

# International Comparison of Crime Victimization Data

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Insecurity statistics

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[Link to this presentation](https://sites.google.com/site/johnvkesteren/cnis2016)

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# General Characteristics of Crime Surveys



These aspects are relevant if we want to compare the outcome of victimization studies

- Crime Victimization Surveys measure **volume crimes**, crimes that are serious because they happen very often, each individual crimes is not considered very serious (compared to homicide of terrorist attacks).
- These volume crimes are often **not very well measured/registered** by the criminal justice system (police, prosecutors, courts, correctional institutes).
- They measure crime **as perceived by the population** that is often not aware of legal subtleties in crime definitions.
- The data is **victim oriented**, in many cases, the offender is not known.
- It is one of the **first steps in victim oriented criminology**. Who is at risk, where, when, how, types of crime, circumstances. What can (potential) victims do to prevent crime. How can (local) government contribute to prevent crime. Security by design.

# Primary use of victimization data

Compliments the data from the criminal justice system.

There are also other crime statistics available

- The health system on violent crime
- Insurance companies have data on crime
- Banks have data on bank- and credit-card fraud

# Levels of aggregation

- **Individual:**  
Rough victimization profile with age, gender, type of resident (town/village), type of crime, circumstances.
- **Regional:**  
Amount, nature and development of crime
- **National:**  
Amount, nature and development of crime
- **International comparison:**  
Harmonization, Inspiration and Science

# International comparison

- **Harmonization:**

This aspect is not relevant. Within the EU, each country has and keeps its own criminal justice system. The nature of the crimes is that they are not cross-border

# International comparison

- **Inspiration:**

This is relevant: Studying amount, nature and development of crimes in international context can inspire to use successful Crime Policy Measures from other countries or abandon non-successful ones

Or: Crime is going down in most Western countries, despite all its different crime policies

# International comparison

- **Science:**

Crime is traditionally studied in two ways:  
Longitudinal and Cross Sectional.

Longitudinal approach: What changes over time can explain changes in the amount, nature and distribution over time.

Cross-Sectional: What differences in geographical locations can explain differences in amount, nature and distribution of crime between these locations.

# International comparison

- Comparing countries opens up a large range of differences between geographical locations.
- Differences between countries are a lot bigger than the differences between regions within France.



# Problems with comparison of victimization survey data

- The Euro Union approach is that each country provides data and then EuroStat applies a harmonization procedure to make data comparable.
- About any subject, also about crime.

# Problems with comparison of victimization survey data

- A main property of Victimization Surveys is that they are in normal, every day language. They ignore the legalistic subtleties.
- Yet, legal definitions will have influence on wording.

# Problems with comparison of victimization survey data

- Crimes included in a victimization survey reflect the amount and nature of (volume) crimes in a country and there are differences between countries.

# Problems with comparison of victimization survey data

- Different approaches in Crime Surveying
  1. Ask a general question and then ask specific details about each crime mentioned. The US crime survey tries to capture all crime in this way.
  2. The North-Western European approach asks for specific crimes that are a representation of all (volume) crimes. (UK, Netherlands, Sweden).

# Problems with comparison of victimization survey data

- Probing, asking many questions about crime victimization leads to higher numbers.

Two examples:

1. A single question about sexual offences in a fixed period of time (e.g. last year). If yes, when, where and other details. (Most victimization surveys do it this way)
2. Asking about all possible gender sensitive crimes to women only about incidents since the age of 15. (Violence Against Women Surveys)

# Problems with comparison of victimization survey data

- Quality of surveying.
- Mode of surveying (Face to Face, by telephone or via Internet).
- Dedicated surveys about victimization only or a small module part of larger surveys.

# **Solution to the Problems with international comparison**

- Organize a Internationally Survey where all aspects are standardized

## **The International Crime Victims Surveys**

This project has been running since 1989.

# The International Crime Victims Surveys



- Initiative was taken by the Dutch Ministry of Justice (Jan van Dijk), British Home Office (Pat Mayhew) and University of Lausanne (Martin Killias). Later also United Nations got involved. Currently, the project is based at Lausanne University. (Reports)
- I have been involved since 1990. responsible for data management and standardization of data analysis.



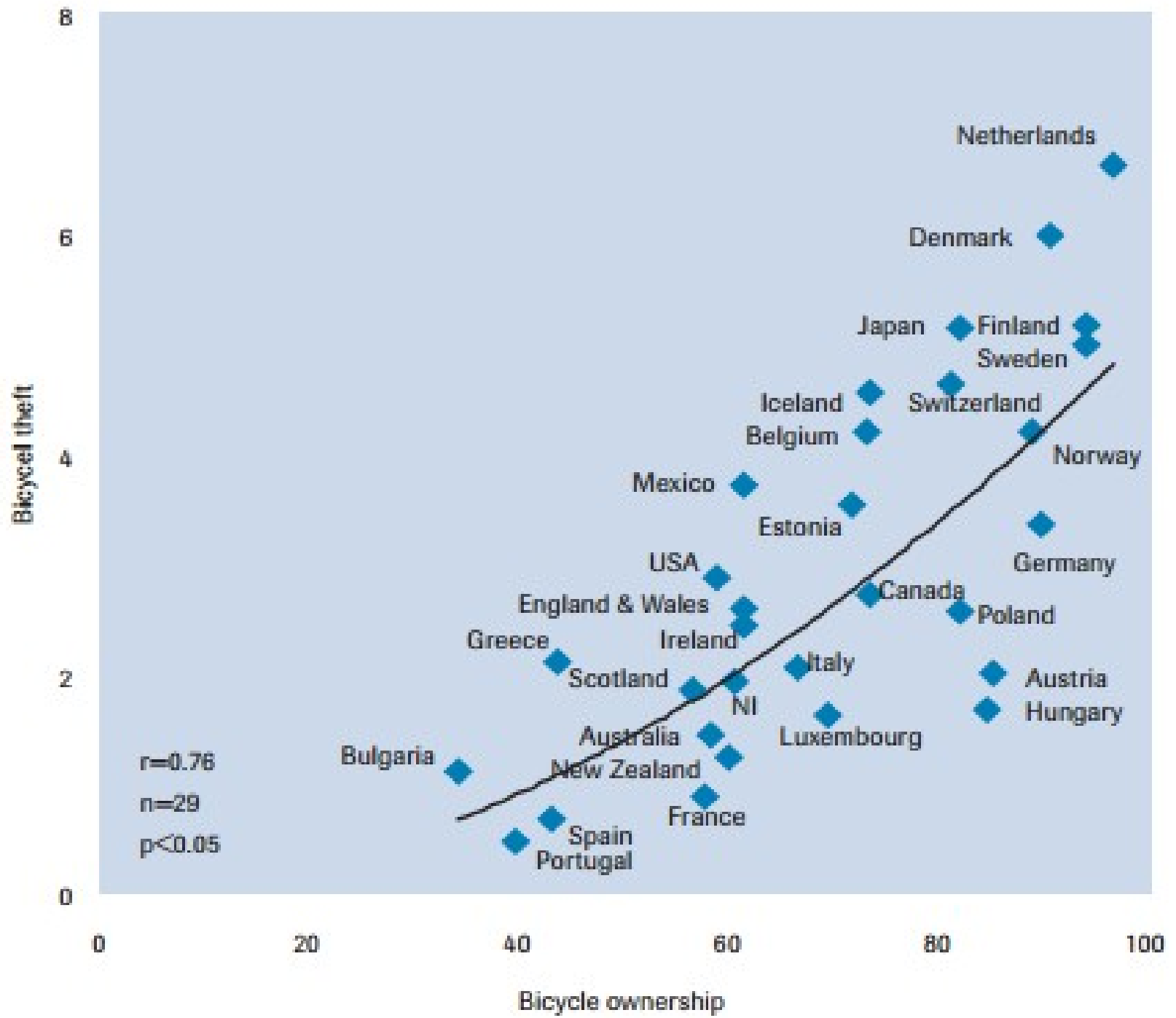
# The International Crime Victims Surveys

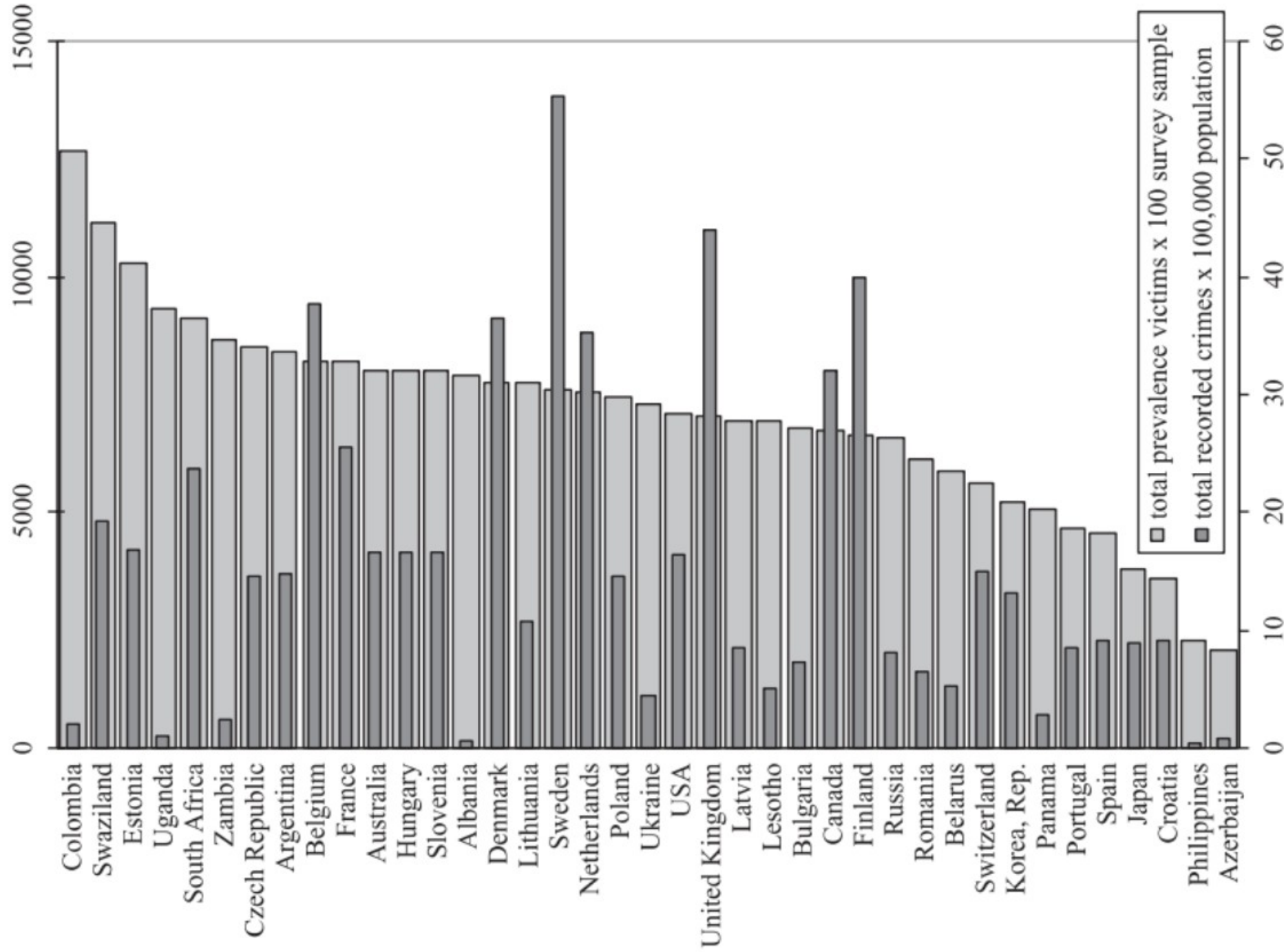
- Over 90 countries participated; over 180 surveys have been done. Latest surveys were done in six Caribbean countries (islands) and in Kyrgyzstan. We are working towards a Central Asian survey. (Reports)

# The International Crime Victims Surveys

- We have made attempts to convert the European part of the ICVS project into a European Union initiative. Coordinated by EuroStat. (report) The attempt failed.

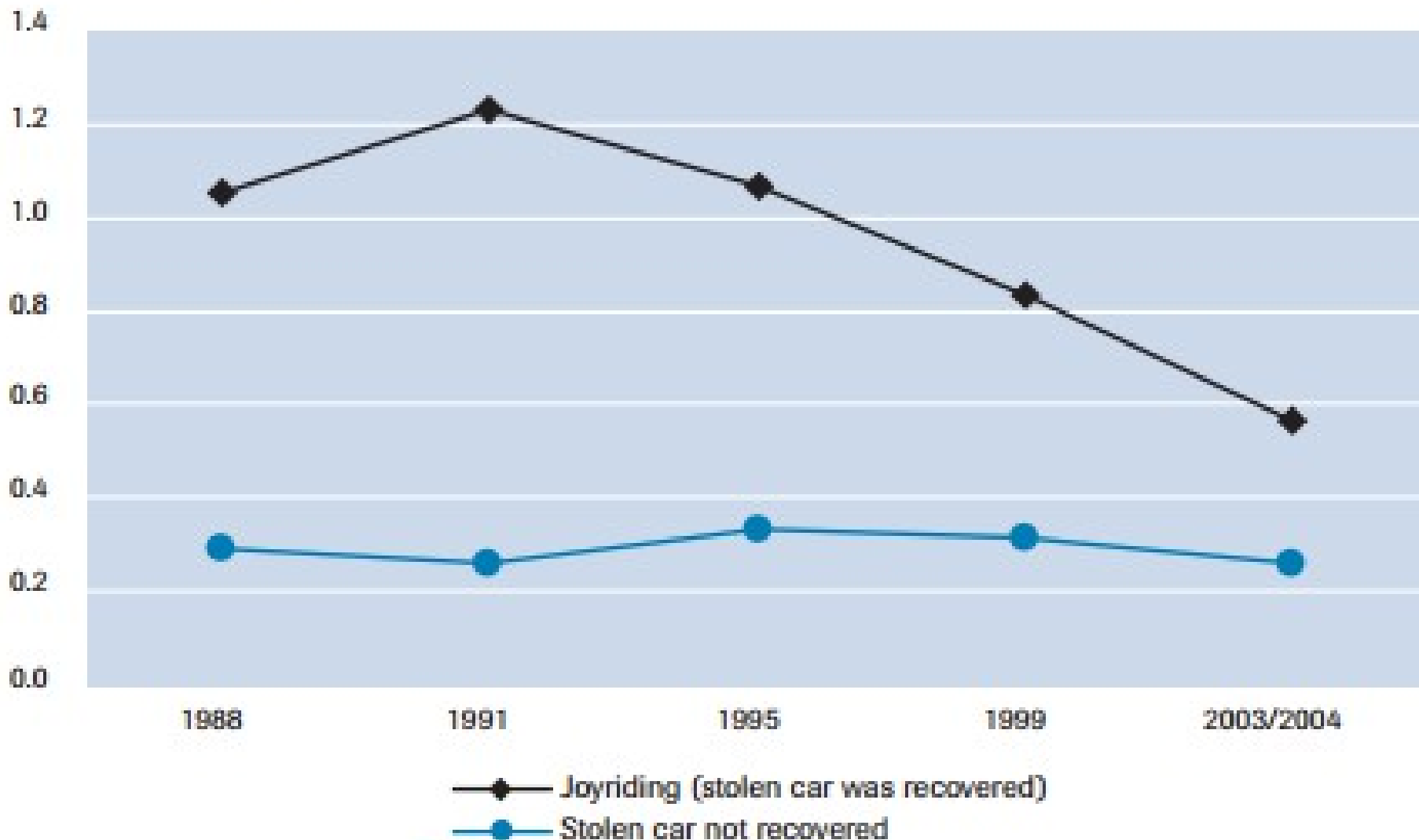
**Figure 11** Plot of bicycle ownership (percentage ownership in 2004/05) with theft of bicycles (percentage one year prevalence rate in 2003/04) in countries. 2004-2005 ICVS and 2005 EU ICS





**Figure 7**

**Trends in theft of a car, broken down by type of theft; one-year prevalence rates (percentages) for countries for which data is available for at least three rounds of surveys\*. Data from the 1989-2005 ICVS and 2005 EU ICS**

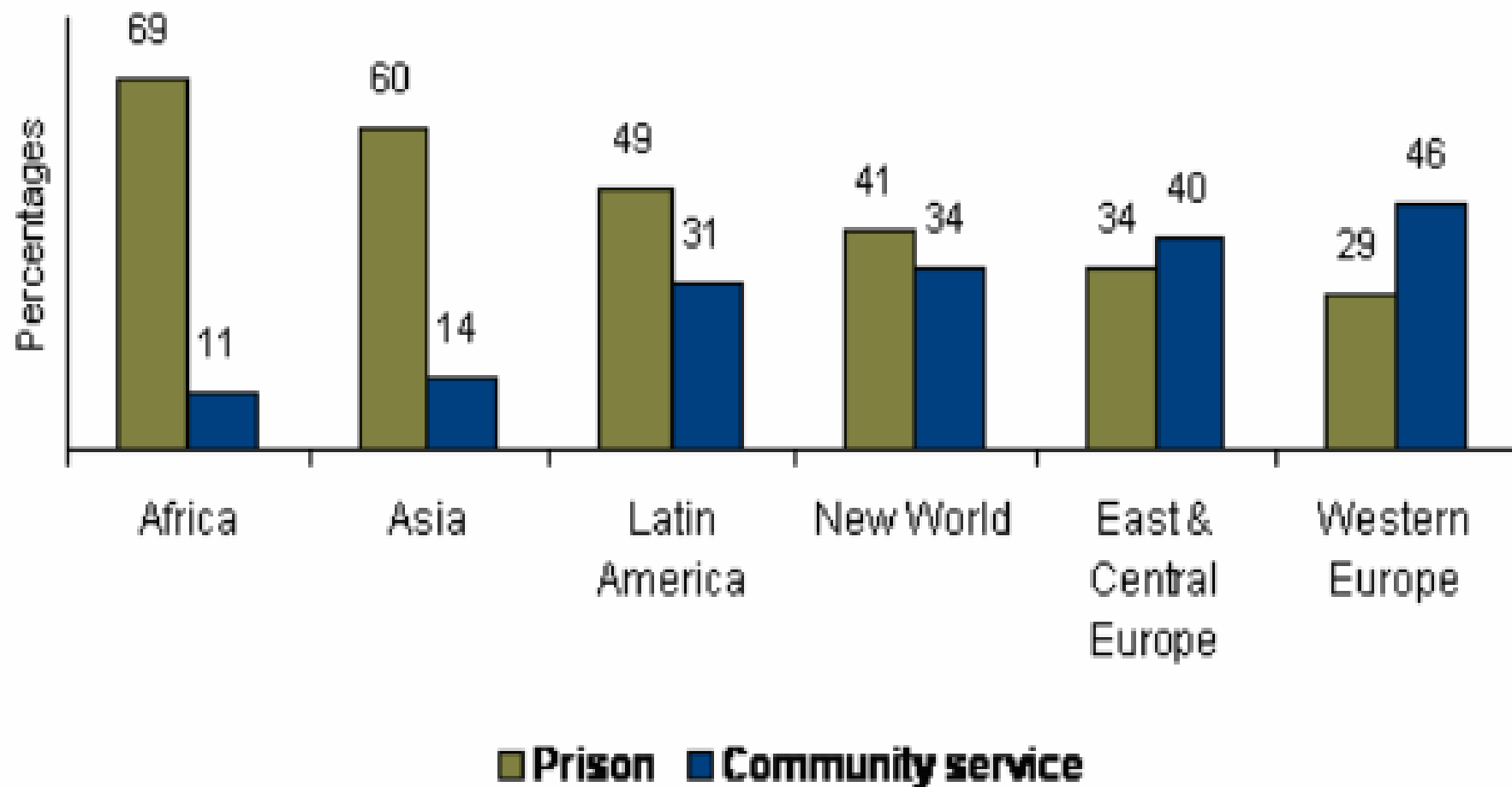


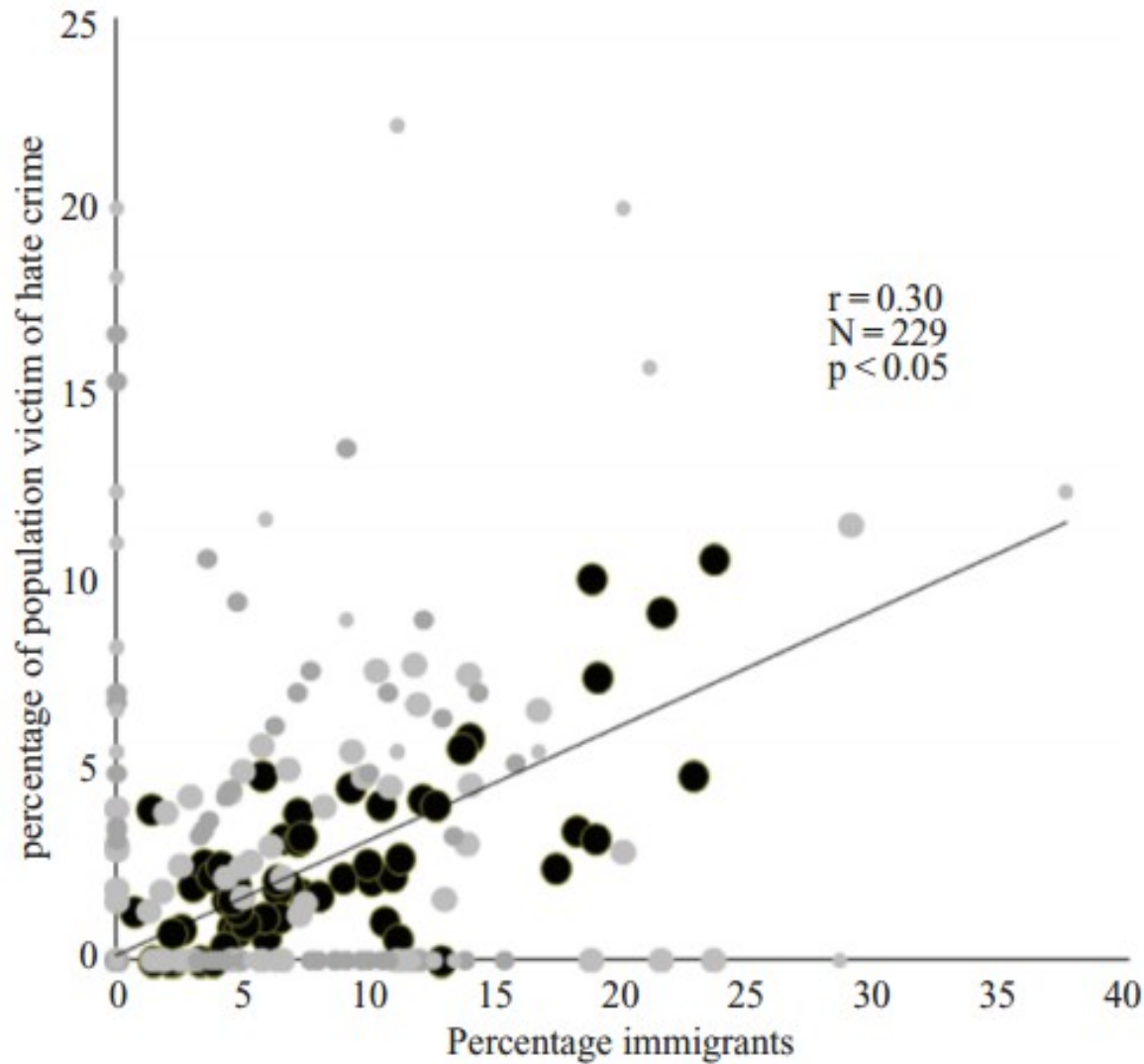
**Table 2.** Controlled effects of personal gun ownership and levels of national gun ownership (on victimizations involving guns (controlling for age, gender and city size).

Gun level	Gun owner	Long gun	Handgun
Low (<1%)	No	1.00	1.00
	Yes	2.08	6.94*
Average (>1%–<5%)	No	1.30	1.17
	Yes	1.60	6.49*
High (>5%)	No	1.46	1.50
	Yes	1.15	2.44*

Source: van Kesteren (2013). \*  $p < 0.05$  on a Chi-squared test.

**Figure 1: Support for imprisonment and community service, by global region**





**Figure 3.** Hate crime victimization prevalence by percentage of the population being immigrant in 229 NUTS2 regions from 14 EU member states. Data from the ICVS 2004/05 ICVS.