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EVALUATION DOCUMENT

CRIME PREVENTION PRACTICE IN CANADA 2000

Summary

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**Evaluation Division
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Canada™

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Background

Crime Prevention Practice in Canada 2000 is one of a suite of studies that has been, or will be conducted to provide information in support of the evaluation of the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention (the Strategy). It is linked with the Evaluation Division's Benchmarking Study 1998-2003, also a sub-study of the evaluation and provides:

- further insight into the nature and extent of crime prevention at the community level
- a sense of community awareness and knowledge of, and support for the Strategy, and
- a methodology that can be replicated in future years of the Strategy.

Study Issues

The study examined the following issues, as seen by key informants through a community lens:

- the policy context of crime and criminal victimization
- who's involved in crime prevention
- the nature of crime prevention partnerships
- the nature and extent of crime prevention activities
- the beneficiaries of crime prevention activities
- perceived gaps in crime prevention , and
- level of awareness, knowledge and support for the Strategy.

Methodology

We developed a purposive sample of 30 communities across Canada, stratified by region and size (6 regions, 12 small, 12 medium and 5 large communities). One community served as the pilot. Using a tested protocol to identify key informants in each community, we conducted 172 in-depth interviews at the local level. The sample included individuals from community or non-governmental organizations (including community service organizations, women's organizations/shelters, family-oriented services, governments (primarily municipal), police, schools, health services, aboriginal organizations and the private sector.

Limitations

This study is based on the perceptions of key informants. While we are confident that our methodology provides a good snapshot of crime prevention practice, it is not, however, an inventory of all crime prevention activities that may be carried out within any of the communities studied.

Findings: Policy Context

Concerns about Crime: 92.4% of the respondents perceive people in their communities as being very (47.1%) or somewhat (45.3%) concerned about crime. Respondents from the Prairies were significantly more likely than respondents from Quebec, Ontario and the North to report that people in their communities are very concerned about crime. Variance by community size was not statistically significant.

Concerns about Criminal Victimization: Overall, 84.8% of respondents perceiving members of their communities as being very (42.4%) or somewhat (42.4%) concerned about being criminally victimized. Being very concerned about victimization is highest in the Atlantic (57.7%), the Prairies (52.9%), and the Pacific (51.5%) regions, as compared to the North (39.1%), Quebec (33.3%) and Ontario (19.2%) regions. Variance by community size was not statistically significant.

Who's at Risk of Criminal Victimization: Almost thirty-five percent (34.3%) of respondents indicated as their first response that seniors are at risk, followed by youth identified first by 18.0% of respondents and women identified first by 12.8% of respondents. Most respondents (87.6%) identified at least two groups at risk, with seniors, women, children and youth, the business community and Aboriginal peoples being the most commonly identified. There were no statistically significant variations in the identification of at risk groups for seniors, youth or women by region or community size.

Key Crime Issues: The most common crime issue identified across the country was property crime - mentioned first by 47.7% of the respondents and by 81.4% of respondents overall. This was followed by crimes of violence, including family violence (the first issue identified by 13.4% of respondents; other violent crime (the first issue mentioned by 5.8% (10) of the respondents). Overall, 30.8% (53) of the respondents identified family violence and 30.8% (53) identified other violent crimes as their first, second, or third crime issue. Seventy-six (44.2%) respondents identified substance abuse as an issue, though only 11.6% (20) of the respondents

mentioned this issue first. Finally, youth crime was identified as a crime issue by 26.1% (45) of the respondents overall while it was mentioned first by 11.6% of the respondents. Statistically significant relationships between region and these key crime categories are as follows:

- Respondents from the Pacific region (87.9%) were significantly more likely to identify property crime as an issue than any other region. Quebec (50.0%) and the North (48.0%) were less likely to identify property crime as an issue than other regions.
- Concern about substance abuse was highest in the North (56.0%), the Atlantic (53.8%), and Quebec (50.0%) and lowest in Ontario (15.4%).
- Respondents in the North (56.0%) were significantly more likely to identify family violence as a crime issue than those from any of the other regions. Ontario respondents were significantly less likely (3.8%) to identify family violence as a community crime issue than respondents in any of the other regions.
- Respondents from the North (52.0%) were significantly more likely to report youth crime as a crime issue than respondents from any of the other regions. Quebec (32.1%) respondents were more likely than respondents from the Pacific (18.2%), the Prairies (17.6%) and the Atlantic (11.5%) to report youth crime as a concern. Ontario (26.9%) respondents reported more concern with youth crime than respondents from the Atlantic (11.5%) and less concern with youth crime than the North.

Findings: Who's Involved in Crime Prevention?

A wide variety of sectors, groups and organizations are involved in crime prevention activity across the country however the level and nature of their activity varied considerably.

- The **police**, identified as delivering the most programs in 24 of the 29 communities in the study sample, were the most prominent group involved.
- **Schools**, identified as delivering an average of about three school-based programs per community, were also seen as very active.
- **Community-based organizations** are involved in delivering the majority of the activities provided. However, a single agency rarely delivered more than two or three programs.

- The **federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments** were also main players with an average of two government programs or activities per community.
- The **private sector** was reported as being directly involved in only three communities. They often provide indirect support to community crime prevention, a role especially evident in situational crime prevention efforts.
- **Health care agencies** were also identified as playing a main role by providing a range of direct service and prevention programs, such as parenting and health-oriented interventions with children and families at risk, addictions services, and public health outreach to street populations.

Findings: The Nature of Crime Prevention Partnerships

All respondents indicated that much work occurs through partnerships in their communities. Three categories of partnership emerged:

- **co-ordination**, involving consultation, liaison and information-sharing among organizations, but autonomy in program planning and delivery decisions.
- **co-operation**, (the most common form of partnering identified) which in addition to consultation, liaison and information-sharing, involves sharing of resources. Co-operative partnerships may include client referral protocols, however the parties involve retain relative autonomy in program planing and delivery decisions.
- **collaboration**, (the least common form of partnering identified) which not only involves working together, but shared responsibility for decision-making, resources, delivery and accountability.

The form of partnership varied by community size. Smaller communities tended to have less formal, more co-operative partnerships than medium and larger communities. Larger communities tended to have more co-ordinated partnerships.

Findings: Nature and Extent of Crime Prevention Practice

Respondents reported extensive crime prevention activity in all communities:

- in **large communities**: an average of 24.6 groups working on crime prevention activities and 52.0 activities were identified.
- in **medium communities**: an average of 14.9 organizations working on crime prevention and 32.0 activities were identified.
- in **small communities**: an average of 8.7 organizations and 22.7 activities were identified.

While most communities had traditional situational programs and activities, the majority of the activities identified were Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD) in orientation. In most communities, the police were the main group participating in both situational crime prevention and CPSD.

Findings: Crime Prevention Program Beneficiaries

In all 29 communities, youth and children were identified as the major program beneficiaries. Programs directed at families (family violence, high risk families, and families with young children) were identified in 13 of the 29 communities. Seniors were identified as program beneficiaries in 9 communities and women in 8 communities. Aboriginal peoples and victims of crime were identified as beneficiaries in 5 communities each. Programs aimed at the general public were identified in 8 communities.

Findings: Crime Prevention Gaps

We recorded the respondent's first three responses to our question regarding crime prevention gaps. On a positive note, 39.5% of respondents reported that there are no gaps in crime prevention activity in their communities. Although this seems to indicate that most crime concerns are being addressed, this finding should be interpreted with caution. 21.5% of respondents indicated that while crime prevention issues are being covered, the scope and depth of activity is not necessarily matched to the scope and depth of the issue. In reality, coverage is thin.

The reporting of gaps varied by region but not by community size. Respondents from the North (86.4%) were significantly more likely to report gaps in crime prevention than respondents from

the other five regions. Two thirds (66.7%) of respondents from the Prairie region reported crime prevention gaps. This was significantly different from Ontario (41.7%) and the Atlantic (36.0%) regions. It was not statistically different from the Pacific region (59.4%) and Quebec (59.3%).

Findings: Level of Awareness of the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention

We asked respondents four questions about the National Strategy and our findings are as follows:

Received information about the Strategy prior to being contacted for the study interview? A majority of respondents (58.1%) had not received any information on the Strategy prior to being contacted. Receipt of information did not vary by sector or community size. However, it did vary by region of the country, with 64% of respondents from the North and 58.8% of respondents from the Prairies having received information, as compared to 38.5% in Atlantic, 35.7% in Quebec, 27.3% in Pacific and 26.9% in Ontario having received information.

Aware of the Strategy? About one third of respondents (34.9%) indicated they were not at all aware of the Strategy. Awareness was highest in the North where 72.0% of the respondents were very or somewhat aware of the Strategy. More than sixty-five percent of respondents (67.7%) from the Prairies were very or somewhat aware of the Strategy. Respondents from both the North and the Prairies were significantly more aware of the Strategy than respondents from the Atlantic (57.7%), the Pacific (29.4%), Quebec (25.0%) and Ontario (19.2%).

Aware of Strategy's Goals? The majority of respondents (71.5%) were not aware of the Strategy's goals prior to the study. Respondents from the North had the highest levels of awareness (48.0%), followed by respondents from the Atlantic region (42.3%). In the Prairies 35.3% of respondents indicated they were aware of the Strategy's goals. This was significantly higher than Quebec (21.4%), Ontario (15.4%), and the Pacific region (12.1%).

Support for the Strategy's Goals, Priorities and Objectives? Support for the Strategy was overwhelming with 99.4% saying they were either very or somewhat supportive of the Strategy's goals, priorities and objectives.

Conclusions

Crime Prevention Practice in Canada 2000 concentrates on painting a national picture of the nature and extent of crime prevention in Canadian communities. The primary conclusions -and issues suggested for further exploration - are noted below.

Perceptions regarding groups at risk of criminal victimization in the communities studied are generally inclusive of the priorities of the Strategy, with the exception of seniors. This finding is worthy of further exploration at the community level, particularly in light of the seemingly contradictory finding that crimes against seniors were neither identified as a key crime issue nor as a crime prevention gap.

Property crime, crimes of violence, notably family violence and other categories of violent crime, substance abuse and youth crime represent the constellation of issues most commonly identified as local concerns. There are regional differences in this pattern, which may also be worthy of further exploration.

We are left with the positive impression that the concept of crime prevention through social development (CPSD) is being articulated and practiced at the community level, particularly in relation to activities involving children and youth.

A wide variety of groups and organizations participate in crime prevention, with the police playing a central role in both delivering or participating in traditional and social development oriented crime prevention activities in Canadian communities. Private sector involvement in crime prevention is less apparent in most communities, and more 'back-stage' in nature where it exists.

Three categories of partnership - co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration - exist, with a greater sense of informality in smaller communities than larger communities. This study only touches the surface of crime prevention partnership activity - an area that would also be worthy of further exploration.

It should be noted that 39.5% of key informants did not identify any crime prevention gaps in their communities. The remaining identified a range of gaps related to the key issues of concern, and most importantly, the issue of limited resources to effectively address local concerns. This finding is also worthy of further exploration, to determine how communities can best access, develop and optimize resources.

The relatively low levels of awareness of the National Strategy suggest a need for further communication with community players on the National Strategy. On a very positive note, there is overwhelming support for the goals, priorities and objectives of the National Strategy.