



From demand deficit to knowledge mobilization: Reflections on the first decade of the *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*

Matt Torigian*

When the *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being* was first conceived, it emerged from an observation about the different ways professional fields make decisions.

My exposure to scholarly publishing began through my wife Jill, who has spent her career working in academic publishing and whose company ultimately became the publishing service provider for the journal. Through her work, I observed the interactions between researchers and practitioners in fields such as medicine. What struck me was the degree to which healthcare decision-making was rooted in research, peer review, and evidence-based practice. Physicians, health administrators, and researchers operate within a culture where scholarly journals play a central role in shaping both policy and frontline practice.

At the same time, as a police leader, I recognized that many of the decisions shaping policing and community safety were driven less by research and more by experiential authority and professional judgment. Experience remains invaluable in policing, but it was difficult to ignore the contrast between the deeply embedded culture of evidence-based decision-making in healthcare and the more impression management-driven approaches that sometimes influenced decisions in policing and public safety.

That contrast prompted an important question: if complex social challenges were increasingly shaping the work of policing, why was there not a similarly robust and accessible body of research informing the decisions of police leaders and their partners?

As I began to explore that question further, two additional observations emerged. The first was that important areas of inquiry related to community safety were significantly underrepresented in the scholarly literature. There was relatively little research focused on community mobilization, collaborative risk-based interventions, the intersection between public safety and public health, the role of the social determinants of health in shaping crime and disorder, or the economics of policing. These were issues that police leaders and community partners were increasingly confronting in their daily work, yet the research infrastructure supporting them was still developing.

The second observation was more subtle but perhaps even more important. The issue was not simply a shortage of research. In many areas, relevant knowledge existed, but it was not reaching practitioners in a form that influenced decision-making. In other words, the challenge was not necessarily a supply deficit of research; it was a demand deficit. Community safety decisions were still heavily rooted in experiential expertise, and governance bodies often remained deferential to police leaders' professional judgment rather than expecting those decisions to be grounded in accessible research and evidence.

At the same time, a broader shift was underway in how communities were beginning to think about safety and well-being. Increasingly, police services, governments, and community organizations were recognizing that many of the issues driving calls for service – mental health crises, substance use, family violence, homelessness, and youth vulnerability – could not be effectively addressed through traditional enforcement responses alone. These challenges required collaboration across sectors and a greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and coordinated social supports.

This emerging ethos of multi-disciplinary partnerships and risk-based interventions created an opportunity for something new: a Canadian-based, forward-looking scholarly journal dedicated specifically to the evolving field of community safety and well-being.

From the beginning, one principle was non-negotiable. The journal had to be accessible. If the goal was to bridge the gap between research and practice, then access to that research could not be restricted behind subscription barriers. The journal would need to be peer-reviewed to maintain scholarly rigour, but it would also need to be open access, free for anyone, anywhere, to read and use.

That commitment aligned with the broader values underpinning contemporary approaches to policing and public service. Community safety and well-being initiatives depend on collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and communities. Knowledge that supports those collaborations should therefore be widely available to everyone involved.

With Jill as a co-founder, along with Norm Taylor, we were able to leverage Jill's expertise in academic publish-

Correspondence to: Matt Torigian, 806328 Sideroad 25, Meaford, ON N4L 1W7, Canada. E-mail: matt.torigian@icloud.com

To cite: Torigian, M. (2026). From demand deficit to knowledge mobilization: Reflections on the first decade of the *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*. *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*, 11(Suppl 1), S12-S13. <https://doi.org/10.35502/jcswb.555>

© Author(s) 2026. Open Access. This work is distributed under the Creative Commons BY-NC-ND license. For commercial re-use, please contact sales@sgpublishing.ca.

SG PUBLISHING Published by SG Publishing Inc. **CSKA** Official publication of the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance.

ing and in particular the Open Journal Systems platform developed by Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. Open Journal Systems provided the technical infrastructure needed to launch a modern, open-access academic journal while maintaining the peer-review standards expected within scholarly publishing.

Even with a clear vision and the technical infrastructure in place, two critical elements were still required: an organizational home and sustainable sponsorship.

Fortunately, both emerged through the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (CSKA). The CSKA, a collaborative initiative envisioned by Chief Dale McFee (retired) of Saskatchewan, was established to advance research and knowledge exchange related to community safety and well-being. Recognizing the value of a dedicated scholarly platform for this emerging field, the CSKA agreed to assume ownership of the journal and to support its early development.

As the journal began to grow, another important partnership emerged. Niche Technology, a Winnipeg-based company recognized globally for its police records management systems, was simultaneously expanding its focus toward technologies that support multi-agency information sharing and collaborative approaches to community safety. With a global presence and a leadership team committed to values-based innovation in public safety, Niche Technology became a natural mission sponsor for the journal.

Together, these partnerships helped ensure that the journal could operate sustainably while remaining faithful to its core commitment to open-access knowledge.

Over the past decade, the field of community safety and well-being has evolved in remarkable ways. Governments at multiple levels, across a growing number of countries, are increasingly embedding community safety and well-being principles into policy frameworks and service delivery models. Police leaders, public health professionals, academics, and community organizations are collaborating in ways that were far less common even a decade ago.

In Ontario, this evolution became particularly visible when the provincial government mandated community safety and well-being planning for every municipality. The requirement that municipalities develop and maintain community safety and well-being plans reflected a broader recognition that improving safety requires coordinated strategies addressing the underlying social and health factors that contribute to crime and disorder.

Similar approaches have since taken root across other Canadian provinces and in many jurisdictions throughout the United States. Increasingly, policymakers and practitioners are recognizing that prevention-oriented, cross-sector strategies are not simply desirable; they are necessary.

The journal has also benefited from important international partnerships. Among these, the relationship with the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association (GLEPHA) has been particularly significant. GLEPHA's work has played a key role in advancing research that explores the intersection between public health and policing, and its contributions have helped expand the journal's reach within the global research community.

Today, health agencies, public safety organizations, and governments around the world are paying greater attention to multi-sector policy instruments designed to address complex social challenges. As this field continues to mature, the need for credible, accessible, and interdisciplinary research will only increase.

Looking ahead to the next decade, several challenges and opportunities stand out. Among the most pressing is the need to overcome persistent barriers to data sharing across institutions and sectors. Effective early intervention strategies depend on the ability of organizations to identify risk factors and coordinate responses before crises escalate. Yet institutional silos, privacy concerns, and organizational cultures often make collaborative data use difficult.

Equally important is the need to move beyond territorial leadership posturing that sometimes inhibits collaboration. The issues that shape community safety – poverty, housing instability, mental health challenges, substance use, and social marginalization – do not fall neatly within the mandate of any single organization. Addressing them effectively requires leaders who are willing to share information, resources, and responsibility.

At the same time, the opportunities are significant. Increasingly sophisticated data analytics, advances in information-sharing technologies, and growing recognition of the importance of early intervention are creating new pathways for identifying solutions that reduce violence, prevent social disorder, and ultimately save lives.

What we know with increasing clarity is that the social determinants of health are also the social determinants that prevent involvement in the justice system. When communities invest in policies and interventions that improve housing stability, educational opportunity, access to health services, and social inclusion, they are improving not only health outcomes but also public safety.

The *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being* was founded with the goal of helping bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice in this emerging field. Over the past decade, it has become an important platform for sharing knowledge, fostering dialogue, and supporting evidence-informed approaches to community safety.

If the progress of the past 10 years is any indication, the decade ahead holds tremendous promise. The continued success of the journal will depend on the collective efforts of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders who remain committed to advancing knowledge and translating that knowledge into practical action.

In doing so, the journal will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the future of community safety and well-being is guided not only by experience and intention, but by evidence, collaboration, and shared learning.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

*Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada.