

Algarve Crime – Some welcome trends

The annual crime statistics released by Government at the end of March showed that overall reported crime in the Algarve decreased slightly from 21,907 cases in 2017 to 21,680 last year (i.e. 1%) compared with Portugal as a whole (down 2.5%). The very good news is that violent crime in the region decreased by 7.3% to 921 cases.

Safe Communities Portugal has undertaken an initial analysis of the report and more detailed figures provided by Direção – Geral da Política de Justiça, to determine the crime situation for the Algarve and identify any noticeable crime trends. This is important because knowing the trends enables us all to take appropriate crime precautions.

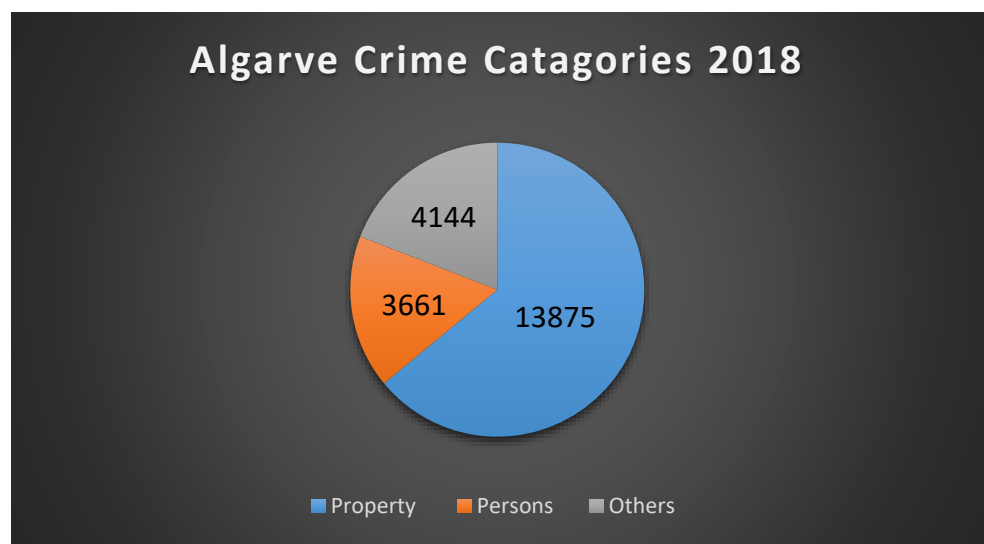
Putting the figures in context

Firstly it is important to put all this in context, of what is happening in the rest of Portugal as well as Europe as a whole. In Portugal over the last 10 years crime has decreased around 22.1% whereas in the Algarve it has decreased 25% during the same period. This is good news especially when considering the significant growth in tourism in the last few years. From a European perspective Portugal maintains the lowest crime rate.

The Algarve – the main trends

The decreased in overall crime is welcome as it reverses a slight increase in 2017 compared to 2016. Apart from this, crime has been decreasing steadily since 2008 when the total of crimes reported stood at 29,248.

The highest recorded crimes in the Algarve in 2018 were: drink driving, followed by domestic violence and opportunist theft.

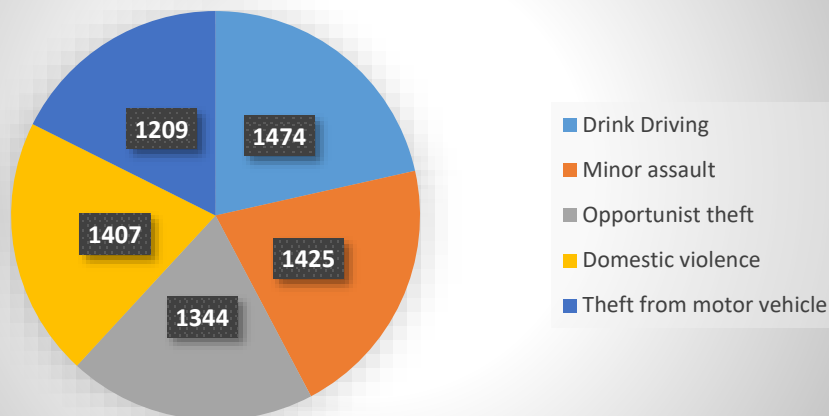


In the overall categories, crime against persons stood at 3661 cases down 11.3% from 2017 and crimes against property 11,884 cases, up 0.6%. The level of property crime is higher than the national average and crime against persons lower.

The main areas of **increased** crime compared to 2017 were related to fraud and forgery. Bank fraud rose from 106 cases to 171 an increase of 61% and fiscal fraud increased from just 18 cases to 61. Computer fraud increased by 15% to 473 cases, compared to just 15 cases in 2008! This includes mainly on-line fraud such as on-line shopping fraud; villa letting scams etc. Reversing an upward trend from previous years, however, other frauds decreased slightly to 925 cases.

A significant increase was recorded concerning drug trafficking which increased from 393 to 466 cases, the highest in over 20 years. The reason for this has yet to be established.

Highest Crimes in Algarve



With regards to property crime there were some welcome figures, with opportunist thefts decreasing by 110 cases, an indication that people are taking greater care of their property. Pickpocketing decreased considerably 20% to 500 cases.

Together with a decrease of street robberies down 9%, this is an indicator

that crimes against tourists have decreased, as these are two of the main categories where tourists become victims not only in Portugal, but in other countries as well. This is borne out by the fact that in Albufeira, which attracts the highest number of tourists, opportunist theft and pickpocketing fell by a quarter to 374 cases compared with 2017. These are the lowest in 6 years! Contributory factors are more focused and increased police patrols in the summer months and greater awareness through police campaigns and Safe Communities "Safe Tourism Program".

One of the most common crimes are burglaries and in this respect the situation was mixed with burglaries with break-ins increasing slightly to 1199 cases (up 4.4%) burglaries without breaking decreasing by a similar amount.

The continuing decrease in thefts from vehicles from 1252 to 1209 cases is welcome. However, in Portugal overall this is the highest crime and one that is the most preventable. Again this is a reminder that people should not display valuable items in vehicles and ensure that upon leaving, windows are closed and doors locked.

Violent crime

There was a slight decrease in domestic violence down from 1437 in 2017 cases to 1407. This reverses a slight increase compared to the previous year.

Good news is that during 2018 there were once again no robberies at banks, pharmacies, or on public transport in the Algarve. Robberies at commercial establishments (21 cases) were the second lowest for 11 years.

There were 40 cases of rape recorded, one less than in 2017, and 40 cases of sexual abuse against children, seven lower than in 2017 and the lowest over the last seven years.

It was of concern that in 2017 residential robberies increased from 35 to 56 cases, but thankfully last year this fell to 47 cases. Many of the victims in these cases were the elderly with the culprits gaining access by pretending to be from various authorities.

Geographical distribution of crime

Compared to 2017, seven municipalities showed an increase and nine a decrease. In terms of the distribution of crime, Loulé had the highest number of reports 3661 (although this was down by nearly 100 cases concerning the previous year); followed by Albufeira 3139 cases: Faro 3038 cases, reflecting generally the

areas with the highest population and number of tourists. At the lower end of the scale Alcoutim had the least number of reported crimes, just 105, followed by Monchique 175 and Castro Marim 192.

What we can all do to prevent crime

Although there is some good news the level of crime that is preventable is still high. We can all do more by looking after our property especially in public places. Computer and on-line frauds are on the increase and here again we can do more by using strong passwords; avoid opening suspicious emails and using up to date anti- virus protection. Also taking care when booking holidays and using credit card to book your accommodation rather than interbank transfers can help avoid becoming a victim of fraud.

David Thomas

President Safe Communities Portugal

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