2018 crime figures depict a major reduction in crime reports which follow a year on the stabilisation in reported crimes as published in the Annual Crime Report of 2017. The year 2018 saw a major decrease in the number of crimes over the previous year dropping by 7% or 1211 crimes amounting to a reduction of a count of 101 crimes per month, this being the largest decrease since 2009. The Maltese offence profile has maintained the past three years’ shift from a public-oriented to a personal-target structure with an increasing focus on financial-related offences. Crime has evolved to one where bodily harm has been pushed further down the league due to a relatively large increase in fraud. Displacement is also very evident as the migration of crimes from one zone to another becomes more pronounced. San Giljan’s rate of crime dropped from a height of 19.5 in 2012 to 10.6% in 2017 and again to 9.4% in 2018, a drop of 18% from 2017, the lowest in the last 14 years. Malta maintained a generic lower than EU average across most crime categories. In terms of societal reaction, moral panic still plays a part in rendering a perception that crime is increasing, when the facts depict a stabilised scenario. In terms of predicted crimes for 2018, with a drastic increase in resident population and also the number of tourists, the difference between the expected and observed crimes was lower, indicating that the number of crimes that should have occurred during the year, did not occur, resulting in a safer scenario. Victims are mainly Maltese residents, aged falling within the 40-59 year cohort. Victims aged less than 18 years fell to 3.3%.
CRIMEMALTA ANNUAL CRIME REVIEW

Year 2018

In 2008, CrimeMalta was launched as a conveyor for crime research and reporting in the Maltese Islands. As from 2017, the annual report is being published through the enhanced CrimeMalta Observatory initiative, which is targeted to expand its reporting to other areas inclusive of environmental, locational and other societal domains. The annual report covers a factual crime review of Malta’s interactive spatial technologies and spatial statistics such as published in this year’s annual report for 2018.

In the first instance, this year the report publishes an overview of victims.

This report covers the 2018 annual statistics as elicited from an analysis of reported crime, incarceration statistics and spatial analysis. The outputs below pertain to the closed 'accounts' for 2018 crime.

In terms of the European comparison, Malta fares as a very safe place, well below the EU28’s average in all serious crimes covering Assaults, Burglary, Drugs, Homicide, Rape, Robberies, Sexual Assault and Sexual offences as published by the UNODC. The only remaining main category that was higher than the EU average pertained to Theft which high rate was accentuated by one sub-category that had dominated crime reporting in Malta over the past years: that pertaining to pickpocketing. 2018 experienced a near-halving of the phenomenon of pick-pocketing and back to the counts registered before 2012 when the sequential increase started.

In summary, at 15,925 reported offences, crime analysis shows a major reduction over the recent years’ crime offences, evidenced through a significant decrease in crime reports over the 2017 period comprising an absolute decrease of 1211 crimes or 7.1%. This is a welcome rapid decline from the previous year’s 0.9% decrease that comprised an absolute decrease of 162 crimes. This rapid decrease is due to the fact that the previous entire crime scenario had been absorbed by a single phenomenon falling within the Theft category, which phenomenon had grown by 5 times between 2009 and 2016 but for the first time since 2009, Malta had experienced a 12% dip in this category from 2016 to 2017 and a further 46% drop in 2018: Pickpocketing has decreased by 995 offences in 2018 dropping from 2144 cases in 2017 to 1149 reports. Most other categories of theft have decreased apart from theft from factories by employees, mugging, religious temples, occupied residences, shop lifting, snatch and grab theft from sea craft and theft from vehicle. Theft from beaches experienced a 46% decrease to 152 reports, the lowest in 14 years, contrasting sharply with the 31 percent increase in 2017. Such indicates more awareness, crime prevention and actual in-situ mitigation, in a period when tourism experienced a 2.6million peak. The opportunities for crime have multiplied drastically, which is not reflected in the number of report crimes, pointing towards effective measures being set in place.

Theft comprises 41% of all offences reported to the Police, down from 48.2% in 2017, the lowest in 14 years when the rate was that of 62.4% of all reported offences. This indicates
both mitigation as well as a diversification of offences in other crime categories as indicated in the next sections.

The second highest reported offence, **Damages**, has seen a slight increase to 24.7% of all offences up from 22% in 2017, increasing through *Involuntary Damage by Hit and Run* incidents and *Wilful damage by Other Means*.

In third place, consonant with the previous years, **Domestic Violence** has increased its previously stable 7% rate to 8.4% of all offences, to reach 1341 cases, with a 10% increase in *Psychological Harm* and 8% *Slight Bodily Harm with Physical Force*.

The long-standing the fourth highest ranking offence has been pushed to fifth place: **Bodily Harm**, which has registered a year on year decrease initiated in 2009 dropping to 5% in the previous years and retained a 5.6% (a slight increase of 13 offences). This points to a steadily more tolerant and less violent society in the social realm, a phenomenon that does not reflect its antithesis where Domestic Violence, ensconced within the private realm, has seen a veritable increase in personal and intimate violence, equally split between psychological and slight bodily harm as evidenced since 2007.

**Bodily Harm** has again been usurped by a newcomer to the 4th ranking, as **Fraud** again experienced an increase of 31% (245 additional cases) over the previous year reaching **1032 cases** in 2018. The main increase was registered as *Fraudulent Gains*.

These 5 categories of crimes comprise 88.1% of all crime reports.

**Causalities, Opportunity and the Expected Increase that again did Not Materialise**

The causes of the 2018 change are interesting in criminological terms. As described in previous reports, the foundations that comprise social structures known as **PREFE** (Politics, Religion, Economy, Family and Education) have experienced rapid change such that the impact of values and norms becomes less tangible. Whilst the Political or legal measures have evolved and security implementation has increased in the social arenas resulting in the reduction of such offences as theft from residences, damages, bodily harm and prostitution, the strongest pillar pertaining to the family or household has become increasingly fragile such that the incidence of the personal-security incidents has grown dramatically. This is reflected through domestic violence, irrespective of form or method, whether psychological or physical. The inclusion of Technology as a new foundational element is essential as it posits scenarios where crime has migrated to the digital domains, both in commissioning and investigation: **PREFET**.

As Economic measures increasingly offer most offenders an opportunity to partake to crime when the rewards far exceed the sanctions, offences such as theft emanating from the invasion of person-spaces increase as they offer a quick intake of funds. The fact that the **recreation and leisure activities offer ripe ground** for offending particularly where the recreational zones are crowded and person space is not possible, the opportunity for dexterous hands offers a high rate of return. Vitally important is the **expected increase in tourism-related offences**, where tourism offers an opportunity for crimes in terms of numbers and access to the partaking of goods: an annual year-on-year
expected increase of 1500 offences that did not occur as expected to reflect the high increase in tourist numbers, which has reached 2.6 million visitors as at 2018. This may be due to an alert public, increased awareness, tourism police and better security visibility. The study of pick-pocketing as a comparative analysis of people movements may help one to understand the dynamics pertaining to the relative increase followed by the 2018 decrease in both the criminal process and the social phenomenon under study as being offered by the opportunity offered by the increase in potential victims.

Incidentally, the Maltese population has experienced a major shifting in terms of structure, whilst the predicted population for 2018 would have been circa 420,000, the figures depict a reality that is closer to 470,000 persons. This 50,000 population difference has resulted in both a higher potential for victimisation, though it has also pushed down Malta’s crime rate from 42 crime per 1000 persons to one where the rate has reached 34 crimes per 1000 persons, rendering the islands a safer place to reside in.

In terms of crime mitigation, the Maltese society needs to focus further on this phenomenon and change accordingly, even in terms of educational campaigns that target both citizens and visitors, whilst building awareness scales on the measurement of such offences, the relative offender-victim dynamics, the flow of goods and the offence displacement when action is taken by the state and its operational arms.

In terms of the loss of relative offence volume that San Giljan experienced over the past years, going down from 19.5% in 2012 to 9.4% in 2017, a rate even lower than the lowest recorded of 10.6% in 2017 and lowest in the last 14 years. This scenario, within a national perspective where offences have remained stable, calls for the investigation of the displacement issue. The latter seeks to understand where such offences migrated to and in turn to predict mitigation of predicted crime before it occurs. Revived areas such as Valletta have borne the brunt of such a migration but in 2018 this scenario was mitigated for as pick-pocketing was sheared by 995 cases or 46% and target areas, inclusive of Valletta experienced such a sharp decline. Offences migrate to the opportunities offered to potential offenders who weigh the risk taken against the reward achieved, where the higher the reward as against the risk, such an offences becomes more attractive and is partaken to. The revived city of Valletta and its mushrooming recreational and retail outlets are offering increasingly lucrative options for offenders, thus migration from other localities become a conscious choice for offenders. In turn, the policing effort in such places has placed a stressor on offenders and the result of mitigation and awareness is evidenced in 2018.

Emphasis should be now taken to the next level through an educational awareness campaign starting from the early ages to elder adults. The implementation of the 2017 Crime Prevention Strategy is a veritable vehicle for such a process.
Victims: Source, Age-Cohorts, Gender

For this first time, the CrimeMalta Observatory reviewed victimisation and the components pertaining to such a phenomenon. Victims are mainly Maltese residents (74.3%), followed by UK residents (2.5%), whilst Italians, French, Germans and Spanish comprise other source countries whose residents suffered victimisation. Victims hail from 161 countries, excluding the Maltese victims.

Foreigners are in their majority victims of theft (77.9%) as against Maltese who comprise 47.9% in that category. Maltese victims suffer more damage when compared to foreigners.

Both Maltese and foreign victims suffer the same rate of bodily harm at 8% of all offences.

Age

The main age cohort that is victimised pertains to the 40-59 year cohorts, followed by the 20-29 year and the 30-39 year and the 60+ cohorts respectively.

The 30-39 and 40-59 age cohorts have seen a slightly increasing victimisation rate.

Domestic violence was mainly experienced by the 40-59 year cohort, followed by the 30-39 year cohort.

Those aged under 18 were mainly victims of pornography and sexual offences, when compared to the other age cohorts, whilst the 60+ cohort were mainly victims of forgery, fraud and theft.

Youths aged less that 18 yrs have declined in victimisation rates from 4.6% in 2016 to 3.3% in 2018.

Gender

In terms of gender, main victims’ gender is male, growing over the years up to 57.6% in 2018, whilst females make up 42.2% of victims.

Females were mainly victims of prostitution, trafficking in persons, crimes against public peace, sexual offences, pornography and domestic violence. Males were mainly victimised for arson, violence against public officer, forgery, damage, bodily harm and fraud.
MORPHING OF THE MALTESE CRIME SCENARIO

Offences in the Maltese Islands have morphed from a multi-thematic to a spatial structure: *From a Social-Space scenario to a Private-Space scenario*

Whilst homicides once again took media precedence, such was not based on volume but on method and location. The method, particularly high profile murder in Paceville raised concern and increased calls for mitigation. In fact, such was the major contribution to the perceived fear of crime as published in conjunction with the perception of corruption and bribery. All other perceptions report low or very low concern on both violent and non-violent crime.

The past year has again seen an increased awareness process on Domestic Violence as well as the uptake of initiatives projects that study the phenomenon. The Crime Prevention Strategy (Formosa Pace, 2017) sought for a focus on raising awareness towards the mitigation of crime that integrates further community policing aimed at decreasing the social-space offences further, have been taken up by the relevant entities. The need to focus on the movement away from the perception that the mitigation is simply a role that the Police Force must be solely responsible for is erroneous, but one needs to view such as rather a call for collective Social Responsibility.

The reduction in crime of 7% points towards both awareness and on-the-ground mitigation by the forces.

Previous CrimeMalta reports pointed towards a depiction where Social Capital is provided through the PREFET structures, of which the Police Force form a part. However, the essential aspects that will pivot towards offence mitigation lies in the enhancement of Social Cohesion through awareness raising, values redefinition, self-respect and the will to report and stop offences. Such a process requires a sea change in both the Police Force and relative enforcement agencies remit as well as civil society through NGOs and self-help groups. The instances where such institutions were attacked on a constant basis have eroded the perception and perceived trust, which the entities need to work on in order to achieve both reduction in offences as well as the an increase of knowledge on the actual crime situation based on facts as against social-media depictions or rash statements that go counter to the crime statistics.

One cannot continue to observe crime as the arena for uniformed officers but one where such are enhanced through social and publicity activity run by social entities to ensure knowledge on crime, rescue and support functions as well as personal safety and security increase. It is imperative that offences are viewed as a personal domain issue as against that pertaining to the police. The latter are tasked with securing social spaces but the individual is tasked with securing their private spaces. This is to be enhanced through the implementation of measures emanating from the Crime Prevention Strategy.

On a regional/locality level, crime reports need to be taken seriously as they posit a comparative approach to research methodology that would allow one to make information-based policy and in effect take realistic measures to mitigate crime fluctuations.
Criminologist Professor Saviour Formosa (www.crimemalta.com) has been publishing crime statistics and reviews since 2008 through the analysis of crime trends in Malta as of 1949 and through spatio-temporal analysis as from 1998 (338,898 offences). Crime studies in Malta comprise 37 main categories of crime and 229 sub categories.

The studies take the form of a rate analysis, as against a count analysis, through the study of a RISC assessment (Relative Index of Spatial Crime), trend analysis and spatio-statistical analysis. The RISC categories that show which towns suffer most from crime, or inversely are safest in Malta and Gozo, can be found below.

Over the years a spatial depiction was developed to aid users to visualise crime through maps, where due to the increasingly available mobile technologies, users can interact with their location and identify safety zones as well as offence areas. The 2018 report comprises the publication of interactive maps highlighting graduated maps, heat maps as well as variable high-level cluster maps that users can review and understand safety and security in the Maltese Islands. The categories comprise Main Category Offences, Sub-Category Offences and Heat.
FIGURES TO PONDER

- **Crimes that Increased** (in descending percentage change order): abuse of public authority, trafficking of persons, money laundering, forgery, crimes vs admin of justice, fraud, pretended rights, computer misuse, sexual offence, pornography, drugs, threats and private violence, domestic violence, damage and bodily harm

- **Crimes that Decreased** (in percentage change order): crimes against public peace, crimes against public safety, infanticide/abandonment of child, violence against public officer, attempted offences, arson, theft, homicide, immigration, perjury and false swearing and prostitution

- **Thefts** have seen a major decrease in most categories, dropping by 21% or 1727 cases in 2018, such following a drop of 567 cases in 2017, mainly related to Pickpocketing which in turn decreased by 995 cases (46% drop), theft from beaches (130 cases – 46% drop), theft from vehicle interior (252 cases – 24% drop). The categories that registered increases in theft include theft from factories and building sites, mugging, retail outlets, religious temples, occupied residences, snatch and grab, theft from sea craft and theft from vehicle exterior. A new sub-category indicates that theft from Government buildings has been registered for the first time at 14 reported cases. Theft comprises 41% of all offences, a decrease of 7% over the previous year’s drop.

- **Damages** increased slightly in 2018, comprising 24.7% of all offences up from 22% in 2017, increasing through *Involuntary Damage by Hit and Run* incidents and *Wilful damage by Other Means*.

- **Bodily Harm** stood at 892 cases in 2018 which results in a slight 1% increase, where the main increase was related to *Slight Bodily Harm with Physical Force*.

- **Fraud** has experienced a massive 31% increase (245 cases) following a similarly high 57% (287 cases) increase over the previous year, again having been experiencing a steady annual rate of increase. The count for 2018 amounted to 1032 cases.

- **Computer** related crime experienced a 20% increase over the previous year, through password disclosure, unauthorized access and copying / disclosure / possession of data.

- **Drugs** reporting increased by 12% in 2018 to 348, the highest figure ever reported since 2004.

- **Domestic Violence** increased to 8.4% of all offences, reaching 1341 cases, with a 10% increase in *Psychological Harm* and 8% in *Slight Bodily Harm with*
Physical Force.

- **Threats and Public Violence** has increased 322 in 2018, mainly through stalking, blackmail and causing fear of violence, though harassment experienced a reduction in reporting.

- **Sexual Offences** increased by 18% (120 cases) in 2018, reversing a trend initiated since 2015, with an increase in all sub-categories except for rape which registered a slight decrease.

- **Violence against Public Officers** decreased by 9% to 217 cases.

- **Theft from Residences** has again increased by 31 cases or 5% as compared to 2017 reaching 623 cases.

- **Pretended Rights** which had been recorded as a separate category in 2017 registered a 21% increase in reports amounting to 172 cases.

- **Money Laundering** as recorded for the first time as a distinct category in 2017 registered a 94% increase in 2018, reaching 33 cases from a count of 17 cases in 2017.
Temporal Statistics

In terms of Temporal statistics, the months are balancing out with slight differences between the months, though steadily increasing from January to May, peaking again in August and again declining slightly till January. As tourism establishes a hold on the shoulder months, such is also reflected in offences as the months of January, February, April and May experienced an increase and against the other months that registered a decrease.

Monday, followed by Tuesday attract most incidences.

In terms of time of time, 20% of offences occur between 00:00 and 03:00, which however has seen as decline between 2016 and 2018. Crimes reported between 08:00 and 12:00 have seen a steady decrease, whilst the rest of the time periods have remained stable. Reports lodged between 03:00 and 08:00 have experienced a 13% decline.

PRISONS IN MALTA

Prison numbers registered a return to the situation experienced in 2012 when high rates went beyond the Psychological Threshold of 600 residents. On the 28 December 2018, 618 residents were registered.

CCF remains inundated with a high number of inmates, held in the Island’s only prison that comprises services for both sexes, all categories of offences, all ages, national and international provenance, sentenced and remanded offenders, amongst other categories. Youths have been transferred to Mtahleb.

As from 2012, CrimeMalta’s research process was also enhanced to include the prison population statistics, with data going back to 2001.

Some statistics recorded on a Friday base-date:

- The CCF Psychological Capacity Threshold of 600 inmates was exceeded for the first time at the end of September 2012.

- The CCF Population as at 28th December 2018 (last Friday): 618 (547 males and 71 females);

- The CCF Population as at the highest ever recorded Friday - 25th April 2014: 645 (607 males and 38 females).
RISC MODEL: LEAGUE TABLES FOR 2017

As part of a review of RISC Modelling for the Maltese Islands, a number of analytical studies have been carried out for the period between 1998 and 2018. Domestic Violence and Commercial Activity-related RISC has been included as from 2015.

Grand Total Offences
In terms of Grand Total Offences, Mdina pushed San Giljan to third place where it had maintained its perennial hold at the top of the League, with Mdina hosting between 2 and 5 times the national rate of offences, which is calculated as the observed offences as against those which should potentially occur in those areas under study. Also at a rate between 2 and 5 times the national rate, Floriana followed a close second, which group also comprises San Giljan, Valletta and Marsa.

At a rate between the national up to twice that rate one can find Paola, Gudja, San Pawl il-Bahar, Marsaxlokk, Ta’ Xbiex, Bormla, Zebbug (Ghawdex), Sliema, Msida, Hamrun, Luqa, Munxar, Ghajnsielem, Mellieha, Birgu and Qormi.

All the other Councils host a lower that national rate, albeit none have a Zero RISC.

Theft from Residences
Whilst this category of offences registered no councils having over 5 times the national rate of offences, in 2018, the relative RISC still appears for Bormla, San Giljan and Gharghur, the latter registered within the 2x-5x RISC. The rate between the national up to twice that rate category includes Zebbug (Ghawdex), San Pawl il-Bahar, Xghajra, Msida, Balzan, Marsa, Ta’ Xbiex, Iklin, Hamrun, Qala, Floriana, Sliema, Paola, Gzira, Birzebbugia, Santa Venera and Zebbug (Malta). In contrast, most other zones have lower than average rates and that Nadur, Safi, Mqabba, San Lawrenz and Mdina registered zero residential offences in 2018.

Theft of and from Vehicles
During 2018, Marsaxlokk took top spot, followed by Mdina, Floriana and Marsa as the highest RISC areas where one’s car could be vandalised, broken into and/or stolen, which towns host between 2 and 5 times. Note that these towns host the largest parking and transport-related activities that attract offenders to high-volume and relatively less monitored opportunities.

Domestic Violence
Domestic violence reports pertain to stalking, slight bodily harm, grievous bodily harm and psychological harm. Bormla, Floriana, Isla, Birgu, Ghaxaq and Pembroke host between 2 and 5 the national rate. With diminishing rates of RISC, it is imperative to note that a significant number of councils exhibit some form of domestic violence that is above the
national rate (yellow in the RISC maps depicted in the CrimeMalta website) at 1-2 times the rate. In effect all towns have incident reporting but may register lower than national rates.

At the other end of the scale, Safi, Ghasri, San Lawrenz, Kercem and Gharb registered zero offences, a phenomenon also found in rural and small areas were the changes in legislation may yet have an effect in terms of encouraging victims to report.

**Commercial Activity-related**

San Giljan hosted the highest RISC rates, which at the top of the League, host between 2 and 5 times the national rate of offences. Gudja (also due to the MIA activity) and San Pawl il-Bahar was registered within this category, indicative of their proximity to the main economic centres such as the San Giljan recreational zone and the Gudja airport. The least RISC registering towns at zero RISC include San Lawrenz, Sannat, Kalkara, Dingli, Kercem, Qala, Mqabba, Ghasri and Gharb.
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February 2019

REFERENCE MAPS:

Main site: http://www.crimemalta.com
Main Crime Categories Interactive Map: http://crimemalta.com/qgis2018/main
Main Crime Sub Categories Interactive Map: http://crimemalta.com/qgis2018/subselected
Sample Imagery

Interactive Cluster Map

Interactive Heat Map