

# Monitoring The Future Survey

## Finds Overall Decline in Teen Substance Abuse

**For Release December 19, 2005**

Overall, the 2005 Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey showed good news. While there was no substantive change in any illicit drug use between 2004 and 2005, analysis of the survey revealed an almost 19 percent decline in past month use of any illicit drug by 8th, 10th, and 12th graders between 2001 and 2005. This trend is driven largely by decreasing rates of marijuana use among these students. For example, since 2001, past month use of marijuana has fallen by 28 percent among 8th graders and by 23 percent among 10th graders.

Since 1975 the MTF survey has measured drug, alcohol, and cigarette use and related attitudes among adolescent students nationwide. Survey participants report their drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and past month. Overall, 49,347 students in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades from 402 public and private schools participated in this year's survey. The survey is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and conducted by the University of Michigan.

While the 2005 survey showed a continuing general decline in drug use, there are continued high rates of non-medical use of prescription medications, especially opioid painkillers. For example, in 2005, 9.5 percent of 12th graders reported using Vicodin in the past year, and 5.5 percent of these students reported using OxyContin in the past year. Long term trends show a significant increase in the abuse of OxyContin from 2002 to 2005 among 12th graders. Also of concern is the significant increase in the use of sedatives/barbiturates among 12th graders since 2001.

"I'm pleased to see the decreased drug use noted in this survey; however, the upward trend in prescription drug abuse is disturbing," says NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni. "We need to ensure that young people understand the very real risks of abusing any drug."

"While cigarette smoking is at lowest levels in the history of the survey and overall drug use among teens and adolescents is continuing to decline, there remain areas of concern with specific drugs of abuse such as prescription painkillers," says Dr. Nora D. Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institutes of Health. "Prescription drugs are very powerful medicines that are effective when used properly and with a doctor's supervision. Using these drugs without a prescription is dangerous. It's imperative that teens get this message."

Among the survey's findings were the following changes from 2004 to 2005:

- Lifetime use of cigarettes declined 2 percent among 8th graders; declined 1.7 percent among 10th graders; and declined 2.8 percent among 12th graders;
- Past year use of alcohol was down 2.7 percent among 8th graders; down 1.5 percent among 10th graders; and down 2.1 percent among 12th graders;

- Lifetime use of methamphetamine fell 1.2 percent among 10th graders and fell 1.7 percent among 12th graders;
- And past year use of steroids declined 1.1 percent among 12th graders.

MTF is one of three major HHS-sponsored surveys that provide data on substance use among youth. Its website is <http://monitoringthefuture.org>.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), sponsored by HHS' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is the primary source of statistical information on illicit drug use in the U.S. population 12 years of age and older. Formerly known as the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, the survey collects data in household interviews, currently using computer-assisted self-administration for drug-related items. More information is available at <http://www.drugabusestatistics.samhsa.gov>.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), part of HHS' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, is a school survey that collects data from students in grades 9-12. The survey includes questions on a wide variety of health-related risk behaviors, not simply drug abuse. More information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm>.

More information on MTF can be found at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>; or <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>

Additional details are also available at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/DrugPages/MTF.html>

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to ensure the rapid dissemination of research information and its implementation in policy and practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and further information on NIDA research can be found on the NIDA web site at <http://www.drugabuse.gov>