Diversification in Law Enforcement
Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force
Anne Li Kringen, PhD

Current status of diversity in policing

Nationally, law enforcement agencies demonstrate limited diversity. National data on law enforcement personnel[1] show that law enforcement officers in the United States are:

- 65.7% White
- 10.4% Black
- 19.8% Hispanic
- 2.9% Asian
- 1.0% Native American

These percentages have not changed significantly in the last two decades. In Connecticut, agencies are[2]:

	All agencies	Large agencies[3]
White	84.1%	71.7%
Black	5.8%	11.9%
Hispanic	6.3%	15.5%
Asian	0.6%	0.6%
Native American	0.1%	0.04%

Why is diversity in policing important?

While it is easy to see through popular media that the public outcry after Ferguson and George Floyd includes calls for increased diversity in policing, public sentiment is not the only driving rationale supporting increasing diversity in policing.

What is diversity in policing?

Diversity[4] in policing is generally discussed along two dimensions. The first is racial diversity, and the second is gender diversity. While racial diversity has recently received substantial attention, gender diversity is also an important consideration. Underlying racial and gender diversity is the idea of ideological diversity.

Racial diversification

Racial diversification in policing carries several substantial benefits. While limited evidence has supported differences in outcomes between White and Black officers, a recent study[5] that now reflects the best available evidence on the subject shows that:

- Black and Hispanic officers use less force than White officers.
- Black and Hispanic officers make fewer stops and fewer arrests than white officers. This reflects a greater reliance on community interaction and problem solving.

In addition to these advantages, racial diversity also relates to representative bureaucracy, the idea that government should reflect the characteristics of the governed.

Gender diversification

Gender diversification in policing carries similar benefits. Studies have shown that female officers:

- Use less force than male officers[6]
- Use less coercion[7]
- Receive fewer complaints and engage in less misconduct[8]

In addition to these benefits, female officers are better at communication and de-escalation and enhance perceptions of procedural justice[9].

Ideological diversity

Together the benefits of racial and gender diversification support improved police/community relationships and police legitimacy. As well, a diversification supports ideological diversity or the inclusion of many points of view. Police agencies generally do not foster diversity in thinking due to strict command structure, adherence to authority, an institutional culture. Diversity supports different perspectives when framing problems and proposing solutions, two benefits that might help police agencies transform.

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[1] Reaves, 2019
[2] Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics 2013
[3] Reporting agencies that serve a population more than 100,000: Bridgeport, Hartford, Middletown, New Haven, Stamford, Waterbury
[4] While diversity is a larger concept incorporating principles of inclusivity for other marginalized groups, studies of diversity in the policing context are generally limited to the categories traditionally measured within police organizations.
[5] Knox et al., 2021
[6] Knox et al., 2021; Schuck et al., 2005
[7] Paoline et al., 2004
[8] Corsianos, 2011
[9] Novich et al., 2018