

The Impact of Police Agency Size on Crime Clearance Rates.
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ABSTRACT:

The impact of police agency size on the ability of those agencies to deliver necessary police services is a question critical to many policy makers as they attempt to determine the best and most efficient manner to provide police services to their citizens. Over the years, there has been an ongoing debate as to the role of agency size and its effect on agency effectiveness. This study examines one element of that debate by looking at the role agency size plays on the ability of the agency to clear reported crime.

The study hypothesizes that larger agencies are able to clear a larger proportion of reported crimes because larger agencies can take advantage of larger staff, greater resources and capitalize on other factors often associated with larger organizations. To conduct this analysis, the study develops a data set from LEMAS, UCR, and Census Bureau data that contains 2,271 local, county, and regional police and sheriffs' agencies. Utilizing this data set, the study uses hierarchical regression to assess the impact of agency size on the clearance rates for seven UCR Part I crimes. The analysis controls for the effect of community demographics, agency structure, community policing tactics, and workload.

The results of the analysis are mixed. For several crime categories, agency size does not contribute significantly. However, for robbery, felony assault and vehicle theft, size is significant and has an inverse relationship to crime clearance rates. The finding that the clearance rates for robbery, felony assault and vehicle theft would decrease as agency size increases, is contrary to the study's hypothesis. The study concludes with a discussion of possible reasons the size variable did not have the affect theorized, the implications of these findings, a discussion of the issues surrounding the effect of the control variables, as well as possible directions for future research.