

# JUST THE FACTS

*"JUST THE FACTS" is a series of briefs on critical topics and issues in the treatment and management of individuals with co-occurring disorders in the justice system. The series is produced periodically by the National GAINS Center.*

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## The Prevalence of Co-occurring Mental and Substance Abuse Disorders in the Criminal Justice System

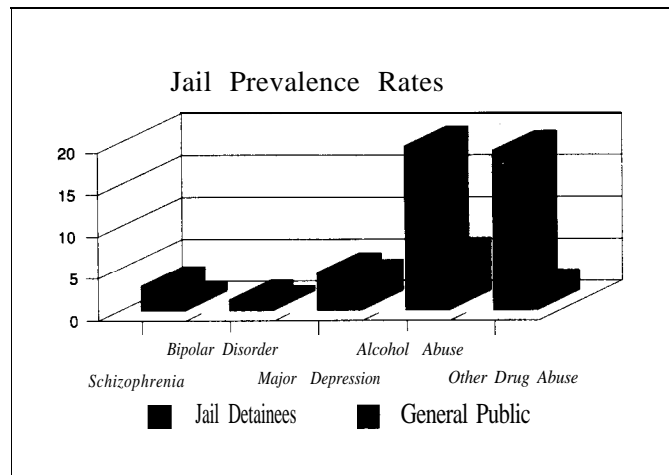
The criminal justice system has experienced explosive growth over the past decade. Nearly 1.6 million individuals currently are incarcerated in our nation's jails and prisons; an increase of 113% since 1985. In addition, nearly 4 million people are on probation or parole. In total, 3% of the U.S. adult population is under some form of correctional supervision. The growing correction population includes an increasing number of individuals with special treatment needs. Estimates indicate that more than half of the people in the criminal justice system have diagnosable, serious mental illnesses or substance abuse disorders.

Scientifically rigorous prevalence estimates are available for U.S. jail and prison populations, but not for individuals under community corrections supervision. Therefore, prevalence estimates for the general public are included for comparison purposes.

### JAILS

Approximately 9.8 million people are booked into jails across the country annually. On June 30, 1995, a total of 507,044 people were held in the 3,304 U.S. jails. According to 1995 Drug Use Forecasting data, urinalysis at booking reveals that more than half of all arrestees test positive for illicit drug use. Nearly a third of jail detainees meet the criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol or drug dependence.

Seven percent of jail detainees have acute and serious mental illnesses upon booking. In addition, more than 50% have other mental health diagnoses, including dysthymia (8%), anxiety disorders (11%), and anti-social personality disorders (45%). These diagnoses are considered less serious than schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and unipolar depression, but may be equally



debilitating and create equal, if not greater, management and treatment problems for administrators and providers.

In total, 63% of jail detainees have a mental illness or a substance abuse disorder, and 5% have both. These figures indicate that 320,000 jail detainees and inmates are affected by mental health or substance abuse problems on any given day, of whom 25,350 people have serious mental illnesses and co-occurring substance abuse disorders.

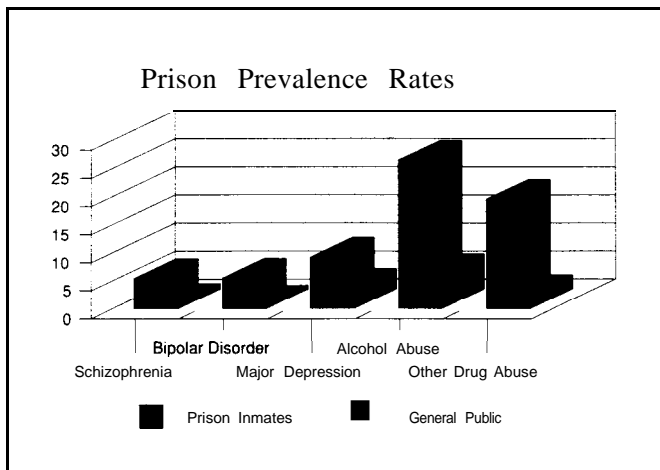
### PRISONS

In June 1995, a total of 1,127,132 individuals were held in state and federal prisons. Of these, an estimated 57% had a mental or substance abuse disorder.

The rate of serious mental illnesses is twice that of the jail population and three to five times that of the rates found in the community. The one-year prevalence rate of serious mental illnesses among prisoners is 5% with schizophrenia, 6% with bipolar disorder, and 9% with unipolar depression.

The rate of active substance abuse or dependence is similar to the jail sample (26% with alcohol abuse/dependence and 20% with drug abuse/dependence). Among those diagnosed with schizophrenia, major affective disorders, or antisocial personality disorder, the prevalence of co-occurring substance abuse disorders is 90%.

Approximately 13% of the prison population has both a serious mental illness and a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. Thus, an estimated 642,500 inmates are affected by mental health or substance abuse problems on any given day, of whom 132,000 people have serious mental illnesses and a co-occurring substance abuse disorder.



## COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

Like jails and prisons, probation and parole departments have experienced explosive growth over the past decade. As of June 30, 1994, a total of 2,962,200 individuals were under active probation supervision, and 690,200 were under active parole supervision. This represents a 25% increase since 1989. The growing community corrections population includes an increasing number of individuals with special treatment needs. While no prevalence estimates of serious mental illnesses among people under community supervision exist, the percent of individuals with co-occurring disorders is likely to fall between estimates for the general population and for individuals in jails and prisons.

## CO-MORBIDITY OF DISORDERS

The co-morbidity of serious mental illnesses and substance abuse or dependence among the general population is significant. Among drug dependent individuals, a significant proportion have diagnosable serious mental illnesses, including schizophrenia (6%), bipolar disorder (6%), and unipolar depression (20%).

In addition, 10% of drug dependent individuals have dysthymia, 4% have panic disorders, 7% have obsessive-compulsive disorders, 23% have phobias, and 17% meet the criteria for antisocial personality disorders. Psychiatric symptoms associated with some disorders, such as depression, dysthymia, and panic and anxiety disorders, are also symptomatic of drug dependence. The symptoms associated with these diagnoses may disappear with abstinence from the specific drug.

People with mental illnesses in the general population also have a high incidence of substance abuse/dependence. Among individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia, 28% have a drug addiction. Eighteen percent of individuals diagnosed with depression and 34% of individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorders also have a drug addiction.

Ultimately, this means that having a substance abuse disorder is related to a higher likelihood of having a co-occurring mental illness. Similarly, having a mental illness increases the probability of having a co-occurring substance abuse disorder.

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**The National GAINS Center for People with Co-Occurring Disorders in the Justice System** is a national center for the collection and dissemination of information about effective mental health and substance abuse services for people with co-occurring disorders who come in contact with the justice system. The GAINS Center is jointly funded by two centers of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration - the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and the Center for Mental Health Services - and the National Institute of Corrections.