

Evaluation News is produced by BJA's Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement at the Justice Research and Statistics Association.

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Evaluation News provides information on the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement, promotes the exchange of information on evaluation and performance measurement, and publicizes criminal justice research and evaluation reports for use by state and local criminal justice agencies.

Research Summaries

Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence

Makarios and Pratt conducted a meta-analysis in an attempt to determine what works in reducing gun violence. They found a wide range of policy initiatives and programs designed to reduce gun violence, and categorized these efforts into four major areas: information, training, and storage campaigns; gun buy-back programs; gun laws; and law enforcement campaigns. In all, 29 studies were included in the analysis. The results revealed that certain gun violence reduction interventions do not work, some do work, and some work better than others. Based on the results the authors drew three major conclusions. First, studies with low methodological rigor consistently showed stronger effect sizes than did studies with high methodological rigor. Second, some popular programs such as gun buy-backs programs, waiting periods, and background checks did not reduce gun violence, and bans on the sale of firearms had marginally positive effects. Third, certain types of policies and programs do show promise for reducing gun violence. Specifically, law enforcement programs and strategies are clearly more effective than gun laws and certain law enforcement programs and strategies are more effective than others. For example, prosecutorial strategies were found to have, at best, small effect on gun crime, whereas directed patrol policing strategies were shown to have a moderate impact on firearms violence. The programs that were found to be the most consistently effective were those that were also the most comprehensive. Multidimensional, community-based approaches, such as Operation Ceasefire and Partnerships to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence, noticeably outperformed other more limited interventions. The study, "The Effectiveness of Policies and Programs That Attempt to Reduce Firearm Violence: A Meta-Analysis," was published in *Crime and Delinquency*. The abstract is available at:

<http://cad.sagepub.com/content/58/2/222>

Reentry

White, Saunders, Fisher, and Mellow evaluated the impact of the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement (RIDE) Program, a jail-based reentry program operated by the New York City Department of Corrections. RIDE seeks to link inmates with appropriate health and human service organizations in the community through a coordinated, collaborative effort to provide a continuum of care during the reentry process. Assistance begins while the inmate is incarcerated and continues for 90 days of following release with services provided by a community-based service agency. The evaluation assessed whether RIDE reduced recidivism and/or delayed return to jail within one year of release. In addition, it assessed

Useful resources for criminal justice program evaluation and performance measurement are available at the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement web site:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation>.

the role of program dosage on outcomes. The study compared matched samples of participants (n = 478) with nonparticipants (n = 1,231) and program completers (n = 312) with noncompleters (n = 371). Findings showed that the RIDE group and comparison group differed little on measures of recidivism. Nearly three quarters of both groups returned to jail at least once during the next year. Both groups had approximately two new jail stays; both spent, on average, approximately 2 months in jail during the follow-up period; and both groups first returned to jail approximately 3 months following release. Though there are some concerns about measurement and the role that early return to jail played on the ability of individuals to complete the program, the authors offer the following conclusions: 1) Altogether inmates who participated in RIDE did no better than comparable inmates who did not participate in RIDE. Individuals returned to jail at approximately the same rate and at approximately the same time. 2) Individuals who received 90 days of post-release services had far better outcomes than both those who received less than 90 days of post-release services and those who did not participate in RIDE at all. This suggests that program dosage is important. The authors note that this program has overcome some of the barriers to providing reentry services to the jail population and they provide recommendations for implementation of jail-based reentry programs. The study, "Exploring Inmate Reentry in a Local Jail Setting: Implications for Outreach, Service Use, and Recidivism," was published in *Crime and Delinquency*. The abstract is available at: <http://cad.sagepub.com/content/58/1/124>

Crime Prevention

The Urban Institute recently released an evaluation of the use of cameras to prevent car-related crimes in Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) commuter parking facilities. In partnership with the Metro Transit Police (MTP) staff, the research team created a blocked randomized experimental design involving 50 matched pairs of commuter parking facilities in which a combination of live and dummy digital cameras was deployed, along with accompanying signage, at the exits of one randomly selected facility from each pairing. Based on existing Situational Crime Prevention research, the researchers theorized that by creating the perception of greater surveillance, potential criminals would be convinced that they would be more likely to get caught and that they would consequently refrain from crime or take their criminal activities elsewhere. Following installation of the cameras, researchers collected and analyzed crime data from MTP and jurisdictions in which WMATA operates, as well as the physical and environmental characteristics of WMATA's parking facilities. Researchers also collected and analyzed historical crime data from MTP and the seven jurisdictions in which WMATA Metro stations and parking facilities are located. The authors indicated that they were unable to assess the degree to which the cameras were used for crime control and investigative purposes. Shortly before the cameras were deployed, MTP's Auto Theft Unit was disbanded due to budget cuts. Researchers were unable to ascertain the degree to which the camera photos were used for investigative purposes and whether digital camera data were ever linked to license plate recognition software as originally planned. The researchers believe that this suggests that the intervention was confined to the placement of cameras (some live, some dummy) and signage and did not involve any enhanced investigations or increase in suspects. Overall, the analyses revealed that after the cameras were added, car crimes specifically and crimes in general did not change. Researchers also found no evidence of displacement or diffusion of crime to areas surrounding the Metro stations. These findings are consistent with recent research suggesting that video surveillance cameras are more likely to have an impact when they are highly concentrated, actively monitored, and integrated into the broader law enforcement strategy. The report, "Evaluation of Camera Use to Prevent Crime in Commuter Parking Facilities: A Randomized Controlled Trial," is available at: <http://www.urban.org/publications/412451.html>

Announcements

The American Evaluation Association (AEA) has announced a Call for Proposals for its 26th Annual Conference *Evaluation 2012 – Evaluation in Complex Ecologies*. The conference will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota October 22-28, 2012. AEA encourage proposals focusing on the conference theme, or exploring any aspect of the breadth and

depth of the field of evaluation. The deadline to submit a proposal is Friday, March 16th. For more information see: <http://www.eval.org/eval2012/default.asp>

Tip of the Month

Is your Evaluation Report Reader-Friendly?

For an evaluation report to be useful, it must be written with the user in mind. If a report is unclear, it is likely to be of little value to the organizations or policy makers that it is intended to inform. Rakesh Mohan and Margaret Campbell of Idaho's legislative Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE) have identified some common misconceptions about writing evaluation reports and offer some tips to improve the clarity of an evaluation report. Contrary to popular belief, Mohan and Campbell argue that it is unnecessary to dumb down reports, it is possible to explain complex issues, and that even minor edits can greatly improve the clarity of a report. Some of the tips that they offer include: using simple active verbs, minimize jargon and acronyms, and to have a non-evaluator review the report. For more information on writing user-friendly evaluation reports see: <http://aea365.org/blog/?p=5773>