

PATS KEY FINDINGS: Released April 6, 2011

2010 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, sponsored by MetLife Foundation

The 22nd annual Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), sponsored by MetLife Foundation, shows that teen drug and alcohol use is headed in the wrong direction, with marked increases in teen use of marijuana and Ecstasy over the past three years. The study confirms a disturbing trend that has emerged among American teens since 2008 and highlights that underage drinking has become more normalized among adolescents.

PATS 2010 – Teen Key Findings:

According to the three-year trend confirmed in this year's 2010 PATS data:

- *There was a significant 67 percent increase in the number of teens who reported using Ecstasy in the past year (from 6 percent in 2008 to 10 percent in 2010).*
- *Past-year marijuana use among teens increased by a disturbing 22 percent (from 32 percent in 2008 to 39 percent in 2010).*

The new data underscore alarming patterns in early adolescent alcohol use and found that teens view drinking alcohol – even heavy drinking – as less risky than using other substances:

- *Of those teens who reported alcohol use, a majority (62 percent) said they had their first full alcoholic drink by age 15, not including sipping or tasting alcohol.*
- *Of those teens who reported alcohol use, one in four (25 percent), said they drank a full alcoholic drink for the first time **by age 12 or younger**.*
- *Among teens who reported drinking alcohol, the average age of first alcohol use was 14.*

Weak perceptions of risk and a perceived “normalization” of underage drinking underlie the PATS survey data on adolescent alcohol use:

- *Almost half of teens (45 percent) reported they do not see a “great risk” in heavy daily drinking.*
- *Only 31 percent of teens strongly disapprove of teens and peers their age getting drunk.*
- *A majority of teens, seven out of 10 (73 percent), report having friends who drink alcohol at least once a week.*
- *It's important to note that teens who begin drinking before the age of 15 are much more likely than other teens to develop problems with alcohol as adults.¹*

¹ DeWit, J. Adlaf, E. et al. (2000) Age at First Alcohol Use: A Risk Factor for the Development of Alcohol Disorders, Am J Psychiatry 157:745-750.

PATS 2010 – Parent Key Findings:

The PATS survey also found that parents feel unprepared to respond to underage drinking by their children:

- *Almost a third of parents (28 percent) feel “there is very little parents can do to prevent their kids from trying alcohol.”*
- *One in three teens (32 percent) thinks their parents would be ok if they drank beer once in a while.*
- *Yet only one in ten parents agrees with teens drinking beer at a party.*

PATS 2010 – Other Trends in Teen Smoking and Drug Use:

According to the PATS survey, teen abuse of prescription (Rx) medicines continues to be an area of major concern, with abuse rates holding steady and at levels that should be worrisome to parents:

- *The data found one in four teens (25 percent) reported taking a prescription drug not prescribed to them by a doctor at least once in their lives.*
- *More than one in five teens (23 percent) used a prescription pain reliever not prescribed to them by a doctor.*
- *Teen past-year use of over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine has remained at roughly one in ten (11 percent).*
- *Past-year teen inhalant abuse remains at 10 percent, yet only 60 percent of teens strongly agree that “sniffing or huffing things to get high can kill you,” significantly less than the 70 percent of teens who said the same in 2008.*
 - *Inhalant abuse merits careful monitoring – as teen attitudes towards inhalant abuse weaken, abuse is more likely to increase.*
- *Teen smoking rates have remained stable with 27 percent of teens reporting smoking cigarettes in the past month.*
- *Among teens, past-year methamphetamine use is holding at 5 percent and cocaine/crack is at 9 percent.*
- *Teen use of heroin use remains low at 4 percent for lifetime use.*

#
