



Comparative Analysis of Crime Trends in Russia and Bulgaria (2019-2021)

Anna Mantarova¹ ^a and Elena Bagreeva^{2,3} ^b

¹*Institute of Philosophy and Sociology Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria*

²*Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russian Federation*

³*Moscow State Regional University, Moscow, Russian Federation*

Keywords: Criminological Analysis, Crime, Comparative Analysis of Crime in Russia and Bulgaria, Pandemic.

Abstract: A comparative analysis of crime in Russia and Bulgaria in recent years was carried out in order to understand the impact on criminological processes of the changed conditions of all spheres of our life in the situation of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. The study uses the method of comparative analysis of statistical information from official sources of the Russian Federation and Bulgaria for 2019-2021. As a result of the conducted research, a significant change in the structure of crime in two countries was revealed: in general, a decrease in some indicators and an increase in others. There has been a significant decrease in the first months of a number of "street" types of crimes and an increase, first of all, in the indicators of cybercrime; the growth of a number of crimes has become significant: fraud using IT technologies, domestic violence and theft. The theoretical and practical significance of the study is to identify the impact of the social environment changed as a result of the occurrence of extraordinary circumstances on crime. As well there is the need to study the limit of the use of law enforcement agencies to ensure public order, the conditions for achieving balance and maintaining the trust of citizens in curbing the growth of crime is justified. Analysis of crime statistics and changes in the socio-economic sphere of Russia and Bulgaria for 2019-2021 allows us to formulate predictive trends in crime changes in the near future.

1 INTRODUCTION

Crime as a phenomenon that accompanies the life of society throughout the thousand-year history of mankind stimulates scientists to analyze its tendencies and identify the reasons for its manifestation. Epochs changed, wars began and stopped, political regimes changed, some countries conquered others, economic crises and revolutions unfolded and were overcome, and crime, like a "tenacious virus", accompanies human life all this time.

Such social processes as globalization, multiculturalism (Kucheryavaya et al., 2020), migration (Nitschke, 2019), pandemic Covid-19 and others set in motion all spheres of human activity. Russia and Bulgaria being the European countries are no exception.


The nineties of the last century in Russia showed an unprecedented surge in crime under the conditions


of a changing social system, but same as in Bulgaria, after several unprecedented leaps in the 90s, the crime rate has stabilized.

During the past three years, life has presented the whole world with another test - the coronavirus pandemic, and criminologists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and other scientists are faced with the task of analyzing its social consequences, including crime.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

Scientists of the two countries, using the comparative method, analyzed the changes in the structure of crime in Russia and Bulgaria over the past three years in order to understand the impact of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic on the state of crime, which has changed the conditions of all spheres of life. The

^a  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9599-257X>

^b  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1407-1574>

use of a comparative method of analyzing statistical information from official sources of the Russian Federation and Bulgaria for 2019-2021 made it possible to present a change in the structure of crime (a decrease in some indicators and an increase in others), identify trends and predict their development. Analysis of the current state of crime in our countries allows us to assert its theoretical and practical significance in solving problems of identifying the impact on crime of the social environment changed as a result of emergencies, justifying the need to study the reasons for the commission of criminal acts by individual citizens in a situation of general danger.

3 RESULTS

Studying the official statistical "picture" of Russian crime today (Brief, 2021), it should be noted positive changes in the reduction of illegal acts in January-July 2021. For example, the number of murders and attempted murders decreased by 8.4%, intentional infliction of serious harm to health – by 12.4%, brigandages – by 19.5%, robberies - by 20.4%. Based on these indicators alone, it can be concluded that the atmosphere in the country is quite favorable and controlled.

However, it is important to analyze the changed structure of crime, and, therefore, to understand the behavior of people who allowed themselves to commit crimes in a situation of a coronavirus pandemic that threatens citizens with mortal danger. We will make sure that some citizens, such as doctors and volunteers, joined the ranks of fighters against the virus and its consequences, while others by their actions aggravated the criminal, economic and psychological instability of society. In the article we will look at the crime trends of the last three years in more detail.

In Bulgaria in the XXI century, crime also stabilized and, under the influence of a number of socio-economic and demographic factors, began to decline. After fluctuations during the economic crisis of 2009 and the political instability of a slightly later period, a few years later the downward trend was consolidated (Crime Trends, 2020).

If the number of crimes committed in 2016 in Bulgaria is taken as 100%, then in 2020 they already amount to 78.2%. Over the past few years, the decline compared to the previous year was, respectively, 9.39% in 2018, 7.25% in 2019 and 9.59% in 2020. Note that the level of registered crimes per hundred thousand people is also decreasing.

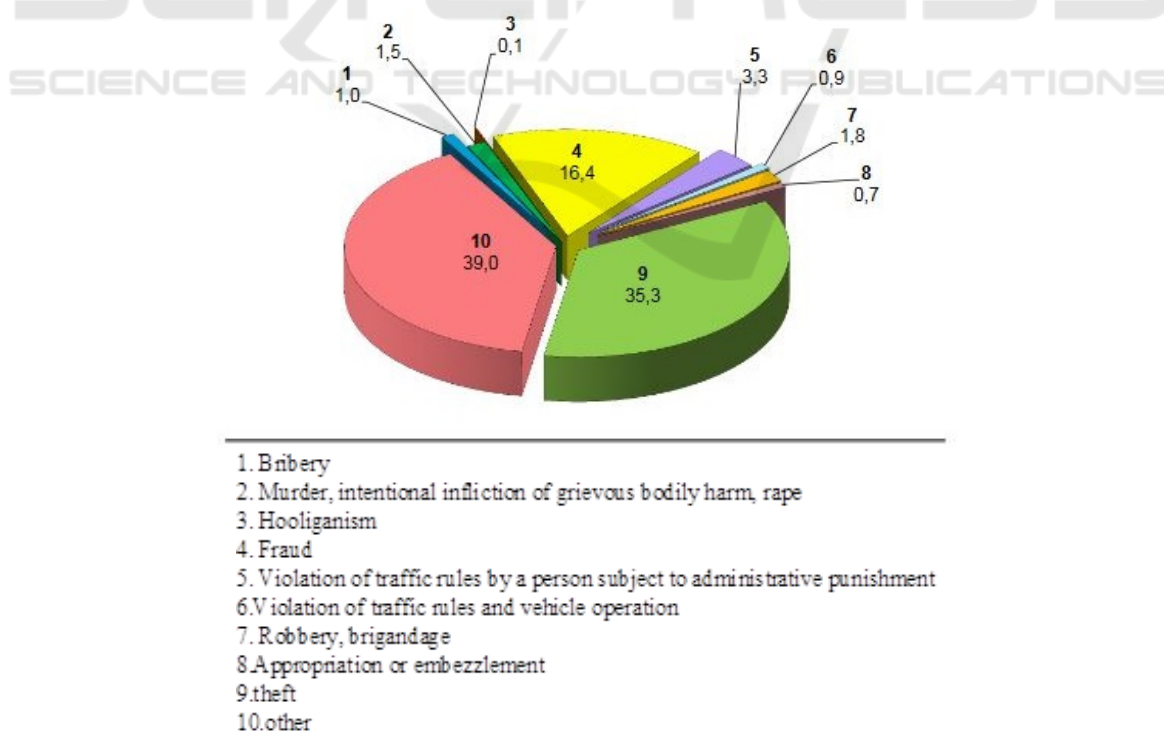


Figure 1: The state of crime in the Russian Federation.

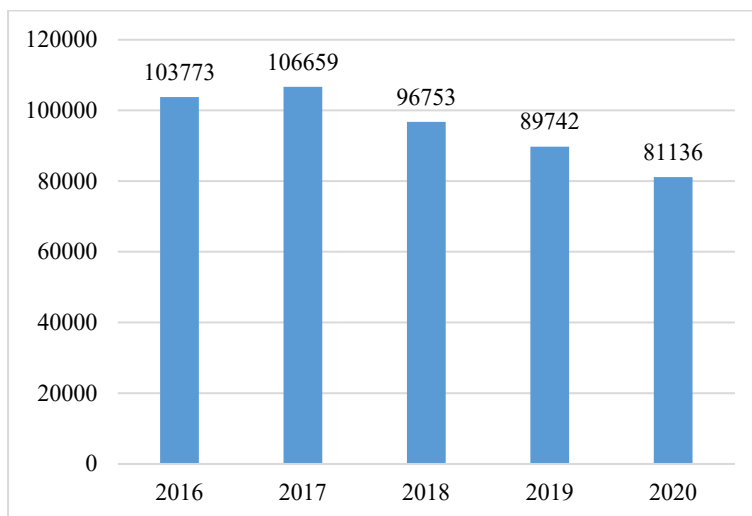


Figure 2: The number of registered crimes in Bulgaria.

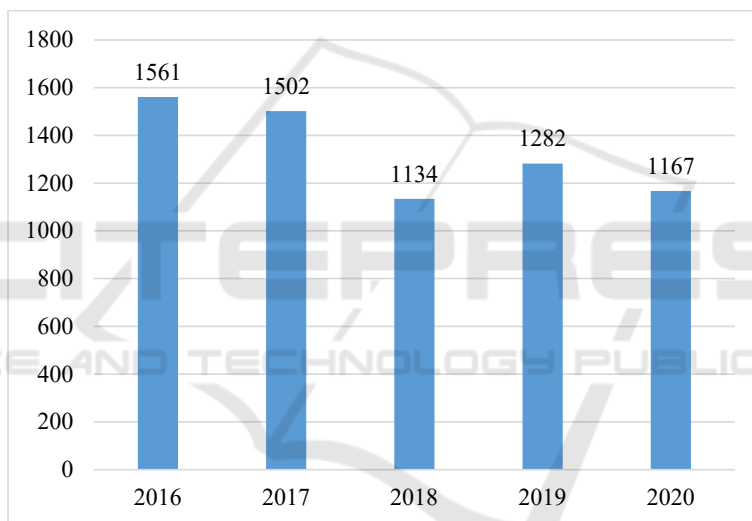


Figure 3: Registered crime rate in Bulgaria per 100,000 people.

A number of different factors determines the downward trend in registered crime. Demographics cannot be ignored either. True, based on Bulgarian statistics, the indicator of registered crimes per one hundred thousand people reflects a decrease in the population (from 2016 to 2020 it decreased from 7101859 to 69165481, or by 185311 people). But there is one very important fact - a very significant decrease in the number of people in the age groups whose criminal activity is highest

from 20 to 39 years. From 2016 to 2020, they decreased by 186,806 - from 1810955 to 1624149 people (National Statistic).

In Russia, on the contrary, in 2020 the number of registered crimes is insignificant, but increased by 1.0% (Crime in Russia, 2021). According to data

published by Rosstat, back in 2019, there were signs of an increase in the crime rate after a rather long period of decline that began in 2007. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation, the growth of general crime continued in 2020. However, the number of crimes per 100 thousand people of the permanent population in 2020 was 1,400 - and this is the lowest figure compared to all previous years, since 1991. In addition, the number of deaths as a result of criminal assaults decreased by 5.4% (Ministry, 2021; Prosecutor, 2021).

The crime situation in 2020 in both Russia and Bulgaria was influenced by situational factors - the spread of COVID-19, measures introduced to limit it and minimize the consequences: they have had a

serious, albeit ambiguous, impact on the level and structure of crime. Statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Bulgaria allows you to track changes in crime in 2019, 2020 and 2021 (Ministry of Internal Affairs).

If we look at the structure of crime, we will see that the most significant decrease in relative proportions is marked by crimes against citizens' property, followed by particularly dangerous crimes.

There is a similar picture in Russia and Bulgaria, characterized by a decrease in mortality rates as a result of criminal acts. So, in 2020, 66 premeditated murders were registered in Bulgaria, which is 17.5% less than a year earlier. In Russia, per 100,000 permanent residents, the number of deaths as a result

of criminal assaults has decreased (from 54 in 2001) to 15 in 2020. In Bulgaria, the number of rapes from the category of crimes against the person has significantly decreased - by 12.7% less.

In Russia, more than half of all registered crimes are crimes against property, primarily theft of other people's property and, first of all, theft. The theft rate is quite high in the overall crime structure, despite the fact that it decreased in 2020 to 36.7% (compared to 2002), and in January-July of the current 2021 it decreased by another 19.5% compared to last year. In addition, robberies have steadily declined in recent years, dropping to 1.9% in 2020.

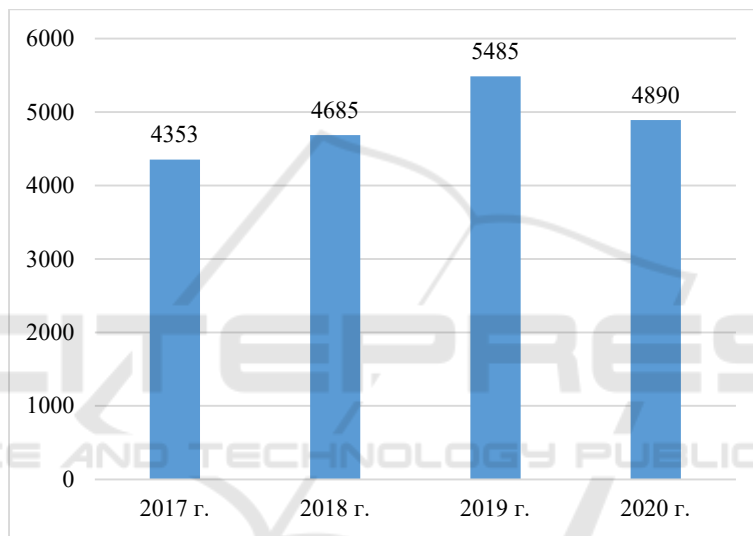


Figure 4: Crimes against the person in Bulgaria.

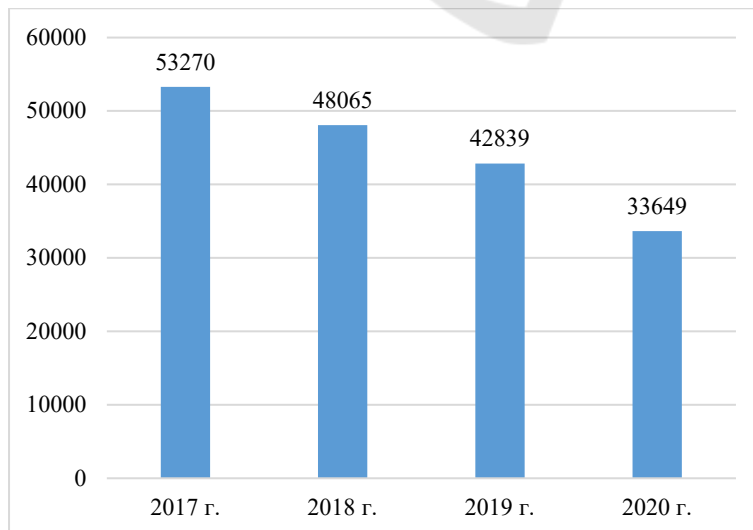


Figure 5: Crimes against property in Bulgaria.

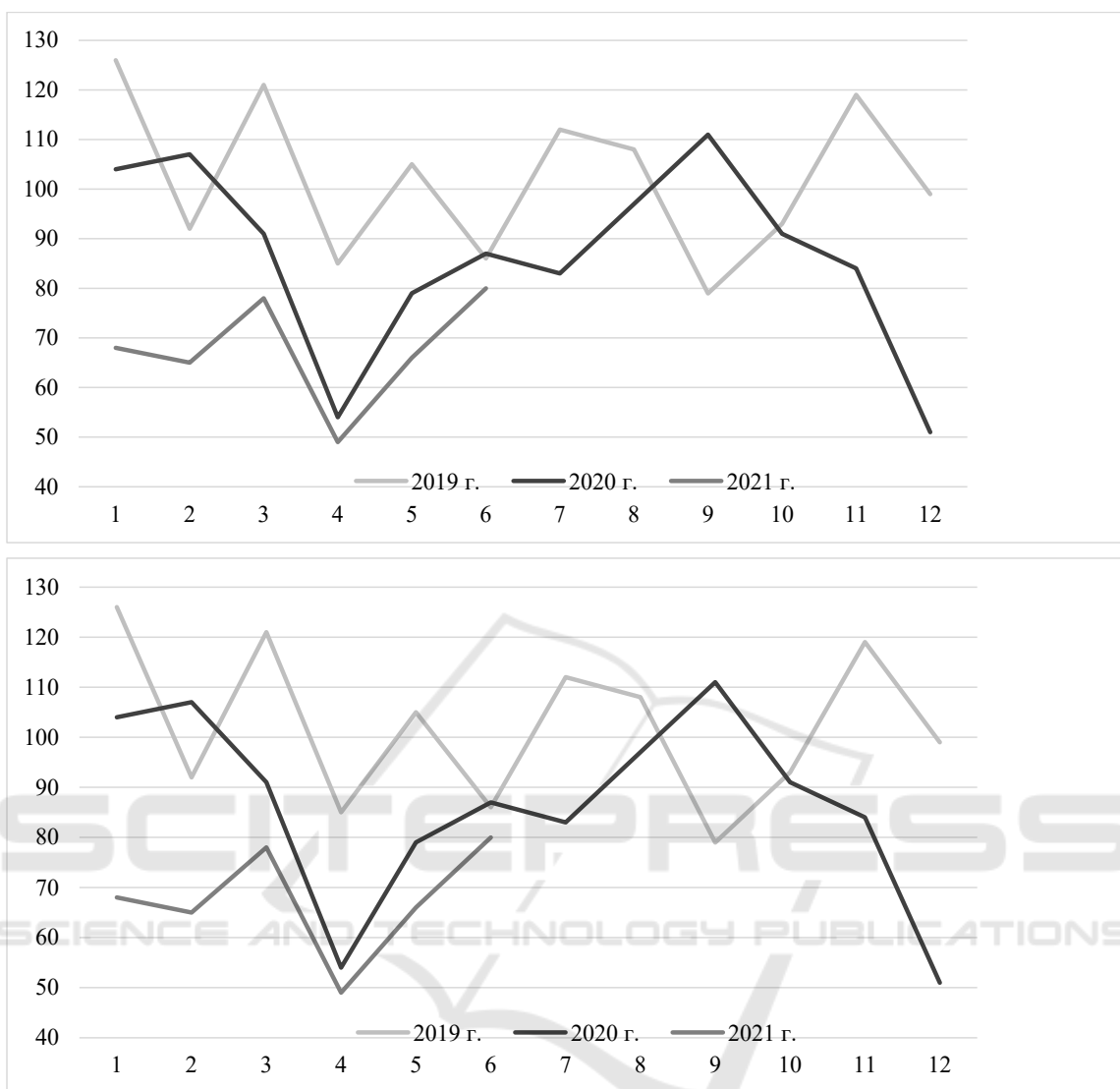


Figure 6: Registered robberies in Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria, crimes against property have also decreased markedly in recent years: in 2020, 33,649 (41,024 for 2019) were recorded, or 18% less. 1002 robberies were registered (1183 for 2019), which is 15.3% less.

Among crimes against property in Bulgaria, the largest share is theft - 80.3%. 27,036 such crimes were registered (33,172 for 2019), or 18.5% less. The bulk of the thefts are committed by burglary. In 2020, 5,344 cases were registered, which is 14.2% less than in 2019. There is a positive trend in thefts of housing - a decrease of 15.2% compared to 2019.

There is an obvious difference in the monthly statistics: in contrast to 2019, when there was an increase in thefts in March and April, whereas in

2020, a sharp decline in indicators was recorded in the same months.

As for this type of crime as fraud, the picture in the two countries is exactly the opposite: if in Russia the share of registered fraud cases is steadily growing in the total number of crimes, which increased from 3.2% in 1997 to 16.4% in 2020, then in Bulgaria there was a decrease of 34.6% in fraud. Moreover, the number of telephone frauds also decreased by 77%, 129 were registered (561 in 2019), which is 432 less.

Unfortunately, in Russia, these figures have slightly increased: in January - August 2021, more than a third (40.2%) of the crimes committed using information and telecommunications technologies accounted for crimes using mobile communications (144.4 thousand; +6.4%).

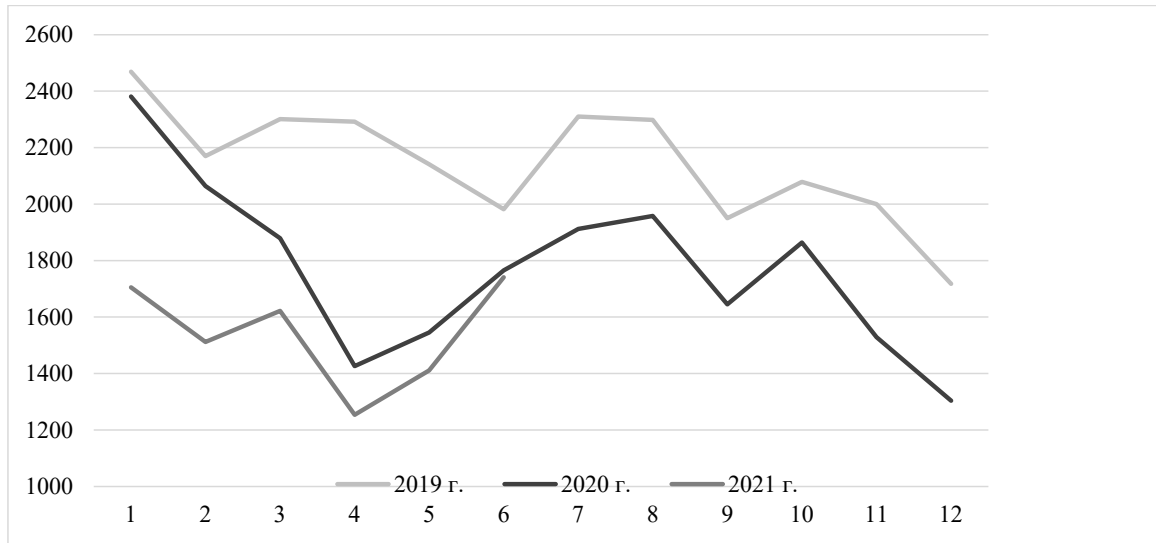


Figure 7: Registered thefts in Bulgaria.

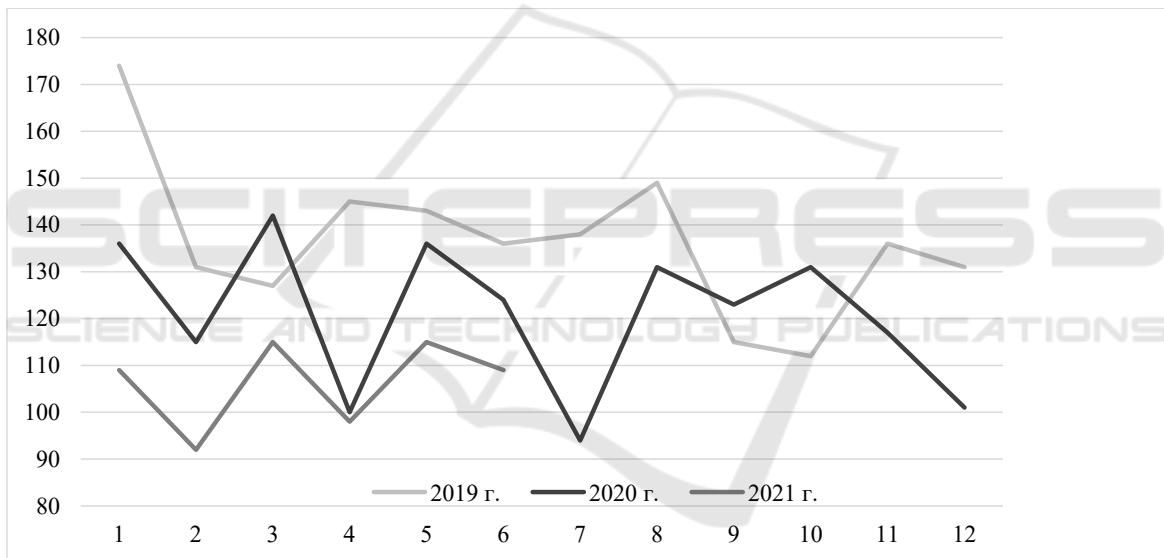


Figure 8: Theft of motor vehicles in Bulgaria.

Moreover, crimes committed using information and telecommunication technologies or in the field of computer information were registered by 12.7% more than in the same period last year: their share increased from 23.3% in January - August 2020 to 26.5%.

In Russia, in January-July of the current 2021, the number of vehicle thefts decreased markedly – by 27.4% and thefts - by 16.3%. The number of car thefts in Bulgaria is 1,582 (1,641 were registered in 2019), which is 3.6% less.

In Bulgaria, drug-related crime decreased by 28.2% compared to 2019.

The criminological picture in Russia is also encouraging, but not so impressive indicators. So, in

January - August 2021, 123.4 thousand crimes related to drug trafficking were detected, which is 4.1% less than in the same period last year. In addition, every tenth (10.6%) crime, using information and telecommunication technologies or in the field of computer information, was committed for the purpose of illegal production, sale or shipment of narcotic drugs: 37.9 thousand (+47.5%).

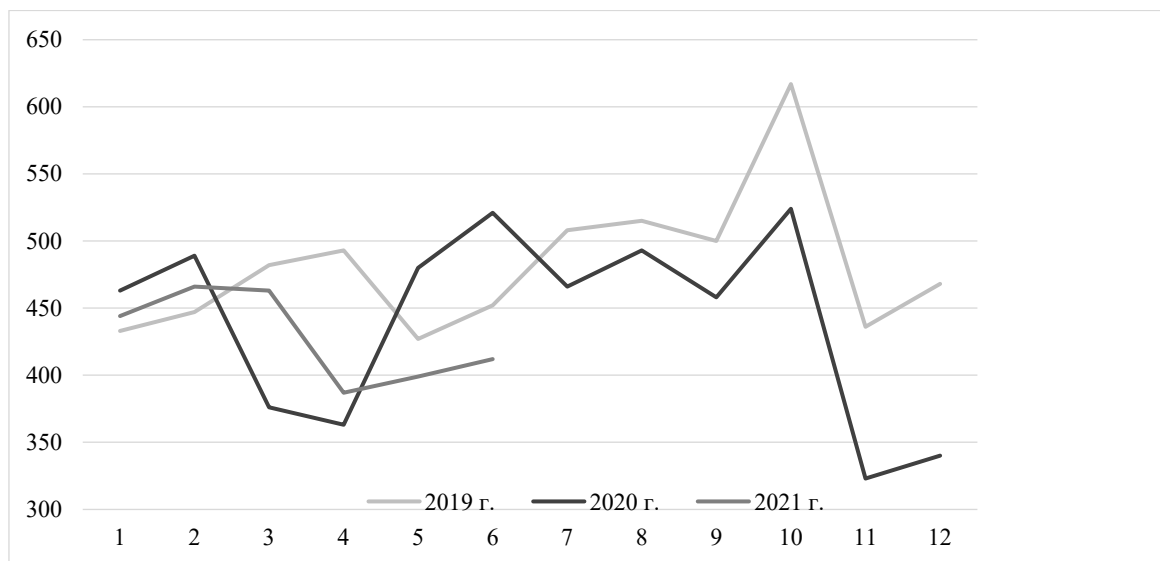


Figure 9: Drug-related crimes in Bulgaria.

Hooliganism has sharply decreased in Bulgaria - by 65.8%. Russia can also be proud of the decrease in the level of street crime: in parks, squares and on the streets, the number of robberies has significantly decreased.

4 DISCUSSION

Undoubtedly, the restrictive measures introduced and the increased police presence have had a significant impact on crime, especially on certain types of crimes. In general, we can say that during 2019-2021, a decrease in both ordinary and organized crime is recorded. Along with this, there has been a shift in criminal activity in cyberspace - fraud, extortion, theft of personal and bank data, fraud and speculation in the prices of medicines and protective equipment, etc.

If we take a closer look at the statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Bulgaria for individual months and link them to the presence and type of restrictive measures, we will see a decrease in March - May 2020. compared to the same period in 2019, it is 13.72%, and in the second period with the strengthening of restrictive measures - November and December, the decrease is even greater - by 18.48%. And vice versa - for the "free", so to speak, months - January, February, June, July, August, September, October 2020 - the decrease is only 4.77%, i.e. half of the total annual figure in recent years.

Among crimes against property in Russia and Bulgaria, the largest share falls on theft: these

indicators are still high, but statistics indicate some positive downward trend. It should be noted that since 2018, there has been an increase in thefts in Bulgaria only by persons in case of recidivism: this fact indicates problems in the judicial system and with solving the problems of their re-socialization in an open society.

Despite a noticeable decrease in thefts in Bulgaria over the past year, this type of crime occupies a large share in the overall crime picture of the country, far exceeding the Russian indicators for this type. Perhaps the reason for such a high percentage in Bulgaria is low control and insufficient equipment with technical means (surveillance cameras) of the housing stock. And the significant improvement in the situation should be explained by the restrictive measures taken in connection with coronavirus infection, the improvement of the work of law enforcement agencies around the world (Kugler et al., 2021). The pandemic has created new challenges and problems in the field of cybercrime with the "possibility" of theft of personal and banking information, fraud and smuggling. There is an increase in crime in the online space, social networks and "darknet". The demand and shortage of certain goods, especially medical devices and equipment, has led to an increase in the trade in counterfeit goods and fraud.

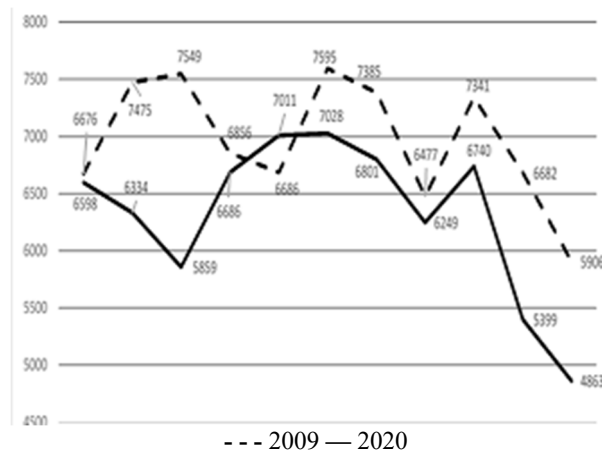


Figure 10: The number of registered crimes in Bulgaria.

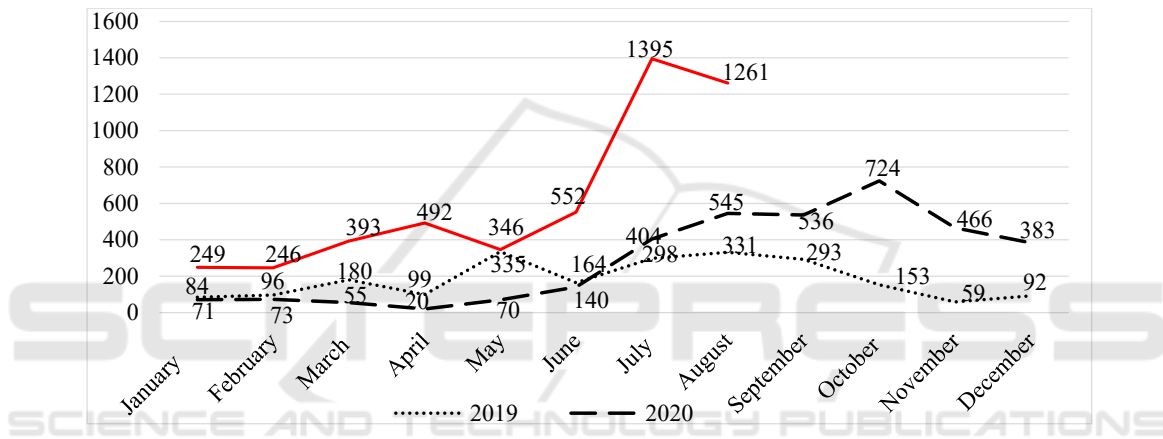


Figure 11: Detained at the entrance and exit through the state border and detected in illegal stay in the country.

The most common forms of computer crimes remain financial crimes and illegal content on the Internet. During the year, numerous preliminary checks of cyberattack signals were carried out in Bulgaria, during which Internet banking accounts were hacked. Every month, both in Bulgaria and in Russia, Facebook, Google, Twitter, non-governmental organizations and other organizations receive signals related to the distribution by consumers of materials representing the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet. In this regard, for example, an interdepartmental working group was established in Bulgaria to prepare a draft update of the National Cybersecurity Strategy "Cyber Sustainable Bulgaria 2020" (An interdepartmental, 2020).

International cooperation of specialists from different countries will allow to resist a number of crimes using the Internet space.

The picture of illegal crossing of the state border is dynamic. During the first wave of the pandemic, the number of illegal border crossings decreased

significantly. Bulgarian statistics on detainees entering and leaving the state border and the detection of illegal stay in the country in April showed the minimum number of registered violations. In May 2020, in contrast to 2019, when there is a sharp increase, the absolute values achieved are much lower. On the other hand, in contrast to the June decline in the previous two years due to the easing of restrictive measures, their growth was observed in 2020.

These offenses are fully conditioned by many objective and subjective political and organizational factors, processes (Bagreeva and Mottaeva). It is noteworthy that after a noticeable decline that occurred with the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic in Europe, in May 2020, the influx of migrants to the EU increased again, and sharply. In May, the European border service Frontex registered almost 4,300 cases of unregulated crossing of EU borders on the main migration routes - almost three times more than in April, the Funke group reported

on June 14, citing statistics (Markov, 2021). However, statistics show that migrants arriving in Bulgaria were increasingly trying to leave the country quickly. Even more significant growth was recorded in 2021. The total number of detainees by August 31 amounted to 4,934 people (compared to 1,378 in the same period in 2020), respectively 765 at the entrance through the state border (249 in 2020) and 651 at the exit (461 in 2020).

5 CONCLUSIONS

The state and structure of crime in Russia and Bulgaria over the past three years has been influenced by a wide range of specific social facts and processes. Some of them had a positive effect, limiting the possibility of committing certain crimes, for example, home thefts, acts of physical violence, especially as a result of conflict situations, etc.

But at the same time, there were factors that have a certain criminogenic effect: for example, crimes committed using information and telecommunication technologies or in the field of computer information. New opportunities have predetermined the increased interest of cybercriminals in the relevant platforms. Digitalization has significantly expanded the "criminal field" and changed the structure of crime in general.

Prolonged suspension of classes and the lack of opportunities for students and students to continue normal life activities (for example, sports, fitness, etc.) also had some criminogenic effect. With such a long period of inactivity, it became possible to fill your free time with other activities, including telephone fraud, search and drug use. With the increasing use of the Internet, their vulnerability and the risk of becoming victims of cybercrime have also increased.

In Bulgaria, the return from abroad of a huge number of Bulgarian citizens, some of whom were involved in illegal and criminal activities abroad (pickpockets, prostitutes, pimps, beggars, organizers of human trafficking, drug dealers, etc.) added work to law enforcement agencies. This situation carries the risk of their continuing criminal activity in the country and creates a situation with criminogenic potential at different times.

The growth of domestic violence in our countries is caused by a sudden change in the way of life, based on the well-known dependence "frustration - aggression". Stress, from fear, anxiety, insecurity, isolation, provokes aggression, which during stay in

homes is very often directed at those who are there, and this determines

Expectations regarding the future dynamics of crime are formed on the basis of an analysis of the changes in the social environment that have occurred and are expected in the near future and the criminogenic effects already established for them.

Poverty carries a special risk, which is even more likely in the coming months, taking into account the growth of inflation. The impact of poverty on the level of property crimes is well known. The psychological consequences of the crisis caused by the coronavirus will be heard for a long time. Stress itself reduces the threshold of irritability and reaction - it is easier to provoke aggression and violence in their various forms. And from the literature and in practice, the relationship "frustration – aggression" is well known, and this carries the risk of an increase in the number of crimes against the individual.

However, the most serious challenges facing society are related to cybercrime. Criminal groups have already managed to reformat their activities, actively using information and communication technologies, involving more and more new people experiencing various kinds of problems with earnings. The boundlessness of the Internet and the use of its capabilities creates an environment for the commission of transnational, cross-border crimes that do not exclude the involvement of minors.

During the state of emergency, e-commerce and electronic payments increased dramatically. Habits of extensive use of the Internet for purchases and services purchased during quarantine are likely to persist. In addition, more importantly, an increasing number of representatives of the so-called "generation Z" are entering an active life - "those born after 2000 are called digital children. The technology is innate to the representatives of Generation Z, because they have not witnessed the changes with the advent of the Internet and these innovations, but were born in this environment...'

On the one hand, it is necessary to oppose cybercriminals with measures to increase the level of legal culture of citizens on the use of innovative digital technologies and ways of its legal regulation (Bagreeva et al., 2020). On the other hand, improving the activities of law enforcement agencies in both Russia and Bulgaria by expanding the staff in this area, increasing their professionalism.

There are also all the prerequisites for the growth of the hidden economy. In addition to the desire of the self-employed and employers to save on taxes, social security and other payments, during a crisis, criticality always decreases and tolerance increases

on the part of both the employed and society as a whole.

Another expected consequence is the growth of trade in low-quality products and imitation of branded goods. On the one hand, it is obvious today that there is a decrease in the purchasing power of citizens and the need for cheaper products, low quality goods and services. On the other hand, small enterprises that are experiencing an especially acute economic crisis are ready for any "manifestations of tolerance". This gives reason to expect an increase in smuggling in the near and medium term.

In order to keep the business and not be involved in criminal activity, many small and medium-sized businesses have either already been reformatted or are in the process of transforming their activities. The Russian leadership sought various ways and forms of support for small and medium-sized businesses: from insurance payments to targeted assistance (Shelemekh et al., 2021). Russian scientists have developed a classification matrix of sources of new knowledge as a tool for planning innovative activities of the company, the application of which will improve the work of enterprises taking into account new realities (Khoroshavina et al., 2018).

Especially for Bulgaria, we can expect a continuation and even an increase in the flow of people illegally crossing the state border. The palpable economic crisis in a number of countries has prompted many people to migrate in search of a better life to richer countries. In addition, socio-political reasons in Afghanistan have become a serious source of migration flows.

So, analyzing the situation with the pandemic and the criminogenic picture in our countries in 2019-2021, we note its stages, its motley nature and the change of vectors of statistics of individual forms and types of crimes. Strict restrictions on self-isolation, the closure of borders, enterprises, industries have had an extremely negative impact on the economy of our countries, which has led to socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-psychological causes of crime.

REFERENCES

- Bagreeva, E., Mottaeva, A., Migration flow management as crime prevention during and after COVID-19 in *Innovative technologies in science and education (E3S Web of Conferences, 210)*.
- Bagreeva, E.G., Barakina, E.Y., Chvorovich, D.S., 2020. Increasing the level of citizens' legal culture by introducing innovative digital technologies in Russia. *Revista Inclusiones, 7: 57-68*.
- Crime in Russia, 2020. Institute of Demography of the HSE named after A.G. Vishnevsky, No. 915 - 916, October 5 - October 18, 2021, <http://www.demoscope.ru/>.
- Khoroshavina, N.S., Sharkova, A.V., Vasilyeva, O.N., Borisova, O.V., Sokolov, K.O., 2018. The classification matrix of sources of new knowledge as a tool for planning a company's innovation activity. *Espacios, 39(41)*.
- Kugler, M.B., Oliver, M., Chu, J., Lee, R., 2021. American law enforcement responses to COVID-19. *The journal of criminal law & criminology, 111*.
- Kucheryavaya, E.V., Witkowska, M., Kalinovskaya, V., Seleznev, P. et al., 2020. The multiculturalism policy in Europe. *Modelling the new Europe, 32: 58-71*.
- Markov, U., Information Agency Fokus. 17.10.2021 <http://m.focus-news.net/?action=news&id=2909025>.
- Nitschke, P., 2019. Migration, inequality and equality in a globalized world: the paradox of reframing the nation state. *Journal of globalization studies, 10(2): 37-44*.
- Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation, General Directorate of Legal Statistics and Information Technologies. The state of crime in Russia for January-December 2020, Moscow, 2021, <https://genproc.gov.ru/>.
- Rangelova, R., 2020. Sustainable development and intergenerational socio-economic changes in Bulgaria. In: A. Mantarova (compiler and editor) *Sustainable development: inter- and intra-generational aspects*. Sofia, Avangard prima.
- Shelemekh, N.N., Mizyureva, V.V., Shadrina, M.A., Satina, A.O., Ilyin, A.Y., 2021. On the Issue of Insurance Premiums for Agricultural Producers. *Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems, 206: 217-226*.