

# CompStat

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CompStat generally consists of regular face-to-face performance meetings that involve comparing statistics (for example, crime trends, patterns, and hot spot maps) and holding police leaders 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 ([read the evidence on zero-tolerance policing](#)). Similar approaches have since been implemented across the USA and internationally.

In New York's case however, CompStat was inseparably linked to the wider set of managerial changes introduced around the same time (for example, 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 have helpfully described how CompStat has been implemented (for a summary, see Weisburd and others, 2006), the evidence on its effect on crime is limited.

It is particularly difficult to draw any firm conclusions about CompStat's impact because it has usually been introduced alongside other policing strategies (such as hot spots policing). Even advocates of CompStat have highlighted there is insufficient evidence to claim it can reduce crime (Silverman, 2006).

Research on CompStat implementation has highlighted that the meetings tend to be used to hold people to account for their performance, rather than for delivering problem-solving (Weisburd and others, 2006; Santos, 2013; Vito and others, 2017; Yuksel, 2014).

As a result, CompStat may reinforce traditional 'command and control' police hierarchies and approaches, and be a barrier to innovative local crime reduction activity (Yuksel, 2014). One study found, for example, that meetings focused on problem-solving produced greater innovation and had

stronger crime control gains than CompStat meetings based around statistics (Bond and Braga, 2015).

An excessive focus on accountability can also increase the pressure on police leaders to deliver the numbers regardless of how they do it (for example, manipulating crime figures or not recording crimes) (Silverman, 2006; Eterno and others, 2016).

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## Tags

Crime reduction