

## ESRC Understanding Inequalities project:

### Evidence submission to the Edinburgh Poverty Commission – June 2019

#### Introduction

In response to Phase 2 of the Call for Evidence by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, this document provides relevant information and research findings based on the work of the Understanding Inequalities research team. For further information about Understanding Inequalities, please visit the [study website](#) or contact the Study's Director, Professor Susan McVie (smcvie@ed.ac.uk).

#### Key findings:

- In 2017/18, crime rates were higher in Edinburgh than all other Scottish local authorities, with the exception of Glasgow.
- More deprived Electoral Wards in Edinburgh tend to have higher crime rates, although policing practice (such as stop and search) is not necessarily more concentrated in deprived communities.
- Adults living in the most deprived Edinburgh neighbourhoods were almost twice as likely to report being a victim of crime in 2014/15 (and they reported more crimes on average) than those living in the most affluent neighbourhoods.
- Edinburgh residents were more likely to report being victims of crime than those in the rest of Scotland, regardless of deprivation level, in 2014/15.
- People living in Edinburgh have similar perceptions of crime to those in other parts of Scotland, although there was a sharp increase in people from Edinburgh thinking there had been a rise in crime in 2014/15 – this was very similar for people living in the most and least deprived neighbourhoods.
- Imprisonment rates are highest in the most deprived Edinburgh neighbourhoods, although variation across neighbourhoods suggests that factors other than deprivation also explain imprisonment rates.
- Children and young people who grow up in poor households and deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to get involved in crime, especially violence.
- Girls and otherwise low risk children who grow up in deprived circumstances are at particular risk of becoming violent.
- Poverty also influences decision making by the police, youth justice system and adult courts, and increases the likelihood of a young person being charged by the police and convicted in court, which in turn increases the likelihood that a young person will end up NEET.
- Our 'inequality index' suggests that between 2004 and 2016, low income Edinburgh residents have been increasingly moving out of the city centre and becoming concentrated in peripheral housing areas.
- This 'decentralisation of poverty' has resulted in an increase in inequality for low income residents in terms of access to services and amenities and distance to employment, compared to people who are not on low incomes.

## **Crime and justice in Edinburgh**

One of the potential causes and consequences of poverty and inequality is crime. However, there is little or no evidence about the relationship between crime and poverty outlined in the Edinburgh Poverty Commission strategy documents.

The Understanding Inequalities project has been conducting research on crime and justice inequalities across Scotland, and can share some of its findings on crime in the City of Edinburgh.

In presenting these data, please note that there are limited sources of information on crime below Local Authority level in Scotland (unlike England and Wales where data are publically available at very low levels of geography). This means that it is not possible to examine in detail the relationship between crime, justice and poverty at a local/neighbourhood level; nevertheless, the findings below provide some useful indication as to how crime and justice vary according to levels of deprivation.

### *1) Crime and poverty in Edinburgh*

In 2017/18, the crime rate in the City of Edinburgh was 645 per 10,000 people – this was second only to Glasgow City (708 per 10,000) and well above the Scottish average (451 per 10,000).<sup>1</sup>

Looking at different crime types recorded by the police in 2017/18, Edinburgh had higher than average rates of robbery, housebreaking, shoplifting, vehicle theft and vandalism, but lower than average rates of sexual, drug and knife crime.

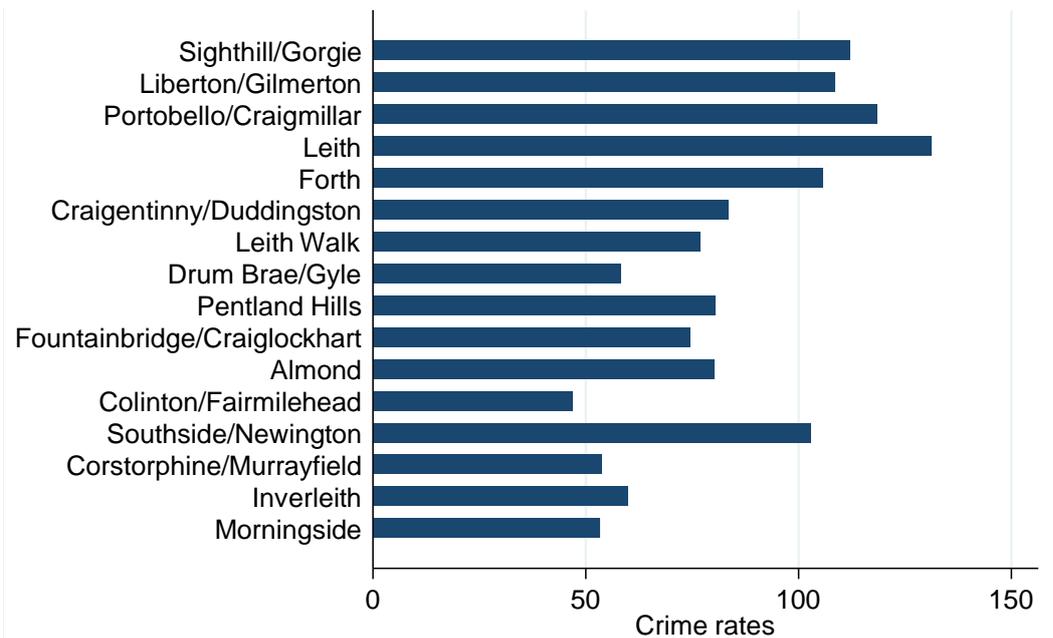
There are no publically available data about crime or policing at a local level in Scotland. However, as part of an Understanding Inequalities project on stop and search, Police Scotland made available data on certain crime types (those likely to be influenced by stop and search practices) at Electoral Ward level.

Figure 1 shows the crime rate per 1,000 adults (age 16 or over) in each of the Edinburgh Wards during 2018. The Wards are ordered according to average level of deprivation from the highest (Sighthill/Gorgie) to the lowest (Morningside). (Note: Figure 1 excludes the city centre as this has much a higher crime rate than other wards and so it skews the general pattern of crime in the city).

There is not a perfect relationship between average level of deprivation and the crime rate; however, it is clear that crime rates tend to be higher in more deprived Wards, and lower in less deprived wards.

Wards are not an ideal level of geography to study crime because they are quite large. It is likely that there is a lot of variation in crime rates across neighbourhoods within Wards; however, based on the findings from Figure 1, we could reasonably expect there to be higher crime rates in more deprived neighbourhoods.

**Figure 1: Crime rates per 1,000 adults in Edinburgh Electoral Wards, ranked from most (top) to least (bottom) deprived (excluding the city centre)**

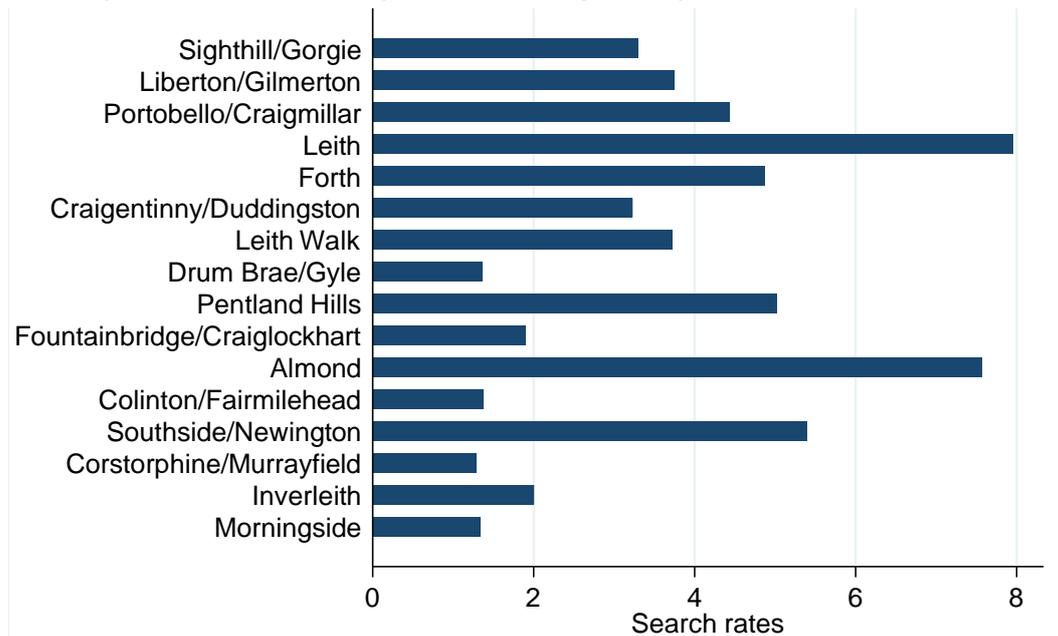


Stop and search data is published on the Police Scotland website on a quarterly basis.<sup>2</sup> Search rates in Edinburgh (which are a proxy measure of how localities are policed) show a similar pattern to that of Figure 1, although there is a less clear relationship to level of deprivation within Edinburgh Wards.

Figure 2 shows that the highest search rates were not necessarily in the Wards that had the highest deprivation rates, although broadly speaking Wards that were at the upper end of the deprivation scale had higher search rates than those at the bottom end of the scale.

These findings suggest that while crime might have a reasonably close relationship with levels of poverty, patterns of policing are likely to be driven by a wider range of factors. However, as noted above, we would need to have data that allowed us to explore these relationships at much smaller geographical units to be certain of this.

**Figure 2: Stop and search rates per 1,000 adults in Edinburgh Electoral Wards, ranked from most (top) to least (bottom) deprived (excluding the city centre)**

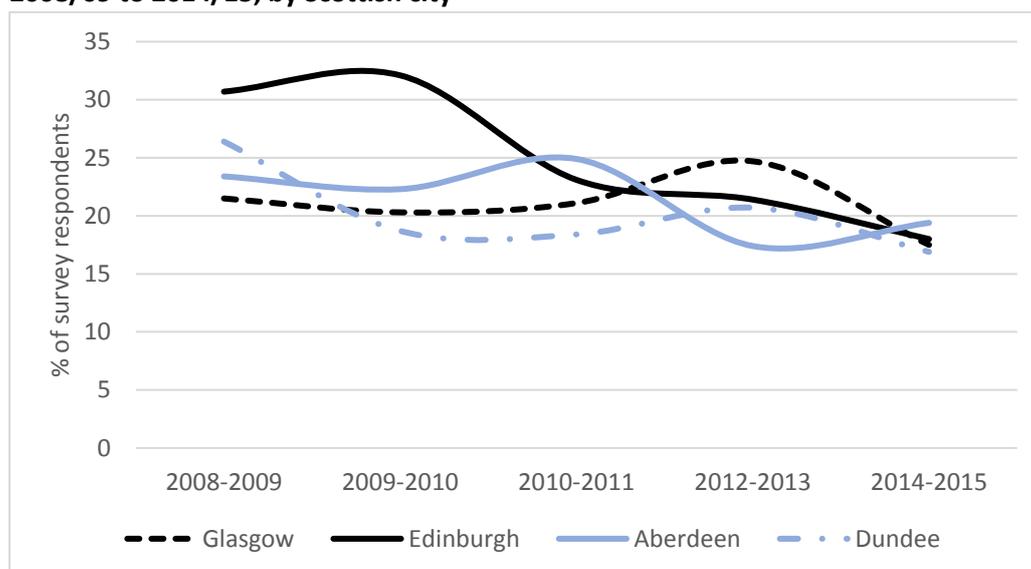


## 2) *Experience and perceptions of crime in Edinburgh*

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) measures people's experiences and perceptions of crime in Scotland. Looking at data from the 2008/09 to 2014/15 surveys, we found that 25% of all survey respondents living in Edinburgh said that they had been a victim of any type of crime measured by the survey. This was significantly higher than Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and other parts of Scotland.

Rates of victimisation in Scotland fell between 2008/09 and 2014/15. Figure 3 shows that the risk of being a victim was higher in Edinburgh than the other Scottish cities in 2008/09 and 2009/10, but by 2014/15 it had reduced to around the same level. It appears there was a greater fall in crime in Edinburgh over this period, therefore.

**Figure 3: Percentage of SCJS respondents who said they experienced any survey crime, 2008/09 to 2014/15, by Scottish city**



Looking just at the SCJS data for 2014/15, the SCJS found that 18% of adults living in Edinburgh reported being a victim of crime (this compared with 14% of adults living in the rest of Scotland).

Victimisation rates varied widely according to level of deprivation, however. Figure 4 shows the prevalence of victimisation for people living in Edinburgh compared to the rest of Scotland according to whether the SIMD quintile they were living in.

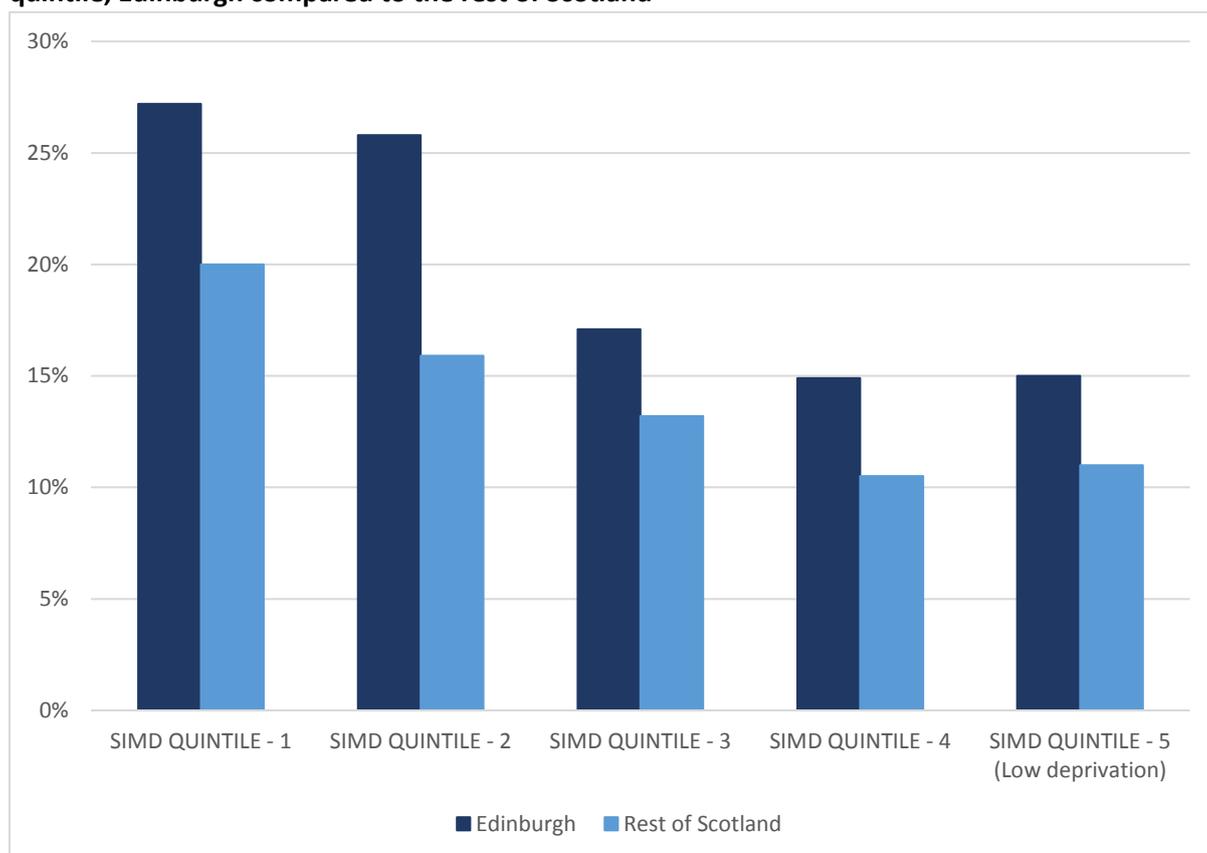
Figure 4 shows that 27% of adults living in the most deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh were a victim of at least one crime compared with 15% of those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods. (The comparable figures for the rest of Scotland were 20% and 11%, respectively).

It is also clear from Figure 4 that victimisation rates in Edinburgh were higher across all SIMD quintiles than they were for those in the rest of Scotland (although that would include a large degree of variation across local authorities).

The average number of incidents of crime reported by victims was also higher in Edinburgh compared to the rest of Scotland, especially amongst those in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Victims living in the most deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh reported an average of 1.9 incidents of crime compared to 1.3 in the least deprived neighbourhoods. (The comparable figures for the rest of Scotland were 1.7 and 1.3, respectively).

**Figure 4: Percentage of adults reporting at least one incident of victimisation by SIMD quintile, Edinburgh compared to the rest of Scotland**



The SCJS also collects information on people’s perception of crime. This includes a question about whether there is more or less crime in your local area compared to two years ago.

Figure 5 shows that there was a reduction between 2008/09 and 2014/15 in the perception of people thinking there was more crime in their local area, and a slight increase in the perception that there was less crime.

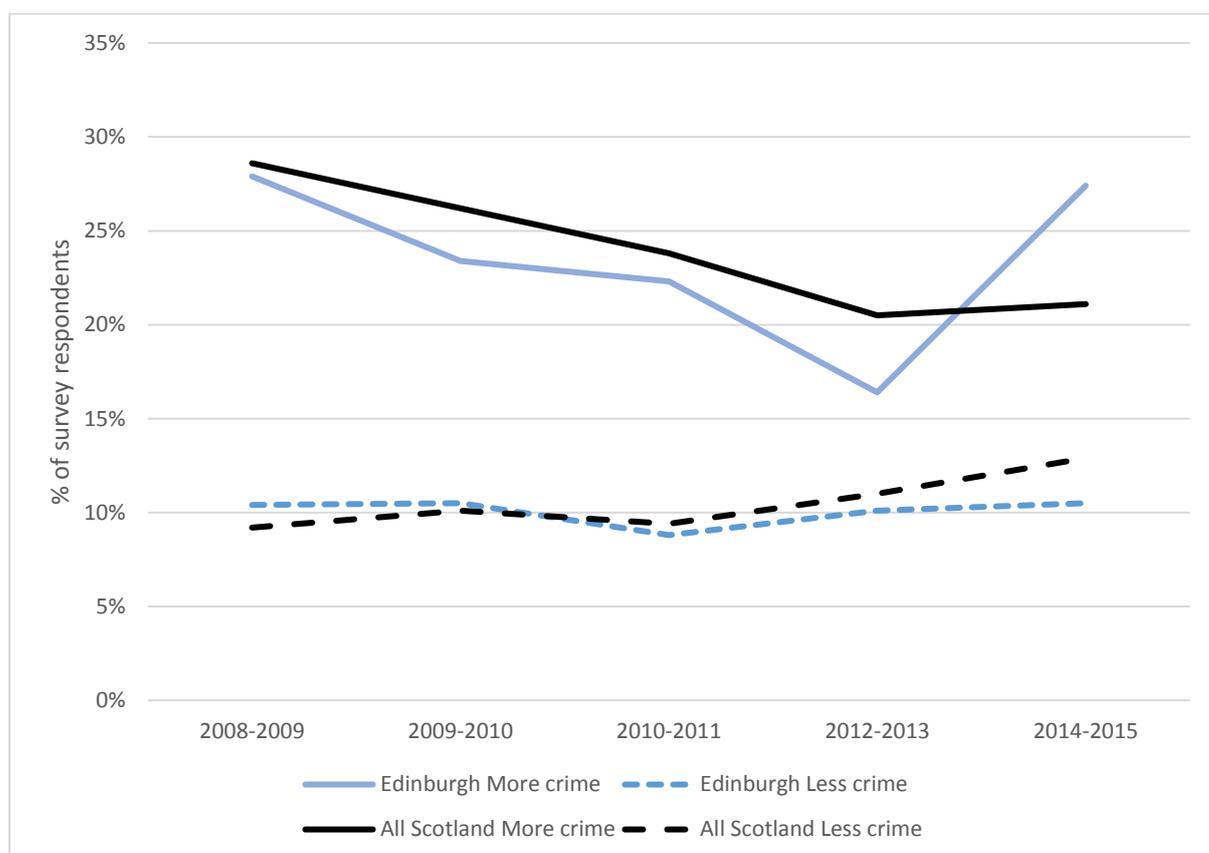
Trends in the perception of the level of crime for people living in Edinburgh were broadly similar to those in the rest of Scotland, with the exception of 2014/15 when there was a sharp increase in the percentage of people thinking that there was more crime in their local area (see Figure 5).

Interestingly, analysis of the 2014/15 SCJS showed that there was very little difference between people living in the most deprived (28%) and least deprived (25%) communities in Edinburgh in terms of thinking that there was more crime than two years ago.

However, there was a big difference in the percentage of people who thought that there was less crime (22% of those in the most deprived communities compared to 9% of those in the least deprived communities). In other words, people living in poor areas were more likely to have *perceived* there to be a fall in crime in 2014/15.

Most people, across all communities, actually thought that crime had stayed the same.

**Figure 5: Percentage of SCJS respondents who said they thought there was more or less crime in their local area compared to two years ago, 2008/09 to 2014/15, Edinburgh compared to the rest of Scotland**



### 3) *Imprisonment rates across Edinburgh neighbourhoods*

Rates of imprisonment vary across the country, but they are highly related to the level of deprivation in a local area.

Table 1 compares the imprisonment rates for the 10% most and 10% least deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh with the rest of Scotland (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation), using data from 2014 which is the most recently available.

The imprisonment rate for Scotland's most deprived neighbourhoods is 30 times higher than that in its least deprived neighbourhoods.

The imprisonment rate for those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh is very slightly higher than for the rest of Scotland, while the imprisonment rate for the most deprived communities is lower.

However, people living in the most deprived communities in Edinburgh are still about 23 times more likely to be imprisoned than those in the least deprived areas.

**Table 1: Imprisonment rate per 1,000 working-age population, 2014**

Region	Least deprived 10% neighbourhoods	Most deprived 10% neighbourhoods
City of Edinburgh	0.29	6.67
Rest of Scotland	0.24	7.18

Looking at a map of Edinburgh city, it is clear that those neighbourhoods with the highest rates of imprisonment are very closely aligned with those that have the highest levels of deprivation (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Maps of Edinburgh showing imprisonment rates (left) and level of deprivation (right)**

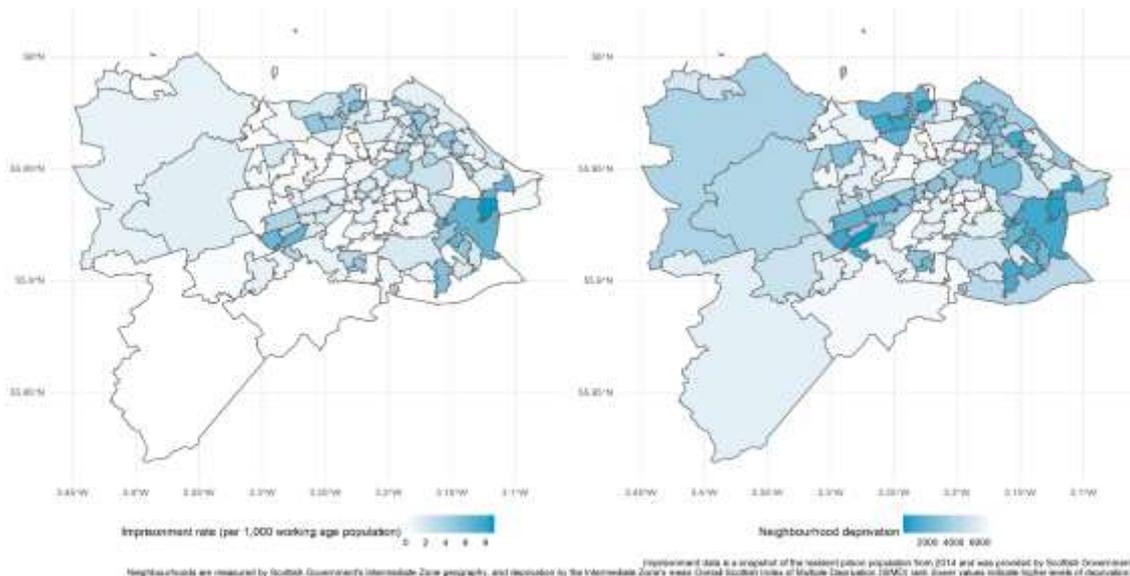
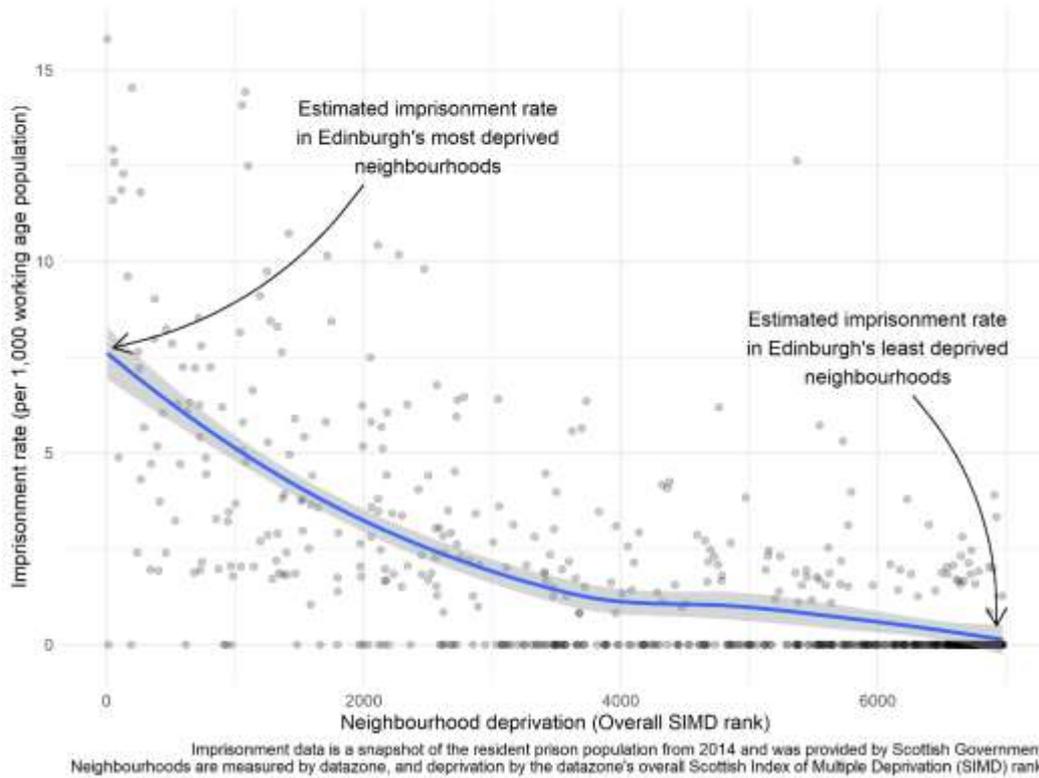


Figure 7 provides further evidence that the average imprisonment rate is much higher in Edinburgh's most deprived neighbourhoods than its least deprived neighbourhoods.

Nevertheless, Figure 7 also shows that there is a lot of variation in imprisonment rates across Edinburgh neighbourhoods, especially amongst those that are most deprived. This suggests that there are likely to be factors other than deprivation that affect rates of imprisonment in Edinburgh's neighbourhoods.

**Figure 7: The relationship between deprivation and imprisonment rates in Edinburgh neighbourhoods**



#### 4) Children, crime and justice in Edinburgh

The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime is a longitudinal study which began in 1998 with the aim of examining the offending pathways of a cohort of 4,300 young people who were just starting secondary school. For the last two decades, the study has provided valuable evidence about the relationship between poverty and both offending behaviour *and* access to the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.

Findings from the Edinburgh Study show that children growing up in poor households or more deprived neighbourhoods were at greater risk of offending: <sup>2,3</sup>

- Growing up in poverty has a significant and direct effect on young people's likelihood of engaging in crime, especially violent crime, even when a range of other factors are taken into account.
- Young people living in a family where the head of household is unemployed or in low status manual employment, and those living in communities with high levels of deprivation, are more likely to engage in violence.
- Boys are generally more likely to engage in violence than girls; however, girls from poor households are at greater risk of engaging in violence than girls from more advantaged backgrounds.
- Children who are classed as at 'low risk' of involvement in violence (according to a range of protective factors) have a higher risk of being violent if they live in a poor household.

- For some young people living in poverty, violence provides a sense of status and identity amongst their peers and becomes a resource that they use to cope with various forms of adversity they face in everyday life.

Edinburgh Study findings also show that poverty impacts on the type of juvenile and adult criminal justice system contact that young people receive, as well as other outcomes: <sup>5,6</sup>

- Through the teenage years and into adulthood, the decision-making practices of institutions (such as the police, the children’s hearings system, and the criminal courts) disproportionately focus on young people from poor backgrounds.
- By age 15, young people who were involved in serious offending and hanging around the streets were more likely to be charged by the police; however, young people from poor households were significantly more likely to be charged by the police than those from more affluent backgrounds.
- By age 18, the strongest factor predicting whether a young person was Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) was whether they had ever been charged by the police and whether they had been placed on supervision by the children’s hearing system.
- By age 22, young adults who had been unemployed for more than a year were significantly more likely to be charged by the police than others, while those who had been unemployed for more than a year and were known to the police by age 15 were more likely to be convicted by a court, even though they may not have committed the most serious offences.

### **The impact of poverty on employment opportunities in Edinburgh**

Another aspect of the work of the UI research team is examining how the relative growth of low-income individuals in the suburbs or periphery of UK cities have been affected by inequalities in access to employment opportunities and amenities. <sup>7,8</sup>

We used information from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to construct indices on inequalities between low income residents of Edinburgh and other residents based on where they lived and how that affected their:

- 1) Distance to the city centre
- 2) Access to amenities (e.g. schools, shops)
- 3) Access to employment opportunities
- 4) Exposure to air pollution

Using our new inequality index, Figure 8 shows the level of inequality in exposure to various conditions and how this has changed for those living in the poorest households from 2004 to 2016. The first panel shows inequality in the distance that poorer people live from the city centre. This has declined over time, as poorer people have tended to become more decentralised, moving out of Edinburgh city centre and becoming more concentrated in peripheral areas.

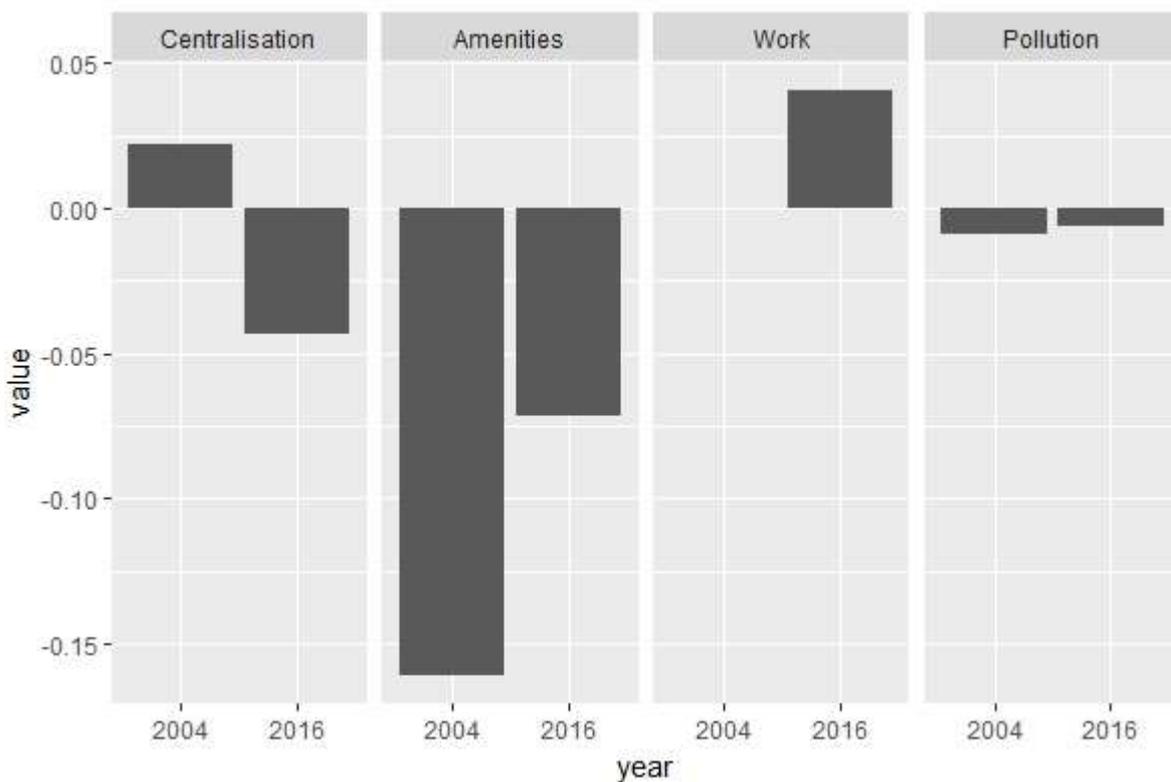
The second panel shows inequality in terms of access to amenities. This was much lower in 2004 than it is in 2016, which suggests that poorer people in Edinburgh now have less access to services and other amenities than they did before. This is almost certainly related to the fact that they are living in the outskirts of the city, so they may have to travel further to access services.

The third panel shows that there was no inequality for poorer people in terms of access to employment in 2004, but this has increased in 2016. This may also be related to the decentralisation of poverty.

The final panel shows that inequality in terms of air pollution is fairly low, but it has increased marginally for poorer people.

In this research, we have not explored the exact causes of these trends, which may be down to gentrification of the inner city or other factors.

**Figure 8: The Inequality Index for Edinburgh measuring residential centralisation, access to amenities, distance to employment and exposure to air pollution**



We have not yet published our work on Scotland but our inequality index is currently being used by [The Improvement Service as part of their Community Planning Outcomes Profile](#).

## Sources of evidence

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2018) Recorded crime in Scotland 2017-2018.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2017-18/pages/7/>

<sup>2</sup> Stop and Search data can be obtained from the Police Scotland website:

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/police-scotland/stop-and-search/stop-and-search-data-publication/>

<sup>3</sup> McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2015) The reproduction of poverty. *Scottish Justice Matters* 3(3): 4-5.

[http://scottishjusticematters.com/wp-content/uploads/Pages-from-SJM\\_3-3\\_November2015-The-Reproduction-of-Poverty.pdf](http://scottishjusticematters.com/wp-content/uploads/Pages-from-SJM_3-3_November2015-The-Reproduction-of-Poverty.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2016) Understanding youth violence: the mediating effects of gender, poverty and vulnerability. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2016.02.011>

<sup>5</sup> McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2007) Youth justice? The impact of system contact on patterns of desistance from offending, *European Journal of Criminology*, 4(3): 315-345.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370807077186>

<sup>6</sup> McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2010) Youth Crime and Justice: Key messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 10(2): 179-209.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895809360971>

<sup>7</sup> AQMeN Research Centre Website <https://www.research.aqmen.ac.uk/pushed-to-the-periphery-changing-patterns-of-poverty-in-scottish-cities/>

<sup>8</sup> Kavanagh, L., Lee, D., and Pryce, G. (2016) Is poverty decentralizing? Quantifying uncertainty in the decentralization of urban poverty. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2016.1213156>

### About the Understanding Inequalities project

[Understanding Inequalities](#) is a three-year project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant Reference ES/P009301/1), which aims to explore the causes and consequences of inequalities in Scottish society and beyond. This innovative and ambitious programme of interdisciplinary research will provide robust evidence to inform and develop new policy solutions to tackle multiple forms of inequality. We will also contribute to the development of new data sources and methodological approaches for researching different types and aspects of inequality.

This research builds on research findings produced, and advanced quantitative methods developed, by the ESRC-funded [AQMeN Research Centre](#) (2013-2017). Our team of researchers are based in Universities and Research Organisations across the UK, Europe and the US.

The UI research focuses on two interconnected themes: the influence of space, place and concentration effects on inequalities; and stability and change in inequalities over the life course.

The UI researchers contributing to this call for evidence were: Professor Susan McVie, Dr Ben Matthews and Dr Babak Jahanshahi (University of Edinburgh), Professor Gwilym Pryce (Sheffield University) and Dr Meng Le Zhang (Cardiff University).