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Perception of Security Phenomena in Local Communities in Slovenia[1]

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The concept of human security assumes that the provision of security is human-centred, that is, on people. Today's complex security environment makes it hard for the individual to protect himself/herself without external assistance. This means it is important that security phenomena as perceived by residents should be properly understood by both policymakers and the agencies and services responsible for providing security and safety. Taking public opinion into account adds to the legitimacy of security policy. The paper presents public opinion on security-related issues in the last 25 years, focusing on research in 2011 and 2017 and examining the views held by residents and police officers about security phenomena in local communities. Results of recent research show that respondents perceive phenomena – like the provision of alcoholic beverages to drunk people, unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, theft, speeding, and burglary – as key (security) problems. Compared with male residents, females believe phenomena like drinking alcohol in public, the accumulation of litter in public places, pollution of the natural environment, speeding, and providing alcohol to juveniles are more problematic in the local community. In contrast to male police officers, their female colleagues are more likely to perceive the drinking of alcohol in public, accumulation of litter in public places, theft, burglary, and pollution of the natural environment as more threatening. Residents and police officers from suburban and rural areas view security phenomena quite similarly, unlike respondents from urban areas who attach greater importance to most phenomena.

Key words: security phenomena, public opinion, human security, local community, security provision, residents, police officers, security policy

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1 Introduction

Security is an inherently complex term because it is determined by space and time, as well as individual entities (individuals, groups, communities, states, regions, etc.) together with their own norms and values. The same applies with threats, the 'flip side of the coin'. Since the Cold War came to an end, threats have become increasingly multidimensional, transnational and complex. The new security environment is more vulnerable, and fragile, with higher threat levels. More emphasis is put on security of the individual, not on states like it was in the past (Grizold & Bučar, 2011). Thus, security should be considered more broadly than previously (including social well-being, technological development, etc.). Namely, security is not a concept with fixed boundaries (Williams, 2012) but one that is being constantly contested (Smith, 2002). This not only means it is difficult to agree on the definition/meaning of a particular concept (Williams, 2012), but that some concepts in the social sciences remain in constant dispute due to the inability to settle on a generally accepted definition (Smith, 2002).

Research practice shows that one must follow certain rules in the study of security. For example, while analysing security, Buzan and Hansen (in Grizold & Bučar, 2011) noted four vital questions: 1) the question of the reference object (for whom the security is being provide for); 2) the question of whether inside and outside territorial border threats are mentioned in the discussion (state sovereignty); 3) the question of the military/political dimension in security studies; and 4) the question of security and the dynamics of threats. Pavone, Degli-Esposti and Santiago (2015) concentrate on the following elements in security studies: who safeguards (the security actor/the security entity); protection from what (threats); whom to protect (the reference object: an object at risk needing to be protected); why protection is needed; what are the potential results; and in what conditions is the protection provided? Williams (2008, 2012) adds four more questions for consideration in security studies: 1) what is security;

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2) whose security are we talking about; 3) what do we consider as security matters; and 4) how can we achieve security?

When dealing with the provision of security today, one often hears about the concept of human security. This concept may be defined as: 1) an approach that emphasises the importance of basic human goods (prosperity as an indicator of security); 2) a dogmatic or interventionist approach (security must necessarily be focused on the individual); 3) an approach where development is an asset, not a goal; and 4) an approach looking at non-traditional security and civil society (Grizold & Bučar, 2011). Therefore, security these days links up with various humanitarian, economic and social issues so as to reduce or avoid people's suffering through the provision of security. Security is no more and no less than what the individual considers a security problem and, as such, it is a completely subjective concept (Williams, 2012). Accordingly, security is defined from the viewpoint of every individual, shaped by their needs, values and idiosyncrasies. Henry Kissinger, the politician, diplomat, national security professional and Nobel Peace Prize winner once stated that in international relations "it is not a matter of what is true that counts, but a matter of what is perceived to be true" (Pilger, 2014). Basically, the same is true when it comes to the perception of security phenomena and the provision of security in the local community. While discussing the security of the individual, we should also consider a sociological perspective. 'Thomas' theorem' assumes that if one identifies situations as real/true, they should then be treated as real in all dimensions, along with all the consequences (Merton, 1995; Scott & Marshall, 2009).

The individual's perception of security is largely determined by events and the situation at the local level, given that the consequences of security phenomena are mostly visible and perceptible at that level. The local security environment can thus strongly affect the quality of an individual's life. An (un)safe environment not only endangers the fundamental values of the individual and society, but also greatly influences their development. Hence, security phenomena determine the (national) security policy and therefore the security interests and security goals set by the state (Sotlar, 2008). Irrespective of whether security phenomena are global, transnational or national in origin, the impacts are always local (Sotlar, 2015). It is thus up to local decision-makers (and security organisations) to assess what is an actual or potential threat to the individual and society. Phenomena in the security realm force society to ponder how and with which forces and resources it should use to address the problems that arise (Sotlar, 2015).

Therefore, policymakers must take public opinion into account and seek to understand why and how society, the local community, and individuals act or respond in certain circumstances. Decision-makers should not overlook the desires of society, social groups, and individuals. The security issues residents perceive in various surveys are not necessarily always a perfect reflection of reality, but should still be accounted for by policymakers if they wish to ensure the legitimacy of their decisions related to security matters and beyond. It is also important not to create moral panic with discussions and decisions on security. Securitisation is a process in which political leaders, governments, interest groups and others define a particular event as a security phenomenon or declare it as a key problem. This enables decision-makers to legalise the measures they wish to implement. Securitisation also depends on civil society's preparedness to accept such a definition by politicians and other elites. Namely, insecurity is not simply seen as a direct consequence of a threat itself but as a result of the (political) interpretation of that threat (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998). This is not about the reality of a threat, but a process in which a common understanding of security phenomena is constructed (Wæver, 2004). Yet, security policymakers should not rely exclusively on public opinion and not instrumentalise the decision-making process to follow their narrow, political or even ideological interests. If policymakers are smart, they will also incorporate the views of the professional public, long-term political agreements, the international security situation, and foreign experience.

This paper brings insight into how residents and police officers perceive certain security phenomena in their local community as a problem. Attention is paid to surveys on the provision of security in local communities conducted by Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor in 2011 (Meško, Sotlar, Lobnikar, Tominc, & Jere, 2012; Tominc & Sotlar, 2012, 2017) and 2017 (Tominc & Sotlar, 2018), although some other findings from longitudinal research on security phenomena in Slovenia are presented as well.

2 Public Opinion on Security Phenomena in Slovenia

2.1 Selected Characteristics of Slovenian Public Opinion on Security Phenomena

Based on analysis of the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey,[4] Malešič and Vegič (2007) recognised Slovenian public opinion as rational when dealing with key security topics.

[4] In Slovenia, continuous and systematic studies of public opinion on security phenomena (of course, on top of other security, defence and military issues) are conducted at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Defence Research Centre (usually within the Slovenian Public Opinion research programme 1968–).

Typically, public preferences concerning security are genuine and have meaning. Observations of the same variables show that public opinion on security phenomena is relatively stable in the long term. If trends change, they are generally related to altered circumstances. This may be seen by the many security phenomena that are also perceived to be a threat. Public opinion shows meaningful (logic) patterns and is not internally contradictory, indicating the consistency of Slovenian public opinion (Malešič & Vegič, 2007).

Based on discussions on the rationality (responsiveness), consistency, stability and reliability of public opinion, Malešič and Vegič (2007; 2009) also considered the characteristics of public opinion surveys after 1990 with respect to groups of variables related to security in Slovenia. Burke (in Malešič & Vegič, 2007) observed that long-term public opinion trends on security issues indicate public opinion is highly organised and responds rationally to the available information, while striving for sustainability. If it does change, it is usually a reasonable response to altered circumstances and new information. The intensity of public opinion reflects whether people are convinced about certain security issues. They are sometimes willing to take certain actions (e.g., on terrorism), while at other times their reaction is lukewarm and without certain background motives (Hartl in Malešič & Vegič, 2007). When it comes to an issue that is complex and professional in nature (also in relation to security), the public often does not have a well-formed opinion, but still feels obliged to answer the questions being put to them (Malešič & Vegič, 2007; Page & Shapiro, 1983).

Malešič and Vegič (2007) conclude that the response of Slovenian public opinion to vital security topics may be described as rational, since the public's preferences with regard to security are genuine and hold significance. Changes towards security are the public's response to altered circumstances and information received (from the mass media, for example), indicating a fair amount of constancy. In this sense, public opinion may be a backbone for the political elite while addressing key security phenomena. The Slovenian public does not always respect the opinion of the country's political elites, but still supports the main national security projects. This is a pragmatic attitude to specific issues in given circumstances (values) (Malešič & Vegič, 2009).

2.2 Findings from the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey on (In)security in Slovenia

Longitudinal research of the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey between 2001 and 2015 shows the vast majority of respondents (residents of Slovenia) generally feel very safe (see Table 1).

The share of people who feel safe grew by 10 percentage points between 2001 and 2003, also remaining above 80% in 2005. Yet, in 2007 and 2009 this trend started to decrease, and in 2012 the downward movement became even more pronounced. The reasons for this lie in the economic crisis in Slovenia (and the world) and, thus, in the poor social situation facing society. This is explained in Table 2, which shows perceptions of a set of security threats. The largest deviation from the long-term average is observed in 2012, when almost one-fifth (22.3%) of respondents stated they generally felt threatened in the given social and political situation, while unemployment was estimated as the biggest threat (see Table 2).

Table 1: The perception of (in)security in the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (sources: Hafner Fink & Malešič, 2016; Hafner-Fink et al., 2013; Jelušič et al., 2005; Malešič et al., 2007, 2009; Toš et al., 2001, 2003)

Do you feel safe or threatened? (in %)	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2012	2015
Safe	71.9	81.9	81.8	78.4	72.0	68.0	78.8
Threatened	10.9	13.8	9.4	10.4	17.2	22.3	14.0
I do not now; I cannot answer; no answer	17.2	4.3	8.8	11.2	10.8	9.7	7.2

Table 2: Perceived threats according to the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (*N* = 1,000) (sources: Hafner-Fink et al., 2013; Jelušič et al., 2005; Malešič et al., 2007, 2009; Malešič & Vegič, 2009: 105; Toš et al., 1994, 1999, 2001, 2003)

Security threats/year	1994	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2012
Unemployment	-*	3.35	3.14	3.26	3.24	2.97	3.46	3.73
Crime	3.14	3.46	3.28	3.28	3.20	3.20	3.18	3.52
Drugs narcotics	2.95	3.45	3.41	3.28	3.21	3.17	3.12	2.95
Traffic accidents	-*	3.21	3.24	3.16	3.12	3.34	3.22	2.88
Poverty	-*	3.13	3.05	3.08	3.05	2.99	3.25	3.51
Destruction of the environment	3.17	3.35	3.07	2.91	3.06	3.04	3.12	3.03
Selling off of national assets	3.01	3.14	2.87	3.06	2.96	3.03	3.19	3.17
Economic problems	3.08	3.22	2.99	2.92	2.85	2.69	3.14	3.54
Reducing the number of births	2.25	3.29	3.00	3.09	3.14	2.98	2.60	2.52
Suicides	-*	3.08	2.88	2.82	2.72	2.74	2.74	2.58
Internal political instability	2.89	2.94	2.53	2.59	2.45	2.51	2.61	3.06
Refugees, illegal immigrants	2.68	2.98	2.74	2.59	2.49	2.52	2.47	2.01
Lagging behind in the field of science and technology	2.66	2.83	2.33	2.47	2.55	2.41	2.67	2.30
Natural and technological disasters	2.80/2.76	3.19	2.76	2.62	2.73	2.85	2.83	2.68
Infectious diseases (AIDS etc.)	-*	2.77	2.43	2.21	2.28	2.22	2.23	1.98
Conflicts in the territory of former Yugoslavia	2.72	2.74	2.09	2.31	2.22	2.15	2.26	1.78
Extreme nationalism	2.48	2.53	2.20	2.14	2.15	2.07	2.14	1.89
Terrorism	2.45	2.64	2.09	1.87	1.90	1.91	1.79	1.63
Military threats posed by other states	2.36	2.21	1.79	1.76	1.68	1.70	1.68	1.39
Disputes with neighbouring countries	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	1.75
Cyber-attacks on computer systems and networks	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	2.03
Energy dependency on the rest of the world	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	2.54
Financial crisis, recession	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	3.63

Legend: 1 – not considered a threat, 4 – considered very threatening; * – the variable was not covered by the survey

As shown in Table 2, the Slovenian public believes that non-military sources of threat including crime, socio-economic factors (unemployment, poverty, low birth rates), traffic accidents, and environmental destruction, followed by suicides, natural and technological disasters, economic problems, and refugees and illegal immigrants, are the key to Slovenia's security and development.

The perception of economic factors as a threat was fairly high in 1999, when the trend reversed and then reached its lowest value in 2007. In 2009, the trend turned upward and economic factors have again been becoming increasingly important in the perception of security. This trend also coincides with statistical indicators of unemployment in Slovenia (Figure 1).

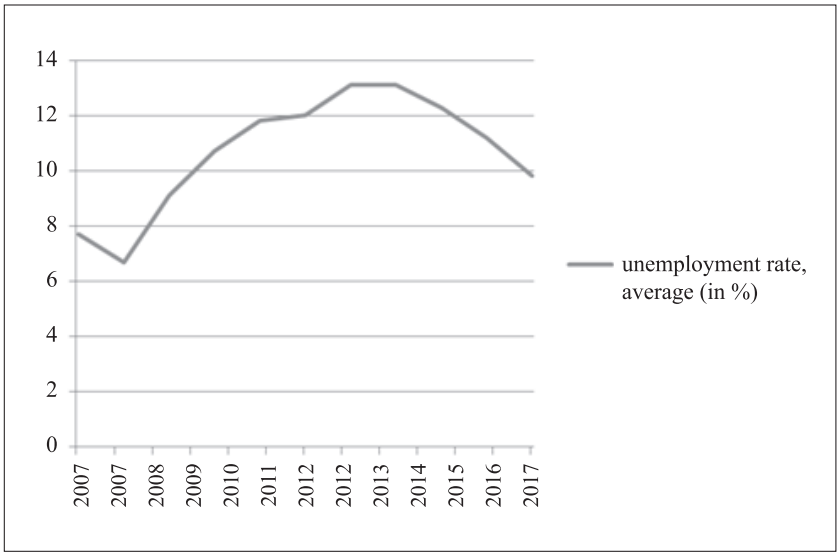

Figure 1: The unemployment rate in Slovenia (source: Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje, 2017).

Table 2 also shows that threats like terrorism and military aggression are perceived by civil society as the least important security phenomena in Slovenia. Extreme nationalism, infectious diseases, and conflicts in the territory of former Yugoslavia are also viewed as non-threatening factors to security. The most common security phenomena are factors of uncertainty of a social nature, traditional crime, as well as natural and technological disasters. These security phenomena originate from the area in which respondents live and work – their local community.

Table 2 also reveals another trend – the most problematic factors in 1999 such as crime, drugs, narcotics, and environmental destruction have been declining over time, although they still exceed the average value in 2009. Social factors like unemployment, poverty, and the selling off of national assets which, in addition to traffic accidents, were given the highest average values in 2009 and therefore rated as the most threatening to security in Slovenia. By omitting the ever-high perception of traffic accidents (even though the number of fatal accidents is falling), in 2009 the population was already experiencing the effects of the global economic and financial crisis as seen in higher unemployment and poverty in Slovenia. However, the security phenomena of particular significance a decade before had by 2009 become even bigger and more threatening in respondents' eyes (Tominc & Sotlar, 2012).

In 2015, the migration crisis unfolded and affected Slovenia, reshaping public opinion. Events related to the migrant crisis (refugees, illegal migrants) overtook socio-economic factors as the biggest concerns (see Table 3).

Table 3: Concerns about natural and man-made disasters (in %) (source: Hafner Fink & Malešič, 2015)

How concerned are you about...	Terrorist attacks	Natural disasters (floods, earthquakes)	Technological disasters (oil spills, nuclear incidents)	Armed conflicts	Socio-economic crisis (lower standard, unemployment)	Mass migration (refugees, illegal and economic migrations)
Very concerned	16.5	10.6	13.7	14.8	29.9	33.9
Somewhat concerned	31.3	38.0	34.6	30.4	49.1	42.1
A little concerned	38.0	39.6	40.0	38.7	18.0	20.2
Not at all concerned	13.2	11.4	10.7	15.0	2.6	3.2
I do not know; no answer	1.0	0.4	1.0	1.1	0.4	0.6

In view of the above findings on the rationality (responsiveness), consistency, stability and reliability of public opinion in Slovenia, the outcomes of researching security at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security are presented in the next section.

3 Researching how Security Phenomena were perceived in 2011 and 2017

In the last decade, researchers at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor have conducted several public opinion studies that also contained questions on the perception of certain phenomena in the local community that are seen as security problems. These include the Target research programme entitled "Feelings of (in)security and the role of police at the local level" took place between 2010 and 2012, while the Programme research group "Security and safety in local communities" considered security provision in local communities between 2015 and 2018. The findings presented below are the results of surveys conducted in 2011 and 2017.

3.1 Method

The respondents in both studies are adult residents of the Republic of Slovenia (18+) and police officers. The sample is stratified, systematic and random. The strata are defined by the Police Directorates (8 units) and the type of municipality within the Police Directorate (one small, one medium, and one large municipality), such that the sample includes police officers from 24 police stations and residents from 24 Slovenian municipalities. The sample is chosen independently in each stratum. The respondents' participation was voluntary, with confidentiality guaranteed. The quantitative analysis included 1,542 completed survey questionnaires in 2011 and 1,785 in 2017.

In 2011, the survey included a set of 65 and in 2017 a set of 38 phenomena that one may encounter in a local community. The respondents were asked to assess how much they perceive those phenomena to be a security problem in the local community where they live/work.

For the purpose of this article, which also includes comparative analysis, we only refer to those phenomena assessed in both 2011 and 2017. Some other phenomena, but not identical ones in 2011 and 2017, are mentioned only in the discussion. For the analysis of differences, a *t-test* for independent samples ($p \leq 0.05$) and ANOVA test ($p \leq 0.05$) are used.

3.2 Perception of Security Phenomena in 2011

At the start of the decade, the following phenomena were considered to be the main security problems in the local community (according to all respondents – including police officers and residents): factors of uncertainty (like unemployment (M = 3.95), and poverty (M = 3.58)), problems linked to intoxicating substances (alcoholism (M = 3.35), drug trafficking (M = 3.56)), problems linked to compromising road safety (speeding (M = 3.53)), and economic risk factors (economic downturn (M = 3.41), economic crime (M = 3.39), and corruption (M = 3.32)). The least problematic were tourists (M = 1.85), sexual assaults/rapes (M = 2.19), and people of a different ethnic or cultural origin (M = 2.19).

A statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) in the attitudes of residents and police officers existed for poverty ($M_{(residents)} = 3.45$; ($M_{(police)} = 3.80$) whereby police officers view poverty as more threatening than residents do. In fact, in most cases police officers make a stronger assessment of the risk factors, except that phenomena linked to jeopardising the environment were perceived by residents as more threatening than by the police officers (accumulation of litter in public places ($M_{(residents)}= 3.09$; ($M_{(police)}= 2.91$), pollution of the natural environment ($M_{(residents)}= 2.95$; ($M_{(police)}= 2.74$);). Differences in opinion between police officers and residents were also seen in phenomena linked to endangering human life, health and sexual integrity (street violence ($M_{(residents)} = 2.44$; ($M_{(police)} = 2.82$), sexual assaults/rapes ($M_{(residents)} = 2.12$; ($M_{(police)} = 2.31$), prostitution ($M_{(residents)} = 2.22$; ($M_{(police)} = 2.49$), and domestic violence ($M_{(residents)} = 3.08$; ($M_{(police)} = 3.60$). These phenomena were viewed as more threatening by police officers, although it should be noted that average value of these phenomena was low. This was not true of domestic violence since it is considered to be the most threatening phenomenon ($M_{(all)} = 3.28$).

Statistically significant differences were also found in phenomena related to criminality (organised crime ($M_{(residents)}= 2.89$; ($M_{(police)}= 3.50$), drug trafficking ($M_{(residents)}= 3.42$; ($M_{(police)}= 3.79$)), migrants ($M_{(residents)}= 2.31$; ($M_{(police)}= 2.86$), alcoholism ($M_{(residents)}= 3.25$; ($M_{(police)}= 3.52$) and smoking marijuana in public ($M_{(residents)}= 3.03$; ($M_{(police)}= 3.20$). These phenomena were also considered to be more threatening by police officers.

3.3 Perception of Security Phenomena in 2017

In the 2017 survey, residents and police officers evaluated 38 different phenomena one might perceive as security phenomena in the local community. Differences in the perception of (security) phenomena between residents and police officers, as well as the influence of gender and living/working environment (urban vs. rural) on the perception of various phenomena, are presented below.

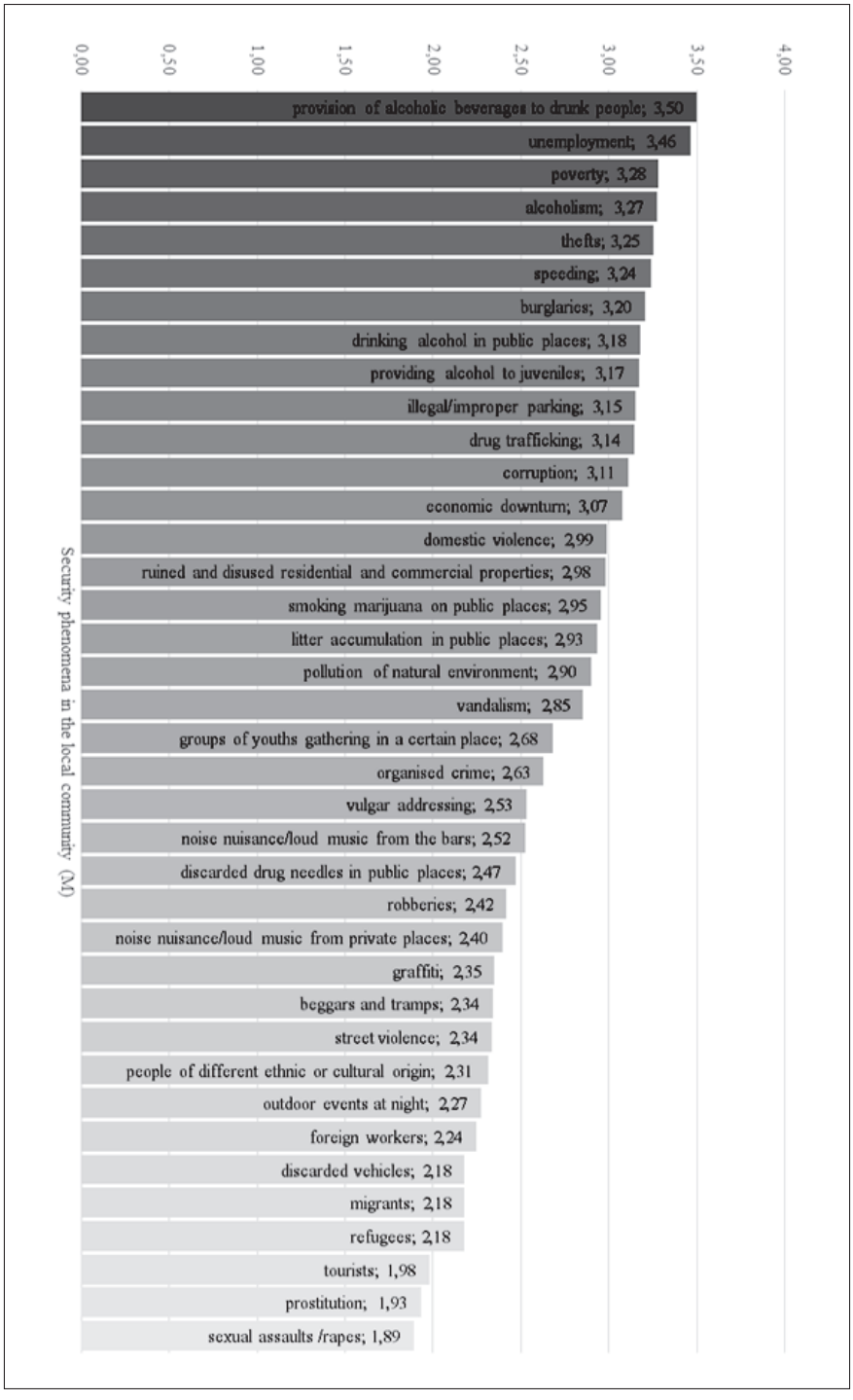

Figure 2: Perception of severity of security phenomena in the local community (M)
Legend: 1 – not considered a problem, 5 – considered a big problem

As shown in Figure 2, the most problematic issues related to security in the local community in 2017 were the provision of alcoholic beverages to drunk people (M = 3.50), unemployment (M = 3.46), poverty (M = 3.28), alcoholism (M = 3.27), theft (M = 3.25), speeding (M = 3.24), and burglary (M = 3.20). Sexual assaults/rapes (M = 1.89), prostitution (M = 1.93), tourists (M = 1.98), discarded vehicles (M = 2.18), migrants (M = 2.18), refugees (M = 2.18) and foreign workers (M = 2.24) were regarded as less problematic security phenomena by respondents.

In order to establish if residents and police officers both feel the same about problems in the local community, a *t-test* for independent samples ($p \leq 0.05$) was used. The comparison revealed only 12 variables where differences in the perception of police officers and residents are not statistically significant: vulgar addressing, graffiti, alcoholism, vandalism, needles and syringes being discarded by drug users, street violence, unemployment, economic downturn, illegal/improper parking, corruption, poverty and drinking alcohol in public. Both police officers and residents agreed that the biggest threats to Slovenia were factors of uncertainty like unemployment and poverty.

In general, statistically significant differences in opinion were detected between residents and police officers with respect to 26 phenomena. Of these, 21 phenomena were more of a problem to police officers than to residents. Among them, police officers considered the following phenomena to be most threatening: alcoholism, drug trafficking, theft, and burglary.

The following phenomena fall within the top 20% of the most threatening phenomena in the opinion of residents: providing alcohol to juveniles; accumulation of litter in public places, and speeding. Statistically significant differences also emerged between police officers and residents, with residents considering them to be more threatening than the police officers do.

We assumed a security phenomenon is perceived as threatening when its average value exceeds 3. Thus, only those phenomena were presented in Table 4 which showed statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) between police officers and residents and where the *mean* value was higher than 3.

We were also interested in any larger disparities between males and females. The average value in most cases was higher among males, but statistically significant differences in this respect can only be found regarding 13 phenomena.

Males statistically significantly perceived as more threatening drug trafficking, organised crime, people of a different ethnic or cultural origin, tourists, foreign workers, outdoor events at night, and noise nuisance/loud music from private places. Five phenomena were statistically significantly considered to be more threatening by females than males: providing alcohol to juveniles, drinking alcohol in public, accumulation of litter in public places, speeding, and pollution of the natural environment.

Table 5 presents statistically significant differences between male and female respondents, but only those whose mean value exceeds 3.

Table 4: Differences between police officers and residents in perceptions of a set of phenomena being a threat to security

Security phenomena	Residents		Police officers		*t-test* for equality of means
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Alcoholism	3.17	1.16	3.52	0.94	–6.15*
Providing alcohol to juveniles	3.22	1.26	3.05	0.98	2.78*
Smoking marijuana in public	2.89	1.31	3.11	1.03	–3.48*
Drug trafficking	3.05	1.38	3.36	1.04	–4.58*
Accumulation of litter in public places	3.01	1.28	2.74	1.00	4.34*
Domestic violence	2.87	1.27	3.28	0.91	–6.78*
Speeding	3.33	1.24	3.02	0.94	5.03*
Theft	3.10	1.19	3.61	0.96	–8.72*
Burglary	3.01	1.22	3.68	0.95	–11.23*
Ruined and disused residential and commercial properties	2.92	1.28	3.12	0.98	–3.17*

Legend: 1 – not considered a problem, 5 – considered a big problem
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level
Note: M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively

Table 5: Differences between males and females in perceptions of a set of phenomena as being a threat to security

Security phenomena	Male		Female		*t-test* for equality of means
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Providing alcohol to juveniles	3.10	1.15	3.27	1.23	–2.93*
Drinking alcohol in public	3.11	1.18	3.28	1.22	–2.96*
Drug trafficking	3.20	1.24	3.06	1.36	2.22*
Accumulation of litter in public places	2.83	1.15	3.07	1.28	–4.08*
Speeding	3.17	1.12	3.33	1.23	–2.77*
Pollution of natural environment	2.82	1.12	3.01	1.25	–3.47*

Legend: 1 – not considered a problem, 5 – considered a big problem
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level
Note: M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively

When we only observe the population of residents, statistically significant differences emerge in five phenomena, all of which were perceived to be more threatening by females (see Table 6).

Table 6: Differences between male and female residents in perceptions of a set of phenomena as being a threat to security

Security phenomena	Male		Female		*t-test* for equality of means
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Drinking alcohol in public	3.09	1.23	3.27	1.25	–2.63
Accumulation of litter in public places	2.93	1.25	3.09	1.31	–2.23
Theft	3.03	1.16	3.17	1.21	–2.18
Burglary	2.92	1.17	3.08	1.26	–2.33
Pollution of natural environment	2.85	1.22	3.01	1.28	–2.30

Legend: 1 – not considered a problem, 5 – considered a big problem
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level
Note: M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively

When we solely observe the population of police officers, in most cases the average value was higher among females, with statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) in this sense being found in relation to 15 phenomena. For 11 phenomena, statistically significant differences were found between male and female police officers and exceeded the average ($M > 3$) (see Table 7).

Table 7: Differences between male and female police officers in perceptions of a set of phenomena as being a threat to security

Security phenomena	Male		Female		*t-test* for equality of means
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Alcoholism	3.46	0.94	3.88	0.80	–4.08
Providing alcohol to juveniles	3.00	0.99	3.32	0.92	–2.60
Provision of alcoholic beverages to drunk people	3.53	0.97	3.76	0.81	–2.16
Foreign workers	2.57	1.07	3.04	1.02	–3.51
Unemployment	3.37	0.98	3.67	0.92	–2.46
Domestic violence	3.22	0.90	3.67	0.95	–4.00
Organised crime	2.85	1.09	3.19	0.93	–2.83
Theft	3.57	0.97	3.89	0.86	–2.97
Burglary	3.63	0.96	3.99	0.81	–3.38
Ruined and disused residential and commercial properties	3.08	0.99	3.36	0.91	–2.28
Pollution of natural environment	2.77	0.96	3.01	0.95	–2.02

Legend: 1 – not considered a problem, 5 – considered a big problem
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level
Note: M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively

To determine whether a difference exists in the perception of the severity of security phenomena in the local community, according to the characteristics of one's residence, a comparison of urban, suburban and rural residents and police officers was undertaken.

A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between residents and police officers in all security phenomena, except alcoholism ($F(2, 1778) = 0.948$, $p = 0.39$). A Tukey post hoc test had the following results.

Table 8: Differences in opinion on security phenomena held by residents and police officers in urban, suburban and rural areas

Dependent variable	Group (predictor)	*M*	*SD*	Multiple Comparisons (ANOVA)	
				Urban area	Sub-urban area
Providing alcohol to juveniles	Urban area	3.31	1.19		
	Suburban area	3.05	1.16	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.84	1.10	0.00*	0.05
Provision of alcoholic beverages to drunk people	Urban area	3.57	1.15		
	Suburban area	3.42	1.12	0.09	
	Rural area	3.35	1.12	0.01*	0.70
Drinking alcohol in public	Urban area	3.39	1.19		
	Suburban area	2.89	1.17	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.75	1.11	0.00*	0.28
Smoking marijuana in public	Urban area	3.17	1.23		
	Suburban area	2.65	1.25	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.52	1.10	0.00*	0.37

Drug trafficking	Urban area	3.38	1.25		
	Suburban area	2.85	1.32	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.63	1.19	0.00*	0.07
Accumulation of litter in public places	Urban area	3.13	1.19		
	Suburban area	2.62	1.16	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.60	1.21	0.00*	0.99
Noise nuisance/loud music from the bars	Urban area	2.74	1.16		
	Sub-urban area	2.16	1.04	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.19	1.05	0.00*	0.93
Noise nuisance/loud music from private places	Urban area	2.56	1.11		
	Suburban area	2.11	0.96	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.14	1.03	0.00*	0.95
Outdoor events at night	Urban area	2.41	1.10		
	Suburban area	2.01	0.93	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.07	1.01	0.00*	0.73
Refugees	Urban area	2.30	1.33		
	Suburban area	1.70	1.09	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.26	1.32	0.90	0.00*
Foreign workers	Urban area	2.33	1.22		
	Suburban area	1.99	1.13	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.22	1.12	0.26	0.03*
Migrants	Urban area	2.30	1.31		
	Suburban area	1.74	1.09	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.19	1.26	0.33	0.00*
Beggars and tramps	Urban area	2.62	1.27		
	Suburban area	1.75	1.02	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.87	1.00	0.00*	0.36
Tourists	Urban area	1.98	1.16		
	Suburban area	1.83	1.10	0.09	
	Rural area	2.13	1.19	0.11	0.00*
People of a different ethnic or cultural origin	Urban area	2.43	1.24		
	Suburban area	2.03	1.09	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.20	1.15	0.00*	0.16
Corruption	Urban area	3.37	1.33		
	Suburban area	2.72	1.29	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.66	1.20	0.00*	0.84
Economic downturn	Urban area	3.21	1.25		
	Suburban area	2.76	1.21	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.93	1.10	0.00*	0.15
Unemployment	Urban area	3.65	1.14		
	Suburban area	3.04	1.17	0.00*	
	Rural area	3.27	1.05	0.00*	0.02*

Poverty	Urban area	3.48	1.16		
	Suburban area	2.84	1.10	0.00*	
	Rural area	3.08	1.06	0.00*	0.02*
Domestic violence	Urban area	3.18	1.18		
	Suburban area	2.61	1.18	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.74	1.07	0.00*	0.31
Groups of youth gathering in a certain place	Urban area	2.86	1.19		
	Suburban area	2.37	1.13	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.39	1.06	0.00*	0.97
Vulgar addressing	Urban area	2.75	1.21		
	Suburban area	2.12	1.11	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.21	1.01	0.00*	0.58
Vandalism	Urban area	3.12	1.20		
	Suburban area	2.31	1.19	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.52	1.12	0.00*	0.05*
Street violence	Urban area	2.64	1.24		
	Suburban area	1.83	1.04	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.84	0.93	0.00*	0.99
Organised crime	Urban area	2.91	1.25		
	Suburban area	2.09	1.20	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.26	1.12	0.00*	0.17
Prostitution	Urban area	2.16	1.17		
	Suburban area	1.55	0.88	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.57	0.86	0.00*	0.98
Sexual assaults/rapes	Urban area	2.15	1.20		
	Suburban area	1.46	0.84	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.47	0.76	0.00*	0.99
Speeding	Urban area	3.38	1.18		
	Suburban area	3.02	1.17	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.96	1.07	0.00*	0.74
Illegal/improper parking	Urban area	3.37	1.16		
	Suburban area	2.82	1.23	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.77	1.09	0.00*	0.86
Theft	Urban area	3.42	1.14		
	Suburban area	2.90	1.20	0.00*	
	Rural area	3.05	1.03	0.00*	0.20
Robbery	Urban area	2.70	1.24		
	Suburban area	1.94	1.10	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.95	0.95	0.00*	0.98
Burglary	Urban area	3.34	1.17		
	Suburban area	2.95	1.27	0.00*	
	Rural area	3.01	1.10	0.00*	0.80

Ruined and disused residential and commercial properties	Urban area	3.10	1.22		
	Suburban area	2.63	1.18	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.93	1.09	0.05*	0.00*
Pollution of natural environment	Urban area	3.08	1.19		
	Suburban area	2.58	1.09	0.00*	
	Rural area	2.61	1.10	0.00*	0.96
Graffiti	Urban area	2.65	1.17		
	Suburban area	1.76	0.90	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.94	0.94	0.00*	0.08
Discarded vehicles	Urban area	2.34	1.14		
	Suburban area	1.90	1.05	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.93	0.95	0.00*	0.93
Needles and syringes being discarded by drug users	Urban area	2.78	1.34		
	Suburban area	2.10	1.24	0.00*	
	Rural area	1.79	1.00	0.00*	0.00*

Legend: 1 – not considered a problem, 5 – considered a big problem
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level
M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

There were statistically significant differences amongst all three groups in the evaluation of five security phenomena as threats to security. These were unemployment, poverty, vandalism, ruined and disused residential and commercial properties, and needles and syringes being discarded by drug users. The population (residents and police officers) of the urban area regards all of the phenomena listed above as more threatening than the suburban and rural groups do (highest average value).

When comparing the population of the urban and suburban areas, statistically significant differences were evident for 89.2% of the phenomena (in 33 phenomena). When comparing those from urban and rural areas, there are statistically significant differences in 94.6% of phenomena (in 35 phenomena). When comparing the population of the suburban and rural areas, statistically significant differences emerged in 25.7% of phenomena (in 9 phenomena). This allows us to conclude that the perceptions held by the population living in suburban areas is more similar to those from rural areas than those from urban localities. Results are discussed further and explained in the last section of the paper.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicate that the residents of Slovenia generally feel very safe. The share of those feeling safe has traditionally reached values above 70%, and in some years more than 80% of respondents felt that way. In the analysis, we ranked various phenomena perceived as a potential security phenomenon, from biggest threat to smallest threat, and we made comparisons by gender and by living environment, although one should be aware that on a five-point scale (1 - does not represent a problem to 5 - is a big problem), few phenomena exceeded the average value of 3 and even harder to find were those whose average approached the value of 4. Most average values ranged somewhere between 2.5 and 3, also confirming the previously emphasised finding that Slovenian residents generally feel safe. A closer analysis of the research findings shows that non-military sources of threat have been seen as the biggest threat by the population over the last 25 years. Phenomena with a socio-economic origin (unemployment, poverty, economic problems) stand out in all of the analysed studies. Traditionally, terrorism and military threats by other countries are not recognised as serious threats.

The 2017 survey shows that while respondents still single out the same security phenomena, they no longer perceive them to be as serious as in 2011. We compared 31 security phenomena respondents assessed in both 2011 and 2017 and found that only in regards to four phenomena did their attitude not change. This included perceptions of outdoor events at night, beggars and tramps, illegal/improper parking, and pollution of the natural environment. On the other hand, only three phenomena (e.g., tourists, people of a different ethnic or cultural origin, and ruined and disused residential and commercial properties) were perceived as more serious threats

when compared to the results from 2011. The majority of phenomena (24) were perceived as less of a serious threat than in 2011. A comparison of the results separately for residents and for police officers showed a similar result to the abovementioned since for most variables there was a statistically significant drop in the perception of an individual phenomenon being a problem in the local community.

Recent research indicates a fairly distinct difference in how residents and police officers view threats, although the general assumption is that police officers should strive to understand the residents' needs and expectations in the field of security. Also revealed was a statistically significant distinction between the perception of urban, suburban and rural residents regarding security phenomena. Both residents and police officers from the urban environment attributed greater importance to security phenomena than respondents from suburban and rural areas do.

A sense of (in)security is built on subjective assessments. These assessments can vary considerably, under the influence of gender, geographical, political, social, professional, age, cultural and other factors. This only reinforces our belief that the concept of human security in practice is actually a 'live' concept, regardless of whether it is consciously applied by the state and local government to the security policy- and decision-making process or not.

The urban–rural dichotomy related to security issues certainly warrants further research. Research findings show that the perception held by people from suburban areas is closer to that of people from rural localities than from urban areas. However, it is unclear which factors create these differences. One assumption could be that suburban areas are not monolithic, and that some parts of suburban areas have many characteristics shared with an urban environment, but not always. At least this assumption could be addressed and tested in future research.

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Zaznavanje varnostnih pojavov v lokalnih skupnostih v Sloveniji

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Koncept človekove varnosti predpostavlja, da mora biti zagotavljanje sodobne varnosti osredotočeno na posameznika, ki se zaradi kompleksnosti sodobnega varnostnega okolja le s težavo zaščiti brez pomoči zunanjih deležnikov. Zato je pomembno, da varnostne probleme, kot jih zaznavajo prebivalci, razumejo tako oblikovalci varnostnih politik kot njih izvajalci, torej organizacije za zagotavljanje varnosti. Upoštevanje mnenj prebivalcev je tudi vprašanje legitimnosti varnostne politike države. Članek predstavlja javno mnenje o varnostnih vprašanjih v zadnjih 25 letih, s poudarkom na raziskavah v letih 2011 in 2017, ko so bila proučevana stališča tako prebivalcev kot policistov glede varnostnih pojavov v lokalnih skupnostih. Rezultati zadnje raziskave kažejo, da anketiranci kot ključne (varnostne) probleme zaznavajo pojave, kot so točenje alkohola pijanim osebam, brezposelnost, revščina, alkoholizem, tatvine, divjanje z avtomobili, vlomi idr. Prebivalke v primerjavi s prebivalci pijančevanje na javnih mestih, točenje alkohola mladoletnim in/ali pijanim osebam, kopičenje smeti na javnih mestih, divjanje z avtomobili ter onesnaženost naravnega okolja dojemajo kot bolj problematične pojave. Policistke v primerjavi s policisti kot bolj ogrožajoče označujejo naslednje pojave: pijančevanje na javnih mestih, kopičenje smeti na javnih mestih, tatvine, vlomi in onesnaženost naravnega okolja. Prebivalci in policisti primestnih in ruralnih območij podobno zaznavajo varnostne pojave v primerjavi z anketiranci iz urbanih okolij, ki večini pojavov pripisujejo večjo resnost.

Ključne besede: varnostni pojavi, javno mnenje, človekova varnost, lokalna skupnost, zagotavljanje varnosti, prebivalci, policisti, varnostna politika

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