International Association of Chiefs of Police
Research Center Directorate
Perspectives

Police Officer to Population Ratios
Bureau of Justice Statistics Data

Introduction

The IACP *Perspectives* series is intended to help local agency decision-making by providing useful information gleaned from our network of information sources. The *Perspectives* series does not present IACP positions on the topic being addressed, nor does it replace long-term research. *Perspectives* publications raise thoughtful issues regarding complex policy topics- in this case, police officer to population ratios- to inform the debate at the local level.

Ratio Data and Agency Staffing

Before presenting BJS data, it is first important to clarify IACP's position on police to population ratios and why they should ***not*** be used as a basis for agency staffing decisions. The following is a quote from IACP's ***Patrol Staffing and Deployment Study*** brochure: *Ratios, such as officers-per-thousand population, are totally inappropriate as a basis for staffing decisions. Accordingly, they have no place in the IACP methodology. Defining patrol staffing allocation and deployment requirements is a complex endeavor which requires consideration of an extensive series of factors and a sizable body of reliable, current data.*

BJS ratio data presented here can be useful to local agencies in other ways, including historic perspective on staffing trends across all US law enforcement, and in conducting long term staffing trend analysis, locally, regionally and nationally.

BJS Ratio Data

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), within the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) publishes ***Local Police Departments*** report every three to four years. This report contains excellent and highly reliable data on state and local police personnel throughout the U.S. One aspect of this report is the average ratio of full time officers per 1,000 residents. The most recent BJS data on this topic (2003), by size of population served follows:

Population Served	*FT Officers Per 1,000 Residents	Population Served	*FT Officers Per 1,000 Residents
250,000 or more	2.5	10,000 to 24,999	2.0
100,000 to 249,999	1.9	2,500 to 9,999	2.2
50,000 to 99,999	1.8	1,000 to 2,499	2.6
25,000 to 49,999	1.8	All Sizes	2.5

*Average Ratio

In addition to the ***Local Police Departments*** publication, BJS also publishes a more comprehensive report intermittently entitled ***Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (year): Data for Individual State and Local Agencies with 100 or More Officers.*** Both reports can be valuable to local law enforcement agencies. To learn more about the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and their statistical reports on law enforcement, visit their website: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.