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# **IMMIGRATION AND THE CRIME DROP: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

Dainis Ignatans (University of Huddersfield) and Roger Matthews,  
(University of Kent)

## **Abstract**

Explanations of the remarkable decrease in crime over the last two decades across a number of western countries have been in varying degrees unpersuasive. The article presents an exploratory analysis of possible links between immigration into the UK and crime levels. Drawing on a range of international research the paper suggests that in contrast to the popular opinion that increased immigration is associated with an increase in crime, that not only are the recent waves of immigration not statistically linked to increased rates of crime in the UK and elsewhere, but that the proposition that recent waves of immigration may have contributed to the crime drop is tenable. Possible ways of clarifying the issue are suggested.

**Keywords:** Immigration, crime, crime drop, violence, victimisation.

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## **Introduction**

The decrease in recorded crime and victimisation studies over the past two decades in the UK, North America and other Western countries is without doubt the most remarkable development in relation to crime in living memory. According to the International Crime Victims Survey (UNICRI 2000; Farrell et al. 2010) crime has decreased over the last two decades in at least twelve different countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, England and Wales, Finland, France, Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA). In England and Wales the overall decrease in recorded crime in this period is in the region of thirty five per cent. Surprisingly, there has been a paucity of informed commentary on this development. In fact, it was not until 2000, around half a decade after the crime drop became evident, that the first major publication appeared. This was an interesting but ultimately inconclusive collection of articles edited by Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman (2000) that attempted to assess the significance of different determinants of changing levels of crime.

The twin causes of the crime drop were widely held to be changes in policing and in imprisonment. Radical changes in styles of policing, particularly in New York, were held to have had a major impact. However, Andrew Karman (2000), in his review of the decline of crime in New York

City pointed out that recorded crime had also decreased significantly in other US cities that employed other forms of policing. Because the crime drop was common across cities with contrasting policing styles, the role of policing in reducing crime was cast into doubt. Similar limitations occurred in relation to imprisonment. Crime rates decreased in states where prison numbers were stable or decreasing as well as those where inmate numbers increased. These arguments were swiftly followed by a number of other competing claims, such as changes in drug use, the legalisation of abortion, new forms of gun control as well as changing levels of lead in petrol which, it was argued, were responsible to some degree for falling crime rates (Blumstein and Wallman 2000; Levitt 2005; Conklin 2009). While these different factors may individually have had some effect on the crime rate in some locations they all seem to fall short in terms of providing a comprehensive explanation of the international and persistent nature of the decrease in recorded crime (Farrell 2013).

Significantly, there have only been five books focusing on the crime drop to date and they have all been published in the USA (Blumstein and Wallman 2000; Karman 2000; Conklin 2009; Parker 2008; Zimring 2007; 2011). Despite the fact that the decrease in recorded crime in the UK has almost mirrored that, which has taken place in North America, there is no major British text to date that directly addresses this issue.

Not surprisingly, American books on the subject have concentrated on developments in the US paying relatively little attention to drops in crime elsewhere. Importantly, however, a crime drop, which is common across countries, demands a cross-national account. International comparisons make many of the leading ‘explanations’ for the crime drop even less tenable as changes in policing, imprisonment, drug use and the like show no clear or direct association with the crime drop in Western countries other than the USA. Consequently, those books which have sought to explain the crime drop are found wanting. Franklin Zimring (2003), for example, who although taking some account of international developments admits in his conclusion that ‘this is a book without a bottom line’ and argues that the discipline as a whole suffers from parochialism and ‘ideological blinders’. In a similar vein, Andrew Karman (2000), after presenting a fairly exhaustive critique of the various accounts the crime drop is equally inconclusive, claiming that there was a ‘fortuitous confluence’ of factors and that no single factor is more important than the rest. He does point out that the crime drop seems to have continued over the past two decades despite economic downturns and political fluctuations. The persistence of the drop in crime over time he adds questions the liberal claim that crime is a direct product of deprivation, as well as the conservative claim that crime can effectively be reduced by get-tough policies.

What arises from a review of the literature is that any plausible explanation of the crime drop has to account for four main developments. First, that crime has decreased steadily year on year. It has not been a process of fluctuations or of gains and losses, but a fairly consistent fall over time, albeit at different rates. Second, the drop is evident across crime types, including both violent and property crime. There are, of course, some variations in the changes in different countries and there are particular exceptions such as the increase in recorded rape cases in England and Wales, but the near ubiquity of the drop itself is remarkable. Third, crime has fallen across regions within countries as well as cross-nationally (Ogston 2013; Roberts 2014; Warrell 2014). Fourth, the crime drop has been an international phenomenon. Some twelve countries have reported significant decreases in recent years but the international nature of this development means that explanations have to move beyond the parochialism that pervades contemporary criminology.

The implication of these four aspects of the crime drop is that we need to embrace wider socio-economic and cultural explanations if we are to achieve an understanding. Even James Q. Wilson (1983), who is probably best known for his arguments on the need to focus on minor crimes, incivilities and anti-social behaviour has recently suggested in an article in the Wall Street Journal that:

At the deepest level, many of these shifts, taken together suggest that crime in the United States is falling – even through the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression – because of a big improvement in the culture. The culture argument may strike some as vague, but writers have relied on it in the past to explain both the Great Depression fall in crime and the explosion of crime during the Sixties (Wilson 2011: 4).

Although Wilson notes that measuring and examining ‘culture’ raises methodological difficulties he is no doubt correct that explanations based on broad socio-cultural forms of analysis offer the possibility of developing more plausible and credible explanations of the crime drop than many of those accounts that have been offered to date.

### **Immigration, Crime and Violence in America**

Robert Sampson (2006; 2008) has also explored some of the cultural aspects of the crime drop. He has suggested that mass immigration may have played an important role in changing the cultural mix in inner city communities and may have served to ‘dilute’ the existing criminogenic culture in many American cities. This thesis at first appears counter intuitive and goes against the common sense wisdom that immigrants are disproportionately involved in crime. High levels of incarceration in different countries amongst various immigrant groups are often presented

as an indication of their high level of criminal involvement. These claims, along with frequent media depictions of immigrants participating in high profile crimes such as drug dealing, sex trafficking and the like, reinforces the popular conception that serious crime is largely perpetrated by outsiders, foreigners and immigrants. Migrants, according to the popular myth come predominantly from poor countries, have low levels of education and skills, and travel to countries like the UK to take advantage of a relatively generous welfare system, or to engage in illicit enterprises (Charteris-Black 2006; Sides and Citrin 2007; Zedner 2010).

Sampson (2008) argues that this depiction of immigrants is largely mistaken and that the empirical evidence presents a very different picture. In essence, a number of studies have shown that in America and elsewhere first generation immigrants are generally law abiding and hard working. Self-report studies, for example, indicate that criminal involvement is generally lower amongst immigrant groups in America (Kubrin and Desmond 2009; Butcher and Piehl 1998). Moreover, immigrant groups tend to include the most confident, mobile, and energetic sections of the population in the countries from they come.

In contrast to the claims of social disorganisation theory and the work of the Chicago School it is apparent that the influx of immigrants can often revitalise certain areas and that rather than adding to the disintegration of



the area into which they settle, they can become essential to the continuing vitality of the area by introducing and establishing new familial and neighbourhood institutions that can serve to improve the local economy (Sampson 2008; Kubrin 2012). Sampson also suggests that certain immigrant groups, particularly the Hispanics in America, have a lesser culture of violence than the indigenous population and therefore can have a depressing effect on the culture of urban violence.

Drawing on his Chicago research, Sampson (2008) claims that there is a growing volume of evidence that points to increased immigration as a major factor associated with lower crime rates. He suggests that:

In today's society, I would hypothesize that immigration and the increasing cultural diversity that accompanies it generate the sort of conflicts of culture that lead not to increased crime but nearly the opposite. In other words, selective immigration in the current era may be leading to the greater visibility of competing non-violent mores that affect not just immigrant communities but diffuse and concatenate through social interactions to tamp down violent conflict in general (Sampson 2008: 33).

These themes have been explored and endorsed in the American context by other commentators. A study of violent crime employing a pooled cross sectional time series analysis by Jacob Stowell et al. (2009) concluded that

violent crime tended to decrease as Metropolitan areas experience gains in their concentration of immigrants. This inverse relationship was found to be especially robust in the case of robbery.

Another study of violent crime in America by Tim Wadsworth (2010) also found that cities with the largest increases in immigration between 1990 and 2000 experienced the largest decreases in homicide and robbery in this period. Wadsworth, like other researchers, has focused on violent crime and robbery mainly because the data on these offences are seen to be relatively reliable and because violent crime tends to be a public and policy priority. Significantly, immigrant composition has been found to have a negative association with violent crime rates in Chicago (Velez 2009), Los Angeles (Fieldmeyer 2009) as well as Miami, El Paso and San Diego (Martinez et al. 2004).

Graham Ousey and Chris Kubrin (2009) have explored the connection between immigration and crime rates in 159 US cities between 1980 and 2000. Focusing on the macro-level of change they examined how immigration affects demographic, economic and social structures and how these changes in turn might affect crime rates. They found that on average that cities that experienced increases in immigration from 1980 to 2000 experienced a decrease in violent crime rates and concur with Sampson's (2006) claims 'that immigration may be a key factor contributing to the

crime drop of the 1990s'. They claim that this outcome is mainly a consequence of immigration having a depressing effect on crime by bolstering the family and local economies. This and related research has raised the question of criminal involvement amongst different generations of immigrants as well as the differential involvement in crime and victimisation amongst different ethnic groups (Hagan et al. 2008; Wortley 2009).

### **Immigration and Crime: The European Experience**

Research on immigration and crime in Europe has produced mixed results. (Tonry, 1997; Aebi and Linde 2010). Various studies have reported that those from ethnic minority groups in Western countries are disproportionately likely to be arrested and imprisoned for different crimes. (Albrecht 1999; van Kalmthout et al. 2007; Tonry 1997).

Research on crime in Germany and Denmark has found that in Germany approximately one fifth of all crime suspects are immigrants (Entorf and Larsen 2010). However, it is reported that the proportion of non-German crime suspects has decreased from 26.7 per cent in 1993 to 19.3 per cent in 2011. It is also pointed out that a substantial share of criminal cases in this period involved asylum seekers and that their offences were mainly to do with their under-status as non-Germans.

In Denmark, the evidence suggests that immigrants are generally over-represented in the crime figures. However, their involvement in violations of the Penal Code has steadily decreased for males from 44.5 per cent in 1995 to 38.09 per cent in 1998 and then to 34.7 per cent in 2000 (Entorf and Larsen 2004). The authors make a distinction between asylum seekers, illegal immigrants and foreign citizens with a residence permit. While asylum seekers were found to constitute a higher percentage of all convictions for violations of the Penal Code between 1997 and 2001 the percentage of foreign born citizens with a residents permit who were convicted in this period decreased from 12.2 per cent to 11.4 per cent.

Cesar Alonso-Borrego and his colleagues (2012) have examined the situation in Spain between 1999 to 2009 and found that during this period there were large waves of immigration from various parts of the world. These authors suggest that while some immigrant groups have contributed to certain forms of crime, Latin American immigrants who were more easily assimilated into the culture have probably undermined the potential rise in crime rates in Spain.

In a similar vein Tuba Bircan and Marc Hooghe (2011) differentiate between different immigrant groups settling in Belgium between 2001 and 2006. Their focus is on the neighbourhood level and the differences in criminal involvement amongst different ethnic groups. By breaking down

immigrants into a number of sub-groups in relation to ethnicity the authors conclude that it is the unemployment rate amongst those different groups that most directly influenced crime levels. Although the authors note that both property and violent crime have decreased significantly in the period under study and that this was a period of high immigration into Belgium, it is claimed that it is unemployment and not the concentration of immigration in different neighbourhoods that is most prominently associated with the decrease in recorded crime.

This research, however, is limited both conceptually and methodologically. Conceptually, the authors advocate a version of social disorganisation theory which would predict a rise in crime following waves in immigration involving different ethnic groups, leading to a weakening of community ties and the breakdown of informal controls. However, they note that there has been no discernible increase in either property crime or violent crime in neighbourhoods with high immigrant concentration. This observation would appear to further question the validity and explanatory value of social disorganisation theory in this context (Wortley 2009). Also, as the authors note themselves the data addresses a relatively short period and is unable to identify trends. Moreover, their investigation is reminiscent of the classic critiques of the unemployment and crime relation which pointed out that because this research does not examine the relevant populations at

the individual level it is never clear whether it is actually the unemployed in the selected areas who are committing crime (Box and Hale 1986).

Interestingly, the immigration-crime nexus raises questions about the explanatory value not only of social disorganisation theory but also of other mainstream criminological theories including culture conflict, strain theory, labelling theory as well as rational choice and routine activities theory (Farrell 2013). Indeed, the most appropriate theoretical approach would seem to be some form of cultural criminology, but not so much in the form that focuses mainly on street culture, popular culture and the media, but one that embraces a wider notion of ‘culture’ (see O’Brien 2005; Martinez and Lee 2000).

### **Immigration and the Crime Drop in the UK**

There has been a noticeable reticence amongst British scholars to address the remarkable decrease in recorded crime that has taken place in the UK over the past two decades. Two of the main responses to the issue of the crime drop in the UK amongst British criminologists has either been to play down these developments and to claim that either the crime drop is a function of the manipulation of the crime figures by the key agencies, or that traditional forms of crime have been replaced by the growing volume of cybercrime (Fitzgerald 2014; Segal and Senna 2008).

In relation to the manipulation of the crime figures there is clear evidence that the police have changed recording practices in recent years and have admitted ‘massaging’ the crime figures. In December 2014 the gold standard ‘national statistics’ status was withdrawn from the police in England and Wales due to discovery that they had been ‘fiddling’ the figures (Travis 2014). However, the continued and widespread decrease in a range of crimes over time, particularly those where the police are able to exercise limited discretion, or where there is not much room for manipulation such as car crime, robbery and serious violence, suggests that a significant decrease has taken place - at least amongst certain crime types. The international nature of the crime drop also suggests that despite dubious police recording practices in the UK, crime is decreasing in different countries where recording practices have remained relatively stable. In addition, the simultaneous decrease in victimisation recorded by the Crime Survey for England and Wales tends to reinforce the conception that crime rates are decreasing.

In relation to the increase in new forms of cybercrime there can be little doubt that it is taking place, but it is extremely questionable that traditional forms of ‘street crime’ are being displaced in this way. Cybercrime would in all probability increase in the current period irrespective of changes in other forms of crime. However, it is important to note that cybercrime

involves a distinctly different group of offenders than traditional forms of street crime as well as having a different set of victims (Wall 2007).

There are two main studies, to date, on the crime drop in the UK. The first and probably the best known is by Graham Farrell and his colleagues (2011) which explores the 'security hypothesis' focusing mainly on property crime and the role of crime prevention measures. Drawing on routine activities and opportunity theory the authors claim that changes in both the quantity and quality of security has been a key driver of the crime drop. Taking the widespread use of electronic immobilisers and central locking mechanisms for cars as their empirical reference point they claim that the subsequent reduction in car theft may have induced a decrease in other crimes including violence. There are however, questions concerning the fit between the introduction of these security measures and the decrease in vehicle crime in different countries as well as major doubts about the impact of car crime security on other forms of crime, particularly violent crime.

Even Home Office researchers who are generally sympathetic to accounts based on routine activities theory and opportunity theory are sceptical about the explanatory value of the 'security hypothesis' and point out that:

The hypothesis is largely silent on why violence has fallen alongside theft. And for acquisitive crime, the case that better security caused



the drop rests on the largely untested assumption that car immobilisers also prevented thieves from committing other types of theft. Data suggests that the opposite is equally likely – that as one thing becomes harder to steal, thieves switch to something else. So, because all types of theft fell markedly at the same time in the mid-1990s it seems likely that a change in offender propensity for crime is more likely to provide the main explanation (Home Office 2015).

Thus we are left with the nagging problem of explaining why there was a decrease in nearly all forms of crime from the mid-1990s onwards in a number of different countries. This suggests that a broader explanation that identifies not only changes in the modes of regulation but also changes in the nature of agency, is required.

The second study in the UK has been carried out in the UK has been conducted by researchers based in the London School of Economics. Significantly, this study focuses on the immigration-crime relation. In a series of reports Stephen Machin and his colleagues have examined what they see as the two main waves of immigration in the UK (Bell, Machin and Fasani 2010; Bell and Machin 2011; Jaitman and Machin 2013). The authors suggest that the first wave occurred in the late 1990s and involved asylum seekers, while the second wave from 2004 onwards involved

workers from different EU countries. Drawing on Becker's (1968) economic theory of crime they conclude that the first wave of asylum seekers contributed to an increase in property crime but not violent crime, while the second wave of what they refer to as A8 European migrants have a negative effect on property crime and no effect on violent crime. They also conclude that immigrants have a lower level of victimisation than the indigenous population.

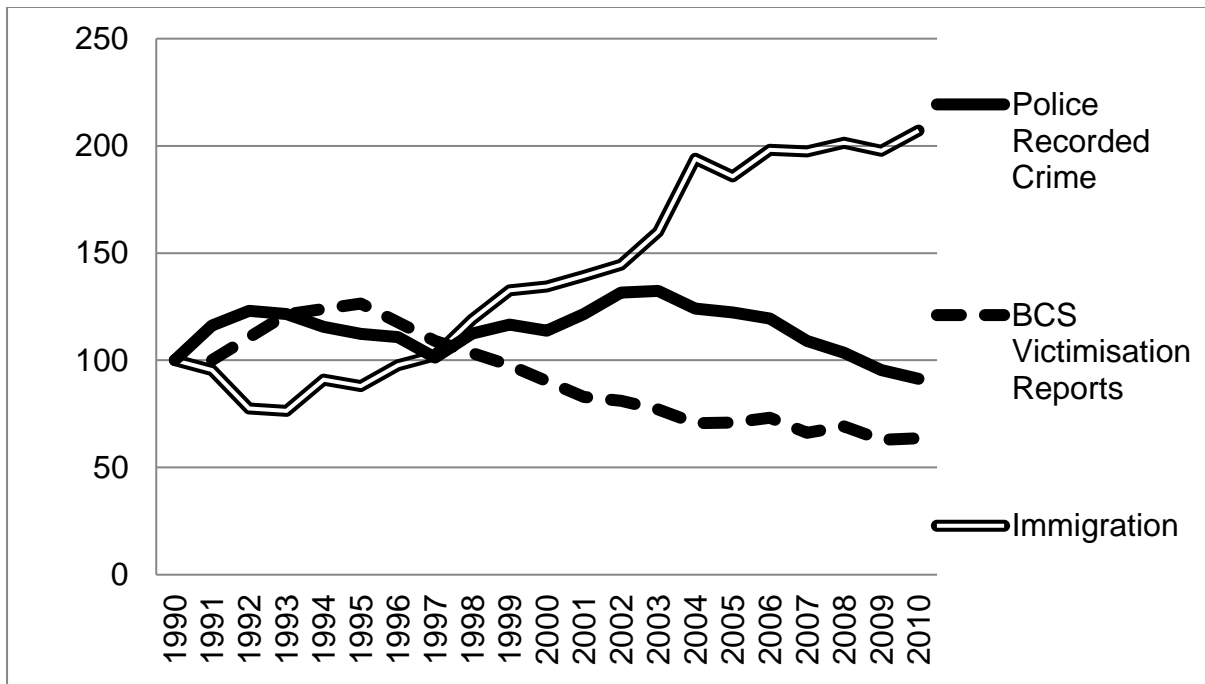
The economic model of crime that they adopt assumes that the fundamental driver of criminal involvement is access to the legal labour market. Thus, it is suggested that immigrant groups with low employment prospects or who find themselves in situations in which the gains from employment are less than those for crime will be drawn into crime. Adopting a classic rational choice perspective the authors argue that it was the weak labour market attachment that propelled the first wave of asylum seekers to engage more actively in property crime. However, there are unresolved questions about whether the actions of criminals can be adequately explained by the concept of 'rationality' (Green and Shapiro 1994; Nussbaum 1997). In reality, it is widely recognised that offenders are often unable to make meaningful cost-benefit analyses about their involvement in crime, while as cultural criminologists have pointed out, criminal involvement often involves expressive and risk taking dimensions (Katz 1988; Hayward

2007). Moreover, in the UK the influx of poorer Asians from countries like Pakistan and India in the 1990s did not result in this group having a high involvement in crime or having high rates of imprisonment. The economic model of crime also does little to explain white collar crime and corporate crime or why the rich frequently engage in malpractices such as fraud and embezzlement. However, Machin and his colleagues raise some important issues in relation to the use and reliability of the available data. In particular, they raise the problem of controlling for endogeneity since migrants tend to settle in areas that already have high crime rates. This, in turn, raises questions about causality and the neighbourhood effects on crime.

Having considered these contributions to the immigration-crime debate in the UK we turn to our own explorative investigation on the relationship between immigration and the crime drop. We begin from the observation that there is an inverse relationship between the decrease in recorded crime and the increase in immigration in England and Wales during the period of 1990-2010. The question that Figure 1 below raises is whether this relationship is significant or coincidental. We note that there are variations between decrease in recorded crime levels and the Crime Survey of England and Wales. However, these two measures capture different aspects

of crime and victimisation, but both indicate a significant downward trend in recent years.

Figure 1. Changing Levels of Crime and Immigration in England and Wales 1990-2010, Indexed to 100.



Source: Office for National Statistics

The objective of our study is to examine the relation between immigration and crime and the possible significance of the thesis that large waves of immigration are likely to have an effect on the ‘crimogenic culture’ of the receiving country. Drawing on the available UK data we present four ‘snapshots’ designed to identify different aspects of the immigrant-crime relationship. The first two aspects of this issue that we examine include an investigation of the macro relation between crime and immigration by area and between sub-groups in England and Wales between 2001-2011. The

second set of snapshots focuses on anti-social behaviour in different areas and arrest data for Greater London in 2011.

Our research draws predominantly on two data sources. First, it extracts census data for 2001 and 2011 which features population numbers based on country of birth, deemed to be the most appropriate classification since it allowed the identification of first generation immigrants. Second, crime data was taken from the Notifiable Offences recorded by the police in 2001 and 2011 (Home Office, 2001/2011). As noted above, these forms of police generated data have to be treated with some caution. However, the largest victimisation dataset in England and Wales, the Crime Survey for England and Wales only includes low level geographical variables since 2008. This data would therefore severely restrict the range and relevance of the analysis. Areas examined in this analysis are all the cities across England and Wales.

Table 1 depicts changes between 2001 and 2011 in both immigrant population and crime, and also immigrant population in 2001. It therefore addresses the following questions

1. What does an area's immigrant population in 2001 say about its likely change in crime per head a decade hence?
2. How are changes in immigrant populations in different areas between 2001 and 2011 associated with changes in crime over the same period?
3. Expressed as a policy question, what can we expect by way of crime changes in areas with increased immigrant populations in the future behaves like the past.

Table 1. Area Immigrant Population (Percentage and Count) in 2001 and Change in Immigrant Population 2001-2011: Associations with Area Crime between 2001-2011 (England and Wales).

	Statistic	Change in Crime Count 2001-2011	Change in Violent Crime Count 2001-2011	Change in Property Crime Count 2001-2011	Change in Vehicle Crime Count 2001-2011	Change in Crime Per Head of Population 2001-2011	Change in Violent Crime Per Head of Population 2001-2011	Change in Property Crime Per Head of Population 2001-2011	Change in Vehicle Crime Per Head of Population 2001-2011
Immigrant	Pearsons R	-.307*	-.327*	-.295*			-.421**		

Count 2001	CoD	.094	.107	.087			.177		
	Beta	-.065*	-.020*	-0.035*			-8.647E-8**		
Immigrant Proportion 2001	Pearsons R						-.366*		-.360*
	CoD						.134		.130
	Beta						-.718*		-.451*
Change in Immigrant2 001-2011	Pearsons R								-.342*
	CoD								.117
	Beta								-1.135E-7*
Change in Immigrant Proportion 2001-2011	Pearsons R								
	CoD								
	Beta								

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Office for National Statistics

In each cell of Table 1 there are three numbers. The first is the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient; the second is the coefficient of determination, namely the proportion of variation in 2011 crime accounted for by the immigration variable in question the third is the beta weight, That is, the change in recorded crime one might anticipate from the additional of one first generation immigrant or 1 per cent change in immigrant population according to row of data). It should be noted that the relationship is treated as linear such that the effect of the extra immigrant does not differ according to the extant number of immigrants. This linearity of course only holds within the range of the data captured and may differ for values outside that range.

In text form, the statistically reliable results are as follows.

1. For every additional first generation immigrant in an area in 2001, there will on average be 0.065 fewer crimes in 2011. The relationship is reliable separately for violent and property crimes.
2. For every additional 1% of first generation immigrants in an area in 2001, there will on average be 0.72% fewer crimes per person in 2011. The relationship holds for property and vehicle crime but not for violent crime.
3. There is no case where immigrant population in 2001 or its increase over the next decade, is reliably associated with adverse crime changes.

As has been noted, there are likely to be significant differences in officially recorded criminal involvement amongst different immigrant groups. In order to explore some of these differences we examined the association between

different immigrant groups and crimes for which they are held accountable. Immigration and Recorded Crime variables, as in the previous analysis, were coded in prevalence change ratios, this time for 344 local authorities across England and Wales for the years between 2001 and 2011.

In order to further the discussion and to encapsulate the various associations between different immigrant groups and crime types a number of more specific sub-groups were created. These include 'South Asian' immigrants largely from India and Pakistan. 'Far Eastern' immigrants from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. 'Middle Eastern' groups who largely come from Iran and Cyprus. 'Western European' involves a combination of French, German, Italian and Spanish immigrants. 'Other European' category was created by deducting western immigration from the total European cohort. Majority of 'Other European' immigrants come from Eastern Europe, Scandinavia as well as southern Europe. By including these new immigration sub-groups in the analysis the intention was to examine a wider spectrum of immigrant groups that have settled in England and Wales and their relationship with crime. Violent crime includes common assaults, robberies, wounding and sexual offences. Property crime category includes theft, criminal damage, arson, burglary and vehicle crime. Pearsons' correlations were carried out and are presented in Table 2. Significant correlations are highlighted.

Table 2. Relationships Between the Change in Different Immigration Sub-Groups and the Change in Crime between 2001-2011

	Total Crime	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Common Assault	Robbery	Theft from the Person	Criminal Damage	Burglary	Motor Vehicle Theft	Theft from Motor Vehicle
Total Immigration	.022	-.167**	.026	-.289**	-.373**	-.068	.049	-.011	.048	.031
South Asian	.079	-.058	.081	-.143**	-.099	-.095	.089	.065	.090	.076
Far Eastern	-.050	.179**	-.055	.242**	.224**	.010	-.050	-.060	-.071	-.049
Middle Eastern	.033	-.008	.032	.006	-.092	.031	.027	.027	.033	.026
African	.092	-.020	.092	-.113*	-.100	-.026	.106*	.071	.099	.087
Other European	-.708**	-.104	-.704**	-.105	.027	.647**	-.785**	-.654**	-.602**	-.786**
Western European	-.200**	-.264**	-.191**	-.359**	-.572**	-.088	-.136*	-.256**	-.113*	-.177*

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Office for National Statistics

The first point of interest is that common assault and robbery rates as well as violent crime in general appear to be negatively associated with immigration flow. Therefore, areas with high new immigrant populations appear to experience a greater decrease in violent crimes than areas with lower levels of recent immigration. In line with the findings of Jaitman and Machin (2013) we found that European immigration, in particular, has an inverse relationship with the majority of crime types. The associations do vary and immigration is linked to an increase in recorded crime in five cases, but this increase is relatively small. Overall, Table 1 shows that there is a statistical association between immigration and decreases in violent crime, particularly common assaults and robberies. Although there is also an inverse relation with property crime, this relationship is not so strong.

Overall, there is a clear negative association between immigrant influx and the change in crime rates for the decade between 2001 and 2011. On a macro level, immigrant totals in 2001 as well as immigrant influx between 2001 and 2011 are both associated with a decrease in recorded crime. On a micro level, the influx of immigrants from all backgrounds correlates with a decrease in most crime types.

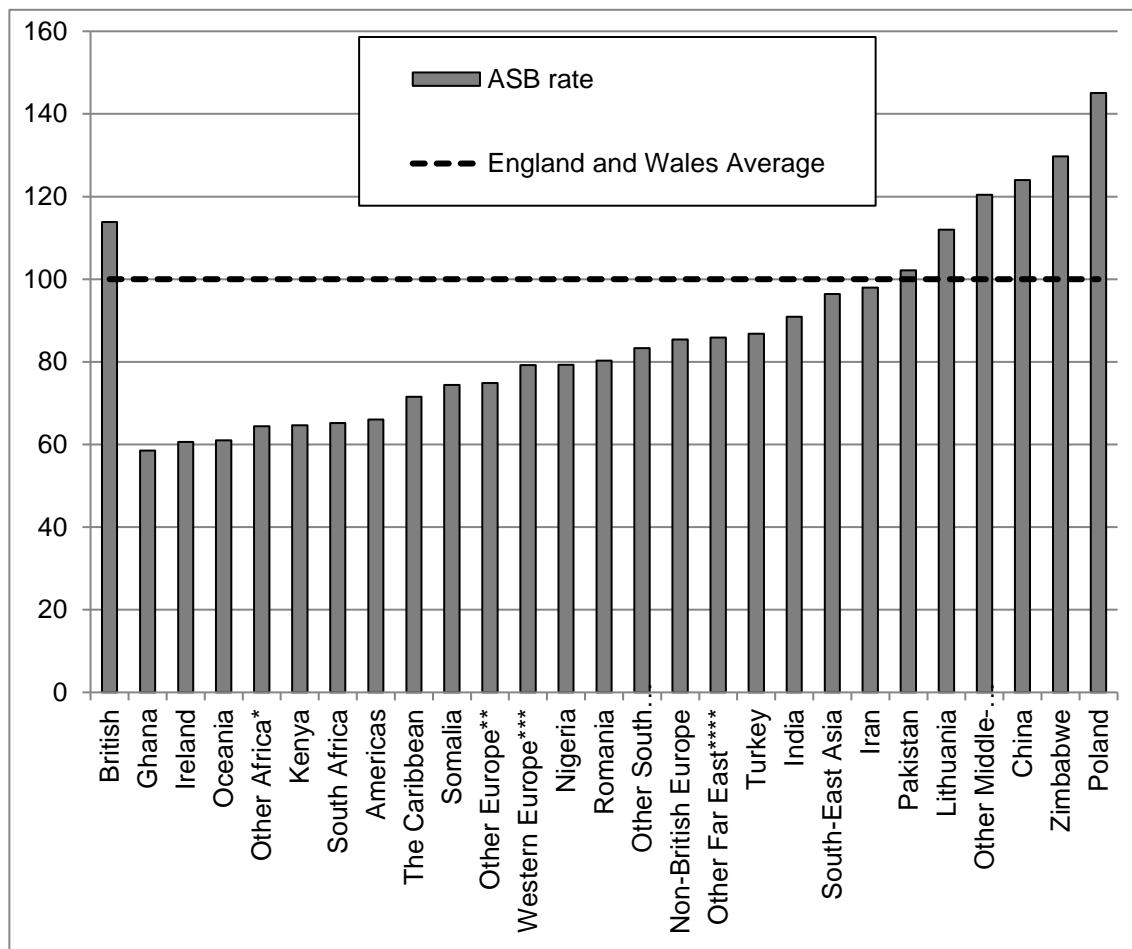
To examine how immigration has affected low level disorder, UK Census data as well as recorded Anti-Social Behaviour data from the police for year 2011 were sourced for every Middle Layer Super Output Area in England and Wales. MLSOAs are commonly used by the Office for National Statistics when publishing small area statistics. There are currently 7201 MLSOAs in England and Wales, each with a minimum occupancy of 5,000 residents and 2,000 households (and average occupancy of 7500). It should be noted that while anti-social behaviour and disorder are generally seen as involving forms of 'pre-crime' that the categories of ASB tend to morph into various types of crime in certain cases (Matthews 1992).

The UK Census data are not sufficient to examine immigration from every country. For this reason, immigration was divided into a number of detailed categories. 'Other Africa' includes all African countries apart from Ghana, Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. 'Other European' includes all



European countries apart from Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Western Europe. 'Western Europe' includes France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. 'Other South Asia' includes all South Asian countries apart from India and Pakistan. 'Other Far East' includes all Far Eastern countries apart from China. 'Other Middle-East' includes all Middle-Eastern countries apart from Iran. MLSOAs were ranked from lowest to highest by every immigration type. The average rate of ASB was calculated for top 10 per cent of areas with highest proportion of every inhabitant group. So, 720 areas with the highest proportion of every population form every column of the figure. The same areas can be in the top 10% for more than one population group. The average ASB rate per person in England and Wales was indexed to 100. The findings are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. ASB rates within areas with predominant immigrant type and indigenous population, 2011.



A number of points can be gleaned from this figure. First, areas with the highest proportion of British nationals suffer from a greater-than-average rate of ASB by roughly 13 per cent. Only areas with the greatest proportions of immigrants from Poland, Zimbabwe, China and Middle East are associated with higher ASB rates than areas with the indigenous population. Second, not only are the majority of areas with high immigrant proportions associated with lower ASB rates than the indigenous population, but also in areas with high immigrant populations ASB rates are mostly found to be significantly below the average for England and Wales.

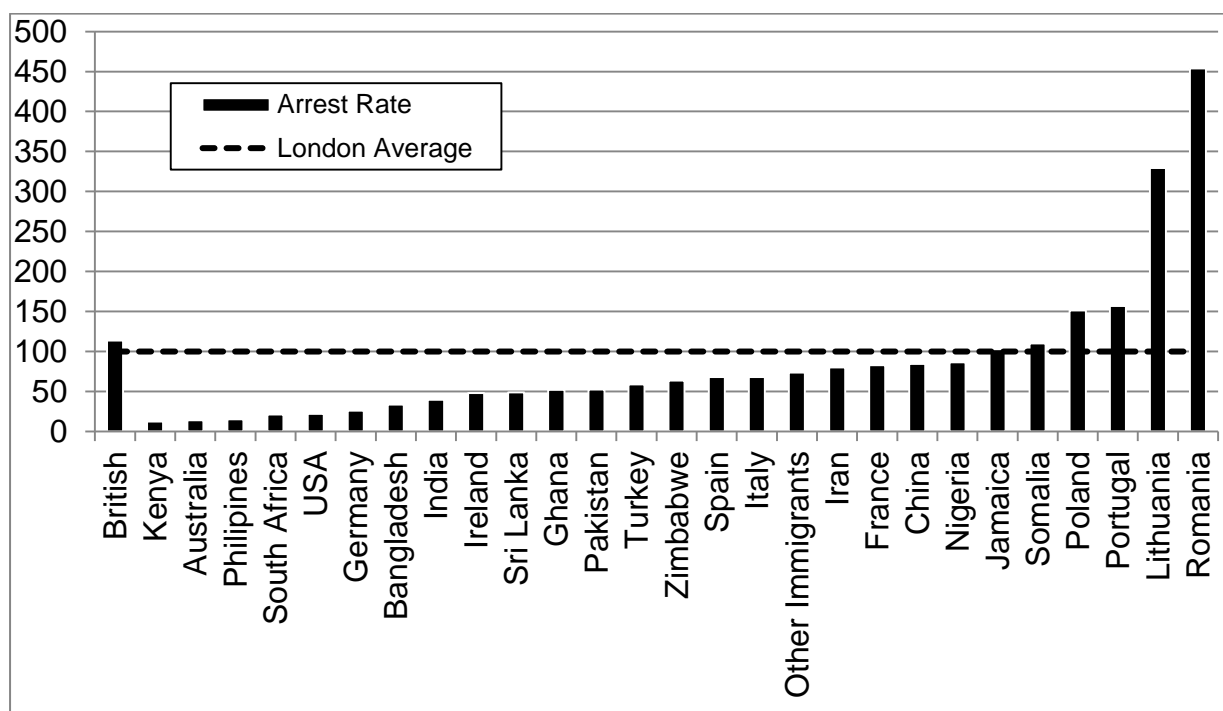
Our final investigation of the immigration-crime relationship involves an exploration of the arrest rates of various immigrant groups in the Greater London area. This arrest data was supplied by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) following a freedom of information request. Immigrant numbers were sourced from a corresponding UK Population Census for 32 London Boroughs that fall under the responsibility of MPS. Due to the limitations of UK Census, as outlined previously, only 27 immigrant sub-groups could be distinguished.

Figure 3 below depicts arrest rates by country of birth. The average arrest rate in London in 2011 was 3.3 per cent of relevant sub-population, indexed to 100. For an overwhelming majority of immigrant sub-groups arrest rates were found to be significantly below the average. Low arrest rates were associated with immigrants from a variety of cultures and continents, suggesting relatively low criminality regardless of country of origin. Very few immigrant sub groups were found to be arrested more than average, except for Romanians and Lithuanians. However, as Laura Jaitman and Stephen Machin (2013) have pointed out that there are important demographic differences between immigrant groups and the indigenous population particularly with respect to age. It is, in the main, younger people who migrate between countries and this population tends to be made up, for the most part by young males who are statistically speaking the most likely group to become involved in criminal activity. It is also the case that that the use of stop and search powers is skewed towards males in the 21-40 age group and towards certain ethnic minority groups (Bowling and Phillips 2007). However, being arrested is not

proof of culpability and it is estimated that approximately 40 per cent of those arrested result in the individual facing actual charges (Ministry of Justice 2012).

Since over a million immigrants were not included in the 27 categories explored here, the arrest rate of ‘other immigrants’ was calculated in order to try to compensate for the shortcomings of datasets and to ensure the inclusion of all immigrants in the analysis. Due to the low arrest rates associated with the majority of individual immigrant sub-groups as well as the aggregate category of ‘other’, the conclusion to be drawn is that immigrants in the London area at least have a lower arrest rate than the indigenous population, with very few notable exceptions.

Figure 3. Arrest Rates in London by Country of Birth, 2011.



Source: Metropolitan Police Service

To summarize, it appears that in terms of anti-social behaviour and arrest data seems to confirm the picture presented in Tables 1 and 2. Above. For most immigrant groups, particularly first generation, there appears to be a lower level of involvement in most crime types and in areas of high immigrant population density the effects are most pronounced.

## **Conclusion**

These trends, it should be emphasised, are suggestive rather than conclusive in terms of the effects that immigration might have on crime. While the limited evidence presented in this paper suggests that recent waves of immigration have not resulted in an increase in recorded crime, but rather may have contributed to the crime drop there are some variations between areas and different immigrant groups. In order to explore this relation in more detail it would be necessary to engage in an analysis of the relation between neighbourhood structure the rate of immigration and the changing levels of recorded crime. Such an analysis would need to consider the role of other variables such as employment levels, housing, cultural variations between different ethnic groups, levels of social integration and the like.

The correlations that we have found however 'significant' they might be at the statistical level do not necessarily indicate a causal relationship. Our research remains suggestive and speculative. In order to produce a more persuasive causal explanation of these developments there is a need to theorise these processes more thoroughly and formulate some testable hypotheses (Sayer 2010; Pawson and Tilley 1997). It is not just a matter of listing variables but of trying to explain the relationship between them and how they might be connected. The question is how and why does

immigration impact on crime and what are the intervening mechanisms that might account for this phenomenon.

However, the impression that emerges from the four 'snapshots' that we have presented is that immigration has not been found to be generally associated with increasing crime, and as Robert Sampson (2008) has suggested immigration could be an important contributory factor in the crime drop at least in certain areas and amongst different ethnic groups. This is important since as he points out, patterns of immigration are currently reshaping the social demographics of the western world.

Although it has been suggested that immigration may go some way to meeting the conditions for developing any credible and comprehensive explanation of the crime drop, it should be emphasised that any future investigation will need not only to develop testable hypotheses but to combine qualitative and quantitative - intensive and extensive - forms of analyses that are able to examine the diverse effects of different forms of immigration, as well as the impact of different generations of immigrant groups over time (Graif and Sampson 2009; Kubrin 2012). This will require undertaking not only cross sectional but also longitudinal analysis that can locate these changes within the socio-economic context in which they occur. In this way the aim is to move from observations and descriptions to explanations. This will require a series of detailed

qualitative studies that are better equipped to uncover the motivations and attitudes of the relevant populations.

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