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Working paper

Police infrastructure, police performance, and crime: evidence from austerity cuts



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MVPF estimates ranging from 1.4 to 4, indicating that each pound saved through this policy imposes up to £4 in additional costs on society.

7 Conclusion

The relationship between police presence and crime is well established in the literature, yet the mechanisms through which policing affects crime remain a black box. This paper sheds light on this issue by examining how a major reorganization of police resources through station closures affected crime, police effectiveness, victim cooperation with law enforcement, and overall community welfare. Findings reveal that reduced proximity to police stations has detrimental consequences, weakening the mechanisms that help curb future crime, as citizens become less likely to trust law enforcement.

These results carry several compelling implications, particularly in light of ongoing debates about police funding and public safety. First, while policymakers may view station closures as a cost-saving measure to enhance efficiency, this strategy is far from cost-effective. The resulting increase in crime disproportionately affects lower-income communities and ultimately requires costly corrective measures. To offset the crime surge, the police would need to recruit an additional 17,000 officers, wiping off any fiscal savings from the closures. Second, police infrastructure plays a crucial role in the optimal provision of public safety. Police proximity is not just about emergency response times; it also fosters stronger police-community interactions, and deterrence. As law enforcement represents the state, any erosion in its perceived legitimacy can weaken public trust and engagement with public institutions.

References

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