Ensuring the Quality, Credibility, and Relevance of U.S. Justice Statistics

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of the U.S. Department of Justice is one of the smallest of the U.S. principal statistical agencies but shoulders one of the most expansive and detailed legal mandates among those agencies. Ensuring the Quality, Credibility, and Relevance of U.S. Justice Statistics examines the full range of BJS programs and suggests priorities for data collection.

BJS's data collection portfolio is a solid body of work, well justified by public information needs or legal requirements and a commendable effort to meet its broad mandate given less-than-commensurate fiscal resources. The book identifies some major gaps in the substantive coverage of BJS data, but notes that filling those gaps would require increased and sustained support in terms of staff and fiscal resources.

In suggesting strategic goals for BJS, the book argues that the bureau's foremost goal should be to establish and maintain a strong position of independence. To avoid structural or political interference in BJS work, the report suggests changing the administrative placement of BJS within the Justice Department and making the BJS directorship a fixed-term appointment.

In its thirtieth year, BJS can look back on a solid body of accomplishment; this book suggests further directions for improvement to give the nation the justice statistics--and the BJS--that it deserves.

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