



ARCHIVED - Archiving Content

Archived Content

Information identified as archived is provided for reference, research or recordkeeping purposes. It is not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards and has not been altered or updated since it was archived. Please contact us to request a format other than those available.

ARCHIVÉE - Contenu archivé

Contenu archivé

L'information dont il est indiqué qu'elle est archivée est fournie à des fins de référence, de recherche ou de tenue de documents. Elle n'est pas assujettie aux normes Web du gouvernement du Canada et elle n'a pas été modifiée ou mise à jour depuis son archivage. Pour obtenir cette information dans un autre format, veuillez communiquer avec nous.

This document is archival in nature and is intended for those who wish to consult archival documents made available from the collection of Public Safety Canada.

Some of these documents are available in only one official language. Translation, to be provided by Public Safety Canada, is available upon request.

Le présent document a une valeur archivistique et fait partie des documents d'archives rendus disponibles par Sécurité publique Canada à ceux qui souhaitent consulter ces documents issus de sa collection.

Certains de ces documents ne sont disponibles que dans une langue officielle. Sécurité publique Canada fournira une traduction sur demande.

AIC *Crime reduction matters*



3 June 2003, no. 2
ISSN 1448-1383

Crime reduction or prevention: Is there a difference?

“Crime reduction” and “crime prevention” are essentially the same things—combinations of actions designed to eliminate and/or minimise the occurrence of crime and the harm associated with it. There is no empirical basis for the use of one term over the other.

However, they do imply slightly different goals. For example, crime prevention is more likely to focus on the outright elimination of crime by preventing opportunities and conditions that enable crime to occur. A crime reduction strategy is likely to place greater emphasis on measures to contain and reduce existing crime problems. This could be likened to taking a risk-management approach based on an acceptance that it is not possible to eliminate all opportunities and conditions that facilitate crime.

A crime reduction measure may have a shorter timeframe than a prevention measure because its goals may be less ambitious and intervention more sharply defined. It might, therefore, be useful to think of crime reduction and crime prevention as terms that describe interim and final outcomes.

There is nothing to preclude a crime prevention strategy using risk-management tools or setting goals which acknowledge that not all crime will be eliminated in all circumstances. Similarly, a crime reduction measure may be designed to eliminate a certain form of crime, or at least its consequences.

A simple example of this can be found in the experience of *Operation Ceasefire*, which focused on crime among the city of Boston’s youth gangs in the late 1990s. Using a sophisticated problem analysis approach, the *Operation Ceasefire* team determined that youth gangs were responsible for a wide variety of crime in the area. They assessed the relative risk of all the crimes in which the youth gang members were involved and applied a strategy to eliminate the most harmful, namely gun homicides. In so doing, they actively chose to reduce the attention provided to other crimes.

Should this be called a crime reduction or a crime prevention measure? The distinction is so minimal that it does not matter. The important thing is the outcome and the fact that once a major problem is contained or eliminated, it is easier to address the remaining problems.

Further reading:

Pease K. 2002, “Crime reduction”, in M. Maguire, R. Morgan & R. Reiner (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 947–79.

Kennedy, D., Braga, A., Piehl, A. & Waring, E. 2001, *Reducing Gun Violence. The Boston Gun Project’s Operation Ceasefire*, National Institute of Justice (NCJ 188741), Washington DC.



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF CRIMINOLOGY

Delivering training, evaluation and research services

visit online: www.aic.gov.au/publications/crm
Email: aicpress@aic.gov.au Phone 02 6260 9200