

Discontinuities in the Age-Victimization Profile and the Determinants of Victimization

Nadine Ketel

Abstract:

Across the world, many rights and responsibilities are conferred on adolescents at the key age thresholds of 16 and 18. Using register data for all reported victimizations in the Netherlands, we show that there are sharp and discontinuous increases in victimization rates at exactly these age thresholds: about 13% for both genders at 16 and 9% and 15% for males and females, respectively, at 18. These effects are comparable for disadvantaged youths (single parent, low income, high neighborhood crime) despite higher baseline victimization risks. We assess which rights underlie these reduced form increases in victimization risk by utilizing (i) detailed data on offense type and location, (ii) cross-cohort variation in the minimum legal drinking age driven by a 2014 reform, and (iii) supplementary survey data of alcohol/drug consumption and mobility behaviors. We conclude that the bundle of access to weak alcohol, bars/clubs and smoking clearly increases the victimization risk at 16, and that rights granted at age 18 (hard alcohol, marijuana coffee shops) exacerbate this risk. The discontinuities are not driven by either access to vehicles (mopeds at 16 at motorcycles/cars at 18) or reaching the school dropout age.