Definitions and Terminology

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There is often some confusion about the use of particular terms related to crime prevention. Crime prevention, community safety, crime control and crime reduction are terms often used interchangeably without any real distinction between each.

In a recent publication, Chainey and Ratcliffe (2005) have attempted to distinguish these terms. The following definitions have been adapted and/or replicated from Chainey and Ratcliffe.[1] They have been listed in descending order of specificity of focus. That is, the terms become increasingly more focused on responding to specific criminal incidents.

Term	Definition
Community Safety	"Community safety is realized through an integrated consideration of diverse harms to the public, and 'refers to the likely absence of harms from all sources, not just from human acts classifiable as crimes' (Wiles and Pease, 2000). Community safety also provides a strategic viewpoint on community harms by focusing attention towards the development of programmes that set targets to manage risks and aims to maiximise public safety" (2005:17-18)
Crime Prevention	Crime prevention involves any activity by an individual or group, public or private, which attempts to eliminate crime prior to it occurring or before any additional activity results. By drawing on the public health model, some theorists have distinguished between primary crime prevention (universal), secondary crime prevention (at-risk) and tertiary crime prevention (known offenders).
Crime Reduction	"Crime reduction is concerned with diminishing the number of criminal events and the consequences of crime. Crime reduction is applied within the bandwidth of an available resource input (e.g. financial input) and needs to be considered as an action that brings net benefits, fear of crime and the impact of other programmes that may have contributed to any specific crime reduction activity. Crime reduction promotes a spirit of optimism that actions towards a problem will reduce crime or reduce the seriousness of criminal events … it aims to intervene directly in the events and their causes" (2005: 19).
Crime Control	"Crime control considers that crime has already happened and that some management of these criminal activities is required to ensure that it does not spiral out of control. It points to the need for maintenance of a problem, one where crime is kept to a tolerable level, and not to a situation where crime can be prevented" (2005: 18-19).

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[1] Chainey, S. and Ratcliffe, J. (2005) GIS and Crime Mapping, John Wiley and Sons, England