

Project Safe Neighborhood Impact Assessment Michigan State University

Michigan State University (MSU) conducted the national evaluation of Project Safe Neighborhoods by initially examining the trend in violent crime in cities with a population of 100,000 or greater. Several comparisons provide strong evidence of PSN having an impact on violent crime. First, cities designated as PSN target cities experienced an 8.9 percent decline in violent crime during this period whereas non-target cities experienced no change in violent crime (-0.25%). Second, PSN target cities in districts with high levels of federal prosecution for gun crimes experienced a very significant decline of 13.1 percent in violent crime. This contrasted with non-target cities in low federal prosecution districts that experienced a 7.8 percent increase in violent crime. This 20.9 percentage point difference between target cities in high prosecution districts and non-target cities in low prosecution districts represents the best estimate of PSN impact in districts that most effectively implemented PSN. These trends in violent crime were supported by a sophisticated multivariate analysis that controlled for other potential explanations such as changes in levels of policing, incarceration rates, and socio-demographic characteristics of the cities that are known to be associated with violent crime. The differences between high and low prosecution districts and PSN target and non-target cities proved statistically significant in these analyses.

Following the initial MSU research report to the National Institute of Justice, the MSU team has continued to analyze the impact of PSN by examining trends in firearm homicides (these data were not available at the time of the NIJ report). The firearm homicide data support the above findings. The analyses are somewhat different in that some cities had too few homicides to be included. The basic finding was that PSN target cities in high dosage sites experienced a 10.5 percent decline in firearm homicides. Cities in low dosage districts experienced an increase of 14 percent and non-target cities experienced an increase on 11 percent in firearms homicides. MSU is continuing to analyze and update the firearm homicide data but as noted, the initial results are highly indicative of a PSN impact on firearm homicides.

In conclusion, it is the consistency across the findings (high prosecution contrasted with medium and low prosecution; target cities contrasted with non-target cities; violent crime as well as firearm homicides; select case study sites and all cities over 100,000 population) that suggest that the effective implementation of PSN resulted in significant declines in violent crime and homicides committed with a firearm.