



FACT SHEET

Crime and U.S. Cities: Recent Patterns and Implications

Summary: This study analyzes the substantial reduction in U.S. crime rates that occurred between 1992 and 2005, studying the distribution of crime reductions across cities and suburbs and across neighborhoods of different racial and economic compositions. It further examines the association between reductions in urban crime and central city population growth. Overall, the distribution of crime reduction was “progressively” skewed toward larger crime reductions in cities and places occupied by minority, poor, and foreign-born residents. Nonetheless, reduced crime in cities appears to have had only a modest association with overall central city population growth. Ingrid Gould Ellen and Katherine O'Regan (October 2009). *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 626(22). Retrieved from <http://ann.sagepub.com/content/626/1/22.full.pdf+html>.

Key Findings:

- Between 1992 and 2005, U.S. cities saw crime rates decline sharply in cities, which saw 48 percent fewer violent crimes and 39 percent fewer crimes overall.
- On average, these declines narrowed the crime gap between cities and suburbs, from a 1992 gap of 4,100 more crimes per 100,000 residents in cities to a 2005 gap of 2,100 more crimes per 100,000 residents.
- The average white urban resident saw the crime rate in his/her city decline by only 31.8 percentage points, whereas the average black and Hispanic urban resident saw declines of 33.5 percentage points and 37.7 percentage points respectively. Meanwhile, city crime exposure rates declined by 35.7 percent for the poor and by 41.8 percent for foreign-born residents.
- A neighborhood-level analysis of Cleveland and Denver found that the largest neighborhood crime rate declines occurred in neighborhoods occupied by minority groups, renters, the poor, and the foreign-born.
- Cities experiencing larger reductions in crime between 1989 and 1994 saw greater population growth between 1990 and 2000, while safety increases were not associated with growth between 2000 and 2005.

Methods:

- Crime data for central city and suburban areas are drawn from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's State of the City website (<http://socds.huduser.org>) for 1992 and 1997-2005. The study includes 278 cities with sufficient data on both the central city area and the suburban areas.
- U.S. Census data was used for 1990 to 2000 population growth and demographic data, while the American Community Survey was used for 2005, with city crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports.
- Census tract-level crime data was collected by Denver's Department of Public Safety via the Piton Foundation's community facts website and by the Cleveland police department via the Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change at Case Western's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Implications

- At the city and neighborhood level, crime reductions between 1992 and 2005 dramatically changed the geography of urban crime and typically reduced disparities in crime exposure among demographic groups.
- Greater crime reductions in central cities compared with suburbs may have increased cities' relative attractiveness, increasing the ability of central cities to retain middle-class, mobile households.