

Practice Sheet

Citizens' Feelings of Insecurity Tool



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How should we respond to an outbreak of perceptions of insecurity?

A manual to support local practitioners in measuring and mitigating citizens' feelings of insecurity in Catalonia.



The Cutting Crime Impact (CCI) project



During the *Cutting Crime Impact* (CCI) project, the Department of Interior of Catalonia (INT) set out to tackle outbreaks of perceptions of insecurity. Sudden occurrences of such outbreaks can affect citizens' daily life and coexistence, and

sustainable interventions can only be developed by understanding their causes. The Perception Matters tool guides practitioners through the process of analysing and responding to citizens' perceptions of insecurity.

Context

Exploring new ways to understand feelings of insecurity

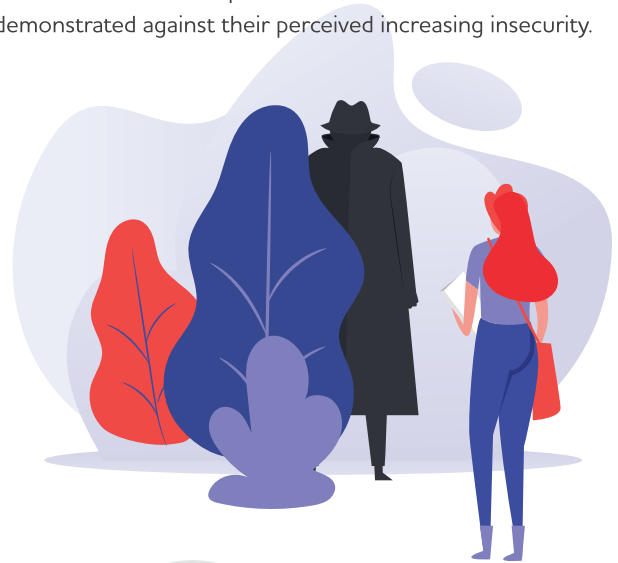
When considering the local safety context, in terms of sources of information, there are the 'usual suspects' — crime statistics, convictions, arrests and, potentially, data collected through public surveys. What is harder to assess is people's perceptions of security. In Catalonia, the focus has been on measuring feelings of insecurity by analysing quantitative questions posed within victimisation surveys. Studies have shown that the people who profess the highest levels of feelings of insecurity are often from those groups less at risk of victimisation.

Outbreaks of perceptions of insecurity among citizens result in political pressure and require a rapid response that specifically targets causal factors. Most responses rely on increased police presence and visibility, which generally don't tackle the underlying problems. Depending on the problem, such responses may result only in a temporary cessation of criminal activity but not in a long term improvement of the situation."

Reasons for feelings of insecurity can range from prostitution, to complaints about noisy neighbours, to use of

public space by vulnerable groups, to more systemic issues, such as an agglomeration of empty apartments being taken over by drug dealers and their customers — the problem of *narcopisos* faced by Barcelona.

When researching the real-world problem on which their CCI Tool should focus, the Department of Interior of Catalonia decided to focus on the impact of *narcopisos* on the perception of insecurity of citizens' living in one neighbourhood of Barcelona. While there is no recorded increase in actual victimisation rates, citizens' perceive the risk of falling victim to crime as very high. In January 2020, residents took their displeasure to the streets and demonstrated against their perceived increasing insecurity.



Keywords

Feelings of insecurity
Rapid response
Tools and methods

Objective of Research

To develop a systematic approach to better understand and more effectively address citizen's feelings of insecurity

The Department of Interior of Catalonia researched and identified various scenarios around citizens' feelings of insecurity in Barcelona. These were used in a CCI *DesignLab* to collaboratively develop concept directions for solution development. Through prototype development and testing with end-users, a Tool was developed to meet identified use and context requirements.



Target group

The Perception Matters tool was developed for use by public officials and/or police officers responsible for dealing with citizens' feelings of insecurity:

- Public officials in charge of responding to insecurity outbreaks. Depending on the city, these may be officials within the prevention service or prevention officers of municipalities.
- Senior police officers in small and medium municipalities that may not have a prevention service.

The CCI Feelings of Unsafety Lifecycle model

Supporting the identification of priorities for taking action

CCI adopts a human-centred design approach, deploying a research methodology focused on gaining deep understanding and insight into the end-user perspective. The CCI methodology is characterised by three principles:

- 01 The inclusion of end users (i.e. front-line practitioners) and a focus on the humans that will using the design solution that is to be developed.
- 02 The collaboration and exchange of knowledge and experience between stakeholders and across different professional disciplines to enable problem framing and solution ideation (in a CCI *DesignLab*).
- 03 The early development of solution prototypes, and prototype testing with end users to support solution validation, feasibility testing and design decision-making.



The development and testing of design solutions is an iterative process — one in which solutions can be amended and improved in response to feedback from those that will ultimately use and benefit from them. For CCI, end-users are Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) practitioners and their delivery partners, while the design solutions are the Tools developed by the project.

The *Perception Matters* tool is one of two on the topic of citizens' feelings of insecurity. While the tools on Predictive Policing, Community Policing and Crime Prevention through Urban Design and Planning (CP-UDP) were based on in-depth research into end-user problem contexts, the tools on feelings of insecurity were informed by critical review of the scientific evidence-base and development of theoretical concepts and practical *use scenarios*.

Use scenarios included: use of playgrounds and parks; use of local facilities in certain city centres by local shop owners, their employees and older individuals; use of popular tourist spots; walking at night for young women; and young women using the underground train system at night. Two of these were selected for use during the subsequent DesignLab.

The critical review, led by CCI coordinator, the University of Salford, resulted in the development of the *CCI Feelings of Unsafety Lifecycle model* (see figure 1). This is a conceptual framework that aims to operationalise the different facets of feelings of unsafety impacting the lived experience. The *CCI Feelings of Unsafety Lifecycle model* includes individual perspectives on unsafety — from 'assumed situational

vulnerability', 'situational anxiety', and 'fear' in the face of immediate threat. It includes two facets arising after crime victimisation — immediate 'shock, anger and distress' and the medium to longer-term processes of dealing with victimisation. Finally, completing the cycle is the rationalisation of the experience. This process feeds into the 'background context' as individual experiences are shared with family members, friends and neighbours and this in turn informs wider societal concerns, anxieties and political priorities. In this way, the model seeks to illustrate how the 'background context' for feelings of unsafety both feeds and is fed by individual experience. Identifying this conceptual structure is important for measuring feelings of insecurity in a way that can provide actionable understanding.

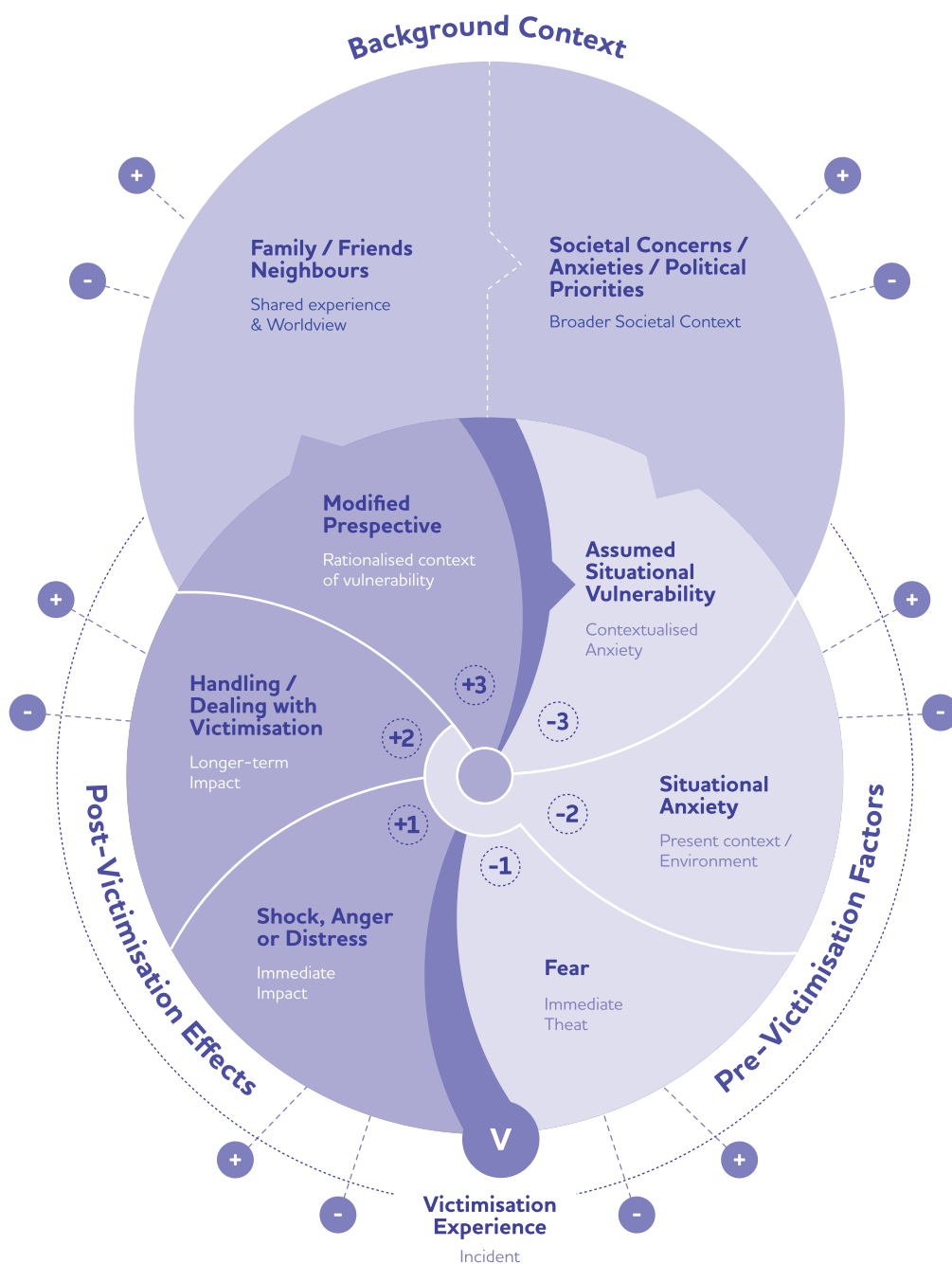


Figure 1: CCI Feelings of Unsafety Lifecycle

Solution

Enabling security practitioners to explore and better understand factors impacting citizens' perceptions of insecurity

The Perception Matters tool is a manual comprising five parts that guides local practitioners through the process of understanding and responding to outbreaks of perceptions of insecurity. The tool outlines the ingredients of an outbreak of perceptions of insecurity, how to decide on the immediacy of response required, how to analyse the situation and how to communicate the interventions and their progress to citizens.



A five-part manual that guides users through the process step by step

01

Analysis and response guide

Part one introduces the topic of perceptions of insecurity and outlines questions to consider in order to start exploring the underlying reasons for such perceptions and decide how to respond to them. In addition, the guide includes an explanation of the *CCI Feelings of Unsafety Lifecycle* and how it can support problem analysis and framing.

02

Criteria for a quick response

Part two is particularly important because sometimes a speedy response is needed, prior to gaining a deeper understanding of causal factors. Immediate action should be taken, for example, if there is a serious risk of harm to people or property.

03

Useful tools and methodologies for research into feelings of unsafety

Part three provides information on methods and tools that can be used to further explore causal factors underpinning citizens' feelings of insecurity. This includes short, practical explanations on how to use research methods such as focus groups, interviews and neighbourhood exploratory walks.

04

Criteria for mid to long-term responses

Part four complements part two on “criteria for a quick response”, providing ideas, concepts and questions that should be considered before engaging in a response. These range from considerations about different perceptions of police presence, through reflections of social isolation, to the exploration of the various impacts of urban design features on citizens' feelings of insecurity.

05

Communication kit

Part five, the final component of the tool, contains advice on how to manage communications with, for example, a group of citizens raising issues of insecurity, complaints around quality or speed of public service responses.

Perspectives

The *Perception Matters* tool addresses outbreaks of citizen's feelings of insecurity that are visible and raise consequential issues for decision-makers (e.g. situations that result in citizen protest / action and direct political pressure). The tool guides city authorities in targeting and delivering quick and sustainable action. Use of *Perception Matters* may include the deployment of methods that provide decision-makers an enhanced understanding of the fears and perceptions of groups that may not feel comfortable directly voicing their concerns.

The approach taken by the CCI project supported the Department of Interior of Catalonia in undertaking their research into the problem area with an open mind. This led to their realisation that a 'quick response' element should be

included in their Tool design — something they had not foreseen.

The *CCI Feelings of Unsafety Lifecycle model* helped researchers from the Department of Interior of Catalonia understand the importance of ascertaining the different phases of the cycle in which citizens find themselves — and the proportion in each phase. This knowledge helps determine the most appropriate measures to be taken — both in terms of where in the model citizens might be located and how many are ascribed to a particular phase. By gaining this clearer picture of the nature of insecurity experienced by citizens, measures to tackle the causes of these perceptions of insecurity can be devised and implemented.



This practice sheet was produced by the **European Forum for Urban Security (Efus)**, the **Design Against Crime Solution Centre at the University of Salford** and the **Department of Interior of Catalonia** as part of the **Cutting Crime Impact project**.

For more information on Efus visit:
<https://efus.eu/>

For more information on *La Percepció Importa / Perception Matters* contact the **Department of Interior of Catalonia**:
lapercepcioimporta@gencat.cat

For more information on the **Cutting Crime Impact (CCI) project** visit:
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