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News from the EU City.Risks Project (H2020 - 653747)

City.Risks Newsletter - November 2016

Main findings of City.Risks survey in London, Sofia and Rome

The City.Risks project carried out a survey in the three pilot sites , Rome (Italy), Sofia (Bulgaria) and London Waltham Forest (UK), to gain greater insight into citizens' perceptions and experiences of crime and their readiness to adopt new technologies to address fears of crime in the city. A total of 22,632 questionnaires were successfully completed across the three pilot sites and the main findings are reported below. [More info in D2.2]

The findings
Perception of local crime rates and the criminal justice system

- Broadly, those in Waltham Forest and Sofia expressed greater confidence in the local police and criminal justice agencies to adequately deal with crime, in comparison to those in Rome.
- Overall, women were more confident in the ability of the police and criminal justice agencies to protect their citizens in the pilot cities than men.

Fear of crime and impact of fear on behaviour

- Respondents in all three pilot sites reported being 'worried to some extent' about crime. However, those in Sofia and Rome expressed more concern than respondents from Waltham Forest. On the whole, women in the three cities were more fearful of becoming a victim of crime than men.

and Rome felt safe walking alone after dark in their local area.

- Across the three sites, respondents reported modifying or changing behaviours because of the fear of being the victim of a crime. This was most likely to be the case in Rome.

Levels of victimisation

- The majority of respondents across the three pilot sites had *not* been a victim of crime in the last 12 months.
- In Waltham Forest and Rome, the crime most commonly experienced by respondents was vehicle damage.
- Greater satisfaction was reported by respondents from Waltham Forest when discussing how their crime report was dealt with than respondents in Rome.
- Fewer respondents from Rome than Waltham Forest were interested in seeking alternative ways (e.g. via a mobile phone or online) of reporting a crime.

The role of citizens in community safety

- In all the pilot sites, respondents believed that conducting citizen consultations about crime and community safety issues was a worthwhile process.

The readiness to use new technologies

- Social networking apps were the most commonly used apps in Waltham Forest and Rome.
- Willingness to report crime via an app, if it was possible, was high across all sites, in particular Sofia. There were similar levels of interest in obtaining and sharing information about a crime in their local area in real-time via an app.

The conclusions

An (app)etite

The survey findings show that there is an appetite amongst citizens in the three European cities to engage with technologies aimed at mitigating risks. Our findings provide support for the development of an app that allows users to report a crime they have witnessed or have been victim to, with speed, ease and one that yields a satisfactory response from the police.

Police involvement

Targeted citizen consultations

Most of those surveyed have lived and/or worked in the area for 10 years or over and utilising their local knowledge and experiences would be valuable to the technological project. Greater, targeted consultation and delivered using a variety of methods is pivotal to the development of a technological app.

Information-sharing to address avoidance behaviour

Across the three sites, the fear of becoming a victim of crime was quite high. An app that provides accurate and 'live' information about crime and other incidents in local areas has the potential to reduce the fear of crime amongst citizens.

City.Risks presents a fine-grained analysis of security threats in large urban environments

The main focus of this research was to describe, analyse and discuss the distribution of urban crime and fear of crime among people. [More info in D2.3]

Risk factors

Risk factors for victimisation are both related to specific places and certain groups of people. For example, locations with a high density of people (e.g. the inner-city and public transport stops), weak cohesion among residents, and high prevalence of alcohol outlets, are characterised by an increased risk of crime. People at elevated risk for victimisation are young, single, male, and/or have low socio-economic status. Further, both places and individuals previously victimised are at greater risk for repeated victimisation.

Fear of crime

Fear of crime is a phenomenon distinct from crime itself and encompasses several different subjective aspects of crime. The research on fear of crime suggests, for instance, that people, especially after dark, become fearful because of physical features of the environment, such as shrubs, and poor lighting. Fear may also be influenced by individual characteristics which can be exemplified by the common finding that fear of crime is more prevalent among women than men and in specific age groups (elderly are more fearful).

Ethical issues

among people operating in these areas on a daily basis. Therefore, the pilot studies need to examine potential ethical issues when using the solutions presented in the project.

Risk factors

Finally, this study encompasses several risk factors and other important aspects of urban crime and fear of crime. It is unlikely (if not impossible) for the project to target all of these factors. Nonetheless, a thorough and comprehensive design of the pilot trials may reveal when, where and how the project's solutions may be specifically relevant and successful. For instance, little is known about the actual use of information-sharing for reducing crime and fear of crime and the project's pilot trials may provide insights of how this could work in practice. Thus City.Risks may contribute to a better understanding of crime and fear of crime reduction possibilities in urban communities.