

Law and order situation in 2020

Overall law and order situation in Hong Kong

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1. Overall situation

The overall number of crimes reported in 2020 was 63,232 cases, representing an increase of 4,007 cases (+6.8%) when compared with 59,225 cases in 2019. Violent crimes dropped by 299 cases (-3.1%) from 9,690 cases to 9,391 cases. The detection rates for overall crimes rose slightly in 2020 by 0.7% from 37.1% to 37.8%.

The overall crimes registered an increase of 4,007 cases, mainly due to the rise of over 7,000 deception cases. In addition, blackmail and crime types that were detected by Police's proactive actions, including serious drug, serious gambling and organised vice offences, recorded relatively significant increases ranging from about 20% to 55%. The rise was mainly attributable to the fact that the violence and law-breaking situation arising from the "anti-extradition amendment bill" related incidents have eased since last year, Police have deployed resources flexibly and mounted intelligence-led operations to combat the above offences proactively.

Though the number of crimes in 2020, as compared with 2019, has increased by 6.8%, a drop of 4% was recorded for the overall crimes when comparing the figures of the first and second half of 2020. A substantial drop of about 60% was recorded for robbery. A drop of about 20% was noted for burglary. The types of crimes in relation to the "anti-extradition amendment bill" incidents (arson, criminal damage, offences against public order, etc.) also registered decreases ranging from about 10% to 70%, indicating that the law and order situation has gradually resumed stable.

The law and order situation in Hong Kong saw substantial improvement. In addition to Police's strict law enforcement, the deterrent effect of Court sentences for riots and violence cases and public's rejection towards illegal acts, The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("National Security Law") which was promulgated on June 30 last year also facilitated the restoration and maintenance of social order.

2. Deception

Deception cases registered a significant increase in 2020, up by 89.3% (+7,337 cases) from 8,216 to 15,553 cases. The jump was mainly driven by the upsurge of cases in e-shopping fraud (+2 folds, from 2,194 to 6,678 cases), telephone deception (+84.1%, from 648 to 1,193 cases) and romance scams (+52.4%, from 594 to 905 cases).

Online mask scams emerged as a new form of e-shopping fraud with the outbreak of the epidemic in the past year. A total of 2,538 cases of mask

scams were recorded with losses amounting to \$74 million, accounting for over 56% of the overall increase in e-shopping frauds.

The huge amount of losses involved in telephone deception cases (+2.8 folds or \$424.8 million) remained a cause for concern. The prevalent modus operandi used by the scammers were "Pretend Officials" and "Guess Who".

The Force will continue to step up publicity and education initiatives, especially the online campaigns for those staying home to fight the virus so as to raise their awareness of fraud and cyber pitfalls. In fact, owing to the efforts of the "Anti-Scam Helpline" of the Anti-Deception Co-ordination Centre, the Force managed to stop the victims of more than 300 scams from sending funds to fraudsters in 2020 and successfully intercepted over \$3 billion before the money reached scammers.

3. Robbery and burglary

There were 264 cases of robbery, a rise of 26% when compared with 2019. Among these, 165 cases were detected. The detection rate was 63%, registering a significant upsurge when compared with 37% in 2019. For burglary, 2,095 cases were recorded, representing a decrease of 12%. Police detected a total of over 580 cases and arrested over 450 persons. The detection rate was about 28%, representing a rise of 10 percentage points. Police will continue to mount intelligence-led operations and deploy resources flexibly to step up patrol to further combat street crimes.

4. Sexual offences

As regards to sexual offences, a total of 64 rape cases were recorded, a rise of 28% compared with 2019. The detection rate was 92%. There was only one case involving strangers and it has been detected. The remaining 63 cases (98.4%) were committed by acquaintances. There were 18 cases involving victims aged under 16, registering a rise of over 30% compared with 2019. A total of 682 indecent assaults were recorded, representing a drop of about 30% (-300 cases). The detection rate was about 76%. Approximately 24% of the cases involved victims aged under 16.

There were 31 cases in which victims were sexually assaulted, involving rape and indecent assault, by suspects met through the Internet, registering an increase of nearly 15%. Police will continue to pay attention to the trend of sexual offences and collaborate with relevant stakeholders for targeted publicity and public education.

5. Homicide

In 2020, 22 cases of homicide were recorded, a slight decrease of two cases (-8.3%) when compared with 24 cases in 2019. Among the 22 cases, nine of the cases involved domestic or family violence while three of the cases were triad-related.

6. Illegal immigrants

In 2020, Police and other law enforcement departments arrested 828

Mainland illegal immigrants and 1,121 non-ethnic Chinese illegal immigrants, with a rise of nearly two folds and 30% respectively when compared with 2019. Of these, the number of Mainland illegal immigrants soared, probably owing to the imposition of immigration control measures during the epidemic, driving them to enter Hong Kong illegally for illegal work or prostitution activities.

7. Youth crime

Youth crime involving offenders aged 10 to 20 saw a decrease of 281 arrests (-6.6%) from 4,268 to 3,987 arrests in 2020. Despite the fall, the number of youth arrested for offences related to robbery, drugs and triads nearly doubled. During recent operations, Police noticed that young people were recruited by criminal syndicates for illegal debt collection. In addition, a spate of atrocious cases of youth bullying took place in 2020 which involved serious violence and grievous bodily harm.

Apart from law enforcement measures, Police also took active steps to help young people under the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme, where rehabilitation opportunities were offered to arrestees under 18 years of age who confessed to their crime, showed remorse and played no part in any serious offences. Police will also continue to pursue inter-departmental and multi-agency collaboration in developing and strengthening law-abiding awareness among young people to keep them on the straight and narrow.

8. Enforcement on National Security Law

As at February 1, 2021, Police arrested a total of 97 persons for suspected "secession", "subversion", "terrorist activities", "collusion with a foreign country or with external elements" and "providing pecuniary or other financial assistance or property for the commission by other persons of the offence of secession"; some suspected of "uttering any seditious words", "fraud", "money laundering", etc. Of these, eight persons have been prosecuted.

The fight against the epidemic

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Police have made use of the Major Incident Investigation and Disaster Support System (MIIDSS "supercomputer"), with 40 officers dedicated to provide assistance in analysing about 10,000 cases; and crime officers were deployed to conduct field investigations for more than 1,000 cases, with a view to tracing transmission sources, analysing transmission hotspots and super spreader.

Police also seconded 50 officers in assisting the Department of Health for investigation and prosecution against offenders, and 40 officers working in the newly established cases tracing office to carry out contact tracing work of confirmed cases.

Moreover, Police regularly deployed officers to different entry points and quarantine centres. Police also assisted with the implementation of the

quarantine order; conducted spot checks and tracked down offenders who had violated compulsory quarantine orders; conducted compulsory testing for designated premises; carried out inspection and enforcement action in respect of “no-gathering order”, “mask order” and subject premises.

At present, the epidemic across the globe and Hong Kong is still fluctuating, Police members will stand steadfast at their posts and dedicate themselves in preventing and stopping the epidemic through concerted efforts with various government departments.

Commissioner’s Operational Priorities 2021

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The Commissioner’s Operational Priorities 2021 include:

- safeguarding national security
- combating violent crimes
- combating triads, syndicated and organised crimes
- combating dangerous drugs
- combating quick cash crimes
- enhancing cyber security and combating technology crimes
- enhancing public safety
- enhancing counter-terrorism

Work focuses in 2021

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Firstly, to advance the work on safeguarding national security. Police will proactively collect and analyse intelligence concerning national security to combat any acts endangering national security, through taking resolute action to enforce the law by arresting the offenders to protect Hong Kong citizens’ safety and interests.

Secondly, to focus on fighting crime and preventing crime. This year, Police will focus on dealing with issues of law and order situation and livelihood conditions of public concerns. Apart from conducting intelligence-led operations and stepping up patrols, Police strive to work closely with the community and make good use of technology to combat cybercrime, fraud, violence, vice, gambling activities, drug-related offences, burglary, robbery, etc. Effective traffic enforcement will also be in place.

Thirdly, to enhance community engagement. Police will adopt a proactive and extensive public relations strategy, readily clarifying and rebutting fake information, and continuously increasing transparency in parallel so that the public would better understand police work and discern facts from fallacy.

Police will adopt a positive approach to strengthen communication with the public proactively, in particular young people, and collaborate with different community sectors and stakeholders to open up communication channels, seizing the opportunity for community engagement and school-

outreaching to foster police-community relations and earn public trust and support.

Fourthly, to spare no effort in assisting government's anti-epidemic work. Police will continue its efforts on quarantine work, spot checks on persons under quarantine at home and conducting "no-gathering order" related enforcement operations. When required, Police will deploy more resources and are determined to fight against the epidemic with the Hong Kong community.