

UNDERSTANDING DRUG PENALTIES

This document outlines the possible punishments for the following offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act: (a) Possession of drugs, (b) Consumption of drugs and (c) Trafficking and importation/exportation of drugs, and some key factors that the court considers when determining the appropriate sentence.



1. INTRODUCTION

MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1973

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1973 (MDA) is the primary legislation governing drug offences. It reflects Singapore's zero-tolerance policy towards drug abuse by criminalising the following acts in relation to illegal drugs and substances:



POSSESSION



CONSUMPTION



TRAFFICKING, IMPORTATION
& EXPORTATION

TYPES OF ILLEGAL DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES

The drugs and substances* regulated by the MDA fall into three broad categories:

“CONTROLLED” DRUGS

These are all the drugs listed in the First Schedule of the MDA. They are classified into Classes “A”, “B” and “C” and include “specified” drugs as well as other drugs.

EXAMPLE:

Codeine
 (“controlled”, but
 not “specified”)

“SPECIFIED” DRUGS

These are all the drugs listed in the Fourth Schedule of the MDA. They are a subset of “Controlled” drugs, and can attract enhanced penalties.

EXAMPLES:

Cannabis (aka “weed”, “marijuana” or “pot”), Cocaine (aka “crack” or “coke”), MDMA, MDEA and MDA (aka “Ecstasy”), Diamorphine (aka “heroin”, “white”, “smack” or “putih”), Methamphetamine (aka “ice”), Ketamine, Morphine, Nimatazepam

PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

These are substances that can produce a “psychoactive effect” on someone when consumed. A substance has a “psychoactive effect” if the stimulation or depression can change how a person thinks, feels, or behaves by affecting their brain or nervous system.

EXCEPTIONS:

Substances listed in the Fifth Schedule (e.g., alcohol and caffeine) are excluded from this category even though they may produce a “psychoactive effect”

**The drugs listed above are not exhaustive. Please refer to the MDA for the full list.*

DISCLAIMER

This document is NOT to be regarded as legal advice. Please seek independent legal or professional advice if you have questions about the criminal law and process governing drug and substance offences. The information contained in this document is correct as of 18 May 2026.

2. POSSESSION

PUNISHMENTS AND SENTENCING - POSSESSION OFFENCE

The severity of punishment for **possessing** illegal drugs and substances is primarily determined by:

1

CLASSIFICATION OF THE DRUG TYPE UNDER THE MDA

In descending order of severity:

- “Specified” drugs (especially for repeat offenders)
- Class A
- Class B
- Class C

“Specified” drugs can attract enhanced penalties over “controlled” drugs especially for repeat offenders.

2

CRIMINAL HISTORY OF SIMILAR OFFENCES

- Enhanced penalties
- Mandatory minimum sentences (imprisonment, caning and/or fine)

3

QUANTITY

- Higher quantities (by weight) typically attract heavier penalties
- Certain weight thresholds trigger mandatory minimum sentences (imprisonment, caning and/or fine)



IMPORTANT NOTE

These are some of the common factors that may affect the sentence, and they are not arranged in order of severity. The court will consider all the circumstances of each case in deciding on the appropriate sentence. For more information on the sentencing ranges, please refer to the table on the next page.

2. POSSESSION

PRESCRIBED SENTENCES - POSSESSION OFFENCE

The table is organised based on: (1) the type of drugs; (2) the stated quantities; and (3) the offender's conviction history.

DRUG TYPE	AMOUNT (g) POSSESSED			
	< 330	330 – 500	> 500	
Cannabis (aka marijuana, weed, pot, grass, joints, ganja)	< 330	330 – 500	> 500	
Cannabis Mixture (aka marijuana, weed, pot, grass, joints, ganja)	< 660	660 – 1,000	> 1,000	
Cannabis Resin (aka hashish)	< 130	130 – 200	> 200	
Cocaine (aka crack, coke, snow)	< 20	20 – 30	> 30	
Diamorphine (aka heroin, peh hoon, white, smack, junk, powder, putih, medicine, ubat)	< 10	10 – 15	> 15	
Methamphetamine (aka ice, glass, crystal, speed, ice cream, cream, hirropon, yaba, shabu, syabu)	< 167	167 – 250	> 250	
Drugs containing morphine (except opium)	< 20	20 – 30	> 30	
Opium	< 800	800 – 1,200 AND containing ≥ 20g morphine	> 1,200 AND containing > 30g morphine	
Any other controlled drugs / psychoactive substances	Any amount		-	
SENTENCE	First-time offence	Subsequent Offence/s	First time and all subsequent offences	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 10-year jail term and/or Fine of up to S\$20,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum: 2-year jail term Maximum: 10-year jail term Possible fine: Up to S\$20,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum: 10-year jail term and 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: 20-year jail term and 10 strokes of the cane* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum: 20-year jail term and 10 strokes of the cane* Maximum: 30-year jail term and 15 strokes of the cane*

* Refer to section below titled "Caning Considerations".



IMPORTANT NOTE

The court decides on the appropriate sentence based on the facts of each case. The court also considers sentences that have been imposed in other similar cases. Some of the common factors that may affect the sentence to be imposed are described in the section below titled "Aggravating/Mitigating Factors".

3. CONSUMPTION

PUNISHMENTS AND SENTENCING – CONSUMPTION OFFENCE

The severity of punishment for **consuming** illegal drugs and substances is primarily determined by:

1

CLASSIFICATION OF THE DRUG TYPE UNDER THE MDA

In descending order of severity:

- “Specified” drugs (especially for repeat offenders)
- Class A
- Class B
- Class C

“Specified” drugs can attract enhanced penalties over “controlled” drugs especially for repeat offenders.

2

CRIMINAL HISTORY OF SIMILAR OFFENCES

- First-time drug consumer
- Casual consumer
- Addict
- Previous convictions (enhanced penalties)

Previous convictions may trigger mandatory minimum sentences (imprisonment, caning and/or fine).

3

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE OFFENCE

For example:

- Whether the consumption was planned
- Whether payment was made for the drugs

4

AGE OF THE OFFENDER



IMPORTANT NOTE

These are some of the common factors that may affect the sentence, and they are not arranged in order of severity. The court will consider all the circumstances of each case in deciding on the appropriate sentence. For more information on the sentencing ranges, please refer to the table on the next page.

3. CONSUMPTION

PRESCRIBED SENTENCES – CONSUMPTION OFFENCE

The table is organised based on: (1) the type of drug/substance consumed and (2) the number of previous drug-related convictions. As can be seen, the prescribed punishments generally escalate with each subsequent conviction.

DRUG TYPE		CONTROLLED DRUG	SPECIFIED DRUG	PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES
SENTENCE	First-time offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 1-year jail term • Maximum: 10-year jail term • Possible fine of up to S\$20,000 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine: Maximum of \$20,000 and/or • Maximum: 10-year jail term
	Second-time offender			
	Third-time offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 3-year jail term 	Long-Term Imprisonment 1 (LT1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 5-year jail term and 3 strokes of the cane* • Maximum: 7-year jail term and 6 strokes of the cane* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 3-year jail sentence • Maximum: 10-year jail term
	Fourth-time offender (with prior LT1)		Long-Term Imprisonment 2 (LT2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 7-year jail term and 6 strokes of the cane* • Maximum: 13-year jail term and 12 strokes of the cane* 	

* Refer to section below titled "Caning Considerations".

! IMPORTANT NOTE

The court decides on the appropriate sentence based on the facts of each case. The court also considers sentences that have been imposed in other similar cases. Some of the common factors that may affect the sentence to be imposed are described in the section below titled "Aggravating/Mitigating Factors".

To determine the difference between a first-time offender and repeat offender, please refer to the table in the next page.

3. CONSUMPTION

DEFINITION

The definition of first-time and repeat offenders are as listed below:

First-time offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No previous conviction for consumption of controlled drug/ psychoactive substance under the MDA or the Singapore Armed Forces Act 1972 (SAFA)*.
Second-time offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A previous conviction for consumption of controlled drug/ psychoactive substance under the MDA or the SAFA;• A previous admission to a drug rehabilitation centre under the MDA; or• A previous conviction for an offence of failure to provide a urine/hair sample to the relevant authorities.
Third-time offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 previous admissions to a drug rehabilitation centre under the MDA;• 2 previous convictions for consumption of a specified drug;• 2 previous convictions for an offence of failure to provide a urine/hair sample to the relevant authorities;• 1 previous admission and 1 previous conviction for consumption of a specified drug;• 1 previous admission and 1 previous conviction for an offence of failure to provide a urine/hair sample to the relevant authorities; or• 1 previous conviction for consumption of a specified drug and 1 previous conviction for an offence of failure to provide urine/hair specimen to the relevant authorities.
Offender with prior LT1 conviction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior LT1 conviction for consumption of specified drug or an offence of failure to provide urine/hair specimen to the relevant authorities.

* SAFA is only applicable to persons subject to military law e.g. NSFs, Regular servicemen and any other military personnel

4. TRAFFICKING, IMPORTING & EXPORTING

PUNISHMENTS AND SENTENCING – TRAFFICKING, IMPORTING & EXPORTING OFFENCES

It is an offence to traffic, import, or export drugs and substances regulated by the MDA. “Trafficking” includes selling, giving, administering, transporting, sending, delivering and distributing drugs (or offering to do so).

The severity of punishment for **trafficking/importing/exporting** illegal drugs and substances is primarily determined by:

1

CLASSIFICATION OF THE DRUG TYPE UNDER THE MDA

In descending order of severity:

- “Specified” drugs (especially for repeat offenders)
- Class A
- Class B
- Class C

“Specified” drugs can attract enhanced penalties over “controlled” drugs especially for repeat offenders.

2

INTENDED RECIPIENT OF THE DRUG

Whether the drugs were intended to be given to a:

- Young person (under 21 years old) or
- Vulnerable person (suffering from a serious mental disorder)

3

CRIMINAL HISTORY OF SIMILAR OFFENCES

4

QUANTITY INVOLVED



IMPORTANT NOTE

These are some of the common factors that may affect the sentence, and they are not arranged in order of severity. The court will consider all the circumstances of each case in deciding on the appropriate sentence. For more information on the sentencing ranges, please refer to the table on the next page.

4. TRAFFICKING, IMPORTING & EXPORTING

PRESCRIBED SENTENCES – TRAFFICKING, IMPORTING & EXPORTING OFFENCES

For “Specified” and “Controlled” Drugs

DRUG TYPE		AMOUNT (g) TRAFFICKED OR IMPORTED/EXPORTED		
Cannabis (aka marijuana, weed, pot, grass, joints, ganja)		< 330	330 – 500	> 500
Cannabis Mixture (aka marijuana, weed, pot, grass, joints, ganja)		< 660	660 – 1,000	> 1,000
Cannabis Resin (aka hashish)		< 130	130 – 200	> 200
Cocaine (aka crack, coke, snow)		< 20	20 – 30	> 30
Diamorphine (aka heroin, peh hoon, white, smack, junk, powder, putih, medicine, ubat)		< 10	10 – 15	> 15
Methamphetamine (aka ice, glass, crystal, speed, ice cream, cream, hirropon, yaba, shabu, syabu)		< 167	167 – 250	> 250
Drugs containing morphine (except opium)		< 20	20 – 30	> 30
Opium		< 800	800 – 1,200 AND Containing ≥ 20g of morphine	> 1,200 AND Containing > 30g of morphine
SENTENCE	First Time Offence (Trafficking)	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-year jail term • 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-year jail term • 15 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-year jail term • 15 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-year jail term OR Jail for life • 15 strokes of the cane* 	Death Penalty (subject to s 33B of the MDA)
	First Time Offence (Importation/Exportation)	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-year jail term • 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-year jail term OR Jail for life • 15 strokes of the cane* 		
	Subsequent Offence/s (Trafficking/Importation/Exportation)Note: <i>Previous conviction need not be for the same drug or substance</i>	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-year jail term • 10 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-year jail term • 15 strokes of the cane* 		
	Trafficking/Importation/Exportation of drugs/substances meant for a young or vulnerable person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-year jail term • 15 strokes of the cane* 		

* Refer to section below titled “Caning Considerations”.

4. TRAFFICKING, IMPORTING & EXPORTING

For any other “Controlled” Drugs and Psychoactive Substances

DRUG TYPE		SENTENCE			
		First Time Offence (Trafficking)	First Time Offence (Importation/ Exportation)	Subsequent Offence/s (Trafficking/ Importation/ Exportation) <i>Note: Previous conviction need not be for the same drug or substance</i>	Trafficking/ Importation/ Exportation for drugs/ substances meant for a young or vulnerable person
Any other “Controlled” Drugs	Class A Drug	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-year jail term 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term 15 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-year jail term 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-year jail term OR Jail for life 15 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-year jail term 10 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-year jail term 15 strokes of the cane* 	
	Class B Drug	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-year jail term 3 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term 10 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-year jail term 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-year jail term OR Jail for life 15 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-year jail term 6 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-year jail term 15 strokes of the cane* 	
	Class C Drug	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-year jail term 2 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-year jail term 5 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-year jail term 5 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term 15 strokes of the cane* 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4-year jail term 4 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term 15 strokes of the cane* 	
Psychoactive Substances		Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-year jail term Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-year jail term Possible fine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ranging from S\$4,000 to S\$10,000 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-year jail term Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term Possible fine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ranging from S\$6,000 to S\$20,000 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4-year jail term Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term Possible fine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ranging from S\$8,000 to S\$20,000 	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4-year jail term 4 strokes of the cane* Maximum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-year jail term 15 strokes of the cane*

* Refer to section below titled “Caning Considerations”.

4. TRAFFICKING, IMPORTING & EXPORTING

HOW THE COURT ARRIVES AT THE APPROPRIATE SENTENCE

After identifying the applicable sentencing range, the court looks at the **quantity** of the drugs/substance involved to set a starting point for the sentence. Then, the court may adjust the indicative starting sentence upward or downward based on:

- **The offender's culpability**

This generally refers to how responsible was the offender for the crime.



FACTORS THAT MAY INCREASE CULPABILITY (MORE RESPONSIBLE):

- Leading/Organising a large-scale drug operation.
- Involving other people in the operation by pressuring or rewarding them.
- Taking steps to avoid being caught for the crime.



FACTORS THAT MAY LOWER CULPABILITY (LESS RESPONSIBLE):

- Being involved in only a small part of the crime under someone else's direction.
- Being forced, tricked or pressured into committing the crime and/or not properly understanding what was happening.

- **The presence of aggravating or mitigating factors**

Aggravating factors are things that make the crime more serious.

Mitigating factors are things that help reduce the sentence.



IMPORTANT NOTE

The court decides on the appropriate sentence based on the facts of each case. The court also considers sentences that have been imposed in other similar cases. Some of the common factors that may affect the sentence to be imposed are described in the section below titled "Aggravating/Mitigating Factors".

5. AGGRAVATING / MITIGATING FACTORS

Here are some common but non-exhaustive factors that may affect the appropriate sentence:



AGGRAVATING FACTORS (THAT MAY MAKE THE CRIME MORE SERIOUS):

- Having a criminal history of related drug offences.
- Having similar charges taken into consideration for sentencing.
- Committing the crime while on bail, or during a drug rehabilitation / halfway house programme.
- Trying to hide or destroy evidence of the crime.
- Dealing with a wide range of drugs.



MITIGATING FACTORS (THAT MAY REDUCE THE SENTENCE):

- Voluntarily confessing to the crime.
- Pleading guilty (the earlier the better).
- Providing substantive assistance to the investigating authorities.
- Having a serious mental condition that led to the commission of the offence.
- Young offender with strong rehabilitative prospects.



IMPORTANT NOTE

Even when mitigating factors are present, the Court cannot give a sentence below the mandatory minimum sentence (imprisonment, caning and/or fine) prescribed by law.

6. CANING CONSIDERATIONS

Caning is **exempted** for the following persons:



Female offenders



Male offenders who are over 50 years of age at the time of infliction of the caning



Male offenders sentenced to death whose sentences have not been reduced



IMPORTANT NOTE

- Note however that the court may impose an imprisonment term not exceeding 12 months in lieu of caning.
- For young offenders below 16 years of age, only the High Court can impose caning.

7. YOUNG OFFENDERS



ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING OPTIONS FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

For offenders below 21 years old who show strong rehabilitative potential, the Court may, depending on the facts of the case, impose a lighter sentence that does not require the offender to serve time in prison such as:

PROBATION

Generally allows the offender to remain in the community under supervision, typically between 6 months to 3 years.

Offender must adhere to the following:

- Regular meetings with a probation officer
- Compliance with time restrictions
- Performing community service
- Attending counselling or rehabilitation programmes
- Residing at an approved institution (for specified period)



REFORMATIVE TRAINING



Harsher form of sentence than probation — more structured and requires the offender to be detained at a reformatory training centre to undergo rehabilitation for a **minimum period** of 6 or 12 months (as ordered by the Court).

After detention, there will be a period of supervision lasting for a maximum duration of 54 months.



Tel: 6 JUSTICE (65878423)

www.judiciary.gov.sg