

Seasonality of Youth's First-Time Use of Marijuana, Cigarettes, or Alcohol

In Brief

- Youth initiation of alcohol use was highest during December, January, June, and July
- Youth initiation of marijuana use and cigarette use were highest during June and July
- The percentages of marijuana, cigarette, and alcohol initiates increased between the spring (April and May) and the summer (June and July)

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks respondents aged 12 or older who reported lifetime use of marijuana, cigarettes, or alcohol how old they were when they first used these substances. Respondents who very recently used a substance for the first time are asked to indicate the month in which they initiated use. This report focuses on respondents who recently initiated the use of these substances at an age that was younger than 18.¹ For each substance, the percentage of initiates in each month are presented.

Initiation of Marijuana Use

Among recent youth marijuana initiates, initiation was highest during June (11 percent) and July (11 percent) (Figure 1). The percentages of youth marijuana initiates increased to 11 percent per month during June and July, compared with just 8 percent per month during April and May. November (7 percent) and December (6 percent) had the lowest percentages of youth marijuana initiates.

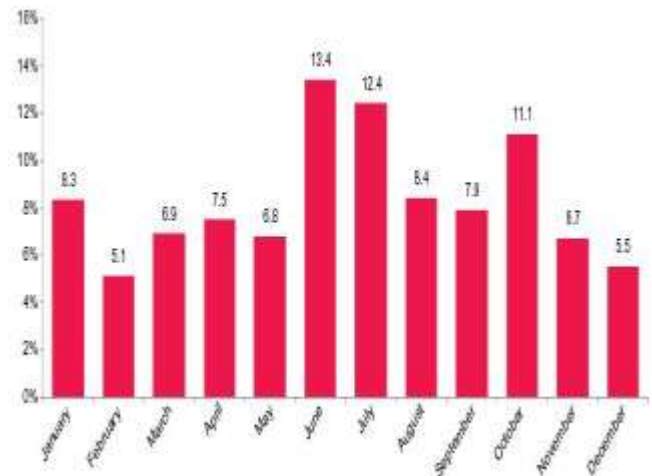
Figure 1. Percentages of Initiates among Persons Who Recently Initiated Marijuana Use When They Were Younger Than Age 18, by Month: 2002



Initiation of Cigarette Use

Recent youth cigarette initiates were more likely to have initiated use during June (13 percent) and July (12 percent) than during other months (Figure 2). The percentage of youth cigarette initiates increased from 7 percent per month during April and May, to 13 percent per month during June and July. February (5 percent) and December (5 percent) had the lowest percentages of youths initiating the use of cigarettes.

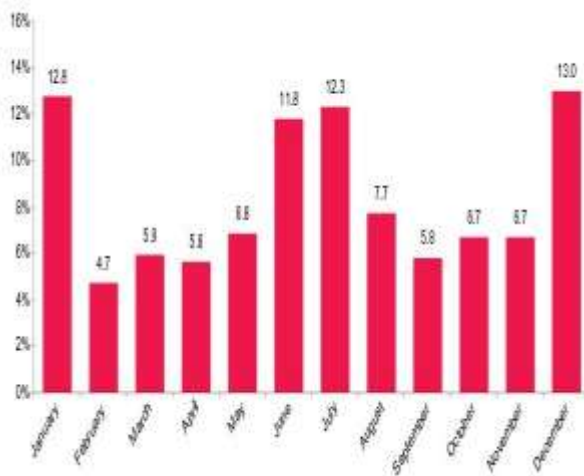
Figure 2. Percentages of Initiates among Persons Who Recently Initiated Cigarette Use When They Were Younger Than Age 18.



Initiation of Alcohol Use

Recent youth alcohol initiates were more likely to initiate alcohol use during January (13 percent), June (12 percent), July (12 percent), and December (13 percent) than during other months (Figure 3). The percentage of youth alcohol initiates increased to 12 percent per month during June and July, compared with the 6 percent per month during April and May. February had the lowest percentage (5 percent) of youths initiating the use of alcohol.

Figure 3. Percentages of Initiates among Persons Who Recently Initiated Alcohol Use When They Were Younger Than Age 18.



End Notes

1. Due to the structure of the NSDUH questionnaire, only respondents who indicated an age of first use that was equal to or 1 year less than their current age were asked to indicate the month in which they initiated the use of marijuana, cigarettes, or alcohol. This analysis focuses on respondents who reported an age at first use that was younger than 18 years and who were asked the question on the month of first use. Consequently, the estimates approximately represent initiation of use among persons younger than 18 that occurred between 2000 and 2002.

Figure Note

Source SAMHSA 2002 NSDUH

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2002 data are based on information obtained from 68,126 persons aged 12 or older, including 1,963 recent youth marijuana initiates, 1,698 recent youth cigarette initiates, and 3,626 recent youth alcohol initiates who reported their month of first use. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

The NSDUH Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, and by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.)

Information and data for this issue are based on the following publication:

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NSDUH Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available online. <http://www.oas.samsha.gov>

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002 survey should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.

The staff at **Recovery Happens Counseling Services** specialize in the outpatient treatment of adolescents and young adults with addiction and mental health issues. Our approach balances the traditional "chemical dependency" model with current developmental psychology and the emerging research from interpersonal neurobiology, affect dysregulation/regulation. This comprehensive view of addiction/mental health and development allows for a more multi-dimensional understanding of the issues being addressed which translates in to a more comprehensive treatment approach and empowering solutions for the client and their family. Our goal is not just helping the client become drug free, but to also become well at a deeper level. Being drug free is the first step on the road of wellness. The treatment process involves individual, group and/or family counseling, along with multiple parent education classes and drug testing, etc. Each session has a specific purpose in the structured process of decreasing denial and guiding a client toward recovery, affect regulation, healthier attachment experiences and wellness. It is recognized that almost all drug users begin treatment without the motivation to change. Our first task by working with them and the system around them is to help them develop a greater recognition of their problem, and to support a growing motivation for change and mental health. We enjoy working closely with other therapists, doctors, schools, programs, etc and hope to be a collaborative resource for you.

DON'T LET YOUR TEEN'S SUMMER GO TO POT: PARENT TIPS

Summer can be a risky time for teens. More teens smoke marijuana for the first time in the summer months of June and July than any other time of the year. Every summer day, more than 5,800 teens try marijuana for the first time. This is equal to the enrollment of eight average-sized U.S. high schools.

And marijuana is more harmful than many parents think. It can lead to a host of health, social and behavioral problems at a crucial time in kids' lives, when their bodies' brains are still developing. Marijuana can be addictive and more kids are in drug treatment for marijuana than for all other illicit drugs combined. Teens using marijuana are also more likely to take risks, such as having sex, engaging in violence, riding with someone who's driving high or using alcohol or other drugs.

So how can you stop your teen's summer from going to pot? Here is a list of S-U-M-M-E-R tips -- simple things parents (and adult influencers) can do and say to help prevent their teen from using marijuana this summer. **Parent Tips:**

1. **Set rules:** Let your child know that marijuana use is unacceptable. Two-thirds of kids say that upsetting their parents or losing the respect of family and friends is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs. Set limits with clear consequences for breaking them. Praise and reward good behavior.
2. **Understand and communicate:** Take time to learn the facts about marijuana and talk to your teen about its harmful health, social, learning and mental effects on young users.
3. **Make sure you know where your teen is:** Know where your teen will be and what they will be doing during unsupervised time. Research shows that teens with unsupervised time are three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs. Unsupervised teens are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as underage drinking, sexual activity and cigarette smoking.
4. **Make sure you know who your teen is with:** Get to know your teen's friends and their parents by inviting them over for dinner or talking with them at your teen's soccer practice, dance rehearsal or other activities. Stay in touch with the adult supervisors of your child (camp counselors, coaches, employers) and have them inform you of any changes in your teen. Warning signs of drug use include distance from family and existing friends, hanging out with a new circle of friends, lack of interest in personal appearance, or changes in eating or sleeping habits.
5. **Engage your teen in summer activities:** Enroll your child in a supervised summer camp, educational program, or a summer sports league. Research shows that teens who are involved in constructive, adult-supervised activities are less likely to use drugs.
6. **Reserve time for family:** Spend time together as a family regularly.

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www.recoveryhappens.com



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