

# Community policing problem in the united states

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Many reports from newspapers and journals claim that community policing is increasing in popularity across the United States. However there are also numerous reports that point out that community policing is not a panacea for all social ills. While community policing is in theory a very effective way of combating crime, yet in reality there are many practical problem that have to be overcome.

Community policing is generally seen as a system of policing that requires optimum cooperation between the police force and the public so that the most effective methods of crime prevention and apprehension can be employed. A definition from the California Attorney General's Office is as follows: " Community policing is a philosophy, management style, and organizational strategy that promotes pro-active problem solving and police-community partnerships to address the causes of crime and fear as well as other community issues." In a theoretical and ideal sense community policing is,

... a collaborative effort between the police and the community that identifies problems of crime and disorder and involves all elements of the community in the search for solutions to these problems. It is founded on close, mutually beneficial ties between police and community members."

(About Community Policing)

However there are many problems area that have to be practically dealt with in order to ensure that community policing actually lives up to these ideals. One aspect that comes to the fore when discussing this problem is that the entire concept of this form of law and order enforcement and management

lies in the integration between the police and the community. One of the specific problems encountered concerns a reticence on the part of some police officers to fully participate in this symbiotic relationship. As one study puts this problem: " While community policing promises an expansion of the professional role which will be appealing to many police officers, it also requires experimentation with major changes in the way in which officers and their departments think about and organize their work." (Riley J. 1997)

The effective implementation of community policing often requires fundamental changes in the way police officers have traditionally thought about their work and the way that many police departments are organized. This also implies that the strict hierarchical structure of many police departments also has to be changed to align itself with the demands of a closer cooperation with the community. All of these changes are often initially difficult to implement and an integration period is often necessary. This often necessitates that,

Police departments must convince their patrol officers that it makes sense for them to take community policing seriously, if a successful transition is to take place. In this context, administrative decisions about organization, resource allocation, and the promotion of individual officers shape the understanding of patrol officers in important ways."

Adjustment problems may also take place from the point of view of the community. This is especially the case with minority communities, where prior suspicions and misunderstandings about new forms of policing may arise. However, it is mainly in the area of planning and organization, which

are crucial elements in the implementation of effective community policing, that problems occur. " Problems associated with planning and coordination which characterizes the beginning of any organizational change was among the most frequently expressed concerns of the officers..." (ibid) In a study by John Riley entitled Community Policing: Perspectives from the Field, it was found that many officers felt that there was a " lack of direction" in the move towards community policing. (ibid)

Another potential practical problem that has been encountered is that the policing area may be very large and therefore require more officers than would normally be the case in conventional policing activities. . "... it takes a whole lot more cops to do community -presence work. Suburban counties are often big." (Reed 2)

A further aspect that has been mentioned in many reports is that if community policing does not function optimally then the blame may be directed to the police force, making the situation more difficult and complex than before. " If community policing is not able to accomplish a solution to all the communities' problems, it could easily become the scapegoat for an array of community related problems." (Community-Oriented Policing: Blessing Or Curse?)

The above are only a few of the most important issues that face community policing. While this method of law enforcement is ideal in that it optimizes the most effective relationship between the community and the police force yet, in the initial stages, it can present many practical and logistical

problems. However, once these problems have been overcome, community policing often proves to be a highly effective form of law enforcement.