



Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Cross Tracking Data Anonymization Tool FAQs

Q: What is cross tracking?

A: Cross tracking is the Commonwealth's new statewide data initiative to standardize criminal justice information. Conceived as part of the criminal justice reform law signed by Governor Charlie Baker, the fully integrated data framework is designed to enhance transparency, improve access to criminal justice data, and facilitate high-level analysis for the public, stakeholders, and researchers to inform public policy and improve public safety.

Q: Why create this dashboard, and what impact will it have on justice involved individuals?

A: Criminal Justice Reform required the EOPSS, in consultation with the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS), to create a data collection and Cross Tracking system for criminal justice agencies and the Trial Court. The system was designed to provide a streamlined, 360-degree view of an individual's engagement with the criminal justice system following them from the point of arrest to entry into a custodial institution and eventual release to Parole Supervision.

The integrated data system has six primary goals:

- Drive operational efficiency and effectiveness
- Connect individual records across the criminal justice system
- Increase criminal justice data availability, quality, and public trust
- Empower data-driven decision making and monitoring
- Analyze disparities and evaluate effectiveness of reform programs
- Enable internal and independent studies of recidivism and other criminal justice research

Q: What steps has EOPSS taken thus far to develop the Cross Tracking system?

A: EOPSS approached this complex process knowing that it required technological expertise and consensus among public safety partners. The integrated Cross Tracking system required state leaders to develop uniform data collection and reporting standards across a broad range of agencies and independent constitutional offices. EOPSS promulgated regulations to this end which established consistent data definitions, defined the governance framework, outlined integration requirements, and developed operational and implementation procedures. EOPSS supported the Sheriff Office Offender Management System upgrade to allow for the collection of the consistent data elements. EOPSS further coordinated with various Sheriff Offices in securing LiveScan devices to provide more fingerprinting capabilities during the booking procedure. EOPSS also secured a Data Use License Agreement from each phase one criminal justice partner agency.

Together, the partners strategized how to standardize data for presentation, moved data securely from agencies to the dashboard, and developed the public-facing visualization designs. This is the fourth

dashboard that EOPSS has created for Cross Tracking and the first of its kind. EOPSS is excited for users to engage with this dashboard, review data trends, and provide feedback to EOPSS. As the first of its kind, EOPSS anticipates improvements throughout the development of cross tracking.

Q: Why was an API tool developed?

The requirement for an Application Program Interface is detailed in the following statutory language drawn from [MGL Chapter 6A section 18 3/4](#) (12):

(ii) Anonymized cross-agency data shall be made available to the public for analysis through an application programming interface which allows access to all electronically available records.

Q: What are the counties referred to in the tool?

A: In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, there are 14 counties: Barnstable, Berkshire, Bristol, Dukes, Essex, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, Middlesex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and Worcester. Except for Nantucket, each County Sheriff's Office holds incarcerated individuals. Individuals convicted and/or arrested on Nantucket are transferred to the Barnstable County Sheriff's Office.

NOTE: ADD LANGUAGE THAT DUKE/NANTUCKET/BARNSTABLE AND FRANKLILN/HAMPSHIE COLLAPSED

Q: What is a house of correction, jail, state facility, and prison?

A: There are several kinds of correctional facilities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Each County Sheriff's Office, excluding Nantucket, oversees a Jail. A Jail is a pretrial holding facility where individuals awaiting trial or sentencing are housed at the discretion of a judge. The Sheriffs oversee Houses of Correction. An Offender sentenced to a House of Correction will receive a sentence limited to 2.5 years. But an Offender with a state prison sentence may also be transferred to a House of Correction and subsequently released to a DOC institution. DOC operates state correctional facilities (also referred to as prisons) housing various Offenders. Depending on their security and programming needs, individuals entrusted to DOC's care live in a pre-release, minimum, medium, or maximum-security facility.

Q: Will the dashboard allow members of the public to access information about a specific person?

A: No, due to Criminal Offender Record Information Laws (CORI) which prohibit the dissemination of justice-involved individuals to the public, the public facing information does not include any personally identifiable information. While criminal justice agencies can access person-specific information to develop effective, personalized rehabilitation plans, the public facing dashboard should be used to understand trends across the larger system. For more information about a specific individual, you may request access through the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS).

Q: Were any data exclusions made?

A: These charges and convictions dashboard displays information for sentenced offenders in custody on January 1st for the years 2017 through 2024.

Excluded from these counts are:

- Pre-trial individuals
- Civilly Committed Individuals;
- Juveniles;

- Individuals under the jurisdiction of the federal government, or another state's jurisdiction through an Interstate Compact Agreement;
- Any person sentenced in Massachusetts and serving custody in another jurisdiction via interstate compact;
- Any individual booked by another criminal justice agency and held temporarily at a Jail or House of Correction under a Safe Keep Agreement. A person who was previously booked by another criminal justice agency and then transported to a Jail or House of Correction to be held for pre-arraignment or detention purposes. This is known as a "Safe Keep." (not pretrial or convicted)

Q: How does the dashboard display data that predates Criminal Justice Reform (CJR)?

A: Given that data submitted by the participating criminal justice agencies predates the CJR data reporting standards outlined in the new governing regulations, EOPSS has taken great care to review and match the records from the various agencies to consolidate the data seen in the dashboard. In doing so, some of the older data, known as legacy data, was not able to meet these matching criteria and therefore, is not shown in the dashboard. EOPSS will continue to work through the legacy data with its stakeholders to ensure accuracy to be able to display it on the dashboard.

Q: Will additional data become available in the future?

A: Yes, the dashboard will expand to include additional statutory fields statutory data fields. When fully achieved, Cross Tracking will provide quality, standardized data to all agencies improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Equally important, the Cross Tracking dashboards will provide anonymized and comprehensive data to the public and any interested party.

Q: What guidelines were used to protect the privacy of individual offenders?

A: The Data Anonymization working group worked with the following set of guidelines as regards to offender privacy:

1. The cross-tracking API should make reasonable efforts to protect the identity of individual offenders.
2. The cross-tracking API will not release Personally Identifiable Information (PII) related to offenders.
3. The cross-tracking API should operate within the confines of the [FBI's CJIS system compliance framework](#).
4. The cross tracking API should operate according to the [501 CMR 18.00: Data collection and reporting standards for criminal justice agencies](#).

Q: How is the anonymity of offenders maintained?

1. Usage of aggregated data rather than individual records. The application will only display aggregated data when a data sample has five or more records that meet the selection criteria. Data samples of less than five records will be suppressed.
2. Removal of all PII from returned data.
3. Usage of generalization. The system will use groupings of data elements to return results. The following generalizations will be used:
4. Age Group (rather than Birth Date)

5. Offense Type and Subtypes rather than specific offenses (optionally, still in discussion)
6. Consolidation of data from smaller custodial agencies – Dukes and Barnstable (renamed to ‘Cape and Islands’), Franklin and Hampshire (renamed to ‘Northwestern’). This should help with extraction of data from smaller agencies.

Q: What does API mean?

A: API is an Application Programming Interface. This tool is a piece of software that follows the user’s instructions and communicates to the data warehouse to retrieve the data requested by the user. Users will see a URL at the top of the screen which can be copied and run from a browser. The URL can be saved for future use.

Q: What file formats are available for download:

A: There are two file formats available for download.

- JSON (JavaScript Object Notation) is a common file format for data exchange
- CSV (Comma Separated Values) is another common file format for data exchange

Q: What questions will the tool help to answer?

The purpose of this API is to supply criminal justice data for public consumption and research. The initial version of our API will provide data related to the following areas of interest:

1. Who is incarcerated and what is the status of the offenders? Incarceration information will be provided by various dimensions: Offender Status (Pretrial vs Sentenced), Age Group, Assigned Sex, Gender Identity, Race, and Ethnicity
2. Where are offenders incarcerated? Custodial statistics will be available by snapshot date and agency. Demographic information will also be available here.
3. How long have offenders been incarcerated?
4. What offenses have been committed by the currently incarcerated population?
5. Which offenders participate in programming? Do disparities exist in program participation related to Age, Sex, or Race/Ethnicity?

Q: What cohorts are in the model?

A: The data anonymization tool includes information for offenders in custody in the MA DOC or Sheriff’s Offices on January 1st for the years 2017 through 2024.

Q: Can offenders be included in the dashboard more than once?

A: Yes, if the offender was in custody on January 1st of different years as a sentenced offender, then they will be in the sample more than once. This can occur if the offender has a long sentence, so they are in custody over multiple January 1st dates, or if the offender was released from custody and then reincarcerated at some later point.

Q: What agencies are included in the model?

Information is available for all custodial agencies in Massachusetts, including the Massachusetts Department of Correction and Sheriff's Offices. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, there are 14 counties: Barnstable, Berkshire, Bristol, Dukes, Essex, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, Middlesex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and Worcester. Except for Nantucket, each County Sheriff's Office holds offenders. Offenders convicted and/or arrested on Nantucket are transferred to the Barnstable County Sheriff's Office.

For purposes of the data anonymization dashboard, offenders in the custody of Barnstable and Dukes county collapsed into the category Cape and Islands, and offenders in the custody of Franklin and Hampshire are collapsed into the category of Northwestern.

Q: How is the age of the offender determined?

Age is defined as the age of the offender at the custodial date, that is the January 1st date when the offender was in custody. Ages will be assigned to the following groups consistent with the existing public dashboard:

- ○ 18 to 24
- ○ 25 to 29
- ○ 30 to 39
- ○ 40 to 49
- ○ 50 to 59
- ○ 60 and above

Q: How is the race and ethnicity of the offender determined?

A: Race has five values. If the records management system indicated that the race was Hispanic, that appears in the "other / unknown" category:

- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black / African American
- Other / Unknown
- White

Ethnicity as three values:

- Hispanic/Latino
- Not Hispanic / Latino
- Unavailable

Q: What is the difference between assigned sex and gender identity?

A: *Assigned Sex* is assigned at birth based on a combination of a baby's biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs, and is originally documented on a person's birth

certificate. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else such as agender, binary, gender fluid, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, or nonbinary. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. All people have a gender identity.

Q: What are the values for gender identify and how are they defined?

A: In addition to male and female, the following values can be found in the field gender identity:

Agender: An identity under the nonbinary and transgender umbrellas. Some agender individuals have no gender identity, although some define agender as having a gender identity that is neutral.

Bigender: An identity under the nonbinary and transgender umbrellas. Bigender individuals identify with more than one gender.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity matches with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Expansive: An adjective that can describe someone with a more flexible gender identity than might be associated with a typical gender binary.

Gender Fluid: Refers to an identity under the nonbinary and transgender umbrellas. Genderfluid individuals have different gender identities at different times. A genderfluid individual's gender identity could be multiple genders at once, and then switch to none at all, or move between single gender identities. For some genderfluid people, these changes happen as often as several times a day, and for others, monthly, or less often.

Intersex: Refers to a person who is born with sexual or reproductive anatomy that does not fit within the sex binary of male or female, encompassing a variety of sex expressions.

Nonbinary: A term used by people who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female. This can include people who are agender, bigender, genderfluid, gender nonconforming, and genderqueer, among others. Some nonbinary people identify as transgender, while others do not.

Transgender: A broad term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from those typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. "Trans" is shorthand for "transgender." Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, for example: "transgender people," "people who are transgender," "a woman who is transgender," etc. However, "transgenders" or "transgendered" are incorrect and disrespectful.

Two-Spirit: Contemporary umbrella term that refers to the historical and current First Nations people whose individual spirits were a blend of female and male spirits. This term has been reclaimed by Native American LGBTQ+ communities in order to honor their heritage and provide an alternative to the Western labels of gay, lesbian, or transgender.

Variante: Gender variant is an umbrella term used to describe gender identity, expression, or behavior that falls outside of culturally defined norms associated with a specific gender.

Q: How was the incarceration time computed?

A: Incarceration time is calculated as the number of days from the most recent admission date to the custodial facility to the snapshot date. In all instances each part of any day of custodial placement counts as a full day. For example, if an offender was admitted on December 30, 2021, then the incarceration time would count December 30, December 31 and January 1st or 3 days as the incarceration time.

For sentenced offenders who had a period of pre-trial incarceration prior to the sentenced placement, the incarceration time will include only that time from the beginning of the sentenced placement and will not include any jail credits. For offenders transferred from one custodial agency to another, the incarceration period will include only that time since admission to the most recent facility. For parole violators, the incarceration time will include only that time since admission as a parole violator.

Q: What is the difference between mean and median incarceration time?

A: Mean incarceration time sums the incarceration time for all offenders in the selected category and divides by the number of offenders. Median incarceration time represents the incarceration time in the middle of the range of all incarceration times for the selected category of offenders. Because mean incarceration time will be impacted by “outliers” or offenders with a very long period of incarceration, the mean and median may be very different. Looking at both metrics will provide users with a fuller understanding of the length of incarceration.

Q: What programs are included in the program enrollment metrics?

A: All programs for which the offender enrolled between the most recent admission date to the custodial facility and the snapshot date are included in the program metrics. Thus, this will include programs in which the offender is currently enrolled as well as programs that the offender already completed during that custodial placement.

Q: In the program metrics what do the columns indicate?

A: Users will see the following columns after selecting program enrollment metrics:

- Record Count: the total number of offenders in the selected sample including offenders who have zero program enrollments
- Total Enrollments: the total number of program enrollments for the selected sample of offenders. This number will generally be larger than the record count because offenders enroll in multiple programs
- Total Counts by Program Service Intervention (PSI) area. Programs are assigned into one of six categories. Each column represents the number of enrollments in that PSI group:
 - Beh – Behavioral Health / Mental Health / Substance Use
 - Edu – Educational and Vocational
 - Sup – Support / Mentorship
 - Work – Work Assignment
 - Reinvestment – Community Reinvestments
 - Religious – Religious / Spiritual

Q: How do I get information on governing charges and leading charges?

A: To see information on governing charges and leading charges, the user must select offender status as a dimension and select a single offender status in the filters section. This will open up two new options: offender status dimensions and offender status filters for the user.

Q: How were governing charges and leading charge captured?

Custodial agencies maintain detailed records on all charges associated with custodial placement. For sentenced Offenders this includes only those charges that resulted in a conviction and a sentence of incarceration. In contrast, the Trial Court maintains records on all charges and the disposition of each charge. To consistently report all charges and convictions for sentenced offenders, the dashboard linked the docket numbers and other information maintained by custodial agencies with MassCourts records maintained by the Trial Court.

Q: How is the governing offense determined?

A: Pursuant to 501 CMR 18.00 "As determined by the Department of Correction or House of Correction, is the offense for which an Offender is committed to the Department of Correction or a House of Correction and which controls the overall sentence structure." For purposes of this dashboard, Governing offense applies only to sentenced Offenders In IMS, the DOC identifies the governing offense. In OMS and JMS, there is no designation. For custodial records where there is no identifiable governing offense designation, the dashboard will show the first charge listed resulting in a sentence to incarceration associated with the docket with the earliest filing date and the lowest docket number. Occasionally, multiple dockets are submitted on the same day.

Q: How is leading charge determined?

A: For pretrial Offenders there is no identifiable leading charge designation in IMS, JMS, or OMS. The dashboard will show the first felony charge listed associated with the docket with the earliest filing date and the lowest charge number. If there are no applicable felony charges, then the first misdemeanor charge listed associated with the docket with the earliest filing date and the lowest charge number is selected.

Q: What is offense severity?

A: Offense severity refers to the statutory penalty structure of the offense. Any offense for which a state prison sentence could be imposed is a felony. All other offenses are misdemeanors. This does not imply that a state prison sentence was imposed, only that a state prison sentence was an option for this charge. (see MGL Chapter 274, Section 1).

Q: What are the offense types?

The public dashboard will display the total level broken down by offense type. The offense type will be determined by the statutory reference that is included in the charge action code associated with each charge in a docket number. Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) contains the statutory basis for criminal charges. Criminal charges are organized by statutory chapter. For example, MGL Chapter 265 is entitled "CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON" and Chapter 94C is entitled "CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT". For

purposes of this dashboard, these chapter designations are used to aggregate offenses into offense types. The public dashboard displays all charges and convictions according to the following offense type categories:

M.G.L Chapter Reference	Offense Type
265	Person
266	Property
94C	Drug
90	Motor Vehicle
269	Weapons
272	Public Order
Other	All other M.G.L. chapters, CMR, or municipal offenses

Q: What are offense sub-types?

The public dashboard displays data broken down offense sub-types. All charges were grouped into the offense types by statutory chapter reference and into offense sub-types. The following table shows the offense types and offense sub-types available on the public dashboard:

Drug

- Distribute Class A
- Distribute Class B
- Distribute Class C
- Distribute Class D
- Distribute Class E
- Distribute School Zone
- Other Drug
- Possess Class A
- Possess Class B
- Possess Class C
- Possess Class D
- Possess Class E
- Possess Marijuana

Traffick Class B/Cocaine
Traffick Heroin
Traffick Marihuana

Motor Vehicle

Motor Vehicle Other
MV Homicide
MV OUI

Other

License Violation
Other
Public Order
Restraining Order, Violate

Person

Assault
Assault & Battery
Kidnap
Murder/Manslaughter
Other Person
Robbery
Sex

Property

Arson/Burn
B&E / Burglary
Forgery
Fraud
Larceny
Motor Vehicle
Other Property
Shoplifting
Trespassing

Weapon

Dangerous Weapon
Firearm
Other Weapon