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US POLICE RECRUITMENT PROCESS: CHALLENGES AND REALITY

The process of selecting and recruiting candidates for police forces across the United States has become a topic of increased scrutiny in recent years. With over 18,000 law enforcement agencies nationwide, the procedures and requirements for police recruits vary, giving rise to common concerns regarding the screening and hiring of officers [2].

The educational standards for police recruits are generally modest across much of the U.S., typically requiring only a high school diploma or GED certificate. Some argue that mandating a certain level of college coursework could raise standards and enhance police performance and public relations. While defenders emphasize the need for inclusive recruitment, questioning the sole value of college in police preparation, strict education requirements might limit applicant diversity. Encouraging additional education through scholarship and tuition assistance programs could broaden access to higher education for potential police applicants.

The consistency and rigor of background investigations on applicants vary widely, with some departments conducting only cursory checks. More comprehensive vetting on factors like past drug use, financial problems, domestic violence, and affiliations could better identify potentially high-risk candidates. Concerns about intrusive investigations necessitate clear, relevant standards. Improved inter-department data sharing on recruit backgrounds could help identify warning signs.

Psychological screening aims to filter out recruits prone to excessive force, racial bias, and lack of empathy. However, many departments do not conduct regular psych evaluations, and the predictive validity of existing tests is disputed. Standardizing testing could enhance public assurance but faces pushback over accuracy and testing rights. If required, psych tests must balance predictive validity, fairness, and applicant rights, considering the costs of widespread implementation [1].

The duration of police academy training varies widely, ranging from as little as 10 weeks to six months. Expanding

programs to six months or more could allow for improved development of de-escalation and communication skills. However, longer academies may deter applicants and significantly increase training costs. Supplemental post-academy training programs throughout an officer's career might be a more feasible solution. Field training officer programs should provide close mentorship for recruits after academy graduation.

Ex-military personnel are frequently recruited into the police force for qualities like discipline, teamwork, and firearms proficiency. Critics argue that overreliance on ex-soldiers can shape the police as warrior combatants rather than community protectors. Calls exist to diversify police ranks and recruit individuals with broader community experiences. Balancing militaristic tendencies without removing valuable ex-military candidates is a challenge [3].

Despite decades of reform efforts, minority groups remain underrepresented on many forces relative to local demographics. Targeted outreach and hiring initiatives have seen limited success, while preferences based on race or gender fuel legal debate. Innovations in recruiting from minority communities should be paired with internal cultural changes to retain diverse officers. Advertising a more inclusive, guardian-focused policing approach could attract a more diverse pool of applicants.

Rapid hiring surges can reduce selectivity and training rigor, overwhelming thinly stretched academies with subpar candidates. Capping recruitment classes could elevate standards but may worsen current understaffing on many police forces. Phased, sustainable growth allows for a balance between quality and quantity hiring. Urgent staffing needs in crime-challenged areas must be weighed against the benefits of controlled recruitment.

Nepotism remains an issue, with leadership appointments of family or associates lacking proper vetting. Anti-nepotism rules can increase professionalism, though smaller agencies defend limited exceptions. Merit, not connections, should determine all police hires and promotions. Universal application of anti-nepotism policies should be considered, with flexibility for remote or small forces.

In summary, the ongoing debate among experts centers on the optimal policies for recruiting and selecting qualified, community-focused police officers. While changes in hiring processes alone cannot resolve deeper issues in policing, they represent a crucial step toward rebuilding public trust and effectiveness. A combination of elevated educational requirements, rigorous background checks,

inclusive recruiting, and high-quality training is needed to foster positive change in law enforcement.

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ILLEGAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The illegal exploitation and trafficking of children is a grave and deeply concerning issue that persists in various parts of the world, including some African countries. Children are vulnerable to exploitation due to factors such as poverty, lack of education, armed conflict, and weak law enforcement. Several forms of exploitation and trafficking of children exist, including forced labor, child soldiers, child marriage, and sexual exploitation.

Relevance of the topic: Modern slavery is a by-product of poverty. More than 20 million people in Africa are victims of modern slavery, in terms of turnover; this "market" is second only to the trade in arms and drugs. The global profit, according to moderate estimates, could amount to about 29.4 billion euros every year [1].

African law conditionally allows the exploitation of children. This is labor exploitation, when the slave owner has enormous profits from free physical labor. Child slavery is manifested both in the physical and sexual exploitation of children, and in their use in begging. Modern slavery also includes early or so-called child marriages. This is when girls under the age of 18 are forcibly married off and become