

CJARS Executive Summary

The Criminal Justice Administrative Records System (CJARS) is a cutting-edge data platform designed to fundamentally transform research and statistical reporting on the U.S. criminal justice system. The project's ultimate goal is to enable research and statistics that legislators and administrators can use to develop evidence-based criminal justice policy.

CJARS is the first nationally integrated research data repository that follows individual offenses from arrest to charge to disposition to sanction. Data come from all types of criminal justice agencies and from across the U.S. At the University of Michigan, data are harmonized into a common schema that allows analysis across disparate jurisdictions. After secure transfer to the U.S. Census Bureau, CJARS data are anonymized and linked at the person-level to confidential social, economic, and demographic survey and administrative records to produce novel empirical analysis of criminal justice caseloads.

CJARS was founded in 2016 as a joint project of the U.S. Census Bureau and the University of Michigan. Start-up funding has been provided by the NSF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Arnold Ventures, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Census Bureau.

Why is CJARS critical for the future of U.S. criminal justice policy?

Incomplete criminal justice data infrastructure limits how performance is measured, which policy questions are asked

- Unlinked criminal justice processes lead to varying definitions of recidivism by agency.
- Lack of integration makes it difficult to identify effective policy levers.
- Failure to account for socioeconomic outcomes limits dynamic benefit-cost analyses of justice policies.

CJARS is a nationally integrated criminal justice data repository to support next-gen statistical reporting

- University of Michigan solicits longitudinal, multi-jurisdictional, person-level data from criminal justice agencies around the country representing all stages of the justice system.
- Disparately formatted source data are harmonized and integrated into a national schema, tracing the arc of a criminal episode through the justice system.
- Harmonized data are transferred securely to the Census Bureau where they can be linked to a wealth of socioeconomic survey and administrative records to evaluate outcomes in a broader context.

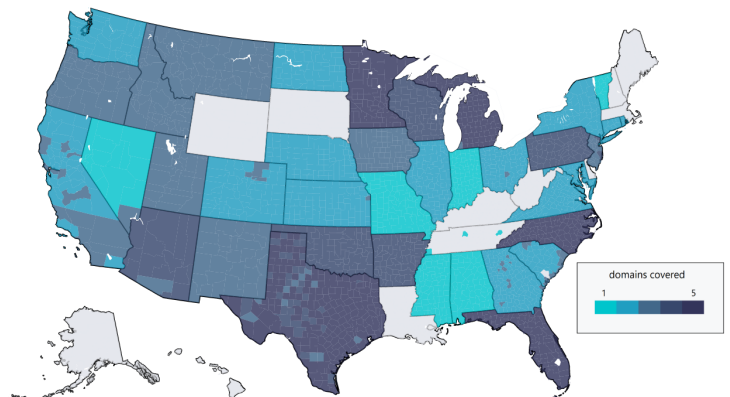
Data acquisition has been hugely successful

- Data collection strategies include data-use agreements, open records requests, and web scraping.
- Data on arrests, court proceedings, and periods of probation, incarceration, and parole covering:
 - 3+ billion records,
 - 215 million criminal justice events,
 - 34 states, and
 - 44 million unique individuals.
- Current holdings represent 84% of the U.S. population.

Data security and confidentiality are an acute focus

- PII is isolated from data users.
- CJARS IT at University of Michigan complies with FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Security Policy.

Map of CJARS Coverage



All CJARS stakeholders derive value from participation

- *Criminal justice agencies* receive statistical products using linked data to support public administration.
- *Criminal justice scholars* use CJARS to develop new research that supports evidence-based policymaking.
- *Federal statistical system* improves reporting on the criminal justice system and the justice-involved population at reduced cost and with higher quality.
- *Communities and policymakers* use statistical products to understand criminal justice system performance.

Research using CJARS is shedding new light

- The scope of justice system involvement is broader than previously measured.
- Justice-involved individuals have employment rates and earnings significantly below those who have not completed high school.
- Justice-involved individuals are more likely to be entrepreneurs than individuals from reference groups.
- A large percent of children are exposed to felony conviction of co-resident adults.