

# The carbon footprint of crime has fallen, study finds

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A study led by an Engineering Doctorate student at the University of Surrey has found that the carbon footprint of crime over the last 20 years has fallen.

The study, published in the *British Journal of Criminology*, applied estimates of the carbon footprint of criminal offences to police-recorded [crime](#) and self-reported victimisation survey data, to estimate the carbon footprint of crime in England and Wales between 1995 and 2015.

The study was conducted by Helen Skudder at the University of Surrey and supported by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the Home Office, and Secured by Design Police Crime Prevention Initiatives Limited.

The carbon footprint of acquisitive and violent crime was estimated at around 7 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e in 1995, falling to below 3 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2015. This represents a substantial carbon drop of 62% and a total cumulative reduction of 54 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e over this period.

Research lead Helen Skudder said: "All public bodies, organisations and businesses must reduce their carbon emissions wherever possible, so to ignore these carbon emissions risks [crime prevention](#) strategies being unsustainable. Our study has shown that the carbon emissions have fallen further than the rate of crime, with a 48% carbon drop observed alongside a 30% crime drop."

Focusing on areas that resulted in the majority of emissions reductions may offer the best potential opportunities for further decreasing the carbon footprint in the future. These include burglary and vehicle offences, which reduce the need to replace stolen or damaged items, which was found to contribute substantially to the footprint.

The relationship between the drop in crime and drop in carbon footprint is complex. A 30% drop in police-recorded crime between 1995 and 2015 resulted in a 48% reduction of [carbon emissions](#). This clearly demonstrates that there is not a straightforward relationship between the number of offences and the resulting [carbon](#) footprint. This study adds to previous research on the [carbon footprint](#) of crime, and the results presented in the paper are an important contribution towards a growing connection between crime prevention and sustainability agendas.

**More information:** Helen Skudder et al, The falling carbon footprint of acquisitive and violent offences, *The British Journal of Criminology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azx009](https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azx009)

Provided by University of Surrey

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