

What Works Briefings were superseded in 2015 by the [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#)

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Overview:

The review finds that use of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) can lead to a small reduction in crime. CCTV is more effective when directed against specific types of crime; it is effective at reducing theft of and from vehicles, but has no impact on levels of violent crime.



What is a 'what works briefing'?

The aim of this briefing is to summarise the best available research evidence in relation to the use of CCTV and to highlight its implications for police policy and practice.



The review assesses the effectiveness of CCTV as a deterrent, rather than its effectiveness in detecting crime, assisting in investigations, and bringing criminals to justice.

This document briefly summarises a Campbell Collaboration Systematic Review¹ which is a longer and more technical report that focused on the impact of CCTV on personal and property crimes. Applying rigorous selection criteria the review identified 44 projects in which CCTV was installed in an area and changes in crime rates were compared with a similar 'control' site where CCTV was not installed. The Review then drew general conclusions from this pool of evaluations about the impact of CCTV on crime rates.

¹ The studies were based mainly in the UK (37 studies), with four in the USA and one each in Canada, Norway and Sweden



What is CCTV?

CCTV is an investment in 'situational' crime-prevention; it is designed to change the environment within which crime occurs, rather than trying to change the attitudes and capacities of offenders. It is thought to deter criminality in the area under surveillance by;



- (a) increasing the threat of potential and actual offenders being identified;
- (b) mobilising some form of response; or
- (c) collecting evidence.

Installation of CCTV is often accompanied by other measures such as general improvements in the physical amenity of a location (reversing 'broken windows') and other security measures such as fencing (target hardening) or improved lighting.

CCTV systems can vary in terms of:

- locations where they are installed: city or town centre business areas, or residential areas; or within shopping malls, railway stations, airports or car parks; or on trains and buses.
- areas they cover and the density of that coverage.
- Whether they involve either 'active' or 'passive' monitoring
 - ◇ 'Active monitoring' by operators who monitor the cameras in real time can (a) increase the threat of identification and (b) help mobilise a response as operators may have open channel communication with the police.
 - ◇ 'Passive monitoring' refers to CCTV systems that regularly scan an area and produce a record that can later be examined, assisting with (c) collecting evidence.

Does CCTV work?

Overall, use of CCTV makes for a small, but statistically significant, reduction in crime, but this generalisation needs to be tempered by careful attention to (a) the type of crime being addressed and (b) the setting of the CCTV intervention. CCTV is more effective when directed at reducing theft of and from vehicles, while it has no impact on levels of violent crime.



Location, location, location

Location is an important factor in the effectiveness of CCTV. The review found that use of CCTV resulted in a marked and statistically significant reduction in crime in car parks while the evidence was insufficiently clear to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of CCTV schemes in city and town centres, public housing and public transport



Location	Results of review
Car Parks	Combining the data from six separate UK studies shows a marked and statistically significant reduction in vehicle-related crimes. The review found that overall crime decreased by 51 per cent in sites operating CCTV compared to areas where there was no such intervention. In all six UK studies of car parks, the introduction of CCTV was coupled with other improvements such as better lighting and increased security staff
City and town centres	Overall the review found a small reduction in crime but one that was insufficiently clear to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of CCTV. When 15 UK city centre projects were analysed together, a 10 per cent fall in crime was identified, though this finding was not statistically significant.
Public Housing Estates	CCTV resulted in a small but non significant reduction in crime. Three of nine estates in the analysis witnessed reductions in crime following the installation of CCTV, but in other estates there were either increases in crime, or results were ambiguous.
Public Transport	The combined data of 4 studies on underground systems shows a 'sizeable' (23 per cent) reduction in crime, but this figure is driven by one particularly successful intervention in London. Two of the other interventions either saw increased crime rates or made no difference. Overall the findings are ambiguous and not statistically significant.

Displacement of crime or diffusion of benefit?

A common concern is whether offending may just be displaced to other locations if offenders are deterred from committing offences by CCTV. Alternatively, if CCTV does reduce crime, then positive effects might diffuse to other nearby areas. The review found little evidence of either displacement of crime or the diffusion of positive impacts. However, there are two caveats to this conclusion:

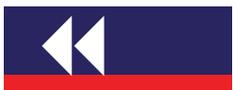
1. Most of these evaluations took place over a short time frame (roughly 12 months). The reviewers consider this too short a period in which to assess the wider consequences of CCTV deployment.
2. In an article based upon a major Home Office study of 13 CCTV projects, researchers suggest that more refined analysis shows evidence of limited displacement of crime.²

Conclusions

When all the evidence from all the projects is combined, the results indicate that;

- ◇ CCTV has a modest but significant desirable effect on crime,
- ◇ is most effective in reducing crime in car parks and is most effective when targeted at vehicle crimes (largely a function of the successful car park schemes),
- ◇ CCTV schemes have been found to be most effective with high coverage and when other interventions are used such as improved lighting and/or increased security guards.

These results lend support for the continued use of CCTV to prevent crime in public space, but suggest that it be more narrowly targeted than its present use would indicate. Future CCTV schemes should employ high-quality evaluation designs with long follow-up periods.



Implications for good practice

CCTV reduces certain types of crime in some locations. Successful use of CCTV means clearly identifying the crime problem at a location, and developing a clear rationale for the installation of CCTV. Simply installing cameras and hoping for the best is unlikely to repay the investment. Consider the following issues:



- **The type of crime**

The review shows that CCTV had the desired effect in reducing vehicle-related crime, but it did not have the same impact on violent crime.

- **The location**

CCTV is most effective in specific locations where good coverage can be ensured. Car parks and underground train stations are confined areas where it is possible to achieve nearly 100 per cent coverage. CCTV is more likely to succeed as a prevention strategy when there are no 'blind spots' to be exploited by criminals.

- **Other interventions or improvements**

CCTV alone may not be enough. In all six UK studies of car parks, the introduction of CCTV was coupled with other improvements such as better lighting and increased security staff. CCTV is likely to work better as part of a wider strategic approach.

- **Evaluation**

Evaluate your intervention: Future CCTV schemes should employ high-quality evaluation designs with long follow-up periods to ensure more robust analyses of the use of CCTV in crime prevention

Other issues

This review does not assess the contribution of CCTV to ensuring criminals are caught and convicted. There is at present limited research evidence on the impact of CCTV on detections and convictions.

- **The type of crime**

The review shows that CCTV had the desired effect in reducing vehicle-related crime, but it did not have the same impact on violent crime.



Help and advice

Whilst this report focuses on redeployable CCTV, the approach taken has wider application:

Gill, M., A. Rose, et al. (2005). A good practice guide for the implementation of redeployable CCTV. London, Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate. Available from:

<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/hordsolr/rdsolr1605.pdf>

A number of studies from the very thorough 2005 Home Office evaluation of 14 CCTV installations may also be of interest. A good starting point is:

Gill, M, et al. (2005). The impact of CCTV: fourteen case studies. London, Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate. Available from:

<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/hordsolr/rdsolr1505.pdf>

<http://popcenter.org> may also be a useful resource.



¹Welsh BP, Farrington DC. Effects of closed circuit television surveillance on crime. Campbell Systematic Reviews 2008:17

www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/download/243/

²Waples, S., M. Gill, et al. (2009). "Does CCTV displace crime?" Criminology and Criminal Justice 9(2): 207–224.

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