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**Law Enforcement Shift Schedules:
Results of a 2005 Random National Survey of Police Agencies**

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The Police Foundation is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting innovation and improvement in policing. Established in 1970, the foundation has conducted seminal research in police behavior, policy, and procedure, and works to transfer to local agencies the best new information about practices for dealing effectively with a range of important police operational and administrative concerns. Motivating all of the foundation's efforts is the goal of efficient, humane policing that operates within the framework of democratic principles and the highest ideals of the nation.

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This report and others from the Police Foundation shift length experiment are available at www.policefoundation.org/shiftexperiment/.

Introduction

Many police agencies throughout the U.S. have adopted variations on the traditional five-day, eight-hour/day work schedule. Compressed schedules (longer hours over fewer days weekly) have become increasingly attractive to both police agencies and police personnel for a variety of reasons. However, there is no known national source that indicates the extent to which compressed schedules have been implemented. Therefore, as part of a larger study about the impact of various shift schedules on safety, health, performance, and quality of life,¹ the Police Foundation conducted a random phone survey of police agencies. The purposes of this phone survey, conducted in November, 2005, were to determine the proportion of agencies having various shift schedules (e.g., 8-, 10-, or 12-hours in length) for their field patrol officers and the extent to which agencies still employed rotating shifts.

Methodology

The sample was drawn from the *2000 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies* (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics). A total of 300 county, township, and municipal (city, town) police departments with 50 or more sworn members were randomly selected. There were 289 respondents (96.3%); eleven agencies did not respond to repeated phone calls during the week of the survey, and two others were excluded from the analysis due to the fact that they had fewer than 50 sworn members at the time, resulting in 287 cases for final analysis. A total of 57.1% of the total 289 respondents were from smaller agencies (between 50 and 100 sworn officers), 28.4% were from mid-sized agencies (101 to 200 sworn officers), and 13.8% were from larger agencies (201 sworn members or more) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents Based on Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Number of Responding Agencies (%)
< 50	2 (0.7)
50 to 100 (small)	165 (57.1)
101 to 200 (medium)	82 (28.4)
201 + (large)	40 (13.8)
Total	289 (100)

Eleven (3.7%) of the 300 sampled agencies did not respond to the survey.

¹ *The Shift Length Experiment: What We Know About 8-, 10-, and 12-Hour Shifts in Policing*, is available at www.policefoundation.org/shiftexperiment/.

Results

Shift Length

As illustrated in Table 2, the most prevalent shift length across all agency sizes was the traditional, 8-hour shift (40.1%), followed by the 10-hour shift (27.2%) and 12-hour shift (24%). Additionally, our survey showed that a small proportion of agencies (5.9%) do employ multiple shift lengths for their patrol officers. Perhaps not surprisingly, less traditional schedules like 9-hour and 11-hour workdays were very uncommon, less than 3% overall.

Shift Length by Agency Size

As shown in Table 2, the 10-hour shift was most common (35%) in the larger agencies, although the 8-hour shift was employed almost as often (32.5%). While 12-hour shifts are increasingly attractive to many, our survey suggests that they are most likely to be implemented in smaller agencies; 28.5% of smaller agencies have adopted such schedules, whereas just 19.5% of the medium and 15% of the larger departments have done so.² Finally, the adoption of multiple shifts was most common in the larger agencies (12.5%) as shown in Table 2, possibly due to the greater flexibility of having more staff.

Table 2. Distribution of Shift Length by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	8 HR Agencies (%)	9 HR Agencies (%)	10 HR Agencies (%)	11 HR Agencies (%)	12 HR Agencies (%)	Multiple^a Agencies (%)	Total
50 to 100 (small)	68 (41.2)	3 (2.0)	37 (22.4)	--	47 (28.5)	10 (6.1)	165 (58.5)
101 to 200 (medium)	34 (41.5)	2 (2.4)	27 (32.9)	1 (1.2)	16 (19.5)	2 (2.4)	82 (28.6)
201 + (large)	13 (32.5)	--	14 (35.0)	2 (5.0)	6 (15.0)	5 (12.5)	40 (13.9)
Total	115 (40.1)	5 (1.7)	78 (27.2)	3 (1.0)	69 (24.0)	17 (5.9)	287

^a Agency has a combination of shift lengths (8-, 9-, 10-, 11-, and/or 12-hour shifts)

² Actual shift lengths were reported by departments, and we applied rounding as follows: schedules of 7.5 to 8.4 hours were classified as 8-hour tours; 8.5 to 9.4 hour tours were considered 9-hour shifts; 9.5 to 10.4 were considered 10-hour shifts; 10.5 to 11.4 were considered 11-hour tours; 11.5 to 12.4 were considered 12-hour shifts; and those with 12.5 to 13.4 were considered 13-hour shifts. There were no agencies who reported schedules of 13.5 or more hours.

Shift Rotation

We were surprised to find that the use of rotating shifts is still employed to a significant extent (46%), as shown in Table 3. However, shift rotation is most common among the smaller agencies (52.1%), and is less common among larger agencies (41.5% for mid-sized agencies, and just 30% for larger agencies). Furthermore, when considering shift rotation by agency size, fixed 8-hour shifts are most common for both small and medium agencies (see Table 4). However, for the larger agencies, there was an equal proportion of both fixed 8-hour and fixed 10-hour shifts (25% each).

Table 3. Distribution of Shift Type by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Fixed Shift Agencies (%)	Rotating Shift Agencies (%)	Total Agencies (%)
50 to 100 (small)	79 (47.9)	86 (52.1)	165 (58.5)
101 to 200 (medium)	48 (58.5)	34 (41.5)	82 (28.6)
201 + (large)	28 (70.0)	12 (30.0)	40 (13.9)
Totals	155 (54.0)	132 (46.0)	287 (100)

Table 4. Distribution of Shift Length and Type by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Shift Type	Shift Length						Total
		8 HR Agencies (%)	9 HR Agencies (%)	10 HR Agencies (%)	11 HR Agencies (%)	12 HR Agencies (%)	Multiple ^a Agencies (%)	
50 to 100 (small)	Fixed	39 (23.6)	1 (<1.0)	18 (10.9)	--	18 (10.9)	3 (1.8)	165
	Rotating	29 (17.6)	2 (1.2)	19 (11.5)	--	29 (17.6)	7 (4.2)	
101 to 200 (medium)	Fixed	20 (24.4)	1 (1.2)	17 (20.7)	1 (1.2)	8 (9.8)	1 (1.2)	82
	Rotating	14 (17.1)	1 (1.2)	10 (12.2)	--	8 (9.8)	1 (1.2)	
201 + (large)	Fixed	10 (25.0)	--	10 (25.0)	1 (2.5)	5 (12.5)	2 (5.0)	40
	Rotating	3 (7.5)	--	4 (10.0)	1 (2.5)	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	

^a Agency has a combination of shift lengths (8-, 9-, 10-, 11-, and 12-hour shifts)