

Crime figures in the first half of 2019

In the first half of 2019, a total of 25 295 crime cases were recorded, representing a decrease of 1 255 cases or 4.7% when compared with the same period of last year. The overall crime figures hit a record low since 1977 in which half-year crime statistics were first kept.

There were 3 970 cases of violent crime in the first half of 2019, a decrease of 9% when compared with the same period of last year.

1. Major crimes recorded decreases

In the first half of this year, crimes recorded decreases included homicide, robbery, burglary, serious drug offences, wounding and serious assault, and criminal intimidation, etc.

There were 11 cases of homicide, representing a decrease of 6 cases or 35.3% when compared with the same period in 2018. These cases arose from disputes between couples, family members, friends, residents in residential care homes, etc. All cases were detected.

There were 44 cases of robbery reported, representing a significant drop of 38 cases or 46.3% when compared with the same period of last year. The number of street and convenience store robberies decreased by 31 cases or 63.3%. Police will continue to strengthen the work on intelligence and investigation, including collaboration with the Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies, to prevent and detect robberies so as to neutralize related crime syndicates.

A total of 586 serious drug cases were recorded, representing a drop of 146 cases or 19.9% when compared with the same period in 2018. The seizure amount of cocaine, ketamine, cannabis and heroin increased while the amount of methamphetamine (Ice) seized dropped. The increase in the seizure amount was attributed to multiple successful operations conducted by the Police and the Customs and Excise Department respectively. In recent years, some overseas countries and regions legalized the use of cannabis for medical or recreational purpose. Nonetheless, possessing, consuming or trafficking cannabis or products containing controlled cannabis compounds constitutes a criminal offence in Hong Kong. Members of the public should pay attention to relevant local legislation while traveling abroad during summer vacation, and be mindful of products containing cannabis compounds so as to avoid contravening the law inadvertently by bringing them back to Hong Kong.

2. Major crimes recorded increases

In the first half of 2019, crimes that registered increases included deception and sexual offence.

A total of 3 855 cases of deception were recorded, representing a rise of 184 cases or 5% when compared with the same period in 2018. Such increase mainly stemmed from telephone deception and e-shopping fraud.

2.1 Telephone deception

Telephone Deception totalled 231 cases, representing a rise of 66 cases or 40%. The two common modus operandi were "Pretend Officials" (108 cases, increase of 83.1%) and "Guess Who" (122 cases, increase of 22%). There was only 1 case of "Detained Son" recorded (decrease of 83.3%). The pecuniary loss involved in telephone deception totalled \$53 million, being a 4-fold increase. Near 90% of the loss was attributed to "Pretend Officials" cases, pecuniary loss of which totalled \$46 million, reaching a 9-fold increase.

Other than instructing the victims to make deposit to designated bank accounts, fraudsters also lured the victims to set up new bank accounts, and subsequently asked them to disclose the banking details and passwords on various pretexts in order to have direct control over victims' bank accounts. This often siphoned off all savings of the victims in the account causing the significant increase in total monetary loss.

Telephone deception became more prevalent among the young people. Victims aged below 30 increased by around 40% over the same period of last year. Majority of them were victims of "Pretend Officials".

In light of this, Police will continue to alert the public of the latest modus operandi through different channels and social media, including the Hong Kong Police Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Weibo, etc.

2.2 E-shopping fraud

A total of 1 084 cases of e-shopping fraud were reported, representing a rise of 135 cases or 14.2%. The total loss was \$13 million, representing a drop of 27.3%.

To raise the awareness of the public, Police has strengthened collaboration with online trading platforms and mobile apps to disseminate anti-deception messages to remind the public to remain vigilant when trading online.

By the end of June this year, the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre (ADCC), which has been established for two years, has successfully intercepted over \$2.7 billion of payment in collaboration with the banking sector. This year, Police managed to intercept a remittance of \$21 million to an overseas bank, in cooperation with overseas law enforcement agency for the first time.

2.3 Sexual offence

In the first half of 2019, an increase was recorded for sexual offence,

including rape and indecent assault. There were 29 rape cases, representing an increase of 6 cases or 26.1% when compared with the same period of last year. One case was committed by stranger and has been detected. For indecent assault, 573 cases were recorded, representing an increase of 36 cases or 6.7%.

Cases in which the victims acquainted with the offenders via the Internet totalled 16 cases, which was the same as last year.

To prevent sexual offences, Police will enhance publicity and education, particularly on social networking traps, on the Internet, at schools and during activities of youth organizations.

3. Triads, domestic violence and youth crimes

Other cases of public concern include triad, domestic violence and youth crimes.

In the first half of 2019, triad-related crimes totalled 777 cases, representing a drop of 6.9% when compared with the same period of last year. During the period, the Force mounted a series of large-scale anti-triad operations, including the territory-wide "Operation LEVINGTON" in April. Over 500 persons were arrested for drug trafficking, money laundering, loansharking, operating gambling establishment, possession of offensive weapon, etc. In addition, to combat triad-controlled illegal gambling activities in licensed game centres, Police mounted "Operation WISEBOLD" with 135 persons arrested and seizure of more than 150 game machines used for gambling.

Police will show no tolerance or leniency towards triad-related crimes, and will continue to proactively combat all triad activities, including conducting large-scale intelligence-led anti-crime operations, undercover operations, as well as conducting financial investigation to intercept crime proceeds of the syndicates.

There were 633 domestic violence (crime) cases in the first half in 2019, representing a decrease of 9.3%. A total of 294 cases of domestic violence (miscellaneous) were received, representing a rise of 52.3%. Family violence (crime) totalled 398 cases, representing a drop of 17.6%.

A total of 1 234 youths were arrested for crimes in the first half of 2019, representing a drop of 17.7% when compared with the same period of last year. Most of them were arrested for shop theft, wounding and serious assault, and miscellaneous theft.

4. Conclusion

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Combating technology crime continues to be one of the Force's operational priorities. The Internet and social media have become part of citizens' daily life, such as for online trading and making friends. More fraudsters take advantage of online channels to prey on potential victims. To

raise the vigilance of the public, Police will alert citizens of the latest pitfalls through different platforms, including the media, social media of the Hong Kong Police Force, ADCC, etc. Police will also enhance the overall capabilities in detecting technology crime and further equip investigating officers with professional knowledge via trainings.

Police will continue to carry out duties with utmost dedication, serve faithfully and impartially, and maintain the law and order in our best endeavors.