THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON POLICING

A CASE STUDY OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

PREPARED BY

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GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY | Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy

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A Case Study of the Fairfax County Police Department

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in early 2020 and continuing through 2022, has been one of the largest, if not most impactful public health crises in recent history. With over one million lives lost in the United States at the time of writing, the pandemic significantly impacted all aspects of social, economic, and civic life. Given this, the short and long-term impacts on criminal justice processes and institutions were significant.

This report documents an in-depth case study of the impacts of the pandemic on a large, suburban police agency, the Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department (FCPD) in Fairfax, Virginia. Near the nation's capital, Fairfax County is home to a diverse and large populace, with a police department of approximately 1,400 sworn officers serving over 1.1 million people. The pandemic severely disrupted life in the county, as it did in many other jurisdictions across the United States. Faced with this unprecedented and fast-moving public health crisis, the police department had to adjust its policies, deployment, human resources strategy, and interactions with the community quickly. These changes focused on keeping the department's workforce safe from COVID while simultaneously carrying out the agency's mandate of maintaining public safety.

Early in the pandemic, the Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Assistance implemented its *Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program,* which provided funds to eligible states, local government units, and tribes to strengthen the prevention, preparation, and response to COVID-19 and foreseeable related problems in the future.[1] George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (GMU-CEBCP) partnered with the FCPD to apply for this award as a sub-award recipient to study the impacts of the pandemic on the department. The study aimed to assess the pandemic's impacts on crimes, disorders, and other public safety concerns, police operations and deployment, community-police relationships, and other organizational impacts. The goal of this study was not only to document the impacts of COVID-19 on FCPD but to provide lessons learned and recommendations for other agencies and FCPD to strengthen their prevention, preparation, and response for future public health crises.

The GMU-CEBCP research team used a multi-method approach to conduct this extensive assessment. This method included:

1. **Collecting documentation** to understand FCPD's strategy and timeline of events;
2. **Using a random-sample community survey** of 6,000 households to gauge community perceptions of aspects of FCPD's COVID response.
3. **Implementing a workforce survey** of all sworn and non-sworn staff in FCPD to understand the experiences of employees during this period.
4. **Analyzing workforce data** provided by the FCPD to understand how COVID impacted the availability of personnel and use of sick leave.

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[1] See https://bja.ojp.gov/program/cesf/news-and-information.

5. **Conducting interviews** of those involved in COVID-19 policy implementation and also officers and supervisors from district stations.
6. **Analyzing calls for service** for trends and patterns during the COVID pandemic.

Summary of Findings

The FCPD's experience with COVID-19, especially in the early months of the pandemic, mirrored many other agencies in the United States, large and small. A national survey by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and George Mason University (IACP-GMU)[2] indicated that many agencies experienced similar declines in overall calls for service; initial challenges with personal protective equipment (PPE); adjustments to the workforce, leave, and remote work; transitions to remote response for some calls for service; and reductions in community-oriented and proactive policing activities. Given these national trends, many aspects of FCPD's experience are similar and generalizable to large, small, urban, suburban, and rural agencies.

Initial Reaction and Response

➢ The FCPD took extensive action at the start of the pandemic to protect employees from COVID transmission while at the same time providing for public safety. The agency's key steps included establishing an incident management team who activated the incident command system to manage its COVID response, initiating safety protocols and training within the agency, reassigning many employees to remote work, adjusting to new sick leave policies from the county, creating a vaccination program for employees, expanding remote responses to calls for service, adjusting academy and training, redeploying sworn employees to patrol duty, and reducing community-oriented and proactive contacts in the field.

➢ The agency benefited from infrastructure and the existing practice of using an incident command system (ICS) that pre-dated COVID. In particular, the agency had an existing Safety Officer Section focused on occupational safety and health issues, including exposure to contagious illnesses. This unit was central to developing policies, procedures, and guidance to protect the agency's employees from exposure to COVID. This infrastructure included strong relationships with non-police entities essential to the pandemic response.

➢ While national, state, and local governments provided some general guidance, the agency and the county had to develop strategies for its everyday operations during the pandemic. FCPD command staff had to anticipate the extent to which the pandemic would last, the pandemic's impact on public safety, and the possibility of workforce contagion and staffing shortages. In response, the County developed new types of leave, and the FCPD adopted remote work options during the pandemic's first year. The agency also initially redeployed

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[2] See Lum et al., 2020a; 2020b; 2022.

some detective and specialized unit officers to patrol to anticipate shortages in patrol from possible infections or quarantines.

➢ A significant operational adjustment was in determining how to reduce exposure and COVID contagion but continue to respond to calls for service. The agency expanded its existing infrastructure of remote response to calls for service, deciding to respond remotely rather than in person to minor, low-priority calls and investigative follow-ups. For calls that required a response, the agency developed plans and guidelines on how officers and detectives would safely respond in person. The FCPD also significantly reduced in-person community engagement activities and proactive enforcement.

Impact on the Workforce

➢ The surveys, interviews, and workforce data collected in this project indicated that the pandemic posed significant organizational challenges to the FCPD from a human resources standpoint. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic, combined with heightened concerns about the health and safety of personnel balanced against concerns about maintaining public safety, created a challenging internal environment for the agency. Agency leadership had to anticipate what might happen to the availability of personnel and the need for leave without knowing how long the pandemic would last or its ramifications. The agency also had to communicate evolving changes and policies to its personnel.

➢ Despite these challenges, the agency maintained a steady level of total weekly hours worked during the first six months of the pandemic. In addition, overall leave levels (all categories combined) did not substantially increase or decrease during the pandemic. COVID infections remained very low throughout the first six months of the pandemic.

➢ Sworn personnel generally rated the agency's response as "good" (a middle rating) for its accommodations to employees and availability of PPE, specifically. However, they gave relatively lower ratings for the department's overall COVID response and the agency's communications with employees (rating the agency "fair" to "good"). Non-sworn employees rated the agency higher than sworn personnel ("very good") across the same performance indicators, although giving relatively lower ratings to the timeliness of the response by human resources. Perceived unfairness by both sworn and non-sworn personnel in accommodations given, leave policies, and remote work (a common theme in open-ended responses) may have contributed to lower ratings, as did perceptions of inconsistent adherence to COVID protection policies (e.g., masks, vaccinations, social distancing).

➢ Worries about contracting COVID at work were very high at the beginning of the pandemic but declined substantially after one year for both sworn and non-sworn personnel. Work-related stress levels were high or very high for two-thirds of sworn respondents at the start of the pandemic. Even after a year, 44% of sworn respondents were still experiencing high to very high levels of work-related stress. Open-ended responses and interviews indicated

that other factors besides COVID may have contributed to these stress levels, from national protests due to the murder of George Floyd to local concerns and complaints with the police department.

➢ After the first year of the pandemic, more than a third of sworn respondents expressed interest in leaving the profession. This sentiment was more pronounced in non-White or Hispanic officers and those more likely to experience work-related or personal stress during the initial months of the pandemic and one year later. However, we cannot disentangle how much this sentiment is due to a negative experience with policing during a pandemic or a negative reaction to broader local and national criminal justice issues.

Impacts on Community-Police Relationships

➢ The pandemic substantially changed how the FCPD interacted with the community. Most notably, the agency reduced in-person responses to calls for service, proactive policing, and community engagement. Community meetings were transitioned to virtual environments, and many other community activities were suspended. These findings mirror national trends. The IACP-GMU survey found that community policing and proactive contacts with the public were often restricted or stopped in the majority of agencies across the United States at the beginning of the pandemic. Some of these reductions persisted into 2022 for the FCPD.

➢ Despite the reduction in community interaction, the 2021 Fairfax County Community Survey (see also Lum et al., 2022) indicated that overall satisfaction with the police stayed the same between 2015 and 2021. Fairfax County residents generally felt that the FCPD responded well to the COVID crisis.

➢ Many calls for service were handled remotely between 2020 and 2022. FCPD officers strongly preferred this adjustment and felt that the service they provided remotely was as good or better than services provided in person. A minority (20%) of respondents felt that service provided remotely was less effective. While community residents did not view remote response negatively, those who received police services in person rated their experience and satisfaction higher than those who received services remotely by phone.

➢ The reduction of in-person community-policing activities continued for at least one year after the pandemic, suggesting that community-oriented policing activities may be slow to return to normal levels and modes after a severe public health crisis. Some personnel felt that the quantity and quality of the virtual community engagement activities were lower, while others saw benefits to virtual meetings.

Impact of COVID-19 on Crime and Disorder

➢ The IACP-GMU national survey indicated that many agencies experienced overall declines in calls for service during the initial months of COVID. However, the national trends also

showed that various categories of calls exhibited different patterns. In Fairfax County, the most notable changes were that traffic-related calls declined dramatically, and mental health calls increased. Other call types, including violence, property crimes, and disorders, generally remained within expected levels during the pandemic with a few exceptions (e.g., a spike in auto thefts in the summer of 2020, or a sharp decline in assaults in the first months of the pandemic).

➢ As found in the IACP-GMU surveys, FCPD did experience a significant reduction in officer-initiated (proactive) activity that remained below expected levels through 2021.

➢ Overall, it appears that the FCPD seemed to strike a balance between concerns about health and contagion and responding to public safety demands. From the analysis of calls for service, there did not seem to be significant spikes in crime or disorder during the first year of the pandemic.

➢ However, our more in-depth exploration of domestic violence points to important nuances in deciphering the relationship between COVID and crime/disorder. For example, calls for domestic violence in Fairfax County remained at expected levels. However, officers and detectives dealing with family violence felt there had been an increase. Our interviews revealed that the calls for service trend might mask changes in the nature of domestic violence, the frequency or modality of reporting, and the overall landscape of public safety related to domestic violence (e.g., opportunities for crime, responses to victims and offenders, availability of support services, and responses of other justice institutions). Support for victims or monitoring of offenders were more challenging during COVID that may have downstream effects. This "masking" may also be the case for other crime and disorder categories.

Recommendations for Law Enforcement

The COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented in the U.S. However, given the world's connectivity, the globalization of trade and travel, and changes in technology and governance, the likelihood of a future serious and similar public health crisis is possible. Several recommendations from the FCPD experience may help prepare other agencies for the next crisis:

1. If they have not done so already, agencies should review their current infectious disease and health safety protocols and conduct a more formal and comprehensive assessment of their COVID response, as done here. Such after-action assessments can identify strengths and weaknesses in the agency's response, building preparedness for the next public health crisis. Assessments might also flag unintended long-term consequences of various activities or negative aspects of the agency's response that have become institutionalized into daily work.

2. One successful strategy of the FCPD was using the existing infrastructure of a health safety unit to quickly implement infectious disease control and serve as a collaborator and conduit with other public health and safety organizations in the county. Individuals with specialized training in emergency medical response and infectious diseases within this unit were a particularly strong asset during the pandemic. Post-COVID, the FCPD also made the Incident Command System Coordinator and Office of Emergency Liaison position permanent, recognizing the importance of these positions.

3. Strategic discussions should include both internal workforce issues (e.g., leave, training, remote work, quarantine policies, and health safety protocols) as well as adjustments to patrol, investigative, and specialized unit deployments. In the same vein, agencies should have demobilization plans for returning to normal operations that include internal workplace arrangements and external deployment practices (e.g., responding to calls for service, community engagement activities, proactive policing, and supervision). Agencies should try to anticipate the unintended consequences of both workplace and deployment decisions. For example, certain deployment decisions, such as remote response or virtual community engagement, may become institutionalized that do not benefit the agency and the community in the long run. Some workplace decisions like leave and remote work options may lead to personnel friction (see next point).

4. In a health crisis involving contagion, agencies should try to anticipate perceptions of inequities or unfairness in accommodations, leave, and remote work for employees. These also include perceptions of inconsistencies in the implementation of, and adherence to, mask-wearing, social distancing, and other health and safety protocols. Such perceptions may challenge already difficult work environments and create adverse effects that can linger beyond the crisis.

5. Communication is challenging in a rapidly evolving crisis. Having a system to communicate with all personnel quickly is a strategy that agencies can work on when not in crisis. Email or intranet systems may be ineffective if officers do not regularly read emails or log in (especially when not on duty). Additionally, coordinated or simplified communications and reminders about specific accommodations and benefits may be welcomed by employees.

6. Generalizations about crime, disorder, and other demands on public safety are hard to anticipate in public health crises and may vary across jurisdictions. Certain issues (like traffic accidents) might decline during a pandemic if stay-at-home orders are placed into effect, while others (like mental health calls) can increase. However, some crime and disorder levels can stay at expected frequencies. These findings emphasize the importance of maintaining patrol strength, preventative activities, and deterrence in the field. Crime analysts should consider tracking various crime and disorder categories and be prepared for deeper explorations about how the nature and reporting modalities of events are changing, even if overall levels remain stable. This recommendation fits well

into an overall crime analysis strategy that regularly tracks crime, disorders, traffic problems, and police activities in response.

7. COVID, combined with other local and national events related to policing and police reform, may have lasting effects on police agencies. In particular, proactive policing and community engagement activities declined in many agencies across the United States. However, a large body of research indicates that proactive policing and community engagement can prevent and reduce crime and improve police legitimacy. Police agencies may need to be especially attentive to long-term drops in police presence and proactivity that might affect these important outcomes.

8. Agencies should determine how COVID and other recent crises affect the recruitment and retention of officers and non-sworn personnel. This challenge may be unevenly distributed across groups—some racial, ethnic, gender, or age groups may be less willing to see policing as a viable profession after a crisis. Tracking stress and worries during a crisis can also help identify individuals needing additional support. For example, officers with higher levels of sustained stress who also do not take advantage of behavioral health resources may be more likely to leave the profession after a crisis.

1. The Impact of COVID-19 on Policing: A Case Study

The COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States

In December 2019, the highly contagious SARS-CoV-2, commonly known as COVID-19, quickly spread worldwide.[3] As early as January 17, 2020, the first reported case of COVID-19 in the United States emerged in the state of Washington. By the end of January 2020, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services declared the virus a "public health emergency." The number and spread of cases began accelerating at the end of February 2020. On March 11th, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. On March 13th, the U.S. President declared a national emergency, and by the end of March 2020, deaths from COVID-19 had begun increasing exponentially. By early April, 42 states had implemented stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidance.[4]

By this writing, over 96 million (and growing) total cases have been reported by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with likely millions more unreported cases. Figure 1.1 shows the daily trends in the number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States reported to the CDC since the pandemic's start. The death toll in just two-and-a-half years in the United States has exceeded one million. To put this into perspective, COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death in the United States, behind heart disease and cancer in 2020 and 2021.[5] As a pandemic and public health crisis, it has been one of the worst infectious diseases modern humanity has known.

The social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overstated. Within two months of the initial reported case in the United States, COVID-19 and its related public health emergency declarations led to dramatic changes in everyday life. The centers of civic life, including schools, government, public services, transportation hubs, social, economic, and religious organizations, and daily exchanges between people either stopped, shut down, or were significantly reduced. People began sheltering indoors and working from home, venturing outside only sparingly for supplies. Family dynamics and life shifted almost overnight as children stopped attending school, and teachers and parents scrambled to navigate working and schooling from home. Transportation and tourism came to a standstill with images showing entire highways and cities eerily void of vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

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[3] See https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html.

[4] See https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/stay-at-home-orders-to-fight-covid19/. See also https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/states-reopen-map-coronavirus.html.

[5] See https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm for 2020 data, and https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7117e1.htm for preliminary reports of 2021 data, released in April 2022.

Figure 1.1. Daily trends in the number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States reported to the CDC

Daily Trends in Number of COVID-19 Deaths in The United States Reported to CDC
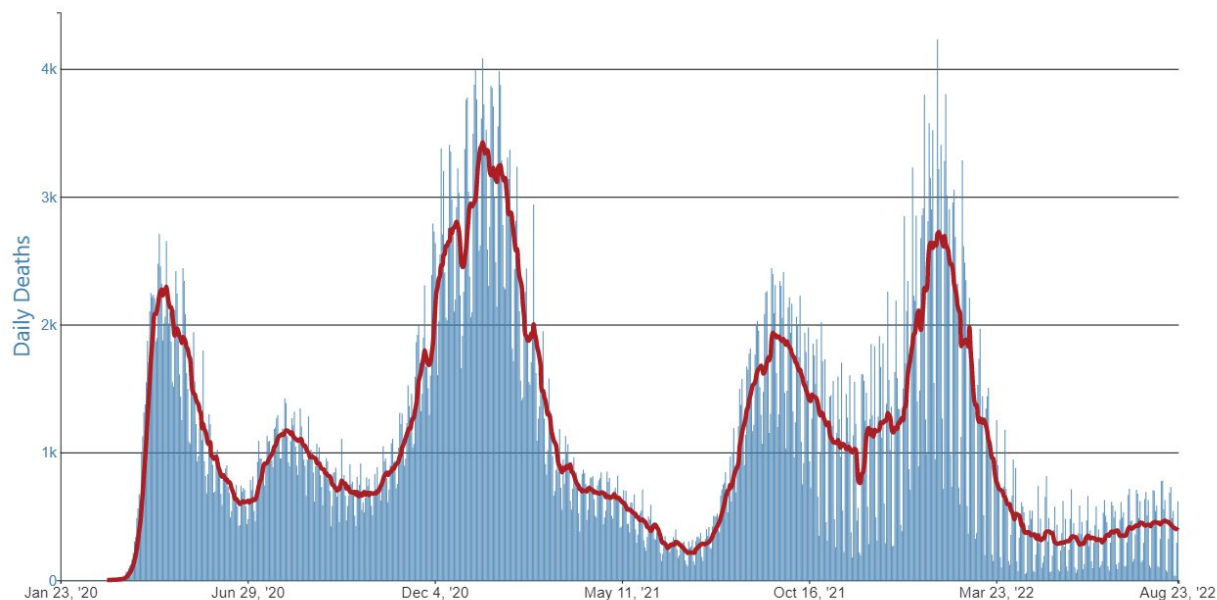
Image downloaded from https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailydeaths_select_00

The pandemic's political, social, economic, and demographic effects were solidified in 2020 and continue to ripple into 2021 and 2022. Throughout 2020, there would be dramatic shifts in employment and commerce, from lost jobs to adjustments in how people labored. A Gallup Panel Workforce Survey (Saad & Wigert, 2021) found that by April 2020, 69% of U.S. employees were working from home for at least some of the work week, with 54% working exclusively from home. These are national averages; the percentages are undoubtedly higher and concentrated in suburban and urban areas, where 80% of the U.S. population lives. The pandemic and its response further exacerbated pre-existing racial, ethnic, gender, and social inequalities. Deteriorating mental health, drug use, alcoholism, and overdoses were additional consequences of these social changes. Hospitals, nursing homes, and morgues bore the brunt of the immediate impact of COVID, overwhelmed by sickness and death. These unprecedented changes in every aspect of life would undoubtedly impact policing and crime.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Criminal Justice and Policing

The pandemic significantly impacted (and altered) the criminal justice system, as it did many other aspects of government (education, social services, public health). In July 2020, the Council on Criminal Justice (CCJ), a leadership think tank,[6] convened a National Commission on COVID-19 to take a broad view of COVID-19 on the criminal justice system (National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, 2020). Primarily focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on crime, jails, prisons, substance abuse treatment, and racial and ethnic disparities, the commission determined that the justice system was unprepared for COVID-19. More specifically, the

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[6] See https://counciloncj.org/.

commission noted several impediments to a better response, including the justice system's size, scale, and scope, the absence of public health coordination, the inconsistencies and variations across justice agencies, and the lack of data, data sharing, and communication.[7]

More specific accounts illustrate CCJ's findings. For example, because of social distancing guidance and the risk of contagion and death, court services reduced person-to-person contact and postponed hearings and trials,[8] leading to extensive downstream backlog impacts (Chan, 2021; Jurva, 2021; Witte & Berman, 2021). Due processes stalled until personnel could find alternatives to gathering juries, public observations, hearings, trials, and jail and prison transportation. Correctional systems also adjusted, attempting to restrict entry and hasten release to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in incarceration environments (Hawks et al., 2020; Marcum, 2020).[9] Some jails restricted intake to the most serious offenders or refused to take arrested individuals who showed signs of illness. A recent report found that approximately 8.2% of state and federal prison populations tested positive for COVID-19 within the first 12 months of the pandemic (Carson et al., 2022). Parole and probation supervision and treatment services were also affected, with officers and providers unable to meet with their clients.

First responders, including police officers, were immediately affected by COVID-19, from their own health and safety to their responses to daily service requests. Unlike schools and other public or private services, law enforcement could not shut down or transition to remote work. By definition, 911 systems are designed to respond to crises. Thus, emergency services had to remain active during COVID-19 to deal with their assigned duties and adjust and increase several capacities to handle individuals sick with COVID-19. The impacts of COVID-19 on law enforcement operations became instantly apparent at the start of the pandemic. For example, the Police Executive Research Forum began a "daily report" on March 17, 2020, in which readers could see real-time comments by police executives about some of their current challenges and activities.[10] On March 19th, the National Policing Institute (NPI, formerly the National Police Foundation) released a briefing for law enforcement in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) also began several efforts to monitor the developing situation, consult with expert practitioners, and inform and advise police agencies on emerging issues.[11]

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[7] See https://counciloncj.org/covid-19/.

[8] These restrictions are too lengthy to review here. However, there is extensive documentation on restrictions in U.S. federal courts (https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/court-website-links/court-orders-and-updates-during-covid19-pandemic) and in state and local courts (for one example in Virginia, see https://www.vacourts.gov/news/items/covid_19.pdf).

[9] Again, these orders are documented differently across states. To see an example from New York, go to https://doccs.ny.gov/doccs-covid-19-report.

[10] See https://www.policeforum.org/covid-19-response#daily.

[11] See https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/law-enforcement-information-on-covid-19. See also International Association of Chiefs of Police and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services *COVID-19 Law Enforcement Impact and Response: Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC)* at https://cops.usdoj.gov/collaborativereform.

Since the pandemic, several studies have surveyed law enforcement officers and some agencies about their reactions and responses to the pandemic (see, e.g., Ekici & Alexander, 2021; Frenkel et al., 2020; Jennings & Perez, 2020; Kyprianides et al., 2021; Maskály et al., 2021; Maskály et al., 2022; Mrozla, 2021). One survey effort was conducted in the immediate wake of the pandemic and shutdowns in March 2020 and again in May 2020 (before the murder of George Floyd) across a national sample. This was the International Association of Chiefs of Police – George Mason University multi-wave, national survey effort (herein, "IACP-GMU survey"), led by the first author of this report and the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP). Those surveys aimed to brief police organizations and researchers with immediate and evolving information about the impacts of COVID-19 on policing (see Lum et al., 2020a, 2020b; Lum et al., 2022).

Several findings emerged from the IACP-GMU survey that supported the need for a deeper dive into agency experiences, motivating this study. Most importantly, the surveys show that COVID's impacts on policing were dramatic in the first two months of the pandemic. Not only were the impacts of COVID-19 on police agency operations substantial, but these impacts were shared across agencies large, small, urban, suburban, and rural. Specifically, the IACP-GMU surveys found that:

- COVID-19 altered the demand for police services. The dramatic change in everyday routines caused by COVID restrictions shifted many longstanding calls for service and crime patterns that police agencies (and researchers) have become accustomed to seeing. Specifically, there was a significant decline in the overall volume of calls for service and certain call types (most significantly traffic crashes and fatalities), confirming patterns others have found when analyzing specific groups of agencies.

- Although the overall volume of calls for service dramatically declined, not all call types went down. A good proportion of agencies reported increases in calls related to domestic violence and mental illness (which likely included drug overdoses). Calls for violence and commercial burglaries remained steady for large proportions of agencies.

- The significant changes in the demand for police services and crime patterns created an entirely new portfolio of community needs for the police; typical resource prioritization and allocations changed within weeks, if not days.

- Many large, small, urban, suburban, and rural agencies modified the supply of their services for various reasons, but primarily to address anticipated infections and staffing shortages. For example, the vast majority of responding agencies restricted officers from responding to specific calls for service in person, and some began answering calls remotely (via telephone and the internet). The majority of agencies also reduced their proactive enforcement, in particular, traffic stops.

- Most agencies surveyed by IACP-GMU also ceased their community engagement activities, and there were likely substantial changes in how agencies interacted with their communities during the pandemic.

- The IACP-GMU survey also found that while most agencies were very concerned with mitigating disease contraction and supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) early in the pandemic. However, by May 2020, most agencies did not seem overly challenged with acquiring PPE.

- Regarding civilian or non-sworn workforce members, agencies tended not to follow the national remote work trend; most agencies only had a small proportion of their civilian workforce working remotely. However, those jurisdictions with large proportions of their non-sworn workforce on remote work were also in states with stay-at-home orders.

- Although there was not a strong pattern of remote work by civilian employees, a significant minority of responding police agencies also reduced the hours of work by civilian employees substantially.

A Case Study of the Fairfax County Police Department

The national IACP-GMU survey illuminated that many agencies, regardless of their size or population served, had similar experiences in their reaction and response to COVID-19. However, a more in-depth case study of agencies was missing from this and other surveys to draw out specific nuances and individual officer, command staff, and civilian staff experiences.

Given this, in May 2020, the CEBCP research team led by Professors Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper partnered with the Fairfax County Police Department to apply for COVID-19 emergency funds to support research and analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on the Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department. The project's goal was to strengthen the prevention, preparation, and response to COVID-19 and foreseeable related problems in the future through an in-depth and holistic case study of the impacts of COVID-19 on the Fairfax County Police Department. The project's scope was to assess the impacts of the pandemic on crimes, disorders, and other public safety concerns, agency organization and operations, the management of human resources, the agency's interaction with the community, the perceptions of the workforce, and community reactions. This report provides the final findings of this endeavor.

Data and Methods for this Case Study

Selection of Fairfax County Police Department as a Study Site

The selection of the Fairfax County Police Department for this case study is both convenient and purposeful. George Mason University (GMU) is one of the largest public universities in Virginia and the largest in its Northern region. Its main campus sits inside Fairfax County, and GMU is an active part of the county's community and knowledge base. The CEBCP has partnered with the FCPD on several research projects since 2006 and also agreed to partner (under then Chief Ed Roessler) for this study. At that time, research activities and travel were restricted due to COVID, and a local partnership was ideal.

Although FCPD was selected because of these conveniences, Fairfax County is also an excellent location to study the impacts of COVID-19 on a police agency. Fairfax County is suburban-urban jurisdiction and part of the Washington, DC, metropolitan region. Before the pandemic, the police department employed approximately 1,400 full-time sworn and 400 non-sworn personnel and would be considered a larger police department in the United States. While it is the case that three-quarters of the 18,000 police agencies in the U.S. have 25 officers or less, approximately 85% of the U.S. population lives in "urban areas," as defined by the U.S. Census.[12] Fairfax County is one of these many urban areas, and its population and police department are comparable to other urban-suburban locales. In 2020, it had a population of 1.15 million, about half of whom describe themselves as non-White or Hispanic, and 31% of its population is born outside the United States. It is one of the wealthier counties in the country and has a lower-than-average crime rate compared to other similarly-populated jurisdictions. At the same time, it has a higher rate (per population) of calls-for-service and can average approximately 1 million calls to the public safety center annually.[13]

Like other cities and counties in the United States, Fairfax County was not immune from COVID. Unfortunately, Fairfax County had the highest number of deaths in the state of Virginia, primarily because of its large and dense population. Thus, lessons and generalizations from the FCPD experience are relevant to many other jurisdictions and police agencies around the country. Additionally, given that the IACP-GMU survey found that agency size is often unrelated to the impacts of COVID-19 on policing, lessons and descriptions about FCPD's response are relatable to many other jurisdictions.

This study aimed to examine the impacts of COVID-19 in Fairfax County on both the police organization and public safety. Given this broad research charge, a multi-method approach was most appropriate. Specifically, the research team:

1. **Collected documentation** about FCPD's strategy and changes in policies;

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[12] See https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2012/04/how-do-we-measure-urban-areas.html.

[13] See https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/911/about-us.

2. **Used a random-sample community survey** of 6,000 households to gauge community perceptions of aspects of FCPD's COVID response;
3. **Implemented a workforce survey** of all sworn and non-sworn staff in FCPD to understand the experiences of employees during this period;
4. **Analyzed workforce data** provided by the FCPD to understand how COVID impacted the availability of personnel and use of sick leave;
5. **Conducted interviews** of those involved in COVID-19 policy implementation and also officers and supervisors from district stations; and
6. **Analyzed calls for service** for trends and patterns during the COVID pandemic.

The FCPD provided specific documentation about their operational decisions, especially in the early stages of the pandemic. This documentation provided a specific timeline of events, general orders, and information about operational adjustments the agency made during the early stages of COVID (a description of the timeline of events relevant to Fairfax County is provided in Table 5.1). The agency also developed a "phased demobilization plan," which they shared with the research team. This plan was for "getting back to business" after COVID cases had declined and was aligned with the state of Virginia and then Governor Northam's three phases of reopening.[14] This documentation was explained and expanded upon in various interviews.

Random-Sample Community Survey

In February 2021, the CEBCP partnered with the FCPD to conduct a random-sample survey of Fairfax County residents as part of the FCPD's continued accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). The CEBCP had also conducted the FCPD's previous community survey in 2015. The survey independently solicited residents' opinions about the services of the FCPD and their perceptions of crime and safety in the respondents' neighborhoods. The overall goal of the survey was to provide the FCPD with a scientifically sound and objective assessment of residents' views of FCPD police officers and the agency. The full description of the survey, including its methodology and main results, is reported in Lum et al. (2022)[15] and is therefore not reported here. However, given that the current COVID project occurred around the same time, we added questions that would be relevant to FCPD's COVID response and included the analysis of those questions in this study.

The community survey asked about residents' experiences with the FCPD "over the last 12 months," covering the COVID period. The relevant questions from this survey for this project included overall questions about the community's satisfaction with the police during the first year of the pandemic period, as well as the specific question: "In your opinion, how would you rate the police department's handling of the impacts of COVID-19 on public safety?". We also asked residents if they had called, contacted, or flagged down the FCPD for service in the last

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[14] See https://www.nbc29.com/2020/05/04/watch-gov-northam-holding-press-briefing-covid-/.
[15] See https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/sites/police/files/assets/documents/2021%20fairfax%20county%20community%20survey.pdf.

twelve months during the COVID period and about their level of satisfaction with the services they received. We asked questions to gauge differences in the satisfaction with telephone versus in-person responses, given that the agency had shifted to remote response for a significant proportion of their calls for service during COVID.

To ensure that all possible households[16] had an equal chance of receiving the survey, we randomly selected 6,000 households, including rental units, to receive the survey. We oversampled non-White/Hispanic households to try and obtain a more representative sample of the racial and ethnic mix of Fairfax County, given our previous experience in 2015 of receiving a lower response rate from these groups. Completed surveys were returned from 1,218 of the 6,000 households that received them (20.3%). White and non-Hispanic residents continue to be overrepresented as respondents. However, the oversampling of non-White or Hispanic residents helped increase the survey's non-White or Hispanic representativeness from 24% in 2015 to 37.4% in 2021.

The findings from the COVID portions of the community survey are presented primarily in Chapter 4. A copy of the community survey is provided in Appendix A.

Workforce Survey of All Sworn and Non-Sworn Personnel

In May 2021, the research team collaborated with the FCPD to implement a workforce survey of all its employees. Employees in FCPD are generally categorized as "sworn" (law enforcement authorized) and "non-sworn" (all other employees). The survey aimed to understand employee experiences and perceptions about the FCPD's handling of COVID internally and externally. For example, all employees were asked about their satisfaction with resources provided by the FCPD and the county more generally related to COVID, their perceptions and experiences about remote work (if applicable), their concerns about their health and safety during this time, and accommodations and communications provided by the agency. We also asked sworn personnel about their response to calls for service and their perceptions of their service to community members during COVID.

The survey was implemented electronically using employee emails. The survey request was sent to all 1,394 sworn employees and 392 non-sworn employees at the time by email. The link to complete the survey was managed by the CEBCP, and all data were collected through secured servers at George Mason University. As with the community survey, we did not request any identifying information from respondents and assured anonymity and confidentiality in the survey collection and reporting (all research methods for this study are approved and monitored by George Mason University's Human Subjects and Institutional Review Board[17]). After the survey was released on May 3, 2021, all employees were given three email reminders

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[16] Fairfax County, Virginia, contains approximately 400,000 residential households, which house its 1.15 million residents.

[17] See https://oria.gmu.edu/topics/human-subjects/.

(on May 6, 13, and 20) to complete the survey. Agency leadership also encouraged survey participation in their respective commands.

The response rate for the survey was 38.6%. In total, 529 sworn employees (40% of all sworn) and 116 non-sworn employees (30% of all non-sworn) responded to the survey.[18] The findings from the workforce survey are primarily shared in Chapter 3 but also in Chapter 4. A copy of the questions from the workforce survey is provided in Appendix B.

Workforce Data

In addition to the workforce survey, the research team also collected aggregate workforce data. This data did not identify any individual employee but included the total number of payroll hours logged per day by sworn and non-sworn employees from January 1, 2018, through September 20, 2020 (when the data was provided for this study). The agency also regularly collects leave data. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, the agency developed an "Activity Tracker Related to COVID-19" for commanding officers to keep track of the various leave categories used by those under their supervision. This data included the total number of leave hours accumulated each week by employees by various categories of leave, including leave specific to COVID-19. Trends of this data are presented alongside the workforce survey data in Chapter 3.

Interviews of Key Personnel and Open-Ended Survey Responses

In addition to the surveys, data, and document collection and analysis, the research team interviewed several individuals involved in implementing and managing the FCPD's COVID operations. We also interviewed officers, detectives, and supervisors in districts who were part of the daily operations of the police department during COVID. The interviews provided a rich context for interpreting our survey data and document analysis.

To conduct these interviews, we worked closely with the FCPD command to identify those with the most knowledge about specific aspects of the COVID response. We also contacted district commanders from three stations to coordinate officer, detective, and supervisor interviews. Following our approved Internal Review Board Human Subjects Application with George Mason University, we sought voluntary and informed consent from those identified by asking them if they would like to participate in a 30-60 minute interview once identified. Each individual was given an informed consent form ahead of time that outlined the specific assurances of confidentiality and the questions to be asked (see Appendix C). We used a semi-structured interviewing approach with pre-planned questions for our interview instrument. We used a modified questionnaire for patrol officers, detectives, and first-line supervisors (also included in Appendix C). Given COVID restrictions and transmission concerns during our data collection, we

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[18] In Qualtrics (our survey data collection program), 566 surveys were initiated by sworn personnel. However, 37 surveys had no answers completed. Thus, a final sample of 529 surveys was used. Similarly, 123 surveys were initiated by non-sworn personnel. However, 7 surveys had no answers completed, resulting in a final non-sworn sample of 116 surveys.

conducted most of these interviews virtually, using the secured Zoom platform hosted by George Mason University. However, we conducted interviews at the district station in person. In total, the research team conducted 34 interviews. These included 23 sworn personnel (administrative/command=7; sergeants=4; detectives=7; uniformed officers=5) and 11 non-sworn personnel (within FCPD=8; county employees=3). Six individuals declined to be interviewed.

In addition to these interviews, we also included an open-ended survey question in our workforce survey for employees to provide any additional thoughts. In total, 195 sworn and 35 non-sworn personnel provided anonymous (and sometimes extensive) comments to an open-ended survey question. Given that we could not conduct extensive interviews throughout the FCPD given this project's scope, we analyzed these responses to provide further information about workforce perceptions. These findings are provided throughout Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Time Series Analysis of Calls for Service

To determine how the pandemic and related policy changes impacted crime, disorder, and policing trends in Fairfax County, we analyzed trends in calls-for-service (CFS) data between January 2015 and February 2021. The purpose of analyzing such a long time series is to determine to what extent changes post-COVID were unusual given normal trends experienced by the agency pre-COVID. We use calls for service rather than reports of crime incidents because calls for service provide the best gauge of the total demands on the police, including for non-crime incidents. For example, calls for service record minor disorders, traffic events, suspicious circumstances or people, medical emergencies, and fears that would not appear in official written reports of crime (most calls for service are not formally documented in a crime incident report). Calls for service data also capture proactive, officer-initiated activity.

We analyzed 3.1 million calls-for-service records between January 2015 – February 2021. These records reflect over 250 specific classifications of events, which we grouped into 14 categories:

- Administrative-related, non-crime calls
- Alarms
- Disorders (e.g., disputes, trespassing, animals, graffiti, noise, code violations, etc.)
- Domestic-related incidents
- Follow-ups and service requests
- Persons crimes (e.g., assaults, homicides, robberies, sexual assaults, weapons)
- Other interpersonal crimes (e.g., harassment and threats)
- Mental-related
- Missing persons
- Property crimes (e.g., thefts, burglaries, auto thefts, frauds)
- Proactive work by officers (traffic and otherwise)
- Suspicious incidents

- Traffic-related (non-proactive)
- Vice, overdoses, and narcotics events

To analyze this data, we used an auto-regressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) modeling technique with a forecast package in R, a statistical application to analyze quantitative data. ARIMA modeling is a time-series analysis approach that examines the "normal" trend of data (from pre-COVID periods) against the trends that appeared during the COVID period (post-March 2020). Adding a forecasting element allowed the research team to use pre-COVID trends and patterns in the data to forecast expected levels of CFS for each month of the first year of the pandemic (March 2020 – February 2021). These forecasts produce a likely range of the levels of calls that would have been expected in the absence of the pandemic. Comparing the actual level of calls for service during the pandemic with the forecasted level allows us to determine if the actual levels of calls for service changed significantly from the pre-COVID period. The ARIMA-forecasting technique is particularly appropriate for studying COVID-19 calls for service trends as there is no comparison site that was *not* affected by the pandemic (Brantingham et al., 2021; Estévez-Soto, 2021).

The remainder of our report is organized as follows: Chapter 2 details the various policy adjustments and actions that the FCPD implemented to set the stage for the rest of the report. Chapter 3 showcases the workforce survey findings, workforce data analysis, and relevant interview findings. Chapter 4 describes community-police relationships during the pandemic, including the relevant results from the community and workforce surveys and the interview data. Chapter 5 presents the results of the time series analysis of the calls for service data, the analysis of police proactivity, and relevant interview data that provides context to these findings (including a special section on domestic violence). Finally, chapter 6 summarizes these findings and makes several recommendations for law enforcement agencies based on this case study.

2. FCPD's Pandemic Response and Preparedness

At the start of the pandemic, the FCPD command staff and human resources leadership were concerned about two priorities for the agency: keeping officers healthy and safe from COVID-19 and maintaining public safety. The primary challenge with achieving these dual priorities is that public safety in Fairfax County has customarily been provided in-person by officers in the community. Since the advent of 911 systems in the United States, the expectations of police officers to respond to calls in person, for detectives to investigate crimes in person, and for supervisors to handle complaints and other community concerns in person have been a regular fixture of American law enforcement. In addition, the police are also involved in responding to medical emergencies and deaths (as they are first responders) with fire departments and emergency medical technicians. The infectious nature of COVID-19 created a particularly challenging environment for meeting these two priorities simultaneously.

Even before the pandemic, law enforcement agencies have been concerned about the health and well-being of their personnel. However, this concern has focused on officer injury, specific concerns about contracting particular diseases, or preventative care. For example, agencies reduce physical injuries to officers by providing them with protective gear, defensive weapons, and training, or by requiring officers to wear seatbelts while driving (given that automobile accidents are the most common cause of injury to officers). Police agencies protect against infectious diseases by providing officers with training and personal protective equipment for specific calls where bodily fluids or diseases may be present and have protocols when officers are exposed. Depending on the agency, officers may also be required or encouraged to stay physically fit, exercise, refrain from smoking, or take regular health and wellness assessments.

However, at the pandemic's start, many agencies had to reassess their health, safety, and wellness protocols quickly. COVID-19 presented an unprecedented challenge to police agencies. It is an airborne, respiratory, and contagious disease that has infected at least 60% of people in the United States by some estimates.[19] Given the interpersonal nature of policing, the likelihood of officers contracting the disease could be high if exposed. Not only did agencies have to be concerned about contracting the disease from interacting with the public, but also from each other. The contagious nature of the disease and concerns about severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID contraction made officer health and safety an even heightened concern for the agency administration, officers, and their families. In the early stages of the pandemic and before vaccinations were available, it was not unusual to hear stories of first responders finding ways to keep the disease from entering their home and family life (i.e., not going home, sleeping outside, cleaning off before entering personal homes, etc.).

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[19] See https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7117e3.htm?s_cid=mm7117e3_w.

This chapter describes the FCPD's response and preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the pandemic's early stages. The chapter examines steps that the agency took internally to protect the health of its staff, as well as changes the agency made in how it served the public, given the infectious nature of the disease. The chapter also addresses how the FCPD cooperated with other county agencies in responding to the pandemic. We describe these actions broadly, noting that the details and complexities involved in these matters, some of which are discussed in subsequent chapters, were substantial.[20] A detailed list of events by date is provided in Table 5.1 in Chapter 5.

Preparedness Before the Pandemic

The FCPD already had experience dealing with major public safety crises, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the subsequent Anthrax scares that same year, the Washington DC area sniper case, and even the Y2K crisis, that laid the foundations for the agency's response to COVID-19. Given these experiences and general preparedness principles for law enforcement, the agency had an existing infrastructure for dealing with major crises, including using incident command systems (ICS) for managing critical events and long-term crises. The agency also had good working relationships with other county agencies, most notably the Department of Health, the Department of Public Safety Communications, and the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, which would prove to be critical in responding to COVID-19.

The FCPD had also been prepared for critical incidents and crises involving diseases and other biohazards. Before the pandemic, the FCPD sent several key staff for training on biohazard response. Moreover, the agency had its own volunteer medical director and a Safety Officer Section focused on occupational safety and health issues, including exposure to contagious illnesses. Dealing with dangerous exposures and respiratory illnesses was a significant emphasis of the section before COVID. Among other duties, the safety officers managed the FCPD's personal protective equipment (PPE) and disinfected police facilities (e.g., using electrostatic sprayers) during the regular flu season. This section (described in detail below) was central to the FCPD's response to COVID. The FCPD also had a substantial supply of PPE at the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, including roughly 15,000 masks.[21]

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[20] This chapter focuses primarily on actions taken by the FCPD. Chapter 5 (Table 5.1) describes actions taken by other state and local entities that had the potential to affect public safety (e.g., court closures, school closures, and executive orders issued by the governor).

[21] The agency had to relinquish some of this stockpile during the crisis due to problems with the quality of the equipment. This necessitated some rationing of PPE during the initial months of the pandemic, but the agency was able to maintain adequate supplies.

Internal Safety and Health Responses

Developing the Emergency Response

In March 2020, the FCPD established an incident management team (IMT) that followed incident command system (ICS) protocols to manage the COVID emergency. The Planning and Research Bureau commander, who had been monitoring the COVID situation with public health officials since January (see below), was selected as the incident commander of the IMT, with other designated staff from throughout the agency assigned to assist in defined roles. The IMT directed and coordinated the agency's response to the pandemic via incident action plans that were updated weekly. These plans covered safety and health issues, emergency patrol mobilization, and plans for remote work and remote response to calls for service, all of which are discussed below. The IMT also developed plans to demobilize the agency in stages and return to normal operations (i.e., a Demobilization Plan) as the pandemic subsided. The FCPD's safety officers reported to the IMT commander throughout this time.[22]

Responses by FCPD Safety and Health Staff

Before COVID, the Safety Officer Section had one full-time officer and ten supplemental officers who could be activated when needed. The full-time safety officer and the Planning and Research Bureau commander (who became the IMT commander) began consulting with county health authorities about the developing COVID-19 pandemic as early as January 2020. When the crisis took hold in Virginia (and elsewhere) in March 2020, the supplemental safety officers were activated, and the Safety Officer Section began providing 24-hour coverage and support throughout the agency. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the safety officers conferred with county health authorities and kept abreast of advice from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

The Safety Officer Section advised the FCPD on safety procedures during the crisis and performed numerous other functions. These tasks were challenging because COVID-19 was an unknown disease at the outset of the pandemic, and knowledge and guidance from health authorities were continually evolving and changing. This guidance included:

- keeping the agency up to date on what was known about COVID and its risks;
- serving as translators of the science of infectious diseases and answering questions about disease transmission that personnel might have;
- training officers and supervisors on the use of PPE, sanitation, and safety procedures;
- sanitizing police facilities;
- helping the agency manage its PPE supply;
- developing procedures for quarantining officers with COVID symptoms and conducting contact tracing to identify other potentially infected personnel;

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[22] After COVID, the FCPD also created a permanent Office of Emergency Management Liaison/ICS Coordinator position.

- coordinating with health officials and local hospitals to conduct COVID testing for officers (especially in the early stages of the pandemic when testing availability was very limited);
- advising personnel on field operations (e.g., how to safely handle interactions with citizens);
- developing and implementing staff wellness checks;
- organizing and encouraging vaccination efforts (once vaccines were available); and
- responding to a high volume of incidents in the field—including approximately 2,100 calls from March 2020 through November 2020—to guide officers and assist in handling potentially hazardous cases, such as those involving sick individuals.

The Safety Officer Section also assisted the FCPD with two other critical tasks to reduce officers' risk of exposure to COVID in the field. One was to assist the agency in developing a volunteer Infectious Disease Response Team (IDRT), which responded to all scenes involving sick or deceased individuals starting in early April 2020. Team members were given PPE and training to reduce their risk of infection, and safety officers also guided IDRT officers in the field. IDRT fielded four officers per shift in the early months of the pandemic, which was reduced to two officers per shift in July 2020. More than 90 officers were trained for IDRT service, and the team responded to upwards of 1,900 incidents, most of which were death scenes, from April 2020 through February 2021. The deployment of IDRT enabled the agency to minimize the exposure of other officers to these high-risk situations.

Another critical task for the safety officers involved managing the agency's prisoner transport vans during the early months of the pandemic. These vehicles, based at each district station, had to be modified on the inside (i.e., some seats had to be removed) so that officers and subjects could be seated with proper physical distancing. Further, vehicle operators had to make pickups in the field rather than loading arrestees at the stations because officers making arrests could not safely place arrestees in their patrol vehicles. Guided by the safety officers, the FCPD expanded its transport vans from four to eight and trained 50 assigned officers to serve as drivers.

Remote Work

To minimize employees' exposure to COVID, FCPD provided some of its staff with the opportunity to work remotely for part or the entirety of their workweek. This was not generally available to patrol officers. However, the agency took other steps to minimize patrol's risk of exposure, such as holding roll calls virtually or outdoors and minimizing patrol officers' public contacts through operational adjustments discussed below. Early in the pandemic, two-thirds of the personnel at agency headquarters (sworn and non-sworn) were assigned to work remotely, as were two-thirds of staff working for several specialized investigative units. This allocation was changed to one-half working remotely in June 2020 as the agency moved into Phase 2 of its Demobilization Plan. One-half of the agency's district-level detectives were also assigned to work remotely at this time, following the temporary redeployment of many district detectives to patrol work in the earliest months of the pandemic (see below). When the agency

entered Phase 3 of its Demobilization Plan in July 2020, all district-level detectives resumed working in person, as did two-thirds of all staff in other units that had remote deployments. These adjustments lasted until nearly the end of March 2021. During these periods, district commanders had discretion in allowing remote work for staff who did not contribute to patrol staffing and were not members of the groups above. Remote working has continued in the FCPD for some non-sworn staff at reduced levels since the pandemic, subject to the needs of different stations and bureaus.

Police Academy and Training

The FCPD kept its training academy open during the pandemic, which helped to avoid critical staffing shortages. In-service training was canceled in the early months of COVID and then moved online for several types of training, effectively accelerating plans to shift to online learning that were already in motion before the pandemic. In addition, new officer training was moved online at times due to rashes of COVID infections or exposures involving several individuals. Still, academy personnel generally maintained in-person instruction for recruits with attention to health guidelines for social distancing, masking, disinfection, and other precautions. Maintaining in-person training for many aspects of the academy was also necessary for the agency to meet state standards for training new officers. However, ride-alongs and field training were limited during COVID, which caused some concerns about the preparation of new officers at that time.

The spring 2020 session of the Community Police Academy was canceled. This academy usually occurs twice yearly and is attended by a variety of community members. The academy was moved online for the Fall of 2020, which presented logistical challenges and resulted in lower enrollments. The Community Police Academy is currently back to in-person classes.

Sick Leave Policies

Several leave policies were implemented during the pandemic (in addition to regular sick leave or injury leave). Special categories (added to existing categories not shown here) included:

- **Administrative Leave-Pandemic:** Between March 15 and May 8, 2020, employees were eligible to receive up to six weeks of this type of leave which could be used for the following reasons: lack of childcare, inability to work due to being quarantined, sickness due to exposure to the COVID-19 virus, employee's compromised immune system, employee's serious health condition, the employee being age 65 or older, or lack of work when a facility was closed with no alternative placement or telework was available. Sworn police officers could only use this leave after May 8th if they had a job-related exposure to COVID-19.

- **Administrative Leave-Pandemic Gap:** This type of leave could be used through December 31, 2020, for employees unable to work or telework to be paid at two-thirds of their regular pay rate up to a maximum of $200/day, for a total benefit of $12,000. This could also be

used for employees who were age 65 or older. School crossing guards primarily used this leave given that in-person school was shut down.

- **Emergency Paid Sick Leave-Self:** This category falls under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act from the U.S. Department of Labor which requires certain employers to provide certain employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The provisions applied from April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020.[23]

- **FMLA[24] Original/Qualifying Event-Sick:** This type of leave could be used if an employee contracted COVID and had complications related to COVID (the complications would be FMLA-qualifying, but the contraction would not be).

- **FMLA Original/Qualifying Event-Injury Leave:** This is related to worker's compensation claims for injuries sustained on duty. The human resources division was unaware of these claims being used for COVID-related issues.

Fairfax County also took additional steps to compensate employees for service during the COVID crisis. On February 9, 2021, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved a one-time hazard pay bonus of $2,000 to recognize eligible Fairfax County government employees who worked under hazardous conditions and met several criteria. Further, the county granted "pandemic appreciation leave" to employees in the spring of 2022 to compensate those who could not take administrative pandemic leave during 2020. Under this policy, FCPD and other county employees are eligible for two weeks of pandemic appreciation leave minus any administrative pandemic leave they took earlier.

Vaccinations

The FCPD began administering vaccines to its staff in January 2021 when they became available from the Department of Health. The agency organized and administered vaccination efforts through the Public Safety Occupational Health Center (OHC). The OHC is a private medical practice contracted by the FCPD, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (which

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[23] From the FCPD Human Resources Division: "This leave gave employees up to two weeks of paid sick leave which was paid at 100% or 66% based on the reason the leave was being taken. Leave paid at 100% was capped at $511/day ($5,110 total) and leave paid at 66% was capped at $200/day ($2,000 total). For payment at 100%, the following reasons qualified: Employee was subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19, employee was advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine, employee was experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and was seeking a medical diagnosis. For payment at 66%, the following reasons qualified: Employee was caring for an individual subject to an order for a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order or caring for an individual who was advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19, employee was experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the US Dept of Health and Human Services, or employee was caring for their child whose school or place of care was closed due to COVID-19 related reasons."

[24] FMLA refers to the Family and Medical Leave Act, see https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla.

manages the OHC), and several other county law enforcement agencies.[25] This was a considerable logistical and planning effort as it required the FCPD and its partners to select locations for vaccinations; arrange for personnel to staff the clinics (including emergency medical personnel to handle any adverse reactions); develop a system for getting staff signed up; and account for the possibility that officers and staff might need time off if they suffered side effects from the vaccine. In October 2021, Fairfax County Government issued a policy requiring all county employees to be vaccinated or tested weekly for COVID. Accordingly, the FCPD had to develop internal guidelines and procedures for regular testing of unvaccinated officers and staff, which required considerable management on the part of supervisors (an estimated 15%-20% of employees remain unvaccinated at this time).

Adjustments to Field Operations

The FCPD also implemented several significant changes to field operations to minimize COVID risks to its personnel and ration its use of PPE while still providing needed services to the public. Some of the most significant adjustments are described below. Many of these changes were instituted temporarily in the early stages of the pandemic and phased out in stages based on the FCPD's Incident Demobilization Plan. The timeline for demobilization was based in part on then-Governor Northam's plans for reopening the state's government, business, and public activities more generally as the pandemic subsided.

Responding to Calls for Service

Before the pandemic, the FCPD had a unit called the Community Reporting Section (CRS), where certain non-emergency calls would be diverted to a telephone line by offering the caller the option to make a report online or to call the CRS phone number to report the issue. In the event the caller declined those options, the dispatch center could create an event for CRS personnel to call the caller back when available. Before COVID, CRS was used in limited ways and staffed with one full-time officer position, working Monday through Thursday and augmented with light duty personnel during regular business hours.[26] In March 2020, to reduce the possibility of contagion, the FCPD expanded the CRS staffing, hours, and call types to handle many more calls for service remotely by phone rather than in person. CRS began operating 24 hours a day and included staff at the FCPD's headquarters, district stations, and patrol officers in the field who were given the discretion to respond to certain calls using cell phones issued by the county. Fifty-two school resource officers were also temporarily added to the CRS system, given that schools had shut down. Some stations also assigned remote call reporting duties to officers under quarantine, light duty, or administrative leave.

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[25] The OHC provides medical services to these agencies on a regular basis (e.g., physical examinations, x-rays, and bloodwork).

[26] The agency also had an online reporting system for handling financial crimes (which was unaffected by COVID).

Calls that could be handled remotely included: calls for informational or insurance purposes; calls that were not events in progress or that were not likely to lead to an immediate apprehension of a suspect; incidents in which suspect information was too general to provide investigative leads; and cases in which victims did not wish to prosecute. Through the CRS, the FCPD handled roughly 40% of its calls by phone at the height of the COVID crisis (see Chapter 4).[27] FCPD data also show that roughly one-quarter to one-third of incidents resulting in a written report during the spring and summer of 2020 were handled by phone (the FCPD had dedicated personnel reviewing reports taken by phone to ensure they were handled appropriately). This was a significant operational change, as the agency had previously answered most calls in person and responded in person whenever a caller insisted that an officer be dispatched. During COVID, if a community member insisted on a police response for a low-priority call, this was evaluated by the duty officer.

The agency began to scale back the expanded CRS somewhat in July 2020. At that point, CRS operations were continued each day from 5:30 am to 1:00 am and were staffed by one day officer and one evening officer in each FCPD station. However, patrol officers were still given discretion for responding remotely to calls for service. Through 2021, the CRS continued to operate, staffed by light duty officers and others at the district stations, and officers continued to have some discretion in responding to calls for service remotely. FCPD data show that the percentage of incident reports handled by phone declined to 15%-20% by the spring and summer of 2021. As of August 2022, officers are now expected to return to pre-pandemic call response practices, with the CRS operating limitedly at pre-pandemic levels.

For calls and investigations that had to be handled in person, the FCPD safety officers provided guidance for minimizing potential exposure to COVID. For example, officers were advised to wear masks, speak outdoors to community members, and maintain social distancing.

Redeployment of Staff to Support Patrol

Early in the pandemic, FCPD commanders were concerned that patrol operations could be significantly depleted if large numbers of patrol officers were infected with COVID or had to be quarantined for possible exposure to COVID. For this reason, they redeployed significant numbers of personnel into patrol duty. Most notably, the agency moved half of its district detectives into patrol work from March 2020 through late June 2020 (centralized detective units were exempted from this change). Detectives moved to patrol during this time were still assigned cases to investigate, but their patrol duties took precedence. Although proactive work and community contacts by officers on patrol were significantly reduced (see below), these steps helped the FCPD to maintain regular patrol strength in the community throughout the pandemic. In addition, other specialized units were also re-assigned to patrol duties, such as traffic units, mall units, and school resource officers.

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[27] As discussed in Chapter 4, the FCPD's 2021 community survey indicated that about 40% of survey respondents who had requested police service during the prior year received a response by phone. This was confirmed by several interviews.

Reducing Community Contacts

The FCPD took several additional steps to minimize officers' exposure to COVID. Though not a formal policy or directive, officers were generally advised or permitted to minimize unnecessary contact with the public. As shown in Chapter 5, there were significant reductions in proactive traffic stops and other proactive contacts with community members (e.g., pedestrian checks, warrant service, community policing activities, etc.) during the pandemic. Traffic stops and other proactive contacts remained far below pre-pandemic levels through at least early 2021 after stay-at-home orders were relaxed due to continuing concerns about COVID among officers and other factors addressed in Chapter 5.[28] Detectives also reduced their public contacts by conducting most investigations and interviews by phone or other remote means. Related in-person activities like executing warrant searches were likewise reduced for less serious cases.

Community policing activities by the FCPD were also significantly curtailed based on COVID concerns. These changes are detailed in Chapter 4. Besides reducing community contacts in the field, FCPD staff had to stop in-person events such as community meetings, teen programs, and the Community Police Academy. Many of these activities were shifted to virtual (Zoom) forums and continued online well into 2021. Relatedly, the agency also suspended some public services, such as fingerprinting members of the public for job-related background checks.

Collaboration with Other County and State Agencies

Throughout the COVID crisis, the FCPD worked with other state and local agencies to coordinate responses to the pandemic. In this section, we highlight some of the most critical and extensive of these collaborations.

Public health authorities in the county assisted the FCPD in numerous ways, primarily through liaising with the FCPD's health and safety officers. Health authorities advised the FCPD on what was known about COVID and how to handle different incidents and operations safely, including deaths. They also notified FCPD (and other first responders) about people known to be positive for COVID and addresses where a person had tested positive. In some instances, county health staff could assist police by verifying the claims of arrestees who stated they had COVID (which they sometimes did falsely to avoid jail). The FCPD also kept county health authorities apprised about officers who had tested positive so that necessary contact tracing could be conducted.

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[28] Reductions in vehicle traffic and public activity stemming from the state's stay-at-home orders and remote working also contributed to the drop in proactive contacts, as did executive orders issued by the governor that suspended some forms of vehicle enforcement due to closure of the state's Department of Motor Vehicles. A Virginia law passed in late 2020 may have also contributed to lower levels of traffic stops as it prohibits police officers in the state from stopping vehicles based on certain types of minor violations such as having unsafe/defective equipment or not having operating brake lights.

The Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC), which receives and processes community calls for police, fire, and medical assistance, was also a critical partner in public safety efforts. To keep call service fully operational while keeping their employees safely onsite (considered critical to DPSC operations), the DPSC opened an additional call center to complement their primary facility and initiated various internal safety protocols (social distancing, disinfection, etc.). DPSC staff supported the FCPD and other first responders by developing a line of questioning to determine if callers had possible COVID symptoms or had been exposed to COVID. They also worked with the FCPD to develop operational guidelines for determining which calls could be handled remotely via the CRS. Both steps required DPSC call-takers to develop and ask new follow-up questions for many calls. DPSC and FCPD staff had to consult regularly on operational guidelines for the CRS and developed protocols that were updated weekly. This process also continued as the CRS was scaled back in later phases of the pandemic. The FCPD also maintains a regular police liaison who works onsite at the DPSC call center and assists DPSC staff with handling or making decisions about particular calls. This liaison program was expanded during COVID so that an FCPD liaison would be available at both the main and alternate call centers.

The FCPD also coordinated with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (FCFRD). Because the FCFRD responds to various fire, rescue, and emergency medical situations, it was able to advise the FCPD on protocols for responding safely to these types of incidents during COVID. Another area of coordination involved decisions about the types of incidents requiring joint responses by the agencies. FCPD officers are needed when there is the potential of death at a scene, and they often assist the FCFRD with fire scenes by, for example, managing traffic at the location. The FCPD had to factor these considerations into its decisions about in-person responses to incidents. The agencies also communicated regularly about matters involving PPE supplies, vaccination announcements and plans, and staff who tested positive for COVID after responding to scenes involving both agencies (for purposes of contact tracing).

FCPD's school resource officers (SROs) worked with county schools on how to deliver safety services while school was held remotely. The SROs and schools developed informal systems for communicating about students that appeared to have domestic or mental health problems. The pandemic also raised new issues for the SROs, including how to respond to online misbehavior (e.g., online theft and disruption of class Zoom sessions) and illegal activities revealed through video communications (such as children in possession of firearms).

Finally, another critical coordination area involved state orders issued during COVID to protect public health. In the early months of the pandemic, then-Governor Northam issued a series of executive orders that restricted government, business, and public activity, required people to remain in their residences except for specific activities (i.e., stay-at-home orders), and required people to wear masks in public to prevent the spread of COVID. These restrictions were gradually lifted through the summer and fall of 2020, though some had to be temporarily reinstated in late 2020 due to a new surge in COVID cases. These executive orders required coordination to ensure that FCPD and Fairfax County policies aligned with these orders.

However, in consultation with other state and local authorities, then-FCPD Chief Roessler decided early in the pandemic that the FCPD would not take primary responsibility for enforcing these mandates, mainly because the mandates did not represent criminal violations.[29] Instead, primary responsibility for enforcing these mandates was given to an existing multi-disciplinary code enforcement team with personnel from several public safety and public health organizations (police, fire, zoning, health, etc.). If violators did not respond to requests from the code enforcement team, the violations were referred to the Commonwealth Attorney's Office. However, the FCPD did play an active role in supporting businesses with non-compliant customers who refused to follow mandates and became disorderly.

Summary of FCPD's Pandemic Response

In summary, the FCPD took extensive action at the start of the pandemic to protect employees from COVID transmission while at the same time providing for public safety. The agency's key steps included establishing an incident management team who activated FCPD's incident command system to manage its COVID response, initiating safety protocols and training within the agency, reassigning many employees to remote work, adjusting to new sick leave policies from the county, creating a vaccination program for employees, expanding remote responses to calls for service, adjusting academy and training, redeploying sworn employees to patrol duty, and reducing community-oriented and proactive contacts in the field.

The agency benefited from infrastructure and the existing practice of using an incident command system (ICS) that pre-dated COVID. In particular, the agency had an existing Safety Officer Section focused on occupational safety and health issues, including exposure to contagious illnesses. This unit was central to developing policies, procedures, and guidance to protect the agency's employees from exposure to COVID. This infrastructure included strong relationships with non-police entities essential to the pandemic response.

However, the actions necessary to respond to COVID were unprecedented in their nature, magnitude, and scope. The agency also had to adapt in many new ways, anticipate possible consequences and problems, and react quickly to rapidly changing circumstances—all with little prior experience, given the uniqueness of the COVID crisis. While national, state, and local governments provided some general guidance, the agency and the county had to develop strategies for its everyday operations during the pandemic. FCPD command staff had to anticipate the extent to which the pandemic would last, the pandemic's impact on public safety, and the possibility of workforce contagion and staffing shortages. In response, the County developed new types of leave, and the FCPD adopted remote work options during the pandemic's first year. The agency also initially redeployed some detective and specialized unit officers to patrol to anticipate shortages in patrol from possible infections or quarantines.

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[29] Further, responsibility for enforcing the mask mandate issued in May 2020 was given specifically to the Virginia Department of Health (see Virginia Executive Order 63 issued by Governor Northam).

A significant operational adjustment was in determining how to reduce exposure and COVID contagion but continue to respond to calls for service. The agency expanded its existing infrastructure of remote response to calls for service, deciding to respond remotely rather than in person to minor, low-priority calls and investigative follow-ups. For calls that required a response, the agency developed plans and guidelines on how officers and detectives would safely respond in person. The FCPD also significantly reduced in-person community engagement activities and proactive enforcement.

3. Experiences with Agency Policies and Policing During COVID-19: Results of the Workforce Survey, Interviews, and Data Analysis

As detailed in the previous chapter, the FCPD implemented and carried out several significant operational and internal adjustments in response to COVID-19 to protect the health and wellness of its personnel while maintaining public safety. These included:

- creating or mobilizing administrative and operational units to develop, strategize, plan, and implement the agency's COVID response;
- adjusting core operational activities, specifically response to calls for service, patrol deployment, investigative and enforcement activity, and academy training to minimize exposure to the public without compromising public safety;
- restricting, modifying, and in some cases stopping, police department services and community-oriented activity with the public;
- implementing policies and practices (social distancing, provision of PPE, safety officers, infectious disease control) to protect employees from contracting COVID;
- implementing policies and practices to respond to employees who had been exposed to or contracted COVID;
- providing human resource support, leave, and other assistance for those exposed to or who had contracted COVID; and
- providing human resource support, leave, and other assistance for secondary impacts of the pandemic (i.e., childcare concerns, family member care, etc.)

To gauge employee experiences with these adjustments, we surveyed all employees (both sworn and non-sworn) and gleaned additional context from our interviews. We also analyzed leave use data during the first six months of the pandemic to better understand those impacts on the agency. For some questions, we compared answers across various groups of employees.

As a backdrop to this chapter, we note that there were 650 COVID infections, including two deaths, among FCPD employees through May 2022. During the first year of COVID, the focus of this report, the agency's employees had 161 infections and one death (in July 2020).[30] However, nearly three-quarters of the agency's infections during this first year occurred during

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[30] The number of infections had increased very little beyond this number by the time of our FCPD employee survey in May 2021.

the second wave of COVID in late 2020 and early 2021, when the United States experienced its highest death rates from COVID.

Sworn Employees

Respondent Characteristics

In total, 529 of the 1,394 sworn employees (40%) responded to the workforce survey (the specific number of respondents for each question is noted by "n=" in the tables below). We asked officers to provide their current work assignment when they responded to the survey (May 2021) and their work assignment on April 1, 2020. The proportion of sworn employees who worked in various assignments during these two periods is shown in Table 3.1. Choices included the following categories:

- **Uniformed patrol:** all sworn uniformed officers, supervisors, and operational commanders at a district station.
- **Investigations:** all sworn investigators (any rank) who operate at a district station or headquarters.
- **Other specialized units:** all sworn individuals (any rank) in all specialized units such as traffic safety, special operations, intelligence, forensics, etc.
- **Education and training:** any sworn personnel assigned specifically and primarily in an education and training capacity, including all academy personnel. This would not include field training officers who are part of uniformed patrol, above.
- **Administrative:** all sworn individuals with administrative roles (i.e., resource management, information technology, administrative support).

Table 3.1. Work assignment of SWORN respondents in April 2020 and in May 2021 (% of respondents)

	Assignment as of April 2020 (n=525)	Assignment as of May 2021 (n=529)
Uniformed Patrol	60.2	55.2
Investigations	12.2	13.8
Other specialized units	21.1	23.6
Education and Training	2.1	1.1
Administrative	4.4	6.2

Table 3.2 provides the percentage of respondents' self-identified race, ethnicity, and gender, as well as the average number of years they had been employed in the FCPD. As a comparison, we show the agency demographics for all FCPD sworn personnel.[31] Note that all races listed can also include individuals who self-identify as Hispanic, and those who responded as Hispanic might also identify as any race. An analysis of the combination of answers for both race and

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[31] As provided by www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/sites/police/files/assets/images/chief/messages/fcpd_sworn_diversity_score_card.pdf

ethnicity revealed that 67% of respondents identified as White AND non-Hispanic, while 22.3% of respondents were non-White OR Hispanic. However, almost 11% of respondents chose not to identify their race, and another 10% self-identified as mixed-race or other. Similarly, with gender, 10% of respondents choose not to answer this question. Broadly, the survey respondents appear reasonably representative of the agency's racial, ethnic, and gender demographics. However, given the large number of missing responses to these questions, it is challenging to draw definitive conclusions about the representativeness of this survey.

Table 3.2. Race, ethnicity, and gender of SWORN respondents (n=529)

	% of Respondents	% of Agency
White	70.3	77.3
Black	6.2	8.4
Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American	3.2	5.6
Mixed race or other	9.5	0.9
Chose not to provide race or ethnicity	10.8	---
Hispanic	6.0	7.8
Male	71.6	82.3
Female	14.6	17.7
Gender-neutral, nonbinary, or transgender	3.8	Not available
Chose not to provide gender	10.0	---
Average number of years employed	15.8 years	13.2 years

Remote Work

The IACP-GMU survey found that most agencies across the U.S. did not have many sworn personnel working remotely (not physically coming into their assignment). Similarly, in the FCPD, approximately 65% of the sworn respondents answered that they were required to come to work and did not have a remote work option. However, the agency also provided remote work options for some sworn employees at the start of the pandemic, depending on their assignment and responsibilities. Table 3.3 shows the proportion of those respondents who were given the option for specific types of remote work (including no option) by their assignment. Expectedly, those in uniformed patrol had the least options for remote work, while those in investigations and administration had more options to work remotely.

Table 3.3. Remote options provided to SWORN employees by work assignments

	Option to work remotely entirely [a]	Option to work remotely sometimes	No option-must come into work	Unsure of options	Total number of responses
Uniformed Patrol	3.5%	4.1%	88.6%	3.8%	315
Investigations	42.9%	35.9%	19.0%	1.6%	63
Other specialized units	17.1%	41.4%	36.9%	4.5%	111
Education and Training	0.0%	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	10
Administrative	39.1%	52.2%	0.0%	8.7%	23

[a] Includes "must work remotely (no choice)" to protect the confidentiality of a very small number of respondents.

However, some sworn personnel who had the option to work remotely chose not to do so. Of those sworn respondents who did have an option to work remotely, 39% chose to come into work, while 49% took the option to work remotely only some of the time. Only 10% of those allowed to work remotely did so for their full workweek. Table 3.4 shows how often respondents estimated they worked remotely in the early months of the pandemic. Table 3.4 shows that most sworn personnel chose not to work remotely or only worked remotely for up to 20% of their workweek.

Table 3.4. Percentage of SWORN respondents who worked specific amounts of remote work (n=526)

	% of Respondents
I did not work remotely at all	71.5
I worked remotely for 20% of my workweek or shift	9.8
I worked remotely for 40% of my workweek or shift	5.3
I worked remotely for 60% of my workweek or shift	4.3
I worked remotely for 80% of my workweek or shift	5.7
I moved entirely to remote work	2.8
Missing answers	0.6

Sworn personnel were also asked to rate the agency on how well it communicated to employees about changes in work schedules and remote work accommodations on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. Of all the performance ratings used in the survey (see other tables below), this specific aspect of the agency's performance was rated the lowest, at 2.64 on average (between fair and good).

The survey also asked respondents to answer an open-ended question: "Please provide any comments about how the agency could have done better in its accommodations and communications with its employees about COVID-19." Approximately 40% of survey respondents provided comments (sometimes extensive). Regarding remote work, open-ended remarks in the survey consistently conveyed concerns about disparities in treatment across various sworn employees, units, and assignments. For example, several respondents noted that patrol officers did not have remote work options while detectives, specialized units, and command staff did, and yet both received the same hazard or other bonus pays. Within these concerns, some believed those with remote privileges were taking advantage of the opportunity. Disparities were also raised across stations; some respondents perceived that decisions about who could work remotely varied station by station. This was raised in the interviews at stations as well.

Changes in Deployment

As documented in Chapter 2, in anticipation of workforce illness and public safety demands, the FCPD command made several deployment adjustments. These included reducing in-person response to calls for service (to be discussed more in Chapter 4), transitioning specialized unit officers and some district detectives to uniformed patrol, and developing a health safety plan

for officer quarantining. In hindsight, the level of infection among employees and the demand for police services was not nearly as high as the agency anticipated. However, these adjustments resulted in several complaints from sworn personnel that were revealed in both the survey's open-ended question and the district station interviews. Many of these findings are discussed in greater detail in various areas of the report. But in short, uniformed patrol felt that they bore the brunt of the pandemic's effects on the agency, and concerns about equitable treatment (compared to other sworn personnel) were regularly raised. While others could work remotely, patrol officers felt they did not have a choice. When patrol officers were exposed to COVID, they were sent home (as opposed to a quarantine hotel or station), which heightened concerns about infecting their families. The specialized and investigative units that were moved into uniformed patrol felt that this move was unnecessary and that they were still expected to continue their previous work (i.e., investigations) while at the same time tending to patrol functions. There was a strong consensus in both the interviews and open-ended survey responses that officers generally liked responding to calls for service remotely (see Chapter 4).

Communication and Measures to Reduce Spread of COVID-19

As discussed in the previous chapter, the agency tried to take steps to keep COVID from being contracted by sworn personnel. These included responding to calls for service by telephone, conducting investigative activities remotely, reducing operational meetings in closed spaces (for example, some roll calls were held outside or virtually), providing PPE, testing, tracing, monitoring, and later vaccinations, and communicating with personnel.

The survey asked sworn personnel to rate the agency's performance in its communications about the precautions and risks of COVID and on the supply of PPE on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. Table 3.5 shows these mean ratings and whether statistically significant differences were found between racial/ethnic groups and genders. FCPD sworn personnel rated the agency's communication as slightly less than "good" and the provision of PPE as "good" to "very good." Men tended to rate the agency's communications about the risks and protections of COVID more poorly than women (2.89 versus 3.28, respectively). Non-White or Hispanic sworn personnel also tended to rate the department's availability of PPE more poorly than their White counterparts (3.09 versus 3.51, respectively). Higher ratings were also positively correlated with longer time-in-service.

Table 3.5. Mean ratings of SWORN employees as to agency measures to communicate and protect employees from COVID (with differences between groups)

	Mean (s.d.)	Racial/ethnic differences?	Gender differences?
Communication with employees about the risks of, and protections from, COVID-19 (n=500)	**2.90** (1.303)	NO	**YES**
Availability of personal protective equipment (PPEs) for employee use (n=501)	**3.41** (1.317)	**YES**	NO

The mean is based on choices on a Likert scale with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. "YES" indicates that a statistically significant difference was found using a two-tailed independent samples t-test, with p<.05 threshold. "NO" indicates

Interviews and open-ended survey responses provided context to these findings. One significant theme that emerged about communications between the county, FCPD command staff, and employees was a perception that there was often too much communication, but at the same time, that messages were not prioritized or clear. Additionally, because COVID was a fluid situation, policies and information changed over time. This complicated the agency's ability to communicate consistently about the disease and COVID protections (or when to quarantine). One additional challenge noted in the open-ended survey responses and some interviews was that there was no communication mechanism to reach every officer in the FCPD quickly. While email is often used and can be sent to every officer, respondents argued that many officers do not open emails (and not immediately). One survey respondent suggested that FCPD needed to invest in a communications strategy and mentioned the possibility of a phone app that would allow the agency to quickly communicate with every employee and know if employees did not receive or view the message.

Regarding the availability of PPE, the agency did have some stockpiles of PPE available for officers but, like many agencies, had to ration PPE carefully in the early stages of the pandemic. In this regard, FCPD seemed similar to many other agencies in the IACP-GMU survey in that while PPE shortages were always a concern, the shortage did not reach a critical point. However, several respondents were concerned about the perceived lack of PPE at some stages in the pandemic and about reusing or recycling masks. Another repetitive theme raised in the open-ended survey question was the inconsistency in mask wearing by some officers and command staff and the different political beliefs that exacerbated disagreement surrounding mask wearing and vaccinations. While some survey respondents felt that COVID vaccinations, masks, and health impacts of the disease were overblown, others in the survey felt that the agency was not doing enough to enforce consistent mask-wearing and vaccinations to keep employees safe. Some viewed daily health checks as unnecessary.

Worries and Stress

Given that almost all sworn employees were required to come to work for at least some part of their workweek, employees were asked how comfortable they were doing so. They were first asked to answer by thinking back to the start of the pandemic (April 2020), and then at the time of the survey (May 2021) "considering the safety provisions and accommodations that have been implemented by the agency." Table 3.6 shows that 38% of respondents were initially uncomfortable or very uncomfortable about coming to work at the start of the pandemic. However, one year into the pandemic, this discomfort dropped to 13%, with 71% of sworn employees comfortable or very comfortable coming to work. The mean Likert score (calculated from scale choices of 1 = "very uncomfortable" to 5 = "very comfortable") increased almost one full level from 3.05 to 3.97.

Table 3.6. Comfort level of SWORN personnel coming into work in April 2020 and in May 2021 (% of respondents)

	Level of comfort in April 2020 (% of n=506)	Level of comfort by May 2021 (% of n=512)
Very Uncomfortable	22.3	5.9
Uncomfortable	15.8	7.2
Neutral	20.6	15.6
Comfortable	17.2	26.4
Very Comfortable	24.1	44.9

We also asked sworn employees how worried they were about contracting COVID-19 from work-related or non-work-related activities. Table 3.7 shows the mean levels of worry as calculated on a Likert scale ranging from 1= "Not worried at all" to 5= "Very worried." Sworn employees were more concerned about catching COVID-19 at work than outside of work in April 2020, but the levels of worry for both categories declined significantly between 2020 and 2021.

Table 3.7. Mean levels of worry of contracting COVID-19 in 2020 versus 2021 for SWORN employees

	Mean level of worry in April 2020 (s.d.)	Mean level of worry by May 2021 (s.d.)
Level of worry of contracting COVID from **WORK-RELATED** activities (n=501, 502)	3.43 (1.396)	2.22 (1.147)
Level of worry of contracting COVID from **NON-WORK RELATED** activities (n=502, 502)	2.36 (1.215)	1.69 (0.876)

The mean level of worry was calculated on a Likert scale ranging from 1= "Not worried at all" to 5= "Very worried."

In the open-ended comments for the survey, some respondents expressed concern about bringing COVID infections home to their families. Some suggested that if a COVID exposure happened at work, the agency should consider putting individuals into hotels rather than sending them home to quarantine, as they could expose family members. In addition, as vaccinations became more available, some suggested that better policies were needed about when an officer needed to quarantine and when they did not. And finally, a consistent concern raised in the open-ended comments to the survey was the inconsistency in mask wearing and vaccinations by employees in the FCPD, which became a source of concern for some (regarding contagion).

Almost two-thirds of sworn personnel who answered the survey reported experiencing high or very high levels of work-related stress at the start of the pandemic. By May 2021, this had declined, *although 44% of sworn individuals were still experiencing high to very high levels of stress*. We cannot determine whether COVID was the only source of this stress or whether other local and national events (such as the death of George Floyd and related social justice protests) contributed to this stress. However, general stress, discomfort in coming into work, and worries about contracting COVID were all highly correlated across work and personal-related concerns. In other words, people who were more worried about coming into work and

contracting COVID were more stressed generally at work and personally. Although these worries tended to decline over time, the same individuals with higher levels of worry at the start of the pandemic also had higher levels of worry one year later (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8. Mean ratings of work and personal stress of SWORN personnel at the beginning of the pandemic compared to one year later

	Mean stress levels in April 2020 (s.d.)	Mean stress levels in May 2021 (s.d.)
Work-related stress (n=518,518)	3.75 (1.299)	3.26 (1.292)
Personal-related stress (n=516, 517)	3.31 (1.369)	2.80 (1.236)

The mean level of stress was calculated on a Likert scale with 1 = "Very low" and 5 = "Very high."

An interesting finding from the survey emerged regarding race/ethnicity and stress. While White non-Hispanics experienced similar levels of *personal* stress as non-White or Hispanic sworn employees during the pandemic and one year later, these groups differed significantly in their *work-related* stress during both periods. Non-whites had significantly higher levels of work-related stress at the start of the pandemic *and* one year later, as Table 3.9 shows.

Table 3.9. Mean levels of work and personal stress for SWORN employees in April 2020 and May 2021, comparing racial/ethnic groups

	Mean for White AND non-Hispanic (n=352) (s.d.)	Mean for Nonwhite OR Hispanic (n=118) (s.d.)	Statistically significant difference (p<.05)?
Work-related stress in April 2020	3.69 (1.298)	4.02 (1.247)	YES
Work-related stress in May 2021	3.18 (1.291)	3.54 (1.265)	YES
Personal-related stress in April 2020	3.29 (1.373)	3.37 (1.357)	NO
Personal-related stress in May 2021	2.75 (1.250)	2.97 (1.202)	NO

The mean level of stress was calculated on a Likert scale with 1 = "Very low" and 5 = "Very high." "YES" indicates that a statistically significant difference was found using a two-tailed independent samples t-test, with p<.05 threshold. "NO" indicates that no statistically significant difference was found.

When comparing genders,[32] females had significantly higher levels of *personal* stress than males at the start of the pandemic (females=3.68 (s.d.=1.210); males=3.21 (s.d.=1.388)), but no other significant differences were found between genders in personal stress one year later. Gender differences were not found when comparing work-related stress at the start of the pandemic

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[32] A third gender category was offered in the survey ("Gender-neutral, nonbinary, or transgender") but given the very small sample sizes and to protect the confidentiality of those surveys, these are not included in this specific gender analysis.

and in May 2021. We also asked sworn employees about childcare challenges at home. Around 40-41% of *both* men and women indicated that they had childcare challenges at home.

Agency Accommodations and Support

As described in the previous chapter, the FCPD and Fairfax County provided various accommodations to sworn and non-sworn employees during the pandemic. We asked sworn employees to rate the department's performance on accommodations and the agency's overall response to the pandemic regarding employees on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. Table 3.10 shows these mean ratings for sworn respondents. Sworn employees rated the agency higher (in the range of good to very good) concerning the agency's accommodations for childcare and employees with high-risk health conditions (or family members with these conditions). However, lower ratings were given for the department's overall timeliness in response to employee needs and the FCPD's overall response to COVID as it relates to employees (with responses averaging slightly less than good). The lower ratings are similar to those related to agency communication with employees.

Table 3.10. Mean ratings of SWORN employees to agency accommodations and overall response

	Mean (s.d.)	Racial/ ethnic differences?	Gender differences?
Accommodation to employees who had childcare challenges (n=491)	**3.11** (1.290)	**YES**	**YES**
Accommodations for employees who had high-risk health conditions (n=487)	**3.34** (1.285)	**YES**	NO
Accommodations for employees with family members who had high-risk health conditions (n=490)	**3.08** (1.326)	**YES**	**YES**
The overall timeliness of the department's response to employee needs during the pandemic (n=500)	**2.85** (1.263)	**YES**	**YES**
The department's overall response to COVID as it relates to its employees (n=499)	**2.80** (1.257)	**YES**	NO

The mean is based on choices on a Likert scale with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. "YES" indicates that a statistically significant difference was found using a two-tailed independent samples t-test, with p<.05 threshold. "NO" indicates that no statistically significant difference was found.

Table 3.10 also indicates that statistically significant differences in ratings were found across race/ethnicity and gender. For every rating, non-White or Hispanic sworn employees tended to rate the agency lower than their White counterparts. For three of the five ratings, men rated the agency more negatively than women. Interestingly, the more time-in-service a sworn employee had, the more positive the rating they gave across all of these questions (those correlations were statistically significant).

Several survey respondents raised concerns about employee accommodation and leave during the pandemic. These concerns primarily focused on a perceived lack of equity in accommodations. Some of these were related to remote work, as already discussed. But others mentioned inequity in accommodations for employees with children (that they received more

accommodations compared to those without); perceived differences in accommodations across stations and units; inconsistencies in the use of sick leave, pandemic leave, and compensated leave due to COVID; and concerns that some employees were "gaming" the system. Several mentioned that the agency did not keep a promise of "comp" leave, and some believed that other jurisdictions were more consistent in their accommodations than the FCPD. These feelings may have changed in the spring of 2022 when the county granted "pandemic appreciation leave" to employees to compensate those who could not take administrative pandemic leave during 2020.

The department and county also made resources available to support well-being that sworn employees could use. These included employee assistance programs, the "BurnAlong" app, training and webinars by Livewell, dedicated behavioral health specialists, and other resources. Table 3.11 shows how many respondents were aware of or had used each service. Sworn personnel were more familiar with the agency's employee assistance programs and behavioral health specialists. Although far fewer people used these resources, EAP and dedicated behavioral health resources were the most used.

Table 3.11. Percentage of SWORN personnel respondents who were aware of, or had ever used, well-being resources

	% aware	% ever used
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	82.6	14.9
BurnAlong App	5.9	1.7
Training and webinars by Livewell	57.3	11.0
Dedicated behavioral health specialists & resources	68.4	13.4

Missing responses to the awareness questions ranged from 29-31. Missing responses to the "ever used" question were higher, ranging from 53-75.

Feelings about Remaining in the Law Enforcement Profession

Finally, we asked sworn personnel, "Thinking about your experience as an officer during a year of a serious health pandemic, has the pandemic changed your interest in remaining in law enforcement as a career choice?" Table 3.12 shows the proportion of respondents that answered for each choice. While a majority were unchanged in their career choice after the pandemic experience, 16% were somewhat less interested in remaining in law enforcement, and 19% were much less interested. Although this question attempted to focus on how the respondents' views were affected by COVID, we cannot rule out the possibility that their responses were also impacted by other national and local events in the summer of 2020, including the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests, or the indictment of an FCPD officer for a use of force incident.

Table 3.12. Interest by SWORN personnel in remaining with law enforcement as a career after the pandemic experience

	% of Respondents
It has made me MUCH MORE interested in remaining in law enforcement.	1.5
It has made me SOMEWHAT MORE interested in remaining in law enforcement.	0.2
It has NOT CHANGED my interest in remaining in law enforcement.	53.9
It has made me SOMEWHAT LESS interested in remaining in law enforcement.	16.4
It has made me MUCH LESS interested in remaining in law enforcement.	19.3

Note: 8.7% of respondents did not answer this question.

We also examined the types of sworn employees who were less interested in remaining in law enforcement after the pandemic experience. Statistically significant findings indicated that (1) non-White or Hispanic sworn employees; (2) those who were more likely to experience work-related or personal-related stress during and one year after COVID; and (3) those who were not aware of dedicated behavioral health specialists and resources, were less interested in remaining in law enforcement. Gender and time-in-service were not significantly related to these overall feelings.

Non-Sworn Employees

Respondent Characteristics

In total, 116 non-sworn employees responded to the workforce survey, a response rate of approximately 30% of the 392 total non-sworn employees in the agency at the time of the survey. To protect the confidentiality of this smaller sample, non-sworn employees were asked to identify themselves generally with three work assignment selections, and the proportion of these groups who answered the survey is provided in Table 3.13:

- **District Station:** Includes all non-sworn employees whose usual workplace is inside a district station.
- **Headquarters or academy:** Includes all non-sworn employees who work at the FCPD headquarters building or another centralized location such as the police academy.
- **Varying locations:** Includes all non-sworn employees who work at various FCPD locations, depending on assignment and need. In later analyses, this group is subsumed under "Headquarters or academy" to protect their confidentiality.

Table 3.13. Work assignment of NON-SWORN respondents in April 2020 and in May 2021 (% of respondents)

	Assignment as of April 2020 (n=115)	Assignment as of May 2021 (n=116)
District Station	28.4	28.4
Headquarters or academy	65.5	68.1
Varying locations	5.2	3.4

Table 3.14 provides the percentage of non-sworn respondents' self-identified race, ethnicity, and gender and the average number of years non-sworn respondents have been employed in the FCPD. Also shown are the agency demographics for all non-sworn personnel.[33] In total, 58% of respondents were White AND non-Hispanic, while 32% of respondents were non-White OR Hispanic. Almost 11% of respondents chose not to identify their race or ethnicity, and another 10% self-identified as mixed-race or other. In addition, 30% of the respondents were male, and 60% were female. Again, however, 10% of respondents choose not to answer this question. Given this large rate of unclear responses, it is challenging to draw definitive conclusions about the representativeness of this survey. However, the non-sworn respondents appear to reasonably mirror the agency's non-sworn personnel on several measures.

Table 3.14. Race, ethnicity, and gender of NON-SWORN respondents (n=116)

	% of Respondents	% of Agency
White	67.2	67.3
Black	6.0	14.1
Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American	10.3	7.7 [a]
Mixed race or other	6.0	1.3
Chose not to provide race or ethnicity	10.3	---
Hispanic identified (can be any race above)	10.3	9.6
Male	30.2	34.6
Female	60.3	65.4
Gender-neutral, nonbinary, or transgender	0.0	Not available
Chose not to provide gender	9.5	---
Average number of years employed	13.1 years	10.4 years

(a) The agency only provided non-Hispanic Asian numbers.

Remote Work

Approximately 28% of the non-sworn respondents answered that they were required to come to work (i.e., they did not have a remote work option). This proportion was expectedly much less than sworn employees. However, as with some sworn personnel, this could vary across assignments. Table 3.15 compares the proportion of non-sworn respondents who responded having various remote work options at the beginning of the pandemic. Those who worked at district stations were less likely to be given options for remote work compared to those who worked at non-district places (headquarters, academy, etc.).

Table 3.15. Remote options provided to NON-SWORN employees by work assignments

	Option to work remotely entirely [a]	Option to work remotely sometimes	No option-must come into work	Unsure of options	Total number of responses
District Station	36.4%	6.1%	48.5%	9.1%	33
Headquarters, Academy, Other	45.7%	28.4%	19.8%	6.2%	81

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[33] As provided by Fairfax County Police Department Human Resources Division.

A smaller proportion of non-sworn personnel who had the option to work remotely chose not to do so compared to their sworn counterparts. For non-sworn respondents who did have the option to work remotely, 17% chose to come into work, while 42.3% took the option to work remotely some of the time. Almost 40% of those allowed to work remotely did so for their full workweek. Table 3.16 shows the estimated amount of the workweek that was carried out remotely.

Table 3.16. Percentage of NON-SWORN respondents who worked specific amounts of remote work (n=116)

	% of Respondents
I did not work remotely at all	37.1
I worked remotely for 20% of my workweek or shift	10.3
I worked remotely for 40% of my workweek or shift	1.7
I worked remotely for 60% of my workweek or shift	8.6
I worked remotely for 80% of my workweek or shift	17.2
I moved entirely to remote work	25.0

Non-sworn personnel were also asked to rate the agency on how well it communicated to employees about changes in work schedules and remote work accommodations on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. Non-sworn employees rated the agency's performance on communication higher than sworn respondents, although this rating was still relatively lower than other performance ratings (3.60) shown below. There were no racial/ethnic or gender differences among non-sworn personnel with regard to this rating.

Regarding the open-ended question asked in the survey, approximately 30% of non-sworn respondents provided comments. Most of the concerns expressed were perceptions of inequity related to remote work (and other accommodations). First, for those non-sworn individuals who did not (or were not allowed) to work remotely, there were concerns about unequal treatment between sworn and non-sworn individuals concerning hazard pay. Non-sworn individuals who came into work felt they should be granted hazard pay. There were also perceptions that district supervisors had inconsistent views about supporting remote work or COVID precautions (e.g., mask-wearing). Non-sworn survey respondents also expressed concerns about changing communications about remote work, pandemic leave, and employee dishonesty about using accommodations. There was a general view that remote work should continue, especially for non-sworn employees for positions where in-person work was unnecessary. Finally, there was a concern about the lack of laptops available for remote work.

Communication and Measures to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

Non-sworn personnel rated the agency higher than sworn personnel as to the agency's communication efforts about the risk and protections of COVID and the availability of PPE, as

shown in Table 3.17. Scores averaged close to very good on both items, and no racial/ethnic or gender differences were found in these perceptions amongst non-sworn employees.

Table 3.17. Mean ratings of NON-SWORN employees as to agency measures to communicate and protect employees from COVID (with differences between groups)

	Mean *(s.d.)*	Racial/ ethnic differences?	Gender differences?
Communication with employees about the risks of, and protections from, COVID-19 (n=500)	**3.88** *(1.346)*	NO	NO
Availability of personal protective equipment (PPEs) for employee use (n=501)	**3.79** *(1.121)*	NO	NO

The mean is based on choices on a Likert scale with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. "YES" indicates that a statistically significant difference was found using a two-tailed independent samples t-test, with p<.05 threshold. "NO" indicates that no statistically significant difference was found.

The primary concern raised by non-sworn employees related to these issues in the open-ended responses was the lack of enforcement and consistent adherence to mask-wearing and social distancing by other employees during the pandemic, including concerns about being ridiculed for wearing masks at work by the time of the survey (May 2021).

Worries and Stress

As with the sworn employees, we asked non-sworn employees how comfortable they were about coming to work during the initial month of the pandemic (April 2020) and also one year after when they were answering the survey (May 2021), "considering the safety provisions and accommodations that have been implemented by the agency." As Table 3.18 shows, 44% of respondents were initially uncomfortable or very uncomfortable coming to work at the start of the pandemic. However, one year into the pandemic, this dropped to 11%, with 73% of non-sworn employees feeling comfortable or very comfortable coming to work. The mean Likert score increased one full level from 2.88 to 3.93 after one year (mean comfort is calculated on a Likert scale with "Very Uncomfortable" = 1 and "Very Comfortable" = 5). These findings are similar to the results for sworn personnel.

Table 3.18. Comfort level of NON-SWORN personnel coming into work in April 2020 and in May 2021 (% of respondents)

	Level of comfort in April 2020 (n=98)	Level of comfort by May 2021 (n=114)
Very Uncomfortable	26.5	7.9
Uncomfortable	17.3	3.5
Neutral	20.4	15.8
Comfortable	13.3	33.3
Very Comfortable	22.4	39.5

We also asked non-sworn employees how worried they were about contracting COVID-19 from work-related or non-work-related activities (Table 3.19). Non-sworn employees were more concerned about catching COVID-19 at work and were more concerned than sworn employees

about contracting COVID-19 from non-work-related activities. However, this worry declined between 2020 and 2021.

Table 3.19. Mean levels of worry of contracting COVID-19 in 2020 versus 2021 for NON-SWORN employees

	Mean Level of worry in April 2020 (s.d.)	Level of worry by May 2021 (s.d.)
Level of worry of contracting COVID-19 from **WORK-RELATED** activities (n=105, 103)	3.76 (1.404)	2.38 (1.147)
Level of worry of contracting COVID-19 from **NON-WORK RELATED** activities? (n=105, 105)	3.30 (1.344)	2.02 (0.888)

The mean level of worry was calculated on a Likert scale ranging from 1= "Not worried at all" to 5= "Very worried."

On average, when asked to rate their stress levels on a scale from 1= "Very low" to 5 = "Very high," non-sworn employees were somewhat less stressed than their sworn counterparts (Table 3.20). Although 50% of non-sworn respondents experienced high or very high levels of work-related stress at the pandemic's start, this dropped to 26% by May 2021. As with sworn personnel, general stress, discomfort in coming into work, and worries of contracting COVID were all highly correlated across work and personal-related concerns. Although these worries tended to decline over time, the same individuals with higher levels of worry at the start of the pandemic also had higher levels of worry one year later.

Table 3.20. Mean ratings of work and personal stress of NON-SWORN personnel at the beginning of the pandemic compared to one year later

	Mean stress levels in April 2020 (s.d.)	Mean stress levels in May 2021 (s.d.)
Work-related stress (n=115, 114)	3.38 (1.328)	2.63 (1.332)
Personal-related stress (n=115, 115)	3.45 (1.446)	2.57 (1.285)

The mean level of stress was calculated on a Likert scale with 1 = "Very low" and 5 = "Very high."

Unlike sworn employees, non-sworn White/Non-Hispanic employees reported slightly higher levels of stress at the early stages of the pandemic, but slightly lower levels of stress one year later compared to non-White or Hispanic non-sworn employees. However, none of these differences were statistically significant, as Table 3.21 shows.

Table 3.21. Mean levels of work and personal stress for NON-SWORN employees in April 2020 and May 2021, comparing racial/ethnic groups

	Mean for White AND non-Hispanic (n=67) (s.d.)	Mean for Nonwhite OR Hispanic (n=37) (s.d.)	Statistically significant difference (p<.05)?
Work-related stress in April 2020	**3.42** *(1.304)*	**3.35** *(1.438)*	NO
Work-related stress in May 2021	**2.66** *(1.438)*	**2.50** *(1.342)*	NO
Personal-related stress in April 2020	**3.42** *(1.426)*	**3.46** *(1.609)*	NO
Personal-related stress in May 2021	**2.49** *(1.223)*	**2.62** *(1.421)*	NO

The mean level of stress was calculated on a Likert scale with 1 = "Very low" and 5 = "Very high." "YES" indicates that a statistically significant difference was found using a two-tailed independent samples t-test, with p<.05 threshold. "NO" indicates that no statistically significant difference was found.

When comparing genders, although non-sworn female employees had slightly higher levels of personal stress than their male counterparts at the start of the pandemic and one year later, these differences were not significantly different. However, for non-sworn employees, a greater proportion of women (25%) mentioned having childcare challenges at home than men (17%).

Agency Accommodations and Wellness Support

Non-sworn employees rated the FCPD's performance higher regarding accommodations and overall pandemic-related support than sworn employees. Table 3.22 shows these mean ratings for non-sworn respondents. The overall rating that non-sworn employees gave to the department's response was 3.71 (between "good" and "very good"), which was substantially higher than that given by sworn employees.

Table 3.22. Mean ratings of NON-SWORN employees to agency accommodations and overall response

	Mean (s.d.)	Racial/ ethnic differences	Gender differences
Accommodation to employees who had childcare challenges (n=94)	**4.11** *(1.000)*	NO	NO
Accommodations for employees who had high-risk health conditions (n=99)	**3.99** *(1.191)*	NO	NO
Accommodations for employees with family members who had high-risk health conditions (n=101)	**3.90** *(1.221)*	NO	NO
The overall timeliness of the department's response to employee needs during the pandemic (n=104)	**3.63** *(1.315)*	NO	NO
The department's overall response to COVID as it relates to its employees (n=104)	**3.71** *(1.259)*	NO	NO

The mean is based on choices on a Likert scale with 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; and 5=excellent. "YES" indicates that a statistically significant difference was found using a two-tailed independent samples t-test, with p<.05 threshold. "NO" indicates that no statistically significant difference was found.

Unlike sworn employees, there were no significant differences between demographic groups on these ratings. While non-Whites/Hispanics or male non-sworn employees tended to give the agency slightly lower ratings (similar to sworn respondents), these were not statistically different from their White/non-Hispanic or female counterparts. The years a non-sworn employee had worked in the FCPD only significantly influenced two ratings. The more time-in-service a non-sworn employee had, the more likely they would rate the department's efforts in accommodating employees with high-risk health conditions or who had family members with such conditions more poorly.

In the open-ended responses, non-sworn employees pointed out possible inequities in the provision of accommodations, but most of those concerns surrounded remote work. However, concerns were raised by some non-sworn respondents about the timeliness of the human resources department in adjusting to the pandemic.

Regarding available resources to support an employee's well-being, most non-sworn respondents were aware of at least three of the four services listed in Table 3.23. They were also more likely than their sworn counterparts to use the employee assistance program, the BurnAlong App, and the Livewell resources. However, they were less likely to access dedicated behavioral health specialists and associated resources.

Table 3.23. Percentage of NON-SWORN personnel respondents who were aware of, or had ever used, well-being resources

	% aware	% ever used
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	75.9	19.8
BurnAlong App	25.9	12.1
Training and webinars by Livewell	79.3	34.5
Dedicated behavioral health specialists & resources	63.8	8.6

Missing responses to the awareness questions ranged from 11-12. Missing responses to the "ever used" question were higher, ranging from 17-19.

Analysis of Workforce Data

At the start of this project, we were provided workforce data starting in 2018 and extending through the first six months following the start of the pandemic (March 2020-September 2020). Workforce data shows the number of payroll hours sworn and non-sworn employees worked daily. These data are aggregated weekly below. For each figure shown, the approximate start of the pandemic (mid-March 2020) would be around weeks 12-13 in 2020.

We note that COVID infections among FCPD employees were low during these early months of the pandemic, likely due to the agency's precautionary measures described in Chapter 2. Through September 2020, the agency reported only 38 COVID infections, the first of which was reported in May 2020. However, the agency did experience one death from COVID in July 2020.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the total payroll hours worked for sworn and non-sworn employees in the FCPD. In the case of sworn officers, the number of payroll hours has been consistent since 2018, even during the first six months of the pandemic. While the non-sworn payroll hours have been consistently increasing since 2018, this increase remained consistent throughout the first six months of the pandemic.

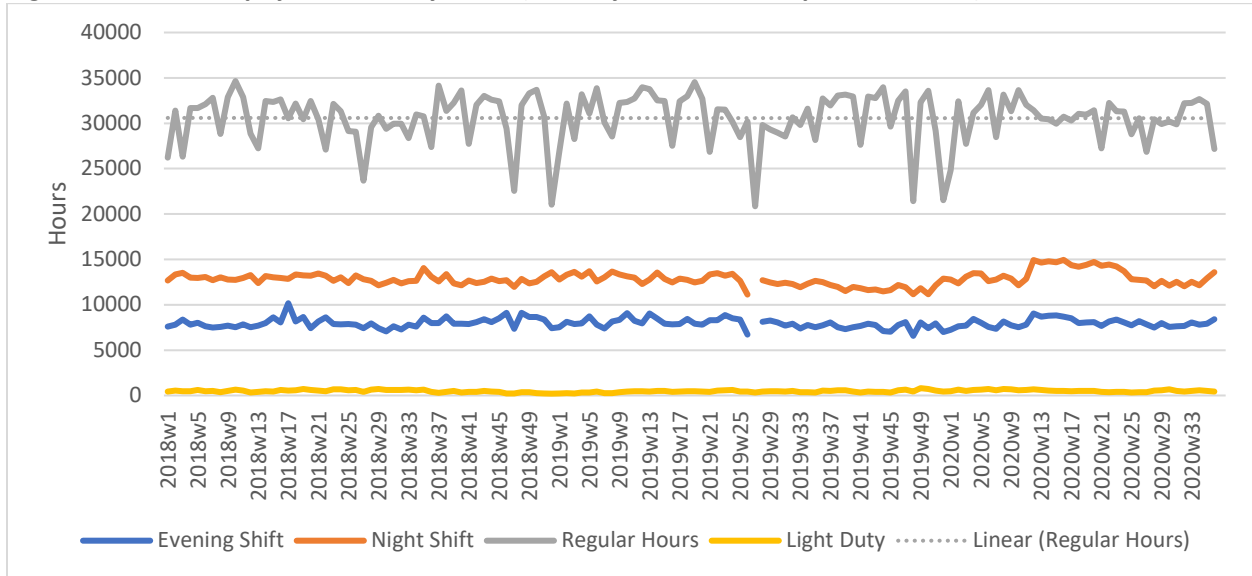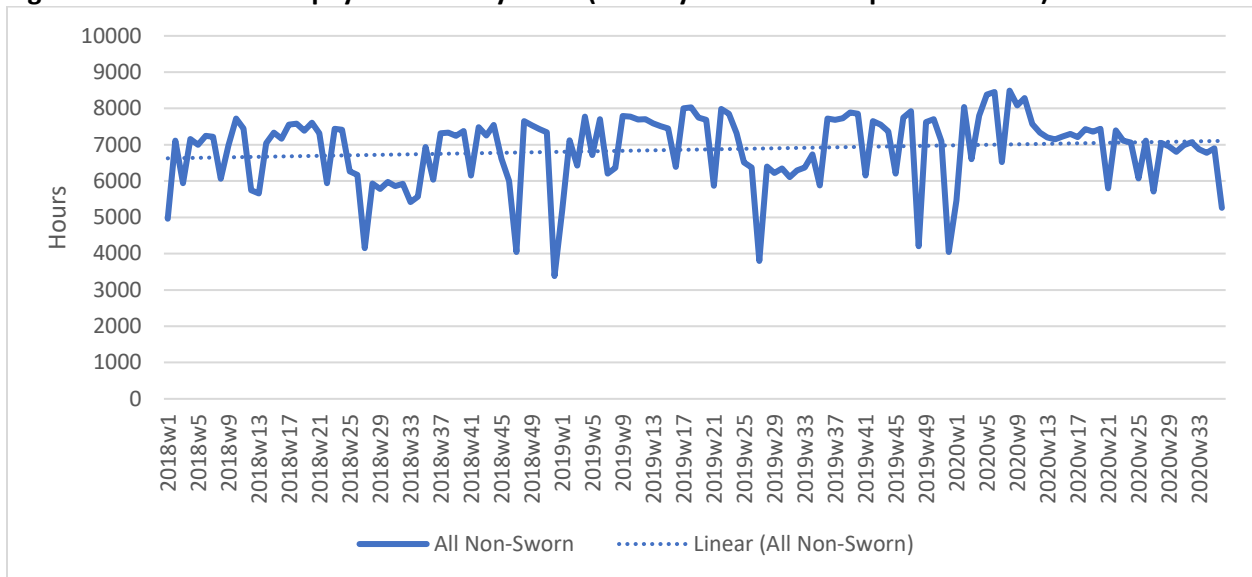**Figure 3.1. SWORN payroll hours by week (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)**

Figure 3.2. NON-SWORN payroll hours by week (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)

The use of regular sick leave hours by week for sworn and non-sworn employees are shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4. For both sworn and non-sworn employees, there was a significant decline in the use of regular sick leave during the first six months of the pandemic. This pattern was particularly pronounced for non-sworn employees, dropping their use of regular sick leave to levels substantially lower than usual.

Figure 3.3. SWORN sick leave hours by week (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)
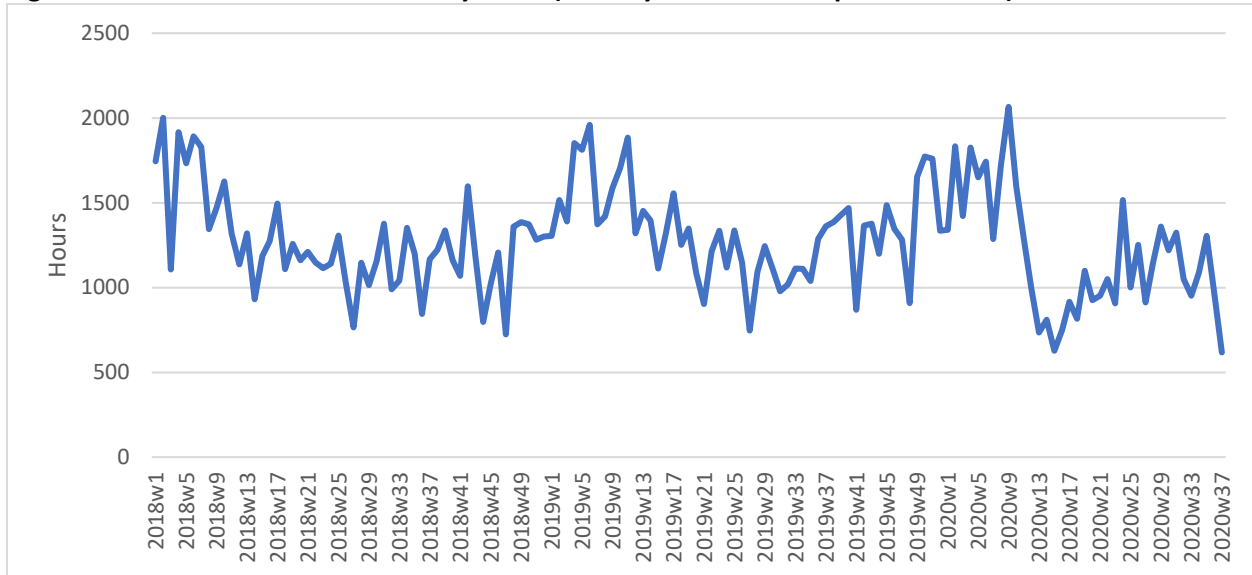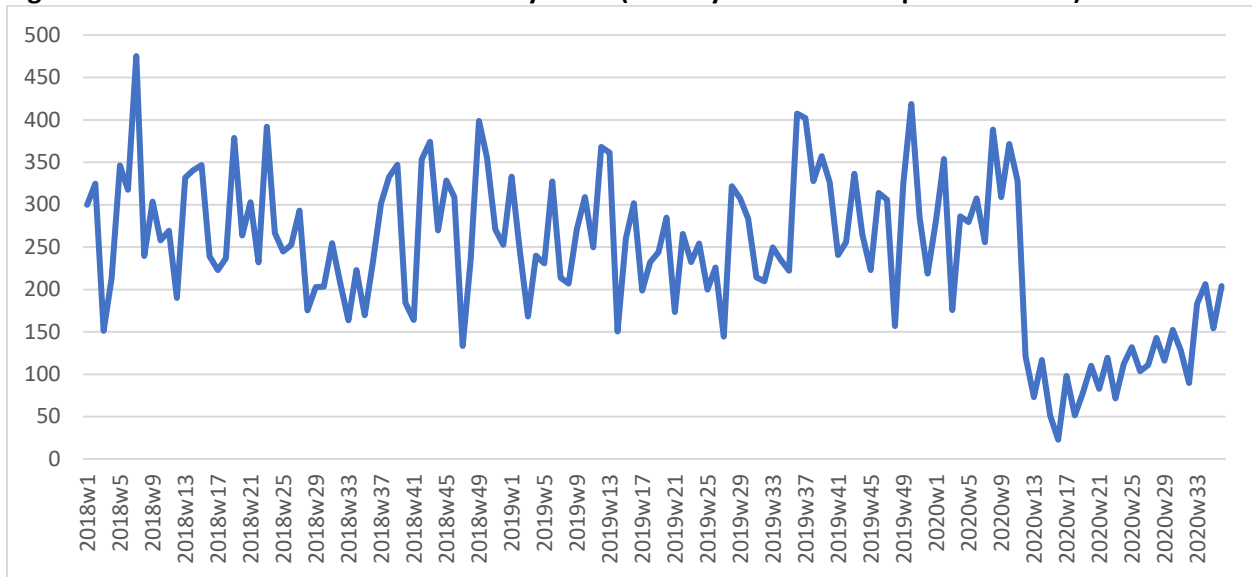

Figure 3.4. NON-SWORN sick leave hours by week (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)

Several factors may explain this decline in both sworn and non-sworn use of regular sick leave. For example, according to the FCPD Human Resources Division, between March 15 and May 8, 2020, employees were eligible to receive up to six weeks of "Admin-Leave-Pandemic" leave. This leave could be used for pandemic-related lack of childcare, inability to work due to being quarantined, sickness due to exposure to the COVID-19 virus, an employee's own compromised immune system, an employee's serious health condition, being age 65 or older, or lacking work when a facility is closed when no alternative placement or telework was available. Sworn police officers could use this specific type of leave on or after May 9, 2022, only if they had a job-

related exposure to COVID-19. The increased use of this leave in the first ten weeks of the pandemic is shown in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5. SWORN "admin-leave-pandemic" leave hours by week (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)
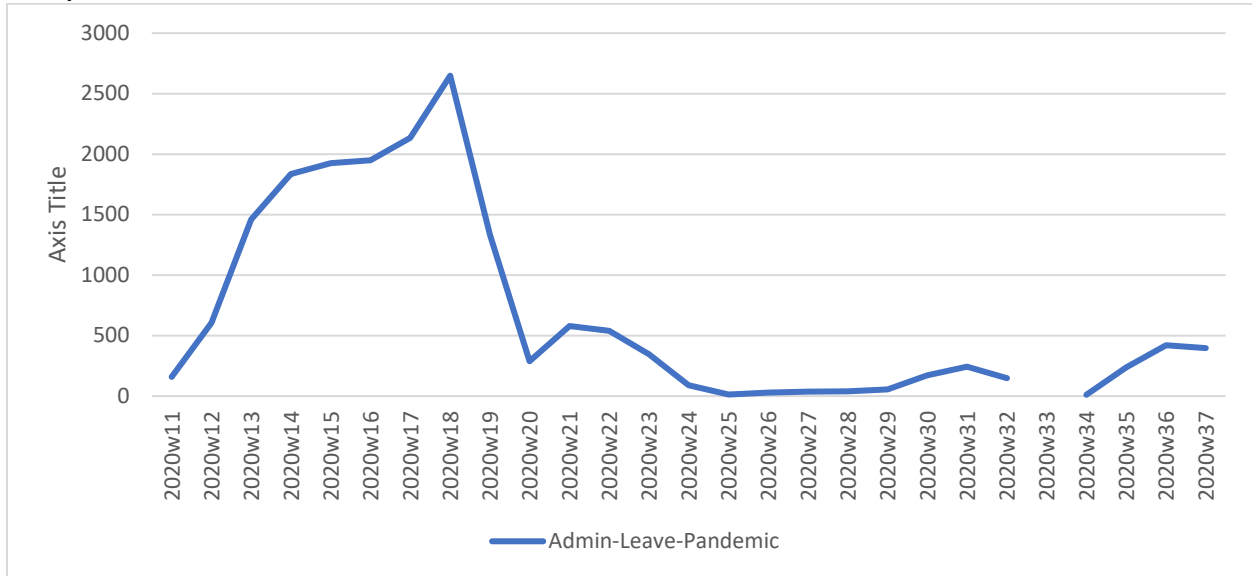
Non-sworn "admin-leave-pandemic" and "admin-leave-pandemic gap" leaves are shown in Figure 3.6. Pandemic gap leave could only be used between May 9 – Dec 31, 2020, for employees who could not work or telework to be paid at two-thirds of their regular rate of pay up to a maximum of $200/day for a total benefit of $12,000. School crossing guards primarily used this gap leave.

Figure 3.6. NON-SWORN "admin-leave-pandemic" leave hours by week (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)
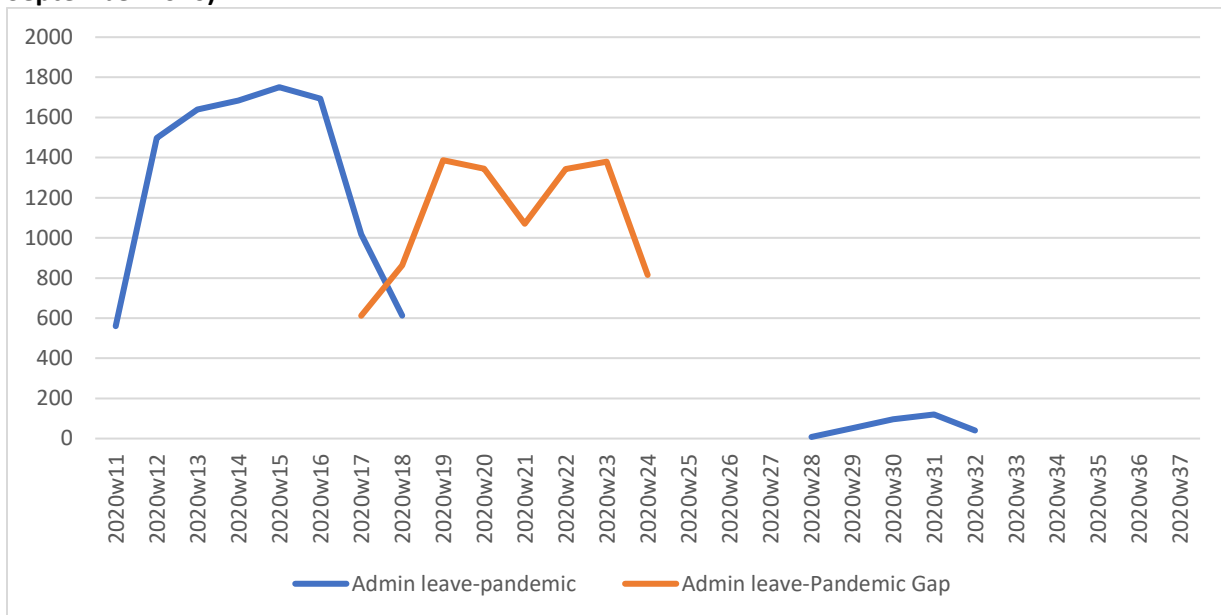
There were also other types of leave sworn and non-sworn personnel could take, some of which were unrelated to the pandemic. These included the following, which are shown in Figures 3.7 and 3.8 for sworn and non-sworn, respectively:[34]

- **FMLA Original/Qualifying Event (QE)-Injury Leave:** This is related to Worker's Comp claims for injuries sustained on duty. The human resources division was unaware of these claims being used for COVID-related issues.
- **FMLA Original/Qualifying Event (QE)-Sick:** This type of leave could be used if an employee contracted COVID and had complications related to COVID (the complications would be FMLA-qualifying, but the contraction would not be).
- **Emergency Paid Sick Leave (SL)-self:** This category falls under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act through the Department of Labor which requires certain employers to provide certain employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The provisions applied from April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020.[35]
- **Injury Leave:** This leave is shown below, but was not used for COVID.

Figure 3.7. Other types of leave used by SWORN personnel (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)

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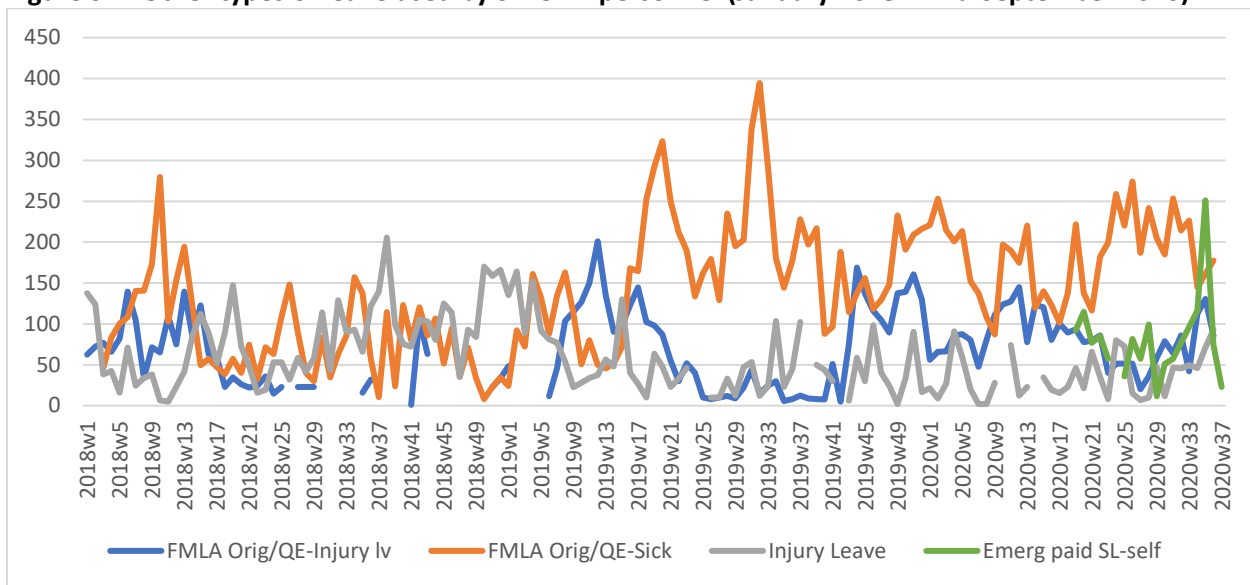
[34] These explanations were provided by the FCPD Human Resources Division.

[35] From the FCPD Human Resources Division: "This leave gave employees up to two weeks of paid sick leave which was paid at 100% or 66% based on the reason the leave was being taken. Leave paid at 100% was capped at $511/day ($5,110 total) and leave paid at 66% was capped at $200/day ($2,000 total). For payment at 100%, the following reasons qualified: Employee was subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19, employee was advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine, employee was experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and was seeking a medical diagnosis. For payment at 66%, the following reasons qualified: Employee was caring for an individual subject to an order for a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order or caring for an individual who was advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19, employee was experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the US Dept of Health and Human Services, or employee was caring for their child whose school or place of care was closed due to COVID-19 related reasons."

Figure 3.8. Other types of leave used by NON-SWORN personnel (January 2018 – mid-September 2020)
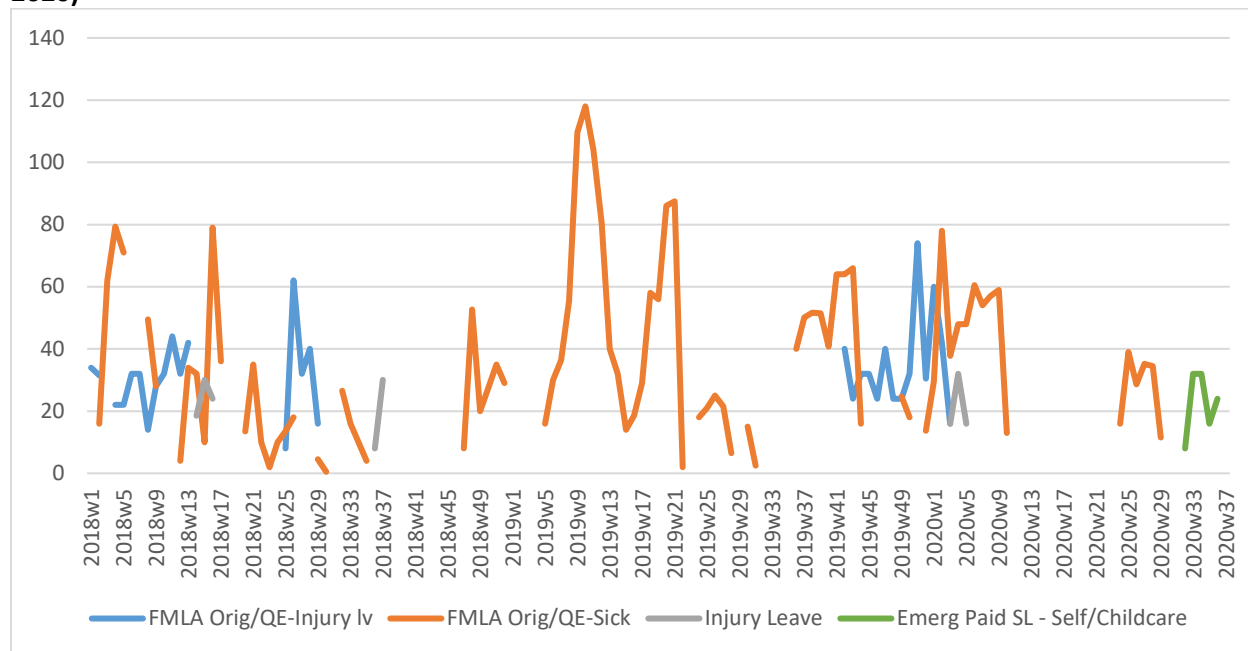
The categories Emergency Paid Sick-Leave-Self and Emergency Paid Sick Leave-Childcare were combined for this chart. A category that was not shown because it was recorded very infrequently was "FLMA-Plus," which was recorded in week 27 of 2020 (10.6 hours), week 30 of 2020 (30 hours), and week 37 (280 hours).

Overall, the total number of sworn and non-sworn hours worked appeared similar before and during the pandemic. While Fairfax County provided some adjustments to the types of leave taken, it appears that the agency was able to maintain its person-power and services throughout the pandemic. Overall levels of sick leave did not seem to increase (or decrease) substantially during the pandemic. Combined with efforts to keep infections low, FCPD maintained its workforce levels.

Summary of Workforce Survey and Data

The surveys, interviews, and workforce data collected in this project indicated that the pandemic posed significant organizational challenges to the FCPD from a human resources standpoint. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic, combined with heightened concerns about the health and safety of personnel balanced against concerns about maintaining public safety, created a challenging internal environment for the agency. Agency leadership had to anticipate what might happen to the availability of personnel and the need for leave without knowing how long the pandemic would last or its ramifications. The agency also had to communicate evolving changes and policies to its personnel.

In anticipation, the command staff strategized about adjustments to deployment, the use of remote work, and which community demands could be handled over the phone. Additional challenges included communicating policies to personnel and ensuring communications were

read. The command staff elected to rely on the chain of command to implement deployment policies, leave, safety precautions, and remote work.

Despite these challenges, the agency maintained a steady level of total weekly hours worked during the first six months of the pandemic. In addition, overall leave levels (all categories combined) did not substantially increase or decrease during the pandemic. COVID infections remained very low throughout the first six months of the pandemic.

Sworn personnel generally rated the agency's response as "good" (a middle rating) for its accommodations to employees and availability of PPE, specifically. However, they gave relatively lower ratings for the department's overall COVID response and the agency's communications with employees (rating the agency "fair" to "good"). Non-sworn employees rated the agency higher than sworn personnel ("very good") across the same performance indicators, although giving relatively lower ratings to the timeliness of the response by human resources. Perceived unfairness by both sworn and non-sworn personnel in accommodations given, leave policies, and remote work (a common theme in open-ended responses) may have contributed to lower ratings, as did perceptions of inconsistent adherence to COVID protection policies (e.g., masks, vaccinations, social distancing).

Worries about contracting COVID at work were very high at the beginning of the pandemic but declined substantially after one year for both sworn and non-sworn personnel. Work-related stress levels were high or very high for two-thirds of sworn respondents at the start of the pandemic. Even after a year, 44% of sworn respondents were still experiencing high to very high levels of work-related stress. Open-ended responses and interviews indicated that other factors besides COVID may have contributed to these stress levels, from national protests due to the murder of George Floyd to local concerns and complaints with the police department.

After the first year of the pandemic, more than a third of sworn respondents expressed interest in leaving the profession. This sentiment was more pronounced in non-White or Hispanic officers and those more likely to experience work-related or personal stress during the initial months of the pandemic and one year later. However, we cannot disentangle how much this sentiment is due to a negative experience with policing during a pandemic or a negative reaction to broader local and national criminal justice issues.

4. The Impact of COVID-19 on Community-Police Interactions

## National Trends in Police-Community Relations during COVID

A trusting and legitimate relationship between a jurisdiction's community members and its police department is the hallmark of advanced democratic policing. However, 2020 presented several challenges to community policing across the United States. Not only did COVID-19 reduce the frequency and change the nature of police-citizen interactions, but the social justice protests resulting from the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 exacerbated relationships in several jurisdictions in the U.S. within an already challenging environment.

The IACP-GMU national survey showcased the immediate impact of COVID-19 on community policing before Floyd's murder. As Lum et al. (2022) report, even before Floyd, jurisdictions across the U.S. experienced a decline in both the demand for and supply of police services primarily due to COVID-19. In terms of demand, most agencies experienced a decline overall in total calls for service (although this trend varied across the type of calls) as public routines dramatically shifted. In terms of supply, many agencies reported actively reducing their proactive policing and community-oriented policing activities to reduce face-to-face contact between officers and citizens.

Specifically, the IACP-GMU survey found that by March 23, 2020, 73% of responding agencies said they had officially and formally reduced or limited community-oriented policing activities. By May 10, 2020, this proportion had only declined to 64%. As shown in Figure 4.1, this trend occurred across almost all agency sizes. Interestingly, the smallest agencies were less likely to restrict community policing activities than their larger counterparts.

In terms of increasing communication with communities, the IACP-GMU survey also found that most agencies did not change their social media activities, nor did they hold press conferences or other similar activities about COVID with their communities (at least before Floyd). For example, by May 10, only 19% of responding agencies had led an official press conference addressing law enforcement activities and concerns surrounding COVID-19. More generally, 66% of responding agencies in the IACP-GMU survey had responded that they had not significantly changed their use of social media to communicate with the public (although 27% did increase their use of social media because of COVID).

Figure 4.1. Percentage of responding agencies (by size of agency) to the IACP-GMU survey who had formal policies to restrict community policing activities
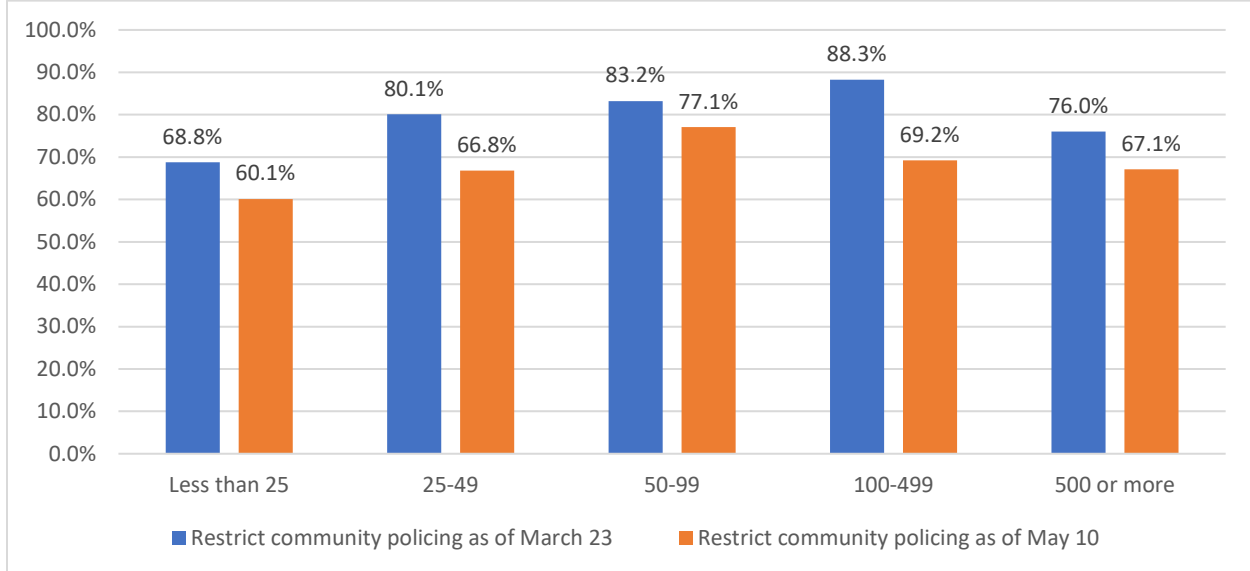
From Lum et al., (2022)

By June 2020, many city and county jurisdictions were experiencing social justice protests due to George Floyd's murder. In many communities, a racial reckoning and move to reform policing and criminal justice services began. Fairfax County was no exception; during this period, not only did Fairfax County experience protests and rallies, but debates also ensued in the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors about policing and justice reforms.[36] The Commonwealth's Attorney in the county also implemented several justice-related reforms.[37] In combination, before and after COVID hit Fairfax County, the relationship between the community and its police agency was a topic of regular discussion among the police, community members, and policymakers.

Community-Police Interactions in Fairfax County during COVID

During the pandemic, several policy adjustments were made concerning community-police interactions in Fairfax County (outlined in Chapter 2). These adjustments primarily consisted of reducing in-person responses to certain calls for service, reducing proactive contacts (traffic and pedestrian stops, primarily), temporarily stopping in-person community policing events and activities (and then moving some of them to virtual settings), and creating public messaging on specific topics, such as domestic violence victimization. Then-Chief Roessler also decided early in the pandemic to keep officers from being involved in enforcing social distancing and masking

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[36] Some of these discussions preceded the Floyd incident. In 2018, the Board of Supervisors had already released the final report of its Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, see https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/policecommission/sites/policecommission/files/assets/documents/final-report.pdf.

[37] https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/commonwealthattorney/reforms

mandates or managing testing centers. The community and workforce surveys and interviews revealed important insights about community-police relationships in Fairfax County during and due to the pandemic that are explored in this chapter.

Community Views of the FCPD during the First Year of the Pandemic

In February 2021, the FCPD asked the CEBCP to conduct a rigorous and independent community survey of Fairfax County households to fulfill their Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) requirements and gauge the community's perceptions of police services and public safety. As with the 2015 survey, the 2021 survey solicited Fairfax County residents' opinions about the police department and their perceptions of crime and safety in their neighborhoods. The survey methods and results are summarized in Chapter 1 and reported in detail in a publicly available report (see Lum et al., 2022). In total, 1,218 residents responded to the community survey. Given that the survey was implemented during the pandemic, the research team also included questions about the FCPD's response to COVID-19. These questions about the agency's pandemic response and the broader assessment of the police agency during this challenging time provide insights into police-community relationships in Fairfax County.

Despite the challenges brought on by Floyd and the pandemic, the overall community survey responses in 2021 were generally positive and similar to the findings from the 2015 survey (see Lum et al., 2016 for a detailed presentation of the 2015 survey findings[38]). Most respondents were satisfied with the FCPD and reported that the agency serves the community effectively. Statistically significant differences in perceptions of FCPD officers and the agency persisted between the 2015 and 2021 surveys between racial and ethnic groups, as they do nationally. Specifically, non-White or Hispanic residents in Fairfax County have relatively poorer perceptions of the police on various measures than White, non-Hispanic residents. Nevertheless, the fact that the 2015 and 2021 surveys report similar findings (especially given that the 2021 survey was more representative of the population—see Lum et al., 2022) indicates that Fairfax County residents' views of the police did not change substantially, despite COVID or the impacts of Floyd.

In the community survey, the specific COVID-related question was posed: "How would you rate the police department's handling of the impacts of COVID-19 on public safety?" Respondents could rate the agency from "poor" to "excellent" on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Of those who answered this question, 70% gave the agency a rating of 4 or 5 (Table 4.1).

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[38] See https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/sites/police/files/assets/documents/fcpd2015survey.pdf.

Table 4.1. Community survey respondents' rating of the FCPD's handling of the impacts of COVID-19 on public safety (n=1,096)

	% of Respondents
1 ("Poor")	1.0
2	1.9
3	26.8
4	34.9
5 ("Excellent")	35.4

Community Perceptions of Police Response to Requests for Assistance

As detailed in Chapter 2, a significant adjustment to the police department's responses to public safety was responding to calls for service by phone instead of in person. As the IACP-GMU survey indicated, many agencies across the country did the same. The effects of this shift on community perceptions of the police (as well as public safety) are largely unknown. Still, we attempted to provide some insight into community reactions in Fairfax County via the community survey. Specifically, the survey asked whether residents requested services from the police "in the last twelve months" (during the COVID period), what type of service they received (in person or over the telephone), and their satisfaction with that service.

The survey found that between February 2020 and February 2021, 20% of respondents (compared to 28% in the 2015 community survey) had requested police services at least once. Table 4.2 shows the mechanism by which a survey respondent who requested police services asked for police assistance. Of those citizens who requested police services, the vast majority did so by telephone (88%).

Table 4.2. Percentage of respondents who requested police services by mode of request (n=243)

	% Requested Police Services
By telephone (911 or another non-emergency number)	87.7
In-person (going to the station; flagging down an officer)	12.3
By internet or email	7.0

For those who had requested police service, the survey asked how an officer initially responded to their request (in person, over the phone, or by internet/email). Table 4.3 provides the percentages of respondents who received services in person, by telephone, or by internet/email. Over 41% of those who had requested police services received a response by telephone, a proportion also mentioned during our interviews.

Table 4.3. Percentage of respondents who received police services by mode of response (n=233)

	% Received Police Services
In-person	54.9
Telephone	41.2
Internet/email	3.9

Note: Ten respondents who initially said they requested police services did not respond to this question.

We then asked residents about their level of satisfaction with the police services they received. Generally, respondents were either satisfied (23.8%) or very satisfied (51.5%) with that service. However, when comparing those who received services in person to those who had received services remotely, significant differences in satisfaction emerged. Table 4.4 shows the percentage of respondents' level of satisfaction for each service mode (combining telephone and internet as "remote") with the mean Likert rating for each in the final column. Those who received services in person were more satisfied than those who received services remotely. This finding (of greater satisfaction during in-person responses) persisted when analyzing White/non-Hispanic callers and non-White or Hispanic callers separately.

Table 4.4. Distribution of responses and mean ratings of satisfaction with in-person versus remote response to calls for service

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Mean Rating *(s.d.)*
In-person service (n=128)	0.8%	7.0%	6.3%	25.0%	60.9%	**4.38** *(0.940)*
Remote service (n=104)	10.6%	10.6%	13.5%	23.1%	42.3%	**3.76** *(1.376)*

Mean ratings are calculated on a Likert scale from "1" to "5," with 1 being "very unsatisfied" to 5 being "very satisfied."

As a matter of policy, calls that officers responded to over the phone or by internet were minor, non-urgent, and satisfying specific requirements. Hence, the pattern shown in Table 4.4 may reflect differences in the types of incidents that received in-person versus remote responses or in respondents' feelings about the quality of service provided based on the type of response. However, this finding may warrant further consideration by the FCPD as it makes decisions about the continued use of remote responses to service calls.

Officer Perceptions of Their Responses to Requests for Assistance

The research team also asked sworn personnel in the workforce survey about their perceptions of remote/telephone responses to calls for service. The workforce survey revealed that 79% of sworn personnel who responded to the question (n=483) had, at some point during 2020, responded to a call for service or carried out certain investigative functions by telephone. However, the frequency by which sworn personnel did so varied across individuals. Table 4.5 shows the percentage of sworn respondents and how frequently they responded to calls or handled investigative activity over the phone or via videoconference.

Table 4.5. Frequency of remote response by SWORN personnel

	% of Respondents (n=479)
Rarely to never (less than 10% of the time)	39.3
Sometimes (around 25% of the time)	21.9
About half the time (around 50% of the time)	16.1
Most of the time (around 75% of the time)	8.3
Almost always to always (more than 90% of the time)	4.9

Note: 50 respondents did not answer this question.

Almost 60% of survey respondents felt that the same level of remote response practiced during the pandemic should continue after the pandemic. Another 28% felt that the amount of remote response should *increase*. Only 13% of respondents supported reducing the level of remote response from pandemic levels. Several expressed these positive opinions about remote response in the open-ended questions and argued that dispatching officers is unnecessary for some calls that the agency has historically responded to in person. As Table 4.6 indicates, most sworn personnel were either satisfied or very satisfied with the decision of FCPD commanders to increase the use of remote response to calls for service and investigations. The average rating on this Likert scale, with 1 = "Very dissatisfied" and 5 = "Very satisfied," was 3.79. However, this rating was slightly lower (3.61) when sworn personnel were asked how they thought community members felt about remote response (although the majority still believed community members were satisfied or very satisfied with remote response). When comparing the community survey with the officer survey, there appears to be disagreement between officers' and community members' feelings about remote response.

Table 4.6. SWORN personnel rating their own satisfaction with remote response and then their perception of community satisfaction with remote response (% of respondents)

	Sworn personnel satisfaction level with remote response (n=478)	Sworn personnel perception of community satisfaction with remote response (n=476)
Very dissatisfied	5.0	3.6
Dissatisfied	6.1	7.6
Neutral	25.9	36.3
Satisfied	30.3	29.4
Very satisfied	32.6	23.1
Average Rating (s.d.)	*3.79* (1.114)	*3.61* (1.033)

Mean ratings are calculated on a Likert scale from "1" to "5," with 1 being "very dissatisfied" to 5 being "very satisfied."

Among officers that handled matters remotely, more than 60% felt the service they provided was similar to responding in person. In addition, nearly 20% felt the service was *more* effective than responding in person; only 19% felt the service was not as effective (Table 4.7). No statistically significant differences emerged when comparing only those in uniformed patrol assignments to everyone else about these beliefs.

Table 4.7. SWORN personnel's beliefs on the level of service provided remotely compared to in-person.

	% of Respondents
I felt the service I provided was better and more effective than responding in person.	19.5
I felt the service I provided was similar to responding in person.	61.5
I felt the service I provided was not as effective as responding in person.	19.0

Percentages are based on 390 officers that responded to incidents remotely.

The sworn personnel interviews confirmed many of these findings but provided additional insights and nuances into officers' perceptions of community beliefs about the police

department. For example, while it appeared that the initial move toward remote response to calls for service was due to concerns about COVID contagion, interviews and surveys revealed that officers became used to this approach and believed that even before the pandemic, certain calls did not need an in-person (or even a police) response. At the same time, some officers sensed that community members still wanted to see them face-to-face. Some acknowledged that citizens wanted officers to respond in person, but officers wanted to respond by phone in many instances. A minority of officers expressed that aspects of interaction and customer service were lost when they didn't interact face to face, which hurts policing in the long term.

Proactive Contacts in the Field

Due to concerns about health and safety for both officers and community members, FCPD officers generally limited contact with the community in their daily interactions, not just in responding to calls for service. This led to a sharp reduction in proactive contacts with community members at the start of the pandemic (e.g., traffic and pedestrian stops, business checks, etc.). These statistics are detailed in Chapter 5 (see Figures 5.14 and 5.15) and show dramatic declines in traffic-related and non-traffic proactive contacts that continued into 2021.

Some interviewees and survey respondents described patrol operations going into "Plan P" (for "park") mode, an informal term describing what officers often do during inclement weather to reduce their risk of traffic crashes. Interviews revealed that the Plan P mode became a more standard practice during COVID, reducing officer proactive contacts with the community. It wasn't clear from the interviews whether this reduction in proactivity was a formal or official policy, but it seemed to be informally encouraged or allowed. Further, accounts suggest that the pullback from community contact caused initially by COVID (i.e., remote call responses and more passive patrol) was further reinforced by the national and local protests and critiques against police that followed the death of George Floyd in the summer of 2020. Hence, as shown in Chapter 5, the decline in police proactivity lasted throughout the first year of the pandemic.

Although not confirmed by survey data, interviewees suggested that morale was impacted much more by Floyd's murder and the ensuing protests against the police than by COVID. For example, one interviewee stated that at the beginning of the pandemic, police and other service responders were very much appreciated by the community. But after Floyd, the tables quickly turned, and many felt a much more volatile atmosphere. Morale also seemed impacted by previous history and events in the FCPD and the perceived politics of the Commonwealth Attorney. Some argued that officers preferred to do as little as possible with the community to avoid any risk of getting into a "bad situation."

Community Policing Activities and Communication

FCPD efforts to build positive relationships with community members, generically captured as "community policing activities," also include activities unrelated to enforcement or calls for service responses. The interviews showcased not only the array of community engagement

activities that FCPD had engaged in before COVID but also the impact of COVID on these activities. Aligned with national trends, the FCPD initially stopped face-to-face meetings with community members. Even at the time of the interviews (summer of 2021), many of these activities had not yet resumed. Specifically, the following community-policing activities were impacted by COVID:

- Activities to recruit potential employees from the community were temporarily stopped, and the agency had to find other ways to recruit personnel. Recruitment of officers and non-sworn personnel had been challenging even before COVID and continued after COVID for several reasons, as mentioned above.

- Social activities, community gatherings, and tours of station houses ceased. Juvenile programs stopped or were reduced, and some teen programs were held virtually, which interviewees felt led to reduced participation. Coordinating virtual events was especially challenging for personnel involved in the Special Olympics.

- Specific services to the community initially ceased. These included providing records checks, fingerprinting, help with visas, and other support for federal clearances. According to several interviewees, these services were in high demand given the jurisdiction's nearness to Washington, D.C. and the federal workers that live in the county. Thus, during COVID, complaints were made to the police department regarding the lack of availability of these services.

- The spring 2020 session of the Community Police Academy was canceled. This academy usually occurs twice yearly and is attended by a variety of community members. The academy was moved online for the Fall 2020, which presented logistical challenges and resulted in lower enrollments. As one interviewee stated, "It wasn't the same experience, but it was a chance to keep people engaged." (The Community Police Academy as of Fall 2022 is back to in-person classes.)

- Community meetings initially stopped and were later transitioned to virtual meetings. There were mixed feelings about this among interviewees. The agency was able to implement Zoom virtual meetings fairly quickly, and there was a sense (at least in the first year of the pandemic) that many officers and community members preferred Zoom meetings because they could participate more easily. However, some community officers we spoke to expressed that the quality of in-person meetings was lost in the lack of face-to-face interactions with the community.

Regarding communications with the community, the FCPD was already using Twitter, Facebook, and NextDoor to communicate with residents before the pandemic. NextDoor was often used to push notifications and information out to residents because it was unclear who Twitter followers were. These efforts continued during COVID, although a general challenge to communication was that many community members are not on social media or do not follow the FCPD's social media communications. The police chief also posted domestic violence

victimization video messages to ensure that community members would continue to be encouraged to report domestic violence during lockdowns. However, from our interviews, it appears that most communication efforts by the agency were focused on internal instead of external information dissemination.

Summary of Community-Police Relationships during the Pandemic

The pandemic substantially changed how the FCPD interacted with the community. Most notably, the agency reduced in-person responses to calls for service, proactive policing, and community engagement. Community meetings were transitioned to virtual environments, and many other community activities were suspended. These findings mirror national trends. The IACP-GMU survey found that community policing and proactive contacts with the public were often restricted or stopped in the majority of agencies across the United States at the beginning of the pandemic. Some of these reductions persisted into 2022 for the FCPD.

Despite the reduction in community interactions, the 2021 Fairfax County Community Survey indicated that overall satisfaction with the police stayed the same between 2015 and 2021. Fairfax County residents generally felt that the FCPD responded well to the COVID crisis.

Many calls for service were handled remotely between 2020 and 2022. FCPD officers strongly preferred this adjustment and felt that the service they provided remotely was as good or better than services provided in person. A minority (20%) of respondents felt that their service provided remotely was less effective. While community residents did not view remote response negatively, those who received police services in person rated their experience and satisfaction higher than those who received services remotely by phone.

The reduction of in-person community-policing activities continued for at least one year after the pandemic, suggesting that community-oriented policing activities may be slow to return to normal levels and modes after a severe public health crisis. Some personnel felt that the quantity and quality of the virtual community engagement activities were lower, while others saw benefits to virtual meetings.

5. Trends in Crime and Disorder during the Pandemic in Fairfax County

Crime, Disorder, and Calls for Service during COVID

As the IACP-GMU national survey found, agencies across the country, large and small, reported overall declines in their calls-for-service. The halting of public life dramatically altered the opportunities, routines, situations, and interpersonal exchanges associated with crime, disorder, conflicts, and traffic accidents. These changes naturally impacted the volume, frequency, and types of calls for emergency services through 911 and other non-emergency public safety numbers, as already documented by others (see, e.g., Abrams, 2021; Ashby, 2020; Campedelli et al., 2020; Langton et al., 2021; Lopez & Rosenfeld, 2021; Piquero et al., 2021).

At the same time, studies have also revealed that crime, disorder, and calls-for-service trends in specific jurisdictions are more complex, especially within specific types of events. While some crimes and disorders decreased early in the pandemic, others increased or fluctuated. Most notably, firearms and other violence have increased in some cities (Beard et al., 2021; Kim & Phillips, 2021; Lopez & Rosenfeld, 2021). Some declines in calls for service may have also occurred due to a decline in official reporting but may not reflect actual trends, such as domestic violence (Nix & Richards, 2021; Piquero et al., 2021) or child abuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022).

Assessing the effects of COVID on public safety is also complicated by the potential impacts of social and political events that followed the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis in May 2020. This incident ignited protests in thousands of communities across America and worldwide during the summer of 2020 (Bliss, 2020; Buchanon et al., 2020), including in Fairfax County. The Floyd incident and other recent controversies surrounding police use of force have raised concerns about a legitimacy crisis in policing that may be worsening attitudes towards police (Kochel, 2019; Reny & Newman, 2021; Tesler, 2020), undermining community cooperation with police (Ang et al., 2021; Desmond et al., 2016), and even fueling increases in violence (Rosenfeld, 2016; Rosenfeld et al., 2021). Some argue that this has also contributed to police pulling back from the public in many communities.

Operational Changes and Events that May Impact Fairfax County Trends

In Virginia generally and in Fairfax County more specifically, several key events may have impacted routines, activities, and in turn, crime and disorder trends. Some of these events, including shifts to remote work and government restrictions on public activities, impacted lifestyles and routines that normally contribute to crime, disorder, accidents, and other public safety events. However, other events are specific to FCPD and criminal justice policy changes

that may have also impacted calls for service (for example, the FCPD's reductions in proactive traffic enforcement, in-person response to calls, and community-oriented policing activities). Yet other social events, such as the widespread protests for police reform following the murder of George Floyd, may have impacted crime and disorder in Fairfax County, as they seem to have elsewhere. In Table 5.1, we highlight numerous events and policy changes that seemed to have the greatest potential to affect crime and disorder in the county. The policy changes include those by the FCPD and significant changes made by other state and county authorities. We grouped these events by relevant month for the first year of the pandemic.

Table 5.1. Timeline of key events and operational changes with potential to impact crime and disorder

March 2020	• National, state, and local authorities declared states of emergency for Virginia, Fairfax County, and the United States
	• The Governor of Virginia issued a series of executive orders that:
	○ Restricted public and private gatherings to 100 or fewer people initially and later to ten or fewer people
	○ Closed congregation areas in dining and drinking establishments and closed public access to recreational and entertainment businesses (patrons onsite were limited to no more than ten at one time)
	○ Imposed a stay-at-home order limiting activities outside the home
	○ Closed K-12 schools for two weeks and later suspended in-person instruction through the end of the academic year
	○ Ended in-person instruction at institutions of higher learning through the end of the academic year
	○ Extended the validity of some Dept. of Motor Vehicle driver and vehicle credentials and suspended state enforcement of vehicle inspection requirements
	• FCPD operational adjustments:
	○ Agency expanded remote (phone/online) responses to calls for service through its expanded Community Reporting Section
	○ Additional staff, including half of the agency's district detectives, were redeployed into patrol
	○ Community contacts were reduced (e.g., traffic stops, proactive and community policing activities)
	○ Remote work arrangements instituted for many staff
	• Fairfax County courts closed and instituted remote proceedings; many cases were rescheduled or suspended
	• County parks were closed
May 2020	• Businesses in Fairfax (and other parts of Northern Virginia) were partially reopened at the end of May, subject to capacity limits and other safety requirements specified in Phase 1 of the Governor of Virginia's *Forward Virginia* plan for reopening the state
	• County parks were reopened for limited use
	• Fairfax County summer camps were canceled
	• The Governor of Virginia issued an executive order requiring people to wear face masks in public indoor settings

June 2020	• Several planned protests, rallies, and vigils occurred in Fairfax County in response to the murder of George Floyd
	• Virginia's stay-at-home order expired
	• Fairfax County (and other parts of Northern Virginia) entered Phase 2 of the *Forward Virginia* plan, further easing business restrictions and allowing for social gatherings of up to 50 people
	• FCPD operational adjustments:
	   ○ Temporary patrol assignments ended for redeployed officers; all district detectives moved back to investigative assignments with half teleworking
	   ○ Remote working assignments were reduced throughout the agency

July 2020	• Fairfax County (and other parts of Northern Virginia) entered Phase 3 of the *Forward Virginia* plan, ending business capacity restrictions and restrictions on social gatherings
	• FCPD operational adjustments:
	   ○ Remote (phone/online) responses to calls for service were reduced
	   ○ All detectives resumed full investigative duties onsite
	   ○ Traffic division resumed normal duties
	   ○ Remote working assignments were further reduced throughout the agency
	• Enforcement of vehicle inspection requirements resumed by the Virginia Department of State Police near the end of July
	• FCPD officer indicted for a use of force case that occurred in June 2020

November 2020	• In response to a resurgence in COVID cases, the Governor of Virginia issued executive orders that:
	   ○ Expanded requirements for wearing face masks in public indoor settings
	   ○ Established new safety requirements and capacity restrictions for many businesses and places
	   ○ Limited nighttime hours for alcohol sales and dining and congregation in dining and drinking establishments
	   ○ Limited public and private gatherings to 25 people

December 2020	• In response to a resurgence in COVID cases, the Governor of Virginia issued executive orders that:
	   ○ Imposed a modified stay-at-home order that required individuals to stay home between midnight and 5:00 am
	   ○ Limited public and private gatherings to 10 people and gave law enforcement officers authority to enforce this restriction
	   ○ Extended other business and public masking restrictions imposed in Nov. 2020
	• Fairfax County District Court announced case continuances to April 2021 for all stand-alone traffic infractions
	• Virginia passed legislation restricting traffic stops for certain minor violations

January 2021	• COVID vaccinations began for FCPD staff • All extensions for Department of Motor Vehicle driver and vehicle credentials expired

	• Rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol violently in an attempt to prevent certification of the election results for the U.S. presidency
February 2021	• Governor of Virginia's Dec. 2020 executive orders regarding businesses and social gatherings, stay-at-home orders, and masking requirements expired • Students started returning to classrooms in Fairfax County
March 2021	• FCPD operations returned to normal (remote call responses and remote working continued at higher levels than before the pandemic)

Data and Methods Used for this Analysis

To determine how the pandemic and related policy changes impacted crime, disorder, and policing trends in Fairfax County, we analyzed trends in calls-for-service (CFS) data between January 2015 and February 2021. We analyzed over 3 million CFS generated by community members and officers from January 2015 through February 2021. These records reflect over 250 specific categories of events, which we categorized into 14 types:

- Administrative-related, non-crime calls
- Alarms
- Disorders (e.g., disputes, trespassing, animals, graffiti, noise, code violations, etc.)
- Domestic-related incidents
- Follow-ups and service requests
- Persons crimes (e.g., assaults, homicides, robberies, sexual assaults, weapons)
- Other interpersonal crimes (e.g., harassment and threats)
- Mental-related
- Missing persons
- Property crimes (e.g., thefts, burglaries, auto thefts, frauds)
- Proactive work by officers (traffic and otherwise)
- Suspicious incidents
- Traffic-related (non-proactive)
- Vice, overdoses, and narcotics events

The purpose of analyzing such a long time series of data (January 2015 – February 2021) is to determine to what extent changes post-COVID were unusual, given expected trends experienced by the agency over multiple years. We use CFS rather than crime incident reports because CFS provides the best gauge of the demands on the police, including non-crime incidents. For example, CFS record minor disorders, traffic events, suspicions, medical emergencies, and other concerns that would not appear in official written reports of crime (most calls for service are not formally documented in a crime incident report). CFS data also capture proactive, officer-initiated activity.

To analyze this data, we used an auto-regressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) modeling technique with a forecast package in R.[39] Using this technique, we compared the "normal" trends and patterns in the data from the pre-COVID period against trends and patterns that appeared during the COVID period (post-March 2020). More specifically, we used pre-COVID trends and patterns in the data to forecast expected levels of CFS for each month of the first year of the pandemic (March 2020 – February 2021). These forecasts produced a likely range of the levels of calls that would have been expected in the absence of the pandemic.[40] Comparing the actual level of calls for service during the pandemic with the forecasted level allows us to determine if the actual levels of calls for service changed significantly during COVID—and if so, when, for how long, and for what types of calls. We then compared the results to the timeline of social and policy changes above to assess what factors may have caused short-term or long-term changes in call patterns.[41]

Results

Citizen-initiated Calls for Service

The following figures illustrate the results from the time series analysis for various calls-for-service events. For each figure, the vertical dotted line marks March 2020, when the pandemic began. The black trend line before March 2020 indicates the actual volume of calls for service each month since 2015. After the March 2020 vertical indicator, the black line indicates the forecasted trend of each particular type of event *given the previous trend*. The shaded buffer zones above and below that line represent that prediction's 95% confidence bound. In other words, actual volumes within the shaded area can be considered within expected ranges given previous trends within a 95% confidence bound.

The orange line shows the *actual* levels of calls for service recorded between March 2020 and February 2021. When the orange line is within the shaded buffer zones, this indicates that the actual volume of calls for service during the pandemic months falls within predicted values— what would have happened had the pandemic never occurred. When the orange line falls outside the shaded buffer zones, this indicates a statistically significant deviation from the expected trend—an "unusual" increase or decrease in calls for service during the pandemic period.

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[39] R is a language and environment for statistical computing and graphics. Information about R and its developers can be found at https://www.r-project.org/about.html.

[40] We limited our forecasts to the first year of the pandemic because forecasting variability (and hence uncertainty) becomes greater as the forecasting time period is extended. This also represents the period when public activities and FCPD operations were most disrupted.

[41] Using the ARIMA-forecasting technique for a single site study of trends in Fairfax County is particularly appropriate for studying the impacts of COVID-19 as there is no comparison site for Fairfax County that was *not* affected by the pandemic (Brantingham et al., 2021; Estévez-Soto, 2021). Further, there was no single intervention point for a standard interrupted time series design that compares pre-intervention and post-intervention means. It is thus more informative in this context to look dynamically at a range of social, policy, and operational changes that occurred over time to determine which, if any, led to temporary or permanent changes in CFS.

As previous research has indicated, while calls for service generally declined during the COVID period for many agencies, there are several nuances and exceptions to this overall pattern. For example, Figure 5.1 shows the total volume of calls for service about violence (i.e., personal crimes, not including those specifically flagged for domestic violence, which we will examine separately) from January 2015 to February 2021. The total non-domestic-related violence calls declined significantly from April 2020 through June 2020 during the initial lockdown period. These calls dropped to roughly 300-350 a month during this time, down from their normal levels of around 400-500 per month. Violent crime calls generally rebounded to within expected levels through the rest of 2020, before again dropping below expected levels during the first two months of 2021. In addition, separate analyses of serious and minor violence showed this same pattern, although 60% of all violence is primarily made up of fights and simple assaults.

Figure 5.1. Actual and predicted volume of VIOLENCE (non-domestic) calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)
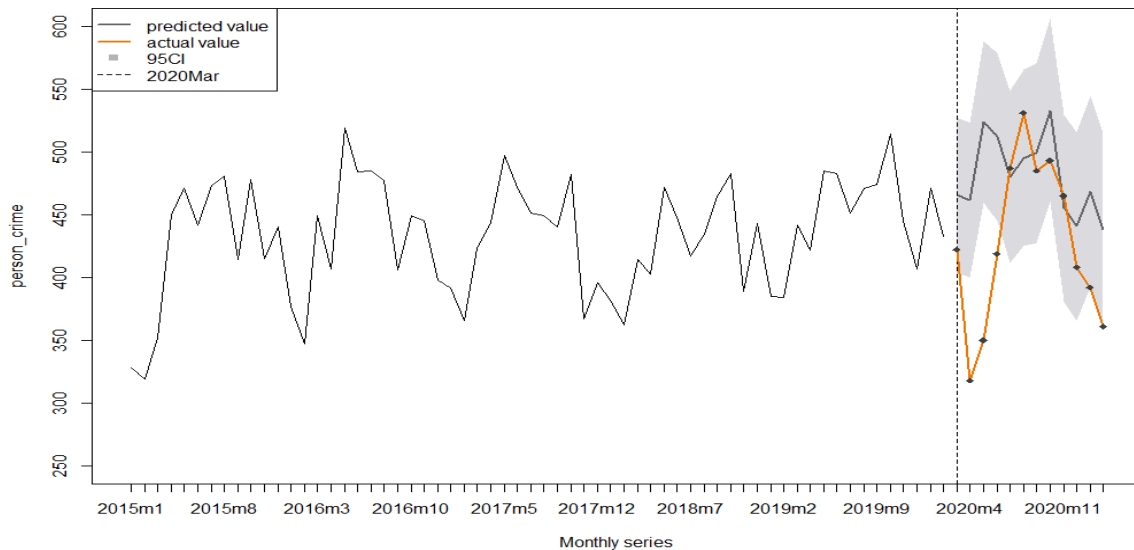
Figure 5.2 shows the trends for property crimes before and during the pandemic. Property crime calls for service experienced an initial dip in the early months of the pandemic but quickly returned to within expected ranges throughout the pandemic, showing no significant increases or decreases.

Figure 5.2. Actual and predicted volume of PROPERTY CRIME calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)
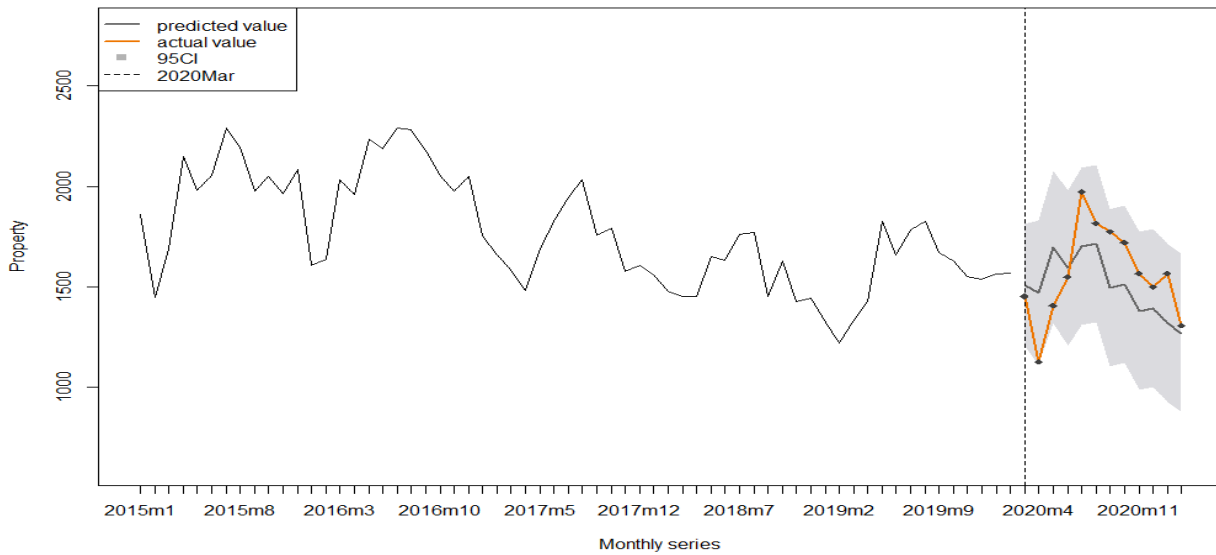
According to a routine activities perspective (see Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson, 1987; Lopez & Rosenfeld, 2021), we might expect some property crimes to decline because more people are at home (i.e., fewer burglaries and car thefts). However, other property crimes, such as car theft or destruction of property, may increase because fewer guardians are protecting public spaces. Thus, overall property crime trends may mask variable trends for particular types of crime.

To explore this hypothesis, Figures 5.3 – 5.6 show four types of property crimes—burglaries, auto theft, larceny and fraud, and destruction of property, respectively. These series indicate some nuances in the general trend. Burglary, larceny and fraud, and destruction of property all experienced initial declines at the start of the pandemic (most notably for larceny and fraud and destruction of property) but quickly returned to predicted levels.[42] Auto theft and tampering, however, rose during the summer months. At their highest point (and most significant increase) in July 2020, auto theft/tampering calls reached almost 600 per month, up from their usual expected levels of 300-400 per month.

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[42] Because the CFS data do not distinguish between commercial and residential burglaries, we were unable to examine them separately. To explore the possibility that burglaries of businesses and other government buildings might have increased (because these establishments were likely to be closed), we also examined trends for burglary alarms that originated from businesses, banks, or schools. Contrary to expectations, these alarm calls remained within expected ranges and did not increase during COVID (results not shown).

Figure 5.3. Actual and predicted volume BURGLARY calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)
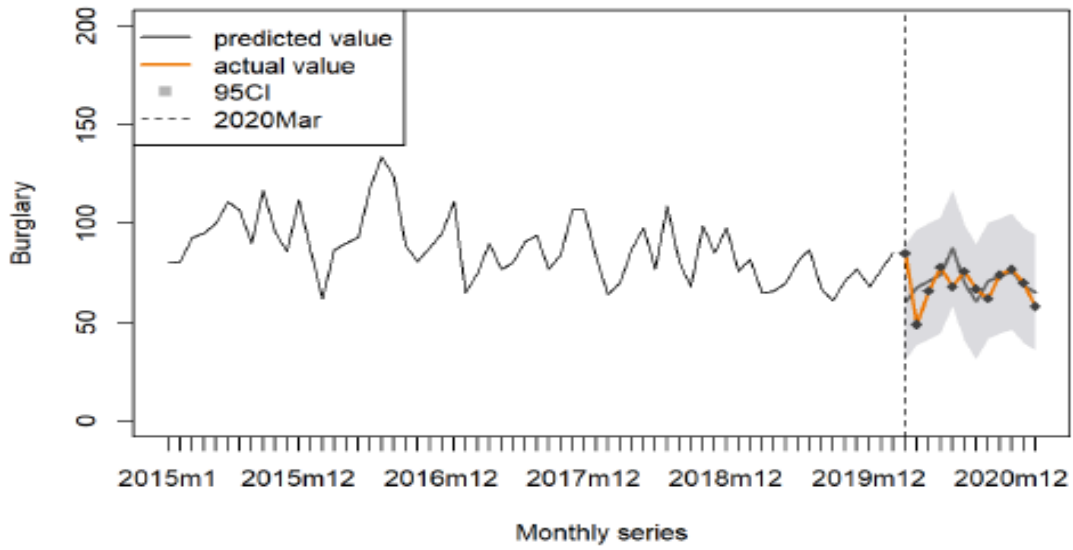

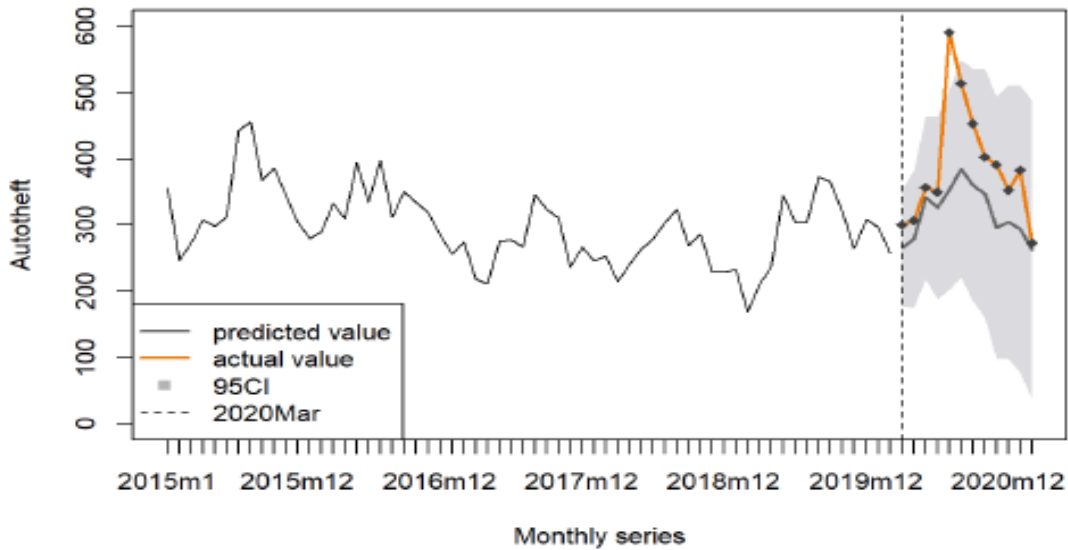**Figure 5.4. Actual and predicted volume AUTO THEFT/TAMPERING calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)**

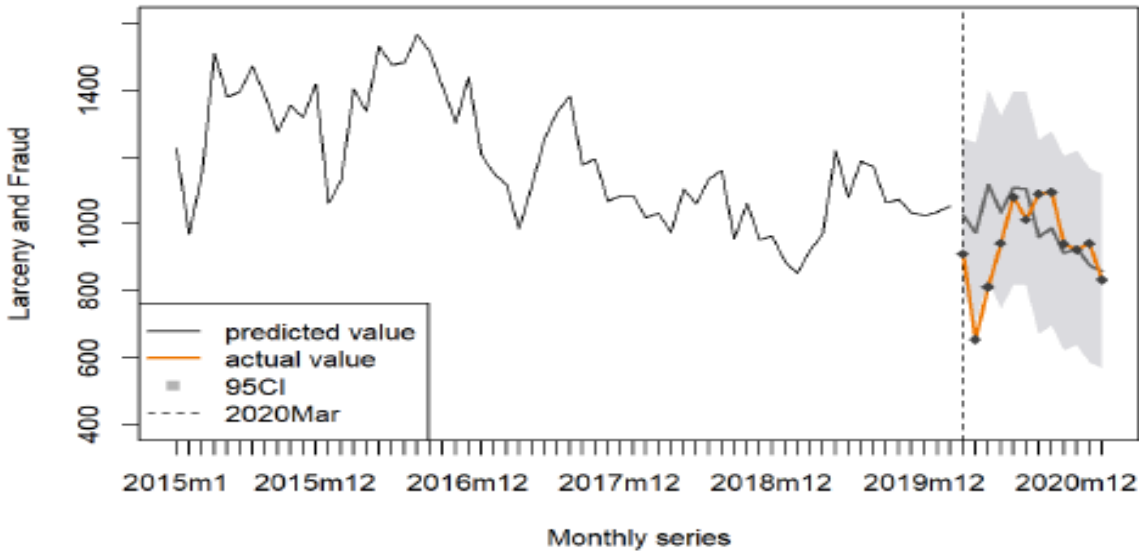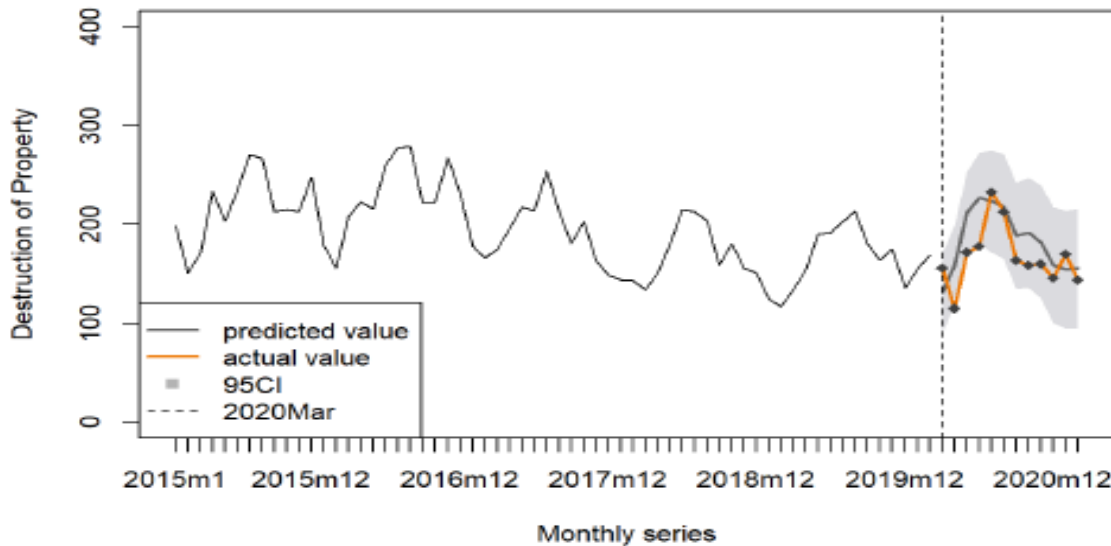**Figure 5.5. Actual and predicted volume LARCENY/FRAUD calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)**


Figure 5.6. Actual and predicted volume DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)


A large number of calls to police are about "disorders." These include several types of calls that are not usually defined as crime or serious crime, and can include disputes, animal problems, trespassing, liquor violations or drinking in public, noise complaints, abandoned vehicles, loitering, or other vehicle-related disorders. Figure 5.7 shows the analysis of these types of calls. While there was an initial decline in disorders in April 2020, the volume of disorder-related calls was within expected ranges during the first year of the pandemic.

Figure 5.7. Actual and predicted volume of DISORDER calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)
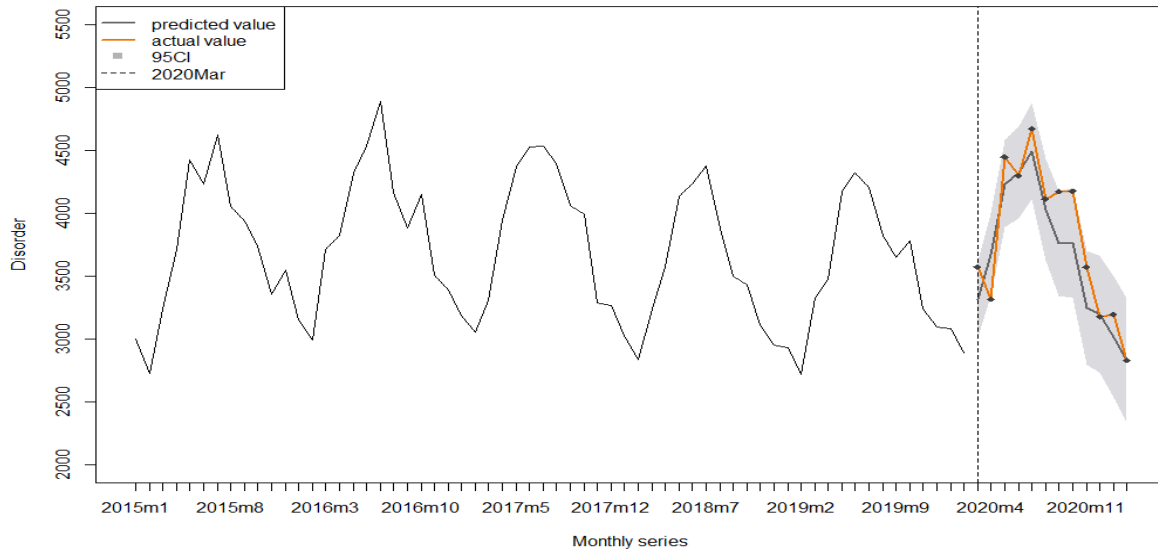
Calls about suspicious behaviors, persons, and circumstances have generally been increasing in Fairfax County since 2015, as Figure 5.8 indicates. However, these calls were lower than usual during April and May 2020 and then rose temporarily in the summer of 2020. Generally, however, calls about suspicious activity remained within normal statistical ranges from June 2020 through February 2021.

Figure 5.8. Actual and predicted volume of calls related to SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIORS, PERSONS, AND CIRCUMSTANCES (January 2015 – February 2021)
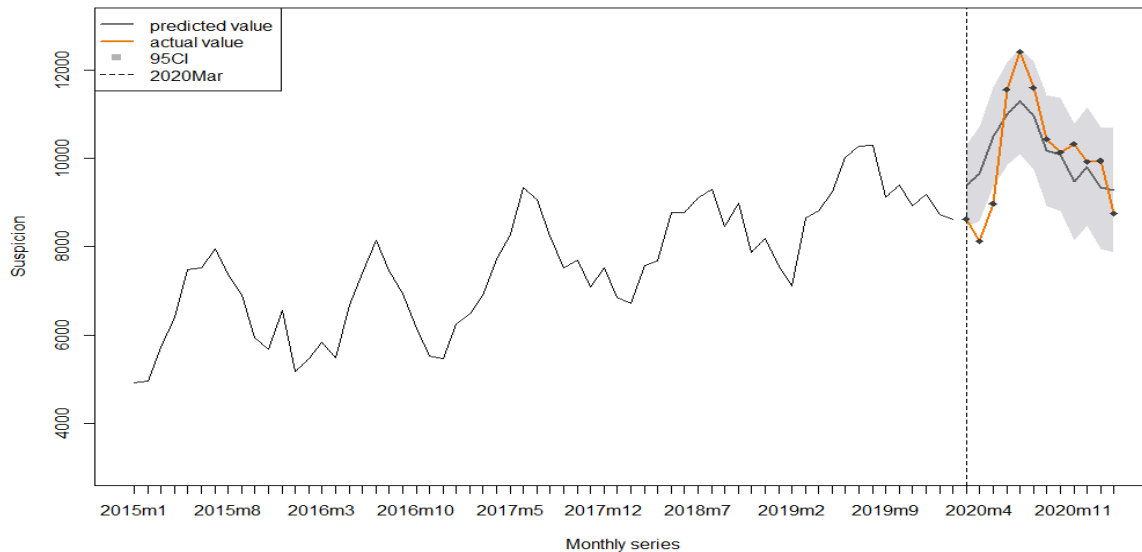
Calls for drug-related matters and vice declined during the first year of the pandemic and were significantly lower than expected during several months of the study period, particularly from November 2020 through February 2021 (Figure 5.9). These calls averaged more than 300 per

month before the pandemic but dropped to around 250 per month by late 2020 and early 2021. We note that this decline may simply mean that drug activity and vice were taken indoors. Across several communities in the U.S., we know that drug and opioid overdoses increased during the pandemic period.[43]

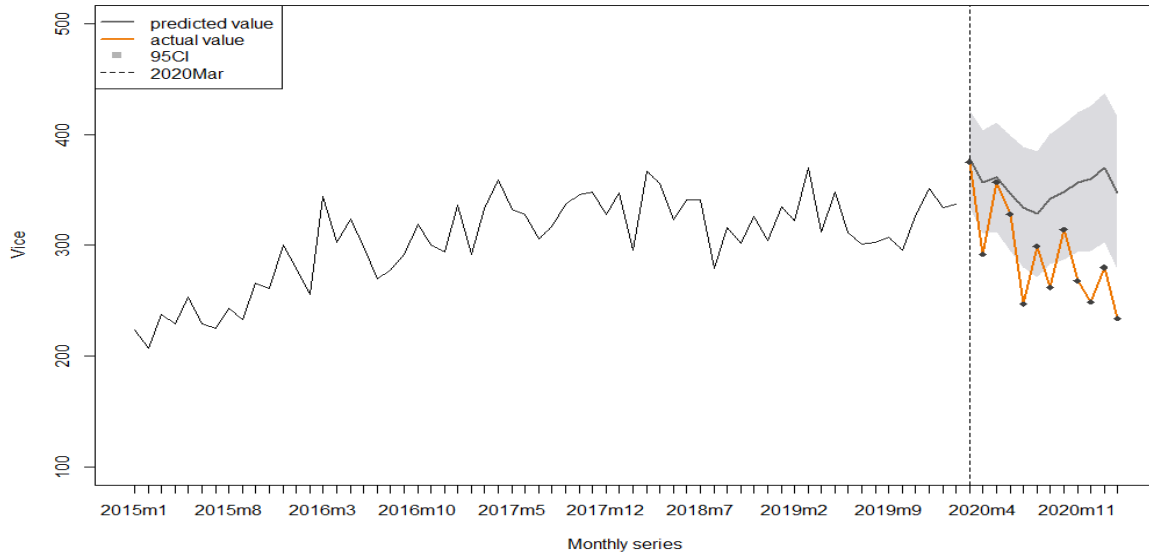**Figure 5.9. Actual and predicted volume of VICE-RELATED calls (January 2015 – February 2021)**

Figure 5.10 shows that the most common type of call for service in Fairfax County—traffic-related calls from citizens to the police—declined dramatically during the pandemic and remained well below normal levels through February 2021. Traffic calls typically ranged between 4,000 and 5,000 per month before the pandemic but dropped to 2,000 to 3,500 per month after the pandemic's start. This is expected given the substantial decline in traffic during the pandemic stemming from lockdowns and telecommuting.

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[43] See https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm; see also, e.g., Cartus et al., (2022) and Ghose et al. (2022).

Figure 5.10. Actual and predicted volume of TRAFFIC-RELATED calls (January 2015 – February 2021)
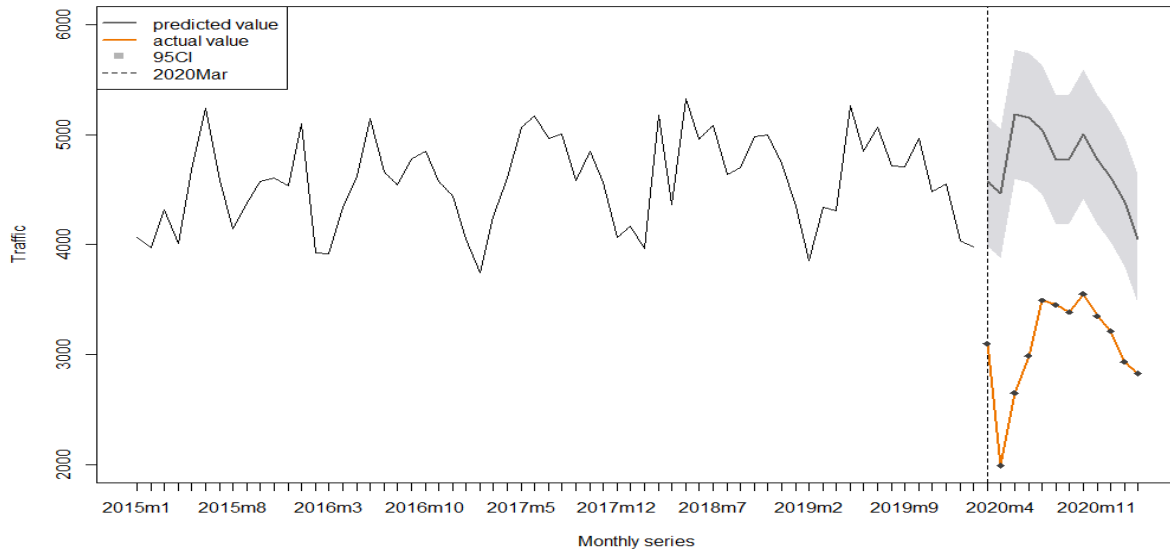
In contrast, calls classified as mental health or distress-related climbed significantly during the pandemic. As shown in Figure 5.11, these calls were trending upward before the pandemic, averaging around 600 per month just before March 2020. However, they rose considerably afterwards, reaching statistically significant highs of around 900-1,000 per month from October 2020 through February 2021.

Figure 5.11. Actual and predicted volume of MENTAL HEALTH calls (January 2015 – February 2021)
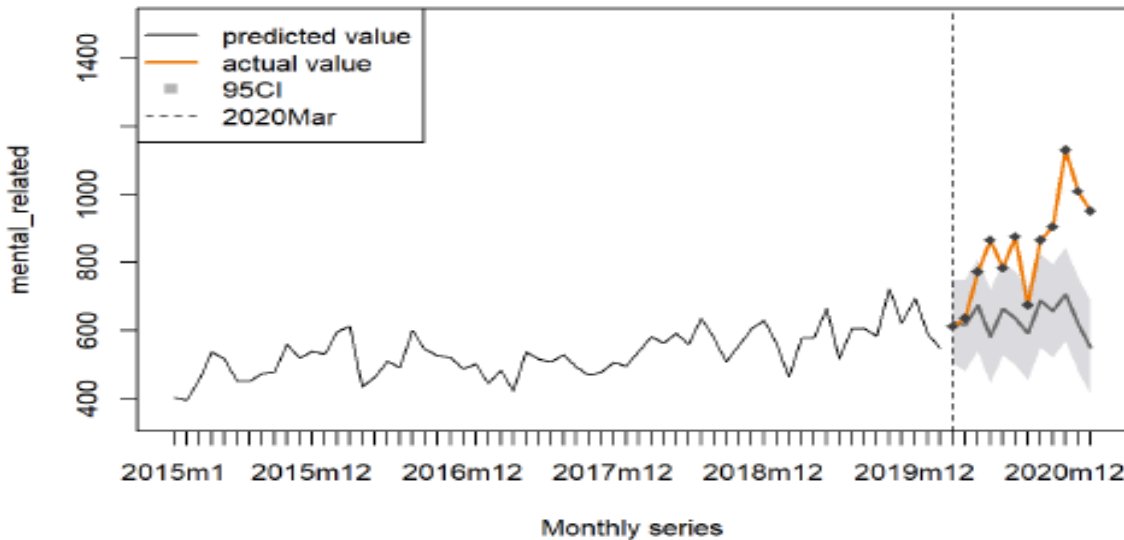
Officer-Initiated Events

During the first year of the pandemic, officers reduced their proactive contacts with the public to reduce the potential for COVID-19 contagion. This included reducing proactive pedestrian

and traffic stops, other street-level proactive contacts with community members, and more structured community-oriented activities, as discussed in Chapter 4. Officer-initiated proactive stops and activities are recorded in the computer-aided dispatch system and, therefore, can be analyzed separately here.

Figure 5.12 shows that officer-initiated traffic stops by the FCPD, which generally ranged between 10,000 and 13,000 per month before the pandemic, declined dramatically from expected levels during the pandemic, dropping to 2,500-3,500 per month. This likely reflects a combination of factors, including the decline in traffic activity in the region, decisions by the FCPD, and executive orders from the governor that extended the time limits of DMV credentials and suspended vehicle inspection enforcement by the state police.

Figure 5.12. Actual and predicted volume of OFFICER-INITIATED TRAFFIC STOPS (January 2015 – February 2021)
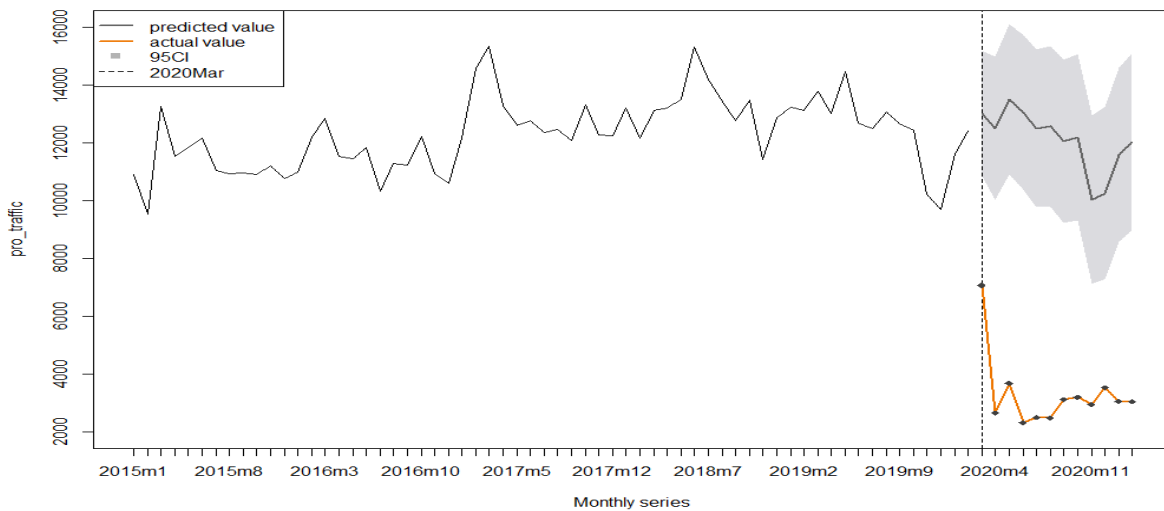

Figure 5.13 also shows that officers reduced other non-traffic self-initiated events as well. Both figures confirm the findings of Lum et al.'s (2022) IACP-GMU national survey, which found that proactive enforcement and other proactive activities declined during the COVID period across U.S. police agencies. It is also notable that FCPD's proactive contacts remained low throughout 2020 and early 2021, with non-traffic proactive work continuing to decline, even as public activity increased after the pandemic's early months. By early 2021, these contacts had dropped to roughly 1,500-2,000 per month, down from their normal ranges of 3,000-3,500 per month before the pandemic. Though beyond the scope of this report, this pattern may also reflect the impacts of other recent national and local incidents (e.g., the George Floyd incident and related protests against police) that some officers feel have prompted officers to pull back from proactive work in the field.

Figure 5.13. Actual and predicted volume of OTHER NON-TRAFFIC SELF-INITIATED EVENTS (January 2015 – February 2021)
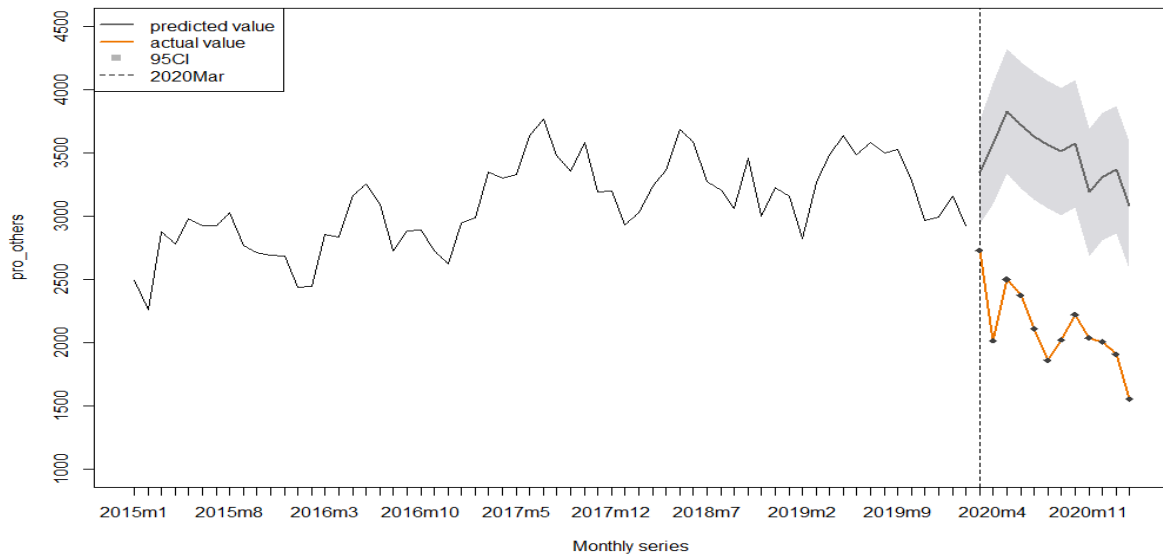
The Case of Domestic Violence

We discuss a specific type of call for service—domestic violence—to highlight the potential complexities of interpreting trend analysis of calls for service. The impact of COVID-19 on trends in domestic violence rates, reporting, and police response has been a rapidly growing area of interest to both police and researchers alike. While some patterns and trends have emerged, researchers suggest that trends may mask both incidence and reporting changes that have important implications for domestic violence victimization.

For example, Lum et al. (2022) examined the impact of COVID-19 on policing at the national level and found that 43% of agencies reported an increase in domestic violence when comparing April 2019 with April 2020 calls for service. Similarly, a recent meta-analysis of 18 studies by Piquero et al. (2021) also showed that rates of domestic violence significantly increased overall in these studies following COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, and this effect was stronger in the U.S. than in other countries. Yet despite this overall pattern, studies have also shown variability in domestic violence patterns across locations and time periods (i.e., early versus later pandemic periods). For example, Nix and Richards (2021) compiled data on domestic violence calls to police in six different jurisdictions across the U.S. and found that while five of the six showed an immediate spike in calls to police immediately following the introduction of stay-at-home orders, declines in domestic violence occurred once orders were lifted.

In addition, findings have also varied based on the types of data analyzed (e.g., calls for service, offense reports, and calls to hotlines). For example, Richards et al. (2021) reported overall increased rates of domestic violence calls to police and emergency hotlines across seven cities

in the U.S. as a result of COVID-19 (comparing March-October 2020 with the same periods in 2018 and 2019). However, there was notable variability across cities concerning which kinds of calls and reports increased or decreased. Accordingly, we must be cautious about overgeneralizing the relationship between COVID and domestic violence.

Not all jurisdictions followed the pattern of domestic violence increases. For example, Lopez and Rosenfeld (2021) discovered that longer at-home durations were associated with *decreased* domestic violence rates. In contrast, shorter at-home durations were associated with *increased* domestic violence during the first several months of the pandemic. Moreover, this same study found no increases in domestic violence during the pandemic beyond what would be expected for seasonal patterns of change in domestic violence reporting. However, the authors note that stay-at-home orders could contribute to a decreased likelihood of reporting, even if it does not correspond to actual offending rates (Lopez & Rosenfeld, 2021).

Various hypotheses and arguments have been presented to explain domestic violence rates and reporting trends. For example, Piquero and colleagues (2021) suggest that reporting rates may have dropped due to victims being at home with abusers and having less access to support. At the same time, actual domestic violence incidents may have increased due to greater stress, anger, and violence coinciding with the pandemic and forced stay-at-home orders. Indeed, stay-at-home orders required everyone to be in the same space for extended periods, thus increasing the chance for domestic violence as opportunities increased (Ceroni et al., 2021; Nix & Richards, 2021). Additionally, school personnel operating in a virtual schooling environment were not as easily able to see signs of potential abuse of youths. On the other hand, more individuals in the home setting might have also increased third-party witnesses who could potentially make reports to the police (Nix & Richards, 2021).

Access to victim services programs was also undeniably impacted by COVID-19 (Ceroni et al., 2021). Many resources closed their doors and moved to a virtual format. Victims were also concerned about COVID-19 exposure even when programs were still open (Nix & Richards, 2021). Other risk factors associated with domestic violence have increased as a result of COVID-19, including social isolation, increased interaction with abusers, limited external support and access to resources, financial stress, emotional/psychological stress, and parenting/childcare concerns (Ceroni et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2021).

Trends and Patterns of Domestic Violence Reporting at the FCPD

The predicted and actual trends for calls for domestic-related incidents in Fairfax County are shown in Figure 5.14. While these calls were slightly higher than normal at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, they were within expected ranges during the rest of the study period. This overall pattern of reporting to the FCPD is consistent with other national reports showing an increase in domestic violence reporting at the beginning of the pandemic (Piquero et al., 2021; Lum et al., 2022; Richards et al., 2021) and then tapering off (Nix & Richards, 2021).

Figure 5.14. Actual and predicted volume of DOMESTIC-RELATED calls for service (January 2015 – February 2021)
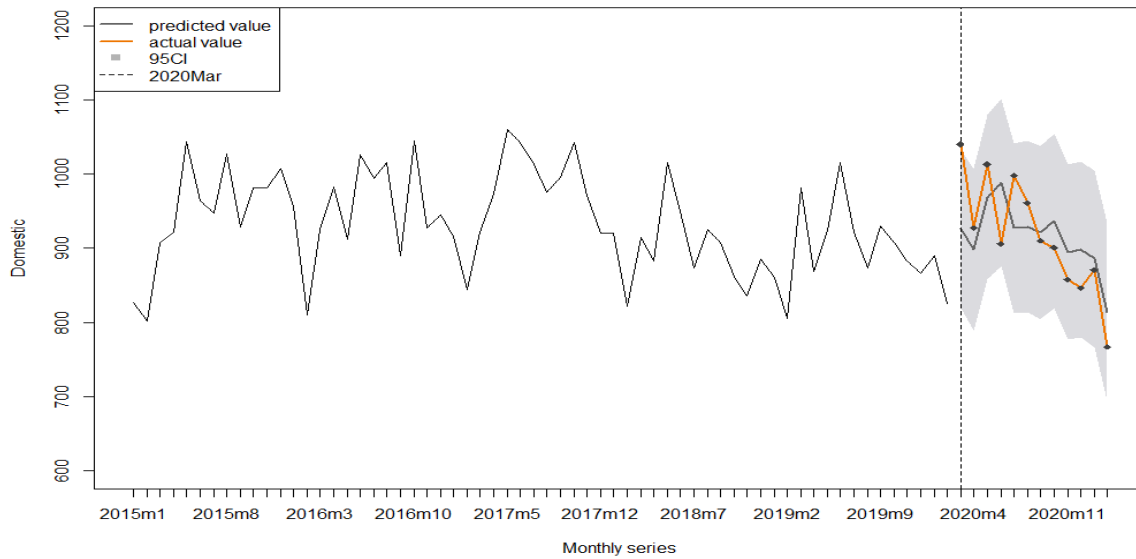
Revelations from Interviews with FCPD Personnel

While the volume of calls for service for domestic violence remained at expected levels as Figure 5.14 shows, this trend may not reflect the same landscape of victimization and reporting before the pandemic. We received more insight into the context and nuance of these domestic violence trends through our interviews with relevant FCPD personnel. For example, in response to the increased calls observed at the national and local level, the FCPD disseminated a video message early at the start of the pandemic (April 2020), specifically focusing on domestic violence. This public video message—released on social media in English and Spanish—highlighted the agency's concern with the initial spike in cases. The videos tried to reassure the public of FCPD's presence, ongoing response, and support for domestic violence victims.[44]

Those interviewed perceived that actual domestic violence incidents (regardless of what was reported to the police) increased during the COVID period, given the new opportunities for abuse (and potentially more frequent and severe abuse) and new challenges in reporting. These perceptions would be consistent with the trend in Figure 14, which shows a small spike in overall domestic violence cases at the beginning of COVID. However, what might explain the tapering-off that followed and an overall trend of domestic violence that was generally similar to pre-COVID trends? Several hypotheses were garnered from the interviews with FCPD detectives and victim support services. For example, interviewees perceived that child abuse reports might have declined due to a decrease in reporting by mandated third parties (school personnel, counselors, girl/boy scout troop leaders, etc.). As noted by one interviewee, child abuse cases were dropping in March and April of 2020, and the seasonal increases typically expected in August (when school is back in session) were not observed.

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[44] See https://www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyPD/videos/260040538484537/ (English) and
https://www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyPD/videos/223999465592946/ (Spanish).

The interviews also revealed several logistical changes resulting from COVID-19 that directly impacted police response to domestic violence cases. Screening of cases was first conducted via phone to protect against COVID exposure, rather than in-person, which was done in the past. While shifts to remote formats for investigations and court presented some benefits to officers, including increased ease of attending court hearings and quicker/easier availability of officers, interviewees also noted the virtual or remote formats presented challenges to domestic violence victims. Communication and interpersonal connectedness were more limited. Some victims did not have access to or know how to use computers or were unable to use Zoom. Detectives in the FCPD discussed difficulties in conducting sensitive interviews virtually, where it was more challenging to build rapport, confidence, and trust. Even if in-person interviews were an option, masks made the human-to-human nature of the process more difficult.

Financial concerns are often a reason why victims do not leave their abusers. Thus, having enough funding to support victims can be critical to their willingness to make reports and leave abusive situations. Providing financial support to domestic violence victims was one area impacted by COVID-19. Interviewees mentioned that providing victims with support and resources—such as emergency rental assistance—was easier before COVID. However, after a budget amendment was processed in the county, one indirect benefit of COVID-19 was that emergency funding became available to support victims later in the pandemic from funds that would have otherwise been used for training.

Consistent with other studies, there were also challenges that the police department noted with agencies they frequently partner with to help domestic violence victims. During the initial year of the pandemic, the availability of and access to community resources were more limited, and response times were often longer than normal. Victims would become frustrated by delays or lack of accessibility to social services and lose interest in cooperating with their case or gaining help. For example, counseling services had primarily moved to a virtual format, and many victims did not have access to computers or the internet. Some shelters were using hotels to reduce the possibility of contagion. However, being in a hotel could make some victims feel more isolated, especially if no one came to check on them (and therefore, they might decline that resource). In addition, some victims were uncomfortable with the resources provided (e.g., food that did not accommodate cultural/religious preferences). Finally, interviewees noted that victims relayed not feeling heard or validated during the pandemic.

Challenges were exacerbated for victims with language barriers. Some victims would often opt to stay in their homes with an abuser despite the risk of further violence because of language barriers. This was collectively very frustrating for victims, FCPD Victim Specialists, and FCPD detectives, as language resources were unavailable in many cases during the pandemic. Additional work often fell on those in the FCPD who quickly learned that other agencies handling crisis intervention were not operating in person (and therefore could not assist). For example, other victim support services personnel that would typically attend court with victims were no longer providing these services, leaving victims alone, scared, and intimidated in an already confusing and scary system. The FCPD Victim Services Division staff, meanwhile,

continued to attend court in person with victims when possible and continued to respond to domestic violence callouts.

Despite the more limited availability of these alternative resources for support, it is also possible that similar levels of domestic violence calls in Fairfax County as in previous years were the result of more (or new) victims selecting alternative reporting mechanisms other than the police (e.g., hotlines and other agencies, as highlighted by Richards et al., 2021). Unfortunately, communication difficulties between agencies likely leave much of this unknown.

Other systematic challenges at the institutional level also emerged during the pandemic. For example, access to hospitals and prisons was more challenging. In some cases, detectives were unable to gain access to domestic violence victims in a hospital setting to conduct interviews or evaluations. Suspects in jails were also not easily accessible to interview. Even coordination across jurisdictions was challenging when other jurisdictions shut down entirely during COVID.

In addition, significantly backlogged and delayed court hearings due to shut-downs from COVID-19 may have affected domestic violence (and other) victims in negative ways. Interviewees noted that court hearings were moved to a virtual format (in-person hearings resumed at the end of summer 2021 for domestic violence cases). Consequently, hearings were often delayed for more than a year. This could result in non-responsiveness to detective outreach attempts as case delays wore on. Domestic violence detectives also expressed concern that the delay in processing and lack of coordination across systems perpetuated the cycle of violence, with victims returning to their abusers. Detectives noted that victims who may have been initially motivated and engaged in the reporting process would feel frustrated about not being able to move forward with their cases or with their lives due to the court system backlog and delay. Detectives also noted that in many cases preparing for court meant supporting victims through the process of re-victimization, bringing up all details, and going through the trauma again, only to be left unresolved and waiting for closure because of court delays.

We raise these details about domestic violence from our interviews to point out that calls for service trends (whether for domestic violence or other crimes) might mask complexities about the landscape of particular crimes. The causes of domestic violence and reporting trends may differ pre- and post-COVID. Post-COVID, there may indeed be an increase in domestic violence, as FCPD personnel believe. Still, that increase may be stifled by a decline in reporting, the ability of detectives to follow through with cases, or the willingness of victims to cooperate with the justice or social service systems. Yet unknown are the downstream effects of all these challenges mentioned above, including new victims who emerged during COVID and might become repeat victims later.

Summary of Calls for Service Analysis

The IACP-GMU national survey indicated that many agencies experienced overall declines in calls for service during the initial months of COVID. However, the national trends also showed that various categories of calls exhibited different patterns. In Fairfax County, the most notable changes were that traffic-related calls declined dramatically, and mental health calls increased. Other call types, including violence, property crimes, and disorders, generally remained within expected levels during the pandemic with a few exceptions (e.g., a spike in auto theft in the summer of 2020, or a sharp decline in assaults in the first months of the pandemic).

As found in the IACP-GMU surveys, FCPD did experience a significant reduction in officer-initiated (proactive) activity that remained below expected levels through 2021.

Overall, it appears that the FCPD seemed to strike a balance between concerns about health and contagion and responding to public safety demands. From the analysis of calls for service, there did not seem to be significant spikes in crime or disorder during the first year of the pandemic.

However, our more in-depth exploration of domestic violence points to important nuances in deciphering the relationship between COVID and crime/disorder. For example, calls for domestic violence in Fairfax County remained at expected levels. However, officers and detectives dealing with family violence felt there had been an increase. Our interviews revealed that the calls for service trend might mask changes in the nature of domestic violence, the frequency or modality of reporting, and the overall landscape of public safety related to domestic violence (e.g., opportunities for crime, responses to victims and offenders, availability of support services, and responses of other justice institutions). Support for victims or monitoring of offenders were more challenging during COVID that may have downstream effects. This "masking" may also be the case for other crime and disorder categories.

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APPENDIX A: FCPD Community Survey

1. In general, how effective do you think the Fairfax County Police Department is at:

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neutral	Somewhat Ineffective	Very Ineffective
a. Preventing property crime in your community.	○	○	○	○	○
b. Preventing violent crime in your community.	○	○	○	○	○
c. Responding quickly to calls for service.	○	○	○	○	○
d. Assisting victims of crime.	○	○	○	○	○

2. In general, to what extent do you agree or disagree that Fairfax County police oficers:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Are trustworthy.	○	○	○	○	○
b. Treat everyone fairly.	○	○	○	○	○
c. Clearly explain the reasons for their actions.	○	○	○	○	○
d. Treat people in a respectful manner.	○	○	○	○	○
e. Are honest.	○	○	○	○	○
f. Give you a sense of confidence in the Fairfax County Police Department.	○	○	○	○	○
g. Consider the views of the people involved before making their decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
h. Act within the law.	○	○	○	○	○

3. In general, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about FCPD?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I have confidence in Fairfax County police oficers.	○	○	○	○	○
b. The Fairfax County Police Department does a good job of working together with members of my community.	○	○	○	○	○
c. The Fairfax County Police Department has an adequate process for addressing concerns and complaints about the police.	○	○	○	○	○
d. The Fairfax County Police Department does a good job of communicating with members of the community (e.g., through social media, websites, newsletters, community meetings).	○	○	○	○	○

4. Overall, how fearful are you about the following:

	Very fearful	Somewhat fearful	Neutral	Not too fearful	Not at all fearful
a. Crime in your community.	○	○	○	○	○
b. Someone breaking into your house to steal things.	○	○	○	○	○
c. Being robbed by someone who has a gun or knife.	○	○	○	○	○
d. Being stopped and questioned by the police.	○	○	○	○	○
e. Being a victim of internet or telephone fraud.	○	○	○	○	○

FCPD Community survey

5. In general, how safe do you feel when:

	Very safe	Safe	Neutral	Unsafe	Very unsafe
a. Walking alone in your neighborhood during the day.	○	○	○	○	○
b. Walking alone in your neighborhood after dark.	○	○	○	○	○

6. How much of a problem is each of the following issues in your neighborhood?

	A major problem	A moderate problem	A minor problem	Not a problem at all
a. Burglaries.	○	○	○	○
b. Robberies.	○	○	○	○
c. People loitering in public.	○	○	○	○
d. Fighting/assaults.	○	○	○	○
e. Graffiti.	○	○	○	○
f. Automobile thefts.	○	○	○	○
g. Automobile break-ins.	○	○	○	○
h. Youths being disruptive.	○	○	○	○
i. Drug dealing and drug use.	○	○	○	○
j. People drinking in public.	○	○	○	○

7. Have you HEARD OF any of the following services offered by the FCPD? Also, in the last column, please indicate whether you or members of your household have actually USED OR ENGAGED WITH this service.

	YES, I am aware of this service	NO, I am NOT aware of this service	I, or members of my household, have used or been involved in this service
a. Community groups at each district station	○	○	○
b. Volunteer Program	○	○	○
c. Auxiliary Police Program	○	○	○
d. Chief's Diversity Council	○	○	○
e. Community Reporting System (FCPD's online crime reporting)	○	○	○
f. Neighborhood Watch Program	○	○	○
g. Crime Mapping Application (online crime mapping)	○	○	○
h. Crime Solvers Anonymous Tip Line	○	○	○
i. FCPD's social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, FCPD Blog, Nextdoor)	○	○	○

8. In the past 12 months, have you requested assistance from the FCPD by calling the police, asking for help from an of cer in person, or requesting help through the internet? Please mark all that apply.

○ I have not requested assistance from the FCPD in the last 12 months.

○ I called the police for assistance (via 911 or an FCPD non-emergency number).

○ I asked for help from an officer in person.

○ I requested FCPD assistance through its online reporting system or by email/internet.

If you did request assistance from the FCPD in the last 12 months, thinking about your MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE, please answer the following questions (8a 8b):

8a. Did an FCPD officer initially respond to your request in person, by telephone, or by Internet/email?

○ In person

○ Telephone

○ Internet/email

8b. Thinking about your experience, how satisfied were you with the police service that you received?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
○	○	○	○	○

9. In the past 12 months, have you been stopped by a Fairfax County police officer while you were driving, walking, or cycling?

○ Yes

○ No

9a. If you have been stopped by a Fairfax County officer in the last 12 months, thinking only about your MOST RECENT STOP, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Fairfax County police officer treated me fairly.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
○	○	○	○	○

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with the Fairfax County Police Department?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
○	○	○	○	○

11. Starting in March of this year, the FCPD had to alter business practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In your opinion, how would you rate the police department's handling of the impacts of COVID-19 on public safety?

Poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

Comments/Suggestion. If you have any comments about the FCPD or suggestions for how the department could improve, please write them in the space below.

Please tell us about yourself:

D1. I identify as:

○ Male

○ Female

○ Gender-neutral, binary, or transgendered

○ Prefer not to answer

D2. How long have you lived in Fairfax County?

○ Less than 1 year

○ 1 to 5 years

○ 6 to 10 years

○ 11 to 15 years

○ 16 to 20 years

○ 21 years or more

D3. With which racial group do you most closely identify?

○ White/Caucasian

○ Black/African American

○ Asian or Pacific Islander American

○ Indian or Alaskan Native

○ Other

D4. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

○ Yes

○ No

D5. In what year were you born? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

APPENDIX B: FCPD Workforce Survey

Fairfax County Police Department
Workforce survey for all employees on FCPD's COVID response

Dear Colleagues,

Members of the COVID-19 Incident Management Team (IMT), with the assistance of George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP), are asking for your feedback about FCPD's response during the COVID-19 crisis as it relates to its employees. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions related to employment and workforce issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and will be used for research purposes only. This survey is being sent to all employees of the FCPD.

This survey is anonymous and voluntary. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. At no time will you be asked any questions that could identify you, nor will your survey be linked to you in any way. You may withdraw from the survey at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or withdraw from the study, there is no penalty, loss of benefits, or costs to you or any other party. There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this survey, nor are there any benefits to you as a participant. No compensation will be provided to individuals for participating in the survey.

Your help and cooperation are greatly appreciated. If you agree to participate, please enter the survey by clicking the "Next" button, below.

This survey is being independently facilitated, collected, and analyzed by George Mason University under the supervision of Professor Cynthia Lum, Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University. She may be reached at clum@gmu.edu; 703-993-3421 for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 or irb@gmu.edu if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research. Please reference IRB number 1736699-1. This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research. The Institutional Review Board committee that monitors research on human subjects may inspect study records during internal auditing procedures and are required to keep all information confidential. The anonymous data collected in this survey could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.

Q1. Which best describes your job status in the department?
- Sworn employee (any rank)
- Non-sworn employee

[DEPENDING ON ANSWER TO Q1, QUALTRICS WILL SKIP TO Q1ca/cb or Q1oa/ob:]

[FOR NON-SWORN EMPLOYEES:]

Q1ca. Which best describes your **CURRENT** work assignment?
- I usually work at a district station
- I usually work at FCPD Headquarters or another centralized location (e.g., police academy)

- I usually work at different FCPD locations, depending on the assignment and need.

Q1cb. Which best described your work assignment **on APRIL 1, 2020 of last year**?
- I worked at a district station
- I worked at FCPD Headquarters or another centralized location (e.g., police academy)
- I worked at different FCPD locations, depending on the assignment and need.

[FOR SWORN EMPLOYEES:]

Q1oa. Which best describes your **CURRENT** work assignment?
- Uniformed Patrol: officer, supervisor, or commander at a district station
- Investigations: either at a district station or headquarters
- Other specialized units (i.e., traffic safety, special operations, intel, forensics, etc.)
- Education and Training/Academy
- Administrative (i.e., resource management, information technology, admin support)

Q1ob. Which best described your work assignment **on APRIL 1, 2020 of last year**?
- Uniformed Patrol: officer, supervisor, or commander at a district station
- Investigations: either at a district station or headquarters
- Other specialized units (i.e., traffic safety, special operations, intel, forensics, etc.)
- Education and Training/Academy
- Administrative (i.e., resource management, information technology, admin support)

[FOR ALL EMPLOYEES]

Q2. Which best describes the **option** you were given related to working remotely once COVID impacted operational changes in the police department (around April of 2020)? *For all questions, the term "remotely" specifically refers to working outside the police department (i.e., from home).*
- I was given the option to work remotely for my entire workweek/shift.
- I was given the option to work remotely for some of my workweek/shift.
- I was told that I must come into work for my entire workweek/shift and did not have a choice to work remotely.
- I was told that I must only work remotely and did not have a choice to come into work.
- I was unsure of my options.

Q3. Which best describes your **decision** about the options you were given above?
- I did not have a choice, as I noted above.
- I chose to work remotely (i.e., from home) for my entire workweek/shift.
- I chose to work remotely (i.e., from home) for part of my workweek/shift.
- I chose to physically come into the police department to work.

Q4. Once COVID impacted changes in the police department **(around April of 2020)**, approximately what proportion of your work week or shift did you carry out remotely? *Please round up if your option is not listed).*
- I did not work remotely at all.
- 20% of my workweek or shift.
- 40% of my workweek or shift.
- 60% of my workweek or shift.
- 80% of my workweek or shift.

- I moved entirely to remote work.

Q5. If you physically came into work (either full or part-time), how comfortable did you feel doing so at the start of the pandemic **(around April of 2020)**, considering the safety provisions and accommodations that were implemented by the agency? [1=Very uncomfortable to 5=Very comfortable][45]

Q6. How comfortable do you **currently** feel about coming to work, considering the safety provisions and accommodations that have been implemented by the agency? [1=Very uncomfortable to 5=Very comfortable]

Q7. Overall, which of the following best describes your levels of work-related stress **in April of 2020, during the start of the pandemic**? [1=Very low stress to 5=Very high stress]

Q8. Overall, which of the following best describes your **current levels** of work-related stress? [1=Very low stress to 5=Very high stress]

Q9. Overall, which of the following best describes your levels of personal-related stress **in April of 2020, during the start of the pandemic?** [1=Very low stress to 5=Very high stress]

Q10. Overall, which of the following best describes your **current levels** of personal-related stress? [1=Very low stress to 5=Very high stress]

Q11. During the COVID pandemic, have you had challenges related to childcare at home? [YES/NO]

Q11a. [ONLY IF ANSWERED YES TO QUESTION ABOVE] What accommodation did FCPD provide you that was the most helpful concerning childcare?
- The ability to work from home.
- The ability to work flexible hours.
- The ability to reduce my hours worked.
- Other: [FILL IN]
- No accommodation was provided.

Overall, how would you rate the department's efforts for each of the following as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic? [1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; 5=excellent] (Q12 – Q19)

Q12. Accommodation to employees who had childcare challenges.

Q13. Accommodations for employees who had high-risk health conditions.

Q14. Accommodations for employees with family members who had high-risk health conditions.

Q15. The CONTENT of communication with employees about the risks of, and protection from, COVID-19 infection.

Q16. The CONTENT of communications to employees about changes in work schedules and remote work accommodations due to COVID-19.

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[45] All Likert scales were reverse coded from the original survey so that all responses are in the same low to high direction. These reverse codes are noted here for convenience.

Q17. Availability of personal protective equipment (PPEs) for your use, such as masks, eye protection, disinfectants, sanitizers, and gloves.

Q18. The overall timeliness of the department's response to employee needs during the pandemic.

Q19. The department's overall response to COVID as it relates to its employees.

Q20. Please mark which of the following best describes how worried you were **last year (2020)** of contracting COVID-19 from **WORK-RELATED** activities: [1=Not worried at all to 5=Very worried]

Q21. Please mark which of the following best describes your **current** level of worry of contracting COVID-19 from **WORK-RELATED** activities: [1=Not worried at all to 5=Very worried]

Q22. Please mark which of the following best describes how worried you were **last year (2020)** of contracting COVID-19 from **NON-WORK RELATED** (family, social, or other non-work activities) activities: [1=Not worried at all to 5=Very worried]

Q23. Please mark which of the following best describes your **current** level of worry of contracting COVID-19 from **NON-WORK RELATED**: [1=Not worried at all to 5=Very worried]

Please mark whether (a) you are aware of the following resilience resources provided by the Fairfax County Government and (b) whether you have used them: [YES/NO] (Q24 - Q27)

Q24. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Q25. BurnAlong App

Q26. Training and Webinars offered through Livewell on well-being

Q27. Dedicated behavioral health specialists and Resources

Q28. Please provide any comments about how the agency could have done better in its accommodations and communications with its employees about COVID-19. [Open field]

[FOR SWORN EMPLOYEES ONLY]

Q29. **At any time during 2020,** did you respond to some calls for service or carry out certain investigative functions over the phone or via videoconference? [YES/NO]

Q30. Approximately how often did you respond to or handle calls or investigative activity over the phone or via videoconference?
- Rarely to never (less than 10% of the time)
- Sometimes (around 25% of the time)
- About half the time (around 50% of the time)
- Most of the time (around 75% of the time)
- Almost always to always (more than 90% of the time)

Q31. Overall, how satisfied were you with the FCPD's increased use of remote response to calls for service and investigations? [1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied]

Q32. Overall, how satisfied do you think citizens were to remote response to calls for service and investigations? [1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied]

Q33. How would you describe the level of service you provided to citizens remotely compared to providing service in person?
- I felt the service I provided was better and more effective than responding in person.
- I felt the service I provided was similar to responding in person.
- I felt the service I provided was not as effective as responding in person.
- Not applicable; I did not respond to any service calls remotely.

Q34. Did you have to handle an incident related to the lack of compliance with Virginia's health mandates about social distancing, mask-wearing, large gatherings, or business closings? [YES/NO]

Q35. Which of the following best reflects your opinion about whether the agency provided you with enough information and specific procedures by which to handle incidents related to compliance with Virginia health mandates?
- The agency provided me with clear and specific guidance and procedures to follow.
- The agency provided me with general guidance but allowed me to use my discretion.
- The agency provided me with guidance, but it was insufficient to handle these concerns.
- The agency did not provide me with enough guidance about this issue.
- I did not receive any guidance about how to handle these types of concerns.

Q36. Thinking about the future, after the COVID pandemic is over, which of the following best reflects your views about remote response to calls for service and investigations?
- We should decrease the amount of activity we carried out remotely during the pandemic and go back to in-person call response and investigations.
- We should continue responding and investigating remotely to certain types of calls and investigative activity in the same frequency as during the pandemic.
- We should increase the amount of activity we carried out remotely during the pandemic.

Q37. Thinking about your experience as an officer **during a year of a serious health pandemic**, has the pandemic changed your interest in remaining in law enforcement as a career choice?
- It has made me MUCH MORE interested in remaining in law enforcement.
- It has made me SOMEWHAT MORE interested in remaining in law enforcement.
- It has NOT CHANGED my interest in remaining in law enforcement.
- It has made me SOMEWHAT LESS interested in remaining in law enforcement.
- It has made me MUCH LESS interested in remaining in law enforcement.

[QUESTIONS FOR EVERYONE:]

D1. How many years of service (round up to the nearest year) have you worked for the Fairfax County Police Department? [Dropdown 1-40].

D2. I identify as: [FEMALE/MALE/GENDER-NEUTRAL, NONBINARY, OR TRANSGENDER]

D3. I identify as: [HISPANIC/NON-HISPANIC]

D4. I identify as [WHITE/BLACK/ASIAN, PACIFIC ISLANDER/NATIVE AMERICAN/MIXED RACE/OTHER

APPENDIX C: Interview Informed Consent Form and Questions

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

STUDY TITLE
Preventing, Preparing, and Responding to COVID-19: An In-Depth Case Study on the Impact of COVID-19 on Fairfax County Police Department

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to understand how COVID-19 impacted the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD). As part of this project, we are interviewing several individuals in FCPD to understand the impact of COVID-19 specific operational areas within the FCPD. The interview questions are provided for your convenience on the next page. We anticipate the interview should take between 30-45 minutes.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research. Questions asked during the interview are only about the agency's official response, policies, and practices related to COVID-19. Participants do not have to answer all questions and can choose to stop participating at any time.

BENEFITS
There are no benefits provided to you as a participant other than to further research in police responses to pandemics and other significant events. Others may benefit from the knowledge gained from this case study, as its findings will be submitted disseminated to other law enforcement agencies who are addressing similar concerns. Study findings may also be reported in academic journals so that researchers can better understand COVID-19's impact on the criminal justice system.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data provided by any individual in any interview will be confidential. No individual will be identified in any report or article related to this study. Knowledge gained from the interviews will be combined and aggregated to draw conclusions about the impact of COVID-19 on the FCPD. With your consent, we will be recording this interview only for the purposes of accurate note-taking. Note taking will only record summaries of responses directly related to the questions asked. If any personal information that is unrelated to these purposes is volunteered or mentioned, it will not be recorded in the notes. Once notes are created from this interview, any recording of this interview will be immediately destroyed/deleted. Only official GMU-Zoom interfaces and accounts will be used for recording interviews, and recordings, prior to deletion, will be kept secure on only Professor Cynthia Lum's official GMU Zoom Account. Those who participate via zoom may review Zoom's website for information about their privacy statement (https://zoom.us/privacy/). While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. The Institutional Review Board committee that monitors research on human subjects may inspect study records during internal auditing procedures and are required to keep all information

confidential. De-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.

PARTICIPATION
All FCPD employees are eligible to be interviewed. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason or choose not to answer any question. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party in participating in this interview.

CONTACT
This research is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Cynthia Lum, Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University. She may be reached at clum@gmu.edu; 703-993-3421 for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may also contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 or irb@gmu.edu if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research. Please reference IRB number 1798992-1. This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT
If you have read this form and all of your questions have been answered, please email the researchers or call to verbally inform the researchers if you consent to participate in this study.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FCPD PERSONNEL (COMMAND AND OTHERS)

1. Describe your role and responsibilities in FCPD's response to COVID-19 and the policies and activities of which you were involved or led.

2. Can you tell me what was the thinking or motivation behind developing certain policies, practices, and changes for the agency that you were involved in?

3. What has been the impact of these changes on the agency's operations?

4. What changes, if any, occurred with regard to FCPD's interaction and efforts in the community?

5. What were some of the biggest challenges and problems that the agency faced during COVID-19?

6. If a similar situation like COVID-19 happened again, or if we need to go back to certain public health restrictions, what do you think are the most important lessons learned, or what should be adjusted?

7. Do you think some changes made during COVID-19 should be continued permanently?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FCPD PERSONNEL (DISTRICT STATIONS)

1. What is your current assignment and rank? How long have you been in this assignment? How long have you been with the agency?

2. When the pandemic began in early 2020, how did your everyday patrol duties and work change?

3. What type of guidance and support did you receive to carry out these adjusted duties and work efforts?

4. What were some specific challenges that you faced carrying out your patrol duties during the pandemic?

5. Were there any specific policies that were put in place during COVID that you think should be continued, even after the pandemic? Which should be discontinued?

6. As a patrol officer, did you notice any changes in your interactions with the community? Did they express to you any concerns during 2020 related to the pandemic?

7. If a similar situation like COVID-19 happened again, or if we need to go back to certain public health restrictions, what do you think are the most important lessons learned, or what should be adjusted?

8. Do you think pandemic has impacted the policing profession more generally, and in what ways?