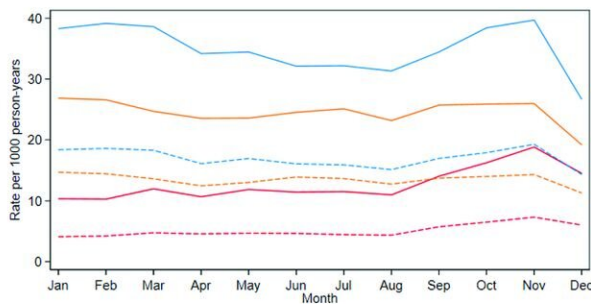


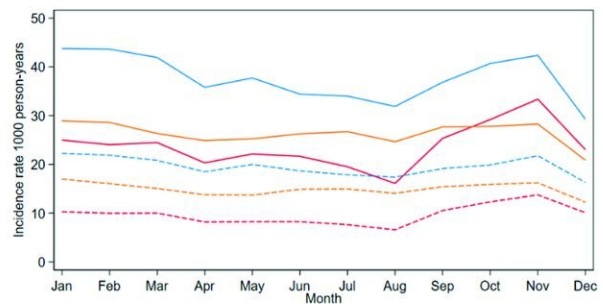
# Teenagers are most likely to seek help for anxiety or depression at the start of the school year, finds study

November 2 2023, by Charlotte Anscombe

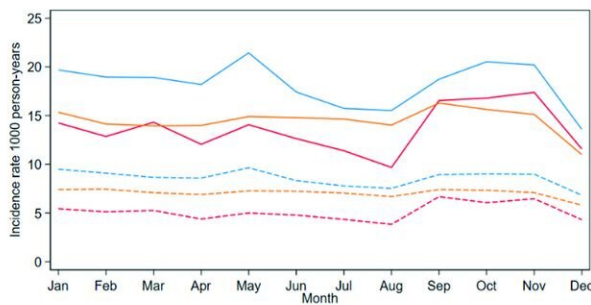
SSRIs



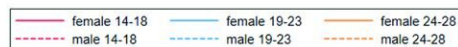
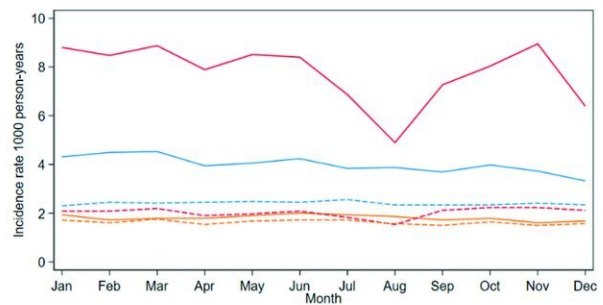
Depression



Anxiety



Self-harm



Incidence rates for SSRIs, depression, anxiety and self-harm per 1,000 person-years for each month, by age and sex, England, 2006–2019. SSRIs, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. Credit: *BMJ Mental Health* (2023). DOI: 10.1136/bmjment-2023-300855

Teenagers are more likely to visit their GP about depression and anxiety at the start of the school year in the autumn, according to new research led by experts from the University of Nottingham.

In recent years there has been an increase in [mental health issues](#) and antidepressant prescribing in children and [young people](#), however specialist mental health services in the U.K. are currently struggling to meet these increased demands.

Members of a Young Person's Advisory Group asked whether there are particular periods in the year when adolescents have more mental health issues.

A new study, [published](#) in *BMJ Mental Health*, looked at the anonymized electronic health records from GPs of 5 million people in England over a 13-year period, to determine whether there are seasonal patterns in antidepressant prescribing and consultations for mental health issues in adolescents and young adults.

The research was led by Dr. Ruth Jack from the Center for Academic Primary Care, Lifespan and Population Health in the School of Medicine at the University of Nottingham.

Information from QResearch about antidepressant prescribing and mental health events between 2006 and 2019 was used. People were grouped into males and females in three age groups: 14–18 years (adolescents), 19–23 years and 24–28 years.

The first record of [depression](#), [anxiety](#) and [self-harm](#), as well as the first antidepressant prescription if (it was a [selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor](#) (SSRI) ) was included. Antidepressant prescribing, depression and anxiety incidence rates were higher in autumn months for adolescents, but not for the older groups.

Recorded self-harm was lowest in August for adolescents, and relatively stable throughout the year for the other groups. The findings suggest that support for adolescents around mental health issues from GPs and others should be focused during the autumn.

"Our large study of over 5 million people in England shows that teenagers are more likely to visit their GPs for mental health issues in the autumn. Rates started to increase in September, and peaked in November. The start of a new school year can be a particularly difficult time and it's great that people are seeking help.

"By understanding the changing demand for services at different times of the year, GPs, teachers and others who support teenagers can make sure there are enough resources and help available when it's most needed," says Dr. Jack.

**More information:** Ruth H Jack et al, Seasonal trends in antidepressant prescribing, depression, anxiety and self-harm in adolescents and young adults: an open cohort study using English primary care data, *BMJ Mental Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjment-2023-300855](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjment-2023-300855)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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