

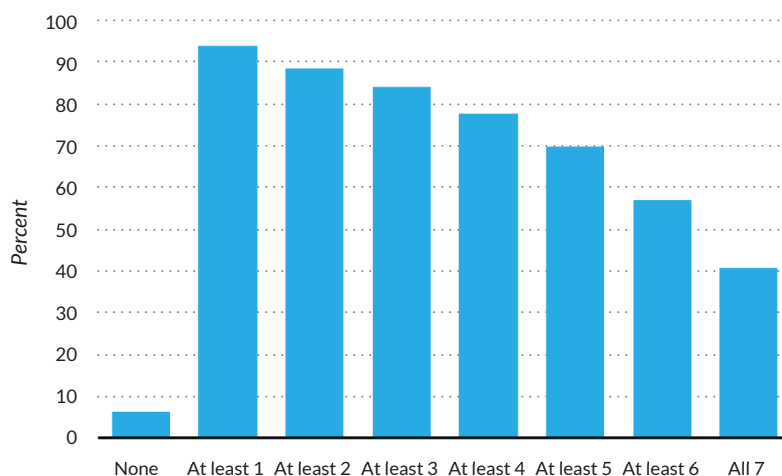
How Prosecutors Are Collecting and Using Data for Decisionmaking

Findings from the 2018 National Survey of State Prosecutors' Offices

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Data can help prosecutors make management and efficiency decisions, set and measure their goals and priorities, and explain their decisions and constraints to constituents. We surveyed state prosecutors' offices to gauge their capacity to collect and use data and found that many prosecutors have an interest in collecting and using data and that many are using data to inform critical operational and case decisions. However, barriers often stand in the way of widespread and systematic incorporation of data into prosecutorial decisionmaking.

Number of Foundational Metrics Collected



Note: Foundational metrics include cases referred, charges at arrest, final charges, cases declined, cases dismissed, cases resolved by plea, and cases that go to trial.

FINDINGS

- Based on a review of the literature and interviews with prosecutors, we identified seven measures crucial to tracking prosecutorial activities. Almost all offices (94 percent) are collecting at least one of these foundational measures, but fewer than half (41 percent) are collecting all seven.
- Most offices collect data on screening, alternative approaches, or sentencing, but fewer than half (47 percent) collect data on pretrial release decisionmaking.
- Except for small offices, almost all offices use at least one electronic case management system and have staff that work on data. However, data accuracy and resource constraints pose significant barriers to greater data use.
- Many prosecutors are using data to manage their offices and outcomes, but systematic approaches for tracking compliance or emerging trends within the data are less common.
- Higher levels of data collection are associated with a greater reported use of data.



STEPS TO EXPAND DATA COLLECTION AND USE

Based on survey data, interviews with responding offices, and a review of the literature, we identified eight ways that prosecutors' offices can increase their collection and use of data in decisionmaking:

- 1. Assess your office's current capacity to collect and use data.** Use the survey questions to identify whether your office has a low, medium, or high capacity to collect and use data. (See appendix D of the full report for a self-assessment tool.)
- 2. Start by collecting information that describes case flow,** reflected in the seven foundational measures outlined above.
- 3. Ensure your office is collecting relevant case details,** such as offense type, misdemeanor/felony, referring law enforcement agency, assigned prosecutor, defendant characteristics, and victim characteristics.
- 4. Collect at least one measure at each stage of the decisionmaking** process, starting with measures that are particularly relevant for your jurisdiction.
- 5. Improve the ability of staff to collect and analyze data,** and take advantage of outside resources where possible.
- 6. Strengthen technology infrastructure.** Prioritize investments that will automate data entry and reporting.
- 7. Learn from peers to implement innovative approaches,** such as dashboards, to track and respond to changes in trends and operational metrics.
- 8. Solicit information from the community and share your findings** back with the community by publishing findings and analyses over time.

THE SURVEY

- 50 closed-ended questions, 5 open-ended questions
- Sent to 682 state prosecutors' offices of varying sizes
- 141 offices responded (21 percent response rate)
- 17 additional offices responded to an abbreviated version
- Respondents represented a diverse range of sizes and locations
- 5 responding offices participated in follow-up interviews and are featured as case studies in the brief

"When I think about whether to track something, I ask myself: will this help me improve as a prosecutor? Will it help me do what I was elected to do for my community? If so, it's of great value."

STEPHEN JONES

County Attorney of Labette County, Kansas