CRIME MALTA ANNUAL CRIME REVIEW

Year 2015

Latest figures exhibit a generic trend line decrease in reported crime though experiencing a fluctuation increase caused by one specific offence subcategory. The Maltese offence profile has changed from a public-oriented to a personal-target dimension requiring a mitigation shift in both policing and personal safety. Crime is evolving from a social-space structure to the invasion of personal-space.

Professor Saviour Formosa
www.crimemalta.com

April 2016
CRIMEMALTA ANNUAL CRIME REVIEW

Year 2015

CrimeMalta's preparatory activities to launch the Malta Crime Observatory Initiative (MaCO) continued this year through a review of interactive spatial technologies and spatial statistics such as published in this year’s annual report for 2015. The MaCO initiative will be launched later in 2016.

This report covers the 2015 annual statistics as elicited from analysis of reported crime, incarceration statistics and spatial analysis. The outputs below pertain to the closed 'accounts' for 2015 crime.

In summary, at 17,138 reported offences, crime analysis has seen a slight increase in crime reports over the 2014 period comprising an absolute increase of 490 crimes, entirely absorbed by a single phenomenon that has quadrupled since 2009. This phenomenon relates to Pickpocketing which increased by 492 offences in 2015, an increase of 32% over the previous year. In fact, from 450 such reports in 2009, this offence has become the single tsunami surge in Maltese reporting comprising 2030 instances or 12% of all crimes. Ironically most other categories of theft have decreased apart from common theft that registered a 16% increase.

The second highest reported offence, Damages, has seen a slight decrease to 24% of all offences. In turn Domestic Violence has experienced a consistent increase year-on-year reaching 7% of all offences. The fourth highest ranking offence, Bodily Harm, has registered a year on year decrease initiated in 2009, which points to a 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. In turn, Fraud also experienced a slight increase of 3%. These 5 categories of crimes comprise 90% of all crime reports.

The analysis of crime requires the study of the dark figure of crime and where the proposed EU-SASU has been shelved by the EU, Malta has finally run a long-awaited survey which will be published over the next months through the Department of Criminology at the University of Malta.
The causes of the 2015 change are interesting in criminological terms. 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.

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. Maltese society needs to focus on this phenomenon and change accordingly, even in terms of educational campaigns that target both citizens and visitors.

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*

This implies that one must essentially focus on raising awareness towards the mitigation of crime that integrates further community policing aimed at decreasing the social-space offences further, whilst focusing society's efforts towards effecting a stemming of the high increase in Domestic Violence effected mainly through Psychological Harm.

It is high time that the focus on crime has to move away from the perception that the mitigation is simply a role that the Police force should fulfil to one of a collective Social Responsibility. Social Capital is provided through the PREFE structures, of which the Police Force form a part, but 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.

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.
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 (290,000 offences). Crime studies in Malta comprise 38 main categories of crime and 214 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 2015 report comprises the publication of interactive maps highlighting graduated maps, heat maps and choropleth 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 RISC.
**FIGURES TO PONDER**

- **Thefts** have seen an overall decrease in most categories, except for Pickpocketing and common theft that exhibited high increase in reporting. Overall, Theft comprises 51% of all offences, of which pickpocketing comprises 12%.

- **Damages** constituted a stabilisation of reports between 2014 and 2015, decreasing slightly.

- **Bodily Harm** dropped to 926 cases in 2015 which results in a 7% drop, though still registering an average of 2.5 incidents per day, down from 3 incidents per day (average 2004-2013). This statistic shows a consistent occurrence every year.

- **Fraud** has experienced a 6% increase over the previous year.

- **Computer** related crime experienced a 27% increase over the previous year.

- **Drugs** have gone down by 21% in 2015.

- **Prostitution** decreased by 41%.

- **Domestic Violence** has continued its steady increase reaching 1205 instances in 2015 up from 1046 reports in 2014, which points to a 1038% increase between 2007 (116 reports) and 2015, when specific statistics on Domestic Violence became available due to changes in legislation; The main sub-category increase pertains to Domestic Violence through Psychological Harm (46%) and Slight Bodily Harm through Physical Force which comprises 47% of this category of offences.

- **Threats and Public Violence** have once again increased, this year-on-year increase registering a 28% jump in 2015.

- **Sexual Offences** increased by 22% over the previous year.

- **Violence against Public Officers** has remained static at 1.2%.

- **Theft from Residences** has dropped dramatically by 24% compared to 2014 when instances dropped from 932 reports in 2014 to 712 in 2015.
Temporal Statistics

In terms of Temporal statistics, the summer months remain the highest offence absorbers, steadily increasing from April to August, declining slightly till December, dropping in January and then slowly increasing till April.

Saturday, followed by Sunday attract most incidences though during the past three years Mondays registered the highest target days. The rest of the weekdays are comparatively stable with circa 42 offences per Monday.

Offences occur mainly at 18:00 or between 10:00 and 14:00.

PRISONS IN MALTA

Prison numbers registered a steady decrease since 2012 when high rates went beyond the Psychological Threshold of 600 residents.

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 at the end of September 2012, increasing till April 2014 and decreasing to 539 inmates in June 2015;

- The CCF Population as at **25th December 2015** (last Friday): 566 (527 males and 39 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 2015

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 2015. Domestic Violence and Commercial Activity-related RISC has been included as from 2015.

Grand Total Offences
In terms of Grand Total Offences, San Giljan maintains its perennial hold at the top of the League, hosting over 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. At a rate between 2 and 5 times the national rate, Mdina followed a close second, which group also comprises Valletta, Floriana, Sliema, San Pawl il-Bahar and Ta’ Xbiex. The latter two entered this category for the first time, having had a position at 1x-2x the national rate in previous years, whilst Marsa reverted to that category in 2015.

At a rate between the national up to twice that rate one can find Marsa, Msida, Gzira, Gudja, Pieta, Birzebbujua, Paola, Mellieha and Zebbug (Gozo). 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 a decline in 2015, the relative RISC still appears for those towns experiencing the phenomenon. Ghasri, San Giljan, Msida, Svieqi, Sliema, Pembroke, Bormla and Gzira are yearly top graders in the 2x-5x RISC. Ghasri and San Giljan were two zones that hosted relative rates of high residential theft incidents. The Sliema theft episode was very evident in terms of public reaction, which had caused a veritable displacement and suspension of activities in the area until the offenders returned when the reaction subsided. In contrast, most other zones have lower than average rates and that Fontana, Mqabba, Xewkija and Mdina registered zero residential offences in 2015.

Theft of and from Vehicles
During 2015, Mdina took top stop, followed by Floriana, San Giljan and Valletta 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. At the other end of the scale, Gharb and Qala registered zero vehicle-related offences.
Two new RISC categories were included in the 2015 report: Domestic Violence and Commercial-related Offences (include offence categories such as Theft from retail units).

Domestic Violence
Domestic violence reports pertain to stalking, slight bodily harm, grievous bodily harm and psychological harm. Birzebbugia, San Pawl il-Bahar and Floriana 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, Sannat, Fontana, Gharb and San Lawrenz 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 over 5 times the national rate of offences. San Pawl il-Bahar was registered at second place hosting between 2 and 5 times the national rate of offences. The least RISC registering towns at zero RISC include San Lawrenz, Fontana, Xewkija, Isla, Dingli, Lija, Xaghra, Xghajra, Qala, Qrendi and Gharb.

Professor Saviour Formosa
Department of Criminology  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing  
University of Malta  
saviour.formosa@um.edu.mt

Profile: https://www.um.edu.mt/profile/saviourformosa  
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Saviour_Formosa

CrimeMalta: www.crimemalta.com  
info@crimemalta.com

April 2016
REFERENCE MAPS:

Main site: http://www.crimemalta.com
Main Crime Categories Interactive Map: http://crimemalta.com/qgis2015/main
Main Crime Sub Categories Interactive Map: http://crimemalta.com/qgis2015/subselected
RISC Map: http://crimemalta.com/qgis2015/risc

Sample Imagery

Graduated Map – Theft from Residence
Choropleth Map – Theft from Residence

Heat Map – Theft from Residence
Domestic Violence Interactive Cluster Map

Pick-Pocketing Interactive Cluster Map