

# Recent Development in Effective Crime Prevention

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## Strategic Overview

### The Challenge

In the last decade crime has decreased in Canada as in other advanced nations. Nevertheless, one in five Canadians aged 15 years and older reported being victimized in 2014. This includes more than two million Canadians aged 15 and over who were victims of a violent crime such as a physical assault. The total harm to Canadians from interpersonal crime is estimated at \$55 billion a year.

Exact rates of intimate partner and sexual violence are not known for Canada, but disproportionately impact women and girls and do lasting damage to their victims. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by violence, including being victims of 1 in 4 of homicides. Street gang violence remains a too frequent problem.

From 2002-2012, costs of policing increased at a rate of 43% above inflation. The Council of Canadian Academies task force reported on the most extensive analysis ever of the future of policing, calling for development of professional policing, improved collection of data on policing and its costs, and a shift towards multi-sectoral crime prevention where police are just one sector.

### Prevention as a Solution

The knowledge on what is effective in reducing crime and victimization is now extensive and accessible to decision makers, but not yet used.

The book Smarter Crime Control advises decision makers about the conclusions from this knowledge and how to implement it. It concludes that investing the equivalent of 10% of what we currently spend on policing, courts and corrections in effective crime prevention can reduce crime sustainably by as much as 50%.

Analysis of the U.S. Department of Justice's comprehensive analysis of what has been proven to reduce crime - [crimesolutions.gov](http://crimesolutions.gov) - shows that sixty-five percent of programs identified as effective involved services to youth and families, life-skills curricula in schools, and services in the health sector. Programs based on proactive law enforcement and diversion also reduce policing costs, prevent victimization, and reduce violence.

Opinion polls show that Canadians prefer controlling crime through investments in education and crime prevention rather than police, lawyers and prisons. Through investment in effective programs, harm to victims and notional costs of policing have been reduced by \$7 or more for every dollar invested.

### City Wide Strategies

Implementing effective crime prevention through multi-sectoral approaches based on data and planning is widely endorsed by intergovernmental organizations. One such impressive example is the Glasgow Violence Reduction Strategy, which has become a model practice as it reduced gang violence, specifically homicides by 50% within three years.



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## **Action Briefs for Municipal Stakeholders (2016)**

Municipalities face street violence, violence against women and property crime as well as unsustainable increases in policing costs. Scientific evidence confirms that prevention has reduced these problems. The challenge is getting more investment in prevention in more municipalities.

The following briefs will provide easy access to evidence on crime prevention and actions to be taken by elected politicians, senior municipal officials, police executives, community safety coordinators, and citizens. Here are the first four:

### **Action Brief 2016: 1**

#### **Why Invest in Crime Prevention in Municipalities?**

Interpersonal crime does \$55 billion in harm to citizens annually. The accumulated "evidence" justifies smart investments in prevention as the most cost effective way to reduce crime. The majority of Canadians support these investments.

### **Action Brief 2016: 2**

#### **Major Resources that Provide Evidence on Effective Crime Prevention**

The "evidence" on what prevents crime is accessible in a guide to politicians on Smarter Crime Control and on major websites. Proven programs are in sectors such as youth and family services, schools and health as well as in policing.

### **Action Brief 2016: 3**

#### **Examples of Proven Crime Prevention Programs**

Examples of successful prevention programs include outreach to vulnerable youth, support for parents, school curricula focusing on relationships, social prevention from hospital emergency rooms and preventive policing.

### **Action Brief 2016: 4**

#### **Comprehensive Community Safety Strategies for Delivering Effective Crime Prevention**

Internationally some municipalities have reduced crime by 50% or more by targeting social development and preventive policing into areas of high crime and disadvantage. Their successful strategies included diagnosis and evaluation of results.

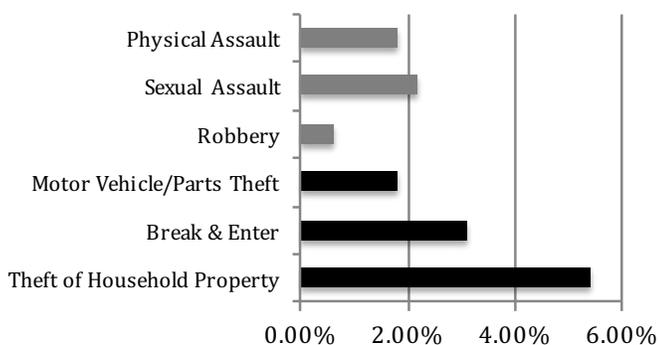
## Introduction

This outlines recent developments in crime prevention knowledge and its implication for crime reduction in Canada, particularly for municipalities. It is based on a list of sources posted on the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention website. It does not include developments within the municipalities of the CMNCP, which will be shared through the different activities of the project **Building Municipal Capacity to Harness Evidence for Crime Prevention**.

## Crime rates and the challenge ahead

Victimization surveys by Statistics Canada (2014) indicate that one in five Canadians aged 15 and over were a victim of a common crime in the previous 12 months. That is over 2.2 million Canadians, or 7.6%, of adults who were victims of a violent crime such as a physical assault. Additionally, 14% of households reported experiencing some form of theft. Information obtained from victimization surveys are valuable due to their ability to overcome the issue of non-reporting to police. Interviews with victims of crime indicate that many individuals choose not to report their victimization to the police, with some forms of victimization, such as sexual assault, these rates of non-reporting can exceed 90%.

Rate of Violence per 100 adults  
Property Crime per 100 households



Crime recorded by the police (UCR) cannot include crimes not reported to them or those that for various other reasons do not get the attention of the officer. The rate for violent crimes, such as assaults, is at 1 per

100 Canadians. This rate multiplied five times between 1962 and 1990, but has since declined by 25%. The UCR measure of police recorded property crime is 3 per 100, which has declined from its peak in 1990 to a rate similar to the 1960's. Moreover, the police laid a steady number of charges over the last decade for other offences, such as drunk driving (2.2 per 1,000) and possession of drugs (1.7 per 1,000 for cannabis possession). Canada currently has a homicide rate of 1.5 per 100,000. While this is significantly lower than the rate of the USA (5 per 100,000), it remains higher than other advanced countries such as England, Germany or Sweden (1 per 100,000).

Statistics Canada analysis of the geographic distribution of police reported crime show crime to be concentrated in a limited number of areas within Canadian cities. These areas, called "problem places", tend to be characterized by high levels of poverty, familial breakdown, a greater proportion of young single males, and lack of social cohesion.

## The impact of crime on Canadian Municipalities

Our best estimates of the total harm to Canadian victims of crime suggest that tangible losses such as property loss, wages and costs of health care are close to \$10 billion each year. Intangible losses such as pain, suffering, and loss of quality of life due to the trauma of crime cost an estimated \$45 billion. This leads to a combined total cost of \$55 billion – the equivalent of approximately 2% of Canada's GDP.

Beyond the harm to victims and cost to society, there are a number of pressing issues affecting Canadian municipalities:

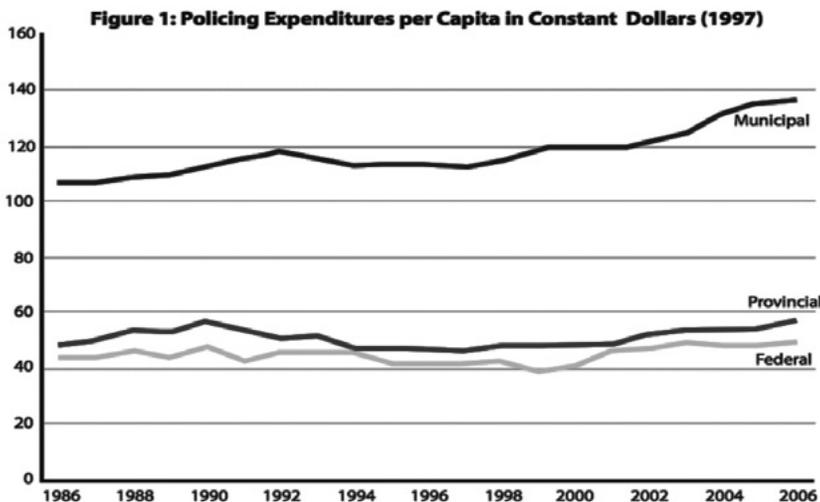
- Gang related shootings remained an issue since 2000;
- The disproportionately high number of Indigenous persons who are victimized yearly. Despite representing just over 4% of the national population, Indigenous people represent one in four murder victims and one in three of those charged with homicide;
- Issues of drug abuse and trafficking;

- Intimate partner and sexual violence, particularly affecting women, for which Canada does not yet have an adequate national survey.

The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention undertook a model national survey of intimate partner and sexual violence in 2010. This showed the high prevalence of these types of violence and how they contribute to lifelong ill health and early death, particularly for women. The report provides an inspiring example of how Canada could collect such data and focus government attention to the issue. The US report recommendations include actions such as changing youth behavior and values in schools, support for victims, and using data to inspire and assess progress.

### Municipalities faced with police budgets taking increasing proportions of property taxes

Compared to other advanced countries, Canada has a moderate number of police officers at about 200 officers per 100,000 residents, similar to Sweden and the Netherlands and below the 230 for the USA. The Canadian rate has remained fairly stable for nearly forty years. However, the costs of policing are escalating rapidly with total expenditures doubling to \$13.5 billion since 2000, rising at a rate of 43% above inflation. With 60% of this cost paid by municipalities, policing represents a significant and growing expense for this level of government.



The Federation of Canadian Municipalities calls this "unsustainable growth in policing and public safety costs for municipalities, often crowding out other essential services such as early intervention and crime prevention programs".

In Canada, municipalities do not generally pay directly for corrections. Canada has a moderate rate of adult prisoners per capita just above 100 per 100,000. This rate is within a range for most advanced countries, though is higher than countries such as Germany (78) but still much below the USA's rate of 700.

### Canadian reports on the economics of policing and community safety

In 2014, the Council of Canadian Academies published the most extensive study of policing in Canada to date, titled "Future of Policing". The report called attention to changes in crime and policing environment stemming from technological advances and the rapid growth in policing expenditures. The conclusions recommend professionalizing policing and improving collaboration and partnership skills. For municipalities, it stressed that governing of policing should be part of public safety—meaning police are only one way to control crime.

A number of other recent reports and national conferences have drawn attention to the budget challenges caused by rising expenditures on policing. These include the Drummond Report in Ontario, the Parliamentary Budget Office, the Fraser Institute and two national conferences organized by Public Safety Canada on the Economics of Policing and Community Safety. The recommendations from these reports vary in the details, but two themes remain consistent: 1) the call for greater use of evidence in policy making; and 2) a reduction on demand for policing by investing in prevention.

## 2016 Resources for effective crime prevention strategies

2016 marks a time when municipalities possess unprecedented ease of access to knowledge of proven crime prevention strategies. Governmental and non-governmental organizations have produced a number of extensive and accessible resources that provide solutions for municipalities eager to address crime and budget issues.

The recent book – “Smarter Crime Control: A guide to safer futures for citizens, communities and politicians” (Waller, 2014) reviews all the evidence from advanced countries to date on what prevents interpersonal crime and provides concrete actions for decision makers who want to reduce crime and save taxes. It concludes that investing the equivalent of 10% of what we currently spend on policing, courts and corrections in effective crime prevention can reduce crime sustainably by as much as 50%.

The conclusion is based on three dominant analyses:

1. Crime has trended down in most advanced countries in the last 20 years, but not because of expenditures on standard policing, courts and corrections. Evidence of this is the crime situation in the USA. If police and prisons were the solution to crime, the USA should be the safest advanced country on the planet. Instead, it has one of the highest crime rates;
2. Crime reductions for property crime can in part be explained by technological developments such as alarms and car ignition locks that make committing crime more risky or difficult. Variations in violent crime within and between advanced countries can be explained in part by variations in social risk factors such as disadvantage and familial breakdown, particularly where the variations are not mitigated by an adequate social welfare net;
3. There is now extensive useable evidence illustrating efforts that have proved cost-effective in preventing property and violent crime. This accumulation of evidence confirms

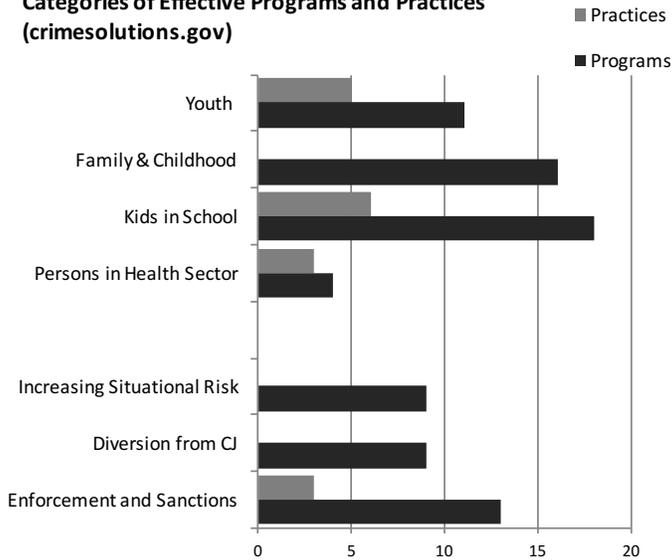
the view that the most effective and cost-efficient way to deal with crime is prevention. This knowledge needs to be used.

The resources available to decision makers on what has been proven to reduce crime now include websites of prestigious organizations such as the World Health Organization, the US Department of Justice, and the British Inspectorate of Police. These accessible resources have amalgamated research knowledge on effective crime prevention accumulated over the last 50 years. Some of these resources will be explored in more detail in the Action Brief (2016: 2).

The World Health Organization continues promoting evidence-based public health strategies that prevent violence in both advanced and developing countries. In 2014, it launched a report of the evidence focusing on youth and family, weapons, alcohol and drugs, as well as violence against women and victims. A global violence-reduction action plan was then developed that analyzed governance frameworks and effective programs implemented in 133 countries. The report provides municipalities with evidence about the role of a public health approach.

The US Department of Justice launched a comprehensive website on proven programs and practices, [crimesolutions.gov](http://crimesolutions.gov). The site presents evaluations of approximately 400 different types of programs and 80 common practices by bringing together evaluations of programs implemented over the last 50 years in advanced countries. Each program or practice is rated as effective, promising or not effective. While some proactive police programs are rated as promising, the vast majority of the effective programs (65%) fall under the youth, family and early childhood, school curricula and health categories. Programs based on proactive law enforcement and diversion also reduce policing costs, prevent victimization, and reduce violence.

### Categories of Effective Programs and Practices (crimesolutions.gov)



Prison sanctions are rated as not effective, and so are some programs that have become household names in municipalities, such as Scared Straight and Boot Camps.

The Global Commission on Drugs has brought together evidence on what actions prevent the abuse of illicit drugs. The evidence is clear: the “war on drugs” has been ineffective and extraordinarily expensive, both in terms of the financial burden on taxpayers and the harm to individuals. The report identified numerous effective ways of preventing drug abuse and reducing harm, including learning from innovations like those proposed for legalizing marijuana in Canada.

A number of other agencies have reviewed this research, for instance the Campbell Collaborative is an international research network that produces systematic reviews of the effects of social interventions of crime and justice, education, international development and social welfare. Through systemic and rigorous approaches to research synthesis, the network improves the knowledge base for decisions on policy and practice (campbellcollaboration.org).

### Knowledge and implementation in Canada

Current research suggests the most effective measures in preventing crime are those that tackle risk factors through social development and situational initiatives. These include youth outreach and mentoring, family and

early childhood services, school curricula deliverables, and innovations in the health sector—all of which are sectors within the control or influence of municipalities. Other easily implemented solutions include problem oriented policing and situational crime prevention through environmental design. Public Safety Canada has recently developed a police research catalogue that is beginning to provide access to such evidence.

Due to the lack of significant investment in this form of research in Canada, much of the evidence on effective crime prevention is derived from other advanced countries and must be adapted to Canada. The National Crime Prevention Centre can play an important role by continuing to fund and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs within a Canadian context.

The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada include many recommendations on primary prevention such as child welfare, education, culture and health; however, it will be impossible for the National Council for Reconciliation to achieve the myriad calls to reduce over-incarceration of Indigenous people without municipal action aimed at reducing the criminal victimization rate of Indigenous people.

The Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses has proposed an important national plan of action to reduce violence against women and children and to improve services for victims of gendered crime. This is an important basis, but much more work is needed to get a real focus and action on these issues.

There is both logic and general evidence, but no specific evaluations that confirm that investments in mental health and housing first would be an effective pre-crime initiative.

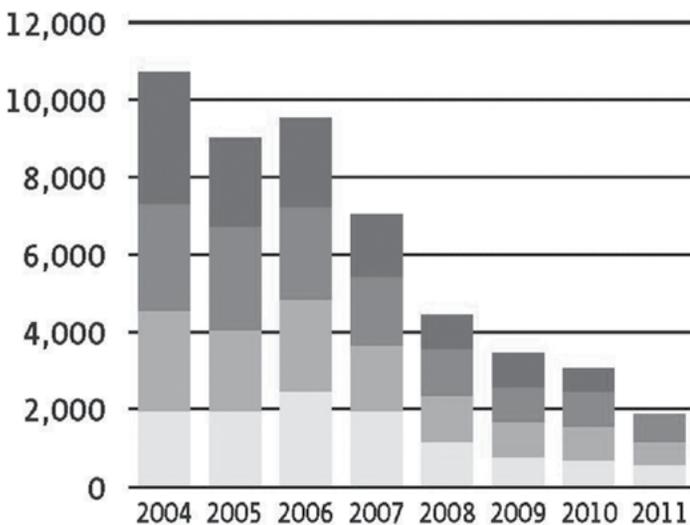
### Municipal comprehensive community safety strategies

Crime prevention strategies that are widely endorsed by intergovernmental organizations and associated with the largest reductions in crime are characterized by being comprehensive and multi-sectoral. UN Habitat

confirms the importance of comprehensive community safety strategies as the key to its safer cities program. In particular, it focuses on the role of a responsibility centre in diagnosing, planning, implementing and evaluating multi-sectoral strategies.

Some particularly impressive examples include:

- Winnipeg reducing auto thefts by 76% with an investment of \$40 million into a comprehensive community safety strategy that diagnosed the problem and solved it through outreach to youth, implementing target hardening that made cars harder to steal, and focusing on frequent offenders. This initial investment has seen a fivefold return.



- Glasgow, Scotland, reduced its homicide rate by more than 50% through the implementation of youth and family outreach, counseling assistance to victims in emergency rooms, and focused police action. It applied a comprehensive municipal crime prevention strategy involving planning and data now recommended by UN agencies (UN-Habitat, 2015).

These success stories and others are described in more detail in Action Brief 2016:4.

## Provincial and the Federal support for municipal strategies

In Ontario, the Ministry of Community Safety and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police have produced a report on a framework for prevention and one on community safety and wellbeing with a promise of a third to follow. These emphasize the evidence on the effectiveness of both social and police prevention strategies, and show how some communities have started implementing proven prevention programs. However, much more action is needed by the province to foster municipal programs likely to make cities safer.

In Saskatchewan, "Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime" wants to establish multi-sectoral and evidence based partnerships, inspired by the success of the Centre of Responsibility and the Hub in Prince Albert. The hub component is inspiring considerable interest by police services anxious to divert problems from police to a more appropriate sector. The Centre of Responsibility has not yet inspired the prevention component at the municipal level. This may be an important role for the CMNCP.

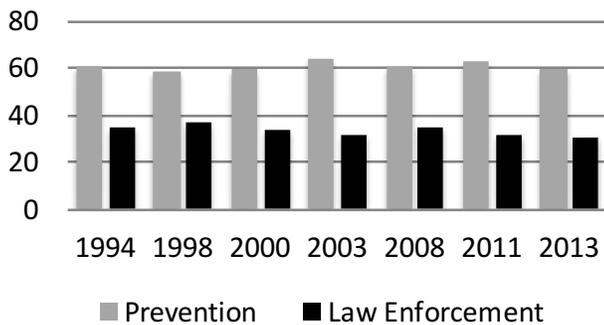
In 2006, the "Alberta Crime Reduction Strategy" established a multi-sectoral and evidence based partnership of key ministries including Justice, Public Safety, Education, Youth and Health. They funded prevention programs in a broad range of sectors and cities across the province. Despite the international interest and success, the secretariat for the multi-sectoral partnership was abandoned in 2012.

The National Crime Prevention Centre has continued to fund evaluations of programs for up to 5 years for a maximum of \$7.5 million for programs proven effective in reducing crime elsewhere. Public Safety Canada has also established a police and community safety research catalogue that is accessible on the internet. These provide resources for municipalities to develop proposals and use the available knowledge.

## Support from the public

Opinion polls show more Canadians (60%) prefer to control crime through investments in education and crime prevention rather than police, lawyers and jails. Analysis of the reason for reporting crime to police in victimization surveys show victims of violence to want prevention and victims of property crime to want their property back much more than those wanting punishment.

### 60% of Canadians prefer crime prevention to law enforcement



## Bibliographical References

Key bibliographical references used for action briefs and other crime prevention evidence are kept up to date on the web at [safercities.ca](http://safercities.ca). These include sources for Canada, USA, and internationally.



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