KL tops country's crime rate

Analysis shows criminals in M'sia driven more by wealth than income inequality

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PETALING JAYA: Kuala Lumpur has the highest number of index crimes per 100,000 population in the country, followed by Johor Baru, Seberang Prai Tengah (Penang), Penampang (Sabah) and Bentong (Pahang), an analysis by *The Star* has found.

Index crime comprises 13 types of violent and property crime including murder, rape, robbery, causing injury, house break-in, vehicle theft, snatch theft and motorcycle theft.

At the other end of the spectrum is Kinabatangan in Sabah which has the lowest index crime rate per 100,000 population in the country, followed by Julau, Kanowit, Saratok and Song, which are all located in Sarawak.

By comparing the index crime rates per 100,000 population with district income data, the study found that crime in Malaysia is driven more by wealth rather than income inequality.

The top 10 districts in terms of crime per capita had average household incomes of between RM4,044 and RM11,692 in 2016 whereas the bottom five all had average incomes below RM4,996.

The analysis revealed that on average, a one per cent increase in district household income was associated with a 3.59% increase in crime rate.

Index crime rates per 100,000 population is a measurement used in the study of crime.

It is calculated by dividing the total number of index crimes in each area by its population figure and then multiplying by 100,000.

The Star's analysis used the method to better understand why crime appears to be more prevalent in some parts of Malaysia compared to others.

Apart from district-level crime and population figures, the study also looked at district income data. All of the data used in the study was published by the Statistics Department.

Districts that rank higher in the country's crime per capita list do not necessarily have more crime cases. This is because for each district, the analysis looked at the number of crimes per person, not just the total number of crimes.

However, the analysis does not show any correlation between a district's crime rate and its Gini coefficient – a common measure of income inequality.

This is in contrast to a cross-country study by the World Bank titled "Inequality and violent crime", which showed higher inequality being strongly linked to higher crime rates.

A study by Universiti Putra Malaysia on local crime and economic conditions offered an explanation for the case of Malaysia, noting that greater wealth provided "more lucrative targets for potential criminals".

One of the paper's authors, Assoc Prof Baharom Abdul Hamid, told *The Star* that wealth was a "push factor" for criminals, adding that it provides more opportunities to commit crime.

Read this story online at thestar.com.my to check out the crime rate in your district and other interactive content.

Highest index crime rates per 100,000 population

Rank	City/town	Total index crime incidents (2018)	Index crime per 100,000 population	Total population '000 (2018)	Population per sq km (2018)
1	Kuala Lumpur	11,632	618.7	1,880.20	7,366
2	Johor Baru	6,482	410.4	1,579.40	1,482
3	Seberang Prai Tengah, Penang	1,744	407.3	428.2	1,801
4	Penampang, Sabah	604	401.3	150.5	322
5	Bentong, Pahang	536	400.9	133.7	73
6	Melaka Tengah	2,236	391.4	571.3	1,591
7	Seremban, Negri Sembilan	2,411	389.4	619.1	649
8	Kuala Muda, Kedah	1,973	383.6	514.4	563
9	Langkawi, Kedah	409	372.5	109.8	209
10	Hilir Perak	560	361.5	154.9	196

Lowest index crime rates per 100,000 population

Rank	City/town	Total index crime incidents (2018)	Index crime per 100,000 population	Total population, '000 (2018)	Population per sq km (2018)
1	Kinabatangan, Sabah	80	40.9	195.4	29
2	Julau, Sarawak	8	44.2	18.1	11
3	Kanowit, Sarawak	15	45	33.3	15
4	Saratok, Sarawak	25	47.3	52.8	59
5	Song, Sarawak	12	50.6	23.7	6
6	Kudat, Sabah	54	53.9	100.2	78
7	Beluran, Sabah	75	57	131.5	17
8	Ranau, Sabah	66	58.9	112.1	31
9	Kunak, Sabah	49	61.9	79.1	69
10	Kuala Kangsar, Perak	120	68.7	174.7	69

Data source: Statistics Department