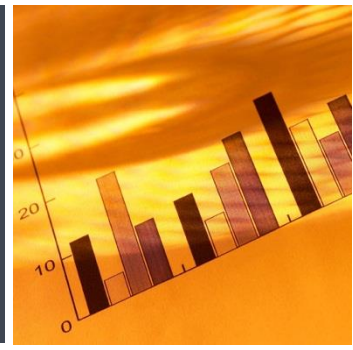


Monetary Cost of Criminal Trajectories



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BACKGROUND

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing interest in efforts to estimate the monetary costs of crime. This increase is likely the result of significant methodological advances and the increasing recognition that such information could be used to conduct cost-benefit analyses of crime reduction programs. Estimating the cost of criminal offending also helps justify investments in developmental crime prevention programs. Being able to gather strong estimates of crime will allow us to determine the cost benefit which is necessary for making evidence-based decisions when allocating scarce resources. As a result of a steady accumulation of cost estimates that have become available to researchers, it is now more efficient to derive high quality estimates across jurisdictions and with different populations.

The present report aims to contribute a Canadian perspective to existing literature on the cost of crime. The primary objective of the present study was to estimate the monetary cost of the crimes committed by a sample of 386 male offenders in Ontario. Estimates of the costs of crime associated with 7 subgroups of offenders, based on their longitudinal pattern of offending was used to provide a more detailed analysis.

Another objective was to add to the Canadian body of literature by replicating three studies of offence trajectories that have recently been conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

METHOD

Researchers from Ryerson University and the Ontario Correctional Institute utilized a detailed criminal history dataset, a 15 year follow-up period and a more extensive list of criminal types to allow for more precise calculations. The sample was derived from 386 male juvenile offenders who were sentenced in two

open custody facilities between January 1986 and December 1997. Costs were calculated for 7 criminal trajectory groups ranging from low persisters to moderate later persisters.

Offence trajectories were followed for an average of 16.4 years with the average age at the end of the follow-up period being 32 years of age. In the present study, offence costs were calculated for a uniform 15 year interval between ages 12 to 26.

Cost estimates were obtained and aggregated for areas related to victims, disposition-based correctional costs, police, court prosecution, legal and costs associated with undetected crimes. Published and grey literature sources were used to provide supporting information about victim costs, criminal justice system costs and undetected crimes.

FINDINGS

The aggregated cost of offending according to official convictions in court for the 386 males over the 15 year follow up interval was \$671 million. Victim costs accounted for \$182,602,699, correctional costs totaled \$122,179,765 and other criminal justice system costs amounted to \$366,539,294. The average cost per person is \$1.74 million over 15 years or \$115,945 per person per year.

Of the victim costs incurred by the sample, crimes involving violence accounted for the largest proportion of costs. Together, homicide, rape, serious assault, robbery and common assault accounted for 72% or \$131,473,943 of the total victim crime costs.

The most costly period was between the ages of 15 and 17 which accounted for forty percent of the total costs, not including the higher costs of undetected crimes. This finding reflects the high rate of criminal activity of this cohort during this period.

In the present study, federal costs accounted for one tenth of all correctional costs, yet offenders who spent time in federal custody alone, accrued substantially higher average costs of 4.55 million per person compared to 1.64 million per person in the provincial system.

IMPLICATIONS

Given that the highest aggregate cost of crime for this sample of males occurred between the ages of 15 and 17, investments in strategic prevention and early intervention programming have a high potential of offsetting the costs incurred.

Efforts to identify and implement evidence-based programs for children under the age of 12 years of age will reduce the amount of offenders that enter the criminal justice system. Evaluation studies conducted by both Public Safety Canada and Farrington et al have demonstrated that an evidence-based program for children under the age of 12 has been able to demonstrate that for every dollar spent up to five dollars is saved.

SOURCE

Day, David; Koegl, Christopher, *The Monetary Cost of Criminal Trajectories for an Ontario Sample of Offenders*, Public Safety Canada Report, 2014.

Smith-Moncrieffe, *Interim Evaluation Findings of the Stop Now and Plan Program*, Public Safety Canada, 2013.

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