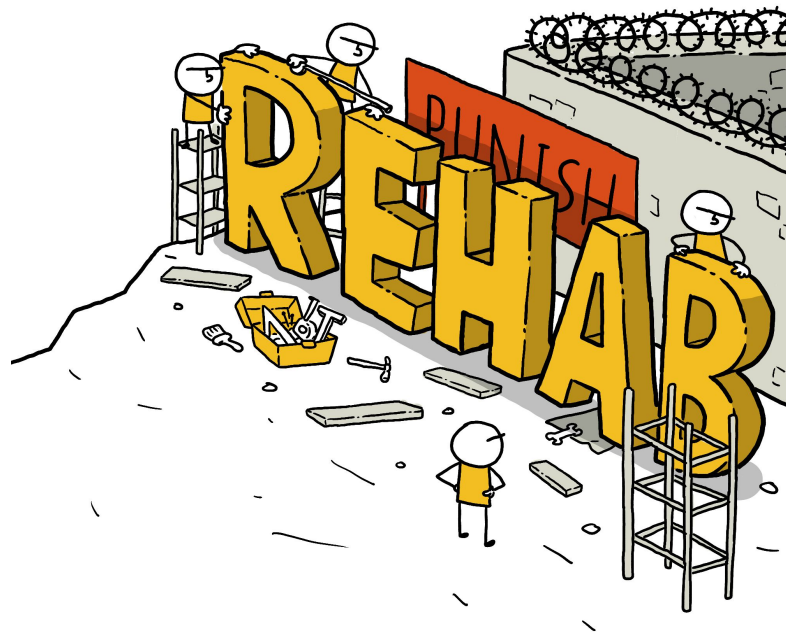


HOW DO MALAYSIANS REALLY FEEL ABOUT DRUGS?

A nationwide study of how Malaysians view the use of, dependence on, and offences related to controlled drugs

July 2022



Ambassador's Foreword



The Delegation of the European Union to Malaysia is pleased to support this important work by The Centre. ‘How Do Malaysians Really Feel About Drugs?’ has arrived at an opportune moment, on the back of the Malaysian government’s recent announcement to abolish the mandatory death penalty. The EU warmly welcomes this decision, which is a step for Malaysia towards global abolition of death penalty. As drug offences have been the main contributor to the number of prisoners on death row in the country, the study’s findings, which provide the ongoing context within which public perception towards drugs is shaped in Malaysia, will contribute significantly to the conversation that will follow the government’s announcement.

A clear understanding of current public attitudes will also help the government and relevant stakeholders to identify aspects that require intervention, for example through more effective advocacy strategies. One of those aspects, as suggested in this report, is the prevailing societal stigma, the reduction of which is crucial to ensuring a successful agenda to reform the country’s criminal justice system for drug-related offences.

H.E. Michalis Rokas
Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Malaysia



Executive Summary

Malaysia's drug policies have contributed to serious burdens on its criminal justice system: over-incarceration of minor drug offenders, prison overcrowding, and the preponderance of drug offenders on death row.

Calls to reform Malaysia's drug-related policies have long been made by MPs, lawyers, medical experts, academics, and activists. However, public perception towards drug-related issues remains underexplored.

To address this gap, The Centre conducted a nationwide survey to study the views of Malaysians towards drugs and their appetite to reform the criminal justice system for drug-related offences. This report presents the survey's findings and our accompanying policy recommendations.

Our study finds that attitudes towards drugs are generally conservative - but not as conservative as

we expected. Perhaps due to recent high-profile cases, many Malaysians seem receptive towards the use of certain controlled drugs particularly to treat physical health issues. Many Malaysians seem empathetic towards the nature of drug addiction, though there is still hesitation in accepting former drug dependents as neighbours or family members. Regarding drug-related crime and punishment, there is generally low support for the death penalty for drug offences.

To address societal stigma, we call for more compassionate messaging on drug-related issues from the authorities and media. We also recommend the amendment of Malaysia's drug laws including increasing weight thresholds for drug offences, setting penalties in proportion to intention and scale, and replacing punitive with rehabilitation-based measures. The Malaysian public appears ready for such a shift in mindset and approach to this vital public health issue.



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01

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Malaysia has tough penalties against drug offences, be it for serious offences such as trafficking or comparatively less serious offences such as minor drug possession and use.

Consequently, **drug offenders comprise the biggest group of inmates** in Malaysia's prisons. As of November 2020, about 65% of all prison inmates were serving sentences from drug-related offences.

It is a similar picture for prisoners awaiting death sentences: as of December 2019, **70% of inmates on death row were convicted of drug trafficking**¹.

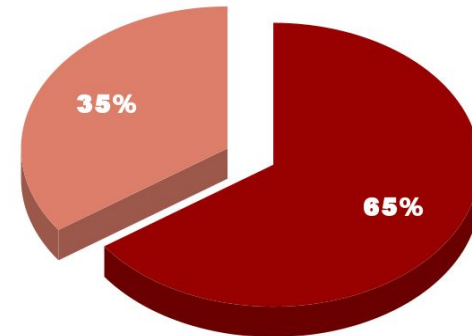
¹ The high proportion of drug-related convictions amongst death row inmates has persisted despite a 2017 amendment to the Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA) that removed the mandatory death penalty for major drug offences.

² Sources: [Parliamentary reply](#), 18 November 2020; [Parliamentary reply](#), 3 December 2020; [The Malaysian Reserve](#), 8 December 2020.

Figure 1: National Distribution of Prisoners by Offences in Malaysia

Accurate as of November 2020²

● Drug-related Offences ● Other Offences



Despite a largely punitive approach towards deterring drug-related offences, there is little evidence of drug-related activities abating. For example, the amount of drugs [seized](#) increased from about 13,000 kg in 2020 to about 28,000 kg in 2021³, while the number of [recorded drug dependents](#) in the country also rose from 20,887 in 2013 to 25,267 in 2018⁴.

Disproportionately tough penalties for drug offences have also burdened the criminal justice system. Malaysia's prison overcrowding problem, for example, is largely caused by the incarceration of high numbers of [minor drug offenders](#)⁵.

³ Source: [Sinar Daily](#), 1 February 2022

⁴ Source: [Ministry of Home Affairs](#), 12-15 March 2019

⁵ Under Malaysian law, minor drug offences include consumption of drugs and/or possession of drugs in relatively small amounts.



The [recidivism rate for drug users](#) has also been on the rise, going from 9% in 2015 to 11% in 2019⁶. This is also reflected in the number of [relapse cases](#) recorded — from 6379 cases in 2015 to 8754 cases in 2019⁷.

Research has shown that recidivism is contributed by society's **negative perception towards former drug offenders**.⁸ Societal stigma impedes the group's reintegration into society, a finding confirmed by a 1995 study conducted in Peninsular Malaysia.⁹ Many human interest stories bear this out, including media features of ex-offenders being shunned by their [families](#)¹⁰ and the [authorities](#)¹¹ upon re-entering society.

Shifting public perception, therefore, is crucial to facilitate drug offenders' reintegration into society as well as to help address recidivism.

⁶ Source: [Parliamentary reply](#), 18 November 2020

⁷ Source: [AADK](#)

⁸ Razali, A., Ani, F., & Mohd Tohar, S. (2019). The Relationship Between Social Support and Relapse Among Former Drug Addict. Journal Of Social Transformation And Regional Development, 1(2): 16-23. <https://publisher.uthm.edu.my/ojs/index.php/jstard/article/view/5980>

⁹ Low, W., Zulkifil, S., Yusof, K., Batumalai, S., & Aye, K. (1995). Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions Related to Drug Abuse In Peninsular Malaysia: A Survey Report. Asia Pacific Journal Of Public Health, 8(2), 123-129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/101053959500800212>

¹⁰ Source: [Malaysia Gazette](#), 14 March 2021

¹¹ Source: [Berita Harian](#), 10 June 2019



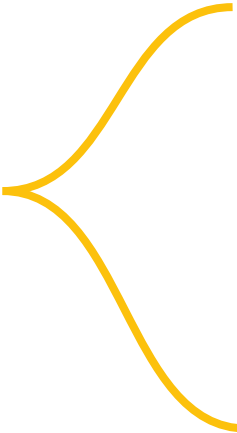


Research Questions

Current efforts to change Malaysia's approach to drugs have been mainly led by small groups of stakeholders such as NGOs as well as social & medical researchers.

Would such efforts get support from the wider public?

We asked two questions:



How do Malaysians feel about the use of different categories of controlled drugs and about drug dependents?

How do Malaysians feel about current penalties for different levels of drug offences?

Study Objectives

To understand how
Malaysians **perceive**
drugs and drug use in
general, and what
motivates their
opinions

To assess Malaysians'
sense of what
constitutes
proportionate
punishment for key
types of drug offences
under Malaysian law

About the Study

Study Methodology

Nationwide face-to-face survey of **500** adult members of the public.

Simplified random sample by state and ethnicity, selected via street intercept and door-to-door approach.

Survey conducted from 3rd to 11th April 2022.

Survey Design

Survey questions were adapted from 3 reference studies:

- (1) Low, W., Zulkifil, S., Yusof, K., Batumalai, S., & Aye, K. (1995). Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions Related to Drug Abuse In Peninsular Malaysia: A Survey Report. *Asia Pacific Journal Of Public Health*, 8(2), 123-129.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/101053959500800212>
- (2) O'Neil, Kevin M., Marc W. Patry, and Steven D. Penrod. 2004. "Exploring The Effects Of Attitudes Toward The Death Penalty On Capital Sentencing Verdicts." *Psychology, Public Policy, And Law*.
- (3) Goodstadt, M., Cook, G., Magid, S. and Gruson, V., 2021. The Drug Attitudes Scale (DAS): Its Development and Evaluation. *The International Journal of the Addictions*, [online] 13(8). Available at:
<https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.3109%2F10826087809039344> [Accessed 25 March 2021].

Questionnaires were in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin.



Survey Sections

Demographics



Gender, age, ethnicity, state, education, income

General attitudes towards drug use and offenders



Respondent's opinion towards drugs, drug use, drug offenders, and reasons behind their views

Judgement on MAXIMUM penalties/responses for various types of drug offences



Respondent's assessment of proportionate punishment/response for offences involving drug use and possession by type of drugs, weight of possession, and intent

Judgement on MAXIMUM penalties/responses for *specific scenarios* involving drug offences



Respondent's assessment of proportionate punishment/response for actual case scenarios containing various mitigating factors (cases reworded to remove identifying details)

Respondent Demographics

GENDER



52%



48%

ETHNICITY

Malay Bumiputera	59%
Non-Malay Bumiputera	5%
Chinese	28%
Indian	7%
Others	1%

AGE

18 — 25 years old	23%
26 — 35 years old	29%
36 — 45 years old	20%
46 — 55 years old	17%
55 years old & above	10%

MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Below RM3,000	17%
RM3,000 — RM5,000	37%
RM5,000 — RM8,000	33%
Above RM8,000	12%

REGIONS

Northern Peninsular	21%
Central Peninsular	28%
Southern Peninsular	19%
East Coast	15%
East Malaysia	19%

QUALIFICATIONS

SPM & below	45%
STPM/Certificate/Diploma	40%
Bachelor's degree & above	15%



02

GENERAL ATTITUDES

NOTE

For the purposes of this survey, controlled drugs were divided into two groups, **MORE SERIOUS** and **LESS SERIOUS** controlled drugs.

LESS SERIOUS controlled drugs are those with known medical benefits or applications according to health authorities and a relatively moderate risk of addiction, while **MORE SERIOUS** controlled drugs are those with no known medical benefits and the highest risk of addiction.

Some examples below:

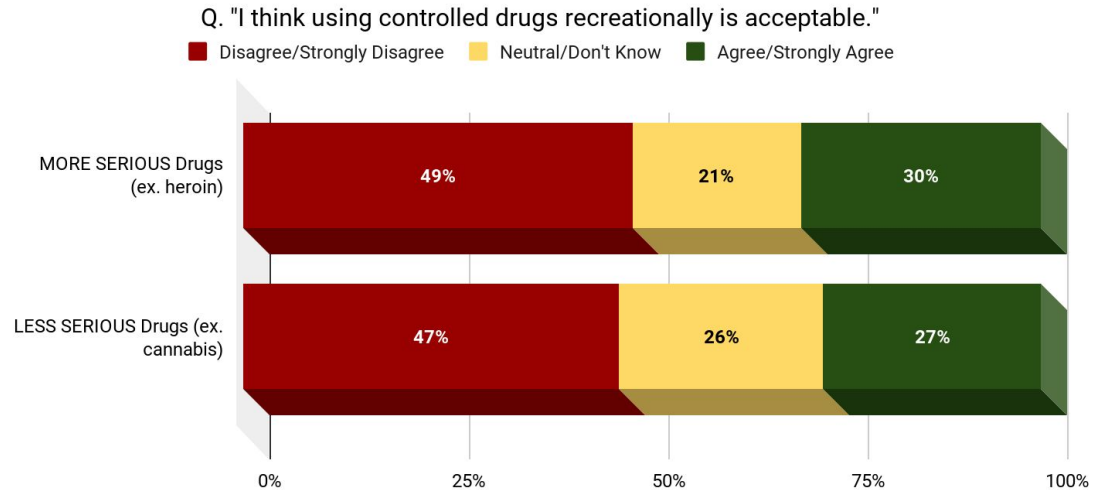
MORE SERIOUS controlled drugs	LESS SERIOUS controlled drugs
Heroin LSD MDMA/ecstasy Opium Crack cocaine Crystal meth	Cannabis Ketum Adderall Morphine Codeine Amphetamine

Many Malaysians are conservative towards drug use – but not as many as expected?

Nearly half of respondents do not support recreational use of drugs regardless of the type of drugs involved. There is little difference in receptivity between MORE vs. LESS SERIOUS drugs.

However, given the tough policy and criminal justice environment towards drugs, there is a relatively higher level of *public* tolerance than we expected. Around 30% of respondents view recreational drug use as acceptable.

Figure 2: Receptivity Towards Using Controlled Drugs Recreationally



Notably, there is greater receptivity for the use of controlled drugs **for self-medication** compared to recreational use.

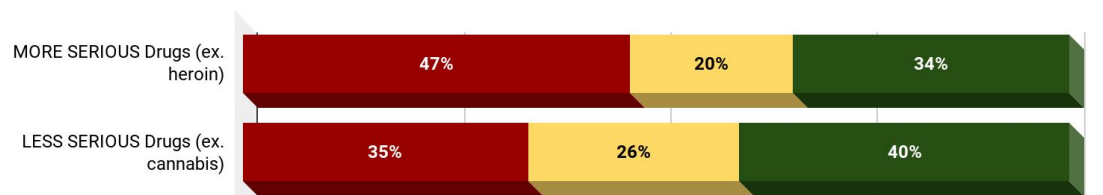
In this regard, there is generally **more support for the use of controlled drugs to address or relieve physical health** than for mental health. Nearly 10% more respondents expressed support for the former compared to the latter.

Receptivity towards drug use increases with purpose of use and type of drug. Our study finds that **nearly 50% of respondents are receptive to the use of less serious controlled drugs for self-medicating physical health symptoms** - quite a high number for a relatively drug-conservative nation.

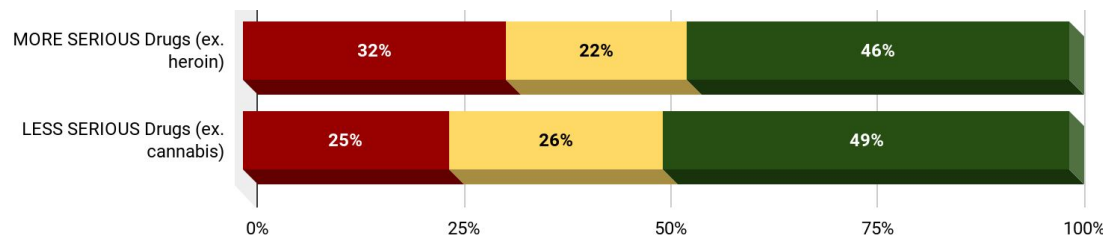
Figure 3: Receptivity Towards Using Controlled Drugs for Self-Medication

Q. "I would consider using controlled drugs to cope with anxiety and tension."

■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree ■ Neutral/Don't Know ■ Agree/Strongly Agree



Q. "I would consider using controlled drugs if I was experiencing severe physical pain."



Respondents were also tested on their attitudes towards people who struggled with drug addiction.

Generally, **only 6% of respondents completely accepts, both publicly¹² and privately¹³**, those who are or who used to struggle with addiction issues, regardless of the type of drugs involved.

This finding to some extent corroborates findings of past research on the prevalence of societal stigma towards former drug offenders in Malaysia.¹⁴

¹² We define public acceptance in terms of (a) acknowledgement of addiction as an illness, (b) recognition of the possibility of physical and mental health factors to cause addiction, and (c) the patients' need for social reintegration.

¹³ We define private acceptance in terms of receptivity of their presence as neighbours or family members.

¹⁴ Razali, A., Ani, F., & Mohd Tohar, S. (2019). The Relationship Between Social Support and Relapse Among Former Drug Addict. Journal Of Social Transformation And Regional Development, 1(2): 16-23.

<https://publisher.uthm.edu.my/ojs/index.php/jstard/article/view/5980>



A small majority of Malaysians have empathetic views about drug addiction, showing a degree of awareness on the nature of addiction

55% - 57% of respondents have generally empathetic views towards people addicted to controlled drugs, seeing drug addiction as an illness and driven by trauma.

As many as 62% of respondents think it is important to accept those formerly addicted to controlled drugs into society.

Figure 4: Public Receptivity Towards People Addicted To Controlled Drugs

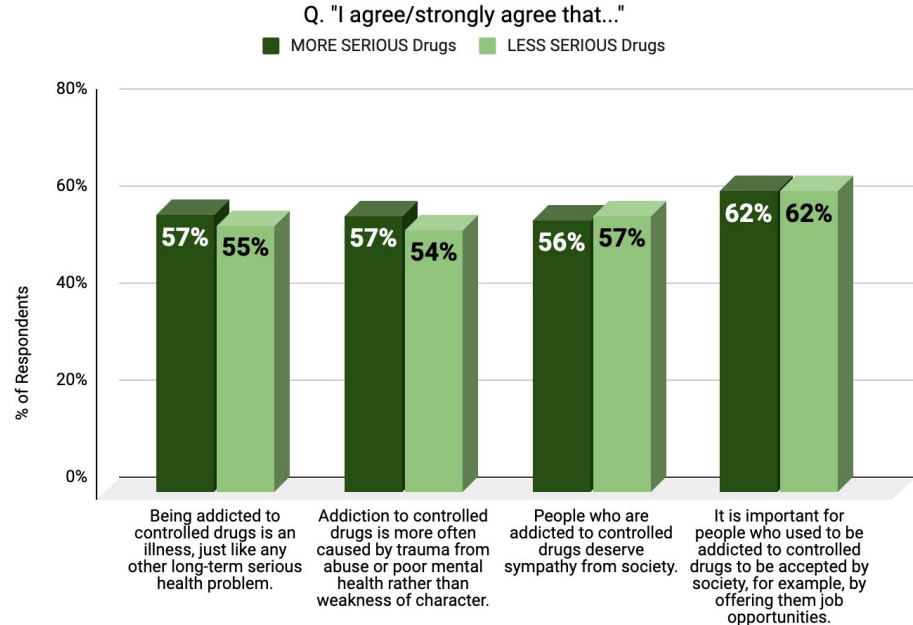


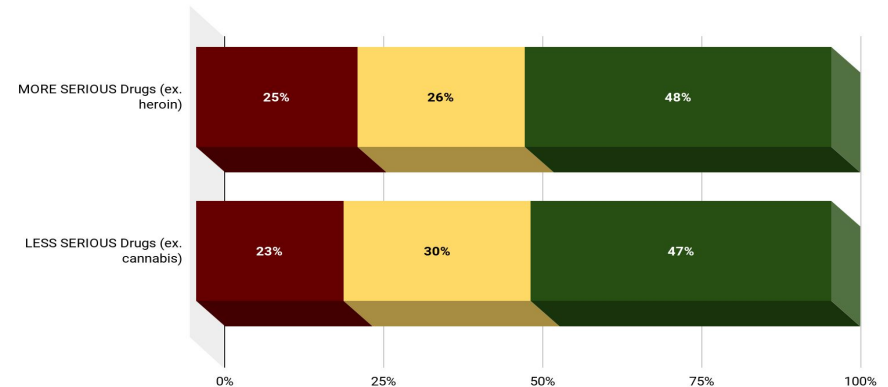
Figure 5: Receptivity Towards People Formerly Addicted to Controlled Drugs

Q. "I would be OK to live near someone who used to be addicted to controlled drugs."

Disagree/Strongly Disagree Neutral/Don't Know Agree/Strongly Agree



Q. "I would be OK with accepting into my family someone who used to be addicted to controlled drugs."



However, private acceptance of people who are/used to be addicted to controlled drugs is lower compared to public acceptance.

Receptivity towards accepting people who are formerly addicted to controlled drugs as neighbours or family members is lower (47-48%) compared to accepting them in public society more generally (56-62%, previous slide).

This finding supports extant research as well as media reports on the longstanding stigmatisation of people addicted to controlled drugs.

Our research also found a few significant factors that predict these attitudes:

Receptivity Towards Personal Use	Respondents who are receptive towards personal use of LESS SERIOUS drugs are 9% more likely to be receptive towards people addicted to it.
Monthly Household Income	Respondents with a monthly household income of above RM3,000 are 17% more likely to be receptive towards people addicted to LESS SERIOUS drugs compared to those earning under RM3,000 in monthly household income.
Age	Respondents between 26-45 years old and 56 years old and above are 13% and 21%, respectively, less likely to be receptive towards people addicted to LESS SERIOUS drugs compared to youths aged 18 to 25 years old.

General Attitudes: Recap

Many Malaysians are **conservative** towards the use of controlled drugs as well as people addicted to them, regardless of the type of drugs involved - but not as many as we expected.

- A significant proportion of Malaysians (nearly half) **does not support** recreational use of drugs. However, a **significant 30% find it acceptable**.

- There is more support towards using controlled drugs for self-medication than recreational use, with greater receptivity towards relieving or addressing **physical health** than for mental health.

- Still on self-medication: There is more support towards using **LESS SERIOUS controlled drugs** than MORE SERIOUS controlled drugs.

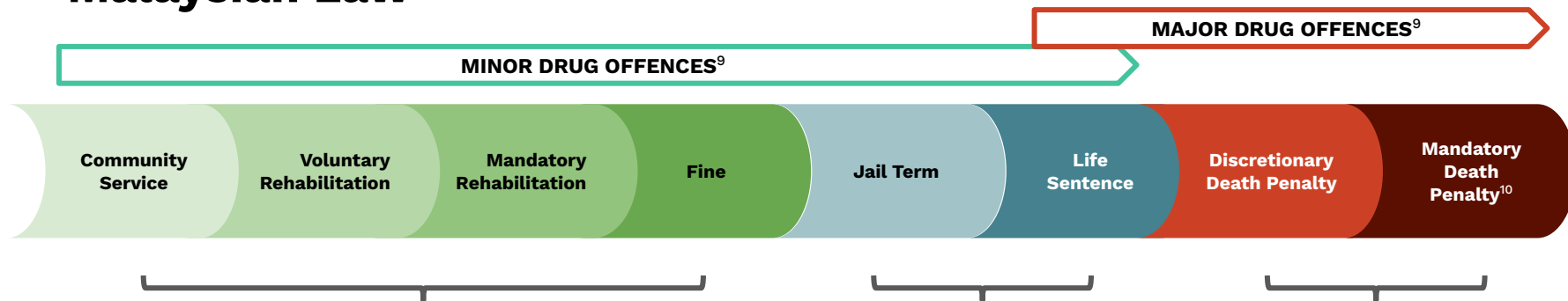
- Many Malaysians show willingness to accept people who are/used to be addicted to controlled drugs into society. However, this **acceptance drops when it comes to accepting them in private life**.



03

VIEWS ON PROPORTIONALITY OF PUNISHMENTS/ RESPONSES

Current Responses & Punishments for Drug Offences Under Malaysian Law



NO PUNISHMENT/NON-CUSTODIAL SENTENCES

Current usage of these options is lacking¹¹, despite being provided for in Malaysian law

CUSTODIAL SENTENCES

Current usage of these options is heavy, resulting in the [over-incarceration](#) of minor drug offenders in the country

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Current usage of these options is heavy, despite a [2017 amendment to the DDA](#) aimed at allowing the imposition of life sentences in place of the death penalty under certain conditions

⁹ Major offences include drug trafficking and major drug possession, which carry the death penalty and life imprisonment respectively. Minor drug offences include consumption of drugs and possession of drugs in relatively small amounts.

¹⁰ In June 2022, the government announced that the *mandatory* death penalty is [to be abolished](#), but the death penalty remains.

¹¹ The Dangerous Drugs Act currently stipulates that drug users face both a fine and a jail term, instead of only a fine. The Act also stipulates that an offender would have to serve his jail term prior to being placed under rehabilitation. Community service is an option under the Prison Department's [Human Development Plan](#) though offenders would still have to serve their prison sentences before being considered for community service.



- *KNOWINGLY* transporting, carrying, or delivering
- *UNKNOWNLY* transporting, carrying, or delivering
- Selling large amounts (in kilograms)
- Possessing large amounts (in kilograms)

¹² For purposes of this study, major drug offences are differentiated from minor drug offences by weight/volume of drugs involved and the nature of intent/knowledge behind the drug-related activity.

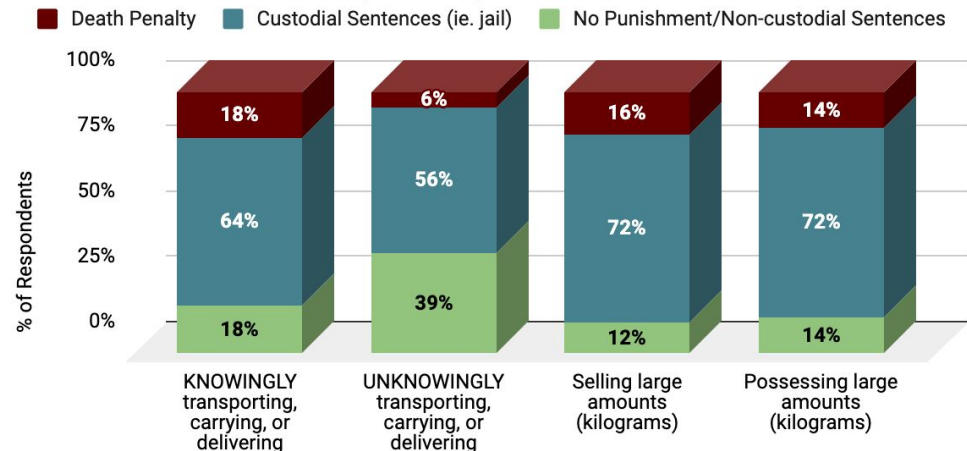
Support for the death penalty is low for major drug offences.

Less than 20% of respondents support the death penalty for each respective major drug offence tested involving MORE SERIOUS drugs. Instead, the **majority of respondents support non-capital punishments** as responses towards the individual major offences.

Notably, 39% of respondents support non-custodial sentences or even no punishment at all for the offence of *unknowingly* transporting MORE SERIOUS drugs. This suggests a significant level of **consideration for factors such as intent** in committing the crime.

Figure 6: Opinion on Proportionate Punishment/Response to Offences Involving MORE SERIOUS Drugs

Q. "I think the MAXIMUM response or punishment for each offence should be:"



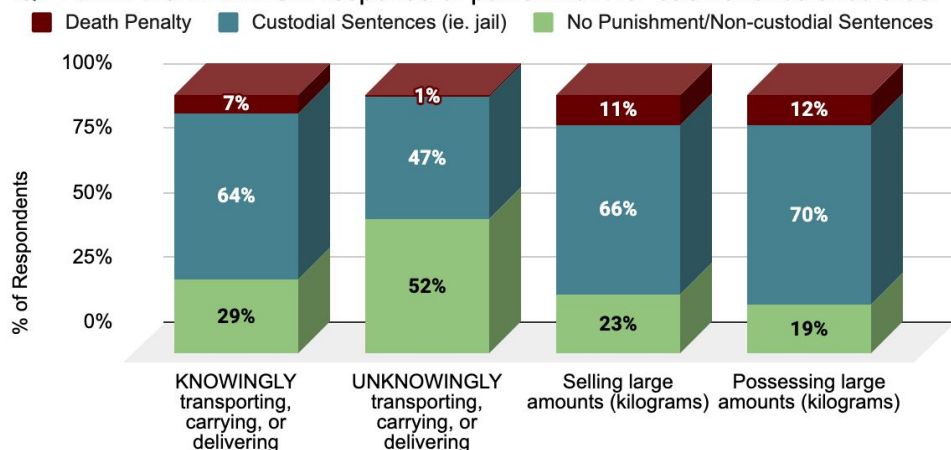
Support for the death penalty drops even further for major offences involving LESS SERIOUS drugs.

Compared to responses towards major offences involving MORE SERIOUS drugs (p.26), **support for the death penalty is even lower for major offences involving LESS SERIOUS drugs. Support for non-custodial responses are comparatively higher.** This may be attributed to the perceived harm of the type of drugs involved in these offences.

It is notable that support for the death penalty dropped most significantly for the offence of KNOWINGLY transporting drugs, from 18% for SERIOUS drugs (p.26) to 7% of respondents for LESS SERIOUS drugs.

Figure 7: Opinion on Proportionate Punishment/Response to Offences Involving LESS SERIOUS Drugs

Q. "I think the MAXIMUM response or punishment for each offence should be:"



Support for the death penalty for major drug offences gets even lower in the presence of mitigating facts, except...

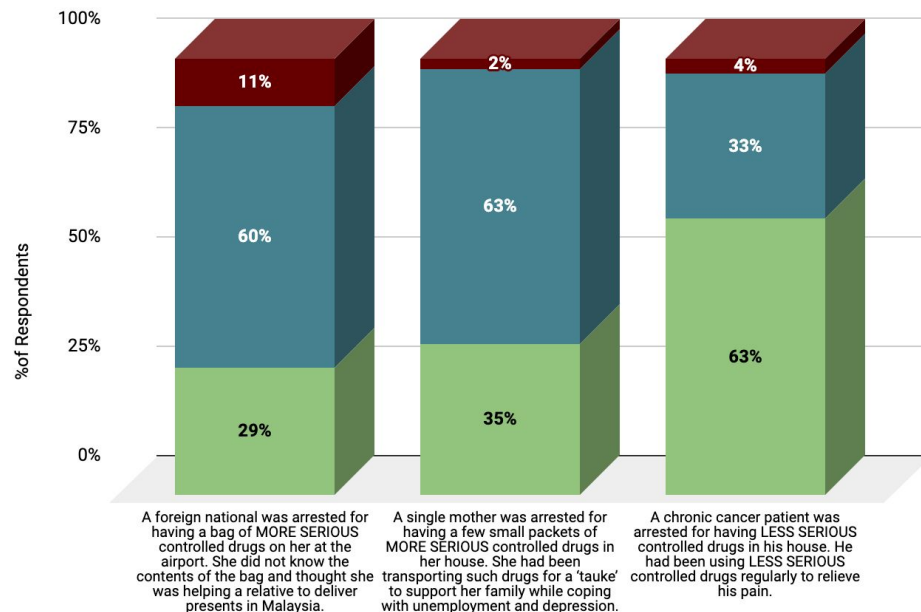
for a case involving a **foreign woman** who unknowingly carried MORE SERIOUS drugs. This could be attributed to a lack of public acceptance for foreigners and migrant workers.

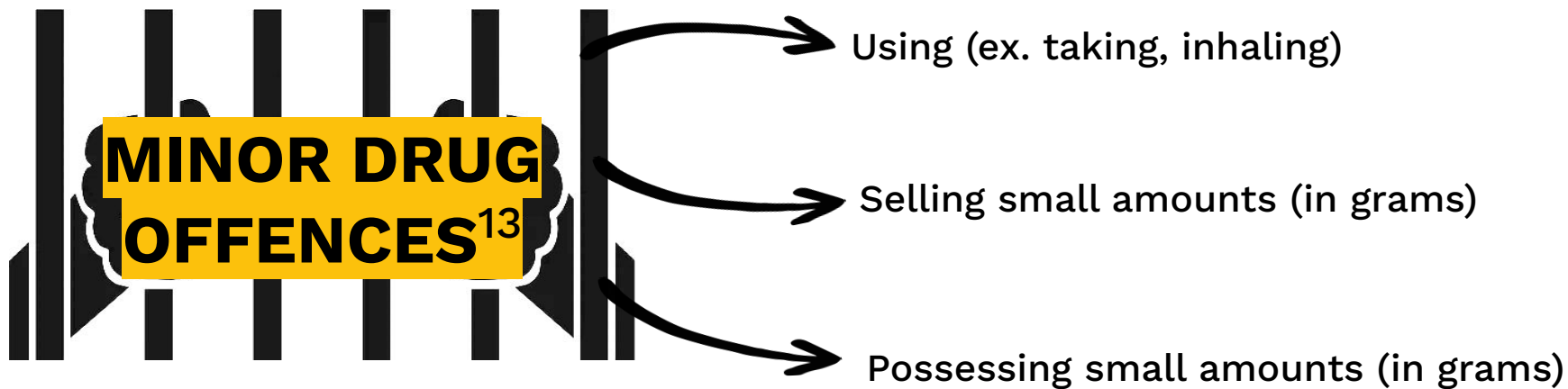
According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) [report](#) dated 2020, a high majority of 83% of respondents thought that crime rates have increased in Malaysia due to migration.

Figure 8: Opinion on Proportionate Punishment/Response to Case Scenarios

Q. "I think the MAXIMUM response or punishment for each scenario should be:"

■ Death Penalty ■ Custodial Sentences (ie. jail) ■ No Punishment/Non-custodial Sentences





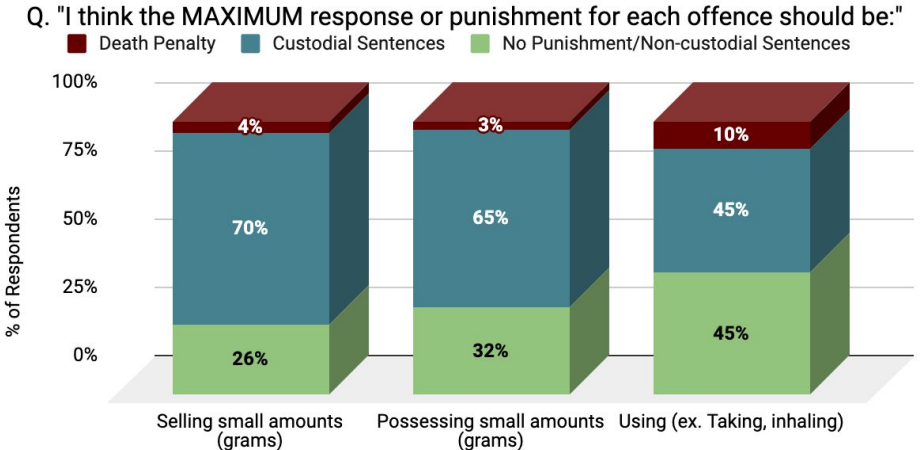
¹³ For purposes of this study, major drug offences are differentiated from minor drug offences by weight/volume of drugs involved and the nature of intent/knowledge behind the drug-related activity.

Views on punishment for minor drug offences driven by intent: commercial vs. consumption

Although support for the death penalty is low for minor drug offences involving MORE SERIOUS drugs, 65% to 70% support either jail terms or life sentences for possessing or selling small amounts of such drugs — which in the case of morphine could be as little as 5 grams (*about 1 teaspoon*) under the Dangerous Drugs Act.

Nonetheless, there is significant support (45%) for non-custodial sentences (ex. community service, fines) or no punishment at all for the offence of *using* MORE SERIOUS drugs, showing greater sympathy for offences of consumption vs. offences of commercial gain.

Figure 9: Opinion on Proportionate Punishment/Response to Offences Involving MORE SERIOUS Drugs

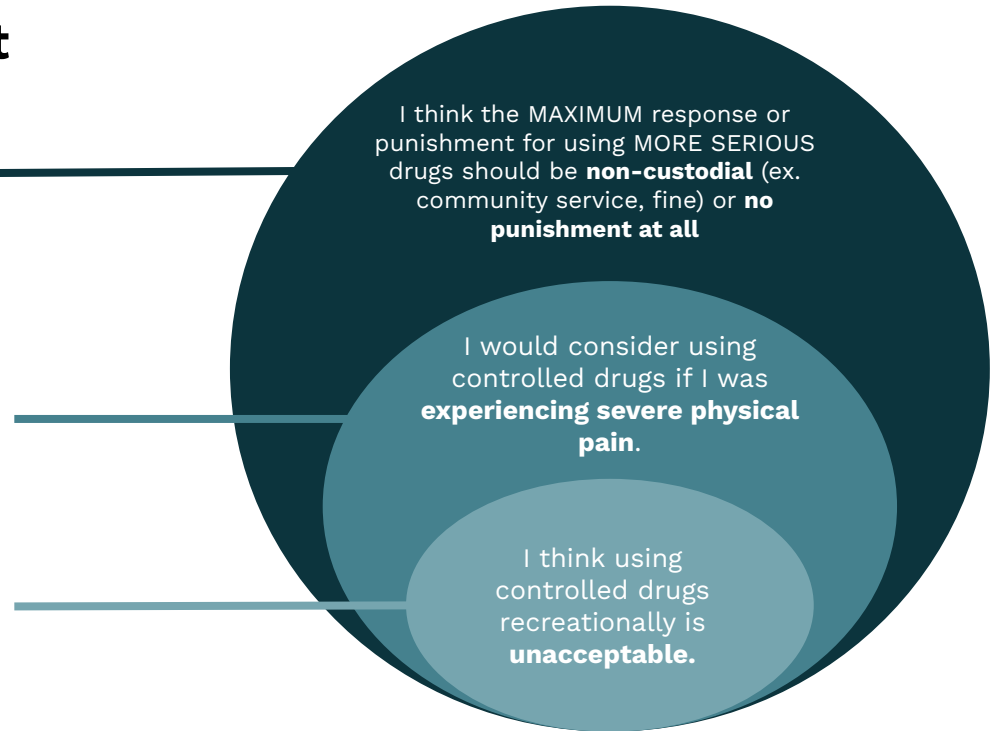


Snapshot: Values profile of a pro-non custody respondent

45% of respondents support the use of non-custodial responses for *using* MORE SERIOUS drugs e.g. community service, fines etc.

47% of these respondents would consider using MORE SERIOUS controlled drugs for self-medication of physical health issues.

At the same time, 47% of these respondents are against using controlled drugs recreationally.

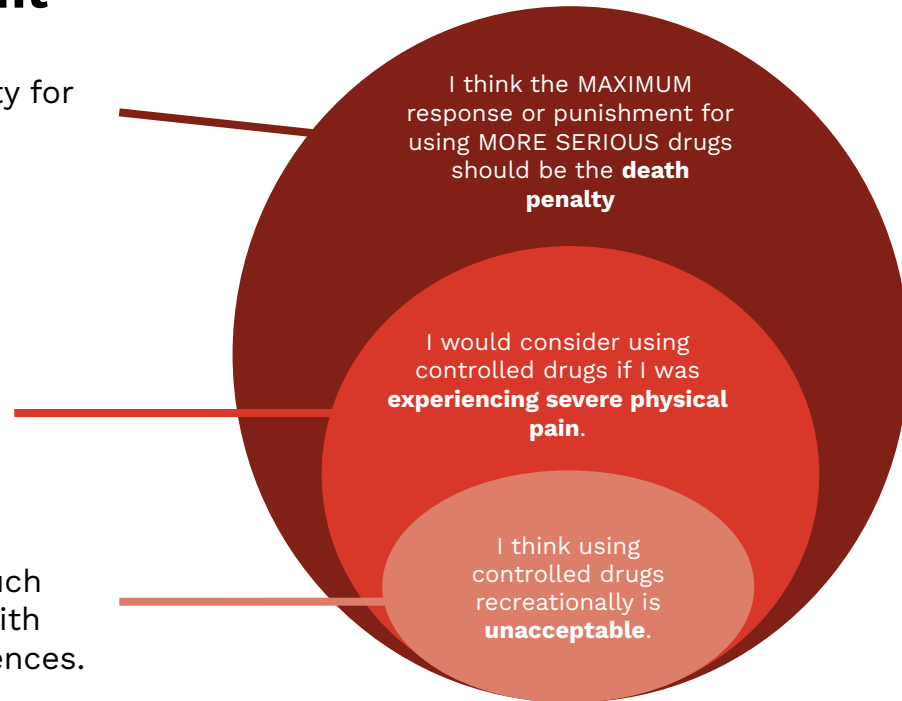


Snapshot: Values profile of a pro-death penalty respondent

10% of respondents support the death penalty for *using* MORE SERIOUS drugs.

39% of these respondents would consider using MORE SERIOUS controlled drugs for self-medication of physical health issues - clearly more conservative on this score compared with respondents who are for non-custodial sentences (p.31).

49-51% of these respondents disagree with recreational use of controlled drugs - not much more conservative on this score compared with respondents who are for non-custodial sentences.



Only 12% of our respondents support either jail terms or life sentences across every minor drug offences, regardless of the type of drugs involved. *None* support the death penalty for every minor drug offences.

This finding is in stark contrast to the reality of Malaysia's current prison population, where over 60% of inmates were convicted of minor drug offences.



63% of inmates minor drug offenders, says Azalina, in calling for prison reform

FMT Reporters - November 29, 2021 2:00 PM

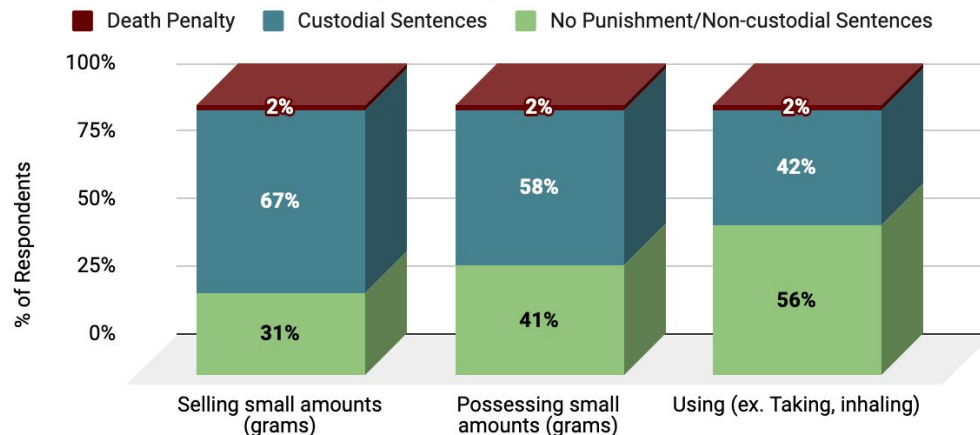
The type of drugs involved in minor drug offences influences the idea of proportionality

For minor drug offences involving LESS SERIOUS drugs, support for either no punishment or non-custodial sentences is higher compared to offences involving MORE SERIOUS drugs (p.31). Notably, for the offence of *consuming* LESS SERIOUS drugs, as high as **56% of respondents** do not support either custodial or capital punishments.

The type, weight of drugs involved and the nature of the offence significantly influences the public's idea of proportionate punishment.

Figure 10: Opinion on Proportionate Punishment/Response to Offences Involving LESS SERIOUS Drugs

Q. "I think the MAXIMUM response or punishment for each offence should be:"



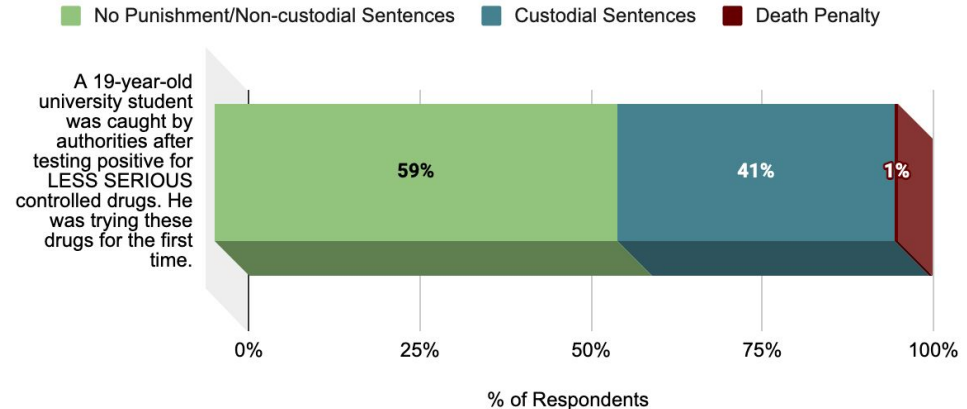
Support for non-custodial sentences/no punishment rises in presence of further mitigating factors

A majority of respondents (59%) support either no punishment or non-custodial sentences for the case of a teenager who is trying drugs for the first time — an increase from the 56% previously for the same offence without any context.

This finding supports the need for consideration of mitigating factors prior to sentencing minor drug offences.

Figure 11: Opinion on Proportionate Punishment/Response Towards A Case Scenario Involving A Minor Drug Offence

Q. "I think the MAXIMUM response or punishment for this scenario should be:"



Our research also found a few significant factors that predict views on proportionate punishment:

Age	Adult respondents (26 - 45 years old) are about 15% more likely than youths (25 years old and below) to be punitive towards major drug offences/scenarios involving both MORE SERIOUS and LESS SERIOUS drugs. Senior citizen respondents (56 years and above) are 16% more likely than youths (25 years old and below) to be punitive towards minor drug offences/scenarios involving MORE SERIOUS drugs.
Ethnicity	Chinese respondents are 11% more likely than Malay Bumiputera respondents to be punitive towards major drug offences/scenarios involving LESS SERIOUS drugs.
Qualifications	Tertiary-educated respondents are 13% less likely than secondary-educated ones to be punitive towards minor drug offences/scenarios involving LESS SERIOUS drugs, but also 27% more likely than secondary-educated ones to be punitive towards major drug offences/scenarios involving MORE SERIOUS drugs.
Region	Respondents from the Northern Region (Kedah, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang) are 17% less likely to be punitive towards major drug offences/scenarios involving MORE SERIOUS drugs than Klang Valley respondents.
Monthly Household Income	Respondents with a monthly household income of RM5,000 - RM8,000 are 17% less likely to be punitive towards major drug offences/scenarios involving MORE SERIOUS drugs than those with below RM3,000.
Attitudes Towards Drug Use	Respondents who think that recreational use of LESS SERIOUS drugs is acceptable are 10% less likely to be punitive towards major drug offences/scenarios involving LESS SERIOUS drugs. Respondents who agree that addiction to MORE SERIOUS drugs is likely caused by traumatic factors are 9% less likely to be punitive towards minor drug offences/scenarios involving MORE SERIOUS drugs.

Views on Proportionality: Recap

There is strong support for non-capital punishment for drug offences, regardless of the seriousness of the crime

- Support for the use of the death penalty, discretionary or mandatory, is generally low regardless of the offence or type of drugs involved

- Support for custodial punishments (jail term/life sentence) is significant, but decreases as more nuances of offence and case scenarios are presented

- The type of drugs involved in offences/scenarios influences the punitiveness of opinions

- There is significant support (>56% of respondents) for non-custodial sentences, or even no punishment at all, for the offence of using LESS SERIOUS drugs



04

CONCLUSION & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

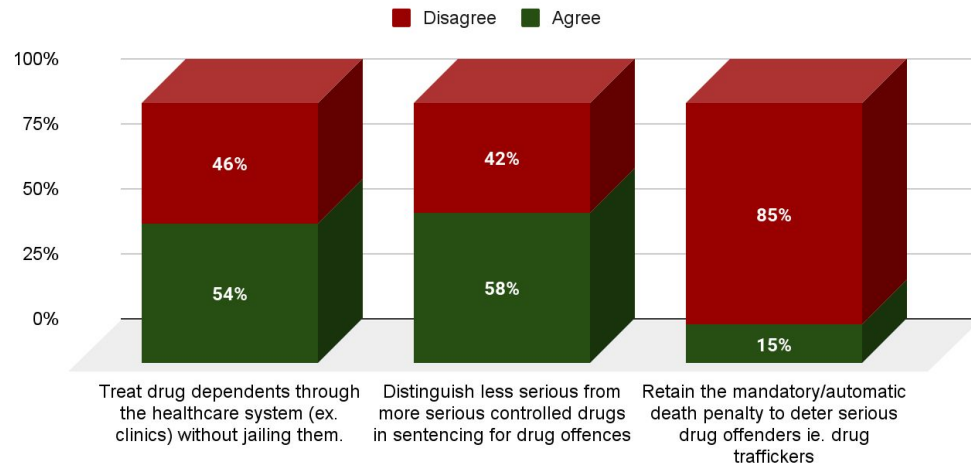
Hope for rehabilitative approaches in Malaysia's drug policy

Despite expressions of relatively conservative views towards drug use, a small majority of respondents support treating drug dependents medically (54%) and differentiate sentencing further based on drug type (58%).

A large majority disagree with retaining the mandatory death penalty for drug offences (85%).

These findings strongly suggest that there is public appetite to reform aspects of Malaysia's drug policy, including amending the Dangerous Drugs Act.

Figure 12: General Views Toward Malaysia's Drug Policy





#1

Current penalties for drug offences need to **be reviewed** to amend disproportionate sentencing

#2

A shift in public perception towards drugs needs to **be facilitated** to enhance acceptance towards reintegrating drug offenders into society

Key Takeaways

1

There is minimal support for the death penalty for drug offences regardless of the severity of the crime.

This observation reflects a non-capital view of proportionate punishment among the public. With appropriate advocacy strategies, amending the Dangerous Drugs Act to remove the death penalty could be deemed acceptable by the public.

2

Views on punishment proportionality for drug offences vary depending on the type of drugs involved, intent of the crime, and other mitigating factors.

There tends to be more lenient views towards the use of, dependency on, and offences involving less serious drugs, weight of the drugs involved in a crime, as well as offences that were committed unintentionally.

3

There is some public acceptance towards the issue of drug addiction and people who are struggling/used to struggle with it.

A small majority of Malaysians show willingness to accept people who are/used to be addicted to controlled drugs into society. However, this acceptance drops when it comes to accepting them as either neighbours or family members.

Key Recommendations

AMENDMENTS

Dangerous Drugs Act

- ❑ Increase the weight thresholds of drugs in serious offences (ex. trafficking).
- ❑ Redefine punishments for serious offences (ex. trafficking) based on intention of the crime.
- ❑ Increase distinction of the seriousness of drugs involved in offences prior to sentencing.

Drug Dependants (Treatment & Rehabilitation) Act

- ❑ Expedite its replacement with the Drug and Substance Abuse Act, which was announced [last year](#).
- ❑ Disclose the contents of the proposed replacement and gather input from the relevant stakeholders.

ADDRESSING STIGMA

Messaging

- ❑ Adopt non-stigmatising language and tone in official communications about drugs and people who use drugs.
- ❑ Encourage emphasis on public health rather than criminal perspectives in media reporting on drug-related issues.

Outreach

- ❑ Encourage more [community-based](#) treatment and harm reduction initiatives.
- ❑ Engage with community leaders to facilitate reintegration of former drug offenders into society.

Future Considerations

Follow up research...

at the micro and community levels to study the rehabilitative needs of drug users in Malaysia. Outcomes may include recommendations of measures that would suit specific users and contexts, and proposals on what rehab-based policies would look like in Malaysia.

Advocacy programmes...

amplifying the call for a more rehabilitative environment for people who use drugs in Malaysia. Outcomes may include [shifting public mindset](#) towards drug users and more compassionate messaging approaches on drug-related issues by authorities and the media.

Stakeholder engagement...

to convince policy makers and implementers of the value of non-punitive or '[alternatives to punishment](#)' approaches in managing drug issues. Outcomes may include further amendments to the punitive and capital aspects of Malaysia's drug laws, and more support for agencies and departments that focus on rehab and treatment related work.



Acknowledgements

The Centre's utmost appreciation goes to the following parties, without whom this important research effort would not have been possible.



**Funded by
the European Union**

Delegation of the European Union to Malaysia

HOMETRICS

Fieldwork Partner

Special thanks also go to our founders YB Khairy Jamaluddin and Shahril Hamdan for supporting the premise and execution of this research effort.



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The Centre is a centrist think tank based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We research issues related to three research pillars: societal contracts, safety nets, and public goods.

Our research is driven by our mission to develop and advocate progressive and pragmatic policy ideas.

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