



DISSEMINATION
PROJECT

ADOLESCENCE AND DRUGS: AN EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION

UAB

Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Nerea Ochoa de Eribe Casado – Biomedical Sciences – 2020/2021

INTRODUCTION

Drug use in adolescence is a normalised social problem. First exposure to psychoactive substances in Spain usually occurs at the age of 14.

Teenagers are highly susceptible to both drug use and brain damage derived from it

Features of this stage of life
(impulsivity, inexperience, low-risk perception...)

Delayed prefrontal cortex development (decision-making, planning, self-control)

High risk for trying drugs and becoming addicted

Drug abuse may cause severe and long-lasting brain changes

Knowledge of the effects of psychoactive substances on the brain might be a preventing strategy for drug use in adolescence.

AIMS

- ✓ To analyse most common drugs and their negative effects on brain function
- ✓ To raise awareness about risks of drug abuse
- ✓ To provide truthful scientific information to students
- ✓ To promote responsible decision-making on teenagers



In order to reach these aims, I conducted an informative workshop for high school students

METHODOLOGY

GATHERING INFORMATION

First of all, I carried out an extensive **literature search** in databases, papers, reviews, books, and web portals. Main sources were:



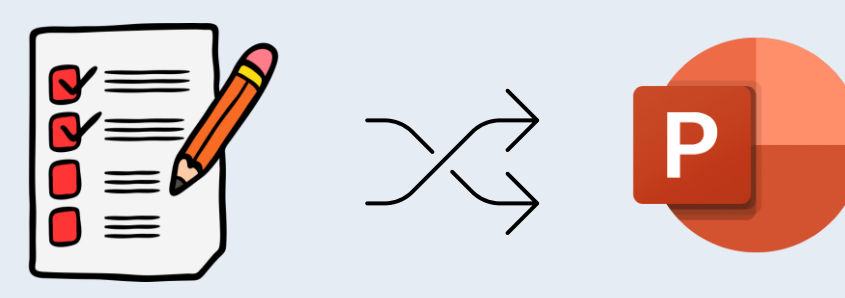
ADAPTING INFORMATION

All the information was compiled in an initial script and was **adapted to an understandable and attractive format** for students.

I also **contacted the high school** to plan and organize the workshop according to the needs of students.

WORKSHOP CREATION

All the adapted content was reflected in **PowerPoint presentations and dynamic activities**.



DATA ANALYSIS

Once the workshop was completed, the results obtained from questionnaires allowed the assessment of:

- ✓ Drug myths prevalence
- ✓ Drug risk perception
- ✓ Workshop evaluation

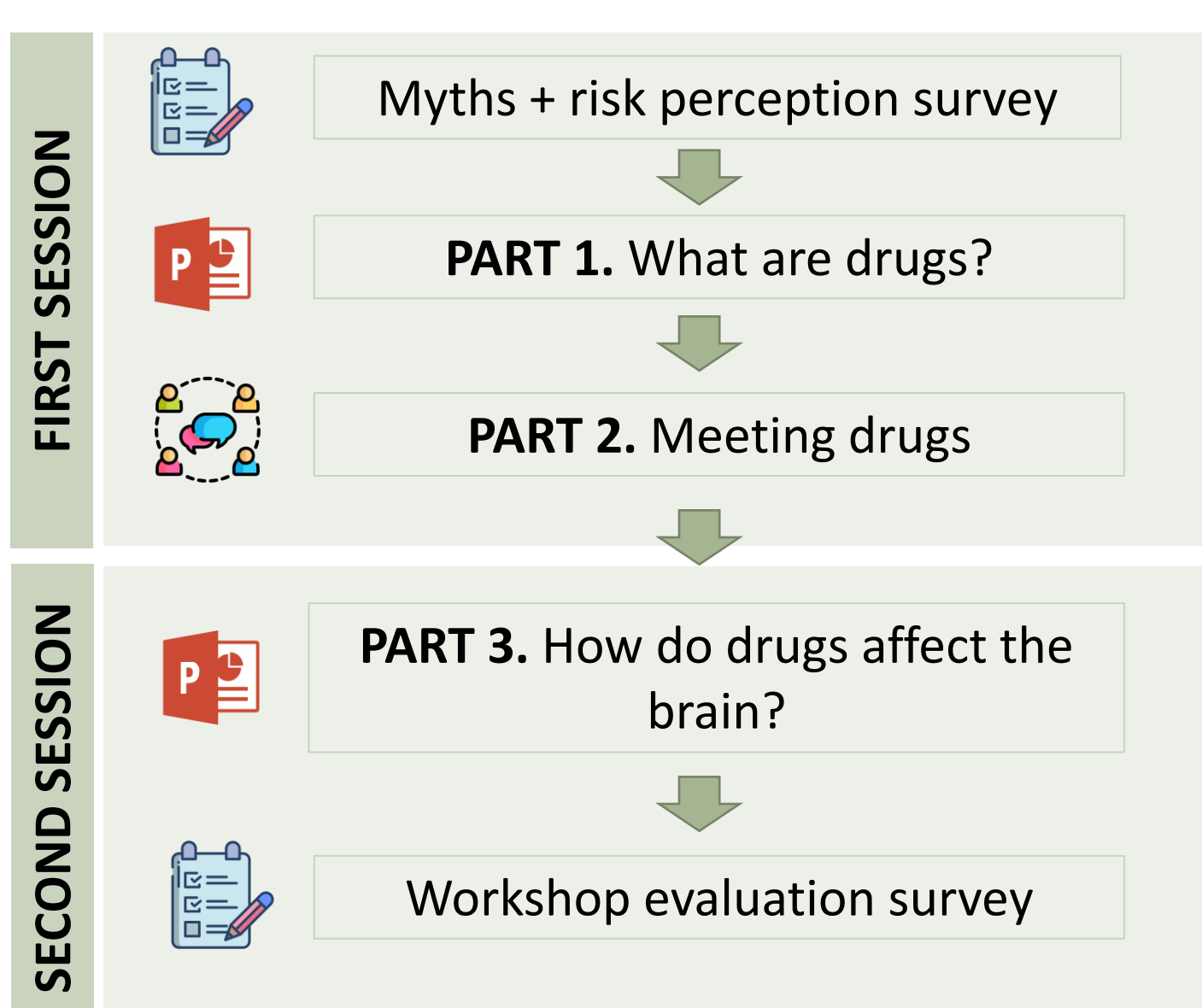
EDUCATIONAL ACTION

The main educational action consisted of a **DRUG WORKSHOP**, which included two sessions and was divided into three parts. Explanations were sequentially combined with individual and group activities.

MATERIAL

- ✓ PowerPoint presentation
- ✓ Two surveys
- ✓ Activity dossier
- ✓ Action protocols script

The organization of the drug workshop was:



RESULTS

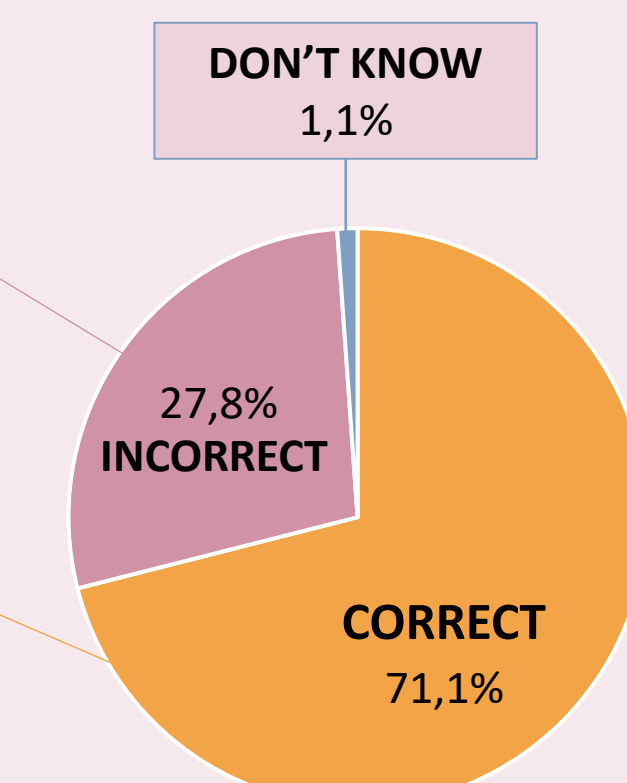
There were **83 students** from the third grade of secondary school between **14 and 16 years old**.

DRUG MYTHS PREVALENCE

The prevalence of drug myths was estimated using a true/false test consisting of **12 statements**.

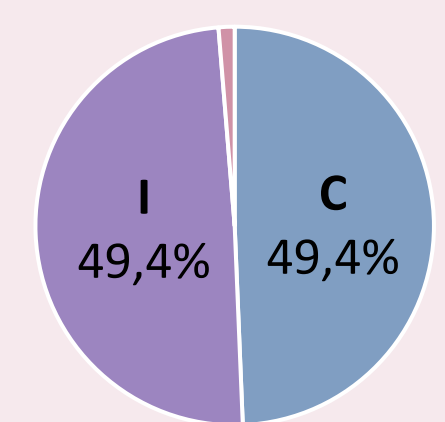
On average, students believe **27,8%** of drug myths

71,1% of the myths are well identified. Some statements had a 90% success rate or higher.



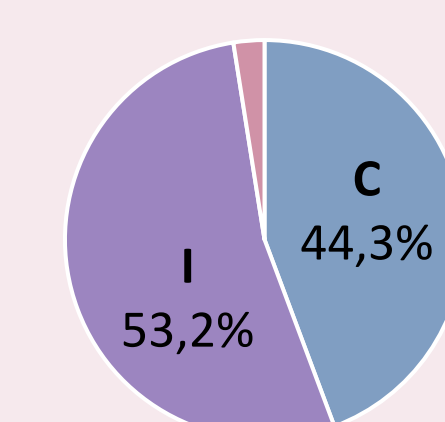
TWO MOST PREVALENT MYTHS WERE:

"Gambling addicts have a drug dependency"



Half of the students don't know the difference between **DRUG ADDICTION** and **ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR**

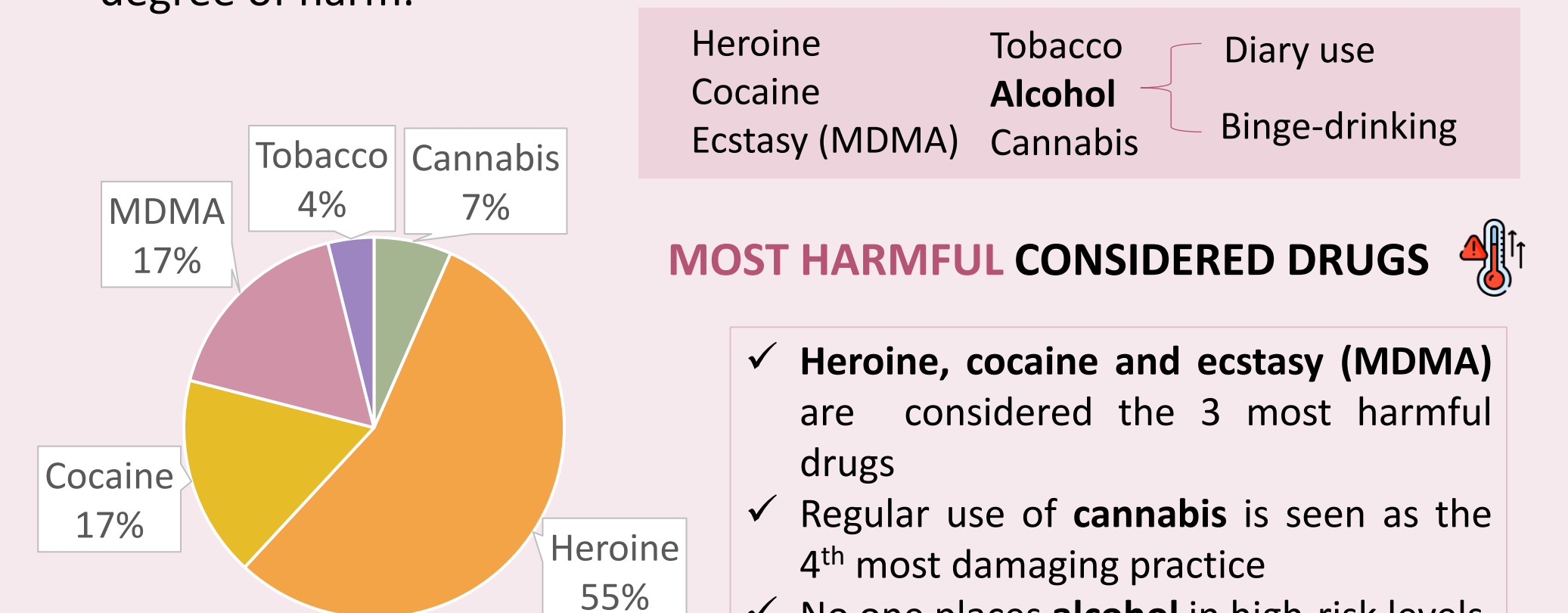
"Women tolerate alcohol worse than men"



53,2% of participants are unaware about this fact

DRUG RISK PERCEPTION

Students **ranked the regular use of 6 common drugs** according to the degree of harm.

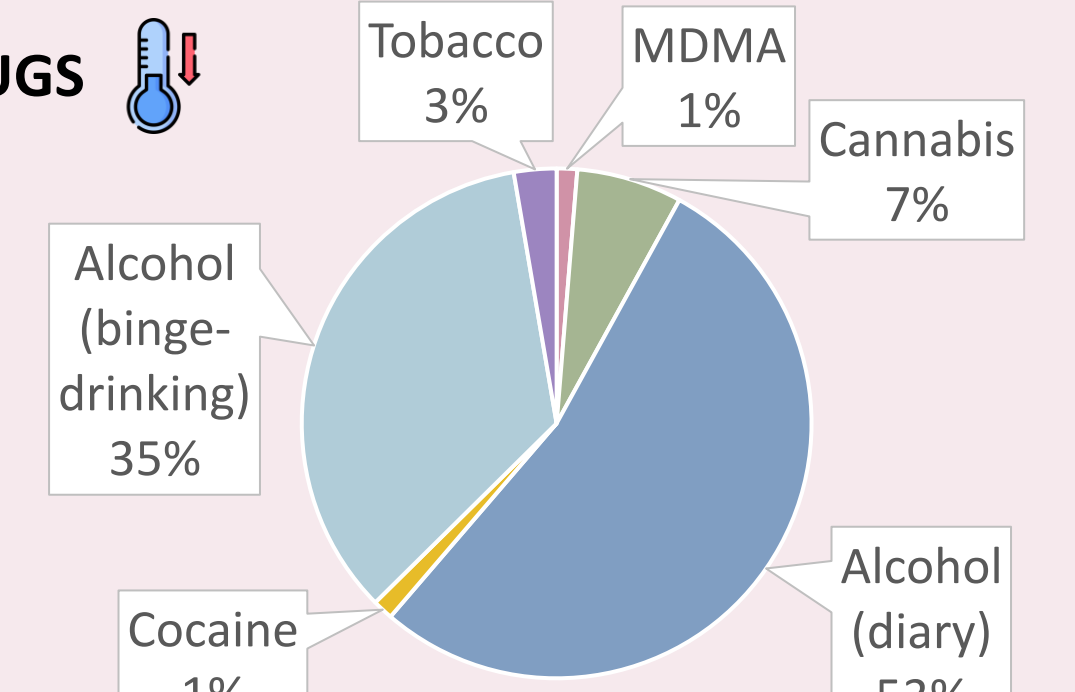


MOST HARMFUL CONSIDERED DRUGS

- ✓ **Heroine, cocaine and ecstasy (MDMA)** are considered the 3 most harmful drugs
- ✓ Regular use of **cannabis** is seen as the 4th most damaging practice
- ✓ No one places **alcohol** in high-risk levels

LESS HARMFUL CONSIDERED DRUGS

- ✓ Students believe that **diary alcohol consumption** is the less damaging practice
- ✓ **88%** of students place **alcohol** at the lowest level of risk
- ✓ **Cannabis** is the illegal drug with lower risk perception

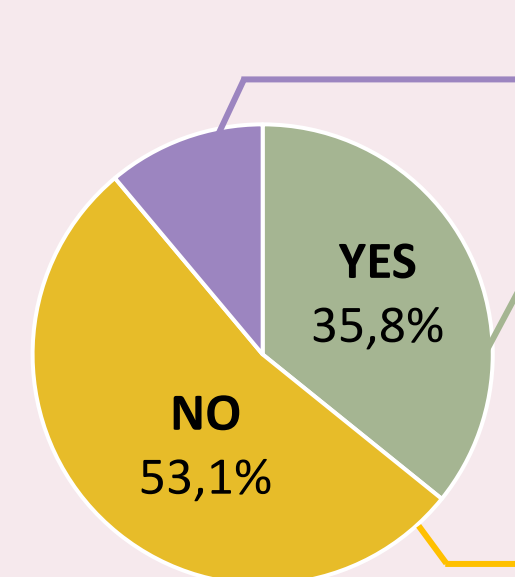


WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Workshop impact was evaluated by a **9-question survey** and an **optional comment box**.

- ✓ **97,6%** claimed to **understand** the scientific explanations. Moreover, almost all of them (**98,8%**) think they **could explain it**.
- ✓ All of the teenagers found the workshop **useful and relevant**, and **95,2%** of them would like to receive more informative talks.
- ✓ **98,8%** of adolescents consider themselves **more conscious about the risk of drug use** after the workshop.

"Have you ever consumed drugs without knowing their risks?"



11,1% of students have informed themselves before experiencing with a drug

35,8% of participants have consumed substances without knowing their effects or risks

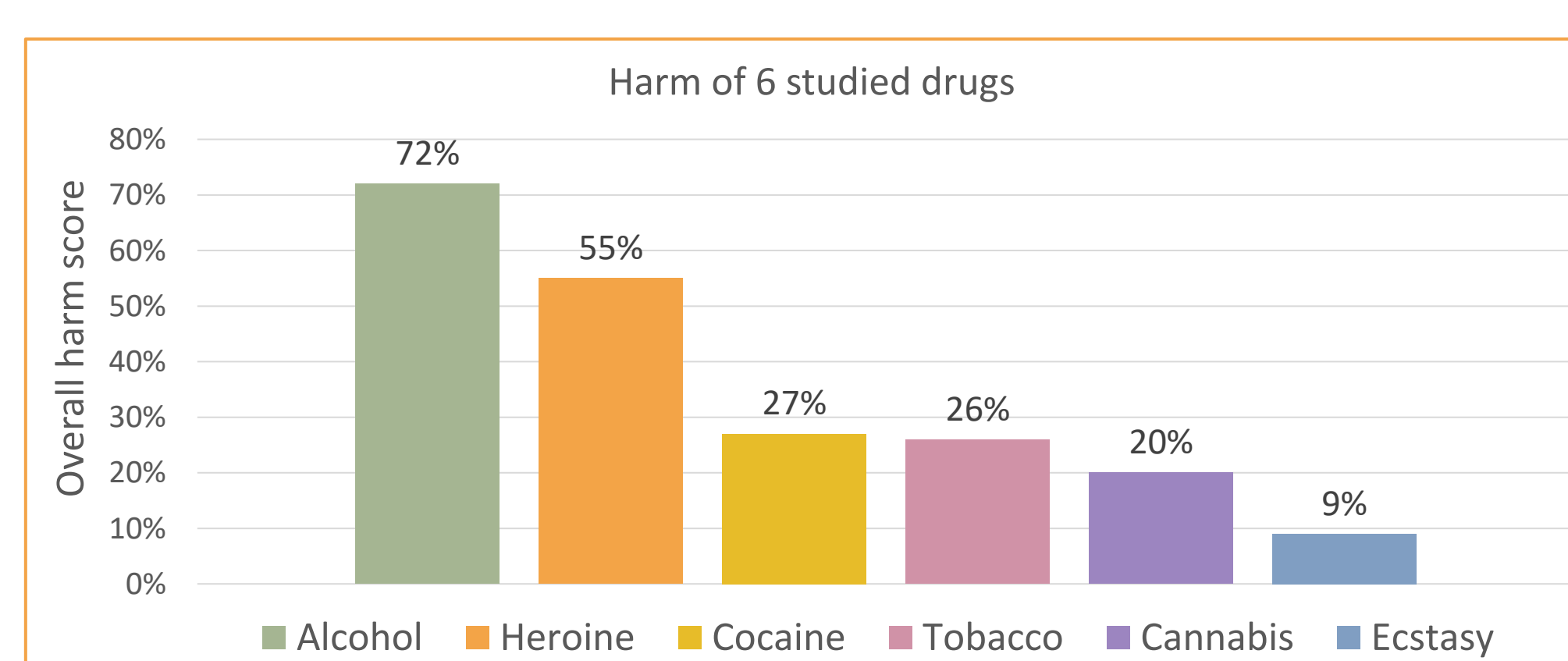
53,1% of participants have never use drugs



CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ Students have shown a **clear lack of knowledge** about drug use and its risks
- ✓ Some prevalent myths can have serious consequences when experimenting with drugs
- ✓ Adolescents have a total **opposite risk perception** about drug use
- ✓ **Legal drugs** are seen as the less harmful drugs because of their normalisation in society.
- ✓ Although 100% of students think it is important for adolescents to receive this type of workshop, **only 21,7%** of them **had ever received a drug workshop** in their life.

It is necessary to remove entire drug myths, educate adolescents on evidence-based education, and raise awareness of drug risks in adolescence.



Harm caused by drugs. Adapted from Nutt et al (2010).

WE CAN'T IGNORE NO MORE
THIS EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION



Let's be the example they deserve!