

**August 2013**

**Jim Chu, President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police**

**Police Information and Statistics (POLIS) Committee  
Annual Report 2012/13**

**Executive Summary:**

The POLIS Committee has extensive representation from police agencies across Canada. It is strongly supported by, and enjoys an excellent working relationship with the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada. As well, it has a formal linkage to Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Deputy Ministers responsible for justice and public safety through representation on the Liaison Officers Committee.

The POLIS Committee contributes value through the opportunity to develop, improve and deliver accurate statistical and analytical information to the Canadian public, police and government to better understand our environment with respect to offending, victimization and policing, and to thereby facilitate strategic decision making, policy development and resource allocation.

Over the past year, the POLIS committee worked with Statistics Canada to:

- improve the collection of data on the involvement of organized crime/street gangs;
- raise awareness and engage the CACP Board regarding incomparability of certain offences across police services;
- support the CCJS and the UCR Data Managers Working Group to improve data quality;
- provide feedback from a policing perspective on the content of Statistics Canada's 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization;
- Gather information on the feasibility of reporting offender legal status through the UCR Survey

**Committee Partners / Sponsors:**

The POLIS Committee would not be viable without the continuous support (logistical, administrative and financial) of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics' Policing Services Program, led by Ms. Rebecca Kong, as well as the many police agencies who contribute the time and resources for their members to participate. POLIS is further strengthened by the active membership and participation of senior representatives from Justice Canada and Public Safety Canada.

## **Committee Vision / Mission / Mandate/ Objectives / Strategic Priorities**

**Vision:** Quality data for quality policing

**Mission:** POLIS supports progressive change in policing, in partnership with the Policing Services Program of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, a Division of Statistics Canada, and other partners, through the development and communication of meaningful public safety information.

### **Mandate/Objectives:**

- Represent the police community in ensuring that emerging police issues, priorities and concerns are addressed by Statistics Canada surveys and products;
- Facilitate the development of partnerships among governments and criminal justice agencies to further the integration of justice information systems;
- Collaborate with Statistics Canada and police organizations in the development of standard police performance indicators;
- Promote improved police management and decision making by identifying, developing and communicating best practices in the collection, analysis and application of statistical information;
- Ensure that, in the development of new and ongoing surveys of crime and police resources, data can be provided by the police community in a standardized and cost-effective manner, minimizing respondent burden and costs;
- Promote innovation in information systems, collection techniques and other matters that improve the production and utility of police information;
- Review Statistics Canada reports before public release to ensure that appropriate context surrounding issues and trends is included to explain differences in local and regional comparisons, as well as to explain changes in trends.

### **Strategic Priorities 2010 – 2013 :**

- given the decreasing rate of public reporting of incidents to police identified in the recent national victimization survey, identify options to increase public reporting rates and communicate back to CACP;
- continue to identify data quality and comparability issues through the UCR Data Quality Managers Working Group – in particular, try to resolve the variance in clearance rates across the country, especially in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Communicate best practices back to CACP;
- with advice from the POLIS sub-committee on organized crime data quality, make a determination as to whether or not the UCR survey is the appropriate vehicle to collect quality data on the involvement of organized crime and street gang in criminal incidents in this country. If it is determined to be feasible, recommend training and best practices to CACP.

## **Summary of Major Activities and Initiatives in 2012/2013:**

### **1. Organized crime data collection:**

*Background:* Since the launch of the organized crime variable as a part of the 2.2 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) survey in 2005, police agencies have consistently produced low numbers of offences linked to organized crime. POLIS believes that the data being submitted to Statistics Canada represents a vast under-count of organized crime's involvement in police-reported crime. For this reason, the data are not released and therefore have remained unusable for academics, federal and provincial/territorial governments, policy makers and other important stakeholders whose mandate it is to prevent and respond to the organized crime threat in Canada.

Street gang linkages to reported crime appear to be more reliable in contrast to the minimal data being supplied for offences associated with organized crime groups. However, recent discussions at POLIS have suggested that there is little difference anymore between organized crime and street gangs.

POLIS has asked that a detailed examination of the UCR2.2 organized crime data be undertaken in order to determine whether the under-counting is related to the nature and complexity of organized crime itself, or if it is the result of a lack of quality assurance processes and/or training. Some members have also raised the possibility that the UCR survey is simply not the appropriate data source to collect this kind of information.

As a result, a POLIS sub-committee was struck in 2009 to conduct a consultation with the police services represented by POLIS as follows:

- identify the causes of the severe under-reporting of the organized crime variable;
- identify potential solutions or best practices designed to improve reporting;
- ascertain and address concerns police agencies may have in relation to collecting/reporting these data; and
- identify other potentially more relevant and reliable sources and indicators of the impact of organized crime in Canada.

In April 2011, the results of the consultation and the 12 recommendations were presented to POLIS. As a result of the consultations, POLIS ratified the recommendation to not remove the organized crime street gang variable. In 2011/2012, the following work was completed to respond to some of the remaining recommendations:

- Recommendation #3: CCJS combined the organized crime and street gang variables together;
- Recommendations # 4: CCJS remove from the UCR2.2 categories of criminal organizations that are based on ethnicity;
- The development of a pilot project whereby a select number of UCR violations are identified in order to focus on data quality, communication and training efforts

by police agencies on a subset of the overall UCR submission has been started with eight police services participating, including the RCMP.

***Activity in 2012/2013:***

In 2012/2013, work continued to advance on this issue including:

- Launch of the pilot project which includes 12 of Canada's largest municipal police services, the OPP, the SQ and the RCMP.
- With funding from Public Safety Canada, the development and pilot of a half-day classroom-based training course which included an instructor's manual and a manual for participants. The goal of the course is to educate the police on key indicators of organized crime and the rules for scoring the information in the UCR2.2.
- With funding from Public Safety Canada, the development of Prairie Region-specific training course (adapted from the main package) and delivery of training to Regina Police Service and Saskatoon Police Service. Note that 4 additional region-specific packages are planned for delivery by March 31, 2014 as well as training with eight other police services.

• ***Policy implications:*** Organized crime is a growing threat to the police community and the Canadian public. Accurate and timely data are required to quantify the threat that organized crime groups pose and determine if their activity is increasing. Several of the 12 recommendations being considered by POLIS to ensure successful collection of these data via the UCR survey require financial and human resources to implement. The POLIS committee and the CCJS will continue to pursue the recommendations to fully determine if the UCR survey is the appropriate vehicle for collection of this critical information. If it is not, then a new source must be identified that is.

**2. Comparability of UCR data across police services**

***Background:*** In 2007, upon recommendation by POLIS, a national UCR Data Managers Data Quality Workshop was held in 2007 at Statistics Canada. This represented a significant achievement in bringing together Statistics Canada staff and records managers from across the country to address major data quality issues and concerns.

Among the many Workshop recommendations were those to create an ongoing Data Managers Working Group to deal with emerging UCR data quality issues and information sharing; for Statistics Canada to work closely with police services to provide multi-level training; and, for Statistics Canada to continue their regional training workshops.

Since then, the UCR Data Managers Working Group hold tele-conference calls quarterly. Recently, the group has been dealing largely with identifying UCR violations that are subject to differences in reporting across police services, and the reasons driving these differences. Findings and recommendations by the group are reported at each POLIS committee meeting. At the April 2012 POLIS meeting, the committee determined that an action plan needed to be put in place by POLIS to try to increase comparable reporting

where possible since much action required to increase comparability lies with the police services themselves. It was also decided that POLIS should make a presentation to the CACP Board to bring the issue to the CACP's attention.

Matt Torigian, co-chair of POLIS, made a presentation to the CACP Board of Directors in August 2012 that outlined the issue, implications and the recommendations by POLIS. The recommendations were supported by the Board. The issue of comparability will be a standing item at the POLIS meetings. Engagement by the POLIS committee and the CACP are needed in order for the work of the Data Managers Working Group to move forward.

***Activity in 2012/2013:***

In 2012/2013, recommendations were implemented. Chief Torigian sent a directive to all Police Chiefs reminding police services of the UCR scoring rules for Criminal Code offences dealt with by police through lesser statutes (e.g. provincial legislation or by-laws), and reminding them to be mindful of information flows when adjusting methods used to respond to criminal offences. Further, the CCJS enhanced the contextual content in their annual crime statistics *Juristat* released in July 2013 to inform readers of factors that may affect comparability and offences that are more susceptible to differences in reporting.

***Policy implications:*** The credibility of police-reported crime statistics ultimately boils down to data reported in a uniform, consistent and timely manner. Only the ongoing communication and data quality efforts between Statistics Canada and police services will ensure that Canada will continue to be at the forefront in terms of the quality of its incident-based crime data.

**3. Developing content for the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization**

***Background:*** Every five years, Statistics Canada conducts a national general population survey to measure Canadians' to better understand how Canadians perceive crime and the justice system and their experiences of victimization with respect to eight different crime types. The General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization is the only national survey of self-reported victimization which provides data on criminal victimization for the provinces and territories. As not all crimes are reported to the police for a variety of reasons, the survey provides an important complement to officially recorded crime rates. It measures both crime incidents that come to the attention of the police and those that are unreported. It also helps to understand why some people choose whether or not to report a crime to the police.

In summer 2012 POLIS was one of the stakeholder groups consulted by Statistics Canada regarding the proposed content for the 2014 cycle of the survey. The main focus of the POLIS committee's feedback was improvements to the measurement of reasons for not reporting criminal victimizations to the police. The committee found that in the traditional "reasons for not reporting to police" categories used by the GSS, there was overlap in the response options and were not specific enough for police to use to develop

policy, programs or operational changes to address non-reporting. A sub-group assembled a proposal for Statistics Canada's consideration that is based on a review of response categories used in various police service community satisfaction surveys and in a recent US victimization survey.

***Activity in 2012/2013:***

In Fall 2012, the POLIS committee worked with the manager of the General Social Survey on Victimization to finalize the new response categories on "reasons for not reporting to police". In Spring 2013, the committee was informed that the testing of these 21 new categories was successful and they will be used in the 2014 GSS on Victimization.

Further, through direct involvement of the Justice Canada and Public Safety members of POLIS and support of the larger committee, the GSS on Victimization also improved the measurement of the impact and consequences of criminal victimization. The recommendations replaced responses that reported on feelings and emotions, to the use of the standardized scale "Primary Care Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" which will provide metrics on impact that can be used by police and stakeholders to attribute cost to victimization.

(If anyone from the CACP is interested in receiving a copy of the revised questions on reporting to police and/or impacts and consequences of victimization, please contact POLIS co-chair Rebecca Kong).

***Policy implications:*** A clear understanding of why certain types of offences are not reported to the police is necessary in order to assess and improve services provided, understand the use of resources and services other than police, and to increase public safety. Moreover, a better understanding of reasons for not reporting will provide additional context to police-reported crime statistics.

In the current fiscal environment, there is a demand to base policy changes and decision-making on business cases which require costing evidence. The improvement to the data collected by the GSS on victimization on impacts and consequences of criminal victimization will provide put such information in the hands of those responsible for public safety and service delivery for victims.

Data from the 2014 GSS on Victimization will be available Fall 2015.

**4. Gather information on the question of reporting offender legal status through the UCR Survey**

Background: In recent years, the MacDonald-Laurier institute has released two reports critiquing police-reported crime statistics. Included was a recommendation for police to report the offender's legal status through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. Legal status is referring to, for instance, whether or not the offender is on bail, probation, parole at the time they are charged (or charges recommended) by police, as well as their immigration status. This was discussed at POLIS a few years ago with the release of the

first MacDonald-Laurier Institute report and the general feedback from the committee was that the information is not available within records management systems and may not be up to date or accurate. With the most recent release from MacDonald-Laurier Institute in February 2013, this was again highlighted as a key information gap and a recommendation was made once again for police to report these data via the UCR survey.

**Activity in 2012/2013:** Through leadership by two POLIS members, the committee is examining the feasibility of providing such information through the UCR and will assemble a summary of findings and recommendations in response to this question.

**Policy implications:** The return of offenders to the justice system is a key indicator of the system's performance, particularly of the performance of courts and corrections. Further, the risk of repeat offending is a common concern of the general public. There are indicators that currently exist for corrections in terms of breach of probation or parole. In addition, the CCJS is currently piloting the measurement of offender re-contact with police, courts and corrections, a measurement which will contribute greatly to assessing and informing this issue. POLIS's report on the feasibility and challenges of reporting these data through the UCR will contribute to the discussion on this public policy question.

## **5. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics' Products**

Each year, the POLIS committee provides suggestions for special topic reports and input into the final selection of reports that the CCJS will release in the next fiscal year. The committee also reviews and provides feedback on all policing-related articles. The POLIS committee reviewed the following *Juristats* that were released in 2012/2013: Family violence in Canada annual report; hate crime statistics annual report; crime statistics annual report; special topic report on clearance rates; special topic report on impaired driving; special topic report on violence against women.

Policing-related topics released to date for 2013/2014 include:

- Family violence in Canada annual report (released June 2013)
- hate crime statistics annual report (released July 2013)
- crime statistics annual report (released July 2013)

The following are planned for release between now and the end of fiscal:

- Special topic report on co-offending in Canada (November 2013)
- homicide in Canada annual report (scheduled for r December 2013)
- Special topic report on police-reported cybercrime (Winter 2014)
- Special topic report on trends in reporting crime to police (based on 2009 GSS on Victimization) (Winter 2014)
- police personnel and expenditures annual report (March 2014)

Note that the following special topic *Juristats* originally scheduled for release in 2013/2014 have been delayed to 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2014/2015:

- Special topic report on crime in northern Canada
- Special topic report on sexual offences against children
- Special topic report on firearms and violent crime

The CCJS product line for 2014-2015 will be finalized in late fall 2013 with input from the POLIS committee.

**Meetings Held in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014:**

April 11 & 12 2012 in Ottawa  
 September 26 & 27 2012 in Ottawa  
 April 10 & 11 2013 in Ottawa

**Meetings Planned:**

September 30 and October 1 in Ottawa

**POLIS committee members as of August 2013:**

Alcorn	Greg	Inspector	Edmonton Police
Beaulne	Mario	Sup't	RCMP
Carrique	Thomas	Deputy Chief	York Regional Police
Erfle	Ralph	Sup't	Ottawa Police
Fugère	Paul	M.	Sûreté du Québec
Kijewski	Kristine	Ms.	Toronto Police
Kong*	Rebecca	Ms.	CCJS
Lawrence	Austin	Mr.	Public Safety Canada
MacLean	Alyson	Ms.	Justice Canada
Malone	Brian	Mr.	Saint John Police
Marshall-Cope	Dawna	Ms.	Vancouver Police
McDonald	Tracesandra	Ms.	RCMP
Morin	Bob	Deputy Chief	Regina Police
Perry	Darlene	Ms.	Victoria Police
Perry	Debi	Ms.	Calgary Police
Rousseau	Daniel	Inspector	Montréal Police
Roxburgh	Doug	Inspector	Winnipeg Police

Silverthorn	Mary	Provincial Commander	Ontario Provincial Police
Singleton	Ab	Deputy Chief	St. John's, RNC
Torigian*	Matt	Chief	Waterloo Regional Police
Weighill	Clive	Chief	Saskatoon Police
Young	Brenda	Superintendent	Halifax Regional Police

\* Co-Chair