

while the countries that reported the lowest incarceration rates are also the most likely to report the lowest murder rates. For example, the rate of incarceration is highest (of the 89 countries) in the United States, and the rate of homicide is also high. Regarding other countries, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Swaziland, Estonia, Latvia, Panama, Belarus, and Ukraine also have high rates of incarceration, as well as high rates of homicide (see Figure 3.5).

On the other hand, a number of countries have low rates of incarceration and low rates of murder. Such countries include Japan, Iceland, Indonesia, and Norway (see Figure 3.5). Again, countries that experience low levels of violence likely do not need to lock up such violent offenders; however, this analysis is done per capita, or by rate, so such comparisons are applicable. Of course, this observed association of countries that have the highest rates of murder tending to have the most punitive sanctions could be spurious, in the sense that sanctions in these countries are so punitive because they have higher rates

of violence. But the bottom line of this analysis is that despite more punitive sanctions in some countries (e.g., the United States, Russia), there appears to be no deterrent effect among individuals who commit murder. Perhaps this is due to the offenders not actually thinking about the sentences or penalties likely to result from the act of homicide, which will be explored more in the next section of this book.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. When comparing various countries, how do incarceration rates correlate with homicide rates?
2. Which countries seem to incarcerate the most by rate? How do such nations tend to rank on homicide rates?
3. Which countries tend to have the lowest incarceration rates, and how do such countries rank on homicide rates?