



## HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

### The Effect of Violent Crime on Educational Attainment



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This study focuses on violent crime as an important determinant of educational attainment. I use two different models, a fixed effects model and an instrumental variable model to identify the causal effect of violent crime on educational attainment. First, a city fixed effects model with city-specific linear trends exploits different trends in violent crime among 229 major cities. The results indicate that the association between violent crime and grade 12 enrollment is significant while the same association with grade 9 enrollment is not. This difference suggests that student drop-outs drive the decline in enrollment associated with a high violent crime rate. Second, this study uses the implementation of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program as an instrument to estimate the effect of violent crime on educational attainment. The EBT program implementation changed the method of payment for welfare recipients to debit cards from paper checks. This change lowered local crime rates by reducing cash flow and opportunities for crime in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Using the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, two-stage least squares estimates show that exposure to violent crimes lowers educational attainment. These results provide evidence that non-educational policies can affect educational outcomes and shed light on the importance of coordinating educational and non-educational policies to enhance student educational outcomes.

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