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Police Department and Cities Economies

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April, 2023

Police Departments and Cities Economies

Sustainable Development Goal 8

Abstract

This study will show how important the presence of law enforcement agencies is for economic development in growing communities. Law enforcement provides a sense of safety, which is attractive for individuals as well as business owners in the community. The safety of a place also attracts people as well as businesses to an area. This study shows how the Georgetown Police Department implements events to improve community trust. This is important for the community given the population growth in and around the coastal areas of South Carolina. This study is focused on Sustainable Development Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Introduction

In order for a city to thrive and grow it has to be a safe place. No one wants to move to an unsafe place for fear that something bad will happen to them or their belongings. On top of that, no business wants to start somewhere that they are going to lose money, or where their employees will feel unsafe. This is where police departments come in to aid in making these communities and cities safer places so they can grow. There are a few elements in which police departments take part in making communities safer, but they do not do it alone. For a police department to be successful in its mission of safety, it must rely on the residents of the communities they reside in to inform them of issues and report crimes. Events such as coffee with a cop and coat drives are simple events that police departments can organize to engage with community members and gain their trust. All of these factors are important pieces that go into having successful law enforcement in an area which in turn helps the community's economy. Sustainable Development Goal 8 is focused on promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Police departments play a crucial role in this goal. As stated, a community that is not safe is not a community that is attractive for new growth such as new businesses. Those

businesses are how a communities economies continue to grow so the force that is keeping their doors open is essential to obtaining the goal of economic growth. Sustainable Development Goal 8 also promotes decent work for all individuals. A decent work environment is one that is safe and welcoming. The overall goal of the SDGs is to promote prosperity and peace in our world in the years to come. Police departments have the ability to aid in these goals in their day-to-day work.

Literature Review

Areas in which crime rates are high are not really areas in which a typical person would willingly want to move to or that a business owner may start a business in. The safer the area the more attraction it has to individuals as well as business owners. Community involvement is something that Police Departments do in order to gain the trust of the citizens living in their jurisdiction. This also allows for Police Departments to hear and be made aware of certain crimes and public safety problems happening (Scheider, Spence, Manssourian, 2012). In order to make the cities in which they police a safer place they have to do more than just make arrests. Efforts of prevention by providing offenders with clear incentives for compliance has been shown to be an effective way to reduce violence (Scheider, Spence, and Manssourian, 2012).

In order to be an effective police department there must be sufficient funds to do so. In 2020 after a few incidents happened there were calls to reform, defund, or abolish the police nationwide (Ahmed). However, this would have major effects on the economy. In 2017 the Census Bureau's data shows that 88,000 local governments prioritized their law enforcement over public health and child and social services (Usafacts, 2020). Without the presence of police departments criminals may see an easy out in engaging in crime and not getting caught (Blesse, Diegmann, 2022). In the German state of Baden-Württemberg there was a large police reform

that turned into the closure of 37 percent of local police stations (Blesse, Diegmann, 2022). After these stations closed it was found that some theft categories increased in number of reported crimes. (Blesse, Diegmann, 2022). While there are some arguments that police departments do more bad than good just their presence alone keeps areas a little safer than they would be without them. Even if people do not have much confidence in law enforcement because of certain events that doesn't change how they reduce crime (Owens and Ba, 2021).

Many behaviors and protocols of the police come from historic laws enacted by federal, state, and local governments (Cunningham, 2021). This means that in order for there to be change there needs to be a joint effort in altering laws that may not be applicable in this time period. For a police department to be as effective as possible in a community they must work with other governmental agencies and groups to have a comprehensive plan on crime (Smith, 1945). Working on police engagement in a good light such as working local events or running a coat drive with other governmental organizations will aid in communities' perception of their local police departments.

Analysis

In Georgetown, SC there are 2 law enforcement agencies. The Sheriff's Department and the city police department. Both are located in the heart of Georgetown, SC. I have been placed at the Georgetown City Police for the past couple of months. I go in and get to see day-to-day operations as well as assist in them. The biggest project that I worked on was the process of getting the police department accreditation. There are different levels of accreditation a police department can receive. These levels of accreditation are state, federal, as well as international. The Georgetown City Police Department is in the process of getting state accredited. A department that is accredited complies with state, federal, or international requirements in every

aspect of how they operate. Department policies have to contain certain requirements as well as how officers should carry themselves and act in certain circumstances. These requirements range from how evidence is to be handled and stored down to different restraint techniques officers can and can not use. There are 27 chapters that departments must follow in order to become an SCLEA (South Carolina Law Enforcement Accreditation) accredited agency. By following all of these requirements the police department is bettering itself for the improvement of community safety.

It is important for the county to have a good law enforcement presence with the population growth that is occurring. Horry County is directly north of Georgetown County, and it is the second fastest-growing county in South Carolina population-wise. (SC State Library). Considering that Georgetown is directly north of Horry County it is to be expected that Georgetown County will continue to grow in the coming years. Georgetown's law enforcement is already taking strides to ensure that its community is ready for population growth. They are hiring more police officers as fast as possible. I have sat in on multiple interviews for potential new police officer hires in the last few months that I have been there. Since 2000, Georgetown has seen a steady increase in population. This trend is expected to continue into

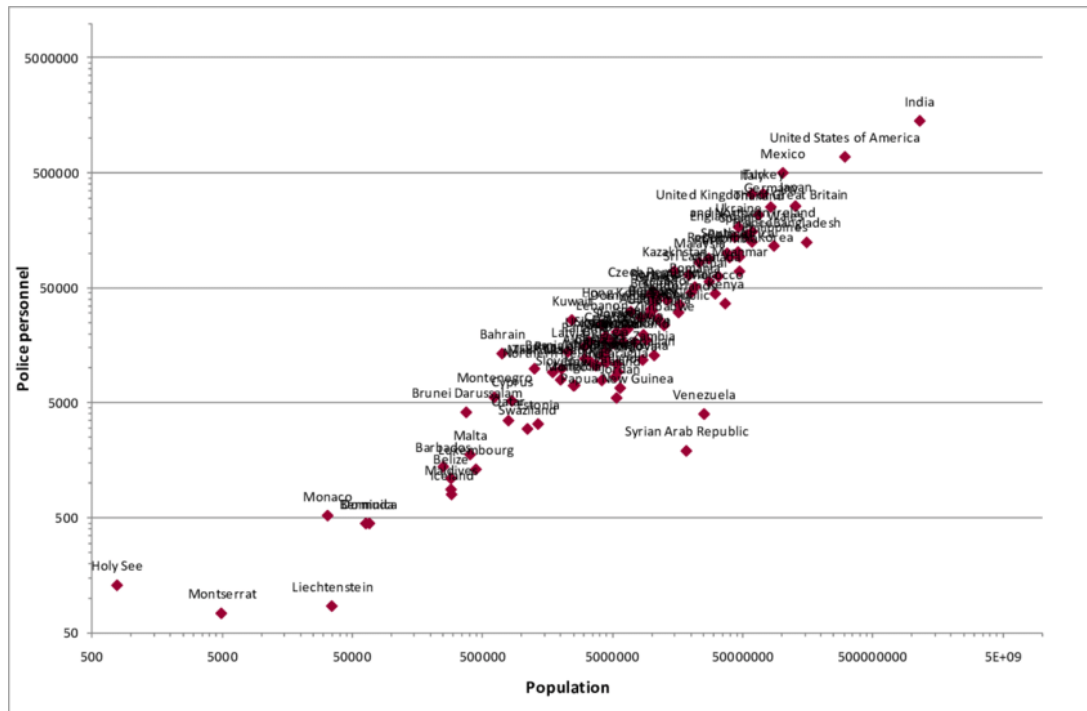


Table 1: (South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, 2019).

2035. (South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, 2019). Table 1 above shows that countries with larger populations tend to have a greater amount of police personnel. Some individuals may question whether or not the police do aid in keeping a community safe. Some of this questioning was heightened in the aftermath of the events in 2020 with police officers and some of their actions. Police departments were thought of differently after that and it hindered the way that individuals perceived police departments. It did not change the fact that police departments do so much good in and for the communities that they are present in. Making an environment safer has many advantages to it. The biggest one is that the safer an area is the more potential it has for population growth as well as business growth.

The next table below (Table 2) shows how the increase and decrease in the amount of police affected whether or not the crime cost per capita increased or decreased (Mello, 2019). It steadily shows that when the amount of police decreased the crime increased and when the amount of police increased the crime decreased. The table shows that when there was a

significant addition to number of police the crime cost had a huge decrease. The presence of law enforcement agencies in a place alone will be a crime deterrent.

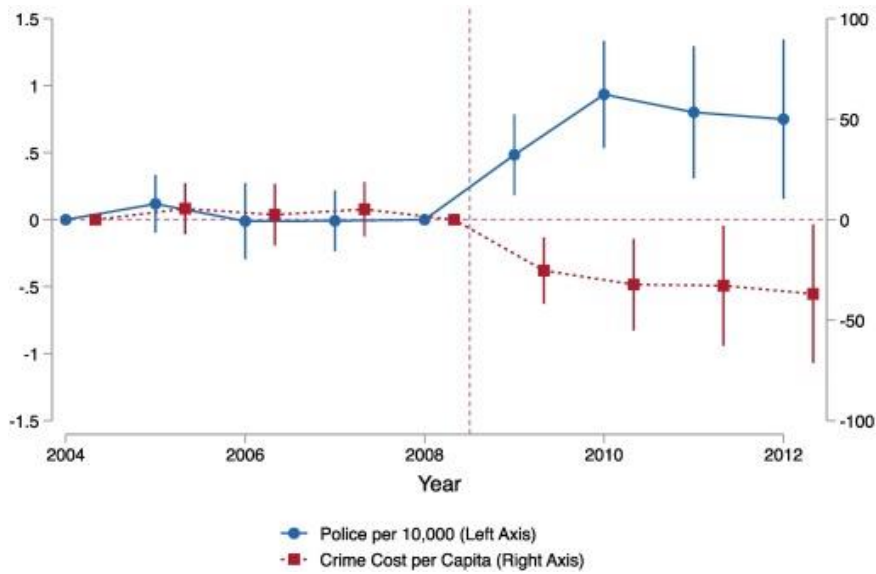
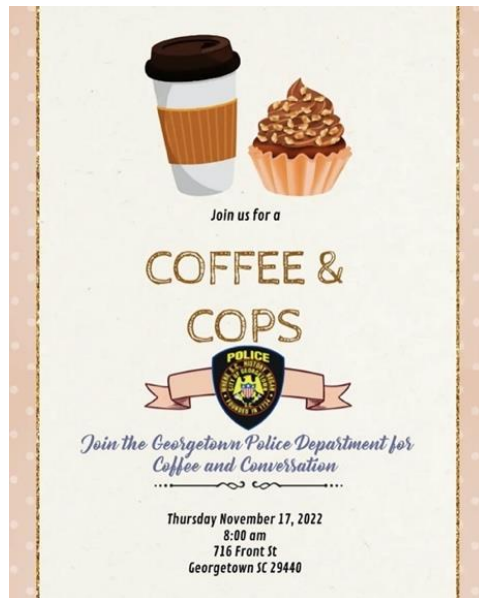


Table 2: Number of Police impacted vs Crime Cost Per Capita

Having the presence of a police department is important to the deterrence of crime but it is not enough to just be there. The best thing a police department can do is engage itself in the community and with the community members. Gaining the trust of community members is key to making it a safer place for its population. The police department relies on its community to report crimes and communicate with them what is happening within the community that may need to be addressed to make it safer. The best way in which trust is built is by doing things that help members of the community that may be less fortunate as well as being present at big community events. The Georgetown police department has different programs implemented to allow them to engage with community members directly. In addition, they often host community events. An example of one “Coffee and Cops” is seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Georgetown County Police Department Events: Coffee and Cops



These events are a time in which residents can come with concerns or issues that they would like to discuss with the police department. Things like parking or noise complaints may be discussed. If the public sees their voices being heard and those little problems being fixed the idea is that those individuals will have a stronger trust in the police department than they may have before. Coffee and Cops is an event that was started in California and has since spread to over 36 states. (The Beat, 2013). The ultimate goal of each law enforcement agency in the United States that participates in Coffee and Cops is to enhance community trust, increase police legitimacy, and build partnerships. This is one of the events that the Georgetown Police Department takes part in with these goals in mind.

Being available to the public is just one way in which law enforcement agencies can improve the relationship between them and the community. There are actions they can take to improve the community's perspective of them. Helping out the less fortunate in the community shows that they care about the citizens they are entrusted with keeping safe. A good example of this would be a coat drive or canned food drive. For example, the Georgetown Police Department does a winter coat drive each year. The biggest community involvement program that they take place in is the V.O.I.C.E. Program. This is a program in which the police department makes regular visits and contacts with residents that are homebound or infirmed. This is also a volunteer opportunity for other community members to take place in. This program is a great way that the police



department proves how much they care about the city and the individuals in the city that they provide for.

For communities to grow and be successful they must have businesses that community members can utilize. Police departments play a role in this. A store that sells foods, home goods, clothing or anything essential to a person's day-to-day life is essential in communities. However,

these businesses cannot run and stay open if they don't have protection. A store relies on the police to catch people that have shoplifted or robbed them. Any sign of crime has the potential to scare customers off from a business. (United States Department of Justice, 2023). Without any shoppers, the business cannot operate or make any money to stay up and running. Keeping this in mind a successful city contains successful businesses that provide for the community members and the economy.

The police are also a necessary factor in keeping touristy places within a county up and running. A good example of this in Georgetown County is the Murrells Inlet Marsh Walk. This is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the county and it brings in thousands of dollars of revenue for the county. It is essential to the economy of Georgetown County. It is home to over eight different restaurants and bars (The Marsh Walk, 2022). The bars are the biggest attraction for nightlife in Georgetown. For these bars to successfully run they must comply with the state and federal alcohol laws. This is where the police come into play regarding the Marsh Walk. Georgetown County Sheriff's Department and SLED work together to ensure that these bars are complying with these laws by going in and checking IDs. In 2021 they did a sweep of 52 establishments in the county including those on the Marsh Walk. (Caines, 2021) This was not just to be cruel as some individuals would see it. The purpose was to catch those restaurants that may not be following the rules and make sure they are aware they need to be, so they don't get shut down. Without those restaurants and bars that would be a big loss to the profit that Georgetown County obtains each year putting a dent in the economy.

Law enforcement is a necessary factor for global economic development and safety. It is important that we also look at the global context the police have on Sustainable Development Goal 8. The changes that happen at local levels of law enforcement have the potential to affect

the whole country as well as the world. Coffee with a Cop has become a worldwide event created to improve community relationships with local law enforcement. There are reported to be 15 different countries that have law enforcement agencies participating in this initiative. (Coffee With a Cop, 2022).

Recommendations

For an economy to thrive and develop law enforcement presence is essential. While having that presence is essential the more hands-on an agency is the better trust a community is going to have about their local law enforcement. With trust comes the ability to communicate and share events and things happening in the community that might need the police department's presence or attention. It could be small events like a 5K run, such as the bridge-to-bridge run, or it could be murders, like the murder of 17-year-old Jaydyn Woodward. (WMBF News, 2023). Whatever it may be community trust in law enforcement is essential.

The mission statement for the Georgetown Police Department is as follows: Providing the citizens of Georgetown with excellence in law enforcement by serving, protecting, and positively impacting the quality of life for all residents of the City of Georgetown. From what I have observed the personnel in the police department truly believe in this mission statement and embody it in their day-to-day work. From the office staff to the police officers in the street each one of them wants the best for Georgetown County.

The Georgetown Police Department takes measures to ensure that they are providing the best protection for the county and citizens of Georgetown. Events such as the coat drive are great opportunities to help residents that may need a little extra help. Coffee with a cop is also an event that will continue to go on and improve relations that may or may not be strained between community members and law enforcement in Georgetown, SC. My recommendation is that the

police department continues to hold these events year after year. They may seem small, but it could be the difference in something bigger. It could also be the difference in how Georgetown grows.

Crime and economic factors go hand in hand, both affect the other. A study showed that 7 of 11 countries that had a change in economic indicators, GDP and unemployment, also showed an increase in at least one type of crime. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). The crime levels are dependent on the state of the economy which shows us how important it is for there to be police presence. If police are present and keeping communities and businesses safe, they are in turn helping the economy. It is all like a circle of events that just goes around and around. It can go the other way for crime and the economy. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). If the crime levels are high, then the economy is going to suffer.

Conclusion

The feeling of safety may not be something we appreciate every day but when a situation arises that we need that back up it is appreciated that it is there. This is the job of police departments all over the world, providing a feeling of safety to communities and their members. There are many factors that play into a city and country's economy but, for there to be any sort of success there needs to be safety. Gaining and keeping the trust of community individuals that law enforcement agencies serve will allow for the agency to be more efficient and successful in its missions of safety. To do so departments and agencies need to be involved in the community they serve to build relationships that will be beneficial for them and their communities. Events such as Coffee and Cops as well as coat drives are basic things that show the community, they have someone there for them when they run into times of need.

For a county that has the potential to grow on an exponential scale, there has to be an attraction to the area. The coastal area of South Carolina currently holds that attraction. In 2021 the census reported that Georgetown County had a population of 8,333 people. (United States Census Bureau). Georgetown County is 813.61 square miles compared to Horry County being just north of it at 1133.31 square miles. In 2020 Georgetown County had a population per square mile of only 77.9 while Horry County's was 309.7. (United States Census Bureau). This means Georgetown has lots of room to grow and expand in the future. Keeping this in mind, the safer an area is the more likely developers are to give it consideration for things like neighborhoods, shopping centers, and restaurants. All of which are attractive things for a prospective resident. Georgetown County has an attractive location as well as the space for new development. The same ideology can be applied to countries around the world, the safer a country is the more potential for growth it has. Falling in line with Sustainable Development Goal 8, for the world to be a more sustainable place for us to live there has to be decent work and economic growth. Law enforcement worldwide takes place in aiding in these elements.

With the continuation of following their mission statement in their day-to-day work the Georgetown Police Department is taking the right steps in ensuring that Georgetown will be a part of the economic growth that is happening in coastal South Carolina. They are focused on the betterment of not only the county but the people that live in it as well. Law enforcement all around the world should do the same. Whether they are looking to grow or not, positive police engagement in communities will help many aspects of the economy locally and worldwide. Safety is something that every single person, business, group, and government can benefit from even if they do not realize it.

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