
UNDERSTANDING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF THE NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT



A Report by

THE CENTER FOR SOCIETY, LAW AND JUSTICE
and

THE SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER
at the

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS



January 5, 2004

Introduction

The sworn officer strength of the New Orleans Police Department has reached a critical point. Total force strength has declined every year since 2000, and is currently at 1,610 officers. The serious manpower shortage that the NOPD is now experiencing is threatening the basic ability to respond timely to citizen complaints and continue the concerted effort to further reduce crime in our City.

A sufficiently staffed and high quality police force is fundamental to the NOPD's ability to protect and service the citizens of New Orleans. As such, a streamlined and efficient recruiting process is essential to meeting manpower goals for the Department.

However, recruiting quality applicants is only half of the manpower equation. Equally important are efforts aimed at helping to retain officers that the Department has trained and developed. The ability to retain these officers is paramount to the future success of the Department. According to the findings of this study, critical to retention is that officers be paid commensurate to other large cities with high crime, know that promotional opportunities promised to them will be granted, be able to achieve higher educational goals, and be trained and equipped to the highest quality possible. These issues must be addressed to stem the tide of attrition that is threatening the crime fighting abilities of the NOPD.

This report identifies both the recruiting and retention needs and challenges that NOPD is currently facing. It depicts an understaffed department that is losing officers at a much faster rate than they can be replaced. This current attrition crisis is occurring at a time when the City's murder rate is increasing and gun violence is a daily occurrence for far too many.

A manpower shortage is threatening the NOPD's crime fighting abilities.

The ability to retain officers is paramount to the future success of the NOPD

The NOPD is currently losing officers at a much faster rate than they can be replaced.

The report will shed light on the factors influencing officer recruitment and attrition. Through surveys of current NOPD officers as well as those who have since resigned, a better understanding of why officers leave and what would influence them to stay has emerged. When available, comparative data is also presented to show how NOPD compares with other cities and police forces similar in size and crime rate.

Some of the major findings of this report include:

Crime and Perceptions of Crime in New Orleans

- According to NOPD, from January to September 2003, overall crime in New Orleans declined compared to the same time period last year; however, murder increased by 17%.
- Despite a declining crime rate, there is increasing public concern over crime in New Orleans. From 2000 to 2003, the number of people perceiving crime to be increasing in New Orleans increased from 15% to 67%.
- According to a recent (November, 2003) survey, Orleans Parish voters believe that the most important way to reduce crime is to have more police.

There is increasing public concern over crime in New Orleans

Orleans Parish voters believe that having more police is the most important way to reduce crime

NOPD Manpower and Attrition

- The NOPD has consistently suffered declines in overall force strength every year since 2000, and from 2001 to 2003, there has been an 18% decline in the number of officers assigned to the eight police districts.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

- The NOPD lags behind many other cities in the number of officers per capita.
- There has been a 154% increase in the number of resignations from the NOPD from 1999 to 2002.
- The NOPD has a higher attrition rate than many other cities and is losing officers disproportionately to voluntary resignation as compared to retirement.
- From 1999 to 2002, 78% of resigning officers left after only less than 5 of service, over half served 2 years or less.
- Only 12% of those who apply to the NOPD make it through the testing, screening and training necessary to be hired as an officer.
- The NOPD is currently losing more officers than it recruits. If manpower losses continue to outpace gains, NOPD force strength will continue to decline each year.

From 1999-2002, there has been a 154% increase in the number of resigning officers.

Officer Dissatisfaction and the Current Climate of NOPD

- Almost thirty percent of the newest and youngest officers say they expect to leave the NOPD within five years. This means that the Department will continue to suffer significant losses among the younger officers.
- 44% of the officers who responded to the survey said that their next career move is to leave the

44% of officers report their next career move is to leave NOPD.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

NOPD. There seems to be no end in sight to the manpower problems facing the Department.

- Low pay, the residency requirement (primarily among whites), dissatisfaction with promotions, working conditions, and unfairness/dishonesty emerge throughout the survey as the main reasons officers would consider leaving.
- The climate of the NOPD is very poor as indicated by perceptions of morale. Perceptions of morale do not vary by rank or by length of service; even the newest officers believe moral is low.
- Over half of the officers who responded said they would not re-join the NOPD knowing what they do now. This was a more common response among officers with more than four years of service, indicating that time in the NOPD tends to reduce satisfaction with the job.
- Senior officers are also more dissatisfied with the promotions process and see more unfair and inconsistent treatment. Thus, the younger, newer officers are exposed to the more cynical views of their seniors.
- Nearly all white officers oppose the requirement, and 62% of black officers also oppose it. Among the black officers, it is the youngest and those with least seniority are most opposed to the residency requirement.

Police morale in the NOPD is extremely low.

Over a majority of both white and black officers oppose the residency requirement.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Taken together, the aggregate and survey data show a troubled Department. The NOPD will continue to lose officers at an unacceptable rate unless some of their sources of discontent are addressed.

Crime in New Orleans and the Fight for Our City

Superintendent Compass and the men and women of the NOPD have worked aggressively to sustain and improve upon the historic gains achieved in reducing crime and improving quality of life in New Orleans. Integral to this effort, Superintendent Compass has initiated several major programs, including a witness-protection and support program, targeted programs for our City's at-risk and disadvantaged youth, and programs involving partnerships with the clergy from all denominations. In addition, NOPD has formed collaborations with the State Police, Orleans Parish District Attorney, US Attorney and other federal agencies to implement projects such as Operation Safe Streets and Project Safe Neighborhood.

The results of these aggressive crime fighting efforts are promising. Based on statistics supplied by the NOPD, in 2002, violent crime decreased by 22% and property crime dropped by 12% compared to 2001. According to this year's first through third quarter crime statistics (January - September), violent crime has declined 6% and nonviolent crime declined 14% compared to the same period last year. Despite the decreases in overall crime, the 2003 crime statistics show that particular crimes against citizens - murder and rape - have increased compared to the same period last year.

**Despite decreases
in overall crime,
murder and rape
have increased
compared to
2002.**

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

New Orleans Police Department Reported Crimes for the 1st through 3rd Quarters, 2002 and 2003			
	Jan.-Sept. 2002	Jan.-Sept. 2003	% Change
Murder	181	211	+17%
Rape	130	149	+15%
Armed Robbery	1,143	1,068	-7%
Simple Robbery	384	360	-6%
Aggravated Assault	1,701	1,523	-10%
Violent Crime Totals	3,539	1,523	-6%
Burglary	3,606	3,479	-4%
Theft	11,288	9,145	-19%
Auto Theft	5,779	5,201	-10%
Non-Violent Crime Totals	20,673	17,825	-14%
Overall Crime Totals	24,212	21,136	-13%

Source: New Orleans Police Department, Technical and Support Bureau, Information Systems and Services Division

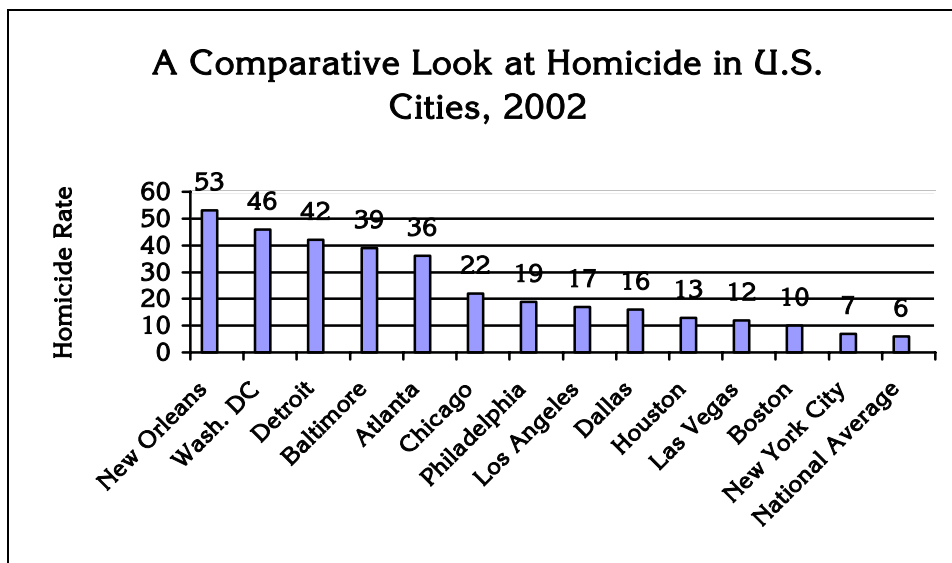
Since crime in New Orleans reached an historical high of 61,799 incidents in 1990, UCR crimes had decreased 49.7% by 2002 (31,025 incidents) according to NOPD statistics. Yet, New Orleans cannot become complacent with its current level of crime. Despite the large decrease in overall crime over the last 12 years, New Orleans remains one of the more violent cities in the country, ranking 31st in violent crime among cities with populations of 250,000 or more in 2002.¹

**New Orleans
cannot become
complacent with
its current level of
crime as it re-
mains one of the
more violent cit-
ies in America.**

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Particularly alarming is homicide in New Orleans. Murder is the most troubling of crimes and is often viewed as indicative of a larger crime problem. New Orleans has consistently faced one of the highest homicide rates of any city in the United States. Over the last 10 years, over 3,000 people have been murdered in the City. In 2002, New Orleans had the highest homicide rate among cities of 250,000 population or more.

In the last 10 years, over 3,000 people have been murdered in New Orleans.



Source: 2002 FBI Uniform Crime Reports. Homicide rates are the number of homicides per 100,000 people. The cities selected all have populations over 250,000.

As the table above illustrates, New Orleans has a murder rate that is over 7 times higher than that of New York City and 9.5 times higher than the national average. For New Orleans to have a murder rate on par with New York City's, our city would have to record only 36 homicides per year. This is 221 fewer murders than the 257 recorded in 2002. Also alarming, is that murder in New Orleans is on the rise, registering increases every year since 1999. As of November 10, 2003, 237 people have been murdered in New Orleans this year, compared to 208 murders in the same time period last year. This is an increase of 14%. Projecting year end totals based on these numbers yield a homicide rate of approximately 60 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest since 1996.²

In 2002, New Orleans had a murder rate 9.5 times higher than the national average.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Homicide in New Orleans 1996-2003			
Year	# of Homicides	Homicide Rate	% Change from previ- ous year
1996	351	72.0	
1997	266	54.7	-24.2%
1998	230	48.8	-13.5%
1999	159	33.9	-30.8%
2000	203	43.3	+27.6%
2001	212	44.0	+4.4%
2002	257	53.1	+21.2%
2003	237		+14%
	(as of 11/10/03)		(compared to same time period last year)

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 1996-2002, NOPD Technical Services Bureau for 2003 total.

Concomitant with an increase in homicide has been a high amount of gun violence in New Orleans. A total of 1,643 guns have been seized by the NOPD from January to October 2003 alone.³ Guns account for the overwhelming majority of murders committed in New Orleans. In 2002, 88% of the City's homicides were shootings by firearm.

With crime often come the companion problems of fear, reduced quality of life, population loss and economic decline. The table below presents a comparative look at selected economic indicators for the city, state and nation as a whole. These data show that New Orleans lags behind both the State and Nation in household income, poverty and unemployment.

**Homicide in
New Orleans
has increased
every year
since 1999.**

**Guns account for
the overwhelming
majority of mur-
ders committed
in New Orleans.**

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

New Orleans, Louisiana and U.S. Economic Indicators, 2000			
	New Orleans	Louisiana	United States
Median household income	\$27,133	\$32,566	\$41,944
People living in poverty	28%	20%	12%
% Unemployed	5.5%	4.3%	3.7%

Source: Greater New Orleans Community Data Center

Public perceptions of crime in New Orleans between 1994 and 2000 had become increasingly more positive, going from 94% of people perceiving crime as increasing in 1994 to 15% perceiving crime as increasing in 2000. However, despite an eight year reduction in reported crime, public concern over crime is increasing. From 2000 to 2003, the percentage of people perceiving crime as increasing in New Orleans quadrupled from 15% in 2000 to 67% in 2003.

The percentage of people perceiving crime as increasing in New Orleans quadrupled from 2000 to 2003.

Perceptions of Crime In New Orleans, 2000, 2002, 2003			
	2000	2002	2003
% perceiving crime as increasing	15%	31%	67%
% perceiving crime as remaining the same	26%	32%	26%
% perceiving crime as decreasing	57%	36%	4%

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center's Quality of Life Surveys and November 2003 Orleans Parish Citizen's Survey.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

In addition to more people perceiving crime to be increasing, 57% of surveyed voters in November 2003 report that they do not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods at night.

**57% of people
report that they
do not feel safe
in their
neighborhood at
night.**

While crime in New Orleans has fallen every year since 1996, public opinion on crime is now starting to diverge from these decreases. It is common for public opinion on crime to not closely match actual crime rates. However, it can be argued that in some ways it is public opinion that really matters since this is the perceived quality of life. Research shows that opinions on crime can be influenced by many more factors than the overall crime rate. Such factors may include seeing nightly news coverage of violence and homicides (which are on the rise), seeing fewer officers patrolling the neighborhood, and seeing more incivility, or “broken windows” type of infractions (which cannot be as rigidly enforced with a manpower shortage).

The survey results, when compared to 2000 and 2002, demonstrate that Orleans parish voters have become more concerned about crime. When asked to name the most important thing the city can do to reduce crime in New Orleans, over 30% of voters responded that having more police is the number one priority. “More police” was the most common free response answer among blacks, and among whites having more police was tied with “improving the quality of life” as the number one priority. Increasing the size of the NOPD is clearly a priority for New Orleans citizens as they perceive crime to be increasing and are fearful in their neighborhoods at night.

**Increasing the
size of the
NOPD is a top
priority for New
Orleans citizens.**

**Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges
of the New Orleans Police Department**

Most Important Thing To Do To Reduce Crime (Free Response)			
	ALL	RACE	
		Black	White
More police	31%	32%	30%
Tougher penalties and enforcement	12%	13%	12%
Improved quality of life	22%	17%	32%
Eliminate corruption	3%	2%	4%
Better quality police	2%	1%	5%
Drugs off streets	9%	12%	4%
Can do nothing	6%	8%	4%
Other	13%	15%	10%
Total	462	293	169

Source: University of New Orleans Survey Research Center's November 2003 Orleans Parish Citizen's Survey

Doing More with Less, A Decline in NOPD Manpower

The NOPD serves 486,157 residents in an area of 181 square miles and currently employs 1,610 sworn police officers. This is 275 officers below the Department's short-term goal of 1,885 sworn officers for the NOPD.

The race and ethnic breakdown of the NOPD demonstrates a department that is becoming more similar in composition to the City it serves. This reflects a commitment by the Department to bringing minorities on the force to ensure the NOPD is representative of the community it serves.

NOPD and City of New Orleans Racial and Ethnic Composition			
	City of New Orleans	NOPD 2002	NOPD 2000
Blacks	67.3%	54.9%	52.1%
Whites (Non-Hispanics)	28.1%	41.5%	45.1%
Other	4.6%	3.4%	2.8%

Source: Human Resource Division, New Orleans Police Department and 2000 Census

In addition, women now comprise 16.4% of NOPD sworn officers; this is 1.5% more than in 2000 and 6.2% more than in 1993. These numbers show that an effort has been made to bring the race and gender composition of the NOPD more in line with that of the City. The NOPD however, is a department suffering manpower shortages and high attrition. The NOPD has been suffering declines in force strength every year since 2000.

The NOPD has suffered declines in force strength every year since 2000.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

NOPD Sworn Strength, 2000-2003

	Total Force Strength	Recruits*	Total Commissioned Officers
2000	1,704	103	1,601
2001	1,652	105	1,547
2002	1,621	103	1,518
2003	1,610	71	1,539

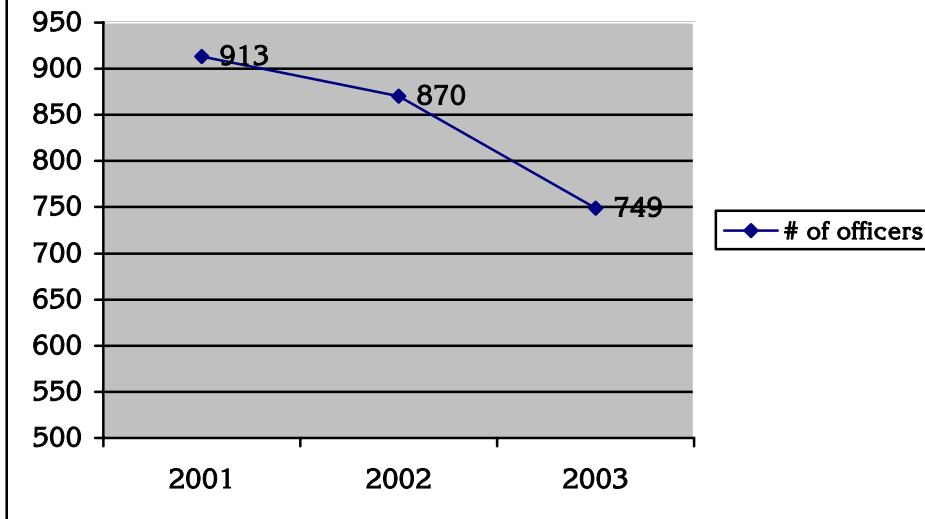
*The data in this table reflect the number of officers classified as recruits who are either in the academy or in field training for each of the listed years.

Source: NOPD annual reports.

Each of the eight Districts has suffered sharp declines in their force strength over the last three years. Overall there has been an 18% decline in officers assigned to the Districts since 2001. There were 913 officers assigned to the Districts in 2001; currently there are fewer than 750 officers in these assignments. Such a loss of manpower impedes the ability to proactively police the community and forces officers to assume a more reactive strategy to policing.

Manpower losses impede the NOPD's ability to proactively police the community.

NOPD Officers Assigned to the Districts, 2001-2003



Source: NOPD Manpower Reports. This chart reflects the number of officers (including supervisors and PO's) assigned to each of the eight districts in August of 2001, 2002 and 2003.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

The manpower decline in the NOPD has caused a situation forcing the remaining officers to increase their already heavy workloads to make up for the shortages. Demands placed on existing personnel and resources can be better understood by examining the dispatched calls for service statistics which show that in 2002 alone there were 303.5 calls for service per NOPD officer. However, this average underestimates the demand on patrol officers' time since it is computed based on the total number of officers on the force instead of the number of patrol officers available to respond to calls for service.

It is estimated that less than half of the total force serve in assignments that require them to respond to calls for service. A more accurate estimate is that there were approximately 566 calls per service per responding officer in 2002. This estimate is based on the number of officers assigned to the districts (870 in August of 2002). This, however, is a very conservative estimate because not all officers assigned to the districts initially respond to calls for service (for example, District Commanders, detectives, proactive task force officers and most lieutenants respond to calls only when the situation demands or a responding officer requests their presence).

New Orleans lags behind many other cities in officers per capita. As the table below shows, while New Orleans ranks first in murder rate of cities of 250,000 or more inhabitants, it has only half of the officers per capita as does Washington DC, a city also struggling with a high murder rate.

The decline in NOPD manpower has forced officers to increase their workloads to make up for the shortages.

New Orleans lags behind other cities in the number of officers per capita

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

A Comparative Look at Force Strength and Homicide in Selected Cities

	Number of Offi- cers per 1,000 people	2002 Homicide Rate	2002 Homicide Ranking
New Orleans	3.14	53	1
Washington D.C.	6.31	46	2
Detroit	4.34	42	3
Baltimore	5.64	39	4
Atlanta	3.52	36	5
Chicago	4.71	22	10
Philadelphia	4.88	19	13
Los Angeles	2.42	17	16
New York City	4.97	7	46

Source: LRIS, Officer Wage and Benefit Survey, 2002, FBI 2002 Crime in the United States

According to the 2001 NOPD Plan of Action, the force strength goal for NOPD should be a ratio of four officers for every 1,000 New Orleans residents, comparable to the ratio deployed by other large cities in the nation.⁴ This Plan of Action called for increasing the size of the NOPD from 1,735 officers to 2,000 officers to improve NOPD's ability to drive down crime. Unfortunately, each year since the publication of that Plan of Action, the City has moved further and further away from this goal of 2,000 officers.

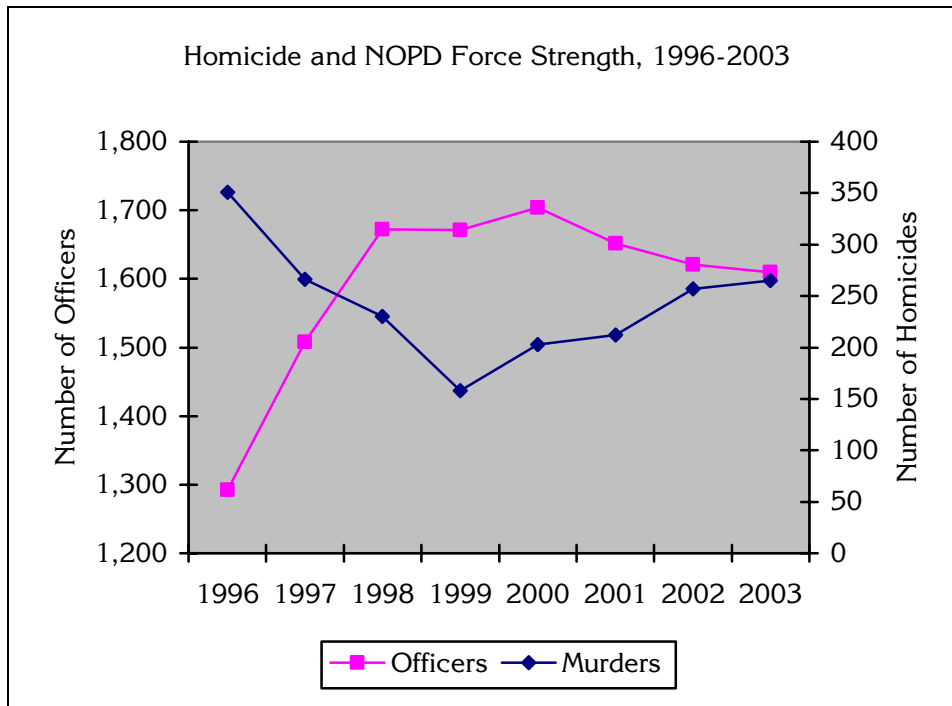
The 2001 NOPD Plan of Action stated that increasing officer strength could lead to greater reductions in crime in the City. Other police officials have echoed the effect of force strength on crime, arguing that the declining number of cops on the streets have contributed to slight increases in the number of homicides, rapes and burglaries over the past two years.⁵

**A 2,000 officer
force strength
could improve
the NOPD's
ability to drive
down crime.**

As indicated in the chart below, as the number of NOPD officers has increased, the number of homicides in New Orleans has decreased,

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

and vice versa. Although no direct causal relationship can be made between the number of officers and the number of homicides, the trends below suggest that the number of homicides in New Orleans may be related to the force strength of the NOPD.⁶



Officer Attrition and the Shrinking NOPD

The NOPD is a shrinking department. Since 1999, the NOPD has consistently seen an increase in the number of officers resigning from the force. From 1999 to 2002, a total of 527 officers left the force, 291 officers resigned voluntarily and 144 officers retired, the remainder were dismissals or medical leaves. 102 officers have separated from the department in 2003 alone (as of 11/12/03). Officers are leaving at a rate that is outpacing recruiting efforts and hiring. The recent history of NOPD attrition is a troubling one that demands immediate action to prevent the department from falling to dangerously low levels of manpower in a city so in need of police services.

**NOPD officers
are leaving at
a rate that is
outpacing re-
cruiting and
hiring.**

The attrition rate is calculated as the percentage of officers leaving the force for any of the three following reasons: voluntary resignation, retirement and dismissal. From the period of 1999 to 2002, the average yearly sworn strength of the NOPD was 1,662 officers and the average yearly number of separations was 132. This results in an attrition rate of 8% for this four year time span.

When viewed in comparison with other agencies, the NOPD's attrition rate appears high. A 2001 report funded by the National Institute of Justice in which 1,270 police agencies were surveyed on issues of retention and recruitment found that smaller law enforcement agencies (those serving populations of fewer than 50,000) had an average attrition rate of 7% while larger agencies (those serving populations of over 50,000) averaged a 5% attrition rate. These are both lower than the NOPD's four year attrition rate of 8%.⁷

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

A Comparative Look at Officer Attrition		
	Large Agencies Sur- veyed in NIJ Report	NOPD
Attrition Rate	5%	8%
Reasons for Separation		
Retirement	49%	26%
Disability	5%	4%
Dismissal	9%	15%
Voluntary	36%	55%

Source: Koper, Christopher S. (2001) *Hiring and Retention Issues in Police Agencies* and Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

The above table also illustrates that NOPD officers differ markedly from the selected large agencies in terms of reasons for their separation from the force. While the NOPD sees the majority of its separations due to voluntary resignations (55%), the large agencies in this study did not. Instead, these large agencies experience most of their separations in the form of retirements (49%).

While the NIJ study provides one of the most comprehensive pictures of officer attrition available, the data is outdated and it groups agencies with an average of 361 sworn officers into the “large” agency category. To better understand how New Orleans currently compares to specific and similar large urban police departments, the NOPD conducted a small survey of selected departments.⁸ The table below presents the findings from this survey.

**The NOPD loses
more officers due
to voluntary resig-
nations than to
retirements.**

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Officer Attrition in Selected Cities, 2000-2002			
	Average # of Officers	Average # of Separations	Attrition Rate
New Orleans	1,659	145	9%
Boston	2,196	73	3%
Baltimore	2,712	142	5%
Washington, DC	3,645	200	5%
Los Angeles	9,029	538	6%
Detroit	4,143	286	7%
St. Louis	1,439	103	7%

Source: Data gathered from survey responses of selected police departments.

Of the cities responding to the NOPF retention survey, New Orleans has the highest attrition rate. Also, the NOPD's attrition rate increases when calculated based on 2000-2002 (9%) as compared to the 1999-20002 average attrition rate (8%).

It is evident from the above tables that the NOPD is dealing with an attrition rate that is higher than many of its peers. To better understand NOPD attrition, it is best to analyze individual officer resignations and retirements. By examining at each of these, the source of NOPD attrition can be better understood.

**The NOPD has a
higher officer at-
trition rate than
many of its peers.**

Resignations

As previously mentioned, 291 officers separated voluntarily, or resigned (which does not include retirements and dismissals) from the NOPD from 1999 to 2002. There were 100 resignations in 1999 and 2000 and 191 in 2001 and 2002.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Officers Resigning from the NOPD, 1999-2002

Year	# Resigning	% change
1999	35	
2000	65	+86%
2001	102	+56%
2002	89	-13%
Total	291	

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

Since 1999, there has been a 154% increase in the number of resignations from the force. A large majority of these resigning officers (78%) left the force after only less than 5 years of service. Over half (54%) served for two years or less.

Since 1999, there
has been a 154%
increase in the
number of officers
resigning from the
NOPD

Years of Service for Resigning Officers, 1999-2002

	# of officers re- signing	% of Total resignations
Less than one year	73	26%
1 year	39	14%
2 years	40	14%
3 years	45	16%
4 years	24	8%
5 or more years	62	22%
Total	283*	100%

* The total of 283 represents the total number of resignations for which length of service can be determined. There were 291 resignations in all for this time period.

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

From 1999 to 2002, for officers who resigned, the median age at their date of appointment was 25, while the median age at the date of their resignation was 29.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

In comparison, departing NOPD officers serve a much lower tenure with the department than do officers in other large police agencies. According to the 2000 Police Hiring and Retention Survey, 67% of departing officers serve 5 or more years with their department, while only 48% of departing NOPD officers do.

A Comparative Look at Officer Tenure: Length of Tenure of Departing Officers in Large Agencies and NOPD

	Large Agencies	NOPD
% serving 5 years or less	33%	52%
% serving more than 5 years	67%	48%

Source: Koper, Christopher S. (2001) *Hiring and Retention Issues in Police Agencies* and Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

This indicates that NOPD may in many cases be serving simply as a training ground for officers who then move on to other agencies. Having such a large number of officers leaving the force after only a few years of service places a strain on the department, not only in terms of lost manpower, but also in terms of resources. It is evident the NOPD is not receiving an adequate return on the investment it makes in recruiting and training.

The racial breakdown of officer resignations indicates that, as a whole, whites and blacks are leaving the force in similar numbers. Blacks comprise 45% and whites 49% of officers resigning from the NOPD between 1999 and 2002. The number of blacks resigning from the NOPD has increased every year since 1999.

With so many officers leaving after only a few years of service, NOPD is not receiving an adequate return on the investment it makes in recruiting and training.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Resignations by Race, 1999-2002

	White	Black	Other	Total
1999	21	8	4	33
2000	34	26	4	64
2001	53	40	5	98
2002	31	52	5	88
Total	139 (49%)	126 (45%)	18 (6%)	283*

* The total of 283 represents the total number of resignations for which race can be determined. There were 291 resignations in all for this time period.

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

Retirements

The number of officers retiring from the NOPD has remained relatively stable over the last 5 years. From 1999-2002, the median age of retirement for an officer was 51, while the median length of service for retiring officers was 27 years.

Officers Retiring by Year and Race, 1999-2002

	Total # Retiring	Total White Retirees*	Total Black Retirees
1999	27	24	3
2000	39	33	6
2001	34	23	11
2002	44	34	10
Total	144	114	30

* The totals reflect the number of White and Hispanic retirees.

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

The data reveal that NOPD is losing nearly twice the number of officers through voluntary resignations as compared to retirements. This is disturbing in what it implies: many officers do not view the NOPD as an organization in which to build a career. Instead, NOPD may be being viewed as a “training ground,” “place to start,” or a “holding place until something better comes along” among officers.

The data indicate that officers do not view the NOPD as an organization in which to build a career.

Recruitment

The Recruiting Process

The process of becoming a New Orleans police officer is multifaceted. In order to become a New Orleans police officer, a potential candidate starts by completing an application with the Civil Service Commission. Applicants who meet the necessary qualifications are then scheduled to take an entrance exam. After passing the Civil Service exam, applicants then enter into a screening process including interviews and background checks.

According to the NOPD Recruitment Division, as recently as five years ago, the screening process was taking an average of 74 working days, a lengthy process that led to large backlogs of potential recruits waiting to be processed. The NOPD has worked hard to reduce this backlog and now processes applicants through the screening in an average of 45 working days. Once a recruit passes the screening process and is accepted by the NOPD, he or she must then wait an additional 30 days to be processed by the Civil Service Commission.

The recruit is then appointed to the NOPD and is temporarily placed into a division until the next training academy class begins. Academy classes generally are commenced once approximately 50 recruits are ready to be trained. The NOPD usually conducts two training sessions per year, one in the Spring and one in the Fall, each lasting 22 weeks. Upon graduation from the training academy,

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

the recruit undergoes field training for 16 weeks. After completion of this field training, the recruit officially becomes an officer (PO-I).

Increasing NOPD Manpower through Recruitment

The NOPD has worked hard to recruit qualified and dedicated individuals to the force. As a result of these efforts, the NOPD has been successful in enrolling into the academy an average of 104 officers per year from 1999 to 2002. Between 1999 and 2002, the median age at hiring date for new recruits was 25.

of New NOPD Recruits Enrolling in the Academy*, 1999-2002

Year	Number of Recruits
1999	66
2000	147
2001	97
2002	104

*Yearly recruit totals will vary depending on which data is presented. Some estimate recruit totals by year of appointment, others report recruit data based on class totals. These numbers differ for each year. For example, some recruits are placed into an academy class months after their official date of appointment, allowing for a recruit to be appointed in 2001 but placed in a class in 2002. For the purposes of this study, recruiting totals are based on number of recruits entering the academy each year, and not the number of recruits hired each year. There is some attrition from the moment recruits are hired to when they actually enter an academy class

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

While the totals above reflect the number of recruits entering the training academy each year, it does not truly depict the scope of the problem. Many who apply do not make it through the entire process to become a police officer. In fact, for every 10 applicants, the NOPD only gains approximately 1 officer. The winnowing down of potential candidates is presented in the table below.

**For every 10
applicants, the
NOPD only
gains ap-
proximately
one officer.**

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

NOPD Applicant, Recruit, and New Hire Totals 1999-2002					
	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
Applicants	583	745	851	754	2,933
Applicants Tested	476	593	690	605	2,364
<i>(% of applicants)</i>	<i>(82%)</i>	<i>(80%)</i>	<i>(81%)</i>	<i>(80%)</i>	<i>(81%)</i>
Recruits entering Academy*	66	147	97	104	414
<i>(% of those tested)</i>	<i>(14%)</i>	<i>(25%)</i>	<i>(14%)</i>	<i>(17%)</i>	<i>(18%)</i>
Recruits graduating from Academy	50	110	88	95	343
<i>(% of recruits who entered academy)</i>	<i>(76%)</i>	<i>(75%)</i>	<i>(91%)</i>	<i>(92%)</i>	<i>(83%)</i>
% of applicants graduating	9%	15%	10%	13%	12%
*These totals refer to individual recruits entering the academy. This does not include recruits that entered one class and for various reasons are recycled into a later class.					

Source: Civil Service Commission Records; Personnel Division and Education and Training Division, New Orleans Police Department

From 1999 to 2002, only 12% of those individuals applying to become a police officer actually made it through the testing, screening, education and training necessary to be hired as an NOPD officer. This data illustrates the challenge the NOPD faces in recruiting qualified candidates to the force. Despite the best efforts to attract more applicants, the critical fact remains that only a small percentage of the applicant pool possesses the necessary qualifications and commitment to become a New Orleans police officer.

In order to boost force strength through recruiting, the NOPD must focus on attracting an even larger number of applicants that it cur-

Only a small percentage of the applicant pool possess the necessary qualifications and commitment to become an NOPD officer.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

rently does. In fact, in order to achieve the identified short-term goal of 1,885 sworn officers, the NOPD would have to attract well over 2,000 applicants. This is almost three times the number of candidates that apply to the NOPD every year.

The NOPD is not alone in the recruiting struggle, as there have been national accounts that the pool of qualified police candidates does not meet current demands.⁹ According to the 2000 Police Hiring and Retention Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, over two-thirds of large agencies surveyed reported that a lack of qualified applicants has caused some or much difficulties in finding officers to fill vacancies.¹⁰

To increase force strength, the NOPD would have to attract a larger number of applicants than it currently does.

The Recruiting/Attrition Dilemma

The NOPD must also effectively retain new recruits to sustain its force strength. This has been a challenge for the NOPD as 20% of officers recruited and hired since 1999 have actually left the force.

20% of NOPD officers hired since 1999 have since left the force.

Resigning Officers by Recruiting Class, 1999-2002		
Year	Total Recruits	Total that have since voluntarily resigned* (% of total recruits)
1999	66	16 (24%)
2000	147	41 (28%)
2001	97	17 (18%)
2002	104	8 (8%)
Total	414	82 (20%)
* These numbers reflect the total number of recruits that have since resigned as of August 2003.		

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

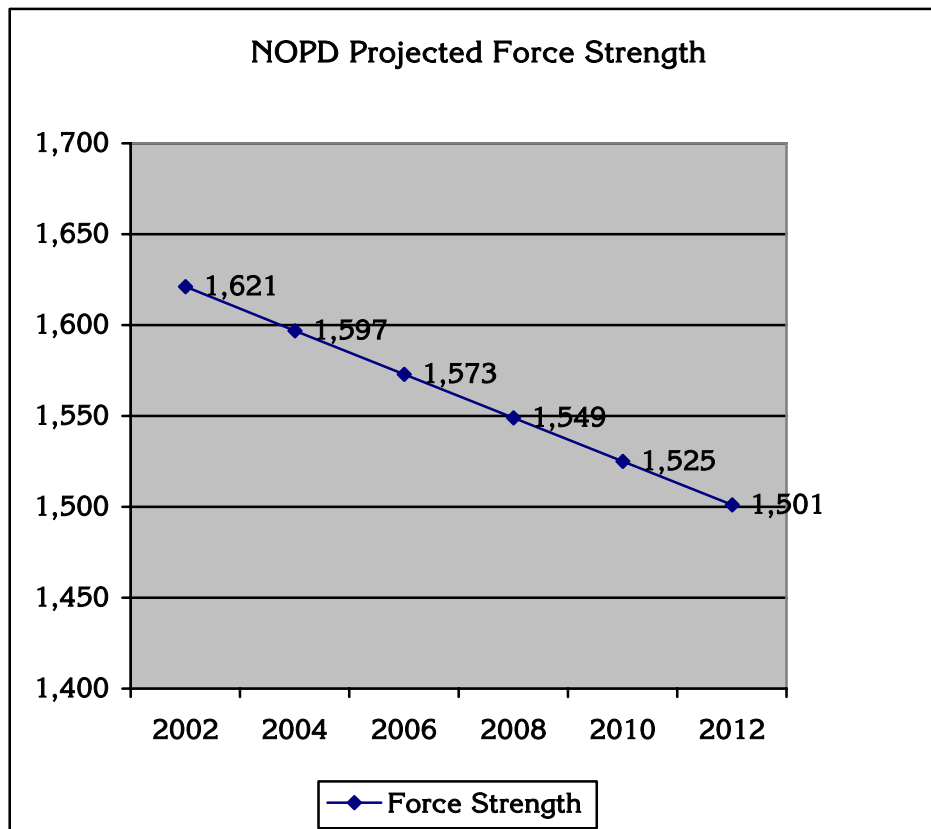
From 1999-2002, 82 of the 414 individuals who entered the academy during those years have since resigned. Of these, 61% were still classified as recruits when they resigned. The cost of just replacing the 82 officers who began the police academy since 1999 and who have subsequently resigned from the department is approximately \$3.7 million. This is based on an estimated \$44,665 cost for recruiting and training each officer.¹¹ Based on this figure, it would cost the City nearly \$13 million to replace all 291 officers resigning from the force since 1999.

It would cost the City nearly \$13 million to replace the 291 officers who have resigned since 1999.

The City cannot allow officer attrition to continue at the current rate, to do so will have serious consequences for officers who choose to remain on the force, the Department as a whole and the City it-

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

self. The NOPD is currently averaging a loss of 132 officers and a gain of 120 officers per year.¹² Based on these averages, the table below presents the projections of force strength if attrition and hiring continue at the current pace for the next 10 years.



If recruiting and attrition continue at their current levels, the NOPD will continue to suffer declines in overall force strength each year.

Understanding Why Officers Leave, A Survey of the NOPD

To better understand the factors that fuel officer dissatisfaction and willingness to leave the NOPD, the New Orleans Police Foundation commissioned a survey of NOPD officers conducted by the UNO Survey Research Center. Conducted in October of 2003, the survey was distributed to officers of all ranks at departmental roll calls. A survey report prepared by the UNO Survey Research Center is At-

tachment A of this study. The report describes the survey methodology and data and includes an in depth analysis of the major findings.

In addition to surveying officers currently on the force, this study also analyzed data from officers who have left the NOPD. The NOPD's Personnel Division distributes exit surveys to resigning officers. At the time of resignation, officers are given a form to complete that includes questions on reasons for resigning and suggestions on how to improve NOPD. As completing the exit survey is voluntary, only 164 of the 291 officers who resigned between the years of 1999 and 2002 elected to complete the survey.

Concerns and dissatisfaction with pay and benefits, promotional fairness and opportunities and the residency requirement were the most frequently mentioned issues in open-ended questions posed to resigning officers.

The emerging significant issues from the resigning officers' exit survey mirror those of the current officers' survey. Based on the findings of the 2003 Officers' Survey, pay, promotional opportunities and fairness and the residency requirement emerged as significant factors fueling officer discontent. The survey data, as presented in the attached survey report, points to these three factors as reasons officers may choose to leave the NOPD in the future. Guided by these findings, this report presents a closer look at these three factors and presents aggregate and comparative data when available.

Resigning officers report dissatisfaction with pay, promotional opportunities and the residency requirement as the most significant issues affecting their decision to leave NOPD.

Pay, promotional opportunities and the residency requirement are significant factors fueling current officer discontent.

Officer Pay and Benefits

One significant source of discontent emerging from the officers' survey was the overwhelming desire for better salaries and benefits. The survey results showed that:

- **75%** of officers responded that pay and benefits would be a very likely reason they would consider leaving the NOPD
- Of those officers reporting they anticipate leaving the NOPD, **51%** say the number one reason they are leaving is due to inadequate and low salaries
- **69%** of officers feel that the most important thing the NOPD could do to retain officers on the force is increase salaries and institute pay raises
- **89%** of officers responded that increasing pay and benefits was the number one or number two goal for NOPD in terms of their own job satisfaction

Comparative salary data shows that New Orleans lags behind many other cities in what it pays its police officers. As the table below shows, New Orleans ranks near the bottom of the selected cities in pay for new recruits and pay for officers after one year on the force.

**New Orleans
lags behind
other cities in
what it pays its
police officers.**

**Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges
of the New Orleans Police Department**

A Comparative Look at Officer Starting Salaries		
City	Current Starting Salary (as a recruit)	Increases After 1-5 Years
New Orleans	\$30,539	\$33,556 (after 1 year)
Washington DC	\$39,644	\$43,375 (after 18 months)
Atlanta	\$29,031	\$32,783 (starting salary for officer)
Baltimore	\$35,784	\$45,800 (within 5 years)
Philadelphia	\$33,861	\$36,211 (starting salary for officers)
New York City	\$34,514	\$54,048 (after 5 years)
Chicago	\$36,984	\$47,808 (after one year)
Los Angeles	\$47,710	\$49,631 (after one year)
Memphis	\$29,443	\$38,222 (after 1-2 years)

Source: Recruiting divisions of selected cities

Not only does New Orleans rank behind many other major cities across the nation, it ranks behind other local law enforcement agencies as well. NOPD recruits are not offered the highest starting salary for officers in our region, as the City of Kenner has raised its officer starting salary to \$36,165 which is \$2,609 more than what is offered by NOPD. The table below shows the difference in pay and benefits for New Orleans and Kenner police officers.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Starting Salary and Benefits Comparison New Orleans and Kenner			
New Orleans Police Department		Kenner Police Department	
Calendar Date	Annual Salary	Calendar Date	Annual Salary
Date of Hire (day 1)	\$30,539*	Date of Hire (day 1)	\$32,000
Day 365	\$33,556*	Day 365	\$36,165*
*This includes: \$25,508 base salary \$3,600 state supplemental pay \$500 uniform allowance \$931 City millage (amount depends on tax collected) **Salary after one year of service includes: \$28,525 salary (with 2.5% longevity increase) \$3,600 state supplemental pay \$500 uniform allowance \$931 City millage		* Salary additions at point of 1 year raise: \$675 annual raise \$3,600 annual state supplemental pay \$1,890 uniform allowance Additional benefits: - KPD officers who reside within City limits are given a take-home vehicle for an additional estimated savings of \$8,660, further increasing total salary package after one year to \$46,325.	

Source: NOPD, Office of Personnel: New Orleans Civil Service, City of Kenner, Police Department Recruiting Information, www.kenner.la.us/pol_carops.html.

In addition to Kenner, Baton Rouge also offers a higher salary for new officers on the force than New Orleans.

Recruit and Officer Starting Salaries New Orleans and Baton Rouge Police Departments			
New Orleans Police Department		Baton Rouge Police Department	
Calendar date	Annual Salary	Calendar date	Annual Salary
Day 1 (recruit)	\$30,539	Day 1 (recruit)	\$25,799
Day 365	\$33,556	Day 365	\$34,210

Source: Recruitment Division, BPD and NOPD

According to the NOPD, a \$2,000 salary increase for all police officers is budgeted for 2004. When this raise goes into effect, the

salary for officers who have served one year on the force will be \$35,556.

Residency

In 1973, the City of New Orleans passed a municipal ordinance that instituted a domicial requirement for all City employees. This “residency requirement” mandates that City employees (including NOPD officers) live within Orleans Parish. In accordance with the law, no applicant for police recruit can be hired unless he or she is a resident of Orleans Parish. Also, to be eligible for promotion, an NOPD officer must establish that his or her residence is in Orleans Parish. Those officers who were living outside of Orleans Parish at the time the domicile law was passed were allowed to continue to live outside city limits; however, in order to be eligible for a promotion they must move back into the City.

According to NOPD officers, the residency requirement is a significant factor inhibiting the recruitment and retention of officers.

According to the NOPD officers responding to the survey, the residency requirement is a significant factor in inhibiting both the recruitment and retention of officers on the force. The survey results demonstrate that:

- **79%** of officers oppose the domicial law requiring officers to live within Orleans Parish.
- **72%** of officers feel that the residency requirement is a major factor in the retention of NOPD officers.
- **82%** of officers feel that the residency requirement is a major factor in the recruitment of NOPD officers.

New Orleans is not the only city that imposes a residency rule on its police force. The table below provides a comparative perspective on residency in selected cities across the United States.

**Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges
of the New Orleans Police Department**

Residency Requirement for Police Officers		
City	YES	NO
New Orleans	☒	
Chicago	☒	
Atlanta		☒
Detroit		☒
Los Angeles		☒
Newark	☒	
Washington D.C.		☒
Baltimore		☒
Philadelphia	☒	
St. Louis		☒
Boston	☒	

Source: New Orleans Police Foundation Survey of Selected Cities

While New Orleans is not alone nationally, it does stand apart from other agencies in the metropolitan region on this issue of residency. Neither Jefferson Parish nor the City of Kenner has a residency law in place for its police officers. Baton Rouge and Lafayette do have residency restrictions in place for their officers; however, they are less restrictive than New Orleans' residency law.

Residency Requirements for Employees, New Orleans Region		
Agency	YES	NO
New Orleans Police Department	☒	
Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office		☒
Kenner Police Department		☒

**Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges
of the New Orleans Police Department**

Residency Requirements for Employees, New Orleans Region		
Agency	YES	NO
Baton Rouge Police Department	☒ (must live within 24 miles of geographic center of city)	
Lafayette Police Department	☒ (must live within 30 miles of Lafayette Parish Court House)	

Source: Recruiting Divisions of selected law enforcement agencies

While residency requirements have been challenged in the courts, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that they are constitutional.¹³ These requirements have been imposed by municipal charters, city council ordinances, administrative rules and state statutes in law enforcement agencies around the country.¹⁴

Proponents of residency laws for police officers and other municipal workers argue that requiring employees to live within the city adds to the City's revenues by providing a stable tax base and enhancing participation in the local economy.¹⁵ However, there are few studies that provide empirical tests of these arguments.

Residency supporters also contend that having police live in the city promotes a better police-community relationship. They argue that resident police officers have a better "feel" and concern for the true problems of the city.¹⁶ Also, residency supporters believe that requiring police to live within the city ensures that adequate manpower will be available in the event of an emergency or a major critical incident.

Opponents of residency requirements in general and New Orleans' in particular, argue that these types of laws are regressive policies. In the words of one residency opponent, "the residency requirement prevents the City from unifying as a regional entity and perpetuates

**Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges
of the New Orleans Police Department**

only stagnancy for New Orleans.” Opponents to residency requirements argue that economic development, environmental issues, transportation, public safety and quality of life are regional issues that should not be thought of in terms of political borders. As such, in supporting a residency policy that emphasizes isolation and boundaries, the city prevents itself from adopting a regional approach to solving common problems.

Much of the published research and literature on residency laws is anecdotal and non-empirically based. However, it is evident that residency requirements do restrict the labor supply by limiting the potential labor pool to a confined area and number of people. All individuals who live outside of the City and who would not choose to relocate to accept employment are excluded from consideration as an NOPD officer. For the NOPD, the job restrictions make it more difficult to recruit the necessary number of qualified applicants in order to keep force strength up to desired levels when factoring in the amount of officers who leave the force.

The majority of applicants to the NOPD are residents of the City of New Orleans when they apply. Only a very small number of applicants to NOPD are residents of other areas in the metropolitan region.

Place of Residence at Time of Application to NOPD	
Place of Residence	% of Applicants
New Orleans	61%
Metropolitan Region (Including: Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Plaquemines parishes)	5%
Louisiana (outside of New Orleans and the Metro Region)	2%
United States (outside of Louisiana)	17%

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

Place of Residence at Time of Application to NOPD	
Place of Residence	% of Applicants
Outside United States	2%
Unknown	12%

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

There are more people from outside of Louisiana that apply to become an NOPD officer than there are from the four parish metropolitan region combined. It is not evident why so few from the surrounding parishes are applying to the NOPD. However, the residency requirement may be one of the factors that act as an obstacle to attracting residents from the surrounding metropolitan region to apply with the NOPD.

Promotions and Career Advancement

Another major issue raised by officers responding to the survey is the need for a more equitable and predictable promotional policy. The findings of the NOPD officers' survey show that:

- **59%** of officers feel that the lack of promotional opportunities and fairness is a very likely reason they would consider leaving the NOPD

These survey findings are supported by previous NOPD analyses of this issue. In 2001, an NOPD Task Force on Promotions and Recruitment reported:

“The NOPD rank structure provides for four classifications of Police Officer, I through IV. At each step, officers are given a 2.5% raise for successful promotion. However, these promotions have not been given on a regular basis due to City budgetary constraints, and some officers have not been promoted at all since

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

they started in 1997. Many officers with four or less years of service who have left the department and who have been interviewed for this and other ongoing studies of the NOPD have indicated the lack of promotions as one of the main reasons for their willingness to leave.”¹⁷

The findings of this 2001 Task Force report still hold true today. As the table below shows, there has not been a single patrol officer (PO-I through PO-IV) promoted since 2001.

There has not been a single patrol officer promoted since 2001.

NOPD Promotions, 2000-2003				
	2000	2001	2002	2003
Police Officer I-IV	200	328	0	0
Sergeant	12	26	26	32
Lieutenant	14	9	10	12
Captain	6	2	11	4

Source: Personnel Division, New Orleans Police Department

There are currently 1,185 officers classified in the PO-I through PO-IV positions. Many of these officers have been employed with NOPD long enough to be eligible for a promotion to a higher PO classification and the resulting salary increase. For these officers, the opportunity to advance their career and salary will be a key factor in their decision whether or not to remain with NOPD.

The opportunity to advance one's career and salary will be a key factor in officers' decision whether to stay or leave the NOPD.

In the City's current difficult fiscal environment, NOPD is likely facing many budgetary constraints. This may mean that the Department has to make tough choices about how to spend its limited monies. If faced with a choice between allocating money for raises and step promotions and allocating money to allow for more overtime shifts, the Department may feel compelled to choose the later, especially due to the current manpower shortage.

It is critical that the NOPD address officer concerns regarding promotional opportunities and fairness, to neglect to do so will breed resentment and low moral within the ranks. Without an equitable and consistent promotional system, officers will become discouraged by the lack of opportunity to advance their careers within the NOPD, making them more likely to leave the force and seek employment opportunities elsewhere.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that NOPD is being depleted by a steady stream of resignations and retirements. With only 1,610 officers, the NOPD is coping with its smallest force size since 2000 and is moving further and further away from the goal of a 2,000 officer force strength. If recruiting and attrition are allowed to continue at the current pace, force strength will continue to decline and further threaten the NOPD's crime fighting abilities.

Endnotes

¹ According to the FBI's 2002 Crime in the United States, New Orleans ranked 31st among 71 cities with populations of 250,000 or more in violent crime.

² If murder in 2003 continues to outpace murder in 2002 by 14%, the projected 2003 murder total is 294, which computes to a murder rate of 60.4 per 100,000 residents.

³ "Murder Task Force Effective: Resources Poured into Deadliest Area" *The Times Picayune* September 25, 2003.

⁴ *Making New Orleans one of the Safest Big Cities in America: A Plan of Action for Securing the Gains while Removing the Threats to Further Crime Reduction.* June 28, 2001. Richard J. Pennington, Superintendent of Police.

⁵ "Federal, Local Cuts Pull Cops Off Streets" *USA Today* December 2, 2003. pg. A.01.

⁶ Without a multivariate analysis of the data controlling for the influence of other variables, we cannot be sure that a causal relationship between force strength and homicide exists.

⁷ Koper, Christopher S. (2001) *Hiring and Retention Issues in Police Agencies: Readings on the Determinants of Police Strength, Hiring and Retention of Officers and the Federal COPS Program.* Washington D.C.: Urban Institute.

⁸ The NOPF sent a one-page questionnaire to selected police departments. These questionnaires asked agencies to provide information on the total number of officers on the force, total number of separations and total number of officers hired for the years 2000 through 2002. Included in the table are the agencies that submitted responses to the NOPF.

⁹ *Law Enforcement News.* 2000. "Coast to Coast, Good Police Recruits Just Keep Getting Harder to Find." May 15:1,15.

¹⁰ Koper, Christopher S. (2001) *Hiring and Retention Issues in Police Agencies: Readings on the Determinants of Police Strength, Hiring and Retention of Officers and the Federal COPS Program.* Washington D.C.: Urban Institute. A report to the National Institute of Justice; Grant #NIJ 99-IJ-CX-001.

¹¹ A \$44,665 cost for recruiting and training each new NOPD officer was identified in Superintendent Pennington's 2001 Plan of Action.

¹² The estimate of average number of officers gained per year reflects the average number of hires, which includes those recruits who resigned or were dismissed before entering the academy.

¹³ In *McCarthy v Pennsylvania Civil Service Commission* (1976), the Supreme Court articulated the federal constitutionality of residence requirements and decided in favor of governmental units which seek to utilize these restrictions.

¹⁴ Hayford, S and Durkee, W. (1978) "Residency Requirements in Local Government Employment." *Labor Law Journal* 29 (June) pages 343-351.

Understanding the Recruitment and Retention Needs and Challenges of the New Orleans Police Department

¹⁵ Eisinger, P. (1983) "Municipal Residency Requirements and the Local Economy." *Social Science Quarterly* 64 (March) pages 85-96.

¹⁶ Smith, Dennis (1980) "Police Attitudes and Performance, the Impact of Residency." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* Vol. 15, No. 3, pages 317-334.

¹⁷ The Task Force on Promotions/Recruitment, A Proposal for Reengineering the Promotions Process and the Recruitment Process. Chaired by Captain Donald J. Curole, July 23, 2001.