

Comparative Criminology: **MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT**

Ranking Regions/Countries on Rates of Motor Vehicle Theft

The key measure of prevalence of motor vehicle theft in the world is the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), which is a data bank that collects and standardizes police reports from more than 70 countries around the world. This measure has been conducted since 1987 and does have some weaknesses, but it is currently the best measure of most crimes in terms of cross-national comparisons.

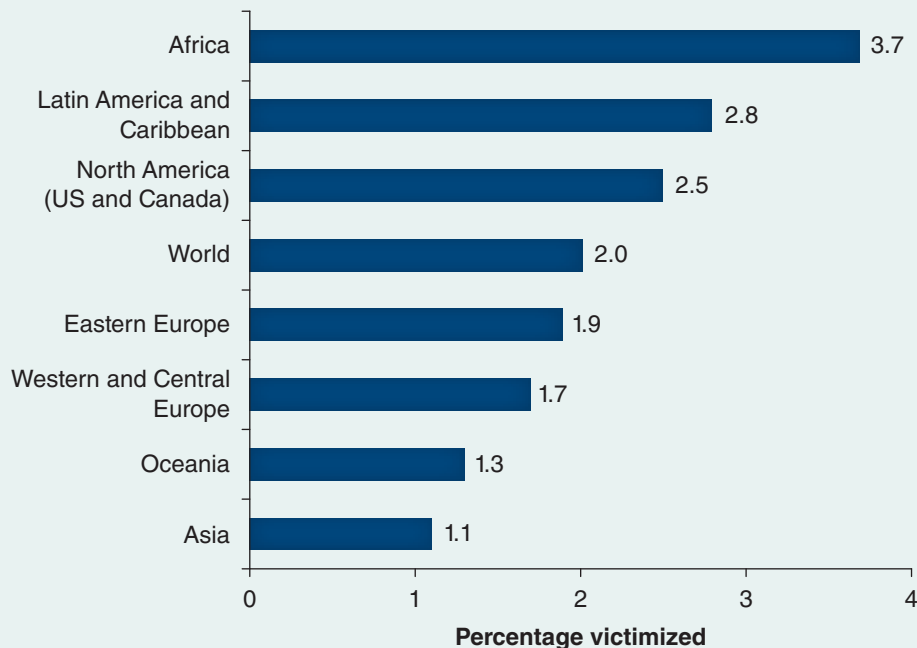
The ICVS has collected many years' worth of data on motor vehicle theft. Van Dijk synthesized the data from ICVS regarding car theft from the years 1996 to 2005.⁵¹ Some regions have very high numbers of stolen vehicles, but to make a fair

comparison across regions, rates of ownership should be accounted for. As seen in Figure 1.2, the countries with by far the highest percentages of car owners in urban areas who had been victimized by car theft were on the continent of Africa. A relatively distant second highest ranking area was countries in the region of Latin America/Caribbean.

To be more specific, we can examine the ranking of the countries in terms of their rates of vehicle theft. As can be seen in Figure 1.3, ICVS data show that Papua New Guinea had by far the highest rate (at 9.8% of car owners victimized each year), followed by Mozambique (7.5%) and then South Africa, Swaziland, and Brazil rounding out the top five. It is notable that the United States did not rank in the worst 15 countries for motor vehicle theft.

FIGURE 1.2

Percentages of Car Owners in Urban Areas Victimized by Car Theft or Joyriding During the Past 12 Months



Source: ICVS, 1996–2005, latest survey available.