

Property Thefts from Parked Vehicles

Using reminder notices to reduce crime

Agency: West Vancouver (BC, Canada) Police Department

Project Duration:
02/22/19–04/22/19

Pracademic*:
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Context

Thefts from autos (TFA) have become an increasing problem in West Vancouver, BC. In an effort to reduce thefts from parked vehicles, the WVPD tested a postcard mailed to property addresses that describes the need to lock one's vehicle and secure one's possessions.

Key Finding

When controlling for type of building/residence, no difference in reported TFA crimes was found between the intervention (reminder) and control (no reminder) conditions.

*BetaGov provides ongoing training to agency personnel to become research-savvy "Pracademics" who can lead trials.

Why BetaGov Spark?

Background

Thefts from parked vehicles in West Vancouver have increased over the last few years. The West Vancouver Police Department (WVPD) documented a 33% increase in thefts from autos (TFAs) from 2015 to 2018. Most TFA activity centered in three areas in the community. Many thefts were of items left in unlocked vehicles parked either on the street or in private driveways. Owners reported that most occurred during the night. To address this crime, the WVPD tested a community awareness campaign that reminded randomly selected community members about removing valuables before locking cars.

Design

Random assignment to the intervention (reminder notice) and control (no reminder notice) was conducted for matched areas within high-TFA areas in the city's East, Central, and West Districts. Matching was on the basis of demographic and economic characteristics of each of the eight selected areas. A direct mailer (see image) was sent to 3,007 addresses in the four intervention areas that described the importance of locking cars, removing valuables, and keeping items left in cars out of sight.

Lessons Learned

A total of 12 TFA occurred in the intervention areas in the two months following the mailed reminders compared with 25 in the control areas for the same period. Because of differences in the number of industrial buildings, commercial buildings, single- and multi-family residences across conditions, we conducted analyses to control for building type. When comparing only single-family residence areas, the reminders were not associated with fewer TFAs. The pattern of

TFAs is similar when comparing to previous time-points when combining property types within the two conditions.

Next Steps

Because of the difficulty of comparing unlike areas, we turned to analyses of similar, one-family residence areas and found no difference in the number of TFA. Although reminders were only sent to the intervention areas, these results may be due to the successful dissemination of the message across all areas of the community. Further efforts to address TFA are being considered..



**Lock
Your
Car.**

West Vancouver Police Department
755 16th St.
West Vancouver, BC V7V 0B9, Canada

Dear neighbor,

Thefts from cars in your area are increasing. However, simple efforts can eliminate loss of your property:

- 1) Don't leave your car unlocked or the windows down when parked at home or in the community.
- 2) Don't leave valuables in your car.

Don't be a victim.

Do you have more to say about property crime and public safety in West Vancouver? We want to hear from you! Please fill out our community survey at _____

