

# Results at a glance

## Evaluation of the Justice Canada Federal Victims Strategy (March 2021)

The objective of the Justice Canada Federal Victims Strategy (Justice FVS) is to give victims a more effective voice in the criminal justice system and to increase access to justice for victims of crime. In order to better respond to the needs of victims, in 2000, the federal Victims of Crime Initiative was created. In 2007, the Initiative was significantly enhanced and re-launched as the Justice Canada Federal Victims Strategy, and continues through to today.

Justice Canada works closely with other federal institutions, provincial and territorial governments, victim advocates and service providers (e.g., non-governmental organizations) involved in the criminal justice system to coordinate and implement the Justice FVS objectives. To this end, they use a multi-pronged approach that includes criminal law reform, program development and delivery, and policy development and federal leadership.

### WHAT WAS FOUND

- The evaluation found that there is a continued need for the Justice FVS and the multi-pronged approach to identify and respond to the ongoing and emerging needs of victims in Canada in a multifaceted and collaborative manner. Demand for funding from the Victims Fund remained high throughout the evaluation period.
- Some communities of victims experiencing ongoing or emerging needs may be hesitant to engage the criminal justice system or experience other barriers to access for a variety of reasons. Results of the evaluation also identified emerging needs related to increasing rates of gender-based violence, violence against children and cybercrime due to the COVID-19 pandemic isolation measures.
- The Justice FVS was aligned with government priorities, roles, and responsibilities, respecting jurisdictional responsibilities in relation to victim issues in Canada and its emphasis on collaboration with federal, provincial, and territorial partners. Specific efforts were made to increase access to justice for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, child victims, and victims of gender-based violence (e.g., victims of sexual assault).
- The evaluation confirms that the Justice FVS has improved criminal justice system responses to victims

and increased access to responsive services that support victims. In particular, the Justice FVS enhanced the capacity of those working in the justice system (e.g., funding through the Victims Fund), increased awareness of victim issues, legislation and services (e.g., public legal education and information), and improved legislative and policy responses for victims (e.g., policy support to implement legislative changes). In addition, leadership was provided that supported a coordinated and collaborative approach to identifying and responding to victim issues across Canada.

- Funding agreements through the Victims Fund were flexible to support provinces and territories and non-governmental organizations to undertake projects and initiatives that responded to the needs of their jurisdictions. The Victims Fund agreements were efficiently delivered, and the majority of funds were expended between 2015-16 and 2019-20.
- The evaluation found that there was inconsistent data collected from funding recipients regarding the activities funded under the Victims Fund, primarily due to differences in reporting practices. More consistent data collection and reporting would enhance the ability to analyze program performance over time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Recommendation 1:** To continue to address the ongoing and emerging needs of victims and survivors of crime, it is recommended to engage in annual collaborative priority setting exercises to inform the activities of the Justice FVS.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended to improve reporting templates and tools to allow for more consistent and strategic data collection of Victims Fund projects.

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**ABOUT THE EVALUATION:** The Evaluation of the Justice FVS was conducted by the Department of Justice Evaluation Branch and covered fiscal years 2015-16 to 2019-20. Its main objectives were to examine relevancy, effectiveness and efficiency of the Strategy, in accordance with the Treasury Board's *Policy on Results* (2016).

