



# Rebuilding the Force: Solving Policing’s Workforce Emergency

By Logan Seacrest and Jillian Snider

**The future of law enforcement depends on its ability to adapt to evolving societal expectations and labor market dynamics.**

## Executive Summary

This policy study explores the recruitment and retention crisis in U.S. law enforcement, analyzing historical, social, and economic factors that have shaped the problem. It describes the staffing shortage, evaluates its consequences, and explores innovative strategies to address the issue. The findings and recommendations offered in this paper provide a practical, comprehensive framework for agencies to build and sustain a strong, resilient workforce.

## Introduction

Despite growing public demand for police services, departments across the United States are losing officers faster than they can hire new ones.<sup>1</sup> This alarming trend reflects broader societal challenges, including shifting demographics, collapsing institutional trust, and changing attitudes toward

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1. “New PERF survey shows police agencies are losing officers faster than they can hire new ones,” Police Executive Research Forum, April 1, 2023. <https://www.policeforum.org/staffing2023>.

work.<sup>2</sup> Strong economic and employment conditions have put law enforcement agencies in competition, not only with one another for talent but also with private-sector companies that offer higher salaries.<sup>3</sup> Although the police workforce crisis is not the sole cause of actual and perceived increases in crime in the past five years, it has been a contributing factor.<sup>4</sup>

This labor-market challenge calls for bold, market-based policy ideas, a higher caliber of scholarship, and solutions that go beyond surface-level fixes. In this policy study, we assess the state of the law enforcement labor market, analyze the key factors driving this crisis, and examine why it has become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain officers. We also highlight innovative strategies that go beyond short-term hiring incentives, focusing on long-term workforce development, retention policies, and structural reforms that can make policing a viable and attractive career for the next generation. The paper concludes with a summary of key recommendations designed to help agencies build and sustain a strong, resilient, and capable workforce.

## The Thinning Blue Line

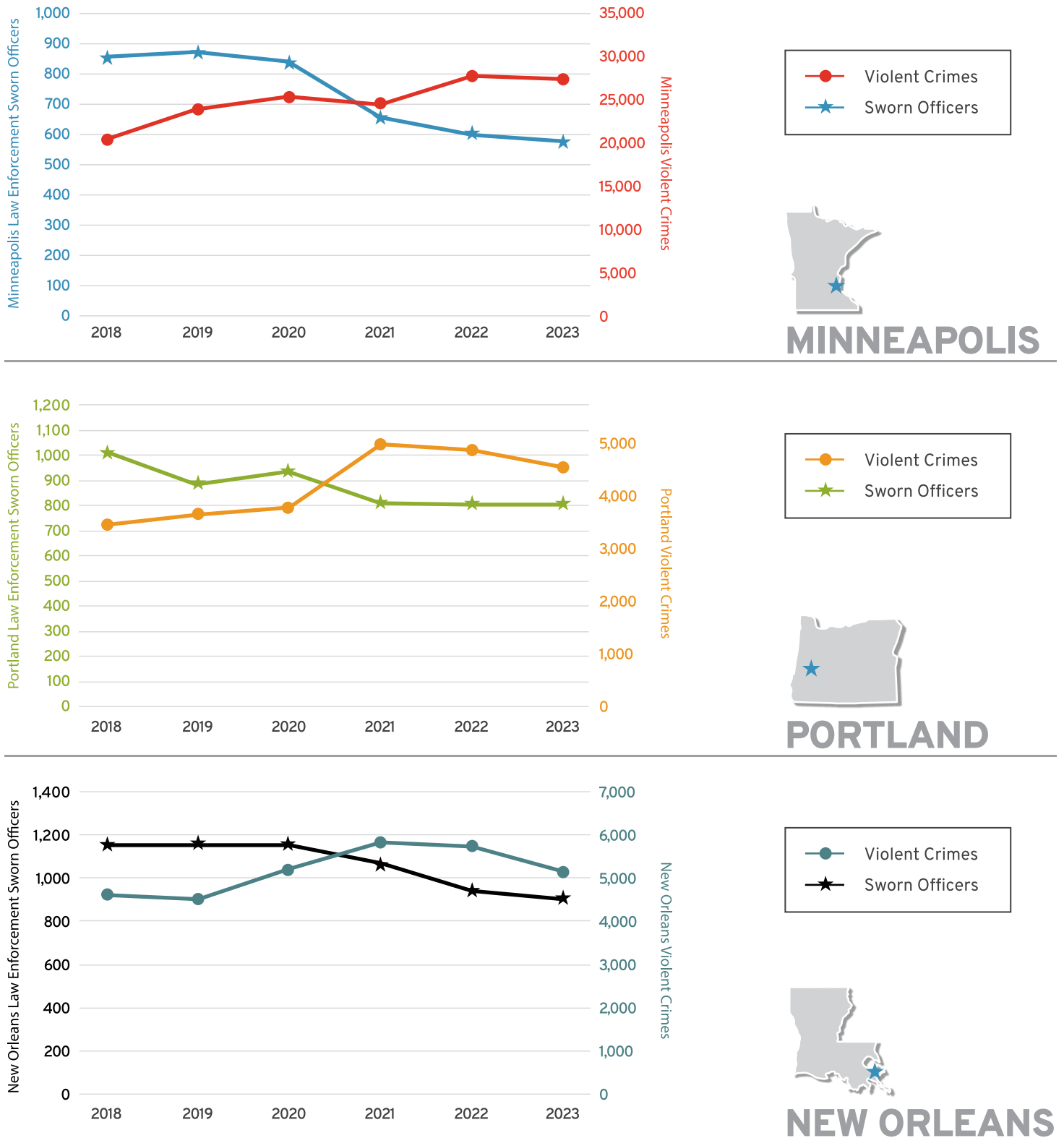
The law enforcement labor shortage is doing what the “defund the police” movement could not—hollowing out U.S. law enforcement. A 2024 survey found that 70 percent of agencies reported having more difficulty hiring compared to five years ago.<sup>5</sup> Dozens of the nation’s largest departments have shrunk by 10 percent or more.<sup>6</sup> Some agencies have seen staffing levels plummet dramatically, such as New Orleans and Minneapolis, which are both 40 percent smaller than they were a decade ago.<sup>7</sup> The New York City Police Department (NYPD) has also seen historically high attrition, bringing on just 2,345 new recruits last year, hundreds short of the 2,931 officers who left.<sup>8</sup> The NYPD continues to bleed about 200 police officers per month.<sup>9</sup> Even in cities where the exodus has been less pronounced, like Chicago and Philadelphia, department budgets have been strained by excessive overtime and expensive recruiting campaigns.<sup>10</sup> For decades, cities and states have been asking their police to do more and more with fewer resources, which may correlate with increases in crime (Figure 1).



A 2024 survey found that 70 percent of agencies reported having more difficulty hiring compared to five years ago.

- Duren Banks et al., “National Sources of Law Enforcement Employment Data,” U.S. Department of Justice, Oct. 4, 2016. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/nslead.pdf>.
- “Actually, the U.S. labor market remains very strong,” Economic Policy Institute, Oct. 3, 2024. <https://www.epi.org/blog/actually-the-u-s-labor-market-remains-very-strong/>; “The American economy: The envy of the world,” *The Economist*, last accessed Feb. 18, 2025. <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2024-10-19>.
- Ian T. Adams, et al., “Turnover in Large US Policing Agencies Following the George Floyd Protests,” *CrimRxiv* (2023). <https://www.crimrxiv.com/pub/smw9kp1d/release/1>.
- “The State of Recruitment & Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing,” International Association of Chiefs of Police, November 2024. [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/IACP\\_Recruitment\\_Report\\_Survey.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/IACP_Recruitment_Report_Survey.pdf).
- Jeff Asher, “Larger Police Departments Shrunk After COVID, Smaller Ones Mostly Stayed the Same Size,” Jeff-alytics, June 13, 2023. <https://jasher.substack.com/p/larger-police-departments-shrunk>.
- Missy Wilkinson and John Simerman, “NOPD staffing flatlines after academy classes with low graduation rates,” *Police1*, Oct. 7, 2024. <https://www.police1.com/police-recruitment/nopd-staffing-flatlines-after-academy-classes-with-low-graduation-rates/>; Meg Anderson, “Police departments are offering big raises. Does it work?” *NPR*, July 26, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/2024/07/26/nx-s1-5015701/police-understaffing-raises-money>.
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- Jennifer Bisram, “NYPD suffering from exodus of officers, creating safety and security concerns,” *CBS New York*, March 13, 2024. <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/nypd-suffering-from-mass-exodus-of-officers-creating-safety-and-security-concerns>.
- Heather Cherone and Jared Rutecki, “Chicago Spent \$542M on Overtime in 2023, Including \$293M for Police, Setting New Records,” *WTTW*, March 12, 2024. <https://news.wttw.com/2024/03/12/chicago-spent-524m-overtime-2023-including-293m-police-setting-new-records/>; Leonard Robinson, “Philadelphia signals financial support for more police officers,” *The Center Square*, June 20, 2023. [https://www.thecentersquare.com/pennsylvania/article\\_e6840974-0f95-11ee-b1e6-4351abf92d31.html](https://www.thecentersquare.com/pennsylvania/article_e6840974-0f95-11ee-b1e6-4351abf92d31.html).

**Figure 1: A Tale of Three Cities: Law Enforcement Staffing Levels vs. Crime Rate**



Sources: "Law Enforcement Employees Reported by the United States," FBI Crime Data Explorer, last accessed Feb. 12, 2025. <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/le/pe>; "Police Strategic Plans and Annual Reports," Portland.gov, last accessed Feb. 12, 2025. <https://www.portland.gov/police/chiefs-office/ppb-plans-and-reports>; New Orleans Police Department "NOPD Staffing Dashboard," City Council New Orleans, last accessed Feb. 18, 2025. <https://app.powerbi.com/w?r=eyJrIjoiYTllMzlyZTMtY2Y2JiYS00YTQyLWFKY2EtZTVkYjRiMDZhMmQ4IiwidCI6IjY2ZTVkYjRiMDZhMmQ4IiwiaWQiOiE3LWE3NTBjNWlxMzlyZCIsImMiOiJN9&pageName=RreportSection21e91234a747587e452f>.

## Public Perception

One popular explanation for the declining law enforcement workforce is that high-profile incidents of police violence have tarnished the profession's image to such a degree that people no longer want to serve.<sup>11</sup> This explanation has its roots in the "Ferguson Effect," a theory positing that criticism of police since 2014 has not only led to apathetic enforcement and subsequent spikes in crime but also recent surges in retirements and resignations.<sup>12</sup> The mayor of Tulsa, Oklahoma, explained, "the national dialogue that demonizes police officers has made police department staffing significantly more difficult for every major city in America."<sup>13</sup> Most police chiefs agree: 78 percent of departments identified negative public perception as a significant barrier to recruitment.<sup>14</sup> Although this may be a factor, recent evidence suggests that the Ferguson Effect has been less pronounced than once believed.<sup>15</sup>



## Policing Trends

Law enforcement is a high-stress profession, and officers are frequently exposed to traumatic events and physical danger. Accountability measures, like state-mandated use-of-force policies, have been perceived by some as limiting agency autonomy.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, officers perceive the job as riskier than ever before, and evidence suggests that they are correct.<sup>17</sup> From 2021 to 2023, 194 officers were killed in the line of duty—more than any other consecutive three-year period in the past 20 years.<sup>18</sup> Officers are now three times more likely to suffer a nonfatal injury than any other class of worker.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, studies have shown that chronic stress and burnout are leading causes of early retirements and resignations among officers.<sup>20</sup> The demands of the job come at a high cost: The life expectancy of former police officers is 21 years shorter than the average American's.<sup>21</sup>



## Demographics

The movement away from manufacturing toward a service-based, knowledge economy has reshaped our society. In 2020, millennials



11. "The State of Recruitment: A Crisis for Law Enforcement." [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/239416\\_IACP\\_RecruitmentBR\\_HR\\_0.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/239416_IACP_RecruitmentBR_HR_0.pdf).
12. S.E. Wolfe and J. Nix, "The alleged 'Ferguson Effect' and police willingness to engage in community partnership," *Law and Human Behavior* 40:1 (2016), pp. 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000164>.
13. Daphne Duret and Weihua Li, "It's Not Just a Police Problem, Americans Are Opting Out of Government Jobs," The Marshall Project, Jan. 21, 2023. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2023/01/21/police-hiring-government-jobs-decline>.
14. Ibid.
15. Ashleigh N. Wojslawowicz et al., "Gauging the impact of negative media publicity on career decisions: exploring police recruit motivations during a recruitment crisis," *Policing: An International Journal* 46:2 (February 2023). <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/PIJPSM-12-2022-0149/full/html>.
16. H. Douglas Otto and Alysson Gatens, "Understanding Police Officer Stress: A Review of the Literature," Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, May 24, 2022. <https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/understanding-police-officer-stress-a-review-of-the-literature>.
17. Rich Morin et al., "Behind the Badge," Pew Research Center, Jan. 11, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/01/11/behind-the-badge>.
18. "FBI Releases Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2023 Special Report and Law Enforcement Employee Counts," Federal Bureau of Investigation, May 14, 2024. <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-officers-killed-and-assaulted-in-the-line-of-duty-2023-special-report-and-law-enforcement-employee-counts>.
19. Hope M. Tiesman et al., "Nonfatal Injuries to Law Enforcement Officers: A Rise in Assaults," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 54:4 (April 2018), pp. 503-509. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29395571>.
20. Jason Rydberg and William Terrill, "The Effect of Higher Education on Police Behavior," *Police Quarterly* 13:1 (Jan. 3, 2010), pp. 92-120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611109357325>.
21. John M. Violanti, "Life Expectancy in Police Officers: A Comparison with the U.S. General Population," *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health* 15:4 (2013), pp. 217-228, 2013. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4734369>.

overtaken baby boomers as America's largest generation—a profound shift in the workforce with implications in every sector and industry.<sup>22</sup> In fact, over the next five years, an exodus of baby boomers will reduce the overall number of Americans in the labor market, creating a “silver tsunami” and intensifying competition for workers.<sup>23</sup> If law enforcement agencies do not take proactive steps to mitigate these generational workforce shifts, a potentially dangerous imbalance could form in many agencies between the number of experienced officers and new recruits.

## Economics

Like any market, the law enforcement labor market is governed by supply and demand. Right now, demand for police officers is higher than ever, but the supply of appropriate candidates is getting smaller. At any given moment, the employer–employee power dynamic is a product of the market economy. During economic downturns or recessions, fewer jobs are available for workers, giving employers more options and control over employees. Conversely, when the economy is booming, employees have more opportunities and therefore greater control than employers. With historically low unemployment rates and the last sustained recession a distant memory, American workers are currently in the driver's seat. It should therefore come as no surprise that \$50,000—the average starting salary of an officer in the United States—is insufficient compensation for one of society's most demanding jobs.<sup>24</sup> Inflation has exacerbated the problem in urban areas where the cost of living is high and additional officers are most desperately needed.



## Hiring for a Job Like No Other

Law enforcement is not like other careers. Any other job with such a long list of duties, irregular hours, and inherent dangers would demand a premium in the marketplace. However, entry-level officers typically earn less than comparable college graduates and much less than job seekers with degrees in engineering, medicine, or finance.<sup>25</sup> A 2024 survey found that most college students are not interested in becoming police officers, particularly those with higher grade point averages.<sup>26</sup> Especially in this post-COVID period of transitional labor relations, characterized by remote work and employee choice, it is not surprising that police are feeling left out.



A 2024 survey found that most college students are not interested in becoming police officers, particularly those with higher grade point averages.

22. Richard Fry, “Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America's largest generation,” Pew Research Center, April 28, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation>.

23. Kirsten Ellis, “Peak Boomer Retirements Mean Hundreds of Thousands of Employees Are Leaving the U.S. Labor Force Every Month,” Protected Lifetime Income, Aug. 27, 2024. <https://www.protectedincome.org/news/labor-day-peak-65-trades-hit-hardest>.

24. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics: Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers,” U.S. Department of Labor, May 2023. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes333051.htm>; Benita Mehta, “Top 25 Most Dangerous Jobs in the United States,” Industrial Safety & Hygiene News, Nov. 5, 2020. <https://www.ishn.com/articles/112748-top-25-most-dangerous-jobs-in-the-united-states>.

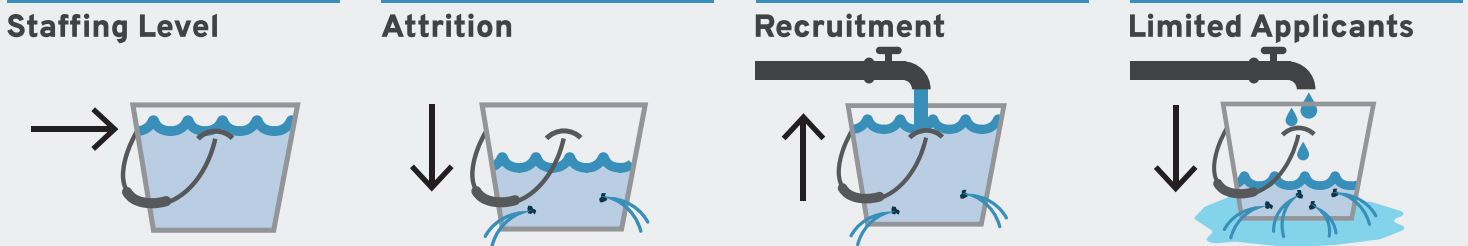
25. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes333051.htm>.

26. Mateus R. Santos et al., “Informing the recruitment crisis in policing: Evaluating which incentives can entice the best candidates among college students,” *Criminology and Public Policy* 23:3 (August 2024), pp. 569–603. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1745-9133.12668>.



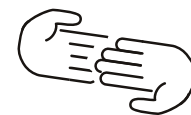
## The Labor Bucket

Researchers have used a bucket metaphor to describe the law enforcement labor market. In this analogy, the bucket represents the total need for officers, and the water level indicates the current staffing level. Officers “leak out” through retirements or resignations, causing the water level to drop. The bucket is continually refilled through recruitment, but if the flow of new officers into the bucket is weak because of limited applicants, water flows out of the bucket faster than it can be refilled. Furthermore, as community policing expectations broaden the duties police are expected to perform, the size of the bucket must grow to accommodate those new demands, requiring more “water” to fill it. In other words, police HR departments face a “three-body problem.”<sup>27</sup> Agencies must dynamically balance a triad that includes hiring, workforce attrition, and the expansion of police duties—constantly shifting variables that affect each other in unpredictable ways.



## Call of Duty

Most police officers join the force for reasons that go beyond salary. When asked why they chose policing as a career, many officers will offer some version of “I want to help people.” Police departments are public service organizations, so it makes sense that they would attract people interested in serving the public. The best law enforcement recruiters recognize this and lean into that core value with messaging that reinforces how officers are serving a greater purpose than themselves. Offering people a sense of meaning is essential when marketing a tough, dangerous job that does not pay particularly well. Even though the salary, benefits, and working conditions are often superior elsewhere, intrinsic benefits will always naturally attract certain people to law enforcement.



## Generation “Job-Hop”

Law enforcement leaders are also increasingly being tasked with accommodating the needs and expectations of officers from different generations. Gen Z has been described as a cohort of pragmatic, tech-savvy individuals who value direct communication and self-care—attributes that are often lacking within police culture.<sup>28</sup> The demanding schedule of a rookie cop can be a particularly significant roadblock for younger workers, who tend to prioritize flexibility and work/life balance.<sup>29</sup> In general, young people also have less organizational commitment than prior generations and are much less likely to stay in the same job their entire career.<sup>30</sup> Once considered a red flag on a resume, new research suggests that job hopping can yield knowledge and skills that enhance employability.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore,



27. Barrow-Green, “The Three-Body Problem,” in Timothy Gowers et al. (eds.), *The Princeton Companion to Mathematics*, (Princeton University Press, June 2008), pp. 726-728. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9781400830398.726/html>.

28. Melissa De Witte, “Gen Z are not ‘coddled.’ They are highly collaborative, self-reliant and pragmatic, according to new Stanford-affiliated research,” Stanford Report, Jan. 3, 2022. <https://news.stanford.edu/2022/01/03/know-gen-z>.

29. “The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It,” Police Executive Research Forum, September 2019. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>.

30. Thomas W.H. Ng and Daniel C. Feldman, “Re-examining the relationship between age and voluntary turnover,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 74:3 (June 2009), pp. 283-294. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001879109000128>.

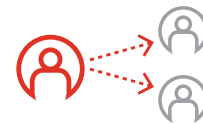
31. “Nearly 1 in 4 job hopping GenZers increased their salary by \$50k+,” Resume Builder, Oct. 17, 2023. <https://www.resumebuilder.com/nearly-1-in-4-job-hopping-genzers-increased-their-salary-by-50k>.

the higher levels of illicit drug use, obesity, and debt seen in younger generations have led to marked reductions in the available pool of qualified applicants.<sup>32</sup>

For younger employees, boredom is the enemy. A dynamic, varied workday is more important to current labor market participants than it was to previous generations.<sup>33</sup> Strategies such as job enrichment (making work more meaningful), job enlargement (adding more responsibilities), and job rotation (temporarily mixing up assignments) can help keep officers motivated and refresh their skills.<sup>34</sup> Forward-thinking agencies are restructuring job descriptions and organizational charts to improve flexibility and offer more scheduling options.<sup>35</sup> The rigid hierarchies and inflexible schedules of the past are being overhauled to appeal to a new generation of workers, most of whom do not plan to stay in the same job for decades.<sup>36</sup>

## Good Cops Know Good Cops

When police search for a suspect, the task is not given to just one person—it is a group effort involving other patrol units and sometimes other departments. Recruiting should work the same way. Employee referral systems make every officer a potential recruiter. Many departments reward officers for successful referrals with a “finder’s fee” bonus, like time off or cash. Having learned about the agency firsthand from an officer, referred candidates have a more realistic view of the job. Even as websites like LinkedIn and Indeed have made it easier to recruit online, candidates discovered via crowdsourced, informal avenues are more likely to be hired and stay longer.<sup>37</sup> When leaders make recruitment and retention a top priority for everyone in the organization, the results speak for themselves.



## Trust Is Earned, Not Given

With confidence in police at a record low, rebuilding public trust will be necessary to make law enforcement careers more appealing. One advantage police have over other employers is frequent access to news outlets. Recruiters can leverage relationships with reporters into “earned media” publicizing new recruitment programs or hiring incentives. These types of human-interest stories are a good way to bring attention to police departments and advertise career opportunities. Sharing use-of-force data and other law enforcement information is another way to help communities understand how they are being policed.<sup>38</sup> Departments can also designate “recruitment liaisons” as an outreach strategy to build personal



32. Wade J. Derby, “The Impact of Drug Decriminalization on the Future of Police Recruiting Standards,” *Police Chief* 75:8 (August 2008), pp. 92-95. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/the-impact-of-drug-decriminalization-on-the-future-of-police-recruiting-standards>.

33. Harun Sesen and Ama Asantewaa Donkor, “Job Crafting, Job Boredom and Generational Diversity: Are Millennials Different from Gen Xs?,” *Sustainability* 15:6 (March 13, 2023), p. 5058. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/6/5058>.

34. Jay Fortenbery, “Improving Motivation and Productivity of Police Officers,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Aug. 4, 2015. <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/improving-motivation-and-productivity-of-police-officers>.

35. “Lovick bill allowing flexible work schedules for police passes Senate,” *Senate Democrats*, Jan. 17, 2024. <https://senatedemocrats.wa.gov/lovick/2024/01/17/lovick-bill-allowing-flexible-work-schedules-for-police-passes-senate>.

36. Michael Francis Aiello, “Gendered messages in police recruitment: Understanding the impacts of descriptors and physical fitness requirements on potential applicants,” *Policing: An International Journal* 42:3 (2019), pp. 455-473. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-05-2018-0072>.

37. Stephen V. Burks et al., “The Value of Hiring through Employee Referrals,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130:2 (May 2015), pp. 805-839. <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/130/2/805/2331590>.

38. Logan Seacrest and Jillian Snider, “Measured Force: The Benefits of Police Data Transparency,” *R Street Policy Study* No. 302, April 2024. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/measured-force-the-benefits-of-police-data-transparency>.

connections and listen to community concerns. These types of partnerships, particularly with churches and religious organizations, can help break down barriers and garner credibility with communities historically skeptical of the police.

## Streamlined Hiring

Because a protracted, cumbersome hiring process can deter potential recruits, once a candidate is in the door, it is important to expedite interviews and hiring. This is not only about speed but also about making the process applicant-friendly with online applications, revamped testing requirements, and interim employment opportunities. Pre-hire programs start recruits in civilian roles while they wait for academy slots, keeping them engaged and reducing drop-off. Departments should also consider conducting entry interviews to learn why candidates are joining the force, as these can be just as insightful as exit interviews. Hiring managers should also explore and leverage grant funding available through the Recruit and Retain Act, which can help cover costs related to sign-on bonuses, childcare services, relocation assistance, tuition reimbursement, and more (see [Appendix 1](#) for relevant federal legislation).<sup>39</sup>



[\[View Appendix 1\]](#)

## The High Cost of Low Standards

Not everyone is cut out to be a law enforcement officer. Recruiters are looking for a specialized combination of traits that limit the supply of qualified candidates. Specifically, the ideal officer is:

- Courageous enough to put their life on the line at work every day
- Knowledgeable of most federal, state, and municipal laws
- The right temperament to wield power in a responsible way
- Comfortable around firearms
- Able to run a mile at a full sprint

At a moment's notice, officers must be able to serve as social workers, conflict mediators, mental health counselors, medical responders, information technology experts, traffic controllers, counter-terrorism units, and paralegals—sometimes all in the span of a single shift. It is a demanding career by almost any definition. Even if municipalities could afford to pay their officers a premium rate, finding enough candidates who embody all of these qualities constrains the candidate pool. To get more people in the door, cities like New York and Chicago have been forced to lower hiring standards.<sup>40</sup> This is a mistake.

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The tragic case of Sonya Massey underscores the deadly consequences of letting standards slip.<sup>41</sup> In July 2024, the 36-year-old resident of Springfield, Illinois, called 911 to report suspicious activity outside her home. Instead of receiving help, she was killed—shot three times by an Illinois Sheriff's Deputy with a long record of misconduct. Before the shooting, he had been transferred

39. H.R.3325 – 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, "Recruit and Retain Act of 2024," May 15, 2023. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3325>.

40. Dave Collins and Lisa Maria Pane, "Police loosen standards for accepting recruits," Police1, Nov. 14, 2016. <https://www.police1.com/police-jobs-and-careers/articles/police-loosen-standards-for-accepting-recruits-3uCEoz8NBnvmY1G1>.

41. Logan Seacrest and Jillian Snider, "De-escalation Now," R Street Institute, July 31, 2024. <https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/de-escalation-now>.



or dismissed from six police departments during his brief stint in law enforcement.<sup>42</sup> His record also included two convictions for driving under the influence, leading to his discharge from the military for serious misconduct.

The case is a reminder that lowering hiring standards to boost recruitment is not a sustainable solution. Officers with less education are significantly more likely to use force to resolve situations.<sup>43</sup> The same is true of officers who are unable to meet physical fitness standards, as they may lack the physical ability to resolve situations in a tactically safe manner. Additionally, officers with subpar fitness levels have a heightened risk of injuries and health problems, leading to increased absenteeism and healthcare costs.<sup>44</sup> Of note, some legislators have introduced bills that would reduce the minimum age for new candidates to 18 years and relax residency requirements, allowing officers to live outside the area they serve.<sup>45</sup> Although these strategies can boost recruitment in the short term, the downsides in terms of officer maturity and community relations must be carefully considered. Moreover, slashing eligibility requirements can undermine public trust in law enforcement, hamper officers' ability to handle complex situations, and ultimately risk public safety. It is also the opposite of what American citizens actually want.<sup>46</sup> Even though setting the bar lower may increase the number of viable applicants, reducing officer standards should be a last resort, no matter how dire the staffing shortage.

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That is not to say all hiring standards make sense. Superficial or cosmetic standards should be adjusted for candidates entering the workforce today. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of tattoo bans that, although less common than previous eras, still exist in some jurisdictions.<sup>47</sup> These rules will have to change sooner or later, as the percentage of Americans with at least one tattoo has risen from 14 percent to 32 percent—a surge in popularity that appears to be accelerating.<sup>48</sup> They are even more common among the 21- to 35-year-old demographic that is most likely to apply to a police academy.<sup>49</sup> Agencies need to stop artificially narrowing the field of potential candidates and instead do everything possible to expand it. In addition to relaxing antiquated tattoo policies, more leniency with regard to credit checks, prior drug use, and minor arrest records could help agencies safely expand the pool of eligible candidates.

42. Farrah Anderson and Sam Stecklow, "Sean Grayson, who killed Sonya Massey, committed misconduct at prior jobs. Another one of his cases just got dropped," IPM News, Nov. 18, 2024. <https://ipmnewsroom.org/sean-grayson-sonya-massey-dropped-case-logan>.

43. Cedric Alexander, "Guest Post: Raise, not lower, police hiring standards to restore public trust," *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/crime-law/2022/04/29/alexander-guest-hiring>.

44. Michael C. Harper and Matthew Wagner, "Enhancing Officer Safety & Survivability," *Police Chief*, May 19, 2021. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/enhancing-officer-safety-survivability>; Sonia Quinones, "Physical Fitness and Wellness at the Hallandale Beach Police Department," Florida Department of Law Enforcement Senior Leadership Program, 2009, pp. 1-13. <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FCJEL/Programs/SLP/Documents/Full-Text/Quinones-Sonia-RESEARCH-PAPER.aspx>.

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## Higher Learning, Safer Streets

The evolution of educational requirements in law enforcement reflects a century-long effort to professionalize the field and enhance community trust. Pioneered in 1909 by August Vollmer, Berkeley's first police chief, the integration of education into policing began with collaborations between law enforcement and academia, culminating in the first criminal justice program at University of California Berkeley in 1916.<sup>50</sup> The 1931 Wickersham Commission Report emphasized the need for higher educational standards to combat corruption and inefficiency.<sup>51</sup> Federal initiatives in the mid-20th century, such as the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, enabled more than 100,000 officers to earn college credits by the 1970s and expanded criminal justice programs nationwide.<sup>52</sup> By the late 20th century, departments like the NYPD required 60 college credits or equivalent military experience for new recruits, and agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation had mandated bachelor's degrees for most positions, reflecting a national consensus on the value of higher education in promoting analytical thinking, ethical decision-making, and leadership. Concurrently, research highlighted the importance of inclusive training environments, addressing barriers faced by female trainees and stressing how diverse perspectives bolster intellectual rigor.<sup>53</sup> Together, these developments demonstrate the critical role of higher education in fostering effective, ethical, and community-focused policing.



Of note, departments that are interested in hiring candidates with higher levels of education will have to start hiring more women, as they outpace men in educational attainment across every major racial and ethnic group. In 1995, men and women were equally likely to graduate from college.<sup>54</sup> Since then, women have outpaced men, with 47 percent of U.S. women ages 25 to 34 earning a bachelor's degree, compared to only 37 percent of men.<sup>55</sup> Despite being more likely to have reached higher levels of education, women are still underrepresented in policing, occupying only 13.1 percent of law enforcement jobs.<sup>56</sup> Even with outreach efforts like the 30x30 Initiative, this figure is lower than it was in 1999, when women made up 14.3 of the force.<sup>57</sup> This is worth rectifying, as college-educated women are significantly less likely than male peers to use excessive force, racially profile suspects, or be named in a lawsuit.<sup>58</sup> Female officers also tend to be better at de-escalation and can serve as role models for girls who may consider joining the force themselves one day. Targeted online recruitment campaigns emphasizing fitness have been shown to appeal to women, and specialized programs like Denver's diversity recruitment advisory board are ways to foster an inclusive organizational culture.<sup>59</sup>



**Departments that are interested in hiring candidates with higher levels of education will have to start hiring more women, as they outpace men in educational attainment.**

50. David Weisburd and Anthony A. Braga, *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*, 2e (Cambridge University Press, October 2019).

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56. P.J. Verrecchia, "Learning from the Perceptions of Women in Policing," *Police Chief*, March 2024. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/learning-perceptions-women-in-policing>.

57. Ibid.

58. Kim Lonsway et al., "Hiring and Retaining More Women: The Advantages to Law Enforcement Agencies," National Center for Women & Policing, Spring 2003, p. 4. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/hiring-and-retaining-more-women-the-advantage-to-law-enforcement-agencies>.

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## Keeping the Good Ones

Across the country, officers are leaving the force early, abandoning their pensions to seek new opportunities.<sup>60</sup> Between 2020 and 2023, law enforcement resignation and retirement rates increased by 47 percent and 19 percent, respectively.<sup>61</sup> Even though salary is not the primary consideration for most people when initially choosing a career, it is the single most frequently cited reason for resigning, making pay more important to employee retention than recruitment.<sup>62</sup> Salary typically becomes an issue if: (1) it is not competitive and (2) the employee is unhappy. In general, people who dislike their jobs or who are struggling to pay bills will switch jobs for a 5 percent pay raise, or even less, whereas satisfied employees generally require at least a 20 percent pay increase before they consider resigning.<sup>63</sup> For many, a job they love is worth even more.

## Retention > Recruitment

While most large agencies have a division specifically dedicated to recruiting, few have a division specifically dedicated to retention. The discourse on recruitment tends to overshadow retention, but from a first-principles perspective, this focus should be reversed because high turnover is even more concerning than dwindling recruitment. Generally speaking, it is far better to keep good employees than to hire new ones because training a replacement requires major investments of time and money.<sup>64</sup> Estimates vary, but with expenses related to academy tuition, equipment, and on-the-job training, it costs approximately \$20,000 to \$100,000 to train a single police officer.<sup>65</sup> In the United States, officers spend about 833 hours, or 21 weeks total, in training, which is a substantial investment, especially for smaller departments.<sup>66</sup> These upfront costs are the primary reason that replacing an officer with three years' experience costs more than twice their annual salary (Table 1).<sup>67</sup>

## ↑ HIGH COST OF LOW STANDARDS ↓

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It is far better to keep good employees than to hire new ones because training a replacement requires major investments of time and money.

**Table 1: Turnover Costs**

Category	Costs (FTE = full-time employees)
Recruitment	Advertising, recruiter FTEs, bonuses
Selection	Medical tests, review-board FTEs, investigator FTEs, medical, psychological exam, drug screening
New employee	Payroll, information technology, new uniforms and equipment
Training	Academy, orientation, trainer FTEs, in-service training

60. Dean Balsamini, "Nearly 2,000 NYPD cops quitting before getting full pensions — a 71% jump from 2021," *New York Post*, Aug. 6, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/08/06/thousands-of-nypd-cops-quitting-before-getting-their-pensions>.

61. "New PERF survey shows police agencies are losing officers faster than they can hire new ones." <https://www.policeforum.org/staffing2023>.

62. W. Dwayne Orrick, "Best Practices Guide: Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Law Enforcement Personnel," International Association of Chiefs of Police, August 2018. <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/BP-RecruitmentRetentionandTurnover.pdf>.

63. Leigh Branham, *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave: How to Recognize the Subtle Signs and Act Before it's Too Late* (American Management Association, 2005).

64. Jeremy M. Wilson et al., "Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium," RAND Corporation, 2010. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG959.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG959.pdf).

65. Brett Meade, "Recruiting, Selecting, and Retaining Law Enforcement Officers," National Policing Institute, March 16, 2016. <https://www.policinginstitute.org/onpolicing/recruiting-selecting-and-retaining-law-enforcement-officers>.

66. Emily D. Buehler, "State and Local Law Enforcement Training Academics, 2018 – Statistical Tables," Office of Justice Programs, July 2021. <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/state-and-local-law-enforcement-training-academics-2018-statistical-tables>.

67. W. Dwayne Orrick, "Calculating the Cost of Police Turnover," *Police Chief* 69:10 (October 2002), pp. 100-103. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/calculating-cost-police-turnover>.

Category	Costs (FTE = full-time employees)
Operating	Overtime to cover vacancies, loss of productivity, increased further turnover, peer disruption, disruption of department operations, lower morale, missed deadlines
Intangible	Loss of knowledge and experience, disruption or loss of community relationships, lower morale

Additionally, the most effective agencies realize that retention begins before an officer is even selected. The goal should be to maximize the forces pulling employees into an organization while minimizing the forces pushing them out. While the city of Austin's decision to offer a \$15,000 signing bonus will no doubt bring in fresh cadets, those funds could be even more effectively deployed in the form of retention bonuses.<sup>68</sup> In fact, sustained improvement in turnover can alleviate the need for expensive and time-consuming recruitment campaigns altogether.<sup>69</sup> Some proposals opt for the stick rather than the carrot. For example, proposed legislation in Indiana would allow governments to seek "reasonable reimbursement" from police officers for sunk costs related to training and equipment if they leave to work for "a nonpublic employer" within three years of being hired.<sup>70</sup> The legislation would even allow agencies to seek reimbursement from other "units of government" that lure officers away from police departments after training.<sup>71</sup>

## Pension Tension

Compensation is not just about money. As people age, their priorities change, as do the benefits they value.<sup>72</sup> Once considered the gold standard of retirement, public pensions have been drastically scaled back since the 1990s, making them less of a draw than they once were.<sup>73</sup> Still, even less-generous pensions can be a powerful incentive to stay once someone is on the force, especially for veteran officers.<sup>74</sup> Until recently, federal law unfairly penalized law-enforcement retirees by offsetting Social Security, spousal, or survivor benefits based on their government pension income. On Jan. 5, 2025, however, President Joe Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act, repealing these provisions and ensuring that law enforcement officers receive all the retirement benefits they have earned.<sup>75</sup> In addition, some states are allowing veteran officers to defer retirement, signaling a respect for their experience and years of service and providing an incentive to stay on the job. When Arizona began letting officers defer retirement several years ago, 58

## HIGH COST OF LOW STANDARDS

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68. Stephanie Becerra, "City of Austin announces incentive pay plan for APD officers, including 4% raise," CBS Austin, March 2, 2023. <https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/city-of-austin-announces-incentive-pay-plan-for-apd-officers-including-4-raise>.

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70. Jim Lucas, House Bill 1549: State payment of municipal police training, Indiana General Assembly, 2025. <https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2025/bills/house/1549/details>.

71. Ibid.

72. Orrick, "Best Practices Guide: Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Law Enforcement Personnel." <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/BP-RecruitmentRetentionandTurnover.pdf>.

73. "State and Local Government Pensions," Urban Institute, last accessed Feb. 10, 2025. <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-and-local-backgrounders/state-and-local-government-pensions>.

74. Paul Baugher et al., "The Role of Defined Benefit Pensions in Recruiting and Retaining Public Safety Professionals," National Institute on Retirement Security, June 2024. [https://www.nirsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NIRS-24-PolFire-DefBen-Pension-Plans\\_Final-7.10.24.pdf](https://www.nirsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NIRS-24-PolFire-DefBen-Pension-Plans_Final-7.10.24.pdf).

75. Drew Friedman, "Biden signs Social Security Fairness Act into law," Federal News Network, Jan. 5, 2025. <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/retirement/2025/01/biden-signs-social-security-fairness-act-into-law>.

percent of qualified officers took the extension, massively reducing attrition.<sup>76</sup> Wyoming now permits retirees to return to work after a one-month break without losing their pension, enabling them to work part-time while still collecting their retirement benefits—a crucial advantage for rural agencies facing acute workforce challenges. (For more pending state legislation, see [Appendix 2](#).)

## Great Expectations

Most officers who quit do so within the first three years of hire.<sup>77</sup> The fact that so many young officers come into the field, experience the job, and leave almost immediately indicates that many departments are not properly managing expectations. When hiring, police agencies too often focus exclusively on the positive or exciting aspects of law enforcement even though the reality is less glamorous than what the public sees on crime dramas like *Law and Order*. A fully transparent hiring process can help dispel romanticized misconceptions, accurately calibrate expectations, and ensure that officers and their families understand the good and challenging aspects of the job. These conversations are not easy, particularly for departments desperate to attract talent, as they require honest and upfront discussions on sensitive topics that do not come up in normal job interviews. Some departments have found that conveying the realities of policing is not always possible from behind a desk and require applicants to complete a series of ride-alongs before making an employment offer.<sup>78</sup> The International Association of Chiefs of Police's (IACP's) "Discover Policing" program is also helpful, as it offers a series of realistic job preview videos that can be used in recruitment to help agencies weed out unserious or unprepared recruits.<sup>79</sup>

## Upward Mobility

Like any professional, officers are seeking more than a job—they want a career. Opportunities for career development are strongly correlated with retention throughout the labor market, and police officers are no exception.<sup>80</sup> Workers who fail to achieve their career objectives are more likely to become frustrated and look for a new job. In addition, when officers do not receive sufficient training, they make more mistakes and have higher use-of-force rates, leading to lawsuits, negative press, and poor organizational performance.<sup>81</sup>

The dynamic, evolving nature of policing makes ongoing training key for officer readiness, but it can also serve as an incentive to stay. Specialized career tracks in areas like cybersecurity, forensic analysis, and crisis negotiation can align officers' professional development with personal

[\[View Appendix 2\]](#)

### ↑ HIGH COST OF LOW STANDARDS ↓

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76. Val Van Brocklin, "How one department moved the needle on police recruitment and retention," *Police1*, March 18, 2024. <https://www.police1.com/what-cops-want/how-one-department-moved-the-needle-on-police-recruitment-and-retention>; "Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP)," *Public Safety Personnel*, last accessed Feb. 10, 2025. <https://www.psprs.com/public-safety-personnel/member/deferred-retirement-option-plan-drop>.

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*

80. Richard Odin Segovia, "Overcoming Recruitment and Retention Challenges in Law Enforcement: A Systematic Review," *Liberty University*, June 2024, pp. 1-43. [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=educ\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=educ_fac_pubs).

81. Seacrest and Snider. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/measured-force-the-benefits-of-police-data-transparency>.



competencies and interests. Agencies that fail to provide such development opportunities fundamentally misunderstand what draws people to public service and will continue losing personnel. Last year, an IACP survey found that 65 percent of U.S. agencies reported reducing services or specialized units, prioritizing essential patrol functions only.<sup>82</sup> This is clearly problematic from a service perspective, but it is also counterproductive from a recruitment and retention perspective. Proactively offering employees more responsibility and pathways for advancement communicates their value and can foster creativity. For those with leadership potential, the IACP offers a training program to prepare young officers for supervisory and management roles.<sup>83</sup>

## EdCOPS Act of 2024

Pending federal legislation like the EdCOPS Act of 2024 proposes providing public safety officers—and their families—with federal educational assistance. The bill would provide law officers up to 45 months of financial support for education and would even allow the funds to be passed on to their spouse or children. Initiatives like this demonstrate a commitment to professional development and provide the public with more professional policing. (For more federal legislation, see [Appendix 1](#).)



[\[View Appendix 1\]](#)

Millennial employees are the group most likely to cite limited career prospects as a reason for leaving their current position.<sup>84</sup> This can be a problem in traditional law enforcement hierarchies, where the only way to move up is to assume a management position. Unfortunately, in many smaller agencies, leadership vacancies only become available when someone retires or dies. Additionally, the system leaves little room for officers who may have no interest or capacity for management but are nonetheless an invaluable asset to the department. Many departments are developing alternative opportunities, such as dual-track promotion structures that cater to individuals who want to rise through the ranks, advance their careers, and—crucially—earn more, without becoming supervisors as was once required.

## The Feedback Loop

Feedback is the easiest, least expensive way to incentivize exceptional performance. When individuals do not receive recognition for their work, they are less inclined to continue working hard and have no way of knowing whether they are on the right track or not. Even negative feedback, if offered constructively, is valuable for employees who are eager to improve. For feedback to be meaningful, it must be timely, specific, behavioral, and job-related. A hockey coach does not wait until the end of the season to correct a player's performance; they pull the player to the side, explain the play, and get their head back in the game. By quickly reinforcing good behavior and

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82. Ibid.

83. "Leadership in Police Organizations," International Association of Chiefs of Police, last accessed Jan. 14, 2025. <https://www.theiacp.org/LPO>.

84. Ibid, p. 12.

addressing bad behavior before it becomes a persistent problem, supervisors can help officers operate at peak performance, build their self-confidence, and integrate into the department. Supervisors who fail to provide appropriate feedback allow poor work habits to form, resulting in citizen complaints, human resource problems, or worse.

## Wellness Check

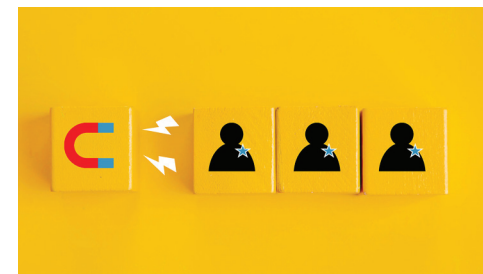
Policing can take an emotional and physical toll, leading to injuries and medical retirements. Overworked officers have also been shown to make suboptimal decisions and be susceptible to burnout.<sup>85</sup> Tragically, the suicide rate for police officers is 54 percent higher than that of the civilian population.<sup>86</sup> Although many police agencies have specialized peer volunteers who spring into action after a critical incident, most of what officers do during a typical day, while stressful, falls outside of the scope of critical care. Agencies should not wait for something traumatic to happen to offer their officers helpful resources. Employee wellness programs can help bridge that gap.<sup>87</sup> One example is the Sheriff's Office in Sedgwick County, Kansas, which provides fitness equipment, gym memberships, and even catered food.<sup>88</sup> And not only does this benefit officers' health, but limited research also indicates that officers who maintain healthy physical fitness levels are significantly less likely to use lethal force.<sup>89</sup>

## ↑ HIGH COST OF LOW STANDARDS ↓

Tragically, the suicide rate for police officers is 54 percent higher than that of the civilian population. Agencies should not wait for something traumatic to happen to offer their officers helpful resources.

## Key Recommendations

Addressing the recruitment and retention crisis in law enforcement requires a fundamental shift in how agencies attract, develop, and support their workforce. Agencies must implement forward-thinking strategies to ensure sustainability, professionalism, and effectiveness. The recommendations that follow provide evidence-based, practical solutions to enhance workplace conditions, modernize recruitment, optimize staffing, and foster long-term retention. These approaches have the potential to improve officer satisfaction and agency effectiveness as well as strengthen public trust and community relationships. Agencies that have implemented some of these initiatives are seeing measurable improvements in recruitment numbers, job satisfaction, and overall workforce stability, signaling a positive path forward for policing's future.<sup>90</sup>



Agencies must implement forward-thinking strategies to ensure sustainability, professionalism, and effectiveness.

85. Dean Balsamini, "NYPD exodus: Police on pace to quit, retire in record numbers," *New York Post*, June 11, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/06/11/nypd-cops-on-pace-to-quit-retire-in-record-numbers>; Colin Tiernan, "Applicants scarce for open law enforcement positions," *The Spokesman-Review*, April 24, 2021. <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2021/apr/24/officers-down-applicants-scarce-for-open-law-enfor>; and Steve Lynk, "Understanding and combating officer burnout," *American Police Beat*, Sept. 19, 2021. <https://apbweb.com/2021/09/understanding-and-combating-officer-burnout>.

86. John M. Violanti and Andrea Steege, "Law enforcement worker suicide: an updated national assessment," *Policing* 44:1 (Oct. 21, 2020), pp. 18-31. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8056254>.

87. Alicia Romero, "Elevating Officer Wellness through Family Support," *Police Chief*, May 2024. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine-issues/may-2024-officer-safety-wellness>.

88. Joshua Lee, "Case studies: How two law enforcement agencies built effective officer wellness teams," *Police1*, Feb. 21, 2023. <https://www.police1.com/smash-the-stigma/articles/case-studies-how-two-law-enforcement-agencies-built-effective-officer-wellness-teams-TaN2hkbDdo0pyUNC>.

89. Quinones. <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FCJEI/Programs/SLP/Documents/Full-Text/Quinones-Sonia-RESEARCH-PAPER.aspx>.

90. Brocklin. <https://www.police1.com/what-cops-want/how-one-department-moved-the-needle-on-police-recruitment-and-retention>.

## • Enhance Workplace Conditions

- Promote work-life balance, autonomy, and leadership support to boost job satisfaction
- Foster a culture of safety and resilience with wellness programs and peer-support networks
- Implement job-enrichment and -rotation strategies to engage officers and train them in useful skills
- Equip officers with reliable, modern tools and technology to demonstrate a commitment to their safety and effectiveness



## • Improve Compensation and Benefits

- Offer competitive salaries that reflect the risks of policing, and implement sliding-scale compensation based on officer priorities
- Provide incentives like signing bonuses, tuition reimbursement, and housing assistance
- Encourage community residency with reduced taxes, lower utility bills, or take-home vehicles



## • Optimize Staffing and Workloads

- Conduct a staffing analysis to align workforce size with community needs
- Restructure job roles and schedules to offer more flexible shifts
- Employ civilians for administrative tasks to free officers for critical roles
- Offer interim roles during background checks and academy training



## • Modernize Recruitment Practices

- Create interactive websites that tell a story using audio and video
- Streamline hiring with rolling academies and digital processes
- Implement an employee-referral system to involve the entire department in recruitment
- Require ride-alongs for applicants to ensure that they have a realistic understanding of the job before they are hired



## • Foster Professional Growth and Retention

- Conduct “stay” interviews to identify and address workplace dynamics and retain high-performing officers
- Offer structured career-development programs, leadership training, and long-term-growth opportunities
- Implement dual-track promotion structures to offer career advancement for non-supervisory roles
- Incentivize continued service with employment bonuses tied to length of service



## • Expand Recruitment Pools

- Relax outdated policies on tattoos, past drug use, and minor offenses to align with changing societal norms
- Partner with colleges, especially in criminal justice and STEM departments, to create streamlined pathways into policing
- Appoint recruitment liaisons for targeted outreach, mentorship, and community partnerships



- **Leverage Evidence-Based Policing**

- Advocate for a “more police, fewer prisons” approach, emphasizing crime deterrence over incarceration
- Highlight the visible deterrent effect of community policing to reduce crime proactively

- **Secure Federal and State Support**

- Increase Department of Justice grant funding for recruitment and hiring initiatives
- Advocate for sustained state investments in long-term recruitment pipelines



The implementation of these recommendations offers law enforcement agencies a sustainable path forward in addressing staffing shortages and improving workforce morale. Agencies that have embraced some of these strategies are already experiencing higher recruitment rates, lower attrition, and a more engaged and professionally fulfilled police force.<sup>91</sup> By rethinking traditional hiring models, investing in officer development, and fostering a supportive work environment, policing can adapt to modern workforce expectations while maintaining high professional standards. Moving forward, continued evaluation and adaptation of these approaches will be critical to ensuring that law enforcement agencies remain competitive employers capable of attracting and retaining the next generation of skilled and dedicated officers.

## Conclusion

Police officers are leaving the force to pursue safer, more lucrative, and less scrutinized careers, taking invaluable expertise and institutional knowledge with them.<sup>92</sup> The IACP has declared the crisis “the most urgent challenge facing law enforcement today,” with far-reaching implications for public safety, community trust, and the sustainability of policing as a profession.<sup>93</sup> In the business world, understaffing might lead to less profit, falling stock prices, or unfinished products. In law enforcement, the consequences are much more serious. From unsolved cases to slower response times, the operational impact goes beyond public safety, reinforcing the perception of a profession in crisis. Ultimately, the future of law enforcement depends on its ability to adapt to evolving societal expectations and labor-market dynamics. Agencies that fail to do so will continue to shrink, while those that succeed will rebuild their ranks with dedicated public servants, laying the foundation for a more sustainable, professional, community-oriented model of policing.



Police officers are leaving the force to pursue safer, more lucrative, and less scrutinized careers, taking invaluable expertise and institutional knowledge with them. The IACP has declared the crisis “the most urgent challenge facing law enforcement today,” with far-reaching implications.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Logan Seacrest** is a resident fellow for the R Street Institute's Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties team. He produces research and analysis on the criminal justice system with a focus on juvenile justice.

**Jillian E. Snider** is the policy director for the R Street Institute's Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties team and a retired New York City police officer. She produces research and commentary on public policy related to all stages of the criminal justice system: policing, pretrial and prosecution, incarceration, sentencing, juvenile justice, and reentry.

91. Ashley French et al., “Improving Recruitment,” Police Chief Online, May 3, 2023. <https://www.policchiefmagazine.org/improving-recruitment>.

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## Appendix 1: Federal Recruitment and Retention Legislation

Bill	Number	Year	Introducers	Summary	Status	URL
<b>Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act</b>	HR 1322	2023	Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ)	Expands the definition of a law enforcement officer under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). It includes federal employees involved in criminal investigations or apprehensions, IRS employees collecting delinquent taxes, U.S. Postal Inspection Service employees, VA police officers, and certain Customs and Border Protection specialists. The bill ensures that service performed by these employees after its enactment counts as law enforcement service for retirement purposes. Past service can also be credited if employees submit a written election within five years or before leaving government service. Those who elect before enactment may pay a deposit to cover prior service.	Referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1322">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1322</a>
<b>LEO Fair Retirement Act of 2023</b>	HR 1323	2023	Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ)	This bill changes how retirement benefits and premium pay are calculated for federal law enforcement officers (LEOs). It allows LEOs to include premium pay exceeding current limits in their retirement calculations if they make a lump-sum payment to the Office of Personnel Management. To offset this cost, the bill provides a nonrefundable tax credit for those payments. Additionally, it extends eligibility for availability pay—premium pay for criminal investigators—to postal inspectors, federal air marshals, and other specified personnel.	Introduced in the House; awaiting action	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1323">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1323</a>
<b>Invest to Protect Act of 2023</b>	HR 3184	2024	Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ)	Allocates \$250 million to support small law enforcement agencies in training, mental health support, and recruitment and retention efforts.	Passed in the Senate unanimously; referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3184/text">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3184/text</a>



Bill	Number	Year	Introducers	Summary	Status	URL
<b>Enhancing COPS Hiring Program Grants for Local Law Enforcement Act</b>	HR 3376	2023	Rep. Max Miller (R-OH); Rep. Greg Landsman (D-OH)	Expands the COPS Hiring Program to allow local law enforcement agencies to utilize grants for recruitment and retention bonuses and extends grant-application validity to five years.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3376/text">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3376/text</a>
<b>Law Enforcement Training for Mental Health Crisis Response Act of 2023</b>	HR 3501	2023	Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)	Creates a grant program for law enforcement agencies and corrections agencies to obtain behavioral health crisis response training for law enforcement officers and corrections officers and to fulfill other purposes.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3501">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3501</a>
<b>HERO Act</b>	HR 3671	2023	Rep. Ami Bera (D-CA)	To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to improve the detection, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues among public safety officers and to fulfill other purposes.	Referred to the Subcommittee on Health	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3671/text">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3671/text</a>
<b>Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022</b>	HR 6943	2022	Rep. David Trone (D-MD)	This act expands the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program to cover death and disability benefits for public safety officers and their survivors affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), acute stress disorder, or trauma-related disorders from duty-related traumatic events. It defines these disorders as personal injuries in the line of duty if a traumatic event was a substantial factor. The act presumes an officer's death or disability was duty-related if the officer took an action to end their life within 45 days of a traumatic event and had a related psychiatric disorder. It ensures that such cases qualify for PSOB benefits unless proven otherwise. Additionally, the Government Accountability Office must report on benefits issued under the act and suggest program improvements.	Signed into law on Aug. 16, 2022	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6943">https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6943</a>

Bill	Number	Year	Introducers	Summary	Status	URL
<b>COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act of 2024</b>	HR 6973	2024	Rep. Nick LaLota (R-NY)	To permit COPS grants to be used for the purpose of increasing the compensation and hiring of law enforcement officers and to fulfill other purposes.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6973">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6973</a>
<b>Police Training and Independent Review Act of 2024</b>	HR 9246	2024	Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN)	Provide for grants for states that require sensitivity training for law enforcement officers of that state and to incentivize states to enact laws requiring the independent investigation and prosecution of the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9246">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9246</a>
<b>Public Safety Retirees Healthcare Protection Act of 2023</b>	HR 957	2023	Rep. Abigail Davis Spanberger (D-VA)	This bill amends the Internal Revenue Code to increase from \$3,000 to \$6,000 the amount excludible from the gross income of public safety officers for distributions from governmental retirement plans for health and long-term-care insurance. Provides greater financial security in retirement for public safety officers and advocates for federal-assistance grants to support recruitment initiatives.	Referred to the Subcommittee on Health	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/957">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/957</a>
<b>Supporting the Health and Safety of Law Enforcement Act of 2023</b>	HR 4911	2023	Rep. Josh Harder (D-CA)	Establishes a three-year pilot program through the Department of Justice to provide grant funding up to \$300,000 over three years to facilitate closer coordination between community mental health centers and law enforcement.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/4911/text">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/4911/text</a>
<b>Pathways to Policing Act</b>	HR 9576	2024	Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN)	Authorizes a grant program to encourage the recruitment of law enforcement. Half of the grant funds can be used for marketing for recruitment campaigns and the other half is to be used for develop, operate, or expand Pathways to Policing programs.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9576">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9576</a>

Bill	Number	Year	Introducers	Summary	Status	URL
<b>Police CAMERA Act of 2024</b>	HR 9620	2024	Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN)	Establishes a \$30 million grant program aimed at assisting state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in acquiring body-worn cameras and managing the associated data. The funds can be used for purchasing or leasing body-worn cameras, training officers, and ensuring secure data storage and maintenance. Additionally, the bill calls for the creation of a toolkit to provide training and technical assistance to law enforcement agencies and a study on the efficacy and impact of body-worn cameras.	Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9620/text">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9620/text</a>
<b>COPS on the Beat Grant Program Parity Act of 2023</b>	S 1530	2023	Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)	To permit COPS grants to be used for the purpose of increasing the compensation and hiring of law enforcement officers, and to fulfill other purposes.	Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar Under General Orders	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1530/cosponsors">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1530/cosponsors</a>
<b>EdCOPS Act of 2024</b>	S 4450	2024	Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ); Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO)	Provides up to 45 months of education benefits for public safety officers and their families, with transferable benefits and performance-based aid retention.	Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/4450/text">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/4450/text</a>
<b>Recruit and Retain Act</b>	S 546	2023	Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE); Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE)	This act expands the COPS grant program to cover onboarding costs and promote school partnerships to create a stronger pipeline for law enforcement careers. Allows funds to be used for reducing application-related fees (e.g., fees for background checks, psychological evaluations, and testing) and directing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to award competitive grants to partnerships between law enforcement agencies and educational institutions for recruiting activities, such as for career and job fairs. The act requires the DOJ to establish guidance for understaffed law enforcement agencies applying for COPS grants. The Government Accountability Office must study and report on the effects of recruitment and attrition rates on federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies.	Signed into law on May 24, 2024	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/546">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/546</a>

## Appendix 2: Notable State Recruitment and Retention Legislation

State	Bill Number	Year	Summary	Citation URL
Alabama	HB 188	2025	Would establish the Alabama Law Enforcement Officers' Family Scholarship Program. The scholarship is designed to boost law enforcement recruitment and retention by providing financial assistance for college tuition and associated expenses to eligible dependents of long-serving law enforcement officers.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/AL/bill/HB188/2025">https://legiscan.com/AL/bill/HB188/2025</a>
Alaska	SB 28	2025	Would implement various reforms to the public employees' and teachers' retirement systems.	<a href="https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/34?Root=SB%2028#tab2_4">https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/34?Root=SB%2028#tab2_4</a>
Arizona	HB 2862	2022	Appropriated funds for \$10,000 one-time bonuses to law enforcement officers as part of the state budget.	<a href="https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/55leg/2R/summary/H.HB2862_062422_TRANSMITTED.DOCX.htm">https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/55leg/2R/summary/H.HB2862_062422_TRANSMITTED.DOCX.htm</a>
Arkansas	N/A	2025	Raises salaries and allows special bonuses in roles with chronic shortages, including corrections and state law enforcement. The plan increases pay ranges by 10% across the board and permits recruitment and retention bonuses for hard-to-fill public-safety jobs.	<a href="https://senate.arkansas.gov/senate-news/posts/2024/november/governor-unveils-new-pay-plan-for-state-employees/">https://senate.arkansas.gov/senate-news/posts/2024/november/governor-unveils-new-pay-plan-for-state-employees/</a>
California	SB 960	2022	Removed U.S. citizenship requirement for peace officers, allowing any legally authorized immigrant to become an officer.	<a href="https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB960">https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB960</a>
Colorado	HB 1143	2023	Authorized law enforcement agencies to seek federal approval for DACA recipients to carry firearms as peace officers, removing a barrier to hiring non-citizens.	<a href="https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1143">https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1143</a>
Connecticut	SB 421	2024	Proposed comprehensive measures to enhance police recruiting and retention, including incentives and pipeline programs.	<a href="https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/CGABillStatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&amp;bill_num=SB00421&amp;which_year=2024">https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/CGABillStatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&amp;bill_num=SB00421&amp;which_year=2024</a>
Delaware	HB 39	2023	Established a \$20M grant program to recruit new officers, promote careers in law enforcement, pay the salaries of newly hired officers, pay for overtime to help address issues of local concern, and implement programs designed to improve public safety.	<a href="https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?legislationId=129906">https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?legislationId=129906</a>
Florida	HB 3	2022	Created the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Program to provide up to \$5,000 signing bonuses for newly hired officers. Also included other incentives (e.g., out-of-state relocation support).	<a href="https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/billsummaries/2022/html/2845">https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/billsummaries/2022/html/2845</a>

State	Bill Number	Year	Summary	Citation URL
Georgia	HB 130	2023	Provided for student loan repayment for law enforcement officers.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/GA/bill/HB130/2023">https://legiscan.com/GA/bill/HB130/2023</a>
Hawaii	SB 3313	2024	Appropriates funds to increase the salary schedules of deputy sheriffs within the Department of Law Enforcement.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/HI/text/SB3313/id/2901975">https://legiscan.com/HI/text/SB3313/id/2901975</a>
Idaho	SB 1435	2024	Appropriates \$111,138,200 and 658 full-time positions to the Idaho State Police for fiscal year 2025.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/ID/bill/S1435/2024">https://legiscan.com/ID/bill/S1435/2024</a>
Illinois	HB 3863	2022	Established the Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention Fund to grant money to local agencies for hiring and retaining officers.	<a href="https://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/102/PDF/102-0755.pdf">https://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/102/PDF/102-0755.pdf</a>
Illinois	HB 3751	2023	Allowed non-U.S. citizens (with federal work authorization and who can legally carry firearms) to serve as police officers to expand the recruitment pool.	<a href="https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=3751&amp;GAID=17&amp;GA=103&amp;DocTypeID=HB&amp;LegID=149009&amp;SessionID=112">https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=3751&amp;GAID=17&amp;GA=103&amp;DocTypeID=HB&amp;LegID=149009&amp;SessionID=112</a>
Indiana	SB 406	2025	Increases the police officers' and firefighters' pension and disability fund's maximum annual cost of living adjustment from 3% to 5%.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/IN/bill/SB0406/2025">https://legiscan.com/IN/bill/SB0406/2025</a>
Iowa	HF 2680	2024	Updates disability compensation rules to include disabilities caused by long-term physical stress and mental health conditions; changes the state's pension program for professional police and firefighters.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/IA/bill/HF2680/2023">https://legiscan.com/IA/bill/HF2680/2023</a>
Kansas	HB 2237	2022	Authorized hiring, recruitment, and retention bonuses in state agencies' employee award and recognition program, increasing the limits of such awards or bonuses to \$10,000, eliminating the secretary of administration's authority to adopt rules and regulations, and requiring such secretary to submit an annual report to certain legislative committees concerning such awards and bonuses.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/KS/bill/HB2237/2025">https://legiscan.com/KS/bill/HB2237/2025</a>
Kentucky	HB 259	2022	Provided a \$15,000 annual salary increase for Kentucky State Police troopers to improve recruitment and retention. Also increased the training stipend for local officers by \$600.	<a href="https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&amp;prid=1898">https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&amp;prid=1898</a>
Louisiana	HB 290	2023	Established a Law Enforcement Recruitment Incentive Program, including a one-time \$5,000 bonus for newly certified officers.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/LA/text/HB290/id/2762562">https://legiscan.com/LA/text/HB290/id/2762562</a>



State	Bill Number	Year	Summary	Citation URL
Maine	LD 2094	2024	Establishes a 17-member task force to examine and recommend improvements to law enforcement recruitment, retention, and officer wellness in Maine.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/ME/bill/LD2094/2023">https://legiscan.com/ME/bill/LD2094/2023</a>
Maryland	HB 670	2021	Created the Maryland Police Officers Scholarship Program to provide tuition assistance for students who commit to law enforcement careers in Maryland, as a recruitment incentive.	<a href="https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/Chapters_noln/CH_59_hb0670e.pdf">https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/Chapters_noln/CH_59_hb0670e.pdf</a>
Massachusetts	S 1593	2024	Creates a permanent commission on police recruitment, hiring, and retention (covering municipal, police, and fire) and gives departments more flexibility outside the traditional Civil Service exam system. These changes aim to streamline hiring and offer alternative pathways to becoming an officer, helping departments fill vacancies.	<a href="https://www.mass.gov/economic-development-bill">https://www.mass.gov/economic-development-bill</a>
Michigan	HB 4176 / SB 32	2023	Allowed a city or county to recoup police academy training costs from an officer who leaves for another agency within 4 years. Deters larger agencies from poaching officers trained by smaller ones, aiding in retention.	<a href="https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2023-HB-4176">https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2023-HB-4176</a> <a href="https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2023-SB-0032">https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2023-SB-0032</a>
Minnesota	HF 1000 (Omnibus Public Safety)	2023	Removed the citizenship requirement for Minnesota POST peace officer licensing, allowing non-citizens with work authorization to become officers (implemented via the 2023 public safety omnibus act).	<a href="https://mn.gov/post/assets/Advisory%20Committee%20Meeting%20Agenda%20and%20Materials%20on%203-8-2022_tcm1189-567238.pdf">https://mn.gov/post/assets/Advisory%20Committee%20Meeting%20Agenda%20and%20Materials%20on%203-8-2022_tcm1189-567238.pdf</a>
Mississippi	HB 745	2024	Proposed the Supplemental Salary Pay for Law Enforcement Act to give certified officers an extra \$600 per month after one year of service. Aimed to curb officers leaving for higher pay elsewhere.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/MS/text/HB745/id/2905338">https://legiscan.com/MS/text/HB745/id/2905338</a>
Missouri	SB 75	2022	Allowed retired police officers to be rehired by the same agency without losing retirement benefits (by entering a newer pension plan) to bolster staffing.	<a href="https://senate.mo.gov/23info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=r&amp;BillID=44690">https://senate.mo.gov/23info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=r&amp;BillID=44690</a>
Montana	SB 489	2023	Adjusted capital gains tax (part of broader funding mechanism) to fund grants for first responder (including law enforcement) recruitment and training.	<a href="https://archive.legmt.gov/bills/2023/billpdf/SB0489.pdf">https://archive.legmt.gov/bills/2023/billpdf/SB0489.pdf</a>
Nebraska	LB 1241	2022	Provided tiered retention bonuses for Nebraska officers: e.g., \$1,500 after 1 year of service, \$2,500 after 3 years, \$3,000 after 5 years. Funded by a state program to incentivize longevity.	<a href="https://ncc.nebraska.gov/law-enforcement-retention-act">https://ncc.nebraska.gov/law-enforcement-retention-act</a>

State	Bill Number	Year	Summary	Citation URL
New Hampshire	SB 153	2023	Established a career development, recruitment, and retention program for police, firefighters, and EMTs, including state-funded bonuses and tuition assistance for those entering and remaining in those fields.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/NH/bill/SB153/2023">https://legiscan.com/NH/bill/SB153/2023</a>
New Jersey	S 247 / A 5689	2023	Would permit individuals with DACA status or other legal work authorization to become police or corrections officers, which is currently limited to U.S. citizens. Intended to widen the pool of qualified recruits.	<a href="https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/A5689">https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/A5689</a>
New Mexico	HB 86 & HB 68	2022	HB86 (Retention Fund) proposed 5% annual bonuses for officers. HB68 (Recruitment Fund) created a \$40M fund to help departments hire new officers. Portions funded via budget: e.g., \$57M in 2022 for local recruiting efforts.	<a href="https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=H&amp;legtype=B&amp;legno=86&amp;year=22">https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=H&amp;legtype=B&amp;legno=86&amp;year=22</a> <a href="https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=H&amp;legtype=B&amp;legno=68&amp;year=22">https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=H&amp;legtype=B&amp;legno=68&amp;year=22</a>
New York	S 6483A	2023	Would create a Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), allowing NY State Police to accumulate pension benefits while still working, as a retention incentive.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/NY/bill/S06483/2023">https://legiscan.com/NY/bill/S06483/2023</a>
North Carolina	HB 768	2023	Would allow certain law enforcement members of the Local Government Employee's Retirement System and the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System to continue working while still drawing retirement benefits.	<a href="https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2023/H0768">https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2023/H0768</a>
North Dakota	"Back the Blue" bill package	2023	Appropriated \$3.5M to create a grant program for local law enforcement agencies to offer hiring and retention bonuses for officers. Aimed at addressing workforce shortages statewide.	<a href="https://www.nd.gov/news/burgum-signs-back-blue-bills-workforce-grants-enhanced-retirement-benefits-peace-officers">https://www.nd.gov/news/burgum-signs-back-blue-bills-workforce-grants-enhanced-retirement-benefits-peace-officers</a>
Ohio	HB 84	2023	Would lower the minimum age for police officers from 21 to 18 under certain conditions to expand the recruitment pool.	<a href="https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/hb84">https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/hb84</a>
Oklahoma	SB 58	2025	Would include a tuition waiver for those pursuing a college degree related to a career as a peace officer, firefighter, or emergency medical technician.	<a href="http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=sb58&amp;Session=2500">http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=sb58&amp;Session=2500</a>
Oregon	HB 2905	2025	Mandates that certified reserve officers must serve with a law enforcement agency for a minimum of three years following their certification. Failure to comply could result in the suspension or revocation of their certification, ensuring that officers remain committed to their roles and responsibilities.	<a href="https://trackbill.com/bill/oregon-house-bill-2905-relating-to-the-training-of-police-officers/2601131/">https://trackbill.com/bill/oregon-house-bill-2905-relating-to-the-training-of-police-officers/2601131/</a>
Pennsylvania	SB 1193	2022	Established a \$135M grant program (using ARPA funds) for municipal police; could be used for hiring and retention incentives, equipment, and training in underserved communities.	<a href="https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=2021&amp;sind=0&amp;body=S&amp;type=B&amp;bn=1193">https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=2021&amp;sind=0&amp;body=S&amp;type=B&amp;bn=1193</a>

State	Bill Number	Year	Summary	Citation URL
Rhode Island	S 0093	2025	Would allow police officers and firefighters to retire with 20 years of service upon reaching age 57 and changes the method of calculating “final compensation” from the current five consecutive years to the highest three consecutive years of a member’s compensation. The bill aims to provide more attractive retirement options for public safety workers while balancing the financial considerations of the retirement system.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/RI/bill/S0093/2025">https://legiscan.com/RI/bill/S0093/2025</a>
South Carolina	H 3437	2022	Provided exemptions to the earnings limitations for retired members of the South Carolina Retirement System and the South Carolina Police Officers Retirement System. Specifically, the bill stipulates that the earnings cap does not apply to retirees who have not engaged in compensated service for a participating employer in any capacity for at least 12 consecutive months following their retirement.	<a href="https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/bills/3437.htm">https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/bills/3437.htm</a>
South Dakota	Admin Rule	2023	Lowered the minimum age for new officers from 21 to 18.	<a href="https://rules.sd.gov/Uploads/790_PublicNotice.pdf">https://rules.sd.gov/Uploads/790_PublicNotice.pdf</a>
Tennessee	HB 1622	2022	Created a grant program for local agencies to fund recruitment bonuses and retention incentives for officers and to provide state supplements for training and education to improve retention.	<a href="https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/Billinfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1622&amp;ga=113&amp;utm_source">https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/Billinfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1622&amp;ga=113&amp;utm_source</a>
Texas	HB 1661	2023	Removed the previous age limit of 44 on new recruits, making room for individuals interested in joining law enforcement later in their careers.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/TX/bill/HB1661/2023">https://legiscan.com/TX/bill/HB1661/2023</a>
Utah	SB 102	2021	Permitted lawful permanent residents who have lived in the U.S. for at least five years (and have work authorization) to apply to become peace officers or dispatchers.	<a href="https://le.utah.gov/~2021/bills/static/SB0102.html">https://le.utah.gov/~2021/bills/static/SB0102.html</a>
Vermont	H 585	2024	Adjusted the state retirement plan for county sheriffs and deputies to improve their benefits and, notably, instituted a 30% cut in salary for any sheriff who is not a certified law enforcement officer.	<a href="https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.585">https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.585</a>
Virginia	HB 1800	2022	Increased budget for Virginia State Police troopers, deputy sheriffs, and corrections officers, which carried into 2023. Also provided a one-time \$5,000 bonus to sworn officers using federal ARPA funds in 2022.	<a href="https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/amendment/2021/2/HB1800/Introduced/CR/477/2c/">https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/amendment/2021/2/HB1800/Introduced/CR/477/2c/</a>

State	Bill Number	Year	Summary	Citation URL
Washington	HB 1638	2023	Established the State Trooper Expedited Recruitment Incentive Program within the Washington State Patrol to fill vacant trooper positions by offering accelerated hiring procedures and training for lateral hires from other law enforcement agencies as well as financial incentives like bonuses of \$5,000 to cadets upon completing the WSP Academy and an additional \$5,000 after a one-year probation period. Lateral hires receive \$7,500 after completing the accelerated training program and another \$7,500 following their probation period.	<a href="https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1638&amp;Year=2023">https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1638&amp;Year=2023</a>
Washington	SB 5060	2025	Would create a \$100M law enforcement hiring grant program to assist local and tribal law enforcement agencies in hiring new officers. The bill outlines the establishment of application policies, evaluation criteria, and reporting requirements for grant recipients.	<a href="https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=5060&amp;Year=2025&amp;Initiative=false">https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=5060&amp;Year=2025&amp;Initiative=false</a>
West Virginia	SB 712	2024	Proposed to lower the minimum State Police cadet age from 21 to 18.	<a href="https://legiscan.com/WV/bill/SB712/2024">https://legiscan.com/WV/bill/SB712/2024</a>
Wisconsin	AB 576	2023	Required the Wisconsin Department of Justice to establish and implement a program for peer-support teams and critical incident stress management teams for certain public safety personnel. This program aims to provide emotional and moral support and coping mechanisms for personnel and volunteers affected by stress or incidents.	<a href="https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/proposals/ab576">https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/proposals/ab576</a>
Wisconsin	AB 245	2023	Reformed the shared revenue program to increase state shared revenue to municipalities that meet specific conditions related to police staffing. Under this act, municipalities with populations greater than 20,000 are required to maintain law enforcement staffing levels equivalent to the previous year. Failure to meet this maintenance of effort can result in a 15% reduction in the municipality's shared revenue allocation. Municipalities have the discretion to use the increased shared revenue to support various public safety initiatives, which can include offering recruitment and retention incentives to law enforcement personnel. For example, the Milwaukee Police Department implemented a program offering \$10,000 bonuses to officers transferring from other departments to address staffing challenges.	<a href="https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/proposals/ab245">https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/proposals/ab245</a>
Wyoming	HB 0045	2023	Permitted a retired peace officer to return to work after a one-month break without losing their pension. In practice, this allows retired officers to work part time, or for a limited duration, while still collecting their retirement benefits.	<a href="https://wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2023/HB0045">https://wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2023/HB0045</a>