

Caribbean Security Index™

V.13 No. 03

INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Security Index™ (CSI) was created as a tool to assist cruisers in assessing the risk from crime at ports of call in the Caribbean. The CSI provides a straightforward means of assessing risk in a given area as well as ensuing changes in those risks. The index is stated in a numerical scale (1-10) with mitigating factors listed.

The index is derived from the examination of the relationship between crime, unemployment, levels of education and literacy. Additional factors include average income, distribution of income, presence of security, infrastructure, and past record/history of crimes in a given area.

While nothing can foretell future incidents of crime in a given area, the above factors considered over a number of years can provide valuable insight as to what to expect and what to avoid.

Tuned into, and monitoring, changes over time, with this update we have added a new category, “bad behavior”. While such threatening behavior may have been occurring all along, the reporting of several recent incidents represent a shift at least on the part of cruisers.

Ratings for each country on a scale of 1-10 (10 -- safest) can be used as indicators of the factors mentioned above condensed into one number. Mitigating factors relate to extraordinary circumstances and may not appear in every case. Charts are included where helpful. Pie charts, for example, take into account the *many* harbors, marinas, and anchorages in some countries and appear for those countries where the distribution of types of crime by area is considered pertinent.

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NOTE: CSI ratings are *not* based solely on the number of reported crimes in a given area; they take into account many other diverse but relevant factors.



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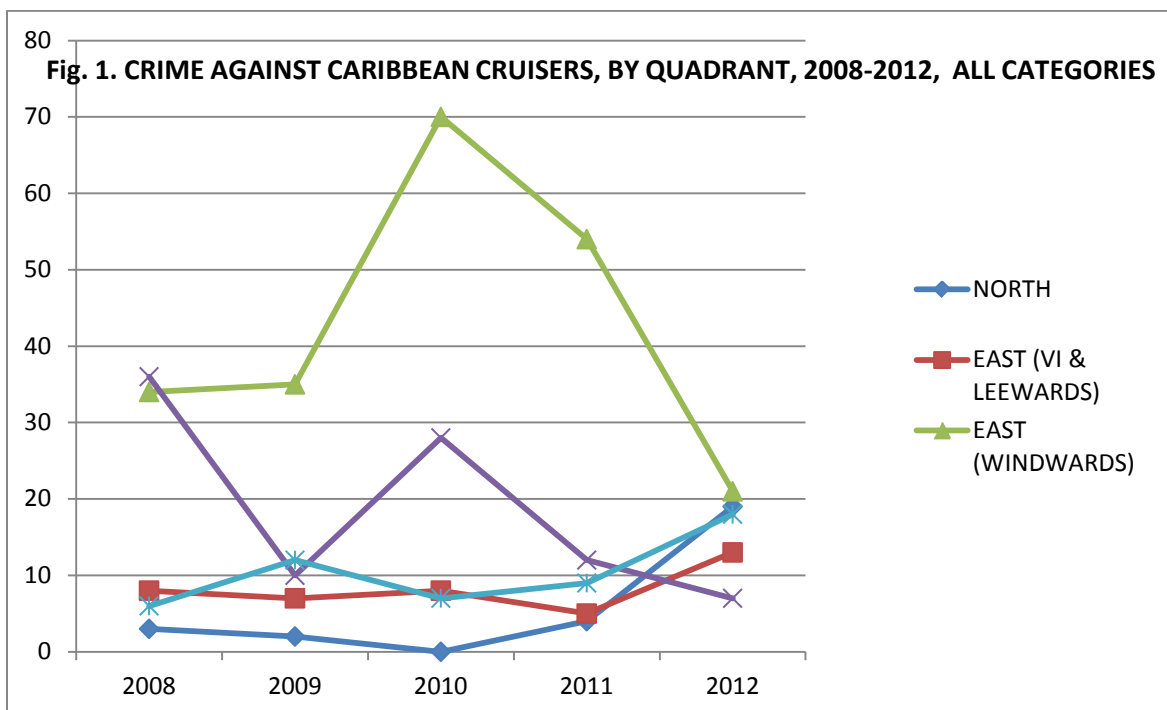


OVERVIEW OF 2012

With the 2013 Miami Boat Show behind us and the spring Caribbean cruising season in full swing, or full sail, the Caribbean Security Index has completed its review of the entire year of 2012. By year end, there were 66 *reported* incidents. CSI stresses *reported* as many stories circulate across the million square mile Caribbean without rising to the status of *reported*. There are many reasons for this, including lack of police presence, lack of police resources even with policed presence, apparent lack of police and/or government interest, and even uncertainty on the part of cruisers as to where they can make an official report.

You may say, but there are some 15,000 cruisers spread throughout the million square mile Caribbean during cruising seasons, so what are 66 reported crime events in the course of a year? I say you are looking at the situation like a *national* crime rate when in fact it would be closer to reality to think in terms of islands and even areas of an island as individual cities, each with its own characteristics. Even if all 15,000 cruisers were distributed evenly at the same time across 50 islands, the cruiser population at each would be only 300. 15000 spread equally across the four quadrants would be fewer than 4000 per quadrant.

The first two charts show the distributions of *all* reported crime against cruisers and *reported* violent crime by quadrant. If we pick the East Quadrant (Windwards) in 2010, Figure 1 shows overall reported crime there to be more than twice as high as in the Southeast Quadrant, while violent crime in the Southeast Quadrant was eight times that of the East Quadrant (Windwards).



The following table shows the relationship between the total reported crimes against cruisers and violent crimes, again by quadrant. Again, it is important to remember that such things as dinghy thefts are under reported; we do not know by how much. We do know that scarce resources and lack of a region wide reporting structure are culprits.

REPORTED TOTAL & VIOLENT CRIMES AGAINST CRUISERS: CARIBBEAN, 2008-2012					
	NORTH	EAST (VI/LEEWARDS)	EAST (WINDWARDS)	SOUTHEAST	SOUTHWEST
2008					
Total	3	8	34	36	6
Violent	0	0	2	12	1
Percent	0.0	0.0	5.9	33.3	16.7
2009					
Total	2	7	35	10	12
Violent	0	2	6	5	0
Percent	0.0	28.6	17.1	50.0	0.0
2010					
Total	0	8	70	28	7
Violent	0	1	1	8	2
Percent	0.0	12.5	1.4	28.6	28.6
2011					
Total	4	5	54	12	9
Violent	0	0	2	4	6
Percent	0.0	0.0	3.7	33.3	66.7
2012					
Total	19	13	21	7	18
Violent	0	1	1	2	9
Percent	0.0	7.7	4.8	28.6	50.0

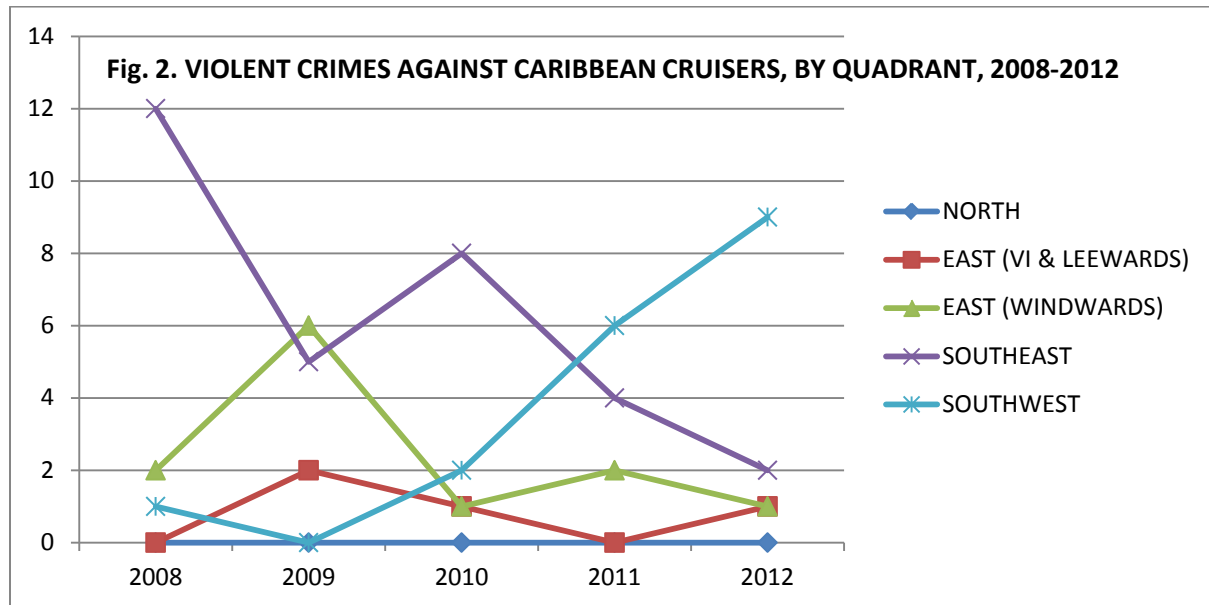
Caribbean Security Index by FreeCruisingGuides.com

VIOLENT CRIMES: Threats with weapons, actual attacks, and resulting injuries

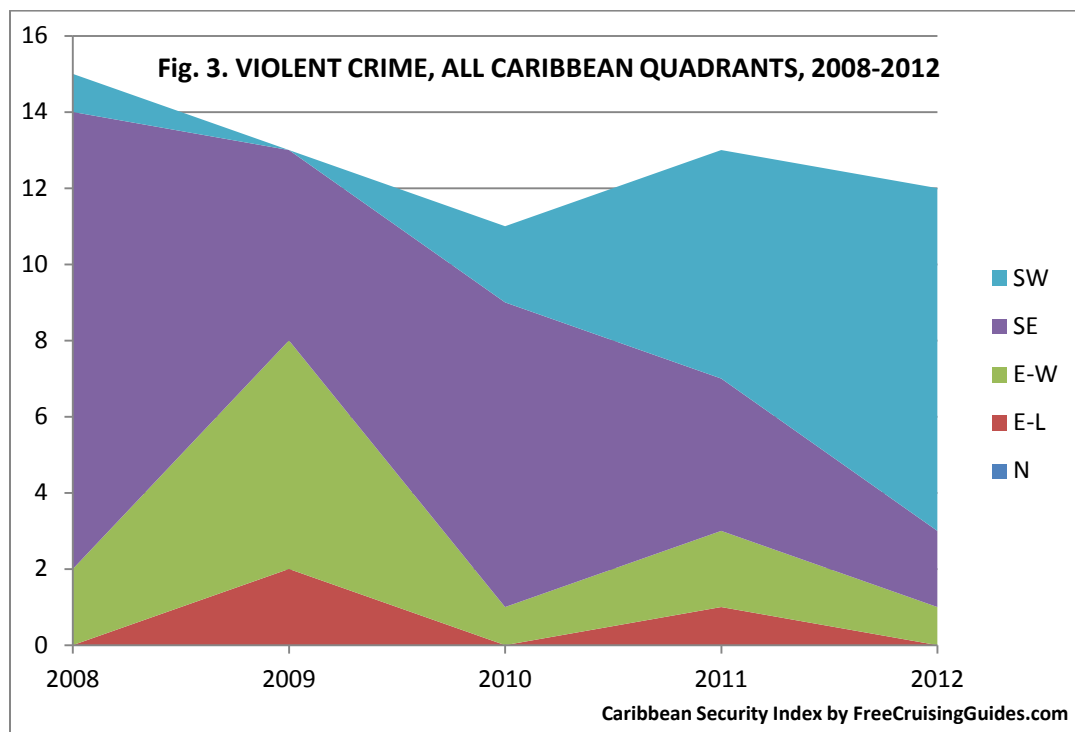
Violent crimes are recorded more reliably than lesser crimes simply because they are, well, violent, and the consequences for the victims can be dire. Bad news travels fast, and *really* bad news, it seems, at the speed of light. Really bad news has a long shelf life, which makes for dramatic cautionary tales. But what does violent crime against cruisers really look like? Those with violently criminal intentions, need potential victims and opportunity. Where are these lately?

We know, first, that the Lesser Antilles, the acknowledged “beaten path”, is, for that very reason, top heavy with cruisers; and second, that the cruiser population shifts, and ebbs and flows, around the

seasons. At any given time there are likely to be far fewer in the other three quadrants. So, for the SW Quadrant to experience eight – EIGHT – violent crimes in 2012 is an extraordinary violent crime rate



Another way of looking at violent crime is in Figure 3, which shows total reported instances have declined slightly from 2008 to 2012. It also illustrates the relative positions of the different quadrants.



Note in the Figure 3 legend above that the dark blue NORTH Quadrant is essentially invisible. This is because in all the years shown, the number of violent crimes against cruisers in the NORTH Quadrant countries/islands has been zero (although a rash of outboard motor thefts in Luperon DR during the year bumped up the rate of non-violent crime for the quadrant. Even the Leeward Islands portion of the E Quadrant (red) has become relatively tame. The differences are even more apparent when we break out the areas as one can see in Figures 2a through 4.

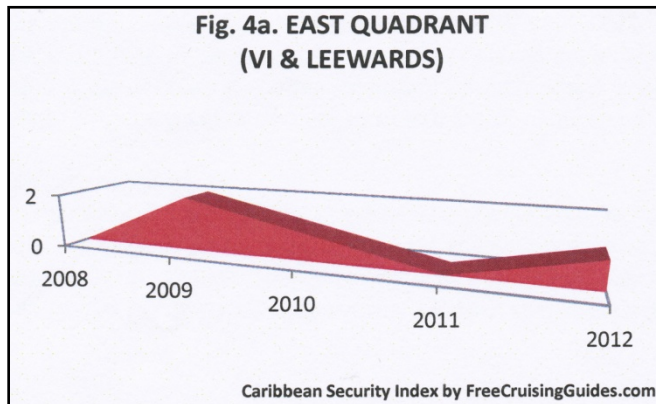
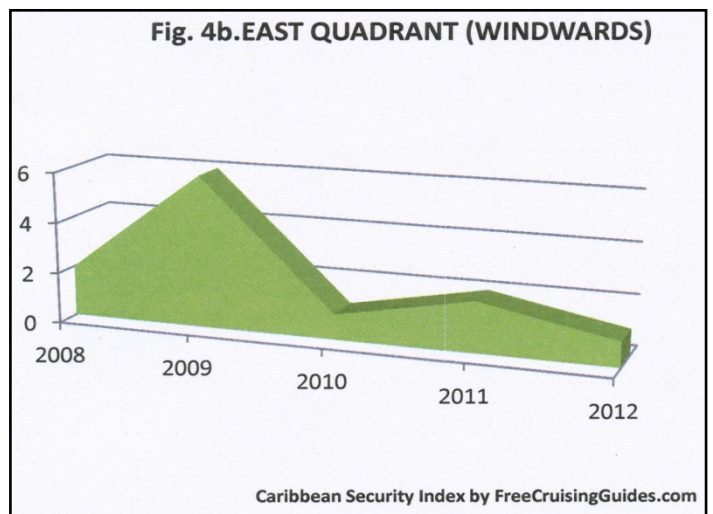
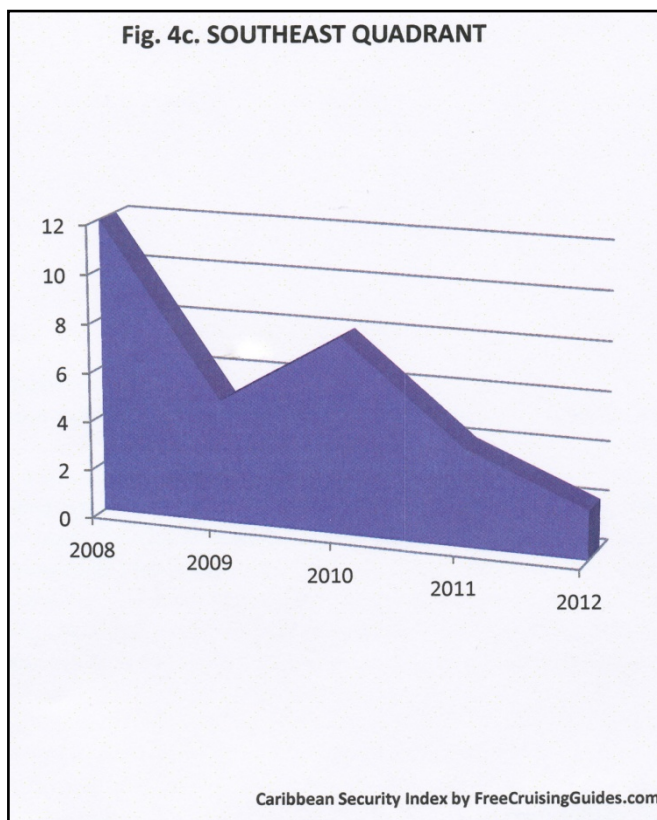


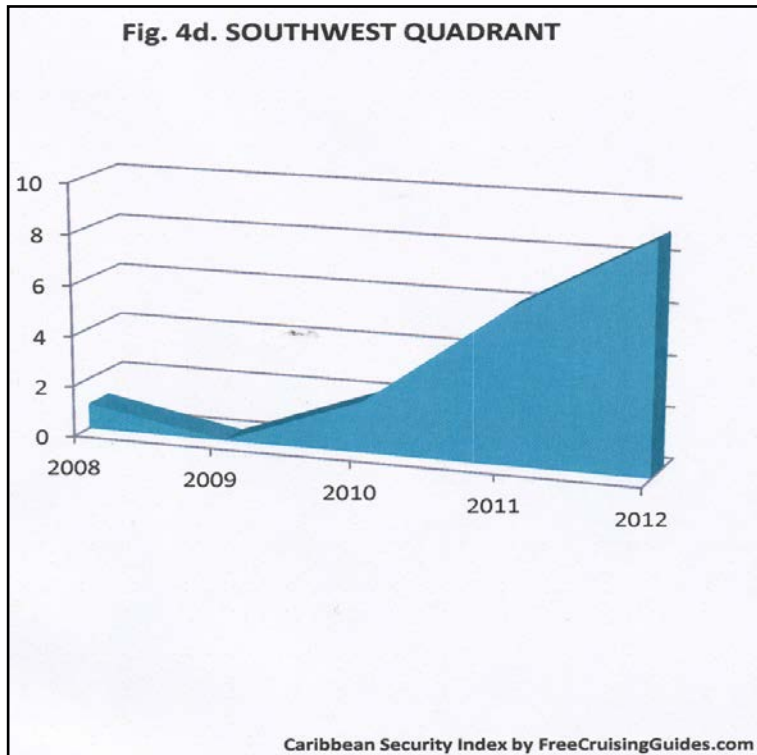
Figure 3 shows that the number of violent crime incidents has really grown in only one quadrant: the SW (blue). Drilling down in the SW Quadrant, Figure 3 clearly illustrates its emergent notoriety. In fact, while the number of incidents there has risen, the prominent locations have changed. Honduras has grown increasingly violent starting in 2010 and Panama in the last two years has the unfortunate distinction of first place. (Figure 6)



The dramatic drop in the numbers of both reported total crimes and violent crimes in the Windward Islands of the E Quadrant reflects the fact that Trinidad began to take its problems seriously, especially during hurricane season when Chaguaramas is packed with boats most of whose owners have headed home.

Simultaneously, and perhaps surprisingly, the number has dropped in the SE Quadrant. (Figures 1 and 3) While the ABCs inhabit the same quadrant as Venezuela, it is solely on the basis of geography. Venezuela has been the violent crime capital of the SE Quadrant, and, indeed, of the entire Caribbean. (Figure 5)

Beneath the surprise, however, is the fact that following several years of exceptional violence and at best tepid governmental response as well as ongoing political uncertainty in Venezuela, a constant drumbeat of warnings by cruisers for cruisers has apparently worked. The result has been fewer cruisers visiting the Venezuelan islands and mainland and therefore diminished opportunity for thieves and their ilk.



The Orinoco delta appears to be the reigning pocket of opportunity, an explanation for which may be that cruisers visiting the delta are inadvertently making themselves unwelcome intruders in a known and dangerous area of drug trafficking.

Figure 5 shows reported violent crime diminished in the Venezuelan islands, but continuing on the mainland.

Venezuela has a long way to go.

Since cruisers now visit the SW Quadrant in greater numbers, the opportunity center has shifted to the wild west.

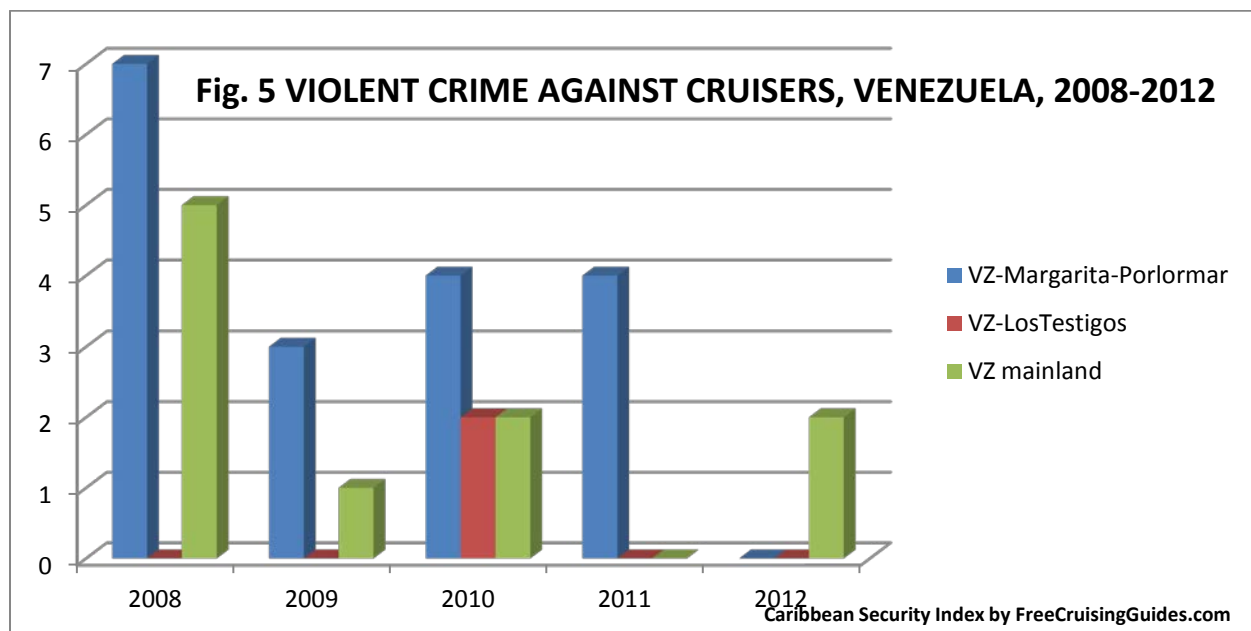
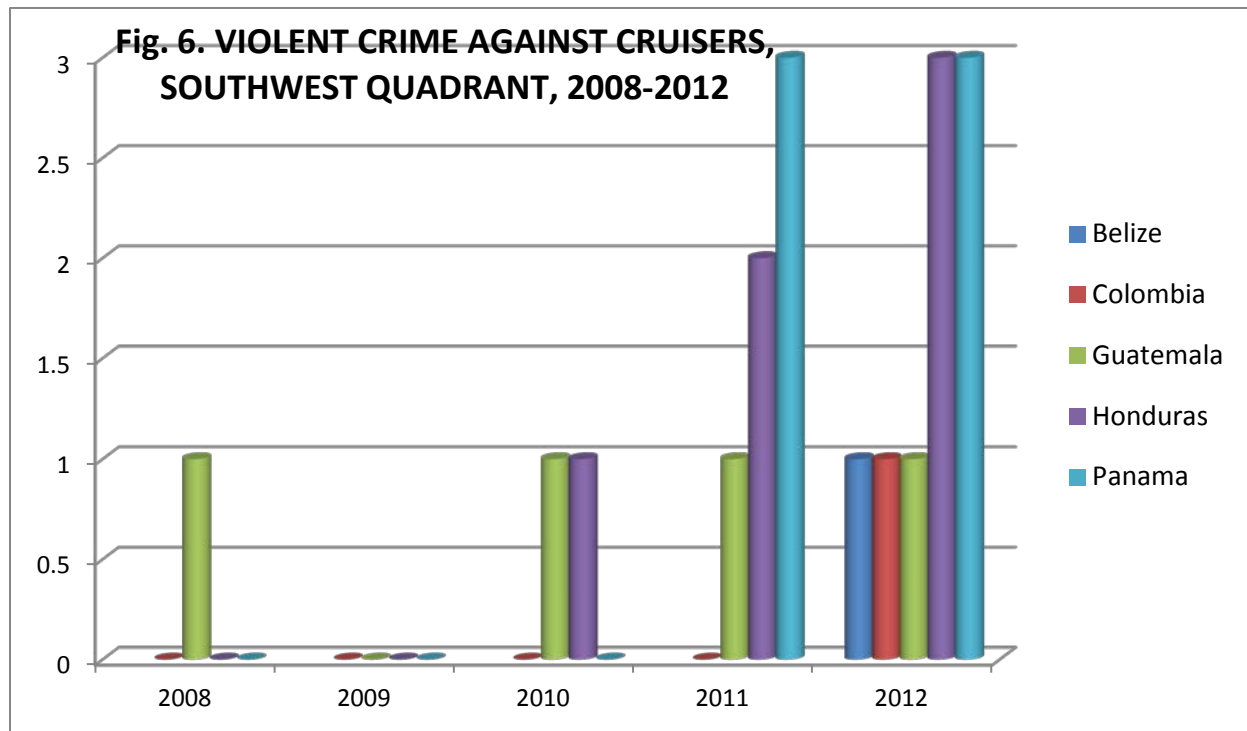


Figure 6 shows the changing distribution and, sadly, escalating number of reported violent crimes in the SW Quadrant. Every country is represented, and Honduras matched Panama. While the number and locations of reported violent crimes signal a need for caution, they do not capture the most disturbing trend, namely, the increasing *degree* of violence.



BAD BEHAVIOR: Nothing new, but getting “badder”

CSI has begun to track a phenomenon which is not new but several instances of which have been not only reported but discussed in public forum. This category is "bad behavior", which has “displaced” consequences. Unfortunately, the fallout from bad behavior doesn’t impact the perpetrators; it harms economically the local community. Six incidents generated buzz in 2012. They took place in Haiti, Dominica, Barbados, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Belize, and Colombia.

Reported bad behavior in 2012 ran the gamut from individual enterprise wherein someone demands payment for a spurious inspection with an implied “or else”, to official heavy handedness like the much discussed and unsettling encounter of a boat with Dominican officialdom. Basically all incidents were variations on extortion or attempted extortion. At the very least the experiences were unnerving and the targeted cruisers were left with a resolve to avoid those occasions, or locations, in the future. And the nautical grapevine being what it is, such news spreads far and wide.

Bad behavior discourages visits by cruisers which in turn depresses local businesses that cater to cruisers. It is a problem that if experienced and exposed by cruisers must be addressed by the local community and authorities or they will be the losers. Cruisers vote with their sails.

ST KITTS

Ratings: In harbor n/a Anchored out 9.4

Mitigating factors... Old plantation island with light cruiser traffic.

NEVIS

Ratings: In harbor n/a Anchored out 9.5

Mitigating factors... Old plantation island with light cruiser traffic.

ST MARTIN/SINT MAARTEN

Ratings: At marinas 8.8 Anchored out 8.5

Mitigating factors... Lots of yachting activity; safe yachting hub. The presence of mega yachts makes for added security. Dinghies and their outboards were the targets of 4 *reported* thefts early in 2012; although unofficial sources claim as many as two dozen dinghy thefts occurred in the spring. **NOTE: Probably best for now to avoid anchoring near airport in Simpson Bay due to isolated location.**

STATIA

Ratings: In harbor n/a Anchored out 9.6

Mitigating factors... Mainly commercial harbor activity. Yachts visit infrequently; no reported crime.

EAST QUADRANT – WINDWARD ISLANDS

BARBADOS

Ratings: At marinas n/a Anchored out 9.6

Mitigating factors... Light cruiser activity.

GRENADA

Ratings: At marinas 8.8↑ Anchored out 7.8↑

RECOMMENDATION: Good place to visit generally with low crime; good yachting facilities and repair opportunities. Nice anchorages and harbors, in the company of many other cruisers.

Mitigating factors... Grenada has a small population with a high literacy rate and a long and profitable history of catering to cruisers. Reported 2012 thefts down slightly from 2011.

MARTINIQUE

Ratings: At marinas 9.5 Anchored out 9.5

Mitigating factors... Extensive marine infrastructure; little reported crime to date.

ST LUCIA

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **7.0**

Mitigating factors... In harbor at marinas safe; anchoring out increasingly less safe. The country has been ill managed in recent years, although response time and effort by local authorities to crime has improved somewhat.

ST VINCENT

Ratings: At marinas **n/a** Anchored out **5.6**

Mitigating factors... Land and seascape beautiful and popular with cruisers, but crimes against cruisers have a well documented record.

GRENADINES

Ratings: At marinas **n/a** Anchored out **8.2**↓

Mitigating factors... Land and seascape beautiful and popular with cruisers, but crimes against cruisers in the form of boarding yachts day or night continue to plague cruisers.

TRINIDAD

Ratings: At marinas **9.2**↑
TTSA **7.0** Anchored out **8.0**

Mitigating factors... For all intents and purposes, to speak of Trinidad is to speak only of Chagauramas as the sheer number of boats and concentrated service infrastructure make fort a target rich environment. Three major factors include: TTSA where mooring area is dark and extensive; hurricane season, when most boats are untenanted; and upland. Quality/ cost of marine facilities seems to be inversely related to amount of crime. Dedicated effort over the past few years has significantly reduced reported crime.

TOBAGO

Ratings: At marinas **n/a** Anchored out **9.0**

Mitigating factors... Consistent history of safety for cruisers until first reported crimes surfaced in 2012.

SOUTHEAST QUADRANT

ARUBA

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **9.6**

Mitigating factors... Country's investment in tourist industry, specifically big cruise ship traffic, translates into greater security and sense of same with a welcome spillover effect for cruisers.

BONAIRE

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **9.6**

Mitigating factors... No crimes reported since 2010 in this naturalist's paradise.

CURACAO

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **9.2**

Mitigating factors... Curacao safe for cruisers, but be alert for theft if anchored in Spanish Waters.

VENEZUELA

Ratings: In harbor **6.8** Anchored out **4.5**

RECOMMENDATION: AVOID this country, especially the mainland

Mitigating factors... Venezuela is a country in chaos without a rule of law or a process that allows for redress in the event of a crime. The government had announced plans to appropriate yachts of Venezuelan citizens. Uncertainty surrounding government policies, coupled with high unemployment (nearing 50%), has led to a heightened level of criminal activity.

CSI recommends *complete* avoidance of Venezuelan waters at this time despite diminished reported crime. See discussion and graphs in [Overview](#).

SOUTHWEST QUADRANT

BELIZE

Ratings: At marinas **9.4**↓ Anchored out **8.8**↓

Mitigating factors... Light cruising traffic, mostly directed toward SCUBA diving. An especially violent crime in 2012 plus an instance of “bad behavior” earns Belize a caution.

COLOMBIA

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **8.6**↓

Mitigating factors... Strong Coast Guard presence and expansion of marine infrastructure has resulted in cruisers returning to this country; significantly reduced crime. Remote locations warrant extra vigilance.

COSTA RICA

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **9.6**

RECOMMENDATION: VERY safe.

Mitigating factors... Light cruiser traffic.

GUATEMALA

Ratings: At marinas **9.2**↓ Anchored out **5.8**

Mitigating factors... VERY dangerous if anchoring out. Marinas lack sufficient security measures for a sure sense of safety.

HONDURAS

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **See mitigating factors**

Mitigating factors... Cruiser traffic is light along this coast. The few reported incidents of crime do include a violent attack resulting in murder. Lack of infrastructure is the basis for recommending continued avoidance of this coast at this time.

HONDURAN ISLANDS

(Utilia, Guanaja, Roatan and the Cayos Cochinos)

Ratings: At marinas **n/a** Anchored out **5.4**↓

Mitigating factors... Magnet for cruisers and divers; also, increasingly, for violent assault. Only mooring is permitted in the beautiful Cayos Cochinos, a national park.

MEXICO

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **9.0**

Mitigating factors... Marinas on Isla Mujeres have been the preference of the cruising community for ease of entrance into and exit from the western end of the Caribbean.

NICARAGUA

Ratings: At marinas **n/a** Anchored out **n/a**

Mitigating factors... Light cruiser traffic on Miskito coast and lack of marine infrastructure. With an assault and robbery on the record in 2012, *know that it can be dangerous.*

PANAMA

Ratings: At marinas **9.6** Anchored out **5.8**↓

Mitigating factors... New marina infrastructure. Most cruisers choose marina berthage for greater safety.

SAN BLAS ISLANDS

Ratings: At marinas **n/a** Anchored out **9.5**

Mitigating factors... Local chieftains keep anchorages safe.

