



## Media Release

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### **2<sup>nd</sup> South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008 Reveals Safer Sexual Behaviour but Riskier General Behaviour**

*Johannesburg, April 20, 2010* -- The Medical Research Council released the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008 today. This nationally representative survey among 10,270 secondary school learners in grades 8 through 11, reports on the prevalence of behaviours that place them at risk for disease and ill health. The survey was conducted by a team of researchers from the Health Promotion Research and Development Unit of the Medical Research Council, headed by principal investigator Professor Priscilla Reddy. Dr. Reddy stated, "This survey has given us a scientific window into the conditions our young people face growing up in South Africa today. Seeing where the stresses are on this vital part of our population will allow us to put precious resources to work in the best way."

Following the first Youth Risk Behaviour Survey in 2002, this survey investigated behaviours related to infectious diseases (sexual risk behaviour and hygiene), injury and trauma (violence and traffic safety), mental health (depression, suicide related behaviour, substance use), and chronic diseases (nutrition and physical activity). The data from the YRBS surveys may contribute useful evidence as government plans its long term strategy by showing trends in behaviours that place youth at risk for disease and ill health.

#### **Some positive developments**

The 2008 survey showed significant reductions in risky sexual behaviour. Fewer school learners had ever had sex (from 41% to 38%). Of those who had sex, the number of school learners that had two or more sexual partners in their lifetime significantly reduced (from 45% to 41%), and less learners had one or more sexual partners during the past three months (from 70% to 52%). Also, of those who ever had sex, the incidence of sexually transmitted infections significantly reduced (from 7% to 4%), while consistent condom use increased slightly (29% to 31%).

#### **Increasing health threats**

The survey showed clear reductions in physical activity, increased threat to mental health and unsafe traffic behaviour. A significant increase in physical inactivity (38% to 42%) and TV watching for more than 3 hours per day (25% to 29%) was observed. Regarding mental health, more learners made one or more suicide attempts during the past six months (17% to 21%). Regarding unsafe traffic behaviour, more learners drove a vehicle after drinking alcohol in the past 30 days (8% to 18%) and were driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol in the past 30 days (35% to 38%).

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