

May 3, 2016

Angela's Agony: Refugee Crime Rates and the Effect of Migration on Age Dependency in Germany

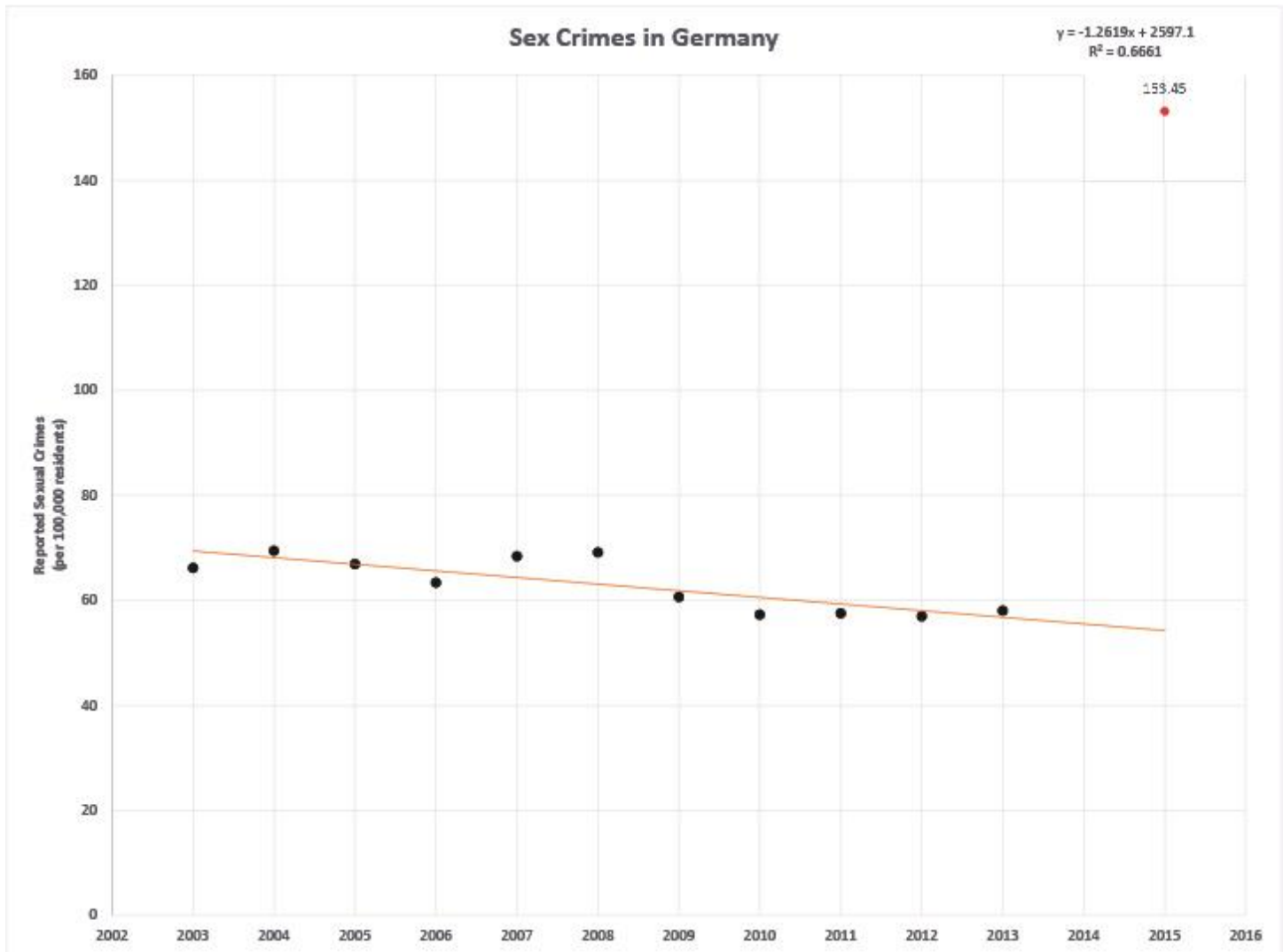
By Kainoa Little

Recently, there have been very vocal accusations by different groups - particularly Europeans espousing more conservative values - suggesting that the German government is underreporting crimes committed by refugees, assumedly in an attempt to protect the German government from a backlash against its refugee policies. This report will discuss how crime rates compare between new refugees to Germany and the general German population. It will also explore the demographic realities in Germany, specifically considering the country's aging workforce and generous and expensive social programs, which may have influenced the German government's decision to take a calculated risk in allowing more than a million refugees to settle there in the past year.

This first part of this report compares the rate of crimes committed by Germans to the rate of crimes committed by refugees, with special focus on sex crimes. The data for this report comes from multiple sources, a method of data collection which I acknowledge introduces the possibility of measurement error, where sex crimes may be defined and/or measured differently by different organizations. I collected the numbers of sex crimes in Germany between 2004 and 2013 from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). These numbers were divided by the population of Germany that year (between 80 and 82 million), as recorded by the World Bank, then multiplied by 100,000 to get the rate of sex crimes per 100,000 people.

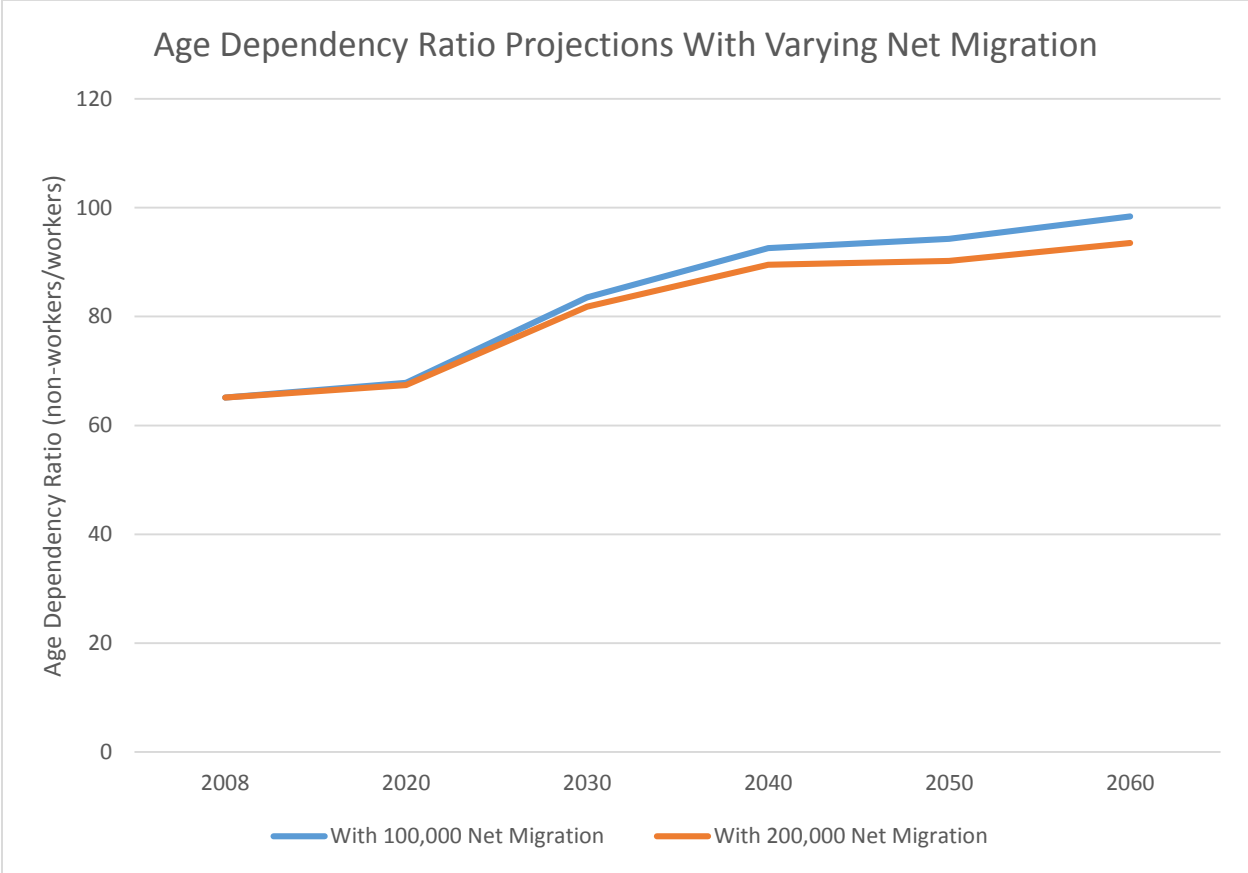
The lynchpin of this statistic is one number – 1,688, the number of sex crimes perpetrated by refugees in Germany in 2015 according to a report leaked by Germany's Federal Criminal Police Agency (BKA) to the Bild Newspaper in February (DW 2016). In the interest of transparency, any leaked statistic should be viewed with suspicion and the Bild newspaper is unambiguously a tabloid of dubious moral standards. However, the numbers it reported did not appear to be disputed by the BKA and were repeated by more legitimate sources, such as Deutsche Welle. To process the number of sex crimes committed by refugees, I used the same methods as for the general German population. The number was divided by the well-publicized number of refugees in Germany by the end of 2015, 1.1 million, then multiplied by 100,000 to get the rate of sex crimes among refugees per 100,000.

Because relevant data for the general German population was not available for the years 2014-2015, a linear regression line, with an R^2 value of .6661, was used to approximate the likely trend in sex crimes. Using the equation of the line ($-1.2619x+2597.1$) and plugging in 2015 for x , this regression predicts a value of 54.3715 instances of sexual violence among the general German population according to current trends. Unfortunately, according to the available numbers, refugees committed sex crimes at a rate of 153.45 per 100,000, nearly 3 times the rate of Germans.



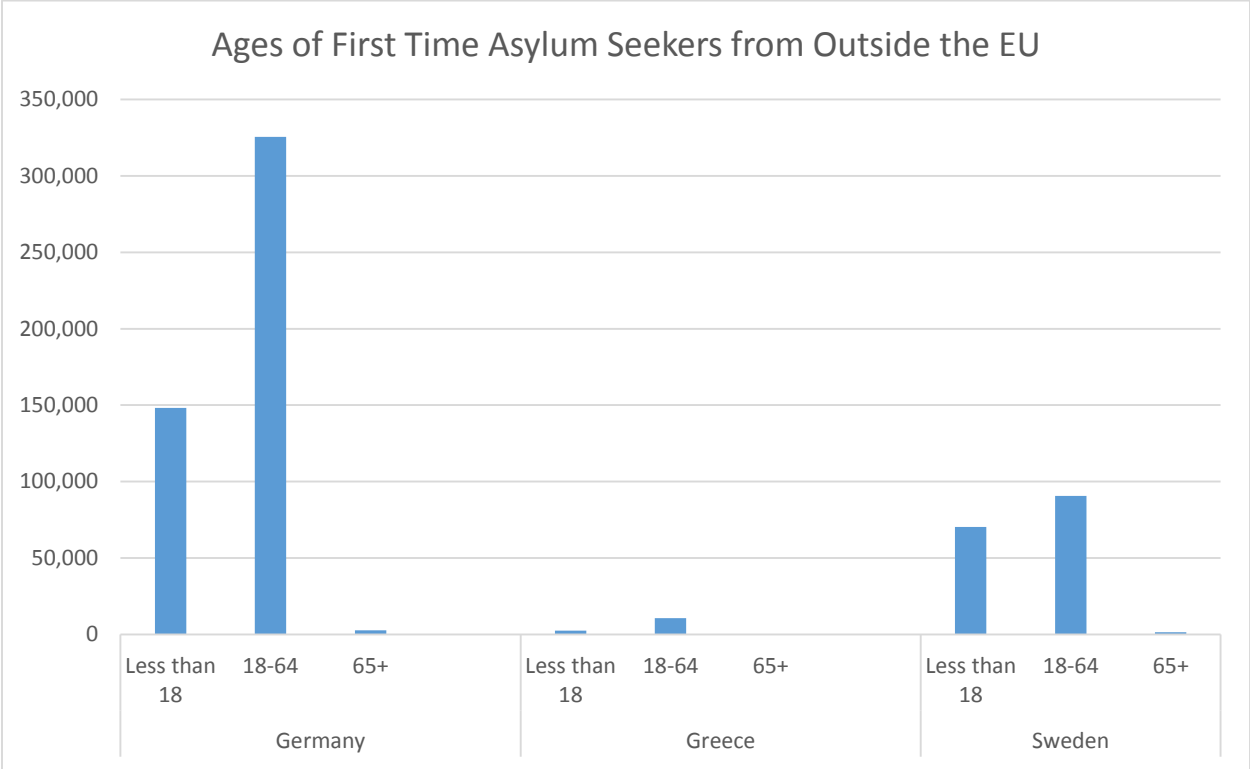
Curiously, no news outlets I could find compared these numbers in this way. Instead they focused on the fact that, while the refugee population in Germany increased 440% from 2014 to 2015, total crimes perpetrated by refugees increased only 79%. Additionally, less than 1% of the 208,344 reported refugee crimes were sex crimes, while asset fraud and theft together accounting for 65% (DW 2016). Refugees fleeing war in the Middle East and Central Asia committed disproportionately few crimes. In 2015, Syrians made up 47% of the refugee population, but committed only 24% of the crimes; Afghans make up 17%, but commit only 11% of the crimes; Iraqis make up 13% but commit only 9% of the crimes (Daily Mail 2016). Conversely, Kosovars, Serbians, and Albanians are highly overrepresented in the criminal population in Germany. Some of this targeted news may be attempts to dispel a rampant rumor mill, especially in conservative circles in Europe. The Atlantic reported on the work of Hoaxmap, which tracks rumored refugee crimes through social media posts, reported statements by police and witnesses, and others, reports that 25% of rumored refugee crimes involve sexual assault, while the actual number is less than 1% (Atlantic 2016). In this case, spikes in rumors of sexual crimes closely followed credible instances of sexual harassment and assault that took place in Cologne on New Year's Eve.

For 40 years Germany’s average fertility rate has been 1.4, falling well below the replacement rate of 2.1 (BMI 2015). The German government most likely took the low German fertility rate into account when they formed their refugee policy. At a persistent rate of 1.4 births per woman, a steady 2008 rate of immigration, and a fixed rate of increase in life expectancy, the demographic shifts in Germany are expected to be substantial in the medium-term future of Germany. By 2020, the share of Germans over 67 is expected to grow by 27% and the population over 80 will increase by 43%. This shift would assumedly be paired with economic stagnation. The following chart attempts to show the effects of higher net migration on age dependency, which describes the burden of non-working age individuals on society, typically taking the form of monetary expenditures on social programs such as education for the young and healthcare for the old. This statistic is calculated strictly on the metric of age and is defined as the people in a population between 0-15 years of age and over 65 years of age, divided by the working age (16-65) population and multiplied by 100. This chart looks from 2008 to 2060, assuming a fertility rate of 1.4 births, and a steady rate of increase in life expectancy (Federal Statistical Office 2009). It shows the projected change in the Age Dependency Ratio based on two levels of net migration – 100,000 and 200,000.



This model does take into account the peculiarities of German demographics, including the post-World War II baby boom, but does not attempt to model the effects of the recent influx of migrants. It simply shows that increased net migration alone can mitigate the rise in the age dependency ratio and lessen the economic burden of non-working citizens on society. In the following descriptive chart, it is possible to see a rough demographic depiction of what ages are coming to three major recipient countries

(Eurostat 2016). It's clear that the vast majority of incoming migrants are working-age young people who will soon join the work force.



This report has painted a mixed quantitative picture of the dangers and the benefits of refugee influx into Germany. One cannot envy the policymakers of Europe.

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