

Trends in Crime and Policing

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Introduction

- American support for law enforcement is currently at its lowest point in nearly thirty years (Gallup, 2020)
 - *Black Lives Matter* and policing reform
 - “Defund the police” and budgetary priorities
- National conversations on law enforcement reform met with shifting post-pandemic challenges to public safety
 - General decline in most serious crime
 - 45% ↑ gun homicides, 2019-2021 (Simon et al., 2022)
 - Exacerbated racial disparities in homicide
- How exactly law enforcement can contribute to these public safety conditions depends on several factors
 - Police force size
 - Officer incentives and responsiveness

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- Empirical evidence suggests \uparrow police expansion $\rightarrow \downarrow$ crime
 - **Police Employment** (Evans and Owens, 2007)
 - **Visibility** (Klick and Tabarrok, 2005)
- Chalfin et al. (2022) provides new evidence on the effects of police employment on homicide and enforcement activity
 - \downarrow Racial disparities in homicide
 - \downarrow Racial disparities in index arrests and crime
 - \uparrow Racial disparities in certain “quality-of-life” arrests
- Many law enforcement agencies are facing significant challenges in maintaining “optimal” staffing levels
 - \uparrow Retirements and other departures
 - **Philadelphia:** \downarrow 364 officers, 2019-21 (McCormick, 2022)
 - **Minneapolis:** \downarrow 340 officers, 2019-22 (Kuznia, 2022)
 - $\Rightarrow \uparrow$ approx. 40 additional homicides (on average)

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 - Arrests v. prosecution of gun offenses
 - Increased gun proliferation (Arthur and Asher, 2021)
 - Regulation of secondary firearm markets
 - “Line-of-duty” officer mortality (Cho et al., 2021)
- Recent reforms in Missouri capture some of the complexities of ↑ gun violence and enforcement (Williams, 2022)
 - 2007 “permit-to-purchase” law repeal
 - ↑ 1,387 FBI handgun background checks per 100K
 - ↑ 24% fraction of suicides committed with a firearm
 - ↑ 13.20 Black firearm homicide per 100K
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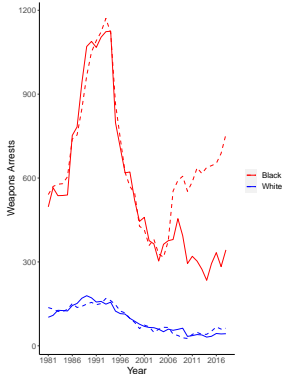
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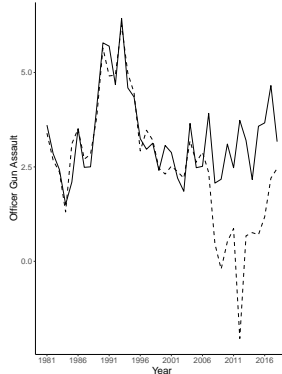
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Post-Repeal MO Gun Violence

City of St. Louis and Kansas City



(a.) Weapons Arrests



(b.) Officer Gun Assaults

Officer Incentives (cont.)

- Other research highlights additional factors which could potentially shift law enforcement approaches to enforcement
- Some work points to questions surrounding police legitimacy in the wake of “high profile” police shootings and homicide
 - “Ferguson effect” (Rosenfeld and Wallman, 2019)
 - Discretionary arrests? (MacDonald, 2019)
 - DOJ investigations (Devi and Fryer, 2020)
 - High-profile officer-involved homicide (Premkumar, 2020)
 - Murder of George Floyd and ↓ 911 calls (Ang et al., 2021)
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 - Gun proliferation and regulations
 - Incentives affecting enforcement decisions
- Disentangling many of the factors driving both changes in policing and rising gun violence faces several challenges
 - COVID-19 pandemic
 - Coinciding reforms and unobservables (e.g., NY bail reform)
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 - Policy experiments
 - Other forms of quasi-random variation
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Thank You!

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