

## PP7. USING COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAMS TO REDUCE CITIZEN'S FEAR OF CRIME

[Tags: Perception of crime, Cultural factors, Citizens]

An important component of community policing is reducing fear of crime within the community. Since risk perceptions is considered to be the best predictor of fear of crime, decreasing the level of perceived risk is a possible way of reducing fear of crime. The level of perceived risk should be kept close to the level of actual risk. Avoid activities that aim to eliminate fear entirely as a certain amount of fear serves as an important survival and defence mechanism.

To reduce fear of crime it is important first to measure it. It is recommended to use questions that are more crime-specific, as these allow for better quantification of fear. Thus, people should be asked about their sources of worry, specific crime events etc. It is also recommended to use both crime-related fear as well as the perceived risk of being victimized, sine these are distinct but related constructs.

Experience sampling method (ESM) enables researchers to measure fear of crime in near-real time. Anonymity should be guaranteed when collecting data on risk perception. Even though Internet surveys tend to provide low response rate, they are especially recommended.

Examples:

- Intelligence-led directed patrols at hot spot locations, hot times, or for specific criminal activities (such as gun seizures);
- Intentional, non-enforcement, face-to-face contact between officers and citizens in the neighbourhoods of greatest need;
- Community meetings with a problem-focused orientation, such as neighbourhood watch meetings;
- The implementation of a police substation within a strip mall, housing project, or community centre;

Mode of implementation:

- Create opportunities for police-citizens interaction;
- Inform people about crime rates in the community, as these helps citizens estimate the level of actual risk more objectively (e.g. booklets about crime rates, criminal justice and police);
- Consult experts from other areas, such as mental health when designing community policing programs;
- Use Social media tools in order to assess the perception of risk and fear of citizens;
- When aiming to reduce fear of crime, not only focus on decreasing victimization but also target other factors influencing crime-related fear;
- Encourage citizen's to engage in crime protective behaviour, such as involvement in Neighbourhood Watch Groups or clean-up programs;
- Use internet platforms to facilitate interaction between citizens and the police. This can be used as a way of increasing social cohesion and consequently feelings of security amongst people.

## Resources:

- Duprez, V. Christophe, B. Rimé, A. Congard and P. Antoine (2015). Motives for the social sharing of an emotional experience. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 32, 757-787. doi: 10.1177/0265407514548393.
- M. Choi and C.L. Toma (2014). Social sharing through interpersonal media: Patterns and effects on emotional well-being. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 530-541. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.026.
- Johnson, R. (2015), Reducing fear of crime and increasing citizen support for police. PATC Legal and Liability Risk Management Institute.
- Worrall, J. (2014). *Crime Control in America*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Kim, M., & de Guzman, M. (2012). Police paradigm shift after the 9/11 terrorist attacks: the empirical evidence from the United States municipal police departments. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 25(4), 323-342.