



# Partnership Attitude Tracking Study

Parents with children 18 and younger

Winter 2004

## Our Mission

**The Partnership for a Drug-Free America® exists to reduce illicit drug use in America.**

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America® (The Partnership) is a coalition of communications professionals - from advertising, the media industry, public relations, research companies, actors guilds and production companies - dedicated to one mission: to help kids and teens reject substance abuse by influencing attitudes through persuasive information. Our mission unfolds primarily in the form of a research-based national advertising campaign, now in its 17th year, created by hundreds of volunteers who comprise the Partnership.

With a diversity of private sector funders supporting our work, the Partnership is beholden to no special interest, has no political agenda and supports no commercial concern. Our singular concern is reducing drug use among children.

## The Partnership for a Drug-Free America® Today

A pioneer in the field of consumer social marketing, The Partnership for a Drug-Free America® (The Partnership) is perhaps best known for its national advertising campaign. The Partnership's more than 16 years of experience and its national model have become the foundation on which similar and larger issue-oriented media campaigns have been built.

The Partnership is comprised of a small staff and hundreds of volunteers from the communications industry who create and disseminate

the organization's advertising. Advertising agencies create Partnership messages pro-bono; talent unions permit their members to work for free; production professionals bring Partnership messages to life; a network of advertising professionals distribute the group's work to national and local media; public relations firms lend services to various Partnership projects; and media companies donate valuable broadcast time and print space to deliver Partnership messages to millions of Americans.

The organization began in 1986 with seed money provided by the American Association of Advertising Agencies. Today, The Partnership receives major funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and support from more than 200 corporations and companies. The Partnership accepts no funding from manufacturers of alcohol and/or tobacco products. The Partnership's first ad appeared in March 1987; the campaign is now the largest public service media campaign in advertising history.

The Partnership is now participating in an unprecedented public/private marketing effort - the largest ever undertaken in the United States - that is redefining public service advertising. Backed by an annual appropriation and with bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has become the centerpiece of the country's efforts to reduce demand for illegal drugs. Rolled out nationally in July 1998, the effort is taking several directions, but at its core the campaign is tapping into the enormous power of mass media through The Partnership's national advertising campaign. The bulk of federal monies appropriated for this program were specifically earmarked for the one thing that eluded The Partnership's campaign in the early and mid-

1990s - consistent, targeted and optimal national media exposure for anti-drug advertising.

The Partnership, which receives no funding for its role in this campaign, is the primary provider of advertising to this federally-backed effort. The advertising industry - which is and has been the heart and soul of The Partnership - continues to create our messages for free.

The campaign is being coordinated by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in cooperation with The Partnership. Working with ONDCP and Congress, the campaign is commanding as much exposure as many leading commercial advertisers, and returning outstanding value to U.S. taxpayers. For every dollar the government spends on media exposure, media companies are asked to donate equivalent value through additional advertising exposure, storylines in programming or in other creative ways. To date, the matching component of the campaign has leveraged substantial added media exposure for the campaign.

In addition to its work on the national level, The Partnership has helped create state- and city-based versions of its national advertising campaign through its State/City Alliance Program. Working with state/city governments and locally-based drug prevention organizations, The Partnership provides the guidance, on-site technical assistance and creative materials necessary to shape a multimedia campaign tailored to local needs.

Ads created for The Partnership are subject to a rigorous approval process, substantiation of scientific claims by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and final approval by a committee comprised of some of the best creative directors in the advertising industry.

Creating effective anti-drug messages requires talent, passion and dedication. It also requires an understanding of the issue that is firmly grounded in research. The Partnership has the largest body of consumer-based attitudinal research on drugs in the nation. This research provides insights into the minds of young people and helps to ensure our messages will reach and resonate with their intended audiences. Sophisticated consumer research - along with the critically important counsel of our partners in health care, education, government, entertainment and community volunteer organizations across the country - ensure that Partnership ads continue to meet the highest standards of excellence.

(For more information about The Partnership and its programs, download The Partnership's latest annual report @ [www.drugfree.org/news-center](http://www.drugfree.org/news-center) or request a hard copy by mail from The Partnership's Public Affairs @ 212-922-1560.)

## **The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study**

The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) is The Partnership's unique contribution to the field of substance abuse prevention. An annual study that tracks the elaborate and complex attitudes consumers have about illegal drugs, this research allows us to understand what our target audiences think and feel about various drugs. This consumer-focused, consumer-based research is the largest drug-related attitudinal tracking study in the country. No other organization in the country - commercial, non-profit or governmental - has the rich insights into consumers and drugs that PATS has captured. The insights gleaned from this study help us develop advertising designed to unsell drugs to consumers.

Attitudes drive behavior. According to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future study, two critical drug-related attitudes - perception of risk (how risky consumers view a particular drug) and perception of social disapproval (consumer appeal and acceptance of a particular drug) - move in correlation with consumption. Generally speaking, as consumers come to view drug use as more risky and increasingly disapprove of drugs, consumption declines. Similarly, the opposite holds true.

Understanding the vast dimensions of perceptions of risk and social disapproval provides a look into the consumer mindset on drugs, and offers some insight into the challenges of effectively unselling drugs via media communication. It is no easy task. When it comes to drugs and drug taking, consumers define risk in a multitude of ways - physical, emotional, social, aspirational, etc. Each risk category is segmented by specific types of attitudes. The same holds true for social disapproval. Both major categories, and the elaborate array of subcategories and attitudinal measures, are influenced by a multitude of variables - age, gender, race, socio-economic background, geography, peers and other influencers.

PATS consists of two nationally projectable samples - a teen sample for students in grades 7 through 12, and a parent sample. The 2004 PATS is the 17th wave of this research conducted since 1986. Prior to 1993, these studies were conducted by interviews in public locations. Since the 1993 study, PATS has been conducted in schools and in homes. Beginning with the 1995 study, the in-home study was conducted with parents of children under the age of 19, and data from that sample are projected accordingly.

Since 1993 Roper Public Affairs and Media, a leading market research company, has conducted the studies for The Partnership. PATS is funded, in part, by an organizational grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In the 2004 PATS Parents study 1,205 parents nationwide were surveyed. The margin of error for the entire sample is +/-2.8 percent.

The data in this report were collected from February through April 2004. Parents in households with children under the age of 19 were questioned with an oversampling of households in African- and Hispanic-American populations. Parents completed self-administered questionnaires under the supervision of Roper Public Affairs and Media's interviewers. The anonymity of all respondents was maintained throughout the study.

For the in-home sample of parents, three samples were drawn independently - a national sample of 50 counties, an African-American sample of 25 counties, and a Hispanic sample of 25 counties. Within each county, four locations were drawn, with two interviews assigned per location.

## Questionnaire Development

Roper Public Affairs and Media developed the questionnaires for The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study in cooperation with The Partnership for a Drug-Free America.® Survey instruments were based on past PATS questionnaires, with modifications designed to cover new areas of interest, to improve the sensitivity of the existing questions and to produce data that could be directly compared with other existing research.

## Self-Report Data

PATS is based on self-reported data. Surveys based on self-reported data collection represent the dominant methodology used in the marketplace. Many academic/government institutions use self-reporting data when researching sensitive issues, i.e., Centers for Disease Control (Youth-At-Risk), University of Michigan (Monitoring the Future study), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (National Survey on Drug Use and Health).

Self-reported data have strengths and limitations. Researchers can take preparatory steps to ensure collection of self-reported data is done properly and produces the most accurate answers possible. For example, questionnaires are not signed, nor are they identified in any way that might make it possible to associate responses with the individuals who gave them.

## Parents and Prevention

“The home environment makes a difference in the health of American youth. When teens feel connected to their families and when parents are involved in their children’s lives, teens are protected. Teens are also protected when they do not have access to guns, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs at home.” (Resnick, 1997)

The Partnership’s research reinforces the importance of parental involvement in their teens lives.

## Parents’ Teaching is Key



Kids who learn about drug risks from parents are up to **half as likely to use**

**BUT TOO FEW KIDS BENEFIT FROM THE EDUCATION -**

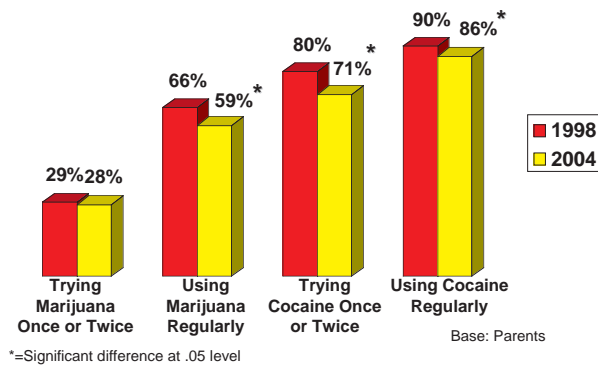
**ONLY 1/3 OF TEENS SAY THEY LEARN A LOT ABOUT THE RISKS OF DRUGS FROM THEIR PARENTS**

The data from the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) indicate that parents in 2004 are not doing all they can to ensure that they have healthy and protected children.

## Parental Perceptions of Risk in Drug Use

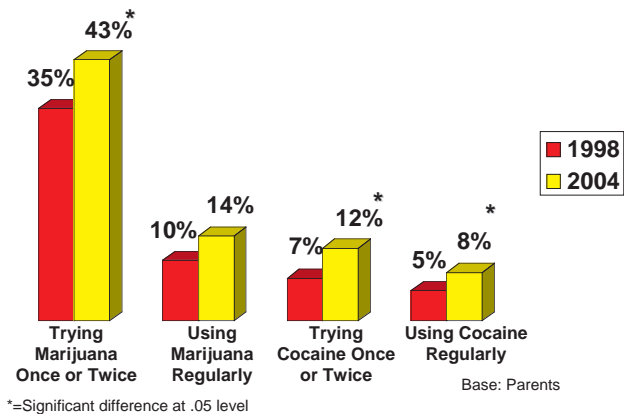
Compared to parents in 1998, today's parents are significantly less likely to see great risks in using marijuana regularly, trying cocaine once or twice, and using cocaine regularly.

### Significant Decreases in Perceptions of **Great Risk**



Corresponding to this is a significant increase in the perceptions of slight or no risk in trying marijuana once or twice, trying cocaine once or twice, and using cocaine regularly.

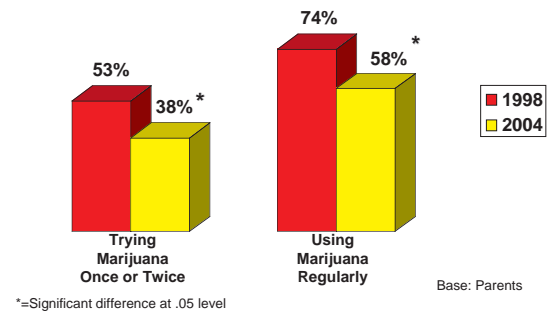
### Significant Increases in Perceptions of **Slight/No Risk**



## Perceptions of Child's Sense of Risk in Drug Use

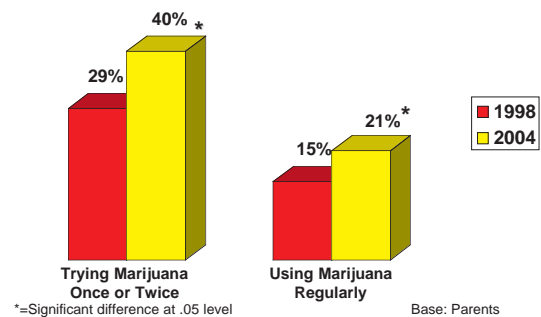
Versus 1998, parents in 2004 are significantly less likely to believe their child sees great risk in trying marijuana once or twice and using marijuana regularly.

### Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Marijuana Use



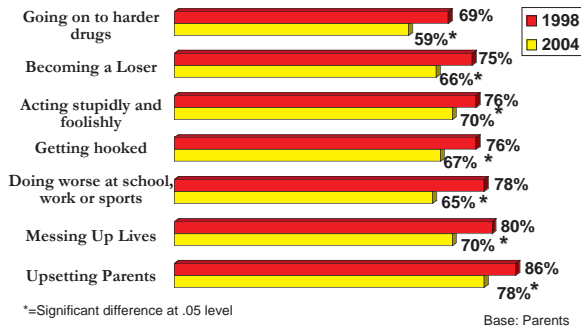
Corresponding to this is a significant increase in parents' perceptions that their child sees slight or no risk in trying marijuana once or twice and using marijuana regularly.

### Parents Believe Child Significantly More Likely to See **Slight/No Risk** in Marijuana Use



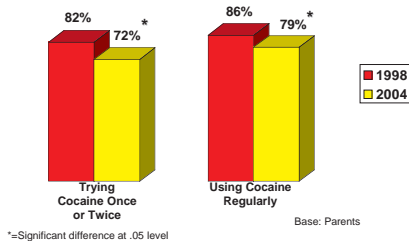
Today's parents are significantly less likely than those in 1998 to believe their child sees specific great risks in marijuana use – going on to harder drugs, becoming a loser, acting stupidly and foolishly, getting hooked, doing worse at school, work or sports, messing up their lives, or upsetting their parents.

Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Marijuana Use

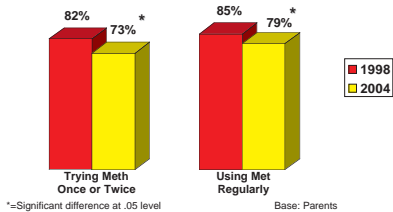


There is a similar finding in terms of perceived risk in trial and use of cocaine and methamphetamine, that is, parents today are significantly less likely than parents in 1998 to believe their child sees great risk in trying these drugs once or twice and using them regularly.

Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Cocaine Use

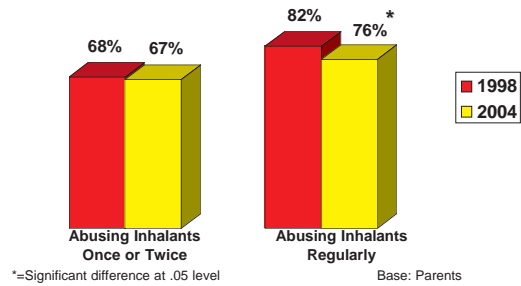


Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Meth Use

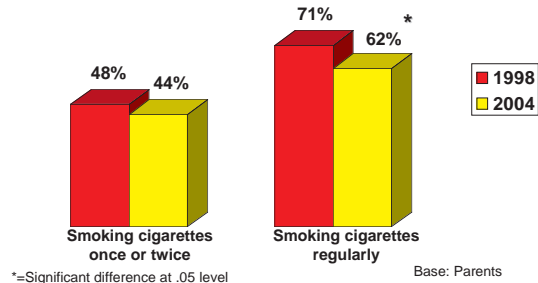


Parents are also significantly less likely to believe their child sees great risk in regular inhalant abuse and regular cigarette use.

Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Inhalant Abuse

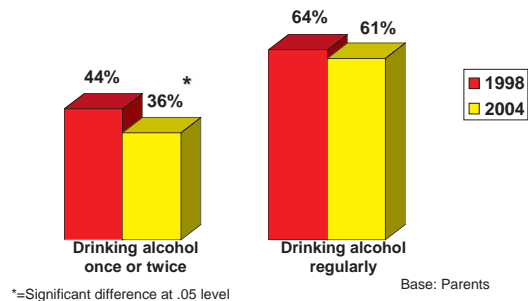


Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Cigarette Use



They are also significantly less likely to think their child sees great risk in drinking alcohol once or twice.

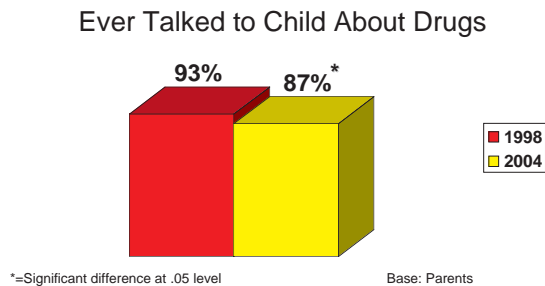
Parents Believe Child Significantly Less Likely to See **Great Risk** in Alcohol Use



These results could indicate that parents are becoming more aware of the vulnerability of their children to drugs or it could be a sign of weaker anti-drug attitudes on the part of parents. If it was the result of closing the gap between parents' perceptions and child's behavior, we would expect parents to be more involved in their child's drug prevention education. However, the data do not indicate that this is the case.

## Parental Attitudes

There are disturbing signs among parents. 2004 parents are significantly less likely to report talking to their child about drugs.



## Who are today's parents of teens?

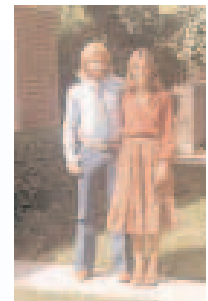
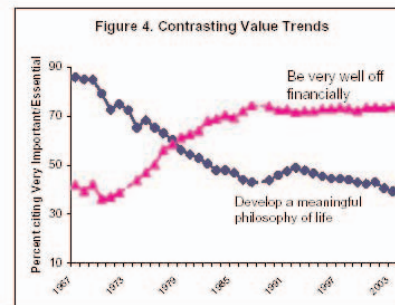
There are 23 million parents of teens and their average age is 42. The average parent was born in 1962.

They are in the tail-end of the "Boomers" (1946-64) and the forerunners of Gen-Xers (1964 -75).

They were only 7 years old when the definitive Boomer event, Woodstock, occurred.



They were high school seniors in 1979 and represent a changing cohort. Research indicates that 1979 was pivotal year for changing values with "develop a meaningful philosophy of life" declining and "be very well off financially" increasing.

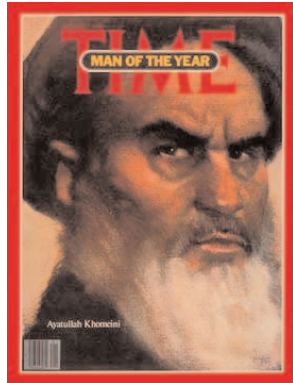


Source: UCLA Higher Education Research

## Teen Culture of Today's Parents of Teens

The 70s began with the first Earth Day and ended with the tragedy at Three Mile Island.

1979 the year that these parents were seniors in high school was the year with the highest record of marijuana use. According to *Monitoring the Future*, sixty (60) percent of seniors in 1979 reported that they had tried marijuana at least once in their lives. That is significantly higher than seniors' reported use (46 percent) in 2003.



1979 high school seniors' perception of risk in trying marijuana once or twice and their disapproval of people who smoke marijuana once or twice was also significantly below those of teens in 2003.

Majority of Teens in 1979 Smoked Marijuana

High School Seniors	In 1979 (%)	In 2003 (%)
Great Risk in trying marijuana once or twice	9	16
Disapprove of people (18+) trying marijuana once or twice	34	53
<b>Ever tried marijuana</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: Monitoring the Future

While the majority (56 percent) of today's parents of teens report that they have tried marijuana, only a small number (8 percent) claim to be current users of the drug.

## What's going on with Today's Parents of Teens

Seven out of ten parents of teens agree that parents should *forbid their kids to use drugs at anytime* and half would be upset if their child *even tried marijuana*.

Right answers so what's the problem?

There are barriers that hinder their ability to really educate their children – denial, hypocrisy over their own use, societal influences, pressures of job and family.

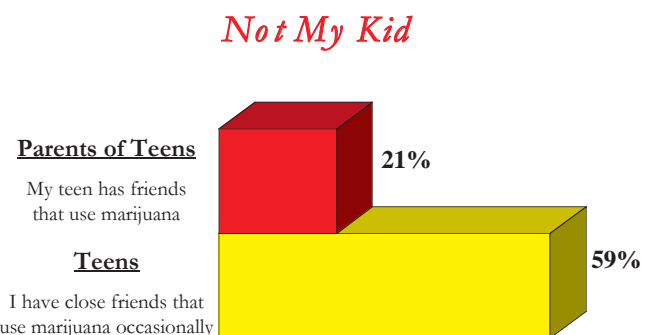
### Barriers to Effective Parenting and Prevention

#### NOT MY KID

“My child is completely independent and trustworthy so I don't have to worry.”

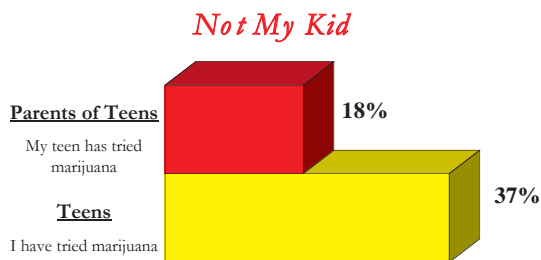
“I can't ever know for sure, but I really think I'd know if she/he were into drugs. I'd notice a change. I'd know if something is wrong.”\*

The result is that they underestimate teens' exposure to drugs through friends use.



\*Quotes are representative of responses heard in qualitative research.

They also underestimate teens' use.



This “disconnect” represents a serious barrier to prevention: *if parents don't perceive their children to be vulnerable to drug use they are less likely to take steps to prevent the activity.* How to overcome this barrier has been a major issue for the Partnership.

### **IT'S A RITE OF PASSAGE. I WANT TO BE HIS/HER FRIEND**

Many of today's parents declare that they don't want to be like their parents. They want to be friends with their teens.

*“I don't want to spy on them. Too aggressive parenting may have a negative effect.”*

*“If I am too tough on them they are going to rebel. I don't classify marijuana in the same category as other drugs.”*

### **FEELING OVERWHELMED BY DEMANDS OF PARENTHOOD: CAREER AND HOME RESPONSIBILITIES**

Many parents feel the stress of being pulled in many directions.

*“As a parent you can't be there 24/7 and there is only so much you can do.”*

*“There are too many other factors out there that could influence the kid. I try my best but you will never know what your child is really doing.”*

*“Because you can't prevent them from anything anymore. You can keep up with them but you only have so much control.”*

*“Because you can't have eyes on them at all times. I'm not sure what I do makes a difference.”*

### **LACK OF CONFIDENCE AND KNOWLEDGE**

The statement “*I wish I knew better how to talk to my child about drugs*” has both rational and emotional components.

Rational: *I wish I knew more about the new drugs that are out there. They seem to change everyday. How can I educate my teen if I don't know what the threats are?*

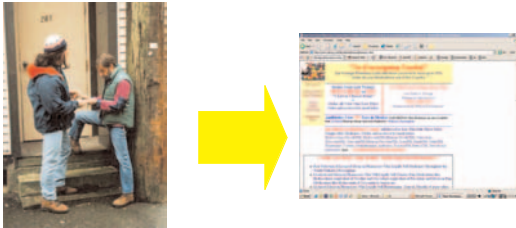
Emotional: *I wish I felt better and more confident that I could talk to my child about drugs and to know that it would make a difference.*

The landscape of drugs is evolving and growing from the more traditional “field grown” drugs like marijuana and cocaine to include a wide range of pharmaceutical (used without a doctor's prescription) and over-the-counter drugs.



In addition, the means of distributing drugs is also evolving and widening from the street corner drug dealer to the Internet.

### Changing Methods of Distribution



Hand commerce

E commerce

## HYPOCRACY

*How can I tell my kid to say no when I said yes?*

Many parents feel conflicted about their own past use. Should they acknowledge to their teen that they smoked marijuana when they were young? Should they lie about their past use?

## How can the Partnership and its communications help parents?

There is evidence that parents with heavy exposure to anti-drug messages are more likely than those with low exposure to be involved with educating their children about the risks of drugs.

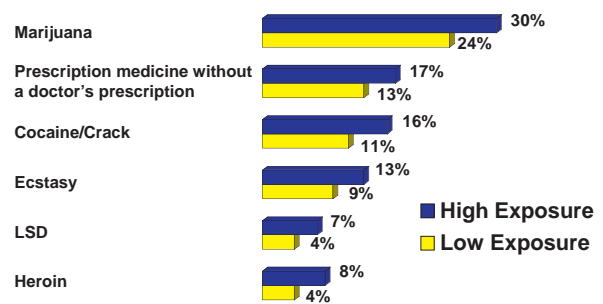
Heavy Exposure = See/hear anti-drug commercials/ads every day or more often, represents 28% of parents.

Low Exposure = See/hear anti-drug commercials/ads less than once a week, represents 43% of parents.

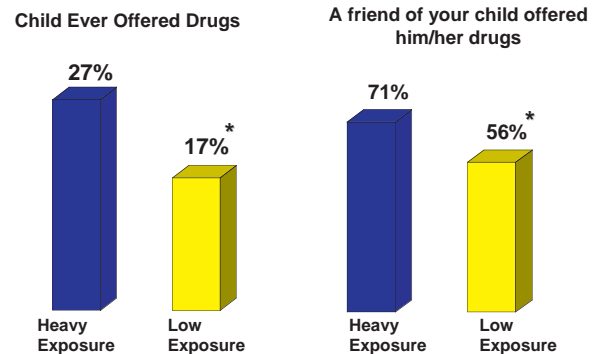
The recent 2004 PATS Parents data suggest that a major positive effect of heavy exposure to anti-drug public service messages is helping to “decrease the parent/child disconnect.”

Parents with heavier exposure are somewhat more likely than those with low exposure to be aware that drugs are available to teens.

### Very Easy to Get...

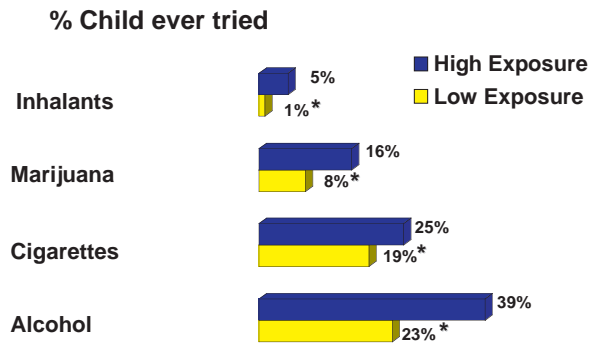


They are significantly more likely to recognize that their teen has been exposed to drugs through direct offers.



\* Significant difference at .05 level

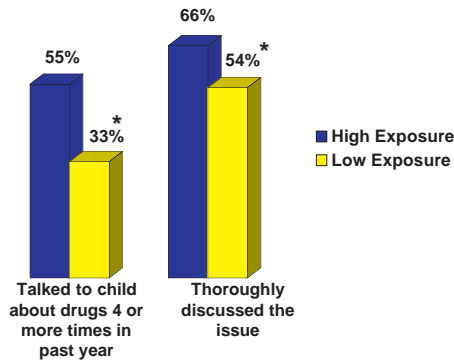
Higher exposed parents are also more likely to say “*it might be my kid.*”



\* Significant difference at .05 level

### Link Between Exposure and Parenting

The results from PATS parents indicate that not only does exposure correlate to decreasing the “not my kid” barrier but also correlates to greater parental involvement.



\* Significant difference at .05 level

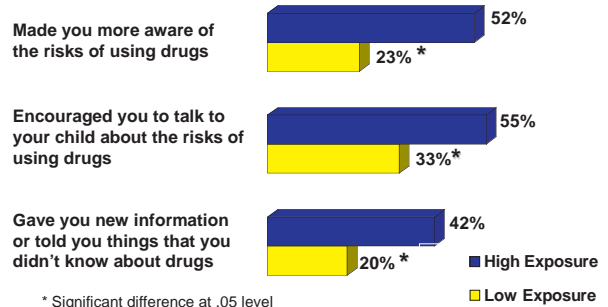
Heavily exposed parents are also more likely than low exposed parents to discuss topics like cigarettes, marijuana, Ecstasy “a lot” with their children.

% discussed topic “a lot”	Heavy Exposure	Low Exposure
Drugs in general	75	65*
Cigarettes	71	60*
Marijuana	67	51*
Drugs like heroin, cocaine, crack	46	35*
Ecstasy	36	23*

\* Significant difference at .05 level

Parents with heavy exposure are more likely than those with low exposure to credit the anti-drug commercials as having a positive effect on them, *made them more aware of the risks of using drugs, encouraged them to talk to their child about the risks of using drugs, and gave them new information or told them things that they didn’t know about drugs.*

### Agree strongly that anti-drug commercials



\* Significant difference at .05 level

### References:

Resnick, M.D. et al. *Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health.* Journal of the American Medical Association (1997), monograph.

## Interpretation

PATS research indicates that today's parents have more lenient attitudes toward adolescent alcohol and drug use than did parents just six years ago. There are a number of potential explanations for this occurrence.

Today's parents grew up in a peer accepted marijuana culture. In fact, they are more likely to have smoked marijuana when they were teens than their own teen is today. The result is that some parents feel so conflicted about their own past use that it becomes a stumbling block to prevention education.

Many parents express the wish to not be like their parents. They want a more open relationship with their teens - often wanting to be their friends.

Parents also feel that today's environment makes it very difficult for them to be able to effectively monitor their teens' activities. Many parents feel the stress of being pulled in many directions of career and home responsibilities. They also feel that teen pop culture works against them and makes it harder for them to effectively parent.

Parents also indicate that they lack confidence and knowledge. Part of the reason for this is that the landscape of drugs is evolving from the traditional "grown in the field drugs" to a wide range of pharmaceutical and over-the-counter drug abuse. In addition, the means of distributing drugs is also evolving and widening from the street corner drug dealer to the Internet.

The Partnership has the potential to be an aide to today's parents. Research indicates that parents with heavy exposure to anti-drug media messages are more likely than those with low exposure to be involved with educating their children about the risks of drugs.