

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

### Fear of Violent Victimization among the Foreign-Born

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**Abstract.** In general, most studies that examined the relationship immigrants – criminal behavior focused on the immigrants’ involvement in criminal activities as offenders and/or the effects of immigration on crime rates. Only limited research looked at the levels of victimization and perceived safety experienced by immigrants in their receiving countries. Using the most recent available data from the European Social Survey (Round 5/2010), the present quantitative analysis conducted on a representative sample of residents in United Kingdom (N=2422) tries to determine the levels of criminal victimization and fear of violent crime associated with foreign nationals living in a European country, where immigration is generally unpopular. Although foreign-born persons living in United Kingdom appear to have a higher degree of victimization (vicarious and direct) than natives, the inter-group difference is not sufficiently large to be significant at  $p \leq .05$ . Nevertheless, compared to natives, first-generation immigrants manifest a significantly higher level of fear of violent victimization. Results also show that in addition to inter-group differences in the levels of perceived unsafety and experiences with victimization, the effects of fear-of-crime correlates vary in intensity among respondents differentiated by their country of birth. In addition, one’s level of acculturation contributes to differences in fear of crime among immigrants.

**Keywords:** *fear of crime, fear of crime correlates, immigrants, victimization, United Kingdom.*

#### Introduction

On December 26, 2011, in the early hours of Boxing Day, (a public holiday in UK), Anuj Bidve, a 23-year old international postgraduate student from India, was shot in the head at point-blank range as he walked with friends near their hotel in Salford, Greater Manchester. Initially, the detectives treated the crime as a hate crime, suspecting it may have been racially motivated. According to a Facebook

page set up in Mr. Bidve's memory, he "was killed for not answering a simple question - What's the time?" (Press Association 2011). In July 2012, the 21-year old, Kieran Stapleton, a local factory worker, was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. No clear motives for the crime were provided at the trial, though it could have been part of a gang initiation ritual (see BBC News, 2012), a hate crime, or just a random act of violence.

In the past decade several incidents that involved immigrants as victims of crime have been exemplified in research reports (see OSCE/ODIHR 2007, 2012) and portrayed by the media. Nevertheless, due to recording practices and immigrants' general unwillingness to report to the police that they have been victims of crime, especially if they are undocumented immigrants, it is difficult to determine with exactitude what proportion of the foreign-born people have been victimized in recent years in United Kingdom or in other countries. Yet, based on recent information it could be concluded that a relatively large number of immigrants (particularly non-white residents) have been victims of hate crime. For instance, the British Government's Home Office statistics indicate that during the period 2011-2012, there were 43,748 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales. Approximately 82% of these crimes were racially motivated and 4% were religion-motivated hate crimes (Home Office 2012). In sum, in 2011, there were 50,688 hate crimes reported to the police in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Approximately 20,000 of them have been prosecuted in England, Wales, and Scotland, and 12,651 cases were sentenced in England and Wales (OSCE/ODIHR 2012, 135). Although official records do not indicate how many of these crimes involved foreign nationals, it is reasonable to assume that immigrants, especially those who are part of visible minority groups, have been among the victims.

It should be noted that more than other countries in the region, United Kingdom has seen the benefit of major initiatives by law enforcement and prosecution services to introduce training and procedures making the implementation of hate crime legislation a major priority. Based on the most recent report of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) it can be noticed that even if most member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) now collect information on hate crimes, in many cases data are missing, are not updated, or are reported in an extremely limited manner. Even when hate crime legislation is on the books, most countries fall short

on implementation. France, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, or United States, for example, have hate crime legislation, but almost nothing to show with regard to reporting or prosecutions for hate crime incidents to be included in the most recent ODIHR annual report. Because most countries underreport or do not report at all data on hate crimes, out of the 57 OSCE member states, United Kingdom appears to have the largest number of hate crimes reported to the police in 2011. Nonetheless, the authors of the ODIHR report noted that currently, hate crimes continue to represent a serious problem across the region, forming a spectrum of violence ranging from intimidation, threats, vandalism and assault to arson and murder (OSCE/ODIHR 2012).

Over the past two decades, among the studies that examined the effects of immigration on different socioeconomic and cultural aspects of life there is an increasing body of research that focused on immigrants' involvement in criminal activities or the effect of immigration on variations in crime levels (see Butcher & Piehl 1998; Davies & Fagan 2012; Desmond & Kubrin 2009; Herzog 2009; Kubrin & Ishizawa 2012; Martinez 2000; Martinez & Stowell, 2012; Ousey & Kubrin 2009; Reid, Weiss, Adelman & Jarrett 2005; Tonry 1997; Wortley & Tanner 2006). Some of these studies (mostly conducted in United States) concluded that immigration does not contribute significantly to increases in levels of crime, while other studies even found a significant negative relationship between immigration and crime levels, suggesting that "immigration generally serves a protective function, reducing crime (see Zatz & Smith 2012, 141)."

In United Kingdom, for instance, arrest data indicate that a black native is 4.2% more likely to have been arrested than a white native, while a black immigrant is 2.8% less likely to have been arrested than a white native, all else equal. In addition, 2007 OECD data showed that compared to other Western European countries, such as Switzerland, France, Germany, Finland, Denmark, Austria, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, or Norway, foreigners were only slightly overrepresented in UK prisons. In Switzerland, for example, foreign inmates represented in 2007 approximately 71% of the prison population, while only 23% of the country population were foreign-born. Comparatively, in United Kingdom, about 9% of the residents were immigrants, while foreign inmates represented about 11% of the prison population (Bell & Machin 2011, 83).

Nevertheless, public perceptions are more likely to be influenced by media depictions of crime than by the results of scholarly research studies. Referring to

Great Britain, Bowling and Phillips (2002, 79) noted that the media and political reactions to the public disorders registered in UK in the late 1970s and 1980s contributed significantly to a lasting popular perception of “black people as disorderly and criminal.” Moreover, the authors acknowledged the media 'loudness' about the criminality of immigrant minorities and the media relative 'deafness' about the victimology of the same immigrant minorities (Bowling and Phillips 2002).

Although there is extensive international literature on the criminalization of immigrant minorities in many western countries (Hawkins, 1995; Schissel and Brooks, 2002; Tonry, 1997), especially in relation to black immigrants in countries such as Australia (Collins, 2005, 2007), Canada (James, 2002; Chan and Mirchandani, 2002; Wortley, S. and Tanner, J. 2006) and United Kingdom (Bowling and Phillips 2002; Cathcart, 2000; Cook and Hudson, 1993; Gilroy, 1987), systematic research on all immigrants as victims of crime and the effects of victimization on the immigrants' sense of safety is relatively limited. The present analysis intends to contribute to the literature on fear of crime by discussing these issues. In particular, this study will compare natives and foreign-born people in terms of victimization (vicarious and direct) and fear of violent crimes, when controlling for individual-level variables, such as institutional and interpersonal trust, socioeconomic status, subjective health, perceived discrimination, age, ethnicity, gender, and place of residence.

Based on Census data there were 7,505,010 foreign-born people in England and Wales in 2011, representing approximately 13.4% of the total population (56.1 mil. people) in these two countries of the United Kingdom (Migration Observatory, 2012). In 2011, there were around 3 million more foreign-born people in England and Wales than in 2001. Taking into account this significant increase in immigrant population levels, the fact that recent surveys show strong public support for the governing Coalition's policy meant to reduce immigration dramatically (Mulley 2012, 3), and considering that a significant percentage of native Britons are less likely to favor multiculturalism or to see immigration as beneficial to the country (see Andreescu 2011), it is important to determine if hostile attitudes toward the foreign-born (ethnic minorities in particular), may be expected to translate into anti-immigrant crime in the near future in United Kingdom. In addition, the extent of fear of violent victimization experienced by immigrants should be known because feelings of insecurity may not only negatively affect a person's general

well-being, but they may undermine the community cohesion and social stability making the immigrants' integration in the receiving country more difficult.

### **Explaining fear of crime**

Since the 1960s, when the *fear of crime* concept entered the criminological literature, an impressive number of scientific research studies examined the propensity of fear of victimization and the factors that influence variations in people's perceived unsafety, as well as the effects of fear of crime on one's quality of life. Fear of crime has become a significant social and political issue and attracted so much social scientific research because it is widely perceived as a significant social problem (Gray, Jackson & Farrall 2008, 375). At the individual level, fear of crime may limit social interaction and may negatively affect one's general well-being, physical and mental health included. Adams & Serpe (2000) contend that fear of crime may act as a chronic stressor and Collins (2007, 65) considers fear of crime a form of vicarious victimization. At the community level, fear of crime may have detrimental effects as well. When residents are afraid they might be victimized, the sense of community is reduced and the capacity of the community to act as an effective source of informal social control is diminished. As a result, fear of crime may indirectly contribute to increases in criminal activity at the local level (Maxfield 1984).

Although a positive correlation should exist between crime levels and fear of crime, research demonstrated that this was not always the case (Wyant 2008). In fact, a recent study that used data from 21 European countries found that the proportion of respondents who are fearful decreases as the country crime rate increases (Reese 2009). "Given the weak relationship between crime and fear, scholars have unsurprisingly looked elsewhere for explanations (Jackson 2009, 366)." According to Halle (1996), the three theoretical approaches identified in the studies of fear of crime are the vulnerability perspective, the experience with victimization perspective, and the ecological perspective, which mostly focuses on the effect of contextual factors on fear of crime or perceived risk of victimization.

The vulnerability framework considers that persons who lack effective defense mechanisms and have a lower ability to control successfully potential victimization events will manifest a higher level of fear of crime than individuals

who perceive themselves as being better equipped to deal with threatening circumstances. From this perspective it is expected that women, the elderly, social minority groups (e.g., racial and ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, or persons with disabilities), and those who are economically disadvantaged will have a higher perceived risk of victimization. Research showed frequently that women and the elderly, two groups that are less likely to be victimized in most societies, paradoxically, have higher levels of fear than men or younger persons, respectively (see Chiricos, Hogan and Gertz 1997; De Donder, Verte and Messelis 2005; Garofalo 1979; Lagrange & Ferraro 1989; Lane & Meeker 2000; Reese 2009; Scott 2003; Taylor, Eitle, and Russell 2009; Ziegler & Mitchell 2003). A few exceptions, however, exist. For instance, Dammert & Malone (2003) did not find a significant linear relationship between age and fear of crime, while other researchers (e.g., Chadee & Ditton 2003; Jackson 2009; Kanan & Pruitt 2002; Liu, Messner, Zhang, & Zhuo 2009; Taylor, Eitle, and Russell 2009; Yun, Kercher & Swindell 2010) found that younger people and not the elderly have higher levels of fear of victimization.

Mixed results were also obtained when the relationship minority status – fear of crime was examined. Some studies concluded that persons belonging to racial/ethnic minority groups have higher levels of fear (Hough 1995; Jordan & Gabbidon 2010; Salisbury and Upson 2004; Skogan & Maxfield 1981; Walker, 1994), while other studies did not find inter-group differences in perceived safety when the race or ethnicity of the respondent was considered (e.g., Wyant 2008). In general, research examining the effect of individual-level factors on fear of crime found that a higher socioeconomic status was associated with lower levels of fear of crime and a diminished perceived risk of victimization (Jordan & Gabbidon 2010; Lane & Meeker 2000; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Scott 2003; Taylor, Gottfredson & Brower 1984 ). Yet, other studies did not find that variations in fear of crime were significantly influenced by one's income and/or education (Clemente & Kleiman 1977; Toseland 1982; Wyant 2008).

Studies focusing on fear-of-crime correlates also examined the effect of contextual factors. From this ecological perspective, it was found that certain characteristics of the place influence variations in residents' level of fear of crime. For instance, fear of victimization was higher in larger urban areas than in smaller cities or in rural areas (Bankston et al. 1987; Keane 1992; Scott 2003; Yin 1980) and a positive relationship between the population size of the residential

community and the level of perceived unsafety was identified as well (Clemente & Kleinman 1977; Toseland 1982). In addition, researchers found that persons living in neighborhoods characterized by higher levels of collective efficacy, where people trust and help each other, were less afraid of being victimized than individuals living in communities with a lower level of social integration (Gibson et al. 2002). In sum, as Jackson (2009, 366) noted, research provided strong evidence regarding the importance of public concerns about neighborhood disorder, social cohesion and collective efficacy when explaining variations in fear of crime (Ferraro, 1995; Wyant, 2008).

The victimization perspective examines the effects of direct and indirect experiences with victimization on fear of crime. Research findings are not universal in this case as well. While some researchers found that persons who have been victims of crime tend to have higher levels of fear of crime (Ferraro 1995; Kanan & Pruitt 2002; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Reese 2009; Skogan & Maxfield 1981; Taylor, Eitle & Russell 2009; Yun et al. 2010), other scholars (Clemente & Kleiman 1977; Liska, Lawrence & Sanchirico 1982) did not identify a significant relationship between one's experience with crime and fear of victimization.

### **Victimization and fear of crime among immigrants**

“Crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, extremism and intolerance of the other remain a daily reality across the European Union (EU), as evidence collected by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) consistently shows (FRA 2012a, 13).” Results of the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS), the first EU-wide survey related to victimization and based on random samples of members of immigrant and ethnic minority groups in the 27 EU Member States (N = 23,500) shows that sizeable proportions of members of minority and immigrant groups in the EU perceive themselves to be the victims of ‘racially motivated’ criminal victimization. Specifically, the *EU-MIDIS* report on minorities as victims of crime shows that the average rate of criminal victimization for all groups surveyed was 24%. On average, based on comparisons with data from the European Crime and Safety Survey, minorities are victims of personal theft, assault, or threat more often than the majority population. The study also shows that people belonging to visible minority groups report higher levels of victimization than immigrant or minority groups who look similar to the majority population. For instance, Roma (10 %), Sub-Saharan Africans (9 %) and North Africans (9

%) were, on average, most likely to have been assaulted or threatened with violence at least once during the 12 months period that preceded the data collection. The groups with the highest perceived rates of racially motivated in-person criminal victimization were the Roma in the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia; Somalis in Finland and Denmark; and Africans in Ireland, Italy and Malta. It should be noted that respondents indicated that most incidents of assault or threat were not committed by members of right-wing extremist groups (FRA 2012b, 3).

Since 1982, the British Crime Survey (BCS) included questions asking respondents in England and Wales about their experience with victimization and if they worry about crime. The 2000 BCS indicated that in 1999, on average, 4.2% of adults in England and Wales were the victim of one or more violent crimes. Blacks were listed among the adults most at risk of violence with a 5.4% victimization rate. However, that figure was equal to the percentage of men age 25-44, who were victims of violent crimes and was significantly lower than the proportion of young men age 16-24 who have been victimized (20.1%). In terms of fear of crime, results showed that 37% of Black respondents (i.e., persons who classified themselves as Black-African, Black-Caribbean or Black-Other) and 41% of Asian respondents (i.e., those who classified themselves as Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi) were very worried about their home being burgled, compared to 18% of white respondents (Kernshaw et al. 2000, 37- 47).

Based on 2003 data from the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS), a nationally representative self-report offending survey of around 12,000 people in England and Wales, 45.8% of natives and 46.4% of immigrants have been victims of crime and 11.5% of natives and 10.5% of immigrants have been victims of violent crimes. A review of the British Crime Surveys from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010 (N = 165,169; sampling ages 16-65) indicated that the proportion of immigrants who have been victimized (27.1%) was slightly lower than the percentage of victimized natives (30.7%). Similarly, 3.1% of immigrants declared being a victim of a violent crime vs. 4% of natives (Bell & Machin 2011, 73-74). These results indicate that, at least in England and Wales, the victimization rates (including violent victimization) were not significantly different when immigrants and natives were compared. However, the fear of crime was higher among immigrants, especially when they belonged to visible minority groups (e.g. Blacks and South-Asians).

The 2008 Garda Public Attitudes Survey, the tenth in a series of national surveys commissioned by the police force in Ireland ((An Garda Síochána) and conducted on a representative sample of adults (N=10,032) showed that 9.2% of the respondents have

been themselves or a member of their household victims of crime in 2007. Approximately 1.5% of the respondents in the overall sample declared they had been subjected to a racist incident. The sample included 8% non-Irish nationals. In this subsample 9% of non-European Union immigrants and 7% of immigrants from countries belonging to the European Union experienced some racist incident. In another section of the survey, the majority of the respondents (57%) agreed with the statement “people who are different are likely to experience ridicule or personal attack on our streets.” In the overall sample, 37% of respondents declared they worry about becoming a victim of crime and 44% declared they worry about a member of their family becoming a victim of crime. The large majority of the sample (89%) declared that crime is increasing in Ireland. Fear of crime was higher in urban areas (except the capital city, Dublin) than in rural areas (Browne 2008, 32-53). In addition, non-Irish nationals (apart from British nationals) were also found to be less likely to be ‘concerned about crime’ than Irish nationals, once their prior history of victimization was controlled for (Browne 2008). It is difficult to determine if ethnic minorities or immigrants belonging to visible minority groups had higher levels of victimization or fear of crime than the majority because the 2008 Irish survey did not record the respondents’ ethnicity.

Using survey data from Sweden, Martens found that immigrants had a higher fear of victimization than natives. In addition, immigrants were found to have a higher level of victimization than native Swedes when three aspects of crime against the person (i.e., violence causing death, serious violence, and threats of violence) were considered. Regarding property crimes, the reviewed surveys did not indicate significant inter-group differences in terms of victimization rates. The factors associated with increased victimization rates among both immigrant and indigenous groups were: youth, being single, living in public housing and living in an urbanized environment (Martens 2001).

An analysis based on data from the 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization conducted in Canada on a representative sample that included approximately 24,000 households showed that immigrants had a rate of violent victimization (i.e., sexual assault, robbery and assault) that was considerably lower than that of the Canadian-born population (e.g., 68 violent incidents against immigrants per 1,000 population, compared to 116 incidents per 1,000 for non-immigrants). However, even if immigrants were less likely to be victims of violent crime, and despite being more likely to feel that there was no social disorder in their neighborhood, they expressed slightly higher levels of fear than the Canadian-born population. For example, immigrants felt less safe than Canadian-born individuals when walking alone in their area after dark, when using public transportation

alone after dark, and when alone in their home in the evening or at night (Perreault 2008).

Using data from the 2004 International Crime Victimization Survey conducted on a probability sample (N=7000) in Australia, Johnson (2005, 4) concluded that immigrant minorities were not more likely to be victims of crime than natives. However, the author acknowledged that immigrants from Middle East were underrepresented in the sample and that the survey did not collect information about racially motivated hate crimes. Additional analyses showed that when looking at fear of crime, those who spoke at home a language other than English reported higher levels of fear (Johnson 2005, 34). Another research study conducted in Sydney, Australia on a sample (N=825) that included mostly immigrants (i.e., 80% of the respondents had a non-English speaking background) revealed that immigrants were both perpetrators of crime and victims of crime, and that the fear of crime was strongly present in the immigrant community (i.e., about 63% of the immigrant adults surveyed were very concerned about crime) (Collins 2007, 63).

In United States data regarding crimes that involve immigrants as victims are not specially collected and it is difficult to determine if victimization rates are different when immigrants are compared to natives. Yet, it seems that in recent years there was registered an increase in racially motivated hate crimes against all Latinos, regardless of their immigration status. According to FBI hate crime statistics, in 2007 anti-Latino hate crimes (N=595) were almost 40% higher than in 2003 (N=426) (Mock 2007). A recent analysis that made use of FBI, Census, and Department of Homeland Security data found that hate crimes against Hispanics, which are the largest ethnic minority group in United States, tend to follow immigration trends. On average, from 2000 to 2004, US states reported an average of 10 anti-Hispanic crimes per year, with a higher incidence in the West and Northeast, even if immigration appears evenly distributed across US regions. While 44% of anti-Hispanic hate crimes were property crimes, more than half of them (56%) were crimes against the person, intimidation representing the majority of offenses. The authors of the study also noted that hate crimes against Hispanics are less frequent in areas where Hispanics are more numerous. Drawing on traditional theories of intergroup conflict and in particular on minority threat theory, the authors found support for the hypothesis that recent changes in Hispanic legal immigration are positively related to hate crimes targeting Latinos. However, the measure of economic threat, the overall state economic conditions, or the white-to-Hispanic unemployment rate had no significant impact on anti-Hispanic hate crime (Stacey, Carbone-López, and Rosenfeld 2011). According to the most recently published FBI report there were 6,222 hate crimes

reported in United States in 2011. These crimes involved 7,713 victims and 60% of the incidents (including offenses like vandalism, intimidation, assault, rape, or murder) were crimes against persons. Racial bias and ethnicity/national origin bias motivated the majority (58.5%) of the reported hate crimes (FBI 2012).

Although not too many studies examined the level of fear of crime among immigrants in United States, research results indicate that in general, immigrants tend to worry more about crime than natives do. A comparative study conducted among high-school students from Brownsville, Texas determined that Hispanic immigrant juveniles were more fearful of weapon associated victimization than nonimmigrant juveniles. In addition to age, gender, seeing other students carry weapons, and involvement with student clubs/organizations, another significant predictor of fear of crime was a low level of acculturation (i.e., the language spoken at home was not English) (Brown & Benedict 2004). A study that examined the correlates of fear of crime among Korean immigrants in Chicago found that foreign-born Koreans have significantly higher levels of fear of crime than US-born Koreans. Results showed that measures of acculturation explained variations in fear of crime among immigrants. For example, English proficiency and length of residence were negatively related to fear of crime, while exposure to media and attachment to ethnic friends and the Korean culture were positively related to fear of victimization (Lee & Ulmer 2000). Although the authors do not indicate the extent of victimization experienced by immigrants, a more recent study conducted among Chinese immigrants in Houston, Texas shows that immigrants who have been victims of violent or property crimes had significantly higher levels of fear than immigrants without criminal victimization experience. Results also showed that age, acculturation, and socioeconomic status were negatively related to fear of crime, while perceptions of neighborhood crime as being problematic had a positive relationship with fear of crime (Yun et al. 2010). In a qualitative study based on 61 interviews conducted in Phoenix, Arizona with Latino immigrants from Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico, Menjívar and Bejarano (2004) concluded that immigrants' perceptions of crime and safety in the United States are also shaped by the immigrants' experiences with crime and victimization in their homelands, which serve as a point of reference. For instance, Cuban respondents, who experienced low crime levels in Cuba, acknowledged a high level of fear of crime, even if they were living in relatively safe communities. On the other hand, Salvadoran respondents, who were living in more crime-prone neighborhoods in the United States, but were used to witness violence and higher crime rates in their homeland, perceived their community in the host country as being safe.

## Methodology

The present analysis is conducted on data from a representative sample of residents in United Kingdom, who in 2010 participated at the European Social Survey (ESS Round 5, 2010, 2012). The main objectives of the analysis are: to determine if there are variations in victimization rates when natives and immigrants are compared; to compare the inter-group levels of fear of violent victimization; to examine the effects of the fear-of-crime correlates on perceived fear of violent victimization, and to determine if the same individual-level factors are more likely to influence perceptions of safety when foreign-born people are compared to native Britons.

In order to answer the research questions, bivariate and multivariate analyses have been conducted. The dependent variable, fear of violent victimization is a composite variable that includes responses at two questions: (1) “How safe do you – or would you - feel walking alone in your neighborhood after dark?” (2) “How often, if at all, do you worry about becoming a victim of violent crime?” The variables are significantly and positively correlated (Pearson  $r = .26$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The obtained summative index has been recoded into a dummy variable (i.e., code 1, if respondent is afraid all or most of the time, and zero otherwise). The selected predictors of fear of violent victimization and the control variables used in this analysis are presented below.

*Experience with victimization* is a dummy variable. Respondents who answered ‘yes’ at the question “Have you or a member of your household been the victim of a burglary or physical assault in the last 5 years?” were coded one, and zero otherwise. *Police distrust* – the variable takes values from zero (complete trust) to 10 (complete distrust). *Contact with police* – a dummy variable coded 1 for persons who had contact with police and zero for those who did not have any contact with police. *Interpersonal distrust* – this composite measure includes three questions (i.e., Most people can be trusted or you can’t be too careful; Most people try to be fair or try take advantage of you; Most of the time people are helpful or mostly looking for themselves), each with scores that varied from 0 (complete trust) to 10 (complete distrust). A factor of interpersonal distrust has been computed through principal component analysis. Only one factor has been extracted (Eigenvalue = 1.920; variance explained = 64%). The factor loadings varied from .786 to .815. The Cronbach’s Alpha

reliability coefficient for this index was .72. *Subjective general health* is an ordinal-level variable that takes values from 1 (very good health) to 5 (very poor health). *Perceived discrimination* – is a dummy variable. Respondents who declared they belong to a discriminated group were coded 1 and the others were coded zero. The indicator referred to perceived discrimination based on ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, or religion. *Financial difficulties* – a dummy variable, coded 1 if a person stated that it is difficult and very difficult to live on present income and zero otherwise. *Immigrant status* – is a dummy variable, coded one if a person was born abroad, and zero if the respondent was born in United Kingdom. *Residency* – persons living in large urban areas (including suburban areas) were coded one and zero otherwise. *Gender*, a dummy variable, was coded one for females and zero otherwise. *Age* – two dummy variables were created and used in this analysis. Age 20-24, was coded one for people in this age group and zero otherwise. Age 65 and over was coded 1 for persons in this age group and zero otherwise. Preliminary analyses (not included) showed that persons belonging to these two particular age groups had the highest levels of fear of violent crime. *Ethnic minority* – coded 1 if the respondent is part of an ethnic minority group and zero otherwise.

Prior research (Brown & Benedict 2004; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Yun et al. 2010) found that the level of acculturation associated with the foreign-born has a significant impact on immigrants' perceptions of safety and their perceived risk of victimization. Acculturation can be defined as a multi-dimensional process that involves language (i.e., usage of the official language of the dominant culture), sharing the cultural beliefs and values of the dominant majority, and a structural assimilation that refers to the integration of a minority group (e.g., immigrants) into the social structure of the majority group (Hazuda, Stern and Haffner 1988). The two immigrant-specific variables used in this analysis as measures of acculturation are the *language most often spoken at home* (a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent speaks at home a language other than English and zero if the respondent mostly speaks English at home) and the *length of time* in United Kingdom (a continuous variable that measures the number of years spent by the respondent in the host country).

It is hypothesized that persons having a higher level of perceived vulnerability (i.e., females, older residents, ethnic minorities, persons who perceive themselves as being discriminated and those who are economically

marginalized, persons with poor health, and people who are foreign-born) as well as those who directly or indirectly experienced victimization will have a higher level of fear of violent crimes. In addition, it is anticipated that persons who tend to distrust the police and people in general will feel less safe than, respectively, individuals who express confidence toward the police and tend to perceive their fellow citizens as trustworthy. Taking into account the fact that most violent crimes are recorded in large urban areas and that young males are overrepresented among the victims and the offenders involved in violent crimes (see Bell & Machin, 2011), young age and residency in large cities are expected to be positively related to fear of violent victimization. It is anticipated that foreign-born persons characterized by a low level of acculturation (i.e., non-English language spoken at home; short time since arrival in UK) will have higher levels of fear of crime than persons better integrated in the British society.

## Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the overall sample and separately for two subsamples – immigrants and natives. In addition, bivariate analyses have been conducted to observe if there are inter-group differences in terms of the variables used in this analysis. It can be noticed that the foreign-born population in this sample represents approximately 11%. It can also be observed that foreign-born persons appear to express a significantly higher level of fear of crime than native Britons ( $t=1.97$ ;  $p<.05$ ). While 35% of the natives are afraid they might be violently victimized, 41% of the immigrants share a similar fearful attitude. The two subsamples do not appear to differ significantly (at  $p < .05$ ) in terms of levels of interpersonal trust and socioeconomic vulnerabilities such as financial difficulties and perceived discrimination, or gender structure, which are variables usually considered relevant predictors of fear of crime. Although the difference is not significant at  $p < .05$ , it should be noted that the proportion of foreign-born people who directly or vicariously experienced victimization (23%) is higher than the proportion of native Britons (19%) who had a similar experience. In addition, immigrants have a significantly lower number of contacts with police and seem to have more positive perceptions of police than natives do. The proportion of senior citizens among the foreign-born is also

significantly lower than the proportion of the natives who are 65 years old and over. It can be observed that immigrants perceive their general health in more positive terms than natives do. This is not surprising taking into account the fact that the average age for the subsample of immigrants is 44 (std.dev. = 18.44), while the average age for the subsample of natives is 51 (std. dev. = 18.91). It can be also noticed that foreign-born people are more likely than natives to live in large urban areas, where crime levels and the risk of victimization tend to be higher. Additionally, almost half of the respondents (43%) in the subsample of immigrants belong to a minority ethnic group, while in the subsample of natives, ethnic minority respondents represent only 3%. Although, on average, the immigrants in this sample lived in United Kingdom for 23 years, it should be noted that approximately four out of ten immigrants (39%) speak at home a language other than English.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-tests**

Variable	All (N= 2422)		Immigrants (N = 271)		Natives (N = 2151)		t-test	p
	Me an	SD	Mean	SD	Me an	SD		
		.480						
Fear of violent crime	.36		.41	.493	.35	.478	1.970	.049
Interpersonal distrust	.00	1.00	.10	1.02	-	.996	1.710	.087
	0				.01			
Police distrust	3.8	2.44	3.51	2.63	3.8	2.41	-	.018
	3				8		2.370	
Contact with police	.37	.482	.31	.463	.38	.484	-	.035
							2.113	
Victimization	.19	.392	.23	.420	.19	.389	1.691	.091
Foreign-born	.11	.315						
Ethnic minority	.08	.273	.43	.496	.03	.189	12.97	.000
Financial difficulties	.19	.394	.22	.416	.19	.391	1.302	.193
Subjective health	2.1	.965	1.89	.912	2.1	.97	-	.000
	1				5		4.178	
Perceived discrimination	.12	.319	.15	.355	.11	.315	1.774	.076
Age 20-24	.06	.232	.08	.273	.05	.226	1.787	.074
Age 65 and over	.25	.435	.18	.385	.26	.440	-2.938	.003
Residency (big city)	.31	.463	.49	.501	.29	.454	6.759	.000
Gender (female)	.56	.496	.54	.499	.56	.495	-7.45	.457
Language spoken at home	-	-	.39	.488	-	-		
Length of stay in UK	-	-	22.9	20.3	-	-		

Further analyses examined the simultaneous effect on variation in fear of violent victimization of a selected number of fear-of-crime determinants. The results of the multivariate analyses conducted on the entire sample and separately on each subsample are presented in Table 2. The first model, which includes all respondents, shows that when controlling for all the variables included in this analysis, foreign-born persons have a significantly higher level of fear of violent victimization than natives do. In addition, as anticipated, females, senior citizens, persons in poor health, residents of large cities, persons who tend to distrust their fellow citizens, and persons who experienced victimization are more likely to feel unsafe and are more afraid of becoming a victim of a violent crime than, respectively, males, very young and middle-age adults, persons in good health, residents of towns and rural areas, persons who trust people in general, and those who were not victims of crime. Due to the fact that a relatively large proportion of the immigrants included in this sample belonged to ethnic minority groups, in order to avoid multicollinearity, the variable ethnic minority was used only in the comparative analyses presented in Table 2 as well.

The second model includes the subsample of foreign born individuals, while the third model includes the subsample of natives. Results indicate that while there are some similarities between foreigners and natives who are afraid of being victimized, inter-group differences exist as well. For instance, both natives and foreign-born people who experienced victimization directly or indirectly are more likely to be afraid of becoming a victim of a violent crime. Also, in both subsamples women and those who consider their health as being poor tend to have significantly higher levels of fear of violent crime. The odds of being afraid of violent victimization are however increased by a factor of 2.7 (OR = 2.718) for native women and by a factor of 2.3 (OR = 2.292) for foreign-born women, suggesting that gender has a stronger effect on structuring feelings of perceived unsafety among UK-born residents than it does among foreign-nationals. On the other hand, direct or vicarious experience with victimization, seems to have a stronger impact on immigrants' level of fear of crime (OR = 2.201) than it does on natives' fear of violent victimization (OR = 1.291). Foreign-born people who have been victimized are twice more likely to be afraid of being victims of crime than their counterparts without victimization experience. On the other hand, natives who have experienced victimization are



only 30% more likely to be afraid of violent crime than natives without victimization experience. Even if the inter-group difference in odds ratios (OR) is not very large, the effect of perceived health is stronger among immigrant people (OR = 1.533) than among natives (OR = 1.432).

**Table 2: Logit estimates for fear of violent victimization**

Variable	All (N=2422)			Immigrants (N=271)			Natives (N=2151)		
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	p	B (SE)	Exp(B)	p	B (SE)	Exp(B)	p
Interpersonal distrust	.305 (.050)	1.356	<b>.000</b>	.144 (.156)	1.155	.357	.331 (.053)	1.393	<b>.000</b>
Police distrust	.007 (.020)	1.007	.713	-.051 (.065)	.951	.436	.013 (.021)	1.013	.546
Contact with police	.135 (.100)	1.145	.178	.311 (.317)	1.365	.327	.121 (.107)	1.129	.256
Victimization	.307 (.119)	1.359	<b>.010</b>	.789 (.346)	2.201	<b>.023</b>	.255 (.128)	1.291	<b>.047</b>
Foreign-born	.358 (.148)	1.430	<b>.016</b>						
Financial difficulties	.201 (.119)	1.222	.090	.918 (.364)	2.504	<b>.012</b>	.120 (.128)	1.128	.346
Subjective health (poor)	.361 (.049)	1.435	<b>.000</b>	.428 (.169)	1.533	<b>.012</b>	.359 (.052)	1.432	<b>.000</b>
Perceived discrimination	.114 (.144)	1.121	.428	-.492 (.427)	.611	.249	.145 (.157)	1.156	.354
Age 20-24 years	.305 (.197)	1.357	.122	.342 (.531)	1.408	.519	.387 (.216)	1.473	.073
Age 65 years and over	.578 (.111)	1.782	<b>.000</b>	-.258 (.484)	.772	.593	.623 (.117)	1.864	<b>.000</b>
Residency (big city)	.472 (.099)	1.603	<b>.000</b>	.484 (.295)	1.622	.101	.465 (.107)	1.592	<b>.000</b>
Gender (female)	.955 (.096)	2.598	<b>.000</b>	.829 (.303)	2.292	<b>.006</b>	1.000 (.103)	2.718	<b>.000</b>
Ethnic minority				.313 (.311)	1.367	.314	.311 (.265)	1.365	.241
Language (non-English)				.631 (.315)	1.880	<b>.045</b>			
Length of stay				.020 (.010)	1.021	<b>.036</b>			
Constant	-2.501	.082	.000	-2.89	.056	.000	-2.545	.078	.000
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>		.159			.205			.164	
Goodness of fit	Chi-sq. 14.204	df 8	p .077	Chi-sq. 6.873	df 8	p .551	Chi-sq. 12.379	df 8	p .135

Interpersonal distrust increases significantly one's level of fear of violent crime only in the subsample of natives. Only in the subsample of UK-born people, persons age 20-24, senior citizens, and residents of large urban areas tend to be afraid more often than others of violent crimes. Whereas having financial difficulties increases the level of fear of victimization in both subsamples, the variable has a significant positive association with the dependent variable only in the subsample that includes foreign-born persons. Economically disadvantaged persons are 2.5 more likely to be afraid of violent victimization than immigrants who live comfortably. While gender has the strongest influence on variation in fear of violent crime in the natives' subsample, having financial difficulties has the stronger impact on immigrants' feelings of insecurity. Although the other predictors (e.g., police distrust, police contact, perceived discrimination, and minority status) included in the models presented in Table 2 preserved almost in all instances the direction of the anticipated effects, their impact on fear of violent crime was not sufficiently strong to be significant.

Results also show that immigrant persons characterized by a lower level of acculturation (i.e., those who speak at home most often a language other than English) are almost twice (OR = 1.880) more likely to be afraid of violent victimization than immigrants who speak English at home. Although as indicated by additional analyses the likelihood of a foreign-born speaking at home a language other than English decreases significantly with the number of years an immigrant spent in the host country ( $r = -.295$ ;  $p < .001$ ), in the multivariate model the variable *length of time in the host country* did not have the anticipated negative relationship with the dependent variable. It should be noted that immigrants who lived for more years in UK are more likely to be persons 65 years old and older ( $r = .60$ ;  $p < .001$ ) who are also more likely to perceive their health as being poor ( $r = .31$ ;  $p < .001$ ), factors shown to be associated with higher fear of victimization.

To summarize, compared to native Britons who are not afraid of violent victimization, natives who worry about their safety are more likely to be persons who experienced victimization, females, senior citizens, persons in poor health, residents of large urban areas, and individuals with low interpersonal trust. Among the foreign-born, those who fear violent victimization have been exposed to crime, are more likely to be females, persons with health problems, individuals with low socioeconomic status, and persons who are not well integrated in the host society, despite the fact that some migrated to United Kingdom many years ago.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This study finds partial support for the social vulnerability hypothesis. Consistent with prior research (Brown & Benedict 2004; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Kernshaw et al. 2000; Martens 2001; Perreault 2008) foreign nationals in this sample have a significantly higher fear of violent crime than native Britons, even if the immigrants' experience with victimization was not significantly higher than the natives' exposure to crime. Also, as found in most studies that examined the fear of crime correlates, both native and immigrant females had significantly higher levels of fear of violent victimization than their male counterparts. In both subsamples, as hypothesized and consistent with prior research (Taylor et al. 2009) persons with physical limitations and in poor health expressed higher levels of fear than individuals in good health. However, perceived discrimination and being part of a racial/ethnic minority group did not influence significantly variations in fear of violent crime in any of the subsamples examined here. In addition, age seemed to explained variations in perceived safety only in the subsample of natives, where senior citizens, and at some extent, younger persons (age 20-24) seemed to express higher levels of fear than the reference category (i.e., persons age 25-64 or younger than 20 years old). On the other hand, one's socioeconomic status appears to influence significantly only the immigrants' perceptions of safety.

Although this analysis recognizes the merit of the vulnerability perspective, it offers a stronger support for the crime experience perspective. As found in other studies (Ferraro 1995; Kanan & Pruitt 2002; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Reese 2009; Skogan & Maxfield 1981; Taylor, Eitle & Russell 2009; Yun et al. 2010), results showed that when controlling for a set of selected predictors, experience with victimization was positively and significantly related to fear of violent crime in both groups. Nonetheless, it should be noted that victimization (direct and/or vicarious) had a much stronger effect on immigrants' perceptions of safety than it did on natives.

Regarding the effect of contextual factors, residency in large urban areas was associated significantly with higher levels of fear of crime only for the subsample of native Britons. Similarly, support for the integrative model is found only within the subsample of natives. While native Britons who live in areas where people are fair, trustworthy, and help each other tend to have

significantly lower levels of fear of crime, differences in interpersonal trust do not seem to affect significantly the immigrants' perceptions of safety, even if the direction of the effect is the same in both subsamples. Despite the fact that in both samples individuals who had more frequent contacts with the police are more likely to worry about their safety, the effect is not strong enough to be significant. In addition, the level of confidence toward the police does not appear to influence significantly personal feelings of safety, at least when people refer to fear of violent victimization. This finding differs from other studies (e.g., Bennett 1994; Jackson et al. 2009; Reynolds et al. 2008) that identified a significant negative relationship between fear of crime and trust in the police. However, these studies examined the level of fear in general, including fear of property crime, while the present analysis focused only on people's concerns regarding personal crime.

Even if the measures used here to determine the level of acculturation associated with foreign-born individuals are limited and the English language proficiency (an important component of the acculturation process) was only indirectly estimated, consistent with prior research (Brown & Benedict 2004; Johnson 2005; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Yun et al. 2010), this analysis also found that individuals who speak more often at home a language other than the official language (which could be considered an indicator of a lower integration in the host society), appear to worry more often about being victimized. In addition, it was anticipated that more years an immigrant spends in the host country, better integrated he/she would be and as a result, perceptions of safety would be similar to those expressed by natives. Yet, the results indicate that the immigrants' feelings of unsafety tend to increase with their length of stay in the host country. Additional analyses showed that the foreign-born individuals who lived in United Kingdom for more than 23 years ( $N = 101$ ), which is the average length of stay for the sample, have certain characteristics that could explain the positive relationship between length of stay and fear of crime. For instance, 55% of the immigrants in this group are females, 42% are over 65 years old, and 25% of them are less likely to speak English at home. In addition, they have, on average, more health problems than natives do. These findings suggest that physical vulnerability or a low level of acculturation, or a combination of these two factors could explain an increase in fear of violent victimization among the first generation of immigrants who relocated to UK more than two decades ago.

In conclusion, this study indicates that individual-level variables that account for variations in fear of crime in general, also work relatively well in explaining variations in perceived risk of violent victimization. Yet, although this research shows that certain factors, such as gender, physical vulnerability, and experience with victimization are significantly related to fear of personal crime in both populations (natives and foreign-born), inter-group differences exist regarding the strength of these effects. In addition, certain predictors of fear of crime influence perceptions of safety in one group, but not in the other, suggesting that individual dissimilarities in culture and nationality may account for variations in perceptions and emotions, including worries about crime.

Similar to prior research, the current study found that compared to natives, immigrants worry more often about becoming victims of violent crime. While inter-group differences in experience with victimization and a relatively low level of acculturation associated with almost 40% of the foreign-born sample might partially explain discrepancies in the level of fear when immigrants and natives are compared, it is possible that current perceptions of (un)safety may be relative to the immigrants' experiences with crime and victimization in their homelands (see Menjívar and Bejarano 2004). For example, in 2002, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Kingdom received more refugees than any other country (i.e., 15.2% of the worldwide total of 555,310 asylum applications). As a reflection of major conflicts and persecution, the main origin countries of asylum applicants were at the time, Iraq (4,375), Zimbabwe (2,750), Somalia (1,835), Afghanistan (1,350), and China (905) (Somerville, Sriskandarajah and Latorre 2009). It is reasonable to assume that refugees, who were fleeing war zones and extreme violence, would perceive crime levels in United Kingdom as being relatively low compared to crime rates in their homelands. Considering that most asylum seekers belong to ethnic/racial minority groups, it is not surprising that ethnic minority status (43% in the subsample of immigrants) was not significantly related to fear of violent crime in this study. Conversely, economic migrants, such as those relocating for work from other European countries, especially after the European Union enlargement, might have different expectations that could negatively affect their perceptions of crime and safety in the host country.

As a secondary analysis, the present research was limited by the existing

data and detailed background information about immigrants, frequency and specifics of victimization, the rationality of people's feelings of insecurity, as well as other potentially important predictors of fear of crime could not be included in the statistical models. Although in an attempt to determine the collective efficacy that characterizes the community where people live a proxy indicator (i.e., interpersonal trust) was created, other ecological variables that would have offered specific information about the neighborhood conditions (e.g., crime and delinquency levels; physical incivilities; characteristics of the housing stock; ethnic, cultural, and socio-demographic composition of the community; community segregation level, etc) have been omitted because data were not available.

Despite its limitations, this study suggests that not only demographic and socioeconomic differences shape perceptions of crime and safety. In addition to environmental factors, life experiences and cultural factors play an important role and they should be considered when strategies meant to create more cohesive and safer communities are formulated. Nonetheless, future research, policy makers, and the police, as the main institution responsible for ensuring community safety and protection, would benefit if the residents, natives and immigrants alike, would be asked to clearly identify the specific causes of their worries and fear of victimization. In order to generate targeted responses to fear of crime at the community level, the objective sources of fear should be addressed first.

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