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Original Research

A Descriptive Analysis of the Current State of Peace Officer Standards and Training Physical Fitness Requirements across the USA

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Abstract

International Journal of Exercise Science 18(8): 543-560, 2025. https://doi.org/10.70252/WQSL5192 Many law enforcement organizations are experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, of which physical fitness can be a factor. The study purpose was to collate information from Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission staff in each USA state to document current fitness mandates and policies for recruits/officers. A 10-question survey was allocated to an appropriate representative from every state POST organization. The survey collected information regarding minimum state-mandated fitness standards for academy entry and exit; minimum state-mandated requirements for fitness programming, including safety plans; education/training requirements for fitness training instructors; and minimum state-mandated fitness standards for incumbent officers. The response rate was 98% (49/50 states). Fewer than half of the states mandated: age- and gender-neutral statewide academy entry fitness tests (29%; *n*=14); ability-based fitness training (24%; *n*=12); minimum education or formal certifications for fitness training instructors (45%; *n*=22); statewide collection of fitness (25%; *n*=12) or injury (45%; *n*=18) data; a statewide fitness training safety plan (40%; *n*=19); age- and gender-neutral exit fitness tests for recruits/students (35%; *n*=17); and officer fitness standards (8%; *n*=4). Only thirteen states (27%) had an active work group focusing on survey topics. POST Commissions should be proactive in reviewing minimum fitness requirements for academies, and staff should continue and/or expand fitness education. Resources are available for POST Commissions to design/update safety plans and address other findings. Although difficult to mandate fitness standards for officers, they should be provided resources to remain physically active. Implementing these practices via appropriate policies should assist with personnel health and retention.

Keywords: Entry and exit examination, incumbent officer, POST Commission, recruits

Introduction

Law enforcement organizations across the United States of America (USA) are experiencing challenges with recruitment and retention.[1] Difficulties in filling positions can lead law enforcement organizations to adjust requirements that would previously disqualify a candidate, such as removing restrictions related to prior drug use, facial hair, and citizenship.[1] Another area in which organizations can adjust hiring standards is via entry (i.e., tests completed prior

to hiring) and exit (i.e., tests completed prior to training academy graduation) physical fitness or ability tests.[2] It is important for practitioners (e.g., fitness trainers, strength and conditioning coaches, exercise physiologists, physical therapists, athletic trainers) working with law enforcement to understand the state of entry and exit fitness testing in the USA, and any state guidelines for physical fitness training. State requirements could govern the policies adopted by individual law enforcement organizations and the expectations for applicants, recruits, and law enforcement staff relative to the priority given to fitness and exercise training.

Fitness can be impactful on an individual's ability to be hired to a law enforcement agency, and their ability to pass academy requirements. Previous studies have shown that superior physical fitness can enhance a recruit's ability to graduate from an academy.[3-5] In addition to entry testing, better muscular strength, power, and endurance, and anaerobic and aerobic fitness, can also contribute to superior performance in exit fitness or ability tests.[6] There are, however, no national standards in the USA relative to entry or exit physical fitness or ability tests for law enforcement training academies. Authority and oversight will generally be delegated to state, regional, and municipal law enforcement for anything other than the enforcement of federal laws. Accordingly, a variety of standards, which includes fitness assessment and training, are adopted in the more than 800 law enforcement training academies within the USA.[7] No research to date has categorized which states mandate entry or exit fitness and ability standards in the USA. It is essential for practitioners working with law enforcement organizations to have some understanding of the policies surrounding exit fitness tests for recruits, as this could impact fitness training, programming, and medical and rehabilitation interventions during academy training. Documentation of this information could assist with best practices in implementing entry and exit fitness testing given national recruitment and retention shortfalls,[1] efforts to recruit more women into law enforcement,[8] and shifting population demographics such as increased obesity[9] and decreased physical activity[10] in the general adult population. If numerous states do mandate entry and exit fitness testing, recruitment could become more challenging for police departments as less fit candidates will be excluded.

An appropriate training program can improve the fitness (i.e., muscular strength, endurance, and power, anaerobic and aerobic capacity) of recruits over the course of an academy.[11,12] Effective training programs can also reduce injuries.[12] Common injuries for law enforcement recruits that could be prevented with effective training programs include joint and ligament trauma, muscle injuries, and overuse injuries.[13] Reduction of injuries could allow greater personnel retention. This is important, especially if there are lower numbers of candidates available to hire,[1,14] and the general conditioning of current recruits may be less than optimal.[9,10] However, there is also no national standard or policies relative to fitness training in law enforcement academies. To benefit the practitioner, it is essential to document any state standards that may exist across the USA relative to fitness training. Documentation of standards, relative to factors such as program design, staffing, required education, and safety plans, could assist with staff adopting best practices for training their recruits, which could ultimately lead to reduced attrition and greater retention. Information regarding state expectations for fitness training could also assist the practitioner with understanding the culture behind fitness training

for an organization (i.e., does command staff support the implementation of specific fitness training programs, regardless of whether it is mandated by the state?).

Agencies should ideally implement scientifically supported, evidence-based, and job-relevant strategies and policies to assist with officer retention, such as encouraging lifetime fitness. Better fitness in personnel can assist with critical job task performance (e.g., body/victim drags, foot pursuits, obstacle clearance),[6] in addition to reducing injury risk.[15] Cardiovascular disease is also common among law enforcement personnel,[16] of which the risks can be reduced with increases in aerobic fitness.[17] As a result, some agencies may introduce fitness standards for their incumbent officers. However, law enforcement officers may not be in favor of specific fitness standard policies,[18] and there can also be the risk of legal challenges with the implementation of mandatory standards.[19] These factors could dissuade agencies from considering standard adoption. Further, age and gender or sex may need to be considered with any type of physical fitness standards for officers. This is because fitness often declines with age,[20,21] and males tend to display better fitness compared to females.[4,22] Currently, there is no information available regarding the number of states where fitness standards are mandated, or whether age, sex, or gender standards are utilized.

If outdated tests and/or training methods are used for law enforcement personnel, higher attrition and liability are likely. Before specific tests or training modalities can be discussed, it is essential to document the number of states that have established minimum standards for fitness testing and training, and whether they are stratified by age or sex/gender. The purpose of this study was to collate information via a survey of staff from the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission (body responsible for oversight of law enforcement hiring and training) in each state of the USA. The specific aims included: improving understanding of current policy and practices relative to recruitment and retention challenges related to physical fitness of applicants, recruits, and incumbent officers; supporting evidence-based practices and establishing a base to assist in determining the impact of age- and gender-based fitness standards for applicants, recruits, and incumbent officers; and supporting transparency and collaboration to assist POST agencies to plan, explain, and validate their efforts.

Methods

Participants

The participants for this study were representatives from each POST Commission in the 50 states from the USA and authorised to respond on behalf of their organisation (e.g., state POST directors). For the context of this study, federal agencies (i.e., Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Homeland Security), districts and territories were not included. To assist with the design and implementation of the survey, the researchers collaborated with a large organization that was responsible for the leadership, policy development/implementation, and management of USA and international law enforcement training. An institutional ethics committee approved the study (HSR-22-23-117), and the study was conducted in agreement with the ethical standards of the *International Journal of Exercise Science*.[23]

Protocol

This study involved an electronic survey to collect cross-sectional data from representatives from the POST Commission in each state in the USA. Statewide minimum physical fitness standards for entry, training, exit, and incumbent officers are typically maintained by a POST Commission or are otherwise noted in state law, regulation, or code. The primary goal of the survey was to provide initial descriptive information about state mandated and statewide minimums to enhance understanding of current policy and practices of fitness standards in applicants, recruits, and officers. This approach of statewide minimums was a more efficient data gathering method than surveying the hiring practices of over 3000 counties, 19500 cities,[24,25] and more than 800 state, regional, and local law enforcement training academies.[7] Each entity (federal, state, city, county, agencies, and academies) can set different standards, which may be constantly in flux due to litigation, development, and adjustment. Thus, the survey focus was on statewide minimums as mandated by POST commissions.

The survey contained questions that addressed POST locations, entry and exit fitness standards from academies, physical training requirements, whether fitness training instructors were required to complete specific training, safety plans, data on academy physical fitness scores and injuries, standards for incumbent officers, and whether the state had a working group focused on any of these topics. The focus of the questions was on *statewide* and *state-minimum* mandates, and not those from any individual academies, of which there are more than 800 in the USA[7] as individual agencies and academies may implement more detailed practices than the mandated state-minimums. The questions that were included in the survey were finalised following consultation with subject matter experts, leaders, and those responsible for policy development and implementation within law enforcement standards and training. Essential components were questions that provided the necessary information, information that was valuable for personnel working within law enforcement standards and training, and relative brevity to ensure participants would respond. Shorter surveys with less open-ended questions lead to surveys with superior response rates.[26] This was essential when considering the law enforcement population for which the survey was directed, and a key point of emphasis from all subject matter experts.

The researchers composed the survey within QualtricsXM (Qualtrics International Inc., Seattle, Washington, USA) software, which was also used to distribute the survey. The survey contained a total of 10 questions, which are shown in Table 1, and was designed to take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The design element of 10 questions in 10 minutes was specifically intended to gather as much relevant information as possible with the least impact to respondents. Most questions involved Yes/No responses, although certain questions had different options relative to a 'Yes' response (Table 1). One question (Question 1) focused on demographics, two questions (Questions 3 and 4) focused on physical fitness training delivery, three questions (Questions 2, 8, and 9) covered physical fitness standards, two questions covered data tracking (Questions 5 and 6), one question (Question 7) asked whether there was a state-mandated safety plan in place relative to physical fitness training, and the last question (Question 10) inquired if there were any current working groups addressing the issues featured in the survey. The terms 'recruit'

and 'student' were both included in the survey, as law enforcement agencies can often use both terms to refer to personnel completing initial academy training. Also, the term 'gender' was used in the survey as it has been used previously within labor legal rulings specific to public safety occupations.[27]

Table 1. Survey questions.

1. What state does your POST or Training Commission represent? *All 50 states were listed as options.*
2. Does your state have a mandated minimum entry physical fitness assessment or test for initial academy entry that all recruits/students must pass across the state to enter a training academy? □ Yes – The test is aged based □ Yes – The test is gender based □ Yes – The test is both age and gender based □ Yes – The test is age and gender neutral (no age or gender scoring) □ No
3. Does your state have a mandated minimum physical fitness training program that all recruits/students across the state must complete? □ Yes – The program is adjusted to the needs/abilities of individual recruits/students □ Yes – Every recruit/student completes the same physical fitness training program □ No
4. Does your state have mandated minimum education or certification standard (e.g., training courses, state certifications) for physical training/physical fitness instructors? (Note: this ONLY refers to physical fitness instruction and not defensive tactics, arrest and control, etc.) □ Yes □ No
5. Is academy/initial recruit physical fitness training data tracked at the state level? □ Yes – Only physical fitness program pass rates are tracked statewide □ Yes – Individual recruit/student entry and exit physical fitness scores are tracked statewide at the POST level and individual recruit/student data is held at the state POST level □ Yes – Individual recruit/student entry and exit physical fitness scores are tracked statewide, but specific data are dispersed and held at the local academy level □ No
6. Are academy/initial recruit training injuries tracked at the state level? □ Yes – Only severe injuries requiring hospitalisation are tracked statewide at the POST level □ Yes – All types of injuries that require more than basic on-site first aid (e.g., band aid, etc.) are tracked statewide at the POST level. In other words, all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reportable and/or Worker's Compensation injuries that occur in initial/academy training are reported to your state POST. □ No
7. Does your state have a mandated minimum safety plan relative to physical fitness training within your sworn law enforcement training academies (i.e., initial basic training)? □ Yes □ No
8. Does your state have a mandated minimum exit physical training/physical fitness/ability test that must be passed by all recruits/students across the state before they can graduate from a training academy? □ Yes – The test scoring is age based □ Yes – The test scoring is gender based □ Yes – The test scoring is both age and gender based □ Yes – The test scoring is age and gender neutral (no age or gender scoring) □ No
9. Does your state have mandated minimum physical fitness standards for incumbent officers? □ Yes – The standards are age based □ Yes – The standards are gender based □ Yes – The standards are both age and gender based □ Yes – The standards are age and gender neutral (no age or gender scoring) □ No – Standards are in development □ No
10. Does your state have a current and active work group focusing on any of the previous topics?

□ Yes
□ No

Prior to completing the survey, participants were required to read the study consent form and indicate whether they consented to completion of the survey. If the participant did not consent, they were taken to the end of the survey and did not complete any questions. If the participant did consent, they were taken to the first page of the survey which provided directions for how to complete the survey and the participant could provide contact details so the researchers could follow-up as needed. This was for a future study where the researchers would contact the participants with specific questions as to the type of entry and exit fitness or ability tests their POST Commission mandated, specific fitness training programs, and issues of that nature. However, this information was not included in the current study. Contact via email with representatives from the POST Commissions from each of the 50 states began in January 2023 with a follow up in February 2023. The researchers periodically checked responses in QualtricsXM to monitor completion progress. The researchers followed up with individual contacts as needed though March-May 2023.

Statistical Analysis

The data analysis for this study was modelled on previous survey research.[28,29] Details of the results were electronically transferred from QualtricsXM to Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Corporation™, Redmond, Washington, USA) where the results were collated and analysed. Data is presented as number of positive responses (p) from the total number of surveyed respondents or responses for a particular question (t), and subsequent relative percentage (p/t x 100; %).[28,29]

Results

Respondents to the survey came from 49 out of a potential 50 states, providing an overall response rate of 98%. Only one response per state was required, and the researchers did not receive multiple responses from any state. For question 2 (Figure 1), 31% (n = 15) of states had statewide entry fitness tests that were scored relative to age and gender, while 29% (n = 14) of states had entry fitness tests that were age and gender neutral. More states (39%; n = 19) did not mandate academy entry fitness tests. More states in this sample (47%; n = 23) mandated that recruits/students completed the same fitness training program during academy; 24% (n = 12) mandated the program be adjusted relative to the needs of the individual, while 29% (n = 14) of states did not mandate fitness training during academy (Figure 2). There were approximately 45% (n = 22) of states that mandated minimum education or certifications for their physical fitness training instructors, while more than half of the states did not (55%; n = 27; Figure 3).

One state POST representative did not respond to question 4, which was regarding the tracking of fitness training data, leaving a total number of responses of 48. Out of the 48 states, 38% (n = 18) did not mandate the tracking of individual physical fitness training data, but 25% (n = 12) of states tracked fitness data and held this data at the POST level (Figure 4). More than half of the states (55%; n = 27) did not mandate the tracking of injury rates during academy or initial

training (Figure 5). One state POST representative did not respond to the safety plan question. Nonetheless, 60% (n = 29) of states did not mandate a safety plan relative to physical fitness training (Figure 6).

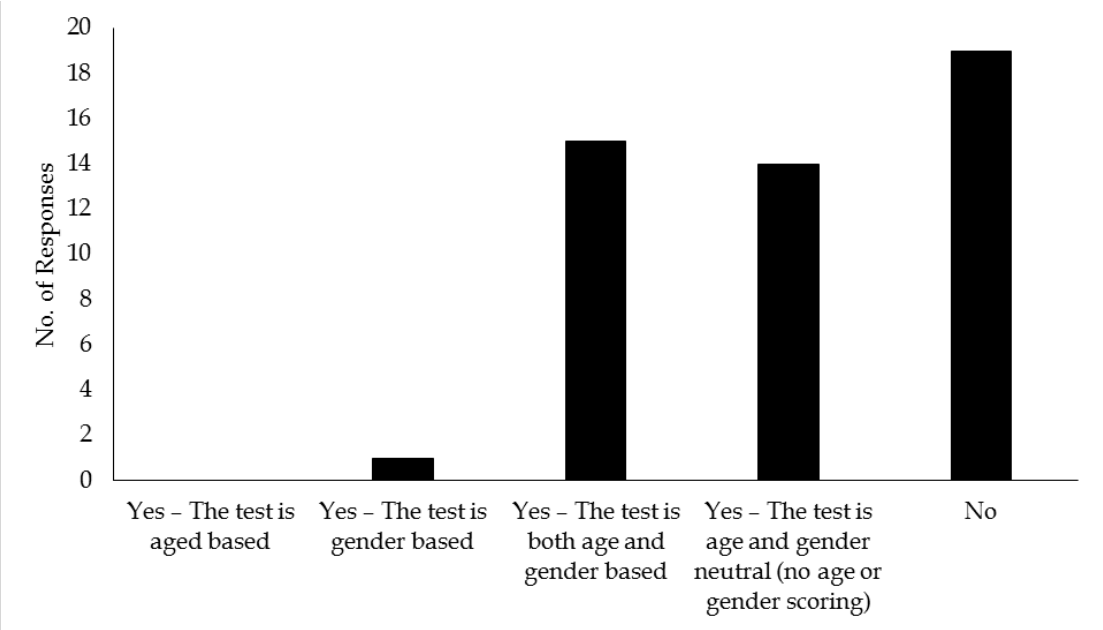

Figure 1. Responses to the question "*Does your state have a mandated minimum entry physical fitness assessment or test for initial academy entry that all recruits/students must pass across the state to enter a training academy?*"

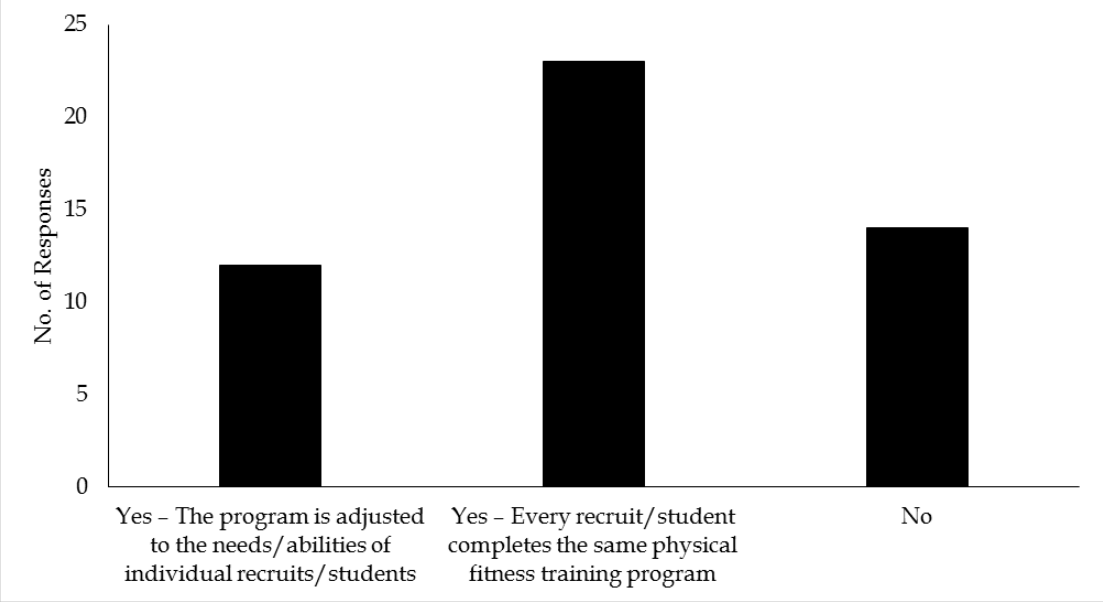

Figure 2. Responses to the question "*Does your state have a mandated minimum physical fitness training program that all recruits/students across the state must complete?*"

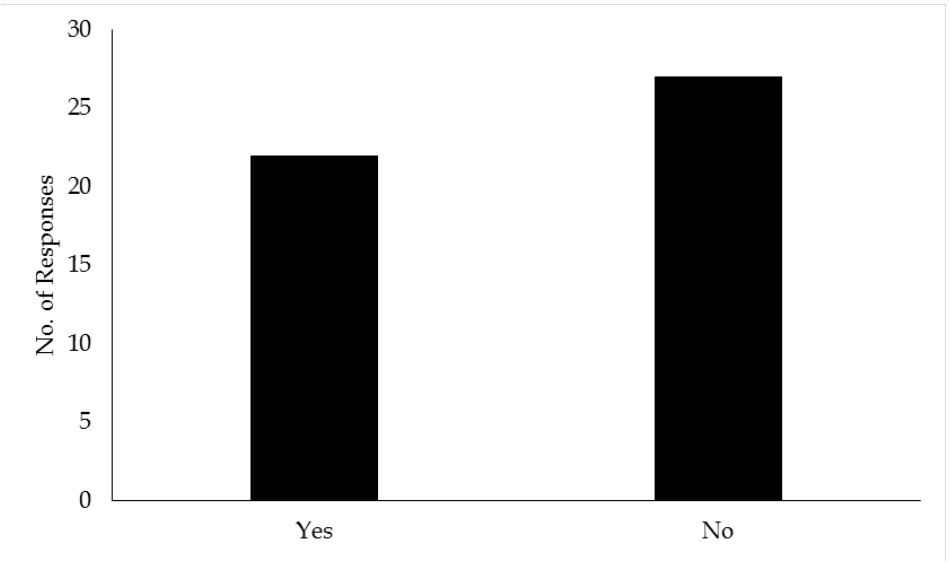

Figure 3. Responses to the question "*Does your state have mandated minimum education or certification standard (e.g., training courses, state certifications) for physical training/physical fitness instructors?*"

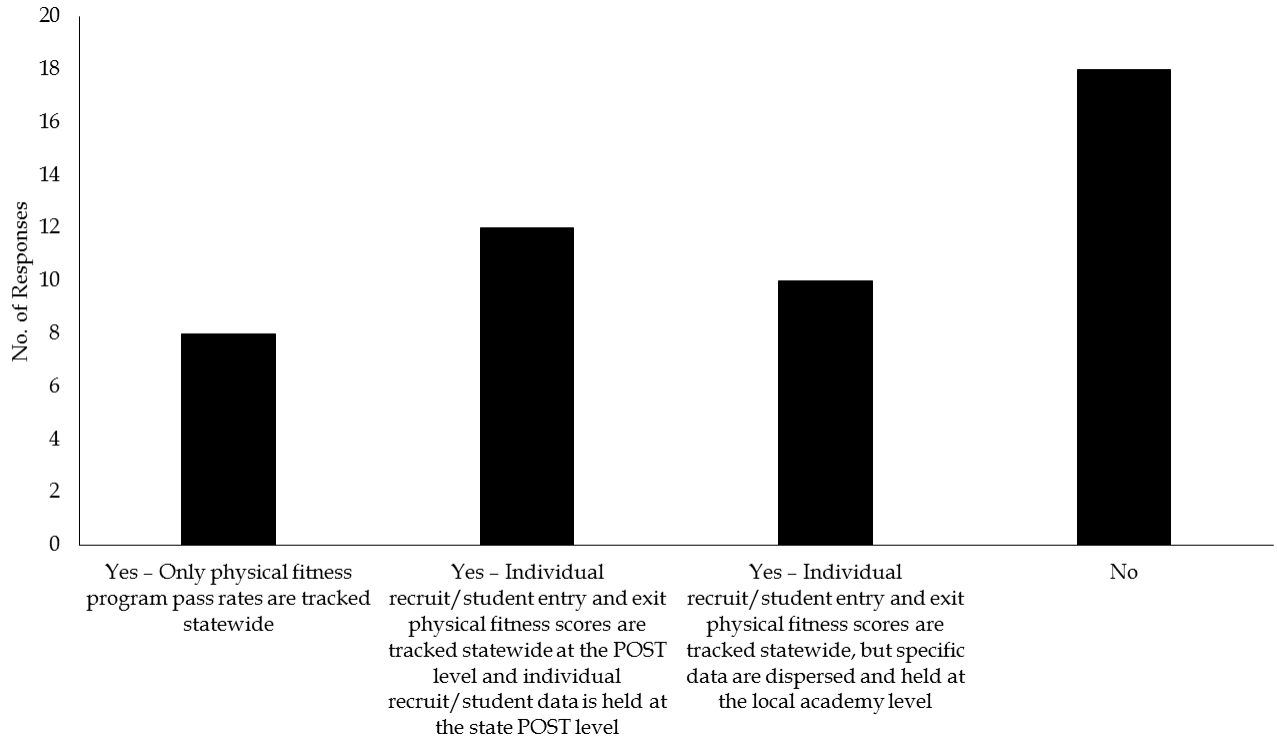

Figure 4. Responses to the question "*Is academy/initial recruit physical fitness training data tracked at the state level?*"

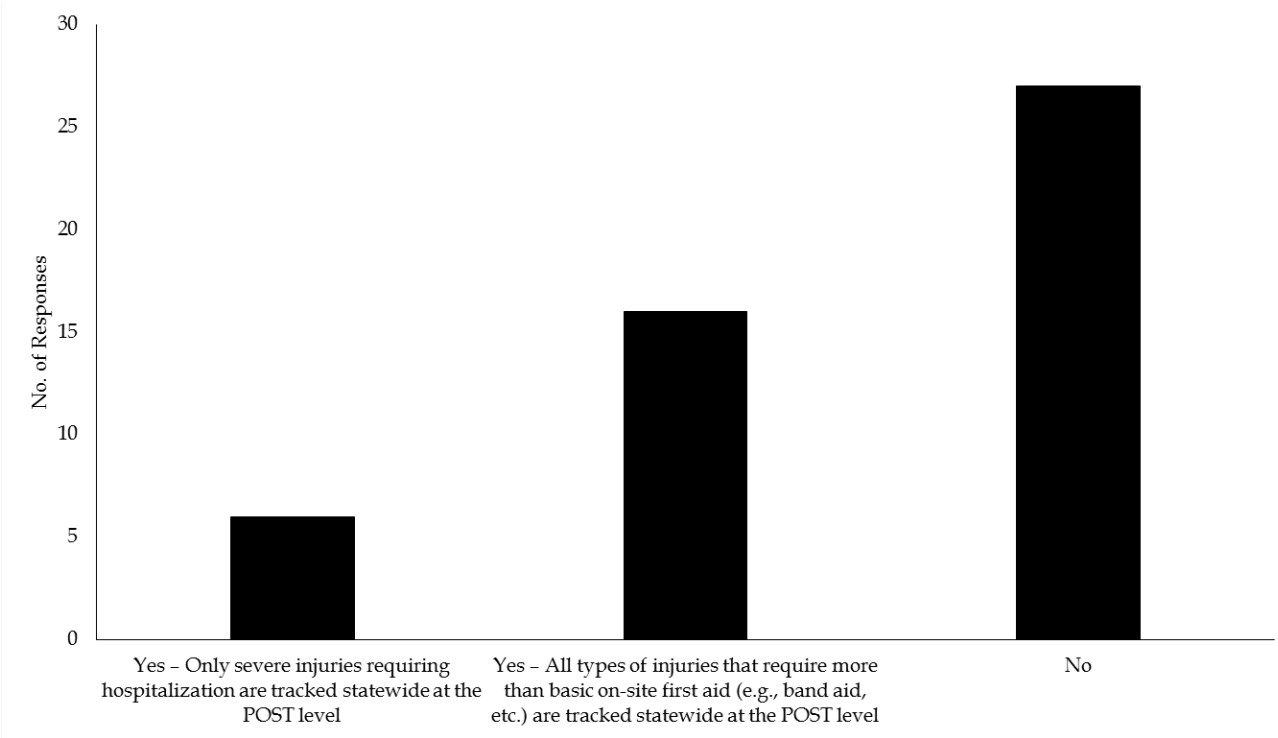

Figure 5. Responses to the question "*Are academy/initial recruit training injuries tracked at the state level?*"

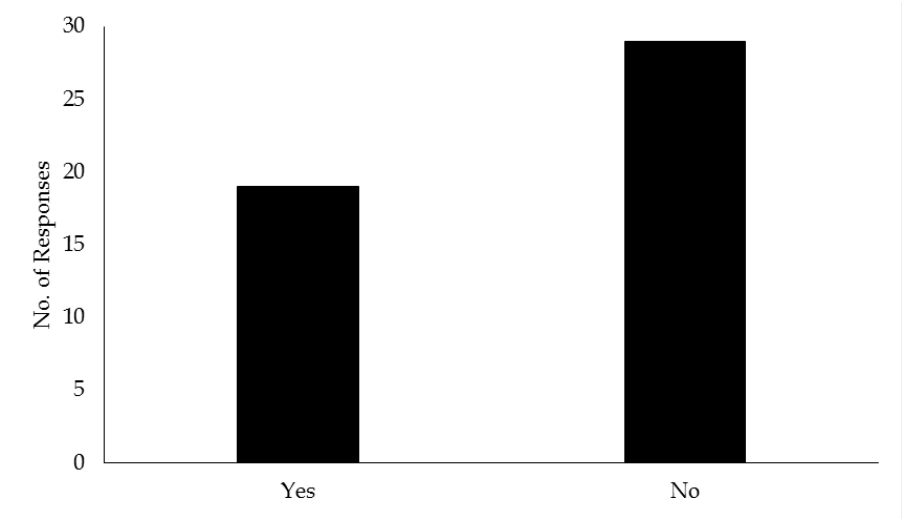

Figure 6. Responses to the question "*Does your state have a mandated minimum safety plan relative to physical fitness training within your sworn law enforcement training academies (i.e., initial basic training)?*"

In the sample, 39% (n = 19) of states did not mandate any statewide exit physical fitness or ability tests for a recruit or student to graduate from their training academy (Figure 7); 35% (n = 17) of states mandated exit fitness or ability tests that were age and gender neutral, while 24% (n = 12) of states scaled their exit tests by age and gender. Most states (88%; n = 43) did not mandate physical fitness standards for their incumbent officers (Figure 8). Moreover, 73% (n = 36) of states did not currently have an active work group focusing on any of the survey topics (Figure 9).

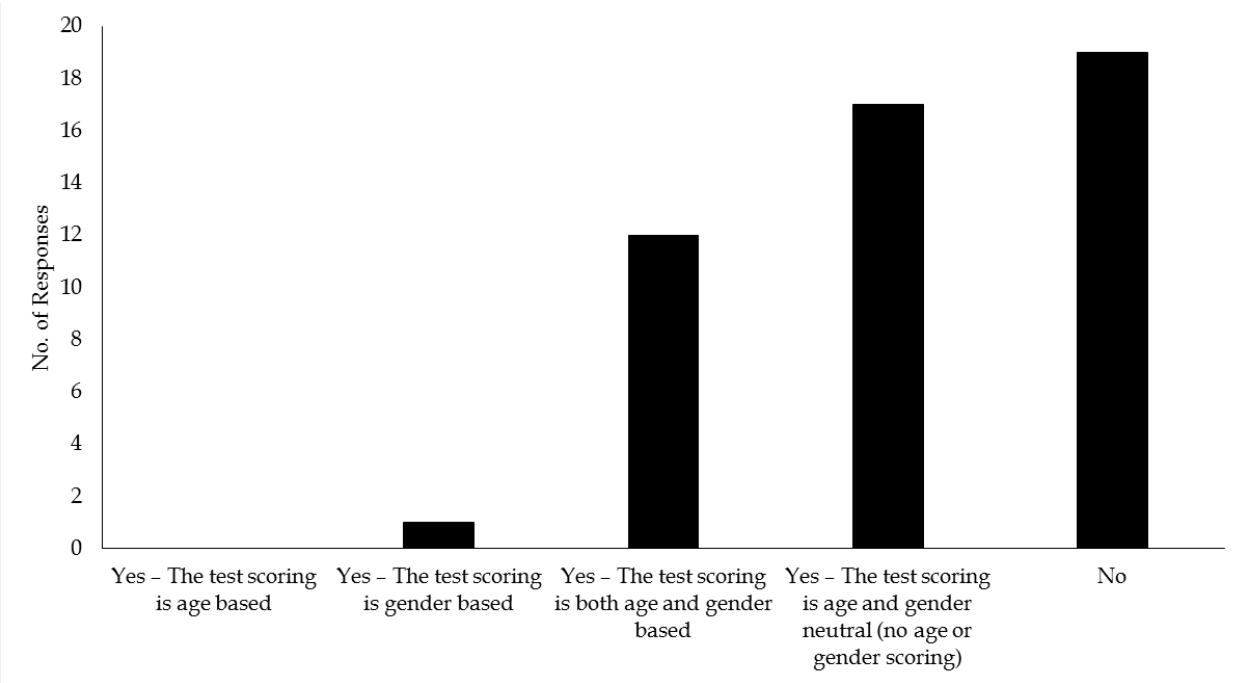

Figure 7. Responses to the question "*Does your state have a mandated minimum exit physical training/physical fitness/ability test that must be passed by all recruits/students across the state before they can graduate from a training academy?*"

Figure 8. Responses to the question "*Does your state have mandated minimum physical fitness standards for incumbent officers?*"

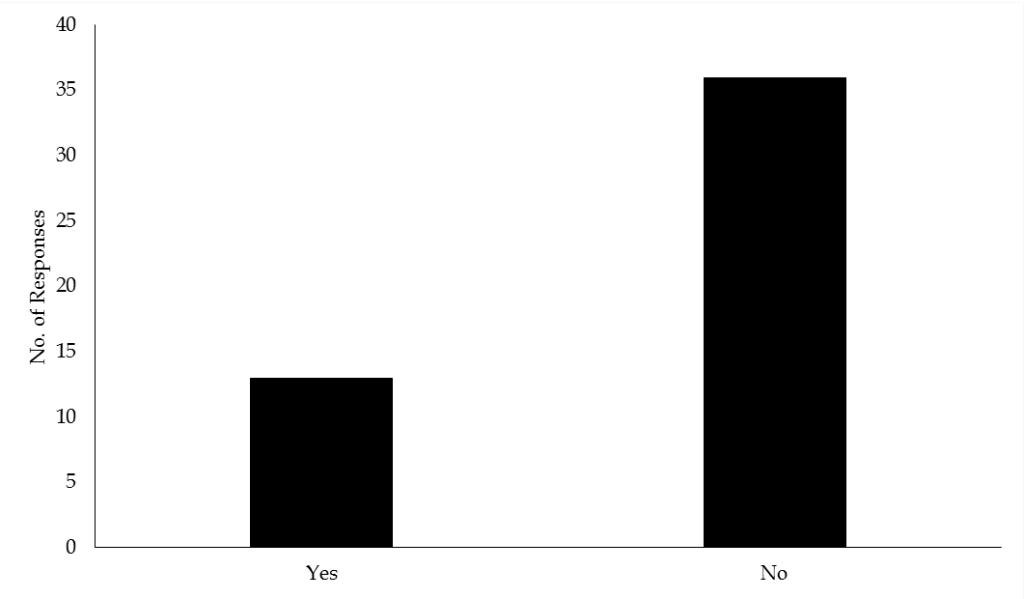

Figure 9. Responses to the question "*Does your state have a current and active work group focusing on any of the previous topics?*"

Discussion

This study collated survey information about minimum physical fitness standards for entry, training, exit, safety and training injury data, and incumbent officers as mandated by the POST Commission from each state of the USA. Appropriate personnel who had knowledge of policies and mandates from each state's POST Commission were asked to complete the survey. Representatives from 49 of 50 states completed the survey, providing a response rate of 98%. Meta-analyses of survey-based research has documented response rates of 52.7%[30] and 44.1%,[31] with the total number of respondents ranging from under 10 to several thousand.[31] While the sample size was lower in this study, the response rate was still far in excess of the data reported by Baruch and Holtom[30] and Wu, Zhao and Fils-Aime,[31] and represented 98% of the given sample size. It should also be asserted that the data in this study refers to *state* mandates; individual academies (800+) and agencies (17,000+) may set their own standards relative to entry-level physical fitness and training. Nonetheless, the primary goal of this research was to provide initial descriptive information about state mandates across the USA to enhance understanding of current policy and practices of physical fitness standards in applicants, recruits, and officers. Documentation of this data will also provide greater transparency and potential collaboration across law enforcement organisations.

Entry fitness testing can be used to assess the anaerobic and aerobic capacity of candidates that relate to the demands of the occupation and identify whether candidates have the qualities necessary to successfully complete an academy.[5] Fitter recruits are generally better positioned to tolerate the rigors of the training academy and successfully graduate.[3-5] Despite this, more states did not mandate entry fitness tests (39%; n = 19). There are several reasons why that might be the case. Entry fitness tests must be legally defensible; ensuring this is the case for a POST

Commission could be an extended process, including a job task analysis and ensuring the validity and reliability of any selected tests.[32] Poor physical fitness may disqualify many candidates,[2] and in light of recent recruitment difficulties,[1] POST Commissions may decide not to mandate fitness testing. Furthermore, various law enforcement academy operational models exist, with state agencies, colleges, regional cooperatives, and individual agencies all operating academies that may impact test administration and logistics. At the same time, the different state, regional, county, town, and city and town law enforcement agencies can determine their own hiring requirements and policies. Notably, 31% of states (n = 15) had entry fitness tests that were scored based on age and gender. Normative age and gender fitness data from the Cooper Institute is often used to construct standards for law enforcement organisations, but even the Cooper Institute has stated that their data should not be used to set standards.[33] Moreover, the gender identity of some individuals may vary from their assigned sex at birth, which could complicate the hiring process if binary fitness gender standards are used. Fitness practitioners working with trainees should understand the requirements of their respective state (and individual academy/department, as this could vary from the state).

Previous research has acknowledged that fitness training in law enforcement academies often use 'one-size-fits-all' training models,[22] where every recruit or student is expected to complete the same training program regardless of their current fitness or ability levels. This training model can be used in part used because the job tasks of all officers are generally the same, regardless of age, sex, gender, and physical ability. More states mandated this type of training approach (47%; n = 23). However, the use of this model could be a challenge given the wide variety of fitness and ability levels typical within law enforcement academy classes.[22] Ability-based training has been recommended for law enforcement recruits, as this should provide conditions to improve the fitness of most recruits while reducing their risk of injury.[12,22] There are numerous methods that can be used to scale the intensity of exercises relative to the individual within large group (80-120+ individuals) academy settings.[12,34] This information, and academy specific physical training instructor support, could greatly assist the knowledge base of the instructors.

More states did not mandate specific education or training for their personnel working as physical fitness instructors (55%; n = 27). This is notable, as physical fitness instructors in the law enforcement academy environment are often trained as officers first and may not have the knowledge common to certified strength and conditioning coaches. In recent years there has been a shift with USA military organizations externally hiring certified strength and conditioning coaches to physically prepare their personnel.[35] Even if law enforcement organizations are not able to hire strength and conditioning coaches or other fitness professionals, organizations such as the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) can provide supplementary education to staff (e.g., Tactical Strength and Conditioning Facilitator certification). POST Commissions are strongly encouraged to provide their physical fitness training instructors with the opportunity for specific initial and continuing education relative to the physical fitness development of recruit/students. Where possible, POST Commissions and law enforcement training academies should consider hiring certified strength and conditioning coaches to work at the academy level. Strength and conditioning coaches are

expected to follow industry-accepted professional standards and guidelines,[36] which should ultimately benefit the physical conditioning of recruits. Another option for law enforcement organizations is collaborating with their local college or university who have kinesiology and exercise science programs. Partnerships with local universities could provide access to trained staff (e.g., strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers, physical therapists), research support to analyze the effectiveness of training interventions, and student interns to provide training and medical support to personnel.

A relatively high number of states did not mandate the tracking of fitness training (38%; *n* = 18) or injury (55%; *n* = 27) data within their academy. Tracking of individual and detailed (e.g., push-up or sit-up repetitions completed, time to complete tasks, etc.) recruit fitness training data (e.g., applicant, academy entry, academy mid-point, and academy exit) is important to ensure any programs that are implemented lead to positive improvements in the health, fitness, and occupational performance of trainees or students. This is especially notable in the law enforcement academy environment where training practices can often have an emphasis on aerobic conditioning,[22] even though many job tasks can place a greater emphasis on muscular strength, power, and anaerobic fitness (e.g., body drags, defensive tactics, obstacle clearance, foot pursuits).[6,37] This approach may be problematic for recruits. For example, there can be a high frequency of injuries early during a law enforcement training academy (i.e., within the first 2 weeks),[13] which could be linked to the large spike in training load (especially endurance-type training) that occurs during this time.[38] Injury tracking within training academies could also be used to mitigate the risk of injury in recruits.[38] Academy management and training staff could use information such as this to adjust the total physical workload of trainees during this time. Reductions in loss of trainees due to injury within academy could also serve to reduce operational costs for an organisation.[12] Furthermore, failure to effectively monitor training related injury rates could also lead to litigation for the agency.

A statewide minimum safety plan, with the ability of individual agencies and academies to add specific detail as required, could ensure the appropriate implementation of fitness training programs and injury reduction methods, and used to ensure best practices. Many states (60%; *n* = 29) did not have a POST-mandated minimum safety plan relative to physical fitness training for their training academies. It should be noted that individual training academies may have their own safety plans, and this information was not collated as part of the survey. Nonetheless, numerous professional organisations provide resources that could help with compiling a safety plan for physical fitness training for a POST Commission. For example, the NSCA and American College of Sports Medicine provide guidelines for the implementation of exercise, and the National Athletic Trainers' Association specify procedures for the care of athletes. There are also available position stands about issues that could influence fitness training, such as hydration.[39] For the well-being of all personnel, POST Commissions should ideally ensure their training academies have appropriate and current safety plans in place, as there are resources available to help facilitate this process and the implementation of any policies.

More states did not mandate exit physical fitness or ability tests (39%; *n* = 19). For those states that did have mandated exit fitness tests, most used scoring that was age and gender neutral

(35%; *n* = 17). The California Work Sample Test Battery (WSTB) is an example exit test that has age and gender neutral scoring, and is intended to measure of a recruit's ability to perform the simulated job tasks of a patrol trainee.[6] The existence of a mandated exit fitness or ability tests could change the focus of a fitness training program. If staff knew that there were job-specific fitness tests to train for that recruits would subsequently be assessed on, then the fitness program could be tailored towards that target.[11] If there are no physical fitness tests at the end of an academy, this could create a situation where the fitness training program is less focused. A lack of an exit assessment could also call into question academy training time devoted to fitness training. In any case, academy physical fitness training intended to prepare recruits for routine uniformed patrol duties should be as closely aligned with the development of documented physical job tasks (e.g., power, agility, strength, and anaerobic capacity), as opposed to perceptions of job tasks. It must be noted that there are legal reasons why a state may not mandate exit fitness or ability tests.[40] As for entry fitness tests, any mandated exit tests should only be implemented after a job task analysis and confirmation of test validity and reliability.[32] A detailed discussion of the legal ramifications of exit fitness or ability tests is outside the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, the current data shows that many POST Commissions in the USA did not mandate exit fitness or ability tests.

The overwhelming majority of POST Commissions did not mandate fitness standards for law enforcement officers (88%; *n* = 43). These results were not surprising. As previously noted, law enforcement officers may not support fitness standards,[18] and there is also the risk of legal challenges.[19] Previous research has suggested that fitness testing for incumbent officers be used for education and motivation, and to encourage officers to exercise and reduce the deleterious effects of age on health and fitness.[21] Incentive-based fitness testing and exercise programming could fit as part of health and wellness programs, which can be implemented at the department-level.[20] However, any incumbent or incentive-based plan should contain metrics for program effectiveness to engage officers of all fitness levels, especially those with lower fitness levels. Nonetheless, Lockie, Orr and Dawes[20] documented that health and wellness program participation by police officers could limit fitness decrements that occur with age. Although most POST Commissions may not mandate fitness standards within their state, they should encourage and provide resources for their personnel to exercise and maintain their health and fitness.

Most states did not report having a currently active working group that focused on any of the issues raised in the current survey (73%; *n* = 36). One of the reasons why the survey was composed was to provide support for POST Commissions that do intend to address their fitness standards and training. Given the current challenges law enforcement organisations are experiencing with recruitment and retention,[1,14] and changes to population demographics,[9,10] it is important for POST Commissions to continue to be proactive relative to their fitness standards, instructor support, data management, and training. To reiterate, this survey was also the first stage of this research. Upcoming research will involve deeper analysis of specific entry and exit fitness tests, training, and other training practices.

In conclusion, POST Commissions and law enforcement training staff should continue to be proactive with development and monitoring of their minimum fitness requirements and training for training academies. Further, POST Commissions and staff should carefully consider the use of age and gender-neutral standards and policies for entry or exit fitness tests, given the fluidity of gender categories and population trends, and potential limitations of using normative fitness data for job standards. Training staff should have appropriate education, development, and continued support relative to physical fitness programming. Training staff with greater, more specific education in regards to physical fitness programming could also allow for better training outcomes for recruits and could also mitigate liability in the event of recruit injury or dismissal. Numerous resources are available to design/update appropriate minimum-level physical fitness safety plans for training academies, so this should be implemented for each state. Although it may be difficult to mandate fitness standards for incumbent officers, a state's POST Commission and staff should continue to encourage some type of fitness testing and training for personnel, even on a voluntary basis.

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