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*Trends in Crime and Fear: Lessons from Chicago, 1994–2003\**

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I. INTRODUCTION

**F**EAR OF CRIME has real consequences for the communities in which we live, as well as for the emotional and social lives of those it afflicts. Fear can confine people to their homes, and it undermines their trust in neighbours and—especially—in their neighbours' children. Fear leads some to withdraw from public life, and it undermines informal and organised efforts by the community to control crime and delinquency. Fear undermines the value of residential property and thus the willingness of owners to maintain it properly, and the viability of small businesses. In the United States, fear of crime has been one of the most important factors driving city-centre residents to the suburbs, encouraging race and class segregation, and undermining the political importance of American cities. Fear of crime is also a 'wedge issue' that is used to divide whites from other Americans, because it is politically useful to some factions (Skogan 1995). The fears of the public also resonate in debates over crime policy, again supporting the positions of some factions over others.

But in the United States, as in some other countries, crime is down. After peaking in 1991, by 2003 the murder rate had dropped by 42 per cent and robbery by almost half, or 48 per cent. Public opinion has followed this trend to a more limited extent. In February 1992, 44 per cent of Americans reported that there was a place within a mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night, but by October 2004 that figure had fallen in 32 per cent (Gallup 2005). While this is far from being a perfect

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mirror of the extent of changes in national crime rates, crime and fear in the United States have at least moved downward in concert. However, in 2004, 53 per cent of Americans still thought that there was more crime in the country as whole than there was the year before, despite more than a decade of declining crime (Gallup 2005).

As this illustrates, one of the conundrums of fear of crime is that it does not always appear that the public feels safer when they 'should'. As the National Reassurance Policing Programme (2004) website noted:

Since 1995 the amount of recorded crime in Britain has declined, but this decline has not been matched by a corresponding fall in the public's fear of crime. This divergence of achievement and recognition—the 'reassurance gap'—is a serious concern to the Police, a service that ultimately depends on public support for its funding and legitimacy. It is a concern shared by the Home Office.

Convinced by the British Crime Survey, the National Crime Victimization Survey and other sources that crime has been falling, some have been puzzled that surveys do not show fear declining in proportion. Ditton et al (2000: 144) propose as a 'criminological maxim' that fear of crime climbs when crime rates climb, but fails to fall when crime falls. Concern about what Innes (2004) calls the resulting 'reassurance gap' between levels of crime and fear has begun to drive government policy in the UK, as witnessed by the launch of the National Reassurance Policing Programme (see [www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk](http://www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk)), the imposition of an official five-year plan to bring fear down (see [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)), the official prioritising of anti-social behaviour as well as conventional crime in order to respond to the causes of fear (see [www.policereform.gov.uk](http://www.policereform.gov.uk)), and the launching of a spate of research on whether fear is driven by distinctive 'signal crimes' rather than general trends, helping explain this conundrum (Innes 2004).

It is thus an important policy question whether fear inevitably 'ratchets up' and does not decline, and it is an important political question whether or not debates over crime will take place within an ever-mounting spiral of emotionality, regardless of 'the facts of the case'—which is taken by some as the condition of late modernity.

It turns out that little is known about the over-time dynamics of fear of crime. Aside from descriptions of trends presented by pollsters, there has been almost no research on why fear goes up or down. Almost all fear-of-crime research begins with the influence of factors such as gender and age, but demography alone cannot explain the short-term fluctuations in concern that are of such interest to policy-makers.

This chapter addresses the issue of trends in fear, using repeated surveys of residents of the city of Chicago. Like other US cities, over recent years Chicago witnessed a dramatic reduction in recorded crime, and surveys enable us to determine the extent to which this brought down levels of fear. Other factors that might have affected fear were changing as well, and this

chapter is able to address the influence of several of them as well. During the time period considered here, the city adopted a community policing programme, for example. In addition, there were substantial changes in the composition of the population: the (safer) white population dropped by about 13 per cent, mostly to be replaced by (more fearful) immigrants from Mexico and their families. The chapter parses out the impact of these components of change, and documents how they explain a substantial—but still only partial—fraction of the very noticeable decline in fear of crime that took place in Chicago during the 1994–2003 period.

## II. TRENDS IN FEAR IN CHICAGO

This chapter examines trends in one of the most common measures of fear, responses to the question ‘How safe do you feel or would you feel being alone outside in your neighbourhood at night?’ Respondents were asked to indicate whether they would feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe if they found themselves in that situation. This question has been included in surveys conducted by the US Census Bureau, and it is commonly used in research on fear. It is not a behaviour measure. Behavioural measures of fear—such as reports of staying indoors at night or driving rather than walking to avoid being victimised—are sensitive to a host of contingencies and life situations (such as having a night-time job, or not having a car) that make them very complex to interpret. Responses to questions about one’s (perceived) risk of being victimised incorporate some of what fearful people have already done to protect themselves (such as staying at home), and they can also miss the mark (Skogan 1993). The fear measure examined here does not hone in on particular ‘signal crimes’ that can dominate people’s views because of their social or even political significance (Innes and Fielding 2002), nor does it count the frequency with which respondents experience instances of dread (Farrall and Gadd 2004). It focuses on the potential for harm that people feel crime holds for them, or what they believe *could* happen to them *if* they exposed themselves to risk. It is a neighbourhood-oriented, close-to-home measure of fear.

The chapter reports findings from eight citywide surveys conducted in Chicago between 1994 and 2003. The interviews were carried out by telephone, contacting households using random-digit-dialing procedures in order to ensure that new households, those that recently had moved and changed their telephone number, and persons who choose to be unlisted (which is more than 50 per cent of Chicagoans) would be included in the sample. When more than one adult lived in a responding household, one of them was chosen at random to represent the family, and extensive callbacks were made to reach selected respondents. During 1994–96 the surveys included 1300 to 1800 respondents. During 1997–99 they involved 2800

to 3000 respondents, in 2001 just over 2500 individuals were interviewed, and in 2003 there were 3140 respondents. The most conservative completion rates for the surveys ranged between 40 and 60 per cent, declining somewhat over time. While the respondents remained anonymous, they were asked to identify the general location of their home by giving the name of their residential street and the nearest cross street, or—failing that—to indicate the name of their neighbourhood. Responses to these questions enabled most respondents (92 per cent) to be identified by their police beat, and data gathered independently at this level are used to describe the geographical context within which each respondent lived.

Figure 5.1 examines trends in fear during the course of the 1990s, and into the 2000s. It presents trends separately for key demographic groups—by age, gender, home ownership and income. The trend lines chart the percentage of respondents who indicated they would feel either somewhat or very unsafe out alone in their own neighbourhood at night.

The surveys reveal that fear of crime has been in general retreat over most of Chicago. By 2003, every group depicted in Figure 5.1 had fallen below the 40 per cent fearful mark, and seven of the nine were at or below 30 per cent. As the figure indicates, divisions remain; even in the twenty-first century, men make themselves out to be less fearful than women.

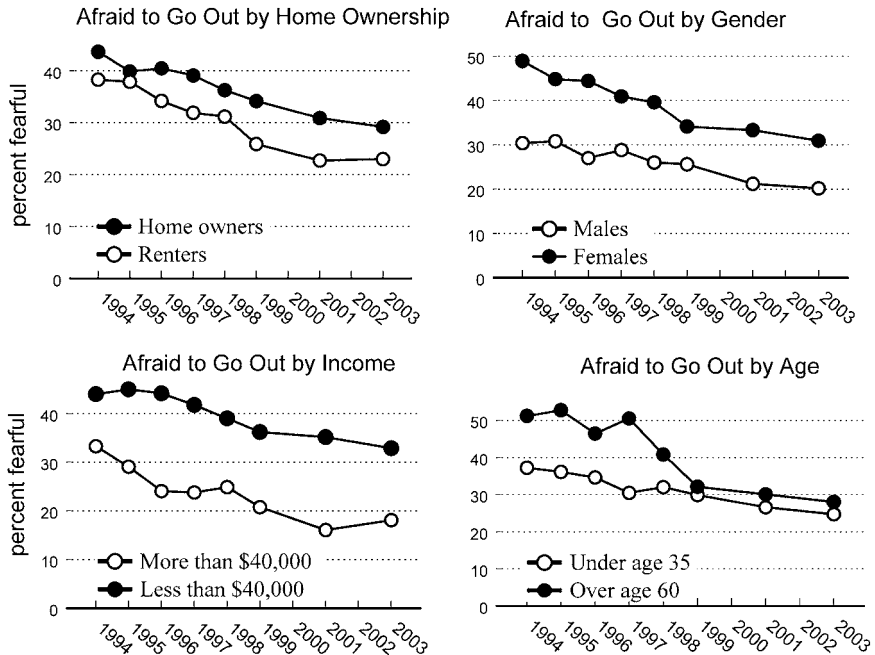


Figure 5.1: Trends in fear, by age, gender, home ownership and income

Among men, fear was down by 10 percentage points or so. However, fear dropped by almost twice as much for women, from 49 per cent to 31 per cent. It was down among both younger and older Chicagoans. Among those over 60 years of age fear dropped from 51 per cent to 28 per cent. In fact, age differences in fear (here comparing the fears of those under age 35 and those 60 and older) virtually *disappeared* in Chicago at the end of the 1990s. This is very surprising, because age has hitherto been one of the most reliable correlates of fear (Fattah and Sacco 1989). In an early study of crime and the elderly, Cook and Cook (1976: 645) concluded that ‘the major policy problem associated with the elderly and crime is probably not crime *per se*. Rather, the problem is related to the elderly person’s fear of crime and the restrictions to daily mobility that this fear may impose.’ They argued that ‘the policy response to victimisation of the elderly should be targeted to alleviating fear’. Fear also declined among both home-owners and tenants, and at about the same pace. The lower-left panel documents the more limited gains reported by less affluent residents; in this group, fear dropped from 44 per cent to 33 per cent. By contrast, among better-off Chicagoans the fear index stood at 33 per cent in the first survey, and dropped to just 18 per cent by 2003.

Figure 5.2 documents trends in fear by race and—within the city’s large Latino population—by language. By this measure, fear dropped by half among the city’s whites, from 34 per cent to 17 per cent. Fear dropped among African-Americans at about the same pace: the percentage of blacks who reported they would feel somewhat unsafe or very unsafe declined from 49 per cent to 25 per cent. The city’s Latinos turned out to have made the fewest gains over this period. In comparison to 1994, the 2003 level of fear for the group as a whole was down just a bit, from 43 per cent to 38 per cent. Earlier in the decade African-Americans were the city’s most fearful group, but by the turn of the century blacks felt significantly safer than the city’s Latinos.

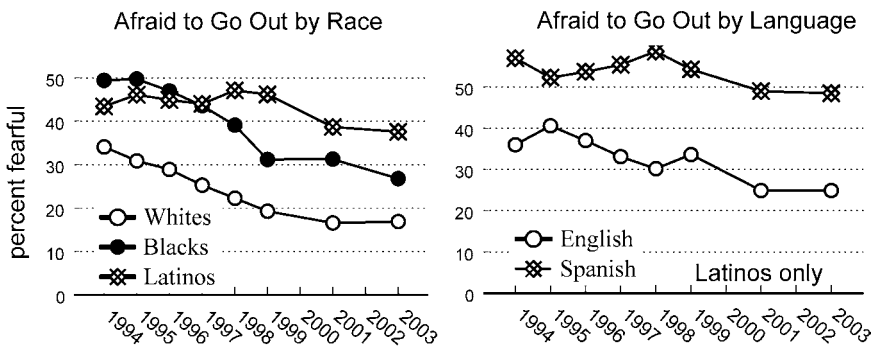


Figure 5.2: Trends in fear, by race and language

The right-hand panel in Figure 5.2 divided Latinos into Spanish-speakers and English-speakers, based on the language in which they preferred to be interviewed when contacted by survey interviewers. It describes the large differences in fear associated with language. Spanish-speakers are a growing group: by 2003 they made up 54 per cent of all the Latinos that were interviewed, foretelling an important demographic shift in Chicago's population (Skogan and Steiner 2004b). In the mid-1990s, Spanish-speaking Latinos were easily the most fearful large demographic group. Over time, fear declined among both English- and Spanish-speakers, but the gulf between them actually widened.

### III. EXPLAINING TRENDS IN FEAR

What could account for declining fear? Past research does not provide much guidance for answering this question; most of it examines fear as a static phenomenon. The findings of these studies emphasise the importance of the fairly fixed features of people—their race, age, gender, affluence, education and the like. The Chicago findings substantiate all of the observations on which these inferences are built. In the early 1990s, women, the elderly, the poor, and racial minorities were substantially more fearful than their counterparts. However, these personal attributes take on a different and more limited significance when the goal is explaining *trends* in fear over time. For all of their obvious importance, the fixed personal factors that play such an important role in discussions of fear of crime cannot explain substantial changes in levels of fear over a relatively short period of time. Some demographic features of a city's population change only glacially. This includes one of the strongest predictors of fear, the average age of the population. In addition, the sex ratio in large populations tends to not change at all. Home ownership is also quite 'sticky' and changes only slowly over time. Further, in Chicago, fear was down *within* these groups. The racial composition of American communities is a demographic factor that can change rapidly, but we saw in Figure 5.1 that fear was down among the city's whites, African-Americans and Latinos.

The challenge, then, is to identify causal factors that can and have changed over time, and could account for declining levels of fear.

#### A. Declining Crime and Disorder, for Many

What can change rapidly is neighbourhood conditions, and they are also linked to fear. Fear is related to many of the conditions and experiences reported by respondents to the surveys. Not surprisingly, Chicagoans are more fearful when they think burglary or assault is a problem in their

neighbourhood. They are also more fearful when they can see around them visible signs that social order is breaking down: they report more fear in places where public drinking, loitering and graffiti are common, and they are distressed by the appearance of street drug markets in their community. In Chicago, as elsewhere (see Lane and Meeker 2003), the relationship between neighbourhood conditions and fear is a strong one.

It is thus doubly significant that the problems undermining the quality of life in respondents' neighbourhoods declined substantially in Chicago during the course of the 1990s and into the 2000s. By many measures, including those drawn from data archives and the Census, as well as from the evaluation surveys, Chicago's neighbourhoods became cleaner, safer and more orderly, and fear declined as a result.

Figure 5.3 examines two measures of the extent of neighbourhood crime problems in Chicago, and how they trended over time. More details about all of them can be found in Skogan and Steiner (2004a). The top panels of Figure 5.3 chart trends in officially recorded crime between 1991 and 2003. Incident-level data on all of the crimes that were recorded by police during this period were supplied by the Chicago Police Department. To construct these trend lines, the city's residential police beats (the smallest police administrative units) were grouped by their racial composition, based on

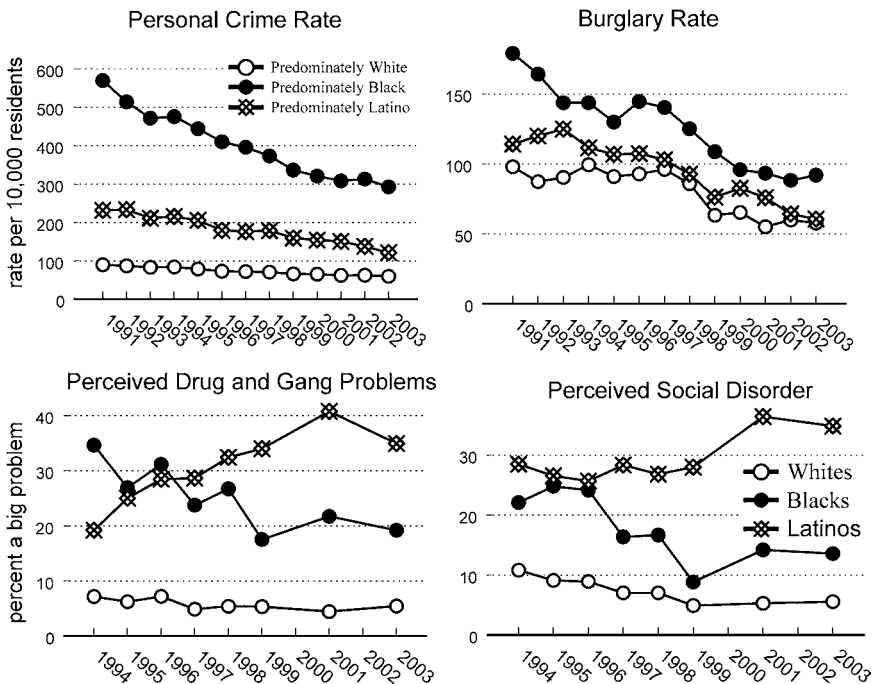


Figure 5.3: Trends in official and survey measures of crime

the 1990 census. Some beats were so racially diverse that it was impossible to classify them in simple fashion, and they are excluded here for simplicity (Skogan and Steiner (2004a) presents all the details). The aggregated groups of beats differed in size, so the analysis here reports rates of crime per 100,000 persons living in each grouping.

As Figure 5.3 illustrates, crime was down in all or most areas, but it declined most dramatically in African-American communities. By 2003, robbery was down in predominately African-American beats by 61 per cent, rape by 43 per cent, murder by 26 per cent. Personal crime rates were not very high in white areas even at the outset, but in percentage terms even they enjoyed significant declines in violent crime. For African-Americans, the biggest decline in property crime was registered in the burglary category, which is depicted in the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 5.3. Motor vehicle theft rates were also generally down.

In addition to conventional crime, neighbourhoods can be plagued by 'social disorders', which are conditions that are also strongly associated with fear. Elsewhere I described social disorder as 'bands of teenagers deserting school and congregating on street corners, prostitutes and pan-handlers soliciting for attention, public drinking, ... verbal harassment of women on the street, street violence, and open gambling and drug use' (Skogan 1990: 2). Others have added fare evasion in the subway (Kelling and Coles 1996), recreational violence in clubs and pubs, and threatening phone calls (Leigh, Read and Tilley 1998), and homeless squatters and 'dumpster divers' searching for food (Finn 1988). In general, most of these activities are illegal, and the others frequently are, but it can be hard to get police interested in them. Albert Reiss (1985) captured the essence of many forms of disorder when he described them as 'soft crimes', lying on the boundaries of traditional definitions of crime and the priorities of police.

This chapter examines the impact of trends in three forms of social disorder: public drinking, loitering, and school disruption. School disruption was assessed by responses to a question about 'disruption around schools, that is, youths hanging around making noise, vandalizing or starting fights', and teen loitering by responses to a question about 'groups of people hanging out on corners or in the streets'. Respondents were presented with a list of these problems, and asked in each case to rate whether they were 'no problem', 'some problem', or 'a big problem' in their neighbourhood. In the eyes of Chicagoans, all three problems were quite common. In 1995, loitering was the most highly rated problem in the survey—22 per cent reported that loitering bands of people were a big problem in their neighbourhood, and another 32 per cent thought they were some problem. In the same survey, 52 per cent indicated that public drinking was a problem in their neighbourhood, and disorder around local schools was identified as a big problem by 16 per cent of Chicagoans. Because responses to these questions were substantially correlated with one another (in 1995, the average



inter-item correlation was  $+0.52$ ), they are combined here into one index of perceived neighbourhood social disorder.

Surveys also provide an alternative measure of two hard-core crime problems that are very ill-measured in official data—gangs and drugs. In the case of drugs, police work mostly with records of drug arrests, but this is actually an enforcement measure. Gang activity is even more difficult to track separately from the success of police investigations. In the surveys, respondents were also asked to rate ‘drug dealing on the streets’ and ‘gang violence’ in their neighbourhood. In 1995, 23 per cent of Chicagoans rated drug dealing a ‘big problem’ in their neighbourhood, while 19 per cent gave top billing to gang violence. Responses to these two questions were particularly strongly related to one another ( $+0.73$  in 1995), and they too are combined here into one index of neighbourhood gang and drug problems.

As Figure 5.3 illustrates, when asked about gang, drug and social disorder problems, people’s responses presented a complex picture of trends in neighbourhood conditions in Chicago. In particular, by many measures conditions worsened for the city’s Latinos. This was largely because of the impact of massive immigration and the emergence of new, poor and highly segregated Latino neighbourhoods in Chicago (Skogan and Steiner 2004b). At the same time, reports of crime and disorder problems declined substantially among African-Americans, and even among whites, who faced far fewer problems. To the extent to which they are linked to fear, trends in gang, drug and social disorder problems—and differential changes in these factors by race—may help explain declining levels of fear for many in Chicago.

The statistical analysis of fear that is presented below uses another measure of neighbourhood conditions as well, one combining accounts of the extent of three conventional crimes. Officially collected data have substantial limitations, one of which is that police are heavily dependent on the willingness of residents to report crimes. A rule of thumb is that no more than about 50 per cent of crimes are reported (Hart and Rennison (2003) report the details). The police further screen complaints to ensure that they meet legal and bureaucratic requirements before they file an official record, and this also reduces the count. Survey measures of crime bypass these barriers by going directly to the public, who are in a position to report on crime as it is experienced rather than as it is counted. Respondents were quizzed about ‘cars being stolen’, ‘people breaking in or sneaking into homes to steal things’, and ‘people being attacked or robbed’ in their neighbourhood. Trends in these followed the patterns depicted in Figure 5.3. Whites thought things were a bit better, despite their already low base. In the mid-1990s, African-Americans and Latinos reported about the same level of concern for every crime problem. Then, during the course of the 1990s, their experiences diverged. Over time, more and more African-Americans reported that things were not so bad, and by 2003 their scores

in these problem indices had dropped by about 10 percentage points. By 2003, the views of blacks had converged toward those of whites, and both groups expressed relatively low levels of concern about these crimes. But there was again little good news for the city's growing Latino population. In the first survey they reported about the same level of crime problems as did African-Americans, but reports of concern by Latinos did not decline during the 1990s. Worse, their ratings jumped to new highs during the early 2000s. By 2003, the city's Latinos were three times more likely than whites and African-Americans to report that street crime, burglary and auto theft were big problems in their community.

### **B. Growing Confidence in the Police**

Does confidence in the police—and changing levels of confidence—affect fear of crime? It is important to consider this proposition because during the period described here, policing in Chicago was also in flux. The surveys were conducted to help evaluate the implementation and impact of a community policing programme. If police are thought to be becoming more effective at dealing with neighbourhood crime and disorder, responding more effectively to the particular problems that are of most concern, or just more visible while making their daily rounds, people may feel more secure. Many correlational studies have found that visible police presence on the streets is associated with lower levels of fear. In a quasi-experimental study of foot patrols in Newark, New Jersey, Pate (1986) found that foot patrols reduce levels of fear. Bennett (1989) drew the same conclusion from a quasi-experiment in Britain. Zhao, Scheider and Thurman (2002) provide a wide-ranging review of this literature, concluding that the weight of the evidence is that visible police presence reduces fear.

On the other hand, not everyone perceives their local policeman in favourable terms, and more contact and familiarity with them may not be seen to be an unalloyed good. More intensive and visible policing may be seen as intrusive, oppressive, and perhaps unfairly targeting residents. Skogan (1994) found that, in general, British Crime Survey respondents who recalled having seen police patrolling on foot in their neighbourhood felt substantially more positive about them—with the important exception of Afro-Caribbeans, for whom police visibility had no discernible favourable effects.

And it is also possible that the causal relationship between confidence in the police and fear runs in the other direction, and that improving conditions and declining levels of fear increase satisfaction with the police, rather than the other way around. A recent study by Xu, Fiedler and Flaming (2005) built the reverse assumption into a complex causal model that included measures of awareness of community policing, perceptions

of neighbourhood conditions, quality of life, and fear of crime, and they found that the data fitted a model specifying that fear affected confidence in the police. However, the many intervention studies that have examined this link—including the foot patrol experiments noted above—generally support the policing-affects-fear specification. My own best evidence concerning the causal link between policing and fear comes from 1993–94. During that period, Chicago police experimented with their new programme in five police districts, while their approach proceeded as usual in the remaining 20 districts. Before-and-after evaluation surveys conducted in the experimental areas and in matched comparison districts (see Skogan and Hartnett (1997) for the details) found that these changes had an effect. Residents of most of the prototype districts noted positive changes in policing during the experimental period. There were increases in the visibility of foot officers in the experimental areas, more police were visibly driving around on patrol in the neighbourhoods, and there were more informal police contacts with citizens. Residents of the experimental districts were reassured when they saw police doing community-oriented patrols. Controlling for many factors, enhanced police visibility in the experimental areas was linked to positive changes in people’s views of the quality of police service, and—especially for African-Americans and people who rented rather than owned their home—reduced fear of crime. Statistically, the effect of increased police visibility on fear was of about the same magnitude as the effects of age and gender, two important factors in the fear of crime equation.

Here, the effect of confidence in the police is captured by responses to 10 questions assessing residents’ satisfaction with the demeanour, responsiveness and effectiveness of police working in their community. Respondents were asked how polite, helpful, concerned and fair the police were when dealing with residents of their neighbourhood. Other questions probed how responsive police were to neighbourhood concerns, and how good a job police were thought to be doing dealing with the problems that concern residents. Finally, Chicagoans were asked about the effectiveness

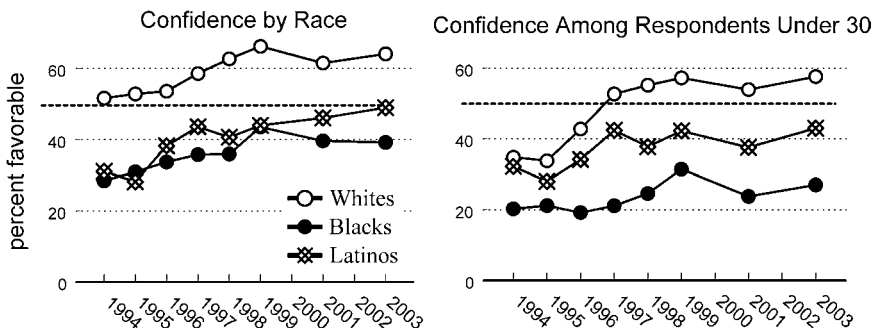


Figure 5.4: Trends in confidence in the police

with which police prevented crime and disorder, and how good a job they were doing in helping crime victims. In the 1995 survey (a typical year), responses to these 10 questions were correlated an average of  $+.57$  and when combined they formed an overall index of opinion with a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of  $.93$ . In these data, Chicagoans who feel that the police are doing a good job are less fearful than those who are sceptical about their effectiveness.

In addition we will examine the impact of Chicagoans' awareness that a community policing programme was in place. In a nationwide Internet-based survey, Weitzer and Tuch (2004) found that awareness of community policing was related to increased confidence, in their case measured by perceptions of the extent of police misconduct. Awareness is measured here by responses to the question: 'Now I have a few questions about a community policing program sponsored by the Chicago Police Department. It calls for more cooperation between police and the residents of Chicago. Have you heard about this policing program?' A later question gauged whether respondents had heard of the city's beat meetings. These gatherings of residents and police who work in their area are held monthly throughout the city, and they are one of the most distinctive features of the city's community policing programme (see Skogan and Steiner 2004a).

Figure 5.4 illustrates trends in confidence in police by charting the percentages of respondents each year who on average rated the police as doing a 'good job' or a 'very good job'. Confidence generally rose during the 1990s, and then levelled off at near its highwater mark in the 2000s. Confidence—and changes in confidence—also differed substantially by race and age, the two strongest correlates of views of the police. In general, only whites averaged in the favourable range throughout the entire period—this is highlighted by the dotted line delineating the 50 per cent mark in both panels of Figure 5.4. However, Latinos *gained* the most confidence, with the favourable faction growing from 31 per cent in 1994 to 49 per cent by 2003. Support among African-Americans grew between 1993 and 1999, before dropping a bit, and in 2003 almost 40 per cent of the city's blacks were in the positive range. Among those under age 30—traditionally a very sceptical group—favourable ratings of the police went up over time among all racial groups. However, it rose the most among white youths, and the least among young African-Americans. In 1994, young whites and Latinos shared a relatively jaundiced view of the police, but the growth in confidence reported by young whites over time was not mirrored by young Latinos, and they had fallen noticeably behind by 2003. Not illustrated in Figure 5.4 is that confidence in the police rose for other groups as well. Confidence went up among both renters and home-owners, and among higher- and lower-income people. To the extent to which confidence in the police affects fear, generally improving confidence in the police may help explain changes in fear over time.

### C. Impact of Neighbourhood Conditions and Confidence in Police

Table 5.1 presents a multi-level analysis of fear of crime. It probes the joint effect of individual and contextual factors that may help explain the decline in fear in Chicago during the 1994–2003 period. The table examines the opinions of 16,878 respondents interviewed between 1994 and 2003.<sup>1</sup> The individual factors that are included were significant predictors of fear when they were examined separately. They are a mix of demographic factors and perceptual assessments, so the two were entered in separate blocks. The beat-year contextual factors include crime, which is represented by the log of personal crime and residential burglary per 10,000 residents of each beat. There are also measures of the racial composition of each beat, and demographic factors that help separate out the unique effects of crime as opposed to other features of these areas. The beat-year context data are organised so that the police beat in which each respondent lives is described by crime and (interpolated or projected) census data for the year in which they were interviewed. For example, respondents interviewed in 1993 are linked to 1993 crime rates and estimates of 1993 census characteristics for their beat, while those interviewed in 2003 are linked to crime data and census estimates for that year. In total, respondents are situated in 2,043 distinct year-beat contexts. Technically, this is a ‘fixed effects’ model for estimating the joint impact of individual and context-level measures on fear of crime.

Column I of Table 5.1 includes just the personal characteristics of our respondents. All of them are by dichotomies, so their coefficients can be compared in magnitude. The coefficients represent the difference in fear, net of other factors in the model, associated with being on one side of a demographic category rather than the other. The analytic variables representing race identify all but white respondents; as the ‘omitted category’ in this analysis, the other measures contrast the fear scores of their group’s members with others and in comparison to white Chicagoans. Whites were the safest group, and even controlling for the other individual factors presented in Column I of Table 5.1, everyone else was still significantly more fearful. Across the entire period, the strongest individual correlates of fear were being female and a Spanish-speaker, followed by being older (over age 65) and African-American. Less strongly, more affluent respondents reported being less fearful (this is indexed by education, home ownership, and income, along with being in employment). Younger respondents were reluctant to express much fear. These patterns are in line with past research

<sup>1</sup> This analysis excludes respondents who failed to answer the questions itemised in Table 5.1, plus those for whom we could not identify a beat of residence. Together, these criteria excluded about 18 per cent of the 20,363 individuals who were originally interviewed between 1994 and 2003.

Table 5.1: Personal factors, neighbourhood conditions, confidence in police and fear of crime, 1994–2003

	I		II		III	
	Individual Factors	Neighbourhood Assessments	Neighbourhood Assessments	Significance	Neighbourhood Context	Significance
	Coefficient	Significance	Coefficient	Significance	Coefficient	Significance
Intercept	2.14	.00	2.12	.00	2.23	.00
<b>Individual Factors</b>						
African-American	.14	.00	.02	.36	-.13	.00
Latino	.08	.00	.04	.08	-.02	.30
Spanish-speaking	.29	.00	.10	.00	.09	.00
Other or undetermined race	.06	.02	.03	.26	-.00	.87
Female	.27	.00	.27	.00	.28	.00
Age 65 and older	.14	.00	.34	.00	.34	.00
Under age 30	-.04	.01	-.07	.00	-.07	.00
In the labour force	-.11	.00	-.10	.00	-.09	.00
College graduate	-.07	.00	-.01	.30	-.01	.41
Income \$40,000 or more	-.10	.00	-.06	.00	-.05	.00
Home-owner	-.05	.00	-.04	.00	-.02	.00
<b>Neighbourhood Assessments</b>						
Crime problems (z)			.12	.00	.13	.00
Drug and gang problems (z)			.16	.00	.13	.00
Social disorder problems (z)			.11	.00	.10	.00
Confidence in local police (z)			-.17	.00	-.16	.00
Heard about community policing			-.04	.00	-.04	.00
Heard about beat meetings			-.03	.02	-.04	.00

(continued)

Table 5.1: Continued

<b>Beat-Year Context</b>			
Log personal crime rate (z)		.05	.00
Log residential burglary rate (z)		.03	.00
Per cent black (z)		.12	.00
Per cent Latino (z)		.05	.00
Log linguistic isolation (z)		.04	.00
Beat stability index (z)		-.03	.00
<b>Variance Explained</b>			
Within-neighbourhood	4 per cent	21 per cent	22 per cent
Between neighbourhood	37 per cent	85 per cent	90 per cent
Number of Cases			
Individuals Contexts	16,878	16,878	16,878
	2,043	2,043	2,043

Note: 'z' indicates standardised measure; all other measures are 0-1 dichotomies.

on the individual correlates of fear. Note that the coefficient for being a Spanish-speaker was more than three times as great as that for being one of the city's Latino residents—this reflects the large linguistic divide among Hispanics, illustrated in Figure 5.2. This was also the fastest-changing demographic factor on the list, and the fact that there were many more Spanish-speakers at the end of this time period than at the beginning magnified their statistical impact.

Together, the variables examined in Column I explain just 4 per cent of the variance in fear. This is lower than the  $R^2$ s typical of multiple regression models of fear; in fact, the comparable  $R^2$  for the same set of variables was 10 per cent when calculated using OLS regression. The difference is that multilevel analysis decomposes the variance that is attributable to differences between neighbourhoods from that which is due to differences among individuals, while OLS regression attributes the effects of both to the individual variables. This makes a considerable difference, because in these data the year-beat context within which individuals are situated explains 17 per cent of the total variance in fear (this is the 'intra-class correlation'). This figure is high for criminological research in general (Oberwittler 2004), but it is almost exactly the figure reported by Robinson et al (2003) for a block-level study of fear in Baltimore. Because Chicagoans are strikingly segregated by race and class, 37 per cent of the between-context difference in fear was due to 'compositional effects' (for example, some neighbourhoods exhibited more fear because many Spanish-speakers were concentrated there), and this is reported as well in Table 5.1.

Column II of Table 5.1 adds respondent's views of neighbourhood crime conditions and the police to the mix. Unlike their personal characteristics, we have seen that these perceptions shifted over time, some quite dramatically and differentially for various population groups. Together, Chicagoan's assessments of what was happening in their neighbourhoods increased the  $R^2$  in Column II to 21 per cent, a five-fold increase over the simple demographic model.

The three indices of the extent of crime, drug and gang, and social disorder problems were standardised, so that the coefficients presented for them in Table 5.1 are comparable; this is highlighted by the 'z' displayed in those rows. The coefficients represent differences in levels of fear associated with a one standard deviation shift (which is a very substantial change) in the level of each of those independent variables. All were strongly related to levels of fear, with perceived drug and gang problems having the largest negative impact. In addition, assessments of the quality of policing were linked to fear, with an effect equalling that of drug and gang problems. The two dichotomous measures of awareness of Chicago's community policing programme each had about the same effect, which was in the range of that of being a home-owner. Not surprisingly, in addition to increasing the individual-level  $R^2$ , adding these perceptions of neighbourhood conditions



and policing explained 85 per cent of differences between the neighbourhoods.

Interestingly, taking these factors into account also dramatically altered the relationship between fear of crime and race. Being a Spanish-speaker was the only racial or ethnic factor that was still significantly associated with fear, once the effects of these measures of crime, disorder and police-community relations were accounted for. Statistical differences in fear uniquely associated with being an African-American dropped by a factor of seven (from .14 to .02), and the fear associated with being a Latino dropped by half. Even the uniquely high level of fear associated with being a Spanish-speaker dropped by almost two-thirds, from .29 to .10, although it remained statistically significant. The influence of most other individual characteristics was not much affected, for they are less geographically concentrated and covaried less with crime, disorder, and relations with the police.

Column III of Table 5.1 adds beat-year context measures of crime and associated demographic factors to the mix. All of the measures were also standardised, so the coefficients can be directly compared in terms of their magnitude. The extent of officially recorded crime mattered for fear at this level as well. Residents were more fearful in times and places with high levels of reported personal crime and residential burglary. Because crime rates were dropping in almost all areas of the city between 1993 and 2003, the inference is that neighbourhood crime decline was one factor behind the drop in fear. In addition, fear of crime was lower in more stable areas; beat stability is represented by a factor score loading heavily on home ownership and a low level of residential turnover in the area. Fear levels were higher where there were concentrations of African-Americans and Latinos, with the former evidencing the highest covariance with individual levels of fear. But whites, who were the safest group, declined by 13 per cent between 1990 and 2000, so that certainly could not explain declining levels of fear. The final contextual level factor described in Table 5.1 is linguistic isolation. For each beat in each year, this is a measure of the percentage of households in which all members 14 years old and above routinely speak a language other than English and none of them speak English (by their own assessment) 'very well'. Linguistic isolation is closely associated with the emergence of large, poor, Spanish-speaking immigrant neighbourhoods in Chicago, and these are places in which many survey respondents who report worsening neighbourhood conditions are concentrated (Skogan and Steiner 2004b). Together, the individual-level and context-level neighbourhood factors listed in Table 5.1 explained 90 per cent of the difference between beat-year contexts in fear of crime.

Interestingly, taking more neighbourhood-level factors into account further altered the relationship between fear of crime and black Chicago. The coefficient associated with being African-American became significant and *negative*. This means that in an unlikely world in which African-Americans

lived in places that were ‘just average’ (if this was their score on these measures of gangs, drugs, social disorder, residential stability, recorded crime, and confidence in the police), they would feel even safer than whites and Latinos. Of course, this is not the real world, for they are over-concentrated in some of the worst parts of town, but many of the trends presented in Figures 5.4 and 5.5 project that this is the direction in which things are moving, a hopeful sign for the city’s blacks. On the other hand, the extra dollop of fear associated with being one of the growing number of Spanish-speakers remained significantly associated with fear.

#### IV. MODELLING TRENDS IN FEAR

The final question is, how accurately do these factors account for *trends* in fear over time? This is addressed in Figure 5.5, which compares yearly levels of fear with trends predicted by various components of the statistical model. Three statistical predictions are presented. The first is based on the fixed personal characteristics of respondents, and it is apparent that those demographic factors account for scarcely any of the decline in fear over time. The ‘demographic prediction’ of fear is virtually flat over time, and does not match the observed trend at all. This is consistent with the data presented in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, which illustrated that the decline in fear in Chicago was broad-based during the 1994–2003 period, and could not be easily explained by changes in the city’s demography.

Adding respondents’ assessments of neighbourhood conditions, their awareness of community policing, and their confidence in the police helped a great deal. The yearly levels of fear predicted by demography plus those factors did capture some of the trend in fear, and the further addition of area crime and demography improved the fit a bit more.

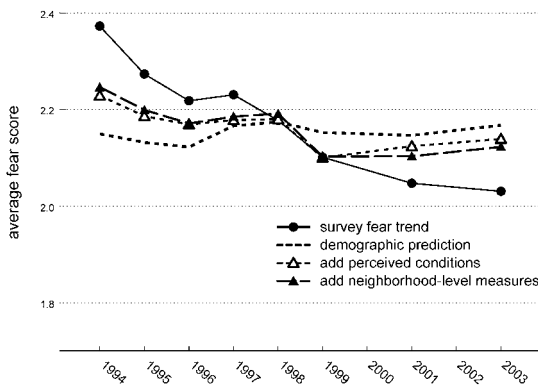


Figure 5.5: Trends in Survey and Predicted Fear

However, it is apparent in Figure 5.5 that the factors examined here can account for only part of the drop in fear witnessed in Chicago during the 1990s and 2000s. In particular, the predicted level of fear in the 2001–03 period is further from the mark than it was for the 1990s. The early 2000s was a period in which confidence in the police stopped increasing among African-Americans, and when their reports of neighbourhood gang, drug and social disorder problems ceased improving. Things also took a turn for the worse among Spanish-speaking Latinos during this period. Fear of crime continued to drop for both groups, on the other hand, suggesting that other factors *not* included in this analysis were at work during the 2000s. The large size of the individual-level coefficient associated with being a Spanish-speaker even when controlling for neighbourhood and policing factors suggests that more needs to be understood about the sources of their fear.

There are certainly many plausible causes of fear that are not examined here, because adequate measures were not included in the survey. One is a direct measure of personal victimisation, which in line with declining recorded crime rates should have declined over the course of this study. Other causes of fear include what Skogan and Maxfield (1981) dubbed ‘vicarious victimisation’. People can have ‘second-hand’ experience of crime via a variety of channels (see also Tyler 1980, 1984). One such channel is media coverage of crime. There has also been some research on the impact of another source of second-hand information on crime—interpersonal communication—but this research is less common. As Skogan and Maxfield (1981) documented, people talk and hear about crime on a frequent basis. When they do they are more fearful, and when victims they hear about resemble themselves and come from the same neighbourhood, they are even more fearful. Given the decline in crime that Chicago experienced during the 1990s, it is plausible that talk about neighbourhood crime diminished somewhat, and data on this point might improve our understanding of trends in fear. On the other hand, I am less sanguine that media coverage of crime tracked this new reality very closely.

Also not considered here is a list of concerns about ostensibly ‘non-crime’ issues which research has linked to expressions of fear of crime. On this list are perceptions of growing racial diversity in the neighbourhood, the appearance of immigrants in the community (Lane and Meeker 2003), and concern about cultural diversity more generally (Merry 1981). Another study might be able to consider additional neighbourhood or contextual-level factors, including the extent of neighbourhood cohesion or solidarity, and the willingness of neighbours to intervene to protect one another. These are components of ‘collective efficacy’, which has been shown to deter violent crime (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997). Xu, Fiedler and Flaming (2005) document that collective efficacy is linked to fear, both directly and indirectly through its impact on neighbourhood disorder and

crime. What is unknown in the present context is whether Chicagoans' 'non-crime' concerns and neighbourhood solidarity have increased enough over time, to account for declining levels of fear.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

At least since the 1970s, fear of crime has been one of the barometers by which society judges its emotional condition. Mounting levels of fear provided a backdrop for highly charged political debates over crime policy and criminal justice practices. One theme of this volume is that this 'emotionalisation' of the issue threatens to dominate discussions of jurisprudence and criminology, as politicians position themselves to address the apparent emotional needs of the public. In this context, the view that trends in fear of crime have not reflected real declines in crime in the UK and elsewhere takes on real political significance.

However, it turns out that fear of crime does not inevitably ratchet up; it also can go down, and dramatically so. This chapter examined the factors lying behind this trend. Surveys conducted in Chicago between 1994 and 2004 document that fear of crime there *did* drop noticeably, as crime declined. The decline was a general one, and in addition fear went down a bit more among some of the groups that were initially most fearful, including women, African-Americans and older residents. The challenge facing the chapter was to *explain* these trends, which is an issue that has not been addressed in past research.

The analysis focused on factors that—unlike demography—can shift relatively rapidly, and could thus account for rapidly declining fear. Among them were neighbourhood conditions. These were represented by archival measures of crime and by perceptions of neighbourhood conditions gathered in the surveys. Another factor that changed during the 1994–2003 period was policing. During this period Chicago adopted a community policing programme, and the evaluation surveys indicate that awareness of the programme grew over the period, and Chicagoans became more confident in their police.

The chapter presented a statistical model incorporating these individual and neighbourhood-level factors. These factors explained a substantial fraction—but far from all—of the decline in fear that was observed over time. Among the notable findings was the importance of immigration; after women and older people, Spanish-speaking residents were the most fearful Chicagoans. This factor takes on added significance because it is the fastest-changing feature of the city's demographic landscape. The effect of confidence in the police was a strong one, and awareness of the city's community policing programme contributed to declining fear as well. Both awareness and confidence rose during the 1990s, as the programme took

hold in the city. Not surprisingly, indicators of the extent of crime, gang, drug, and social disorder problems were also linked to fear, and these too declined for many residents during the 1990s and early 2000s.

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