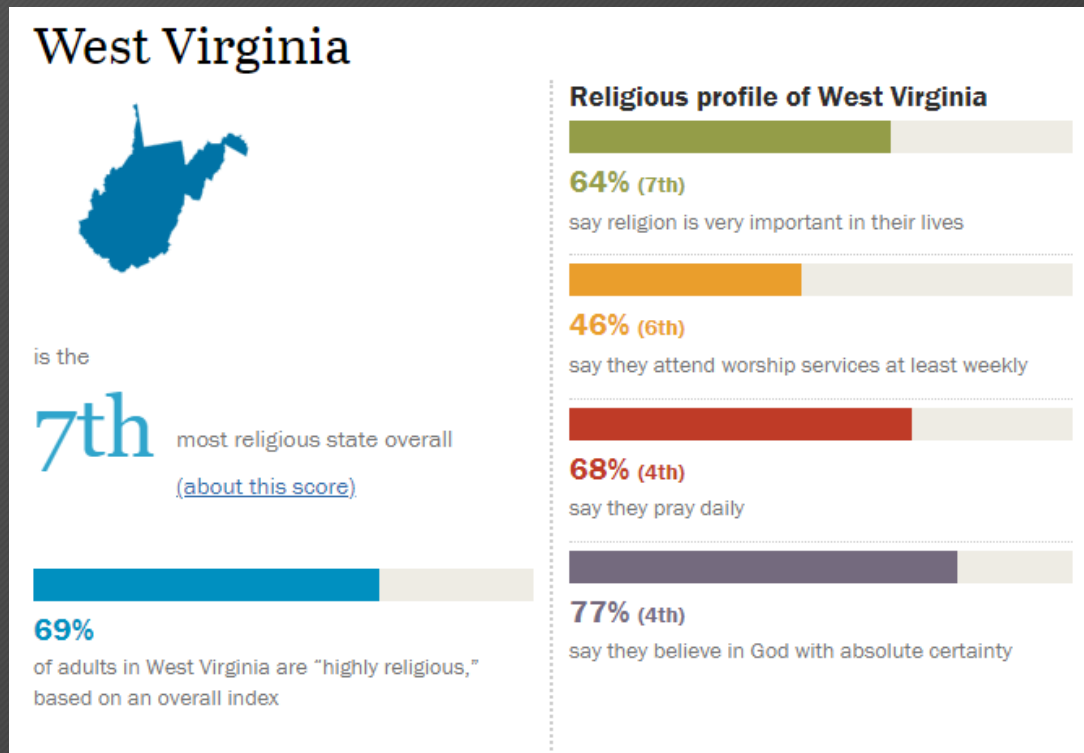
Pat Donnelly
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Forestry in Appalachia



Role of Religion in the Region

- Christianity the main religion



- Faith-based approaches have been used to intervene on:

- Stress
- Cardiovascular risk factors
- Child obesity
- Social isolation
- HIV/AIDS
- Substance abuse
- ...

Pew: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/how-religious-is-your-state/?state=west-virginia>

HIV: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29383967/>

Substance Abuse: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34190824/>

Social Isolation: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36469874/>

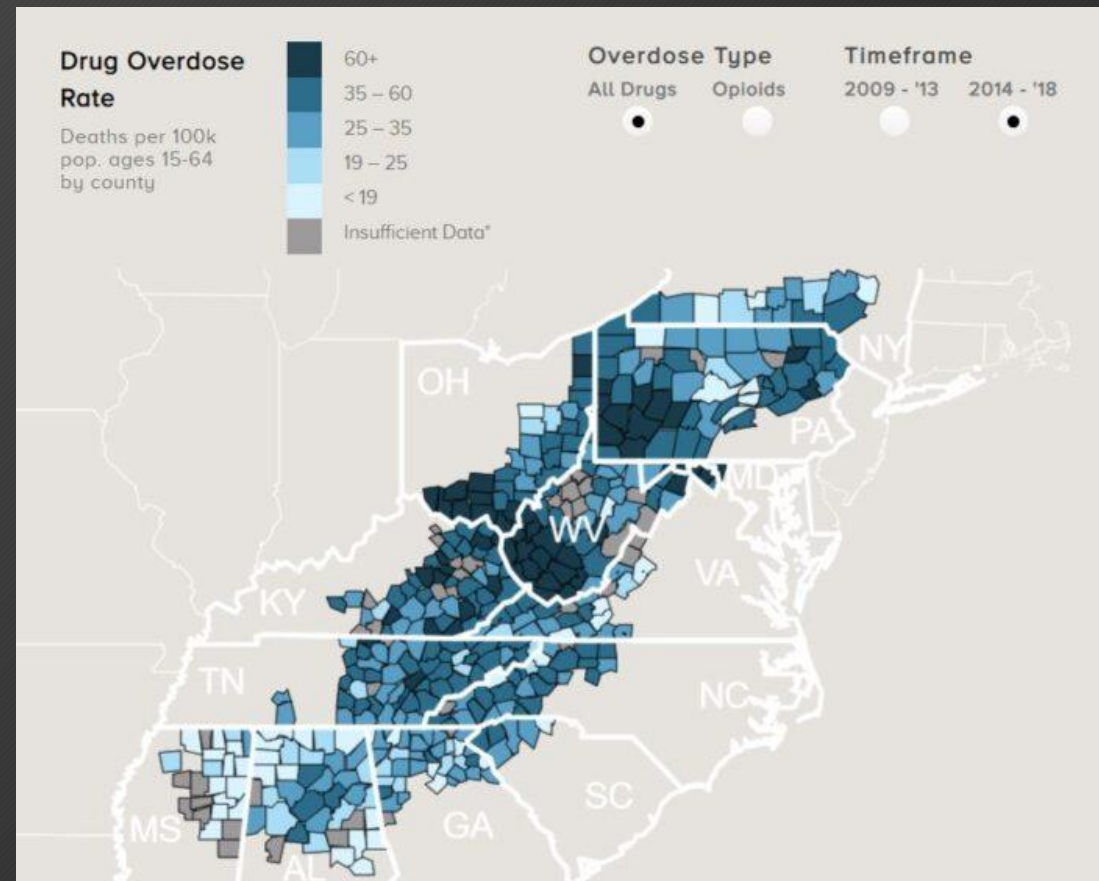
Cardiovascular risk: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35065922/>

Stress: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26548794/>

Child Obesity: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30630108/>

Substance Use Disorders in Appalachia

Drug overdose death rates for people ages 25-64 is **61%** higher here than in the rest of the country



The Appalachian Overdose Mapping Tool, developed by NORC at the University of Chicago and ARC

Economics of Drug Use

- Some loggers and forestry workers are experiencing equipment robberies which are then sold to pay for drugs
- Fentanyl can be less expensive than cannabis
- Just to give some reference:
 - 1.5 grams methamphetamine ~ \$100
 - 1 gram crack cocaine ~ \$100
 - 1 gram heroine or fentanyl ~\$100

Some Personal Background

- Cut my first tree in the 1970's
- Held various jobs in the forest products industry
 - Tree climber
 - Logger
 - Sawmiller
 - University Extension Health and Safety Field Researcher
- Outside of forestry, involved in local church activities

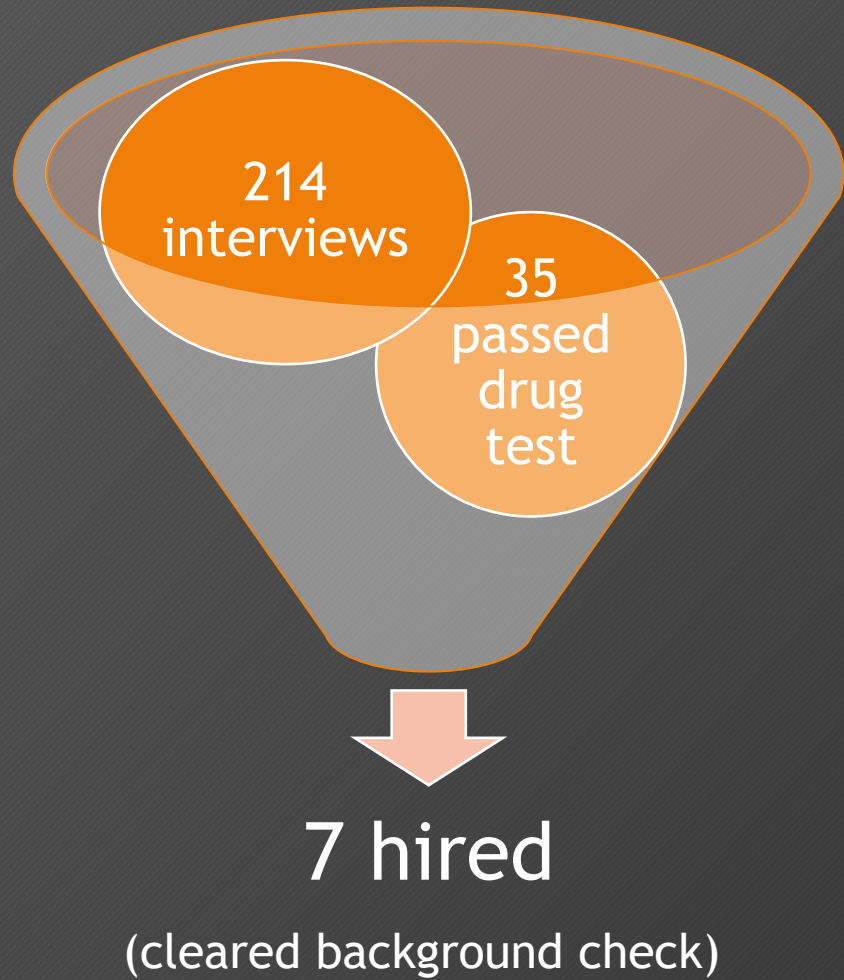


What do these numbers mean?

214 - 35 - 7

30 - 6

Hiring at the last sawmill where I worked:



I've worked with 30 logging crews...



...6 of the crews had significant drug problems



Addiction in the Forestry Industry

- Anecdotal evidence of addiction among forestry workers
- Research also indicates that it's a problem among this cohort
 - Scott and colleagues asked logging workers, "Opioid misuse is now a public health emergency. In your opinion, how prevalent is opioid misuse in the logging industry?"
 - Responses ranged from not a problem to reports of overdose deaths among logging workers

Twelve Steps

- Twelve Steps are the foundations of such programs like Alcoholics Anonymous
- These evidence-based approaches have been blended with biblical teachings

THE TWELVE STEPS OF LIFE RECOVERY

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our problems—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps used in the Twelve Steps devotional reading plan in this Bible have been adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Church's Role in Recovery

- Many churches, including my own, support many parishioners in recovery
- Hope Houses
 - ¾ House - shelter for 12 men
 - House rules
 - 5 recovery meetings/week
 - Attend church
 - Stay clean



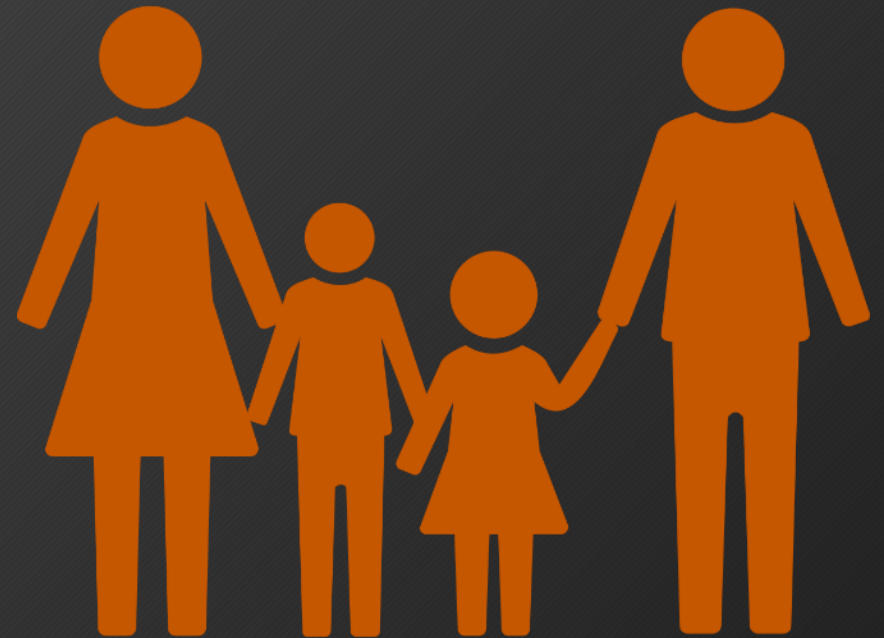
Supporting those Ravaged by Addiction

- Working since 2019 with a logger struggling with addiction
 - Has been fired from work multiple times
 - Continues to be re-hired because logging firms are in desperate need of workers
 - Has lost multiple family members to addiction, including
 - Parents
 - Wife and unborn child



Recovery takes Time and Dedication

- Have been meeting with another logger who is 9 months clean
- Works for a large family logging business
- Despite a few setbacks remained clean
- Attending church services with family
- Reengaged in work and doing well



Conclusions

- Addiction is negatively impacting the forestry industry
- Multiple approaches need to be used to address this exploding epidemic
- The role of faith and religion should be considered in public health interventions
- Solutions should be regionally tailored e.g.
 - Resiliency and Recovery Task Force
 - County Drug and Alcohol Task Force including faith leaders, public health professionals, employers, law enforcement, etc.

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Questions?

Patrick Donnelly patrick.donnelly1@mail.wvu.edu

