

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

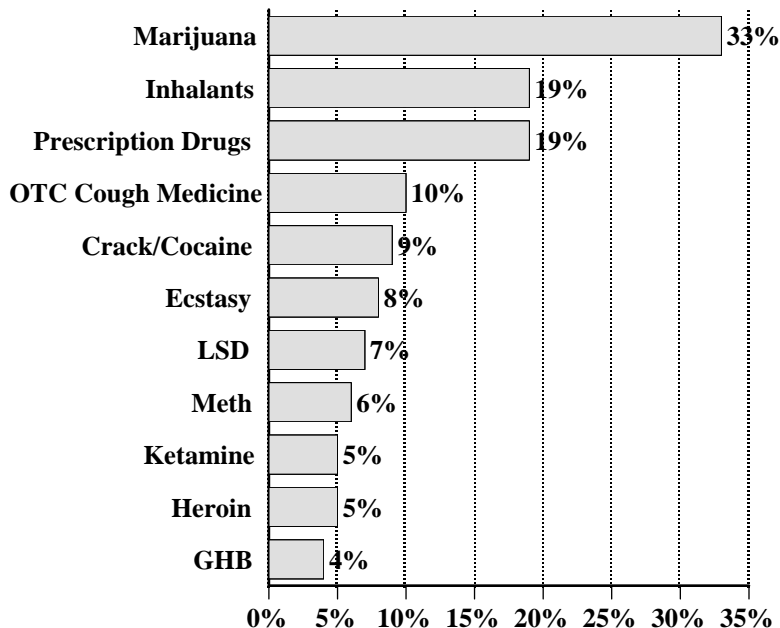
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Marijuana, Inhalants, and Prescription Drugs Are Top Three Substances Abused by Teens

More teens report abusing prescription drugs and inhalants than any illicit drug except marijuana, according to data from the recently released Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS). Marijuana continues to be the most prevalent drug used among this population, with nearly one-third of teens reporting having ever tried marijuana in their lifetime. The next two most prevalent substances abused, however, are substances that are not illegal when used as directed, and are often readily available in teens' households. Nearly one in five (an estimated 4.7 million) teens have ever abused inhalants and the same number report abusing prescription drugs. In addition, 10% of teens (an estimated 2.5 million) have ever abused over-the-counter cough medicines—approximately the same percentage who have ever used crack/cocaine or ecstasy (see figure below). Perceived risk and availability may help explain the prevalence of prescription drug abuse—41% of teens thought that prescription drugs are much safer to use than illegal drugs and 61% reported that prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs (data not shown).

Percentage of U.S. Teens (Grades 7 to 12) Reporting Ever Trying Drugs, 2008

(N=6,518)



NOTES: Abuse of inhalants and OTC cough medicine is defined as using the substance to get high. Abuse of prescription drugs is defined as use without a doctor's prescription. The margin of error is +/- 1.3%.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, *The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS): Teens 2008 Report*, 2009. Available online at http://www.drugfree.org/Files/full_report_teens_2008. For more information, contact the Partnership at 212-922-1560.