



ETHICAL ISSUES

Women as Police Officers

New Hampshire police have different physical fitness testing standards based on the gender of the police cadet. Overall, on average males are stronger than females, and to account for these differences some jurisdictions, including New Hampshire, require female recruits to satisfy less rigorous physical standards than males when training in the police academy.

Think About It

This policy raises several questions.

1. Is it ethical that physical fitness tests be used at all?
2. Is it ethical that females be allowed to be police officers given their average lower physical strength and lower testing threshold?
3. Will the smaller physical presence of female officers (on average) provoke attacks by offenders and therefore endanger the public? Or does greater technology negate physical differences?
4. Or should females be allowed to be officers but be restricted to working at a desk, with juveniles, and only with other females?

Research suggests that females on average are more empathetic, better communicators, and less aggressive than males. These findings raise several important questions related to policy.

5. Do these gender differences indicate that females make better police officers than males?
6. Given the nature of most police work (which is not physical), are greater communications skills among females indicators that females are more suitable police officers?

Not only do the New Hampshire police have different physical fitness standards based on gender; they also must meet differing criteria based on the age of the applicant. Older applicants are not expected to meet such rigorous physical requirements.

New Hampshire's policy on age raises more questions.

7. Should one limit hiring of police officers only to younger folks who tend to be more physically fit on average than their older counterparts?
8. Or should older police officers be allowed to work only with the elderly?
9. Or perhaps the ethical thing to do is to restrict older officers to desk work duty?

As the new police chief of Peacefulville, you are charged with establishing police officer testing criteria.

10. How will you address average differences in males and females in terms of requirements? Will you impose different criteria based on age, physical size, education, and communication skill levels?
11. What would you do and why?