

Crime Surveys User Conference 2020

Research paper abstracts

1. The socioeconomic distribution of alcohol-related violence in England and Wales

Lucy Bryant, Institute of Alcohol Studies, and Carly Lightowlers, University of Liverpool

Inequalities in alcohol-related health harms have been repeatedly identified. However, the socioeconomic distribution of alcohol-related violence (violence committed by a person under the influence of alcohol) – and of subtypes such as alcohol-related domestic violence – remains under-examined. To examine this, data are drawn from nationally representative victimisation survey, the Crime Survey for England and Wales, from years 2013/14 to 2017/18. Socioeconomic status specific incidence and prevalence rates for alcohol-related violence (including subtypes domestic, stranger, and acquaintance violence) were created. Binomial logistic regressions were performed to test whether the likelihood of experiencing these incidents was affected by socioeconomic status when controlling for a range of pre-established risk factors associated with violence victimisation. Findings generally show lower socioeconomic groups experience higher prevalence rates of alcohol-related violence overall, and higher incidence and prevalence rates for alcohol-related domestic and acquaintance violence. Binomial logistic regression results show that the likelihood of experiencing these types of violence is affected by a person's socioeconomic status – even when other risk factors known to be associated with violence are held constant. Along with action to address environmental and economic drivers of socioeconomic inequality, provision of publicly funded domestic violence services should be improved, and alcohol pricing and availability interventions should be investigated for their potential to disproportionately benefit lower socioeconomic groups.

2. The Data First programme and opportunities for criminological and criminal justice research

Andromachi Tseloni, Nottingham Trent University

This presentation will introduce the Data First Programme, one of ADR UK's (Administrative Data Research UK) flagship programmes of work on crime and justice, led by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and overview its potential for criminological and criminal justice research in England and Wales.

[Data First](#) (DF), is an ambitious data-linking programme which aims to unlock the potential of the wealth of administrative data already created by MoJ via linking administrative datasets from across the justice system (criminal, family, civil). It involves data from MoJ's executive agencies, such as Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) – *internal linking*, as well as linking MoJ administrative data with data from other government departments - most notably, the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions - and Public Health – *external linking*. The ultimate goal of DF is for government and researchers to exploit the produced linked datasets in order to generate robust and independent evidence of what works and for whom in the justice domain. Such research-led knowledge would then enhance evidence-based policymaking.

3. Crime mapping and the dark figure of crime: Assessing the impact of police data bias on maps of crime produced at different spatial scales

Angelo Moretti and Samuel H. Langton, MMU, and David Buil-Gil, University of Manchester

Police-recorded crimes are the main source of data used by police forces to analyse crime patterns, study the spatial concentration of crime, and design strategies to prevent crime in places. However, crimes known to police are affected by unequal crime reporting rates across social groups and geographical areas. The proportion of crimes known to police may be smaller in some areas compared to others, thus affecting the accuracy of maps produced from police records. This paper analyses the impact of underreporting and police data bias on crime maps produced from police records at different spatial scales. Specifically, we assess whether crime maps produced at fine-grained aggregations are at a larger risk of bias compared to maps produced at coarser spatial units. Data from the UK Census 2011 and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) 2011/12 are used to generate a synthetic dataset of crimes known and unknown to police in Manchester, which allows investigation into the impact of police data bias on crime mapping. Based on Census parameters, we simulate a synthetic population consistent with the social-demographic and spatial characteristics of Manchester. Then, based on model parameters derived from the CSEW, we simulate crimes suffered by individuals across social groups and areas, and predict the likelihood of these crimes being known to police. This permits a comparison of the relative difference between all crimes and police-recorded crimes at the level of Output Areas, LSOAs, MSOAs and Wards. We find that when producing maps at medium-level geographies, the percentage of crimes known to police is similar in all areas, thus, the risk that police statistics under or overestimate crime rates in some areas more than others is small. At the micro-level, however, the percentage of crimes unknown to police varies considerably between areas.

4. The impact of measurement error in police crime records

Jose Pina-Sánchez, University of Leeds, Alexandru Cernat, University of Manchester, Ian Brunton-Smith, University of Surrey, and David Buil-Gil, University of Manchester

It is well known that the measurement properties of police crime records are deeply flawed. Underreporting of crime and recording inconsistencies across police forces are often pointed as two widespread problems, challenging estimations of the true figure of crime. Yet, police data is regularly used to explore the causes and consequences of crime. In particular, crime rates at different area levels are normally used in regression models exploring core theories in Criminology such as routine activity, or social disorganization theory. Here, we demonstrate how the way this data is used, if left unadjusted, will lead to large biases in the estimates of those regression models, questioning the validity of much of the literature on the field. Specifically, we illustrate the impact of the measurement error associated to victim underreporting and inconsistent recording practices, both algebraically and empirically (using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police.data.gov). We further demonstrate how the extent of the observed biases can be minimised using Bayesian adjustments, and simpler rules of thumb, provided we can estimate the nature and prevalence of the measurement error adequately enough.

5. Inequality in victimization trends in Scotland 2008/09-2017/18

Ben Matthews, Susan McVie and Paul Norris, University of Edinburgh

Many studies have shown that the burden of victimization is not equally shared across society. A number of studies have also identified a marked drop in crime rates in Western Europe and the USA since the 1990s, raising the question of whether inequality in victimization has increased or decreased over the course of the crime drop. We add to the literature examining change in victimization over the course of the crime drop by analysing victimization trends between 2008/09-2017/18 in the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. We argue that different ways victimization inequality has previously been measured - either with or without statistical adjustment for a person's other characteristics - map on to distinct policy areas related to the concepts of secondary and tertiary crime prevention. We use this distinction to inform our analysis, allowing us to describe victimization trends across multiple dimensions of inequality, including protected characteristics and socio-demographic characteristics, and also how this inequality relates to policies of reducing overall victimization (secondary prevention) and providing support to victims of crime (tertiary prevention). Our results show a varied picture of changing victimization across aspects of inequality. We see pronounced falls in victimization amongst young people, but increasing victimization inequality between those experiencing financial hardship and those with financial stability. We also show how our results describing change in victimization inequality we can help refine theoretical explanations of the crime drop, by identifying groups in society with diverging victimization trends.

6. Differences in Assault Victimization Incidence in England and Wales Prior and During the Crime-Drop Era

Eleftherios Nomikos, Andromachi Tseloni, and James Hunter, Nottingham Trent University

The extent to which the crime-drop has been equitable across different socioeconomic groups and crime-types has only recently begun occupying a small portion of the criminological thought. Most of the available international studies have focused on aggregated crime categories, such as violent, personal or property. Studies on individual crime types are lacking, especially in England and Wales, an acknowledged fact and empirical gap which was deemed necessary to fill by future studies. Simultaneously, literature on alternative explanatory hypotheses other than the Security Hypothesis are also lacking in empirical examination.

From the pre-crime drop era to now, immigration in the United Kingdom saw unprecedented yearly increases. The trends of which oppose the trajectory of the sharp crime declines observed during the decade of 1990. Surprisingly, ethnicity & immigration research in England and Wales is also sparse. Especially when immigration has been identified at least partially responsible for the crime-drop in the United States. The current study offers novel empirical perspectives on whether a) there was an equitable drop across different socioeconomic groups in assault victimisation risk, b) how has the victimisation risk changed for different ethnic minorities compared to the white majorities and c) whether immigration status as a single predictor as well as paired with other sociodemographic information indicates different victimisation risks from natives. Pooled sweeps of BCS & CSEW from prior, a decade and two decades after the crime-drop were utilised and statistically modelled in both Logit and Negative Binomial models in order to address the division between victims and non-victims as well as the number of incidents suffered. The results provide empirical and theoretical insights regarding the assault victimisation risk across socioeconomic groups, minorities & non-natives face and potential causes to their differences.

7. Political socialization: Analyzing age, period and cohort effects on worry about crime and disorder

Emily Gray; Maria Grasso; Will Jennings; Colin Hay and Stephen Farrall, University of Derby

Using insights from political science and generational modeling, this paper explores cohort-influenced aspects of the fear of crime and perceptions of public disorder using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (1982-2012). Individual ageing, socio-political contexts and generational membership are distinct temporal processes. These age, period and cohort (APC) effects are crucial to a robust understanding of the origins and shape of social change and its consequences (Mannheim, 1928). We explore how worry about crime and disorder in England and Wales were impacted by the political environment in which respondents experienced their 'formative years'. For example, we assess if those who grew up in the 1980s in England and Wales – an era of economic individualism and high-crime rates – were more likely to express anxiety about particular offences/activities than the political generations who came before and after them. Our results underline the theoretical significance of political socialization and the methodological relevance of time when exploring public perceptions of crime.

8. Does homeownership reduce crime? A radical housing reform from the UK

Matteo Sandi and Stephen Machin, LSE, Richard Disney, LSE, Institute for Fiscal Studies and University of Sussex, and John Gathergood, University of Nottingham

“Right to Buy” (RTB), a large-scale natural experiment by which incumbent tenants in public housing could buy properties at heavily-subsidised prices, increased the UK homeownership rate by over 10 percentage points between 1980 and the late 1990s. This paper studies its impact on crime, showing that RTB generated significant reductions in property and violent crime that persist up to today. The behavioural changes of incumbent tenants and the renovation of public properties were the main drivers of the crime reduction. This is evidence of a novel means by which subsidised homeownership and housing policy may contribute to reduce criminality.