

# TEN MYTHS OF POLICING

## 1. Police officers have a duty to protect us.

As the United States Supreme Court ruled in 2005, Police do not have a constitutional duty to protect citizens. There is no law or statute anywhere that compels officers to maintain the safety of the public. Furthermore, the role of police has never been to preemptively stop crime; police respond to crime, they do not prevent it. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/28/politics/28scotus.html>

## 2. Police officers are always well educated and knowledgeable about the law.

There simply is no widely-encompassing standard for police training in the country. The process for becoming a beat cop can include as little as a high school diploma (or GED) and completion of police academy training, which can take anywhere from 9 to 25 weeks depending on your locality. A few departments are now requiring either an Associate's Degree or Bachelor's Degree. Furthermore, many of the most common citations are also the source of the most instances of overprosecution with the lowest substantiation rates; specifically, citations such as loitering, disorderly conduct, and obstructing the legal process. [http://discoverpolicing.org/what\\_does\\_take/?fa=requirements](http://discoverpolicing.org/what_does_take/?fa=requirements)

## 3. Police officers are held accountable when they do wrong.

Internal affairs departments as well as civilian oversight committees almost never levy meaningful discipline against police officers. Police unions have powerful political sway and back almost every bad cop. Although many argue that the percentage of police misconduct is quite low, the reality is that these numbers are either equally as high or higher than the percentages of civilians when compared per 100,000 people. <http://www.policemisconduct.net/arguing-the-case-for-police-accountability-part-1/>

## 4. Police officers just don't do that sort of thing.

Throughout history, police have been involved with the worst kinds of crimes. Things like rape, murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, evidence planting, and witness intimidation. Every time their crimes have come to light, the public discourse has always been "We just didn't think they would do that sort of thing." In reality, these types of police misconduct are far more common than many people think. <http://www.informationliberation.com/?id=34433>, <http://www.ajc.com/news/atlanta/former-deputy-convicted-of-825472.html>, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/02/16/BAI41HO8E3.DTL>

## 5. Police don't have arrest/citation quotas.

In the past several years a number of police officers have come forward to denounce the roles of arrest/citation quotas in their line of work. Officers from New York City, Miami, Baltimore, New Orleans, and certainly many more cities are faced with increasing pressure to make citations (whether warranted or not) or risk losing their jobs. <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-whittier-ticket-quotas-20150304-story.html>

## 6. Police officers lead stable home lives.

Numerous studies demonstrate significantly higher rates of alcoholism, divorce, and domestic violence among police officers than the rest of the nation. In all three common indicators of stress: divorce rate, suicide, and alcoholism, police have significantly higher rates of each. <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/09/police-officers-who-hit-their-wives-or-girlfriends/380329/>, <http://www.lawenforcementtoday.com/2012/02/14/fourth-nypd-officer-commits-suicide-in-2012/>

## 7. Police misconduct is the result of 'a few bad apples'.

Over and over again police officers at every level within a department, including chiefs and lieutenants, are found guilty of engaging in all types of police corruption. Although over 1100 police misconduct complaints were filed with the Minneapolis Office of Police Conduct Review between October 2013 and October 2015, only a handful of cases were investigated and none led to discipline. <http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/221422101.html>

## 8. Being a police officer is among the most dangerous professions.

Being a police officer doesn't even crack the top ten of the most dangerous careers in America. More dangerous are fishers and fishing workers, timber and lodging workers, pilots, structural and steel workers, garbage men, farmers, roofers, electricians, construction workers, and truck and taxi drivers according to the 2013 Bureau of Labor Statistics' Report. [http://www.forbes.com/2008/08/25/dangerous-jobs-fishing-lead-careers-cx\\_mk\\_0825danger.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/08/25/dangerous-jobs-fishing-lead-careers-cx_mk_0825danger.html), <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/coi.pdf>

## 9. Policing is race-neutral.

Blatant racism can be seen in several types of police behavior including where police patrol, who gets stops, who gets searched, who gets arrested and for what, who gets charged with what, and the arresting officer(s)' role in interrogation, conviction, and sentencing. Men and women of color greatly outnumber white men and women in numbers of traffic stops and represent the majority of the prison population even as they represent a minority population in society. <https://www.aclu.org/racial-justice/racial-profiling>, <http://www.civilrights.org/publications/reports/racial-profiling2011/the-reality-of-racial.html>

## 10. Police don't lie to you.

Whether in court or on the street, police lie to justify arrests, search you and your belongings, and to get convictions. Courts around the country have upheld the ability of law enforcement to give false statements to suspects in order to coerce damning testimony. <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=372&invol=528>, <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=360&invol=315>



Information provided by **COMMUNITIES UNITED AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY**. We meet every Saturday at 1:30 p.m. at 4200 Cedar Avenue in Minneapolis. For more information or for help with a police brutality incident, call our 24-hour hotline: **612-874-STOP** or see our website at **www.CUAPB.org**.