

# **POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE POLICE ORGANISATION: THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN SURVEYS**

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## **Introduction**

Over the last few decades victim surveys have played an important role in improving knowledge on the phenomenon of crime. However, far less attention has been paid to the ways in which victim surveys can be used as a means to improve policy making in the field of criminal justice, especially within the police. In this paper, the issue is addressed by discussing three topics:

- the need to use this kind of research (section 2);
- the kind of information offered by surveys (section 3);
- implementation of the results (section 4).

However, before setting out, two preliminary remarks must be made. In the first place the introduction will not be limited to crime as such, but will encompass the broader topic of social safety problems in general: public order, traffic safety, problems in the neighbourhood and feelings of unsafety amongst the population are also important topics. Secondly, as a consequence, discussion cannot be restricted to victim surveys and it is thus preferable to talk about citizen surveys. Not only victims, but all citizens may have information that is important for policy makers.

## **The need to use citizen surveys**

Since World War II, there has been an increase in social safety problems in western society. Many countries have experienced rising rates for various types of crime, feelings of unsafety and, often in a wave-like movement, problems concerning public order. In the same period society has taken on a more critical attitude towards the government and, in particular, the police. Among western societies the United States have had the doubtful honour of being in the lead. The report of the President's Commission on Crime and Law Enforcement of 1967, entitled "Task Force Report: The Police", pointed to new ways of overcoming those problems. One of results of this report was a wave of empirical research. On the one hand, these studies were empirical, i.e. directed towards gaining more knowledge about the police. Empirical research consisted mostly of participant-

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observation studies<sup>2</sup> or pointed to new ways of developing theoretical frameworks for policing<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, research was policy-oriented, aimed at improving the effectiveness and quality of policing. Examples of well-known projects are the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment, which attempted to determine the effectiveness of preventive patrolling activities<sup>4</sup>, studies to improve the effectiveness of reactive patrolling<sup>5</sup>, and many projects aimed at improving effectiveness in traffic safety and crime control<sup>6</sup>. Policy-oriented research was not only carried out in the USA, but was followed by other countries like Canada, the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands, and for the first time in this kind of research, citizen surveys were used on a substantial scale.

As far as the author can judge, the impact of this wave of research was limited and results modest. The impact on policy making was relatively low. As a result, the use of surveys for policy purposes became less attractive. Although it is difficult to estimate how many police forces in the USA and Canada are currently using surveys as an instrument for policy making on a regular basis, it is quite certain that in Europe they are used on a limited scale. In England, for example, the Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service complained that "forces have been slow to adopt market research to gather views of the public"<sup>7</sup>. The use of citizen surveys for policy purposes in the Netherlands also had a slow start: things did not get under way until the early eighties. Since then there has been growing attention for this method of gathering information. Some police forces have used citizen surveys as a means of evaluating processes of change; others use it on a regular basis to monitor developments; and also the central government has carried out a first nationwide study for policy purposes. Standards for questionnaires have been developed by both the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior.

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<sup>2</sup> Skolnick, J. (1966) *Justice without trial*, John Wiley & Sons, New York; Reiss, A.J. (1971) *The police and the public*, Yale University Press, New Haven; Manning, P.K. (1979) *Police work. The social organization of policing*, The MIT-Press, Cambridge (Mass.).

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, J.Q. (1986) *Varieties of police behaviour*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.); Bittner, E. (1974) "A theory of the police" in Jacob, H. (ed.) *The potential of reform of criminal justice*, Sage, London; Goldstein, H. (1977) *Policing a free society*, Ballinger, Cambridge (Mass.); Cain, M. (1973) *Society and the policeman's role*, Routledge Kegan Paul, London.

<sup>4</sup> Kelling, G.E., T. Pate, D. Dieckman and G.E. Brown (1974) *The Kansas City preventive patrol experiment*, The Police Foundation, Washington D.C.

<sup>5</sup> Pate, T., A. Ferrara, R.A. Bowers and J. Lorence (1976) *Police response time, its determinants and effects*, The Police Foundation, Washington D.C.; Kansas City Police (1977) *Response time analysis*, (2 vols).

<sup>6</sup> Overviews of the results are to be found in Chaiken, J. (1976) *What's known about deterrent effects of police activities*, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica; van der Vijver, C.D. and W. Broer (1978) "Politie-onderzoek, problemen en mogelijkheden" *Sociologische Gids*, pp. 465-486; Fijnaut, C., E.G.M. Nuijten-Edelbroek and J.L.P. Spickenheuer (1985) *Politiële misdaadbestrijding. De ontwikkeling van het Amerikaanse, Engelse en Nederlandse onderzoek aangaande politieële misdaadbestrijding sedert de jaren '60*, Staatsuitgeverij, The Hague.

<sup>7</sup> Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England and Wales (1990) "Effective policing - performance review in police forces" *Police papers* 8:2, December.

What is the reason for this sudden interest? Factors on two different levels seem to have played an important role. On a local level, many police forces have implemented fundamental changes in their organisation since the beginning of the eighties. This development was strongly advocated by so-called reform chiefs with an academic background; who wanted an objective indication of the results of their organisational efforts. One study, the evaluation of an overhaul in one of the bigger police forces, proved quite successful. This prompted others to start using surveys as well.

At the national level, a debate began on the effectiveness of policing. This stimulated, among other things, policy making on the basis of the so-called "rational policy-model"; a model in which measuring effectiveness is very important.

This does not mean that all forces are carrying out surveys. Nor does it mean those forces that are carrying them out are actually using the results of surveys in their daily practice: it is a well known fact that research and the implementation of its results can be worlds apart. Changing policy is very difficult in itself, but changing the behaviour of the policemen and women who are at the basis of the organisation is even more compelling (this will be discussed in the section related to the implementation of the results). While some forces are enthusiastic, others are cynical. Opinions are divided on this point. Nevertheless, surveys will undoubtedly play an even more important role in the future, for two reasons. The first is related to developments in the field of insecurity, the second to the relationship between the police and the environment in which they operate.

One of the main problems facing police management is related to the identification of expected developments in the field of crime or - better - in the field of social insecurity, and the police's response to them. These questions are among others addressed by prognostic research, a field of growing interest. In Canada for instance, a future model of policing has been developed<sup>8</sup>. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Police and Society Foundation asked McKinsey & Company to study future trends in public insecurity. The results of their study<sup>9</sup> are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Expected trends in public insecurity (1990-2000)**

	Optimistic scenario	Pessimistic scenario
Massive petty crimes:		
- vandalism	=	=
- shoplifting	=	+
Massive serious crimes		
- burglary	-	++
Violent crimes		
- assault	-	+
- robbery/mugging	+	++

<sup>8</sup> Normandeau, A. and B. Leighton (1990) Police-challenge 2000: A vision of the future of policing in Canada, The Solicitor-General of Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Veiligheid en Politie: een beheersbare zaak. Aanzet tot beleid van veiligheidszorg, gericht op ontwikkelingen tot de eeuwwisseling (1991) rapport Stuurgroep Politie 2000, Gouda Quint, Arnhem.

Crime against society - environmental crime - EC subsidy fraud	++ ++	++ ++
Organised crime - drugtrafficking	+	++
Public order disturbances - small scale - large scale	+ = =	++ ++ ++
Unsafe traffic	--	--
Feelings of insecurity	+	++

++ increase > 15%  
 + increase > 5% - < 15%  
 = constant > -5% - < 5%  
 - decrease > -15% - < -5%  
 -- decrease < -15%

Source: Veiligheid en Politie

Debate in the Netherlands show that, in spite of considerable methodological criticism, these trends are generally thought to be correct: the problem of public insecurity is expected to grow, with the sole exception of unsafe traffic: the number of people killed or injured in an accident will show a downward trend. The problem of public security will grow in importance for policy makers; not just the police or the criminal justice authorities, but also many governmental and non-governmental organisations. Politicians at both national and local levels will pay more attention to the problem of public security, and will undoubtedly try to increase their influence in their attempts to solve it. These developments are likely to put increased pressure on the police management to find adequate ways of dealing with the problems involved. The pressure will come from various levels, such as from politicians, the government, the business sector, or even the general public.

In the sixties and seventies, politicians provided a rather simple response to growing crime rates: the more crime increased the more had to be invested to counteract it. However, given the present economic situation in most countries and the acquired awareness that an increase in police personnel does not always mean more safety, both local and national governments have become more critical and less willing to provide the police with more financial assistance upon the simple request of the latter. It is generally expected that, in the future, government agencies will only provide the police force with financial assistance if they are convinced of the worthiness and effectiveness of its proposed solutions. It is already possible to observe, for instance, that governments are only willing to pay (extra) money to those organisations that most need it, determining this on the basis of objective standards. In England, for example, the Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service is working on a system of output indicators and target standards of service, in order to set objectives and develop monitoring and review systems<sup>10</sup>. Studies have been carried out in order to ascertain if this approach is

<sup>10</sup> Audit Commission, *Effective...*, op. cit.

feasible<sup>11</sup>. In the Netherlands, where the police is funded entirely by the central government, government agencies are working on a system in which funds will be awarded at least partially according to output indicators. Extra funds are only allotted when police chiefs co-operate towards the development of a system of output indicators, or if they are able to prove that the money is in fact used to help solve safety problems. Citizen surveys are used as a means to determine whether those goals are reached. Thus, surveys will probably be used as a new bureaucratic system of government control.

On the other hand, there is a strong tendency in police management to improve the quality of policing by adjusting it to the needs of the community. Examples are neighbourhood team policing, neighbourhood watch programmes, and other structural changes, such as developing planning systems aimed at local needs, improving management systems, stimulating the external orientation of the police organisation, stressing the importance of effectiveness and quality<sup>12</sup>. What is important, is that the police should not concentrate on improving the output (clearance rate, arrest rate, patrol rate, response time), but rather on improving the outcomes of the organisation: lowering the victimisation rate, improvement of perceived safety and the level of safety problems experienced by the population, prevention of public order problems such as conflicts between different social groups, improved confidence in the police.

The author, taking the police's point of view, strongly disapproves with the management approach according to which output indicators are considered the most important aspect of management. Since the relationship between output and outcomes is a rather weak one, there is a great danger that an excessive focus on output indicators will encourage the police to perform activities that do not contribute towards the outcome. Therefore, the police should focus on outcomes and not on the output. This means the police have to concentrate on at least two aspects:

- 1) the need to adjust to the needs and requirements of the community;
- 2) the need to improve their knowledge on the outcomes, i.e. the effectiveness of policing.

The next section will deal with the role citizen surveys can play in improving the knowledge of policing, and the implication this has on policy making. Obviously, surveys cannot play a role in all areas of safety problems. Policy making in the field of organised crime, fraud, environmental crime - in short, all those aspects that are not visible or tangible - cannot be supported by surveys. The need for police activities in these fields and the evaluation of the results have to be determined in a different way. However, surveys can play a major role in all those aspects that are of vital importance to the residents of a certain area, such as "ordinary" crime, unsafe traffic, feelings of insecurity, public order disturbances, problems people

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<sup>11</sup> Horton, Chr. and D. Smith (1988) Evaluating police work, an action research project, Policy Study Institute, London.

<sup>12</sup> McConville, M. and D. Shepherd (1992) Watching police, watching communities, Routledge, London/New York.

experience within their neighbourhood, and - last but not least - their judgement of the police. The elements listed in Table 2 may play a role:

**Table 2: Elements in citizen surveys**

Actual level of victimisation
Fear of being victimised
Perceived risk of victimisation
Reporting behaviour
Concern about crime
Neighbourhood problems
Priorities required from the police
Attitudes towards the police
Contacts between citizens and police
Judgement of police work

Each item in this list is important for police managers at different levels, including police constables performing their duties on the streets who, as professionals, take almost every decision without supervision. The information required at the various levels may, however, differ substantially. Top level management typically needs information of a highly abstract nature, the lower level groups need information concerning the specific problems in their area and information which can help them determine concrete goals.

Citizen surveys can play an important role in describing problems more accurately and determining priorities. They offer insights into the development of problems at both the top and grassroot levels of the organisation. Moreover, the results usually differ from the ideas that prevail in the police organisation itself. When a manager only listens to the voices within the force, there is a fair chance that the problems considered important by the police are different to those considered to be important by the public. Apart from that, results in the past have shown that the way in which problems are experienced by the public may differ substantially from one neighbourhood and the next. Surveys enable the police to take action in a more specific, problem-oriented way.

Although an abundance of information exists in this field, it will be limited here to some examples of the items mentioned in Table 2, in order to give an idea of what this kind of information may look like. Unless otherwise indicated, the information presented is taken from the citizen surveys carried out by the Amsterdam police on a regular basis since 1985<sup>13</sup>.

### **Surveys and policy information**

There are two major fields in which citizen surveys can play a role:

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<sup>13</sup> Hoenson, L.F.H. and R.H. Lofers Adema (1992) *Amsterdammers over misdaad en politie in 1991*, Amsterdam.

- 1) they can help to identify the problems in a certain area, formulate the goals of the organisation (the effectiveness) and improve quality (the ways the goals are reached);
- 2) they can help to evaluate the way the police are functioning;

*Describing the problems and formulating the goals*

- *General developments*

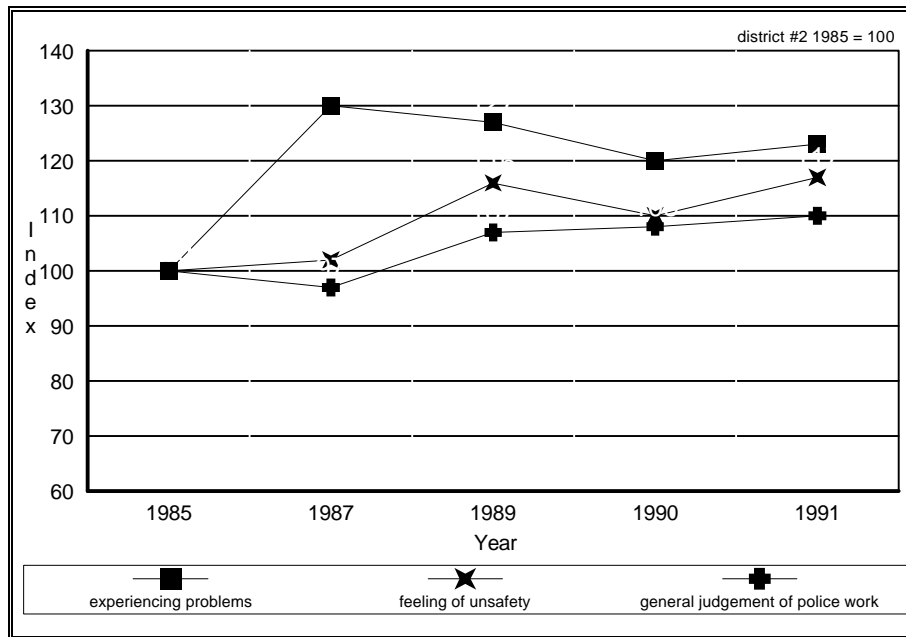
The identification of problems and the formulation of the goals of an organisation take place at different levels of abstraction. Top level policy makers are mainly concerned with one or two basic questions: where do they stand at this point in time? What is the general direction of developments: is there an upward or a downward trend? They require a "barometer of unsafety", a time series analysis of different types of scales. This "barometer" presents information at a very high level of aggregation, for instance concerning:

- developments in problems, such as fear of victimisation, the problems people are experiencing;
- development of the victimisation rate and public reporting behaviour;
- development of the judgement of the police by the population.

Different proposals for such a barometer have been developed. One example is the barometer used in Amsterdam, developed after five surveys carried out between 1985 and 1991. It offers an insight into trends and a basis for fundamental policy decisions.

The extent to which citizens in this district experience problems increased substantially in 1987 as compared to 1985. After 1987 it slowly declined, but until 1991 it remained approximately 20% higher than in 1985. Over the last four years the people's judgement of the police, after a short decline, showed a constant rise, as did feelings of unsafety. Apart from interesting theoretical questions that may arise when studying these graphs, the relevance for policy makers is obvious.

**Figure 1: Barometer of unsafety and judgement of police in a police district in Amsterdam (1985-1991)**



### *Victimisation: burglary*

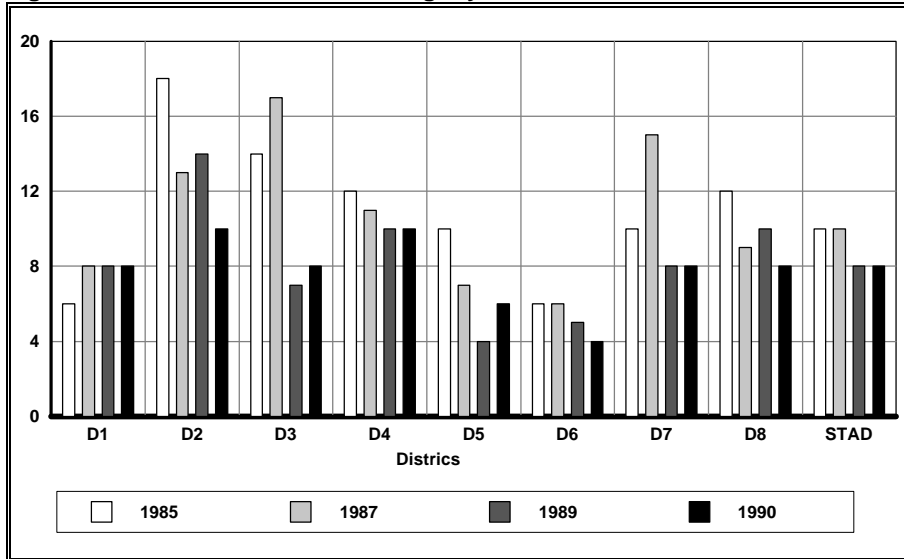
As an example of the information concerning victimisation, Figure 2 shows the percentage of citizens that became victims of burglary, both in Amsterdam as a whole and in the different police districts.

The average figure for the city as a whole is relatively constant, but this kind of information is hardly relevant for management. The differences between the districts and developments within each district are, however, great. More specifically the second and third districts (D2 and D3, both in the city centre) show a substantial decline. It is, of course, impossible to prove that police action caused this change. In any case, from a management point of view there is considerably less need to pay as much attention to this problem now as there was in 1985/1987.

Naturally critics might ask whether it is necessary to carry out surveys in order to obtain this kind of information and whether the same data might not be derived from the burglaries reported to the police? The answer to that question is a clear-cut no: that it is impossible because there is no information concerning reporting behaviour. To clearly point out what can go wrong, Figure 3 elucidates the results of the evaluation of a series of innovations in another police force. In an area of the city concerned, a new way of community policing (neighbourhood team policing) was introduced, including an attempt to introduce problem-oriented policing. The rest of the city was used as a "control area". After one year findings indicated that in both the team area and the control area the number of burglaries reported to the police had risen. The citizen survey, however, showed that in the team area the

level of victimisation had remained the same, while reporting had risen; whereas in the control area the level of reporting behaviour had remained unchanged and the level of victimisation had risen.

**Figure 2: Victimization rates for burglary**



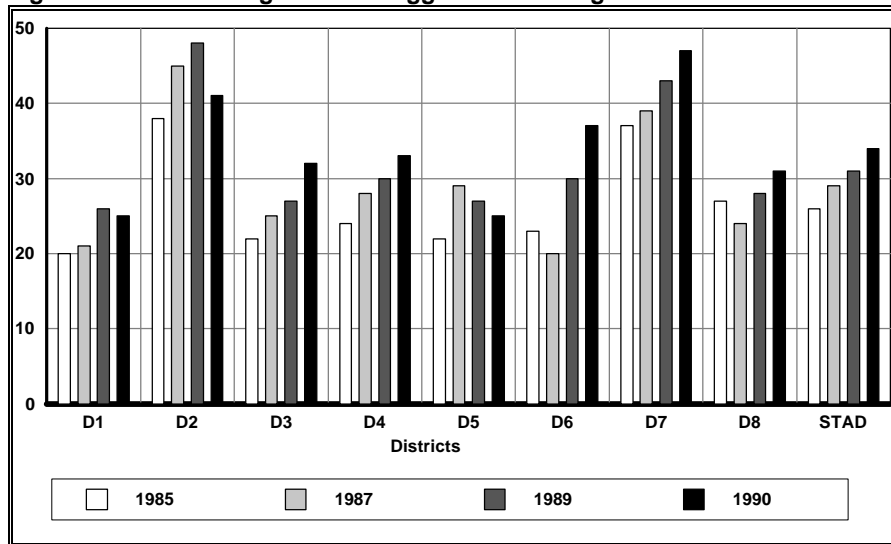
**Figure 3: Relation between victimisation and reporting**

	Recorded by police	Victimization by survey	Reporting by survey
Team Area	↑	==	↑
Team Control	↑	↑	==

*Feelings of unsafety*

The following section concerns perceived feelings of unsafety, which is a much debated topic in the literature. The general debate will not be discussed here, but emphasis will be placed on those aspects concerning feelings of unsafety that are of major concern for policy makers. Several aspects can play a role in this sense: fear of being victimised, fear of being alone at home at night, fear to walk in the streets at night or in the daytime, fear of being robbed or mugged in the street. An example of the latter is included in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Fear of being robbed/mugged in own neighbourhood**



Unfortunately, citizen surveys do not always show pleasant things. As is obvious from Figure 4, fear is constantly rising, with the exception of the second district - the centre of Amsterdam - where a tremendous effort has been made to control insecurity. In the same period, there was also a rise in the actual rate of victimisation. One can wonder, however, if the fear of being robbed is really linked to the actual victimisation rate, since often there is a great difference between the problem itself and perceived feelings of fear. The trend presented in Figure 4 may be caused by the great interest shown by the press in this subject; a lot of media attention often produces a greater impact than the real level of victimisation. In any case, one thing is clear: there is still a lot of work to be done.

**Table 3: Sources of feelings of unsafety**

Traffic accident	47%
Burglary	33%
Robbery	20%
Sexual assault	15%

Source: Veiligheid en Politie, 1991

Since citizen surveys have been carried out predominantly by criminologists, they have concentrated on the fear of crime. This, however, appears to be only part of the problem. The fear of unsafe traffic also causes great concern to a lot of people. Table 3 shows the risk perception by the public. The figures presented

indicate the percentage of the population that sometimes feels unsafe or worried about themselves or their relatives.

### *Experiencing problems*

When asked in general terms what kind of problems the police should address, citizens tend to mention a very broad range of crimes, mainly traditional violent crime (rape, assault, murder). Similar replies are given in different types of neighbourhoods. However, when asked what kind of problems citizens have to deal with personally, results are quite different. A number of relatively small, but irritating phenomena, such as vandalism, nuisance or harassment caused by youth, are usually mentioned. The kinds of answers may differ substantially between neighbourhoods. Questions in surveys concerning the problems people consider relevant for the police, should therefore always concentrate on the problems in their own neighbourhoods. An example of the kinds of answers given in two different neighbourhoods in Amsterdam are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Problems experienced by citizens in two areas**

Area I	Area II
1. Burglary	Drugs
2. Nuisance by youth	Parking
3. Vandalism	Theft of bicycle
4. Theft of bicycle	Burglary
5. Traffic safety	Serious crimes

### *Contacts between citizens and the police*

Information concerning contacts is very important for several reasons. In the first place, to a large extent, many citizens base their judgement of the quality of policing on the results of their contacts with the latter. Moreover, the quality of contacts can be influenced by management. In this field we do not have any problems with "causal relations", as in the field of the outcomes of policing.

**Table 5: Reasons for negative contacts**

Behaviour of the police	58%
Negative result	23%
No/insufficient action	19%

Usually 70-80% of the population give a positive opinion with regard to their contacts with the police. Two interesting observations can be made in this respect. Firstly, it appears that citizens who have had "negative" contacts with the police (e.g. those who just receive a fine for a traffic offence) are usually just as critical

towards the police as the victims who reported a crime or citizens who witnessed one. Secondly, it is interesting to note that the main reason why people complain about the police is not to do with police effectiveness in fighting crime but, in the majority of cases, concerns the behaviour of the police.

### *General judgements of the police*

When asked to provide a general judgement of the police, the public tends to rate police performance relatively high: "75% of the population thinks the police are doing an excellent job" is one of the well-known results. Even if residents do not have the slightest idea of what the police are doing, they often have a positive opinion of them. This kind of result should not be trusted by managers. A high rating on a general satisfaction scale says very little about quality: even in areas with great problems and high tension the general rating is invariably high. However, when the research asks more specific questions, the results become more negative<sup>14</sup>. Citizen surveys tend to create an image that is more positive than do, for example, participant observation, in-depth interviews or laboratory research. The answers given in surveys are probably not primarily a judgement on police performance, but an indication that "an organisation to perform social control duties is really necessary".

### *Evaluation of police performance*

When citizen surveys are used as a means of evaluation, they usually address the same topics mentioned above. The only difference is that surveys are carried out several times in order to determine if a project (e.g. to decrease a specific problem), or a process of change (e.g. the organisational structure, implementing new strategies of policing) has brought about the originally intended results.

This kind of evaluation research is known to be very difficult. One of the most obvious problems in this kind of study is related to causality: how can you prove that changes in the environment are caused by different policing methods? It is the problem of the black box: one changes the structure of the organisation and then takes it for granted that all changes in the outcomes of the organisation have been caused by the original, structural change. This, of course, is nonsense. For instance, after the development of a plan for restructuring the organisation, there is a long causal chain:

- does the restructuring really take place?
- do the policing methods really change?
- does the citizenry (or special target groups) notice that the police are behaving differently?
- does this affect their behaviour?
- does the change of behaviour have any effect on the problems that originally prompted the plans to change the organisation?

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, D.J. (1983) *Police and the people in London* (4 volumes), Policy Studies Institute, London.

Evaluations of "change projects" in the sixties/seventies often proved to be without any substantial effect. Researchers regularly concluded that different ways of policing did not have any effect on social problems like crime, traffic safety, public order disturbances, etc. Unfortunately, however, most of these evaluations did not study the effect of different policing methods, but the incapability of the organisation to really implement change processes. A change in the organisation does not automatically produce changes in the behaviour of policemen and women on the beat. In order to monitor real developments, the use of citizen surveys only as a means of evaluation is often insufficient. There is a relatively large "gap" between the decision to change the organisation and possible changes of outcomes. One possible way of overcoming this problem is to choose different kinds of evaluation. In the Netherlands one fundamental change process of a police force has been evaluated through three types of research:

- 1) an internal evaluation amongst police personnel, through both surveys and interviews (unfortunately it was impossible to use observation as a means of gathering information). Such a study reveals how police personnel themselves judge the differences in their behaviour;
- 2) in-depth interviews with key-persons in the local community. These are people who, by virtue of their jobs or social position, have a more than average knowledge of the quality of police services. They can see if something is really changing in the behaviour of the police and related consequences;
- 3) A citizen survey, including all topics mentioned in Table 2.

The advantage of using different types of research is that it offers more insight into the "causal chain". No type of research is preferable to another; each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Together they offer more knowledge.

Some research projects carried out over the past ten years proved to be more promising than those conducted in the seventies. Recent research has shown that changing the strategies of policing can produce a positive effect on the level of victimisation, the fear of crime, the level of problems, and the judgement of the police<sup>15</sup>. A better understanding of the nature of policing, improved management systems and a better research methodology have played an important role.

When using surveys for evaluation purposes, one should always realise that changes in the results of surveys may be caused by either differences in the way the police functions or by differences in public opinion. One always measures people's judgement of reality, and this judgement is influenced by the level of their expectations, on the one hand, and by their experience of actual behaviour, on the other. When expectations are low, it is relatively easy to obtain positive results from surveys and to proclaim the successful results of the endeavour. Rising expectations make it very difficult to measure positive effects. When, for instance, the mayor or the chief constable promises in the newspapers that "he is definitely going to solve this or that problem" and the public does not experience an

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<sup>15</sup> Skolnick, J.H. and D.H. Bayley (1986) *The new blue line - police innovation in six American cities*, The Free Press/Collier Macmillan, New York/London; Broer, W., C.C. Schreuder and C.D. van der Vijver (1987) *Eindbalans organisatieverandering politie Haarlem. Resultaten na drie jaar werken met wijkteams*, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, The Hague.

improvement, this may negatively influence their opinion on the effectiveness of the police, even if the police are doing a far better job than they did previously. It is, therefore, important to keep expectations at a low level and performance at a high level. Given the conflicting external roles of policy makers (such as a mayor and a chief constable) who have to convince politicians on the seriousness of their problems, this will always remain a difficult problem to solve.

## Implementation of the results

Traditionally, the goals of the police in social terms, its effects, and the relation between costs and results were not considered important by management. Output criteria and formal aspects, like the quality of the reports in legal terms, were considered to be more important. Management focused more on internal rather than external aspects and the exchange of information for policy reasons with the environment - the public - was limited. Scanning the environment, marketing, measuring effectiveness, evaluation research were considered to be of little or no importance. The criminal justice system (including the police) considered itself a service, a facility which was in existence because it had always existed. It had tasks to perform, not goals to reach; and these tasks were mainly aimed at fighting crime or, better, catching criminals. This position is now changing, however, and the police are looking for new role definitions, are adopting new strategies and, as a result, are adopting a more business-like approach in their behaviour. If this trend continues, and this seems the case, this will produce greater pressure to prove that the criminal justice system has an important role to play. This does not mean that those changes are easy to implement in the organisation. It is not just the culture that has to change, it is a real paradigm-shift, and everyone knows that such a development process is difficult and requires very many years.

Citizen surveys have been conducted in Amsterdam for seven years. There has been a growth in the number of policemen and women using the results (often in a very informal way: for example, teasing a colleague when the results in his or her neighbourhood are below average), but still many members of the organisation have hardly any knowledge of the results.

If this situation is to change, the only solution is for the constables to do the research themselves. They should interview key-persons, citizens who have had contacts with the police, or a sample of residents. Of course, results cannot be expected to meet scientific standards, but the impact on the organisation would be greater. About 50% of the neighbourhood teams in Amsterdam already have some experience, and the results are better than the expectations, and in any case, far better than the results of the surveys carried out for the force as a whole.

Police personnel have also interviewed, with remarkable results, a very special group of "clients": people who have been taken into custody. This pleased not only the prisoners but also the policemen who work in the prisons.

In addition to influencing police work, surveys have also been used for other policy problems, e.g. to solve allocation problems. In most western countries the costs for the police and the judiciary are borne by the central government. Obviously, one of the key issues is how much money each police force should receive. The same problem occurs within the forces; for example in the allocation of personnel in the police districts of a town. Many, often very complex formulas, have been developed over the years, but none of them have proved satisfactory. Can citizen surveys solve this allocation problem by offering more objective standards? Is it possible, for instance, to develop an objective "scale of problems" as a criterion for allocation? In the Netherlands this has been attempted on both a national and local scale, but both attempts failed miserably. Surveys are just not the right instrument to match the need for police-presence and related problems.

In more general terms, it is difficult to use the results of surveys as a means of comparing cities or jurisdictions. It is impossible to tell whether differences in the results of the study are caused by differences in policing, or by differences in the way the population judges policing. For instance, if the citizens of Amsterdam and those of Rotterdam are asked highly abstract questions, the people of Amsterdam will be far more critical towards their police than those of Rotterdam; their general judgement is considerably lower. The reason for this could be either differences in policing, or the fact that people in Amsterdam have always been far more critical in general than those in Rotterdam. Rotterdam is a city where people work and do not talk, Amsterdam has a much more intellectual, left-wing, critical culture, and its inhabitants do not easily accept any kind of authority. There are strong indications that these cultural differences play an important role. If, for instance, the differences in specific interactions between police and citizens are studied, the results for both cities are more or less the same.