

Compstat

Compstat generally consists of regular face-to-face performance meetings – based around up-to-date crime data, analysis of crime trends and patterns, and crime hotspot maps – in which police leaders are directly held 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 (see [The evidence on zero tolerance policing](#)). Similar approaches have since been implemented across the US and internationally. In New York's case, however, Compstat appeared broader in scope and inseparably linked to the wider set of managerial changes introduced around the same time (e.g. 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 describe Compstat's implementation in New York and elsewhere (for a summary see Weisburd et al. 2006), the evidence on its impact on crime is limited. It is particularly difficult to draw conclusions about Compstat's crime reduction effect because it has usually been introduced alongside other policing strategies (such as hotspots policing). Even advocates of Compstat have highlighted that the evidence is currently insufficient to claim it can reduce crime (Silverman 2006).

Researchers who have examined the implementation of Compstat in a number of US police departments have highlighted that, in practice, greater emphasis tends to be placed on holding people to account for performance than on problem-solving (Weisburd et al. 2006). As a result, it has been argued that Compstat can reinforce traditional 'command and control' police hierarchies, and not foster innovative local crime reduction activity. Further risks of an excessive focus on accountability, in terms of pressure to 'deliver the numbers', can be the manipulation of crime statistics and crimes not being recorded (Silverman 2006).

References

- 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.
- Silverman, E. (2006) *Compstat's Innovation*, in Weisburd, D. and Braga, A. (eds) *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weisburd, D., Mastrofski, S., Willis, J. and Greenspan, R. (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.