

The DASIS Report

January 4, 2002

Admissions to Treatment for Abuse of Alcohol Alone

In Brief

- Abuse of alcohol alone was the most common substance problem for admissions to substance abuse treatment between 1994 and 1999
- Admissions for abuse of alcohol alone were generally for persons who were white (74 percent), male (77 percent), and whose average age at admission was 38 years
- Forty-five percent of alcohol-only admissions were referred to treatment through the criminal justice system

In 1999, nearly three quarters of a million admissions to publicly funded substance abuse treatment were for abuse of alcohol. Many of these people entered treatment with secondary illicit drug abuse in addition to primary alcohol abuse. However, more than half of all alcohol admissions were for abuse of alcohol alone, with no abuse of illicit drugs.

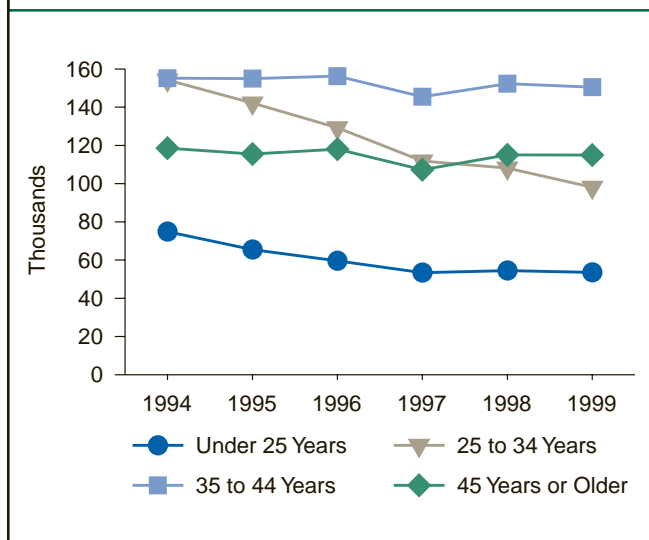
The Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) collects information on admissions to publicly funded substance abuse treatment. It permits analysis of the characteristics of persons treated for abuse of alcohol alone.

Abuse of alcohol alone was the most common substance problem for admissions to substance abuse treatment between 1994 and 1999 (Table 1). However, the number of alcohol-only treatment admissions declined by about 15 percent during that time period—from 498,000 in 1994 to 417,000 in 1999. In 1994, admissions for treatment of abuse of alcohol alone made up 31 percent of all admissions to substance abuse treatment. By 1999, this had fallen to 26 percent as admissions for abuse of illicit drugs increased.

Table 1. Primary Substance of Abuse at Admission: 1994-1999

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
All Admissions (in Thousands)	1,634	1,637	1,606	1,538	1,615	1,588
<i>Primary Substance</i>	<i>Percent</i>					
Alcohol Only	30.8	29.2	28.9	27.2	26.7	26.3
Alcohol with Secondary Drug	21.6	21.3	21.5	21.1	20.5	20.1
Opiates	13.9	14.5	14.5	15.4	15.4	16.2
Cocaine	17.9	16.7	16.1	15.1	15.1	14.4
Marijuana	8.7	10.5	12.0	13.0	13.5	14.1
Stimulants	2.8	3.9	3.3	4.4	4.4	4.6
Other	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.8	4.4	4.3

Figure 1. Alcohol-Only Admissions by Age Group: 1994-1999



Source: 1999 SAMHSA Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).

Demographics

Admissions for abuse of alcohol alone were generally for persons who were white (74 percent), male (77 percent), and whose average age at admission was 38 years.

The number of alcohol-only admissions among younger persons declined between 1994 and 1999 (Figure 1). In 1994, the number of alcohol-only admissions was highest among persons aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 44, and the numbers of admissions for these two age groups were similar. By 1999, however, the number of alcohol-only admissions among 25 to 34 year olds had declined sharply. The number of alcohol-only admissions among those under age 25 also decreased. In contrast, the numbers of admissions for the older age groups remained relatively constant between 1994 and 1999.

The sex distribution of alcohol-only admissions differed only slightly within racial/ethnic groups (Figure 2). Men made up just over three quarters of admissions among whites and blacks and 71 percent among American Indians/Alaska Natives. Hispanics and Asians had slightly higher proportions of male alcohol-only admissions (87 and 80 percent, respectively).

Treatment Referral Source

The criminal justice system was the most common source of referral to treatment, making up 45 percent of all 1999 alcohol-only admissions (Figure 3).

Among admissions under age 25, 67 percent entered treatment as the result of a judicial process. This proportion decreased with age—to 35 percent of those aged 45 or older. The proportion of

self-referrals increased with age—from 14 percent of those under 25 to 30 percent of those in the older age groups. The proportion of admissions referred by substance abuse and other health care providers also increased with age—from 9 percent of those under 25 to 25 percent of those aged 45 or older.

Prior Treatment Episodes

Almost half (47 percent) of all 1999 alcohol-only admissions were entering treatment for the first time (Figure 4). However, one in five (21 percent) had been in treatment at least three times previously.

For the majority of admissions aged 25 or younger (71 percent), this was the first treatment episode, while those from older age groups were more likely to have been in treatment before.

Figure 2. Alcohol-Only Admissions, by Race/Ethnicity and Sex: 1999

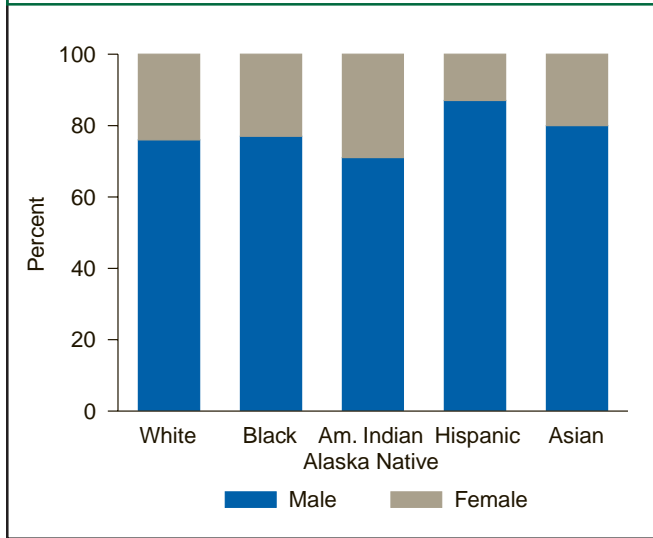
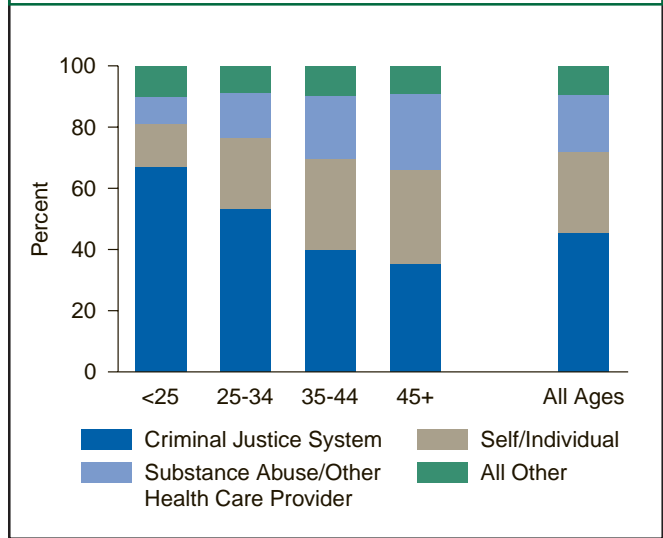


Figure 3. Alcohol-Only Admissions, by Age Group and Source of Referral: 1999



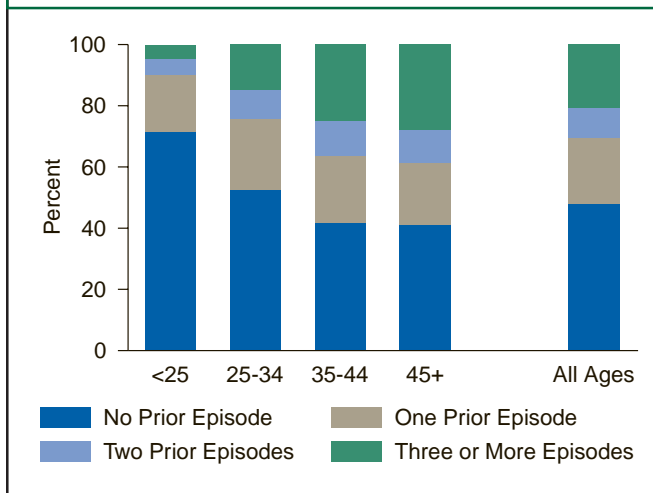
About 60 percent of those aged 35 or older had been in treatment previously, and more than one in four had been in treatment at least three times before the current treatment episode.

Age at First Intoxication

Use of alcohol among persons admitted to treatment in 1999 began early (data not shown). The average age at first

intoxication was 16, well below the current legal drinking age of 21 years. About 80 percent of those treated for abuse of alcohol alone had first become intoxicated by age 18 and 87 percent by age 21.

Figure 4. Alcohol-Only Admissions, by Age Group and Number of Prior Treatment Episodes: 1999



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

Access the latest TEDS public use files at:
www.icpsr.umich.edu/SAMHDA/teds.html