BSC Annual Conference (July 2021): Crime & Justice Statistics Network Panel

ESRC Data First Fellowship: Understanding the nature, extent and outcomes of serious and organised crime (SOC) cases heard before the Crown Courts in England and Wales (2013-2020)

Tim McSweeney
What I’ll cover…

• Background on SOC

• Funding & data sources

• Processes involved in accessing the data

• Identifying SOC cases within court data

• What are the aims of the project?

• Longer term data linkage ambitions
Serious and organised crime (SOC) is considered a national security threat by HM Government (Mackey, 2020).

Protecting the public from serious offenders is one of three priority outcomes set for the MoJ by the 2020 Spending Review.

Considerable social and economic costs to the UK associated with SOC: estimated at £37 billion in 2015-16 (NAO, 2019).

But NAO concerned government does not yet have the extent or depth of data that it needs to formulate an effective response.

Several recent high-profile reports have raised concerns about the effectiveness of CJS responses to SOC (e.g. Home Office, 2018; Police Foundation, 2018; HMIC, 2019).
Funding & data sources

Funder

- ADR UK and MoJ Data First Research Fellowship (via the ESRC/UKRI).

Data sources

- Crown Court Data (XHIBIT, ~1M individual-level records between 2013-2020).
- Magistrates’ Court Data (LIBRA, ~13M individual-level records between 2011-2020).
Processes involved in accessing the data

- ONS Research Accreditation Panel (RAP) application and approval (inc. MoJ Secure Access to Data (SAD) and ADR UK Je-S approvals)

- Becoming an accredited researcher with the ONS (inc. an initial application, training session and online exam)

- An assured organisational connectivity (AOC) agreement with ONS (in order to remotely access its secure research service (SRS) via an approved ‘secure room’ at UH)
A proxy measure for involvement in SOC will be developed and tested, replicating the approach used by Francis and colleagues (2013).

- Offence corresponds with one of 185 individual Home Office offence codes considered to have a potential link to SOC and which involve some degree of planning and control.

- Charged with an offence attracting a minimum custodial sentence of three years upon conviction.

- Where co-defendants were involved.
What are the aims of the project?

• To better understand the **nature, extent and outcomes** of SOC cases heard before the Crown Courts in England and Wales between 2013-2020.

• It will measure the **cumulative crime harms generated** by these SOC cases (vs. non-SOC cases) and assess whether harms are equally distributed across different offence types, SOC groups, and locations.

• It will test for any association between SOC status and the likelihood of cases being discontinued or dismissed.

• Finally, it will assess the feasibility of measuring subsequent **reappearances of SOC defendants before the courts** over time (vs non-SOC defendants).
Finally, longer term data linkage ambitions include…

• Exploring scope for **linking details of the SOC defendants** identified here with other datasets (e.g. OASys, PNC) to explore:
  
  o **social circumstances of SOC offenders**;
  o **their known criminal histories**;
  o **offending-related needs (e.g. thinking, attitudes, lifestyle, or relationships)**; and
  o **any risk factors for involvement in SOC**.

• These **profiles can be comparatively assessed** against those of non-SOC offenders.

• What can the new Data First **prisoner journey** and **linked courts dataset** tell us about their custodial reconviction rates? Can we test for associations between presence of SOC-related prisoners and levels of violence, drugs, self-harm, contraband, etc. within establishments?
Thanks for listening. Any observations, questions or comments?