



## NEWS RELEASE

### ICA ANNUAL STATISTICS 2023

192.8 million travellers cleared Singapore’s checkpoints in 2023, an increase of more than 80% compared to 2022. Despite this, the experience of the travellers did not suffer and in fact, generally improved including in clearance times, due to the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA)’s ongoing transformation of border clearance through deploying more automated lanes and allowing more visitors to use these lanes.

#### Facilitating cross-border trade and travel

##### *Significant increase in travellers*

2 There was a **significant increase in traveller volume** in 2023. ICA cleared 192.8 million travellers, an increase of 84% or 88 million travellers compared to 2022. During the school and public holidays period, traveller volume at the land checkpoints exceeded pre-COVID-19 levels, reaching about 440,000 travellers daily.<sup>1</sup>

	2022	2023	
<b>Total travellers cleared</b>	104,880,000	192,846,000	▲ 84%

*[Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand]*

##### *Decrease in cargo*

<sup>1</sup> Approximately 400,000 travellers crossed Woodlands and Tuas checkpoints daily during pre-COVID-19 years.

3 The volume of cargo cleared decreased in 2023 as compared to 2022. The number of containers, consignments and parcels cleared through the checkpoints dipped by 8%, while the volume of low-value goods cleared saw a 23% decline. This could be due to more consumers returning to shopping in physical stores than during the COVID-19 period.

	2022	2023	
<b>Containers cleared</b>	1,178,000	1,177,000	▼ 0.1%
<b>Consignments cleared</b>	5,163,000	5,082,000	▼ 2%
<b>Parcels cleared</b>	3,396,000	2,724,000	▼ 20%
<b>Total cleared</b>	9,736,000	8,983,000	▼ 8%

[Rounded to the nearest thousand]

	2022	2023	
<b>Low-value goods cleared</b>	49,775,000	38,152,000	▼ 23%

[Rounded to the nearest thousand]

### Safeguarding Singapore's borders

4 Some travellers ***attempt to enter Singapore using an impersonated identity or an identity different from their previous trips to Singapore.*** This is to evade detection, often because they had previously committed offences in Singapore, and would thus be considered undesirable persons who are not allowed to enter Singapore.

5 To counter this, ICA has put in place ***multi-modal biometric clearance systems at the checkpoints to better detect and deny entry to foreigners with multiple identities or impersonated identities.*** Since July 2020, all automated immigration lanes and manual counters at Singapore's land, sea and air checkpoints have been equipped with iris and facial scanners. The concurrent use of these two primary biometric identifiers, in addition to fingerprints as a secondary biometric identifier, provides a highly accurate way of authenticating travellers' identity.

*Slight decrease in number of multiple identity cases*

6 In 2023, there was a **slight dip in the number of multiple identity cases** detected at the checkpoints.

	2022	2023	
<b>Multiple identity detected on arrival</b>	441	437	▼ 0.9%

*Increase in number of forged/tampered travel documents*

7 Despite the increase in traveller volume, ICA has remained vigilant against travellers who use fraudulent travel documents. The number of **travellers detected with forged/tampered travel documents more than doubled**, rising from 21 in 2022 to 65 in 2023. Most of these cases involved foreign passports with altered or counterfeit biodata pages.

	2022	2023	
<b>Forged/tampered travel documents detected on arrival</b>	21	65	▲ 210%

*Rise in contraband smuggling attempts*

8 There was a **23% increase in contraband smuggling attempts** foiled by ICA at the checkpoints in 2023. This could be due to the increase in travel volume in 2023.

	2022	2023	
<b>Contraband cases detected</b>	35,000	43,000	▲ 23%

*[Rounded to the nearest thousand]*

9 By leveraging data analytics and maintaining vigilance on the ground, ICA officers have thwarted multiple attempts to smuggle prohibited, controlled and dutiable

items into Singapore. These include the smuggling of large consignments of contraband cigarettes and e-vaporisers. (Refer to [Appendix](#) for the case detections in 2023.)

### Keeping Singapore safe through inland enforcement operations

10 ICA conducts regular inland enforcement operations together with other law enforcement agencies such as the Singapore Police Force to arrest immigration offenders (IOs).

#### *Increase in number of IOs*

11 The total number of ***IOs arrested by ICA increased*** by more than 40% in 2023, due to the arrest of more overstayers. This could be because of the easing of travel restrictions, as well as ICA increasing its intelligence-led operations from an average of 40 per month in 2022 to 58 in 2023. However, the total number of IOs arrested in 2023 was still much lower compared to pre-COVID-19 years.<sup>2</sup>

	2022	2023	
<b>Illegal immigrants arrested</b>	57	45	▼ 20%
<b>Overstayers arrested</b>	357	542	▲ 52%
<b>Total IOs arrested</b>	414	587	▲ 42%

#### *Increase in number of harbourers and employers of IOs*

12 The total number of ***harbourers and employers of IOs arrested by ICA increased*** by over 40% in 2023.

<sup>2</sup> ICA arrested a total of 1,071 IOs in 2018 and 932 in 2019.

	2022	2023	
<b>Harbourers of IOs arrested</b>	166	204	▲ 23%
<b>Employers of IOs arrested</b>	60	123	▲ 105%
<b>Total harbourers and employers of IOs arrested</b>	226	327	▲ 45%

13 Close to half of the harbourers arrested in 2023 were family members, friends, or employers of the IOs. They claimed to have overlooked applying for a pass extension/renewal for the offender or verifying the immigration status of the offender. Some also claimed to have mistaken the In-Principle Approval<sup>3</sup> or validity of the visa<sup>4</sup> as the duration which the offender was allowed to remain in Singapore. Many harbourers arrested had rented out the unit or room but had not conducted any checks on their tenant's immigration pass, nor ensured that their tenant's immigration status in Singapore remained valid throughout the rental period. Others had performed only the initial check - at the point of rental - to ensure that their tenant's stay in Singapore was legal.

14 The majority of the employers arrested either did not check if their workers possessed a valid immigration pass to stay in Singapore, or had failed to check that whether the pass was valid. Most IOs employed by errant employers were found to be working as freelance house cleaners or domestic workers, as well as in the food & beverage industries as kitchen assistants or dishwashers.

15 It is a serious offence to harbour or employ IOs. ICA will continue to take tough action against harbourers and employers of IOs. Members of the public and employers must play their part to deter IOs by denying them shelter and means of subsistence, to make it tougher for them to stay illegally in Singapore. Homeowners who wish to rent out their property must exercise due diligence by checking the immigration status of their prospective foreign tenants, to ensure that their stay in Singapore is legal (refer

<sup>3</sup> An In-Principle Approval (IPA) is a document issued to an applicant pending completion of formalities for Singapore Citizenship, Permanent Residence, Long-Term Visit Pass or Student's Pass.

<sup>4</sup> A Singapore visa is not an immigration pass. It is a pre-entry permission to allow the holder of a valid Singapore visa to travel to and seek entry into Singapore.


to infographic below). We urge the public to report suspected cases to ICA at [<https://go.gov.sg/icafeedbackio>].

**Infographic: Checks to be done before renting out a housing unit to foreigners**

### 1 Check


the original immigration or work pass.

Do not accept pictures or photocopies.




### 2 Compare

the particulars of the original pass with the particulars on the original passport to ensure they are the same.




## VERIFY validity of passes:



**ICA**  
Go to [www.ica.gov.sg](http://www.ica.gov.sg) and search for "Verify Validity of Immigration Pass" OR use MyICA Mobile app

For immigration passes (Student's Pass and Long-Term Visit Pass)



**MOM**  
Go to [www.mom.gov.sg](http://www.mom.gov.sg) and search for "Check work pass and application status" OR use SGWorkPass app)

For work passes and long-term passes issued by MOM

*Decrease in number of persons arrested for marriage-of-convenience (MOC)-related offences*

16 The number of persons arrested for MOC-related offences in 2023 **dipped slightly from nine to eight persons** compared to the year before.

	2022	2023	
<b>Persons arrested for MOC-related offences</b>	9	8	▼ 10%

17 ICA takes a serious view of foreigners entering into MOCs with Singaporeans to obtain immigration facilities in Singapore. We will continue to take tough enforcement action against them, including those who facilitate MOCs. Members of the public should report any suspected cases of MOC, as well as any other immigration-related offences, at [<https://go.gov.sg/icafeedbackio>].

## ICA's transformation plans to redefine border operations and service delivery are on track

**New Clearance Concept (NCC):** *Providing a faster and more seamless clearance experience for travellers at our checkpoints*

### NCC Passenger

18 In 2023, ICA extended the usage of automated lanes to passport holders of 60 jurisdictions. Today, more than two-thirds of travellers arriving in Singapore via Changi Airport can now clear immigration via the automated lanes, as compared to only one-third in the pre-COVID-19 years. To cater to the increasing number of travellers, ICA installed more than 160 additional automated lanes in 2023 and will be installing a further 230 lanes in 2024.

19 Automated immigration clearance is today also possible for travellers in wheelchairs and family groups of up to four persons. In 2023, ICA installed eight **Special Assistance Lanes (SALs)** at both the arrival and departure bus halls of Woodlands Checkpoint, another eight at Marina Bay Cruise Centre Singapore, and a total of 42 SALs at Terminals 1, 2 and 3 of Changi Airport.<sup>5</sup>

20 With the introduction of the next generation **Automated Border Control System (ABCS)** in 2024, ICA aims to allow all foreign visitors, regardless of nationality, to clear immigration using our automated lanes without the need for prior enrolment. The ABCS lanes will progressively replace the existing automated lanes and manual counters at our checkpoints. In addition, these new lanes will provide Singapore residents and departing visitors with contactless clearance, i.e. they will not need to present their passport.

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<sup>5</sup> Singapore is the first country in the world to introduce an automated lane that allows multiple travellers to perform self-immigration clearance as a group with the SALs, which were introduced in December 2022.

## NCC Cargo

21 The NCC Cargo concept aims for a seamless, paperless, and secure cargo clearance process. ICA implemented the ***paperless clearance initiative for conventional cargo*** at the air, land and sea checkpoints in March 2023. Under this initiative, drivers/traders only need to submit their vehicle number and Cargo Clearance Permits (CCPs) via the SG Arrival Card Cargo module on the ICA website or the MyICA mobile application before seeking clearance at the checkpoint. ICA officers can then retrieve the information back-end and clear the cargo vehicle, and no longer need the driver/trader to produce the hardcopy CCP. This enhances efficiency for both ICA and the drivers/traders. The clearance time has been reduced by more than two minutes per vehicle, from an average of seven minutes previously to five minutes, which represents time savings of about 30% per vehicle. Since its implementation, ICA has seen a ***high adoption rate of over 94% for the paperless clearance initiative across the checkpoints*** as of December 2023.

22 Since April 2023, ICA has been conducting trials at our air cargo checkpoints on remote clearance. Under this trial, ICA officers can perform customs clearance, including the analysis of cargo images, remotely, thus allowing more booths to be open, and hence speeding up clearance. The initiative is part of ICA's NCC Cargo to further streamline and automate cargo clearance processes.

### **Services Centre Next Generation (SCNG): Delivering a 'No Fuss, No Visit, No Waiting' experience for our customers**

23 ICA has made significant strides in digitalising our services. As of December 2023, close to 95% of ICA's services have gone digital, with approximately 95% of customers submitting applications through our website or via the MyICA mobile application.

24 We have also made progress in the digitalisation of ICA-issued documents. In February 2023, ICA introduced the **digital Long-Term Pass (LTP)** for ICA-issued Long-Term Visit Passes, Student's Passes, and Dependant's Passes granted by the Ministry of Social and Family Development. The digital LTP can be downloaded to



personal devices, allowing secure and easy access for the LTP pass holder. Applicants will no longer need to visit the ICA Building in person to collect the hardcopy LTP. With the digital LTP, there is no risk of misplacement or damage, unlike a hardcopy pass.

25 As ICA transforms the way our services are delivered, our officers at the ICA Services Centre (ISC) will be upskilled and reskilled to perform functions across the entire scope of citizen, permanent resident, and visitor services. They will oversee the digital service touchpoints of all services and products and provide a holistic case assessment for the various immigration facilities that our customer can apply for.

### **Continuous efforts to manage traffic and enhance travellers' experience at the land checkpoints**

26 Since the reopening of our borders in 2022, ICA has seen a growing number of travellers using our land checkpoints. During the recent year-end holidays, traffic flow through Woodlands and Tuas checkpoints exceeded pre-COVID-19 levels, with nearly 13.6 million travellers cleared, averaging about 440,000 travellers daily.

27 In view of the increase in traveller volume and limited manpower resources, ICA adopts a multi-pronged approach to alleviate traffic congestion and continuously reviews checkpoint operations to enhance immigration clearance processes and the traveller experience.

#### *Speeding up clearance throughput at the passenger bus halls*

28 In recent years, ICA has installed 90 more automated lanes at the bus halls of Woodlands and Tuas checkpoints. Automated clearance has become the default for bus travellers today. This has helped ICA increase clearance throughput, allowing us to clear about 8,500 travellers per hour during departure peak periods, as compared to 5,000 travellers pre-COVID-19.

29 With faster clearance at the bus hall, more travellers are choosing to cross the Causeway by bus. As of December 2023, close to 45% of travellers passing through

Woodlands Checkpoint travelled by bus. To prevent overcrowding at the bus concourse and minimise waiting time, ICA had worked with various partners to increase the frequency of bus services. This includes a loop system for Causeway Link buses, dedicated immigration clearance lanes for departing public buses, as well as increasing the frequency of public buses during peak periods.

#### *Adjusting the deployment of resources in response to traffic condition*

30 ICA monitors traffic conditions in real-time and dynamically adjusts the deployment of officers to manage the changing traffic situation. Also, clearance lanes are flexibly converted for different modes of conveyances, for example, car zones are converted to clear motorcycles during peak periods. This minimises motorcycle queues along the Causeway/Second Link and the BKE/AYE, which could block other modes of conveyance from entering the checkpoints.

#### *Other initiatives to improve clearance efficiency*

31 In March 2023, ICA installed 10 bi-directional self-clearance immigration kiosks at Woodlands Train Checkpoint. These are the first kiosks that ICA has implemented for immigration clearance. The kiosk combines passport scanning and biometric capturing and takes up significantly less physical space as compared to the usual automated lane. This has allowed ICA to effectively utilise the limited space available at Woodlands Train Checkpoint, and provide a faster clearance experience for travellers (about 24 seconds via the kiosks as compared to 45 seconds at the manual counter).

32 Since May 2023, ICA has utilised the departure zone to clear motorcyclists entering Singapore via the Second Link in the mornings. This has allowed ICA to overcome the infrastructural constraints at Tuas Checkpoint and increased its clearance capacity from 40 automated lanes to 70 automated lanes.

33 ICA will be redeveloping Woodlands Checkpoint in phases over the next 10 to 15 years, which will provide more efficient immigration clearance for travellers for the long term, and ensure more robust border security.

34 ICA will continue to explore innovative solutions and build deeper service delivery capabilities to enhance our operations and provide even better customer experiences.

**IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

**13 FEBRUARY 2024**

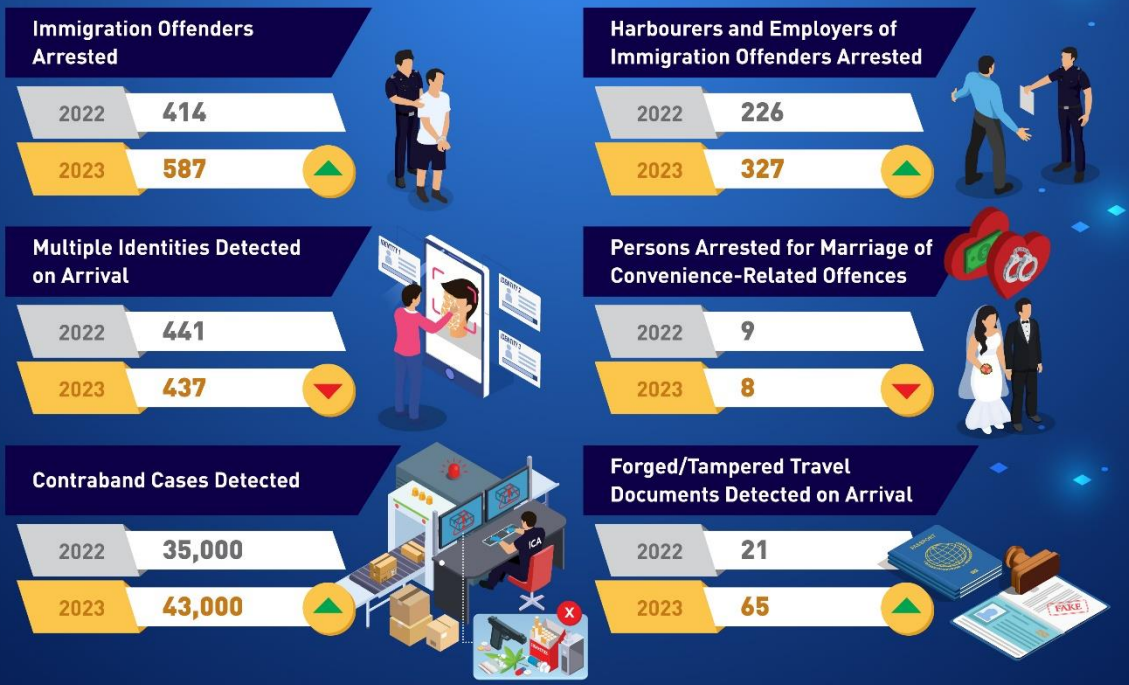
# ICA Annual Statistics 2023



## Checkpoint Operations



## Enforcement Efforts



## Appendix

### Case #1 – Smuggling of 337 live birds through Tuas Checkpoint

On 23 March 2023, ICA officers at Tuas Checkpoint directed a Malaysia-registered vehicle for further checks and detected eight boxes containing 337 live birds. The birds were in plastic boxes hidden behind the driver and passenger's seat. Two of the men involved in the case were sentenced to 60 weeks' imprisonment and 72 weeks' imprisonment respectively, while the court case against the third individual is ongoing. The sentences imposed on the two men are the highest to date for animal smuggling.



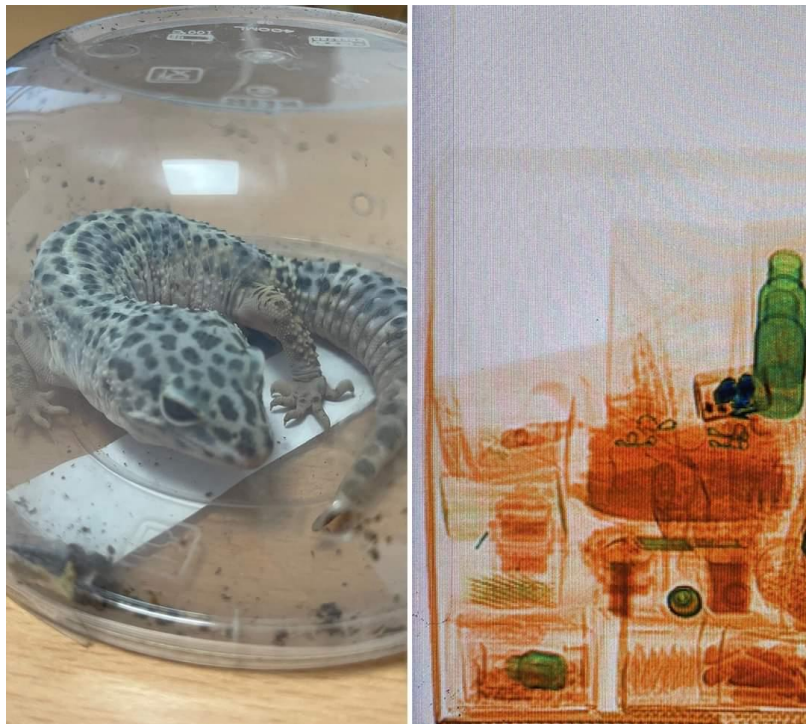
Birds discovered packed in plastic boxes in the vehicle.

QR code to ICA's TikTok post on 18 Sep 2023:



## Case #2 – Smuggling of live gecko through Changi Airfreight Centre

On 3 August 2023, ICA officers at Changi Airfreight Centre foiled an attempt to smuggle a live leopard gecko. The gecko was uncovered after officers noticed anomalies in the scanned images of the package. The case was referred to the National Parks Board (NParks) for further investigation. NParks has since taken enforcement action against the offender.



Live gecko found in the package.

QR code to ICA's Facebook post on 19 Sep 2023:



### Case #3 – Smuggling of replica guns and accessories through Tuas Port

On 9 August 2023, ICA officers at Tuas Port foiled an attempt to smuggle two replica guns and their accessories into Singapore. The items were hidden within a consignment of assorted cargo. They were uncovered when officers noticed anomalies in the scanned images of the container and directed it for further checks. The case was referred to the Singapore Police Force for further investigation.



The two replica guns and their accessories.

QR code to ICA's Facebook post on 9 Oct 2023:



## Case #4 – Smuggling of 750 e-vaporisers and 3,150 components through Tuas Checkpoint

On 20 October 2023, ICA officers at Tuas Checkpoint thwarted an attempt to smuggle e-vaporisers and components concealed among cartons containing shampoo products. The contraband was uncovered after officers detected anomalies in the scanned images and directed it for further checks. The case was then referred to the Health Sciences Authority (HSA). On 7 December 2023, the 31-year-old Malaysian lorry driver was prosecuted for smuggling a total of 750 e-vaporisers and 3,150 related components. The smuggled contraband was estimated to be worth \$73,000.



E-vaporisers detected by ICA officers at Tuas Checkpoint.

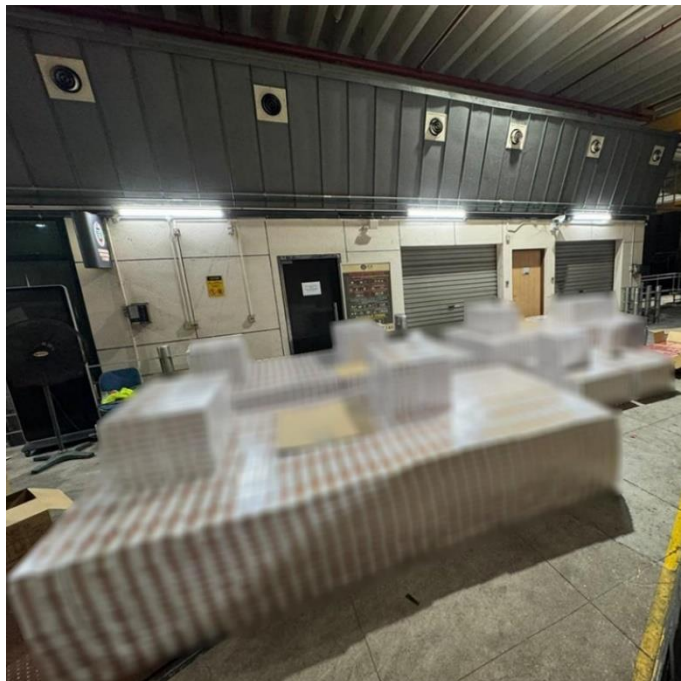
**QR code to joint release by ICA and HSA on 7 Dec 2023:**





## Case #5 – Detection of 13,000 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes at Tuas Checkpoint

On 21 December 2023, ICA officers at Tuas Checkpoint foiled an attempt to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore. A Malaysia-registered lorry was directed for enhanced checks, where a total of 13,000 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were uncovered. **It was the largest quantity of duty-unpaid cigarettes detected at the land checkpoints in 2023.** The total duty and Goods and Services Tax evaded was \$1,276,619 and \$114,922 respectively. The case was referred to Singapore Customs for further investigation.



13,000 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes, the largest quantity detected at the land checkpoints in 2023.

QR code to ICA's Facebook post on 22 Jan 2024:



## Case #6 – Detection of controlled drugs at Parcel Post Section

On 21 December 2023, ICA officers at Parcel Post Section detected an inbound postal article containing illegal substances. Officers noticed anomalies in the scanned x-ray images of the postal article. Upon further checks, three small packets of crystalline substances suspected to contain drugs and five LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) stamps were found. The case was referred to the Central Narcotics Bureau for further investigation.



Three small packets of crystalline substances suspected to contain drugs and five LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) stamps found in the postal article.

**QR code to ICA's Facebook post on 12 Jan 2024:**

