



The Latest Research

- **Donahue, John J. III, and Steven D. Levitt.** "The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime." National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 8004, November 2000. http://www.nber.org/papers/w8004.pdf?new_window=1.
- **Drum, Kevin.** "America's Real Criminal Element: Lead." *Mother Jones*, January–February 2013.
- **Mielke, Howard, and Sammy Zahran.** "The Urban Rise and Fall of Air Lead (Pb) and the Latent Surge and Retreat of Societal Violence." *Environment International* 43 (August 2012): 48–55.

Scholars continue to debate the causes of the crime drop that began in 1992. A decade and a half ago, *Freakonomics* coauthor Steven Levitt (along with John Donahue) startled readers with the argument that legalized abortion reduced crime. More recently, journalist Drum has drawn on research by Rick Nevin, Jessica Wolpaw Reyes, Howard Mielke, and Sammy Zahran to identify another external change that may have affected the crime rate—the removal of lead from gasoline in the 1970s. High exposure to lead is associated with lower IQs for children and a whole raft of behavioral problems. By introducing leaded gasoline in the 1940s and '50s, the argument goes, industry unwittingly exposed a broad swath of children to this dangerous element, increasing the likelihood of criminal activity. The crime drop in the 1990s occurred when a generation with less exposure to lead grew up.

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- **Zimring, Franklin.** *The City That Became Safe: New York's Lessons for Urban Crime and Its Control*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

The role of the police in the crime drop also remains controversial. This is particularly true of the NYPD. Politicians and police commissioners from Rudolph Giuliani and Bill Bratton to Michael Bloomberg and Ray Kelly have all pointed to police tactics as a primary cause of the crime decline (and a primary reason for the public to support them). Not surprisingly, skeptics have argued

that New York City's crime rate plummeted within weeks of Giuliani and Bratton's arrival. However, the most comprehensive examination of New York City's crime decline to date concludes that policing did play an important critical role. "The estimates of the independent impact of changes in policing in New York City exceed 30 percent for robbery and burglary, 20 percent for auto theft, and are also substantial for homicide and rape," Zimring writes. "Police make a difference."

- **Meares, Tracey, Tom Tyler, and Jacob Gardner.** "Lawful or Fair? How Cops and Laypeople View Good Policing." Yale Law School, Public Law Working Paper No. 255, August 11, 2014.

Mass incarceration and racial profiling have become hot-button issues, thanks largely to the mounting evidence that current imprisonment levels are not deterring crime but are instead turning entire communities against law enforcement. In response, academics have begun to explore the concept of procedural fairness. This paper draws on surprising research about court decisions finding that people's satisfaction with the court system hinged more on how they were treated than on the outcomes. Psychologist Tom Tyler called this "procedural fairness." Tyler's research has spawned a rapidly growing body of research into issues of fairness and legitimacy, one that has found that firsthand experiences of fairness increase civilians' belief that police authority is legitimate and enhance their willingness to cooperate.

- **Benson, Michael L., Leanne Fiftal Alarid, Velmer S. Burton, and Francis T. Cullen.** "Reintegration or Stigmatization? Offenders' Expectations of Community Re-Entry." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 39 (2011): 385–393.

A survey of 1,031 adult males convicted in Texas confounds expectations about whether ex-prisoners will feel stigmatized after serving their sentences. Although prior researchers had found that offenders experience the criminal justice system as degrading

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