

Police and Policing

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OUTLINE

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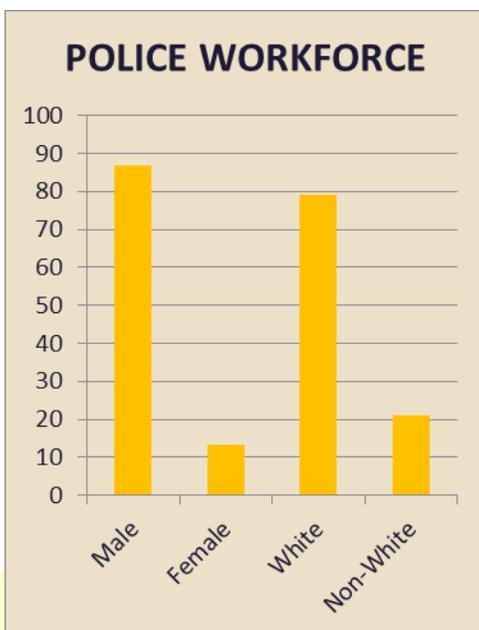
Who are the Police?

Ideally, a police force is in action in order to “protect and serve.” An ideal police force would be composed of a diverse range of people, as to keep potential of bias and prejudice at bay, and so that any specific person could feel comfortable talking to an officer.

Realistically, America’s police force is composed of White males, with 86.7% of the officers being male, and 79% of them being White. This is just one of the factors that leads to the functioning of the police force being less than ideal.

An assumption that could be easily made is that the police workforce is dominated by White males because the majority of the population are White males. And, while the latter is true, the police force does not accurately represent the population, with the population being 78% White and 49.2% Male. So, what led to such a racial and gender domination? The answer lies in our history. Nineteenth Century Policing laws made it near impossible for Black men to be hired as police officers, and women were not allowed into the police workforce officially until 1957.

For the reasons previously stated, states are in need of a diverse police force. Having the force dominated by one single gender and race not only reduces their effectiveness as a whole, but leaves room for tension to build between a diverse population and non-diverse police force. This can lead to an “us vs. them,” mentality, which only increases the already existing tension.



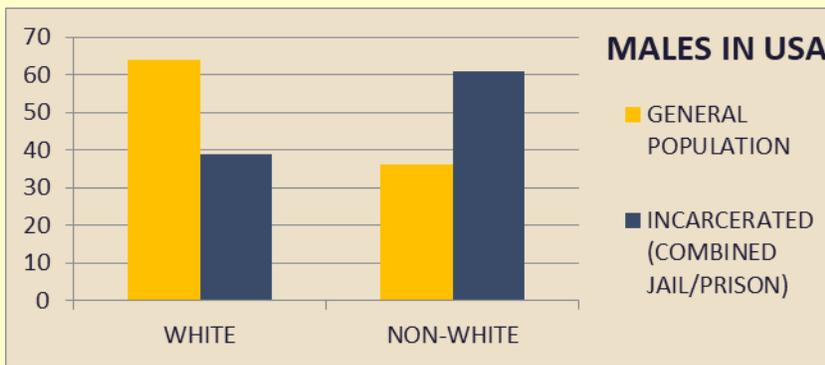
Who's in Cuffs?

If we want to analyze the prison system, we have to first analyze how prisoners get to jail in the first place: by being arrested. But who exactly is being arrested in the first place? Statistics show, that Black males are. 40% of incarcerated males (in jails and prisons combined) are Black. 61% are non-white, while 39% are White. When compared to the general un-incarcerated population, it's nearly opposite, with 64% being white and 36% being non-white. And we can consider the previous statistics to remind us who's arresting them: White males.

These statistics show a clear race issue that has stemmed from a less progressive, more segregated America. But how do we stop our history from affecting our future? It seems near impossible, with the amount of personal bias and prejudice that seems to go unnoticed and that seems to skew the reality of who is targeted by police.

“When you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression.”

If we suddenly were able to make our policing system more equal, how do you think it would be received by the general public? If the population who is the majority in the streets and the minority incarcerated suddenly didn't hold those titles anymore, how do you think they would react? Maybe that's why change hasn't happened yet.



Us vs. Them

Police brutality can be a sensitive subject for many, especially members of the police themselves. The issue comes with dealing with and preventing brutality from happening while not alienating the police as a whole and not punishing those officers who have never exhibited brutality. It's evident that this can get complicated pretty quickly.

Police brutality, similar to many other issues with the police stems from a long history of brutality against minorities in America. Regional evolution has helped to segregate some parts of America even more, causing a great divide between races, and an even greater divide between the public and the police. The “us vs. them” mindset has been developing since before police even existed, and lack of diversity in the police force, especially in diverse and/or segregated areas, makes the “us vs. them” fight even stronger.

In addition, the police force often implements policies in attempt to prevent “us vs. them” that only make it worse. An example is deploying stricter and harsher police forces to high-crime areas. While this makes sense in theory, it forces the police to become more militarized in the public eye.



9 US Police arrest a teenager, 2015

So, how do we fix all these issues? There is no one simple answer for any of the problems previously discussed. However, there are many steps that we can take in the right direction, and the first step doesn't start with the police, it starts with the public. The "us vs. them" mentality can be hard to break, but if the media was a little more fair in their reportings then perhaps the public opinion could sway more towards a neutral feeling towards the police in general. This might encourage more women and minorities to join the police force, which in turn would help diversify the police force, reducing the amount of bias and prejudice seen today.

It may sound idealistic, but one small change can really affect everything.



“We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race. We all share the same basic values.”

The public has more in common with the police than they might realize. People often seem to forget that the men and women in blue are human as well, and have families and live normal lives as we do.

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Thank you for reading!

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