

Police Officers Perception of Threats in Urban and Rural Environments¹

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Urbanisation has led to many differences in social interactions and the nature of crime in urban and rural environments. In the paper, police officers' perception of threats in urban and rural environments in Slovenia are analysed. The results of the survey, conducted during the winter months of 2011–2012 and spring 2017, showed that police officers in rural environments perceive neighbourhood safety more positively, while police officers in urban environments perceive public disorder and alcohol abuse as greater threats. The comparison between police officers' perceptions of threats in both time-periods showed that both perception of security threats and socio-economic disadvantages have decreased. In addition, statistically significant differences were identified between police officers perception of neighbourhood safety, security threat of public disorder, and socio-economic disadvantages in different time-periods.

Keywords: police officers, threats, rural and urban environments, Slovenia

UDC: 343.9+351.78(497.4)

1 Introduction

Gollin, Jedwab, and Vollrath (2015) noted that according to the density of human-created structures and resident people, human settlements can be classified as rural or urban; urban areas are known as towns or cities while rural areas are called villages or hamlets. The main difference between urban and rural areas is that the latter are usually developed located on the distribution of natural vegetation and fauna available in a region, while urban settlements are more likely planned (Tisdale, 1942). Gollin et al. (2015) emphasised that rural areas are frequently focused upon by governments and development agencies, with the aim of turning them into urban areas. For this reason, urban settlements are defined by their advanced civic amenities, opportunities for education, facilities for transport, business and social interaction and an overall better standard of living, whereas rural settlements are not (Vlahov & Galea, 2003). Moreover, the urban population

receives the benefits of man's advancements in the areas of science and technology and is not nature-dependent for its day-to-day functions. Another issue, more often and problematic in urban areas, is crime.

Doucet and Lee (2016), Sampson and Groves (1989), Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997), and Lee (2008) emphasise that according to the Civic Community Theory, areas that have population stability (i.e., not much fluctuation the movement of people in and out of the settlement), fixed investments and services, and fixed infrastructure (e.g., schools, hospitals, libraries, etc.) are known to have less crime and security issues.

Rebernik (2008), Adams and Serpe (2000), Glaeser and Sacerdote (1999), Pavlović (1998) and Wirth (1938) compared social interactions and crime in urban and rural environments and identified certain differences between them: 1) the nature of interpersonal interactions (more common in rural areas, where trust among residents is higher), 2) common interests and more frequent assistance among neighbours in rural areas, 3) a sense of belonging is greater in rural areas, which is reflected in the participation of resident in local activities and societies, 4) higher acquaintanceship of neighbours and other residents in the community and surrounding areas, and 5) less crime in rural areas.

The differences between urban and rural environments are also evident in crime statistics and crime forms. Analyses of crime statistics and findings of studies showed that the number of crimes in rural areas is significantly lower than

¹ This article is based on a research programme Security and safety in local communities – comparison of rural and urban environments (P5-0397 (A), 2019–2024), financed by the Slovenian Research Agency. The research programme is carried out by the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

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in urban areas (Glaeser & Sacerdote, 1999; Pavlović, 1998). Moreover, certain differences in forms of occurred crime can be observed (Japelj, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). Bunei, Rono, and Chessa (2014), Harkness (2017), Sacco, Johnson and Arnold (1993), and Zvonarević (1989) found that smaller concentration of residents has an impact on the development of specific (more personal) social relations with a higher level of social cohesion, organised (clean) environment, a higher level of assistance among neighbours, and enhanced informal social control, which generally function to reduce the commission of crime in rural areas.

Interpersonal disputes, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence are among the most common forms of crime in rural settings. In these communities, the tolerance for these offences among residents is rather high. Consequently, some incidents are not taken seriously (Harkness, 2017). Donnermeyer (2016) highlighted that about 50% of the world's population lives in rural settings, but very infrequently do criminological studies focus on crime in rural areas. However, in the last two decades, a new branch of criminology called rural criminology has been developing that focus on the study of crime in rural settings (Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2013).

The findings of preliminary and pilot studies in the Slovenian environment have pointed to differences in the characteristics of crime, fear of crime, etc., between urban and rural environments. Slovenia presents a specific region where distinctions between urban and rural areas are sometimes difficult (only in two Slovenian cities population exceeds 100,000 inhabitants). The problem can be seen in a lack of research about the occurrence, frequency, and location of crime in the rural areas of Slovenia. Therefore, we analysed different forms and concentration of crime in urban and rural Slovene areas to identify possible differences in forms and frequency of crime. Furthermore, we focused on police officers' perception of threats in urban and rural environments in two different time-periods. In conclusion, the discussion of results and proposals for future research are provided.

2 Crime in Rural and Urban Environments

Rogers and Pridemore (2016) tested Social Disorganisation Theory related to crime in rural communities and found that European studies contradict Chicago School findings on Social Disorganisation Theory. Their findings were similar to Donnermeyer (2016), Berg and Lauritsen (2015), and Barnett and Mencken (2002), who discovered that crime in rural areas varies greatly and that crime with a "personal connotation" (domestic violence) is more frequent.

Compared to the urban environment, the rural environment is generally characterised by population stability and greater homogeneity by race and ethnicity. Wilkinson (1984a, 1984b), Kowalski and Duffield (1990), and Arthur (1991) find that rurality is not a "constant" predictor of crime rates, while poverty in both environments has a positive correlation with crime. Researchers (Doucet & Lee, 2016; Lee, 2008; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997) also discovered that crime in rural areas is affected by population instability (immigration/emigration), ethnic heterogeneity, and family disruption. Behrendt, Porter and Vivian (2016) studied factors that influence crime in rural areas and found that crime is more frequent in rural settings that have rates of high unemployment and low educational levels (e.g., Indigenous Australians and North Americans, etc.). These environments are also characterised by: difficult socio-economic conditions (population decline and poor income or poverty); alcoholism; unemployment and lack of other social activities; inability to pay fines; excessive police presence and activity and limited reporting of crime; limited punishment options; limited access to alternative methods of punishment and problem solving; and poor economy and overcrowding. Furthermore, rural environments with high crime levels are also characterised by poor local community relations (e.g., racism and segregation in some places), unstable or unpredictable local community relations (high levels of violent crime), the need and desire for self-determination and autonomy (e.g., Aborigines, Native Americans), and unregulated police-community relations.

For rural areas, crime against farms and farmers can be high, which is a crime not present in urban areas simply because farms are not located there. The most common forms of crime in rural environments include the theft of livestock, cereals, crops, wool, eggs, fruits, nuts, vegetables, shells and other agricultural products; burglaries and thefts from houses and outbuildings (e.g., machinery, equipment, fuel, sprinklers, fertilizers, etc.); vandalism in fields or of objects; fraud (on products or mortgages); arson; biosecurity offences; illegal dumping of waste; water and wood theft from natural habitats; cultivation of marijuana or production of illicit drugs on agricultural land; abuse of animals and sometimes farmworkers; and illegal hunting (a common occurrence in rural areas as an issue with the social background of the individual, but may also be an activity of organised crime) (Barclay, 2015; Bunei et al., 2014; Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013; Donnermeyer & Barclay, 2005; Lovell, 2016; Nicholson, 2015; Pohja-Mykrä, 2016). Farmers, in general, do not report crime to the police. This may be due to a lack of knowledge or presumption that the police will not be successful (disinterested) at resolving the crime. Consequently, sometimes there is revenge against the perpetrator, a form of vigilantism (Lovell, 2016).

In rural areas, the percentage of certain forms of violence against women, such as sexual assault, rape, and physical and mental violence, is also higher compared to urban areas. Weisheit and Wells (2005) examined the increased number of homicides related to domestic violence in rural areas of the USA and obtained similar results as Ellis and DeKeseredy (1997). The problem is that violence in the rural environment remains hidden or is hidden surreptitiously, and consequently, women have fewer possibilities to search for or receive the proper help. Moreover, the perpetrator and the victim are more likely to know each other.

Regarding juvenile delinquency, Evans, Smokowski and Cotter (2016) point out that “classical” bullying is more common in rural settings than cyberbullying, and that vandalism is not as common as in urban areas. Weisheit and Brownstein (2016) add that rural areas, especially very remote areas, are ideal for cannabis cultivation and marijuana production (e.g., forests, remote fields or untreated areas, in which sowing of cannabis among other plants take place, etc.), as well as for the production of methamphetamines.

Concerning policing, various authors (Jones, Lithopoulos, & Ruddell, 2016; Yarwood & Wooff, 2016) emphasise that in a rural environment, the system of police activity and the criminal justice system is distinctive from that in an urban environment – smallness and interconnectedness of the rural areas affect the rigorousness of policing, which is, in general, more lenient than in urban environments. The economic, social and cultural factors of smaller environments are reflected in rural settings as they condition the response of the police and other state authorities. Funding sources are limited, and consequently, the response of the authorities is slower and usually more expensive. Local police officers and other state representatives are also part of the village social environment, which affects their judgment and decision-making.

Jones et al. (2016) point out that the history of rural areas also affects community policing (for example Indigenous peoples in Australia and North America). Such groups of people in rural areas generally live in difficult socio-economic conditions, consequently, more violence and crime occur in these environments, the treatment of local residents in the criminal justice system is looser and consequently poorer relations with the police (especially if the police have been violent in the past) are generated. The authors emphasise that in these environments, the police must first gain back the trust in the police and respect of the residents.

Yarwood and Wooff (2016) stated that modernization has brought police forces to rural areas whereby two specific characteristics, “visibility” and “accountability”, are expected

from them (Yarwood, 2003, 2008). Although the amount of crime is lower in the rural environment, environmental rurality and police operability must also be taken into account (Gilling 2011; Rudell & Lithopoulos, 2016; Wooff, 2015; Yarwood & Gardner, 2000). Ruddell (2015) highlights police officers in rural areas as so-called “generalists” who have to respond to almost everything that is happening, even though only 30% of applications fall within their area of work. Smith and McElwee (2013) find that one problem of rural police officers is to maintain social distance (the problem of over- or under-policing). What is more, some communities are more “resistant” to crime in terms of their economic and social development. Many partnerships and programs have been concluded in the UK to reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness in rural areas and to prevent crime or fear of crime (Yarwood & Wooff, 2016). This raises the question of who is actually responsible for rural policing (Yarwood, 2011) and what visions and guidelines for rurality are addressed or implemented by the police (Gilling, 2011), clearly indicating the arrival of plural policing.

3 Briefly about the Slovenian Police

In 1992, the Slovenian police as a body of the Ministry of Interior was formed, and the former state militia was abandoned. The development of the police on Slovenian territory started in the 19th century when Slovenia was part of the Austrian empire (establishment of gendarmes based on the French model). After the Second World War, Slovenia was one of the federal republics of socialist state Yugoslavia. The police in its pre-war shape was abandoned, and the militia was formed, highly influenced by the socialist party. The independence of Slovenia in 1991 caused shifts within police organisation in the form of de-politicisation and greater emphasis on human rights (Kolenc, 2002). Meško and Lobnikar (2018) stated that initial reforms were symbolic (e.g., renaming the former militia to the police, changing of insignia, etc.), however, in 1998 a new Police Act was adopted, which changed police powers and introduced the civilian oversight of policing. Moreover, the General Police Directorate became an autonomous body within the Ministry of the Interior. In 2013, adoption of new legislation was adopted, aimed at decentralization, community policing and intelligence-led policing.

The Director-General heads police in its current form, and the police organisation is organised at three levels: general police directorate (state level), police directorates (regional level), and police stations (local level). In 2018, 8,204 individuals were employed in police organisations of Slovenia, out of which: 1) 5,458 were uniformed police officers, 2) 1,712 were

non-uniformed police officers, and 3) 1,034 were other police personnel (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2019b). The authorities and work of the police are regulated with the Police act and Organisation and work of the police act (Zakon o organiziranosti in delu v policiji [ZODPol], 2013; Zakon o policiji [ZPol], 2009). The number of criminal offenses investigated by the police decreased from 89,511 in 2009 to 56,507 in 2018. Criminal offenses against property, life and limb, and drug-related offenses present the prevailing forms of crime (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2019a). Since 2015, the police have intensified its surveillance of the Slovenian southern border with Croatia, due to the migration crisis (Meško, Hacin, Pirnat, & Eman, 2018).

Policing in Slovenia depends heavily on the environment in which police officers work. In recent years rural areas have become a place of living for workers who commute to their jobs and seniors after their retirement (Barbič, 2005). This form of resettlement of the population does not present a challenge for Slovenes, as they are strongly connected to rural identities and culture, even if they are living in urban areas (Uršič, 2015). However, the resettlement of the population and changes in demographics in the rural areas lead to security threats and specific crimes that previously were not typical for the countryside. Nevertheless, Slovenian police officers in rural areas are faced with a unique set of challenges that distinguish them from their colleagues who work in suburban and urban areas. They have more frequent face-to-face contact with citizens whom they know personally, police stations in rural areas have less staff, the isolation of certain rural areas results in increased response time to calls for service, etc. (Adams, 2019; Pierce, 2001; Ricciardelli, 2018; Weisheit, Wells, & Falcone, 1994; Yarwood & Mawby, 2011). In the following section, crime characteristics in urban and rural environments in the period 2010–2018 are presented.

4 Crime in Urban and Rural Environments

In Table 1, characteristics of crime in rural and urban environments recorded by the police in the period 2010–2018 are presented. In general, the number of criminal offenses decreased from 90,004 in 2011 to 56,561 in 2017 (the number of crime decreased by 37.2%).⁴ In the study period, the crimes that increased included: 1) against humanity, 2) against suffrage and elections, 3) against labour and social security, 4) against general safety of people and property, 5) against safety of public traffic, and 6) against sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia and its democratic constitutional system.

⁴ The number of recorded crime by the Slovenian police differs from the number of investigated criminal offences.

The number of crimes against military service and crimes against defence of the state remained the same, while the number of other types of crimes decreased.

The number of criminal offenses in urban municipalities decreased from 50,748 in 2011 to 30,209 in 2017 (the number of crime decreased by 40.5%). In the study period the number of crimes against humanity, against labour and social security, and against the environment and natural resources increased. Crimes that stayed the same were: 1) against suffrage and elections, 2) against military service, 3) against general safety of people and property, 4) against sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia and its democratic constitutional system, and 5) against defence of the state. All other types of crime decreased.

The number of criminal offenses in rural municipalities⁵ decreased from 39,256 in 2011 to 26,352 in 2017 (the number of crime decreased by 32.9%). In the study period, some crimes increased, including crimes: 1) against humanity, 2) against suffrage and elections, 3) against labour and social security, 4) against general safety of people and property, 5) against safety of public traffic, and 6) against sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia and its democratic constitutional system. The number of crimes against military service, crimes against defence of the state, and crimes against international law remained the same, while the number of other types of crimes decreased.

In both (urban and rural) municipalities, crimes against property are the prevailing form of crime followed by crimes against the economy, crimes against marriage, family and children, crimes against human rights and freedoms, and crimes against human health. Comparison of different types of crime in urban and rural municipalities in the period 2010–2018 showed that crimes: 1) against humanity, 2) against human health, and 3) against property more frequently occur in urban municipalities. Moreover, crimes: 1) against life and body, 2) against sexual integrity, 3) against marriage, family and children, 4) against safety of public traffic, and 5) against environment and natural resources more frequently occur in urban municipalities. In the following section the methodology of the empirical part of the study on police officers' perception of threats in urban and rural environments is presented.

⁵ In Slovenia, the naming of non-urban municipalities does not officially exist (the term municipality is used). For the purpose of easier differentiation between different types of municipalities, the term rural municipality will be used.

Table 1: Recorded crime in urban and rural municipalities in the period 2010–2018 (source: Generalna policijska uprava, 2019)

Type of crime	Municipality	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Crimes against humanity	Urban	3	3	3	2	4	47	31	34	60
	Rural	1	4	3	37	0	4	1	33	13
Crimes against life and body	Urban	1,120	958	938	863	811	731	608	620	669
	Rural	1,276	1,249	1,283	1,139	998	942	985	888	967
Crimes against human rights and freedoms	Urban	1,620	1,554	1,791	483	768	566	651	710	841
	Rural	2,469	2,384	1,108	577	457	463	1,248	1,243	1,243
Crimes against suffrage and elections	Urban	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Rural	0	1	0	2	4	1	11	0	1
Crimes against honour and good name	Urban	31	56	61	62	63	43	43	57	29
	Rural	48	52	38	72	32	43	67	47	35
Crimes against sexual integrity	Urban	160	137	160	169	129	131	125	166	141
	Rural	319	340	223	231	176	141	227	262	212
Crimes against human health	Urban	1,070	892	1,144	1,187	963	1,086	820	798	836
	Rural	884	821	803	722	900	822	815	990	803
Crimes against marriage, family and children	Urban	2,316	2,279	2,679	2,252	2,072	2,127	771	777	824
	Rural	3,721	3,511	3,893	3,905	4,006	3,051	1,694	1,538	1,958
Crimes against labour and social security	Urban	176	526	1,337	1,388	3,824	1,626	1,702	865	881
	Rural	473	963	907	1,978	2,105	1,200	1,497	611	788
Crimes against property	Urban	35,060	35,921	36,937	37,745	35,242	27,491	23,176	21,903	22,529
	Rural	22,806	23,075	26,068	27,047	22,274	16,740	18,573	16,928	15,601
Crimes against the economy	Urban	6,020	5,531	4,753	5,280	3,619	2,924	2,493	2,578	2,011
	Rural	3,468	3,041	2,649	3,702	3,169	2,225	1,893	2,744	2,183
Crimes against legal traffic	Urban	1,948	1,533	1,471	1,696	1,965	2,079	828	1,421	537
	Rural	2,104	1,454	1,694	1,344	1,503	2,921	1,167	1,152	1,413
Crimes against official duty, public authority and public resources	Urban	90	139	107	172	325	279	305	155	70
	Rural	129	172	83	128	411	113	92	82	42
Crimes against justice	Urban	288	169	138	137	154	160	128	122	108
	Rural	197	204	188	165	195	150	170	128	134
Crimes against public order and peace	Urban	694	724	828	757	616	478	590	427	520
	Rural	1,004	1044	821	583	603	522	518	500	588
Crimes against military service	Urban	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Rural	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Crimes against general safety of people and property	Urban	107	126	87	109	111	93	89	91	107
	Rural	187	171	177	152	138	143	185	208	198
Crimes against safety of public traffic	Urban	17	26	17	12	20	11	12	23	15
	Rural	23	35	30	24	36	30	24	31	40
Crimes against environment and natural resources	Urban	26	52	31	48	35	36	30	27	31
	Rural	147	144	131	181	120	157	114	124	131
Crimes against sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia and its democratic constitutional system	Urban	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Rural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Crimes against defence of the state	Urban	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Rural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crimes against international law	Urban	2	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
	Rural	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total (urban)		50,748	50,628	52,483	52,364	50,725	39,908	32,404	30,774	30,209
Total (rural)		39,256	38,666	40,099	41,989	37,127	29,669	29,279	27,509	26,352
Total		90,004	89,294	92,582	94,353	87,852	69,577	61,683	58,283	56,561

5 Methodology

The present study focuses on police officers' perception of security threats in different cultural environments based on results from a questionnaire used in the study on security and safety in local communities (Meško, Sotlar, Lobnikar, Jere, & Tominc, 2012). Participation of police officers in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Surveys were conducted in the period between November 2011 and January 2012, and in spring in 2017. Within eight police directorates, 24 police stations were selected (eight small, eight medium, and eight large). Eight of them were located in urban environments (Kranj, Maribor, Nova Gorica, Ljubljana, Celje, Novo mesto, Koper, Murska Sobota) and 16 were located in rural environments (Škofja Loka, Jesenice, Ajdovščina, Gorišnica, Vrhnika, Gornji Petrovci, Domžale, Bovec, Kozina, Trebnje, Radlje ob Dravi, Šmarje pri Jelšah, Sežana, Dolenjske Toplice, Lendava, Podlehnik). In both time-periods, surveying took place at the same police stations. Police station commanders arranged a meeting with police officers at the police station where they would fill in the questionnaire after the presentation of the study objectives and instructions. Police officers completed the questionnaire at their regular working meetings. The data were entered in a dataset and analysed with the SPSS program.

5.1 Sample

The sample from 2011 is based on data obtained from surveying 581 police officers from 24 police stations. It represented 7.1% of the average number of police officers in 2011 (8.808 individuals were employed in the Slovenian police in 2011). Approximately, 46% of the respondents worked at police stations located in rural environments. More than 80% of respondents were males,⁶ and approximately half of the respondents were between 31 and 45 years old (the average number of Slovenian police officers in 2011 was 38.1 years). One quarter (25.1%) of respondents earned some form of higher education (in 2011, 27.5% of all police officers in the Slovenian police obtained some form of higher education) (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2012). More than a third (37.9%) of respondents were employed in the police for more than 16 years. Half of the respondents (50.4%) reported their monthly income to be approximately the same as the average monthly income in Slovenia (988 EUR). Less than half (46.6%) of the respondents work in an urban environment (police station was located in an urban municipality).

The sample from 2017 is based on data obtained from surveying 520 police officers from 24 police stations. It represented 6.3% of the average number of police officers in 2017 (8.204 individuals were employed in the Slovenian police in 2017). Almost, 47% of the respondents worked at police stations located in rural environments. More than 80% of respondents were males,⁷ and almost two-thirds (64.0%) of the respondents were between 31 and 45 years old (the average number of Slovenian police officers in 2017 was 41.7 years). Approximately 40% of respondents earned some form of higher education (in 2017, 29.1% of all police officers in the Slovenian police obtained some form of higher education) (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2018). More than half of the respondents (57.1%) were employed in the police for more than 16 years. Little less than half of the respondents reported their monthly income to be lower than average monthly income in Slovenia (1,087 EUR). Less than half (46.9%) of the respondents work in the urban environment (police station was located in an urban municipality). Characteristics of both samples are presented in Table 2.

⁶ In 2011, 2,116 women (24.0%) and 6,692 men (76.0%) were employed in the Slovenian police (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2012).

⁷ In 2017, 2,082 women (25.4%) and 6,122 men (74.6%) were employed in the Slovenian police (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2018).

Table 2: Description of the sample

Variable		2011 (n = 581)				2017 (n = 520)			
		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender	Male	264	45.4	228	39.2	231	44.4	211	40.6
	Female	43	7.4	41	7.1	43	8.3	32	6.1
	No answer	5 (0.9%)				3 (0.6%)			
Age (in years)	< 30	95	16.4	99	17.1	24	4.6	25	4.8
	31–45	171	29.4	134	23.1	177	34.0	156	30.0
	46 <	31	5.3	28	4.8	72	13.9	61	11.7
	No answer	23 (3.9%)				5 (1.0%)			
Education	Upper secondary and less?	227	39.1	191	32.8	168	32.3	136	26.1
	Higher vocational and more?	73	12.6	73	12.6	106	20.4	106	20.4
	No answer	17 (2.9%)				4 (0.8%)			
Years of service	< 5	69	11.9	63	10.8	12	2.3	15	2.9
	6–10	71	12.2	55	9.5	54	10.4	47	9.0
	11–15	52	8.9	41	7.1	49	9.4	37	7.1
	16 <	111	19.1	109	18.8	155	29.8	142	27.3
	No answer	10 (1.7%)				9 (1.8%)			
Income	Less than average	163	28.1	130	22.4	119	22.9	113	21.7
	Average	99	17.0	89	15.3	94	18.1	79	15.2
	More than average	39	6.7	38	6.5	51	9.8	43	8.3
	No answer	23 (4.0%)				21 (4.0%)			

The following section describes the variables examined, which were subjected to factor analyses.

5.2 Factors

In Table 3, variables subjected to factor analysis (Principal component factoring, rotation Varimax) and further analysed using discriminant analyses are presented.

Table 3: Description of variables included in the factor analysis

Variable	2011				2017			
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Neighbourhood safety</i> ($\alpha = 0.85$; KMO = 0.77; var. = 69.24%) ^a	3.48	0.74	2.99	0.69	3.50	0.80	3.12	0.72
Residents feel relaxed in the neighbourhood.	3.38	0.89	2.91	0.81	3.39	0.93	2.97	0.81
Residents feel safe.	3.65	0.91	3.21	0.84	3.69	0.87	3.35	0.82
When residents walk through the neighbourhood at night, they feel safe.	3.70	0.92	3.23	0.91	3.81	0.92	3.36	0.85
When someone is not at home, he can rely on neighbours to look after his home or pay attention to possible trouble.	3.16	0.92	2.65	0.89	3.29	0.94	2.79	0.98
<i>Security threat (public disorder)</i> ($\alpha = 0.89$; KMO = 0.68; var. = 81.51%) ^b	2.43	0.81	3.05	0.92	2.45	0.75	2.87	0.77
Noise or loud music from cafes.	2.50	0.88	3.13	0.98	2.54	0.88	3.04	0.92
Noise or loud music from private parties.	2.50	0.88	3.13	0.98	2.47	0.87	2.87	0.89
Outdoor events at night.	2.28	0.89	2.84	1.00	2.35	0.85	2.68	0.88
<i>Security threat (abuse of alcohol)</i> ($\alpha = 0.86$; KMO = 0.77; var. = 70.04%) ^b	3.18	0.83	3.58	0.89	3.17	0.78	3.48	0.79
Alcohol abuse.	3.50	0.93	3.54	0.99	3.50	0.94	3.54	0.94
Serving alcohol beverages to minors.	3.15	0.95	3.56	0.99	2.91	0.95	3.22	0.97
Serving alcohol beverages to drunk people.	3.15	0.95	3.5	0.99	3.54	0.95	3.61	0.96
Drinking in public places.	2.94	0.97	3.71	1.07	2.83	1.01	3.55	1.05
<i>Socio-economic disadvantage</i> ($\alpha = 0.82$; KMO = 0.66; var. = 73.52%) ^b	3.69	0.86	3.81	0.87	3.24	0.79	3.31	0.87
Economic downturn.	3.39	1.11	3.53	1.07	3.09	1.02	3.14	1.04
Unemployment.	3.88	0.93	4.02	0.97	3.36	0.91	3.47	1.02
Poverty.	3.73	0.96	3.84	1.03	3.23	0.93	3.35	1.00
<i>Strategy of community policing (goals)*</i> ($\alpha = 0.87$; KMO = 0.66; var. = 68.72%) ^c	-	-	-	-	3.14	0.76	3.05	0.76
More partnership (cooperation) with the local community.	-	-	-	-	3.14	0.84	2.97	0.86
More partnership (cooperation) with state authorities.	-	-	-	-	3.15	0.79	3.00	0.85
More partnership (cooperation) with representatives of civil society.	-	-	-	-	3.14	0.80	2.97	0.84
Greater visibility and presence of the police in the local community.	-	-	-	-	3.18	1.03	2.93	1.03
Increasing the sense of safety among citizens.	-	-	-	-	3.29	0.93	3.13	0.89
Increasing trust in the work of the police.	-	-	-	-	3.26	0.93	3.17	0.94
Increasing satisfaction with the work of the police	-	-	-	-	3.25	0.91	3.17	0.93

* Factor was calculated based on the data of surveyed police officers in 2017.

^a Scale: from 1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree.

^b Scale: from 1 – No problem at all to 5 – Very big problem.

^c Scale: from 1 – Goals are not achieved at all to 5 – Goals are completely achieved.

6 Findings

In Table 4, the results of the discriminant analysis are presented. Wilks' Lambda (0.83; $p < 0.001$) revealed statistically significant differences between police officer perceptions of security threats in rural and urban environments in 2011. The results emphasise that neighbourhood safety (66.87; $p < 0.001$), security threat (public disorder) (74.13; $p < 0.001$), and security threat (abuse of alcohol) (32.44; $p < 0.001$) affect differentiation between the groups. A comparison between police officers in rural and urban environments reveals that police officers in rural environments perceive neighbourhood safety more positively, while police officers working in urban environments perceive security threats of public disorder and abuse of alcohol as a greater threat. Classification of police officer responses shows that 71.1% of the originally grouped respondents were correctly classified (63.1% of police officers in urban environment and 78.1% of police officers in rural environment). Results of the classification reveal that police officers in rural environment have more unified views, with 36.9% of police officers in urban environment expressing similar views as police officers in rural environment. Only 21.9% of police officers in rural environments have similar views as police officers in urban environment.

In Table 5, the results of the discriminant analysis are presented. Wilks' Lambda (0.89; $p < 0.001$) revealed statistically significant differences between police officer perceptions of security threats in rural and urban environments in 2017. The results emphasise that neighbourhood safety (32.50; $p < 0.001$), security threat (public disorder) (41.04; $p < 0.001$), and security threat (abuse of alcohol) (19.72; $p < 0.001$) affect differentiation between the groups. A comparison between police officers in rural and urban environments reveals that police officers in rural environments perceive neighbourhood safety more positively, while police officers in urban environments perceive security threats of public disorder and abuse of alcohol as a greater threat. Classification of police officer responses shows that 63.1% of the originally grouped respondents were correctly classified (56.6% of police officers in urban environment and 68.8% of police officers in rural environment). Results of the classification reveal that police officers in rural environments have more unified views, with 43.4% of police officers in urban environment expressing similar views as police officers in rural environments. Only 31.2% of police officers in rural environments have similar views as police officers in urban environments.

Table 4: Discriminant analysis: Police officers' perception of security threats in rural and urban environments in 2011

Variable	Rural		Urban		Wilks' Lambda	F
	M	SD	M	SD		
Neighbourhood safety	3.48	0.74	2.99	0.69	0.89	66.87***
Security threat (public disorder)	2.43	0.81	3.05	0.92	0.89	74.13***
Security threat (abuse of alcohol)	3.18	0.83	3.58	0.89	0.95	32.44***
Socio-economic disadvantage	3.69	0.86	3.81	0.87	0.99	2.85
Wilks' Lambda					0.83***	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5: Discriminant analysis: Police officers' perception of threats in rural and urban environments in 2017

Variable	Rural		Urban		Wilks' Lambda	F
	M	SD	M	SD		
Neighbourhood safety	3.50	0.80	3.12	0.72	0.94	32.50***
Security threat (public disorder)	2.45	0.75	2.87	0.77	0.94	41.04***
Security threat (abuse of alcohol)	3.17	0.78	3.48	0.79	0.96	19.72***
Socio-economic disadvantage	3.24	0.79	3.31	0.87	0.99	1.01
Strategy of community policing (goals)	3.14	0.76	3.05	0.76	0.99	
Wilks' Lambda					0.89***	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

In Table 6, the results of the discriminant analysis are presented. Wilks' Lambda (0.92; $p < 0.001$) revealed statistically significant differences between police officer perceptions of security threats in rural environments in 2011 and 2017. The results emphasise that socio-economic disadvantage (44.07; $p < 0.001$) affects differentiation between the groups. A comparison between police officers in rural environments in 2011 and 2017 reveals that police officers in rural environments in 2017 perceive socio-economic disadvantages as a greater threat than in 2011. Classification of police officers responses shows that 62.6% of the originally grouped respondents were correctly classified (70.3% of police officers in 2011 and 54.0% of police officers in 2017). Results of the classification reveal that police officers in 2011 have more unified views, with 46.0% of police officers in 2017 expressing views similar to police officers in 2011. Only 29.7% of police officers in 2011 have similar views as police officers in 2017.

security threats in urban environments in 2011 and 2017. The results emphasise that neighbourhood safety (4.23; $p < 0.05$), security threat (public disorder) (5.77; $p < 0.05$), and socio-economic disadvantage (42.69; $p < 0.001$) affect differentiation between the groups. A comparison between police officers in urban environments in 2011 and 2017 reveals that police officers in urban environments in 2011 perceive security threats related to public disorder and socio-economic disadvantages as a greater threat than in 2017. Moreover, police officers in urban environments in 2017 perceive neighbourhood safety more positively than police officers in 2011. Classification of police officer responses shows that 61.4% of the originally grouped respondents were correctly classified (66.8% of police officers in 2011 and 55.30% of police officers in 2017). Results of the classification reveal that police officers in 2011 have more unified views, with 44.7% of police officers in 2017 expressing similar views as police officers in 2011.

Table 6: Discriminant analysis: Police officers' perception of threats in the rural environment in 2011 and 2017

Variable	Rural		Urban		Wilks' Lambda	F
	M	SD	M	SD		
Neighbourhood safety	3.48	0.74	3.50	0.80	1.00	0.11
Security threat (public disorder)	2.43	0.81	2.45	0.75	1.00	0.05
Security threat (abuse of alcohol)	3.18	0.83	3.17	0.78	1.00	0.01
Socio-economic disadvantage	3.69	0.86	3.24	0.79	0.93	44.07***
Wilks' Lambda					0.92***	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

In Table 7, the results of the discriminant analysis are presented. Wilks' Lambda (0.91; $p < 0.001$) revealed statistically significant differences between police officer perceptions of

Only 33.2% of police officers in 2011 have similar views as police officers in 2017.

Table 7: Discriminant analysis: Police officers' perception of threats in the urban environment in 2011 and 2017

Variable	Rural		Urban		Wilks' Lambda	F
	M	SD	M	SD		
Neighbourhood safety	2.99	0.69	3.12	0.72	0.99	4.23*
Security threat (public disorder)	3.05	0.92	2.87	0.77	0.99	5.77*
Security threat (abuse of alcohol)	3.58	0.89	3.48	0.79	0.99	2.03
Socio-economic disadvantage	3.81	0.87	3.31	0.87	0.92	42.69***
Wilks' Lambda					0.91***	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

Differences between rural and urban environments are clearly seen in the cultural and historical development, social relations, conservatism, and the characteristics of crime. The analysis of crime statistics from 2010 to 2018 in urban and rural environments in Slovenia showed that the number of crimes in rural areas is lower than in urban areas and that differences in crime characteristics were also present. Crime in rural areas is affected by: population instability (immigration/emigration), ethical heterogeneity and family disruption (Doucet & Lee, 2016; Lee, 2008; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997). Rurality as such is not a “constant” predictor of crime rates, however, we can claim that crime with a “personal connotation”, such as domestic violence, is higher in rural environments (Berh & Lauritsen, 2015; Weisheit & Donnermeyer, 2000). What is more, poverty is positively correlated with crime in both environments.

Slovenia is a small country, where it is quite difficult to clearly distinguish between rural and urban environments. Findings showed that police officers stationed in rural environments perceived neighbourhood safety more positively than their colleagues in urban environments. Small communities with strong informal surveillance, which more likely exists in rural environments, enhance the feeling of safety for both residents and police officers. Moreover, in such communities, the level of crime and the presence of fear of crime is lower (Eman, Meško, & Fields, 2009; Hacin & Eman, 2014; Meško & Eman, 2016; Meško, Šifrer, & Vonšnjak, 2012).

On the other hand, police officers in urban environments perceive security threats related to public disorder and abuse of alcohol as more serious than their colleagues in the rural environment. Public disorder in the form of loud music and all-night parties is more characteristic for urban environments with appropriate infrastructure (e.g., bars, night clubs, pubs, etc.). Moreover, the smallness of rural settlements prevents the gathering of a relatively large number of young people (there is simply not enough young people). Moreover, all-night parties in rural environments take place in the form of an event, in which the whole community participates. Regarding the threat of abuse of alcohol, we can say that tolerance towards abuse of alcohol, serving alcohol to minors, and public drunkenness is lower in urban areas than in villages. Residents in rural areas often have their own vineyards or small distilleries for the production of alcohol for their personal consumption. We can only speculate that drinking in rural areas is mostly limited to local pubs and individual households and is not conducted in public. Furthermore, the social and cultural characteristics of smaller environments are reflected in rural settings that also condition the response of

the police. Local police officers are part of the village social environment, in a sense that the smallness and interconnectedness of rural areas affect the rigorousness of policing, which is generally not as rigorous as in urban environments (Jones et al., 2016; Weisheit et al. 2006; Yarwood & Woolf, 2016).

Police officer perceptions of socio-economic disadvantages as a threat in rural and urban environments decreased in the period 2011–2017. In 2011, the effects of the economic crisis (unemployment, poverty, etc.) that hit Slovenia was still strongly present in all communities. The influence of high levels of unemployment on crime, especially in rural environments was already confirmed by Behrendt et al. (2016). Moreover, police officers’ perception of neighbourhood safety increased, while the perception of security threats related to public disorder decreased.

The limitation of the study is seen in the small number of included factors (only four factors were included). Moreover, a possibility exists that police officers gave socially desirable answers in the process of surveying, due to fear of disclosure and possible sanctions from their supervisors.

Future research should focus on the examination of differences between police officer perceptions of various threats (including those that are characteristic solely for the rural or urban environment), as there are many areas in Slovenia where the borders between rural and urban environments are blurred. An in-depth study should be conducted on police officer perceptions of threats, which would provide insights into possible local particularities in different areas across Slovenia. Moreover, specifics of the field of work and environment of police officers that influence their perception of threats should not be neglected in future research.

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Zaznavanje groženj pri policistih v urbanih in ruralnih okoljih

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Urbanizacija je privedla do razlik v družbenih interakcijah in naravi kriminalitete v urbanem in ruralnem okolju. V prispevku smo analizirali zaznavanje groženj pri policistih v urbanih in ruralnih okoljih v Sloveniji. Rezultati študije, ki je bila izvedena v zimskih mesecih 2011–2012 in spomladi 2017, so pokazali, da policisti v ruralnem okolju zaznavajo varnost v soseski bolj pozitivno, medtem ko policisti v urbanem okolju zaznavajo varnostne grožnje, povezane z javnim neredom ter zlorabo alkohola, kot večje grožnje. Primerjava med zaznavami groženj pri policistih v obeh obdobjih je pokazala, da zaznava resnosti groženj in socialnoekonomskih prikrajšanosti upada. Nadalje so bile v različnih časovnih obdobjih ugotovljene tudi statistično pomembne razlike med dojemanjem varnosti soseske, varnostnih groženj, povezanih z javnim neredom, in socialnoekonomskih prikrajšanosti.

Ključne besede: policisti, grožnje, ruralno in urbano okolje, Slovenija

UDK: 343.9+351.78(497.4)