



The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Training and Technical Assistance program developed the PSN Research in Brief series to provide a summary report of scholarly articles, studies, and publications relevant to the PSN program. This first issue of the PSN Research in Brief series summarizes the following study by Bryanna Fox, Scott Allen, and Alexander Toth published in the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*: ***Evaluating the Impact of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Initiative on Violence and Gun Crime in Tampa: Does It Work and Does It Last?***¹



BACKGROUND:

- PSN was developed in 2001 by the US Department of Justice (DOJ).
- PSN is an evidence-based initiative aimed at reducing violence and gun crime through the use of proactive policing and enhanced enforcement and sentences for repeat offenders.

THEORY AND PRACTICE:

- PSN draws upon deterrence-based crime prevention strategies such as focused deterrence and “pulling levers.”
- Deterrence theory and behavioral economics suggest that crime prevention occurs when the costs of committing crime are perceived to outweigh the benefits.
- PSN targets those most at risk of committing crime, providing both incentives to desist from committing crime and deterrents to committing crime, including the certainty and severity of punishment.

THE VIP LIST

-  Tampa used an evidence-based risk assessment called the **Violent Impact Player (VIP) List** to identify chronic offenders who were targeted by law enforcement (*a list of less than 50 individuals*).
-  All individuals on the VIP List were subject to specific deterrence under PSN.

STUDY OUTCOMES:

- The goal of the study was to determine the magnitude and duration of the PSN program’s violence and gun crime reduction goals.
- This study used a quasi-experimental design with multiple pre- and post-test measures, control groups, and statistical methods.
- The findings indicate that the Tampa approach was associated with a 24.4 percent raw reduction in violence ($d=-0.16$) and a 24 percent reduction in gun crime rates ($d=-0.22$), compared to much smaller decreases in violence and gun crime rates for the control groups over the same time period.
- During the study period, the Tampa Police Department dramatically reduced total arrests, suggesting that the department did not “mass arrest” individuals to reduce crime.
- The effects of the PSN initiative on both violence and gun crime decreased in strength by year 3 post-implementation.

1 Fox, B., Allen, S. F., & Toth, A. (2022). Evaluating the impact of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative on violence and gun crime in Tampa: does it work and does it last?. *Journal of experimental criminology*, 18(3), 543-567.