

Supporting the Successful Implementation of the National Crime Prevention Strategy

Introduction

The National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), introduced in 1998, is administered by Public Safety Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC). Managed in collaboration with the provinces and territories, the National Crime Prevention Strategy provides a policy framework for implementing crime prevention interventions in Canada.

The NCPC's mission is to *"provide national leadership on effective and cost-efficient ways to both prevent and reduce crime by addressing known risk factors in high-risk populations and places."*¹ To achieve its mission, the NCPC develops policies; gathers and disseminates knowledge to Canadian communities; and, in cooperation with the provinces and territories, manages funding programs that support community crime prevention projects through time-limited grants and contributions.

In its 2008 budget, the Government of Canada provided \$30 million in ongoing funding for crime prevention, effectively doubling the Strategy's permanent funding base to \$63 million per year.

This reflects the government's commitment to effective prevention as a component of public policy in responding to crime.

Preventing crime among vulnerable groups

The NCPS is based on the premise that well-designed interventions can have a positive influence on behaviours; crimes can be reduced or prevented by addressing risk factors that can lead to offending. Successful interventions have been shown to reduce not only victimization, but also the social and economic costs that result from criminal activities and the costs related to processing cases in the criminal justice system.

This overview addresses the following key elements of the Strategy:

- expanding the knowledge base of risk factors associated with the likelihood that individuals will engage in criminal activity;
- identifying individuals at different stages of development who exhibit or are exposed to these risk factors; and

- building on the body of knowledge on effective interventions for addressing these risk factors.

Targeting criminogenic risk factors

Criminogenic risk factors refer to characteristics that increase the likelihood of an individual committing a crime. Such risk factors can apply to individuals and groups, as well as social environments such as schools and communities.

Social science literature generally groups key risk factors under five domains:²

- **Individual-related factors:** hyperactivity, impulsiveness, sensation-seeking behaviours, alienation, rebelliousness, early aggressiveness, early use of substances and early onset of deviant, delinquent behaviour.
- **Family-related factors:** parent or family member involved in crime, addictive substance use, family disputes or violence, little parental involvement, poor discipline.
- **Peer-related factors:** deviant or criminalized friends, friends who are gang members, little social commitment.
- **School-related factors:** poor school performance, low attachment to school, truancy, dropping out of school, exclusion or suspension from school.
- **Community-related factors:** availability of firearms or drugs, social disorganization, weak or poor social networks.

An individual who presents these risk factors will not necessarily engage in criminal activity, particularly when protective factors increase the resilience of these persons. However, research indicates that the presence of certain risk factors

increases the likelihood of committing a crime and being arrested.³ Such research includes longitudinal studies (following people in the same age group over an extended time) conducted in various countries; retrospective studies of factors that led to a lifelong history of criminal conduct by adult offenders; and evaluation studies of the positive impacts of various preventive interventions in reduced offending.

Risk factors have a cumulative effect: the more risk factors an individual is subject to, the greater the likelihood that that person will commit a crime or violent act.⁴ For example, a study suggests that a 10-year-old child who presents six or more risk factors is 10 times more likely to become violent by the age of 18 than is a child who is exposed to just one risk factor.⁵

Duration of exposure is also cumulative: for a person who committed a first offence early in life, and more offences during adolescence, the longer that person was exposed to risk factors, the higher the likelihood of later offending. There is also evidence that the tendency to commit crime is higher among those who have committed a first offence earlier in life and who have committed a number of them during adolescence (Carrington, 2008). Furthermore, chronic offenders have been shown to not only present multiple risk factors but also to lack protective factors such as attachment to the family, school or the community.

For these reasons, it is important to intervene as early as possible to thwart the development of a crime-oriented path. Accordingly, the NCPS focuses on interventions that have a high chance of reducing the impact of those risk factors that are amenable to change.



Focusing on persons most at risk of offending

In Canada as in many other Western countries, crimes are not randomly distributed among the population or across geographical areas. Rather, a disproportionate share is committed by a small group of offenders. In fact, 16% of offenders commit at least 60% of the crimes reported to police.⁶ These offenders tend to share characteristics such as early onset of delinquency and an accumulation of risk factors.

The probability of committing crimes differs according to gender. Males account for more than 80% of all offenders arrested, although the proportion of females charged with an offence has risen gradually in recent years.

Crime also differs by age, with the propensity to offend much higher among the youngest segments of the population with criminal liability in Canada (the minimum age is 12 years).⁷ The 12–24 age group accounts for nearly half of all offenders (20% for those aged 12–17 years and 24% for those aged 18–24 years), even though they represent only 18% of the total population.

In terms of geography, studies show that offences reported to police departments tend to be concentrated in certain hot spots, which vary by city, and that this concentration varies by age group.⁸ Offences committed by youth, for example, tend to take place closer to schools than city centres.⁹

Although the availability of data is limited, there is evidence that Aboriginal people are at higher risk of being arrested and incarcerated than other segments of the population. Among Aboriginal people, the number of victims of acts of violence is significantly higher, as is the crime rate in the

territories compared with the provinces. Consequently, Aboriginal people, who account for only 3% of the Canadian population, represent upwards of 50% of the inmates in some provincial institutions, and approximately 19% of inmates under federal jurisdiction. On reserves, crime rates among adults are six times higher, and among youth, three times higher, than elsewhere in the country.¹⁰

Based on these patterns, the NCPS focuses on the following priority groups, with an additional, particular emphasis on Aboriginal people:

- children aged 6–11 years, to prevent their initiation to criminal activity from the point at which there are early signs of anti-social behaviour;
- young people aged 12–17, to reduce the pressures brought about by known risk factors among those who are the most predisposed to criminal activity, including those who have been in trouble with the law;
- young adults aged 18–24, particularly those who have a history of offending;
- offenders who have completed their sentence and have been released into the community, to prevent or reduce recidivism.

Supporting evidence-based interventions

Since the 1980s, extensive studies have assessed the impact of crime prevention programs resulting in a substantial pool of knowledge about the most effective approaches. Various government agencies around the world, along with universities and research institutes, continually gather and evaluate these programs and promote those that have proven to be successful.¹¹

The NCPC recognizes some crime prevention practices as model programs, based on rigorous evaluation studies and positive results in various communities and environments.

It defines promising programs as those based on components and attributes of model programs that rely on knowledge of risk factors, but whose evaluations have not clearly determined their effectiveness.

Proven programs can attribute their success to:

- carefully targeting clients who are most likely to benefit from intervention;
- implementing tested approaches as faithfully as possible; and
- monitoring the implementation and evaluating program impacts.

Yet many programs that succeed in other countries are little-known or under-used in Canada, and few have been tested here. Consequently, the NCPC focuses on gathering and disseminating practical knowledge about such programs, and the NCPC funds their implementation.¹²

Because it recognizes the dynamic and progressive nature of the knowledge surrounding crime prevention, the NCPC also funds *innovative* projects—taking into account local situations and the characteristics of their crime-related issues. This is especially true for prevention programs for Aboriginal communities.

This approach reflects the normal program development cycle in which the gradual and systematic amassing of knowledge about program effectiveness and operating mechanisms leads to innovations that evolve into promising programs and, eventually, into model programs.

Working for communities and practitioners

To achieve the Strategy's ultimate goal of reducing offending, the NCPC undertakes two key streams of activities:¹³

- community funding¹⁴ to support projects that deliver social crime prevention measures¹⁵ aimed at those most at risk of offending;
- and building and sharing practical knowledge of successful crime prevention measures, and promoting their use by stakeholders.

In its capacity as a *resource centre*, the NCPC makes available its extensive knowledge base to communities and organizations. It provides evaluation summaries and research reports on risk factors and related issues, as well as tools and guides on best practices. It also facilitates access to resources such as researchers, non-governmental organizations and practitioner networks. A large part of the information is available via the NCPC website at www.publicsafety.gc.ca/NCPC, including information about contacts at the NCPC who have links to a wide network of experts in the field.

As a *centre of expertise* on crime prevention programs, the NCPC assists organizations whose project proposals have been accepted in the initial stage of the request for letters of interest by ensuring that their proposals meet the terms and conditions of the funding requirements. Internal evaluation analysts further refine accepted proposals and the logic model that links their proposed activities to the desired outcomes, and develop and implement monitoring and process evaluation tools.

Once a proposed project is selected to implement a model or promising crime prevention program, stakeholder training is offered to the recipient



organization by the specialists who designed the intervention. From the early stages of a project's development through to its successful completion NCPC program officers provide support to the organization and contribute to the continued enhancement of programs and policies.

Taking into consideration the conclusions and recommendations of a 2006 report by a group of independent experts on funding programs,¹⁶ and feedback from organizations in the field, the NCPC takes all necessary measures, within its scope, to expedite the funding application process and to simplify accountability processes and requirements, while maintaining the high level of rigour expected for the sound management of public funds.

To summarize, the NCPC provides the following tools to practitioners and the public:

- studies on topics such as risk factors and changes in the population at risk;
- support for carrying out rigorous evaluation studies of the impacts of funded projects;
- knowledge-sharing mechanisms such as seminars, workshops and training sessions, plus information posted on the NCPC website;
- support for establishing communities of practice around particular models or populations; and
- dedicated professionals in six regional offices throughout Canada who keep abreast of current affairs in the field, maintain close contact with provincial/territorial representatives, and carry out the NCPC's core policies and funding practices.

Through the NCPS, the NCPC is committed to developing, disseminating and promoting the use of sound information on best practices in crime

prevention for the benefit of practitioners so that, based on the best knowledge available, their interventions on the ground have a greater likelihood of effectively preventing crime among groups at greatest risk of criminal behaviour.

APPENDIX 1: National Crime Prevention Strategy – Logic Model

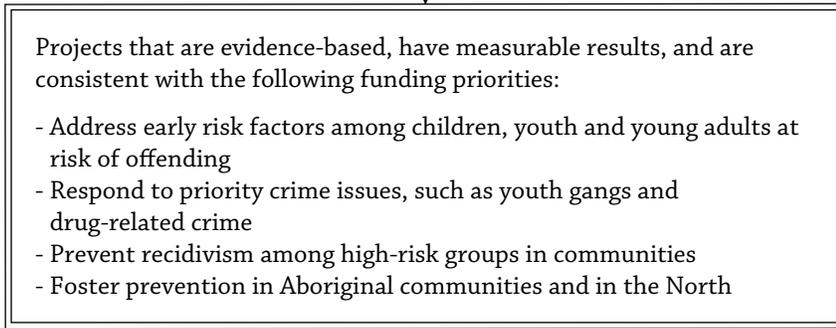
Renewed National Crime Prevention Strategy

OPERATIONAL COMPONENT

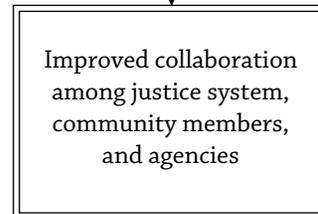
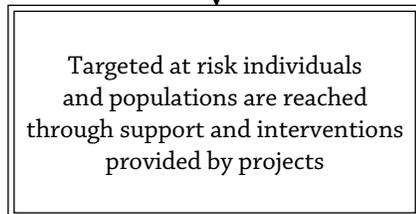
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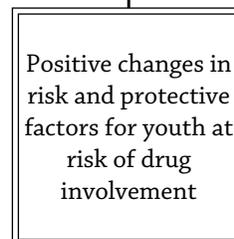
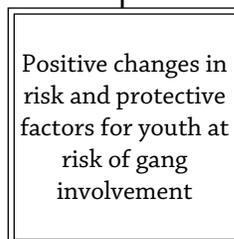
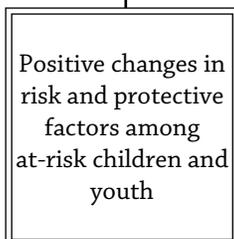
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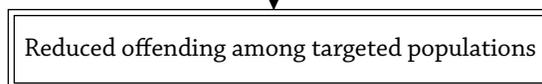
SHORT TERM OUTCOMES



INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

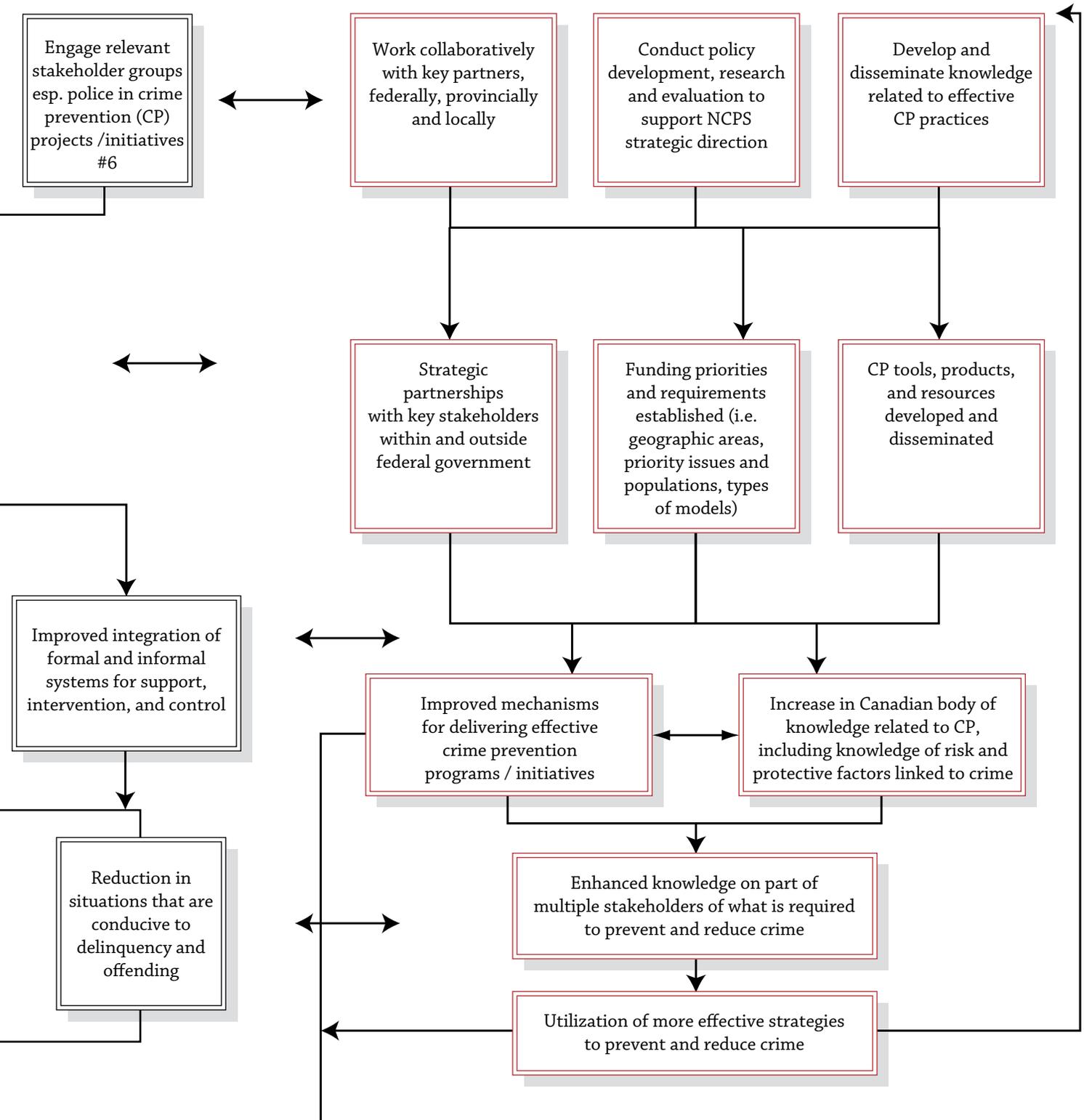


ULTIMATE OUTCOME



Prevention Strategy – September 2008

STRATEGIC COMPONENT



End Notes

- ¹ — Canada. Public Safety Canada. National Prevention Crime Centre. 2007. *A Blueprint for Effective Crime Prevention*. Ottawa: Public Safety Canada.
- ² — Hawkins, J.D., R. F. Catalano, and M. D. Arthur. 2002. “Promoting science based prevention in communities”. *Addictive Behaviors*, 27(66): 951-976.; Herrenkohl, T.L. et al. 2000. “Developmental risk factors for youth violence”. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 26(3): 176-186.; Loeber, R. et al. 1998. “The development of male offending: Key findings from the first decade of the Pittsburgh Youth Study”. *Studies in Crime and Crime Prevention*, 7:141-172.; Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. (n.d.). *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*.; Thornberry, T., D. Huizinga, and R. Loeber. 2004. “The causes and correlates studies: Findings and policy implications”. *Juvenile Justice Journal*, 9(1): 3-19.; Vassallo, S. et al. 2002. *Patterns and Precursors of Adolescent Antisocial Behaviour, the First Report*. Retrieved from: www.aifs.gov.au/atp/pubs/cpv/report1.pdf
- ³ — See: Lieberman, A. 2008. *The Long View of Crime*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.
- ⁴ — Loeber, R., D. Farrington, et al. 1998. “The development of male offending: Key findings from the first decade of the Pittsburgh Youth Study”. *Studies in Crime and Crime Prevention*, 7:141-172.
- ⁵ — Herrenkohl, T.L. et al. 2000. “Developmental risk factors for youth violence”. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 26(3): 176-186.
- ⁶ — Carrington, P., A. Matarazzo and P. deSouza. 2005. *Court Careers of a Canadian Birth Cohort*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.
- ⁷ — The minimum age of criminal liability in Canada is 12 years of age.
- ⁸ — Savoie, J. 2006. *Youth Self-Reported Delinquency, Toronto, 2006*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada; Savoie, J. 2007. *Youth Self-Reported Delinquency, Toronto, 2006*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.
- ⁹ — Perreault, S., J. Savoie, and F. Bédard. 2008. *Neighbourhood Characteristics and the Distribution of Crime on the Island of Montréal*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.
- ¹⁰ — Canada. Statistics Canada. 2006. *Crime Statistics in Canada, 2005*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.
- ¹¹ — Examples of government agencies include the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Washington, DC (<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta (www.cdc.gov/); the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Washington, DC (www.samhsa.gov/); the United Kingdom’s Home Office, London (www.homeoffice.gov.uk/); and the Youth Justice Board, London (www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/). Examples of institutions include the Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Boulder, Colorado (www.colorado.edu/cspv/); the Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra (www.aic.gov.au/); and the Child Development Institute, Toronto, Ontario (www.childdevelop.ca/).
- ¹² — Canada. Public Safety Canada. National Crime Prevention Centre. 2008. *Promising and Model Crime Prevention Programs*. Ottawa: Public Safety Canada; Canada. Public Safety Canada. National Crime Prevention Centre. 2008. *Crime Prevention Action Fund: Funding Guide*. Ottawa: Public Safety Canada.
- ¹³ — See Appendix 1 for NCPS’ logic model.
- ¹⁴ — A series of guides describing the NCPC’s funding programs can be found at www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/ncps-fundsindex-eng.aspx. Printed copies are available through NCPC headquarters and regional offices (1-877-302-6272).
- ¹⁵ — For a glossary of common terms used in crime prevention please contact NCPC Headquarters at 1-877-302-6272.
- ¹⁶ — Canada. Blue Ribbon Panel on Grant and Contribution Programs. (2006). *From Red Tape to Clear Results*. Ottawa: Treasury Board of Canada. Retrieved from: <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection?BT22-109-2007E.pdf>