

# Project Safe Neighborhoods in West Virginia: Selected Findings from Gun Crime and Domestic Violence Initiatives

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**Funding Source**

This project was supported by grant #**2003-GP-CX-0013** awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, or the West Virginia Division of Criminal Justice Services.

**Recommended Citation**

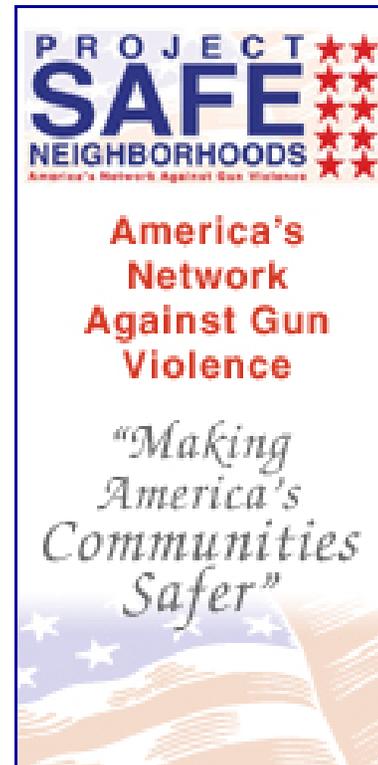
Haas, S. M. & Turley, E. (2007, July). *Project Safe Neighborhoods in West Virginia: Selected Findings from Gun Crime and Domestic Violence Initiatives*. Charleston, WV: Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center, Division of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety. Available online at: [www.wvdcjs.com/statsanalysis](http://www.wvdcjs.com/statsanalysis).

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**p**roject Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is the federal firearms initiative aimed at reducing gun violence through coordinated strategic planning. In May 2001, President Bush announced this initiative making a nationwide commitment to reducing gun crime by providing locally-based programs with additional tools and resources necessary for success. United States Attorneys, federal, state, and local law enforcement, and community leaders together with media outreach and research partners, were to work together to determine the specific aspect of gun violence to address locally in each of the 94 federal judicial districts. This team would form a local task force to develop interventions targeting the specific gun violence problem identified through the data.

The foundation for Project Safe Neighborhoods was built upon the apparent success of local initiatives such as Project Exile in Richmond, VA, Boston’s Operation Ceasefire, and the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) sites. Project Exile was a response to the gun violence problem which used enhanced federal prosecution efforts with longer sentences and a targeted public awareness campaign to deter potential offenders. Operation Ceasefire focused on the high youth homicide rates in Boston and was hailed as an unprecedented success in the media even before evaluation. Strong partnerships between local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors were key



to each of these programs. Other major cities and the Department of Justice (DOJ) sought to replicate the process. In 1998, funding for the SACSI sites was made available to do just that. Many of the elements of SACSI are present in the PSN model. Both are collaborative data-driven strategic interventions which call for the measurement of their impact.

In recognition of the unique gun crime problems in existence across the country, a “one-size-fits-all” strategy was not mandated for all 94 federal judicial districts under the PSN initiative. However, five essential

components of successful gun violence reduction strategies were set forth. These include the building of partnerships, strategic planning, training, community outreach and public awareness, and accountability. To promote strong partnerships, each U.S. Attorneys' Office was tasked with bringing together and leading a local task force composed of federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutors, researchers, media and outreach specialists, and community leaders. To provide PSN task forces across the country with the necessary training and technical assistance, DOJ partnered with various organizations to conduct regional cross-trainings. In collaboration with The Ad Council, DOJ launched national public service advertising campaigns aimed at reducing gun crime with messages of strong enforcement, prevention, and deterrence. Each district also received funding for a media outreach partner to guide local community outreach and public awareness activities.



## *Project Safe Neighborhoods*

To incorporate strategic planning and accountability into the PSN initiative, funding was provided for research partners to be a part of the local task forces. Each district was to develop a data-driven strategic plan depending on the specific nature of gun crime in their community. The research partner/crime analyst grant program supports research to analyze firearms-related violent crime data, develop data-driven interventions, and measure the effectiveness of the interventions. PSN expected research partners to be fully engaged in problem solving throughout the entire process.

In October 2002, the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center (CJSAC) received a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to serve as the research partner for both judicial districts in West Virginia. As such, the CJSAC is responsible for evaluating the impact of PSN project activities in the state. This report provides a brief description of West Virginia's PSN initiatives and presents selected findings from the analysis of a statewide general population telephone survey and official reports of crime in the state. In addition, media and prosecution outputs are presented as evidence of project implementation.

**D**istinct gun violence problems were identified by West Virginia's two judicial districts and each took a slightly different approach to implementing *Project Safe Neighborhoods*. However, the primary intervention in each district was the development of a media campaign based on deterring gun violence through awareness of federal firearms laws. Television, radio, billboards, and various other posters, flyers, and stickers were distributed in each district.

### Project Safe Homes

The Northern District, *Project Safe Homes (PSH)*, targets the entire 32 county district. Project Safe Homes' overall goal is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in the district as well as gun-related crime in general. A two-pronged strategy consisting of vigorous prosecution and media outreach was decided upon. The media message is intended to deter potential abusers through the prospect of losing their guns. The message is also intended to reach victims to educate and empower them to escape abusive environments. The media campaign was initially launched in the fall of 2003 with the message: "If you beat your partner, you lose your guns, all of them, for life." In addition to the media campaign, trainings were held to educate domestic violence advocates and law enforcement officers on federal firearms laws as well as to provide an orientation to PSH.

*Project Safe Homes*

*Hard Time for Gun Crime*

### Hard Time for Gun Crime

The Southern District, *Hard Time for Gun Crime (HTGC)*, chose 6 of the 23 counties in the district as the target area, but initially launched their media campaign in only 3 of these counties (Kanawha, Cabell, and Raleigh). Hard Time for Gun Crime focuses on those who possess/use firearms illegally and at-risk youth. Their strategy includes community awareness through a comprehensive media campaign, increased prosecutions, and programming that targets at-risk youth. The message is intended to deter gun violence, and more generally, violent crime using federal firearms laws. The media campaign was initially launched in the spring of 2004 with the message: "Commit a crime with a gun, spend 5 years to life in federal prison, no parole." Initial implementation of the project also involved the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) providing training on the HTGC initiative and federal gun laws to state and local law enforcement. Law enforcement officers across the district were instructed on how to recognize the necessary components of a federal case and were encouraged to provide information regarding individuals arrested with a firearm to the USAO. In addition, a close working relationship with ATF agents was promoted.

**E**nhanced prosecution efforts were an important part of the PSN program. Hence, federal prosecution data were obtained from the two U.S. Attorney’s Offices in West Virginia. Aggregate data were extracted from each offices’ case management system. Firearms matters/cases as reported were defined using federal code title 18 sections 922 and 924.

Only district level data was obtained for the two federal judicial districts in WV. Calendar year totals were provided for 2000 through 2005 in the southern district. The northern district provided fiscal year data for 1993 to 2006. For each district, firearms matters received, total matters received, defendants in firearms matters, total defendants in all matters, firearms cases filed, total cases filed, defendants in firearms cases, and total defendants in all cases were analyzed.

Table 1 shows the fluctuation in the number of firearms matters and cases in the southern district from 2000 to 2005. The number of firearms matters opened increased from 89 in 2000 to 119 in 2005. The greatest number of matters were opened in 2002 (143). However, as a proportion of all matters opened, firearms matters were fairly stable over the period. On average 18.2% of all matters opened by the USAO were firearms matters. During the period from 2000 to 2005, this proportion ranged from a low of 15.8% in 2000 to high of 20.9% in 2002.

In terms of cases filed, the peak occurred in 2004 with 97 firearms cases. This was up from 63 firearms cases filed in 2000. In 2005, firearms cases decreased back to 64. The percent of all cases that were for firearms violations varied from a low of 21.4% in 2003 to a high of 42.0% in 2004. On average, 29.0% of all cases filed during this 6-year period were firearms cases.

**Table 1. Number and Percentage of Firearm Matters and Cases for Southern District, 2000-2005**

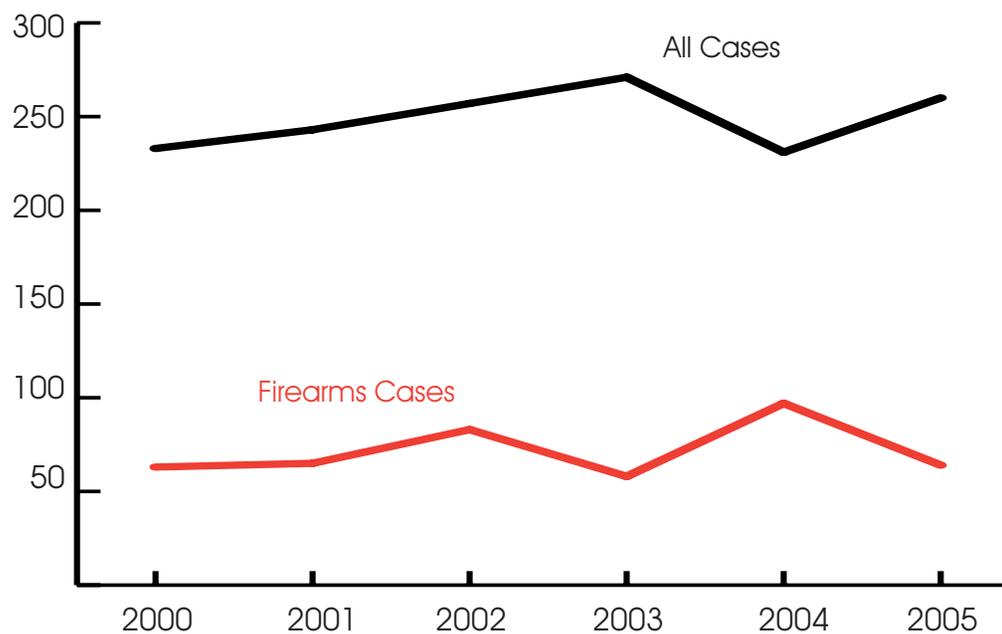
	Matters				Cases			
	# Firearms	% Total	# Firearm Defendants	% Total Defendants	# Firearms	% Total	# Firearm Defendants	% Total Defendants
<b>2000</b>	89	15.8%	127	14.3%	63	27.0%	99	29.0%
<b>2001</b>	89	16.3%	102	12.5%	65	26.8%	91	26.0%
<b>2002</b>	143	20.9%	160	16.4%	83	32.3%	93	26.1%
<b>2003</b>	125	19.2%	125	12.6%	58	21.4%	68	19.7%
<b>2004</b>	108	17.0%	122	13.0%	97	42.0%	107	36.0%
<b>2005</b>	119	19.7%	146	16.0%	64	24.6%	72	23.6%

Source: Prosecution data provided by the Southern District USAO for 2000 through 2005 calendar years.

Graph 1 further illustrates the trend in firearms cases over time compared to that of all cases filed by the southern district USAO. From 2003 to 2004, just after the start of the initiative, the number of firearms cases filed increased while the total number of cases declined. As a result, firearms cases made up the greatest proportion of all cases (42.0%) in 2004. Likewise, firearms defendants comprised 36.0% of all defendants

in 2004. This trend, however, reversed from 2004 to 2005 with total cases increasing and firearms cases decreasing. The total number of cases filed was slightly higher at the end of period while firearms cases were at nearly the same level.

**Graph 1. Trends in Firearm and Total Cases Processed by the Southern District USAO, 2000-2005**



Source: Prosecution data provided by the Southern District USAO for 2000 through 2005 calendar years.

**T**able 2 provides similar information for the northern district USAO on the number of matters opened and cases filed. Data on matters were not available for fiscal year 2004. The number of firearms matters opened increased from 39 in FY 2000 to 71 in FY 2006. In FY 2003, 82 firearms matters were opened, representing 24.1% of all matters. Firearms matters comprised on average 17.1% of all matters opened in the northern district from FY 2000 to FY 2006.

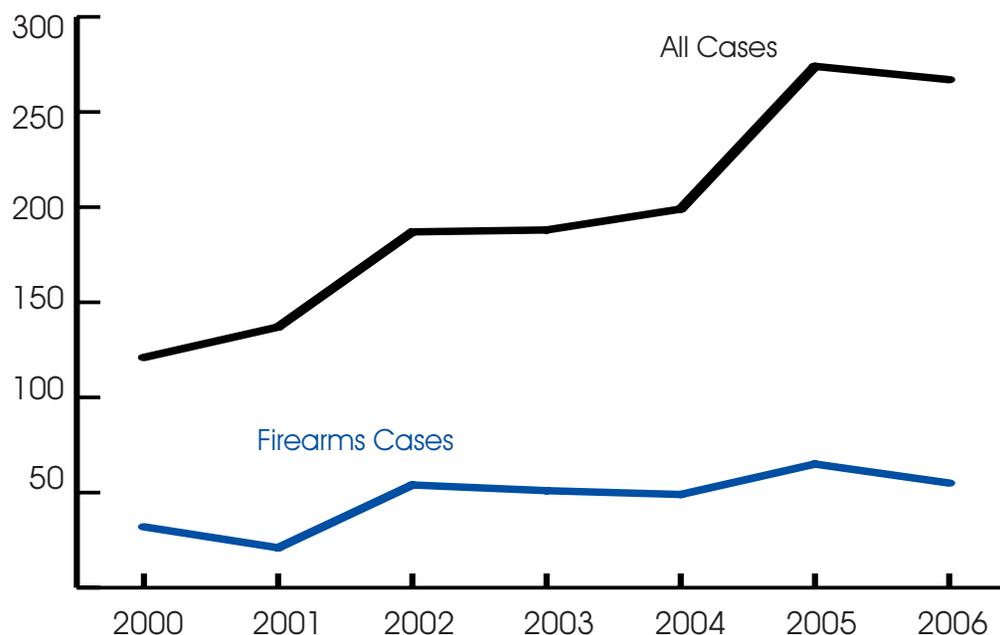
The number of cases filed that involved firearms violations increased during the period from 32 in FY 2000 to 55 in FY 2006. Firearms cases ranged from a low of 21 in FY 2001 to a high of 65 in FY 2005. On average, 23.8% of all cases filed in the northern district from FY 2000 to FY 2006 were firearms cases. The greatest proportion of cases filed involving firearms violations occurred in FY 2002 (28.9%). By FY 2006, firearms cases represented 20.6% of all cases filed.

**Table 2. Number and Percentage of Firearm Matters and Cases for Northern District, 2000-2006**

	Matters				Cases			
	# Firearms	% Total	# Firearm Defendants	% Total Defendants	# Firearms	% Total	# Firearm Defendants	% Total Defendants
<b>2000</b>	39	15.1%	46	11.0%	32	26.5%	40	21.3%
<b>2001</b>	38	13.6%	71	14.5%	21	15.3%	42	14.8%
<b>2002</b>	60	17.3%	82	14.4%	54	28.9%	64	20.9%
<b>2003</b>	82	24.1%	96	16.8%	51	27.1%	62	19.4%
<b>2004</b>	---	---	---	---	49	24.6%	51	16.7%
<b>2005</b>	63	14.7%	95	13.3%	65	23.7%	84	19.0%
<b>2006</b>	71	17.0%	83	13.9%	55	20.6%	62	15.6%

Source: Prosecution data provided by the Northern District USAO for 2000 through 2006 *fiscal* years.

**Graph 2. Trends in Firearm and Total Cases Processed by the Northern District USAO, 2000-2006**



Source: Prosecution data provided by the Northern District USAO for 2000 through 2006 *fiscal* years.

As shown in Graph 2, the total number of cases filed by the northern district USAO grew at a faster pace during this period than the number of firearms cases. From FY 2002 to FY 2004, the total number of cases increased by 6.4% while firearms cases declined by 9.3%. Total cases filed increased sharply in FY 2005 to 274. At the same time, firearms cases reached their highest point of the period (65). The total number

of cases filed more than doubled from FY 2000 to FY 2006, however, the increase for firearms cases was somewhat less. Additionally, the number of firearms defendants comprised a smaller proportion of all defendants in FY 2006 (15.6%) than in FY 2000 (21.3%).

**P**ublic awareness and community outreach are essential elements of the PSN initiative. At the national level, the Department of Justice, in collaboration with The Ad Council, developed and launched public service advertising campaigns aimed at reducing gun crime. One of the national campaigns was even specifically focused on the problem of domestic violence. These campaigns sought to convey the priorities, messages, and results of the effort to both law-abiding citizens and potential offenders.

At the local level, an outreach partner guided the development, production, and distribution of the local public awareness campaign, as well as engaged members of the community in the initiative. The Charleston Public Safety Council received funding in the southern district, while the WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence served as the outreach partner in the northern district. Each of these groups in turn contracted with communication/media specialists for production of the localized campaigns.

While the southern district has launched several different campaign messages for Hard Time for Gun Crime (HTGC), the primary focus of the initial media launch centered on the message “commit a crime with a gun, spend 5 years to life in federal prison, no parole.” This message was heavily marketed to the three counties that comprised the southern core or target area.

Twenty-three billboards were displayed across the 3 county target area of the southern district with the potential of reaching 212,300 people. Numerous ads and feature stories ran on cable and broadcast television stations. In addition, other innovative strategies such as pizza box flyers

and posters/stickers on front doors, gas pumps, coolers at convenience stores, and public transportation were utilized to reach potential offenders as well as the general population. Additional press for the campaign included newspaper, television, and radio interviews and feature stories.

HTGC sought to establish a presence in the community through numerous speaking engagements and other outreach activities. Information booths at local fairs and presentations throughout the community were conducted to spread the message and develop partnerships. A web site for the HTGC initiative was also developed to educate online visitors and provide contact information.

In the northern district, 16 billboards were displayed across 10 of the 32 counties in the district reaching a potential audience of 145,700. Radio stations broadcast in all but four counties played the campaign spot. Television spots were also aired by stations in 10 cities. In addition, 107 newspaper print ads were ran with a potential circulation of 240,978.

Unique delivery methods such as point-of-sale displays in community stores and anywhere guns are sold, posters at game checking stations and where hunting licenses are obtained, placemats/coasters for bars, and paycheck/utility bill stuffers were also considered. However, the campaign was ultimately delivered through newspapers, billboards, radio, and television with an initial full scope blitz running in October/November 2003. Posters were also developed for the initial run of the campaign and were distributed by the Coalition to ATF agents and domestic violence advocates to display in their communities. Mini-blitzes using only broadcast media (radio and television) ran in January, April, and October of 2004 and again in October of 2005 and 2006 for domestic violence awareness month.

A general population telephone survey was developed to measure awareness of the PSN media campaign messages in WV. Other constructs measured by the instrument include: perceptions of crime in the neighborhood and risk of victimization, knowledge of federal firearms laws, and perceptions of certainty and severity of punishments. In addition, measures were constructed to examine whether participants' fears and perceptions of crime and punishment had changed over the last two years, or since implementation of the PSN initiatives.

Given that the central message of the media awareness campaign was rooted in the notion of deterrence, the survey assessed whether respondents' perceptions of the severity and certainty of punishment (i.e., arrest, prosecution, and confinement) differed depending on whether they had or had not heard the campaign message. If a potential deterrent impact is present in the general population, we would expect that respondents exposed to the campaign message will perceive the certainty and severity of punishment to be greater compared to respondents who had not heard the message. The survey questionnaire was pre-tested prior to actual fielding in an effort to eliminate confusing questions or wordings. A total of 30 interviews were conducted for the pre-test.

Telephone interviews were conducted in November 2005. Using an 85-station telephone bank, random digit dialing (RDD) was used to obtain the sample. A total of 804 interviews were completed in which 404 were residents of the northern district, 202 were from the southern target counties, and 198 were from the remaining southern counties. The total sample of 809 yields a maximum statistical error of  $\pm 3.4\%$  at

the 95% level of confidence. At the regional level, the 404 in the northern judicial district and the 400 in the combined target and remaining southern judicial district counties each yield a maximum statistical error of  $\pm 4.9\%$ , the 202 in the southern target area  $\pm 4.9\%$ , and the 198 in the remaining southern counties  $\pm 7.0\%$ , all at the 95% level of confidence. Five respondents did not give their county and are thus unassigned to a region and not included in the final analysis.

Data were weighted to reflect the actual geographic distribution of the population in terms of gender, race, and age. This secured sufficient responses in the northern judicial district and southern target area, for example, from skewing the total while still providing sufficient interviews in each area for analysis. Responses were analyzed from a regionally weighted sample of residents designed to closely mirror the population demographics in three areas (south core, south comparison, and northern district).

The final weighted sample consisted of 778 respondents, including 198 in the southern target area, 189 in the southern comparison group, and 391 in the northern district. As noted previously, the sample was weighted by gender, race, and age to approximate the population of the state as well as the different regions. The demographic characteristics of the weighted sample of survey participants are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Characteristics of the Weighted Sample of Survey Respondents (N = 778)**

	Southern Core (n = 198)		South Comparison (n = 189)		North (n = 391)	
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	93	47.1%	89	47.3%	189	48.3%
Female	105	52.9%	100	52.7%	202	51.7%
Total	198	100.0%	189	100.0%	391	100.0%
<b>Race</b>						
White	181	91.5%	183	96.7%	375	95.8%
Nonwhite	17	8.5%	6	3.3%	16	4.2%
Total	198	100.0%	189	100.0%	391	100.0%
<b>Age</b>						
18 to 34	57	28.9%	51	26.9%	115	29.4%
35 to 54	75	38.1%	75	39.7%	149	38.2%
55 and over	65	33.1%	63	33.4%	127	32.5%
Total	198	100.0%	189	100.0%	391	100.0%
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	94	47.6%	103	54.6%	231	59.3%
Single	54	27.3%	46	24.3%	83	21.4%
Divorced	32	16.1%	20	10.8%	39	10.0%
Separated	1	0.7%	1	0.7%	7	1.9%
Widowed	16	8.3%	18	9.6%	29	7.5%
Total	198	100.0%	189	100.0%	389	100.0%

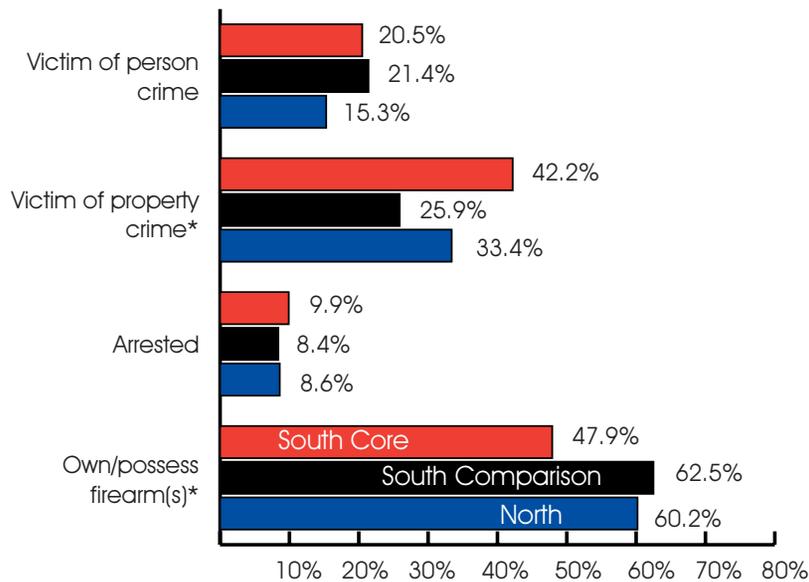
Notes: Detail may not add to total shown due to rounding. Percent distributions based on unrounded figures.

**Table 3. Characteristics of the Weighted Sample of Survey Respondents (Continued)**

	<b>Southern Core (n = 198)</b>		<b>South Comparison (n = 189)</b>		<b>North (n = 391)</b>	
<b>Education Level</b>						
Not a graduate	16	8.0%	32	17.0%	56	14.3%
HS graduate	59	30.2%	76	40.1%	130	33.4%
Some college	50	25.7%	41	21.7%	92	23.5%
College graduate	42	21.3%	27	14.3%	74	19.0%
Some graduate school	6	3.2%	6	3.2%	10	2.6%
Graduate degree	23	11.7%	7	3.8%	28	7.1%
Total	197	100.0%	189	100.0%	390	100.0%
<b>Income Level</b>						
Less than \$15,000	37	20.0%	43	24.9%	59	16.4%
\$15,001 to \$25,000	32	17.4%	28	16.3%	67	18.6%
\$25,001 to \$35,000	34	18.5%	20	11.3%	65	18.1%
\$35,001 to \$50,000	29	16.0%	39	22.2%	69	19.1%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	31	17.1%	28	16.3%	61	16.9%
\$75,001 to \$100,000	9	5.0%	10	5.7%	23	6.4%
Over \$100,000	11	6.0%	6	3.3%	16	4.5%
Total	183	100.0%	174	100.0%	359	100.0%
<b>Town Population</b>						
Small town/rural	28	17.1%	64	39.5%	107	32.0%
Town	38	22.9%	48	29.7%	82	24.4%
Small city	26	15.5%	27	16.8%	53	16.0%
Mid-size city	18	11.0%	12	7.5%	45	13.4%
Large city & surrounding	55	33.4%	10	6.5%	47	14.1%
Total	166	100.0%	162	100.0%	334	100.0%

Notes: Detail may not add to total shown due to rounding. Percent distributions based on unrounded figures.

**Graph 3. Percentage of Respondents Indicating Household Victimization, Contact with the Criminal Justice System, and Gun Ownership**



\*  $p < .01$

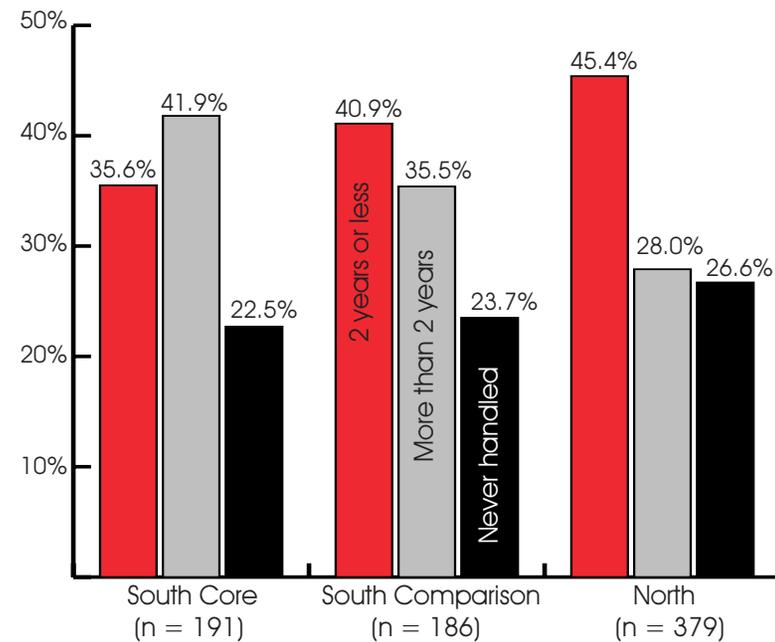
**p** participants in the southern comparison counties were slightly more likely to have been victims of a person crime (21.4%) than those in the south core counties (20.5%). Respondents in the southern target areas were significantly more likely to report a prior property victimization (42.2%). This compares to 33.4% in the north and 25.9% in the southern comparison counties.

Participants previous interactions with the criminal justice system and gun ownership status were also used to categorize responses as this information may influence opinions. Less than 10.0% of participants in any region indicated that they had previously been arrested. High levels

of gun ownership were common across all three areas, with 48-63% of participants reporting that they owned a firearm. However, respondents in the southern target area were significantly less likely to indicate that they currently own/possessed a firearm.

Roughly one-quarter of participants indicated that they had never handled a firearm. However, respondents in the northern district were significantly more likely to indicate that they had handled a firearm within the past two years. In the north, 45.4% reported that it had been 2 years or less since they had last handled or carried a gun.

**Graph 4. Length of Time Since Handling a Gun for any Purpose**



$\chi^2 = 11.699, p < .05$

**G**enerally, only a small percentage of respondents indicated that they had heard of PSN and the specific initiatives in WV. In particular, very few respondents had heard of Project Safe Homes. In fact, only 5.4% of the respondents living in the northern district had heard of Project Safe Homes. On the contrary, the Hard Time for Gun Crime campaign was heard by over one-half of residents living in the three target counties of the south (51.5%). Nearly one-third of respondents in the southern comparison counties had also heard of the campaign (31.2%). More

survey respondents in the north were aware of the Hard Time for Gun Crime campaign than their own campaign, Project Safe Homes.

An overall composite awareness measure indicates that 71.2% of participants in the south target area were exposed to some message relating to PSN. Over half of those in the south comparison counties (54.5%) and 41.7% in the north received some information about a gun crime initiative.

**Table 4. Number and Percentage of Respondents Reporting Awareness of the Media Campaign by District**

	South Core		South Comparison		North		$\chi^2$
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Project Safe Neighborhoods	56	28.3%	38	20.1%	100	25.6%	8.872
Project Safe Homes	7	3.5%	13	6.9%	21	5.4%	3.652
Hard Time for Gun Crime	102	51.5%	59	31.2%	61	15.6%	86.927 *
Any gun crime reduction initiatives in WV	55	27.8%	37	19.6%	78	19.9%	6.426
<b>Composite</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>71.2%</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>54.5%</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>46.405 *</b>

Notes: Composite measure indicates that participant responded yes to hearing their own district specific message, a general PSN message, or any gun crime reduction message in WV over the past two years.

\*  $p < .001$

**V**iolent crime involving guns and domestic violence were not perceived by respondents as the most important crime-related problems facing their neighborhoods. As a result, survey participants did not consider either of the two primary focuses of the PSN campaigns in WV (domestic violence or violent crime involving firearms) to be as great as some other problems.

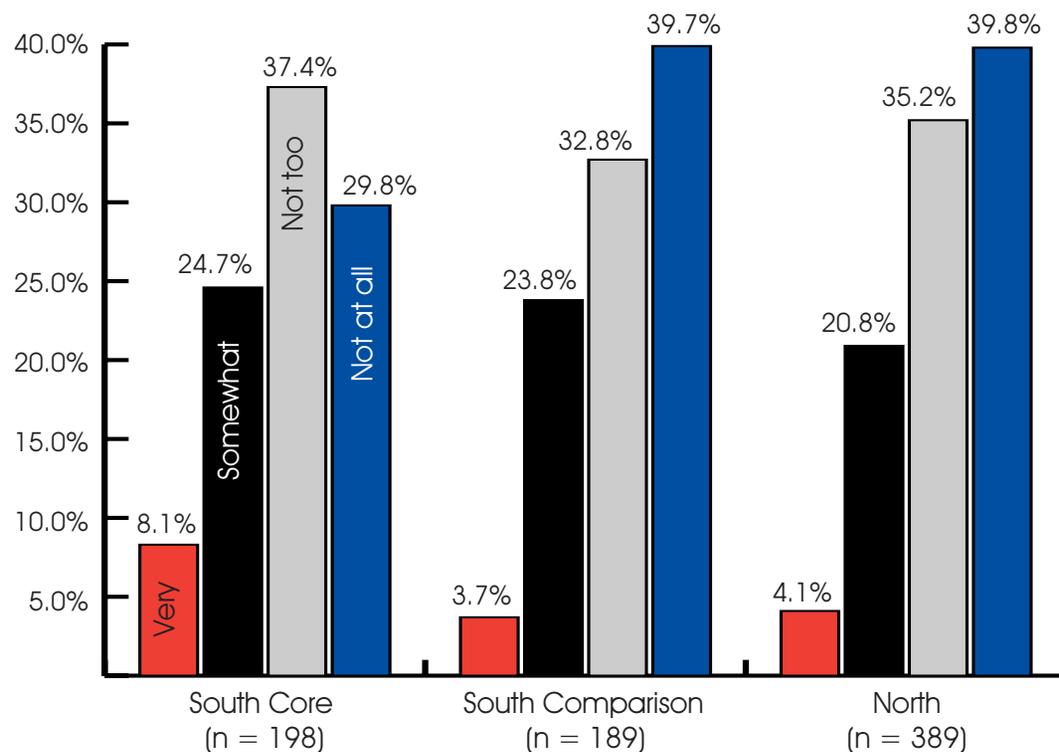
Respondents were asked to indicate how much of a problem each of the below crime-related issues posed for their neighborhoods. As shown in Table 5, illegal drug use was rated as the biggest problem mentioned across all three regions. Stolen property was also a problem for participants in both southern areas. Drunk drivers and juvenile delinquency were considered larger problems by residents in the north.

**Table 5. Mean Perception of Neighborhood Crime by District**

	South Core			South Comparison			North		
	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd
Illegal Drug Use	186	5.09	3.29	182	5.78	3.54	375	5.13	3.35
Stolen Property*	196	4.65	3.11	185	4.50	3.07	383	3.84	2.73
Drunk Drivers	190	4.30	2.91	185	4.32	2.91	381	4.82	3.11
Juvenile Delinquency	192	4.13	3.00	186	3.83	3.01	375	4.04	2.88
Domestic Violence	186	3.47	2.55	181	3.71	2.79	373	3.56	2.71
Violent Crime Involving Firearms	195	2.77	2.42	185	2.56	2.51	381	2.36	2.10

\*  $p < .01$

**Graph 5. Fear of Crime in Neighborhood by District**



Most survey respondents indicated that they were not very fearful of crime in their neighborhood. Regardless of district, less than ten percent of respondents indicated that they were “very” fearful of crime in their neighborhood. Only 8.1% of residents surveyed in the southern target area indicated they were “very” fearful compared to 3.7% and 4.1% of residents in the southern comparison counties and north, respectively.

Nearly forty percent of participants in the south comparison (39.7%) and north (39.8%) indicated that they were “not at all” fearful of crime in their neighborhood. This is compared to 29.8% of residents in the southern core areas. As a result, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all survey respondents were either “not too” fearful or “not fearful at all” regardless of district or group.

**F**urther examination of gun violence victimization indicates that there is little variation in respondents fear of gun violence victimization across districts. However, a slightly larger percentage of respondents in the southern target area indicated that they were “somewhat fearful” and “very fearful” of being a victim of gun violence by a stranger.

Participants in all three areas tend to be less fearful of being victimized by someone known to them than by a stranger. The proportion of

respondents indicating that they were very fearful of victimization by a stranger was roughly double that of victimization by someone known to them. About three-quarters of participants in each district indicated that they were “not at all fearful” of gun violence in the home by someone known to them. Only a small percentage of residents indicated that they were “very fearful” of gun violence either by a stranger or someone they know.

**Table 6. Fear of Gun Violence Victimization by District**

	Fear of gun violence victimization by a stranger			Fear of gun violence victimization in the home by someone known		
	South Core %	South Comparison %	North %	South Core %	South Comparison %	North %
Very fearful	7.6% (15)	6.3% (12)	6.0% (23)	2.0% (4)	3.7% (7)	2.6% (10)
Somewhat fearful	36.9% (73)	28.0% (53)	26.0% (100)	6.1% (12)	8.6% (16)	6.7% (26)
Not too fearful	28.3% (56)	30.2% (57)	30.2% (116)	14.6% (29)	12.8% (24)	16.1% (62)
Not at all fearful	27.3% (54)	35.4% (67)	37.8% (145)	77.3% (153)	74.9% (140)	74.6% (288)

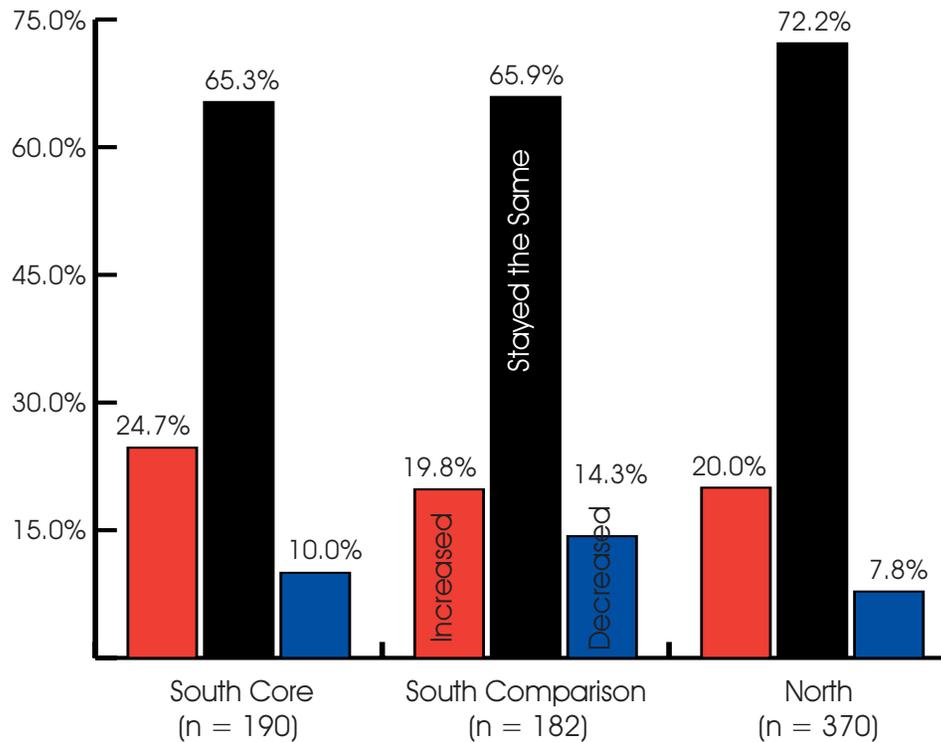
Note: Number of respondents are indicated in ().

## Change in Fear of Neighborhood Gun Crime

**M**ost survey respondents across all regions indicated that there had been no change in their level of fear over the last two years. In the northern district, 72.2% reported that their fears of gun crime in their neighborhood were the same as two years ago (since inception of the PSN initiative). Likewise, about 65.0% of participants in each of the southern regions indicated that their fears had stayed the same.

The proportion of residents indicating a decrease in their fears of gun crime was much less than those indicating that their fears had increased in the south core counties and the northern district. In the south comparison area, 19.8% reported increased fears over the last two years while 14.3% said their fears had decreased.

**Graph 6. Change in Fear of Gun Crime in Neighborhood Over the Past Two Years by District**



**Table 7. Change in Perceived Risk of Victimization Over the Past 2 Years by District**

	The use of guns to commit a crime			The occurrence of domestic violence*		
	South Core %	South Comparison %	North %	South Core %	South Comparison %	North %
Increased	55.7% (107)	60.1% (110)	51.2% (192)	60.7% (116)	71.2% (126)	63.4% (237)
Stayed the same	33.9% (65)	31.7% (58)	39.2% (147)	28.3% (54)	24.3% (43)	32.1% (120)
Decreased	10.4% (20)	8.2% (15)	9.6% (36)	11.0% (21)	4.5% (8)	4.5% (17)

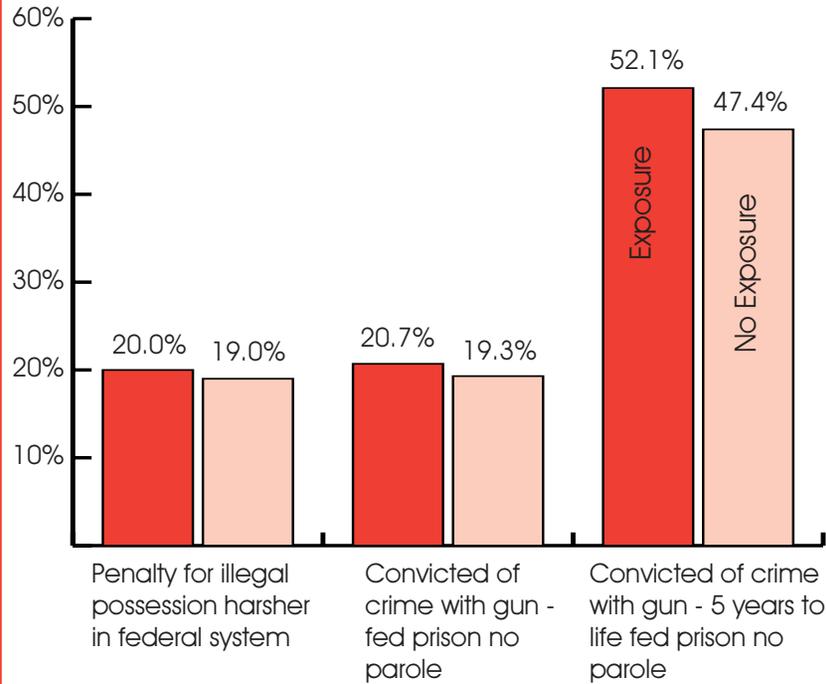
Note: Number of respondents are indicated in ().

\*  $\chi^2 = 13.837, p < .01$

**E**ven though fears of neighborhood gun crime were largely unchanged over the past two years, many participants did believe that the use of guns in crime and/or domestic violence had increased over the previous two years. In the south comparison area, for example, 60.1% felt that an increase in the use of guns to commit a crime had occurred. This compares to 55.7% in the south core and 51.2% in the northern district. Only about 10.0% or less in any region thought there had been a decrease in the use of guns in crime in the previous two years.

With regard to domestic violence, even more participants felt there had been an increase over the past two years. In the south comparison area, 71.2% said there was an increase compared to 63.4% in the north and 60.7% in the south core. In contrast, 11.0% of participants in the south core counties believed that the occurrence of domestic violence had declined. This is compared to only about 5.0% of those in the south comparison counties or the north indicating that there was a decrease.

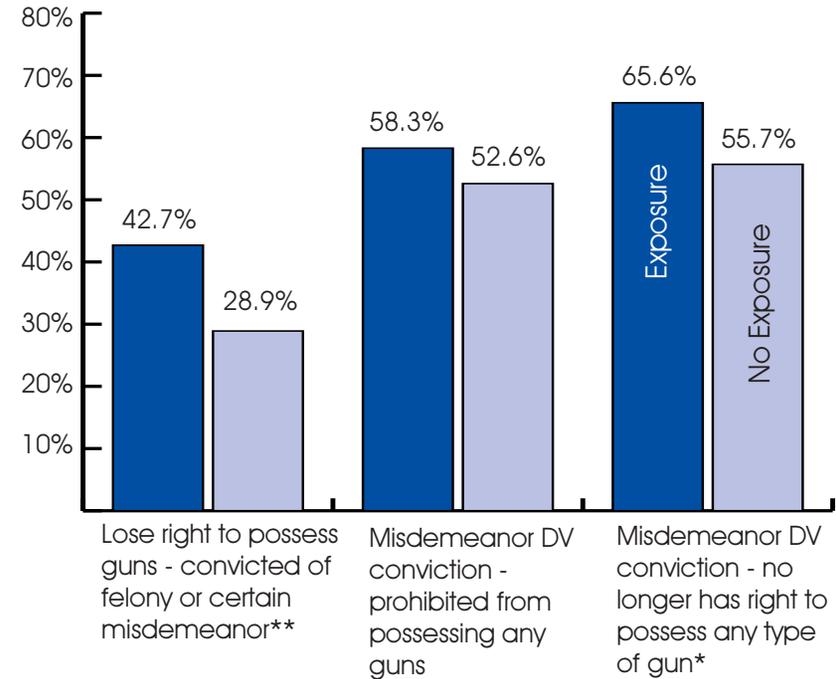
**Graph 7. Knowledge of Federal Firearms Laws Among Southern Judicial District Target County Residents by Media Campaign Exposure**



**G**enerally, knowledge of the federal firearms laws did not appear to be affected by exposure to the media campaign message. Residents of the southern district target counties were about equally likely to respond correctly to questions pertaining to the penalties for gun crimes regardless of whether or not they had heard the campaign message.

In the north, a greater proportion of respondents exposed to the message responded correctly to items measuring knowledge of federal firearms laws. Of those exposed to the campaign in the north, 42.7% knew that a person could lose their right to possess a gun for life if convicted of a felony or certain misdemeanors. Significantly fewer, 28.9%, of those who had not heard the message responded correctly. About two-thirds of northern district residents exposed to the campaign responded correctly to a true/false item pertaining to misdemeanor convictions for domestic violence (65.6%) compared to 55.7% who did not hear the message.

**Graph 8. Knowledge of Federal Firearms Laws Among Northern Judicial District Residents by Media Campaign Exposure**



\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 8. Perception of Punishment Certainty in the Southern District**

	Exposure			No Exposure			t-test
	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	
For every 10 gun crimes, how many will result in offender...							
<b>South Core</b>							
Being Arrested	127	5.12	3.23	52	5.09	3.26	-0.061
Being Convicted	129	4.40	3.16	50	4.06	2.93	-0.662
Serving <5 years in prison	120	3.41	3.09	52	4.13	3.03	1.410
Serving 5+ years in prison	120	2.51	2.83	51	1.75	2.30	-1.704
<b>South Comparison</b>							
Being Arrested	91	4.92	2.92	74	4.52	3.43	-0.799
Being Convicted	89	4.15	2.61	74	4.08	3.13	-0.158
Serving <5 years in prison	86	4.24	3.27	74	4.15	3.46	-0.166
Serving 5+ years in prison	83	2.62	2.45	71	1.71	2.18	-2.427*

\*  $p < .05$

In addition to the expectation that residents should be more knowledgeable of federal firearm laws after exposure to the media campaign message, it is anticipated that residents would also rate the certainty and severity of punishment to be greater after hearing the message. However, little or no difference was found in respondents' perceptions of certainty between the south core and south comparison counties. Moreover, having heard the media campaign message had little effect on participants' beliefs.

Respondents in the south core and comparison counties believed that only about half of all gun crimes committed would result in the arrest of the offender. Participants in both southern areas felt even less certain that gun crime offenders would be convicted or serve time in prison. Of residents who heard the message in the south core counties, it was believed that only about 2.5 out of every 10 gun crimes would result in the offender serving 5 or more years in prison. Residents in the south comparison area responded similarly.

Similar to the southern areas, the perception of punishment certainty in the northern district among respondents also did not vary depending upon whether they had been exposed to the media campaign. No significant difference was found in perceived punishment certainty between residents who had and had not heard the message.

Likewise, survey participants in the northern district felt more certain that offenders would be arrested than convicted or sentenced to prison. Respondents who had heard the campaign message in the north thought that on average 4.6 out of 10 domestic violence offenders would be arrested while those who were not exposed thought that 4.2 would be arrested. On average, survey respondents indicated that fewer than 2 in 10 domestic violence crimes would result in the offender serving 5 or more years in prison—regardless of whether or not they had heard the media campaign in the north.

A greater proportion of residents exposed to a media campaign across all three districts believed that a person’s risk of conviction, going to prison, and losing their right to possess a firearm had increased over the previous two years. Participants who had no exposure to the message seemed to be mixed on whether these risks had increased or stayed the same (see Table 10).

Roughly 60.0% of participants in the south core counties who had been exposed to the message thought that each of these risks had increased over the past two years. Of respondents who had not heard the message, between 40.0 and 45.0% felt that a person’s risks had increased.

In the north, two-thirds of survey respondents who were exposed to the media campaign believed that a person’s risk of losing their right to possess firearms due to a conviction had increased. However, 61.1% of those who did not hear the message also thought the risk had increased over the past two years.

**Table 9. Perception of Punishment Certainty in Northern District**

	Exposure			No Exposure			t-test
	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	
For every 10 domestic violence crimes, how many will result in offender...							
<b>North</b>							
Being Arrested	150	4.60	3.10	202	4.22	3.05	-1.165
Being Convicted	149	3.58	2.84	203	3.29	2.77	-0.972
Serving <5 years in prison	148	4.38	3.68	201	3.65	3.43	-1.908
Serving 5+ years in prison	148	1.80	2.73	198	1.67	2.54	-0.428

**Table 10. Changes in Perception of Punishment Certainty Over the Past Two Years by District**

	South Core		South Comparison		North	
	Exposure %	No exposure %	Exposure %	No exposure %	Exposure %	No exposure %
<b>Risk of conviction for illegally carrying a gun</b>						
Increased	57.5% (77)	40.4% (23)	53.4% (55)	41.7% (35)	52.2% (83)	43.9% (98)
Stayed the Same	36.6% (49)	56.1% (32)	40.8% (42)	47.6% (40)	39.6% (63)	46.6% (104)
Decreased	6.0% (8)	3.5% (2)	5.8% (6)	10.7% (9)	8.2% (13)	9.4% (21)
$\chi^2 = 6.312, p < .05$						
<b>Risk of going to federal prison for a gun crime</b>						
Increased	60.0% (81)	45.5% (25)	60.4% (61)	45.1% (37)	59.7% (95)	50.2% (111)
Stayed the Same	32.6% (44)	45.5% (25)	31.7% (32)	42.7% (35)	34.6% (55)	37.1% (82)
Decreased	7.4% (10)	9.1% (5)	7.9% (8)	12.2% (10)	5.7% (9)	12.7% (28)
$\chi^2 = 6.375, p < .05$						
<b>Risk of losing right to possess guns due to conviction</b>						
Increased	61.8% (84)	44.4% (24)	69.0% (69)	51.3% (41)	66.5% (105)	61.1% (135)
Stayed the Same	33.1% (45)	46.3% (25)	28.0% (28)	40.0% (32)	27.2% (43)	33.0% (73)
Decreased	5.1% (7)	9.3% (5)	3.0% (3)	8.8% (7)	6.3% (10)	5.9% (13)
$\chi^2 = 6.856, p < .05$						

Notes:  $\chi^2$  values shown only for significant results. Number of respondents are indicated in ().

While survey respondents felt that the certainty of punishment had increased over the past two years in some way, no relationship was found between exposure to the media campaign and punishment severity. Hence, the message of the media campaign did not make residents feel that punishments were more severe compared to previous years. Although over one-half of all survey respondents who were exposed to the message in each region believed that the severity of penalties had increased over the past two years, the results were not statistically significant.

When there was no exposure to the message, more people in the two southern areas thought that the severity of penalties had stayed the same. In the north, however, even respondents who did not hear the message were slightly more likely to believe that the penalties had increased. Across all districts and regardless of exposure, 10.0% or fewer believed that the severity of penalties had decreased over the last two years.

**Table 11. Changes in Perception of Punishment Severity Over the Past Two Years by District**

	South Core		South Comparison		North	
	Exposure	No exposure	Exposure	No exposure	Exposure	No exposure
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>The severity of penalties for committing a gun crime</b>						
Increased	53.6% (75)	39.3% (22)	54.4% (56)	45.0% (36)	56.3% (90)	47.5% (105)
Stayed the Same	36.4% (51)	51.8% (29)	36.9% (38)	46.3% (37)	35.6% (57)	41.6% (92)
Decreased	10.0% (14)	8.9% (5)	8.7% (9)	8.8% (7)	8.1% (13)	10.9% (24)

Note: Number of respondents are indicated in ().

**Table 12. Factors Influencing Respondents’ Perception of Punishment Severity by Exposure to the Media Campaign in the Southern District**

	Exposure			No Exposure			t-test
	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	
How important are the following in impacting a person’s decision to use a gun in a crime...							
<b>South Core</b>							
Chance of losing right to possess guns	138	3.48	3.04	56	2.83	2.69	-1.395
Concerns about their family	136	3.84	2.80	56	4.15	3.04	0.680
Chance of being arrested	137	4.42	3.08	56	4.88	3.44	0.892
Chance of going to state prison	136	4.13	2.90	57	4.27	2.88	0.291
Chance of going to federal prison	137	4.25	3.05	57	4.10	3.10	-0.327
<b>South Comparison</b>							
Chance of losing right to possess guns	99	3.84	3.41	83	4.46	3.29	1.244
Concerns about their family	99	4.00	3.35	84	4.30	3.11	0.624
Chance of being arrested	100	4.46	3.15	83	4.76	3.16	0.629
Chance of going to state prison	98	4.03	3.02	80	5.03	2.92	2.222*
Chance of going to federal prison	99	4.26	3.23	78	5.04	3.13	1.623

\*  $p < .05$

Exposure to the media campaign did not influence respondents’ perception of which punishments were more or less severe. Little difference was found between the different types of punishment and participant ratings of which punishments would most influence a person’s decision to commit a crime with a gun. A statistically significant difference in punishment severity, however, was found in the “chance of going to state prison” in the southern district comparison group.

Residents who were not exposed to the media campaign believed the chance of going to state prison was more important for impacting a person’s decision to use a gun in a crime. While the message of Project Safe Neighborhoods emphasized the federal prosecution of cases, survey respondents did not consider this form of punishment to be the most severe—regardless of the district.

Similar to the southern areas of the state, exposure to the media campaign did not impact respondents' evaluations of punishment severity in the north. No statistically significant difference was found in respondents' perceptions of punishment severity and campaign exposure.

In relation to the crime of domestic violence, all of the different forms of punishment were rated nearly the same in terms of severity (i.e., importance for impacting a person's decision to commit an act of domestic violence). Residents who were exposed to the message rated

the chance of losing the right to possess guns (4.60) slightly higher than those who were not exposed (3.99). Concerns about family was also rated as being somewhat more important for impacting a person's decision to commit an act of domestic violence among respondents who were exposed to the media campaign.

**Table 13. Factors Influencing Respondents' Perception of Punishment Severity by Exposure to the Media Campaign in the Northern District**

	Exposure			No Exposure			t-test
	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	
How important are the following in impacting a person's decision to commit an act of domestic violence...							
<b>North</b>							
Chance of losing right to possess guns	159	4.60	3.31	224	3.99	3.01	-1.855
Concerns about their family	160	4.19	3.19	224	3.80	2.93	-1.231
Chance of being arrested	160	4.41	3.08	224	4.39	3.19	-0.066
Chance of going to state prison	160	4.50	3.20	224	4.39	3.07	-0.342
Chance of going to federal prison	158	4.59	3.12	222	4.44	3.21	-0.465

Respondents were also asked to indicate to what degree different types of punishments would create problems in their own lives. In comparison to the previous analysis, mean scores were much higher when participants were asked if similar factors would create a problem in their personal lives. Similar to the previous results, however, exposure to the media campaign did not seem to impact ratings of punishment severity. No statistically significant differences in severity ratings were found based on exposure.

For many respondents, these results clearly indicate that a conviction rather than simply losing the right to possess a gun would have the greatest impact on their personal lives. Losing the right to possess a gun scored lowest across all regions, regardless of campaign exposure. Survey participants indicated that being convicted of a gun crime or a domestic violence crime would impact their lives to a great extent.

**Table 14. Perception of Punishment Severity and Exposure to the Media Campaign**

	Exposure			No Exposure			t-test
	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	
<b>South Core</b>							
Losing right to possess gun	135	5.38	3.92	56	4.16	3.87	-1.967
Being convicted of a gun crime	133	8.68	2.88	55	8.30	3.19	-0.812
Being convicted of a DV crime	137	8.43	3.05	56	8.42	3.25	-0.020
<b>South Comparison</b>							
Losing right to possess gun	101	5.49	4.06	84	5.19	4.12	-0.502
Being convicted of a gun crime	99	8.51	2.97	81	8.46	3.10	-0.113
Being convicted of a DV crime	98	8.16	3.31	82	8.25	3.12	0.184
<b>North</b>							
Losing right to possess gun	161	5.40	4.11	219	5.08	4.05	-0.769
Being convicted of a gun crime	157	8.07	3.43	216	7.87	3.59	-0.535
Being convicted of a DV crime	154	8.21	3.33	216	7.97	3.47	-0.667

Data from the West Virginia Incident-Based Reporting System (WVIBRS) were obtained from the WV State Police, Uniform Crime Reporting Section to measure official reports of firearm crime and domestic violence between 2000 and 2005. While WVIBRS data are estimated to represent 100.0% of the population, individual agency participation levels do vary across the state, as well as over time.

WVIBRS is a fluid data system which is updated with incident information reported by law enforcement agencies on a continuous basis. The data analyzed for this report represents offenses and victims reported for each calendar year up to the date on which the data were extracted from the state police repository. Data files for 2000-2002 were obtained in December 2003 and 2003 data were received in December 2004. The 2004 data file was obtained in June 2005, while 2005 data were received in April 2006.

WVIBRS data were used to illustrate patterns and trends in the number and rate of firearm offenses and domestic violence victimizations over the course of the PSN initiatives in WV. For the purposes of this report, firearm offenses include all offenses known to law enforcement and reported in the WVIBRS in which any type of firearm was involved. Domestic violence victim data obtained from the WVIBRS includes all victims known to law enforcement where an intimate partner or other familial relationship was present between the victim and at least one of his/her offenders at the time of the incident.

In order to evaluate the potential impact of the PSN initiatives in WV, most analyses compare reported offenses and victims prior to and after the implementation of the PSN initiatives in WV. Data for the calendar years 2000-2002 compose the “pre-PSN” period. Since at least some initial activities took place beginning in 2003 for both the northern and southern districts, data for 2003-2005 were considered to be the “post-PSN” period.



***Crime in WV  
Incident-Based Reporting System  
WV State Police***

**O**n average, 1,563 offenses known to law enforcement each year involve a firearm. This corresponds to a rate of just under one firearm offense for every 1,000 residents of the state per year. Statewide, the firearm offense rate in 2005 (0.90) was nearly unchanged from that in 2000 (0.88).

Table 15 shows that between 2000 and 2005 more firearm offenses were reported in the three counties that comprise the southern district target area (Kanawha, Cabell, and Raleigh Counties). Firearm offense rates in these southern district core counties were roughly double the rate of the comparison counties in the southern district between 2000 and 2005. Rates were lowest in the 32 counties that comprised the northern district.

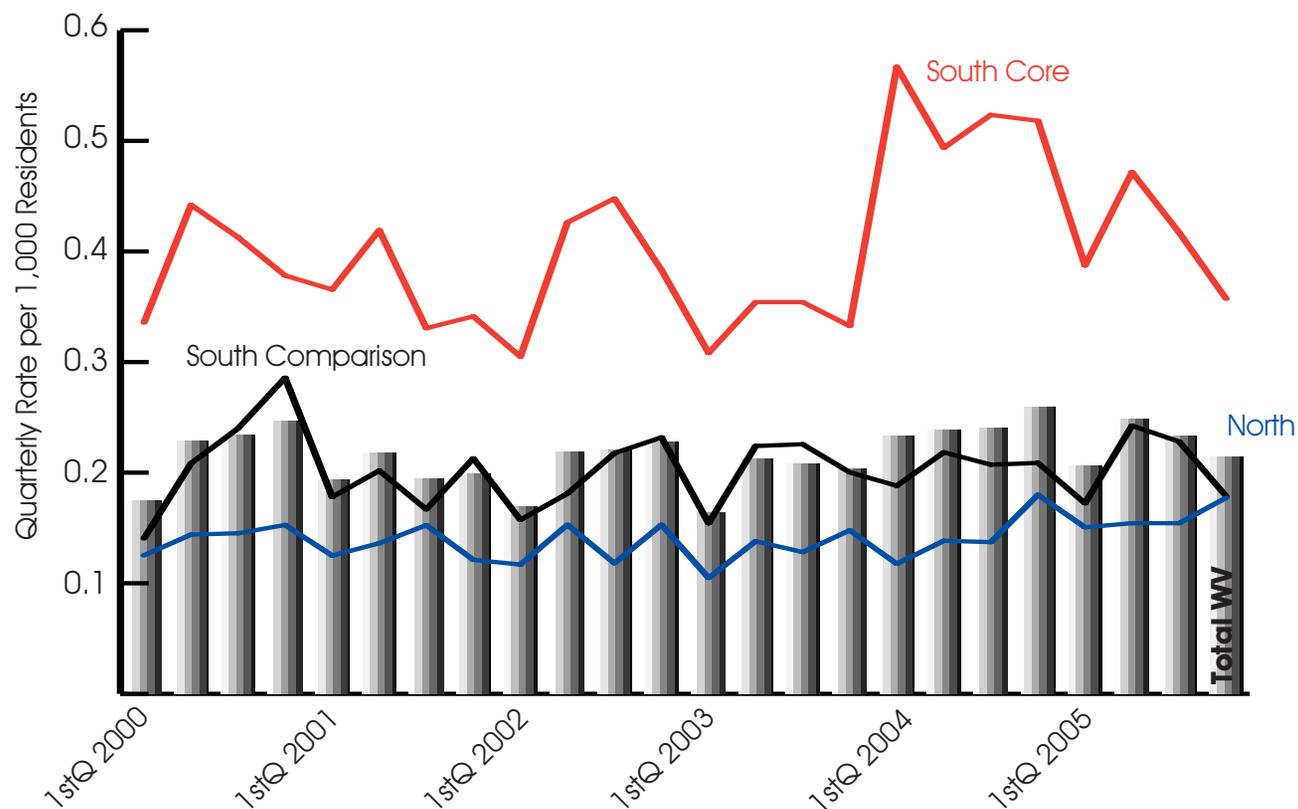
In both the south core counties and the northern district, firearm offenses were greater in 2005 than in 2000. There were 599 reported firearm offenses, or 1.63 offenses for every 1,000 residents, in the south core counties in 2005. This was down from the high of 775 offenses in 2004 but up from the 589 offenses (or 1.57 per 1,000 residents) reported in 2000. In the north, firearm offenses increased from 453 in 2000 to a high of 524 offenses in 2005. Firearm offenses in the southern comparison counties were at their highest in 2000 (554) and were down in 2005 to 515.

**Table 15. Firearm Offenses and Rates by District, 2000-2005**

	<b>South Core</b>		<b>South Comparison</b>		<b>North</b>		<b>Statewide</b>	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
2000	589	1.57	554	0.87	453	0.57	1,596	0.88
2001	542	1.46	478	0.76	428	0.54	1,448	0.80
2002	579	1.56	496	0.79	435	0.54	1,510	0.84
2003	499	1.35	506	0.80	421	0.52	1,426	0.79
2004	775	2.10	516	0.82	468	0.57	1,759	0.97
2005	599	1.63	515	0.82	524	0.64	1,638	0.90

Note: Rates per 1,000 residents based on Census population estimates as of 3/16/2006.

**Graph 9. Firearm Offense Rates for the State and by District, 2000-2005**



An examination of the quarterly firearm offense rates from January 2000 through December 2005 illustrates that the southern district target counties consistently experienced rates above the statewide level. A rather large increase occurred in these counties between the 4th quarter

of 2003 and the 1st quarter of 2004. Conversely, the counties in the northern district experienced rates lower than the statewide level. Rates in the remaining southern district counties were closest to the statewide level and followed roughly the same pattern.

**T**he distribution of firearm offenses in WV was roughly 60.0% violent crimes and 40.0% weapon law violations in 2005. Violent crimes made up a greater proportion of all firearm offenses in the southern comparison counties (66.4%) than in the target counties (56.4%) or the northern district counties (56.9%).

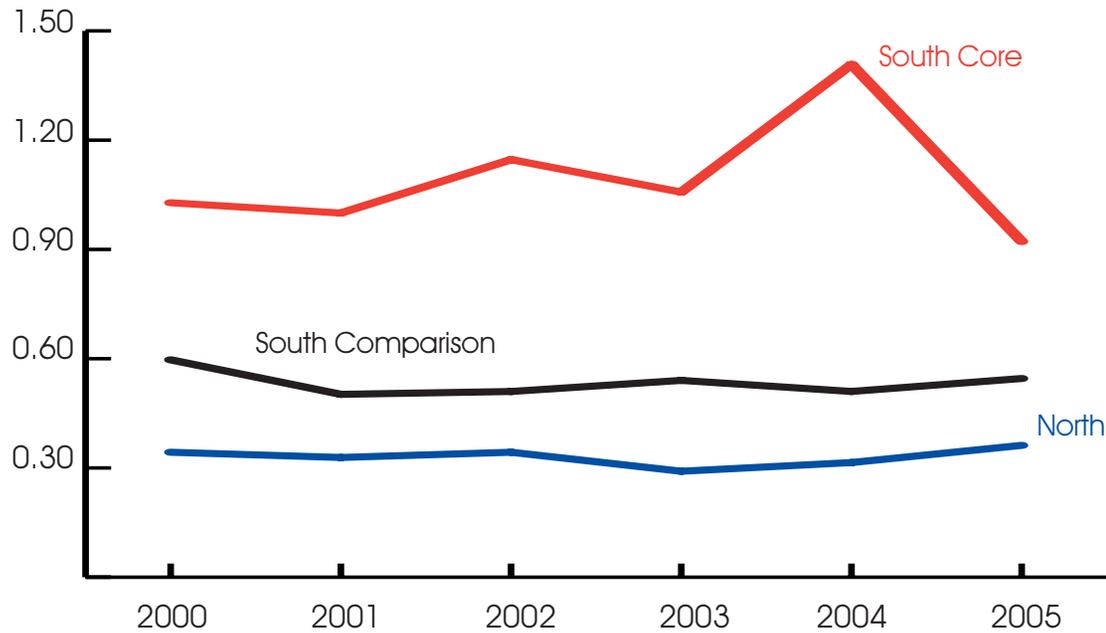
In 2005, the number of firearm offenses that involved violent crimes declined from 2000 in both the southern target counties and the south comparison counties. Violent crime firearm offenses increased in the northern district during this time.

Aggravated assault was the most frequently reported violent crime involving a firearm across all three regions of the state in 2005. These offenses accounted for over half of all firearm offenses in the south comparison area. In the north, 42.9% of firearm offenses were aggravated assaults while in the south core counties the proportion was slightly less at 32.1%. Robberies involving a firearm were more prevalent in the southern target counties accounting for 20.0% of firearm offenses. However, this was also the only area where robberies declined between 2000 and 2005.

**Table 16. 2005 Firearm Offenses by Type of Offense**

	South Core			South Comparison			North		
	#	%	% Change from 2000	#	%	% Change from 2000	#	%	% Change from 2000
<b>All Violent Crimes</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>56.4%</b>	<b>-12.4%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	<b>-9.5%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>56.9%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>
Murder	16	2.7%	100.0%	13	2.5%	8.3%	6	1.1%	-33.3%
Forcible Rape	1	0.2%	-80.0%	1	0.2%	---	2	0.4%	100.0%
Robbery	120	20.0%	-11.1%	42	8.2%	13.5%	61	11.6%	32.6%
Aggravated Assault	192	32.1%	-15.8%	282	54.8%	-11.3%	225	42.9%	6.6%
Forcible Sodomy	0	0.0%	---	1	0.2%	---	0	0.0%	-100%
Sexual Assault w/ Object	2	0.3%	---	0	0.0%	-100%	0	0.0%	---
Forcible Fondling	1	0.2%	---	0	0.0%	-100%	0	0.0%	-100%
Kipnapping/Abduction	6	1.0%	-40.0%	3	0.6%	-25.0%	4	0.8%	0.0%
<b>Weapon Law Violations</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>43.6%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>26.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-7.0%</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>

**Graph 10. Violent Crime Rates Involving Firearms by District, 2000-2005**

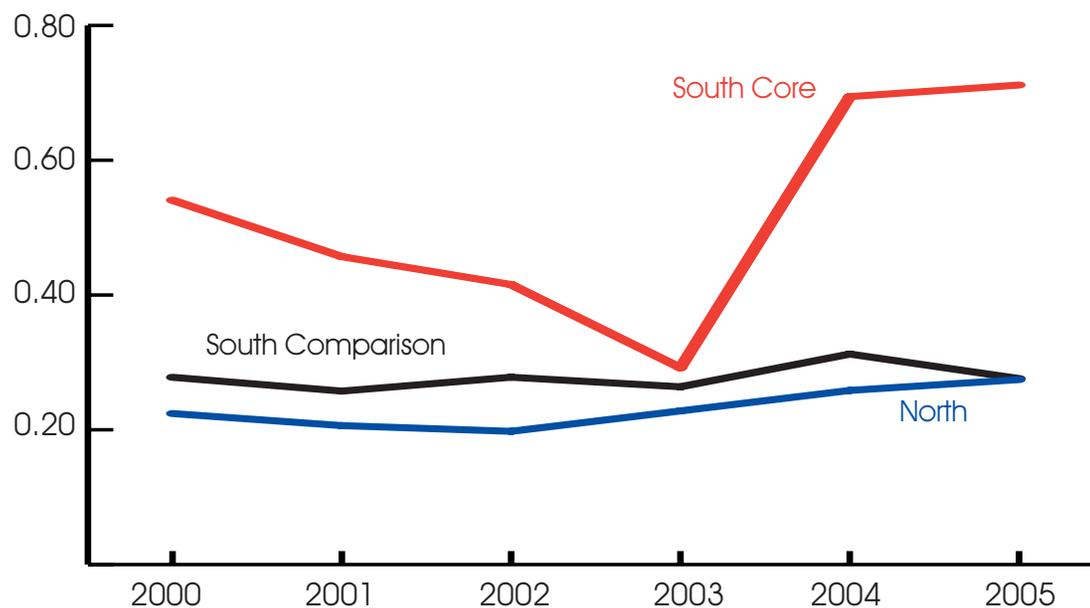


Firearm offenses that were weapon law violations increased by more than 25.0% in both the south target area and the northern district from 2000 to 2005. These same offenses decreased by 1.7% in the south comparison area (see Table 16).

While the trend over time for firearm offenses was relatively stable in the southern comparison counties and in the northern district, more fluctuation is apparent in the south core counties in terms of both violent crimes and weapon law violations (see Graph 10 and Graph 11).

Violent crime firearm offense rates were generally on the rise in the south core counties from 2000 to 2004 while weapon law violations declined through 2003. Then weapon law violation firearm offense rates increased rather sharply from 2003 to 2005. Violent crime firearm offense rates declined from 2004 to 2005.

**Graph 11. Weapon Law Violation Firearm Offense Rates by District, 2000-2005**



In the southern district comparison counties the trend in both violent crime and weapon law violation firearm offense rates was relatively flat during the six-year period.

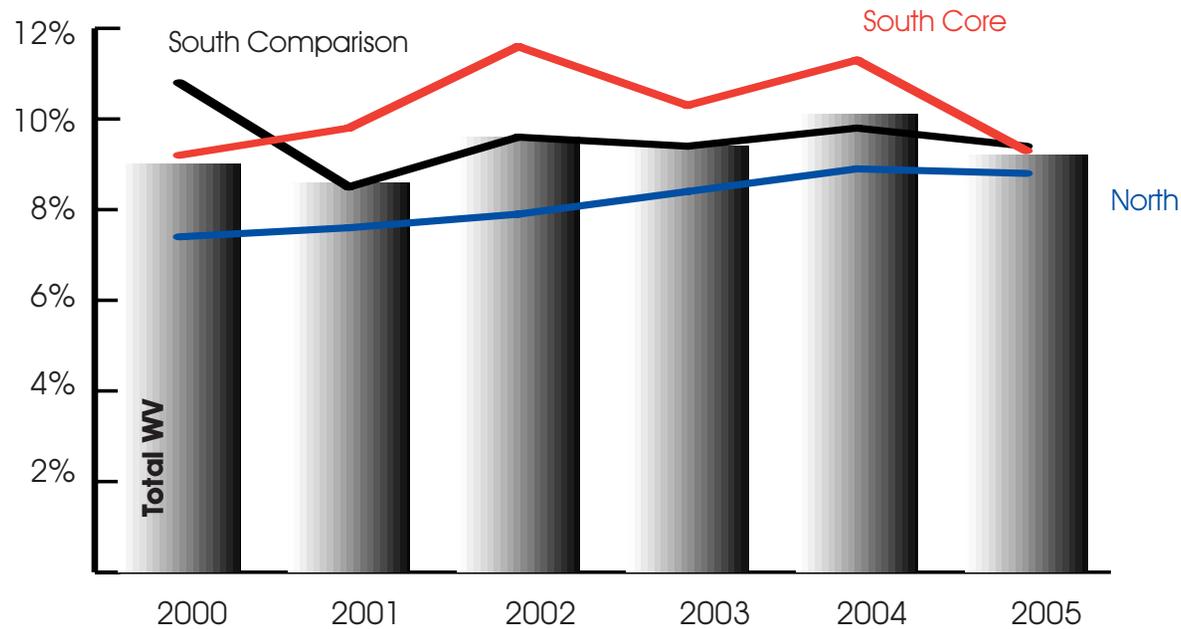
A slight rise in both violent crime and weapon law violation firearm offense rates after 2003 resulted in higher rates in 2005 than in 2000 in the northern district.

## Proportion of Firearm Offenses

**O**n average, about 9.0% of all offenses for which weapon use was reported involved a firearm statewide. The proportion of offenses involving a firearm in the southern target area (10.3%) was on average slightly above that of the state, while in the north (8.2%) it was consistently below the state.

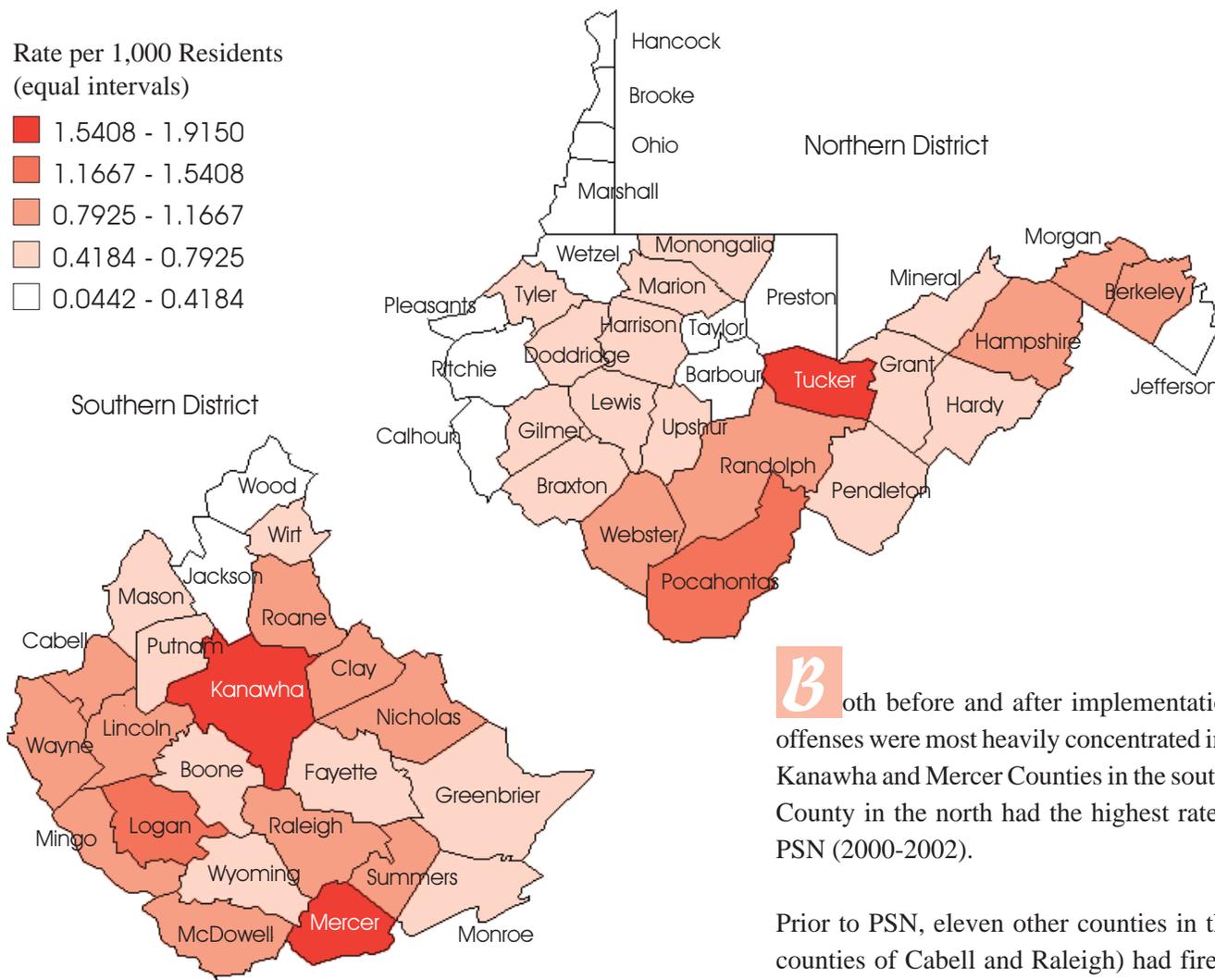
The percentage of weapon use attributable to firearms in the south core area was nearly the same in 2005 as in 2000. In the southern district comparison counties, firearms accounted for a smaller proportion of weapon use in 2005 than in 2000. The opposite was seen in the northern district where the proportion of offenses involving a firearm increased between 2000 and 2005.

**Graph 12. Proportion of Offenses Involving a Firearm as the Weapon Type, 2000-2005**



# County Distribution of Firearm Offenses

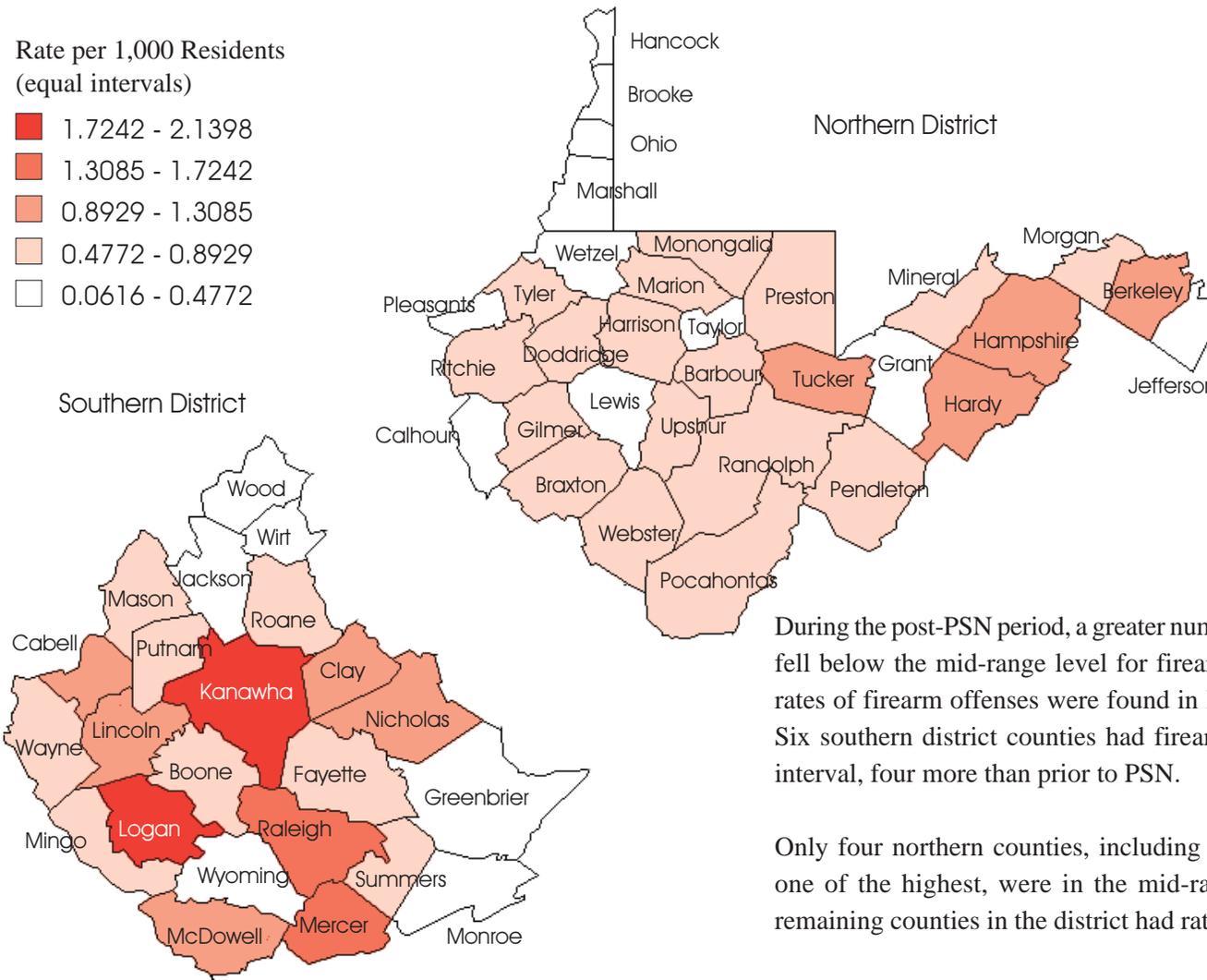
**Figure 1. Distribution of Pre-PSN Firearm Offense Rates, 2000-2002**



**B**oth before and after implementation of the PSN effort, firearm offenses were most heavily concentrated in the southern district counties. Kanawha and Mercer Counties in the southern district along with Tucker County in the north had the highest rates of firearm offenses prior to PSN (2000-2002).

Prior to PSN, eleven other counties in the south (including the target counties of Cabell and Raleigh) had firearm offense rates at or above mid-range while only 2 counties fell into the lowest rate interval. Conversely, in the north 25 of the 32 counties had firearm offense rates that fell into the two lowest rate intervals.

**Figure 2. Distribution of Post-PSN Firearm Offense Rates, 2003-2005**



During the post-PSN period, a greater number of counties in both districts fell below the mid-range level for firearm offense rates. The highest rates of firearm offenses were found in Kanawha and Logan counties. Six southern district counties had firearm offense rates in the lowest interval, four more than prior to PSN.

Only four northern counties, including Tucker which was previously one of the highest, were in the mid-range at post-PSN. All of the remaining counties in the district had rates in the bottom two intervals.

The three target counties in the south continued to have some of the highest rates of firearm offenses in the state. Only Cabell County's rate fell slightly from 1.15 pre-PSN to 1.07 post-PSN.

While all three regions of the state experienced increases in firearm offense rates during the post-PSN period, the increase was greatest in the south core area. The difference in firearm offense rates between pre and post-PSN in the south core counties was 0.1657 or 10.8%. However, caution should be used when interpreting these results due to the small numbers involved.

Firearm offense rates increased by the least amount in the comparison counties of the southern district (1.1%). In the north, firearm offense rates were 5.2% higher post-PSN.

Firearm offenses involving violent crimes increased by 6.7% in the south core counties at post-PSN. Decreases were seen in both the south comparison area and the north.

Rates for weapon law violations increased by about 20.0% in both the south core counties and the northern district. However, in the south comparison area, the increase for these types of offenses was just 4.8%.

**Table 17. Average Firearm Offense Rates 2000-2002 and 2003-2005**

	Pre-PSN Average 2000-2002	Post-PSN Average 2003-2005	Rate Difference	Percent Rate Change
<b>South Core All Firearm</b>	1.5292	1.6949	0.1657	10.8%
Violent Crime	1.0582	1.1289	0.0707	6.7%
Weapon Law	0.4710	0.5660	0.0950	20.2%
<b>South Comparison All Firearm</b>	0.8074	0.8161	0.0087	1.1%
Violent Crime	0.5363	0.5320	-0.0043	-0.8%
Weapon Law	0.2711	0.2841	0.0130	4.8%
<b>North All Firearm</b>	0.5476	0.5762	0.0285	5.2%
Violent Crime	0.3383	0.3225	-0.0158	-4.7%
Weapon Law	0.2093	0.2537	0.0443	21.2%

Note: Three year average rates per 1,000 residents.

## Trends in Domestic Violence Victimization

**O**n average there were 11,802 victims of domestic violence in WV each year between 2000 and 2005. This translates to an average of 6.5 domestic violence victims for every 1,000 residents of the state.

The number of reported victims was roughly the same across all three regions studied, despite the differences in population covered. This results in victimization rates that were considerably higher in the southern district target area. Domestic violence victimization rates were lowest in the northern district while rates in the south comparison counties were similar to the rates for the state.

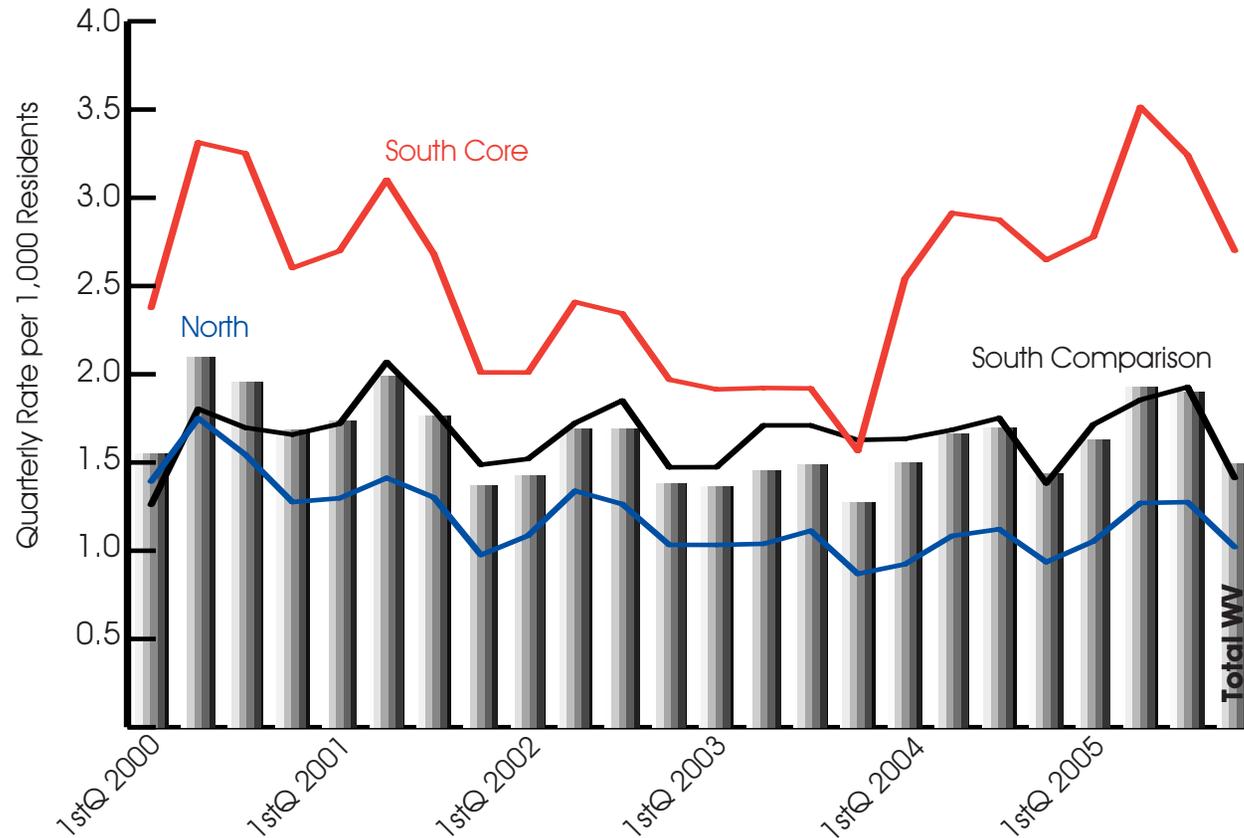
Statewide, domestic violence victims declined by 4.1% from 2000 to 2005. However, by district, only the northern district had fewer victims in 2005 (3,803) than in 2000 (4,763). In the south core counties, domestic violence was at its highest point of this six-year period with 12.23 victimizations for every 1,000 residents in 2005. The number of domestic violence victims was also up in the south comparison counties in 2005 after three consecutive decreases.

**Table 18. Domestic Violence Victims and Rates by District, 2000-2005**

	<b>South Core</b>		<b>South Comparison</b>		<b>North</b>		<b>Statewide</b>	
	Victims	Rate	Victims	Rate	Victims	Rate	Victims	Rate
2000	4,334	11.54	4,065	6.42	4,763	5.96	13,162	7.28
2001	3,904	10.49	4,452	7.07	3,991	4.99	12,347	6.85
2002	3,237	8.73	4,134	6.57	3,798	4.72	11,169	6.19
2003	2,708	7.32	4,103	6.52	3,289	4.05	10,100	5.58
2004	4,047	10.98	4,048	6.45	3,319	4.06	11,414	6.30
2005	4,487	12.23	4,331	6.91	3,803	4.62	12,621	6.95

Note: Rates per 1,000 residents based on Census population estimates as of 3/16/2006.

**Graph 13. Domestic Violence Victimization Rates for the State and by District, 2000-2005**



An examination of the quarterly domestic violence victimization rates by district illustrates that the three counties in the south target area had consistently higher rates than the rest of the state and experienced considerable fluctuation over this period. Similar to the firearm offense trend, the greatest rise in domestic violence victims in the south core

occurred between the 4th quarter of 2003 and the 1st quarter of 2004. Conversely, the northern district experienced the lowest rates while the south comparison area most closely matched the statewide level for domestic violence victimization during this six-year period.

**Table 19. Domestic Violence Victims by Type of Offense, 2005**

	South Core			South Comparison			North		
	#	%	% Change from 2000	#	%	% Change from 2000	#	%	% Change from 2000
<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>-25.9%</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>-37.3%</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>-33.8%</b>
Murder	9	0.2%	125.0%	12	0.3%	100.0%	6	0.2%	20.0%
Forcible Rape	10	0.2%	-47.4%	16	0.4%	14.3%	34	0.9%	3.0%
Robbery	5	0.1%	-44.4%	2	0.0%	100.0%	4	0.1%	300.0%
Aggravated Assault	300	6.7%	-25.9%	507	11.7%	-39.2%	461	12.1%	-36.3%
<b>Other Assaults</b>	<b>4,111</b>	<b>91.6%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>3,713</b>	<b>85.7%</b>	<b>19.7%</b>	<b>3,184</b>	<b>83.7%</b>	<b>-17.0%</b>
Simple Assault	3,520	78.4%	17.4%	3,104	71.7%	34.2%	2,708	71.2%	-14.4%
Intimidation	580	12.9%	-28.2%	577	13.3%	-24.4%	449	11.8%	-30.6%
Kidnapping/Abduction	11	0.2%	-47.6%	32	0.7%	23.1%	27	0.7%	12.5%
<b>Other Sex Crimes</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>-25.7%</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>-24.3%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>-30.9%</b>
Forcible Sodomy	8	0.2%	-11.1%	7	0.2%	-12.5%	11	0.3%	-38.9%
Sexual Assault w/ Object	10	0.2%	0.0%	15	0.3%	-6.3%	19	0.5%	26.7%
Forcible Fondling	28	0.6%	3.7%	44	1.0%	-21.4%	63	1.7%	-36.4%
Rape of Male	0	0.0%	---	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%	---
Incest	1	0.0%	-90.0%	1	0.0%	-91.7%	12	0.3%	100.0%
Statutory Rape	5	0.1%	-64.3%	13	0.3%	-7.1%	9	0.2%	-66.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,487</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>4,331</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>3,803</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-20.2%</b>

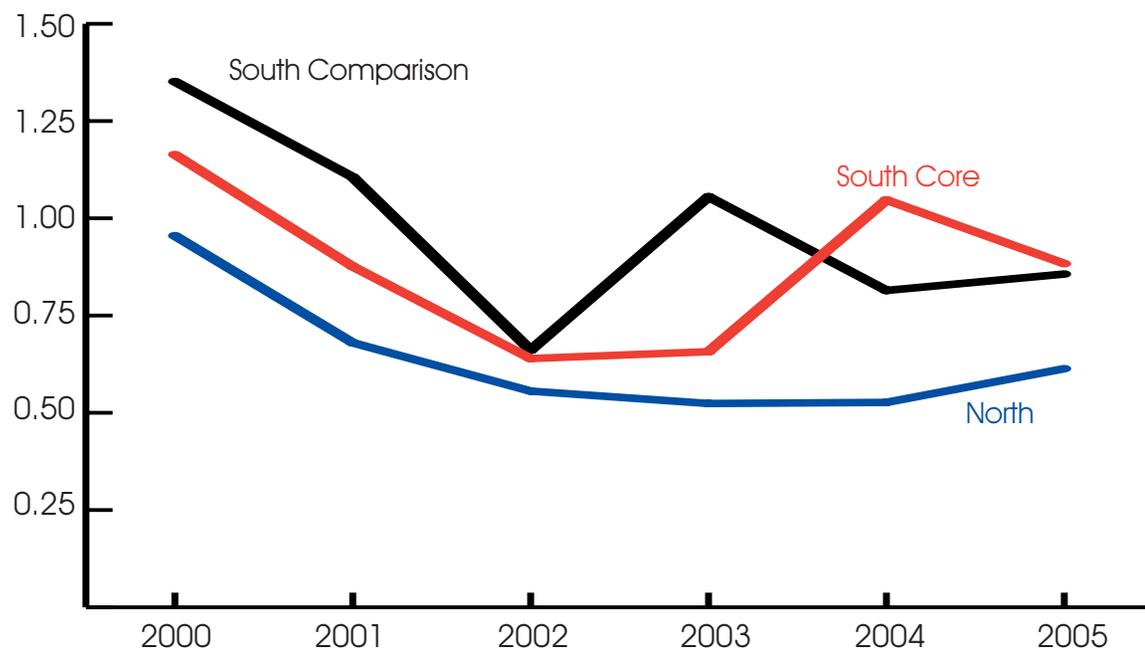
In 2005, other assaults (including simple assault, intimidation, and kidnapping/abduction) were by far the most frequently reported offenses against domestic violence victims across the state (see Table 19). However, the northern district was the only area to see a decrease in these crimes against domestic violence victims. Here other assaults and more specifically, simple assault, decreased by 17.0% and 14.4% respectively.

Violent and sex crimes represented a greater proportion of all offenses reported in the northern district than in the other two regions. The number

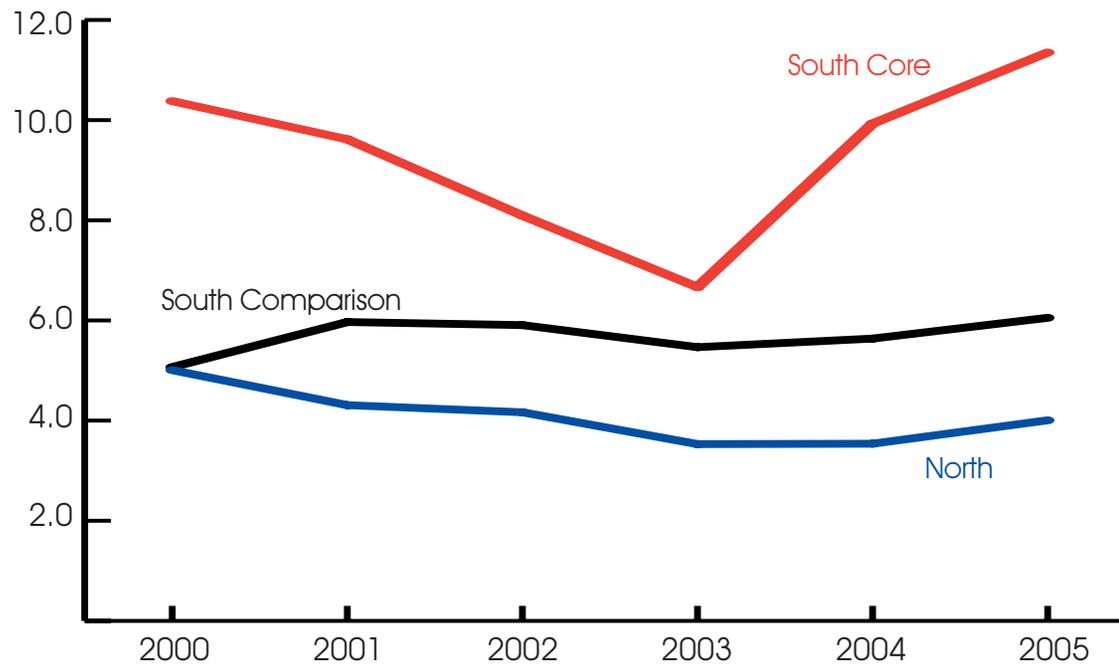
of victims experiencing the most violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) decreased rather substantially in all three regions from 2000 to 2005.

Examining the victimization trends over time illustrates very different patterns for the two broad crime categories, violent crime and all other person offenses.

**Graph 14. Domestic Victimization Trends for “Violent Crimes” by District, 2000-2005**



**Graph 15. Domestic Victimization Trends for “All Other Person Offenses” by District**



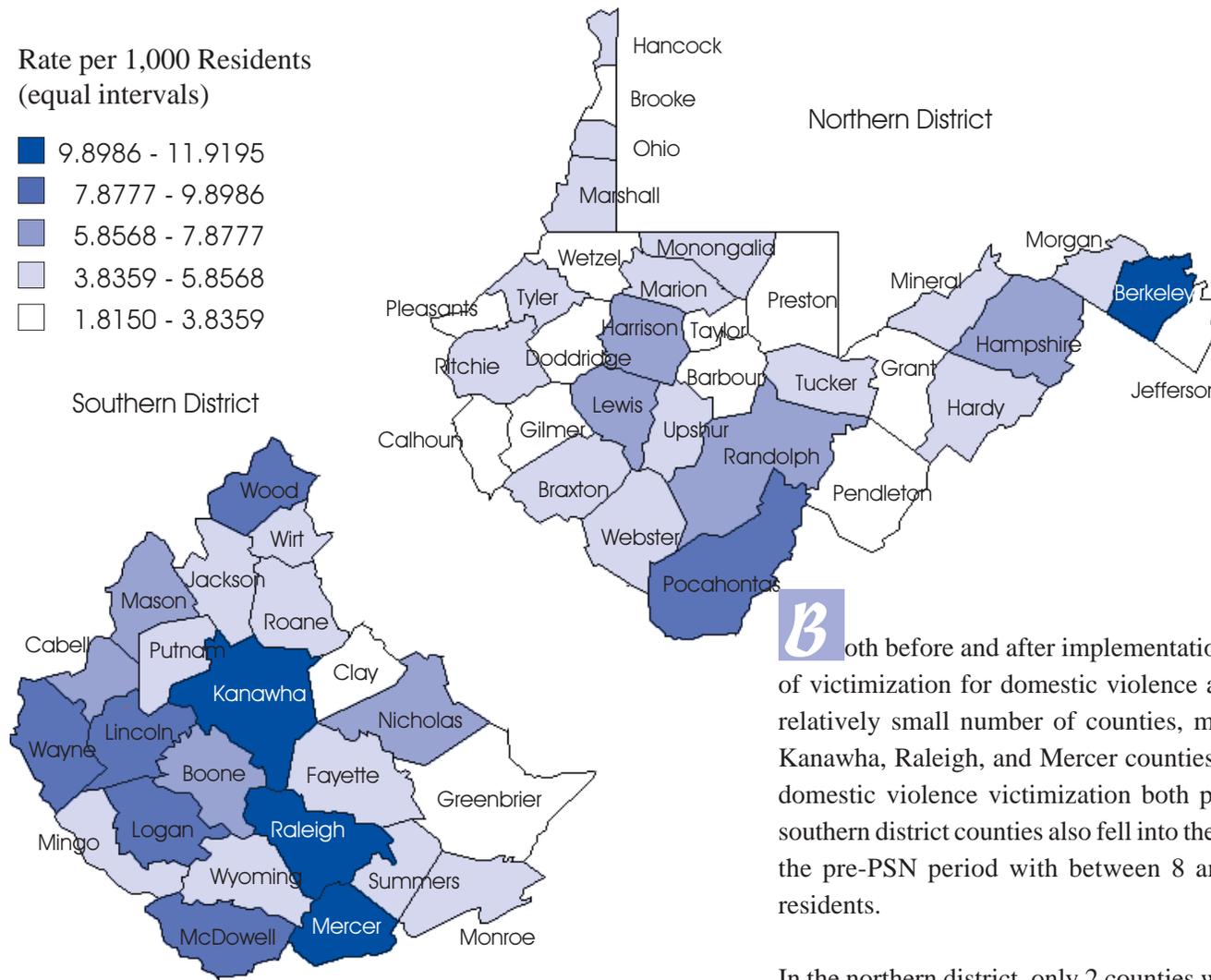
Note: All other person offenses includes other assaults and other sex crimes as defined in Table 19.

Violent crime victimizations were highest in the southern comparison counties at the beginning of the period and were on the decline in all three areas until 2002. Sharp increases at mid-period in both southern regions resulted in the south core counties finishing the period with the highest rates of domestic violent crime victimization.

Domestic violence victimization rates for other violent person offenses were greatest and most unstable in the southern district target area from 2000 to 2005. After falling to a low of 6.66 in 2003, rates climbed to 11.35 in 2005. In the northern district, domestic violence victimization rates for other violent person offenses were slightly lower in 2005 (4.01) than in 2000 (5.01).

## County Distribution of Domestic Violence Victims

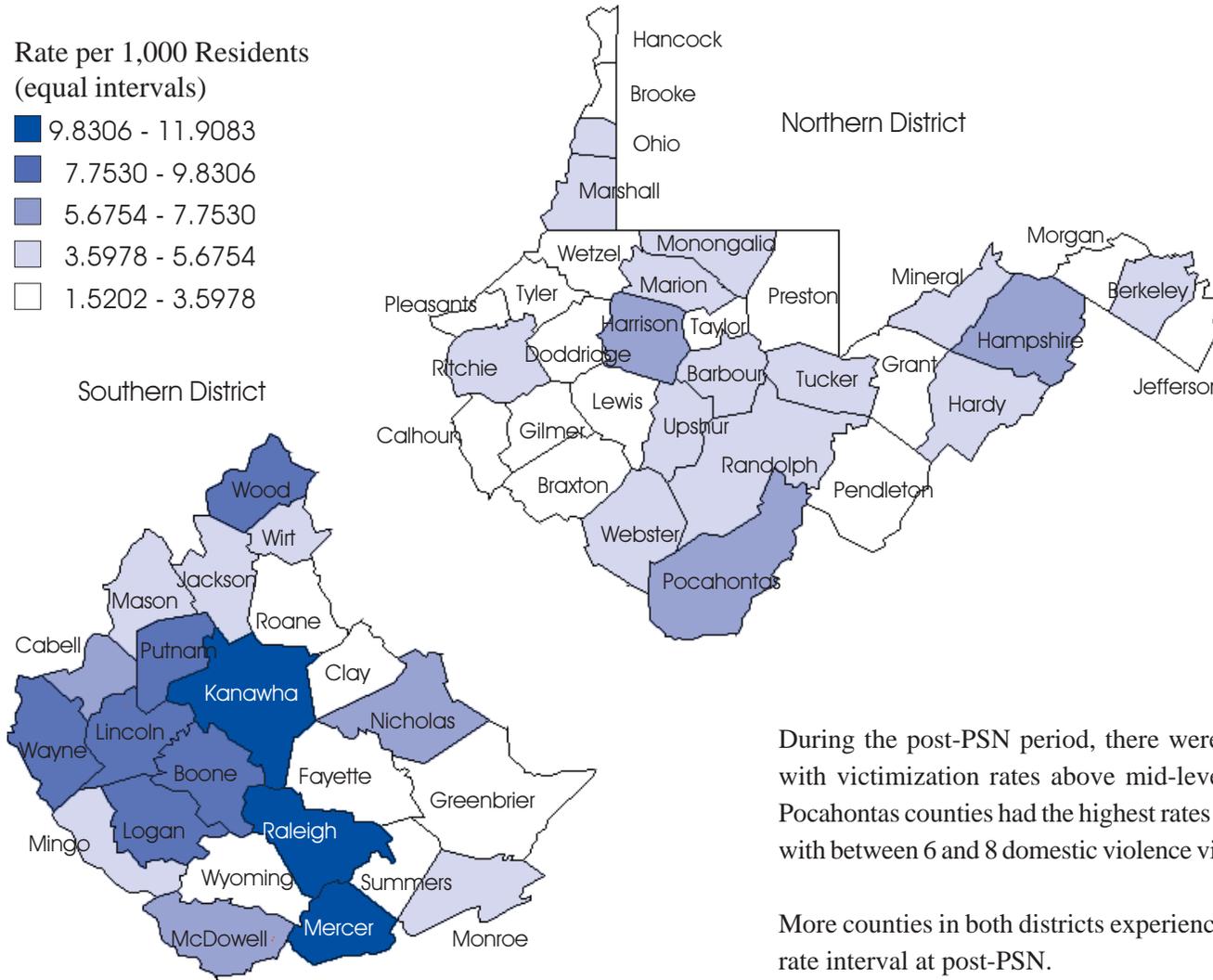
**Figure 3. Distribution of Pre-PSN Domestic Violence Victim Rates, 2000-2002**



**B**oth before and after implementation of the PSN effort, high rates of victimization for domestic violence appear to be concentrated in a relatively small number of counties, mostly in the southern district. Kanawha, Raleigh, and Mercer counties had the three highest rates of domestic violence victimization both pre and post-PSN. Five other southern district counties also fell into the second highest interval during the pre-PSN period with between 8 and 9 victims for every 1,000 residents.

In the northern district, only 2 counties were above mid-level pre-PSN, Berkeley (10.1) and Pocahontas (8.7). At the same time, 12 counties in the northern district fell into the bottom interval with some of the lowest rates of domestic violence victimization in the state.

**Figure 4. Distribution of Post-PSN Domestic Violence Victim Rates, 2003-2005**



During the post-PSN period, there were no northern district counties with victimization rates above mid-level. Hampshire, Harrison, and Pocahontas counties had the highest rates in the district during this period with between 6 and 8 domestic violence victims for every 1,000 residents.

More counties in both districts experienced rates falling into the bottom rate interval at post-PSN.

## Domestic Violence Victimization Rates

**T**otal domestic violence victimization rates declined in all three districts at post-PSN. However, the decrease was most pronounced in the northern district. In this district, domestic violence victimization rates declined from 5.22 pre-PSN to 4.25 post-PSN, a difference of -0.98. This translates to an 18.73% reduction. At the same time rates in the two southern areas fell by less than 1.0%. Again, caution should be used in interpreting these results due to the small numbers.

The only increase in domestic violence victimizations at post-PSN occurred in the southern comparison counties and involved other assaults (1.59%). While less prevalent, both violent crime and other sex crime victimization rates decreased in all three regions. Again, the reductions were greatest in the northern district. Violent crime victimizations decreased by 24.06% in the north while victimizations involving other sex crimes were 24.93% lower during the post-PSN period.

**Table 20. Average Victimization Rates 2000-2002 and 2003-2005**

	Pre-PSN Average 2000-2002	Post-PSN Average 2003-2005	Rate Difference	Percent Rate Change
<b>South Core All Domestic</b>	10.26	10.18	-0.08	-0.77%
Violent Crime	0.89	0.86	-0.03	-3.44%
Other Assaults	9.18	9.18	-0.00	-0.07%
Other Sex Crime	0.18	0.14	-0.04	-23.07%
<b>South Comparison All Domestic</b>	6.69	6.63	-0.06	-0.89%
Violent Crime	1.04	0.91	-0.13	-12.57%
Other Assaults	5.49	5.58	0.09	1.59%
Other Sex Crime	0.16	0.14	-0.02	-9.95%
<b>North All Domestic</b>	5.22	4.25	-0.98	-18.73%
Violent Crime	0.73	0.55	-0.18	-24.06%
Other Assaults	4.31	3.55	-0.76	-17.55%
Other Sex Crime	0.19	0.14	-0.05	-24.93%

Note: Three year average rates per 1,000 residents.

**T**he purpose of the present analysis was to examine both the implementation and potential deterrent impact of PSN initiatives in both federal judicial districts of WV. Using an approach to data analysis called triangulation, multiple sources of data were used to ascertain the degree to which the PSN initiatives in WV were implemented and the extent to which they had the capacity to deter future domestic violence and firearm-related violent crimes. Prosecution data and media outputs were examined to assess the extent to which the PSN initiative in each district was implemented. A general population survey of WV residents as well as offenses reported to law enforcement were used to examine the potential deterrent impact of each initiative.

While the type of crime that served as the focus for each district differed (i.e., domestic violence in the northern district and firearm-related violent crime in the southern district), both PSN initiatives relied heavily on the development of a media campaign as well as enhanced prosecution of cases to deter would-be offenders from committing crimes. As a result, PSN initiatives in both federal judicial districts were rooted in the notion of general deterrence. That is, if citizens are educated on the severe punishments (e.g., federal prosecution, no parole, having their guns taken away, etc.) and believe they will be caught and prosecuted for committing a particular crime, they will decide that the potential benefits do *not* outweigh the costs and will choose not to commit the crime.

In the case of the PSN initiatives in WV, the notion of general deterrence suggests that individuals exposed to the message of the media campaign should consider the severity of punishments to be too great (as well as

the certainty of getting caught) and thus, it is not worth committing the crime. If citizens became knowledgeable of the severe punishments through the campaign message, it is expected that their perception of the severity and certainty of punishment would differ compared to residents who were not exposed to the message—if a potential deterrent impact is present. Persons exposed to the deterrent message are expected to perceive punishment severity and certainty to be greater than those not exposed to the campaign’s message. If a deterrent impact is present, the launch of the PSN initiative should be accompanied by a decline in reported domestic violence and other violent crimes involving firearms.

By triangulating the information from different data sources, the present analysis examined both the implementation and the potential deterrent impact of each PSN initiative in WV. If successfully *implemented*, for instance, the PSN initiative should be accompanied by increased prosecution of eligible offenses, enhanced collaboration between task force representatives and research partners, and widespread exposure to each district’s media campaign message. On the other hand, if the PSN initiative is to have a *deterrent impact* on crime, citizens perception of the severity and certainty of punishment should vary by exposure to the media campaign (as evidenced by the general population survey) and offenses officially reported to law enforcement should decline after the start of the initiative.

In terms of program implementation, Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) was designed to be a collaborative partnership between various federal, state, and local entities to identify and address specific gun violence problems at the local level. The national model and impetus for PSN

initiatives across the county centered on the idea of linking research partners with key practitioners and PSN coordinators (i.e., USAO's) in order to inform decisions through the use of data. Under this model, state and local "task forces" were established to develop a data-driven strategic plan to address the identified problem through the use of a research partner.

However, there is little evidence that this coordinator-research partner collaborative process was fully implemented in the two federal districts of WV. Little or no information was provided to the research partner regarding task force meetings. Likewise, it did not appear that specific data or the results of data analysis was used to formulate intervention decisions. While findings from data analyses were generated which illustrated the spatial distribution and trends in violent crime, firearm, and domestic violence offenses in the state, it is not entirely clear that this information was used by program coordinators to target interventions or tailor the media awareness campaign to select offender populations. This is illustrated by the use of PSA's rooted in mass marketing strategies such as billboards, TV ads, and radio to distribute the campaign messages to the general population of residents in WV. As a result, few efforts were made to identify specific offender populations or geographic areas with a high incidence of domestic violence or firearm-related violent offenses. Such approaches have historically been shown to be less effective than interventions which target specific offender populations and/or smaller geographic areas such as "hot spots".

Despite impediments to the coordinator-research partner process in WV, both districts developed strategies that centered on media awareness of stiff punishments and the increased federal prosecution of cases. However, it is not clear whether the output from each of these strategies was sufficient to produce reductions in domestic violence and firearm-related violent crimes in WV. For instance, an analysis of the prosecution data revealed that while there was a slight increase in the proportion of firearm cases processed by the southern district USAO shortly after the implementation of PSN, this trend was present for only one year (2003-2004) and was very modest (i.e., an increase of only 39 cases). In the northern district, firearm cases made up a smaller proportion of all cases handled by the USAO during the post-PSN period.

On the other hand, another primary output or intervention in both districts was a media campaign based on deterring gun violence through awareness of federal firearms laws. Both districts were successful in developing a campaign. Yet, the southern district was more successful in developing a targeted approach compared to the northern district. The southern district media campaign targeted only three counties, compared to all 32 counties targeted in the northern district's campaign to end domestic violence.

In spite of each district's effort to implement a robust media campaign, only a small percentage of WV residents surveyed indicated that they had heard of PSN or any of the district-specific initiatives in WV. In particular, only 5.4% of all survey respondents in the northern district had heard of Project Safe Homes. This has clear implications for the capacity of the campaign to deter potential offenders from committing

acts of domestic violence in the district. It also may point to the limitation of a general media campaign to reach its intended audience when it is spread across a large geographic area. On the contrary, respondents in the southern target counties were significantly more likely to be aware of the Hard Time for Gun Crime initiative. Over fifty percent of survey respondents in the southern target area heard of the district-specific PSN initiative. It seems likely that the more targeted approach to the delivery of the media campaign's message may have contributed to greater citizen awareness.

Turning to the deterrent potential of the PSN initiatives in WV, results from both the general population survey and official reports to law enforcement were examined. In general, both data sources provided little evidence of a deterrent impact on the respective crimes in either district. The findings illustrated that exposure to the media campaign had little or no effect on residents knowledge of federal firearms laws or perceived levels of certainty and severity of punishment. As noted previously, it was anticipated based on deterrence theory that residents would rate the certainty and severity of punishment to be greater after hearing the message. Yet, little difference was found in the perceptions of residents. While a slightly greater percentage of respondents exposed to the campaign reported that certainty of punishment had increased in some way over the last two years, no relationship was found between exposure and perceived change in severity. These results, combined with the fact that only a small percentage of residents had been exposed to the specific campaigns, suggests that the PSN initiatives in WV had limited potential for deterring acts of domestic violence and/or firearm-related violent crimes or reducing the number of offenses reported to law enforcement.

Given the results of the media awareness survey, it is difficult to attribute any changes in crime trends to the PSN initiative in either district. With only five percent of the northern district's population having heard of Project Safe Homes, it is simply not likely that any impact of the campaign would be captured through an examination of official statistics. On the other hand, while exposure was greater in the southern district there was little change in firearm and violent crime offense rates pre- and post-PSN. As somewhat anticipated, trends in domestic violence victimization reported to law enforcement remained rather stable over the six year period between 2000 and 2005. In the northern district, domestic violence victimization rates were only slightly lower in 2005 (4.01 per 1,000 residents) compared to 2000 (5.01).

For the southern district, an examination of both weapon law violations and violent crime firearm offenses yielded mixed results. With respect to weapon law violations, the south target area experienced an increase of more than 25.0%, with most of this being attributed to sharp increases shortly after the implementation of PSN. This sharp increase might be attributed to increased enforcement. However, contrary to the objectives of PSN in the southern district, violent crime firearm offense rates were generally on the rise in the south core counties from 2000-2004, at a time when rates were flat in the south comparison counties and the northern district.

In sum, the present analysis examined multiple sources of data to ascertain the potential impact of PSN to reduce domestic violence and firearm related offenses in WV. While both the southern and northern districts of WV were successful at establishing a media campaign, it is

not clear whether the campaign had an appreciable impact on crime in either district. Only a small percentage of WV residents were aware of the campaign message and very few citizens appeared knowledgeable of federal firearm laws after being exposed to the messages. Such limited exposure to the campaign, combined with only a slight increase in the number of cases prosecuted, has clear consequences for the deterrent potential of PSN. When all sources of data are considered, there is little evidence that the PSN initiative was successful at reducing domestic violence and firearm-related violent offenses in WV or deterring future crimes.

