

A Common Currency of Policing: How Many Crimes of What Type Can One Police Officer Prevent in One Year?

Lawrence W. Sherman and Barak Ariel, University of Cambridge

Beyond crime counts: enter the
Cambridge Crime Harm Index

--Basis for a “Best Choices Framework” in
Decision-Making about the allocation of Police
Time

--Hard estimates of value for money and
opportunity costs

All Crimes Are Not Created Equal

Solution: Crime counts can be supplemented by translating them into the common currency of the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CHI). This way theft from vehicles is (correctly) given less weight than rape or robbery

No Proactively recorded crimes are counted, since they depend on policing (shoplift, drugs)

Procedure: Convert N victim crime counts to CHI based on sentencing guidelines → multiplying the crime by the number of days in prison that crime would attract if one offender were to be convicted of committing it

Apparent Benefits: CHI values rather than crime counts provides better cost-effectiveness comparisons of alternative strategies of targeting, testing, and tracking resource allocation by police

Overall Crime Harm Index*

Groups	Before	after	Difference	Percent Change	Absolute Difference
Control	16,439	12,695	-3,744	-23% Control	-30% more CHI= 1123
Treatment	21,537	15,053	-6,484	-30% for Treatment	to 1945
Difference in Patrol			5,220 hrs More in T		.2 to .37 per hour

*excluding ASB and shoplifting

Common Currency Analysis with CHI

- PC Plus PCS0 Time = additional hours of police presence
- Marginal gains from using each officer on Hot Spots Patrol or Other Things

CHI BENEFITS Depend on How Hot the Hot Spots Are!

- Total number of victim-crimes prevented = 62 (-96 vs. -158)
- But range of effects from baseline
- Either way, use common currency to estimate the range of effects by type of crime
- Like what you can buy from a menu: this OR That OR That OR These 3 things

What Can You Buy with 1825 Days of CHI

- One less Manslaughter plus
18 fewer ABH

OR

- 5 robberies

OR

- 91 burglaries

OR

- 91 car thefts

OR

- 1825 common assaults

Crime Type	Subtype	Starting Point Sentence Days
Homicide		5475
	Intent	1460
ABH		20
Assault		1
Rape		1825
Sexual Assault		365
Robbery		365
	Dwelling	20
Burglary	Non- Dwelling	20
	Theft of	20
Vehicle	Theft from	2
	Theft from Person	20
Theft	Shop	2
	Other	2
	Arson	33
Damage	Other	2
Fraud		20

CONCLUSIONS SO FAR:

9. Legitimacy of policing is not eroded with hotspot policing
10. Crime reported by victims (no ASB or shoplifting) was reduced by overall 40% (62 fewer crimes)
11. CHI measure for victim-reported offences shows overall 42% reduction in harm



OPERATION SAVVY: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. PCSOs foot patrol reduces overall crime recorded in hotspots by nearly 10%
2. But hotspots are not all the same; hottest hotspots are more criminogenic
3. Crime was reduced in High and Medium blocks by 40% but recorded crime “increased” in the Low block by 157%
4. PCSOs spent overall more time and visited more often Experimental Hotspots than Control Hotspots
5. PCs patrolled the hottest treatment hotspots nearly 50% more times and patrol the coldest treatment hotspots 50% fewer times AND 39% fewer hours, compared to control hotspots
6. Police may increase visible patrols, but the public does not seem to be aware of these changes
7. Satisfaction with police performance is not changed by additional PCSO patrols
8. Hotspot Policing seems to reduce the Collective Efficacy of the neighbourhood
9. Legitimacy of policing is not eroded with hotspot policing
10. Crime reported by victims (no ASB or shoplifting) was reduced by overall 40% (62 fewer crimes)
11. CHI measure for victim-reported offences shows overall 42% reduction in harm



7th International Conference on Evidence-Based Policing



The Birmingham Hot Spots Experiment

Operation Savvy

Dr Barak Ariel and Superintendent Jo Smallwood

With

Lawrence Sherman, Neil Wain, Cristobal Weinborn, Wendy Goodhill, Gabi Sosinski, Justice Tankebe and Orlee Yahalom