



How Does Prison Reentry Affect Neighborhoods?

High concentrations of prisoner reentry into low income communities increases perceptions of the law as unworthy of respect, even among those never imprisoned.

HOUSTON, TEXAS, UNITED STATES, May 11, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Higher concentrations of prisoner reentry into low income communities increases the level of neighborhood legal cynicism or perceptions of the law as not worthy of respect or critical in making decisions -- even among those who have never been to prison, research published in the May Issue of "[Social Problems](#)," a flagship social science journal, shows.

The ways in which neighborhood residents view police and the legal system have significant repercussions for society. Because legal cynicism is linked to higher levels of violence, the study brings to light an essential component in the vicious cycle of prison recidivism.

The United States has the largest prison population in the world, and it is growing. Researchers are starting to uncover some of the more profound and troubling effects of mass incarceration for the families and communities affected. The disproportionate release of former prisoners to particular neighborhoods damages their residents' esteem for the law, research shows.

Through statistical analysis of data on the concentration of prison reentry in Chicago neighborhoods and the attitudes and beliefs of residents, David S. Kirk (Oxford University) shows an important aspect of how incarceration affects the culture of communities. Lack of housing and economic opportunities and a desire to stay connected to friends and family often means that former prisoners have no choice but to concentrate in certain neighborhoods.

While prior research shows that the experience of incarceration can decrease a former prisoner's respect for the law, the study shows how "this clustering facilitates the contagious spread of legal cynicism among residents of a neighborhood".

The author notes that "it is imperative to contemplate how to restore positive perceptions of the law and the criminal justice system." Some important policy implications of this study are the need to provide more housing opportunities for former prisoners outside of underprivileged neighborhoods and to reduce the use of incarceration in the United States as a means of violence and crime control.

For further information, please contact Kasey Henricks at khenricks@luc.edu. The article, "[Prisoner Reentry and the Reproduction of Legal Cynicism](#)," appears in the May 2016 Issue of [Social Problems](#).

[Social Problems](#) is the official publication of The Society for the Study of Social Problems and one of the most widely respected and read professional journals in the social sciences. This quarterly journal presents accessible, relevant, and innovative articles that uphold critical perspectives on contemporary social issues. For additional commentary, you can follow the journal on [Twitter](#).

Kasey Henricks
Social Problems
4233649251

email us here

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