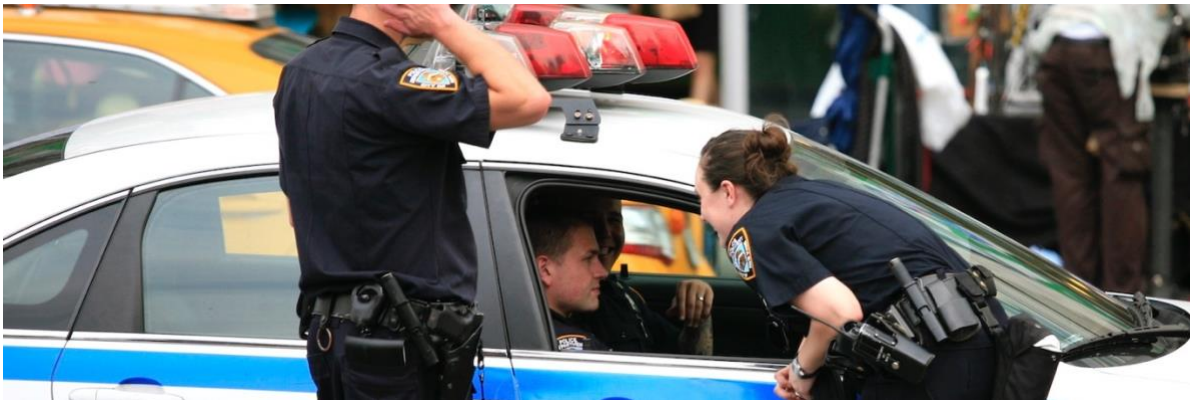


# The Effect of Various Police Enforcement Actions on Violent Crime: Evidence From a Saturation Foot-Patrol Intervention

*Criminal Justice Policy Review (2018)*

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403417725370>



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## Key Takeaways

- This study tested the effect of police officer actions on crime during a foot-patrol intervention in Newark, NJ
- Foot patrol officer actions fell within 2 broad typologies: enforcement actions and guardian actions
- Enforcement actions consisted of arrests, quality of life summonses, and field interrogations
- Guardian actions consisted of business checks, bus checks, citizen contacts, and taxi inspections
- Guardian actions were associated with decreased levels of overall violent crime and robbery in the target area
- No officer actions were related to crime levels in the displacement zone
- Enforcement actions were not significantly related to crime levels in any of the statistical models

## The Effect of Various Police Enforcement Actions on Violent Crime: Evidence From a Saturation Foot-Patrol Intervention

### Research Summary:

The current study tests the crime prevention effect of various police officer actions during the Newark, New Jersey Police Department's (NPD's) Operation Impact, a foot-patrol initiative. Operation Impact patrols occurred from 6pm to 2am each night to coincide with the times which violence was highest in the quarter-square-mile target area.

Street-level actions enacted by police officers can exhibit a great deal of variability, even within single interventions. Police officers enjoy a great deal of latitude when choosing how to address incidents of concern, with a number of appropriate enforcement decisions available in most instances. On one hand, police officers may choose to address incidents by leveraging their law enforcement powers, specifically by making arrests or issuing citations. Conversely, police officers may rely on their conspicuous presence and more informal community engagement during their crime control efforts. While there are examples of effective place-based policing interventions incorporating both enforcement and less punitive actions, research has yet to compare the relative effect of these tactics. As such, our understanding of effective police *strategies* has developed at a much more rapid pace than the knowledge base around effective police *tactics*.

The current study tested the effect of police officer actions on daily crime levels during Operation Impact. Police actions were categorized into two typologies: official "enforcement actions" and less punitive, more informal "guardian actions." Enforcement actions consisted of arrests, quality-of-life summonses, and field interrogations. Guardian actions consisted of business checks, bus checks, citizen contacts (non-crime related), and taxi inspections. All officer actions were collected from custom after-action reports created by Operation Impact commanders and completed by all foot-patrol officers on a nightly basis. Crime was measured from the NPD's records management system.

Findings of the statistical analysis indicate enforcement actions and guardian actions have disparate effects on crime. In the target area, each 1-standard deviation increase in guardian actions was associated with a 51% decreased likelihood of violent crime during the 24-hour period and a 58% decreased likelihood of violent crime during the operational period. Guardian actions were similarly effective in preventing robbery, with a 1-standard deviation increase associated with a 52% decreased likelihood of robbery during the 24-hour period and a 51% decreased likelihood of violent crime during the operational period. Enforcement actions were not related to crime levels in a single instance. No Operation Impact officer action variables were associated with crime levels in the catchment zone, meaning they did not help explain the occurrence of spatial displacement caused by the foot patrols. However, enforcement actions conducted by NPD officers not assigned to the foot patrols were associated with increased levels of robbery in the catchment zone as well as increased levels of assault and murder in the target area during the non-operational period (2am to 6pm).

The study findings suggest that police may be able to de-emphasize enforcement actions in favor of less invasive guardian actions without sacrificing crime control benefits. This may help police strike a balance between crime prevention and fostering positive relationships with the community. Findings also indicate police agencies should build processes to measure guardian actions into performance review structures, such as CompStat.