

POLICE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Resources and Lessons for Workforce Building

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COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice



Police Staffing Observatory
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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This project was supported, in whole or in part, by cooperative agreement 15JCOPS-22-GK-03551 awarded to Michigan State University by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) or contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. References to specific individuals, agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the author(s), the contributor(s), or the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues.

The internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s), the contributor(s), nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

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Recommended citation:

Wilson, Jeremy M., and Clifford A. Grammich. 2023. *Police Recruitment and Selection: Resources and Lessons for Workforce Building*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Published 2023

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INTRODUCTION

PERSONNEL are the foundation for the work of all police organizations. Indeed, personnel costs account for most expenditures for local U.S. police departments.¹ Local governments across the nation employ nearly 700,000 sworn officers and more than 200,000 nonsworn personnel for police work.

Recruiting and selecting personnel for such a large workforce is a large, continuing, and growing challenge for U.S. police agencies. For several years, police agencies have been losing officers faster than they can hire new ones.² Police organizations report several strategies to increase recruitment and improve selection.³ Yet not all solutions will succeed for all agencies. More critically, few agencies have the capacity or resources to develop solutions.

Ongoing research led by Michigan State University is seeking to identify the most effective strategies that police organizations may use to recruit and select officers (as well as support other aspects of staffing). This publication highlights resources that are relatively recent and in-depth and that list comprehensive or rigorously tested tactics or explore novel or innovative strategies not discussed elsewhere. The focus is on unique or particularly insightful U.S. sources, but some helpful ones from other nations are included as well.



These resources are presented in two ways.

The goal of this publication is to provide information to the law enforcement field about existing methods for improving recruitment and selection. This work is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to promote awareness of recent relevant research and professional publications that may not be visible or accessible to practitioners. Many of these resources have reference lists that will guide the reader to other publications on these issues.

These resources are presented in two ways. First, a table lists the resources alphabetically by title along with page references within them where readers might find further information on various specific recruiting and selection issues. The issue domains categorized in this way are analysis and benchmarking, cadet or intern programs, focus on race and ethnicity, focus on women, focus on other underrepresented

1. Emily D. Buehler, *Justice Expenditures and Employment in the United States*, 2017, NCJ 256093 (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/justice-expenditures-and-employment-united-states-2017>.

2. Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), "New PERF Survey Shows Police Agencies Are Losing Officers Faster than They Can Hire New Ones," April 1, 2023, <https://www.policeforum.org/staffing2023>.

3. PERF, *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It* (Washington, DC: PERF, 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>; Jeremy M. Wilson, Erin Dalton, Charles Scheer, and Clifford A. Grammich, *Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium: The State of Knowledge*, NCJ 232275 (Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, 2010), <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/police-recruitment-and-retention-new-millennium-state-knowledge>.

INTRODUCTION

groups, improving processes, incentives, marketing, mentorship, organizational climate, outreach to community, outreach to schools, selection, and staff recruiters. Note that there may be other pages in these resources with information on these and other domains, but the page numbers cited are where these domains are discussed most directly.

Second, resources are listed alphabetically by title along with useful information for assessing and accessing them, including the lead author of the resource, the year it was published, its URL or DOI, and a summary of its contents. All quotations are from the resources described.

The resources include both broadly focused publications from organizations discussing wide-ranging issues and more narrowly focused academic publications with precise analyses, sometimes backed by experimental evidence. Each has its unique strengths, depending on the breadth and depth of issues a department wishes to address. Altogether, the information in this guide provides users a means for launching evidence-based approaches to improving recruitment and selection practices. Concurrent with this project, in April 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) convened law enforcement and community leaders from across the country to discuss best practices and solutions to address recruitment challenges. A report on that convening was released just prior to the completion of this publication and should be considered an additional resource for leaders in the field.⁴



The resources include both broadly focused publications from organizations discussing wide-ranging issues and more narrowly focused academic publications with precise analyses, sometimes backed by experimental evidence.

4. Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, *Recruitment and Retention for the Modern Law Enforcement Agency* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2023), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-r1136>.

Future research by the Michigan State team will discuss recruiting and selection tactics from these and other sources more systematically, including input from practitioners on those that are most helpful for various performance goals. It will also look into the infrastructure necessary to support an effective recruitment and hiring program. These are pieces of a much larger national platform of research meant to provide the law enforcement community evidence-based lessons for workforce planning.

Our broader research on recruitment and selection is part of the Michigan State University Police Staffing Observatory (<https://cj.msu.edu/research-excellence/pso/pso-home.html> and <https://www.linkedin.com/company/michigan-state-university-police-staffing-observatory/>). The Police Staffing Observatory is a global collaborative of academics, scholars, practitioners, and students who have come together to promote evidence-based police workforce research, strategy, and operations. Its primary aims are to advance police workforce knowledge and its application by

- conducting timely and innovative research on critical aspects of a wide range of police staffing issues, resulting in scholarly and practitioner-oriented publications;
- creating a venue for the network of police staffing scholars to share opportunities, discuss ideas, and enable collaborations;
- facilitating research-practitioner partnerships and technical assistance;
- serving as a repository and dissemination vehicle for collaborators' research of so that it is easily discoverable by practitioners and others.

Through its facilitation of research and outreach, the Police Staffing Observatory is a community of science that ultimately serves as a valuable resource for the community of practice. It currently has links to more than 100 resources for practitioners and researchers.

For more information on this work or the Police Staffing Observatory, please contact Jeremy Wilson, Director and Professor, at jwilson@msu.edu.

RESOURCE CHART

RESOURCE CHART

See page	Resource	Page references for recruitment and selection topics							Page references for recruitment and selection topics						
		Analysis / benchmarking	Cadet or intern programs	Focus on race / ethnicity	Focus on women	Focus on other underrepresented groups	Improving processes	Incentives	Marketing	Mentorship	Organizational climate	Outreach to community	Outreach to schools	Selection	Staff recruiters
11	Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement	vi-b	vi-a				vi-b				vi-a	vi-a, vii	vi-a	vi-b	
11	Articulating the Dynamic Police Staffing Challenge: An Examination of Supply and Demand	343-344					343	338						343	
12	Blueprint for Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention in the 21st Century: Principles of a Comprehensive Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Retention Strategy	16, 26, 28		16	10, 15	11, 15, 26, 28	14		14-15, 26-27	10, 31	16, 28	26	13, 28	13-15, 28	
13	Diversifying the Police Applicant Pool: Motivations of Women and Minority Candidates Seeking Police Employment		217	212-218	212-218		218	216	217				217-218		
13	Enhancing Recruitment and Retention of Visible Minority Police Officers in Canadian Police Agencies			466, 471			457, 473			466	458, 460-461	466, 471, 474		457, 464	472
14	An Examination of Recruiting and Selection Practices to Promote Diversity for Colorado State Troopers	13-15, 17-20	6	9-10, 12, 16, 19-20	6, 8-10, 14, 16-20		6, 10-11, 17, 19-20	15-16, 20	4, 6, 11-13, 15, 16, 20	6, 19	14	4	4, 18	3-10, 18-19	4, 6, 10, 16, 18
14	Finding Good Cops: The Foundations of a Screen-In (Not Out) Hiring Process for Police					687									
15	Gendered Messages in Police Recruitment: Understanding the Impacts of Descriptors and Physical Fitness Requirements on Potential Applicants				470									470	
16	Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Success		3, 15, 26, 41-44		9-13		33-39	10, 26, 43, 49	46	34, 42, 47, 49	45-49	6-8, 26	9, 44-45	9-11, 13-16, 18-23, 26-27, 53-58	
16	Innovation and Transparency in the Recruitment of Women in Australian Policing	528, 530, 534, 536		529-532	528-538		535	528, 530	530, 532-534, 536		530, 534			529-531, 535	535
17	Interest in Police Patrol Careers: An Assessment of Potential Candidates' Impressions of the Police Recruitment, Selection, and Training Processes		19-20	23-24					20	6, 19				7-8, 10, 19	
17	Law Enforcement Recruitment in the 21st Century: Forum Proceedings	10-11, 19	11-12, 24		13-15	15-18	11	18	11, 18-19	14		12, 14, 16, 17	11, 13-14	5-6, 11, 14	10-11, 16-17
18	Leveling the Playing Field in Police Recruitment: Evidence from a Field Experiment on Test Performance													947-953	
18	Low Police-Public Social Distance as the Key to Recruiting			186-189	186							186-189			186-189

See page	Resource	Page references for recruitment and selection topics										Page references for recruitment and selection topics			
		<i>Analysis / benchmarking</i>	<i>Cadet or intern programs</i>	<i>Focus on race / ethnicity</i>	<i>Focus on women</i>	<i>Focus on other underrepresented groups</i>	<i>Improving processes</i>	<i>Incentives</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Mentorship</i>	<i>Organizational climate</i>	<i>Outreach to community</i>	<i>Outreach to schools</i>	<i>Selection</i>	<i>Staff recruiters</i>
19	The Model Police Officer: Recruitment, Training, and Community Engagement	29	9–10		11–12	29		28	10,29	29		10, 14–19, 29	14–19, 29	19–22, 28	10–11
19	More than Public Service: A Field Experiment on Job Advertisements and Diversity in the Police	77–79		71–77	71–77				70–71, 77–79						
20	Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium: The State of Knowledge	xv, 44–46, 70–72, 89	10–12, 18, 79–80	18	18	18, 80–81	18, 21	18, 21, 52–54	xv, 18, 21, 58, 75–77, 79	21, 51–52, 74, 79	70, 72	71–72, 77–78	79–80	49, 81–87	18, 73–74
21	Police Recruitment Videos and Their Relevance for Attracting Officers				6–7				5–11		7, 10	8			
21	Preventing Attrition among Women and Minority Police Applicants		1040–1041	1035–1043	1035–1043		1038, 1041, 1043	1040		1040–1041, 1043				1038, 1040, 1042	1038, 1041
22	Promoting the Police: A Thematic Analysis of the New Zealand Police Recruitment Campaigns and the Construction of Officers' Identities			228	228	228–229			227–233					229	
22	Recruiting for Diversity in Law Enforcement: Selected Research Insights	29	4	6–8, 11–14, 17, 19, 24–25, 27–30	8, 11–16, 18–19, 24–27, 29–30	4, 15	5–6, 11, 14, 21–22	9, 27	7–10, 11–14, 16–19, 22–25, 29–30	6, 7, 21, 24, 27–30	7, 13, 15, 20–21	7, 26	4, 11, 22, 30	14, 16, 24	
23	Recruiting and Retaining Officers in Small and Rural Agencies			26–27	26–27	26			26–27, 33–34		24–29, 31–32, 35	31			25
23	Responding to the Staffing Crisis: Innovations in Recruitment and Retention	31, 65–66	6, 8, 35–37, 40–41, 68	5, 9, 21–22, 31, 33, 35–36, 40, 68	5, 22–25, 28–29, 31, 34, 41, 68	17–18, 20–26, 30–34	5, 31, 37–39, 68	4, 6–7, 14, 40–41, 50–52, 55–56, 68	5–6, 20, 31–37, 40–41, 50, 68	19, 26, 36, 39–41, 47, 68	1, 3–4, 7, 17–18, 20, 23–24, 40–42, 51–52, 64	9, 33–35	4–6, 31, 34–37, 68	6, 25–32, 68	25, 40–41
24	Review of the Prince William County, VA Police Department's Recruitment and Hiring Practices: Final Report	12–14, 19, 21, 36, 41–43, 50, 55, 64, 66, 70, 81	73	8, 10, 13, 21, 42–43, 79, 88	12, 19–21, 74–75, 88	5, 9, 29	4–8, 11, 14–15, 17–18, 16–27, 32, 36, 40–44, 52–54, 56, 64–69, 79–81	20, 73–74	7, 18–21, 70–75, 81	73, 88	6	74	74	4–14, 17–18, 20–21, 25–30, 42–45, 49, 51–54, 64–69	76–77
24	A Signaling Theory of Law Enforcement Hiring			519		519							519	514–515, 519–521	
25	Thick Red Tape and the Thin Blue Line: A Field Study on Reducing Administrative Burden in Police Recruitment						100								
25	The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It	12–13	14, 38–39, 40–42, 50, 59	14, 42–44, 59	10, 14, 42–43, 46, 56, 59	13, 14, 37–46	10, 14–15, 32, 46–48, 59	10, 30, 33–34, 59	10, 14, 24, 32, 37–42, 47–50	10, 38, 41–42, 45	42, 51, 56	13, 23–24, 27, 39–42, 45	10, 14, 37–39, 42–43		15, 45, 48

RESOURCE LIST

TITLE: Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement

DATE: 2016

LEAD AUTHOR: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

LOCATION: <https://www.eeoc.gov/advancing-diversity-law-enforcement>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report was part of the Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement initiative, which sought “to identify barriers that undermine diversity in law enforcement and to highlight promising practices that help agencies better reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.” It focused on barriers and promising practices in recruitment, hiring, and retention. Among its overall suggestions were “ensuring that the agency’s organizational culture is guided by community policing,” “engaging stakeholders” throughout the community to help create a workforce that reflects the community, and “being willing to re-evaluate employment criteria, standards, and benchmarks.” Promising recruitment practices it identifies include “proactive and targeted community outreach,” “partnerships with educational institutions and providing young people with internship programs,” and “effective, innovative use of technology and social media [to] connect with all members of the community.” Promising hiring practices identified include “adopting a holistic view of [applicant] skills and strengths;” “reconsider[ing] selection criteria . . . that do not correspond to job-related duties, and that disproportionately screen out individuals from underrepresented populations;” “streamlin[ing] and ma[king] more transparent hiring and selection procedures,” including help to applicants preparing for examinations; and “involv[ing] community members in the hiring process.” The report also presents case studies of six agencies that sought to increase their diversity.

TITLE: Articulating the Dynamic Police Staffing Challenge: An Examination of Supply and Demand

DATE: 2012

LEAD AUTHOR: Jeremy M. Wilson

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM.18137aaa.004>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This article reviews more than 150 works on police recruitment and retention, with discussions on the demand for police, the supply of police, and how systemic and episodic changes affect each. It notes challenges arising from increases

in attrition, decreases in recruitment, and expansion of police responsibilities. To attract officers, agencies have offered incentives “ranging from signing bonuses and moving expenses to health-club memberships and mortgage discount programs.” Some may also relax age, education, or residency requirements or become more tolerant of experimental drug use, bad credit history, or minor arrest records. Such initiatives should consider their effects in the context of officer quality and performance. Agencies may seek “to revamp internal procedures, such as screening, interviews, background investigations, and identifying characteristics predictive of hiring success.” Finally, agencies may wish to rely on research regarding the “police workforce environment” to adapt to changing preferences and attributes of applicants, and on the demand for police services to explore alternative ways of meeting it.

TITLE: **Blueprint for Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention in the 21st Century: Principles of a Comprehensive Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Retention Strategy**

DATE: 2022

LEAD AUTHOR: Christopher Sun

LOCATION: <https://bja.ojp.gov/library/publications/blueprint-law-enforcement-recruitment-and-retention-21st-century>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report offers a four-part comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy for police agencies. Its recruitment strategies are “effective and equitable approaches to expand the pool of officer candidates” and “identification of the best candidates during screening and selection.” Recommendations include “engag[ing] with and attract[ing] candidates who are representative of the communities” that agencies serve and “identify[ing] candidates that have the important traits and qualities needed to be a successful and productive officer while also effectively screening out undesirable individuals.”

TITLE: Diversifying the Police Applicant Pool: Motivations of Women and Minority Candidates Seeking Police Employment**DATE:** 2019**LEAD AUTHOR:** Jennifer C. Gibbs**LOCATION:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2019.1579717>**ACCESS STATUS:** Available through subscription or one-time purchase**ABSTRACT:** This work explores reasons cited by women and minority candidates for applying to a large police agency in the northeastern United States. The most common reasons cited were pursuing “policing as a childhood dream, making a difference in the community and the opportunity to help people, and believing policing was a good transition from military to civilian life.” The least-cited reasons were salary, benefits, and job security. Among its specific recommendations are “encouraging daughters of current and retired officers to join the agency,” “incentives for minority officers who recruit family and friends,” “following up with young women and young people of color enrolled in Police Explorers programs” and developing cadet programs, “recruiting through veterans’ organizations,” and “visit[ing] criminal justice courses at local colleges and universities to encourage young women to apply.”

TITLE: Enhancing Recruitment and Retention of Visible Minority Police Officers in Canadian Policing Agencies**DATE:** 2021**LEAD AUTHOR:** Catherine Rigaux**LOCATION:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2020.1750611>**ACCESS STATUS:** Available through subscription or one-time purchase**ABSTRACT:** To better understand how to improve recruitment of police officers, this study interviewed minority police officers in a western Canadian police organization about the barriers to recruitment and retention of “visible minorities.” Among the general barriers cited were organizational culture that was slow to change and the inability of leadership to follow through on improving diversity. The article recommends “re-engineering the recruitment process” to ensure “that mandatory requirements do not create ‘unintended barriers for reasons that have nothing to do with whether you’d be a great officer.’” This might include, for example, eliminating or modifying age requirements, credit checks, criminal record bans, aptitude tests, and long periods at a training depot. At the same time, the article stresses the need to maintain quality

standards. The article also notes the need for diversity among recruiters and in the ranks of police leadership to attract more minority candidates. It also stresses the need for referrals, mentoring, and community engagement, including through “gate-keepers” who can help establish community relationships.

TITLE: An Examination of Recruiting and Selection Practices to Promote Diversity for Colorado State Troopers

DATE: 2019

LEAD AUTHOR: Tracy C. Krueger

LOCATION: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2999.html

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report examines the Colorado State Patrol’s efforts to recruit a workforce that better reflects the demographic characteristics of the state. Among the barriers to diversifying the workforce that it identifies are “the composition of the current workforce, the nature of the job, relocation requirements, and the lengthy hiring process.” Recommendations include “assessing propensity to apply, determining why applicants drop out, adjusting application windows, exploring strategies to shorten background investigations, and providing a realistic job preview.” The Colorado State Patrol also moved to an online application system, added “real-time communication opportunities” for applicants on its website, standardized its email communications with prospective applicants, and removed the physical fitness test as a pass-fail outcome.

TITLE: Finding Good Cops: The Foundations of a Screen-In (Not Out) Hiring Process for Police

DATE: 2022

LEAD AUTHOR: Brice Terpstra

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-08-2021-0116>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This study surveyed officers of an Arizona police department regarding their “perceptions of the most important qualities necessary to be an exceptional police officer, as well as the optimal processes for finding people with these traits.”

The results confirm the findings of earlier research on the importance of honesty, integrity, ethics, compassion, empathy, and communication and listening skills. The authors also suggest “expansion of existing screen-out processes to also screen-in desirable prospects, application of some academy training processes to the hiring pool, and more proactive recruitment efforts” to identify candidates with desired traits. The article recommends in particular finding “veterans with a guardian philosophy,” “focus[ing] on students with undergraduate majors that emphasize targeted traits, such as social work teaching, nursing, communications, and psychology,” or “target[ing] people who work in those professions, as well as those who have successful experience in other service industries that require dealing effectively with people (e.g., bartending, food service, retail).”

TITLE: Gendered Messages in Police Recruitment: Understanding the Impacts of Descriptors and Physical Fitness Requirements on Potential Applicants

DATE: 2019

LEAD AUTHOR: Michael Francis Aiello

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-05-2018-0072>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This work explores how potential applicants might respond to specification of physical requirements in police recruitment requirements. It finds that, contrary to much previous research, women were more likely to provide their contact information for recruitment when they knew an agency’s physical fitness requirements. This suggests “that departments should not be concerned about limiting the pool of women applicants by stating their age and sex-categorized physical fitness requirements. In fact, this choice may actually improve applicant pool diversity.”

TITLE: Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Success

DATE: 2017

LEAD AUTHOR: Kevin P. Morison

LOCATION: <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-w0831>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This document summarizes discussions of a forum held among expert practitioners in police standards, screening, and hiring, including representatives from police labor organizations, state agencies responsible for police standards, professional associations, municipal civil service agencies, practitioners in police psychology, and academic experts. Themes of the forum included “Hiring candidates who share the values and vision of the community and the department,” “Making the hiring process more efficient,” and “Advancing diversity and inclusiveness in the hiring process.”

TITLE: Innovation and Transparency in the Recruitment of Women in Australian Policing

DATE: 2020

LEAD AUTHOR: Aiyana Ward

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2020.1720955>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This paper “reviews developments in gender equity–oriented recruitment policies” in Australia from 2015 to 2019, summarizing findings for each of the six states as well as the federal police and Northern Territory police. Its “primary aim was to identify successful or promising strategies to increase the number of female officers, with possible transferable lessons.” Four of the eight departments had explicit 50:50 male-female recruitment targets, and five had recruitment campaigns targeted toward women. Targeting included advertising and incentives focused on women, women-only information sessions and recruiting rounds, and female mentoring. Efforts also included profiling female officers on social media and developing a public image that would “encourage women to ask themselves whether they have the attributes that policing requires.”

TITLE: Interest in Police Patrol Careers: An Assessment of Potential Candidates' Impressions of the Police Recruitment, Selection, and Training Processes

DATE: 2018

LEAD AUTHOR: Charles Scheer

LOCATION: https://aquila.usm.edu/fac_pubs/15651/

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This research explores why potential applicants may or may not choose careers in police patrol work. It surveyed college students enrolled in criminal justice courses to gauge their perceptions of the policing profession, the application process, public demands of police officers, and police training, focusing on "fear points" regarding each of these. Most students saw patrol work as a step to some other career path. Most also noted having a mentor would influence their decision regarding policing. Nearly half said they have little knowledge about the realities of a police academy. Non-White students were more likely than White students to say their families would disapprove of becoming a patrol officer. Most saw police patrol work as requiring substantial lifestyle changes. Among the principal recommendations of the report are providing applicants individualized guidance and communication about policing.

TITLE: Law Enforcement Recruitment in the 21st Century: Forum Proceedings

DATE: 2017

LEAD AUTHOR: James E. Copple

LOCATION: <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-w0830>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This document summarizes discussions of a forum held by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and Strategic Applications International on law enforcement recruitment. Forum participants included representatives from law enforcement and community organizations, researchers, and subject-matter experts. Forum topics included characteristics of the ideal recruit and recruiting action steps for female, LGBTQ, and millennial law enforcement candidates.

TITLE: Levelling the Playing Field in Police Recruitment: Evidence from a Field Experiment on Test Performance

DATE: 2017

LEAD AUTHOR: Elizabeth Linos

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12344>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This work reports the results of a randomized controlled trial in a United Kingdom police force where a disproportionate number of minority applicants chose not to complete an online situational judgment test. This online test is mandatory for continued consideration in the hiring process and “is meant to capture how potential recruits would react to different realistic situations in which they may find themselves as a police officer.” The intervention was to change the email eligible applicants received before taking the test. For half the sample, the intervention “removed any language that was unnecessary and may have caused anxiety,” “changed the language to be more positive and to prime success and belonging,” and added language to encourage applicants to reflect on why they wanted to join the force. The intervention resulted in “a 50 percent increase in the probability of passing the test for minority applicants in the treatment group, with no effect on white applicants.” That is, it “closed the racial gap in the pass rate without lowering the recruitment standard or changing the assessment questions.”

TITLE: Low Police-Public Social Distance as the Key to Recruiting

DATE: 2020

LEAD AUTHOR: Jennifer C. Gibbs

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay020>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This study explores whether creating “low social distance may be one way police agencies can attract more women and minority applicants.” It tested this assertion by surveying a sample of university students on interest in being a police officer. Having a family member or friend as a police officer increased interest in policing among men, while knowing a police officer by name increased interest among women. The authors note, “reducing social distance by acquainting citizens—especially women and minority candidates—with the police may be a fruitful

avenue of exploration for police recruiters.” More specifically, the authors suggest management provide incentives to officers to recruit qualified applicants, especially women and minority candidates.

TITLE: **The Model Police Officer: Recruitment, Training, and Community Engagement**

DATE: 2018

LEAD AUTHOR: International City/County Management Association

LOCATION: [https://icma.org/documents/
model-police-officer-recruitment-training-and-community-engagement](https://icma.org/documents/model-police-officer-recruitment-training-and-community-engagement)

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This document presents views of local government leaders and staff, police chiefs and union representatives, and community members regarding “model” police officers, their characteristics, and how to recruit them. The project interviewed from two to ten representatives of 28 communities of varying size nationwide. Many police staff were unsure of the most effective recruiting method, and a few even said there were no effective recruitment strategies, but those identifying specific strategies most frequently cited relationship or “word-of-mouth” recruiting, recruiting college students, or advertising on social media.

TITLE: **More than Public Service: A Field Experiment on Job Advertisements and Diversity in the Police**

DATE: 2018

LEAD AUTHOR: Elizabeth Linos

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mux032>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This study presents the results of a field experiment in Chattanooga, Tennessee, aimed at increasing diversity of police force applicants. Specifically, it compares the results of postcard messaging focusing on public service motivations for policing with that focusing on the personal benefits of policing (e.g., challenge of the job or career benefits). It found the public service motivation messages were “ineffective at attracting candidates who would not have applied anyway,” while the

personal benefits messages were “three times as effective at getting individuals to apply . . . without an observable loss in applicant quality,” and were “particularly effective for people of color and women.”

TITLE: **Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium: The State of Knowledge**

DATE: 2010

LEAD AUTHOR: Jeremy M. Wilson

LOCATION: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/police-recruitment-and-retention-new-millennium-state-knowledge>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This work explores the threefold challenge that local police agencies face in staffing. First is attrition, resulting from retirements or decisions of younger officers to leave policing for other fields. Second is the diminishing supply of new officers, resulting from changing generational preferences or expanded requirements that reduce the number of individuals who qualify for police work. Third is the expanded duties that policing agencies must undertake, such as the adoption of community policing or increased emphasis on homeland security. Among its suggestions for recruitment and selection are involving the community in the hiring process, developing a separate recruitment team and incentives for it, comparing benefits with those of other employers seeking applicants, investing in high-quality media, selling the profession of policing as a service career, providing realistic job previews, communicating consistently with applicants, developing a cadet or intern program, targeting second-career applicants, streamlining the application and testing process, developing an assessment team, and considering which recruiting standards might be relaxed.

TITLE: Police Recruitment Videos and Their Relevance for Attracting Officers**DATE:** 2022**LEAD AUTHOR:** Rylan Simpson**LOCATION:** <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paac057>**ACCESS STATUS:** Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This work analyzes the content of recruitment videos from 567 U.S. police agencies. It finds “that in addition to some technical information about the job, many videos also feature high-speed driving, the use of firearms, the demonstration of canine as well as special weapons and tactics units, and an emphasis on men, masculinity, and physicality.” The article suggests that “recruitment videos may misrepresent the reality of work for many police officers” and thereby “impact who decides to pursue policing careers.” The article further suggests that “transforming the image of policing via recruitment materials could minimize interest among some groups who were attracted to the ‘action-packed’ image of the job, but simultaneously increase interest among other groups who . . . would still be excellent candidates for policing careers.”

TITLE: Preventing Attrition among Women and Minority Police Applicants**DATE:** 2020**LEAD AUTHOR:** Jennifer C. Gibbs**LOCATION:** <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paaa069>**ACCESS STATUS:** Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This work explores reasons for withdrawal from the application process among 143 women and minority police applicants to a large agency in the north-eastern United States. The primary reasons for withdrawal, after change of mind or another personal reason, were finding other employment or the length of the hiring process. The author suggests increasing communication to applicants, shortening the hiring process, and hiring continuously as solutions.

TITLE: Promoting the Police: A Thematic Analysis of the New Zealand Police Recruitment Campaigns and the Construction of Officers' Identities

DATE: 2022

LEAD AUTHOR: Angelique Nairn

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1177/26338076221085310>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This article examines a recruitment campaign that helped New Zealand Police exceed monthly application targets. The analysis identifies four key themes of the campaign: (1) that police make New Zealand safe, (2) that New Zealand Police comprise diverse personnel, (3) that police officers are normal people, and (4) that law enforcement is a rewarding career. The videos demonstrating that police are normal people featured officers discussing the meaning of their tattoos as well as reference to the removal of height restrictions. The videos on policing as an interesting and rewarding career conveyed the message that "joining the police would allow a person to 'get better work stories'" in an organization that encourages personal development.

TITLE: Recruiting for Diversity in Law Enforcement: Selected Recent Research Insights

DATE: 2021

LEAD AUTHOR: Jane Wiseman

LOCATION: https://scholar.harvard.edu/sites/scholar.harvard.edu/files/janewiseman/files/police_recruiting_research_summary_august_2021.pdf

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report "seeks to assist law enforcement agencies in hiring a diverse force." Its recommendations are to "widen outreach strategies to attract more candidates," "make the process more efficient," "support recruits so that fewer abandon the process," "employ targeted recruitment strategies to attract candidates of color [and] female candidates," and "experiment with recruiting varied messages and their focus on what works." It offers specific tactics for following these recommendations, a "thematic summary of research insights" including specific examples of their application, and a listing of studies on which the report is based.

TITLE: Recruiting and Retaining Officers in Small and Rural Agencies

DATE: 2020

LEAD AUTHOR: Kelly Bradley

LOCATION: <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-p426>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This document summarizes “a day-long forum to discuss recruitment and retention challenges for smaller and more rural law enforcement agencies.” The report draws on previous recruitment and retention research while recognizing a lack of focus on smaller and rural departments. The forum explored whether smaller departments engage in qualitatively different strategies than larger departments do. Specific tactics discussed include investing in marketing, directed recruitment to underrepresented groups, community engagement, and cadet and intern programs.

TITLE: Responding to the Staffing Crisis: Innovations in Recruitment and Retention

DATE: 2023

LEAD AUTHOR: Police Executive Research Forum

LOCATION: <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/RecruitmentRetention.pdf>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report builds on a previous report by the Police Executive Research Forum on the workforce crisis in police agencies. It notes continuing increases in officer retirements and resignations and decreases in applications leading to dropping staffing levels. Strategies it suggests for boosting recruiting include re-examining hiring processes, adopting innovative recruiting strategies (e.g., social media outreach), “going upstream” (e.g., to schools) to identify future officers, updating hiring standards to reflect current needs, and offering recruitment incentives (e.g., housing assistance).

TITLE: Review of the Prince William County, VA Police Department's Recruitment and Hiring Practices: Final Report

DATE: 2021

LEAD AUTHOR: Police Executive Research Forum

LOCATION: <https://www.pwcva.gov/assets/2021-07/PWC%20Report%20Final.pdf>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report reviews recruitment and hiring of the Prince William County (Virginia) Police Department. It includes a review of the department's protocols and processes for hiring and recruitment, an analysis of data on its job applicants, and findings from interviews with department staff. It highlights good practices by the department and makes specific recommendations for improvement.

TITLE: A Signaling Theory of Law Enforcement Hiring

DATE: 2017

LEAD AUTHOR: Susan Hilal

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2015.1081388>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This study interviews police chiefs in Minnesota, where law enforcement candidates must have completed at least a two-year degree from an accredited institution as well as professional police officer education before being hired. Such a system, the authors note, "creates a large pool of ostensibly identical *license-eligible* candidates, hence this article examines how hiring managers separate the high-quality ones from their low-quality counterparts." The article suggests "evaluating observable signs" of candidates "that chiefs believe to be correlated with unobservable trust-warranting properties, such as honesty, loyalty, and cultural competency." It also notes the need to have schools "reach out to potential high-quality candidates early and try to 'sell them' into the profession, particularly people of color and low socio-economic status who may be deterred" by the cost and burdens of the qualification process. Often, it says, "High-quality candidates may not even be aware they are well suited for a career in law enforcement." At the same time, it suggests schools "be honest who aren't cut out for law enforcement" and who therefore may wish to pursue other fields.

TITLE: Thick Red Tape and the Thin Blue Line: A Field Study on Reducing Administrative Burden in Police Recruitment

DATE: 2020

LEAD AUTHOR: Elizabeth Linos

LOCATION: <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13115>

ACCESS STATUS: Available through subscription or one-time purchase

ABSTRACT: This article reviews administrative data and a field experiment conducted in the Los Angeles Police Department to assess the impact of administrative burden on a candidate remaining in the recruitment process. It found that simplifying processes led to increases in compliance with them and likelihood of being hired. At the same time, this streamlining kept unqualified candidates in the process for longer, reducing the efficiency of hiring. The specific interventions tested were an email noting an online option for completing a personal history statement and stating that most applicants can complete such a statement within two weeks, and a text message one week after the initial email reminding applicants to submit the personal history statement within the next week.

TITLE: The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It

DATE: 2019

LEAD AUTHOR: Police Executive Research Forum

LOCATION: <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>

ACCESS STATUS: Free

ABSTRACT: This report explores the dimensions of the “workforce crisis” for policing agencies and what agencies are doing to resolve it. It notes that “even as police departments are struggling to get enough applicants in the door, they need to be raising the bar and looking for applicants with a wider variety of talents and skills” to address the diversifying demands on them. It notes a “triple threat” to police workforces: fewer applicants, increasing attrition, and increasing numbers of officers becoming eligible for retirement. It summarizes findings on these issues from a conference held on them, including law enforcement leaders and officers, researchers, and other subject matter experts.

ABOUT

Dr. Jeremy M. Wilson is a Professor of the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University, where he founded and directs the Police Staffing Observatory. As a scholar, educator, advisor, and consultant, he has collaborated with a wide array of institutions, published more than 160 products, and led more than \$14 million of research and outreach projects sponsored by the U.S. Congress, U.S. Departments of Justice and the Interior, foundations, governments, agencies, associations, and corporations. His policing research focuses on evidence-based personnel planning and developing a systems approach to police staffing, integrating aspects of workload demand, performance objectives, resource allocation and deployment, recruitment, retention, cohort management, workforce attributes and related areas. Among his staffing publications are *A Performance-Based Approach to Police Staffing and Allocation*, *Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium: The State of Knowledge*, *Recruiting and Retaining America's Finest: Evidence-Based Lessons for Police Workforce Planning*, *Police Retention: A Systematic Review of the Research*, *Staffing Composition in Large, U.S. Police Departments: Benchmarking Workforce Diversity*, and *Police Workforce Structures: Cohorts, the Economy, and Organizational Performance*. To learn more, see <https://jeremywilson.org/>.

Dr. Clifford A. Grammich is director of Birdhill Research and Communications, LLC. As a communications analyst with the RAND Corporation, Dr. Grammich collaborated with Dr. Wilson on a COPS Office project on police recruitment and retention in the contemporary environment, coauthoring both a volume of conference proceedings and a monograph summarizing lessons on recruiting and retaining effective police workforces. As an independent contractor, Dr. Grammich continued his collaboration on policing projects with Dr. Wilson, including compiling resources and examining case studies on police consolidation and shared services, conducting field research for an NIJ multisite evaluation of police consolidation and shared services, and coauthoring more than a dozen publications on police organization and staffing.

ABOUT THE COPS OFFICE

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has been appropriated more than \$20 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 136,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- More than 800,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations and the COPS Training Portal.
- Almost 800 agencies have received customized advice and peer-led technical assistance through the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.

The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement. COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, <https://cops.usdoj.gov>.

Police officer recruitment and selection are challenging, yet vitally important contributors to police accountability and establishing a trusted relationship with the community. To help police leaders make informed decisions, researchers at Michigan State University reviewed existing literature and compiled this guide to current resources on law enforcement staffing. The guide presents summaries of publications describing innovative strategies and rigorously tested recruitment and selection tactics in a format that is concise and accessible. All information is cross tabulated on an easy-to-read table that allows readers to easily identify resources (and the specific page numbers within the resource) that address fourteen relevant themes such as mentorship, outreach to schools, and focus on various underrepresented groups. This work supports a comprehensive commitment by the U.S. Department of Justice to provide resources for the field to help police leaders meet the challenges of recruitment and staffing, as indicated by the 2023 publication of *Recruitment and Retention for the Modern Law Enforcement Agency*, a joint publication of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the COPS Office.



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Justice
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