

# Careers: Police officer or detective

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Police officers in Brooklyn, New York. Photo by: NYPD

Police officers protect people and property. They chase and catch people who break the law. Detectives investigate crimes. They gather facts and collect evidence.

## State And Local Law Enforcement

**Uniformed police officers** look for signs of crime. They may search and arrest criminals.

**State police officers** are called state troopers or highway patrol officers. They do many of the same things as police officers. They may spend more time enforcing traffic laws. They can work anywhere in the state. They often help police in rural areas or small towns.

**Transit and railroad police** patrol railroad yards. They also patrol train and bus stations. They protect property, workers and passengers.

**Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs** work for counties. Sheriffs are usually elected by the people. They do the same work as a local police chief. Some sheriffs' departments mainly run the county jails. They also guard local courts.

**Detectives** collect evidence for criminal cases. They take part in raids and arrests. Detectives usually specialize in one type of crime.

**Fish and game wardens** patrol fishing and hunting areas. They also look into complaints and accidents.

## **Federal Law Enforcement**

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents work for the government. They investigate national crimes. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents enforce drug laws. Secret Service officers guard the president and the vice president. Federal Air Marshals protect airplanes. U.S. Border Patrol agents protect the country's borders.

## **Work Environment**

In 2014, there were about 806,400 police officers and detectives.

Police and detective work can be hard and stressful. They work at crime and accident scenes. They deal with death and suffering. Still, many officers like helping members of their community.

## **Injuries And Illnesses**

Police have very high rates of injury and sickness. It can be a dangerous job. They can be shot by criminals or hurt during car chases.

## **Work Schedules**

Police usually work full time. They may work at night or early in the morning. The public must be protected at all times.

## **Education**

Police and detectives must graduate from high school. Many police departments require a college degree. Others want officers to take at least some college classes. Knowing a foreign language is helpful.

## **Training**

Officers usually attend a training academy. They learn about state and local laws. They also learn about the U.S. Constitution, civil rights and police ethics.

Detectives usually start as police officers. Military or police experience is helpful.

## **Advancement**

To get promoted, officers must take a written test. They also must do their job well. Officers can become detectives.

## Important Qualities

Officers must have good communication skills. They should also write well.

They must understand people. They also must be willing to help the public.

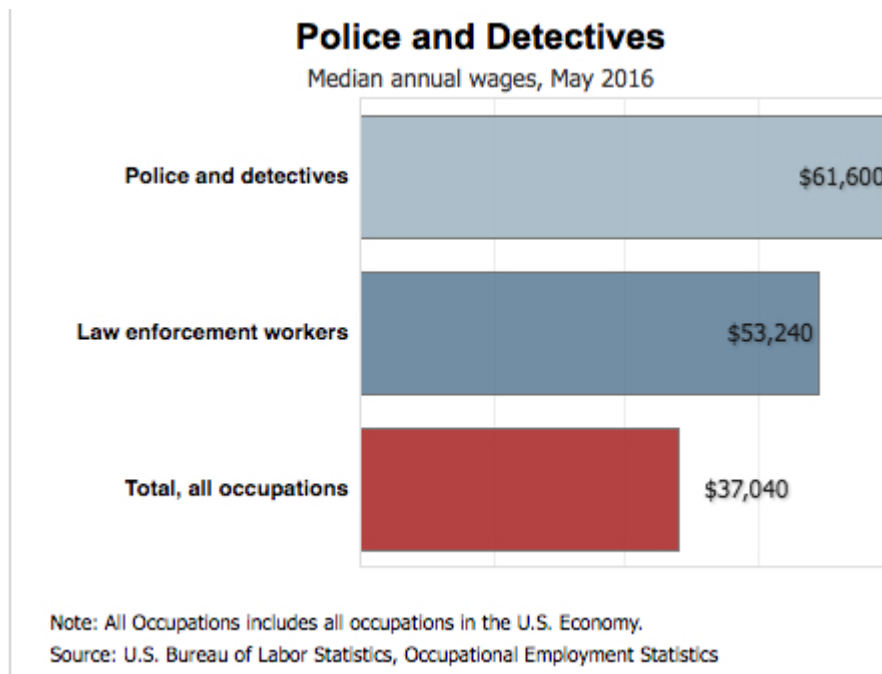
Officers must be good at solving problems.

Police officers must be good leaders. The public looks to them for help in emergencies.

Officers and detectives must be in good shape. They have to be strong to catch criminals.

## Pay

The median annual wage for police and detectives was \$61,600 in 2016. Half of the police and detectives earned more than that amount. The other half earned less. Some detectives earn more than \$100,000.



## Job Outlook

Experts think the number of police jobs will go up. But, it won't go up as fast as jobs in other fields.

People with a college degree will have the best chance of becoming an officer. Military and police experience is also good. Knowing another language is a plus when trying to get a job as an officer.

## Quiz

- 1 Read the paragraph from the section "Education."

*Police and detectives must graduate from high school. Many police departments require a college degree. Others want officers to take at least some college classes. Knowing a foreign language is helpful.*

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

- (A) Where do most police officers get their college degrees from?
  - (B) What does a person need to do to become a police officer?
  - (C) How many college classes should a police officer take?
  - (D) Which foreign language should police officers learn to speak?
- 2 Which sentence from the article describes a skill that police officers need?

- (A) Police officers protect people and property.
- (B) Still, many officers like helping members of their community.
- (C) To get promoted, officers must take a written test.
- (D) Officers must be good at solving problems.

- 3 Look at the photograph at the top of the article.

Which detail from the section "Important Qualities" does the photograph show?

- (A) Officers must have good communication skills.
- (B) They should also write well.
- (C) Officers and detectives must be in good shape.
- (D) They have to be strong to catch criminals.

- 4 Look at the graph near the section "Pay."

How does the graph show the MAIN idea of that section?

- (A) It shows that the annual wage for law enforcement workers is more than it used to be.
- (B) It shows that all occupations together earn more than law enforcement workers.
- (C) It shows that half of police and detectives earn more than \$100,000 per year.
- (D) It shows that police and detectives earn more than other law enforcement workers.

