



Emergency Calls for Service Assessment

New Orleans, LA

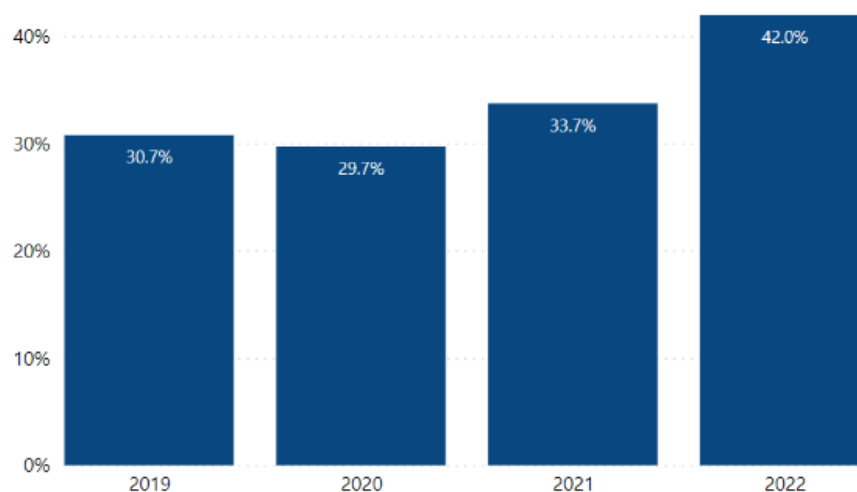
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Problem Summary

The share of Calls for Service that were downgraded from emergency to non-emergency status has increased substantially in 2022 as NOPD deals with decreasing commissioned officer strength. NOPD has downgraded 42 percent of over 28,000 Calls for Service that were initially emergencies to non-emergency priority as of mid-August 2022, up from 30.7 percent in 2019. These incidents likely were judged to not require an immediate response due to the caller or victim not being in imminent danger and/or the suspect no longer on scene.

Figure 1 - Share of Initial Emergency Calls for Service Downgraded per Year (RTF, GOA and UNF Dispositions), 2019 - 2022



Downgrading incidents¹ increases an incident's response time which in turn increases the likelihood that an incident will receive a Gone on Arrival (GOA) or Unfounded (UNF) disposition. The share of downgraded incidents that were GOA is likely driven by two main factors: the response time and the time of day that officers arrived. Downgraded incidents that received a Report to Follow (RTF) disposition have had an average response time² of 88 minutes in 2022 while downgraded incidents with a GOA disposition had an average response time of 278 minutes.

Table 1 - Average Response Time for Downgraded Emergency Incidents by Disposition, 2019 - 2022

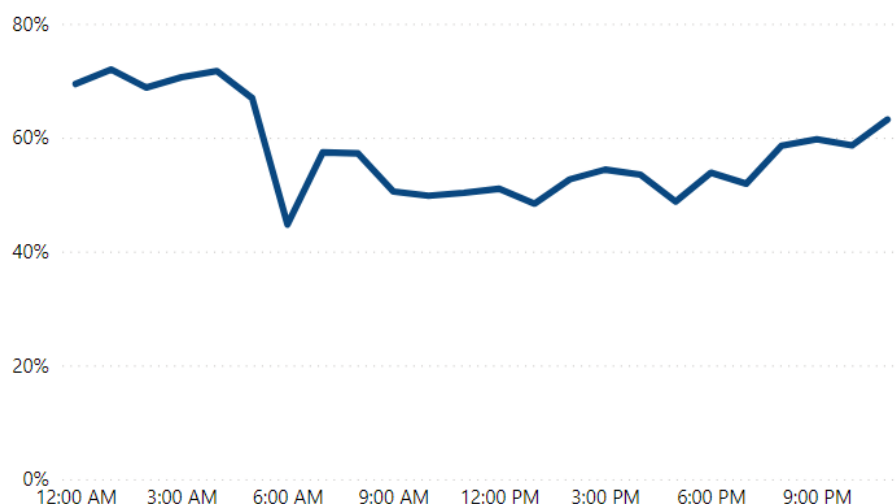
Year	RTF	GOA
2019	38.9	103.1
2020	52.1	184.7
2021	70.7	225.4
2022	87.9	278.4

¹ Downgraded incidents are determined by those incidents with an RTF, GOA or UNF disposition that began as a priority 2 incident and ended as a priority 1 incident.

² Response times are calculated by comparing the arrival time with the incident creation time. Arrival time is not available for a small number of incidents, so dispatch time is used for those incidents. Response times are only calculated for incidents with a response time of between 0 and 24 hours. Average response time is used for this analysis rather than median response time to capture the varied range of response times.

The other critical factor for whether a downgraded incident receives a GOA disposition is the officer's noted arrival time. Officers can catch up on a backlog of lower priority incidents during the early hours of the day though this is also the time when people are least likely to be responsive. In 2022, 70.1 percent of downgraded emergency incidents with an arrival time before 6 AM were GOA compared to 54.4 percent of such incidents with an arrival time between 6 AM and midnight.

Figure 2 - Share of Downgraded Incidents with GOA Disposition by Arrival Hour, 2022



Nearly 12,000 incidents with a RTF, GOA or UNF disposition that were not officer-initiated have been downgraded from emergency to non-emergency in 2022 through mid-August, nearly matching the total number of such incidents downgraded in all of 2019. The below table highlights several incident types that have been downgraded from emergency to non-emergency at much higher levels this year compared to previous years. Over 44 percent of aggravated rape incidents that started as an emergency this year, for example, have been downgraded to non-emergency compared to 30 percent between 2019 and 2021.

Table 2 - Overview of Downgrading from Initial Emergency Priority for Selected Incident Types, 2019 - 2022

Incident Type	Incidents Downgraded (2022)	Percent Downgraded (2022)	Percent Downgraded (2019 – 2021)	Change in Downgrading
Aggravated Assault	252	36.2%	23.2%	+12.9%
Aggravated Rape	95	44.4%	30.4%	+14.0%
Armed Robbery & Carjacking	74	14.1%	8.4%	+5.7%
Attempted Suicide ³	163	24.9%	11.9%	+13.0%
Domestic Disturbance	1,486	36.6%	23.7%	+12.9%
Simple Battery (Domestic)	431	24.9%	15.2%	+9.8%

³ Figures for attempted suicide incidents in this analysis include Necessary Action Taken (NAT) dispositions as well as RTF and GOA because a large portion of these incidents have a NAT disposition. Includes Attempted and threatened suicide incidents.

Downgrading incidents from emergency to non-emergency leads to longer response times and a large difference in an incident's disposition. Almost 65 percent of domestic disturbances that were downgraded from emergency to non-emergency have had a GOA disposition this year compared to 16 percent of those that were not downgraded, for example.

Table 3 - Share of Initial Emergency Incidents with GOA Disposition by Downgrade Status, 2022

Incident Type	Percent GOA (Downgraded)	Percent GOA (Not Downgraded)	Difference
Aggravated Assault	77.0%	50.8%	26.2%
Aggravated Rape	41.1%	26.1%	15.0%
Armed Robbery & Carjacking	59.5%	13.8%	45.7%
Attempted Suicide	68.4%	40.4%	28.0%
Domestic Disturbance	63.5%	16.0%	47.5%
Simple Battery (Domestic)	77.3%	25.8%	51.5%

Deep Dive – Aggravated Rape

There were 95 aggravated rape incidents that were downgraded in priority between January and July 2022 with a heavy concentration of such incidents in January and February 2022. Over 40 percent of the downgraded incidents received a GOA or UNF disposition compared to 26 percent of aggravated rapes that began and concluded as emergencies. Victims in some of these incidents may have been successfully contacted later though it is impossible to determine how many were successfully reported from the available data.

An assessment of dispatch comments covering the 95 downgraded aggravated rapes this year showed that 58 percent (55 of 95) involved a juvenile victim – including at least 14 incidents with a juvenile victim younger than 10. At least 16 of the incidents either occurred at or were reported from a school. Of the incidents involving a juvenile victim, 23 of 55 (41.8 percent) were disposed of as Gone on Arrival.

Several incidents involved victims reporting crimes that took place weeks, months, or years prior to attempting to contact the police. A few victims reported having been raped or sexually assaulted while previously visiting New Orleans from out of town and expressed logistical difficulty in reporting these incidents. If the downgraded incidents received GOA dispositions at a similar rate as the incidents that remained emergencies, then there would have been 14 more aggravated rape incidents with an RTF disposition so far in 2022.

Rapes and sexual assaults are already systemically underreported with the 2020 National Crime Victimization Survey showing that just 22.9 percent of victimizations were reported to the police in 2020 and just 33.9 percent in 2019. Several incidents provide examples of the types of aggravated rapes that were downgraded from emergency to non-emergency before receiving a GOA disposition:

- A social worker reported that two young girls had told her they were raped three years prior by a family member who was no longer in the household. The initial call came in at 10 PM, it was downgraded to non-emergency shortly thereafter, and there was no answer when officers attempted to call the social worker 6 hours later at 4:21 AM.
- A young girl reported having been previously sexually assaulted. The incident was reported in the early afternoon, but contact was not attempted until 12:30 AM with no answer so the incident received a GOA disposition.
- A mental health crisis line operator reported a mother had requested advice regarding her juvenile daughter claiming to have been raped several years earlier. Officers reached voicemail twice when attempting to make contact with the operator 11 hours later at 1 AM and the incident was marked GOA.
- A caller reported at 2:20 PM that his girlfriend had been sexually assaulted the previous night. The incident was downgraded to non-emergency because no units were available to respond and no contact was made when the officer arrived more than five hours later.

Two factors primarily determined whether many downgraded aggravated rape incidents were successfully reported (RTF disposition): response time and arrival time. Incidents that were GOA had longer response times and officers frequently arrived while the victim would likely be sleeping or the place from which the initial call was made had closed. Incidents that were RTF had an average response time of 75 minutes (median response time of 51 minutes)⁴. The incidents that were GOA had an average response time of 227 minutes (median response time of 175.5 minutes).

Arrival time was the other determining factor. There was little difference in when incidents were reported -- 78 percent of both RTF and GOA downgraded aggravated rapes were initially reported between 8 AM and 8 PM -- but a noticeable difference in when officers arrived. Nearly 40 percent of GOA incidents had an officer arriving between 8 PM and 8 AM compared to just 19.7 percent of RTF incidents. Officers arrived between midnight and 6 AM in 22 percent of downgraded aggravated rape incidents with a GOA disposition compared to 2 percent of such incidents with an RTF disposition.

⁴ Two outlier incidents where the officers arranged to meet the child the next day – and did so successfully – but were removed for this calculation.

Policy Implications

Increasing downgrading emergency Calls for Service to non-emergencies is another consequence of NOPD's declining commissioned officer strength. There are 959 commissioned officers and 27 recruits in NOPD as of August 14, 2022, which is 107 fewer commissioned officers than December 2021 and more than 200 fewer officers than there were in mid-2019.

NOPD's commissioned strength may have fallen considerably since peaking in mid-2019 but the public safety demand has not. There have been 82,560 non-officer-initiated Calls for Service with a GOA, RTF or UNF disposition so far this year compared to 85,122 such calls during the same timeframe in 2019.

The response capability of literally hundreds of commissioned officers must be replaced, and civilianization at scale would be the most effective policy response for improving the efficiency of commissioned NOPD officers. Civilians could respond to non-emergency non-criminal incidents and property crimes and make sure that rape victims who are not in imminent physical danger are met quickly by an NOPD staff member. More civilians on staff would be the most effective means of freeing up officer time to respond to violent crimes and life-and-death emergencies. Either civilians or contractors responding to large quantities of non-injury traffic accidents would be an easy mechanism for easing NOPD commissioned officers' response burden.

Expanding alternate mechanisms to respond to Calls for Service would also decrease the number of incidents needing a physical response from a commissioned officer resulting in greater officer availability to respond to more critical calls. This can be accomplished by increasing the share of Calls for Service that are eligible for Alternative Police Response (APR) as well as online reporting and encouraging residents to maximize their use of these systems for reporting Calls for Service. Greater expansion of APR along with an increase in the unit's capabilities would require greater civilian staffing to ensure there are adequate resources available to handle the additional call volume.

NOPD should identify incident types that could be downgraded more often because they are GOA most of the time and rarely result in reports even when officers arrive quickly. For example, nearly 99 percent of roughly 9,000 burglar alarm incidents that began as emergencies this year have an NAT disposition suggesting they were false alarms, but only half of those incidents were downgraded to non-emergency status.

Additionally, nearly 80 percent⁵ of suspicious person incidents – final incident type – have had a GOA disposition this year and just 1.4 percent of incidents were RTF. Yet only 34 percent of 5,700 incidents that had suspicious person as their final type were downgraded from emergency to non-emergency. These incidents can be serious and deserve speedy responses but could potentially take less precedence than ensuring that rapes, batteries, and assaults are appropriately recorded even if the victim in those incidents is no longer in immediate physical danger.

⁵ Calculation includes incidents with a NAT disposition where suspicious person or burglar alarm was the final incident type.

Methodology

This assessment analyzes Calls for Service from 2019 through mid-August 2022 to highlight how the share of emergency Calls for Service being downgraded to non-emergencies has increased in 2022. This analysis only looks at Calls for Service that were not officer-initiated with a response time between 0 and 24 hours to isolate incidents where a law enforcement response occurred.

Most of this analysis evaluates only incidents with a disposition RTF, GOA, or UNF to compare incidents where something serious enough to warrant a report being written occurred with incidents where no complainant was found. Unless otherwise noted, incidents with a Necessary Action Taken (NAT) disposition are not included in this analysis though thousands of those types of incidents are downgraded every year as well. The share of NAT incidents that have been downgraded has similarly increased in 2022.

Finally, this analysis only examined Calls for Service that were Priority 1 (non-emergency) or Priority 2 (emergency) at both the initial and final stage. Incidents that were Priority 0 – no officer response needed – and priority 3 – human life in imminent danger or officer requests emergency assistance – were not included in this analysis.