

The DASIS Report

May 5, 2005

Older Adults in Substance Abuse Treatment: Update

The Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) is an annual compilation of data on the demographic characteristics and substance abuse problems of substance abuse treatment

admissions. The information comes primarily from facilities that receive some public funding. TEDS records represent admissions rather than individuals, as a person may be admitted to treatment more than once.

In Brief

- In 2002, 66,500 admissions aged 55 or older were admitted to substance abuse treatment facilities in the United States
- Alcohol was the most frequently reported primary substance of abuse among older adults in treatment for all years from 1995 to 2002
- Primary drug admissions among older adults increased by 106 percent for men and 119 percent for women between 1995 and 2002

This report examines admissions of adults aged 55 or older from 1995 to 2002. In 2002, this age group comprised approximately 62 million people in the United States. Estimates indicate that the number of adults aged 55 or older will reach 75 million by 2010,¹ and that the number of adults aged 50 or older with substance abuse problems will increase from 2.5 million in 1999 to 5.0 million in 2020.²

In 2002, there were 66,500 admissions aged 55 or older to substance abuse treatment (Table 1). The admission rate for adults aged 55 or older was 107 per 100,000, which was considerably lower than the rate of 801 admissions per 100,000 for the population younger than 55.

Trends in Treatment Admissions

Between 1995 and 2002 the number of substance abuse treatment admissions among persons aged 55 or older increased by 32 percent, from 50,200 to 66,500 admissions (Table 1). This increase outpaced the total treatment population increase of 12 percent during the same time period. Adults aged 55 to 59 made up the largest part of the older adult treatment population, increasing from 51 percent of older adults in treatment in 1995 to 59 percent in 2002 (Figure 1).

In each year from 1995 to 2002, alcohol was the most frequently reported primary substance of abuse³ for admissions aged 55 or older. The number of primary alcohol admissions among older adults increased from 33,100 men and 7,000 women in 1995 to 39,300 men and 8,700 women in 2002 (Figure 2), increases of 19 percent for men and 24 percent for women. However, the proportion of older admissions reporting alcohol as their primary substance declined over the same time period, from 86.5 percent in 1995 to 77.5 percent in 2002.

By contrast, primary drug admissions among older adults more than doubled over the same time period, increasing from 6,200 men and 1,600 women in 1995 to 12,800 men and 3,500 women in 2002—a 106 percent increase for men and a 119 percent increase for women.

Table 1. Admissions Aged 55 or Older, by Primary Substance at Admission: 1995-2002

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Admissions Aged 55 or Older (Thousands)	50.2	51.0	52.1	55.7	57.8	60.8	59.8	66.5
<i>Primary Substance</i>	<i>Percent</i>							
Alcohol	86.3	84.8	82.1	80.9	80.9	80.3	79.2	77.5
Opiates	6.8	7.9	9.7	10.3	10.1	10.9	10.8	12.0
Cocaine	2.0	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.3	3.5	4.1	4.3
Marijuana	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.2
Stimulants	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5
Other	4.2	4.3	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.1	4.5	4.5

Source: 2002 SAMHSA Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).

Table 2. States with Largest Numbers and Highest Rates of Admissions Aged 55 or Older, by Rank: 2002

<i>State</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 Aged 55 or Older</i>
New York	15,524	Colorado	534
California	7,087	New York	360
Colorado	4,358	Alaska	343
Florida	3,220	Oregon	268
Oregon	2,114	District of Columbia	255
Maryland	2,083	Maryland	183
Massachusetts	2,071	South Dakota	183
Illinois	1,777	Connecticut	182
Minnesota	1,742	Minnesota	166
Michigan	1,710	Maine	146
Washington	1,626	Vermont	146
Pennsylvania	1,560	Massachusetts	142
New Jersey	1,502	Kentucky	139
Connecticut	1,485	Montana	135
Georgia	1,362	South Carolina	134

Demographics

In 2002, admissions aged 55 or older were more likely to be male than were younger admissions (80 vs. 70 percent). Admissions aged 55 or older did not differ substantially from younger admissions in racial/ethnic composition: about 60 percent were White, about one quarter were Black, about 12 percent were Hispanic, and the remainder were other race/ethnicities. The average age of first use of drugs or first alcohol intoxication was 19 for admissions aged 55 or older and 16 for younger admissions.

Referral Source

In 2002, older admissions were more likely than younger admissions to be individually referred or referred to treatment by health care providers, and less likely to enter treatment through the criminal justice system. Among admissions aged 55 or older, 42 percent were self/individually referred compared with 35 percent of admissions younger than 55. Also, 11 percent were referred by health care providers compared with 7 percent of admissions younger than 55. Twenty-six percent of admissions aged 55 or older were referred

through the criminal justice system compared with 36 percent of younger admissions. There was little difference between the two groups for the remaining referral sources⁴, which accounted for 21 percent of older admissions and 22 percent of admissions younger than 55.

Admissions by State

In 2002, the most populous States tended to have the largest numbers of older adults entering substance abuse treatment, but not necessarily the highest admission rates per 100,000 population (Table 2). Admission rates among adults aged 55 or older tended to be highest in northern and northeastern States.

End Notes

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2001). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2002 (122nd Ed.) Washington, DC: GPO.

² Korper, S. P., & Council, C. L. (Eds.). (2002). Substance use by older adults: Estimates of future impact on the treatment system (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3763, Analytic Series A-21). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies.

³ The *primary substance of abuse* is the main substance reported at the time of admission.

⁴ The remaining referral sources include alcohol/drug abuse care providers, schools, employers/employee assistance programs, and other community referrals.

Figure 1. Admissions Aged 55 or Older, by Age Group: 1995-2002

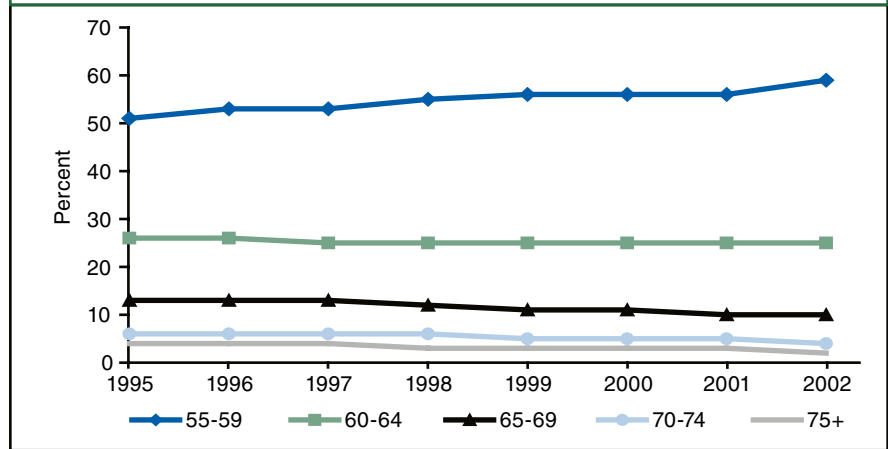
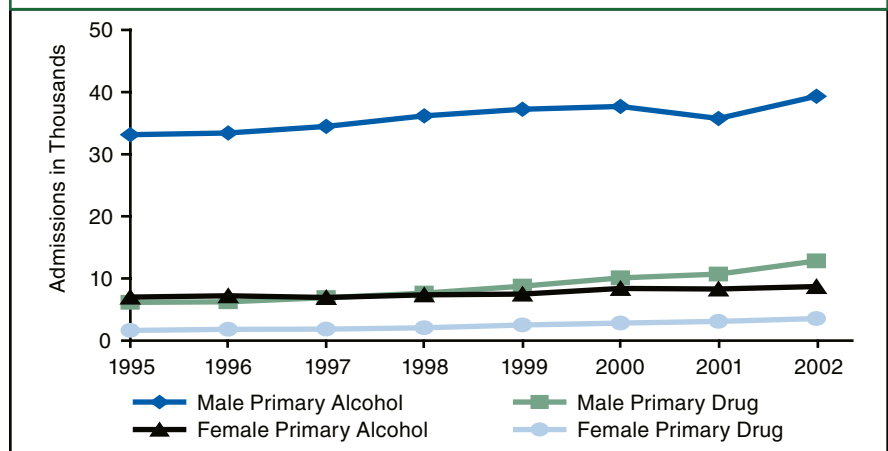


Figure 2. Admissions Aged 55 or Older, by Sex and Primary Substance: 1995-2002



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. TEDS records represent admissions rather than individuals, as a person may be admitted to treatment more than once. State admission data are reported to TEDS by the Single State Agencies (SSAs) for substance abuse treatment. There are significant differences among State data collection systems. Sources of State variation include completeness of reporting, facilities reporting TEDS data, clients included, and treatment resources available. See the annual TEDS reports for details. Approximately 1.9 million records are included in TEDS each year.

The *DASIS Report* is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA; Synectics for Management Decisions, Inc., Arlington, Virginia; and by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute).

Information and data for this issue are based on data reported to TEDS through March 1, 2004.

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

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

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

