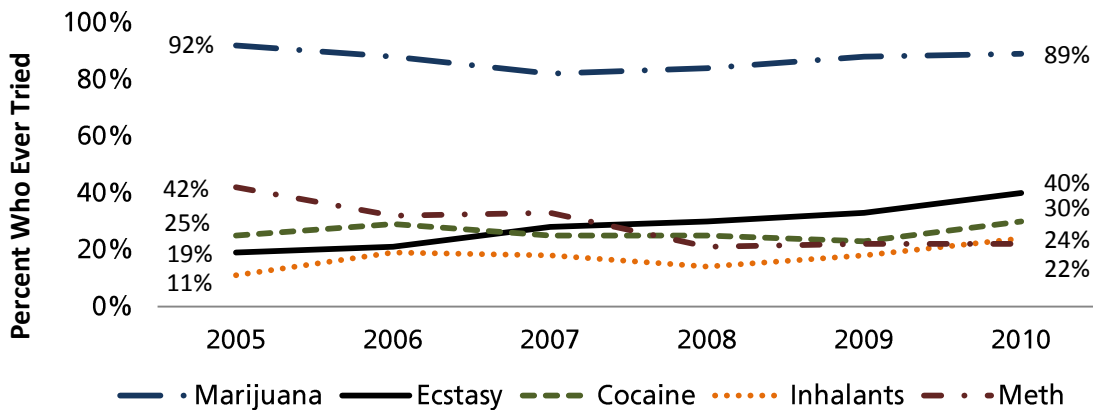


**ECSTASY USE ON THE RISE AND IMPACTING A NEW GROUP OF USERS**

Once thought of as purely a “club” drug of the 1990s, ecstasy<sup>1</sup> is seeing a resurgence, especially among African-Americans and Hispanics who are a new customer base in the U.S. for the drug.<sup>2</sup> Across the nation there have been several reports indicating an increase in both the number of youth who have tried ecstasy and in the availability of the drug. In the 2010 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, there was a notable 67 percent increase in teens reporting ecstasy use from 2008 to 2010.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice attributes this increase to Asian drug trafficking organizations, which have expanded the production of ecstasy and its availability in the United States since 2005. Utilizing street gangs for distribution, the amount of ecstasy on the market has increased in the Southwest, Southeast and Great Lake Regions.<sup>2</sup>

Recent data available from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) are in alignment with these national trends in ecstasy use. As part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program<sup>4</sup>, results from local interviews with recently arrested juveniles show an increase in those reporting having ever tried ecstasy from 2005 (19%) to 2010 (40%) (Figure 1). Following marijuana use (89%), ecstasy was the second most frequently used drug among juvenile arrestees in 2010 compared to cocaine (30%), inhalants (24%), and meth (22%). Interestingly, unlike marijuana, which is not viewed as harmful by most juvenile arrestees (25%), almost two-thirds (63%) of those who had ever used ecstasy still acknowledged it could be bad for them and over 70 percent said that it was easy to get (not shown).

**Figure 1  
ECSTASY SECOND MOST FREQUENTLY USED DRUG AMONG SAN DIEGO JUVENILE ARRESTEES**



Given the current distribution pattern of ecstasy and San Diego County’s Southwest location, these data draw attention to a possible growing problem. To learn more about drug use among local juvenile arrestees and access past and current Substance Abuse Monitoring reports, please visit [www.sandag.org/cj](http://www.sandag.org/cj). Comprehensive data from interviews conducted in 2010 will be available beginning in July 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Ecstasy, or MDMA, is a psychoactive drug that creates feelings of euphoria, increased energy, and produces distortions in perceptions and tactile experiences.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Justice (2010). National drug threat assessment. Retrieved on June 15, 2011 from <http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs38/38661/index.htm>

<sup>3</sup> The Partnership at DRUGFREE.ORG. (2010). Partnership attitude tracking study. Retrieved on June 15, 2011 from <http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/FULL-REPORT-FINAL-PATS-Teens-and-Parent-April-6-2011-1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The SAM program is partially supported by funding from the County of San Diego and California Border Alliance Group (CBAG).