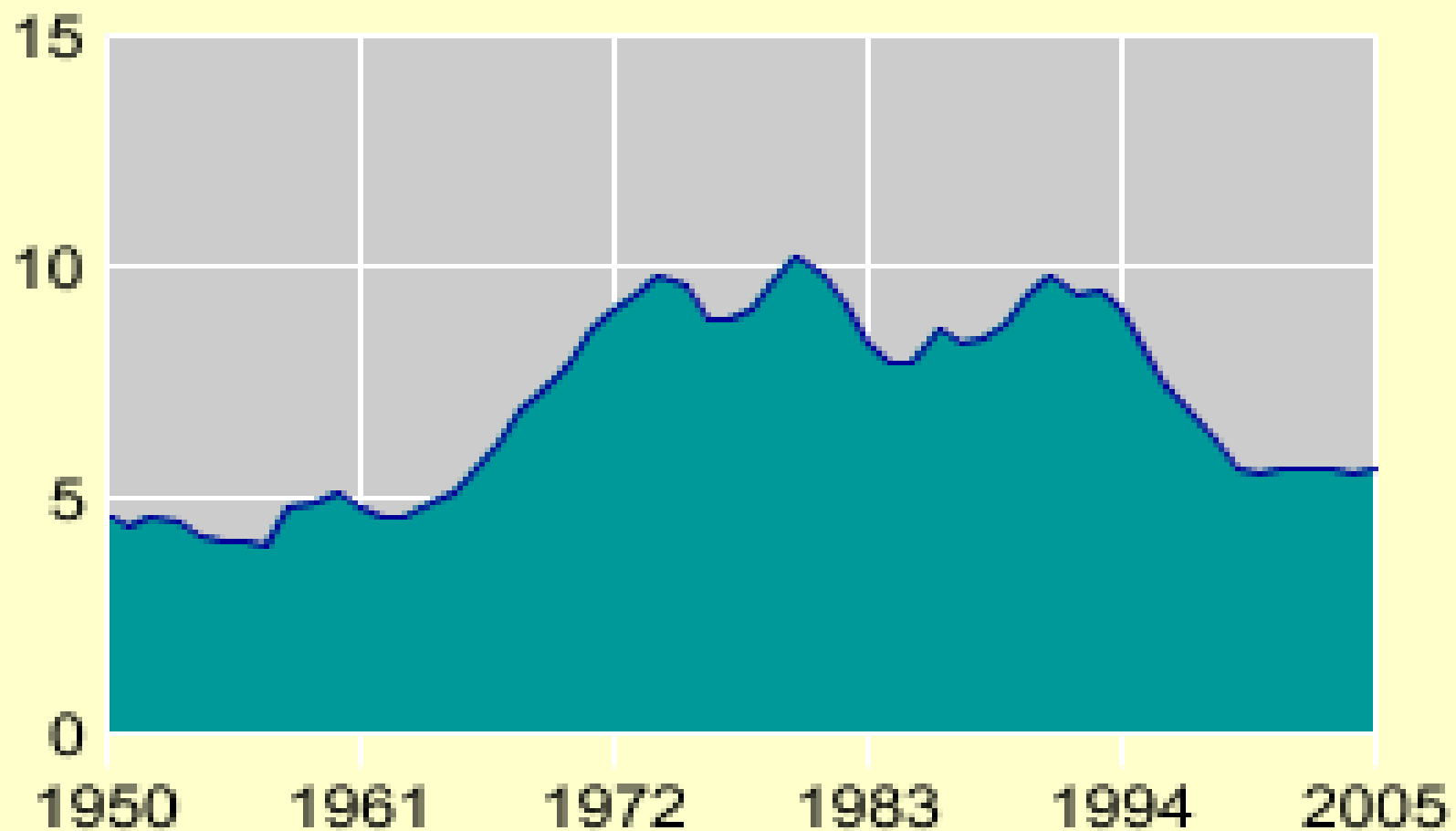# Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence

7th Annual Youth Violence Prevention Conference University of Missouri St. Louis April, 2008

Edmund F. McGarrell

Director and Professor

School of Criminal Justice
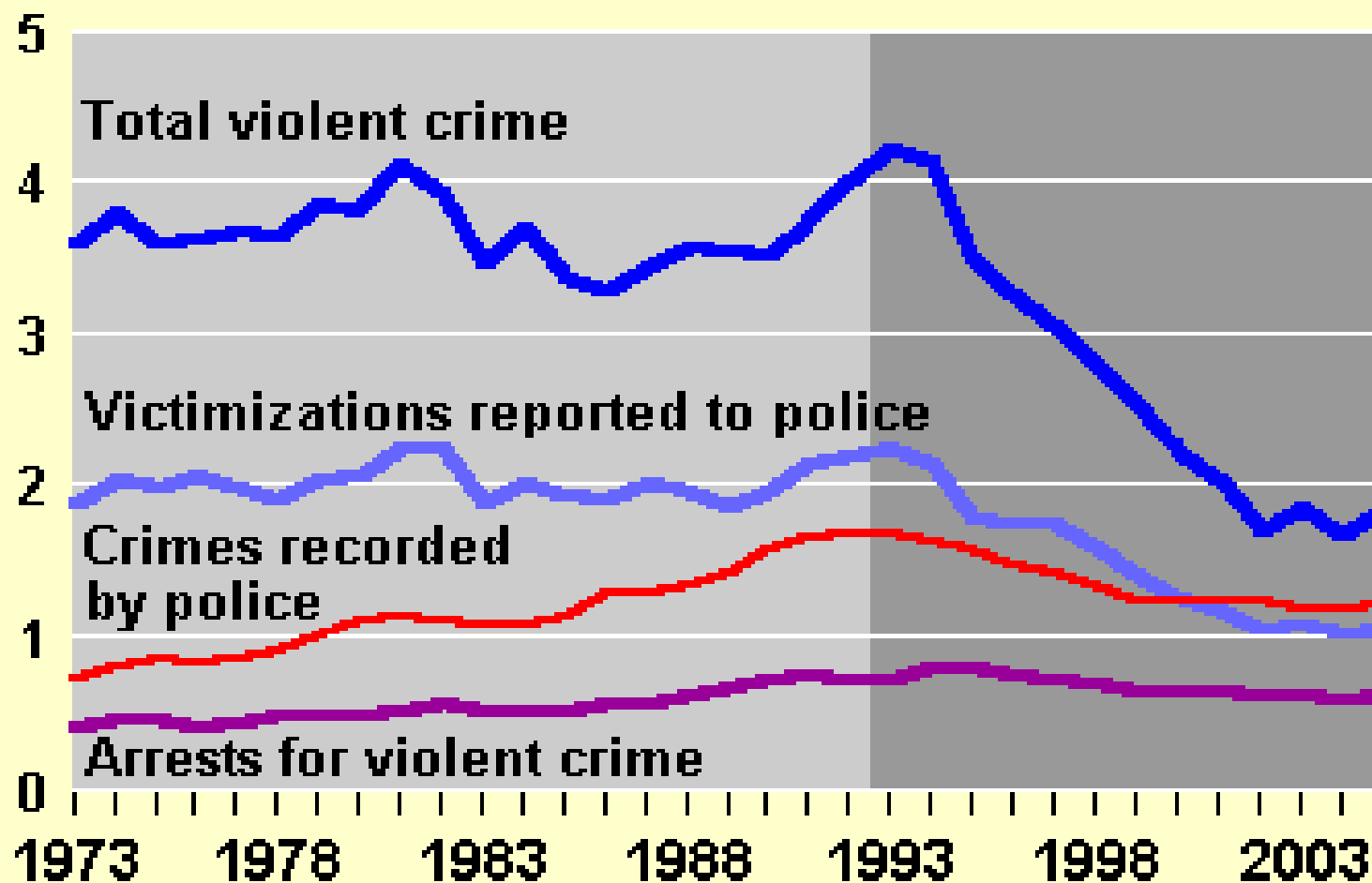
Michigan State University

Homicide victimization, 1950-2005
Rate per 100,000 population

Four measures of serious violent crime

Offenses in millions

Total violent crime

Victimizations reported to police

Crimes recorded by police

Arrests for violent crime

Role of Police & CJS

"Crime affects criminal justice. Criminal justice no affect crime." (Duffee, 1980)

"The police do not prevent crime. This is one of the best kept secrets of modern life." (Bayley, 1994)

National Academy of Sciences

"There is strong research evidence that *the more focused and specific* the strategies of the police, the more they are tailored to the problems they seek to address, *the more effective* the police will be in controlling crime and disorder."

National Academy of Sciences, *Fairness & Effectiveness in Policing*, (2004: p. 5)

Problem Analysis

Analysis allows for the focus of limited resources on those people, places, and contexts generating violent crime
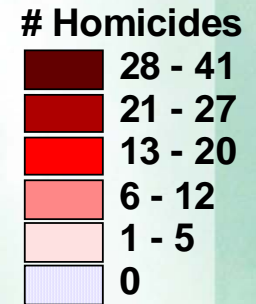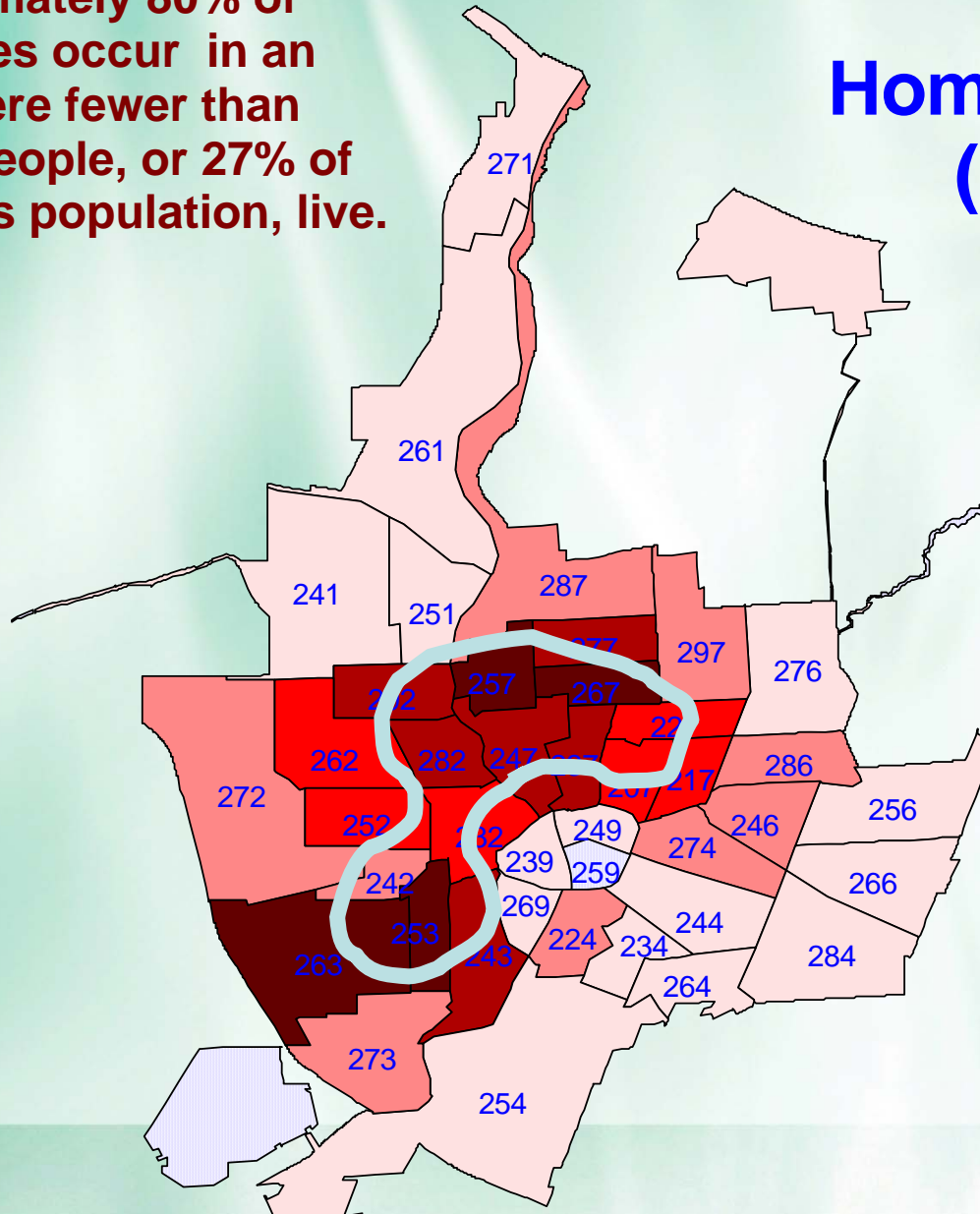
Offender

Victim

Location

Homicides By Carbeat (1991 - Present)

Homicide Rates for Specific Groups
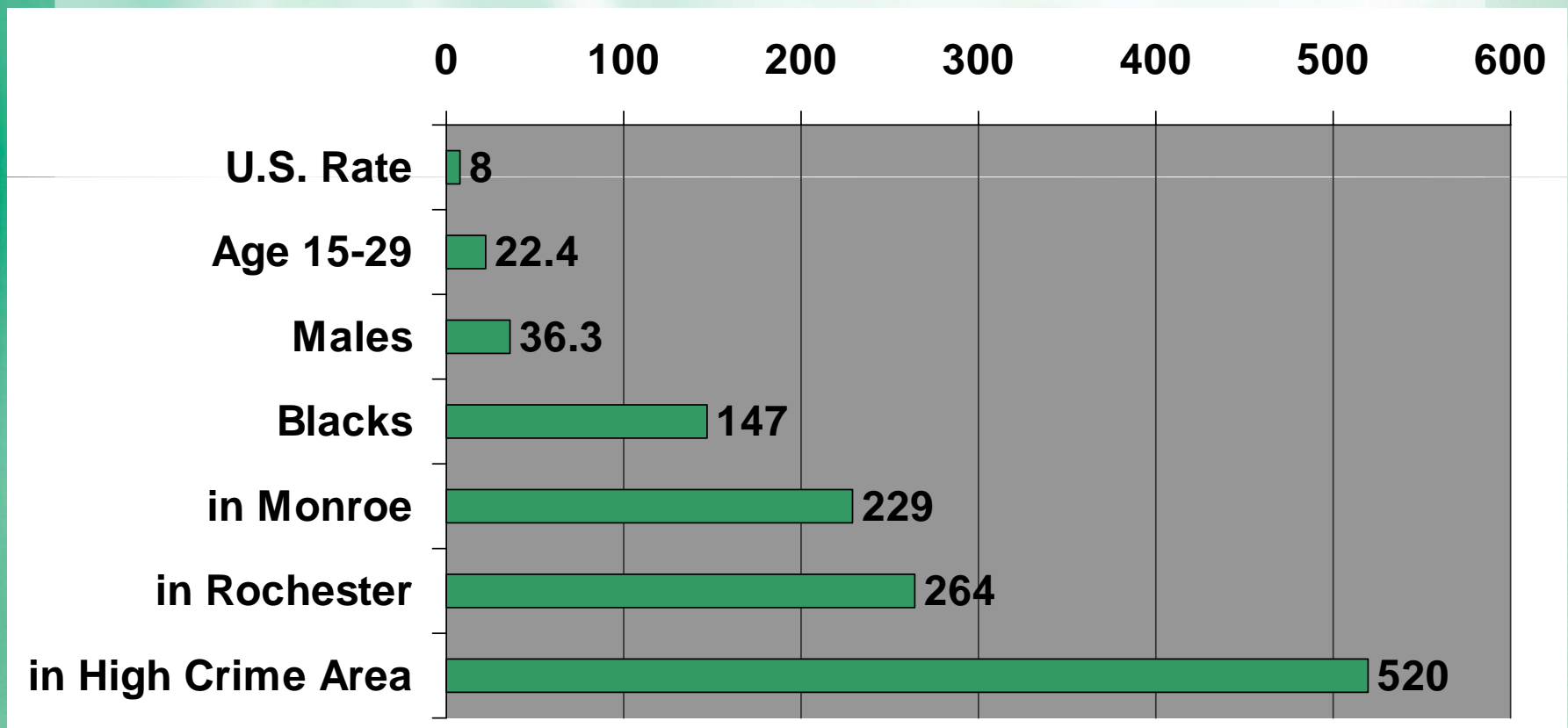
Note: Each bar is a subset of the one above it.
Monroe/Rochester data are based on an average of 50 homicides per year.

Young Black men living in Rochester's High Crime Crescent have a homicide rate that is about 65 times that of the nation as a whole.

PSN Builds Upon

- Directed Patrol Focused Gun Crime

- Project Exile (Richmond)

- Boston Gun Project (Ceasefire)

- Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI)

Directed Police Patrol

Targeted patrols in high violent crime areas with a focus on illegal gun possession

- Kansas City (Sherman & Rogan, 1995; 1996)

- Indianapolis (McGarrell et al., 2001)

- Pittsburgh (Cohen & Ludwig, 2003)

Key Findings

- Significant reductions in gun crime

- Positive community reaction

Key Questions

- What is causing impact?

- Can the results be sustained?

- What are the key leadership, managerial, and officer behavior components that secured community support?

Focused Interventions

"There is strong research evidence that *the more focused and specific* the strategies of the police, the more they are tailored to the problems they seek to address, *the more effective* the police will be in controlling crime and disorder."

National Academy of Sciences, *Fairness & Effectiveness in Policing*, (2004: p. 5)

Project Exile

- Increased federal prosecution for gun crimes

- Media campaign to communicate deterrence message

- Evidence of reduced gun crime (Rosenfeld et al. 2005)

Boston Gun Project

- Multi-agency team
- Problem analysis
- Focused intervention
- Lever-pulling strategy
- Threat federal prosecution
- Linkage to opportunities
- Evidence of reduced gun crime (Kennedy, Braga, et al.)

SACSI

- 10 City initiative
- Multi-agency team
- Problem analysis
- Focused intervention
- Lever-pulling strategy
- Threat federal prosecution
- Linkage to opportunities
- Evidence of reduced gun crime – e.g., Indianapolis (McGarrell et al., 2006)

Summary

Intervention Components	Directed Police Patrol	Project Exile	Boston Gun Project – SACSI
Specific focus on gun crime	X	X	X
Analysis local gun crime	Geographic patterns	Individual criminal histories	Robust problem analysis
Deterrence focus	X	X	X
Street-level contact	X	?	X
Community-level deterrence messages		X	X
Direct communication – lever pulling meetings			X
Social support & link to opportunities			X
Organizational structure	Police driven	U.S. Attorney driven	Multi-agency collaboration

PSN

National Strategy to Reduce Gun Crime

- Strategic problem solving
- Collaborative partnerships
- Focused interventions
- Federal & local coordinated prosecution
- Increased federal prosecution
- Communication strategy
- Prevention and intervention

Strategic Problem Solving to Focus Interventions

"There is strong research evidence that *the more focused and specific* the strategies of the police, the more they are tailored to the problems they seek to address, *the more effective* the police will be in controlling crime and disorder."

National Academy of Sciences, *Fairness & Effectiveness in Policing*, (2004: p. 5)

PSN Implementation

- Study of initial implementation of PSN suggests that task forces fall into 3 general categories (based on extent of partnerships, federal prosecution, data driven decision making)

Type	Interaction	Cost	Hypothesized Outcome
Symbolic	limited	minimal	none
Narrow	exclusive	low	limited
Strategic	inclusive	high	broad

PSN Impact on Gun Crime ?

- As first step, series of case studies of impact at local level

PSN Case Study Evaluation Challenges

- National, "full coverage," program

- Uneven implementation

- Larger cities offer treatment and comparison sites but may have both citywide and targeted program components

- Smaller and medium cities – may be no logical comparison site

- Variation in data availability (e.g., NIBRS vs. non-NIBRS; outputs/dosage measures)

PSN Comprehensive Case Studies

Criteria for selection:

- PSN strategy implemented in a "meaningful fashion"
  - Evidence of implementation of PSN strategies
  - Evidence of new & enhanced partnerships
  - Integration of research partners & research-based strategies
  - Strategies in operation long enough to have potentially affected gun crime
  - Sufficient base rates of gun crime to allow assessment of impact
  - Regional & demographic variation

PSN Comprehensive Case Studies

Essentially asking – is gun crime being addressed in new ways and is there evidence of impact on levels of gun crime?

Initial PSN Case Studies

- Middle District Alabama (Montgomery) – Project Exile

- Southern District Alabama (Mobile) – Project Exile

- District Massachusetts (Lowell) – Strategic Problem Solving

- Eastern District Missouri (St. Louis) - Strategic Problem Solving

- District Nebraska (Omaha) – Strategic Problem Solving

Project Exile Model

- "Smart prosecution" (coordinated federal-local gun crime prosecution screening)
- Large increase federal prosecution of gun crime
- Significant media campaign

PSN Case Studies – Initial Results

Project Exile Model – MD AL (Montgomery)

- Montgomery witnessed significant decline homicide and gun assaults at a time property crime remained stable (time series)

PSN Case Studies – Initial Results

Project Exile Model – SD AL (Mobile)

- Mobile witnessed significant decline total gun crime & violent crime with a gun at a time property crime increased (time series)

- No change homicide

- Gunshot wound admissions to trauma center declined significantly

Strategic Problem Solving Model

- Multi-agency team
- Strategic problem solving (integration of research)
- Increase federal prosecution or threat of federal prosecution
- Multiple strategies (examples)
  - Smart prosecution
  - Incident reviews
  - Chronic violent offender programs
  - Offender notification meetings
  - Police-probation-parole home visits

PSN Case Studies – Initial Results

Strategic Problem Solving Model – ED MO (St. Louis)

- Violent gun crime and homicide declined in target areas but also declined in contiguous and control areas

- Decline may be due to program impact that generalized beyond target area

- Decline may have been due to some other factor affecting treatment, control and contiguous areas

PSN Case Studies – Initial Results

Strategic Problem Solving Model – D MA (Lowell)

- Gang focused lever pulling

- 28% reduction in gun assaults

- Statistically significant reduction and greater than that observed in other MA communities

PSN Case Studies – Initial Results

Strategic Problem Solving Model – D NE (Omaha)

- Monthly firearms offenses declined 20% after implementation PSN (time series)
- Property crime stable during same period

Summary - PSN Case Studies

To date,

- All five sites experienced a statistically significant decline in gun crime following implementation of PSN

- In four of the five sites, the decline in gun crime was greater than the comparison (either other neighborhoods, cities or with trend in property crime)

Additional Suggestive Evidence

- Strategic Problem Solving Model – MD NC (Durham, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury, Winston-Salem)

- High Point separate target specific impact analysis

- Salisbury small N, low statistical power

- Three tests (Durham, Greensboro, Winston-Salem)

PSN Case Studies – Initial Results

Strategic Problem Solving Model – MD NC

- Durham – total firearms offenses decline from 76.7 per month to 68.9 per month but not statistically significant

- Greensboro – statistically significant decline in total firearms offenses

- Winston-Salem - statistically significant decline in total firearms offenses

Additional Suggestive Evidence

- Chicago (Papachristos, Meares and Fagan)

- Stockton (Braga)

- Thus, no claim PSN has reduced gun crime in all jurisdictions, but suggestive evidence that PSN interventions can have an impact on gun crime

Drug Market Interventions

- Arise out of problem analyses that link gun violence to drug markets and gang involvement
- Take a focused deterrence approach
- Include multiple strategies for communicating to high-risk populations
- Attempt to link to services & opportunities

Drug Market Intervention

- High Point, NC
- Winston-Salem, NC
- Raleigh, NC
- Providence, RI
- Rockford, IL
- Nassau County, NY

Promising Practices

Directed Police Patrol	Project Exile	Boston Gun Project - Strategic Problem Solving
Kansas City	Richmond	Boston
Indianapolis	Montgomery	Indianapolis
Pittsburgh	Mobile	Lowell
		Omaha
		Chicago
		Stockton
		High Point
		Greensboro
		Winston-Salem

Promising Practices

- *Some combination of focused deterrence, communication, data-driven problem solving, & linkage to opportunities, appears promising in reducing gun crime*

Lingering Research Questions

- What is happening in the remaining PSN districts and other cities where PSN has been implemented?
  - "Compstat" and "Broken Windows" Issue

- Is the impact short-term or sustained?

Lingering Research Questions

- What is the impact on individual offenders in contrast to neighborhood/community effects?

  – Indianapolis SACSI Intervention
  – Indianapolis Lever Pulling Experiment
  – Kansas City PSN Intervention
  Vs.
  – Chicago PSN (Impact on Gun Re-offending)
  – High Point PSN (Reduced re-offending among meeting attendees)

Lingering Research Questions

- Which program components are producing the impact?

- Can we increase the scientific rigor of the tests of these "promising practices?"

Summary

Strategic Components

- Focus on people, networks, places, contexts driving violence
- Credible & focused deterrence
- Communication
- Credible link to social support

PSN Implementation

- What distinguished symbolic, narrow, and strategic implementation?

Type	*Interaction*	*Cost*	*Hypothesized Outcome*
Symbolic	limited	minimal	none
Narrow	exclusive	low	limited
Strategic	inclusive	high	broad

Summary

Strategic Components

- Focus on people, networks, places, contexts driving violence
- Credible & focused deterrence
- Communication
- Credible link to social support

Organizational Foundations

Data-driven

Organizational & Inter-organizational Relationships

Leadership & Commitment

Citations

- Boston (Braga et al., 2001a,b)
- Indianapolis (McGarrell et al., 2006)
- Omaha (Hipple et al., forthcoming)
- Lowell (McDevitt et al., 2007)
- Chicago (Papachristos et al., 2006)
- High Point (Lang et al., 2007)
- Greensboro (Hipple et al., forthcoming)
- Winston-Salem (Hipple et al., forthcoming)
- Stockton (Braga, 2007)
- Richmond (Rosenfeld et al., 2005)
- Montgomery (McGarrell et al., 2007)
- Mobile (Hipple et al., forthcoming)
- St. Louis (Decker et al., 2007)
- Indianapolis (Chermak, 2008)
- Kansas City (WDMO PSN Task Force, personal communication)