



PRESS RELEASE

Contact Information:

Caitlin Kizielewicz
412-554-0074 | caitlin@asc41.com

**Special Issue of *Criminology & Public Policy* Examines Effects of COVID-19
on the Criminal Justice System**

The impacts of COVID-19 on crime and justice continue to unfold amid a social justice reckoning and calls for significant reform in criminal justice around the world. Among the questions that have arisen: What has been the impact, if any, of COVID-19 on the quality of justice during this period? Did the pandemic exacerbate already-challenged areas of criminal justice response such as family and domestic violence or criminal gang activity? Did the pandemic provide opportunities for new crime categories and quell others? Did COVID-related restrictions reveal new insights into police-community interactions? How did the pandemic affect those under criminal justice supervision?

These questions and more are being addressed by scholars from the American Society of Criminology in a special issue of *Criminology & Public Policy*, the flagship policy and practice issue of the society, edited by Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper at George Mason University.

In the introduction to the special issue, Alex R. Piquero, professor of sociology at the University of Miami, discusses the effects of COVID-19 on the criminal justice system. He highlights a nonexistent policy playbook and initial response to the virus by the criminal justice system and discusses various decisions and lessons learned as the system dealt with the outbreak with little or constantly changing guidance from state and federal officials.

The special issue also features seven articles, including:

- In “Gang-Related Crime in Los Angeles Remained Stable Following COVID-19 Social Distancing Orders,” researchers examined the impact of mandated, citywide social distancing orders on gang-related crime in Los Angeles. The study found that gang-related crime remained stable, and crime hot spots stayed relatively stationary after shelter-in-place orders.
- In “Risk and Implications of COVID-19 Among the Community Supervised Population,” researchers used data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health to explore differences in the extent to which men under community supervision are vulnerable to COVID-19 and have access to care during the pandemic, comparing them to men not involved with the criminal justice system. Their study highlights the greater levels of risk for serious illness or death from COVID-19 and the disproportionate lack of health insurance among men under community supervision, suggesting that decarceration efforts alone are insufficient to address the spread of the virus among those who are supervised in the community.
- In “COVID-19 Frauds: An Exploratory Study of Victimization During a Global Crisis,” researchers surveyed more than 2,200 American adults to investigate their experiences with COVID-19-related frauds. More than a quarter of respondents reported purchasing a COVID-19-related product or service, and almost 43 percent said they felt targeted for fraud. Fraud victimization during crises like a pandemic requires prevention, legal and technical interventions, and greater attention to consumer protection.

- In “Crime, Quarantine, and the U.S. Coronavirus Pandemic,” researchers surveyed the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on crime rates in 31 large cities. Controlling for seasonal fluctuations, their study found that some offenses fell while others rose during 2020. In particular, weekly property crime and drug offense rates, averaged across the cities, fell during the pandemic, except for motor vehicle theft, which rose after restrictions were instituted in March 2020. But beginning in June 2020, homicides, aggravated assaults, and gun assaults rose significantly, then declined in late summer and fall.
- In “What Does the Public Want Police to Do During Pandemics? A National Experiment,” researchers surveyed a national sample of more than 1,000 U.S. adults in April 2020 to determine what factors shape support for various policing tactics amid the COVID-19 pandemic. While respondents were sharply divided in their views about pandemic policing tactics, one clear finding was that the public values police patrols and wants to continue to have access to officers. Additionally, people who believe police are procedurally just are more likely to trust them during times of crisis and empower them to enforce new laws or regulations.
- In “Crime Under Lockdown: The Impact of COVID-19 on Citizen Security in the City of Buenos Aires,” researchers studied the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown on criminal activity in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Following quarantine restrictions, property crime dropped significantly, with no changes in homicides. The researchers found that increases in health and social services may have also helped decrease crime. However, there was a considerable rise in arrests for resisting authorities, pointing to frictions between police and people at COVID checkpoints.
- In “Comparing 911 and Emergency Hotline Calls for Domestic Violence in Seven Cities: What Happened When People Started Staying Home Due to COVID-19?” researchers examined changes in how frequently domestic violence victims sought help in seven U.S. cities during the pandemic. The study estimated more than 1,000 additional calls to police and more than 1,600 additional calls to emergency hotlines across the group studied than would have occurred without the pandemic. However, jurisdictions varied in these trends and how victims sought help, highlighting that while needs might persist or increase during a pandemic, how authorities and services are alerted to those needs might change.

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Summarized from *Criminology & Public Policy*, *The Policy Lessons Learned from the Criminal Justice System Response to COVID-19*, a special issue. Copyright 2021 The American Society of Criminology. All rights reserved.

The articles in the special issue are:

- “Gang-Related Crime in Los Angeles Remained Stable Following COVID-19 Social Distancing Orders,” by Paul Jeffrey Brantingham, professor of anthropology at the University of California at Los Angeles, George E. Tita, assistant professor of criminology, law, and society at the University of California, Irvine, and George Mohler, professor of computer and information science at Indiana University
- “Risk and Implications of COVID-19 Among the Community Supervised Population,” by Carmen Gutierrez, assistant professor of public policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Evelyn J. Patterson, assistant professor of sociology at Vanderbilt University
- “COVID-19 Frauds: An Exploratory Study of Victimization During a Global Crisis,” by Jay P. Kennedy, assistant professor of criminal justice at Michigan State University, Melissa Rorie, assistant professor of criminal justice at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and Michael L. Benson, professor of criminal justice at the University of Cincinnati



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- “Crime, Quarantine, and the U.S. Coronavirus Pandemic,” by Ernesto Lopez, a doctoral student in criminology and criminal justice at the University of Missouri, and Richard Rosenfeld, a criminologist at the Council on Criminal Justice
- “What Does the Public Want Police to Do During Pandemics? A National Experiment,” by Justin Nix, assistant professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska Omaha, Stefan Ivanov, professor of criminal justice at State University of New York at Albany, and Justin T. Pickett, professor of criminal justice at State University of New York at Albany
- “Crime Under Lockdown: The Impact of COVID-19 on Citizen Security in the City of Buenos Aires,” by Santiago M. Perez-Vincent, a research economist at the Inter-American Development Bank, Ernesto Schargrotsky, professor of economics at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, and Mauricio García Mejía, modernization of state lead specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank
- “Comparing 911 and Emergency Hotline Calls for Domestic Violence in Seven Cities: What Happened When People Started Staying Home Due to COVID-19?” by Tara R. Richards, associate professor of criminology and criminal justice at the University of Nebraska Omaha, Justin Nix, assistant professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska Omaha, Scott M. Mourtgos, a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Utah, and Ian T. Adams, a PhD candidate at the University of Utah