

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

### Concerns about Violent Crime in France: Does Immigrant Status Make a Difference in Public Perceptions of Safety?

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**Abstract:** The present analysis compares and contrasts groups of natives and immigrants in France in terms of their prior exposure to victimization and their perceived risk of violent victimization based on survey data collected in 2010 from a representative sample of French residents (N=1728). Results show no significant inter-group differences regarding victimization experience and fear of violent victimization. In both subsamples, direct or vicarious victimization, as well as distrust in people in general, are significantly and positively associated with higher levels of perceived unsafety. The inter-group differential effect of several fear-of-crime predictors is also observed and the implications of the findings are briefly discussed.

**Keywords:** fear of violent crime, victimization, immigrants, France.

#### Introduction

France is the second largest country in the European Union and its population of 65.8 million people represents approximately 13% of EU population (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies/INSEE 2013). Different from other Western European countries that became destination countries for immigrants mainly after WWII, during the nineteenth century, France was already regarded as a sanctuary for political refugees and other people in search of freedom and civil liberties. The trend continued during the following decades and by 1931, the foreign-born persons represented about 6.5% of the French population. As a result of post-war industrial expansion a substantial number of immigrants, ready to satisfy the country's labor needs for low-skilled workers

migrated to France from Italy, Portugal, Spain, and North Africa. Although this trend stopped in the early 1970s after the first oil crisis, family and humanitarian migration continued (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/OECD 2008; Seljuq 1997; Tucci 2010). In 1990, for instance, there were 4.2 million immigrants in France and after a decade of relative stability in terms of migration inflows, starting with 1999, the number of immigrants continued to increase. Based on recent data, in 2010, 5.5 million people were first generation immigrants, representing 8.4% of the total population and 6.7 million persons were second-generation immigrants (i.e., persons born in France to immigrant parents) (INSEE 2011). If in 1990, one out of two immigrants was born in Europe, currently only 38% of the immigrants are born in a European country. About 43% of non-natives are born in Africa and most of these immigrants (70%) are born in one of the North African/Maghrebian countries – Algeria, Tunis, and Morocco (INSEE 2013). Recent data also show that 61% of the children born in France between 2006 and 2008 had two native parents who were both descendents of natives, while 10% had two immigrant parents and 29% had a least one parent who was born abroad or is a descendant of a foreign-born person (Breuil-Genier, Borrel & Lhommeau 2011, 36).

Even if France had a long experience with migration, an immigrant integration policy was formerly defined only recently (OECD 2008). And the recent tragic events in Paris, where seventeen people were killed, as well as the series of hate crimes that followed, suggest that France is currently facing a serious challenge. On one hand, similar to situations registered in other countries (see Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe /OSCE/ODIHR 2012), certain immigrant populations in France are facing suspicion, prejudice, xenophobia, or even hate crimes, while on the other hand, a large majority of the population publicly manifest its discontent with immigration policies as well, increasing the social distance (see Tucci 2010) between the group of natives of French origin and the others, making the immigrants' socioeconomic integration difficult and negatively affecting the cohesiveness of the French society.

For instance, a public opinion poll conducted in 2011 at the request of the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights (CNCDH) on a representative stratified sample of adult residents in France (N = 979) showed that the majority of the residents in France (56%) declared that "there are too many immigrants in France" and 67% of those interviewed contended that many immigrants relocate to France only to receive welfare benefits. Approximately 50% of the respondents said they do not feel at home in France anymore, 44% of the interviewees noted that

immigration is the main cause of insecurity in the country, and 26% of the respondents declared that those who are born in France to foreign-born parents, are not really French. Overall, compared to 2008, public opinion poll data indicated an increase in anti-immigration attitudes. Additionally, approximately 87% of the residents in France considered that racism is a widespread phenomenon in the country, an increase by 11 points compared to 2008. Almost half of those interviewed (46%) declared that Muslim immigrants from North Africa are the most common victims of racism in the country, followed by black immigrants from Africa. Roma people, Muslims, and Maghrebis are perceived by a large segment of the population in France, respectively 72%, 48%, and 35%, as being a '*different group of people*' in the French society. Results of the face-to-face interviews also indicated that during the past five years prior to data collection, 28% of those interviewed had experienced racist attitudes and discrimination. According to those who were victimized, one's nationality and one's skin color were the most common reasons for racist attitudes (Institut d'Etudes et de Conseil /CSA 2011, 6).

Authorities responsible for hate-crime data collection in France are the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights Defender. Bias motivations recorded in hate crime statistics are: race/color; ethnicity/national origin/national minority; citizenship; religion; sexual orientation; disability; gender; political conviction, and state of health and hate crimes are classified in the country as homicide, physical assault, damage to property, desecration of graves, attacks on places of worship, vandalism, and threats/threatening behavior. In 2012, France amended all hate crime provisions contained in its criminal code to include gender identity as a protected characteristic. Although anti-Semitic crimes represent a specific category and are recorded separately, anti-Muslim, anti-Christian and anti-Roma/Sinti hate crimes are not registered as a specific type of bias-motivated crime (OSCE/ODIHR 2013, 109).

Although no official data on anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Christian, anti-Roma, or crimes motivated by bias against LGTB people were reported to ODIHR in 2012, different non-governmental organizations and human rights agencies recorded a relatively large number of incidents motivated by bias against different social minorities in France. For instance, LICRA, the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (*Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme*), reported the case of a series of murders on 19 March, 2012 that included three children and the father of one of the children being shot dead outside a Jewish school in Toulouse. The perpetrator was killed by the police in the process of being apprehended. LICRA also reported a further case of damage to

property against a kosher supermarket. The Jewish Community Protection Service reported 96 incidents of physical violence, including a knife attack against a girl, three attacks involving spraying tear gas in the victims' faces, an attack by a group causing serious injury to a man, one attack by a group at school against one child resulting in serious injury; one case of robbery and physical assault resulting in serious injury against a Jewish man with significant disabilities; one case of blanks being shot out of a car at a rabbi and his congregation outside their synagogue; 172 cases of graffiti; 71 cases of vandalism and two cases of arson. The OIC Observatory reported eight cases of desecration of and vandalism to mosques, including two where a pig's head was left outside a mosque and one case where a mosque was smeared with excrement; one arson attack against a mosque; and three cases of desecration of graves, including one incident where 30 tombstones were vandalized. The *Association against Islamophobia in France* (CCIF) reported two physical assaults, including one against two men, and a serious assault against a girl resulting in her hospitalization; one case of graffiti on the home of a Muslim family; two case of threats with a gun; a case where a Muslim family found a pig's head in the stroller of their baby; and a case involving a woman's burka being pulled and ripped. The *Holy See* (the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Rome) reported four cases of grave desecration involving over 130 graves and a case of church desecration. The *Observatory on Intolerance Against Christians* reported one incident in which Christian icons in public places were vandalized; three arson attacks against church property, including one against a nativity scene and two against a church; 12 incidents of damage and/or vandalism to church property, including one incident against a bookstore owned by a church; three incidents of theft of church property; and four incidents of cemetery desecration. *Amnesty International* and the *European Roma Rights Centre* reported in 2012 an arson attack against the temporary home of a Roma family in Marseille and the NGO *SOS Homophobie* reported 138 physical assaults, 12 sexual assaults and 255 incidents involving threat and/or blackmail directed at persons belonging to sexual minority groups (OSCE/ODIHR 2013, 57-81)

Nevertheless, although the total number of hate crimes reported to the police in France from 2010 to 2012 remains unknown, according to official hate-crime data, in 2010, out of 2,007 bias-motivated incidents (including defamation and discrimination crimes) prosecuted in France, 562 (28%) crimes received a sentence, indicating that the large majority of the cases (72%) have been dismissed prior to trial (OSCE/ODIHR 2013). Due to differences in methods of recording crimes and also because many bias-motivated crimes remain underreported, especially if

the victim was an illegal immigrant, inter-country comparisons remain almost impossible and it is difficult to determine how France compares to other European countries or other developed nations in the world in terms of the extent of hate-crime offenses.

However, it should be noted that during the two-week period that followed the January 7-9, 2015 shooting spree by three French jihadists that killed 17 persons, including four French Jews at a kosher supermarket, the National Observatory against Islamophobia reported 116 anti-Muslim incidents (e.g., in several towns shots have been fired at mosques and racist slogans have been painted on their walls), a significant increase compared to the full month of January 2014, when there were reported 28 attacks on places of worship and 88 threats. In order to increase security and protect the mosques, a significant number of troops have been mobilized as part of the governmental anti-hate crime strategies (Agence France Press 2015). It should be noted that despite the fact that in France collecting official statistics about the race or religion of the citizens is prohibited by law, based on the average of several recent studies that attempted to calculate the number of people in France whose origins are from Muslim majority countries (see also Pew Research Forum 2011), it is estimated that about 6.5 million Muslims currently live in France, representing about 10% of the population.

Oberwittler & Roché (2013), the authors of a recent study that examined the relationships between the police and adolescents of foreign origin in France and Germany, noted that systematic empirical research on social issues regarding different minority groups in France is lacking, French social research relying mostly on political analyses or a mix of theoretical formulations and qualitative data. Additionally, it is quite difficult for researchers to determine how public attitudes and behaviors vary by ethnic groups because official statistics cannot legally include data on ethnicity. One objective of this analysis is to contribute to the literature on fear of crime by examining perceptions of safety experienced by groups differentiated by their place of birth. The amount of victimization each group has been exposed to will be also evaluated. Moreover, in addition to commonly used predictors of fear of crime, the analysis will observe the effect of ethnicity on attitudes by using *African origin* as a proxy. Even if the category used here includes persons belonging to different ethnic sub-groups it was restricted by the information available in the dataset structure. Another objective of the paper is to determine if data collected years prior to the lethal attacks recently registered in Paris, France would offer some indication that immigrants' victimization levels and/or a higher perceived risk of violent victimization might further motivate some

persons of foreign origin to retaliate and socially interact aggressively. Knowing the immigrants' perceptions of safety and the factors that influence their levels of fear is important not only because the perceived risk of victimization experienced by this particular group did not receive extensive attention from scholars (see Andreescu 2013), but also because by finding ways to diminish the citizens' worries about crime, immigrants' integration levels, as well as the social cohesiveness and the community capacity to prevent and fight crime might increase substantially.

### **Criminal victimization, perceived vulnerability, social context, and fear of crime**

In general, most studies that tried to determine why certain people worry about becoming victims of crime more often than others considered the influence on perceptions of safety of factors such as: one's exposure to direct and indirect (vicarious) victimization, personal socio-demographic characteristics that make individuals see themselves as being more vulnerable to victimization (e.g., women, the elderly, the youth, economically disadvantaged individuals, persons physically impaired, racial/ethnic minorities, etc), and the social environment a person lives in (e.g., quality and extent of social interactions; level of urbanization; neighborhood characteristics, etc) (see Halle 1996). Although research on fear of crime is characterized by a lack of uniformity regarding the way the dependent variable (fear of crime) as well as important predictors have been defined and operationalized, a review of the literature (see Andreescu 2013), yet not exhaustive, shows that at least partial support for the three theoretical models of fear of crime (Halle 1996) has been documented by research. Although a significant and positive relationship between experience with victimization and fear of crime was not always supported by evidence, several studies that examined people's fear of crime found that persons who have been victimized or were aware of other relatives/close friends being victims of crime tended to also express higher levels of insecurity (Ferraro 1995; Kanan & Pruitt 2002; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Reese 2009; Skogan & Maxfield 1981; Taylor, Eitle & Russell 2009). On the other hand, persons less likely to be victimized, such as women and the elderly, were among those who worried significantly more often about crime than men and younger individuals, respectively (Chiricos, Hogan & Gertz 1997; De Donder, Verte & Messelis 2005; Lane & Meeker 2000; Reese 2009; Scott 2003; Taylor, Eitle & Russell 2009; Ziegler & Mitchell 2003). However, it should be noted that not all studies examining the relationship age –fear of crime found a significant and positive relationship between these variables. Similarly, while several researchers (Hough 1995; Jordan

& Gabbidon 2010; Salisbury & Upson 2004; Skogan & Maxfield 1981) concluded that persons belonging to racial/ethnic minority groups tend to have higher levels of fear of crime than the majority of the population, other scholars did not find that one's race or one's ethnicity had a significant influence on a person's perceptions of safety. Results have been inconsistent as well when the relationship socioeconomic status and fear of crime has been examined. Yet, more frequently researchers found that economically and socially marginalized persons tend to worry more about the possibility of becoming victims of crime than individuals who are better educated and more secure financially (Jordan & Gabbidon 2010; Lane & Meeker 2000; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Scott 2003). Although research examining the relationship between fear of crime and subjective or objective health is not extensive, studies that tried to determine if an individual's mental health and physical functioning are influencing his/her perceptions of safety generally concluded that persons with health problems tend to worry more about crime, a fact that, as Jackson and Stafford (2009) noted, might negatively affect one's well-being even further by decreasing the fearful persons' health and by making them more vulnerable to victimization.

Regardless of the fact that research examining fear of crime experienced by the foreign-born is quite limited, prior studies that tried to determine how often non-natives worry about crime found that immigrants tend to express higher levels of fear of victimization than natives do (Andreescu 2013; Brown and Benedict 2004; Kernshaw et al. 2000; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Martens 2001; Perreault 2008), even if, according to statistical evidence, foreign nationals have been victimized, directly or indirectly, at a lesser extent or not significantly more than natives did, as several studies showed (Andreescu 2013; Bell & Machin 2011; Johnson 2005; Perreault 2008). While variations in immigrants' perceptions of safety in the host country are sometimes shaped by prior experiences with victimization or an already high level of perceived unsafety in the country of origin (Menjivar & Bejarano 2004; Wu & Wen 2014), it seems reasonable to consider immigrants as being part of a socially vulnerable group, particularly in Europe, where an increase in anti-immigration attitudes and bias-motivated crimes has been documented by recent research (OSCE/ODIHR 2013).

Research that examined the influence of the social context on one's perceptions of safety found that persons living in cohesive and socially organized communities, individuals who tend to trust people in general, also tend to worry less about being victimized (Andreescu 2013; Ferraro 1995; Gibson et al. 2002; Jackson 2009). In contrast, several studies found that residency in larger urban

areas, where social interaction is more superficial and exposure to crime is higher, was positively associated with higher levels of fear of crime (Andreescu 2013; Bankston et al. 1987; Keane 1992; Scott 2003).

## Methodology

The analysis presented in this paper uses as a data source the European Social Survey conducted in 2010 on a representative sample of residents in France (ESS Round 5 2010, 2012). This is the most recent available ESS survey that includes information regarding citizens' worries about violent victimization. The analysis intends to compare immigrants to natives in terms of direct and vicarious victimization and fear of violent victimization. Additionally, several individual-level predictors will be used in multivariate analyses to determine if they affect differently one's perceived risk of violent victimization when attitudes are examined separately based on the respondent's nationality status.

The dependent variable, *fear of violent victimization* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent declared that he/she worries some time or most/all of the time of becoming a victim of a violent crime and zero otherwise. The large majority of the fear-of-crime predictors used in this analysis followed the same coding scheme used in a prior comparative study that examined fear of violent crime in United Kingdom (see Andreescu 2013). The independent variables used in this analysis are described below.

*Experience with victimization* was coded 1 if the respondent declared that in the last five years he/she or a household member has been a victim of a burglary or physical assault and zero otherwise. *Interpersonal distrust* - a factor of interpersonal distrust has been created through principal component analysis (PCA) of answers at 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). The original variables have been recoded so higher values would indicate higher levels of interpersonal distrust. As a result of PCA only one factor has been extracted (Eigenvalue = 1.662; variance explained = 55.3%). The factor loadings varied from .713 to .783. The Cronbach's reliability coefficient Alpha for this index was .597. *Police distrust* - the original variable has been recoded and takes values from zero (complete trust in the police) to 10 (complete distrust). *Health problems* is an ordinal-level variable that measures the respondent's subjective assessment of his/her health; the measure varies from 1 (very good health) to 5 (very poor health). *Perceived discrimination* - persons who consider themselves as being part of a discriminated

group as a result of their age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, or religion were coded 1 and the others were coded zero. *Economic marginalization* – respondents who stated that it is difficult and very difficult to live on present income were coded 1, while the better-off individuals were coded zero. *Immigrant status* – is a dummy variable, coded 1 if a person was not born in France, and zero if the respondent was a native of France. *Household size* – this interval-level variable records as a code the number of persons living in the same house. *Residency* – persons living in large urban areas (big cities) were coded one, while those living in suburban areas, in smaller cities, or in rural areas were coded zero. *Gender*, a dummy variable, was coded 1 if the respondent was a female and zero otherwise. *Age* is a continuous variable representing the respondent's calculated age. *Born in Africa* – coded 1 if the foreign-born respondent was born in Africa and zero otherwise.

Additionally, because several research studies found that an immigrant's level of acculturation and fear of crime are significantly related (Andreescu, 2013; Brown & Benedict 2004; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Yun et al. 2010) the present analysis used two measures of acculturation. A foreign-born individual's level of acculturation refers mainly to an immigrant's level of integration in the host country, his/her usage of the official language, and the immigrant's capacity to share the cultural beliefs and the values of the natives in the receiving country (Hazuda, Stern & Haffner 1988). Based on the information provided by ESS5, the analysis used as measures of acculturation the *language most often spoken at home* (a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent speaks frequently at home a language other than French and zero if the respondent mostly speaks French at home) and the *length of time* in years the foreign-born respondent spent in France since arrival.

Consistent with a similar study conducted on sample data from United Kingdom (see Andreescu, 2013), it is anticipated that persons who directly or indirectly experienced victimization, residents of large urban areas, persons who perceive themselves as being unable to successfully control potential crime events, those who have lower levels of interpersonal trust and distrust the institution meant to protect them from being victimized, and those who see themselves as being socially and economically marginalized will express higher levels of fear of violent victimization. Additionally, it is hypothesized that immigrants who appear to be better integrated in the host country will worry less about violent victimization than their counterparts characterized by lower levels of acculturation.

## Results

Univariate analyses presented in table 1 show that about four out of ten immigrants (37%) and three out of ten natives (31%) in France worry often or very often they might become a victim of a violent crime. As indicated by the independent-samples t tests, there are no significant inter-group differences in the levels of experienced victimization ( $t = -.023$ ;  $p=.981$ ) or the fear of violent crime when immigrants and natives are compared ( $t= 1.504$ ;  $p=.133$ ). Although immigrants appear to distrust people more and police less than natives do, the attitudes expressed by the two subsamples in terms of interpersonal and institutional trust are not significantly different. However, if only 8% of the natives see themselves as being part of a discriminated group, a significantly higher percentage of the immigrants (23%) acknowledge discrimination ( $t = 5.714$ ;  $p = .000$ ). The proportion of immigrants experiencing financial difficulties (32%) is almost twice higher ( $t = 4.651$ ;  $p = .000$ ) than the proportion of natives (17%) who cannot make ends meet.

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

Variable	Immigrant (155)		Native (1573)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Fear of violent crime	.37	.48	.31	.46	1.504	.133
Experience with victimization	.21	.41	.21	.41	-.023	.981
Interpersonal distrust	.06	1.01	-.01	.99	.866	.387
Police distrust	4.11	2.33	4.39	2.31	-1.428	.154
Part of discriminated group	.23	.42	.08	.28	5.714	.000
Health problems	.23	.42	.24	.43	-.118	.906
Financial difficulties	.32	.47	.17	.37	4.651	.000
Gender (female)	.57	.49	.53	.49	1.002	.316
Age	51.09	17.8	49.24	18.6	1.188	.235
Residential area (big city)	.42	.49	.17	.38	7.561	.000
Household size	2.52	1.46	2.35	1.28	1.546	.122
Born in Africa	.59	.49				
Years lived in France	33.94	20.2				
Language spoken at home (other than French)	.35	.48				

It should be also noted that almost 60% of the immigrants are born in an African country and that even if on average, the foreign-born people spent about 34 years in their host country, more than a third of the immigrants (34%) in France speak at home a language other than French.

Table 2 presents the results of the logistic regression, the statistical analysis used to examine the effects of the selected predictors on variations in fear of violent victimization for the overall sample and separately for the subsample of immigrants and the subsample of natives. Although the effect of one's immigration status on perceptions of safety could have been assessed using a series of interaction terms, due to the fact that the interpretation of interactions is not always intuitive, separate models have been created for the main groups of interest differentiated by the respondent's place of birth.

Consistent with the results of the bivariate analysis, the respondent's nationality does not produce significant differences in perceived fear of violent victimization when controlling for additional individual-level variables. In the overall sample, results show that gender and experience with victimization are the predictors that impact the most variations in perceived safety. As hypothesized, individuals with health problems and those with low levels of confidence in their fellow citizens tend to worry more about crime than, respectively, people who do not suffer from physical or mental impairments or those who live in trustworthy communities. Different from what has been anticipated, age, perceptions of social discrimination, economic marginalization, family structure, or residency did not impact significantly variations in perceived safety. In order to determine if there are inter-group differences regarding the magnitude and direction of the effects the selected predictors might have on the dependent variable two additional models are also presented in table 2.

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. The odds of being afraid of violent victimization are however increased by a factor of 3 (OR = 3.131) in the immigrant group and by a factor of 2 (OR = 1.979) in the group of natives, suggesting that vicarious and/or direct victimization has a stronger effect on the immigrants' feelings of safety. In both subsamples, interpersonal distrust is positively and significantly associated with fear of violent crime and the effects are approximately equal (OR = 1.695 for immigrants; OR = 1.505 for natives). In other words, persons with low confidence in people in general, also worry more about crime.

**Table 2: Logit estimates for fear of violent crimes in France**

	Total (N=1728)			Immigrants (N=155)			Natives (N=1573)		
	B (SE)	Exp (B)	p	B (SE)	Exp (B)	p	B (SE)	Exp (B)	p
Foreign-born	.120 (.191)	1.128	.528						
Experienced victimization	.693 (.129)	1.999	.000	1.141 (.474)	3.131	.016	.683 (.136)	1.979	.000
Interpersonal distrust	.422 (.058)	1.524	.000	.528 (.209)	1.695	.012	.409 (.061)	1.505	.000
Police distrust	-.025 (.025)	.975	.308	.013 (.085)	1.013	.877	-.028 (.026)	.973	.286
Part of discriminated group	.177 (.184)	1.193	.338	.228 (.490)	1.256	.641	.194 (.204)	1.214	.342
Health problems	.280 (.135)	1.323	.038	.247 (.457)	1.280	.589	.277 (.142)	1.320	.050
Financial difficulties	.053 (.145)	1.055	.714	.332 (.440)	1.393	.451	-.010 (.157)	.990	.951
Gender (female)	.852 (.113)	2.343	.000	.315 (.411)	1.371	.443	.921 (.120)	2.513	.000
Age	.000 (.003)	1.000	.969	.032 (.019)	1.033	.099	-.002 (.004)	.998	.509
Residential area (big city)	.256 (.138)	1.292	.063	.362 (.391)	1.436	.355	.194 (.151)	1.214	.199
Household size	.033 (.046)	1.033	.481	.443 (.152)	1.557	.004	-.025 (.050)	.975	.620
Born in Africa				-.592 (.427)	.553	.166			
Years lived in France				-.015 (.016)	.985	.350			
Language spoken at home (non French)				-.402 (.437)	.669	.357			
Constant	- 1.571 (.291)	.208	.000	-3.280 (1.303)	.038	.012	- 1.330 (.305)	.264	.000
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)		.124			.252			.124	

Although the effect is positive in both groups, having health problems (i.e., being hampered in daily activities by illness, disability, or mental problems) increases significantly one's level of fear of violent victimization only in the subsample of natives. Only in the subsample of natives, gender has a significant

effect on perceived safety. While French women worry significantly more (OR = 2.513) about violent victimization than their male counterparts, the difference in perceptions of fear between female and male immigrants is not large enough to be significant. Even if the average household size is comparable in both groups (2.5 persons in immigrant families and 2.4 persons in French-born families), only in the foreign-born subsample there is a significant increase in fear of violent crime with an increase in the number of persons currently living in the same household. While additional analyses (not shown) that examined levels of fear among residents belonging to different age groups did not suggest that age and fear of violent crime are significantly related, it should be noted that with age, immigrants tend to worry more about being victimized (OR = 1.033;  $p < .10$ ), while natives tend to feel safer, as indicated by a negative, though non-significant relationship age – fear of violent crime.

Additional variables included in the model pertaining to foreign-born residents examined the effects of acculturation on immigrants' fear of violent victimization. Different from prior research (see Andreescu 2013), this analysis found that individuals (35% of the subsample of immigrants) who speak more often at home a language other than French (which could be considered an indicator of a lower integration in the host society), appear to worry less often about being victimized. As hypothesized, with a longer period of stay in France, the immigrants' level of fear of violent victimization tends to decrease. Both acculturation effects were, however, not significant. Despite the fact that the variable did not have a significant effect on immigrants' perceived risk of violent victimization, it can be observed that immigrants born in an African country tended to worry less about becoming a victim of a violent crime than immigrants born in other parts of the world.

## **Conclusions**

For the most part, this study replicated a prior analysis (see Andreescu, 2013) based on data from a national sample of residents in United Kingdom that also examined variations in fear of violent victimization when natives were compared to the foreign-born people. Similar to what was found in UK, immigrants and native French had almost identical levels of victimization. In both countries approximately one in five persons, natives or immigrants, experienced directly or indirectly some form of criminal victimization. Nonetheless, in both countries

immigrants tended to have a higher level of perceived unsafety than natives did, but in France the inter-group difference was not significant.

Consistent with prior research (Andreescu 2013; Ferraro 1995; Kanan & Pruitt 2002; Lee & Ulmer 2000; Reese 2009; Skogan & Maxfield 1981; Taylor et al. 2009; Yun et al. 2010), French residents (natives or foreign-born) who have been exposed to some form of criminal victimization are significantly more afraid of becoming victims of a violent crime. It should be noted that similar to what was found in the analysis of sample data from United Kingdom the effect of victimization on perceptions of insecurity was much higher in the subsample of immigrants than it was in the subsample of natives.

Although the present analysis found strong support for the crime experience theoretical perspective, support for the vulnerability hypothesis was more limited in France than it has been found in the prior analysis of survey data collected in United Kingdom (Andreescu 2013). While in both countries and consistent with prior research (e.g., Chiricos et al. 1997; De Donder et al. 2005; Garofalo 1979; Scott 2003; Taylor et al. 2009), women in the overall sample and in subsample of natives were significantly more afraid of becoming victims of a violent crime than their male counterparts, French women born abroad did not worry about violent crime much more often than immigrant men did. Taking into account the fact that the majority of the immigrants in the population are born in Africa, it is possible that a significant part of the foreign-born arrived in France as refugees trying to escape civil wars or other human rights violations that exposed men and women equally to violence and somewhat may have leveled intra-group gender differences in fear of violent victimization.

Different from results obtained from the UK sample and findings from other studies (see Andreescu, 2013), in France, fear of violent victimization does not increase significantly with age in any subsample differentiated by the respondent's nationality status. Additional analyses (not presented) that examined variations in fear among different age groups confirmed that age and fear of violent crime are not significantly related in France. In addition, in both subsamples other variables meant to identify groups that according to the literature may feel vulnerable in potentially harmful situations, such as being part of a discriminated group, being an ethnic minority (i.e., born in Africa) or being economically disadvantaged did not impact significantly one's levels of fear. However, in France as in United Kingdom (Andreescu 2013) or in United States (Taylor et al. 2009) natives with a poor health feel unsafe and are more afraid of being victimized. Interestingly, like gender, having health problems does not appear to influence

significantly variations in fear of violent crimes within the sample of immigrants. It appears that just by having an immigrant status places a person in a position of vulnerability, diminishing the influence on fear of violent crime of other individual-level characteristics. Nevertheless, further research using a larger sample of immigrants might be able to determine if there are internal variations in fear of victimization among foreign-born groups differentiated by additional important characteristics.

As in United Kingdom and consistent with prior research (Andreescu 2013; Gibson et al. 2002; Jackson 2009), support for the integrative model of fear of crime was quite strong in France as well. Even if the effect of the interpersonal trust on perceptions of safety is slightly higher in the group of immigrants, in both subsamples, those who think that people are in general helpful, fair, and trustworthy are also significantly less likely to express worries about violent victimization. Different from other research findings (Jackson et al. 2009) but similar to what has been found in previous analyses of survey data from United Kingdom (Andreescu 2013; Bennett 1994), in multivariate analyses people's attitudes toward the police did not appear to influence significantly their perceptions of safety in France. In terms of contextual factors, big-city residency does not impact significantly the natives' or the immigrants' levels of fear in France. This result differed from what was found in United Kingdom, where residency in large urban areas, particularly for natives, was significantly and positively associated with fear of violent victimization (Andreescu 2013). However, taking into account the highly publicized 2015 lethal terrorist attacks in Paris, it is possible that fear of violent victimization expressed by urban residents will increase in France as well.

Regarding the effect of two measures of acculturation (language spoken at home and length of stay in France) on immigrants' perceived fear of violent victimization, different from what has been hypothesized, results showed that one's level of integration in the French society does not appear to play an important part in the foreign-born person's perceptions of safety. It should be noted that on average, an immigrant spent about 34 years in France, a period of time long enough to ensure one's integration in the host society. Additionally, even if one third of the immigrants interviewed declared they spoke at home other language than French, it should not be inferred that an equally large segment of the immigrant population lacks language proficiency, especially when a large proportion of the foreign-born persons immigrated to France from French-speaking Northern-African countries. Taking into account the fact that many native French people continue to consider the first- and even second-generation immigrants from

Africa, as not being “really French” (see CSA 2011) and that three times more immigrants than natives see themselves as being discriminated (see Table 1 and also Breuil-Genier et al. 2011, 39), it appears that the foreign-born people’s fears of violent victimization are less a function of one’s degree of adaptation to the host society and more a result of perceived anti-immigrant attitudes, documented by several public opinion polls conducted in recent years. Despite the fact that in 2007 it was created in France a ministry meant to ensure immigrants’ integration in the French society and several programmes and policies have been specially designed to increase social cohesion, statistical information indicates that children of immigrants, particularly those of Maghreb and other African origin have much higher unemployment rates and are frequently facing discriminatory hiring practices when seeking employment (OECD 2008; Tucci 2010). In sum, despite its inability to clearly determine why certain people feel at a higher risk of victimization than others, the present secondary-data analysis suggests that direct or indirect experience with victimization and a lack of interpersonal trust can be considered the most important predictors of fear of violent crimes expressed not only by foreign-born people in France, but also by natives.

One objective of this analysis was to determine if data collected five years before the dramatic, but isolated events that took place in France in January 2015, would offer some indication that immigrants’ victimization levels attracted some desire to retaliate and respond to aggressive behavior with increased violence. Despite the fact that bias-motivated crimes and negative public attitudes toward foreign-born people belonging to certain ethnic and religious groups have been documented by research conducted in France in the past few years (see CSA 2011, 2013; France 24, 2012; OSCE/ODIHR 2013), the results of the present analysis showed no difference in actual victimization rates and perceptions of safety when natives and immigrants were compared. However, it should be noted that the group of natives also included persons born in France to immigrant parents and the attitudes expressed by them could have affected the results. More detailed further analyses could try to verify the consistency of the findings presented here by comparing the first-generation immigrants’ attitudes and victimization experiences with those expressed by persons born in France to native parents and persons born in France to immigrant parents.

Referring probably to the 2005 riots in France organized mainly by Arab, North African and black second-generation immigrants that compelled the French Parliament to declare a three-month state of emergency and were considered by many analysts the largest rebellions in recent European history

(see Oberwittler & Roché 2013), an OECD report stated not long ago that the “French society is already paying a price in terms of disinvestment and disaffection by children of immigrants, in reaction to both past and current unfavorable outcomes (OECD 2008, 11).” And, as the recent heartrending events in Paris showed, second-generation immigrants’ involvement in criminal activities can be one of the negative outcomes of ineffective government policies regarding immigrant integration.

Three weeks after the series of attacks that left seventeen people dead in France’s capital city, the French television channel France 24 (2015) announced that the French government launched a new social media campaign meant to discourage potential jihadists from joining Islamist fighters in Syria and Iraq. The French government estimates that about 1,200 French residents are currently involved in jihadist activities and the new initiative is an addition to a 2014 pilot program intended to stop young people from leaving the country for Syria. Although it is premature to assess the effectiveness of the government-sponsored message that in response to jihadist propaganda tells radicals in France and elsewhere that they “will discover hell on earth and will die alone” (see France 24 2015), it is reasonable to assume that as long as the French government will not address more efficiently the root causes of the current issues that risk to divide the French society even further it is unlikely that major changes in public attitudes and behavior will happen. Socio-economic, educational, and mentoring programs targeting disadvantaged young people who are part of religious and ethnic minority groups coupled with novel media strategies meant to temper anti-immigrant feelings and reduce hate crimes in France might have much more lasting positive effects and might be able to help restore institutional and interpersonal trust within the French society making it safer and less vulnerable to external negative pressure.

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