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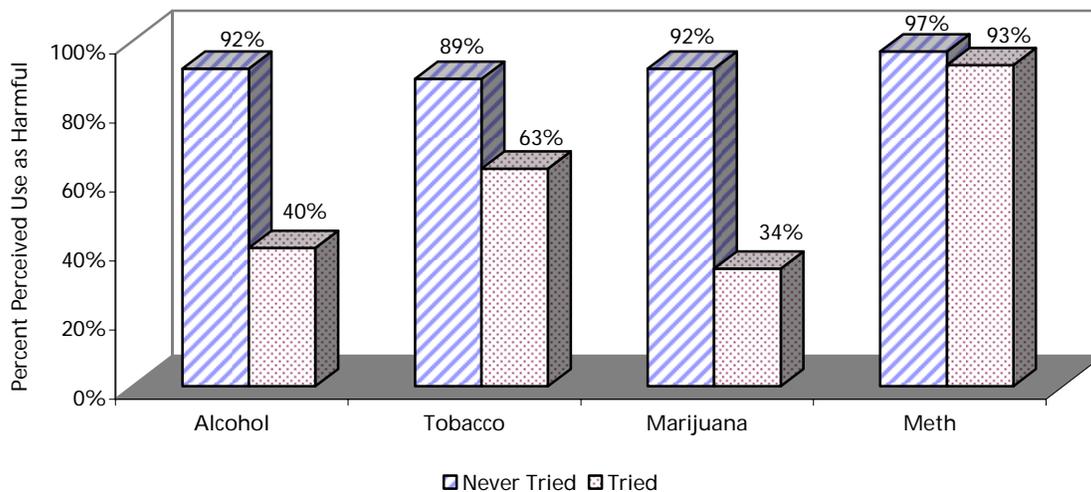
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YOUTH PERCEPTION OF DRUG USE'S HARM VARIES BY USE HISTORY

Interviews with juveniles booked in San Diego County Juvenile Hall shed light on the differences in perception of harm caused by alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) between those youth who have used drugs and those who have not¹. Not surprisingly, youth who reported never having used ATOD were more likely to view each of the substances as harmful compared to those youth who reported ever using one or more of the substances (Figure 1). However, this pattern differed significantly among those youth who had reported using methamphetamine (meth). Specifically, nine out of ten youth, regardless of their use history, believed that meth was a harmful drug.

These results raise a couple of issues for professionals in the ATOD prevention and intervention field to explore. Specifically, given that meth users seem to already possess a realistic view of the negative consequences of the drug, should social marketing campaigns targeting this population be designed differently than other ATOD prevention campaigns? In addition, the higher percentage of tobacco users who perceived cigarettes as harmful compared to marijuana and alcohol users suggests a gap in knowledge and the need for educational outreach to users of these substances.

Figure 1
YOUTHS' PERSONAL SUBSTANCE USE HISTORY IS RELATED TO THEIR PERCEPTION OF HARM



SOURCE: Juvenile Arrestees – CJ Bulletin June 2006: 2005 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

Additional information about drug use trends and at-risk behaviors of the juvenile arrestee population in San Diego County will be available in the upcoming SAM bulletin to be released at the end of June 2006. This bulletin, as well as past SAM bulletins on both the adult and juvenile arrestee population, can be found on the SANDAG's Web site at www.sandag.org/cjc.

¹ As part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) Program, previously known as ADAM, SANDAG interviews recently arrested adults and juveniles about their drug use as a means to monitor drug trends in the Region.