



ICA
Securing Our Borders,
Safeguarding Our Home

NEWS RELEASE

ICA ANNUAL STATISTICS 2021

Decrease in Traveller and Cargo Volume; Increase in Low-Value Goods

1 In 2021, the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) cleared over 5.9 million travellers and 10.8 million consignments, containers and parcels. ICA also cleared over 29.5 million low-value goods¹ through the air cargo checkpoints.

2 With border closures and travel restrictions in many countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traveller volume continued to fall in 2021. Cargo volume also saw a slight dip. On the other hand, we continued to see an uptrend in the number of low-value goods imported into Singapore as consumers turn to e-commerce and online purchases.

Travellers		
	2020	2021
Travellers cleared	42,190,000	5,923,000

▼ 86.0%

[Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand]

Cargoes		
	2020	2021
Containers	1,167,000	1,248,000
Consignments	4,462,000	5,103,000
Parcels	6,131,000	4,532,000
Total Cargoes cleared	11,760,000	10,884,000

▼ 7.4%

[Rounded to the nearest thousand]

¹ Low-value goods are subjected to GST relief when they are imported by air/post. They do not require permits and have a total Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) not exceeding \$400. This is not applicable to intoxicating liquors and tobacco.

Low-Value Goods		
	2020	2021
Low-Value Goods cleared	21,236,000	29,515,000

▲ 39.0%

[Rounded to the nearest thousand]

Decrease in the Number of Immigration Offenders (IOs), Harbourers and Employers (H/Es) of IOs, and Marriage Of Convenience (MOC)-Related Offences

3 Tight border control measures, coupled with ICA's inland enforcement efforts, joint operations with other Home Team agencies, and publicity on ICA's enforcement efforts against harbourers, have led to a drop in the number of IOs, H/E and MOC offences.

Decrease in Number of IOs and H/Es of IOs

	2020	2021
Illegal Immigrants arrested	57	56
Overstayers arrested	416	299
Total IOs arrested	473	355

▼ 1.8%

▼ 28.1%

▼ 24.9%

	2020	2021
Harbourers of IOs arrested	223	184
Employers of IOs arrested	56	52
Total H/E of IOs arrested	279	236

▼ 17.5%

▼ 7.1%

▼ 15.4%

4 Ongoing COVID-19-related border control measures have resulted in fewer social visitors in 2021 and hence a lower number of overstayers. ICA also kept the IO situation under control through a combination of enforcement and technology. The use of multi-modal biometric screening at the checkpoints has enabled our officers to more effectively detect IOs attempting to use someone else's identity or a false identity to enter Singapore. This is complemented by rigorous in-land operations to arrest IOs and those who illegally harbour and employ them. As IOs may pose a security risk if they turn to crime in Singapore, ICA continues to take a tough enforcement stance by deporting them and barring them from re-entering Singapore.

5 In 2021, most IOs employed by errant employers were found working in the construction sector, maintenance and F&B industries, or as freelance house cleaners and odd job workers. The majority of the harbourers and employers failed to exercise due diligence to conduct checks before employing these IOs or renting out their premises to them. They either did not check the foreigners' immigration status or failed to ensure that the immigration status would be valid throughout the tenancy period. We seek the public and employers' cooperation to deny IOs shelter and employment, and to report suspected cases quickly to ICA at [<https://go.gov.sg/icafeedbackio>]. ICA will continue to publicise and raise public awareness of these immigration offences. (Refer to [Appendix A](#) for related cases and the mandatory checks to conduct when renting out premises.)

Decrease in Number of Persons Convicted of MOC-Related Offences

	2020	2021
Persons convicted of MOC-related Offences	6	5

▼ 16.7%

6 ICA has made good progress through a multi-pronged approach comprising robust checks, enforcement, and prosecution, to deter the arranging of or entering into MOCs since 2012 – when MOC was made an offence. From the peak of 284 MOC offenders convicted in 2013, we have observed the number of MOC offences declining over the years, to 5 cases last year.

7 ICA takes a serious view of foreigners engaging in MOCs with Singaporeans to obtain immigration facilities in Singapore. We will continue to take tough enforcement action against such offenders and the middlemen who facilitate MOCs. Members of the public should report any suspected cases of MOCs, as well as any other immigration-related offences at [<https://go.gov.sg/icafeedbackio>]. (Refer to [Appendix B](#) for related case.)

Decline in Overall Contrabands Detected at the Checkpoints; Rise in Contraband Cases among Imports of Low-Value Goods

8 With the significant fall in traveller volume, the number of contraband cases detected at the ICA checkpoints has also decreased by about 33% in 2021.

	2020	2021
Total number of contraband cases detected	41,000	27,000

▼ 33.1%

[Rounded to the nearest thousand]

9 However, ICA noted an uptick in the number of contraband smuggling attempts via airfreight and parcels, specifically low-value goods. This is consistent with the boom in e-commerce in recent years. In 2021, there were 5,860 contraband cases detected among imports of low-value goods, almost 40% higher compared to 2020. ICA will continue to monitor this trend closely.

10 In 2021, ICA successfully foiled several noteworthy attempts to smuggle contraband into Singapore. Huge consignments of contraband cigarettes and drugs were found hidden within legitimate consignments transported by lorries. In some of these cases, the offenders had used sophisticated methods of concealment, making it harder for authorities to detect. These included hiding the cigarettes in air-conditioning units, rolling paper drums, ventilation fans, or in various modified compartments in the vehicles. ICA will continue to watch this very closely as similar methods of concealment may be used to smuggle arms and explosives into Singapore. Besides the smuggling of contraband, ICA had also detected several incidents of unauthorised importation of COVID-19 ART test kits and medicines such as Ivermectin. (Refer to [Appendix C](#) for related cases.)

ICA's Ongoing Efforts amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

Tough Enforcement to Ensure Compliance with SHN Regime

11 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ICA's role in securing our borders has become more complex. Besides our core responsibilities of border security, immigration control and registration services, ICA has also been administering and enforcing the SHN regime since the onset of the pandemic. This has prevented the spread of the virus from imported cases to the community and in turn ensured the safe reopening of our borders for travel.

12 ICA's SHN Investigation Taskforce has been actively investigating and prosecuting SHN breaches since 2020. In 2021, ICA issued more than 350,000 SHNs, and nine persons were charged under the Infectious Diseases Act (IDA) for breaching SHN requirements.

Supporting the Re-opening of Borders

13 ICA will continue to adapt and innovate to support Singapore’s efforts to progressively reopen our borders. With the expansion of the Vaccinated Travel Lanes (VTLs) from air travel to land travel, ICA swiftly rolled out several initiatives at the checkpoints to provide a safer, more secure, and more seamless immigration process for travellers². ICA’s Safe Travel Office continued to provide travellers with a single government touchpoint via the SafeTravel Website and Contact Centre, and expanded the SafeTravel application portal to facilitate entry applications. In 2021, the SafeTravel portal processed over 500,000 applications to enter Singapore. Other noteworthy initiatives to support a COVID-19 resilient nation include the following:

- **Digital Authentication of Vaccination Certificates:** Singapore requires proof of vaccination for a visitor to enter Singapore and qualify for vaccination-differentiated safe management measures. ICA has been progressively integrating the verification of digital vaccination certificates issued by other countries/regions into our processes, allowing travellers to upload their digital vaccination certificate’s QR code on the VTL application portal when they apply for approval to enter Singapore under the VTL scheme, or when they submit their electronic SG Arrival Card/electronic health declaration.
- **Safer Manual Immigration Counters:** ICA redesigned the manual immigration counters at selected checkpoints to enable the self-scanning of passports by travellers. This contactless interaction has made immigration clearance safer for travellers and ICA officers alike.



Safer manual immigration counter at Airport Command
Photo: ICA

² ICA’s news release, “ICA provides more secure, safer and more seamless immigration clearance as Singapore reopens its borders” was issued on 7 November 2021.

- **COVID-19 vaccination as a condition for approving or granting of new long-term passes as well as permanent residence:** Effective from 1 February 2022, this measure supports Singapore's national policy of achieving a population with high vaccination coverage against COVID-19.

ICA's Transformation Efforts

New Clearance Concept (NCC)

14 Amidst the pandemic, ICA has not let up in our efforts to transform immigration and cargo clearance, and move towards our New Clearance Concept (NCC) vision. This will achieve better security and service outcomes. As of end-2021, we have steadily made progress through various initiatives.

NCC People Clearance:

15 The NCC's vision is for Singapore Citizens, Permanent Residents and Long-Term Pass Holders to be able to clear immigration without needing to present their passport, and for foreign visitors to be able to clear immigration at automated lanes without prior enrolment.

16 Since July 2020, all immigration lanes (automated and manual) at the passenger halls have been equipped with iris and facial scanners. The use of iris patterns and facial features as primary identifiers for immigration clearance not only provides more robust and reliable identity authentication of travellers, but more hygienic, convenient, and efficient immigration clearance.

17 To facilitate a fuss-free clearance experience, foreign visitors no longer had their passports stamped with inked endorsement from 2021. Instead, they have been issued with an electronic Visit Pass (e-Pass) via an email notification to the email address declared in their electronic SG Arrival Card. The e-Pass has been introduced in a phased approach at Changi Airport since 10 October 2021, and will be gradually implemented at all other checkpoints. This will be complemented by an online Enquiry Portal that allows the digital retrieval of e-Pass records. The introduction of the e-Pass not only provides for safer immigration clearance with reduced contact between officers and travellers, but is also a crucial building block for ICA to make automated clearance a norm from 2023.

NCC Cargo Clearance:

18 ICA's vision for cargo clearance is to leverage automation and digital technologies to move cargo securely and efficiently, which bolsters Singapore's position as a global port. ICA has successfully implemented the "On-the-Fly" clearance concept at Tuas Port since 1 October 2021 where cargo clearance is conducted while the vehicle is still on the move. Cargo Clearance Permits (CCPs) will be cleared automatically after ICA's image analysts assess that there are no anomalies in the scanned images of the cargo consignment.

19 To minimise the time to clear cargoes flagged for secondary checks, ICA officers at the cargo checkpoints have been using mobile tablets to clear permits on-the-spot at the checking bays since October 2021. We have ceased the manual endorsement of CCPs since February 2022, thereby reducing the turnaround time for vehicles and cargos passing through the checkpoints. Under the NCC Cargo vision, ICA aims to fully digitalise the cargo clearance process where drivers will no longer be required to present hardcopy CCPs and supporting documents for both containerised and conventional cargo.

Services Centre Next Generation (SCNG)

20 Under the SCNG, ICA is committed to providing a 'No Fuss; No Visit; No Waiting' experience for our customers through greater use of digital, robotic, biometric and automation technologies. Through these initiatives, customers can transact with ICA at their convenience.

21 Since end-2021, ICA had implemented 23 e-Services that cover 99% of our public transactions, and reduced the need for members of the public to make physical trips to the ICA Building³. We will continue to redesign our processes and deliver more seamless and efficient digital experiences to our customers. ICA will also digitise ICA-issued documents so that customers will be able to access and retrieve them remotely via a secure platform. By end-2022, ICA will launch digital versions of birth and death certificates, Student's Pass and Long-Term Visit Pass.

³ The remaining 1% are services which are seldom used, used only on an exceptional basis, applicable to a very small number of people, or requires a physical interview.

22 Besides ramping up e-Services to enhance the accessibility of ICA’s services, ICA has taken other steps to reduce footfall at ICA Building. We have, from 1 October 2021, doubled the validity period of Singapore Passports⁴ from five to 10 years⁵. As an added convenience, ICA also offers free collection of Singapore Passports and Identity Cards at various post offices island-wide⁶.

23 As Singapore takes steps to gradually reopen its borders, ICA will make efforts to stay on top of the prevailing border control policies and effectively discharge its role to ensure both the security and public health of our nation. We will continue to innovate to enhance ICA’s services to secure our borders as well as to provide greater convenience and secured services to our customers.

⁴ Applicable to those aged 16 and above

⁵ ICA’s news release, “Singapore passports with increased validity period of 10 years from October 2021” was issued on 7 May 2021.

⁶ ICA’s news release, “No additional fees for collection of passport and identity card at post offices” was issued on 22 September 2021.

Appendices

Appendix A

Case #1 – Male Indian National sentenced to imprisonment for harbouring an immigration offender

1 On 30 June 2020, ICA officers conducted a check at a unit at Rowell Road and arrested a 26-year-old Sri Lankan national Abdul Cadeer Naina ('Abdul') who had remained unlawfully in Singapore for a period of 150 days. Investigations revealed that 37-year-old Indian national Paramasivam Seeman ('Paramasivam') had sublet a bedspace in the said unit to Abdul. Abdul did not offer to show his identification documents to Paramasivam and Paramasivam did not ask him for supporting documents to verify the validity of his stay in Singapore⁷. Paramasivam claimed that he was managing the unit on behalf of the main tenant. It was also revealed that he had deceived his friend to sign a tenancy agreement as the main tenant for the unit where Abdul was discovered.

2 On 11 June 2021, Paramasivam was sentenced to nine months and two weeks of imprisonment for harbouring an immigration offender at a unit located in Rowell Road, and for intentionally perverting the course of justice by instructing the main tenant of the said unit to give a false statement to an ICA officer.

Three mandatory checks to conduct when you rent your premises out:

- (a) Check the tenant's original immigration/work pass;
- (b) Cross check the particulars on his/her pass against the particulars on his/her original passport; and
- (c) Verify the validity of his/her pass by checking with the issuing authority (i.e. Ministry of Manpower for work passes at www.checkwpstatus.mom.gov.sg or download the SGWorkPass mobile application; and ICA for Student's Pass and Long-Term Visit Pass at (<http://eservices.ica.gov.sg/ipienquiry/web/verifi/landing>).

Prospective homeowners/landlords can also refer to the video on how to check whether their foreign tenants have legal stay in Singapore.



⁷ ICA's news release, "Male Indian national sentenced to 9 months' and 2 weeks' imprisonment for harbouring an immigration offender", was issued on 11 June 2021

Appendix B

Case #2 – Singaporean Man and People’s Republic of China National jailed for offences relating to marriage of convenience

1 A 46-year-old male Singaporean, Pang Beng Lee (‘Beng Lee’), and a 34-year-old female Chinese national, Qin Fuxing (‘Qin’), were arrested on 31 May 2018 by ICA officers for offences relating to marriage of convenience⁸.

2 Investigations revealed that Beng Lee had arranged a marriage of convenience (MOC) between his elder brother, Pang Beng Hai (‘Beng Hai’) and Qin. Beng Lee first met Qin when she was residing and working in Malaysia in 2013. They could not register their marriage as Beng Lee was already married with children then. Knowing that Beng Hai needed a flat to stay in after transferring the ownership of his flat to his ex-wife, Beng Lee suggested for him to marry Qin so that they could apply for subsidised public housing by virtue of the marriage. This way, Beng Lee could also continue to be with Qin.

3 Beng Hai and Qin subsequently solemnised their marriage on 11 September 2017, with Beng Lee as the witness. Qin managed to extend her stay in Singapore several times with Beng Hai acting as her sponsor. Beng Lee had also abetted Beng Hai and Qin to make false statements by declaring that ‘the couple’ was staying together at the same residential address stated in Qin’s Visit Pass applications.

4 On 11 March 2021, Beng Lee was sentenced to 12 months and two weeks’ imprisonment, while Qin was sentenced to 10 months and two weeks’ imprisonment. Charges against Beng Hai for his involvement in the MOC and false statement offences were abated as he passed away in April 2020.

⁸ ICA news release, “A male Singaporean and a female Chinese national jailed for marriage of convenience offences” was issued on 11 March 2021.

Appendix C

Case #3 – Detection of 200 vials of Fentanyl that led to three persons arrested for suspected drug activities

1 On 1 March 2021, officers from Changi Airfreight Centre, Air Cargo Command, noticed anomalies in the scanned images of a parcel declared as ‘medicine’ from Vietnam⁹. Through further checks, ICA officers uncovered 200 vials believed to contain about 20mg of fentanyl. Other illicit medicines, including 3,990 tablets labelled as diazepam, 400 tablets labelled as codeine phosphate, 300 tablets labelled as gabapentin and 40 vials labelled as midazolam, were also found in the parcel.



200 vials believed to contain 2ml of fentanyl each
Photo: CNB

2 The detection prompted a follow-up operation conducted by the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) in the afternoon of the same day. CNB officers arrested the intended recipient of the parcel, a 30-year-old female Singapore Permanent Resident, in the vicinity of Beach Road. Two other Singaporean males (aged 62 and 25) were also arrested together with the female suspect for suspected drug-related offences. The three suspects were escorted to their hideout, an apartment in the same vicinity.

3 The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) was alerted when CNB found other illicit medicines in the apartment. During a search of the apartment, HSA seized approximately 16 litres of cough syrup in cannisters and bottles, and more than 4,500 units of unlabelled tablets and pills. The total street value of these illicit medicines is approximately \$9,300. Preliminary investigations revealed that the

⁹ Joint ICA-CNB-HSA's news release, "200 vials of fentanyl seized: three arrested for suspected drug activities", was issued on 6 March 2021

apartment was used to illegally manufacture and store the cough syrup and medicines. Instruments used for mixing and rebottling, such as a high-speed industrial blender, funnels and measuring containers, were also seized.



Bottles of cough syrup, other illicit medicines and instruments used to manufacture cough syrup found in an apartment in the vicinity of Beach Road

Photo: HSA

Case #4 – Joint Operation resulting in arrest of four men and seizure of duty-unpaid cigarettes

1 On 12 May 2021, ICA officers at Pasir Panjang Scanning Station detected anomalies in the scanned image of a 20-foot container.¹⁰ The information was shared with Singapore Customs, on the suspicion that the container contained duty-unpaid cigarettes.

2 The next day, Singapore Customs mounted an operation at a store unit in an industrial building at Jalan Pemimpin. During the operation, three men were seen entering a store unit after four steel water tanks were unloaded from a container and moved into the unit. Duty-unpaid cigarettes were found concealed in the water tanks. More than 9,081 cartons and eight packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized and four men were arrested for their involvement in the case.

¹⁰ ICA-SC news release, “Joint operation leads to arrest of four men and seizure of more than 9,081 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes” was issued on 18 May 2021.



The steel water tanks containing duty-unpaid cigarettes found at a store unit in an industrial building at Jalan Pemimpin
Photo: Singapore Customs



More than 9,081 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes seized in the operation
Photo: Singapore Customs

Case #5 – Detection of the electronic vaporisers and components

1 On 7 June 2021, officers at Tuas Checkpoint foiled an attempt by 14 smugglers, comprising drivers and attendants of seven lorries from the same company, to bring electronic vaporisers and related components into Singapore¹¹. ICA officers found the prohibited products concealed in the cabin passenger seats of the seven Malaysian lorries which were used to transport live chickens into Singapore.

¹¹ ICA-HSA news release, “Fourteen persons jailed for smuggling around \$700,000 worth of electronic vaporisers and components” was issued on 5 July 2021.

2 On 28 June 2021, the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) prosecuted 14 persons for smuggling 54,392 pieces of e-vaporisers and electronic components into Singapore. The street value of the prohibited products is estimated to be around \$700,000.



E-vaporisers and Related Components Seized
Photo: HSA

Appendix D

Case #6 – Singaporean Man who made false declaration in SDF Opt-Out application

1 A 58-year-old Singaporean man, Vijeyakumar S/O Z Joseph ('Vijeyakumar'), had arrived from Jakarta on 22 November 2020¹². On his arrival at Changi Airport, Vijeyakumar allegedly declared in a physical declaration form that he had not travelled to any other country/region apart from the listed countries/regions in the 14 consecutive days prior to entering Singapore. He also allegedly declared that he would be occupying his place of residence alone or with household members with the same travel history as him and serving their SHN for the same duration. He was subsequently served with an SHN from 22 November to 6 December 2020.

2 On 25 November 2020, enforcement officers conducted checks at Vijeyakumar's place of residence and found him allegedly residing with two other household members who did not share the same travel history as him.

3 On 21 June 2021, Vijeyakumar was sentenced to three weeks' imprisonment.

Case #7 – Two Singapore Permanent Residents who breached SHN requirements

1 On 14 March 2021, 37-year-old Suresh Naidu Bojanki ('Suresh') and 47-year-old Bharati Tulshiram Choudhari ('Bharati') got acquainted on the same flight to Singapore¹³. They were each served with a 14-day SHN upon their arrival and were informed that they were not allowed to leave their individual rooms or have visitors for the duration of their SHN at the dedicated facility. Both Suresh and Bharati were assigned to different rooms at the same dedicated facility.

2 On 20 March 2021, Suresh allegedly left his room and entered Bharati's room without wearing a face mask at about 12.30am. He allegedly remained there for more than half an hour.

¹² ICA's news release, "Singaporean man to be charged for making false declarations in application to opt out of serving shn at dedicated facilities" was issued on 19 March 2021.

¹³ ICA's news release, "Two Singapore Permanent Residents to be charged after breaching their Stay-Home Notice requirements" was issued on 2 July 2021.

3 On 17 August 2021, both Suresh and Bharati were sentenced to three weeks' imprisonment for not complying with the SHN requirements, thereby exposing others to the risk of COVID-19 infection.

Case #8 – Singaporean woman who failed to comply with safe distancing measures and breaching SHN requirements

1 A 58-year-old Singaporean woman, Phoon Chiu Yoke ('Phoon'), had arrived from the United Kingdom and was served with an SHN for a 14-day period between 28 June to 12 July 2020. She was required to serve SHN at a dedicated facility. On 28 June 2020, she left her hotel room and was also seen not wearing a face mask while outside her hotel room. Phoon also failed to wear a mask in public on three other separate occasions between December 2020 and May 2021.

2 On 6 September 2021, Phoon pleaded guilty to nine charges of violating COVID-19 requirements and was sentenced to 16 weeks' imprisonment.