

Message from Director, Central Narcotics Bureau

Overview

Singapore adopts a comprehensive drug control strategy that tackles both drug demand and supply. It involves preventive drug education, tough anti-drug laws, rigorous enforcement, international engagement, and rehabilitation and aftercare of drug offenders.

The drug situation in the region continues to be of concern. East and Southeast Asia are currently among the world's largest methamphetamine markets, and the problem is aggravated by organised drug syndicates' increased capacity and capability to manufacture illicit drugs in the region.¹ According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, a record amount of 172 tons of methamphetamine were seized in the East and Southeast Asian region in 2021. Several countries have also reported a decrease in drug prices, making it more affordable for abusers. This may further deepen their addiction.

The regional drug situation is also affected by shifting global attitudes toward drugs which have influenced countries' drug control approaches. Within ASEAN, some countries are reportedly looking to follow Thailand's footsteps and shift towards decriminalisation and legalisation of cannabis use. In Singapore, the rise of cannabis abuse is of major concern.

¹ Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest Developments and Challenges, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2022.

Local drug situation

In 2022, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) conducted intensive enforcement operations that resulted in the dismantling of 23 drug syndicates. CNB also worked closely with other Home Team and government agencies to conduct more than 700 joint operations, including at the checkpoints, to intercept drug movements both into and within Singapore.

The number of drug abusers arrested in 2022 increased by 4% from 2021. We have also observed worrying trends of increased cannabis seizures and a growing number of new cannabis abusers below the age of 30 years, with some as young as 14. Some of the abusers were involved in drug trafficking. While we continue to receive strong support from a very large majority of youths for Singapore's drug-free approach and laws, recent surveys have shown that, fuelled in part by the 'normalising' of abuse of cannabis in other parts of the world, a growing proportion of our youths may hold more permissive views on drugs.² Despite the harms of cannabis being well-evidenced by the medical community, including its potential for addiction, they do not think cannabis is harmful. CNB will increase our efforts to raise the awareness of our youths, about the harms of cannabis and drug abuse.

Staying ahead of the changing drug landscape

CNB ensures Singapore's drug laws are updated regularly to stay ahead of the evolving drug landscape. The First and Third Schedules to the Misuse of Drugs Act were expanded in June 2022 to cover more drugs and more precursors used for the manufacturing of drugs.

² A survey by the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) in 2020 found that 82.5% of youth respondents aged 18 to 30 supported Singapore's zero-tolerance approach towards drugs. However, this was lower than the level of support from older respondents above age of 30, which was 88.3%. A Public Perception Survey on Singapore's Anti-Drug Policies conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2018 found that the youth respondents (13-30 years old) generally hold more permissive views on cannabis. While close to 90% of those above the age of 30 agreed that cannabis abuse should remain illegal in Singapore, only about 80% of youths held this view. Similarly, about 84% of those above the age of 30 perceived the consumption of cannabis to be harmful, as compared to around 68% of youths.

Concluding remarks

Singapore's focus is on building a drug-free society, not a drug-tolerant one. As a small nation, we can ill afford the societal devastation that can be caused by widespread drug addiction, as witnessed in other countries.

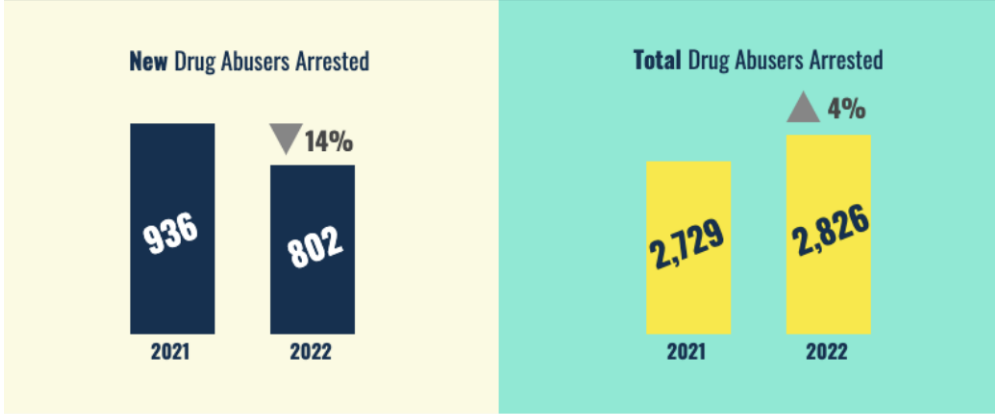
Singapore's tough stance on drugs is based on scientific evidence, and we will continue to communicate this clearly and dispel misinformation, so that Singaporeans can make informed choices on drug abuse.

I would like to call on more organisations to partner CNB in this endeavour. Everyone needs to take a clear zero-tolerance stand against drug abuse, speak out against it, and help spread drug-free values, especially to our children. Our future generations, like us, deserve to live in a safe, drug-free society.

Sam Tee
Director, Central Narcotics Bureau



KEY DRUG STATISTICS 2022

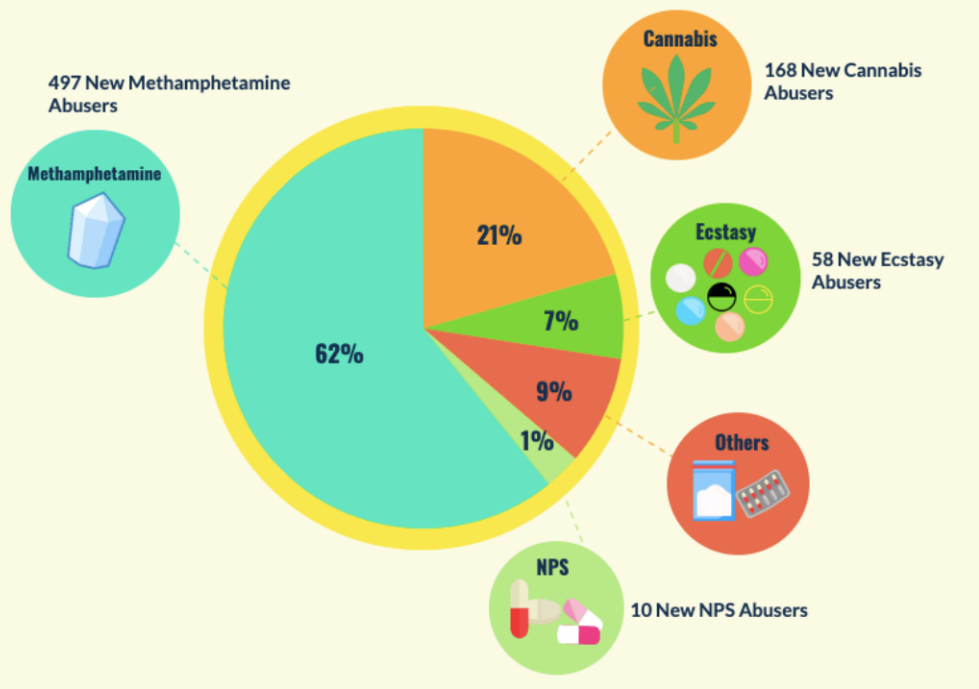


Proportion of new drug abusers arrested is at 28% of total drug abusers arrested
About 50% of new drug abusers arrested were below the age of 30

71% increase in cannabis abusers arrested
71% of cannabis abusers arrested are new abusers, of which 70% are below the age of 30

New Abusers by Drug Type

Methamphetamine, cannabis and ecstasy were the three most commonly abused drugs by new drug abusers arrested in 2022



OVERVIEW OF SINGAPORE'S DRUG SITUATION IN 2022

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Areas of concern

- The number of cannabis abusers arrested in 2022 increased by 71% from 2021, with the majority arrested being new abusers. More youths (below the age of 20) were also being arrested for abusing cannabis, as compared to 2021.

2. Sustained enforcement efforts to curb drug supply and demand

- CNB continued to work closely with the Home Team and other government agencies on enforcement operations to detect and prevent the flow of drugs into and within Singapore.
 - In 2022, together with the Singapore Police Force and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, CNB conducted 11 island-wide operations targeting drug traffickers and abusers, as well as 783 operations at our checkpoints to intercept attempts to smuggle drugs into Singapore.
 - CNB also carried out major operations that crippled 23 drug syndicates.
- CNB made significant drug seizures with an estimated market value of about S\$16.66 million.

3. Preventive drug education (PDE) outreach and engagement efforts

- In 2022, CNB kept up the momentum of our PDE efforts, and sought out new ways to educate and engage the community on the harms of drugs and strengthen the resilience of Singaporeans to stay drug-free.
 - For example, CNB continued to collaborate with students from MOE schools and Institutes of Higher Learning to co-create anti-drug contents that would be relatable and relevant to their peers. These included social media campaigns, augmented reality installations, and student-led roadshows.

4. Amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA)

- As part of regular drug reviews, the First Schedule to the MDA was further amended in June 2022 to cover 13 additional New Psychoactive Substances as Class A controlled drugs. Three new controlled substances were also added to the Third Schedule to the MDA.

I. GLOBAL DRUG SITUATION

Globally, the number of drug abusers remains high, with many countries seeing a higher percentage of youths taking drugs than before, particularly cannabis. According to data from the UNODC World Drug Report 2022 (WDR 2022), an increase in the use of cannabis and amphetamines was observed in 2020. In Southeast Asia, methamphetamine seizures in 2020 saw a 30% increase from 2019. Countries in East and Southeast Asia and North America, are the main points of departure or transit of methamphetamine globally.

2 Cannabis, the most widely used drug worldwide, also saw an increase in both seizures and abusers. Singapore, being in close proximity to the producing countries, is vulnerable to the inflow of cannabis. This is exacerbated by the long-term trend of increasing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, the psychoactive chemical substance in cannabis that causes abusers to feel 'high', in seized cannabis, which increases the health risks for those who consume it.³

3 The global shift in attitudes toward drugs has also led to the liberalisation of drug policies in some countries, as evident in the decriminalisation and/or legalisation of cannabis in Thailand and some states in the United States. In countries such as Uruguay and the United States, cannabis abuse among youths is high. It is also worrying to note that in countries that have legalised the use of cannabis, the proportion of people with psychiatric disorders and suicides associated with regular cannabis abuse has increased, alongside the number of hospitalisations.⁴

II. LOCAL DRUG SITUATION IN 2022

In 2022, CNB arrested 2,826 drug abusers, an increase of 4% from the 2,729 arrested in 2021.

2 The number of repeat drug abusers arrested increased by 13% to 2,024 in 2022, from 1,793 in 2021. The number of new drug abusers arrested decreased by 14% to 802 in 2022, from 936 in 2021. 50% of new abusers arrested were under 30 years old.

3 CNB made significant drug seizures in 2022. The drugs seized were estimated to have a street value of about S\$16.66 million. There was a 29% decrease in seizures of heroin to 68.22kg in 2022, from 95.43kg in 2021. Cannabis seizures saw, on the contrary, a 25% increase to 133.41kg in 2022, from 107.08kg in 2021. Seizures of crystalline methamphetamine (more commonly known as 'Ice') saw a 44% decrease to 28.15kg in 2022, from 49.95kg in 2021.

³ Cannabis, World Drug Report 2022, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2022

⁴ Cannabis, World Drug Report 2022, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2022

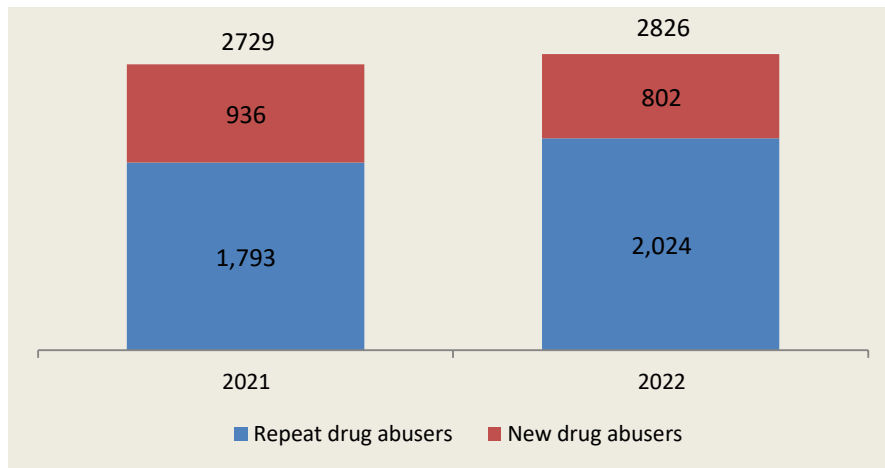
4 Methamphetamine, heroin, and cannabis were the three most commonly abused drugs in 2022, with 95% of drug abusers arrested abusing at least one of these three drugs. For new drug abusers, methamphetamine, cannabis and 'Ecstasy' were the three most commonly abused drugs, with 90% of new drug abusers arrested abusing at least one of these three drugs.

| Local Drug Seizures in 2022 | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Drug type | 2021 | 2022 | % change in seizure | Estimated market value 2021 | Estimated market value 2022 |
| Heroin No.3 | 95.43kg | 68.22kg | -28.5% | ≈ S\$18.31 million | ≈ S\$16.66 million |
| Methamphetamine ('Ice') | 49.95kg | 28.15kg | -43.6% | | |
| Cannabis | 107.08kg | 133.41kg | +24.6% | | |
| Cocaine | 0.98g | 405.22g | +41,249% | | |
| 'Ecstasy' | 9,313 tablets + 252.27g | 8,024 tablets + 1,082.48g | -13.8% (tablets) +329.1% (weight) | | |
| Methamphetamine tablets ('Yaba') | 29 tablets | 2,313 tablets | +7,875.9% | | |
| Ketamine | 3.46kg + 747 tablets | 3.97kg + 641 tablets | +14.7% (weight) -14.2% (tablets) | | |
| Erimin-5 | 13,292 tablets | 10,906 tablets | -18.0% | | |
| Buprenorphine ('Subutex') | NIL | NIL | - | | |
| New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) (e.g. synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones) | 2,775 tablets + 6,681.6g + 249 bottles + 9 stamps | 171 tablets + 571.11g + 57 bottles | -93.8% (tablets) -91.5% (weight) - 77.1% (bottles) - 100% (stamps) | | |

III. Local Drug Abusers – Overall

CNB arrested 2,826 drug abusers in 2022. New abusers arrested decreased by 14% to 802 in 2022, from 936 in 2021. Refer to Chart 1.

Chart 1: Total and new drug abusers

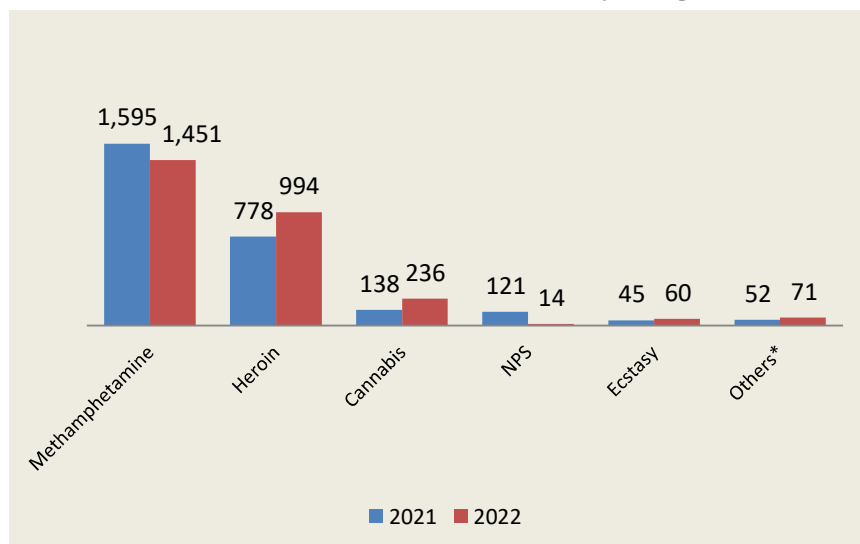


IV. Drug Abusers – By Drug Type

Methamphetamine, heroin, and cannabis were the three most commonly abused drugs in Singapore. 1,451 methamphetamine abusers (51%), 994 heroin abusers (35%) and 236 cannabis abusers (8%) were arrested in 2022. Refer to Chart 2.

2 The number of cannabis abusers arrested increased by 71% from 138 in 2021 to 236 in 2022. Out of the 236 cannabis abusers, about 61% are below the age of 30.

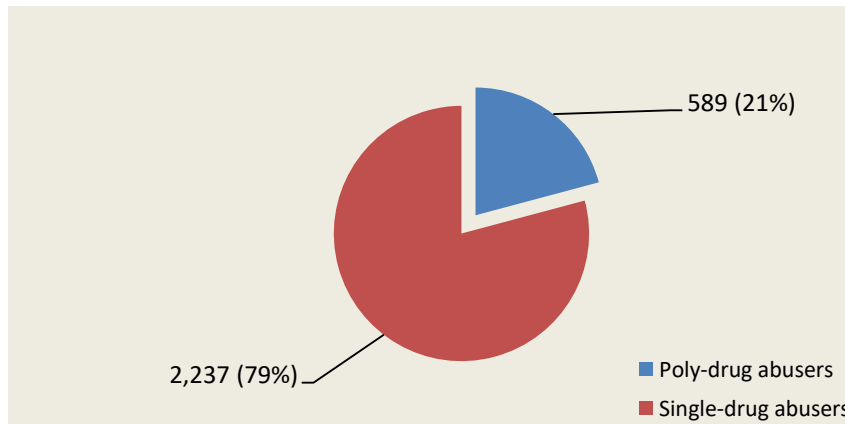
Chart 2: Total abusers by drug



*Others include Cocaine, Ketamine, GHB, LSD, Methadone, Methylphenidate and Tapentadol

3 Of the 2,826 drug abusers arrested in 2022, 589 abusers (21%) were poly-drug abusers i.e. persons who abused more than one type of drug. Refer to Chart 2a.

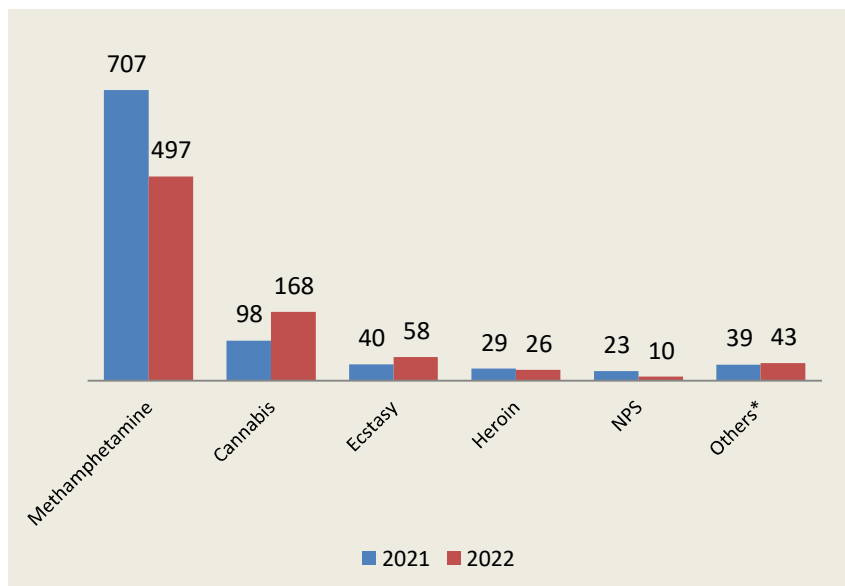
Chart 2a: Breakdown of single/poly-drug abusers in 2022



4 Methamphetamine abusers made up the largest proportion of all new abusers. Of the 802 new abusers arrested in 2022, 497 (62%) abused methamphetamine, which was a 30% decrease from the 707 arrested in 2021.

5 However, the number of new cannabis abusers arrested increased by 71% from 98 in 2021 to 168 in 2022. Refer to Chart 2b. Out of the 168 new cannabis abusers, 70% are below the age of 30.

Chart 2b: Total new abusers by drug type

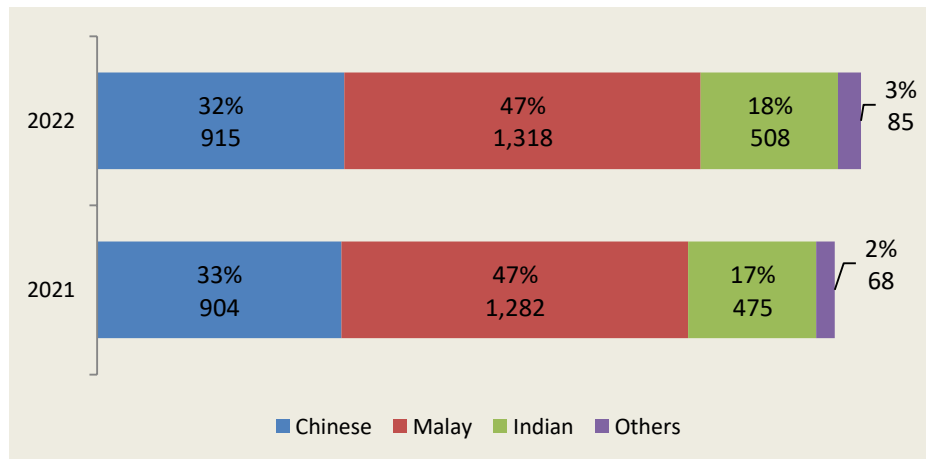


*Others include Cocaine, Ketamine, GHB, LSD, Methylphenidate and Tapentadol

V. Drug Abusers – By Ethnic Group

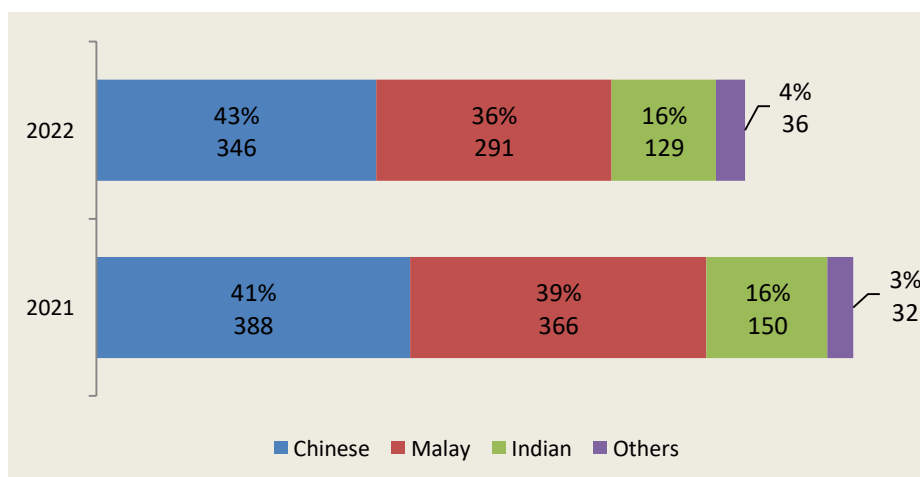
The number of Chinese, Malay and Indian drug abusers arrested increased in 2022. The proportion of drug abusers by ethnic group is similar to that of the previous year (2021). Refer to Chart 3.

Chart 3: Total abusers by ethnic group



2 In line with the overall decrease in new abusers arrested, the number of new Chinese, Malay and Indian drug abusers arrested decreased in 2022. Refer to Chart 3a.

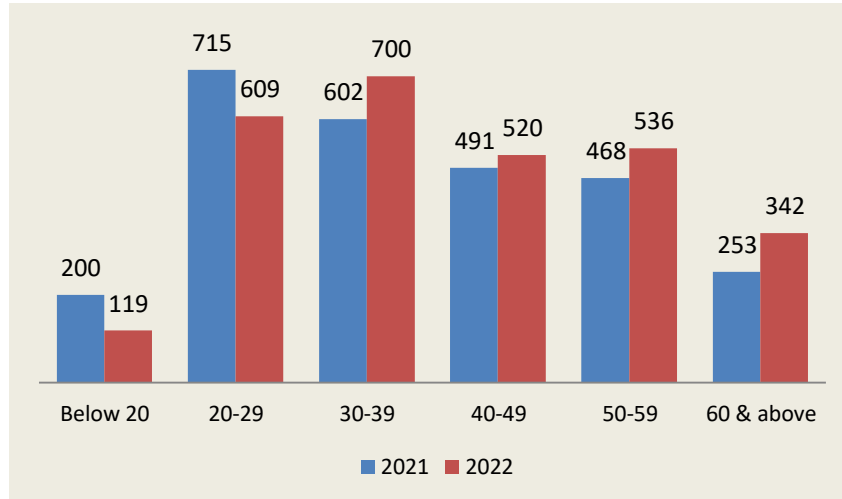
Chart 3a: New abusers by ethnic group



VI. Drug Abusers Arrested - By Age

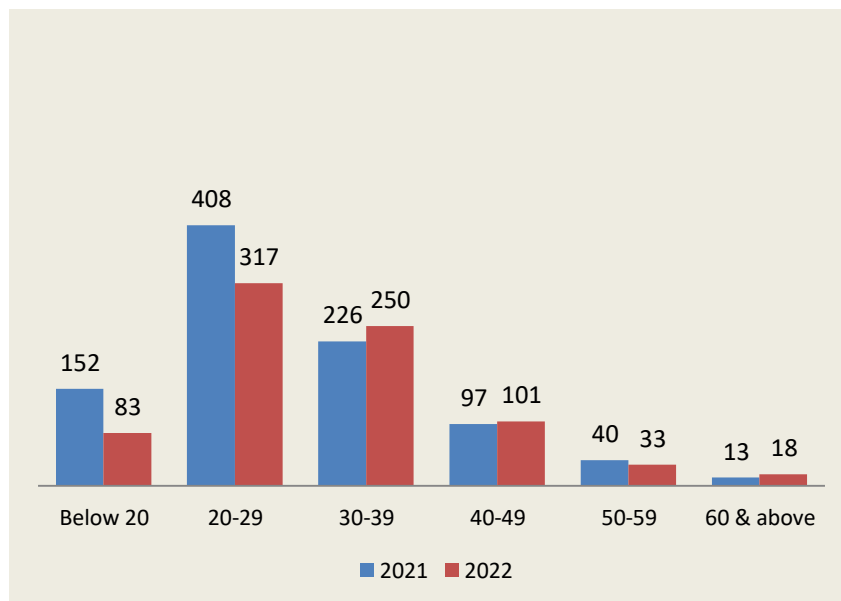
In 2022, 728 (26%) of all drug abusers arrested were below 30 years old. Refer to Chart 4.

Chart 4: Total abusers by age



2 In 2022, 400 (50%) of all new abusers arrested were aged below 30. Refer to Chart 4a.

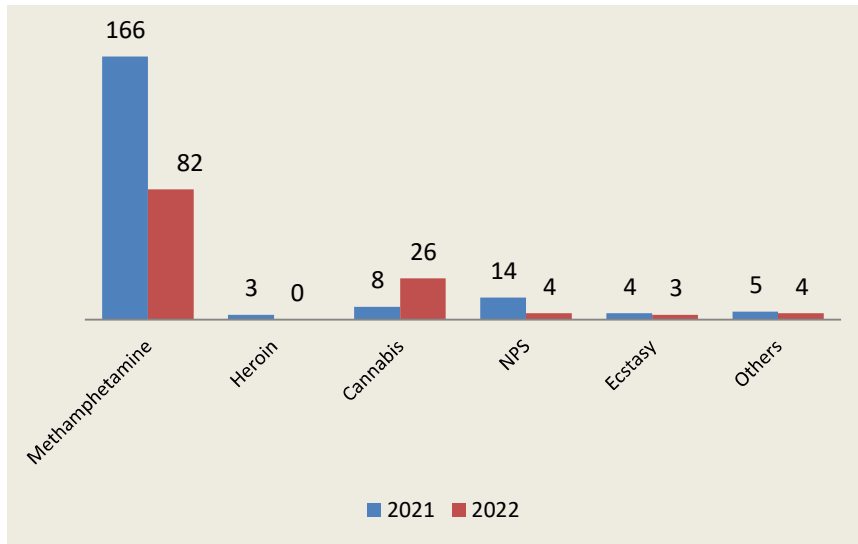
Chart 4a: New abusers by age



VII. Youth Drug Abusers - By Drug Type

The number of youth abusers (i.e. aged below 20 years old) caught who abused cannabis increased threefold from 8 in 2021 to 26 in 2022, forming about 22% of total youth abusers arrested. Those arrested who abused methamphetamine decreased by 51% from 166 in 2021 to 82 in 2022.

Chart 5: Youth abusers by drug type

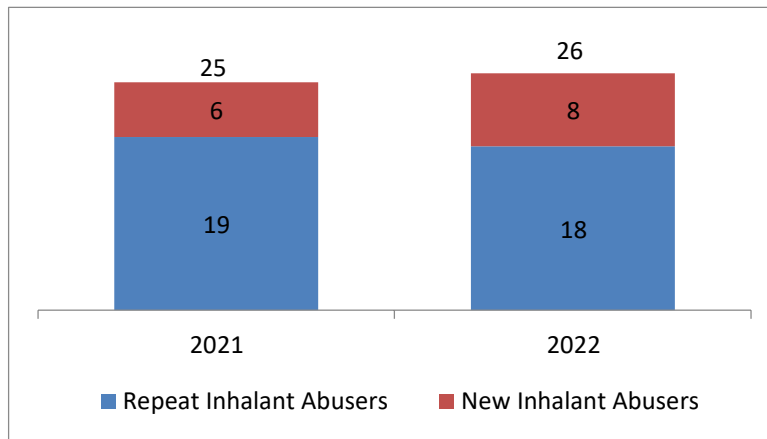


*Others include Ketamine

VIII. INHALANT ABUSE SITUATION IN 2022

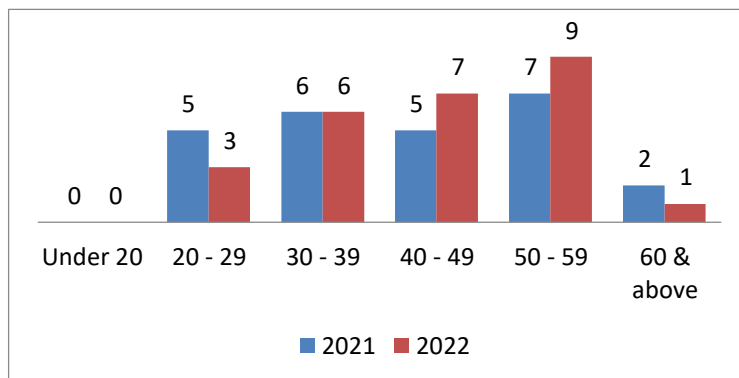
The number of inhalant abusers arrested in 2022 increased slightly to 26. Refer to Chart 6.

Chart 6: Inhalant abuse situation



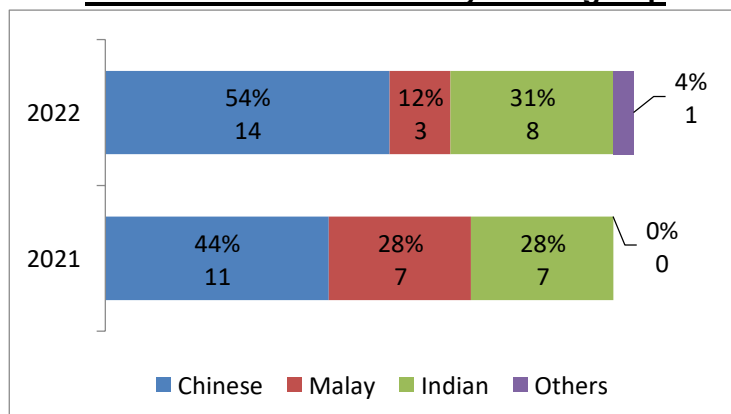
2 Inhalant abusers aged 50 to 59 formed the largest group at 35% (9 abusers) in 2022. Refer to Chart 7.

Chart 7: Inhalant abusers by age group



3 Slightly more than half of inhalant abusers arrested in 2022 were Chinese (54%). Refer to Chart 8.

Chart 8: Inhalant abusers by ethnic group



IX. PREVENTIVE DRUG EDUCATION (PDE) IS A KEY COMPONENT OF OUR STRATEGY

PDE continues to be the first line of defence in Singapore's overall drug control strategy – CNB actively reaches out to engage and educate youths on the harms of drugs, so that they do not become the next generation of drug abusers. Through public education, CNB seeks to equip youths and members of the public with the correct information on drugs, so that they can make informed choices, embrace a drug-free lifestyle, and amplify the anti-drug message amongst their loved ones and peers.

2 Strong support from the community, especially from schools and community partners, is crucial in Singapore's fight against drugs. We call on more organisations and partners to join us in speaking up against drug abuse, and in building a drug-free home for our children.

3 The highlights of our PDE initiatives in 2022 are at [Annex](#).

**ISSUED BY:
CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU
26 May 2023**

***NOTE:
2021 and 2022 figures are confirmed.
In this report, 2022 refers to the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.***