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## SAFETY PERCEIVED BY THE SLOVAKS IN THE RESEARCH OF ESS (GENERATION ASPECT)<sup>2</sup>

**Summary.** The aim of the study is to present the results of the project of ESS, which focuses on the perception of individual safety by Slovak respondents. We studied two indices: characteristics of a safety situation and personal experience with criminality. We compared outcomes from individual results carried out in Slovakia (rounds 2-6) and at the same time we studied safety perception from the generation point of view. The aim of the study is to inform technical public on empirical research of a social-scientific character and to contribute to the enrichment of an information base in a research sphere as well as to contribute to the synthesis of various sciences.

**Key words:** all-European project ESS, security, generation connection

## POSTRZEGANIE BEZPIECZEŃSTWA PRZEZ SŁOWAKÓW NA PODSTAWIE BADAŃ ESS (ASPEKT POKOLENIOWY)

**Streszczenie.** Celem tego artykułu jest prezentacja wyników projektu Europejskiego Sondażu Społecznego ukierunkowanego na postrzeganie indywidualnego bezpieczeństwa przez słowackich respondentów, do czego wykorzystano dwa wskaźniki: charakterystykę sytuacji bezpieczeństwa oraz osobiste doświadczenia z przestępczością. Wyniki poszczególnych sond przeprowadzonych na Słowacji zostały porównane (edycje 2. – 6.), a równocześnie badano zależności w postrzeganiu indywidualnego bezpieczeństwa z pokoleniowego punktu widzenia. Celem artykułu jest zapoznanie także środowiska technicznego z dorobkiem z dziedziny nauk społecznych i wzbogacenie w ten sposób bazy informacyjnej w sferze badawczej oraz zbliżenie różnych gałęzi nauki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ogólnoeuropejski projekt ESS, bezpieczeństwo, zależności pokoleniowe.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The safety issue in the research of a public opinion most frequently studies three indicators – perception of violence, experience with criminality and perception of fear of

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<sup>2</sup> This article is a solution result of the research grant project VEGA 2/0173/12

violence or criminality. In contrast to objective findings as e.g. number of crimes, we focus our attention on the subjective evaluation of a security situation and its influence on a decision making, attitudes, values and especially on behaviour of individuals.

A considerably big attention was paid to the above mentioned indicators in individual rounds of ESS<sup>3</sup>. In a set of questions which focused on a study of a social inclusion (exclusion), a considerable attention was paid to safety saturation (with the characteristics of social environment) and to the three above mentioned indicators.

The aim of the article is to present a perception of individual security by Slovak respondents in connection with their age and to compare the research findings within individual rounds (round 2 -6). We were particularly interested in respondents' age; whether it has an influence on the safety perception or not. If so, then we studied the extent and the direction of the perception.

## 2. METHODICS AND THE RELATION FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSES

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## 3. RESULTS

Results are presented from two points of view:

- with the emphasize on a selection of a particular variant in each file (research variable)
- with emphasis on development tendencies of answers in individual files in individual rounds (concerning Slovakia).

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<sup>3</sup> European social survey (ESS) is an international research project which aims to study aspects of social, political and cultural life in participating countries. The project was scheduled for five rounds (in two-years cycles) in 2001 – 2011. In round 1 (2001-2003) participated 22 countries, in round 2 (2004-2005) 25 countries were involved, 23 countries took part in round 3 (2006-2007), in round 4 participated (2008-2009) 27 countries, in round 5 (2010-2011) 26 countries, in round 6 were 24 countries (2012-2013). The overall number of respondents reached more than 2 mil.370 thousand respondents. Slovakia has been a participating country since round 2.

### 3.1. Index of individual safety

Graph 1 displays results of perception of safety situation with Slovak respondents from the point of view of answer distribution to the variants in individual rounds.

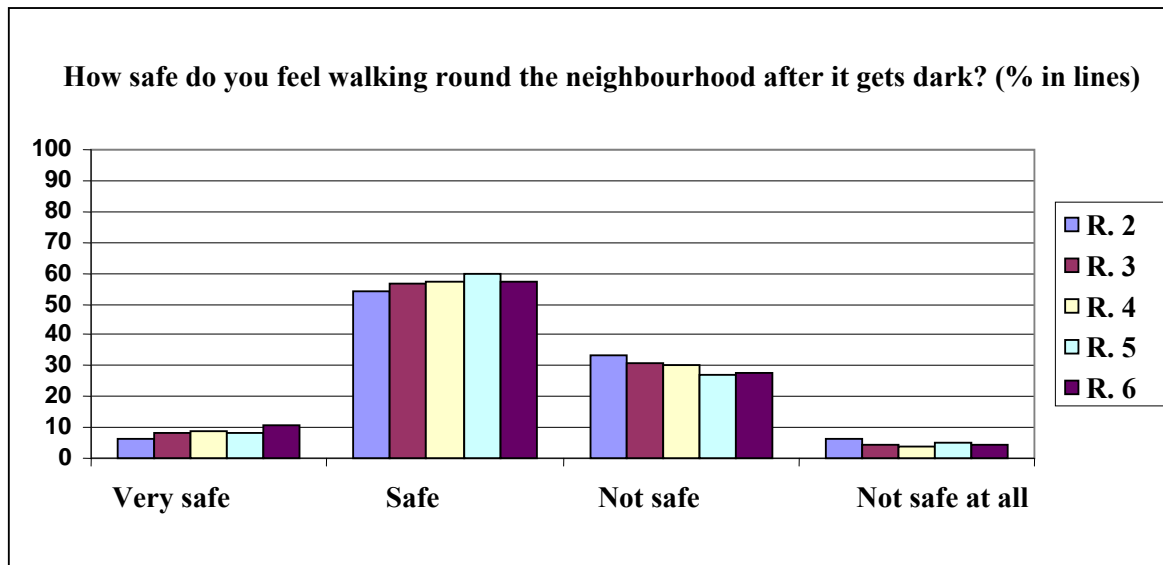


Fig. 1. Perception of safety situation by the Slovaks

Rys. 1. Wyniki postrzegania sytuacji bezpieczeństwa przez słowackich respondentów z punktu widzenia przydzielania odpowiedzi do zaproponowanych wariantów w poszczególnych edycjach sondażu

From the point of view of the offered variants it is obvious that within the research period, Slovak respondents chose especially the variants which generally evaluate the situation as either “safe” or “not safe”. Edge variants were selected in a smaller extent (with “very safe” selected more frequently). Most respondents consider their neighbourhood safe. In each round (with slight deviations) more than a half of respondents chose this variant. There is a slight increase in the perception of safety from round 2 to 5. (round 2: 54.2%, round 3: 56.6%, round 4: 57.5% and round 5: 59.5%). Though, there is a slight decrease in the variant in round 6 (57.4%), we find an increase in variant “very safe”, which confirms an overall tendency of the gradual increase of a safe feeling in the respondents’ neighbourhood. The overall average of the variant “very safe” in all rounds is 57.7%. It is necessary to say that one third of respondents (especially in round 2, 33.2%) perceives the situation in the neighbourhood as not safe. The overall average expressing the absence of feeling safe is 29.6%.

Graph 2 presents results of personal experience of Slovak respondents with criminality within individual rounds.

Studying personal experience with criminality we find that Slovak respondents confirm low personal experience with crime which decreases with each round. (round 2: 15.1%; round 3: 14.6%; round 4: 9.3%; round 5: 10%; round 6: 7.6%). In the last 10 years the experience with crime was confirmed on average by one tenth of respondents (11.32%), which means that Slovakia belongs among countries with a lower rate of criminality (the overall average percentage in last ten years is 17.5%). It is necessary to say that in round 6 Slovak respondents confirmed the lowest rate of criminality among all participating countries.

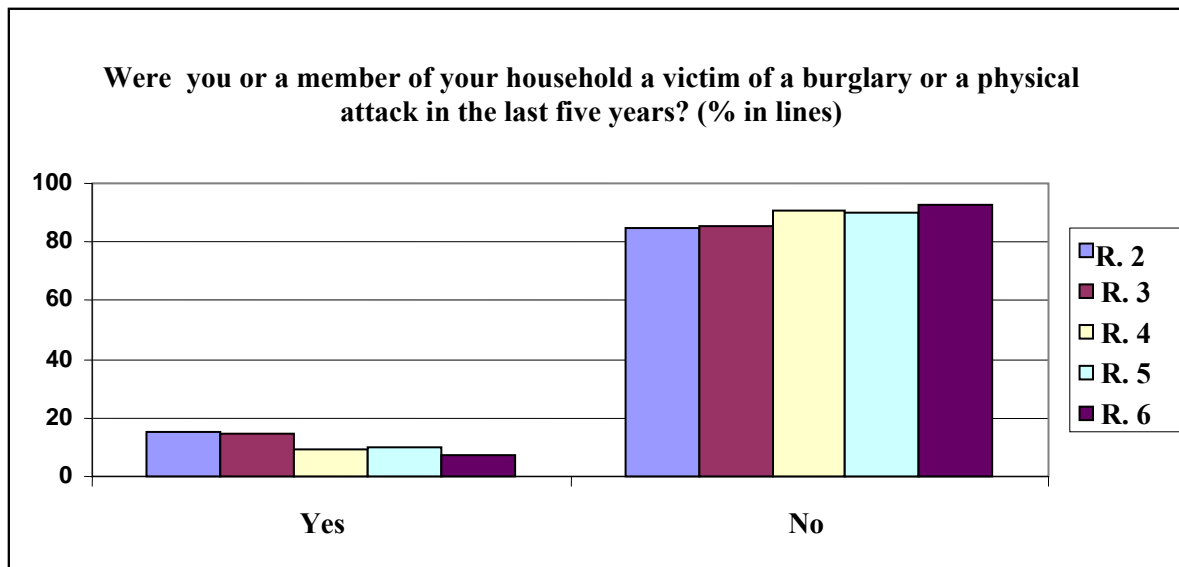


Fig. 2. Personal experience by the Slovaks

Rys. 2. Wyniki osobistych doświadczeń słowackich respondentów z przestępczością w poszczególnych edycjach sondażu

### 3.2. Generation index

Table 1 shows generational categories of Slovak respondents in individual rounds of ESS. The generational categories were defined by us.

Table 1  
Representation of generations in Slovakia in individual rounds of ESS

Generation representation in Slovakia in individual rounds					
	Young generation (to 34 years)	Middle generation (to 54 years)	Older generation (to 55 years)	N	valid%
Round 2	39.1	36.3	24.6	1462	96.7
Round 3	37.7	35	27.3	1724	97.6
Round 4	22.6	34.5	42.9	1798	99.3
Round 5	22.3	33	44.7	1849	99.6
Round 6	22.6	36.1	41.3	1838	99.5

The table shows that while in rounds 2 and 3 it is young generation that dominates slightly (more than one third of respondents) compared to older generation (around one fourth of respondents), in rounds 4, 5 and 6 it is older generation which dominates with more than one third of respondents compared to younger generation (less than one fourth of respondents). When evaluating the results of comparative analyses these disproportions must be considered. However, we can say that all three categories of respondents are sufficiently represented, which enables to carry out comparative analyses.

### 3.3. Generational perception of individual safety

In the next analyses we were interested in the fact if there is a connection between generations of respondents and evaluation of individual safety in the neighbourhood. To increase the validity of results and to offer a better illustration of results we merged four variants of an index of a safety situation into two categories: The first category confirms the

feeling of safety whereas the other category excludes the feeling of safety. The results are shown in graphs 3 and 4 which present results of five analyses.

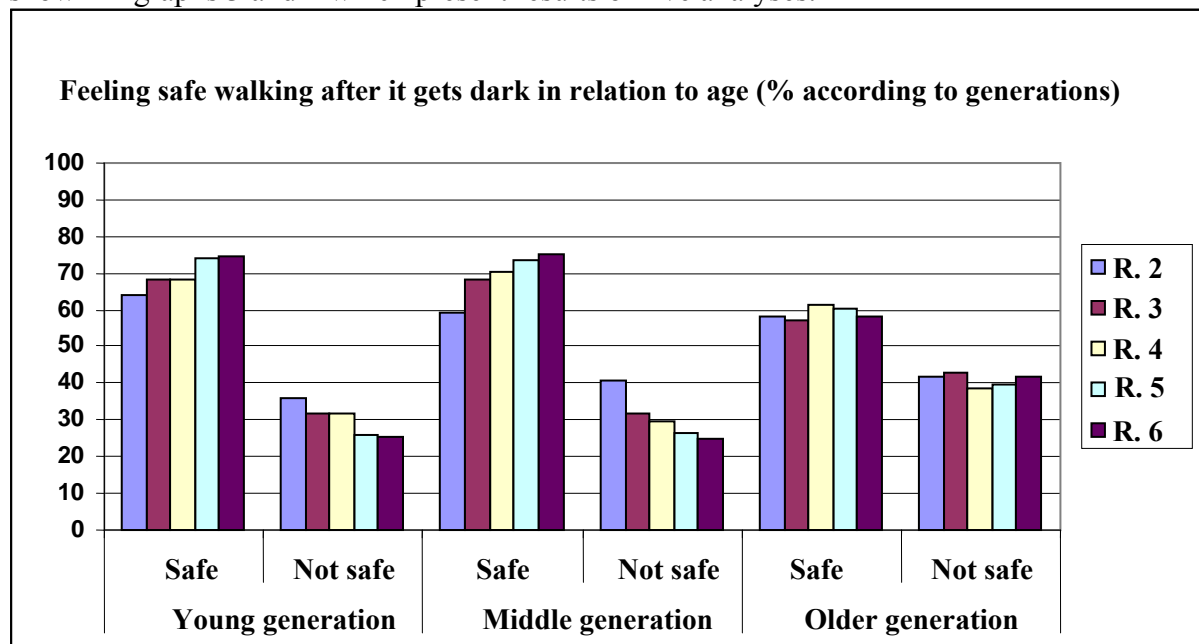


Fig. 3. Feeling safe walking after it gets dark in relation to age (% according to generations)  
Rys. 3. Bezpieczeństwo spacerów po zmroku w stosunku do wieku

It results from the generation point of view of evaluation the safety of the neighbourhood that older generation feels to be mostly threatened. Compared to other generational groups, this group perceives the lowest feeling of safety (the overall average of 59.15) and a higher feeling of threat (the overall average of 40.9%). Perception of safety or threat (not feeling safe) is with the two other groups almost identical (young generation: the overall average of feeling safe 69.9%, not feeling safe 30.1%; middle generation: feeling safe 69.3%, feeling not safe 30.7%).

Graph 3 shows evaluation of safety perception within individual rounds of ESS. While with younger and middle generation the feeling of safety gradually increases and the feeling of being threatened decreases, with the older generation (older than 55) the perception of safety does not change, it remains at the same evaluation level. It means that it is exactly this group of respondents who permanently feel a higher rate of threat. Results in all rounds are statistically significant.

If the fear is justified, we studied in the next analyses focused on personal experience with criminality.

The table shows that the results are from the generational point of view statistically important only in round 4 whereas there are no significant differences in evaluation of real experience with criminality between generations and the fear of crime perceived by the older generation was not confirmed. A higher rate of experience with criminality may be noticed with the middle generation (overall average 12.68%) and with the young generation (12.04%) than with the older generation (9.3%). With each round there is a decrease in individual experience with criminality.

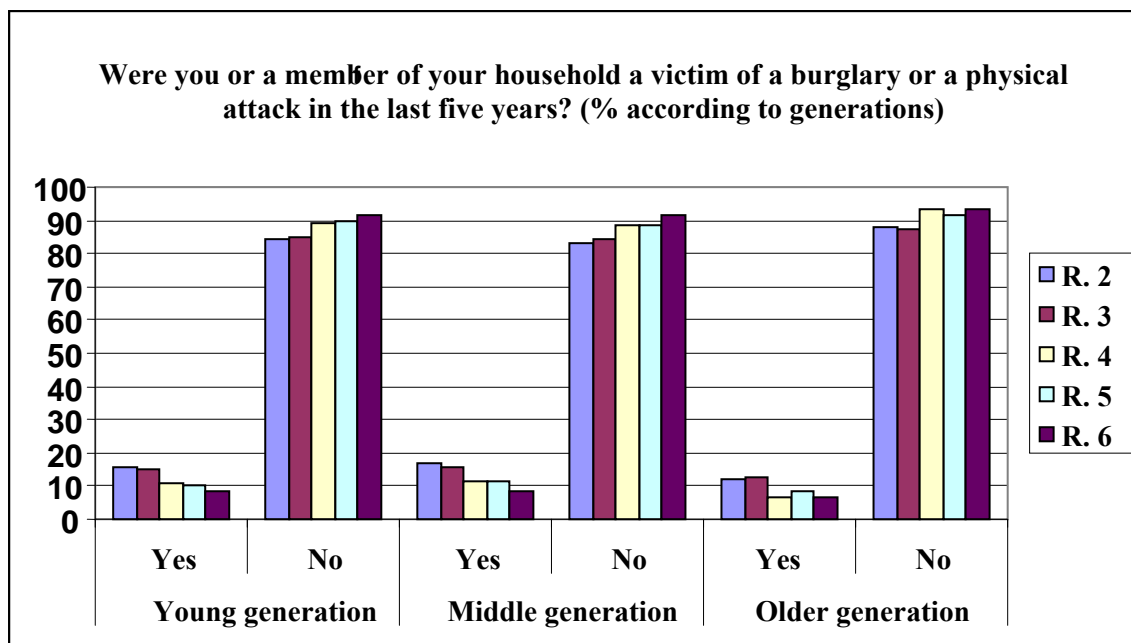


Fig. 4. Personal experience with criminality related to age

Rys. 4. Osobiste doświadczenia z przestępczością w stosunku do wieku

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Studying the basic analyses of indices of individual safety perception we get to the conclusion that Slovak respondents within the evaluation period (last ten years) mostly considered the safety situation in the neighbourhood safe. In each round (with slight deviation), more than a half of respondents see their neighbourhood safe. There is a slight increase in the feeling of safety with the respondents from round 2 to round 5. It has to be said that around one third of respondents (especially in round 2) perceives the situation in the neighbourhood not safe. It was confirmed that Slovak respondents, in relatively low percentage, claim their personal experience with criminality and with each round there is a decrease in that kind of experience. Within the last ten years, on average more than one tenth of respondents confirmed the experience. It means that Slovakia belongs among countries with a lower rate of criminality.

It results from the analyses of indices of individual perception of safety and from the generation index that mostly threatened feels to be the older generation (obviously under the influence of various subjective and objective facts). In contrast to the younger and middle generation, the older generation perceives the lowest feeling of safety and a higher feeling of threat. In addition to it, while with the younger and middle generation the feeling of safety increases and at the same time the feeling of threat decreases, with the older generation the perception of safety does not change. The older generation perceives a higher rate of threat. Next analyses do not show significant differences regarding the evaluation of personal experience with criminality between generations and concerns about the fear of older generation were not confirmed.

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