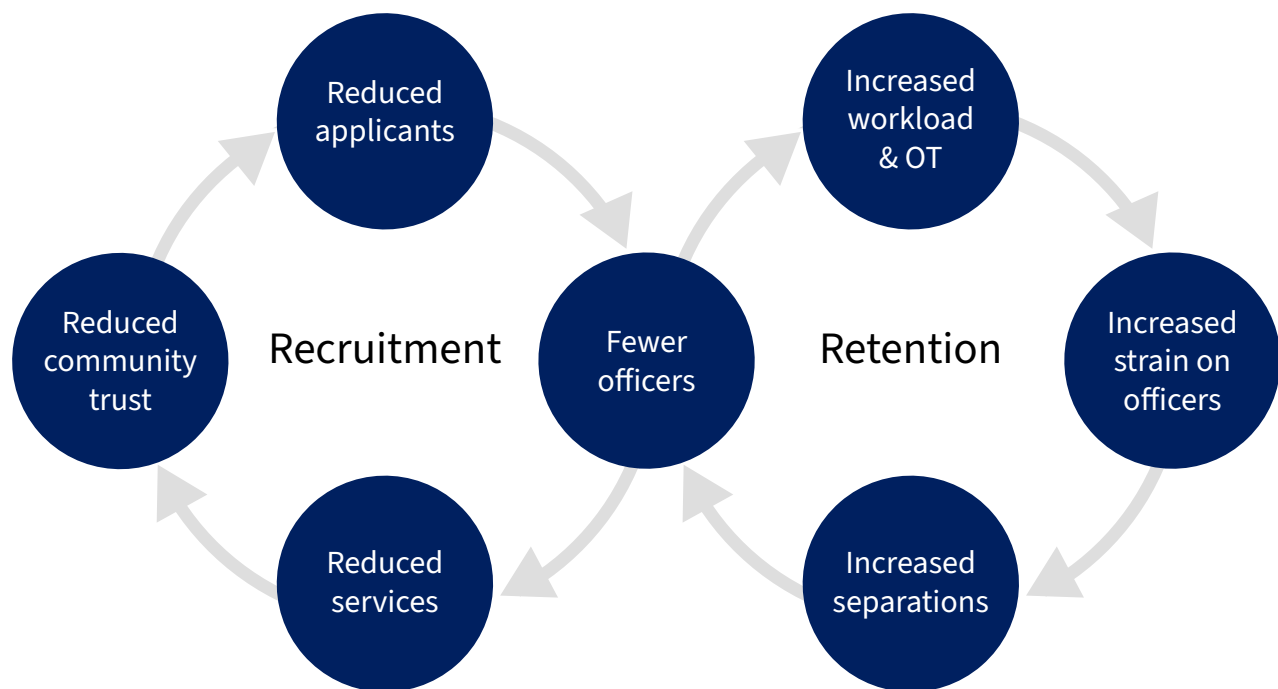


Choosing to Serve: Views of a Career in Law Enforcement



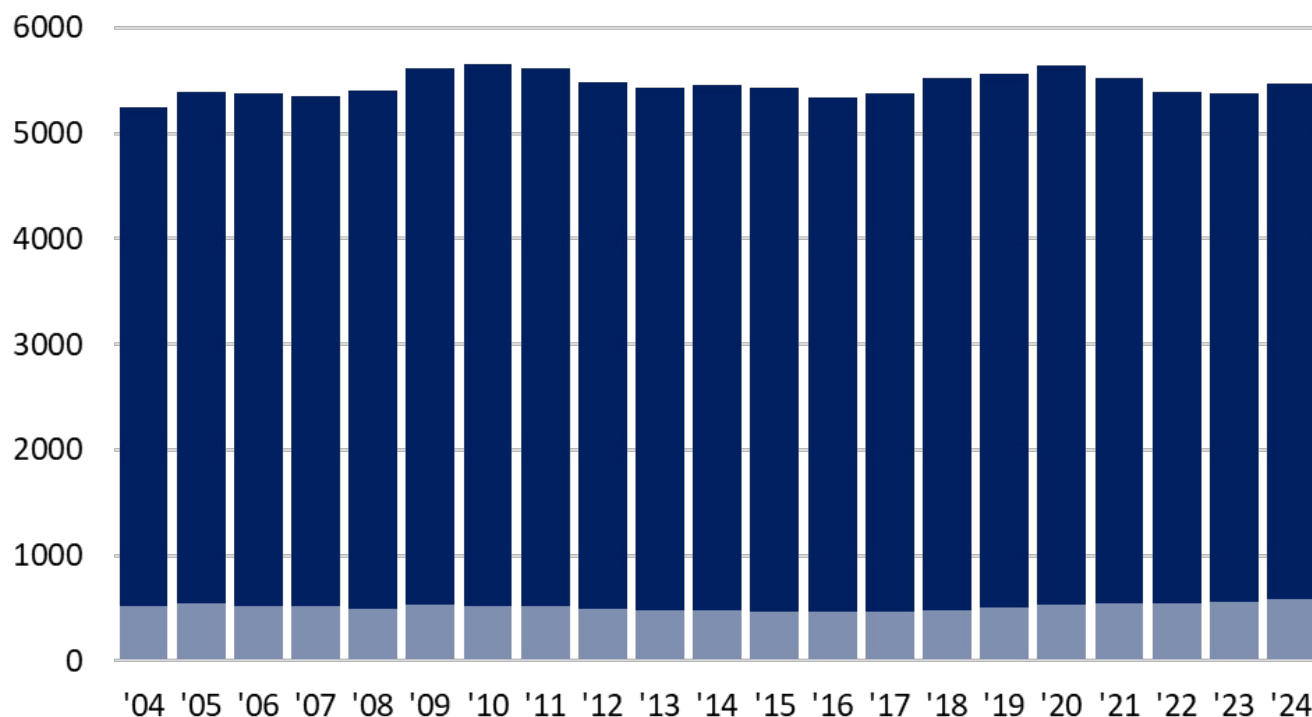
Executive Summary
May 2025



The phenomena of recruitment and retention are incredibly intertwined. Agencies are facing unqualified applicants, increased competition for jobs, and a general disinterest in police work; all in addition to jurisdiction-specific challenges such as benefits, agency reputations, the variety of assignments, and affordability of local housing.

Over the last 20 years, the yearly total of certified officers in Oregon has remained relatively stagnant, with a minimum of 5252 officers and a maximum of 5658 certified officers (below). This is over the contrasting backdrop of a 19% increase in Oregon's population between 2004 and 2024 (Portland State University Population Research Center, 2011, 2024).

■ Women ■ Men



- 1 To help people in the community
- 2 Desire to stop those who would do harm
- 3 Variety & non-routine nature of work
- 4 To fight crime
- 5 Opportunity to solve problems

Women

- 1 Desire to stop those who would do harm
- 2 To help people in the community
- 3 Exciting work
- 4 To fight crime
- 5 Variety & non-routine nature of work

Men

Motivators & Concerns

Officers - regardless of gender and agency size - enter a policing career to help people. But the concerns for their own well-being remain top-of-mind.

- 1 Stressful nature of the job
- 2 Threat of injury and/or death
- 3 Attitude of community towards police
- 4 Impact on mental health
- 5 Concerns about ability to do the job effectively

Women

- 1 Insufficient salary, retire. and/or benefits
- 2 Attitude of community towards police
- 3 Work schedule
- 4 Stressful nature of the job
- 5 Threat of injury and/or death

Men



Concerns by Agency size

Officers' top five concerns about a career in policing varied depending on their agency size. Across all sizes, insufficient salary and public attitude ranked high for officers.

- 1 Insufficient salary, retirement, and/or benefits
- 2 Work schedule
- 3 Concerns about ability to do the job effectively
- 4 Attitude of community towards police
- 5 Impact on mental health

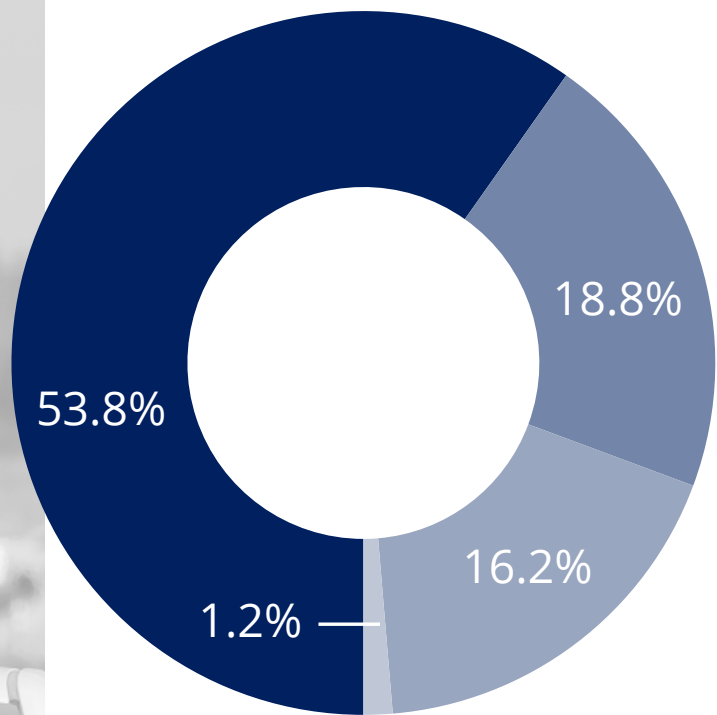
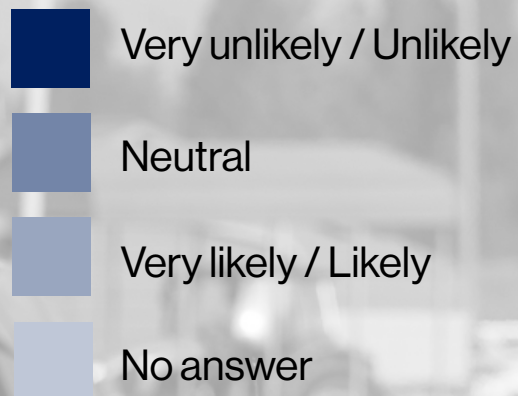
Small

- 1 Attitude of community towards police
- 2 Threat of injury and/or death
- 3 Stressful nature of the job
- 4 Insufficient salary, retirement, and/or benefits
- 5 Impact on mental health

Medium

- 1 Stressful nature of the job
- 2 Work schedule
- 3 Attitude of community towards police
- 4 Insufficient salary, retirement, and/or benefits
- 5 Threat of injury and/or death

Large



Promotional Aspirations

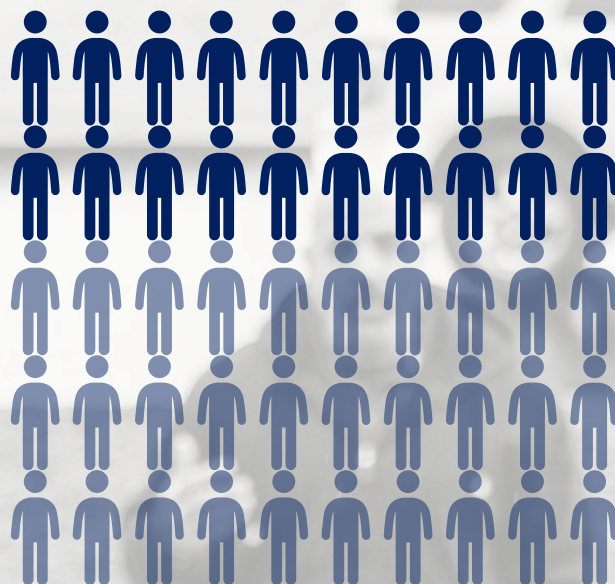
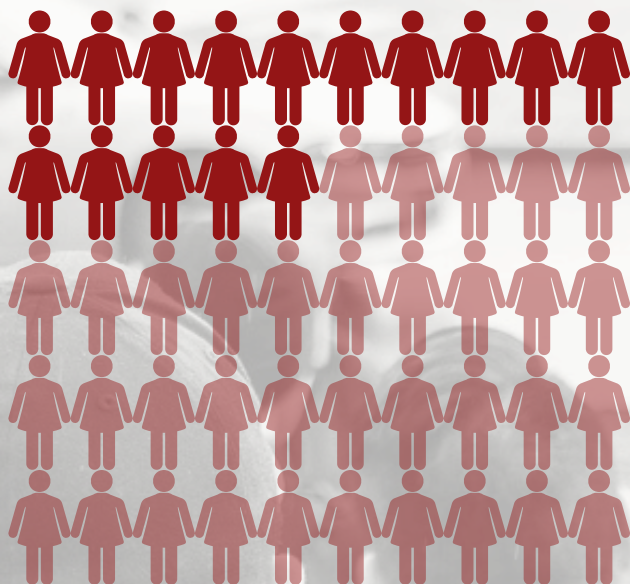
The majority of respondents (53.8%) indicated that they were “very unlikely” or “unlikely” to pursue promotion in the next two years. Those that indicated they were interested in promotion ranked being a role model, making change, feeling prepared, next step in career, and feeling supported by agency as their top five,

- 1 Happy with current position
- 2 Impact on work-life balance
- 3 Lack of confidence in promotional process
- 4 Change in type of duties
- 5 Do not feel prepared for promotional position

Women

- 1 Happy with current position
- 2 Impact on work-life balance
- 3 Change in type of duties
- 4 Inadequate compensation
- 5 Less desirable schedule

Men



Making Lateral Moves

38.5% of officers who took the survey indicated that they had moved laterally at least once in their career. By gender, 30% of women officers and 41% of men officers had moved.

- 1 Seeking improved relationship with leadership
- 2 Low morale at current agency
- 3 Better fit with new agency's culture
- 4 Seeking better pay/benefits
- 5 Burnout from workload at current agency

Women

- 1 Low morale at current agency
- 2 Seeking better pay/benefits
- 3 Seeking more opportunities to adv.
- 4 Better fit with new agency's culture
- 5 Seeking improved relationship with leadership

Men



Reasons to move laterally by Agency size

Officers' top five reasons to move laterally were relatively consistent across agency sizes, often centered around interpersonal dynamics. Officers at small agencies ranked seeking more training opportunities higher, while those at medium and larger agencies were seeking more opportunities for advancement.

- 1 Seeking improved relationship with leadership
- 2 Low morale at current agency
- 3 Seeking better pay/benefits
- 4 Better fit with new agency culture
- 5 Seeking more training opp.

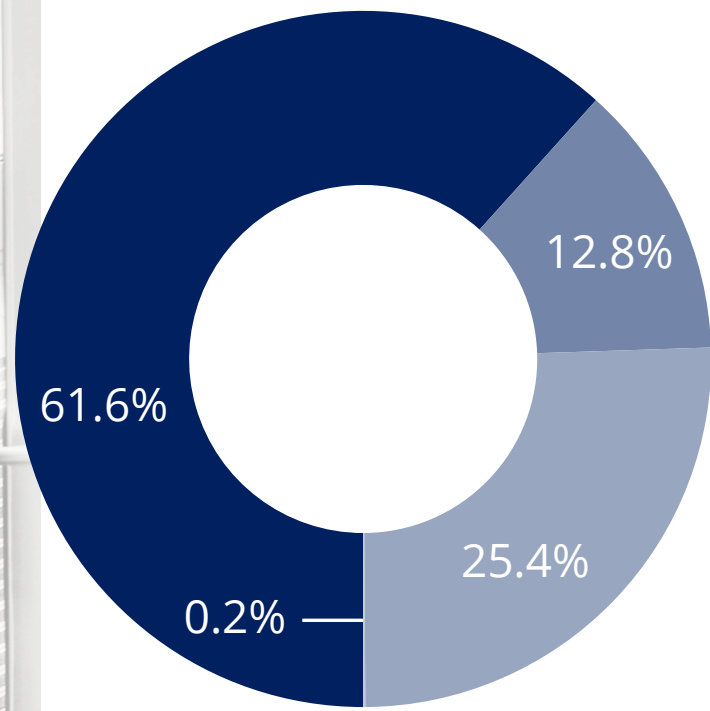
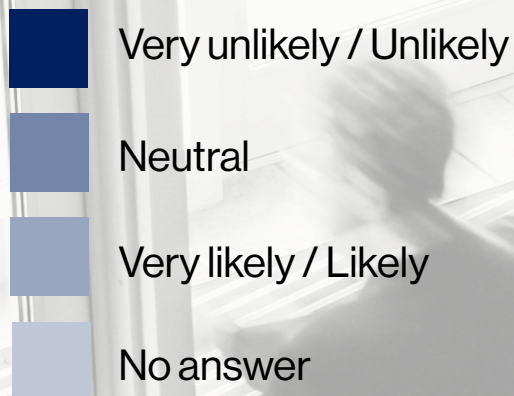
Small

- 1 Seeking improved relationship with leadership
- 2 Low morale at current agency
- 3 Better fit with new agency culture
- 4 Seeking better pay/benefits
- 5 Seeking more opp. for advancement

Medium

- 1 Low morale at current agency
- 2 Seeking more opp. for advancement
- 3 Seeking better pay/benefits
- 4 Better fit with new agency culture
- 5 Seeking improved relationship with leadership

Large



Opting out of policing

The majority of respondents (61.6%) indicated that they were “very unlikely” or “unlikely” to leave policing in the next two years. Those who indicated a desire to leave, both men and women cited agency culture, impacts on mental and physical health, and not feeling like they were make a difference.

- 1 Impact on mental health
- 2 Public attitude toward police
- 3 Lack of advancement opportunities
- 4 Impact on physical health
- 5 Dissatisfaction with job tasks

Small

- 1 Public attitude toward police
- 2 Impact on mental health
- 3 Do not feel like I'm making a difference
- 4 Agency culture
- 5 Impact on physical health

Medium

- 1 Agency culture
- 2 Impact on mental health
- 3 Impact on physical health
- 4 Public attitude toward police
- 5 Do not feel like I'm making a diff.

Large

Next Steps & Resources

The strategies available to increase recruitment and retention are numerous. Individual agencies will need to determine what will work best for their communities, staff, and resources. Luckily, the staffing challenge has resulted in numerous open-source reports in recent years that dive deeper into various staffing insights and strategies. While not exhaustive, these reports and resource pages include:

- [30x30 What Works Resource Page](#)
- [Addressing Police Turnover: Challenges, strategies, and future research directions](#)
- [Best Practices for Optimizing Law Enforcement Job Descriptions to Recruit Diverse Candidates](#)
- [Blueprint for Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention in the 21st Century](#)
- [Performance-based Approach to Police Staffing and Allocation](#)
- [Recruiting and Retaining Officers in Small and Rural Agencies](#)
- [Recruitment and Retention for the Modern Law Enforcement Agency](#)
- [Recruitment and Retention for Workforce Diversity Resource Guidebook 2021](#)
- [Responding to the Staffing Crisis: Innovations in Recruitment and Retention](#)
- [The State of Recruitment and Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing 2024 Survey Results](#)
- [Women in Police Leadership: 10 Action Items for Advancing Women and Strengthening Policing](#)
- [Women in Policing: Breaking Barrier and Blazing a Path](#)