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Impacts of crime and violence

The impacts of crime and violence are multidimensional. Apart from injury and death, victims of crime and violence suffer long-lasting psychological trauma and subsequently live with the fear of crime. At the national level, crime and violence are impediments to foreign investment, contribute to capital flight and brain drain and hinder international tourism.

- **After the 9/11 attack, the total labour and capital loss** in monetary terms to New York City as of June 2002 amounted to between US\$33 and US\$36 billion.
- The effects of terrorism on cities in developing countries are likely to be exacerbated by high levels of poverty, rapid pace of urbanization and unplanned expansion of cities, as well as the inability to effectively respond to, and recover after severe terrorist attacks.
- Findings from **Latin America show that the financial burden of violence** is equivalent to 25 per cent of the GDP in Colombia and El Salvador, 12 per cent in Mexico and Venezuela, 11 per cent in Brazil and 5 per cent in Peru.
- **Crime** negatively affects economic and health systems at the national and regional levels. It has been identified as an impediment to foreign investment and a **cause of “capital flight” and “brain drain”**.
- The local impacts of crime and violence include the flight of population and businesses from central city locations. There is also evidence that rising levels of crime tend to depress property values – an important economic variable bearing on investment decisions and the creation of wealth.
- In Jamaica, high levels of homicide have adversely affected tourism and contributed to brain drain. At the local level, crime and violence result in the stigmatization of neighbourhoods or even entire sections of the city. Such areas become “no-go” zones and eventually lose out in terms of investment or provision of infrastructure and public services.
- The impact of robberies and burglaries in cities of developing countries manifests in the growing demand for private security and the proliferation of gated communities. In **South Africa, for instance, the number of private security guards has increased by 150 per cent since 1997**. The increased privatization of security and public space is an indication of the loss of confidence in the ability of the relevant authorities to cope with the growing levels of crime and violence.
- According to the World Bank, **corruption is the largest single obstacle to development**. In Africa, corruption is perceived to be even more important than other types of crime and violence as a disincentive to entrepreneurial investment. Corruption subverts the ability of governments and city authorities to provide fair municipal services by distorting planning and allocation processes.
- For people **between the ages of 14 and 44, violence has been identified as a major cause of death**, and in some distressed communities it is the primary cause of mortality of young people.
- The impacts of crime on urban society are also manifested in damage to buildings and infrastructure. Together, these costs represent a significant, albeit incalculable, economic loss worldwide.



- **Impacts of intimate partner violence and child abuse are varied** and include destruction of social and human capital and contribute to the rising numbers of street families and children in transitional and developing nations. Many women who are victims of domestic violence not only experience negative physical and psychological effects, but are also affected financially due to lost productivity from paid work, medical care costs, mental healthcare costs, property loss and legal costs.
- **Abused children and those who grow up in violent family settings** stand a much greater risk of becoming offenders than those who have not had such experiences. Furthermore, abused children often perform poorly in school, thereby adversely affecting their lifetime opportunities. Thus, the impacts of intimate partner violence and child abuse violence reverberate across time and affect the overall prospects of families and communities for generations.
- The impact of the widespread **availability of arms** on cities is variable. In some nations, such as the US, legal gun ownership is widely dispersed throughout urban neighbourhoods, while in the UK, legal gun ownership is far more restricted. In Brazil, gun ownership is relatively restricted among the general population but some dangerous favelas have significant numbers of small arms that are illegally purchased, pilfered from government arsenals or traded among drug gangs. Generally, the use of both legal and illicit firearms in the commission of violent crime is more likely to take place in, or adjacent to, distressed low income neighbourhoods rather than high-income areas. Such incidents tend to increase compartmentalization and the segregation of the former neighbourhoods as a result of fear generated by perceptions and realities of gun crime.
- **Street children are both victims and perpetrators of crime in cities** due to survival needs and exposure to cultures of violence, including deviant peer behaviour. There is evidence that their increasing numbers in some cities are related to trafficking and organized crime. For instance, a study on beggars in Bangkok (Thailand) revealed an organized racket of child beggars built on children from poor families trafficked from Cambodia and Burma, who are forced to beg by their brokers. The children make nothing from their takings and are sometimes beaten. This example highlights the economic exploitation of street children, and implies that the growth in the number of street children has an economic dimension.
- Beyond the incalculable costs **to trafficked individuals**, who are denied their basic human rights, there are health and urban service costs to cities that can only be approximated. For example, human trafficking greatly increases prospects for prostitution and sex tourism, especially in large cities where rural women and girls are often transported by traffickers.

Such activities hasten the spread of disease and crimes associated with the sex industry. Human trafficking also increases the costs of policing and the provision of social services and threatens the building of human and social capital by destabilizing families.