



There's Something About Iceland

Brandon Wilson
Junior, B.S. Homeland Security
wilsob32@my.erau.edu

Abstract

Despite a recent murder of a 20-year-old girl, an event that was an intense shock to the entire nation, Iceland is thought of as one of the safest countries on the planet due to a combination of worldwide reporting on the infrequency of violence in the peaceful country as well as a certain air about Iceland making it seem just as safe as it is said to be. This project explores the reasons behind an extremely low violent crime rate in Iceland and evaluates the effects that tourism and immigration are having on the crime rates. There has been very little research on the subject of crime in Iceland. The reasons for a low crime rate and effects of tourism and immigration were researched in Iceland through interviews, media publications, observation and even a few museum placards. It was found that the low crime rate in Iceland is largely due to a culture of nonviolence in Iceland itself as well as a nearly homogeneous population and other unique factors. This research could be further developed to further understand the scope of factors that contribute to violent crimes as well as factors that reduce the chances of violent crime.

References

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Methodology

The methods of data collection consisted of interviews, literature review and observations all taken in country from March 9 – March 16, 2018. Literature on the topic of crime in Iceland was very scarce, so the literature review only offered a peek into a better understanding of Iceland's lack of crime.

Interviews

- Icelandic Tour Guide
- Icelandic Bus Driver
- Group of police
- Shop owner

Observations

- Icelandic perspective on 2017 murder
- Instances of security equipment
- Number of police, amount of police activity

Literature Review

- Online sources were used to compile quantitative data
- Icelandic online news articles on crime



Figure 1: Insignia of Icelandic Police

Interview Results and Observations

Interviews

- Most violent crime is contained in organized criminal rings
- Low drug use comparatively
- Betterment or amends in the face of crimes was the normal solution
- Very spread out, rural country
- Small communities
- Icelanders hold onto Viking tradition, which was peace at home, violence elsewhere

Observations

- Police are unarmed
- There are few police
- Unified and welcoming culture
- People seemed completely stress-free
- High gun ownership, guns mostly for hunting
- Smaller crimes are controlled and rehabilitation is the norm in Iceland

Literature Review

- Iceland's population is largely homogeneous
- Class disparity is nearly nonexistent
- Very low instances of violent crime, theft and drug use
- The first fatal police shooting in Iceland occurred in 2013



Photo 1: No crime to observe, but the remnants of covered graffiti were found on a church.

Discussion and Findings

Reasons for a Low Violent Crime Rate

- The general culture in Iceland seems to be very egalitarian, with roughly equal treatment and opportunities of rich and poor alike
- The historic isolation of Iceland and difficulty of expansion has led to a very high regard of human life, so betterment of criminals to bring them back to society is important
- Viking traditions that are still, in some part, paramount to the culture of Iceland engender peacefulness within their own society
- Taking care of their society includes offering essential and effective medical or psychological treatment to criminals
- Community efforts to find missing girl in 2017 show strong connections among the population

Effects of Tourism and Immigration

- According to police, tourism and immigration have not caused an observable increase in violent crime or major theft
- Increased tourism, although, does bring with it many speeding offences and accidents
- Rarely though, theft does occur in tourist areas, likely due to increasing traffic

Conclusion

Iceland has enjoyed a certain air of peace and calmness across the nation for nearly 1000 years, a cultural time capsule left behind by the Vikings. The Icelanders are only determined to continue their peaceful interactions amongst themselves and others. Both by continuing the egalitarian culture they have created with very little disparity between people and seeking to help criminals and provide other means for survival. Violent crime in Iceland is almost exclusively confined to the underground criminal rings that run drugs, but even with the presence of drug trafficking, drug use in Iceland is incredibly low as well. On the subject of tourism and immigration, it appears that an observable effect has not surfaced outside of increased speeding offences. Although this was the findings, Iceland's tourism industry continues to expand, so a lasting effect of tourism and immigration may still be developing.



Picture 3: Church with the Icelandic flag near where ancient Viking congress was held