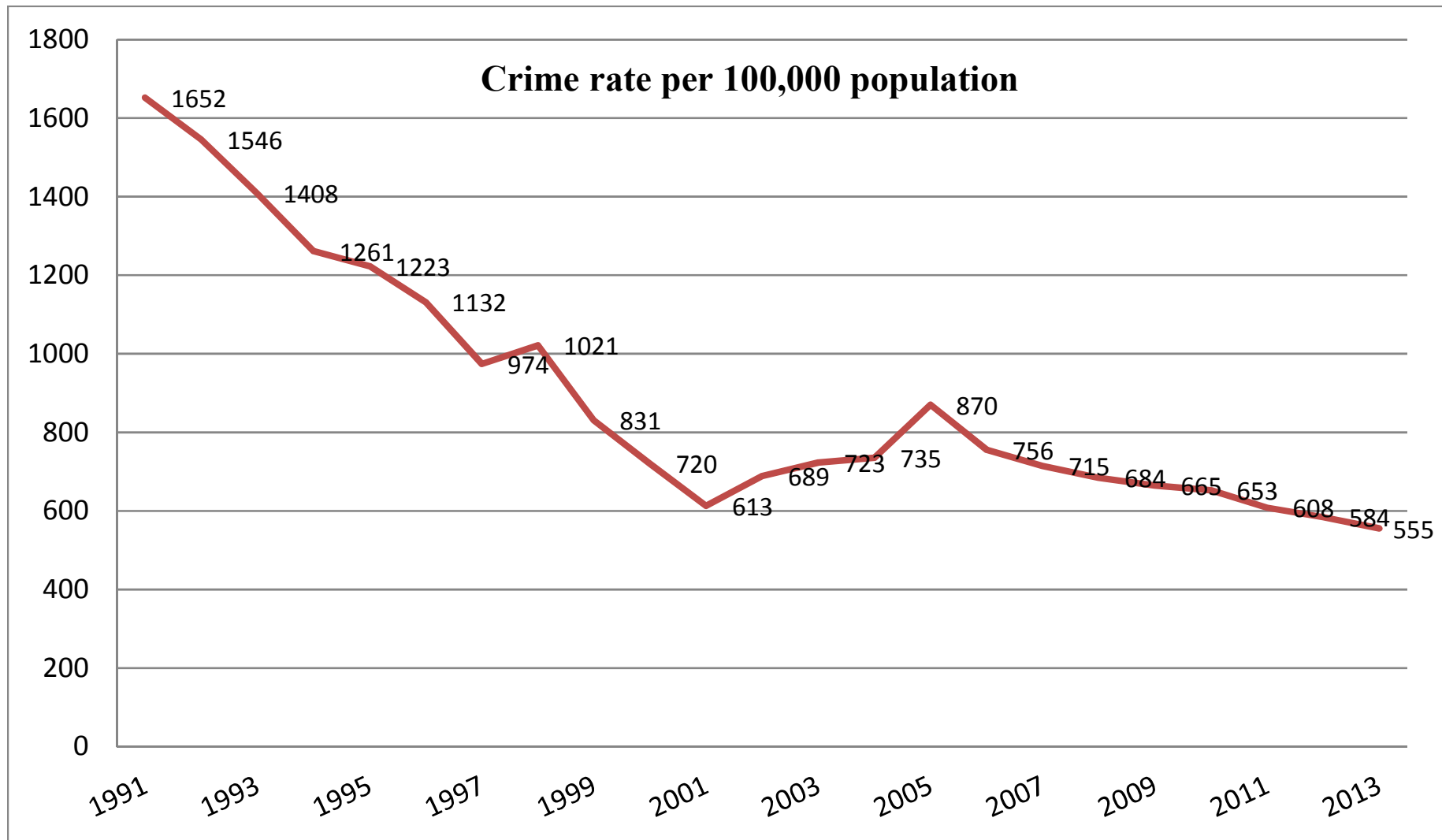


Family Conferencing for Juvenile Offenders: Lessons from Singapore

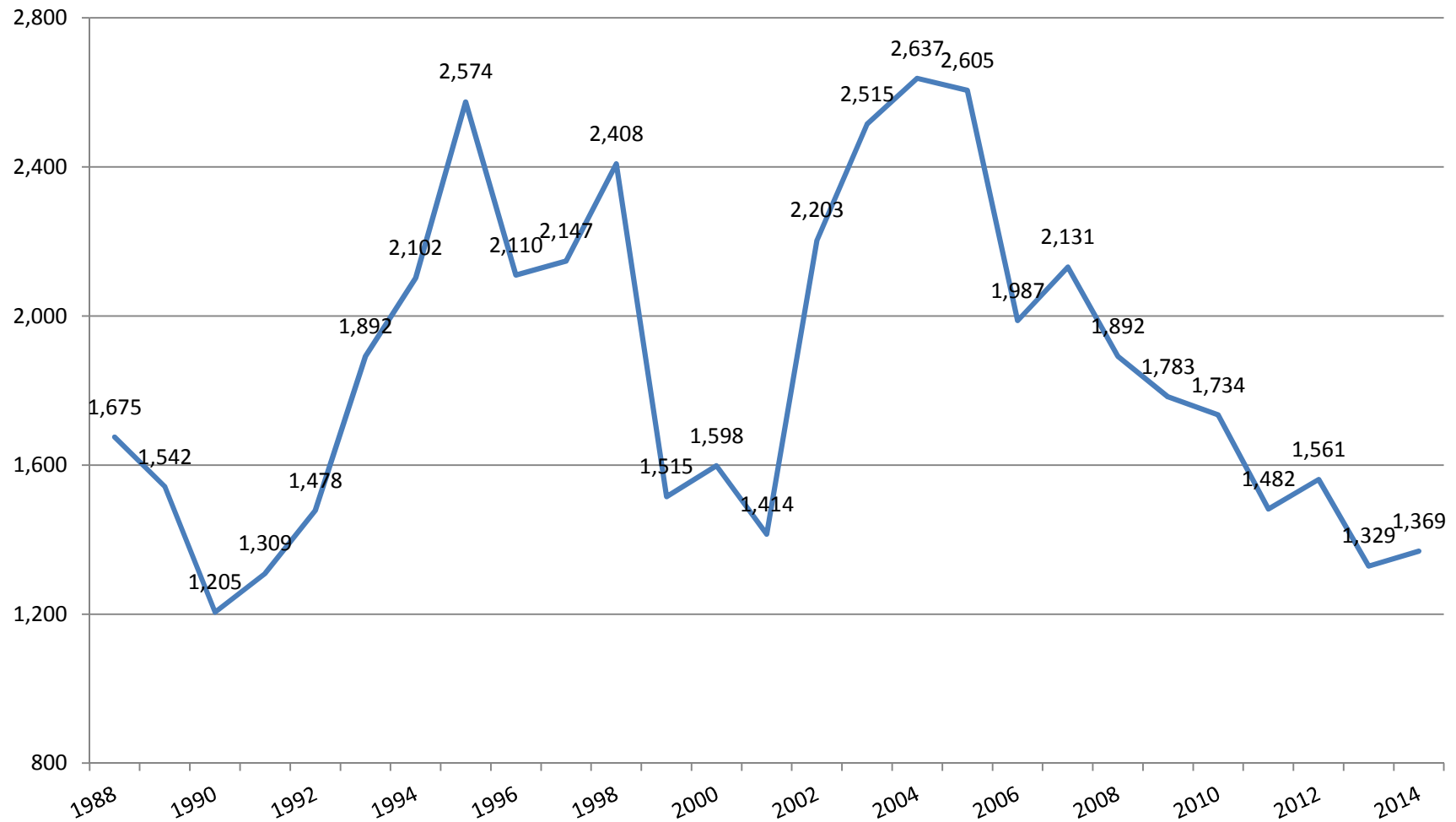
Wing-Cheong CHAN
Associate Professor
Faculty of Law
National University of Singapore

Crime situation in Singapore



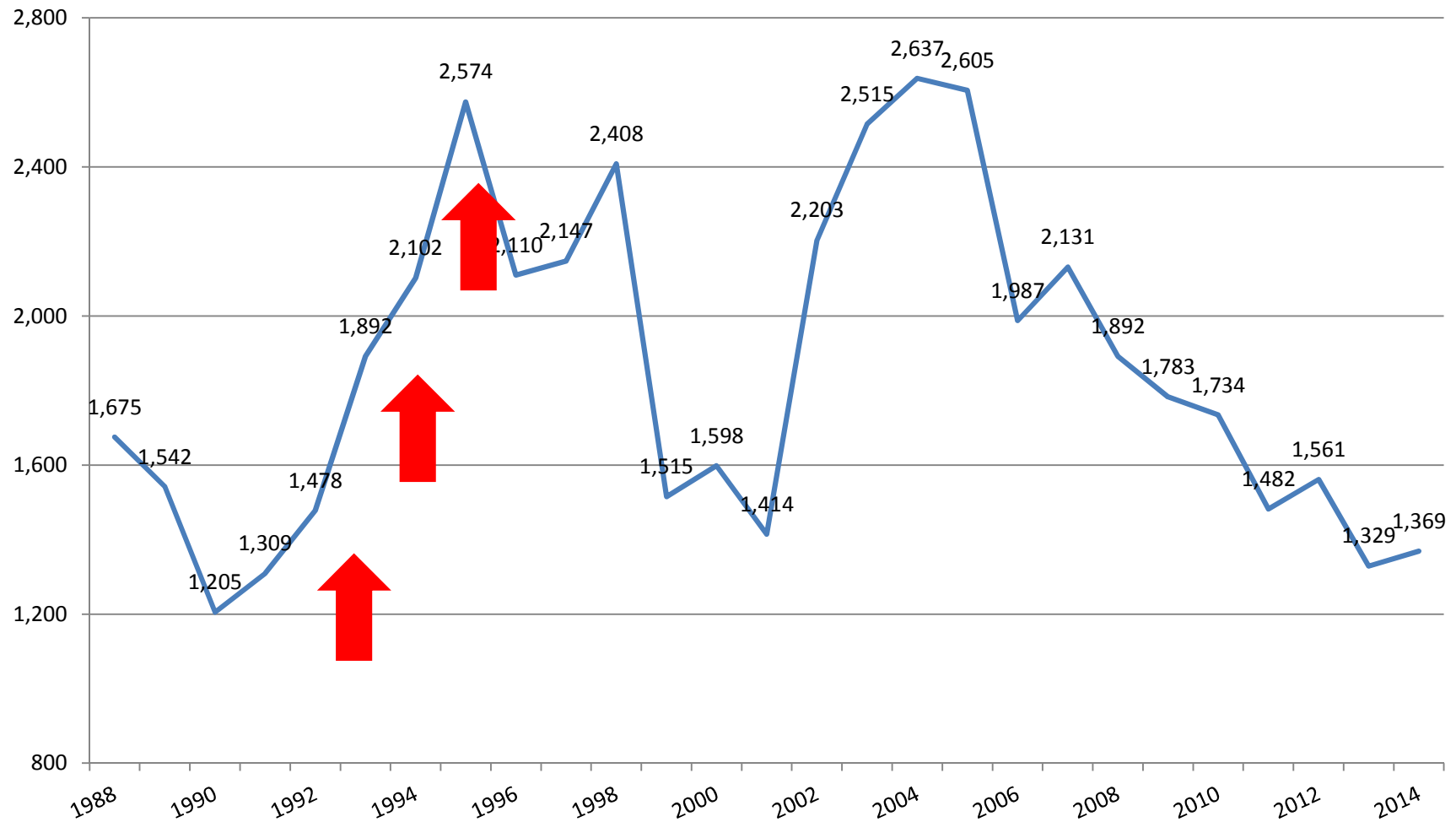
Number of juveniles arrested

Juveniles arrested



Number of juveniles arrested

Juveniles arrested



Restorative justice

- Crime as harm to people
- Engage offenders, parents, victim and significant others
- Seeks to repair damage to social harmony of victims, offenders and the community:
 - Not to stigmatise the offender
 - Support familial and community networks
 - Chance for offender to “put things right” and accept responsibility for the behaviour

Family conferencing in Singapore

- Not used as a diversionary process
- Used for selected juvenile offenders who have either pleaded guilty or been found guilty to the charges
- Considerations:
 - Nature of the offence
 - Character of the offender
 - Record of conduct
 - Offender's parents

- Participants include:
 - Offender
 - Offender's parents / other members of family
 - Investigating officer
 - Prosecuting officer
 - Probation officer
 - Victim of offence
 - Victim's parents / other members of family
 - Representative of offender's school
 - Offender's counsellor / social worker

- Decision of family conference:
 - Reprimand offender
 - Administer formal caution against committing further offence
 - Require offender pay compensation to victim
 - Require offender to perform community service up to 240 hours
 - Require offender to apologise to victim
 - Other acts as it thinks appropriate in the circumstances

- But family conference must “have regard to the orders which may be made by the Youth Court ... for dealing with a person who has been found guilty by the Court of a comparable offence”
- If offender fails to comply, Youth Court will make an order in accordance with its powers

Evaluation studies

- Offenders reported that family conference made them realise they have caused their parents to suffer and felt ashamed of the offence
- Also reported that their relationship with their parents improved
- Nearly all offenders were able to keep their resolutions
- Few breached time restriction / re-offended

Issues to consider

- Diversionary or part of court process?
- Training of facilitators
- “Standardisation” of script
- Selection of cases
- Presence of victim and victim involvement
- Restrictions on the measures adopted

Thank you