

Singapore's crime up by more than 11% in first half of 2021, due to uptick in scam cases



Scam cases in Singapore rose by 16 per cent to 8,403 between January and June, compared to 7,247 in the same period last year, according to the police. (File photo: Reuters/Kacper Pempel)

SINGAPORE: Crime rose in Singapore in the first half of this year with 19,444 cases reported, a jump of 11.2 per cent year-on-year.

The increase was largely fuelled by a rise in scam cases amid the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Singapore Police Force (SPF).

In a news release on Monday (Aug 30), the SPF said that such cases rose by 16 per cent to 8,403 between January and June, compared to 7,247 in the same period last year.

Despite this, SPF said the increase was "noticeably" lower compared to the same period in previous years, which ranged between 19.5 per cent and 108.8 per cent from 2018 to 2020.

There were also more cases involving outrage of modesty and voyeurism, partly due to a lower number of cases recorded during the "circuit breaker" last year.

"The number of (outrage of modesty cases) occurring within the public transport system, including public transportation nodes and on public transport, remains a concern," said the police, adding that they will continue to work with public transport operators to raise awareness among commuters.

Physical crimes dropped by more than 400 cases across two broad categories - housebreaking, theft and related crimes.

The police said the number of reported cases for robbery, housebreaking and snatch theft in the first half of the year was the lowest in 10 years, with just 75 cases.

Social media impersonation scams	1,147	1,054 ↓
Job scams	40	658 ↑
Internet love scams	345	568 ↑
Non-banking-related phishing scams	204	565 ↑
Banking-related phishing scams	893	535 ↓
Credit-for-sex scams	504	329 ↓
China officials impersonation scams	219	323 ↑
Total	6,349	7,470 ↑

The total amount cheated for the top ten scam types more than doubled to S\$168 million from January to June, compared to the same period last year at \$63.5 million. (Infographic: Kenneth Choy)

S\$168 MILLION CHEATED IN SCAMS

Figures from the police show that the total amount cheated for the top 10 scam types more than doubled to S\$168 million in the first half of 2021, compared to the same period last year at \$63.5 million.

In particular, loan scams, e-commerce scams, investment scams and job scams were “of concern”, as they made up 54.8 per cent of the top 10 types of scams reported.

The total number of reported cases for these four types of scams rose by 34.9 per cent, said the police.

“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,” the police added.

Loan scams accounted for the largest number of reported cases in the first half of the year, with 1,243 cases - a 55.4 per cent increase from the 800 cases in the same period last year.

The total amount cheated increased to S\$10.6 million, nearly double that of the S\$5.6 million cheated in the first half of 2020.

SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN JOB AND INVESTMENT SCAMS

Investment and job scams were among the top five scam types, in terms of the number of reported cases.

Both also saw significant increases in the number of reported cases compared to the year before.

Investment scam cases tripled to 1,054, up from 351 in the first six months of 2020. The total amount cheated more than tripled to S\$66.2 million.

As for [job scams](#), the number of cases rose sharply to 658, more than 16-fold increase from last year. A total of S\$6.5 million was cheated through job scams this year, a significant increase from the \$60,000 cheated in 2020.

The number of e-commerce scam cases decreased from last year but it still accounted for the second largest share of cases this year with 1,141 cases.

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, said the police.

ANTI-SCAM EFFORTS

The police said that more than 7,400 reports involving total losses of more than \$201.7 million, were referred to the [Anti-Scam Centre](#) in the first half of the year. Based on these reports, the centre froze more than 5,400 bank accounts and recovered about S\$66 million, accounting for about 32.7 per cent of the total amount scammed.

“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,” said the police.

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, they added.

Besides this, the police said the centre also uses technology to track islandwide scam trends and “make sense” of the voluminous crime data that it receives every day.

The authorities said that business operators as well as members of the community all have a key role in fighting crime.

“Everyone has a part to play in keeping Singapore safe and secure, especially during these uncertain times,” said the police.

“Business operators such as banks, digital platform owners and telcos have a responsibility to prevent, deter and detect crimes committed through their platforms,” the police added, urging these businesses to put in place anti-scam measures to keep their customers safe.

Family members and friends can also play a part by staying aware of the crime situation and preventing those around them from falling victim to crime, the authorities said.