

An Overview of the Criminal Justice Administrative Records System

Keith Finlay
Business Development Staff
Economic Reimbursable Surveys Division
U.S. Census Bureau

October 25, 2023

Criminal Justice Administrative Records System (CJARS)

- ▶ Data infrastructure project to develop a platform for the next generation of statistics and research on criminal justice system and the justice-involved population
- ▶ Partnership between Census Bureau and University of Michigan started in 2016

Current criminal justice data infrastructure is incomplete

- ▶ Limits how performance is measured, which policy questions are asked
- ▶ Leads to varying definitions of recidivism
- ▶ Makes it difficult to identify effective policy levers
- ▶ Prevents comprehensive benefit-cost analyses

Goal: develop a more complete criminal justice data infrastructure and enable its use

- ▶ Collect, harmonize, and link longitudinal, multi-jurisdictional criminal justice data to track individuals and cases across space and time
- ▶ Enable timely and innovative federal statistical products about criminal justice system and justice-involved population
- ▶ Provide national research platform for qualified researchers on approved projects

Goal: develop a more complete criminal justice data infrastructure and enable its use

- ▶ Collect, harmonize, and link longitudinal, multi-jurisdictional criminal justice data to track individuals and cases across space and time
- ▶ Enable timely and innovative federal **statistical products** about criminal justice system and justice-involved population
- ▶ Provide national **research platform** for qualified researchers on approved projects

Project scope and data collection

3k sheriff's
offices/3k jails

3k prosecutor's
offices

50 state court
admins/3k
criminal courts

50 state
departments
of corrections

Arrest

Pre-trial detention

Adjudication

Probation

Incarceration

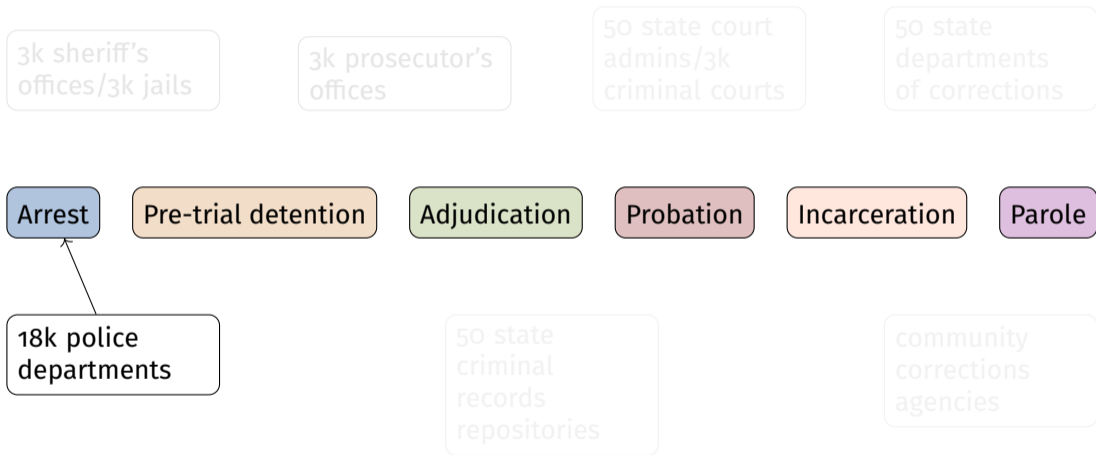
Parole

18k police
departments

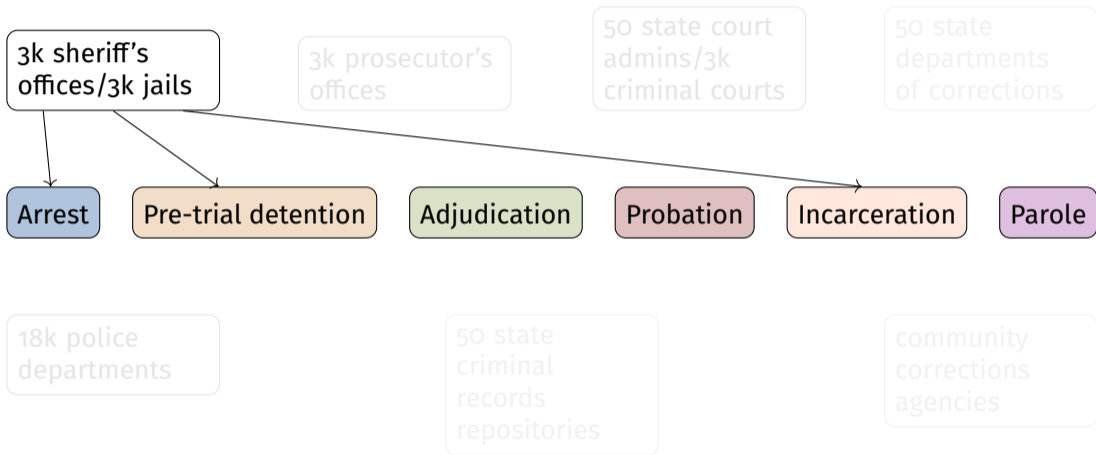
50 state
criminal
records
repositories

community
corrections
agencies

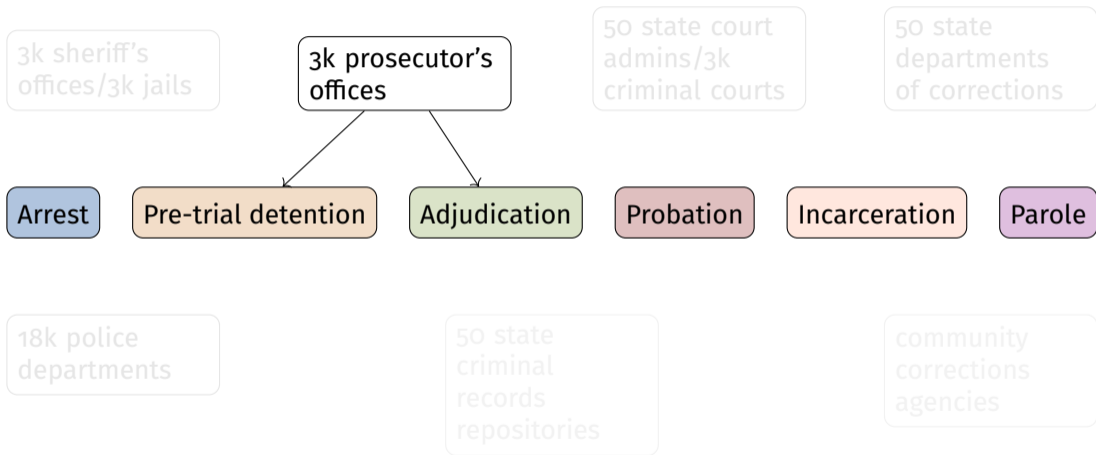
Project scope and data collection



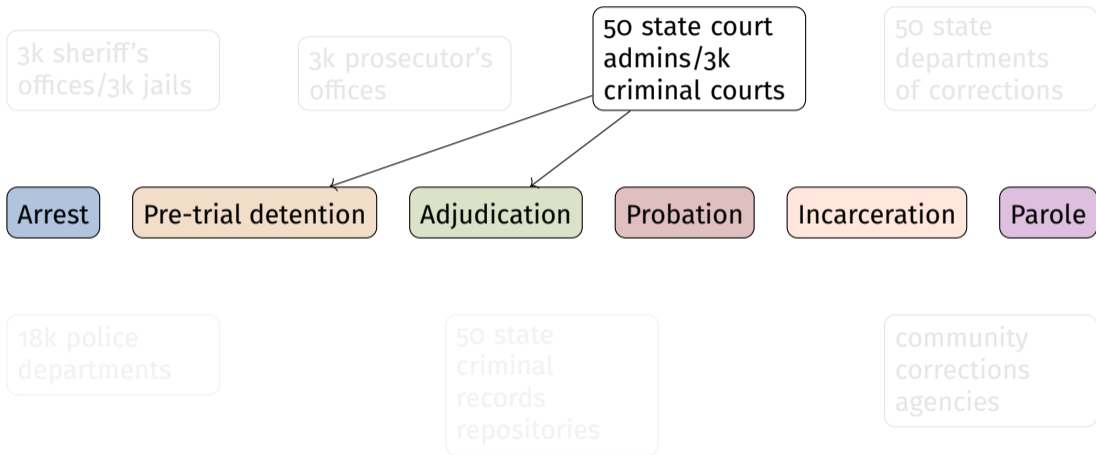
Project scope and data collection



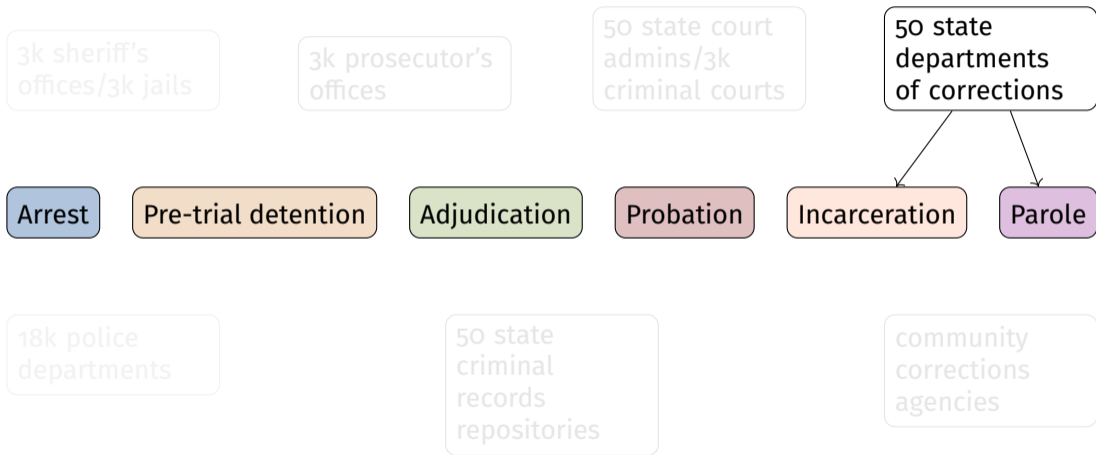
Project scope and data collection



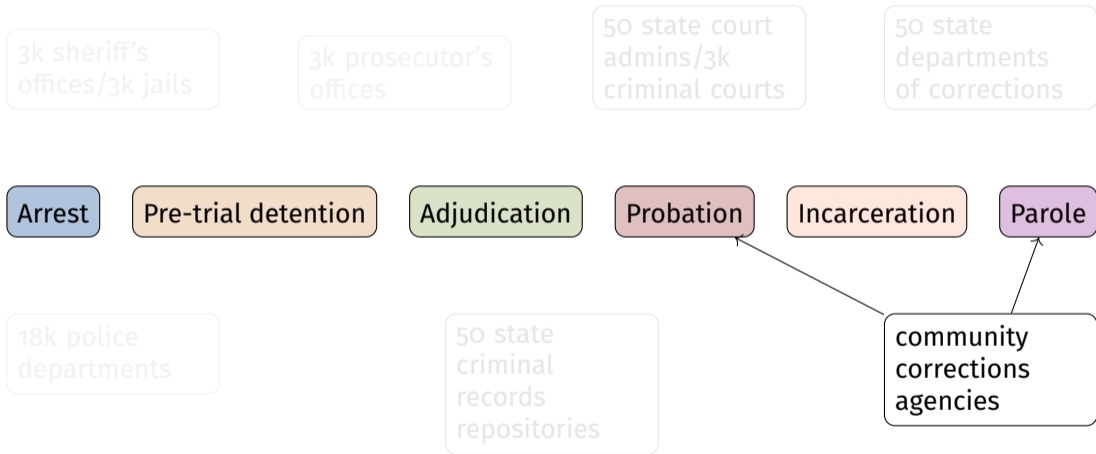
Project scope and data collection



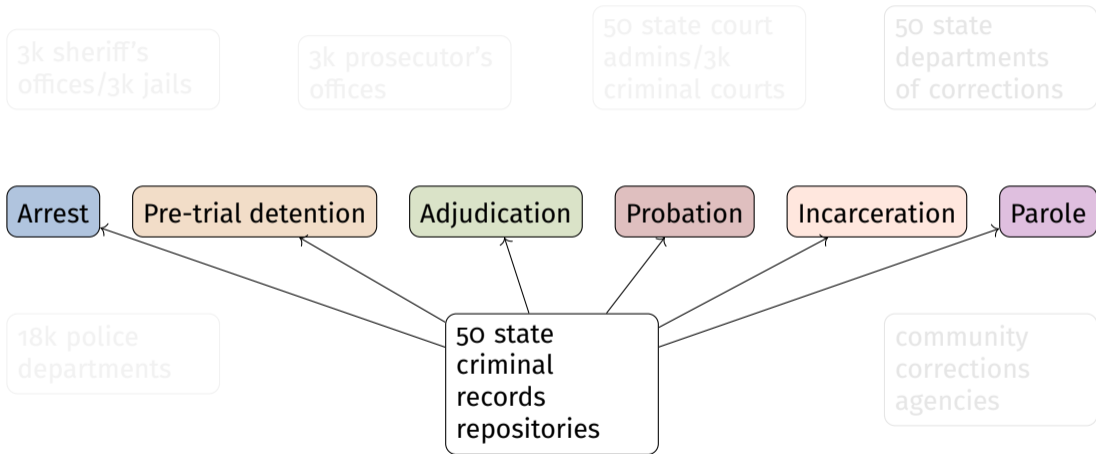
Project scope and data collection



Project scope and data collection



Project scope and data collection



Project scope and data collection

3k sheriff's
offices/3k jails

3k prosecutor's
offices

50 state court
admins/3k
criminal courts

50 state
departments
of corrections

Arrest

Pre-trial detention

Adjudication

Probation

Incarceration

Parole

18k police
departments

50 state
criminal
records
repositories

community
corrections
agencies

CJARS stakeholders and roles

- ▶ **University of Michigan** acquires and harmonizes data from **criminal justice agencies**, including law enforcement, judicial, and corrections agencies
- ▶ **Census Bureau** links CJARS with other socioeconomic data to build data products for data providers, develop new data products, and improve operations
- ▶ Qualified **researchers** on approved projects analyze CJARS in the FSRDCs
- ▶ **Communities and policymakers** use CJARS-derived statistical products to understand the performance of the criminal justice system

CJARS data coverage

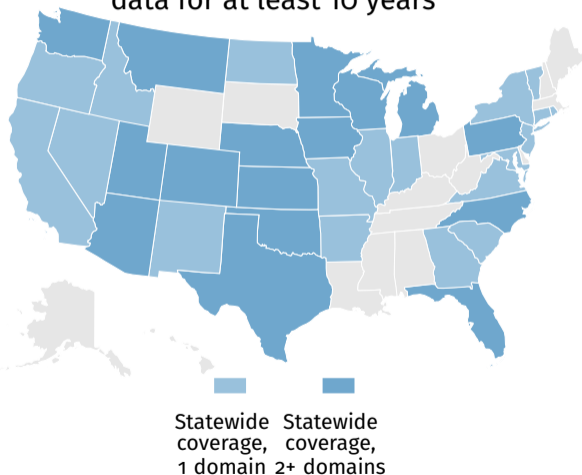
All records (back to 1970s)

- ▶ > 300 data providers
- ▶ 3.5b records
- ▶ 216m CJ events
- ▶ 40m unique individuals

Statewide records

- ▶ States with coverage of **state court, state corrections, and/or state repository** represent >**80%** of U.S. population

States where CJARS covers statewide data for at least 10 years



Growing CJARS ecosystem of researchers

- ▶ Platform enables a community of researchers
 - ▶ Rapid growth in research proposals and use by FSRDC researchers
- ▶ CJARS team has prototyped research applications
 - ▶ Children living with justice-involved adults
 - ▶ Self-employment as an alternative to employer-based jobs
 - ▶ Impacts of financial sanctions
 - ▶ Safety net enrollment and justice involvement
- ▶ Research is a critical tool for improving data quality

Growing CJARS ecosystem of partners

- ▶ Research will assess whether CJARS data can be used as an alternative data source for enumeration/imputation/testing of Group Quarters in **2030 Census**
- ▶ Partnership with **Council of State Governments** will support development of agency performance dashboards
- ▶ Design panel for next National Longitudinal Survey of Youth cohort recommended that **BLS** consider use of administrative data, including CJARS

Session highlights growing CJARS ecosystem

- ▶ **Justice Outcomes Explorer** statistical product will report on reentry experiences of justice-involved people
 - ▶ Offer new insights about this population using population-level linkage
 - ▶ Provide value back to agency data providers and create an incentive for agencies to join
- ▶ Reimbursable work with **CDC** measures incidence and impacts of **adverse childhood experiences**
 - ▶ New population measures previously only available in retrospective surveys
 - ▶ Demonstrates the value that CJARS brings to the Census Bureau Data Linkage Infrastructure, which in turn adds value to CJARS

Session highlights growing CJARS ecosystem

- ▶ **Justice Outcomes Explorer** statistical product will report on reentry experiences of justice-involved people
 - ▶ Offer new insights about this population using population-level linkage
 - ▶ Provide value back to agency data providers and create an incentive for agencies to join
- ▶ Reimbursable work with **CDC** measures incidence and impacts of **adverse childhood experiences**
 - ▶ New population measures previously only available in retrospective surveys
 - ▶ Demonstrates the value that CJARS brings to the Census Bureau Data Linkage Infrastructure, which in turn adds value to CJARS

Additional references

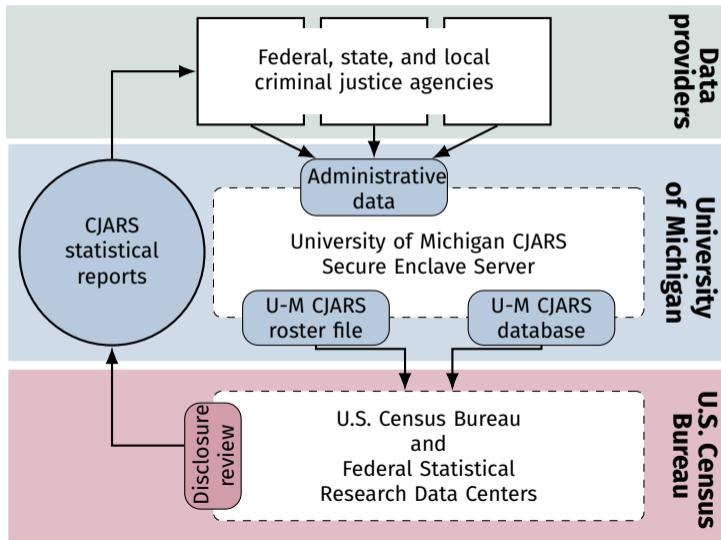
- ▶ Project website at Census Bureau: <https://census.gov/cjars>
- ▶ Project website at University of Michigan: <https://cjars.org>
- ▶ Data documentation:
<https://cjars.org/data-documentation-download>

Thank you

Keith Finlay
keith.ferguson.finlay@census.gov
301-763-6056

Additional slides

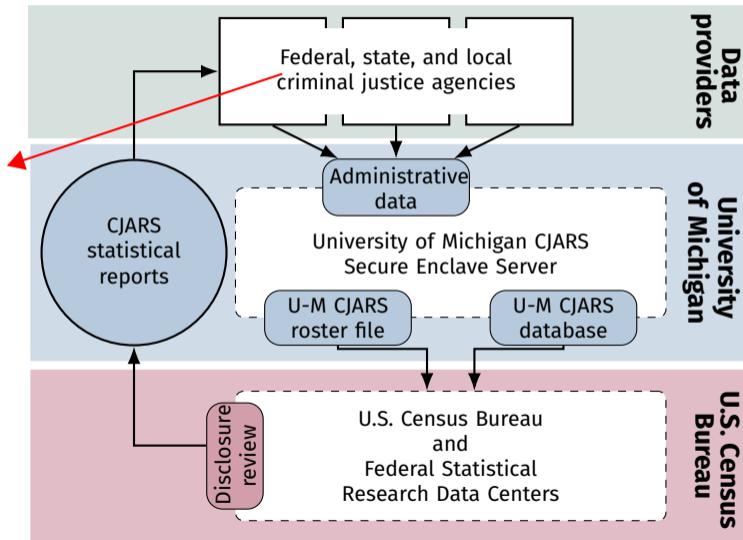
CJARS stakeholders and data exchange



CJARS stakeholders and data exchange

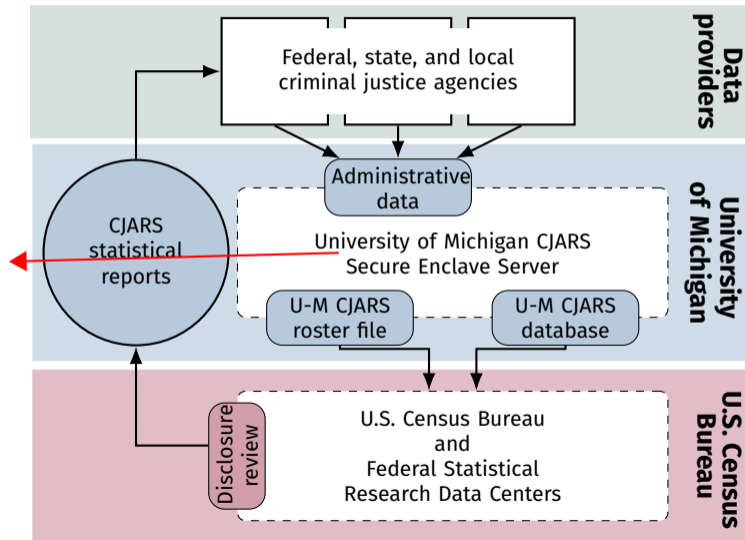
University of Michigan
acquires data via

- ▶ Data-use agreements
- ▶ Public-information requests
- ▶ Downloads/scraping



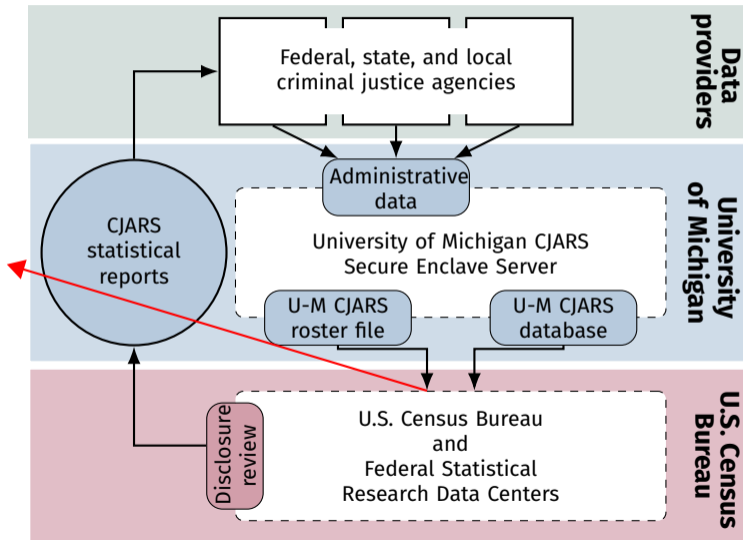
CJARS stakeholders and data exchange

- ▶ Harmonization to national schema
- ▶ Entity resolution to identify unique individuals, assign CJARS IDs
- ▶ Episode resolution to identify linked processes



CJARS stakeholders and data exchange

After Census processes roster through Person Identification Validation System (PVS), CJARS can be linked anonymously by Protected Identification Key (PIK)



CJARS stakeholders and data exchange

After disclosure review, agencies receive aggregate statistical products based on linked data

