



Report
Dragon® Professional Cloud
for law enforcement

DRAGON® PROFESSIONAL CLOUD

2021 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report

Key issues facing law enforcement professionals
specific to police documentation and tech
usage in the wake of COVID-19.

Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Key findings
- 5 2021 survey implications
- 6 Methodology

The COVID-19 pandemic has left its mark on virtually every professional sector – and law enforcement is no exception. New safety protocols for personal protection and processing perpetrators, modified ways of collecting and disseminating information, social distancing (where feasible), and the accelerated adoption of hardware and software technologies all became part of the ‘new normal.’ For law enforcement, these efforts helped preserve their mission as first-responders and allowed them to protect and serve despite the heightened level personal risk.

Introduction

The documentation burden faced by police officers also increased commensurate with the societal stress imposed by the pandemic. In addition to dealing with mandatory community curfews, there was an increase in public demand for law enforcement services—all of which require documentation. The strain of being “cooped up” during stay-at-home orders resulted in more domestic disturbance calls. Officers also reported a higher incidence of issues related to those struggling with mental health—whether due to greater stress, not being able to access care or, in some cases, obtain necessary medications. Several of these trends are summarized in a National Institutes of Health (NIH) article, [“The Immediate Impact of COVID-19 on Law Enforcement in the United States.”](#)

Excessive paperwork and inefficient reporting processes can have a negative impact on law enforcement’s ability to serve their communities. According to a survey deployed to more than 8,000 police chiefs and command staff across the country, 85% cite agreement that the volume of paperwork causes officers to spend too much time on administrative tasks and less time in the field. Also, mandates like NIBRS compliance require greater detail and specificity in incident reporting. The same survey revealed 2 out of 3 respondents agree regulations and federal mandates have increased the amount of documentation generated since March 2020.

These demands create ripple effects across departments. Absent the right set of connected tools, documentation captured in various physical locales and memorialized using different mediums can become disjointed, leading to inaccuracies and incompleteness of reports to prosecutors seeking to move criminal proceedings along. It can also contribute to officer burnout and health and safety concerns as officers capture incident details in their cruiser, “heads down,” hunched over an MDC entering incident details.

38%

spend **2-4 hours a day** on paperwork

+

an additional

16%

spend **>4 hours a day** on paperwork

68%

agree there is **greater interest in smart-tools** to interact with the public because of precautions taken during the pandemic

62%

say **improving officer productivity and omnipresence** is the primary focus of their department's technology strategy

Key findings

Documentation demands have increased since March 2020

- 47% of law enforcement professionals say COVID-19 resulted in an increased documentation burden
- 67% percent attribute increased documentation requirements to federal mandates and regulations

Nearly 50%

say the pandemic increased their documentation burden

Paperwork causes a significant drain on productivity

- 89% of respondents indicate creating incident reports limits the time officers spend in the community
- 45% of respondents report writing and filing incident reports as the most significant drain on productivity

89%

say creating incident reports limits time in community

Connected, cloud-hosted solutions are becoming more appealing

- 70% say their department is more receptive to secure, cloud-hosted solutions today compared to 2016
- 1/3 of respondents agree their department is increasingly open to – and has the means to acquire- PoliceTech for a fixed, monthly fee
- 60% cite body worn cameras and mobile phones and apps as tools used to automate reporting and streamline documentation processes

70%

say receptivity to secure cloud-hosted applications has grown since 2016

Officers expect PoliceTech to play an increasingly critical role

- Taking cues from their experiences with consumer tech, 89% of respondents agree officers need a “connected workplace” of smart technology like productivity tools, ambient assistants, and cloud-hosted apps similar to those available in their personal life
- Additionally, reliance on mobile hardware and software for mission-critical police work has increased, with 57% saying the need for these tools has substantially increased since March 2020. However there is growing awareness that such tools must be sanctioned by their IT department, with 74% agreeing technology must be vetted for security and reliability.
- As in other professional sectors, a significant 66% believe that post-pandemic, virtual communication tools—like Zoom or Teams—will play a more prominent role in the administrative aspects of policing

89%

say they need a “connected work-place” of smart tools similar to what is available in their personal life

2021 survey implications

The Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report **provides a unique “snapshot” in time during the COVID-19 pandemic.** The report reaffirms three key themes previously reported by law enforcement agencies since the pandemic began:

– **The documentation burden is constant:** In fact, COVID-19 exacerbated what was, already a major stressor before the pandemic by increasing demand for law enforcement to enforce curfews, respond to civil unrest, and mediate domestic disturbance during stay-at-home orders. As these incidents became more prevalent, it only added to existing strains on law enforcement with almost half (47%) of respondents agreeing COVID-19 resulted in an increase in documentation burden.

– **The pandemic altered established work patterns:** From processing perpetrator documentation prior to sally port transfer, to new safety protocols and using PPE protection, law enforcement—like many other professionals—needed to adapt. This was especially difficult as the pandemic created a higher demand for services and coincided with a time of recruitment and retention challenges. It is not yet clear how many of these process and procedural changes will persist post-pandemic.

– **Consumer technology continues to influence the demand for PoliceTech:** As private citizens, officers are certainly aware of evolving

consumer technology and how it helps manage their personal affairs. Whether it’s ambient personal assistants, cloud-hosted

secure, cloud-hosted applications for their agency has grown compared to just 5 years ago

The confluence of these trends is likely to increase the demand for PoliceTech to provide flexible, “anytime, anywhere” access to memorialize critical police documentation and assist prosecutors as they advance criminal proceedings. AI-powered technologies such as cloud-hosted natural language speech and understanding solutions, can be a major force-multiplier to drive documentation efficiency, accuracy, and completeness. Like the consumer sector, the use of technology in law enforcement is transitioning from discreet “point solutions” to a more holistic approach—using federated databases, mobile technology, and secure, cloud-hosted documentation solutions. Ultimately, these types of changes promise to radically streamline the production of critical documentation even as new applications such as ambient listening devices help further automate labor-intensive tasks. For police, this may fundamentally change the way interviews are conducted and transcribed—creating more seamless and productive interactions between officers, witnesses, and suspects.



mobile apps, or productivity and health and wellness tools, they have become accustomed to expecting more from technology. Officers are increasingly asking for similar tools and services to provide more a sophisticated experience, with greater convenience and flexibility, to help protect and serve their community. Almost 90% of respondents agreed officers need “a connected workplace” and more than 2/3 say receptivity to

Methodology

The **Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report** is a national survey to Police Chiefs and their Command Staff, including Patrol Officers, Detectives, Commanders, Sergeants, Lieutenants, as well as those responsible for IT and Records Management (RMS) systems within the department.

The survey respondents include law enforcement professionals in our national database. They are current customers, interested parties we have met with from law enforcement trade shows and other industry events, or those who have responded to our marketing campaigns, such as webinars.

Survey questions were selected to solicit the role technology plays in completing incident reporting and other documentation in the day-to-day life of law enforcement professionals. The survey is issued via a leading commercial software platform.



About Nuance Communications, Inc.

[Nuance Communications](#) (Nuance) is a technology pioneer with market leadership in conversational AI and ambient intelligence. A full-service partner trusted by 77 percent of U.S. hospitals and 85 percent of the Fortune 100 companies worldwide, Nuance creates intuitive solutions that amplify people's ability to help others.

© 2021 Nuance. All rights reserved.
DPC-0070_Report_October 1, 2021