
CRIME, FEAR OF CRIME AND INSECURITY DURING THE PANDEMIC: THE GREEK REALITY

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in the beginning of 2020 has been a massive health crisis causing tremendous consequences in all sectors of everyday human life. In this context, it is assumed that such a health crisis along with the imposition of the various restrictive measures to reduce the spread of the virus, have had a profound impact on crime and fear of crime worldwide. In the framework of the present analysis, we investigate such an impact on crime and insecurity in Greece during the year 2020 and the first quarter of the year 2021. According to the research data there was a shift in crime interest and a simultaneous reduction in overall crime as well as in specific categories of crime during the implementation of the two lockdowns in the first year of the pandemic. Indeed, in some crime categories, such as crimes against property and economic crimes, the reduction exceeded approximately 30%. In contrast, in terms of cybercrime, there has been an increase since the implementation of the first lockdown. As far as the first quarter of the year 2021 is concerned, a slight increase in crime rates was recorded from March onwards when the restrictive measures loosened. Regarding fear of crime, our analysis has shown that during the first year of the pandemic the prevailing preoccupations and worries of the Greek citizens have centered upon their personal financial situation and on their daily life, as well as on the fear of infection and the spread of the pandemic. As is evidenced the uncertainty that was caused by the pandemic and the consequent measures has led the Greek citizens in a state of limbo where fear and insecurities linked to survival prevailed, while

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concerns about crime have moved to the background. However, from 2020 to 2021 a transition from survival-related fear to quality-of-life-related fear is observed. The aforementioned shifts in crime and fear of crime could be related to the restructuring of criminal opportunities as a consequence of the imposed restrictions to everyday mobility and the displacement of crime from the public space to the private setting. Such a displacement led to a noticeable reduction in exposure to risks and threats related to crime in the public sphere. In addition, in terms of fear of crime and insecurity, it is expected that during such a serious health crisis the focus of attention shifts from fear of crime and concerns about crime to other concerns arising from a general fear of survival.

Key words Covid-19 pandemic, crime trends, Greece, fear of crime, insecurity

I. Introduction

For the last two years, humanity has been struggling with a new coronavirus disease (Covid-19), caused by the “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2”. Covid-19 was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization four months after it emerged in China (city of Wuhan) in December 2019 (Mohan & Nambiar, 2020)⁵. The term *pandemic* refers to the spread of an infectious disease on a global scale as opposed to the term *epidemic* which refers to the spread of an infectious disease over an extended geographical area (Morens & Fauci, 2020:1078·Piret & Boivin, 2021:1).

Over the centuries, contagious diseases appear or reappear in human population with a remarkable stability over time, reminding humanity of its vulnerability to viruses and microbes (Piret & Boivin, 2021). Indeed, one could mention, by way of illustration the Athenian Plague during the Peloponnesian War, the Antonine Plague that struck the Roman Empire, Justinian’s plague that severely affected the Byzantine Empire and finally, the “Black Death” that occurred in the Asian and European continents leading to an extremely high number of deaths⁶ (MacArthur, 1954· Ditrach, 2017· Piret &

⁵ The Chinese Center for Disease Control was informed about the cases of a specific number of people diagnosed with pneumonia of unknown etiology on 31 December 2019. Within the next 2-3 months the new coronavirus was dispersed all over the globe (Mohan & Nambiar, 2020:2).

⁶ The “Black Death” was present in the European continent until the beginning of the 19th century and claimed the lives of 200 million victims. See Piret and Boivin, 2021:3. During the bubonic plague in 1377 in the city of Ragusa (Dubrovnik, Croatia) a 40-day period of isolation was foreseen by law for the first time, leading to the establishment of the term “quarantine”. See Sehdev, 2002:1072.

Boivin, 2021). Without a doubt the 20th century was marked by the outbreak of the Spanish flu in the midst of the World War I with significant loss of life worldwide (over 50 million people), as well as the HIV pandemic, which emerged in the early 1980s and wiped out some 37 million people globally (Honigsbaum, 2018· Sharp & Hahn, 2011· Morens, Folkers & Fauci, 2008· Morens & Fauci, 2020). During the first two decades of the 21st century smaller-scale pandemics emerged such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), the “Swine Flu” and the Ebola and Zika epidemics, causing great concern among scientists, even though their mortality rates were considered low (Kalra et al. 2014· Fauci & Morens, 2016· Morens & Fauci, 2020·).

Once again history is repeating itself and the planet is now facing the novel Covid-19 pandemic, a massive health crisis⁷ that has caused enormous social, economic and political disruption in human societies (Shang, Li & Zhang, 2021, p2). The consequences of such a crisis may vary across different countries depending on their context as well as on the type of the government policies implemented to reduce the spread of the disease (Grasso et al., 2021; Askitas, Tatsiramos, Verheyden, 2020). Indeed, the governments around the world have adopted a variety of different infection control measures at national, regional and local levels depending on the pandemic situation, needs and the specificities of each country or region or city. In Europe the first country that entered national blockade was Italy, one of the most tortured nations by the new coronavirus at the time (Sartor et al. 2020, p188). In the same vein several European states gradually moved to introduce national blockades in an attempt to cope with the rapid spread of the epidemic. In such a context, Greece, also responded promptly to the critical health emergency situation by imposing a national lockdown from 23rd of March to 4th of May 2020 (Politis et al., 2021:4). The measures put in place included, among others, the closure of facilities, stores, schools, workplaces, cancellation of events and prohibition of social gatherings, national and international travel bans and special travel requirements, border controls, quarantine for Covid-19 cases as well domestic restrictions and curfew measures (Askitas, Tatsiramos &

⁷ According to London (2016:221) a health crisis may be defined as “*a state of affairs in which the health of a substantial portion of a community’s members is either compromised or in imminent danger because of the inability of existing mechanisms for safeguarding the public’s health to cope with an emergent health threat*”.

Verheyden, 2020:265). The lockdowns seem to have had a profound impact on people's daily lives with short, medium and long-term consequences at many different levels. The levels affected include occupation, education, physical and psychological health, interpersonal relationships, economy and many other aspects that actually determine people's level of satisfaction with quality of life (Grasso et al., 202:4).

The aforementioned multifaceted crisis and the resulting abrupt social shifts have undoubtedly affected the everyday life of people all over the world, thus compromising the integrity of the structure and safety net of society. Indeed, such a crisis could lead not only to a deregulation of norms and values but also to the extreme state of anomie⁸ according to Durkheim's theory (Newburn, 2017:186· Morrison, 2006·DiCristina, 2015). Against such backdrop, the emergent conditions due to such sudden and sweeping shifts in the social context can also have a serious impact on people's routine activities, thereby, leading to the redefinition of criminal opportunities in place and time (Felson & Boba, 2010:28·Cohen& Felson, 1979· Zarafonitou, 2015:17). In this light, the containment policies imposed against Covid-19 appear to have largely affected individuals' daily activities, mainly through restricting populations' mobility and contacts, while the variety of the countermeasures to slow the pandemic in different contexts may have a different impact on criminal opportunities depending on the type of crime under consideration (Nivette et al.2021:869).

Moreover, the Covid-19 health crisis had far-reaching consequences in many aspects of people's lives. Indeed, the pandemic could be seen as a highly stressful situation that causes significant impacts on people's physical, psychological and social wellness (Saladino, Algeri, & Auriemma, 2020· Koçak, Koçak & Younis, 2021; Sonuga-Barke & Fearon, 2021; Heinen et al. 2021). Such a stressful condition may contribute, inter alia, to the intensity of personal insecurities. In the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, people's concerns and worries seem to focus on issues such as the risk of infection, financial insecurity, physical and mental health as well as interpersonal relationships and separation from significant others (Emodi-Perlman et al., 2021·OECD, 2021· Saladino, Algeri, & Auriemma, 2020). Therefore, it can be assumed that any social

⁸ Anomie is considered to be a "state of ethical normlessness or deregulation, pertaining either to an individual or a society". See Morrison, 2006:12.

crisis may actually affect the hierarchy of individual preoccupations and insecurities and, consequently, crime may cease to be at the top of social concerns or worries.

In this context, the current study will focus on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on crime, fear of crime and the feeling of insecurity in Greece. More specifically, our hypothesis is that the restrictive policies imposed affected the quantitative and qualitative features of crime through the reconfiguration of criminal opportunities. In this context, we will consider the impact of Covid-19 health crisis on people's daily lives and the radical shifts in routine activities. Therefore, it is assumed that some categories of crime have decreased, others have increased, and others have shifted from the public to the private space in line with the conditions created in the aforementioned context. On the other hand, fear of crime and the feeling of insecurity have also been affected by the changes that occurred during the Covid-19 period. Against such backdrop, it should be examined if the concern about crime during such a health crisis remained at the top of the social concerns or moved to the background.

This paper will examine the evolution of crime in the year 2020 as well as on the first quarter of 2021.

It will also explore the prevailing concerns of Greek citizens during the first year of the pandemic in relation to the social changes caused by the emerging Covid-19 crisis, in order to identify the main sources of insecurity and fear of crime among them.

II. Crime and criminal opportunities during the pandemic in the Greek context

a. Crime evolution during the pandemic in the European and international context

According to the existing empirical data on crime trends during the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems that the imposed lockdown measures across countries and regions, may be associated with a significant overall drop in crime (Langton et al. 2021). As an example, research conducted in 27 cities across 23 countries worldwide (America, Europe, Middle East and Asia) showed an average reduction in crime⁹ of 37%. However, this reduction was not evenly distributed across all crime categories (14% for homicide, 46% for robbery, 47% for theft, 28% for burglary, 39% for vehicle theft and 35% for

⁹ The crimes examined were the following: assault, theft, burglary, robbery, vehicle theft and homicide. See Nivette et al. 2021:869.

assault) (Nivette et al., 2021:873-874). The aforementioned reduction was related to the fact that “*far fewer potential victims spent time in crime hot spots such as inner-city areas*” (Nivette et al., 2021:873). Indeed, during the lockdown period, the restrictive measures imposed reduced the social activities and, consequently the likelihood of finding suitable targets and potential offenders in public space. Such a change in daily life seems to have significantly affected the structure of criminal opportunities by causing a displacement of crime from the public to the private sphere. In this context, some empirical studies show a shift from crimes committed in the public space to violence within the private environment¹⁰ (Piquero et al., 2021·Evans et al., 2020 as cited in Nivette et al., 2021:875·). Another empirical study conducted in 25 big cities in U.S.A. showed an overall decrease¹¹ in violent and property crime by 19%. More specifically, when the pandemic hit the U.S. there was a significant decrease in property crimes (23.5% in residential burglary, 28.2% in theft and 20.3% in theft from vehicles) except for non-residential burglary which increased by 37.8%, thus, indicating a shift in criminal activity to unoccupied targets (Abrams, 2021:6)¹². There was also a decrease in violent crimes (20.2% in robbery, 15.9% in aggravated assault, 33.3% in simple assault, 38.6% in rape) with the exception of homicide and shootings. Finally, drug related crimes showed the highest percentage of decrease (65%) (Abrams, 2021:4, 6 & 8). The latter finding confirms the hypothesis that there has been a displacement of crime from the public space to the private sphere, as drug related crimes are crimes committed mainly in public space. In the same direction, Boman και Gallupe (2020), measured the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on crime trends in the U.S. (compared to the year of 2019) based on calls for service to law enforcement concluding that crime decreased after lockdown measures were imposed in the different states. However, according to the research data the recorded decline was likely due to a decrease in minor offenses as serious offenses (homicide and intimate partner violence) remained stable or were on the rise (Boman & Gallupe, 2020:541-542). In another study carried out in

¹⁰ According to some other studies a drop in domestic violence is recorded during the pandemic. For example, in the frame of Abrams’s research (2020:6) there was a decline in domestic violence by 17.3%. However, for the interpretation of such a finding, one must take into account that the cases of violence within the home usually display a very low reporting rate. Also, in the frame of the aforementioned research the cases of domestic violence were examined only in 4 cities out of the total sample (Abrams, 2021:3).

¹¹ The decline was recorded based on both criminal incidents (crime reports) and arrests.

¹² See also Felson et al. 2020 who examined burglary in Detroit during March 2020 and found out a displacement of burglaries from areas with an exclusively residential character to areas with mixed land uses.

England and Wales on trends in crime and anti-social behavior over a six months period (March-August 2020) based on open police recorded data, there was an examination of the expected evolution of crime as opposed to the observed crime rates (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021)¹³. According to the research findings the shift in people's mobility and routine activities appeared to have a profound impact on criminal opportunities through changing the coincidence of potential offenders, suitable targets and guardians (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021:12). Indeed, of the 14 crime categories examined¹⁴, 12 decreased significantly in the first month of the enforced national lockdown, and then increased¹⁵ as the "stay at home" measures were loosened. By way of illustration, in April theft from persons showed a reduction of almost 80% against the expected trend¹⁶, then there was a gradual resurgence at the expected levels, even though by August the rates remained low. Rates of other forms of theft were 20% lower in March declining even more to almost 50% in April. Similarly, in April robbery rates were almost 60% lower than expected, but by August the rates finally returned to expected levels. Burglaries showed a decline of 15% in March but in April and May the decline was a third below expected. However, burglary rates were on the rise again from June onwards (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021:11). Conversely, drug-related crimes showed an increase during the lockdown period compared to expected levels (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021:8). However, this trend may not reflect a real change in crime rates. Indeed, the increase in drug crimes is considered to be the result of enhanced policing. This intensification of policing was due to the fact that police personnel were available because lockdown policies reduced the number of requests to the police for crime prevention and suppression and consequently, their workload. Moreover, arresting drug offenders was easier due to the abandonment of the streets (Langton et al. 2021:13)¹⁷.

¹³ The expected crime rates were developed based on the examination of crime rates from March 2015 to February 2020 (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021:7).

¹⁴ The crime categories that were examined were the following: antisocial behavior, bicycle theft, burglary, criminal damage and arson, drugs, other theft, possession of weapons, public order, robbery, shoplifting, theft from person, vehicle crime, violence and sexual offences, other crime (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021:7).

¹⁵ This resurgence was not the same for all crime categories. The rise was slow for crimes committed in residential areas (e.g. burglary, vehicle crime) and more rapid for other crimes such as robbery and violence (Langton, Dixon & Farrell, 2021: 11 & 13).

¹⁶ The expected rates if there was no pandemic.

¹⁷ The authors characteristically state: "*the trends observed for drug offences likely reflect policing activity and the ease of arrest, rather than a shift in criminal behavior*" (Langton et al.:8).

Apart from the general finding of the overall decline in crime during the lockdown period, there are also some empirical data showing an increase in cyber-crime (Interpol, 2020· Nivette et al., 2021:875· Kemp et al. 2021· Collier, Shepherd & Horgan, 2020). Such a finding could be related to the fact that during the stay-at-home period more people were using the internet for various purposes, making them potential victims (e.g. shopping, payments, remote working, education, entertainment etc.) (Collier, Shepherd & Horgan, 2020:9). This change in people's daily activities increased the opportunities for cybercrime and the number of suitable targets, thereby leading to a displacement of crime from the physical space to the cyberspace (Kemp et al., 2021:5).

Based on the above, the documented overall decline in crime trends - varied according to the type of crime under consideration (Kemp et. al., 2021:5; Langton et al., 2021; Estévez-Soto, 2020; Nivette et al., 2021)- as well as the increase in specific categories of crime (e.g. cyber-crime) could be attributed to the significant impact of the Covid-19 restriction policies on the structuring of criminal opportunities. More specifically, everyday activities create the context for potential offenders to identify available targets without the presence of guardians in order to effectively commit their crimes (Felson & Boba, 2010:28· Cohen & Felson, 1979· Zarafonitou, 2015:17). These routine activities have been profoundly altered due to the emergence of the pandemic and in particular, during the mandatory lockdown periods. As a consequence, opportunities for crime have been reshaped, thus, leading to the change in crime trends.

b. Crime trends during the pandemic in Greece

The evolution of crime in Greece during the Covid-19 pandemic depicted an overall decrease in crime during the lockdown periods in the year 2020. In particular, the year of 2020 coincides with the occurrence of the first and the second "wave" of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study on the monthly evolution of crime during the mentioned year 2020, for the whole Greek territory, is of particular interest, since it can be compared with the course of the pandemic based on the implementation of the Covid-19 containment measures. In the abovementioned context, the results derived from a

comparative study of the statistical data¹⁸, concerning all crime and also four selected categories of crimes, are presented below for the case of the Greek territory.

More specifically, regarding the total number of criminal offenses in Greece, (Graph 1), a sharp downward trend is observed in the period March-May 2020, when the first stricter lockdown was imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic (compared to the baseline month, which is January 2020). At the same time, a second downward trend (milder though than the first one) is recorded from November and onwards, when the second wave of restrictive measures was applied (but milder than the first). Indeed, the percentage rate of reduction (compared to the baseline month, i.e. January 2020) ranges from 27,2% for March 2020 (i.e. 14,799 incidents were recorded, compared to 20,332 cases recorded in January of the same year) to 28,2% for November of the same year (where 14,602 criminal offences were recorded, compared to 20,332 criminal cases recorded in January 2020). This illustration of crime trends for the year of 2020 suggests that crime has fallen more or less over the period of the restrictive measures, and the more stringent the measures applied, the greater the decline (Graph 1). Overall, the crime incidents in 2020 resemble a bi-slope distribution, similar to the letter W (Graph 1), where recorded crime incidences decrease during the two lockdown periods.

Furthermore, an increase in crime was observed for the year 2021¹⁹. Indeed, criminal offenses for the first quarter of 2021, based on the official crime data records for the same year, slightly increased (started from March 2021). Schematically speaking, this increasing trend seems to represent the upper right part of the “W-shape” distribution of the offences for the Greek territory (see Graph 1).

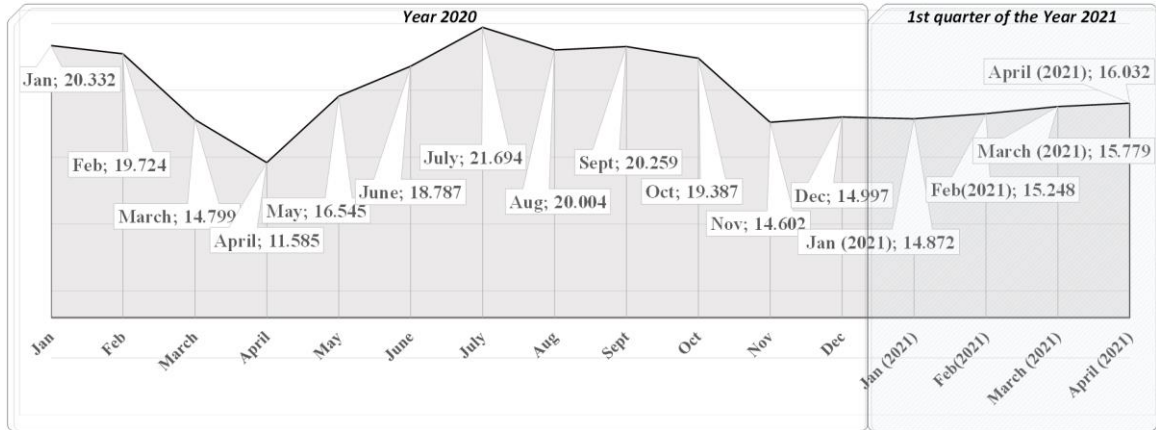
Graph 1: Criminal offenses²⁰ of the year 2020 and for the 1st quarter of the year 2021 per month of perpetration for the Greek territory

¹⁸ a) The statistical data regarding total crime for the year 2020 derived from the Hellenic Police Statistical Yearbook of the year 2020 and

(http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=81&Itemid=73&lang=)
b) the statistical data regarding the cybercrime was granted by the Hellenic Police following our relevant request.

¹⁹ The statistical data regarding total crime for the year 2021 derived from the Hellenic Police Statistical Yearbook of the year 2021.

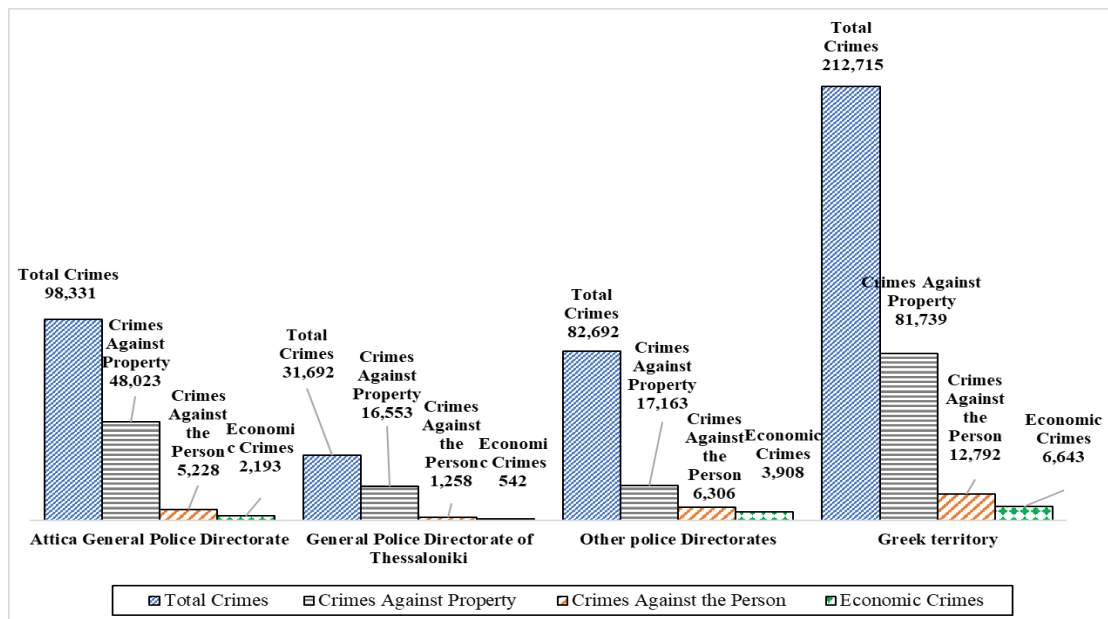
²⁰ Cybercrime is not included.



Source: Statistical yearbook of the Greek police for the year 2020, 2021, Table 10

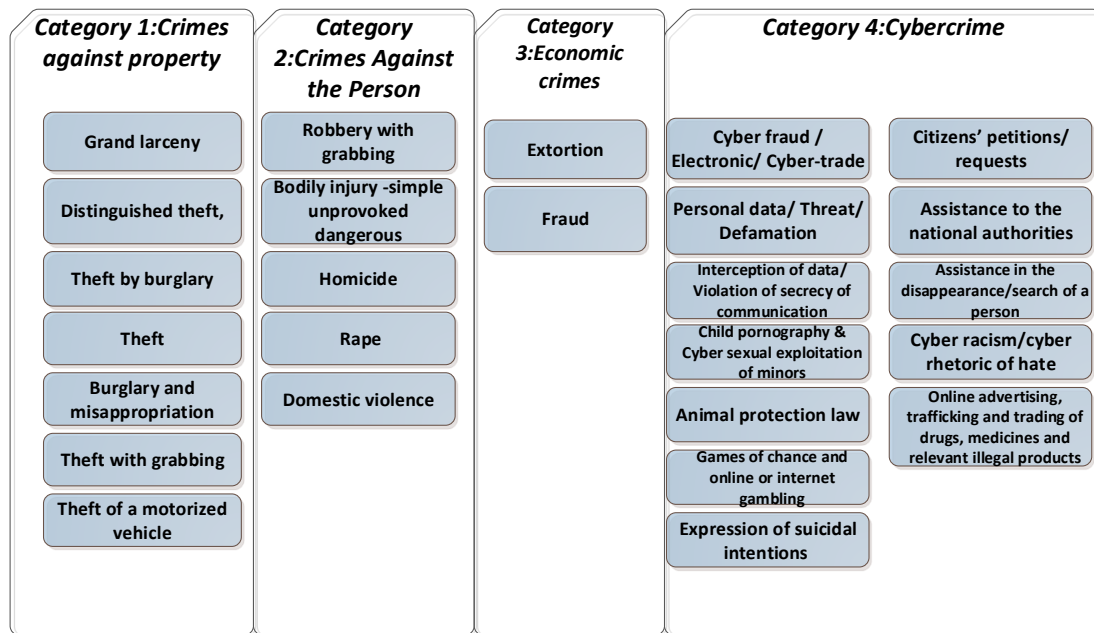
Regarding the spatial distribution of total crime for the year 2020 (Graph 2) it is clearly observed that the majority of criminal cases were recorded in the two major urban centers of the Greek territory, Attika and Thessaloniki. Indeed, 130,023 criminal cases (98,331 and 31,692 respectively) were registered by the General Police Directorates of Attica and Thessaloniki. These cases correspond to 61.1% of the total of 212,715 cases recorded nationwide for the year 2020, as 82,692 cases were recorded by the remaining Police Directorates, during the same period, corresponding to the 38.9% of the total reported crime for the year 2020.

Graph 2: Spatial distribution of criminal offenses per Police Directorate of the Greek territory for the year 2020



The selected offenses to be investigated were classified into 4 selected broad categories: crimes against property, crimes against the person, economic crimes²¹ and cybercrime (Shape 1). Considering their evolution all categories with the exception of cybercrime, tend to follow the pattern described for overall crime. That is, there was a decrease in incidents during the period of the lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a consequent increase in incidents during the interval.

Shape 1: Classification of selected offenses into four broader categories



More specifically, in terms of crimes against property (Graph 3), in March and April 2020, (i.e. the first two months of the initial lockdown), there is a sharp decrease of 34.1% and 58.7% respectively, compared to January of the same year. More specifically, 6,396 cases were recorded in March and even fewer (4,006) in April, when 9,710 cases were recorded in January of the same year. From April 2020, until November 2020, when the second set of restrictions against covid-19 pandemic took place, a decrease in criminal incidents was recorded, compared to bi-month March-April 2020. It should be noted that, despite the relevant fluctuations the recorded cases

²¹ The term economic crime is a quite broad concept that includes a wide range of crimes such as fraud, consumer fraud, fraud on the EU’s finances, stock market fraud, corruption, tax evasion, extortions, smuggling of goods etc. In the case of economic crime, the basic motive is utilitarian and aims at the economic gain. According to Europol’s definition, economic crime “refers to illegal acts committed by an individual or a group of individuals to obtain a financial or professional advantage. The principal motive in such crimes is economic gain”. In this context, for the purposes of our study we chose to examine indicatively extortion and fraud since they constitute two common types of economic crime. See Courakis, 2000, Cusson 2009:342 and [Economic Crime | Europol \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europol.europa.eu/economic-crime)

remain consistently lower than the reference month of January 2020. From November 2020 onwards, recorded incidents of crimes against property further decreased. In fact, their percentage rate of decrease ranges from 27.8% for October (i.e. 7,012 cases) to 42.8% for November and 42,6% for December (5,558 and 5,578 cases respectively).

Spatial distribution for the category of crimes against property (Graph 2), indicates that only 17,163 cases were recorded by the Police Directorates outside Attica and Thessaloniki. This represents 21.0% of the total registered crimes compared to the relevant percentage for Greece, where 81,739 cases of crimes, related to this specific category, were recorded. Which means that the remaining 79.0% of the incidents, for this specific crime category have been recorded exclusively in the two large urban centers of Attica and Thessaloniki. Indeed, in the case of the General Police Directorate of Attica 58.8% of crimes against property (48,023 cases) have been recorded while the remaining 20.3% (16,553 cases) have been recorded in the Thessaloniki General Police Directorate.

Graph 3: Category1. Distribution of crimes against property (*grand larceny, distinguished heft, theft by burglary, theft, burglary and misappropriation, theft with grabbing, theft of a motorized vehicle*) by month of commission, for the year 2020 and for the entire Greek Territory.



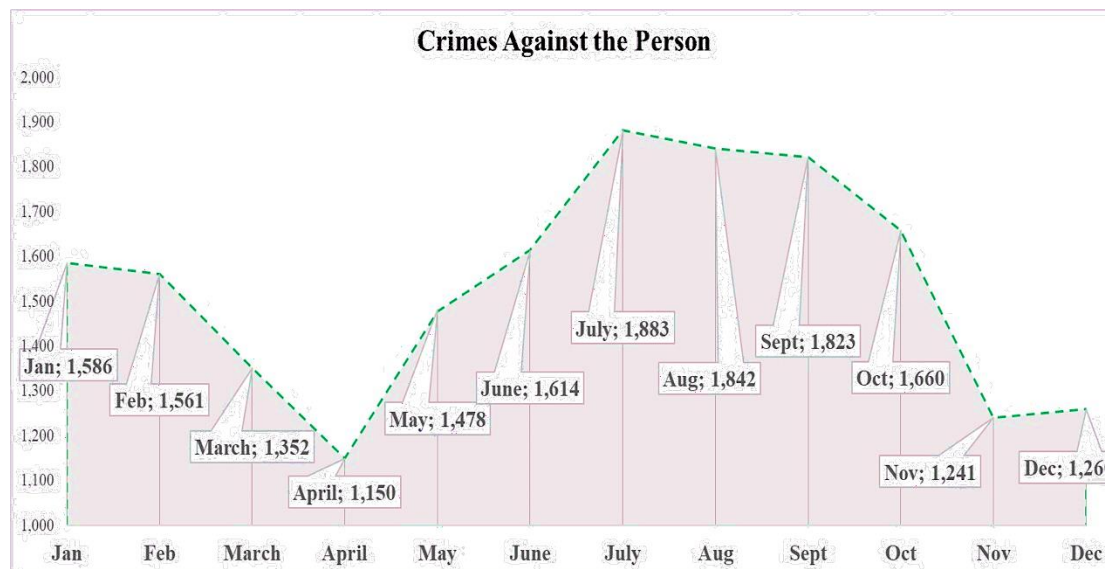
Source: Statistical yearbook of the Greek police for the year 2020, Table 20

As regards the evolution of crimes falling under the category of crimes against the person, it also follows the “W shape” pattern as before (Graph 4) as there is a decrease during the period of the first and second lockdown. Indeed, recorded crime cases were 1,352 in March and 1,150 in April and the decline compared to January 2020, when 1,586 violations were recorded nationwide, corresponds to 14.8% and 27.5%

respectively. Since November, following the first lockdown, there has also been a decrease in incidents related to crimes against persons (compared to the reference month January 2020), almost as pronounced as that observed during the first lockdown. In fact, 1,241 cases were recorded in November, a 21.8% decrease compared to January 2020, when 1,586 cases were recorded. This downward trend was maintained in December 2020, where 1,260 cases were recorded, which corresponds to a decrease of 20.6% compared to January 2020.

In the case of the aforementioned crime category, more than half of the cases are recorded in the general Police Directorates of Attica and Thessaloniki (Graph 2). More specifically, 5,228 cases were recorded by the General Police Directorate of Attica (representing 40.9% of the total recorded crime for this category for the year 2020) and 1,258 cases were registered by the General Police Directorate of Thessaloniki (representing 9.8% of the total crime). At the same time, the remaining 49.3% of crime for this category (6,306 cases) was registered by the remaining Police Directorates.

Graph 4: Category 2. Distribution of crimes against the person (*robbery with grabbing, bodily injury - simple unprovoked dangerous, homicide, rape, domestic violence*) by month of commission, for the year 2020 and for the entire Greek Territory



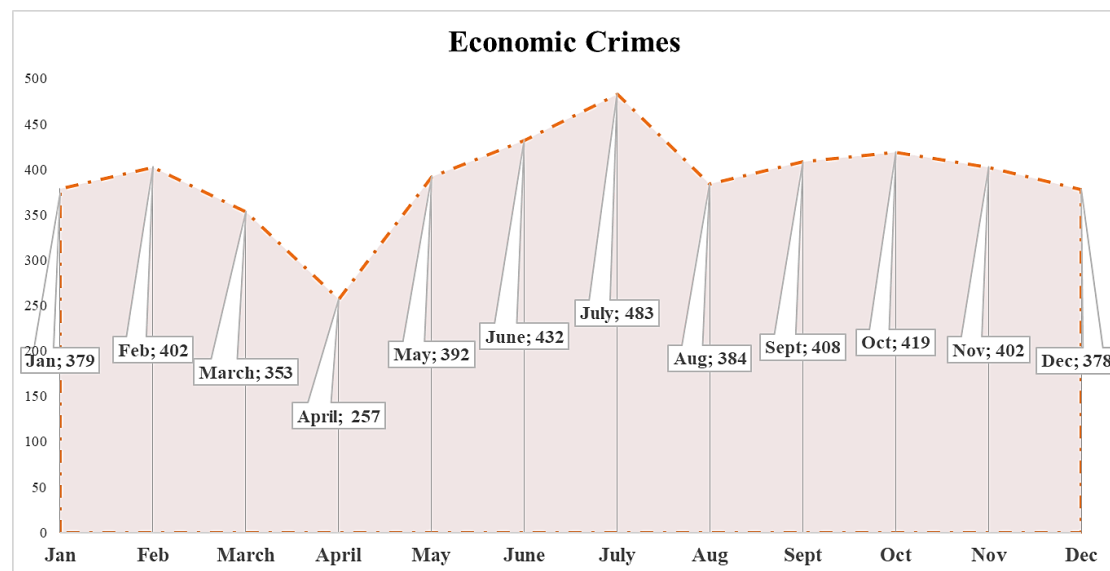
Source: Statistical yearbook of the Greek police for the year 2020, Table 14, Table 19, and Table 20

Finally, the evolution of economic crimes during the two periods of the lockdown, due to covid-19 pandemic, again resembles a “W shape” distribution, with the exception that the recorded criminal incidents decrease rapidly during the first lockdown period, compared to the second lockdown (Graph 5). Indeed, first sharp slope of the

distribution, corresponds to a reduction of incidents from 6.9% to 32.2% for the months of March and April, respectively, compared to January of the same year. More specifically, 353 cases were recorded in March and 257 cases in April, while in January of the same year the recorded cases were 379. Thereafter, there is an increase in the number of offences in this category, with some fluctuations, until November 2020, when the second, less pronounced, slope of the distribution has been noted, with only 17 fewer cases recorded compared to October 2020. Nevertheless, the specific crime rates remain 6,1% higher compared to the baseline month (January 2020), followed by a 0.3% reduction in December 2020, where one less incident was recorded than in January 2020 (378 cases, compared to 379 cases respectively).

Again, almost a quarter of the recorded crimes of this category (41%) was registered by the Police Directorates of Attica and Thessaloniki (2,193 cases, i.e., 33.0% and 542 cases, i.e. 8.2% respectively). The remaining Police Directorates recorded 3,908 cases of economic crimes, i.e., 58.8% of the 6,643 total cases of this category recorded for the Greek territory (Graph 2).

Graph 5: Category 3: Distribution of economic crimes (*extortion, fraud*) by month of commission, for the year 2020 and for the entire Greek Territory

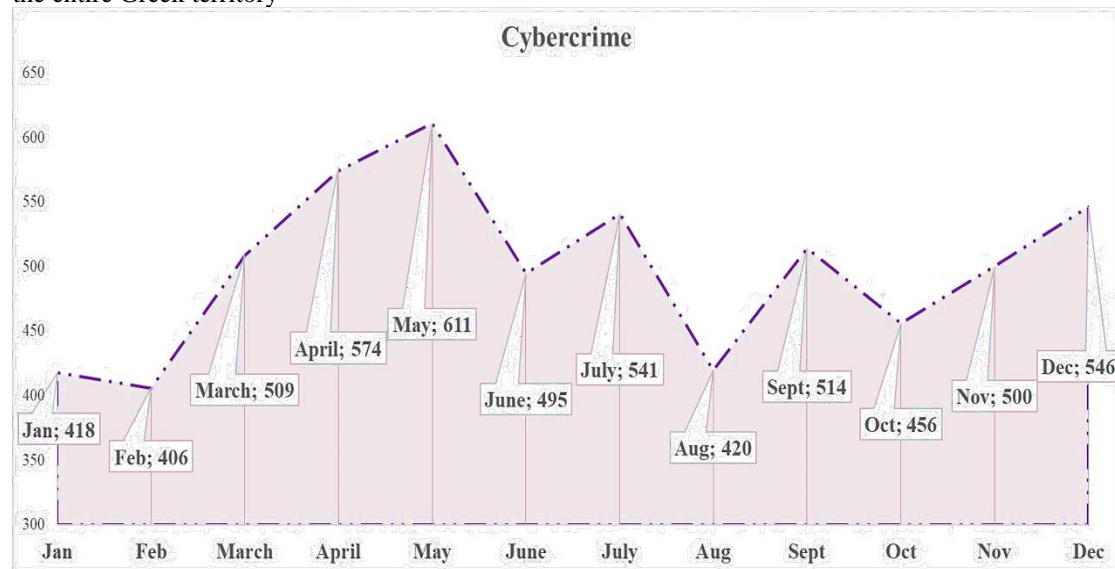


Source: Statistical yearbook of the Greek police for the year 2020, Table 20

Regarding now cybercrime data, their distribution resembling more with the letter M, as cybercrime cases in 2020 increased during the two lockdown periods (Graph 6). More specifically, cyber-related offenses increased the March-May 2020 quarter, compared to January 2020. This increase ranged from 21.8% in March (where 509 cases

were recorded against 418) to 46.2% in May 2020, where 611 cases were recorded. Thereafter and up to the implementation of the second lockdown, a fluctuation in the number of criminal cases was captured, which nevertheless, remains consistently higher than the baseline value corresponding to January 2020. While from October 2020 onwards, the recorded crime rate cases are constantly increasing, ranging from 19.6% in November (500 cases) to 30.6% in December 2020 (546 cases), in relation to the reference month which is January 2020.

Graph 6: Category 4. Cybercrime-related offenses* by month of commission, for the year 2020 and for the entire Greek territory



* 1. Cyber fraud/ Electronic/ Cyber-trade, 2. Personal data/ Threat/ Defamation, 3. Interception of data/ Violation of secrecy of communication, 4. Child pornography & Cyber sexual exploitation of minors, 5. Animal protection law, 6. Games of chance and online or internet gambling, 7. Expression of suicidal intentions, 7. Citizens' petitions/requests, 8. Assistance to the national authorities, 9. Assistance in the disappearance/search of a person, 10. Cyber racism/cyber rhetoric of hate, 11. Online advertising, trafficking and trading of drugs, medicines and relevant illegal products.

III. Fear of crime and the feeling of insecurity during the pandemic in Greece

a. Fear of crime and the feeling of insecurity

Fear of crime constitutes a complex multifactorial phenomenon partially associated with crime and victimisation rates. Fear of crime is considered to be “a rational or irrational state of alarm or anxiety engendered by the belief that one is in danger of criminal victimisation” (McLaughlin, 2006:164). Thereby, the feeling of unsafety

depends on the perception of crime as “*a real and serious enough threat in order to be taken into account in the arrangement of everyday life*” (Killias, 2001:399; Zarafonitou, 2011:50). However, fear of crime is not only associated to crime and victimization rates, but also to general individual and social concerns as well (Ζαραφώνιτου, 2009:1). Within this spectrum, fear of crime 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)²² must be distinguished from the general concern or worry about crime as a serious social problem²³ (Furstenberg, 1971; Robert & Pottier, 2004:218; Zarafonitou, 2011:50, 2009:278). In this sense, the feeling of insecurity associated with crime may reflect other concerns of individuals about the elements that determine their quality of life and the real threats, as well as the ability of the state to provide them with effective services (Zarafonitou, 2002:32; Ζαραφώνιτου, 2006:1032). Within this spectrum, other important personal and social insecurities may be expressed through fear of crime, and these insecurities may be exacerbated by the state's inability to meet people's needs and expectations in terms of crime control, state corruption, welfare state benefits, etc. (Ζαραφώνιτου, 2009:9). This lack of trust in the state may eventually lead to the questioning of the state itself as the guarantor of every citizen's personal security²⁴ (Ζαραφώνιτου, 2006:1033). Such a distinction could explain the fact that many citizens state in surveys and polls that they fear crime, expressing a general social concern within the “*symbolically dense concept of crime*” (Jackson, 2004:962).

In this context, fear of crime could be affected by the insecurities that emerge during a serious social crisis (e.g. a health crisis). Moreover, it could be also affected by the criminal opportunities that are shaped by the particular spatio-temporal dynamics of

²² However, the role of “vulnerability” which people attribute to themselves and to those close to them, is crucial for the subjective perception of criminal threats (Killias, 2001; Killias & Clerici, 2000; Zarafonitou, 2011:50). According to Killias (2001:411) fear of crime requires three preconditions: (a) a high probability for an unpleasant event to take place, (b) potential measures for protection are considered to be insufficient, and (c) the impact of the event is considered as being traumatic or unavoidable. The aforementioned elements refer at the same time to a physical, social and situational dimension, and all of them constitute the nine dimensions of vulnerability. Also see Zarafonitou, 2002:38.

²³ The ideological and political orientations, the educational level, the unofficial social control and the dynamics of the social networks contribute significantly to the creation of the general concern about crime as a serious social problem (Ζαραφώνιτου, 2006:1032; Killias & Clerici, 2000; Taylor & Hale, 1986).

²⁴ The personal safety refers to “*the absence of danger regarding an individual's personal interests (life, physical integrity, personal liberty, property) caused by actions of authority bodies and other individuals in the social space*” (Μανωλεδάκης, 2004:21).

crime in a particular social context. In the era of Covid-19 pandemic and under this twofold spectrum, it could be assumed that fear of crime is either intensified by the insecurities related to the pandemic or mitigated due to the limited exposure of people to criminal threats in the public social environment, especially during the lockdown periods. In this latter case, the concern about crime seems to be replaced by other prevailing social concerns related to the conditions established by the pandemic.

b. Prevailing concerns and worries of the Greek citizens during the pandemic

In the present section emphasis is placed on exploring the dominant concerns of Greek citizens during the first year of the pandemic, in order to identify the main sources of their insecurity. We conducted our analysis by drawing information from public opinion surveys, that were held in 2020. More specifically, we recorded the basic findings of the surveys regarding the major concerns stated by the Greek respondents for each month, in order to track how insecurities are shaped by the evolution and consequences of the pandemic.

The findings from our analysis indicate that the financial concerns were among the basic preoccupations of the Greek citizens, during the first year of the pandemic. Financial preoccupations, include both worries about the macro level regarding the economic state of the country and unemployment and worries about the micro level concerning the individual financial state and the loss of income. Fear of infection and general concerns about the pandemic are also widespread.

In particular, as showed by the polls, conducted in 2020, most Greeks were worried that the pandemic would derail the economy (Ekathimerini, 2020). During March 2020, in which the first lockdown was implemented, 94% of the respondents said that the pandemic would negatively affect business activity, while about half of respondents (54%) were pessimistic about the course of the Greek economy (Pulse RC, 2020a). The concerns about the financial situation were also highlighted by polls, conducted in April and May according to which 84.3% of the respondents agreed to the negative impact of Covid-19 on the Greek economy (διόΝΕΟσις, 2020) and 53% of respondents said that the pandemic and the measures taken affected their household's financial situation (Pulse RC, 2020b).

The relaxation of the restrictive measures brought a sense of relief to the Greek citizens, in June, when lower percentages of worries about the pandemic were recorded. Overall, during the first summer of the pandemic, preoccupations regarding the economy prevailed again, setting unemployment (49%) as the most significant challenge (Εθνός, 2020). Financial concerns and worries about the pandemic also clearly outweighed during the preceding fall, in which the imposition of a second nation-wide lockdown was activated. More specifically, as indicated by relevant polling, more than half of the respondents (59%) reported having felt the compression of the personal and family income (Opinion Poll, 2020), while the amount of concern regarding the pandemic was increased compared to the previous months (70%) (Pulse RC, 2020c).

As recorded by the Covid-19 online survey, commissioned by the European Parliament, at the beginning of October 2020 the feeling that best described the emotional status of the Greek citizens was uncertainty (Eurobarometer, 2020). It is also worth mentioning that the levels marked by the Greek participants (69%) were substantially higher, compared to the European average (50%). Other feelings reported by the Greeks, that also exceeded the European means, were frustration (42%) and fear (30%).

During December 2020, a first round of vaccination was launched, an action that instilled hope about the ending of the pandemic (Το Βήμα, 2021; The power game, 2021) but also raised serious controversies in a small percentage of people about the effectiveness and the mandatory nature of vaccination. Concerns about the economic consequences of the pandemic continued to dominate in 2021, along with negative expectations about the future of the Greek economy, while concerns about the pandemic were significantly reduced due to vaccination.

Given the prevailing concerns of Greek citizens in the first year of the pandemic, centered around economic concerns and fear of infection, we conclude that during such a severe health crisis the focus of attention shifts from fear of crime and concerns about crime to other concerns arising from a general fear of survival. Such a shift may also relate to the overall drop of crime due to the restructuring of criminal opportunities and the displacement of crime from the public space to the private setting. Conversely, in the second year of the pandemic, as indicated by polls, adverse economic conditions, anxiety about the future, and fatigue from the prolonged duration of the pandemic led

to a new fear about the quality of life after the pandemic. The transition from preoccupations linked to survival to concerns about the quality of life has also led to an increased interest of the Greek citizens about crime and criminality, as is also indicated by the fact that during 2021 opinion surveys have added a significant amount of questions about criminality, insecurity and trust in criminal justice system²⁵ (The Toc, 2021; Alco, 2021a; Alco, 2021b; Alco, 2021c; Alco, 2021d; E-ota, 2021; Pulse RC, 2021).

IV. Conclusions

According to the available research data it seems that the immense social changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have affected crime trends mainly through the reshaping of people's everyday activities thus, leading to the restructure of criminal opportunities (Cohen & Felson, 1979). In this context, certain types of crime decreased (i.e. crimes against property) while others were on the rise (i.e. cybercrime) which also indicates the shift of crime from the public sphere to the domestic sphere.

The same picture seems to hold true in the case of Greece. More specifically, the research results regarding the evolution of crime (in total and for selected crime categories) in Greece during the Covid-19 pandemic were based on the comparison of crime cases in Greece during the first year of the pandemic when the nationwide lockdowns were imposed to both the first and the second epidemic wave of Covid-19.

²⁵ For example, in 2021, as depicted by a poll conducted in May in the Greek region, including a sample of 800 people, 92,7% of the respondents reported that criminality is a “very” and a “quite” serious problem. The Toc, 2021. Δημοσκόπηση MRB για το TheTOC: Εγκληματικότητα, αστυνόμευση και ισόβια, μετά το έγκλημα στα Γλυκά Νερά. Available at <https://www.thetoc.gr/koinwnia/article/dimoskopisi-mrb-gia-to-thetoc-oi-polites-niothoun-anasfaleia-theloun-perissoteri-astunomeusi-kai-austiroteres-poines/> (Accessed: 10 Oct. 2021). Similar were the findings of another poll conducted in May according to which 67% of the participants reported feeling “a bit” and “not at all” safe regarding the phenomena of violence and criminality in Greece. Alco, 2021a. Έρευνα για το Open, 17-21 Μαΐου, 2021. Available at <http://alcopolls.gr/portfolio/open-%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B5%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%83-2021> (Accessed: 15 Sept. 2021). Indicative of this situation was the statement of the Minister of Citizen Protection of Greece, Michalis Chrysochoidis who has spoken of an increase in “crime phobia” due to specific circumstantial reasons. As concerns the factors that triggered “crime phobia” the Minister referred to two incidents that shocked the Greek society, the brutal murder of a mother in front of her infant, an unprecedented incident for the country and the reappearance of the clearing of circuits by members of the organized crime. Η Kathimerini, 2021. Χρυσοχοΐδης: Αύξηση της εγκληματικότητας δεν υπάρχει. Available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561388324/chrysocho-dis-ayxisi-tis-egklimatikotitas-den-yparchei/> (Accessed: 2 Oct. 2021). Regarding the levels of policing in May 2021, 73,1% of the participants stated that they were “a bit” or “not at all” satisfied by the police. The dissatisfaction concerning the criminal justice system was also significantly high (81,9%). The Toc, 2021, *ibid*.

The comparison of monthly crime cases was made in relation to January 2020 that is considered the reference month. Thus, the respective monthly percentage (%) change in crime referred to the change, increase or decrease, in relation to the aforementioned reference month. Findings indicated a shift in crime interest and a simultaneous reduction in overall crime as well as in selected crime categories during the implementation of the two lockdowns. In fact, in some crime categories, such as crimes against property and economic crimes, this reduction exceeded 30% (42.6% for December 2020 and 32.2% for the months of March and April respectively). Such a reduction may be related to the compulsory stay-at-home orders and the consequent everyday mobility that changed the availability of suitable targets in the public space and established a continuous presence of guardians in the domestic sphere. This is also reinforced by the fact that criminal offenses for the first quarter of 2021, based on the official crime data records of this year, show a slight increase in crime rates, started from March 2021, when the gradual lift of the restrictive measures for the spread of the pandemic began.

In contrast, in terms of cybercrime, there has been an increase since the implementation of the first lockdown; an increase which peaked in May 2020 (when the recorded rate was 46.2%), when restraining orders restricting individuals' activities were phased out. In fact, this increase in cybercrime has continued, with some fluctuations, throughout 2020, as despite a second peak in incidents since November 2020 when the second lockdown was implemented, these remain consistently higher than the reference month (January 2020). The recorded increase in cybercrime in the first year of the pandemic is again related to the change in daily activities, as a large portion of people stayed at home, worked remotely and used all kinds of services provided on the internet to deal with their daily needs, thus increasing the availability of suitable targets for potential offenders (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Regarding the preoccupation and worries of the Greek citizens during the first year of the pandemic, as revealed by the public opinion surveys, these focus on the impact of the pandemic and the restrictive measures on the economy, on their personal financial situation and on their daily life, as well as on the fear of infection and the spread of the pandemic. This unprecedented situation, for the current Greek reality and the uncertainty that it has given rise to, has led the Greek citizens in a state of limbo were

fear and insecurities linked to survival prevailed, while concerns about crime have moved to the background. In order to understand this shift, it is necessary to take into account the imposed restrictions on citizens' mobility, which have led to a noticeable reduction in exposure to risks and threats related to crime in the public sphere. Especially the circulation after dark, which is traditionally related to fear of crime (Zarafonitou, 2002, 2011), was prohibited for long periods during the lockdowns that took place, during the first year of the pandemic. Moreover, prolonged confinement at home affected cognitive processes of insecurity, significantly reducing thoughts that one's home might be robbed or broken into, since people were essentially acting as permanent guardians of their private space. Indeed, as is pointed out by the official police statistics, a major drop was observed in property and street crimes during 2020. Our argument that fear of crime and insecurity have been replaced by other prevailing concerns or worries during the first year of the pandemic, is also supported by the comparison of the prevailing preoccupations, according to the polls conducted, between 2020 and 2021. Overall, from 2020 to 2021 there is a transition from survival-related fear to quality-of-life-related fear. Furthermore, while in 2020, most polls focused on economic and health concerns, in the second year of the pandemic there was a significant shift in the content of the questions. Indeed, in addition to the impact of the pandemic, polls also included questions about crime, delinquency and criminal justice. This latter finding, could be related to the increase in crime trends in line with our research results for the first quarter of 2021. However, further thorough research is needed in order to establish such a relationship, also taking into account the role of various factors related to fear of crime and feelings of insecurity. After all, fear of crime is considered a complex social phenomenon that poses major challenges that need to be addressed by theory and research.

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