



POLICE NEWS RELEASE

Mid-Year Crime Statistics For January To June 2018

Increase in Overall Crime due largely to Rise in Scams

Overall crime increased by 3.2% to 16,460 cases in the first six months of 2018, from 15,949 cases in the same period last year. This increase is largely attributed to a rise in e-commerce scams, loan scams and “China officials” impersonation scams.

Scam Situation for January to June 2018

2. E-commerce scams, loan scams and “China officials” impersonation scams registered a significant increase. The number of such scams increased by 72.8% to 1,823 cases, from 1,055 cases in the same period last year.
3. With pervasive Internet penetration and greater prevalence of smartphones in Singapore, more Singaporeans are going online. This has likely contributed to the increase in online commercial crime cases.
4. Online crimes are particularly challenging to solve because of the borderless nature of the internet.
5. A significant proportion of online commercial crimes are committed remotely by foreign syndicates that are hiding behind the anonymity of the Internet. These criminals will continue to find ways to exploit and prey on the vulnerabilities of potential victims.
6. The Police will continue to educate the public to minimise the chances of them becoming victims of commercial crimes. In particular, we will focus our public education efforts on the online community.

Decrease in Internet Love Scams and Credit-for-sex Scams

7. The outreach and public education efforts by the Police and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), in collaboration with business operators and the media, have helped to raise awareness and reduce internet love scams and credit-for-sex scams.

(I) Internet love scams

- a. Internet love scams decreased for the first time in five years. There was an 18.6% decrease to 280 cases in the first half of 2018, from 344 cases in the same period last year.
- b. The total amount cheated fell to around \$12 million in the first half of 2018, from about \$22 million in the same period last year.
- c. This improvement can be attributed to the formation of the Transnational Commercial Crime Task Force (TCTF) under the Commercial Affairs Department (CAD), which investigates all scams that involve foreign crime syndicates. Since its formation on 1 October 2017, the TCTF has seized more than \$1.1 million and closed more than 400 bank accounts belonging to money mules who were involved in internet love scams, which has disrupted the operation of such syndicates.
- d. The Police have also been working closely with remittance agencies and banks to train their frontline staff to detect customers who may be victims of a scam. The heightened awareness and vigilance in the trained staff had resulted in several successful interventions. In March 2018, two OCBC staff alerted and helped a customer who had requested to remit \$2,500 allegedly to pay a customs clearance fee for a parcel stuck at the Malaysian customs. The bank staff convinced the victim that it was a love scam and prevented any remittance of money.
- e. Although the internet love scam situation has improved, the amount cheated was still significant and these scams remain a concern.

(II) Credit-for-sex scams

- a) There was an 18.2% decrease to 207 cases in the first half of 2018, from 253 cases in the same period last year.
- b) The total amount cheated fell to about \$450,000 in the first half of 2018, from about \$720,000 in the same period last year.
- c) This improvement can be attributed to the good partnership with convenience stores such as 7-11 and Cheers which provide training to enable their staff to identify customers who may be victims of a scam. They help to look out for potential scam victims and advise them against buying iTunes cards, which is one mode of payment in such credit-for-sex scams. 7-11 and Cheers also display scam advisories prominently in the premises to warn customers.

- d) The Police also partnered with AXS to display digital scam advisories on the screens of all AXS machines. This is in addition to displaying a credit-for-sex crime advisory next to all AXS machines to warn the public against such scams.

Increase in E-commerce Scams, Loan Scams and “China officials” Impersonation Scams

8. The public continues to fall prey to the following scams, despite the various outreach and crime prevention education efforts:

(I) E-commerce scams

- a) There was a 58% increase to 1,277 cases in the first half of 2018, from 808 cases in the same period last year.
- b) The total amount cheated increased by 43.1% to about \$930,000 in the first half of 2018, from about \$650,000 in the same period last year.
- c) The largest amount cheated in a single case in the first half of 2018 was about \$50,000.
- d) 80% of the e-commerce scams took place on Carousell, with common transactions involving electronic items, and tickets to events and attractions, in particular, tickets to the Universal Studios Singapore.

(II) Loan scams

- a) There was a 92.6% increase to 364 in the first half of 2018, from 189 in the same period last year.
- b) The total amount cheated increased by 192% to about \$730,000 in the first half of 2018, from about \$250,000 in the same period last year.
- c) The largest amount cheated in a single case in the first half of 2018 was about \$90,000.

(III) “China officials” impersonation scams

- a) There was a 213.8% increase to 182 cases in the first half of 2018, from 58 cases in the same period last year.
- b) The total amount cheated increased by 233.3%, to about \$6 million in the first half of 2018, from about \$1.8 million in the same period last year.
- c) The largest amount cheated in a single case in the first half of 2018 was about \$650,000.

- d) In June 2018, the Police arrested two men for their suspected involvement in a series of “China officials” impersonation scams and seized cash amounting to about \$590,000. This was the largest amount seized by the CAD in relation to such scams in 2018.
9. Members of the public are advised to take the precautions listed in **Annex A** to prevent falling prey to such scams.

“NCPC has been rigorously driving its anti-scam campaign since 2014. Besides TV commercials, online publicity, HDB lift decals and Crime Watch, we also run a website (Scamalert.sg) and Helpline (1800-722-6688) to give advice to the public. The fight against scams must continue, as Singaporeans still lose millions of dollars every month to scams. In the months to come, we will roll out a revamped campaign and intensify our outreach to the community through advocates and tie-ups with corporations.”

*- Mr Gerald Singham
NCPC Chairman*

Outrage of Modesty Remains a Key Concern

10. Outrage of Modesty (OM) cases increased by 21.5% to 832 cases in the first half of 2018, from 685 cases in the same period last year. In particular, OM cases at public entertainment nightspots and on public transport are key concerns:
- a. 37% increase to 63 OM cases at public entertainment nightspots in the first half of 2018, from 46 in the same period last year.
 - b. 43.8% increase to 105 in OM cases on public transport in the first half of 2018, from 73 in the same period last year.
11. The Police will continue to educate the public to be vigilant against OM, and advise victims of molestation to make a Police report as soon as possible. Reporting the crime early is crucial to help the Police identify and arrest the perpetrator.

“The Police is closely monitoring the increase in outrage of modesty cases. We will continue to step up our efforts to work closely with stakeholders and the community to prevent and deter such cases, especially in public entertainment night spots and public transport networks. Offenders will be dealt with severely in accordance with the law.”

*- Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police How Kwang Hwee
Director of Operations Department*

Business Operators and the Community Can Play a Bigger Role in Fighting Crime

12. Everyone can play a part in keeping Singapore safe and secure. Business operators have a responsibility to take on a bigger role in preventing and deterring crime at business premises or on business platforms, and put in place the necessary precautions against crime. This will in turn help create a positive relationship between businesses and their customers.
13. Family members and friends can prevent someone they know from falling victim to crimes, as well as intervene to prevent any losses. Members of public are urged to stay vigilant against crimes and report perpetrators to the Police.

Ensuring Safer and More Secure Transactions

14. E-commerce scams on online retail site Carousell increased by 136% to 1,020 in the first half of 2018, from 432 in the same period last year. 80% of all e-commerce scams took place on Carousell, and the total amount cheated was close to \$550,000 in the first half of 2018.
15. The Police welcome the introduction of CarouPay in June 2018 by Carousell. As an escrow payment system, buyers using CarouPay are protected from e-commerce scams as the payment will only be released to the sellers after the buyers have acknowledged the satisfactory receipt of the items purchased. The Police encourage the public to make use of such payment systems when they transact online to protect themselves against e-commerce scams.

Smart Clubbing Campaign by Clarke Quay Entertainment Outlets

16. The Police, in partnership with public entertainment outlets in Clarke Quay, will launch a **Smart Clubbing Campaign** later this year. The new campaign aims to educate patrons to be 'smart clubbers', by focusing on the following:
 - a. Creating awareness of crimes commonly committed against patrons at public entertainment outlets, such as OM in particular;
 - b. Taking a personal responsibility to avoid falling victim to crimes by adopting the necessary crime prevention measures; and
 - c. Knowing what to do if witnessing a crime, or as a victim of crime, at public entertainment outlets.

17. The participating public entertainment outlets will play a bigger role in this campaign, and create a safer environment for their patrons. Measures will include the following:
 - a. Display glow-in-the-dark crime advisories and screen a new 'smart clubber' crime prevention video on digital boards. These crime advisories aim to remind patrons to stay vigilant against crimes, such as OM and theft in particular.
 - b. Management and service staff will make every effort to:
 - i. Maintain a continual lookout for patrons who may appear tipsy or drunk. They will request associates of these patrons to watch over them and to look after their safety so that they do not become an easy target of crime.
 - ii. Remind patrons to safeguard their personal belongings from theft and to stay vigilant against crimes.

Expanded Patrols by Citizens on Patrol Members to Include MRT Stations and Trains

18. The Citizens on Patrol (COP) volunteers with Queenstown Neighbourhood Police Centre have expanded their patrol to cover Queenstown MRT station to deter and detect crime. With the rise in cases of OM on the public transport, these COP volunteers will also be disseminating crime prevention messages to raise the awareness and vigilance of the commuters against this crime.

19. The Police will extend this patrol initiative to other COP groups island-wide.

“With the continued outreach and education efforts by the Police, as well as close collaborations with the community and key stakeholders, we have seen a significant drop in internet love scams and credit-for-sex scams. However, despite this, the scam situation and number of outrage of modesty cases remain key concerns.

The community has an important role to play in fighting crime. Members of public are urged to stay vigilant against crimes and to report perpetrators to the Police. To avoid falling victim to scammers, the public are also reminded to stay alert and exercise due diligence when engaging in online transactions.

The Police will continue with our tough enforcement efforts and to work closely with the community and key stakeholders to fight crime, so as to keep Singapore safe and secure.”

*- Deputy Commissioner of Police Florence Chua
Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation and Intelligence)*

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE
23 AUGUST 2018 @ 9.30AM**

Crime Prevention Measures against Scams

1. E-Commerce Scams:

- Online platforms such as Carousell, provide a consumer-to-consumer marketplace that offers strangers the ease of transacting without the need to meet up, making it susceptible to being exploited by scammers.
- Exercise extra caution when you come across unrealistic bargains for goods such as concert tickets, apparel, hotel stays and electronic products.
- Always check the buyer's or seller's track record. Buy only from reputable vendors and sellers.
- If advanced payments are required, use shopping platforms that provide arrangements to only release your payment to the seller upon your receipt of the item.

2. Loan Scams:

- Licensed moneylenders are not allowed to advertise their business through SMSes or WhatsApp messages.
- Ignore such advertisements. Do not give out personal information to anyone, such as NRIC and contact numbers, and bank details such as bank account numbers.
- Do not reply to these messages. Instead, block or report the number as spam on WhatsApp or through third party applications.

3. "China Officials" Impersonation Scams:

- Be wary of calls from people claiming to be officials, especially those from foreign countries.
- Know that official agencies will not ask you to make payments over the phone.
- Be suspicious of callers who do not give you enough information about themselves to verify their identity.
- Refrain from giving bank details, credit card numbers, OTP codes from tokens or passport numbers to strangers over the phone.
- Call the Anti-Scam Helpline at 1800 722 6688 to check, if you receive calls from Government officials asking for payments over the phone.