



**CNB**  
For a Drug-Free Singapore

# **Topic 1: Understand Singapore's DRUG POLICY**

# UNDERSTAND SINGAPORE'S DRUG POLICY

## DARK HISTORY OF DRUG ADDICTION IN SINGAPORE



Sale of opium was a lucrative source of government revenue

**1 out of 3** Chinese was an opium addict <sup>(1)</sup>

**45** opium dens <sup>(2)</sup>

**550** licensed opium dens <sup>(3)</sup>

1906: Public outcry against opium <sup>(3)</sup>

1946: Opium finally **made illegal** after 40 years of campaigning <sup>(1)</sup>

**65** people died in relation to drug abuse <sup>(4)</sup> :

Found dead on streets due to overdose

Hit by vehicles in a drug stupor

Set themselves alight and died from severe burns

Jumped to death

Drugs were freely sold in "black areas"

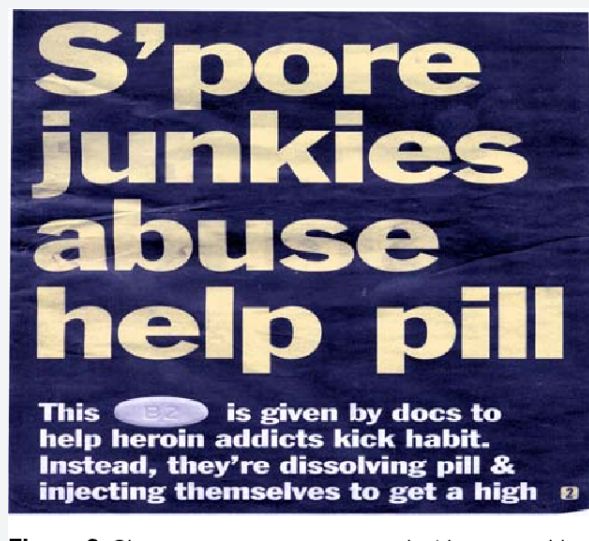
**1848**

**1900s**

**1969 - 1974**

# UNDERSTAND SINGAPORE'S DRUG POLICY

## DARK HISTORY OF DRUG ADDICTION IN SINGAPORE



**Subutex** (buprenorphine) was introduced as a substitution treatment for opiate addiction.

Intended to reduce heroin cravings and facilitate social functioning improvement among addicts.

2000 - 2002

Abusers started abusing Subutex by **mixing it with other drugs and injecting the concoction.**

Complications from Subutex abuse included **severe infections** leading to a concerning rise in **fatalities.** (1)

2002 - 2006

Singapore reclassified Subutex as a **Class A controlled drug** under the Misuse of Drugs Act in August 2006. (2)

**Subutex Voluntary Rehabilitation Program** (SVRP) provided medical detoxification and structured substance abuse counseling.

2006

**“If drug abuse were to be allowed to grow unchecked, we would eventually be faced with a dangerous national security problem... Rampant drug addiction among our young men and women will also strike at the very foundation of our social fabric and undermine our economy.”**



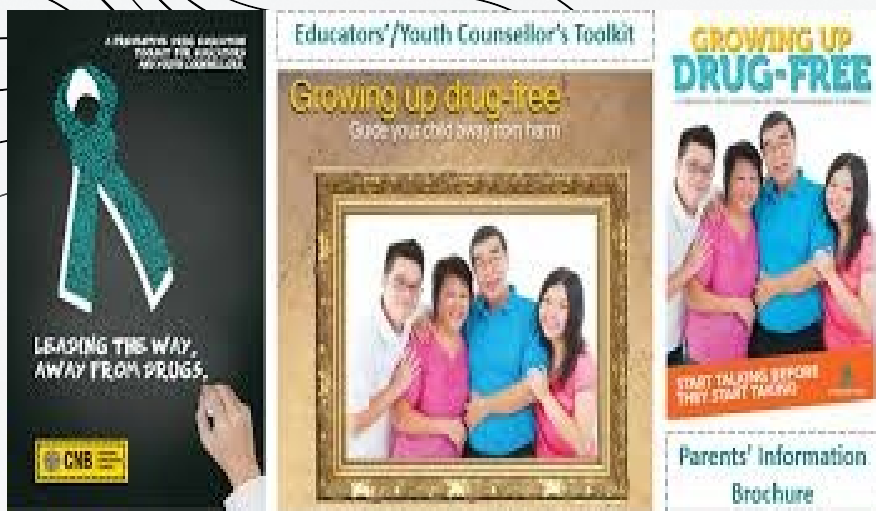
*Former Minister of Home Affairs , Mr Chua Sian Chin, 20 Nov 1975*

# UNDERSTAND SINGAPORE'S DRUG POLICY

## Harm Prevention

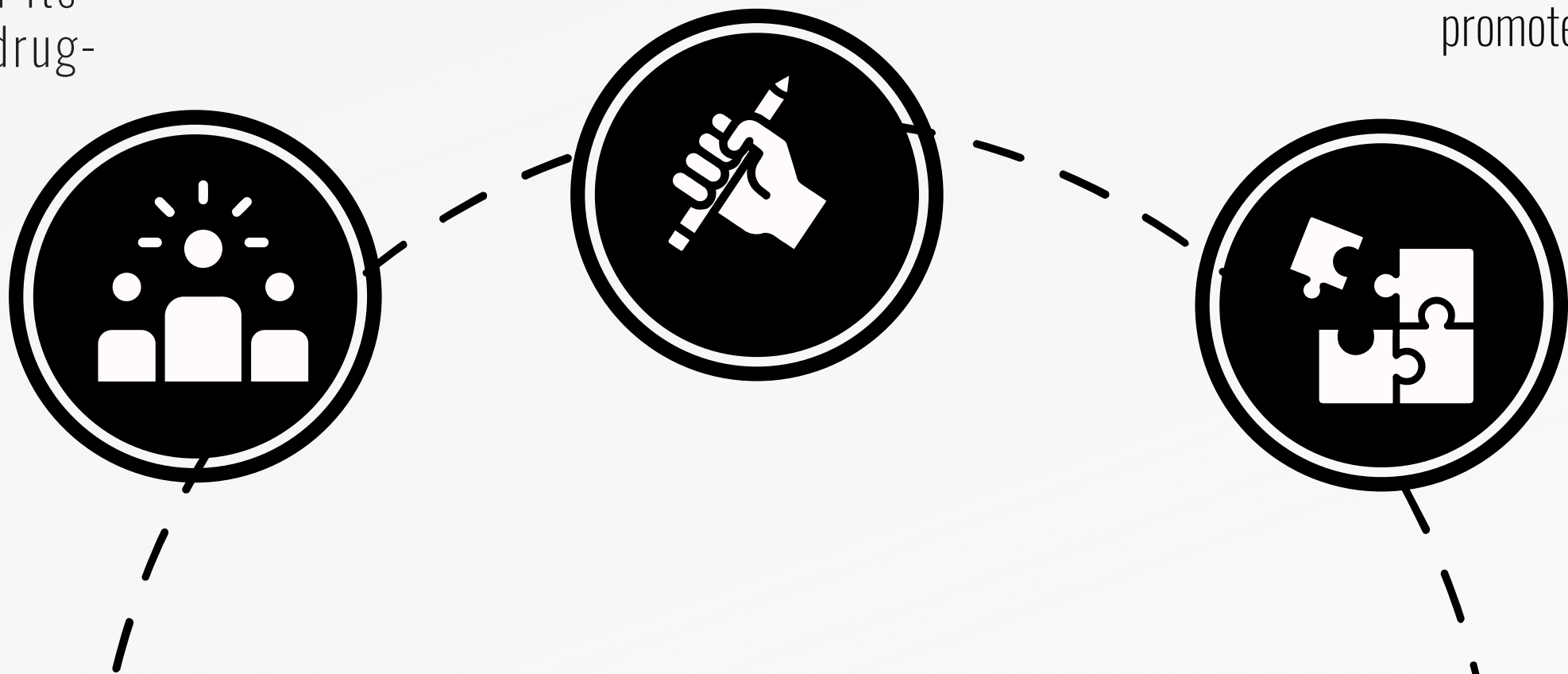
Prevention Drug Education

Aims to equip individuals with knowledge and skills to resist drug use by raising awareness of its risks and promoting drug-free lifestyles.



Tough Laws & Vigorous Enforcement

Strict legal penalties and rigorous policing to deter drug-related crimes and reduce drug abuse



Evidence-informed Rehabilitation & Aftercare

Provide tailored, research-based interventions and support to promote long-term recovery and prevent relapse.



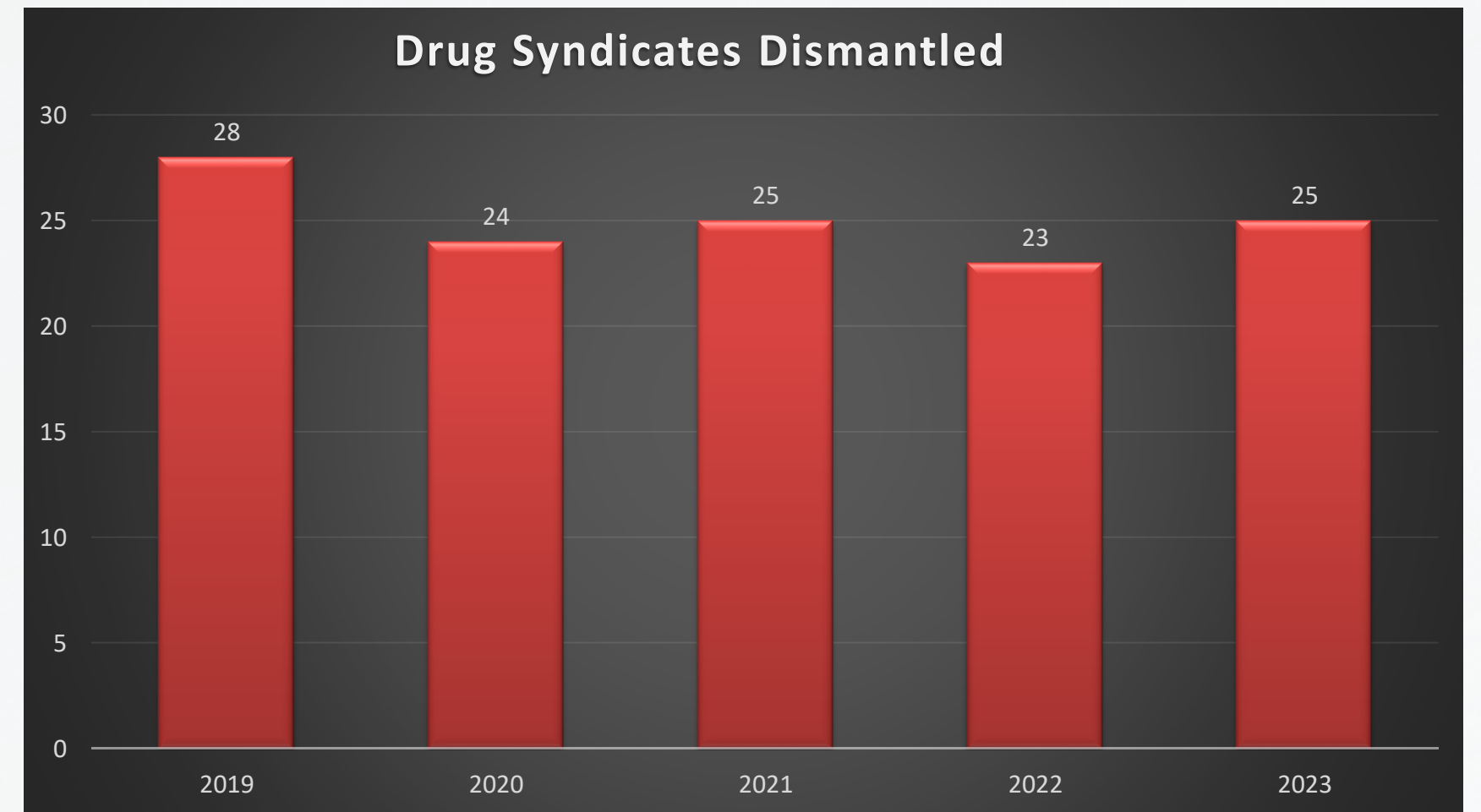
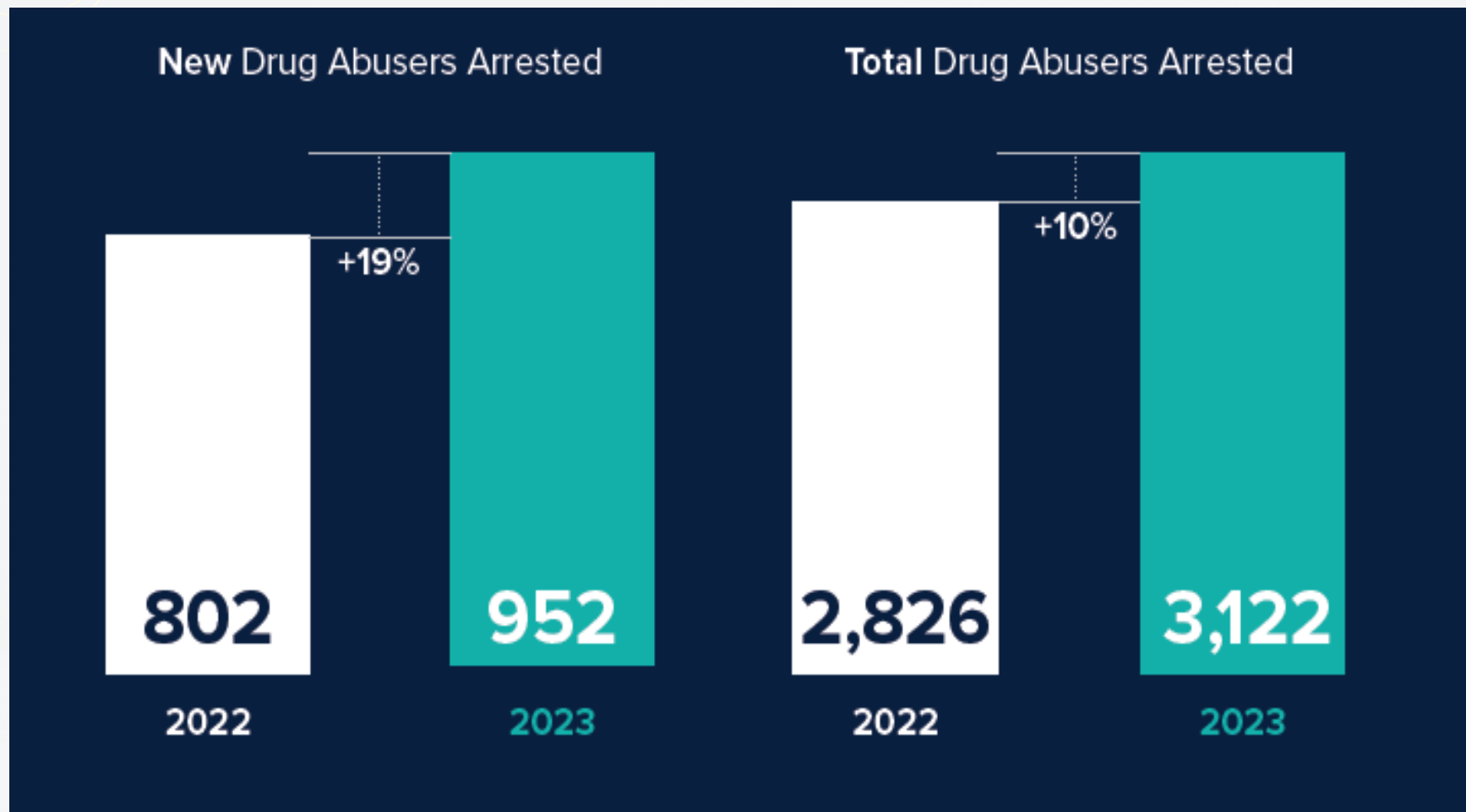
# LOCAL DRUG SITUATION

	Weighted %	Unweighted Frequency
<b>What was the first drug that you have used? *</b>		
Cannabis	82.8%	70
Methamphetamine	4.5%	7
Ecstasy	4.0%	3
<b>Which drug did you use most frequently? #</b>		
Cannabis	68.0%	45
Methamphetamine	15.5%	14
Heroin	6.5%	10

## Results from the Singapore Health and Lifestyle Survey (conducted from April 2021 – July 2022) :

- 6509 Singapore residents (Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents) aged between 15 and 65 years were randomly selected for participation.
- Questionnaires were administered to assess the consumption of illicit drugs and collect information on correlates.
- The lifetime prevalence of consuming illegal drugs was **2.3%** (95% confidence interval [CI] 1.9–2.8) (n=180).
- Compared to individuals aged 15–34, those aged 50–65 (odds ratio [OR] 0.3, 95% CI 0.2–0.7) had lower odds of lifetime drug consumption.
- **Cannabis** remained the most consumed illicit drug among abusers.

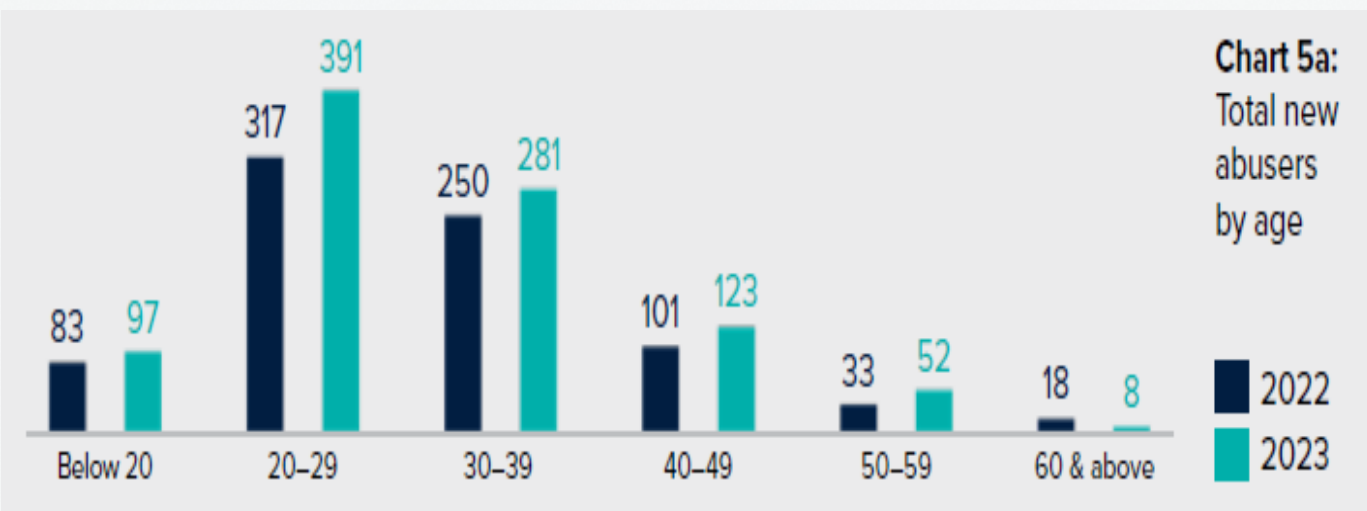
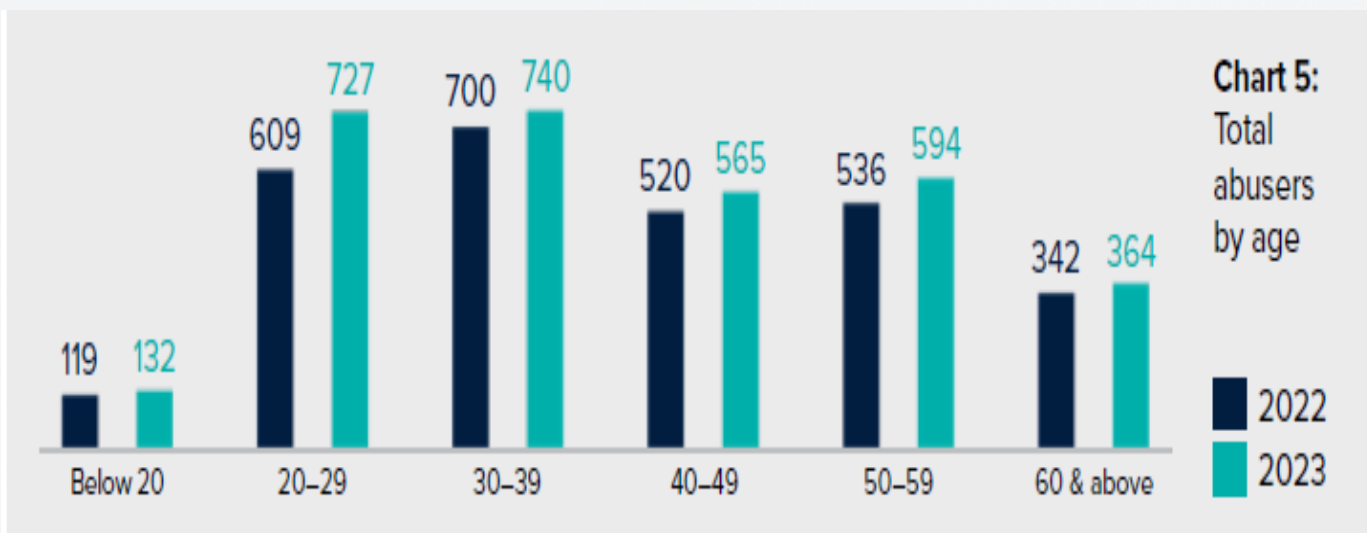
# LOCAL DRUG SITUATION 2023



In 2023, CNB arrested 3,122 drug abusers <sup>(1)</sup>, an **increase of 10%** from the 2,826 abusers arrested in 2022.

Number of drug syndicates apprehended also saw a **significant increase** in 2023.

# LOCAL DRUG SITUATION 2023



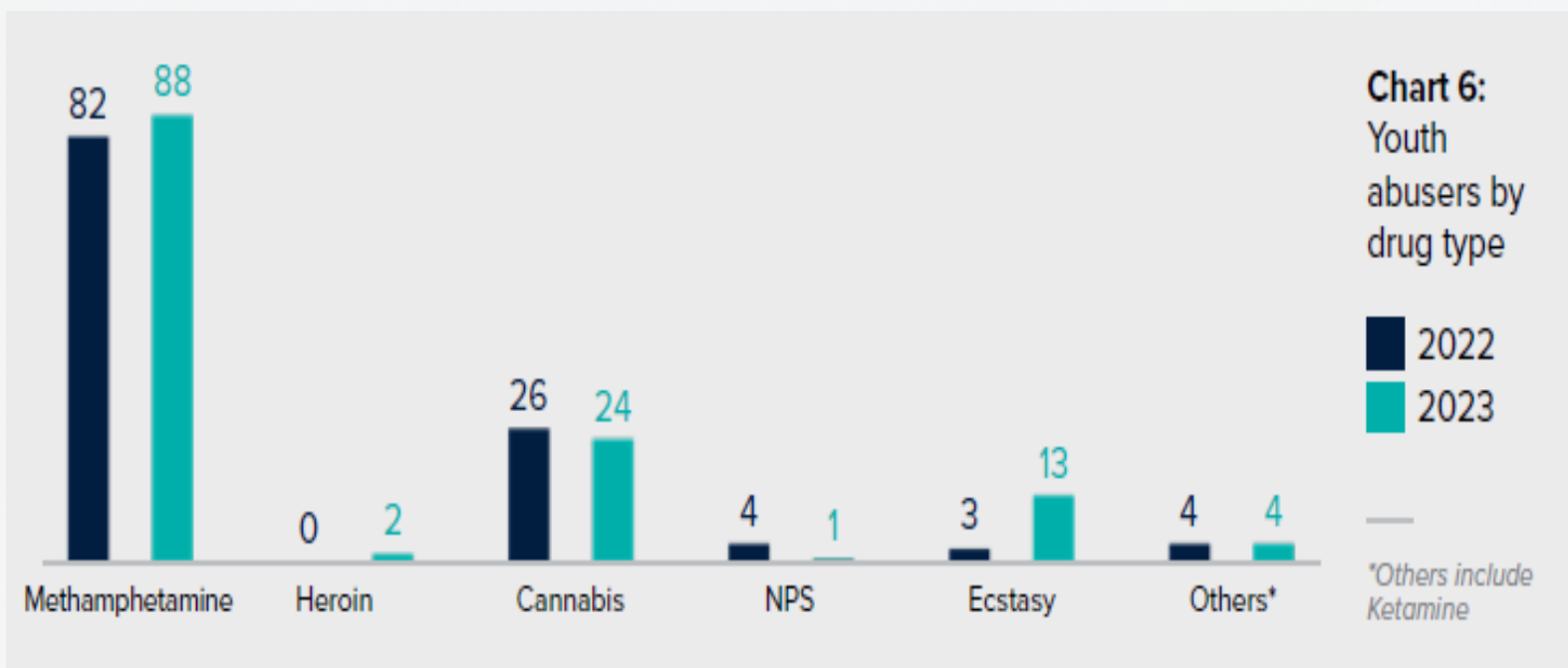
## Local Drug Abusers – By Age

859 (28%) 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 11%** from 119 in 2022 to 132 in 2023.

488 (51%) of all new abusers arrested were aged **below 30 years old**. The number of new youth abusers arrested (i.e., aged below 20 years old) **increased by 17%** from 83 in 2022 to 97 in 2023.



# LOCAL DRUG SITUATION 2023



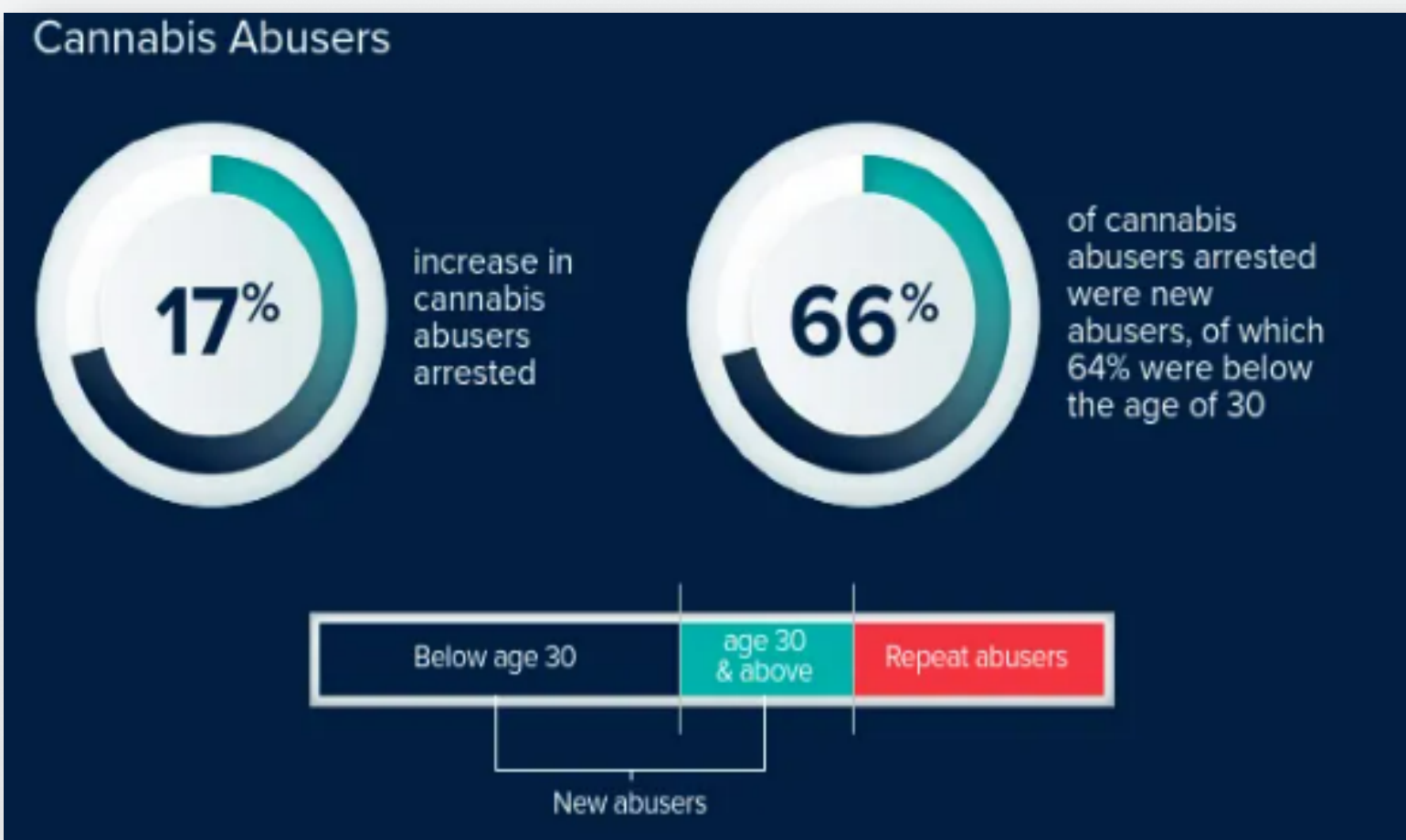
## Local Youth Drug Abusers – By Drug Type

The number of youths (i.e., aged below 20 years old) who abused methamphetamine continued to form the bulk (67%) 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. <sup>(1)</sup>

# LOCAL DRUG SITUATION 2023



## Increase in Drug Abusers (under 30 years old)

- Many of these abusers are young and are new drug abusers
- Mean age of onset of drug abuse was **below 16 years old**.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Rise in Cannabis Abusers Arrested

- Number of cannabis abusers arrested reached a 10-year high in 2023.<sup>(2)</sup>
- Likely exacerbated by the **ongoing global shift in attitudes towards cannabis**, as many countries are loosening their legislative and enforcement measures against cannabis despite clear scientific evidence of its harms on the abuser and society at large.

# GLOBAL LANDSCAPE



Cannabis remains the most used illicit drug globally. The UNODC reported that approximately 200 million people used cannabis in 2019 <sup>(1)</sup>, reflecting its broad acceptance and use across various regions.

## Cannabis Consumption



An estimated 600,000 deaths were attributed to drug use in 2019, with drug overdoses accounting for a quarter of these deaths. <sup>(2)</sup>

## Global Drug-Related Mortality



Synthetic opioids, especially fentanyl, have led to a dramatic increase in overdose deaths, resulting in a surge in opioid-related fatalities in the United States and Canada. <sup>(3)</sup>

## Opioid Crisis and Overdose Epidemic

# GLOBAL LANDSCAPE -

## Thailand – Cannabis Regulation Crisis

### ❑ Surge in Addiction Cases / Widespread Infusion

- Hundreds of cannabis dispensaries opened nationwide, leading to a surge in addiction cases, with monthly cases quadrupling from **72 to 282**.<sup>(1)</sup>
- **Rise in severe incidents**, including teenagers hallucinating and toddlers hospitalised after ingesting cannabis cookies.

### ❑ Policy Response

- **Sept 2023**: PM Srettha Thavisin calls for a rewrite of cannabis laws, emphasising no middle ground for recreational use.
- **Feb 2024**: Thai government moves urgently to pass a bill banning recreational cannabis use.



# GLOBAL LANDSCAPE -

## Global Drug-Related Mortality

### □ UNODC World Drug Report 2023

- **Estimated 500,00 deaths** globally were attributed to drug use in 2019. <sup>(1)</sup>
- Drug overdoses accounted for approximately **25%** of these deaths; which translates to about **150,000** overdose-related deaths. <sup>(1)</sup>
- The remaining deaths are due to various complications associated with drug use, such as:
  - **Chronic Health Conditions:** Diseases related to long-term drug use (e.g., liver disease, cardiovascular issues).
  - **Drug-Related Accidents:** Accidents and injuries occurring under the influence of drugs.
  - **HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis:** Often linked to intravenous drug use.
- The impact of drug-related deaths varies by region, with higher rates often observed in regions with significant drug trafficking and substance abuse issues.

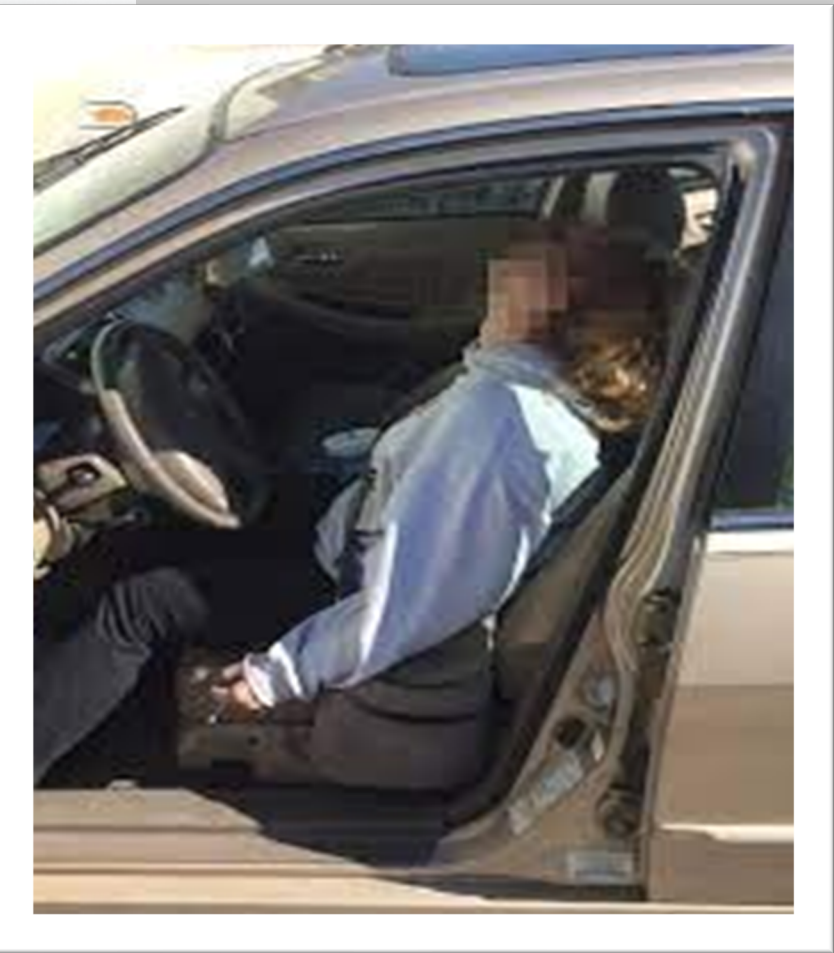


# GLOBAL LANDSCAPE -

## Opioid Crisis and Overdose Epidemic

### ☐ United States [Opioid Crisis]

- More than **110,000** deaths from drug overdose in 12-month period ended Apr 2023 <sup>(1)</sup>
- **>300** Americans died each day due to drug overdose <sup>(2)</sup>
- From 2015-2017, US saw the longest period of sustained **decline in life expectancy** since WWI, largely due to opioid crisis <sup>(3)</sup>
- **Opioid epidemic** : shaved 1 year off life expectancy for boys born in the US <sup>(4)</sup>



# GLOBAL LANDSCAPE -

## *Cannabis Legalisation*



Several countries and U.S. states have legalised cannabis for recreational use.

**Recreational Use**



Many countries, including the U.K., Australia, and Germany, have legalised cannabis for medicinal use, enabling treatments for conditions like chronic pain and epilepsy.

**Medicinal Use**



Countries like Portugal and the Netherlands have decriminalised small amounts of cannabis for personal use, though it remains illegal.

**Decriminalisation**



# GLOBAL LANDSCAPE - Cannabis Legalisation

## Countries advocate for drug legalisation for several reasons:

### ❑ Public Health Improvement

- Reduced overdose deaths by increasing access to safe consumption spaces and medical support.
- Removes the stigma associated with drug use, making it easier for individuals to seek help and access treatment for substance use disorders.

### ❑ Criminal Justice Reform

- Reduce incarceration for minor drug offenses, which can alleviate overcrowded prison systems and reduce criminal records.
- Law enforcement resources can be redirected from minor drug offenses to more serious crimes, improving overall public safety.





# RESOURCES

*for information*



*CNB's website*



*Drugs and Inhalants*



*Misuse of Drugs Act 1973*

*to watch*



*CNB's YouTube*



*PDE Video: Down the Rabbit Hole*



*PDE Video: Last Days*

# RESOURCES

*for parents, educators, counsellors*



*Smart Parenting articles*



*PDE toolkits*



*PDE message cards*



*Information booklet on Cannabis*



*Information booklet on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)*

# THANK YOU

We hope you find this set of resources useful.  
Let's work together towards a drug-free society!

