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Nearly One-Third of U.S. High School Seniors Report Driving While Impaired or Riding with An Impaired Driver

“Impaired driving by youth remains a problem that needs serious attention despite some progress in recent years,” according to a recent analysis of data from the 2001 to 2006 Monitoring the Future surveys. In 2006, 30% of high school seniors reported that in the two weeks prior to the survey they had driven after heavy drinking (five or more drinks in a row) or after using marijuana or other drugs, or rode in a car whose driver had done the same. While this is a decline from the 35% reported in 2001, most of the decline occurred between 2001 and 2003, with little change occurring in more recent years. In each year, students were more likely to report driving after marijuana use than driving after heavy drinking (13.1% vs. 9.5% in 2006; data not shown). While driving after marijuana use is often considered to be less dangerous than driving after heavy drinking, the study found that seniors who reported driving after marijuana use (but not after heavy drinking) reported having been in a traffic accident in the past 12 months as often as those who reported driving after heavy drinking (38% and 39%, respectively).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from the Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA, *Treatment Episode Dataset (TEDS) Highlights—2005, National Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment Services, 2007*. Available online at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/dasis.htm#teds2>.