POLICE SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN NEW ORLEANS

"IF WE SIT ON THIS PORCH LONG ENOUGH TODAY, AT LEAST ONE PERSON WILL COME IN TELLING US THEY WERE SEXUALLY VIOLATED BY A COP."[1]

Sexual violence is an everyday practice of policing. Even in New Orleans, where in 2014 the federal government placed the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) under a consent decree, police sexual violence persists. Despite federal and local oversight, publicly available data and public records data reveal:

At least

236 Complaints of sexual and/or intimate violence

BY

189 NOPD officers between 2014–2020[2]

These records confirm what many quietly know: **police routinely perpetrate a spectrum of sexual harm in our communities.**

By centering survivors[3] – particularly Black girls, women, and queer people in the South – we can better understand the scope of the everyday violence of policing. This factsheet highlights the urgent need for divesting resources away from policing and investing in social programs that meet survivors' needs, affirm bodily autonomy, and actually keep us safe.

WHAT DOES SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY POLICE LOOK LIKE?

- Sexual comments on the street, during a stop, search, or in custody
- Asking for sexual favors under threat of arrest
- Touching
- Strip searches, including searches to target queer and trans people
- Following a person or their car
- Hitting on a person
- Trying to communicate with a young person digitally (IG, TikTok)
- Engaging with a sex worker and then not paying
- Pressuring or forcing someone into any unwanted physical contact

A COMPLAINT OF SEXUAL OR INTIMATE VIOLENCE IS FILED AGAINST AN NOPD OFFICER ALMOST EVERY 10 DAYS.

Complaints show the ubiquitous presence of sexual violence in daily policing: assaults, rapes, and harassment during traffic stops, searches, arrests, and transportation to lock-up. Officers have broad legal authority to stop, touch, search, confine, move, and otherwise violate bodily autonomy.

1 Advocates describing the frequency of police sexual violence in New Orleans.

2 Under the consent decree, NOPD's Public Integrity Bureau (PIB) began publishing annual reports on misconduct allegations against NOPD officers in 2014. These reports are found here. PIB failed to publish a report in 2021 and has not yet published a report for 2022. This factsheet reviews complaints from 2014–2020.

3 If you or a loved one have experienced sexual or intimate violence by an officer, local and statewide resources are available: Louisiana Survivors for Reform hosts monthly survivor support and community organizing meetings [call or text (504) 535-4912 or email lsr@defendla.org]; Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response provides a 24/7 hotline and in-person services [call 855-435-STAR]; the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault provides a hotline [text 225-351-SAFE (7233) or call 1-888-995-7273].

umbrella coalition

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Complaint data represents a fraction of the harm experienced by policed communities. Many survivors do not feel safe reporting sexual violence committed *by* the police *to* the police. In spite of significant structural barriers, many survivors have come forward to report abuses, including:

73 Reports of physical sexual harm against a community member, **including 35 rape and sexual assault**

71 Reports of non-physical sexual harm against a community member

39 Reports of sexual harm against an NOPD officer

53 Reports of intimate harm, including rape, molestation, and physical assault, against partners and children [cops' intimate partner violence[4] is a matter of public concern: multiple officers who assault their loved ones also sexually harm people they police]

Every point of contact between people and the criminal system creates context and cover for officers to perpetrate sexual harm.

SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY NOPD ARE OVERWHELMINGLY BLACK, YOUNG, AND GIRLS AND WOMEN.

Police data routinely minimizes, obscures, and silences survivors' voices – limiting our understanding of survivors or their experiences. The data renders experiences of queer and trans people invisible.[5]

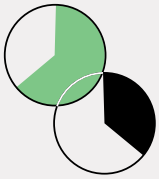
Of complainants whose demographic information is available:

84% are girls and women

75% are Black[6]

67% of male survivors are Black

Ages range from 12-70 years old; over one-fourth are children and young people under 26[7]



Almost two-thirds are Black girls and women, who are only a third of New Orleans residents

People who experience police sexual violence are often already survivors of sexual or intimate violence. Multiple complaints report officers harassing or assaulting survivors who had called 911. Local officials have advocated for increased funding for NOPD to better respond to sexual and intimate partner violence calls. However, police not only fail to intervene in, address, or prevent interpersonal violence – officers routinely prey on victims during crisis calls.

AT LEAST 189 NOPD OFFICERS HAVE AT LEAST 1 COMPLAINT OF SEXUAL AND/OR INTIMATE VIOLENCE. THE DEPARTMENT CURRENTLY EMPLOYS 944 OFFICERS.

Of these 189, **26 have 2 or more complaints of sexual or intimate violence** and **5 have 3 or more complaints.**

On average, each officer has **18** total misconduct complaints[8], and 1 in 4 that has **25** or more.[9] The highest number of complaints for one officer is **64.**

4 Complaints of intimate violence are likely higher than current records. Louisiana Revised Statute 40:2533(C)(1) (a part of the Officer "Bill of Rights") allows officers to expunge domestic violence complaints specifically from their personnel files under certain conditions

5 The only gender categories reported are "male" and "female" and are identified by police, not the survivor.

6 The data does not capture experiences of non-Black people of color; the only "race" categories regularly used are "white" and "Black."

7 The criminalization, adultification, and sexualization of Black and brown children makes them particularly vulnerable to police contact (and, therefore, violence).

8 This does not include allegations of use of force.

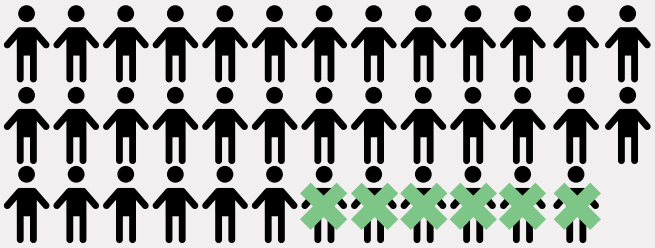
9 Officer misconduct data is primarily sourced from Louisiana Law Enforcement Accountability Database (LLEAD), created by Innocence Project New Orleans (IPNO) and Public Data Works (PDW). Misconduct data of the officers described here as well as other NOPD and Louisiana officers is found at LLEAD.co.

POLICE ROUTINELY IGNORE, CONCEAL, AND UNDER-INVESTIGATE POLICE SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

Overall, NOPD sustained 22% of all sexual harm or intimate violence complaints. NOPD sustained just 14% of complaints describing rape and sexual assault.

NOPD regularly dismisses complaints where officers have multiple previous (and sustained) complaints or multiple sexual harm related complaints.

POLICE REPORTED FOR MISCONDUCT, INCLUDING SEXUAL HARM, USUALLY RESIGN WITHOUT INVESTIGATION OR CONSEQUENCE.



Officers with sexual violence complaints often quietly leave the department. Out of the 189 officers, we can only confirm 38 have left since 2019; **and only 6 were terminated or resigned under investigation.** Most resigned for other stated reasons. Most of the 189 are still on the job.

THIS POINTS TO A LARGER PATTERN OF OFFICERS RETIRING OR LEAVING AFTER BEING REPORTED FOR MISCONDUCT.

Between 2019 and 2021, 254 NOPD officers left the department. According to NOPD, **only 31 were terminated or resigned** under investigation.

AMONG RESIGNED OFFICERS WITH PUBLICLY AVAILABLE MISCONDUCT RECORDS, 90% WHO RESIGNED BETWEEN 2019 AND 2021 WERE REPORTED FOR MISCONDUCT OR USE OF FORCE WITHIN THE PREVIOUS CALENDAR YEAR OF THEIR RESIGNATION. 97% HAD A MISCONDUCT COMPLAINT WITHIN THE PREVIOUS 2 CALENDAR YEARS.

These complaints make clear that policing is sexually violent and makes us less safe. They demonstrate the failures of public officials' and of costly system-reinforcing reforms – police convictions, disciplinary processes, consent decrees, local and federal monitors, and trainings – to prevent, address, or reduce violence inherent to policing. Safety requires that our cities stop funneling millions into policing – and invest in resources that allow us to heal, thrive, and live freely.[10]

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE OR ORGANIZING AROUND THIS ISSUE, EMAIL COPWATCHNOLA@PROTON.ME

FILE A COMPLAINT ABOUT AN NOPD OFFICER

VIEW A LIST OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMPLAINTS LODGED AGAINST NOPD OFFICERS

10 If you would like to report a complaint, contact the Office of the Independent Police Monitor at https://nolaipm.gov/file-a-complaint-or-commendation/ or call (504) 309 – 9799.

THIS FACT SHEET IS PRESENTED BY UMBRELLA COALITION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

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