

Factors Impacting Crime

Across the country, lawmakers and system stakeholders are looking for ways to respond to calls for crime reduction and increased public safety. Increasing penalties is often the response to increases in crime, but research has found that there are many outside factors that impact crime rates. To create and sustain low rates of violent and property crime, lawmakers should consider these drivers of crime and adopt meaningful responses.

↓ Significantly Reduces Crime

Access to Healthcare

Medicaid expansion has consistently been shown to reduce crime.¹

States that expanded Medicaid saw a 5.3% reduction in reported violent crimes and saved approximately \$4 billion.² Drug arrests decreased between 25-41% in states that expanded Medicaid.³ The availability of mental health treatment, addiction programs, and psychotropic medications also reduce crime.⁴

5.3%  **in reported violent crimes**

Access to Education

There is a consistent, positive relationship between crime reduction and education.⁵

Increasing high school graduation rates and average years in school can dramatically reduce crime rates.⁶ Education increases the likelihood of stable employment with higher wages and contributes to better reasoning skills and self-control.⁷

— Marginally Reduces Crime

Increased Police Presence

Increases in policing like heightening police visibility and hiring more officers has only marginal deterrent effects.¹¹

There is evidence that “hot spot” policing can reduce crime by concentrating officers on high-risk locations.¹²

Quality Employment

Studies have found that higher unemployment rates are linked to increases in property crimes.⁸

Gainful employment also reduces the likelihood of recidivism upon release, but a criminal history can severely restrict employment opportunities.⁹

Aging

Most people “age out” of crime and criminal behavior.

Experts agree that criminal behavior tends to peak between 18-25 and decrease steadily afterward. By age 32, the likelihood of criminal behavior is similar to someone who has not engaged in crime activity.

Reentry and Diversion Programs

Diversion programs, reentry programming, and community supervision all show promising results in terms of reducing recidivism and prison costs.¹⁰

✗ No Impact on Crime

Harsh Penalties

Increasing deterrents, mass incarceration, and lengthy sentences are not associated with crime reduction.¹³

There is evidence that the certainty of consequences has a modest deterrent effect,¹⁴ but that effect does not increase with the severity of consequences nor does it decrease as punishment is decreased.¹⁵