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New Report Finds that Housing Voucher Recipients Don't Cause Crime, but Tend to Follow in its Wake

NYU's Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy debunks the myth that households with vouchers lead to increase in neighborhood crime; finds that recipients tend to settle in neighborhoods with existing high crime rates.

Report findings raise questions about if the housing voucher program is meeting its stated goal of helping recipients reach "better" neighborhoods.

NEW YORK, NY – A [new report](#) debunks the myth that housing voucher recipients cause a rise in neighborhood crime. The study, released today by NYU's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy and Moelis Institute for Affordable Housing Policy, found that housing voucher recipients do not cause crime, but tend to move into neighborhoods where crime levels are already high. These findings raise questions about whether the voucher program is meeting its objective of helping recipients reach "better" neighborhoods.

The report, "[Investigating the Relationship between Housing Voucher Use and Crime](#)," (PDF) includes the results of a Furman Center study that tested the commonly held belief that an increase in households using vouchers in a neighborhood leads to a rise in crime. Using housing voucher and crime data from 10 large American cities, including Austin, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Indianapolis, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, Seattle, and Washington, DC., researchers examined how neighborhood crime levels changed after an increase or decrease in the number of households using vouchers.

The study found that while crime is higher in areas in which more households use vouchers, these elevated crime levels existed prior to the influx of households using vouchers, discrediting speculation that households with vouchers cause crime in a neighborhood to increase.

“Despite the lack of rigorous research to support the claim that housing voucher recipients cause crime to increase, this misconception has fueled fear and community resistance,” said Ingrid Gould Ellen, faculty co-director of the Furman Center and co-author of the study.

The trend of housing voucher recipients locating in areas with high crime rates, however, has significant implications for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which aims to assist households reach a broader set of neighborhoods. The report raises questions about what might be limiting the ability of voucher recipients to reach lower crime areas.

“These findings raise questions about the degree to which the Housing Choice Voucher program is opening up new neighborhood opportunities for households,” said Ellen. “This could be due to the shortage of units renting at levels subsidized by the voucher program, limited information, administrative burdens, or discrimination by landlords.”

“At a minimum, determining what is driving households with vouchers to move to higher crime neighborhoods should be a priority for policymakers to ensure that the Housing Choice Voucher program is meeting its goals,” said Ellen.

Policy brief now available: [Investigating the Relationship Between Housing Voucher Use and Crime](#) (PDF)

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*The **Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy** is a joint center of the New York University School of Law and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. The Furman Center is the leading academic research center in New York City devoted to the public policy aspects of land use, real estate, and housing development, and is dedicated to providing objective academic and empirical research. More information on the Furman Center can be found at www.furmancenter.org.*