

# HIGHER EDUCATION EXPANSION AND CRIME: NEW EVIDENCE FROM CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper we present causal evidence on the impact of higher education expansion on crime by exploiting a massive expansion of college enrollment in China since 1999, using data from multiple sources. Our identification strategy exploits regional variation in the intensity of the higher education expansion with partially identified difference-in-differences models. We explore various assumptions to account for the potential unparallel trends over years and find that college expansion causally reduces crime rates and the effect changes over time. Moreover, the crime reducing effect extends beyond the post-secondary educational level and into the senior high schools. Our findings document an important yet overlooked positive externality associated with higher education expansion.

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