

Displacement and the Diffusion of Benefits

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A crime prevention strategy might not only have a direct impact on the crime and location that is being targeted, but also have other positive and negative consequences. Diffusion of benefits occurs when a crime prevention initiative has other positive outcomes. These might include preventing other crimes not directly targeted. If boom gates were installed in a shopping centre car park to prevent motor vehicle theft, but it was also found that their installation had caused a reduction in stealing from motor vehicles, then in the absence of other strategies having affected this change, the boom gates might have caused this diffusion of benefits.

In contrast to the diffusion of benefits, a crime prevention initiative might also cause displacement. For example, access control measures (i.e. entry phones) installed in a housing complex might cause displacement of break, enter and steal offences into a neighbouring housing complex without entry phone technology. This form of displacement is known as geographical displacement, as the same crime is being committed in another area due to the original crime prevention initiative.

There are generally five potential types of displacement and diffusion of benefits. These are illustrated below.

Type	Definition	Diffusion	Displacement
Geographical	The offence occurs elsewhere	Reduction in target and surrounding area	Switch to another location to offend
Temporal	The offence occurs at a different time	Offences reduced at other times	Offences committed at other times
Target	The offender selects a different target	Various items protected rather than just one protected	Other items stolen
Tactical	The offender goes about committing the offence differently	Other tactics blocked	Other tactics used to achieve same result
Crime type	The offender is dissuaded from the original offence and elects to commit another	Other crime types also prevented	Other crimes committed instead

(Table adapted from Clarke, R. and Eck, J. **Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers: in 60 small steps**, Center for Problem-Oriented Policing)

By way of illustrating the above table, if security guards are deployed at a car park known for high rates of motor vehicle theft, then geographical displacement will occur if rates of motor vehicle theft increase at neighbouring car parks. Temporal displacement will occur if the thefts increase during daylight hours, as opposed to evenings, when the security guards are deployed. Target displacement occurs if bicycles are stolen rather than cars, while tactical displacement might include the apprehension of the guards while cars are stolen. Finally, crime type displacement would involve a rise in break, enter and steals, due to the offenders electing to commit different crimes.

Both diffusion of benefits and displacement should be considered during the formulation of crime prevention strategies. Often data will need to be captured prior to the implementation of a crime prevention initiative to determine if diffusion of benefits and / or displacement occurs.