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***National Study Confirms Teen Drug Use Trending in Wrong Direction:
Marijuana, Ecstasy Use Up, Teen Abuse of Rx/OTC Drugs Holds Steady***

62 Percent of Teens Who Reported Alcohol Use Had First Drink by Age 15

New York, NY – April 6, 2011 – Following a decade of steady declines, a new national study released today by [The Partnership at Drugfree.org](http://ThePartnershipatDrugfree.org) and [MetLife Foundation](http://MetLifeFoundation.org) indicates 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 22nd annual Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), sponsored by MetLife Foundation, affirms a disturbing trend that has emerged among American teens since 2008 and highlights that as underage drinking becomes more normalized among adolescents, parents feel unable to respond to the negative shifts in teen drug and alcohol use.

According to the three-year trend confirmed in this year's 2010 PATS data, there was a 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). Similarly, past-year marijuana use among teens increased 22 percent (from 32 percent in 2008 to 39 percent in 2010).

Teen abuse of prescription (Rx) medicines, meanwhile, 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, and 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).

"Prescription drug abuse has become entrenched in communities across Ohio. In recent years, we've seen a dramatic surge in the intentional misuse of these medications, especially among young people," said Orman Hall, director of the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services – the parent organization for The Partnership's activities in Ohio. "There's a perception that prescription drugs are safe since they are prescribed by a doctor not some shady dealer on a street corner. The reality is prescription painkillers are highly addictive and can have deadly consequences when taken to get high. The PATS findings underscore the importance of educating youth and families about the risks involved."

Youth Drinking More Normalized: Majority of Teens Surveyed Report First Alcohol Drink by Age 15

The new data also highlight 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.

“As teen drug and alcohol use take a turn for the worse, a heavier burden is placed squarely on the shoulders of parents – who need to take an active role in preventing substance abuse in their families, take action if they suspect their child is using and [get immediate help for a child](#) who has developed a problem with drugs or drinking,” said Director Hall.

Teens See Little Risk in Heavy Drinking; Parents Feel They Can’t Stop Risky Behavior

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.

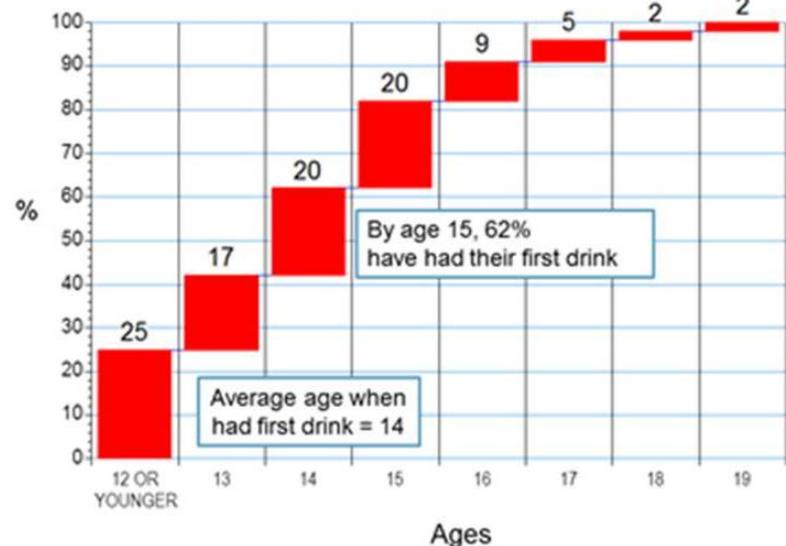
While the number one reason teens reported using alcohol is that they think “it’s fun to drink” (60 percent), a significant number of teens reported using alcohol to deal with stress.

- One in three (32 percent) teens said they drank “to forget their troubles.”
- Almost one in four (24 percent) said they used alcohol to help them “deal with problems at home.”
- One in five (20 percent) teens reported they drank to “deal with the pressures and stress of school.”

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

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

Age at Which Teens Who Reported Drinking Had First Alcoholic Drink



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.

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.

“These findings should serve as a call to action for parents,” said Dennis White, President and CEO of MetLife Foundation. “We encourage parents and caregivers to pay attention to the warning signs of teen drinking and other drug use, in order to intervene early and effectively. If you suspect a problem, [do not wait to get help](#) for a child who is struggling with substance abuse or addiction.”

[Time To Get Help](#): Resource to Help Parents Intervene and Get Treatment for Addiction in Their Families

For parents who suspect or know their child is using drugs or alcohol, The Partnership at Drugfree.org created [Time To Get Help](#), a first-of-its-kind website and online community to provide parents of teens and young adults with lifesaving information when families are in crisis and facing a child’s addiction.

With teen drug and alcohol use on the rise, the likelihood that more young people will need treatment increases. Of the nine million American teens and young adults needing treatment, two million are between the ages of 12-17, and ninety percent of those are not getting the help they need.²

[Time To Get Help](#) offers parents and caregivers comprehensive insight into adolescent alcohol and drug abuse, dependence and addiction; support from top experts and other parents who have been there; and treatment options for their child and family.

No Improvement in Teen Abuse of Inhalants, Cigarettes, Meth, Cocaine/Crack, Heroin

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.

For more information, or to view the full PATS report, please visit [drugfree.org](#).

PATS Methodology

The 22nd annual national study of 2,544 teens in grades 9-12 and 831 parents is nationally projectable with a +/- 3.6 percent margin of error for the teen sample and +/- 3.4 percent for the parent sample. Conducted for The Partnership at Drugfree.org and MetLife Foundation by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications the 2010 PATS teen survey was administered in private, public and parochial schools, while the parent survey was conducted through in-home interviews by deKadt Marketing and Research, Inc.

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About The Partnership at Drugfree.org

The Partnership at [Drugfree.org](#) is a nonprofit organization that helps parents prevent, intervene in and find treatment for drug and alcohol use by their children. Bringing together renowned scientists, parent experts and communications professionals, this public health nonprofit translates current research on teen behavior, parenting, addiction and treatment into easy to understand resources at [drugfree.org](#). The organization also reaches families through its [community education programs](#) which focus on local drug and alcohol issues of concern for parents, youth and the Hispanic community. The Partnership at Drugfree.org depends on donations from individuals, corporations, foundations and the public sector and is thankful to SAG/AFTRA and the advertising and media industries for their ongoing generosity.

² 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (SAMHSA)

