

Reducing neighborhood crime: Place management of alcohol outlets

27 May 2020



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Recent research from the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation and the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health suggests that neighborhood crime may be reduced by enhancing "place management" resources in and around off-premise alcohol sales outlets, particularly at small and independent stores.

Place management is monitoring and controlling what people do in and around a place. Poor place management may provide opportunities for [crime](#). Neighborhood crime is sometimes higher where there is higher alcohol outlet density, and often, alcohol outlet managers are held responsible for these problems. However, it's unclear how alcohol [store](#) staff can control neighborhood crime.

To understand how place management operates across a wide range of store and neighborhood types, researchers assessed crime-prevention strategies at all 403 off-premise outlets in six contiguous California cities, interviewed managers in 40 of these outlets, and conducted extensive observations in 15 of these 40 outlets.

According to some managers, physical and verbal threats from customers and intoxicated people and insufficient law enforcement response made it difficult for store staff to control behavior of people in and around their stores. Some managers reported relying on their own strong personalities and friendships with neighborhood-based customers to manage problems. Managers reported some ability to assert their authority over interior spaces, but less so over exterior, public spaces.

Further, small and independently operated stores were the most [common type](#) in the study, but had fewer resources for place management than large and chain stores.

Says principal investigator Dr. Juliet Lee: "In under-regulated alcohol markets like California, many stores, and many kinds of stores, can get a license to sell alcohol, but not all retailers have sufficient resources or authority to prevent area crimes. Improved [law enforcement](#) and manager training may help reduce crime in areas with high density of [alcohol](#) sales outlets."

More information: Lina Ghanem et al, Place management in off-premise alcohol outlets: Results of a multi-methods study in a six-city California area, *International Journal of Drug Policy* (2020). DOI: [10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102735](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102735)

Provided by Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

APA citation: Reducing neighborhood crime: Place management of alcohol outlets (2020, May 27)
retrieved 18 June 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-neighborhood-crime-alcohol-outlets.html>

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