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PROFILING THE ROUTINE TASKS OF POLICE OFFICERS

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BLUF

The routine operational tasks attended by police officers are varied in both type (from checking bona fides to domestic incidents) and duration, where the same task may vary dramatically (from 2 minutes to over 4 hours).

INTRODUCTION

Research regarding police routine tasks has focused on the general nature and frequency of physical activities performed during these tasks. ^[1, 2]

While this information is valuable, it does not actually define the specific police tasks that are routinely conducted, and the proportions of officer time spent undertaking each specific type of occupational task.

For example, it is unclear exactly what occupational tasks police undertake in the time they are reported to spend in standing ^[1] or sitting positions ^[2] either at their desk or in patrol vehicles.

The aim of this study was to profile the routine tasks performed by law enforcement officers of an Australian state police force by frequency and duration



METHODS

- A cross sectional, retrospective study design was used to investigate the operational tasks routinely performed by 53 uniformed police officers (female officers, n=10; age=31.6±9.1 years; years of service=7.1±6.1 years; height=166.5±5.9 cm; weight= 66.6±5.9 kg; male officers, n=43; age=40.0±7.4 years; years of service=7.3± 6.5 years; height=180.5±6.2 cm; weight=88.9±11.9 kg) who each completed a minimum of two or a maximum of four concurrent work shifts (2 day shifts/ 2 night shifts).
- Non-identifiable data covering these police officers' shifts were extracted from the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, which captures the specific types of occupational tasks attended by police officers whilst on duty.
- The police stations in which these officers operated were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring they were stations that operated over a complete 24-hour period.
- The CAD data were imported into SPSS (v.20) and summarized by station, task and duration. Descriptive statistics were calculated to profile the participants, as a group, the tasks attended and the task durations. Sub analysis included profiling these statistics by their three geographical locations (metro, urban and rural).
- Ethics approval for the study was given by the Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee (RO 1893).

RESULTS

- A total of 292 tasks (mean 29.2±17.5 tasks per station) were attended by officers,
- The majority of which came from the six rural stations (n=199: two urban stations n=54; two metro stations n=39).
- Of the 40 distinct task types attended, '**check bona fides**' (27%) was the most frequently occurring task followed by attending a '**domestic incident**' (14%).
- The least frequently occurring task type was '**attend following a threatening phone call**' (<1%).
- On average, the longest duration task was '**effecting an arrest**' (mean=43.50±78.85 mins, range 2 mins to 249 mins, occurrence n=10, 3.4%).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that police tasks are **highly varied** in terms of type and, notably, duration and add operational context to the current literature focusing on physical activities and postures.

The frequencies and types of tasks may differ between regions although more dedicated research investigating regional differences is needed.



PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Coaches training law enforcement personnel, whether they be new recruits, serving officers wanting to improve performance or serving officers undergoing a return-to-work program, need to ensure that these personnel **develop physical fitness across a spectrum of capabilities** and task durations ranging from a very short period to a protracted duration.

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