



Future-proof: Future-ready

Global Perspectives on the Future of Policing

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Staying ahead of tomorrow's global threats & challenges

Even before the start of the pandemic, the lingering question to governments worldwide has been "how can we keep our communities safe - now and in the future"? Safety and security takes centre-stage in this debate, as its role in enhancing the wellbeing of communities and driving economic stability and growth is paramount.

Over the past three years, the uptake on many of the new trends and technologies that were "taking the security sector by storm" has accelerated. Rather, today a wealth of experiences, lessons and insights on how to build trust in government and gear towards sustainable outcomes are emerging and can be leveraged.

To capture these insights, our senior global safety & security experts share their perspectives on the future of policing. This report builds on their views - setting a strategic outlook for law protection and enforcement leaders worldwide.

Our sector is dynamic, fast-paced and agile; it has to be if we are to stay ahead of the curve! Now more than ever, there is an urgency to reflect and capitalise on the outcomes and recommendations in this report. A concise and useful reference guide for top policy makers seeking a better, safer tomorrow.



George Alders

Global Safety and Security Leader



Rami Nazer

Global Advisory Government & Public Sector Leader

A Public Safety Inflection Point

Policing is at its second inflection point since the September 11 attacks. The disruption, change and havoc that (initially) ensued from the lockdowns, the shift to virtual work and schooling, as well as the release of long-term COVID-19 restrictions and regulations, has presented new priorities and challenges in law enforcement and public safety.

Community and police responders saw a shift away from traditional/ street crime and a significant increase in cyber-threats, domestic violence and counterfeit and fraud. Essentially, many of the changes already underway, that we highlighted in [policing in a networked world](#), were accelerated. All while balancing the need to protect the personal safety of officers and security personnel.

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We need to make use of the windows of opportunity that COVID has given police... whether in accelerating digitisation, innovation, or collaboration. Police forces are now - more than ever - keen to be future proof.

The stakes are high for governments worldwide. Government readiness, and its resilience and agility in managing the pandemic has direct bearing on public confidence and trust, socio-economic development, and quality of life for citizens. The effectiveness of response has varied from one country to another and is impacted by a number of factors including levels of digitisation, perceptions and the relationship between citizens and government, as well as the readiness to “act fast”. As a result, the top winners in the fight to [stay ahead of the threat](#) are those that have been able to synergise the three key elements of strategy, capability and funding into a sustainable framework that sets clear priorities, integrates operations, and optimises capability development to quickly reopen their economies while maintaining public health and quality of life.

This report explores the long-term impact of the changes that are underway and how they will manifest in the future. We propose that there are five key trends that are profoundly changing the face of policing as we know it today.

A Paradigm Shift in the Policing Mission

Policing is evolving from responding to threats and enforcing law & order towards proactive, preventative policing. By forming sophisticated partnerships that problem solve to identify the root causes of crime, preventative policing aims at reducing victims, crime, and consequently, demand for traditional policing. Preventative policing starts at the top - with a commitment from leadership to collect and share information that allows for the identification of trends and patterns.

Evidence-based standards, designing innovative structures and integrating new ones to manage and reward performance, and collaborating with a wide range of non-traditional partners are just a few of the key enablers to making the all important transition to modern policing.

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Current trends have challenged how police are working ... ultimately, what has worked in the past will not necessarily work in the future.

As is typical with any major change, this paradigm shift does not come without its challenges. The “police culture” is typically hierarchical and designed around uniformed officers who investigate crimes, reinstate order, and make arrests. Preventative policing requires the integration of (all types of) analysts into the very fabric of the police machinery. Rather, in the future, analysts will work side by side with uniformed officers, and a whole range of community stakeholders who have more access and are better qualified to deal with the root issues driving crime. In addition, cyber skills will increasingly become a foundational part of police recruit training - rather than just specialist unit capability. Another key challenge is the inbuilt bias of data pools. The information that police are sourcing in order to analyse crime is often developed to capture and record incidents that have already happened. As a result, its sources are often inherently in marginalised areas - creating a bias against minorities and other vulnerable groups.

Several attempts have been made to address some of these issues and good progress has been made. The strategies of top police organisations emphasise the value of preventative policing, and have taken concrete steps to recruit and train analysts to work in equal rank to traditional police officers/ investigators.

Governments are also taking action. In the United States, the US Algorithm Bill requires private companies that have developed algorithms to test them for bias. In the United States and the United Kingdom, live facial recognition has been mired in controversy and in some cities banned due to concerns around bias. Finally, more recently, the World Economic Forum, in collaboration with the United Nations and the Interpol are developing a governance framework to address bias in facial recognition technology.

Building the Police Force of the Future

There is no doubt that crime is evolving at accelerated speed. Criminals are using technology to maximise the scale and impact of their returns. As they reinvest their proceeds to build capability, they are able to better pinpoint and exploit gaps and weaknesses in police organisations and cross international borders. Despite the many opportunities that technologies have given policing, it has multiplied the risks. A single cyber crime can have tremendous impact and a significantly high number of victims, with some studies suggesting repeat victimisation being of up to 25%.

All in all, policing is faced with a rising number of tactical threats and a fast shifting strategic landscape. Unfortunately, at the risk of broadly generalising, the scale and pace of investment in policing has not matched that of crime.

Fundamentally, one of the key challenges to better equipping police to stay ahead of crime is financial. Getting funding right and aligned to the policing strategy is key. The gap is widening between police and criminals, especially when it comes to skilling and digital capability. Underpinning the need for funding and digitising the police force is the need to attract qualified professionals who can research and innovate in policing; while importantly, upskilling and digitising existing security personnel and operating models to use technology to both inform live decisions and report on performance. Beyond the financials, digitisation and the turn to evidence-based policing requires in the first instance, a mind shift and a culture that is agile, and embraces communication, collaboration and change.

We must build capability to address the evolving nature of crime. Related to both those points is collaboration and the material need to enable and do better than we are today.

Steps are already underway and one can say that our agile, digitised, evidence-based police force(s) of the future are already forming. As more millennials progress in their careers, it is likely that police organisations are becoming more and more open and collaborative. Recruitment protocols and requirements are changing and are more digitally focused. A number of national initiatives are already underway to professionalise the police service and more clearly articulate the profiles of the “police force of the future” - prominent amongst which is the United Kingdom College of Policing’s dissemination of best practise in policing and its push towards continuous improvement. Because the pandemic has assimilated specialists who are better equipped to deal with some of the “first responder” needs, police forces are already more diverse and inclusive bringing together mental health professionals alongside social workers and other community policing stakeholders. The Australian Cyber Collaboration Center takes this one step forward by providing an institutional framework for small businesses, academia, and industry to collaborate with the government and policing organisations on minimising cyber risk.

A “Citizen-Centric” Approach to Policing

Public trust and confidence in policing is at a crossroads. On the one hand, top line figures on police response and management of the COVID-19 crisis are positive. However, these figures are countered by reactions to reports of police misconduct, discrimination and abuse. In addition, the overall trend is that confidence in policing is lowest among youth and minorities. COVID has disproportionately impacted society’s most vulnerable, and consequently created significant gaps in the levels of trust in government between the “haves and have nots”. Obviously, this differs from one context to another, depending (among other factors), on overall levels of trust in government, the demographics of the constituency/ area in question, as well as the level of interactions that take place outside the context of law enforcement and arrest.¹

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One of the most significant issues at the moment is public trust and confidence. Across the globe, the level of public confidence in police is quite high, despite some worrying trends. Governments need to capitalise on technology to track public confidence levels at more granularity of detail - by demographics, education, social background..etc, to develop a much richer picture of what is happening on the ground

It is important to take stock of the great strides that technology has enabled in the day to day provision of police services. Citizen interactions with the police extend beyond law enforcement and include a variety of services from traffic control, victim and witness support, to the transportation and monitoring of public assets. When applied holistically, technology has the potential to offer a seamless, integrated “customer” experience that can potentially spillover to broadly impact overall safety and security. An example of this are the “Smart Police Stations” introduced by Dubai Police. These self-service stations offer 27 services and 33 sub-services in six different languages, in areas ranging from crime-related services, through to community services, traffic services, as well as the issue of permits and certificates. The stations are available in a variety of formats (walk-in, drive-through, and kiosks), and are open 24/7.

Over the past years, social media has increasingly become a strategic platform to access police services and provide police with important data for crime prevention and response. Digital/ social media and mobile applications now allow real-time communication and interaction between the police and the public, and for the police amongst themselves. That said, social media is a double edged sword that also subjects police to greater exposure and public scrutiny - driving efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, and at the same time functioning as a moral compass to keep police in check when and where it is needed.

One of the key challenges to capturing the full potential of technology in improving the customer experience is ensuring the coherence of the digital policy. Rather than simply acquiring and adopting flagship technology, automation should be integrated and streamlined into all aspects of operations - be it people, infrastructure, or culture, and streamlined and coordinated with other agencies and organisations.

¹ In the United Kingdom, friendly home visits by the police increased the general public’s confidence in the police by 6% and 11% amongst minorities

“Future Ready” Legislation & Governance Models

With the increased uptake of technology, and the exchange of information and data, cyber-security and the need to mitigate the risk associated with data breaches increases. In addition, the move within policing to evidence-based policing and cloud storage has created an imperative to protect the privacy and security of data that is shared digitally/ through AI enabled collaboration. This is true whether to ensure the integrity of the crime investigation, or to protect the personal freedoms and liberties of those involved. Police organisations all over the world realise that they are under obligation to regulate and enforce cyber-security while protecting digital evidence in their possession in the same manner they have historically been obliged to protect physical evidence.

The key challenge for leaders of policing organisations is staying ahead of criminals and preempting new, unknown crimes. More recently, governments have approved laws and regulations that enable covert police operations on the dark web - long regarded as beyond the reach of law enforcement. As a result, by combining traditional investigative police work with technology, police organisations have been able to identify, arrest and convict all kinds of criminals be they drug/ arms dealers, child pornographers, or terrorists and other criminals. Moving forward, as criminals become even more sophisticated and innovative, legislators and police will continue to identify gaps and entry points for human error and create entry points for law enforcement through innovative legislation and governance models.

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How do we build a pipeline to disrupt crime? How do we build an intelligence picture, disrupt against it, and move to the next one? That is how we can materially make a difference

Across the board, governments are taking concrete steps to safeguard data and prioritise ethical policing. No doubt spurred by international and national human rights organisations and public outcry against police brutality, governments are taking concerted steps to regulate police activity. In this regard, one of the most notable and recent examples is the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. The Act is designed as “a bold, comprehensive approach to hold police accountable, change the culture of law enforcement, empower .. communities, and build trust between law enforcement and .. communities by addressing systemic racism and bias to help save lives”². As societies and consequently governments evolve, legislation tailored to the local context will continue to develop to address relevant challenges and bias.

Collaborate, Collaborate, Collaborate

The underlying theme to this report is that the traditional view of policing being the responsibility of policing organisations alone, no longer holds. Partnerships between police and other actors is a key requisite to future success.

² “Justice in Policing Act”, The House Committee on the Judiciary”. <https://judiciary.house.gov/issues/issue/?IssueID=14924>

In the future, at the organisational level, police forces will include a variety of skills sets and profiles that are supported with an array of partnerships with state and non-state actors. In Canada, there are many ground up initiatives that partner with different agencies at the municipal, national and provincial levels. This can and should be supported by government initiatives by legislation such as the Ontario “Community Safety & Wellbeing Legislation” which effectively institutionalises partnerships between police and other actors towards common goals.

Information exchange is a focal point for inter-agency collaboration, and allows safety and security personnel to access data in areas outside their mandate or reach. For example, collaboration platforms are increasingly being set up between government and private sector security vendor platforms to counter and address cyber threats. This kind of collaboration allows advance warning on cyber crimes being perpetuated. As different agencies share and report on cyber crimes, they will advance from being users to becoming repositories of information and centers for analysis to identify trends and patterns. In this regard, a standout global innovation that is still underway is the Mark 43 which provides public safety software to over 120 Australian agencies and supports the overall safety and security ecosystem. Mark 43's innovation is that it consolidates the different operational technologies/ platforms and makes them singularly searchable.

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No one entity holds a single source of data. Data is often spread over a wide range of both public and private sector actors... and the truth is, in many instances, the private sector is at the cutting edge of the development and adoption of the technology. Law enforcement organisations need to ‘dare to share’, engage and collaborate

Considering the rise in espionage and international crime, there is a strong trend to formulate agreements and partnerships that advance information exchange between governments. Where the political will for cooperation exists, the main challenges to cooperation between governments can be in the definition of common threats as well as the availability of the physical, human and financial resources to provide information and execute on the ground. This provides an important intersection between multilateral diplomacy and policing. International agreements and specialised agencies such as the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), national associations, and organisations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police will play an increasingly important role in driving cooperation, encouraging radical innovation and pushing operational efficiencies for implementation at the national and local levels.

Finally and most important, time has proven that community collaboration with the police (and vice versa) is key to ensuring the safety and security of our societies. The onus is on governments to secure and retain public confidence and trust by creating appropriate platforms and channels of communication with the public. In the Netherlands, Strategic Reflection Tables, which bring police leadership with court prosecutors, academics, mayors of cities and others have been established to explore the ethical questions and standards associated with artificial intelligence. The Tables are just one example of the power and potential of police-community partnerships.

... in a future full of unknowns, the trends underway in policing show promise of safer, more secure communities.

Contact Us

Rami Nazer

PwC Middle East
rami.nazer@pwc.com

George Alders

PwC Netherlands
george.alders@pwc.com

Muhammad AlQadoumi

PwC Middle East
muhammad.alqadoumi@pwc.com

Tara Macpherson

PwC Canada
macpherson.tara@pwc.com

Andrew Newsham

PwC United Kingdom
andrew.newsham@pwc.com

Andrew Morley

PwC Middle East
andrew.morley@pwc.com

James Ogg

PwC Australia
james.t.ogg@pwc.com

Nesrine Halima

PwC Middle East
nesrin.halima@pwc.com