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PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A STUDY ON ROBBERIES IN SLOVENIA – POLICE INVESTIGATION AND CRIME PREVENTION ASPECTS

The authors present a preliminary analysis of results of the study on robberies in Slovenia. A sample of 187 (53.6 %) out of 349 reported robberies in 2003 was examined in regard to robberies committed in closed premises and robberies committed on public space. The results of the study show main characteristics of robberies, victims and perpetrators, time past between the commission of crime and reporting it to the police, police investigative measures taken after the report was received and main characteristics of investigation the two types of robberies in regard to police investigation. Possible improvements of criminal investigation are implied in the final part of the paper as well as possible crime prevention measures.

INTRODUCTION

STATISTICAL DATA OF ROBBERIES IN SLOVENIA (1991-2003)

Statistical data presented in this chapter are based on the official statistical reports made by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia and published in Annual Reports on the Work of the Police (Letno poročilo o delu policije 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003). Older information are based on the reports made by Svetek and published in Slovenian Journal of Criminal Investigation and Criminology (Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo). All statistical data present the cases of robberies, which the police reported to the prosecutor's office. The data on robberies are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1: Reported robberies in Slovenia since 1991¹

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of robberies	220	213	205	275	292	507	341	379	463	474	503	449	349

Statistical data show that the number of robberies was almost unchanged at the beginning of the 1990's, but in 1994 the number of this criminal offences started to increase. In 1994 the number of robberies was 34.1 % higher then a year before. For the next two years this trend continued and in 1996 the number of robberies was more than two times higher then at the beginning of the 1990's. After the peak in 1996 the number of robberies decreased but in 1998 the second wave appeared. Another peak was achieved in 2001 when the number of robberies almost matched the one in 1996. After that we can see another decline in the number of robberies. In 2002 there were for 10.7 % less robberies than a year before and this trend continued throughout the year 2003 when there was a 22.3% decrease of all robberies if compared with a previous year, but this number is still higher than at the beginning of the 1990's.

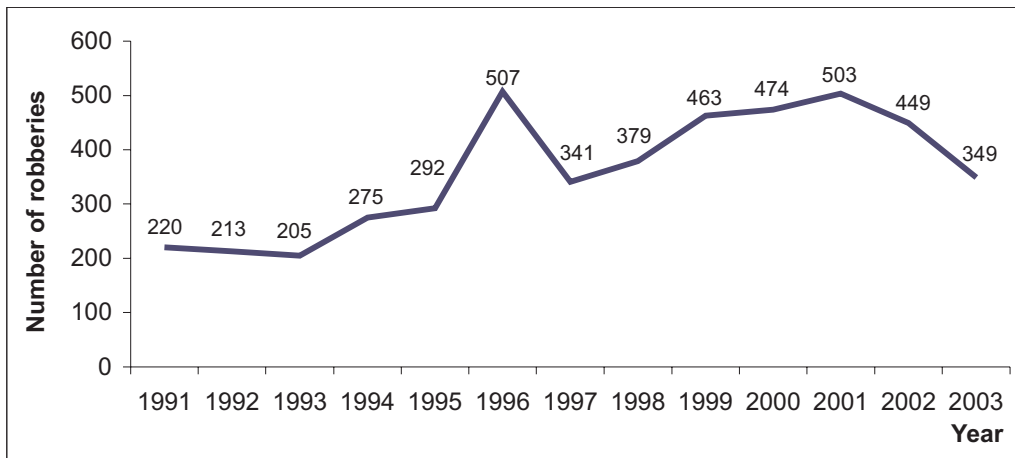


Figure 1: Reported robberies in Slovenia since 1991

THE PRESENT STUDY

The goal of this paper is to present preliminary results of a study on robberies in Slovenia. We used a modified questionnaire prepared by Dujmović, Mikšaj-Todorovič and Budjanovac, (2002) and studied about 53.6 % of robberies committed in Slovenia in 2003. A computer access to the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia crime database was granted to researchers of the Faculty of Criminal Justice of the University of Maribor for the purpose of this study. Every studied case in the police database was studied closely and a questionnaire was filled in for every of 187 studied robberies. Furthermore, the sample was also weighted upon the number of robberies committed on each police directorate's area. For this purpose, we used proportional sub-samples of all eleven police directorates in Slovenia and generated the sample for entire Slovenia. Out of 349 (total number of robberies in 2003), 187 cases generate the sample for this study. The data are all on nominal level and entered into a SPSS database for statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics and chi-squares were calculated to get an overall picture of the robbery problem and compare the two types of robberies.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY ON ROBBERIES IN SLOVENIA

ROBBERY, POLICE INVESTIGATION, SUSPECTS, AND VICTIMS

ROBBERY

There were committed 349 robberies in Slovenia in 2003. Out of 187 robberies studied, 67 were committed in indoor facilities and 120 in the outdoor space. The majority of robberies was reported immediately after victimization on the telephone number 113 (police operational and information centre) or to a local police station by the victims of robbery (71.7%), witnesses (14,4%), victim's representative (9,6%) and others. Just 4.3% of robberies were reported to the police while in progress.

Robbery occurs most often on Friday (22.5%) and Thursday (15.5%). Regarding months, all months are about equally burdened with robberies (between 9 and 11%). The most typical parts of the day for commission of robbery are in the afternoon (32.1%) and in the evening (39,6%).

Outdoor robberies (n =120) happened the most frequently in the street (55), a park (14), agricultural areas such as fields and gardens (11), in front of a supermarket (10), and other areas (30).² Indoor robberies (n = 67) happened the most frequently in a shop (18), a family house (15), other premises (15)³, an apartment (10), a post office (4), a petrol station (2), a newspapers kiosk (2), a bank (1.5%), an exchange office (1) and other financial institution (1).

The robbers applied different kind of force, weapons and tools during the commission of a robbery: a bodily force (69,5%), firearms (16%), a knife (16.2%), a gas pistol (2,7%) and other force (use of a baseball bat or a pipe) (1,6%).

The distribution of the value of items taken is as follows: under 250 € (61.3%), 251-400 € (13,1%), 401-2500 € (18.5%), 2501-5000 € (2,4%) and over 5001 € (4.8%).

Number of perpetrators committing a robbery is as follows: one (50.3%), two (32.1%), three (10.2%), more than three (7.4%). Identity of a robber known to the police when crime reported was in 29.9% of cases, in a week time (15.5%), in a month (3.2%), in six months (3.7%), in a year (0.5%), not known at all (47.1%).

Robbers wore a disguise (a motor a cap with holes for eyes and mouth, a stocking, a face covered with a handkerchief) in about one-third of the studied cases. The use of a disguise is more typical for the indoor than outdoor robberies. Robbers wore gloves during a crime commission in about 10% of cases.

POLICE INVESTIGATION AND OTHER POLICE ACTIVITIES

Police response time under ten minutes was found in 35.8% of cases, followed by 11-30 min (12.8%), 31-60 min (3.2%), 61 min – 6 hours (3.7%) and N/A (44.4%). Crime scene was secured by the uniformed police officers in 27.3% of cases. Uniformed police (23.5%), criminal investigators (21.9%) performed crime scene investigation. No crime scene investigation was performed in 54.4% of the studied cases. When criminal investigation was performed, one police officer (20%), two police officers (69.4%), three police officers (5.9%) and more than three police officers (4.7%) performed crime scene investigation.

After informed about the robbery, the police controlled an area close to the crime scene in 7.5% and controlled a wider area in 12.8%. In addition, a strict patrol of a close and wide areas (13.4%) in which possible suspects might be arrested were performed.

The police conducted interviews with witnesses in about a half of all studied cases. Recognition of offenders by the albums of photographs of known offenders was used in one-fourth of all studied cases.

Crime scene investigation offered usable clues and tracks in (55) 64.7% of the studied cases of performed crime scene investigations – (n=85, 45.4% of all cases). Biological tracks were found in 28.6%, footprints in 26.2%, fingerprints in 22.6%, and micro tracks were found in 19%, tracks for ballistic examination in 7.1% of the cases where crime scene investigation was performed. A CCTV was found useful for obtaining information for police investigation in 10.7% of all the studied cases. Forensic analysis of the tracks was performed in 44 cases (23.5%).

Line-up recognition of suspects was used in 77.8% cases. Time spent for investigation of robbery is as follows: up to three days (10.7%), 4-7 days (7.5%), 8-30 days (42.2%), 1-3 months (32.1%), 3-6 months (5.3%), and 6-12 months (2.1%).

The police investigated 187 robberies out of which they reported ninety-nine persons to the prosecutor's office. After the police conducted an interview with the suspects, 65.7% of the suspects admitted the commission of robbery, while 34.3% did not admit the commission of the criminal offence but the police gathered substantial evidence to support their charges.

SUSPECTS

Re-offending rate was 40.4% out of which 87.9% re-offenders had committed also other criminal offences in addition to the robbery they were suspected of. Criminal history of re-offenders was related to property crimes (27.3%), violence crimes (8%) and both (64.7%). 27.3% of suspects were brought to an investigative judge and 26.3% of suspects were detained.

Assumed motives for the commission of robbery were as follows: professional activity (33.3%), money for drugs (21.2%), frustration/debts (13.3%), and other (32.3%).⁴

The age of suspects was as follows: under 18 (18.2%), 18-25 (47.5%), 26-35 (28.3%), and 36-50 (6.1%). The place of residence of suspects appears to be in the same town (53.3%), in other town (33.3%), in other state (7.1%), and suspects come from different towns (6.1%).

Suspects were caught in the act by the police in nine cases, in four cases by witnesses, by private security guards in one case and in no cases by the victim.

VICTIMS

Victims of robbery are distributed in the following manner: one male victim (65.8%), one female victim (21.9%), more than one male victims (4.3%), more than one female victims (4.8%), and more than one male/female victims (3.2%). Regarding the number of victims of a robbery, one (86.1%), two (11.2%), three (1.6%) and more than three people (1.1%) happened to be victimised by a robbery. Age characteristics of victims are as follows: under 18 (17.7%), 18-25 (27.1%), 26-35 (16.6%), 36-50 (16%), 51-over (22.7%).

Victims resisted the offender in about 35% of the cases of which fighting with a perpetrator (18.2%), calling and crying for help (13.9%), and the use of handy means (4.8%) were the most typical responses of the resisting victims. Seventy victims (38.7%) out of 181 were injured during victimisation. Fifty-seven victims (31.5%) were taken to a hospital and provided with the medical treatment.

Psychophysical status of victims was as follows: sober victim (76.5%), under the influence of alcohol (12.3%), under the influence of other drugs (3.7%), N/A (7.5%).

Victims lived in the same town as crime scene (66.8%), in other town (25.1%), in other state (5.3%), and victims came from different towns (2.7%) in the time of victimisation.

COMPARISON OF ROBBERIES IN INDOOR PREMISES AND OUTDOOR SPACE

A comparison based on the independent variable "place of robbery" with variables on the act of robbery, police investigation, suspects and victims was conducted using chi-square test.

ROBBERY

Report of robbery while in progress variable was found significant ($p < .01$) because 6 (9%) of indoor robberies were reported to the police and just 2 (2%) of outdoor robberies were reported to the police while in progress. Significant difference ($p < .000$) on "who reported robbery" shows that outdoor robberies are mainly reported by the victim (84.2%), indoor robberies are reported by victims (49.3%), victim's representatives (26.9%) and non-victimised individuals (14.2%). The way of reporting a robbery to the police also differs significantly ($p < .01$) because indoor robberies are mainly reported to the police by a telephone (67.2%), and in person (29.9%), while outdoor robbery is reported in person (50.8%), followed by a telephone report (48.3%).

Force used in the commission of a robbery differs significantly ($p < .01$) because severe threat is used more often in an indoor robbery (50.7%) and the use of physical force is more typical for an outdoor robbery (52.2%). Kind of force or threat also differ significantly ($p < .000$) because bodily force is more typical for outdoor robbery (82.5%), and the use of firearms is more typical in indoor robberies (32.8%). The variable amount of money taken in indoor robberies (65.7%) in comparison to outdoor robberies (38.3%) also differs significantly ($p < .000$). The opposite tendency was found for the variable purse/bag taken ($p < .05$). The value of items taken ($p < .001$) was quite small for outdoor robberies (under 250 €, 71.8%), while the value of items taken in indoor robberies was much higher.

Robbers wore disguise in indoor robberies in 43.3% and in outdoor robberies in 3.3% of the cases ($p < .000$). Robbers used gloves only while committing indoor robberies in 29.9%. Premises were technically protected in 26.9% in indoor and in 1.7% of outdoor robberies ($p < .000$).

POLICE INVESTIGATION AND OTHER POLICE ACTIVITIES

Crime scene protection differs significantly because 59.7% of indoor and 9.2% of outdoor crime scenes ($p < .000$) were protected by the uniformed police to keep the crime scene for further investigation. Police response time was much shorter ($p < .000$) in cases of indoor robberies (under 10 min – 52.2%) than outdoor robberies (under 10 min – 26.7%). Crime scene investigation of indoor robberies ($p < .01$) was conducted by criminal investigators (50.7%) in comparison to the uniformed police (29.9%), while outdoor robbery crime scenes were investigated by the uniformed police in 20% and criminal investigators in 5.8% of the studied cases. Tracks for further analysis were found in the indoor (75.9%) and in outdoor crime investigation (45.2%) ($p < .01$). Micro tracks ($p < .01$) were searched mainly for indoor robberies (27.8%). The same pattern is significant for foot prints (37% for indoor and 6.7% for outdoor, $p < .01$).

The police performed a strict control of an area close to the crime scene ($p < .000$) in case of indoor (17.9%) and outdoor robberies (1.7%). Intensive patrolling of a wider area also differs significantly for indoor (28.4%) and outdoor (5.0%) robberies ($p < .000$). A forensic analysis of tracks ($p < .000$) is more often performed for indoor (47.8%) than outdoor robberies (10%). Line-up recognition of suspects ($p < .05$) is more often used for outdoor (85.7%) than indoor robberies (63.9%). Police dogs were used only 6% of investigations of indoor robberies.

SUSPECTS

It was more typical to bring a suspect to the investigative judge ($p < .001$) in the case of the indoor robbery (47.2%) than of the outdoor robbery (15.9%). Suspects of indoor

robberies were more often detained (47.2%) than suspects of outdoor robberies (14.3%)($p < .000$).

VICTIMS

Gender of victims differs significantly ($p < .000$). The majority of victims of robberies were men (65.8%). Comparison of indoor and outdoor robberies shows that men were victims of indoor robberies in 38.8% and 80.8% cases of outdoor robbery. Perpetrators more likely robbed one victim at a time (74.6% for indoor and 92.5% for outdoor robberies) than more victims ($p < .01$). Younger people up to 30 years of age were more likely to be victims of outdoor robberies (over 50%) while people older than 50 were more likely to be victims of indoor robberies (31.1%) ($p < .01$). Victim's use of handy means for crime commission hardening appeared to be typical only for indoor robberies ($p < .000$). Psychophysical condition of victims of both kinds of robbery also differs significantly ($p < .01$) – more victims of outdoor robberies were under the influence of alcohol and drugs (around 20%) than victims of indoor robberies (7.5%). Victims of indoor robbery ($p < .01$) more often lived in the town of victimisation (80.6%), while victims of outdoor robbery appeared to be victimised less often in the town of their residence (59.2%).

DISCUSSION

The analysis of 187 robberies committed in Slovenia in 2003 revealed some patterns, which can be used for reflection on the improvement of police investigation, robbery prevention related to victims and creation of defensible space for both, indoor and outdoor robberies.

Regarding the police activities and criminal investigation in particular, we have learnt that indoor robberies deserve much more attention of qualified criminal investigators and the use of forensic techniques than outdoor robberies of which the number of "mobile phone snatching" qualified as a robbery increases. If we can be allowed to hypothetically explain the most critical time of robbery, then the police and other professionals involved in crime control and prevention should reconsider control activities on Thursday and Friday afternoons and evenings.

The results also show that outdoor robberies due to the nature of crime (delayed reporting etc.) do not lead to quick response of the police in such cases. Response of the police on indoor (especially in financial institutions) robberies was quite fast because of the nature of priorities in solving such crimes. Such institutions and premises are more often equipped with quiet alarms and employees received basic instruction on how to react in the case of robbery. The use of CCTV on premises also contributes to the quality of police investigation.

Streets and shops are "dangerous places" people routinely use every day. In this regard situational crime prevention, as developed by Clarke (1997) should solve quite many opportunistic crime with very simple and not too expensive measures. A typical Slovenian robber uses physical force to threaten a potential victim. In this regard self-defence and avoidance techniques are worth of reconsideration. The majority of robbers do not make a huge profit with the commission of the outdoor robbery. Moreover, it is unpredictable how much valuables would a possible victim have on him or her.

The most interesting results are related to victims, which in majority appear to be young men who walk alone and expose themselves to potential victimisation, and live in the town of victimisation. While the most robbery victimisations in outdoor space happen to a victim who walks alone, it is recommended not to expose oneself to "criminalisable space" while alone. In addition to young men, people of age 51 and over are a risk group for this kind of victimisation.

Robbery is a crime where a victim can get injuries (about one third). Quite worrying are results of injurious victimisation (38.7%), and victimisation resulted in medical treatment of the victim (31.5%) despite the fact that the majority of victims were sober while victimised. These findings suggest a proper reaction of victims and non-exposure strategies while victimised.

CONCLUDING REMARKS – REFLECTION ON POSSIBILITIES FOR MORE EFFICIENT INVESTIGATION AND ROBBERY PREVENTION

We have learnt about some characteristics of robberies, criminal investigation, suspects and victims of robbery in Slovenia. We believe that criminal investigation of robberies should be improved, especially investigation of the outdoor robbery, which seems that does not deserve as much attention of the police as the indoor robbery. It is also necessary to train police officers to properly respond to crime report by the victim because of their psychological state in the after victimisation period.

In addition, the results of our preliminary study show interconnectedness between drugs (i.e. suspects addicted to drugs) and robbery (21.2%). In other studies previously conducted in Slovenia (Dvoršek, 2002) the percentage of suspected drug addicts for the commission of robbery is much higher (71%) than in the present study. Such diverse results require further research on all types of robbery because a common sense conclusion can lead us to the statement: "Fighting drug abuse equals fighting robberies". This hypothesis needs to be tested also in a scientific manner like in research projects Adam I and New Adam. (Bennett, 2000)

The results on robbery, robbers and victims can be used also for crime preventative purposes, especially for victim and place oriented approaches. The results imply possibilities for the following victim related crime prevention of an outdoor robbery (place avoidance, avoiding risk hours, being in a group of people, taking a safe route, etc.) and indoor robbery (CCTV, private security, regulations on money and valuables handling, etc.). In addition, a variety of situational crime prevention activities can be quite successful in the reduction of robberies with simple measures of target hardening, making bigger risk and marking property. The role of "Big brother" techniques in financial institutions seem to be a must if the employees, property and valuables are supposed to be protected successfully.

In addition to awareness raising campaigns, informing people about possible preventative measures, the following measures by Clarke and Homel (1997, in Siegel, 2004) should be reconsidered in robbery and other property and violent crime prevention and subsequently scientifically tested in Slovenia. For further reconsideration, the situational measures are presented in Table 2. The measures, which should be tested closely in regard to robbery prevention, are in bold letters.

It is necessary to conduct a profound study on robbery, robbers and their victims in Slovenia to get a detailed insight into the structure of this predatory form of crime, which caused a significant number of injurious victimisations in 2003, to develop successful strategies of robbery prevention. This is a real challenge for the authors' future research.

Table 2: Situational crime prevention⁵

Increasing Perceived Effort	Increasing Perceived Risks	Reducing Anticipated Rewards	Inducting Guilt or Shame
1. <i>Target hardening</i> Slug rejector devices Steering locks Bandit screens	5. <i>Entry/exit screening</i> Automatic ticket gates Baggage screening Merchandise tags	9. <i>Target removal</i> Removable car radio Women's refuges Phone card	13. <i>Rule setting</i> Harassments codes Customs declaration Hotel registration
2. <i>Access control</i> Parking lot barriers Fenced yards Entry phones	6. <i>Formal surveillance</i> Burglar alarms Speed cameras Security guards	10. <i>Identifying property</i> Property marking Vehicle licensing Cattle branding	14. <i>Strengthening moral condemnation</i> Shoplifting is stealing Roadside speedometers Bloody idiots drink and drive
3. <i>Deflecting offenders</i> <i>Bus stop placement</i> <i>Tavern location</i> <i>Street closures</i>	7. <i>Surveillance by employees</i> <i>Pay phone location</i> <i>Park attendants</i> <i>CCTV systems</i>	11. <i>Reducing temptation</i> Gender-neutral phone lists Off-street parking	15. <i>Controlling disinhibitors</i> Drinking age laws Ignition interlock Server intervention
4. <i>Controlling facilitators</i> Credit card photo Caller ID Gun controls	8. <i>Natural surveillance</i> <i>Defensible space</i> <i>Street lightning</i> <i>Cab driver ID</i>	12. <i>Denying benefits</i> Ink merchandise tags PIN for car radios Graffiti cleaning	16. <i>Facilitating compliance</i> Improved library checkout Public lavatories Trash bins

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ENDNOTES

1 Table 1 and Figure 1 sources of information:

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- 2 More specifically, a car parking (9), a bus station (7), a road (4), a beach (2), a subway (2), a play ground (2), a railway station (1), a highway (1), a school yard (1), a public toilette (1).
 - 3 Other premises (15) are a restaurant (3), a school (3), a food kiosk (2), a taxi (2), a disco club (1), a toilet (1), a hotel room (1), a car wash (1), an entrance of a block of apartments (1).
 - 4 Greed, revenge, and self-affirmation.
 - 5 Clarke and Homel (1997), in Siegel, L.J.(2004). *Criminology – Theories, Patterns and Typologies*. Wadsworth, Thompson Learning, p. 118.

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