

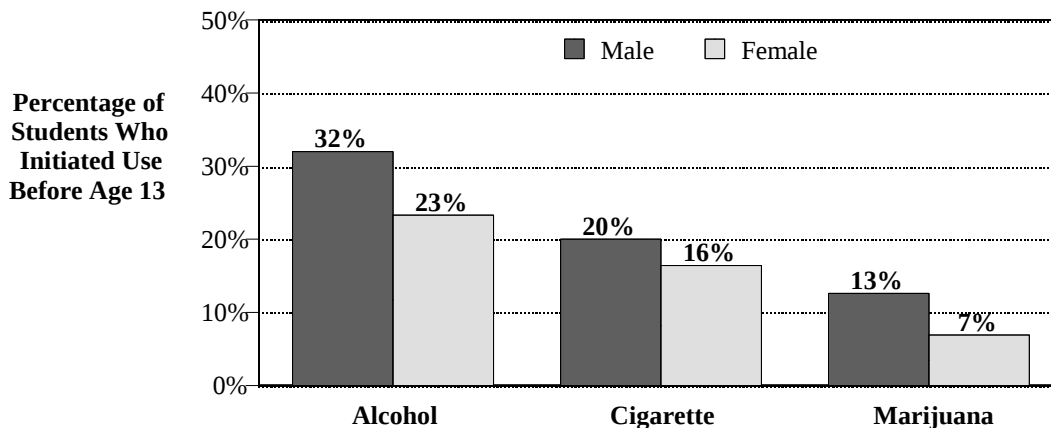
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

More than One-Fourth of U.S. High School Students Report Using Alcohol Before Age 13; Males More Likely than Females to Report Early Use

U.S. high school students were more likely to report early initiation of alcohol than cigarettes or marijuana, according to recent data from the 2003 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). More than one-fourth (28%) of high school students had drunk more than a few sips of alcohol before age 13, compared to 18% who smoked a whole cigarette and 10% who tried marijuana before that age (data not shown). Males were more likely than females to report early initiation of all substances. For example, nearly twice as many males (13%) than females (7%) reported trying marijuana before age 13. Previous studies have found a relationship between early drug initiation and drug use and dependence (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 12, Issue 8; Volume 9, Issue 38; and Volume 7, Issue 8; available online at www.cesar.umd.edu).

Percentage of U.S. High School Students Who Reported Initiating Alcohol, Cigarette, and Marijuana Use Before Age 13, by Gender, 2003



NOTE: The 2003 YRBS conducted a three-stage cluster sample of all public and private schools with students in at least one of grades 9-12 in the 50 states and the District of Columbia to produce a nationally representative sample of 15,214 students in grades 9-12.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2003," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 53(SS-2):1-96, 2004. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/ss/ss5302.pdf>.