

New study supports link between inequality and crime

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Compelling new evidence of a link between inequality and crime in England invites reconsideration of the individualistic 'tough on crime' stances of recent New Labour and Conservative governments - according to an article in the latest issue of the journal *Social Policy and Society*.

The research by Dr. Adam Whitworth from the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield analyses Home Office 2002-2009 data for [burglary](#), [robbery](#), [violence](#), vehicle [crime](#) and criminal damage at sub-national level across England against a range of factors including inequality, [unemployment](#), residential turnover and educational achievement. After controlling for other factors the results suggest that inequality is significantly and positively associated with increased levels of all five crime types, with effects being larger for acquisitive crime and robust across various different measures of inequality.

Whitworth explained: "New Labor was criticised for continuing the previous Conservative government's individualisation of policy around ideas of personal responsibility, with social and economic context pushed down the agenda, and this is a trend that continues under the Coalition government. This encourages government to adopt a policy approach wedded to the assertion of greater control, protection of the socio-economic status quo and more intensive punishment of individuals at the risk of ignoring the structural inequalities within which outcomes need to be placed as well as the harm done to the social order from

(albeit legal) large-scale tax avoidance by wealthy individuals and organizations."

He concluded: "In *The Spirit Level* (2009) Wilkinson and Pickett bring together the substantial and growing body of evidence about the harmful effects of inequality on different social outcomes. This harms all of us but particularly those who are least able to insulate themselves and their families from its negative consequences. The findings of this new research contribute further evidence of the harmful effects of [inequality](#) on social outcomes in terms of associations with increased levels of crime at sub-national level across England. We must have greater recognition in policy of the role of structural social and economic inequalities in relation to crime outcomes and a closer integration between social, economic and crime policies."

'Inequality and crime across England: a multilevel modelling approach' appears in *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 11 issue 1 (January 2011). To read the article free of charge visit journals.cambridge.org/Whitworth. *Social Policy and Society* is published quarterly by Cambridge University Press for the [Social Policy](#) Association.

Provided by Cambridge University

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