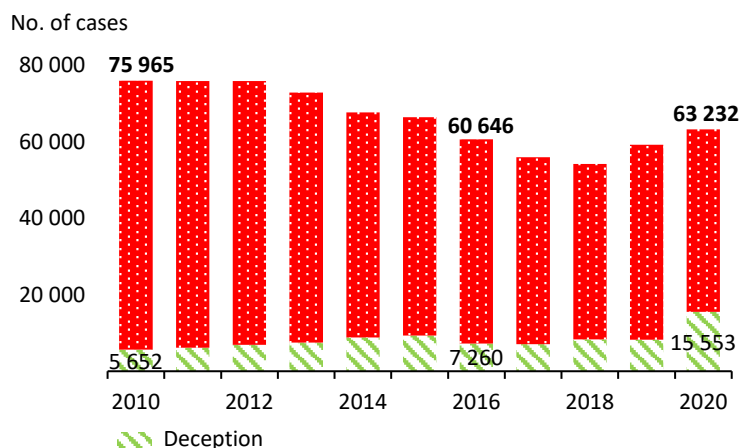
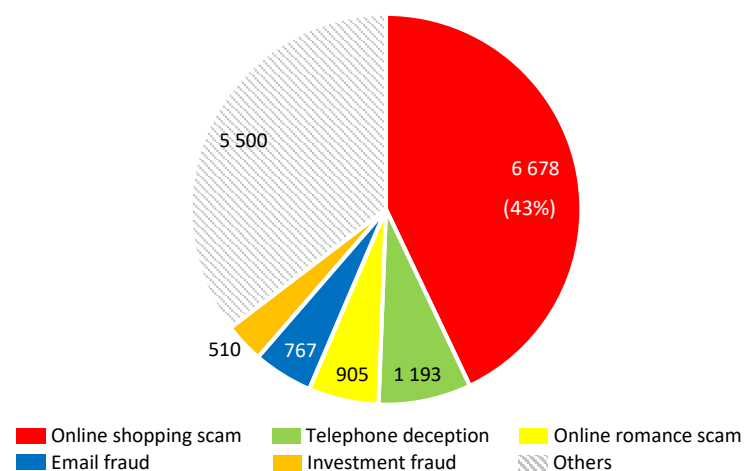


## Online shopping crime in Hong Kong

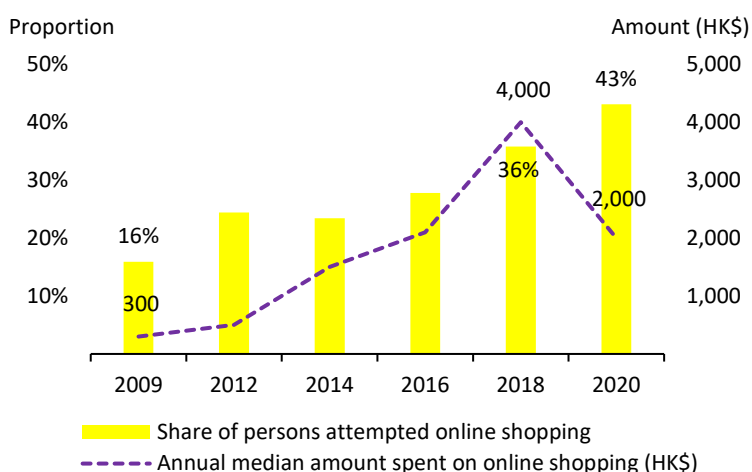
**Figure 1 – Reported crime in Hong Kong**



**Figure 2 – Deception caseload by type in 2020**



**Figure 3 – Trend of online shopping in Hong Kong**

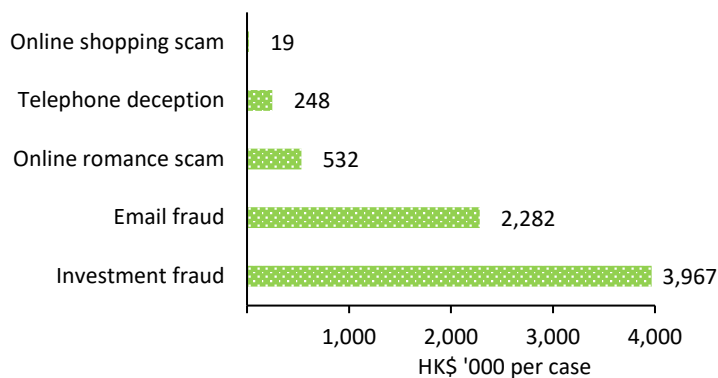


## Highlights

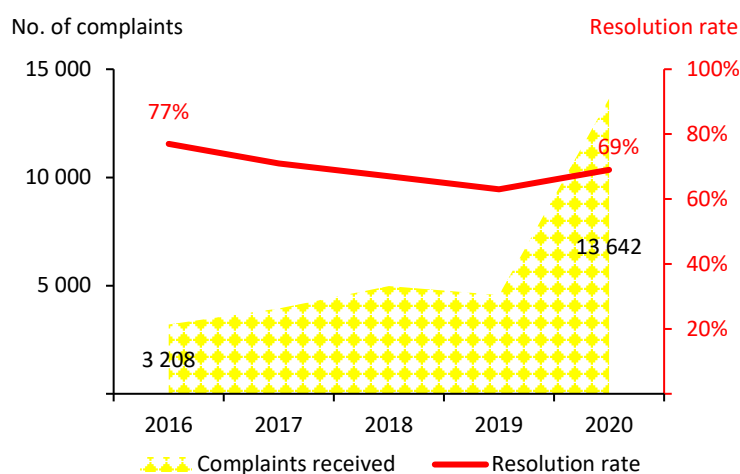
- During 2010-2020, deception crime reported to the Hong Kong Police has exhibited a significant growth by 175% to 15 553 cases, contrasted against a 17% drop in overall crime. As such, the proportion of deception to overall crimes has tripled from 7% to 25% within a decade, largely attributable to rapid development of information and communication technology and social media. More recently, increasing usage of online platforms for purchase of necessities and social interactions upon the outbreak of COVID-19 also poses additional deception risks (**Figure 1**).
- Analyzed by type, online shopping scam exhibits 413% upsurge during 2016-2020, next only to a 694% growth in online romance scam (**Figure 2**). There were 6 678 cases of such online shopping crime (with some two-fifths related to face masks) in 2020, taking up the largest share of 43% in total deception crime. This was followed by telephone deception (8%), online romance scam (6%), email scam (5%) and investment fraud (3%). The combined share of these five types of frauds went up markedly from 49% to 65% over the past five years.
- The upsurge in online shopping scams is closely related to wider acceptance of e-commerce nowadays. According to the Census and Statistics Department, the proportion of respondents having attempted online shopping has almost tripled to 43% during 2009-2020 (**Figure 3**). The median sum spent on online purchase even leaped by 13-fold to HK\$4,000 per annum in 2018, before halving to HK\$2,000 amidst a more difficult economic environment in 2020.

## Online shopping crime in Hong Kong (cont'd)

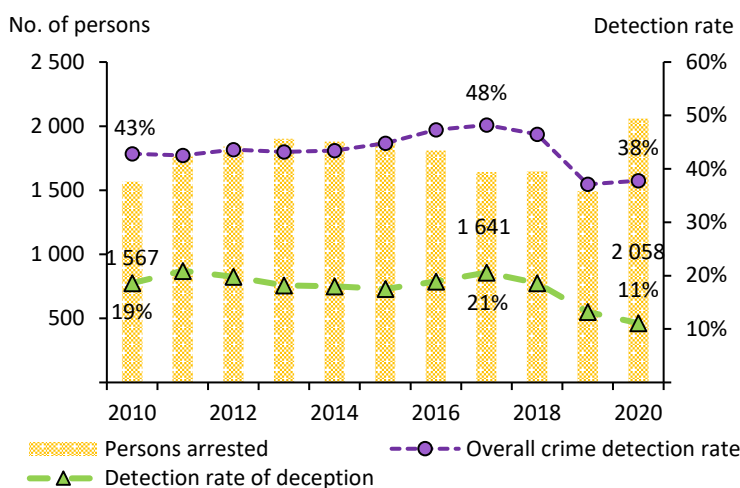
**Figure 4 – Average monetary loss in selected deceptions, 2016-2020**



**Figure 5 – Complaints lodged to the Consumer Council on online shopping**



**Figure 6 – Enforcement against deception by the Police**



## Highlights

- As online shopping scam usually involves purchase of products (e.g. clothes, concert tickets and food) with lower value, its monetary loss per case is lower than other frauds. During 2016-2020, the average monetary loss per online shopping scam was HK\$19,000 (Figure 4). This was far lower than those of investment fraud (HK\$3.97 million) and email scam (HK\$2.28 million), given that most of the victims in the latter frauds are investors and business firms.
- Certain online shopping crimes (e.g. non-delivery of goods) also lead to complaints lodged to the Consumer Council ("CC"). During 2016-2020, these complaints had registered a cumulative increase of 325% to 13 642, representing 44% of total complaints received by CC in 2020. However, as fraudsters usually create numerous fake social media accounts without contacts, it is very difficult for CC to proceed investigation. As such, the resolution rate on e-shopping disputes fell from 77% to 69% during 2016-2020 (Figure 5). More recently, deceptions emerge on the part of shoppers who offer bogus cheques to buy luxury goods at e-shops, prompting calls for enhanced regulation of e-commerce activities.
- Due to the rapid uptrend in online scams, the Police set up the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre in July 2017 to step up public education and online patrol. This helped arresting more deception suspects, up by 25% during 2017-2020. However, the detection rate of deception fell further to just 11% in 2020, way below that of 38% in overall crimes (Figure 6). According to the Police, many fraudsters are based in other places, requiring joint enforcement actions across boundary.

Data sources: Latest figures from Hong Kong Police Force, Security Bureau, Census and Statistics Department and Consumer Council.

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