



POLICE NEWS RELEASE

MID-YEAR CRIME STATISTICS

Overall Crime Situation for January to June 2020

Overall Crime increased due to a rise in scam cases

In the first half of 2020, the total number of reported crimes increased by 11.6% to 18,121 cases, from 16,240 cases in the same period in 2019.

2. This increase was primarily due to a rise in scam cases. In particular, online scams saw a significant increase as Singaporeans stayed home and carried out more online transactions due to the COVID-19 situation. Please see [Annex A](#) for the statistics on the top ten scams.
3. On the other hand, there was a decrease in physical crimes of nearly 2,000 cases in the three broad crime classes - crimes against persons (e.g. serious hurt, outrage of modesty and rioting), housebreaking and related crimes, and theft and related crimes, in the first half of 2020 in comparison with the same period in 2019. If scam cases were excluded, the total number of reported crimes for the first half of 2020 would have decreased by 20.5% to 10,151, from 12,770 in the same period in 2019.

Scam Situation

4. The total amount cheated for the top ten scam types doubled to S\$82 million in the first half of 2020, from S\$41.6 million in the same period in 2019. E-commerce scams, social media impersonation scams, loan scams, and banking-related phishing scams are of particular concern. These four types of scam made up 71% of the top ten scam types reported in the first half of 2020, and the total number of reported cases for these four types of scam rose sharply by 163%, compared to the same period in 2019.

E-commerce scams remain the top scam type

5. E-commerce scams remain the top scam type, with the highest number of reported cases in the first half of the year.
 - a) E-commerce scam cases increased by 73.8% to 2,089 in the first half of 2020, from 1,202 in the same period in 2019.

- b) The total amount cheated increased to S\$5.4 million in the first half of 2020, from S\$1 million in the same period in 2019.
- c) The largest sum cheated in a single case on an online marketplace in the first half of 2020 was S\$175,000.¹
- d) A total of 294 cases reported between January and June 2020 involved COVID-19 related items such as face masks, hand sanitisers and thermometers.
- e) The number of e-commerce scams which involved transactions on Carousell increased to 884 cases in the first half of 2020, from 532 cases in the same period in 2019. The more common scam transactions involved sales of electronic items, gaming-related items and COVID-19 related items such as face masks and hand sanitisers.
- f) There were also increases in e-commerce scams on other digital platforms such as Shopee, Facebook and Lazada (see [Annex B](#) for the breakdown of e-commerce scams on the various digital platforms).

Significant increase in social media impersonation scams and banking-related phishing scams

6. Social media impersonation scams and banking-related phishing scams recorded the second and fourth highest number of reported cases respectively amongst all scam types. Both also registered significant increases in the first half of 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019.

a) Social media impersonation scams

- The number of cases jumped more than tenfold to 1,175 in the first half of 2020, from 83 in the same period in 2019.
- The total amount cheated increased to S\$2.7 million in the first half of 2020, from S\$726,000 in the same period in 2019.
- The largest sum cheated in a single case in the first half of 2020 was S\$367,000.²
- In the majority of these cases, victims were tricked into disclosing their mobile numbers or credit card information and One-Time Passwords (OTP) to scammers who used compromised or spoofed social media accounts, to impersonate their victims' friends or followers on social media platforms. Scammers would often claim to help their victims sign

¹ In February 2020, the Police received a report from a victim who was purportedly cheated by an online seller selling face masks. The online seller was uncontactable after the victim handed over a sum of S\$175,000 as a deposit to him for 500 cartons of face masks.

² In April 2020, the Police received a report from a victim who informed that she had transferred a total sum of about S\$367,000 and had also provided her personal details such as her bank account, to an unknown person, after she responded to a link on a purported monetary grant sent by her friend via Facebook messenger.

up for online contests or promotions which turned out to be fake. Their victims would later discover that unauthorised transactions had been made from their bank accounts or mobile wallets.

- Instagram and Facebook were the most common social media platforms where such scams took place, with 578 cases and 575 cases respectively.

b) Banking-related phishing scams

- The number of cases went up more than twenty-fold to 898 in the first half of 2020, from 34 in the same period in 2019.
- The total amount cheated increased to S\$3.6 million in the first half of 2020, from S\$93,000 in the same period in 2019.
- The largest sum cheated in a single case in the first half of 2020 was S\$506,000.³
- In the majority of these cases, victims were tricked into disclosing Internet banking usernames, Personal Identification Numbers (PIN) and OTPs to scammers posing as bank staff. The scammers would then access victims' bank accounts or their bank card information, and perform unauthorised transactions.
- IMO, Viber and WhatsApp were the most common platforms used by the scammers to communicate with the victims.

Loan scams remain a concern

7. Loan scams are the third highest type of scam in the first half of 2020. The total number of cases and total amount cheated from loan scams also saw significant increases in the first half of 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019.
- a) The number of cases increased by 56% to 1,014 in the first half of 2020, from 650 in the same period in 2019.
 - b) The total amount cheated more than tripled to S\$6.5 million in the first half of 2020, from S\$1.9 million in the same period in 2019.
 - c) The largest sum cheated in a single case in the first half of 2020 was S\$250,000.⁴

³ In January 2020, the Police received a report from a victim who informed that he had lost S\$506,000 after providing his One-Time Passwords (OTPs) to scammers who claimed to be staff from local banks. The scammers told the victim that they needed his OTPs to disable his bank accounts as they claimed that the accounts have been hacked.

⁴ In June 2020, the Police received a report from a victim who informed that she had transferred a total sum of about S\$250,000 after responding to an unsolicited text message offering loan services.

Anti-Scam Centre continues to disrupt scammers' operations

8. Since the formation of the Anti-Scam Centre (ASC) in June 2019, more than 8,600 reports involving total losses of more than S\$51.9 million have been referred to it. The ASC has frozen more than 6,100 bank accounts and recovered 40.8% of the total amount scammed, or about S\$21.2 million.
9. These achievements were made possible through strong collaboration with relevant stakeholders such as banks, fintech companies, telecommunication companies (telcos) and online marketplaces. For example, funds tracing, which previously would take up to two months, can now be conducted more swiftly within days.
10. The ASC also works with the local telcos to terminate mobile lines which are found to have been used for scams. More than 1,500 such local mobile lines were terminated in the first half of 2020.
11. The ASC uses technology to track island-wide scam trends and make sense of the voluminous crime data that the centre processes every day. Such sense-making and analytic work facilitated island-wide enforcement operations conducted by the ASC's E-Commerce Fraud Enforcement and Coordination Team (E-FECT) and the seven land divisions, leading to the arrest of 172 scammers and investigations into 1,655 money mules who allowed their bank accounts to be used by scammers, or assisted the scammers to carry out payment services.

Collaboration with foreign law enforcement agencies to combat scams

12. Online crimes are particularly challenging to solve because of the borderless nature of the Internet. A significant proportion of scams is committed remotely by foreign syndicates which continually find new methods to exploit and prey on the vulnerabilities of potential victims.
13. To combat scams perpetrated by foreign syndicates targeting victims in Singapore, the Police continue to work closely with foreign law enforcement agencies, and to monitor and share information on emerging scams.
14. In February 2020, the Commercial Affairs Department (CAD) of the Singapore Police Force and Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) of the Royal Malaysia Police jointly crippled a transnational fraud syndicate based in Kuala Lumpur. The syndicate perpetrated impersonation phone scams targeting banks and carried out Internet love scams across various jurisdictions. Three subjects from the syndicate were arrested. They are believed to be involved in at least 12 cases of Internet love scams in Singapore, involving losses of S\$700,000.

15. In May 2020, CCID arrested four subjects in Malaysia who are believed to be a syndicate responsible for at least eight cases of Internet love scams in Malaysia and Singapore, involving losses of S\$430,000.

Public education efforts against scams

16. The Police will continue to conduct public education about scams. In particular, we will focus our efforts on the online community to prevent more people from falling victim to online scams. To enhance outreach, the Police have created content on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.
17. The Police, together with the National Crime Prevention Council, will launch a new anti-scam public education campaign, 'Spot the Signs. Stop the Crimes.', on 27 August 2020. The campaign will run from August 2020 to March 2021 and aims to educate the public by using visuals such as posters and videos on how to spot telltale signs of various scams.

Rise in Cyber Extortion Cases

18. The number of cyber extortion cases more than tripled to 81 cases in the first half of 2020, from 25 cases in the same period in 2019. 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 use the video footage or images to extort money or online credits from these victims. The total amount lost by victims of cyber extortion cases was more than S\$190,000. The highest amount lost by a victim in a single case was about S\$26,000.⁵ The most common social media platforms where these cases took place were Facebook, Tinder and MiChat.

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

19. Criminals have been taking advantage of the COVID-19 situation to find new victims, by exploiting the public's fear and sense of uncertainty. This is evident from the significant increase in online scam cases reported in the first half of 2020.
20. 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

⁵ In June 2020, the Police received a report from a victim who informed that he had purchased about S\$26,000 worth of Alipay credits and Google Play credits for a suspect as he had been threatened with a video of him being captured in a compromising act, during a video call with a woman he knew through an online dating platform.

and precautions against crimes will also help business operators keep their customers safe from scams.

21. Family members and friends can play their part too. They can prevent someone they know from falling victim, by being aware of these threats. Members of the public should stay vigilant and report any crime-related information to the Police.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE
26 AUGUST 2020 @ 9.30AM**

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

Types of Scams	Jan-Jun 2019	Jan-Jun 2020	Total Amount Cheated in First Half of 2019 (S\$)	Total Amount Cheated in First Half of 2020 (S\$)	Largest Sum Cheated in a Single Case in First Half of 2020 (S\$)
E-Commerce Scam	1,202	2,089	1.0 Mil	5.4 Mil	175,000 [#]
Social Media Impersonation Scam	83	1,175	726,000	2.7 Mil	367,000
Loan Scam	650	1,014	1.9 Mil	6.5 Mil	250,000
Banking-Related Phishing Scam	34	898	93,000	3.6 Mil	506,000
Credit-For-Sex Scam	458	503	1.1 Mil	1.3 Mil	50,000
Investment Scam	172	400	15.4 Mil	22.3 Mil	1.0 Mil
Internet Love Scam	270	394	13.6 Mil	13.4 Mil	1.0 Mil
Tech Support Scam	30	317	340,000	15.0 Mil	958,000
Non-Banking Related Phishing Scam	7	238	4,000	268,000	19,000
China Officials Impersonation Scam	121	225	7.1 Mil	11.1 Mil	795,000
Total	3,027	7,253	\$41.6 Mil	\$82.0 Mil	-

[#] Largest sum cheated in a single case on an online marketplace in the first half of 2020.

TOP 5 DIGITAL PLATFORMS USED IN E-COMMERCE SCAMS

Platforms	Cases Reported		% of Total E-Commerce Scams		
	Jan - Jun 2019	Jan - Jun 2020	Jan - Jun 2019	Jan - Jun 2020	+/-
Carousell	532	884	44.3%	42.3%	-1.9%
Shopee	72	371	6.0%	17.8%	11.8%
Facebook	278	342	23.1%	16.4%	-6.8%
Lazada	62	221	5.2%	10.6%	5.4%
Instagram	73	19	6.1%	0.9%	-5.2%
Other platforms	185	252	15.4%	12.1%	-3.3%
Total	1,202	2,089	100.0%*	100.0%*	-

*Figures may not add up to 100.0% due to rounding up.