

Presentation title:

More offenders, more crime: Estimating the size of the offender population in a Latin American setting

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Research that has examined the high crime levels experienced in Latin American settings has suggested that macro-structural variables (such as social inequality) and factors associated with development and institutional capacity offer explanations for these high crime levels. Although useful, these studies have yet to quantify how these explanations translate to the dynamics of offending activity. In the current study we examine a key component relating to offending dynamics - the size of the offender population. Using two capture-recapture techniques and a bootstrap simulation, estimates of the size of the offender population were generated for three comparable cities in Brazil, Mexico, and England. Each of the techniques generated similar estimates for offender population size for each city, but with these estimates varying substantially between the cities. This included the estimated offender population size for the Brazilian city being 25 times greater than that for the English city. Risk of arrest values were also generated, with these calculated to be substantially lower in the Brazilian and Mexican city than for the English city. The results provide a quantification of criminal behaviour that offers a potential new insight about the high levels of crime that are experienced in Latin America settings. We also discuss the potential of using estimates of offender population for evaluating the impact of crime reduction programmes.