
Police Visibility as an Influencing Factor on Citizens' Perception of Safety

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Purpose:

The objective of this research was to determine to what extent tactics based on police visibility can influence one of the important segments of safety, i.e. citizens' subjective feeling of safety. The research was conducted in order to determine the connection among various aspects of police visibility, being predictor variables, with sense of safety.

Design/Methods/Approach:

The data for this research were collected on a sample containing 1,096 respondents, which can be considered representative of the Republic of Croatia based on socio-demographic characteristics. Beside seven socio-demographic variables, the questionnaire used in the research contained 34 variables found in following sub-scales for: perception of crime victimization risk and frequency; perception of feeling of safety and assessment of self-protection ability; perception of incivilities that disrupt the public order; perception of the presence of problematic categories of persons; perception of police visibility. The data were processed by using multivariate regression and multivariate quasi-canonical analyses.

Findings:

The research results point to a statistically significant, yet relatively weak connection between the components of police visibility and the sense of safety. On the one hand, police foot patrols and dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood have a positive effect on citizens' feeling of safety; on the other hand, police car patrols have an opposite effect.

Practical Implications:

This research is important not only due to providing scientific evidence for the connection between police visibility and citizens' sense of safety, but also due to significant practical implications on police dealings. When planning police fieldwork, negative aspects of car patrols on the perception of safety have to be taken into account. What should be considered are new, alternative forms of fieldwork, which enable the intervention ability of police, as well as which allow for foot patrols and contacts between citizens and the police in non-incident situations.

Originality/Value:

This research is the first research focusing on the influence of police visibility on the feeling of safety of citizens in Croatia. Considering the used methodology

the research is an original scientific contribution to the understanding of the impact of police field work to citizens' safety.

UDC: 351.741

Keywords: police visibility, police car patrols, police foot patrols, sense of safety, fear of crime, perception of crime

Vidnost policije kot dejavnik vpliva na občutek varnosti državljanov

Namen prispevka:

Cilj te raziskave je bil ugotoviti, v kolikšni meri lahko taktike, ki temeljijo na vidnosti oz. prisotnosti policije, vplivajo na enega od pomembnih segmentov varnosti, torej na subjektivni občutek varnosti državljanov. Raziskava je bila izvedena z namenom, da se ugotovi povezava med različnimi vidiki vidnosti oz. prisotnosti policije, na podlagi katere lahko poskušamo napovedati občutke varnosti pri prebivalcih.

Metode:

V raziskavo je bil vključen vzorec 1.096 anketirancev iz Republike Hrvaške, katerega reprezentativnost temelji na sociodemografskih značilnostih. Poleg sedmih sociodemografskih spremenljivk je anketni vprašalnik vseboval 34 spremenljivk, ki so razvrščene v naslednje sklope: zaznavanje tveganja za kriminalitetno viktimizacijo in njena pogostost; zaznavanje občutka varnosti in ocenjevanje sposobnosti samozaščite; zaznavanje nespoštljivosti, ki moti javni red; zaznavanje prisotnosti spornih kategorij oseb; zaznavanje vidnosti oz. prisotnosti policije. Pri obdelavi podatkov je bila uporabljena metoda multivariatne regresije in multivariatne kvazikanonične analize.

Ugotovitve:

Rezultati raziskave kažejo na statistično pomembno, a razmeroma šibko povezavo med vidnostjo policije in občutkom varnosti. Po eni strani imajo policijske peš patrulje in ukvarjanje z osebami, ki motijo javni red v soseščini, pozitiven učinek na občutek varnosti državljanov, po drugi strani pa imajo policijske patrulje z avtomobili ravno nasproten učinek.

Praktična uporabnost:

Raziskava je pomembna ne le zaradi zagotavljanja znanstvenih dokazov o povezavi med vidnostjo oz. prisotnostjo policije in občutkom varnosti državljanov, temveč tudi zaradi pomembnih praktičnih posledic za policijsko delo. Pri načrtovanju policijskega terenskega dela je treba upoštevati negativne vidike avtomobilskih patrulj glede zaznavanja varnosti. Upoštevati je treba nove, alternativne oblike terenskega dela, ki omogočajo intervencijo policije in stike med državljanji in policijo v nekriznih situacijah.

Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:

Gre za prvo raziskavo, ki se osredotoča na vpliv vidnosti oz. prisotnosti policije na občutek varnosti hrvaških državljanov. Glede na uporabljene metode

je raziskava izvirni znanstveni prispevek k razumevanju vpliva policijskega terenskega dela na zaznavanje varnosti državljanov.

UDK: 351.741

Gljučne besede: vidnost policije, avtomobilska policijska patrolja, policijske peš patrolje, občutek varnosti, strah pred kriminaliteto, zaznavanje kriminalitete

1 INTRODUCTION

Changes that have been taking place in policing over the past thirty years and that have led to new policing concepts, such as community policing or problem oriented policing, are the results of efforts to find more effective ways of policing, which will promote public safety and enhance citizens' quality of life, i.e. increase the feeling of safety and reduce the fear of crime. The scope and nature of crime, as well as changes in the type of crime have led the police to find more effective solutions and to expand crime control tactics with crime prevention strategies, increasing the feeling of safety and the quality of life in communities. Therefore, lack of feeling of safety, i.e. fear of crime has turned into a significant problem and has gradually become the focus of police interest. Due to the function that the police have in society, it is considered that their presence and visibility can successfully reduce such fear in local communities, i.e. improve citizens' overall sense of safety. Namely, research related to perception of safety provides scientific evidence on the effectiveness of various policing strategies in reducing fear among citizens (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994). These strategies, to be effective, have to be tailored specifically for the nature and cause of fear of crime (Cordner, 2010). Cordner (2010) recommends a targeted problem-oriented approach as the most effective strategy for fear reduction but also recognizes 12 crime-reductions measures or actions divides into six different (effective) strategies: traditional approach (reducing crime); professional policing (motorized patrols; police visibility; rapid response; solving crimes); crime prevention (target hardening, street lighting); community policing (police-citizen contact; public confidence in police; public information); broken windows (reducing disorder) and Targeted-oriented policing (targeted responses).

Modern approaches to policing, such as community policing in its comprehensive sense, encompass numerous aspects, having as one of their primary goals to create the feeling of safety (Schorer, 2007). As opposed to traditional policing which is focused on crime through identifying and arresting perpetrators, as well as assessing police work through police statistics, i.e. identified and reported crime, modern policing particular attention paid to the subjective feeling of safety, i.e. fear of crime. This is understandable if we take into consideration the fact that citizens' satisfaction with the police and their activities depends, in large part, on whether citizens feel safe or not. According to the traditional policing concept, the police become responsible only when a crime is committed or when some other incident takes place. For this reason, citizens consider this kind of policing passive because it is only concerned with consequential reactions to crime, and not with the possibilities of preventing crime, as well as concerns and

fear that may appear among citizens. On the other hand, a proactive approach aimed at solving problems before they lead to crimes helps reduce the fear of crime and increases the feeling of citizens' control over the community (Cordner, 2010; Fleissner & Heinzelmann, 1996) which is an elementary human need. Numerous strategies were developed within that framework, with the aim of increasing police presence and visibility among citizens, not only in situations that require police reaction, but also in non-incident situations that enable contact between the police and citizens that is free of conflict and tension.

2 FEAR OF CRIME CONCEPT AND ITS RELEVANCE

Police dealings should be aimed at solving the issue of feeling unsafe and fear of crime because fear of crime can often be just as harmful as the crime itself. A growing number of citizens feeling unsafe results in physical and psychological withdrawal from society, weakens informal social control, and diminishes the capacities of individuals and the community to jointly solve problems they face. The consequence of this is grounds for the development of crime and incivilities; moreover, it weakens trust in the institutions and the ability of a state to protect its citizens.

Fear of crime can be explained in various ways, among other things, as a feeling of safety/lack of safety, probability of victimisation, fear, confusion due to crime. "Fear of crime is a rational or irrational state of concern or anxiety about the likelihood of criminal victimisation" (McLaughlin, 2001, p. 118). It is an emotional reaction characterised by a sense of danger and anxiety produced by the threat of physical harm elicited by perceived clues in the environment that relate to some aspect of crime (Church Council on Justice and Corrections, 1995; John Howard Society of Alberta, 1999). It can also be defined as a person's or a group's sense, which represents a belief, perception or emotion related to crime or public order, and which has a negative impact on their feelings, thoughts or behaviour and the quality of life (Glasnović Gjoni, 2006). Finally, Ferraro and LaGrange (1987, p. 72) defined the fear of crime as "negative emotional reactions generated by crime or symbols associated with crime". This definition is often recognised in the literature on fear of crime because it also takes into consideration emotional responses to situations and circumstances that can create fear, as well as cognitive assessment of victimisation risk, which can also create fear (Ferraro, 1995; Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987). This fear can be a reaction to direct danger when a person comes face to face with some form of violence. As people have the ability to anticipate future events by means of diverse symbols (streets littered with garbage, devastated public property, graffiti, abandoned buildings and the like), fear of crime can appear due to an anticipated possible threat or as a reaction to an event, i.e. some characteristics of the surroundings.

Ferraro (1995) suggested that perceived risk of crime and fear of crime should be considered different constructs. Such a standpoint is taken in this research. By distinguishing fear of crime from assessment of risk, the same author claims that fear includes an emotional, and sometimes even a psychological reaction to the assessed danger. The author further explains that fear is essentially a different

psychological experience than the assessment of a potential risk situation. While risk also bears a cognitive component, fear is essentially based on emotions. Robinson (1998) agrees with his definition, and defines fear as a feeling of possible injury, regardless of whether the fear is realistic or unrealistic. The same author defines risk assessment as an assessment of probability that an injury will actually occur. This does not mean that someone who perceives their surroundings as unsafe will, at the same time, have a fear of crime.

Warr (2000) differentiates between fear of crime and risk assessment by defining fear of crime as an emotion, a feeling of alarm or dread caused by an awareness or expectation of danger. Accordingly, fear of crime includes a variety of emotional states, attitudes or perceptions, including lack of trust towards others, anxiety, assessment of injury risk, fear of strangers, concern over the situation in the neighbourhood or decrease in the moral values in society. Furthermore, the same author claims that fear is a reaction to perceived environment, not a perception of that environment. Warr (2000) considers perceived risk of harm a proximate cause of fear of crime. Moreover, fear is not a belief, attitude or evaluation even though it may result from the cognitive processing or evaluation of perceptual information.

A somewhat different approach to this issue is taken by Rountree (in Doležal, 2009). Instead of differentiating fear of crime from risk assessment, Rountree defines fear of crime as a combination of the cognitive (perception of risk) and the emotional (being afraid). The author operationalizes fear as a person's concern that he or she is going to be a victim. Cordner (in Silverman & Della-Giustina, 2001) defines fear of crime as an emotional and behavioural phenomenon, but does not elaborate. The authors Gabriel and Greve (2003) also use the so-called behavioural component, which indicates the possibility for the existence of fear of crime. Behavioral component is interpreted as an act of avoiding the perceived risk or a threat, or conducting specific self-protection measures. From the stated definitions, it is clear that there is no consensus on how to define fear of crime.

Only rare researches on fear of crime have been conducted in Croatia and following are worth mentioning: "Youth and Security: Does Youth feel safe in the City of Zagreb" (Galić, Ljubotina, Matić, Matešković, & Ninić, 2009); "Fear of Crime: Gender and Age Characteristics" (Glasnović Gjoni, 2006); "Fear of Crime in Slovenia and Croatia (Meško & Kovčo, 1999) and "Extent of fear of crime in Croatia and effects of television viewing on fear of crime" (Šakić, Ivičić, & Franc, 2008).

By analysing the fear of crime paradigms provided by the mentioned authors, it can be concluded that this fear, in the majority of cases, refers to an emotional reaction caused by crime in general or symbols identifying it, which differentiates it from risk assessment, concern or concrete behaviour.

3 PERCEPTION OF CRIME AND INCIVILITIES

The perception of crime and incivilities significantly influences citizens' feeling of safety and their perception of the police. Both crime and incivilities in their various forms belong to phenomena that destructively affect social surroundings. Crime causes citizens to feel anxious and unsafe, and reduces their trust in state

institutions and their ability to protect them (Singer et al., 2009). However, public trust in the police does not increase with a decrease in crime frequency. This means that citizens' perception of crime and its trends often does not correspond to the actual situation. For that reason, research is necessary on the predictors of the perception of crime, as well as on strategies that will encourage those citizens with a negative perception to change it to a positive one (Fielding & Innes, 2006; Herrington & Millie, 2006).

Conclusions on the public perception of crime are generally based on data on assessment of the prominence of crime as a social problem in relation to the perception of other social problems. According to data for 2002, citizens of Croatia perceived unemployment, poverty and corruption, followed by crime (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2002), as the most important problems in the country. In research conducted in 2003, unemployment and corruption, followed by crime, were selected as the three most important problems (Čular, 2005). In research studies conducted in 2005 and 2006, crime was second after unemployment according to perceived prominence (Standard Eurobarometer in Franc, Ivičić, & Šakić, 2007). Franc et al. (2007) found that unemployment, as well as economical crime and corruption are still perceived as largest problems of society by citizens of Croatia. Crime and violence are perceived as a society problems of low or mid intensity. It is almost a rule that a larger share of citizens consider crime a greater problem at the national than at the local level.

In Great Britain, studies on the perception of crime frequency have a longer tradition than in Croatia, being conducted since 1996 (Thorpe & Hall, 2009). Although trends are different, there is a constant in indicators showing that the majority of people find crime to be rising at the national level and declining at the local level. In other words, citizens believe that, at the national level, the type of crime rising is the one that receives greater media coverage, mostly violent crime as opposed to property crime. Predictors of the perception of crime as a social problem in general, and in particular in Croatia, have not been sufficiently researched. The reasons for differences between the real frequency and type of crime and its perception are most frequently sought in the impact of how media present crime to citizens. The differences in perception of certain criminal offences indicate that, when it comes to a crime that occurs rarely, there is a small probability that citizens will have personal experiences, and their perception is more influenced by the significant media coverage of those events (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). It is essential to emphasise that, nowadays, media represent an important source of information on all the problems that do not represent everyday experience of average people, while among them are definitely problems related to serious, violent crime (Teece & Makkai, 2000). According to Dubois (2002) the media are the source of information people count on to mould their opinion of the world around them. With respect to the presence of crime in said world, the author believes the media are the primary source of information. The study conducted by O'Connell (1999) showed that the reasons for this skewed perception on crime lie in the way it is presented in media because:

- extreme and atypical crime is shown more frequently,
- more space is devoted to extreme crime,
- mostly crime involving vulnerable victims and non-vulnerable perpetrators is presented,
- they are pessimistic about the criminal and legal systems.

For the above stated reasons, it is an important issue how media, by covering certain criminal events, influence the perception of crime, as well as the overall sense of safety.

The perception of crime frequency varies depending on demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Accordingly, a British study (Thorpe & Hall, 2009) showed that age (35 and over) is strongly related to the perception of rise in crime frequency at the national level. On the other hand, the perception of significant rise in crime at the local level is related to variables, such as prior victimisation and type of area where respondents live. When testing police dealings in Houston, Brown and Wycoff (1986) determined that certain strategies based on the community policing concept improved the perception of crime frequency by reducing the share of those who consider that there is a high crime frequency in the community. This is a statistically significant relationship between concern over crime and dissatisfaction with local police (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). The increased perception of crime is mostly in accordance with a higher incidence of crime and incivilities in areas where citizens live, whereas concern over crime is particularly high among citizens with small children (Paskell, 2007).

In addition to crime, incivilities draw attention of citizens living or working in a certain area, particularly because disrupted public order, whether in the form of physical disruptions in the surroundings or social disruptions, i.e. anti-social behaviour, significantly influences the quality of life. The presence of incivilities in certain areas discourages citizens from using these areas thereby reducing the number of desired activities and social contacts, and increasing the number of undesired activities and presence of risk persons. All of this diminishes the cohesion of inhabitants, as well as reduces and even encourages loss of social control. Both incivilities and fear of crime are statistically significant predictors of citizens' satisfaction with the police. To put it simply, fear of crime, perception of incivilities and informal social control are more important for public trust in the police than objective indicators on crime and incivilities (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). A British study (Walker, Flatley, Kershaw, & Moon, 2009) showed significant differences in the perception of anti-social behaviour based on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Not surprising is the fact that perception also depends on the level of deprivation and physical disruption in the surroundings. For instance, those living in multi-cultural areas perceive a high level of anti-social behaviour three times more often than citizens in other areas. Furthermore, 31 per cent of citizens living in deprived areas perceive a high level of anti-social behaviour as opposed to only seven per cent of citizens living in less deprived areas. The perception of anti-social behaviour (Thorpe & Hall, 2009) also varies depending on age and prior victimisation. People aged from 16 to 24 perceive anti-social behaviour to a larger extent than other age groups. Those aged over 75 perceive anti-social behaviour to a lesser extent. These results can be

explained by differences in ways of life, meaning that people from various age groups, based on different ways of life, type and number of activities they engage in, perceive anti-social behaviour differently. It should be emphasised that persons who perceive incivilities to a greater extent have a poorer perception of the police (Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996). Some authors (Brown & Wycoff, 1986) argue that police strategies can influence the perception of incivilities in a community.

4 POLICE VISIBILITY

Increased police presence and visibility are keys to the functioning of the police. They are related to technological development, which can be considered advancement for every police organisation. However, during periods of professionalization, by establishing a range of highly specialised departments, and in particular through technical equipment and modernisation, the police have become detached from citizens by closing themselves in offices and laboratories, communicating through modern communication channels and means, patrolling mostly in police cars, even when simply patrolling a certain area (Ent & Hendricks, 1991). With time, the number of foot patrols has been systematically reduced or even abandoned altogether. The particular advantages of this type of police work were soon noticed. Police officers were able to move and patrol in an easier manner, covering a significantly larger area than in the past, in addition, the speed and number of police interventions per day were improved. In other words, the police increased their effectiveness in reacting to incidents, at the same time becoming less preventive. By examining the process of police modernisation, Mouhanna (2007) concluded that increased specialisation and professionalization resulted in an increasing lack of communication between the police and citizens. Contacts between the police and citizens were reduced to incidents when dealing with committed crime and offences, and restoring public order. Encounters between the police and citizens in non-incident situations were reduced to the least possible extent; consequently, the police have lost in terms of presence and visibility in local communities and neighbourhoods. Finally, both sides, the police and citizens, have lost in terms of quality of their relationship and cooperation. The visible presence of the police had an impact on those citizens planning on breaking the law by discouraging them from their intentions, while it provided a certain degree of safety to other citizens. For this very reason, the police patrolling primarily on foot in local communities and neighbourhoods were regarded as a manner of building new relationships between citizens and the police.

Schorer (2007) also emphasises that presence, visibility and contact are, among other things, important in order to create a feeling of safety, to create safety in an objective and measurable way, as well as to encourage a relationship between the police and citizens built on trust. Regular citizens concerned over the lack of safety can only be reassured by an active and visible police presence. Police programmes aimed at increasing police visibility and making them more accessible to citizens meet expectations because they promote cooperation between the police and citizens, prevent crime and incivilities, increase safety and reduce fear of crime (Fleissner & Heinzelmann, 1996).

Police visibility in a well-defined form has rarely been examined as a potential factor influencing fear of crime (Salmi, Grönroos, & Keskinen, 2004). Only a small number of citizens has personal contact with the police, meaning that, apart from direct experience, the perception of policing can also significantly influence the perception of a criminal situation and the sense of fear of crime. According to Salmi et al. (2004), respondents who saw police foot patrols more often were less afraid of property crime and crime against life and limb. However, seeing the police patrolling in various forms can have a different impact on citizens. For instance, seeing the police in activities related to car patrols resulted in an increase in fear of crime against life and limb and property crime. The results of the same research indicated that a simple police activity, such as exiting the police car (not only in crime-related circumstances) for informal encounters with citizens, reduces fear of crime.

The experiment conducted in Elsinore (Holmberg, 2005) showed that there was no connection between the citizens' perception of police visibility and their feeling of safety. This finding can be attributed to the fact that an individual's feeling of safety is related to numerous factors, such as gender, age, education, social integration, feeling of physical/mental health and vulnerability, as well as level of urbanisation, social loss (deprivation) and victimisation risk in the area where the individual lives. The police have little or no influence on the majority of these factors. Citizens will, in certain situations, interpret police presence, as a symbol of a criminal offence being committed in their neighbourhood, which will hardly enhance their feeling of safety. Consequently, it should be pointed out that police visibility does not influence citizens' feeling of safety unambiguously, meaning that visibility-based police approaches should be applied in a careful and controlled manner. The presence and openness of the police for collaboration and communication with citizens can have a positive impact on the public views and perception of the police. On the other hand, police presence in combination with repressive actions can have an opposite effect. For that reason all activities related to higher police visibility have to be carefully planned and based on the needs of a certain community.

5 RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

Described in the introductory section is the importance of conducting research on the influence of police visibility on citizens' sense of safety, primarily because numerous police strategies aimed at improving citizens' safety are based on police visibility. Research in this area must be a precondition for creating and managing effective police strategies, i.e. it must help in establishing realistic foundations and expectations for projects aimed at increasing police visibility.

In other words, the goal of this research is to determine the connection between specific aspects of police visibility and the sense of safety, i.e. its affective and cognitive dimensions. In addition, the goal is to examine whether all aspects of police visibility have an equal impact on the sense of safety.

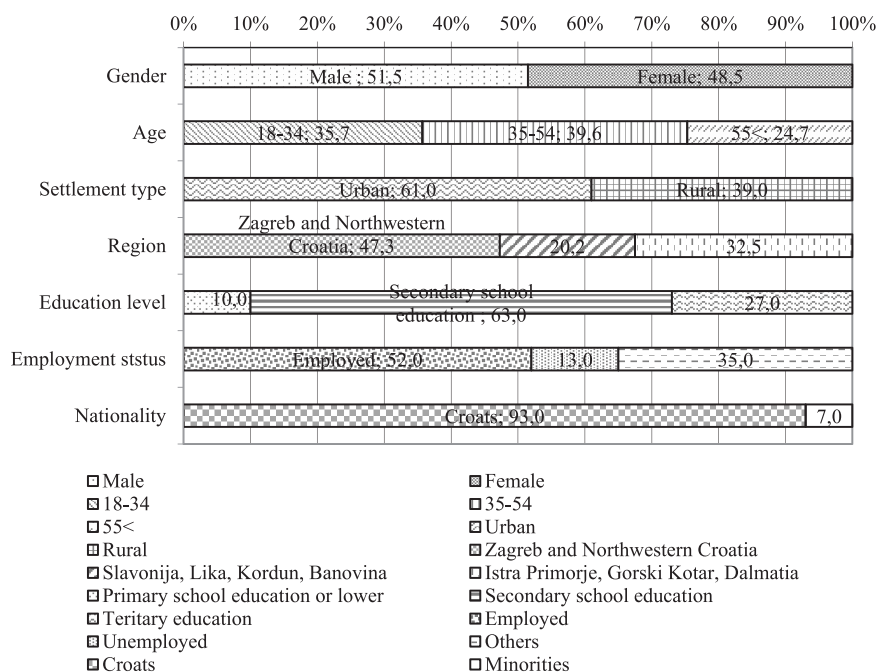
In accordance with the stated goals, the following hypothesis has been set:

H1: There is a statistically significant connection between police visibility

and variables related to the sense of safety: fear of crime, perception of crime risk and frequency, as well as perception of incivilities. Respondents who perceive the police as more visible are less afraid of crime; moreover, they perceive crime risk and frequency, and incivilities as lower.

The research encompassed a total of 1,096 respondents over 18 years of age. The sample was representative for the Republic of Croatia according to county, settlement size, gender and age. The data used for this research was collected under the large 2009 project of Croatian Ministry of the Interior and United Nations Development Programme titled "National Public Opinion Survey on Citizens Perception of Safety and Security in the Republic of Croatia". The field research was carried out by a professional agency using two quantitative methods: telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews in households. The sample was multiply stratified in the way that telephone numbers for telephone interviews were randomly selected, while 207 settlements across Croatia were randomly selected for face-to-face interviews in households. Figure 1 depicts the sample structure according to the most important demographic variables.

Figure 1:
Structure of respondents according to the most important demographic variables
N = 1,096



5.1 Questionnaire

A survey was used in the research. Beside seven socio-demographic variables, the questionnaire used in the research contained 34 variables found in following sub-scales for: perception of crime victimization risk and frequency; perception of feeling of safety and assessment of self-protection ability; perception of incivilities that disrupt the public order; perception of the presence of problematic categories

of persons; perception of police visibility. The questions referring to police visibility used in questionnaire are following: when did you last see police officers in your neighbourhood a) patrolling by car b) patrolling on foot and c) dealing towards persons disrupting public order. The respondents were offered answers on a scale from 1 – in the last seven days to 5 – never.

In addition to variables that measure police visibility, the questionnaire contained variables that measure fear of crime (feeling of safety at night in an apartment or house, as well as feeling of safety at night when moving about the neighbourhood). By using the factor analysis of the questionnaire (Borovec, 2013), it was determined that fear of crime is also defined by variables that refer to the assessment of one's abilities to protect oneself from physical attack, as well as to protect one's property due to the projection of these variables on fear of crime. The perception of crime risk and frequency was assessed based on four questions referring to the crime frequency in the place of residence, and in relation to the Republic of Croatia, as well as to crime victimisation risk in the place of residence, and what the assessment is like compared to the entire country. The perception of incivilities was assessed based on questions referring to the presence of risk groups committing various types of crime and based on questions referring to incidents related to disrupting public order in a community (twenty-two questions in total). The questionnaire used in this survey has proven its validity (clear and interpretable latent structure), as well as good metric characteristics. The Cronbach-Kaiser-Caffrey α reliability coefficient amounts to 0.965 (Borovec, 2013).

In order to examine the relation between police visibility and sense of safety (fear of crime, perception of crime risk and frequency, perception of incivilities), the multivariate regression analysis was used. This analysis will provide an answer to the question to what extent police visibility accounts for each of the criteria variables, as well as which of them accounts best for certain criteria. After the regression analysis, a quasi-canonical correlation analysis (Momirović, Dobrić, & Karaman, 1983, 1984) was applied, as an alternative method that is less sensitive to respondent samples described by category variables than the "classic" canonical correlation analysis. Since the aim of the research was to determine how various aspects of police visibility influence the sense of safety, when analysing data, police visibility variables were used as manifest variables, and not as a unique factor, whereas fear of crime, perception of crime risk and frequency, as well as perception of incivilities were considered latent dimensions obtained by factorising the questionnaire. The SPSS application was used to statistically process the data.

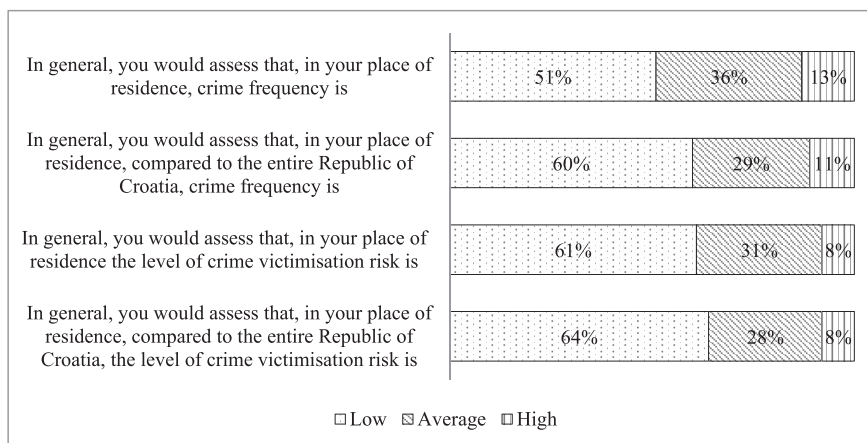
6 RESEARCH RESULTS

6.1 Descriptive Analysis of Research Results

Before presenting the results of the regression and quasi-canonical analyses, an overview of the research results acquired by a descriptive analysis is provided. The first results refer to the perception of crime frequency and victimisation risk according to the assessment of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia.

In order to do so, respondents were asked to assess crime and crime victimisation risk in their place of residence, as well as to compare them with the average for the Republic of Croatia. Answers to that question are depicted in Figure 2, where the relative shares of respondent answers are shown according to the categories – 1-low, 2-average and 3-high. Slightly over half of citizens perceive crime frequency in their place of residence to be low, while 13 per cent of citizens perceive it to be high. However, the perception of crime victimisation risk is lower (slightly under two-thirds of respondents perceive it as low, and less than a tenth of respondents perceive it as high).

Figure 2:
Distribution of relative frequencies: Perception of crime victimisation risk and frequency



When the respondents were asked to assess the same elements compared to the average of the Republic of Croatia, two-thirds of the respondents assessed victimisation risk to be lower than the average, whereas 60 per cent assessed crime frequency to be lower compared to the average of the Republic of Croatia. This can mostly be attributed to the consequences of media influences on public opinion. Citizens receive information on crime occurring outside of their place of residence mostly through the media, which is understandable since this type of crime does not belong to citizens' personal experience or experience of people from living in their surroundings. Media coverage of crime and the general state of society provide a significantly poorer image than the image based on precise data and actual events, meaning that citizens assume that these occurrences take place somewhere else in the country. The media image of crime does not reflect reality since the media, according to certain criteria, select the events they are going to present and decide how much space is going to be devoted to specific occurrences (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). These results confirm the research results on the perception of crime as a significantly greater problem at the national than at the local level (Thorpe & Hall, 2009; Walker, Kershaw, & Nicholas, 2006;).

Furthermore, sense of safety is represented in Figure 3, which contains the relative frequencies divided into the following categories: 1-highly unsafe/I cannot protect myself at all, 2-mostly unsafe/I mostly cannot protect myself, 3-mostly safe/I mostly can protect myself, 4-completely safe/I can completely protect myself. A large majority of Croatian citizens (92 per cent) feels safe at

night when alone in their apartment/house. A slightly smaller number, yet still a vast majority (85 per cent), feels safe even when moving about alone at night in their neighbourhood. In addition to the feeling of safety, the perceptions of self-protection abilities and of protection of property in case of a physical assault were examined. The results show that these assessments are quite similar, whereby the ability to protect property is slightly higher than the possibility of self-protection. It is fully understandable that respondents feel safer in their own home than outside since fear of crime can, among other things, be related to fear of strangers (Borooah & Carcach, 1997) that citizens more frequently encounter in public spaces. Moreover, the assessment of the ability to protect oneself from a physical assault is higher in one's own home.

More than two thirds of citizens (65 per cent) believe that they can protect themselves from physical assault, while a slightly larger number (66 per cent) believes in being able to protect their property. Approximately a third of the respondents perceives that they cannot protect themselves or their property.

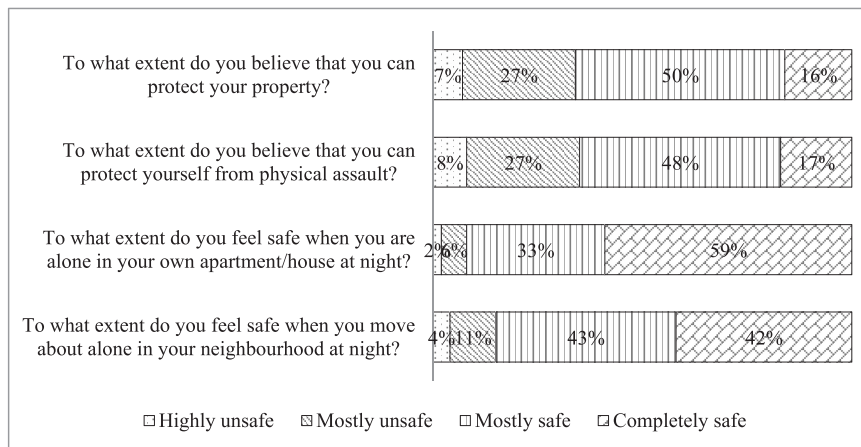
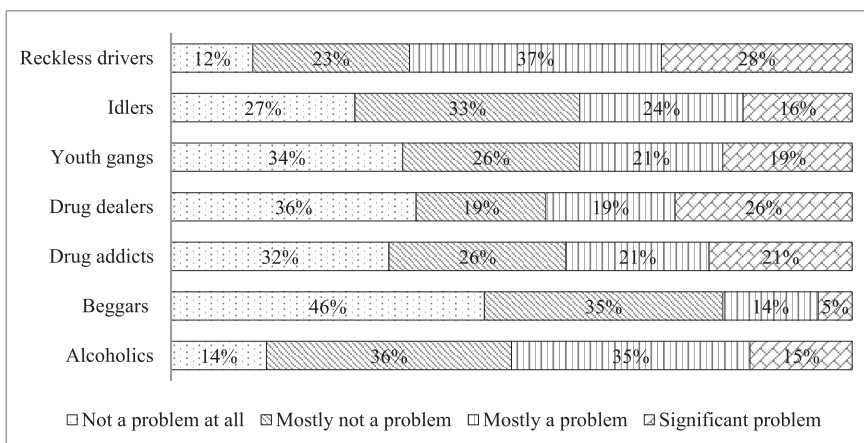


Figure 3: Distribution of relative frequencies: Feeling of safety and assessment of self-protection ability

The survey also included the area of incivilities, i.e. to what extent citizens of the Republic of Croatia perceive different categories of persons as a problem in their place of residence (Figure 4). The results show that undisciplined and reckless drivers are considered to be the greatest problem, i.e. two-thirds of respondents (65 per cent) perceive them in that way. The second most frequent problem are persons under the influence of alcohol (according to 50 per cent of citizens), followed by drug dealers and drug addicts (45 per cent and 42 per cent), as well as youth gangs and dealers (40 per cent). On the other hand, beggars are not perceived as a problem (19 per cent), while gangs and drug dealers which can related to criminal behaviour are perceived as high risk. It can be concluded that citizens are more bothered by deviant persons (reckless drivers and alcoholics) given that they encounter such types of behaviour almost on a daily basis, and less by persons exhibiting criminal behaviour.

Figure 4:
Distribution of relative frequencies:
To what extent do the stated groups of persons represent a problem in your place of residence?



In addition to the perception of to what extent certain groups of persons represent a problem in their place of residence, examined was the perception of the prominence of incivilities related to their various forms (Figure 5). Improper vehicle parking is the most common problem encountered by the respondents – slightly over half of them (54 per cent) encounter this problem frequently or almost on a daily basis. This is followed by littered streets and green areas (problem encountered frequently/almost on a daily basis by over one-third of citizens), damage to private and public property, as well as excessive drinking and drug abuse in the streets, which over a third of citizens consider a problem (35 per cent and 34 per cent), noise at night (31 per cent), juvenile incidents (30 per cent), as well as dangerous dogs and violence among people (every fourth respondent). Prostitution is the least prominent problem – the majority of respondents (70 per cent) has never encountered this problem in their place of residence. The described perception of respondents related to negative occurrences in their place of residence and to risk groups of persons is mostly affected by respondents' personal experience in their place of residence. Such information is rarely reported by the media, however, since in question are repeated or constantly present problems in local communities, citizens notice them more or less frequently depending on their intensity, which obviously affects their quality of life and their satisfaction with their place of residence. It is, therefore, understandable that citizens frequently or almost on a daily basis notice problems and occurrences related to their physical environment (improper parking, littered surroundings, damaged public property), whereas behaviours related to the erosion of social relationships and moral values (prostitution, discrimination, animal cruelty, burglaries/robberies and violence) are less often noticed.

The frequent occurrence of behaviours that disrupt the public order, i.e. the presence of undesired occurrences and risk groups of persons is perceived by citizens as a threat to the norm and value system which they rely on (Borovec & Cajner Mraović, 2010).

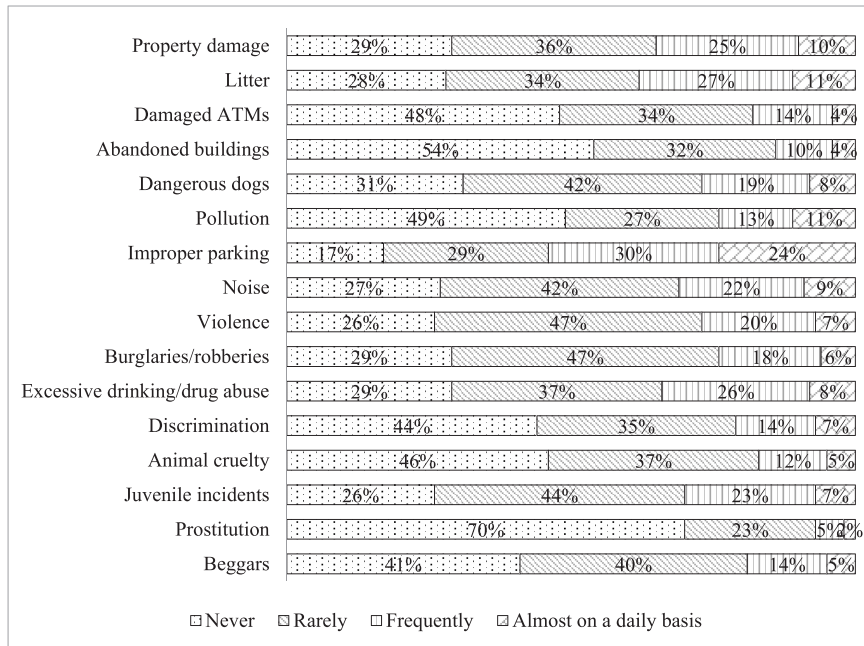


Figure 5: Distribution of relative frequencies: How often do the stated occurrences appear in your place of residence?

The results of answer frequencies related to visibility of police dealings are depicted in Figure 6. According to the respondents, police car patrols are the most frequently noticed police activity – within one month prior to the beginning of the research, two-thirds of citizens (almost half of them within one week prior to the beginning of the research) noticed the activity, while foot patrols and dealings towards persons disrupting public order were noticed only by approximately one-fourth of the respondents over the same period.

It should be emphasised that nearly half of citizens has never seen police officers patrolling on foot in their neighbourhood. A fourth of citizens has never seen police dealings towards persons disrupting public order. Since the organisation of police work in patrol areas is, in most part, based on car patrols, and, only in less part, on foot patrols, the results obtained are completely realistic and expected.

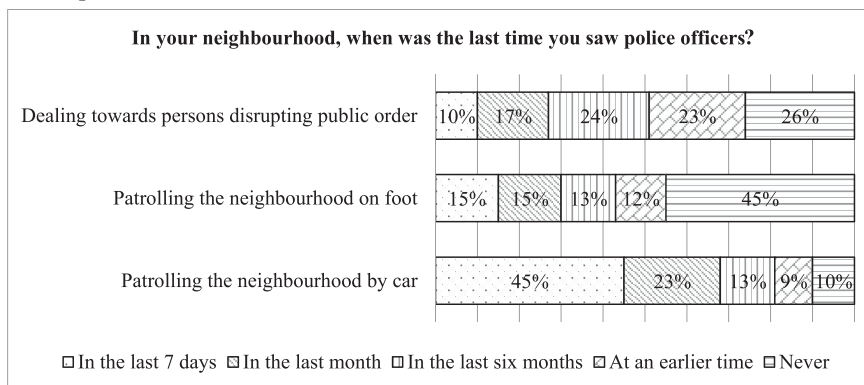


Figure 6: Distribution of relative frequencies: Police visibility

6.2 Results of Regression and Quasi-Canonical Analyses

Regression analysis (Mejovšek, 2008) is used to determine the relation between a set of independent variables and one dependent variable. In this analysis, the key coefficients are the multiple correlation (R) and β coefficients (standardised coefficients of partial regression). The multiple correlation shows the level of relation between a set of predictors and a criteria variable, as well as provides data on the value of the entire system of predictors in predicting a criteria variable. Each predictor has a β coefficient that explains the share of a predictor in predicting criteria, i.e. shows a special share of a particular predictor in explaining the common variance of a set of predictors and criteria.¹

In the first regression analysis (Table 1), fear of crime is a dependent or criteria variable, whereas variables defining police visibility are independent variables or predictors.

Table 1:
Multiple regression analysis for the criterion: Fear of crime

| Predictors | B | Std. error β | p |
|--|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Patrolling the neighbourhood by car | -0.223 | 0.32 | 0.000 |
| Patrolling the neighbourhood on foot | -0.011 | 0.34 | 0.688 |
| Dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood | 0.092 | 0.34 | 0.007 |
| $R = 0.215$; $R^2 = 0.046$; $F(3) = 16.414$; $p < 0.001$; Std. error 0.977 | | | |

It is visible from Table 1 that the regression of predictor variables on fear of crime is statistically significant because $p < 0.001$. The coefficient of multiple correlation (R) amounts to 0.215 and the coefficient of determination (R^2) amounts to 4.6 per cent, meaning that 4.6 per cent of criteria variance was explained by predictors. The “patrolling the neighbourhood by car” variable, with a regression coefficient of -0.223, participated most in predicting the results for the “fear of crime” variable. In addition, participating in the prediction, according to its strength, is the “dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood” variable, whose standardised regression coefficient amounts to 0.092. Based on the negative sign of the coefficient and the way in which the predictors are scaled, i.e. the way in which the degrees on the scale are defined, the negative sign means that seeing the police patrolling the neighbourhood by car more often is related to a higher level of fear of crime. On the other hand, more frequent police dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood have a positive impact on reducing fear of crime. Participating least in predicting the criteria is the “patrolling the neighbourhood on foot” variable ($\beta = -0.011$), which was shown to be a statistically insignificant predictor.

In the following regression analysis (Table 2), the dependent or criteria variable is perception of incivilities.

¹ All predictions of multiple regression in relations to normal distribution of results are met. During the analysis the colinearity of predictors was also tested, but no significant linear relationship was found.

| Predictors | B | Std. error β | p |
|---|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Patrolling the neighbourhood by car | 0.171 | 0.32 | 0.000 |
| Patrolling the neighbourhood on foot | -0.160 | 0.34 | 0.000 |
| Dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood | -0.034 | 0.34 | 0.329 |
| $R = 0.202; R^2 = 0.041; F(3) = 14.509; p < 0.001; \text{Std. error} = 0.979$ | | | |

Table 2:
Multiple regression analysis for the criterion: Perception of incivilities

The regression of predictor variables on incivilities, as visible in Table 2, is statistically significant and it amounts to $p < 0.001$. The coefficient of multiple correlation (R) amounts to 0.202, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) amounts to 0.041, i.e. predictors account for 4.1 per cent of criteria variance. Of the three predictors, two had a statistically significant regression coefficient amounting to $p < 0.01$, whereas the “police dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood” criterion has proven to be statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). The “patrolling the neighbourhood by car” variable, with a regression coefficient of 0.171, participates mostly in predicting the results for the “perception of incivilities” variable. According to strength, it is followed by “patrolling the neighbourhood on foot” variable, whose standardised regression coefficient amounts to -0.160. According to the sign of the coefficient and the way in which the degrees on the scale are defined, it can be concluded that seeing police patrolling the neighbourhood by car more often is related to a higher perception of incivilities. However, seeing the police patrolling the neighbourhood by foot more often is related to a lower perception of incivilities.

The perception of crime risk and frequency as a component of the sense of safety was also used as a criteria variable in the regression analysis. The results obtained are presented in Table 3.

| Predictors | B | Std. error β | p |
|---|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Patrolling the neighbourhood by car | 0.145 | 0.32 | 0.000 |
| Patrolling the neighbourhood on foot | -0.145 | 0.34 | 0.000 |
| Dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood | -0.097 | 0.34 | 0.005 |
| $R = 0.208; R^2 = 0.043; F(3) = 15.355; p < 0.001; \text{Std. error} = 0.978$ | | | |

Table 3:
Multiple regression analysis for the criterion: Perception of crime risk and frequency

In this case as well, the regression of predictor variable on the “perception of crime risk and frequency” criterion is statistically significant because $p < 0.001$ per cent. The coefficient of multiple correlation (R) amounts to 0.208, whereas the percentage of the common variance (R^2) is 4.3 per cent. Again, a large proportion of the variance has remained unexplained, meaning that police visibility can only, to a very limited extent, influence citizens’ perception of victimisation risk and perception of crime frequency. Based on the results R^2 variance explained is very low and there are mostly other indicators that influenced these perceptions. In

this case, all predictors are statistically significant because $p < 0.05$. In predicting the results for the “perception of crime risk and frequency” variable, participating equally are the “patrolling the neighbourhood by car” variable, whose regression coefficient amounts to 0.145, and “patrolling the neighbourhood on foot” variable, $\beta = -0.145$. However, their regression coefficients have a different sign. In predicting the perception of crime risk and frequency, participating also is the third predictor “dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood”, whose standardised regression coefficient amounts to -0.097. Taking into consideration the sign of the coefficient and the way in which the predictors are scaled, it can be concluded that seeing the police patrolling the neighbourhood by car more frequently is related to a higher level of perception of crime risk and perception of crime frequency. On the other hand, seeing police patrolling the neighbourhood on foot more frequently, as well as dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood, have a positive influence on diminishing perceived crime risk and frequency.

Table 4 provides a clear overview of how predictors and statistically significant criteria are related.

Table 4:
Relation
between
predictors and
criteria

| Predictors | Criteria |
|---|---|
| Patrolling the neighbourhood by car more frequently | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased fear of crime • Increased perception of incivilities • Increased perception of crime risk and frequency |
| Patrolling the neighbourhood on foot more frequently | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased perception of incivilities • Decreased perception of crime risk and frequency |
| More frequent dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased fear of crime • Decreased perception of crime risk and frequency |

Canonical analysis is a complex statistical procedure, whose result is the canonical correlation that represents the maximum correlation between two sets of variables. This correlation is calculated between sets of linear combinations of variables in both sets of variables. However, when data of “lower quality”² are used, as is the case in this research, it is more suitable to use the canonical covariance analysis or quasi-canonical correlation analysis (Momirović et al., 1983). The canonical covariance analysis is a robust method that is adapted for data at the level of nominal and ordinal scales, and is comprised of maximising covariances of linear composites of two sets of variables. Furthermore, a normal distribution of data is not a condition. Mejovšek (2008) emphasises that the method is not sensitive to higher levels of relationships between variables from two different sets. In addition, the method allows for a non-orthogonal relationship of latent dimensions and, along with the structure of quasi-canonical factors (orthogonal projections of variables on quasi-canonical factors, which are actually correlations of variables and quasi-canonical factors), there is also a pattern of quasi-canonical factors (parallel projection of variables on quasi-canonical factors).

² In the research and processing of data the Likert type variables were used which are not equally scaled, i.e. they do not have the same number of categories and the relations among those categories are not unified. Because of the mentioned, Quasi-canonical correlation analysis was used as a method, because it is less sensitive to processing such data.

In order to determine the relationship between the components of police visibility and the sense of safety, conducted was a spectral decomposition of square matrix of covariances between the mentioned set of variables, as presented in Table 5.

| | Eigenvalues | Cumulative variance | % of common variance |
|----|-------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | 0.07973 | 0.07973 | 2.66 |
| 2. | 0.03133 | 0.11106 | 3.70 |
| 3. | 0.00127 | 0.11233 | 3.74 |

Table 5:
Eigenvalues of the covariance matrix of police visibility and sense of safety

The results show that a significant quasi-canonical component was extracted, whose covariance amounts to 0.08 (explained in detailed in Table 7). It is a low correlation, and the results indicate that the first pair of quasi-canonical factors of the two sets of variables, which points to what is important for their relationship, explains 2.66 per cent of the common variance. The quasi-canonical correlations were calculated for the significant quasi-canonical component. The results of the testing of the significance of the quasi-canonical correlations³ are presented in Table 6.

| Component | Quasi-canonical correlation | Quasi-canonical covariance | χ^2 | DF | Significance <i>P</i> |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----|-----------------------|
| 1. | 0.25 | 0.08 | 70.32 | 4 | 0.000 |

Table 6.
Testing of the significance of the quasi-canonical coefficients of police visibility and sense of safety

The correlation of the significant quasi-canonical component amounts to 0.25, while the quasi-canonical correlation (0.08) is statistically significant, with $p < 0.01$ per cent. It can be claimed that there is a relationship between police visibility and sense of safety over one significant quasi-canonical component. Therefore, the analysis of the structure of the quasi-canonical variable can be conducted.

Table 7 presents parallel projections and correlations of variables (matrices of pattern and structure are identical and therefore not shown separately) that define police visibility on the quasi-canonical component extracted from that set of variables and from the other set of variables (sense of safety).

| Variables | Parallel projections and correlations of variables of the first set on components extracted from set 1 | Parallel projections and correlations of variables of the first set on components extracted from set 2 |
|---|--|--|
| Patrolling the neighbourhood by car | 0.50 | 0.16 |
| Patrolling the neighbourhood on foot | -0.58 | -0.12 |
| Dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood | -0.50 | -0.09 |

Table 7:
Matrices of pattern/structure of the first set of variables: Police visibility

Based on the results presented in Table 7, it is possible to determine variables belonging to police visibility that are responsible for the relationship with the sense of safety set of variables. The first among them is the "patrolling the neighbourhood by car" variable, whose parallel projection and correlation

³ In a Quasi-canonical analysis Quasi-canonical covariance is a parameter corresponding to Wilks Lambda in Canonical analysis.

on the component extracted from the sense of safety amount to 0.16. The next variable is “patrolling the neighbourhood on foot”, whose parallel projection and correlation on the first component amount to -0.12. The third variable (dealings towards persons disrupting public order in the neighbourhood) has lower parallel projections and correlations on the first component extracted from the set of variables that describe the sense of safety. In other words, the result shows that the perception of the police patrolling the neighbourhood by car less frequently and on foot more frequently are the most significant for relating police visibility with a positive sense of safety (lower level of fear of crime, perception of lower crime risk and frequency and lower level of incivilities).

Furthermore, it was analysed which sense of safety variables most significantly create the quasi-canonical component. Table 8 presents the parallel projections and correlations of variables that define the sense of safety on the quasi-canonical component extracted from that set of variables and from the other set of variables (police visibility).

Table 8:
Matrices of
pattern/structure
of the second
set of variables:
Perception of
safety

| Variables | Parallel projections and correlations of variables of the second set on components extracted from set 2 | Parallel projections and correlations of variables of the second set on components extracted from set 1 |
|--|---|---|
| Fear of crime | -0.63 | -0.15 |
| Perception of incivilities | 0.78 | 0.19 |
| Perception of crime risk and frequency | 0.79 | 0.20 |

By examining Table 8, which represents the matrix pattern and the matrix structure of the second set of variables, it is possible to determine the sense of safety variables that are responsible for the relationship with the police visibility set of variables. In this case, these are all three variables, whereby the first among them is “perception of crime risk and frequency”, whose parallel projection and correlation on the first component amount to 0.20. It is followed by the “perception of incivilities” variable, whose parallel projection and correlation on the first component amount to 0.19 and by the “fear of crime” variable that has somewhat lower parallel projections and correlations on the first component extracted from the set of variables that describe police visibility. This result means that all aspects of subjective sense of safety are significantly related to police visibility.

In conclusion, the first pair of quasi-canonical factors in police visibility is defined by variables that refer to patrolling the neighbourhood by car and patrolling the neighbourhood on foot, whereby the first pair of quasi-canonical factors in sense of safety is defined by perception of crime risk and frequency, perception of incivilities and fear of crime. These results show that the perception of the police patrolling the neighbourhood on foot more frequently and by car less frequently is related to a higher sense of safety, i.e. lower perception of crime risk and frequency, as well as incivilities is related to higher police visibility.

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the hypothesis set in this research was confirmed, however, not completely. There is a statistically significant relation between police visibility and citizens’ sense of safety; however, the relation of various aspects of visibility has different signs in relation to sense of

safety. Visibility of police car patrols has an unfavourable effect on all aspects of the sense of safety, whereas visibility of police foot patrols and visibility of police interventions have a positive influence on the majority, yet not on all aspects of the sense of safety. Visible police foot patrols diminish the cognitive perception of the lack of safety (perception of crime frequency, victimisation risk and incivilities), whereas visible police dealings towards persons disrupting public order diminish fear of crime, as well as the perception of crime risk and frequency.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The traditional and conventional response of the police to an increase in citizens' feeling unsafe is to increase police presence and visibility (Grabosky, 1995). However, this research points out that such an approach does not necessarily produce positive effects, i.e. it can, depending on police tactics, make the situation even worse. The research results indicate that there is a complex relationship between visibility and citizens' affective and cognitive perception of safety. On the one hand, certain aspects of police visibility have a positive effect on the perception of safety; on the other hand, others are related contrary to expectations. Data can be interpreted in favour of visibility of foot patrols and police interventions having the most significant influence on the sense of safety, while visibility of police car patrols has a negative influence on citizens' perception of safety. In other words, all police efforts aimed at increasing activities related to foot patrols and to dealings towards risk groups are important in achieving a better perception of safety. However, it should be pointed out that the strength of the relationship, although statistically significant, is relatively low. To put it differently, police visibility will, only to a limited extent, influence citizens' feeling of safety. As Salmi et al. (2004) have determined, and which this research has confirmed, police visibility is important for the sense of safety. The increase in the number of foot patrols will reduce fear of crime (Grabosky, 1995), and enhance the feeling of safety in general (Office for National Statistics, 2014). However, although police visibility has a significant influence, it does not have a strong influence on citizens' subjective safety, which it influences only to a smaller extent. If citizens see police patrolling on foot, which enables direct contact with police officers, and if citizens see police dealings towards persons disrupting public order, this will positively influence citizens' sense of safety.

It is important to bear in mind that sense of safety is based on perception, in the same ways as assessment of the police and its visibility. Perception being so important, police efforts to reduce fear of crime or perception of crime risk and frequency, and incivilities will not be effective if they remain unnoticed by citizens. Obviously, the question arises how often citizens should see the police in order to perceive it as an integral part of everyday life in their neighbourhoods. Although police presence in the community through various patrolling techniques is often encouraged, still prevailing in Croatia is coverage of urban and rural areas by car patrols, which is significant in the context of the results obtained.

Although this was not the subject of this research, it should be mentioned that police visibility should not be viewed exclusively in isolation, but rather in the

context of the place or area police visibility is aimed at, and in relation to concrete tactics used by police patrols and in relation to the way they deal with citizens. In addition, other possible advantages of increased police visibility should be taken into consideration. On the one hand, it is prevention, i.e. reduction in the number of criminal offences committed (reported crime), and on the other hand there are possible positive influences on citizens' opinion on police and perception of police effectiveness, which can encourage citizens to report criminal offences and, in that way, reduce the dark crime figures. In other words, the assumption that police visibility could encourage to cooperate more with the police should not be neglected, which is particularly important in light of new concepts of policing, such as Community policing, problem-solving policing and the like. This is also confirmed by the research conducted by other authors (Sherman & Eck, 2002; Weisburd & Eck, 2004), which shows that visible police patrols can reduce crime, provided they are aimed at crime hotspots (high crime locations). To put it differently, random or reactive patrolling when police officers patrol a specific area and wait for citizens' calls for interventions, without being concentrated on high crime or anti-social behaviour locations, will not have a positive impact on reducing crime. Kelling, Pate, Dieckman, & Brown (1974) confirmed that random patrols do not have an influence on crime and fear of crime. If police patrols are focused on problem areas, it is much more likely that they will be effective. In addition, goal-oriented foot patrols might have a positive effect on citizens' perception of the police (Dalglish & Myhill, 2004; Office for National Statistics, 2014) and on reducing crime (Koper, 1995). Besides raising citizens' level of trust in the police, as well as reducing crime, foot patrols could potentially have a positive influence on citizens' perception of crime and sense of safety if the problem-solving approach is applied, and if the engagement of the local community in solving safety problems together with the police is encouraged (Tuffin, Morris, & Poole, 2006).

The results obtained point to a whole range of important implications both for police policies and police practice. First of all, citizens' sense of safety is a complex construct and police tactics must not be reduced only to increasing police presence in communities since a large share of the variance of the sense of safety is explained by other predictors, many of them not being within the scope and under the influence of the police. For instance, this can refer to some individual characteristics of citizens, factors that affect their increased vulnerability or diminished capacities to protect themselves from crime victimisation, as well as numerous factors in local communities. For that reason, reducing citizens' perception of feeling unsafe should be one of the main, yet not the only police priority. However, realistic goals and promises should be set and given to citizens because unrealistic promises, if not fulfilled, can result in disappointment. Moreover, the feeling of lack of safety should not be viewed only negatively since a certain level or amount of fear is an important survival and defence mechanism, which encourages citizens to take care of and take on measures to ensure their safety.

Furthermore, decision-makers in the police must develop strategies to improve not only police visibility, but strategies that will mostly be based on foot patrols. Given the fact that police work cannot be organised exclusively on foot, in

all situations that allow for it, car patrols should be combined with periods when police officers exit the car, patrol certain areas on foot and have direct contact with citizens, particularly in non-incident situations. What is more, police strategies must be planned in a way that certain activities result in multiple positive effects. Within this context, the effects of those activities aimed at increasing police visibility should also be expected in terms of reducing crime incidents or certain types of criminal offences, of influencing the positive perception of the police, as well as of reducing citizens' feeling of lack of safety.

The importance of direct contact between citizens and the police that is more frequent when police officers patrol on foot, should not be underestimated. The largest number of characteristics that influence citizens' feeling of satisfaction when encountering the police is related to the manner in which the police behave on site. This includes friendliness, willingness to help, fairness, attention when listening to citizens, and willingness to explain to citizens what exactly is going on.

Finally, some restrictions of this research should also be mentioned. First of all, the research can be understood as an attempt to explain fear of crime through police visibility. However, the results lead to a conclusion that there is a whole range of other, probably even stronger, predictors of the feeling of safety, which were not taken into account in this research. Moreover, a possible problem of this research might be the fact that assessments of both predictor and criteria variables were obtained from the same source. This might have caused a higher level of relations than exist in reality (so-called effect of method variance). In order to additionally test the results obtained, further research in which the criteria and predictor variables will be assessed in various contexts is necessary.

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