

# What Darkness Does to the Mind

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## *The Atlantic:*

In the summer of 2008, I moved from Pittsburgh to Chapel Hill to start my new position as a faculty member at the business school at the University of North Carolina. Although I was sad to leave Carnegie Mellon and my colleagues there, I was excited to meet new ones and to move into our new home. A few months earlier, my husband Greg and I had bought a lovely house surrounded by quiet, leafy streets just a few blocks away from the center of town.

Within a few days of moving in, Greg and I received a letter from Chapel Hill's City Hall welcoming us and informing us that new street lighting would be added in the neighborhood in the following weeks since that part of town had recently experienced a surge in crime. In addition to raising my fears (and not making me feel any safer), the letter also piqued my curiosity, since it highlighted an intriguing assumption: that lighting would reduce crime.

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Soon after Greg and I received our letter from City Hall, Chen-Bo Zhong (a professor at the University of Toronto), Vanessa Bohns (a professor at the University of Waterloo), and I designed a series of experiments to test whether darkness — or even dim lighting — would increase dishonesty.

Read the whole story: [The Atlantic](#)