

The NSDUH Report

June 4, 2004

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 2002 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

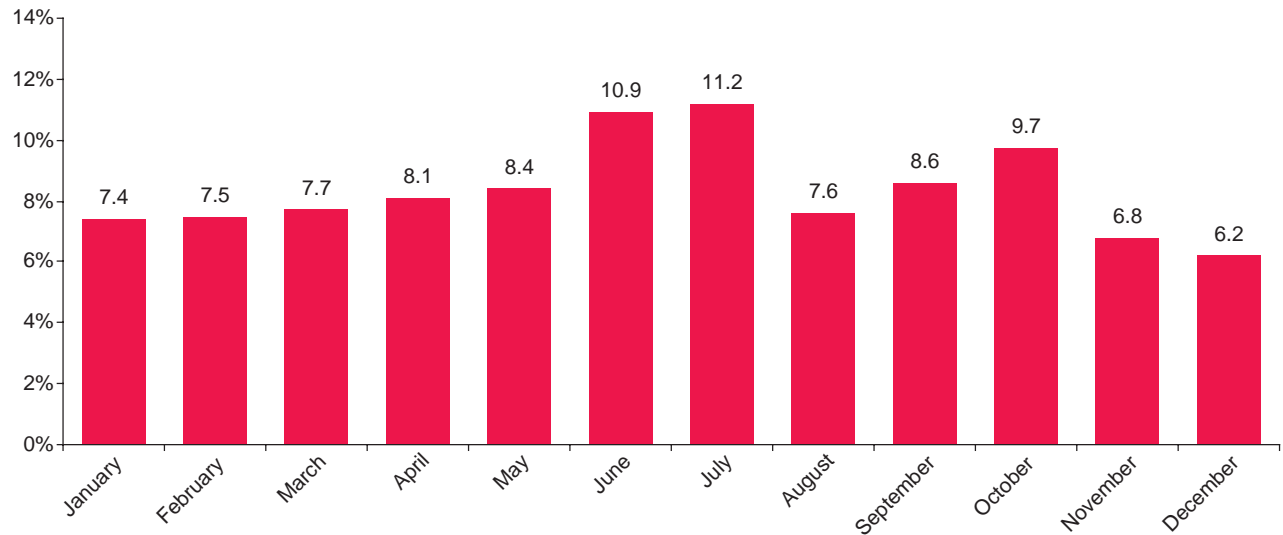


Figure 2. Percentages of Initiates among Persons Who Recently Initiated Cigarette Use When They Were Younger Than Age 18, by Month: 2002

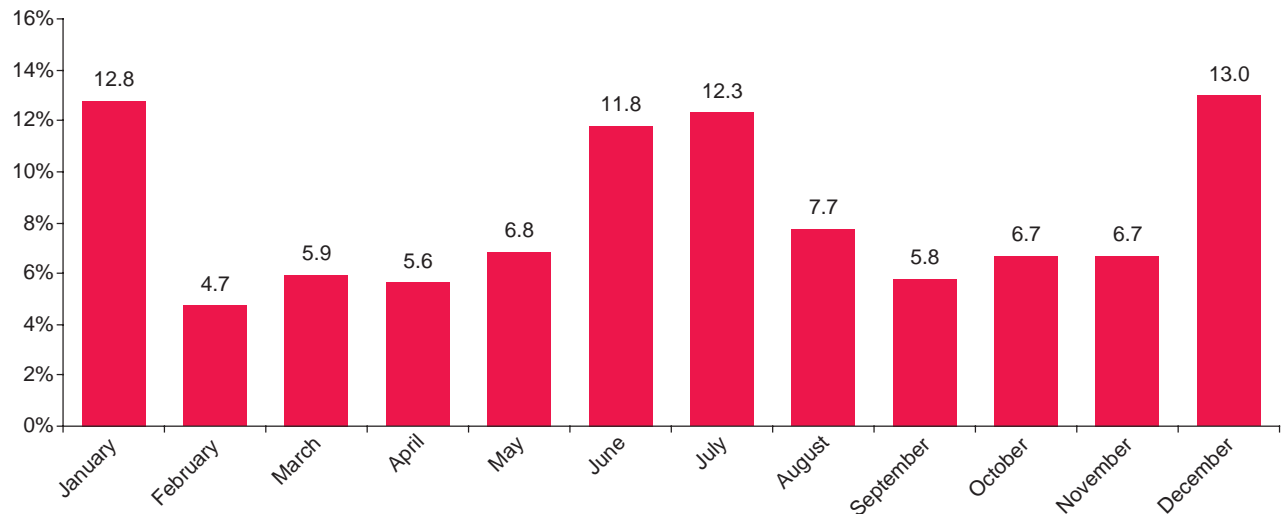


Initiation of Cigarette Use

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 ini-

tiates 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 3. Percentages of Initiates among Persons Who Recently Initiated Alcohol Use When They Were Younger Than Age 18, by Month: 2002



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.

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.samhsa.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.



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