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NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY REDUCES CRIME AND VIOLENCE OVER 10 YEARS:  
EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

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2022 Working Paper

# Cognitive Behavior Therapy Reduces Crime and Violence over 10 Years: Experimental Evidence

Several small, short-term, or non-experimental studies show that cognitive behavioral informed trainings reduce antisocial behaviors for 1–2 years. But there is no large-scale, long-term research on persistence. We follow 999 high-risk men in Liberia 10 years after randomization into: 8 weeks of low-cost therapy, \$200 cash, both, or a control group. A decade later, men receiving therapy or therapy with cash were about half as likely as the

control group to engage in various antisocial behaviors, including robbery, drug selling, and street fights—far exceeding expert predictions. Impacts are concentrated in the highest-risk men, and most robust from therapy with cash.

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