

Effects of the Pandemic on Case Management Services for Marginally Housed Young Adult Substance Abusers

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Introduction

Montgomery County has the highest rate of drug abuse in Ohio.² The county is challenged by poverty and untreated substance abuse which impacts our young adults and contributes to their addiction, neglect, abuse, and mental health problems. Young adults aged 18-24 have a high prevalence of substance use and mental illness, and those with multiple risk factors are at greater risk of victimization, with those living on the streets at the highest risk.¹ The DayTREE project was developed to address risk factors through substance abuse and mental health screening, referral to treatment, prevention education, and case management with a goal of reduced substance use and improved quality of life.

Methods

Procedure: The DayTREE program has partnered with Daybreak, a shelter for runaway and homeless youth, to provide SUD and mental health screening and treatment, tobacco cessation, SUD education, HIV/hepatitis risk reduction and testing, case management, and other recovery support. Participants were screened for SUD and mental health disorders; those with service needs were enrolled in the program, connected to formal treatment and engaged with harm reduction strategies. Contact between case managers and participants was maintained via in-person meetings, phone/text, and social media. Outcome measures, including substance use and mental health symptoms were obtained from self-reported data at baseline and six-month follow-up. Repeated measures ANOVAs were used to measure change in outcome measures and compare enrollment group differences.

Participants: The DayTREE program screened 135 individuals. Of those screened, 51.9% were male and 47.4% were female. Nearly all of the participants were either African American (54.1%) or white (29.6%). The other 16.3% of individuals identified as multi-racial, American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander or "other". Additionally, nearly 16% of individuals identified themselves as Hispanic/Latinx. Ages of those enrolled ranged from 18 to 24 with fairly even distribution between the ages.

Unexpected Challenges

Like many other behavioral health services programs, DayTREE experienced immediate challenges as a result of the pandemic, including:

- Fear and uncertainty
- Transitioning to remote work environments
- COVID outbreaks, lockdowns and quarantines

Moreover, the unique situation of the DayTREE participants, that is being marginally-housed, young adult, substance users, created additional and ongoing issues, including:

- Attempting to engage participants via telehealth when they prefer face-to-face interactions
- The loss of free Wi-Fi and access to technology for participants
- Cost of PPE and struggling to acquire enough to keep staff protected
- Negotiating both administrative and clinical staff turnover
- Rewriting procedures and protocols to account for ongoing challenges
- Providing ongoing re-trainings as changes are necessitated
- Exploring new avenues of identifying and enrolling new participants

Results

The following data is taken from the CSAT GPRA interview collected at baseline and six-month follow-up.

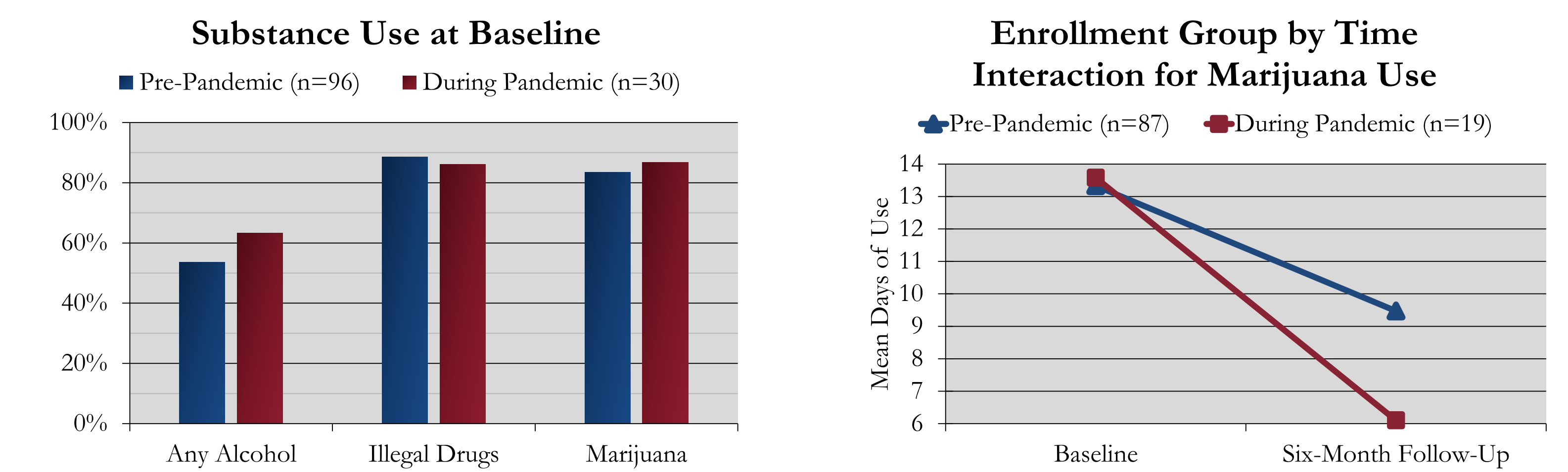


Figure 4: A larger number of individuals enrolled during the pandemic were using alcohol and marijuana at baseline compared to those enrolled before the pandemic. For marijuana, both enrollment groups reported about 13.5 mean days of use at baseline. However, individuals enrolled during the pandemic reported six days of use at follow-up compared to the 9.5 days reported by those enrolled prior to the pandemic. Due to the small number of individuals enrolled during the pandemic, the interaction was not statistically significant.

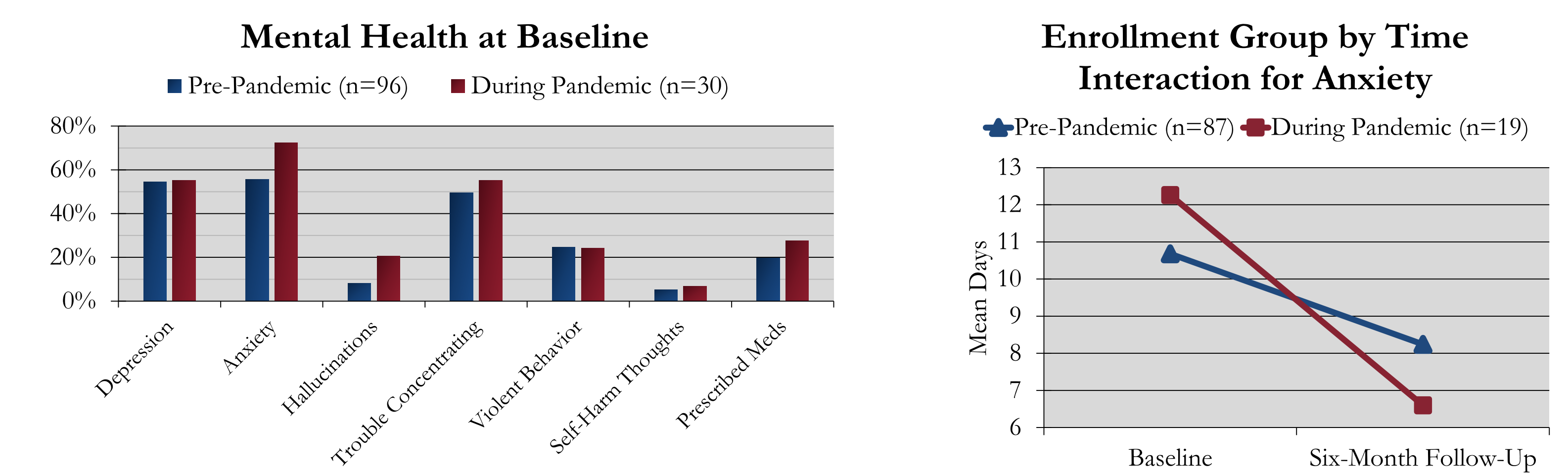


Figure 5: For those individuals enrolled during the pandemic, a higher percentage reported recently experiencing anxiety, hallucinations, trouble concentrating and self-harm thoughts compared to those individuals enrolled prior to the pandemic. Similar to substance use, individuals enrolled during the pandemic presented with higher mean days experiencing mental health issues and showed greater reductions compared to those enrolled before the pandemic. Again, due to the smaller number of individuals enrolled during the pandemic, the interaction between the groups was not statistically significant.

Case Management – Pre vs During Pandemic

To date, the DayTREE program has enrolled 126 individuals, 96 of whom were enrolled prior to the pandemic and 30 enrolled during the pandemic.

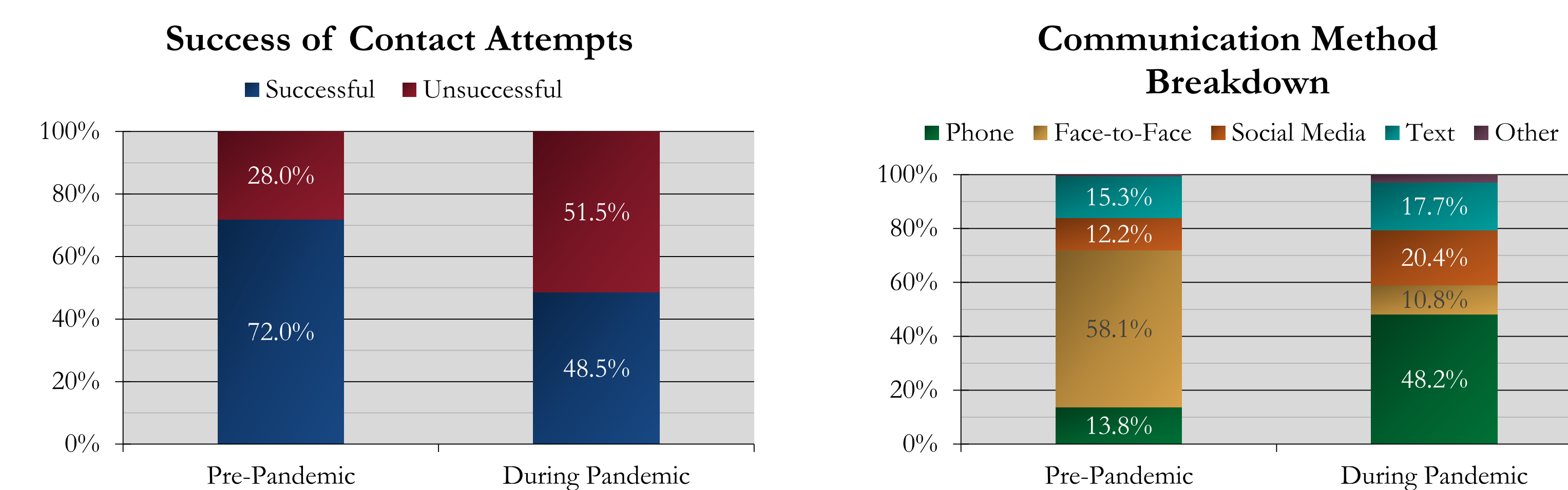


Figure 2: Prior to the pandemic, 72.0% of contact attempts made by case managers were successful. Since the start of the pandemic, the success rate has steadily declined to 48.5%. Additionally, pre-pandemic, the overwhelming majority of contacts between case managers and enrolled individuals were made face-to-face (58.1%) with phone calls (13.8%) and text messaging (15.6%) being used primarily to make and verify appointments. However, during the pandemic case managers were forced to shift to 'remote' forms of communication, relying heavily on phone calls (48.2%), social media (20.4%) and text messaging (17.7%).

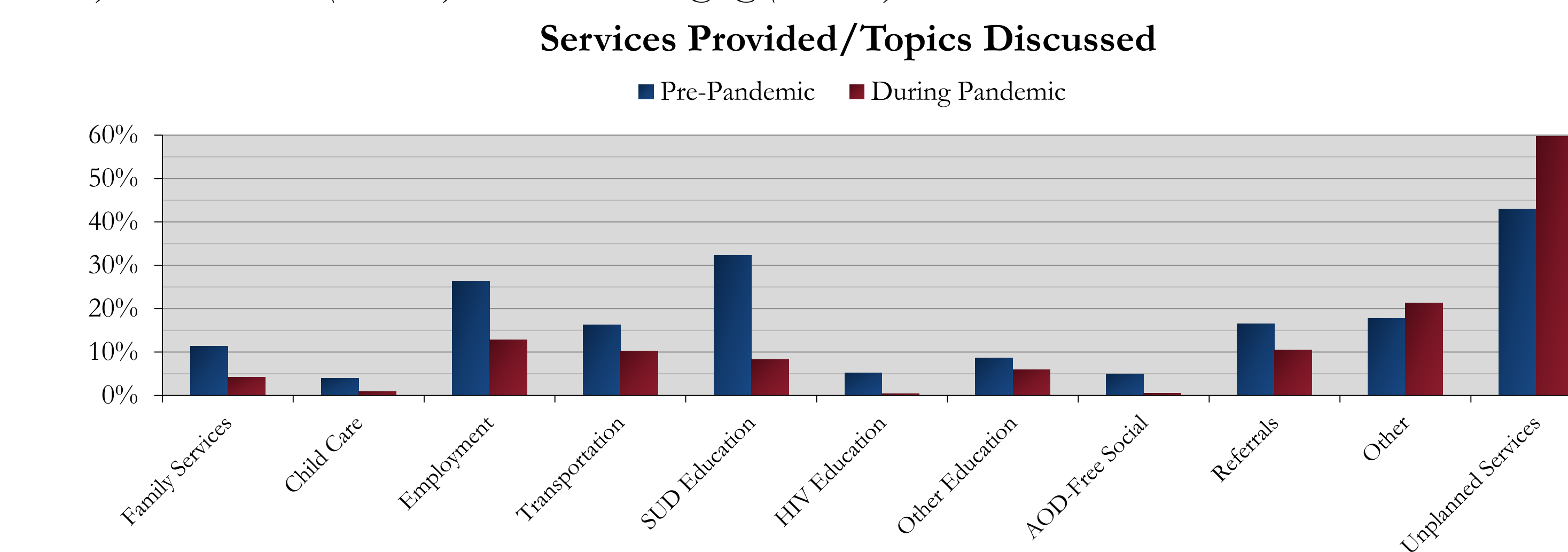


Figure 3: Services provided/topics discussed also shifted during the pandemic with those related to family services, child care, employment, transportation, education and referrals all declining. This decline is likely due, in part, to the lockdowns, eviction moratorium and stimulus packages temporarily eliminating these issues for those enrolled. In their place, an increase in other case management services, as well as unplanned services was noted.

Conclusions

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the DayTREE program continues to provide effective harm reduction services to participants through a variety of services including intensive case management. Addressing substance use and providing consistent contact with case managers resulted in reduced risk factors and improved basic life needs.

Literature Cited

1. Daybreak (2018). *Daybreak Annual Report 2016-2017*. Retrieved from: http://daybreakdayton.org/images/stories/annual_reports/annlrptfy17.pdf
2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2016). *National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*, 2012-2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh/reports?tab=34>

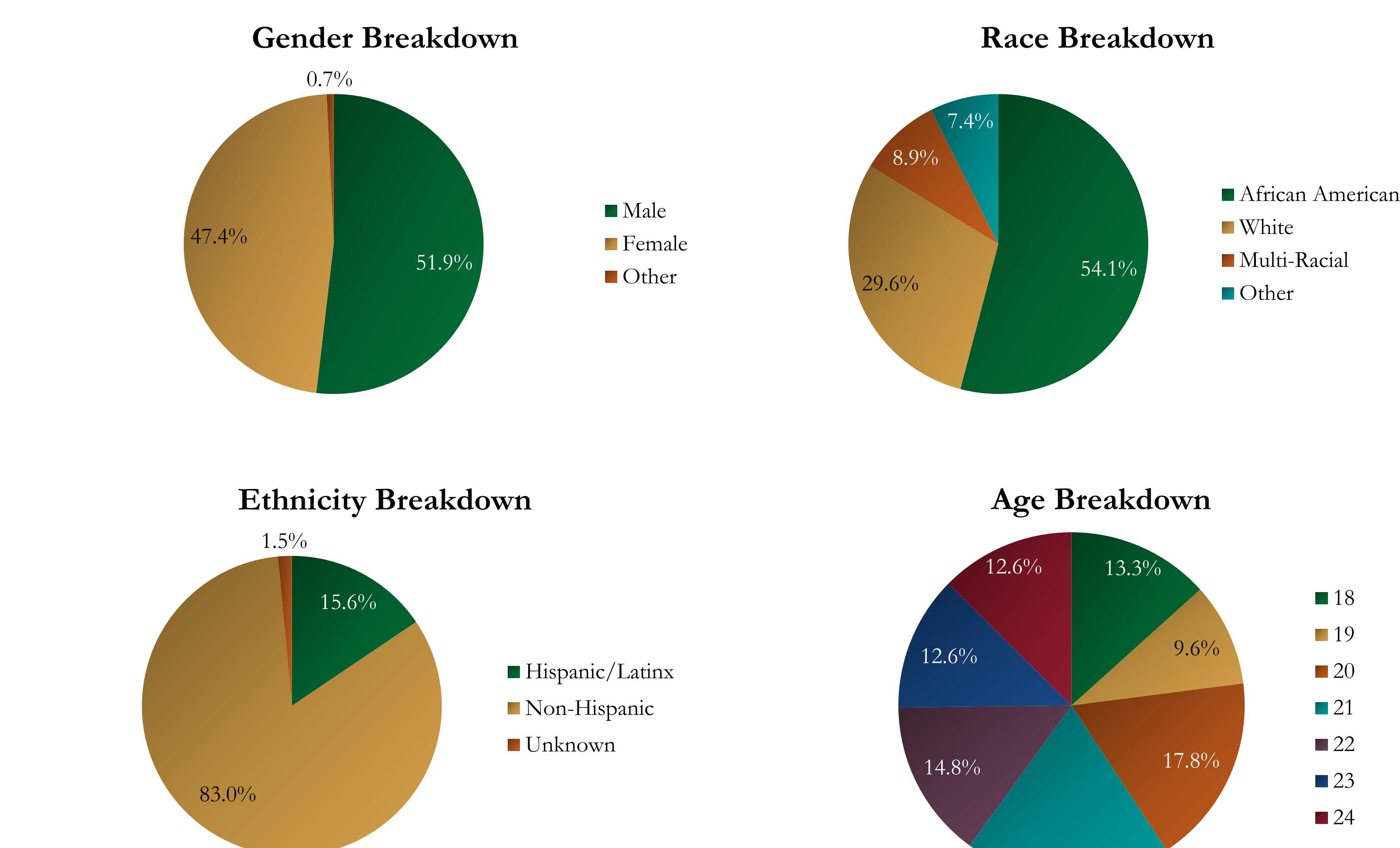


Figure 1: Demographic profile of screened individuals in the DayTREE program.