August 2015

Chief Clive Weighill, President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Police Information and Statistics (POLIS) Committee Annual Report 2014/15

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 (CCJS) 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 is currently co-chaired by Commander Mary Silverthorn of the OPP, and; Rebecca Kong, Chief of the Policing Services Program at the CCJS.

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 (including street gangs) in criminal violations;
- examine the feasibility of collecting national uniform data on calls for service and develop a proposal for a national set of standard police performance indicators;
- improve national reporting of the Aboriginal identity of homicide victims and accused persons to Statistics Canada's Homicide Survey;
- continue to advance data quality and the comparability of UCR other police-reported data across police services;

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 2014 – 2016 :

- Continue efforts to collect via the UCR2.2 data on the involvement of organized crime in criminal incidents that occur in Canada.
- With the support of the Data Quality Managers Working Group and the CACP, continue to address data quality and comparability issues within the UCR.
- In working with other working groups and experts, recommend to CACP a suite of national, uniform police performance and community safety indicators that are or will be feasible to collect.
- Through the assistance of a POLIS working group, establish common categories for classifying calls for service.

Summary of Major Activities and Initiatives in 2014/2015:

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, it was decided in 2009 to suspend release of the data. As such, the data remain 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.

In 2009, a POLIS sub-committee was struck to conduct a consultation with the police services represented by POLIS 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.

In April 2011, the results of the consultation and 12 recommendations were presented to POLIS. These were also presented to the LOC in May 2011 (please see item 21.3 in the November 2014 LOC binder for details on the recommendations).

Since then, the CCJS and POLIS have made significant investments to address the recommendations with the goal of producing reliable data. These efforts include:
- Adjustment of definitions within the UCR;
- Development and delivery of training on scoring the organized crime flag (made possible with financial support from Public Safety Canada);
- Launch of a pilot project whereby participating police services focus on the quality of the organized crime flag for a select number of UCR violations.

Activity in 2014/2015:
The CCJS has collected and processed organized crime data for the following violations reported by the 15 police service in the pilot for 2013 data: all homicides (including manslaughter), attempted murder and conspire to commit murder. The data have been signed off and the findings will be released in the form of a bulletin in the Fall of 2015.

The original plan was for pilot services to begin collecting and reporting organized crime flags for all violation of drug production and trafficking starting January 2014. Challenges, however, have meant that only three services are participating in data collection, but others have noted information on best practices and challenges with reporting on such large volumes of data. Eight services continued with the organized crime flags for the homicide-related violations for 2014 and 2015.

The CCJS conducted consultation with pilot participants to identify best practices regarding communication and training efforts within police services. Based on the consultations, a document of best practices and challenges to accurate reporting was produced for POLIS members in the spring of 2015 (again, made possible with financial support from Public Safety Canada).

The co-chairs of the POLIS committee discussed the recommendations with the Liaison Officer's Committee (a committee of the National Justice Statistics Initiatives that represents the Deputy Ministers) at their May 2015 meeting to determine the level of priority for this information, and also presented to the CACP sub-committee on Organized Crime at their June meeting to seek expert advice on the feasibility of implementation. POLIS will be working further with the CACP Organized Crime Committee in the Fall before making recommendations to the CACP Board of Directors regarding next steps. Next steps will help determine whether or not the UCR will continue to be the vehicle for measuring the nature and extent of organized crime that is dealt with by the Canadian policing community.

*Policy implications***:** Organized crime is a 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 to determine if their activity is increasing. More recently, the need for these data have recently been raised in the discourse on the economics of policing in terms of the need to illustrate the changing nature of crime and the growing complexity of policing. 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 the feasibility of police to report and sustain the reporting of quality information to the UCR survey and the role of Statistics Canada in data quality assurance.

2. Development of national uniform categories for calls for service and police performance metrics

Background: With the recent discourse on the economics of policing, police leaders now more than ever are looking to metrics to measure and report on police workload and performance. Currently, UCR crime rates, the Crime Severity Index and clearance rates are often the "go-to" statistics on police workload and performance simply because very few other national indicators exist. Police services have estimated that responding to crime can account for 30% to 50% of their calls for service. It is also understood within the policing community that there is no national standard for categorizing the different types of calls for service within the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, nor for the categorizing of call priorities.

Recognizing the need for data that will support police leaders in decision-making and management, in Spring 2014 the POLIS committee established a Working Group on Calls for Service to work with the CCJS to develop common categories for classifying calls for service and call priorities. The mandate of the working group is to determine the feasibility of collecting national, uniform and comparable data on calls for service and make recommendations on a strategy for national data collection. The work of this Working Group will also feed into broader parallel work being led by the CCJS, in cooperation with POLIS, on the development of national police performance metrics.

The Working Group was established in May 2014 and is being co-chaired by the CCJS and Sergeant Sean Tout of the Waterloo Regional Police Service. Representation also includes: Ottawa, York, Toronto, OPP, Saskatoon, Regina, Vancouver, Victoria, and the RCMP.

Activity in 2014/2015: The CCJS conducted a consultation with POLIS members on current CFS data. In addition, Waterloo Regional Police hosted a meeting in January where the 5 police services that agreed to be part of a pilot data collection project developed the scope and objectives of the pilot. The pilot is focusing on **mental health related** calls, **domestic disturbances** and **missing persons**. The key issues that were identified for the pilot were: number and type of units dispatched; amount of service time spent on these calls; amount of hospital wait time; criminal incidents and charges, if any, and; persons involved. Further site visits are also being conducted for the CCJS to understand the CFS systems, data collection and storage, flows, etc. Visits have already been conducted with Vancouver, OPP and Ottawa.

It is planned that a detailed analysis to be completed by the CCJS throughout the summer and fall of 2015. Further, a comprehensive report identifying opportunities and challenges of collecting national level calls for service data to be presented to the Police Information & Statistics (*POLIS*) Committee of the Canadian Association of Chief's of Police (*CACP*) in September 2015.

The benefit of collecting personal identifiers to enhance the utility of UCR and other potential police-reported data to create performance metrics has been discussed

throughout the year with POLIS and the CACP Board of Directors. POLIS is currently examining the benefits and challenges with Statistics Canada.

In addition, as a result of a presentation provided by Public Safety Canada (at the April POLIS meeting) regarding research on the validity of measures on trust and confidence in police, POLIS agreed that there is benefit to having consistency in how police are surveying their communities regarding satisfaction with police. POLIS and CCJS both agreed that, given the current extensive use of these data, such indicators would be part of the basket of police performance metrics that POLIS and the CCJS is to recommend. It was decided that Public Safety could lead POLIS work in the development of standard, reliable questions to measure trust and confidence in police. Public Safety Canada has committed to leading this work in collaboration with POLIS by engaging an expert panel. In collaboration with Statistics Canada, work would also include development of guidelines on methodology for police services to consider. Work has been launched this summer.

*Policy implications***:** In the recent climate of fiscal restraint and enhanced public expectations, the discourse on the Economics of Policing has grown in Canada and is a priority of the policing community and the FPT Ministers of Justice and Public Safety. As was articulated at the 2012 Summit on the Economics of Policing, police services and governments are being challenged to find more efficient and effective methods to sustain current levels of policing services to ensure public safety. As evidenced in the Economics of Policing discourse, police leaders are being asked to provide evidence-based business cases to justify resource needs and to demonstrate value for money. For police to rise to this challenge, comparable national metrics beyond crime statistics are needed. Uniform information on all types of calls for service will assist police leaders to strategically manage and plan priorities and resources.

3. Data quality and the comparability of UCR and other police-reported 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.

Activity in 2014/2015:

As a result of the Fall 2014 meeting, POLIS struck a sub-committee on data quality. One of the first tasks of that committee was to carry out among POLIS police services a tool that was developed by the Vancouver Police Department to review records sent to UCR to ensure they met the essential elements of the Criminal Code. This tool was developed to identify over-coding (incident was not a Criminal Code violation) or mis-coding (should have been submitted as a different Criminal Code violation).

A number of police services reviewed their data using this tool and concluded that, while the work was resource intensive, it was worthwhile and identified areas for improvement in classification of incidents. It was decided at POLIS to expand the tool to include other violations (i.e. criminal harassment, uttering threats and harassing communications) and other police services agreed to undertake the review. The committee would like develop a way to use the tool to identify under-reporting. The committee strongly supported a face-to-face data managers workshop in Ottawa to expand knowledge of this data quality tool and advance other issues regarding data quality amongst a large number of services, yet this is dependent upon funding by Statistics Canada to organize and host.

It was agreed that the Data Quality Sub-Committee look at developing a document that would lay out a data quality strategy.

In response to the CACP resolution passed at the 2013 CACP Conference, the CCJS has conducted an audit of one police service in 2014/2015 and has another planned for this fiscal year.

With respect to the Homicide Survey, POLIS members have been engaged in facilitating the additional data quality steps being introduced by Statistics Canada to address gaps identified in recent years and to ensure the completion of the Aboriginal identity of victims and accused on survey forms.

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.

4. 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 between September 2014 to July 2015:

- Family violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013;
- Homicide in Canada, 2013;
- Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2013;
- Drug-related offences in Canada, 2013;
- Trends in reporting criminal victimization to police, 1999 to 2009;
- Mental health and contact with police, 2012;
- Police-reported crime in Canada's provincial north and territories, 2013;
- Police resources in Canada, 2014;
- Police-reported crime in Canada, 2014.

Meetings Held :
September 29-30, 2014 in Ottawa
April 14-15, 2015 in Ottawa

Meetings Planned:
September 28-29, 2015 in Ottawa

POLIS committee members as of August 2015:

See list submitted.