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Do you live in a crime hotspot?

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Crime in Malta has been mapped for the first time and shows that, over the past decade, the areas where crime has been reported most are St Julians followed by St Paul's Bay, Sliema and Valletta.

Data also suggest that there is a relationship between the rate of reported crime and the recreational and retail density of a locality - which explains why the four hotspots are areas known for their recreational and retail centres, criminologist Saviour Formosa explained. He added that this did not mean that the perpetrators lived in that locality.

The areas with the least reported crime are Marsaxlokk, Ta' Xbiex and Pembroke - areas low in such activity. Gozo, in general, has a lower reported crime rate than Malta.

And the most reported types of crime, in general and in the hotspots, are theft followed by damage to property, he said while stressing that this pattern could vary across localities and over the years.

Dr Formosa was speaking during a business breakfast, organised by Group Four Securicor, during which he launched the CrimeMalta website - crimemalta.com - which is the result of 10 years of research during which he analysed Malta's crime data dating back to 1950. The data are limited to reported crime, he said, adding that it was a known fact that over 50 per cent of crimes go unreported and are referred to as the dark figure of crime.

The site aims at bringing security closer to citizens by providing easily understood crime information inclusive of Malta's first crime maps, surveys and research services.

In an enthusiastic presentation, Dr Formosa explained that data showed where the problems lay and it was now up to citizens to be proactive and tackle the problems at their roots. This, he said, should not only be left to the police but industries (whose presence attracted crime to a locality), insurance firms, security companies and residents themselves had a role to play.

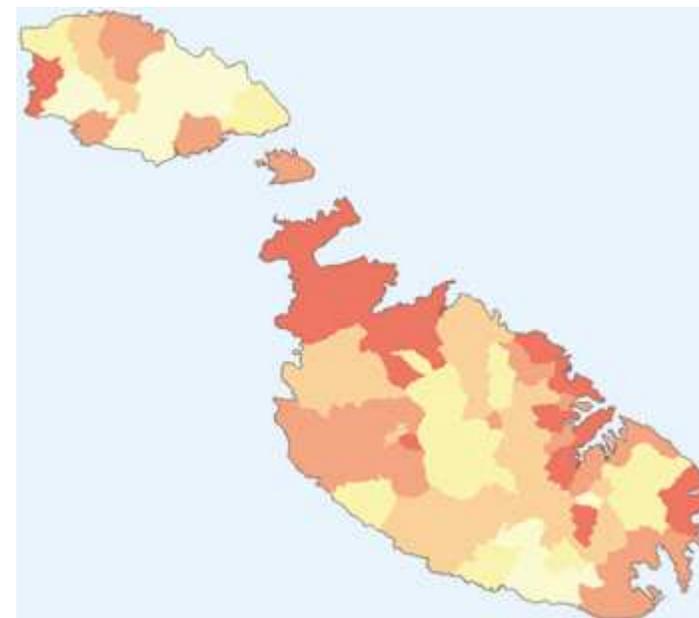
He gave the example of the road leading from the Dragonara to St George's Bay. Here the crime rate had dropped drastically after lights had been installed and cars were no longer allowed to park there - actions led to results, he stressed.

The 50-year offence reporting analysis showed that there was an increasing trend that was consistently growing and appeared to be exponential, increasing from 14,881 offences in the 1960s to 95,180 in the 1990s and 104,752 in the first five years of this century.

The extensive study by Dr Formosa, who holds a PhD in spatio-temporal environmental criminology and lectures at the University of Malta, provides an understanding of crime trends in the Maltese islands.

The results of the research serve as a base for more information on crime which is essential to professionals in the field, security and insurance agencies, local councils, academia and the public.

Dr Formosa's crime maps are based on the location of offences reported to the police since 1998. This establishes the risk of crime by offence in each town and gauges the risk of an offence occurring as against the national rate. Such a service is of use to property buyers who can request an analysis of the area where they



RISC of Crime - Local councils by district (68 units). The darker the colour of the areas indicated, the higher the risk of falling prey to crime when compared to the national rate.

plan to acquire property.

For example the data, show that, when it comes to residential theft St Paul's Bay is 3.9 times more at risk than the national rate (i.e. one) while Mdina is least at risk w the national rate. However, when it came to vehicle theft, Mdina was the locality with the highest risk with 4.3 times the risk of the national rate and the least at risk is l with 0.1 times the national rate.

Dr Formosa's study also analyses the incidence of crime by month and time of day. One example is that last August there was a peak of sexual offences drawing a dir arrival of tourists and students.

The site, that is rich in information, will keep on being updated as more research is carried out. An online Dark Figure Survey is being run by CrimeMalta in order to as reporting structures.



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