

Overall law and order situation in first quarter of 2022

1. Overall Crime Situation

In the first quarter of 2022, a total of 13 866 crimes were recorded, a decrease of 913 cases or 6.2% when compared with 14 779 cases in the same period of 2021. There were 1 840 cases of violent crime, a decrease of 212 cases or 10.3%. The overall detection rate in the first quarter of 2022 was 29.2%, recording a drop of 4.9 percentage points.

The overall crimes registered a decrease, mainly due to the drop of various major crimes, including robbery, burglary, wounding and serious assault, criminal intimidation, criminal damage, theft, serious drug offences, etc.

However, increases were registered for homicide, child abuse, deception and blackmail cases.

2. Homicide

In the first quarter of 2022, seven cases of homicide were recorded, representing an increase of three cases (+75%). Among the seven cases, five cases involved domestic or family violence. All of the cases have been detected.

3. Robbery and burglary

There were 23 cases of robbery, representing a decrease of 23% when compared with the same period of 2021. Among these, 16 cases were detected. The detection rate was 70%. There were 170 cases of burglary, registering a significant drop of 167 cases (-49.6%). Police detected a total of over 40 cases and arrested over 60 persons. The detection rate was 29%. Police will continue to mount intelligence-led operations and deploy resources flexibly to step up patrol to further combat street crimes.

4. Sexual offences

There were 10 cases of rape, a drop of one case (-9.1%). There was no case involving strangers. A total of 143 cases of indecent assault were recorded, representing a drop of 16%. Detection rates of rape and indecent assault cases remained high, at 100% and 79% respectively, however, 40% (four cases) and 31% (45 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.

5. Child abuse

There were 245 child abuse cases, registering an increase of 29%. Cases involving sexual and physical abuse saw a rise of 43% and 17% respectively.

In order to raise stakeholders and public awareness on child protection, Police conducted webinars and training sessions on "Handling of Suspected Child Abuse Cases" for principals, teachers and school social workers, in collaboration with the Education Bureau and Social Welfare Department. Officers also shared their experiences in handling child abuse cases in a radio programme.

6. Deception

A total of 5 378 deception cases were recorded, representing an increase of 29%. Over 70% of the reports were Internet-related. The rise was mainly driven by the upsurge of cases in "online shopping fraud" (1 876 cases), "employment fraud" (610 cases), "investment fraud" (549 cases) and "telephone deception" (339 cases), noting a soar ranging from 28% to over three folds respectively.

"Compensated dating scam" registered a decrease of 39 cases to 270 cases and "romance scam" also recorded a drop of eight cases to 385 cases, however, the pecuniary loss involved rose by 31% to \$14.3 million and \$180 million respectively.

In the past three months, Police mounted a series of intelligence-led operations, neutralising multiple deception syndicates with the arrest of over 60 scammers involving in over 190 cases of "online shopping fraud", "employment fraud", "telephone deception" and "online romance scam", etc, with total pecuniary loss at \$420 million. It included the detection of a case of "telephone deception" by "Pretending Officials", in which the pecuniary loss amounted to \$250 million. The public should stay vigilant when receiving telephone calls from impersonating government officials across the boundary or telephone calls regarding detained parcels. Mainland law enforcement officers would neither take enforcement actions in Hong Kong nor request any persons to make a bank transfer or provide online banking account passwords in order to prove one's innocence. If in doubt, the public should immediately call the Police's 24-hour "Anti-Scam Helpline 18222".

The Anti-Deception Coordination Centre continued to contribute by intercepting over \$380 million of payments in 215 deception cases.

In addition, Police rolled out another round of "Anti-Deception Month" in February on the theme of "Scammers Steal, Stay Alert". Police produced a series of programmes in collaboration with television and radio broadcasters including publicity videos, radio announcements, thematic series and a television game show. Besides, anti-deception messages were also disseminated across the territory through advertisements placed at the tunnels, public transport and large outdoor advertising spaces, as well as anti-deception postcards mailed to the public. Furthermore, social media platforms were also used to enhance public's anti-deception awareness.

7. Blackmail

A total of 432 cases of blackmail were recorded, representing an increase of 96 cases or 28.6% when compared with same period of last year. The upsurge was mainly attributable to “naked chat” blackmail, totaling 348 cases, an increase of 104 cases.

Police mounted intelligence-led operation in January and neutralised a “naked chat” blackmail and “compensated dating scam” syndicate with the arrest of four persons, involving in 18 cases with pecuniary loss at \$420,000.

In view of the upsurge of deception cases and “naked chat” blackmail in recent years, Police enhances publicity initiatives by organising thematic activities. In March, Police collaborated with a television broadcaster and utilised a simulation game to enhance the public understanding on the modus operandi with a view to increasing public anti-crime awareness.

8. Serious drug offence

There were 251 cases of serious drug offences, registering a drop of 32%.

Police continued to step up the proactive combat of drug offences by flexibly deploying resources. In the first quarter of 2022, drug seizures of methamphetamine (“ICE”), heroin and cocaine recorded increases. In February this year, Police neutralised a drug syndicate suspected of trafficking in 115 kg of heroin with the arrest of four persons.

9. Youth crime

A total of 448 youngsters were arrested for committing criminal offences, recording a drop of 269 persons (-37.5%).

While the number of youngsters arrested for triad-related offences (84 persons), wounding and serious assault (58 persons), criminal damage (54 persons) and serious drug offences (52 persons) registered decreases, there were still cases in which vulnerable youths had to pay a high price for going astray. Among these, four 13-year-old male students were exploited by drug syndicates and arrested for trafficking ICE, cocaine and cannabis, while 11 girls aged 12 to 15, with 10 of them being students, were exploited by vice groups to engage in prostitution to earn quick money.

One single youth crime is far too many, in particular youths being exploited by crime syndicates for committing serious crimes such as manufacturing and trafficking in dangerous drugs. During the epidemic, various police districts actively maintained communication with principals, teachers and social workers through videoconferencing. Police also conducted anti-crime webinars and online competitions for youngsters. In addition, youngsters received crime prevention messages continuously during class suspension in order to cultivate their law-abiding awareness. In April, Police launched a series of anti-drug publicity activities, including media interviews and the anti-drug micro-movie “Drug Enticement”, with an aim to

let the public and youngsters recognise the harmful effects of drug abuse and the serious consequences of drug trafficking. Police will produce more crime prevention short video clips for schools, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders to use so as to help foster the youths' positive values and crime prevention awareness, preventing them from being exploited by criminals in undertaking illegal activities.

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. Youngsters also have to learn to say "NO" to temptations from crime syndicates in order to avoid being led astray.

10. Enforcement on National Security Law

As at March 31, 2022, Police arrested a total of 175 persons. Of these, over 110 persons have been charged.

11. Conclusion

The law and order situation in the first quarter of 2022 remained stable.

In addition to fighting the virus together with the public, Police will continue to combat various crimes through devoting mass resources for publicity and education, adopting multi-agency approach and stepping up intelligence-led enforcement operations, especially against online deception cases and youngsters committing criminal offences. 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.