Intergroup contact with refugees shapes levels of social fear of crime

Research suggests that some minority groups, such as refugees, are stereotyped as criminal. The extent to which these criminal stereotypes are endorsed by an individual has been shown to be associated with the extent to which they experience social fear of crime, that is, the worry about crime as a social problem. Across three studies (*NTotal* = 667), we tested our prediction that intergroup contact (Allport, 1954) with groups that are stereotyped as criminal may contribute to social fear of crime levels by affecting the negative preconceptions about criminally-stigmatized groups. As hypothesized, positive intergroup contact with a criminally-stigmatized outgroup reduced social fear of crime by reducing negative preconceptions about the outgroup (Studies 1-3). Negative intergroup contact had the reversed effect (Study 1). Our findings highlight that intergroup contact has not only the potential to affect people’s preconceptions about criminally-stigmatized groups, but can also shape people’s outlook on society, in particular the extent to which they worry about crime as a social problem.