

# Crime in public space, committed by individuals or groups

## Prevention advice

To road users, it is second nature, but personal safety considerations ought to dictate your behaviour anywhere in a public area. Think ahead to predict danger and avoid getting caught up in tense situations. Embrace situational awareness as a way to improve your safety rather than dismissing it as a constraint on your freedom.

### Be (and feel) safer by following this advice:

- Should you feel threatened by (drunk and/or aggressive) individuals or groups, it is probably best to take a detour to avoid them, even if it means a less direct route to your destination. Try to move to the edge of the crowd rather than the middle. Skirting around a perceived danger is never a sign of cowardice but a testament to common sense.
- If possible, walk in a group for mutual overwatch, help and support. In a tense situation, draw attention to yourself. By screaming and shouting ('Don't touch me', 'I'm being mugged') or using a personal alarm or whistle, you will alert potential helpers and witnesses.
- Actively seek help from third parties, such as passers-by. Call on individuals to intervene: 'You there in the blue coat. Help me, please!' That will give others the chance to notice that you are in trouble and call 110, the police emergency line.
- Try to resume your journey or move to a safe establishment – a shop, pub or

service station, a bus or even a taxi. As soon as you feel safe again, call police on 110.

- Even if you do not recognise a threat to you personally, but witness inappropriate or threatening behaviour by groups or individuals, do not hesitate to call the police on 110!
- Always lodge a criminal complaint. i.e., ask police to press charges.

### Carrying 'defensive' weapons:

Police urges caution with the use of weapons – such as pepper spray - for self defence. If you are hesitant or too slow, things can quickly go bad for you. The attacker could take the weapon from you and use it against you. Moreover, if you use a defensive spray against a person and cause injury, a criminal investigation might follow – against you. Keep in mind that weapons that are covered by the Weapons Act and may, in certain circumstances, be carried in public, must never be brought to public events such as sports meetings, exhibitions or demonstrations. Contravention is a criminal offence under section 42 of the Act. Ask your local police for more information. (<https://polizei.nrw/wachenfinder>).

