

Victim Blaming

Criminal Justice

The tendency to attribute responsibility for harm to the person harmed.

Attribution of responsibility to the victim, linked in research to beliefs about a fair and orderly world.

PROPOSED MECHANISM

Belief that the world is basically fair

OBSERVED EFFECT

Lower reporting, higher withdrawal

- Linked to just-world beliefs in social psychology
- Reduces the observer's own sense of vulnerability
- Strongest where the victim is not the ideal type
- Affects reporting, belief and case outcomes
- Appears among professionals as well as the public

LOOK FOR IT

Questions about a victim's conduct can shape how their account is received.

Educational reference. Attribution findings are largely experimental; effects on real decisions are inferred rather than observed.