

Directed police patrols reduce gun crime

June 25 2013

Gun possession arrests made by a concentrated, proactive patrol unit in the Houston Police Department were linked to significant reductions in subsequent crimes involving firearms, a study by Sam Houston State University found.

"These findings add to the growing evidence that supports the use of directed patrols to target illegal [gun possession](#) in high [crime](#) locations," wrote Dr. William Wells, who co-authored the study with Yan Zhang and Jihong Zhao at SHSU's College of Criminal Justice. "An interesting phenomenon observed in Houston and in other cities is that relatively small numbers of additional gun seizures (and gun possession arrests in the current analysis) generate meaningful results."

The study examined the Houston Police Department's Crime Reduction Unit (CRU), which targets high [crime areas](#) with concentrated patrols, frequent contacts with suspicious individuals, and arrests for drug and weapons offenses. An analysis of gun arrests and crime reports shows that the volume of gun possession arrests by the unit had a "significant impact" on offenses committed with guns.

The Houston Police Department introduced the CRU in November 2007, and the study measured results from November 2007 to August 2008. During that time, CRU units concentrated their work in defined, high crime areas across the city and made 197 illegal gun possession arrests.

The study, "The effects of gun possession arrests made by a proactive

[police](#) patrol unit," was published in *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* and recently was presented the 2013 Outstanding Paper Award from the Emerald Literati Network, a group representing 290 academic journals and 2,000 books.

"Ultimately, an outstanding paper should have that special something – something that raises it above all the others and which the editor and Editorial Advisory Board can recognize and define for the rest of us," according to Emerald's Web Site. The Outstanding Paper Award recognizes the contribution of something new to the body of knowledge, excellent structure and presentation, rigorous analysis, relevance to practice, and up-to-date knowledge in the field.

The full text of the study can be found at

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?issn=1363-951x&volume=35&issue=2>.

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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