



Taking Stock:

*communities and governments working together for
community safety and well-being*

What Key Indicators Should be Tracked and How will Data be Managed?

*This report is drawn from the full research report that was written by John Palmer
in association with Katherine Clough and Diane Griffin*

Introduction

The goal of the Taking Stock project is to move towards a wide-ranging approach to safer communities by addressing the root causes of crime through social change. Root causes look at the risk factors that may mean people are more likely to engage in crime or become victims of crime. Social change activities to reduce risk factors could come from the community, police, governments or working together.

A lot has been written on how to prevent crime through social change and the links between factors for health and safety. Some social concerns are:

- People who are not part of the main stream of society
- People who are victims many times
- Lack of regard or respect for other people, and
- Fear of being the victim of crime

About this Research

The goal of this part of the research is figure out ideas to measure how crime is

reduced by improved well-being of people through social change activities. We can use signs or ‘indicators’ to give information on how well we are doing. For example, we use a high temperature as a sign or indicator that a person is feeling sick. If the information changes it shows something that can be tracked over time. It also means we can look at many communities and compare how each one is doing.

With good information, we could track changes in the number and type of criminal acts, the number and type of victims, and peoples’ feelings about crime and safety.

The task is to look for “key”, or most important, indicators to help to:

- Get information on whether social improvements reduce crime
- Set up a system to manage the information, and

Develop a practical way to plan a system to measure “key” factors.



Taking Stock is supported by the PEI Office of the Attorney General
and the National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety Canada

The Problem with Tracking Changes

The main problem with tracking changes due to social improvement is that there are many changes and they are not simple. The information about changes may not be directly useful to making decisions on new policies or programs.

There are two kinds of ‘risk factors’ that affect the chances of criminal acts to occur. These factors put people in situations where they are more at risk to have a problem:

- The first kind is social risk such as poverty or dropping out of school, and
- The second is the immediate risk of crime due to such things as alcohol and drug use, or property that is not well protected.

Indicators

Indicators are pieces of information, which show how a system is working. Information can be recorded over many years so that we can tell if we are making progress. Some indicators that may be used to track the risk factors for crime include:

- Fewer children living in poverty
- Better parenting and more family support projects
- More programs to help families
- Help for young people to get jobs
- More young people passing grade twelve
- Less alcohol and drug use
- Better design of homes and communities
- Better social housing
- Reduced rate of vacant homes
- More people using public spaces and parks
- Better protection of credit cards, and
- Reduced access to firearms
- Better inclusion (e.g. less racism).



We looked at these types of indicators in our study. We also took into account the Island’s information situation now, including the programs, the people who would do the work, as well as what information is available.

We interviewed people who know a lot about crime and what causes it. We also looked at the data, or information, that could be found from provincial and federal governments. There is no “one size fits all” as to how each department collects or uses the information.



Some problems in getting information in PEI include:

- Enough money and people to work on projects on a long term basis
- No one way to define a 'community' because it depends on the type of problem being considered, and
- Agencies do research in different ways and it is hard to match information.

Ways to Measure

Two kinds of systems or ways for tracking information were looked at – one tracks a lot of information, the other looks at results of social change actions.

The first system is to track a large number of indicators on many kinds of social factors related to community safety. An example of this method is the *Community Accounts* project in Newfoundland and Labrador. While such a system might be seen as ideal, the scale of the program is very large. There is the risk that in trying to satisfy everyone who might use the information, no one's needs are really satisfied.

The other system is to measure the results of the governments' and communities' actions to improve community safety. Examples of this type of measurement are in the report, *Crime Prevention Performance Indicators*. This report was prepared in 1988 for the Ottawa Carleton Police.

Recommendations

The Community Accounts approach to measurement, which records all the important factors at a community level, is hard to do. It is not clear that PEI needs such an elaborate system of statistics to further reduce crime and improve public safety.

A first step for the Province at this time is to:

- Improve the reports it gives to people on the state of crime, and
- Measure how well each action and program works at the community level to reduce crime. Local community surveys should be done when crime reduction programs are started in order to test if they are working well.

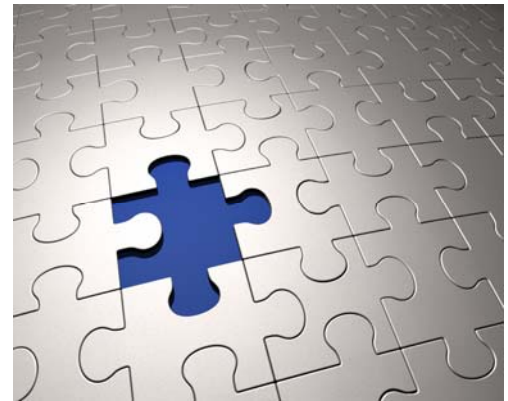




Taking Stock:

*communities and governments working together
for community safety and well-being*

1. A 'comprehensive' crime report should be produced for the province each year. It could include such information as the kinds of crimes, number of people who were charged and the length of sentences. It should also show the links to social action programs and give trends in both social and crime indicators. This would raise the level of information Islanders have on the state of crime.



2. A decision should be made on who will manage a data measurement system. The agency to collect the data and share it with others would have to be somewhat independent of government control so that people can feel that the information is credible, or can be trusted.

3. The Province could play a role in setting up a 'standardized' set of indicators and a measurement system for all projects and programs related to crime and public safety. The 'standard' would be based on accepted guidelines that may come from national research or practice, and which will allow projects to be compared over the long term. The indicators should come from information about crime, social actions and economic factors. A system to track progress could be asked for in order to get funding for projects run by community and non-profit organizations. Indicators could also be used in all projects that are led by the government.

4. The focus should be to measure how well each action, as it is made, is working to improve safety for communities. This should be kept as simple as possible, rather than setting up a complex system. The focus should be on results as well as actions.

To view the full research document, or the French version,
go to the website address: <http://www.cliapei.ca>

Support for the project is from the PEI Office of the Attorney General and the
National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety Canada.



Taking Stock is supported by the PEI Office of the Attorney General
and the National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety Canada