

# Data Spotlight

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

March 6, 2012

## Half of Women on Probation or Parole Experience Mental Illness

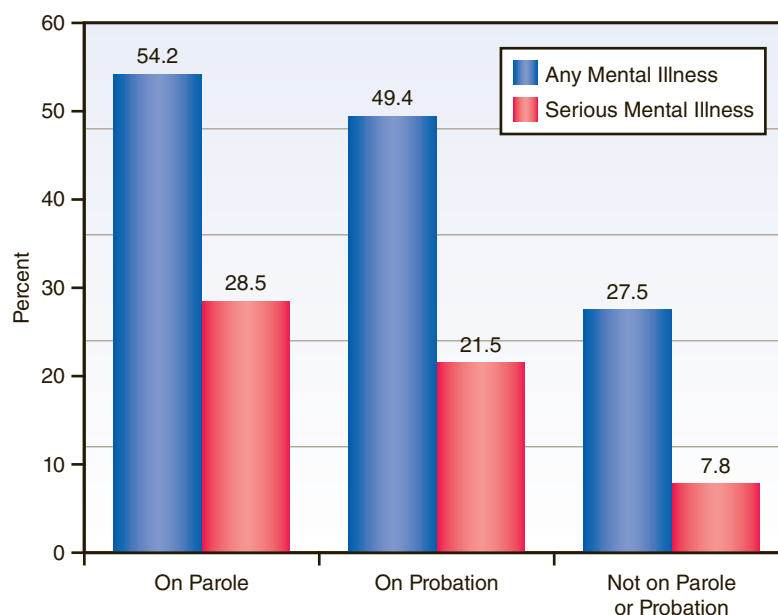
Women on probation or parole are nearly twice as likely to experience mental illness as other women (Figure).<sup>1</sup> According to the 2008 to 2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), among women aged 18 to 49, about half of those who had been on probation (49.4 percent) or on parole (54.2 percent) in the past year experienced any mental illness in the past year, compared with 27.5 percent of women who had not been on probation or parole. Rates of serious mental illness (i.e., mental illness that substantially limits major life activities) were 3 times higher for women who had been on probation or on parole than for women who had not been on probation or parole (21.5 and 28.5 vs. 7.8 percent).

Research indicates that women in the criminal justice system with mental health problems have greater difficulty reintegrating into their families and communities and are more likely to re-offend than those without mental health problems.<sup>2</sup> This suggests a need for care during and after incarceration for those in the criminal justice system who experience mental health problems. For more information on this topic, please visit [http://gains.prainc.com/topical\\_resources/women.asp](http://gains.prainc.com/topical_resources/women.asp).

<sup>1</sup> SAMHSA defines mental illness based on diagnostic criteria in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV). See American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th edition). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>2</sup> Mallik-Kane, K., & Visher, C. A. (2008). *Health and prisoner reentry: How physical, mental, and substance abuse conditions shape the process of reintegration*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center. Retrieved from [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411617\\_health\\_prisoner\\_reentry.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411617_health_prisoner_reentry.pdf)

**Women Aged 18 to 49 Experiencing Past Year Mental Illness, by Past Year Probation/Parole\* Status: 2008 to 2010**



\* Probation and parole are not mutually exclusive. Of the annual average of 1.4 million women who were on probation or parole in the past year, 16.1 percent had been on both probation and parole.

Source: 2008 to 2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs). The NSDUH is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their places of residence.

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