



AIC 2018: GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT IN HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND CIVILIZATION

## Living in Fear: Crime and Residential Turnover

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## Research Highlights

In brief, the interviews with residents at crime-prone neighbourhoods found that burglary and robberies are the most commonly reported form of criminal victimisation, usually in open neighbourhoods but not sparing gated communities. Crime was also perceived to be serious and escalating particularly in urban areas where income disparities are high. In addition, it devalues properties as the neighbourhood turns into a den for criminals and gang activities. As a result, residents, particularly the younger and more mobile owners were willing to move out of the neighbourhood in event crime escalates further. It appears that the environment of the housing estates such as the layout as well as the lack of community support have contributed to the feeling of safety in the area. Residents generally recommend more community involvement in combating crime and installing security features for the neighbourhood such as boom gates for added assurance of safety

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## Research Objectives

Rapid urbanisation has propelled Malaysia from being a developing country to a newly industrialised nation. Nonetheless, urbanisation brings various problems of its own, for instance, it widens the income disparity (Spence et al., 2009) and create resentments (Tacoli, McGranahan, & Satterthwaite, 2015). This increased criminal activities, particularly in the urban areas. Crime is seemingly contagious and have turned neighbourhoods into black spots where crime is rampant and unregulated by authorities (Schrag & Scotchmer, 1997). Thus, as the situation goes beyond control, residents would move out in favour of safer neighbourhoods (Ellen & O'Regan, 2010; Roitman, 2017). This is detrimental to the nation as it encourages urban sprawl, countering the Government's sustainable urban development ideals. Thus, the aim of this research is to assess the perceptions of residents living in crime-prone locations on how criminal activities have affected their livelihood, the impacts on the neighbourhood in general, the security problems that needed to be addressed, and their tolerance and flight intention in event the problems persist.



## Methodology

From November to December 2017, interviews were held with residents residing at known crime-prone areas in Malaysia. A total of 25 residents were snowballed for the research and asked to comment on a set of general topics such as the nature of their victimisation, their opinion on how severe is the current crime conditions, the impacts on the neighbourhood and property values, security problems that needed to be addressed in their neighbourhoods, and their intention to move out of the neighbourhood. Most of the residents are young adults in their 20s to 40s living in open neighbourhoods with their length of stay ranging from a few years up to 41 years.

## Results and Findings

Generally the research found the main form of victimisation is burglary and robbery, followed by smashing of vehicle windscreen and car theft. Most incidences were in open neighbourhoods. Of late, criminals have become emboldened and used various creative methods to illegally enter a property. Crime are also perceived to be more serious in urban areas rather than the suburbs presumably due to the income disparity and difficulty of the lower-skilled workers ability to seek proper employment. It was also noted that residents at rural and suburb are more cohesive and tend to protect one another against victimisation. On the impacts of crime, many cited depopulation to be problem, leading to fall in property prices which further reduces the attractiveness of the area to property investors. As a result, the area would become a lair for social outcasts and criminals, posing an even greater threat to the residents. Most residents consider the problem lies mainly in the layout of the housing estates where there are many entry-exit points; the street lighting and ambience also played a role. Urban residents were deemed to be self-centered and do not get involved with others. The findings shown that home security systems such as alarms were not deemed to be effective. Residents recommended that safety measures be implemented at the neighbourhood level and community members should increase participation in community safety initiatives.



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