

Introduction to Volume 7, Issue 2 (Special Issue)

This issue of the *International Journal of Rural Criminology* is the second instalment of the IJRC special issue on rural policing ([Volume 7, Issue 1](#)). In the first issue, we discussed the significance of studying the ways in which the rural context impacts police practices. Rural settings uniquely affect how police operate and interact with community members, yet comparative research in this area is lacking, despite the fact that a substantial portion of the world's population lives in rural and remote areas and relies on rural police agencies for protection and access to the formal justice system. Although long overlooked in mainstream policing literature, research on rural police has been steadily increasing in recent decades.

Part II of this special issue includes work from researchers and practitioners in the field consisting of surveys, interviews, fieldwork, and theoretical analysis. Three articles, two notes from the field, and one research note explore various aspects of rural policing in North America, Northern and Central Europe, and Australia. Topics addressed include the policing of farm crime, community policing strategies and practices, informal community self-policing, and the recruitment, hiring, and retention of police.

In their research article, Katja Eman and Tinkara Bulovec discuss the challenges of successful community policing in Slovenia. Specifically, they assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on policing efforts and – through interviews with Slovene police across eight directorates – found that the pandemic negatively affected rural police' ability to proactively engage their communities.

Similarly, Maja Vestad explores rural Norwegian communities' response to crime and disorder in the wake of COVID-19. Informed by qualitative fieldwork during 2020, Vestad describes how rural residents in Norway took policing responsibilities upon themselves in the wake of urban migration to rural areas for protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. She contextualizes this in terms of rural vigilantism and explores how mainstream criminological research centers the Anglo-American experience in its definition of vigilantism.

The next article by Morgan Steele, Tamara Lynn, and Abigail Hayes focuses on a key issue impacting modern policing; the recruitment, hiring and retention of qualified officers. In their paper, the authors examine the obstacles that agencies encounter in these areas by drawing on survey data gathered from over 200 agencies in rural and urban settings across three states in the USA. The findings shed light on the variations in recruitment and retention issues that exist across different agency types and sizes, as well as urbanization levels.

Brianna Lynn, Dustin L. Osborne, and Bradley Edwards provide researcher insight into how farm crime cases in the United States are referred to, processed, and perceived by police. Through qualitative interviews, Lynn and colleagues discuss themes that emerged regarding the



factors that influence farm crime case referrals and successful investigation of farm crimes, as well as themes around investigators' perceptions of farm crime offenders.

In a note from the field, police practitioners Cameron Whiteside and Ann Brennan, along with researcher Kyle Mulrooney, discuss the Rural Crime Prevention Team in New South Wales, Australia. After providing historical background on the New South Wales Police Force and the evolution of rural-focused policing, Whiteside and colleagues discuss new and innovative practices and initiatives deployed in rural New South Wales. These practical insights are theoretically contextualized to help address challenges in rural policing worldwide.

Finally, readers can also learn about key challenges and innovations in rural policing from rural police practitioners in North America. This note from the field, similar to that found in [Part I of this special issue](#), consists of a condensed transcript from a virtual roundtable that was hosted by the International Society for the Study of Rural Crime (ISSRC) in 2021. Four panelists – two senior policing practitioners from the United States and two from Canada – answered key questions about community engagement and crime prevention in their rural communities.

Each of the contributions provides unique insight into rural policing in their country of study. Although distinctions between continents or regions are apparent, the significance of 'space' is a common feature across all manuscripts. Our understanding of rural policing requires consideration of location, geography, history and culture and how their intersection shapes crime, victimization, and the criminal justice response. This special issue brings these issues to the fore of rural policing and rural criminological scholarship.

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