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MORE HOUSING VOUCHERS, MORE CRIME?

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There is no evidence to support the idea that an increase in the number of housing voucher holders, or federal rental housing assistance for low-income households, in a community leads to increases in crime, according to a study by New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy which examined crime and housing data over 12 years in 10 U.S. cities, released today. Instead, voucher holders are more likely to move into areas where crime rates are increasing.

"We find that crime tends to be higher in neighborhoods with more voucher holders. However, we found no evidence that an increase in the number of voucher holders leads to more crime," said Ingrid Gould Ellen, faculty co-director of the Furman Center and a professor at NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

The assumption that more voucher holders living in a neighborhood means increased crime has often led to community opposition to Housing Choice Vouchers, which subsidize rent, but those fears are misplaced, the study shows.

"We find no evidence that more voucher holders in a tract predict more crime one year later," said Katherine O'Regan, an NYU professor and co-author of the study. "These findings are critically important for policymakers around the country, some of whom have discouraged the use of Section 8 vouchers in their towns and neighborhoods due to misperceptions about the relationship between crime and voucher holders."

-- Katherine Clarke