

# DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG FEMALE INMATES

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Since 2001, around 1345 female inmates at Pocatello Women's Correctional Center have participated in a study helping to evaluate a domestic violence class taught at the woman's prison. The inmates filled out client profile questionnaires indicating their past experience with drugs, alcohol and domestic violence. This report will highlight many of the inmates' responses, while delving into the differences between certain segments of the population.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- The average age of the female prison inmates was 32. Over half (63.90%) were under 35.
- The majority (79.57%) were white. The second largest category was Hispanic (10.55%).
- Over 73% had family incomes of less than \$15,000 per year.
- Nearly a third (30.44%) did not have a high school diploma.
- Half (51.94%) worked full-time before incarceration.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age	n	%
18-25	413	30.87
26-35	442	33.03
36-45	377	28.18
46-55	100	7.47
56-65	6	0.45
Total	1338	100.00
Race	n	%
White	1063	79.57
Hispanic	141	10.55
Native American	89	6.66
African American	30	2.25
Asian American/Pacific Islander	13	0.97
Total	1336	100.00
Total Family Income	n	%
Less than \$5000	485	37.92
\$5,000 - \$10,000	262	20.48
\$10,001 - \$15,000	192	15.01
\$15,001 - 20,000	111	8.68
\$20,001 - \$25,000	67	5.24
25,001 - \$30,000	68	5.32
\$30,001 or more	94	7.35
Total	1279	100.00
Education	n	%
Less than high school	407	30.44
High School graduate/GED	548	40.99
Some college/two-year college	315	23.56
College or graduate school graduate	67	5.01
Total	1337	100.00
Hours employed	n	%
Full time (40 or more hours a week)	684	51.94
Part time (Less than 40 hours)	283	21.49
Unemployed or homemaker	350	26.58
Total	1317	100.00

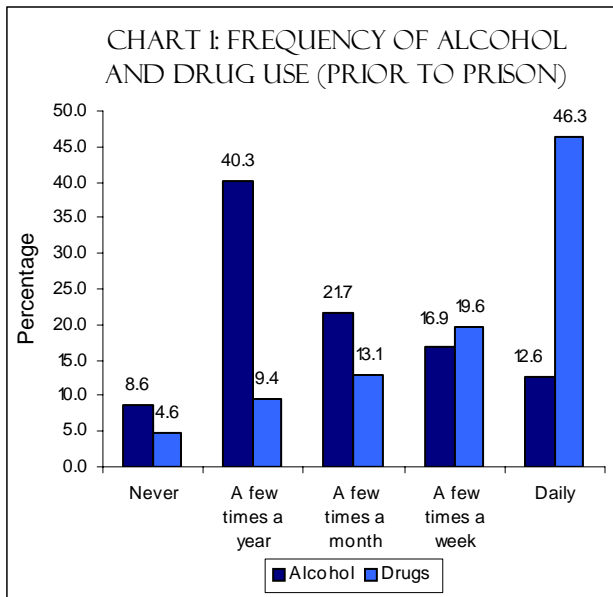


TABLE 2: SUBSTANCE ABUSE

<i>Have you ever driven while feeling intoxicated?</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	661	58.50
No	469	41.50
Total	1130	100.00
<i>Have you ever driven while under the influence of drugs?</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	850	72.59
No	319	27.24
Total	1171	100.00
<i>Have you experienced memory lapses from drinking (blackouts)?</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	483	38.39
No	775	61.61
Total	1258	100.00
<i>Have you used any prescription psychoactive drugs (prescription tranquilizers, sleeping pills and painkillers) more than 5 times in your life?</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	609	48.18
No	655	51.82
Total	1264	100.00
<i>Have you used any illicit drugs (marijuana, cocaine, heroin and hallucinogens) more than 5 times in your life?</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	1056	83.48
No	209	16.52
Total	1265	100.00
<i>Have you used any over-the-counter psychoactive drugs (nonprescription pain killers, tranquilizers, sleeping aids, diet pills and cough medicine) every day or nearly every day for more than two weeks at a time?</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	264	20.89
No	1000	79.11
Total	1264	100.00

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- An overwhelming majority (96.48%) of inmates reported they have used illegal drugs, or drank alcohol within their lifetime.
- Most used drugs more often than alcohol. Nearly half (46.29%) used drugs daily, while only 12.56% reported using alcohol daily.
- Over half (58.50%) admitted that they have driven while feeling intoxicated. 72.59% reported they have driven while under the influence of drugs.
- Over a third (38.39%) have experienced memory lapses due to drinking.
- Nearly half have used prescription psychoactive drugs more than 5 times in their lives.
- The vast majority (83.48%) reported use of illicit drugs more than 5 times in their lives.
- 20.89% reported abuse of over-the-counter psychoactive drugs.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- The majority had experienced physical (69.58%) and emotional abuse (78.73%) by an intimate partner.
- Over half (62.43%) had been cut, bruised or seriously injured during a fight with their intimate partner.
- The majority (85.24%) had experienced yelling, threats/intimidation, and pushing/shoving as a form of violence.
- The majority (69.94%) had also experienced hitting, punching, kicking and beating.
- About one in ten (11.24%) had been stabbed or shot.
- Almost one-third (31.61%) had been raped.
- A minority of inmates (12.14%) said they had never experienced any form of abuse.
- 38.57% said there was violence between their parents while they were growing up.
- One-third (34.10%) reported they were physically abused as a child.
- Before the age of 18, 45.12% were either touched sexually or forced to touch another sexually. In 80.39% of the cases, the abuse happened more than once.

- Nearly one-third (31.07%) had been forced to have sex with an adult or older child before the age of 18. For 74.93% of them, the abuse happened more than once.

TABLE 3: PRIOR FORMS OF ABUSE

Have you experienced physical abuse in an intimate relationship?			
	N	%	
Yes	933	69.57	
No	408	30.43	
Total	1341	100.00	
Have you experienced emotional abuse in an intimate relationship?			
	N	%	
Yes	1055	78.73	
No	285	21.27	
Total	1340	100.00	
Have you ever been cut, bruised, or seriously injured during a fight with your partner?			
	N	%	
Yes	834	62.43	
No	502	37.57	
Total	1336	100.00	
Has your partner ever been cut, bruised, or seriously injured during a fight with you?			
	N	%	
Yes	294	22.07	
No	1038	77.93	
Total	1332	100.00	
Was there physical violence between your parents while you were growing up?			
	N	%	
Yes	498	38.57	
No	793	61.43	
Total	1291	100.00	
Were you physically abused as a child?			
	N	%	
Yes	442	34.10	
No	854	65.90	
Total	1296	100.00	

TABLE 4: PRIOR SEXUAL ABUSE

Before the age of 18, were you personally ever touched in a sexual way by an adult or older child, when you did not want to be touched that way, or were you ever forced to touch an adult or older child in a sexual way—including anyone who was a member of your family?			
	N	%	
Yes	582	45.12	
No	708	54.88	
If yes, did the sexual touching happen more than once?			
	N	%	
Yes	455	80.39	
No	111	19.61	
Before the age of 18, were you ever forced to have sex by an adult or older child—including anyone who was a member of your family, or anyone outside your family?			
	N	%	
Yes	399	31.07	
No	885	68.93	
If yes, did it happen more than once?			
	N	%	
Yes	287	74.93	
No	96	25.07	

## SUBSTANCE USE BY DEMOGRAPHICS

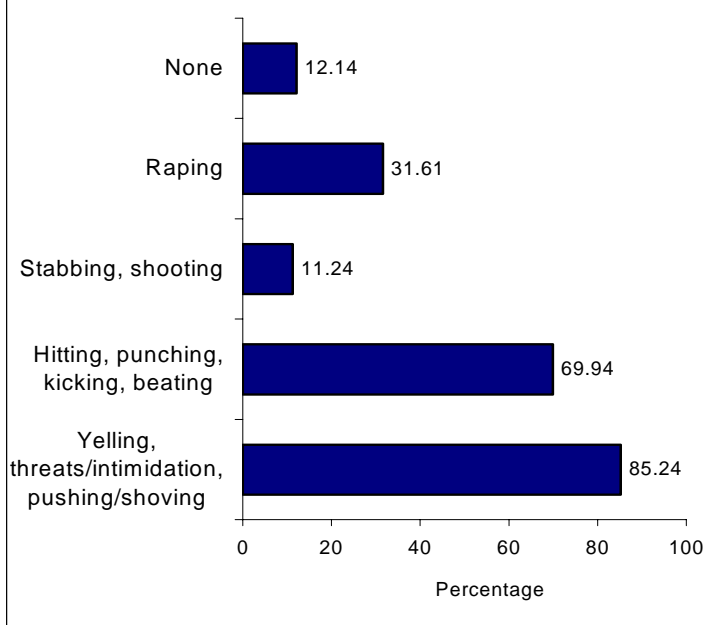
The following will summarize the differences found by age, race, income level, educational attainment and the use of drugs and alcohol.

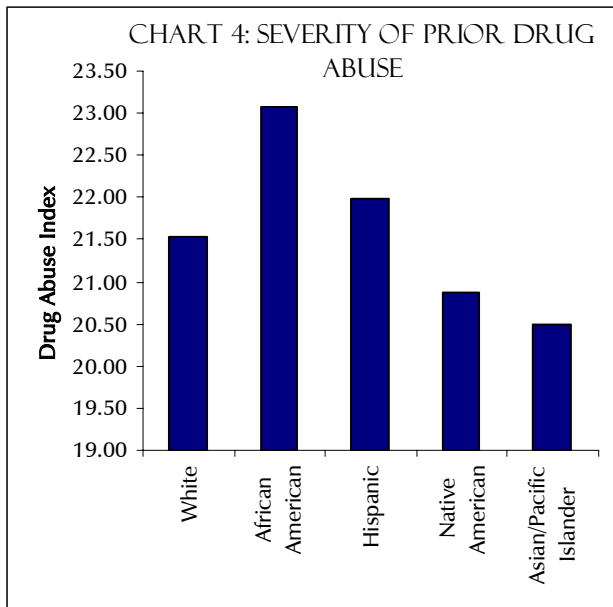
First, an index was created to help identify the severity of the inmates prior drug and/or alcohol abuse. When looked at with regard to race, there were some significant differences. It was found that African Americans were more likely to show signs of more severe drug abuse, whereas Native Americans reported stronger abuse of alcohol prior to prison (Charts 3 and 4).

The alcohol and drug abuse indices showed no difference between the level of drug or alcohol abuse versus educational attainment or family income. There was however, a significant difference with regards to age. For age groups, the 36-45 age group showed the highest abuse of alcohol, and the 18-25 age group showed the highest abuse of drugs (Table 5).

Demographic characteristics of female inmates were also compared with individual types of drugs (alcohol, prescription psychoactive drugs, illicit drugs, and Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs) to see any differences between groups.

CHART 2: FORMS OF ABUSE EXPERIENCED BY INMATES





When compared by age groups, race, income level and educational attainment, the questions from Table 2 yielded the following results. As pointed out in Table 6, the age category with the highest dependency on alcohol was the 46-55 age group (47.25%). The 46-55 age group also had the highest percentage who indicated they have abused prescription drugs (59.57%). The 18-25 age group had the highest proportion saying they had used illicit drugs more than 5 times in their lifetime. The 36-45 age group abused more OTC drugs than other age groups.

**TABLE 5: DEMOGRAPHICS BY ALCOHOL AND DRUG INDEX**

<i>Educational Attainment</i>	<i>Alcohol Abuse Index</i>	<i>Drug Abuse Index</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than high school	11.90	21.66	281	28.33
High School graduate/GED	12.61	21.60	407	41.03
Some college/two-year college	12.78	21.34	250	25.20
College or graduate school graduate	13.15	21.18	54	5.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.48</b>	<b>21.54</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>100.00</b>

<i>Family Income</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than \$10,000	545	57.73
\$10,001 - \$20,000	234	24.79
\$20,001 - \$30,000	93	9.85
\$30,001 and up	72	7.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>100.00</b>

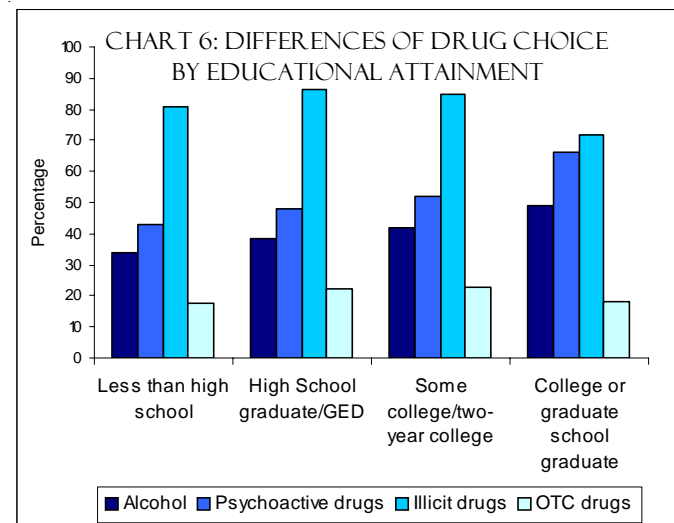
<i>Age group*</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
18-25	323	32.69
26-35	329	33.30
36-45	264	26.72
46-55	69	6.98
56-65	3	0.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>100.00</b>

\*Age is the only characteristic with significant differences between groups

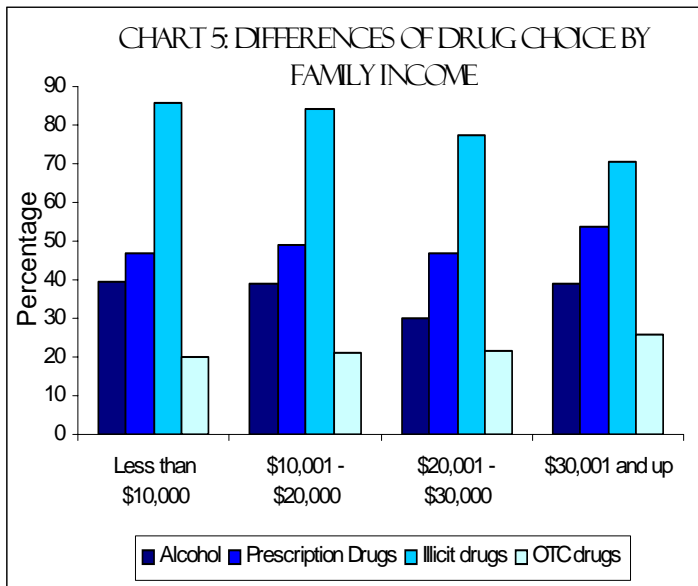
By family income (Chart 5), all groups abused alcohol fairly equally, however those with family incomes under \$10,000 abused alcohol proportionately slightly more. Those with family incomes under \$10,000 also indicated a slightly higher abuse of illicit drugs. Those with family incomes of \$30,001 and up abused prescription medication and OTC drugs in a higher proportion than other groups.

**TABLE 6: DIFFERENCES OF DRUG CHOICE BY AGE**

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Alcohol</i>	<i>Prescription drugs</i>	<i>Illicit drugs</i>	<i>OTC drugs</i>	<i>N</i>
18-25	36.67%	42.31%	88.78%	17.09%	392
26-35	35.58%	46.41%	86.09%	17.70%	418
36-45	41.14%	53.85%	80.97%	28.00%	350
46-55	47.25%	59.57%	61.29%	22.58%	93
56-65	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.29%</b>	<b>48.13%</b>	<b>83.47%</b>	<b>20.76%</b>	<b>1257</b>



By educational attainment (Chart 6), those with a college degree abused alcohol at a greater extent than others (49.15%). They also abused prescription drugs (66.10%) at a higher level. Those with a High School Diploma or GED were more likely to have abused illicit drugs (86.32%), and those with some college/ or a two-year college used more OTC drugs (22.79%).



By race, Native Americans had the highest proportion who admitted to experiencing memory lapses due to drinking (Table 7). African Americans had the highest proportion abusing prescription drugs. The proportion of white inmates saying they had used illicit drugs more than 5 times in their lifetime was higher than other groups. Asian American/Pacific Islanders had a higher percentage abusing OTC medication.

Table 8 gives a comparison of the severity of drug and alcohol abuse indices with different forms of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse experienced by the inmates. Individuals with the highest drug abuse scores were those with prior histories of stabbing or shooting, or those whose partner had been cut, bruised or seriously injured in a fight with them. Those with the lowest drug abuse scores were individuals who said they had experienced no previous physical or emotional abuse. Inmates with the

TABLE 7: DIFFERENCES OF DRUG CHOICE BY RACE

	Alcohol	Prescription drugs	Illicit drugs	OTC drugs	N
White	37.98%	49.60%	85.20%	21.04%	1003
African American	25.00%	67.86%	82.14%	28.57%	28
Hispanic	31.78%	30.77%	71.09%	17.05%	129
Native American	56.79%	51.22%	82.93%	17.07%	82
Asian/Pacific Islander	38.46%	46.15%	75.00%	30.77%	13
Total	38.27%	48.13%	83.45%	20.64%	1255

TABLE 8: DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE INDEX BY TYPES OF ABUSE

Type of Abuse	n	%	Drug Abuse Index	Alcohol Abuse Index
Physical Abuse by intimate partner	933	69.57	21.94**	13.04**
Emotional Abuse by intimate partner	1055	78.73	21.91**	12.87**
Cut, bruised, or seriously injured by partner	834	62.43	22.25**	13.34**
Partner was cut, bruised or injured in fight	294	22.07	23.11**	15.19**
Physical abuse as a child	442	34.10	22.16**	13.30**
Before 18, touched sexually by adult	582	45.12	21.82*	13.19**
Before 18, forced to have sex by adult	399	31.07	22.07**	13.56**
Physical violence between parents	498	38.57	22.19*	13.10*
Yelling, threats or intimidation	1138	85.24	21.72*	12.80*
Hitting, punching, beating	933	69.94	21.92*	12.95*
Stabbing, shooting	150	11.24	23.32*	14.75*
Raping	422	31.61	21.94	13.06*
No abuse	162	12.14	19.67*	10.54*
Abuser had alcohol or drug problems	828	86.61	21.94*	13.02*
Alcohol/drugs were an issue in the abuse	793	75.17	22.03*	13.30*

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

highest alcohol abuse scores were either those who had previously cut, bruised, or seriously injured their partner in a fight and/or those saying they had been stabbed or shot. The lowest alcohol scores were again for those who experienced no previous physical or emotional abuse. There were significant differences between all of the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse characteristics listed, except for rape. Individuals saying they had been raped did not differ significantly from those saying they had not been raped with regards to their severity of previous drug use, however, alcohol abuse was significantly different.

In this vein, it is also interesting to note that 86.61% said their abuser had alcohol or drug problems. Those with an alcohol or drug abusing partner were more likely to have alcohol or drug problems themselves. 75.17% of individuals reported that alcohol/drugs were an issue involved in their abuse. Individuals reporting that alcohol/drugs were an issue in their abuse were more likely to have a problem with alcohol and drug use themselves.

In conclusion, this research points to the overlapping problems of culture, poverty, and domestic and physical violence within the life of the drug/alcohol abuser. It was surprising to note that within the realm of female inmates, those who had college or graduate school degrees were actually more likely to abuse alcohol, and only slightly less likely to abuse drugs. It appears, therefore, that education alone does not solve the problems of alcohol/drug abuse. An approach that covers the myriad of problems the abuser faces will be more effective.

This research shows the benefits of analyzing and comparing groups of drug and alcohol dependant individuals by various characteristics. For instance, it was found that female inmates who have not experienced abuse are less likely to have drug and alcohol problems. It was also found that those who have experienced more severe forms of violence - such as being stabbed or shot, are more likely to have drug and/or alcohol problems. Those who have had a more violent relationship with their former intimate partner and have cut, bruised, or seriously injured them, were also more likely to have drug and/or alcohol problems. This points to the severity of violence in the life of the inmate as an undercurrent in their drug and alcohol abuse.

It also appears that the inmates' drug and alcohol abuse often happened in association with their violent domestic partner. If they felt their abusive partner was addicted to alcohol or drugs, and if they felt that this addiction played into the reasons for their own abuse, they were more likely to have drug or alcohol problems themselves. This could be underscoring the idea that domestic violence victims may be getting involved with drugs and alcohol because of an abusive partner, however, currently this link is unknown. More research is needed to help determine the true effects the previous environment of the inmate has had upon their underlying drug and/or alcohol problems. As always, discovering more about the history of drug and alcohol dependant individuals helps in finding appropriate treatment for them.

For questions or comments about this report, please contact the Idaho Statistical Analysis Center: 208-884-7044, or refer to our website at <http://www.isp.state.id.us/pgr/Research/sac.html>.