

Immigration within Crime and Justice Statistics

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The topic of immigration has been at the fore-front of public and political debate throughout the ages. The only exception to this perhaps being the free movement of people across regions during the periods of the great empires. In classic Athens, for example, immigrants (despite being very welcome) were themselves refused citizen status, and their offspring from 'mixed' marriages with Athenians were deprived from holding public offices. Not even the first man of the first city state in the 'Non-Barbarian' world at the time, the powerful Pericles, could change this - and as a result his only son could not succeed him in politics. Classic Sparta accepted immigrants only as slaves, and these could be killed by any Spartan during training. Aided and abetted by the authorities, immigrants have throughout time within popular culture and opinion been made the scapegoats for anything unpleasant from epidemics and extreme physical phenomena in the middle-ages (or for earlier examples please see the Old Testament). In more modern times, they have been held accountable for economic woes, poor health and social services, and, pertinent to our interests, crime.

In the current context of a rather heated debate on immigration, crime and justice statistics (along with Immigration Statistics from the Office for National Statistics and Home Office) have definitely a role to play in informing both the public and politicians on the relationship, if any, between crime and immigration.

Our only currently approved national crime statistics data source, the **Crime Survey for England and Wales** (formerly known as the British Crime Survey) includes information on respondents' self-reported ethnic background and whether they were born in the UK - alongside other demographic and socio-economic attributes of respondents and their areas of residence (Flatley 2014; ONS 2015; TNS-BRMB 2012). This information can be used to gauge how non-white British and current immigrants feature compared to British and native respondents, respectively, with regards to a wide array of criminological topics covered by the survey:

- victimisation risk by specific crime types, including hate crime, domestic violence, sexual victimisation and stalking;
- fear of crime and perceived incivilities;
- experience of anti-social behaviour;
- experiences of the police and attitudes to the criminal justice system;
- self-reported offending, alcohol consumption and drug abuse;
- experiences with the criminal justice system and victim support services;

- crime prevention and security, including online security;
- media consumption, and many more topics of criminological interest.

In addition, the Home Office collates information from both police recorded crime statistics and CSEW data to produce an annual publication on hate crime (for the latest issue see Corcoran et al. 2015).

The annual Crime Surveys Users Conference regularly features talks on the topic of immigration drawn from (statistical modelling) analyses of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). One such study, for example, from the 2012 conference evidenced that immigrants (defined as those survey respondents who had been born outside the UK) were similarly victimised by property crime but experienced less violence than respondents born in the country owing to adopting crime avoidance behaviours (Papadopoulos 2012). Another study presented at the same conference, dealt with victimisation divides across respondents of different religions, arguably encompassing historic immigration to the UK. It evidenced that Muslims were less victimised and had higher confidence in the police than Christians (Hargreaves 2012). Immigration and crime is revisited by Ignatans and Zielinski (2015) within this year's Crime Surveys Users Conference, on 11th December 2015.

A number of studies, drawn from CSEW data, on victimisation risk, victimisation incidence, encompassing repeat victimisation, crime perceptions, including fear of crime (and other topics) control for respondents' ethnic background rather than immigration status. The former arguably denotes current and historic immigration. It has been evidenced, for example, that ethnic minority respondents experience fewer personal crimes but experience higher fear of crime than Whites, especially in less ethnically diverse communities in England and Wales (Brunton-Smith and Sturgis 2011; Tseloni and Pease 2015). Similar findings have been evidenced internationally (for example, Estrada and Nilsson 2004; Pauwels and Hardyns 2010; Rountree et al. 1994).

It should be highlighted that all the above studies examine ethnic minority, religion or immigration status with regards to victimisation or fear of crime comparing identical individuals (save for their immigration status, religion or ethnicity) residing in the same area. In statistical terms this is called '*allowing for group composition*'. The aforementioned study by Hargreaves (2012) nicely clarifies why this is important when examining ethnicity and immigration: Immigrants may reside in undesirable neighbourhoods and/ or earn less than natives. As a result, immigration status effects are confounded with area of residence deprivation and income level effects when analyses do not readily incorporate all relevant factors.

From a public debate or policy perspective this makes all the difference in obtaining and communicating accurate information about threats, if any, and benefits of immigration. Research from the US has evidenced that immigration has actually positively contributed to the crime drop (Sampson 2008; Stowell et al. 2009). In the UK, despite concomitant opposite trends in crime rates and immigrants' share in the population, there is no

evidence yet suggesting that immigration has caused the crime drop because of a lack of empirical studies focusing upon this issue (Bell and Machin 2013).

Despite the fact that household property crime is actually less in areas with a higher percentage of Afro-Caribbean residents in England and Wales, higher percentages of ethnic minority residents within an area appears to increase fear of crime levels (Brunton-Smith and Sturgis 2011; Tseloni 2007). Is the perception amongst the public of an association between immigration and criminality the product of the over-representation of certain ethnic minority groups within the offender population? The Ministry of Justice Statistics includes the immigration status of individuals who have been in contact with the criminal justice system. This information can therefore be used to gauge whether immigrants are over- or under- represented in offending statistics compared to their population share. Such data, however, presumes that the relative presence of immigrants within these offending statistics is a reflection of their level and type of criminality as opposed to the disproportionate level of attention afforded to them by the police through operational activities such as stop and search. For example, in relation to the over-representation of immigrants within the Greek prison population, Antonopoulou and Pitsela (2014) suggest that this is the product of the targeted use of stop and search by the police, and as a response to the economic crisis, rather than because of immigrants' higher disposition to commit crime. The contrast between ancient Athenians' attitudes towards immigrants and those of certain modern elements within Greece, reminds us how changing contexts can radically alter both responses to immigration – and debates surrounding the link with crime.

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