

Suicides, Police Data, & Occupation Coding Challenges

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*Approaches to Improve the Measurement of Suicide
in Law Enforcement in the U.S.*



Agenda

- Collecting and Coding Occupation Data
- Occupation in Relevant Databases
- What is a Law Enforcement Officer?
- Issues for Law Enforcement Officer Suicide Research



Collecting and Coding Occupation Data



Coding Occupation Data – In Real Life

She
worked
for the
Austin PD

Police
officer

Lt. Sgt.
Patrol
Division

Public
Safety
Officer

Cop

Dog
Warden

Standard Occupational Codes (SOC)
33-0000 Protective Service Occupations:
33-3000 Law Enforcement Workers:
33-3050 Police Officers

Bureau of Census Codes (BOC)
3700 Protective Service Occupations:
3850 Police & Sheriff Patrol Officers

Is this a Law
Enforcement
Officer?

Commonly Used Databases for Law Enforcement Officer Suicide Research

Database	Source	Occupation Definition	Maintained	Recent Year	Codes
Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI)	Various sources*	What were they doing for work at time of death?	BLS	2021	2010 SOC
National Occupational Mortality Surveillance (NOMS)	Death certificate	Usual occupation	NIOSH	2020	2000 BOC
National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)	Death certificate	Usual occupation	NCIPC	2020 (2024)	2010 SOC

** Death certificates, autopsy reports, law enforcement reports, family/friend interviews*

What is a Law Enforcement Officer?

**NVDRS:
Public
Safety
Officer**



All local, state, federal, military, & tribal law enforcement, corrections officers, parole/probation officers, officers of the court, firefighters, emergency medical service clinicians, and public safety telecommunicators

**LESDC:
Law
Enforcement
Officer**



Any current or former officer (including a correctional officer), agent, or employee of the US, a State, Indian Tribe, or political subdivision of a State authorized by law to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, investigation, or prosecution of any violation of the criminal laws of the US, a State, Indian Tribe, or political subdivision of a State

What is a Law Enforcement Officer?

- Include/Exclude?
 - Correctional Officers
 - Bailiffs
 - Parking Enforcement
 - Fish and Game Wardens
 - Public Safety Telecommunicators
 - Private Security Guards
 - Court Officer
 - School Resource Officer
 - Cadet

Considerations for Law Enforcement Officer Suicide Research

- Potential misclassification of occupation due to inaccurate reporting by family/friends
- Retirement
- Work in other occupations
- Lack of a standardized law enforcement officer definition for suicide research



Additional Reading

- NIOSH [2021]. Guidelines for reporting occupation and industry on death certificates. By Robinson C, Schumacher P, Sweeney HM, Steege A, Free H, Lainez J. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, NIOSH, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2012-149.



Questions?

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