

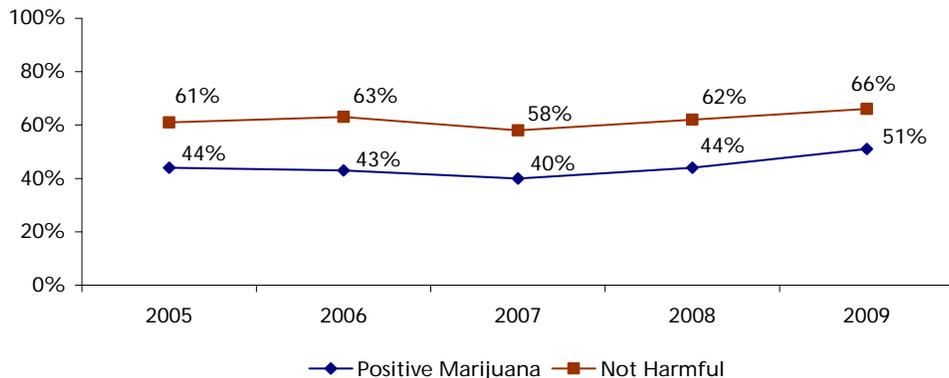
MONITORING MARIJUANA USE AMONG YOUTH

Although studies have noted a decline in the use of harder illicit drugs, recent national and local data warn of a possible upward trend in marijuana use among youth. Results from the 2009 National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) Monitoring the Future Survey, which has been tracking drug use trends among teens since 1975, showed a slight increase in marijuana use by teens in the past year. The proportion of eighth-graders who reported using marijuana was 11.8 percent, compared with 10.9 percent in 2008, tenth-graders' use was 26.7 percent compared to 23.9 percent in 2008, and 12th-graders was 32.8 percent compared with 32.4 percent in 2008. At the same time, the level of perceived risk decreased among eighth- and tenth-graders¹.

Consistent with the national findings, preliminary 2009 data results from SANDAG's Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) project also revealed gradual increases in the number of youth detainees testing positive for marijuana (or its active chemical, THC) with an 11 percent increase testing positive between 2007 and 2009 (40% and 51%, respectively). In addition, during the past two years, this sample of youth also has been more likely to report that marijuana is **not** harmful (58% in 2007 and 66% in 2009) (Figure 1). These data also represent the highest percentage of youth who tested positive for marijuana in the past ten years, as well as the largest proportion of youth believing marijuana is not harmful since this question was added in 2004 (not shown).

Figure 1

POSITIVE TEST FOR MARIJUANA USE UP AMONG JUVENILE ARRESTEES WHILE MORE REPORT MARIJUANA AS NOT BEING HARMFUL



SOURCE: SANDAG; Substance Abuse Monitoring Program, 2005-2009

Although the increase in these numbers is slight, it warrants attention and should be considered in prevention and awareness planning efforts before possibly becoming a larger issue. To learn more about substance abuse trends among the juvenile arrestee population data please visit www.sandag.org/cjc. Complete SAMY results from 2009 will be posted in June 2010.

¹ Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G., Schulenberg, J.E. (2010). **Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings, 2009** (NIH Publication No. [yet to be assigned]) Bethesda, MD: National Institute of Drug Abuse.