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Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa i metody ich zapobiegania w jednostkach penitencjarnych w opiniach funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej w Polsce

Security threats and prevention methods in correctional facilities according to Prison Service officers in Poland

Abstract

The paper outlines the analysis of the results of a survey conducted among Prison Service officers in Poland. The study concerned three key issues, which were selected to tackle the following research problems: the assessment of correctional facilities in the context of potential threats, the classification of threats occurring in correctional facilities, as well as the description of the prevention methods. The study was based on a diagnostic survey, which employed a questionnaire to collect the responses. The choice of this method enabled analysing and understanding the respondents' opinions on the security threats occurring in the correctional

facilities supervised by the Prison Service and their prevention. The collected empirical data was analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 and Microsoft Office Excel 2007 software solutions.

Keywords: security, threats, prevention methods, correctional facilities, Prison Service, Poland

Streszczenie

W artykule zaprezentowano analizę wyników badań ankietowych prowadzonych wśród funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej w Polsce. Tematyka badań dotyczyła m. in. trzech zagadnień, ujętych w następujące problemy: oceny jednostek penitencjarnych w kontekście potencjalnych zagrożeń, rodzajów zagrożeń jakie występują w jednostkach penitencjarnych oraz metod ich zapobiegania. Przy realizacji przyjętych założeń badawczych posłużono się metodą sondażu diagnostycznego, zastosowano technikę ankiety. Metoda ta pozwoliła poznać opinie respondentów na temat zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa w jednostkach penitencjarnych Służby Więziennej i metod zapobiegania tym zagrożeniom. Do analizy zgromadzonego materiału empirycznego wykorzystano program IBM SPSS Statistics 24 oraz Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, zagrożenia, metody zapobiegania, jednostki penitencjarne, Służba Więzenna, Polska

Introduction

The Act on the Prison Service of 9 April 2010 defines two types of correctional facilities in the Polish legal system, namely prisons and detention centres, whose tasks include not only the isolation of incarcerated and detained individuals, but also the execution of court orders concerning pre-trial detention¹. The purpose of these correctional facilities is to isolate individuals who pose a threat to public safety by breaking the law². The isolation of incarcerated individuals is directly linked to the security of the correctional facilities themselves, and as such contributes to the protection of society from law-breaking citizens, who defy the

¹ Article 8, Act of 9 April 2010 on the Prison Service (Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] of 2021, item 1064, as amended).

² The term *correctional facilities* is used throughout the paper as a collective term for prisons and detention centres.

widely accepted norms of behaviour. The Prison Service (Polish: Służba Więzienna, SW) is responsible for carrying out a number of tasks, which are directly listed in the provisions of the relevant laws. These include safeguarding the general public from criminals, as well as maintaining order and ensuring security in prisons and detention centres³. As far as prisoners are concerned, the prison administration has a duty to take appropriate measures to ensure prisoners' personal safety while they are serving their sentences⁴.

Officers of the Prison Service and civilian employees of penitentiary establishments, together with individuals responsible for supervising the work or educational activities of inmates, act as superiors to convicted persons residing in a given facility by virtue of the duties they perform and the official tasks entrusted to them. It should be underlined that the organisational structure of prisons and remand centres – characterised by a dichotomous division into two groups (prison officers and inmates) pursuing inherently opposing objectives - is exceptionally complex and difficult to manage effectively while ensuring the overall safety of the institution. Within penitentiary establishments, a persistent psychological "struggle" is observable between the prison administration and the incarcerated population, aimed at maintaining a balance that safeguards the interests, rights, and security of both parties. Consequently, a precise identification of security threats within penitentiary units remains highly challenging, as such threats are heterogeneous in nature and vary substantially in terms of intensity and scope⁵.

All activities undertaken by the Prison Service are intrinsically linked to ensuring both the internal and external security of penitentiary institutions. Security measures implemented within these establishments should therefore be adapted to the range of potential threats that may emerge in their operational environment.

The issue of security threats and preventive strategies within penitentiary units of the Prison Service has attracted sustained scholarly interest, both among Polish researchers and within the wider international academic community, where it is approached from multiple analytical

³ Article 2, item 2(5) and (6), of the Act of 9 April 2010 on the Prison Service (Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] of 2021, item 1064, as amended).

⁴ Article 108, section 1 of the Act of 6 June 1997 - Executive Penal Code (Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] of 2021, item 53, as amended).

⁵ K. Skelnik, S. Topolewski, B. Błaszcak, *Bezpieczeństwo informacji a bezpieczeństwo osób pozabawionych wolności*, „Law • Education • Security” 2025, no. 126, p. 360–362.

perspectives. Furthermore, state supervisory bodies conduct inspections concerning the safety of prison officers in the performance of their official duties⁶.

The authors of the paper focused on analysing three aspects of the assessment made by staff of prisons and detention centres, who shared their opinions concerning: 1) the functioning of correctional facilities in the context of potential threats; 2) the types of threats, which may occur in correctional facilities in Poland; 3) the methods of preventing the occurrence of these threats.

Methodology

The empirical study was carried out in 2023 in an area encompassing three District Inspectorates of the Prison Service in Krakow, Katowice and Opole⁷. Each of the branches (with the exception of external branches) received 15 questionnaires to be filled out by security officers. The questionnaire comprised 27 questions concerning six research areas, including multiple choice questions, multiple choice questions with a comment box, and six questions concerning demographics. The study involved a total of 31 correctional facilities in Poland, 10 of which were detention centres, while the remaining 21 were prisons. The total number of respondents was 465.

The collected empirical data was analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 and Microsoft Office Excel 2007 software solutions. Statistical

⁶ E.g. M. Kuźmik, *Zagrożenia w placówkach penitencjarnych jako źródło obaw funkcjonariuszy*, „Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” 2018, no. 98, p. 5–21; M. Nosarzewska-Boczek, *Bezpieczeństwo funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Pro Publico Bono” 2020, no. 1 (1), p. 31–38; M. Lewandowski, M. Kuryłowicz, M. Mazurek, A. Pytka, *Poczucie bezpieczeństwa funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej pełniących służbę na stanowisku monitorowego – raport z badań*, „The Prison Systems Review” 2023, no. 118, p. 97–116 and Z. Nowacki, M. Kuryłowicz (ed.), *Psychologiczne i pedagogiczne aspekty pełnienia służby przez funkcjonariuszydziału ochrony polskiej Służby Więziennej. Relacja z badań*. Instytut Penitencjarystyki Stosowanej, Warszawa 2023. See also: J.M. Ellison, R. Gainey, *An opportunity model of safety risks among jail officers*, „Journal of Criminal Justice Volume” 2020, vol. 66, no 101632, p. 2–3 and *Prison Corruption: The Problem and Some Potential Solutions*. Center for the Advancement of Public Integrity, Columbia Law School 2016 https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1064&context=public_integrity (Access: 20.11.2023), as well as *Experts Identify Priority Needs for Addressing Correctional Agency Security Threats*, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/experts-identify-priority-needs-addressing-correctional-agency-security-threats> (Access: 16.11.2025); Najwyższa Izba Kontroli (NIK), *Informacja o wynikach kontroli „Bezpieczeństwo funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych”*, LRZ.430.2.2025, no. ewid. 7/2025/P/24/083/LRZ, <https://www.nik.gov.pl/kontrole/P/24/083/> (Access: 16.11.2025).

⁷ It is worth noting that as of today some of these branches have been reassigned to other district inspectorates or transformed into external branches.

differences between variable values were derived using fractional interval tables, with an assumed significance interval of $P=95\%$. Each of the branches received 15 survey questionnaires to be filled out by officers. The study population was determined by multiplying the number of branches (31) by the number of questionnaires received by each branch, totalling 465. Due to the large number of questionnaires, the provided results are listed as a percentage of the study population, $N = 465$. In each case where N is not equal to 465, the questionnaires with no response were removed from the sample size and the listed percentage is based on the lower N value, as several respondents did not answer all the questions⁸.

In the survey, the vast majority of respondents were men (83.2%), with women being a minority (6.9%). The most common response concerning experience was 11-15 years (31.7%), with 21 years or more being the least frequent response (13.4%). Significantly, a large number of respondents had been working in the Prison Service for five years or less (18%). Nearly half of the respondents belonged to the non-commissioned officer corps (46.7%), while members of the private corps comprised the smallest group (14.4%). The vast majority of respondents (94.7%) were security officers, while 5.3% of respondents were heads of their respective security departments. The majority of respondents worked at prisons (63.2%), with 33.8% working at detention centres. Additionally, 3% of respondents worked at prisons and detention centres at the same time⁹. The respondents are highly educated, with the majority (63.8%) having a master's (45.7%) or a bachelor's (18.1%) degree. The remaining 36.2% of respondents had received secondary-school education.

⁸ J. Wiktorowicz, M.M. Grzelak, K. Grzeszkiewicz-Radulska, *Analiza statystyczna z IBM SPSS Statistics*, Łódź, 2020, p. 35–43.

⁹ It is worth noting that, according to ongoing research (as of 1 July 2023), the security division is “younger,” in generational terms, than the penitentiary division. There are already very few representatives of the Baby Boomer generation (people born between 1946 and 1964) among officers of the Polish Prison Service. It can be expected that in the coming years the entire generation of the post-war demographic boom will leave the service. In the near future, Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1979) will become the oldest generation in the Prison Service. Currently, the Millennial generation—and within it Generation Y (people born between 1980 and 2000)—is numerically dominant in the Polish prison system. The near future will also see the emergence in the service of individuals from a new generation. See: Z. Nowacki, *Pokolenia funkcjonariuszy i pracowników w polskich zakładach karnych i aresztach śledczych w 2023 roku. Specyfika generacji*, „Law • Education • Security” 2024, no. 124, pp. 348–351.

Assessment of the security of correctional facilities in the context of potential threats

The key aim of the study was to gather information concerning the functioning of correctional facilities from the point of view of potential threats. In particular, the issue concerned the respondents' views on the preparedness of correctional facilities in terms of countering threats, as well as key factors ensuring security in correctional facilities.

The initial question concerned the preparedness of correctional facilities in terms of countering threats occurring on their premises. According to the responses, 73.2% of the respondents believe that correctional facilities are adequately prepared to deal with the threats occurring on their premises. 26.8 % of respondents think otherwise.

In the following section of the survey, respondents answered the question concerning key factors contributing to ensuring security in correctional facilities. The responses to this question are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Key factors contributing to ensuring security in correctional facilities

Response categories	%
1. Trained and competent staff, training, adequate preparation, professionalism	28.4
2. Prevention, preventive measures, inspections, audits	13.8
3. Officers' experience, awareness, and knowledge, including knowledge of laws and regulations	7.1
4. Equipment, including weapons, technical safeguards and safety equipment, and investment in equipment and modern technologies	30.8
5. Adequate number of officers, additional staff, and sufficient FTEs	9.0
6. Security system, security instructions, security department, CCTV equipment	8.2
7. Understanding of the prison population, subcultures, surveillance, and observation	4.9
8. Flow of information, communication equipment, and cooperation	7.7
9. Reinstatement of armed officers	2.2
10. Legal acts, relevant regulations, legal protection of the staff	4.3
11. Adhering to recommendations, rules, proper conduct	4.9
12. People, officers, the human factor	4.1
13. Other**	11.0

** Comments clarifying the response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

The opinions of the respondents on key factors contributing to ensuring security in correctional facilities are varied. Some of the most frequently mentioned factors contributing to ensuring security in correctional facilities include equipment and weapons used by the staff, proper technical security measures and safety equipment, procurement of equipment and modern technologies – this response was chosen by 30.8% of all respondents. 28.4% of respondents indicate comprehensive training of officers, competent staff, training provided and readiness of the officers to carry out their tasks. Some of the least frequently mentioned factors contributing to ensuring security in correctional facilities include the so-called human factor (4.1%), staff members and inmates, legal acts, relevant regulations, legal protection of the officer (4.3%), compliance with instructions and proper conduct compliant with the instructions (4.9%). Only 2.2% of respondents chose the need to reinstate armed officers.

What mechanisms are in place for detecting possible threats to the security of correctional facilities in Poland? This was the next question for the respondents. The results show that 82.4% of the respondents are familiar with the mechanisms that enable detection of possible security threats in correctional facilities in Poland. This is a very good result.

Table 2. Mechanisms in place for detecting possible security threats in correctional facilities in Poland

Response categories	%
1. Prevention systems, prevention measures, regulations	17.0
2. Understanding the atmosphere and emotions, observation, surveillance	5.4
3. Participation in training sessions, courses, workshops	9.0
4. Inspections, scanning of objects and individuals, inspections of vehicles, CCTV and relevant equipment	4.5
5. Proper flow of information, including between departments and branches, means of communication	1.5
6. Other**	6.0

** Comments clarifying the response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

According to 17% of respondents, the mechanisms that enable detecting possible threats occurring in correctional facilities include preventive measures, adequate prevention and existing legislation. 9% view training sessions, courses and workshops for staff members as the relevant

mechanism. Only 5.4% of respondents chose understanding the atmosphere and emotions of inmates, as well as observation and surveillance.

Respondents were then asked about the gaps present in correctional facilities, which would hinder the ability to respond properly in an emergency situation. The responses indicate that more than half (57.6 %) of respondents believe that correctional facilities lack novel technological solutions that make it possible to respond properly to an emergency situation. Other responses include existing laws and regulations (38.5%) and equipment (24.7%). Other respondents (2.8%) indicated lack of appropriate training, including gun training, as well as lack of competent staff. Only 3.4% of respondents claimed that the issue lies in an inadequate number of officers directly involved with the inmates.

According to 10.1% of respondents, the missing factor hampering proper response in the case of threats is the lack of adequate cooperation with other entities, including the Police, the Central Bureau of Investigation of the Police, the State Fire Service, the Internal Security Agency, the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, and the Intelligence Agency¹⁰.

Threats in correctional facilities in view of their staff

Identification of the threat sources is required for an effective response. Respondents were asked to identify the main source of threats which may arise on the premises of correctional facilities. For the vast majority of respondents – 88.6% – the main source of emergent threats on the premises of correctional facilities are the inmates. Respondents also listed other potential threat sources, including overworking of officers (resulting in errors and mistakes); under-staffing; skeleton crews which hamper proper operations and functioning of the facilities, and high absenteeism and the consequent reduced security of the facility.

The second issue covered in the survey concerned the types of threats which may occur in correctional facilities. The following threat groups were listed:

¹⁰ Confirmation of these opinions can be found in the remarks of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) contained in section 5.3.7. *Actions Preparing Officers to Undertake Appropriate Measures in Crisis Situations*, pp. 88–91 [in:] *Informacja o wynikach kontroli „Bezpieczeństwo funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych”*, LRZ.430.2.2025, nr ewid. 7/2025/P/24/083/LRZ, <https://www.nik.gov.pl/kontrole/P/24/083/> (Access: 16.11.2025).

1. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to officers.
2. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to inmates.
3. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to forces of nature.
4. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to other factors¹¹.

The first question concerned the potential threats, which may occur in the Prison Service due to officers, inmates and forces of nature.

Table 3. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to officers

Response categories	%
1. Corruption	42.6
2. Dereliction of duty, lack of commitment, haste, routine, negligence	17.0
3. Inappropriate relationships, interactions with inmates	11.6
4. Staff shortages, lack of officers	4.1
5. Insufficient competences, knowledge, experience and skills, poor training	11.6
6. Fatigue, overworking, burnout	5.6
7. Data leaks, accidental disclosure of classified information, improper data storage	2.6
8. Drugs, alcohol, substance abuse	2.2
9. Aggression against inmates, abuse, inhumane treatment	3.4
10. COVID-19, epidemics, diseases among inmates	3.0
11. Unauthorised substances and objects on the premises, smuggling	3.9
12. Bullying	3.7
13. There are no threats due to officers	2.2
14. Other**	10.8

** Comments clarifying the response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

According to the survey results, 42.6% of all respondents chose corruption as a potential threat that could occur in the course of their service. Other commonly selected threats included dereliction of duties, lack of commitment, haste, routine or negligence, which ranked second (17%), while 11.6% of respondents chose inadequate skills, knowledge, experience and poor preparedness as the potential threat source. Only 3.4 % of respondents mentioned aggression, abuse or inhumane treatment of inmates, while 2.2 % of respondents believe that there are no threats or that they are not aware of any threats due to other officers.

¹¹ R. Szymowski, M. Łuszcz, *Threats in correctional facilities of the Prison Service in Poland*, „Security Forum” 2024, vol 8, no 2, pp. 57–58.

The process of carrying out tasks connected with preventing incidents in correctional facilities is often fraught by errors made by officers. The respondents were asked to identify the most common errors that arose in the process of carrying out tasks pertaining to prevention in correctional facilities. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The most common errors arising in the process of carrying out tasks pertaining to prevention in correctional facilities

Response categories	%
1. Routine	39.6
2. Haste	52.3
3. Lack of focus	5.8
4. Lack of commitment	17.2
5. Superficiality of activities	10.5
6. Indifference	6.9
7. Inappropriate use of personal equipment (hand-held metal detectors, mobile phone detectors, weapons, etc.)	5.2
8. Lack of appropriate operating procedures	5.4
9. Other**	2.2

** Clarification of the *other* response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

According to the respondents, the most common mistake made in the process of carrying out tasks pertaining to prevention in correctional facilities by officers is haste – 52.2% chose this answer, citing overwork and inadequate performance of duties. According to the comments, this is a result of the insufficient number of officers in relation to the number of inmates. 39.6% of respondents cited routine, while 5.4% chose the lack of appropriate operating procedures.

The potential threats, which could arise due to inmates, chose the most frequently by respondents (31.6%) included mutiny, protests and demonstrations, and disobeying officers' orders.

20.6% of respondents claimed that acts of aggression, fights, assault, rape or abuse are common threats caused by inmates. 12.0% of respondents believe that the source of threats that may occur in the Prison Service are inmates who are under the influence of drugs, alcohol or illicit substances. Only 2.2% of respondents chose other threats due to inmates, including destruction of prison property, arson and starting fires.

Table 5. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to inmates

Response categories	%
1. Assault on an officer	21.5
2. Mutiny, protests and demonstrations, disobedience of orders	31.6
3. Self-harm, suicide attempts	9.7
4. Acts of aggression, fights, assaults, rape, abuse, fights between inmates	20.6
5. Escapes and escape attempts	4.9
6. Smuggling and attempted smuggling of prohibited objects and substances	7.1
7. Drugs, alcohol, illicit substances, addiction	12.0
8. Too many rights for prisoners, lack of discipline, leniency	3.2
9. Entitled attitude, complaints, slander, libel, blackmail, threats, manipulation, provocations	6.0
10. Corruption	4.7
11. Organised groups, organised crime groups, subcultures	4.9
12. Diseases among inmates – biological and epidemiological threats	3.7
13. Destruction of prison property, arson, fires	2.2
14. Other**	8.4

** Comments clarifying the response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

Table 6. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to forces of nature

Response categories	%
1. Fire	26.9
2. Flood, heavy rain, water damage	33.8
3. Thunderstorms, lightning (which may damage electronic security or communications devices)	20.2
4. Strong winds, hurricanes, tornadoes	16.1
5. Earthquakes	0.4
6. Weather events, anomalies, natural disasters, forces of nature	7.3
7. Epidemics, COVID-19, viruses, diseases	3.9
8. Blackouts, damage to security devices and infrastructure (no reason given)	4.1
9. Other**	5.2

** Comments clarifying the response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

The threats occurring the most frequently in the Prison Service due to the forces of nature are associated with water, including flooding, heavy rain and water damage, as indicated by 33.8% of respondents. According to 26.9 % of respondents, the main threat is fire. 20.2% of respondents chose storms, lightning, strong winds, gales and hurricanes (16.1%).

Table 7. Potential threats in the Prison Service due to other factors

Response categories	%
1. Terrorist attacks, terrorist threat	3.7
2. Cyber attacks against information systems, hacking	2.6
3. Smuggling, throwing unauthorised objects and drugs over the walls	3.7
4. Unmanned aerial vehicles (drones)	1.5
5. COVID-19, epidemics	3.0
6. Attack or assault on the facility from the outside, mob invasion	2.6
7. None	2.4
8. Other**	7.1

** Comments clarifying the response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

According to 3.7% of respondents, the threats that may occur in the Prison Service due to other factors include terrorist attacks, smuggling and otherwise getting unauthorised objects, including illicit drugs, into the correctional facilities. 1.5% of all respondents chose threats stemming from the use of unmanned aerial vehicles. Other responses added by respondents point to additional threat sources, including messages sent to inmates from hooligans and fans, hostility of the society towards officers, lack of food supplies and new communication devices (smartphones, smartwatches).

Measures aimed at improving threat prevention methods and procedures in correctional facilities in Poland

The final issue covered in the survey concerned the measures aimed at improving threat prevention methods and procedures in correctional facilities in Poland. Linked to this issue was one of the final questions, which concerned the measures and priorities in order to prevent such incidents from occurring on the premises of correctional facilities. The responses are listed in Table 8.

The responses show that according to almost 24% of the respondents, the key measure that needs to be undertaken in order to prevent incidents on the premises of correctional facilities involves hiring competent

officers, bolstering the ranks and ensuring professional recruitment of new Prison Service officers. More than 18% respondents believe that these measures can also include appropriate in-service training and other ways of improving officers' skills, resulting in well-trained staff. 12% of respondents believe that the solution to the potential threats involves stripping inmates of their rights and privileges, while increasing isolation and disciplinary action, including additional methods of punishment. Only 1.5% of respondents believe that improved communication, information flow and better cooperation could prove beneficial.

Table 8. Priority measures to be undertaken to prevent incidents from occurring on the premises of correctional facilities

Response categories	%
1. Increasing staffing, hiring competent staff, professional recruitment process	23.7
2. Offering training, ensuring good training of the staff, more training, professional development	18.5
3. Reducing inmates' rights and privileges, more disciplinary measures, more punishment and increased isolation	12.0
4. Prevention, inspections, frequent checks, surveillance	6.0
5. Understanding inmates and their circles, interviews with inmates	4.1
6. Increasing salaries, proper incentives and rewards, improving service conditions	6.2
7. Introducing new protective technologies, improved PPE, better equipment	6.5
8. More rights and powers for officers, legal protection for officers	1.9
9. Improving communication, information flow and cooperation	1.5
10. Tougher laws, regulations, death penalty, changing the law	1.7
11. Ensuring greater discipline among officers, emphasis on dutiful service	2.8
12. No response/Nothing	2.6
13. Other**	10.3

** Clarification of the other response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

In the last question, respondents were asked to indicate what operating procedures should be introduced in order to prevent threats in correctional facilities in Poland. The data is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Operating procedures required in order to prevent threats in correctional facilities

Response categories	%
1. Arming officers, reinstating armed officers, weapons and other methods of coercion	3.7
2. Bolstering officers' ranks, increasing the number of posts, ensuring an adequate number of officers	9.5
3. Stripping inmates' rights and privileges, introducing stronger disciplinary sanctions and measures, reducing communication, increasing isolation, harsher punishment	9.0
4. More training, better training for officers	13.3
5. Prevention, emphasis on preventive measures, managing inmates	7.1
6. Observation, surveillance, understanding the atmosphere	1.7
7. The current operating procedures are sufficient and all methods are adequate	3.0
8. Relevant procedures, instructions, legislation and compliance	3.7
9. Seamless flow of information, communication, cooperation between departments, units, and staff	2.2
10. Better, more modern equipment, including PPE, technological innovations	1.7
11. I don't know/None	5.8
12. Other**	11.4

** Clarification of the *other* response.

Source: Authors' own compilation of the survey results, N=465.

The analysis of the results shows that 13.3% of respondents are convinced that the best way to counteract threats in correctional facilities involves increasing the number of properly conducted exercises and training sessions. According to 9.5% of respondents, the preferred solution is to grow the ranks of officers and bolster the number of full-time positions¹². Only 7.1% of respondents consider proper prevention activities and inmate management to be the best solutions, while 3.7% believe that threats can be prevented with appropriate procedures, instructions and legislation.

¹² The NIK report "draws attention to the persistently high number of vacancies across the entire Prison Service. Only in 2022 did this number fall below 3% of established posts (amounting at that time to 769), whereas during the audit period it increased from 898 to 1,420 (by 58.1%), which corresponded to between 3.2% and 6% of established posts. The proportion of the most experienced officers (with more than five years of service) decreased significantly. From 75% of all officers at the end of 2021, it fell to 63% at the end of June 2024. This was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of the least experienced officers (in preparatory service, i.e., up to two years) from 12.3% to 21.7% of the total", NIK, *Informacja o wynikach kontroli „Bezpieczeństwo funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych”*, LRZ.430.2.2025. nr ewid. 7/2025/P/24/083/LRZ, pp. 16–17.

Conclusion

Summarising the results of the study, one could state that as far as the first issue regarding the security of correctional facilities in the context of potential threats is concerned, the vast majority of respondents believe that as of today, the units of the Prison Service are adequately prepared to counteract the threats occurring on their premises. The Prison Service officers participating in the survey believe that their qualifications and skills are adequate from the standpoint of counteracting any emergent threats in correctional facilities. The respondents indicate that the key factors contributing to security in correctional facilities include proper equipment and weapons, as well as technical safeguards and security systems. Respondents also mentioned well-trained staff, preparedness and regular training of officers. These observations are echoed in their assessment of measures and mechanisms enabling detection and identification of possible threats.

In the assessment of the types of potential threats in correctional facilities, the respondents indicate that as far as the Prison Service officers are concerned, corruption remains the biggest threat. Given the prevalence of this response, this area might require additional focus. Other threats brought up by respondents included dereliction of duty, lack of commitment, haste, routine and negligence. This response is particularly worrisome, since the factors mentioned by respondents have a direct correlation with the level of security in correctional facilities and play a role in dangerous incidents. Sharing their opinions, Prison Service officers also noted significant staff turnover and staff shortages as well as high absenteeism. The fact that officers are overworked results in a higher number of mistakes, while staff shortages hamper the efforts to ensure adequate security.

As far as the threats caused by inmates are concerned, many respondents chose mutiny, protests and demonstrations, as well as disobedience – with over 31% of respondents choosing this answer. Mutiny, protests and demonstrations are both grave and unpredictable threats. Respondents also mentioned acts of aggression, as well as fights, assaults, and the abuse of drugs, illicit substances and alcohol by inmates. Due to the above, it is crucial for officers to prevent the smuggling of the above-mentioned substances into the premises of correctional facilities. The least

mentioned threats due to inmates include destruction of prison property, arson and setting fires.

The threats stemming from the forces of nature in the Prison Service that respondents mention the most often include floods, heavy rain, and water damage. 33.8% of all respondents chose this answer. Others mentioned fires, storms, lightning, strong winds, gales or hurricanes as other threat sources. These threats are difficult to combat, as they are beyond our control.

To conclude, ensuring proper preparedness of correctional facilities in Poland hinges upon ensuring proper training for the Prison Service officers, along with access to relevant equipment and extensive mechanisms which enable counteracting threats on their premises. The ever-changing character of the threats makes them the main factor that impacts the process of maintaining order and ensuring security in prisons and detention centres on three levels, which include the security of inmates, the security of the officers and the security of the correctional facility itself.

The above conclusions correspond with the findings presented in the cited information on the results of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) audit, particularly those included in chapters “5. Key audit findings” and “Analysis of the organizational and economic situation”¹³, which highlighted, among other things, deficiencies in the implementation of exercises and training for officers, failure to identify the needs regarding the number of officers (vacancies and staffing problems within the Prison Service), a lack of willing or adequately prepared and motivated officers, and poor media (and public) perception of officers. As NIK notes, this last aspect in particular seems particularly difficult to overcome, given the media’s tendency to present negative topics and omit positive aspects.

¹³ NIK, *Informacja o wynikach kontroli „Bezpieczeństwo funkcjonariuszy służby ięziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych”*, LRZ.430.2.2025, nr ewid. 7/2025/P/24/083/LRZ, pp. 16-17.

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