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Crime Data Brief

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Women in Law Enforcement, 1987–2008

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During the 1990s and 2000s, the percent of sworn law enforcement officers who were women increased only slightly in federal, state, and local agencies.

By 2007 nearly 4,000 state police, 19,400 sheriffs,¹ and 55,300 local police officers were women.¹ In 2008, across 62 reporting federal law enforcement agencies there were about 90,000 sworn officers, of whom approximately 18,200 (20%) were women.² These 2007 and 2008 numbers suggest a combined total of almost 100,000 female sworn officers nationwide in federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

Using data primarily from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' Census of Federal Law Enforcement Officers (FLEO) and the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) series, this report examines the current state of and trends in the employment of

female sworn officers in federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

In 2008 nearly a quarter of the sworn law enforcement officers in Offices of Inspectors General were women

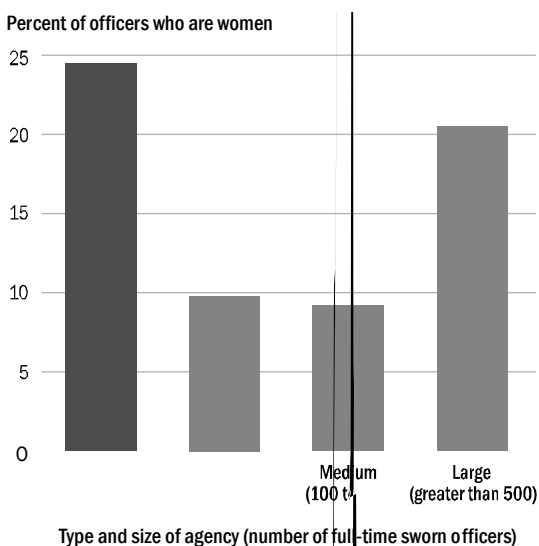
Of all the federal law enforcement agencies with sworn officers, the Offices of Inspectors General had the largest percent of female officers (25%) (figure 1). Among other agencies, those with more than 500 sworn officers employed more than double the percent of officers who were women (21%), compared to both medium-sized (9%) and small (10%) agencies. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (19% women), Federal Bureau of Prisons (14% women), and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (46% women) (not shown) were the largest employers

¹Data for sheriffs' offices and local police departments are estimated from a nationally representative sample.

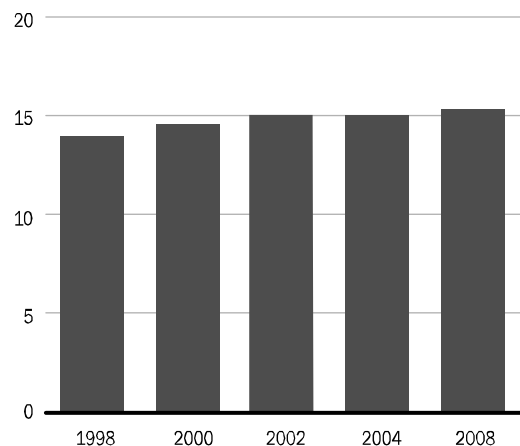
²Data available for 62 of 67 federal law enforcement agencies. In 2004, four of the five missing agencies reported an estimated 11,000 sworn officers of whom approximately 1,500 were women.

Figure 1.

Percent of federal law enforcement officers who are women, by type and size of agency, 2008



Percent of officers who are women



of female officers. These three agencies each employed more than 2,000 female officers.

Overall, the percent of sworn federal law enforcement officers who were women increased slightly from 1998 to 2008

Due to the reorganization of several large federal law enforcement agencies after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and inconsistencies among some agencies in the reporting of data on the sex of officers, the trend analysis was limited to 53

agencies that were consistently organized and had data available on the sex of officers from 1998 to 2008. Among these common reporting agencies, there was relative stability in the percent of female sworn officers. Over the 10-year period, the percent of officers who were women increased slightly from 14.0% in 1998 to 15.2% in 2008 (figure 2).

The percent of female sworn officers increased from 1998 to 2008 in 10 of the 13 largest federal law enforcement agencies

Among federal law enforcement agencies employing more than 500 full-time sworn officers and reporting data on the sex of officers in both 1998 and 2008, women accounted for approximately 16% of the total sworn force (not shown). From 1998 to 2008, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) had the greatest increase in the percent of law enforcement officers who were women (7%) (table 1). In 2008 the USPIS employed just over 500 (22%) women out of about 2,300 total officers. The agency employed nearly the same number of female officers in 2008 as in 1998, but employed about 1,200 fewer law enforcement officers overall in 2008.

The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) each experienced slight declines in the percent of women in law enforcement positions. The percent of female officers among Forest Service law enforcement officers decreased marginally from 16.1% in 1998 to 15.9% in 2008. The total number of Forest Service officers who were women increased slightly, from 97 to 103. Both the overall size of and the number of female law enforcement officers employed by the Fish and Wildlife Service decreased during the 10-year period, from 84 female officers out of 836 officers total in 1998 to 50 female officers out of 565 total in 2008.

From 1998 to 2008, the VHA police force grew substantially, from 262 to 3,175 sworn officers. Although the percent of female officers in the VHA declined from 9% to 8% over the 10-year period, the number of sworn officers who were women increased by more than 200, from 24 to 248 female officers.

Among local agencies in 2007, women accounted for more than double the percent of sworn personnel in large agencies compared to small agencies

In 2007 women accounted for about 15% of the total sworn law enforcement officers in large local police departments (figure 3). In large sheriffs'



offices, female officers comprised about 13% of the total sworn officers. In contrast, local police departments with between 1 and 10 full-time sworn officers employed fewer than 2,000 female law enforcement officers nationwide (6%). Small sheriffs' offices across the county employed just over 200 total sworn officers who were women (4%) in 2007.

Trends in the percent of female officers varied across state and local police departments and sheriffs' offices, from 1987 to 2007

From 1987 to 2007 trends in the percent of sworn law enforcement officers who were women varied among state police departments, local police departments, and sheriffs' offices. The percent of female officers in local police departments increased steadily over the two decades, from 7.6% in 1987 to nearly 12% in 2007 (figure 4). From 1987 to 2007, state police departments also increased the percent of sworn officers who were women, but at a slower rate than the local police departments. In 2007, 6.5% of state police officers were women, compared to 3.8% in 1987. While the percent of female officers was higher in 2007 than in 1987, state police departments did experience a slight decline in the percent of female officers from 2003 (6.7%) to 2007 (6.5%).

After reaching a high of 15.6% female officers in 1997, the percent of sheriffs' officers who were women declined to 11.2% in 2007. The 2007 survey excluded sheriffs' offices that did not perform law enforcement functions. The decline in female officers may be due in part to this exclusion.

From 1997 to 2007, the percent of female sworn officers increased in 12 of the 13 largest local police departments nationwide

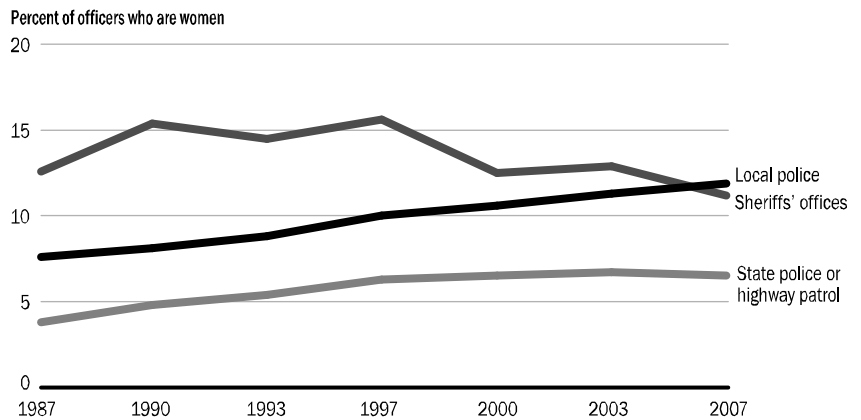
In 2007, women accounted for an average of 18% of the officers among local police departments with 2,000 or more sworn personnel. The Detroit Police Department had the highest percent of female officers (27%) among the largest police departments (table 2).

From 1997 to 2007, 12 of the 13 largest police departments that reported data on the sex of officers had increases in the percent of sworn officers who were women. The Detroit Police Department had the largest increase in the percent of female officers, from 22% in 1997 to 27% in 2007. Because the Detroit Police Department decreased in size by over 1,000 sworn officers overall from 1997 to 2007, the number of female officers actually declined by approximately 50 officers.

The District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department had a 2% decline in the percent of officers who were women, though the number of female officers in the department increased by 12 officers from 1997 to 2007.

Figure 4.

Percent of full-time sworn law enforcement officers who are women among state and local law enforcement agencies, 1987-2007



Note: Data on state police and highway patrol agencies were obtained from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports. Data on local police departments and sheriffs' offices were obtained from the BJS Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) series.

Table 2.

Percent and number of full-time sworn officers who are women among the largest police departments, 1997 and 2007

Agency	Percent		Number	
	1997	2007	1997	2007
Detroit	22 %	27 %	880	829
Philadelphia	22	25	1,461	1,666
District of Columbia	25	23	904	916
Chicago	19	23	2,549	3,097
Los Angeles	17	19	1,644	1,779
Memphis	17	19	250	386
New York City	15	17	5,743	6,151
Dallas	16	17	444	527
San Francisco	15	16	303	378
Baltimore	14	16	432	485
Boston	13	14	275	293
Houston	12	13	637	656
Las Vegas Metro*	8	9	113	219

Note: Data obtained from the BJS 1997 and 2007 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) surveys. Includes police departments with 2,000 or more sworn officers in 2007. Phoenix police department did not provide a distribution of officers by sex and was excluded. *Las Vegas Metro numbers do not include correctional officers.



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Methodology

Data on local police departments and sheriffs' offices were compiled from the BJS Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey. LEMAS collects data from all state and local agencies with 100 or more sworn officers and a nationally representative sample of smaller agencies. Agencies that did not primarily perform law enforcement functions were excluded in 2007. For local police in 2007, the 95% confidence interval around the number of officers was between 51,600 and 59,000 and around the percent of female officers was between 11.1% and 12.7%. Among the agencies that responded to LEMAS in 2007, over 99% of local police and 98% of sheriffs' offices provided data on the sex of officers. See *Local Police Departments, 2003* (<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/lpd03.pdf>) and *Sheriffs' Offices, 2003*. (<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/so03.pdf>) for more information on the LEMAS survey. Data on state police agencies were compiled from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime in the United States series (<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>).

Data on federal agencies with full-time sworn law enforcement officers were compiled from the BJS Census of Federal Law Enforcement Officers (FLEO). In 2008, FLEO data were collected from 62 of 67 federal agencies. The U.S. Supreme Court, Environmental Protection Agency, Agency for International Development, Bureau of Industry and Security, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not provide 2008

This report in portable document format and in ASCII and its related statistical data and tables are available at the BJS World Wide Web Internet site: <<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=2274>>.

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistics agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Michael D. Sinclair is acting director.

This Crime Data Brief was written by Lynn Langton, under the supervision of Joel Garner. Brian Reaves verified the report.

Jill Duncan edited the report, Barbara Quinn produced the report, and Jayne E. Robinson prepared the report for final printing under the supervision of Doris J. James.

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data on the number and sex of law enforcement officers. The sex of officers in the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Marshals Service was estimated using the ratio of male to female officers from 2004, applied to the total number of officers in 2008. See <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pubalp2.htm#fleo> for more information on the FLEO survey methodology.