REIMAGINING THE POLICE WORKFORCE

A Vision for the Future
The world around us is transforming at an unprecedented pace. Public safety agencies must operate in an increasingly digital world, respond to rising citizen and workforce expectations, anticipate and protect against existing and emerging threats, and cope with continuing budgetary pressures.

Almost two centuries after the first forces were established, police officers’ core mission is unchanged: to protect the public, prevent crime, and keep the peace while maintaining the highest standards of trust.

To continue to realize this mission against the backdrop of exceptional change, police agencies will need to develop a more agile workforce and rely on an increasingly expanded ecosystem of partners—to both provide traditional reactive policing services and accelerate the shift to a more preventative policing model.

To inform our vision of the future police workforce, Accenture surveyed a cross-section of 309 people employed in the policing and law enforcement profession in six countries—Australia, France, Germany, Singapore, the United States, and the United Kingdom.
FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

Public safety agencies are operating in a complex and changing landscape which challenges whether their workforces are fit for the future. This landscape includes five key themes:

1. A flexible labor market

The motivations of today’s workforce, in terms of the work they do and how they do it, have been transformed. Digital workforce platforms and the so-called gig economy allow jobseekers to find more flexible, project-based work, so employers will have to think about defining work in a way that attracts and retains the resources they need. In Accenture’s recent Future Workforce research,1 46 percent of people say that traditional job descriptions have become obsolete, while 85 percent of people would invest their free time in learning new skills.

2. Technology and humans

Technology-led disruption is nothing new, and police forces are already using emerging technologies to help their workforce complete tasks more effectively and efficiently. However, the combined power of technologies such as robotic process automation (RPA), analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI) now have the potential to fundamentally change work and the way it is performed. This is not simply about continuing to automate traditional tasks; new types of work will be created that redefine the relationship between humans and machines while freeing up the workforce to focus on higher-value work.

62% of police professionals say that AI will have a positive impact on their jobs.2 Research by the University of Oxford, meanwhile, finds that there is potential for up to 47 percent of jobs to be automated within the next 10–20 years.3
3. Explosion of data as a workforce tool

Police forces could dramatically improve the speed and quality of their actions and decision-making by using previously overlooked reserves of vast and growing data. However, to fully exploit the potential of data—including data that is embedded in internal processes and systems, open-source data, and even partner data—forces will need to develop new mindsets, skills, and ways of working.

85% of organizations (across 13 industries) are developing data strategies around data aggregation, data lakes, and/or data curation, as well as mechanisms that turn data into insights and then into actions.

4. New threats, new demands

New threats are emerging at speed, and familiar risks are finding new forms. At the same time, citizens expect more responsive public safety: eight in 10 citizens have the same or higher expectations of digital services from the public sector as they do from private sector organizations. These two factors are putting increased strain on public sector workforce resilience, motivation, and ability to carry out its mission.

5. Political turbulence

Significant budget cuts have required many police services to look at transformative ways to operate with less. This significantly affects the workforce, which on average makes up 80 percent of budgets. Furthermore, the global political landscape is changing. Police leadership is having to respond to new government priorities while managing the transparent service enabled by video and social media. The police workforce must be able to operate effectively within this environment of uncertainty and scrutiny.
OUR VISION: THE FUTURE POLICE WORKFORCE

The speed and scale at which the public safety landscape is transforming requires police forces to develop new workforce strategies, structures, and skills to remain relevant and effective.

Our vision sets out the way the future police workforce will have to look in order to navigate these changes, overcome the challenges, and make the most of new opportunities to protect the public from harm.

We propose that the future police workforce will consist of a strategic nucleus directing and leading a core police workforce that is supplemented and enhanced by a broad ecosystem of workforce, partners, and the public.
THE NUCLEUS
Senior leadership and small strategic center managing and predicting workforce needs

THE CORE
Dedicated workforce delivering core operational policing services

THE ECOSYSTEM
Adaptive Workforce
Providing radical partnerships with private, public and third sector Partners
More radical partnerships with the private, public, and third sectors Public
Engaging in preventative activities
The nucleus

The nucleus will consist of senior operational leadership responsible for providing strategic direction across all of policing. They will be supported by a strong strategic capability that provides data-driven insights on, for example, the operating model, future trends, finances, and Human Resources (HR). When it comes to HR, the nucleus will be responsible for strategic workforce planning, determining what type of resources will be needed in the future ensuring continuous access to the right number of the right people at the right time and in the right place. A crucial element of this will be enabling the police force to identify, recruit, and manage the adaptive workforce.

The core

The core will consist of permanent police officers and staff who are mission-focused and responsible for the delivery of all fundamental police services. The core will lead all police activities, with the support of a mixed team of both core and ecosystem resources. It will be dedicated to the key competences of policing, such as response, and specialisms like child sexual exploitation and firearms. This highly visible core will be crucial to building public trust, maintaining legitimacy, and forging strong relationships across the entire ecosystem.

The ecosystem

The ecosystem will consist of a wide range of resources offering short-term or specialist capabilities and capacity, which are available for police forces to use in an agile way. It will flex and evolve as needed, drawing on the following groups.

An adaptive workforce

A supplementary and flexible group of resources that police forces can call on to support service delivery. The adaptive workforce will provide access to specialists such as cyber security and data experts, volunteers, “wisdom workers,” and alumni. These specialists will become increasingly important to fulfilling short-term supply gaps and providing local insights.

“Digital disruption is too great for any one organization. Today’s complex policing challenges can’t be solved by the police alone.”

James Slessor, Managing Director, Accenture Global Public Safety
**New partners**

Police forces already work with a wide range of partners. Future demands and the changing nature of crime will see existing partnerships deepen and new, non-traditional connections formed with a broad spectrum of organizations from the public, private and third sectors. These could range from partnering with banks to develop joint apprenticeships on financial crime to working with international charities on cross-border issues. As public safety agencies embrace more preventative policing and seek to deliver a more seamless, citizen-centric service, the future police workforce will also become increasingly involved with other public agencies—health and mental health services, for instance.

**The public**

Cooperation between the police and the public will become commonplace as the latter are called on to support preventative measures and help the investigative process. Police forces will encourage communities to share information and will proactively monitor public engagement to influence and improve their provision of services.
REALIZING THE VISION

To make this vision a reality, public safety agencies will need to develop a workforce and environment that are underpinned by four pillars:

1. Adaptive and agile
2. Empowered and enabled
3. Open and collaborative
4. Healthy and fulfilled

1. ADAPTIVE AND AGILE

- **Build radical relationships.** Have the right resources and ideas on hand—regardless of where they come from.
- **Adopt agile ways of working.** Find innovative ways to get the best out of resources and quickly assemble and disband teams.
- **Make workforce-planning strategic.** Pre-empt and prepare for changes in demand.

**56%**

of police professionals expect greater sharing of resources and skills between agencies in future, with 85 percent of those saying they feel positive about the change.
Police forces will need to be open-minded about what the core really needs to do, and what can be done more effectively by or in collaboration with other parties. The changing nature of crime, rising citizen expectations, and the opportunities presented by new technologies will mean that police forces do not have the capacity or the capability to meet all future demands.

“Will it be data scientists, or will it be new police officers?”
Theo van der Plas, Digitalizing and Cybercrime Program Director, Netherlands Police.

Leaders need to be imaginative about who they build relationships with, and openly engage with other industries—start-ups, academia, technology providers, and platform providers. For example, could they develop joint apprenticeships with banks to focus on financial crime, work more closely with international charities on cross-border issues, exploit the innovative power of start-up enterprises, or mobilize the public to help tackle cybercrime?

Crime detection will always remain a core competency for police forces, but the new threats will require new types of response and skills. “Criminality has moved into a different space—the digital space and cyber space”
Hacer Evans, Director, UK, Digital Policing Portfolio.

Developing both virtual and physical networks now will be key to understanding what external resourcing is available. This way, police forces can put pipelines in place that give them access to the right talent at the right time.

**Adopt agile ways of working**

To make use of the core workforce and extended ecosystem, police forces will need more agile ways of working. These will include project-based working practices, whereby mixed teams of core and adaptive workers are quickly assembled to meet a specific objective and then dispersed to move on to the next piece of work. Role descriptions will become less important as emphasis is placed on whether each person has the right skills for the job at hand.
Seventy-nine percent of senior leaders agree that the future workforce will be structured more by projects—work that is focused on joint goals and completed in collaborative teams—than by job function.\textsuperscript{7}

To get the best out of an extended ecosystem, forces will also need to consider more innovative collaboration and partnering techniques. One example is the Guardian Circle, a new app that connects friends and family to create alert lists so that each member of the group can reach out for help in situations where they might previously have called for police assistance.\textsuperscript{8}

Another is Tryvge, an app launched in Sweden in 2015 and now being trialed in London that enables residents to log incidents on the app and provide descriptions of suspects and other relevant information to help police investigate.\textsuperscript{9} And in Spain and the Netherlands, police forces have been trialing “hackathons,” during which they encourage participants to find new ways to search for clues and insight in huge datasets.\textsuperscript{10} In Canada, meanwhile, Toronto Police have turned to Twitter, releasing clues to cold murder cases weekly in order to increase public awareness.\textsuperscript{11}

**Make workforce-planning strategic**

Future police forces will need greater agility—the ability to rapidly contract and expand the size of their workforces and shake up the skills mix to respond to changing circumstances.

To do this, they will need to make workforce-planning a strategic imperative, constantly pre-empting what future work will look like and the skills needed to do it. They will need to develop an understanding of where there are opportunities for automation, how to connect their future labor requirements with an on-demand supply of workers, and how to better use and create new partnerships.

Many forces have established—or are in the process of establishing—strategic HR functions. However, the level of complexity involved, and the influence workforce-planning has on the execution of a force’s strategy, demand a new approach. Analytical tools can predict future workforce and skills needs, and agile working policies and processes will enable more flexible working arrangements and an adaptive workforce.
2. EMPOWERED AND ENABLED

- Enhance the workforce. Connect the officer.
- Harness the power of machines. Release officers for higher-value work.
- Equip the workforce with the right skills. Work toward digital + human.

Enhance the workforce

Mobile devices, wearables, virtual-reality tools, smart city sensors, and drones are just a selection of the new technologies that will augment the work of police officers. With more information at hand to make decisions that would have once required referral to others, the core police workforce will become more effective as generalists.

The junior ranks, meanwhile, will be able to take on more responsibility and ownership of public safety outcomes; workforce hierarchies will flatten as a result. For example, a response officer could conduct preliminary investigations and initial crime-scene examination or triage of devices through workflow apps, live video communication to experts, and mobile forensic kits.

Harness the power of machines

Machines are already part of the police workforce: chatbots that serve the community, for example, or the automation of repetitive administrative tasks. Their role, however, is set to increase dramatically, and when employed alongside the human workforce they have significant potential to enhance policing effectiveness.

The U.S.’s recently launched FirstNet developer program gives developers the opportunity to create and scale up apps for first responders. These apps could enable and empower officers to make decisions more quickly, share intelligence and insight, and capture information, such as witness statements, more efficiently.\(^\text{12}\)
For example, AI can be used to digitize, analyze, and review large volumes of case data with much greater speed and accuracy than traditional approaches. When AI is augmented with analytics tools, there is also the potential for intelligence such as identifying crime hotspots, connecting crimes, and linking associated offenders.

Our research reveals that three-quarters of police professionals expect digital skills to be required over the next three to five years, and more than 60 percent believe they will receive significant digital technology upskilling. Most do not fear this: 67 percent of respondents are motivated to remain in the profession, and this rises to 75 percent among those who are eager to embrace new digital skills.

As technology drives significant changes in the workforce, it will be crucial not to lose sight of the human aspects of policing and vital to learn to blend these with digital skills. Predictive analytics technologies, for instance, will have a valuable role to play in helping the police to prevent more crime in the future, but acting on the insight from these tools and developing the appropriate response will require a more nuanced set of skills. Intervening officers need to have empathy, good communication and negotiating skills, and the ethical training to determine what is an appropriate and proportional intervention. Technologies cannot provide that.

“How do we make sure our employees are geared and are resilient enough to work through all the challenges for policing?”

Jennifer Evans, Chief of Police, Peel Regional Police, Canada

76% of police professionals predict that digital skills will be more in demand over the next three to five years, but 60 percent say there will be a need for more communication and collaboration skills and 53 percent a need for even “softer” skills, such as empathy, negotiation, and creativity.
3. OPEN AND COLLABORATIVE

- **Build trust.** Provide the legitimacy and autonomy to act.
- **Reset the culture.** Encourage differences and creativity.
- **Inspire through leadership.** Mold diverse teams.

### 72%

of police professionals believe that providing learning and development opportunities is important to the future of their organization.

#### Build trust

For police forces, building and retaining trust and legitimacy will continue to be crucial—with partners, the public, and the workforce.

Our research shows that technologies can revolutionize operations, but success will continue to require citizens’ consent. Police forces cannot afford to neglect the imperative to maintain the trust and confidence of the public.

*“The public trust piece transcends everything. That’s the business we are in—policing is and always will be a people’s business.”*  
Jim McDonnell, Sheriff of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department

As future police forces extend their reach through the adaptive workforce and the broader public safety ecosystem, it is crucial that these more peripheral workers also understand their role and responsibility in maintaining public trust. Everyone involved in delivering policing services will play their part in building and securing confidence in the police. Agencies will need to develop their ecosystems carefully to ensure that they are committed to the same values and mission as the core workforce.
The transition to a workforce that is more heavily reliant on an ecosystem of partners is a significant cultural shift for most police agencies. Police officers and leaders will need to learn to trust the adaptive workforce and put in place the right mechanisms (such as speedy security clearance and vetting processes and pre-approved workforce pools and networks of trusted partners).

**Reset the culture**

One crucial factor in public trust is the extent to which police forces reflect the communities they serve. Much has already been accomplished, with today’s police forces far more diverse than in the past. And more than three-quarters (77 percent) of police professionals tell us that their organizations have a workplace diversity and inclusion policy.

However, diversity goes beyond issues such as ethnicity and gender and having the right policies. Leaders also need to embrace talent from different educational backgrounds and with different lifestyles, and capitalize on the breadth of ideas, experience, and knowledge this talent can offer.

Encouraging a culture of experimentation will be important to be successful in a digital age. This means initiatives such as Police Now, a U.K.-based project that aims to engage with local communities to attract a more diverse group of future police leaders, and direct-entry schemes that enable workers with external experience to join the police at higher ranks. Also in the U.K., London’s Metropolitan Police Service has launched a scheme to attract people from other professions who would not traditionally have considered such a career; candidates may apply for roles that would normally require existing police experience.

**ONLY 45%**

of police professionals agree with the statement “We have a creative and open-minded culture.” And only 46 percent agree that “Diversity policies have helped provide a positive and inclusive workplace for all.”
Inspire through leadership

Police leaders of the future will need to be champions of change, have entrepreneurial drive, and help to accelerate the organization’s digital transformation.

They will need to excel at human and machine-centered leadership and at driving the right culture in multidisciplinary teams to get the best value from the combined power of new technologies and people. And they will need strong relationship-building skills and partnering ability to help nurture the public safety ecosystem and stitch together the core and adaptive workers into effective teams. This might demand investment. In a recent Future Workforce innovation workshop, “initial leadership investment,” was recognized as key to successful change and adaptation of ways of working.

They will also require good judgment and delegation skills and be open to two-way feedback. Challenging traditional hierarchies of the police force will be necessary to reduce unnecessary management bureaucracy and to empower junior ranks to take decisions and think creatively.

In a more agile police force that spans the core and adaptive workforces, flatter structures will be more effective—particularly as new tools and deeper insights provide all team members with an opportunity to exercise autonomy.
4. HEALTHY AND FULFILLED

- **Differentiate to attract talent.** Develop the policing brand.
- **Personalize to retain.** Build career pathways and continued learning.
- **Focus on health and well-being.** Monitor and mitigate workplace pressures.

**Differentiate to attract talent**

**ONLY 4/10**

Police professionals currently rate their police force’s recruitment strategy as effective. However, recruiting new people is seen as vital to the future (but is also perceived as difficult) by about a third of the profession.

Nearly half of those who are currently employed or have been employed in the public sector say it is an attractive place to work. But among those with no experience in government work, only 20 percent say they would find work in the public sector attractive.¹⁶

Some of the traditional attractions of a career in policing—lifelong employment and secure pensions—cannot be relied on to attract and retain the future workforce. The social mission implicit in police work and the broad variety of challenges it offers are more likely to be attractive—and to attract a diverse range of recruits.

Police forces of the future will differentiate themselves by developing targeted digital recruitment strategies and campaigns. These will factor in the motivations of different talent pools and develop personalized messaging to show how different roles match their ambitions. To attract a more diverse set of candidates, they will also debunk myths of what it is like to work for the police.
The most advanced forces will recognize that even the adaptive workforce will need to be considered as part of any talent attraction strategy. This group will have different needs and expectations and will not be as attached to the police force.

**Personalize to retain**

Attracting new talent, however, will not be enough. Taking a personalized approach that attracts today’s younger, more diverse talent will have to continue throughout the recruitment process, onboarding, and each person’s career journey.

Along with the opportunity to be involved in meaningful work, professional development and career advancement are critical factors in making the public sector and especially policing attractive to prospective employees. Police forces have limited scope to improve financial incentives, so this means that training, mentoring, and reskilling will be key to competing for in-demand talent.

Having clear, exciting, and flexible career pathways will also be crucial in order to demonstrate personal development opportunities. These should allow for flexibility, with lateral as well as vertical movement and opportunities to participate in secondments, for example. And it will be important to show individuals how the skills they acquire in the police force can lead to new opportunities and be transferred to other organizations—they will want to know that they have the option to move in and out of policing and to diversify their careers.

The police workforce of the future will feel supported, capable, and committed to delivering on its strong public service ethos.
Focus on health and well-being

The changing nature of police work, the increased scrutiny and citizen demands, and the reduced job security (particularly for the adaptive workforce) could cause difficulties for workforce morale. Supporting the safety, health, and well-being of police officers will become even more important—especially as new and unpredictable risks begin to enter the workplace with the introduction of robotics and AI.

Accenture research shows that 82 percent of employed consumers believe their employers or health plans should provide health and wellness programs, but that the programs currently offered are falling short of their needs and expectations.18

For a resilient, engaged, and productive workforce, police forces will need to develop health and well-being programs that address these pressures. HR analytics, which look at data such as abstraction, overtime, role changes, and type of work performed, will help police forces to better understand and pre-empt any welfare risks.

Smart use of emerging technologies will also help here. Biometric wearables, for instance, can monitor officers’ well-being by providing details of their movement, heart rate, and stress levels. These devices could even alert control-room colleagues to an officer at risk and provide data that helps them to decide on a course of action.
A BOLD AND DEFIANT FUTURE

The vision outlined in this paper will not happen all at once. Nor will there be a direct path to the right workforce strategy and structure.

However, our international research into the views of police professionals, coupled with our daily interactions with police leaders, shows us that today’s workers are already adapting to the changing policing environment. As they build on this momentum, police forces should consider how they can prioritize and make progress on the four pillars presented in this paper to ensure that their future workforce is not just sustainable, but also remains their greatest asset.

“In the face of tremendous opportunities and challenges, the future vision of the police workforce needs to be just as bold and defiant. We need to really stretch our thinking: How will we define a police officer in the future?”

Rachel Phillips, Consulting Lead, Global Public Safety Industry
REFERENCES

3 https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/future-of-employment.pdf
6 https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/9224
8 https://techcrunch.com/2016/03/10/guardian-circle-safety
9 www.eastlondonlines.co.uk/2017/12/neighbourhood-watch-app-used-hackney-residents-tackle-crime/
14 https://www.policenow.org.uk
15 https://www.met.police.uk/car/careers/met/police-officer-roles/detective-constable/overview