

Homework 5

due Wednesday, 4/18 in class

Directions: Only typed answers will be accepted. Hard copies, only, please.

Problem 1 Find and cite at least three articles from 2000 or later discussing the deterrent effect of the death penalty.¹ Briefly (a couple of sentences on each is fine) summarize the findings of each. Describe some problems a researcher is likely to run into when trying to estimate the deterrent effect of the death penalty.

Problem 2 Find and cite at least one recent source on the relative cost of the death penalty versus life imprisonment. What are the major components of the cost of executing a convicted murderer?

Problem 3 In class, we discussed crime rates declining in the 1990's, but the data in the book and the Levitt paper stop in 2003. The FBI makes their Uniform Crime Reports available online; find them, and determine if the drop in crime the US experienced in the 1990's continued into the 2000's. On a graph generated in Excel, and using data from the Uniform Crime Reports, plot the violent crime rate, the property crime rate, and the homicide rate in the US from 1960-2010, with data points every five years.

Problem 4 Locate Uniform Crime Report data on crime in Lexington, KY in 2010. According to the Uniform Crime Reports, how many murders took place in Lexington in 2010? How many robberies? How many motor vehicle thefts? What is the crime rate for each of these three offenses? How do these crime rates compare with the rest of the country? With Kentucky as a whole?

Problem 5 Briefly summarize Steve Levitt's argument that Roe can explain a substantial portion of the drop in crime in the 1990's (including what features of available data he exploited to arrive at this conclusion). Find and cite at least one article that disagrees with Levitt's claim, and summarize its argument.

Problem 6 In decreasing order from largest effect to smallest effect, what are the four factors Steve Levitt identifies as having decreased crime in the 1990's? What are the 6 commonly-suggested factors for which Levitt finds no evidence of actual crime-reduction?

¹As always, peer-reviewed economics or law journal articles are best, but competent, non-editorial, journalism is acceptable as well.