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P o l i c e

Substance Abuse Among Female Inmates

January
2004

Statistical Analysis Center

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Special thanks to Dave Brasuell, Program Manager for the Pocatello Women's Correctional Center during the process of data collection. Also, thanks to Janet Guerin the Program Manager for South Boise Women's Correctional Center.

Cost information for this publication is available from the Idaho State Police in accordance with Idaho Code, Section 60-202. 10 copies of this publication were printed by the Idaho State Police in January 2004. Funding sources for this printing were #02-STOP-42, and #01-BJSC-00. Points of view expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Prior Substance Abuse Among Female Inmates with Histories of Domestic Violence

By Janeena Jamison Wing, Sr. Research Analyst

The relationship between drug abuse and domestic violence has undergone much scrutiny in current research. When domestic abuse occurs within a relationship, the likelihood that the victim will begin abusing alcohol and/or drugs increases.^{1,2,3} Domestic violence has been linked with subsequent depressive episodes, suicide attempts, abusing alcohol and/or drugs, or abusing their own children.

Since 1995, the Pocatello Women’s Correctional Center has been receiving STOP grant funds to provide for an educational class on domestic violence for inmates. An in-depth evaluation of the class began in 1998. Since then, data has been gathered regarding the inmates’ history of victimization and drug abuse. Included in this report is an account of the previous relationship with drugs many of the women admitted having prior to entering prison. Also included is the relationship they say their batterer had with drugs and/or alcohol.

The following is a study of the drug abuse history of women who have experienced either emotional or physical abuse by an intimate partner versus those who have not. The information is taken from a client profile questionnaire given out in 2002 which was used to understand the dynamics of class participants. The class was taught at both Pocatello Women’s Correctional Center (PWCC) and South Boise Women’s Correctional Center (SBWCC).

Four hundred and twenty six women completed and submitted a client profile questionnaire in 2002.

- ◆ 76.4% were white, 13.3% Hispanic, 6.4% Native American, 2.4% African American, and 1.4% Asian American.
- ◆ The women on average were 32.2 years old.
- ◆ Nearly one-third (31.1%) did not have a high-school diploma, 41.1% were either high school graduates or had their GED, and the remaining 27.8% had some higher education.
- ◆ 74.3% had a family income of less than \$15,000 a year before incarceration, 19% had family incomes between \$15,001 and \$30,000, and 6.7% had incomes over \$30,001.
- ◆ 77% reported to have experienced emotional abuse within an intimate relationship, and 67.8% reported previous physical abuse within an intimate relationship.

Race of Female Inmates

Race	%	Sample Size
White	76.4	321
Hispanic	13.3	56
Native American	6.4	27
African American	2.4	10
Asian/Pacific		
Islander	1.4	6

Education Level Attained by Female Inmates

	%	Sample Size
Less than high school	31.1	131
High School graduate	41.1	173
Some college/two-year college	23.3	98
College or graduate school graduate	4.5	19

Family Income of Female Inmates Before Going to Prison

	%	Sample Size
Less than \$5000	36.8	149
\$5,000 - \$10,000	19.5	79
\$10,001 - \$15,000	18.0	73
\$15,001 - \$20,000	7.2	29
\$20,001 - \$25,000	6.4	26
\$25,001 - \$30,000	5.4	22
\$30,001 or more	6.7	27

Percent Who’ve been Emotionally or Physically Abused in an Intimate Relationship

	Emotional Abuse		Physical Abuse	
	Sample Size	%	Sample Size	%
Yes	328	77.0	288	67.8
No	98	23.0	137	32.2

For the following study, those who said they had experienced abuse within an intimate relationship, either emotional or physical, were compared against those who reported neither. This contrast was used to determine whether a relationship exists between having been in a domestic violence relationship and the abuse of alcohol or drugs among women at PWCC and SBWCC.

Findings

On the client profile questionnaire, several questions were asked about the inmate’s previous relationship with drugs, including: 1) If they had ever drunk alcohol or used illegal drugs, and if so, how often 2) If they had ever driven while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and if so, how often 3) If they had ever had spouses or partners complain about their drinking or drug use 4) If they had ever experienced memory blackouts from drinking and 5) If they had ever used any prescription psychoactive drugs or illicit drugs more than five times in their life, or any over-the-counter psychoactive drugs for more than two weeks at a time.

Have you ever drunk alcohol or used illegal drugs?

A slightly larger percent of those who had been abused had used either illegal drugs, or drunk alcohol, versus non abused women. However it was not statistically significant (96.7% compared to 93.1%).

Percentage who have either used illegal drugs or drunk alcohol

	Previous Abuse	Sample Size
Previous Abuse	96.72	335
No Abuse	93.1	87

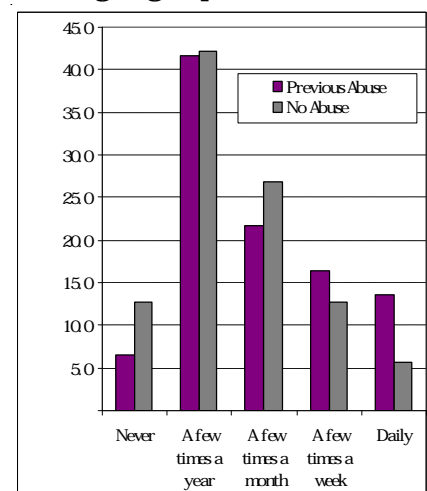
How often have you used illegal drugs or drunk alcohol?

How often the inmates said they consumed alcohol and/or drugs before incarceration was significantly related to whether they had been in a previous domestic violence relationship. There was a distinction between the number of inmates reporting daily consumption of either alcohol or drugs and previous abuse.

- ◆ 13.5% of those who had been victims of domestic violence consumed alcohol daily before prison, whereas, only 5.6% of those who had not been abused did so.

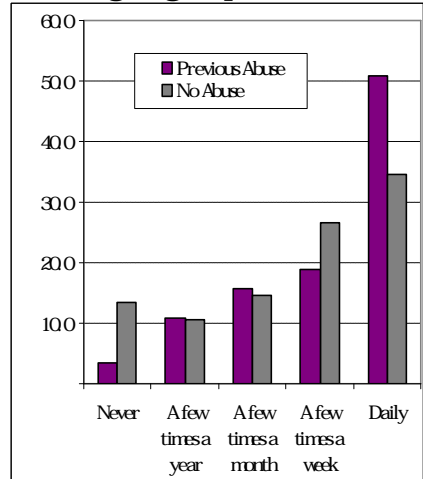
- ◆ 51.0% of those with previous domestic violence relationships said they abused drugs daily before incarceration versus 34.7% who had not been abused.

How often alcohol was used before going to prison



r = -.112*, sign = .034

How often drugs were used before going to prison



r = -.144**, sign = .005

Have you ever driven while under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

When asked if they had ever driven while under the influence of either alcohol or drugs 56% said yes to alcohol, and 69% said yes to drugs.

Comparing those who had been in domestic violence relationships versus those who hadn’t, a slightly higher percent of those who had been abused admitted to driving while under the influence of alcohol (58.6% versus 49.3%). This relationship was not significant, however.

Percent who have driven while under the influence of alcohol

Alcohol	Yes	Sample Size
Previous Abuse	58.6	285
No Abuse	49.3	73

r = .079, sign = .133

A larger distinction existed among those who said they have driven while under the influence of drugs.

◆ 74% of domestic abuse inmate victims versus 50.7% of non-abused inmates said they have driven while under the influence of drugs.

Percent who have driven while under the influence of drugs

Drugs	Yes	Sample Size
Previous Abuse	74.0	285
No Abuse	50.7	77

$r = .208^{**}$, $sign = .000$

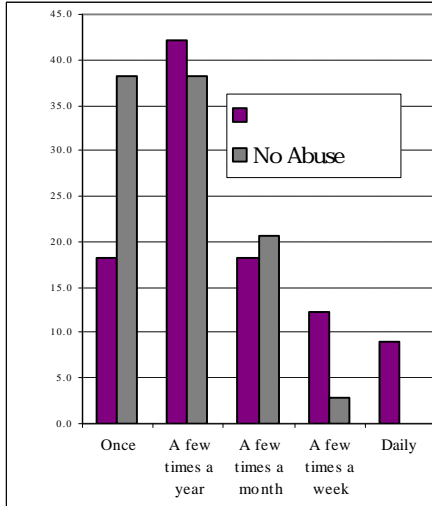
How often have you driven while under the influence?

There is also a difference when comparing how often the person drove under the influence and whether or not they had experienced previous domestic violence.

◆ 21.4% of those stating they had been emotionally or physically abused within an intimate relationship, versus only 2.9% of those stating they had not been abused, drove while under the influence of alcohol between once a week to daily.

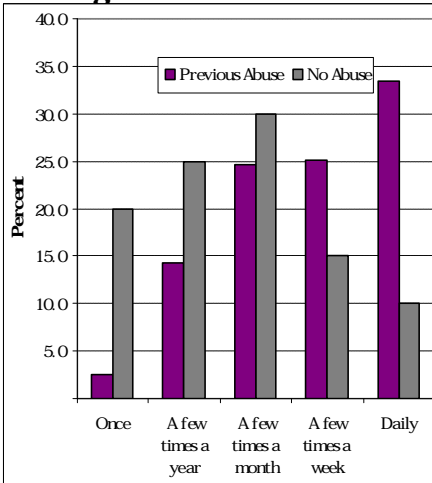
Of those with abusive histories who admitted to having driven while under the influence of drugs, 58.6% reported to have done so between once a week to daily. Only 25% of those who hadn't experienced domestic violence said they drove under the influence of drugs between once a week to daily.

How often female offenders drove while under the influence of alcohol before incarceration



$r = -.208^{**}$, $sign = .004$

How often female offenders drove while under the influence of drugs before incarceration



$r = -.317^{**}$, $sign = .000$

Has your spouse or partner ever complained about your drinking or drug use?

An equal proportion of victims of intimate partner abuse versus non-victims said their spouses or partners had complained about their drinking (30%). There was a distinction between the groups, however, on whether they had ever had a partner complain about their drug use.

◆ 53.4% of those who had been in abusive relationships had spouses complain about their drug use versus 39.2% who had not been abused.

Percent who have had spouses/partners complain about their drinking or drug use

		Sample Size
Drinking Abuse	Previous	279
	No Abuse	76
Drug Use Abuse	Previous	281
	No Abuse	79

$r = .002$, $sign = .973$

$r = .117^*$, $sign = .026$

Have you ever experienced memory blackouts from drinking?

There was a slight difference between abused and non-abused women who said they had experienced memory blackouts from drinking (37% versus 23.5%).

Percent who have experienced memory blackouts from drinking

	Sample Size
Previous Abuse	311
No Abuse	62

$r = .114^*$, $sign = .023$

Have you ever used any prescription psychoactive drugs (prescription tranquilizers, sleeping pills and painkillers) more than 5 times in your life? A slightly larger percentage of inmates who had experienced previous abuse within an intimate relationship noted that they had used prescription psychoactive drugs more than five times in their lives (50.0% versus 36.6%).

Percent who have used prescription psychoactive drugs more than 5 times in their lives.

		Sample Size
Previous Abuse	50.0	312
No Abuse	36.6	82

$r = .109^*$, $sign = .030$

Have you used any illicit drugs (marijuana, cocaine, heroin and hallucinogens) more than 5 times in your life?

Victims of domestic violence were also more likely to have used illicit drugs more than five times in their lives (85.4% to 74.1%).

Percent who have used illicit drugs more than 5 times in their lives

	Yes	Sample Size
Previous Abuse	85.4	315
No Abuse	74.1	81

$r = .122^*$, $sign = .015$

Have you used any over-the-counter psychoactive drugs (non-prescription pain killers, tranquilizers, sleeping aids, diet pills and cough medicine) every day or nearly every day for more than two weeks at a time?

Between the two groups, the percent of individuals who had used over-the-counter psychoactive drugs every day for more than two weeks was fairly close (20.7% abused to 15.0% not abused).

Percent who have used over the counter psychoactive drugs for more than two weeks at a time

		Sample Size
Previous Abuse	20.7	314
No Abuse	15.0	80

$r = .058$, $sign = .252$

When asked whether their abuser had any drug or alcohol related problems 82.6% said yes.

- ◆ 79.6% said that their most recent batterer had alcohol or drug problems.
- ◆ The current or former abusive boyfriend/partner was more likely to have problems with drugs and alcohol (90% of the time) compared to abusive spouse, parent, or other family member.
- ◆ If their current spouse was said to be abusive, 79.5% said the spouse was addicted to alcohol and/or drugs.
- ◆ 75.8% of abusive former spouses were said to be addicted to alcohol and/or drugs.
- ◆ 73.8% of abusive parents were said to be addicted to alcohol and/or drugs.

Does your abuser have any drug or alcohol related problems?

	Yes	Total	% of Total
Current Spouse	31	39	79.5
Former Spouse	97	128	75.8
Current Boyfriend/partner	45	50	90.0
Former Boyfriend/partner	196	216	90.7
Parents (one or both)	59	80	73.8
Family member other than parent	27	38	71.1
Other	4	5	80.0
Total	459	556	82.6

It is apparent from the previous information that women who have been in abusive relationships have a tendency towards heavier use of alcohol and drugs. However, it is not known from this relationship which happened first; the victimization or the drug and alcohol abuse. It is possible that women who have problems with alcohol are more likely to get involved with violent partners.

As the full extent of this relationship is unknown, it is unwise to draw standard conclusions about women in domestic violence relationships from this information. However, as the tendency for domestic violence victims to have problems with drugs and alcohol has been well researched, it is interesting to note that women at PWCC and SWBCC exhibit this characteristic as well. This information must be kept in mind when trying to rehabilitate offenders who have been victims of abuse as an addiction to drugs or alcohol may inhibit their ability to leave their aggressor, leading to further violence.² Thus all attempts at education about domestic violence should include counseling for drug and alcohol abuse.

References

1. Blount, W.R. Silverman, I.J, Sellers, C.S., Seese, R.A. (1994). Alcohol and drug use among abused women who kill, abused women who don't, and their abusers. *Journal of Drug Issues*. Winter/Spring. 24(1/2): 165-177
2. Parisi, D.D. (1991). Chemically dependent battered women: some women's reality. Univ. of Pittsburgh Phd. dissertation, Aug.
3. Schuck, A.M., Widom C. S. (2001). Childhood victimization and alcohol symptoms in females: Causal inferences and hypothesized mediators. *Child Abuse and Neglect The International Journal*. 25 (8): 1069 -1092.

More information

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services "Domestic Violence and Alcohol and Other Drugs". Downloadable at: <http://www.health.org/govpubs/ml001/>

The Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance website at: <http://www2.state.id.us/crimevictim/index.cfm>

The Idaho's Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence website at: <http://www.idvsa.org/>
Domestic Violence Programs in the state of Idaho, website at: <http://www.co.bannock.id.us/dv24hour.htm>