

The DASIS Report

April 11, 2003

Marijuana Use Secondary to Other Substances of Abuse

In Brief

- Three-fifths (60 percent) of admissions involving marijuana in 2000 were admissions where marijuana was the less significant, or secondary, substance abuse problem
- Three-fifths (56 percent) of secondary marijuana admissions had alcohol as the primary substance of abuse
- Average age at admission was older among secondary marijuana admissions than among primary marijuana admissions (31 vs. 23)

Use of more than one substance is a common pattern among admissions to substance abuse treatment.¹ Marijuana was reported as the primary substance of abuse by 236,400 (15 percent) of the 1.6 million admissions in the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) in 2000. However, it was reported as a less significant problem—that is, a problem secondary or tertiary (hereafter “secondary”) to the abuse of another substance—by an additional 336,900 admissions (21 percent). Thus, 60 percent of the admissions involving marijuana were admissions where use of marijuana was secondary to another substance. This report compares admissions with marijuana as a secondary substance of abuse to admissions with marijuana as a primary substance.

TEDS is an annual compilation of data on the demographic characteristics and substance abuse problems of those admitted for substance abuse treatment. The information comes primarily from facilities that receive some public funding. TEDS records represent admissions rather than individuals, as a person may be admitted more than once.

Primary Substance

Of secondary marijuana admissions, 56 percent had alcohol as a primary substance of abuse, 21 percent cocaine, 11 percent stimulants, 10 percent opiates, and 2 percent other substances.

Sex and Age at Admission

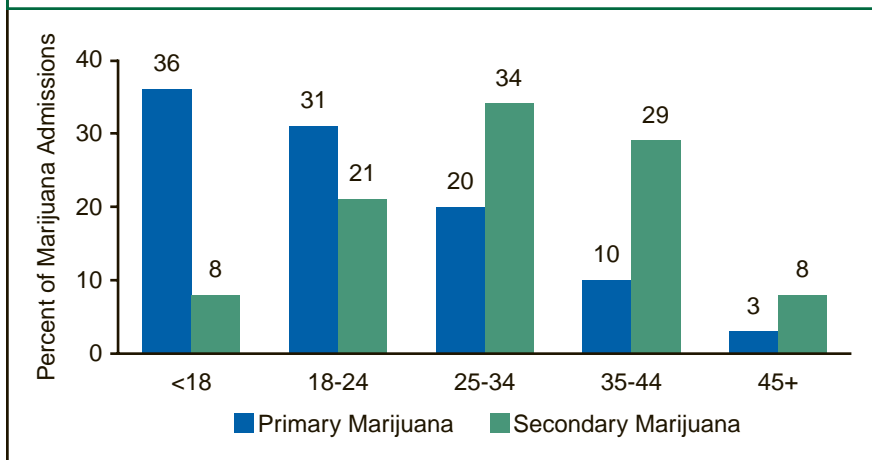
There was a higher percentage of females among secondary marijuana admissions than among primary marijuana admissions (30 vs. 24 percent).

Average age at admission for all marijuana admissions was 28. Average age at admission was older among secondary marijuana admissions than among primary marijuana admissions (31 vs. 23). More than two-thirds (71 percent) of secondary marijuana admissions were age 25 or older, whereas only about one-third (33 percent) of primary marijuana admissions were in that age range (Figure 1).

Age at First Use and Duration of Use

Average age at first use of marijuana differed only slightly between secondary marijuana admissions and primary marijuana admissions (15 vs. 14). First use of marijuana for both secondary and primary admissions almost always occurred before age 25.

Figure 1. Age at Admission, by Primary and Secondary Marijuana Admissions: 2000



Source: 2000 SAMHSA Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).

Among admissions with no prior treatment for substance abuse, the average duration of use was 15 years for secondary marijuana admissions and 9 years for primary admissions. For up to 8 years of use, there were fewer secondary than primary admissions; after about 9 years of use there were more secondary admissions (Figure 2).

Frequency of Use and Prior Treatment

Secondary marijuana admissions were less likely to report daily use of marijuana than primary admissions (23 vs. 30 percent). Three-fifths (58 percent) of secondary marijuana admissions had prior treatment episodes compared with only two-fifths (38 percent) of primary admissions.

Treatment Setting

Secondary marijuana admissions were more likely than primary admissions to be in a residential treatment setting (23 vs. 15 percent) and less likely to be in an ambulatory setting (66 vs. 81 percent) (Figure 3).

Source of Referral

Secondary marijuana admissions were much less likely than primary admissions to be referred by the criminal justice system (40 percent vs. 56 percent). Secondary marijuana admissions were more likely than primary admissions to have entered treatment through self or individual referral (27 vs. 17 percent).

End Note

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2001, October 5). *The DASIS Report. Polydrug Use Among Treatment Admissions: 1998*. Rockville, MD: Author.

Figure 2. Duration of Marijuana Use, by Primary and Secondary Marijuana Admissions: 2000

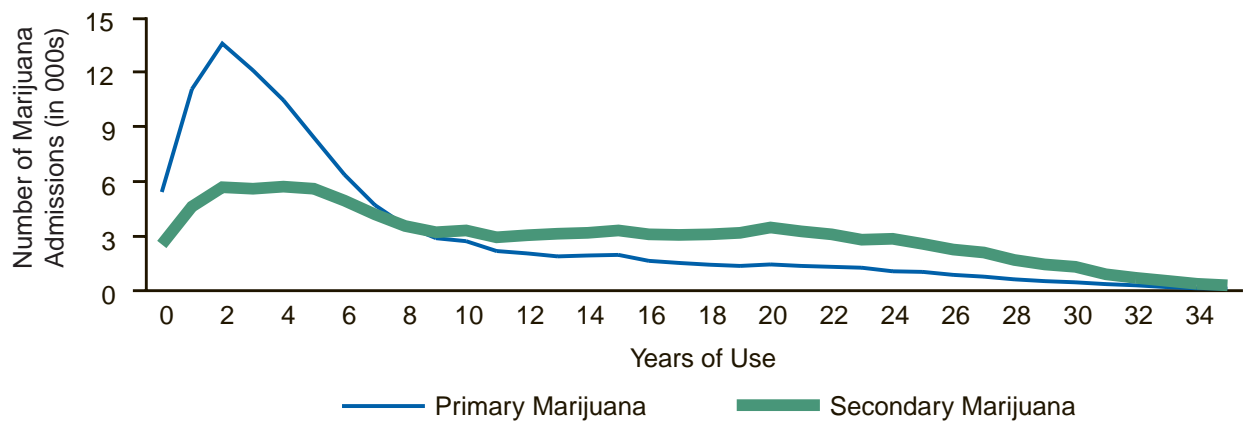
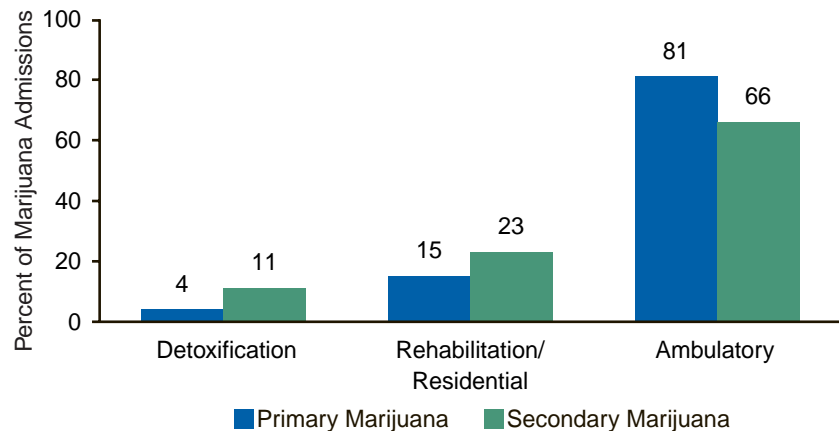


Figure 3. Treatment Setting, by Primary and Secondary Marijuana Admissions: 2000



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). TEDS is a compilation of data on the demographic characteristics and substance abuse problems of those admitted for substance abuse treatment. The information comes primarily from facilities that receive some public funding. Information on treatment admissions is routinely collected by State administrative systems and then submitted to SAMHSA in a standard format. Approximately 1.6 million records are included in TEDS each year. 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 1, 2002.

Access the latest TEDS reports at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/dasis.htm>

Access the latest TEDS public use files at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/SAMHDA.htm>

Other substance abuse reports are available at: <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>



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