
Examining The Extent Of Success Or Failure Of The Gun Experiment In Kansas City

Abstract

The Kansas City Gun Experiment was a project carried out to try and reduce the amount of gun crimes that were committed in the city by increasing the amount of police in a certain area that was infested with homicide and drive by shootings. Whether this experiment was a success or not relies on the individual analyzing the data.

Policing of Firearms

Gun crimes are a serious offense. In the early 1990's, Kansas City, Missouri had a murder rate that was twenty times higher than the national average (Walters, 1995). As an experiment to see the value of an increased police presence, in 1992-93, the Kansas City Police Department implemented a project that focused extra forces in a designated area of the city and compared it to another area that was similar over a 29 week period. These extra officers were only to focus on the objective of the project, which was to seize illegal guns through different tactics, and did not have to respond to routine calls (Sherman, Shaw and Rogan, 1995).

During the experiment, gun crimes dropped dramatically in the target area and remained steady in the control area. As statistics show, there was a 49% decrease in gun related offenses as compared to before the program began (Crime Solutions). Gun seizures were also comparably better as well in the target area. The control area had no significant change in crime level during the experiment time frame. The chart below labeled "Exhibit 1" from National Criminal Justice Reference Service gives a visual of how effective this project was as compared to before it was implemented. However, upon completion of the project, gun crimes returned to their normal rate. This shows that without the proactive enforcement and extra man power, society was not able to self-maintain itself with less crime.

Although ultimately ineffective, I believe that the Kansas City Gun Experiment was a success for what it accomplished. During its implementation, gun crime was down and more illegal guns were seized. However, due to the project not being cost effective and its federal grant running out, the project had to be abandoned. Even if only one life was able to be saved because of this project, it was a success. Life is the most precious thing we have and to lose it is a tragedy.

Source: National Criminal Justice Reference Service