Crime Analytics

It is unsurprising that news media coverage of crime data analytics has a tendency to focus on the most ground breaking and intriguing innovations of the moment. A 2016 Science Magazine article detailed the use of advanced predictive software by agencies looking both to predict where crimes will happen and the actual individuals who may commit or become victims of crimes [Hvistendahl, 2016]. For example, PredPol is proprietary software that uses algorithms to predict where crimes are likely to happen during a shift [Hvistendahl, 2016]. While forecasting crimes is a highly pertinent application of incident data, it is not a cure-all for understanding and effectively using crime data. Furthermore, it does not engage the public.

In 2015 President Obama initiated the Task Force on 21st Century Policing to investigate and speak to the rifts between police and the public[[1]](#footnote-1). The final report outlined six pillars detailing recommendations and action items. The first pillar was the importance of building trust and legitimacy between police and those they serve. Part of the recommendation on building trust and legitimacy was to nurture accountability and transparency. Subsequently the Police Data Initiative (PDI) was launched per recommendation of the Task Force on 21st Century Policing[[2]](#footnote-2). The PDI is a collective network of law enforcement agencies, researchers, and technologists already developing and delivering best practices for collecting and publishing public datasets as well as utilizing data and technology for the improvement of policing and community relations. As of March, 2018, there are 130 contributing agencies and over 330 available data sets through the PDI website. The PDI demonstrates and embraces the diversity of law enforcement agencies’ needs and resources with both large and small department participants.

1. Final Report on the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, http://elearning-courses.net/iacp/html/webinarResources/170926/FinalReport21stCenturyPolicing.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.data.gov/safety/launching-the-police-data-initiative/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)