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International approaches to police performance measurement

Executive Summary

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Executive summary

Police performance measurement is a complex activity that encompasses considerations of the social, legal, institutional and political contexts in which a police force operates. The definitions and methods used need to be regularly updated and adapted to reflect the constant changes in these contexts. This study follows from a broader desire, articulated by the national police force and the Ministry for Justice and Security, to improve how police performance is measured in the Netherlands. Indeed in 2014, Tilburg University and KU Leuven conducted a study to develop a new framework for productivity measurement of the Dutch police.¹ While this study provided useful insights, approaches to performance measurement adopted by police forces abroad may also offer valid examples for the Netherlands and provide opportunities for general learning.

Research design

The study had two main goals:

- 1) To gather insights into how different police jurisdictions have approached performance measurement.
- 2) To assess what lessons these approaches can offer for improving police performance measurement in the Netherlands.

A series of research questions were developed to meet these goals. These questions focused on the methods and indicators used to measure performance in a selection of ten policing jurisdictions,² including the Netherlands; the stated purposes of the performance measurement; the reliability of the approaches; identified or potential adverse side effects of measuring performance; and examples of good or innovative practice in these areas. In addition, several research questions focused on the methods and indicators used to gain insight into the performance of the Dutch police; the aspects of policing not currently captured in this framework; the lessons that approaches to performance measurement in other jurisdictions may offer the Netherlands; and the transferability of these approaches to the Netherlands.

To address these research questions, the study team conducted a targeted literature review and expert and stakeholder interviews in each of these jurisdictions, including the Netherlands. The team then selected five case study jurisdictions for more in-depth data collection and analysis: England and Wales, Israel, North

¹ Zouridis, S., G. Bouckaert, P. Van Roy, J. Stroobants, V. Crompvoets, L. Janssen and R. Peeters (2014). *Politieproductiviteit. Triangulatie voor valide en betrouwbare productiviteitsmeting bij de politie*. As of 11 October 2023: https://repository.wodc.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12832/2056/2341-volledige-tekst_tcm2873068.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

² Australia, Canada, England and Wales, Finland, Israel, New Zealand, North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Sweden, the Netherlands, United States

Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Seattle (United States) and Sweden. Using the resulting findings, the study team focused on extracting current practices from the case study jurisdictions that had potential to offer starting points for improving police performance measurement in the Netherlands. These are presented in the main body of this report. For the countries not selected as case studies (Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and the United States), the study team prepared high-level summaries of current approaches and highlighted several relevant practices that may be of interest to policy makers for the Dutch National Police. These are presented in Annex A of the main report.

To provide focus and enhance the feasibility of the research, this study looks exclusively at how police performance measurement has been approached by stakeholders who can directly influence policing policy, such as the police force and national- and local-level government stakeholders. For each of the case study jurisdictions, the research team has analysed the practices used by the relevant police force(s) and the administrative and/or political authority under which they sit. We are confident that the findings will therefore be of particular interest to decision-makers for the Dutch National Police, including police leadership at both national and regional levels and the Ministry of Justice and Security, and provide leads for improving how police performance is currently measured.

Key findings

In the following section, we discuss the findings of the study according to the first eight research questions (some of which have been grouped together) which concern relevant practices in the case study jurisdictions. The insights that these findings offer for the Netherlands (research questions 9, 10, 11 and 12) are addressed as part of the recommendations outlined at the end of this executive summary.

How did the methodology for the performance measurements come about? Were stakeholders involved? If so, which ones?

In the Netherlands, the key stakeholders involved in police performance measurement are the national and regional police units, the Ministry of Justice and Security, and local mayors and the Public Prosecution Service. At the national level, performance measurement is guided by the indicators and targets defined in the Ministry of Justice and Security's Security Agenda. This framework is supplemented by regional and local performance agreements between municipalities, the Public Prosecutor and the police. The Court of Audit and the Inspectorate of Justice and Security also monitor the functioning of the national police and routinely conduct studies that analyse its performance.

This study found that in most case study jurisdictions, police performance measurement is organised at the national or state/regional level, while leaving flexibility for local units to complement this framework with additional measures, indicators, objectives and/or targets appropriate for the context in which they operate. The only exception to this is Seattle, where the framework for performance measurement was designed entirely at the local level.

For what purposes are the performance measurements used?

An important first consideration in developing a police performance measurement framework is to establish a common understanding of why performance should be measured and what the results will be used for. An organisation's objectives and performance indicators, as well as the associated targets, will be determined

by whether it is seeking to improve the quality of its services, provide strategic direction for its work, show accountability to the public, or demonstrate a return on investment (or a combination of several or all of these factors).

Interviews conducted for this study indicate that the purpose of police performance measurement is conceived differently across stakeholders in the Netherlands, leading to differences in approaches. Due to their varying responsibilities and concerns, the government, certain groups within the police and academics have all developed different ideas about why it is important to measure the performance of the Dutch police and, consequently, about what should be measured. Opinions expressed include a need to demonstrate value for money by emphasising quantitative targets, increasing police accountability and legitimacy through consultation with stakeholders, and ensuring the provision of a high-quality service through benchmarking.

This report highlights that some of these motivations for measuring police performance also underlie the frameworks adopted in the case study countries. In England and Wales, for example, interviewees noted that some stakeholders at the national policy level believe that police performance should be measured in terms of crime reduction. The Seattle Police Department, on the other hand, has chosen to make accountability and the improvement of the quality of services the focus of its performance framework. In Israel, a new framework for performance measurement was developed specifically to increase public trust in the police and to support police stations in addressing local needs.

How is police performance measured in the case study countries?

Police performance is typically measured against a set of performance indicators and targets. The choice to use certain indicators over others tends to reflect the broader strategic priorities of law enforcement and/or government bodies. As such, police performance indicators can be context and jurisdiction specific. In all study forces, including the Netherlands, the indicators used to look at performance were primarily quantitative or quantitatively measured qualitative constructs. Some forces also employ qualitative indicators. For example, the Seattle Police Department considers qualitative feedback to measure the quality of citizen police interactions.

Moreover, stakeholders in all jurisdictions heavily rely on reported crime data gathered by the forces themselves to inform part or all of the performance measurement. While interviewees reported that such data were useful in measuring performance in relation to crime-related outcomes as it is relatively accessible and perceived by some stakeholders to be easy to interpret, using these data was reported to pose significant risks and challenges, as described in the next key finding. Data relating to response times and clearance rates were also frequently used. Seattle reported using more innovative data sources such as location data from police vehicle location tracking systems and automated transcriptions from interactions between police and members of the public recorded on body-worn surveillance cameras.

Data on rates of satisfaction with police services among citizens, often collected via survey instruments, are used for performance measurement in some jurisdictions such as England and Wales and Sweden. In the Netherlands, data on public perceptions of police performance are collected via several citizen surveys, but do not appear to be used systematically by the Dutch police to measure performance. Indeed, citizen perception of the police is not included as an indicator in the Security Agenda and is only mentioned by some regional units in their performance measurement.

What are the (further) advantages and disadvantages of performance measurements? Are any (side) effects of the performance measurements known? If so, which ones?

This study identified several disadvantages and challenges with the frameworks for police performance measurement developed in both the Netherlands and the case study countries.

As noted above, the performance of the Dutch police is measured primarily using quantitative indicators or qualitative constructs that are measured quantitatively. Previous studies have shown that this may increase the risk of perverse incentives, meaning that the indicators of police performance inadvertently encourage undesirable results, such as leading police officers to decline to register cases they feel may negatively impact their quality indicators. A dependence on exclusively quantitative indicators may also mean that some aspects of police work, particularly tasks related to the quality of provided services, are not captured. Interviewees also noted that the Dutch police face several challenges common to police performance measurement, namely the difficulty of establishing causality and measuring the effectiveness of crime prevention activities.

Furthermore, findings from the case studies demonstrate that securing and maintaining engagement from officers in how performance is measured can prove challenging. Interviewees from Israel indicated that this may be especially difficult when the process for implementing new aspects of a framework for performance measurement is complicated and requires a large degree of organisation change. Interviewees from Seattle and Sweden likewise mentioned the importance of ensuring buy-in among force stakeholders. In particular, it was noted that efforts must be made both top-down (by police leadership) and bottom-up (for instance by training officers early on) to ensure that all levels of officers are engaged in the process from the very start so that data collection (and analysis) can be operationalised effectively.

How reliable, valid and representative are the performance measurements?

This study found that there are challenges associated with using any type of data in measuring police performance; however, interviewees identified police recorded crime data as carrying the most risk in terms of validity, reliability and representativeness. Across all case study jurisdictions, interviewees expressed concerns about the quality of crime data from police management systems. In the Netherlands, interviewees reported that data collected through incident registration systems of the police, such as the *Basisvoorziening Handhaving* (BHV), may sometimes be inconsistent and inaccurate. Similar concerns were raised by interviewees in England and Wales and Sweden. The drivers of poor-quality data were also relatively consistent across the jurisdictions and tended to spring from the reliance on police staff to manually input crime data. Drivers included complex data-input processes increasing human error, a lack of resources to ensure that data inputters are appropriately trained and have sufficient time to enter correct and complete information, and under-reporting by members of the public about their crime victimisation.

Which (parts of) foreign performance measurements can be labelled as 'qualitatively good', 'innovative' and/or 'promising'?

This study has identified several innovative and promising practices in measuring police performance in the case study jurisdictions, although there is limited evidence to assess their effectiveness.

In both England and Wales and North Rhine-Westphalia, interviewees positively highlighted the introduction of a process of continuous engagement that had created a feedback loop reported to enhance

stakeholders' understanding of the forces and their performance. In certain forces, performance measurement appears to play an important role in supporting internal learning and improvement. In most jurisdictions, measurements are not (primarily) used to punish forces for poor performance, but rather to trigger reflection and actions to address performance issues and provide support to local and national stakeholders in introducing improvements. For example, the Seattle Police Department has integrated new equity measures to evaluate performance into its professional learning and development structures. Similarly, in Sweden a broad set of new indicators that cover additional dimensions of police work have been suggested to provide a more holistic understanding of performance and enable authorities to allocate resources more effectively.

Recommendations for the Netherlands

This study highlights several leads for improving performance measurement in the Netherlands. The researchers recommend that the Dutch police and policymakers first of all consider several fundamental questions about the type of performance measurement framework they would like to implement. Findings from the study showed that there are two key areas on which there should first be agreement before a new framework for police performance measurement can be developed: the purpose of measuring the performance of the police; and the level (national, regional and/or local) at which objectives, indicators, measures and/or targets should be set.

The purpose of measuring police performance

Careful consideration needs to be given to the purpose for tracking performance before any of the practices discussed in the case study chapters can be applied in the Netherlands. As noted above, an organisation's objectives and the indicators, as well as the targets associated with them and data sources used, will be determined by what it is seeking to achieve by measuring performance. However, this study found that there is currently no agreement among Dutch stakeholders on why performance should be measured. Consensus on this issue may be reached through consultation among key stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Justice and Security and national and regional police units. It may also be useful to gather meaningful insights from other stakeholders, such as the Public Prosecution Office and the Court of Audit. The consultation strategy could include round table discussions, workshops, conferences and staff surveys that facilitate discussion on the organisational objectives of the police and how performance measurement can further these objectives.

The level(s) at which the framework for performance measurement should be set

The level at which performance objectives, indicators, measures and/or targets should be set and by whom needs to be agreed. Currently, the strategic direction from the Ministry of Justice and Security, laid out in the Security Agenda, is supplemented by both regional and local agreements on what should be measured, and against which targets. The study found that key national stakeholders in the Netherlands consequently do not have a clear picture of the performance indicators and targets currently used across the country, as the design of these metrics is partly left to regional and local stakeholders.

Some of the case study countries have chosen a different approach in this regard. For instance, a more local approach was introduced in Israel to address local needs and encourage trust in the police, while in Sweden

most strategic priorities for the national police authority are set by the Ministry of Justice and apply to all police units. This means that some of the practices adopted in each jurisdiction may not be transferable to the Netherlands. Indeed, before any of these practices can be integrated into the Dutch framework for police performance, careful consideration should be given as to whether the current structure for stakeholder involvement is the preferred approach.

The decisions on these two areas for agreement, the purpose of performance measurement and the level(s) at which the framework should be set, will give greater coherence to the Dutch strategy for police performance measurement and determine what practices for measuring performance from the case study jurisdictions might be transferable to the Netherlands.