

# The Role of Policing in Canada

## Facts about policing in Canada

In recent weeks, a lot of public attention has turned to the role of the police in our society. The following is a brief snapshot of policing in Canada and some of the innovative approaches taken by community organizations to improve collaboration with police services.



According to Statistics Canada, in 2017/2018

### Operational Expenditures

\$15.1 billion expenditure



\$318 per person



Highest per capita cost since 2012



2% increase (adjusted for inflation) from previous year in policing operating expenditures

### Police Responded to 12.8 million calls for service

50% - 80% of the calls to which police respond are non-criminal in nature including domestic disputes, traffic accidents, intoxicated persons, mental health-related calls, and disturbances.



The rate of police strength (rate per population) has been declining since 2011

185 officers per 100,000 people in 2017/2018, a decline of 2% from the previous year



8% of police officers identify as a visible minority



4% identify as Indigenous



### Police as First Respondents

- 1 Police have become the default responders for issues related to **mental health and addiction**. This is largely due to cuts to long term institutional care homes; limited community-based care in rural areas; difficulty in accessing hospital beds; and increases in community policing.
- 2 When poorly managed, police interventions in **non-criminal matters can result in negative outcomes** for at-risk populations, including criminalization and, in rarer cases, injury or death.
- 3 Persons in custody are **2 to 3 times more likely** to have mental disorders and **1 in 10** reported using drugs by injection in the months before admission.
- 4 When adjusting for population growth from 2000 to 2017, the **number of fatal encounters has increased from 0.63 per 1 million people to 1 per 1 million people.**

### Between 2000 - 2017

- ▶ 467 fatal police encounters in Canada
- ▶ 70%+ of the victims suffered from mental health and substance abuse problems
- ▶ 9.3% of fatal encounters were with black people (3.5% of Canada's population)
- ▶ 15% of fatal encounters were with Indigenous people (5% of Canada's population)

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## Collaboration Between Service Providers and Police is Essential

Collaboration occurs when a number of community organizations, agencies, and individuals make a commitment to work together and contribute resources to achieve a common, long-term goal. Collaboration between police and other organizations can improve police response to crisis situations, improve access to services for key populations, help community organizations achieve their objectives, and improve police-community trust.



## Examples of Effective Collaboration With Police Services

**Hub Table (Situation Tables).** The Hub Table Model is a risk-driven, collaborative approach which was first adopted in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in 2012 to reduce crime rate (particularly among young people). The model incorporate weekly meetings in which a wide range of agencies (e.g. police services, corrections, schools, housing, mental health and addiction, etc.) discuss immediate, coordinated, and integrated responses to address acutely elevated risk (AER) of identified individuals and then mobilize needed services. A key mechanism of this model is the identification of high-risk individuals, discussion of risk factors and a group intervention (a door-knock) to link individuals to appropriate services and supports

**Joint Response Teams.** Police and other specialists establish interagency response teams as a means of providing coordinated and collaborative services to community members in crisis. Examples of this include the Vancouver Car 87 program and, in the UK, the Street Triage Team. In each example, a police constable is paired with a registered nurse or a registered psychiatric nurse to provide on-site assessments and intervention for people living with mental illness or substance use disorders. These kinds of teams are mobile and can resolve situations on site or make referrals to the appropriate resources.

**Interagency Referral Protocols.** Interagency protocols are developed to guide how organizations and the police interact with one another, to map out how police officers respond to certain key populations, and to determine how agencies respond together to crises in the community. For example, some communities established protocols for a seamless and coherent response to adult victims of family violence across multiple stakeholder organizations. The protocol describes how agencies will respond to the needs of victims of family violence in a collaborative, comprehensive and a culturally relevant way. The signees also commit to an ongoing, cross-agency training about family violence.

**Crisis Intervention Teams.** This model focuses on pre-arrest diversion; specially trained police officers serve as front line responders to community crises and act as liaisons to other services including mental health systems. Officers are trained to assist individuals experiencing mental illness, substance use disorders, and homelessness, and offer appropriate treatment as an alternative to arrest. The model involves collaboration between police, emergency services, treatment providers and specialized mental health services, and often formal protocols are established with these parties.





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We are preparing a paper on strategies that are currently in place and could be employed in Canada to facilitate greater collaboration between service providers and police. As part of this process, we are conducting a short five-minute survey with the non-profit organizations.

We will be sharing a summary of our findings with those who participate. You can access the survey at:

<https://www.research.net/r/YGLJ2BQ>

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