

## Background

In 2011, the City of Los Angeles launched the [Gang Reduction and Youth Development \(GRYD\)](#) program, a comprehensive community-based, public health initiative designed to reduce violence by groups of youth. The program engages at-risk and gang-affiliated youth and their families, provides family wellness services and pro-social activities, delivers programs intended to reduce the allure of gang affiliation, and collaborates with community organizations seeking to interrupt violence and prevent retaliatory behaviors.

## Research Question

To what degree did the GRYD program, which operates outside of the city's law enforcement purview, reduce crime in the areas it served?

## Study Strategy

The GRYD program was delivered in geographic areas selected for their high levels of gang violence and other measures of social disadvantage, such as high poverty rates. Evaluators identified other areas in the city that were in close proximity to the GRYD treatment areas and presumed to be similar to the GRYD areas in terms of demographics, physical characteristics, and historical crime trends. To account for any effects that might have spilled over from the GRYD zones, researchers selected these control areas to be close but not adjacent to the program's service areas. The study design also accounted for temporal trends, such as seasonal variations, that affected all areas regardless of whether they were a focus of the GRYD program.

Analyses comparing outcomes between the GRYD and control areas spanned 27 months before and 27 months after GRYD implementation, examining changes in total crime, violent crime (homicide, aggravated assault, and robbery) and property crime (burglary, auto theft, and burglary-theft from a vehicle). Given the staggered nature of GRYD implementation, researchers examined changes in reported crimes from January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2017.

## Findings

Researchers concluded that the GRYD program resulted in significant reductions in overall violent crime (-18%), including drops of 20% in aggravated assaults (a category that includes shootings) and 17% in robberies. GRYD was not associated with a reduction in homicide, burglary, car theft, or total crime. Areas receiving GRYD services experienced a statistically significant rise in burglaries from vehicles compared to control areas, though the authors did not quantify the increase. Researchers detected no evidence of displacement of crime from GRYD areas to adjacent locations, nor did they identify a reduction of crime or diffusion of benefits in those locations.

### In areas receiving GRYD services:

- Overall violent crime fell by 18%
- Aggravated assaults fell by 20%
- Robberies fell by 17%

The study design was unable to isolate the independent impact of any specific component of the GRYD program; it is unknown, for example, whether family services had more of an impact on crime reduction than programs to dissuade youth from joining gangs. In addition, other city initiatives, such as a [gang injunction program](#) and a [community safety partnership](#) initiative, were active in some of the GRYD and control areas during the evaluation period and may have influenced the impact of the GRYD program.

## Implications

The success of the GRYD program in reducing violent crime has implications for violence reduction efforts nationwide, particularly community-based programs focused on at-risk and gang-involved youth. The findings suggest that programs that are comprehensive—addressing family and community dynamics through both prevention and violence interruption—can curb some types of violent crimes.

"Our results suggest that comprehensive gang violence prevention programs can have a significant impact on crime."

- Brantingham et al. (2021)

Future research should measure the effects of comprehensive violence reduction programs on specific offending behaviors of program participants compared to a matched group of youth who were not touched by the program. One key question is whether gang-affiliated youth were responsible for the increase in vehicle burglaries identified by GRYD evaluators, or whether those crimes were mostly perpetrated by people who were not the focus of the program. Another question meriting exploration is the degree to which GRYD's program features align with existing [research evidence](#) on effective behavior change approaches. In addition, an evaluation design that enables the identification of specific components of comprehensive programs, perhaps those implemented sequentially or at different levels of intensity, would yield useful information, allowing program managers to fine-tune their approaches to obtain optimal results.

## Article Citation

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