

2019 RASI highlights Domestic Violence as highest reported crime

Portugal overall crime trends

At Safe Communities Portugal we have been monitoring crime trends in Portugal since we formed in 2011. What we have seen is a continuing decrease since the “highs” of around 2008/09 to what we have today – one of the safest countries in the world.

Not all crime has however decreased and in-keeping with global trends Portugal has not been immune to the considerable increases in cybercrime, including on-line fraud and various other scams.

The 2019 Annual Homeland Security Report (RASI), released last week, shows a 3% increase in violent and serious crime compared to 2018 and a 0.7% increase in general crime. Violent and serious crime, registered 417 more occurrences with a total of 14,398 cases. Included in this was a significant drop in homicides, 81 in total, 21 fewer cases than in 2018 (-19%).

In 2019, violent and serious crime represented 4.3% of all reported crime, the second best value since records began and is very low compared with many other countries. This is one of the reasons Portugal is 3rd in the Global Peace Index.

Comparing with 2008 (when the current Internal Security Law was approved), 2019 saw a 20.3% reduction in general crime from 421,037 to 335,614 reports, with an even more marked reduction (-40.8%) in the number of violent and serious crime reports down from 24,317 to 14,398 cases.

In the analysis by district, Castelo Branco, Portalegre, Faro, Aveiro and Madeira recorded more crimes than in the previous year. In the opposite direction were Bragança, Vila Real and Lisbon.

When it comes to the general distribution of crime, the situation has remained unchanged over the last few years mainly due to population levels: first Lisbon with 25% of the overall national crime; Porto 17.2%, Setubal 9.1% and fourth Faro 7.1%.

In the country as a whole, just over half (51.4%) was crime against property, which mainly includes thefts and 25.7% crime against the persons, which mainly comprises domestic violence.

Top 5 crimes

Tragically all types of Domestic violence, including against children, rose again to 29,498 in 2019, the highest since 2011, becoming the highest reported crime in Portugal. The others in descending order are: minor assaults 23,279; criminal damage 17,198; drink driving over 1.2g/l 16,872 and computer/communications fraud 16,310.

There was however a significant decrease in pickpocketing to the lowest in 10 years from 12,377 cases in 2018 to 9770 in 2019. This reflects the considerable efforts that have been made by the police especially in the Lisbon area with more arrests and targeted information campaigns for tourists.



Juvenile Crime

Juvenile delinquency - crimes committed by young people between 12 and 16 years - registered an increase of almost 6% in 2019 (total of 1570 cases - 86 more than in 2018), reversing the downward trend of previous years.

According to RASI, juvenile delinquency and school security are mainly through bullying, small thefts through threats or even physical violence and small drug trafficking, in schools.

Police enforcement and personnel.

This slight increase in crime was not reflected in arrests, however, with 4.5% less resulting from criminal investigations bringing the total to 11,340. The same downward trend was seen in general arrests (which include, for example, cases of driving with alcohol or without a license), with 0.6% less, making a total of 50,600. In criminal investigations, there were 3% fewer searches.

To combat all this crime, the security forces (GNR, PJ, PSP, SEF and Maritime Police) had fewer personnel; 880 less than in 2018 (-2%), making a total of about 44,600 police officers.

The Algarve

In 2019 reported crime in Algarve stood at 23,487 cases, an increase of 8.3% compared with the national increase of under one percent. This is the highest level of crime since 2013 but still 20 % lower than it was in 2009.

Increase were shown both in terms of crimes against persons which rose 20.6% and crimes against property which increased by 10%

In the case of crime against persons the increase is significant so it is important to look deeper into this to understand the issue and help address this with well-focused crime prevention measures.

Looking at these crime reports what shows immediately is a large increase in minor assaults increasing by 15.5% to 1646 cases and domestic violence against spouses and partners by also 15% to 1377 cases.

Robberies- Residential (home) robberies decreased to 44 cases the lowest for 3 years and robberies in public areas such as snatch of purses etc decreased slightly to 237 cases.

On the property crime side, thefts by opportunity showed a small reduction to 1325 cases despite increases in tourism. These are the types of crime for instance, like leaving a handbag on a market stall or a mobile phone on display which are preventable. Unfortunately against the national trend, the number of pickpocketing cases rose by 21% to 635 cases although 2018 was a lower than usual year.

In line with national trends there was a major increase in fraud including on-line fraud, which increased by a quarter to 2205 cases, nearly 10% of reported crime in the Algarve.

In terms of the distribution of crime, the top municipalities were Loule – 3881 (6%); Albufeira – 3555 (13.2%); Faro 3301 (8.6%) and Portimão 2505 (0.9%) *Figures in brackets are comparisons with 2018.* This is the usual highest four, with Alcoutim and Monchique with 115 and 171 cases for the entire year respectively. The top four represent over half of the crime for the entire district. In the case of Albufeira despite the moderate increase crime there has decreased by some 40% since 2007.

Safe Communities Portugal will be discussing these trends with the respective GNR and PSP commanders.

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