Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

https://www.vera.org/publications/understanding-police-enforcement-911-analysis

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With more than 240 million 911 calls each year, a sizable proportion of police officers time consists of responding to calls for service. Despite the importance of the 911 call system, little information exists on the nature of calls for service, how they are handled, and how police respond. The Vera Institute of Justice partnered with two police departments to study this crucial component of the policing system. Researchers employed a five-pronged mixed methods approach: reviewing the literature on 911 calls for service; mapping the 911 call system process and analyzing 911 call audio records; analyzing computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data; applying Natural Language Processing techniques to assess narrative fields in CAD data; and analyzing linked CAD and record management system data. By combining these five research components, Vera sought to identify alternatives to traditional 911 call-processing practices that could potentially improve outcomes for community members, call-takers, dispatchers, and police officers.

Although the 911 call system has been in use for 50 years, there is a lack of information on many of its core features, including how calls are processed; how call-takers, dispatchers, and other personnel are trained; and where opportunities for alternative responses exist and can be expanded.

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