

Correlation Between Crime and Education

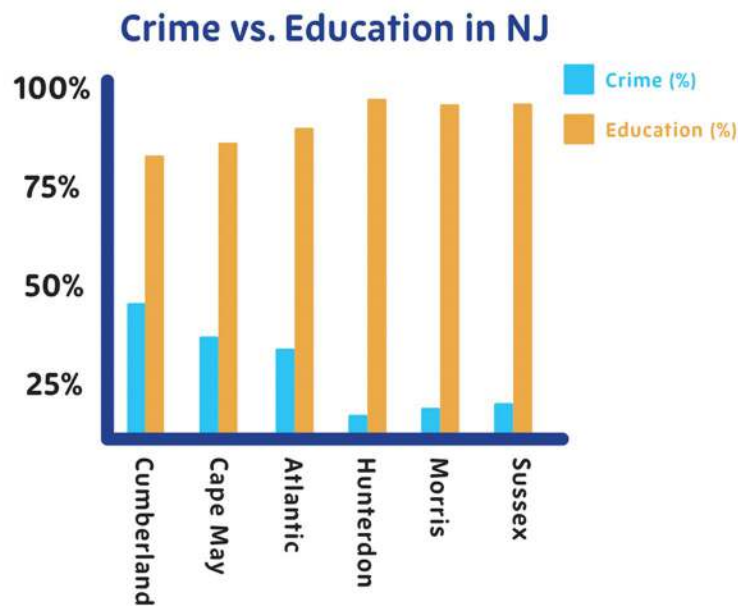
There have been significant steps taken to prevent crime over the past two decades in the United States and there have been amazing results. According to a report by the Pew Research Center, FBI data shows that the violent crime rate has decreased by 49% from 1993 to 2017. ¹ In order to help reduce crime so drastically in the US, there were many studies performed in order to figure out what exactly causes crime and how it can be prevented. According to a study conducted by the Council of Economic Advisors in 2016, "Investing in education is more cost-effective in reducing crime than incarceration".² While there is a lack of studies on the subject, there is data to support that there is a sizeable correlation between education and crime rates.

But what effect does education have on individuals in order to lower crime rates? In a study about the correlation of education and crime rates conducted in 2004 by Lochner and Moretti they argued that their results showed that "education alters an individual's preference leading to increased risk aversion and patience". ³ The more education a person receives, the less likely they are to partake in risky behaviors such as crime due to a changed mindset. Not only does education change a person's mindset in general, it also limits their ability to get involved in crime based purely on the time commitment. This is especially truthful for children because of their longer time spent in school. From ages 7 to 18 children spend around six to seven hours in school five days a week and that does not include extracurricular activities. The same study by Lochner and Moretti notes that "limiting the criminal opportunities of youth can potentially have a major impact on crime as a sizeable fraction of criminals are repeat offenders and, by limiting initial involvement in crime, potential future crime may be reduced as well". ³ Therefore, if most criminals are repeat offenders, limiting the opportunities for children to get involved in crime at an early age will further deter them from getting involved in crime later in life. Another seemingly obvious but important observation about the correlation between education and crime rates is the better opportunities that higher education can give a person in life. In a study conducted by Olof Åslund, Hans Grönqvist, Caroline Hall, and Jonas Vlachos about the correlation between education and criminal behavior they noted that "education typically raises expected earnings from legitimate work, thereby making crime relatively less appealing". ⁴ Education and especially higher education opens up many doors for children and young adults, and while they receive better opportunities for work and pay, they become less and less likely to commit crimes.

High Crime: South Jersey			Low Crime: North Jersey		
	Crime	Grad Rate		Crime	Grad Rate
Cumberland	47.1%	82%	Hunterdon	6.4%	96%
Cape May	35.1%	87%	Morris	8.8%	95%
Atlantic	32.4%	89%	Sussex	9.3%	93%



It is easy to see the correlation between education and crime rates even in the state of New Jersey. The counties with the highest crime rates, Cumberland County (47.1 per 1,000 residents), Cape May County (35.1 per 1,000 residents) and Atlantic County (32.4 per 1,000 residents) ⁵ also have some of the lowest high school graduation rates in New Jersey (82%, 87% and 89%). ⁶ In comparison, the counties with the lowest crime rates, Hunterdon County (6.4 per 1,000 residents), Morris County (8.8 per 1,000 residents), and Sussex County (9.3 per 1,000 residents) ⁷ also have some of the highest high school graduation rates (96%, 95%, and 93%). ⁸ This is why it is imperative to give everyone an equal opportunity to succeed. Especially because most criminals in the United States are repeat offenders, early intervention is crucial. If something as simple as education can help give the youth of America a better shot at a crime-free lifestyle, a quality education should be more accessible to them. It is our responsibility to not only conduct more in-depth studies on the correlation between education and crime rates, but to try and ensure that all children in America have access to a quality education that will set them up for success later in life.



¹ Gramlich, John. "5 Facts about Crime in the U.S." Pew Research Center. January 03, 2019. Accessed June 03, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/03/5-facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/>.

² Moretti, Enrico. "Does Education Reduce Participation in Criminal Activities?" September 2005. Accessed June 3, 2019. doi:Department of Economics UC Berkeley.

³ Moretti, Enrico. "Does Education Reduce Participation in Criminal Activities?" September 2005. Accessed June 3, 2019. doi:Department of Economics UC Berkeley.

⁴ Åslund, Olof, Hans Grönqvist, Caroline Hall, and Jonas Vlachos. Education and Criminal Behavior: Insights from an Expansion of Upper Secondary School. *Labour Economics* 52 (2018): 178-92. doi:10.1016/j.labeco.2017.11.007.

⁵ Sullivan, S.P. "Where does crime happen in NJ?". nj.com. May 02, 2017. Accessed May 31, 2019. https://www.nj.com/news/2017/05/heres_where_crime_happens_in_new_jersey.html

⁶ County Health Rankings.Roadmaps. Accessed September 05, 2018. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-jersey/2018/measure/factors/21/data>.

⁷ Sullivan, S.P. "Where does crime happen in NJ?". nj.com. May 02, 2017. Accessed May 31, 2019. https://www.nj.com/news/2017/05/heres_where_crime_happens_in_new_jersey.html

⁸ County Health Rankings.Roadmaps. Accessed September 05, 2018. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-jersey/2018/measure/factors/21/data>.

