

Law and order situation in the first half of 2022

1. Overall Crime Situation

In the first half of 2022, a total of 31 434 crimes were recorded, showing an increase of 563 cases or 1.8% when compared with 30 871 cases in the same period of 2021. There were 4 084 cases of violent crime, a decrease of 569 cases or 12.2%. The detection rate of overall crimes in the first half of 2022 was 30.6%.

The overall crimes registered an increase mainly due to the rise of over 3 000 deception cases. In addition, blackmail and homicide cases also registered significant increase.

However, substantial decreases were registered in various major crimes. The number of cases of robbery, burglary, rape, wounding and serious assault, snatching, pickpocketing and theft from vehicle hit a new record low since half yearly figures were maintained in 1977.

2. Deception

In the first half of 2022, the number of deception cases increased from 8 699 cases to 12 326 cases, registering a significant increase of 41.7% or 3 627 cases. Over 70% of the reports were Internet-related. "Online shopping fraud" (3 954 cases), "employment fraud" (1 706 cases), "investment fraud" (1 271 cases) and "telephone deception" (786 cases) recorded the highest increase, noting a soar ranging from 40% to about four folds.

The huge amount of losses involved in "investment fraud" and "telephone deception" cases, which was over \$700 million and \$400 million respectively, remained a cause for concern. For "investment fraud", the prevalent modus operandi used by scammers were "Romance Scam cum Investment Fraud" and the use of fake investment applications to deceive victims. For "telephone deception", "Pretend Officials" and "Guess Who" remained as the prevalent modus operandi used by scammers.

In view to tackling various types of deception, Police have been mounting intelligence-led operations, neutralising multiple deception syndicates in the past six months with the arrest of over 250 persons involving in over 1 000 cases of "online shopping fraud", "online employment fraud", "online investment fraud", "telephone deception", etc, with total pecuniary loss at about \$500 million.

The Anti-Deception Coordination Centre (ADCC) continued to contribute by preventing victims of over 300 cases from wiring money to fraudsters and intercepting over \$700 million before the money reached the scammers.

The public should stay vigilant when receiving unfamiliar telephone calls purporting to be from government officials across the boundary or telephone calls regarding detained parcels. Mainland law enforcement officers would neither conduct investigation through telephone calls, nor request any persons to provide bank card numbers and passwords or make a bank transfer or remittance in order to prove one's innocence. If in doubt, the public should immediately call Police's 24-hour "Anti-Scam Helpline 18222". For the latest anti-deception information, please visit "ADCC One-stop Platform" (www.adcc.gov.hk) and the one-stop cyber knowledge platform "CyberDefender" (<https://cyberdefender.hk>).

Police have been launching its "Anti-Deception Season" publicity campaign entitled "Beware of scams, Keep your property safe" since May. Police produced a series of publicity videos, radio announcements, thematic series and a television game show in collaboration with television and radio broadcasters. Besides, anti-deception messages were also disseminated across the territory through advertisements placed at tunnels, large outdoor advertising spaces and bodies and compartments of public transport, as well as anti-deception postcards mailed to the public. Furthermore, social media platforms were also used to enhance public's anti-deception awareness.

3. Homicide

In the first half of 2022, 16 cases of homicide were recorded, representing an increase of six cases (+60%). Eleven cases involved domestic or family violence. All of the cases have been detected.

4. Blackmail

A total of 921 cases of blackmail were recorded, representing an increase of 214 cases or 30.3% when compared with the same period of last year. The upsurge was mainly attributed to "naked chat" blackmail, totalling 708 cases, showing an increase of 215 cases. Students remained as the largest group of victims (25% of the victims). Over 60% of the victims were aged 30 or below.

In view of the upsurge of deception cases and "naked chat" blackmail in recent years, Police continued to enhance publicity initiatives by organising thematic activities. Following the collaboration with a television broadcaster in March, Police worked with a radio station in May to produce an animation series to explain different modus operandi, with a view to strengthening citizens' anti-scam awareness.

5. Child abuse

There were 554 child abuse cases, registering a decrease of 3%. Cases involving sexual and physical abuse saw a slight increase of 0.4% and a drop of 5.9% respectively.

In order to raise stakeholders and public awareness on child protection, Police conducted training sessions and seminars on handling child abuse cases

for various government departments, non-governmental organisations, etc in the first half of 2022. Officers also shared their experiences in handling child abuse cases in a radio programme. In addition, Police will roll out another round of large-scale education and publicity campaign on child protection in October, aiming to raise public concern on child protection.

6. Robbery and burglary

There were 41 cases of robbery, representing a decrease of 39% when compared with same period of 2021. Among these, 27 cases were detected. The detection rate was 66%. There were 381 cases of burglary, registering a significant decrease of 360 cases (-48.6%). Police detected a total of 123 cases and arrested 139 persons. The detection rate was 32%. The detection rate of robbery and burglary hit a record high since half-yearly figures were maintained in 1977. Police will continue to mount intelligence-led operations and deploy resources flexibly to step up patrol to further combat street crimes.

7. Sexual offences

There were 20 cases of rape, representing a drop of 41% when compared with same period of last year. Among these, one case involved strangers. A total of 402 cases of indecent assault were recorded, representing a drop of 81 cases or 16.8%. Detection rates of rape and indecent assault cases remained high, at 100% and 78.9% respectively, however, 40% (eight cases) and 30% (122 cases) of the cases involved victims aged under 16 respectively.

Police will continue to monitor the trend of sexual offences and collaborate with relevant stakeholders for targeted publicity and public education.

8. Serious drug offence

There were 683 cases of serious drug offences, registering a drop of 73 cases.

Police continued to mount operations to combat drug offences in the first half of 2022. Drug seizures of methamphetamine ("ICE") and heroin recorded increases. In May, Police arrested a man suspected of trafficking in 335 kg of "ICE" and 150 litres of liquid "ICE", with an estimated market value of about \$230 million.

9. Youth crime

Youth crime involving offenders aged 10 to 20 saw a decrease of 274 persons (-18%) to 1 245 persons in the first half of 2022. Crimes that recorded decreases included serious drug offences (145 persons), criminal damage (144 persons), shop theft (65 persons), etc. However, increases were recorded for wounding and serious assault (182 persons), deception (102 persons) and unlawful society offences (65 persons), indicating that the situation of vulnerable youths being exploited by lawbreakers to commit

offences remained a concern. In the first half of this year, nine male students aged 13 to 14 were exploited by drug syndicates and arrested for trafficking "ICE", cocaine, ketamine and cannabis; 55 youths aged 12 to 16, with 46 of them being students, were misled and influenced by bad peers to engage in illegal debt collection activities including splashing red paint; while 12 girls aged 12 to 15, with 11 of them being students, were exploited by vice groups to engage in prostitution to earn quick money.

Youth crime is a complex social issue, which requires different sectors of the community to strengthen collaboration on publicity and education with a view to cultivating youths' law-abiding awareness. In June, the Force Working Group on Community Engagement, led by the Commissioner of Police, together with officers from Police Districts had meetings with principals and parents to share the trend of youth crime and crime prevention messages, thus enabling them to assist in enhancing law-abiding awareness of youngsters.

In August this year, with the theme of "Be a Leader Fight Crime Together", the Junior Police Call Fight Crime Summer Camp aims at encouraging youths to step out of their comfort zone, enhancing their resilience, team spirit and leadership skills to cultivate positive values through diversified adventure-based training activities. The Summer Camp also promotes fight crime messages among the participants.

10. Enforcement on National Security Law

As at June 30, 2022, Police arrested a total of 201 persons. Of these, over half of the arrestees have been charged.

In response to the fact that the activities of local extremists have turned underground and more discreet, Police have upgraded its "Anti-violence Hotline" to the "Counter-terrorism (CT) Reporting Hotline 63-666-999" in June to encourage members of the public to provide clues when encountering suspicious persons, objects or activities, with a view to promoting the awareness of "Spot and Report". As at mid-July, the hotline received a total of over 3 800 messages and Police have been taking follow-up actions for reports involving terrorism or violence.

11. Conclusion

The law and order situation in the first half of 2022 remained stable. Although the majority of crimes registered decreases, a significant rise of over 3 600 deception cases was registered. Police appeal to all stakeholders and the public to fight crimes with us through promoting the spirit of mutual help and care, reminding fellows and neighbours to stay alert at all times and reporting crimes proactively, especially against deception cases. Police will continue to spare no effort to combat various crimes and fight the virus together with the public.