

ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies often attempt to hire diverse recruits that are reflective of their community. Recruits should ideally possess high levels of fitness to complete academy training; however, sociocultural norms (e.g., health behaviors, health care access, etc.) could influence fitness. Limited research has detailed the fitness of recruits with different ethnic backgrounds. **PURPOSE:** To investigate fitness differences between law enforcement recruits of different ethnicities. **METHODS:** Retrospective analysis was conducted on data from 2041 recruits (1659 males, 382 females) from a southern Californian law enforcement agency. Recruits completed the following during the hiring process: 75-yard pursuit run (75PR); 60-s push-ups; 60-s arm ergometer revolutions; 60-s sit-ups; and 2.4-km (1.5-mile) run. Recruits self-reported their ethnicity as one of the following: Indigenous, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Filipino/Pacific Islander, White, and Non-Specified (recruit did not disclose their ethnicity; ethnicity not represented in options provided). A univariate analysis, with sex as a covariate, and group as the fixed factor determined between-group fitness differences ($p < 0.05$). **RESULTS:** The breakdown of recruit ethnic groups is shown in Figure 1. For the 75PR, Black recruits were significantly faster than Asian ($p = 0.017$) and White ($p = 0.032$) recruits; Hispanic recruits were slower than Black, White and Non-Specified recruits ($p < 0.001$). Non-Specified recruits performed more push-ups than White recruits ($p = 0.031$), and were significantly faster than Black and Filipino/Pacific Islander recruits in the 2.4-km run ($p < 0.001$). **CONCLUSIONS:** Firstly, it should be clearly stated that ethnicity alone does not play a role in determining one's aptitude as a law enforcement officer. However, the data did suggest that certain recruit ethnic groups exhibited differences in fitness (i.e., Hispanic recruits were slower in the 75PR [measure of change-of-direction speed], Black and Filipino/Pacific Islander recruits were slower in the 2.4-km run [aerobic fitness metric]). Law enforcement agencies should consider this information when hiring individuals who reflect the diversity of their respective communities, possible health disparities across different ethnicities, and how this could influence physical training. **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS:** With the diversification of law enforcement agencies, personnel should have some understanding of sociocultural norms within a society that could influence fitness. This study did find some differences in fitness between recruits with different ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, this study also provides further evidence for the need for ability-based training in recruits, which could also benefit diversification of law enforcement agencies. A further suggestion is that law enforcement professionals who self-identify as ethnically diverse may be better able to communicate with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds relative to their fitness.

INTRODUCTION

- Law enforcement agencies attempt to hire diverse recruits to reflect the communities they serve, while enhancing civilian trust (2). Diversifying law enforcement helps agencies and officers alike to become more aware of the expectations and demands of the citizens within their respective communities (6).
- Unfortunately, many agencies struggle to hire and retain recruits of color (11). Many factors, such as poor community outreach in recruiting programs, have prevented recruits of color from applying to law enforcement agencies (12). Moreover, the reduced trust the public has often displayed towards law enforcement has affected the diversity of applicants (9).
- Numerous studies have shown that fitter recruits are more likely to graduate from their respective training academy. The 60-s push-up test is one of the best predictors for academy success (5,7). Recruits who do not have success within police academies exhibit lower mean scores of many fitness tests, including the push-up test (7). Additionally, recruits who took longer to complete the 2.4-km run had higher rates of failure in the academy (11).
- Although recruits should possess an adequate level of fitness, it is important to note that certain sociocultural barriers and norms, such as age, education level, income, and lack of cultural competence among healthcare workers, could influence the fitness of recruits from different ethnic groups (3,4). There is an insubstantial amount of research done regarding this subject, so further exploration is needed.
- The aim of this study was to investigate fitness differences between law enforcement recruits of different ethnicities.

METHODS

- A retrospective analysis was conducted on data from 2041 recruits (1659 males, 382 females) from a southern Californian law enforcement agency. Data was recorded during 2017-2019.
- Recruits completed the following assessments during the hiring process: 75-yard pursuit run (75PR); 60-s push-ups; 60-s arm ergometer revolutions; 60-s sit-ups; and 2.4-km (1.5-mile) run.
- Recruits self-reported their ethnicity via standard documentation from the agency. They could select from various categories or chose to not self-disclose.
- A univariate analysis, with sex as a covariate, and group as the fixed factor determined between-group fitness differences ($p < 0.05$).

RESULTS

- The breakdown of recruit ethnic groups is shown in Figure 1.
- In regards to the 75PR, Black recruits were significantly faster than Asian ($p = 0.017$) and White ($p = 0.032$) recruits (Table 1).
- Hispanic recruits were slower than Black, White and Non-Specified recruits in the 75PR ($p < 0.001$).
- Non-Specified recruits performed more push-ups than White recruits ($p = 0.031$), and were significantly faster than Black and Filipino/Pacific Islander recruits in the 2.4-km run ($p < 0.001$).

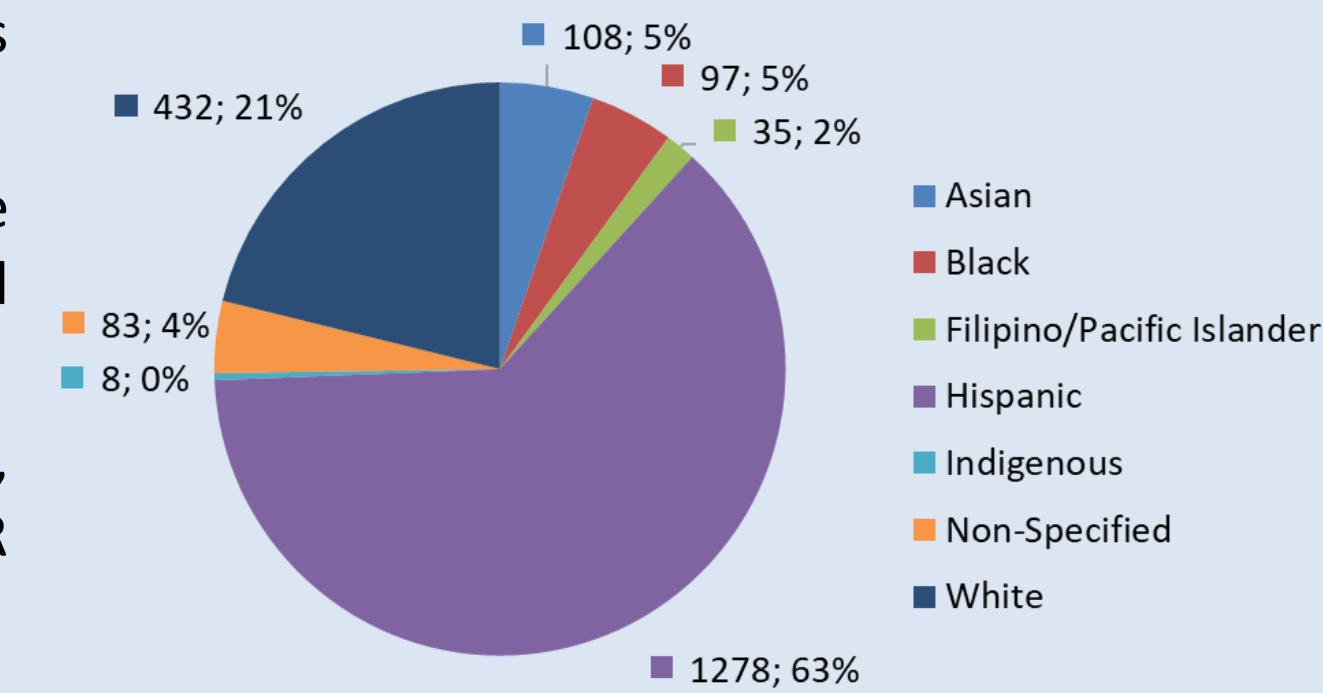


Figure 1. Breakdown (number and percentage [%]) of ethnic groups within law enforcement recruits from this agency.

Table 1. Descriptive data (mean \pm SD) for all and various ethnicities of police recruits for 75-yard pursuit run (75PR), 60-s push-ups, 60-s sit-ups, 60-s arm ergometer, and 2.4-km run.

	Asian (n = 108)	Black (n = 97)	Filipino/Pacific Islander (n = 35)	Hispanic (n = 1278)	Indigenous (n = 8)	Non-Specified (n = 83)	White (n = 432)
75PR (s)	17.47 \pm 0.96*	16.99 \pm 1.15	17.38 \pm 1.30	17.59 \pm 1.23* ϕ	17.62 \pm 0.88	17.05 \pm 0.98	17.29 \pm 1.16*
Push-ups (reps)	43.94 \pm 13.44	41.24 \pm 13.50	49.80 \pm 14.09	41.44 \pm 13.90	42.38 \pm 13.25	45.34 \pm 14.09	41.38 \pm 13.95 \S
Sit-ups (reps)	40.64 \pm 8.54	41.41 \pm 9.06	42.57 \pm 9.86	39.40 \pm 12.12	41.13 \pm 6.33	40.95 \pm 10.06	40.63 \pm 9.59
Arm Ergometer (revs)	128.30 \pm 20.93	125.38 \pm 19.81	129.91 \pm 20.92	129.28 \pm 41.36	132.75 \pm 22.60	128.90 \pm 19.56	127.41 \pm 19.83
2.4-km Run (min)	13.18 \pm 1.53	13.32 \pm 2.23 \S	13.46 \pm 1.56 \S	12.78 \pm 1.64	12.83 \pm 1.48	12.40 \pm 2.01	12.90 \pm 1.64

* Significantly ($p < 0.05$) different from the Black group.

\S Significantly ($p < 0.05$) different from the Non-Specified group.

ϕ Significantly ($p < 0.05$) different from the White group.

CONCLUSIONS

- Recently, many law enforcement agencies have made strides to hire an increased number of recruits who are ethnically diverse. For example, over a 10-year (2010-2020) span for one agency there was a 10% increase in the number of Hispanic recruits, while Black recruits have increased by 6.6% (10). Performance and success within the recruitment process is not solely determined by ethnicity. However, it is important for training staff to be mindful of the many sociocultural factors that could influence one's overall health and fitness, as this could influence fitness test and training performance.
- The current data suggests that certain ethnic groups did exhibit differences in fitness. Hispanic recruits were slower in the 75PR [measure of change-of-direction speed], and Black and Filipino/Pacific Islander recruits were slower in the 2.4-km run [aerobic fitness metric]. It is important to note that training academies often follow a "one-size-fits-all" approach when training recruits (8). In addition to sociocultural factors that can influence academy success, physical and psychological factors and implications can also play a role in the success of a recruit (8). With that said, academies across the country should ensure personnel who train recruits have the skills to make realistic modifications to fitness training within group sessions to adapt to the wide range of applicants with different backgrounds.
- Law enforcement agencies should consider this information when hiring recruits who reflect the diverse communities they serve and the potential health and fitness disparities across various ethnicities and how this could impact their training. The results from this study further emphasize the importance of ability-based training for recruits.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- With the diversification of law enforcement agencies, personnel should have some understanding of sociocultural norms within a society that could influence fitness. This study did find some differences in fitness between recruits with different ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, this study also provides further evidence for the need for ability-based training in recruits, which could also benefit diversification of law enforcement agencies.
- A further suggestion is that law enforcement professionals who self-identify as ethnically diverse may be better able to communicate with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds relative to their fitness. This could help with the training process during academy.

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