

New CrimeCheck app provides neighbourhood safety assessment

News24 has launched CrimeCheck, an online app designed to help South Africans quickly assess the crime risk factor in particular neighbourhood anywhere in the country.



Adriaan Basson, News24's editor-in-chief

The application has been built over several months and involved the processing of hundreds of thousands of official crime statistic records from 1,158 policing precincts from 2017 to 2022 and which will continue to be updated when crime data is released each quarter.

"This is a unique data journalism tool that we have developed for News24's readers to be informed about crime in their neighbourhoods, or when they plan to relocate," said Adriaan Basson, News24's editor-in-chief.

Risk calculation and breakdown

CrimeCheck provides a gauge of risk on a series of crime indices as well as on several individual crimes like murder and burglary. It also provides detail of each of the more than 50 crime types in every precinct which are reflected in South African Police Service's data.

The engine of the CrimeCheck risk gauge is the rate of crime per 1,000 people in a police precinct or the rate of crime per 1,000 households in a precinct. The challenge is that South Africa's police precinct boundaries do not match any other geographic boundaries like suburbs, wards or towns, so there are no readily available population numbers for precincts.

Working with a Geographic Information Systems mapping expert and starting with the last available census in 2011, the developers have been able to calculate populations and household estimates for every precinct for each year in our dataset by also drawing on annual district-level population estimates provided by Statistics South Africa.

These figures are then used to calculate the crime rate for various categories or crime types in each precinct. From these rates, a statistical normalisation technique is used to derive a value between zero and one for each category and precinct which allows the precincts to be compared to each other and compared from year to year. This is the value which powers the risk gauge for each precinct.

Using this view of crime data CrimeCheck surfaces some alarming insights like precincts where the risk of dying violently is arguable greater than for a civilian living in a war zone and many precincts are higher risk than you might think, and others are lower despite perceptions that they are dangerous.

CrimeCheck also includes a page which calculates the daily average of each crime type for every year and for the currently available year. This is useful because it can be difficult to understand if the year which is unfolding is worse or better than previous years. The daily average provides that insight.

Finally, the user is also able to compare up to three precincts side by side. This could be useful if you are researching neighbourhoods if you are planning to move or buy a property, or if you are simply curious about risk where friends and family live.

Visit <https://crimecheck.news24.com/> to assess the risk in your neighbourhood.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>