

SINGAPORE DRUG SITUATION REPORT 2023

Message from Director, Central Narcotics Bureau

The global drug situation is worsening. More drugs are being produced and more countries are taking a softer approach towards drug control. Lobbying by drug producers and other groups with a similar interest to liberalise the drug regime, through well-funded marketing campaigns, has also shifted public attitudes towards “softer” drugs such as cannabis, and the misperception that these drugs are harmless.

According to the World Drug Report 2023, an estimated half a million deaths were attributable to drug use, with drug overdoses accounting for a quarter of these deaths. Many countries are suffering from a deteriorating law and order situation due to drug related violence and crimes, and turf wars between drug syndicates.

Singapore’s drug situation remains under control, but there are worrying trends. The number of drug abusers arrested in 2023 increased by 10% from 2022. Among the new abusers arrested, more than half were below 30 years old. The 2022 Health and Lifestyle Survey conducted by the Institute of Mental Health corroborated this observation and found that the mean age of onset of drug abuse was 15.9 years, with 41.8% of abusers saying that they had started taking drugs before the age of 18. Many consumed the drugs at home or their friend’s home.

We are very concerned that drug abuse seems to be starting at a much younger age. The youngest abusers arrested in 2023 were five 14-year-olds. We are also seeing more female abusers. The number of female abusers arrested increased by 11% from 408 in 2022 to 454 in 2023. They now form 15% of all arrested drug abusers.

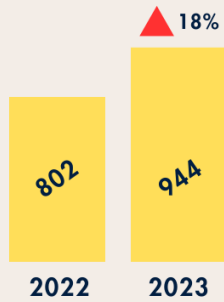
Last year, the most common drugs abused continue to be methamphetamine, heroin, and cannabis. CNB dismantled 25 drug syndicates and arrested many traffickers, including syndicates using the Telegram platform to peddle their wares to young people. We seized drugs with a street value of more than S\$15 million.

CNB will be relentless in the fight against drugs. We will continue our preventive drug education programmes and our tough enforcement stance. However, we cannot stem the tide alone but need the support of the public, especially parents. Our youths are constantly exposed to liberal drug ideas and misinformation about the harms of drugs. Parents should have early conversations with their children about such, and guide them towards leading a healthy, drug-free life.

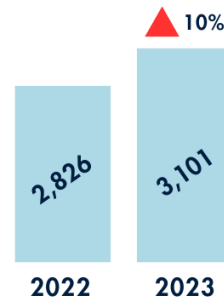
Sam Tee
Director, Central Narcotics Bureau

2023 KEY DRUG STATISTICS

New Drug Abusers Arrested

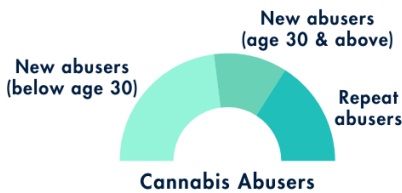


Total Drug Abusers Arrested



30% of arrested drug abusers were new abusers

About 51% of new drug abusers arrested were below the age of 30

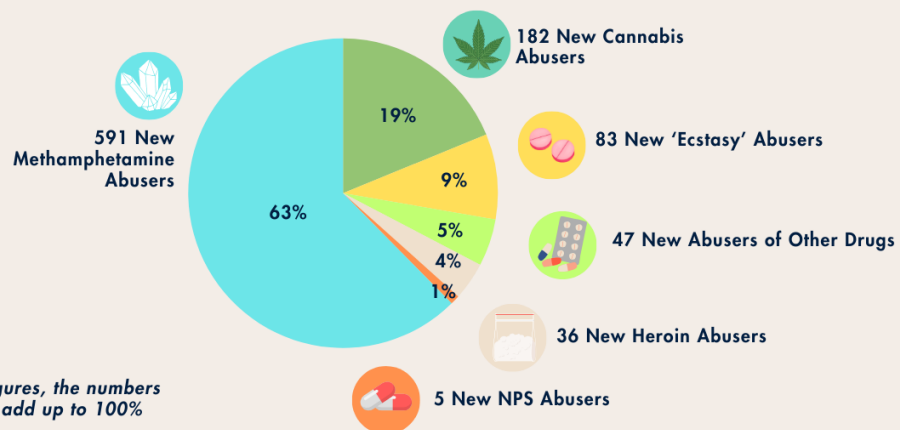


17% increase in cannabis abusers arrested

66% of cannabis abusers arrested were new abusers, of which 64% were 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 2023



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

NOTE:
2022 figures are confirmed and 2023 figures are provisional.
In this report, 2023 refers to the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

OVERVIEW

1. Areas of concern

- The number of new abusers arrested in 2023 increased by 18% from 2022, and more than half were below the age of 30.
- 63% of the new abusers arrested in 2023 were methamphetamine abusers, compared to 44% in 2022.
- The number of cannabis abusers arrested in 2023 reached a 10-year high, with a 17% increase from 2022.

2. Relentless enforcement to curb drug supply and demand

- CNB smashed 25 drug syndicates in 2023 and arrested many traffickers, including syndicates using the Telegram platform.
- CNB made significant drug seizures with an estimated market value of about S\$15.37 million.

3. Preventive drug education (PDE) outreach and engagement

- In 2023, CNB intensified our PDE efforts with our partners, including government agencies, community groups and anti-drug advocates, to educate and engage different segments of the community on the harms of drugs and empowering Singaporeans to stay drug-free.
 - For example, CNB and MOE enhanced the integration of PDE messages into the school syllabus. CNB and the National Council Against Drug Abuse collaborated with community groups to organise outreach programmes which promote drug-free values and lifestyles.

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

- To ensure that our laws remain effective against emerging drug trends, penalties for the possession of large quantities of eight controlled drugs were introduced in the MDA Amendment Bill 2023.
 - The eight drugs are morphine, diamorphine, opium, cocaine, cannabis, cannabis resin, cannabis mixture, and methamphetamine.
 - The new punishment quantum is tiered, based on the weight of the drugs.
 - For the first weight threshold, the punishment is a minimum sentence of 10 years and 5 strokes. For the second weight threshold, the punishment is a minimum sentence of 20 years and 10 strokes.
- In addition, a new statutory framework to deal with psychoactive substances will come into effect in the first half of 2024.
 - A psychoactive substance is a substance or product that has the capacity to create a psychoactive effect on an individual if the individual smokes, administers to himself or herself or otherwise consumes, the substance or product.
- The First Schedule of the MDA was amended in July 2023 to include additional substances as Class A controlled drugs.

I. GLOBAL DRUG SITUATION

Globally, the number of drug abusers remains high. According to the World Drug Report (WDR) 2023, an estimated 500,000 deaths were attributed to drug use in 2019, with drug overdoses accounting for a quarter of these deaths.¹ Cannabis remains the most commonly consumed drug with an estimated 219 million abusers, which accounts for 74% of the global drug abuser population. Many countries are seeing ever higher percentages of their youths consuming cannabis.

2. The advocacy by pro-cannabis groups, including those with commercial interests, touts cannabis as a “natural remedy” for a wide array of health conditions to diminish perceptions of its harm and increase its use.² The global shift in public attitudes has led to more countries legalising the use of cannabis, such as in Thailand and some states in the United States. In Thailand, however, the government recently announced a roll-back of its policy because of the widespread cannabis abuse which followed, resulting in those under 18 being exposed to cannabis and subsequently experimenting with other drugs.³

3. An estimated 41% of drug use disorder cases globally is due to cannabis abuse. The WDR 2023 reiterated that drug abuse can have long-term negative effects and drug use at young ages can lead to faster development of dependence in adults and other problems in adulthood. There is strong scientific evidence of the adverse effects of cannabis use such as increased risk of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and psychotic illness.⁴

II. LOCAL DRUG SITUATION IN 2023

4. In 2023, CNB arrested 3,101 drug abusers, an increase of 10% from the 2,826 abusers arrested in 2022.

5. The number of repeat drug abusers arrested increased by 7% from 2,024 in 2022 to 2,157 in 2023. The number of new drug abusers arrested increased by 18%, from 802 in 2022 to 944 in 2023. 51% of the new abusers arrested in 2023 were under 30 years old, compared to 50% in 2022.

¹ Executive Summary, World Drug Report 2023, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2023

² Contemporary Issues on Drugs, 03: Herbal Cannabis for Medical Use: A Spectrum of Regulatory Approaches, World Drug Report 2023, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2023

³ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2738845#>

⁴ Extract from the Report of the 41st Expert Committee on Drug Dependence: Cannabis and cannabis-related substances (2019) - There is strong scientific evidence of the adverse effects of cannabis use. The World Health Organisation Expert Committee on Drug Dependence has stated that there are particular risks of cannabis use for children, such as respiratory depression, tachycardia, and coma. It has also noted a number of adverse effects associated with long term cannabis use, particularly increased risk of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and psychotic illness. It cautioned that cannabis can cause physical dependence in people who use the drug daily or near daily.

6. CNB made significant drug seizures in 2023. The drugs seized were estimated to have a street value of about S\$15.37 million. There was a 21% increase in seizures of heroin - 82.87kg in 2023, up from 68.22kg in 2022. Cannabis seizures saw a 46% decrease to 71.79kg in 2023, from 133.41kg in 2022. Seizures of crystalline methamphetamine (more commonly known as 'Ice') saw a 10% decrease to 25.47kg in 2023, from 28.15kg in 2022.

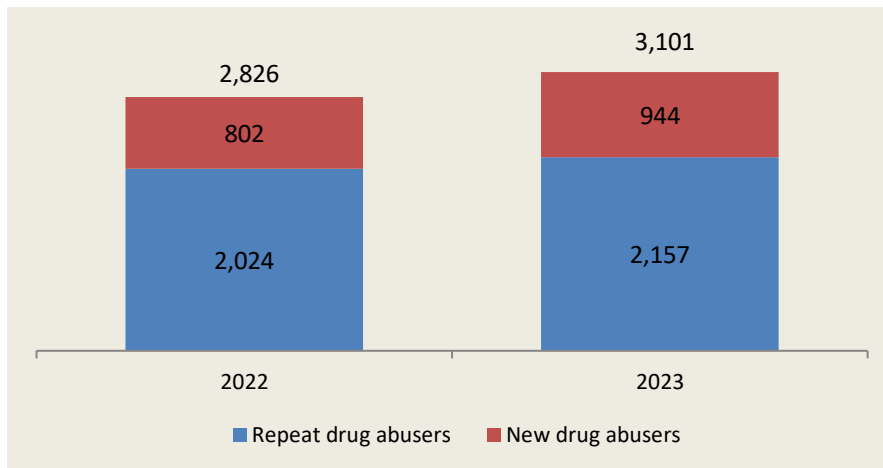
7. Methamphetamine, heroin, and cannabis were the three most commonly abused drugs in 2023, with 94% of drug abusers arrested abusing at least one of these three drugs. For new drug abusers, methamphetamine, cannabis, and 'Ecstasy' were the three most commonly abused drugs, with 91% of them abusing at least one of these three drugs.

Local Drug Seizures in 2023					
Drug type	2022	2023	% change in seizure	Estimated market value 2022	Estimated market value 2023
Heroin No.3	68.22kg	82.87kg	+21.5%	≈ S\$16.66 million	≈ S\$15.37 million
Methamphetamine ('Ice')	28.15kg	25.47kg	-9.5%		
Cannabis	133.41kg	71.79kg	-46.2%		
Cocaine	405.22g	70.73g	-82.5%		
'Ecstasy'	8,024 tablets + 1,082.48g	5,990 tablets + 1,882.72g	-25.3% (tablets) +73.9% (weight)		
Methamphetamine tablets ('Yaba')	2,313 tablets	139 tablets	-94.0%		
Ketamine	3.97kg + 641 tablets	4.65kg + 1,100 tablets	+17.1% (weight) +71.6% (tablets)		
Erimin-5	10,906 tablets	8,260 tablets	-24.3%		
Buprenorphine ('Subutex')	NIL	NIL	-		
New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) (e.g. synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones)	171 tablets + 571.11g + 57 bottles	3,031 tablets + 451.23g + 54 bottles	+1,672.5% (tablets) -21.0% (weight) -5.3% (bottles)		

III. Local Drug Abusers – Overall

8. CNB arrested 3,101 drug abusers in 2023. New abusers arrested increased by 18% from 802 in 2022 to 944 in 2023. Refer to Chart 1.

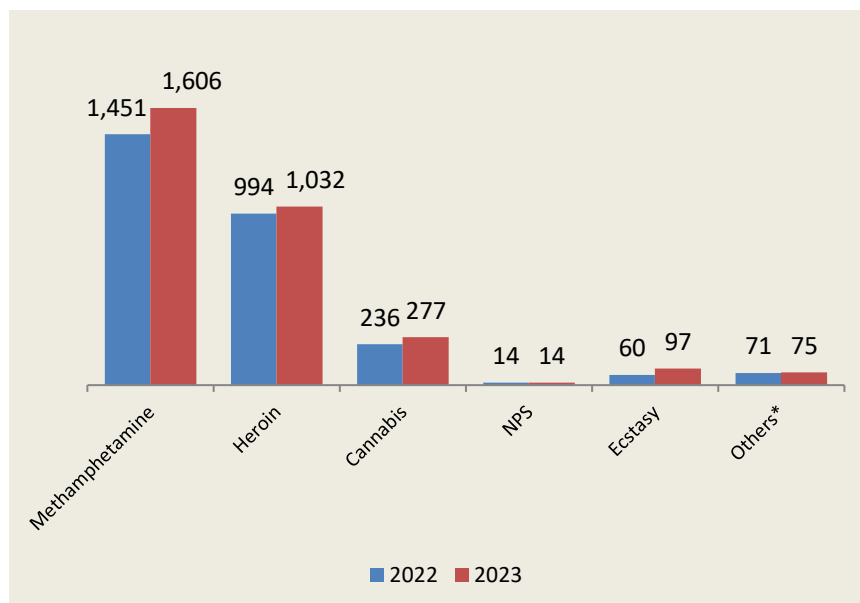
Chart 1: Total and new drug abusers



IV. Local Drug Abusers – By Drug Type

9. Methamphetamine, heroin, and cannabis were the three most commonly abused drugs in Singapore. 1,606 methamphetamine abusers (52%), 1,032 heroin abusers (33%), and 277 cannabis abusers (9%) were arrested in 2023. Refer to Chart 2.

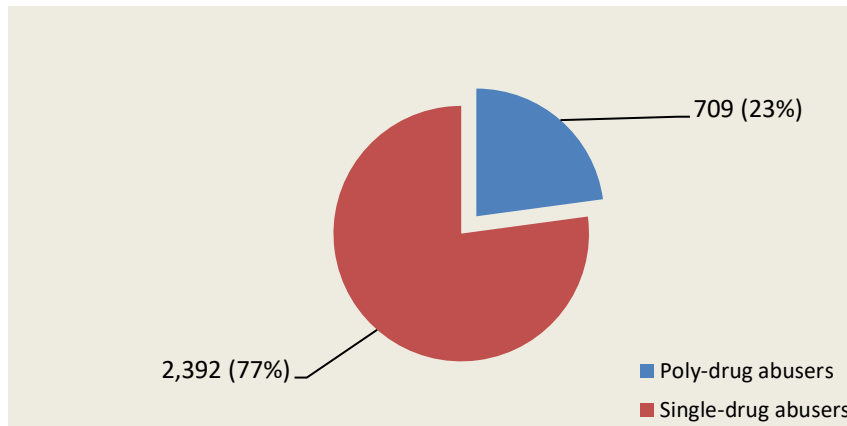
Chart 2: Total abusers by drug type



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

10. Of the 3,101 drug abusers arrested in 2023, 709 (23%) were poly-drug abusers, i.e., persons who abused more than one type of drug. Refer to Chart 2a.

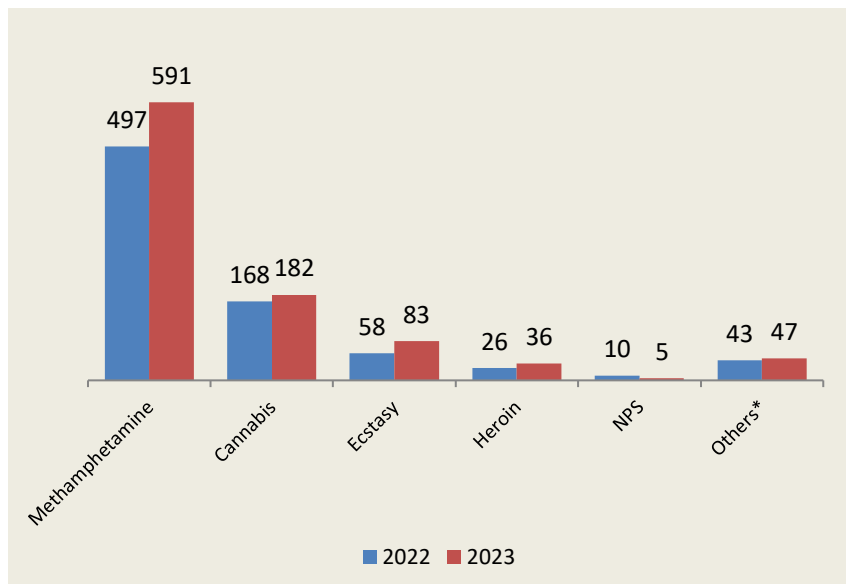
Chart 2a: Breakdown of single/poly-drug abusers in 2023



11. Methamphetamine abusers made up the largest proportion of all new abusers arrested. Of the 944 new abusers arrested in 2023, 591 (63%) abused methamphetamine, which was a 19% increase from the 497 arrested in 2022. Refer to Chart 2b. Of the 591 new methamphetamine abusers arrested, 48% were below the age of 30.

12. The number of new cannabis abusers arrested increased by 8% from 168 in 2022 to 182 in 2023. Refer to Chart 2b. Out of the 182 new cannabis abusers arrested, 64% were below the age of 30.

Chart 2b: Total new abusers by drug type

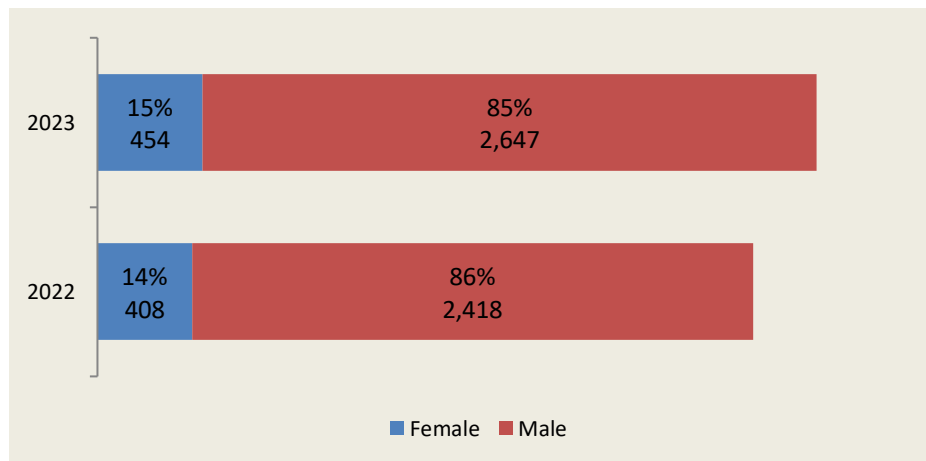


*Others include Cocaine, Ketamine, GHB, LSD, Methylphenidate, Nimetazepam, and Tapentadol

V. Local Drug Abusers – By Sex

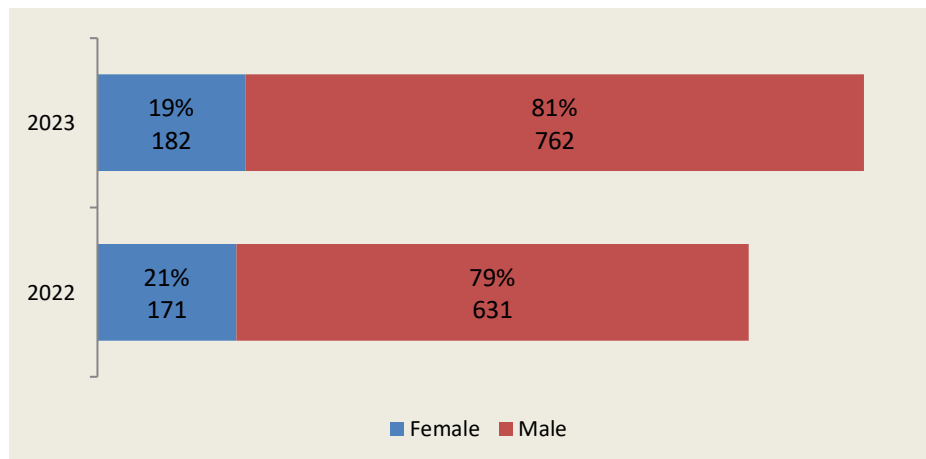
13. The number of female abusers arrested increased by 11% from 408 in 2022 to 454 in 2023. While male abusers continue to form the majority of those arrested (85%), the number of female abusers arrested now form 15% of the drug abusers arrested, up from 14% in 2022. Refer to Chart 3.

Chart 3: Total abusers by sex



14. In 2023, 182 (19%) of all new abusers arrested were females. Refer to Chart 3a. Of these, 118 (65%) were below the age of 30.

Chart 3a: Total new abusers by sex



VI. Local Drug Abusers – By Ethnic Group

15. The proportion of drug abusers and of new abusers by ethnic group remained similar to that of the previous year (2022). Refer to Charts 4 and 4a.

Chart 4: Total abusers by ethnic group

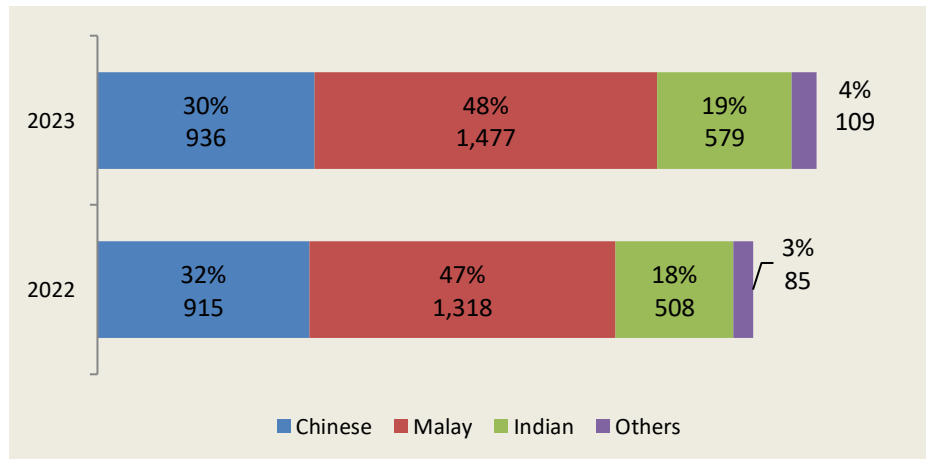
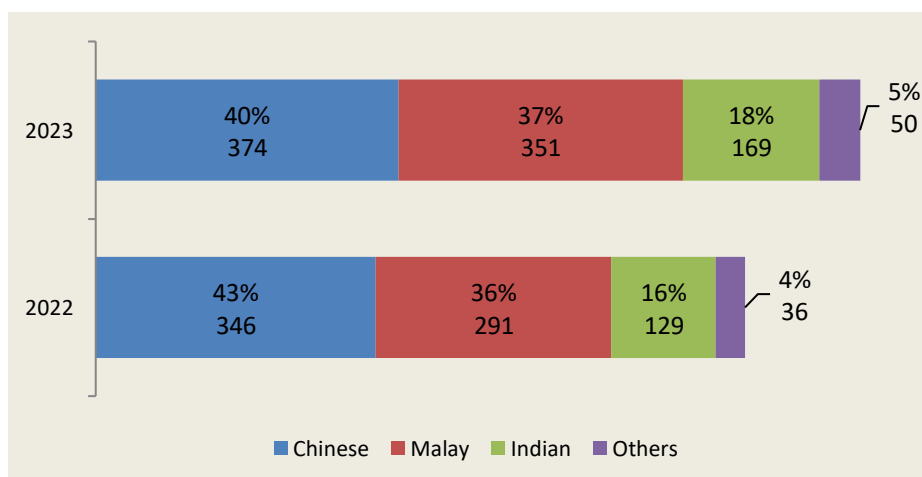


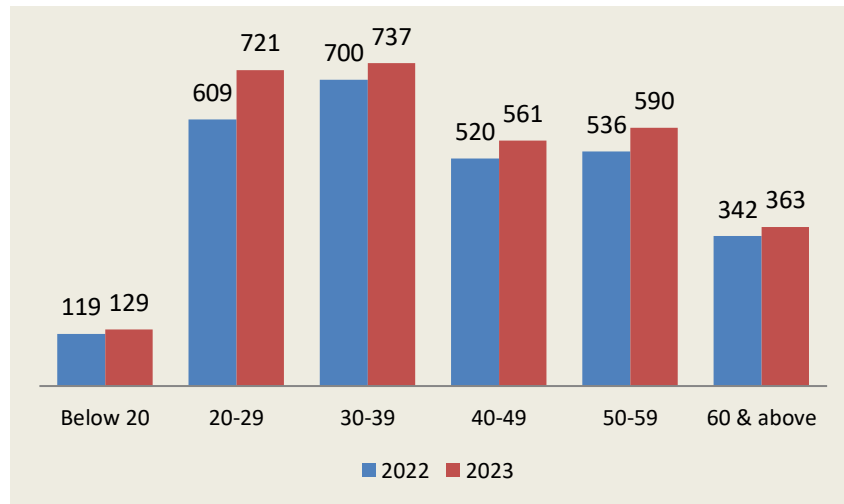
Chart 4a: New abusers by ethnic group



VII. Local Drug Abusers – By Age

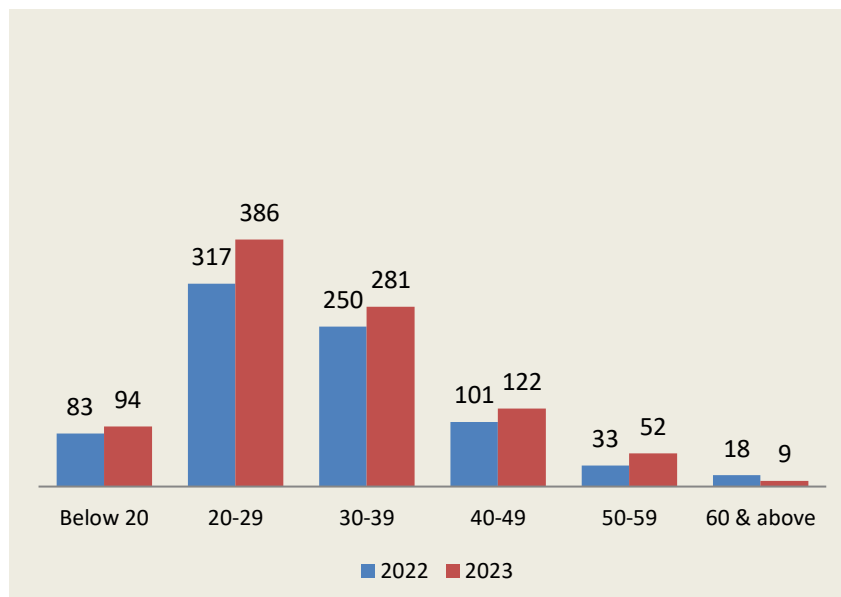
16. In 2023, 850 (27%) of all drug abusers arrested were below 30 years old. The number of youth abusers arrested (i.e., aged below 20 years old) increased by 8% to 129 in 2023 from 119 in 2022. Refer to Chart 5.

Chart 5: Total abusers by age



17. In 2023, 480 (51%) of all new abusers arrested were aged below 30. The number of new youth abusers (i.e., aged below 20 years old) arrested increased by 13% from 83 in 2022 to 94 in 2023. Refer to Chart 5a.

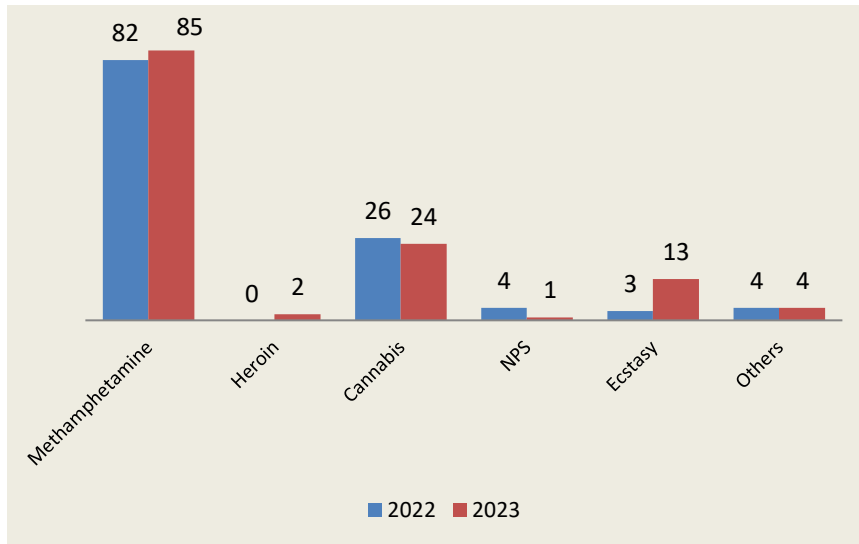
Chart 5a: Total new abusers by age



VIII. Local Youth Drug Abusers - By Drug Type

18. The number of youths (i.e., aged below 20 years old) who abused methamphetamine continued to form the bulk (66%) of the youth abusers arrested. The number of youth abusers arrested who abused cannabis decreased from 26 in 2022 to 24 in 2023. Youth 'Ecstasy' abusers arrested increased from 3 in 2022 to 13 in 2023.

Chart 6: Youth abusers by drug type



*Others include Ketamine

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

19. PDE is a key tenet in our harm prevention approach and is also the first line of defence in Singapore's drug control strategy. Through public education and community engagements, CNB seeks to equip youths and members of the public with the correct information on drugs, teach them how to stay away from drugs, and empower them to make informed choices and to be a positive influence on their loved ones and peers.

20. Strong support from the community, especially parents and schools, 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.

21. The highlights of our PDE initiatives in 2023 are at [Annex](#).

**ISSUED BY:
CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU
14 Feb 2024**

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