



Local Police Departments, 2016: Personnel

SUMMARY | NCJ 252835

OCTOBER 2019

As of June 30, 2016, the 15,322 general-purpose law enforcement agencies in the United States employed an estimated 701,000 full-time sworn officers. Local police departments made up 80% (12,261) of these agencies and employed 67% (468,000) of these full-time sworn officers.

From 1997 to 2016, the total number of full-time sworn officers in general-purpose law enforcement agencies increased by 8%, while the number in local police departments increased by 11%. During the same period, the total U.S. population rose 21%, which resulted in the number of full-time sworn officers in general-purpose law enforcement agencies decreasing from 2.42 to 2.17 per 1,000 residents (down 11%).

General-purpose law enforcement agencies include all municipal, county, and regional police departments, all primary state agencies, and most sheriffs' offices. They are distinct from special-purpose agencies, sheriffs' offices with only jail and court duties, and federal agencies.

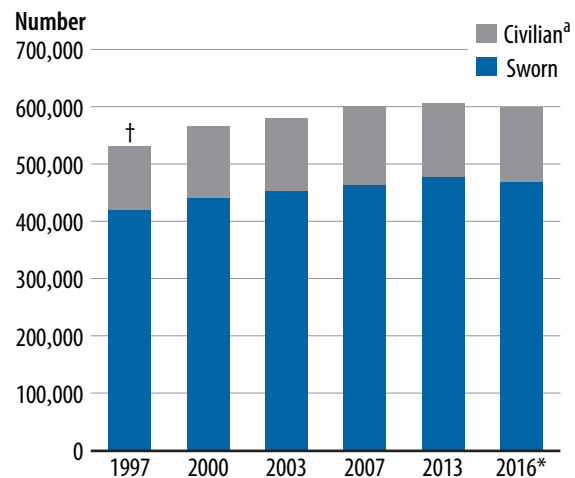
Populations served and historical trends

In 2016, more than two-thirds (71%) of all local police departments served populations of less than 10,000 residents. About 3% of local police departments served populations of 100,000 or more, and those departments employed about 52% of all full-time sworn police officers. Of the 50 largest local police departments, about two-thirds (33) had fewer full-time sworn officers per 10,000 residents in 2016 than in 1997.

Demographics of officers

In local police departments, about 1 in 8 full-time sworn officers, and about 1 in 10 first-line supervisors, were female. From 1997 to 2016, the proportion of female officers rose from 10% to 12%. The proportion of female officers in jurisdictions with 250,000 or more residents (16% females) was twice as high as in jurisdictions with less than 25,000 residents (8%).

Full-time employees in local police departments, 1997-2016



*Comparison group.

†Significant difference from comparison group at the 95% confidence level shown for total full-time employees.

^aIncludes officers/deputies with limited or no arrest powers and non-sworn employees.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics survey, 1997-2016.

About 1 in 4 officers, and 1 in 5 first-line supervisors, were black or Hispanic. Departments serving 1 million or more residents employed the highest percentage of Hispanic male (21%) and Hispanic female (6%) officers.

Specialized units and school resource officers

Most local police departments serving 100,000 or more residents had specialized units with personnel assigned full-time to address drug enforcement (89% of departments), child abuse (72%), and gangs (71%). In 2016, about 2.5% of full-time sworn local police officers served as school resource officers.

The full report (*Local Police Departments, 2016: Personnel*, NCJ 252835), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at www.bjs.gov.