

# **EMBARGOED TILL COMMENCEMENT OF ANNUAL CRIME BRIEF 2019 PRESS CONFERENCE ON 5 FEBRUARY 2020**



**SINGAPORE  
POLICE FORCE**  
SAFEGUARDING EVERY DAY

## **POLICE NEWS RELEASE**

### **ANNUAL CRIME BRIEF 2019**

#### **Singapore remains one of the safest cities in the world**

#### ***Overall Crime Rate increased, primarily due to a significant rise in scam cases***

Singapore remains one of the safest cities in the world. Singapore was ranked first in the 2019 Gallup Global Law and Order report, with 94% of residents reporting that they felt safe walking home alone in their neighbourhood at night.<sup>1</sup> The World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2019 ranked Singapore first for order and security.<sup>2</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit Safe Cities Index 2019 also ranked Singapore first for personal security.<sup>3</sup>

2. In 2019, the total number of reported crimes increased by 6.0% to 35,115 cases, from 33,126 cases in 2018. The Overall Crime Rate also increased, with 616 cases per 100,000 population in 2019, compared to 587 cases per 100,000 population in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

3. The increase in the number of reported crimes was primarily due to a significant increase in scam cases. If scam cases were excluded, the total number of reported crimes would have decreased by 4.9% to 25,570 cases in 2019, from 26,892 cases in 2018 (see Annex A-1).

4. Of note, four out of the six crime classes that made up Overall Crime in 2019 decreased significantly compared to 2018. Crimes against persons decreased by 13.6% to 4,349 cases in 2019, from 5,031 cases in 2018. Violent or serious property crimes decreased by 27.1% to 153 cases in 2019, from 210 cases in 2018. Housebreaking and related crimes decreased by 14.3% to 281 cases in 2019, from 328 cases in 2018. Theft and related crimes decreased by 8.8% to 11,128 cases in 2019, from 12,196 cases in 2018 (see Annex A-2).

5. In particular, motor vehicle and related thefts, robbery and snatch theft cases registered a 35-year low in 2019. Motor vehicle and related thefts cases decreased by

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from: <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/267869/gallup-global-law-order-report-2019.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Extracted from: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/ROLI-2019-Reduced.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Extracted from: <https://safecities.economist.com/safe-cities-index-2019/>

<sup>4</sup> Overall Crime Rate refers to the Overall Crime per 100,000 population. It is computed by dividing the number of crime cases reported over the total Singapore population, and multiplied by 100,000. It is used by many overseas Police forces to measure crime rate.

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25.2% to 655 cases in 2019, from 876 cases in 2018.<sup>5</sup> Robbery decreased by 23.6% to 55 cases in 2019, from 72 cases in 2018. Snatch theft decreased by 27.1% to 35 cases in 2019, from 48 cases in 2018.

### ***More crime-free days***

6. In 2019, 178 days were free from three confrontational crimes, namely snatch theft, robbery and housebreaking, an increase of 15 days compared to the 163 crime-free days in 2018. On an individual crime basis, 332 days were free from snatch theft, 314 days from robbery and 226 days from housebreaking (see Annex A-3). Please see Annex A-4 for comments from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation and Intelligence).

### **Scam situation in Singapore**

7. The total number of scam cases reported increased by 53.1% to 9,545 cases in 2019, from 6,234 cases in 2018. It made up 27% of Overall Crime, up from 19% in 2018.

8. The top ten scam types in Singapore constituted almost 94% of all scam cases reported here in 2019.<sup>6</sup>

9. More monies were also lost to scammers in 2019. The total amount cheated in the top ten types of scam increased by 13.9% to S\$165.1 million in 2019, from S\$144.9 million in 2018 (see Annex B-1).

10. Among the top ten scam types, e-commerce scams, loan scams and credit-for-sex scams are of particular concern, as they constituted more than 62% of the top ten scam types reported in 2019. Furthermore, the total number of reported cases for these scams increased by 53.8%, compared to the same period in 2018 (see Annex B-2).

### ***E-commerce scams remain the top scam in Singapore***

11. E-commerce scams remain the top scam type in Singapore, with the highest number of reported cases in 2019.

- a) E-commerce scam cases increased by 30.3% to 2,816 cases in 2019, from 2,161 cases in 2018.
- b) The total amount cheated increased to S\$2.3 million in 2019, from S\$1.9 million in 2018. The largest sum cheated in a single case in 2019 was S\$180,000.

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<sup>5</sup> Motor vehicle and related thefts cases include theft of motor vehicles, theft of motor vehicle components parts and theft from motor vehicles.

<sup>6</sup> The top ten scam types are e-commerce scams, loan scams, credit-for-sex scams, social media impersonation scams, Internet love scams, investment scams, China officials impersonation scams, business email impersonation scams, lucky draw scams and tech-support scams.

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- c) 44% of e-commerce scams took place on Carousell in 2019, compared to 70% in 2018, as the number of scam cases on Carousell fell. On the other hand, more e-commerce scams took place on other digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Shopee and Lazada as compared to 2018 (see Annex B-3). The common transactions involved sales of electronic products and tickets to events and attractions, such as ticket for Universal Studios Singapore.
- d) The Police continued to work closely with relevant stakeholders, such as Carousell, to remove suspicious advertisements and feature scam advisories to raise awareness against e-commerce scams. The introduction of 'Carousell Protection', a form of escrow payment which will hold money paid by buyers until the sale is acknowledged by both buyers and sellers, had also helped mitigate the risk of buyers falling prey to scams on Carousell.

### ***Significant increases in loan scams and credit-for-sex scams***

12. The second and third highest number of reported cases amongst all scam types are loan scams and credit-for-sex scams respectively. Both registered significant increases in 2019 as compared to 2018.

#### a) Loan scams

- The number of cases increased by 81.0% to 1,750 in 2019, from 967 in 2018.
- The total amount cheated increased to S\$6.8 million in 2019, from S\$1.9 million in 2018. The largest sum cheated in a single case in 2019 was S\$195,000.

#### b) Credit-for-sex scams

- The number of cases increased by 100.0% to 1,066 in 2019, from 533 in 2018.
- The total amount cheated increased to S\$2.8 million in 2019, from S\$1.5 million in 2018. The largest sum cheated in a single case in 2019 was S\$80,000.
- Alipay and iTunes cards remain the more common platforms used for money transfers in this type of scam.

13. Loan scams and credit-for-sex scams are associated with unlawful activities such as unlicensed moneylending and vice.

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### **Police efforts to fight scams**

#### ***New Anti-Scam Centre disrupts scammers' operations***

14. To better fight scams, the Police set up the Anti-Scam Centre (ASC) on 18 June 2019 under the Commercial Affairs Department (CAD). The ASC focuses on disrupting scammers' operations and mitigating victims' monetary losses through close collaboration with business operators such as financial institutions, telecommunication companies and digital platform owners.

15. Since its formation, 3,312 reports involving total losses of S\$10.6 million have been referred to the ASC. The ASC had frozen 2,600 bank accounts and recovered 35% of the amount scammed, or about S\$3.7 million. The ASC's ability to disrupt scammers' operations has also been enhanced with the following:

a) More banks involved in freezing bank accounts swiftly

- The Police continue to work closely with the banks to swiftly freeze bank accounts which are suspected to be involved in scammers' operations, and to impede fund transfers involving such accounts within a few days of notification. Previously, it would take as long as two weeks.
- Besides the three major local banks (DBS, UOB, OCBC) that the ASC has been working closely with since its formation, seven other banks, namely ANZ, CIMB, Citibank, Standard Chartered, Bank of China, HSBC and Maybank have also joined this initiative, since November 2019.

b) Shortening the time needed to obtain PayNow transaction details for quicker intervention

- PayNow is one of the money transfer platforms used by scammers. In November 2019, the ASC worked with the Association of Banks in Singapore to shorten the time for the banks to provide PayNow transaction details to the Police, from weeks to just a few days. This increases the chances of recovery of monies scammed from the victims.

#### ***Extensive island-wide enforcement actions against e-commerce scam operations***

16. To deter local scammers from carrying out their crimes in Singapore, the Police continued to take tough anti-scam enforcement actions against local e-commerce scammers and money mules.

17. In 2019, the Police conducted 85 operations targeting local e-commerce scammers which resulted in the arrest of 112 scammers who were responsible for 1,223 e-commerce scam cases.

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18. In addition, there were 10 enforcement operations targeting money mules who had handed over their local bank accounts to scammers or assisted scammers to conduct money transfers using their personal bank accounts. In 2019, 1,040 money mules involved in more than 2,100 scam cases were investigated.

### ***International collaborative efforts***

19. The high degree of Internet penetration and use of smartphones in Singapore have facilitated the increase in online crimes. A significant proportion of online crimes are committed remotely by foreign syndicates. The Police will continue to work closely with foreign law enforcement counterparts to crack down on such foreign syndicates targeting Singaporeans.

20. In November 2019, the CAD worked with the Royal Malaysia Police, Hong Kong Police Force and the Macau Judiciary Police to jointly cripple a transnational Internet love scam syndicate based in Malaysia. Three Nigerian and 15 Malaysian scammers were arrested during the operations. The syndicate is believed to be involved in at least 139 cases of Internet love scams reported in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Macau, involving losses of about S\$5.8 million.

21. The success of this joint operation between the various law enforcement agencies demonstrates the common resolve of the Singapore Police Force and its regional partners to fight transnational crime, and sends a strong signal to cross-border scam syndicates that the Police will go after them, no matter where they may be operating from.

22. Please see Annex C-1 for a quote by Director of CAD.

### ***Public education efforts against scams***

23. Apart from enforcement, the Police continued to increase public education and engagement efforts with stakeholders, such as convenience stores, remittance agencies and banks, to raise awareness of scams. This included training frontline counter staff to spot signs of individuals who could be unknowingly falling victim to scams, and displaying crime advisories prominently at counters and automated teller machines.

24. The Police, together with the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), have undertaken many scam prevention initiatives and held many anti-scam events to warn the public about scams, and will continue these efforts (See Annex C-2).

25. It is often difficult to recover monies that have already been paid or transferred to the scammers. The Police urge the public to exercise caution when making any online transactions, and exercise due diligence to protect themselves from falling victim to scams. The Police would like to remind the public never to give their one-time banking

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passwords to anyone, including persons purporting to represent the Police or other law enforcement agencies.

26. Members of the public can visit the website [www.scamalert.sg](http://www.scamalert.sg) to learn about the various types of scam and take steps to avoid falling prey.

27. Please see Annex D for comments from the Chairman of NCPC.

### **Unlicensed moneylending situation in 2019**

#### ***Shift in Unlicensed Moneylending (UML) harassment to non-damage and non-confrontational tactics***

28. The total number of UML-related harassment cases increased by 14.6% to 5,281 cases in 2019, from 4,608 cases in 2018. Cases of UML-related harassment by electronic means increased by 14.8% to 4,257 cases in 2019, from 3,709 cases in 2018. This accounted for the majority of the UML-related harassment cases reported in 2019.

29. The Police's enforcement efforts to disrupt UML syndicate operations, strong partnership with the community and the introduction of additional Police cameras in neighbourhoods forced UML harassers to shift to non-damage and non-confrontational tactics, such as placing harassment notes in letterboxes.

30. To combat the rise of UML-related harassment, the Police have been proactive in educating the public not to borrow from unlicensed moneylenders and advising them against any involvement in UML-related activities. However, the proliferation of new communication platforms and smartphones has made it easier for UML syndicates to conduct their harassment via electronic means and simultaneously target larger groups of people.

31. The Police will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders, such as the Infocomm Media Development Authority and the Ministry of Law's Registry of Moneylenders, to disrupt UML syndicates employing such tactics and increase public outreach efforts against unlicensed moneylending.

### **Outrage of modesty remains a key concern**

32. Although the number of Outrage of Modesty (OM) cases decreased by 7.1% to 1,605 in 2019, from 1,728 in 2018, it remains a cause for concern due to the high number of reported cases (see Annex E).

33. The number of OM cases on the public transport system, including at public transportation nodes and on public transport itself, decreased by 12.9% to 237 in 2019, from 272 in 2018. The Police have enhanced our presence at public transportation nodes through stepped-up patrols. We will continue to work closely with the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and public transport operators to reach out to commuters by



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distributing anti-OM advisories. Public education videos with anti-OM messages are also screened at MRT stations and bus interchanges. These advisories and videos educate the public on what they can do when they encounter such crimes, and remind them to stay vigilant.

34. The Public Transport Security Command launched the Riders-on-Watch (ROW) scheme on 2 July 2019. The ROW scheme augments the policing of Singapore's public transport network and aims to tap on the collective effort of public transport commuters to keep Singapore's public transport network safe and secure. As at 31 January 2020, close to 40,000 members of the public have signed up as ROW volunteers. The Police would like to thank the community for the strong support, and encourage more commuters to join us in keeping our public transport safe by signing up.

35. The number of OM cases at public entertainment (PE) outlets decreased by 27.3% to 104 in 2019, from 143 in 2018. The Police, in partnership with NCPC, held the second iteration of the Smart Clubbing Campaign and launched the PE Industry and Security Watch Group (PE iSSWG) to promote closer working relationships within the PE industry, and to jointly implement initiatives such as to promote smart and safe clubbing behaviours, to reduce OM cases and other crimes in PE outlets. The Police would like to encourage more PE outlets to join the PE iSSWG.

36. The number of OM cases at shopping malls increased by 14.7% to 125 in 2019, from 109 in 2018. The Police will step up patrols in the malls and work with stakeholders to deter OM. Members of the public are reminded to stay vigilant against OM whilst in crowded places. Victims of molestation are advised to make a Police report as soon as possible. Reporting such crimes early is crucial in helping the Police identify and arrest the perpetrators.

### **The community and business operators can play a key role in fighting crime**

37. Everyone has a part to play to keep Singapore safe and secure. Community involvement is an essential pillar in our fight against crime.

38. To recognise the community and business operators for their support in helping to keep Singapore safe and secure, the Police presented 144 Public Spiritedness Awards and 71 Community Partnership Awards in 2019. The Police would like the community to continue to support us in the fight against crime.

39. Business operators such as financial institutions, digital platform owners and telecommunication companies have a social responsibility to prevent, deter and detect crimes at their business premises or platforms. Putting in place the necessary anti-scam measures and precautions against crimes will also help them, as it maintains a positive relationship with their customers.

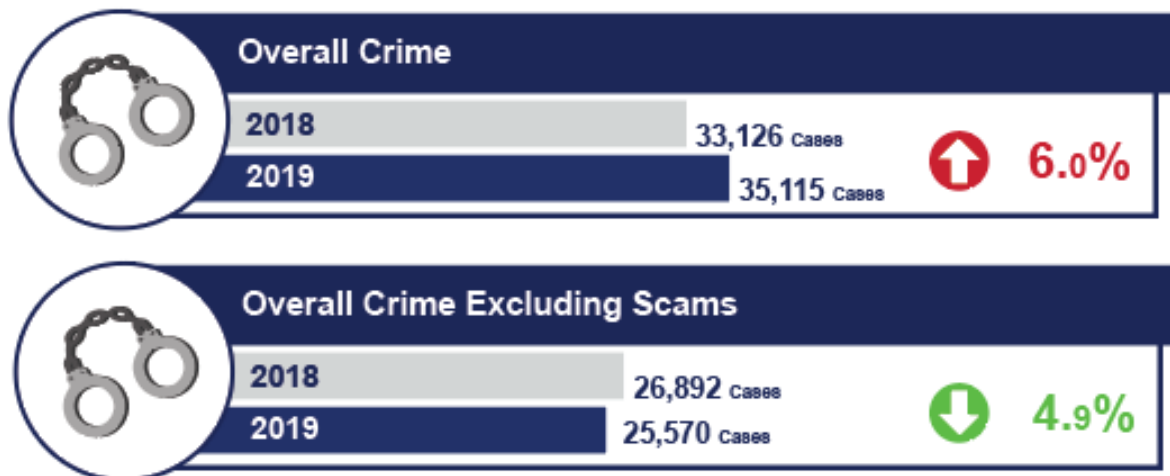
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40. Family members and friends should play their part too. They can prevent someone they know from falling victim to crime and prevent losses. Members of the public are urged to stay vigilant and report perpetrators to the Police.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT  
SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE  
5 FEBRUARY 2020 @ 4.00PM**

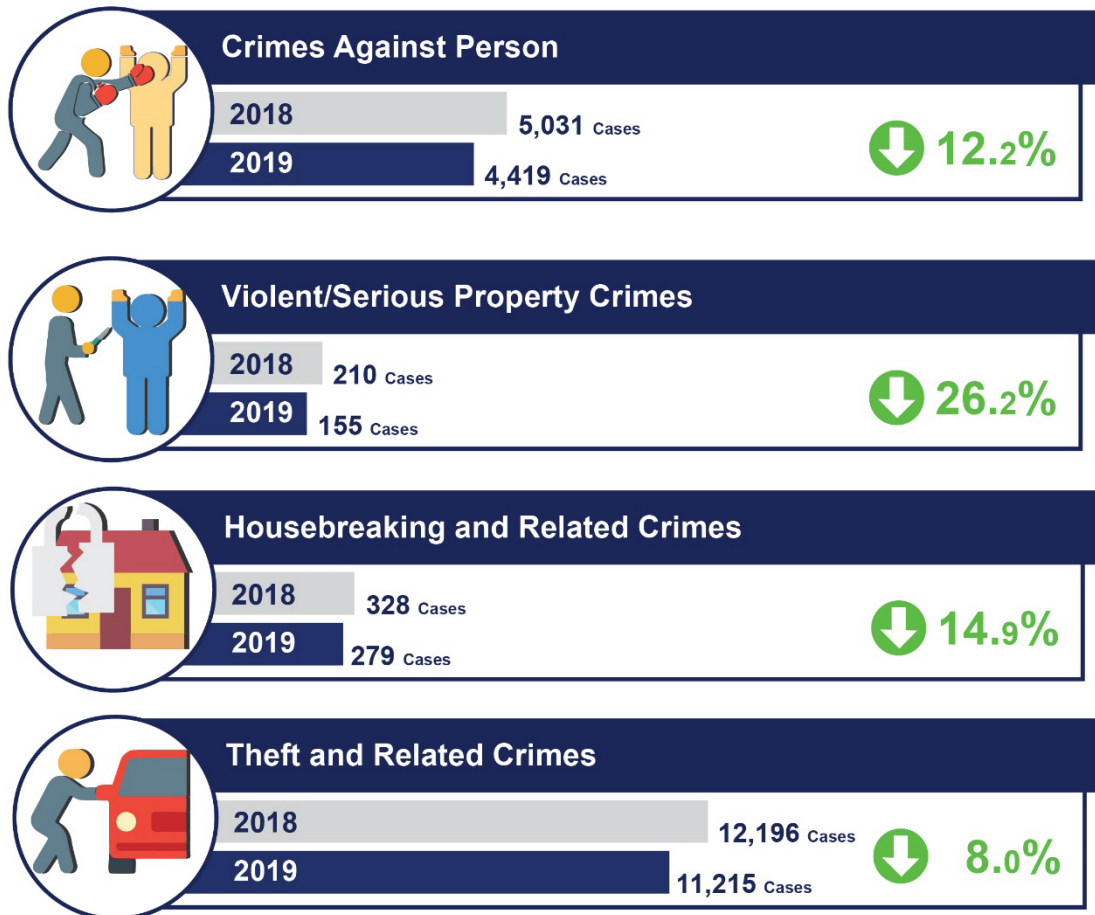


**OVERALL CRIME SITUATION**

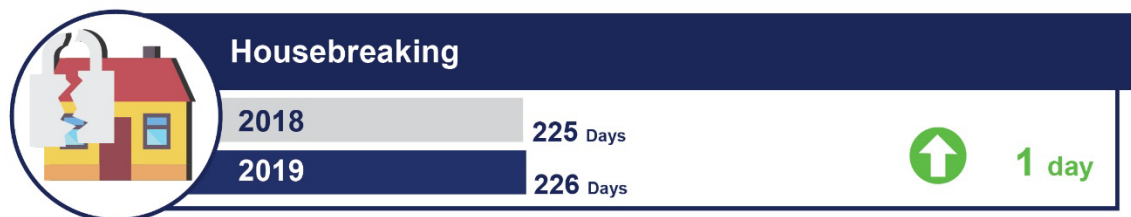
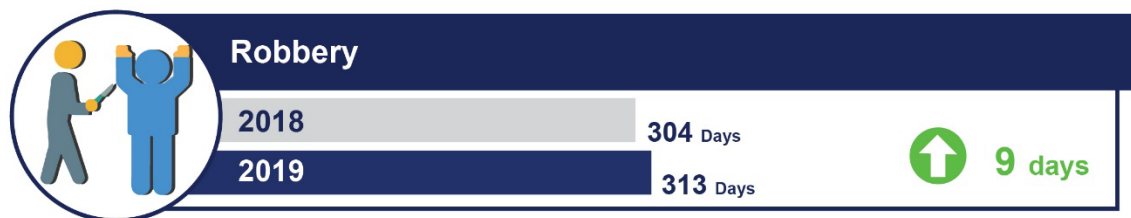


**ANNEX A-2**

**FOUR CRIME CLASSES THAT DECREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN 2019**



**MORE CRIME FREE DAYS IN 2019 FOR THREE CONFRONTATIONAL CRIMES**



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**ANNEX A-4**

*Singapore's streets and homes have become safer but scams have increased significantly, and is a major concern globally.*

*The Police will continue to enhance our public education efforts as well as work with the community and business stakeholders to fight crime.*

*Public education remains the key, especially against scams. Scams can happen to anyone and a discerning public is our best defence. Everyone must do their part to be vigilant to prevent falling victim to scams.*

*– Deputy Commissioner of Police Florence Chua*

*Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation and Intelligence)*

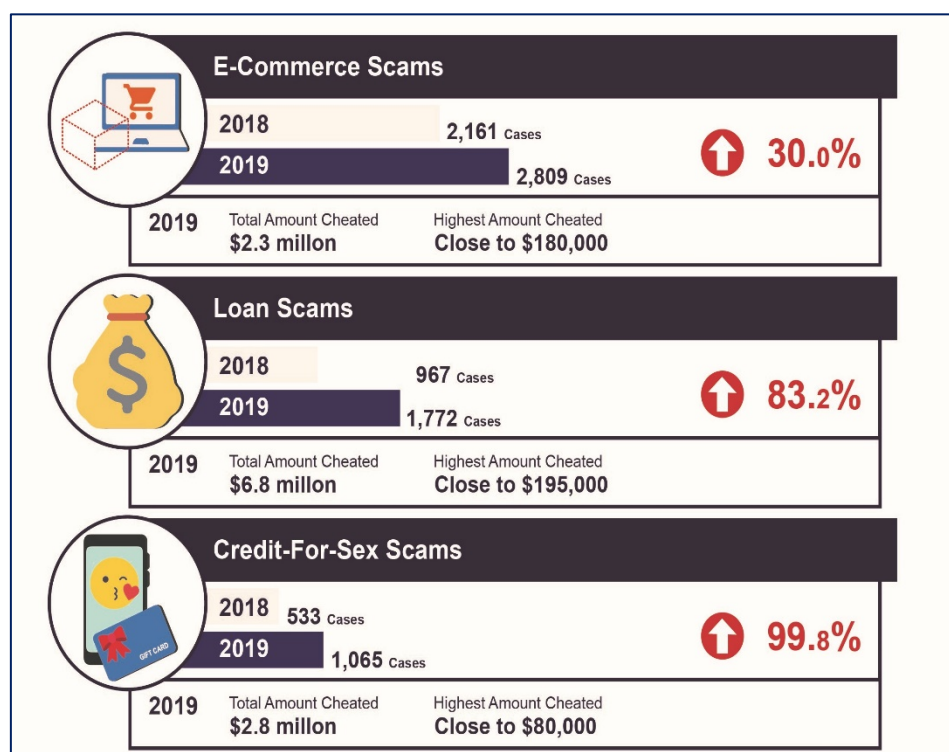
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**ANNEX B-1**

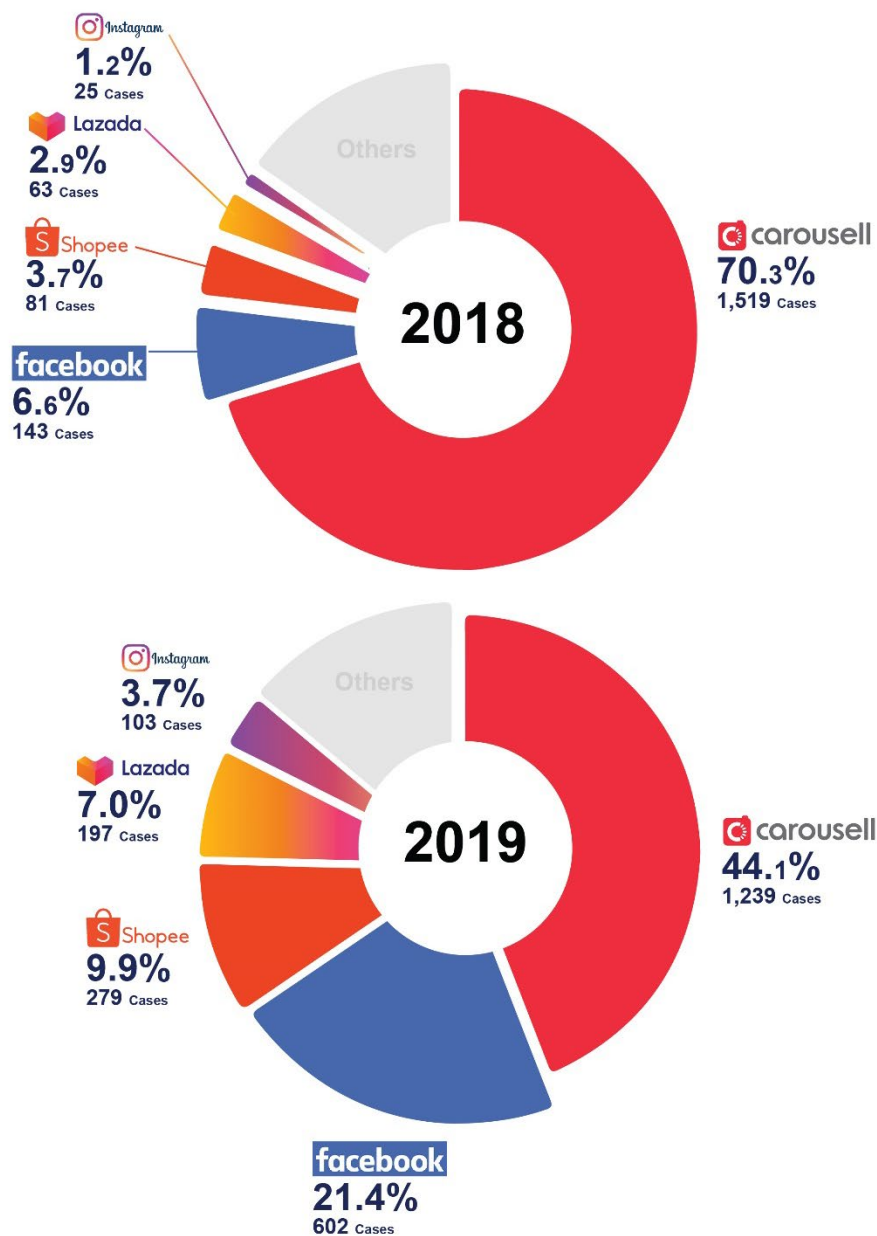
**TOP TEN SCAM TYPES IN SINGAPORE IN 2019**

	Cases Reported		Amount Cheated		
	2019	Change from 2018	2019	Change from 2018	Largest sum cheated
E-Commerce Scams	2,809	+648	\$2.3m	+\$400k	\$180k
Loan Scams	1,772	+805	\$6.8m	+\$4.9m	\$195k
Credit-For-Sex Scams	1,065	+532	\$2.8m	+\$1.3m	\$80k
Social Media Impersonation Scams	810	+703	\$3.1m	+\$2m	\$330k
Internet Love Scams	649	-19	\$34.6m	+\$6.7m	\$4.6m
Investment Scams	508	+161	\$36.9m	-\$2.4m	\$5.3m
China Officials Impersonation Scams	455	+154	\$21.1m	+\$8.4m	\$1.3m
Business Email Impersonation Scams	385	+10	\$45.4m	-\$11.4m	\$4.1m
Lucky Draw Scams	311	+152	\$1.2m	-\$600k	\$314k
Tech Support Scams	249	+226	\$13.9m	+\$13.8m	\$1.6m
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,013</b>	<b>+3,372</b>	<b>\$168m</b>	<b>+\$23m</b>	

**TOP THREE SCAM TYPES OF CONCERN**



**TOP FIVE DIGITAL PLATFORMS USED IN E-COMMERCE SCAMS**





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**ANNEX C-1**

*Scams remain a major concern. Many scammers are taking advantage of the anonymity of the Internet and social media to threaten and target unsuspecting victims.*

*Cyber-enabled scams are a global phenomenon. Many of these scams originate from foreign jurisdictions and we see a lot of the victims' monies leaving Singapore. The Police will continue to collaborate with our foreign counterparts to pursue the scammers and the monies.*

*While the Police will continue to educate the public on crime prevention measures they can take, members of the public also need to play their part. They should be aware of the latest scam tactics and always exercise vigilance to protect themselves, their friends and families from falling victim to scams.*

*Together, we can fight scams more effectively.*

*– Mr. David Chew  
Director of Commercial Affairs Department*

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## **ANNEX C-2**

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORTS TO TACKLE SCAMS**

The Police, together with the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), continue to reach out to the community through various platforms, such as:

#### **1. "Let's Fight Scams" campaign**

The "Let's Fight Scams" campaign for community and business operators to pledge their support against scams was launched by the NCPC in November 2018. Since its inception, over 6,000 such advocates have pledged their support.

Under this campaign, NCPC also developed a WhatsApp broadcast system. The latest scam updates are sent to advocates bi-weekly. As of today, we have over 3,000 advocates who are on this system.

The scamalert.sg website, which registered an annual visitor traffic of 487,717 in 2019, was also updated to include a chat function where an Anti-Scam operator, who is familiar with the latest scam trends, would share scam-related advice. NCPC received a total of 3,900 enquiries on scams via both the chat function and the Anti-Scam Helpline in 2019.

#### **2. Public outreach events on scams in heartlands**

In 2019, over 2,000 anti-scam engagement related activities were held in heartland locations to reach out to the community in various neighbourhoods. One such notable event was an anti-scam talkshow held during the J-Culture Festival at Suntec City in December 2019 where cosplay influencers shared their personal experiences of impersonation and e-commerce scams, and the police representatives also shared scam prevention advice.

#### **3. Partnership with business operators to fight scams**

To heighten awareness and vigilance amongst business operators, the Police have also worked closely with stakeholders such as telecommunications companies, convenience stores, remittance agencies and banks, to improve their ability to detect scamming operations within their business activities and collaboration with the Police on prevention measures. This includes training frontline counter staff to spot scam victims, and displaying crime advisories prominently at the counters and automated teller machines.

#### **Partnering community volunteers to fight scams**

4 The Police also work with the Residents' Committees and grassroots volunteers to educate residents on scams, through community events like block parties, roadshows, festive events and Community Safety & Security Programmes (CSSPs). These are useful avenues to heighten scam awareness in the community and also to reach out to vulnerable groups who may be easy targets for scammers. One such CSSP is the Silver Watch Group. Launched in 2013, this initiative aims to impart crime prevention knowledge to elderly residents by keeping them informed of the latest

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updates on the crime situation and encouraging them to share relevant advice with their peers.

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**Annex D**

*The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) believes that public education is an important pillar in the ongoing fight against scams, and has been working closely with the Police to organise various anti-scam initiatives. We are heartened by the public response to our various initiatives under the 'Let's Fight Scams!' campaign.*

*Two out of the top three scams, namely loan scams and credit-for-sex scams, revolve around questionable activities in the first place - taking loans from questionable sources online, or looking for ladies soliciting for sex online. We are quite concerned that there are still a large number of Singaporeans who engage in such activities and fall for such scams.*

*Scam prevention is an individual responsibility. Be wary of common scam tactics like unbelievably low prices, being asked to disclose your one-time passwords (OTP), being told to pay government fines or assist in investigations by transferring money. It is every individual's responsibility to prevent scams, and prevent their friends and loved ones from being scammed. Let's take active steps to protect ourselves and our loved ones against scams and be a scam-wise community.*

*- Mr. Gerald Singham*

*Chairman, National Crime Prevention Council*

**ANNEX E**

**OUTRAGE OF MODESTY CASES DECREASED BUT REMAINS A CONCERN**

