

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/the-enforcement-of-fines-as-criminal-sanctions-the-english-experience-and-its-relevance-to-american-practice>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

This 1986 Vera report presents findings from a study of four English magistrates' courts with respect to strategies for setting and enforcing criminal fine sentences. The principle source of empirical data for the study are samples of cases from three urban and one town magistrates' courts that target offenders convicted of non-trivial offenses who were at risk of being sentenced to a term of incarceration and who, because of their poverty, were at risk of non-payment if fined as an alternative sentence. The data suggests that fines are near the core of English sentencing policy and that when set rationally in relation to means as well as offense severity, fines can be collected from offenders even when they are poor.

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