

Major Resources that Provide Evidence on Effective Crime Prevention

Strategic Overview

In 2016, we have significant knowledge about what has been proven to prevent crime. This knowledge is readily accessible and available for decision makers.

The U.S. Department of Justice has described and rated nearly 400 different types of programs and 100 practices in terms of their proven effectiveness in preventing crime. Their results are displayed at crimesolutions.gov. More than 60% were delivered by services such as those for youth, families, early childhood, education and health. Others include situational crime prevention, problem oriented policing and diversion.

The book "Smarter Crime Control" provides actionable recommendations for citizens, communities and politicians. Pre-crime prevention strategies focusing on youth and early childhood, schools and the health sector can reduce crime by 50%. Some proactive policing strategies and partnerships with community services are effective. The benefits of prevention to potential victims and taxpayers are in the billions of dollars.

Canada brings together knowledge on effective crime prevention through the National Crime Prevention Centre and the police research catalogue of Public Safety Canada.

The World Health Organization has identified evidence on violence prevention which focuses on youth and early childhood, weapons and alcohol, help to victims and changes in the culture of violence. Other sources look at problem-oriented policing.

Actions for Municipal Stakeholders

1. Municipalities can use significant knowledge on what prevents crime to make the case for greater investment in prevention and inspire effective programs;
2. Municipalities can invest more in youth and family services, encouraging schools to adopt proven curricula and working with the health sector to reduce crime;
3. Municipalities can look to policing that is proactive and in partnership with community sectors, including diverting calls to appropriate community services.

Effective Services and Risk Factors

What differentiates 2016 is the extent to which an impressive accumulation of knowledge on effective crime prevention is accessible to decision makers from 50 years of evidence-based research.

This builds on large-scale studies from across the world on life-course development of youth. The greater the number of negative life experiences, the more likely that youth become persistent offenders. These risk factors include being born into situations of persistent poverty, inconsistent parenting and child abuse, being

identified in primary school as troublesome, dropping out of school, and abusing substances, including alcohol.

Reducing the number of children growing up with these risk factors will reduce crime. For instance, Toronto and Chicago have a similar population but Toronto has approximately 60 murders a year whereas Chicago has 400. While availability of handguns may be a factor, the research shows that social protection policies as in Canada also limit violence. So improving life chances of all children, including in priority areas,



is very much supported by the knowledge.

However, the accumulated evidence available shows that targeting known risk factors in problem areas provides significant reductions in crime in a cost effective way.

CrimeSolutions.gov: On the Effectiveness of Crime Prevention Solutions

Crimesolutions.gov is a user-friendly but evidence-based website with an extensive list of programs and 100 practices. It is hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice. Like a consumer report, it identifies programs as: effective (green); promising (yellow); and no effect (red). For instance, a program is rated “effective” when evaluation(s) of several replications conclusively demonstrate its effectiveness.

A **Program** is a specific set of activities carried out according to guidelines to achieve a defined purpose, such as the Positive Parenting Program – Triple P - or the school curriculum to reduce sexual violence - 4th R.

A **Practice** is a general category of programs, strategies, or procedures that share similar characteristics with regard to the issues they address and how they address them. Examples include youth mentoring or diversion programs. Each entry describes the action implemented, the evidence on crime prevention, data on cost-effectiveness, and key references for additional information.

Types of Actions Listed as Effective on CrimeSolutions.gov

✓+ Effective Programs and Practices

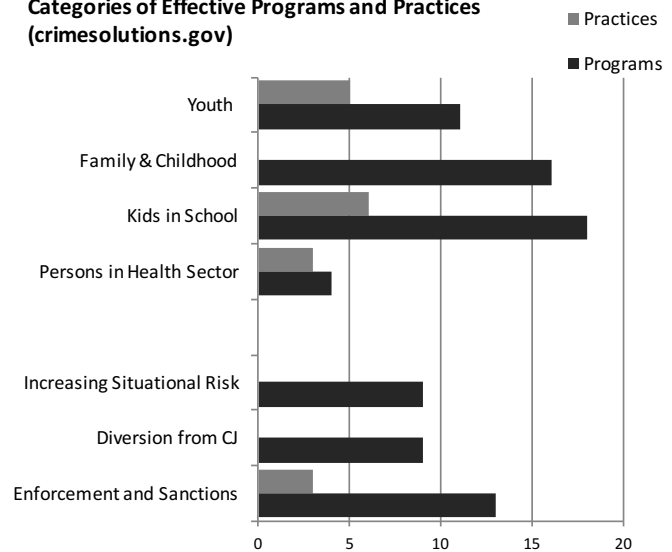
There are 85 programs identified as effective, 242 as promising, and 69 as ineffective.

There are 19 practices identified as effective, 25 as promising, and 23 as ineffective.

The chart below shows that about 65% of the programs involve pre-crime prevention rather than an action by the police, courts, or corrections. More than half of the 85 effective programs tackle problems in families, schools,

or concern themselves with improving life skills of youth through mentoring, and problematic substance use or trauma treatment programs.

Categories of Effective Programs and Practices (crimesolutions.gov)



Promising Programs and Practices

✓ 130 of the programs identified as promising are pre-crime prevention initiatives. 105 relate to situational crime prevention diversion, or involve the criminal justice system.

⊘ No effect Programs and Practices

Programs listed as having no effect in crime prevention are still used extensively, such as **Scared Straight** and **Boot Camps**. These are clearly programs to be avoided.

What Types of Actions have been Proven to Prevent Crime

In order to show municipal stakeholders the types of programs that have been proven to prevent crime, we developed seven categories and then assigned programs and practices into these categories. The first four categories relate to services delivered by the social and community sectors. The three last categories rely on some action from law enforcement.

Categories of Actions Delivered by Social and Community Sectors

1. Youth Services

This category focuses on actions that target youth between the ages of 6 and 24 in a non-

educational, non-familial, and non-carceral context. They aim to improve life-skills of youth in order to prevent challenging future behavior through approaches such as mentoring, youth development, tutoring, career education, counseling and education.

2. Family and Early-Childhood Services

These services involve the family unit and aim to counter family violence, aim to improve parenting skills through education on consistent parenting, and pre-school programs that provide both consistent care to the child and support for the parents. These programs can be implemented in the community, family home, or pre-school.

3. School-Based Actions

These actions improve the life-skills of youth by fostering academic success and student involvement in pro-social behaviors in order to reduce the likelihood of criminal involvement. They are implemented in an educational institution and are generally delivered by a teacher trained in a particular technique.

4. Health Sector Actions

These actions, which focus on the health sector aim to alleviate some of the negative consequences of victimization, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, problematic substance use, mental illness and hospital visits.

Categories of Actions Delivered in the Criminal Justice Sector

5. Situational Crime Prevention

A program or practice falls under this category if it aims to lower the level of opportunity to commit crime, increase the risk of being arrested or reduce the benefits to the offender. These actions often rely on environmental design, increased use of technology, or targeting specific criminal activity through construction, housing design, architecture, engineering, surveillance or lighting. They can also include actions to help potential victims take more effective precautions.

6. Diversion Programs

This category includes projects that divert

offenders away from the police and criminal justice system in order to avoid charges or arrest. They may begin following a 911 call to the police who divert the person in conflict with the law to a more appropriate service. Such programs include: mental health services, restorative justice measures, and community based sanctions. They may also include police decisions to use lesser charges.

7. Enforcement and Sanctions

“Problem-oriented policing” (POP) falls under this category by analyzing the problem for police to solve. It also includes other programs implemented by the police, courts, or correction systems targeting offenders and youth in a way that uses punishment as a deterrent. They aim to reduce recidivism and possible victimization, or prevent crime.

Missing from CrimeSolutions.gov

Crimesolutions.gov is lacking some important prevention initiatives, because there is insufficient research so far. Such programs include those promoting gender equality, and addressing poverty and homelessness.

Smarter Crime Control: A Guide for Citizens, Communities and Decision-Makers

Smarter Crime Control amalgamates scientific knowledge in a book on effective crime prevention initiatives, providing decision-makers with an overview of the conclusions and recommendations for actions that, if properly implemented, would reduce crime rates, taxpayer costs associated with crime, and harm to individuals.

It presents proven programs in different service sectors such as early childhood, family functioning, school actions, youth outreach, health, industrial design, and “smart policing”. Actions tackling risk factors that lead to crime, such as inconsistent parenting, lack of positive role models for youth, difficulties at school and innovative programs in the health sector, are the most effective and cost effective at reducing offending. Problem-oriented policing (POP) and some proactive policing strategies also prevent crime.

The book describes actions that have been successful at reducing pervasive social challenges such as street gang violence, violence against women and traffic fatalities. It provides numerous examples of best-practices, particularly at the municipal level. Furthermore, it develops specific actions that different orders of government can take to reduce crime and save significant costs to taxpayers.

Canadian Key Sources

The National Crime Prevention Centre has been a middle level section in the Department of Public Safety Canada that has funded small scale replications of proven programs across Canada. The proven programs selected are readily available at www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mplmntn-fct-shts-2012/index-en.aspx. It makes available funding up to \$7.5 million over 5 years to test these programs and includes a special fund for gang prevention strategies.

The new Police and Community Research Catalogue is a repository of all the policing related research, consolidated and made available to the policing community, policy makers and the public. It is a user-friendly, public and readily accessible source.

International Key Sources

World Health Organization

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has developed a number of useful resources on the prevention of violence. It has a seven point portfolio for the types of actions that are effective. The "Violence Prevention: The Evidence" (2010) report provides information on how to prevent violence by implementing evidence-based knowledge. Moreover, the WHO has publicized its own list of best buys that can be found in their "Global status report on violence prevention 2014" report available online at www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/status_report/2014/en/.

POPcenter.org

The Problem Oriented Policing website compiles data concerning situational crime prevention and proactive policing techniques proven to be effective. The website provides guides to identify problems and solutions, information on effective models used in various initiatives, and educational tools.

Washington State Institute for Public Policy

This is a non-partisan research institute that informs the legislature of the State of Washington in education, criminal justice, social services, and healthcare. Its website is an important source for policy makers as it systematically reviews evidence on the cost-benefit of programs that tackle crime. The summaries of their findings demonstrate clearly that investing in pre-crime prevention programs not only reduces harm to victims, but also reduces the cost of crime to the state and taxpayers (www.wsipp.wa.gov/).

Other Key Sources

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence in Colorado vigorously reviewed over one thousand programs that target risk factors before identifying its top eleven **Blueprints-**certified programs (www.colorado.edu/cspv/).

The **Centre for Disease Control** has launched an interactive and user-friendly website on how to implement evidence-based research in policy making (vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evidence/#%26panel1-1).

Samhsa.gov, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, aims to alleviate the impact of problematic substance use and mental health issues by providing information on research and a variety of services.



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