Nearly One in Ten U.S. High School Students Report Heavy Marijuana Use in the Past Month; One-Third or More of Heavy Users Also Used Cocaine, Ecstasy, or Other Drugs

Nearly one in ten high school students (9%) reported using marijuana 20 times or more in the past month, according to recently released data from the 2011 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study. While all past month marijuana users were more likely than nonusers to also report the use of other licit or illicit drugs in the past year, heavy marijuana users were most likely to report such use. For example, heavy marijuana users were nearly twice as likely as non-heavy marijuana users (31% vs. 17%) and 30 times more likely than those who did not use marijuana at all (31% vs. 1%) to report cocaine or crack use. In fact, heavy marijuana use was associated with increased use of all drugs asked about in this survey, including alcohol, cigarettes, pain relievers, ecstasy (see figure below), OTC cough medicine*, substances that are huffed or sniffed, and methamphetamine (data not shown). These findings suggest that health practitioners and prevention professionals should be aware that clients who frequently use marijuana may be likely to be using other drugs as well.

Percentage of U.S. High School Students Reporting Past Year Substance Use, by Past Month Marijuana Use, 2011

☐ No Marijuana Use in Past Month
☐ Used Marijuana Less Than 20 Times in Past Month
☐ Used Marijuana 20 Times or More in Past Month

Substance Used in Past Year
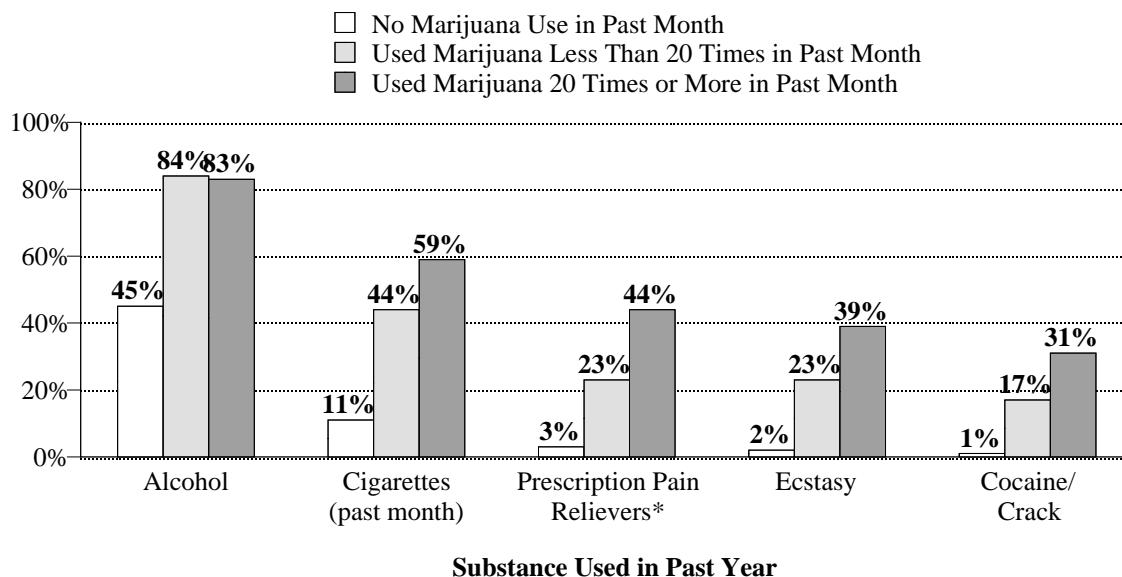
*Used to get high or change their mood.

NOTES: The 2011 survey, conducted by the Roper Public Affairs Division of GfK Custom Research North America, surveyed 3,322 high school students in grades 9-12 between March and June 2011. The margin of error for this sample is +/− 3.0 percent.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from The Partnership at Drugfree.org and the MetLife Foundation, *The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: 2011 Parents and Teens Full Report,* 2012. Available online at http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PATS-FULL-Report-FINAL-May-2-PDF-.pdf.