

Employment Outlook for Police Officers, State Police Officers

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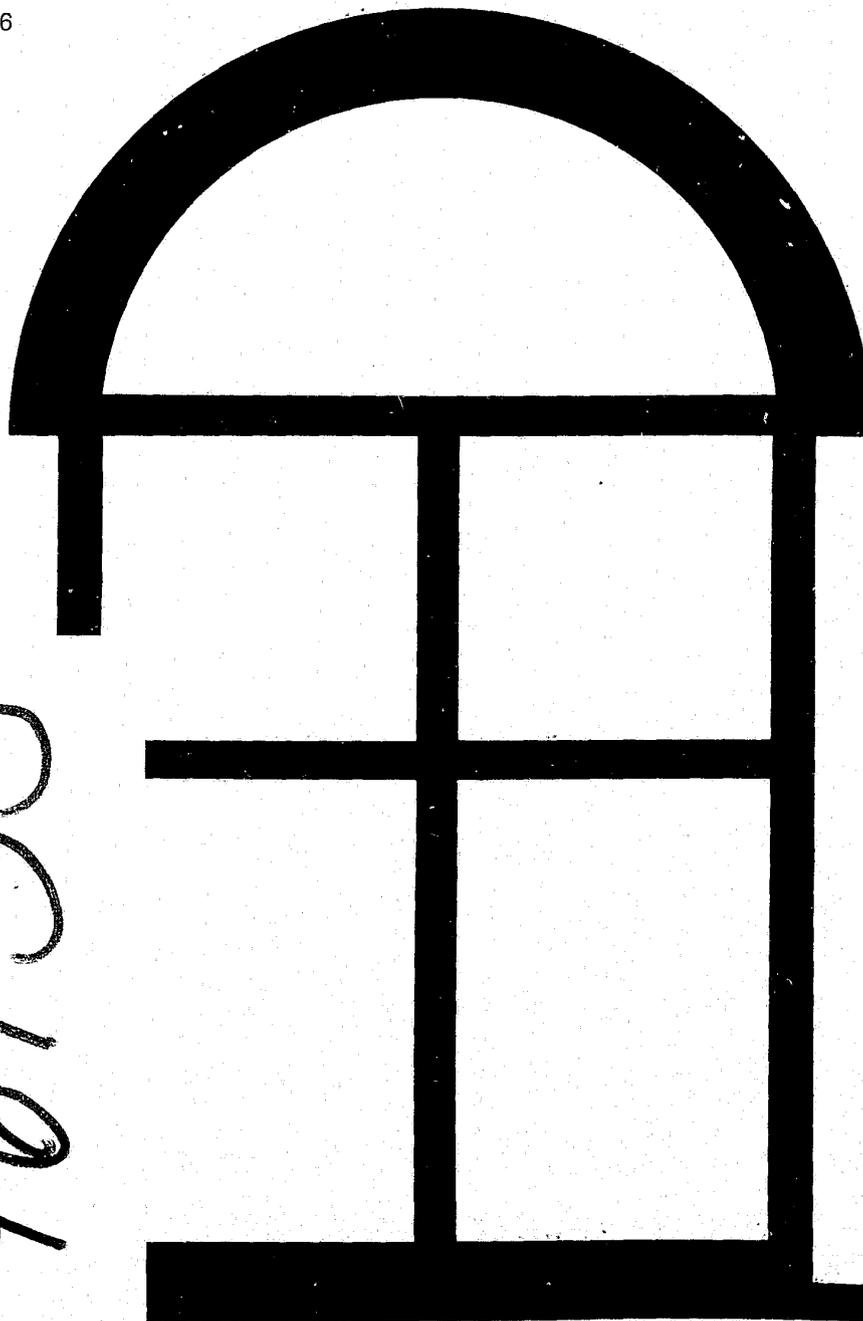
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POLICE OFFICERS

(D.O.T. 375.118 through .868
and 377.868)

Nature of the Work

The security of our Nation's cities and towns greatly depends on the work of local police officers whose jobs range from controlling traffic to preventing and investigating crimes. Whether on or off duty, these officers are expected to exercise their authority whenever necessary.

Police officers who work in a small community have many duties. In the course of a day's work, they may direct traffic at the scene of a fire, investigate a housebreaking, and give first aid to an accident victim. In a large police department, by contrast, officers usually are assigned to a specific type of duty. Most officers are detailed either to patrol or traffic duty; smaller numbers are assigned to special work such as accident prevention or operation of communications systems. Others work as detectives (plain-clothes officers) assigned to criminal investigation; still others, as experts in chemical and microscopic analysis, firearms identification, and handwriting and fingerprint identification. In very large cities, a few officers may work with special units such as mounted and motorcycle police, harbor patrols, helicopter patrols, canine corps, mobile rescue teams, and youth aid services.

Most newly recruited police officers begin on patrol duty. Recruits may be assigned to such varied areas as congested business districts or outlying residential areas. They may cover their beats alone or with other officers, and they may ride in a police vehicle or walk on "foot" patrol. In any case, they become thoroughly familiar with conditions throughout their area and, while on

patrol, remain alert for anything unusual. They note suspicious circumstances, such as open windows or lights in vacant buildings, as well as hazards to public safety such as burned-out street lights or fallen trees. Officers also watch for stolen automobiles and enforce traffic regulations. At regular intervals, they report to police headquarters through call boxes, by radio, or by walkie-talkie. They prepare reports about their activities and may be called on to testify in court when cases result in legal action.

Places of Employment

About 480,000 full-time officers worked for local police departments in 1974. Although most were men, an increasing number of women are employed in police work.

Some cities have very large police forces. For example, New York has over 30,000 police officers and Chicago over 13,000. Hundreds of small communities employ fewer than 25 each. Women police officers work mainly in large cities.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Local civil service regulations govern the appointment of police officers in practically all large cities and in many small ones. Candidates must be U.S. citizens, usually at least 21 years of age, and must meet certain height and weight standards. Eligibility for appointment depends on performance in competitive examinations as well as on education and experience. The physical examinations often include tests of strength and agility.



Because personal characteristics such as honesty, good judgment, and a sense of responsibility are especially important in police work, candidates are interviewed by a senior officer at police headquarters, and their character traits and background are investigated. In some police departments, candidates also may be interviewed by a psychiatrist or a psychologist, or be given a personality test. Although police officers work independently, they must perform their duties in line with laws and departmental rules. They should enjoy working with people, and should want to serve the public.

In large police departments, where most jobs are found, applicants usually must have a high school education. A few cities require some college training and some hire law enforcement students as police interns. A few police departments accept applicants who have less than a high school education as recruits, particularly if they have worked in a field related to law enforcement.

More and more, police departments are encouraging applicants to take post-high school training in sociology and psychology. As a result, more than 500 junior colleges, colleges, and universities now offer programs in law enforcement. Other courses helpful in preparing for a police career include English, American history, civics and government, business law, and physics. Physical education and sports are especially helpful in developing the stamina and agility needed for police work.

Young persons who have completed high school can enter police work in some large cities as police cadets, or trainees, while still in their teens. As paid civilian employees of the police department, they attend classes to learn police skills and do clerical work. They may be appointed to the regular force at age 21 if they have all the necessary qualifications.

Before their first assignments, officers usually go through a period of training. In small communities, recruits learn by working for a short time with experienced officers. Training provided in large city police departments is more formal and may last several weeks or a few months. This training includes classroom instruction in constitutional law and civil rights; in State laws and local ordinances; and in accident investigation, patrol, and traffic control. Recruits learn how to use a gun, defend themselves from attack, administer first aid, and deal with emergencies.

Police officers usually become eligible for promotion after a specified length of service. In a large department, promotion may allow an officer to specialize in one type of police work such as laboratory work, traffic control, communications, or work with juveniles. Promotions to the rank of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain usually are made according to a candidate's position on a promotion list, as determined by scores on a written examination and on-the-job performance.

Many types of training help police officers improve their performance on the job and prepare for advancement. Through training given at police department academies and colleges, officers keep abreast of crowd-control techniques, civil defense, legal developments that affect their work, and advances in law enforcement equipment. Many police departments encourage officers to work toward college degrees, and some pay all or part of the tuition.

Employment Outlook

Police work is attractive to many. The job frequently is challenging and involves much responsibility. Furthermore, layoffs are rare. In periods of relatively high unem-

ployment, the number of persons seeking police employment may be greater than the number of openings. However, the written examinations and strict physical requirements always eliminate many applicants. The outlook should be good for persons having some college training in law enforcement. Opportunities should also be available for women and minority applicants as many departments recruit these workers to make police departments more representative of the populations they serve.

Law enforcement is complex and requires an approach tailored to the particular problems of each city. The police department of a city with a large mobile population is likely to emphasize traffic control, preventive patrol, and cooperation with police agencies in the surrounding areas. In smaller cities, or those with well established communities and fewer employment and recreation centers, police work may be less specialized. In either case, however, the usual way of increasing police protection is to provide more officers for duty.

The number of officers employed will depend on the amount of money made available by local governments. Because of the essential nature of police work, it is likely that funding for law enforcement will have high priority and that the employment of city police officers will rise faster than the average for other occupations through the mid-1980's.

Earnings and Working Conditions

In 1974, entry level salaries for police officers varied widely from city to city. In some smaller communities, officers earned less than \$600 a month, while some major cities offered over \$1,000 a month to new employees. Most officers receive regular salary increases dur-

ing the first few years of employment until they reach a set maximum for their rank. Maximum earnings ranged from about \$800 to over \$1,200 a month in 1974.

Promotion to a higher rank brings a higher basic salary. Sergeants, for example, started at a salary as high as \$1,300 a month in 1974 and in the largest cities, lieutenants began at over \$1,400 a month. In general, police officers are paid about one and one-half times as much as nonsupervisory workers in private industry, except farming.

Police departments usually provide officers with special allowances for uniforms and furnish revolvers, night sticks, handcuffs, and other required equipment.

The scheduled workweek for police officers usually is 40 hours. Because police protection must be provided around the clock, in all but the smallest communities some officers are on duty over weekends, on holidays, and at night. Police officers are subject to call any time their services are needed and may work overtime in emergencies. In some departments, overtime is paid at straight time or time and one-half; in others, officers may be given an equal amount of time off on another day of the week.

Police officers generally are covered by liberal pension plans, enabling many to retire at half pay by the time they reach age 55. In addition, paid vacations, sick leave, and health and life insurance plans frequently are provided.

Police officers may have to work outdoors for long periods in all kinds of weather. The injury rate is higher than in many occupations and reflects the risks officers take in pursuing speeding motorists, capturing lawbreakers, and dealing with public disorder.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about entrance requirements may be obtained from

local civil service commissions or police departments.

Additional information describing careers as police officers is available from:

International Association of Chiefs of Police,
11 Firstfield Rd., Gaithersburg, Md.
20760.

Fraternal Order of Police, National
Headquarters, 3094 Bertha St., Flint,
Mich. 48504.

STATE POLICE OFFICERS

(D.O.T. 375.118, .138, .168,
.228, .268, and .388)

Nature of the Work

The laws and regulations that govern the use of our Nation's roadways are designed to insure the safety of all citizens. State police officers (sometimes called State troopers) patrol our highways and enforce these laws.

State police officers issue traffic tickets to motorists who violate the law. At the scene of an accident, they direct traffic, give first aid, call for emergency equipment including ambulances, and write reports to be used in determining the cause of the accident.

In addition, State police officers provide services to motorists on the highways. For example, they radio for road service for drivers in mechanical trouble, direct tourists to their destination, or give information about lodging, restaurants, and tourist attractions.

State police officers also provide traffic assistance and control during road repairs, fires, and other emergencies, as well as for special occurrences such as parades and sports events. They sometimes check the weight of commercial vehicles, conduct driver examinations, and give information on highway safety to the public.

In addition to highway responsibilities, State police may investigate crimes, particularly in areas that do

not have a police force. They sometimes help city or county police catch lawbreakers and control civil disturbances. State highway patrols, however, normally are restricted to vehicle and traffic matters.

Some police officers work with special State police units such as the mounted police, canine corps, and marine patrols. Others instruct trainees in State police schools, pilot police aircraft, or specialize in fingerprint classification or chemical and microscopic analysis of criminal evidence.

State police officers also write reports and maintain police records. Some officers, including division or bureau chiefs responsible for training or investigation and those who command police operations in an assigned area, have administrative duties.

Places of Employment

About 45,500 State police officers were employed in 1974. Although almost all were men, positions for women are expected to increase in the future.

The size of State police forces varies considerably. The largest force (in California) has over 5,000 officers; the smallest (in North



Dakota) has fewer than 100. One State (Hawaii) does not maintain a police force.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

State civil service regulations govern the appointment of State police officers. All candidates must be citizens of the United States. Other entry requirements vary, but most States require that applicants have a high school education or an equivalent combination of education and experience and be at least 21 years old.

Officers must pass a competitive examination and meet physical and personal qualifications. Physical requirements include standards of height, weight, and eyesight. Tests of strength and agility often are required. Because honesty and a sense of responsibility are important in police work, an applicant's character and background are investigated.

Although State police officers work independently, they must perform their duties in line with department rules. They should want to serve the public and be willing to work outdoors in all types of weather.

In all States, recruits enter a formal training program for several months. They receive classroom instruction in State laws and jurisdictions, and they study procedures for accident investigation, patrol, and traffic control. Recruits learn to use guns, defend themselves from attack, handle an automobile at high speeds, and give first aid. After gaining experience, some officers take advanced training in police science, administration, law enforcement, or criminology. Classes are held at junior colleges, colleges and universities, or special police institutions such as the National Academy of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

High school and college courses

in English, government, psychology, sociology, American history, and physics help in preparing for a police career. Physical education and sports are useful for developing stamina and agility. Completion of a driver education course and training received in military police schools also are assets.

Police officer recruits serve a probationary period ranging from 6 months to 3 years. After a specified length of time, officers become eligible for promotion. Most States have merit promotion systems that require officers to pass a competitive examination to qualify for the next highest rank. Although the organization of police forces varies by State, the typical avenue of advancement is from private to corporal, to sergeant, to first sergeant, to lieutenant, and then to captain. Police officers who show administrative ability may be promoted to higher level jobs such as commissioner or director.

In some States, high school graduates may enter State police work as cadets. These paid civilian employees of the police organization attend classes to learn various aspects of police work and are assigned nonenforcement duties. Cadets who qualify may be appointed to the State police force at age 21.

Employment Outlook

State police employment is expected to grow much faster than the average for other occupations. Although most jobs will result from this growth, some openings will be created as officers retire, die, or leave the occupation for other reasons. As job openings are filled from the ranks of available applicants, the increased interest of women in police work will result in greater employment of women for patrol duties.

Although some State police will be needed in criminal investigation and other nonhighway functions,

the greatest demand will be for officers to work in highway patrol. This is the result of a growing, more mobile population. In ever increasing numbers, Americans are using the motor vehicle as a source of recreation. Motorcycles, campers, and other recreational vehicles will continue to add to the Nation's traffic flow and require additional officers to insure the safety of highway users.

Because law enforcement work is becoming more complex, specialists will be needed in crime laboratories and electronic data processing centers to develop administrative and criminal information systems. However, in many departments, these jobs will be filled by civilian employees rather than uniformed officers.

Earnings and Working Conditions

In 1974, beginning salaries for State police officers ranged from almost \$600 to about \$1,000 a month. The most common entry rates ranged from \$600 to \$700 a month. Although starting salaries are normally higher in the West and lower in the South, State police officers on the average earn about 1 1/2 times as much as nonsupervisory workers in private industry, except farming.

State police generally receive regular increases, based on experience and performance, until a specified maximum is reached. In 1974, maximum rates ranged from about \$750 to over \$1,200 a month; maximum rates were most commonly between \$900 and \$1,000 a month. Earnings increase with promotions to higher ranks. The most common maximum salaries for State police sergeants in 1974 were between \$1,000 and \$1,200. Lieutenants earned more, often between \$1,200 and \$1,300 a month.

State police agencies usually provide officers with uniforms,

firearms, and other necessary equipment, or give special allowances for their purchase.

In many States, the scheduled workweek for police officers is 40 hours. Although the workweek is longer in some States, hours over 40 are being reduced. Since police protection must be provided around the clock, some officers are on duty over weekends, on holidays, and at night. Police of-

icers also are subject to emergency calls at any time.

State police usually are covered by liberal pension plans. Paid vacations, sick leave, and medical and life insurance plans frequently are provided.

The work of State police officers is sometimes dangerous. They always run the risk of an automobile accident while pursuing speeding motorists or fleeing criminals. Of-

icers also face the risk of injury while apprehending criminals or controlling disorders.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about specific entrance requirements may be obtained from State civil service commissions or State police headquarters, usually located in each State capital.

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