

*Released: February 26, 2009*

## *Key Findings of the 2008 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study on Teen Drug Abuse*

---

The Partnership's national survey shows the first major increase in the number of teens revealing 'learning a lot' about the risks of drugs from their parents, however teens continue to report that their parents are not discussing the dangers of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse. The survey also highlights a significant drop in methamphetamine and marijuana use over the past several years.

### **Key Findings:**

The number of teens who reported "**learning a lot**" about the risks of drugs from their parents has increased.

- *37 percent of teens reported learning a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents, a significant 16 percent increase from the previous year and the first major increase since the inception of the study;*

PATS showed a continued decline in several drugs of abuse, especially methamphetamine (meth) and marijuana over the past several years.

- *Teen meth use has experienced a steep three-year drop, with past-month use down to 3 percent – a significant 25 percent decline versus 2005.*
  - *Teen attitudes about meth use corroborate this drop – 83 percent of teens see great risk in using meth regularly, about 85 percent see great risk in "getting hooked on meth" and more than half of teens, (54 percent) see trying meth once or twice as very risky.*
- *Marijuana use has been declining for a decade although it remains the most widely abused drug among teens. Past-year use is down 24 percent since 1998, and past-month use is down a full 30 percent (from 23 percent down to 16 percent) over the same time period.*
  - *Teen attitudes also reflect growing social disapproval of the drug, with 35 percent of teens agreeing strongly they "don't want to hang around with anyone who uses marijuana," up from 28 percent a decade ago.*

PATS determined there is a correlation between increased teen exposure to anti-drug messages on television and a decreased likelihood of trying drugs over the past ten years.

- *Four out of ten teens (41 percent) agreed that anti-drug messages made them more aware of the risks of using drugs and less likely to try drugs (42 percent).*

Despite the increase in parent-teen discussions about the risks of drugs, parents are still not discussing the risks of abusing prescription and over-the-counter medicines.

- *Only 24 percent of teens report that their parents talked with them about the dangers of abusing prescription (Rx) or over-the-counter (OTC) drugs or use of medications outside of a doctor's supervision; and*
- *Just 18 percent of teens say their parents discuss the risks of abusing OTC cough medicine.*

The abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medicines among teens continues to be a troubling trend.

- *1 in 5 teens (19 percent) or 4.7 million reports abusing a prescription medication at least once in their lives;*
- *1 in 10 teens (10 percent) or 2.5 million teens reports having abused a prescription pain reliever in the past year;*
- *About 7 percent or 1.7 million teens have abused OTC cough medicine in the past year, however the abuse of OTC cough medicine have improved with the number of teens who agree that "taking cough medicine to get high is risky" significantly increased from 45 percent in 2007 to 48 percent last year;*
- *41 percent of teens mistakenly believe that abuse of medicines is less dangerous than abuse of illegal street drugs; and*
- *61 percent of teens report prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs, up significantly from 56 percent in 2005.*

The survey found teens see slightly less risk in steroid and inhalant use – as attitudes towards inhalant and steroid abuse weaken, use is more likely to increase.

- *This year fewer teens (65 percent) agreed strongly that teens who use steroids for athletic performance or physical appearance are putting their health at risk, down from 69 percent last year; and*
- *Teen inhalant use remains steady at 11 percent for past year use, yet only 66 percent of teens report that "sniffing or huffing things to get high can kill you."*

Today's generation of teens are open to discussing substance abuse and have discouraged their friend from using drugs

- *There is a statistically significant increase in the number of teens who reported trying to talk a friend out of using drugs (41 percent in 2008); and*
- *40 percent of teens report being aware that they have a family member with a drug or alcohol problem.*