

NON-FATAL INJURIES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Study finds a rise in assaults on officers requiring emergency room visits, better tracking of injuries is needed

Policing Issue

Relatively little is known about police officer non-fatal injuries across the U.S. in terms of how the injuries occur and how they affect the officer and the department. This knowledge gap must be filled in order to reduce injury rates and the impact of the injuries on officers and agencies and to improve officer safety generally.

Methodology

This study examines law enforcement injuries during 2003-2014 that required hospital treatment. A national sample of 67 U.S. hospitals provided data from 2003 to 2014 on work related injuries sustained by a law enforcement officer while on duty.

Findings

Between 2003 and 2014 the overall injury rate for law enforcement officers was 635 per 10,000 full time equivalent (FTE) workers – compared to the injury rate of all other U.S. workers (213 per 10,000). This rate increased from 2007 to 2011, then decreased until 2014, resulting in a 1.2% annual

increase across the 12 years. The most commonly injured body parts were hands and fingers, and lower extremities, and the most common diagnosis was sprains and strains.

Nonfatal injury rates for bodily reaction and transportation injuries did not significantly change during the 9-year time period, however, rates for assault-related injuries significantly increased 2.9% annually from 2003 to 2011. Between 2012 and 2014, the leading nonfatal injury events were violence and other injuries by people or animals (45%), transportation incidents (12%; falls, slips, and trips (11%600), contact with objects and equipment (11%), and over-exertion and bodily reactions (10%).

Implications for Policing

This is the first study to demonstrate an upward national trend in assault-related injuries among law enforcement. The increase in injury rates among law enforcement officers from 2007 to 2011 was a divergent trend from all other U.S. workers, who saw a significant decrease in work-related injuries from 2003-2014.

With 93% of police officers stating that they are concerned about their safety on the job¹, the tracking of these assaults within and across agencies is vital in understanding the true impact of the potential changing landscape of civilian and officer encounters. It is imperative for agencies to track how assaults are being documented, the circumstances under which they are occurring, and any long-term impacts resulting from these rising assaults.

The full report can be found at: [http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(17\)30716-X/fulltext](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(17)30716-X/fulltext)



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¹Morin R, Parker K, Stepler R, Mercer A. Behind the badge: amid protests and calls for reform, how police view their jobs, key issues and recent fatal encounters between blacks and police. Pew Research Center. http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/01/06171402/Police-Report_FINAL_web.pdf