

# The DASIS Report

August 24, 2001

## Women in Substance Abuse Treatment

### In Brief

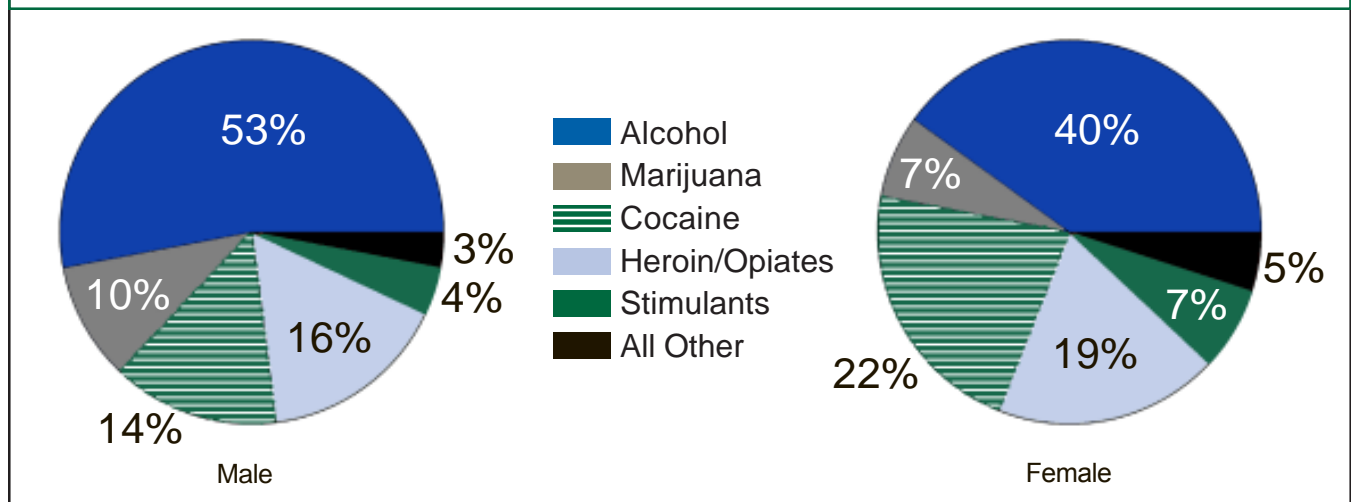
- In 1998, there were 23 men admitted to treatment for every 10 women
- Women were more likely than men to be in treatment for “hard” drugs (e.g., heroin and cocaine) and less likely to be in treatment for alcohol abuse or marijuana use
- Women entered the treatment system through different avenues than did men

In 1998, the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) recorded some 439,000 admissions of adult women to publicly funded substance abuse treatment. Women in treatment, however, were substantially outnumbered by men. In 1998, there were 23 men admitted to treatment for every 10 women. Women represented about 30 percent of substance abuse treatment admissions from 1992 through 1998.

There may be several reasons that fewer women than men have entered treatment. Research indicates that women are less likely than men to abuse alcohol and drugs; thus, fewer women need treatment.<sup>1</sup> Also, women face additional difficulties in getting to and remaining in treatment because of child care, basic access, and other issues.<sup>2,3</sup>

Women and men in publicly funded substance abuse treatment shared a few characteristics. In 1998, both were on average 35 years old, and approximately 60 percent of both men and women were non-Hispanic whites. About 40 percent were entering treatment for the first time, while 13 percent had been in treatment five or more times before. However, there were important differences.

**Figure 1. Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment, by Sex and Primary Substance of Abuse: 1998**



Source: 1998 SAMHSA Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).

### Primary Substance of Abuse

Women were more likely than men to be in treatment for “hard” drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, and less likely to be in treatment for alcohol abuse or marijuana use (Figure 1). Although alcohol was the primary substance of abuse for both men and women entering treatment in 1998, 40 percent of women reported alcohol as their primary substance of abuse compared to 53 percent of men. Of women entering treatment, 7 percent reported primary marijuana abuse compared to 10 percent of men.

Cocaine, however, was reported as the primary substance of abuse by 22 percent of women entering treatment compared to 14 percent of men. Women were more likely than men to report primary heroin/opiate abuse

(19 percent vs. 16 percent, respectively), as well as stimulant abuse (7 percent vs. 4 percent, respectively).

### Male:Female Ratio

The relative numbers of male and female admissions, expressed as a male:female ratio, varied considerably for different substances of abuse (Figure 2). Overall, there were 2.3 male admissions for every female admission in 1998. For marijuana, however, there were 3.3 men for every woman. For alcohol, the male:female ratio was 3.1 to 1. For heroin/opiates, it was 1.9 to 1. For cocaine, there were 1.5 men for every woman.

The number of stimulant admissions was almost equally divided between men and women, while more women than men entered treatment for abuse of tranquilizers and sedatives.

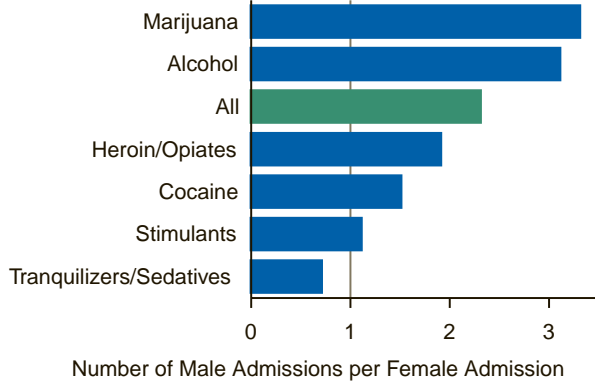
### Source of Referral to Treatment

Women entered the treatment system through different avenues than did men (Figure 3). For men, the most frequent source of referral to treatment was through the criminal justice system. Some 39 percent of men compared to 25 percent of women entered treatment as the result of a judicial process. One third of men and 37 percent of women initiated treatment themselves or were referred to treatment by a family member or friend.

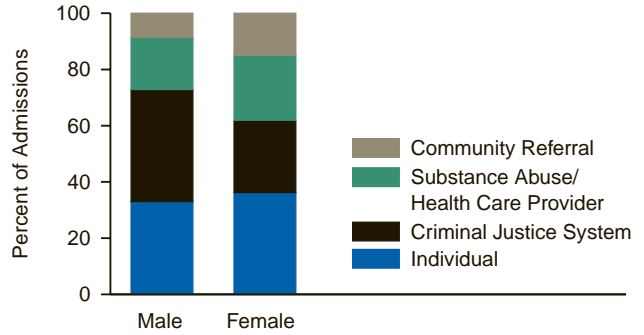
### Employment Status

Women entering treatment were less likely than men to be employed (Figure 4). About 33 percent of men admitted to substance abuse treatment were employed full time, and another 7 percent were employed part

**Figure 2. Male:Female Admission Ratio, by Primary Substance: 1998**



**Figure 3. Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment, by Sex and Referral Source: 1998**



time. However, only 17 percent of women had full time jobs, with 8 percent employed part time. Almost half (45 percent) of women entering treatment were not in the labor force (i.e., neither working nor looking for work) compared with 34 percent of men.

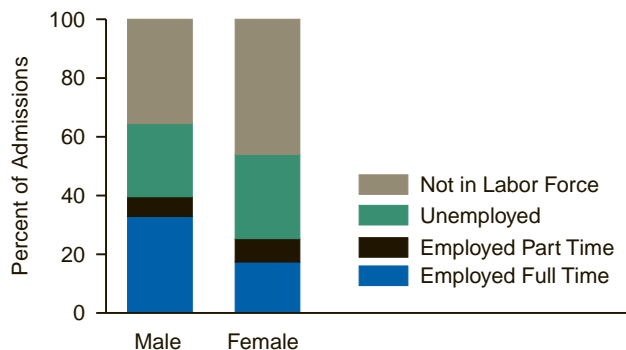
**End Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2000). *Summary of findings from the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 00-3466, NHSDA Series H-12). Rockville, MD: Author.

<sup>2</sup>Grella, C.E. (1997). Services for perinatal women with substance abuse and mental health disorders: The unmet need. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 29, 67-78.

<sup>3</sup>Colletti, S.D. (1998). Service providers and treatment access issues. In: C.L. Wetherington & A. B. Roman (Eds). *Drug addiction research and the health of women* (NIH Publication No. 98-4290, pp. 236-244). Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

**Figure 4. Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment, by Sex and Employment Status: 1998**



The Drug and Alcohol Services Information System (DASIS) is an integrated data system maintained by the Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). One component of DASIS is the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), a national-level dataset comprising State administrative data from treatment facilities receiving public funds. The TEDS system includes records for some 1.6 million substance abuse treatment admissions annually. TEDS records represent admissions rather than individuals, as a person may be admitted to treatment more than once.

*The DASIS Report* is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA; Synectics for Management Decisions, Inc., Arlington, Virginia; and RTI, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

**Information and data for this issue are based on data reported to TEDS through April 16, 2001.**

Access the latest TEDS reports at:  
[www.DrugAbuseStatistics.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.SAMHSA.gov)

Access the latest TEDS public use files at:  
[www.icpsr.umich.edu/SAMHDA/teds.html](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/SAMHDA/teds.html)