

The impact of crime on jamaicas economy criminology essay

[Law](#), [Criminology](#)



An economic problem that Jamaica faces as a country is " Crime". Crime may be defined as an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law. For many decades Jamaica has been plagued with crime and violence. This has been a major concern of the nation and the Government since the mid - 1970s. In the first seven weeks of 2012, Jamaica's murder rate was over 20% higher than in the same period in 2011. The Government has made numerous attempts to decrease the rate of crime but these measures have been short - term. The Government's ultimate plan was to increase Police mobility and firepower but this has proven futile as Police are understaffed, corrupt, and ineffective and the cost is unsustainable. Jamaica's population is estimated at approximately 2. 7 million people. The number of murders and other violence causes Jamaica to have one of the highest crime rates in the world. Police statistics in Jamaica has shown that since the year 1999 Jamaica's crime rate has steadily risen. In 2005, according to International statistics, Jamaica was the " Murder capital of the World". There has been tremendous increase in the rate of homicides and shootings, illegal drugs, arms and ammunition, rape and carnal abuse which continues to negatively impact the country's social and economic growth. Crime can be attributed to several factors namely: weak family structure, poverty, income inequality, unemployment and lack of opportunity. Jamaica is now experiencing a G-culture challenge characterized by a dangerous combination of guns, gangs, grand money and girls to which Jamaican men gravitate (Lewis (2010). The estimated cost of crime has been 67 to 90 per cent of Jamaica's gross domestic product over the last 40 years (jamaicaobserver. com, Business - Reduced crime leads to better economy, Bunting June 17, 2012). The

purpose of this research is to investigate the causes and effects of crime and recommend economic concepts that could be employed to correct this problem in Jamaica. A Review of Literature

Types of Crime

Violent Crime

Violent crimes or violent offenses involve the use of force or injury to the body of another person. The seriousness of a violent crime is usually determined by the degree of physical harm caused to the victim (LaMance, 2011). Jamaica has an above average violent crime rate in the world. From the period 1989 to 2009 Jamaica saw a rise in organized crime and a subculture of violence. Since the arrest and extradition of Christopher 'Dudus' Coke in June 2010 there has been a significant decrease in the murder rate and other crimes across the country. Recent crime statistics have shown that Jamaica's crime rate has decreased by 80 percent. However, crime is still an issue as the country continues to be affected by it. Jamaica is plagued with robbery, gang violence, domestic violence, rape and carnal abuse. Rape and carnal abuse is rapidly increasing. Mostly females are the victims. There has been a recent incident in Montego Bay, St. James where five women including three girls below 18 were brutally raped. Police statistics have shown a 100 percent increase in the number of rapes reported in Clarendon, 58 percent increase in St. Catherine, 43 percent in Manchester, 40 percent in Trelawny and 33 percent in other communities across Jamaica. According to statistics for the period January to September 2012, a total of 626 rape cases were reported while for that same period 2011, 595 cases were reports, this depicts a 5 percent increase.

REPORTED CHILD ABUSE CASES JAN – JUN 2012

Sexual abuse - 1402 Physical abuse - 1201 Trafficking - 20

Of the sexual abuse cases mentioned above 92.9 per cent of the victims were girls. The above data is from the Office of the Children's Registry (OCR). Types of

Crime Nonviolent Crime Non-violent crimes are those crimes that do not involve the use of any force or injury to another person. The seriousness of a non-violent crime is usually measured in terms of economic damage or loss to the victim (LaMance, 2011). Common non-violent crimes affecting Jamaica's economy are: theft, bribery, drug related crimes, corruption and fraud more so the infamous ' Lottery Scam'. The lottery scam is smearing the country's reputation internationally. It deters foreign investors

Crime Factors Weak Family Structures In Jamaica there is a vast amount of children with absent fathers. Growing up without a father or male figure as a role model is very difficult for children, especially boys. There are too many neglected, unloved and uncared for children especially in the inner cities, many of which can be seen wandering on the streets and left to the mercy of perpetrators. Mothers are left to raise their children by themselves, the fathers are never around. Often times these mothers are teenage girls or under twenty five (25) years of age who lack experience and need guidance themselves. A recent study of Caribbean youth found that only 9 per cent grew up with a father, and when step-fathers were factored in, the percentage grew to only 13 per cent. So a large percentage of Jamaican youth are growing up without their fathers. This has grave economic and social consequences for society, Boyne, I. (2005, November 20). Closing Jamaica's crime factories. Jamaica Gleaner. Retrieved November 01, 2012,

from [http: www. jamaica-gleaner. com](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com). In Jamaica society, fatherless children are at a disadvantage as they face more struggles to achieve success in their lives both personally and academically. They lack the sense of the most basic social norms and behaviours. These children become the raw materials of crime in Jamaica as they usually form gangs and engage in criminal acts due to lack of proper guidance and stability. Children from broken homes are far more likely to commit crimes than those from stable families. Many research studies support the theory that weak family structure correlates with delinquency. The family is the foundation of human society. Crime FactorsPovertyThere is a direct link between poverty and crime as they usually go hand in hand. Crime exists everywhere in Jamaica and among all people. However, where there are high poverty levels the rate of crime is significantly high. Poverty causes hunger, when impoverished people are hungry they engage in acts of stealing or robbery to acquire what they need as they lack legitimate means to attain them. The lack of independence which comes with economic hardship makes the poor more likely to commit crime (Harriot, 2001). Young people especially in the inner cities are more likely to get involved in drug dealing and gangs as they feel there is no other way out of their impoverished state. Jamaica's poverty level is unacceptably high. According to CIA Fact book, 16. 5% of the country's population is living below the poverty line (2010 est.); this would be equivalent to approximately 462, 000 people who are unable to meet their basic needs. In addition, the IMF report states that 1. 1 million Jamaicans are living in poverty and earning less than US\$2. 50 per day. A combination of Poverty and crime equals: people benefiting from criminally generated income. People in poverty are

more likely to get arrested. Crime Factors

Income Inequality

Income inequality makes it difficult for the poor to survive and on a wider scale it lowers the economic growth of Jamaica. When income inequalities are high, crime is equally high as it is a major determinant of crime. When the poor feel inferior to the rich it causes serious social tensions to increase hence decreasing the opportunity cost of crime. Consequently, as the income distribution gets more unequal, the gap between the benefits and costs of crime widens and thus the incentive for crime becomes higher (Becker, 1968). Three major ecological theories that fit to the conception that inequality increases crime rates are: Becker's economic theory of crime, Merton's strain theory and Shaw & MacKay's social disorganization theory. According to Becker's framework, areas of high inequality, i. e. those areas where very poor and very rich coexist; the rational criminal's motivation is stimulated by the inequality. Merton's theory argues that when faced with the relative success of others around them, unsuccessful individuals feel frustration at their situation. The greater the inequality is, the greater the inducement for low status individuals to commit crime. The motivation to commit crime is not solely drawn from the expected economic benefits, but from social disgruntlement and dissatisfaction (Kelly, 2000). Crime

Factors

Unemployment & Lack of Opportunity

Jamaica faces great challenges with high rate of unemployment and underemployment. Unemployment creates an environment where parents cannot send their children to go school. Uneducated children are illiterate and When people are unemployed they tend to be more hostile, angry and jealous this creates social dismantling and crime. Youth going to work or school tends to reduce the

probability of being involved in criminal activities (Tauchen and Witte, 1994). The country's economy is in a stagnant state. Income inequality persists, poverty levels remain unacceptably high and there is a high probability that many who are only living just above the poverty line could fall back into poverty.