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Dr. Pamela Ebert Flattau joined the IDA Science and Technology Policy Institute in 2003 to provide expertise in the areas of the social and behavioral sciences and education for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. In 2008, she led a team that designed the first "Digest of Key S&E Indicators" (www.nsf.gov) for the National Science Board. Recently, Dr. Flattau guided a study which focused on the development and presentation of measures for tracking social progress in public safety and security for national policy and planning. Dr. Flattau recently described her work in data visualization in "International Psychology" (www.apa.org). She has served as a member of the US delegations attending the 1st OECD World Forum (Palermo) and the 2nd OECD World Forum (Istanbul). She holds degrees in experimental psychology (perceptual development) from the University of Leeds (UK) and the University of Georgia (USA).

Opportunities and Challenges for Measuring Changes in Public Safety and Security in Urban America

Abstract:

For many years, social and behavioral scientists have explored the relationship between levels of urban crime with such social and demographic factors as poverty, age, gender and race/ethnicity. More recently, theoretical developments have focused attention on the contributions of urban ecology to crime, including neighborhood characteristics.

Owing to important advances in the U.S. Federal statistical system, it has become possible to monitor year-to-year changes in many key socio-economic and ecological factors associated with urban crime. As a result, researchers are attempting to link changes in certain of these urban conditions with changes in the level and type of urban crime. (See, for example, "Understanding Crime Trends," National Research Council, 2008.)

The IDA Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) recently identified several promising "leading urban indicators" of public safety and security of potential value to planners and policymakers. While the opportunity exists for generating such indicators, many challenges remain. For example, it is important to exercise caution when tracking highly correlated factors. One promising solution is to array graphically these groups of factors, which has the potential to provide policymakers with an easier grasp of these complex trends – from city-to-city and nationally. The purpose of this paper is to introduce international experts to the approach being developed by IDA STPI for linking city-level data with national planning and policymaking.