



The investment in more police officers

Assignment "Investment in more police officers"

More Police Officers

An assessment of the effort to increase the
number of police officers in Sweden

Summary of report 2013:12

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) – an agency under the Ministry of Justice – is a centre for research and development within the judicial system.

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Following the 2006 parliamentary elections, the new Centre-Right Swedish Government announced that the country would have 20,000 police officers by 2010. That involved an increase of more than 2,500 in the total number of officers during the intervening years.¹ The initial emphasis was on making the police more visible, gradually shifting towards a greater focus on producing better results. In these circumstances, the Government has commissioned Brå (the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention) to evaluate the effort. An initial report is being submitted in May 2013, while the final report is due by 1 October 2014. An additional, interim report is to be published in January 2014.²

This initial report addresses four overall questions:

1. What directives has the Government issued concerning use of the new resources and the results that are to be achieved?
2. How much have the resources increased on the basis of various parameters and which areas of operations have the resources been earmarked for?
3. How did the police plan for the new resources and what problems arose?
4. How have the results produced by the police developed during this period?

Brå's assessment discusses how the development of the results should be assessed in relation to the efforts – that

¹ In reality the number of officers increased by almost 3,000 until 2011 which led to there being approximately 20,400 police in December of that year. That was corrected the next year in order to drop back to 20,000 officers.

² This extra report will be published in January 2014 in order to present, as soon as possible, the results of the two large questionnaire surveys that Brå conducted in late winter of 2013 concerning the views of the police when it comes to crime prevention and investigative work.

is, whether the results have improved to the extent that can be expected given the magnitude of the effort.

Greater visibility – the Government’s clearest goal

Brå has studied the budget bills and the appropriations documents for the police³ from the period 2006 to 2012. The review indicates that the directives varied somewhat from year to year in terms of both focus and goals.

Greater visibility is the goal that the Government has most consistently stressed in connection with its effort to increase the number of officers. Crime would be reduced, and public safety increased, by putting “more officers on the streets”. Since 2008, the Government has clarified the goal of increased visibility by stating that at least 50 per cent of officers are to be on the streets. Later in the period, however, the Government also emphasised the results of investigations even more strongly. A greater number and percentage of cases are to be solved. The two goals are linked by focusing on the need for police who patrol the streets to perform more thorough investigations at the scene of the crime.

The emphasis on greater visibility as a value in itself in crime prevention work has decreased in recent years. The focus has instead shifted toward strategic, planned measures based on the PUM intelligence gathering model, as well as the PUM-A planning and documentation system.

Brå has also studied the directives that the National Police Board issued for the various police authorities during the period, concluding that that they were fully in line with the intentions of the Government and communicated the same priorities.

Increase not as great as believed

The number of police officers rose by 17 per cent, or 2,866, from 2006 to 2011. In terms of numbers, this is a

³ Appropriations documents are the Government’s annual policy documents for an authority.

relatively large effort. But the increase can be measured in several different ways. The increase in the number of full-time equivalents could be studied instead of measuring how the number of people working as police increased, which reflects the actual increase in resource time and is a more correct measurement when taking into consideration the fact that many new police are young and on leave to care for their children, or only work part-time. The number of full-time equivalent employees increased by 13 per cent, or 2,034. If the increase in the number of civilian employees in the police is also counted, the picture changes even further somewhat. The total number of full-time equivalent police employees then increased by 11 per cent. Taking the population increase during this period into consideration, the increase in police employees then becomes 7 per cent per capita.⁴

Finally, the workload of the police also increased during the period. The number of *reported* offences rose by 16 per cent between 2006 and 2011.⁵

Size of the increase varied among police authorities

The actual average increase in the number of full-time equivalent employees was 11 per cent.⁶ However, the size of the increase varied substantially among police authorities. Halland had the greatest full-time equivalent increase at 24 per cent, followed by 20 per cent for Jönköping and 17 per cent for Jämtland. The lowest increase is in Uppsala, where the number of full-time equivalents decreased by 3 per cent instead. Full-time equivalents rose by approximately 3 per cent in Värmland, Väster-norrland and Södermanland. The police authorities appear to be relatively unaware of this actual increase in resources – that is, the increase in *full-time equivalents* in

⁴ The number of Swedish inhabitants increased by 400,000 during this period. The increase in full-time equivalent employees was 7 per cent per 100,000 inhabitants.

⁵ Interested readers may wish to know that, in accordance with Brå's annual NTU crime victim survey, there are no indications that actual crime has increased.

⁶ The figure here is not related to the population increase.

total for police and civilians – instead focusing primarily on the *number* of officers. Several of the police authorities who had barely increased in full-time equivalents are of the idea that they had a substantial increase in resources because the *number* of police had increased.

Half of the authorities wanted to have more trainees than they received

More than half of the police authorities, both large and small, are dissatisfied with the number of trainees they were assigned. The remainder of the authorities feel that their needs were met.

Most authorities, particularly in the three metropolitan areas, are primarily interested in strengthening their street operations. The smaller authorities also saw a need to reinforce their investigative units and an opportunity to introduce the kinds of specialist functions that they are expected to have. Some authorities, however, had no clear ideas or plans in that respect – local police chiefs could determine where the new officers would be working.

In practice, according to the assessment of the authorities, the new resources have largely been assigned to work on the streets.

More time on the streets but the percentage of total services has not increased

In line with what the authorities believe, the number of resource hours devoted to maintaining a presence on the streets rose during the period. But the time reports of the individual officers indicate that the number of hours spent at police stations had also increased. Thus, the ratio between the two types of services remained unchanged.

The National Police Board – and subsequently the Government – set a goal that half of all hours worked would be on the streets. Based on Brå's calculation method, approximately 45 per cent of hours were spent on the streets in 2011. However, that does not represent much of a change over the 44 per cent figure in 2006.

The individual authorities varied a great deal. The percentage of hours that some authorities assigned to maintaining a presence on the streets increased considerably.

The effort has been primarily devoted to specialist functions and targeted initiatives

The study suggests that most of the new work has not involved daily incidents and investigations, whether on the streets or at police stations, but rather various types of specialist services and teams, as well as targeted initiatives and planned crime prevention.

In compliance with the Government's directives, the police authorities have assigned most new graduates to maintaining a visible presence on the streets. Meanwhile, a large percentage of experienced officers have been transferred to various types of specialist functions and targeted initiatives, both on the streets and at police stations. Among the examples are street pusher teams, youth teams, the GOBmos initiative⁷, LOKUS⁸, handlers⁹, victim coordinators and various types of investigators. New positions have also emerged when it comes to personal safety services and criminal intelligence.

Shortcomings in planning for new resources

Owing to the increase in the number of officers over a relatively short period of time, the police authorities had to receive a large number of trainees.¹⁰ The number of officers rose by more than 2,800 until 2011, but there were 6,500 trainees due to the large volume of retirements. Brå conducted a survey of all authorities to determine how well the trainees were received.

⁷ GOB stands for gross organized crime.

⁸ LOKUS stands for local investigator at the scene of the crime.

⁹ A handler is an officer responsible for contact with informants.

¹⁰ Trainees are attending their final semester of school and have temporary employment at a local police district.

Most authorities boosted the number of supervisors for trainees on their regular staff, while some made the transition from individual to group supervision. Given the greater need for supervision, many of the most experienced officers had to give less priority to their ordinary duties. A number of authorities point to that dynamic as a problem.

Although the National Police Board drew up written guidelines for reception of the new trainees, many of the authorities would have preferred more information and assistance. The Board reviewed how the authorities of five counties planned for the greater number of officers. They concluded that long-term planning had been inadequate.

Inexperienced officers who quit or are reassigned

The police authorities are sensitive to staff turnover, given that virtually all available officers already have some position in the organization. Finding a replacement for someone who quits or is reassigned may be difficult. The authorities in a number of sparsely populated counties are concerned that trainees will quickly move to the metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, the various authorities are generally more worried that officers will be reassigned from the streets to police stations. It appears that young officers these days are more inclined to transfer than was the case with previous generations. As a result, many counties constantly have new graduates on the streets.

Another challenge that the authorities bring up is that there is currently a high percentage of young, inexperienced officers. Both the overall effort and the unusually high rate of retirement in recent years have contributed to that trend. Thus, the need for continuing training will be particularly great over the next few years.

A few more cases were solved, but the percentage was the same

The last section of the report shines light on changes in the results produced by the police after their resources were strengthened. A key monitoring parameter is the

number and percentage of reported crimes that are solved.¹¹ The percentage was largely unchanged after 2006 (down to 17 per cent in 2012). However, the number of cases solved per year rose by 8 per cent during the period.¹²

Brå has tried a new method of determining the number of cases that are solved – excluding offences committed by minors, incidents that later turned out not to involve crimes, etc.

Brå also analysed whether authorities that received the most new resources showed the greatest improvement in results. No clear correlation could be established.

More crime prevention, but qualitative inadequacies

Assessing trends in crime prevention in 2006-2012 is harder than studying the results of investigations. The number of reported hours devoted to crime prevention increased. Adoption of the PUM intelligence gathering model and the PUM-A planning and documentation system permitted crime prevention to be more structured and orderly. A total of 3,176 crime prevention initiatives were entered in PUM-A in 2012, each one of them showing planning, the choice of approach, and any monitoring or evaluation that was performed. The National Police Board's ongoing analysis of PUM-A documentation indicates that many inadequacies remain when it comes to planning and monitoring. According to the documentation, three-quarters of initiatives entered in PUM-A

¹¹ The concept of crime clearance has its roots in police practice and either involves a person having been tied to the offence as a suspect or the offence having been cleared by some other means. When a person has been tied to the offence, a clearance means either that the case has resulted in a court prosecution or that a summary sanction order (involving a fine or suspended sentence) or a waiver of prosecution has been issued by the prosecutor. In Sweden, crimes cleared by these means are usually referred to as person-based clearances. In the remaining cases, the cleared offences have also been investigated to completion from a police perspective even if no perpetrator can be tied to the offences in question. To take one example, it is possible that following the investigation of a reported offence, it may have been determined that the event did not constitute a criminal offence, a so-called "no-crime" decision, or it may be the case that the perpetrator has not reached the age of criminal responsibility and that the investigation can therefore not be continued. Offences cleared by these means are referred to as technical clearances.

¹² Due to the fact that the number of reported offences has increased.

were not preceded by an examination or overview of the problem under consideration. Ninety per cent of the initiatives were not monitored or evaluated at all.

However, the quality of PUM-related activities varied greatly from one police authority to another.

Finally it is worth pointing out that crime prevention collaboration between the police and municipalities increased during the period. By 2012, a total of 85 per cent of municipalities had signed cooperation agreements to address specific issues.

High level of confidence and greater security

The other organizational matters that Brå has studied are processing times – which have grown somewhat shorter – and community relations, which are generally regarded as good.

Brå's annual survey, the Swedish Crime Survey, examines changes in the confidence and sense of security that the general population experiences in relation to the police and their services. The evidence indicates that people have great confidence in the police but that the level did not change during the period. On the other hand, the percentage of those who feel unsafe when out late at night declined from 21 to 15 per cent. However, it should be kept in mind that the public's sense of security and fear of crime are affected by a number of factors in addition to that which the police do.

Brå's assessment

The Government's commission includes an assessment by Brå concerning reasonable expectations of the police in the wake of the effort. First, it is important to note that the increase in the number of full-time equivalent employees has not been as great as it might appear.

When discussing reasonable improvements in the results produced by the police, it is useful to remember that new officers are all young and inexperienced. Initially their supervision needs reduce the number of hours available for ordinary duties. Because of the high rate of retirement during the period, the percentage of new, in-

experienced officers is considerably greater than the increase in the total number of employees. Nearly one-third of current officers were first employed in 2006-2011.

Given the above considerations, determining what a reasonable level of expectations might be when it comes to improved results becomes more complex. Examining the issue in a couple of years may permit a clearer assessment of the impact of the increased resources. Brå's conclusion at this point is that the improvement was fairly marginal during the period, albeit the trend was positive when all parameters are taken into account.

Why has the increase in the number of officers not permitted more offences to be cleared?

The number of cleared offences increased somewhat during the period, while processing times became shorter. However, the percentage of clearances did not increase, although the results for each year are somewhat better if the more inappropriate cases are filtered out.

Could the police authorities have taken better advantage of the extra resources in order to clear more offences? Yes, in Brå's opinion, assuming that the resources had been devoted more to dealing with daily incidents and thus permitted more and farther-reaching investigative procedures at the scene of the crime.

The Government's directives for using the new resources initially stressed that the police become more visible with a greater focus on crime prevention. An additional goal towards the end of the period is that more offences be cleared. Brå's assessment is that the police have assigned the extra resources in accordance with the directives when it comes to visibility and additional time for crime prevention, but not when it comes to improving their prospects of clearing offences.

If the goals of greater visibility and an increase in clearances are not to be mutually exclusive, much of the investigative work must be done on the streets, which would require more officers assigned to dealing with daily incidents. However, Brå's survey and interviews with

the police authorities concerned suggest that this area has not generally been given much priority. Although a large percentage of new officers have been assigned to dealing with daily incidents, experienced ones have been transferred to other positions.¹³ As a result, measures for dealing with daily incidents are of approximately the same magnitude in many police areas as before the effort began. A high percentage of the extra resources have been assigned to specialist functions and targeted initiatives instead. The specialist functions appear to be a result of both greater demands on the police and their own initiative. All of the new positions serve a specific purpose. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that each new position of this kind is added at the expense of something else – ultimately at the expense of measures to deal with daily incidents and thereby the opportunity to take additional and farther-reaching investigative measures at the scene of the crime.

Has crime prevention improved?

The extent to which the increase in the number of officers has led to better results is difficult to determine, given that the results that the Government expects are unclear. The Government's previous crime prevention goal was usually that reports of certain offences would decrease. That kind of goal has been conspicuous by its absence in recent years. Brå regards that change as justified, primarily because the inclination to report plays such a large role in trends for daily offences. Furthermore, research suggests that the police cannot have a decisive impact on national crime figures (Weisburd and Piquero 2008, Pratt and Cullen 2005). Thus, relating the increase in police resources during the period to either reported offences or self-reporting in the Swedish Crime Survey does not appear to be particularly meaningful.

However, research indicates that local initiatives targeting specific types of offences can reduce their occurrence

¹³ In some cases, the purpose of the specialist functions is to improve the far-reaching investigative work at the scene of the crime. Such is the case with local investigators at the scene of the crime (LOKUS).

during the course of the project (Sherman et al 1997). The Kronoberg Model represents such an example in Sweden (Brå 2009:5). Only rarely, though, do the police initiate or participate in crime prevention projects that are evaluated such that general conclusions can be drawn about their effectiveness. As a result, the extent to which the results of local crime prevention has improved since 2006 cannot be assessed.

Looking at results in terms of performance provides a somewhat brighter picture. The police improved their crime prevention in several respects during the period. First, the effort has enabled more officers to be visible on the streets. Second, the PUM and PUM-A system has evolved. The number of scheduled crime prevention initiatives documented in PUM-A has multiplied. Third, collaboration with most municipalities has been beefed up by means of cooperation agreements.

Risk that volume and documentation will be given higher priority than content

There are a number respects in which the police appear to be focusing more on crime prevention these days. Whether such initiatives have improved to the extent that may be expected on the basis of the Government's effort is less clear. Although an evolution has certainly taken place, pronounced quality problems remain.

It is encouraging that the police are cooperating and implementing more initiatives with the social services and that the number of initiatives in PUM-A has increased. But neither type of initiative appears to strongly emphasize results. When Brå examined the cooperation agreements, all parties stated that their relationships have improved, but only a minority perceived a clear difference in terms of quality or results. The police fall far short when it comes to analysing whether a planned initiative is optimal in view of the relevant goal.

The next report will look more closely at quality issues

Regardless of the extent to which resources have increased, Brå believes that there is an indisputable poten-

tial for police work to improve. Both higher quality and conscious prioritization of overall resources are required. The next report will look more loosely at qualitative shortcomings and prospects for improvement.