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National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

Jeremy Travis, Director

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Issues and Findings

Discussed in this Research in Brief: The findings of the most recent NIJ-sponsored National Assessment Program (NAP) survey, which is conducted approximately every 3 years to identify the most pressing problems faced by the various components of the criminal justice system at the State and local levels. More than 2,500 officials in the criminal justice community participated.

Key issues: Respondents were asked whether various problems contributed to their workload, what they were doing to solve them, whether their approaches needed improvement, and what their priorities were for future research and evaluation.

Key findings: Overall, the survey found that like most other Americans, criminal justice system directors were concerned with violence, drugs, and firearms—particularly as they affected young people, both as victims of crime and as offenders.

● More than 65 percent of respondents indicated that cases involving violence caused problems in workload management. Police chiefs and sheriffs indicated domestic violence as the primary concern, and prosecutors highly ranked child abuse and domestic violence.

● Drug-related crime caused workload difficulties to an even greater extent than violent crime.

continued . . .

National Assessment Program: 1994 Survey Results

by Tom McEwen

The National Assessment Program (NAP) is a major part of an ongoing dialog between the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the criminal justice community. The NAP survey, conducted approximately every 3 years, is designed to bring to light the issues that police chiefs and sheriffs, prosecutors, judges, probation and parole agency directors, and others in the criminal justice system see as most important.¹ By identifying what these officials confront on a day-to-day basis, the survey can provide direction in developing programs and strategies to respond to their problems. That direction comes in part through the role of the survey findings in shaping NIJ's plans for research and evaluations. This Research in Brief summarizes the findings of the 1994 NAP survey.

The continuing problems: violence, drugs, and firearms

These findings indicate that the views of the survey participants mirror those of most other Americans. The themes of violence, drugs, and firearms dominated the responses, and respondents repeatedly expressed concern about young people, both as victims of violence and as offenders, as indicated by these comments:

Increased reporting by the public in child abuse, sexual assaults, and family violence has greatly increased our workload. (sheriff)

Domestic violence, child abuse, larceny, and robbery cases are increasing due to drug abuse, and in our area many people are unemployed and the pressures of keeping a job are putting people under a lot of stress. (police chief)

Most of the violent crimes are gang-related. They are difficult to investigate due to lack of cooperation [from victims and witnesses]. Most of the gang problems are over drug selling territories. (sheriff)

Violent Crime. When asked about the effect of violent crime on workload problems, the vast majority of respondents (more than 65 percent of all agencies asked) said they experienced significant problems. (See exhibit 1.) All the violent crimes they were asked about—assault, homicide, rape, domestic violence, and child abuse—caused workload problems for their agency. Of the jail administrators, more than 80 percent said that arrests for violent crime contributed to crowding in their facilities. They cited only arrests for drug charges as contributing more.

Issues and Findings

continued . . .

- More than 80 percent of police chiefs and sheriffs said crimes committed with a firearm contributed to their workload problems, and they were concerned particularly about the availability of firearms to juveniles.

- Police chiefs and sheriffs cited community policing most frequently as their approach to deter crime.

- Almost three-fourths of the police chiefs had programs for at-risk youths, and most others would like to see them established.

- The response to gang-related crime, a problem in the vast majority of large jurisdictions and a growing concern in less populous areas, has involved enforcement and prevention. Among correctional facilities, gangs were a more serious problem in prisons than jails.

- Correctional facilities seem to have succeeded to an extent in reducing crowding because of new construction and such initiatives as alternative sanctions, the most common of which were work release centers.

- The vast majority of police and sheriff's offices have strategies in recruitment and training for working with culturally diverse communities.

- Information systems needs were greater than any other revealed in the survey, although specific need varied by category of respondent.

Target audience: Police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, trial court administrators, jail administrators, prison wardens, probation agency directors, parole agency directors, and State commissioners of corrections.

For police chiefs and sheriffs, domestic violence was the primary concern among crimes of violence, with almost all of them saying it caused workload problems. They also cited gang-related problems as consuming an inordinate amount of resources. Among prosecutors, child abuse and domestic violence were at the top of the list. By contrast, homicide was ranked lowest by police chiefs and sheriffs, although public defenders and judges ranked it high. Carjacking and asset forfeiture were cited by relatively few agency representatives.

Workload problems related to violent crime were also caused in part by factors unrelated, at least directly, to the high crime rate. For example, the number of reports of violent crime has increased,

arrest policies for domestic violence have changed, and State laws have permitted more police action with regard to mandatory arrest.

The extraordinary amount of resources required to handle certain types of violent crime cases was cited by some respondents. Respondents noted, for example, the time needed in child abuse incidents for followup investigation and the complexity of prosecution of these cases. Some public defenders noted the shift to heavy prosecution and away from plea negotiation for certain violent crimes, such as domestic violence. They also said that mandatory sentencing had led to more jury trials and a consequent need for staff and training.

Exhibit 1: Violent Crimes Contributing to Workload Problems

	Police Chiefs	Sheriffs	Prosecutors	Public Defenders	Judges
Assault	98%	95%	79%	74%	70%
Child Abuse	91%	94%	92%	82%	79%
Domestic Violence	99%	97%	91%	83%	85%
Homicide	69%	65%	88%	86%	84%
Rape	77%	74%	88%	79%	75%

Drug-related crime. The survey findings indicate that drug crimes caused workload difficulties to an even greater extent than violent crime. More than 80 percent of the respondents noted drug possession and/or drug sales as creating these problems. In comments such as the following, respondents suggested that the volume of drug cases was the primary reason for workload problems in criminal justice:

Our workload problems are a result of the overwhelming number of cases that are a direct or indirect result of drugs. (sheriff)

Drug activity is the one factor most affecting our court. (judge)

Most crime is related to drug use. (judge)

Current drug treatment slots are less than one-fourth of what they were 10 years ago. (prosecutor)

Drug crime has so dominated police operations in the past few years that large percentages of the departments, according to the survey, have undertaken special activities to respond. These activities include asset forfeiture, programs in the schools, buy-busts, directed

patrol, Neighborhood Watch, drug units, civil enforcement, and enforcement in public housing.

Whereas police and sheriffs have focused on enforcement aimed at drug crime, other agencies have been more directly involved with treatment. These agencies were asked to rate the adequacy of the drug treatment programs in their jurisdictions. Most of them offered treatment as an alterna-

tive sanction for offenders. However, at least 80 percent indicated that improvements were needed in treatment services. Sixty-nine percent of the public defenders and over half the probation and parole agency directors said *major* improvements were needed. In their comments, the respondents generally noted the need for expanded service: more programs and beds, longer time in treatment, and availability of treatment for indigent offenders.

Drug testing programs for offenders under community supervision have become almost universal. Ninety-three percent of the probation and parole agency directors surveyed reported having them. However, their views on the value of testing were mixed. Some saw it as effective in discouraging illicit drug use and as a useful supervision tool, but at the same time, they said it was time-consuming and may

T How the Survey Was Conducted

The National Assessment Program survey is conducted approximately every 3 years to find out the needs and problems of criminal justice agencies. This year's survey, administered by the Institute for Law and Justice, is the fourth, with the others conducted in 1983, 1986, and 1990.

Because the survey began in 1993, the responses reflect figures for 1992, the most recent year for which complete information was available to the respondents.

Who Participated. Representatives of virtually the entire criminal justice system took part. At the local level, this year's questionnaire was sent to police chiefs and sheriffs, jail administrators, prosecutors and public defenders, judges and trial court administrators, and probation and parole directors, and at the State level, to attorneys general, commissioners of corrections, State court administrators, directors of probation and parole, and prison wardens.

Number of Participants. The sample encompassed all 50 States and the District of Columbia. Within the States, a sample of 411 counties was selected.

This included all counties with a population greater than 250,000 (211 in number) and a random sample of 200 smaller counties (with populations of 50,000 to 250,000). The police chiefs were selected by identifying the city in each county with the highest population (as indicated by the 1990 census).

The number of questionnaires sent was 3,739 and the number completed was 2,585, for a response rate of 69.1 percent.

What They Were Asked. The survey questions were tailored to the specific responsibilities of the various kinds of agencies. Thus, for example, jail administrators were asked about such issues as crowding and inmates' medical needs, whereas prosecutors, judges, and trial court administrators were asked about sentencing alternatives and pre-trial practices, among other issues. Questions on staffing and training needs were common to all types of agencies. Before the questionnaires were sent, they were reviewed by criminal justice practitioners and researchers from throughout the country.

There were three major areas of inquiry: workload problems, staffing, and opera-

tions and procedures. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which particular issues contribute to workload problems. For example, they were asked this question about a number of violent crimes, such as domestic violence and child abuse. The key issue was whether the agencies have been able to handle the workload adequately or whether they have had problems doing so.

Respondents also were asked about solutions to the problems they identified. They indicated what approaches they now take to handle specific problems and whether they believed these approaches need improvement. Priorities for future research and evaluation were also explored.

Throughout the survey, open-ended questions enabled respondents to comment on details of their problems and needs and to describe their own experiences. These comments, which are presented throughout this report, complemented and enhanced the quantitative results by providing insights from the respondents on the reasons for the workload problems.

be relied on too heavily to validate good behavior.

Firearms. More than 80 percent of police chiefs and sheriffs said that crimes committed with firearms contributed to their workload problems, and they were particularly concerned about the availability of firearms to juveniles. One police chief characterized the problem this way:

Current law allowing possession of firearms by anyone 16 and older puts many weapons into the pockets and vehicles of juveniles.

Initiatives for addressing the problem of firearms included gun turn-ins and buy-backs. Thirty-seven percent of the police chiefs surveyed said they participated in these programs, and an equal percentage would like to see such a program in their jurisdiction.

Among those with gun turn-in or buy-back programs, the majority were satisfied with the results. Overall, the views on these programs were mixed, with the most favorable coming from urban areas and the most unfavorable from suburban and rural communities. The comment of one participant may help explain the reaction of rural areas. "A gun turn-in program in this rural State would be viewed as ludicrous," this sheriff wrote. "Most people here do not view guns as 'bad,' as they are inanimate objects. Most children receive firearms safety [training] in their local schools along with hunter education."²

What should be done to strengthen the response

The survey respondents also noted what they were doing to respond to the

problems identified and whether they felt the response was adequate.

Community policing. Interest in community policing is growing, with more than 80 percent of the police chiefs and almost two-thirds of the sheriffs surveyed reporting that they have adopted it, as indicated by these comments from two police chiefs:

The contributing factors to our workload have been greater availability of guns for juveniles, more sophisticated firearms in possession of criminals, decline in family cohesiveness in inner-city neighborhoods, availability of illegal drugs, and inadequate prison space. We are responding by shifting resources from traditional vehicle patrol to community policing.

The workload increase for this department stems from neighborhood problems and quality of life issues rather than major crimes. We are adopting community policing in an effort to address these quality of life issues.

Most of those who have not yet adopted community policing indicated they wanted to. That community policing is a relatively recent development also became clear from the survey. Respondents indicated that they were just beginning to adopt it or said it was confined to a few neighborhoods in their jurisdiction. The most common community policing components cited were foot patrols, special units, and neighborhood substations.

The reasons for the interest in shifting away from a traditional policing model, according to police chiefs and sheriffs,

were the desire to improve neighborhood quality of life, involve citizens in crime fighting (especially against drugs), and undertake a more concerted effort at crime prevention. Despite (or more likely because of) the interest in and commitment to the new approach, workload has increased, at least in the view of some respondents. Staffing has presented a challenge, and some respondents said that more officers were needed to expand community policing.

The enthusiasm for community policing was also tempered by training needs. Thus, 83 percent of the police chiefs and sheriffs who had community policing programs said training should be better. Obstacles to training included making time available, according to some respondents. Others noted the difficulty in "selling" the new approach.

Programs for young people. Efforts to deter young people from crime, including drug- and gang-related crime, were high on the agenda of police chiefs and sheriffs and other representatives of criminal justice agencies. Among these efforts were initiatives based in the schools, as reflected by these comments:

It seems that schools have turned into dens of violence and intimidation.
(police chief)

The D.A.R.E.[®] [drug prevention] program has worked well but should be continued past the elementary level. (police chief)

The vast majority of police chiefs and sheriffs (89 percent and 80 percent, respectively) said their jurisdictions had special activities aimed at pre-

venting school crime. The majority, however, reported a need for improvement in these programs. Many of these law enforcement officials noted school resource officers (SRO's), whose aim is to create positive relationships with students and provide law enforcement services, as an approach they were using to deal with school crime.

Some departments were using their community policing programs to work with the schools. One approach is the Adopt-A-School program, which features a single officer who works in a school to prevent and reduce crime. Another is involvement of the schools in the department's overall program of community policing.

Drugs were the focus of some school-based activities. Most police and sheriff's departments have introduced drug education programs into the schools and most were satisfied with the results. Many commented favorably on the D.A.R.E.[®] (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, indicating their belief it has been successful.

Strategies for working with at-risk youths—those who are economically disadvantaged, who often face racial or ethnic discrimination, and whose day-to-day lives are characterized by disorganization—were of great interest to police chiefs and sheriffs. Almost three-fourths of the police chiefs said they had programs for at-risk youths, and of those who did not, most would like to see them established in their departments. Considerably fewer sheriff's departments (53 percent) had these programs, but like the police chiefs, the vast majority of sheriffs who did not have them indicated interest in them. These programs were widely perceived as needing improvement;

about three-fourths of both police chiefs and sheriffs noted they could be better.

One of the greatest needs, expressed by police chiefs and sheriffs alike, was for means to prevent juveniles from obtaining guns. Eighty-five percent of the police chiefs said existing methods needed to be better, and a large percentage said they needed methods. For sheriffs, the percentages were similar.

Gangs and gang-related crime. Gangs and gang-related crime have not been only a challenge for the police and sheriffs. Prosecutors face special problems investigating cases involving gangs, and the presence of gangs in correctional facilities raises the issues of classification and staff training among jail administrators and prison wardens.

The survey revealed that gang-related crime is a problem in the vast majority of large jurisdictions, and it is also a growing concern in less populous areas. Among police chiefs in jurisdictions with more than 250,000 residents, 73 percent said gang-related crime contributed to workload problems. By comparison, 55 percent of the police in medium-size jurisdictions (those with populations between 100,000 and 250,000) and 45 percent in smaller jurisdictions (those with populations of 100,000 or less) said they were experiencing the problem. Not only was gang-related crime reported to be extensive, but it appeared to be growing. As one police chief said:

Gang activity is increasing steadily, and we project it will be the principal cause of homicide and serious assault cases in the next few years, unless it can be abated at this point.

Because the problem was perceived to be greater in large jurisdictions, their response was more intensive. The vast majority (90 percent) of police departments in large jurisdictions had special activities to combat gang-related crime. In medium and small jurisdictions the percentages were lower—82 and 72, respectively. The lack of satisfaction with the existing response may mirror the intractability of the problem: About 80 percent of the police chiefs and sheriffs would like to see improvement in their activities to combat gang crime.

The approach that police and sheriffs were taking to gang crime was two-pronged, involving enforcement and prevention through education. Enforcement may include the establishment of gang task forces or special gang units. One jurisdiction disbanded its traffic unit and converted it to a gang unit. Prevention often focuses on the schools, with specific tactics including use of SRO's or implementation of the GREAT (Gang Resistance Education & Training)³ & D.A.R.E.[®] programs. Respondents' comments suggest that the GREAT program has been adopted where the D.A.R.E.[®] program has been implemented because in virtually every instance in which GREAT was noted, D.A.R.E.[®] was mentioned in conjunction with it.

The prosecution of gang-related crime has been a particular challenge in large jurisdictions, where 58 percent of the prosecutors surveyed said this type of crime was adding to their workload problems. In contrast, 33 percent of the prosecutors in small jurisdictions were experiencing this problem. Again, the response was commensurate with the need. Thus, 38 percent of prosecutors in large jurisdictions have established specialized

gang prosecution units, compared to only about 5 percent in smaller jurisdictions. Prosecution of gang-related crime was seen to be posing special challenges, as indicated by one prosecutor's comment:

The primary problem with [prosecuting] gang violence cases is the difficulty in both locating witnesses and convincing them to testify.

Prosecutors said fear of retaliation was a major inhibiting factor in prosecuting gang crime. The difficulties of prosecution extended to the amount of time required to interview suspects.

In correctional facilities that have gangs, administrators need classification procedures that accurately identify gang members and training that equips staff to deal with this type of inmate. More than 75 percent of the jail administrators surveyed said their classification procedures included ways to identify gang-affiliated inmates, but more than half believed these procedures could be better. With training the figures were similar: a relatively large percentage were providing staff training in controlling gang-related activities in jail, but 65 percent of them indicated the need for improvement.

Gangs appear to pose a more serious problem in prisons than jails because of the longer period of incarceration. According to one prison warden:

Gang influence has been the most detrimental effect on prison operations in the last 25 years.

Wardens said gangs' adverse effects included overcrowding when gang members were segregated. A large

proportion of the wardens (more than 80 percent) said they had classification procedures for identifying gang-affiliated members, but at the same time, 71 percent of those who had them said they could be better. Similarly, staff training in how to deal with gang members could use improvement, according to the wardens.

Easing jail and prison crowding. In the jails, the familiar story of crowded conditions has changed somewhat. One reason is more construction. Comparison of figures reported in the 1990 NAP survey to those in the 1994 survey indicated that the number of jail admissions in responding institutions increased. (See exhibit 2.) At the same time, however, the capital budget for jails more than doubled, permitting the addition of new bed spaces. The effect was to reduce the percentage of jails categorized as "crowded" (from the 52 percent indicated in the 1990 survey to the 35 percent indicated in the 1994 survey) and to increase the per-

centage of jails whose average daily population was under 90 percent of rated capacity.

Imposition of maximum capacity, as well as weekend sentencing and alternative sanctions, were other reasons jail administrators cited for the current, less crowded conditions of the jails.

Although crowding has been somewhat alleviated, 35 percent of the jail administrators said their facility still had this problem. The main reasons they cited were arrests for drug offenses and violent crime (including domestic violence), probation and parole violations, length of sentences, and incarceration in jail of people convicted of felonies who would otherwise have been sent to a prison. Factors affecting the situation in jails and prisons are summarized by these comments from survey participants:

Drug offenders with heavy sentences fill up about 75 percent

Exhibit 2: Jail Admissions and New Cell Construction, 1989-1992

	1989 (1990 NAP Survey)	1992 (1994 NAP Survey)
Average number of jail admissions	14,398	15,457
Average capital budget for jail construction—past 3 years	\$8,750,000	\$19,500,000
Average number of bed spaces added in past 3 years	159	220
Crowded jails*	52%	35%
Jails with ADP** less than 90% of rated capacity	10%	22%

*For the purposes of this analysis, a jail was considered crowded if it was operating at more than 110% of rated capacity.

**Average daily population.

Note: The comparisons in this table are approximate because the two surveys did not include the same jails. In 148 cases, however, the same jails did participate in the survey in both years. They tended to be the larger jails because all counties with populations of more than 250,000 were included. These 148 jails showed the same trends as the ones indicated in this table.

of the available cells. (prison warden)

More offenders are being sentenced for violent crimes and more are given life sentences that are now 40 years or more without parole. (prison warden)

Our county has developed extensive and comprehensive alternatives to incarceration in an effort to relieve jail crowding. (jail administrator)

Many State inmates are serving their entire sentences at our [jail], and the State is often slow in taking others into the prison system. This has been a major crowding factor to us. (jail administrator)

Jail crowding, as a consequence of prison crowding, has resulted from the backlog of sentenced inmates waiting for prison spaces to open up. Of the prison wardens who responded to the survey, 37 percent reported crowded conditions. This percentage was about the same as for jails, and the reasons were similar: drug crime (reported by 88 percent of the wardens), violent crime, longer sentences, parole violations, and insufficient alternative sanctions. Facilities for women were not reported to be as crowded as those for men, although some wardens noted female offenders' involvement in substance abuse and mandatory drug sentences as the reasons behind the rising number of female inmates.

Crowding has adversely affected several operations, particularly inmate programs. As some wardens noted, with the numbers increasing, the emphasis must shift from treatment and programming to containment, diverting

resources from programs to security. Mental health programs and recreational programs were among those affected by crowding.

Like jails, prison systems have added new cells to accommodate increases in the numbers of inmates. According to the survey, prisons that were crowded were more active in adding new cells than prisons without crowded conditions.

Alternatives to incarceration. States and localities are using a range of options that meet the need for flexibility in sentencing and help alleviate crowding in correctional facilities. When asked about the availability in their jurisdiction of several alternatives to incarceration, respondents cited work release centers as most common, followed by electronic monitoring, boot camps, and day reporting centers. Less than half of the respondents in each category said they had day reporting centers, the least common alternative. Among prosecutors, for example, 92 percent said their jurisdictions had work release centers, 84 percent had electronic monitoring, and 71 percent have boot camps, but only 48 percent had day reporting programs. Respondents made a wide range of comments about the alternatives:

Boot camp early releases have high contact requirements, but are lowest risk. (probation/parole director)

Our concern with boot camp programs is that there is little evidence that they result in long-term behavior modification, and they currently have insufficient followup. (judge)

Electronic monitoring has been successful; it needs to be expanded. (judge)

Electronic home confinement has been key to preventing crowding in our jail. (jail administrator)

Prison overcrowding has meant that the day reporting and work release programs have increased faster than the community supervision component. (probation/parole agency director)

Responses to the question of whether the existing program needed improvement also varied with the respondent. Thus, public defenders felt more strongly than others about the need to improve available options. Probation and parole agency directors were less likely than other groups to want any of these alternatives implemented in their jurisdiction. Their comments suggested their resistance may have been due to the potential for additional work for their agencies, which they said were already overburdened.

A relatively high percentage of respondents said they did not want boot camps. For example, more probation and parole agency directors were unreceptive to boot camps than to the other types of sanctions. These directors were not fully convinced of the effectiveness of boot camps and were concerned about the amount of time needed to manage them. Although judges and trial court administrators expressed more favorable opinions about boot camps (a comparatively large percentage of those who did not have them said they needed to be developed), some had reservations. Some judges cited the lack of followup training and supervision, a sentiment shared by other respondents.

Over 90 percent of each respondent group, with the exception of probation and parole agency directors, said work release centers were an option available in their jurisdiction. Probation and parole agency directors were also less receptive to work release centers than were other respondents: almost one-third said they did not want or need them. Their concerns centered on quality of services and supervision needs.

Electronic monitoring followed only work release centers as the most frequently employed alternative to prison or routine probation. More than half of the respondents in each category said their jurisdiction had this type of program. As to the question of whether this sanction needed improvement, respondents were divided, with public defenders the most concerned and probation and parole agency directors the least concerned (80 percent and 48 percent, respectively, said improvement was needed).

These figures may help explain the high percentages of respondents who expressed interest in having day reporting centers developed.

Special populations/ emerging issues

Several issues that have more recently begun to attract the attention of criminal justice system professionals came to light in the survey. They are associated largely with specific portions of the victim and criminal justice population who have particular needs.

Cultural diversity. The diverse cultural makeup of many communities requires modification in the approach taken by law enforcement. Police chiefs and sheriffs expressed concern about how to develop initiatives to work with di-

verse groups, particularly where there were language differences. Comments of individual respondents illustrate the dimensions of the issue:

Our county consists of approximately 10 percent East Indian population and approximately 40 percent Hispanic. Our department consists of approximately 95 percent Caucasian. (sheriff)

I see cross-cultural diversity training as essential for this decade. With an ever-changing culture, all public employees need to be informed. (sheriff)

The State Law Enforcement Training Academy has provided training in cultural diversity for our department and now trains every new officer as part of the basic course. (police chief)

The differences between the cultural composition of the community served and that of the police force were one reason cited for the barriers between police and residents.

Specific strategies for working with culturally diverse communities were fairly widespread: 89 percent of police chiefs and 73 percent of sheriffs have adopted one or more of them. At the same time, law enforcement leaders of both groups (80 percent and 72 percent, respectively) who had implemented a strategy said improvement was needed.

The most common strategies, involving recruitment and training, consisted of recruiting officers from culturally diverse backgrounds, recruiting bilingual officers, training field staff in communicating with people whose backgrounds

were different from their own, and offering foreign language training. In some States, cultural diversity training has been mandated by law.

The proportion of departments that were offering bilingual training was high (76 percent of police departments and 75 percent of sheriff's departments). However, since so many police chiefs and sheriffs said they needed more bilingual officers (80 percent and 75 percent, respectively), it is easy to understand why they believed improvement was needed in the area of bilingual training (85 percent for both groups). (See exhibit 3.) Some police chiefs helped meet their needs by offering higher pay (which they called "bilingual pay") as a recruitment incentive and to encourage officers to learn a second language.

Offenders with mental illness. People who are arrested for an offense and are mentally ill may be processed in several areas of the criminal justice system, so their needs present challenges not just for police and sheriffs. Classification systems for identifying them are needed, and special provisions may have to be made to treat them. When the mentally ill are released by the court or from a correctional facility, they also need treatment services.⁴

When respondents were asked about meeting the needs of the mentally ill in the criminal justice system, their answers suggested a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, several perceived a shift in responsibility from the mental health community to the criminal justice system, as indicated by this police chief's comment:

The State has reduced its risk with mental patients by allowing [the] mentally ill to return to their communities. Lack of

medical supervision eventually results in a police problem.

On the other hand, some cited their own sense of responsibility for providing mental health services to inmates as illustrated by this jail administrator's remark:

We are very short in the area of single cells for special-needs inmates, that is, suicidal, mentally ill, combative, and protective custody.

Compared to other possible problem areas identified in the survey, the issue of the mentally ill was noted as contributing only moderately to workload problems. Judging by the comments, the number of cases handled was not large, and this may explain why the issue was not considered a major workload problem.

For some police chiefs, transporting the mentally ill has created special problems. The comments of sheriffs and police chiefs tended to focus on the perceived failure of mental health agencies to fulfill their obligations, whether in transporting the mentally ill or meeting their needs in general.

In the jails, systems are needed to recognize inmates with mental health problems and take the necessary steps to monitor, treat, or isolate them. Almost 90 percent of jail administrators said their classification methods included procedures for identifying these inmates. Virtually all could provide medical services for mentally ill inmates, but almost two-thirds said these services needed improvement. Providing separate cells or housing, when called for, was one area that jail administrators cited in particular as needing improvement. Others noted their success in employing mental

health professionals, contracting for such services, or arranging for them through the jurisdiction's mental health department. Among prison wardens, almost half indicated the need for some increase in mental health professionals. One reason may be the growing need for treatment of mentally-ill sex offenders.

In probation and parole as well, services must be provided for mentally ill offenders released into the community. In fact, when asked to select from a list of several areas, directors of these agencies cited mental health services and treatment for sex offenders as those for which their need was highest.

Crimes against the elderly. Fraud perpetrated against older people was cited as of particular concern to law enforcement. High percentages of police and sheriff's departments (88 percent and 77 percent, respectively) had activities aimed at preventing fraud against this segment of the population. At the same time, high percentages of both groups believed more could be done, particularly given the unique needs of older people. One police chief explained the problem as follows:

As our population becomes more elderly, the demand for police services by the elderly

will increase. Using call diversion techniques has not been well received. Most want a police officer to make a personal response.

Prevention programs have centered largely on education, with typical approaches behind speeches at Neighborhood Watch meetings and senior citizens' associations and distribution of information about crime prevention tips. The news media have been used to caution against flimflam groups that were active in a given area.

Information systems. Overall, needs were greater in information systems than in any other area explored in the survey. One police chief said:

Although the department is automated, the programs in use are not sophisticated enough to support problem solving.

This view was expressed by large percentages of respondents who said they were not satisfied. In every application area but one (tracking the dates of hearings, noted by prosecutors), a majority of respondents said their systems needed improvement.

The need for a particular application varied by type of agency. Among police

Exhibit 3: Need for Bilingual Officers

	Major Increase Needed	Some Increase Needed	No Increase Needed
Police Chiefs	24.5%	55.6%	13.0%
Sheriffs	23.8%	50.8%	15.0%

Note: The percentages add to less than 100 because some respondents indicated "not applicable." These respondents represented communities with small minority populations and therefore did not feel bilingual officers were needed.

Research and Evaluation Priorities*

Respondents were asked to name the areas that they viewed as priorities for future research and evaluation. These tended to vary by respondent category and to reflect the specific responsibilities of a given group. Some topic areas were cited by more than one category of respondent, however. For example, all groups except police chiefs and sheriffs noted alternative sanctions as a priority. Drug-related topics were listed by sheriffs, jail administrators, judges, and local probation and parole agency directors. The need for research/evaluation in recidivism was noted frequently by wardens, State commissioners of corrections, and State probation and parole agency directors.

LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES

Police Chiefs

- Community policing
- Juvenile crime
- Violent crime

Jail Administrators

- Alternative sanctions
- Classification
- Drug programs
- Mentally ill

Judges

- Alternative sanctions
- Court security
- Drug cases
- Case management

Public Defenders

- Alternative sanctions
- Mandatory sentences
- Death penalty

Sheriffs

- Community policing
- Drugs
- Juvenile crime

Prosecutors

- Alternative sanctions
- Juvenile crime
- Violent crime

Trial Court Administrators

- Case management
- Alternative sanctions
- Court security

Probation and Parole Agency Directors

- Alternative sanctions
- Drug and alcohol treatment programs
- Sex offenders

STATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES

Wardens

- Recidivism
- Gangs
- Drug & alcohol treatment programs
- Alternative sanctions

State Attorneys General

- Inmate litigation
- Computer and telemarketing fraud
- Environmental fraud

State Probation and Parole Agency Directors

- Sex offenders
- Recidivism
- Alternative sanctions

State Commissioners of Corrections

- Alternative sanctions
- Recidivism
- Sex offender treatment

State Court Administrators

- Case management
- Automation
- Court organizational alternatives

*The three top priority areas are listed here. Four areas represent a tie.

chiefs and sheriffs, for example, applications of greatest interest were expert systems, systems to support problem solving, and court disposition information systems. About 45 percent of police and sheriff's departments had expert systems, and another 40 percent said they would like to have them. Of those who had this type of system, almost 80 percent said improvement was needed. Large percentages said their problem-solving and court information systems also needed to be improved.

Jail administrators and prison wardens shared the same type of information systems needs. Both types of agencies were interested in systems for automating records of inmate medical and mental health, court information, and inmate programs. Prosecutors, judges, and trial court administrators cited as a priority information systems to alleviate attorney scheduling conflicts. Several types of agencies needed information from the courts.

Insights and applications

It comes as no surprise that the criminal justice community, like other Americans, expressed concern over violent crime, particularly as it affected young people. Beyond that, the 1994 NAP survey revealed a number of findings that offer particular insights from those on the front lines of crime and justice.

Young people and guns. The survey revealed that in the view of police chiefs and sheriffs, programs to prevent young people from obtaining guns were one of their greatest needs. This finding, and the varied solutions proposed in the comments—amending State laws, creating a “citizens’ academy” that would focus in part on juveniles and guns, and developing a

juvenile-oriented gun turn-in program—are irrefutable evidence that law enforcement sees the problem of juvenile crime in large part as a problem of firearms.

Community policing. Interest in community policing was even more extensive than might have been anticipated, and it was not confined to law enforcement agencies in the larger jurisdictions. Almost all police chiefs reported either having community policing or wanting it; the numbers for sheriffs were almost as high. This is a finding that needs to be interpreted cautiously, however, given the amorphousness of the concept. Adoption of community policing may range from the establishment of a ministration or mobile van in a single precinct, or it may mean departmentwide adoption of a philosophy that extends to an entire jurisdiction.

Cultural diversity. The interest in responding to culturally diverse populations has come in the wake of changing demographics nationwide, but it also reflected a greater sensitivity. Police chiefs and sheriffs were shown in the survey to be acutely aware of the need to develop initiatives to work with diverse groups.

Treatment for sex offenders. The special needs of certain segments of the offender population have been moving closer to the top of the criminal justice agenda. Among them are the mentally ill, some of whom have been charged with sex offenses. The survey revealed the extent of concern about the criminal justice response: Treatment for sex offenders was cited by probation and parole agencies as one of the major needs.

The findings of the NAP survey also showed where attention was needed to

improve programs and develop new strategies. For example, of the three-fourths of the police chiefs who reported having programs to prevent school crime, more than 80 percent said these prevention efforts needed improvement.

As they have in the past, the findings of the NAP survey will help provide direction to NIJ in setting its agenda for research and identifying areas in which demonstration projects might be set up or technical assistance made available. In reviewing the findings, criminal justice professionals at the local level will find it useful to compare the solutions they have devised with those of other jurisdictions, to identify the extent to which a particular solution has been adopted, and to assess the extent to which the results have been found satisfactory. Those insights can be useful, in turn, in refining and shaping their own approaches.

Notes

1. The findings of the 1990 NAP survey were reported in *Assessing Criminal Justice Needs*, Research in Brief, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, August 1992. (NCJ 136396)
2. The survey did not inquire about other ways to restrict access to firearms, such as State laws limiting handgun access or requirements for background checks and waiting periods. The survey was conducted before passage of the Brady Bill, which requires background checks before purchase.
3. The GREAT program was developed in 1991 by the Treasury Department's

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Its aim is to educate seventh-grade students who live in gang-prone areas about the consequences of gang membership.

4. A recent publication by NIJ describes a community support program for mentally ill offenders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. McDonald, Douglas C., and Michele Teitelbaum, *Managing Mentally Ill Offenders in the Community*, Program Focus, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, March 1994.

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Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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