

CompStat

CompStat consists of regular performance meetings that involve comparing statistics.

First published 1 July 2021

CompStat generally consists of regular face-to-face performance meetings that involve comparing statistics (for example, crime trends, patterns, and hot spot maps) and holding police leaders to account for the delivery of crime reduction strategies in their area (Silverman, 2006).

CompStat was one of the key reforms introduced in the New York Police Department during the 1990s ([read the evidence on zero-tolerance policing](#)). Similar approaches have since been implemented across the USA and internationally.

In New York's case however, CompStat was inseparably linked to the wider set of managerial changes introduced around the same time (for example, organisational decentralisation). Nevertheless, the specific purpose of the meetings has been described as enhancing internal accountability and encouraging the development of local problem-solving (Kelling and Sousa, 2001).

As such, CompStat might be regarded as a potentially useful way of targeting resources and focusing activity. While studies have helpfully described how CompStat has been implemented (for a summary, see Weisburd and others, 2006), the evidence on its effect on crime is limited.

It is particularly difficult to draw any firm conclusions about CompStat's impact because it has usually been introduced alongside other policing strategies (such as hot spots policing). Even advocates of CompStat have highlighted there is insufficient evidence to claim it can reduce crime (Silverman, 2006).

Research on CompStat implementation has highlighted that the meetings tend to be used to hold people to account for their performance, rather than for delivering problem-solving (Weisburd and others, 2006; Santos, 2013; Vito and others, 2017; Yuksel, 2014).

As a result, CompStat may reinforce traditional 'command and control' police hierarchies and approaches, and be a barrier to innovative local crime reduction activity (Yuksel, 2014). One study found, for example, that meetings focused on problem-solving produced greater innovation and had

stronger crime control gains than CompStat meetings based around statistics (Bond and Braga, 2015).

An excessive focus on accountability can also increase the pressure on police leaders to deliver the numbers regardless of how they do it (for example, manipulating crime figures or not recording crimes) (Silverman, 2006; Eterno and others, 2016).

References

- Bond BJ and Braga AA. (2015). 'Rethinking the Compstat process to enhance problem-solving responses: insights from a randomized field experiment'. *Police Practice and Research*, 16(1), pp 22-35.
- Eterno JA, Verma A and Silverman EB. (2016). 'Police manipulations of Crime Reporting: Insiders' Revelations'. *Justice Quarterly*, 33(5), pp 811-835.
- Kelling G and Sousa W. (2001). 'Do Police Matter? An Analysis of the Impact of New York City's Police Reforms'. New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.
- Mazerolle L, McBroom J and Rombouts S. (2011). 'CompStat in Australia: An analysis of the spatial and temporal impact'. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39(2), pp 128-136.
- McElvain JP, Kposowa AJ and Gray BC. (2013). 'Testing a crime control model: Does strategic and directed deployment of police officers lead to lower crime?' *Journal of Criminology*.
- Roeder O, Eisen L-B and Bowling J. (2015). 'What Caused the Crime Decline?' New York: Brennan Center for Justice, NYU Law School.
- Santos RB. (2013). 'Implementation of a police organizational model for crime reduction'. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 36(2), pp 395-311.
- Silverman E. (2006). 'Compstat's Innovation'. In: Weisburd D and Braga A, eds. 'Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives'. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vito GF, Reed JC and Walsh WF. (2017). 'Police executives' and managers' perspectives on

Compstat'. *Police Practice and Research*, 18(1), pp 15-25.

Weisburd D and others. (2006). 'Changing Everything So That Everything Can Remain The Same: Compstat and American Policing'. In: Weisburd D and Braga A, eds. 'Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives'. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yuksel Y. (2014). 'Implementation of Compstat in Police Organizations: The Case of Newark Police Department'. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 7(35), pp 779-801.

Tags

Crime reduction