

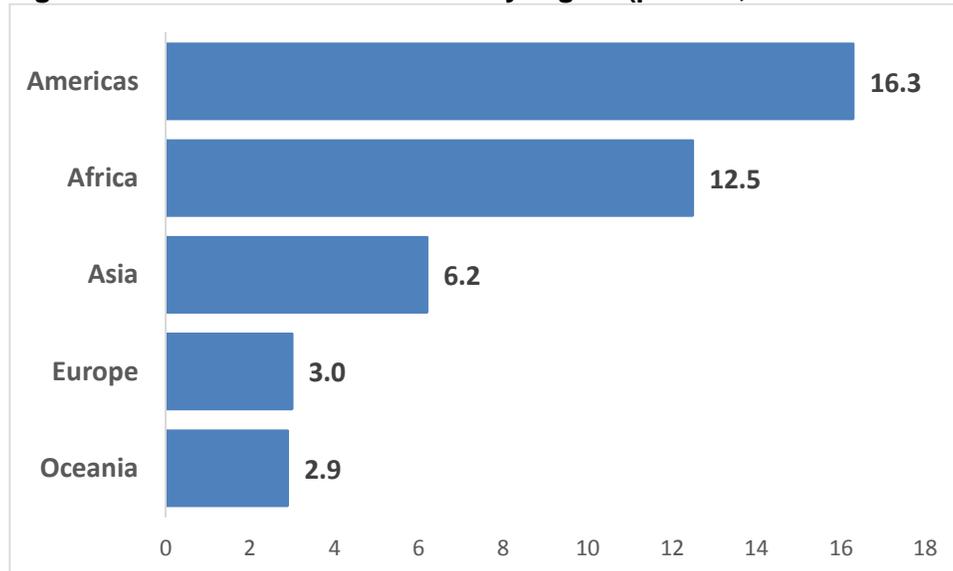


## Crime Rates and Trends in Africa

Official and other statistics show that the crime rate in Africa is high. Of nearly half-a-million homicides committed globally in 2012, only 5% occurred in Europe; 31% occurred in Africa; just next to the Americas 36% (UNODC, 2013). Numbeo (2015) ranked six African countries as among the twenty nations with the highest crime rates in the world. These include South Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Libya. When homicide rates per 100,000 population were calculated, Africa again came second to the Americas. For example, statistics from the victimization surveys in Africa (UNODC, 2010) revealed that in Rwanda, during the period 2003-2008, out of the number of crime cases reported, 68.9% were crimes at the household level while 31.1% were personal/individual cases. In other African countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, Tanzania and Uganda, robbery, corruption, consumer fraud, sexual assault, kidnapping, and property crimes involving car hijacking, theft of livestock, and burglary were prevalent, although to varying degrees.

As indicated by UNODC, out of 437,000 (almost half a million) deaths caused by intentional homicide globally in 2012, more than a third (36%) happened in the Americas, 31% occurred in Africa, 28% in Asia, and just 5% in Europe (UNODC, 2014). Figure 1 shows that Africa has the second homicide rate among the regions of the world.

**Figure 1: The 2012 homicide rates by region (per 100,000 inhabitants)**



Own Elaboration

Source: United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC, 2014)

The world average for the period is 6.2 per 100,000 inhabitants but the African rate is twice that (UNODC, 2014). Other forms of crime, such as arson, child trafficking, drug abuse, drug trafficking, commercial crimes, kidnapping and illicit firearms possession and use also plague African nations in different proportions (Harrendorf, Heiskanen & Malby, 2010; UNODC, 2014).

More worrisome is the fact that crime rates seem to be increasing rather than decreasing. UNODC (2014) reports increases in homicide rates in Eastern Africa with Kenya and Uganda in the lead since 2004. In South Sudan, there have been high levels of firearm availability, and this situation has increased the lethality associated with cattle rustling, especially in the Wunlit Triangle- a region that witnessed one of the highest homicide rates in the world in 2013 at over





60 per 100,000 inhabitants. And, although South Africa experienced a steady decrease in homicide rates between 1995 and 2011 of more than 50%, from 64.9 to 30.0 per 100,000 inhabitants, the country witnessed an increase to 31 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2012. Since then, the trend has continued to rise. In fact, the 2013/2014 crime statistics in South Africa show that the country was less safe than it was two years earlier. Cases of murder, specifically house robbery, and hijacking, have continued to rise in the country. As reported by the South African Police Service, between 2013 and 2014, the murder rate went up by 5%, with more than 17,000 cases. This increase amounts to over 800 cases more than the previous year. Specifically, the average number of murders committed each day rose from 45 in 2012/13 to 47 in 2013/14 (South Sudan Monitor, 2011; *Eye Witness News*, 2014; *Institute for Security Studies and Africa Check*, 2014; South African Police Service, 2014).

With respect to organised, armed conflict, De Villiers (2015) shows that there was an escalation of conflict in Africa in 2014, with five Sub-Saharan countries recording an estimated 74% of all deaths related to conflicts on the continent. Data on trends of violence and conflict-related fatalities in Africa released by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED, 2015) show that Somalia, Sudan and Nigeria accounted for 26%, 10%, and 9% respectively of all organized, armed conflicts in Africa in 2014. This trend shows a continued pattern since 2013, when these countries were responsible for approximately 33%, 10%, and 9%, respectively, with only Somalia recording a reduction. In 2014, Libya and South Sudan joined the category of most violent countries as they accounted for 10% and 8%, respectively, of violent conflict in Africa. However, DR-Congo, which was high on the list in 2013, recorded a reduction in her relative violence rate to 7% of violent conflict in Africa in 2014. In Libya, the rate of conflicts tripled (i.e. approximately 500 conflicts in 2014 compared to 160 conflicts in 2013). The country also witnessed a sharp increase in remote violence tactics (i.e. approximately 280 instances in 2014 compared to 110 in 2013) and violence against civilians (i.e. approximately 270 instances in 2014, up from 108 instances in 2013).

When riots and protests are not considered, the least violent African countries in 2014 were Benin, Botswana, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Nigeria is the deadliest country in Africa recording over 29% of all organized, armed conflict-related fatalities in Africa in 2014, with 6,383 deaths in 2014 (ACLED, 2015), largely caused by the insurgency in the North East. This is almost twice the number of deaths reported in South Sudan which recorded 16% of all organized, armed conflict-related deaths.

The high rate of crime in Africa has been explained as a product of several factors. These include political factors such as state fragility and state failure, and historical factors such as the history of inter-ethnic and interracial injustices including apartheid. Others are economic factors such as unemployment and corruption, and the balloon effect resulting from the improved successes of anti-drug law enforcement in Europe and the Caribbean, which are said to be responsible for increased drug trafficking in West Africa (UNODC, 2007; *The Economist*, 2009; Wylar & Cook, 2009; UNODC, 2015). This, however, is not to suggest that African governments are not fighting crime. The next section is an overview of their efforts.

