Bowling Green State University

ScholarWorks@BGSU

3-17-2023

Rural Police Crime 2005-2017

Chloe A. Wentzlof
Bowling Green State University, cawentz@bgsu.edu

Philip M. Stinson
Bowling Green State University, stinspm@bgsu.edu

John Liederbach
Bowling Green State University, jlieder@bgsu.edu

Rural Police Crime
2005-2017

Chloe A. Wentzlof
Philip M. Stinson
John Liederbach

Bowling Green State University

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
March 17, 2023

BGSU. | **POLICE INTEGRITY**
RESEARCH GROUP
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Background

- American policing confronts an immediate crisis of legitimacy.

- Lack of official data about law enforcement misconduct exacerbates this issue.

- Literature about police misconduct is heavily reliant on studies limited to larger cities or jurisdictions – mainly focused on *urban* policing.

- Most police agencies operate within non-urban jurisdictions.

- The goal of our study is to utilize unique national-scale data to describe crimes committed by *rural* police officers.

Urban vs. Rural Policing

BGSU. | POLICE INTEGRITY RESEARCH GROUP
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

- Officer behavior varies across different types of communities.

- There exists core differences between the tasks of urban and rural policing.

- Police-community relations vary across urban and rural jurisdictions.

- Smaller police agencies often found within rural jurisdictions are more concerned with crime prevention and community-oriented service activities than are urban police agencies.
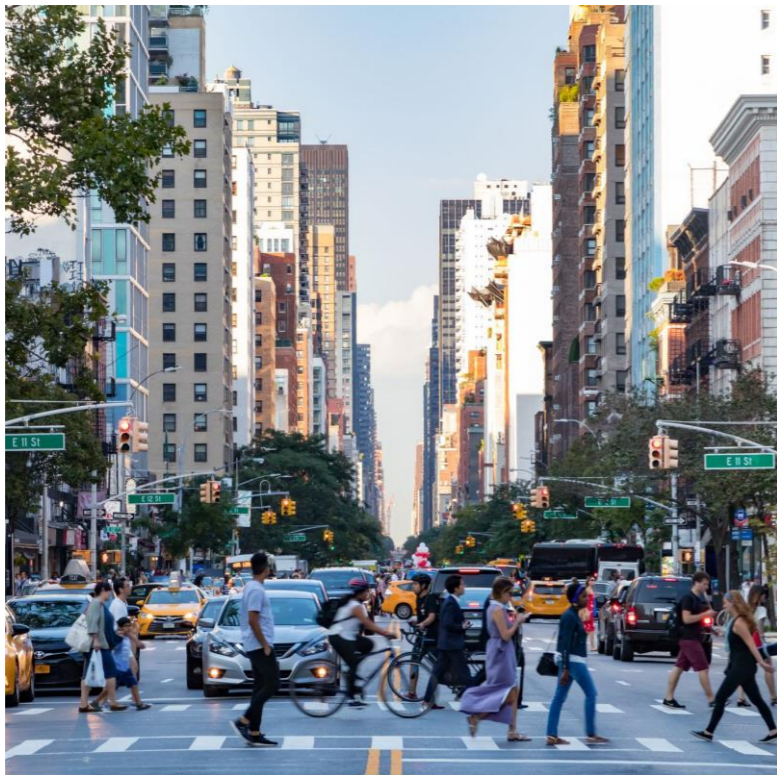
Data

Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database

The Police Crime Database includes summary information on **15,200 criminal arrest cases** from the years **2005-2017** involving **12,465 individual nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers**, each of whom were charged with one or more crimes. The arrested officers were employed by 4,499 state, local, and special law enforcement agencies located in 1,781 counties and independent cities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Purpose

The purpose of the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database is to **improve policing** and **inform the public** about crimes committed by nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers across the United States.

policecrime.bgsu.edu

Table 1. Defining Rurality (*N*=15,200 cases of police crime)

	n	(%)
Urban/Rural Continuum County Code		
County in Metro Area of 1,000,000+ pop.	8,097	(53.3)
County in Metro Area of 250,000-1,000,000 pop.	3,102	(20.4)
County in Metro Area of fewer than 250,000 pop.	1,603	(10.5)
Non-Metro County with Urban pop. of 20,000+, Adjacent to Metro Area	736	(4.8)
Non-Metro County with Urban pop. of 20,000+, Not Adjacent to Metro Area	289	(1.9)
Non-Metro County with Urban pop. of 2,500-19,999, Adjacent to Metro Area	746	(4.9)
Non-Metro County with Urban pop. of 2,500-19,999, Not Adjacent to Metro Area	372	(2.4)
Non-Metro County Completely Rural or less than 2,500 urban pop., Adjacent to Metro Area	125	(0.8)
Non-Metro County Completely Rural or less than 2,500 urban pop., Not Adjacent to Metro Area	130	(0.9)
Level of Rurality		
Metropolitan County	12,802	(84.2)
Non-Metro County	2,398	(15.8)

Table 2. Police Crime Arrest Cases in Non-Metro Counties, 2005-2017 (*n* = 2,398)

	n	(%)		*n*	(%)		*n*	(%)
Level of Rurality			Age			Rank		
Metropolitan County	0	(0.0)	19-23	76	(3.2)	Officer	1,715	(71.5)
Non-Metro County	2,398	(100.0)	24-27	203	(8.5)	Detective	91	(3.8)
			28-31	294	(12.3)	Corporal	23	(1.0)
			32-35	291	(12.1)	Sergeant	164	(6.8)
Agency Type			36-39	331	(13.8)	Lieutenant	58	(2.4)
Primary State Police	113	(4.7)	40-43	274	(11.4)	Captain	33	(1.4)
Sheriff's Office	8,801	(33.4)	44-47	237	(9.9)	Major	8	(0.3)
County Police Dept.	45	(1.9)	48-51	149	(6.2)	Colonel	1	(0.0)
Municipal Police Dept.	1,369	(57.1)	52-55	89	(3.7)	Deputy Chief	33	(1.4)
Special Police Dept.	46	(1.9)	56 or older	113	(4.7)	Chief	272	(11.3)
Constable	13	(0.5)	Missing	341	(14.2)			
Tribal Police Dept.	11	(0.5)				Function		
Regional Police Dept.	0	(0.0)	Years of Service			Patrol & Street Level	1,806	(75.3)
			0-2	324	(13.5)	Line/Field Supervisor	245	(10.2)
Region of United States			3-5	249	(10.4)	Management	347	(14.5)
Northeastern States	188	(7.8)	6-8	142	(5.9)			
Midwestern States	511	(21.3)	9-11	146	(6.1)	Arresting Agency		
Southern States	1,327	(55.3)	12-14	112	(4.7)	Own Employer	391	(16.3)
Western States	372	(15.5)	15-17	98	(4.1)	Not Own Employer	2,007	(83.7)
			18-20	92	(3.8)			
Sex			21-23	41	(1.7)	Criminal Case Disposition		
Male	2,279	(95.0)	24-26	44	(1.8)	Conviction	1,239	(51.7)
Female	119	(5.0)	27 or more years	44	(1.8)	Non-Conviction	511	(21.3)
			Missing	1,106	(46.1)	Unknown	648	(27.0)
Officer Duty Status								
On-Duty	1,018	(42.5)						
Off-Duty	1,380	(57.5)	Type of Crime (not mutually exclusive)			Employment Outcome		
			Violence-Related	1,173	(48.9)	Lost Job	1,734	(72.3)
Official vs. Individual Capacity			Sex-Related	625	(26.1)	Suspended	448	(18.7)
Official Capacity	1,168	(48.7)	Profit-Motivated	582	(24.3)	Kept Job	216	(9.0)
Individual Capacity	1,230	(51.3)	Alcohol-Related	406	(16.9)			
			Drug-Related	296	(12.3)			

Table 3. Bivariate Relationships (*N*=15,200)

	φ
	Rurality
Officer: Male Sex	0.023**
Officer: On-Duty	0.039***
Arresting Agency	0.116***
Official Capacity	0.034***
Drug-Related Crime	0.035***
Alcohol-Related Crime	-0.037***
Sex-Related Crime	0.040***
Violence-Related Crime	-0.024**
Profit-Motivated Crime	0.026***
Officer Suspended	-0.115***
Lost Job	0.082***
Criminal Conviction	0.031***

*p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.01; ***p ≤ 0.001

**Table 4. Binary Logistic Models Regressing Job Loss and Criminal Case Disposition on Predictors (*N*=15,200)**

	Outcome: Lost Job		Outcome: Criminal Conviction	
	Odds Ratio	SE	*Odds Ratio*	SE
Rurality	1.437	0.054***	1.093	0.059
Officer: Male Sex	1.079	0.073	1.165	0.089
Officer: On-Duty	2.071	0.042***	1.107	0.045*
Arresting Agency	1.252	0.041***	1.105	0.046*
Drug-Related Crime	2.574	0.077***	2.159	0.082***
Alcohol-Related Crime	0.822	0.052***	1.947	0.063***
Sex-Related Crime	5.350	0.055***	2.889	0.054***
Violence-Related Crime	1.230	0.045***	0.791	0.050***
Profit-Motivated Crime	3.144	0.060***	2.349	0.065***
Constant	0.511	0.086***	0.964	0.102

*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$

Conclusions

- The criminal arrest cases of rural officers are significantly different than those of urban officers.

- Multivariate analysis revealed the outcomes of criminal arrests of law enforcement officers may be more complex than we initially expected.

- It is likely that our data do not show the full story of rural police crime. Our data only capture criminal arrest cases. Any crime/misconduct handled informally are not included in our data.

- Unique methodology of examining police crime is needed due to the lack of official data. These methods produce significant findings further proving the need and importance of data and research about this topic.

- Our study shows the importance of examining community-contexts of police crime/misconduct.

Thank you!

BGSU. | POLICE INTEGRITY RESEARCH GROUP

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Henry A. Wallace
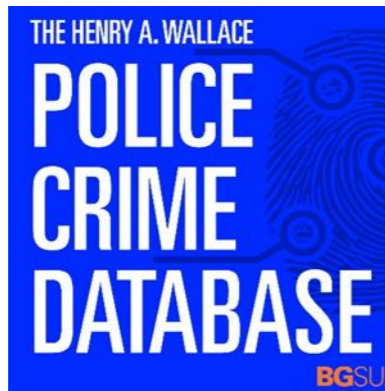
Police Crime Database

https://policecrime.bgsu.edu/

Police Integrity Research Group

Twitter: @bgsuPoliceCrime

Instagram: @bgsuPoliceCrime

Chloe Wentzlof

cawentz@bgsu.edu