



The Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment

A major research collaboration between the Philadelphia Police Department and researchers in the Department of Criminal Justice at Temple University involving 240 police officers on foot beats around some of the city's most violent corners may spark a revision of a long-held view of police patrol.

Since the 1980s, it has long been the opinion of many criminology researchers that police foot patrols improve community perception of the police and reduce fear of crime, but don't prevent actual crime. Results from the Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment suggest that a more positive view of intelligence-led targeting of foot patrol officers may be warranted.

On the invitation of the Philadelphia Police Department, police commanders and researchers worked together to plan the Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment as a randomized controlled trial. With the resources to patrol 60 locations, researchers identified the highest violent crime corners in the city, using data from 2006 to 2008. The top 5% of corners accounted for 39% of robberies, 42% of aggravated assaults, and 33% of homicides.

Violence in the target areas decreased 23% with foot patrols preventing 53 violent crimes

Police commanders designed 120 foot patrol areas around these corners, and stratified randomization was used to assign pairs of foot patrols with similar crime rates as either a *comparison* or a *target* area. Each foot patrol area contained about 15 street intersections and 1.3 miles of roads.

Officers generally patrolled in pairs with two pairs assigned to each foot patrol. They worked from Tuesday morning to Saturday night in two shifts (10am to 6pm, 6pm to 2am). The study ran for three months. When a threshold level of pre-intervention crimes was reached (in our study an average of 6 violent crimes in the three months pre-intervention), target areas had significantly less violent crime during the foot patrol experiment:

- Violent crime in the target areas decreased 22%
- Drug-related incident detections increased 15%
- Pedestrian stops increased 64%
- Vehicle stops increased 7%
- Arrests increased 13%

Analysis shows that the foot patrols prevented 53 violent crimes during the summer. Pedestrian field interviews (where the public are stopped and sometimes frisked or searched) increased by about 64% in the target areas, and vehicle stops and traffic enforcement increased by a third. While this extra activity likely aided deterrence, police commanders should be conscious of the potential harm to police-community relations in targeted areas, and consider other tactics if this is a concern.

More details at www.temple.edu/cj/FootPatrolProject