



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 fourth issue of the PSN Research in Brief series summarizes the following study by Aaron Chalfin, Michael LaForest, and Jacob Kaplan published in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*: ***Can Precision Policing Reduce Gun Violence? Evidence from “Gang Takedowns” in New York City.***¹

BACKGROUND:

- Prior research shows that police presence and visibility can reduce crime.
- Over the last 40 years, police departments have used strategies that deploy large numbers of police to high-crime areas (a strategy sometimes called “hot spots” policing).
- In New York City between 2002 and 2011, the number of street stops made by police increased each year until federal litigation found this practice to be unconstitutional.
- As a result, the New York Police Department (NYPD) deployed precision policing strategies, in partnership with district attorneys and federal prosecutors.

THEORY AND PRACTICE:

- A small number of predictable places are the sites of an outsized number of crimes.
- Precision policing in this study involved targeted enforcement against criminal gangs.
- The specific goal of the NYPD’s strategy was to reduce gang violence by building conspiracy cases implicating large numbers of associates. This change constituted a shift from mass enforcement to precision policing.
- To evaluate the outcomes of this shift, researchers used data on crime, arrests, and street stops obtained from NYPD’s open data website.² To identify “gang takedowns” (i.e., simultaneous arrests of multiple gang members), researchers looked for data arrest clusters for the crime of conspiracy.

STUDY OUTCOMES:

- Looking for clusters of two or more arrests for conspiracy that occurred over the same week, researchers identified 109 probable gang takedowns that occurred within 500 feet of a public housing development since 2011.
- Model estimates found that homicides declined between 50 and 61 percent; however, because homicides are uncommon, only one of four model estimates was found to be statistically significant.
- Model estimates found that shootings decreased between 30 and 36 percent with three of four models found to be statistically significant.
- Researchers estimate that gun violence declined by approximately 40 percent and that the effect persisted for as long as 18 months after gang takedowns occurred without detecting displacement effects.

1 Chalfin, A., LaForest, M., & Kaplan, J. (2021). Can precision policing reduce gun violence? evidence from “gang takedowns” in New York City. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 40(4): 1047-1082.

2 <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/>