

Women in policing: how does gender diversification in police organizations influence workplace experiences and policing outcomes?

Aim

To assess the effect of gender diversification on workplace experiences and policing outcomes.

Background

Police organizations have a reputation for cultural emphasis on masculinity, aggression, and physicality. This workplace culture can create conditions hostile to women, especially to women advancing into leadership positions. Diversification in policing has been argued as the solution to many problems in policing, both in terms of workplace experiences and organizational culture, as well as broader policing outcomes. Gender diversification has been related to policing outcomes such as reductions in disproportionate use of force and misconduct, building trust with communities, and adopting non-traditional policing tactics (Bergman et al., 2016; Black & Kari, 2010). Female police officers are less likely to use force and more likely to use non-aggressive communication approaches to resolve disputes compared to their male counterparts (Bergman et al., 2016). Some argue that more women in the police force can combat the existing male-dominated, aggressive policing culture and norms, leading to a better work environment and improved policing outcomes, including improved public perceptions. One important step in understanding organizational and other outcomes in policing is to evaluate when and why women stay or leave the police. More is needed to understand what individual and organizational factors are associated with retention among female police officers. In addition, women in leadership positions are considered particularly relevant for fostering changes to organizational culture, justice, and policies (Beaton et al., 2022), yet the number of women in police leadership positions remains low. Research on gender diversification in relation to police organizations so far has been concentrated primarily in the United States, where organizational culture, “family-friendly” policies, and policing norms may differ substantially from the Netherlands and other countries.

This project therefore aims to evaluate both the experiences of women in the police, as well as how they may shape organizational and public outcomes. More specifically, this project will have two main aims: First, this project will examine how organizational characteristics and the experiences of women in police relates to individual workplace outcomes, such as job satisfaction and retention. Second, this project will evaluate to what extent gender diversification and female leadership in the police are associated with workplace experiences as well as policing norms and outcomes, such as use of force, service quality, and public support.

Research design

This project will make use of secondary survey/register data in addition to a primary data collection component. Secondary survey data includes the Dutch Nationale Enquête Arbeidsomstandigheden (NEA) linked to register data of Statistics Netherlands. The survey provides information on job satisfaction, resignation intentions, and (adverse) experiences in the workplace for police employees. The PhD candidate will play a major role in collecting primary survey data from the police on team/leadership composition and organizational culture, which will subsequently be related to various policing outcomes.

Project

This project is part of the Stevin prize awarded to Tanja van der Lippe.

Literature

- Beaton, B., Todak, N., & Shjarback, J. A. (2022). The Benefits and Supervisory Styles of Women Police Leaders. *Feminist Criminology*, 155708512110661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15570851211066107>
- Bergman, M. E., Walker, J. M., & Jean, V. A. (2016). A Simple Solution to Policing Problems: Women! *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 9(3), 590–597. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2016.59>
- Black, P. J., & Kari, C. J. (2010). Policing Diverse Communities: Do Gender and Minority Status Make a Difference? *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice*, 8(3), 216–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377938.2010.502848>

Project initiators

Amy Nivette (UU), Isabelle van der Vegt (UU), Eva Jaspers (UU)

Location

Utrecht