



Performance Measurement in the Criminal Justice System

Young people believed it is very important to measure the performance of the criminal justice system (CJS). They indicated that they wanted to know if the CJS effectively deters crime and keeps Canadians safe, treats people fairly and equitably, and holds offenders accountable for their actions.

What we also found¹

- The majority of youth agreed that it is important to monitor, measure and report on the performance of the CJS because it affects all Canadians (as offenders, victims, friends and families, and members of the community) and can impact the well-being of our society.
- Some youth noted that monitoring the system could lead to greater transparency in decision making.

In more depth

Most young people decided the following goals of the criminal justice system should be monitored, measured, and reported on: making sure Canadians feel safe, ensuring that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are respected for all persons, making sure offenders are held accountable for their crimes, and making sure that the CJS recognizes the circumstances of vulnerable people when making decisions, such as decisions on sentencing.

The discussions on performance measurement were largely focused on what should be measured. Young people noted it was very important to go beyond statistics to ask service users about their experience.

Method

Justice Canada, in partnership with the Students Commission of Canada (SCC)², conducted youth engagement projects in both 2016 and 2017. Each project explored youths’ views, perceptions and expectations of the criminal justice system. This was done through developing and hosting a Justice Youth Action Committee (YAC)³, gathering opinions through youth-led Community Action Projects (CAPs)⁴, and hosting the Canada We Want Conference.⁵

Youth Engagement on the Criminal Justice System (CJS) Project 2017: Eight Justice Youth Action Committee members representing Indigenous, non-Indigenous, rural, urban, and other diverse populations joined bi-weekly calls from June 2017 to March 2018. This project had an issue-based focus relevant to the work of Justice Canada. Issues covered included: bail and AOJOs, restorative justice, problem-solving justice, overrepresentation of Indigenous persons in the CJS, overrepresentation of persons with mental health and cognitive issues in the CJS, performance measurement of the CJS, and the perspectives of victims of crime. During the 2018 Canada We Want Conference the **CJS theme team**, a



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group of 11 youth and 2 youth facilitators from 2 territories and 5 provinces, representing Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Northern, and a number of other diverse populations, engaged in discussion around justice issues.

Performance measurement was a particularly difficult topic to address in committee calls. In order to make it relevant to young people's lives, the SCC first started by talking about other systems that young people engage with regularly. The SCC focused on education and transportation systems. Using these examples, YAC members explored what made the CJS a system, what its goals were, and how those goals could be measured. The SCC built an online version and a print-friendly version incorporating visual aids. With only three questions, this survey reached 92 youth and the findings were validated at the 2018 Canada We Want Conference.

For further information on the findings and/or surveys mentioned in this document please contact the Department of Justice's Research and Statistics Division (rsd.drs@justice.gc.ca)

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all findings are from the Youth Engagement on the Criminal Justice System Project 2017.

² The Students Commission of Canada is a national charitable organization with a mission to support young people in putting their ideas for improving themselves and their communities into action. The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement is a network of youth, youth organizations and academics focused on providing evidence on the benefits of youth engagement and positive youth development.

³ The Students Commission selected members to join the Youth Action Committee for Justice Canada. The youth selected were from across the country, aged between 12 and 22 years, lived in urban and rural communities, were from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and had varied life experiences.

⁴ Community action projects required YAC (Youth Action Committee) members to go into their communities and gather data from their peers using the survey questions identified on the calls. Youth could deliver a survey, a focus/discussion group, or interviews to collect this data.

⁵ At the "Canada We Want" conference, the *CJS theme team* (a diverse group of youth from across Canada) generated recommendations for policy makers and other young Canadians regarding the criminal justice system.