



## Message from Director, Central Narcotics Bureau

### Overview

Singapore's drug control strategy is a comprehensive one that tackles both drug supply and demand, through preventive drug education, tough anti-drug laws, vigorous enforcement, international engagement, rehabilitation and aftercare. Drug abuse exacts a heavy price from abusers, their family, and ultimately society.<sup>1</sup> Livelihoods are lost, relationships are destroyed, children suffer, and the wider community too, because of drug-related crimes.

The international drug scene remains of concern. There is a strong push by parties with vested interests for more liberal drug policies. Global methamphetamine seizures reached a record high of 228 ton-equivalents in 2018<sup>2</sup>, and there are indications of increased trafficking in Southeast Asia<sup>3</sup>. Methamphetamine has been the most commonly abused drug in Singapore since 2015.

### Arrests and enforcement operations in 2020

In 2020, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) conducted intensive enforcement operations, dismantling 24 drug syndicates. CNB also worked closely with other Home Team agencies to conduct over 500 operations across Singapore, including at the checkpoints to intercept attempts to smuggle drugs into Singapore.

While the number of drug abusers arrested decreased by 15% in 2020, there were several worrying trends nevertheless. The proportion of new drug abusers arrested remained high at 38%, and the proportion of new drug abusers arrested who were under 30 years old remained significant at 62%. Drug seizures also remained high in 2020.

### Staying ahead of the changing drug landscape

CNB continually reviews our anti-drug strategy to stay ahead of the changing drug landscape. For example, after the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) was amended in 2019 to enhance the rehabilitation regime, CNB psychologists developed the Community Supervision Skills (CoSS) course in 2020 to equip CNB officers with skills to engage drug supervisees more effectively, to prepare them for the implementation of the five-year Supervision Order under the amended MDA. Through structured supervision sessions, officers will be better able to identify the needs of the supervisees, refer them to relevant

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<sup>1</sup> Findings from a study by the Nanyang Technological University (commissioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2016) quantified the costs of drug abuse on abusers, the victims of their crimes, the family of the abusers and victims, and society.

<sup>2</sup> 'World Drug Report 2020' – Booklet 1, page 18, United Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020

<sup>3</sup> 'World Drug Report 2020' – Booklet 3, page 48, United Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020

social service agencies for assistance, and help them to engage in long-term pro-social behaviour to stay drug-free.

In September 2020, the First Schedule to the MDA was further amended. The Synthetic Cannabinoid generic groups were revised and expanded, and a new generic description to deal with Lysergic acid and diethylamide analogues was introduced to strengthen our enforcement levers against new psychoactive substances.

#### Adapting to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic

Despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, CNB has remained steadfast in its mission to keep Singapore drug-free, while also contributing to the national COVID-19 response. Close to 100 CNB officers were involved, taking on duties that included contact-tracing, conducting checks on persons subject to Stay-Home Notices (SHNs), as well as in managing dormitory operations.

COVID-19 did not put a stop to CNB's preventive drug education (PDE) efforts. Many of the outreach activities including community engagement and PDE talks were brought online. CNB also live-streamed PDE skits to schools.

#### Concluding remarks

Singapore adopts a harm-prevention approach to deal with the scourge of drugs. Our approach has worked well for our context and has helped keep the drug situation under control. This is why our approach continues to receive strong public support, with almost nine in ten Singaporeans agreeing that our drug laws are effective.<sup>4</sup>

CNB, working closely with the community, will keep up our efforts to prevent drug abuse, and to keep Singapore drug-free for future generations.

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<sup>4</sup> Findings from the 2018 Public Perception Survey on Singapore's Anti-Drug Policies conducted by MHA.

# 2020

# KEY DRUG STATISTICS

## New Drug Abusers Arrested



## Total Drug Abusers Arrested



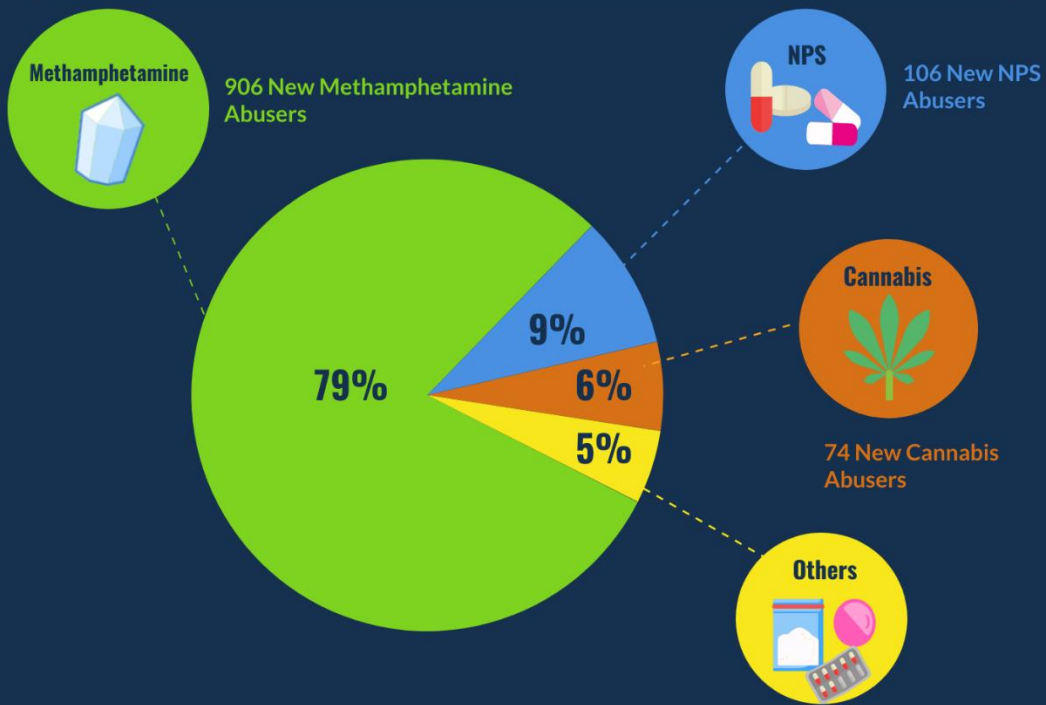
Proportion of new drug abusers arrested remained **high** at 38% of total drug abusers arrested

About 62% of new drug abusers arrested were below 30 years old



## New Abusers by Drug Type

Methamphetamine, NPS and cannabis were the three most commonly abused drugs by new drug abusers arrested in 2020



Note: Due to rounding of figures, the numbers in the pie chart do not add up to 100%

## OVERVIEW OF SINGAPORE'S DRUG SITUATION IN 2020

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### 1. Areas of concern

- The proportion of new drug abusers remained high – about 38% of drug abusers arrested in 2020 were new abusers.
- 62% of new drug abusers arrested were under 30 years old.

#### 2. Sustained enforcement efforts to curb drug supply and demand

- Despite the evolving COVID-19 situation, CNB remained vigilant and mounted intensive enforcement efforts against drugs and worked closely with Home Team agencies to suppress drug supply and demand.
  - In 2020, together with the Singapore Police Force and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, CNB conducted seven island-wide operations targeting drug traffickers and abusers, as well as 506 operations at our checkpoints to intercept attempts to smuggle drugs into Singapore.
  - CNB also carried out major operations that crippled 24 drug syndicates.
- While there was a decrease in the overall number of drug abusers arrested, CNB continued to make significant drug seizures estimated to have a market value of about S\$11.60 million.

#### 3. Preventive drug education outreach and engagement efforts amidst COVID-19

- CNB adapted preventive drug education (PDE) efforts to the new normal.
  - PDE talks and materials were hosted online and live-streaming of PDE skits was offered to schools.
  - Social media campaigns and online activities were launched in lieu of physical activities, including themed Instagram filters and sticker packs to encourage members of the public to pledge their commitment to the anti-drug cause for Drug-Free SG Light Up 2020.
- CNB continued to engage our partners, volunteers, anti-drug advocates and community groups, via online platforms.
  - For example, CNB collaborated with youths to co-create anti-drug content such as comic books, PDE short films and social media campaigns to reach out to their peers.

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

- In 2019, the drug rehabilitation regime was enhanced to allow repeat abusers with no other concurrent offences to undergo rehabilitation instead of being incarcerated. At the same time, the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) was amended to extend drug supervision from two years to five years after abusers are released from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre or prison.
- To prepare CNB officers for the implementation of the five-year Supervision Order, CNB psychologists developed the Community Supervision Skills (CoSS) course based on core correctional principles and effective practices in community supervision, with the aim of equipping CNB officers with skills to engage drug supervisees more effectively. Through structured supervision sessions, officers will be able to better identify the needs of the supervisees,

refer them to relevant social service agencies for assistance, and help them to engage in long-term pro-social behaviour to stay drug-free.

- CNB conducted a review of the MDA to tackle the challenge of many variants of new psychoactive substances (NPS) entering the drug market. These variants were designed to evade control by having chemical structures that lie outside the scope of the MDA. The First Schedule to the MDA was amended in September 2020 which introduced three new generic groups for Synthetic Cannabinoids and a new generic description to deal with Lysergic acid and diethylamide analogues. These changes have strengthened CNB's enforcement levers against NPS.

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## GLOBAL DRUG SITUATION

Singapore is vulnerable to developments in the regional drug situation. According to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2020 (WDR 2020), methamphetamine use remains of concern in East and Southeast Asia (SEA), as more than one-third (9.9 million people) of the estimated global number of users of amphetamines are in the region.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the NPS market is evolving and expanding quickly, posing another challenge to drug control in the region.

Singapore is surrounded by major markets for illicit drugs in the neighbouring regions of East Asia, South Asia and Oceania, and is within the reach and influence of transnational organised criminal groups.<sup>6</sup> CNB actively cooperates with its regional counterparts to tackle the transnational activities of drug syndicates. In 2020, CNB conducted 17 joint operations and joint investigations with our international counterparts.

On the international front, the push for more liberal drug policies, driven by commercial interests, has seen increasing normalisation of drug use in mass and social media. This can lead to the misperception that drugs are not that harmful, despite scientific evidence showing otherwise. Growing liberal attitudes could undermine Singapore's zero-tolerance stance against drugs.

## LOCAL DRUG SITUATION IN 2020

In 2020, CNB arrested a total of 3,014 drug abusers. This was a 15% decrease from the 3,526 drug abusers arrested in 2019, likely due to reduced movement of travellers across our borders, which impacted both drug supply and demand.

The number of repeat drug abusers arrested decreased by 9% to 1,871 in 2020, from 2,066 in 2019. The number of new drug abusers arrested decreased by 22% to 1,143 in 2020, from 1,460 in 2019. 62% of new abusers arrested were under 30 years old.

CNB made significant drug seizures in 2020. The drugs seized in 2020 were estimated to have a street value of about S\$11.60 million. There was a 79% increase in seizures of heroin to 68.25kg in 2020, from 38.12kg in 2019. Cannabis seizures saw a 55% increase to 43.12kg in 2020, from 27.78kg in 2019. Seizures of crystalline methamphetamine (more commonly known as 'Ice') saw a 46% increase to 44.87kg in 2020, from 30.80kg in 2019.

Methamphetamine, heroin and NPS were the three most commonly abused drugs in 2020, with 95% of drug abusers arrested abusing at least one of these three drugs. For new drug abusers, methamphetamine, NPS and cannabis were the three most commonly abused drugs, with 95% of new drug abusers arrested abusing at least one of these three drugs.

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<sup>5</sup> 'World Drug Report 2020' – Booklet 2, page 21, United Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020

<sup>6</sup> 'Transnational Organized Crime in Southeast Asia: Evolution, Growth and Impact', UNODC, 2019

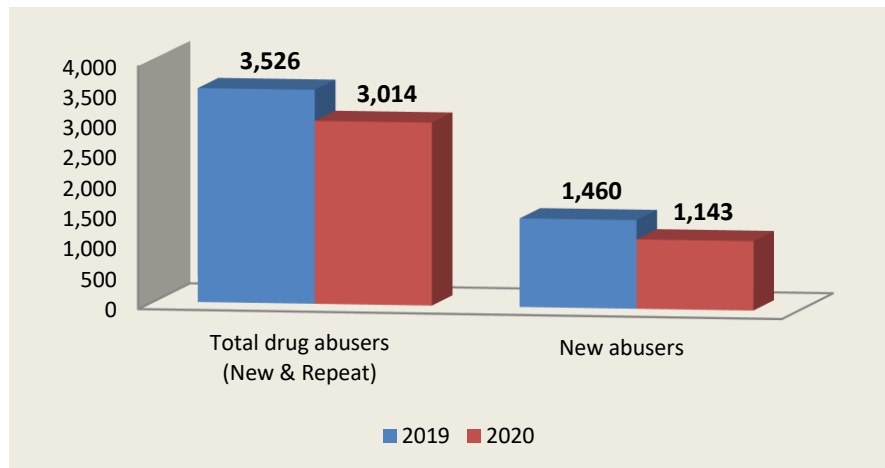
Local Drug Seizures in 2020					
Drug type	2019	2020	% change in seizure	Estimated market value 2019	Estimated market value 2020
Heroin No.3	38.12kg	68.25kg	+79.0%	≈ S\$6.49 million	≈ S\$11.60 million
Methamphetamine ('Ice')	30.80kg	44.87kg	+45.7%		
Cannabis	27.78kg	43.12kg	+55.2%		
Cocaine	60.35g	22.66g	-62.5%		
'Ecstasy'	5,742 tablets + 469.47g	19,837 tablets + 63.84g	+245.5% (tablets) -86.4% (weight)		
Methamphetamine tablets ('Yaba')	691 tablets	66 tablets	-90.4%		
Ketamine	3.00kg	4.08kg	+36.0%		
Nimetazepam	8,204 tablets	42,706 tablets	+420.6%		
Buprenorphine ('Subutex')	NIL	NIL	-		
New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) (e.g. synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones etc.)	413 tablets + 9,471.33g + 90 bottles <sup>7</sup> + 1 stamp	94 tablets + 5,757.19g + 30 bottles	-77.2% (tablets) -39.2% (weight) -66.7% (bottles) -100.0% (stamps)		

<sup>7</sup> Liquid-filled bottles of various volumes

## Local Drug Abusers - Overall

CNB arrested 3,014 drug abusers in 2020. New abusers arrested decreased by 22% to 1,143 in 2020 from 1,460 in 2019. New abusers continue to form a significant proportion (38%) of all abusers arrested. Refer to Chart 1.

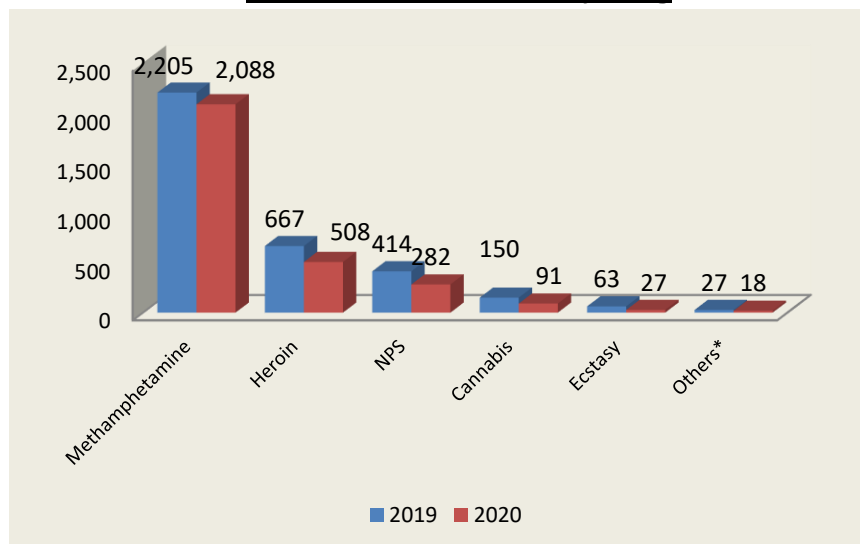
**Chart 1: Total and new drug**



## Drug Abusers - By Drug Type

Methamphetamine, heroin and NPS remained the three most commonly abused drugs in Singapore. 2,088 methamphetamine abusers (69%), 508 heroin abusers (17%) and 282 NPS abusers (9%) were arrested in 2020. Refer to Chart 2.

**Chart 2: Total abusers by drug**

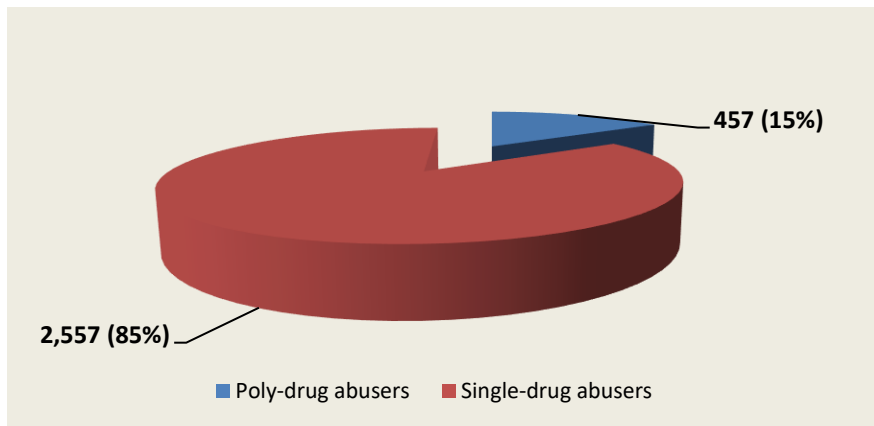


\*Others include Cocaine, Ketamine, LSD and Methadone



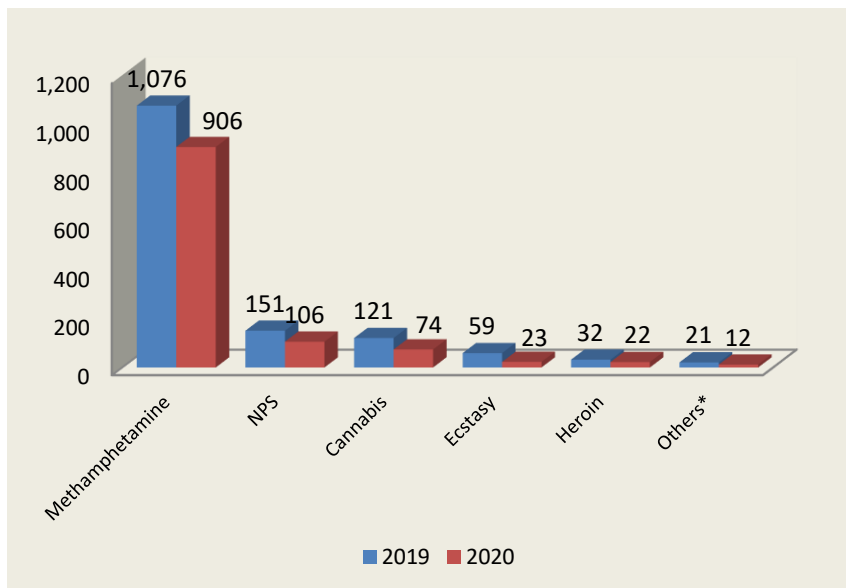
Of the 3,014 drug abusers arrested in 2020, 457 abusers (15%) were poly-drug abusers who abused more than one type of drug. Refer to Chart 2a.

**Chart 2a: Breakdown of single/poly-drug abusers in 2020**



Methamphetamine abusers made up the largest proportion of all new abusers. Of the 1,143 new abusers arrested in 2020, 906 (79%) abused methamphetamine. Refer to Chart 2b.

**Chart 2b: Total new abusers by drug type**

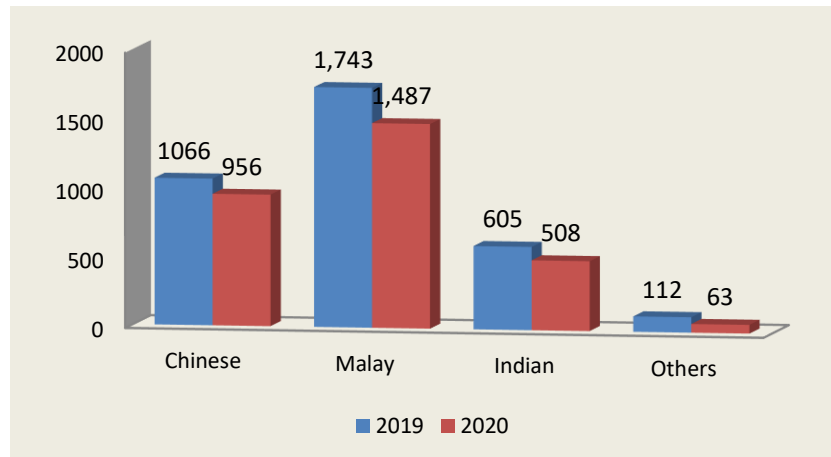


\*Others include Cocaine, Ketamine and LSD

## Drug Abusers - By Ethnic Group

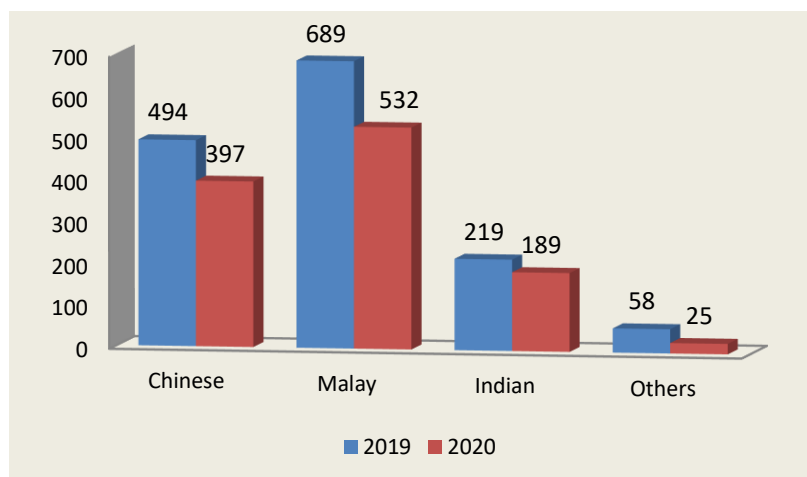
The number of drug abusers arrested decreased across all ethnic groups in 2020. The proportion of drug abusers by ethnic group is similar to the previous year (2019). Refer to Chart 3.

**Chart 3: Total abusers by ethnic group**



Similarly, the number of new drug abusers arrested decreased across all ethnic groups in 2020. The proportion of new drug abusers by ethnic group is similar to the previous year (2019). Refer to Chart 3a.

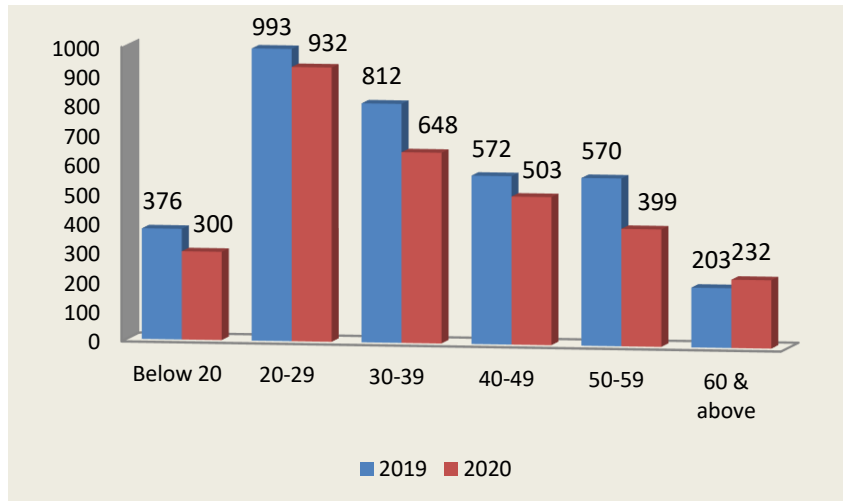
**Chart 3a: New abusers by ethnic group**



## Drug Abusers Arrested - By Age

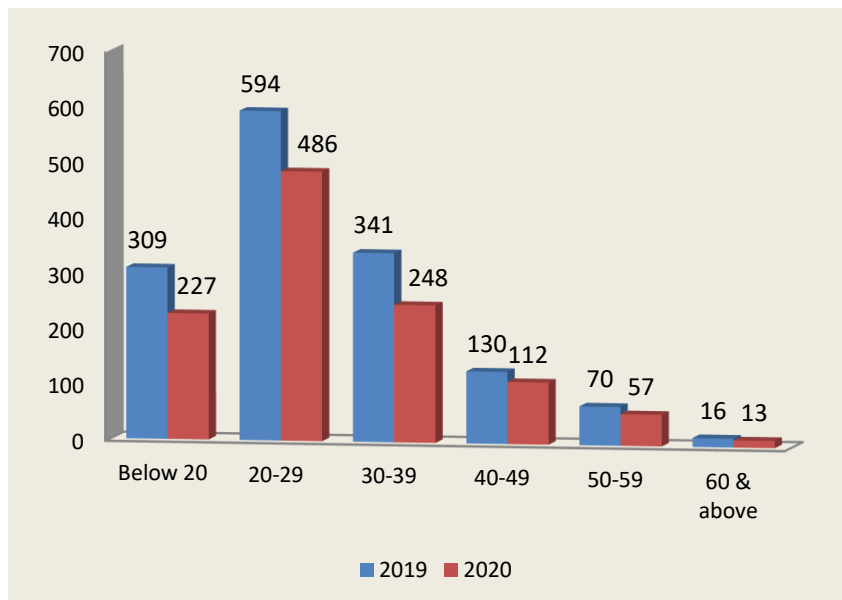
In 2020, 1,232 (41%) of all drug abusers arrested were below 30 years old. Drug abusers in the 20 to 29 age group continued to form the largest group of abusers. There was a 14% increase in the number of drug abusers in the 60 and above age group to 232 in 2020, from 203 in 2019. Refer to Chart 4.

**Chart 4: Total abusers by age**



In 2020, 713 (62%) of all new abusers arrested were aged below 30. Refer to Chart 4a.

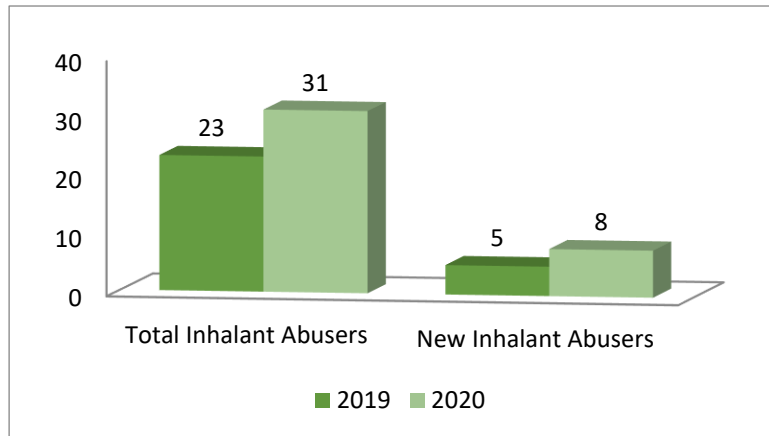
**Chart 4a: New abusers by age**



## INHALANT ABUSE SITUATION IN 2020

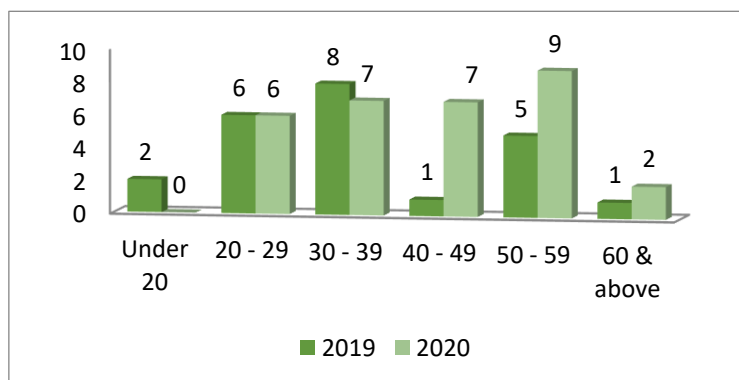
There was a 35% increase in the total number of inhalant abusers arrested – from 23 in 2019, to 31 in 2020. Refer to Chart 5.

**Chart 5: Inhalant abuse situation**



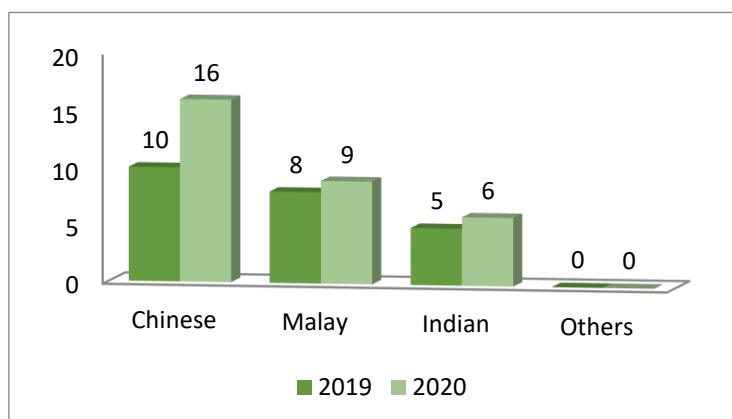
The number of inhalant abusers arrested in 2020 increased across the following age groups – 40 to 49, 50 to 59 and those 60 and above. Inhalant abusers aged 50 to 59 formed the largest group at 29% (9 abusers) in 2020. Refer to Chart 6.

**Chart 6: Inhalant abusers by age group**



The majority of inhalant abusers arrested in 2020 were Chinese (52%). Refer to Chart 7.

**Chart 7: Inhalant abusers by ethnic group**



## **PREVENTIVE DRUG EDUCATION IS A KEY COMPONENT OF OUR STRATEGY**

The principle underlying Singapore's approach to the drugs problem is to prevent harm to our people and society, rather than allowing the drug problem to fester and then trying to mitigate the harm. CNB's Preventive Drug Education (PDE) is our first line of defence. It aims to reduce the demand for drugs by educating youths on the dangers of drug dependence, and engaging community partners and the public to sustain a national consensus of zero tolerance against drug abuse.

CNB conducted its outreach and engagement activities online given the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media campaigns and online activities were launched in lieu of physical activities, and CNB's engagements with partners, volunteers, anti-drug advocates and community groups likewise took place on online platforms.

A list of highlights of the PDE initiatives in 2020 is attached at [Annex](#).

**ISSUED BY:  
CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU  
3 FEBRUARY 2021**

***NOTE: 2019 figures are confirmed, and 2020 figures are provisional. In this report, 2020 refers to the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020.***