

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Criminology  
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## A FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AND SERIOUS CRIME

*Focused Deterrence, Legitimacy, and  
Prevention*

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-94006-1 — A Framework for Addressing Violence and Serious Crime  
Anthony A. Braga , David M. Kennedy  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

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**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108940061](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108940061)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108938143

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First published 2020

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-94006-1 Paperback

ISSN 2633-3341 (online)

ISSN 2633-3333 (print)

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# A Framework for Addressing Violence and Serious Crime

Focused Deterrence, Legitimacy, and Prevention

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DOI: 10.1017/9781108938143  
First published online: November 2020

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**Abstract:** This Element examines an increasingly important community crime prevention strategy: focused deterrence. This strategy seeks to change offender behavior by understanding underlying crime-producing dynamics and conditions that sustain recurring crime problems, and implementing a blended set of law enforcement, community mobilization, and social service actions. The approach builds on recent theorizing on optimizing deterrence, mobilizing informal social control, enhancing police legitimacy, and reducing crime opportunities through situational crime prevention. There are three main types of focused deterrence strategies: group violence intervention programs, drug market intervention programs, and individual offender programs. A growing number of rigorous program evaluations find focused deterrence to be an effective crime prevention strategy. However, a number of steps need to be taken to ensure focused deterrence strategies are implemented properly. These steps include creating a network of capacity through partnering agencies, conducting upfront and ongoing problem analysis, and developing accountability structures and sustainability plans.

**Keywords:** deterrence, prevention, evidence-based policy, legitimacy, public safety

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ISBNs: 9781108940061 (PB), 9781108938143 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2633-3341 (online), 2633-3333 (print)

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