

## ROCKWOOL® FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT

# Crime rates halved among second-generation immigrants

Crime rates among non-Western second-generation immigrants to Denmark have been more than halved in only 15 years.

This is one of the findings of a new analysis from the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, which reveals that ethnic minorities in Denmark today display significantly less criminality than was the case in the 1990s – and that in terms of crime, they are coming to resemble ethnic Danes ever more closely.

This trend is very clear among non-Western second-generation immigrants. In 1990, 11% of male non-Western second-generation immigrants aged 15-45 committed at least one criminal offence of which they were convicted. In 2006 the proportion was under half of that; 5% committed at least one offence during the year which led to a conviction. The same trend, though from a lower starting point, was evident among first-generation non-Western male immigrants; in 1990 6% of them were convicted of committing at least one criminal offence, while the proportion in 2006 had fallen to 3%.

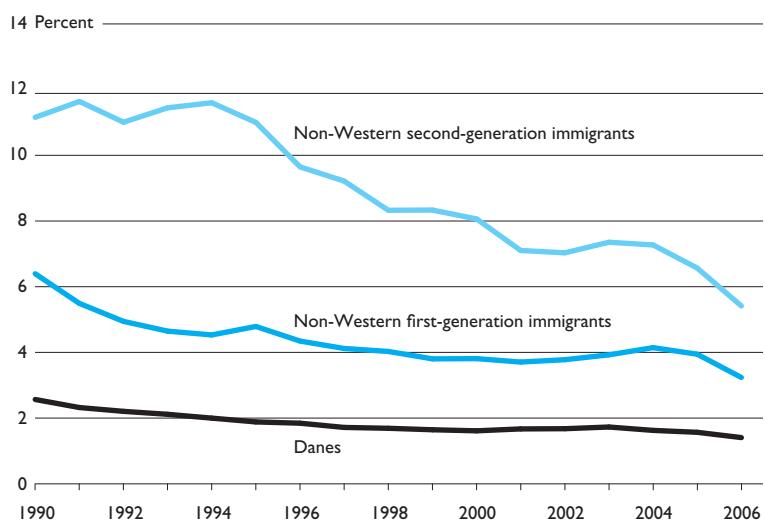
According to Torben Tranæs, Research Director at the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, there are several explanations for this marked fall in criminality. “One point is that there has been a general fall in crime levels in Denmark over the past couple of decades. Another is that the population of non-Western second-generation immigrants has aged. In all population groups, it is typically the young who commit the most crimes.”

In the calculation of the proportions of convicted criminals among the population groups, illustrated in Figure 1, no account is taken of the age composition of the groups or of social background.

“But even when corrections are made for age and social background, the results show that the ethnic minorities are coming to resemble Danes to an ever-increasing degree. As far as second-generation immigrants are concerned, a larger proportion of them still tend to commit crimes than is

FIGURE I

**Proportions of convicted criminals in the period 1990-2006, males aged 15-45.**



The proportions of male, non-Western first- and second-generation immigrants convicted of at least one criminal offence committed in the years shown have grown closer over time to the proportions among male Danes. Nevertheless, the levels among these immigrants, and especially among the second-generation immigrants, remain significantly above that for Danes.

the case for Danes; but while fifteen years ago, there were 76% higher proportion of criminals among the second-generation immigrants than among ethnic Danes, the difference has now fallen to only 31%” explains Torben Tranæs.

The differences have grown smaller, but the fact remains that the ethnic minorities in Denmark still have a greater proportion of criminals among them, however much background factors are taken into account. The analysis shows, furthermore that it is violent crime that is more widespread among second-generation immigrants from non-Western countries than among Danes; the proportion of these second-generation immigrants convicted of violent crimes is 55% higher than for the corresponding group of Danes.

In contrast, the proportions of the two groups who commit property crimes are identical.

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## Comprehensive controls for social and economic factors

When different population groups are to be compared with respect to patterns of criminality, important information can be obtained by taking social and economic factors into account. The present study by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit goes further than previous studies in this respect, and when making comparisons involving second-generation immigrants it takes into account information about the social and economic circumstances of their parents. .... page 10



*Etniske minoriteters overrepræsentation i strafferetlige domme* (The overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in criminal convictions in Denmark)

By Lars Højsgaard Andersen and Torben Tranæs

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# Differences in crime rates have narrowed

The crime rates for both first- and second-generation immigrants from non-Western countries have come closer to those for ethnic Danes over the course of the last two decades.

This is revealed by an analysis of criminality for the years 1990-2006. People of non-Western ethnic origins have exhibited higher crime rates than ethnic Danes throughout the period, but the differences have narrowed over time.

In each of the years analysed, non-Western immigrants and second-generation immigrants committed proportionally more crimes than Danes. But their overrepresentation in the crime statistics fell throughout the 1990s, and onward to 2006. The falls are relatively modest when one simply compares the raw figures without controlling for individuals' socioeconomic backgrounds, but markedly more significant when such adjustments are made.

Figure 2 shows the levels of criminality among the various groups during the period. For example, it shows that in 1990 there were 4.5 times as many convicted criminals in a second-generation immigrant group than in a Danish group of similar size. In 2006 there were only 3.9 times as many.

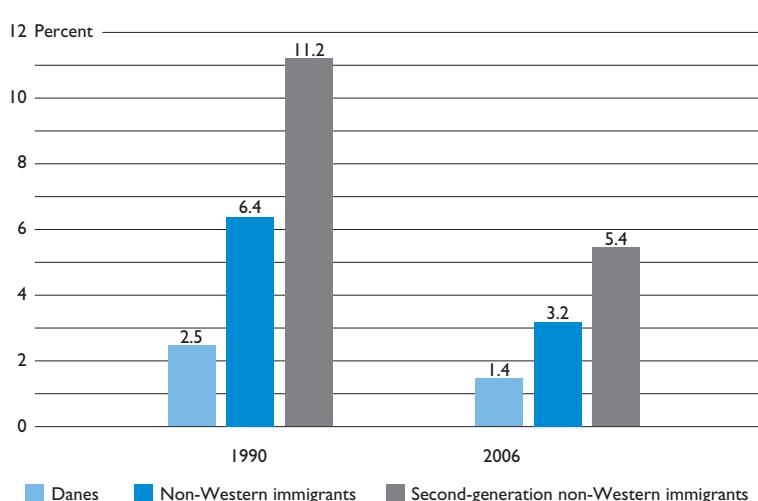
No account is taken in the statistics shown in Figure 2 of differences in the social background or the age compositions of the various groups.

## From 76 to 31 percent more

The differences between the non-Danish and the Danish ethnic groups are found to be significantly smaller when the figures are adjusted to take into account social background, including factors such as parents' backgrounds. This is only possible for second-generation immigrants, for whom information on parents can be documented. For the immigrants themselves this is not possible, since their parents live overseas and it is difficult to access information about whether they are rich or poor.

In contrast, the parents of second-generation immigrants can be traced, and so it is possible to compare them with simi-

FIGURE 2  
Proportions of criminals in 1990 and 2006 among males aged 15-45



Note: A criminal in this context is defined as a person who committed at least one criminal offence during the year in question of which he was later convicted.

*In the cases of both non-Western immigrants and second-generation immigrants there has been a marked decline in crime rates. Crime rates for both groups still remained higher than for Danes in 2006, but the gaps had narrowed significantly. The figures are not adjusted for age or social background; they simply show crime rates among males aged 15-45.*

lar groups of ethnic Danes.

The results of such a comparison are presented in Table 1. The table shows that the crime rate among non-Western second-generation immigrants was higher in the past than among Danes, and remained higher in 2006, irrespective of how the rates are calculated. The table also indicates, however, that the difference has narrowed over the period. This is espe-

TABLE I  
Amount by which crime rates among non-Western second-generation immigrants were greater than those of Danes

Males, aged 15-45	1990	2006
Not adjusted	343 %	300 %
Adjusted for age, own socioeconomic position and parents' background	76 %	31 %

*When the figures are adjusted to take into account age and social background, the proportion of male non-Western second-generation immigrants who committed criminal offences in 1990 was 76% higher than that for Danes. In 2006, the difference was 31%.*

cially evident in the figures that are adjusted to take account of age and social background.

In 1990 the proportion of convicted criminal offenders among non-Western second-generation immigrants was 76% higher than that of Danes. For every 100

convicted criminals among a group of Danes of a given size, there were 176 such offenders among a group of second generation immigrants of the same size and composition. In 2006 the difference was only 31%.

## More criminals. More crime. More prison

They have a greater tendency to be criminals. And when they are criminal, they commit more crime than other criminals. And this crime leads more often to custodial sentences.

This conclusion is an ultra-brief description of criminality among non-Western second-generation immigrants in Denmark in comparison with the criminality of Danes during the period 2002-2006.

The conclusion is based on an analysis of information in three areas concerning criminal behaviour among second-generation immigrants. The first piece of information concerns the proportion of the population who is convicted of a criminal offence. The second concerns the number

of convictions each person receives, while the final item concerns the number of convictions that leads to custodial sentences.

The first piece of information, the proportion, gives an indication of how normal it is in the population group to take part in criminal activity.

Among non-Western second-generation immigrants, the proportion committing one or more crimes in a year is 31% higher than the proportion among a group of Danes. In other words, if there are 100 convicted criminals in a group of Danes, there will be 131 such criminals in a group of non-Western second-generation immigrants of the same size and composition.

Among Western second-generation immigrants, the position is reversed. They have a lower tendency than Danes to be criminal. And when they are criminal, they commit fewer crimes than other criminals, and their crimes more rarely lead to the imposition of custodial sentences.

These figures are adjusted for age and for social and economic factors, including parents' backgrounds.

### More convictions

The second item of information – the number of convictions – indicates the average number of convictions per person in the population group.

While the proportion of convicted criminals in a group gives a picture of how many members of the group have committed crimes, the number of convictions reflects how active these criminals are.

The number of convictions among non-Western second-generation immigrants is 51% higher than among Danes.

TABLE 2  
Participation in, and extent and seriousness of, criminality among males aged 15-45

	Danes	Non-Western second-generation immigrants	Western second-generation immigrants
<i>Participation in crime:</i>			
Number of criminals in a group of a given size	100 criminals	131 criminals	72 criminals
<i>Extent of criminality:</i>			
Number of criminal convictions in a group of a given size	100 convictions	151 convictions	90 convictions
<i>Prison sentences:</i>			
Number of prison sentences in a group of a given size	100 prison sentences	167 prison sentences	79 prison sentences

Notes: Participation in crime is a figure for the number of people in the group concerned who were convicted of at least one criminal offence committed in 2006. Extent of criminality is a figure for the number of criminal convictions for people in the group concerned over a five-year period. Prison sentences is a figure for the number of suspended or enforced prison sentences given to people in the group concerned over a five-year period. Figures are adjusted for age and a number of social and economic factors.

*Non-Western second-generation immigrants have a greater tendency than Danes to be criminal, and the criminals in this group commit more crime than Danes. The crimes they commit more often lead to prison sentences. The converse is the case for Western second-generation immigrants.*

If a group of Danes receives 100 criminal convictions, a group of second-generation immigrants of the same size and composition receives 151 convictions. Among Western second-generation immigrants the number is lower than for Danes, at 90 convictions.

### More prison

While it is true that non-Western second-generation immigrants do commit more crimes than their Danish counterparts, they are also sent to prison more frequently for the crimes that they commit.

That is the conclusion arrived at when the number of convictions is examined in relation to the number of convictions that result in custodial sentences, whether suspended or enforced. The courts impose prison sentences on people who have committed serious crimes and on repeat offenders.

The following example illustrates how we can look at the situation. Allan and Peter, who are the same age, both have a number of convictions for violence, theft and other forms of crime. Allan has five convictions, and three of them have led to terms of imprisonment. Peter has ten convictions, four of which have resulted in prison sentences. No-one could doubt that Peter is more criminal than Allan. But have Allan and Peter been sent to prison to the same extent for the crimes they have committed? The answer is no. Peter has received 100% more convictions (ten as opposed to five), but has only received 33% more prison sentences (four instead of three). Peter has committed more crime than Allan, but the crime Allan has committed has resulted in prison more often for him.

The same method has been used in the analysis related to the groups in the study.

Non-Western and Western second-generation immigrants are sentenced to prison 67% more and 21% less frequently than Danes, respectively. This means that for every 100 Danes in a group who receive prison sentences, 167 non-Western second-generation immigrants in an equivalent group are sent to prison, while only 79 Western second-generation immigrants from a group of the same size and composition suffer that fate.

These figures should be compared with

### Should differences in social and economic circumstances be taken into account?

Crime is most widespread among people with very little education, with a weak attachment to the labour market and of a young age. If these factors are not taken into account when comparing crime rates among different population groups, there is a risk that the results will be misleading.

For example, among non-Western second-generation immigrants in the age range 15-45, the average age in 2006 was 25. Among Danes in the age range 15-45, the average age was 32. If the age factor is not taken into account, assuming all else to be equal, the result of a comparison will be to suggest that criminal behaviour is more widespread among the immigrant group, simply because they are a younger group – and young people have a greater tendency to commit crime.

There are also large differences between non-Western second-generation immigrants and ethnic Danes as regards wages. The average pre-tax annual salary was just over DKK 115,000 among the second-generation immigrants and DKK 195,000 among the Danes in the analysis. In all groups, low income is associated with high crime rates – and so a correction must be made for it.

However, uncorrected raw data can still reveal important information. These figures show how great a proportion of the people in each population group commit crimes and are convicted and sentenced in Danish courts. This is of interest, for example, if one wishes to know how the immigration to Denmark of population groups whose socioeconomic backgrounds are different to those of ethnic Danes affects levels of crime in the country.

the average number of convictions for the various groups. When Danes from a group of a given size are convicted of 100 criminal offences, non-Western second-generation immigrants are convicted of 151 such offences, whereas there are only 90 convictions among a group of Western second-generation immigrants of the same size and composition. If offences led to prison sentences in equal proportions of cases for each group, it would follow that non-Western second-generation immigrants would be sent to prison 51% more often than Danes, while Western second-

## Who and what is included in the analysis?

The study is based on an analysis of criminal offences among males aged 15-45 during the period 2002-2006.

The reasons for the focus on this group are that criminality among women is so limited that it is difficult to make statistical comparisons across the groups, and that crime is particularly prevalent among people in that age range.

generation immigrants would receive prison sentences 10% less frequently.

In fact, as we have seen, the figures are +67% for the non-Western second-generation immigrants and -21% for Western second-generation immigrants. Non-Western second-generation immigrants thus receive prison sentences more frequently than would be expected, and Western second-generation immigrants less so.

# No greater proportion of thieves, but more theft, among non-Western second-generation immigrants

Among second-generation immigrants of non-Western origin, the proportion of people who commit property crime is the same as the proportion among Danes in an equivalent group.

TABLE 3

### Non-Western second-generation immigrants' overrepresentation in statistics for participation in and amount of crime among males aged 15-45

	Participation rate	Extent
A. Property crime	-	29%
B. Violent crime	55%	81%
C. Other criminal offences	122%	200%
<b>Criminal offences overall (A+B+C)</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>51%</b>
Prison sentences	44%	67%

Notes: Participation rate is a figure for the number of people in the group concerned who committed at least one criminal offence in 2006 of which they were later convicted. Extent is a figure for the number of criminal convictions among people in the group concerned over a five-year period. The figures show how much more criminality is exhibited by non-Western second-generation immigrants than by Danes. Thus, a figure of 100% would show that the non-Western second-generation immigrants had been convicted of twice as much crime as Danes, while '-' indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between non-Western second-generation immigrants and Danes for a given type of crime. Figures are adjusted for age and a number of social and economic factors. The reason that the rates for the overall total of offences (A+B+C) are at a rather lower level than for crimes of types B and C is that there are many more offences of type A committed in Denmark, and for these offences the overrepresentation of non-Western second-generation immigrants is at a lower level.

*Non-Western second-generation immigrants are convicted of criminal offences much more frequently than Danes – for example, second-generation immigrants are convicted of 81% more crimes of violence than Danes. If there are a total of 100 convictions for violence among a group of Danes, an equivalent group of non-Western second-generation immigrants will receive a total of 181 convictions. There is no difference between the proportions of Danes and non-Western second-generation immigrants who commit property crime – but the second-generation immigrants who do commit such crime receive 29% more convictions than Danes.*

This is shown by an analysis of the types of crime that are committed by different ethnic groups in Denmark.

The difference between offending Danes and non-Western second-generation immigrants lies in the types of crime committed.

Neither group stands out as being different from the other as far as property crimes – breaking and entering, theft, vandalism or robbery – are concerned.

In other words, the probability of a non-Western second-generation immigrant being a person who commits crimes against property is the same as the probability for a Dane with a similar socioeconomic background.

However, the two groups do differ on another point. Among those who are criminals, the level of criminal activity is greater among the immigrant group. Assuming that the clear-up rate for crimes is the same for the two groups, then the non-Western second-generation immigrants quite simply commit more crimes; the criminals with immigrant backgrounds are convicted of 29% more property crimes than Danes. In other words, for every 100 property crime convictions among a group of ethnic Danes, a corresponding group of non-Western second-generation immigrants will be convicted of 129 such crimes.

The analysis is based on convictions of males aged 15-45 for crimes committed during the period 2002-2006; the figures have been adjusted to take into account

differences in socioeconomic factors. This means that non-Western second-generation immigrants are compared with Danes with the same parental backgrounds, level of education, income, age, etc.

### More violence

While second-generation immigrants are not overrepresented among people committing property crime, the situation is different with regard to offences involving violence.

In a group of non-Western second-generation immigrants, 55% more will be convicted of offences involving violence than in a corresponding group of Danes. Violent crime is here taken to cover a range of offences that include assault, threatening behaviour and sexual offences.

It is not only the number of violent people in a group of non-Western second-generation immigrants that is markedly different from the number among an equivalent group of Danes. There is also a large difference in the number of convictions among the two groups. The study reveals that a group of non-Western second-generation immigrants will receive 81% more convictions than a corresponding group of Danes. In other words, the non-Western group not only contains a higher proportion of violent criminals, but those criminals are also significantly more violent (in that they have more convictions per person) than violent criminals of Danish origin.

### Other criminal offences

An even larger difference between the two groups is evident when we consider 'other' types of criminal offences. This category includes offences not covered by the first two categories, for example insulting behaviour towards public officials and perjury.

The proportion of non-Western second-generation immigrants convicted of 'other' criminal offences is fully 122% larger than that for Danes in an equivalent group. Here again the situation is that not only are there more of such criminals, but they each commit more such crimes: second-generation immigrants are convicted of 200% more of these crimes than Danes. For every 100 convictions handed down to a group of Danes, there will be 300 con-

## Various types of crime

**Violent crime** comprises a number of offences, including assault, involuntary manslaughter, murder, sexual crimes, threatening behaviour, serious public order disturbances, unlawful coercion, unlawful imprisonment and human trafficking. Violent crime makes up 25% of all criminal offences committed in Denmark.

**Property crime** includes forgery, arson, vandalism, breaking and entering, fraud, blackmail, embezzlement, receiving stolen goods, theft and robbery. Property crime makes up 69% of all criminal offences in Denmark.

**Other criminal offences** covers criminal offences not classified as either violent crime or property crime. It includes offensive or insulting behaviour towards the authorities and perjury. In total, 'other' crime accounts for 6% of all criminal offences committed in Denmark.

victions for 'other' offences among a corresponding group of non-Western second-generation immigrants.

However, these statistics must be viewed in the light of the fact that there are relatively few cases involving 'other' criminal offences. Of all male non-Western second-generation immigrants aged 15-45, only around 0.5% were convicted of such offences committed in 2006. Among male Danes aged 15-45, only around 0.1% were convicted of this type of offence. Only 6% of all offences committed in Denmark fell into this category.

### More second-generation immigrants in prison

The total number of additional criminal offences among non-Western second-generation immigrants is not as great as some of the figures might immediately suggest. In all, there is a 31% greater probability of non-Western second-generation immigrants being criminals than there is for Danes, and they receive 51% more convictions.

The explanation for the relatively modest figures in relation to the statistics for violent and 'other' crime is that property crime – where the overrepresentation of non-Western second-generation immigrants is lower – accounts for the overwhelming majority of cases.

The same more moderate overrepresentation is found overall in relation to who receives prison sentences. Among non-Western second-generation immigrants, there is a 44% greater probability of a person receiving one or more prison terms in comparison with an equivalent group of Danes.

However, there are not only more crimi-

nals among non-Western second-generation immigrants than among Danes – the criminals from non-Western backgrounds are more criminal than their Danish counterparts. A group of non-Western second-generation immigrants will receive 167 prison sentences for every 100 prison sentences handed down to a group of Danes of the same size and composition.

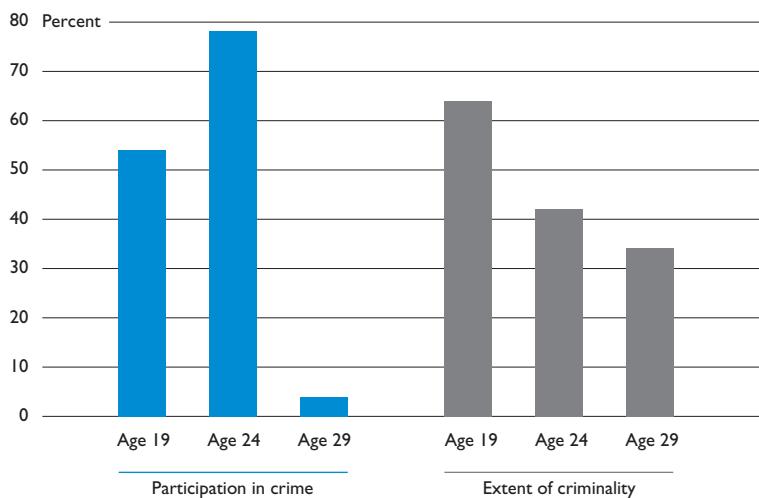
## Differences in criminality diminish with age

The older second-generation immigrants are, the more their patterns of criminality come to resemble those of Danes of the same age.

This information stems from an analysis of the link between age and criminality among Danes and second-generation

FIGURE 3

**Participation in crime and extent of criminality among non-Western second-generation immigrants in relation to Danes, in percentages. For persons aged 19, 24 and 29**



Notes: Participation in crime is a figure for the number of people in the group concerned who committed at least one criminal offence over the preceding year of which they were later convicted. Extent of criminality is a figure for the average number of criminal convictions per person in the group concerned over a five-year period. The figures show how much more frequently non-Western second-generation immigrants are convicted of crimes than Danes are. Figures are adjusted for age and a number of social and economic factors.

*Age is a crucial factor in the amount by which non-Western second-generation immigrants are distinct from Danes in relation to criminality. 19-year-old second-generation immigrants receive 64% more criminal convictions than an equivalent group of 19-year-old Danes; 24-year-old second-generation immigrants receive 42% more convictions than an equivalent group of 24-year-old Danes; and 29-year-old second-generation immigrants receive 34% more criminal convictions than an equivalent group of 29-year-old Danes.*

immigrants. In the analysis, criminality among non-Western second-generation immigrants aged 19, 24 and 29 is compared with levels of criminality among Danes of the same ages.

The rates for participation in crime among non-Western second-generation immigrants are higher than those for Danes, at least among those aged 19 and 24. However, the rates for those aged 29 are no higher than the rates for Danes. Participation in crime is defined as having committed, in the course of the preceding year, a criminal offence of which one is later convicted.

However, with regard to the extent of criminality, non-Western second-generation immigrants aged 19, 24 and 29 are all more criminal than comparable Danes. Extent of criminality is measured as the number of criminal offences committed over the preceding five years which result in convictions.

In other words, increasing age evens out the differences between non-Western second-generation immigrants and Danes with respect to participation in crime, but not with regard to the extent of criminality. However, the overrepresentation of second-generation immigrants in the extent of criminality also diminishes with increasing age; the level of overrepresentation is 64% for 19-year-olds, 42% for 24-year-olds and 34% for 29-year-olds. That is to say, that if a group of 19-year-old Danes receives 100 convictions, an equivalent group of 19-year-old second-generation immigrants will receive 164 convictions. For 24-year-olds and 29-year-olds the figures are 142 and 134 respectively.

# Criminal behaviour varies with country of origin

The country of origin is of great significance for how criminal second-generation immigrants are in comparison with Danes.

While second-generation immigrants from Western countries display a level of criminality which is lower than that of Danes, there are other groups that exhibit considerably higher levels of criminality – for example, those whose parents come from Middle Eastern countries.

This is shown by an analysis of patterns of crime rates related to background. Two factors were studied with respect to second-generation immigrants.

The first factor was the proportion of second-generation immigrants who had participated in crime compared with an equivalent group of Danes. This measure describes how widespread criminality is in a given group – how many members of the group are involved in crime, whether to a greater or to a lesser extent.

The second factor was how many convictions were handed down to people in a particular group, again measured in comparison with a corresponding group of Danes. This measure of the extent of criminality allows for the fact that one person can receive several convictions; it thus describes the degree of criminality.

## Large differences in the extent of criminality

There are large differences in the extent of criminality – the average number of criminal convictions for the group over a five-year period – depending on the country of origin of the parents of second-generation immigrants.

Second-generation immigrants from the Middle East and ‘other non-Western countries’ are convicted of criminal offences much more frequently than Danes – by an average of 64% and 45% respectively for these two groups. The category ‘other non-Western countries’ includes nations such as Bosnia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia.

These figures mean that when a total of 100 criminal convictions are handed down to a group of Danes, a corresponding group of second-generation immi-

TABLE 4

**Participation in crime and extent of criminality among second-generation immigrants in comparison with Danes, by country of origin, for males aged 15-45**

Second-generation immigrants with parents from	Overrepresentation, percent	
	If there are 100 convicted criminals in a group of Danes, the number of convicted criminals in a group of second-generation immigrants of the same size and composition will be	If a group of Danes receives 100 criminal convictions, the number of convictions in a group of second-generation immigrants of the same size and composition will be
Western countries	72	90
Asiatic countries	(72)	(87)
Middle Eastern countries	148	164
Other non-Western countries	121	145

Notes: The differences between Danes and second-generation immigrants from Asiatic countries are not statistically significant. The figure for the number of convicted criminals among second-generation immigrants from ‘Other non-Western countries’ is only weakly significant. Participation in crime is a figure for the number of people in the group concerned who were convicted of at least one criminal offence committed in 2006. Extent of criminality is a figure for the number of criminal convictions for people in the group concerned over a five-year period. Figures are adjusted for age and a number of social and economic factors.

*Second-generation immigrants from Middle Eastern countries and ‘Other non-Western countries’ receive around 50% more criminal convictions than Danes; in contrast, second-generation immigrants from Western countries receive fewer convictions than Danes.*

grants from the Middle East will receive more than half as many convictions again – 164 of them. Similarly, a group with origins in ‘other non-Western countries’ will receive 145 convictions.

Apparently, second-generation immigrants from Asiatic countries are convicted of criminal offences less frequently than Danes. But the difference is not statistical certain.

The situation is completely different for second-generation immigrants from Western countries. They receive fewer criminal convictions than Danes, by around 10%. For a group of Danes convicted of 100 criminal offences, a corresponding group of Western second-generation immigrants will thus receive only 90 convictions.

## Countries of origin

Western countries are EU member states, Iceland, Norway, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino, Switzerland, the Vatican, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Middle Eastern countries are Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Syria.

Asiatic countries are Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Japan, China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand.

Other non-Western countries are countries not named above. Of these countries of origin, the largest numbers of second-generation immigrants have parents who come from the Former Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia.

## Large differences in participation rates

Parents' country of origin is also of significance when describing the proportion of a group that is involved in crime. The picture is the same as that explained above – fewer second-generation immigrants from Western countries participate in crime than

is the case for Danes, those with Asiatic backgrounds do not differ significantly from Danes, while second-generation immigrants from Middle Eastern countries participate most in crime – a 48% higher proportion than among Danes.

## Comprehensive controls for social and economic factors

The study of criminality among ethnic minorities by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit employs a very comprehensive set of controls for social and economic factors.

In this context, 'controlling for social and economic factors' means that criminality among second-generation immigrants is compared with the level among Danes of the same age and with the same degree of attachment to the labour market, the same educational level, the same level of income, etc.

For the first time in this research area in Denmark, adjustments have been made not only for individuals' own social and economic characteristics, but also for those of their parents. In this article we explain why such controls are necessary, and why it is also particularly important to control for parental social and economic background in a study of criminality.

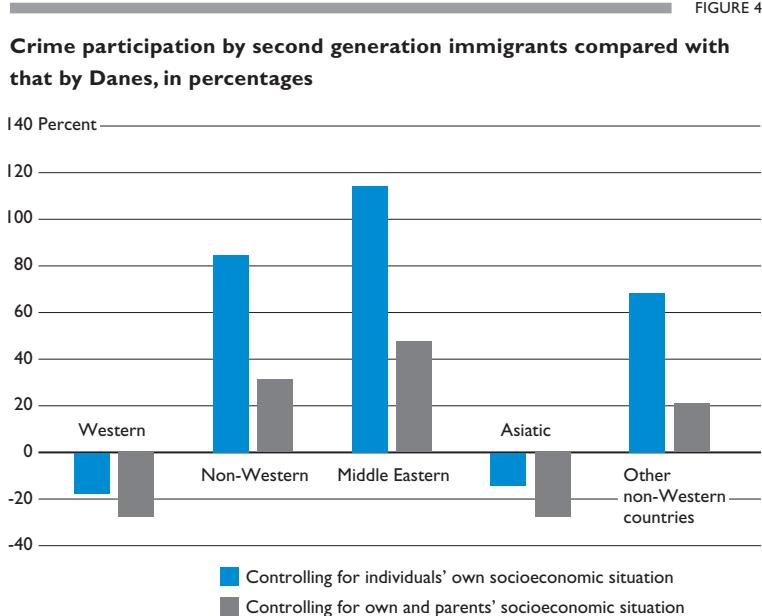
By far the majority of criminals are men who have one or more of the following characteristics: they are young, they have very little education, they have a weak degree of attachment to the labour market, and their parents have little education and low incomes.

Studies that make comparisons of crime rates among various groups without taking into account these and other factors will be comparing groups that differ not only with regard to ethnicity, but also to a great extent with regard to social and economic characteristics. Since second-generation immigrants typically have weaker attachment to the labour market than Danes, this factor in itself would explain some higher crime rate among second-generation immigrant groups.

For this reason, the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit's study of overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the crime statistics compares them with Danes with the same socioeconomic backgrounds.

### Parents' circumstances

As mentioned above, crime is typically committed by young people – and most young people tend to resemble one another in terms of their own social and economic circumstances. Few of them will yet have managed to complete much education beyond compulsory schooling, and similarly there will typically be no large differences as yet in their incomes. Education and income factors do not usually be-



Notes: Crime participation is a figure for the number of people in the group concerned who were convicted of at least one criminal offence committed in 2006. Figures are also adjusted for age.

*The overrepresentation of second-generation immigrants in Danish crime statistics in comparison to Danes is significantly reduced if the socioeconomic circumstances of their parents are taken into account. If we control for individuals' own socioeconomic situation alone, rates of crime participation among non-Western second-generation immigrants are around 85% higher than that among a comparable group of Danes. However, if parents' socioeconomic circumstances are also taken into account, the rate of overrepresentation falls to 31%.*

gin to diverge markedly until later in life. This is probably so in Denmark.

In order to establish a better picture of the social and economic situation of young people, it is useful to take into account the social and economic situation of their parents. This has a great significance for the circumstances in which the young people grow up – and consequently, great significance for whether or not they participate in criminal activities.

As Figure 4 shows, the overrepresentation in the crime statistics of second-generation immigrants is more than halved if parental factors are taken into account. The level of overrepresentation is 85% if the individuals' own socioeconomic circumstances alone are taken into consideration, but 31% if adjustments are made for the socioeconomic backgrounds of their parents.

## Social and economic factors

The following social and economic factors are taken into account in the study by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit:

- Age
- Attachment to the labour market
- Level of education
- Wage income
- Dependency on social benefits
- Whether living with a partner, or with parents

- Whether living in a densely populated area (more than 700 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>)
- Information about parents' social and economic circumstances:
  - Criminal record
  - Level of education
  - Wage income
  - Dependency on social benefits
  - Age of mother at the birth of the child

## The study covers more factors than previous investigations

This study is not the first to examine the overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in Danish crime statistics.

In 2008 the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit carried out an analysis that showed that male immigrants and second-generation immigrants committed more acquisitive crimes than men of Danish origin. Moreover, Statistics Denmark has in recent years carried out analyses that show that ethnic minorities are overrepresented in convictions in criminal cases, even when adjustments are made for socioeconomic factors. In other words, members of ethnic minorities violate the criminal code more often than ethnic Danes.

However, the new study entitled *Etniske minoriteters overrepræsentation i strafferetlige domme* (The overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in criminal convictions in Denmark), which is available as a working paper published by the University Press of Southern

Denmark, is distinct from the previous studies on three points.

First, the study controls for more factors of a socioeconomic nature. These include the socioeconomic status of the parents of second-generation immigrants.

Second, the study focuses on both the proportion of the population who have been convicted of crimes, and the total number of convictions the people in question have received over the preceding five years. Previous studies have used only one or the other of these measures.

Third, the study takes into account more criminal offences than previous studies, which focused either on acquisitive crime or on infringement of the criminal code, traffic laws and other special laws. As a result, the present study can provide a detailed picture of differences in criminality across ethnic groups.

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