



Bureau of Justice Statistics

Executive Summary

October 1999, NCJ 178934

Local Police Departments, 1997

Personnel

- As of June 1997, local police departments had an estimated 531,496 full-time employees, including 420,000 sworn personnel. Local police employment was up by an average of about 3% per year since 1993, compared to about 1% per year from 1987 to 1993.

- Racial and ethnic minorities comprised 21.5% of full-time sworn officers in local police departments in 1997. This compared to 19.1% in 1993, 17.0% in 1990, and 14.6% in 1987.

- Nearly all officers worked for departments that used criminal record checks (99%), background investigations (98%), driving record checks (98%), and medical exams (97%) to screen applicants. Psychological (91%), aptitude (84%), and physical agility (78%) tests were also widely used.

- In 1997, 1% of departments required a 4-year degree of new officer recruits and 8% a 2-year degree. Overall, 14% of departments, employing 31% of all officers, required new recruits to have completed at least some college in 1997, up from 12% and 15% in 1993.

- Field and classroom training requirements for new officer recruits averaged more than 1,000 hours combined. About

7 in 8 departments required officers to complete in-service training, with an average annual requirement of 29 hours.

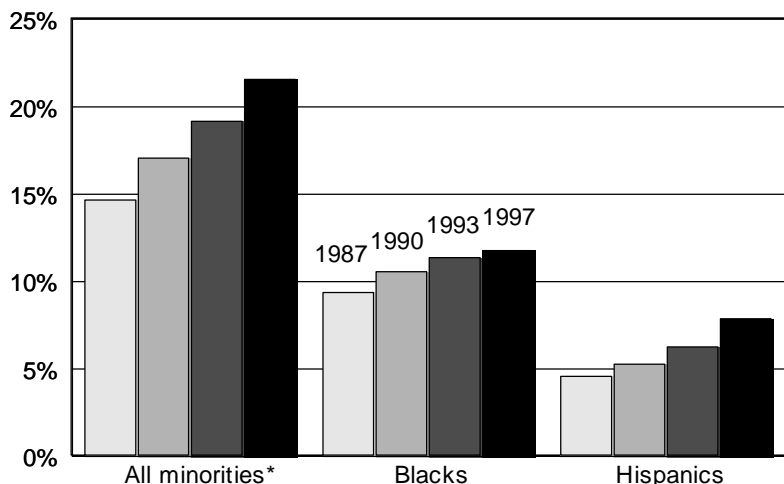
Expenditures and pay

- Local police departments had total operating expenditures of \$29.2 billion during fiscal 1997, 8% more than in 1993 after adjusting for inflation. Expenditures averaged \$67,100 per sworn officer, and \$150 per resident.

- Starting salaries for local police officers averaged about \$28,400, ranging from an average of \$18,800 in the smallest jurisdictions to \$30,600 in the largest.

Minority local police officers, 1987, 1990, 1993, and 1997

Percent of full-time sworn personnel



*Includes blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.

About two-thirds of all local police officers worked for a department that authorized collective bargaining.

Operations

- More than 99% of local police departments were responsible for responding to citizen calls for service, providing routine patrol services, and enforcing traffic laws. Ninety-one percent, including all but a few of those serving a population of 10,000 or more, were the primary investigating agency for crimes occurring in their jurisdiction.

- About 7 in 8 local police departments had primary drug enforcement responsibilities (88%). About a third had officers assigned full time to a drug enforcement unit, with 13,200 officers so assigned nationwide. About a third of departments had officers assigned to a multi-agency drug task force, with a total of 6,200 officers assigned full time nationwide.

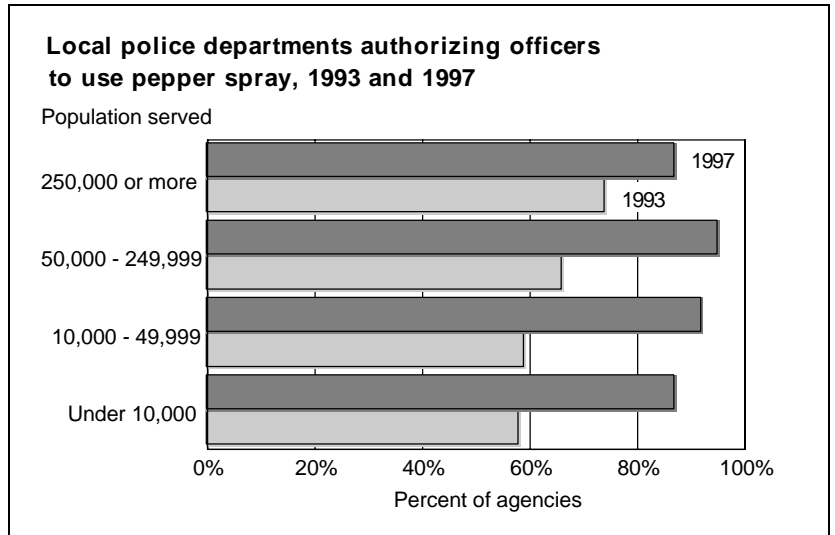
- Forty-three percent of local police departments, employing 82% of all officers, had drug asset forfeiture receipts during fiscal 1997. Collectively, departments received an estimated \$490 million in money, goods, and property.

- In 1997, 85% of local police departments, employing 97% of all officers, participated in a 9-1-1 emergency telephone system compared to 68% and 89% in 1993. In 1997, 53% of departments, employing 80% of all officers, had an enhanced 9-1-1 system, capable of pinpointing the source of a call automatically, compared to 41% and 65% in 1993.

Community policing

- More than 60% of the departments serving 100,000 or more residents had a formal written community policing plan. Overall, about 9 in 10 local police officers worked for a department with some type of community policing plan.

- Sixty-six percent of departments serving 50,000 or more residents had a full-time community policing unit. Fifty-four percent of departments serving 10,000 or more residents had either a full-time unit or designated community policing personnel.



- During the 3-year period ending June 30, 1997, more than 80% of the departments serving a population of 25,000 or more trained at least some in-service officers and new officer recruits in community policing. In a majority of the departments serving a population of 10,000 or more, all new officer recruits received such training.

- Nearly all local police departments serving a population of 10,000 or more regularly met with community groups during 1997. A majority of those serving 25,000 or more residents formed 1 or more problem-solving partnerships through written agreements.

- About 3 in 8 departments had sworn personnel assigned full-time as school resource officers. Nationwide, about 9,400 local police officers worked as school resource officers in 1997.

Equipment

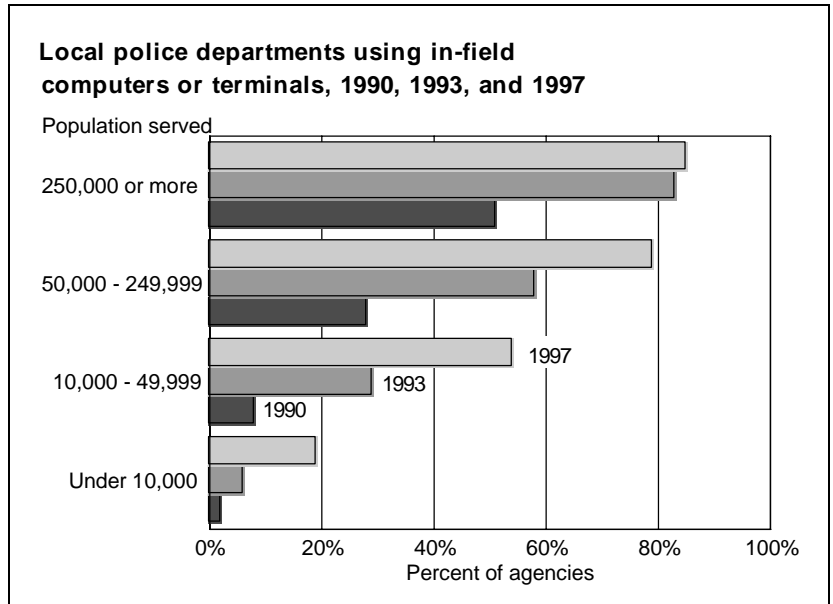
- Ninety-four percent of local police departments, employing 98% of all officers, authorized the use of semiautomatic sidearms in 1997. These percentages represented increases over the 1993 figures of 84% and 96%.

- In 1997, nearly all local police departments authorized the use of nonlethal weapons by officers. From 1993 to 1997, the percent of officers employed by an agency that authorized them to use pepper spray went from 69% to 91%.

- In 1997, about half of all local police officers were employed by a department that required them to wear protective body armor while on duty, compared to about two-fifths in 1993.

- Nationwide, local police departments operated approximately 215,000 cars during 1997, or about 1 for every 2 officers employed. About a third of these cars were unmarked.

- A majority of departments serving a population of 500,000 or more used boats and helicopters. Forty-four percent of those serving 1 million or more residents had at least 1 airplane.



- A fourth of all departments, including nearly all of those serving 100,000 or more residents, used dogs for law enforcement work, with 6,100 in use nationwide. Two percent had horses, with a total of about 1,200 in use.

Computers and information systems

- Nearly all local police departments serving a population of 2,500 or more used 1 or more types of computers during 1997. About two-thirds of those serving fewer than 2,500 residents used them.

- A majority of the departments serving a population of 10,000 or more used computers for crime analysis and dispatch. A majority of those serving a population of 100,000 or more used them for fleet management, resource allocation, and crime mapping.

- From 1993 to 1997, the percentage of local police departments using in-field computers increased from 13% to 29%. Departments using in-field computers employed 73% of all officers in 1997, up from 55% in 1993.

- In about a sixth of departments, at least some officers could access vehicle and driving records by computer while in the field. This was the case in a majority of the departments serving a population of 100,000 or more.

- In 7 of 8 local police departments, officers primarily transmitted criminal incident field data to a central information system through paper reports. Methods used in other departments included laptop download, disk transfer, wireless transmission, or telephone lines.

Written policy directives

- Nearly all local police departments (93%) had a written policy on pursuit driving. Three-fifths restricted vehicle pursuits according to specific criteria such as speed or offense. About a fourth had a policy that left the decision to the officer's discretion. Six percent discouraged all vehicle pursuits.

- Ninety-one percent of local police departments, employing 99% of all officers, had a written policy on the use of deadly force. Eighty-four percent, employing 96% of all officers, had a policy on the use of nonlethal force.

- About 5 in 6 departments, employing 96% of officers, had written policies on the handling of both domestic disputes and juveniles. About 3 in 5 departments, employing 70% of officers, had a discretionary arrest policy.

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