

The DASIS Report

November 2, 2001

Veterans in Substance Abuse Treatment

In Brief

- In 1999, veterans accounted for more than 65,000 admissions for substance abuse treatment
- Although primary alcohol admissions among veterans had declined since 1993, more than two thirds of veteran admissions in 1999 were for alcohol
- The most common source of referral for veterans was the criminal justice system

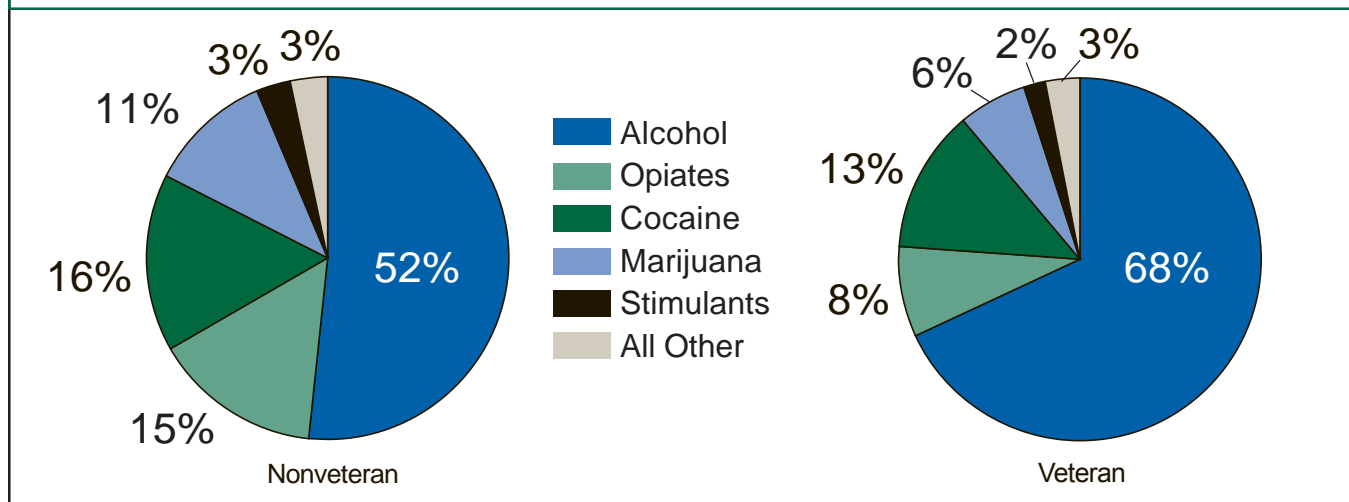
In 1999, the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) recorded more than 65,000 admissions of veterans aged 18 or older to publicly funded substance abuse treatment facilities. These data, collected by 31 States and the District of Columbia,¹ represented 8 percent of all TEDS admissions aged 18 or older in those States and the District.²

Veteran status identifies whether a treatment client served in the uniformed services, such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Veteran status also includes the Coast Guard and the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

The majority of veterans were male (95 percent). In terms of race, both male and female veterans were more likely to be white (65 percent and 58 percent, respectively). About 25 percent of male veterans were African American compared with 31 percent of female veterans. Approximately 6 percent of both male and female veterans were of Hispanic origin.

About 32 percent of veterans were entering treatment for the first time, while 31 percent had been in treatment three or more times before. The average age of male and female veterans was 43 and 37 years, respectively.

Figure 1. Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment, by Veteran Status and Primary Substance of Abuse: 1999



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

Primary Substance of Abuse

Veterans were much more likely than nonveterans to be in treatment for alcohol abuse (Figure 1). Although alcohol was the primary substance of abuse for both veterans and nonveterans entering treatment in 1999, 68 percent of veterans reported alcohol as their primary substance of abuse compared with 52 percent of nonveterans.

Cocaine was reported as the primary substance of abuse by 13 percent of veterans compared with 16 percent of nonveterans. Abuse of stimulants also was reported in relatively equal percentages by veterans (2 percent) and nonveterans (3 percent).

Of veterans entering treatment, 8 percent reported primary abuse of heroin/opiates compared with 15 percent of nonveterans.

Veterans were also less likely than nonveterans to be admitted for primary marijuana abuse (6 percent vs. 11 percent, respectively).

Trends in Admissions Among Veterans

The total number of admissions for veterans aged 18 or older peaked in 1993 (Figure 2). Since then, the overall number of admissions among veterans decreased 32 percent by 1999. This decline was seen mainly among primary admissions for alcohol, which decreased 39 percent. In 1993, there were more than 73,000 admissions for primary alcohol abuse among veterans. By 1999, the number of alcohol admissions had dropped to approximately 45,000. Primary admissions for cocaine decreased from more than 13,000 in 1993 to fewer than 9,000 in 1999, a 32 percent decline.

Primary Substance of Abuse and Age

Alcohol was the substance of abuse for the majority of veteran admissions aged 18 to 24 (53 percent), 25 to 44 (63 percent), and 45 or older (78 percent) (Figure 3). Cocaine admissions were more common among veterans aged 25 to 44 (18 percent) than among those aged 18 to 24 (9 percent) or those aged 45 or older (7 percent). However, marijuana admissions were more common among veterans in the youngest age group (23 percent) compared with veterans aged 25 to 44 (7 percent) and those aged 45 or older (3 percent).

Source of Referral to Treatment and Age

The criminal justice system was the most common source of referral for all veterans (Figure 4).

Figure 2. Veteran Treatment Admissions, by Primary Substance: 1993-1999

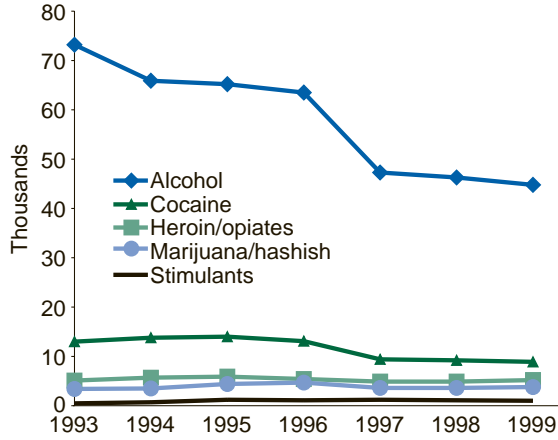
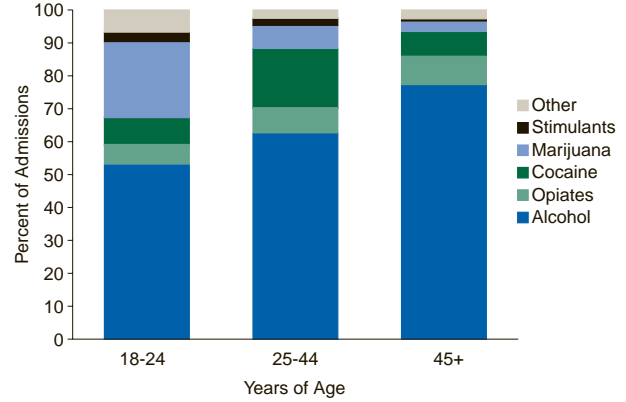


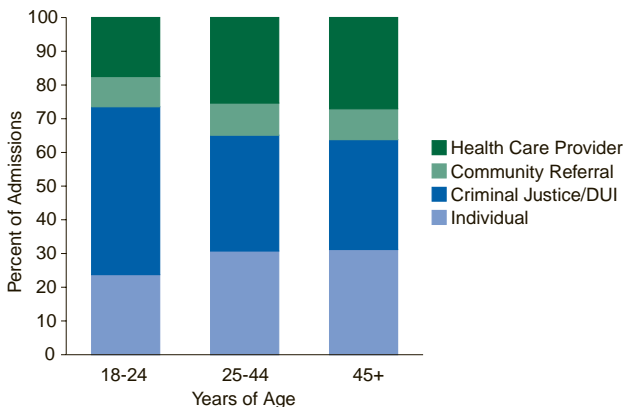
Figure 3. Veteran Treatment Admissions, by Primary Substance and Age Group: 1999



Half (50 percent) of veterans aged 18 to 24 entered treatment as the result of a judicial process compared with approximately one third of veterans aged 25 to 44 (34 percent) and those aged 45 or older (33 percent). About one fourth of veterans aged 25 to 44 (25 percent) and those aged 45 or

older (27 percent) were referred by health care providers, while 17 percent aged 18 to 24 were referred by this source. Nearly one fourth (24 percent) of younger veterans were referred by an individual compared with 31 percent of veterans in each of the other two age groups.

Figure 4. Veteran Treatment Admissions, by Source of Referral and Age Group: 1999



End Notes

¹TEDS, a compilation of State administrative data, consists of a Minimum Data Set collected by nearly all States, and a Supplemental Data Set collected by some States. Veteran status is a Supplemental Data Set item.

²Data on veterans treated for substance abuse in VA hospitals and clinics are not included in this report, which is limited to a consideration of veterans treated in the public system.

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