

DOROTA ZBROSZCZYK¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-5777-4943

SELECTED SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES IN THE PUBLIC SECURITY SPACE

Introduction

Social pathology is a problem that has been affecting humanity since the dawn of time. Pathologically destructive phenomena include: crime, sexual deviation, prostitution, pornography, interpersonal violence, addictions, eating disorders, and suicidal behaviour. The aforementioned pathological acts do not include all possible types of threats to personal safety. Social pathology is a kind of behaviour characterised by public order disturbance, an activity detrimental to a person, the environment, and the community. Pathology enters the areas of social and economic life, occurs in different social groups, and is closely related to the development of communities. Thus, a thesis can be put forward that modern threats of pathologies are caused by human activity. When considering social pathologies in the context of individual entities, one should pay attention to their criteria, manifestations and classification, which are characteristic of modern civilisation. An individual pathology directly affects the person in a negative way, and its effects pose a threat to his or her nearest environment, group and community. The size of a pathological phenomenon in a given population, identified by the number of people concerned, has been considered a criterion of the level of a threat to the members of the public². The article attempts to present the complexity of social pathologies in the public security space.

¹ Dr Dorota Zbroszczyk — educational counsellor, court mediator, trainer of prevention and therapy of behavioural addictions, psychotherapist in a certification process, assistant professor at the Department of Education Studies and Psychology of the University of Technology and Humanities of Kazimierz Puławski in Radom. Author of several dozen articles on public and social security; organiser of many national and international conferences. Member of the Drohiczyn Scientific Society, European Association for Security, Prof. K. Bogdański Transdisciplinary Centre for Security Research at Siedlce University of Life Sciences and Humanities, and Polish Society of Security Sciences.

Correspondence address: <d.zbroszczyk@wp.pl>.

² Świętochowska U, *Patologie cywilizacji współczesnej*. Toruń, 1998, p. 16.

Social pathologies in the public space

Social pathologies, due to the increase in their scale, have a significant impact on the public security space in the modern world. Considerations on the timeliness of the notion of the public security space make us aware of how difficult and complex the problem to define such a space is. The article assumes that it is a properly constructed space that provides users with a proper life activity, comfort and quality of life, a sense of security, and a common good that is determined by a collective way of using the space. The lack of the aforementioned indicators may be a reason for pathological situations to arise.

The public space can be also defined as a commonly used good, deliberately shaped by humans in accordance with social principles and values, which serves to satisfy the needs of local and regional communities. The public character of a space is determined by the way it is collectively used. A properly constructed space aims to ensure the safety of members of the public, and improve their quality of life, that is, to:

- restrict unauthorised access to certain areas;
- reduce the number of acts of vandalism;
- reduce the number of thefts, robberies, and kidnappings;
- design an unfriendly environment for an intruder or attacker, e.g. by eliminating places easy for them to hide in;
- strengthen the identity and social bonds among the residents;
- restrict movements and make them less audible;
- design places favourable to leisure activities;
- strengthen the sense of responsibility among the residents for their own safety and common good³.

Considering the various aspects, it is possible to adopt another perception of the public space according to which it is a place or an area characterised by certain conditions or features created by communities. Moreover, the public space can be seen as: the natural environment, a human product, relations and interactions with other people, different forms of social relations, or whole natural areas that present different social situations, involving social and professional structures or cultural complexity. Katarzyna Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek and Zygmunt Niczyporuk stress that 'the basis for security within the public space is primarily related to social control. Spatial solutions may make it possible to take such control through identifying people via space or social integration. An active attitude of the residents, and their responsibility for the common space, contribute to the sense of security, and the prevention of social isolation⁴.

The public space is a sphere where various interactions take place, e.g. between individuals, social groups, and an organisational and state

³ Lisiecki M, Zarządzanie bezpieczeństwem publicznym. Warsaw, 2011, p. 105.

⁴ Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek K, Niczyporuk Z.T, Bezpieczeństwo publiczne. Zarys problematyki. Gliwice, 2010, p. 227.

sphere. It is a place where a person realises his or her plans and aspirations, a place which defines the quality of life, and it can also have a symbolic dimension as regards the realisation of various spaces and spheres of social life related to public administration, authority organisations, and the expectations and quality of life of members of the public⁵. The definition of the public space includes the notions of community, freedom, and security. Therefore, it can be assumed that there is a connection between freedom and security, however the condition for the existence of a safe public space is strictly related to both an individual sense of personal security, and a general sense of public order. In every town, there are corners and spaces of specific cultural value, which give rise to emotions, and make their recipients reflect. Those are mostly places of special interest for residents and local authorities – usually the city centre districts. They constitute the public space in a traditional sense, together with a network of streets and squares, a collection of important buildings, monuments and urban greenery⁶.

In 1979, M. Felson and L. Cohen developed the Routine Activity Theory, according to which crime results from the organisation of a particular community, specifically its routine activities, i.e. common, everyday activities⁷. The risk of crime increases when the following three elements are present:

- a likely offender,
- a suitable target,
- the absence of a capable guardian against crime.

The aforementioned elements form a, so-called, basic crime triangle⁸. According to this theory, there is a link between crime in a given area and actions undertaken by its administrators⁹.

Social pathologies weaken human potential, and such potential is necessary for people to initiate their social and economic development. Given an individual pathology, a human being, as a physical entity, is a carrier of negative characteristics, habits and actions - possesses them, directly influences their formation, and transmits them in various ways to other people¹⁰.

⁵ Bienkowska I et al., *Profilaktyka w przestrzeni publicznej*. Krakow, 2013, p. 5.

⁶ Dymnicka M, *Przestrzeń publiczna a przemiany miasta*. Warsaw, 2013, p. 53.

⁷ Cohen L, Felson M, *Social change and crime trends: a routine activity approach*. *American Sociological Review*, 1979, No. 44, pp. 588–608.

⁸ Sessar K, *Niemieckie doświadczenia w zapobieganiu przestępczości*, [in:] Czapska J, Widacki J (Eds), *Bezpieczeństwo lokalne. Społeczny kontekst prewencji kryminalnej*. Warsaw, 2000, p. 17, [in:] Bogacka E, *Czynniki kradzieży rzeczy cudzej w świetle teorii działań rutynowych. Przykład województwa wielkopolskiego*. *Rozwój Regionalny i Polityka Regionalna*, 2016, No. 36, p. 200.

⁹ Klafka J, Szafrńska M, *Mapa zagrożeń jako narzędzie zapobiegania przestępczości w mieście*, [in:] Czapska J, Mączyński P, Struzińska K (Eds), *Bezpieczeństwo miasta. W poszukiwaniu wiedzy przydatnej praktykom*. Krakow, 2017, p. 43.

¹⁰ Kondratowicz-Pozorska J, *Przeciwdziałania patologiom społecznym sposobem na wzmacnianie kapitału społecznego województwa zachodniopomorskiego*.

Methodological comments

The aim of the author's research was to obtain opinions on social pathologies as threats to the public security space. The basic research problem was addressed by the following questions:

- Do the respondents feel safe in their place of residence?
- What is the scale of social problems posing a threat to public safety?
- What is the level of threats of social pathologies to social security?
- Which categories and types of social pathologies are most frequently identified by the respondents in their places of residence?

In the research process, a diagnostic survey method and technique were used. The survey was carried out in 2018 in the central and northern regions of Poland. The first stage of the analysis involved the examination of the demographic structure of the respondents, and was based on the questions included in a so-called tag. In total, the questionnaire was correctly completed by 280 people, 121 of whom came from the central region (about 43% of the respondents) and 159 from the northern region (about 57% of the respondents). The respondents were surveyed to determine their gender and region of residence. In general, females constituted 61% of all respondents (171 persons), males 39% (109 persons). The gender structure of the respondents by region was as follows: In the central region, about 75% of the respondents were females (91 persons) and males 25% (30 persons). The northern region was characterised by an almost proportional share of both genders, as 80 females (approx. 50%) and 79 males (approx. 50%) participated in the survey.

Sense of security

Ensuring public order and safety is the responsibility of many authorities and administrative units, and it rests on social organisations and members of the public themselves. Certainly, ongoing social and global processes, characterised by dynamism and complexity of changes, have a significant impact on the sense of security of citizens. Therefore, in this respect, it seems extremely important to conduct research aimed at obtaining social opinions on the assessment of the state of public safety in Poland¹¹.

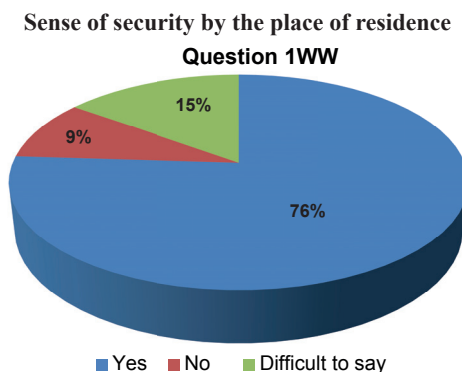
The first survey question concerned the sense of security of the respondents in their place of residence (Figure 1). This question was analysed both in general terms, and in relation to particular demographic characteristics (gender and region). It should be noted that about 76% of the respondents feel safe in their place of residence (211 people), but it is

Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo-Humanistycznego w Siedlcach. Seria: Administracja i Zarządzanie, 2015, No. 106, p. 67.

¹¹ Zbroszczyk D, *Patologie społeczne w publicznej przestrzeni bezpieczeństwa* — wymiar personalny i strukturalny. Radom, 2019, p. 74.

worth noting that the second largest group of respondents are undecided persons - 43 persons (about 15% of the respondents).

Figure 1



Source: author's own work

When analysing the first question concerning the sense of security of the respondents by their region of residence (Table 1), an identical trend should be noted among all of the respondents. The largest group includes those who feel safe in their place of residence.

Table 1

Sense of security by region

Question 1	Region	
	Central Poland	Northern Poland
Yes	71%	78%
No	9%	9%
Difficult to say	20%	13%
Final result	100%	100%

Source: author's own work

A sense of security has a significant impact on the overall assessment of a person's life situation and, consequently, the motivation to act and develop oneself. A sense of security is manifested by a subjective aspect, and refers to the awareness of the existence of, lack of such awareness, or lack of awareness to prevent possible dangers¹². It can also refer to the level of self-assessment, but its high level does not always have to be associated with a high sense of security, so if it is at risk, it will simultaneously undermine the sense of security, and require defensive strategies against a possible failure¹³. A low level

¹² Korzeniowski L, Osobowość menedżerów w warunkach zagrożenia biznesu. *Zeszyty Metodyczno-Naukowe*, 2015, No. 19, p. 203.

¹³ Nowak K, Poczucie bezpieczeństwa w perspektywie psychologicznej — implikacje metodologiczne, [in:] Świdorski A.W (Ed.), *Elementy teorii i praktyki transdyscyplinarnych badań problemów bezpieczeństwa*. Siedlce, 2014, p. 19.

of the sense of security can significantly reduce personal freedom of action both in terms of subjective feelings, e.g. by experiencing mental discomfort, and in terms of real actions aimed at reducing social activity¹⁴. The obtained results indicate that the sense of security is not dependent on the gender of the respondents (Table 2). Among the surveyed women and men, the most numerous group includes persons who feel safe in their place of residence.

Table 2

Sense of security by gender

Question 1	Gender	
	F	M
Yes	72%	80%
No	9%	9%
Difficult to say	19%	11%
Final result	100%	100%

Source: author's own work

Another issue subject in the survey was the respondents' identification of what, in their opinion, is the biggest social and spatial problem. The question was a multiple-choice one, where the respondents answered with a zero/one ('1' - the problem exists, '0'/'no answer' - the problem does not exist), specifying the level of the problem indicated. This question could indicate one of four levels: (A) it is not a problem at all, (B) it is a small problem, (C) it is a big problem, (D) it is a very serious problem. The respondents could choose problems from a closed set of twenty problems: (1) unemployment, (2) small number of police officers and municipal guards on the streets, (3) drinkers on the streets, (4) groups of wandering young people, (5) vandalism, (6) extreme poverty, (7) dirt and rubbish in the parks and streets, (8) lack of access to social care, (9) vandalised/neglected buildings, (10) inscriptions/graffiti on walls, (11) homeless people and beggars, (12) poverty, (13) poor leisure opportunities, (14) poor street lighting, (15) domestic violence, (16) too much noise, (17) harassment of women and girls, (18) drug addicts and dealers, (19) inadequate road infrastructure, (20) street children.

As before, the question was analysed in general terms and compared with demographic characteristics (gender and region C¹⁵+N¹⁶). Additionally, Table 3 shows the ten most frequently indicated problems by the respondents and their scale. To illustrate it, radar charts have been used, which clearly indicate the biggest problems (Figures 2, 3 and 4).

In general, the ten most common problems indicated by the respondents were at level (B), i.e., a small problem. Among the most frequent problems, the respondents pointed out (1) unemployment - 51%, (2) the small number

¹⁴ Jabłkowski P, Poczucie bezpieczeństwa i poziom przestępczości w Poznaniu. Analiza socjologiczna w perspektywie wskaźników jakości życia. Poznań, 2008, p. 203.

¹⁵ C — Central Poland.

¹⁶ N — Northern Poland.

of police officers and municipal guards on the streets - 45%, (3) drinkers on the streets - 44%, (6) extreme poverty - 43%, (8) access to social care - 49%, (10) inscriptions/graffiti on walls - 44%, (12) poverty - 49%, (14) poor street lighting - 46%, (16) too much noise - 49%. However, the most frequently indicated problem was that concerning vandalised/neglected buildings, reported by 147 respondents, which accounts for 52.5% of all respondents.

Table 3

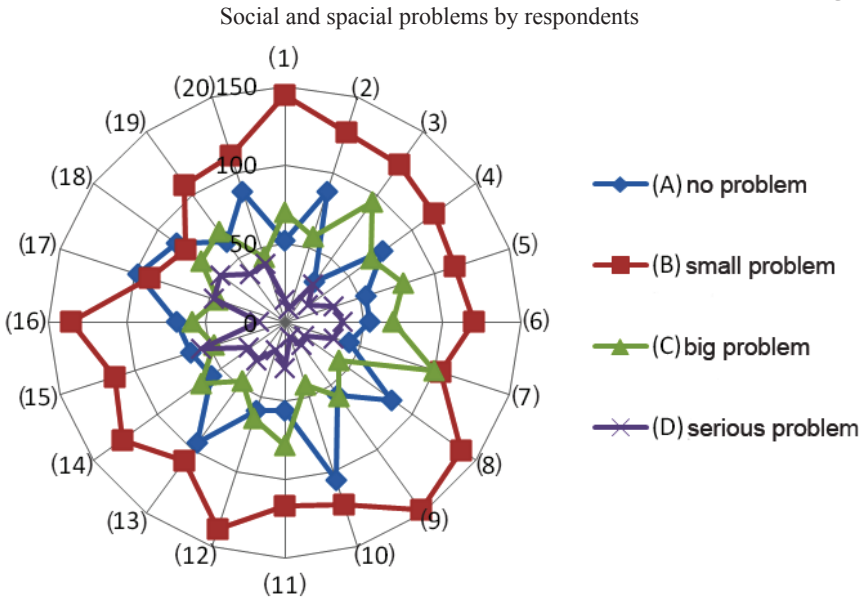
Social and spacial problems

Problem	(A) no problem	(B) small problem	(C) big problem	(D) serious problem
(1) unemployment	52	144	70	14
(2) small number of police officers and municipal guards on the streets	87	127	57	9
(3) drunken people on the streets	32	124	94	30
(4) groups of wandering young people	77	117	68	18
(5) vandalism	54	114	79	33
(6) extreme poverty	54	120	69	37
(7) dirt and rubbish in the parks and streets	43	104	100	33
(8) access to social care	84	139	42	15
(9) vandalised / neglected buildings	57	147	58	18
(10) inscriptions / graffiti on walls	106	122	42	10
(11) homeless people and beggars	56	117	78	29
(12) poverty	59	138	64	19
(13) leisure opportunities	95	109	46	30
(14) poor street lighting	58	128	66	28
(15) domestic violence	63	114	47	56
(16) too much noise	69	136	59	16
(17) harassment of women and girls	98	90	45	47
(18) drug addicts and dealers	85	78	66	51
(19) inadequate road infrastructure	63	108	71	38
(20) street children	87	111	43	39
In total	1379	2387	1264	570

Source: author's own work

The following radar chart shows that only for problems concerning (17) harassment of women and girls and (18) drug addicts and dealers, the respondents more often indicated that the risks were (A) no problem at all, or (B) a small problem. In quantitative terms, this is 98 to 90 in favour of the issues (A) not posing any problem at all, and 85 to 78 in favour of the risks (B) a small problem. It is also worth noting that 100 respondents referred to the problem (7) of dirt and rubbish in the parks and streets, with the level was assessed as (C) a big problem.

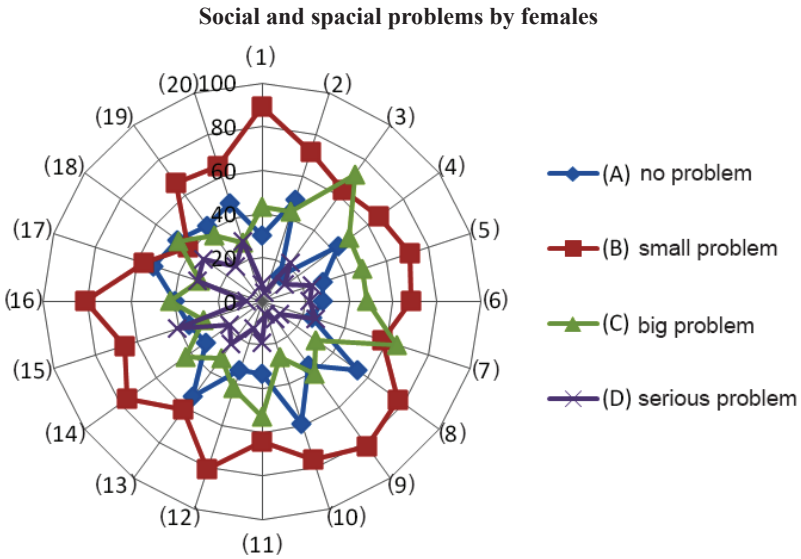
Figure 2



Source: author's own work

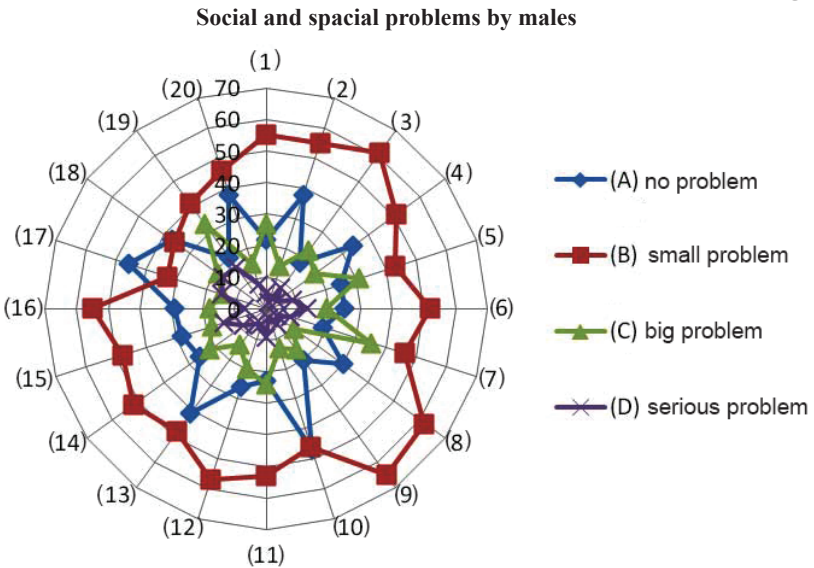
Considering the gender of the respondents, differences in the indications of females and males can be observed. Among females, the most important problems (ten most frequent) involved: (1) unemployment, (2) small number of police officers and municipal guards on the streets, (5) vandalism, (8) access to social care, (9) vandalised/neglected buildings, (10) inscriptions/graffiti on walls, (12) poverty, (14) poor street lighting, (16) too much noise, which they considered to be (B) a small problem. Women also identified problems concerning (3) drinkers on the streets, (7) dirt and rubbish in the parks and streets, and (18) drug addicts and dealers, as problems (C) posing a big risk. The indications are more numerous than those (B) that pose a small risk. Additionally, the problem related to (18) drug addicts and dealers in quantitative terms is an interesting study, as the three levels of this problem are similar in number. The results show that 48 indications reached a non-emergency level (A), 47 indications - (C) a big problem, and 42 indications - (B) a small problem. For male respondents, each most common problem is (B) a small problem. The problems indicated by this group included (1) unemployment, (2) small number of police officers and municipal guards on the streets, (3) drinkers on the streets, (6) extreme poverty, (8) access to social care, (9) vandalised/neglected buildings, (11) homeless people and beggars, (14) poor street lighting, and (16) too much noise. Only in three cases, the more frequent indication is that the risk (A) is not a problem at all. This applies to (8) access to social care, (10) inscriptions/graffiti on walls, and (17) harassment of women and girls.

Figure 3



Source: author's own work

Figure 4



Source: author's own work

Threats to social security

Today's society, often referred to as a 'risk society', is confronted with sudden and unexpected new situations and challenges, which are different in nature. Emerging social risks have a negative impact on different areas of public life, and are characterised by dynamism and multidimensionality, different in their form and influence¹⁷. The sources of threats to security are multiple, and subject to constant evolution following the development of civilization, changes in the interests of countries playing a key role in the international arena, changes in technology, and human relations¹⁸. Therefore, another research area was to determine the level of threats to social security. As before, the question was a multiple choice one, and the respondents could indicate particular areas of threats in a binary system ('1'/'marking' - occurrence of a particular threat, '0'/'no marking' - the absence of a particular threat). The respondents could also indicate the degree of a threat area: (A) large, (B) small, and (C) difficult to say. The respondents could choose from a closed set of the following nine threat areas: (1) organised crime, (2) drug dealing, (3) terrorism, (4) activity of religious sects, (5) civil unrest and conflicts (strikes, demonstrations), (6) refugees, (7) family crime, (8) natural disasters, and (9) murders.

The results of the analysis of the question were identical in form and scope when compared to the previous question. This refers to a tabular and graphical presentation as well as to the demographic features - gender and region. Table 4, below, identifies the five most frequent areas of threats indicated by the respondents.

Table 4

Area of threat to social security

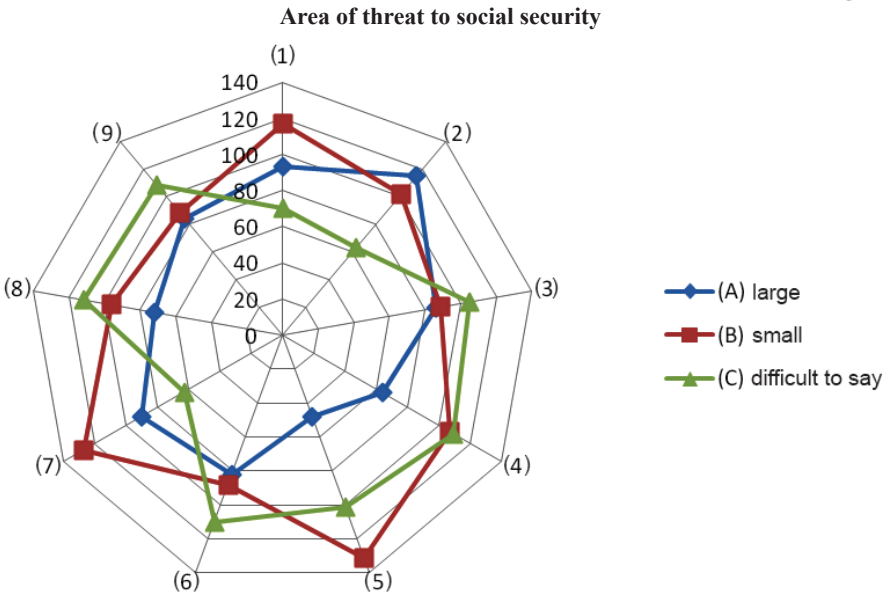
Area of threat	(A) large	(B) small	(C) difficult to say
(1) organised crime	33%	42%	25%
(2) drug dealing	42%	36%	22%
(3) terrorism	32%	30%	38%
(4) activity of religious sects	23%	38%	39%
(5) civil unrest and conflicts (strikes, demonstrations)	17%	47%	36%
(6) refugees	32%	29%	39%
(7) family crime	46%	32%	22%
(8) natural disasters	26%	34%	40%
(9) murders	32%	30%	38%

Source: author's own work

¹⁷ Zbrozczyk D, *Patologie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

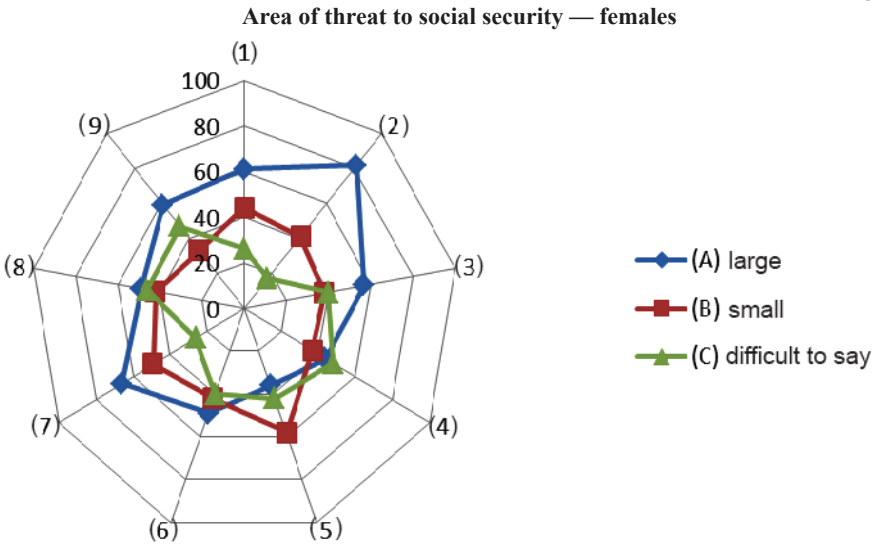
¹⁸ Drabik K, *Bezpieczeństwo personalne i strukturalne*. Warsaw 2013, p. 209 [in:] D. Zbrozczyk, *Patologie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Figure 5



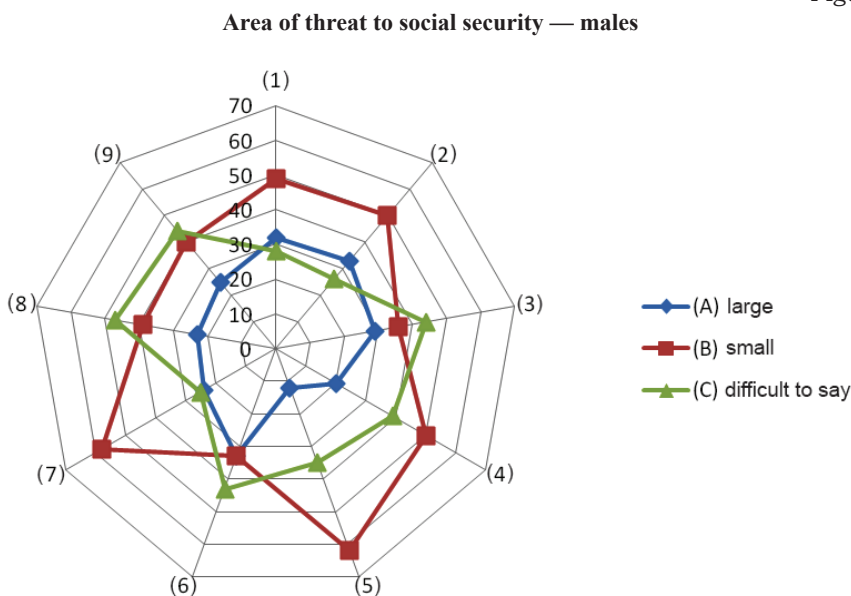
Source: author's own work

Figure 6



Source: author's own work

Figure 7



Source: author's own work

Social pathology

Another question the respondents were asked to answer was to indicate which areas of pathology occur in their place of residence. As before, the question was a multiple choice one, and the respondents could indicate particular areas of threats in a zero/one system ('1'/'marking' - the occurrence of a given pathology, '0'/'no marking' - the absence of a given pathology). The respondents could also indicate the frequency of the indicated pathology: (A) often, (B) very often, (C) rarely, (D) very rarely, and (E) difficult to say. The respondents could choose from a closed set of twelve areas of pathology: (1) crime risk, (2) violent behaviour of football hooligans, (3) juvenile delinquency, (4) unlawful entry, (5) burglary, (6) robbery, (7) vandalism, (8) theft, (9) street fights, (10) drinking in public places, (11) homelessness, (12) begging.

The results of the analysis of the question were identical in form and scope to the previous question. This refers to a tabular and graphical representation of the place of residence - region. Table 5 identifies the ten most frequently indicated areas by the respondents.

Table 5

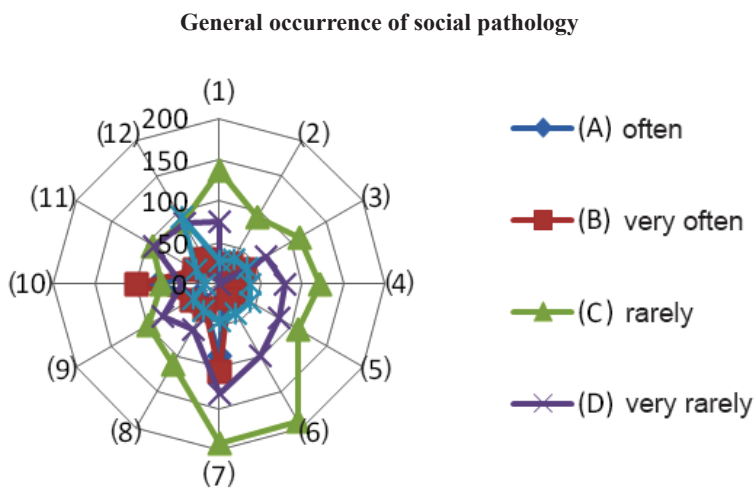
Occurrence of social pathology in the place of residence

Area of pathology	(A) often	(B) very often	(C) rarely	(D) very rarely	(E) difficult to say
(1) crime risk	17	22	137	76	28
(2) football hooligans' violent behaviour	15	29	92	109	35
(3) juvenile delinquency	29	34	113	66	38
(4) unlawful entry	19	23	121	79	38
(5) burglary	22	21	110	83	44
(6) robbery	16	21	191	99	41
(7) vandalism	87	106	191	132	45
(8) theft	34	34	111	64	37
(9) street fights	29	38	98	78	37
(10) drinking in public places	75	99	70	46	17
(11) homelessness	30	34	92	91	33
(12) begging	38	35	87	85	92
In total	411	496	1413	1008	485

Source: author's own work

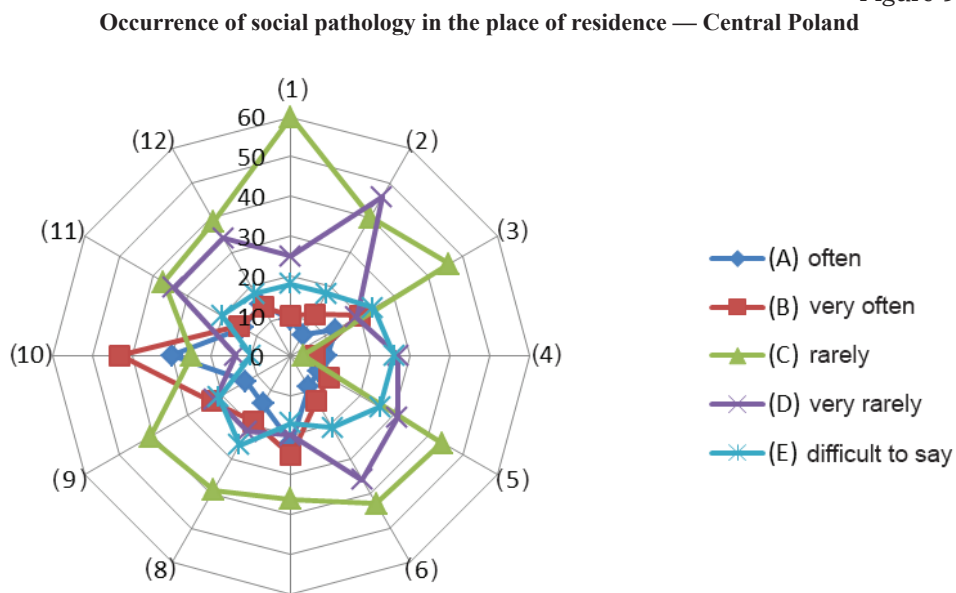
The above table indicates that vandalism is a phenomenon considered by the respondents to be (A) frequent and (B) very frequent in their place of residence. Another worrying phenomenon is drinking in public places - 27% of the respondents indicated that it is (A) a frequent problem in their place of residence, while 35% indicated as (B) a very frequent problem. A significant number of respondents indicated (C) a rare occurrence of social pathologies in their place of residence, e.g. robberies - 68%, crime risk - 49%, juvenile delinquency - 42%.

Figure 8



Source: author's own work

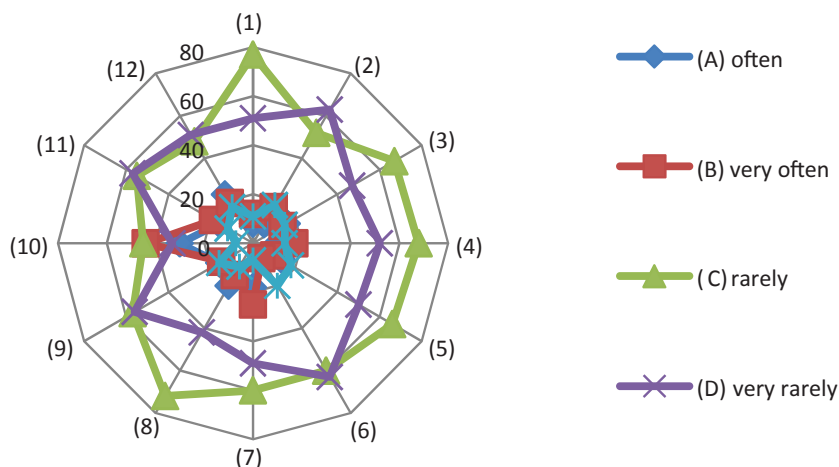
Figure 9



Source: author's own work

Figure 10

Occurrence of social pathology in the place of residence — Northern Poland



Source: author's own work

Conclusions

The aforementioned areas of the risk of social disintegration are only an attempt to show the upward trend of pathological phenomena which have not only an individual and social, but also a global reach. Based on the obtained research findings, several comments and conclusions can be drawn:

- despite the occurrence of social pathologies, most of the respondents feel safe in their place of residence. Therefore, it can be assumed that such a positive assessment of the regional security may result from the fact that during the surveyed period, none of the respondents (or their relatives) personally experienced pathological behaviours such as battery or theft;
- about 36% of the respondents consider dirt, rubbish, and drinkers on the streets to be big social and spatial problems, and unemployment, poverty, and domestic violence to be small problems, which may seem surprising. Perhaps domestic violence being perceived as a minor social problem results from the fact that it takes place 'behind closed doors';
- the respondents recognise social pathologies as threats to social security, including organised crime (33%), drug dealing (41%), and family crime (45%);

— among the most frequently mentioned types of social pathologies that occur in their place of residence, the respondents indicate vandalism and drinking in public places.

To sum up, it should be stressed that among the respondents, there is an ambivalent attitude towards the phenomenon of social pathology, e.g. on the one hand, they indicate that domestic violence is not a big social problem, and simultaneously, they claim that family crime is a big threat to social security. The author finds it paradoxical because community members face an evolution of threats - the number of threats is not decreasing but increasing, and there are still new and sudden threats affecting people, and yet the members of the public are not afraid of the threats.

The author assumes that this apparent ambivalence of human beings is caused by the effect of what is known, which means - I feel safe- or of what is unknown - I deny it and feel safe.

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Summary: Pathological behaviour, pathogenic factors (social and cultural conditions) or other processes affecting the aforementioned situations are constantly present in human life. It can be said that there is a considerable diversity and complexity of such phenomena. The issues of social pathologies discussed in the article concern only selected phenomena, and yet they make the recipients aware of the scale of the problem.