



PSO Newsletter

April 2026

Our newsletter features

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We regularly update our [website](#) and our [LinkedIn](#) page. Please follow us and invite interested contacts to do so as well. Those interested may sign up for the PSO Newsletter by contacting PSO.info@msu.edu.

Partner Publications

Policing as a Second Career: Recruiting Applicants Over 30 Years of Age

Jennifer C. Gibbs, Pennsylvania State University

This work sheds light on an often overlooked but promising solution to police staffing challenges: recruiting adults aged 30+ who pursue policing as a second career. The research shows that older applicants bring deeper life experience, stronger decision-making skills, and more mature communication abilities, making them excellent candidates for modern policing.

Police Staffing Shortages, Public Awareness, and Policy Preferences

Hunter M. Boehme, University of South Carolina; Joshua McCrain University of Utah; Scott M. Mourtgos and Brandon Tregle, University of South Carolina

This work explores the public's attitudes toward ongoing police staffing shortages. The findings from the pre-registered informational vignette survey experiment suggest that it was not the identity of the messenger but the content of the message about the downstream effects of police staffing shortages that influence the public's concern.

Smarter Police Recruitment that Strengthens Retention

Ethan Humphrey and Narelle Hickmon, Michigan State University

This work argues that, while recruitment tactics like sign-on bonuses might offer immediate relief to an understaffed agency, they ultimately fail to address the root causes of the staffing problems. It offers several strategic, multi-goal-oriented approaches to recruitment that can deliver long-lasting impact by simultaneously improving retention.

Emotional Intelligence, Policing, and the Military Veteran Influence

Elizabeth A. Quinby, Clarke University; Irick A. Geary, Jr., University of South Carolina; Matthew W. Logan, Texas State University; Ian T. Adams, University of South Carolina, and Kyle D. McLean, Clemson University
This work examines emotional intelligence (i.e., emotional self-awareness and emotional other-awareness) among military veterans employed as police officers. Using survey data from two large law enforcement agencies, the study finds that veteran officers reported higher emotional intelligence than their non-veteran counterparts.

Financial Incentives for Police Recruitment and Retention: Perceived Effectiveness and Tradeoffs

Jeremy M. Wilson, Michigan State University; Clifford Grammich, Birdhill Research and Communications

This work examines how social exchange theory shapes police recruitment and retention. The authors asked police practitioners to rate the perceived effectiveness of 29 'financial tactics,' finding that practitioners rated increases in pay and retiree benefits as the most effective strategies for improving police recruitment and retention.

PSO Perspective: Tradeoffs of Lowering Minimum Education Requirements for Police Staff

Ethan Humphrey and Jeremy Wilson, Michigan State University

This work highlights the benefits and drawbacks of lowering minimum educational requirements to increase police officer applications. The authors also highlight several examples of agencies that have received significant increases in applications since lowering minimum education requirements.

Motivation, Burnout, and Resignation: A Longitudinal Study of Law Enforcement Officers

Shahidul Hassan, The Ohio State University; Bradley E. Wright, University of Georgia; Darwin A. Baluran, Washington University; Daniel B. Baker, Appalachian State University

This work explores how public service motivation and burnout are related to police officer turnover over time. The findings suggest that public service motivation can help mitigate the effects of challenging periods in policing and dampen burnout-related resignation pressures.

PSO Perspective: Managing the Demand Element of the Staffing Crisis

Ethan Humphrey, Michigan State University

This work discusses different strategies for managing the "demand" side of the policing workload. It argues managing calls for service demands can be just as critical for workforce stability and requires a less resource-intensive complement to staffing efforts.

Anticipated Stigma and Burnout: The Impact of Concerns about Being Perceived as Racist Among Law Enforcement Officers

Shahidul Hassan, The Ohio State University; Bradley E. Wright and Justine E. Tinkler, University of Georgia

This work explores how negative stereotypes are related to heightened anxiety and stress among law enforcement officers, potentially contributing to their burnout. In light of the threat of negative stereotypes, the study identifies strategies to protect officer well-being and improve retention.

PSO Perspective: Online Company Reviews Affecting Officer Recruitment and Retention

Toby Miles-Johnson, Western Sydney University

This work discusses how online company reviews are a valuable source of information that can help understand police officer recruitment and retention.

Workplace Demands, Resources, and Well-Being Among Police Staff Working in Forensic Services

Jacob J. Keech and Jacqueline M. Drew, Griffith University

This work explores occupational stress among police staff working in forensic services. Drawing on survey and interview data, the study sheds light on the occupational and organizational factors that predict stress-related outcomes.

PSO Ponderings

PSO Ponderings is a new series that highlights our partners through short, interview-style conversations. Each feature explores a partner's research and perspectives on key issues in police staffing. Here we highlight Dr. Jessie Huff, Assistant Professor at the University of Cincinnati, and Major T.J. Geary, Operations Bureau Commander with the University of South Carolina Division of Law Enforcement and Safety .



Dr. Jessie Huff

What project or study are you currently most excited about?

Right now, I'm most excited about a statewide study on police recruitment and retention in Ohio that I'm working on with several colleagues. Staffing shortages are a major concern for agencies, and many communities are turning to bonuses to recruit and retain officers. A key part of this project is a retention bonus experiment that allows us to examine whether these incentives actually influence officers' decisions to stay. Much of the existing research is correlational, so we're excited to provide more causal evidence about whether this is an effective funding strategy. The study also includes analyses of staffing data, organizational surveys, and interviews with officers across the state, giving us a more complete picture of what's driving retention and turnover. We're finalizing the report now and looking forward to sharing the findings with both researchers and practitioners at the upcoming American Society of Evidence-Based Policing conference.

How do you hope your research will be used by agencies or communities?

I hope my research helps police agencies create better, more supportive work environments for their personnel. Officers are at the core of any department, and the way they are treated at work can shape both their performance and their interactions with the community. I want this work to inform how police leaders think about recruitment, retention, and organizational practices, and to ensure those approaches are grounded in evidence. I also hope it informs funders at the state and federal levels, since policing

represents a major public investment. Ideally, the research helps ensure resources are being used in ways that truly support officers and improve organizational effectiveness.

How do you navigate translating complex research into actionable insights for practitioners?

I think translation works best when practitioners are involved from the beginning, so the research questions reflect what actually matters in practice. When sharing results, I focus on being clear and concise by using a one-page summary that lays out the question, briefly explains the approach, and emphasizes the findings, what they mean, and what agencies can do next. Visuals like charts can help communicate patterns quickly, especially for people who are busy and may not read lengthy reports. I've seen this approach lead directly to change, including agencies using findings to adjust training practices. Beyond direct partnerships, it's also important to share work through outlets and conferences where practitioners are already looking, because research can't make a difference if it doesn't reach decision-makers.

What innovations or methods do you hope researchers adopt more widely?

I'd like to see more experimental designs in police staffing research, since it allows us to better understand what actually works rather than just what is associated with certain outcomes. I also hope researchers continue to adopt mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative data with qualitative insights, because that's often where the nuance of organizational life becomes clear. Relatedly, implementation science approaches are especially valuable because they help us understand not just whether an intervention works, but whether it's feasible and how it functions in real-world settings. Police organizations are complex, and our methods should reflect that complexity.

What motivates you to keep exploring this area of research?

I'm motivated to keep studying police staffing because I want police organizations to be better places to work. Policing has a significant impact on communities, and attracting and retaining good people is a big part of that. Over the years, I've seen talented officers and research partners leave policing because they felt unsupported or unable to make meaningful change, and that's difficult to watch. It reinforces the importance of research that focuses on organizational context and workplace conditions. Ultimately, I want this work to help make policing a sustainable, supportive career where people feel valued and able to stay and grow.



Major T.J. Geary

What project or study are you currently most excited about?

The project I'm most excited about grew out of a practitioner-researcher program that paired me with Gabrielle O'Keefe, where we focused on officer wellness and academy success. In South Carolina, we're in a unique position because we operate a single, centralized academy, which allowed us to examine how factors like mental health, resilience, and ACE scores relate to academy outcomes. What motivated this work was a long-standing question from my experience in policing: how do we separate what stressors officers bring into the job from what they accumulate over time? We've since expanded this into a five-year longitudinal study that follows officers from their first day at the academy through the early years of their careers. The goal is to better understand how early

experiences, support structures, and agency context shape officer health, retention, and long-term success.

How do you hope your research will be used by agencies or communities?

My hope is that this research is used to support officers rather than screen people out. If we identify factors that affect academy success or early career outcomes, I want agencies to think about what interventions or supports can be put in place, not whether someone should be excluded. Ideally, the findings help academies and departments design training and wellness strategies that build resilience across the board, rather than targeting individuals. More broadly, I hope agencies take a more critical, evidence-driven approach when adopting new tools or programs. Whether it's wellness initiatives, training models, or technology, I want practitioners to ask better questions, remain appropriately skeptical, and think carefully about whether an investment will actually improve outcomes before committing limited resources.

What's something outside of academia or policing that influences how you think about your research?

Philosophy, particularly stoicism, has had a big influence on how I think about both research and policing. It's helped me ground myself during stressful periods at work and while going back to school, and it's reinforced the importance of humility and reflection. One of the ideas I come back to often is recognizing how little we actually know, and questioning assumptions that we take for granted. A question I always ask every time I teach a class is how do we know what we think we know? That mindset shows up in my research because I'm drawn to testing commonly accepted beliefs and asking whether something is truly a best practice or simply a common one. Policing is demanding both intellectually and emotionally, and having a philosophical framework helps me stay focused on resilience, curiosity, and asking better questions rather than clinging too tightly to certainty.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone considering a career in policing or public safety, what would it be?

I think the most important trait for someone entering policing is a commitment to being a lifelong learner. It's easy to reach milestones in this profession and feel like you've figured things out, whether that's graduating the academy, finishing field training, or getting promoted. But policing is constantly changing, from law and tactics to public expectations and working conditions. Every shift can present something new, and assumptions that once held true may no longer apply. If you approach the job as a student of the profession, stay curious, seek out training, and remain willing to challenge your own thinking, you'll be far better equipped to adapt and grow over the course of a long career.

What would a well-staffed, well-supported department look like from an officer's perspective?

In an ideal world, a well-staffed department would allow officers to spend more time training and preparing than reacting call to call. High-performing professions emphasize continual practice, yet policing often places officers in demanding roles for long hours with minimal ongoing training. Realistically, that kind of model requires resources most agencies don't have, but even incremental changes matter. That might mean protected training time during the workweek, more frequent but shorter training sessions, team-based training with supervisors, and schedules that account for fatigue and recovery. Support also means creating enough staffing flexibility to absorb the unexpected, whether that's court, special events, or emergencies, so officers are not constantly operating at their limits.

Is there a book, podcast, or resource that has shaped your leadership or outlook?

I read broadly and regularly, and I try to keep a mix of audiobooks, physical books, and digital reading going at all times. One podcast I frequently recommend is Jerry Ratcliffe's *Reducing Crime* podcast because it does a great job bridging research and practice, bringing together scholars and practitioners to discuss real-world problems. As for books, *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius has had a lasting influence on me. It wasn't written for an audience, but as a private journal, and that honesty really resonates. Seeing someone in an incredibly powerful position wrestle with many of the same challenges we face today is a reminder that uncertainty, leadership strain, and societal tension are not modern problems. There's a lot of perspective and humility to be gained from that.

Professional Activities

Meisenholder wins Professional Staff Award

Congratulations to Tanya Meisenholder for receiving the Professional Staff award at the 2026 National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) conference! The award recognizes individuals who contribute meaningfully to their agency and the broader policing profession and demonstrate leadership and professionalism in their role.

Gruenewald Appointed Chair in the Department of Sociology & Criminology at University of Arkansas

Congratulations to PSO Partner Jeff Gruenewald on his appointment as Department Chair in the Department of Sociology & Criminology at University of Arkansas!

Adams wins Emerging Policing Scholar Award

Congratulations to PSO Partner Ian T. Adams for receiving the Academy of Criminal Justice Science's 2026 Emerging Policing Scholar Award! This award highlights exceptional early-career scholars who demonstrate strong potential and meaningful contributions to policing research.

Gibbs Elected Secretary of Police Section

Congratulations to Jennifer C. Gibbs on being elected as Secretary of the Academy of Criminal Justice Science Police Section! Her three-year term runs from 2026 – 2029.

Gibbs Participates in Podcast on Police Training

PSO Partner Jennifer C. Gibbs, along with Dr. Emily Strohacker, recorded a Police In-Service Training podcast on the topic of police training for recognizing human trafficking. To listen to the podcast, see <https://www.buzzsprout.com/2413505/episodes/18543609>

Call for Abstracts for Iceland Policing Conference

The Police Science Research Center at the University of Akureyri, Iceland invites abstracts for its 9th Policing in Society Conference. The conference will be held September 30 and October 1, 2026. For more information, see <https://www.unak.is/english/upcoming-events/loggaesla-og-samfelagid-2026>

New Partners

The PSO welcomes three new partners: David Shepherd, Ph.D., Jeff Rojek, Ph.D., and Scott Wolfe, Ph.D.



Dr. David Shepherd is a senior lecturer in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at University of Portsmouth. Following a career in engineering, Dr. Shepherd moved into research and teaching in economic crime: white-collar crime, fraud, bribery, corruption, intellectual property crime, economic espionage, and cyber variants. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, David's research encompasses organisational characteristics, compliance, offender behaviour, prevention, policing, law enforcement and justice.



Dr. Jeff Rojek is an Associate Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. He received his Ph.D. in criminology and criminal justice from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Jeff's research focuses on policing, police practitioner-researcher partnerships, intelligence led-policing, violent crime, law enforcement response to disasters, officer decision-making, officer safety and police training, and anti-counterfeiting.



Dr. Scott Wolfe is a Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. Additionally, he is the Director of the Michigan Justice Statistics Center. Scott received his Ph.D. in criminology and criminal justice from Arizona State University. His research focuses on policing, organizational justice, and criminological theory and has been funded by organizations such as the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Bureau of Justice Assistance.

For further information on MSU PSO Partners, see <https://cj.msu.edu/community/psu/directory>

Newsletter Archive

Our newsletters are online. Click [here](#) to read the most recent or previous issues.

About the Michigan State University Police Staffing Observatory

The Police Staffing Observatory (PSO) is a global collaborative of academics, scholars, practitioners, and students working with Michigan State University to promote evidence-based police workforce research,

strategy, and operations. Its primary aims are to advance police workforce knowledge and its application by

- Conducting timely and innovative research on critical aspects of a wide-range of police staffing issues, resulting in scholarly and practitioner-oriented publications
- Creating a venue for the network of police staffing scholars to share opportunities, discuss ideas, and enable collaborations
- Facilitating researcher-practitioner partnerships and technical assistance
- Serving as a repository and dissemination vehicle for the research of collaborators so that it is easily discoverable by practitioners and others.

The PSO conducts research and outreach across the staffing system:



Through its facilitation of research and outreach, the PSO is a community of science that ultimately serves as a valuable resource for the community of practice.