

The Effects of Isolation on Crime: COVID-19 Stay-At-Home Orders

by Shelby Wiley

Has COVID-19 isolation impacted crime rates from 2019 to 2020? How does a lack of socialization affect a person's behavior and criminal activity? Since the onset of COVID-19, many challenges and changes have occurred around the world that have shaped life into what we consider our new normal. One of the most effective ways to fight the spread of COVID-19 is through social distancing and stay-at-home orders. This practice, however, may have come with the unintentional effect of putting society at a higher risk for violent crimes. Humans are social beings, and previous research suggests that a lack of socialization can lead to an increase in negative effects such as stress, anxiety, anger, and depression that could potentially increase criminal behaviors. The goal of my research is to examine the effects that the lack of socialization could have on crime. I will analyze violent and nonviolent crime data to determine if COVID-19 isolation has impacted crime rates, eliminating potential confounding factors. Since the start of COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, I expect to find an increase in violent crimes such as domestic abuse, homicide, and aggravated assault. Simultaneously, I expect to find a decrease in nonviolent crimes such as robbery and other property crimes. I will also explore whether these effects could be caused by isolation, gender, and rural vs. urban settings.