Local Safety Measurement System in Sweden 1998-2021

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Introduction

In the public sector, the paradigm "New Public Management" (NPM) took hold in the 1990s in the entire world. NPM was an approach that seeks to build an administration by implementing flexibility, minimum government, de-bureaucratization, the market orientation of public services, and especially, privatization. NPM with its private sector methods in many fields is more often globally criticized at present, especially in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

Attempts were made as early as in the 1960s to implement such management in certain countries, but it was only during the 1990s that a results-oriented culture started to be established by governments worldwide and globally. The entire development with many different but related concepts accelerated during the 2000s and has now been implemented worldwide on a large scale in both public and private sectors. There are now many experiences to learn from, both positive hallmarks and, in too many cases, negative results.

The Swedish police have been working since 1996 to develop new methods for the direction and management of police work and for trying to improve the quality of their service. This work has entailed the use of a wide variety of different tools and methods, for example, the Balanced Scorecard, quality concepts, various techniques for entering into dialogues with citizens included local surveys, staff commitment measurements, management by dialogue, management by objectives, methods for developing learning organizations, Intelligence-led policing and for the setting up of operational goals in organisations with complex activities, the Swedish Quality Index, e-learning, benchmarking, CAF (Common Assessment Framework) and the Council Method for increased staff participation. All of this has given the Swedish Police a great

deal of experience with major successes, failures, and setbacks. This makes 2021 a year of opportunity to assess what is useful, less useful, and directly inappropriate in policing.

The Police have been one of the basic social institutions in Sweden for hundreds of years and their duties are rooted in a collective need for public order and safety. The work of the police is characterised by being controlled by a democratically elected parliament and government, governed by acts, ordinances, appointments of chief executives and funded through allocations determined in the national budget process. In addition, its goals are set to comply with prevailing social policy strategies.

Consequently, the Swedish Police Service is managed at the national level (albeit only fully so since 2015), but the seven current acting police regions are supposed to adapt their work to local conditions. The Swedish Police Service are led from the headquarters in Stockholm with the support of cross-country departments. Local police regions can therefore be characterised as matrix organisations, even though they have huge regional and local responsibility.

One specific phenomenon with a clear link to the New Public Management- era that spread to police organizations around the world was the idea of Community Policing, which had an enormous impact everywhere. The Swedish Community Policing concept was introduced 1993 and is now 28 years old. Those 28 years are a fantastic source of knowledge and experiences, not only to assimilate in Sweden but in some respects also useful for most police forces interested in success stories or the opposite.

The main objective of the introduction of Community Policing was to change the traditional and often reactive working practices employed by the police. The change should emphasise crime prevention activities and local co-operation.

The understanding of the term "Community Policing" is sometimes problematic, when it comes to international comparisons between countries. There is maybe both a certain lack of conceptual clarity about what Community Policing is and is not, as well as a certain lack of consistency in the way the term has been applied globally to a host of programs, practices, and policy initiatives. The term has been used in police services around the world to describe vastly different practices that may have few similarities.

One of the fundamental concepts guiding the Swedish implementation Community Policing theories from the beginning was that locally based police would be responsible for most of the work within a specific geographical area. Instead of having police officers who worked exclusively with crime prevention and others who worked exclusively with the maintenance of order and criminal investigations respectively, the goal at that time was to have generalists, proficient across all these areas. The generalist police model has its advantages – but expert competence should frequently be used, and the requirement of local access must be weighed against efficient police work when experts are needed.

Community Policing performance is not solely about the setting and hitting of targets, as it was widely believed in the early 1990s under the influence of NPM apologists. It should fundamentally be about delivering the best possible service to the citizens. An effective police service delivery would therefore become firmly embedded in the day-to-day business of policing in neighborhoods.

One other important objective of the community police reform was to employ a problem-oriented approach in close collaboration with those living and working in the area. The Swedish Governments over the years have emphasized that this strategy should apply to all police work, not just community police operations.

It is in this context that the Local Safety Measurement System was created and should be understood.

The Local Safety Measurement system – considerations

Recognition of the public as the main stakeholder in public sector performance leads to need of shifting internal focus to external focus, also in many aspects of the police work.

The idea was increased recognition of public satisfaction and the feeling of personal safety among the public as the most important indicators of police performance. One of the greatest challenges is to increase the public's influence over the work of the police and to develop advanced citizen-driven policing with a view to improving community safety. This way, the citizens will help to improve the content of local police work, but they will not have any influence over the goals and priorities set by the government and, where appropriate, the objectives of the police management.

The overall political goals set for the Swedish police service – to reduce crime and increase public safety – are central to this work. It is essential that the police use more reliable and detailed data about problems at the municipal and municipal district levels in their planning, resource allocation and follow-up evaluations. Such data can usually be obtained directly from the public surveys. This way, the ideas and opinions of the people living or working in an area served will become a crucial element in the planning of everyday policing in that area.

The information is normally gathered by means of scientifically reliable citizen surveys which are constantly being developed further. Such surveys should preferably be supplemented with interactive information-gathering techniques enabling the police to enter into a direct dialogue with the public, for example meetings with consultative groups. Units with specialist or internal service duties have developed their own surveys to obtain specific information. This way, the citizens will help to improve the content of local police work, but they will not have any direct influence over the working goals and priorities.

Another reason for using surveys are the obvious and internationally recognized shortcomings of the recorded police statistics in all countries. The problems were addressed often by using victimization surveys in many countries, included also in the Swedish local safety measurement system.

In some sectors of the police service, however, it is a difficult and complex task to use information obtained directly from the public to develop work routines, for example in units dealing with economic crime. Most members of the public perceive such crimes as being abstract and difficult to detect. The same is true of crimes against society. There are also activities in the police service that should not be based on such information, since they require more comprehensive analyses, a long-term build-up of knowledge and time for reflection. Strategic planning, long-term strategic risk assessments and the allocation of resources to various kinds of duties, crime types and/or geographical areas are some examples of such activities. Others are the fight against organised crime and motorcycle gang-related crimes.

In principle, the main rule when it comes to asymmetrical information should always be observed, i.e., concrete questions should be put to those who can best answer them, whether they be members of the public, police officers or other kinds of experts.

This means that it would be completely wrong to ask the public directly about the types of crime that should be prioritised, or, for that matter, allow the police officer to have too far-reaching views on residential areas where he or she does not spend much time.

However, the citizens' opinions should be seen as the best source of the level of concrete problems analysed in a scientific way. 23 years of experience have shown that the collective perception of the citizen collected via surveys is an unparalleled source for an analysis of major problems, crime hotspots and causes of worry in the municipality.

Another starting point for safety measurements was the need – and the NPM requirement – to be able to show a result of policing that was more far-reaching than the number of cases to prosecutors, clearance rates, etc.

A definition of results is often difficult. It is rarely easy in policing, and, on the contrary, can be exceedingly difficult. A result is a change that can be observed, described, and measured. It is a change where the cause can be identified (a cause-effect relationship). Results may be achieved within the short or long term; they may be planned or unforeseen; they may be positive or negative and may be reflected at the level of individuals, groups, institutions, communities, or the country. A statement of results should be as specific as possible, realistic in relation to the time and resources available, describable, and measurable.

What makes it so difficult in policing is obvious. Since some police services are not very tangible, they cannot be readily seen in their entirety by the public. It is therefore difficult for the public – and sometimes even for experienced evaluators of performance statistics – to make objective assessments about the value of such services. For example, most people will not be able to draw any conclusions from statistics on the average cost of violent crime investigations or the number of investigation reports submitted to the public prosecutor's offices.

While the outcome of a service, such as a crime report, a fixed penalty notice or a passport, may be quite tangible, most members of the public have little or no understanding of the internal work routines of a police authority, why fixed penalty notices are issued, how crime reports or applications for passports are dealt with, why there are waiting times and backlogs or why decisions are sometimes made not to investigate a case. The reason some police services cannot be readily observed is that they are processes.

Anyway, these reflections do not mean that management systems are useless, on the contrary, a carefully organized system considering the latest advances in police research, management, and leadership issues might be helpful.

One successful way to organize the activities of the police management, i.e. Local Safety Measurement System, is to group them into four areas which closely interact with each other and therefore strict lines should not be drawn between activities. The four areas – the Deming Wheel – create a logical order to how things should be done. Firstly, you plan what you are going to do, then you check what you have done and then you act with views to improving your performance and create a learning process.

Local Safety Measurement System in practice

It is essential that the purpose of a citizen survey should be clearly defined. Examples of what a survey may be focused on are

- public knowledge of the police and their work
- public attitude towards the police and their work
- public opinions about the usefulness of the police and their work
- public wishes regarding the police and their work
- public confidence in the police
- public need for the services provided by the police
- the impact of police work on local problems
- the social environment in which the police work
- the community safety situation in areas served by the police

In the Swedish citizen surveys targeting geographical areas we have chosen to focus on the public's need for police services, the impact of police work on local problems, the social environment

in which the police work and the community safety situation, as we have found that these focal points provide the best and most consistent support for local police work.

The input provided by the public, i.e., their expert knowledge of problems in their residential areas, helps us to improve our service. When designing a survey, it is especially important to make a distinction between the public's concrete concerns and their more abstract concerns. People's responses to a survey based on concrete questions will be quite different from those to survey containing general, more abstract questions.

The citizen surveys targeting specific geographical areas used by the Swedish police are based on an American sociological/criminological basic theory introduced into Sweden by researchers in 1995.

Briefly, this theory, called "The Broken window", published 1982 of the US researchers Kelling and Wilson states that visible public order disturbances will either result in the commission of offences or in increased anxiety in the local community. For example, two drunks sitting on a park bench in the morning may start fighting later in the day (offence) or shouting abusive remarks at passers-by (causing anxiety). The offence may also, of course, lead to increased anxiety among the residents. By taking prompt action, the police can reduce the risk of an offence being committed or anxiety being caused to the public. Our citizen surveys are therefore focused on measuring levels of public order disturbances, crime, and anxiety in the communities and on the action taken by the police to counter such problems. It is particularly important to make national comparisons of observation levels and change over time.

Since 1998, 244 (out of 290) Swedish municipalities, under the direction of the local police, have conducted citizen surveys in a total of 1200 areas. Many municipalities have carried out as many as three or four surveys a year and well over 1,000,000 people have responded to these surveys between 1998 and 2021. The total numbers of municipal studies might be over two thousand. This is the biggest study of its kind in Europe.

The Swedish police have conducted the majority, also on a larger scale complemented by several local governments, county administrative boards, NGOs, and other actors.

Data has been collected with the same questions, sequencing, data collection methods, and where the only changes have been some new questions, when introduced, they are always placed last in the survey. Unique is the size of the data, and that no changes in data collection and questionnaires have been made for 23 years.

For the local police to be able to apply a problem-oriented strategy, knowledge is needed on the problems experienced in each area and by those living there. The measuring of local problems has earlier relied to a very great extent on information relating to crimes reported to the police. This was a real weakness and lead to severe problems with an analysis of priorities, half of the map was often missing.

The work with safety measurements includes much more than just the measurement itself. It is an intelligence-based working method for identifying problems – a concept – to strengthen the local work of the police, reduce exposure to crime and develop society's opportunities to improve security in the local community. The working method is based on analyses of the safety situation in the local community, the approach that has been developed over an extended period since 1997 by the previous 21 Swedish police authorities. When the results have been obtained, the police shall as soon as possible, often in collaboration with the municipalities' crime prevention councils, develop and tailor methods for the local community after analysis of the measurement results and any other in-depth knowledge.

Cooperation with other societal actors is often of crucial importance. In addition to local crime prevention boards, the municipality's politicians must be informed about the situation and the results from the current safety survey. Citizen promises, a joint statement to the local public from the Local Police and the Local Government about priorities, then become a concrete tool for cooperation with municipalities and municipal residents, based on the residents' facts about police needs through the safety survey.

A transparent focus must also be placed on external communication directly with residents, the media, and other partners. The results of the safety measurement shall also be disseminated and communicated to interested research institutions, voluntary organizations, think tanks and other relevant actors.

The following steps might be the usual case during the last years in Sweden. The local police unit is always in charge. The following process is under further development and has in many cases already been used with great satisfactory results. It is essential that all steps are conducted uncomplicatedly and quickly, but without sacrificing quality, which is the key to success.

Step 1, Planning

- Conduct the safety measurement
- Identify a probable provable problem picture
- Analyse the problems
- Conduct citizen dialogues if necessary
- Identify important parameters and plan solutions
- Get help from partners, often the municipality's crime prevention board
- Suggest one or more objectives, preferably jointly developed with the municipality

Step 2, Do

- Design "citizen promises" together with the municipality based on the objectives and priorities of both Local Police and Local Governments.
- Decide on an activity plan for "citizen promises" as soon as possible
- Implement the activity plan
- Work with a stable sustainable process
- Conduct citizen dialogues if necessary

Step 3, Follow up

- Follow up the ongoing process – methods for feedback are established in the activity plan
- Primarily use PUM-A (a specific IT-system) for follow-up
- If there are problems in the practical implementation – adjust
- If there are problems with the analysis / factual content – adjust

Step 4, Evaluate and act

- Conduct a new safety survey, at the latest after one year
- Evaluate data in relation to the objectives and the "citizen promises"
- If the problem picture has improved, try to introduce the working method as standard

Back to Step 1, Plan to continually improve

The problem description is a central part of the planning which consists of identifying and delimiting the crimes / disturbances / problems, analysing the underlying causes, finding the most appropriate measures, and preparing for follow-up and evaluation (Problem-oriented police work and the SARA model).

The Swedish Police's operational safety measurement identifies problems in a municipality / municipal part and gives an idea of a probable provable problem picture to work towards. The analysis model also provides comparisons with the situation in other municipalities in the region and, where applicable, the rest of Sweden, national severity (problem level 0 - 6), if the problems increase / decrease over time and thus also perception of any previous work soon worked well enough, both quality and quantity. Other information such as report statistics and incident reports complement the problem picture as well as police experiences from operational work.

It is essential to make clear the geographical demarcations of the current problems. After that, the goal is to be able to identify the places that are particularly important for the residents' stated problems.

A starting point is to map both the environments where the problems arise and the negative behaviours that occur. It is also important to find escalating problems over time through the problem studies and work towards these at an early stage.

The local police area's priorities for problems are entirely dependent on how well the problems have initially been identified. Knowledge-driven problem detection simplifies the assessment of the resource balance between "must-have activities" and other major local problems.

A probable problem picture is also a prerequisite for being able to allocate sufficient resources to the implementation of citizen promises and objectives. All subsequent activities in the local police organization, for example, to select measures and necessary partners are strongly dependent on how well the problem has initially been identified.

A problem identified by a safety measurement presupposes that several criteria are met:

- The crimes or disturbances must have a connection which means that there is a pattern in the form that they, for instance, occur in the same place or affect the same kind of victim.
- They need to occur repeatedly. If a negative event has already occurred several times, this entails an increased risk that it will be repeated.
- Normally it is required that the public, i.e., individuals, companies, authorities, and other groups, must be exposed and suffer injury, e.g., theft or loss of property, personal injury, death, or mental suffering. The police can delimit their responsibility by identifying which other actors can participate.

The problem analysis must thereby answer the following questions:

- What kinds of events are these?
- In what way are they similar?
- Where and when do the recurring ones occur?
- Which people are affected?
- What is the damage caused?

Question marks and traps detected in 25 years in the survey business

To draw the present problems to a head at the risk of overstating: my observation is the major danger that too many politicians, legally trained persons, municipality- and police officers, when confronted with what is claimed to be research-based information in the judicial system, seem to have major difficulties in providing qualified critical reasoning. Too often, one is stuck in total scepticism towards, or the opposite in the uncritical acceptance of, individuals claiming to be scientific authorities and their ideas.

There are more technical difficulties than ever imagined beforehand due to the survey technique, even in highly reputable companies and authorities, such as:

- The survey design: poor conductive or directly intentionally controlled questions that do not measure what is to be measured or not at all measure what is stated to be the intention to measure. Construction of the problem. Vested interests order surveys intended as party submissions (also the answers?).
- Technical weaknesses: changes in questionnaires such as question formulations, sequencing, collection methods etc.; that make comparing between years and different surveys impossible. Then it´s not mentioned telephone interviews, panels, focus groups, on-line random collection, and other types of research.
- Solitaire surveys as a problem: lots of different surveys and interpreting the answers, regardless of quality, are done only one time or a couple of times with difficulties in understanding.
- Quality of analysis: difficulties in understanding the answers, low degree of or no discussion of analyses and methodological problems.
- Too little research in general on issues: results of public authorities/organisations as a problem when they have a monopoly position. Sometimes it is only one operator. RCT-studies are normally difficult to do, however, to have just one single study and draw heavy conclusions from that without other evidence is precarious.
- Universities in the area of security and safety do not do enough meta-studies: the Academy does not deal frequently with horizontal issues and meta-studies, research communication not sufficiently disseminated, territorial thinking widespread.
- A chaos of surveys – another problem: „fake news", confusion.
- Pure handlings problems: like a scan error, selection error, mailings do not correct, table errors, wrong data deployed. Just-in –time conditions, outsourcing, Sub-contractors might be the causes.
- Intended and unintended problems with the communication of results –: exaggerations and errors in communication and misuse of the results of various actors are common.

Conclusions – Why do we need quantified public safety surveys?

Today, the Swedish police have a much better knowledge of the public safety situation in Sweden than before, due in part to our citizen surveys. Quantitative methods are extremely useful for identifying structures and trends in the citizen surveys. In addition to providing a clear picture of developments since the previous survey, statistical methods also enable the police to disseminate complex information efficiently to operational police units, the media, politicians, and the public.

Our recurrent local citizen surveys have given the community police areas a good picture of the level of crime victimisation, what the residents see as the greatest problems, how worried they are about being subjected to crime and whether there are concrete unsafety factors in the area.

In addition, the surveys contain questions eliciting the public's opinions about the willingness and ability of the police to deal with local problems. The answers to these questions are a significant help in the planning of local police work and in the setting of priorities. The citizen surveys also give us a better picture of how successful the police have been in meeting the government's overall goal 'Reducing crime and increasing public safety'.

The Police also use survey results in the planning of local crime prevention initiatives and in training courses for police officers, the staff of city district boards and other local stakeholders. Moreover, they provide a basis for long-term assessments of worries and fear in our society.

Another important reason for performing systematic citizen surveys is that politicians, members of the public, journalists and police officers often tend to make quantitative statements in the public debate, e.g. 'People are feeling less and less safe,' 'No one dares to use the underground anymore,' 'Violent crime is increasing,' 'The number of vigilance committees is increasing' or 'The police performance is deteriorating.' It is important that the police assess such statements systematically and critically to be able to counter any statements based on guesswork, to sway public opinion or influence public policy. The citizen surveys will provide the information required for this task.

There are many other reasons for citizen surveys. One is that public confidence in the Swedish police is founded not only on their competence, care, openness, and observance of the legal rights of the individual but also on the fact that the public and the police share the same values and have the same views about problems. This is due in no small part to our local citizen surveys.

Research has also shown that measures aimed at improving the weakest points of an organization will have the greatest positive effect on public confidence in the organisation. Local citizen surveys will help the police to identify the most severe public order disturbances, major factors negatively affecting community safety, or the actual level of victimisation to everyday crimes. This information can then be used for the setting of priorities at the community police level.

Our citizen surveys have all the usual flaws of questionnaire-based surveys. For example, respondents' reactions to a recent, spectacular incident may have a negative influence on the outcome of a survey, and so may reports in the media, even when they are about matters outside the scope of the survey. However, our experience is that our battery of questions is robust, and it has so far proved less sensitive to such interference than expected. However, survey results must always be assessed with a great deal of caution and must also be supplemented with other kinds of data, obtained for example from in-depth crime surveys and local crime statistics. Used in this way, citizen surveys will provide the police with important knowledge.

The most important holistic "lessons learnt" during the 23 years period are:

- If the police, in cooperation with the actors needed for a particular problem picture, manage to conduct the intended activities, the situation always improves. The prerequisite is that the residents' perspective is given enormous influence.
- Descriptions of the local problems via surveys can be taken as the most valuable starting point for the planning of crime-prevention measures. The prerequisite is that the survey is reliable and valid to a sufficient, scientific standard.
- Systematic measurements provide information as to how successful the community i.e., local police and local government

in reducing criminality and increasing people´s sense of security and safety. External events and reinforcing feedback might have an extreme impact, however, and democratic institutions still have the main responsibility.

- Evidence-based knowledge increases about local variations and how different residential areas affect people´s general level of fear and more important concrete forms of individual expressions.

Content

III. Annex