

**September 2012**

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

**Police Information and Statistics (POLIS) Committee  
Annual Report 2011/12**

**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;
- determine what personal identifiers are required by Statistics Canada to accurately measure an individual's re-contact with the police;
- 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;
- expand the Police Administration in Canada survey to collect detailed information for police personnel to address future HR planning;
- provide feedback from a policing perspective on the content of Statistics Canada's 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization;

**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 2011/2012:**

### **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 has been done 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.

***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. Measuring re-contact with police:**

***Background:*** Several years ago, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada (CCJS) received a request from the justice community to develop indicators of recidivism. Recidivism is broadly defined as re-offending after a prior contact with the criminal justice system. Through consultation with experts in the area of recidivism it became evident that it was not possible to develop measures of recidivism in the truest sense given the limitations of the administrative data provided to the CCJS. It was determined that indicators of re-contact (rather than recidivism) within the police, courts and correctional system were more appropriate given the current data limitations.

Whereas contact is defined as a documented official intervention (e.g. charge) against a person by a criminal justice agency/organization (e.g. police service), a re-contact is defined as a subsequent contact signifying a new, official intervention by the agency/organization during a specified follow-up period (e.g. within 3 years of the initial charge).

As a result of the request from the justice community, CCJS, with the support of the Deputy Ministers of Justice and in cooperation with representatives of the National Justice Statistics Initiative (NJSI)—who have identified re-contact as a key justice priority—has developed multi-year, multi-phase project aimed at delivering ongoing, high-quality indicators of re-contact with, and pathways through, the Canadian criminal justice system.

*Phase I* of the project includes three evaluation studies focused on each of the three key areas of the justice system – policing, courts and corrections. The validity of any re-contact indicators developed by the CCJS hinges on the accurate identification of individuals within their databases. Currently, the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR2) collects a limited number of personal identifiers, including sex, soundex and date of birth. As such, part of the first phase of this project is to determine if the UCR variables currently collected are sufficient to link individuals across incidents and thereby calculate an accurate measurement of the re-contact of individuals

with the police community. In order to do this, it is necessary to make use of additional information available from multiple systems within a police service (i.e. personal identifiers not currently collected by the CCJS) and compare the re-contact rates from this information with those obtained strictly through the data collected in the UCR survey. In 2011, the CCJS began this feasibility work with Toronto Police Service serving as the first evaluation site.

If it is concluded that the current fields captured by the UCR survey are not sufficient to measure re-contact, then the study will try to determine what additional information is required (e.g. first name, middle name, last name) and how feasible it would be to collect these new fields from police services. Subsequent phases of the project will look not only at re-contact rates within police, courts and corrections, but to be able to link individuals across all three sectors.

The POLIS committee and the CACP will play a critical role in responding to recommendations for future data development and standardized measures of re-contact as the study moves forward. Representatives from the CCJS are willing to attend CACP to provide members with additional information about this important project.

***Policy implications:*** The measurement of an individual's repeated involvement with the justice system is key to policy and program development for police and the justice and correctional systems both individually and as a whole. The implementation of a national standard for measurement through standardized data collection would mean the ability to produce indicators and monitor change over time.

### **3. 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. . .

***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. Expanded data on police personnel to assist in HR planning**

***Background:*** The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada, with funding from the Police Sector Council, undertook an analysis in 2010-2011 of the feasibility of expanding the personnel portion of the annual Police Administration Survey to collect detailed information to assist the police community in future human resource planning. The POLIS committee provided input into what information would be most useful as well as feasible to provide with minimum respondent burden and it was determined that expansion of the data collected is feasible. In 2011-2012, a new survey instrument was designed, tested and finalized with the assistance of POLIS committee members. The final instrument collects information such as number of hirings, retirements and other departures by rank and age; education levels and ethnicity of police personnel, and; languages spoken. The first cycle of collection started in May 2012. POLIS has subsequently provided input into the proposed analysis and will continue to assist in shaping the report through discussions at the September 2012 POLIS meeting as well as through the product review process. In addition, POLIS will also assist the CCJS in planning for the next collection cycle by providing feedback to resolve any data collection or quality issues that occurred during the 2012 collection cycle.

***Policy implications:*** With the impending retirement of a significant number of senior police officers, the police community, like many sectors, is facing a possible shortage of replacement workers. As such, the Police Sector Council determined that it requires more information in areas such as age, years of service, number of years to retirement, etc., in order to plan future Human Resources requirements for policing. The objective of the additional questions to the Police Administration Survey is to fill this gap in information.

## **5. 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.

This summer, 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.

**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.

## **6. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics' Products for 2012-13**

Each spring, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada begins its planning process for products to be done in the next fiscal year and POLIS members are asked to put forward any suggestions they may have for topics. Policing-related topics that are scheduled for release in fiscal year 2012-2013 include:

- crime statistics annual report (released July 2012)
- homicide in Canada annual report (scheduled for November 2012)
- hate crime statistics annual report (released April 2012)
- police personnel and expenditures annual report (scheduled for February 2013)
- special topic report on clearance rates (released June 2012)
- special topic report on impaired driving (scheduled for October 2012)
- special-topic report on cyber crime (determined as a priority in 2011 product planning exercise, with release scheduled for spring 2013)

The product line for 2013-2014 will be finalized in late fall 2012.

**Meetings Held in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013:**

April 7 & 8 2011, Victoria  
October 5 & 6 2011 in Ottawa  
April 11 & 12 2012 in Ottawa

**Meetings Planned:**

September 26 & 27 2012 in Ottawa  
April 2013, location tbd

**POLIS committee members as of August 2012:**

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
Perrin	Jim	Sup't	Halifax Regional Police
Perry	Darlene	Ms.	Victoria Police
Perry	Debi	Ms.	Calgary Police
Rousseau	Daniel	Inspector	Montréal Police
Roxburgh	Doug	Inspector Provincial	Winnipeg Police Ontario Provincial
Silverthorn	Mary	Commander	Police
Singleton	Ab	Deputy Chief	St. John's, RNC Waterloo Regional
Torigian*	Matt	Chief	Police
Weighill	Clive	Chief	Saskatoon Police

\* Chair

\*\* Vice-chair