

PUBLIC SAFETY IN ROMANIA. AN ANALYSIS OF RURAL/URBAN AND REGIONAL PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

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ABSTRACT

As demonstrated in numerous studies, the public's perception of their own level of safety, but also on the general state of safety has an important role in evaluating the performance of institutions operating in the field of public safety and in establishing their objectives in the medium and long term. This article aims to contribute to the existing literature on the perception of the public safety, emphasizing on Romanian context, as a result of a secondary analysis of the data from the most recent *Public Safety Survey*, which took place in 2017 and was published in 2018.

The article is structured in two main sections: the first section emphasizes on the differences in perception on the level of public safety between rural and urban residents and between residents of the different Romania's development regions, as well as these differences in population view on the level of victimization from different crimes; the second section is dedicated to the relationship between the feeling of safety in different contexts and perceived level of crime, concern about crime and victimization.

Keywords: *public safety, fear of crime, crime victimization, rural and urban, development region, Romania.*

INTRODUCTION

Perception of security is closely related to many other concepts, which have been intensively studied and debated in numerous studies: rate of actual victimization, fear of crime, trust in police and other institutions working in this area, satisfaction with police, etc. The perception of security and the fear of crime, although they are distinct concepts, have been studied together from many perspectives, from their social and psychological construction, their relationship

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with the environment, the impact of past victimisation to the current perception, to more methodological aspects such as how fear of crime is measured (Prieto Curiel & Bishop, 2016: 2).

Scheider, Rowell & Bezdikian (2003: 370) found that there is a considerable debate over how to define and measure fear of crime. So, fear of crime is defined as “an emotional reaction characterized by a sense of danger and anxiety” (Garafalo, 1981: 840) or as “an emotional and attitudinal phenomenon” (Cordner, 1986: 223). Another definition for the construct is “the negative emotional reaction generated by crime or symbols associated with crime and is conceptually distinct from either judgements (risks) or concerns (values) about crime” (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987: 73). Yet, “it is often said that fear of crime is best defined as not just emotional responses to the threat of crime, but also thoughts (cognitive appraisals of risk) and behavioural responses (precautions against crime and reactions to the sense of the threat)” (Gray *et al.*, 2012: 276).

Markowitz *et al.* stated that “an unreasonably high level of fear of crime concerns both police and residents because it reduces quality of life and neighbourhood cohesion and in doing so can increase crime” (2001, 293). Satisfaction with police was also associated with the fear of crime and the feeling of security. A high level of satisfaction was related to low levels of fear, although no causal order could be determined (Scheider, Rowell & Bezdikian, 2003: 363).

Feeling of safety versus fear of crime

Following the tradition started by Wilson and Kelling (1982), Mladek (2007) shows that modern policing is not primarily a crime fighter, but a security provider. Thus, the security provided by the police must include, for the first time in history, the expectations of citizens as well as the feeling of security. Therefore, it is no longer enough to fight or prevent crime, the police being also responsible for repressing the fear of crime. The police must take a series of symbolic measures (such as being on the street, installing video cameras for surveillance, etc.) to produce a feeling of safety in the population (Balica, 2021).

Gray *et al.* stressed that “fear of crime is now a performance indicator for numerous police forces in North America and Europe, with its reduction often forming a key aspect of ‘reassurance’ interventions and day-to-day operations” (2012: 270). Visser *et al.* noted that since the late 1970s, there has been an intense debate about how to measure fear of crime. If early research measured the fear of crime through questions about feelings of insecurity and the fear of walking alone in the neighbourhood at night, more recent research has shown that the fear of crime is multidimensional. Thus, two components were proposed, the risk perception of the respondent, often operationalized by feelings of insecurity, and the emotional aspect or the fear of different types of crimes, distinction that is widely accepted at present times (2013: 279–280).

Social problems

As Obileye and Aborisade found (2020, 276), social problems have attracted the attention of many scholars, from classical to the contemporary ones. Albrecht (2021, 449) notices that the concept of “social problems” has been developed in the controversies between structural functionalists (e.g., Robert Merton) on the one hand and symbolic interactionists (e.g., Herbert Blumer, Malcom Spector, John L. Kitsuse) and radical constructionists on the other.

There are many definitions of the concept, but we have chosen one that meets the agreement of several researchers: a social problem is an undesirable condition which is damaging to society and its members and that people believe should be corrected because is seen as violating certain fundamental values and beliefs about how society should operate, people are put into tension, fear, insecurity and is socially remediable, requiring a collective approach for its solution. (Amzat & Magaji, 2019: 45; Weber, 1995: 9; Akujobi & Jackson, 2017: 506).

The Romanian context

For the police, the results of public opinion surveys regarding the perception of the level of crime or fear of crime, as well as the population level of victimization are of strategic importance, because, along with official recordings, they are the basis for orienting the preventive intervention and fighting against crime measures, as well as for designing a quality police response, adapted to the needs of the community.

In this regard, even the Romanian legal framework stipulates that ensuring public safety in general (by decreasing the numbers of crimes committed) and reinforcing citizens’ feeling of safety is one of the essential tasks of the Romanian Police, but it is also the responsibility of other institutions within the Ministry of Interior. Thus, in the *Law on the organization and functioning of the Romanian Police*, in Art. 26. (1) 2. it is stated that the Romanian Police “applies measures to maintain public order and peace, the safety of the citizen [...]” (Law 218/2002).

Also, in the general considerations of the *Strategy of the Ministry of Administration and Interior for the achievement of public order and safety, in order to increase the citizen's safety and to prevent street crime*, it is specified that “ensuring the climate of civic normality, order and public safety has always been a priority for society, which through its specialized structures has sought to identify the most efficient forms and ways of achieving this objective” (Government Decision 196/2005). Within this strategy, public safety is defined as “the feeling of peace and confidence that the police service gives in implementing measures to maintain public order and peace, the degree of security of persons, communities and goods, as well as in achieving the partnership between the civil society and the police, in order to solve community problems, to defend the rights, freedoms and legal interests of citizens” (Government Decision 196/2005).

This article is meant to describe the Romanian context, in the light of the results of the *2017 Public Safety Survey*, a tool developed as a joint effort of the Romanian Police and the National Institute of Statistics, as a source of information on a series of indicators of the state of population safety. The article is structured in two main sections, following the objectives I pursued. The first one is dedicated to discovering the differences between rural and urban residents, as well as between the residents of the development regions of the country in the assessment of the feeling of safety/ fear of crime in Romania, operationalized in indicators such the perception on the place of crime in the hierarchy of social problems, the level of safety felt by citizens in different contexts, the main factors affecting the level of safety felt by citizens, the perception on the incidence of problems that citizens face and create feelings of insecurity, public perception on the level of crime in Romania and the level of victimization from different crimes in Romanian's view, from property crimes to violent crimes against persons. The second section is an analysis on the feeling of safety in various contexts and its relationship with other variables such public concern about crime, crime victimization and perception on the level of crime in Romania.

METHODOLOGY

The Public Safety Survey aimed to describe and evaluate the most important aspects of the population's perception of the police activity and its relation with the citizens, in order to guide the planning of the crime prevention and combating measures. The questionnaire, developed by the specialists of The Crime Research and Prevention Institute, followed the three objectives of the research: to assess the perception of the population on the level of public safety, to assess the perception of the population on police activity and police-citizen relationship and to measure the population's level of victimization and the incidence of attitudes and behaviours related to victimization risk.

The Public Safety Survey was conducted in three consecutive years, 2015, 2016 and 2017. The present article is the result of the secondary analysis of data from the 2017 research, which was carried out on a random sample of 6,528 dwellings, distributed in all the Romanian counties, being interviewed all adult persons from those households. The database included 13,407 valid questionnaires and had a number of 218 variables, from which I selected for my analysis 59 variables (1 for residence – urban/ rural, 1 for the development region, 1 for the assessment of the level of crime, 11 for problems that concern Romanians at present, 19 for the problems which create feeling of insecurity, 11 for the factors that affect the level of safety, 6 for the level of safety in different contexts and 9 for the view on victimization from different crimes).

As a member of the research team from the beginning until the research report writing, I found that the data collected were a valuable resource, being suitable for more in-depth analysis than originally planned and can be placed in the context of literature dealing with the fear of crime and the feeling of security. Thus, I performed a secondary analysis of these data, aiming to identify how the population in urban and rural areas and various development regions of the country perceive public safety, as well as the level of victimization from crimes, being interested in discovering the differences in results.

The novelty of my approach is that, in addition to analysing the results of the *Public Safety Survey*, I sought to answer the question “Is there, in the case of the Romanian public too, a link between the level of security felt by citizens and concern about crime?”. Thus, using these data, which have not been exploited so far in this regard, I started from the following research questions:

1. Is there an association between the level of security felt by citizens in different contexts and the concern about crime?
2. Is there an association between the level of security felt by citizens in different contexts and the perceived level of crime in Romania?
3. Is there an association between declared victimization and the level of security felt by citizens in different contexts?

In other words, my approach is based on the assumption that people who are concerned about crime, those who consider that crime in Romania is at a high level and those who have been victims of certain crimes feel a lower level of security in different contexts.

In order to test the association between feeling of safety in different contexts (in their own homes, on the street, in the area where they live, in their localities) and perceived level of crime in Romania, between feeling of safety in these contexts and concern about crime and between feeling of safety and victimization from different crimes (assaults, thefts from pockets and bags, goods or property damages, robberies, sexual assaults, scams, thefts from cars, bicycle thefts), I performed Chi-square contingency tests using SPSS.

RESULTS

The place of crime in the hierarchy of social problems that concern the population at present

In *2017 Romanian Public Safety Survey*, in order to measure the public perception on the fear of crime and on the level of the public safety, we asked the respondents to answer to several questions: which are the problems that concern them most at present times, to what extent have they felt safe in different contexts in the last 12 months, how often have certain problems related to crimes occurred in their locality in the last 12 months, what are the main factors affecting the safety

of citizens in their communities, which is, in their opinion, the level of crime in Romania at present.

The results of the *2017 Romanian Public Safety Survey* show that criminality ranks seventh in the hierarchy of problems that concern Romanians at present, after the quality of medical services (63.4%), the price of goods and services (52.9%), the economic situation of Romania (37.7%), pensions (33.8%), the quality of school education (22.3%) and unemployment (19.5%). Moreover, less than a quarter of the adult population of Romania specify criminality as a phenomenon that worries them (16%)(General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 5).

Fear of crime at country level

Data analysis on how the population relates to crime as a social problem that currently worries them has shown significant differences among the development regions of the country. Thus, while in the Centre region only one in twelve respondents was currently concerned about crime, in the Bucharest-Ilfov region about one in three said the same thing (8.3% Centre, 13% South-Muntenia, 13.5% North-East, 15.6% South-West Oltenia, 16.6% North-West, 18.2% South-East, 18.6% West, 31.3% Bucharest-Ilfov). The data also show that crime worries urban residents more (18.4% of respondents) compared to those in rural areas (13.4%).

Level of crime

Instead, when it comes about the public perception on the level of crime in Romania, we noticed that it is perceived to be at a high level by a large percentage of respondents (42.3% – high or medium to high) and at a medium level (45.2%), only a small percentage placing it to a low level (12.5% – low or medium to low) (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 6).

Interestingly, people living in the Bucharest-Ilfov region see the level of crime similarly to those in the Centre region (only 32.8%, respectively 36.2% considering it high), compared to people in the North-West and North-East regions (both 46.1%) or South-East (49.3%). The rest of the regions look at crime level close to the national average. Considering the residence of the respondents, the proportion of rural residents who consider that the level of crime in Romania is at a high level is significantly higher than those in urban areas (45% compared to 39.9%).

Hierarchy of social problems

In order to be able to create a hierarchy of the problems in the field of contravention and crime that citizens frequently face in their localities and which create feelings of insecurity, the respondents were asked to specify, for a list of 19 actions, their frequency in the last 12 months. From the aggregation of the received answers, it turned out that on the first places are the non-observance of the traffic rules (39.6%), begging (26.8%) and thefts of agricultural products from

fields (20.8%), followed by disturbing behaviours such as noise or scandals (18.3%) and pickpocketing (15.9%). (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 8)

Table 1

The place of crime in the hierarchy of social problems that concern the population at present (%)

	Residence		Development region							
	Rural	Urban	North-West	Centre	North-East	South-East	South-Muntenia	Bucharest-Ilfov	South-West Oltenia	West
Fear of crime	3.4	8.4	6.6	.3	3.5	8.2	3	1.3	5.6	8.6
Level of crime – high	5	9.9	6.1	6.2	6.1	9.3	2	2.8	0.4	0.1
Non-observance of the traffic rules	9.4	9.1	0.5	6.2	1.6	4.5	5.4	6.4	0.1	7
Begging	.8	2.4	5.6	1.4	4.6	4.2	8	7.2	2.2	7
Thefts of agricultural products from fields	8.4	.4	.8	.9	3.9	4.9	1.1		.5	
Disturbing behaviours	1.4	4.7	6.7	3.7	9.7	5	5.1	0.6	8.7	8.6
Pickpocketing	.2	4.9	7.5	4.1	4.1	0.9	0.1	7.7	3.3	6.1
Scams	.8	1.5	2	3.3	6.7	0.8	.2	2.5	.1	.4
Burglaries	.4	2.2	3.6	.7		7.2	.7	1.6	.9	.5
Conflicts between groups of people in public spaces	.3	3.3	.8	.1	1.4	6	0	0.8	0.2	.3
Vandalism acts	.4	3.3	.7	.3	0.8	2.3	.2	.7	.8	5.3

If non-compliance with traffic rules is the first problem mentioned by both urban and rural residents, begging is on the second place only for urban people, but for rural people it is only on the fifth place (see Table 1). Another problem common to the two residences are disturbing behaviours, such as noise and

scandals (third place in rural areas, fourth place in urban areas). Animal thefts and thefts of agricultural products from the fields are among the problems of the rural population, but they are on the last places for the inhabitants of the cities. In contrast, urban residents say that security in their localities is frequently affected by theft from pockets and bags and scams (3rd place, respectively 5th) to a greater extent than those in rural areas (only on 8th place, respectively 9th) (see Table 1).

Non-compliance with traffic rules is on the first place in the top of all development regions, begging being on the second place except for the South-West Oltenia region, where it is ranked fourth. In general, the top five common problems are about the same for all development regions of the country, with a few exceptions. In addition to the two mentioned above, disturbing behaviours such as noise and scandals and theft from pockets and bags are common to all regions. But, as a difference, the inhabitants of the Centre, North-East, South-East and Bucharest-Ilfov regions mention scams, those in the North-West burglaries, those in South-Muntenia thefts of agricultural products from the fields, those in the South-West Oltenia conflicts between groups of people in public spaces, and those in the West acts of vandalism (see Table 1).

Public safety

In addition to the performance of institutions with responsibilities in the field of public safety, the feeling of public safety is influenced by a series of community or situational factors. Thus, from the aggregation of the answers of the questioned subjects (who were asked to choose from a list of such factors maximum 3 variants) in the *2017 Romanian Public Safety Survey*, the factors that affect the level of safety of citizens are mainly related to the reduced number of police officers present on the streets (53.4%), the failure to resolve issues within the competence of local public authorities (street lighting – 43%, stray dogs – 36.1%, abandoned buildings – 16.3%, etc.), as well as the lack of manifestation of the civic spirit among the population (35.8%) (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 8)

The inhabitants of both residences indicate the same factors on the first four places (the small number of police officers present on the streets, the fact that citizens do not react when they see that crimes are being committed, that the streets are not sufficiently lit and that there are many stray dogs – even if the places are interchangeable), but for those from the rural areas is on the 5th place the existence of some areas with abandoned buildings or lands, while for those from the urban area is the fact that there are many dubious people on the streets.

For the first four places, the ranking is the same for the development regions as for the areas of residence, except for the Bucharest-Ilfov region, in the top of which is missing the “stray dogs” issue (being replaced by “many dubious

people”). The differences are noticeable for the fifth place, as follows: the existence of many dubious persons is mentioned by the inhabitants of the Centre, North-East and South-East regions, the fact that the traffic rules are not observed by the inhabitants of North-West and South-West Oltenia, the fact that there are some areas with abandoned buildings or land by those in South-Muntenia, Bucharest-Ilfov and West.

The degree of community safety in different contexts

Most people declare a high level of security regarding their own home, the streets in the area where they live or their locality (over 89%). In these contexts, the number of people saying that they felt safe to a small or to a very small extent is reduced: 4.2% in their homes, 9.3% in their neighbourhood and 10.7% in their village, town or city (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 7). A lower level of safety is perceived for traveling on public roads, as pedestrians, as car drivers or as bicyclists: 40.8%, respectively 39.7% and 40.4% of them feel safe to a small or very small extent (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 7).

There is a clear difference between safety in urban and rural areas in all contexts. Thus, the number of respondents who state that they feel safe to a small or very small extent is lower in the rural areas, compared to those in urban areas both in terms of community contexts and in terms of road traffic (see Table 2). Overall, for the Romanian development regions, certain clear characteristics emerge: the inhabitants of the Bucharest-Ilfov region declare lower levels of security in all contexts, while those of the West region, as well as those of South-Muntenia and South-West Oltenia declare higher levels of safety in almost all contexts (see Table 2).

Residents of the North-West region declare themselves safer in their own home, in the area where they live or in their locality, compared to the rest of the regions. For the inhabitants of the Centre region road safety as a driver or cyclist is a problematic issue, while those in North-East claim road safety as a pedestrian or as a driver. In fact, road safety as a pedestrian is also claimed by the respondents from the South-West Oltenia region, the only context in which this region registered higher percentages for the level of insecurity compared to the national average (See Table 2).

For the inhabitants of the South-East region the insecurity in their locality is higher than for those living in other regions, instead the insecurity as a cyclist is lower (see Table 2).

Table 2

Safety in community and road traffic contexts (%)

Feel safe to a small or very small extent	Residence		Development region							
	Rural	Urban	North-West	Centre	North-East	South-East	South-Muntenia	Bucharest-Ilfov	South-West Oltenia	West
In their own homes	.6	.7	.3	.3	.2	.8	.6	1.2	.3	.8
On the street, in the area where they live	.6	1.9	.3	.3	.7	.8	.9	2.9	.4	.1
In their locality	.8	3.3	.3	.2	0.1	4	0.8	5.5	.5	.9
When traveling on public roads, as pedestrians	9.6	2	0.6	1	4.1	0.2	3.7	6	3.4	1.5
When traveling on public roads, as car drivers	7.5	0.9	7.9	5.2	5.5	9.7	2.5	0.3	3.1	7.2
When traveling on public roads, as bicyclists	8.3	6.3	1.6	8.9	1.2	9.9	4.1	6.6	2.5	3.6

The level of victimization in Romanian's view

Regarding the victimization of the population, the most frequently mentioned crimes were thefts of agricultural products (1.8%) and animal thefts (0.7%) when it comes to households, and assaults (1.4%), thefts from pockets and bags (1.1%) and goods or property damages (0.9%) when it comes to individual persons ($N=6,528$ households, $N=13,407$ persons from these households) (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, 2018: 10–11).

For all these crimes, we compared the data on the declared level of victimization of the population depending on the residence and the region of development.

Table 3
Victimization from crimes (%)

	Residence		Development region							
	Rural	Urban	North-West	Centre	North-East	South-East	South-Muntenia	Bucharest-Ilfov	South-West Oltenia	West
Thefts of agricultural products		.2	.2	.3	.9	.4	.2		.4	
Thefts of animals	.8	.4	.5		.4	.1		.4	.2	
Assaults	.5	.3	.7	.6	.6	.1	.1	.4	.1	.5
Thefts from pockets and bags	.8	.3	.6	.4	.6	.6	.7	.7	.5	.8
Goods or property damages	.2	.7	.7	.4	.5	.6	.7	.4	.9	.7

If regarding the animal thefts and thefts of agricultural products it was expected that there would be differences between rural and urban areas, with significantly more such crimes in rural areas, we noticed that the same thing happens when it comes to goods or properties damages. In contrast, there are significantly more people in urban areas who have stated that they have been the victims of thefts from pockets or bags (see Table 3).

Instead, the data show that the residence is not important in the case of assaults. Depending on the development region, we found that the inhabitants of the North-East region have been more often victims of all the crimes mentioned above, compared to the national average. In the case of assaults, the South-East and South Muntenia regions were also noted with higher frequencies, in the case of thefts from pockets and bags the Bucharest-Ilfov and South-West Oltenia regions, and in the case of goods or property damages again the South-East region had more victims. In contrast, the Centre region stands out with lower percentages of reported victimization for all types of crimes mentioned, compared to other regions (see Table 3).

Association between feeling of safety and perceived level of crime, concern about crime and victimization

In order to see if there is an association between safety felt in different contexts and perceived level of crime in Romania, we used the Chi-square contingency test between the following variables: perceived level of crime in

Romania (with values “Low”, “Medium” and “High”) and safety in your home, safety on the street, in the area where you live and safety in your locality (with values “To a great or to a large extent” and “To a small or very small extent”). As Table 4 shows, the test revealed an association between the perceived level of crime in Romania and the level of security felt in the mentioned contexts. Thus, there are statistically significant differences (at a p level of 95%) between people who said that crime is at a low level and those who said that crime is at a medium or at a high level in terms of safety in their own home. While 4.3%, 4.4% respectively of those who consider that crime is at a high level or at a medium level say that they feel safe to a small or very small extent in their own home, only 2.7% of those who consider crime at a low level say the same thing (see Table 4).

Table 4

Association between feeling of safety in different contexts and perceived level of crime in Romania

Perceived level of crime in Romania	Feeling of safety in different contexts (N=13,407 persons) (To a small or very small extent)		
	Safety in your home	Safety on the street, in the area where you live	Safety in your locality
<i>Low</i>	2.7%	6.3%	6.3%
Adjusted Residual	-3.1	-4.7	-6.2
<i>Medium</i>	4.4%	8.9%	9.6%
Adjusted Residual	1.1	-1.7%	-3.7
<i>High</i>	4.3%	10.8%	13.1%
Adjusted Residual	1.0	4.9%	7.9
Pearson Chi-Square	9.737 (sig 0.008)	34.257 (sig 0.000)	76.539 (sig 0.000)

A bigger difference can be noticed when it comes to safety in the area where they live between those who consider crime at a low level and those who consider crime at a high level (6.3%, compared with 10.8%). There is a negative association between the opinion that the crime level in Romania is at a low level, even at a medium level, and a small degree of safety in the locality where they live, but a positive association between the opinion that the crime level is at a high level and a small degree of safety in the locality (see Table 4).

For testing the association between safety felt in different contexts and concern about crime, we used the Chi-square contingency test between the following variables: concerned about crime (with values “Yes” and “No”) and safety in your home, safety on the street, in the area where you live and safety in

your locality (with values “To a great or to a large extent” and “To a small or very small extent”).

As can be seen in Table 5, the test shows that there is a positive association between the concern about crime and a low level of security felt in the mentioned contexts. Thus, there are statistically significant differences (at a p level of 95%) between people who mentioned crime among the issues that concern them and those who did not mention it in terms of safety in their own home, safety in the area where they live or safety in their locality. While 5.9% of those who are worried about crime say they feel safe to a small or very small extent in their own home, only 3.8% of those who are not worried about crime say the same thing. The association is even stronger when it comes to safety in the area where they live or to safety on the locality they live: those who are concerned about crime say in greater numbers that they feel safe to a small or very small extent (see Table 5).

Table 5

Association between feeling of safety in different contexts and concern about crime

Concerned about crime	Feeling of safety in different contexts (N=13,407 persons) (To a small or very small extent)		
	Safety in your home	Safety on the street, in the area where you live	Safety in your own locality
Yes	5.9%	15.7%	17.7%
Adjusted Residual	4.5	11	11.6
No	3.8%	8.1%	9.3%
Adjusted Residual	-4.5	-11	-11.6
Pearson Chi-Square	19.853 (sig 0.000)	121.548 (sig 0.000)	133.628 (sig 0.000)

The last hypothesis I wanted to test was that there is a relationship between the actual victimization and the level of security felt in the same contexts (in their own homes, in the areas where they live and in their localities). First, using the same Chi-square contingency test, I checked if there is association between a low sense of security in various contexts and having been a victim of assault, theft from pockets and bags and goods or property damage – the most frequently mentioned crimes.

As can be seen in Table 6, the fact of being a victim of any of the three crimes is positively associated with a low level of security both in the home and in the neighbourhood or locality. The strongest association is between victimization from pickpocketing and a low level of safety in the locality where they live, followed by being a victim of an assault and a low level of safety in the locality. Victimization from a theft from pockets and bags is also strongly associated with a decreased level of safety on the street, in their neighbourhood (see Table 6).

Table 6

Association between feeling of safety in different contexts and victimization

Victim of:		Feeling of safety in different contexts (N=13,407 persons) (To a small or very small extent)		
		Safety in your home	Safety on the street, in the area where you live	Safety in your own locality
Assaults	Yes	12.8%	25.1%	33.7%
	Adjusted Residual	6.0	7.5	10.3
	No	4.0%	9.1%	10.3%
	Adjusted Residual	-6.0	-7.5	-10.3
	Pearson Chi-Square	35.757 (sig 0.000)	55.707 (sig 0.000)	105.586 (sig 0.000)
Thefts from pockets and bags	Yes	13.5%	34.0%	42.6%
	Adjusted Residual	5.6	10.1	12.3
	No	4.1%	9.1%	10.3%
	Adjusted Residual	-5.6	-10.1	-12.3
	Pearson Chi-Square	30.986 (sig 0.000)	102.459 (sig 0.000)	152.161 (sig 0.000)
Goods or property damages	Yes	13.1%	24.3%	32.7%
	Adjusted Residual	5.1	5.9	8.0
	No	3.7%	8.4%	9.6%
	Adjusted Residual	-5.1	-5.9	-8.0
	Pearson Chi-Square	25.982 (sig 0.000)	34.538 (sig 0.000)	64.143 (sig 0.000)

The same approach was performed for the association between safety in the mentioned contexts and victimization from other crimes, such as robberies, sexual assaults, scams, thefts from cars, bicycle thefts. For car thefts, as there were not enough respondents in the database who had been victims in the last 12 months, no association tests could be performed. While the level of security in the home proved to be associated with some of the crimes mentioned (robberies, scams, thefts from cars), with others it was not the case (sexual assaults and bicycle thefts).

For the security level in the area where the respondents lived, all the tested crimes (robberies, sexual assaults, scams, thefts from cars, bicycle thefts) proved to be relevant, and for the security level in the locality all these, except sexual assaults. In fact, sexual assaults were found to be associated only with lower safety in the area where the respondents lived, not with the level of safety in their own home or locality.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Given that crime is only 7th in the hierarchy of social problems that concern the population at present, that the degree of self-declared safety in different contexts is high, and the appreciated level of crime is medium, we can conclude that problems in the contravention and criminal sphere do not seem to significantly affect the daily life of citizens. However, problems such as non-compliance with traffic rules by some of the road traffic participants, begging, thefts of agricultural products from the fields or disturbing behaviours such as noise or scandals, but also other factors such as the small number of police officers on the streets or lack of public lighting are visible elements, which can lead to feelings of insecurity. At national level, the most common crimes that respondents have fallen victim were thefts of agricultural products, assaults, pickpocketing and animal thefts. Between rural and urban areas, there are differences in the type of declared victimization, so that respondents from villages report more often thefts of agricultural products from the fields and animal thefts, while persons living in towns are more often affected by thefts from pockets or bags.

There are also differences between the country's development regions, both in terms of concern about crime and the level of victimization. Thus, the Centre region is distinguished both by a lower concern about the problem of crime and by a lower level of victimization. In contrast, the North-East and South-East regions have higher levels of concern about crime, but also higher levels of victimization.

In the most recent *Eurobarometer* regarding the feeling of security (TNS opinion & political, 2017), performed by The Centre for the Study of Opinion and Market on a sample of 1,054 persons for Romania and 28,093 persons throughout the European Union, similar results to those from the *Public Safety Survey* were obtained. 87% of Romanians agreed that their immediate neighbourhood is a secure place to live in, the same percentage considering that their city, town or village is a secure place to live in. When referring to the broader context of the whole country, a slightly smaller percentage (80%) thinks that Romania is a secure place to live in.

Although, generally speaking, the feeling of safety in various contexts is high as Romanians tell, we were concerned about the variables that are positively associated with low levels of safety. Thus, in agreement with other previous studies (conducted on data from other countries), we found that concern about crime is positively associated with a lower level of security in various contexts. Although previous studies reported that the level of crime does not affect feelings of “(un)safety” (Visser *et al.*, 2013: 294), we found that the level of crime perceived at a high level is strongly associated with a low level of security. At the same time, even if we only demonstrated an association between feelings of security and actual victimization, same studies show that there is a strong influence of

victimization on feelings of safety, while others reported ambiguous effects (Visser *et al.*, 2013: 295).

In this article, I explored the relationship between the feeling of safety in different contexts and the perceived level of crime in Romania, concern about crime and actual victimization. Future research should continue to examine which is the direction of these relations, but even to make a profile of the person who feels (un)safe in these contexts, taking into account individual variables such as gender, age, residence, occupational status, marital status or level of education. Also, I think that the final goal of these endeavours could be to find the answer to the question “What can the Romanian Police do to increase the population’s feeling of security and to reduce the fear of crime?”

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