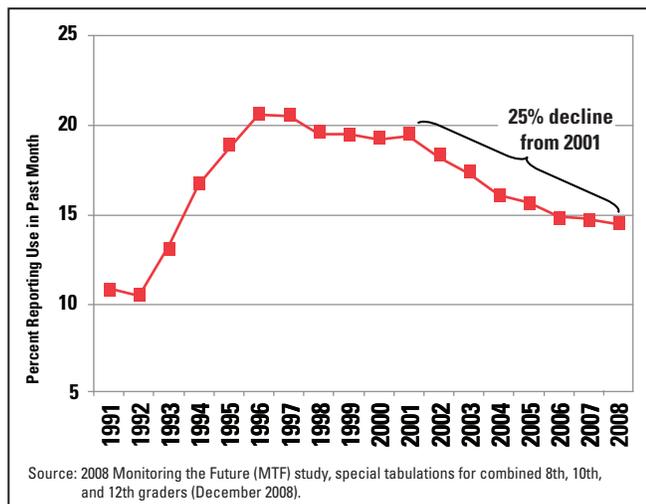


In 2002, the President established ambitious goals for reversing a decade-long surge in illicit drug use in America: a 10 percent reduction in youth drug use in 2 years and a 25 percent reduction in youth drug use over 5 years. Since then, the President's *National Drug Control Strategy* has effectively guided the Nation's efforts to reduce illegal drug use, achieving an 11 percent reduction in youth drug use over the first 2 years and a 23 percent reduction in youth drug use over the first 5 years as measured by the *Monitoring the Future* (MTF) study.

Seven years later, MTF's national survey of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students indicates that current use of illicit drugs by youth has declined by 25 percent (see Figures 1 and 2). However, it is the breadth and depth of these reductions in youth drug use that are particularly impressive. Marijuana use has fallen by 25 percent, and youth use of drugs such as MDMA/Ecstasy, LSD, and methamphetamine has dropped precipitously over the same period, cutting the current use of these dangerous drugs by more than 50 percent. Approximately 900,000 fewer young Americans are using illicit drugs today than when this Administration began.

Figure 1.  
**Teen Drug Use is Down Sharply from 2001**



The importance of these dramatic changes in youth drug use patterns can not be overemphasized. Studies indicate that young people who initiate drug use early in their teen years are at far greater risk of developing a drug dependency than those who initiate later in life. Moreover, young people who do not initiate drug use by age 18-20 are highly unlikely to develop a drug dependency problem in succeeding years, and this protective effect stays with them throughout their lives. By focusing on reducing drug use during this critical period in the lives of young people, we can positively impact the health and safety of Americans well into the future.

However, the substantial declines in drug use in America are not solely found among the youth of today and the adults of tomorrow. Current workforce drug testing data from Quest Diagnostics indicate that cocaine and methamphetamine use by adult Americans also may have turned a corner over the past several years. Positive drug tests for cocaine declined by 38 percent from June 2006 to June 2008, the latest date of available data (see Figure 4). The percentage testing positive for methamphetamine—a form of amphetamines—had been rising quickly in the first half of the decade, but this percentage dropped by roughly 50 percent from 2005 to 2007 (see Figure 4). Overall, drug test positives indicate the lowest levels of drug use in the U.S. workforce since 1988.

Although the dynamics of drug abuse in America have made a profound change for the better over the course of this Administration, challenges clearly remain. The *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (NSDUH) indicates nearly 7 million Americans exhibit the diagnostic criteria for illicit drug abuse or dependence, with marijuana being by far the biggest contributor to the need for treatment.

According to NSDUH, more than one in four 12-17 year olds who report using marijuana in the past year display the characteristics of abuse or dependency. NSDUH also indicates that the risk of marijuana abuse or dependency for those aged 12 to 17 now exceeds that for alcohol and tobacco. Recent research suggests early marijuana use increases the risk of abuse or dependency on other drugs such as heroin and cocaine later in life. Research also confirms that marijuana use itself is a serious risk, not only due to its addictive potential but also due to recently identified connections between frequent marijuana use and mental illness.

Figure 2.  
Youth Drug Use is Declining

	2001	2008	Change as a % of 2001
<b>Any Illicit Drug</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>-25*</b>
Marijuana	16.6%	12.5%	-25*
MDMA (Ecstasy)	2.4%	1.2%	-50*
LSD	1.5%	0.7%	-53*
Amphetamines	4.7%	2.6%	-45*
Inhalants	2.8%	2.6%	-7
Methamphetamine	1.4%	0.7%	-50*
Steroids	0.9%	0.6%	-33*
Cocaine	1.5%	1.3%	-13
Crack	0.9%	0.6%	-33*
Heroin	0.4%	0.4%	0
Alcohol	35.5%	28.1%	-21*
Been drunk	19.7%	14.9%	-24*
Cigarettes	20.2%	12.6%	-38*

\* Denotes statistically significant change from 2001.

Source: 2008 Monitoring the Future (MTF) study, special tabulations for combined 8th, 10th, and 12th graders (December 2008).

The most recent NSDUH data show over two million people misused prescription drugs for the first time in the past year. This is more than the number of new marijuana users. Although not all new users will continue drug use in the future, the large number who are misusing prescription drugs for the first time is a cause for concern and action.

The *National Drug Control Strategy* has produced significant results over the course of this Administration. By building upon the tools that proved most effective in generating those results, we will sustain the progress we have made and rise to meet new challenges. This effort will continue to be guided by three national priorities: stopping initiation; reducing drug abuse and addiction; and disrupting the market for illegal drugs.

Chapter 1 of the 2009 *National Drug Control Strategy* addresses prevention efforts aimed at stopping initiation by expanding and amplifying America’s shift away from drug use, especially among young people. The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, State-level prescription drug monitoring programs, and community-based coalitions nationwide have made a substantial impact on the progress of prevention efforts. The results of drug testing programs have been particularly encouraging. Random drug testing substantially lowered rates of substance abuse in the military, in the workplace, and in sports. Now an increasing number of schools are implementing promising nonpunitive random drug testing programs to reinforce drug-free lifestyles for their students.

Chapter 2 outlines the treatment priority—reducing drug abuse and addiction—through programs focused on expanding the reach and impact of treatment programs, such as Screening and Brief Intervention, Access to Recovery, and drug courts. The vast majority of individuals who need substance use treatment do not recognize their condition. Screening and Brief Intervention addresses this issue by providing opportunities in healthcare settings to screen individuals who may require assistance in order to stop drug use before it develops into a debilitating dependency. For individuals whose drug use has brought them into contact with the criminal justice system, drug courts combine the power of the courts with the renewing potential of treatment to foster a community of support and to change drug-using behavior. Research indicates that both of these programs are critical in addressing America’s underlying abuse treatment needs.

Chapter 3 focuses on U.S. initiatives to reduce the supply of drugs by disrupting the illegal market. Over the course of this Administration, the efforts of Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies have yielded impressive results in the interdiction of drugs and drug-related finances. Yet the greatest impact may be realized through international counterdrug partnerships, such as those with the Governments of Colombia and Mexico. Years of close cooperation with the Government of Colombia have led to a dramatic reduction in the threat posed by narcoterrorists operating there. Enhanced cooperation with the Government of Mexico already has diminished the power of drug traffickers and will be critical to a long-term solution for securing our shared border. The success of these relationships will shape the long-term success of U.S. supply reduction efforts. By investing in proven programs and cooperative mechanisms for prevention, treatment, and supply reduction efforts internationally and at all levels of American society, the United States has turned the tide against drug traffickers and drug use. A continued commitment will be required if we are to build upon these successes in the years to come.