

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

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Introduction

Many police agencies throughout the U.S. have adopted variations on the traditional five day, 8-hour/day work schedule. Compressed schedules (longer hours over less days weekly) have become increasingly attractive to both police agencies and police personnel for a variety of reasons. However, there is no known 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, the Police Foundation conducted a random phone survey of police agencies. The purpose of this phone survey, conducted in November 2005, was 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 287 respondents (95.6%); 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 less than 50 sworn members at the time. A total of 58.5% of the respondents were from smaller agencies (between 50 and 100 sworn officers), 28.6% were from mid-sized (101 to 200 sworn officers), and about 14% were from larger agencies (201 sworn members or more) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Shift Length by Agency Size

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

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

Results

As illustrated in Table 1, the most prevalent shift length was the traditional, 8-hour shift (40.1%). However, for the larger agencies, the 10-hour shift was most common (35%). It is interesting to note that in these larger agencies, the traditional, 8-hour shift is used almost as often (32.5%) as the 10-hour shift. 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 mid-sized and 15% of the larger departments have done so.

Surprisingly, rotating shifts are still employed to a significant extent (46%) as shown in Table 2. Again, these types of shifts are most common among the smaller agencies (52.1%), and become less common with increasing agency size (41.5 and 30% respectively). Indeed fixed 8-hour shifts are most common across all agency types (see Table 3) however, our survey showed that for the larger agencies, both fixed 8-hour and fixed 10-hour shifts are equally popular (25% each).

Table 2. Distribution of Shift Type by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Total (%)	Fixed Shift (%)	Rotating Shift (%)	No Response
50 to 100	165 (58.5)	79 (47.9)	86 (52.1)	7
101 to 200	82 (28.6)	48 (58.5)	34 (41.5)	2
201 +	40 (13.9)	28 (70.0)	12 (30.0)	2
Totals	287 (100)	155 (54.0)	132 (46.0)	11

Table 3. Distribution of Shift Length and Type by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Shift Type	Shift Length						Total
		8 HR (%)	9 HR (%)	10 HR (%)	11 HR (%)	12 HR (%)	Multiple* (%)	
50 to 100	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	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 +	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)	

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

Additionally, our survey showed that while some agencies do employ multiple shift lengths for their patrol officers, that this was most common in the larger agencies (12.5%) as shown in Table 1, possibly due to the greater flexibility of having more staff. Finally, even less traditional schedules like 9 hour and 11 hour work days were very uncommon; less than 3% overall.