Youth Aged 12-17 Now More Likely Than Any Other Age Group to Begin Daily Smoking

Youth aged 12-17 now have a higher likelihood of beginning daily smoking than any other age group, according to an analysis of data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). Historically, starting to smoke daily had been more likely to occur among 18-25 year olds. However, the rate of beginning daily smoking has gradually decreased among 18-25 year olds since the 1960s, while the rate among 12-17 year olds has recently been increasing. By 1996 (the most recent year for which data are available), there were an estimated 78 new daily smokers per 1,000 potential new users aged 12-17--a rate that surpasses those of all other age groups. The researchers estimate that more than 3,000 persons under age 18 now become daily smokers each day.

Age-Specific Rates of First Daily Cigarette Use
(per 1,000 Potential New Users), 1965-1996
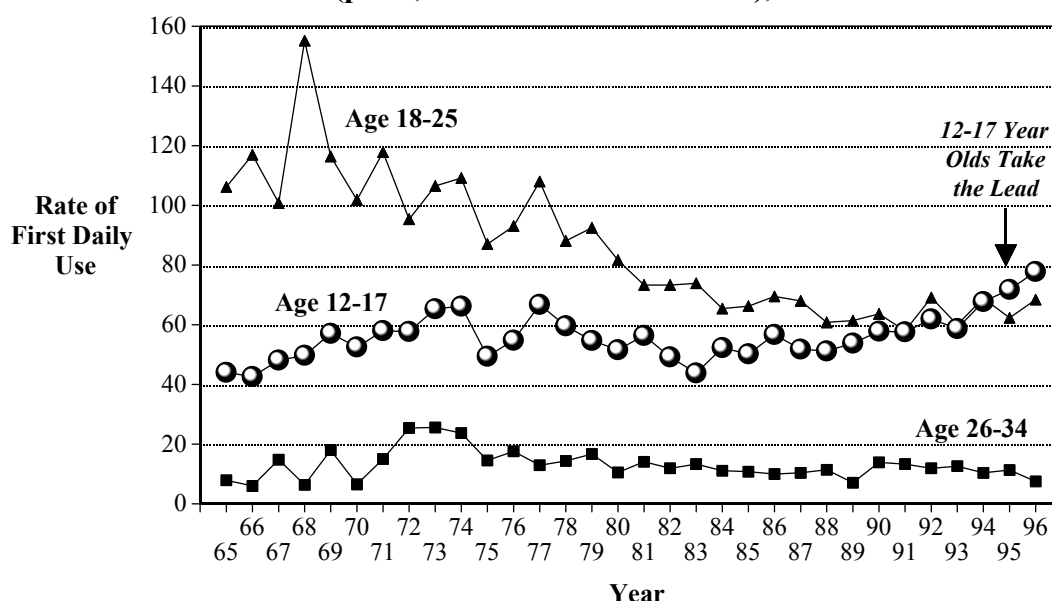
NOTE: These data were calculated from responses to the 1994-1997 NHSDA question, "How old were you when you first started smoking cigarettes every day?"

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Office of Applied Studies (OAS), "Preliminary Results from the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse," August 1998 and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Initiation of Cigarette Smoking--United States, 1965-1996," Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 47(39):837-840. The reports are available on-line at www.samhsa.gov and www.cdc.gov, respectively.

Juvenile SANTA Report Now Available from CESAR

Complimentary copies of the report, "Substance Abuse Need for Treatment among Arrestees (SANTA) in Maryland: Youth in the Juvenile Justice System" are now available. Contact CESAR at 301-403-8329 (phone), 301-403-8342 (fax), or cesar@cesar.umd.edu (e-mail).