VETERANS’ PRIMARY SUBSTANCE OF ABUSE IS ALCOHOL IN TREATMENT ADMISSIONS

Veterans who served in the U.S. military often face challenging experiences during their service. Some veterans turn to substance use as a way to cope with these experiences. This unhealthy behavior can lead to the need for substance abuse treatment.

The Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) is a database of substance abuse treatment admissions, primarily at publicly-funded treatment facilities. TEDS excludes admissions to Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities; therefore, the veteran admissions in TEDS represent veterans who chose to seek substance abuse treatment in a non-VA facility. According to TEDS data for 2013, there were about 62,000 admissions of veterans. The most common primary substance of abuse among veteran admissions was alcohol (65.4 percent), followed by heroin (10.7 percent) and cocaine (6.2 percent). Veteran admissions were more likely than nonveteran admissions to report alcohol as their primary substance of abuse (65.4 vs. 37.4 percent) and were less likely to report marijuana (5.5 vs. 13.4 percent) or heroin (10.7 vs. 20.9 percent) as the primary substance of abuse.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides resources and information for service providers working with military personnel and veterans at [http://www.samhsa.gov/militaryfamilies/](http://www.samhsa.gov/militaryfamilies/).