

Project on American Justice Fireside Chat Summary

The Future of the Criminal Justice System: Community Relations

Overview

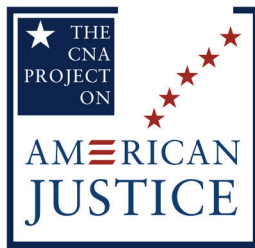
The CNA Center for Justice Research and Innovation's Project on American Justice (PAJ) for 2023 focuses on the future of the criminal system based on current research and trends. To support this effort, CNA works with several leading subject matter experts (SMEs) and senior advisors with research and practitioner experience in the justice field.

In April, PAJ conducted its second "fireside chat" with these experts to discuss community engagement using a futures analysis approach. Specifically, PAJ uses an analysis framework that examines the social, technological, economic, environmental, and political factors (STEEP) that may influence the criminal justice system in the future. The framework aims to better identify opportunities to mitigate risks and promote success.

Based on research and current trends for these STEEP factors, our PAJ team is using the following 2040 future scenario:¹

In 2040, the number of adults outnumber the number of children for the first time in US history and urbanized megapolitan areas exist nationwide, including mega-areas Phoenix-Tucson, Columbus-Cincinnati, Tampa-Orlando, and Washington-Baltimore-Richmond. In these areas and throughout the country, artificial intelligence is commonplace. Automated vehicles transverse streets and robots are replacing the workforce. It is common to have surveillance cameras in public spaces. The US national debt has reached historic highs, limiting our government's ability to invest in new priorities. Economic instability and climate action failure have increased tensions among states and there is no longer any faith in local and federal governments. Economic inequality has resulted in private policing for the wealthy. Communities have no trust in law enforcement. However, law enforcement is more efficient and effective because of AI and automated vehicle advances. Globally, the US has lost its place as the top superpower and has been surpassed by China, and the number of foreign-born individuals in the US is at a historic high and has created a nationally diverse populace where no racial majority exists.

¹ The PAJ team is using this scenario as a baseline for the conversations and does not assume that this will be the final outcome in the future. Rather, we are posing that this is one of many possible futures in 2040.

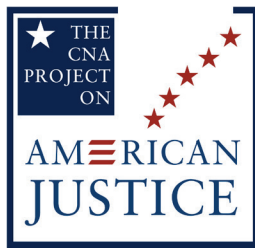


Using this future-state scenario as a starting point, the group discussed potential risks and opportunities regarding community relations, as well as steps to take now to mitigate those risks and promote successes. A summary of the discussion continues below.

Risks and Opportunities

While discussing the 2040 future state scenario, SMEs identified several **risks** to the criminal justice system, which include:

- **Technology will complicate police-community interactions:** Because of the potential increase in use of technology for police services such as reporting and patrol, communities' interactions with police officers may be distilled to critical incidents and response efforts, possibly reducing communication and positive interactions and harming police-community relations. It may also affect the digital divide, either by shrinking or increasing digital literacy. If digital literacy decreases, we may see fewer interactions with large communities.
- **Trust in technology, data, and information:** The adoption and commonplace use of AI will likely bring challenges if justice stakeholders and community members both do not trust the use of technology itself or the information provided by AI. The use of AI may also raise issues regarding the quality of data and information inputs.
- **Challenges with privacy:** The increasing adoption of AI and surveillance technologies will increase concerns around privacy and affect community relations.
- **A greater American divide:** Division in America will amplify through classes and geographically, as megapolitan areas grow in population and certain communities are quicker to adopt cutting-edge technology. The divide will affect how police departments serve their communities and how those communities perceive law enforcement.
- **Regional diversity:** Although the nation will be characterized as having no racial majority, this may vary by neighborhood and segment of the country, such as rural America and tribal communities. Criminal justice actors will have to consider the varied diversity of these regions when engaging with their communities.
- **Community access to information:** Communities will have more information about police officers from nongovernment sources; this information can be detrimental. Police departments will have to manage the perception of officers based on profiles drawn from external sources.
- **Greater diversity in community expectations:** A more nationally diverse population will result in greater diversity in thought and opinion about the role and actions of the criminal justice system. Community members will bring different types of lived experiences that the justice system will have to deal with.
- **Diversity does not mean inclusivity:** Although the nation will be characterized as having no racial majority, that does not necessarily mean the various racial groups will experience inclusivity, challenging community engagement activities for criminal justice stakeholders.



Relatedly, police departments will struggle to hire officers that represent the diverse communities they serve.

- **Identifying communities:** SMEs advised that they are already having difficulty identifying communities within their jurisdictions because of new subdevelopments and skyscrapers. This issue is expected to be amplified in megapolitan areas.
- **Pressure to downsize:** The economic effects of the national debt and reduction in resources to support public safety may put the criminal justice system under pressure to downsize.

In addition, **opportunities** were identified for community relations in 2040.

- **Public access to services:** As a result of megapolitan areas, communities may be more connected to one another, with easier access to public sector services including police departments.
- **Improved communication:** AI technology will be efficient in aiding the criminal justice system in communicating more quickly and in a more informed manner to the public. This creates opportunities for greater transparency and frequency in communication.
- **Reduced biases:** The increased use in AI technology may improve the variable of bias and reduce profiling, improving community interactions and trust.
- **Diversity:** No racial majority allows for diverse modes of thinking and could also promote improved relationships with diverse community groups.
- **Government consolidation:** As megapolitan areas emerge, there may be an opportunity to consolidate or standardize some government services (e.g., hard services like technology and call centers) across regions or areas, which may increase efficiencies. This may allow for local police to invest their time and resources in a more tailored manner, based on the local community's needs.

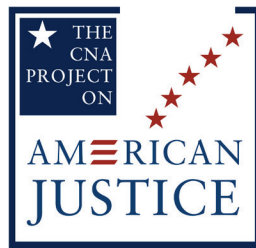
"There's always going to be circumstances where you're going to need the community no matter how advanced your technology is. Without the support of the community, we know our success is limited, right? You have to have the support of the community, and they need to, at a minimum, believe that you can do your job well."

- PAJ SME Jorge Colina

Ideas to Take Action On

The SMEs recommended several steps to take now to address the concerns and opportunities identified throughout the discussion. These include:

- **Prioritizing public transparency** regarding technology. Specifically, agencies should prepare for the greater use in AI technology that will make transparency increasingly important. They must understand that such technology will more readily equip community members with information and affect community relations. Agencies should discuss how to prepare themselves regarding quality of data, messaging, and engagement with the community on these matters.



- **Being proactive in determining how to promote real-time community interactions.** Communities may demand a more active role in governing, such as real-time interactions and reaction around government and community. Government agencies should, for example, work in schools to help youth understand how they can and why they should engage with the government, and what that looks like at a local level.
- **Better leveraging existing technology** for the anticipated challenges, government agencies may have with local neighborhood interactions, such as Nextdoor. Agencies should look to other sectors that are doing this more successfully, like schools. Relatedly, agencies should increase use of AI to become more familiar with its value and use—for example, using it to find information about how the community feels.
- **Having more regular internal dialogue about the evolving nature of criminal justice practices and policies to meet public needs and societal changes.**
- **Addressing injustices made by law enforcement**, such as being more transparent about officers and their actions and being more proactive in engaging with communities.
- **Creating more targeted social media campaigns with positive messaging** and using AI or other technology to automate finding those examples of positive police/community interactions.
- Becoming more efficient in hiring diverse personnel, in terms of not only race, gender, and national origin, but educational perspective, to **learn how to communicate with the communities we serve**, and not just with a technology focus, but on a human-level.

Overall, PAJ's first fireside chat on community relations resulted in fruitful discussion on potential risks and opportunities, as well as considerations on steps to take now to reduce the abovementioned risks and promote successes. The next fireside chat will cover civilianization.