

**EMPIRICAL RESULTS ON FEAR OF CRIME IN THE FRAMEWORK OF
THE RESEARCH PROJECTS “BESECURE-FEELSECURE” AND
“URBANCRIME: SPATIAL ASPECTS OF CRIME AND INSECURITY IN THE
ERA OF ECONOMIC CRISIS: TRENDS, DIMENSIONS AND
CORRELATIONS”**

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Introduction

Fear of crime is a complex social phenomenon that holds one of the top positions in the contemporary agenda on urban security and the citizens' quality of life especially in big cities. In this context, a wide range of sociological, criminological and psychological studies have examined its dimensions and consequences in everyday life as well as the factors that contribute to the creation and enhancement of the phenomenon (Zarafonitou, 2002:26). Fear of crime defined as the “*collective anxiety of the residents of a district, city or country, which stems from the fear of likely victimisation by violent criminal attacks of themselves or other persons close to them*” (Léauté:16) has no linear relationship with crime rates and depends mainly on factors such as signs of physical and social disorder, trust in the criminal justice system and the police, experience of previous victimisation and the media as a source of information about the criminal phenomenon (Zarafonitou, 2006). In this context, vulnerability is of great importance in understanding fear of crime since the subjective perception of threats depends on the vulnerability which individuals attribute to themselves or to those close to them (Killias, 1990, 2001).

In Greece fear of crime has been investigated in a series of empirical studies since 1998 onwards and the research results have showed increased rates of fear especially in the centre of the Greek capital (Zarafonitou, 2002, 2004, 2011, 2012, 2013; Tseloni, Zarafonitou, 2008; Zarafonitou, Courakis, 2009; Zarafonitou, Mimis, Kalamaras, 2020; Zarafonitou, Kontopoulou, 2020). In the current analysis, research results derived from two innovative research programmes on urban security under the scientific responsibility of Professor Christina Zarafonitou, Head of

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the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of Panteion University², will be briefly presented. The projects focused on the investigation of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of crime, the dimensions of fear of crime and its explanatory factors in the urban context.

The BeSecure-FeelSecure Project in the city of Piraeus

The BeSecure-FeelSecure (*A Holistic Risk Management Approach for monitoring, assessing and forecasting the efficiency, sustainability and resilience of Piraeus*) Project was a European innovative programme aiming at the promotion of urban security in the city of Piraeus through a multistakeholder approach at the local level³. More specifically, the project was structured on the basis of three layers: governance, social and spatial actions, and the cyber space. In this context, the Laboratory of Urban Criminology had the scientific responsibility for the social⁴ and spatial actions⁵ as well as for the establishment of Piraeus Local Council of Crime Prevention⁶ and the Piraeus Victim Information Unit⁷.

Before the design and implementation of the aforementioned actions, a diagnostic research was conducted by the Laboratory of Urban Criminology in the 2nd and 5th Municipal Departments of Piraeus (see the following map)⁸. The research aimed at the examination of crime and fear of crime in the city of Piraeus and was implemented on a household level with 539 residents as participants⁹ while another (in a smaller scale) survey was also conducted on a sample of 100 shop owners and employees in the abovementioned Municipal Departments¹⁰. In this context, the baseline values of 5 result indicators (perception of safety, fear of crime, individual participation in community based criminal policy, intention to participate in community based criminal policy, citizens' trust in local authorities) were measured, and at the final phase of the

² <https://easte.panteion.gr/index.php/en-gb/>

³ [Project Overview – Be Secure Feel Secure \(BSFS\) \(bsfs-piraeus.eu\)](#) The project was funded by the European Regional Development Fund in the framework of the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative (UIA) <https://uia-initiative.eu/en>. The leader of the project was the Municipality of Piraeus and the project's partners were the Police (Ministry of Citizen Protection), the European Forum for Urban Security (Efus), Singular Logic, Space Hellas and the Research Centre of the University of Piraeus. Panteion via the Laboratory of Urban Criminology was the scientific responsible partner of the project. [Consortium Archives – Be Secure Feel Secure \(BSFS\) \(bsfs-piraeus.eu\)](#)

⁴ Social informative, sensitizing and mobilization actions such as: consultation meetings with local institutional and social stakeholders, training on urban security issues addressed to public servants, members of the Piraeus LCCP and local stakeholders, awareness sessions to high school students regarding bullying and cyber threats, training sessions on urban security issues addressed to local shop owners, sport events etc.

⁵ Based on the scientific approach of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). See Crowe, 2000.

⁶ The Local Council for Crime Prevention supervised the implementation of the project's actions. For the Local Councils of Crime Prevention see Zarafonitou, 2003, 2004, 2019.

⁷ Piraeus Victim Information Unit is the first generic victim support unit in Greece that provides services (a holistic protection) to all crime victims and their relatives. The design of the unit was developed by the Laboratory of Urban Criminology and its establishment took place under its scientific guidance. [Press Release | The Establishment of the Crime Victims Information Unit of the Municipality of Piraeus – Be Secure Feel Secure \(BSFS\) \(bsfs-piraeus.eu\)](#)

⁸ The survey was conducted in 2020.

⁹ Based on a stratified sampling technique (interviews via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing with a structured questionnaire).

¹⁰ The survey was conducted via face-to-face interviews.

project these indicators were re-evaluated after the implementation of the foreseen actions and interventions¹¹.

In the framework of this analysis only a part of the diagnostic and evaluation research results¹² on the household level will be presented briefly¹³.



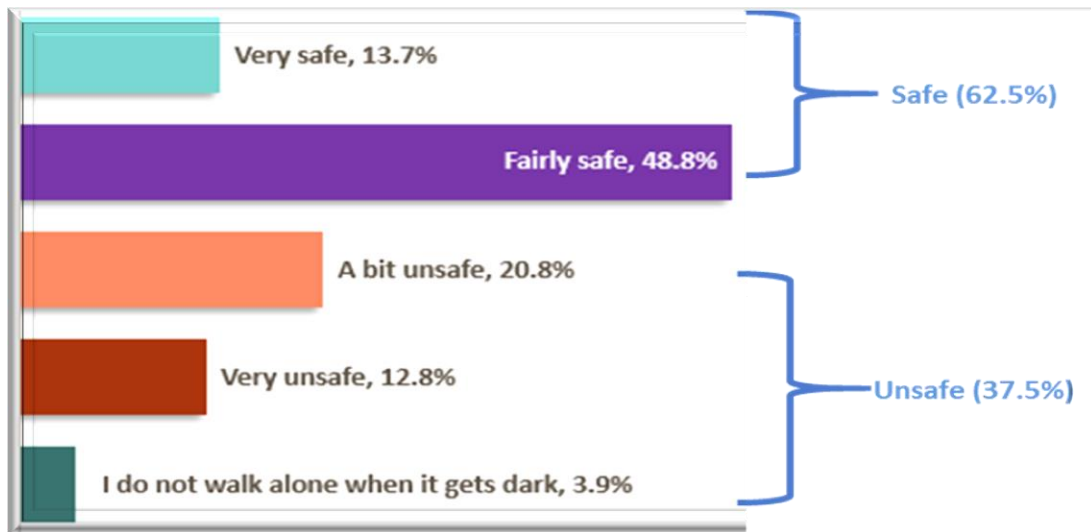
According to the diagnostic survey, the level of crime in the area of residence was characterized by the respondents as moderate (at an aggregate level and per Municipal Department) and crime rates during the last three years¹⁴ were reported as being stable (at an aggregate level and per Municipal Department). The research results showed a low victimisation rate (13,2%) with the criminal offenses of which the respondents were victimised being mainly thefts/burglaries (59,5%) and robberies (14,3%). Regarding fear of crime, the majority of the respondents reported feeling very or fairly safe (62,5%) (Graph 1). In this context, most of the participants reported that the criminal offenses making them feel insecure were mainly thefts/burglaries (20,3% in the 2nd MD and 30% in the 5th MD) and robberies (17,5% in the 2nd MD and 21,3% in the 5th MD).

¹¹ In the framework of the research in the two Municipal Departments (MDs), the spatial variability of crime and insecurity was also examined through map visualization.

¹² The statistical analysis of the data, the spatial analysis and the crime mapping was conducted by Ass. Prof. Angelos Mimis, Dr. Dimitrios Kalamaras and Thanos Synolakis (PhD Candidate) under the scientific responsibility of Prof. Christina Zarafonitou.

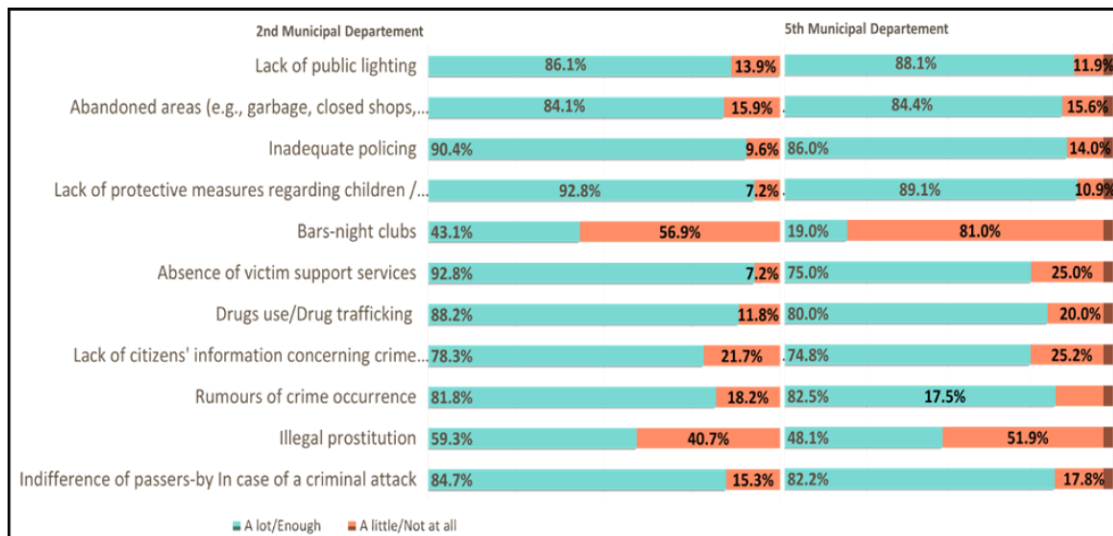
¹³ See also [Victimization, insecurity & trust of citizens towards social institutions: Research findings in the 2nd & 5th Municipal District of Piraeus – Be Secure Feel Secure \(BSFS\) \(bsfs-piraeus.eu\)](https://bsfs-piraeus.eu)

¹⁴ The last three years before the survey was carried out.



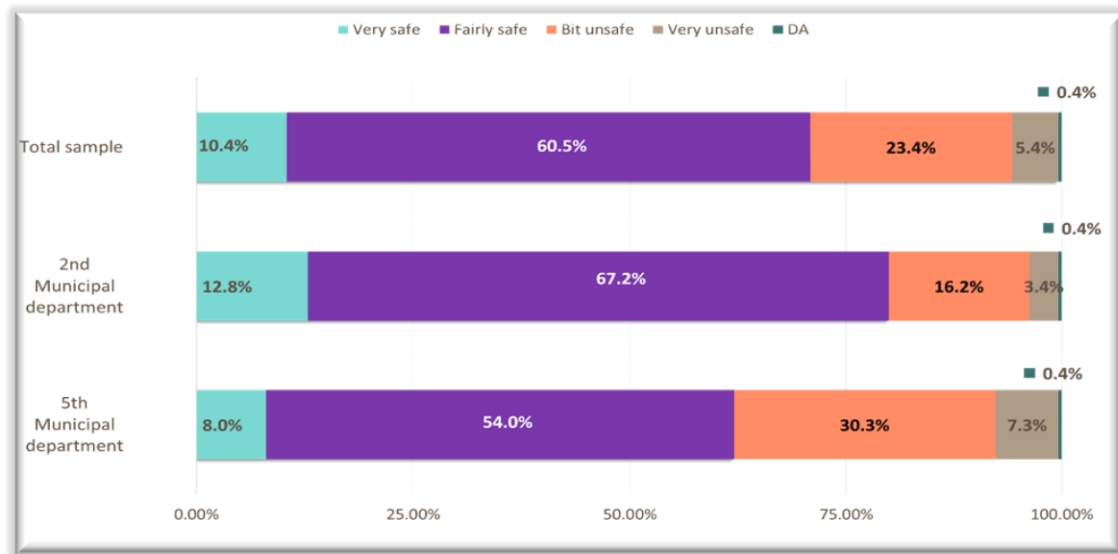
Graph 1 : How safe do you feel walking alone in your area of residence after dark?

Additionally, the factors that seem to contribute the most to the feeling of insecurity were the absence of protective measures for minors in public spaces, inadequate policing, signs of social and environmental degradation (poor lighting in public spaces, abandoned areas, drug use/trafficking), the absence of victim support services and the indifference of passers-by in case of a criminal attack (Graph 2).



Graph 2: Evaluation of the factors' contribution on residents' feeling of unsafety in their area of residence per Municipal Department

Regarding the security level of the area of residence, the majority of the respondents considered their area as very or fairly safe (cumulative percentage 70,9%) (Graph 3).



Graph 3: How would you describe your area of residence?

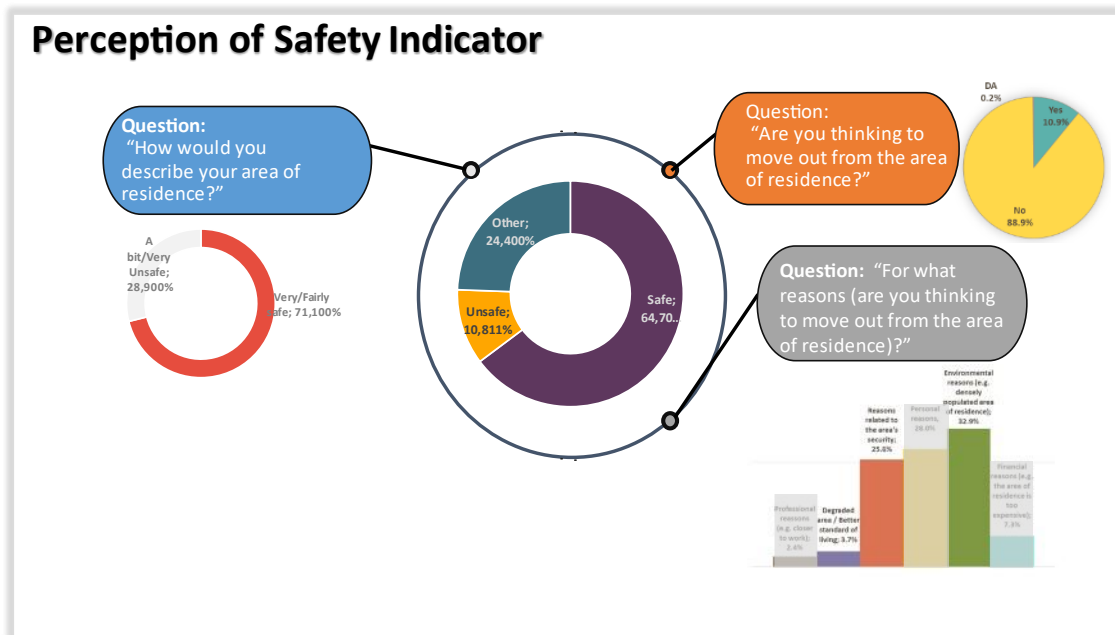
Moreover, according to crosstabulation results¹⁵, those who fear the most are women, residents of the 5th MD, older residents, divorced, housewives, pensioners and traders, as well as individuals with lower educational level and poor financial status. Finally, it was also shown that fear of crime relates to the experience of previous victimisation as well as to the negative assessment of police work in the area of residence.

With respect to the abovementioned five result indicators, their baseline values as well as their re-evaluation will be presented briefly. The baseline value regarding the reference category “safety” of the *Perception of Safety* indicator¹⁶ was calculated equal to 64,7%¹⁷ (Graph 4) while the re-evaluation of the indicator showed that the perception of safety increased since the reference category “safety” was calculated equal to 65,3%.

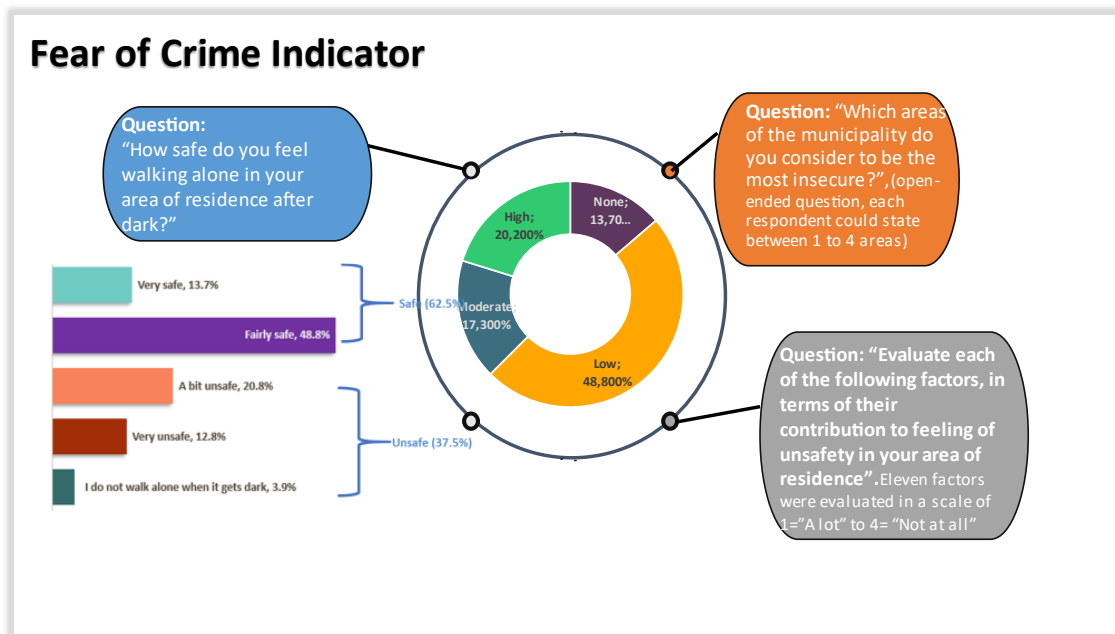
¹⁵ Statistically significant relationships between the variables under examination were investigated (based on Chi Square Test).

¹⁶ The indicator assesses the physical and social elements of the area of residence reflecting the residents’ perception about the area’s reputation.

¹⁷ It describes residents who consider that “their area of residence is very or fairly safe and they have no intention of moving or if they do move it is not for reasons related to the safety of the area”.



Graph 4: Perception of safety indicator

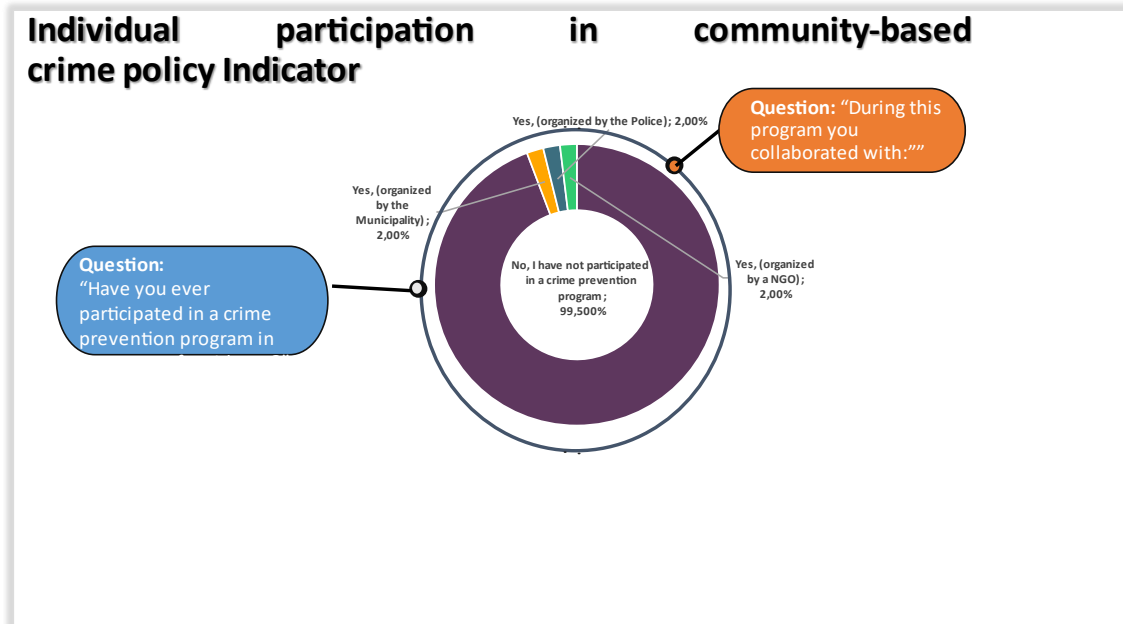


Graph 5: Fear of crime indicator

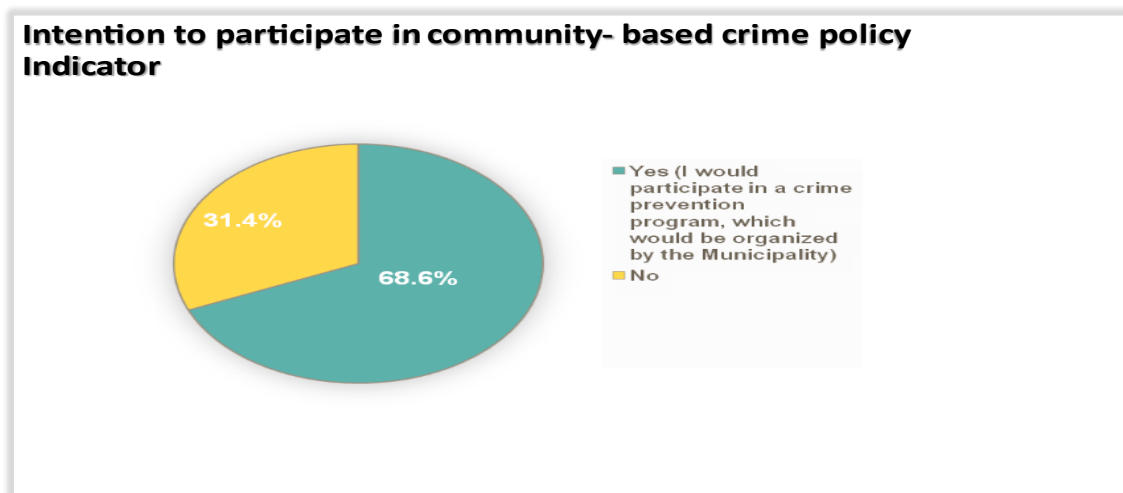
Regarding the indicator of *Fear of Crime*¹⁸, the baseline value regarding the reference category "High" was calculated equal to 20,2% (Graph 5), while the reassessment of the indicator showed a reduction in fear of crime (reference category "High" equal to 17,0%). The *Individual Participation in Community Based Criminal Policy* indicator reflects the amount of citizens

¹⁸ The **Fear of Crime** indicator is captured by (a) the level of insecurity in the neighborhood of permanent residence of the respondents, (b) the number of occurrence of the type of the most insecure areas and (c) the factors that contribute in the creation of the feeling of insecurity.

who participate in the organization, planning and implementation of crime prevention measures in the framework of the participatory model of criminal policy. According to the research results, 99,5% of the respondents reported that they had never participated in such crime prevention measures (Graph 6). The re-evaluation of the indicator showed no change (the value was calculated again equal to 99.45%).



Graph 6: Individual participation in community-based crime policy indicator

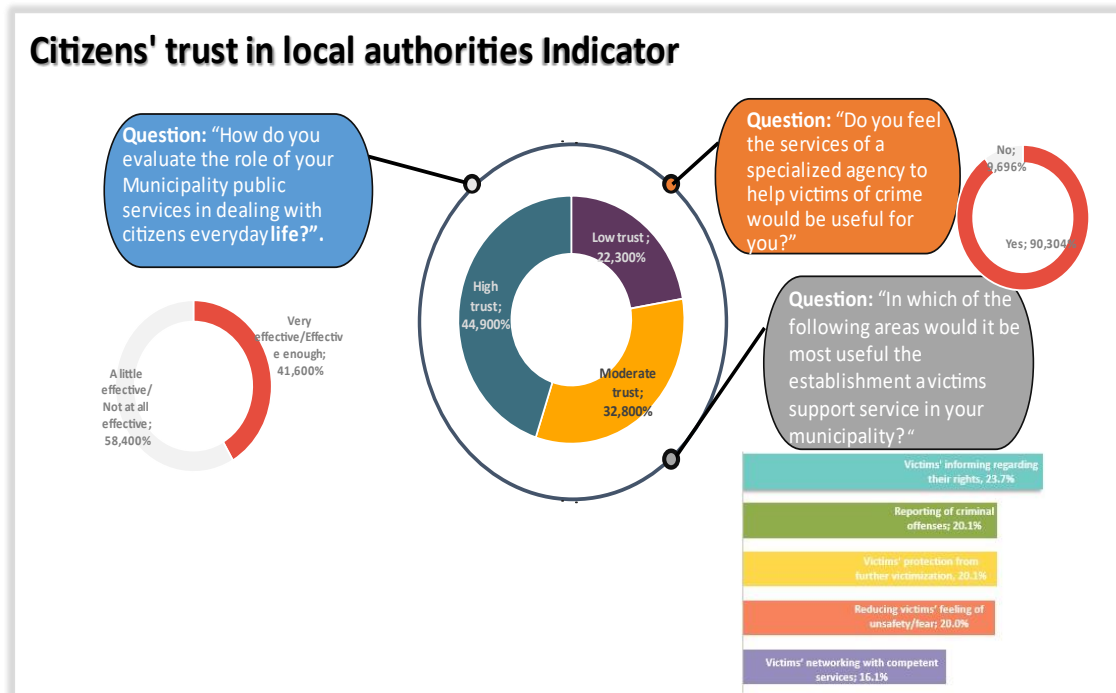


Graph 7: Intention to participate in community-based criminal policy indicator¹⁹

According to Graph 7 which depicts the *Intention of the respondents to participate in community-based crime prevention measures or programmes*, 68,6% of the sample is willing to participate in such community-based initiatives. In the framework of the 2nd wave, the research results showed that 70,2% of the respondents would participate in a community-based crime prevention programme organized by the Municipality.

¹⁹ It was a single dimensional indicator.

Finally, the last indicator was about the *Citizens' Trust to Local Authorities* on urban security issues. During the 1st wave the baseline value regarding the reference category "High trust" was calculated equal to 44,9% (Graph 8). However, the 2nd wave research results showed an enhancement of the citizens' trust in local authorities since the aforementioned value was calculated equal to 49,3%.



Graph 8: Citizens' trust in local authorities indicator

In conclusion, the re-assessment of the result indicators showed the overall positive impact of the BSFS programme in the city of Piraeus.

The Project "UrbanCrime: Spatial aspects of crime and insecurity in the era of economic crisis: Trends, dimensions and correlations"

The project "UrbanCrime: Spatial aspects of crime and insecurity in the era of economic crisis: Trends, dimensions and correlations" aimed at the investigation of crime and fear of crime during the economic crisis in Greece (2009-2019)²⁰ and beyond (2020-2021)²¹ focusing on the region of the Greek capital. The research was conducted in the Municipalities of Athens, Korydallos and Philothei-Psychiko²². In the framework of the project various methodologies were used in order to examine the research questions. More specifically, the methodologies included: (a) statistical analysis of Police data at the level of the Greek territory as well as at

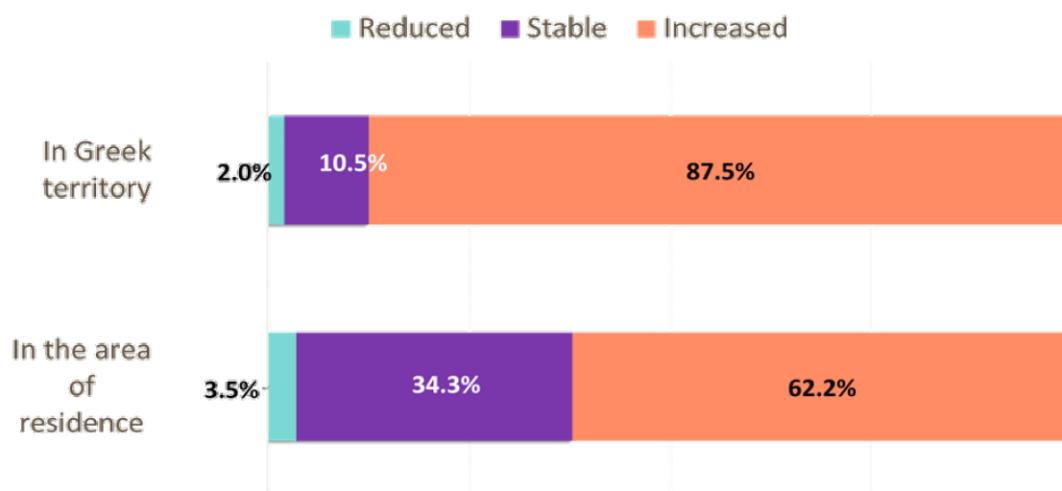
²⁰ In Greece the economic crisis begun in 2009 (debt crisis) and in 2018 the 3rd bailout package expired and in 2019 the imposed capital controls were finally removed.

²¹ The project was funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) under the "1st call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects to support Faculty Members & Researchers and the Procurement of high-cost research equipment grant" (Project Number HFRI-FM17-3898). For more details see the site of the project <https://urbancrime.gr/>

²² Korydallos and Philothei-Psychiko are two remote municipalities (compared to the Municipality of Athens) with different socioeconomic status.

the level of the region of Attica²³ and at a municipality level (for the three aforementioned municipalities)²⁴, (b) a diagnostic research in the three aforementioned municipalities on a household level which included statistical and cartographic analysis of quantitative data and (c) a qualitative research in the three municipalities based on interviews with representatives of the municipal authorities and the Police regarding issues of crime, fear of crime and criminal policy during the period of the economic crisis and beyond.

In the current analysis only a part of the research results (on a non-spatial level) of the diagnostic research²⁵ will be presented briefly²⁶. The survey was conducted through interviews via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) with the use of a questionnaire²⁷. According to the majority of the respondents, crime rates increased in Greece as well as in the area of residence during the period of the economic crisis (87,5% and 62,2% respectively) (Graph 9), while 33,4% of the sample reported an experience of previous victimisation.



Graph 9: Crime level evolution during the period 2009-2019

Regarding fear of crime during the period of the economic crisis, the majority (cumulatively) of the sample (66,2%) reported that they felt “Very” or “Fairly” safe (Graph 10), while the lowest percentages of the feeling of safety were recorded in the Municipality of Athens (61,7% in Athens, 62,3% in Korydallos, 83,6% in Philothei-Psychiko).

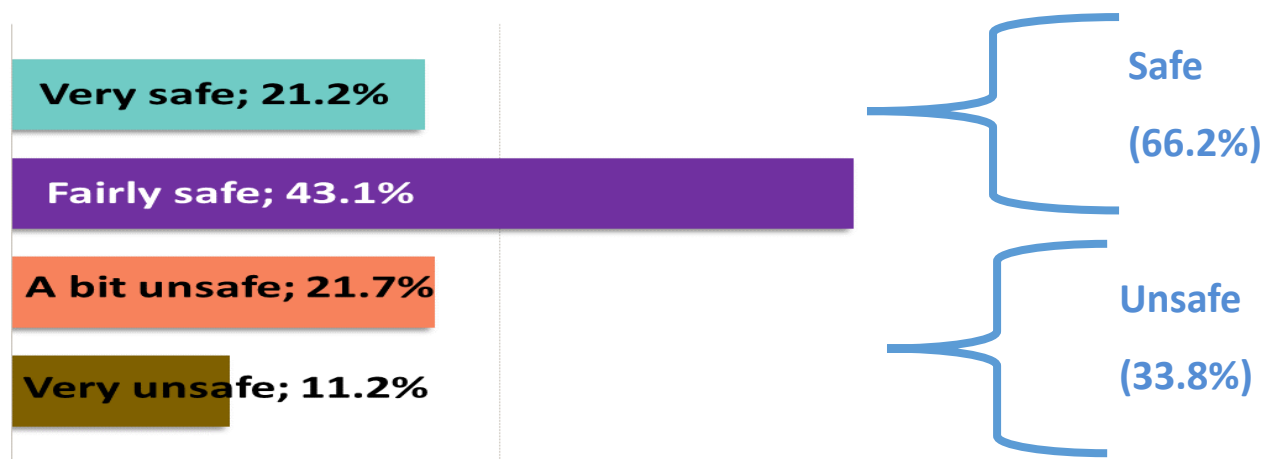
²³For the period 2009-2019.

²⁴ For the period 2017-2019. The spatial analysis of the data was conducted at a Police Department level. The data were provided to the Scientific Responsible of the project after the submission of a relevant request to the Police.

²⁵ The survey was conducted in 2021.

²⁶ The statistical analysis of the data, the spatial analysis and the crime mapping was conducted by Ass. Prof. Angelos Mimis, Dr. Dimitrios Kalamaras and Thanos Synolakis (PhD Candidate) under the scientific responsibility of Prof. Christina Zarafonitou.

²⁷ The sampling design was that of the multidimensional stratified sampling from a sampling population defined based on the population census of Hellenic Statistical Authority for the year of 2011 and 736 questionnaires were filled.



Graph 10: How safe do you feel walking alone in your area of residence after dark (for the period 2009-2019)?

The respondents' feeling of insecurity was related mainly to crimes such as thefts/burglaries (16,4%) and robberies (15,7%) as well as to factors such as deserted or poorly lit areas (11,3%), closed shops and abandoned buildings (10,9%), public drug use/trafficking (8,4%) and insufficient or ineffective policing (8,4%). The crosstabulation analysis²⁸ showed that those who have a higher probability to feel insecure are women, residents of the Municipality of Athens, those who have low-income status, those who had a previous victimisation experience²⁹ and those who assess Police's work negatively. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between the feeling of insecurity during the period of the economic crisis and three indicators that were developed on order to measure the impact of the economic crisis at a household, personal and municipality level³⁰. This research finding highlights the relation between the feeling of insecurity and the economic crisis. For example, regarding the indicator for the **Impact of the Economic Crisis at the Household Level**, it was found that those who believe that the impact of the crisis at the household level was high were feeling insecure at a higher percentage (38,9%) compared to those who believed that the impact of the crisis was moderate (28,6%) or low (35,9%).

Finally, the most important measures proposed by the respondents for the enhancement of the feeling of safety were: better lighting of the streets (10,4%), the improvement of the financial situation in general (10%), the enhancement of policing (9,8%), crime mapping (9,2%), the information of the citizens about crime distribution in their area (8,8%), the improvement of the quality of life (8,8%) and cameras in public spaces/streets (8,4%).

²⁸ Statistically significant relationships between the variables under examination were investigated.

²⁹ The correlation between fear of crime and previous victimisation was positively and statistically significant only for the period 2020-2021 not for the decade 2009-2019. Regarding this finding it should be pointed out that in this case the objective of the relevant question regarding victimisation is not measurement because it refers to a very long period of time. In this context, the role of previous victimisation is examined in relation to the development of a general feeling of insecurity and the subjects' attitudes.

³⁰ Three indicators were developed: indicator for the **Impact of the Economic Crisis on a Household Level**, indicator of the **Impact of the Economic Crisis at a Personal Level**, indicator of the **Impact of the Economic Crisis at a Municipality Level**.

Conclusion

The research findings showed that the majority of the residents of Piraeus city feel safe and those who feel unsafe associate their feeling of insecurity mainly with crimes such as thefts/burglaries and robberies as well as with the urban environment degradation and the insufficient policing. These latter results were also found in the framework of the diagnostic research in the three municipalities in the metropolitan area of Athens. Regarding the crosstabulation analysis in the case of the diagnostic research in the city of Piraeus, it was found that the feeling of insecurity related to factors such as gender, age, marital status, educational level, income status, professional status, previous victimisation experience and the police's work assessment. In the case of the diagnostic research in the three municipalities of Athens, it was found that the feeling of insecurity related to factors such as the area of residence, gender, income status, the experience of previous victimisation, the assessment of Police's work and the economic crisis. In this context, it was found that the residents of the Municipality of Athens were those that felt the most insecure during the period of the economic crisis, a finding that is in line with previous research experience that shows high levels of fear of crime in the centre and central neighborhoods of the Greek capital, especially those which are the most socially and environmentally degraded. The aforementioned results of the crosstabulation analysis in both surveys highlights the role of the explanatory factors of fear of crime according to criminological theory and research experience.

Finally, the positive impact of the BeSecure-FeelSecure project in the city of Piraeus reflects the important role of participatory actions, measures and interventions for crime prevention and the enhancement of the feeling of safety that aim at the so called co-production of urban safety with the ultimate goal to improve and ensure the quality of the citizens' everyday life in the urban context.

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