trends

clearly dwarfs that of other formats, but coverage of vinyl in the Times never fully disappeared during the ‘90s and 2000s. Vinyl has been the most commonly headlined format since 2009.

Vinyl never lost legitimacy. Even ‘90s, but these headlines gave way to stories about stalwart fans and, ultimately, the revival of the medium. Alternately, headlines referencing cassettes all but disappeared, and those mentioning CDs experienced a rise commensurate with their sales during the early period of their existence in the market, but since 2010, there have been nearly twice as many articles written about vinyl. Vinyl now exists as the predominant physical medium discussed within the headline environment.

The legitimating power of popular discourse has enabled vinyl to weather the arrival of more convenient and less expensive competitors. Its continual place in the conversation about music has enabled it to gather the cachet and prestige that have rendered it, today, the only measurably growing physical format in music. Interesting for continuing research, there is anecdotal, but not consistently measured, evidence of a slight resurgence in the cassette format in subcultural music-genres in very recent years that may add another layer of understanding to the manner in which legitimacy can retain a toehold and enable unexpected growth.

R. Saylor Breckenridge is in the department of sociology at Wake Forest University. He studies organizations and institutions, particularly culture industries. William Tsitsos is in the department of sociology, anthropology, and criminal justice at Towson University. He studies the sociology of religion and culture, particularly music-based subcultures.

The format by which music is consumed can serve as a marker of status, and vinyl, while costly and inconvenient, has cachet.

when it was a supposedly “dead” format, it lived on in the popular press and retained a prominence in the music community. For collectors and in special marketing to these audiophiles, vinyl has remained a crucial component of “serious” music appreciation (even as its sales dropped). Claims of its impending demise might have dominated in the 1980s and the legitimating power of popular discourse has enabled vinyl to weather the arrival of more convenient and less expensive competitors. Its continual place in the conversation about music has enabled it to gather the cachet and prestige that have rendered it, today, the only measurably growing physical format in music. Interesting for continuing research, there is anecdotal, but not consistently measured, evidence of a slight resurgence in the cassette format in subcultural music-genres in very recent years that may add another layer of understanding to the manner in which legitimacy can retain a toehold and enable unexpected growth.

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agings toward disaster

by kenneth r. hanson

Volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis: For those living along the tectonic fault lines of the Pacific Rim, these are all relatively regular occurrences. According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), the six countries most affected by natural and environmental disasters are China, India, the United States, Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia, with five out of six of those countries suffering 29.3% of the world’s natural disasters in 2015.

But for all the property damage, loss of power, and loss of services that accompany natural disasters, the loss of life is even more shocking. Many of our grandparents, the world over, live where Mother Nature hits the hardest.

Many of our grandparents, the world over, live where Mother Nature hits the hardest.

The Pacific Rim countries are among the world’s most populous: China, India, the U.S., and Indonesia are the four most populated countries in the world, with Japan and the Philippines just shy of the top ten. Between fault lines and population counts, we have a lot of people living in harm’s way. In fact, CRED estimates that the 10 countries most affected by environmental disasters suffer 87.4% of the deaths caused by environmental disasters. Making matters more complicated, past sociological research shows us that some segments of our population suffer more from environmental disasters than others. One group that is disproportionately affected is elderly people.

In 2005, the world watched Hurricane Katrina unleash its wrath on New Orleans. Images of people stranded on freeway overpasses filled the news media as the U.S. fumbled its attempt to rescue survivors. After the water receded, final counts showed that more than half of the deaths resulting from Hurricane Katrina were people 65 or older. St. Rita’s nursing home in St. Bernard’s Parish proved a particularly poignant example: Its owners were forced to choose between buckling down and preparing for the worst (as they had done in the past) or evacuating. Evacuating elderly patients is risky, since many nursing home patients are on life-supporting systems. Plus, they may be frail, stubborn, or both. So they chose to stay. Thirty-five of St. Rita’s patients died
when the floodwaters overwhelmed the nursing home in less than 20 minutes.

And in September 2017, Hurricane Irma left a Florida nursing home without power—and thus without air conditioning. Eleven residents died, succumbing to the Florida heat.

The number of people aged 65 or over is growing in our most populated countries. Take China and India, which may not have the oldest-aged population on average, but by sheer volume, are home to the greatest numbers of the world’s elders. China alone holds about one-fifth the global population of people 65 or older. Octogenarians are particularly clustered in the countries most prone to environmental disasters. Currently, people who are 80 or older account for about 1% of the world’s population, but the UN projects this group will represent 4% of the world population by 2050, with China, India, the United States, Japan, and Indonesia each boasting 10 million or more individuals over 80.

Our world is moving toward having a majority of its elderly people in harm’s way. At the same time, environmental scientists warn that as global climate change worsens, so do meteorological and climatological disasters. These converging trends paint some bleak possibilities. Certainly, each country has its own unique hurdles and each type of natural disaster has its own challenges. Together, country-specific challenges and disaster-specific effects make it difficult to prepare for imminent disaster.

Typical emergency preparedness follows a familiar, individualistic logic. Individuals are responsible for getting out of harm’s way, which requires them to be aware of the risks of their local environment. Residents in disaster-prone areas are prepared in a variety of ways; they may participate in drills or take workshops on storing and using canned foods. The elderly, however, are less able to prepare than more able-bodied adults. They are more likely to die because they have a harder time taking care of themselves until help arrives. This is why community-level involvement is crucial in forestalling some of the issues that individual-focused solutions cannot address.

In 2011, the strongest earthquake in over 20 years registered a 9.0 on the Richter scale not far off the eastern shore of Japan. Consequently, a tsunami taller than 40 meters devastated much of Japan’s shoreline. Almost 400,000 Japanese residents were displaced into sparse temporary housing, some allocated by lottery. Nor should we forget the Fukushima nuclear reactor spillage, and the many residents still unable to return home. Many of the victims were in rural areas, which as a result of economic trends in Japan are disproportionately populated by older and poor citizens. Some communities demonstrated the strength of joining local experience with custom and care, providing instructive lessons for the rest of the Pacific Rim countries.

The Minamisanriku Council of Social Welfare (MCSW), for instance, formed in a rural Japanese town where over half of the population was in temporary housing from the tsunami. The community was fearful of kodokushi, which roughly translates to “death by loneliness.” The MCSW activated the large elderly base as volunteers who were enthusiastic about helping and held deep-seated knowledge about the area, culture, and community. Rather than let their less-mobile neighbors suffer from loneliness, the elder volunteers offered their time to visit other disaster victims in shelters. The elders’ involvement fed a sense of community and positive rebuilding, and even helped the volunteers’ regain a sense of identity in the wake of destruction. The volunteers framed their experiences in terms of yui, best translated as a norm of reciprocity.
is the public getting smarter on crime?
by christopher uggen and ryan larson

The crime rate surely ranks among the most used and abused social indicators. In politics, media, and popular culture, crime and punishment are invoked to stir up strong public sentiments. But while crime is clearly a social construction, it is also a real concern for individuals, families, and communities. So we can learn a lot by asking a representative sample of Americans what they think about crime and punishment, especially when we track their attitudes and opinions over time. Comparing their thoughts and fears with crime statistics gives us a window into how public opinion tracks “actual” crime.

We focus here on four basic crime stories, as told in the nationally representative General Social Survey (GSS): fear of crime, attitudes about the harshness (or leniency) of the court system, views on police violence, and support for the death penalty. In each case, we argue, American attitudes about crime have begun to align more closely with the best available social indicators on the extent and social distribution of “actual” crime and punishment. Nevertheless, there remains a yawning gap between attitudes and occurrence—and sharp differences based on age, sex, race, and political affiliation.

fear

As then-Chief Justice Warren Berger wrote in 1981, “Crime and the fear of crime have permeated the fabric of American life.” The top chart shows fear of crime for women and men from 1975 to 2016, plotted alongside the official U.S. arrest rate over that time. Men’s fear hasn’t changed too much over the years, with about one in five men reporting they are “afraid to walk at night” in their own neighborhood. But the percentage of women expressing this level of fear has fallen from about 62% in the mid-1970s to about 40% in the mid-2010s. So, as the arrest rate has fallen, so too has the