

# The DASIS Report

August 3, 2001

## How Men and Women Enter Substance Abuse Treatment

### In Brief

- Male treatment admissions outnumbered female admissions by 2.3 to 1
- Men were more likely to enter treatment through the criminal justice system
- When criminal justice admissions were excluded, the relative numbers of admissions for men and women were much closer

Among the 1.5 million admissions for substance abuse treatment in publicly funded facilities in 1998, men outnumbered women by about 2.3 to 1. This may reflect underlying differences in alcohol and drug use rates in the general population.<sup>1</sup> However, it may also reflect differences in how men and women access the limited publicly funded treatment resources available.

The Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) collects information on the treatment referral source for people entering substance abuse treatment in the public sector. Referral sources collected in TEDS are defined as follows:

*Self- or individual referral*—self-referral; family member, friend, or other individual

*Substance abuse care provider*—provider whose principal objective is treating substance abuse problems

*Other health care provider*—physician, psychiatrist, or other health care professional; general or psychiatric hospital, mental health program, or nursing home

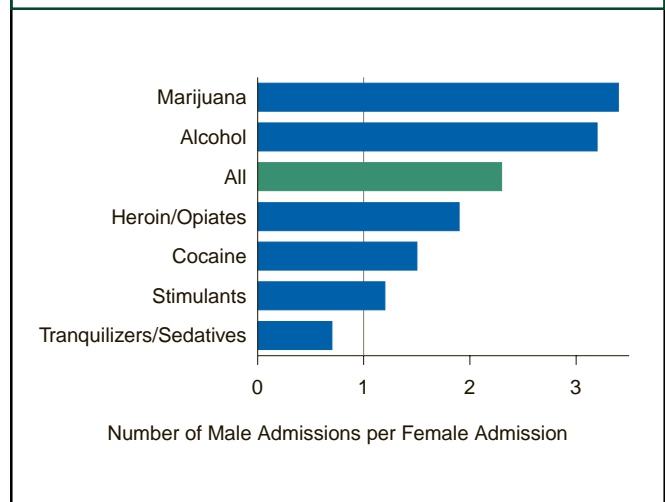
*School/employer*—school principal, counselor, or teacher; student assistance program, school system, or educational agency; supervisor, employee counselor or employee assistance program (EAP)

*Other community referral*—community, religious, or governmental organization/agency providing social services; self-help group

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

Primary Substance	Admissions Aged 18 or Older (%)		
	Male	Female	Total
No. of admissions	1,025,000	439,000	1,464,000
Alcohol	53.3	39.6	49.1
Heroin/Opiates	15.6	19.5	16.8
Cocaine	14.0	21.8	16.4
Marijuana/Hashish	10.2	7.1	9.3
Stimulants	3.5	7.1	4.6
Tranquilizers/Sedatives	0.3	1.0	0.5
All other	3.1	3.9	3.3

**Figure 1.**  
**Male:Female Admission Ratio,**  
**by Primary Substance: 1998**



Source: SAMHSA Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).

*Court/criminal justice referral/ DUI/DWI*—police official, judge, prosecutor, probation officer, or other person affiliated with a Federal, State, or county judicial system; court referral for *DWI/ DUI*; referrals in lieu of or for deferred prosecution, during pretrial release, or before or after adjudication; pre-parole, pre-release, work or home furlough, TASC, or civil commitment

### Primary Substance of Abuse

Among adults (persons aged 18 or older), four substance categories accounted for 92 percent of all 1998 admissions to the publicly funded treatment system (Table 1). These were alcohol, heroin/opiates, cocaine, and marijuana/hashish.

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. Approximately 53 percent of men reported alcohol as their primary substance of abuse compared to 40 percent of women. An estimated 10 percent of men reported primary marijuana abuse compared to 7 percent of women.

Women were more likely than men to report primary abuse of cocaine (22 percent of women vs. 14 percent of men), heroin/opiates (20 percent vs. 16 percent), and stimulants (7 percent vs. 4 percent).

### Male:Female Ratio

Men entering treatment outnumbered women in all substance categories except tranquilizers/sedatives. However, the relative numbers of male and female admissions varied considerably for different substances of abuse (Figure 1). Overall, there were 2.3 male admissions for every female

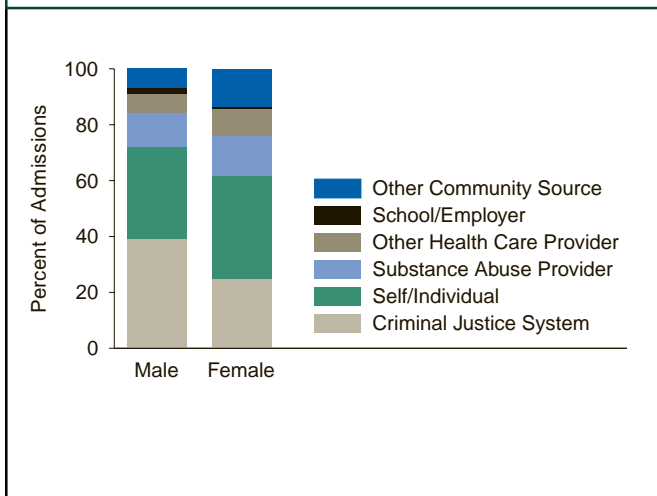
admission in 1998. For marijuana, there were 3.4 men for every woman, while for tranquilizers/sedatives, the ratio was 0.7:1.

### Treatment Referral Source

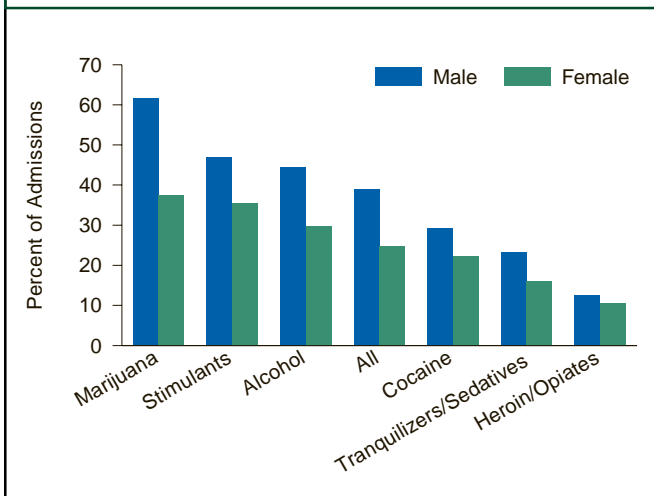
Women entered the treatment system through different avenues than did men (Figure 2). For men, the most frequent source of referral to treatment was through the criminal justice system. Some 39 percent of men, compared to 25 percent of women, entered treatment as the result of a judicial process. One third of men and 37 percent of women initiated treatment themselves or were referred to treatment by a family member or friend.

The proportion of referrals through the criminal justice system varied considerably by substance (Figure 3). Higher percentages of people entered treatment for marijuana,

**Figure 2.**  
**Treatment Referral Sources, by Sex: 1998**



**Figure 3.**  
**Criminal Justice Referrals, by Sex and Primary Substance: 1998**

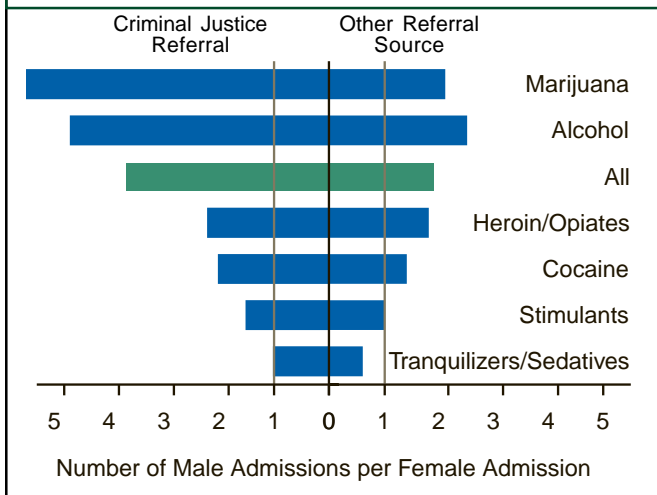


stimulants, and alcohol by way of the criminal justice system than for cocaine or heroin.

For every substance, a higher percentage of men than women was referred through the criminal justice system (Figure 3). For example, 62 percent of adult men entering treatment for marijuana

abuse were sent by the criminal justice system compared to 38 percent of women. When treatment admissions were considered as involuntary (criminal justice system) and voluntary (all other referral sources), the relative numbers of admissions for men and women were much closer to each other (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.**  
**Male:Female Ratio, by Criminal Justice Referral and Primary Substance: 1998**



**End Note**

<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2000). *National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Main findings 1998* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 00-3381). Rockville, MD: Author.

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 Research Triangle Institute, 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:  
<http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.SAMHSA.gov>

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