

Police Encounters with Organised Crime:

a research project about unlawful influence

A summary of report 2009:7

**The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet, Brå)
– centre for knowledge about crime and crime prevention measures.**

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention works to reduce crime and improve levels of safety in society by producing data and disseminating knowledge on crime and crime prevention work.

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Phone +46 (0)8-690 91 90, fax +46 (0)8-690 91 91, e-mail order.fritzes@nj.se

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Phone +46 (0)8-401 87 00, fax +46 (0)8-411 90 75, e-mail info@bra.se
Brå on the Internet www.bra.se
Author: Patrik Baard, Johanna Skinnari, Lars Korsell, Linda Weding, Anita Heber
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Introduction

Currently, the Swedish police are mobilising against organised crime (Ministry of Justice Ds 2009:38). Two hundred police officers have been allocated to fight this form of criminality; action groups are being set up regionally, in eight locations throughout the country, and centrally, at the National Criminal Police. The police information service is being expanded, and regional intelligence centres (RUC) with collaborating authorities will soon be found in eight locations throughout the country. Profits from organised crime are also being focused on, and the police are carrying out an “asset-centered” fight against crime in collaboration with other authorities (Brå 2008:10). The efforts are focusing both on preventing new recruitment and on prosecuting established members. In addition, it is an ambition to create channels to facilitate persons defecting from criminal gangs (Ministry of Justice Direction 2009:8). Organised crime thus appears to be an area of high priority.

But measures give rise to countermeasures. One strategy is for organised crime to become even more cautious and invisible, investing in security and avoid contact with authorities (*cf.* Fijnaut et al 1998). Another tactic, and much more rare, is to fight back, using unlawful influence, which is what this report is about. The term unlawful influence means harassment, threats, criminal damage and violence, but also corruption aimed at exerting influence over the discharge of work duties (Brå 2005:18). It might, for instance, be about ensuring that the police do not carry out a check or apprehend someone. In other cases, they may want to make police employees act in a manner favourable to the influencer, such as passing on secret information. As unlawful influence can take many forms, and thus be aimed at police employees carrying out different tasks, the investigation covers both police officers and civilian employees. The expression does not cover all the instances of threats and violence to which police employees are subjected, but only those that the individuals in question feel fill a more qualified purpose – to influence them in the execution of their work.

The following research project studies unlawful influence against police employees by individuals linked to some kind of organised crime. In this report, the expression “organised crime” covers groups with varying degrees of organisation, from youth gangs who are on the margins of criminal networks to specialised networks concentrating on a particular type of illegal product or service. In between, there are suburban gangs, biker gangs, prison gangs and political extremist groups. A characteristic of the central actors within organised crime is that their criminality constitutes a “profession”, where persons have reached differing levels of achievement (Korsell, Skinnari and Vesterhav 2008).

Method

The report is based on material from surveys, interviews, participant observation sessions and seminars.

Two questionnaires were sent out: one to police officers, which was responded to by 2,689 officers, and one to civilian employees, which was answered by 796 individuals. This represents a total response rate of 73 per cent. The populations consisted of two independent random samples. The respondents correlate largely to the actual distribution of police officers and civilian employees in relation to age, sex and location. The surveys covered overriding issues, such as whether the respondent had been subjected to unlawful influence, to what type, by what group and the consequences resulting from the attempt to influence, both on a professional level and in private.

The interviews provided the opportunity to express greater detail about the format, motive and consequences of unlawful influence. Those who were interviewed included: police officers who had been subjected to unlawful influence, their relatives and also persons linked to organised crime. In total, 62 persons were interviewed, of which 41 were police officers subjected to unlawful influence or who worked against organised crime or with security issues, 14 were interested parties who have or had had links to organised crime and 7 were family members of police officers subjected.

The police officers were reached either through contacts within the police authorities or via the survey where an introductory letter requested interviewees, and as a result some individuals contacted Brå for an interview. Individuals with links to organised crime were reached through contacts within the criminal justice system and through non-profit organisations. The contacts were informed about the project and the types of interviewees we were looking for, whereupon they themselves could contact the project workers. Of the interested parties, only men were interviewed¹.

The interviewees were spread throughout the country, and the police officers worked in both small and large towns and across a variety of units.

Participant observations were also carried out, during which Brå followed police at work on 17 occasions. The observations were carried out in both smaller and larger towns, with everything from police working in action groups to uniformed officers in external service being studied. On these occasions, the focus was on what the encounter between the officers' professional work and organised crime looks like and the response to the officers' work. The observations also provided opportunities for informal chats about organised crime and unlawful influence.

Added to these were seminars with a reference group linked to the project. This consisted of persons from the police authorities, the National Criminal Police and collaborating authorities, and the discussions concerned survey design, interpretation of the results and preventative work.

What kind of influence occur?

An important finding from the study is that most police officers had not been subjected to unlawful influence from organised crime during an 18-month period. However, just over seven per cent were subjected to some form of negative influence – such as threats, harassment, violence and/or criminal damage. These forms are negative in that they include an element of hostility or antagonism against police employees, thus differing from corruption, which, in another way, entails something positive for the recipient.

The percentage of individuals exposed to the different forms of unlawful influence are shown in Diagram 1:

¹ Earlier research shows that there are women within drugs networks, sometimes in leading positions. However, their numbers are often described as very small (van Duyne and Levi 2005, *cf.* also Brå 2007:7). In view of the results from such research reviews, it is hardly surprising that our interviewees mention male criminals in particular. Even if women do figure in the criminal networks, they are not visible in our material concerning unlawful influence.

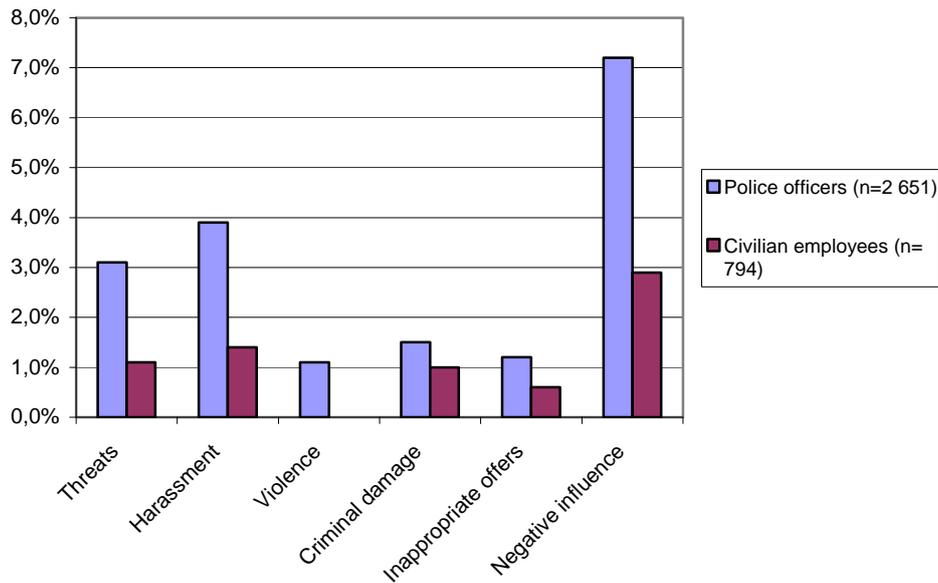


Diagram 1. Percentage of police officers and civilian employees stating that they have been exposed to different forms of unlawful influence.

Both police officers and civilian employees were mostly subjected to harassment. Four per cent of police officers and one per cent of civilian employees stated this. In the survey, harassment was defined as slander, molestation, subtle threats and other often *non-punishable* acts, where the aim was to influence the professional work of the police or which had occurred as a result of the same. Harassment thus covers a broad category, from punishable to non-punishable acts.

Of the other forms of influence, threats were significant – three per cent of police officers and one per cent of civilian employees stated that they had been subjected to unlawful threats or other punishable offences, such as blackmail, from organised crime during an 18-month period. Criminal damage, or physical violence against property, was mentioned by less than two per cent of the police officers and by one per cent of the civilian employees. None of the civilian employees stated that they had been subjected to violence. It is also the least common form of influence that police officers have been exposed to. Finally, just over one per cent of the police officers had received inappropriate offers from organised crime members, compared to one per cent of the civilian employees. The respondents were not asked whether they had received or accepted any inappropriate offers, but only if any had been made. The reason for this is obvious, who would admit to being bribed?

Many had been subjected to an individual form of unlawful influence more than once (59 per cent of police officers subjected to threats had been subjected more than once, and 67 per cent of those exposed to harassment). Around a quarter of the police subjected to negative unlawful influence also stated that they had been exposed to more than one form. These results can be interpreted as there being an increased risk of exposure depending on, for instance, the tasks an officer has and the area he/she is working in.

As so few civilian employees had been exposed, it is difficult to analyse how the influence on them looks at a more detailed level. However, it is important not to neglect civilian employees in measures to prevent influence and support and relieve those who are exposed, as they too are exposed. Unlike police officers they are not necessarily trained and prepared for threats and harassment. It

is therefore important to remember this group of employees, when measures are being discussed.

Usually at work

Most attempts to influence occurred at work. However, criminal damage differs from the other forms of influence, as half of the police officers subjected had had this happen during their leisure time – in the form of criminal damage to private property. A common target for criminal damage is cars.

As most attempts to influence occur at work, it is reasonable to assume that these are opportunities that arise when someone is taken into custody or during controls, for instance – that is, while the officers are carrying out their work (*cf.* Brå 2005:18). Threats or harassment are usually conveyed personally to individual officers rather than being discovered during surveillance or coming from informants etc, although the latter also occurs. Finally, it was very unusual for relatives of police officers to be exposed directly to attempts to influence, but they too can be affected – for instance when criminal damage is inflicted on mutual private property.

Organised crime chooses subtle forms of influence

The fact that harassment is the most common form of unlawful influence on police officers differs in some ways from earlier similar research. For instance, Brå's report *Otillåten påverkan mot myndighetspersoner* ("Exertion an unlawful influence on public servants"), (Brå 2005:18), which included police officers, studied unlawful influence from individual actors who were considered to be substance abusers, individual criminals or persons with a mental illness, in addition to persons belonging to some form of group or network. In that report, six per cent stated that they had been exposed to violence from one of the interested parties mentioned. Violence was one of the most common forms of influence that police officers in that study stated that they had been subjected to. However, in the current study, violence was one of the more unusual forms of influence.

If the results are compared, it would appear that actors with links to organised crime rarely use violence and criminal damage, and prefer more subtle forms of influence, such as harassment, compared with the persons who, in general, use unlawful influence (*cf.* Brå 2005:18, Brå 2008:8).

Different types of harassment are most common

The interviews provide several examples of what these subtle forms of influence are. One officer explained that he had been subjected to what he felt was a subtle threat:

Police officer: *So, one morning, two gang members turned up....*

Interviewer: *You mean at home?*

Police officer: *Yes exactly, and as I had heard a noise, I went out, and they looked at me as if 'well, here we are, just so you know', and then they went away. No threat, nothing, as it wasn't necessary.*

Although most harassment takes place at work, 16 per cent of those exposed stated that they were harassed during leisure time.

The interviews suggest that among some of the influencers, there appears to be a conscious choice to stay “within the framework of the law” when influencing. One influencer described it as follows:

As a criminal, you know that it may be used against you in court. You say something like ‘I’ll find out where you live, and take revenge’, but the latter is unstated.

A possible interpretation is that harassment is an expression of the “professional knowledge” that exist within organised crime, and that persons want to influence without risking being convicted of threats or violence against an official (*cf.* Brå 2008:8). In other words, persons know how it is possible to hint at individual police officers’ perceptions of the capacity of a group by using comments that on the surface are innocent rather than regular threats. In the survey, the most common form of harassment was exactly that, subtle threats during a meeting (22 per cent of those subjected to harassment), followed by somebody taking photographs or recording an individual police officer (21 per cent) and making a counter-report or a report to the Parliamentary Ombudsmen (18 per cent). Reports to the Parliamentary Ombudsmen were felt as having a harassing purpose, and thus differing from other actors’ more or less justified reports (*cf.* “spurious conflict” in Gustafsson 2008).

Another method sometimes used to harass is to expose the private individual behind the uniform. Statements that can feel like subtle threats do not seldom relate to comments showing that the influencer has knowledge of, for instance, where an individual police officer lives, or asking for a name or similar information. Sometimes, the discovery of an individual police officer’s name and other information can be a way of facilitating other forms of influencing, such as reports to the Parliamentary Ombudsmen. During one participant observation session, the following incident took place, which describes the influencer’s intention of finding out more about an individual police officer:

Some of the officers are talking to the man, while colleagues keep watch over the area and the situation. Their posture and tone of voice indicate that they often carry out similar tasks. The man’s frustration at being stopped is shown when he asks the nearest officer the following: “What is your name? I was thinking about making a report to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.”

Corruption

Just over one per cent of the officers stated that they had received inappropriate offers from actors linked to organised crime. Like the other forms of influence, these too occurred at work and were usually aimed at uniformed police. The most common forms were offers of money (48 per cent), a meal or information (24 per cent each). The aim of the inappropriate offer was often felt to be the establishment of a good relationship with the police (52 per cent), access to information (36 per cent) or to achieve passivity to the individual’s advantage (33 per cent). Inappropriate offers are – unlike the other forms of influence – often aimed at having a good relationship with the police, something that can be used later on, as a form of “friendship” corruption, where no bribes are involved.

What groups use unlawful influence?

Organised crime is often associated with a capacity to inflict violence. Persons linked to organised crime use what is known as “the logic of bad reputation” and profile their reputation for violence (Korsell, Skinnari and Vesterhav 2008, *cf.* also Wierup 2007, Brå 2008:8, Collins 2008). The logic of bad reputation entails forming a myth about the violent tendencies and capacity for different forms of violence that a group has. In some cases, the mythology surpasses the reality (Brå 1999:6). The actual circumstances are less important if the reputation is established, and the myth guides the opinions held about the group by the general public, and, in some cases, also individual police officers. A group’s reputation can, in some cases, be reinforced through various kinds of threats and violence against police officers.

However, this does not mean that organised crime is free from individuals with a great capacity for violence. But, in many cases, the myth surpasses the reality and this mythology is a great problem for the general public, and, in some cases, also individual police officers (Brå 2008:8). The material includes instances where interviewed police officers have requested more practical knowledge about the gangs and their members.

In the questionnaires, those who stated that they had been exposed to unlawful influence were asked what group the perpetrator belonged to.²

Negative influence

The most common group judged to be behind the negative forms of unlawful influence were criminal biker gangs (28 per cent), followed by youth and suburban gangs (26 per cent each). This differs from inappropriate offers, where networks specialised in a criminal commodity or service were stated as the influencers by most officers (21 per cent), closely followed by youth and biker gangs (18 per cent each).

There is thus a difference between gang constellations and specialised networks. Actors belonging to the latter use different forms of unlawful influence, which can be interpreted as being more strategic, such as inappropriate offers. Only a few officers responding that they had been exposed to threats, violence or criminal damage mentioned actors with links to specialised networks. These forms of influence are characterised by involving an illegal act, and are thus associated with risks. However, specialised networks are also relatively prominent when it comes to harassment (15 per cent stated this kind of influencer). This can be interpreted as actors within specialised networks having sufficient information to influence without becoming guilty of anything illegal, or exposing themselves needlessly.

Typology of individuals

A typology has been created in an attempt to analyse the individual members of gangs, groups and networks for whom unlawful influence fulfils different purposes. The typology aims to categorise influencers in terms of their roles within

² The response alternatives were worked out in collaboration with the reference group linked to the project and open police reports (RKP report 2005:2b, RKP report 2005:7a). The fact that the definitions were based on the terminology used by the police meant that the survey respondents recognised the alternatives without making longer descriptions necessary.

the gangs or networks, their behaviour in situations when they encounter police officers and the types of unlawful influence they have used. The categorisation takes account of the “profession” that organised crime entails, and how far individuals are described as having reached in their professional careers. The types are based on interviews, both with police officers and interested parties, but earlier research has also been taken into account.

The least-established actors within organised crime have been called *job seekers*, and are often found outside the core of a group or gang. For them, unlawful influence is described as being a way of gaining merit and reaching a higher status within a group. They, therefore, do not hesitate to use visible forms of influencing, such as open threats and violence. *Project employees*, who have greater experience, but who are still seeking status, follow this type. Like job seekers, project employees are described as tending to confront police officers. Because of their greater experience, project employees have started to use more subtle forms of influencing, such as harassment.

Full-time employees appear to be strategic. They regard criminality as a profession, and therefore prefer to act behind the scenes. In other words, they avoid violence and open threats and prefer subtle threats, harassment or corruption. The last two types are the *manager/project leader* and *consultant*. As managers strive to entirely hide their criminal operation, they prefer to use consultants to carry out the influencing. The consultant uses the form of influencing ordered by the project leader.

In a group with both job seekers and project employees – who wish to gain merit through visible unlawful influence and confrontational behaviour – and full-time employees and managers – who wish to keep a low profile – there is a risk of discrepancy, as the different categories have conflicting interests. Attempts to influence, motivated by status and carried out by less-established actors, can lead to the authorities focusing on a group whose criminal operations are then disturbed. Full-time employees and managers mainly use attempts to influence to protect this operation, and may thus equally choose to avoid direct attempts to influence. As a result of this paradox, the visible attempts to influence made by job seekers, and to some extent project employees, may create discord in a criminal network.

Perceived motives

The forms of negative influence all included the same motive alternatives in the questionnaire, and after aggregating, the motives are distributed in accordance with Table 1. However, these are simply what the officers exposed have *perceived* to be the motives.

Table 1. Perceived motives for negative influence (n=251).

| | Per cent | Number |
|--|----------|--------|
| Scare me into passivity in an individual case or situation | 47 | 119 |
| Hate, anger, disappointment | 43 | 108 |
| Power demonstration | 39 | 98 |
| Marking | 39 | 98 |
| Achieve a higher status | 23 | 57 |
| Revenge | 20 | 49 |
| Addiction | 13 | 33 |
| Mental illness | 8 | 21 |

In the analysis, a distinction has been made between instrumental and symbolic motivation for unlawful influence. Instrumental motives are those where the attempt to influence aims to achieve certain goals or effects determined in advance. Symbolic motives are more to do with showing an attitude towards the police and acting against them as a symbol, rather than because of the actual execution of their work, although such attempts to influence often take place in conjunction with their work. Symbolic influence can therefore have instrumental effects.

The results in the table above can be interpreted as negative influence in many cases appear to have primarily symbolically guided motives, such as expressing hatred and to mark against or to attack the police as an authority. The most commonly perceived motive was to scare the police officer into passivity in an individual case or situation. This can be interpreted as being an instrumentally guided act, which is linked to a situation – wishing to avoid taking a specific person into charge, or similar. Motives that are directly instrumental, such as “getting access to information” or “protecting a criminal operation”, were mentioned by only a few officers exposed to negative influence.

During the interviews with interested parties in particular, there was an opportunity to give greater expression to the motives giving rise to unlawful influence. One interested party expressed himself in the following way, which can be felt to be typical of why unlawful influence is used:

It is done to gain a haven, where nobody interferes. You want to work hidden from the authorities with as few problems as possible. It's nothing personal; it's about making the operation work, having fewer problems. Violence against police officers is a problem for criminal networks. Therefore, it happens mostly when feelings run high.

The influencer in the quote above emphasises that explicit forms of unlawful influence, such as violence and threats, are felt to occur for emotive reasons, and this is also confirmed elsewhere in the material. Many interested parties also expressed an awareness that repeated attempts to influence may result in the police working more actively against a certain group or collection of individuals, and that it may therefore be counterproductive.

Finally, while persons linked to organised crime often are described as calculating and instrumental. In fact they can also act irrationally, as shown in the table, where “motives” such as addiction or mental illness are perceived to account for some attempts to influence.

Capacity

As stated above, with “the logic of bad reputation”, organised crime is often associated with a great capacity and willingness to resort to violence (*cf.* Brå 2005:18, Brå 1999:6, Fijnaut et al 1998). The respondents exposed to threats were asked how likely they considered it that the group would turn the threat into reality, as an indication of the capacity they were perceived to possess. The result was that 41 per cent of those exposed to threats perceived it as “probable” and 15 per cent as “very probable” that the group would turn the threat into reality. They were also asked about the grounds for making this assessment, and these mainly originated from: “Own experience” (65 per cent), “General perception” (27 per cent) and “Threat analysis carried out by authority” (13 per cent)³.

³ Several of the respondents marked several alternatives.

In the analysis, “capacity” was divided up into social capacity, financial capacity, access to weapons and reputation used as a weapon. One important result was that social capacity is not a given merely because of individuals being within or having links to a group or a network. There were examples in the material where individuals had carried out attempts to influence that counteracted their aims, resulting in influencers turning their own group against them. However, some police officers expressed a concern that persons with links to groups or gangs were marking their presence in the vicinity of the officers without the officers knowing why, or whether, they planned to carry out something.

It was common for criminal individuals often to display outward attributes signalling a good financial position, which can be seen as a sign of financial capacity. However, for instance during a house search, officers seldom came into contact with home circumstances that produced the same associations. It is not uncommon to display wealth through attributes yet live in poor conditions (Hall, Winlow and Ancrum 2009). Hardly any police officers associated the display of attributes signalling financial capacity as an opportunity for their own financial gain, for instance through accepting a bribe – although it is uncertain whether they would admit to such intentions.

According to earlier research, access to weapons is a component that characterises a criminal lifestyle (Politie 2005, Brå 2007:4). However, weapons do not appear to be for use against the police. The officers who had been subjected to violence were asked whether any weapon was used in the situation, and all of the officers answered that no firearms or knives were used. However, some mentioned other weapons, such as stones. The interviews also include few cases where weapons have been used against the police.

Instead of the above-mentioned forms of capacity, some police officers mention, as it has been referred to above, the logic of bad reputation. One officer describes the perception of individuals’ capacity for violence as follows:

Well, if it had been some little tiddlywink from the market who [had expressed a subtle threat] there would not have been the same weight behind such an expression. But this guy, he is an adult man and this is his method – he uses this style, after all, to make people scared and pay money. So I got scared; it was really unpleasant.

As the quote reveals, the perception of an individual’s reputation for violence can influence how even the police perceives his statements.

Who is subjected and what are the consequences?

As already mentioned, some police officers are at greater risk of being subjected to unlawful influence. These are officers who work in uniform in external duty. They constitute the majority of those exposed to negative unlawful influence, followed by neighbourhood police officers. The unlawful influence occurred in the course of their work and was aimed at, and expressed directly to, the individual officers. Women and men were exposed to negative influence to the same extent, and sex is, therefore, no risk variable. Many of the officers subjected were younger, under 40 years of age, but this may primarily be explained by police in external duty in general being younger. Violence, in particular, was nearly always aimed at uniformed police. Most officers who had been exposed to

negative influence worked as police or criminal inspectors (47 per cent) or police constables (48 per cent).

Out of those who had received inappropriate offers, a majority were uniformed police in external duty (46 per cent). However, in relation to other forms of influence, the share of police officers in uniform that received inappropriate offers was smaller.

In interviews, some officers emphasised what may be called “exposure risks”, as they considered that they have been influenced as a result of being perceived as working too actively against a group, or that their names had appeared in reports etc. In this way, they had become familiar faces and names for actors linked to organised crime. However, being visible is not always a negative thing, but can instead be necessary in order to create good relations with individuals – something that characterises neighbourhood policing, for instance. Some interviewees describe the contacts and relations of neighbourhood policing as necessary for creating understanding and thus reducing the risk of unlawful influence.

Reaction at an early stage

Shock, anger and fear are common direct reactions to attempts to influence. Many police officers in interviews described how they felt powerless and helpless, while others talked about a feeling of unreality. Others reacted with worry or fear, which manifested itself in individuals constantly looking over their shoulder or having problems sleeping. However, it is clear that despite the very differing reactions to attempts to influence, great demands are placed on those around to support, calm down and get the person to start working through the incident at an early stage.

The most common reaction to unlawful influence, both among police officers and their family members, is fear. Not having the control that police officers, in their professional roles, often have at their disposal is described by many as frustrating. Several officers reasoned that it is therefore important to have a place of work where feelings can be aired and where there are sympathetic superiors and colleagues to discuss issues of fear with.

To whom do you turn for support?

The results indicate that attempts to influence are handled in very differing ways by the police authorities, and that different sets of measures exist. However, in order for measures to be taken, it is important that attempts to influence are reported. The survey included questions about whether those exposed had talked about the attempts and notified and reported them to the police. The results are shown in Diagram 2:

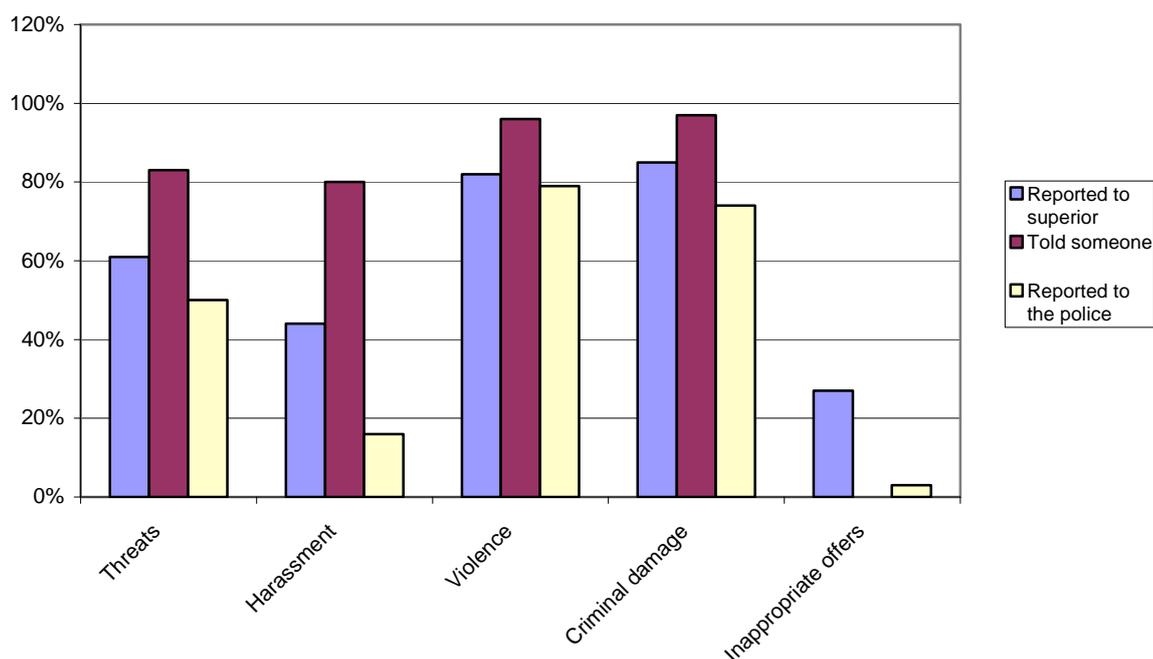


Diagram 2. Percentage of police officers exposed who notified, talked about and reported to the police unlawful influence from organised crime⁴.

The results show that violence and criminal damage, in particular, were *reported* to a authority representative to a greater extent than threats and harassment were. Very few of those receiving inappropriate offers reported these: just below 30 per cent.

In general, fewer persons had reported incidents to the police than had reported them to their superiors. This applied, in particular, to harassment, where just below 20 per cent of those exposed reported the influence to the police. When it came to violence and criminal damage, just below 80 per cent reported these to the police.

The reason why harassment was only notified or reported to the police to a low degree was said to be because this form of influencing did not constitute a punishable offence, and that there was therefore no reason to notify or report it. This differs from violence and criminal damage, which are clear transgressions of the law and more obvious, as some kind of damage has occurred. Of the interviewed officers who had reported or notified attempts to influence, the reactions were varied. Some stated that they were very satisfied with the measures taken by the authority, while others felt that they did not receive the support they considered that they, who had been exposed in their capacities as employees, were entitled to.

There was also a question about whether persons had talked about the attempt to influence, and if so to whom. The results show that police officers, to a large extent, talked about all forms of negative influence, and, in particular, with colleagues rather than with family members. Colleagues could be expected to understand what it meant to be subjected, but as one officer expressed it, “the higher up you get in the hierarchy, the less understanding there is”. Avoiding mixing work with one’s private life was something that was expressed in interviews with exposed police officers. It was felt to be unnecessary to talk about

⁴ Those who had received inappropriate offers were not asked whether they had talked about them or not.

what you had been exposed to as a result of work, at home – however, as shown below, in their private lives persons often worried about their relatives. Those who received inappropriate offers were not asked whether they had talked about them, instead, all survey respondents were asked whether they knew of any colleagues who had received inappropriate offers. The result was that very few knew of any colleagues who had received inappropriate offers. Just over half of the respondents stated that they did not know whether any colleagues had received inappropriate offers or not. This suggests that corruption is not something that police officers talk about.

Reactions in the execution of work

Those who had been exposed to some kind of negative influence from organised crime were also asked whether they had reacted in any of the ways below as a result of the attempt to influence. Table 2 shows the percentage of exposed police officers who stated that they had been influenced in one of the ways on one or several occasions:

Table 2. Percentage of exposed police officers who stated that they had experienced the following reactions to unlawful influence on at least one occasion.

| | Threats (n=81) | Harassment (n=103) | Violence (n=28) | Criminal damage (n=39) |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Considered changing jobs | 16 | 20 | 21 | 10 |
| Considered leaving the police force | 22 | 15 | 14 | 15 |
| Motivation to work has decreased | 28 | 27 | 25 | 18 |
| Felt a feeling of insecurity at work | 63 | 62 | 50 | 35 |
| Been on sick leave | 4 | 2 | 0 | Question not asked |
| Hesitated before an action or a decision | 35 | 19 | 18 | 15 |
| Avoided an area or task | 17 | 16 | 7 | 13 |

Some important conclusions can be drawn from the table above. First, threats and harassment appear to have more serious consequences than criminal damage in particular, but also violence. However, the violence mentioned in the survey appears to have been minor; for instance no one had been off sick as a result of a violent incident. The interviews and the survey responses also show that the violence occurred mainly during interventions and when apprehending persons, and thus was situational. Second, the most common result of attempts to influence is that the officer has at least once felt a feeling of insecurity at work. This can have consequences for the execution of their work, and shows the importance of handling unlawful influence in a professional manner. Third, it is mostly following threats that officers have considered leaving the police force. Every fourth officer stating that he/she had been subjected to threats had at least once had thoughts along these lines.

Attempts to influence can also result in self-censorship, where persons neglect doing parts of their work because of the fear of becoming subjected. In the survey, those who had been exposed to some kind of negative influence were asked whether they had hesitated before an action or a decision, or had avoided an area or a task as a result of attempts to influence. Just over a third of those exposed to threats had hesitated before an action or a decision. This is a phenomenon that can also affect colleagues of an officer subjected, even if they themselves have not been exposed to attempts to influence – that is to say, attempts to influence have a negative spread effect. In the survey, no such question was put to those who had not been subjected to any attempt to influence, but during inter-

views and participant observation sessions, it emerged that it happens. However, based on the results of this research project, it is impossible to state the extent to which this occurs.

Worry at home

Interviewer: *Does it happen that the family of a police officer is targeted?*

Interested party: *Do you mean wives and children? Only in rare cases, when it has become personal. I've never experienced that. It is an unwritten rule among criminals; the very last thing that is done.*

Finally, those who had been exposed were asked whether their private lives had been affected as a result of negative unlawful influence. The results are illustrated in Diagram 3:

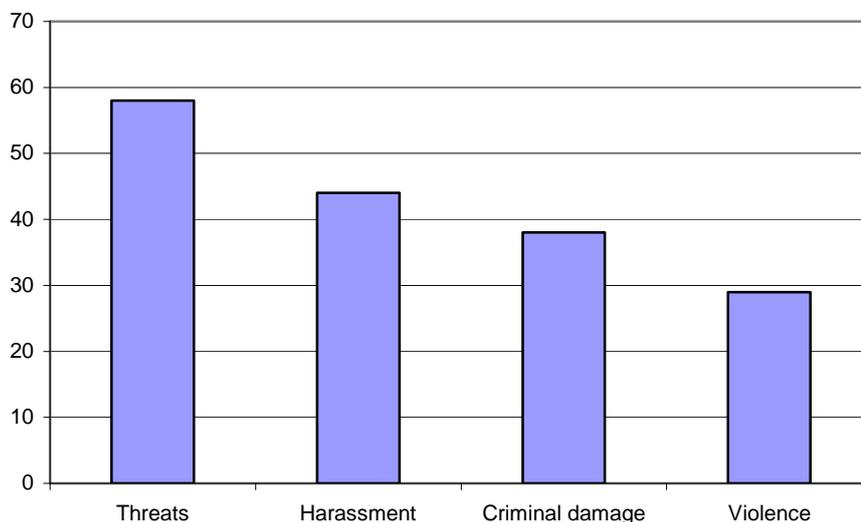


Diagram 3. The percentage of exposed police officers stating that their private life had been affected as a result of unlawful influence.

As we have already seen, it is very unusual for unlawful influence to affect the homes and relatives of police officers. Despite this, private lives have mostly been affected through a worry about family members. Of those who considered their private life had been affected as a result of threats and harassment, two thirds had felt worried about family members, and many also stated that they had felt insecure at home (42 per cent due to harassment; 49 per cent due to threats).

The fact that violence and criminal damage affects people's private lives the least can be interpreted as these are things that occur on a single occasion. Once the violent incident is over, the exposed person does not perceive that any continued threat exists. On the other hand, threats and harassment can have a more abstract character and can be followed by insecurity about whether, and if so, when and how a threat will be carried out. Harassment can in turn also affect the home directly through, for instance, influencers turning up or in other ways signalling a presence in the direct vicinity of the home. Indirectly, harassment can also have an effect through the worry and insecurity that arises.

Some interviewed officers mentioned how they had felt ashamed after finding out about a threat as they felt as if the threat was also passed on to the rest of the family and that the disadvantages of their professional lives had become a part of their private life.

Some interviewed relatives also mentioned the feeling of powerlessness and helplessness that had arisen after their partner had been subjected to unlawful influence. Relatives are also right at the end of the process, and rarely appear to receive any information straight from the police authorities. There are also problems with gaining any recognition for their wishes in terms of measures taken.

Preventative measures

The results of the questionnaires and interviews were presented at a seminar with representatives from the authorities, at which discussions focused on specific measures. Discussions held during participant observation sessions and interviews also formed the basis for the proposed measures.

The measures have been divided up into three stages: before the act of influence occurs, when it occurs, and when a threat is assessed as past. The most important proposals are summarised below.

Before the act of influence occurs

The research shows, both from interviews and from the questionnaires, that much of the unlawful influence takes place in the course of, or as a direct consequence of, police work. It can take the form of subtle threats, situations that become violent when a police officer is carrying out an intervention or an action or when an individual police officer, for some reason, is more visible than others or is exposed in a situation, and thereafter constitutes a target for attempts to influence.

Professional treatment

An important aspect, which is touched on by both police and by interested parties, is the importance of professional treatment and clear communication. There must be no doubt about what police employees are doing, and on what authority. This becomes yet more important when, on some occasions, there may be persons who feel that they are being harassed by the police, or that they have an interest in “testing” the police by questioning measures or asking questions that may be perceived as subtle threats or provocative marking.

Communication is not just verbal: during the encounter, the police also communicate using tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures. These are aspects of communication that individual officers perhaps are not aware of, but which an interested party or potential influencer may be very sensitive to. As a result of the behaviour, the officer may be perceived as being provocative, but also frightened. Regardless of the reason it makes individual police officers visible and might be sufficient enough for a perpetrator to resort to unlawful influence.

“Owning” a situation

There are several methods for preventing a situation from getting out of hand. One such method is to “own” a situation. The phenomenon can be said to consist of three parts. First, it entails having control over the person or persons the intervention is aimed at. This is done, for instance, by removing any weapons and mobile phones from them and deciding where they should stand. Second, it is about maintaining a good communication with colleagues. It is necessary for

all police officers on the spot to know what they are doing, to have the same goal and to show outward unity. The material included situations when communication within a group of officers has failed, misunderstandings have arisen between officers and unlawful influence has resulted from the police thus not having adequate control over the situation. Finally, as these meetings often occur in public, it is important to notice people and vehicles passing the spot. This course of action is a method for preventing attempts to influence from being considered as an option.

Knowledge about the groups/individuals in question

Police officers who work only against organised crime in special projects quickly gain knowledge about a particular groups' working methods, and also about how individuals act. However, the level of knowledge within the police as a whole is not the same. Officers who rarely meet these actors do not develop the same knowledge. Interviews and participant observations indicate that police employees with a good knowledge about organised crime are often better prepared psychologically for how the perpetrators will be acting. A side effect of increased knowledge about the actors is increased security. For instance, this can be knowledge that a particular individual often resorts to threats, or causes harassment through letters from his lawyer.

Knowledge about corruption

Knowledge about groups or any perpetrators involved can also be a component in counteracting corruption; a form of influencing that is often forgotten. Some actors choose more obvious forms of influencing, while others for instance prefer inappropriate offers. In this way, it is possible to adapt working methods following a risk assessment in relation to corruption. This also entails analysing the key functions within an authority, for example handling sensitive issues, making it possible to introduce preventative efforts where necessary. It is also more difficult to make inappropriate offers to two police employees than to one. Working in pairs – which many, but not all employees do – makes it easier both to stand up to attempts at corruption, and also acts as a form of control between colleagues.

Another important component is to raise awareness about the risks of corruption in general, and the forms of corruption that are used – what starts as small offerings can grow into bigger ones. This is made easier with knowledge about current groups or persons and their ways of working, and knowledge about resources and capacity.

When unlawful influence has occurred

An important way to limit the negative consequences is the police authority's handling of an attempt to influence. As already mentioned, there are many variations between the different authorities in how cases involving threatened or harassed staff are handled. It is important that they are handled in a way that is adequate for the exposed person, in order to reinstate security at work and to avoid negative spread effects among colleagues. If an officer is exposed and the matter handled in an unsatisfactory way, this can affect the work of colleagues as well.

Acute measures

The immediate superior of the exposed person plays a central role at the time when unlawful influence has just happened. Action plans and routines should be

available and quickly put into operation. Through reacting rapidly, the employer shows that they are prepared for handling unlawful influence.

During the first stage, it is good practice for a manager or shift leader to make a written assessment of the threat as soon as an attempt to influence becomes known to them (*cf.* Brå 2007). In some cases, there may also be a need to contact the relatives of the exposed person. With the help of the threat assessment, acute protective measures should be taken while awaiting a more detailed threat and risk assessment.

Some officers emphasised the importance of the exposed person being listened to as an injured party, rather than writing a report on the incident. The advantage of a colleague taking notes is that this person, as an outsider, can ensure that important information is included in the report. It can be a problem interpreting the incidents without help, especially after having just been subjected to an attempt to influence.

The importance of getting a response and information

In addition to being listened to as an injured party, an officer who has been exposed to unlawful influence may also need to get a response to his/her perception of the situation, any questions about measures being taken and information about how the matter or the threat is developing. Something that is emphasised by police officers and relatives interviewed is the need to get up-to-date information about the perpetrator, the risk of the threat being realised and the measures planned by the authority. The need for information appears to be particularly great when the perpetrator has not expressed threats directly to the police employee, but it has been found out through other sources. The results indicate that exposed police officers want to make their own evaluation of the character of the threat and the risk of it being realised, and not to be reliant on the evaluations or speculations of others.

Interviewees who had a contact person who was involved with the threat and risk assessments and personal protection express satisfaction that this has meant they received continuous information about the matter. Such a contact person also gives the exposed person the opportunity to express how they perceive the situation. These contacts aim to make an objective risk assessment at the same time as listening to the version the exposed person is telling them, as well as responding to his/her need for support. By having a dedicated contact person, this provides a channel for questions concerning help, and this may be something that the authority can provide.

Pro-active measures

Naturally, many of the proposed measures are aimed at the exposed police employee and the responsibility of the employer. At the same time, several interviewees and seminar participants emphasise the importance of also taking action against the perpetrator.

The police like to say that the threatened person takes one step back, while their colleagues take two steps forward. The aim is to strike harder against a group in order to show that unlawful influence causes negative consequences for them, and that influence, for this reason, counteracts its own purpose. There are also examples where police have joined forces with other units who have collaborated to stop the group members, and where investigations of their crimes have been prioritised. Apart from preventing new attempts to influence, the exposed police officer feels that he/she has the support of the authority, and at the same time other police officers see that an attempt is being made to reduce the exposure to attempts to influence.

Follow-up after the incident

The handling of unlawful influence often fails during a follow-up, despite the fact that attempts to influence can have effects that last a long time. Following up how the exposed person feels and provide adequate communication once a threat has ended are important in order to enable the exposed person to put the incident behind him/her.

First, the officer involved can feel neglected, which can make it harder for them to return to their former tasks and to process the unlawful influence. Second, a follow-up can be a way of achieving closure and moving ahead. Relatives may also feel a need for a follow-up talk. In addition, the lack of a follow-up means that the employer does not find out which measures are working and are appreciated by the staff. In this way, there is no feedback regarding any existing programmes of measures, and no opportunity to improve any failings that exist.

Two important aspects of enabling a person to put an attempt to influence behind him/her are the person who communicates that the threat is over and how this communication is done. Some interviewees had had difficulty moving on because the person who talked to them was not considered to have the knowledge and the judgement needed to make such an assessment. Some of the officers also received just a scantily worded message that the threat had been dealt with, without explanation or motivation. If the message does not come from a trusted source, such as a contact person who has followed the case, or is not communicated in an adequate way, it is difficult to accept the information, and much is at stake if an incorrect assessment has been made.

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