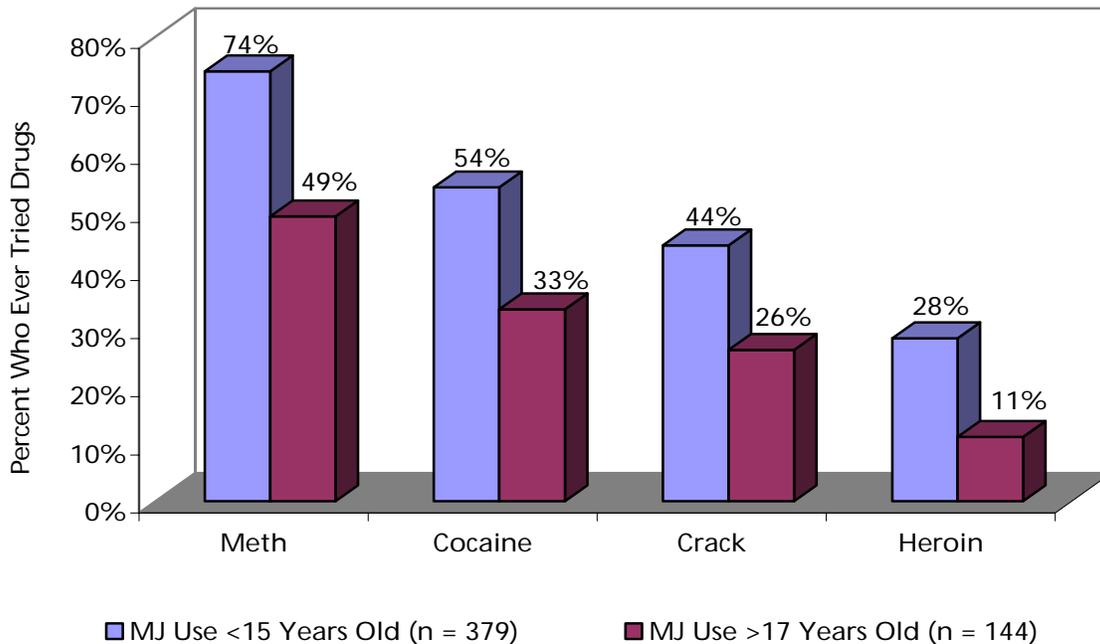


Marijuana Use: A Risk for Future Drug Use

It is well documented that marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among adults and youth in the United States¹. Research has shown that the younger an individual starts using marijuana, the greater the risk of that individual using other illicit drugs in his/her lifetime². Data gathered from recent arrestees booked into San Diego County jails support these national findings. As Figure 1 illustrates, there was a positive relationship between the earlier onset of marijuana use and the likelihood that an adult arrestee reported "ever" using another type of drug. For example, nearly three-quarters (74%) of arrestees who used marijuana before they were 15 years old compared to about half (49%) of those who first used marijuana as an adult, reported having used methamphetamine at one point in their life. In addition, those arrestees who reported using marijuana in their youth were more likely to have a positive drug test for any drug at the time of booking and were also more likely to have injected drugs in the past 12 months (not shown).

Figure 1

CHILDHOOD USE OF MARIJUANA RELATED TO FUTURE USE OF OTHER ILLICIT DRUGS



SOURCE: SANDAG 2003 Substance Abuse Monitoring Program (SAM)

These data, while not indicating causation between marijuana use and subsequent drug use, do draw attention to the importance of early intervention and prevention services for youth. Additional information about marijuana and other drug trends in the at-risk adult and youth populations is available on SANDAG's Web site at www.sandag.org/cj.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (February 2002), Summary of Findings from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Washington, D.C. Author.

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (September 2004), Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns and Implications. Washington, D.C. Author.