Integrating Statistics on Governance, Crime and Justice into Policy Making

Lessons from the United States

Orienting Questions

- How are statistics different from research?
- What is involved in the policy making process?
- How are statistics on crime and governance used in the policy making process?
- What can be done to increase the use of crime and governance statistics in the policy making process?
- How is the criminal justice policy arena unique in the use of statistics in policy making?

Statistics versus Research

- Statistics refers to routinely collected data describing the level and change in crime, its consequences and the criminal justice response.
- Research is the collection and analysis of data for the purpose of testing causal statements.
- The two activities are related but not the same and this presentation focuses on statistics.

Policy Making Process

- Policy formulation identifies a problem and one or more solutions to this problem and competes for attention with other policies.
  - Problems and solutions can be identified on ideological grounds or on political grounds.
  - Policies must be sold and they are best sold on dramatic event contextualized by statistics.

Policy Implementation

- Policy implementation requires that you get people to follow the policy you advocate
- Making the case
- Offering inducements
  - Making it mandatory.
  - Offering grants to encourage compliance at the state and local levels.
- Assessing performance.
  - Did they spend the money for the intended purpose?
  - Did it have the intended effect?

Uses of Statistics in Policy Making

- Policy formulation—fitting solutions to problems
  - Identifying magnitude and nature of problem
  - Identifying solutions that work—Crime Solutions.gov
- Policy implementation—getting others to embrace your solution
  - Funding allocations for service provision in jurisdictions
  - Formula grant programs that use crime and justice statistics to assign funds to jurisdictions
    - Justice Assistance Grants (JAG)
    - Relative Rate Index (OJJDP)
  - Discretionary grants using statistics to show magnitude of problem in a jurisdiction relative to state or nation.

Policy Implementation (Continued)

- Performance assessment measures both implementation and impact.
  - Most funding programs in DOJ do not use statistical systems to assess impact.
  - Financial data and effort data are collected by the grant program itself.
  - Impact or outcome data from statistical series are not often used.
  - Policy areas like education use statistics more extensively for performance assessment, NEAP.

Impediments to Using Statistics in Policy Making

- Deficiencies in available statistics inhibiting use.
- Absence of a culture of evidence-based decision-making.
  - Timeliness—trade off between currency quality
  - Coverage—sample versus census,
  - Scope– crime classes and attributes
  - Flexibility—ability to aggregate, change scope
  - Accessibility—getting statistics to decision-makers
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Making Statistics Useful

- Timeliness—preliminary estimates based on partial data.
- Coverage
  - use sample-based data to estimate population statistics through small area estimation.
  - Build small area estimation into national data collections.
- Flexibility
  - Pursue incident level data whenever possible
  - Provide mechanism for updating content routinely
- Accessibility—Dashboards and tools not reports

Integrating Statistics into Decision-making

- Ignorance is the biggest impediment to the use of statistics in policy making
- It takes too long for needs of decision-makers to be communicated to statisticians.
- It takes to long for statisticians to respond.
- Decision makers do not know the capabilities of statistical systems
- Round table of agency directors from research, statistics and program offices encourages access to decision-makers and adaptability of statistic of statistical systems.

Building a culture of evidence based policy among decision-makers

- Strengthen the position of science in DOJ
  - Holdren memo fosters independence of research and statistics agencies within DOJ
  - Encourage basic technical competence for leaders of science agencies
- Create an institutional research capability in DOJ
  - Using evidence in internal management decision serves as a model for policy-making more broadly.
- OMB push for evidence based programing creating incentive for evidence based decision making.
- Limit micro management from the legislative branch in program and allocation decisions.
  - Earmarking is the antithesis of evidence based

Uniqueness of Crime, Justice and Governance

- Absence of a scientific culture—science in an adversarial culture.
  - Justifying pre-existing positions with facts
  - Reaching a position based on facts
- Independence is often confused with being unaccountable especially in the judicial branch
  - Collecting statistics on decision-making opens officials to criticism
- Measurement of concepts more complicated than in economic or educational policy.

Conclusion

- Every nation is different
- The policy making processes differ.
- The role of statistics and the challenges of integrating statistics into decision-making will differ.
- Yet the integration of statistics into policy formation everywhere will required decision-makers who value statistical evidence and statistical systems that can deliver what they need.
- UNDOC should foster the sharing of strategies for achieving both of these goals.