

Community Policing, Then and Now

Arlen M. Rosenthal, Lorie A. Fridell, Mark L. Dantzker, Gayle Fisher-Stewart, Pedro J. Saavedra, Tigran Markaryan, and Sadie Bennett, "Community Policing: 1997 National Survey Update of Police and Sheriffs' Departments," final report submitted to NIJ, grant number 96-IJ-CX-0045, available from NCJRS (NCJ 187693).

Community policing is one of the most significant trends in policing history, but what impact has it had on police agencies? And how has it changed their perspective?

In the early 1990's, NIJ supported a major survey to determine the extent to which police departments across the country were adopting community policing strategies. Five years later, an update of the survey shows that substantially more agencies are engaged in community policing than before. The findings support the notion that community policing can be regarded as a movement.

The final report from the updated survey is now available on the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Web site. Among the findings:

- The survey confirms the commonly held belief that police executives continue to place a high premium on community policing. For example, in 1993, 76 percent of the executives said community policing is a highly effective means of providing police services. By 1997, that number had increased to 86 percent.
- Most police executives believe that all organizational personnel should be responsible for implementing community policing—not just patrol officers or community relations staff.
- One-fourth of the police executives in the 1997 survey said community polic-

ing is not suitable for every community. Location, the needs of residents, and the history of the police department with community members are all factors to be considered.

- Larger agencies are more likely to implement community policing than smaller agencies. A huge factor in deciding whether to implement a community policing strategy is the organization's experience with community policing.
- When developing a plan to implement community policing, most police executives rely on the talents of their own personnel rather than on outside resources.
- Municipal agencies implement community policing earlier and at higher rates than sheriffs' departments (61 percent versus 44 percent).

The survey respondents reveal a number of lessons learned while implementing community policing. The lesson most frequently mentioned is that it takes time to prepare for adopting community policing as well as time to implement it. Respondents also recommend that community policing be adopted agencywide rather than by special units only.

The survey report will be of interest to anyone wanting descriptive statistics on community policing. The literature review chapter gives excellent background information on community policing in general.

For more information

- Download *Community Policing: 1997 National Survey Update of Police and Sheriffs' Departments* (NCJ 187693) from <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/187693.pdf>. The report was produced with funds transferred to NIJ from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.