

# Importing Crime?

## The Effect of Immigration on Crime in the United States, 1880-1930

Rowena Gray, UC Merced  
and Giovanni Peri, UC Davis

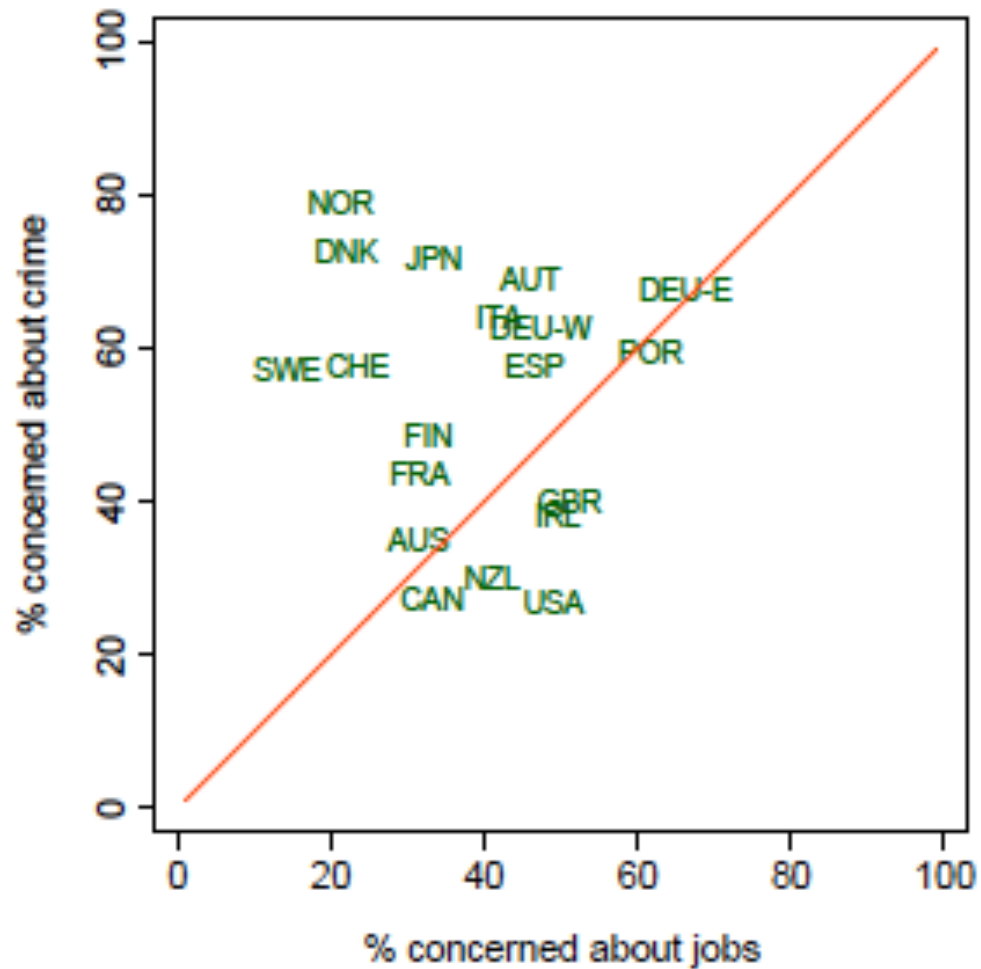
January 5, 2018

# Why look at crime?

When asked what the consequences of more immigration was, 73.4% of respondents to the US General Social Survey in 2000 said that it was at least somewhat likely that crime rates would increase (Spenkuch, 2014)

# Why look at crime?

Figure 1: Opinions about immigrants: crime vs. labor market concerns



# The historical case

- Large inflows
  - 1890s annual inflows ranged from 259000 to 560000, predominantly going to urban areas; 1900s even larger
- Limited immigration restriction before 1917 & 1921 on; legal status not an issue
- More detailed data on immigrant versus native criminality; composition of police forces; police resources; categories of crime

# Immigration and Crime

- Historical literature:

Hourwich (1911); Moehling & Piehl (2009), (2013);  
Bodenhorn et al (2010)

- Recent literature:

Butcher & Piehl (1998); Spenkuch (2014); Chalfin  
(2014); Borjas et al (2009); Bell et al (2013); Bianchi et  
al (2012), Bell (2014)

# Data

Arrests data by category of crime, 1880-1930 for 30 large US cities (per 1900 population distribution)

**Aim: 1530 city-years. Currently: 25 cities complete, 1152 city-years**

Annual Police Reports gathered from archives, hathitrust etc

Also: police strength, technology, sometimes on convictions, nativity

Supplemented by *General Statistics of Cities*, *Financial Statistics of Cities*

Foreign-born Share and Demographic Information:

1880-1930 US decennial censuses and Historical Statistics of the United States

Current cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Fall River, Grand Rapids, Los Angeles, Louisville, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, Newark, New Bedford, New York, Philadelphia, Providence, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle, Trenton, DC

Coming Soon: Columbus, Richmond, Rochester, Portland, St. Louis

# 30 City Sample



## HORSES.

On the 1st of December, 1899, there were 92 horses in the service. During the year 13 were sold and exchanged, 13 were purchased and one died. At the present time there are 91 in service, as shown by Table X.

## WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT.

*Arrests.*

The total number of persons arrested was 33,655, against 39,760 the preceding year, being a decrease of 6,105. The percentage of increase or decrease was as follows:—

	Per Cent.
Offences against the person, . . . . .	Decrease, 1.06
Offences against property, committed with violence, . .	Decrease, 14.22
Offences against property, committed without violence, .	Increase, 5.50
Malicious offences against property, . . . . .	Decrease, 17.55
Forgery and offences against the currency, . . . . .	Decrease, 28.57
Offences against the license laws, . . . . .	Decrease, 22.71
Offences against chastity, morality, etc., . . . . .	Decrease, 9.82
Offences not included in the foregoing, . . . . .	Decrease, 18.75

There were 4,863 persons arrested on warrants and 27,525 without warrants; 1,267 persons were summoned by the court, 31,057 persons were held for trial and 2,598 were released from custody. The number of males arrested was 29,173; of females, 4,482; of foreigners, 15,460, or, approximately, 45.90 per cent.; of minors, 4,596. Of the total number arrested, 10,314, or 30.61 per cent., were non-residents. (See Tables XI., XII. and XIII.)

The nativity of the prisoners was as follows:—

United States, . . . . .	18,185	Poland, . . . . .	60
Ireland, . . . . .	7,506	Austria, . . . . .	58
British Provinces, . . . . .	2,829	France, . . . . .	53
England, . . . . .	1,941	Portugal, . . . . .	33
Italy, . . . . .	914	Denmark, . . . . .	30
Russia, . . . . .	825	West Indies, . . . . .	23
Scotland, . . . . .	430	Belgium, . . . . .	22
China, . . . . .	429	Wales, . . . . .	20
Sweden, . . . . .	368	Holland, . . . . .	15
Greece, . . . . .	332	Spain, . . . . .	12
Germany, . . . . .	305	Finland, . . . . .	9



# COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF FELONY CHARGES FOR PAST FIVE YEARS

FELONIES	1924	1923	1922	1921	1920
Abandonment of Child Under One Year.....	7	6	1	6	3
Abduction.....	5	8	8	9	9
Abortion.....	15	21	18	18	34
Arson and Attempt to Commit Arson.....	32	50	14	20	39
Bigamy.....	46	51	40	53	32
Burglary.....	1,525	1,341	1,757	1,935	1,902
Burglary, Accessory to.....	14	33	12	17	30
Burglary, Attempted.....	116	44	109	139	141
Burglar's Tools, Having.....	40	7	13	47	30
Confidence Game.....	1,455	1,510	1,489	1,692	1,011
Conspiracy.....	138	150	271	216	240
Criminal Carelessness.....	6	3	4	4	2
Counterfeiting Money.....	15	2	1	4	1
Crime Against Children.....	118	115	159	156	169
Crime Against Nature.....	82	71	21	30	21
Embezzlement and Larceny by.....	245	169	183	205	184
Forgery.....	186	144	160	140	112
Incest.....	13	12	12	12	13
Kidnaping.....	57	28	12	22	19
Larceny and Larceny by Bailee.....	5 705	5 731	5,315	5,568	5,471
Larceny by Pickpocket.....	68	14	30	14	39
Larceny of Automobile.....	718	412	410	477	458
Larceny, Accessory to.....	23	8	27	29	28
Larceny, Attempted.....	142	62	99	115	69
Malicious Mischief.....	301	278	384	357	304
Manslaughter.....	273	218	145	144	92
Mayhem.....	26	15	14	8	13
Murder.....	291	20	211	192	198
Murder, Accessory to.....	72	32	36	45	57
Murder, Assault to Commit.....	421	347	316	359	316
Pandering.....	51	37	52	45	49
Perjury.....	18	32	16	17	10
Rape.....	288	255	227	284	196
Rape, Assault to Commit.....	78	80	42	57	58
Receiving Stolen Property.....	925	632	951	1,043	1,150

# Crime Definitions

Follows FBI's Uniform Crime Reports in spirit

- Total arrests: includes serious crimes & misdemeanors
- Murder: excludes attempted murder, should exclude auto accidents
- Manslaughter: negligent homicides (may include auto accidents)
- Rape: includes attempts and assault to rape; excludes statutory rape where possible
- Assault: UCR doesn't include simple assault, my measure does. Includes attempted murder, assault to kill/harm
- Larceny: Theft that doesn't involve violence or threat of violence
- Burglary: Theft that involves b&e but no violence
- Robbery: Theft involving violence or threats
- Arson: includes attempts

Also look at public order offenses due to historical concern over these crimes:

- Vagrancy: includes "rogues and vagabonds"
- Drunkenness: Drunk (& disorderly)

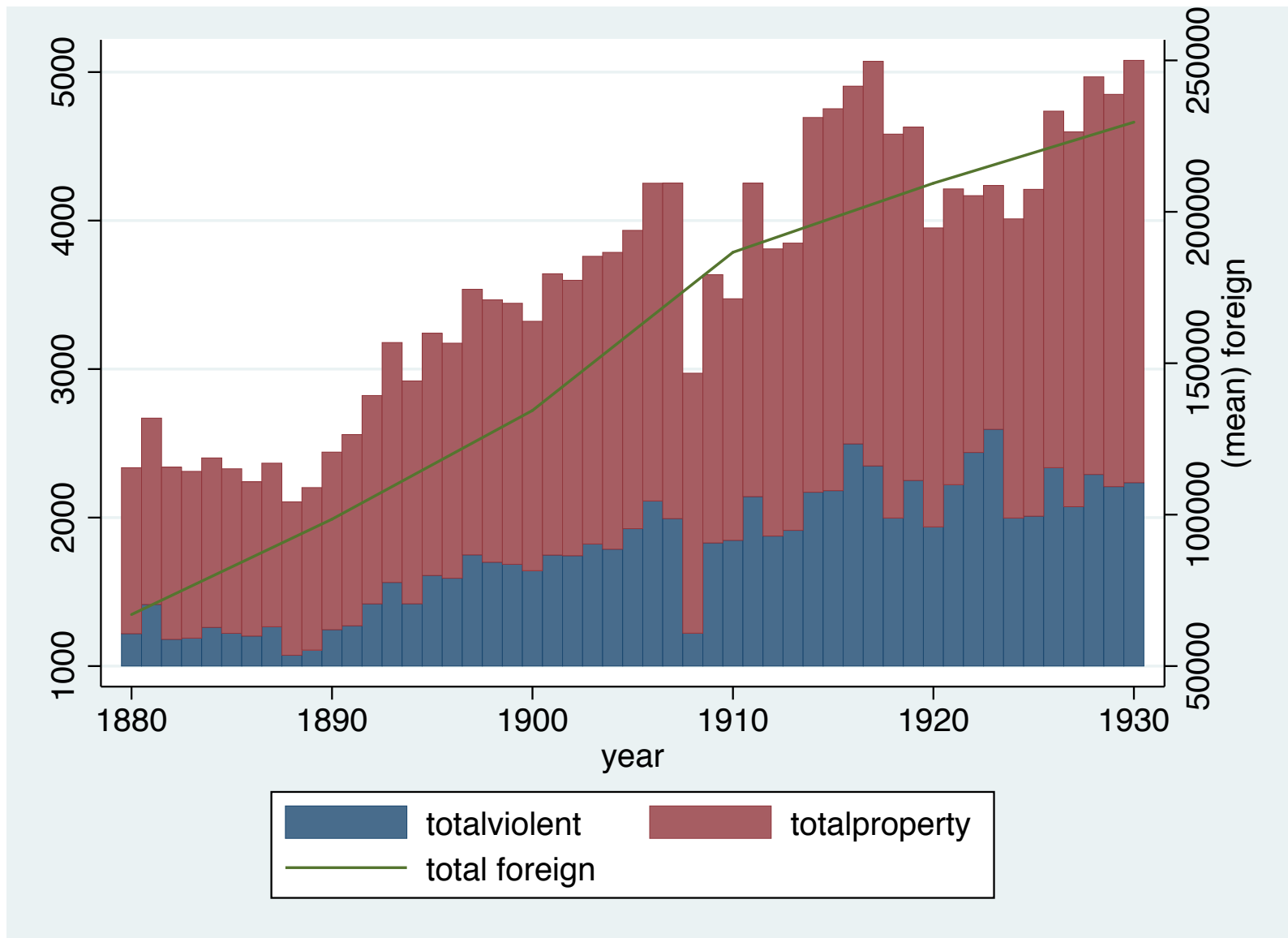
# Measuring Foreign-born Share

- Have actual FBShare for every Census year 1880-1930
  - Also can break it down by immigrant group or country of origin for most Census years
- But, crime data is annual and immigrants may locate endogenously?
  - Solution: use the 1880 distribution of immigrants by origin group and assign inflows of new immigrants 1881-1930 to cities according to that distribution

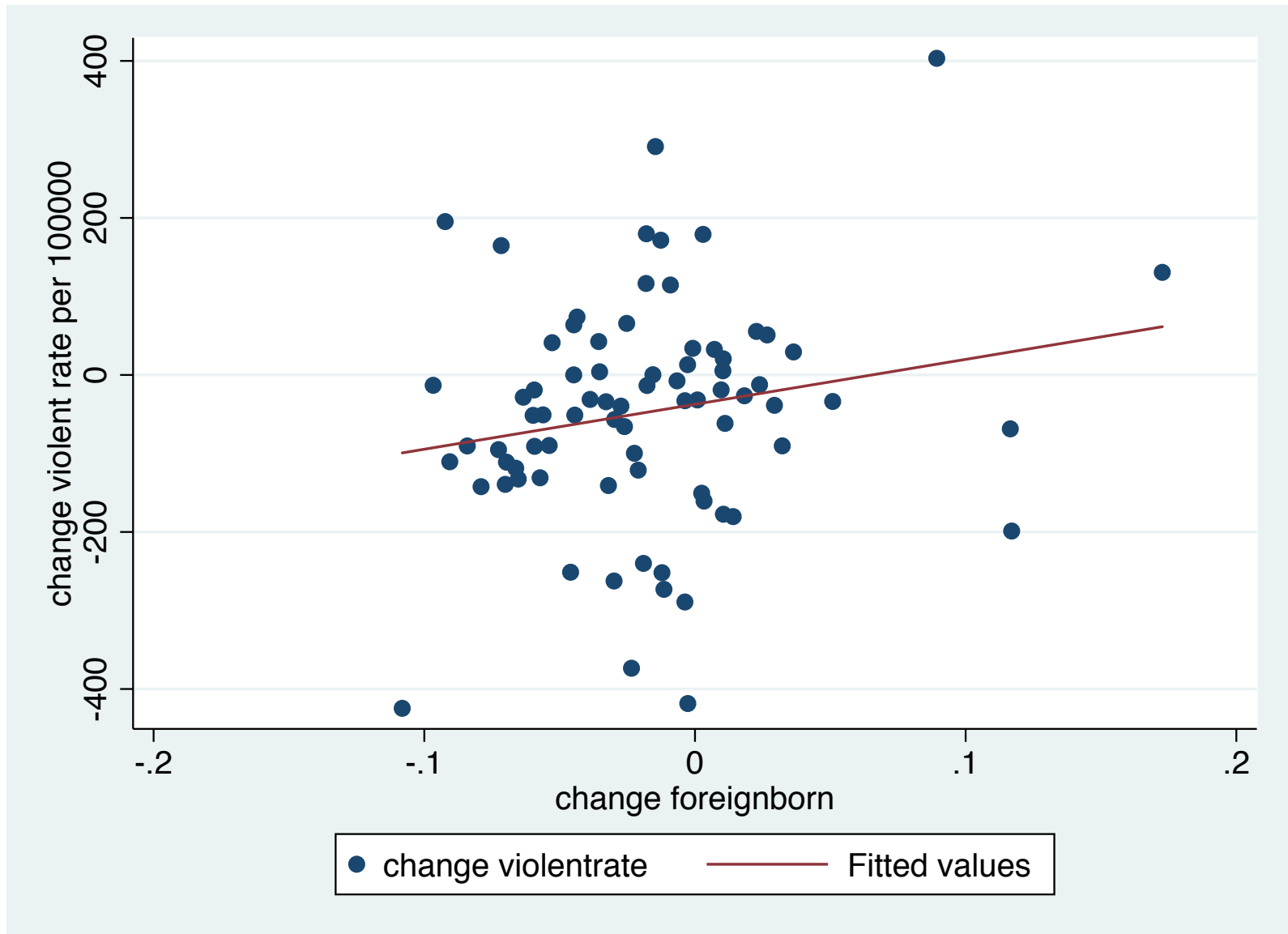
# Immigrant groups

- NW Europeans: Germany, Ireland, UK, Scandinavia, France, Belgium etc
- SE Europeans: Italy, Russia, Poland, Greece, Spain, Austro-Hungary etc
- Americas: Canada, Mexico etc
- Others: Australia, African nations, Arab nations, China, Japan, Korea etc

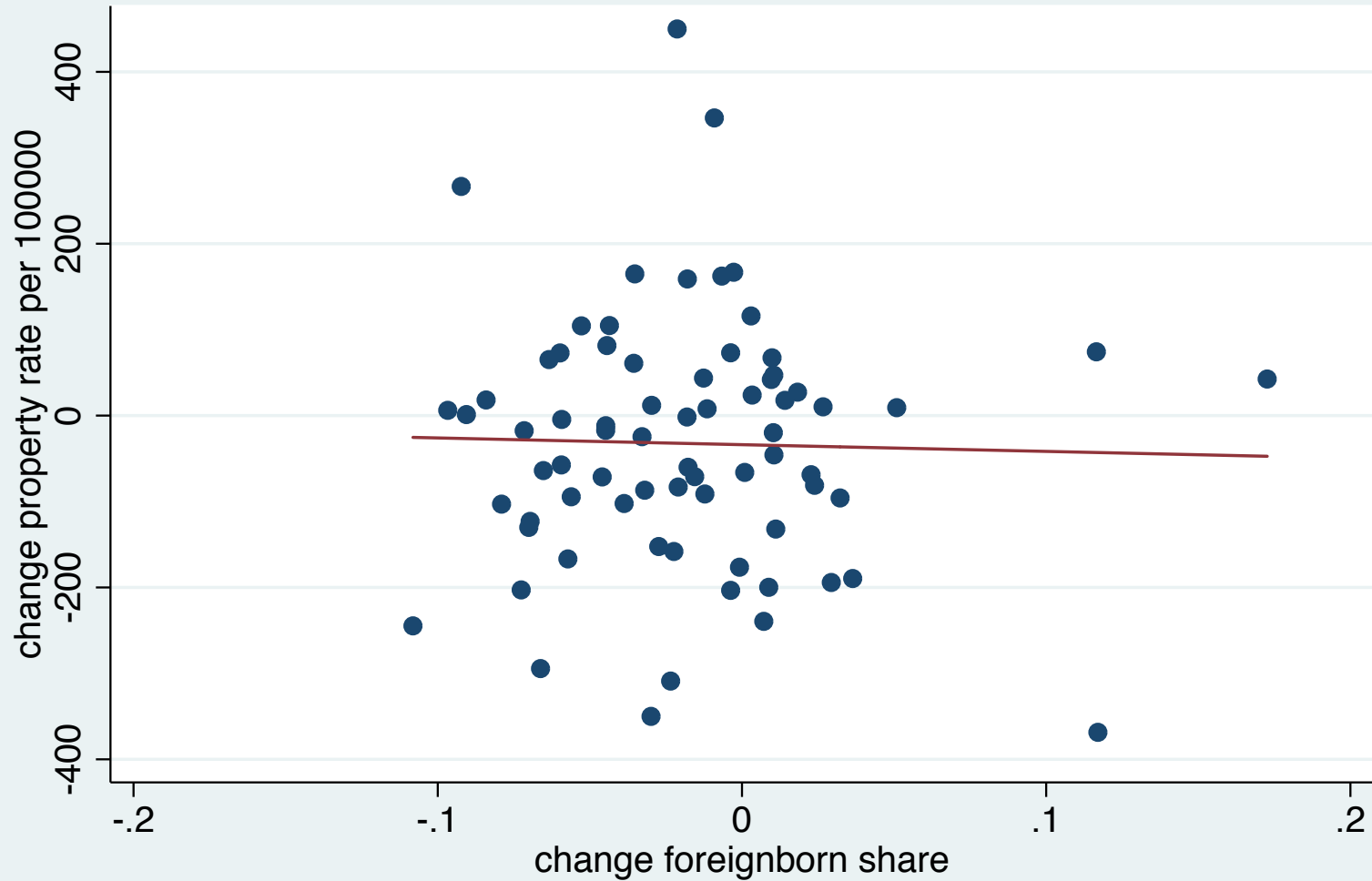
# Immigration and crime, 1880-1930



# Immigration and violent crime



# Immigration and property crime



● change property arrest rate      — Fitted values

# Estimating Equation

$$Crime_{ct} = \beta_1 FBShare_{ct} + \beta_2 PoliceX_{ct} + \gamma X_{ct} + \theta_t + \eta_c + \varepsilon_{ct}$$

- Crime is a count variable
- FBShare is the share of the population in each city-year born abroad
- Police expenditure per capita
- We include city & year FE & demographic controls & population



# Results

	Total	Violent	Burglary	Drunk
FB Share	-.02*** (.01)	-.05*** (.02)	-.04* (.03)	-.07*** (.01)
Police X	-.02 (.04)	-.17** (.09)	-.16 (.12)	-.07 (.06)
SH Black	.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)	-.03 (.07)	.03 (.02)
SH Single	-.03* (.02)	-.07** (.02)	-.06 (.05)	-.02 (.03)
SH Male	-.002 (.02)	.06 (.04)	.09 (.08)	-.06* (.03)
SH Crimeage	.05** (.02)	.001 (.02)	-.02 (.06)	.04 (.03)
City FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs	1013	1032	1017	1022

	Total	Violent	Burglary	Drunk
SH NW Euro	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.06** (.03)	.006 (.02)
SH SE Euro	-.01 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.01 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)
SH Americas	-.19*** (.07)	-.22*** (.07)	-.30*** (.07)	-.25*** (.05)
SH Other	-.11 (.07)	-.27*** (.05)	-.15* (.09)	-.12* (.07)
Police X	.05 (.03)	.02 (.08)	.02 (.09)	.06 (.06)
SH Black	.02 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	.01 (.03)	.003 (.03)
SH Single	-.02 (.02)	-.04 (.03)	-.01 (.02)	-.03 (.02)
SH Male	-.01 (.02)	.04 (.04)	.02 (.03)	-.03 (.02)
SH Crimeage	.04** (.02)	.01 (.02)	-.002 (.03)	.05** (.02)
City FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs	1013	1026	1026	1024

# Conclusion

- Overall, immigrants are not associated with increased arrests, across categories
- Some differences across immigrant groups
  - Further investigation needed into role of time in the US, success in the labor market
  - Can utilize further information on police composition, nativity of arrestees by crime type