Jobs of the Future … and the Present
What Will Happen in Criminal Justice?

June 2024

Opportunity for Higher Education: ★★★★★
Size of U.S. Market: 1 million+

Criminal justice professions, especially law enforcement, are expected to undergo significant changes due to many factors, including artificial intelligence, data analytics, and other science-dependent impacts. The field will also be influenced by ethical and political factors, many of which will play out as a result of the 2024 election. Regardless, the effect on the labor force will be significant, and institutions of higher education will face the challenge of revamping their curriculum, creating new credentials and providing reskilling to evolving and changing professions. This represents a significant opportunity given the size of the market, their experience serving this market, and evolving technologies and policies that could reshape the industry.

This report focuses on three representative law enforcement occupations:

SOC	Description
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers
33-3021	Detectives and Criminal Investigators
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers

Key takeaways for this sector:
- **The overall five-year job posting trend is up**, showing an increase in employer hiring activity in the select occupations. Also, the median advertised wage across these three roles has risen over the past three years (from $56K to $76K).
- **Patrol Officer and Detective roles are expected to grow** but will likely be enhanced or supplemented through greater automation. With over 820,000 individuals currently employed in these professions, the number is projected to swell to about 880,000 by 2030.
- **Correctional Officer and Jailer positions are projected to decline slightly** over the next 10 years, going from about 355,000 currently to 351,000 in 2030. This may reflect

challenges in maintaining a stable corrections workforce due in part to the difficulty, and sometimes danger, of the job.

Figure 1 displays the top posted job titles for the select occupations from April 2010 to April 2024 in the United States. The mix of titles suggests a need for both physical security workers (e.g., Police Officers, Correctional Officers, Border Patrol) as well as more "white-collar," knowledge-based security workers (e.g., Security Analysts, Intelligence Analysts, Background Specialists).

Figure 1: Top Posted Job Titles for Select Occupations in the United States

Top Posted Job Titles •••

Job Title	Total/Unique (Apr 2010 - Apr 2024)	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration
Police Officers	180,799 / 78,478	2 : 1	20 days
Correctional Officers	125,152 / 40,550	3 : 1	24 days
Security Analysts	86,886 / 34,657	3 : 1	18 days
Border Patrol Agents	106,095 / 32,346	3 : 1	21 days
Intelligence Analysts	119,171 / 30,753	4 : 1	16 days
Corrections Officers	30,464 / 14,451	2 : 1	22 days
Background Specialists	54,891 / 10,934	5 : 1	23 days
Investigators	25,156 / 10,098	2 : 1	18 days
Detention Officers	28,383 / 9,716	3 : 1	21 days
Patrol Officers	24,670 / 9,372	3 : 1	24 days

Anticipated Labor Changes for 2034

The following is expected to occur:

- Drones are being piloted in many first responder professions, especially in fire safety, search and rescue, and in some law enforcement positions. Technology regarding robotics is evolving.
- Data analytics, especially predictive analytics, helps to prevent, anticipate, and manage criminal hotspots.
- Evolving and maturing technologies, such as body and dash cams, thermal imaging, and facial identification are also impacting law enforcement. Ethics surrounding much of the

technology will also be an issue. Monitoring social media or gathering information from it could also play a greater role in anticipating crime or with investigations.

- The integration of AI into job functions will significantly impact the skill set required for law enforcement professionals in the coming decade. As AI technology becomes more prevalent in the field, there will be heightened demand for individuals who are adept at utilizing AI-powered tools and platforms over mastery of traditional skill sets.
- With the advancement of AI, it is likely that digital criminals will leverage the technologies in harmful ways, such as the use of deep fake technology, phishing attacks, and various forms of hacking. Law enforcement will develop processes and policies to address and prosecute these crimes of the future.
- New and emerging jobs will include:
    - Cyber Crime Investigator
    - Intelligence Analyst
    - Digital Forensics Examiner
    - Community Outreach Specialists

Table 1 highlights the anticipated growth in select law enforcement occupations over the next decade. These occupations account for over one million jobs in 2024, and the combined workforce is projected to grow 5% by 2034.

Table 1: Current and Forecasted Data for Select Job Occupations in the United States

Occupation	Total Jobs		2024 to 2034 Change		Median Annual Earnings
	2024	2034	# Change	% Change	
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	706,104	761,961	55,857	8%	$72,280
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	116,722	124,813	8,091	7%	$91,104
Correctional Officers and Jailers	355,382	351,227	(4,155)	(1%)	$53,310
Total	1,178,207	1,238,001	59,793	5%	

Figure 2 displays the in-demand skills for the select law enforcement occupations, using job postings from April 2010 to April 2024. The same mix observed in job postings is evident in the top required skills in workforce profiles which include law enforcement, criminal corrections, and intelligence analysis.

Figure 2: In-demand Specialized Skills for Select Law Enforcement Occupations

Top Specialized Skills   •••

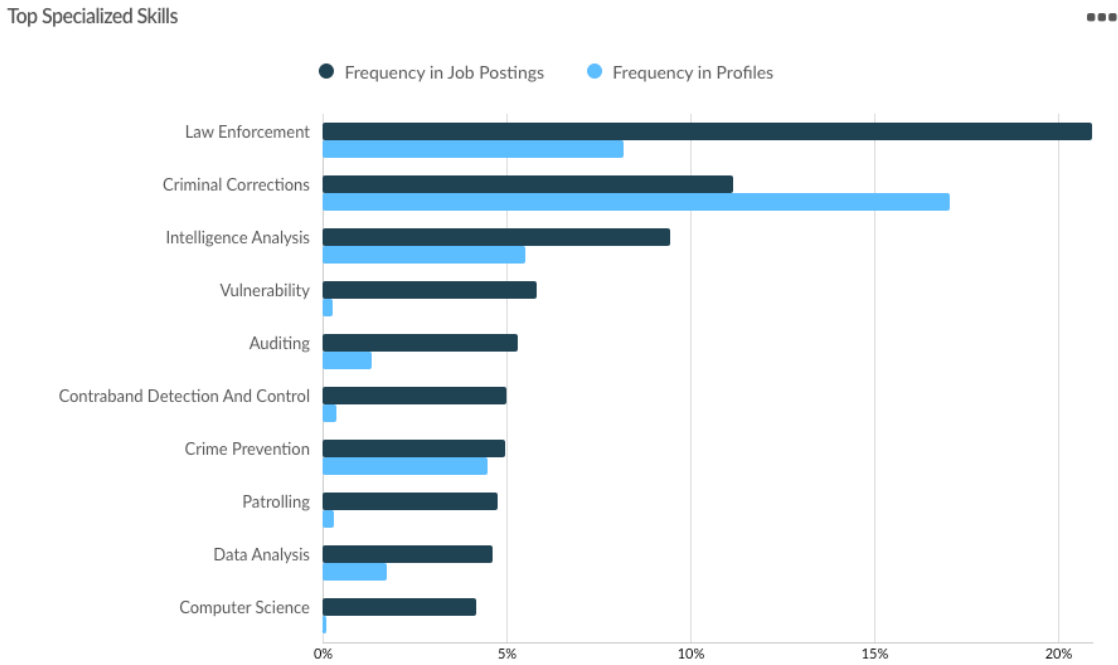● Frequency in Job Postings   ● Frequency in Profiles

Figure 3 displays the projected growth for the top in-demand specialized skills above. Many of the top 10 in-demand skills for these roles are "Growing" or "Rapidly Growing" relative to overall skill demand in the rest of the labor market. Among these are data analysis and computer science which is evidence of the growing importance and influence of technology in law enforcement.

Figure 3: Projected Growth for Specialized Skills in Select Law Enforcement Occupations

Skills	Postings	% of Total Postings	Profiles	% of Total Profiles	Projected Skill Growth	Skill Growth Relative to Market
Law Enforcement	195,013	21%	29,460	8%	+9.8%	Growing
Criminal Corrections	103,896	11%	61,440	17%	+9.5%	Growing
Intelligence Analysis	88,030	9%	19,794	5%	0.0%	Lagging
Vulnerability	54,343	6%	1,023	0%	+16.0%	Growing
Auditing	49,457	5%	4,855	1%	+21.8%	Rapidly Growing
Contraband Detection And Control	46,525	5%	1,363	0%	-1.6%	Lagging
Crime Prevention	46,405	5%	16,138	4%	+4.2%	Lagging
Patrolling	44,356	5%	1,131	0%	+20.2%	Rapidly Growing
Data Analysis	43,008	5%	6,320	2%	+25.8%	Rapidly Growing
Computer Science	38,955	4%	356	0%	+26.8%	Rapidly Growing

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Anticipated Educational Impact

Lightcast and UPCEA anticipate that educational changes could take the form of the following:

- **Law Enforcement: Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers**. Despite the potential for automation and AI to impact law enforcement jobs, it is expected that these jobs will grow over the next decade. In addition, new jobs will be added to the field that leverage technology to anticipate, reduce, and prevent crime. Training in ethics, community relations, and de-escalation techniques is also likely to impact the profession. Education in this field will need to evolve significantly to keep pace with technological advancements and changing societal expectations. Training programs will increasingly incorporate advanced technological competencies, including the operation and ethical implications of emerging tools. Curriculum will need to be continuously updated to reflect the latest developments in technology and law enforcement strategies. Additionally, there will be a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary education, combining elements of criminal justice, technology, sociology, and ethics to prepare law enforcement professionals for the complexities of modern policing.

- **Correctional Officers and Jailers**. The demand for professionals is slowly declining and the industry is challenged with employee retention as a result of increasing prison populations in some states and difficult work conditions. Many evolving AI and automation technologies are being developed or beta-tested which could aid corrections professionals. As a result, educational programs will need to better prepare individuals for the changing landscape of correctional work. Training will increasingly emphasize the integration and ethical use of AI and automation technologies which are designed to enhance safety and operational efficiency. Curriculum will need to incorporate the latest technological advancements and their practical applications within correctional facilities. Furthermore, there will be a heightened focus on mental health management, crisis intervention, and personal safety, addressing the unique challenges of the environment. Educational programs such as interdisciplinary studies that combine criminal justice, technology, psychology, and ethics can better equip future correctional officers and jailers to navigate the demands of their profession.

- **Detective and Criminal Investigator** roles are expected to grow and will likely be enhanced or supplemented through greater automation. There will be an increased need for knowledge-based security workers including background specialists and investigators. Data analytics, especially predictive analytics, will play a significant role in the field. Educational programs will increasingly focus on the integration and application of advanced data analytics and predictive analytics tools. Curriculum will include specialized

courses in data science, cybersecurity, and information technology to equip future detectives with the skills necessary for modern investigative work. Additionally, there will be a greater emphasis on interdisciplinary education, combining criminal justice, computer science, and intelligence analysis. Continuing professional development and certifications in emerging technologies will also become essential to keep pace with advancements in the field.

Institutional Spotlights

As Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement professions adapt to technological changes, institutions have already begun to implement innovative curricula to adequately prepare graduates for growth in these fields. Some examples include:

- **Boston University:** Boston University's Master of Science in Criminal Justice emphasizes data analytics, providing students with a deep understanding of the data-driven nature of modern law enforcement. This program prepares future leaders to combat digital crimes through a curriculum that includes crime and intelligence analysis, building proficiency in essential software tools such as PowerBI, Python, and R. What distinguishes the program is its specialized concentrations in Crime Analysis, Cybercrime Investigation and Cybersecurity, and Strategic Management that collectively address emerging roles in the law enforcement field.

- **University of San Diego:** The increased demand for communication skills in law enforcement is reflected in University of San Diego's Master of Science in Law Enforcement & Public Safety Leadership. With the integration of AI predominantly affecting the analytical aspects of law enforcement, this program prioritizes successful communication and community engagement techniques. It equips leaders with the necessary skills to serve the public in diverse and evolving contexts.

- **Northeastern University:** Northeastern University is addressing the growing demand for intelligence roles within law enforcement by offering a Master of Arts in Security and Intelligence Studies. This program, with a concentration in strategic analysis and intelligence, allows students to build on a traditional curriculum while honing their management skills and adapting to the changing landscape. By providing cutting-edge education in these critical areas, graduates are prepared to meet the evolving needs of the security and intelligence fields.

- **Southern New Hampshire University:** The BS in Criminal Justice program emphasizes effective communication and discretion within criminal justice, which aligns with the

growing demand for vulnerability in the field. The program also prepares graduates to leverage advanced technological tools for investigations, crime prevention, and community engagement, while also understanding and mitigating the risks associated with digital crimes. This dual focus on communication and technology provides a nuanced perspective on the skills required for a new generation of criminal justice and law enforcement professionals.

Next Month's Occupational Focus

- Legal professions

About Lightcast

Lightcast provides trusted global labor market data, analytics, and expert guidance that empowers higher education, employers, and communities to make informed decisions and navigate the increasingly complex world of work. With a database of more than one billion job postings and career profiles, Lightcast provides robust data, clear analysis, and expert guidance on skills, jobs, and opportunities.

Lightcast is active in more than 30 countries and has offices in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, and India. The company is backed by global private equity leader KKR. For more, visit lightcast.io.

About UPCEA

UPCEA is the online and professional education association. Our members continuously reinvent higher education, positively impacting millions of lives. We proudly lead and support them through cutting edge research, professional development, networking and mentorship, conferences and seminars, and stakeholder advocacy. Our collaborative, entrepreneurial community brings together decision makers and influencers in education, industry, research, and policy interested in improving educational access and outcomes. Learn more about us at UPCEA.edu and follow us online @UPCEA.

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