Study finds increased education lowers crime

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New research from The CIBC Centre for Human Capital and Productivity at The University of Western Ontario shows that education, and related education-based initiatives, can reduce crime rates, improve health, lower mortality rates, and increase political participation.

The findings were released today in a new policy brief titled "The Impacts of Education on Crime, Health and Mortality, and Civic Participation," which was authored by Western economics professor and CIBC Center Director Lance Lochner.

"The social benefits from crime and mortality reduction appear to be sizeable," says Lochner. "For example, estimates suggest that increasing the high school graduation rate in the United States in 1990 would have resulted in nearly 100,000 fewer crimes, providing an annual benefit valued at more than $2 billion. Social benefits from reductions in mortality are likely to be of similar magnitude."

Estimated benefits from crime reduction are similar in the United States and Europe while estimated effects of education on health, mortality, and political participation appear to be weaker in Europe.

"The strongest case for government action is based on education's effects on crime due to its significant externalities," adds Lochner. "In terms of crime reduction, policies that increase high school completion rates or that improve school quality and early childhood learning opportunities, especially in disadvantaged communities, are likely to be more successful than policies aimed at increasing college and university

attendance."

Provided by University of Western Ontario