



# **The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS)**

Teens 2008 Report

Released  
February 26, 2009

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## **MISSION**

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America is a nonprofit organization that unites parents, renowned scientists and communications professionals to help families raise healthy children. Best known for its research-based national public education programs, the Partnership motivates and equips parents to prevent their children from using drugs and alcohol, and to find help and treatment for family and friends in trouble.

## **THE PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE AMERICA® TODAY**

Now in its 21st year, the Partnership helps parents and caregivers effectively address drug and alcohol abuse with their children. The centerpiece of this effort is an online resource center at [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org), featuring interactive tools that translate the latest science and research on teen behavior, addiction and treatment into easy to understand tips and tools. At [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org), parents can connect with each other, tap into expert advice for children of all ages, and find the support they want and need to raise healthy families.

Adding depth to its work on the national level, the Partnership's alliance and affiliate program supports the organization's mission at the local level. Working with state and city governments and local drug prevention organizations, the Partnership provides guidance, on-site technical assistance and creative materials necessary to shape anti-substance abuse education campaigns tailored to the needs and activities of any state or city. To carry out its mission, the Partnership depends on donations and support from individuals, corporations, foundations and the government, while its media campaigns rely on donated media time and space. For more information on the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and its programs, visit the Partnership's Web site at [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org).

The Partnership is one of only 13 organizations worldwide to receive the prestigious Discovery Health Medical Honors award for extraordinary contributions to world health. The Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Charity Seal Program officially certified the Partnership for complying with their 20 rigorous charity standards. And, The New York Times said the Partnership is, "one of the most effective drug-prevention organizations in the U.S."

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## **THE PARTNERSHIP ATTITUDE TRACKING STUDY**

The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) is the Partnership's unique research contribution to the field of substance abuse prevention. An annual study that tracks the elaborate and complex attitudes people have about illegal drugs, PATS 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, nonprofit or governmental – has the rich insights into consumers and drug use that PATS has captured. The insights gleaned from this study help us develop advertising designed to “unsell” drugs to America's youth.

PATS consists of two nationally projectable samples – a teen sample for students in grades 7 through 12, and a parent sample. The 2008 PATS is the 20th wave of this research conducted since 1987. 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.

Since 1993 The Roper Public Affairs Division of GfK Custom Research North America, a leading market research company has conducted the studies for the Partnership's teen survey. In the 2008 PATS teens' study, 6,518 adolescents nationwide were surveyed. The margin of error for the sample is +/-1.3 percent.

Significant differences on charts and graphs in this report are indicated only for 2008 results versus 1998 and 2007, unless otherwise noted. Significant differences versus 2007 are noted with an asterisk (\*) and versus 1998 with a plus sign (+). The 1998 survey represents a benchmark for monitoring the Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT**

The Roper Public Affairs Division of GfK Custom Research North America developed the questionnaire for the Partnership Teen Attitude Tracking Study in cooperation with the Partnership for a Drug-Free America®.

## **SELF-REPORTED DATA**

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

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2008 PATS revealed for the first time a major increase in the number of teens reporting “learning a lot” about the risks of drugs from their parents. This progress coincides with data showing remarkable, sustained declines in several drugs of abuse – notably methamphetamine and marijuana.

Marijuana: In 2008 the positive trends in attitudes and behavior related to marijuana held steady with no further declines; however, results show that marijuana trial and past year use were holding at the lowest point since 1993.

Methamphetamine: The positive trends in attitudes and use continued in 2008 with accelerated rates versus 2005.

Steroids: While there has been little overall change in the number of teens who see “great risk” in abusing steroids, fewer teens this year agreed strongly that teens who use steroids are putting their health at risk.

Ecstasy: Teen perception of great risk in ecstasy trial and use remained stable. Measures of ecstasy use in 2008 remained stable and significantly below those in 2001.

Inhalants: Past year abuse of inhalants remained steady but a third did not believe that inhalant abuse can result in death. This is dangerous because one-time use can be fatal.

Other Drugs: Lifetime use of LSD, cocaine/crack, ketamine, heroin, and GHB remained stable in 2008.

Alcohol and Cigarettes: Over the last decade there has been a significant decrease in alcohol and cigarette use among teens. Binge drinking also significantly decreased in 2008 versus 2007.

Prescription Drug Abuse: Abuse of prescription drugs remains less common than marijuana but more prevalent than other drugs with the exception of inhalant abuse. In 2008 4.7 million teens reported they had abused a prescription drug at some time in their lives. The dangers of abusing prescription drugs were not well assessed by many teens. Family medicine cabinets were cited as the main source for obtaining prescription drugs. The research suggests that prescription drug abuse is an additive not a replacement behavior.

Over-the-Counter Medicine Abuse: The research indicated that teens were becoming more aware of the risks in cough medicine abuse. Actual reported abuse remained at the same level as 2007.

# THE PARTNERSHIP ATTITUDE TRACKING STUDY: TRENDS IN ADOLESCENT DRUG USE

## MARIJUANA

In 2008 the positive trends in attitudes and behavior related to marijuana among 7th through 12th grade students held steady. Perceptions of risk in use and social disapproval of peer use maintained the significant increases versus 1998. Teens were significantly more likely in 2008 than in 1998 to perceive great risk in trying marijuana once or twice (20 percent versus 16 percent). They were also significantly more likely to disapprove of marijuana use in 2008 than in 1998; 35 percent agreed strongly in 2008 that they don't want to hang around anyone who uses marijuana compared to 28 percent in 1998. (Chart 1)

Chart 1

### Marijuana

%	1998	2007	2008
Great risk of trying marijuana once or twice	16	22	20+
Agree strongly I don't want to hang around anyone who uses marijuana	28	35	35+

+ = significant at .05 level vs. 1998

Teens in 2008 were significantly more likely than teens in 1998 to see greater specific risks in marijuana use; personal risks of upsetting their parents (64 percent in 1998, 68 percent in 2008) and losing their friends (47 percent in 1998 compared to 54 percent in 2008). They were also more likely to perceive risks to their futures: 64 percent in 2008 seeing great risk in dropping out of school versus 58 percent in 1998; 69 percent in 2008 seeing great risk in messing up their lives compared to 64 percent in 1998. (Chart 2)

Chart 2

### Marijuana

% Great Risk	1998	2007	2008
Upsetting parents	64	65	68+
Losing their friends	47	53	54+
Dropping out of school	58	63	64+
Messing up their lives	64	68	69+

+ = significant at .05 level vs. 1998

# THE PARTNERSHIP ATTITUDE TRACKING STUDY: TRENDS IN ADOLESCENT DRUG USE (continued)

## MARIJUANA

In addition, teens in 2008 were more aware of the personal risks in using marijuana: 61 percent in 2008 perceived a great risk in acting stupidly and foolishly versus 51 percent in 1998; 54 percent in 2008 saw a great risk in becoming lazy as a result of marijuana use versus 46 percent in 1998; 53 percent in 2008 reported a great risk in getting depressed compared to 44 percent in 1998. (Chart 3)

Chart 3

### Marijuana

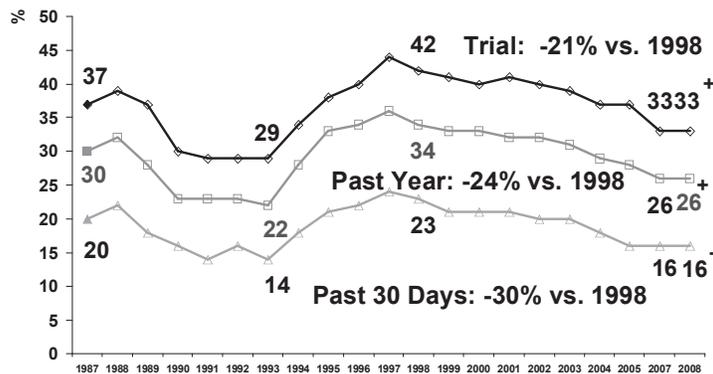
% Great Risk	1998	2007	2008
Acting stupidly and foolishly	51	57	61+*
Becoming lazy	46	52	54+
Getting depressed	44	51	53+

+ = significant at .05 level vs. 1998 \*significant at .05 level vs. 2007

Research has confirmed that attitudes of risk and social disapproval are pivotal to affecting adolescent substance abuse. As perceptions of risk and social disapproval of a drug increase, there is a corresponding decrease in the use of it. Results from the 2008 PATS teens show that marijuana trial and past year use were holding at the lowest point since 1993. Lifetime trial in 2008 was down 21 percent versus 1998; past year use down 24 percent compared to 1998, and past month use down 30 percent compared to 1998. (Chart 4)

Chart 4

### Marijuana Trial and Past Year Use: Holding at Lowest Point Since 1993

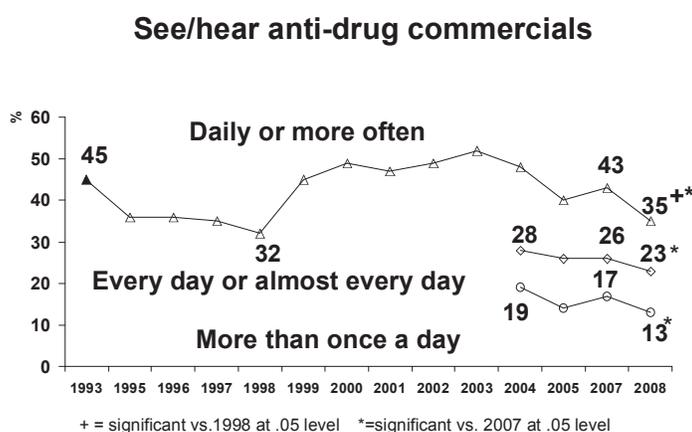


+ significant vs. 1998 at .05 level

## NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

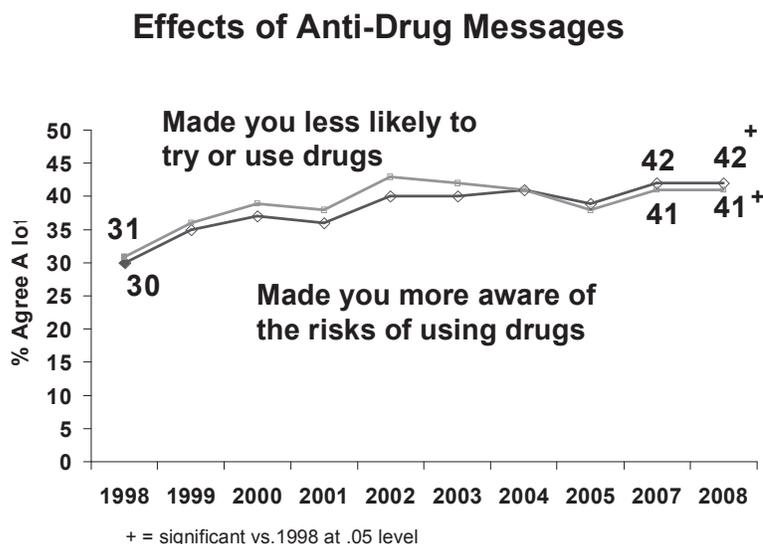
The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign began in July 1998 and primarily focused on reducing adolescent marijuana use. Data from the 1998 PATS survey were collected prior to the launch of the Campaign and serve as a benchmark for monitoring its effect. Consistent with the reduced support of the media campaign, teen awareness of the commercials significantly decreased in 2008 versus 2007. In 2008 35 percent of teens reported frequent exposure (measured as seeing or hearing anti-drug advertising daily or more often) to the ads compared to 43 percent in 2007. (Chart 5)

Chart 5



Overall, teens were more likely to rate the anti-drug messages as efficacious in 2008 than in 1998 – i.e. that the ads made them more aware of the risks of drugs and made them less likely to try or use drugs. (Chart 6)

Chart 6

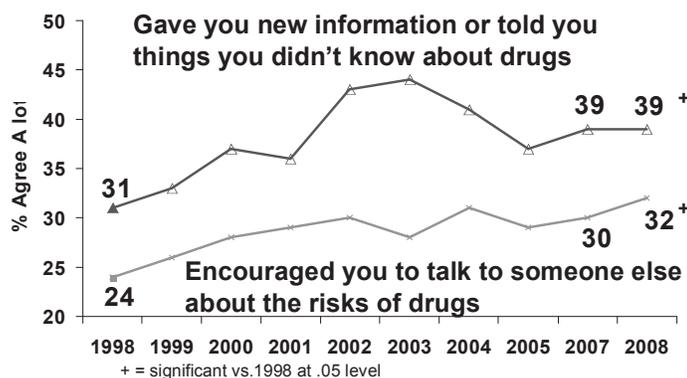


## NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN (continued)

Compared to 1998 significantly more teens said these commercials had given them new information or told them things they didn't know and had encouraged them to talk with someone about the risks of using drugs. (Chart 7)

Chart 7

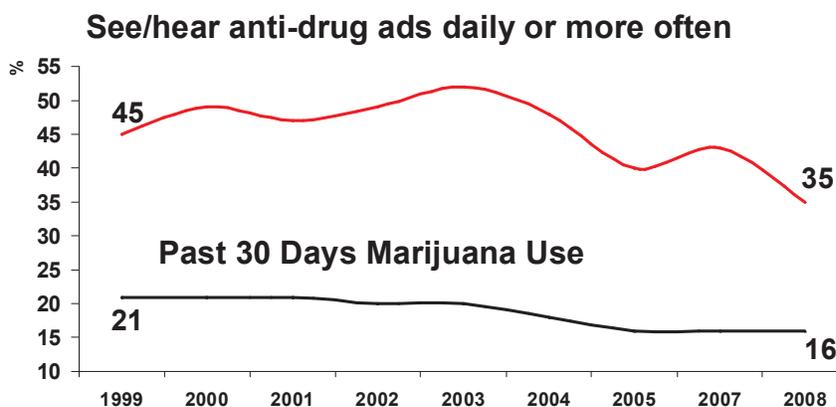
### Effects of Anti-Drug Messages



The relationship between reported exposure to the anti-drug ads and marijuana use between 1999 and 2008 is quite strong (negative .75 correlation). As exposure increases, past 30 day marijuana use decreases. (Chart 8)

Chart 8

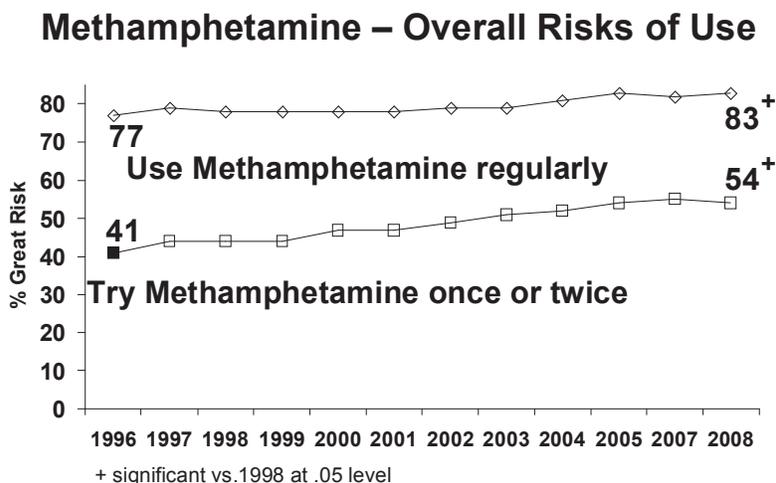
### Marijuana Use – Exposure to Anti-Drug Ads



## METHAMPHETAMINE

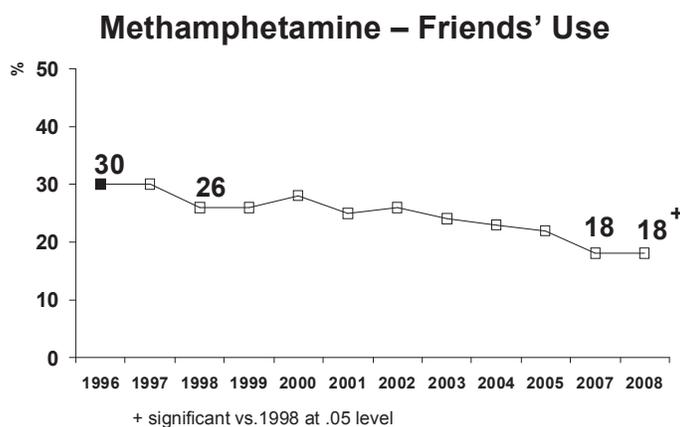
Teen perceptions of risk in trying methamphetamine or using it regularly have steadily increased over the last several years and were significantly higher in 2008 than in 1998: 54 percent of teens reported a great risk in trying methamphetamine once or twice compared to 41 percent in 1998 and 83 percent saw great risk in using methamphetamine regularly versus 77 percent in 1998. (Chart 9)

Chart 9



Teens reporting friends' use of methamphetamine was significantly lower in 2008 (18 percent) than in 1998 (26 percent). (Chart 10)

Chart 10

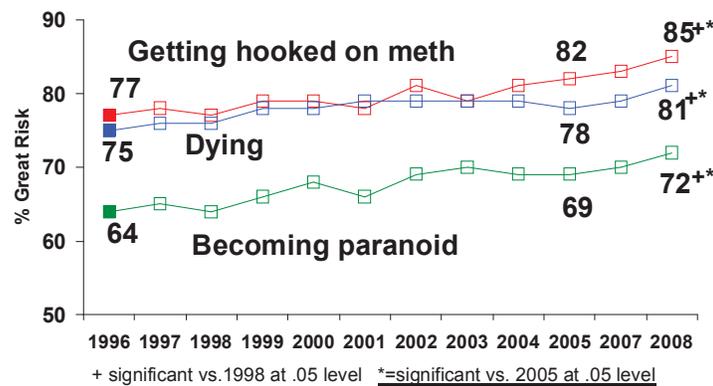


## METHAMPHETAMINE (continued)

Specific risks in methamphetamine use have shown gradual increases over the years with an acceleration from 2005 to 2008. There were significant increases in great risk of getting hooked on meth (82 percent in 2005 versus 85 percent in 2008), dying (78 percent in 2005 versus 81 percent in 2008), and becoming paranoid (69 percent in 2005 versus 72 percent in 2008). (Chart 11)

Chart 11

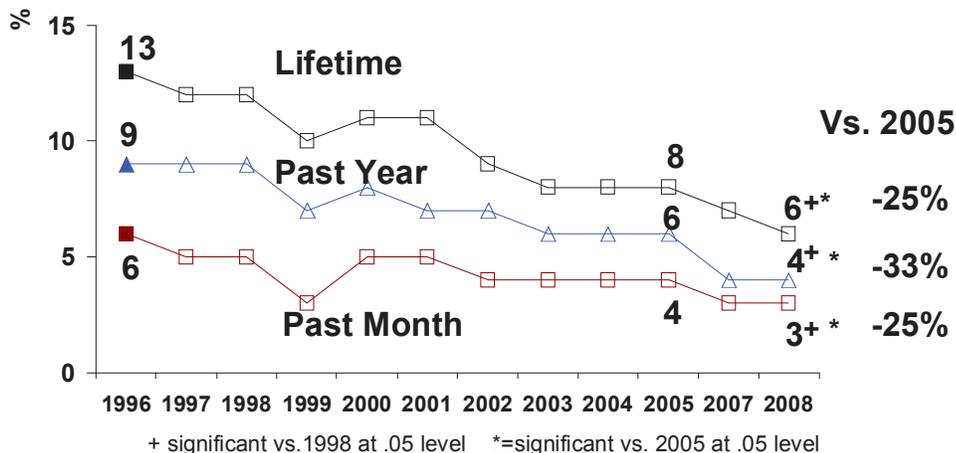
### Methamphetamine Risks – Gradual Increase, Accelerated 2005 to 2008



Consistent with the increase in perceived risks in methamphetamine use, there was a significant decrease in lifetime trial (8 percent in 2005 and 6 percent in 2008), in past year use (6 percent in 2005 and 4 percent in 2008), and in past month use (4 percent in 2005 and 3 percent in 2008). (Chart 12)

Chart 12

### Methamphetamine Use – Gradual Decrease, Accelerated 2005 to 2008



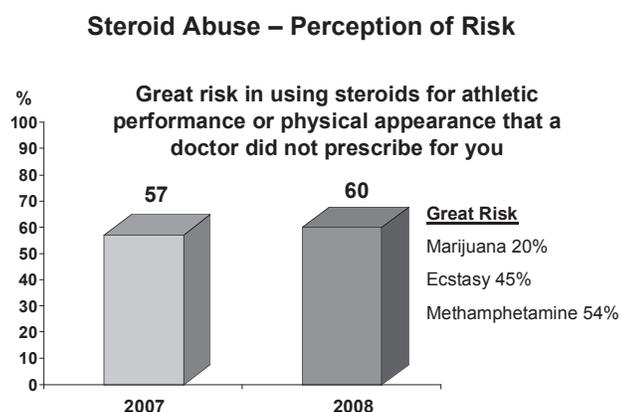
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## STEROIDS

Questions about steroid abuse were added to the PATS teens' questionnaire in 2008. In place of trend data, steroid attitudes and behavior will be compared to other substances of abuse.

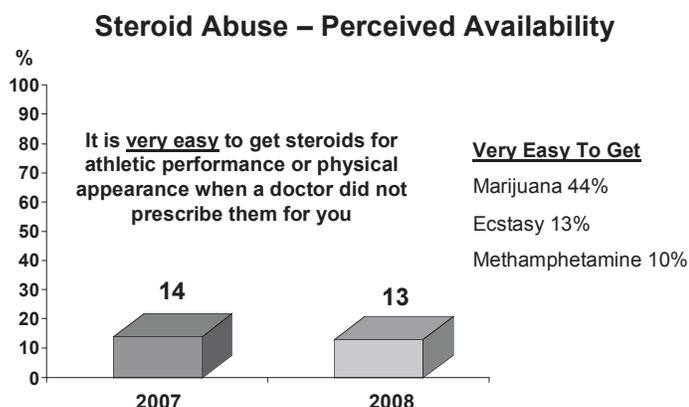
Steroid abuse was perceived to be very risky – more similar to the risk in trying methamphetamine than marijuana. (Chart 13) However there is some cause for concern as fewer teens in 2008 (65 percent) agreed strongly that teens that use steroids for athletic performance or physical appearance can be at risk for severe health problems, down from 69 percent last year.

Chart 13



Steroids were not seen as readily available in 2008: Only 13 percent felt it would be very easy to obtain them. This percent is similar to the perceived availability of drugs like ecstasy or methamphetamine rather than the more prevalent drug, marijuana. (Chart 14)

Chart 14

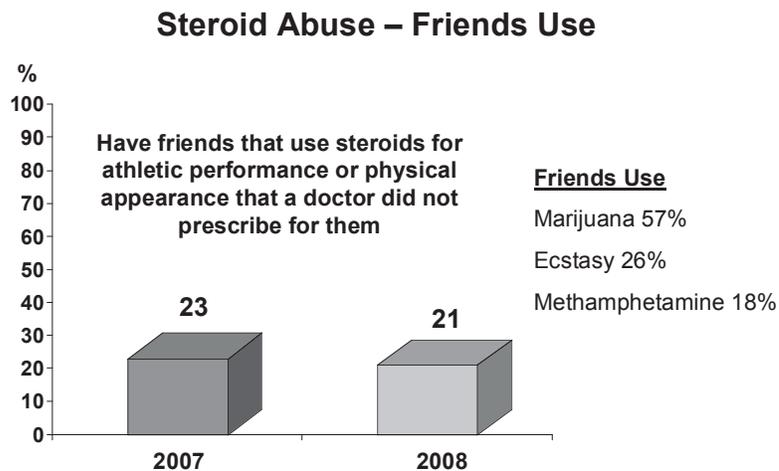


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## STEROIDS (continued)

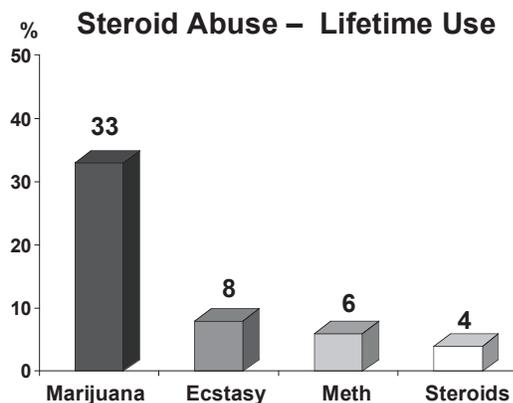
Very similar to perceived availability is the perception of peer use. In 2008, 21 percent of teens reported having friends that use steroids for athletic performance or physical appearance that a doctor did not prescribe for them. This is similar the reported percentages of friends' use for ecstasy and methamphetamine. (Chart 15)

Chart 15



Of all the substances of abuse monitored in PATS teens, steroid abuse had the lowest prevalence – 4 percent reported ever using a steroid for either athletic performance or physical appearance. (Chart 16)

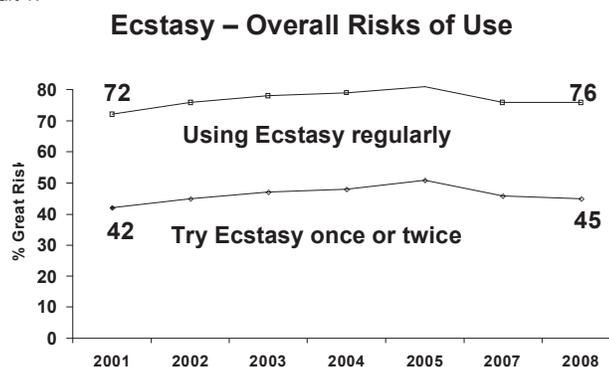
Chart 16



# ECSTASY

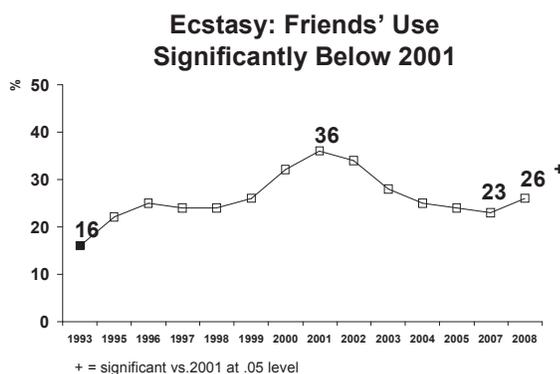
Teen perception of the great risk in trying ecstasy once or twice or using ecstasy regularly has remained stable. (Chart 17)

Chart 17



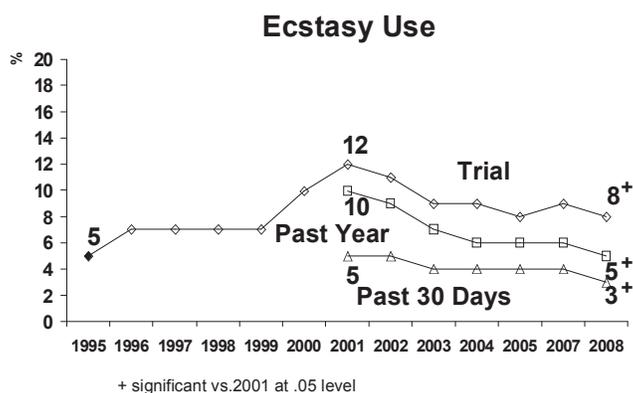
Reported ecstasy use by friends was significantly lower in 2008 (26 percent) than in 2001 (36 percent). (Chart 18)

Chart 18



Compared to 2007, measures of ecstasy use remained stable and significantly below those in 2001. (Chart 19)

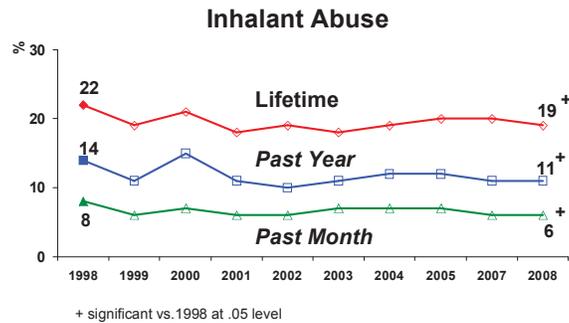
Chart 19



## INHALANTS

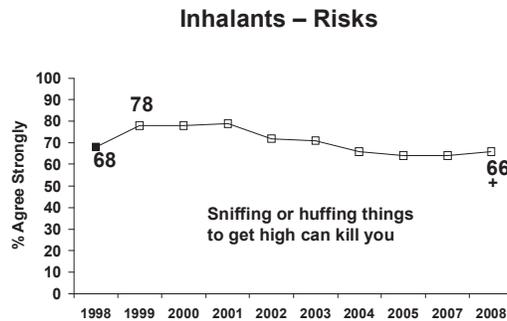
Inhalant abuse remained steady at 11 percent for past year use. (Chart 20)

Chart 20



However only 66 percent of adolescents reported that sniff or huffing things to get high can kill you. (Chart 21)

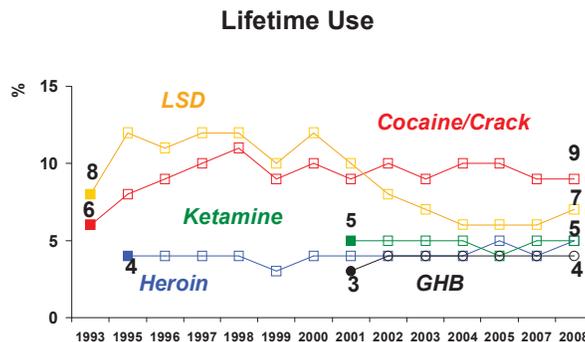
Chart 21



## OTHER DRUGS

Lifetime use of LSD, cocaine/crack, ketamine, heroin, and GHB remained stable in 2008: 9 percent ever trying cocaine/crack, 7 percent ever trying LSD, 5 percent ketamine, 5 percent heroin, and 4 percent ever trying GHB. (Chart 22)

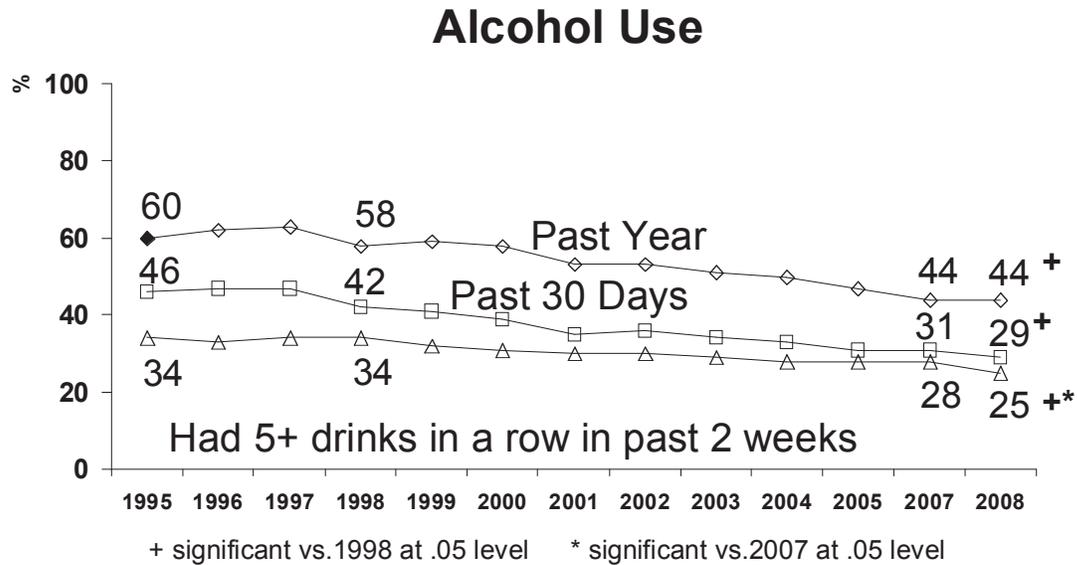
Chart 22



## ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES

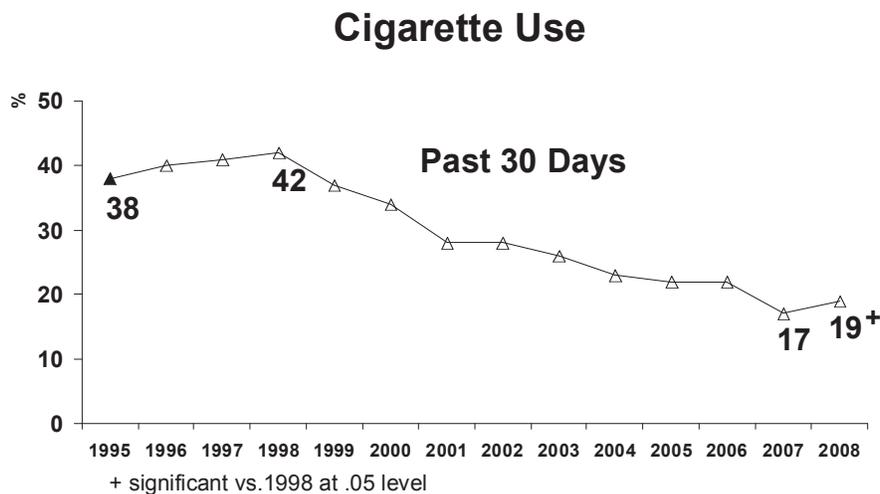
Over the past decade past year and past 30 day use of alcohol significantly decreased. Binge drinking (defined as had 5+ drinks in a row in the past 2 weeks) also significantly decreased in 2008 (25 percent) versus 2007 (28 percent). (Chart 23)

Chart 23



Over the past decade past 30 day use of cigarettes significantly declined from 42 percent in 1998 to 19 percent in 2008. (Chart 24)

Chart 24



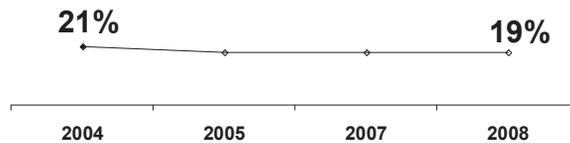
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## PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Unlike alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal drug use, teens' abuse of prescription drugs has not significantly decreased. (Chart 25).

Chart 25

### Lifetime Any Prescription Drug Abuse (Net)

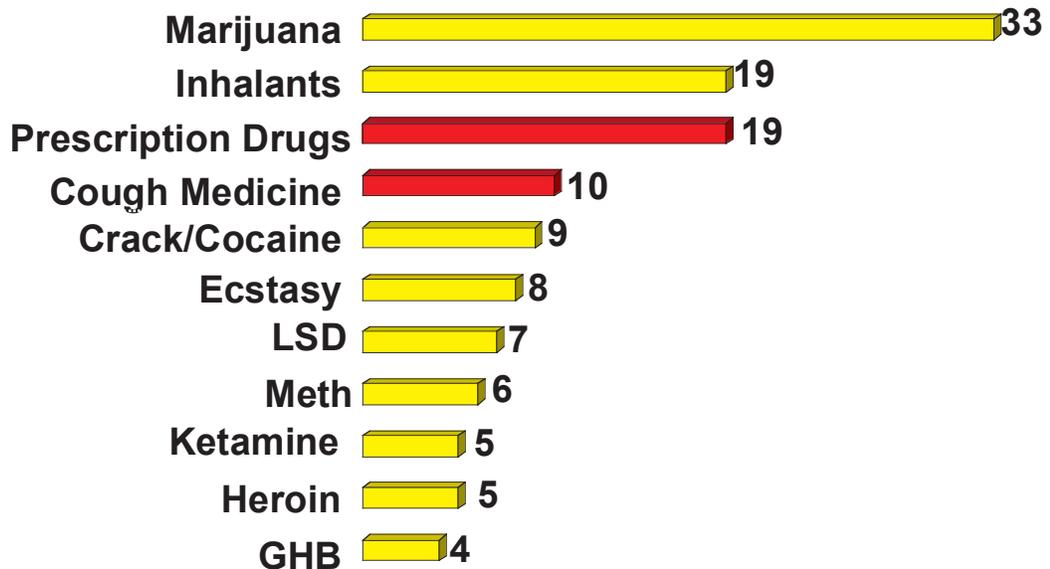


Abuse of prescription drugs remained less common than marijuana but more prevalent than other drugs with the exception of inhalants. (Chart 26)

Chart 26

### Lifetime Trial

% of Teens Who Have Ever Tried:

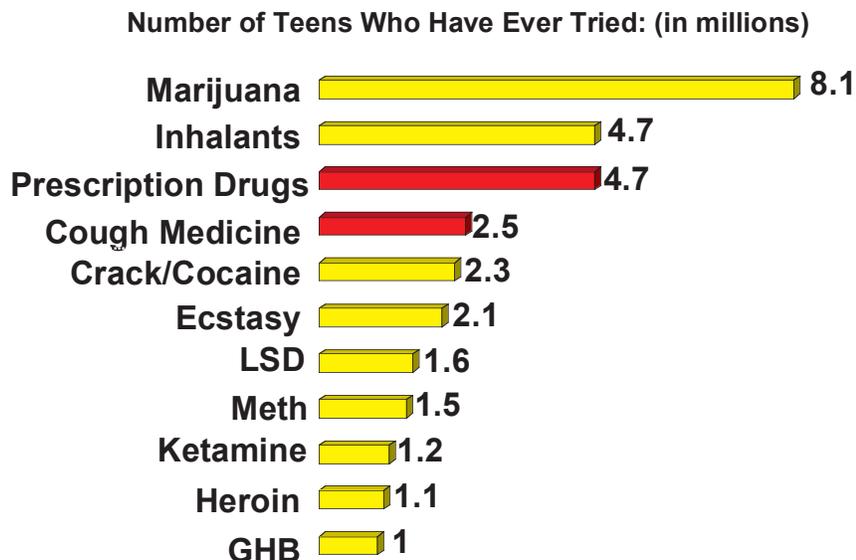


## PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE (continued)

In 2008, 4.7 million had abused a prescription drug at some point in their lives. Abuse is defined as using without a doctor's prescription. (Chart 27)

Chart 27

### The New Landscape



The dangers of prescription drug abuse are not well assessed by many teens. About four out of 10 (41 percent) teens agree that prescription drugs are much safer to use than illegal drugs.

Historically, perceived availability of illegal drugs does not correlate to self-reported adolescent use. However, perceived availability of prescription drugs, because they can be found in the home, may be a risk factor for teens: approximately six out of 10 teens agree that prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs. Teens in 2008 were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than in 2007. (Chart 28)

Chart 28

### Prescription Drug Abuse – Perceived Availability

% agree strongly/somewhat	2005	2007	2008
Prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs	56	57	61*

\* significant vs.2007 at .05 level

## PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE (continued)

Teens cited family medicine cabinets as the main source for obtaining prescription drugs. In 2008 teens were less likely to agree that prescription drugs are easy to purchase over the Internet (34 percent) than they were to agree that it is easy to get prescription drugs from parent’s medicine cabinets (55 percent). (Chart 29)

Chart 29

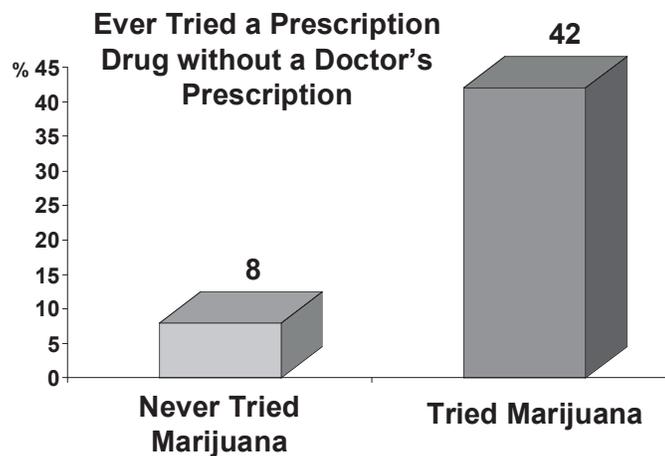
### Prescription Drugs – Perceived Availability

<b>% agree strongly/somewhat</b>	<b>2008</b>
Most teens get prescription drugs from their own family’s medicine cabinets	58
It is easy to get prescription drugs from parent’s medicine cabinets	55
Most teens get prescription drugs from their friends	50
Prescription drugs are available everywhere	42
Prescription drugs are easy to purchase over the Internet	34

The research suggests that in 2008 prescription drug abuse is an additive not a replacement behavior; abusers of prescription drugs were more likely to have tried marijuana than to be non-triers of marijuana. (Chart 30)

Chart 30

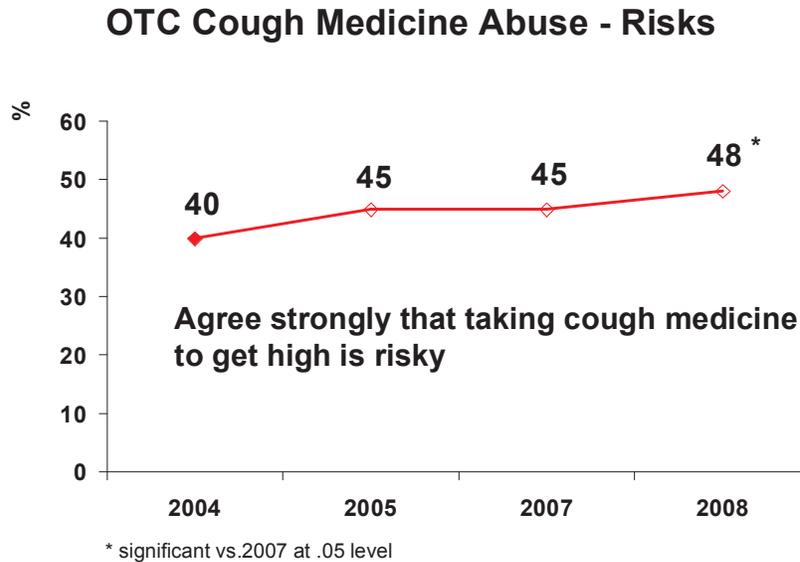
### Additive not Replacement Behavior



## OVER-THE-COUNTER COUGH MEDICINE ABUSE

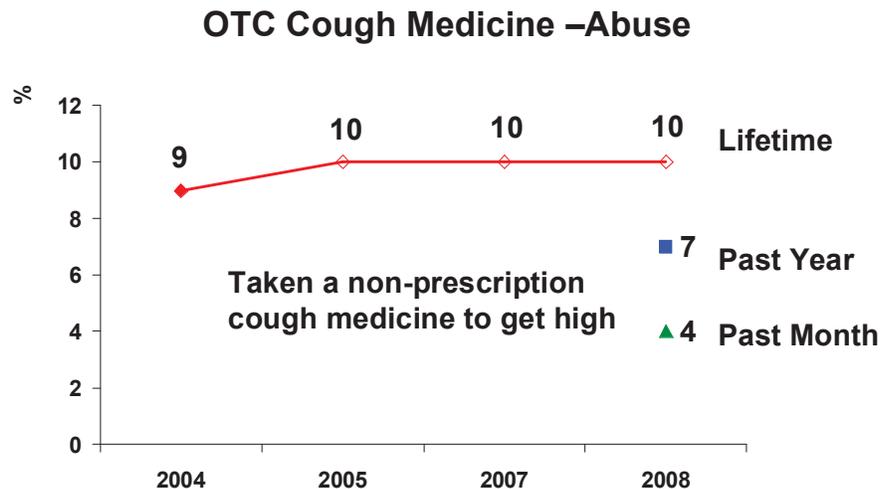
In 2008 there was a positive indication that teens were becoming more aware of the risks involved in abusing over-the-counter medicine; there was a significant increase in teens' agreement that taking cough medicine to get high is risky (45 percent in 2007 and 48 percent in 2008). (Chart 31)

Chart 31



Actual reported use of cough medicine to get high remained state (10 percent in 2007 and 2008). (Chart 32)

Chart 32



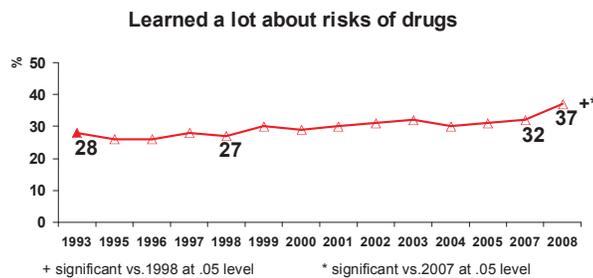
# SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE RISKS OF DRUGS

## PARENTS

For the first time since 1993 the percent of teens reporting that they learned a lot about the risks of drugs significantly increased from 32 percent in 2007 to 37 percent in 2008. (Chart 33) This is an especially positive indication because the research also showed that teens who learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs.

Chart 33

### Sources of Information – Parents



The challenge is to persuade parents to increase their discussions of the risks in prescription and over-the-counter cough medicine abuse. In 2008, 78 percent of teens reported that their parents had discussed the risks of beer and marijuana with them, while only 24 percent reported prescription drug abuse discussions and only 18 percent reported having non-prescription cold or cough medicine abuse talks. (Chart 34)

Chart 34 **Substances Discussed with Parents**

%	2008
Beer/alcohol	78
Marijuana	78
Cocaine/crack	44
Heroin	27
Methamphetamine	26
Inhalants	25
Any prescription drug used without a doctor's prescription	24
Steroids for athletic performance/physical appearance without a doctor's prescription	22
Ecstasy	22
Performance enhancing substance for athletic performance/physical appearance with a doctor's prescription	19
Non-prescription cold or cough medicine to get high	18
Human growth hormone for athletic performance/physical appearance without a doctor's prescription	18

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE RISKS OF DRUGS (continued)

Mothers continued to be the main initiators of discussions about the risks of drugs with their children. (Chart 35)

Chart 35

### Initiation of Discussion

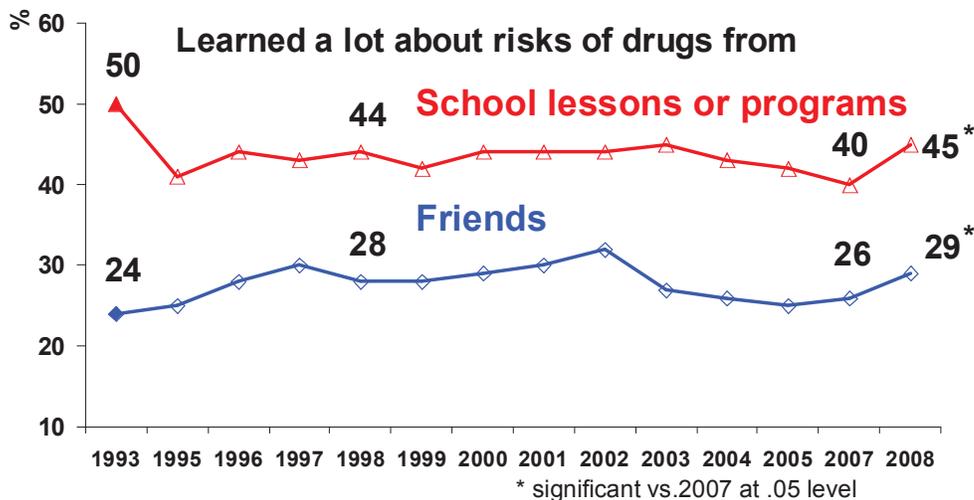
%	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007	2008
You	20	22	21	22	19	20	20	21	19	21
Your mother	60	58	57	57	59	57	58	59	61	58
Your father	28	29	30	31	29	29	29	28	33	29

### OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Teens in 2008 were significantly more likely than in 2007 to report learning about the risks of drugs from school lessons or programs and from friends. (Chart 36)

Chart 36

### Sources of Information

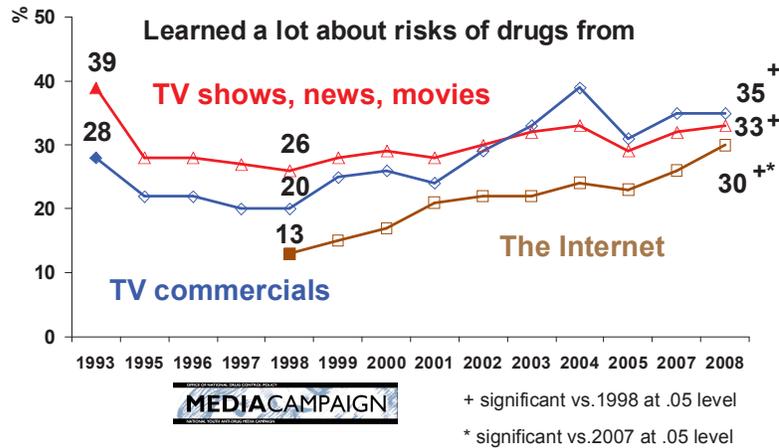


## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE RISKS OF DRUGS (continued)

TV shows, news, movies and TV commercials as sources of information about the risks of drugs were significantly higher in 2008 than in 1998 (prior to the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign). (Chart 37)

Chart 37

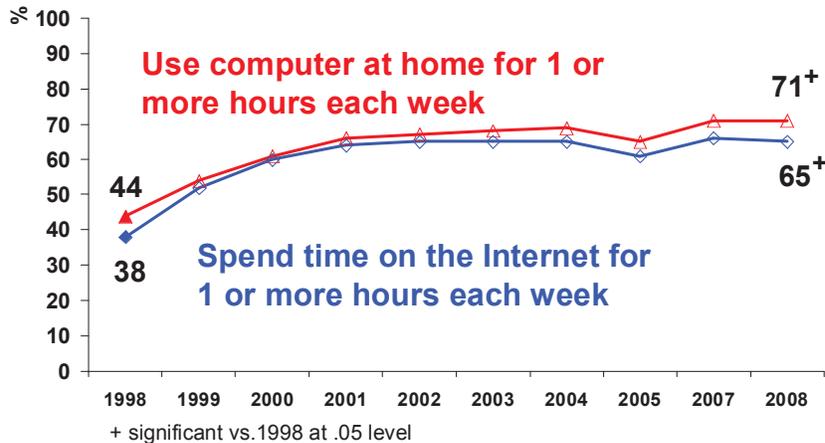
### Sources of Information



About two-thirds of all teens in 2008 spent time on the Internet for 1 or more hours each week. (Chart 38)

Chart 38

### Computer Use



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## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE RISKS OF DRUGS (continued)

Teens in 2008 were significantly more likely than in 2007 to report going to websites that discourage illegal drug use. Teens were more likely to go to websites that discourage illegal drug use (28 percent often/a few times) than websites that support illegal drug use (15 percent often/a few times). (Chart 39)

Chart 39

### Internet and Illegal Drugs

%	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007	2008
Used the Internet to find information on drugs	27	22	24	20	21	28*
Websites that support illegal drug use Often/A few times	20	20	19	17	15	15
Websites that discourage illegal drug use Often/A few times	24	24	26	24	24	28*

\* significant vs.2007 at .05 level

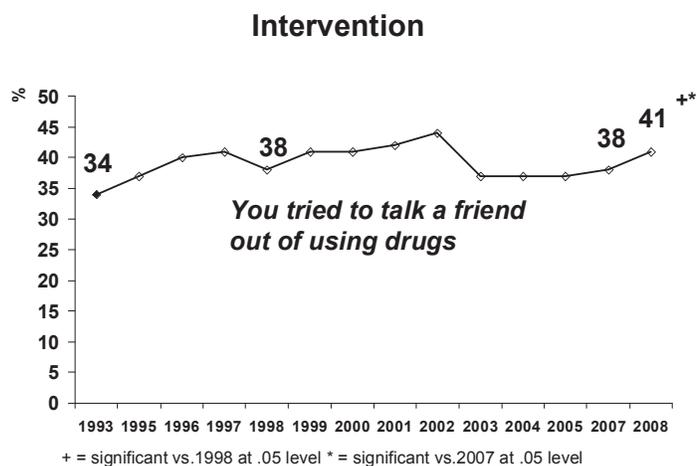
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## FAMILY HISTORY OF ABUSE AND INTERVENTION

Teens in 2008 may have an increased sensitivity to the pervasiveness of substance abuse. In 2008, four out of ten teens (40 percent) reported that they were aware of someone in their family (parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents) having a history of alcohol or illegal drug problems.

There was also a significant increase from 2007 to 2008 in the percent of teens reporting they tried to talk a friend out of using drugs. (Chart 40)

Chart 40



## HISPANIC/LATINO FAMILIES

The increase in Hispanics in the population was reflected in the 2008 teen sample; there was a significant increase from 2007 (12 percent) to 2008 (17 percent). (Chart 41)

Chart 41

### Demographics

	2007 %	2008 %
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>		
African American/Black	14	12
White	61	58
Hispanic/Latino	12	17*
Asian	4	3
Other	3	3
No answer	7	7

\* significant vs.2007 at .05 level

According to Hispanic teens, four out of 10 (40 percent) of their parents speak a mix of English and Spanish at home, 31 percent speak primarily English and 28 percent speak Spanish. (Chart 42)

Chart 42

### Language Spoken by Hispanic Parents

%	2007	2008
<b>Mix of both English and Spanish</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Spanish</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>