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What Works in the Criminal Justice System (And What Doesn't)

A 2000–11 Update on Policing, Courts, and Corrections

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Abstract*

As crime has become a serious cause of concern in most of Latin America, the "nothing works" era in criminal justice has given way to a shift towards evidence-based crime prevention in North America and Europe. The program evaluations conducted so far have yielded growing knowledge about what works, what does not work and what is promising, especially regarding recidivism outcomes. However, policymaking in Latin America remains ignorant to the available evidence, and most crime prevention policies, practices and programs are still being based on tradition, opinions, ideology, trends and anecdotal evidence rather than scientifically validated studies. On the basis of a review of the current literature on evidence-based crime prevention and an extensive search, analysis and systematization of the most recent program evaluations in policing, courts and corrections, this paper summarizes a series of lessons for Latin America and proposes a research and policy agenda for the region.

JEL Codes: K40
Keywords: criminal justice, evidence-based policy, Maryland scale, policing, courts, corrections

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Introduction

Crime is a mounting problem in Latin America. The good news is that the "nothing works" era is finally over. Over the past two decades, the tendency toward evidence-based crime prevention has increased and numerous evaluations have been conducted that have yielded growing knowledge about what works, what does not work, and what is promising, especially regarding recidivism. Although the proportion of evidence-based criminal justice interventions is still fairly low, it has been increasing steadily and has become a reliable source of information. More importantly, data have also started to accumulate regarding the reasons why some programs work and others do not, their appropriateness for some offenders and offenses but not others, and their effectiveness under specific conditions.

The bad news is that in Latin America, even more than elsewhere, too little research has been conducted using rigorous evaluation methods, such as those being applied in the United States and Great Britain and reviewed by Sherman, Farrington, Welsh, and Mackenzie (2002).[1] Most available research is descriptive and qualitative, based on untested assertions, and lacking an experimental dimension. As a result, the policymaking process in the region has so far not been adequately fed by data yielded by methodologically sound program evaluations, and policies keep being decided on in the absence of information regarding their potential impact on crime and public safety. Among the reasons that account for this situation are data limitations, lack of familiarity with experimental or quasi-experimental design in policy evaluations, the costs involved in conducting experimental studies, the preference for punitive rather than preventive measures, and the prevalence of political sensitivities regarding the work of the police or the justice system.

As a result, Latin America has very limited knowledge about the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions in a context in which rising crime and insecurity rate high among the concerns of the majority of citizens. In response to this situation, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) set out to examine the available studies to determine which strategies against crime work and should be promoted, which do not and should be discarded, and which look promising and warrant further exploration.

As a first step toward establishing a body of knowledge for the region, the information provided by Sherman et al. (2002) has been updated for a few specific areas of criminal justice: police and policing, situational crime prevention, and courts and corrections. This document, which encompasses more than four hundred studies, is based on the review, assessment, and

[1] Sherman, L.W., D.P. Farrington, B.C. Welsh, and D.L. Mackenzie. 2002. *Evidence-Based Crime Prevention*. London & New York: Routledge.

classification of the evaluation literature published between 2000 and 2011 regarding the effectiveness of various criminal justice interventions in those areas.

Of note, these interventions have been tested and demonstrated to work (or not) in a number of places other than Latin America. So how can these results help the Latin American countries that are so desperately trying to battle crime? Should they start working on the basis of evidence collected from research in other, more developed regions of the world? The answer seems to be a cautious "yes." As a general rule, the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized to other situations and to other people should be approached cautiously. However, it is indeed worth examining what has been done in other regions in the past couple of decades and taking note of what the available literature shows to have consistently yielded the best results in each area of criminal justice interventions. It is always a good starting point as long as there is awareness that the lessons may not be readily applicable from one situation to the next. An encouraging signal regarding the external validity of the lessons learned from other places is the fact that, in the few cases where rigorous studies conducted in the region were found, their results turned out to be consistent with those yielded by studies conducted in the United States and other industrialized countries. However, important differences between criminal justice settings need to be taken into account to productively apply the bulk of the lessons learned while Latin America plans ahead for methodologically robust evaluation to become embedded in criminal justice interventions, thus growing a substantial base of evidence of its own.

A discussion regarding the validity of these lessons and the transplantation of these strategies to Latin America should be encouraged. The challenges of implementing evidence-based crime-prevention strategies in Latin America also need to be addressed. It would not be surprising if recommendations stemming from evidence-based research were perceived as based on foreign traditions of thought and practice, and thus deemed inapplicable and strongly resisted. A promising way to deal with the transition from evidence-based knowledge to evidence-based policy could be borrowed from the Health Sciences under the form of policy briefs and policy dialogues that provide a useful way to communicate results and implications of major academic studies to wider audiences.

Our first step involved identifying and collecting several hundred evaluation studies. Despite repeated attempts to retrieve methodologically sound empirical studies conducted in Latin America, only three such studies were found: one conducted in Colombia (about a police-enforced ban on carrying firearms in Cali and Bogotá), and two in Buenos Aires, Argentina (one about the effects of increased police presence, and another about electronic monitoring as a pre-trial alternative, both by the same research team). A number of searches by successive approximations were conducted in academic databases, peer-reviewed criminal justice publications, and websites of research institutes, foundations, universities, and government agencies. Online searches also yielded a mass of unpublished material from which the most relevant and methodologically sound studies were extracted. Secondly, all the collected material

was examined to determine its relevance and the quality of its methodological design following the guidelines offered by the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) (Sherman et al., 2002: 13–21). As it was not possible to use an expert panel to classify the studies, two experts performed the work together (rather than separately).

Classification of the retrieved evaluation studies according to their methodological quality was vital to know whether it would be safe to draw any conclusions from their results. The SMS was deemed the best available means for this classification. According to this scale, studies or evaluations are classified into five levels:

Level 1: Establishes a correlation between a prevention program and a measure of crime at one point in time but does not compare program and control conditions.

Level 2: Includes pre/post measures of crime but still has no comparable control condition. If studies at this level include a comparison group, the equivalence between the groups is not demonstrated and no attempt is made to control for differences.

Level 3: Includes pre/post measures of crime in experimental and control conditions. Groups are matched on several variables; however, the comparison group still differs significantly from the treatment group on important variables likely to affect the outcome (e.g., on motivation), though those differences are statistically controlled for. **This level is the minimum from which it is possible to draw reliable conclusions.**

Level 4: Includes pre/post measures of crime in multiple experimental and control units, controlling for other relevant variables. Comparison groups do not exhibit any major differences from treatment groups.

Level 5: Randomizes units to program and control conditions.

It is worth noting that external validity is not measured by this scale, but still must be considered to determine the usefulness of evaluation results in contexts other than those where the study was conducted. An increasing number of studies have been conducted in the past decades that can be classified as Level 3, 4, or 5 on the Maryland SMS, thus providing growing data about which crime prevention interventions work, which do not, and which look promising. Most of the studies included in this review have been rated Level 3, 4, or 5, but a few lower level evaluations have also been given some consideration when no others were available for a specific program and/or it was believed that they could be the source of some additional knowledge or information. We caution, however, that our classification according to the SMS is limited because sufficient resources were not available to assemble a panel of experts devoted to examining and rating several hundred studies. Nevertheless, we believe we can safely assume that this limitation is not a source of errors that could decisively affect our general findings.

Main Findings

426 evaluation studies were reviewed for this document: 59 of police and policing initiatives, 19 of situational crime prevention strategies, and 338 of a variety of policies included in the area of courts and corrections, by far the most diverse and complex category. A more detailed classification of the reviewed studies is presented in the table below. The rest of the document summarizes the conclusions reached within each policy area and subarea.

Summary Table

Policy area	Types of interventions		Number of studies	Distribution by quality level (SMS)				Regional focus (number)
				2	3	4	5	
Police and policing	Additional funding for police forces, new police hirings, and increases in police presence		9	—	4	5	—	U.S. (42); U.K. (8); Australia (6); Argentina (1); Canada (1); Colombia (1)
	Directed patrols		5	2	2	—	1	
	Arrest policies (proactive and reactive)		9	5	3	—	1	
	Community policing		9	3	5	1	—	
	Problem-oriented policing		20	2	11	5	2	
	Other interventions focused on gun violence		7	5	2	—	—	
	Subtotal		59	17	27	11	4	
Situational crime prevention	CCTV		11	1	10	—	—	U.K. (10); U.S. (4); Canada (3); Netherlands (1); Norway (1)
	Street lighting and other measures		8	2	6	—	—	
	Subtotal		19	3	16	—	—	
Courts and corrections	Prisons		9	—	6	—	3	U.S. (265); U.K. (27); Canada (16); Australia (13); New Zealand (7); Netherlands (2); Sweden (2); Switzerland (2); Argentina (1); Italy (1); Finland (1); Norway (1)
	Deterrence strategies		13	2	10	1	—	
	Community restraint strategies		35	—	20	6	9	
	Boot camps		22	—	13	5	4	
	Restorative justice initiatives		24	—	11	5	8	
	Rehabilitation and treatment programs (235)	Cognitive-behavioral programs (CBT)	22	1	9	8	4	
		Drug/driving under the influence (DUI) courts	71	3	51	10	7	
		Therapeutic communities	22	2	8	10	2	
		Other drug treatment programs	20	3	12	—	5	
		Programs for mentally ill offenders	18	8	6	2	2	
		Sex offender treatment	27	7	15	2	3	
		Batterers' programs	11	4	2	1	4	
		Specific programs for juveniles	9	1	2	—	6	
		Reentry, education, and work programs	35	13	9	6	7	
	Subtotal		338	44	174	56	64	
	Total		**416**	**64**	**217**	**67**	**68**	U.S. (311); U.K. (45); Canada (20); Oceania (26); Continental Europe (11); Latin America (3)

Police and Policing

In police and policing, nine studies evaluated the effects on crime of additional funding for police forces, new police hirings, and increases in police presence. Overall, studies tended to dismiss the common practice of simply putting more police on the streets as useless and costly. Instead, they supported the conclusion that additional police hirings, funding for policing agencies, and police presence *can* make a difference if they are applied to specific practices that have proven to be effective.

Among the effective practices is directed patrolling, targeted at specific problems and "hot spots" and "hot times" of criminal activity. Five studies (including two Level 3 and one Level 5) assessed the effectiveness of such interventions, and all exhibited positive results in at least some of the measures chosen. On the other hand, no recent studies were located about random patrolling, probably because previous ones already demonstrated its overall lack of effectiveness. Reinforcing these conclusions, one study reached the conclusion that the more selective traffic stops are, the higher their effectiveness.

Nine studies (including three Level 3 and one Level 5) evaluated arrest policies. According to two studies (one Level 3 and one Level 5), reactive arrests, which are made in response to reported or observed offenses, show some potential for reducing recidivism in domestic violence cases. However, the evidence is inconclusive and more research needs to be done because some studies also cautioned that in certain cases an intervention could have adverse effects. Most of the available studies (seven, including two Level 3) of proactive arrests focused on high-risk offenses or offenders (e.g., repeat offenders or drunk drivers) are about New York City's experience with misdemeanor enforcement or order-maintenance policing (so-called broken windows policing). The evidence is mostly unsupportive; however, proactive arrests appear to be more effective when directed against gun-related and drug crime (crackdowns). More research that is methodologically sound is still required to confirm such results.

Nine additional studies (including five Level 3 studies) evaluated community-policing initiatives. Only one assessed a Neighborhood Watch program, and it did not measure effectiveness at preventing crime, but rather feelings of safety and fear, and perception of the police within the community, a characteristic of many other evaluations. Additionally, all the British studies in this area are about reassurance policing programs, which are also directed at involving local communities and improving public confidence in policing. Similarly, two out of three Australian studies referred to beat policing initiatives as a type of community policing that makes an individual police officer responsible for a defined geographic area. These studies yielded mixed but somewhat encouraging results. Even though improvements have been documented in a number of cases regarding measures of fear of crime and confidence in the police, more research is needed about the crime prevention effects of these programs.

Twenty studies (including 11 Level 3, five Level 4, and two Level 5 studies) examined problem-oriented policing. Among these, four focused on specific "problem places" such as parks, buildings, and construction sites, and all yielded positive results. Three additional studies evaluated interventions focused on specific crimes and offenders (homicides involving guns, drugs, gangs, and repeat offenders; property crimes involving repeat offenders; and repeat offenses committed by parolees or probationers with substance abuse and mental health problems). These also yielded positive results. Another 13 studies were found regarding interventions specifically targeted at gun violence. In particular, a Colombian study of an intermittent police-enforced ban on carrying firearms yielded impressive results. As for American studies, most concentrated on a series of "lever-pulling" initiatives, a deterrence strategy that focuses both criminal justice and, to a lesser extent, social service attention on a smaller number of chronic offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate share of gun violence. These initiatives were based on "notification sessions" that conveyed the message that firearm violence would not be tolerated. Although findings were mixed, these programs did not appear to be highly effective in reducing recidivism. In contrast, evaluations of wider Safe Neighborhoods projects, which included increased federal prosecution, longer sentences, supply-side firearm policing activities, and deterrence through offender notification meetings, yielded more encouraging results.

Finally, seven studies evaluated interventions targeted at gun violence but not qualifying as problem-oriented policing strategies. These included tightened firearm controls, sentence-enhancement programs, and a national gun buy-back. Most of these were methodologically weak (only two of them were coded Level 3) and yielded mixed results; however, they seem to suggest that these programs can indeed reduce homicides if they succeed in drastically reducing the availability of firearms.

Situational Crime Prevention

We examined 19 studies that evaluated situational crime prevention strategies. Despite widespread implementation, there is not enough evidence that these strategies are effective.

Situational crime prevention is defined as the management, design, and manipulation of the physical and/or social environment with the aim to make crime appear more difficult, riskier, or less rewarding to potential offenders. The most frequently evaluated of these strategies involves CCTV. Harshly criticized because of privacy concerns and as the practical translation of the concepts of panopticism and "surveillance society," CCTV is extremely common in the United Kingdom; its effectiveness, however, is debatable. Eleven studies (including 10 Level 3) of CCTV were reviewed; their results were mixed, at best, and not highly encouraging. However, there seemed to be some differences in effectiveness related to the places where cameras were installed (strategic placement, proportion of public space covered by the cameras; especially effective in car parks), the ways they were monitored (especially whether there was real-time

monitoring and coordination between police and camera operators), and the speed of police response whenever a crime was recorded.

We also reviewed eight studies (including six Level 3, but none at the highest methodological quality) that evaluated street lighting programs and other situational measures, such as alley-gating, target hardening, property marking, buildings constructed along the principles of defensible space, and a crime awareness project. They all yielded noticeable decreases in crime.

Courts and Corrections

Incapacitation Mechanisms

Nine studies (six Level 3 and three Level 5) were compiled on a variety of issues related to incarceration. Regarding management styles, the available studies did not support the frequent claim that private prison management is more effective than public management. Regarding security levels, studies comparing inmates located just above and just below cutoff values (i.e., inmates that are similar in all respects other than their conditions of confinement) tended to back the idea that higher levels of security either made no difference on recidivism rates or even increased criminal behavior. Either way, the extra spending on higher security was not justified for the majority of prisoners. Regarding the use of so-called supermax prisons (in which inmates spend most of the day isolated from others), no reduction was found in levels of inmate-on-inmate violence, and inconsistent effects were observed regarding levels of violence against staff. Again, the extra spending did not seem to be justified. Evaluations also suggested that harsher treatment did not reduce, but rather increased, post-release recidivism.

Deterrence Strategies

Three out of 13 studies (two Level 3) of deterrence mechanisms evaluated curfew laws for juveniles; only one found significant decreases in arrests of targeted youth. More research that is methodologically sound is still required to reach reliable conclusions; nevertheless, it can be said that this strategy has so far not been proven to be effective.

Deterrence strategies targeted at sex offenders in the United States and the United Kingdom (six studies, including three Level 3 and one Level 4) were assessed. Three of five American studies concluded that registration and notification policies made no difference in sexual recidivism (although they might have had an impact on other types of recidivism), while two observed positive outcomes (although, again, evidence was sometimes mixed for non-sexual reoffending). The intervention reported in the British study was a periodic polygraph testing strategy, which did not appear to be highly effective. Overall, evidence provided encouragement for initiatives targeting sex offenders with interventions of a more rehabilitative nature.

Additionally, four Level 3 studies weighed the deterrent effects of alternative sentencing options designed to provide safe alternatives to jail time, generally targeted at non-violent

misdemeanor first-time offenders. More information is required to confirm or dismiss the conclusions regarding the weakened deterrent effects of suspended sentences without probation and fines, and the enhanced deterrence of jail time, work release, electronic monitoring, and/or probation for cases of domestic violence, as well as the increased recidivism associated with prison sentences for property offenders.

Community Restraints

Among strategies based on community restraints (35 studies), the most consistently evaluated one is intensive supervised probation or parole (15 studies: five Level 3, three Level 4, and seven Level 5, all conducted in the United States). Alternatives to regular parole are researched because parole, as it is currently practiced, does little to enhance public safety. Indeed, parolees typically do not fare any better than similar prisoners released into the community without supervision. Research is therefore based on the hypothesis that a better classification of parolees and probationers according to risk and need would allow resources to be refocused on those that pose higher risk and/or present higher need, while lesser supervision of the rest would not compromise public safety. As a result, a strategy that has been repeatedly tested consists of reducing supervising officer's caseloads for high-risk/high-need offenders while increasing them for lower-risk/lower-need offenders. Most evaluations of such policies, including the most methodologically sound ones, favor refocusing resources; results hold for both adult and juvenile offenders.

Ten additional studies (seven Level 3, two Level 4, and one Level 5) evaluated home confinement with electronic monitoring. Results are mixed: six studies found very little or no significant difference in recidivism, while four (including the one randomized evaluation, conducted in Switzerland) found significant differences, but one was unclear as to whether results could be attributed to electronic monitoring. As for community service as a sentencing alternative (three studies, one each Level 3, 4, and 5), one evaluation (carried out in Finland) reported no significant difference in reoffending; another (a randomized evaluation conducted in Switzerland) observed an almost significant reduction; and a third (in The Netherlands) yielded a large significant reduction. All three Level 3 evaluations of day reporting centers and both evaluations (also Level 3) of work release programs (all conducted in the United States) found significant reductions on at least some measures of recidivism. Other community-based sanctions (two Level 3 studies) were also found to be more effective than custodial sanctions in the United States and Australia.

Structure, Discipline, and Challenge

The single most popular strategy emphasizing structure, discipline, and challenge takes the form of boot camps (i.e., reformatories that use military discipline), which were originally designed for juveniles but are now also available for adults. Previous evaluations concluded that boot camps did not reduce recidivism; therefore, all newly available studies (22, half of boot camps

for juveniles, half for adults; 13 Level 3, five Level 4, and four Level 5 studies, most conducted in the United States) evaluated second-generation boot camps, which also include vocational, educational, and/or treatment programs. Still, the overwhelming majority of the studies, including two of the three randomized studies, observed very little or no benefit regarding recidivism, and at least one study described the intervention as counterproductive. However, a number of studies also included cost analyses and concluded that boot camps are less costly than imprisonment, mostly due to the shorter length of the programs. Therefore, a financial argument is made in favor of boot camps whenever recidivism figures are no worse than those of their alternatives.

Accountability and Healing

We examined 24 studies of restorative justice initiatives. Restorative justice aims to increase offender sympathy for the victim on the premise that crime is a violation of people and relationships rather than just a violation of the law. On that basis, the most appropriate response to committing a crime is to repair the harm. Seventeen such studies (nine Level 3, two Level 4, and six Level 5) involved programs for juveniles, while the remaining seven (two Level 3, two Level 4, and three Level 5 studies) assessed programs targeted at adults or offenders of any age. Overall, this strategy showed promise. Most of the studies concluded that restorative justice yielded higher restitution payments, agreement fulfillment rates, and participant satisfaction with the justice process. Results, however, are more mixed regarding recidivism rates, with some of the studies of the highest methodological quality having observed reductions and other equally rigorous evaluations having found no significant difference between restorative justice schemes and the usual criminal process. Many studies note that these programs work better for certain subcategories of offenders and offenses, and more research is needed on the matter.

Rehabilitation and Treatment

The fact that rehabilitation and treatment account for the highest number of available studies is not surprising: offenders go back to their communities in great numbers every year, and most of them remain badly equipped to reintegrate and thus eventually recidivate. As a response, a wide variety of rehabilitation and treatment programs focused on criminogenic characteristics have been designed and implemented. Within this group, the single most crowded category is that of programs targeted at offenders with substance abuse issues (113 studies).

Drug/DUI courts (71 studies, including 51 Level 3, 10 Level 4, and seven Level 5) are one of the most innovative and widely evaluated strategies for dealing with drug-involved offenders. These are specialized dockets that provide judicially monitored treatment to (mostly non-violent) drug-involved offenders, and include a variety of graduated responses to non-compliance. Studies across the United States (and a few from Canada and Australia), including those that are the most methodologically sound, found significant treatment effects and confirmed that the combination of supervision and treatment produces better results than each

separately. Furthermore, comparisons among programs, which yielded disparate results, have allowed a few key elements that make drug courts effective to be identified. Key elements include the nature and length of judge assignments, the frequency of court sessions, and graduation requirements. However, many drug courts exhibited less than optimal graduation rates, and recidivism figures, as well as costs, tended to be much higher for terminated participants. Also, drug courts presently handle only a fraction of the cases of potentially eligible drug-involved offenders in need of treatment. Therefore, the main challenges include reaching a higher number of eligible individuals and increasing graduation rates.

Unlike drug courts, therapeutic communities (22 studies: eight Level 3, 10 Level 4, and four Level 5, all from the United States) have been around for decades. Widely applied in prison-based substance abuse treatment programs, the therapeutic community is an intensive, long-term, highly structured residential treatment modality typically used for hard-core drug users. Such programs include successive stages that reflect increased levels of responsibility and use the community to encourage positive change in its members. Many therapeutic communities use cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) curricula. These programs have increasingly been supplemented with aftercare components that aim to counter the erosion over time of the positive effects of in-prison therapeutic communities. On that basis, some studies analyzed the effect of aftercare when added to the typical in-prison program, and generally concluded that it makes a significant positive difference. Overall recidivism findings for therapeutic communities are mixed, but a few high quality studies showed positive results for all participants, and most studies yielded very good results for program graduates.

Among other treatment options for drug-involved offenders, six studies (five randomized) assessed methadone and other drug maintenance programs. Although not all of these evaluations included measures of recidivism, they reported improvements in at least one of the observed variables: treatment retention, substance abuse, risk behaviors, and criminal reoffending. Other rehabilitative interventions include the following: CBT; mental health courts; diversionary programs for offenders with co-occurring serious mental illness and substance abuse; treatment for sex offenders; rehabilitation programs for batterers; multisystemic therapy (MST) for juvenile offenders; and various reentry, education, and work programs.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy targets the thoughts and attitudes associated with antisocial behavior and deviant lifestyles, and teaches skills in problem areas. We reviewed 22 studies (including nine Level 3, eight Level 4, and four Level 5) that evaluated a wide variety of CBT programs, both in prison and in the community, for adult (mostly male) offenders (18 studies) and, to a lesser extent, for juveniles (four studies). Results were mixed. Some of these programs seemed to work, while others did not. More research is needed to identify what makes CBT successful or what makes it work for specific categories of offenders but not for others.

Additionally, we reviewed five studies of CBT programs for offenders with substance abuse issues. Two of the three Level 3 studies (the highest rated ones) reported at least some

positive outcomes regarding drug use and recidivism. However, they yielded different results for male and female offenders, pointing toward the need for gender-sensitive programming. More generally, evidence about CBT programs underlines a point that is valid for all areas of criminal justice: it is of the utmost importance to tailor programs to the characteristics of target populations, and it is equally crucial to appropriately match offenders to programs.

Among programs specifically designed to deal with mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders, Mental Health Courts, which follow the lead of the Drug Court model, are the most studied (nine studies, including three Level 3 and one Level 5, all conducted in the United States). Most evaluations provided at least some evidence of effectiveness compared to the treatment-as-usual alternatives—that is, adversarial criminal processing and less intensive mental health treatment—regarding recidivism and mental health measures.

Strategies targeted at offenders with co-occurring serious mental illness and substance use disorders also include various jail diversion programs. We reviewed five evaluations of such programs (including one Level 3 and two Level 4). They all tended to back this type of intervention one way or another. More importantly, this strategy was supported by the recidivism data yielded by the only available Level 4 study. We note, however, that evaluations were typically based on self-report data from interviews and did not necessarily include measures of recidivism. Similarly, although more research is warranted for them as well, therapeutic communities (two studies, one Level 3 and one Level 5) seem like a good idea for this subpopulation of offenders, as shown by a randomized study comparing their effects to those of treatment-as-usual.

Another broad category of treatment is that targeted at sex offenders (27 studies, including 15 Level 3, two Level 4, and three Level 5). We found an increasing amount of promising evidence (much of it coming from Canada) that contradicted the popular notion that sex offenders cannot be changed. There is, however, an impressive variety of approaches to treat sex offenders. So, beyond the discussion of whether treatment works—to which the plain answer is that some treatment programs do, some do not—it is necessary to determine which ones work best, both generally and for each specific category (and risk level) of sex offenders. More and better research is required in this respect.

Rehabilitation programs are also available for perpetrators of domestic violence (11 studies, including two Level 3, one Level 4, and four Level 5). Most of the assessed interventions combined elements of CBT with responses to the societal conditions that gave men power and control over women. The effectiveness of these programs is questionable, to say the least. Indeed, three of four Level 5 studies concluded that they produce no discernible attitude change and make no difference in recidivism rates.

Additionally, we also examined a rehabilitation strategy specifically designed for juvenile offenders: MST. Most available evaluations of such programs (five out of six) were randomized

trials, and their results tended to back effectiveness based on a variety of outcome measures, such as out-of-home placements, school expulsions, re-arrest rates, drug and alcohol use, psychiatric symptoms, and family relations and functioning.

Last but not least, we scrutinized 35 studies of reentry, education, and work programs (including nine Level 3, six Level 4, and seven Level 5, most conducted in the United States). These programs play a central role in rehabilitation programming because, as most prisoners are eventually released, preparing them to return safely to the community and remain in it as law-abiding citizens is not a choice but a necessity. Although results are varied and mixed, they suggest that in-prison adult basic education and reentry initiatives providing a wide variety of employment and life skills are the most effective strategies within this category.

Conclusions

This study reviewed 416 studies, 311 of which were conducted in the United States. The interventions examined were implemented and evaluated in a variety of ways in similarly varied contexts. Although much further research is still required, analysis yielded a number of clues regarding what might work and what does not in police and policing, situational crime prevention, and courts and corrections. Moreover, complex issues such as what works where, under which conditions, for whom, and even why—which would help researchers and policymakers understand what needs to be done to successfully replicate a program that has been proven to work in a number of circumstances—are just beginning to become clear.

After reviewing hundreds of studies, we still have little knowledge about what could work in Latin America because so few rigorous evaluations have so far been conducted in the region. However, a number of lessons can be learned from the growing experience of other regions with evidence-based crime prevention, as long as a discussion regarding their validity for (and the challenges of their implementation in) Latin America is actively encouraged.

First, one of the strategies most often resorted to by governments facing social unease regarding crime and insecurity—increasing the police presence on city streets—is rejected unless applied to specific activities that have proven to be effective. Examples of successful strategies include directed patrols and targeting “hot spots” and “hot times” of criminal activity.

Second, and also in policing, some evidence supports the strategy of proactive arrests when used against gun-related and drug crime. In turn, while the available evidence regarding community policing tends to support its reassuring function rather than its crime prevention effects, there is some evidence, including some from Latin America, for problem-oriented policing focused on specific places, crimes, and offenders.

Third, there is not enough evidence from methodologically sound studies to support the effectiveness of the widespread strategies grouped under the label of situational crime

prevention. This is no small finding given the amount of resources that are currently devoted to funding CCTV programs.

Fourth, there is enough evidence to justify concerns about the criminogenic effects of incarceration, which should therefore be used as sparingly as possible. Instead, targeted community restraint strategies are highly recommended in cases where public safety is not further compromised. This includes refocusing supervision resources on higher-risk and higher-need offenders and encouraging further experimentation with certain community-based sanctions that have been deemed promising by a number of evaluation studies.

Fifth, boot camps were widely rejected as ineffective. Generally, successful experiences could not be attributed to the military discipline component but rather to the educational and treatment elements, which are also available within other programs.

Sixth, evidence supports restorative justice schemes based on measurements such as restitution payments, agreement fulfillment, and satisfaction with the justice process. However, results are more mixed and inconclusive regarding the effect of restorative justice on recidivism.

Finally, in researching studies for this evaluation, it became very apparent that there is an impressive variety of rehabilitation and treatment programs available. This is a key issue because a massive number of offenders return to their communities every year, most of whom remain badly equipped for reintegration, lacking education and work skills, and burdened by addictions, mental health, and behavioral problems. This situation amounts to a huge social cost that is typically measured in terms of criminal recidivism. A vast array of rehabilitation and treatment programs that are focused on criminogenic offender characteristics and implemented in both correctional and community settings have been assessed. Generally speaking, innovative interventions combining treatment and judicial monitoring with graduated sanctions (drug/DUI/mental health courts) look very promising and deserve more attention. It is important to keep in mind, however, that in this case, as well as in those of therapeutic communities, CBT, MST for juvenile offenders, and reentry, education, and work programs, the results of evaluations are often mixed. Therefore, rather than trying to define a full category of programs that are supposed to work, more and better research should be devoted to the tasks of isolating the factors (already hinted at by some studies) that make some interventions effective, identifying those that make other interventions fail, and designing protocols to successfully replicate the former.