



WASHINGTON STATE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Criminal Justice Research & Statistics Center

Informing a data-driven justice system

The Criminal Justice Data Book (CJDB): An Overview of the CJDB

Washington State Statistical Analysis Center



About the CJRSC – the Washington SAC

Statistical Analysis Centers (SAC) are found across the nation in 51 states and territories. As the Washington SAC, the Criminal Justice Research & Statistics Center (CJRSC) is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting public safety and criminal justice related statistics to federal, state, and local levels of government. We also facilitate the sharing of state-level information nationally. The information produced by SACs and their involvement in criminal justice projects is critical to local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies and community organizations as they develop programs and policies related to crime, illegal drugs, victim services, and the administration of justice.

SACs play a vital role in developing criminal and juvenile justice policy at the state and local levels. Their research provides evidence that policymakers use to guide their decision-making. By furthering the use of evidence-based practices in their states, SACs promote the effective and efficient administration of criminal and juvenile justice.

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Version History

Date	Version	Author(s)	Revision Note
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Abstract

The Washington State Criminal Justice Data Book (CJDB) provides a comprehensive and integrated view of Washington's criminal justice system by combining data from multiple state agency sources into a centralized resource available through CrimeStats Online. As a product of the Criminal Justice Research and Statistics Center (CJRSC) – the Washington State Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), housed within the Office of Financial Management (OFM)'s Public Safety Policy and Research Center (PSPRC), the CJDB serves as an essential resource for understanding trends, patterns, and outcomes across the criminal justice system.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the CJDB including its role in integrating criminal justice data across the justice system, improving public access through CrimeStats Online, supporting research and evidence-based policymaking, addressing important data considerations, and identifying opportunities for future development.

Introduction of the CJDB

Criminal justice systems are complex and involve multiple agencies, decision points, and processes. Data related to crime, law enforcement activity, court processing, sentencing, and corrections are often collected and maintained separately by individual agencies. Without integration across these systems, it can be challenging to understand how individuals and cases move through the broader justice system. The CJDB addresses this challenge by providing a longitudinal, statewide perspective that allows researchers, policymakers, and the public to examine justice system activity over time and across geographic regions.

Through the integration of multiple administrative data sources, the CJDB supports evidence-informed decision-making by providing accessible information about Washington's criminal justice trends. The resource enables users to explore changes in crime, arrests, court outcomes, sentencing practices, and corrections populations while supporting transparency and accountability across the state.

By connecting information across multiple stages of justice system involvement, the CJDB provides a longitudinal perspective on how Washington's criminal justice system operates, changes over time, and responds to evolving public safety needs.

Overview of the CJDB

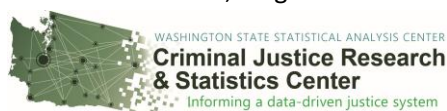
The CJDB combines statewide criminal justice information from multiple agency sources into a searchable and queryable system available through CrimeStats Online. The Data Book allows users to examine key indicators across the criminal justice continuum, including reported crimes, arrests, court activity, sentencing outcomes, and correctional trends.

Unlike individual agency datasets that capture only one portion of the justice system, the CJDB provides a broader perspective by connecting information across multiple stages of justice system involvement. This allows users to examine how patterns emerge across the entire system, from initial contact with law enforcement through court processing and correctional outcomes.

The longitudinal nature of the CJDB is one of its greatest strengths. By maintaining historical criminal justice information over multiple decades, the CJDB provides opportunities to examine long-term trends, evaluate changes associated with policy and legislative decisions, and better understand how Washington's justice system has evolved over time.

Criminal Justice Data Ecosystem

The CJDB brings together aggregated, de-identified data from multiple state criminal justice agencies to create a connected, longitudinal view of Washington's justice system (see Figure 1). Data from law

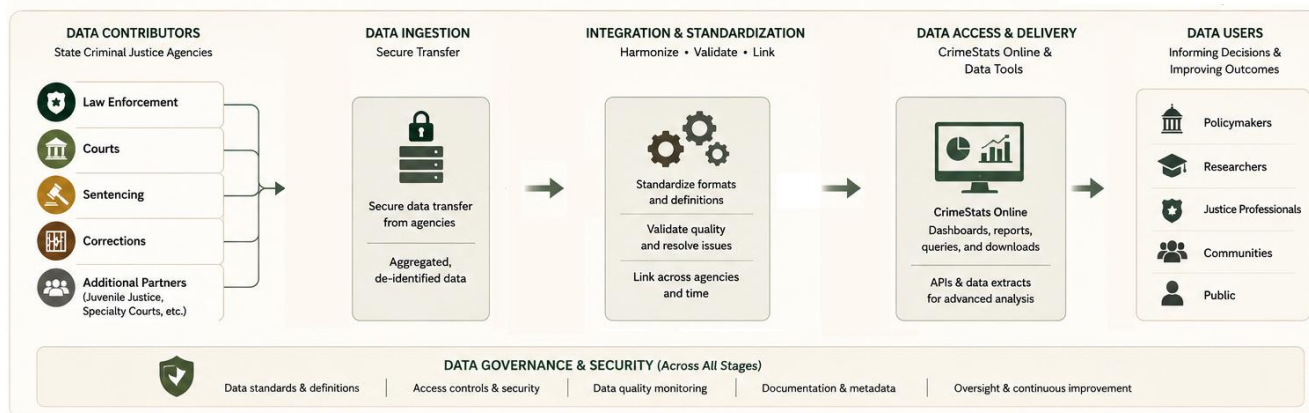


enforcement, courts, sentencing, corrections, and additional justice system partners move through standardized intake, quality assurance, integration, and data governance processes before being made available for analysis and reporting. Through CrimeStats Online, these integrated data support statewide and county-level trend analysis, research, transparency, and evidence-informed decision-making. By connecting information across multiple stages of the justice system, the CJDB provides policymakers, researchers, justice professionals, communities, and the public with a broader understanding of justice system activity and outcomes.

Figure 1. CJDB Data Ecosystem

Criminal Justice Data Book (CJDB) Data Ecosystem

Integrated. Longitudinal. Trusted.

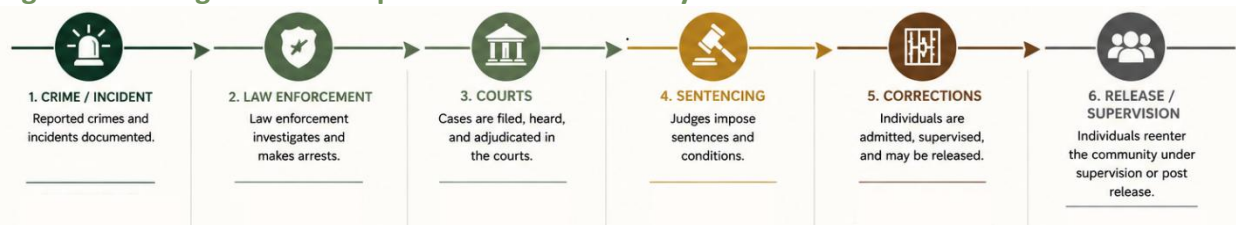


What the Criminal Justice Data Book Provides

A Statewide View of Justice System Trends

The CJDB allows users to examine patterns across Washington’s criminal justice system, including changes in crime, arrests, court activity, sentencing outcomes, and corrections populations. By bringing together information from multiple agencies, the Data Book provides a more complete understanding than any individual dataset can provide alone (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A Longitudinal Perspective of the Justice System



A Longitudinal Perspective

The CJDB supports analysis of justice system trends over time, allowing users to examine historical changes, identify emerging patterns, and better understand how policies, legislation, and system practices influence outcomes.

Accessible Justice Data

Through CrimeStats Online, users can explore statewide and county-level information through an accessible platform designed to support transparency and informed discussion about criminal justice issues.

A Foundation for Research and Policy

The CJDB supports evidence-based decision-making by providing reliable information for research, program evaluation, planning, and policy analysis.

Why It Matters

Understanding the criminal justice system requires more than examining individual agencies or isolated measures. The Criminal Justice Data Book creates a connected view of Washington's justice system by bringing together information across agencies, processes, and time (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Turning Connected Data into Knowledge and Action

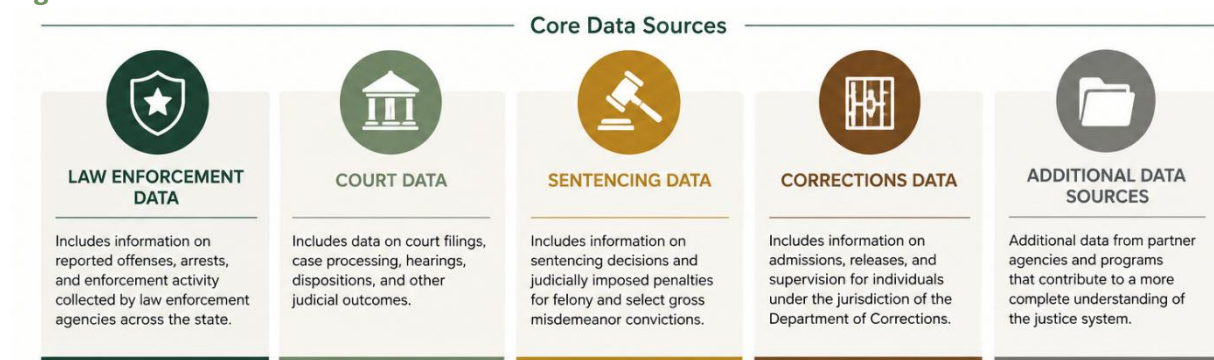


Through data integration, accessibility, and rigorous analytical practices, the CJDB helps Washington better understand justice system trends, evaluate change, and support decisions that improve public safety and system outcomes.

The Data in the CJDB

The data are reported by county, and were collected from previously published annual reports and existing datasets maintained by the Department of Corrections (DOC), Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Office of Financial Management (OFM), Caseload Forecast Council (CFC), and Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. CJDB Core Data Sets



Because the data were provided by five different state agencies, they must be interpreted with caution and with an appreciation for the differences inherent in the types of information provided. Each agency collates data from separately maintained databases or management information systems. Each system supports different clients' needs and business functions. Also, each system relies on unique information processing, verification standards, collection and classification methods, and reporting standards. This means the boundaries between these systems are not seamless.

Each database describes part of the criminal justice process, but none were designed to be connected to each other for a comprehensive overview of the whole process. The data definitions and reporting categories used in this report are consistent with those of the contributing agencies. Furthermore, no attempt was made to collect missing or previously unreported data, nor to adjust for changes in data collection methods or information processing improvements.

This data book is unique. It is the only document that provides over ten years of criminal justice data for each of the 39 counties in Washington state. The report combines data from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government across city, county, and state jurisdictions. This document is the direct result of agencies working together to share information and to make that information available to other interested parties.

Data Integration Across the Criminal Justice System

A central feature of the CJDB is its ability to bring together information from different points within the criminal justice system. Criminal justice data are traditionally collected by individual agencies that have different responsibilities, operational practices, and reporting requirements. The CJDB provides a framework for analyzing these separate sources collectively, creating a more complete picture of justice system activity.

The CJDB reflects the movement of cases and individuals through multiple stages of the justice process. Information about reported offenses provides insight into crime patterns and community-level trends. Arrest data provide information about law enforcement responses and individuals entering the justice system. Court and sentencing information illustrates case processing and judicial outcomes, while corrections data provide insight into incarceration trends and correctional populations.

CrimeStats Online: Improving Access to Justice Data

CrimeStats Online serves as the primary platform for accessing and exploring Criminal Justice Data Book information. The web-based interface allows users to query statewide justice data without requiring advanced programming or statistical expertise. This accessibility expands the ability of policymakers, researchers, community partners, and members of the public to engage with Washington criminal justice information.

Through CrimeStats Online, users can examine statewide and county-level trends, compare patterns over time, and explore changes across different justice system measures. The platform supports data-driven inquiry by allowing users to answer questions about how crime patterns, arrest activity, court outcomes, and correctional populations have changed over time.

For researchers and advanced data users, additional datasets are available for more detailed analysis and visualization. These resources allow analysts to conduct independent statistical analyses, develop dashboards, and create customized reports based on specific research or policy questions.

Supporting Research and Evidence-Based Policy

The CJDB is supporting research and evidence-based policymaking throughout Washington State. By providing consistent access to statewide justice system information, the CJDB allows decision-makers to move beyond isolated measures and examine broader system-level patterns.

Researchers can use the CJDB to investigate questions related to crime trends, disparities in justice system involvement, changes in sentencing practices, geographic differences, and corrections outcomes.

Policymakers can use these analyses to better understand the potential impacts of legislative changes, resource investments, and system reforms.

The CJDB also supports transparency by making criminal justice information available to a broader audience. Public access to reliable and comprehensive data strengthens accountability and encourages informed conversations about justice system policies and outcomes.

Data Considerations and Limitation

Although the CJDB provides valuable insight into Washington’s criminal justice system, users should consider the limitations associated with administrative data. Criminal justice records are collected primarily for operational purposes rather than research, meaning that differences in agency practices, reporting requirements, and definitions may influence how information is recorded and interpreted.

Changes in legislation, agency policies, technology systems, and reporting practices may also affect trends over time. For this reason, data should be interpreted within appropriate historical and policy contexts. Changes in recorded justice system activity do not always represent changes in underlying behavior alone; they may also reflect changes in enforcement practices, system operations, or reporting processes.

Careful interpretation of CJDB information ensures that findings accurately reflect the complexity of Washington’s criminal justice system.

Future Opportunities

As Washington’s criminal justice information needs continue to evolve, the CJDB provides a strong foundation for future data integration, analysis, and public transparency efforts. Continued development of data resources, improved visualization tools, and expanded analytical capabilities can further enhance the ability of researchers and policymakers to understand justice system trends.

Figure 5. What the CJDB Makes Possible



Future opportunities may include additional integration of justice-related datasets, expanded longitudinal analyses, enhanced dashboards, and innovative approaches to communicating complex criminal justice information to diverse audiences.

Conclusion

The CJDB represents a significant statewide resource for understanding criminal justice trends, supporting research, and informing policy decisions. By integrating data from multiple agency sources and providing access through CrimeStats Online, the CJDB creates a comprehensive view of Washington’s justice system that would not be possible through individual datasets alone.

Through its focus on accessibility, transparency, and rigorous analysis, the Criminal Justice Data Book strengthens Washington’s ability to understand justice system patterns and make informed decisions. As a foundational component of the state’s criminal justice data infrastructure, the CJDB continues to support meaningful research, effective policy development, and improved understanding of public safety across Washington.