

CRIMINAL VICTIMISATION IN GREECE AND THE FEAR OF CRIME: A 'PARADOX' FOR INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

The measurement of victimisation was rare and sporadic in Greece until 2005 when it was included in the EU International Crime Survey (EUICS). Many findings are highly interesting as for example those concerning corruption. There are also high ratings of feeling unsafe among the inhabitants of Greece, in particular those in Athens, in spite of the relatively low rates of their victimisation. This paper focuses on this point, trying to reveal the factors which could explain this 'paradox'.

Keywords: Victimisation — fear of crime — satisfaction with the police — quality of life

INTRODUCTION

Victimisation surveys have been rare and sporadic in Greece until 2005 when they were included in the European victimisation survey (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a; 2007b: p. 30). At the national level, only one victimisation survey has been carried out, in 2001 (Karydis, 2004) but this theme has frequently been examined in the framework of surveys on fear of crime which were carried out in Athens during the last decade (Zarafonitou, 2002, 2004; Zarafonitou and Courakis, 2009)¹. The most important observation which emerged from those was the relatively low levels of victimisation of Greek citizens in comparison to the high levels of fear of crime revealed. In order for this 'paradox' to be explained, a conceptualisation of fear of crime (Vanderveen, 2006: p. 28) is necessary as well as looking at its attributed 'social meaning'², in the context of the general social framework in which social attitudes are shaped and manifested.

Fear of crime is, on the one hand, an important factor in the moulding of people's attitudes and perceptions of crime, and on the other, a product of these based on a process of interaction. These feelings do not relate only to actual situations and the experiences of individuals but also to more general personal and social concerns. Thus, even when fear of crime refers to less serious crime, concern derived from aspects related to criminality can be much stronger. It has

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been ascertained that this concern is sometimes based on the conviction that ethical values have been lost and a pervasive anomie prevails which transforms deviations into the norms (Widmer *et al.*, 2004). In addition, a negative correlation between crime and fear of crime has been noted (Taylor and Hale, 1986; Robert and Pottier, 2004; Crawford, 2007). Especially in the later 1970s, it became obvious that the 'public fear of crime is a measurable phenomenon that is to some degree independent of crime and victimisation rates' (Garland, 2001: p. 122).

Fear of crime as 'a rational or irrational state of alarm or anxiety engendered by the belief that one is in danger of criminal victimisation' (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2006: p. 164) can be distinguished from the worry which is caused by the perception of crime as a serious social problem (Furstenberg, 1971; Robert and Pottier, 2004: p. 218). Even though this distinction does not exclude some connection of fear of crime with the crime/victimisation rates in an area, it also demonstrates the role of subjective perceptions of threats based on *vulnerability* (Killias and Clerici, 2000; Box *et al.*, 1988; Taylor and Hale, 1986) which individuals adopt to themselves or to those close to them. This helps to explain the large number of citizens who claim on relevant surveys and polls that they are afraid of being victimised, thus expressing their general social worries through 'the symbolically dense concept of crime' (Jackson, 2005: p. 963).

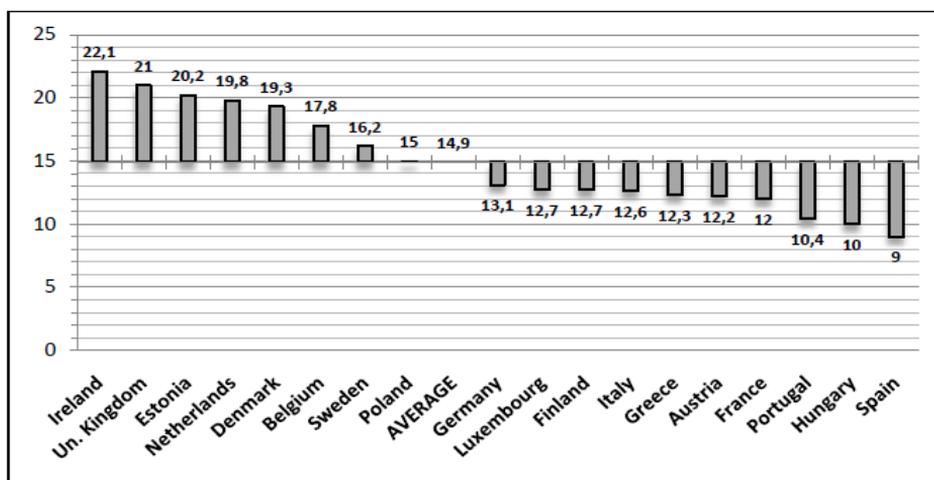
This tendency to equate personal and collective insecurities with fear of crime, leads, in fact, to extreme assessments of the dimensions and characteristics of criminality, much more so because this situation does not originate wholly from personal experience but from that of others and is often formed from different sources of information (Lupton and Tulloch, 1999: p. 521). The expression of similar feelings is related to a series of different factors³ such as the elements which compose the quality of life of citizens in an area, their trust in the criminal justice system and even their broader socio-ideological perceptions. Citizens' lack of trust often reflects their general perception about the weakness of the state itself and results in their doubting it. It is also 'representational of a community that lacked trust, moral consensus and informal social control' (Jackson, 2004: p. 960). Because of the variety of its origins, fear of crime requires combined methodological tools and occasionally an interdisciplinary analysis (Gray *et al.*, 2008).

This paper is based on data derived from the *European Crime and Safety Survey* (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a), complemented by those included in the *International Crime Victim Survey* (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b) as well as data from Greek surveys. The EU International Crime Survey (EUICS) was carried out in 2004/2005 in the 15 old member states of the European Union as well as in Poland, Hungary and Estonia. The last ICVS (2004/2005) was carried out in 30 countries, including the majority of developed nations and in 33 main cities selected from developed and developing countries (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 11). Country level analysis is based on EUICS data while analysis at city level is based on ICVS data.

THE DIMENSIONS OF VICTIMISATION IN GREECE

Conventional Crimes⁴

As was noted above, the levels of victimisation of Greek citizens are relatively low, even though criminality has constantly risen in the last few years. This is the general picture derived also from the data of the European Victimization Survey for 2005 (Figure 1), according to which the lowest levels of crime were found in Spain (9%), Hungary (10%), Portugal (10.4%), France (12%), Austria (12.2%) and Greece (12.3%). The risk of victimisation in these countries is significantly below the European average (14.9%) and so they are classified in the 'low crime countries in an EU context' (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 20).

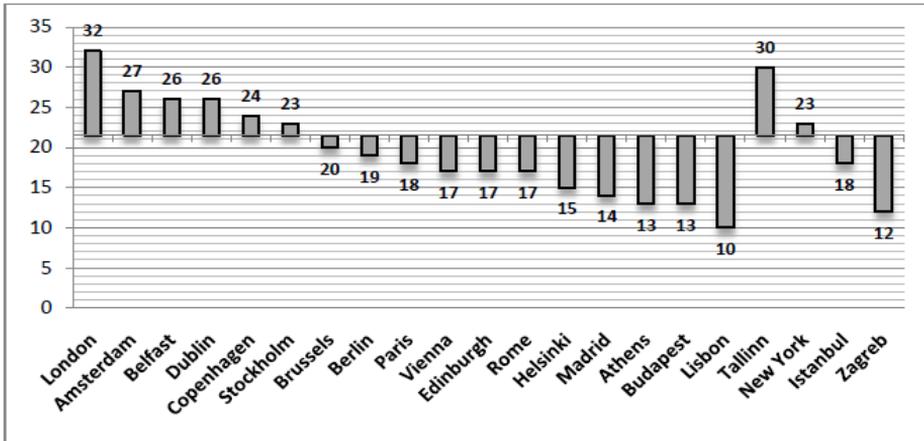


Source: Van Dijk *et al.*(2007a)

Figure 1. Prevalence victimisation rates for 10 common crimes in 2004–2005

A similar picture is also derived from EU ICS data in relation to the victimisation rates of main cities. According to these data, the percentage of people victimised one or more times in 2004 by any of ten common crimes is on average 21.5%. For the citizens of Athens, this rate is much lower (13.5%) and so Athens has a very low standing rate compared to other developed cities (Figure 2).

The low victimisation of Greek citizens is also confirmed by the overall data from the last ICVS (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b), according to which the overall one



Source: Van Dijk et al. (2007a).

Figure 2. Crime prevalence in capital cities. Respondents affected by at least one type of crime in 2003/04

TABLE 1
One year prevalence victimisation rates (percentages) ICVS/EUICS 2004–2005

Conventional crimes	Average for countries	Greece	Average for cities	Athens
Overall victimization	15.7	12.3	21.5	13.5
Theft of a car	0.8	0.3	1.3	0.7
Theft from a car	3.6	1.8	4.4	3.7
Car vandalism				
Theft of a motorcycle	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.5
Theft of a bicycle	2.9	2.1	3.3	0.9
Burglary	1.8	1.8	3.2	1.7
Attempted burglary	1.7	1.7	2.9	1.9
Robbery	1.0	1.4	2.4	0.7
Theft of personal property	3.8	5.3	5.9	3.5
Sexual offences against women	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.1
Sexual offences against men	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.0
Assaults and threats	3.0	2.4	4.0	2.4

Source: Van Dijk et al. (2007b).

year victimisation prevalence rate in Greece is lower than the average rate of the 30 countries which participated in the 5th sweep of the International Victimization Survey (12.3% vs 15.7% respectively) (Table 1).

With reference to particular offences, only the theft of personal property (including pick-pocketing) has a noticeably higher percentage in Greece (5.3%) in relation to the average for the countries surveyed (3.8%, Table 1). This finding is not valid for Athens which has a rate of 3.5% for this type of offence while the average among developed cities is 5.9%. Of particular significance is the rate of assaults and threats, which is significantly below the average at both the country and city levels (2.4% vs. 3.0% for countries and 2.4% vs. 4.0% for cities, Table 1).

Non-conventional Crimes⁵

The surveys discussed above clearly show the low victimisation rates of the inhabitants of Greece and of Athens. However, these data are one year victimisation prevalence rates for *conventional crimes*, such as property crimes or assault. The picture is different in the case of *non-conventional crimes*, especially consumer fraud, corruption and drugs (Table 2).

Consumer Fraud

In relation to consumer fraud, the EU ICS data collected for 2004 reveal that on average 12% of the population surveyed claimed in 2005 that someone 'when selling or delivering a service, cheated his/her clients in terms of the quantity or quality of the goods or services'. With a rate of 24.6%, Greece scores very high in this classification, coming second, after Estonia and before Hungary (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a; p. 55). At the city level, the ICVS average was 12.4%, with Budapest (25.8%), Tallinn (24.5%) and Athens (24.1%) registering the highest levels of victimisation in consumer fraud (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 87). The fact that Greece is the only country at the top of this list of victimisation which is not an economy in transition from a socialist to a market economy is noteworthy.

Corruption

The findings related to corruption, from both EU ICS and *International Transparency*, are even more notable⁶. 13.5% of Greek respondents said that 'during 2004, some government official, for instance a customs officer, a police officer, a judge or inspector in their country asked them or expected them to pay a bribe for his or her services' (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 56) (Table 2). Though ICVS/EU ICS focuses mostly on street-level corruption and its measures 'do not

TABLE 2
Non-conventional crimes (%), EUICS 2005

Countries	Consumer fraud	Corruption	Hate crimes	Drugs
Austria	8.1	0.6	1.8	8.0
Belgium	8.0	0.5	4.2	9.0
Denmark	16.5	1.7	4.8	4.7
Estonia	25.7	3.1		
Finland	5.2	0.0	1.1	2.0
France	10.2	1.1	4.9	9.4
Germany	11.7	0.6	2.6	7.1
Greece	24.6	13.5	1.6	28.4
Hungary	19.6	4.8	–	2.8
Ireland	8.0	0.3	2.2	7.2
Italy	5.9	0.4	0.9	8.8
Luxembourg	9.8	0.4	4.3	13.3
Netherlands	7.0	0.2	3.6	9.8
Poland	16.1	4.4	–	11.6
Portugal	8.2	1.0	1.5	12.6
Spain	10.8	0.3	2.1	12.9
Sweden	13.7	0.1	3.0	3.1
U.K.	8.3	0.0	4.1	11.3
Average	12.0	1.8	2.8	9.9

Source: Van Dijk et al. (2007a)

capture less visible but potentially more damaging forms of high level or grand corruption' (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 65), it is still a very important parameter of everyday life. Data from Greece are indicative of a mentality which reinforces common practices of problem solving via exchanges or bribery. Citizens of the Greek capital also said they had experienced this type of corruption daily to a high extent (13.8%), which is much higher than the average (1.8%) for the main developed cities (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 90). This reflects, on the one hand, citizens' lack of confidence in state services and, on the other, the absence of citizens' consciousness of their rights in every aspect of social life. A convincing explanation of this phenomenon would need to be based on qualitative studies which can reveal the special cultural characteristics of each country. In recent years, an increased awareness of Greek citizens concerning victimisation through various types of corruption has been observed, with this being manifested in the development of stronger consumer associations⁷.

Hate Crimes

Hate crimes were also examined by the EU ICS (Table 2) and, in contrast to the rest of the non-conventional offences, the recorded rates in Greece were significantly lower (1.6% compared to an average 2.8%). So, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Finland are situated at the bottom of this classification (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 52). This finding is of great importance for all European countries where different expressions of racism appear in the form of xenophobic behaviour or extreme violence. This type of victimisation is especially interesting for Greece since a mass entry of immigrants with different religious beliefs was witnessed during this period of time. However, in this category, apart from crimes motivated by hatred because of race, those motivated by hatred because of religion or sexual orientation or, in other words, 'ideologically motivated personal violence' are included (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 52). When victimisation by hate crimes is restricted solely to immigrants, the picture is completely different, for they are victimised more frequently by this type of offence (10%) compared to non-immigrants (2%). A different ranking of the victimisation rates is also noted according to country, with Belgium, Spain and Greece at the top of the scale with the highest rates of hate crimes reported by immigrants (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 53).

The victimisation of immigrants was, moreover, greater for the ten common crimes of 2004 (19%), compared to non-immigrants (15%), a fact which connects immigration with their vulnerability to criminal threats. However, this image is not confirmed by the results of our survey amongst the inhabitants of the greater Athens area, in the same year. According to the latter, the percentage of victimisation of immigrants was only slightly higher than that of Greeks (21.8% vs 20.5%) and at the same time it was not found that they felt vulnerable

or unsafe (Zarafonitou, 2006a). Thus, 72.9% of them claimed that they felt quite or very safe when they walked after dark and only 27.1% of them quite or very unsafe (Table 3). On the contrary, in research carried out over the same period of time, the sample of which included only Greek citizens, there was a quite different picture since the percentage of those feeling unsafe was 52.7% (Zarafonitou, 2006b).

The immigrants' (un)safety was differentiated on the basis of their ethnic origin, with respondents being classified in the following three categories: *high personal safety*, which included Albanians (84.8%), Bulgarians (80%) and ex-Soviets (73.1%); *relative safety*, which included Rumanians (53.1%); and finally *feeling unsafe* which included only Pakistanis, who expressed feelings of safety at a remarkably low rate (17.6%). Within this framework, a relationship between victimisation and insecurity was revealed since the Pakistanis who expressed more fear also talked about the highest percentages of victimization (52.9%). This relationship, however, is not linear because it is affected by other significant factors such as the degree of immigrants' integration in the reception country as well as other social and cultural factors.

TABLE 3
Rates of (un)safety and victimisation of immigrants to Athens in 2004 (%)

	Total	Albanian	Bulgarian	Ex-USSR	Rumanian	Pakistanis
Safety	72.9	84.8	80	73.1	53.1	17.6
Feeling unsafe	27.1	15.2	20	26.9	46.9	82.4
Victimisation	21.8	20.7	14.3	15.4	16.1	52.9

Source: Zarafonitou (2006a)

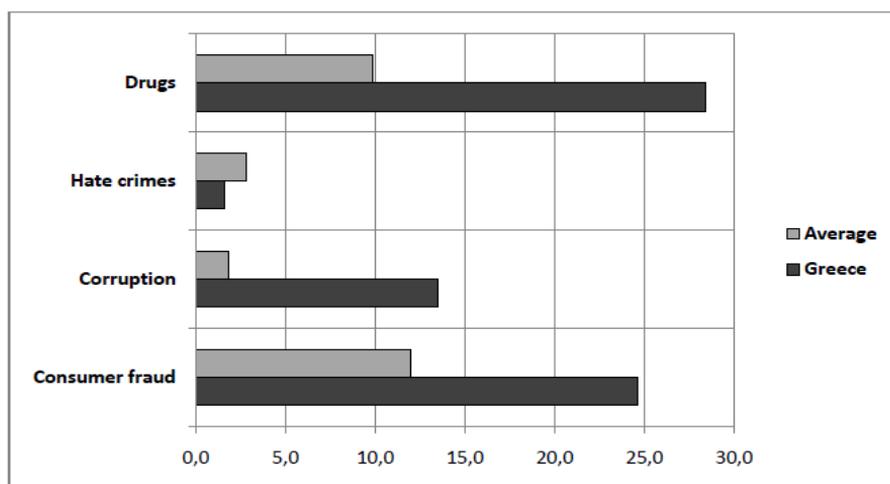
Drug-related Problems

The last ICVS/EU ICS included a question related to drug-related problems, which proved to be of particular interest for Greece since 28.4% of the respondents said that 'over the last 12 months very often or from time to time they personally came in contact with drug-related problems in the area where they lived (seeing people under the influence of drugs, witnessing others taking

or using drugs in public places or finding syringes left by drug addicts)' (Table 2). According to these data, the inhabitants of Greece are the highest in the Table and, with the inhabitants of Portugal and Luxembourg, reported higher levels of these problems (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 96).

Though the answers to this question give little information about actual trends in drug-related problems⁸, it should be mentioned that this is a phenomenon which has strongly concerned Greek society from 1980 until today. This is also confirmed by both the annual report concerning the extent of drug use at a national and international level and the criminal statistics, since drug use is criminalised in Greece (National university research institute, 2007). Consequently, the cases which were related to drugs and recorded by police in 2005 were 10,450, an increase of 15.4% compared to those in 2004. A similar increase occurred concerning offenders (16.1%) who numbered 14,893 in 2005, following an upward trend from 1995, with the exception of 2004, which was the year of the Olympic Games in Greece. The significantly high rate of people convicted for drug-related offences in 2003, the highest of the last decade (3.2% or 2,324 convicted of drug-related offences from a total of 73,161), shows, moreover, the intolerance of Greek society towards this specific category of offences and is confirmed by the over-representation of these offenders in prisons, where they constitute 43.1% of inmates.

The image which is derived from the above data shows Greece as a country with low victimisation for conventional criminality but high rates of victimisation for non-conventional crimes.



Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a)

Figure 3. Victimisation rates for non-conventional crimes, Greece 2005.

The question which arises at this point is if this evidence can explain the very high percentages of fear of crime shown by Greek citizens or if other significant factors which create this insecurity need to be taken into consideration.

FEAR OF CRIME

The relationship between victimisation and fear of crime remains contradictory. Research in general confirms the correlation between fear of crime and victimisation, even if it is not a strong one (Quann and Hung, 2002: p. 313). This relationship is differentiated by the effects of other factors, such as the type of crime, while research by Killias conducted in Zurich in 1998 and 1999 linked the fear of crime of the inhabitants of certain areas with their frequent victimisation near their residence (Killias, 2001: pp. 124, 405). However, mitigation of the emotion caused by victimisation results in mitigation of the relevant fear (Box *et al.*, 1988) and the de-dramatisation of criminality (Killias, 2001: p. 400).

The ICVS/EU ICS survey has measured fear of crime via two questions. The first asks respondents 'how likely they think it is that their house will be burgled in the coming year' and it is addressed either to countries' or to main cities' citizens. The percentage of the public who perceive there to be a likelihood of burglary (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 64) is, in general, high (on average 30%), but it is even higher in main cities (on average 35%). In Greece, half the respondents (49%) perceived a similar risk and in Athens this rose to three quarters of the inhabitants (73%)⁹ (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 127).

This question is based on the hypothesis that the perception of risk of victimisation increases respondents' fear¹⁰; therefore their answers should be compared to victimisation rates for this type of offence. Greek citizens' victimisation rates for burglary were 1.8% and for attempted burglary 1.7% in 2005 on the national level and 1.7% and 1.9% respectively in Athens.

The perception of the risk of victimisation for this type of offence seems very disproportionate compared to the rates of Greek citizens' victimisation. This disproportionate relationship can also be seen from an examination of police statistics (Aebi *et al.*, 2006: p. 47), according to which in 2003, 293 burglaries occurred per 100,000 inhabitants (or 2.9/1,000 inhabitants). There is an intense perceived risk of victimisation which attests to the fear of crime. This exaggerated estimate may be partly due to the inclusion of other forms of offences against property such as thefts in inhabitants' perceptions of risk.

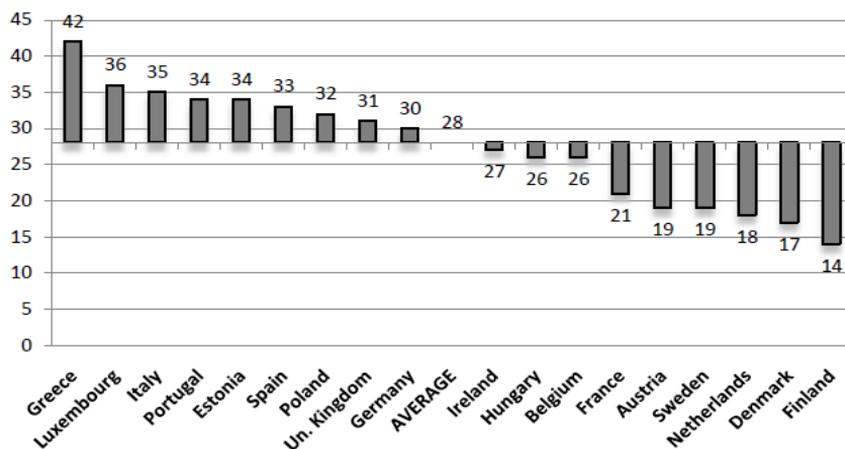
The fear of crime hypothesis is also confirmed by the high rates for the population 'feeling unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their area after dark'. According to the ICVS/EU ICS data for 2004/05, 42% of Greek citizens said that they feel very or a bit unsafe walking in the streets after dark, the highest rate in Europe. On average, at a country level, more than a quarter of the national population (28%) felt unsafe in 2005 (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 66). The rate is

TABLE 4
Victimisation rates and risk perception for burglary

ICVS & EU ICS	Victimisation rates			Risk perception			
	2005	Greece*	Athens**	Greece*	EUICS* Countries average	Athens**	ICVS** Main cities average
Burglary		1.8%	1.7%	49%	30%	73%	35%
Attempted burglary		1.7%	1.9%				

Source: * Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a)
 ** Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a: p. 127)

higher among inhabitants of main developed cities (32%) with Athens registering 55% at the top (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 131).



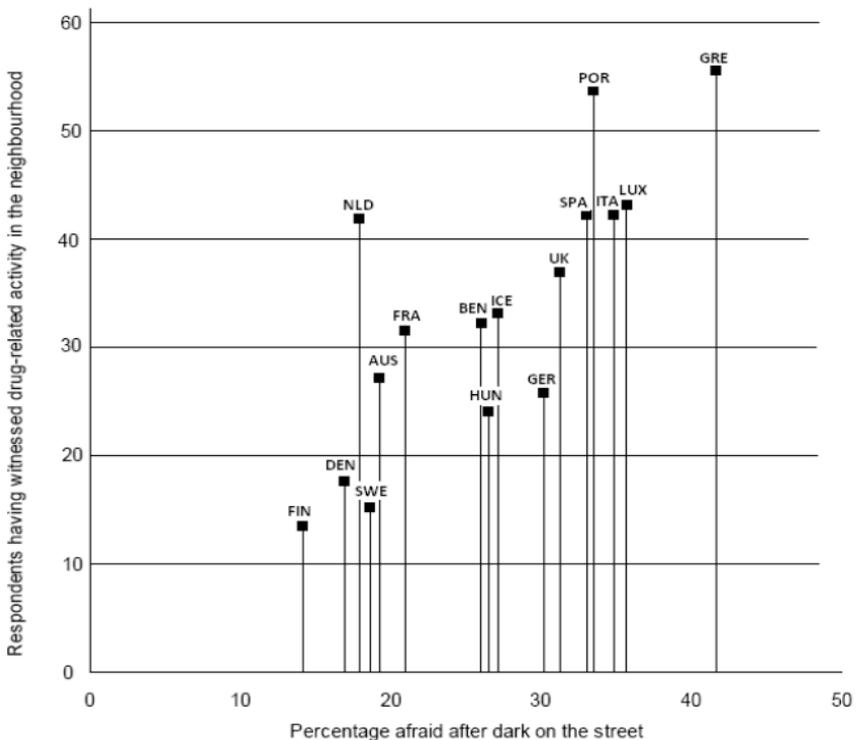
Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a)

Figure 4. Percentage of the population feeling unsafe on the streets after dark, results from the 2005 EUICS

Clearly, from the above, fear of crime is not proportional to the victimisation which Greek citizens reported. The latter percentages are quite low when they refer to conventional crimes while the former are extremely high in comparison to the other countries at a European or international level. The picture derived from the surveys in Athens is similar since the rate of feeling unsafe walking alone in the streets after dark was 52.7% in 2004 (Zarafonitou, 2004) and 56.5% in 2006 (Zarafonitou and Courakis, 2009).

The following factors, derived from the EU ICS (2005) data, appear to contribute to the interpretation of this 'paradox': the very high exposure of Greek citizens to drug-related problems, their restricted security precautions, their dissatisfaction with the police and generally with state services, as well as dissatisfaction with the quality of their life.

The importance of drug-related problems has already been shown. The impact of this exposure in terms of the fear of crime comes from perceptions of the dangerousness of addicts.

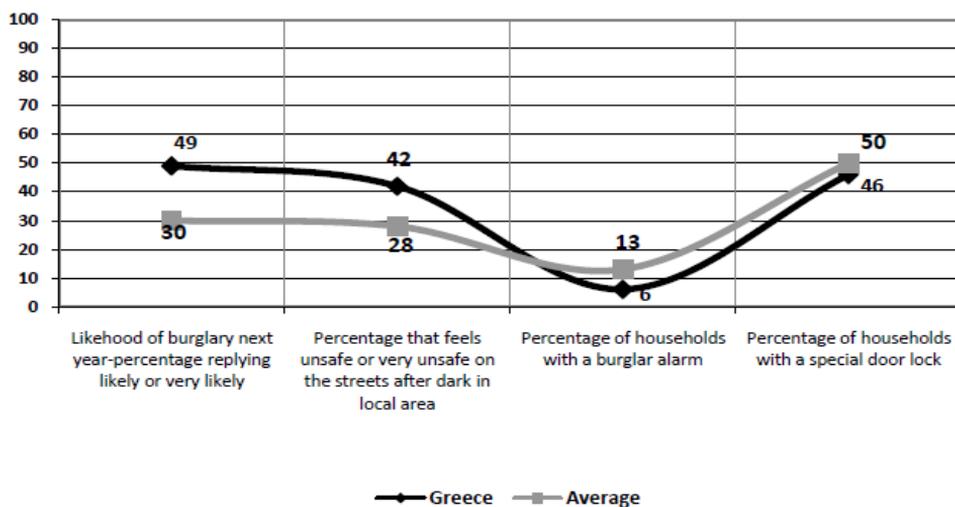


Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a: p. 68)

Figure 5. Correlation of exposure to drug related problems and the fear of crime

This assumption is validated by Greek research on fear of crime which shows drugs are considered a very serious social problem and an explanatory factor for the insecurity of the inhabitants of an area. According to Zarafonitou (2004), drugs are reported to be the most important social problem by Athenian inhabitants followed by immigrants and unemployment. Additionally, drug addicts, along with foreigners, marginalised people, and the mentally disturbed form the most negative stereotypes in terms of dangerousness, as is shown by the structures of social representation concerning crime and criminals in a sample of Athenian residents (Zarafonitou and Mantoglou, 2000).

National surveys and the last ICVS and EU ICS have revealed that the extent to which Greek citizens resort to technical means of prevention is low. On average in Europe 50% of households possessed special door locks to protect against burglary in 2004/2005. In Greece this rate is 46% and the percentage of households with burglar alarms is much lower. This image seems to confirm the hypothesis that in part explains the positive correlation between victimisation and fear of crime as a result also of not taking special measures to avoid the possibility of subsequent victimisation (Killias, 2001: p. 402).



Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a: p. 117)

Figure 6. Risk, fear of crime and preventive measures against burglary

In any case, research evidence in Greece has confirmed that the greatest fear of crime is felt by victims (Zarafonitou, 2008; Tseloni and Zarafonitou, 2008) and this fear cannot be explained by only one factor. A series of social changes, such as the numerous arrivals of immigrants from Balkan, Asiatic and African countries, or the financial insecurity of citizens have affected general social attitudes and have shaken citizens' trust in the capability of the state to ensure their safety¹¹.

Linked to the relationship between the state and the citizens is the issue of lack of confidence in the police and its impact on fear of crime. The first studies on fear of crime noted the decisive role that the presence of police can play, especially if the force is willing, effective, and accepted by the community (Box *et al.*, 1988: p. 353). This role has become even more important in modern urban environments due to a lack of informal social control and the loosening of social bonds. Within this framework, the police are perceived by citizens as 'an organisation in the service of the local population' and, as such, satisfaction with police services 'constitutes a "logical" criterion for its assessment' (Killias, 2001: p. 429). Findings indicate that those who feel more intense fear are those who are also most dissatisfied by the work of the police and who seek greater policing (Zvekcic, 1997: p. 8).

This image is also verified by Greek research results according to which inhabitants of Athens in 2004 gave a negative assessment of the work of the police (Table 5) with almost three quarters of respondents assessing police work as not very or not at all effective (71.8%). This assessment, however, becomes even more negative in the case of victims (75.8%) or those expressing feelings of lack of security (77.6%).

TABLE 5
Evaluation of the job the police do in the area where the respondent lives

Evaluation	Total	Those feeling unsafe		Victims		
Effective	122	28.2%	53	22.4%	22	24.2%
Ineffective	310	71.8%	184	77.6%	69	75.8%
Total	432	100%	237	100%	91	100%

Source: Zarafonitou (2004)

Similar rankings are also given by the EU ICS in 2005; on average, 67% of the public thinks 'the police do a good or a very good job in controlling crime in the local area'. Greece is among the countries where the poorest judgments of

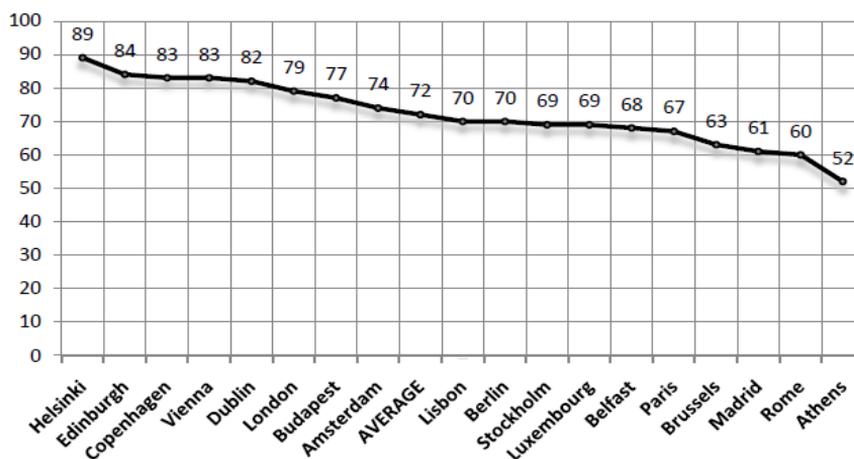
police performance were expressed (57%). The others were Poland (41%), Estonia (46%), Spain (58%) and France (60%) (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 80).

TABLE 6
Police assessment in European countries, 2005

Assessment	EU ICS Average	Greece
Percentage satisfied with police controlling crime in local area	67%	57%
Victims satisfied with report (5 crimes)	55%	28%

Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a)

The evaluation of police work in the context of the European capitals is somewhat better. However, the inhabitants of Athens are the most negative since they were last, with only 52% who said that the police do a good job (Figure 7).

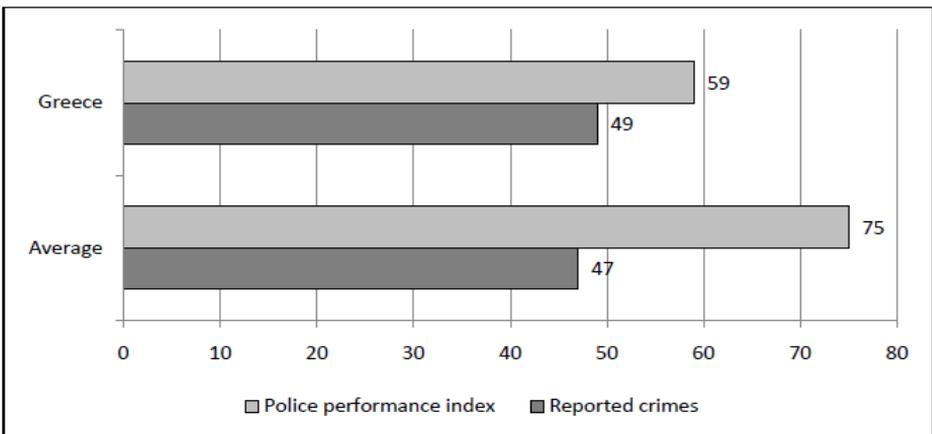


Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a)

Figure 7. Evaluation of police in European capitals (% of residents saying the police do a good job)

The EU ICS focused especially on the assessment of police work by victims of five crimes (Table 6). The victims who reported any burglary with entry, theft from a car, robbery, a sexual incident or assault threat were less satisfied in comparison to the general sample (55% on average). The worst assessments came from Estonia (15%) and Greece (28%) and the best from Denmark (75%). Having specialised support agencies for victims of crime was limited in Hungary (0.4%), Finland, Germany and Greece (2% respectively), Italy and Spain (3%) (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007a: p. 77).

The ICVS provides three measures for the 'quality of public relations of police forces': (a) the reporting rate for victims of recent crimes¹² (an objective behavioural measure of public confidence in the police), b) victims' assessment of their police treatment (a subjective criterion) and c) the assessment discussed above of the general effectiveness of the police in controlling crime (also a subjective criterion) (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 141). According to these data, the ICVS has formulated an *index of police performance*. The average by countries of the index of ICVS and EU ICS 2004/05 was 75% and Greece is again among the countries with the poorest perceived performance of their police forces with a rate of 59% (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 143).



Source: Van Dijk *et al.* (2007b)

Figure 8. Reported crimes and 'police performance index', ICVS 2005

The above criteria show that Greek citizens are dissatisfied with the police and they also question the role of the police in society as the civil service that is particularly responsible for citizens' safety. This factor seems strongly related to the high levels of lack of safety. This position is also related to the general

dissatisfaction that citizens feel with state services in relation to health, education, public transportation, and the environment. The above parameters refer to the issue of 'quality of life' that emerged from the research on fear of crime among inhabitants of Athens mentioned above (Zarafonitou, 2004). According to these research findings, quality of life appeared to be an important factor concerning lack of safety since 76.8% of those who expressed feelings of fear were also dissatisfied by the quality of life in their municipality while among respondents who felt safe, the relevant figure was 58.0% (Table 7).

TABLE 7
Satisfaction with the quality of life in the area where the respondent lives

SAFE	Satisfied		UNSAFE
	89	55	
41.9%		23.2%	
	Not Satisfied		
	123	182	
58.0%		76.8%	
	Total		
	212	237	
100%		100%	

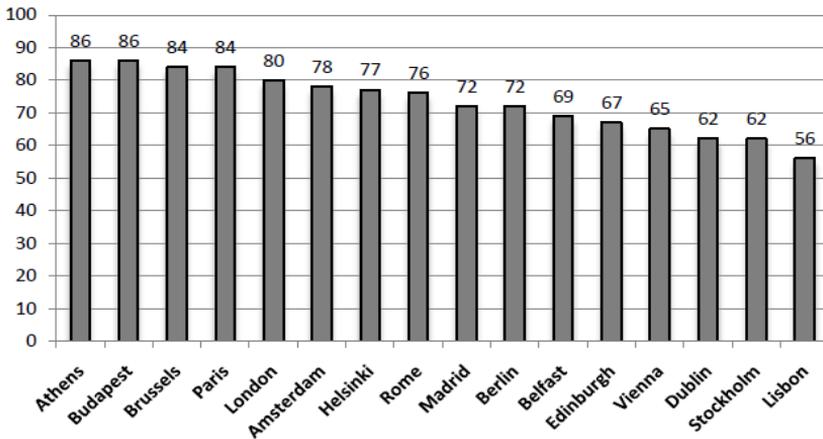
$\chi^2: .000$

Source: Zarafonitou (2004)

This finding is also borne out by multiple-regression analysis, according to which those who are satisfied by the quality of life in their residential area feel twice as safe (2.042) as those saying they are unsatisfied.

A question concerning the environment, included in the European Victimization Survey (EU ICS), is relevant to 'environmental disorder' and examines the stance of citizens of European capitals on the basis of certain

characteristics that delineate the notion of 'a deprived area' (youth on the streets, homeless persons, beggars, littering, graffiti, vandalism and public intoxication: Hideg and Manchin, 2005). Research data rate inhabitants of Athens first in negative assessments with 86%, along with inhabitants of Budapest. These are followed by the inhabitants of Brussels and Paris (84%), while the inhabitants of Lisbon are in last place (and therefore have the most positive image) (56%), (Figure 9). This stance is correlated with (in)security¹³.



Source: Hideg and Manchin (2005), cited in Van Dijk *et al.* (2007a)

Figure 9. Adverse neighbourhood characteristics

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, it could be argued that the lack of safety which is related to problems of criminality is quite extensive in Greece and particularly in Athens. This lack of safety is disproportionate to the rates of victimisation for conventional crimes, which are relatively low in comparison to those of the rest of European countries. This is correlated to the perception of a number of parameters relating to everyday life, such as exposure to drug-related problems, adverse neighbourhood characteristics, and corruption as well as dissatisfaction with the police services. In reality, this image of high levels of fear of crime among Greek citizens could be better understood as general insecurity rather than a specific fear of victimisation (Kury and Obergfell-Fuchs, 2008: p. 55).

The 'paradox' which results from the lack of correlation between low victimisation and high fear of crime may be better interpreted by an examination of subjective and objective parameters which compose it¹⁴. Psychological

considerations of vulnerability, wider social attitudes and day to day perceptions of risk compose one side of the 'social significance' of lack of safety (Jackson, 2004: p. 960). The other side is composed of personal and social vulnerability (sex, age, place of residence, neighbourhood characteristics) and of the extent of threats (possibility of crime, seriousness of undesirable consequences and sense of weakness in controlling these situations (Killias, 1990; Killias and Clerici, 2000).

Hence, other important personal and social uncertainties are being voiced through the fear of crime¹⁵. This dissatisfaction is apparent, in particular, towards the police which is considered to be the only appropriate state service for issues of safety given the fact that Greeks rarely resort to technical measures of protection. It is also apparent because of extensive corruption in citizens' daily contact with the state. In both cases, significant inadequacy on the part of the state is detected either because the state does not sufficiently meet its responsibilities towards its citizens, as in the case of the police, or because it 'victimises' its citizens instead of providing the services to which they are entitled, as in the case of corruption by civil servants.

Citizens' insecurities expressed via fear of crime have increased due to the social changes which have taken place in the last two decades. One such significant change was the massive influx of economic immigrants originally from the Balkan countries (mostly from Albania) and recently from Asia and Africa. In this manner, Greece, which was in the past an 'immigrant sender' country, has taken on the role of an 'immigrant receiver'¹⁶. The consequences of this change are visible not only demographically but socially and culturally. Research findings reveal a considerable connection between Greeks' feelings of lack of safety and this phenomenon (Zarafonitou, 2002, 2004, 2009)¹⁷.

Thus, social insecurities are perceived and faced as insecurities derived from immigration (Palidda, 1999: p. 39) and immigrants are seen as responsible for various social problems and the increase of criminality (Tonry, 1998: p. 60). Moreover, the social changes in Greece are linked to negative consequences of globalisation. The increase in the amount of illegal drugs imported and the spread of their use among the population is indicative. Drugs are considered a significant social problem. The drug problem is also connected to fear of crime because a high degree of dangerousness is attributed to drug users.

The above parameters create a negative evaluation of quality of life for the citizens. Socio-economic criteria account for the fact that the perceived decline in the quality of life is more intense in some milieux. For example, city neighbourhoods fall into this category because the signs of decline can be more obvious here (Zarafonitou, 2002, 2004; Zarafonitou and Courakis, 2009). On the other hand, the perception of threats as well as the perception of positive or adverse neighbourhood characteristics is also dependent on the level of social integration of the respondents (Kury and Obergfell-Fuchs, 2008: p. 76).

In addition to all the above, the role of the media is always important in the construction of social attitudes and representations (Vanderveen, 2006: p. 204;

Cario, 2004). In the case of Greece, the number of television channels, radio stations, newspapers and magazines has increased rapidly since 1990. Although Greek studies here found that the objectivity of the media is doubted since the majority of people believe that they exaggerate when dealing with criminal issues, the media constitute people's main source of information concerning crime and criminal justice (Zarafonitou, 2002, 2004; Zarafonitou and Courakis, 2009).

The level of fear of crime is generally overestimated in the context of victimisation surveys which include the standard indicators of this feeling (Kury and Obergfell-Fuchs, 2008: p. 79). The previous analysis shows a significant role for the qualitative characteristics in the interpretation of the quantitative dimensions of a compound social phenomenon such as fear of crime (Gray *et al.*, 2008; Kury and Obergfell-Fuchs, 2008). The lack of safety shown by the research evidence obviously reflects not only the existing situation but also a current social phenomenon. The content of this meaning, however, is differentiated significantly by social and cultural factors which are not shown by pure quantitative measurements¹⁸. Therefore, it is obvious that combined methodological approaches are necessary for the study of compound social phenomena.

In conclusion, in the case of Greece, the high level of the fear of crime reflects, on the one hand, the general social and personal insecurities of the citizens which derive from the interaction of various features within Greek society and, on the other, cultural characteristics which justify some exaggeration in the expression of feelings. Thus, one can explain the inconsistency between citizens' significant rate of insecurity and the fact that they do not limit going out nor do they take other precautionary measures in everyday life.

NOTES

- 1 For an overview of the research on fear of crime in Greece, see Zarafonitou (2010).
- 2 According to Jackson (2004: p. 960) 'worries about crime articulate such social meaning because they are constituted by social meaning'. This way, there is a considerable overlap of the 'experience' aspect of fear with an 'expressive' aspect.
- 3 For a systematic review of the literature on fear of crime explanations, see Vanderveen (2006) and Lee (2007).
- 4 The ICVS and EU ICS cover ten *conventional* crimes: vehicle related crimes (theft of a car, theft from a car, theft of a motorcycle or moped, theft of a bicycle), burglary, attempted burglary, theft of personal property and contact crimes (robbery, sexual offences, assault and threats) (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 11).

- 5 According to the ICVS and EU ICS, the non-conventional crimes are: street-level corruption, consumer fraud, drug-related problems and hate crimes (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 85).
- 6 According to the latest report on corruption of International Transparency, in 2009 Greece was placed last of the European countries with a CPI of 3.8/10 and below the level of 5 which shows that there is a long road ahead if the situation is to change substantially (<http://www.transparency.org>).
- 7 According to recent research findings, Athens' inhabitants are the most punitive on corruption, which is followed by vandalism, drug-trafficking, food fraud, hooliganism, sexual exploitation of children and women, and rape (Zarafonitou and Courakis, 2009).
- 8 As it is pointed out by Van Dijk *et al.* (2007b: p. 97), 'contact of the general public with drug-related problems cannot be seen as an indicator of the actual level of drugs consumption' and also 'no strong relationships were found between the extent of the public's exposure to drugs and national rates of cannabis consumption and estimated rates of drug addicts. No relationships were found between exposure to drugs-related problems and levels of property crime'.
- 9 According to the research findings of the national victimisation survey (Karydis, 2004), 66% of the respondents thought it very or fairly likely that 'someone will try to break into their home, over the next 12 months'.
- 10 The opposite hypothesis is also suggested in order to test whether risk and fear 'are separate concerns and that risk is not acting as a proxy for fear' (Chadee *et al.*, 2007: p. 147).
- 11 On this basis, lack of security is connected with the state–citizen relationship. This 'discussion' is more intense in societies with a tradition of a strong state (Robert, 2005: p. 95).
- 12 According to the Greek research results (Zarafonitou, 2004), the rate of reporting among inhabitants of Athens was relatively high (64.5%), despite their much more negative image of police effectiveness. Concerning the last ICVS/EU ICS data at a country level, almost half the Greek citizens (49%) reported their victimisation to the police in five types of crime and this rate is more than the average of 47% (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007b: p. 110).
- 13 On spatial perception and unsafety, see Kaal *et al.* (2008).
- 14 Crawford (2007: p. 899) suggests that 'subjective fear of crime may be high amongst those people with little objective risk of victimization'.
- 15 Rapid social change and uncertainty are correlated with the perception of a 'risk society' (Beck, 1992).
- 16 The exact number of immigrants living in Greece cannot be precisely calculated because those who do not have a residence permit are also included. In any case, the official data from the 2001 census estimate that immigrants were 8% of the total population (5.3% in 1991), but it is assumed that the number is higher. This development places Greece first among the European countries whose immigrant population has risen so sharply at the end of the 20th century (Pavlou, 2004: p. 371).
- 17 Vanderveen (2006: p. 219) refers to the 'fear of strangers' as a fear of the unknown.

- 18 A simple but indicative example is the meaning of time in the classic question 'how safe do you feel walking alone in your area after dark', which residents of the Greek capital consider to be after 10 pm. Thus, to the question 'after which hour do you feel unsafe', the majority (75.7%) answered 'after 10 pm', with 21.7% saying 'from 8pm to 10pm' and only 2.6% 'up to 8 pm' (Zarafonitou, 2004). It is obvious that the answers to the above question differed according to the country or city.

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