

## Comparative Criminology: **ASSAULT**

### **Ranking Regions/Countries in Terms of Prevalence of Assault**

In this section, we will examine the findings and conclusions of various studies regarding assault, which is defined by the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) as personal attacks or serious threats without the purpose of stealing (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 78). The findings of recent studies regarding the prevalence of assault across various regions and countries of the world are enlightening in several ways.

The key measure of prevalence of assault in the world is the ICVS, a data bank that collects and standardizes police reports from more than 70 countries around the world. This measure has been conducted since 1987. It does have some weaknesses, but it is currently the best international measure of crime for such cross-national comparisons.

The ICVS has collected many years' worth of data on assault. Van Dijk (2008) synthesized the data from the ICVS regarding assault from the years 1996 to 2005. As seen in Figure 6.3, the countries with by far the highest percentages of persons victimized by assaults were those in Africa. Tied in

a distant second and third were, respectively, countries in North America and Oceania (the islands near Southeast Asia and Australia).

It is not too surprising that assault tends to be more common in some of the most deprived nations in the world, such as Africa, given the studies that have linked poverty to violence. In such extreme poverty, many individuals appear to be frustrated and take out their stress on others. After all, similar results are seen for homicide rates across countries, with Southern Africa having by far the highest rates (see Chapter 9). However, the results from the ICVS reveal that assault happens frequently in all portions of the world, so assault is somewhat prevalent in virtually all societies, especially in inner-city, poor areas.

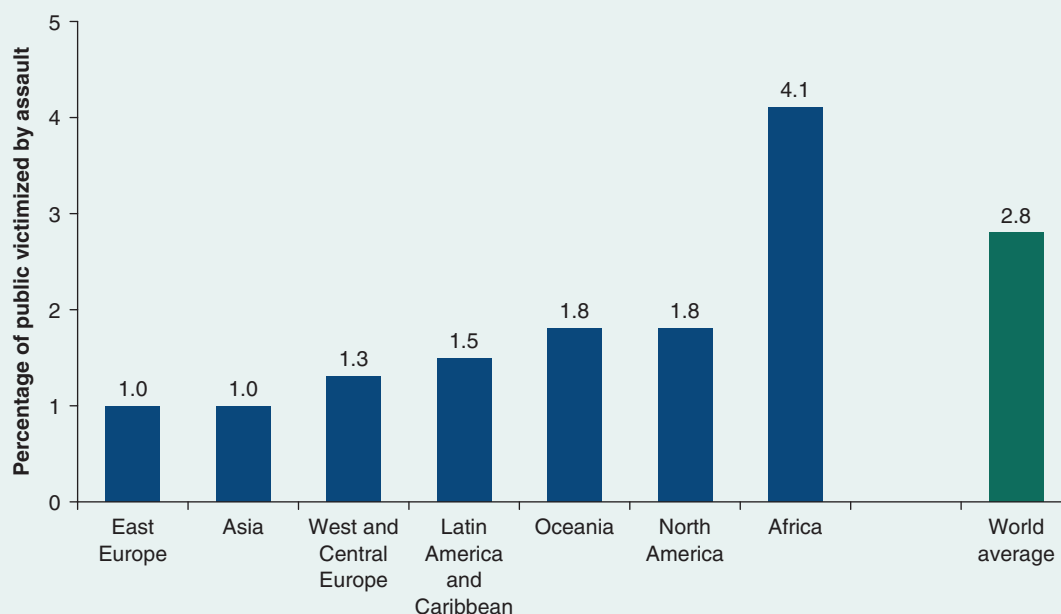
#### **THINK ABOUT IT:**

1. Why do you think African nations have the highest rates of assault compared to other regions of the world?
2. What types of policies do you think could be used to reduce high rates of assault in countries that have such a significant problem with this type of offense?

Source: Van Dijk, J. (2008). *The world of crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**FIGURE 6.3**

Percentages of the Public Victimized by Assaults in Urban Areas, by World Region



Source: International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), 1996–2005.