

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S CRIME REDUCTION INITIATIVES



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The Crime Reduction Research Program

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The statements, findings, and recommendations contained in this report have been reached independently by the authors of this report and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Province of British Columbia.

Executive Summary

In 2005, British Columbia launched an ambitious, police-led crime reduction initiative in response to rising crime and the proliferation of drug-related gang violence, at a time when Vancouver was labelled the property crime capital of Canada and Surrey the auto theft capital of the world (Cohen et al., 2014). The initiative rested on the premise that meaningful reductions in crime required the police to be intensely information- and intelligence-led, problem-focused, offender-focused, pre-emptive, performance-based, and committed to strategic partnerships, and that this work be pursued as a whole community, rather than a purely police undertaking. Early evaluations were encouraging, as crime reduction jurisdictions experienced larger declines in property and overall crime than the rest of the province, and the Prolific and Priority Offender Management Program was associated with a 40% reduction in recidivism among the offenders it managed (Haarhoff, 2011; Rezanoff et al., 2012). However, its effect on violent crime was less clear.

This study set out to understand the legacy and continuation of that initiative in terms of whether its initially successful jurisdictions have sustained their gains, how the more successful police agencies have maintained their commitment to the foundational principles of crime reduction, and what newer evidence-based practices warrant consideration for adoption in British Columbia. The project combined three strands of evidence: a review of the international literature on police-led crime reduction; a quantitative analysis of Statistics Canada incident-based crime rates across the period from 2005 to 2024; and 45 qualitative interviews with police leaders, police officers, and crime analysts across ten police agencies in British Columbia and three from outside the province.

Based on Statistics Canada data, over the full 20-year period, the crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia experienced a 46% decline in their overall crime rate, compared with a 41% decline for British Columbia overall and a 22% decline for Canada overall. This pattern was most pronounced in the second decade. Between 2015 and 2024, crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia saw their overall crime rate fall by 17% and their property crime rate fall by 30%, while the rest of British Columbia recorded reductions of 5% and 22%, respectively, and Canada overall recorded a 10% increase in its overall crime rate and no change in property crime. Across every group and every period, property crime showed the largest decline; over the 20 years, crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia recorded a 57% drop in property crime, compared with 51% for the province overall and 35% for Canada.

Violent crime followed a different and more cautious pattern. All groups recorded substantial declines in violent crime in the first decade, followed by an increase in the second. However, the crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia fared comparatively well: their 9% increase in violent crime between 2015 and 2024 was less than half of the increase experienced by the province and the country overall. Therefore, the results are most fairly read as evidence consistent with a sustained benefit in crime reduction jurisdictions, rather than as proof that the initiative alone produced these outcomes.

The interviews revealed that crime reduction operates far more as a function than as a fixed organisational form. Agencies attached the label of crime reduction to markedly different structures, from dedicated units to work distributed across several specialized teams. Continuity tended to reside in experienced individuals rather than in durable institutional structures, leaving

hard-won expertise vulnerable to single departures. Across this diversity, an offender-centric model was the closest thing to a shared approach, and the analytic and intelligence functions were repeatedly described as the elements that tied otherwise disparate roles together.

When asked what worked well, participants were candid that enforcement remained central but rarely produced lasting reductions on its own, as arrests delivered durable benefits only when followed by housing, substance use treatment, supervision, and other community-based support, and operations without anything downstream were described as temporary suppression rather than reduction. Most tellingly, when asked what worked, the participants named conditions more often than tactics. Participants referred to having the right people, supportive leadership, freedom from micromanagement, flexibility, and advantages of scale. They predominantly described the challenges as issues related to organisational structure, capacity, and positioning, rather than focusing on methodological concerns. Resourcing was the most frequently named constraint, compounded by gaps in experience and knowledge transfer, contested and expanding mandates, unstable and time-limited funding, technological limitations, and the persistent difficulty in demonstrating that crime reduction efforts work. These challenges are deeply interdependent, such that additional capacity alone is unlikely to resolve them.

Drawing together the international evidence base and the experiences described by participants, this report offers a set of thematically organised recommendations for police leaders and for those who set the funding, mandates, and strategic direction of crime reduction work. Both the literature and the interviews caution against relying on any single tactic because crime reduction has its greatest impact when designed as a coordinated, whole-agency commitment that bridges operational and investigative functions and integrates analysts with one another and with police officers rather than as a set of siloed initiatives. Enforcement and prevention should be integrated by design rather than housed in separate units, with the hand-off to corrections, health, housing, and social services treated as a defined and owned part of the model. The analytic and intelligence functions should be formally recognized as core services and resourced accordingly. Proactive work should be protected structurally so that it is not continually displaced by reactive demand, funding should be placed on a stable, multiyear footing, and performance should be measured in ways that fit the model rather than defaulting to enforcement counts.

The results collectively outline a feasible way ahead for police agencies and the governments that finance and oversee them. British Columbia's crime reduction initiative produced real and, in its leading jurisdictions, durable gains, but its sustainability depends less on any single model than on deliberately promoting and safeguarding the conditions that practitioners credit for success. Police leaders should remain realistic about the limits of policing, recognizing that the courts, health and social systems, and the root causes of crime lie largely outside their control, while continuing to coordinate closely with those systems. On this foundation, the province's police agencies and their partners can build on the early success of the initiative and sustain reductions in property crime, violent crime, and social disorder over the long term.

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Introduction

In 2005, British Columbia launched an ambitious police-led initiative to reduce crime in the province. While this effort was initiated by the British Columbia Ministry of the Solicitor General and the “E” Division RCMP, it quickly received buy-in from a significant number of RCMP detachments and municipal police departments throughout British Columbia. The initiative was in response to increasing crime rates and the proliferation of drug-related gang violence in many jurisdictions throughout the province. In some instances, the crime rates in British Columbia were particularly embarrassing, given the general and long-running decline in crime elsewhere in Canada and worldwide (Tonry, 2014). For example, the City of Vancouver was labelled the property crime capital of Canada, whereas the City of Surrey was described as the auto theft capital of the world (Cohen et al., 2014). Simultaneously, there was a growing recognition that a disproportionate amount of crime was being perpetrated by repeat offenders (Cohen et al., 2014; Croisdale & Plecas, 2016). Importantly, the crime reduction initiative was based on the appreciation that any significant reduction in crime required the police to be intensely information- and intelligence-led, problem-focused, offender-focused, pre-emptive, performance-based, and committed to developing strategic partnerships with a wide range of community services and resources and public safety agencies (Cohen et al., 2014). Equally important, while the initiative was predominantly police-led, it was designed as a whole-community approach, with community and government partners leading various components (Cohen et al., 2014). One of the most sophisticated of these crime reduction components was the Prolific and Priority Offender Management Program, which was set up in six communities and aimed to ensure that the most problematic prolific offenders received the support and supervision they needed to desist from crime (Cohen et al., 2014; Rezansoff et al., 2012).

British Columbia’s crime reduction initiative, which can also be seen as a collection of interrelated principles and evidence-based crime reduction strategies, did not happen immediately. Rather, while most of the strategies were implemented fully and with great intensity in some jurisdictions over the 2004-2005 period, the rollout in other jurisdictions took much longer. Moreover, in other jurisdictions, the rollout hardly happened at all for various reasons (Haarhoff, 2011). From an evaluation standpoint, the various ways in which crime reduction was and was not implemented provided a good opportunity to examine the direct and overall effects of the crime reduction initiative on crime rates. Specifically, it provided an opportunity to examine differences in crime decline between jurisdictions that had fully adopted the crime reduction initiative and those that had not. The general expectation was that if the crime reduction initiative was truly effective and successful, crime reduction jurisdictions should experience crime declines to a greater degree than those jurisdictions that had not fully implemented crime reduction initiatives.

In one such study by Haarhoff (2011), crime declines in 14 policing jurisdictions in British Columbia that implemented crime reduction were compared with the average decline in crime experienced elsewhere in the province. The findings showed a positive effect on crime rates of the crime reduction initiative over its first five years. Specifically, the results showed that crime reduction jurisdictions had an overall crime rate reduction of 25% compared to 13% in the rest of the province, with a property crime rate drop of 32% compared to 18% for the rest of the province (Haarhoff, 2011). Moreover, while British Columbia had an increase in crime over the 2000-2005

period, it still experienced a greater drop in crime than any other province in Canada over the 2000-2009 period once the crime reduction initiative was implemented (Haarhoff, 2011).

In addition to the findings of Haarhoff (2011), the findings of Rezansoff et al. (2012) were noteworthy. Specifically, Rezansoff and her colleagues conducted a one-year longitudinal analysis of 197 prolific and priority offenders who had been assigned to the Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO) program, which had been introduced as a major component of a crime reduction initiative. They found that the program produced a 40% reduction in recidivism (Rezansoff et al., 2012). They also found program benefits with respect to inter-agency collaboration, management of prolific offenders, and connecting offenders to health and social services (Rezansoff et al., 2012).

However, while the crime reduction initiative in British Columbia had a very positive effect on property crime and was sufficient to influence crime rates overall, it is not clear whether it had any substantial impact on violent crime rates and other criminal offences. In this regard, as Haarhoff (2011) pointed out, violent crime and other criminal offences in British Columbia were relatively stable from 2005 to 2009. However, there are examples where the application of the principles underlying the crime reduction initiative had a substantial effect on gang activity. For example, the Abbotsford Police Department's efforts to tackle gang violence in response to the City of Abbotsford being named the murder capital of Canada in 2009 is one such example (Squires & Plecas, 2015).

Objectives of the Project

This research project aimed to understand the legacy and continuation of British Columbia's crime reduction initiative. This will be accomplished by using quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand the extent to which British Columbia's initially successful crime reduction jurisdictions have been able to sustain their success in reducing crime to a greater extent than other policing jurisdictions in the province and elsewhere in Canada. Moreover, by examining the more successful police agencies in British Columbia, this project identified how these police agencies maintained their commitment to the principles of crime reduction. This objective strives to understand the extent to which these jurisdictions have developed strategies that build upon the seven essential principles of crime reduction that served as the foundation of British Columbia's crime reduction initiative. Finally, this study focused on identifying new evidence-based practices and principles that have been implemented in jurisdictions worldwide that should be considered for adoption by police and their community partners in British Columbia to facilitate substantial reductions in property crime, violent crime, and social disorder.

This report is designed to call attention to the sustainability of the principles that underpinned the initial success of the crime reduction initiative in British Columbia and to recently adopted evidence-based strategies that could be helpful in furthering the success of the initial crime reduction initiative with respect to property crime, violent crime, and incidents of social disorder in British Columbia.

Project Methodology

The objectives of this project will be achieved using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project includes a literature review detailing empirically validated, evidence-based crime reduction strategies that have been adopted and found to be effective by policing jurisdictions in British Columbia, in Canada, and in Western Countries. The literature review focused on promising and best practices in crime reduction for violent and property crimes, as well as social disorder issues. Key aspects of this review were programs or initiatives that are both police- and community-led, demonstrate lasting impact, and could be adopted by jurisdictions and police organizations in British Columbia.

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSES

The quantitative aspect of this project drew on incident-based police statistics provided online by Statistics Canada. The analyses involved examining changes in property, violent, and overall crime rates between 2005 and 2014, 2015 and 2024, and the combined 20-year period between 2005 and 2024. More specifically, the analyses focused on identifying the average change over each of those periods with respect to each of the four groups of policing jurisdictions. These groups were ten crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia, all other jurisdictions in British Columbia overall, three jurisdictions in other provinces, and jurisdictions in Canada overall. The analysis focused on comparing differences in property, violent, and overall crime rate changes across the four groups. The primary aim was to examine the degree to which crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia experienced greater declines in their crime rates over the time periods considered compared to other British Columbia jurisdictions overall and Canadian jurisdictions overall.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

The qualitative aspect of this project was designed to involve conducting interviews with police leaders, police officers, and crime analysts in the ten crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia identified by Haarhoff (2011) as having experienced the greatest crime decline. However, some jurisdictions decided not to participate in this project and were replaced by others that were just outside the top 10 in British Columbia. In total, 10 police agencies within British Columbia and three from provinces outside British Columbia participated in this project, resulting in 45 interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to understand what their initial crime reduction model and strategies looked like; what strategies, programs, and services they currently use to support their crime reduction model; how they have maintained their initial momentum for their crime reduction model; the human, financial, technological, and other resources allotted to crime reduction; what they have found works well; and what their challenges are in reducing and preventing crime.

All interviews were conducted by the principal investigators with the assistance of a research assistant. All interviews were conducted via telephone or online video conferencing. The ethics of the research project, including the interview schedule and project methodology, were reviewed and approved by the University of the Fraser Valley's Human Research Ethics Board prior to data collection. Participation in the interview was voluntary, and those willing to participate were provided with an information sheet prior to the interview that included a detailed overview of the purpose of the interview. Immediately before the interview began, the information provided in the information sheet was reviewed, and the participants were asked to provide verbal consent to being interviewed. All participants were provided with a consent form and asked to sign and return it to the principal investigators via email. Interviews were not video- or audio-recorded, and all information provided by the participants was anonymized prior to analysis.

During the interviews, the research assistant typed what was being said into an anonymous Microsoft Word document. Upon completion of all interviews, all the separate Word documents were amalgamated into one anonymous Microsoft Word document with no attributions related to who said what. This amalgamated document was used to qualitatively analyze the interviews for common themes. The analyses focused on themes emerging from the specific content provided by respondents during their interviews, in addition to latent content that illustrated any underlying themes.

Literature Review

Since the establishment of modern policing in the United Kingdom in the early 19th century, crime prevention and reduction have been central to police mandates across the Western world (Lentz & Chaires, 2007). From Sir Robert Peel's early emphasis on preventing crime before it occurred to contemporary evidence-based policing frameworks, police agencies have consistently framed crime reduction as a core organizational objective (Lentz & Chaires, 2007; Rogers et al., 2022; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Over time, this objective has been operationalized through a wide range of police-led initiatives, including targeted patrols, offender-focused interventions, problem-oriented strategies, and community-based partnerships, often in collaboration with non-police stakeholders.

Despite sustained declines in recorded crime across many Western jurisdictions since the late 20th century, crime reduction remains a challenge. Emerging crime types, periodic increases in violent crime, persistent repeat offending, and growing complexity related to mental health, substance use, and social inequality continue to strain the police capacity. For example, cybercrime has emerged as a primary challenge for Western police agencies, with research consistently finding that police generally lack sufficient preparation and resources to respond effectively to online offences. Research has consistently found that the police lack sufficient preparation and resources to effectively respond to cybercrime incidents, which influences police officers' confidence, interest, and capacity to combat online offences (Kassem & Erken, 2025; Lee et al., 2025). Moreover, repeat offending remains a persistent and costly feature of Western criminal justice systems. A systematic review of recidivism data across multiple countries found that reported rates were generally high, with at least one in five individuals reoffending within two years of their release (Yukhnenko et al., 2023). In some countries, recidivism rates exceed 40% within the first year, representing a

significant societal burden in terms of public safety, healthcare, and associated costs (Yukhnenko et al., 2023). With respect to social issues, mental health-related calls for service represent a large and growing portion of the police workload across Western jurisdictions (Cohen et al., 2024). Some research estimates that at least 20% of police calls for service involve a mental health or substance use crisis, and this demand has been increasing for many police agencies (Katz, 2024).

While broader social and economic factors account for a substantial portion of long-term crime trends, a growing body of research demonstrates that certain police-led strategies can produce measurable reductions in specific crime types and at specific locations. In response to these challenges, policing scholars and practitioners have increasingly emphasized that effective crime reduction requires a deliberate, principle-based approach. This emphasis is backed by a substantial body of policing research documenting that crime reduction is most effective when police agencies adopt a coherent, principle-driven framework rather than rely on reactive or fragmented enforcement practices (Lum et al., 2011; Tilley & Newburn, 2008; Weisburd, 2019; Weisburd & Eck, 2004; Cohen et al., 2014).

Drawing on operational experience in British Columbia and elsewhere, several interrelated principles have been identified as foundational to successful police-led crime reduction. These principles are information-, intelligence-, offender-, problem-, and partnership-oriented; pre-emptive, performance-based, and crime prevention-led. The following sections examine the academic and policy literature on each of these principles, their implementation in practice, and their relevance to contemporary crime reduction efforts. These principles reflect broader developments in intelligence-led, problem-oriented, situational crime prevention, and evidence-based policing.

INFORMATION-LED AND INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING

Information- and intelligence-led policing are widely recognized as foundational components of contemporary crime reduction strategies. Historically, in many jurisdictions, policing was dominated by reactive models that relied heavily on responding to calls for service and conducting investigations after offences had occurred. Early critiques of this approach highlighted its inefficiencies, noting that reactive policing often failed to address underlying crime patterns, allowed repeated victimization, and resulted in the suboptimal allocation of limited police resources (Cope, 2004; Maguire & John, 2006). More recent research continues to demonstrate that traditional rapid response models have limited preventive effects, particularly when police resources are distributed broadly rather than strategically (Weisburd, 2021).

Information-led policing refers to the use of data, such as crime reports, calls for service, and community-generated information, to guide police activities. Intelligence-led policing, while closely related, represents a more structured and formalized model in which crime intelligence is systematically collected, analyzed, and used to guide decision-making at both the strategic and operational levels (Cope, 2004; Maguire & John, 2006). As Burcher and Whelan (2019) explained, information-led policing seeks to move policing away from a reactive or prosecution-directed mode toward a proactive and preventive approach in which intelligence drives operations rather than operations dictating intelligence priorities.

The institutionalization of intelligence-led policing was articulated through the development of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) in the United Kingdom (Maguire & John, 2006). The NIM established standardized processes for intelligence collection, analysis, tasking, and coordination, and embedded analytical products into routine decision-making structures. Under this model, police agencies are expected to prioritize threats, allocate resources, and design interventions based on systematic analyses rather than anecdotal experiences or organizational habits (Maguire & John, 2006). This reflects a broader shift toward what has been described as a managerial and business-oriented philosophy of policing, in which objective data and performance considerations guide decision-making (Maguire & John, 2006; Ratcliffe, 2008; McLaughlin & Murji, 2001).

At its core, intelligence-led policing requires that information derived from crime data, intelligence reports, and community input drive police decision-making, rather than intuition or routine practice (Cohen et al., 2014; Burcher & Whelan, 2019). Crime analysis plays a crucial role in this process. Through techniques such as crime mapping, hot spot analysis, and trend identification, analysts can identify patterns, relationships, and concentrations of offending, which in turn enable more efficient allocation of police resources and more targeted interventions (Cope, 2004). As noted, crime analysis functions as a mechanism for translating raw data into actionable intelligence that can guide both tactical responses (e.g., targeted patrols) and strategic planning (e.g., long-term crime reduction initiatives).

Empirical research strongly supports the effectiveness of these approaches. Studies have demonstrated that analytical tools such as geographic information systems (GIS), predictive mapping, and intelligence products can significantly improve police productivity and enhance the precision of enforcement and prevention strategies (Bowers et al., 2004; Chainey et al., 2008; Garicano & Heaton, 2010). However, more recent studies have highlighted important limitations. The growing use of algorithmic and predictive policing tools has raised concerns about transparency, accountability, and the potential to reinforce existing social and racial biases (Degeling & Berendt, 2018). Recent work on “precision policing” highlights how algorithmic systems are reshaping intelligence-led approaches and emphasizes the need for safeguards to prevent bias and maintain legitimacy (Egbert & Esposito, 2024).

Intelligence-led policing is not typically implemented in isolation from other policing strategies. Rather, it often operates as a hybrid model that integrates elements of community and problem-oriented policing (Ratcliffe, 2008). As demonstrated, community policing contributes valuable locally derived information and emphasizes collaboration with the residents. In contrast, intelligence-led policing provides an analytical framework through which this information can be systematically interpreted and acted upon. This integration allows police agencies to combine data-driven decision-making with community engagement, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and legitimacy. This convergence is supported by research demonstrating a significant overlap between intelligence-led and community policing in both philosophy and practice (Carter & Fox, 2019). Additionally, community policing theory emphasizes the importance of the local context, citizen engagement, and problem-solving, all of which strengthen intelligence processes and outcomes (Fielding, 2005).

OFFENDER-FOCUSED AND PROBLEM-FOCUSED STRATEGIES

Another major theme in the crime reduction literature is the importance of focusing police efforts on both prolific offenders and recurring crime problems. These approaches reflect a shift away from treating crime as a series of isolated incidents and toward understanding it as a patterned and concentrated phenomenon. Problem-oriented policing, first articulated by Goldstein (1979), provides a conceptual foundation for problem-focused strategies. Problem-oriented policing encourages the police to move beyond incident-based responses and identify, analyze, and address the underlying conditions that give rise to crime and disorder (Goldstein, 1979; Braga et al., 2015; Hinkle et al., 2020). Evidence indicates that such approaches can reduce crime and disorder by approximately one-third, with little evidence of displacement and some evidence of the diffusion of benefits (Hinkle et al., 2020). As Cope (2004) noted, crime analysis is central to this process, enabling the police to identify recurring problems, understand their causes, and develop tailored interventions to address them. Similarly, the community policing literature emphasizes that effective policing must address broader issues, such as fear of crime, social disorder, and locally defined priorities rather than focusing solely on reported offences (Bullock, 2013; Fielding, 2005). Systematic reviews provide strong empirical support for problem-oriented approaches. Studies have consistently found that problem-oriented policing is associated with statistically significant reductions in crime and disorder, particularly when implemented with fidelity (Weisburd et al., 2010; Hinkle et al., 2020; Weisburd et al., 2024).

Similarly, offender-focused strategies prioritize individuals or groups responsible for a disproportionate share of criminal activities. A substantial body of research demonstrates that crime is highly concentrated among a small number of prolific offenders, making targeted interventions particularly efficient (Cope, 2004; Cohen et al., 2024). Meta-analyses have demonstrated that targeted interventions for high-risk individuals or groups can produce meaningful reductions in crime, especially violent crime (Braga et al., 2019). These approaches align closely with intelligence-led policing by prioritizing individuals who account for a disproportionate share of harm (Khalfa & Hardyns, 2024). Meta-analyses indicate that focused deterrence strategies significantly reduce violent crime and gang-related offences (Braga et al., 2019).

PARTNERSHIPS

The development of meaningful partnerships is another recurring theme in the crime reduction literature. Research on community policing, reassurance policing, and interagency collaboration suggests that police agencies cannot effectively reduce crime independently, particularly when crime drivers are rooted in social, economic, or health-related factors (Innes, 2005; Tilley & Newburn, 2008). Many factors that contribute to crime, such as poverty, substance use, mental health issues, and social disorganization, fall outside the traditional mandate of policing and require coordinated responses across multiple sectors (Innes, 2005; Tilley & Newburn, 2008).

For many crime reduction strategies, success depends on maintaining effective partnerships because the police cannot independently address the complex underlying causes of most calls for service. As Peters and Cohen (2017) demonstrated, the success of partnerships derives from the

recognition that crime problems are generally caused by social issues that the police are not in the best position to address and therefore require external partnerships. Many of the people that the police interact with because of a call for service are connected to other public agencies that have the necessary skills, resources, and professionals to address the client's needs much more efficiently than the police. Given this, effective partnerships reduce the burden on the police and contribute to clients getting the help they need, which reduces crime. In effect, many of the social and psychological drivers of criminal behaviour and their solutions are outside the police's own resources and authority.

Partnership-based approaches enable information sharing, coordinated responses, and the integration of prevention-oriented services with enforcement. As Maguire and John (2006) highlighted, frameworks, such as the National Intelligence Model, explicitly incorporate the perspectives of partner agencies and local communities into decision-making processes. Similarly, community policing emphasizes collaboration with residents and stakeholders to identify and address locally defined problems (Bullock, 2013). In more complex areas, such as counterterrorism, partnerships are essential for facilitating intelligence sharing and coordinating responses across agencies (McGarrell et al., 2007).

Coliandris and Rogers (2008) found that the quality of police partnerships is significantly influenced by police culture and leadership. When police leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to partnership work, police officers are more likely to invest in it. Furthermore, for greater success in police crime reduction efforts, police agencies should establish diverse partnerships (Parent & Snyder, 1999). Effective partnerships can be broad, with a general mandate to improve police effectiveness and community well-being, or they can be focused on specific issues, such as intimate partner violence, gang activity, youth at risk, or substance use. Partnerships can also be highly specific, targeting particular types of offenders and crimes. These partnerships manifest in various forms, including joint patrols, shared case management and dedicated liaison officers. Building on the principles of information- and intelligence-led policing, a significant obstacle to effective crime reduction has historically been the reluctance of organizations to share information (Parent & Snyder, 1999). Short-term information-sharing agreements seem particularly beneficial for effective police collaboration.

PRE-EMPTIVE APPROACHES

Closely related to partnerships is the principle of being pre-emptive. Pre-emptive policing seeks to prevent crime before it occurs rather than responding after harm has already been done. Situational crime prevention provides a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for pre-emptive strategies. As outlined by Clarke (1983), situational prevention focuses on reducing opportunities for crime by modifying environmental conditions, increasing perceived risk, and reducing potential rewards. Evaluations of interventions, such as improved lighting, surveillance systems, and access control measures, consistently demonstrate measurable reductions in crime across a wide range of settings (Clarke, 1983; Clarke & Homel, 1997; Knutsson & Clarke, 2006; Braga et al., 2015; Tregle et al., 2025). Apel (2021b) outlined that maximizing resource use requires targeted and proactive approaches. This involves focusing on areas, issues, and individuals where

crime is concentrated. Lum et al. (2011) integrated proactivity into their Evidence-Based Policing Matrix, demonstrating its greater effectiveness in crime reduction compared to reactive methods. In their research, moderately proactive interventions or place-focused strategies contributed to crime reduction. Pre-emptive approaches are achieved by analyzing existing crime trends and the criminal population within a jurisdiction to identify effective strategies for crime reduction. This involves pinpointing specific crime or disorder issues, setting related goals, and developing strategies to achieve these goals. Once emerging trends are identified, the police can work more effectively as a team to strategize solutions, which may involve other police agencies or community partners to address the issue.

Current perspectives on pre-emptive and intelligence-led policing have expanded beyond a solely offender-centered approach to a more holistic one (Khalifa & Hardyns, 2024). This shift involves considering both who is most likely to offend and the problems that are most likely to cause harm. However, pre-emptive work extends far beyond police enforcement. For example, Mazerolle et al. (2020) explored a protocol for reviewing police programs aimed at fostering community connectedness to combat violent extremism. Moreover, evidence from New York City and Baltimore since 2023 suggests that well-implemented community violence intervention programs can reduce shootings by up to 23% (Avram et al., 2024; Centre for Gun Violence Solutions, 2023). A contemporary Canadian parallel is the British Columbia government's Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII). ReVOII employs an enhanced case management model that pairs probation officers, correctional supervisors, police agencies, and Crown prosecutors. It also incorporates culturally appropriate support for Indigenous individuals and access to mental health and addiction treatment services (Legal Aid BC, 2023; Government of British Columbia, 2025).

A complementary longitudinal perspective on pre-emption is offered by Griffiths and Norris (2020), whose analysis of the England and Wales crime drop disaggregates the post-1995 decline into two phases with distinct mechanisms. While the first phase (1995–2005) was driven principally by deterrence effects associated with the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the second phase (2005–2015) was attributed almost entirely to a reduction in the youth offending population, which contracted by more than 60% and accounted for roughly 45% of the total offence reduction during that period (Griffiths & Norris, 2020). The authors identified Youth Offending Teams, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as the central multi-agency mechanism, coordinating police, schools, health services, and the voluntary sector to address specific risk factors, such as inadequate parental supervision and substance misuse. Importantly, Griffiths and Norris (2020) documented an intergenerational “feed-forward” effect, whereby reductions in youth offending predicted subsequent reductions in adult offending in later years. This finding is consistent with life-course criminology and the broader literature on early desistance (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 1993). For pre-emptive crime reduction, the multi-agency case management logic invoked in spatially or offender-targeted initiatives, such as ReVOII, has a developmental analogue in youth diversion, where coordinated welfare-oriented intervention appears to generate compounding crime reduction returns over time. Moreover, sustaining these reductions requires continued investment in diversion and early intervention, even under fiscal pressure, since the gains accrue across the life course rather than within a single reporting period.

PERFORMANCE-BASED APPROACHES

Performance-based policing emphasizes accountability, evaluations, and continuous improvements. The rise of evidence-based policing has reinforced the need for police agencies to assess the effectiveness of their interventions using rigorous evaluation methods rather than relying on tradition or intuition (Sherman, 2013; Lum & Koper, 2017). Randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews of hot spot policing, patrol strategies, and disorder policing consistently show that focused, well-measured interventions outperform broad, unfocused enforcement (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995; Braga & Bond, 2008; Braga et al., 2015; Weisburd & Eck, 2004; Braga et al., 2015).

One of the most influential studies in this area is the Minneapolis Hot Spots Experiment, conducted by Sherman and Weisburd (1995). This randomized controlled trial tested whether concentrating police patrols in small geographic areas with high crime concentrations or “hot spots” could reduce crime more effectively than traditional patrol strategies could. The researchers identified a set of crime hot spots in Minneapolis and randomly assigned some locations to receive substantially increased police patrol time, while others continued to receive routine policing. The results demonstrated that hot spot locations receiving increased patrol experienced significant reductions in both disorder and crime compared with control locations. The study found little evidence that crime was simply displaced to nearby areas; instead, surrounding locations sometimes experienced modest reductions in crime. This experiment was particularly influential because it provided one of the first rigorous tests demonstrating that a targeted police presence in micro-locations can produce measurable reductions in crime (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995).

Subsequent research has replicated and expanded these findings. One prominent example is the Philadelphia foot patrol experiment conducted by Ratcliffe et al. (2011). In this randomized experiment, newly graduated police officers were assigned to conduct intensive foot patrols in designated violent crime hot spots during summer months. The researchers compared crime trends in these treatment areas with similar control locations that did not receive increased patrols. The results showed a statistically significant reduction in violent crime in foot patrol areas, particularly in offences such as robbery and assault. Although the study found mixed results regarding perceptions of police legitimacy and community engagement, it demonstrated that focused patrol strategies can be an effective method for targeting violence in high-risk areas (Ratcliffe et al., 2011).

Beyond individual experiments, multiple jurisdictions have found consistent evidence that focusing police resources on small, high-crime locations leads to meaningful reductions in crime and disorder. These findings were reinforced by later reviews that examined additional interventions, including problem-oriented policing and focused deterrence strategies (Braga et al., 2014; Braga et al., 2019). More recent analyses continue to confirm that these approaches produce measurable reductions in crime when implemented with sufficient analytical capacity and organizational support (Turchan & Braga, 2024). Collectively, this body of research has helped establish targeted policing strategies as among the most empirically supported approaches available to police agencies seeking to reduce crime rates.

BEING CRIME PREVENTION-LED

The distinction between reactive and proactive policing has long shaped debates regarding the role of the police in crime reduction. Reactive policing, which focuses primarily on responding to calls for service and investigating crimes after they occur, has historically dominated police practice but has demonstrated limited effectiveness in producing sustained reductions in crime (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Earlier experimental research examining traditional policing practices has produced similar conclusions. The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment found that routine random patrols had little measurable effect on crime rates, fear of crime, or public satisfaction with police services (Kelling et al., 1974). These findings contribute to a broader recognition that traditional models emphasizing rapid response and incident-driven policing are insufficient for addressing the underlying causes and patterns of crime. As noted in research on police patrol practices, the rapid response model has remained dominant despite limited evidence of its preventative impact (Weisburd, 2021).

In response to these limitations, policing scholarship has increasingly shifted toward prevention-oriented approaches. Contemporary research widely recognizes that police can and do play a meaningful role in preventing crime when their strategies are proactive, targeted, and evidence-informed. As highlighted in recent theoretical reflections on modern policing, the field has moved from skepticism about the preventive capacity of the police to an acceptance that strategic, targeted interventions focused on high-risk places, people, and problems can produce measurable crime reductions (Apel, 2021a). This shift reflects a broader paradigm change in policing, where prevention is no longer viewed as secondary to enforcement but as a central organizational objective of policing.

Situational crime prevention provides a theoretical foundation for prevention-oriented policing. Rather than focusing solely on offender motivations, this approach emphasizes the role of opportunity structures and environmental conditions in shaping criminal behaviour. Clarke (1980; 1983) argued that crime can be prevented by increasing the effort required to commit offences, increasing the risks of detection, reducing the rewards of crime, and removing situational prompts to offend. Empirical research on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) further supports this perspective, demonstrating that modifications to physical environments, such as improved surveillance, access control, and territorial reinforcement, can reduce opportunities for crime, particularly in high-risk locations (Lee, 2010; Tregle et al., 2025). These findings underscore the value of embedding prevention principles in routine police practice rather than treating prevention as a secondary or peripheral function.

Importantly, as mentioned above, prevention is not limited to situational or place-based interventions but also includes broader social and developmental strategies. Policy frameworks increasingly emphasize that effective crime prevention requires addressing underlying social risk factors, such as poverty, substance use, and lack of access to services. As highlighted in community safety and well-being frameworks, crime prevention is a shared responsibility that extends beyond policing and requires coordinated multisectoral responses focused on early intervention and risk reduction. Evaluations of police-led social prevention initiatives further suggest that targeted interventions with at-risk populations can reduce offending and generate wider community benefits, although implementation challenges remain (Hobson et al., 2021).

Taken together, this body of literature strongly supports the importance of crime prevention as a central objective of policing. Prevention is consistently identified as being more effective, efficient, and sustainable than reactive enforcement strategies, particularly when interventions are targeted, evidence-based, and integrated with broader social and environmental approaches. As noted by Homel (2009), prevention is widely regarded as a foundational requirement for achieving safe and stable communities, with benefits extending beyond crime reduction to broader social and economic outcomes.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF POLICE-LED CRIME REDUCTION

The origins of police-led crime reduction can be traced to the early development of modern policing in the United Kingdom. Sir Robert Peel's principles emphasized that the primary purpose of policing was crime prevention rather than the visible exercise of authority. Although subsequent scholarship has challenged the historical accuracy of Peel's principles as they are commonly cited in the literature, their symbolic influence on policing philosophies remains significant (Lentz & Chaires, 2007). Historical analyses of British policing suggest that early policing models were rooted in maintaining order and preventing crime through community presence, even if these principles were later formalized retrospectively (White, 2009).

Throughout the 20th century, crime reduction evolved differently across jurisdictions. In the United Kingdom, the development of problem-oriented and later intelligence-led policing reflected growing dissatisfaction with reactive enforcement models. Problem-oriented policing, first articulated by Goldstein (1979), marked a significant conceptual shift, encouraging the police to address the underlying causes of crime rather than responding to incidents in isolation. Although developed in the United States, this approach was rapidly adopted and further developed in the United Kingdom, where it became closely integrated with broader crime prevention strategies (Tilley & Newburn, 2008). The formalization of intelligence-led policing through national policy guidance in the early 2000s marked a significant shift toward data-driven prioritization and strategic crime reduction (ACPO/Centrex, 2005; Maguire & John, 2006). The National Intelligence Model outlined above institutionalizes crime analysis, threat assessment, and tasking processes as core components of police decision-making, embedding crime reduction within organizational structures and governance processes (Cope, 2004).

In addition to these developments, United Kingdom policing advanced crime reduction through approaches such as reassurance and neighbourhood policing that emphasized public confidence, visibility, and engagement as mechanisms to prevent crime. As Innes (2005) argued, these models reflect a broader political and organizational shift toward addressing public perceptions of safety alongside measurable crime outcomes, further embedding prevention within policing practices.

In the United States, crime reduction has often been framed in terms of local-level innovation rather than centralized national models. The emergence of problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979), hot spot policing (Sherman et al., 1989), and focused deterrence strategies reflected an emphasis on experimentation, evaluation, and local adaptation. Experimental research, such as the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, has demonstrated the potential for rigorous evaluation to shape

policing policy and practice (Sherman & Cohn, 1989). This emphasis on scientific testing and evidence generation has become a defining feature of American-led crime reduction approaches.

While American police agencies frequently claim leadership in developing crime reduction approaches, comparative scholarship suggests that United Kingdom policing played a foundational role in formalizing crime reduction as a strategic, organization-wide objective. In particular, the United Kingdom's adoption of national frameworks, such as the National Intelligence Model and its integration of situational crime prevention principles, helped institutionalize prevention as a core police function (Clarke, 1983). Furthermore, United Kingdom-led developments in intelligence-led policing have been applied in diverse contexts, including, as mentioned above, counterterrorism, where intelligence integration and interagency coordination are central to crime prevention efforts (McGarrell et al., 2007).

Over time, these traditions have converged. Contemporary crime reduction frameworks increasingly blend United Kingdom-style intelligence models with American-led experimental evaluations, producing hybrid approaches that emphasize prevention, targeting, partnerships, and accountability (Tilley & Newburn, 2008; Rogers et al., 2022). Research suggests that this convergence is reflected in the growing emphasis on evidence-based policing and crime prevention initiatives that combine analytical frameworks, community engagement, and targeted interventions across jurisdictions (Rogers et al., 2022). Additionally, the expansion of police-led prevention initiatives, including social and community-based interventions, demonstrates the continued evolution of crime reduction strategies beyond traditional enforcement models (Hobson et al., 2021; Ndakotsu, 2023).

ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES TO CRIME REDUCTION: WHOLE-AGENCY VERSUS SPECIALIZED UNITS

Historically, crime reduction within police agencies has often been delegated to specialized units, such as crime prevention units, gang enforcement teams, domestic violence units, or youth liaison officers. These units emerged in response to specific crime problems and organizational pressures, including rising violence, drug markets, and public concern about offences. Research on the development of specialized units suggests that their creation is often driven by external pressures, resource dependencies, and perceived threats, rather than purely evidence-based organizational design (Katz et al., 2002). While these units have developed targeted expertise, the literature highlights several limitations of unit-based approaches, including siloed knowledge, fragmented communication, and limited organizational ownership of crime reduction outcomes (Maguire, 1997; Katz et al., 2002).

Empirical research further demonstrates that while specialized units can be effective in addressing specific crime types, their impact is often constrained by their isolation from broader organizational processes. For example, studies of specialized enforcement units, such as gang and drug units, show that they can enhance targeted enforcement but may not produce sustained, system-wide reductions in crime without integration across the organization (Burke, 2022). Similarly, evaluations of specialized domestic violence units indicate improvements in case

processing and victim support but also highlight the importance of coordination with patrol and investigative divisions to ensure consistent responses (Regoeczi & Hubbard, 2018).

In response to these limitations, many police agencies have increasingly adopted whole-agency approaches to crime reduction, framing it as a shared responsibility across patrol, investigations, and leadership. Organizational reforms associated with community and problem-oriented policing emphasized decentralization, collaboration, and the integration of crime reduction responsibilities across all levels of the organization (Maguire, 1997). Research on the implementation of community policing further suggests that embedding crime reduction in everyday patrol work enhances responsiveness to local problems and improves organizational coherence (Greene, 2015).

Evidence-based policing frameworks emphasize that crime reduction is most effective when analytical capacity, decision-making authority, and accountability are embedded throughout the organization rather than confined to specialized units (Lum et al., 2011; Weisburd, 2019). The evidence-based policing matrix, for example, highlights that the most effective interventions are focused, proactive, and implemented at appropriate organizational levels, often requiring coordination across multiple units and functions (Lum et al., 2011). Similarly, broader reviews of policing strategies conclude that effective crime reduction depends on aligning organizational practices with targeted, evidence-informed interventions, rather than relying solely on specialized enforcement efforts (Weisburd & Eck, 2004).

Research from Canada suggests that larger police services often employ hybrid models that combine specialized crime reduction units with department-wide expectations for patrol-level engagement in prevention and problem solving (Peters & Cohen, 2017). While specialized units can play an important coordinating and analytical role, the literature increasingly supports the view that sustainable crime reduction requires organization-wide alignment with core principles and priorities (Cohen et al., 2014). This hybrid approach reflects broader trends in police leadership and organizational design that emphasize the integration of specialized expertise into a cohesive, organization-wide strategy for operational effectiveness (Roycroft & Brine, 2021).

GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORTING POLICE-LED CRIME REDUCTION

The extent to which governments take a leadership role in supporting police-led crime reduction varies considerably across different jurisdictions. In some contexts, provincial, state, or national governments provide strategic direction, funding, and legislative frameworks that explicitly prioritize prevention and evidence-based policing. Examples include national intelligence models, performance management regimes, and funding tied to crime reduction outcomes. For example, the United Kingdom has historically played a strong central role in shaping policing priorities through Home Office policy directives, national crime reduction strategies, and the development of frameworks, such as the National Intelligence Model and the Crime Reduction Programme, which aimed to coordinate crime prevention initiatives across multiple agencies and levels of government (Maguire & John, 2006; Tilley, 2009; Crawford, 1998).

Government leadership can also indirectly shape crime reduction through policy priorities in public health, harm reduction, and community safety. Research examining police engagement with safe

consumption sites demonstrates how shifts in government policy can influence police attitudes, operational practices, and perceptions of legitimacy (McNeilly et al., 2024). Studies examining harm reduction policies in Canada and other countries suggest that when governments adopt public health-oriented responses to drug use, police agencies may adapt their enforcement practices to support broader public safety objectives, including overdose prevention and improved relationships with marginalized communities (Beletsky et al., 2011; DeBeck et al., 2008). Where governments provide clear policy guidance and intersectoral support, police agencies appear to be better positioned to adopt prevention-oriented approaches that extend beyond enforcement.

However, the literature also highlights the tensions between political priorities and police practices. Short-term political pressures, funding instability, and punitive policy shifts can undermine long-term strategies for crime reduction. For instance, shifts in political leadership or public opinion can lead to rapid changes in enforcement priorities, funding allocations, or legislative mandates, potentially disrupting the implementation of evidence-based policing initiatives (Loader & Walker, 2007; Crawford, 2006; Lum et al., 2021; Vaughn et al., 2022; Powell, 2023). Consequently, while government leadership can enable crime reduction, its effectiveness depends on sustained commitment, evidence-based alignment, and cross-sector collaboration. Scholars increasingly emphasize that effective crime reduction requires governance structures that support long-term planning, stable funding, and integrated policy approaches that link policing to broader social policy interventions (Crawford, 1998; Welsh & Farrington, 2012).

EVALUATIONS OF CRIME REDUCTION INITIATIVES AND EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

A substantial body of evaluation research assesses the effectiveness of police-led crime reduction initiatives. Across experimental studies, quasi-experimental designs, and systematic reviews, the literature consistently demonstrates that police can reduce crime when their strategies are proactive, targeted, and analytically informed. However, this evidence also highlights important variations in effectiveness, depending on implementation, context, and organizational capacity.

One of the most influential areas of evaluation research focuses on place-based strategies, particularly hot spot policing. As outlined above, early experimental work, most notably the Minneapolis Hot Spots Experiment (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995), demonstrated that concentrating police patrols in small geographic areas with high crime concentrations can produce significant reductions in crime and disorder. This study was foundational in establishing that crime is not evenly distributed across a jurisdiction but is clustered in micro-locations. Given this, a targeted police presence can be more effective than traditional generalized patrol strategies (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995). Subsequent experimental research, including the Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment (Ratcliffe et al., 2011), reinforced these findings, showing that targeted patrols in high-crime areas can significantly reduce violent crime.

Beyond individual experiments, a growing body of systematic reviews and meta-analyses provides strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of targeted policing strategies. Reviews of hot spots policing consistently find meaningful reductions in crime, with little evidence of displacement and some indication of the diffusion of benefits to surrounding areas (Braga et al., 2014; Braga et al., 2019; Turchan & Braga, 2024). Similarly, systematic reviews of problem-oriented policing indicate

that interventions focused on identifying and addressing the underlying causes of crime can substantially reduce crime and disorder, particularly when implemented with high fidelity (Weisburd et al., 2010; Hinkle et al., 2020). Offender-focused strategies have also been extensively evaluated. Focused deterrence approaches, which target high-risk individuals or groups responsible for a disproportionate share of crime, have been shown to produce significant reductions in violent and gang-related offences (Braga et al., 2019). These strategies are particularly effective when targeted enforcement is combined with communication, social support, and multi-agency collaboration, highlighting the importance of integrating policing with broader prevention efforts.

More recent evaluations have expanded the methodological approaches used to assess police effectiveness. Quasi-experimental and causal inference studies, such as those on neighbourhood policing initiatives, demonstrate that police interventions can have measurable but heterogeneous effects across different contexts (Antonelli & Beck, 2023). Similarly, controlled field experiments examining interventions in both chronic and temporary crime hot spots show that targeted policing strategies can reduce violence. However, the magnitude of these effects varies with local conditions and implementation practices (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). These findings reflect a broader shift in the literature from asking whether policing works to examining how, where, and under which conditions it is most effective.

Evaluation research also highlights important limitations and challenges. The effectiveness of crime reduction strategies is highly dependent on implementation quality, organizational support, and alignment with broader policing priorities. Studies of specialized units, such as domestic violence teams, indicate improvements in case processing and victim engagement but show mixed effects on recidivism rates (Regoeczi & Hubbard, 2018). Similarly, evaluations of police-led prevention initiatives targeting at-risk populations suggest positive impacts on offending and community outcomes but also identify challenges related to sustainability, coordination, and resource allocation (Hobson et al., 2021).

Finally, a growing body of research emphasizes that evaluations should consider not only crime outcomes, but also the broader impacts on legitimacy, procedural justice, and community trust. Systematic reviews of procedural justice interventions suggest that the way police implement crime reduction strategies can significantly influence public perceptions and cooperation, which in turn may affect long-term effectiveness (Mazerolle et al., 2013). This highlights the importance of balancing enforcement effectiveness with fairness and legitimacy in policing practices.

Taken together, the evaluation literature provides strong evidence that police-led crime reduction strategies can be effective, particularly when they are focused, proactive, and based on evidence. However, it also demonstrates that the effectiveness is not uniform. Crime reduction outcomes depend on the interaction between strategy, implementation, organizational context, and community dynamics. The most successful approaches combine rigorous analysis, targeted interventions, and ongoing evaluation within a broader framework of accountability and continuous improvement.

APPLICATION OF CRIME REDUCTION PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Empirical research demonstrates that each of the crime reduction principles outlined above has been operationalized through a range of initiatives. Intelligence- and information-led policing have been applied through crime analysis, hot spot mapping, and predictive policing tools that enable police agencies to identify patterns and allocate resources strategically. Research on crime mapping and forecasting demonstrates that analytical techniques can successfully predict the spatial concentrations of crime and inform targeted interventions (Bowers et al., 2004; Chainey et al., 2008). These approaches exemplify how data-driven decision-making translates to operational policing strategies.

Offender-focused approaches have been implemented through initiatives targeting prolific and high-risk individuals, including focused deterrence strategies and repeat offender management. These strategies are grounded in the recognition that a small proportion of offenders account for a disproportionate share of crime and harm, and they align closely with intelligence-led policing by prioritizing high impact targets. Problem-focused strategies are most clearly reflected in the application of problem-oriented policing, where the police identify recurring crime issues, analyze their underlying causes, and develop tailored interventions to address them. Research on the implementation of situational crime prevention demonstrates how modifying environmental conditions, such as increasing guardianship, improving surveillance, and reducing opportunities for offending, can reduce crime in specific contexts (Knutsson & Clarke, 2006). These approaches highlight the importance of addressing root causes rather than responding to individual incidents.

Pre-emptive strategies are evident in a wide range of initiatives designed to prevent crime. These include situational prevention measures, predictive policing models, and targeted patrol strategies. Experimental research on hot spot policing provides strong evidence that concentrating police resources in high-risk locations can reduce crime and disorder (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995; Ratcliffe et al., 2011; Tregle et al., 2025). These initiatives demonstrate how pre-emptive and information-led approaches can be combined to disrupt crime opportunities. Partnership-based approaches are reflected in collaborative initiatives involving the police, community organizations, and other public agencies. These partnerships support information sharing, coordinated interventions, and the delivery of prevention-focused services, particularly in addressing the complex social drivers of crime.

Performance-based approaches are operationalized using crime metrics, evaluation frameworks and continuous improvement processes. Police agencies increasingly rely on performance measurement systems to assess the effectiveness of interventions and guide resource allocation, which aligns with broader trends in evidence-based policing. While the evidence base supports these principles individually, the literature suggests that their greatest impact occurs when they are implemented as an integrated framework rather than as isolated initiatives. In practice, many of the most effective crime reduction strategies, such as hot spot and problem-oriented policing, simultaneously reflect multiple principles, including intelligence-led, pre-emptive, problem-focused, and performance-based. This convergence highlights the importance of adopting a coordinated, organization-wide approach to crime reduction that integrates multiple principles into cohesive strategies.

POLICE INITIATIVES TARGETING SPECIFIC TYPES OF CRIME

Research on crime-specific initiatives demonstrates that police-led strategies can be effective when tailored to the dynamics of the offences. Rather than relying on generalized enforcement approaches, the literature consistently shows that interventions designed around the characteristics of specific crime types, such as offender behaviour, situational context, and victim dynamics, are more likely to produce meaningful reductions in harm.

In the context of intimate partner abuse, for example, a substantial body of experimental and quasi-experimental research has examined the impact of arrests, specialized units, and victim-focused interventions. Early experimental research, most notably the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, suggested that arrest could deter repeat offending (Sherman & Berk, 1984). However, subsequent replication studies found that deterrent effects varied depending on offender characteristics, such as employment status and social stability, highlighting the importance of context in shaping outcomes (Maxwell et al., 2001). More recent evaluations indicate that specialized domestic violence units can improve case processing, victim-survivor engagement, and coordination with support services, although the impact on recidivism remains mixed (Regoeczi & Hubbard, 2018). Additional research on victim-oriented policing approaches further emphasizes the role of on-scene assistance and support services in reducing repeat victimization and improving outcomes for victims-survivors (Smith-Ekman & Seng, 2009; McCormick & Cohen, 2024; McCormick et al., 2026).

Auto theft reduction initiatives provide another example of targeted policing strategies. Programs such as bait car operations, hot spot enforcement, and the use of automated license plate recognition (ALPR) technologies have demonstrated measurable impacts when combined with intelligence-led deployment and public awareness campaigns (Willis et al., 2018). These initiatives are particularly effective when they focus on repeated locations and prolific offenders, reinforcing the importance of combining technological tools with targeted enforcement strategies.

Police responses to drug-related crimes have been widely evaluated, particularly in relation to enforcement strategies and harm reduction approaches. Meta-analyses of street-level drug enforcement suggest that traditional enforcement can have modest effects on drug markets but may also produce unintended consequences, such as displacement or increased harm (Mazerolle et al., 2007). Recent research highlights the importance of integrating enforcement with harm reduction and public health approaches. For example, ethnographic studies of policing in overdose prevention contexts have demonstrated that enforcement practices can either support or undermine the effectiveness of harm reduction initiatives, depending on how they are implemented (Collins et al., 2019). Studies of specialized drug enforcement units further illustrate the limitations of enforcement-only approaches, emphasizing the need for coordinated multi-agency strategies to achieve sustainable reductions in drug-related harm (Burke, 2022).

Police initiatives targeting violent crime, particularly gun and gang violence, have increasingly incorporated focused deterrence and public health approaches in recent years. Focused deterrence strategies that target high-risk individuals and groups have been shown to produce significant reductions in violence when combined with community engagement and social support (Braga & Weisburd, 2010). Similarly, programs such as Cure Violence have adopted a public health model,

using outreach workers and community-based interventions to interrupt cycles of violence, demonstrating promising reductions in gun-related incidents (Butts et al., 2015). Advances in analytical techniques, including social network analysis, have further enhanced the police's capacity to identify and target high-risk individuals within criminal networks, thereby improving the precision of violence reduction strategies (Paulo et al., 2013).

Impaired driving enforcement is one of the most consistently supported areas of crime reduction research. Evaluations of sobriety checkpoints and random breath testing programs have demonstrated strong and consistent deterrent effects, leading to significant reductions in alcohol-related crashes and fatalities (Elder et al., 2002; Hedlund et al., 2007). These strategies are particularly effective because they increase the perceived certainty of detection, which is a key deterrence mechanism.

Finally, research on disorder policing and proactive enforcement strategies highlights their potential benefits and limitations. Studies examining practices, such as stop-and-frisk, and order maintenance policing suggest that these approaches can contribute to reductions in certain types of crime, particularly when focused on high-risk areas (Fagan et al., 2010). However, the literature also raises concerns about their impact on procedural justice, legitimacy, and racial disparities, underscoring the importance of balancing enforcement effectiveness with fairness and accountability (Cohen & Burk, 2020).

Taken together, this body of research demonstrates that police initiatives can effectively reduce specific types of crime when tailored to the characteristics of those offences and supported by evidence-based practices. However, the findings also emphasize that no single strategy is universally effective in all situations. The success of crime-specific initiatives depends on careful targeting, integration with broader prevention efforts, and sensitivity to the social and organizational contexts in which they are implemented.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO POLICE CRIME REDUCTION EFFORTS

The literature identifies a range of challenges that police agencies face in their crime reduction efforts. Staffing shortages, recruitment and retention difficulties, and workforce burnout have reduced capacity in many jurisdictions (Police Executive Research Forum, 2019). Simultaneously, police are increasingly tasked with responding to complex social problems related to mental health, addiction, and homelessness, often in the absence of adequate support from health and social service systems (Butler et al., 2022). Public trust and legitimacy pose additional challenges. Research indicates declining confidence in the police, particularly among racialized communities, driven by concerns about bias, use of force, and accountability (Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, 2020; Dandurand et al., 2022). Technological innovations, including predictive policing tools, raise concerns about transparency, fairness, and algorithmic bias (Egbert & Esposito, 2024; Almasoud & Idowu, 2025).

In response to these challenges, police agencies have adopted a range of strategies and adaptations. Technological innovations, such as body-worn cameras, digital evidence systems, and analytical platforms, aim to enhance accountability and efficiency, although evidence of their impact on crime reduction is mixed (Maskaly et al., 2017). Cross-sector collaboration has expanded through co-

response models, interagency teams, ‘hubs’, and community safety and well-being frameworks, reflecting the recognition that police cannot address complex crime problems alone (Cohen et al., 2015; Cohen et al., 2024; Shapiro et al., 2022). Trauma-informed policing and organizational reform efforts seek to improve interactions with victims and marginalized populations while reducing the harm. Community-oriented policing and legitimacy-focused strategies emphasize procedural justice, communication, and trust-building as essential complements to enforcement (Gill et al., 2014).

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed above reflects a substantial and growing body of evidence supporting structured, proactive, and analytically informed approaches to police-led crime reduction. Across jurisdictions in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, research consistently demonstrates that reactive, incident-driven policing is insufficient to produce sustained reductions in crime. In its place, a convergent set of principles has emerged as foundational to effective crime reduction: the use of information and intelligence to guide decision-making; a focus on prolific offenders and recurring crime problems; meaningful partnerships with community and social service agencies; pre-emptive and situational strategies that disrupt opportunities for offending; performance-based accountability; and a whole-agency commitment to being crime prevention-led. Evaluations of specific interventions, including hot spot policing, problem-oriented policing, focused deterrence, and crime-specific initiatives, provide strong empirical support for these principles when implemented with fidelity, organizational alignment, and sustained resources. At the same time, the literature highlights important limitations, including the risks of siloed specialized units, fragmented information sharing, leadership instability in funding and priorities, and the potential for algorithmic tools to introduce bias into enforcement.

These findings provide the foundation for the present study, which examines how a sample of British Columbia and Canadian police agencies understand and implement crime reduction in their own organizational contexts. While the international evidence base offers a well-developed framework of promising and best practices, it also reveals persistent gaps in the adoption and embedding of these principles within specific jurisdictions. This study addresses these gaps by combining a quantitative analysis of crime trend data across British Columbia with qualitative interviews with police leaders and officers. Together, these two methodological strands allow for an examination of both the measurable outcomes of crime reduction efforts in the province and the organizational, cultural, and operational factors that shape how evidence-based principles are implemented. The insights generated from this analysis are intended to inform practical recommendations for strengthening police-led crime reduction in British Columbia.

Quantitative Data Analysis of Crime Rates

Initially, the project focused on examining changes in crime rates across British Columbia. The aim was to pinpoint the jurisdictions that experienced the most significant changes in crime rates from 2005 to 2014, a period during which the police in the province implemented crime reduction

strategies. More specifically, the purpose was to identify jurisdictions that had the largest overall crime rate declines and the largest declines in property and violent crimes. As a result, 12 jurisdictions were identified, each of which had undertaken significant efforts to implement crime reduction initiatives to varying degrees. In this study, contact was made with all 12 police agencies, and ten consented to participate in the qualitative segment of the project. In this section of the report, these police agencies will be referred to as “crime reduction jurisdictions.”

The analysis presented here aims to assess whether jurisdictions that had previously reduced crime rates continued to see decreases in property and violent crimes from 2015 to 2024. Additionally, it sought to evaluate the total decline in crime rates over a 20-year span from 2005 to 2024. Most importantly, the analysis compared the changes in crime rates for the 10 crime reduction jurisdictions to those of the entire province of British Columbia and Canada overall. The hypothesis was that if crime reduction jurisdictions truly benefited from the implementation of crime reduction strategies, they should have experienced greater crime rate declines than the rest of British Columbia and Canada overall. It should be acknowledged that jurisdictions not designated as “crime reduction jurisdictions” may have also adopted crime reduction strategies to some degree. This was certainly the case in British Columbia following the introduction of the official provincial crime reduction initiative. The key difference for the purposes of the analysis in this report comes from the knowledge that all 10 of the crime reduction jurisdictions in this study intentionally implemented crime reduction initiatives, which cannot be said for all police agencies in British Columbia and across Canada. In addition to the 10 crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia, one police agency from Alberta, one from Saskatchewan, and one from Ontario were included. Following a preliminary analysis of crime rate fluctuations in every jurisdiction throughout Canada, these three jurisdictions were chosen because their police agencies exhibited the most significant reductions in crime rates over the 20 years. For the purposes of the analysis presented below, these three jurisdictions are referred to as “crime reduction jurisdictions outside British Columbia.”

The data used for the change in the crime rate over time were Statistics Canada incident-based crime rates. The analysis involved calculating the percentage change in the property, violent, and overall crime rates for four groups: the crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia, the crime reduction jurisdictions outside British Columbia, British Columbia overall, and Canada overall. Incident-based crime rates were collected for each of the four groups across three periods: 2005–2014, 2015–2024, and 2005–2024. The reason for grouping the crime reduction jurisdictions was to protect their anonymity as per the University of the Fraser Valley’s Research Board Ethics requirements. The results are presented in Table 1.

As the first column of Table 1 demonstrates, in terms of the first 10-year period, each group experienced a notable drop in its average overall crime rates. Each group also experienced a notable decrease in both the average property and violent crime rates. The group of crime reduction jurisdictions outside British Columbia experienced a noticeably larger decline in its overall crime rate than the group of crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia and the group representing jurisdictions in British Columbia overall (see Table 1). However, all three groups experienced noticeably larger drops in their average overall crime rates than Canada overall. Furthermore, this pattern of Canada having the smallest decline was also apparent with respect to

average property crime rates. Moreover, crime reduction jurisdictions in and outside British Columbia had noticeably larger declines than British Columbia and Canada overall. In short, crime reduction jurisdictions experienced somewhat better drops in terms of property crime rates and crime rates overall over the first 10-year period.

TABLE 1: COMPARING CHANGES IN CRIME RATES 2005 TO 2024¹

	% Change 2005 - 2014	% Change 2015 - 2024	% Change 2005 - 2024
Change in Overall Crime Rate²			
Average for Crime Reduction Jurisdictions Outside BC	-43%	-13%	-47%
Average for Crime Reduction Jurisdictions in BC	-38%	-17%	-46%
British Columbia Overall	-36%	-5%	-41%
Canada Overall	-30%	+10%	-22%
Change in Property Crime Rate			
Average for Crime Reduction Jurisdictions Outside BC	-47%	-18%	-53%
Average for Crime Reduction Jurisdictions in BC	-41%	-30%	-57%
British Columbia Overall	-38%	-22%	-51%
Canada Overall	-37%	0	-35%
Change in Violent Crime Rate			
Average for Crime Reduction Jurisdictions Outside BC	-40%	+11%	-35%
Average for Crime Reduction Jurisdictions in BC	-33%	+9%	-20%
British Columbia Overall	-42%	+25%	-21%
Canada Overall	-29%	+27%	0

However, in the second 10-year period, the group of crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia performed better than the other groups in terms of overall crime rate reductions and reductions in property crime rates. Most notably, in terms of the average overall crime rate, the group of crime reduction jurisdictions experienced a 17% reduction, while, on average, other jurisdictions in British Columbia experienced only a 5% reduction. Moreover, Canadian jurisdictions experienced, on average, a 10% increase in crime rates. Likewise, while the average property crime rate for the group of crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia decreased by 30%, the average reduction for the rest of British Columbia was 22%, and the reduction for Canadian jurisdictions overall, on average, was 0%. Importantly, there may have been increases or reductions year-over-year; however, the data presented in Table 1 considers the crime rate in 2024 compared to 2015. In effect, the group of crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia experienced a noticeably greater reduction in both property crime and crime rates overall compared to other jurisdictions in British Columbia and Canada overall. That said, Jurisdictions in British Columbia overall experienced a greater reduction in property crime rates than did crime

¹ Statistics based on Incident-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, police services in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Canada. Statistics Canada. All figures rounded.

² Rates exclude traffic offences.

reduction jurisdictions outside of British Columbia. As a group of jurisdictions, they also experienced a far greater decrease than the jurisdictions in Canada (see Table 1).

Considering how crime rates for each group changed over the 20-year period of 2005 to 2024, in terms of crime rates overall, crime reduction jurisdictions experienced greater declines than both British Columbia and Canada overall. Notably, with respect to Canada overall, the reduction was less than half of what it was for crime reduction jurisdictions. A similar pattern was observed for property crime rates over the 20-year period. Specifically, while the group of crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia and the group of crime reduction jurisdictions outside British Columbia experienced property crime rate declines of 57% and 53%, respectively, the average reduction for British Columbia overall was 51%, and 35% for Canadian jurisdictions overall. Given this, in terms of the property crime rate and the overall crime rate, crime reduction jurisdictions experienced somewhat greater declines than jurisdictions in British Columbia overall and experienced substantially greater declines than all jurisdictions, on average, in Canada.

Regarding violent crime, the percentages presented in Table 1 reveal different patterns. While each group experienced a substantial decline in violent crime rates in the first 10-year period, all groups experienced an increase in violent crime rates in the second 10-year period. That said, the increase experienced by crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia was less than one-half of that experienced by both British Columbia jurisdictions overall and Canadian jurisdictions overall. Most notably, while groups experienced an increase in violent crime rates between 2015 and 2014, crime reduction jurisdictions inside and outside British Columbia saw lower increases than the rest of British Columbia and Canada overall.

Looking at the violent crime rate changes between 2005 and 2024, except for Canadian jurisdictions overall, all other groups experienced substantial decreases in their violent crime rates, which can be attributed to the substantial decreases that each group experienced in the first 10-year period. However, the decline in violent crime for the crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia (-20%) was very similar to the 21% decrease experienced by British Columbia jurisdictions overall. Furthermore, the decline for the crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia was far behind the 35% decline experienced by the group of crime reduction jurisdictions outside British Columbia. Still, the declines over the 20-year period for these three groups were impressive considering that jurisdictions in Canada overall did not experience a decline in violent crime rates when comparing 2005 to 2024.

In summary, it is clear from the percentage changes in overall crime rates that the selected group of crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia experienced somewhat larger overall crime rate declines over the 20-year period than the other jurisdictions in British Columbia (46% vs. 41%). Over that 20-year period, crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia also experienced substantially larger overall crime rate declines than Canadian jurisdictions overall (46% vs. 22%). Nevertheless, the reductions across all categories were predominantly due to the decreases that occurred during the initial decade of the 20-year span. In particular, across all groups, the reductions observed during the latter half of the 20-year span were significantly less pronounced than those in the initial decade. For Canada as a whole, there was a shift from a 30% decrease during the initial decade to a 10% increase in the subsequent decade.

For all groups, the largest percentage decrease in crime rates was for property crimes, and this was true for each period. Furthermore, the property crime rate decline for the crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia was larger than for the other jurisdictions in British Columbia and Canada overall in each period. Most notably, over the 20-year period, crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia experienced a 57% decrease in property crime, while jurisdictions in British Columbia generally experienced a 51% decrease, and Canada overall experienced a 35% decline.

All groups experienced less significant reductions in violent crime rates. While all groups experienced significant decreases in violent crime in the first 10-year period, they experienced an increase in the second 10-year period. However, the 9% increase experienced by crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia was far less than that of the other groups (see Table 1). Accordingly, the 20% and 21% violent crime rate decreases experienced over the 20-year period by crime reduction jurisdictions in British Columbia and the other British Columbian jurisdictions overall, respectively, were a consequence of the larger declines experienced in the first 10 years. Importantly, while these declines were not nearly as impressive as those related to property crime over the 20-year period, they are impressive relative to the fact that Canada overall did not experience a decline at all.

It is also worth noting the impressive decrease in crime rates for the group of crime reduction jurisdictions outside British Columbia. For the 20-year period, this group experienced a 47% decrease in their overall crime rate, a 53% decrease in their property crime rate, and a 35% decrease in their violent crime rate (see Table 1). Each of these represents percentage declines somewhat larger than the jurisdictions in British Columbia overall and substantially larger than the crime rate decreases experienced among Canadian jurisdictions overall.

Undoubtedly, variations in crime rates result from a combination of factors that can vary across jurisdictions and time. Moreover, police efforts are just one of many factors that affect changes in crime rates over time. Accordingly, the present analysis does not allow for any definite conclusions about how much of the observed declines were a function of police-based crime reduction efforts specifically. Nonetheless, considering that the jurisdictions chosen for crime reduction were those that deliberately created and executed crime reduction strategies, and given the substantial disparities in crime rate declines compared to the overall Canadian jurisdictions, it is likely that crime reduction efforts influenced crime rates over time.

Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

CRIME REDUCTION AS FUNCTION NOT FORM

In total, 45 interviews were conducted with police leaders, officers, and analysts across agencies of varying sizes and structures. Given this diversity, the main theme that emerged was that crime reduction operated far more as a function than as a fixed organisational form. The most pervasive pattern was a striking asymmetry between long organisational service and a comparatively short tenure in a participant's current crime reduction role. A large majority of sworn officers reported substantial policing careers frequently approaching two decades, and in several cases, exceeding 25 years. However, most described their time in their current crime reduction position in terms of months or a small number of years. This pattern held for analysts as well as several who reported

well over a decade of analytical experience, even when their connection to crime reduction work specifically was more recent. Moreover, a substantial subset of participants had occupied their current role only briefly, and several held positions on an acting or interim basis. Long police service paired with a shorter amount of time working on crime reduction strategies or projects reflected crime reduction expertise and experience residing in individuals rather than in the positions they happened to hold.

It also became clear that crime reduction does not denote a single, consistent organisational form. Across participants, the label of crime reduction was attached to markedly different structures. Several participants reported that their organization had no dedicated crime reduction unit, while others described a named unit or team with a defined mandate and dedicated personnel. Other participants described the work as distributed across several specialized teams, such as prolific or repeat-offender suppression teams, robbery and break-and-enter units, community response teams, youth teams, gang enforcement teams, and teams addressing homelessness and mental health issues. Others reported that their crime reduction team functioned essentially as a street crime unit oriented toward drug and property offences. This heterogeneity matters because participants using the identical phrase “crime reduction unit” often described teams or functions that differed fundamentally in scale, permanence, and purpose.

Regardless of the function or structure of their work, a recurring comment from participants was the challenge posed by organisational instability, frequently attributed to resource shortages. Participants described teams or units that had been responsible for crime reduction as having been disbanded and later reconstituted as something else, teams amalgamated to economize on personnel, teams often operating below their nominal strength, and mandates rebranded or reconstructed in response to a lack of resources. This instability is consequential because it indicates that crime reduction capacity, as experienced by practitioners, is contingent and reversible rather than settled. The instability is structural, affecting whether teams exist at all rather than merely operational.

When asked whether their position was tenured or time-restricted, participants again revealed no shared organisational consistency. Many participants reported open-ended arrangements in which they could remain in the role as long as they wished, were not subject to rotation, and typically left only because of a promotion, transfer, or decision to retire. Several participants explicitly noted that their positions were not tenured in any formal sense, yet were stable in practice. In contrast, a minority described formal tenure structures, such as a defined maximum number of years that they could remain in the position, or a fixed-term rotational posting being introduced into a unit that currently had none. This variation is underpinned by the tension between two competing institutional values. Open-ended tenures favour the retention of expertise, corporate knowledge, and continuity of relationships, consistent with the premium participants placed on experience. Fixed tenure and rotation favour renewal, the distribution of skills, and development opportunities for a wider pool of police officers. Participants did not agree on which value should prevail, as some prized the ability to remain indefinitely with a team, tying capability directly to the expertise and relationship-building that time affords, while others welcomed routine rotation as a way to expose more police officers to a wider range of experiences and to support career development. A further tension was the claim that specialized postings were easy to fill and oversubscribed, while others

argued that these teams struggled to attract qualified police officers, which suggests that desirability is highly local and may turn on the availability of training, the work schedule of the unit, and the unit's reputation rather than the nature of the work.

Participants also arrived in crime reduction roles through strikingly varied routes, with no single career pathway dominating. Among sworn officers, participants arrived in their current crime reduction roles by progressing from frontline patrol through drug enforcement teams or organized crime teams, while others took a community-response pathway. Some participants moved into crime reduction roles after serving some time doing youth and child protection work, while others moved through their organization's communications team. In some cases, participants returned to crime reduction teams. Expertise in crime reduction, in other words, is assembled from heterogeneous prior experience rather than produced by a dedicated training stream, which reinforces how thoroughly the function rests on the individuals who staff it.

Taken together, these patterns yield three general conclusions that help to organize the sections that follow. First, where a police agency possessed crime reduction continuity, it was vested in experienced individuals who stayed in or were connected to crime reduction work rather than in durable institutional structures, such as a dedicated and defined crime reduction team that had been in existence for decades. This process of securing knowledge in people but leaving it vulnerable to their departure and dependent on units that can be reorganized around them appears to be somewhat common. Second, crime reduction is best understood as a function rather than a fixed form, as police agencies have adopted many different approaches to the same commitment, some treating a single named unit as the natural home of the function and others distributing the work across many teams, with the difference reflecting genuinely distinctive organizing philosophies rather than mere labelling. Third, as the analysis below develops, analytical capacity sat in some agencies as a centralized service to the whole organization and in others as a capability embedded within specific units.

CRIME REDUCTION ROLES

When asked to describe their roles as related to crime reduction, the most frequent observation among sworn police officers was to first mention that crime reduction work occupied a fragile and shifting organisational footing. Participants described their units and their own positions in terms of impermanence, characterized by 'acting' appointments, positions held at the discretion of senior leadership, vacancies that could not be formally filled, units that had been collapsed or reduced, and personnel seconded away to other duties. The cumulative impression is of a function expected to deliver continuity while resting on arrangements and responsibilities that were somewhat conditional. Chronic resource pressure is a closely related concern. Participants described being short-staffed, with remedies promised only at some future point, reductions in personnel owing to hiring difficulties, and crime reduction tasks absorbed into already full workloads as secondary duties rather than dedicated responsibilities. Layered on this staffing precarity was a constant churn in structure and identity, with units being renamed or rebranded, mandates transferred between teams, services moving from an older operating model to a new one on a fixed transition date, and new layers of command introduced. Teams were created, collapsed, and later revived,

sometimes in a deliberately different operating style from the original, and several participants described their roles as having evolved through successive titles. However, this churn should not be read exclusively as a problem or an indication that a police agency's commitment to crime reduction was in decline. For many police agencies, the same changes reflected a genuine and purposeful evolution toward a clearer and more effective crime reduction purpose.

Beneath this structural instability lies a deeper ambiguity. As mentioned above, participant responses revealed that crime reduction had no single, agreed-upon meaning. The label of crime reduction was attached to a strikingly wide range of activities, such as covert surveillance of prolific offenders, high-visibility uniformed patrols, outreach to people who were unhoused or insecurely housed, evidence-based approaches to those suffering from a mental health crisis, youth and school engagement, and a presence at community events. Two broad orientations were identified. For many participants, crime reduction meant targeted enforcement described through covert patrols, surveillance-led units, dedicated strike or street crime teams, plainclothes drug enforcement, and the management and monitoring of repeat and prolific offenders. For these participants, the work was organized around identifying the right people to target, building intelligence portfolios on them, and using enforcement processes to address their offending. For others, crime reduction meant addressing the social conditions that generated the most harm in a community or location and focused on developing responses to those in a mental health crisis, connecting people to housing and support services, moving people out of homeless encampments into more permanent accommodation, providing outreach to vulnerable persons, and undertaking prevention work with young people at risk. Some participants framed their work through a social-justice and risk lens alongside, or instead of, an enforcement-centered role.

Cutting across both orientations was a recurrent distinction between proactive and reactive work, with proactivity treated as an aspiration and reactivity as a gravitational pull. While this will be discussed in greater detail below, at this point, some participants described their crime reduction efforts as comprising roaming teams deliberately detached from the call for service queue so that they could stay proactive, services transitioning toward more generalist proactive engagement models, and external pressure to expand proactive rather than frontline reactive capacity. However, the same participants often described resourcing challenges that pulled their work back toward reactive responses to incidents or crimes.

Civilian participants brought the analytical and intelligence dimensions of the work into sharper focus. When asked to describe their roles, crime analysts and other civilian members of police agencies overwhelmingly emphasized analysis and intelligence, treating data and information as the connective tissue that holds crime reduction efforts together. At the operational end, analysts described identifying trends, patterns, and offenders, and disseminating that information to frontline officers or specialized teams, producing recurring bulletins and summaries on specific issues, such as gangs and property crime, developing offender profiles, keeping patrol officers current on emerging trends and evidence-based strategies, tracking prolific offenders, and analyzing statistical patterns to determine when and where to deploy resources. They also described more continuous functions, such as producing routine intelligence products, using statistical analysis for direct deployment, maintaining dynamic offender lists to compare performance year over year, and advancing evidence-based and research-informed policing. A

smaller set of analysts described longer-term analytical work, including strategic and business planning, budgeting, policy analysis, and operational metrics, such as police response times and ways to address persistent staffing issues.

These responses were generally expected. The most striking finding, by contrast, was the emergence of explicitly research-oriented roles that the participants described as novel. For example, one police agency had a dedicated organisational researcher tasked with operationalizing academic research and translating it into evidence-based police projects and operations. There was also a research and innovation unit running project-based and grant-funded crime reduction approaches, piloting and evaluating new response models, and engaging frontline officers to generate or accept evidence-based strategies to reduce crime. In another agency, there was a long-standing crime prevention strategist responsible for rethinking policing at the community and policy levels. Participants repeatedly characterized these positions as more recent developments, first-of-their-kind, or otherwise unusual in policing, which serves as evidence of an emerging, albeit uneven, interest in embedding research capacity directly into police operations in some of the most successful police agencies in Canada.

Where analysts were located within the organization proved equally unsettled. Analysts described themselves variously as embedded, dedicated, exclusive, centralized, or siloed, signalling that the relationship between analysts and who they serve was itself an organisational decision rather than a settled matter. Several analysts felt strongly about their physical location in the police agency. Some analysts reported that their desks were directly across from the unit they supported explicitly to generate more interaction and build relationships and knowledge about a unit or team with the intention of developing more helpful tools, information, and intelligence for these teams. In other police agencies, analysts were located on the operational floor of the building, and others were in a centralized location alongside the agency's other analysts. These two allocation philosophies are in direct contradiction to each other. In one, analysts had been moved off fixed portfolios toward a task-based system in which whoever was free took the incoming request, and in the other, analysts were assigned and retained on specialized portfolios on the grounds that specialization created continuity, trust, and expertise. Underlying the disagreement over whether analysts should be centralized or distributed into operational units was a clear argument for centralization, as analysts believed that their technical skills had outpaced what could be sustained in isolated roles. Otherwise, frontline officers received disjointed, repetitive, and at times contradictory information depending on whom they asked. Moreover, analysts working alone lack both shared data access and colleagues with whom to deconflict. In some police agencies, the centralization of analysts, as opposed to embedding them with specific teams, was a deliberate attempt to address fragmentation and information silos internal to the agency itself.

Across all participants, the existence, character, and success of crime reduction work were repeatedly tied to particular people rather than durable structures. Participants attributed the creation of roles to the vision of specific leaders and the strength or weakness of crime reduction efforts to whether the right individuals were in the right positions. Several participants reported that their roles were deliberately created by a senior leader. For example, one participant discussed a communications function reshaped around a chief's particular vision, another highlighted how a strategist position was established by a theoretically minded chief seeking to expand the

conception of policing, and another discussed a faltering crime reduction program that improved markedly once a supportive senior officer took an interest in the work the team was doing. The recurring implication is that where structures were weak, individuals supplied the continuity that the organization could not.

Finally, many participants described their role as bound up with external partners, funding streams, and programs over which their agency had only partial control. This dependence was presented matter-of-factly, but its cumulative effect was to sometimes locate the determinants of crime reduction capacity substantially outside the unit's control. Several participants tied their role to specific and often time-limited funding, making the scale and even the survival of that work exposed to funding decisions taken elsewhere. Similarly, social-facing roles depend on effective community partnerships. For these participants, the police were one actor within a larger system, and the effectiveness of crime reduction and the participants' own roles were partly a function of how well they worked within that structure.

In short, the participants' roles in crime reduction across their police agencies were strikingly varied. Some participants defined their work primarily in terms of harm prevention, a small number framed theirs as building an evidence base for police operations, others emphasized project development and community work, including crime prevention messaging and public education, and many described their role in enforcement terms, with little or no reference to the social, preventive, or community elements that others highlighted.

Three themes emerged from the participants' descriptions of their roles. First, crime reduction was simultaneously expected to expand and left structurally under-secured in that the same participants who described ambitious, broadening mandates spanning proactive engagement, social and preventive work, intelligence-led targeting, and evidence-based innovation also described temporary positions, soft vacancies, collapsed teams, overtime-funded programs, and sometimes dependence on external money. Second, analysis and intelligence repeatedly tie these disparate conceptions together. Whether a role was framed as enforcement or social intervention, analytical capacity was described as central to the work. Third, the work was outward facing. For many participants, the role that could be achieved was determined in part by funding, inter-agency projects, and community and political expectations. The next section turns from roles to the mandates that defined the scope of participants' crime reduction efforts.

CRIME REDUCTION MANDATES

If roles describe what participants do, mandates define how widely participants are permitted to do it. When considering the information participants provided about their mandates, four main themes emerged: whether breadth or narrowness in a mandate is preferable; the offender-centric focus that most mandates shared; the range from suppression to social prevention along which mandates fell; and the drivers that caused mandates to change or remain stable over time.

The variation in the breadth of the mandates was unsurprising, given the diversity of the sample. What was not expected was that participants disagreed not only on how widely a mandate should be drawn, but also on whether breadth or narrowness was preferable in the first place. On one side were participants who treated a deliberately broad and flexible mandate as a strength because it

allowed them to adapt, assimilate, and absorb work as priorities shifted. These participants spoke of mandates written broadly enough to cover any type of criminal activity and of teams that were not pigeonholed into a fixed set of activities. For these participants, flexibility was precisely what allowed a team to be responsive to an emerging problem without the friction of redefining its purpose. On the other hand, a tightly bound mandate was itself the point. The clearest example of this was a school-based crime reduction team whose responsibilities were confined to school grounds, hours, and the school community. In this example, narrowness was not a constraint but a directive that protected the team from mission creep and being overwhelmed by other police priorities. Strikingly, both positions were justified by the same finite capacity pressure. Flexibility was valued by some because there were not enough people to staff a separate unit for every crime reduction issue. Therefore, these participants valued a mandate that allowed them to respond to whatever the police agency deemed critical at that time. Mandate narrowness was valued by others because there were not enough people to do everything a broad mandate might invite. The issue, then, was less a fixed preference for breadth or focus but how each organization addressed the same scarcity problem that allowed participants and their teams to be effective and successful in their own ways. Where mandates were broad, the decision about what a unit actually did at any moment was pushed downward to the team leader or the supervisor to whom that leader reported. Therefore, priorities were set by the team rather than by a fixed offence list. This arrangement worked precisely because the supervisor or team leader was empowered and trusted to decide what was appropriate for their team to focus on, week by week.

Beneath this variation in breadth lies a more consistent logic. Many participants described mandates organized around people rather than places or offence categories, such as prolific, repeat, chronic, or high-harm offenders. Although the terminology varied, the premise did not change. A small number of individuals were understood to generate a disproportionate amount of harm, and the crime reduction mandate was to identify and concentrate on them. What distinguished one offender-centric mandate from another was the understanding of what drove offending and, in turn, which group of offenders to prioritize. For example, some participants argued that illicit drugs were the root cause of offending because they believed that offending, including property crime, stemmed from drug use. For other participants, the main issue driving crime in their community, and therefore the appropriate target for crime reduction, was firearms. The argument was that removing guns upstream reduces downstream violence. For the third group of participants, the organizing variable was harm itself, with prioritization driven by a harm score given to an offender rather than focusing on a particular offence type. These were not merely different methods of selecting crime reduction targets but also different causal theories about why crime occurred and what was, therefore, appropriate to have as a crime reduction mandate. Regardless, it was interesting to note that most participants had a near-default belief that property crime, namely auto theft, break-and-enter, theft from vehicles, street-level robbery, and serial property offences, was the most important offence type to focus on, and several participants identified addressing this as their primary mandate.

Mandates also fell along a spectrum between two different types of work. As mentioned above, at one end was suppression and enforcement activities in the form of proactive targeting, covert surveillance, and the arrest of offenders. The other was social, preventive, and relationship-building

activities that took the form of community engagement, delivering public education on crime reduction and prevention strategies, developing partnerships in the community with local businesses, schools, and service providers, and managing social problems that are not, in themselves, crimes. Participants described community education and engagement delivered on request, such as fraud-awareness sessions when scams spiked, home security advice, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design assessments, crime-free multi-housing initiatives, diversity and inclusion outreach to cultural and religious communities, and vulnerable persons work addressing mental health, addiction, and homelessness.

Crucially, these two approaches were not always housed in separate units. In several police agencies, a single mandate held both together, such as a gang unit that coupled direct suppression with youth diversion programming in schools or a youth squad that paired probation order enforcement with family engagement and partnerships with child-welfare services. Such mandates suggest that the enforcement versus social distinction, though real, is better understood as a tension managed within mandates than as a clear divide. A few participants described an evolution in which, for example, an earlier community policing mandate that focused on being a visible, friendly presence without a clear link to crime outcomes had been displaced by an expectation that engagement must demonstrably serve crime reduction goals. This shift is consequential because it reframes the social elements of a mandate not as an alternative to crime reduction but as a means of achieving it.

Participants identified four main drivers of changing mandates. The first was a change in the leadership. Several participants attributed a redirection of their unit's mandate to, for example, a new chief or supervisor who brought a prevention focus into decision-making and operational priorities to the unit. The second was community demand, with a few participants describing how their mandate was shifted to address a specific issue of community concern, such as the insecurely housed or visible street disorder. The third driver was the process of internal reorganization, which involved moving a team to another section or a management decision to reassign personnel or reposition the team. The fourth driver, and the most commonly mentioned one, was addressing gaps. This involved changing the mandate to address an emerging trend. Against these pressures, many participants expressed an offsetting desire for stability. Moreover, many participants stated that their mandate had not changed in a long time. However, an important distinction emerged between change and evolution. Many participants described a mandate that had grown in scope without being abandoned or meaningfully redefined, and some regarded the apparent evolution of their mandate as a rebranding rather than a genuine change.

Mandates also told participants what did not belong to them. Several described handing files to other teams or explicitly excluding certain work because of their mandates. For example, gang-related or violent crimes were placed off-limits for one community-focused team on the grounds that such work required specialized training and lay outside its mandate, while another unit declined certain requests because its mandate defined it as operations support supplementing frontline officers rather than directly assisting investigative teams. Participants thus rarely framed their mandate in the abstract, but in terms of what their mandate and resources allowed them to do. The connecting thread, once again, was resourcing. Participants felt that the following choices were largely governed by the resources made available to them: whether to draw a mandate

broadly or narrowly, whether to hand a file off or keep it, and whether to respond to a community problem or a data-indicated one.

In summary, three conclusions are drawn from the discussion of the mandate. First, the offender-centric model was the closest thing to a shared approach across enforcement units, analytical functions, and even some prevention-oriented teams, the premise that a concentrated minority of offenders generated a disproportionate share of harm was widely assumed. Participants did not differ on this premise but on the believed root causes of offending and on whether the right response was suppression, management or diversion. Second, the dominant operating model was a broad mandate informed by information and intelligence that set general boundaries for the team. Data narrowed the boundary, and the supervisor, commander, or team leader decided what the team would specifically focus on. Third, enforcement and prevention were increasingly integrated within single mandates, and several participants described their current arrangement as being more coordinated than what preceded it. Having examined what crime reduction work was and how widely it ranged, the next section considers where that work was located within the organization.

THE LOCATION AND STRUCTURE OF CRIME REDUCTION PERSONNEL

The location of crime reduction work within the organization proved to be as variable as its meaning and mandate. This claim is supported by participants' comments related to the absence of any consistent organisational home for crime reduction efforts, the shared character of the units that did exist, and the way an organization's placement of the crime reduction function signalled how it conceived of crime reduction in the first place.

Given the sample, it was unsurprising that no consistent organisational home for crime reduction emerged. A substantial group of participants located their work within investigative services, with crime reduction, intelligence, analysis, chronic offender management, and special projects all described as sitting there. The second group placed comparable work within community policing or community outreach programs, alongside youth, traffic, and community response functions. A third group of participants placed their agency's crime reduction efforts under operations or operational support, sometimes describing themselves as primarily a support function. The same kind of work, in other words, was construed as investigative, community-facing, operational support, or strategic depending on the organization. Beyond this cross-sectional variety, several participants described the placement of their crime reduction efforts as currently in flux rather than settled, and the recurring impression was that the proper location for these functions was treated as an open question that these participants were rarely able to explain. Equally important, much crime reduction work was not assigned to a single self-contained team but was shared across many people and teams, and many participants described routine collaboration across unit lines as simply how the work was done efficiently and effectively.

In effect, there was no standard model for organizing crime reduction work across police agencies. Comparable functions were sometimes constituted as dedicated units and sometimes not, and were sometimes stable and sometimes in active flux in different parts of the organization. Consequently, the term 'crime reduction unit' does not denote a consistent entity across different police agencies.

Participants repeatedly indicated that the organisational chart was an incomplete guide to how their work was governed, what they did, and with whom they worked. Many units were not self-contained but borrowed personnel, lent capacity to others, distributed ownership of files and projects, and leaned on mutual aid and shared central services to complete their work and fulfil their mandate. Some organizations established dedicated crime reduction units. In others, participants reported a conscious decision not to have one team or unit exclusively responsible for crime reduction, reasoning that framing crime reduction as a shared organisational responsibility avoided placing an unrealistic burden on a single team and better reflected the orientation of all police officers in that agency. Several participants singled out civilians and analysts as especially valuable to the function. However, as noted above, how analysts were organized and located varied considerably, partly because of the size of the police agency and partly because of decisions about centralizing or embedding these roles.

Finally, although placement did not always reflect the actual orientation of the work, where crime reduction was housed signalled how the organization conceived of it. Locating the function under investigative services implies that crime reduction is chiefly an investigative specialization. Housing it under community policing suggests that it is a community-facing function. Placing it under operational support reflects a more enabling service. Read this way, the organisational chart is less a map of where the work happens than a statement of what each police agency believes crime reduction fundamentally to be, which returns to the opening claim that crime reduction is, across these various police agencies, a function in search of a settled form.

UNIT SIZE AND COMPOSITION

As outlined previously, across the sworn operational units, the most representative full-strength figure was approximately eight members. Teams were typically built as a sergeant plus six or seven constables or as two smaller teams under separate supervisors. It was interesting to note that eight police officers were the figure participants most often named as ideal. However, the lived reality was typically below the number of police officers on paper. The number available on any given day was more commonly between three and seven, and a four-person team was one of the most common real-world structures. In other words, units or teams that appeared to have eight police officers on paper frequently operated closer to four to six in practice. Beyond the numbers, two features of unit assembly stood out. The first is a common rank scaffold, where a small number of constables reported to a corporal or sergeant, who in turn reported to an inspector. The second, and more striking, was the number of units that were no longer composed solely of sworn officers. Several participants described how they integrated civilians and external partners directly into their teams. For example, one intimate partner violence team brought together detectives, victim service workers, social workers employed by an external agency, and a probation officer under terms that gave each partner organization a veto over whether to take on a file or not. Other units had integrated nurses in mental health response cars. The composition of these teams is increasingly multi-agency rather than purely police.

Participants also readily spoke about the experience profile of their teams and, in several cases, about an ideal level of experience. Two participants articulated an explicit notion of a “sweet spot”

for the level of experience needed on an effective team. Specifically, one participant placed it around the ten-year mark because this was the point at which police officers became comfortable across the full range of their policing roles and responsibilities. Another participant estimated that it took roughly three years for a police officer to become genuinely comfortable with their work. Given this, it was interesting that the general current were teams skewing younger or were made up of police officers with fewer years of policing experience.

When asked about the ideal size, almost every sworn participant wanted more people. The dominant logic was that additional team members would allow the team to cover more ground or run more than one project simultaneously. For example, more members were desired so that a current team could be divided into several smaller teams to work on writing warrants, working on more than one project, and still having members available for proactive patrolling. Other participants were interested in recruiting more members to either build out their current surveillance team or run more than one surveillance team, as several participants described the painful choice of which of two targets to follow when resources were thin. It is interesting to note that when asked whether extra bodies would mean doing more of the current work or something different, the participants were somewhat split. Some participants wanted to stay in their lane, while others wanted to open new fronts, such as a dedicated deterrence team alongside an enforcement team, or the capacity to address lower-priority community complaints currently crowded out by more urgent harms.

Underlying the question of team size was a shift in how attractive postings to crime reduction teams or those engaged in crime reduction were. One long-serving participant contrasted the era of some years ago when police officers lined up to join a newly proposed proactive team with their more recent experience of struggling to generate interest. However, other participants reported the opposite, that exposure to a unit's work and successes had generated a queue of interested police officers, and that a crime reduction posting had become the most sought-after destination.

Civilian analysts described teams as an order of magnitude smaller than sworn units, and several worked alone or nearly alone. However, teams of three or four were typical across the analyst responses. The general tone was that before the mid-2000s, the people doing analytic work were police officers. Over time, civilian positions were created, and the department-wide complement of analysts grew over the past two decades. The result is a function that is simultaneously growing in aggregate but is thinly stretched in many police agencies.

Analysts described how the work reached them, and a common model emerged. Requests that originated from anywhere in the police agency gravitated to either an available analyst or one who had built knowledge in a particular area. To keep a very small team resilient, the analyst's work was often organized into individual streams while deliberately preserving crossover, so that if a colleague went on an extended leave, anyone could step in. This aligned with the decision to locate all analysts in a shared common space where they would work with each other and share skills and information when responding to requests. When asked about ideal staffing levels, analysts framed their answers around the threshold at which they could actually fulfil their mandates rather than around an ambitious expansion. What appeared to be most important to them was having enough analysts to address the volume of requests, having sufficient breadth of skills and knowledge to

effectively and appropriately respond to the analytic needs of requests, and being able to provide both strategic and tactical information and intelligence.

Considering the responses of all participants, the sworn police officers and analysts shared a key element. Both types of participants described a persistent gap between the authorized and available strength that has come to feel normal, and both leaned on workarounds, such as overtime, external funding, secondments, neighbouring jurisdictions, and civilian or partner-agency staff, to be most effective. When asked what they would do with more people, both groups of participants answered chiefly in terms of doing the existing work more thoroughly rather than fundamentally different work, with only a minority of participants proposing genuinely new functions.

WORK SCHEDULE

The most prominent feature of the sworn police officers work schedules was a four-day week, most often Monday to Thursday or Tuesday to Friday, beginning around six or seven in the morning and ending in the late afternoon. This work schedule appeared across investigative, community engagement, youth, and crime reduction units. When participants explained their choice, the rationale clustered tightly around daytime work because businesses and retailers are open during the day, community meetings and partner agencies operate on business hours, and, by several accounts, the bulk of relevant files they worked on required being available during the daytime. A substantial number of participants indicated that their team deviated from the daytime norm by rotating into afternoons or evenings, typically on four-on, four-off patterns, or on multi-week cycles that alternated blocks of day and afternoon shifts. The purpose of these routine deviations was not to align with the operating hours of businesses but to align with the ‘operating’ schedules of offenders. Several participants stated that most offenders do not get moving until the late afternoon or evening, that surveillance is easier at night when fewer people are around, and that drug activity is more common at night. Where the rationale was made explicit, participants frequently cited an analysis of call loads or crime patterns as the basis for their work schedules.

A direct consequence of four-day schedules built around Monday to Thursday or Tuesday to Friday is that many units do not cover parts of the weekend, and several do not cover Mondays. Participants were candid about this, but the gap was rationalized on the grounds that the hours or days not covered were genuinely quieter or were covered by overtime, if needed, or by having members available on call for urgent matters. In effect, almost every sworn participant qualified their schedule by stressing that it was flexible. Start times were shifted earlier or later to match a target’s pattern, shifts extended past their scheduled end when a target was mobile or the objective was not yet met, or information or intelligence obtained about a target or an offender required a shift in schedule. Participants pointed out that the formal schedule understated how much the actual working schedule of the team was dictated by events. It is important to note that some participants pointed to constraints, noting that any schedule had to fit within the collective agreement or contract and that union rules shaped how overtime was allocated. Moreover, some participants pointed out that it was critical to have an appealing schedule to recruit members to the team. To this end, a four-day week was described as highly desirable, and a later shift starting time was valued because it spared members from upending their entire day.

However, several participants believed that their unit's schedule ought to follow its mandate, yet the same organisational goal of reducing crime pulled schedules in opposite directions depending on whether the core task required daytime engagement and investigation or evening surveillance and enforcement. The daytime schedule is optimized for businesses, partners, and meetings, whereas the afternoon schedule is optimized for targets. A team whose mandate blends both cannot fully satisfy either requirement. Moreover, when asked why the schedule was as it was, several participants answered that the team's schedule had always been that way or that they had no idea why the schedule was the way it was.

The analysts' schedules were markedly different from the sworn rotations. The norm was a Monday to Friday week starting around 07:00 and ending around 15:00 without shift rotation and without any 24-hour analyst coverage. In effect, analysts worked conventional office hours. Within this fixed weekly frame, analysts described several options. Some participants worked flexible start times around a 40-hour expectation, balancing a longer day against a shorter one; one participant worked a compressed week, and others worked Monday to Thursday or Tuesday to Friday, like the sworn officers. A recurring theme was that working conventional office hours left the operational side of the team without analytic support on the days and hours when enforcement work intensified. This led one analyst to argue that moving to a four-on, four-off model would be beneficial because it would place an analyst on every day of the week. While some police officers can perform a degree of analytic work themselves, it is better to have these tasks completed by a trained analyst. It is also interesting to note that while sworn police officers, at least sometimes, tied their hours to call loads or offender activity, the analysts' schedules were more often explained by other considerations. One analyst reported that they had successfully negotiated their work schedule to align with their parental obligations, which they freely acknowledged bore no relation to their workload. On the sworn side, several analysts could offer no rationale for their hours beyond the schedule, having always been so or having changed before they arrived.

In summary, both types of participants shared a somewhat common schedule gravitating toward daytime, weekday work, and both qualified their formal schedules with a degree of flexibility, when needed. However, the general similarity of their schedules was somewhat superficial in nature. For sworn units, the daytime four-day week was one option within a collection that also included deliberate afternoon and evening rotations chosen to match offender activity. For the analysts, the daytime work week was virtually the only work schedule. Given this, both groups of participants left some structural gaps, namely weekends and Mondays for the sworn officer participants and evenings and weekends for the analysts.

ENTRY AND SELECTION INTO CRIME REDUCTION UNITS

When asked to describe the process of joining their team or unit, the most common response was that joining a crime reduction unit involved no special recruitment route. Participants described entry as being identical to any other internal posting. A vacancy is advertised on an internal board, the candidate submits a resume and cover letter, sets out how they meet the stated criteria for the position, and moves through the organization's ordinary channels to be selected. Several participants said that there was nothing distinctive about the unit's recruitment, that no special

skills were needed, or that the process was standard. In effect, one applies to join a crime reduction team as one would to any section, and the selection process is generic rather than tailored. The outcome of this is that participants did not think of crime reduction postings any differently than any other posting.

When participants discussed who made the selection decision, a consistent structure emerged. The final authority rested with the line officer, while the unit supervisor or a serving member played an advisory, screening, or recommending role. One supervisor described receiving and reviewing candidate CVs, forming recommendations, and passing them up the chain of command while stressing that the final decision belonged to the line officer. Another participant expected that they would be consulted on the hiring process at the line officer's discretion, noting that the authority lay with the line officer but could be delegated to others. A third participant confirmed that they had a role in deciding who joined the team. Across these accounts, the team's supervisor seems to have a voice, but not the last word, on the team composition. This is important because it places control over a specialist unit's membership largely outside the unit itself.

While participants described the process of joining the team as the same way any police officer joins any specialized team, what separated successful candidates was anything but generic. Several participants pointed to competency frameworks, such as leadership, decision-making, and teamwork, and to the expectation that candidates demonstrate each of these qualities with concrete examples. Others described the requirement of specific operational experience, including handling confidential sources, writing search warrants, and prior investigative work, to be successful when applying to the team. Other participants emphasized qualities that are harder to assess, such as work ethic, flexibility, willingness to work, ability to get along on a small team, and strong communication skills. Taken together, these accounts show that the claim that 'the standard process' of being selected for a crime reduction team concealed a substantively demanding threshold to surpass. The selection procedure may be typical, but the criteria operating within it are highly specific and demanding.

Civilian crime analysts describe an entry route that diverged substantially and consistently from the sworn pathway. For them, the decisive condition of entry was not internal policing competency or operational experience but academic and professional credentials. One analyst described having to come from a specific crime analyst academic program with specific courses completed before being eligible to apply. Another analyst entered the field by completing a degree in criminology with a diploma in crime analysis. Set against the dominant competitive posting accounts was a cluster of participants who bypassed open competitions altogether. For example, one participant was appointed directly by the chief and did not apply at all, having previously led a community policing branch. Notably, this role was a leadership-track placement, not a competition. One civilian analyst received informal offers during a period of organisational change, entering without any formal competitive process. One participant did not describe entering an existing post at all but rather building their own position and mandate designed to grow the unit's capacity and the breadth of what it covered over time, extending its reach from frontline projects to provincial and federal engagement. Together, these accounts complicate any claim that entry into crime reduction units is uniformly a merit-based competitive process. A meaningful minority arrived by

appointment, through informal offers, or by building the role themselves to address an institutional need. It is important to keep in mind that each of these routes was represented by a single participant and, therefore, in no way a common approach taken by most of the police agencies represented in this project.

Furthermore, when considering the sample, only two participants suggested that those who ended up in crime reduction units were shaped not only by the process but also by their disposition and lifestyle. In other words, one participant observed that their unit attracted a certain personality partly because of the prospect of a more stable shift schedule. Another participant suggested that whether the section is seen as desirable depends on whether someone enjoys proactive work, noting that some police officers simply prefer reactive policing or just responding to calls for service. These types of comments indicated that, to some extent, the candidate pool for crime reduction teams is partly self-filtering before any formal process begins, with the nature of the work and its conditions screening people in or out of applying for the position.

In summary, entry into crime reduction units was overwhelmingly described as routine and unremarkable. For most participants, the unit was, procedurally, just another posting where people who selected to join the team through the same processes as any other internal move. However, the selection process is substantively selective. Competencies must be evidenced, specialist experience is sometimes a precondition, credentials are paramount in the civilian route, and interpersonal fit and documented ability are important. The teams themselves have limited formal control over their own composition, and the influence they have on who joins the team seems to depend on the line officer's discretion. Finally, recruitment is largely reactive and vacancy-driven rather than strategic or proactive, as some participants indicated that nothing was done in advance to encourage suitable people to apply ahead of an opening.

TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND EXPERIENCE IN CRIME REDUCTION UNITS

Regarding training, the most pervasive comment was that crime reduction units do not require role-specific training before a member joins. Instead, members are recruited and then trained, with the unit treating the early period of tenure as the time to acquire the courses, tools, and knowledge required by the role. Participants across different units described this sequence in almost identical terms. Most commonly, training was available after arrival, and members were placed on the next available course once they were in their positions. One investigative team captured the logic through the image of a new member as a passenger who cannot drive until the relevant training is completed. This approach placed enormous weight on on-the-job learning, and many participants were explicit that this, rather than any formal course, was where competence was built. Analysts and police officers alike described picking up the work through trial and error, learning to recognize patterns and trends with time on the team, and absorbing local knowledge that no formal training course could provide. The recurring observation was that professional competence came through experience on the team rather than any formal or structured training before joining the team. Given this, mentorship and modelling became the main ways in which members developed their professional skills. Participants described experienced members leading by example, supervisors co-locating with more junior members so questions could be asked in the moment, and

daily feedback as the way people learned their roles and responsibilities and developed their skills. A minority of units inverted this dominant model. These tended to be the busiest and most specialized teams, which described themselves as lacking the capacity to develop new members and, therefore, expected new team members to arrive substantially trained. For example, one participant stated that they expected new team members to already be trained in informant handling, surveillance, have some undercover skills, and could act as an affiant. Another participant described their positions as non-developmental, expecting new members to arrive already equipped to process complex files.

Another important theme was that very little of the training described by the participants was designed for crime reduction units. Repeatedly, participants said that there was nothing specific to their unit, that no mandatory training was automatically tied to the team, and that the courses police officers took were general policing or investigative courses applied to the unit's purposes rather than built for them. The existing training is essentially assembled from components originally designed for different purposes, such as surveillance, warrant writing, interviewing, informant management, and crime prevention assessment. These components are then adapted to fit the specific mission of the unit. Where a unit is heavily invested in a particular task or function, team members train specifically for that task, but this is described as a response to the unit's chosen initiatives, such as surveillance, rather than a coherent curriculum for crime reduction work in general. Importantly, the lack of dedicated training was not always considered a deficiency. Several participants regarded the generalist foundation as appropriate and sufficient because a broadly trained and experienced police officer can be shaped to meet the unit's needs. The field lacks a standardized body of crime reduction-specific training, and crime reduction teams have organized themselves around that fact in different ways.

In the space left by the absence of a standard curriculum, several units have developed their own training programs. Examples include a structured monthly in-house program in which members host external agencies and then share what they have learned, an internally developed media-relations curriculum, complete with presentations, public-speaking practice, and mock interviews, and custom-built courses in de-escalation and peer mental health support. Locally built training programs are a notable form of adaptive capacity. They also reflect a recurring civilian-facing concern with soft skills and community engagement that formal policing training is said not to address well, such as the development of empathy and patience.

When the sworn police officer participants identified specific training, surveillance training was mentioned more often than any other single course and was frequently described as the principal or even the only formal training that police officers needed. This was followed by warrant writing, interviewing and forensic interviewing, disclosure and file coordination, human source and informant handling, and drug investigation techniques. Several participants described tiered surveillance pathways, from short-foot surveillance courses to tactical and advanced courses. These courses were recognized as comprising the operational-investigative core of the work, and proficiency in these areas was considered a reasonable proxy for readiness.

It should be noted that the prominence of these skills was because of the sample of participants, as many were involved in proactive, plainclothes crime reduction work. Surveillance is not normally

offered to uniformed police officers and depends on plainclothes postings. Several participants worked on teams that were exclusively plainclothes, and participants from community-facing teams commonly noted that, although surveillance training was something everyone asked for, it was not a priority for them precisely because they were in uniform and much of their work involved community engagement.

For those working in operational teams, informant handling was singled out as both the most important and hardest skill to develop. One participant described informant handling as a substantial piece of their crime reduction strategy because informants provide information about places the police cannot otherwise reach. Several participants felt that a crime reduction unit without this capacity quickly developed a productivity and intelligence gap. Several participants also described newer technical capabilities being added, often through the interest or background of a particular team member. These included covert tracking devices for vehicles and phones, the use of drones, and the deliberate recruitment of members with information technology backgrounds to explore how technology might benefit the unit and police agency.

Because formal, role-specific training was not always available and competencies were built after entry into a crime reduction unit, selecting for disposition was viewed as very important. The sentiment that a skill can be taught but an attitude cannot was expressed in various forms by several participants. Two general portraits of ideal members emerged, and which one dominated depended largely on the team's mandate. Investigative and disruption-focused teams described ideal members in terms of drive and appetite. The recurring vocabulary was of a go-getter, a self-starter, an industrious and innovative member who challenged the status quo, and viewed their role as being a hunter. Analysts in intelligence-oriented roles were similarly described. They were viewed as needing to be conscientious, self-directed, patient, willing to sit with a problem, and aggressive in the sense of actively seeking connections rather than waiting for tasks to be assigned. This characterization focused on initiative and tenacity rather than any specific credentials.

Community safety, school-facing, media, and partnership-oriented participants described a very different ideal. The prized qualities were being personable and approachable, communicating well with the public and with partners outside the policing world, understanding the purpose and impact of engagement, and, for those working with vulnerable or marginalized populations, leading with compassion while remaining alert to risk. Media and communication roles added public speaking confidence, trustworthiness, tact, poise, and composure under pressure. These participants valued the ability to move between different audiences in a single day. For these participants, relational and communicative capacity was critical, much of which they regarded as innate rather than trainable. Flexibility and adaptability were repeatedly identified as important characteristics across all participants. Moreover, coachability, initiative, a willingness to learn, the humility to pass work to a better-placed colleague, and the capacity to take constructive criticism were all described as widely sought attributes.

Of course, civilian crime and intelligence analysts require training that is very different from that of sworn officers. While the police officer pathway focused on a period of apprenticeship and the development of excellent general policing skills and experiences, the analyst pathway was markedly more formalized, credentialed, and tool-centered. Analysts described obtaining their

positions with formal qualifications, such as diplomas and degrees in crime analysis, criminology, psychology, political science, or other related fields. Several police agencies treated a degree as a requirement and a postgraduate qualification as preferred. Participants described a profession that has been standardized over time, moving from the ad hoc, one-off analyst roles of the past to established standards with testing and education requirements for entry. Professional bodies, seminars, conferences, and provincial analyst networks were described as ongoing sources of development.

Analyst training was commonly expressed as being organized around specific analytic tools and techniques, such as mapping and geographic software, spreadsheet proficiency, link analysis and case analysis tools, open-source research, and dedicated tactical and strategic analysis courses. The gaps identified by analysts clustered around cybercrime and financial crime, dark-web and deep open-source investigation, and intelligence analysis. Several analysts said that these were skills and capabilities that they did not have. Other participants stated that there was a need for refresher training, exposure to newer software, and more regular access to open-source training. A distinct frustration among some participants was that junior analysts tended to receive training while senior analysts, whose knowledge was more dated, did not. This served to invert the mentoring relationship on which the model relied. A particularly sophisticated concern raised by the analyst was that police officers were sent to conferences to discover new covert technologies and software, but the analyst group was not included in this process. Consequently, there is a gap between acquiring a new technology and being able to deploy and use it effectively and efficiently.

Even when appropriate training existed, participants often described a set of structural constraints that determined whether members actually received it. To begin with, sought-after courses were heavily oversubscribed, resulting in people having to apply several times before securing a place. Budgets also restrict the pace at which members can be trained. Time was another constraint because multi-day courses were difficult to take when every day that a member spends in training is a day their operational workload accumulates or must be addressed by someone else. One leader was explicit that members not having all the necessary training was a consequence of this trade-off rather than any unwillingness to train them. The absence of an ability to backfill those who are away on training further compounded the problem, as sending a member on a course removed capacity that was not typically replaced. Finally, access to training was described as contingent on supportive leadership and, frequently, external funding. Several participants credited supportive supervisors with their ability to train, describing the flexibility to send members on courses as a luxury enabled by their leadership's backing.

When asked directly whether their team members had the necessary training, education, and experience to fulfil their mandate, most participants answered in the affirmative. However, these affirmations were heavily qualified. A recurring theme was that the situation was adequate, but it could always be better. Several participants framed adequacy as sufficient to get a member started while leaning heavily on subsequent on-the-job learning. The overall picture was one of qualified confidence rather than of complacency. The gaps identified by participants fell into a remarkably consistent pattern, which is useful because it suggests where investment would have the broadest effect. The first cluster was legal and court-related, in that participants felt shortfalls in detailed

legal knowledge, in writing legal caveats and limitations into reports, and in court disclosure and legislative understanding. The second gap was in cyber, intelligence, and open-source data mining, while a third gap in training, education, or experience was in the development of community engagement and the associated soft skills, which several participants regarded as essential, such as empathy, patience, and the relational skills demanded by work with vulnerable populations.

In summary, participants described a training landscape that was improvised and disconnected rather than standardized and frontloaded. The most powerful theme was the dominance of post-entry, on-the-job development, and training. For most participants, a formal training course was treated as a supplement to experience rather than its foundation, and the real curriculum was the work itself, transmitted through mentorship and time on the team. This shaped everything else and explains why new members are, in part, selected because of their trainable dispositions, why mentorship is so valued, and why the time to obtain competence is measured in years. The second overarching theme was the absence of crime reduction-specific training. Those working in crime reduction units compile their capabilities from generalist policing courses and a recognized operational-investigative toolkit, supplemented by team-specific activities and experiences that fill the gaps each unit feels most acutely. While some participants described mandatory courses and structured individual learning plans, others described training as interest-based, with a lack of standardization provided to those who requested it.

A TYPICAL SHIFT

A striking feature was the number of participants who resisted the premise of the question. Several stated, in effect, that there was no typical shift, as their days were shaped by what came in, what projects were already running, and what the week's priorities happened to be. The most consistent comments were regarding the way the shift opened. Almost every participant, sworn or civilian, began their shift with some combination of reading the overnight or weekend files, checking emails and incoming bulletins, attending a briefing, and planning or triaging the day. These habits convert the previous period's events into the current period's priorities and establish what each person or team will pursue. The remarkable thing is how invariant this was across the very different roles represented by the participants, even as the rest of their days diverged sharply.

When it came to the daily briefing, many participants described briefings that were layered or attended by people from different parts of the organization. In several police agencies, a detachment-wide or watch briefing brought every section together to hear what had happened overnight and what each unit was doing that day, sometimes followed by a second, narrower briefing for a specific rank of officers or a specialized team. The general purpose of these meetings was to create mutual situational awareness. Participants described a deliberate effort to ensure that everyone knew what everyone else was working on. Thus, the briefing is not only an information session but also a coordination mechanism.

Notably, the civilian analyst participants described a distinctive variant at the beginning of their shifts. Rather than receiving a briefing, several participants indicated that they produced the materials used in briefings. As such, their mornings are spent reading the previous day's or several

days' files to identify patterns, series, repeat offenders, and trends, which are then turned into bulletins, summaries, or verbal context delivered at the briefing. For these participants, the opening of the shift is the moment of information and intelligence production, and several participants described attending briefings specifically to inject what they had noticed and to offer recommendations.

After the review and briefing, planning follows. Participants described setting weekly objectives, building a daily or weekly plan, drawing up target sheets, and creating a 'plan of attack'. In some teams, this planning is individualized, with each member recording what they intend to achieve, while in others, the plan is set by a supervisor. Across nearly all participants, the work of the day was repeatedly described as information- or intelligence-led, and many participants positioned a variety of analytical products, such as hot spot maps, daily and weekly bulletins, warrant logs, offender profiles, target packages, and trend reports, as the things that direct where team members go, whom they watch, and whom they interact with. Intelligence was viewed as the connective tissue between the structured morning and operational day.

Civilian analysts described several routine products that they produced. These include daily summaries and bulletins distributed to patrol officers and others, weekly intelligence bulletins that track offender custody status, prominent arrests, and connections between files, hot spot identification based on temporal and spatial factors, curfew lists, and offender profiles. Several participants emphasized that they tailored these products to be brief and actionable, filtering for what frontline members could actually use. Some participants described drawing on sources that operational members lacked the time or access to exploit, including open-source and online material that, importantly, positioned the analyst as an investigative resource and not merely as a producer of statistics. On the sworn side, several supervisors described using intelligence to assign specific beats or targets rather than allowing officers to roam based on their intuition.

Notably, several participants described intelligence as a two-way street rather than just from the analyst to the sworn member. Here, operational members forwarded observations, tips, and file information to the analysts, who then incorporated that information into the next briefing, bulletin, or operational meeting. However, almost every participant was clear in reporting that the use of information and intelligence was overwhelmingly retrospective and used to develop current operational plans, but that it was not used in a predictive policing way, as will be discussed in greater detail below.

Many participants described their day as a negotiated balance between proactive activities, such as specific projects, surveillance, and focusing on disrupting crime trends, and reactive work that focused on responding to calls for service, assisting frontline police officers, and responding to incoming requests. This balance was described differently by sworn officers and civilian analysts, but the underlying structure was that their days were divided between work that they initiated and work that was required or demanded. For the sworn participants, proactive work was frequently described as project-based and objective-driven work. They described surveillance that continued until an objective was met, projects that ran for weeks or months, and time-bound activities, such as giving two days to address a retail theft problem. Based on participant accounts, proactive work was clearly valued and was often where participants found their work most meaningful.

However, these same participants described monitoring the radio and assisting frontline officers when something arose, taking over files that matched a known pattern or method of operation, and responding to all-hands situations. Civilian analysts described a request queue that structures and often dominates their day, with requests being prioritized by a dairy date or by the seniority of the requester, such as a request from the chief. Several participants described their reactive work as dominating their proactive work. On the analyst side, several participants described how the request queue had, over several years, steadily reduced the time available for self-directed trend work, such that proactive analysis only happened when there was a lull. On the sworn side, understaffing was repeatedly described as reducing the ability of members to engage in proactive work.

A large portion of participants reported that a typical shift was organized around named targets and offenders rather than places or call types. Surveillance, warrant apprehension, compliance checks, and the management of prolific, priority, or chronic offenders were commonly reported by many participants, especially those who worked in surveillance, investigative, and chronic-offender teams. For these participants, a typical shift involved reviewing priority offender lists at the briefing, tracking a defined population, flagging individuals in police systems so that any contact triggered a notification, and liaising with the Crown and probation. Particularly in smaller or rural settings, a typical shift included compliance and curfew checks on offenders subject to conditions and coordinated follow-up when someone was not where they should be.

Running alongside the offender-centered operations was a different process, in which the typical shift was built around visible presence in the community and building relationships. A distinct set of crime reduction teams, such as those responsible for community engagement, vulnerable persons, schools, and co-response mental health cars, described days organized around foot presence in commercial cores, the maintenance of relationships with businesses and community partners to understand their concerns and needs, and maintaining extensive networks of community partners to assist homeless, vulnerable, or at-risk people. Some participants described their typical morning tasks as moving people sleeping in front of businesses and conducting wellness checks. Others described going to encampments, connecting people with support, and providing food and water to those in need of it. Others described a typical shift in directing public drug use toward overdose prevention sites. For some participants, their daily routine involved preparing and delivering structured prevention and education programs to the community. This could include fraud awareness and crime prevention workshops at community and senior centres, lockdown drills, and presentations on cyberbullying, gang recruitment activity, and online safety education at schools. External partnerships were equally important. Participants described routine work with probation, Crown counsel, municipal and city safety teams, mental health and assertive community treatment services, schools, business owners, loss prevention officers, insurance and emergency services for community events, and government ministries. Given this, many participants reported that intelligence meetings that gathered analysts and unit heads and converted analytical findings into tasking, CompStat or CompStat-like processes, situation tables participation, and crime reduction meetings were all routine, albeit not necessarily daily, aspects of a typical shift.

Finally, a set of common constraints was often identified by participants that shaped what any shift could realistically contain. These complaints were not incidental. Rather, participants described resourcing, backlog, and paperwork burden as active determinants of how the day was structured and what did not get done. Several participants described the volume of demands as exceeding their capacity. One analyst described a backlog in which even quick tasks could sit for days and longer pieces for months, and analytical products that have been paused outright because of being understaffed. Some sworn participants described being too short-staffed to do meaningful proactive work, while others described investigative areas with enough work to justify several times the current number of teams.

Report writing or paperwork was another common constraint and a feature of a typical shift. For sworn officers, participants described returning to the office to finish paperwork, the several hours an arrest can consume in report writing, and a sense that reports to the Crown now take far longer than they once did, with some newer officers said to avoid them in favour of the next arrest. By contrast, for civilian analysts, report writing was not a constraint on the work but the work itself. Quarterly and annual statistical reports, grant measurables, officer activity tracking, and recurring bulletins were described as the substance of the role, with one analyst observing that they were essentially always reporting on something.

In summary, the participants described a working day that was neither routine nor improvised. There were a small number of stable activities, such as overnight reviews, briefings, and planning meetings. The widespread refusal of the idea of a typical shift is best understood as a description of this structure rather than as its absence. The use of intelligence was the most consistent factor. Whether a participant was a surveillance officer, engagement team supervisor, or analyst, the typical shift was repeatedly described as being directed by crime patterns or trends, hot spots, and a focus on identified targets or offenders. Analysts produced the morning picture, sometimes sat in the coordinating meetings, fed tasking, and, in some cases, shaped or contributed to the formation of strategies. The second strong pattern was the two broad operational processes that coexisted within and across the various crime reduction teams. Some participants focused on offenders and targets built on surveillance, warrants, and offender management, while others were more place- and relationship-focused, built on visibility, engagement, and community partnerships. Moreover, many police agencies clearly run both, sometimes within a single dual-mandate team.

DECIDING WHAT THE TEAM SHOULD DO

Across the sworn police officer participants, when asked how decisions about what their team focuses on, a monthly CompStat-style review, weekend or overnight file reviews, dayshift watch reports, daily crime bulletins from frontline officers, or information provided by analyses, was common. From these sources, participants reported identifying locations where there was an increase in criminal activity and the individuals responsible for the offending. According to these participants, while data may initiate the decision, human judgment, operational sense, and local knowledge complete it. Participants often spoke about not removing the human aspect in the decision-making process but supplementing their data with what police officers know about who is where and what is of concern to the community. Therefore, the picture is not of data-driven tasking

in a mechanical sense, but of data-initiated tasking that is filtered through experience. Some supervisors described their decision-making as being connected to data outputs with priorities that were revisited on a set schedule. This creates a degree of regularity in what is otherwise a fluid, demand-driven environment.

When participants were asked how they chose between priorities, a consistent response was the seriousness of the offence and the risk it posed to people and the community. For example, a violent offence was prioritized above a property offence, and a small number of serious offences were weighted above a large volume of minor offences. Several participants refined this further by distinguishing between continued or ongoing risk, such as whether an offender posed a threat to the wider public or to an identifiable victim, and whether an assault was a stranger or domestic matter. In this way, the calculation was about future harm as much as past seriousness. Moreover, low-value property crimes and shoplifting were frequently identified explicitly as the work most likely to be deprioritized or triaged down.

Another element considered when prioritizing the team's focus was the viability or solvability of the file. Some participants described deprioritizing a file where the initial conditions for successfully resolving it were poor, such as no usable video, no witness or victim statements, or a weak frontline investigation. Conversely, participants reported prioritizing files where the groundwork already existed, and a realistic outcome could be identified from the start. Others folded solvability into a cost calculation, noting that a fraud file may be substantial in terms of harm but so time-consuming that shorter, completable files are cleared first. Based on severity, teams expressed a desire to pursue issues that cause the most harm, while based on solvability, teams wanted to pursue matters that can be resolved. However, these two priorities do not always point to the same file. A small number of participants articulated severity not through the nature of the offence but through the status of whoever was asking. Work originating from an outside agency or major crime section was often prioritized. Running alongside severity, and at times displacing it, was the public interest. Participants described public interest as a major determinant that did not align with the seriousness of the offence. Others described how a gang-related incident, once it reached the news or was alarming to the community and effectively compelled a visible response, would take priority over other issues.

Notably, several participants described political pressure from the mayor's office as a real input in the prioritization process. However, this should not always be viewed negatively. While one participant explicitly stated that priorities arriving from the mayor's office or higher up in the organization were not always those the data would justify, others reported that sometimes these demands were helpful because they helped someone that might otherwise be ignored because the data would understate the harm or risk associated with that file.

A recurring theme was the gap between how teams wished to operate and how the circumstances forced them to operate. Participants described preventative check-ups when a location showed a spike, going into businesses to speak with owners about ongoing problems, mounting time-limited interdiction projects, and intervening before a problem became entrenched, such as getting involved before a tent becomes an encampment, or engaging a high-volume individual with treatment and housing services before more files accrued as proactive activities that should be

prioritized. However, the same participants acknowledged that their day-to-day work was frequently reactive and dictated by what came in, such as issues they encountered over the radio, immediate disturbances that must be assigned and monitored, and calls to the police that must simply be taken, triaged, and progressed. In effect, as will be discussed below, teams hold a proactive self-image and want to be more proactive, but they operate in conditions that continually pull them back towards being more reactive.

In terms of who decides what the teams will do, decisions were distributed across ranks and varied markedly by police agency. At one pole, several supervisors described letting corporals operationalize the work of the constables on the team, declining to micromanage the team as long as priorities were completed, or running a weekly roundtable in which members stated their own priority tasks and work was reallocated from the overloaded to the underused or less busy. For some participants, the workload was described as essentially self-dictated, with senior officers rarely directing what the team members did. At the other pole, decisions were described as resting clearly with a named role, such as a staff sergeant in charge of a team, a team supervisor, or a specific senior officer. Between these poles, the most common arrangement was where a supervisor set the strategic direction while a staff sergeant or supervisor ran the day-to-day functioning of the team. What unified these varied approaches was a repeated insistence that good decision-making relies on experience and relationship building. The decision system was described as personal and relational rather than procedural. A notable number of participants described deciding priorities not in terms of individual files or patrols but as discrete, time-bound projects. Framing their work as a project appeared to serve several purposes for the participants. It limited the commitment to an issue to a specific amount of time, created a justification that could be sent up the chain of command for approval, and produced a measurable result.

For the analysts, the decisions about what they would do were very different, as they were rarely deciding where police officers went or what a team would focus on. Instead, they decided which analytical requests to take, in what order, and how to convert a request into something meaningful. Analysts described their decision-making primarily as the management of an inbound queue of requests. Here, operational and time-sensitive work came first, and a shared tracking log was used to monitor what every analyst was working on and how long tasks were taking, so that prioritization was partly a matter of workload management. In short, the analyst's decisions were largely demand-driven, and their discretion was over the sequencing and feasibility of requests. Moreover, there were standing, scheduled outputs, such as monthly profiles or bulletins, year-end reports, and CompStat meetings that prioritized the analysts' work.

In summary, decision-making was described as a layered process across both sworn police officers and analysts, in which a rational starting point was consistently qualified by other factors. Structured information, such as statistics, bulletins, intelligence reports, and scheduled reviews, almost always initiated decisions regarding prioritization. However, the data are rarely described as deciding anything by themselves. It is filtered through severity and risk judgments, public interest, the experience and relationships of team leaders and members, and the hard limits of capacity. Whether the term used is experience, mentorship, relationships, rapport, or simply knowing who is where, participants located the prioritization process in skilled and knowledgeable

people rather than in static procedures. Finally, many participants made it clear that decisions about what teams focused on were, in part, driven by not having enough police officers, analysts, and time.

STRATEGIES, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES

As expected, for those participants who worked in enforcement teams, the core of their work was described as arrest, charging, and pursuing convictions. Even participants whose units engaged in disruption, deterrence, or engagement tended to rank enforcement first. While enforcement was the single most consistent element mentioned by participants, it was not monolithic. A recurring narrative among many participants was that their unit was originally framed around deterrence or “softer” approaches to crime reduction but had hardened, over time, into enforcement teams. For example, one participant reported that their team was originally designed to focus on deterrence but was now primarily an enforcement team. It is also interesting to note that when participants described a change in their unit’s behaviour or priorities, it was consistently from prevention or deterrence toward enforcement.

While getting charges approved was the stated objective for many, several participants described pragmatic substitutes when a charge was unlikely or less valuable than another outcome. For example, the seizure of large quantities of drugs over the pursuit of charges in cases where charges were never realistically going to follow was viewed as an excellent outcome. Other participants described graduated responses, such as providing a warning for a breach followed by an arrest for subsequent breaches, as reasonable alternatives to an enforcement-first approach. In other words, the charge was the dominant objective, but not the only one.

Many participants described a key feature of their unit as having a structured process for managing known, repeat, or prolific offenders, frequently organized around a named priority-offender program and a set of associated offender lists. The presence of a focus on the most consequential offenders in the community was common across organizations with striking consistency and was the closest thing to a shared, formalized model of crime reduction. Three main components were consistent. First, participants described an administrative framework in which team members were assigned to specific offenders and maintained detailed records of these offenders, such as spreadsheets to track court dates, curfews, probation conditions, and the various locations where these offenders lived, worked, or frequented. This clerical work was consistently described as inseparable from the operational side, which was the second most common component. The operational side of offender management includes the enforcement, deterrence, and disruption activities of the team. The third component was a more analytically intensive form of offender management aimed at high-harm individuals, combining proactive information gathering with focused deterrence projects that may result in a targeted door knock or a coordinated operation to arrest offenders.

These three components are connected by the notion that strategies, operations, and programs are or should be informed and directed by intelligence and analysis. Participants described their activities as responding to crime spikes and trends, concentrating their efforts on identified hot

spots, and drawing on analytical products to decide where and against whom to act. In this way, which was articulated by the analyst participants, crime reduction was not exclusively something police officers did in the community but also something an analyst produced, circulated, and informed what sworn officers did. For example, participants described analyst-generated patrol projects, such as seasonal foot patrols through shopping centres and other identified hot spots, and described reacting to crime spikes, such as a cluster of residential break-ins in one area, which resulted in the development of strategies to be executed by police officers.

Distinct from routine enforcement, work was organized around covert surveillance and sustained, project-based investigations. Participants described covert observation of suspected drug dealers and running projects that could sometimes last up to one year, which were deliberately built toward a larger outcome. Given the nature of the units that participants came from, there was a tension between those who favoured rapid, high-volume, visible enforcement against less serious offences on the reasoning that the work was endlessly repeatable and a botched attempt could simply be retried the next day, and participants who deprioritized quick wins in favour of longer-term cases aimed at more serious offenders and the most complicated files.

As noted throughout this report, some participants' work focused on vulnerable and unhoused people. For these participants, this work involved connecting people to support rather than, or alongside, enforcement, such as liaising with social service agencies and asking them to reach out to someone who appeared to be struggling or steering street entrenched people towards a hub offering food, warmth, housing, and resources. A recurring question raised by several participants was whether the police should lead this work. Several participants were explicit that being unhoused was not a crime and that the appropriate lead to address this issue was a municipal or bylaw agency, with the police role confined to assisting, ensuring safety, and collecting information about who was present and what they needed. However, many participants recognized that if the public called about an issue, it became a policing matter. The general consensus was that the police should aim only to lead the conversation far enough so that another agency could take it over.

Notably, the concept of displacement was somewhat contested by the participants. Some participants outright rejected displacement as a goal. For example, one participant objected to the term's negative connotation while accepting that a person obstructing a business must be moved, framing displacement as connecting the person to resources rather than simply moving them on. Another participant acknowledged that displacement was the only available strategy for a particular population and described active multi-agency efforts intended to build something more holistic and humane. A third reframed displacement is not an aim but a downstream effect of sustained enforcement that pressured offenders to relocate.

The final group of strategies, programs, and services focused on education, situational crime prevention, and community engagement activities, which were central to a minority of participants. Participants described a range of situational and community-facing activities, such as working with the media to issue preventive public messaging, delivering presentations in schools, engaging community volunteers to increase presence and visibility in a crime hot spot, target hardening efforts, and practical problem-solving projects, such as helping secure building access. These measures were typically described as one tool among several rather than as a team's defining

purpose, and these efforts clustered among participants who worked within a broader or more community-oriented mandate.

In summary, whatever else a unit does, enforcement is the primary focus. For some teams, prevention, support, and engagement were the primary focus, but across the entire sample, these activities were most often described as adjuncts to or preconditions for enforcement. While participants described their work along a spectrum from suppression to support, most units occupied a position somewhere along this spectrum rather than at one end or the other, and the same team may find itself at different points along this spectrum for different problems.

Intelligence and analysis were commonly used to direct enforcement and surveillance. Whether through formal analytical products, crime trend analysis, hot spot identification, or prolific offender lists, participants presented their efforts as targeted rather than random. Many participants resisted naming a single strategy, program, or service they used, insisting instead that each issue called for a different response. The strategic approaches used by the participants were problem specific. Finally, what participants did was contingent on who was on the team and the resources that the team had. The consistency of personnel, the drive of individual members, trusted relationships within the community, and team leadership all played critical roles in what participants did and how they achieved their mandate.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN BEING REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE

When asked about the balance between their units being reactive and proactive, approximately half of the participants indicated that their work was largely proactive to one degree or another. Among this half, several participants described their units as entirely, firmly, largely, or very proactive. An even greater number of participants in this group suggested that 70% to 100% of their work was proactive. Simultaneously, among participants who saw their units as largely reactive, most still believed that they spent between 10% and 50% of their time engaging in proactive activities. Other participants who saw their units as largely reactive emphasized that they wanted to be more proactive and would be, were it not for the ever-present demands of high call volume within their policing jurisdiction. Notably, for some units, the balance between proactive and reactive work shifted on a weekly basis, determined by how work was prioritised. Moreover, only two participants described their unit's work as being completely reactive.

Participants also commented on what being proactive meant to them. For most participants, as mentioned above, being proactive involved focusing on specific offenders, problem locations, or crimes, with the goal of preventing criminal activity. In terms of focusing on offenders, several participants referred to time spent engaging with and monitoring high-risk offenders just released from prison, engaging with offenders showing signs of escalating behaviour, doing checks on offenders on probation conditions, engaging with high-risk youth, and conducting overt and covert surveillance on criminal suspects. In addition to calling attention to a focus on offenders, several participants focused their proactive efforts on emerging crime problems or problem locations within their policing jurisdictions, such as tent encampments or street vending. A recurring issue was that proactive efforts were not followed up with help from other organizations, resulting in the

situation eventually reverting to its former state once proactive activity ceased. As the participants described, the impact of their proactive efforts was not lasting because the police could not maintain their presence or keep up the pressure endlessly, and other organizations did not often step in to fill the gaps.

Other proactive activities included strategic communication with the public and media. The goal was to encourage the public to report suspicious activity, be thoughtful about their surroundings, be prevention-minded, and trust the police to be helpful as effective strategies to enhance public safety. Several participants also discussed how they intentionally used communication with the public to reduce the likelihood of citizens becoming victims of specific crimes, such as extortion, fraud, and stranger assault. Such communication was also intended to alert and deter would-be criminals that the police were actively pursuing perpetrators who engaged in these types of crimes. In terms of proactive strategies, some participants developed and delivered presentations in schools to educate youth on a wide range of topics, such as consent, sextortion, gang recruitment, and substance use.

Several participants also discussed the use of patrols proactively. For example, one participant highlighted how their police chief implemented a model in which frontline police officers were tasked with flooding a hot spot once per month by foot or patrol car. The areas chosen for each blitz were those where the crime rate was higher than expected. Another participant mentioned that Block Watch was a proactive effort that contributed to reducing crime and that proactive patrols established by a crime analyst were used in neighbourhoods without the program. Others talked about proactively targeting a problem district in the community by placing more police officers on the road in uniform, on bikes, and in plainclothes. These participants felt that increased targeted patrols served as a deterrent and contributed to reducing crime. Finally, proactive approaches to investigations were also adopted. Specifically, in response to an increase in a particular crime type, crime reduction teams would establish who the likely offender or offenders were and then engage in undercover operations and covert surveillance that would result in arrests.

The responses of most participants indicated that they, their colleagues, and their police agencies attempted to be proactive. In this regard, many participants talked about how they regularly paid attention to emerging crime problems, set and reset priorities based on these issues, regularly targeted high-risk offenders, and took a problem-solving and prevention-minded approach to problem areas to reduce crime. However, it was clear that most participants recognised that they could do much more proactive work if they had more police officers. In this regard, it is noteworthy how many policing jurisdictions applied for special government funding to facilitate their ability to be more proactive. This funding was used to pay police officers' overtime to allow more boots on the ground to do the work.

HAVING AN ON-GOING AWARENESS OF OFFENDERS AND CRIME PROBLEMS

Participants made it clear that they had an ongoing awareness of the individuals they needed to pay attention to in their efforts to reduce crime. This awareness partly stems from their experience of repeatedly dealing with the same person. However, it also comes from an awareness of who is in custody, who is on conditions, who appears to be criminally active, and who is identified through

intelligence meetings, shift briefings, analyst products, inter-jurisdictional information sharing, and confidential informants. Accordingly, while participants maintain lists of offenders, such as those in the REVOII program, on curfew restrictions, gang involvement, high-risk youth, and prolific offenders, they generally did not find lists necessary, as they reported already knowing that they needed to pay attention to them on an ongoing basis. Moreover, participants reported knowing where the high-crime and social-problem areas were in their jurisdictions.

When asked how they identified targets, the participants provided a range of responses. Many participants stated that targets were identified through information generated by an analyst, weekly or monthly meetings, bulletins, reports from other police officers, information from other jurisdictions, the public, and REVOII and bail lists. Other participants reviewed reports or researched in PRIME to self-generate targets. Some units put a significant amount of energy into working with confidential informants to identify targets. Others noted that they did not need to proactively seek out new targets because they already had more than enough offenders to deal with.

At the inception and introduction of crime reduction models, the primary focus was on prolific and priority offenders. However, there was great variation in participants' answers regarding the time they spent working with prolific and priority offenders. The participants described the allocation as inconsistent and situational. Several factors were attributed to the difficulty, including whether a target was in custody, seasonal or pattern-driven shifts in crime, fluctuating call volume, or the individual police officer's orientation and team assignment. Some participants said that they spent most of their time dealing with prolific offenders because they were their jurisdiction's biggest problem or they were always interacting with them. However, several participants indicated that they did not spend a significant amount of time on prolific offenders. While some time was spent monitoring prolific offenders or those on the REVOII program, some participants made it clear that they did not spend much time on prolific offenders. These participants reported being more focused on priority offenders involved in low-level social disorder behaviours. Given this, when it comes to priority and prolific offenders, participants were attentive to their presence and the need to monitor and connect with them on a somewhat routine basis.

Interestingly, several participants doubted that the people they worked with met the prolific threshold. For example, one larger police agency operationalized the category through harm severity rather than sheer volume of offending because, for them, there was a very small proportion of offenders who accounted for a large proportion of harm each year, even though the specific individuals who caused the harm changed. Other participants observed that transient behaviour blurred the category because lower-level social disorder offending was handled by the crime reduction function, but higher-level gang or serious property offending was handled by a separate enforcement unit. For some participants, prolific and priority offenders were not their primary responsibility. Given this, the work was triaged, shared across units, or owned by others. The trade-off was that handing the work off to specialised teams allowed those with the necessary familiarity, focus, and expertise to address these offenders. However, the downside might be that the proliferation of investigative teams produced divisions and the siloing of information.

Among the participants, a considerable amount of work with priority or prolific offenders was also on a spectrum. At one end, participants reported engaging in conversations and managing low-level social disorder issues, such as loitering, trespassing, and repeated negative contact, rather than pursuing high-volume offenders. Some participants highlighted the importance of ensuring compliance by engaging in activities such as verifying curfews, enforcing conditions, and monitoring an individual from the time of being charged until the court proceedings are completed. At the other end of the spectrum were more assertive efforts, including deterrence tactics, such as stationing police officers outside residences known for drug activity to disrupt it, and occasional coordinated operations focused on individuals with outstanding warrants.

With respect to another important group, the participants reported that they did not find youth in their communities consuming much of their time. Among the participants, youth were not seen as being involved in a notable number of negative police contacts. However, the participants indicated that their police agencies intentionally interacted with youth regularly in a prevention role. They do this through their youth sections, which focus on working in schools, at events attended by youth, and via youth awareness initiatives aimed at discouraging bullying, drug use, and susceptibility to gang recruitment and association. Several participants mentioned that young individuals who engaged in criminal activities were typically directed to the police agency's youth section. The exception to this was instances where youth were significantly involved in gang activity, serious and high-harm crimes, or were identified as being at high risk of offending.

In addition to their focus on these groups, most participants reported identifying crime problems in their jurisdiction through information, intelligence, and prevention. In this regard, several participants referred to weekly or monthly meetings and community partner meetings in which crime problems, team priorities, and strategies were discussed. Many participants also specifically referred to information provided by their analysts, other jurisdictions, bulletins, PRIME, the public, city councillors, community agencies, frontline patrol, and various special teams within their police agency as the means by which crime problems were identified.

HOW CRIME ANALYSTS CONTRIBUTED TO CRIME REDUCTION EFFORT

With one exception, all participants reported having access to at least one crime analyst within their jurisdiction, and those who did not served in an RCMP jurisdiction where they had access to analysts at the divisional level. While some jurisdictions employed only one analyst, most employed more than one. Larger police agencies often have four or five analysts. Regardless of the number of analysts, there were significant differences in how and when analysts were accessed by the police. In this regard, as highlighted above, most participants noted that their analysts were not embedded in a specialised team or unit. However, most participants reported that their unit could call upon an analyst for assistance when necessary, with the understanding that the analysts were fielding requests from across the police agency.

Still, sworn participants repeatedly valued being able to reach an analyst within seconds, while analysts repeatedly linked being embedded to their own effectiveness and to being treated as part of the team. Moreover, symbolic placement is also important. For example, being seated in a visible, central work area rather than tucked away in some corner of the building was viewed by

participants as a signal of status. When reviewing the information provided by sworn police officer participants, the most common wish was for a dedicated analyst to be attached to their unit. However, a small number of participants judged their unit to be too small, their analytic need too occasional, or their request volume too low to justify or sustain a dedicated analyst position. From the perspective of the analysts, being fully embedded only made sense when the analytic team was large enough to cover units with an occasional analytic workload. In fact, an analysis of the interviews did not reveal any optimal model.

Moreover, several analysts reported that some of their time was spent on work that was not related to crime reduction analysis at all. Media and public information requests, statistics for senior leadership or elected officials, and broad business or administrative reporting were seen as taking analysts away from their core function of working with teams and units to reduce crime. To this point, one analyst described themselves as functioning more as a general data analyst serving too many masters than as a crime analyst. Another agency tended to use its analysts chiefly for business statistics for the senior leadership. Again, most analysts reported receiving several requests per week and often had to manage multiple requests on any given day. However, a few participants reported having an analyst embedded within their unit who was solely dedicated to serving their unit's needs.

Sworn participants described relying on their analysts to assist with the deployment strategy of police officers, establish hot spot boundaries, and identify a crime trend or pattern that might benefit from a focused operation or a blitz. Analysts described providing police officers and leadership with monthly recaps, bulletins that began as one-off requests and evolved into standing products, and offender lists tied to structured programs or projects. Many participants detailed the role that analysts play in investigations from background information on targets, including addresses, names, vehicle registration, phone numbers, and social media presence, developing link charts and timelines, social network analysis, open-source and database searches, and the analysis of extracted phone or tracker data to triangulate a person's location at a relevant time. Analysts described these functions as the core of their work, and police officers described them as what they reached for when building a target sheet or developing a project. A smaller number of participants described analysts acting as a live resource during operations by running license plates, names, and addresses in real time during surveillance, maintaining running spreadsheets refreshed each morning on offenders, and providing timely information during debriefs. Where this function existed, it was highly valued by the participants. However, several analysts have noted that the real-time role is uncommon.

As outlined above, the flow of work predominantly runs from sworn members to the analysts. Across most of the police agencies in this study, sworn participants described themselves as initiators, with analysts pulling requested data or information and producing the requested products. However, a notable number of sworn participants volunteered that they would like analysts to be more proactive and to identify who and where the next target should be. Participants attributed the lack of proactivity among analysts to capacity, leadership, the expectations set for analysts, and occasionally, analyst skill. In contrast, several analysts reported that they were proactive in identifying a trend and reporting it before any request, flagging a recently released offender and anticipating a local spike in associated crime, recognising a cross-jurisdictional

pattern in an offender's method of operating, or independently analysing a series of offences and pointing investigators toward a likely offender. Analysts with greater experience and deeper integration intentionally attempted to anticipate demand by issuing proactive bulletins and engaging in outreach efforts.

It was also clear that nearly all participants viewed analysts as bringing enormous value to their work. Moreover, several participants stated that they wished they could have one or more embedded in their units. A greater number of respondents expressed a desire for their jurisdictions to employ more analysts. However, it is interesting that while most analysts felt that their work was appreciated by sworn police officers, a few analysts reported feeling undervalued. In this regard, it is worth noting that several participants referred to the importance of good leadership, especially at the senior levels, in ensuring that analysts felt valued and supported.

A clear majority of participants reported that analysts supplied information and intelligence but not operational strategies. More specifically, the team's leadership owned the recommendations and tactics. Multiple sworn participants described the analyst's product as informational or a source of information for awareness rather than a target-and-plan product with operational decisions reserved for the supervisors. Numerous analysts agreed, indicating that their involvement was limited to the intelligence phase and did not extend to advising police officers on their actions. Still, a minority of analysts described routinely offering recommendations, carefully hedged in conditional language or framed as decision options, and a few sworn accounts welcomed this, wishing that analysts would go further and identify the next suitable target. Where analysts do cross into making suggestions or recommendations, participants stressed the interpersonal care required, including establishing legitimacy, using tact, and having the support of leadership.

In summary, participants described a function that was widely valued in principle but unevenly realized in practice. Almost every participant affirmed the value of analysts, yet the depth of actual use ranged from near-total reliance on analysts to near-total non-use. Capacity also recurred as a key aspect of the variation in analysts' use. Proactivity, dedication, integration, and credibility were repeatedly explained by reference to how thinly analysts were spread and how many non-crime reduction requests they were required to fulfill. Many sworn participants articulated a desire to become more intelligence-led and to have analysts feed the front end of decision-making, but suggested that this was not yet how their teams functioned. Finally, relational and structural conditions, such as physical proximity to teams, inclusion in decision meetings, and support from senior management, were recognised as required for moving forward to becoming a more information- and intelligence-led police agency.

In addition to the use of analysts, almost every participant recounted how their experiences and initiatives to reduce crime impacted their progress as a team or a police agency. For example, participants described seeing the value of foot patrols once they experimented with them or how encouraging police officers to get out of their cars to walk the beat and talk to stakeholders was so well received by the community that it created a great incentive for patrol officers to do the same. Other participants discussed how their frontline police officers contributed information that was amalgamated, analysed, and distributed in a way that contributed to the entire police agency becoming more intelligence-led. Another participant described how their unit streamlined the lines

of communication when requesting information from a community partner, resulting in this approach being adopted agency-wide. Finally, another participant described how their concerns about offenders arriving from neighbouring jurisdictions led to the prioritization of broader partnerships and multijurisdictional intelligence-sharing meetings.

THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Approximately two-thirds of the participants indicated that they had adopted new technologies to assist in crime reduction efforts. Some examples include the adoption of Automatic License Plate Recognition, new mapping tools, the development of a new prolific offender dashboard, specific software designed to assist in the location of missing bikes, and Meta Glasses to help with surveillance. In addition, several participants referred to their adoption of drones, street cameras, and trackers. With respect to the use of artificial intelligence, no participants reported that they were actively using this tool, but a few mentioned that their police agency was working on how to implement AI to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of information management. Several participants mentioned that their police agency was consistently updating their software programs and other technologies, but that it was always a challenge to keep up to date because of the costs and security issues involved in doing so.

PARTNERSHIPS

Most participants indicated that they had formal partnerships with other entities within their jurisdiction. Some of the more frequently identified partnerships were with government organizations, such as correctional authorities, including probation, mental health authorities, health authorities, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, local fire departments, social service agencies, bylaw sections, and school districts. Some partnerships involve formal memoranda of understanding (MOU) with mental health authorities to maintain police co-response initiatives or to participate in a hub or situation table. Some involve commitments to hold regular meetings to discuss issues of public concern, such as monthly meetings with stakeholders involved in the downtown core. Others mentioned regular meetings with various stakeholders to formulate plans and ideas to address homelessness and the presence of homeless encampments in the area. Several participants noted that their relationships with partners were viewed as formal relationships, even though no signed MOU was in place.

Many participants also indicated that they had informal partnerships with community service agencies. The most frequently mentioned were informal partnerships with faith-based organizations, shelters, outreach societies, youth and sports associations, gang exit programs, hubs, local businesses, and addiction services. It should be noted that there were some instances in which the partnership between the police and the community organization had an MOU attached, but participants felt that there were additional benefits to having informal relationships between individuals to ensure that the partnership functioned smoothly. It was clear from the participants that they valued formal partnerships, but equally valued their informal partnerships because they both provided opportunities for collaboration and information sharing on important issues. It was

also clear that whether the partnership was informal or formal at the organizational level, the relationship was practiced at the personal level.

Several participants also highlighted their formal and informal partnerships with other police agencies. Examples included co-working groups, multi-jurisdictional offender meetings, and special issues meetings that resulted in information sharing across jurisdictions. Participants working in specific units referred positively to their ongoing relationships with similar units in other jurisdictions, and analysts reported ongoing informal relationships with analysts in other jurisdictions to be helpful on critical issues, such as crime trends or transient offenders.

Given that most police agencies maintained formal and informal partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, it was not surprising that most participants could not identify a specific agency, organization, or community resource that they did not have a relationship with but felt that they should have to better fulfill their crime reduction mandate, other than one participant who felt that a partnership with their local health authority or hospital was needed. However, several participants mentioned that they would like to see increased collaboration or better relationships with the partnerships they already had, such as with their local Indigenous community or local financial institutions, to better address instances of fraud.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Almost all participants indicated that they regularly used some form of metrics to evaluate the performance of their units. The metrics included statistics, for example, on the number of charges, Crown submissions, search warrants, surveillance shifts, curfew checks, REVOII contacts, self-generated files, and drug seizures that contributed to providing some information on the level and nature of activity being carried out by the team. Participants also referred to more team-specific indicators of performance, such as measuring the amount of proactive activity year to year or reviewing the contributions that confidential informants made to investigations year to year. Analysts reported tracking the number of requests they received each year, the nature of the requests, and the amount of time it took to complete the requests satisfactorily. Some participants indicated that they used a peer review process to ensure that investigators were doing more than just the bare minimum to close files. Another participant discussed how, in addition to simply counting the number of arrests made, they also reviewed the harm caused by offenders and whether the arrest was a consequence of reactive or proactive police activity.

While police agencies draw on various metrics to assess their performance, except for what is agreed upon at CompStat meetings, the participants reported that they had not established any specific performance goals or benchmarks. That said, several participants talked about the expectations units set for themselves, such as goals for team leaders, that every team member meets agreed-upon diary dates, and that members do not make routine mistakes. Even in the absence of benchmarks, nearly every participant reported feeling valued by their police leadership, as the leadership acknowledged the value of their work in some way. Several participants added that senior management saw the results of the work that the participants were doing, which contributed to crime reduction and improved public safety. Very few participants believed that

their police leaders were not supportive, but added that if they were not, this could be attributed to a lack of knowledge about the benefits of the work being done.

According to the participants, police agencies consistently implemented measures to ensure that team members were responsible for their performance. In addition to regular performance reviews, participants indicated that they were held accountable for their performance by their supervisors, who would pull them aside informally whenever shortcomings were apparent. For the most part, participants found these informal meetings to be helpful, designed to explore why a police officer was not meeting expectations, and intended to assist the supervisor in being helpful in improving the situation. Regarding team-level performance, a few participants cited regular reporting as a form of accountability. Importantly, several participants also emphasized that they did not have many issues with those on their team underperforming because their team comprised people who wanted to be on the team, wanted to work, wanted to do a good job, and did not want to let down other team members.

Almost all participants noted the emphasis placed on acknowledging police officers' exemplary work. They also noted that most of this recognition was informal, with team leaders or supervisors offering congratulations for good performances. According to the participants, it was also common for supervisors to notify leaders up the chain of command when a team's or an officer's individual performance on a project was outstanding. Many participants also noted that senior leaders frequently took the initiative to engage with team members who were recognized for exceptional individual achievements.

WHAT HAS BEEN WORKING WELL

For many participants, enforcement activities were the most frequently named effective strategy. In effect, everything these participants did was directed toward the end goal of effecting arrests. For example, some participants reported that their team was constantly making arrests and that a high-visibility, make-it-uncomfortable approach had been effective in suppressing gang violence. Importantly, some participants stated that arrests delivered little durable reduction unless something happened after the arrest. The broad conclusion reached by many participants was that what worked best was integrated services in which corrections, health, housing, and social agencies worked together so that the police were not left to fill every gap. The basis for this claim was the belief that after the police completed an operation or project successfully, in that it produced a visible positive effect, once the project ended and enforcement stopped, the problem often returned. In other words, an operation or project that was not followed by interventions related to housing, substance use treatment, or supervision was repeatedly described as temporary suppression rather than reduction. However, it was also felt that repeated warnings without enforcement simply displaced a problem that reappeared once the police left. For many participants, enforcement was undermined by the absence of anything downstream.

For these reasons, a smaller group of participants believed that what worked was not based on enforcement efforts but on non-criminal justice responses. Here, social services, mental health support, harm reduction, and rehabilitation were viewed as alternatives to the criminal justice system that contributed to crime reduction. These participants expressed confidence that early

intervention with young people who were not yet committed to offending reduced current and future criminality. For these participants, the most durable crime reductions came from non-enforcement efforts and were harder to measure as they focused on the absence of crime rather than, for example, the number of arrests a team made.

Participants also discussed whether it was more effective to chase people or crime patterns. Several participants identified what worked well as concentrating on a small number of individuals responsible for a disproportionate share of crime. Here, conducting surveillance on known chronic offenders and arresting them when they offended, supported by the work of analysts in producing and maintaining lists and thresholds for prolific or chronic offenders, was viewed as very successful. Similarly, other participants reported that structured offender management programs that included routine curfew checks also worked well, especially when the other parts of the criminal justice system responded when the individual offended. In addition to a focus on persons, the participants believed that what worked was a focus on crime patterns. Here, rather than targeting specific offenders, participants felt that prioritizing certain offences and crime trends was effective because it used police officer time more efficiently. Using a CompStat approach that focused on hot spots and tasked police officers to be visible in those spots at the correct time was seen as contributing greatly to driving down crime statistics. In other words, being intelligence-led, which allowed the police to know both where to go and whom to look for, was viewed as extremely effective for crime reduction.

The success of a person- and pattern-focused approach to crime reduction was the use of intelligence and crime analysts. If enforcement and proactivity were the visible activities of crime reduction, intelligence was repeatedly described as the thing that made these activities effective. For several participants, the use of confidential informants was an important tool that reduced crime. In fact, one participant described their confidential informant program as the key piece of the puzzle, without which the unit's entire crime reduction capability would not work. Another participant stated that confidential sources were critical and that every investigation by their team began there. For many participants, the number of confidential informants was deliberately small and intensively managed, with a handful of handlers running a few sources each.

Beyond individual sources, participants credited their relationships with analysts as the driving force behind their results. Participants described police officers routinely making requests of their analysts, sharing information with them, and contributing to refining the outputs of analysts to ensure that they are operationally helpful. In other words, many participants judged the relationship between the police officers and analysts to be responsible for essentially all the team's crime reduction successes. Analysts were praised for their critical contributions to operations. Several participants wished for greater integration of analysts into their workflows. The contributions of analysts were described in very strong terms. Some participants observed that analysts knew more than most police officers about intelligence and information, and that bringing analysts and police officers together to set priorities created ownership and a genuine evaluation cycle that directly contributed to the success of their crime reduction efforts.

Participants also located what worked in their physical presence in the community and by getting police officers out of their vehicles and onto the streets. Several participants argued that police

officers had to be on foot because driving around meant that people saw the police officers before they saw people, and that most of their team's arrests were made while on foot. Being out of the car also contributed to police officers going directly into businesses and introducing themselves to store managers, loss prevention officers, and the public. For these participants, police officer visibility demystified the uniform and made police officers more approachable. Notably, other participants felt that what worked best for them, in terms of crime reduction success, was moving away from the traditional strategy of high visibility and walking around in the community, and toward a model that used transit police, drones, and plainclothes police officers to cover more ground, get closer to targets, and blend in. For these participants, plainclothes work and covert surveillance were key to their unit's success. Taken together, what worked was maximally visible reassurance on one hand, and deliberate invisibility for proactive activities on the other. The two are not necessarily contradictory in practice, since a police agency or crime reduction team can do both.

Several participants viewed external, internal, and crime prevention communication as an example of what worked well with their crime reduction efforts. Externally, participants described public education and media work as effective, especially multi-layered approaches across social media, radio, press releases, and their website, as this deliberately avoided a one-size-fits-all message. These participants argued that public education worked best when it was paired with realism rather than delivered as bare prevention messaging, and that going into the community's own space worked better than expecting people to come to the police's website. Internally, communication was defined as rendering analytical products into something frontline police officers could act upon. Preventatively, communication was tied to concrete programs, such as school-based youth programs, anti-gang messaging, peer mentoring, and dedicated liaison roles for community institutions.

The most pervasive pattern in the interviews was that when asked what works well, many participants answered not with a tactic but with a condition. Across the very different police agencies included in this study, what worked was the people, the leadership, the freedom to act, the capacity to adapt, and the advantages of scale. Many participants attributed success first to people defined as investing in high performers, driven by an underlying passion to catch offenders, find those who genuinely cared, and those who wanted to work and make a difference. Participants described strong backing from senior leadership that supported the team, gave the team a degree of autonomy to be self-directed, and did not push team members to deal with trivial issues for political reasons. In other words, not being micromanaged was identified as a condition for performing work well. A willingness to change direction, be flexible, and try new approaches to addressing an issue was an important condition for crime reduction success.

For participants in smaller police agencies, size was repeatedly mentioned as an advantage for crime reduction. A small downtown was described as small enough to have only a few police officers able to have a significant impact on crime. In a small community, arresting the single person responsible for break-and-enters can solve the problem for months, producing a sense of reward and effectiveness that police officers in larger agencies may not experience; having fewer police officers can foster a greater sense of teamwork. Other participants described seeing colleagues

constantly, sharing information informally rather than only in briefings, and benefiting from the deep local knowledge held by long-tenured members. Because the same conditions that empower a small detachment do not apply to a large urban service, larger agencies tend to lean more on formal systems, such as hot spot mapping, chronic or prolific offender programs, and integrated hubs, to achieve what smallness provides. Given this, scale is not just an enabler but perhaps a determinant of what works in crime reduction. Among the participants, there was almost a consensual rejection of the idea that any one thing works best. Participants discussed multi-pronged strategies that used everything available, combining tools and approaches, and warned that over-focusing on one method meant missing opportunities. The ability to share information, bridge operational and investigative functions, co-locate analysts, and have the police work with other community partners were described as key elements of what worked.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

Collectively, the participants pointed to a wide range of extremely successful strategies and initiatives aimed at reducing crime. Some of the strategies and initiatives were information-led, while others highlighted the benefits of being offender- and problem-focused. Additionally, some participants provided examples that highlighted the success that resulted from being proactive and developing meaningful partnerships. Furthermore, some participants highlighted the importance of being performance-based. The examples presented below demonstrate that jurisdictions apply many key principles of police-based crime reduction.

In one example, a participant referred to the helpfulness of an analyst in their efforts to deal with a gang-related drug trafficking problem. In their initial efforts to grapple with the problem, the police were aware that many gang members were involved. However, drug trafficking did not appear to be led by the gang, and it was difficult to identify the gang members involved. Once the analyst was connected to the investigation, the situation changed. The analyst began by reasoning that what was really going on was that there was a gang within the gang. From there, the analyst developed an association and criminal organization pattern that they provided to the investigators, which identified which gang members should be investigated, on whom surveillance should be focused, and how the analyst's information should be interpreted. According to the participant, the analyst had access to databases and information that surpassed that available to sworn members. Therefore, the analyst was able to integrate multiple sources of information and intelligence into a much more complete picture of the gang and its criminal activities. The participant added that had it not been for the efforts of the analyst working with the investigators, a criminal organization chart would not have been developed, and Crown Counsel would not have been able to lay the number of charges, including criminal organization charges, they did because they would have been focusing on the wrong level of drug dealers.

Another example illustrating the value added through analysts came from a participant who discussed a human trafficking file they worked on and a woman they had difficulty finding. By examining numerous intelligence reports on different subjects and identifying the missing woman through social media, tattoos, and her acquaintances, the analyst successfully verified her identity. Notably, once the woman was located, it was determined that she was part of a national trafficking

ring that the police initially thought was local to the area. Notably, the woman became a source for the police regarding human trafficking. In another example, an analyst described how they were helpful in stopping a serial auto thief. To do so, the analyst first created a spreadsheet with the locations, phone numbers, dates, and leads from CCTV footage. However, in the process, the analyst noticed that there were gaps in the information associated with the thefts that had not been followed up on, such as wallets taken from cars and credit cards from those wallets being used. Considering that information with an analysis of the CCTV footage revealed that in eight of the ten thefts captured by the CCTV footage, the same suspect was involved.

In yet another example of the benefits of being information-led, a participant described how they applied the Crime Severity Index to classify harm spots into three categories: community-reported harm, proactively detected harm, and commercially detected harm. From that information, filtering for community-reported harms, applying weights, and creating harm maps, they merged this data with plot maps using hexagons with grid IDs. They then examined which grid ID had the highest number of community-reported harms. Another participant from the same jurisdiction noted this method of focusing on problem locations by enabling police officers to see what they were missing under their previous approach of considering problem addresses only. By targeting specific addresses and high-harm locations, the police were able to determine that 20% of all crimes in the jurisdiction were associated with seven addresses and their surrounding areas. Utilizing the Koper Curve, they built relationships with the buildings and property managers involved, engaged managers with certified CPTED officers, delivered educational pieces and brochures to residents, conducted door knocks, and focused on the top 25 offenders. Part of the result was a drop in the Crime Severity Index from 3,500 to under 700.

In another example of success achieved through an information-led approach, an analyst reported that two arsons occurred in the same week in the same area. This led the analyst to find Facebook photos of other fires in the area that had not been reported. The analyst connected with the fire department to learn of more fires in the area and compiled all police and fire file information with open-source information and images. As a result, a suspect was identified, and the police monitored the suspect for two consecutive nights. The outcome of this was an arrest and a custody sentence, followed by a period of probation.

Another participant called attention to the success they had in being focused on a particular individual who they suspected was responsible for a series of residential break and enters. Believing that this suspect would commit more offences, the police obtained a tracking warrant for the suspect's phone, which then tied the suspect to six residential break and enter locations. Additionally, over the next few months, the police connected the suspect to multiple stolen vehicle frauds. After obtaining a search warrant for the suspect's apartment, the police recovered a large amount of stolen property. Most importantly, the police were able to demonstrate to the Crown Counsel that the suspect was a prolific offender involved in a consistent pattern of criminal activity. In total, 26 charges related to fraud, breaking and entering, and theft were approved, resulting in the offender being held in custody.

Several participants recounted how they focused on high frequency offenders through a partnership approach. In this regard, one participant called attention to an initial effort to stop

shoplifting at a particular store in a mall. However, after speaking with the store manager, the police officer developed a plan involving all stores in the mall and collaborated with various loss prevention officers. With this partnership in place, the police would arrest shoplifters that they or the loss prevention officers would identify as suspects exited the mall. The participant emphasized that the initiative demonstrated how partnering with business owners and interacting with people with local knowledge of the situation allowed the police to achieve safely, effectively, and efficiently much more than they could without partners. One more participant mentioned their achievement in addressing shoplifting through a collaborative strategy. The participant described a project in which they collaborated with store managers and loss prevention officers to conduct a focused operation targeting shoplifters. It turned out that that they were able to arrest 28 shoplifters in only eight hours.

In yet another example of a focus on offenders, one participant discussed their success in addressing extortion and other gang activities. The approach included activities such as visiting local temples, participating in public education forums, encouraging and integrating input from community members, and, most importantly, actively targeting and intervening with gang members from a decidedly preventative approach rather than a strictly enforcement approach with the goal of helping gang members, associates, and would-be gang members remove themselves from any associations with other gang members. By combining communication, events, and education into one approach, the police were able to address the issue from various angles in a collaborative, strategic, and unified manner.

One participant highlighted that adopting a problem-solving strategy resulted in forming a mental health team to handle specific service calls that patrol officers used to address. Specifically, the participant referred to an internal study that examined the types of offenders brought to the cells. The study revealed that many people were those who called 9-1-1 for help but received a frontline police officer response instead. Some of these individuals were transported to cells after being tasered by the police. Believing that there had to be a better way of dealing with mental health-related calls for service, the participant brought his team and various organizations into a meeting and proposed creating a non-police co-response crisis team. The result of that meeting was the allocation of one million dollars in funding to establish the team. Two years later, the model remains in place. This example is just one of many in which police agencies have developed co-response mental health crisis teams through a partnered and problem-solving approach to address mental health-related calls for service more appropriately and effectively.

Another participant emphasized the success of their chronic offender unit in working in partnership with Crown Counsel and correctional authorities with repeat offenders. The participant noted that while the number of offenders involved in the program was small, the unit had made a significant difference, particularly in holding offenders accountable post-release by following up and monitoring offenders. According to this participant, those in the program had seen a reduction in their criminal activity. The final examples address the benefits of being pre-emptive. Here, participants referred to their use of bait equipment, experiences conducting curfew checks, focusing on high-risk youth, and the use of proactive patrols as successful examples.

Taken together, these examples illustrate how the strategies and initiatives that participants identified as the most successful consistently reflected the key principles of police-based crime

reduction. Whether the emphasis was on being information-led, offender- and problem-focused, pre-emptive, performance-based, or grounded in meaningful partnerships, the common thread was a deliberate and evidence-informed approach that directed limited resources toward the people, places, and problems that generated the greatest harm. Importantly, the participants' accounts suggest that success rarely stemmed from any single tactic but emerged when analysts, frontline police officers, and external partners worked in a coordinated and sustained manner toward a shared objective. Going forward, these experiences point to the value of continuing to build analytical capacity, nurture collaborative partnerships, and embed a preventative mindset throughout police operations as the foundation for durable crime reduction.

CHALLENGES WITH THE CRIME REDUCTION MODEL

When it came to challenges associated with their crime reduction efforts, most participants named resourcing, in one form or another, as the most important issue. The striking feature was not simply that participants wanted more, but that resourcing was described as a binding constraint that determined what was possible before any question of strategy or method was considered. Several participants stated that they simply did not have enough people and that their teams had multiple standing vacancies. Moreover, some participants were concerned that their teams were specialized and discretionary and therefore among the first to be raided when, for example, frontline patrols needed more bodies. Of note, several participants framed the problem as less an absolute shortage and more the impossibility of meeting an ever-growing volume of requests. Prioritization emerged here as the practical outcome of a lack of bodies in the form of decisions about which offenders or crime trends will not be addressed, or which community requests must be declined.

Importantly, resourcing was not only discussed in the context of how many police officers were part of a team or a unit. Some participants pointed to shortages in specialized assets, such as covert vehicles, or the time it took police officers to fulfil their administrative responsibilities, which took time away from operational functions. Some participants felt that resource scarcity constrained not only operational output but also strategic thought. Some participants, when asked what they would do with more people, answered candidly that it would mostly mean more of the same rather than anything qualitatively new. However, other participants described the absence of resources as the very thing preventing them from stepping back to assess whether they were doing the right things at all, determining best practice, or considering whether their approaches should change.

Closely related to resourcing was a cluster of concerns about experience, expertise, and the transmission of knowledge. A unit can be at full strength and still be ineffective if its members are too junior, and several participants reported that the problem they faced was not the number of bodies but their level of experience. Participants directly connected inexperience to risk. For example, one participant described how deploying junior members in plainclothes generated both liability and safety hazards, prompting a deliberate decision to return everyone to uniforms and rebuild competence from the ground up before reintroducing plainclothes work only for those with the requisite training.

Several participants identified the challenge as the absence of structured mentorship and balanced team composition. One critiqued a staffing method that allocated members by seniority number

rather than by a tiered, experience-balanced approach, resulting in teams concentrated with junior members and lacking the one or two seasoned hands needed to mentor them. The remedy implied across these accounts was to build teams so that experience was distributed rather than clustered, and to treat mentorship as a structural requirement rather than an incidental benefit. Related to experience was the aforementioned challenge associated with the content and accessibility of training. Participants described the need for courses or programs that do not exist, courses that are hard to access, and a lack of organisational support, compounded by internal competition over which unit most needs the limited training available. Many participants stressed that crime reduction teams require a wide range of skill sets and clear objectives, and that police officers arriving from different organisational backgrounds bring markedly different ways of doing things. Changing case law and its interpretation were named as a moving target that kept the knowledge requirement perpetually current and partly outside the unit's control.

Participants also described the fragility of expertise once it had been developed. Participants noted the recurring pattern in which a member was trained, only to become sought after elsewhere, and reflected that, while this is a long-term gain, it created a continual cycle of rebuilding. While many participants valued movement and transfers with the agency as a guard against complacency and part of developing the skill sets of police officers, others experienced rotation primarily as a challenge to maintaining high-functioning teams.

Participants were also concerned about the scope and limits of their mandate. For example, participants repeatedly described their responsibilities as expanding under the pressure of success, community demand, and the sheer breadth of problems that presented themselves. More specifically, several participants described a dynamic in which solving problems generated greater expectations, so that the scope of what the team needed to address continually grew, making prioritization more difficult. In other words, success carried its own challenges, as it expanded the mandate faster than the capacity could grow. Additionally, the challenge was not only that there was too much to do but also that the boundaries of what the team was responsible for were often unclear and frequently contested. Internally, participants described friction with frontline colleagues over what their team should be doing, and externally, participants described working alongside partner teams whose missions did not always align with their own. Where the mandate was broad and demand was high, prioritization became a central managerial problem. Participants described long-standing queues of requests, the discomfort of telling colleagues that a capability cannot be provided in a given time frame, and the perception of harm in the community that can be attached to populations who are not offenders. The decision of whom to prioritize was made repeatedly and under pressure, and participants did not describe a settled framework for making these choices.

Participants also identified the funding of some crime reduction efforts as a challenge. Here, the concern was with the uncertainty of funding, rather than its amount. Some teams or projects operated through a time-limited external funding stream over which the police had little control, with shifting priorities or reporting requirements. This issue was acute in reference to crime prevention efforts, as prevention is intrinsically difficult to prove. In other words, it is difficult to secure funding to stop something when one cannot readily prove that it was stopped. Participants

described not having the time to write up and publish results and the difficulty of following up to learn what happened with a given project because they were too busy to do so. Consequently, a project may have been extremely effective, but its success cannot be easily demonstrated, which in turn weakens its position when funding and priorities are decided.

Some participants also described technology as a pervasive challenge and characterized the technology used by the police as roughly a decade behind and constantly playing catch-up. For example, the increasing sophistication and encryption of devices used by those involved in drug trafficking reduce the likelihood of extracting useful evidence. Participants were concerned that offenders were adopting new technology faster than the police could respond. Participants also identified the challenge of having data systems robust enough not to crash and computing power sufficient to run the required analytic tools.

The final challenge involved managing the expectations of the public, media, political bodies, and communities, and demonstrating to them that crime reduction efforts and projects were effective. Participants in public-facing roles described the difficulty of managing public expectations and the media's amplification of those expectations. For example, one participant described how when people do not get what they want from the police, the next call is often to a news outlet, and that a reporter may then pursue an angle not grounded in fact, requiring a careful, strategic response from the police that explained the unit's priorities. At the level of individual contacts, participants described the everyday work of setting expectations and helping people understand the cadence of monitoring and follow-up. For some participants, building legitimacy with governing and oversight bodies was described as slow work that required considerable effort. Finally, participants described the difficulty of communicating the good work they do and its results. The absence of time to document, publish, or follow up meant that successes went unrecorded and lessons unlearned, which weakened both external legitimacy and internal improvement.

In summary, when discussing what was not working, the challenges were overwhelmingly framed as matters of organisational structure, capacity, and positioning rather than method or effectiveness. Even though the question explicitly invited participants to highlight what was not working, participants reached far more readily for constraints of people, money, mandate, experience, and culture than for judgements about whether their strategic or operational approaches actually reduced crime. Where strategy was discussed at all, it was often to say that few approaches had outright failed or that effectiveness depended on the specific investigation. Moreover, the challenges identified by participants were deeply interdependent, and the most acute problems were at their intersections. Resourcing constrained experience, experience deficit interacted with mandate, contested mandate interacted with culture, funding instability interacted with the ability to prove the success of their efforts that would justify stable funding, and technology deficit interacted with the intelligence-to-action gap. Finally, there was a discernible split between participants who experienced their model as fundamentally sound but under-resourced and those who experienced it as structurally or culturally unstable. For the first group, the answer to almost every challenge was more capacity; for the second, capacity alone would not resolve the issues of officer buy-in, mandate creep, or the inability to consistently demonstrate

success. Notably, many participants held both views simultaneously, but these views shaped how each participant framed the core problem and, by implication, what they would consider a solution.

Recommendations

This report identifies the strengths and challenges of crime reduction approaches in some of the most successful police agencies in British Columbia and Canada. The recommendations that follow draw together the international evidence base set out in the literature review and the experiences described by the participants in the qualitative interviews. They are organised thematically and are intended to be actionable for police leaders who shape how crime reduction work is structured and delivered and those involved in setting the funding, mandates, and strategic direction within which that work takes place. Each recommendation reflects points of convergence between what the research identifies as effective and what practitioners have reported.

ORGANISATIONAL PLACEMENT AND A WHOLE-AGENCY APPROACH

There is no single organisational home for crime reduction, and both dedicated unit and whole-organization models are defensible. The risk is not the choice itself, but allowing the responsibility to belong to everyone and, therefore, to no one. Whichever model a police agency adopts, it should spell out the mandate, who owns it, and how the work is coordinated, and it should keep team identities stable, since frequent renaming or restructuring of units, teams, or sections carries both an internal cost to continuity and an external cost as partners lose track of a team's purpose.

Moreover, both the literature and the participants caution against relying on any single crime reduction tactic. The research finds that crime reduction principles have their greatest impact when implemented as an integrated, organization-wide framework rather than as isolated initiatives and identifies siloed specialised units and fragmented information sharing as recurring risks.

Participants independently rejected the idea that any one method works best and favoured multi-pronged approaches. Therefore, police leaders should design crime reduction as a coordinated, whole-agency commitment that bridges operational and investigative functions, integrates analysts with one another and with police officers, and avoids the duplication and gaps that arise when specialised units operate in isolation.

STAFFING STABILITY, CONTINUITY, AND SUCCESSION

Crime reduction capability often rests on acting appointments, unfilled vacancies, and provisional postings, and continuity tends to live in long-serving individuals and personal relationships rather than in stable structures, leaving it vulnerable whenever a key person leaves or is reassigned. Police agencies should put the functions they intend to keep on a permanent footing, make a deliberate choice between open-ended tenure and fixed rotation by weighing the value of retained expertise against the benefits of moving people through different teams, and use a deliberate mix of permanent and rotational positions to guard against losing institutional knowledge where posts rotate. This is especially important for small and consolidated units, where examples of teams being disbanded, merged, or run by only two people show how a single departure can eliminate a function entirely. Succession planning and knowledge transfer should be treated as deliberate tasks

that include documenting partnerships and contacts so that internal and external relationships survive turnover, cross-training so that perishable knowledge and skills do not rest with only one or two members, and building research, innovation, and strategy roles into durable structures with written mandates rather than leaving them as personal projects. Finally, because recruitment was described as reactive and vacancy-driven, identifying and developing suitable candidates before posts were opened would better support continuity.

MANDATE, SCOPE, AND BOUNDARIES

There is no shared definition of crime reduction. Enforcement and preventive views sit side by side, often within a single portfolio, and the term ‘crime reduction unit’ means very different things across police agencies. Therefore, the breadth of a mandate should be a conscious decision tied to staffing and purpose. Several participants described their mandate as whatever other units or teams did not pick up. However, a mandate defined by what others exclude is reactive by design and can leave complex work without a clear owner. Police agencies should state boundaries plainly, explain them to everyone, and negotiate them with external partners. Police agencies should also build a routine process for identifying, assessing, and filling gaps that no one else is covering, rather than leaving it to individual initiative.

PRIORITIZATION AND PROTECTING PROACTIVE WORK

Participants consistently want to work proactively but describe resourcing pressures that pull them back into reactive work, with proactive work usually being the first activity cut when capacity tightens, and specialised discretionary teams often being the first to be drawn back to frontline patrol. Where a proactive mandate is intended, it should be protected structurally, for example, by designating crime reduction as a priority function whose members are not reassigned when resources are needed elsewhere or by removing designated teams from the call queue. The regular reviews that participants already hold could include a standing check that proactive work has not been quietly squeezed out by reactive demands. Where flexibility is genuinely needed, police agencies should maintain a trained pool of officers who can backfill positions rather than improvising under pressure. Because participants were nearly unanimous that the principal constraint on doing more proactive work was resources rather than strategy, police leaders should treat proactive time as something to be deliberately protected and expanded, including by actively pursuing special funding mechanisms, such as SITE and C-STEP, that pay for the overtime needed to put more officers on the street. Participants reported that these applications succeeded most of the time and reliably produced results, making them a proven lever for expanding proactive work.

Participants outlined various ways in which their teams established priorities. Police agencies should document this process as a shared, teachable decision frame, including how to weigh severity against solvability and an agreed mechanism for deciding when a community-driven problem should displace a data-indicated one, while maintaining the discretion that participants value. Because turning down requests is unavoidable when demand exceeds capacity, pairing prioritization with clear and open communication of priorities may make necessary refusals easier to explain and sustain. Finally, since a lack of capacity prevents some units from any strategic

reflection, police agencies should try to protect a modest amount of dedicated time for teams to step back and ask whether they are doing the right thing in the right way.

THE ANALYTIC AND INTELLIGENCE FUNCTION

The research literature identifies the use of information and intelligence to guide decision-making as foundational to crime reduction, and participants credited their relationships with analysts as a key aspect of their success, describing intelligence as the element that made enforcement and proactive work effective. Police leaders should formalize an intelligence- and information-led approach to identifying crime problems and targets through regular intelligence meetings, analyst-driven prioritization, and harm-based rather than purely volume-based targeting so that an intelligence-led model becomes the standard operating method across the agency, rather than the practice of individual units. The analytic and intelligence functions should, therefore, be formally recognized as a core crime reduction service rather than background support, with its products, dissemination cycles, and investigator support named as such and given greater visibility. The location of analysts should be a deliberate design decision rather than a default. Police agencies should define what embedding an analyst means in their own context, weigh specialization against flexibility, and act on the finding that physical proximity drives whether analytic capacity is consistently used.

The analyst's role should be set by policy rather than habit, including how requests are made and approved, and the process of translating the outputs from analysts into police officer decision-making and operations. Furthermore, demonstrating the results of police officers' work should be treated as part of the analytic mandate, not an afterthought. Because several analyst offices are short-staffed and locked to a business-hours week that does not always match the teams they serve, police agencies should consider modest, targeted increases in analyst numbers, shifts or four-on/four-off coverage, closer co-location with operational teams, and matching analytic capacity to high-priority teams.

Participants described analysts in glowing terms and credited them with breakthroughs that would not have otherwise occurred. However, most analysts were not embedded in investigative or crime reduction teams. Instead, they were in a central office, addressing multiple requests daily from all sections of the police agency. Police leaders should expand analytic capacity by hiring additional analysts where possible, embedding them within units that can sustain the demand, and building intelligence analyst capability alongside the predominantly reactive crime analysis function that currently exists. Where capacity allows, police leaders should create dedicated or embedded analyst arrangements for units with a sustained analytic workload while weighing the benefits of a co-located analyst pod and the reality that some small or intermittent-need units may not require a dedicated analyst.

Beyond numbers and placement, police leaders should build intelligence-analyst capability alongside the predominantly reactive crime analysis function, routinely include analysts in shift briefings and weekly problem-solving forums as full participants, and actively manage police officer buy-in through the visible endorsement of the analyst as an equal team member. Police leaders should also establish feedback loops so that analysts learn how their products are used, rather than

dispatching products with little or no feedback. Police leaders should also ensure that analysts share recognition for projects to which they have substantially contributed.

Participants consistently described the identification of crime problems and targets as information-, intelligence-, and prevention-led, drawing on analysts, weekly and monthly meetings, such as CompStat, bulletins, PRIME, partner agencies, and the public. The most striking successes have reinforced this. Police leaders should formalize these practices through regular intelligence meetings, analyst-driven prioritization processes, and harm-based rather than purely volume-based targeting so that an intelligence-led model is the standard operating method rather than the practice of individual units.

TECHNOLOGY AND DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

Technology was featured in both the literature and the interviews as a double-edged factor. The research literature notes that analytical platforms, digital evidence systems, and other innovations can enhance efficiency, but that evidence of their impact on crime reduction is mixed and that predictive tools raise concerns about transparency, fairness, and algorithmic bias at a time of declining public trust, particularly among racialized communities. Participants described their own technology as roughly a decade behind and pointed to device encryption that limited evidence extraction, fragile data systems, weak financial crime capabilities, and infrastructure that depended on particular skilled individuals as challenges. These are constraints that more sworn officers or analysts alone cannot fix. Police leaders should treat technology and data infrastructure as first-class resources by modernising data systems, strengthening data extraction and financial crime capability, and ensuring that computing capacity matches analytic demand, while adopting predictive and analytic tools cautiously and transparently so that efficiency gains do not come at the cost of fairness or legitimacy. In pursuing technology that demonstrably improves efficiency and effectiveness, senior management should also budget for the recurring costs and security obligations that adoption entails so that promising tools are sustained rather than stranded.

TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The literature documents staffing shortages, recruitment and retention difficulties, and workforce burnout, and participants added that a team can be at full strength yet ineffective if its members are too junior, linking inexperience directly to operational and safety risks. However, most complaints are about access to training rather than its content, as courses are oversubscribed, budgets and time are tight, and there is no backfill when members are released to participate in training courses. The main levers are, therefore, clear criteria for who gets access to oversubscribed courses, modest backfill when members attend training, and development time protected as mission-critical rather than treated as optional. The same skill gaps recur across very different units, namely detailed legal and court disclosure knowledge, cyber, intelligence and open-source skills, community engagement soft skills and perishable certifications. This is a ready-made priority list that can be addressed through in-house training, shared regional courses, or structured externally offered training courses or programs.

Moreover, police leaders should build teams so that experience is distributed rather than clustered, provide direct refresher and advanced training to experienced staff with clear mentoring expectations attached, and treat mentorship as a defined part of a supervisor's role rather than an unpaid additional duty. Because recruits can only be fully prepared for a new position if their previous postings produced those skills, career pipelines should be coordinated across units to deliberately build the necessary skills.

BALANCING ENFORCEMENT, PREVENTION, AND SUPPORT

The most consistent message across both the research literature and participant interviews is that enforcement alone does not produce durable reductions in crime. The research emphasizes partnerships with community and social service agencies, co-response models, hubs, and community safety and well-being frameworks. Participants reported that arrests delivered little lasting reduction unless they were followed by housing, substance use treatment, supervision, or other community-based support. The most instructive accounts combine enforcement and prevention under a single mandate; therefore, police agencies deciding how to structure crime reduction should design for that integration on purpose rather than placing the two sides in separate units. The prolific and priority offender system is the most consistent and formalized program described in the literature and could be set out as a reliable model. Police leaders should treat the hand-off to corrections, health, housing, and social services as a defined and owned part of the crime reduction model, for example, through the multi-agency tables some participants already use, with clear responsibility for what happens after an arrest. Because proactive successes can be undone when they are not sustained, police leaders should plan for the follow-up phase of any proactive initiative from the outset, securing the commitment of partner organisations so that enforcement or displacement is paired with the services needed to prevent the problem from recurring. Moreover, the police should clarify their roles relative to bylaw, municipal, and social service responsibilities. Displacement should be recognized as a problem rather than being ignored as a silent practice, acknowledged when it is the only available option, and kept distinct from a deliberate strategy. The police should pair suppression with prevention and early intervention work, particularly with young people who have not yet committed any offenses.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships were among the most consistently valued assets described by participants, spanning formal arrangements such as MOUs, situation tables, and co-response initiatives, as well as informal relationships with homeless shelters, outreach societies, businesses, and addiction services. Participants stressed that these relationships were ultimately practiced at a personal level, and that informal ties operating alongside formal MOUs helped avoid added bureaucracy. Therefore, police leaders should treat partnership building as core business rather than as a discretionary add-on and should institutionalize continuity so that relationships survive staff turnover. Leaders should also remain alert to partnership gaps, such as ties with health authorities, Indigenous communities, financial institutions, and schools.

TARGETING OFFENDERS, PLACES, AND DEPLOYMENT

A recurring finding in the literature is that a small proportion of offenders and a small number of places account for a disproportionate amount of crime and harm. Offender-focused strategies, such as focused deterrence and repeat offender management, together with place-based strategies, such as hot spot policing, are among the most strongly supported interventions in the evidence base. Participants described both as working well in practice. For example, conducting surveillance on known chronic offenders, maintaining analyst-supported prolific offender lists and thresholds, and using a CompStat-style focus on hot spots to direct police officers to the right places at the right times were all believed to be effective practices. However, participants also noted that targeting people and places was sometimes in tension. Therefore, crime reduction teams or units should be explicit about which approach they are taking and why, and these decisions should be supported by dedicated analytic capacity and reliable responses from the wider criminal justice system. This latter support is critical because offender-focused work is most effective when curfew checks and other conditions are enforced, and the courts respond when an individual reoffends.

Participants described being proactive as focusing on offenders, problem locations, and specific crimes. Their examples repeatedly paired focusing on offenders with changes to the conditions that enabled crime, such as getting ahead of homeless encampments by securing outreach resources, using a tiered outreach and enforcement approach to address social disorder issues, and engaging a CPTED-trained civilian or sworn member as part of the process of addressing a crime hot spot. Police leaders should ensure that units have access to CPTED expertise and problem-solving tools and encourage approaches that address the places and circumstances driving crime, in addition to the individuals committing it.

Police leaders should also document a working definition of prolific offender within each service, standardizing or at minimum explicitly recording what the service means by prolific, since the current variations found in this study, including property crime-only, harm severity, volume of contacts, familiar to police, or no formal definition, make any comparison of effort across units or agencies essentially impossible. Police agencies that have yet to do so should make ownership of prolific offender work explicit in policy, stating clearly where it sits, and in multi-team services, attending to the documented risk of gaps and siloed information between specialized teams. Police leaders should also ensure that the lists analysts produce are matched to an explicit, owned plan of action so that identification reliably translates into a managed response rather than a nominal focus without follow-through.

Deployment choices should be made in the same manner. High-visibility foot patrol and covert work are both claimed to work for different purposes; therefore, police agencies should capture each unit's operating philosophy as a deliberate, purpose-driven decision rather than an inherited habit. Finally, because some presence and communication work is about managing the public's fear of crime rather than contributing to a reduction in crime, naming that distinction openly would allow each activity to be judged against the right measure of success and protect the credibility of evidence-based claims.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

Participants pointed to strategic communication with the public as a genuine proactive strategy rather than an afterthought, using it to encourage residents to report suspicious activities and build trust in the police. Others used communication to reduce victimization from specific crimes, such as extortion, fraud, and stranger assault, while signalling to would-be offenders that the police were actively pursuing them. Police leaders should resource and formalize public communication and prevention education as a standing component of crime reduction, rather than an occasional add-on.

FUNDING AND GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

The literature finds that government leadership exercised through strategic direction, stable funding, and coherent policy frameworks can enable prevention-oriented policing, but that short-term political pressures, funding instability, and shifting priorities frequently undermine long-term crime reduction strategies. The interviews bore this out, as a large share of the crime reduction activity described by participants relied on provincial, city council, or overtime funding that came from outside the police agency and was time-limited, exposing a gap between symbolic and operational commitment.

Instability in funding was as important as the amount of funding. Participants found short funding time frames and frequent turnover among external advisors and their priorities more damaging than the absolute level of funding, and projects were repeatedly described as working while they ran but losing their gains over time once the funding ended. Where crime reduction work is judged to be core, funders should shift their funding from being temporary to providing more consistent and sustained funding, multi-year funding with a clear and consistent strategic direction should be made available to police agencies, and funding for projects should consider what will sustain the gains after a project ends. Policymakers could also establish a common vocabulary and a short set of standard descriptors for crime reduction work so that benchmarking and funding decisions across agencies do not end up comparing different things.

MEASUREMENT, EFFECTIVENESS, AND THE LIMITS OF THE MODEL

Performance measures should fit the model rather than default to enforcement counts. For example, a health-led approach measures success partly by fewer apprehensions, which an arrest-based metric would miss. When prevention or diversion is a key part of the mandate, outcome measures should be chosen to accurately reflect the intended goals of the crime reduction strategy. Participants were candid that success is often shown by activity rather than by a measurable reduction in crime, that proving cause and effect is hard, and that the absence of time to document and follow up on completed projects leaves successes unrecorded and lessons unlearned. Nearly all participants tracked activity metrics, but apart from the priorities set at CompStat, virtually none had established performance goals or benchmarks. Police leaders should set clear benchmarks that incorporate harm-based measures alongside activity counts and explicitly recognize proactive work. Modest steps, such as agreeing upfront on what outcome a project is meant to achieve and building a simple before-and-after or comparison evaluation into the project's design, would

strengthen accountability, funding, and learning while still accepting the real limits on measuring prevention.

The conditions participants named more often than any tactic that contributed to crime reduction successes were having the right people, leadership and political support, freedom from micromanagement, and flexibility. These are easily eroded and should be actively protected through recruitment and retention, leadership continuity, and operational autonomy. Given this, police agencies should build mechanisms that support these key elements in any crime reduction strategy. Finally, police agencies should be realistic about the limits of any crime reduction model or project. Before adopting a practice that works elsewhere, police leaders should check whether it depends on conditions tied to scale, and they should set expectations about what crime reduction can and cannot achieve. This should include the recognition that courts, health and social systems, clients' own choices, and root causes, such as substance use, lie largely outside the control of policing, but have a tremendous impact on the success of crime reduction efforts. Therefore, the police should deliberately coordinate with the systems that control these other levers.

Conclusion

This report aims to understand the legacy and continuation of British Columbia's crime reduction initiative and the extent to which the principles that underpinned its initial success have been sustained. Drawing together a review of the international literature, a quantitative analysis of crime trends across the province, and qualitative interviews with police leaders and officers, the report points to the consistent conclusion that reactive, incident-driven policing is insufficient to produce durable reductions in crime. Instead, sustained progress depends on a structured, proactive, and analytically informed model built on the use of intelligence to guide decisions, a focus on prolific offenders and recurring crime problems, meaningful partnerships, pre-emptive strategies, performance-based accountability, and a whole-agency commitment to crime reduction.

Participants' descriptions of effective practices reinforced these principles. Enforcement remained central, but participants were candid that arrests delivered little lasting reduction unless they were followed by housing, substance use treatment, supervision, and other community-based support, with operations that lacked anything downstream repeatedly described as temporary suppression rather than reduction. Intelligence and the work of crime analysts were credited as the elements that made enforcement and proactive activity effective, while offender-focused and place-based targeting were both seen as valuable when supported by analytic capacity and a responsive criminal justice system. Most tellingly, when asked what worked, participants named conditions more often than tactics, such as the right people, supportive leadership, freedom from micromanagement, flexibility, and scale advantages.

The challenges identified by participants were overwhelmingly framed as matters of organisational structure, capacity, and positioning rather than method. Resourcing was the most frequently named constraint, compounded by gaps in experience and knowledge transfer, contested and expanding mandates, unstable and time-limited funding, technological challenges, and the persistent difficulty of demonstrating that crime reduction efforts worked. These challenges are deeply interdependent. The practical implication is that additional capacity alone will not be sufficient; proactive work

must be protected structurally, enforcement and prevention must be integrated by design, analytic and intelligence functions must be formally recognized as core services, funding must be placed on a stable and multi-year footing, and performance must be measured in ways that fit the model rather than defaulting to enforcement counts.

Taken together, the findings and recommendations chart a practical path forward for police agencies and the governments that fund and direct them. Crime reduction is most effective when designed as a coordinated, whole-agency commitment rather than a set of isolated initiatives, and when the conditions that practitioners credit for success are deliberately promoted and safeguarded. Looking ahead, police leaders should remain realistic about the limits of any single model, recognizing that the courts, health, and social systems, and the root causes of crime lie largely outside the control of policing. Nevertheless, these factors significantly contribute to the effectiveness of police efforts in reducing crime rates. Therefore, the police should continue to coordinate closely with these systems. By putting these principles on a solid foundation, British Columbia's police agencies and their partners can build on the early success of the crime reduction initiative and sustain reductions in property crime, violent crime, and social disorder over the long term.

Finally, the dedication demonstrated by the participants in this study deserves to be highlighted. It was clear from their responses that they exemplified a high level of commitment to their work, as well as a selfless desire to do what was most helpful to the efforts of their colleagues and the safety of their communities. It was inspiring to listen to their stories.

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