

Original article



## The diagnosis of citizen security. A necessary approach for local public management

**El diagnóstico de la seguridad ciudadana. Un acercamiento necesario para su gestión pública local**

**O diagnóstico da segurança cidadã. Uma abordagem necessária para sua gestão pública local**

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### ABSTRACT

Citizen security is a recurring issue on the governmental agenda of many States working to implement the sustainable development model promulgated by the United Nations in its 2030 Agenda. Cuba is no exception, so citizen security and its provision, as part of public management at the local level, constitute a challenge to advance in the materialization of the Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development. In this understanding, the objective of this work was to analyze the current state of citizen security and its local public management in the municipality of Guantánamo.

It is a qualitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional and descriptive study, which based on the use of methods such as analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, the authors' experience, documentary review and the criteria provided from a survey applied to a sample of public servants involved in its provision, made it possible to identify progress and challenges in this activity. The results reveal the complexity of the concept of citizen security, as well as the multidimensional, interdisciplinary, multi-actor and participatory nature that should characterize its provision from local public management. They also establish an empirical basis that reveals the existence of possibilities that can be explored to make the actions of local authorities and their impact on citizen security more effective.

**Keywords:** management; public management; local public management; security; citizen security.

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## RESUMEN

La seguridad ciudadana resulta un tema recurrente en la agenda gubernamental de muchos Estados que trabajan en pos de implementar el modelo de desarrollo sostenible que promulga la Organización de Naciones Unidas en su Agenda 2030. Cuba no es la excepción, por lo que la seguridad ciudadana y su provisión, como parte de la gestión pública a escala local, constituyen un reto para avanzar en la materialización del Modelo Económico y Social de Desarrollo Socialista. En este entendido, el objetivo del presente trabajo fue analizar el estado actual de la seguridad ciudadana y su gestión pública local en el municipio de Guantánamo. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo, no experimental, de tipo transversal y de alcance descriptivo, que sobre la base del empleo de métodos como el análisis-síntesis, la inducción-deducción, la experiencia de los autores, la revisión documental y los criterios aportados a partir de una encuesta aplicada a una muestra de servidores públicos que intervienen en su provisión, permitió identificar avances y desafíos en esta actividad. Los resultados revelan la complejidad del concepto de seguridad ciudadana, así como el carácter multidimensional, interdisciplinario, multiactoral y participativo que debe caracterizar su provisión desde la gestión pública local. Asimismo, establecen una base empírica que revela la existencia de posibilidades que se pueden explorar para hacer más efectiva la acción de las autoridades locales y sus impactos en la seguridad ciudadana.

**Palabras clave:** gestión; gestión pública; gestión pública local; seguridad; seguridad ciudadana.

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## RESUMO

A segurança cidadã é um tema recorrente na agenda governamental de muitos Estados que trabalham para implementar o modelo de desenvolvimento sustentável promovido pela Organização das Nações Unidas em sua Agenda 2030. Cuba não é uma exceção, portanto, a segurança cidadã e sua provisão como parte da gestão pública em escala local constituem um desafio para avançar na materialização do Modelo Econômico e Social de Desenvolvimento Socialista. Nesse sentido, o objetivo deste trabalho foi analisar o estado atual da segurança cidadã e sua gestão pública local no município de Guantánamo. Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo, não experimental, de tipo transversal e de alcance descritivo, que, com base na utilização de métodos como análise-síntese, indução-dedução, a experiência dos autores, a revisão documental e os critérios fornecidos a partir de uma pesquisa aplicada a uma amostra de servidores públicos que intervêm em sua provisão, permitiu identificar avanços e desafios nessa atividade. Os resultados revelam a complexidade do conceito de segurança cidadã, bem como o caráter multidimensional, interdisciplinar, multifatorial e participativo que deve caracterizar sua provisão a partir da gestão pública local. Além disso, estabelecem uma base empírica que revela a existência de possibilidades que podem ser exploradas para tornar mais efetiva a ação das autoridades locais e seus impactos na segurança cidadã.

**Palavras-chave:** gestão; gestão pública; gestão pública local; segurança; segurança cidadã.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, as a result of historical development and the productive forces of society, it is living with the process of globalization, distinguished among other features by the accelerated advance of science and technology and its unavoidable, direct and almost immediate impact on the life of man and in all spheres of his activity.

In this scenario, there are many uncertainties, challenges and new social problems in the political, economic, sociocultural, technological, environmental, etc., areas that are proliferating worldwide, these include: environmental degradation, the aging of the population, the depletion of natural resources, the increase in crime and administrative corruption, the increase in tensions and hostilities between States, the emergence of new diseases, the fury of hydro-meteorological phenomena and natural disasters, among other events that constantly citizen security.

From the systematization carried out on the concept of citizen security, it has been possible to identify that it should be conceived as a public policy, understanding this as the guidelines or courses of action defined by the authorities of the States to achieve a given objective, and that contribute to create or transform the conditions in which the activities of individuals or groups that make up society are developed, safeguarding human rights (Chinchilla & Vorndran, 2018; Mesa Mejía, 2015).

It was also noted that this concept alludes to two levels of reality. The first alludes to a fundamental condition for the development of every person and society, since it implies certainty and the absence of risk, threat or damage that endangers collective security. From this perspective, the construct acquires a normative meaning and evaluates an ideal situation.

The second perspective from which the analyzed category is approached refers to the concrete actions of the State, aimed at eliminating security threats or protecting citizens from them, reasons that have made them a recurring theme in the governmental agenda of most countries in the world in recent times.

In the approach to citizen security contained in the literature consulted, two dimensions are taken into account: the objective and the subjective, which condition the levels of security experienced by people in a given environment, taking into account indicators that refer to both a quantitative vision of the phenomenon (objective and reflecting reality) and another based on the perception and characteristics of the subject (citizen) in relation to the conditions that guarantee his or her security.

Although from its beginnings, citizen security has included addressing violence, crime and fear of crime, it now involves much more than the protection by the state of people's physical integrity and property. In the evolution of this issue, it has been associated with different concepts (public order, internal order, public safety, etc.) and its approach in practice has been determined by the prevailing approach (repressive, punitive, etc.) to security.

The most recent perspectives conceive citizen security in a broader perspective that implies not only being protected from crime and no longer considering it to be the exclusive domain of the police, the courts and other judicial actors. They also imply the possibility of living in a constitutional rule of law and participating in the benefits of development in terms of health, education, housing, work, leisure

and all areas of social welfare, an evolution that has been interpreted by some authors as a redefinition of public security<sup>1</sup> with a more comprehensive perspective.

Consequently, the notion of citizen security used in this paper is associated with the definition of human security issued by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2013, 2020), which implies a broader conception of security, with a much greater emphasis on people's security and the conditions to guarantee it, merits greater attention to human life and dignity, that is, security based on human development, a perspective still little explored despite the contributions made by various authors in the international arena to provide citizen security (Tanner-Smith et al., 2019), whose proposals criminal activity, criminality and violence, aspects that make up the original core of the phenomenon.

The assumed conception conceives that insecurity does not stem only from the infraction of criminal or contravention norms, as it is part of a complex, multi-causal, multidimensional phenomenon with effects of different scope and nature (Quintero Cordero, 2020; Rodríguez Velazco, 2020).

Consequently, this work highlights the relevance of a comprehensive approach to the causes of the problems that give rise to it, as a basis for the adoption of strategies and interventions that, with a markedly preventive character, have an impact on the social and situational aspects that determine the conditions of safety (Orellana, 2022).

Such consideration of citizen security not only merits the integration of a multiplicity of environments<sup>2</sup>, political, social, economic and environmental, but also of governmental management at different levels (national, territorial and local), capable of promoting and implementing public policies that, centered on citizens, have an impact on their security.

A trend identified in the management of citizen security is that which gives relevance to the work of municipal authorities in its provision (Arjona Sánchez et al., 2023), which is associated with their

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<sup>1</sup> In its traditional definition, public safety refers to the maintenance of peace and public order achieved through criminal control mechanisms and actions for the prevention and repression of certain crimes and administrative offenses that violate it, particularly through the systems for the procurement and administration of justice.

<sup>2</sup> These environments in turn are associated with economic security, community security, environmental security and political security, with their respective indicators (Ramos García, 2005).

proximity to the population and their ability to manage initiatives and resources to address the situations that generate insecurity, including information among the latter.

The need for the provision of citizen security from local management is based on current paradigms of State management that emphasize the need to decentralize its functions to lower levels, with a line of thought that argues that particularly local spaces are the appropriate scenario to promote various initiatives to solve conflicts and problems affecting the community, involving the different actors involved and opening the way increasingly to citizen participation in the matter, so that: (...) people do not behave as passive beneficiaries, but become involved as actors in the processes of generating solutions to their problems (food, health, housing), participate in the creation of opportunities and in decision-making, for example, at the local level (Díaz-Canel Bermúdez & Fernández González, 2020).

In Cuba, this is favored by the new management paradigm assumed by the Public Administration, as a result of the updating of the Cuban Economic Model, configured by the social or citizen dimension, social effectiveness, participation and social transformation, and based on humanistic, extroverted, qualitative, participatory, innovative and strategic approaches in the conduct of the processes of this field of action of the State.

The science and innovation-based government system is also a useful instrument for conducting government policies aimed at connecting science, technology and innovation with the solution of development problems, at the national, sectoral and local levels (Díaz-Canel Bermúdez & Delgado Fernández, 2021).

All of the above imposes a challenge for the municipal government bodies in Cuba, which with the Constitutional Reform in 2019 and the subsequent transformations experienced in legislative matters, are empowered as actors to manage the intended levels of development, by virtue of which they require the incorporation of new methods and tools to carry out local public management at the height of the demands that this imposes, in particular to strengthen the social function citizen security.

Addressing citizen security and analyzing the current state of its local public management in the municipality of Guantánamo, from the perception of citizens who, due to the professional work they perform, are key actors for its provision, is the objective of the work presented, which becomes a starting point for the improvement of this activity from the identification of the main challenges that

the government bodies in this demarcation must overcome to increase the effectiveness of local public management of Citizen Security.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research adopted a mixed approach, consisting of a qualitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional and descriptive study, which was based on the use of the quantitative approach to achieve the stated objective.

The study conducted inquired citizen security and the current state of its local public management in the municipality of Guantánamo, based on the information generated by means of a survey applied to a group of public servants involved in its provision.

For the study, a non-probabilistic and intensive sample of 162 people was chosen, who work as leaders and officials in production and service entities in the municipality of Guantánamo, as well as in bodies and agencies that perform functions of public interest and that have an impact in some way on citizen security. Of these, 13 members of the sample belong to the National Revolutionary Police and other bodies of the Ministry of the Interior in the territory. Another 57 work in positions that perform management functions in business entities specifically dedicated to security and protection services, 70 individuals in the sample are public servants who work in business organizations, as well as in the provincial and municipal Directorates of Central State Administration agencies located in the territory (22), although only 53.5% of them perform management functions at the different organizational levels of their respective entities. Likewise, the study sample includes 21 public officials who hold positions in the local bodies of the People's Power at the provincial level and in the head municipality

The positions held by 27.3% of the selected sample belong to the strategic apex of their organizations, 18.2% to the middle line and 54. to the operational level, which facilitates more systematic contact with citizens. All the interviewees are top-level graduates, and 6 of them have attained a master's degree. The participants in the study have been working in their positions for an average of 11 years, which speaks in favor of their mastery of the activity they perform.

The relevant information for the research was obtained through the application of a survey to individuals belonging to the chosen sample, an instrument composed of six questions with multiple *items* that describe situations on the basis of which it is possible to determine their perception of

citizen security and the current state of certain conditions inherent to their local public management in Guantánamo.

The reliability of the designed instrument was evaluated by determining its internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha, which, determined with the assistance of the SPSS 25 statistical package, reached a value of 0.803. For its application, the individuals who made up the sample were visited and the objective of the study and the characteristics of the instrument were explained to them, and they were asked (after obtaining their informed consent) to provide the corresponding answers. The data collected were entered into a Microsoft Excel template to facilitate processing, visualization and interpretation of the information obtained.

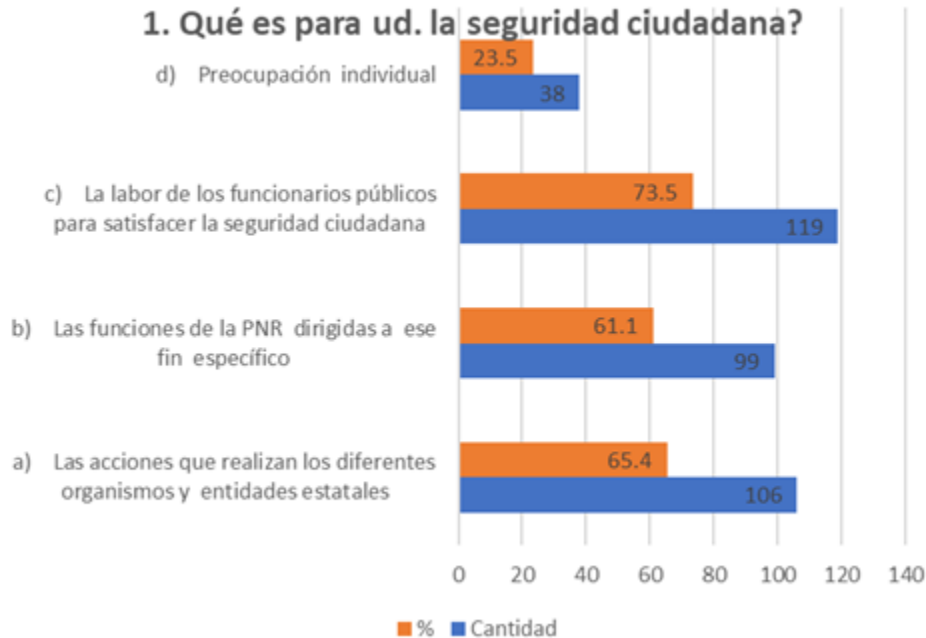
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the instrument used to arrive at an approach to the state of citizen security and its local public management in the municipality of Guantánamo, it was inquired about the conceptual domain that the members of the sample selected for the study, by virtue of the position and the work they perform, have of the concept, which is related to the content of three of the six questions that make up the survey applied, as detailed below.

The analysis of question number one, as shown in the graph in figure 1, reveals that most of the surveyed cadres, leaders and officials identify citizen security with the actions of the State (65,4%) and recognize the role of their role as public servants in its provision (7,5%).

However, the fact that a considerable percentage of the participants in the study associate citizen security with the work of the National Revolutionary Police (61.1%), together with the low proportion of respondents who recognize it as an individual concern (23.5%), confirms the prevalence of conventional approaches to citizen security and reaffirms what was stated by Pacherras Ruiz (2024, p. 3145) on the fact that "(...) the State has as one of its public policies the protection of human rights, and as one of its strategies to involve citizens in actions for security, prevention and control of public safety"





**Figure 1.** Respondents' conception of citizen security

Source: Own elaboration

The criteria of those surveyed in this study yields light on the need to promote effective actions aimed at achieving a more active citizenry in the challenge of guaranteeing citizen security, because, although the State frames and supports it, it is the people with their effective participation who contribute elements for its improvement.

In this scenario, it is agreed that in the management of Citizen Security in Cuba, municipalities have to play a relational role, through strategic alliances, with the social and economic agents of their territory to favor their development and increase the quality of life of citizens, for which the importance of the participation of various actors is recognized, such as the State, the citizenry and mass organizations (Machín Hernández et al., 2019).

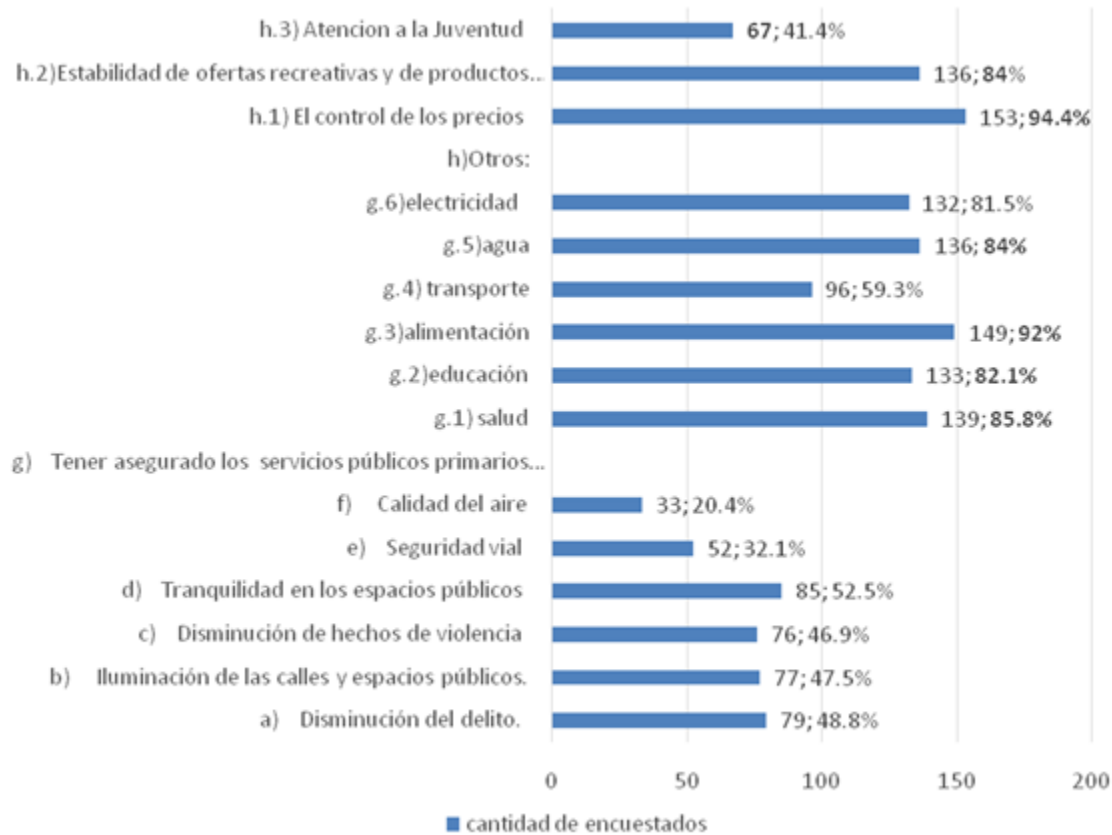
Consequently, the work defends the idea that local citizen security, understood in an integral manner, affects and involves different actors: the institutions located in the municipality, with emphasis on higher education, political, social and mass organizations (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, Federation of Cuban Women), productive entities (state and non-state), non-

governmental organizations and, of course, the people who live in the locality. This is in agreement with the line of thought of Pacherrres Ruiz (2024), who considers the multidimensionality of the subject, and considers that the direct responsibility is not only of the state, but is also a responsibility of the various governmental institutions that includes the participation of citizens.

The second *item* or question had the objective of inquiring the situations with which respondents associate citizen security, in an attempt to identify the relevant dimensions and the factors that influence it. In this regard, and as can be deduced from figure 2, the economic variable acquires special relevance according to the criteria of the respondents, due to the impact it has on the stability of consumer products and services (84%) as well as on the control of their prices (94%).

A considerable number of respondents associate citizen security with the quality of services that satisfy basic needs such as food (92%), health (85.8%), water supply (84%) and education (82%), which makes it a vital factor in providing citizen security.

The above coincides in part with the findings of other research conducted in other contexts. For example, Caro (2017, cited in Pacherrres, 2024), refers to social vulnerability and the economy, as well as the lack of access to basic services such as health, highlighting that the authorities divert attention to the issue in the mass media. However, what is referred to by the respondents in this study contrasts with what has been identified by other authors who report that, in addition to those previously mentioned, insecurity, violence and crime are among the problems that generate the most insecurity among Latin American citizens.



**Figure 2.** Assessment of the situations with which respondents associate the concept of citizen security

Source: Own elaboration

The fact that 52,5% of the respondents associated the concept of citizen security with tranquility in public spaces, 48,8% with the dynamics of crime, 46, 9% with violence and 41, 4% with attention to youth, even though it does not include all the members of the study sample, shows the relevance of the socio-cultural dimension in terms of citizen security.

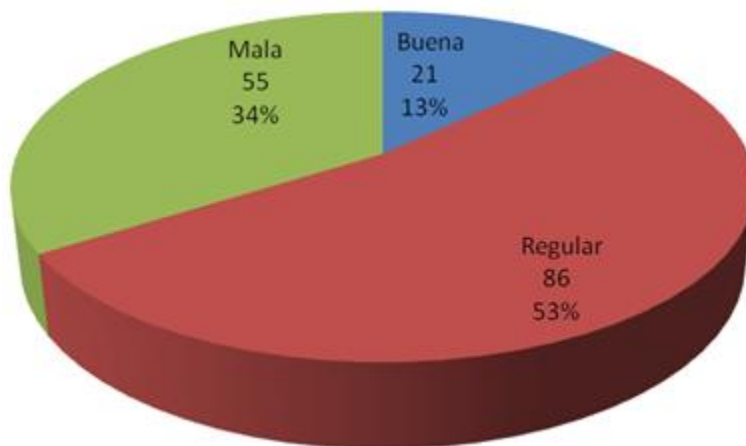
However, it is significant that only 20,4% of respondents associate citizen security with environmental factors, which sheds light on the importance they attach to the environmental dimension, which could be determined by a lack of environmental culture or because they do not perceive that factors of this nature significantly affect or endanger citizen security.

The results of this question reaffirm the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon under study (local public management of citizen security), and reveal the relevance of determining the level of security perceived by citizens as an indispensable support for local government management.

With the analysis of the answers given by the respondents to the third question of the instrument, it was possible to determine that they perceive as the main effects of not providing sufficient levels of citizen security, in order of importance: insufficient quality of life (93 %), citizen discontent (88.6 %) and distrust of citizens in the management of the Government and Public Administration (38.6 %), which indicates that although there are no recipes or easy solutions to provide optimal levels, it is necessary to act around the issue, given the implications it has on the legitimacy of the country's political system and the credibility of citizens in this.

In this regard, question 4 of the survey asked about the evaluation of the members of the study sample regarding the public management carried out at the local level to provide citizen security, which, as shown in figure 3, according to most of the respondents (87%) is not satisfactory.

Such results confirm IPSOS statistics showing in 2018 that 79.6% of citizens in Latin American countries present a dissatisfaction of feeling unprotected by the Government in relation to citizen security, a situation that was further relegated in the time of the pandemic, since the State prioritized health aspects (Pacherres Ruiz, 2024).



**Figure 3.** Assessment of local public management to provide citizen security

Source: Own elaboration

Question number five of the survey was aimed at identifying the factors that act as limitations for local public management of citizen safety. As shown in the graph in figure 4, the main barriers are associated with both tangible and intangible assets in public management. Although those associated with the so-called "hard factors" such as material, financial and technological resources are those that, according to the criteria of most of the respondents, have a marked impact on the phenomenon studied, barriers of a subjective nature related to the preparation of public servants, communication and coordination, also limit it significantly



**Figure 4.** Assessment of the barriers limiting local public management of citizen security

Source: Own elaboration

The last question of the survey asked about proposals or alternative ideas for improving the effectiveness of local public management of citizen security in the territory. It is worth highlighting the diversity of proposals made by the respondents, which due to their similarity were grouped in those related to: the formulation of territorial public policies on citizen security and their implementation at the local level (84.6 %), the elaboration of a Citizen Security Plan as a working instrument to operationalize the strategic projection of the local government in matters of citizen security (82 %); the creation of an observatory or other mechanisms that contribute to manage

information and facilitate social communication of citizen security (46 %) and decision making in this regard, as well as the assessment of the social impact of actions at the community level (54 %).

The research conducted showed that citizen security is a constant concern of the Cuban State, the government and its executing arm: the Public Administration, which is why it occupies the actions of a multiplicity of actors, including the citizens themselves, who have become more aware and more demanding in this regard.

The perception of the participants in the study reveals that conditions associated with economic and material factors (especially their insufficiency) in the current national context are among those that most generate insecurity among citizens, which contrasts with the concerns related to crime, violence and criminality experienced by the inhabitants of Latin America, which limit their peaceful coexistence and the full enjoyment of most diverse human rights.

The impossibility of accessing specific data on indicators that, associated with the different dimensions, complement the analysis of the current state of citizen security in the territory under study, constituted an element that could limit the objectivity of the research carried out, however, it emphasized the value of the subjective dimension of citizen security, as well as the importance of resorting to the criteria and perception of citizens as an essential source of information for greater effectiveness of local public management.

In this sense, the participants in the study perceive local public management of citizen security in the territory as unsatisfactory, which is recognized as being affected by the confluence of objective and subjective factors, where the preparation and performance of local authorities acquire considerable weight in an international and national context in which access to technologies and material and financial resources is increasingly difficult for third world countries.

The study found a multiplicity of challenges that local authorities must face in order to achieve greater effectiveness in the public management of citizen security, among them: the need to adopt an integral, multisectoral, participatory, inclusive approach that emphasizes prevention, that favors institutional strengthening through the allocation of resources and the development of competencies required to implement in practice public policies and work strategies contextualized to the particularities of the territory and of those who inhabit it. There are many opportunities available from the popular wisdom and the political, regulatory, structural and legal framework in Cuba for the improvement of this activity.

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### **Conflict of interest**

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

### **Authors' contribution**

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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