



Addressing Gender-Based Differences in Victimization and Substance Use Among Justice-Involved Youth

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Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been a dramatic increase in girls served by the juvenile justice system¹⁻³; currently girls account for nearly 30% of juvenile arrests in the U.S.²

This increased presence is attributed to:⁴⁻⁶

- elevated physical and mental health problems
- lower school achievement
- substance abuse
- family dynamics
- recurrent delinquency.

Girls formally involved in the juvenile justice system are more likely than their male counterparts to report:⁵⁻¹⁰

- direct trauma and victimization
- sexual and physical abuse
- mental health issues
- fragmented families.

These factors may lead to substance abuse as a coping mechanism in girls¹⁰ and research has shown justice-involved girls have more issues with substance abuse addiction compared to delinquent boys.⁴⁻⁷

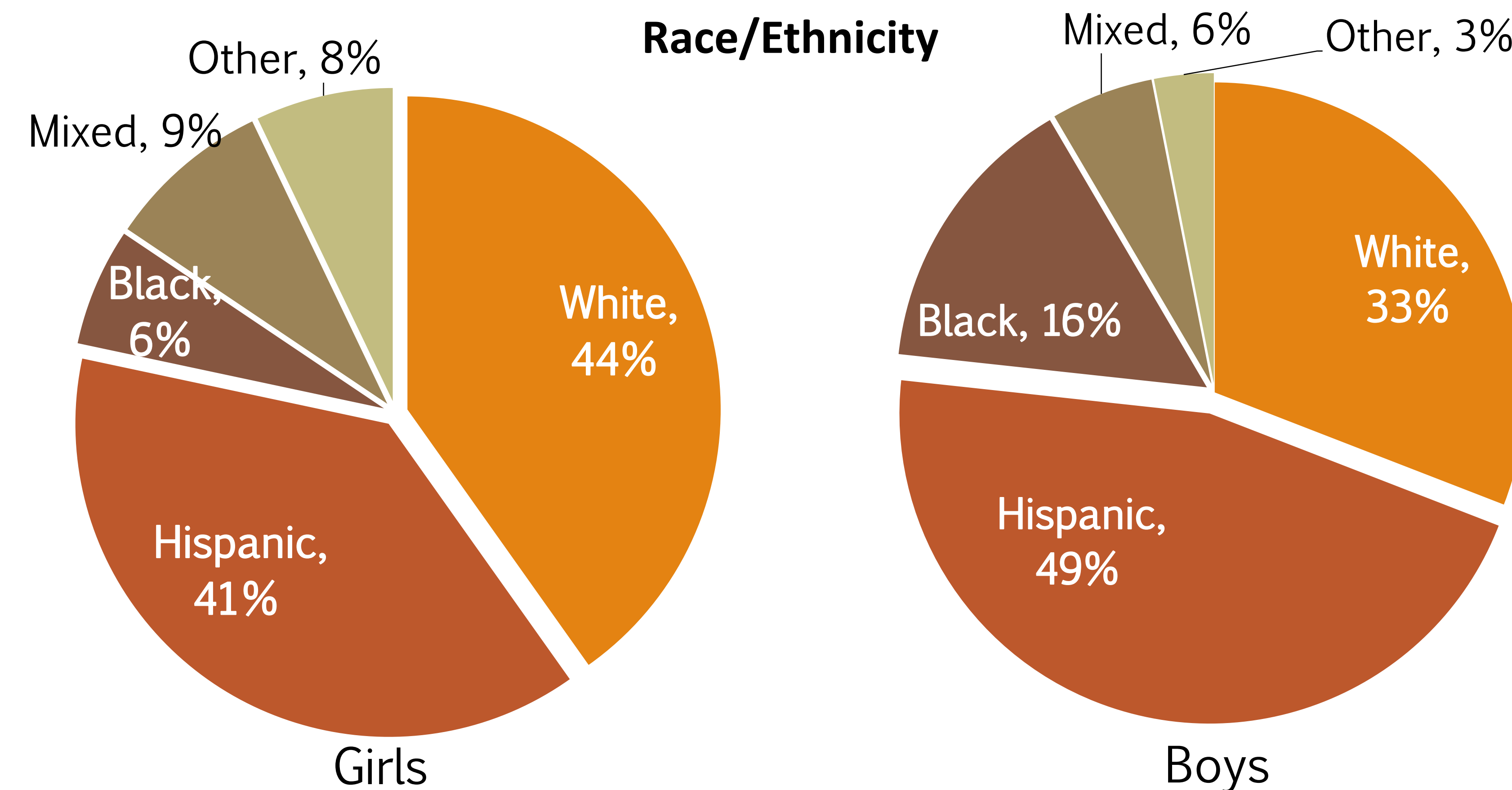
Gender-specific treatment programs are effective in addressing specific needs of girls with substance use problems¹¹⁻¹² and can help to reduce recidivism.¹³ The purpose of this poster is to further examine gender-based differences among youth involved in the juvenile justice system and test the effectiveness of gender-appropriate treatment.

Methods

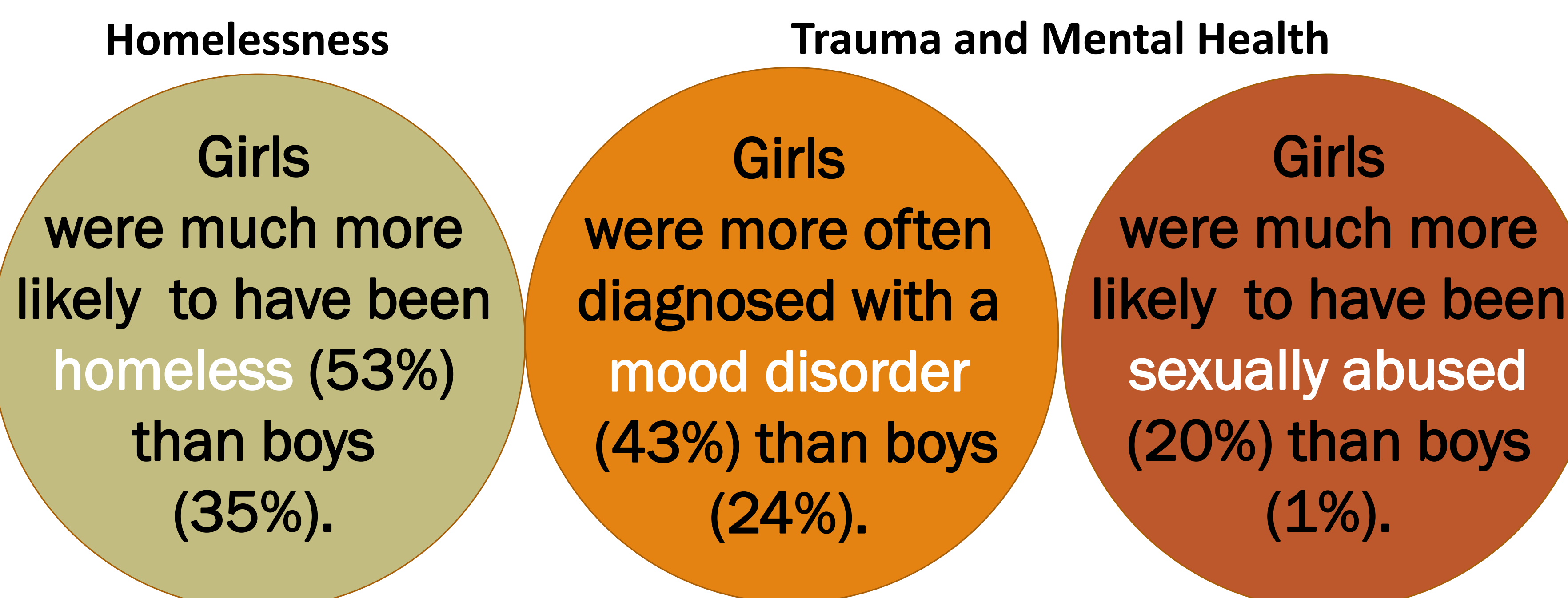
Findings are from the National Cross-Site Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts & Reclaiming Futures (JDC/RF), an evaluation of 8 JDCs across the U.S. implementing JDC/RF, 8 JDCs not implementing RF, and 7 intensive outpatient programs (IOPs). Youth completed the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) Assessment¹⁴ at intake and 6 months post-intake. Extent of utilization of gender-appropriate treatment was measured among program staff using a 1-5 scale of “never” to “always”. Independent sample t-tests were used to examine differences between girls and boys involved in the 8 JDC/RF programs. Hierarchical linear regression was employed to assess the impact of gender-appropriate treatment on client outcomes.

Results

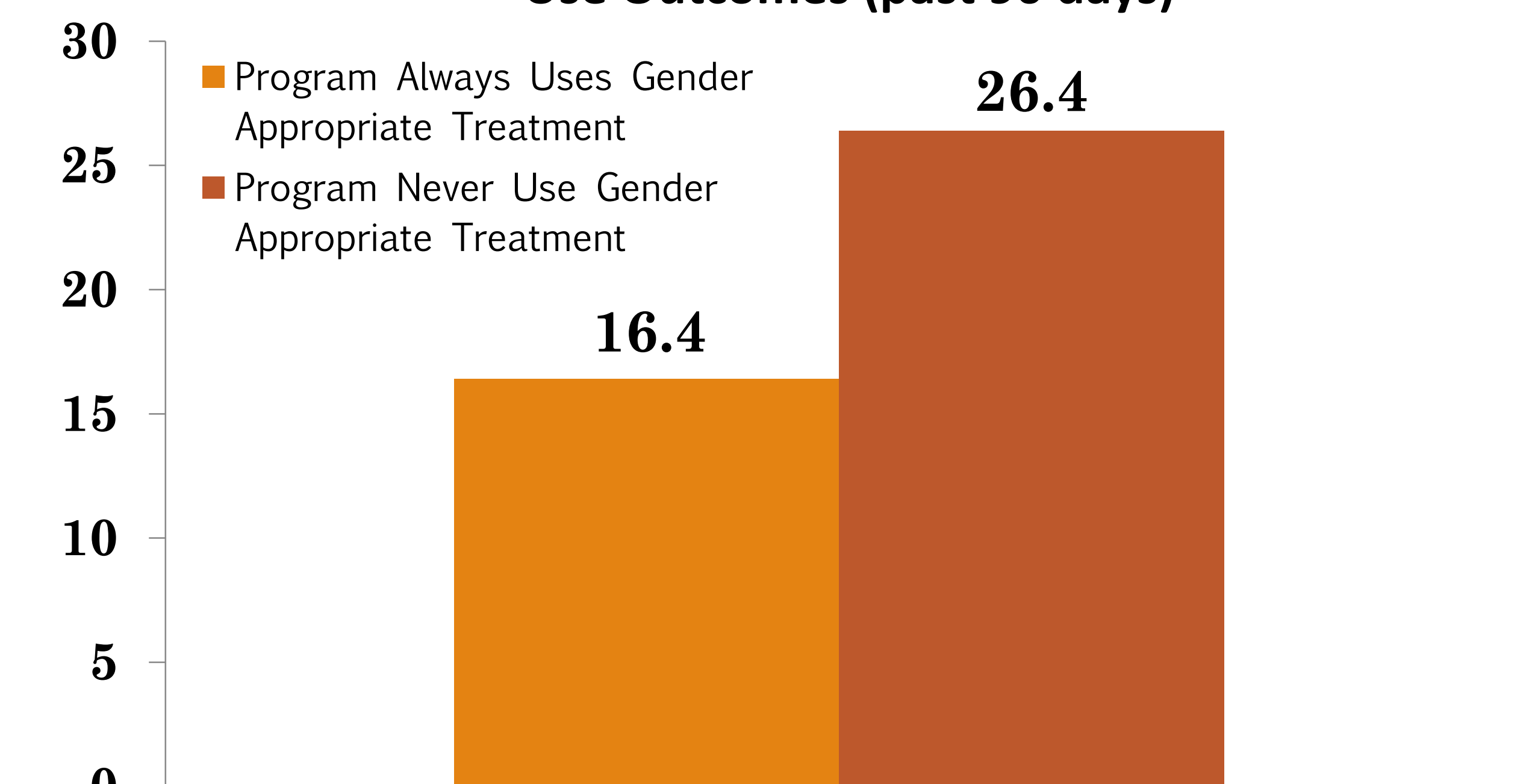
Of the 2,416 justice-involved adolescents enrolled in programs that were included in the JDC/RF evaluation, 73% were boys and 27% were girls. A larger percentage of the girls were between 11-14 years of age (18%) compared to boys (13%). There was a statistically significant difference in racial/ethnic distribution between girls and boys.



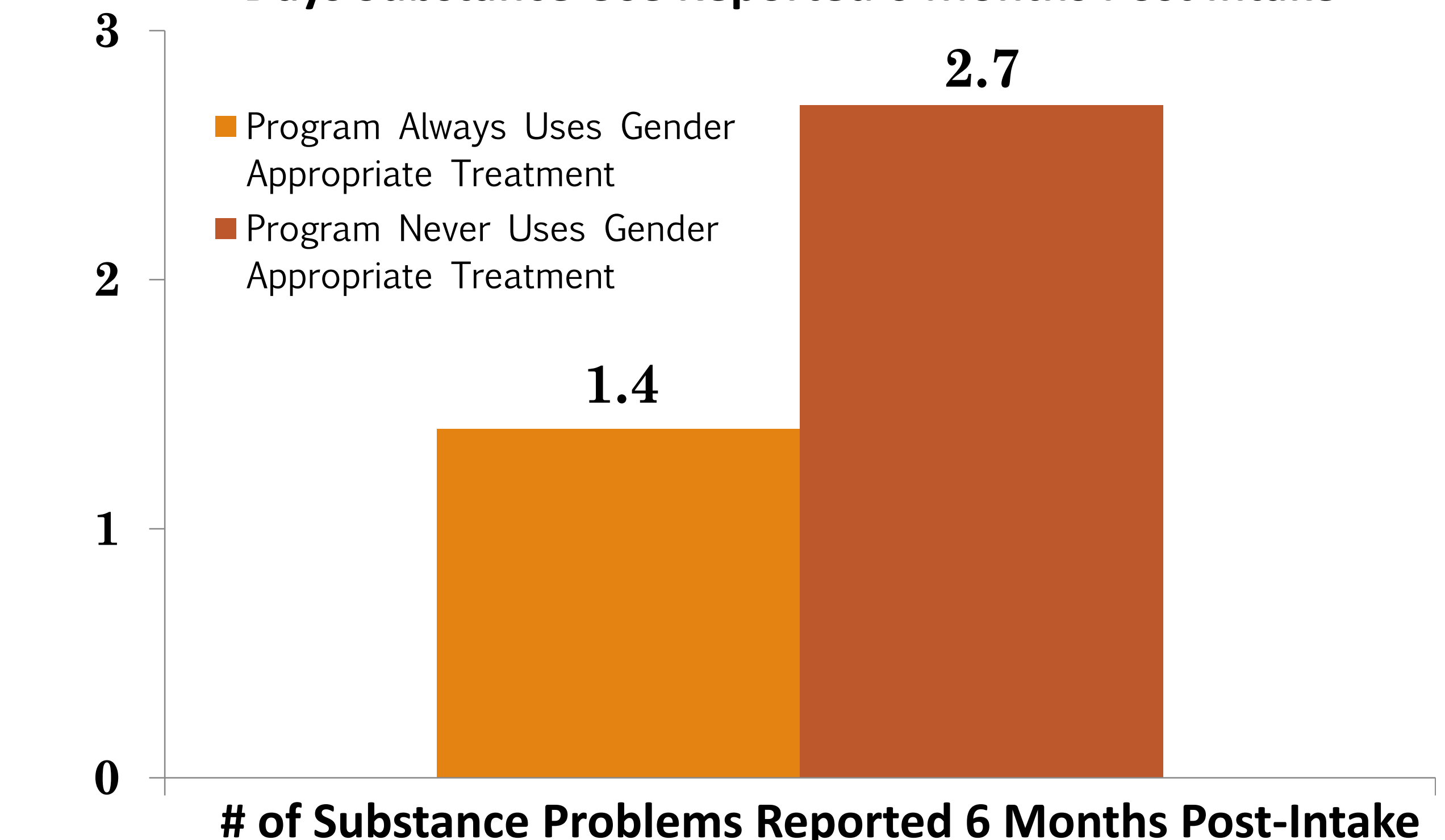
Substance Use	Girls	Boys	p
Meth Use in the past 90 days	9%	3%	<.01
Stimulants other than meth in the last 90 days	10%	5%	<.01
Trauma and Mental Health	Girls	Boys	p
Currently worried about being sexually abused	3%	0%	<.01
Ever been emotionally abused	39%	15%	<.01
Currently worried about emotional abuse	14%	3%	<.01



Effect of Gender-Appropriate Treatment on Substance Use Outcomes (past 90 days)



Days Substance Use Reported 6 Months Post Intake



Conclusion

Findings indicate that girls experience higher rates of homelessness, meth and other stimulant use, sexual and emotional abuse and mood disorders, compared to boys. Gender-appropriate treatment was shown to decrease substance use and substance problems for all youth.

Justice-involved girls are highly vulnerable individuals requiring an array of gender-appropriate services to deal with co-occurring disorders and integrated traumas. Effective clinical assessments are critical to determine the range of services needed for justice-involved girls. Collaborations with a variety of service agencies can assist JDCs and IOPs in providing successful treatment for justice-involved girls.

References

Please see handout for full list of references