



MEDIA FACTSHEET (20 JAN 2020)

Key Findings: Cost of Drug-involved and Drug-attributable Crime in Singapore

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) commissioned a research team from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in 2016 to conduct a study on the cost of drug crime in Singapore.

2. The objective of the study was to estimate the aggregate cost of drug-involved and drug-attributable crime in Singapore by drug type in 2010 and 2015. The findings showed in quantifiable terms that drug abuse is harmful and imposes social and economic costs not only to the drug abusers but also to the victims of their crime, both the abusers and victims' families, and society as a whole.

Drugs and Crime

3. One of the most important areas of risk in the use of drugs is the link between drugs and crime. When the intensity of drug use becomes very serious, drugs and crime are directly and significantly correlated. Drug use also amplifies and perpetuates pre-existing criminal activities. Generally, drug users report greater involvement with crime and are more likely than other non-users to have criminal records; persons with criminal records are much more likely to be drug users than others, and crimes rise in number as drug use increases.

Drug-involved Crime vs Drug-attributable Crime

4. For the purpose of this study, all convicted drug abusers are considered to have committed Drug-involved Crime, regardless of whether they have also been convicted of other offences. The convicted drug abusers who were surveyed for the study included (i) abusers arrested in 2010 and 2015; and (ii) drug abusers with drug consumption offences who were in DRCs or in prison during 2010 and 2015. The non drug-consumption offences committed by the subset of offenders in this group that can be attributed entirely or partially to illicit drug abuse are considered as Drug-attributable Crime. An example of a drug-attributable crime would be one of theft, in order to buy drugs.

Cost of Drug-involved Crime

5. The total cost of drug-involved crime includes both tangible and intangible types of costs. Examples of tangible costs include the cost of obtaining drugs that were

consumed and the reduced or lost productivity attributable to drug consumption or the impact of the crimes committed. Examples of intangible costs include the premature deaths or reduced quality of life experienced by the drug abusers, their victims, and their respective families.

6. The key findings from the study are as follows:

(a) The costs of drug-involved crime were **S\$1 billion in 2010 and S\$1.23 billion in 2015**, amounting to 0.31 per cent and 0.30 per cent respectively of Singapore's prevailing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) then. This economic burden is equivalent to a per capita cost of S\$266 in 2010 and S\$316 in 2015.

(b) By drug type, heroin accounted for the highest cost of Drug-involved Crime, followed by methamphetamine. Taken together, heroin and methamphetamine accounted for 76 per cent (estimated at S\$ 0.76 billion) of the total cost in 2010 and 95 per cent (estimated at S\$1.17 billion) of the total cost in 2015.

Cost of Drug-attributable Crime

7. The costs of drug-attributable crime **were S\$0.52 billion in 2010 and S\$0.74 billion in 2015**, amounting to 0.16 per cent and 0.18 per cent respectively of Singapore's prevailing GDP then. This is equivalent to a per capita cost of S\$139 in 2010 and S\$189 in 2015.

Conclusion

8. While the social and economic cost of drug-involved and drug-attributable crime is often tacitly acknowledged, its quantification remains difficult and the study does have limitations (for example, the cost computations used in the study did not include the cost to the criminal justice system, nor medical expenses and workdays lost to victims). Nevertheless, the study has managed to show that the cost of drug-involved and drug-attributable crime remains a large and significant burden to the society and underscores the need for proactive action in drug control and providing ex-abusers with the necessary support and skillsets so that they stay drug-free.
