



## **White House Office of National Drug Control Policy National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign**

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### **FEWER TEENS USING ILLICIT DRUGS, NEW SURVEY SHOWS**

#### **Parental Disapproval Plays Key Role**

(Washington, D.C.) – Overall illicit drug use among teens is down for the fourth year in a row, according to the largest and most comprehensive study of drug use in the United States released today. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) showed a significant decline in illicit drug use among 12-17 year olds since 2002, particularly marijuana use.

Since 2002, current illicit drug use among 12-17 year olds is down from 11.6 percent to 9.9 percent (2005). That marks a cumulative drop of 15 percent, or 367,000 fewer youth (12 to 17) using any illicit drug in the past month in 2005 compared to 2002. In that same time period, current marijuana use also decreased from 8.2 percent (2002) to 6.8 percent (2005), a drop of 17 percent overall.

“It is encouraging to see this generation of teens making smart decisions and living above the influence of drug use,” said John P. Walters, Director White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. “The powerful anti-drug messages created by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign with the Partnership for a Drug Free America, are sending American teens and parents the right message. We hope parents continue to talk to their children about the dangers of drug use, monitor their activities, and build on this welcome progress.”

The NSDUH survey also shows changes in several other drug use categories, including:

- The perceived availability of marijuana among youth decreased (from 55% to 51%), as did perceived availability of crack, heroin and LSD.
- The average age of first use of marijuana increased from under age 17 in 2002 to 17.4 years in 2005.
- Use of psychotherapeutics among 12-17 year olds has gone down from 4.0 percent in 2002 to 3.3 percent in 2005, with the great majority (60%) of users of all ages saying they obtained the prescription drug for non-medical use from a friend or relative for free.
- A decline in the number of new users of methamphetamine.

- Drinking among teens is also on the decline, with 16.5 percent (down from 17.6% in 2004) of youth ages 12-17 reporting current alcohol use and 9.9 percent (down from 11.1% in 2004) reporting binge drinking.

ONDCP's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has been educating teens and parents about the risks of illicit drug use since its inception in 1998. Parents continue to play a pivotal role in keeping their children away from drugs. According to the survey results, current marijuana use was much less prevalent among youths who perceived strong parental disapproval for trying marijuana once or twice than for those who did not (4.6% vs. 27.0%). An overwhelming majority of youths (91.1%) report that their parents would strongly disapprove of illegal drug use.

"The Media Campaign has been instrumental in educating parents and teens about the negative consequences of drug use," said Steve Pasierb, President and CEO of the Partnership for Drug Free America. "Today's survey underscores the real progress that has been made while reinforcing the essential role all parents must play in educating their teens and helping them live a healthy, drug-free life."

The perception of risk among youth of smoking marijuana once a month or once or twice a week has also increased since 2002. More youth perceive a risk associated with smoking marijuana once a month in 2005 (34.0%) than they did in 2002 (32.4%). Youth perceptions of risk associated with smoking marijuana once or twice a week has also increased (55.0% in 2005 from 51.5% in 2002).

"We're seeing a new generation of teens that is wiser about the harms of marijuana use," said noted teen expert Peter Zollo, President of Teenage Research Unlimited TRU. "Today's teens recognize that they don't need drugs to fit in and the survey results bear that out."

The findings of the 2005 NSDUH survey are consistent with another large-scale longitudinal study, Monitoring the Future from the University of Michigan, which also shows an overall decline in teen drug use since 2002.

Since its inception in 1998, the ONDCP's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has conducted outreach to millions of teens and parents and hundreds of communities to prevent and reduce teen drug use. Counting on an unprecedented blend of public and private partnerships, non-profit community service organizations, volunteerism and youth-to-youth communications, the Campaign is designed to reach Americans of diverse backgrounds with effective anti-drug messages.

**For more information on the ONDCP National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, visit [www.MediaCampaign.org](http://www.MediaCampaign.org)**

**For more information about the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, visit [www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov)**

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