



POLICE NEWS RELEASE

MID-YEAR CRIME STATISTICS 2021

Overall Crime Situation for January to June 2021

Overall crime increased, largely due to a rise in scam cases

In the first half of 2021, the total number of reported crimes increased by 11.2% to 19,444 cases, from 17,492 cases in the same period in 2020.

2. This increase was largely due to a rise in scam cases, which rose by 16.0% to 8,403 cases in 2021, from 7,247 cases in the same period last year. In contrast, there was a 108.8% increase in scam cases in 2020, when scam cases jumped from 3,470 cases in the first half of 2019 to 7,247 cases in the same period in 2020; 27.1% increase in 2019; and 19.5% increase in 2018. The rate of increase this year has been reduced noticeably.

3. Excluding scams, the total number of reported crimes in the first half of the year rose by 7.8% to 11,041 in 2021, from 10,245 in the same period in 2020. This increase was partly due to a lower number of crimes, excluding scams, reported during the Circuit Breaker in 2020, when many activities were restricted. For the same period in 2019, there were 12,770 reported cases of crimes excluding scams.

4. Despite this effect of the Circuit Breaker, there was still a decrease of more than 400 cases reported in two broad crime classes – housebreaking and related crimes, and theft and related crimes – in the first half of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020. Of note, the number of cases of robbery, housebreaking, and snatch theft decreased by 40.5% to 75 cases in the first half of 2021, from 126 cases in the same period last year. The first half of 2021 recorded the lowest number of cases reported for robbery, housebreaking, and snatch theft compared to the same period in the past 10 years.

Scam Situation

5. The total amount cheated for the top ten scam types increased to \$168.0 million in the first half of 2021, from \$63.5 million in the same period in 2020. Scammers are constantly evolving their tactics and have been taking advantage of the COVID-19 situation to prey on victims' heightened vulnerability and sense of uncertainty. Loan scams, e-commerce scams, investment scams and job scams remain of particular concern, and made up 54.8% of the top ten scam types reported in the first half of 2021. The total number of reported cases for these four types of scam rose by 34.9%,

compared to the same period in 2020. Please see [Annex A](#) for the statistics on the top ten scams.

Loan scams becomes the top scam type

6. Loan scams became the top scam type, with the highest number of reported cases, in the first half of the year.

- a) Loan scam cases increased by 55.4% to 1,243 in the first half of 2021, from 800 in the same period in 2020.
- b) The total amount cheated increased to \$10.6 million in the first half of 2021, from \$5.6 million in the same period in 2020.
- c) In the majority of these cases, the victims came across loan offers or advertisements that were supposedly from licensed moneylenders or banks and required victims to provide their personal information to obtain the loan. Victims were also asked to pay a small percentage of the loan amount as administrative fees and once the money had been transferred to the scammers, the scammers would become uncontactable. In some cases, the scammers also asked the victims to transfer more funds for various fees, but eventually, no loan was disbursed to the victims.
- d) Internet websites, text, WhatsApp messages and Facebook advertisements were the common platforms used by the scammers to reach out to potential victims.

Significant increase in job scams and investment scams

7. Investment scams and job scams recorded the third and fifth highest number of reported cases respectively amongst all scam types. Both also registered significant increases in the first half of 2021 as compared to the same period in 2020.

a) Investment scams

- The number of investment scam cases tripled to 1,054 in the first half of 2021, from 351 in the same period in 2020.
- The total amount cheated more than tripled to \$66.2 million in the first half of 2021, from \$21.6 million in the same period in 2020.
- In the majority of investment scams, the scammers would claim to be financial professionals and cultivate victims on online platforms. Once lured, the scammers would introduce victims to investment websites or mobile applications where they would be enticed to invest and asked to transfer money to unknown bank accounts. Victims would also be asked to pay administrative fees, security fees or taxes in order to reap profits. In many instances, victims would earn a profit from the investment at the initial stage, leading them to believe that the investment was legitimate and lucrative. Once larger amounts of

monies were deposited into the designated bank accounts or when the victims realised they were unable to withdraw their money, the scammers would become uncontactable.

- Common platforms used by scammers to communicate with victims included Facebook and Tinder.

b) Job scams

- The number of job scam cases jumped more than sixteen-fold to 658 in the first half of 2021, from 40 in the same period in 2020.
- The total amount cheated increased to \$6.5 million in the first half of 2021, from \$60,000 in the same period in 2020.
- In the majority of job scams, victims would come across online advertisements or receive unsolicited WhatsApp messages from unknown numbers offering a part-time job with a daily salary of between \$300 and \$500. The message would also include a WhatsApp number as a point of contact to sign up for the job. When victims contacted the number provided, the scammer would explain that the job required the victim to help e-commerce platform merchants improve their sales by making advance purchases. The scammer would assure the victims that their money would eventually be refunded, and a commission would be paid to the victims. The scammers would then provide an e-commerce platform item link to the victims and instruct them to provide a screenshot of the item in their shopping cart. Thereafter, the victims would be instructed to make payment for the item by transferring the money to a bank account number provided by the scammer. This process would be repeated several times, beginning with low cost items before progressing to more expensive items. The scammers would initially refund the victims the cost of the item and the commission, but would later claim to have encountered issues with the refund and would stop paying the victims. Victims would realise that they had been scammed when the scammer stopped refunding them and became uncontactable. In some cases, victims were also instructed to complete a certain number of transactions within a given timeframe in order to receive the payouts.
- Advertisements on various social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and TikTok), WhatsApp and SMS messages were common methods used by the scammers to reach out to the victims.

E-commerce scams remain a concern

8. While the total number of cases of e-commerce scams saw a significant decrease in the first half of 2021 as compared to the same period in 2020, e-commerce

scams were nonetheless the second highest type of scam reported in the first half of 2021.

- a) The number of cases decreased by 38.2% to 1,141 in the first half of 2021, from 1,846 in the same period in 2020.
- b) The total amount cheated decreased to \$2.4 million in the first half of 2021, from \$5.4 million in the same period in 2020.
- c) The most common platforms where these scams took place include Carousell, Facebook and Shopee, while the common items involved in the transactions were electronic goods and gaming-related items.

Police Efforts to Fight Scams

Anti-Scam Centre continues to disrupt scammers' operations

9. In the first half of 2021, more than 7,400 reports involving total losses of more than \$201.7 million, were referred to the Anti-Scam Centre (ASC). Based on these reports, the ASC froze more than 5,400 bank accounts and recovered 32.7% of the total amount scammed, or about \$66 million. This amount is more than the total amount recovered by ASC in the whole of 2020, which was \$57.6 million.

10. These achievements were made possible through the collective efforts of and strong collaboration with relevant stakeholders such as banks, fintech companies, telecommunication companies (telcos) and online marketplaces under ASC's Project FRONTIER, which stands for "Funds Recovery Operations & Networks Team, Inspiring Effective Resolutions". Under Project FRONTIER, once the Police are notified, most bank accounts suspected to be involved in scammers' operations can be swiftly frozen within a day, as opposed to the 14 to 60 working days that these processes used to take.

11. The ASC also works with the local telcos to terminate mobile lines which are found to have been used for scams, and social media platforms to remove suspicious accounts and advertisements. More than 1,200 such local mobile lines were terminated and more than 430 suspicious online monikers or advertisements were removed in the first half of 2021. The ASC has also reported close to 7,000 WhatsApp accounts believed to be used in scams to WhatsApp for its review and removal.

12. The ASC uses technology to track island-wide scam trends and make sense of the voluminous crime data that it receives every day. Such sense-making and analytic work facilitated island-wide enforcement operations conducted by investigation units in the Commercial Affairs Department (CAD) and the seven land divisions. In the first half of 2021, a total of 14 anti-scam operations were carried out, resulting in the investigation of more than 3,700 scammers and money mules.

Collaboration with foreign law enforcement agencies to combat scams

13. The Police continue to work closely with foreign law enforcement agencies to monitor and share information on emerging scams.

14. In June 2021, the Police worked with the Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) of the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) to jointly cripple a transnational Internet love scam syndicate based in Malaysia. Officers from the CCID conducted simultaneous raids at two locations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and arrested six Nigerian men and one Malaysian woman, aged between 20 and 46 years old, for their suspected involvement in Internet love scams and parcel scams. In Singapore, a 57-year-old woman was arrested while a 34-year-old man was investigated for allegedly assisting in the transfer of the syndicate's criminal proceeds. This syndicate was believed to be responsible for at least five other cases in Singapore involving \$64,000 in losses and eight other cases in Malaysia involving RM3.7 million in losses. The 57-year-old woman has been charged on 30 June 2021 for money laundering.

15. In that same month, the Police conducted joint investigations with the Royal Malaysia Police against three job scam syndicates where close to 70 individuals were arrested by the Royal Malaysia Police. In a joint operation with the Hong Kong Police Force to dismantle another transnational job scam syndicate, 14 individuals in Hong Kong were arrested and 27 individuals in Singapore were arrested and/or investigated for their suspected involvement in the syndicate. These syndicates had targeted mainly victims in Singapore. Concurrently in Singapore, the Police had proactively detected potential victims who could have received unsolicited text, WhatsApp and Telegram messages sent by the job scam syndicates through extensive sense-making and intelligence probes. More than 1,400 potential victims were proactively contacted by ASC to warn them of the potential scam. This was aided by technology; the Anti-Scam Centre uses Robotic Process Automation to mass-send SMSes to potential victims under Project COMBAT, which stands for Centralised Operational Messaging Bot, Addressing Threats.

ScamShield mobile application to filter out scams

16. To filter out SMSes and phone calls sent and made by scammers, the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) launched ScamShield – a mobile application (app) – on 20 November 2020. It is currently available for iPhone users.

17. The app, jointly developed by NCPC and the Open Government Products team from Government Technology Agency, identifies and filters out scam messages using artificial intelligence. It also blocks calls from phone numbers that were used in other scam cases or reported by ScamShield users. These two functions reduce opportunities for scammers to reach out to intended victims.

18. Since its launch, the app has been downloaded by more than 200,000 iOS users. More than 1.4 million SMSes and over 8,600 phone numbers believed to be used for scam calls have been blocked.¹

19. The android version of the app is expected to be released towards the end of 2021.

Public education efforts against scams

20. A discerning and well-informed public is the best defence against scams, especially given the increase in scam variants. To this end, the SPF continues to work closely with the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) to conduct public education on scams, particularly online, where most scams are taking place.

21. The Police, together with NCPC, launched a new edition of the anti-scam public education campaign, 'Spot the Signs. Stop the Crimes.', in 2020. Now in its second year, the campaign will feature updated visuals, including posters and videos. The focus of this campaign will be on educating the public to spot the common tell-tale signs of scams.

22. The SPF urges the public to diligently look out for signs of potential scams, so as not to fall prey. Members of the public are also advised to exercise caution when making any online monetary transfer, as it is often difficult to recover such monies especially if they have already been paid or transferred to the scammers or transferred overseas. The SPF would also like to remind the public never to give their One-Time Passwords (OTPs) to anyone, including persons purporting to represent government officials. Your vigilance is our first line of defence.

23. Members of the public can visit the website www.scamalert.sg to learn more about the various types of scam and their tell-tale signs, and to take steps to avoid falling prey to scams.

Rise in Outrage of Modesty Cases

24. Outrage of modesty (OM) cases increased by 38.6% to 786 in the first half of 2021, from 567 in the same period last year. This was partly due to a lower number of OM cases recorded in the same period in 2020 due to the Circuit Breaker.

25. Of the 786 OM cases in the first half of 2021, 459 cases involved culprits known to the victim, while 327 cases involved culprits unknown to the victim.

26. The number of OM cases occurring within the public transport system, including public transportation nodes and on public transport, remains a concern. OM cases

¹ Figures updated as of 20 August 2021.

involving culprits unknown to the victim and which occurred on the public transport system rose to 96 in the first half of 2021, compared to 70 in the same period last year.

27. The SPF continues to work closely with public transport operators, and partners such as NCPC, to reach out to commuters to raise awareness, for example, by distributing advisories on OM. Public education videos 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, reminding them to stay vigilant and to report the matter to the Police if they encounter anything suspicious.

28. The Public Transport Security Command launched the Riders-on-Watch (ROW) scheme on 2 July 2019. The scheme augments the SPF's policing efforts by tapping on the collective effort of public transport commuters to keep Singapore's public transport network safe and secure. Regular crime advisories are shared with the ROW members to increase crime awareness.

29. 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 perpetrators.

Voyeurism Cases Are a Concern

30. 146 cases of voyeurism were reported in the first half of 2020, while 242 cases were reported in the same period in 2021. This is partly due to a lower number of voyeurism cases recorded in the same period in 2020 due to the Circuit Breaker.

31. The top three locations where voyeurism cases occurred were:

- a) in residential premises; where there were 84 such cases reported in the first half of 2021, as compared to 35 cases reported in the same period last year;
- b) on the public transport system, where there were 46 such cases reported in the first half of 2021, as compared to 26 cases reported in the same period last year; and
- c) in shopping complexes, where there were 23 such cases reported in the first half of 2021, as compared to 22 cases reported in the same period last year.

32. Members of the public are reminded to stay vigilant against voyeurism by being aware of their surroundings, and advised to make a police report as soon as possible if they are a victim of voyeurism or have witnessed the crime being committed. Reporting such crimes early is crucial in helping the Police identify and arrest perpetrators.

Cyber Extortion Cases Are a Concern

33. The number of cyber extortion cases increased to 141 cases in the first half of 2021, from 81 cases in the same period in 2020. In these cases, criminals typically befriend victims online and subsequently coax them into performing compromising or indecent acts in front of a camera. Thereafter, the criminals would use the video footage or images to extort money or online credits from these victims. In some cases, victims were asked to visit a link or to download an app that may result in granting the criminals access to the victims' contact data which will then be used to extort the victims. The total amount lost by victims of cyber extortion cases was more than \$410,000. The most common social media platforms where these cases took place were Facebook, followed by Grindr and Instagram.

34. The Police have been working with NCPD to reach out to members of the public, to alert them to the threat of cyber extortion and educate them on crime prevention measures. The Police are also working with the grassroots community to better educate members of the public about this crime and the preventive measures to adopt.

Business Operators and the Community Have a Key Role in Fighting Crime

35. Everyone has a part to play in keeping Singapore safe and secure, especially during these uncertain times. Business operators such as banks, digital platform owners and telcos have a responsibility to prevent, deter and detect crimes committed through their platforms. Putting in place anti-scam measures and precautions against crimes will also help business operators keep their customers safe from scams.

36. Family members and friends can play a part too. They can prevent those around them from falling victim to crime, by being aware of the crime situation. Members of the public should stay vigilant and report any crime-related information to the Police.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE
30 AUGUST 2021 @ 12.00 PM**

TOP 10 SCAM TYPES IN SINGAPORE (BASED ON NUMBER OF REPORTED CASES)

Types of Scams	Cases Reported		Total Amount Cheated (at least)		Largest Sum Cheated in a Single Case in First Half of 2021
	Jan - Jun 2021	Jan - Jun 2020	Jan - Jun 2021	Jan - Jun 2020	
Loan scams	1,243	800	\$10.6m	\$5.6m	\$300k
E-commerce scams	1,141	1,846	\$2.4m	\$5.4m	\$400k
Investment scams	1,054	351	\$66.2m	\$21.6m	\$3.3m
Social Media Impersonation Scams	1,054	1,147	\$3.0m	\$2.8m	\$1.0m
Job scams	658	40	\$6.5m	\$60k	\$676k
Internet love scams	568	345	\$25.1m	\$12.4m	\$3.0m
Non-banking related phishing scams	565	204	\$1.2m	\$291k	\$59k
Banking-related phishing scams	535	893	\$2.1m	\$3.3m	\$648k
Credit-for-sex scams	329	504	\$672k	\$1.3m	\$20k
China officials impersonation scams	323	219	\$49.5m	\$10.4m	\$6.2m
Total	7,470	6,349	\$168.0m	\$63.5m	-

Note: Total amount cheated may not tally due to rounding.