A Career as a BJS Statistician
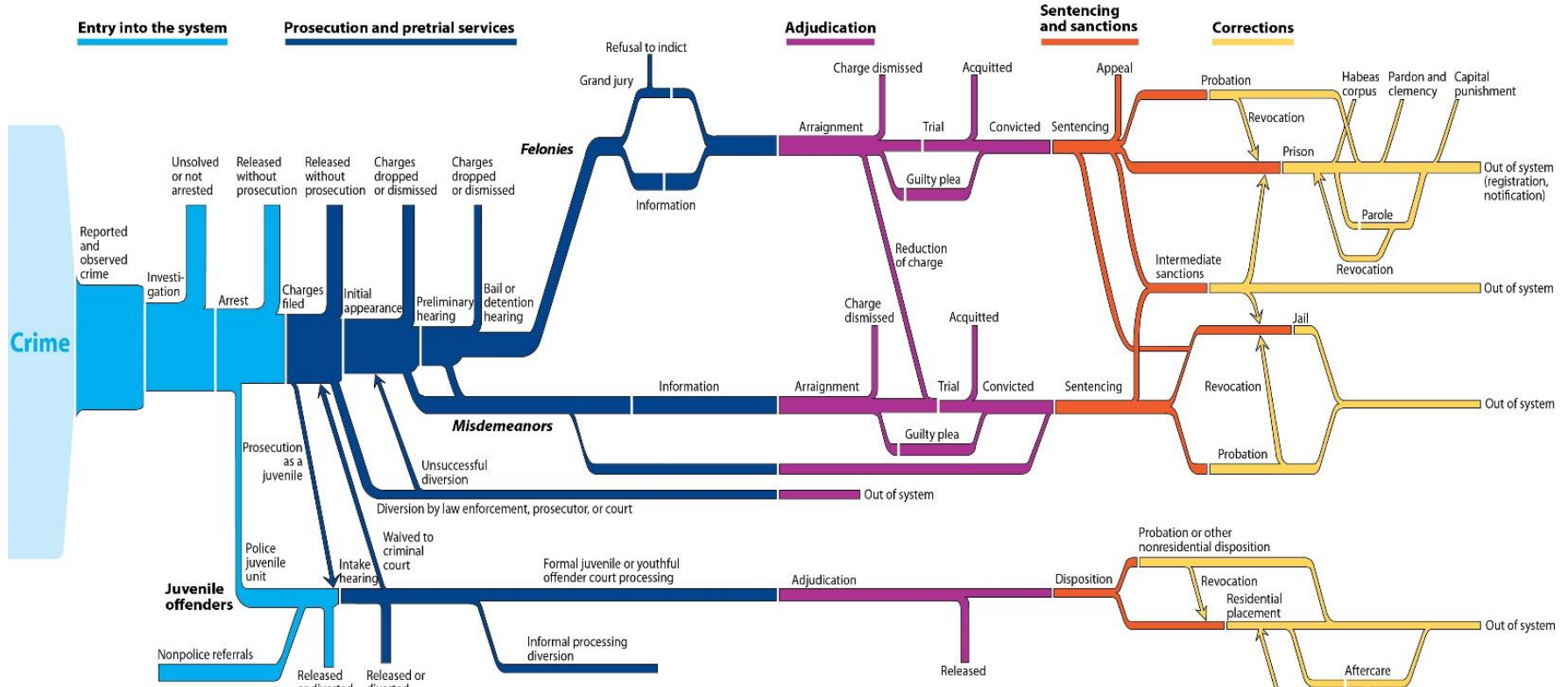
Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D.

Statistician

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics

- The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is one of 13 principal statistical agencies housed in the U.S. government. Each of these 13 agencies has statistical activities as their core mission.
  - 11 of these agencies are located within cabinet-level departments (BJS is in the U.S. Department of Justice) and 2 are independent.
  - Also, 3 subcomponents of federal agencies have statistical work as their principal mission.
- BJS's mission is to collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government. BJS also provides financial and technical support to state, local, and tribal governments to improve both their statistical capabilities and the quality and utility of their criminal history records.

BJS and the Criminal Justice System

Entry into the system

Prosecution and pretrial services

Adjudication

Sentencing and sanctions

Corrections

Crime

Reported and observed crime

Investigation

Unsolved or not arrested

Released without prosecution

Arrest

Released without prosecution

Charges filed

Charges dropped or dismissed

Initial appearance

Preliminary hearing

Charges dropped or dismissed

Bail or detention hearing

Felonies

Grand jury

Refusal to indict

Information

Charge dismissed

Arraignment

Acquitted

Trial

Convicted

Guilty plea

Sentencing

Appeal

Reduction of charge

Probation

Revocation

Prison

Habeas corpus

Pardon and clemency

Capital punishment

Out of system (registration, notification)

Parole

Revocation

Intermediate sanctions

Out of system

Misdemeanors

Information

Charge dismissed

Arraignment

Acquitted

Trial

Convicted

Guilty plea

Sentencing

Revocation

Jail

Probation

Out of system

Prosecution as a juvenile

Unsuccessful diversion

Diversion by law enforcement, prosecutor, or court

Out of system

Juvenile offenders

Police juvenile unit

Intake hearing

Waived to criminal court

Formal juvenile or youthful offender court processing

Adjudication

Disposition

Probation or other nonresidential disposition

Revocation

Residential placement

Nonpolice referrals

Released or diverted

Released or diverted

Informal processing diversion

Released

Out of system

Aftercare

Revocation

Note: This chart gives a simplified view of caseflow through the criminal justice system. Procedures vary

BJS Divisions

Planning, Policy, and Operations Division

- Publications and Dissemination Unit
- Technology and Data Management Unit
- Planning, Management, and Budget Unit
- Criminal Justice Data Improvement Programs Unit

Statistical Operations Division

- Victimization Statistics
- Law Enforcement Statistics
- Law Enforcement Incident-Based Statistics
- Prosecution and Judicial Statistics
- Corrections Statistics
- Recidivism Statistics
- Institutional Research and Special Projects

BJS Victimization Statistics Unit

- Primary data collection is the ***National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and its supplemental surveys*** (financial fraud, identity theft, police-public contact, school crime, and stalking)
  - Household survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that collects information on nonfatal violent and property crimes, reported and not reported to police, against persons age 12 or older from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households
  - NCVS data produce national rates and levels of violent (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) and property victimization (burglary/trespassing, motor vehicle theft, and other types of household theft)

BJS Victimization Statistics Unit

- ***Victim Services Statistical Research Program (VSSRP)*** builds knowledge about victim services by collecting and analyzing national data from victims and the diverse entities that serve victims in all states
  - National Census of Victim Service Providers
  - National Survey of Victim Service Providers

My (typical) day as a BJS Statistician

Coordinate and meet with internal and external federal colleagues re: NCVS data collections	Participate in federal interagency working groups	Draft Information Collection Requests (ICR) for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review
Develop statistical reports – draft table shells, write syntax code, conduct data analysis, write text	Answer data requests and questions from the public, stakeholders, researchers, internal and external federal colleagues	Review data files and codebooks before archiving at National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) for public use

What are the job opportunities for statisticians/data scientists/analysts at BJS?

- 60% of BJS staff are statisticians (or supervisory statisticians) analyzing data on victimization, law enforcement, corrections, prosecution and courts, recidivism, and tribal activities

- Job announcements for BJS statisticians may specify a particular statistical unit or may be general which gives BJS leadership the discretion based on needs of the agency and interest/skills of the candidate

What are the range of skills statisticians/data scientists/analysts need to succeed at BJS?

- Communicate (writing and speaking) to technical and non-technical audiences
- Project management – collaborate and work with internal and external federal colleagues, contractors, etc.
- Research methods, survey methodology, sampling, weighting, statistics
- Statistical software (SPSS, Stata, R, SAS)
- Knowledge (or willingness to learn) about the criminal justice system

What is the career path for statisticians/data scientists/analysts at BJS?

- Bachelors, Masters, and Ph.D. degrees
- Concentrations in sociology, criminology, political science, public policy, public health, and statistics
- Some statisticians have spent their entire career at BJS and others have moved from other government agencies, government contractors, or private companies
- BJS statisticians may have an interest in criminal justice, may have an interest in statistics, or both

Is your agency currently hiring statisticians/data scientists/analysts?

- Check USAJOBS for open announcements

- Sign up for JUSTSTATS to get BJS news and learn about open positions

What advice would you give to students based on your experience?

- Use USAJOBS as a resource to research jobs that sound interesting, understand knowledge and skills requirements, go to the agency website and look at their work

- U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website for position classification standards (1500 – mathematics and statistics group)

- Get experience in survey methodology, developing survey instruments, analyzing data, writing articles and technical reports

- Look for internships, job shadowing, talk with statisticians at agencies of interest

- Go to conferences, present research, network

- Learn statistical software programs (SPSS, R, SAS, Stata)

- Continue to build your resume (or CV) and keep it up to date

Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D.

Rachel.Morgan@usdoj.gov