Besiki Kutateladze Publication Abstracts


Current research on criminal case processing typically examines a single decisionmaking point, so drawing reliable conclusions about the impact that factors such as defendants’ race or ethnicity exert across successive stages of the justice system is difficult. Using data from the New York County District Attorney’s Office that tracks 185,275 diverse criminal cases, this study assesses racial and ethnic disparity for multiple discretionary points of prosecution and sentencing. Findings from multivariate logistic regression analyses demonstrate that the effects of race and ethnicity vary by discretionary point and offense category. Black and Latino defendants were more likely than White defendants to be detained, to receive a custodial plea offer, and to be incarcerated—and they received especially punitive outcomes for person offenses—but were more likely to benefit from case dismissals. The findings for Asian defendants were less consistent but suggest they were the least likely to be detained, to receive custodial offers, and to be incarcerated. These findings are discussed in the context of contemporary theoretical perspectives on racial bias and cumulative disadvantage in the justice system.


Minority overrepresentation in the criminal justice system has long been an important topic of research and policy debate. In New York City, recent changes in the Rockefeller Drug Laws and the controversy around police stop-and-frisk practices have placed an even greater emphasis on the need for studying the possible impact of defendants’ race and ethnicity on criminal justice outcomes. Relatively little contemporary research, though, examines plea-bargaining outcomes. Using unique data on misdemeanor marijuana cases, this study examines the impact of defendants’ race on prosecutors’ decisions to make (a) plea offers for a lesser charge and (b) sentence offers for non-custodial punishments. Preliminary findings indicated that black defendants were less likely to receive reduced charge offers, and both black and Latino defendants were more likely to receive custodial sentence offers. However, these disparities were largely explained by legal factors, evidence, arrest circumstances, and court actor characteristics, though black defendants were still more likely to receive custodial sentence offers after including these controls. No differences were found between white and Asian defendants. Implications for research and prosecutorial practices are discussed.


This Guide is intended to improve the effectiveness of Rule of Law (RoL) programming with a view to implementing UNDP’s Strategic Plan. It furthers the commitment of the organization in the Plan to ensure the highest standards of delivery of development results through rigorous monitoring and quality assurance and measurement. The Guide also responds to an increasing
demand from a wide range of national stakeholders and UNDP Country Offices for guidance on how to measure the impact of RoL programs. This is the first guide that focuses specifically on the measurement of RoL program and projects across the spectrum of development settings, including conflict-affected and fragile environments. In many cases, UNDP program staff will not be collecting and analyzing data themselves, but hiring external consultants to do so. Guidelines for measuring the impact of RoL programming will help RoL practitioners and consultants determine, for example: how to operate under budget, time, political and data constraints; what types of skills to look for when hiring external expertise; how to use research findings to design and implement effective program; and how to translate measurement findings into practice. Ultimately, the strategies laid out in this Guide will contribute to building a culture of accountability and transparency within and between UNDP, donors, national governments and civil society partners.