

Author(s): Rahn, Wendy M. And John Transue
Title: The Political Significance of Fear of Crime
Date: January 15, 1995
Dataset(s): 1995 Pilot Study

Abstract

Rahn and Transue examine the performance of the new fear of crime and crime prevention questions. The authors find that: (1) Fear of crime has different origins depending on whether the respondent is engaged in their community. For socially isolated individuals, fear of crime is heavily based on indirect and mass mediated information. On the other hand, those who are engaged in the community draw more heavily on community-based information -- as indexed by "length of residence" -- than those who are not engaged. (2) Fear of crime is an important predictor of respondents' crime prevention attitudes. It also shapes respondents' evaluations of illegal immigrants, but has no effect in predicting affect toward other social groups. (3) High fear of crime erodes beliefs about government responsiveness, but does not affect trust in government. (4) Finally, fear of crime can moderate the impact of other variables. Specifically, fear of crime can motivate information acquisition and participation, but only if it is combined with knowledge about politics and educational resources. Absent these, the main effect of fear of crime is to strongly discourage cognitive engagement and behavioral involvement in politics.