



Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Criminological Highlights

The Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies, University of Toronto, gratefully acknowledges the Geoffrey Hinton Criminology Fund for funding this project.

Volume 22, Number 4

September 2025

Criminological Highlights is designed to provide an accessible look at some of the more interesting criminological research that is currently being published. Each issue contains “Headlines and Conclusions” followed by one-page summaries for 8 articles.

Criminological Highlights is prepared by Anthony Doob, Rosemary Gartner, Maria Jung, Tyler King, Jane Sprott and Danielle Van Wagner.

Criminological Highlights is available at www.crimhighlights.ca and directly by email.

Follow us on Bluesky where we link *Highlights* summaries with current news events:
<https://bsky.app/profile/crimhighlights.bsky.social>

This issue of *Criminological Highlights* addresses the following questions:

1. How can court-ordered therapeutic programs increase punishment?
2. Why does it matter if a homicide takes place near a police officer’s residence?
3. How does neighbourhood disadvantage account for differences in violence between racialized and non-racialized groups?
4. Does placing people in solitary confinement cause crime?
5. Is it worth explaining to automobile drivers why tickets for small speeding infractions make sense?
6. What can governments do to help those with criminal records get jobs?
7. Are electronically monitored community sentences more effective than imprisonment?
8. How can people be questioned in a manner that is likely to be perceived as being fair?

People who are accepted into court-mandated therapeutic programs but do not comply with all of the program requirements are “marked as noncompliant and channeled toward more punitive interventions.... By framing marginalized people as unwilling to accept help to improve themselves and their lives, state agencies can justify placing them under more coercive forms of control” (p. 114-5). Diversion from standard criminal justice processes can run the risk of increased punishment.

People are sorted by these diversion programs according to whether they are compliant with all of the conditions. “By framing marginalized people as unwilling to accept help to improve themselves and their lives, state agencies can justify placing them under more coercive forms of control” (p. 1115). The result is that program compliance is used to produce unequal legal outcomes where the most vulnerable receive the harshest outcomes.

..... Page 4

When a homicide takes place near a police officer’s home, White police officers are more likely to use force against Black pedestrians during the next week than they otherwise would have done had there not been a homicide in their own neighbourhood.

The study supports the view that discriminatory policing – in this case the use of force against Black pedestrians – is more prevalent after events that officers perceive as personal threats to their wellbeing or that of their families. The data show that White police officers in Chicago are especially sensitive to recent homicides that take place near their homes and that this sensitivity is evident in their use of force with Black pedestrians.

..... Page 5

The longer a youth is exposed to neighbourhood disadvantage in their first 9 years, the more likely the youth is to be involved in aggression and violence. Much of the observed difference across racialized groups in aggression and violence can be traced to the different lengths of time that these racialized groups, as youths, experience neighbourhood disadvantage.

Neighbourhood disadvantage, estimated for the youths’ first 9 years, was an important predictor of the youth’s aggression and self-reported violence. The findings also “reveal that prolonged exposure to neighbourhood disadvantage explains the Black-White disparity in aggression....” (p. 18). The findings also demonstrate that the measure of the total duration of the youth’s exposure to neighbourhood disadvantage was substantially better at predicting a youth’s aggression or self-reported violence than a simple “point in time” measure.

..... Page 6

Imposing solitary confinement on prisoners increases the likelihood that they will be reincarcerated after serving their sentences.

The results are consistent with other research showing the criminogenic impacts of solitary confinement. Though some correctional systems (e.g., Canada’s) might claim that its renamed solitary confinement system is not being used for punishment, the data suggest that both the prisoner, and society more generally, are being punished by solitary confinement. Prisoners who experience solitary confinement are more likely to be returned to prison than those who are not placed in solitary confinement. And society more generally suffers from the effects of solitary confinement because it increases the likelihood of various forms of misconduct in the community.

..... Page 7

Motor vehicle drivers do not like speed cameras that trigger the issuing of a speeding ticket to those exceeding speed limits by even small amounts. However, for drivers who are at least 25 years old, including a written explanation with the speeding offence notice stating that speed limits are set to reduce collisions (half of which involve cars exceeding the limit by less than 10 km/hour) had a positive effect: it reduced repeat speeding convictions in the next year by 11%.

The study demonstrates that a short explanation concerning the social value of obeying speed limits can have an effect in promoting safe driving. Because individual drivers were randomly assigned to receive or not receive the explanatory letter, it is unlikely that the effect had anything to do with deterrence. Obviously, it is not known exactly which aspects of the letter caused the reduction in reoffending. Hence jurisdictions interested in reducing traffic violations using similar techniques would need to test, experimentally, their own communications in order to be confident of their effects.

..... Page 8

Society benefits from allowing people with criminal records to get jobs. Governments can easily make it more likely that people with criminal records will get jobs.

Each of these experiments demonstrated that providing a financial incentive to an employer for hiring a person with a criminal record or providing an employer with insurance against any losses associated with hiring a former offender would increase the likelihood that a job applicant with a criminal record would be hired. The procedure of offering modest compensation to an employer who hires someone with a criminal record was clearly the most effective approach. The US federal program, however, has various serious restrictions on it (e.g., it only can be used within one year of conviction or release from prison).

..... Page 9

The use of an electronic monitored sentence served in the community as a complete substitute for prison sentences of up to six months reduces offenders' reconviction rate.

It is in the public interest to assist offenders to integrate into the community and to increase their labor market participation. Using electronic monitoring as a mechanism to avoid imprisonment, according to this study, can accomplish those goals while also reducing offending and victimization. In Sweden the daily cost of imprisonment is approximately US\$220 compared to a daily cost of US\$46 for electronic monitoring. There appear to be both crime and cost benefits of using electronic monitoring rather than imprisonment.

..... Page 10

People are often required to answer questions put to them by police or other public officials. Giving people a chance to present their own narrative of events, rather than simply answering specific questions that are put to them, increases the likelihood that they will believe they have been treated fairly.

The manner in which the state makes decisions about individual citizens is important. In routine situations like this one – where an applicant is applying for a welfare payment – or in situations where a police officer is questioning a citizen about a routine matter (e.g., a traffic infraction), inviting the citizen to provide their perspective on factors that should be considered appears to be important, whether or not the decision ultimately is the one that the citizen might have wanted. *Procedural* justice appears to be an important dimension in how people evaluate state decisions that directly affect their lives.

..... Page 11

People who are accepted into court-mandated therapeutic programs but do not comply with all of the program requirements are “marked as noncompliant and channeled toward more punitive interventions.... By framing marginalized people as unwilling to accept help to improve themselves and their lives, state agencies can justify placing them under more coercive forms of control” (p. 114-5). Diversion from standard criminal justice processes can run the risk of increased punishment.

Many accused people are diverted into diversion programs that replace formal punishments (e.g., imprisonment) with therapeutic programs (e.g., drug treatment programs). This paper examines this practice to determine what can happen to vulnerable people who don't fully comply with program requirements.

The paper examines a primarily outpatient felony pretrial diversion program in an urban area in the US south. The program was seen as employing best practices for such programs. As part of the study, diversion participants were either interviewed (n=50) or observed in their therapy sessions (n=92). Participation in therapeutic groups – typically after a guilty plea – was required by the program as were other more specific requirements (e.g., drug testing). Non-compliance typically resulted in the return of the participant to the “normal” criminal justice system for sentencing. In these situations, the person was marked as being “noncompliant and [was pushed] toward more punitive interventions” (p. 1126). The study noted, however, that “The people marked for punishment are overwhelming those in need of mental healthcare, Black, and poor” (p. 1127). In other words, groups that are especially vulnerable to harsh treatment by the justice system tend to get harsh treatment by programs designed to be diversions from the justice system.

Some of the most common reasons for removing people from the treatment (diversion) program were the need for mental health treatment, failure to take

drug tests, and the inability to pay for the program costs (which were not always predictable). Treatment providers often added requirements (e.g., more drug tests or treatment) to those who appeared to be non-compliant. The result is that if program participants were sent back to the criminal justice system, they often appeared to have been non-compliant in multiple ways.

“This study... found that state agencies frame noncompliance with standard [therapeutic program] performance demands as a signal that an individual is unwilling to change their own behaviour and thus requires more coercive state [criminal justice] control. But because successful compliance is largely defined by health, financial resources, and – in many cases – institutional trust, the most vulnerable individuals *cannot* submit, despite their best efforts. Their noncompliance then becomes the grounds for punitive state action, as those individuals are channeled toward more coercive forms of intervention” (p. 1135). Noncompliant people were seen as “not just [being] unable to govern themselves but [being] unwilling to change and – in consequence – in need of more coercive control” (p. 1136).

“This study suggests that situating healthcare [for people caught up in the criminal justice system] within agencies that require clients to comply with rigid sets of requirements in order to continue to receive services can increase the precarity of people who are sick” (p. 1138).

Conclusion: People are sorted by these diversion programs according to whether they are compliant with all of the conditions. “By framing marginalized people as unwilling to accept help to improve themselves and their lives, state agencies can justify placing them under more coercive forms of control” (p. 1115). The result is that program compliance is used to produce unequal legal outcomes where the most vulnerable receive the harshest outcomes.

Reference: Stitt, Mary Ellen (2025). Adjudication Under Cover: Compliance and Inequality in the Criminal Courts. *American Journal of Sociology*, 130(5), 1113-1149.

When a homicide takes place near a police officer's home, White police officers are more likely to use force against Black pedestrians during the next week than they otherwise would have done had there not been a homicide in their own neighbourhood.

In many US cities, police officers' residences are concentrated in highly segregated neighbourhoods. Given that "people ascribe symbolic meanings to the places they live, and these places can shape their personal identity and sense of belonging" (p. 1395), it would not be surprising to find that violence near a police officer's home would affect the manner in which they interact with citizens.

Given the importance of race in policing in the US, it is not surprising that previous research has suggested that "Police officers may be particularly sensitive to feelings of racial threat and – perhaps most importantly – uniquely positioned to act on them" (p. 1398). Previous research has shown that "perceptions of disorder in Chicago [the location of this research] are more strongly associated with the racial and ethnic composition of the neighbourhood than readily observed signs of disorder" (p. 1401). Violence near one's home may also be seen as a violation of an important boundary: the racialized *disorder* of the outside world and the *order* of one's own residential space.

To test whether homicides near a Chicago police patrol officer's residence had an impact on their dealing with civilians, data were collected from four sources: (1) demographic data on police officers, (2) a record of the location of their daily work assignments, (3) records of arrests, stops and use-of-force incidents, and (4) location of all homicides and nonfatal shootings. Police officers' home addresses were obtained (for 80% of the officers) by matching them with voting records. "The

racial patterning of officer residences mirrors the broader racial and ethnic segregation that characterizes Chicago's residential landscape" (p. 1410). Whites and Blacks are disproportionately likely to live in areas with higher portions of people of their own racial groups.

In the weeks immediately before the occurrence of a homicide in a police officer's residential neighbourhood, there were no differences between the rate of the occurrence of a use-of-force incident for Black, Hispanic, and White officers. However, in the week or two immediately after the occurrence a homicide in a police officer's residential neighbourhood, the data show that "White officers are significantly more likely to use force against Black civilians for the [first two weeks] that follow a homicide within one-eighth of a mile of the [police officer's] home" (p. 1420). The data also demonstrate that "the closer a White officer lives to a homicide, the more likely they are to engage in force against Black pedestrians during their shifts for the following week" (p. 1422) even though, of course, they may not be working in their own neighbourhoods. However, a nearby homicide had no

effect on officers' likelihood of arresting or stopping Black pedestrians. The effect was limited to the use of force. The study did not find "any evidence that Hispanic or Black officers who were exposed to a nearby homicide are more likely than their unexposed counterparts to use force against pedestrians" (p. 1421).

Conclusion: The study supports the view that discriminatory policing – in this case the use of force against Black pedestrians – is more prevalent after events that officers perceive as personal threats to their wellbeing or that of their families. The data show that White police officers in Chicago are especially sensitive to recent homicides that take place near their homes and that this sensitivity is evident in their use of force with Black pedestrians.

Reference: Donahue, Samuel Thomas and Gerard Torrats-Espinosa (2025). From the Block to the Beat: How Violence in Officers' Neighbourhoods Influences Racially Biased Policing. *American Journal of Sociology*, 130(6), 1394-1434.

The longer a youth is exposed to neighbourhood disadvantage in their first 9 years, the more likely the youth is to be involved in aggression and violence. Much of the observed difference across racialized groups in aggression and violence can be traced to the different lengths of time that these racialized groups, as youths, experience neighbourhood disadvantage.

Although there is a fair amount of research on the impact of neighbourhood disadvantage on offending (e.g., *Criminological Highlights* 9(6)#6, 11(6)#8, 22(3)#3), much of this work does not include estimates of the total proportion of a youth's life that is spent in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. This paper looks at the portion of a youth's life, before age 9, that was spent in a disadvantaged neighbourhood and relates this to their caregiver's rating of their level of aggression and their own self-reported violence.

The effects of neighbourhood disadvantage on violence are important for another reason: Recent studies, for example, "indicate that ethnoracial disparities in violence are reduced once concentrated disadvantage is held constant" (p. 3). "Disadvantaged neighbourhoods have fewer institutional resources, such as quality schools... and employment opportunities (p. 4). Hence, it would not be surprising to find that observed differences across racialized groups would completely or largely disappear once neighbourhood disadvantage is controlled for.

This study uses data from a longitudinal study of 4,898 children born between 1998 and 2000 in 20 large US cities. Primary caregivers were interviewed regularly. Neighbourhood disadvantage data were collected from US census data in 2000 and 2010 and estimates were made as to how much each youth had lived in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. The neighbourhood disadvantage index was a composite of 7 indicators involving such factors as unemployment, poverty, education, and concentration

of vacant housing. A measure of the youth's aggression (e.g., does the child bully others, get into fights, attack others) was obtained from the primary caregiver when the youth was age 15. In addition, (also at age 15) the youth's self-report of violent behaviour (e.g., getting into a serious fight, using a weapon) was obtained. Various control factors (e.g., sex, mother's age at youth's birth, mother's education, family structure, household income) were included in the statistical models.

The results showed that Black youths' aggression (measured with reports from parents and youths at age 15) was higher than the measures relating to White youth's behaviour. However, the difference in the parents' reports of White and Black youths disappeared when the estimate of the total neighbourhood disadvantage the youth had experienced was taken into account. It would appear that the differences between groups was explained by the experience of neighbourhood disadvantage rather than race. For the youth's self-reported aggression, the impact of race was substantially reduced

when neighbourhood disadvantage was included in the model, but it was still statistically significant. Findings for Hispanic youths were similar, but not completely the same.

Conclusion: Neighbourhood disadvantage, estimated for the youths' first 9 years, was an important predictor of the youth's aggression and self-reported violence. The findings also "reveal that prolonged exposure to neighbourhood disadvantage explains the Black-White disparity in aggression..." (p. 18). The findings also demonstrate that the measure of the total duration of the youth's exposure to neighbourhood disadvantage was substantially better at predicting a youth's aggression or self-reported violence than a simple "point in time" measure.

Reference: Bellair, Paul E., Thomas L. McNulty, and Daniel L. Carlson (2025). The Significance of Duration Weighted Neighbourhood Effects for Violent Behaviour and Explanation of Ethnoracial Differences. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 41, 1-22.

Imposing solitary confinement on prisoners increases the likelihood that they will be reincarcerated after serving their sentences.

It is well established that prisoners who have mental health challenges are more likely than other prisoners to serve time in solitary confinement. It is also well established that solitary confinement itself has harmful effects on those placed in those units (*Criminological Highlights*, 20(3)5, 20(4)#3, 19(6)#4). This paper examines a related question: Are prisoners who spend time in solitary confinement more likely than others to be reincarcerated?

One of the challenges in determining the likelihood of reincarceration is that those who serve time in solitary confinement (regardless of what sanitized name is used for it – structured intervention, segregation, restricted housing, etc.) may be more likely to be held until the end of their sentence rather than being released on some form of conditional release (e.g., parole). The effect of not getting conditional release is, of course, that they are not receiving the same degree of supervision and surveillance as those released on some form of parole prior to the end of their sentences. Hence those who experience solitary confinement may be less likely to be reincarcerated simply because the level of surveillance they receive soon after they are released is less than that experienced by prisoners released on some form of parole.

This paper examines the impact of solitary confinement in Pennsylvania prisons on re-imprisonment controlling not only for various standard individual characteristics (e.g., age, race, mental illness, initial offence, “risk” scores, time in prison, misconduct in prison), but also controlling for the nature of the prisoner’s release back into the community (receiving parole supervision or not). For prisoners who were charged with prison misconduct, two groups were created: those who experienced solitary confinement and those who did not. For those who were never charged

with prison misconduct, two separate groups were also created: those who spent time in administrative segregation (e.g., because of threats to themselves or threats they made to others) and those who were never placed in solitary confinement. These groups were then each divided into those who were released on parole (and therefore were being monitored in the community) and those who were released without criminal justice supervision.

The confounding effects of parole were evident in the findings. As expected, those who experienced either form of segregation were less likely to be released on parole. But also those being supervised on parole (whether or not they had experienced solitary confinement) were more likely to be re-imprisoned.

The results of the effects of solitary confinement were straightforward and consistent across groups (those in administrative or disciplinary segregation and those who were released on parole or not). Prisoners who experienced either form of solitary confinement (administrative or disciplinary) were more likely to be re-incarcerated and were likely to be reincarcerated sooner than those who had not spent time in solitary confinement. Simply put, time in solitary confinement led to increased likelihood of reincarceration. But in addition, “the risks of re-imprisonment are especially

high for those held in isolation for longer periods of time – greater than 90 days” (p. 9). Furthermore, the effects of solitary confinement on the “administrative” sample were stronger than the effects of solitary confinement on those with misconduct charges.

Conclusion: The results are consistent with other research showing the criminogenic impacts of solitary confinement. Though some correctional systems (e.g., Canada’s) might claim that its renamed solitary confinement system is not being used for punishment, the data suggest that both the prisoner, and society more generally, are being punished by solitary confinement. Prisoners who experience solitary confinement are more likely to be returned to prison than those who are not placed in solitary confinement. And society more generally suffers from the effects of solitary confinement because it increases the likelihood of various forms of misconduct in the community.

Reference: Anderson, Claudia N., J. Ben-Menachem, S. Donahue, J.T. Simes & B. Western (2025). Solitary Confinement, Parole, and Criminalization. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 98.

Motor vehicle drivers do not like speed cameras that trigger the issuing of a speeding ticket to those exceeding speed limits by even small amounts. However, for drivers who are at least 25 years old, including a written explanation with the speeding offence notice stating that speed limits are set to reduce collisions (half of which involve cars exceeding the limit by less than 10 km/hour) had a positive effect: it reduced repeat speeding convictions in the next year by 11%.

Most road policing initiatives are based on deterrence notions: drivers will obey the law if they perceive they will be caught if they commit an offence. In contrast, this paper examines a different approach to reducing driving offences: providing drivers who have committed an offence with an explanation of the value of the law that is being enforced will encourage them to obey that law.

In Queensland, Australia, the reoffending of over 16,000 drivers who received camera-detected notices of a speed infringement in 2017 was examined. Before the notice of the offence was sent to the driver, the cases were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Everyone received the standard infringement notice. But half of them got an additional letter with the heading “No driver means to kill. They were just going too fast.” This one-page letter explained that “Almost half of all serious speed-related crashes happen at less than 10 km/hour above the speed limit.” It further explained that the limits “take into account the history of crashes in the area” (Appendix A). The others received just their infringement notice.

The study looked at the driving records for these drivers for the 12 months before and after the experiment was implemented. The driving records were divided between speeding offences and other ordinary traffic offences (e.g., failing to stop at a stop sign or traffic light). Drivers were separated into two groups: those under 25 years old and

those 25 years old or older. The gender of the driver and whether they were low or high risk (zero or one offence in the previous year vs. 2 or more offences in the previous year) were included as control factors in the analyses. Male drivers and those classified as “high risk” were, not surprisingly, more likely to reoffend.

The most important finding of the study, however, was that including the explanation of the importance of speed limits reduced subsequent speeding-reoffending by 11% for those drivers who were 25 years old or older. Obviously, this reduction in speeding offences cannot be attributed to “deterrence” since both those who received the letter explaining the importance of speed limits and those who did not were punished by the offence that they originally committed.

Providing the explanation had no effect for young drivers (those under 25 years old). In addition, there was no effect of the letter on other driving offences. This last finding is not surprising since the communication that drivers received focused solely on speeding offences.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that a short explanation concerning the social value of obeying speed limits can have an effect in promoting safe driving. Because individual drivers were randomly assigned to receive or not receive the explanatory letter, it is unlikely that the effect had anything to do with deterrence. Obviously, it is not known exactly which aspects of the letter caused the reduction in reoffending. Hence jurisdictions interested in reducing traffic violations using similar techniques would need to test, experimentally, their own communications in order to be confident of their effects.

Reference: Bates, Lundel, Sarah Bennett, Claire Irvine, Emma Antrobus, & John Gilmour (2025). A Procedurally Just Flyer Reduces Subsequent Speeding Offences: Evidence from the Queensland Speeding Engagement Trial (QSET). *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 21, 201-217.

Society benefits from allowing people with criminal records to get jobs. Governments can easily make it more likely that people with criminal records will get jobs.

“People with criminal records struggle to get jobs... even though their employment would benefit their lives as well as society more broadly.... Employment difficulties resulting from past convictions disproportionately impact Americans of colour... contributing to racial inequality” (p. 210). This paper demonstrates that the stigma of a criminal record when a person seeks employment can be reduced.

In this study, people across the US who had input on hiring decisions in organizations participated in a survey in which the effect of various “incentives” was examined to see which of these incentives would help overcome the impact of a criminal record. Respondents to the survey were given information about job applicants and were asked which ones they would consider hiring. Some of these applicants were described as having criminal records. In the first experiment, the respondents in the control group were simply told that some had criminal records and some did not. The remaining survey respondents were divided into three groups. They were told one of three things: (1) the employer would receive a \$2400 tax credit for each person hired who had a criminal record, (2) the employer would be insured for up to \$25,000 for losses related to employee dishonesty, or (3) there was to be a statutory restriction on negligent-hiring lawsuits where an employee who was hired had a felony conviction. The applicants varied on a number of dimensions. Not surprisingly, people with relevant work experience were more likely to be hired as were applicants with more education or a recommendation letter. In general, applicants with a criminal record were less likely to be hired.

However, offering potential employers a \$2400 tax credit for hiring someone with a criminal record increased substantially that person’s chances of being hired. The offer of employee-dishonesty insurance had some effect, but the restriction on lawsuits was completely ineffective.

In the second experiment, employers were told that they were looking at the applications of people who had been tentatively hired, but who then were required to reveal any criminal records they might have to the potential employer. Various aspects of the criminal record – e.g., multiple convictions, recent convictions – made a difference. In addition, applicants with state issued “rehabilitation certificates” were more likely to be hired. As in the first experiment, if the employer was told that they would receive a tax credit for hiring someone with a record, they were considerably more likely to hire the person. Once again providing the employer with insurance against employee offending was also effective, but the lawsuit restriction had no impact on whether or not the applicant was hired.

Conclusions: Each of these experiments demonstrated that providing a financial incentive to an employer for hiring a person with a criminal record or providing an employer with insurance against any losses associated with hiring a former offender would increase the likelihood that a job applicant with a criminal record would be hired. The procedure of offering modest compensation to an employer who hires someone with a criminal record was clearly the most effective approach. The US federal program, however, has various serious restrictions on it (e.g., it only can be used within one year of conviction or release from prison).

Reference: Bushway, Shawn D. & Justin T. Pickett (2025). Direct Incentives May Increase Employment of People with Criminal Records. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 24, 209-236.

The use of an electronic monitored sentence served in the community as a complete substitute for prison sentences of up to six months reduces offenders' reconviction rate.

There are at least two ways in which electronic monitoring (EM) has been evaluated. First, people have examined whether *adding* electronic monitoring to a community sentence (as a way of tracking where the offender might be) has any effect on reoffending. Second, researchers have studied whether sentences involving a community sentence with EM have different outcomes than ordinary prison sentences.

There is little evidence to suggest that adding EM to an ordinary community sentence is likely to provide any useful benefit, such as reduced reoffending (e.g., *Criminological Highlights* 3(2)#4, 4(3)#7, 19(1)#8). However, in cases where the imposition of EM has been used as a justification for additional community sentences rather than imprisonment, there is some favourable evidence (14(6)#5, 17(1)#6, 20(1)#3).

This study examines the effects of a 2005 change in the law in Sweden that allowed for substituting EM for sentences of imprisonment of 3-6 months. Decisions on whether EM was appropriate were made by correctional officers, not judges, after the judge had sentenced the offender to prison. The study examines the effect of EM (rather than imprisonment) on offenders who had been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for 3-6 months. Such offenders, if they qualified (e.g., they had not been in pretrial detention, they did not live with one of their victims, they were involved in work or an education program, they had an approved residence where all residents have consented to the offender living in the home with EM), were offered EM as a substitute for the prison sentence they received from the judge.

Although only about 23% of these offenders (sentenced to 3-6 months of prison) received releases on EM instead of prison, a conservative decision was made to consider all of those originally receiving 3-6 month sentences as the "treatment" group. Those sentenced to 2-3 months were the comparison group. Again, this would appear to be a conservative decision since, if anything, those sentenced to 2-3 months are likely to have been less serious offenders. It is important to note that the change in the law did not affect the sentence lengths imposed by the judges.

Those sentenced to 3-6 months in prison, some of whom were released to the community on EM rather than serving prison sentences, were less likely to be reconvicted and reincarcerated within 1, 3, and 10 years. Being eligible for EM appeared also to reduce labour market exclusion 1 and 3 years after conviction. The comparison group used for these analyses were those sentenced to 3 months or less. The effects of the reform encouraging release into the community with EM rather than imprisonment was not large: a reduction of about 3% in offending after one and ten years. Perhaps what is more important is that there was *no* indication of any *increase* in

reoffending as a result of the change in the law allowing offenders to serve their sentences in the community (with EM) rather than in prison.

Conclusion: It is in the public interest to assist offenders to integrate into the community and to increase their labor market participation. Using electronic monitoring as a mechanism to avoid imprisonment, according to this study, can accomplish those goals while also reducing offending and victimization. In Sweden the daily cost of imprisonment is approximately US\$220 compared to a daily cost of US\$46 for electronic monitoring. There appear to be both crime and cost benefits of using electronic monitoring rather than imprisonment.

Reference: Al Weswasi, Enes & Olof Bäckman (2025). The Effects of Replacing Incarceration with Electronic Monitoring on Crime, Mortality, and Labor Market Exclusion. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 41, 135-172.

People are often required to answer questions put to them by police or other public officials. Giving people a chance to present their own narrative of events, rather than simply answering specific questions that are put to them, increases the likelihood that they will believe they have been treated fairly.

People often have to answer questions about why they have done things. Often, however, they are not given an opportunity to express, in their own words, why they have acted the way they have. This paper suggests that assessments of procedural justice increase when people are allowed to explain things in their own way.

Previous research has shown that when police give suspects a chance to tell their side of the story of the offence they are accused of, there is less reoffending. Similarly, being treated in a manner that is seen as fair – quite independent of the actual outcome of a case – increases the likelihood that youths will see the criminal justice system as being fair (*Criminological Highlights*, 1(1)#2), 11(5)#1). Said differently, it is not just the outcome that is important to people who have contact with those in authority; procedural fairness in the manner in which an outcome is determined also affects how people view the outcome and perhaps how they behave afterwards.

In this study, people were asked to evaluate a procedure involving ordinary citizens who were applying for a special welfare payment to help pay their utility bills. For half of the participants in this experiment, the application form being assessed consisted only of a series of predictable questions, such as the applicant's income, their rent and related expenditures, their childcare expenses, the size of their household, how long they had lived in the community, etc. For the other half of the participants, the application form was exactly the same

except it had a specific section in which applicants were offered the opportunity to “provide any further information you would like to support your application” (p. 91). This did not have a word limit. Respondents were then asked to provide their views of the application process by indicating whether they thought the application process was fair, dignified, and user-friendly, and whether the form treated the applicant “as a person, not just a case to be processed” (p. 94).

Those assessing the procedure that included the section encouraging applicants to provide their own narrative of why they should receive the benefit saw the application procedure as more fair, etc. Comments from the participants indicated they thought that it was important for those making decisions to have details that *applicants* thought might be important, not just those details that the organization had identified. It is important to note that it was the *procedure* – not the outcome – that was being evaluated. It is likely that procedures that encouraged decision makers to listen to the words of applicants are important determinants of perceived fairness.

Conclusion: The manner in which the state makes decisions about individual citizens is important. In routine situations like this one – where an applicant is applying for a welfare payment – or in situations where a police officer is questioning a citizen about a routine matter (e.g., a traffic infraction), inviting the citizen to provide their perspective on factors that should be considered appears to be important, whether or not the decision ultimately is the one that the citizen might have wanted. *Procedural* justice appears to be an important dimension in how people evaluate state decisions that directly affect their lives.

Reference: Meers, Jed, Aisling Ryan & Joe Tomlinson (2025). Perceptions of Procedural Fairness and Space for Personal Narrative: An Experimental Study of Form Design. *Journal of Law & Society*, 52, 81-111.