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RESEARCHERS FIND THAT PREVENTING CHRONIC OFFENDING CAN LEAD TO COST SAVINGS OF \$200 MILLION.

TALLAHASSEE, Fla— In a series of studies published in *Criminology & Public Policy* (CPP), researchers found that amongst offenders, those who frequently commit crimes when they are young eventually turn to more serious offending in adulthood and impose far greater costs than those whose offending peaks during adolescence. Professors Mark Cohen of Vanderbilt University, Alex Piquero of Florida State University and Wesley Jennings of the University of Louisville found that preventing individuals from becoming chronic offenders could lead to a cost savings of more than \$200 million in terms of the costs imposed because of their criminal behavior. The authors conclude that the most chronic offenders are exerting the highest total monetary costs and therefore, the majority of prevention and intervention efforts should be targeted at the most chronic offenders to have the greatest cost-savings.

Crime likely costs the United States in the range of \$1 to \$2 trillion a year according to Policy essayist Robert O'Brien of the University of Oregon. However, O'Brien believes that this figure probably underestimates the true costs of crime because of the difficulty in accurately measuring all the costs associated with a given criminal act. With the current state of the US economy so fragile and reducing financial costs so important, it is imperative that we consider all costs when developing policies related to crime.

Policy essayist Jens Ludwig of the University of Chicago and National Bureau of Economic Research notes the importance of focusing on the ratio of benefits to costs of prevention efforts and not just the benefits. Ludwig suggests using information about the criminal involvement of parents when identifying the offending groups most at risk for frequent offending because of previous evidence about strong intergenerational correlations in offending behavior. Above all, Ludwig feels that the main implication for crime prevention is that we should be doing a lot more of it.

Senior Editor for this series, Professor David Anderson of Centre College highlights the importance of continuing research on costs of crime and offender prevention efforts. Anderson notes that the existing literature calls into question the effectiveness of severe punishment as a deterrent to crime and he therefore encourages continued analyses of alternative approaches to punishment. In sum, Anderson argues that “with crime so painful and dollars so dear, research that sharpens the focus of deterrence is always welcome.”