

## **Crime prevention: With or without the police? – Rural perspectives on security and self-protection**

The presence of police in rural areas has been significantly reduced in recent decades, raising questions about its impact on crime prevention and residents' sense of security. Between 2007 and 2015, a significant number of police stations in Poland were closed, resulting in many villages being left without a permanent police presence. This study aims to examine the role of law enforcement in rural crime prevention and explore how local communities adapt to limited police availability through alternative security measures.

The research is grounded in both quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of the scientific project "Rural Crime in Poland", which is funded by the National Science Centre (NCN). A nationwide survey (n = 1000) was conducted among rural residents to provide insights into their perceptions of safety, trust in law enforcement, and the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies. Furthermore, in-depth interviews with policing and security experts working in rural areas (FGIs) reveal systemic challenges faced by law enforcement.