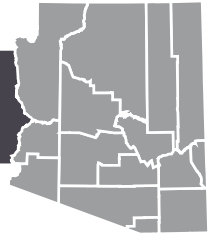


RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ARIZONA'S
LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL



Arizona Public Safety Personnel
Retirement System Data Analysis



Index

Key Findings	1
Report Structure	2
Definitions	2
Data Selection	4
Aggregate Trends Across PSPRS Dataset	5
Statewide Overview	8
Fire Service Employers	8
Law Enforcement (LE)	14
Drill Down by Job	20
Municipal Fire	20
Fire District	25
Department of Public Safety (DPS)	30
Police	35
County Sheriff	40
Metro Type	45
Metro 1	45
Metro 2	48
Metro 3	52
End Notes	55

Key Findings

Retention trends differ between law enforcement and fire service employers.

Our key findings indicate that there was a drop in retention and recruitment of personnel in public safety positions in FY 2020-FY 2021, but whether or not that drop persisted varies by position and agency. While fire service employers saw increased personnel loss from FY 2020-FY 2023, new hires and incoming employees have exceeded losses for the entire study period. For law enforcement employers, employee headcounts have declined overall since FY 2021, and personnel loss has shown a steady upward trend FY 2018-FY 2022, with a small reduction in losses in FY 2023. Hiring and incoming employee rates for law enforcement employers have been variable, with losses exceeding new hires and incoming employees in some years (although new hires and incoming employees outpaced losses in FY 2023.) Law enforcement employers have also seen increased exits among younger age groups, particularly in employees between 20-35, indicating there may be barriers to retention for those who entered the public safety workforce more recently. Barriers to recruitment may also be present, but the exact scope and context of those barriers are difficult to characterize due to a lack of sources for consistent recruitment data across public safety agencies and PSPRS positions.

Lateral movements between agencies are rare.

Lateral movements between public safety agencies can also reduce retention rates. While the percentage of personnel in the PSPRS system with more than one employment record was low (8.46%), analyses of standard pay indicate that second employments had an average of 7-18% higher pay than first employments across all employment categories and job functions except county sheriff. This increase in pay may indicate that standard pay is a factor in inter-agency competition for personnel.

Even within employers of the same type, changes in hiring and exit rates vary by job function.

Breaking out the analysis by job function demonstrates that retention and recruitment trends are not even across every public safety position. Fire districts and municipal fire agencies had some variation between job functions, with personnel loss steadily increasing across both districts and municipalities. Fire municipalities, however, had a rate of new hires and incoming employees that easily exceeded personnel loss, while personnel loss was greater than the number of new hires and incoming employees for fire districts for the first time in FY 2023. Law enforcement agencies also varied by job function. DPS had the largest number of new hires and incoming employees in FY 2020, and the rate has continued to decline into FY 2023. In contrast, police and county sheriff job functions had the lowest number of new hires in FY 2021 and have shown signs of recovery since that point. While fire and law enforcement agencies share a pattern of challenging retention and recruitment trends, the trends among fire service employers appear more consistent, with less variation overall, while there is significant divergence in retention and recruitment trends among law enforcement employers.

Younger employees in large urban areas are increasingly likely to exit their positions, while more rural areas are seeing an upward trend in employees transferring to other positions.

Geographic and demographic factors may also play a role in retention and recruitment. Metro 1 areas, which generally represent the largest populations and highest urban density, have hiring rates that keep pace with personnel loss, but have seen a steady increase in the number of younger employees exiting public safety positions. Metro 2 areas, which generally represent areas of medium population size, also have hiring rates

that keep pace with exits and retirements, but have seen the number of personnel exits overall almost double from FY 2020-FY 2023. Metro 3 areas, characterized as having the least urbanization of all three metro types, show a steady increase in the number of younger employees moving laterally to public safety positions in other metro types, which may indicate an issue retaining employees earlier in their careers.

Report Structure

The NAU research team conducted quantitative analyses based on a dataset sourced from the Arizona Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS) and spanning Fiscal Years 2018 to 2023 (from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2023.) The purpose of these analyses was to assess public safety staffing trends and challenges across Arizona. PSPRS is a state-administered retirement system serving public safety employees who are “regularly assigned hazardous duty,” e.g., primarily firefighters, sworn officers, and other front-line staff.¹ This analysis supports Arizona’s public safety agencies by providing information critical to maintaining optimal public safety staffing and support for personnel and complements accompanying research in this report on *why* these challenges exist. (Further discussion of the context of these challenges can be found in other reports in this series.)²

The first section of this report presents an analysis of PSPRS data from four public safety employer categories (see Table 1) and shows broad trends in employee headcount, age demographics, and personnel loss. These high-level results provide a snapshot of the PSPRS dataset overall that can be used as a signpost pointing towards long-term employment outcomes. Data aggregated at this level, however, are insufficient to tell the story of specific public safety agencies or positions, as employers and job functions vary widely in their mission and context. The second section teases out some of these distinctions by aggregating data by broad employer type, with results from both an analysis of fire service employers and an analysis of law enforcement employers. Subsequent sections then break out the dataset even further across several dimensions, including by the most common job functions (e.g., municipal fire, fire districts, Arizona Department of Public Safety, police, and county sheriff functions) and by metropolitan area classification.

Definitions

Active Headcount: Active headcount refers to the total number of employees who are employed in positions covered by PSPRS at the beginning of a given fiscal year.

DROPs: DROP stands for “Deferred Retirement Option Plan.” The DROP program is a retirement benefit option offered to eligible public safety employees in Arizona that allows eligible public safety employees, such as police officers and firefighters, to accumulate retirement benefits while continuing to work for a specified period. DROP counts include only employees who enter into the DROP program in that fiscal year.

Exits: Exits refer to the total number of employees who permanently left the PSPRS or PSDC within a given fiscal year and did not return to the public safety workforce as of June 30, 2023 (end of FY 2023). This includes both employees who left their positions voluntarily and involuntarily for reasons other than death, retirement, or outgoing transfers. Employees who left their position but returned to the public safety workforce during the study period are classified as return to work or retired and transfer.

Fiscal Year (FY): FY in the United States is a 12-month accounting period that government agencies use for budgeting, financial reporting, and other financial purposes. For Arizona state and local governments, a fiscal year begins on July 1 of one calendar year and ends on June 30 of the following calendar year.

Incoming: Incoming refers to the total number of employees who rejoined the public safety workforce as a function of lateral moves, returns to work, and retirements followed by transfer.

Job Functions: Several analyses categorize PSPRS employees by common job function. Details of the job functions included in the analysis are below.

Job functions included in PSPRS analysis.

Job Function	Job Function	Employer Type
Fire	Fire	Fire District or Municipality
Law Enforcement	Department of Public Safety (DPS)	State Agency
Law Enforcement	Police	Municipality
Law Enforcement	Sheriff	County Agency

Lateral Moves: Lateral moves refer to the total number of employees who left one agency and joined another agency also served by the PSPRS system. Outgoing lateral moves refers to employees who are leaving one agency for employment at another, while incoming lateral moves refer to employees who are joining an agency after leaving a different agency.

Metro Type: Several analyses categorize PSPRS employees by type of metropolitan area. Details of these metropolitan types are below.

Metro type included in PSPRS analysis.

Metro Type	Criteria based on population size
Metro 1	City > 50,000 and County > 1M
Metro 2	City > 50,000, or key cities in the area, or County > 250,000
Metro 3	City < 50,000, or County < 250,000

New Hires: New hires refers to the total number of employees who have joined the public safety workforce for the first time. This is operationalized as employees without previous PSPRS service records.

Outgoing: Outgoing refers to the total number of employees who left the public safety workforce in between multiple employment records within the public safety sector. This is inclusive of lateral moves, returns to work, and retirements followed by transfer.

Personnel Loss: Personnel loss or loss refers to the total number of employees who have left an agency for any reason, including exits, retirements, death, and lateral movement to another agency.

Rates: Rates for exits, deferred retirement option plans (DROPs), retirements, and new hires were calculated by dividing the cumulative number of employees in the desired category (i.e., exits, DROPs, etc.) in a FY divided by the active headcount in the beginning of that FY.

Retired and Transfer: Retired and transfer refers to the total number of employees who retired from the public safety workforce and then subsequently rejoined the sector.

Retirements: Retirement refers to the total number of employees who left their PSPRS position at a certain age or after reaching specific years of service and then began to receive retirement benefits. This also includes the employees who are ending their DROP period and beginning to receive retirement benefits.

Return to Work: Return to work refers to the total number of employees who exited employment from one agency and then rejoined the same agency at a later date.

Data Selection

This analysis focused on public safety employees at the municipal, county, fire district, and state level across Arizona. A total of 37,741 employment records were selected for inclusion in the dataset. These records included the state-administered Public Service Retirement System (PSPRS) and Public Safety Defined Pension (PSDP) plans, with the pooled data hereafter referred to as “PSPRS.” This data included four employer categories (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of employment records in analysis dataset.

Employer Category	Employment Records
County agency	3,619
Fire district	3,498
Municipality	23,650
State agency	1,974
Total	32,741

Some employees in the PSPRS system may have been employed at more than one public safety agency served by PSPRS, thus generating more than one employment record for the same individual. These employment records capture “lateral moves” where an employee transfers between agencies. After analyzing the lateral moves within the PSPRS dataset, 91.54% had only one employment record within the public safety workforce, 7.53% had two, and 0.93% had more than two records (see Table 2.)

Table 2. Summary of lateral moves based on employment records in analysis dataset.

Employment Record	Count	Percentage
1 record	27,359	91.54%
2 records	2,250	7.53%
3 records	243	0.81%
4 or 5 records	37	0.12%

Aggregate Trends Across PSPRS Dataset

The challenges in both retention and recruitment were evident in varying degrees across different geographic locations, job functions, and age groups. The information below is an overview of the pooled dataset (n=32,741), inclusive of all the employer categories listed above (see Table 1).

Figure 1. Total active headcount for all employer types.

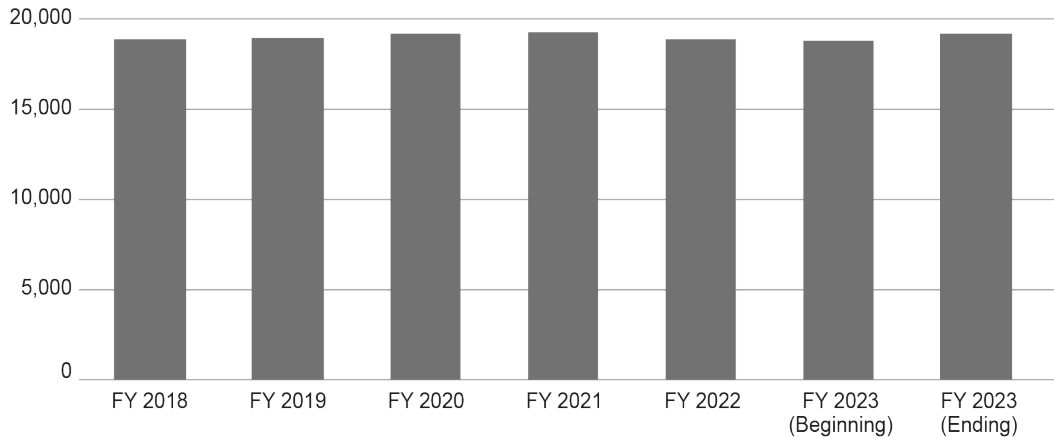
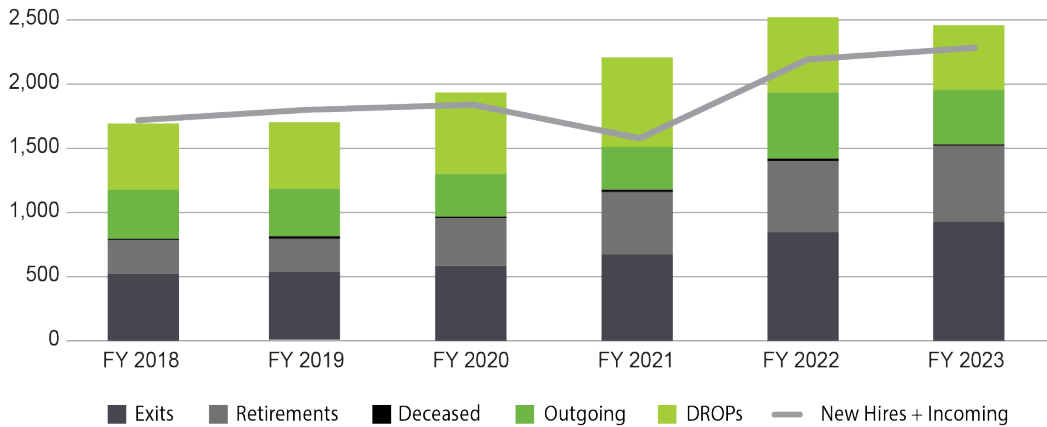


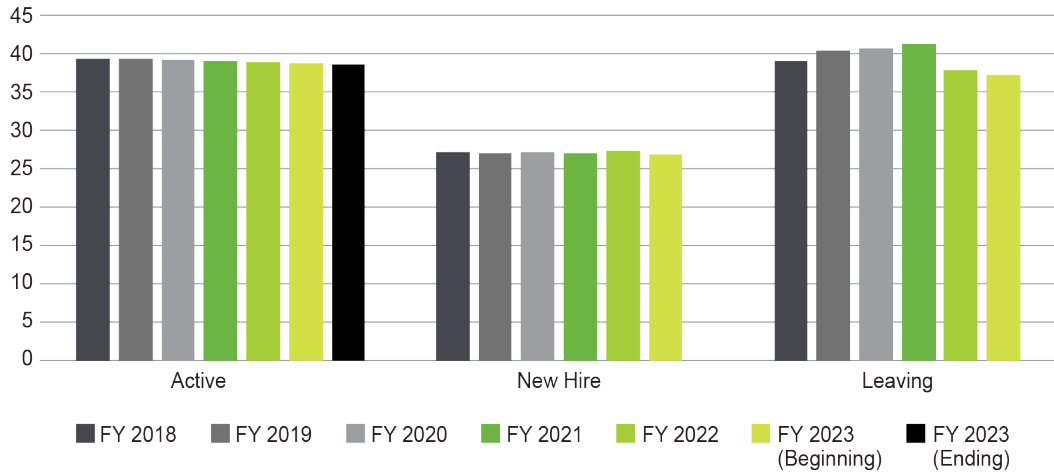
Figure 2. Detail of headcount change across fiscal years for all employer types.



According to the dataset encompassing all four employer types, the total number of new hires and incoming employees has exceeded total personnel losses every year of the study period. In FY 2021, however, the number of new hires and incoming employees barely outpaced the number of employees leaving their positions. Since FY 2021, the new hire and incoming rates have recovered, although the difference between employee gains and losses is smaller than prior to FY 2021.

An outstanding trend was the change of median leave age for people who left PSPRS employment. Including both exits and retirement, the median age was 37.29 in FY 2023—a decrease of 1.8 years when compared to FY 2018. Median ages for active staffing and new hires remained at the same level, indicating that while the composition of the workforce stayed steady, employees exiting the PSPRS system were younger overall.

Figure 3. Median age of active employees, new hires, and those leaving PSPRS employment.



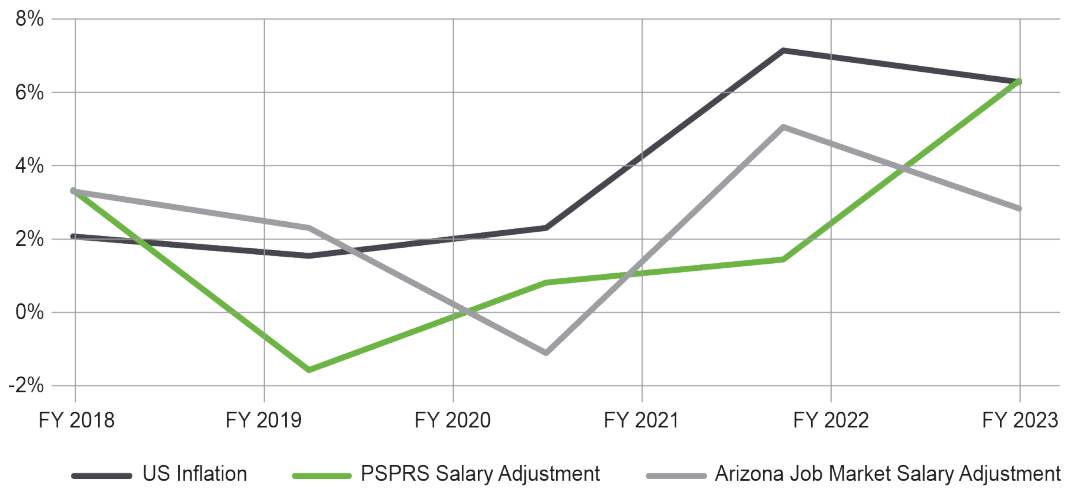
Comparing PSPRS position leaving and recruitment rates with broader job market trends is another way to assess the state of the public safety workforce in Arizona. Figure 4 provides a leaving and recruitment rate for all four employer categories and tracks these rates alongside both Arizona and U.S. overall job opening rates during the study period.³ While not a direct comparison of employee turnover across all three job markets, these rates provide a snapshot of public safety workforce trends in comparison to the state and the country overall. The PSPRS leaving and recruitment rates are consistently significantly higher than the job opening rates for both Arizona and nationwide, indicating that the public safety workforce in Arizona is likely experiencing increased turnover compared to the more general job market. PSPRS leaving rates have consistently outpaced recruitment rates since FY 2020, although the gap between leaving and recruitment has narrowed since FY 2021.

Figure 4. PSPRS leaving and recruitment rates in comparison with job opening rates in the US and Arizona.



Another factor possibly impacting leaving rates is inflation. Inflation changes both employers' and employees' salary expectations.⁴ Pay adjustment within PSPRS was calculated by dividing the difference of the average of current fiscal year salary with the previous year over the average of the previous year's pay. Then the adjustment rate was compared with the rate within the Arizona job market and the U.S. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers.⁵ The result showed salary adjustments in the Arizona job market followed U.S. inflation closely during FY 2022. PSPRS salaries also saw an increase, although this rise trailed behind inflation as the increase did not appear until FY 2023 when inflation was beginning to drop. The analysis shows that the Arizona job market adjustments followed national inflation trends more closely, while PSPRS adjustments were less closely tied to inflation.

Figure 5. US Inflation vs. pay adjustments by PSPRS and the Arizona job market.



Statewide Overview

Fire Service Employers

Firefighters are typically hired by cities, towns, or fire districts to provide emergency response services related to structure fires, wildfires, medical emergencies, and other emergency incidents. Fire departments and districts are essential public safety agencies responsible for protecting lives and property within their jurisdiction. The section below provides an overview of employment trends for all fire service employers, including the total headcount for persons employed as firefighters and changes in that headcount between FY 2018 and 2023.

Active Headcount

The total active headcount of firefighters in Arizona showed a consistent increasing trend between FY 2018 and 2023, with the lowest annual increase rate in FY 2021 at 0.29%. New hires and incoming employees dropped in FY 2020, but have steadily recovered since then. New hires and incoming employees have outpaced personnel loss during every year of the study period.

Figure 6. Total headcount of personnel across all fire service employers.

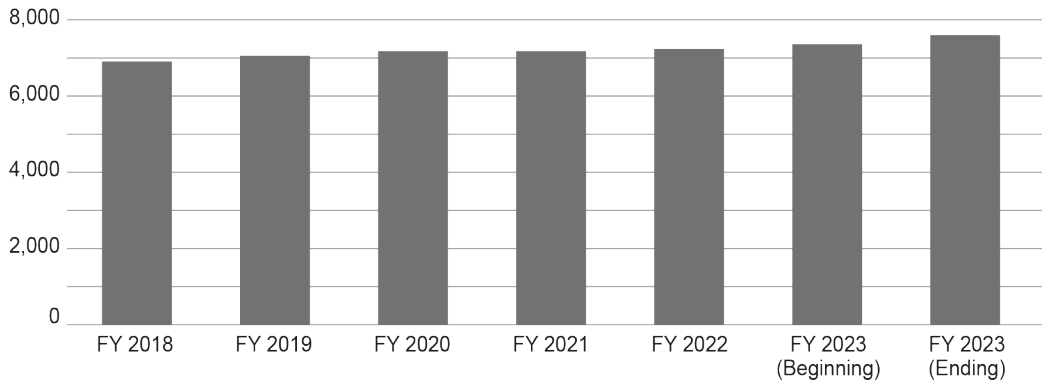
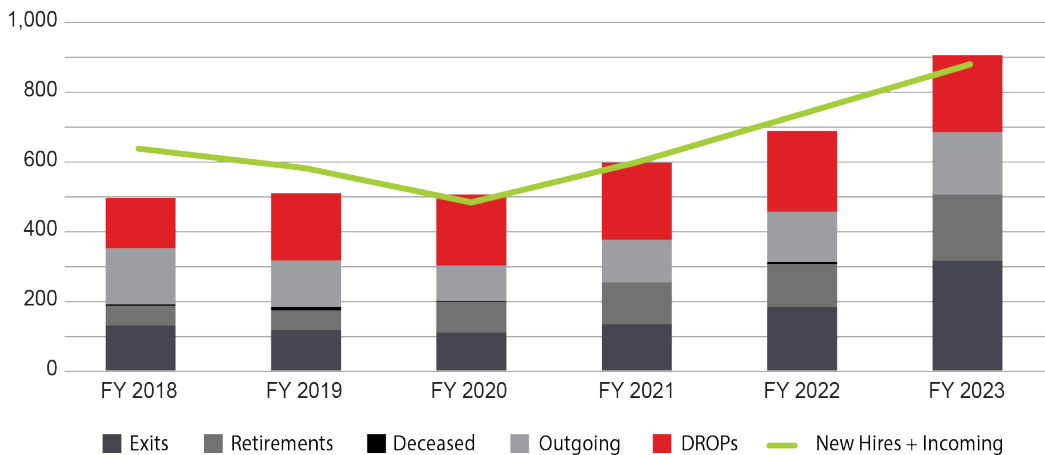


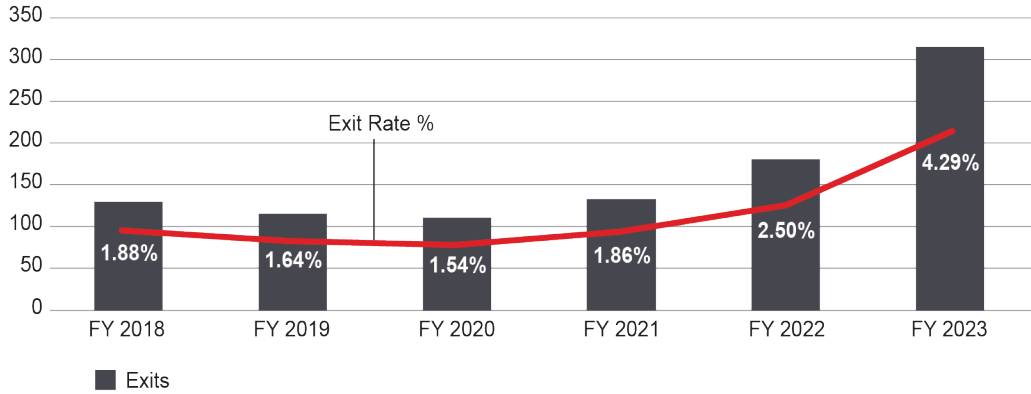
Figure 7. Overview of changes in headcount across all fire service employers.



Exits

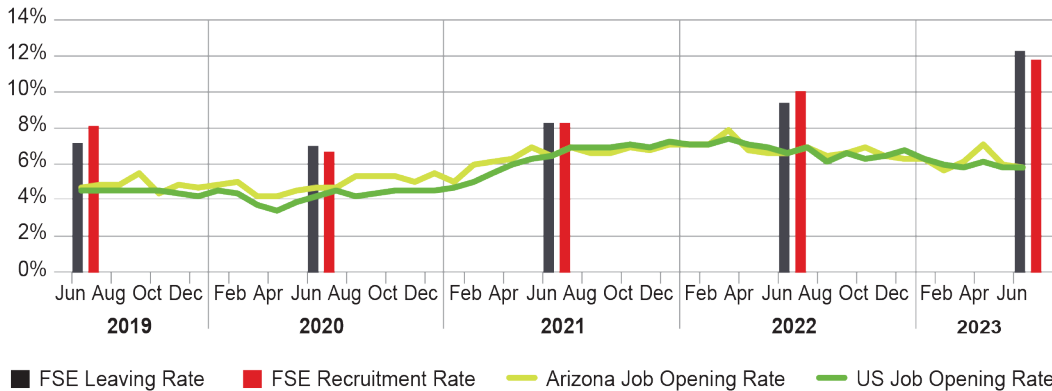
The number of exits increased between FY 2018 and 2023, with the highest number of exits during FY 2023.

Figure 8. Exits and exit rate across all fire service employers.



When compared to the job opening rates of both the US overall and Arizona, fire service employers in this dataset had a higher rate of both leaving and recruitment, indicating that fire service employers may see greater turnover than the general job market. Fire service leaving and recruitment rates have also continued to increase through FY 2023, even while the job opening rate in the broader market began to decrease.

Figure 9. Fire service employers' leaving and recruitment rate in comparison with job opening rates in the US & Arizona.



Breaking out the data by age provides additional insight. The number of exits increased in all age groups in FY 2023, with a majority of exits within the age groups of 25 and 35. Further analysis showed that the average years of service was around 1.3 years for exits between 20 and 25, 3 years for exits between 25 and 30, and 4.5 years for exits between 30 and 35.

Figure 10. Exits by age group across all fire service employers.

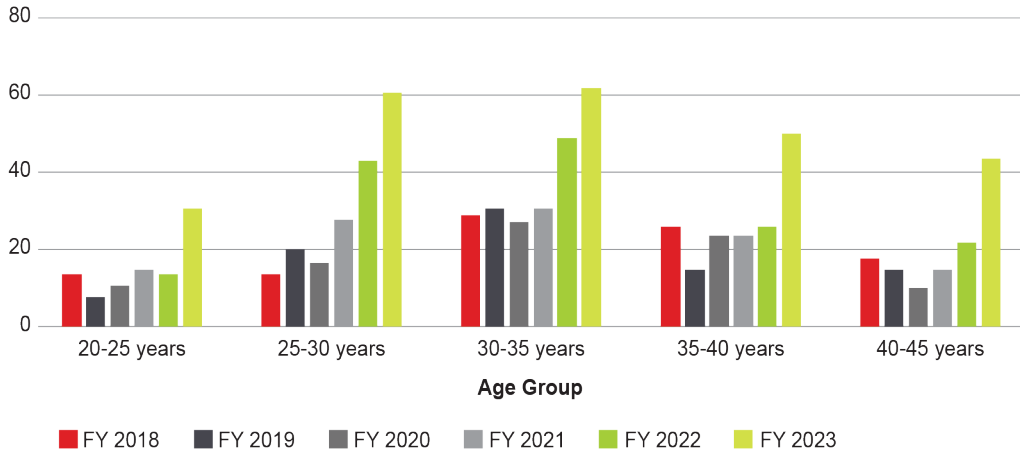
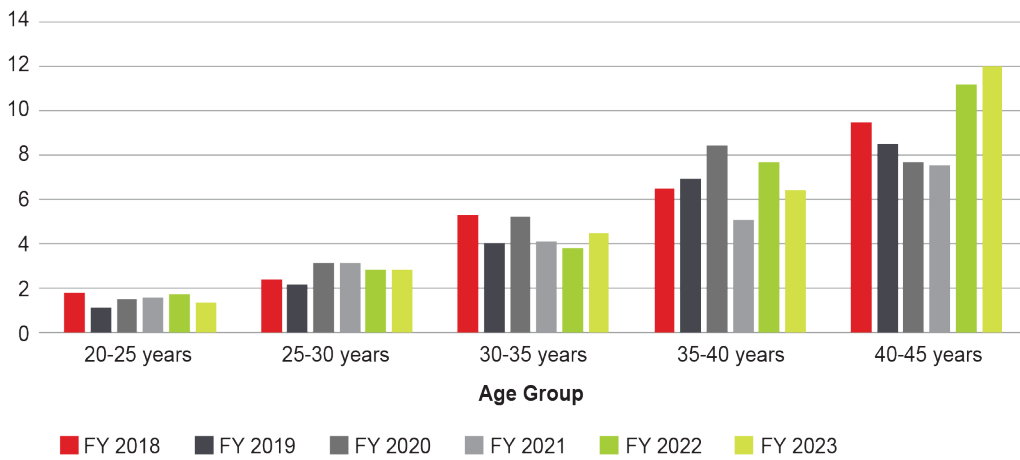


Figure 11. Average years of service at the time of exit across all fire service employers.



DROPs and Retirements

Figure 12. Retirements and retirement rate across all fire service employers.

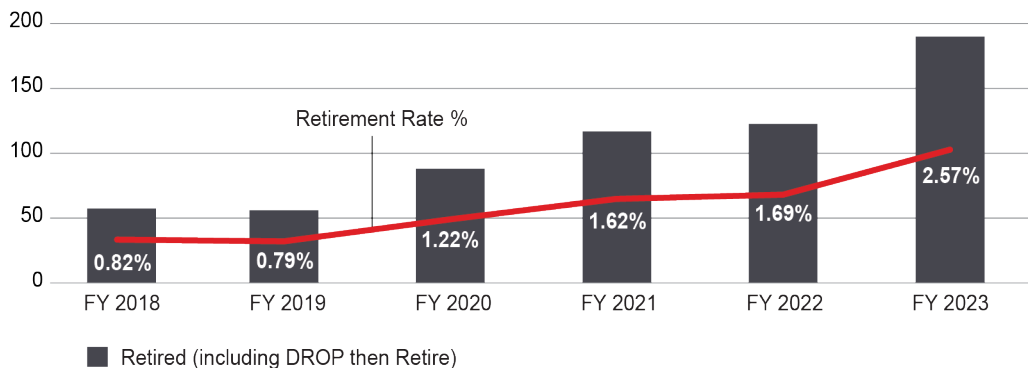
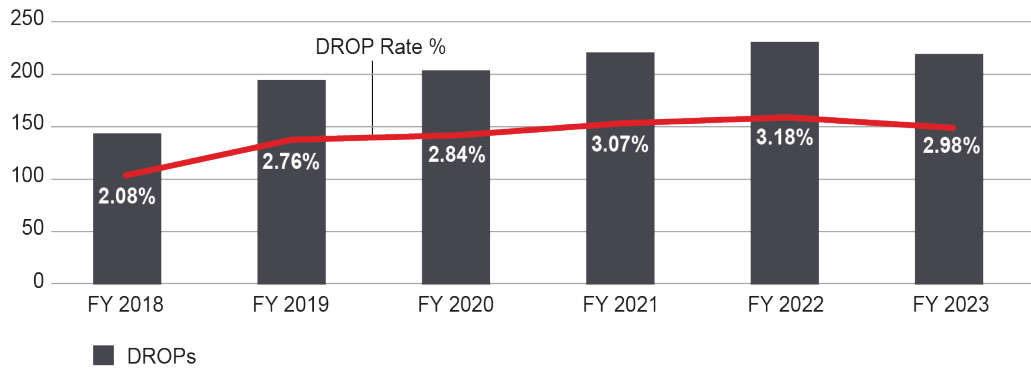
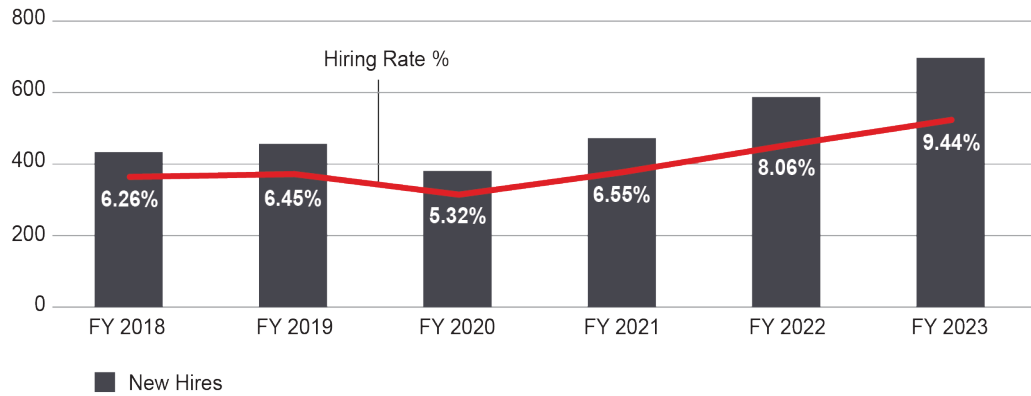


Figure 13. DROPs and DROP rate across all fire service employers.



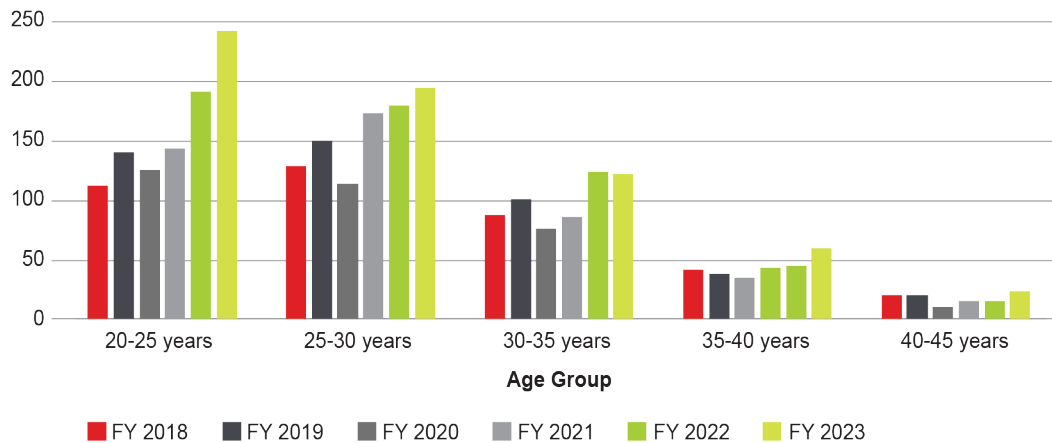
New Hires

Figure 14. New hires and hiring rate across all fire service employers.



The number of employees who joined fire service employers has continued to increase for all age groups from FY 2018 to FY 2023. The majority of new hires were between the ages of 20-30, with the largest increase within the age group of 20-25. For example, in FY 2018, 26% of new hires were in the age group of 20-25, whereas in FY 2023 34% of new hires were between 20-25.

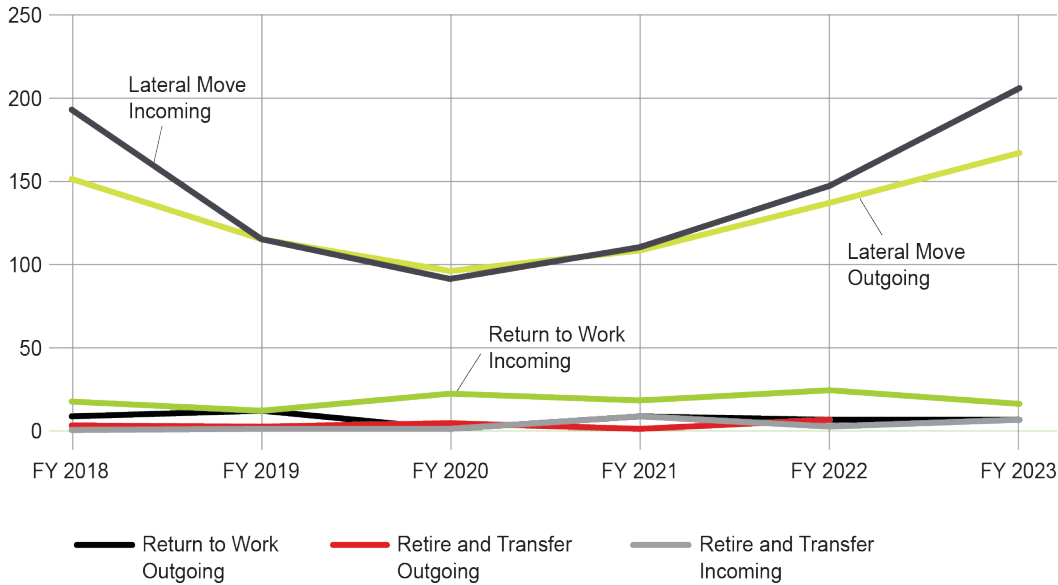
Figure 15. New hires by age group across all fire service employers.



Outgoing & Incoming

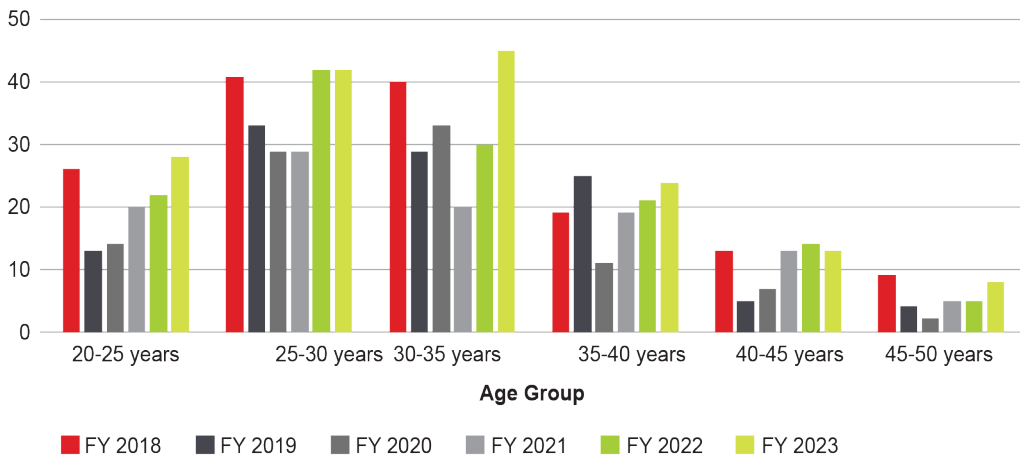
For employees with multiple service records with fire service employers, the majority were lateral moves between different agencies. The number of lateral moves was low in FY 2020 and 2021 during COVID, although higher before (FY 2018-2019) and after (FY 2022-2023).

Figure 16. Outgoing and incoming personnel across all fire service employers.



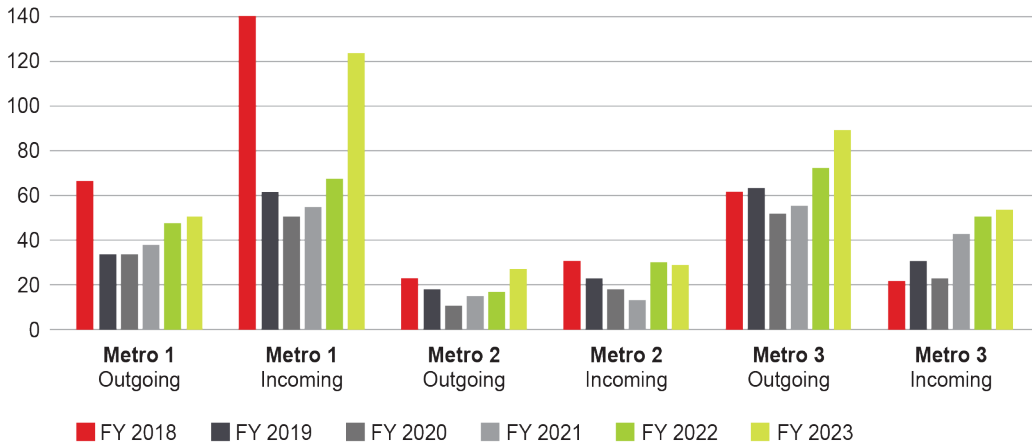
There is also an increasing trend of lateral moves among persons in the 20-25 age group; the overall majority of the lateral moves were among persons between the ages of 25-35.

Figure 17. Outgoing lateral moves within the PSPRS system across all fire service employers.



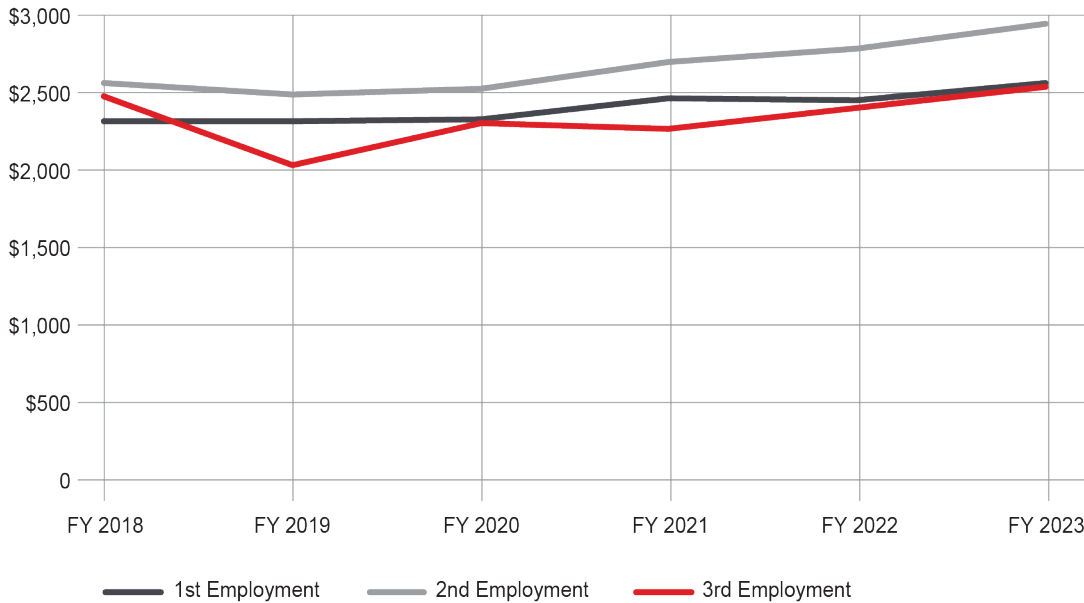
For lateral moves among different metro types, the larger population Metro 1 areas had more incoming than outgoing while Metro 3, composed of lower population areas, had more outgoing than incoming.

Figure 18. Lateral moves by metro type across all fire service employers.



One outstanding trend is that average pay is the highest during a second employment among fire service employers. On average this second employment has pay 8% higher than a first employment.

Figure 19. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record across all fire service employers.



Law Enforcement (LE)

Active Headcount

The high-level job functions captured in this pooled dataset include police officers, sheriffs, and deputies, investigators hired by the state or county, and various other law enforcement functions with state public safety agencies.

The total active headcount of law enforcement personnel in Arizona peaked in FY 2021, and then declined in FY 2022 and 2023. The active headcount had dropped by 3.75% during FY 2022 and recovered only slightly by the end of FY 2023. In FY 2021, total personnel loss exceeded the number of new hires and incoming employees. Although new hires and incoming employees recovered by FY 2023 to exceed FY 2018-FY 2021 levels, total personnel loss also remains elevated.

Figure 20. Total headcount of personnel across all law enforcement employers.

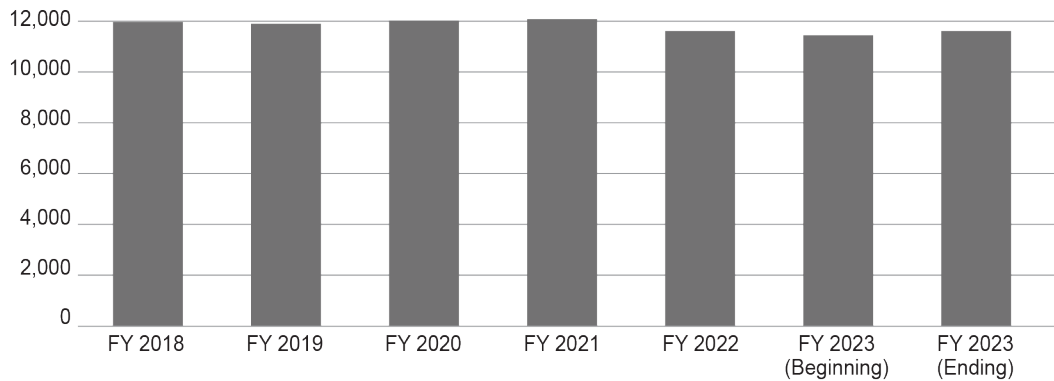
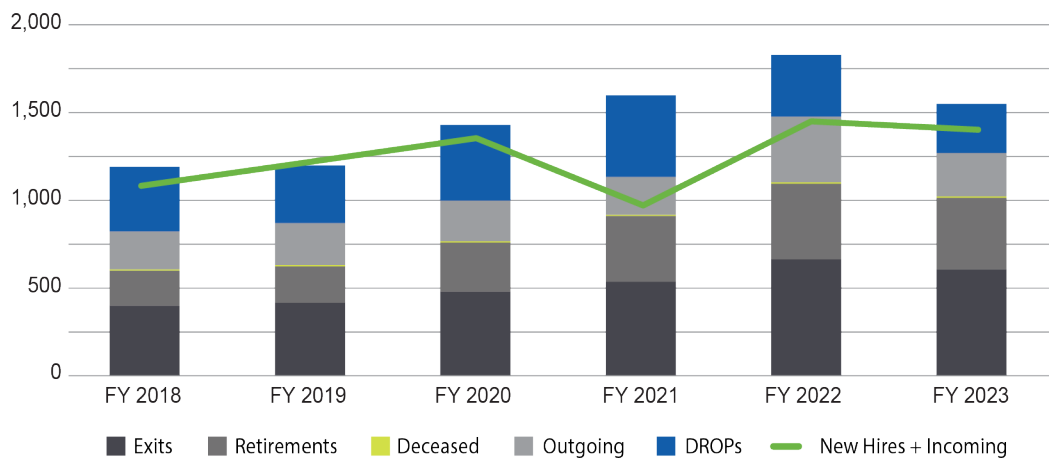


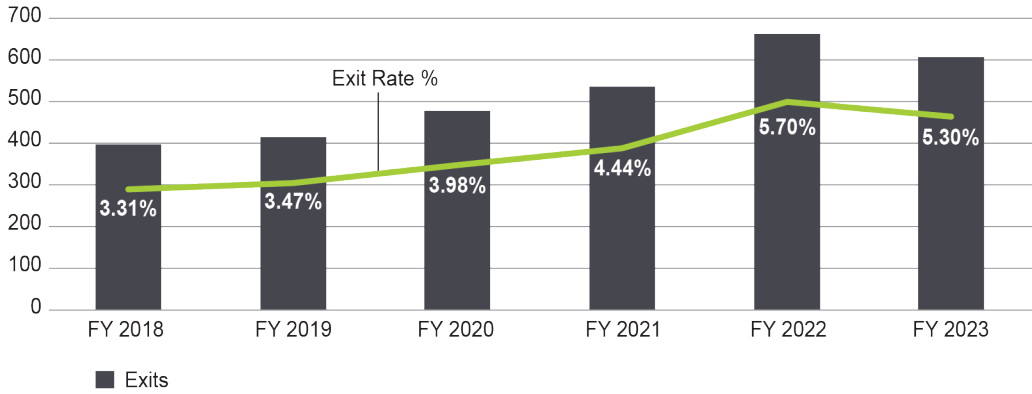
Figure 21. Overview of changes in headcount across all law enforcement employers.



Exits

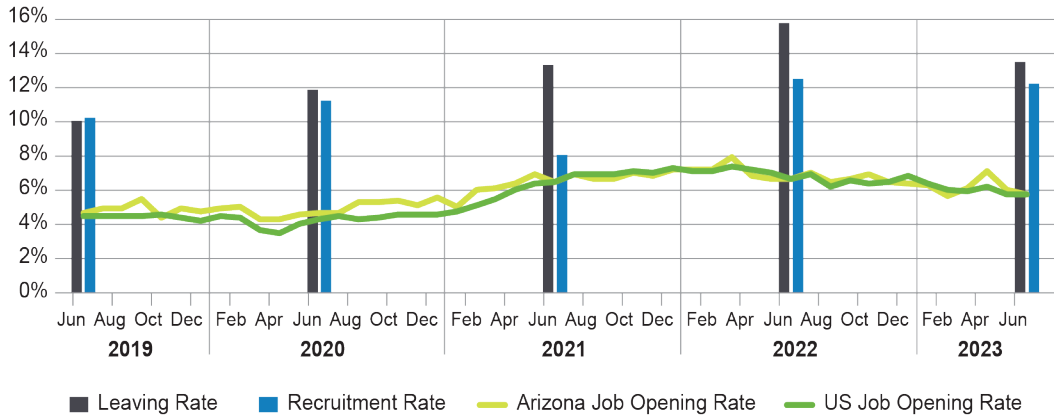
The number of exits consistently increased beginning in FY 2019, peaked in FY 2022, then recovered slightly in FY 2023.

Figure 22. Exits and exit rate across all law enforcement employers.



When comparing the total leaving and recruitment rates of law enforcement employers with Arizona and US job opening rates overall, leaving and recruitment rates consistently exceed job opening rates, suggesting that turnover rates in law enforcement employers may be higher than in the broader job market.

Figure 23. Law enforcement employers' leaving and recruitment rate in comparison with job opening rates in the US & Arizona.



Drilling down by age provides more insight into the total number of exits. There was an increase in exits between the ages of 20-35. The average length of service for exits of employees aged 20-25 was only 0.66 years, and 2.08 years for exits of employees aged 25-30.

Figure 24. Exits by age group across all law enforcement employers.

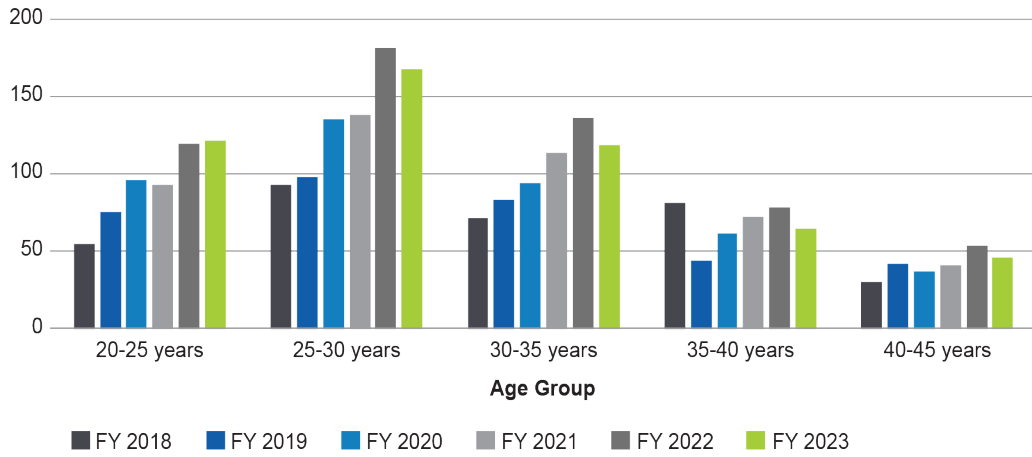
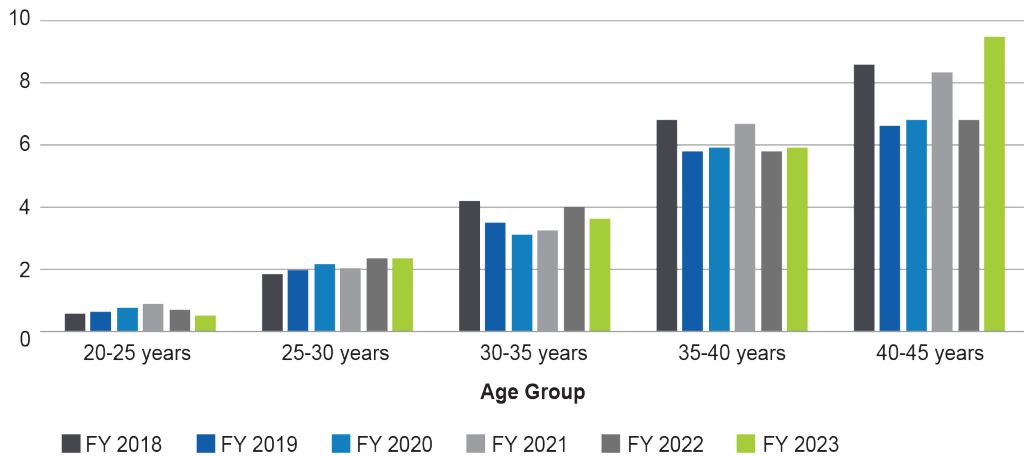


Figure 25. Average years of service at time of exit across all law enforcement employers.



DROPs and Retirements

Figure 26. Retirements and retirement rate across all law enforcement employers.

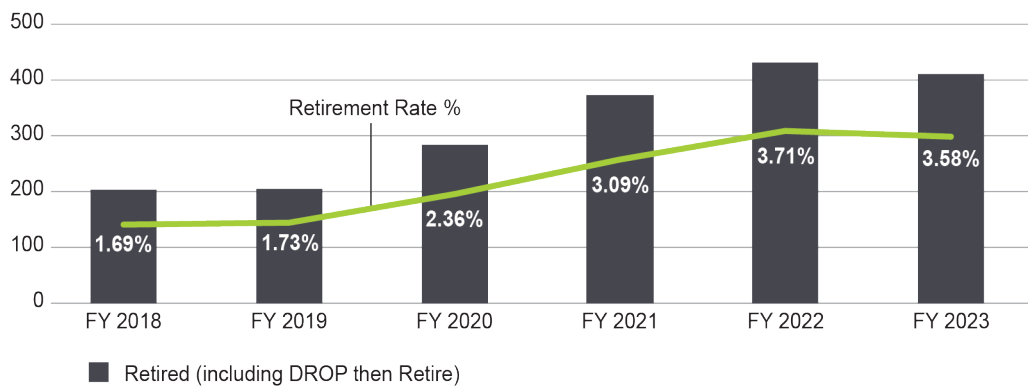
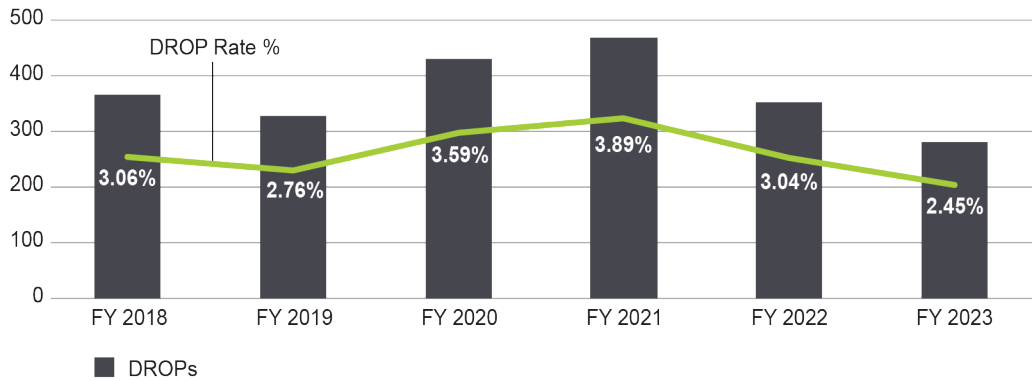


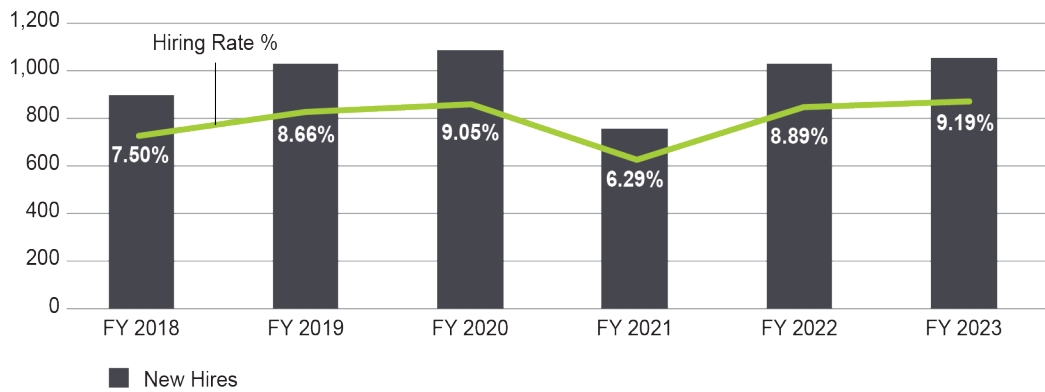
Figure 27. DROPs and DROP rate across all law enforcement employers.



New Hires

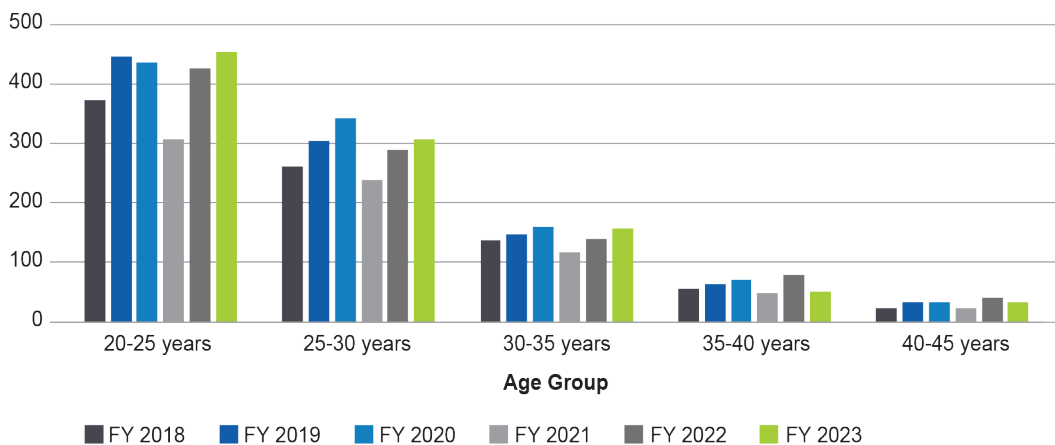
Law enforcement employers had their lowest number of new hires in FY 2021.

Figure 28. New hires and hiring rate across all law enforcement employers.



The majority of new hires were between the ages of 20-25, although overall rates of hiring in that age group have stayed relatively steady. In FY 2018, 41% of new hires were in the 20-25 age group, while in FY 2023, 43% of new hires were in the same age group.

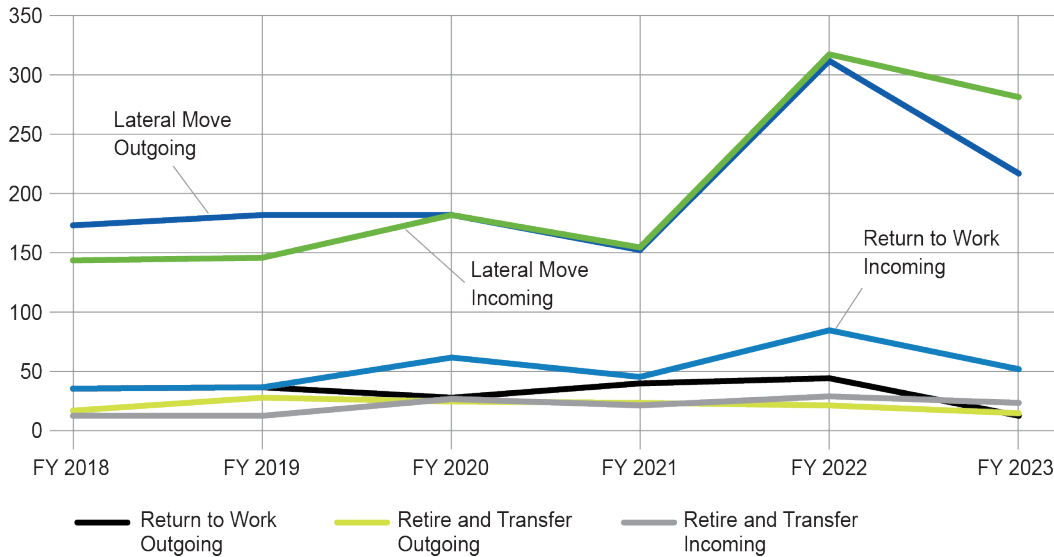
Figure 29. New hires and hiring rate across all law enforcement employers.



Outgoing and Incoming

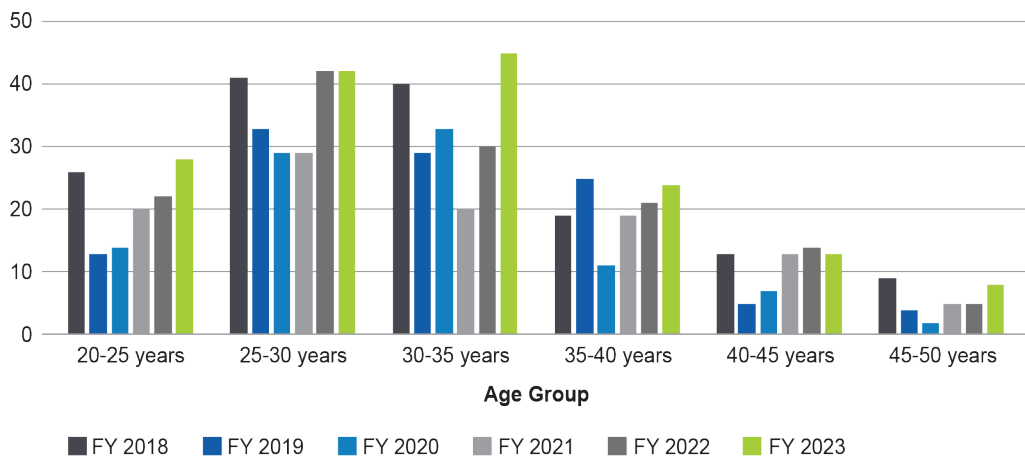
For employees with multiple service records with law enforcement employers, the majority were lateral moves between different agencies. These lateral moves significantly increased during FY 2022 and started to decrease in FY 2023.

Figure 30. Outgoing and incoming personnel across all law enforcement employers.



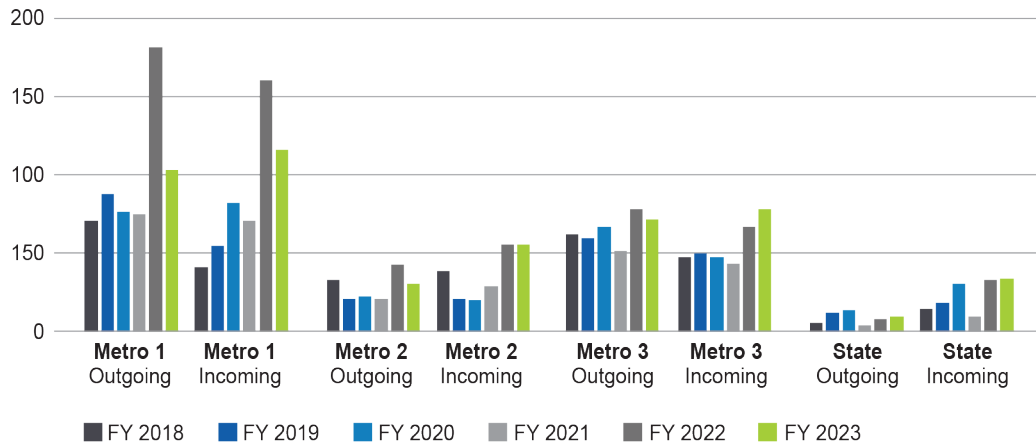
There is an increasing trend of lateral moves among persons in the 20-25 age group, although the majority of the lateral moves are among persons between the ages of 25-35.

Figure 31. Outgoing lateral moves within PSPRS system across all law enforcement employers.



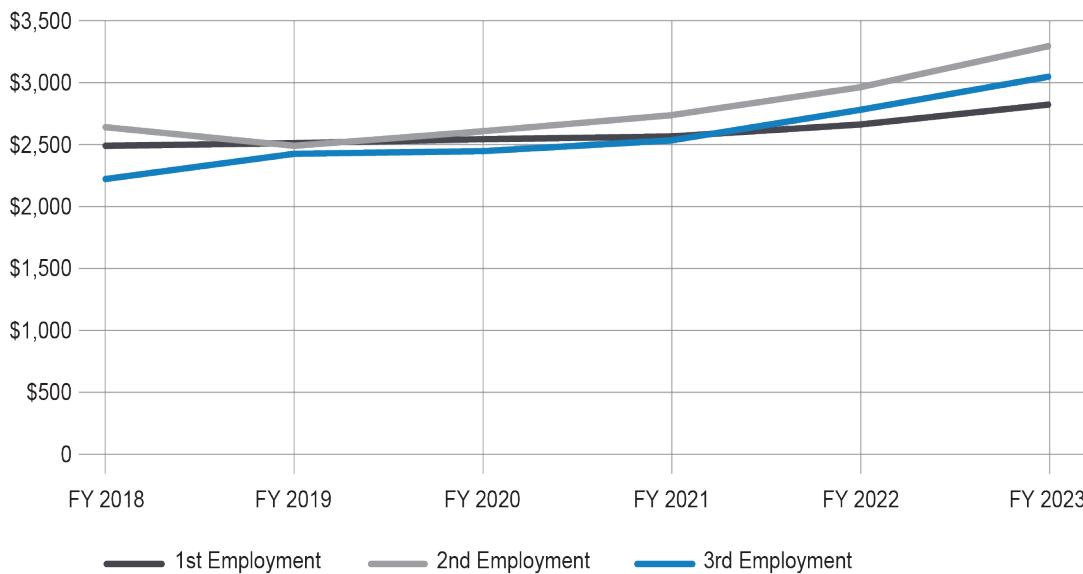
Lateral movements between law enforcement employers also show a different pattern than among fire service employers. For law enforcement employers, more lateral moves were outgoing from the larger population Metro 1 areas than incoming. Incoming lateral moves more commonly went into Metro 2 or state agencies.

Figure 32. Lateral moves by metro type across all LE employers.



Similar to fire service employers, the outstanding trend among law enforcement employers is that second employment is associated with the highest pay; on average this pay is 7% higher than in the first employment.

Figure 33. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record across all law enforcement employers.



Drill Down by Job

This section presents analyses of trends in headcount, personnel loss, and hiring rates using the PSPRS dataset subset by job function. These job functions are defined as municipal fire, fire district, Arizona Department of Public Safety, police, and county sheriff. Each job function’s results are broken out separately to explore differences between types of public safety position.

Municipal Fire

Active Headcount

The total active headcount for municipal firefighters showed a steady increase during the study period. The rate of new hires and incoming personnel dipped in FY 2021 but recovered steadily, reaching its highest rate throughout the study period in FY 2023.

Figure 34. Total headcount of municipal fire personnel.

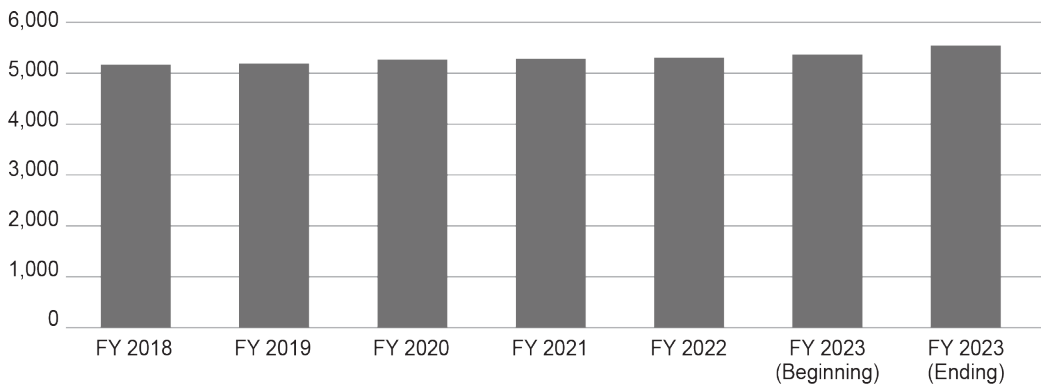
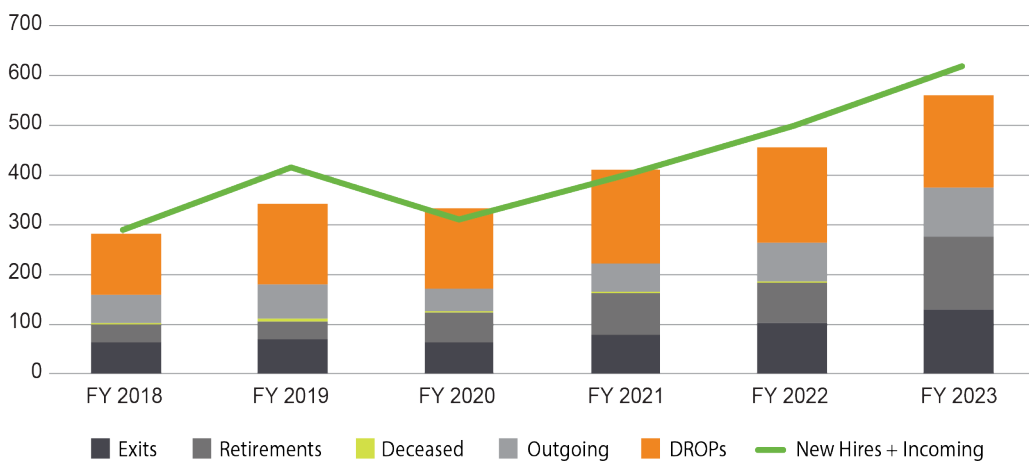


Figure 35. Overview of changes in municipal fire headcount.



Exits

There was an increasing trend in exits for fire municipalities, although this trend has been relatively gradual since FY 2018.

Figure 36. Exits and exit rate for municipal fire personnel.

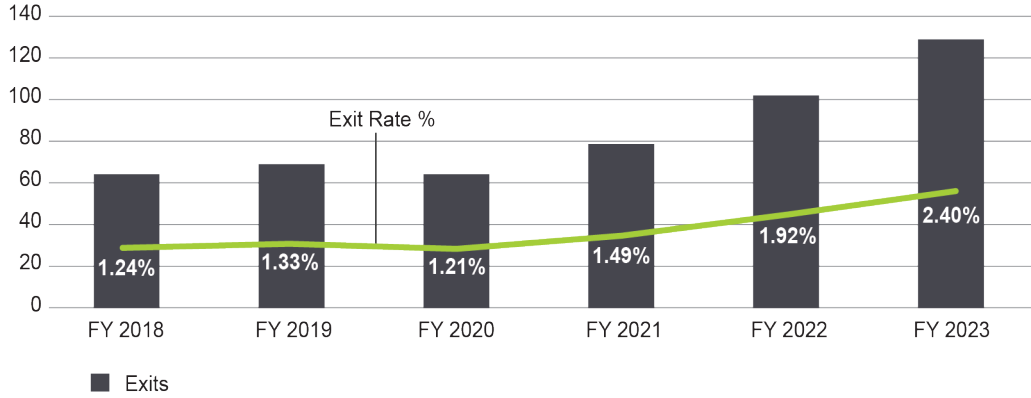


Figure 37. Exits by age for municipal fire personnel.

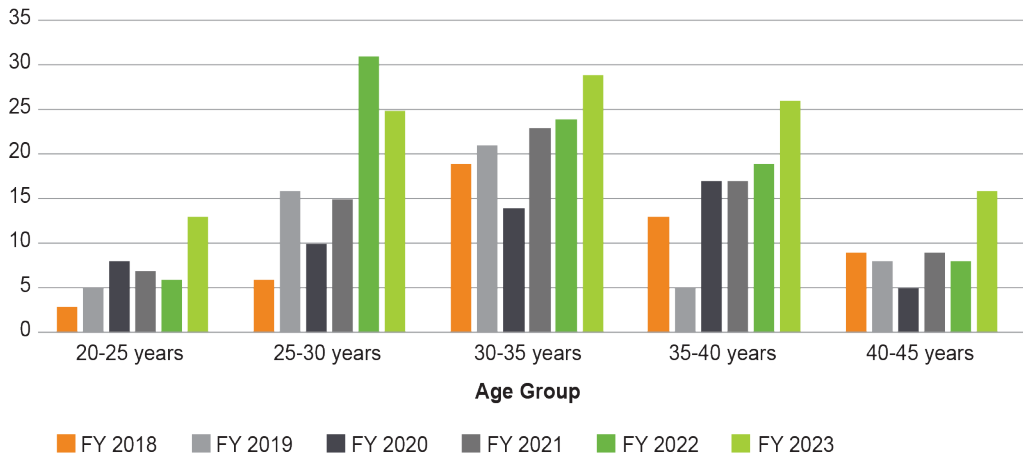
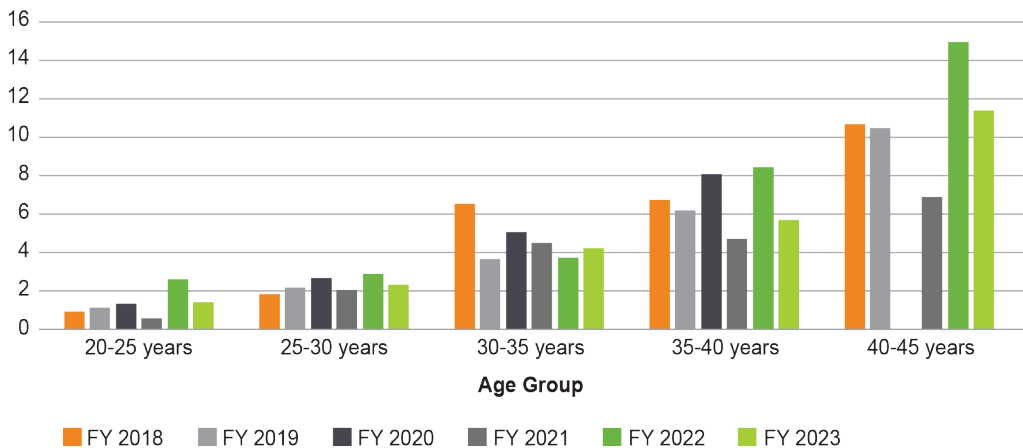


Figure 38. Average years of service at time of exit for municipal fire personnel.



DROPS and Retirements

Figure 39. Retirements and retirement rate for municipal fire personnel.

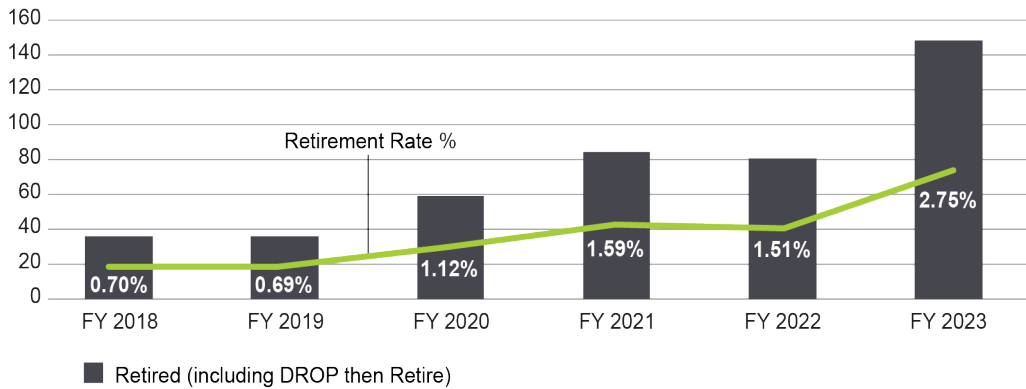
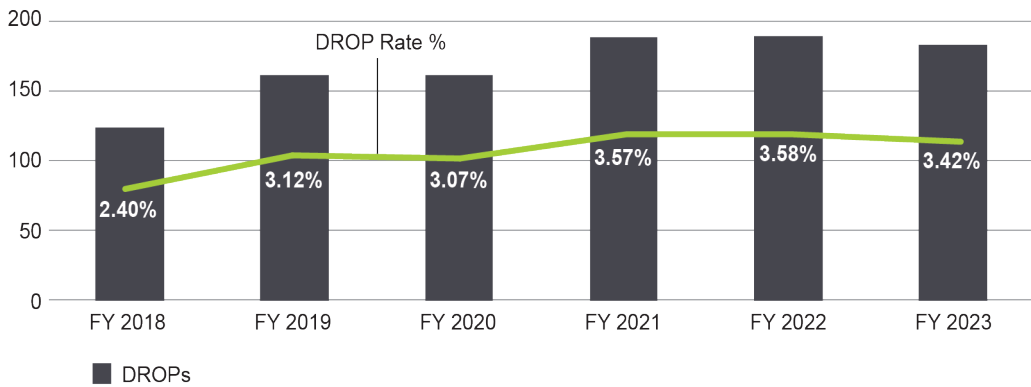


Figure 40. DROPs and DROP rate for municipal fire personnel.



New Hires

Fire municipalities have seen a slight increase in the hiring rate since 2018, and have increased the proportion of new hires between the ages of 20-30.

Figure 41. New hires and hiring rate for municipal fire personnel.

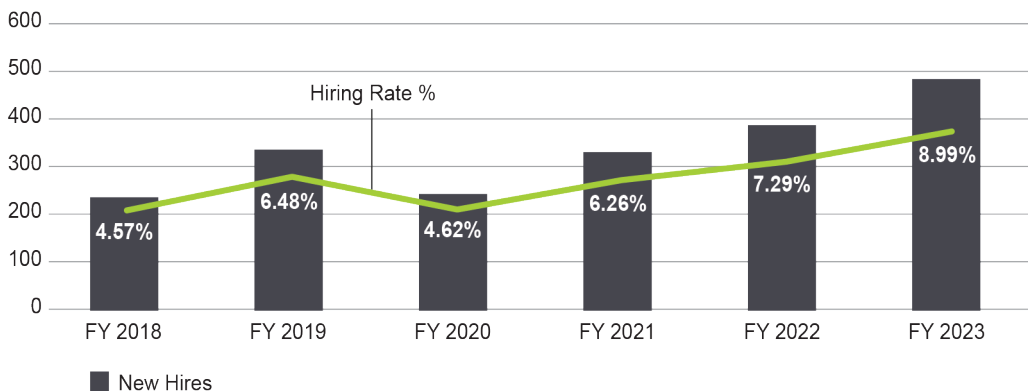
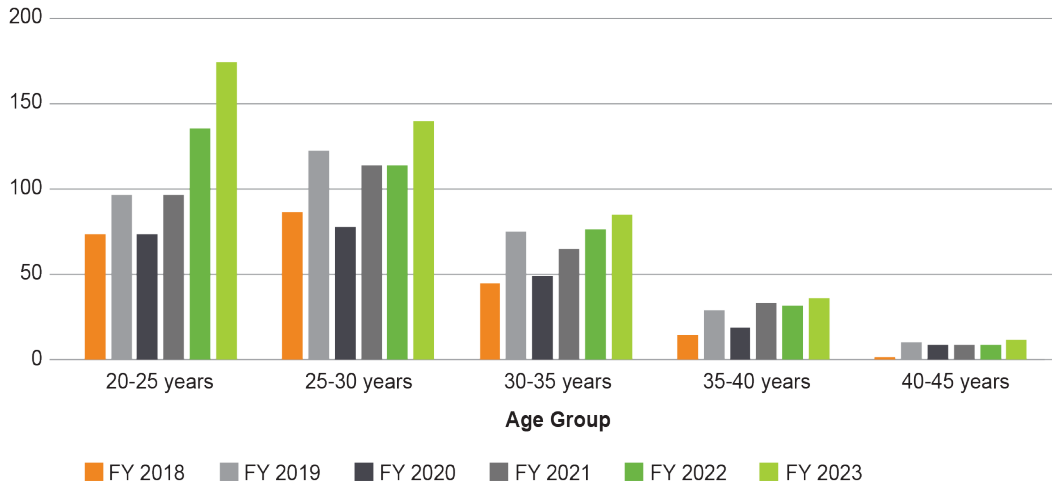


Figure 42. New hires by age group for municipal fire personnel.



Outgoing and Incoming

The numbers of outgoing and incoming personnel were almost equal. There were more personnel incoming to Metro 1 areas and more outgoing from Metro 3.

Figure 43. Outgoing and incoming personnel for fire municipalities.

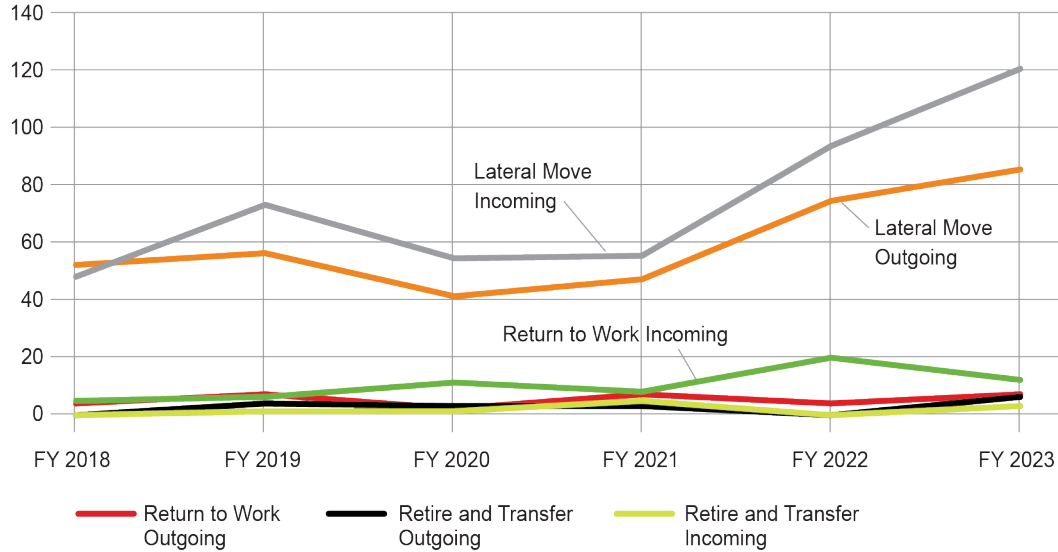


Figure 44. Outgoing lateral moves within PSPRS system among municipal fire personnel.

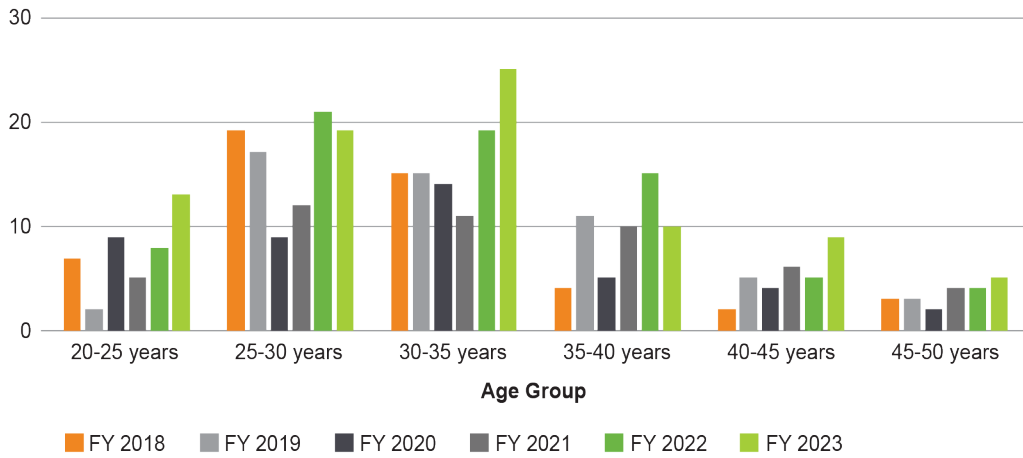


Figure 45. Lateral moves by metro type for municipal fire personnel.

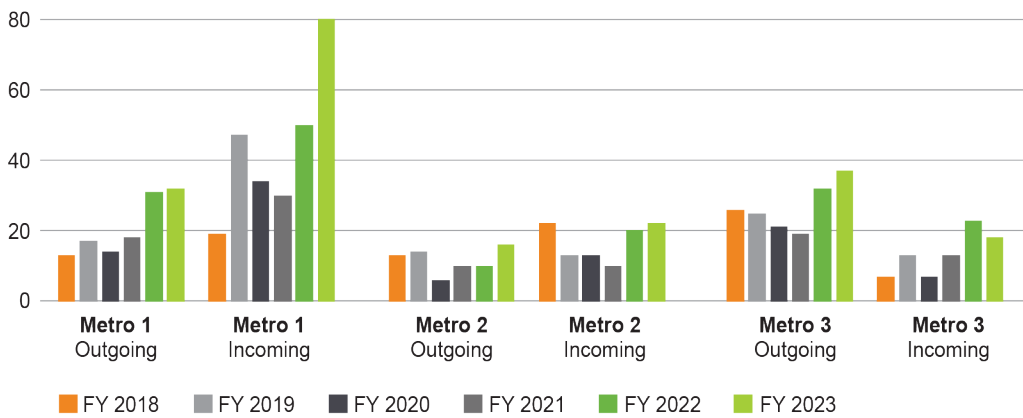
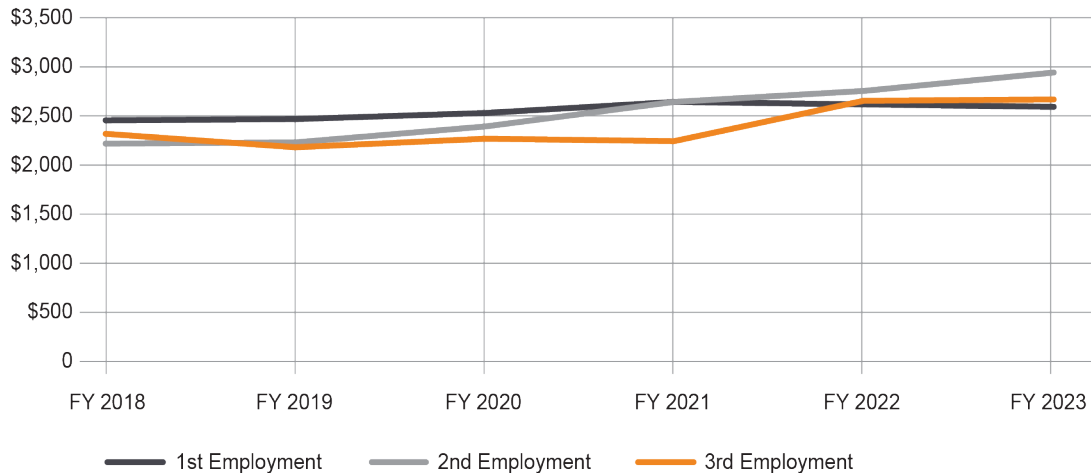


Figure 46. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record for municipal fire personnel.



Fire District

Active Headcount

The total active headcount for firefighters showed a steady increase at the fire district level.

Figure 47. Total headcount of fire district personnel.

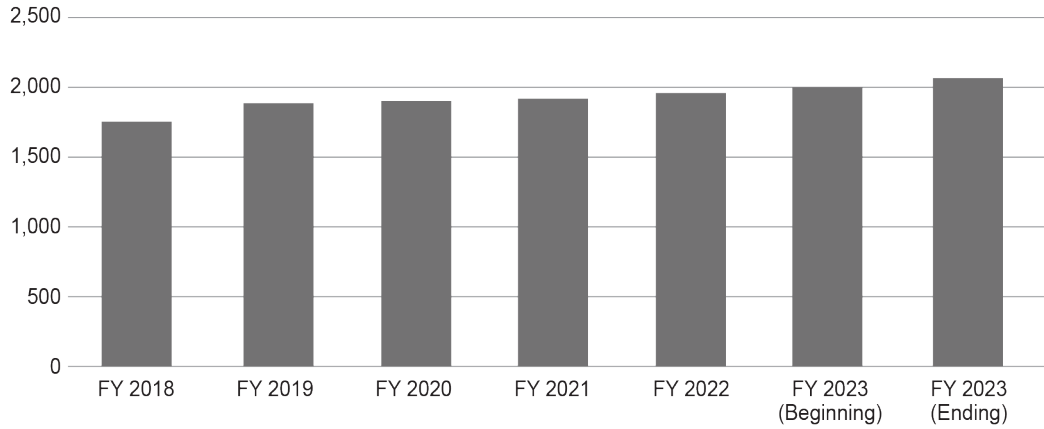
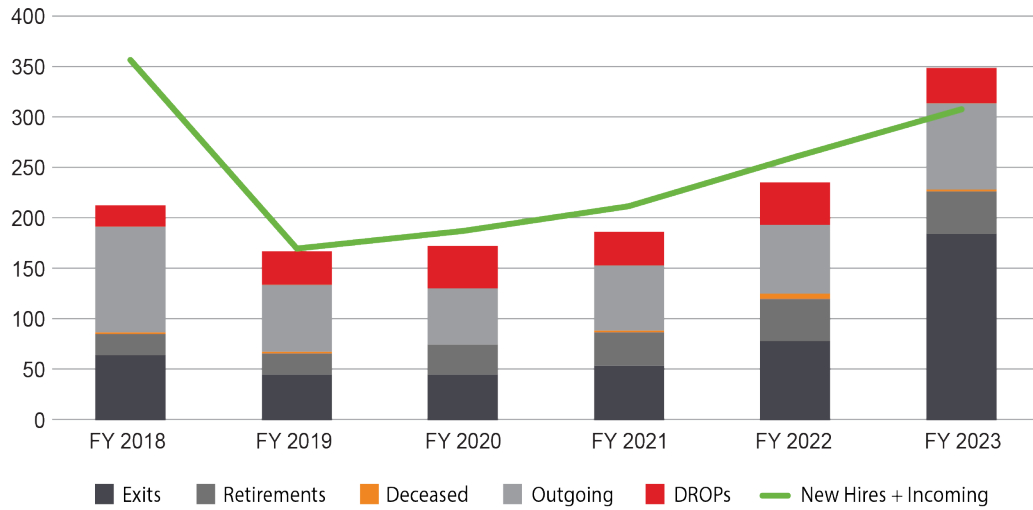


Figure 48. Overview of changes in fire district headcount.



Exits

There was an increasing trend in exits for fire districts, exceeding the exit rate found in fire municipalities. The fire districts had a high exit rate (9.25%) during FY 2023.

Figure 49. Exits and exit rate for fire district personnel.

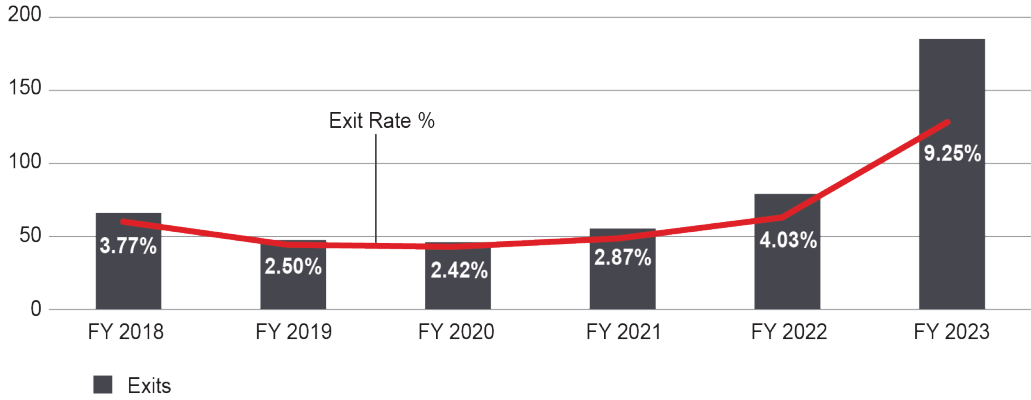


Figure 50. Exits by age group for fire district personnel

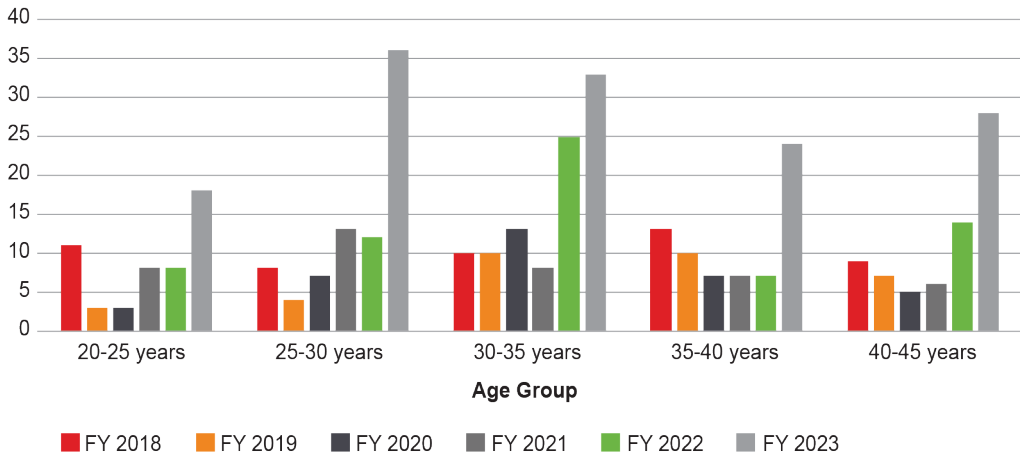
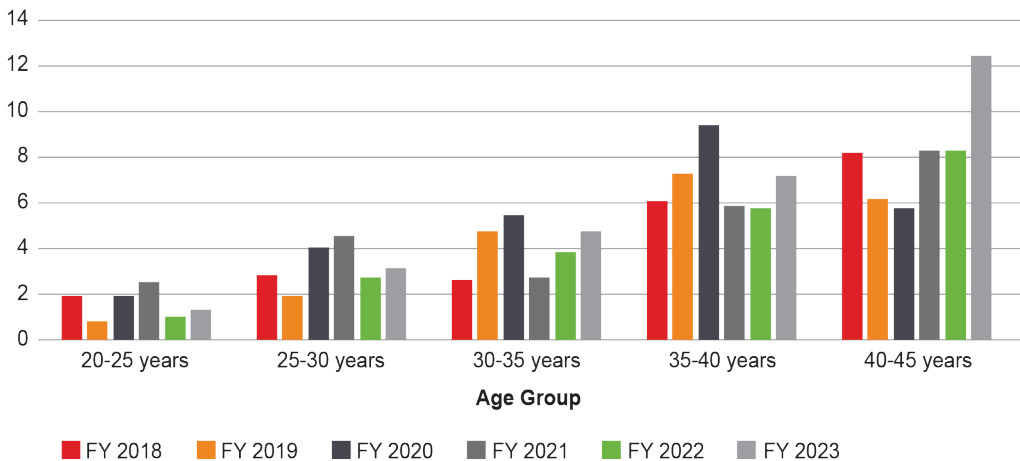


Figure 51. Average years of service at time of exit for fire district personnel.



DROPS and Retirements

Figure 52. Retirements and retirement rate for fire district personnel.

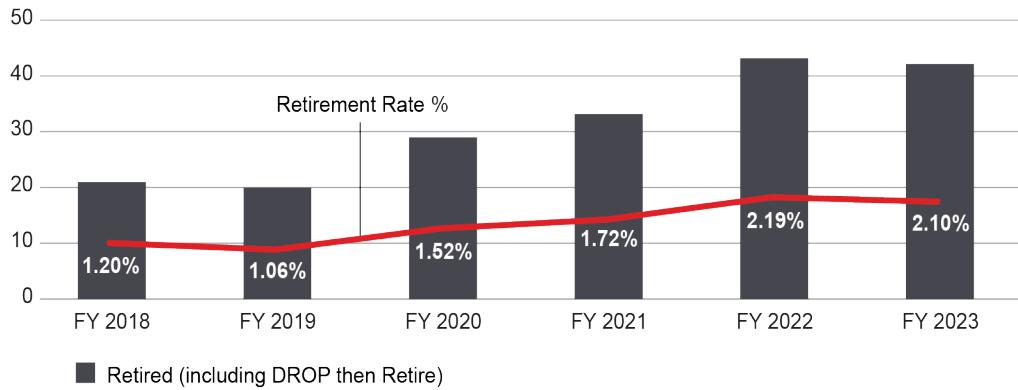
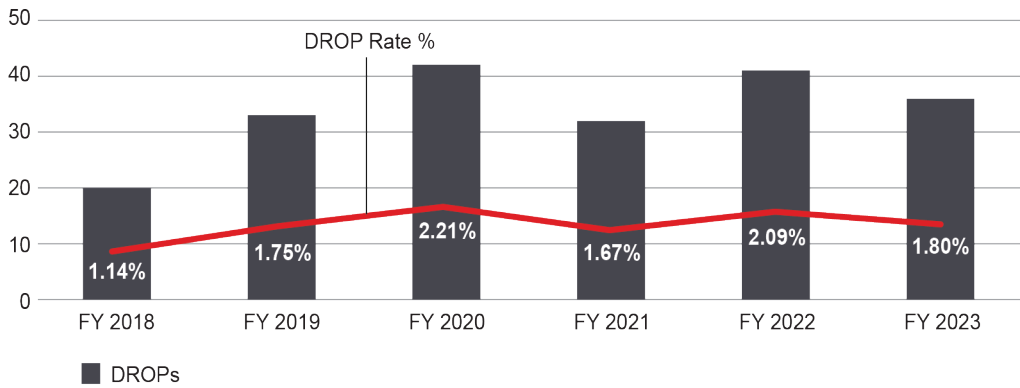


Figure 53. DROPs and DROP rate for fire district personnel.



New Hires

Fire districts showed greater hiring rates than fire municipalities, and have also increased the proportion of new hires between the ages of 20 and 30.

Figure 54. New hires and hiring rate for fire district personnel.

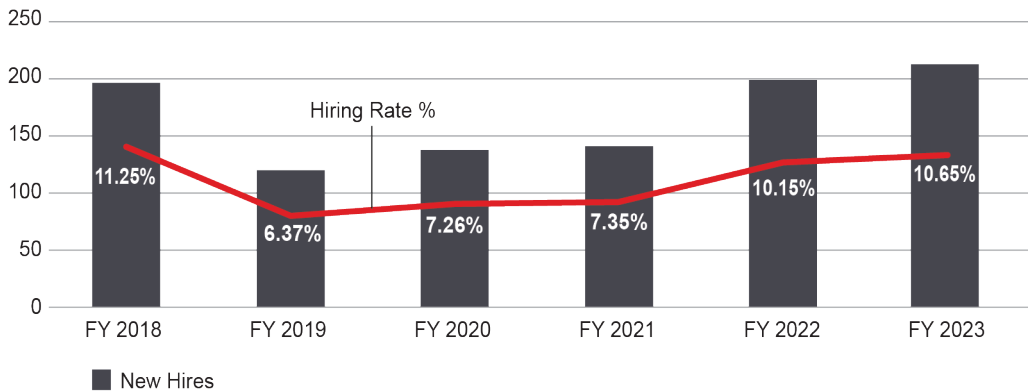
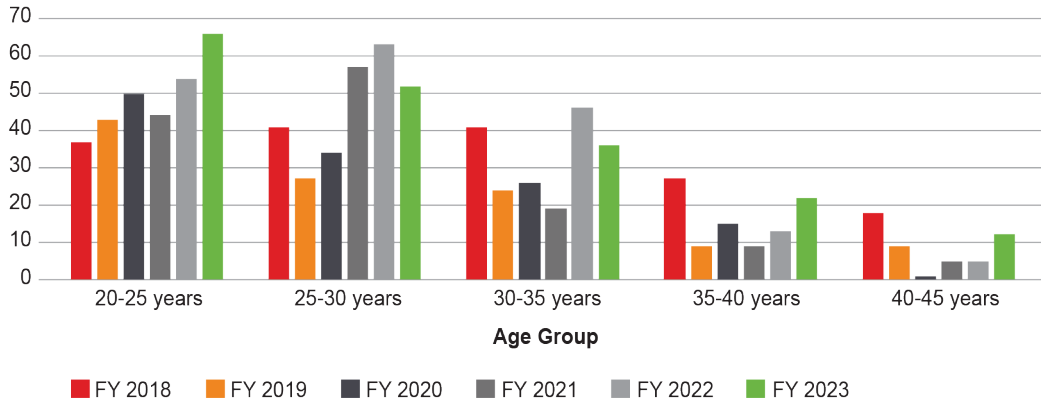


Figure 55. New hires by age group for fire district personnel.



Outgoing and Incoming

The numbers of outgoing and incoming personnel in fire districts mirrored that of fire municipalities.

Figure 56. Outgoing and incoming personnel for fire districts.

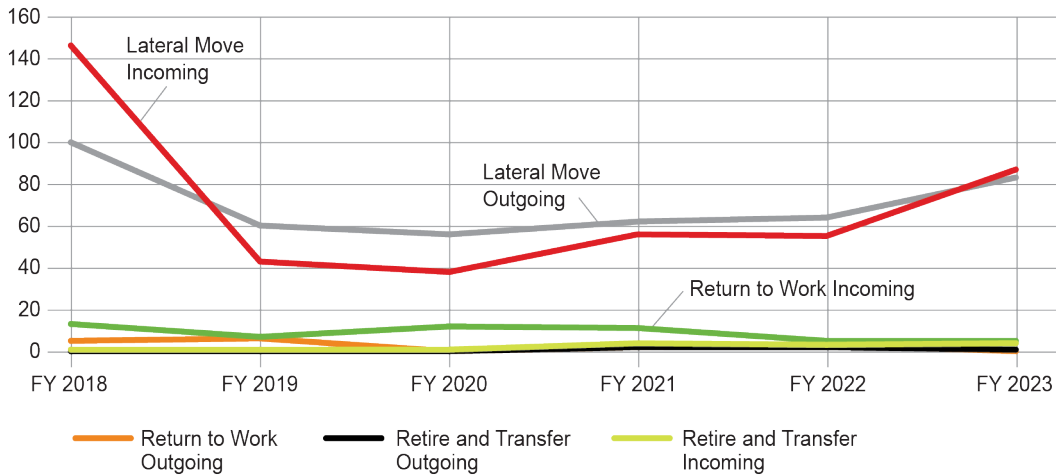
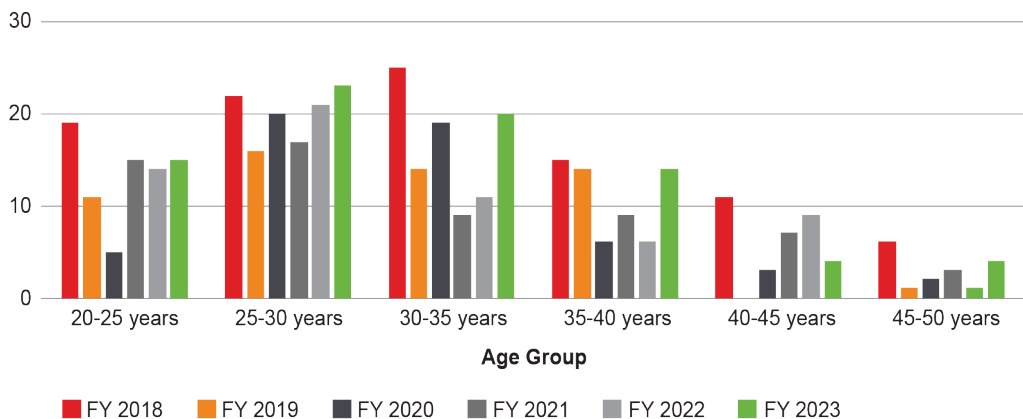
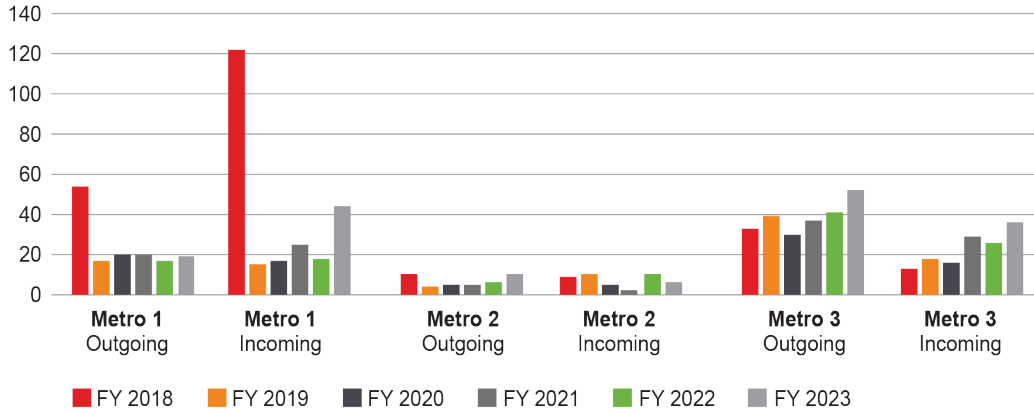


Figure 57. Outgoing lateral moves within PSPRS system among fire district personnel.



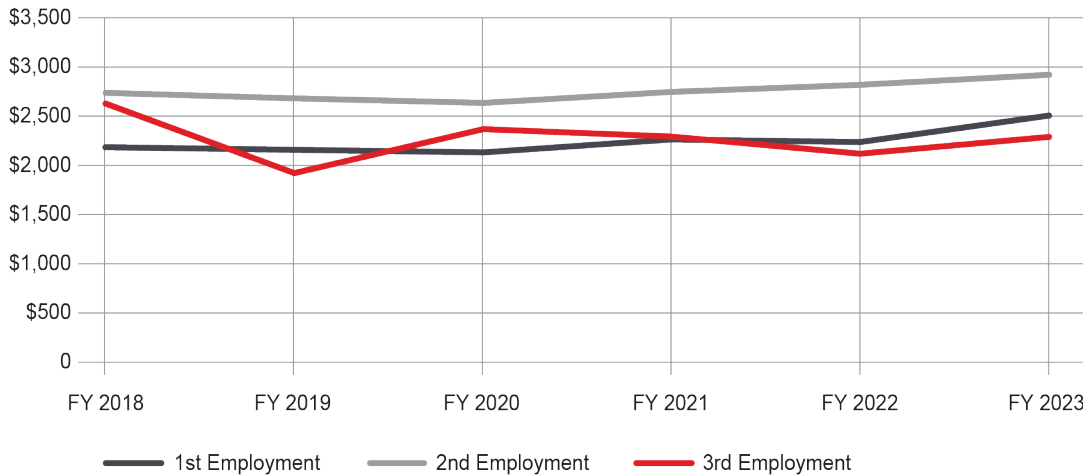
As with fire municipalities, there were more personnel incoming to Metro 1 areas and more outgoing from Metro 3.

Figure 58. Lateral moves by metro type for fire district personnel.



Second employment salaries were higher than first employment salaries for fire district personnel; this trend was also seen in fire municipalities.

Figure 59. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record for fire district personnel.



Department of Public Safety (DPS)

Active Headcount

The active headcount for DPS personnel has declined since FY 2018. The total number of new hires and incoming personnel outpaced personnel loss in FY 2018 and FY 2021, but dropped to below personnel loss in FY 2019 and FY 2022-FY 2023.

Figure 60. Total headcount of DPS personnel.

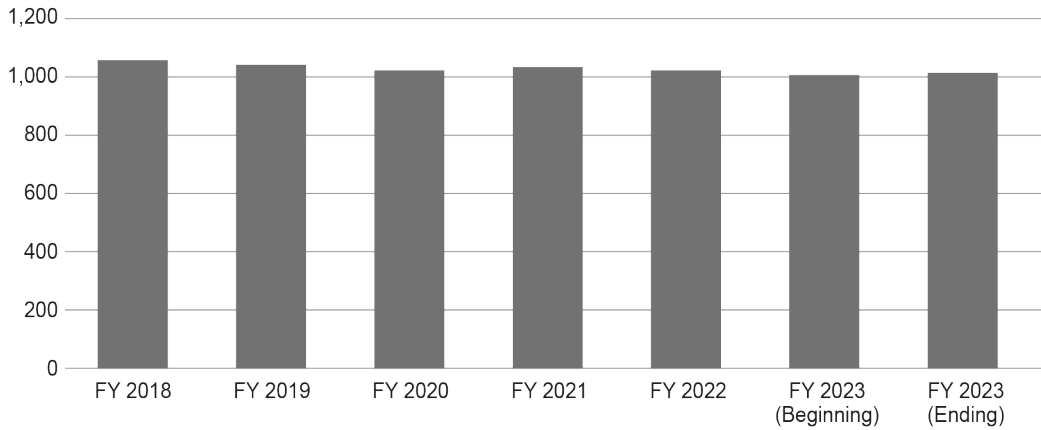
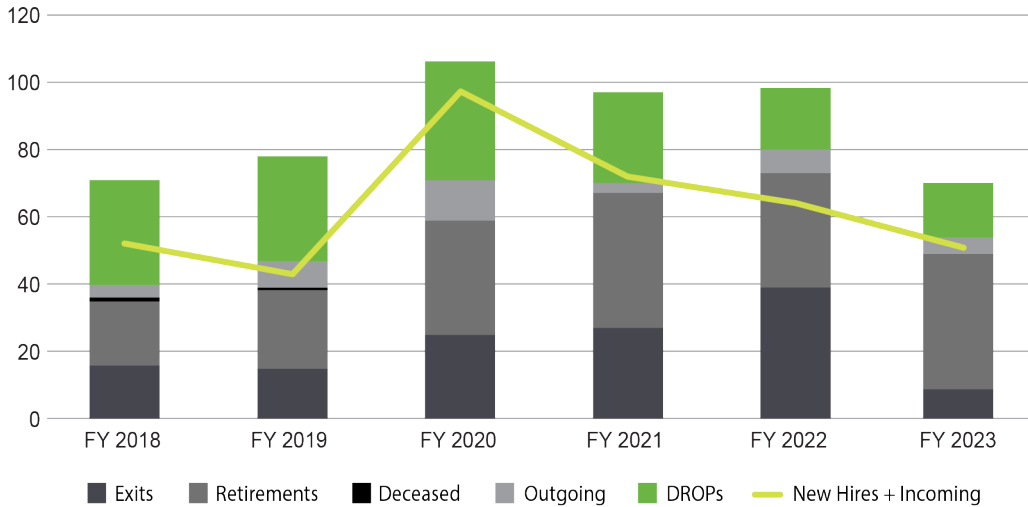


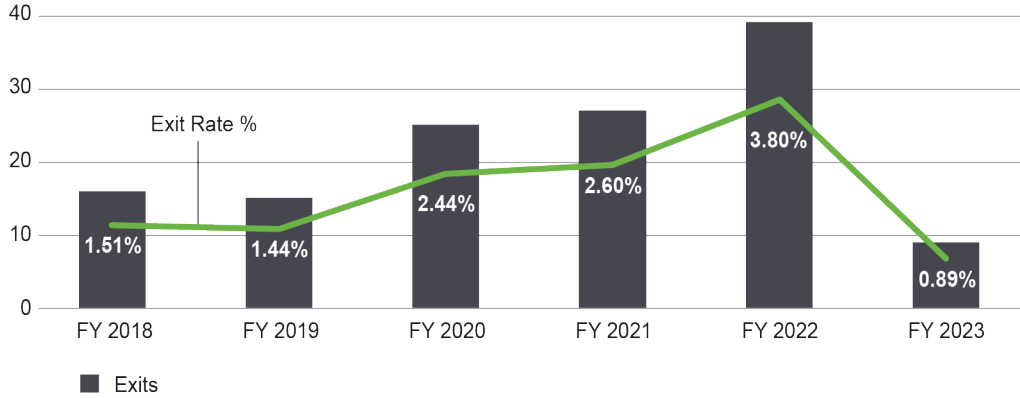
Figure 61. Overview of changes in DPS personnel headcount.



Exits

The highest number of exits within DPS occurred during FY 2022, with a significant reduction in exits in FY 2023.

Figure 62. Exits and exit rate for DPS personnel.



The most common age group for exits was 25-30.

Figure 63. Exit by age group for DPS personnel.

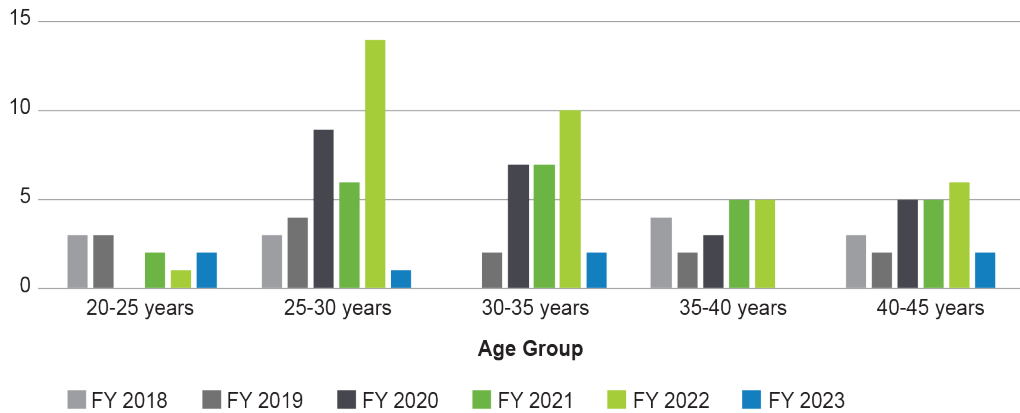
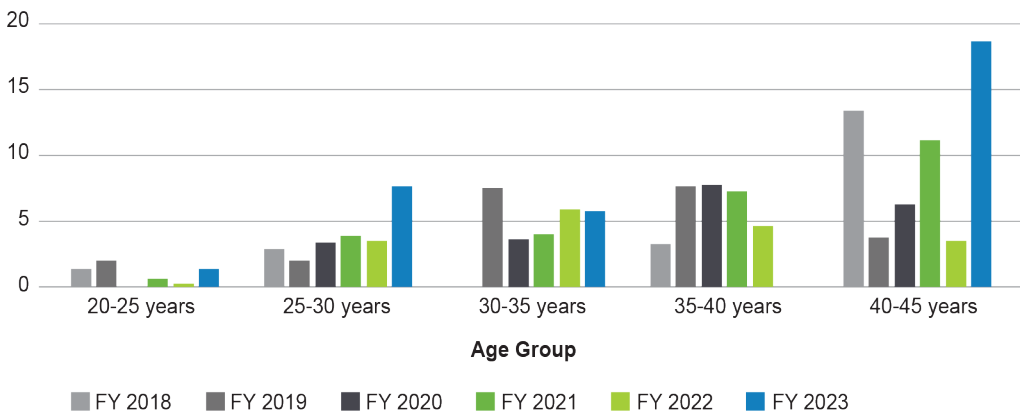


Figure 64. Average years of service at the time of exit for DPS personnel.



DROPs and Retirements

Figure 65. Retirements and retirement rate for DPS personnel.

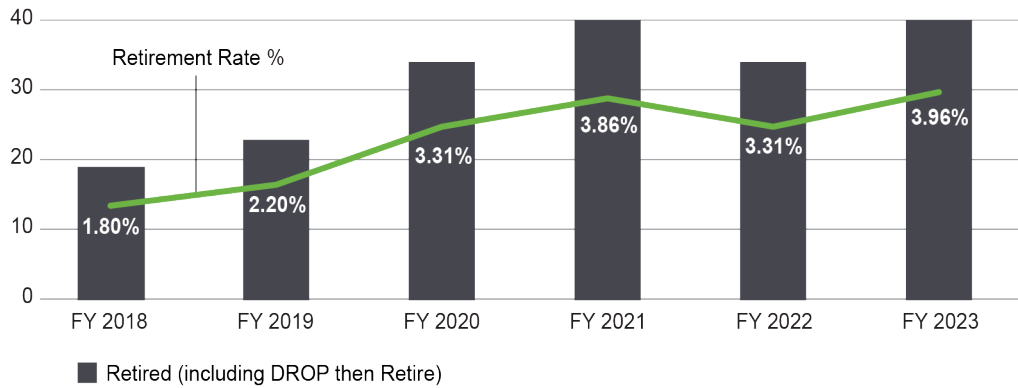
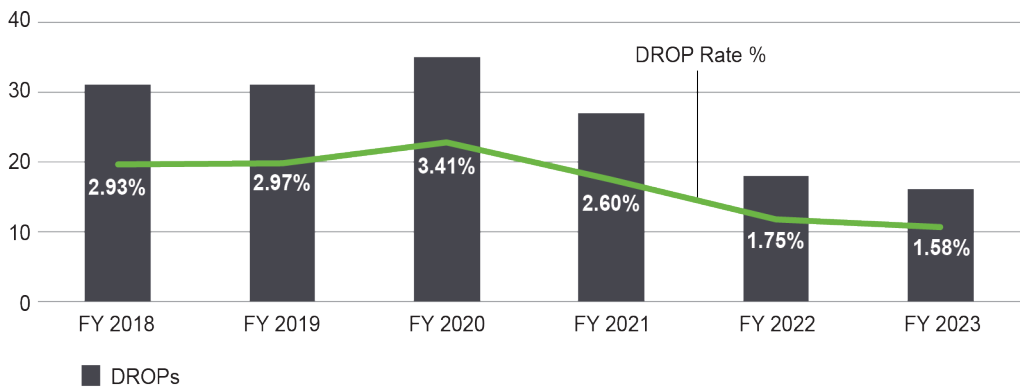


Figure 66. DROPs and DROP rate for DPS personnel.



New Hires

The total number of new hires in DPS personnel was high in FY 2020 and 2021, but dropped in FY 2022 and 2023.

Figure 67. New hires and hiring rate for DPS personnel.

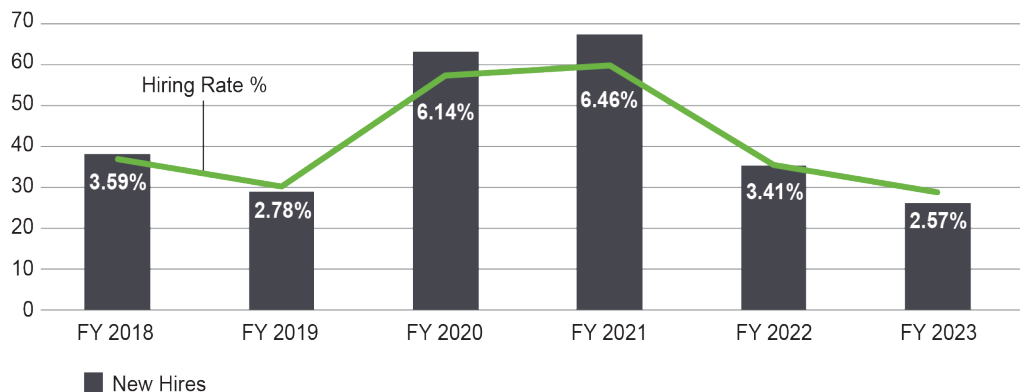
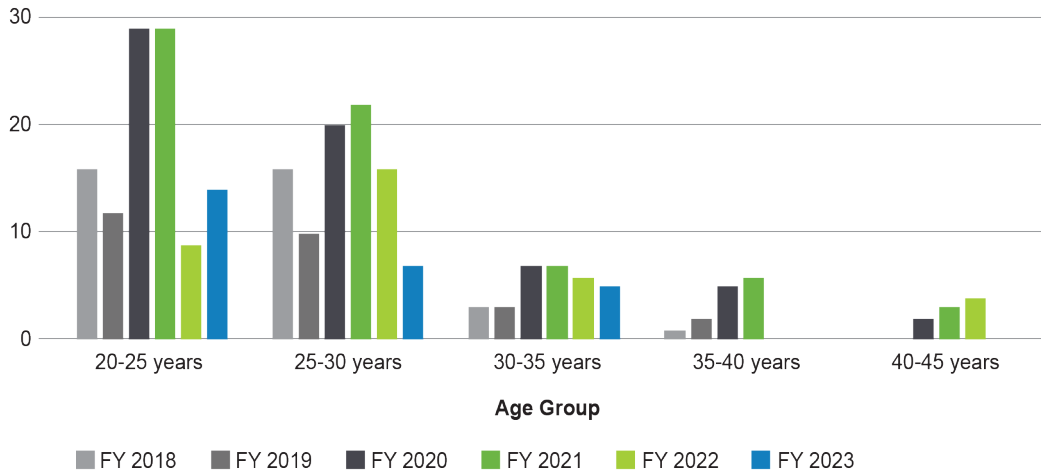


Figure 68. New hires by age group for DPS personnel.



Outgoing and Incoming

There were more incoming lateral moves than outgoing lateral moves among DPS personnel.

Figure 69. Outgoing and incoming DPS personnel.

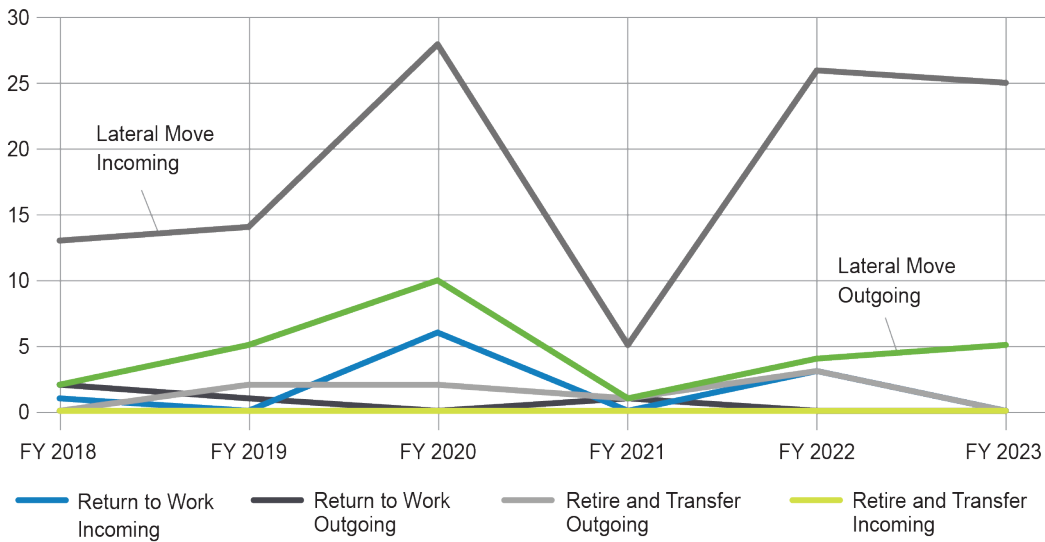


Figure 70. Outgoing lateral moves within DPS by age.

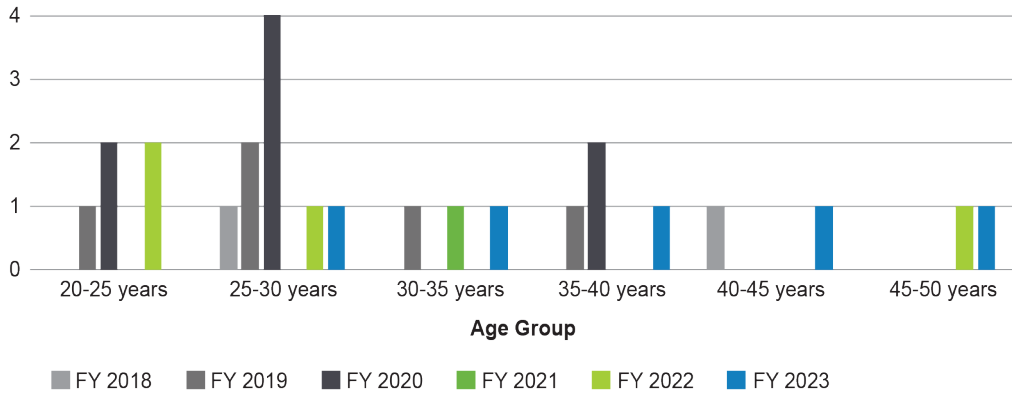


Figure 71. Lateral moves by metro type for DPS.

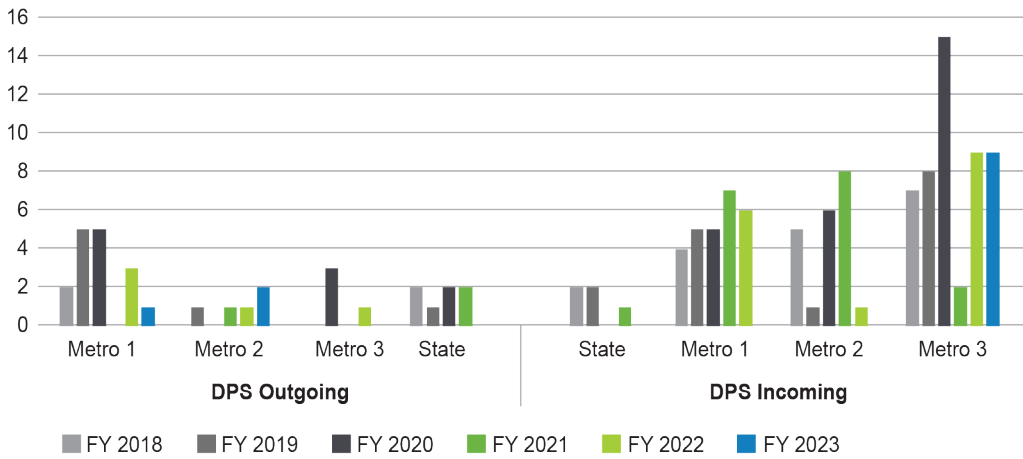
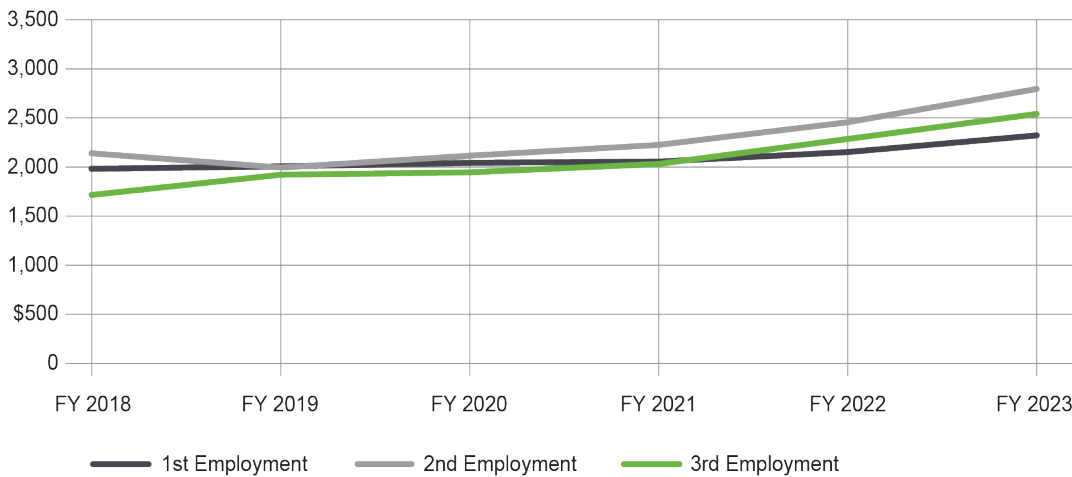


Figure 72. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record for DPS.



Police

All analyses of the police job function include city, town, tribal, and university police department personnel and exclude county sheriff and state public safety agency personnel.

Active Headcount

The total number of active police personnel reached was highest in FY 2020, declined between FY 2021 and FY 2023, and recovered only slightly by end of FY 2023. The total personnel loss was higher than the number of new hires in FY 2021 and equal in FY 2022; new hires increased slightly to overtake personnel loss during FY 2023.

Figure 73. Total headcount of police personnel.

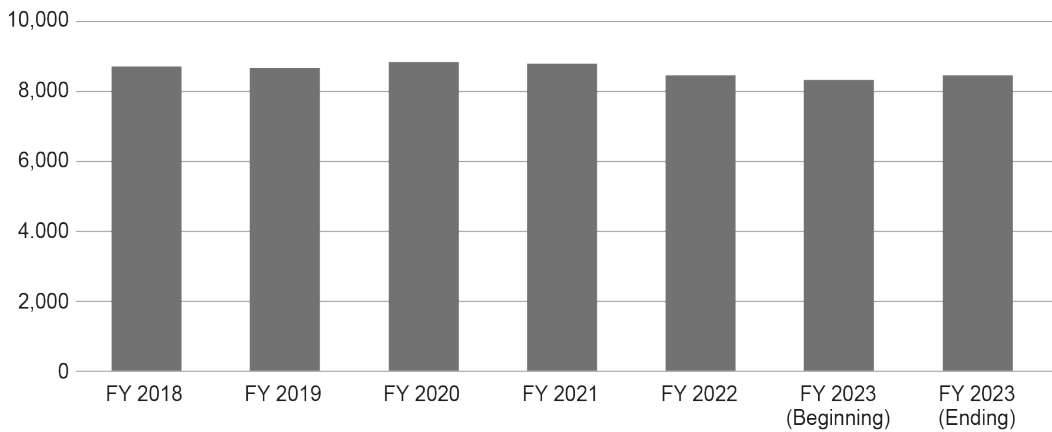
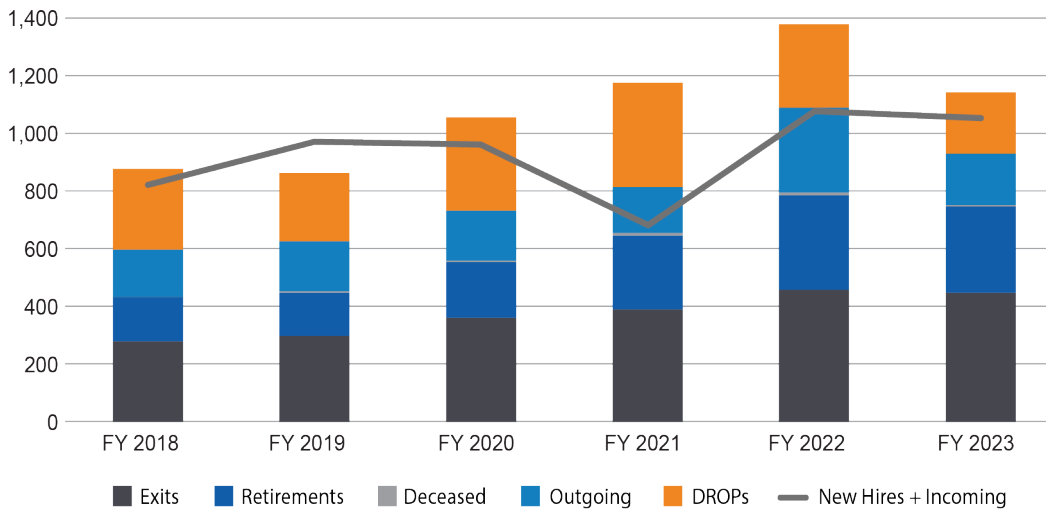


Figure 74. Overview of changes in police personnel headcount.



Exits

The number of exits among police personnel increased from FY 2019-2022 and showed only a slight reduction during FY 2023.

Figure 75. Exits and exit rate for police personnel.

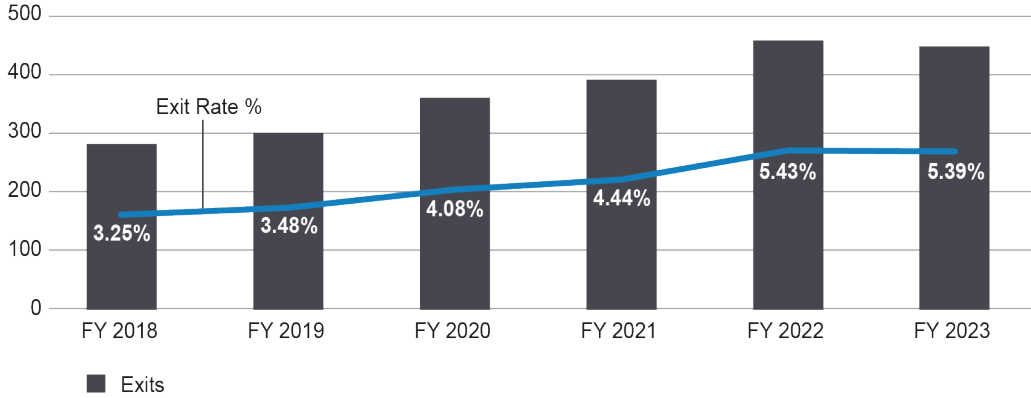


Figure 76. Exit by age group for police personnel.

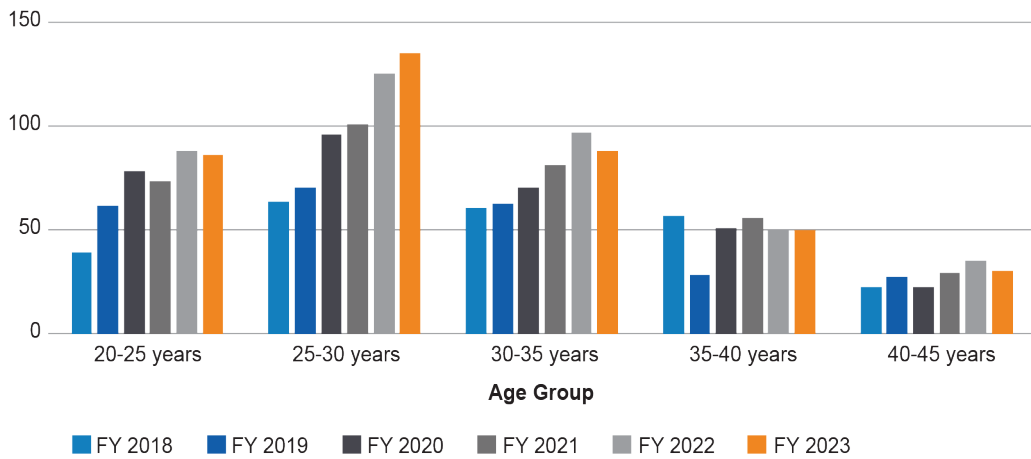
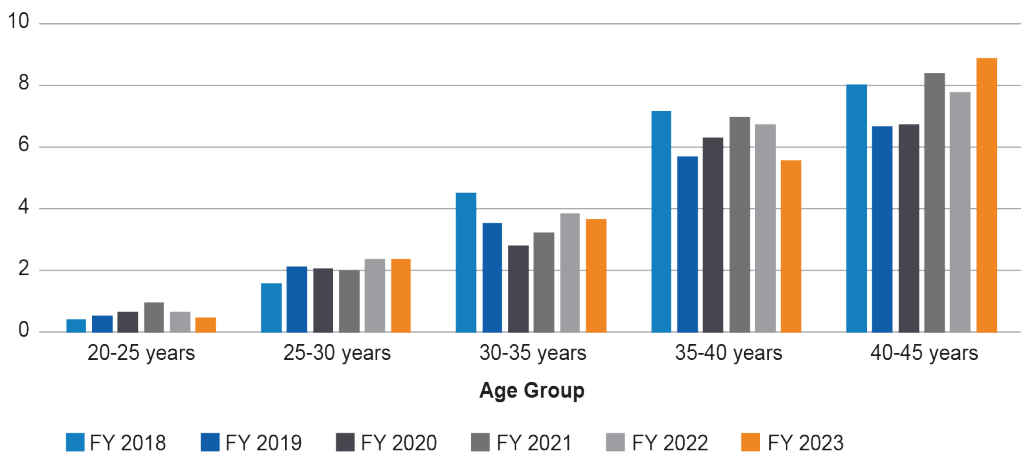


Figure 77. Average years of service at time of exit for police personnel.



DROPs and Retirements

Figure 78. Retirements and retirement rate for police personnel.

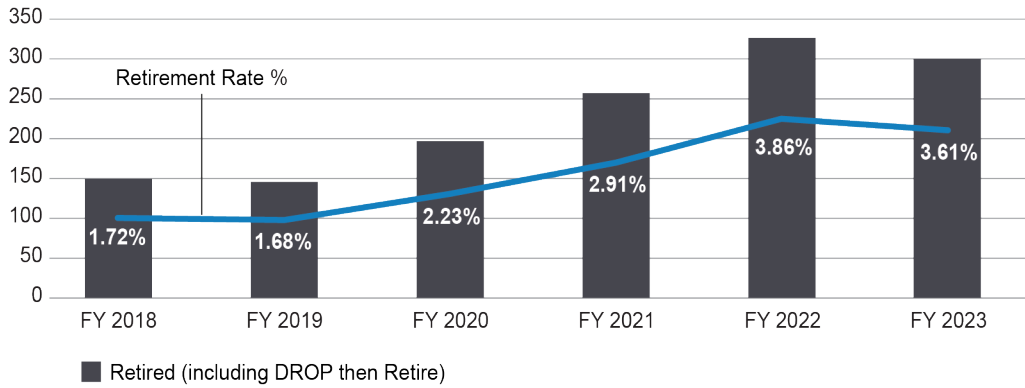
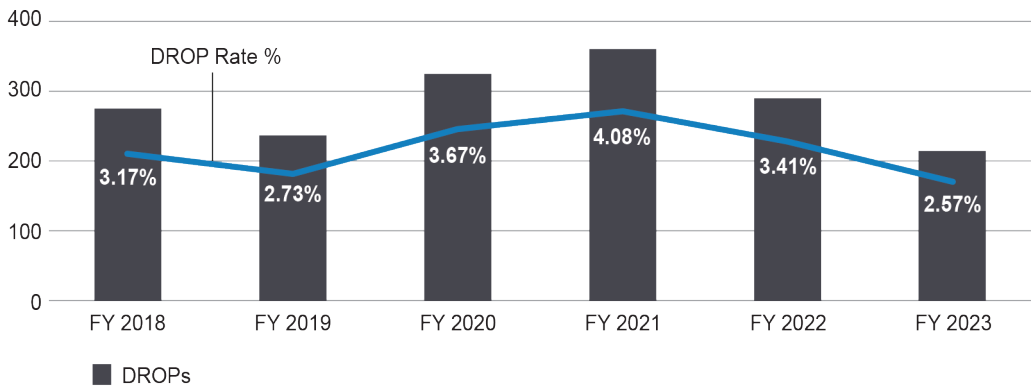


Figure 79. DROPs and DROP rate for police personnel.



New Hires

The number of new hires for police personnel was at its lowest point during FY 2021 but recovered to pre-pandemic levels in FY 2023.

Figure 80. New hires and hiring rate for police personnel.

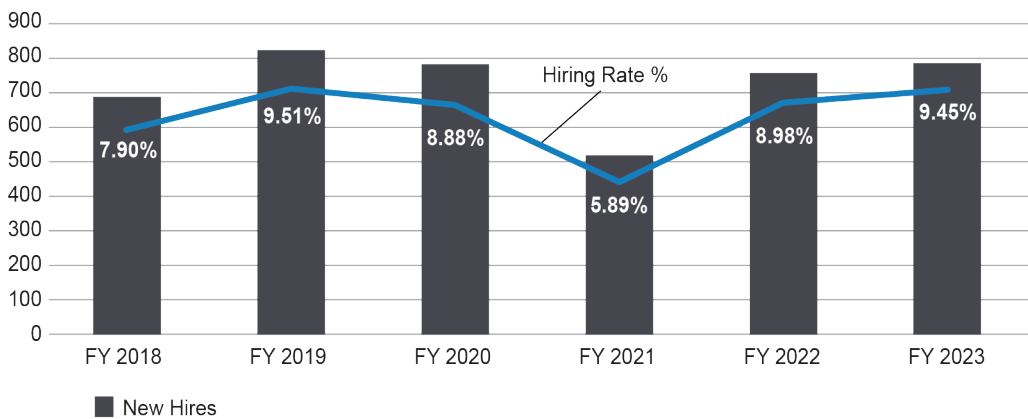
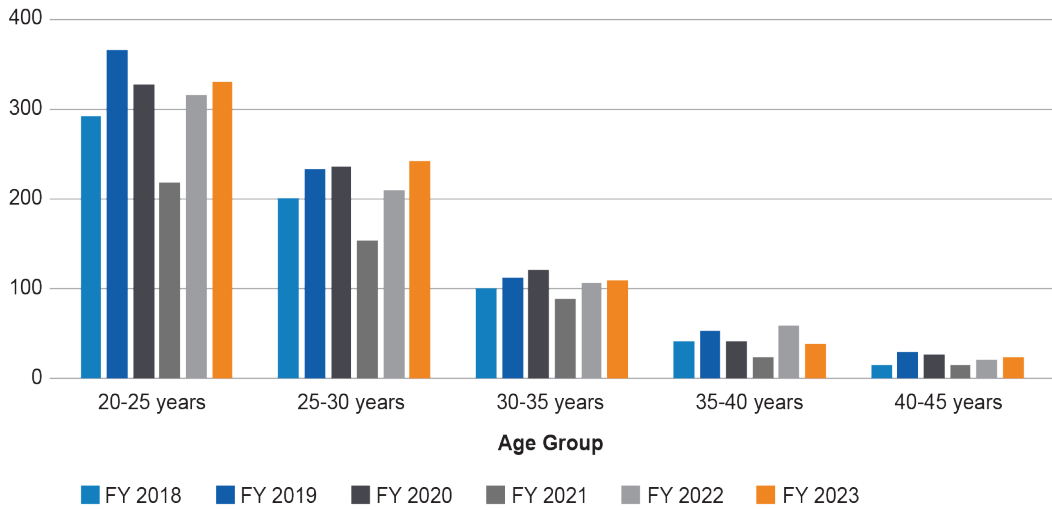


Figure 81. New hires by age group for police personnel.



Outgoing and Incoming

The total numbers of outgoing and incoming police personnel were almost equal.

Figure 82. Outgoing and incoming for police.

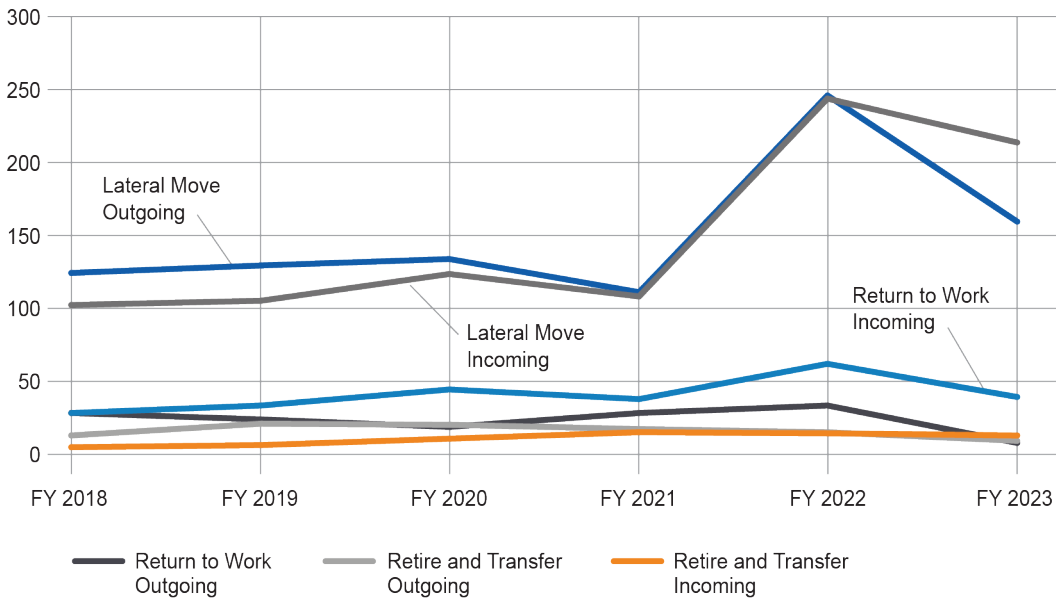


Figure 83. Outgoing lateral moves within PSPRS system among police personnel.

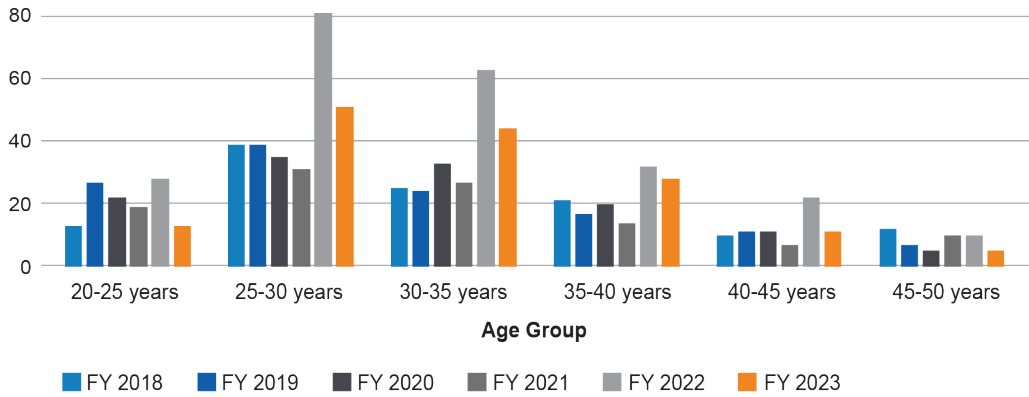
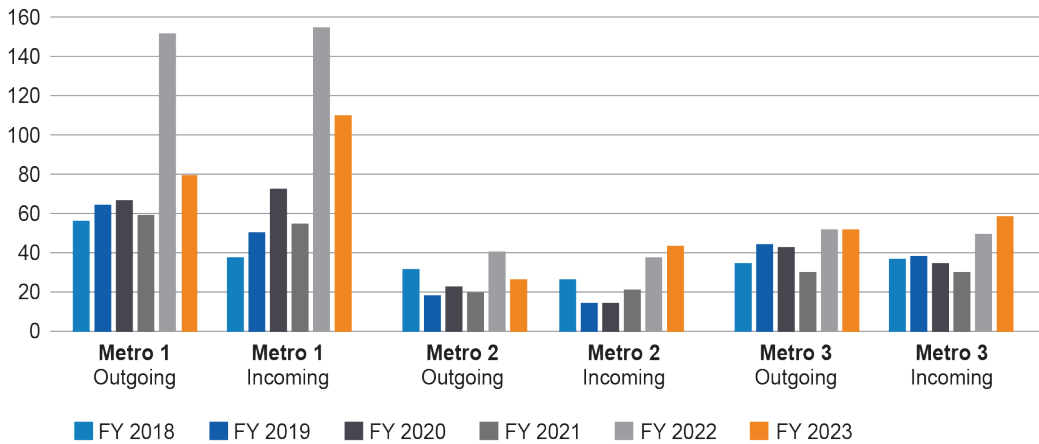
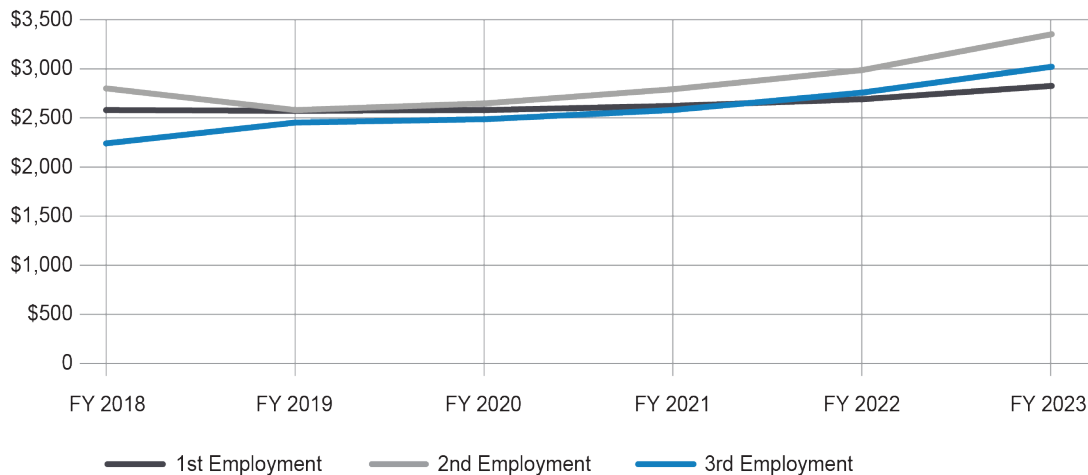


Figure 84. Lateral moves by metro type for police.



For police, average payroll during a second employment was about 18% higher than the first employment.

Figure 85. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record for police personnel.



County Sheriff

Active Headcount

The number of active county sheriff employees has been on a declining trend since FY 2021, although it slightly recovered during FY 2023. In FY 2021, the number of total personnel leaving their positions was greater than the number of new hires and incoming employees, although the total of new hires and incoming employees recovered to exceed personnel loss in FY 2023.

Figure 86. Total headcount of county sheriff personnel.

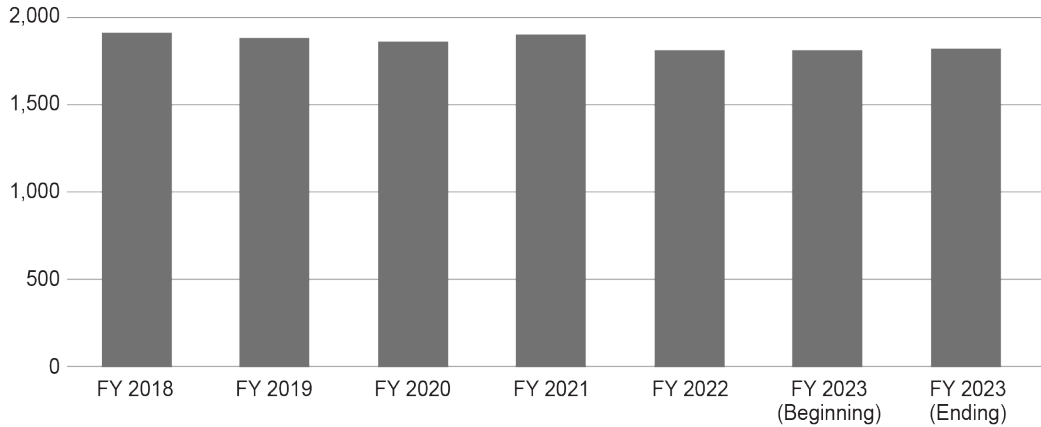
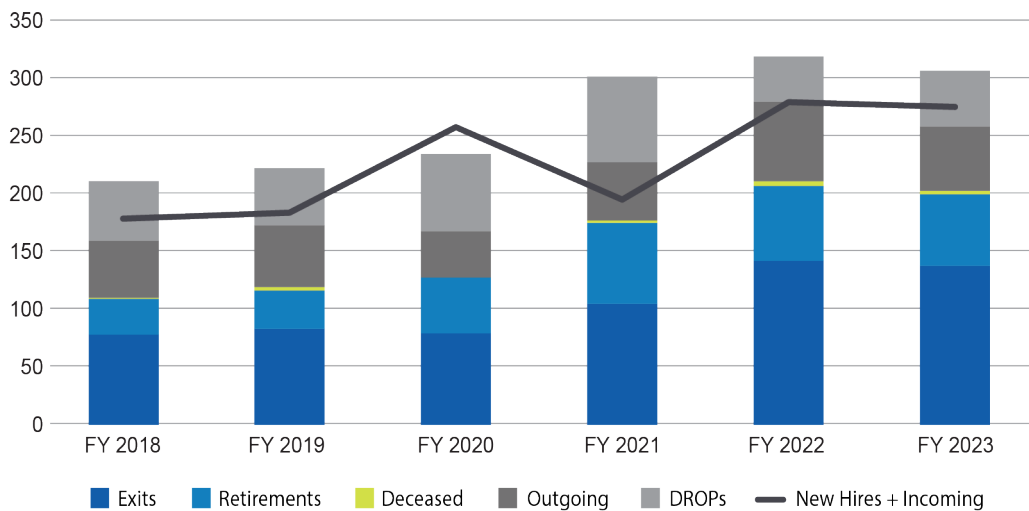


Figure 87. Overview of changes in county sheriff personnel headcount.



Exits

Figure 88. Exits and exit rate for county sheriff personnel.

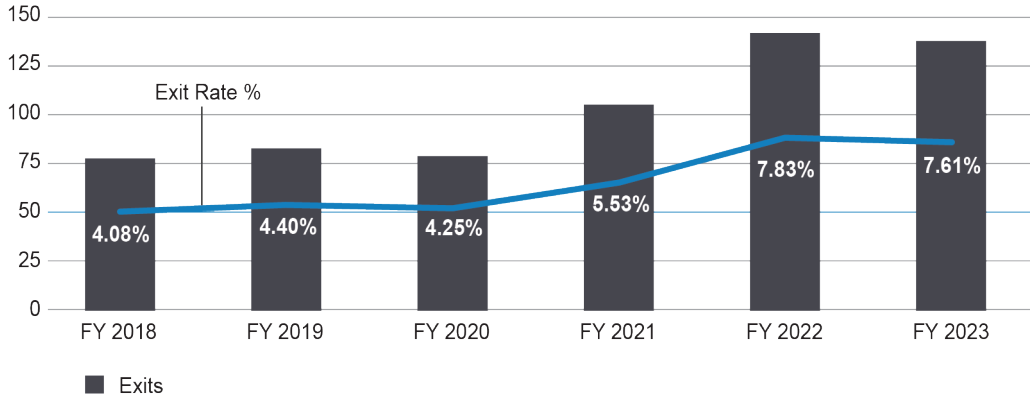


Figure 89. Exit by age group for county sheriff personnel.

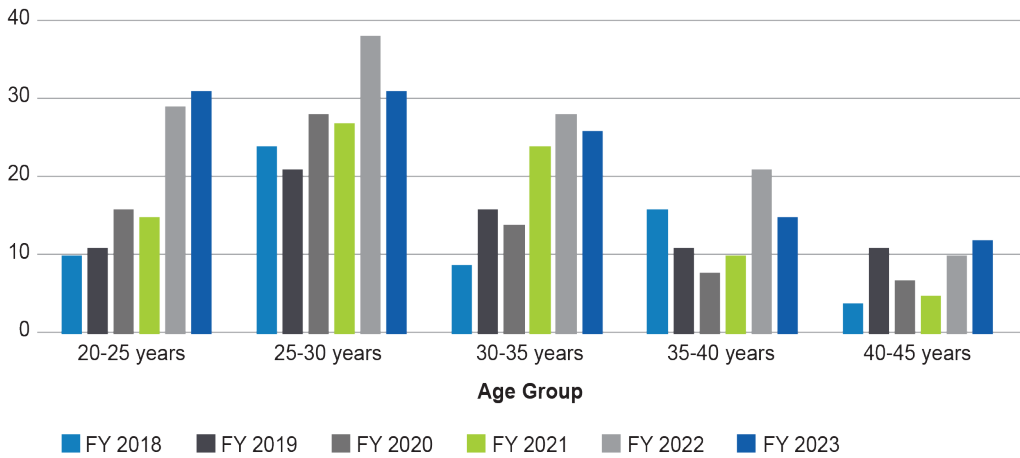
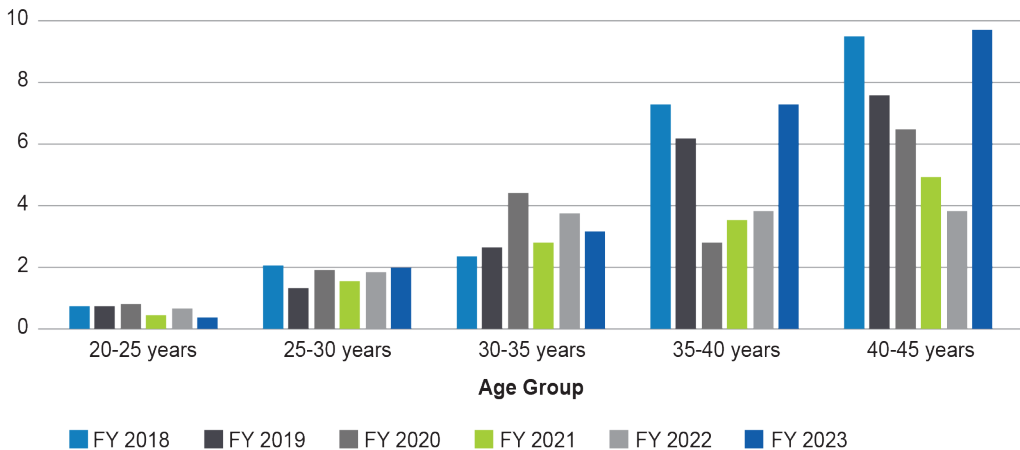


Figure 90. Average years of service at time of exit for county sheriff personnel.



DROPs and Retirements

Figure 91. Retirements and retirement rate for county sheriff personnel.

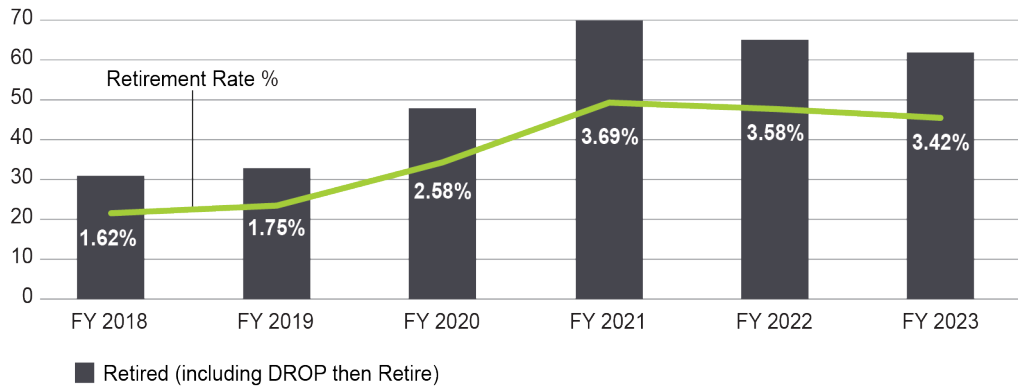
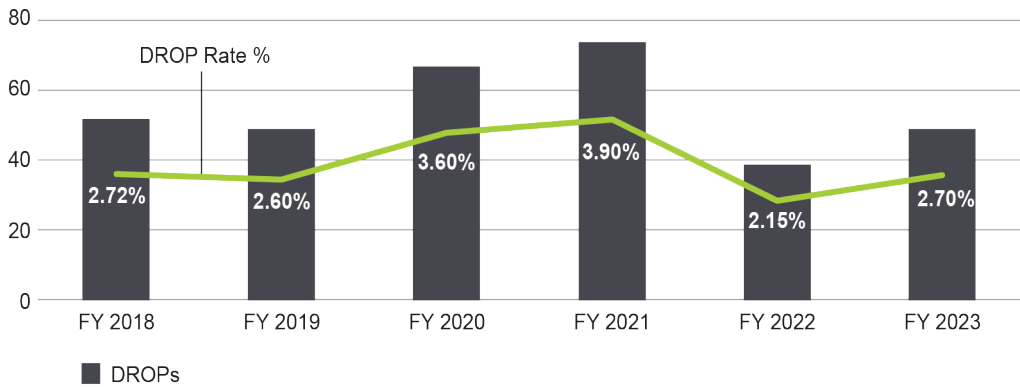


Figure 92. DROPs and DROP rate for county sheriff personnel.



New Hires

Like police, the number of county sheriff new hires hit its lowest point during FY 2021.

Figure 93. New hires and hiring rate for county sheriff personnel.

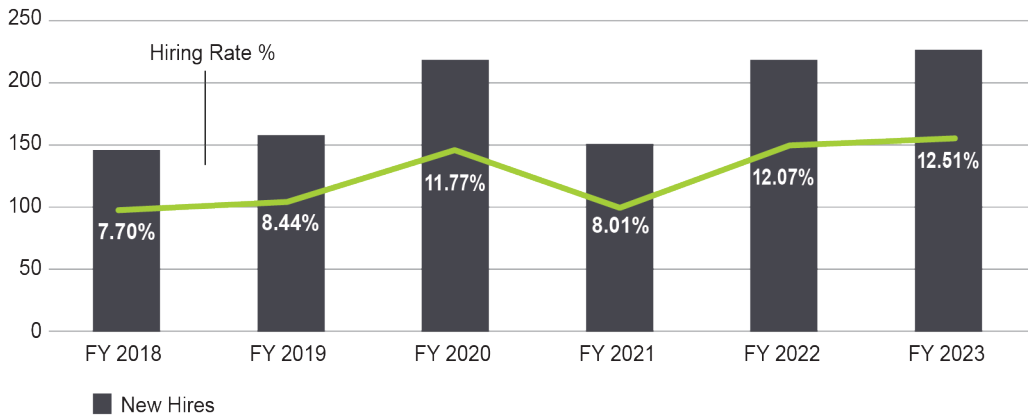
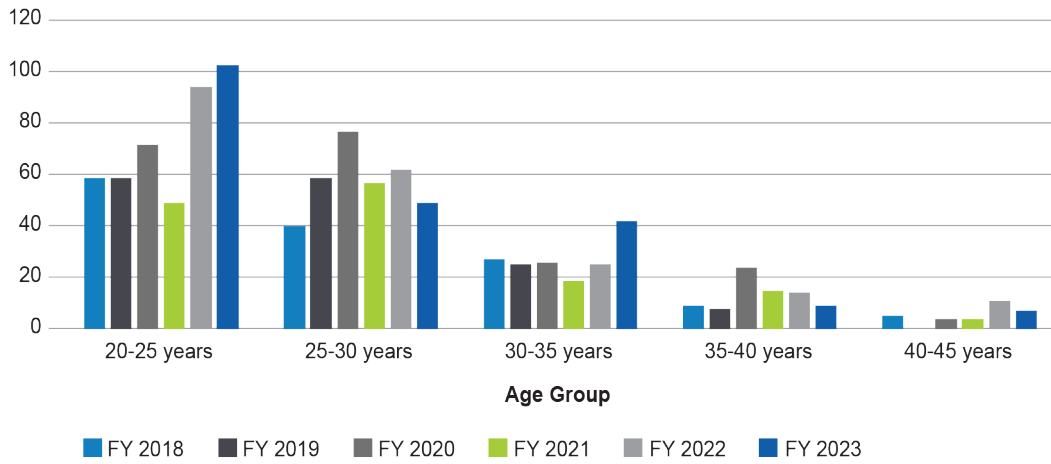


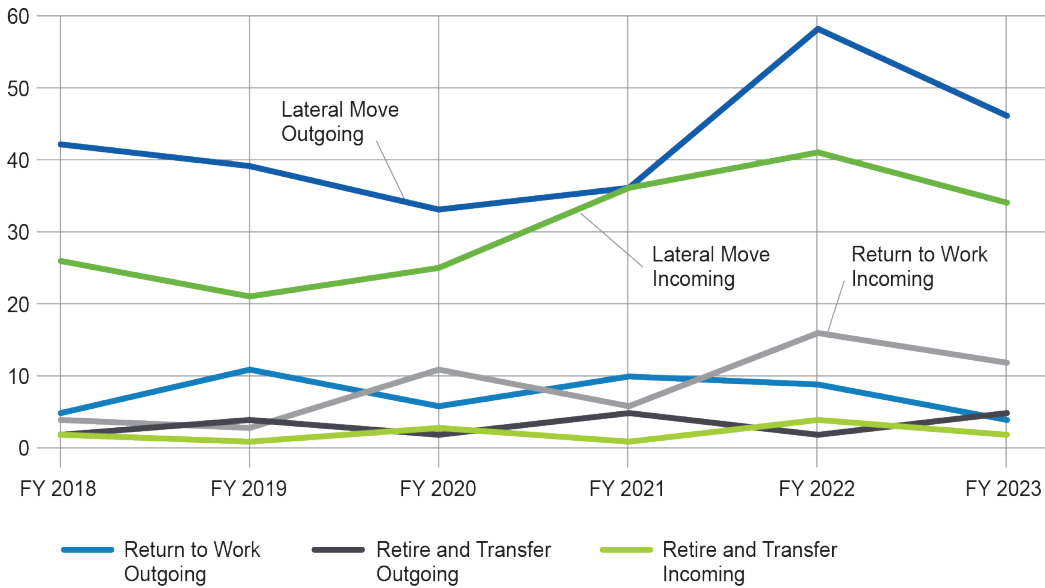
Figure 94. New hires by age group across county sheriff personnel.



Outgoing and Incoming

There were more outgoing lateral moves than incoming lateral moves among county sheriff personnel.

Figure 95. Outgoing and incoming personnel for county sheriffs.



There was an increased number of outgoing sheriff personnel between the ages of 25 and 35 during FY 2022.

Figure 96. Outgoing lateral moves within PSPRS system among county sheriff personnel.

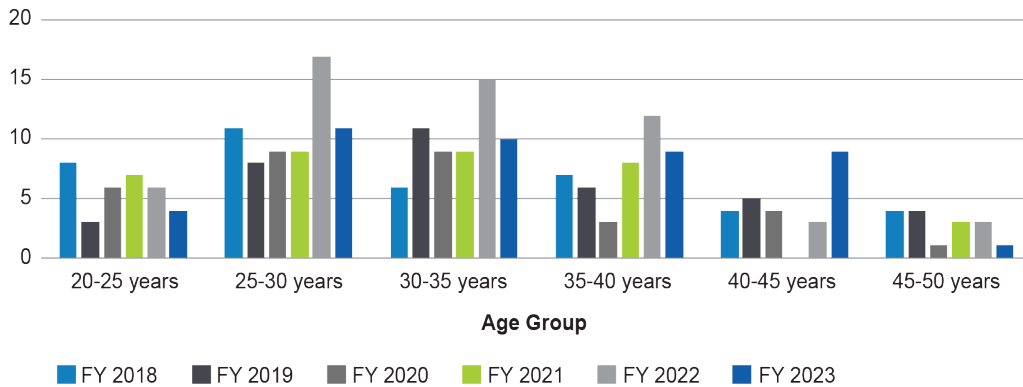
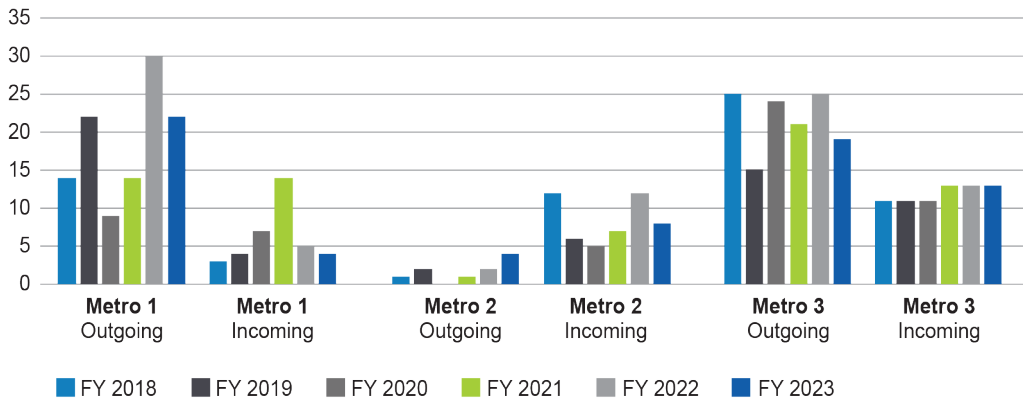
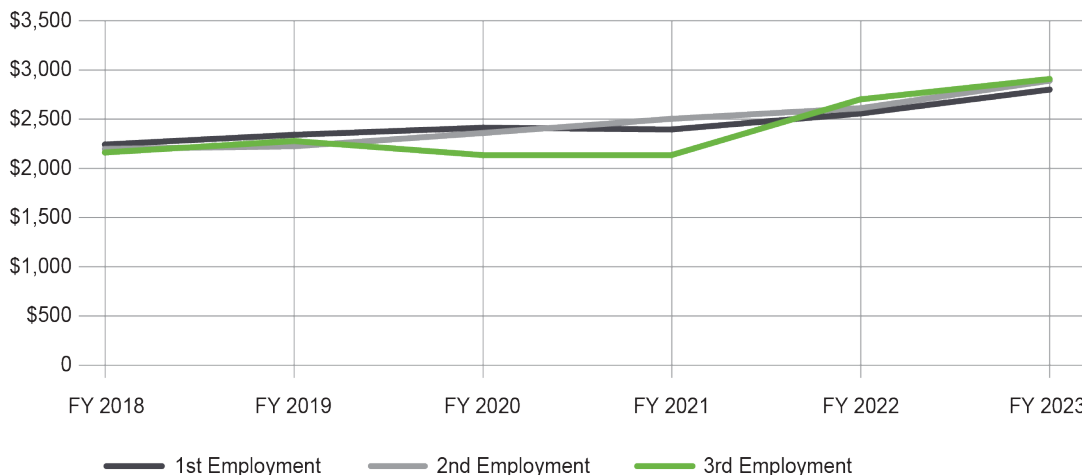


Figure 97. Lateral moves by metro type across county sheriff personnel.



The average salary did not change between first and second employments.

Figure 98. Comparison of difference in average annual salary by employment record for county sheriff personnel.



Metro Type

This section presents trends in headcount, personnel loss, and hiring rate broken out by type of metropolitan area. The analysis uses all personnel records in the PSPRS dataset (i.e., law enforcement and fire service employees) to examine similarities and differences between metro area types as well as incoming and outgoing personnel movement.

Metro 1

Metro 1 represents areas characterized by at least one city with a population exceeding 50,000 residents and a county with a population exceeding 1 million. This definition categorizes Metro 1 as densely populated urban regions, likely comprising major cities and their surrounding counties. Such metropolitan areas tend to be significant centers of economic and social activity, often requiring a specialized and substantial public safety workforce to meet the demands of their populations.

Active Headcount

During the study period, the active headcount experienced minor fluctuations. It reached a peak of 13,050 in FY 2021 and subsequently declined to 12,921 by the end of FY 2023.

Figure 99. Total headcount of personnel in Metro 1 areas.

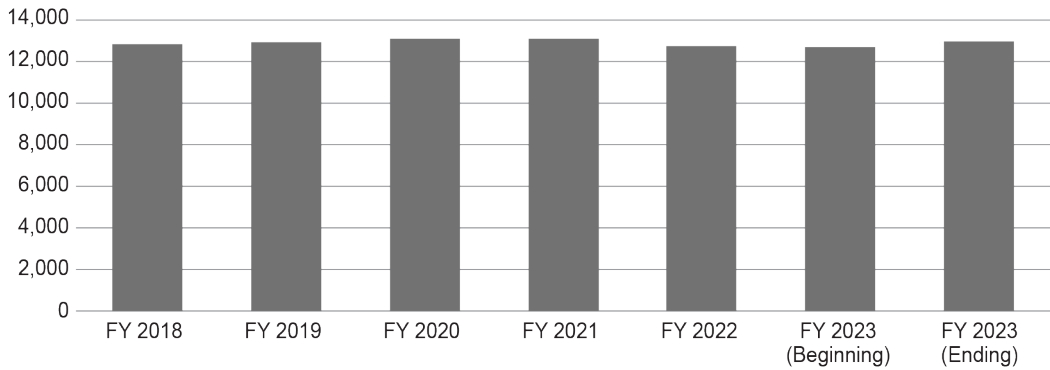
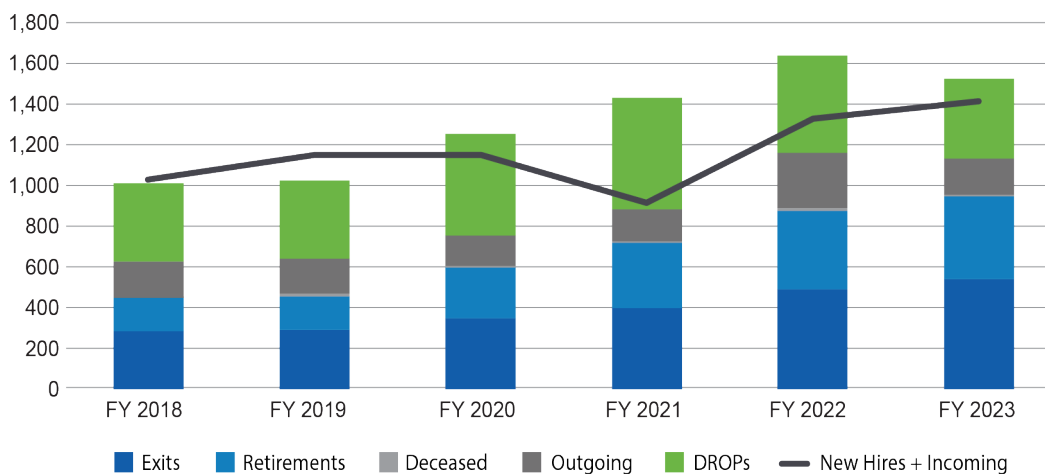


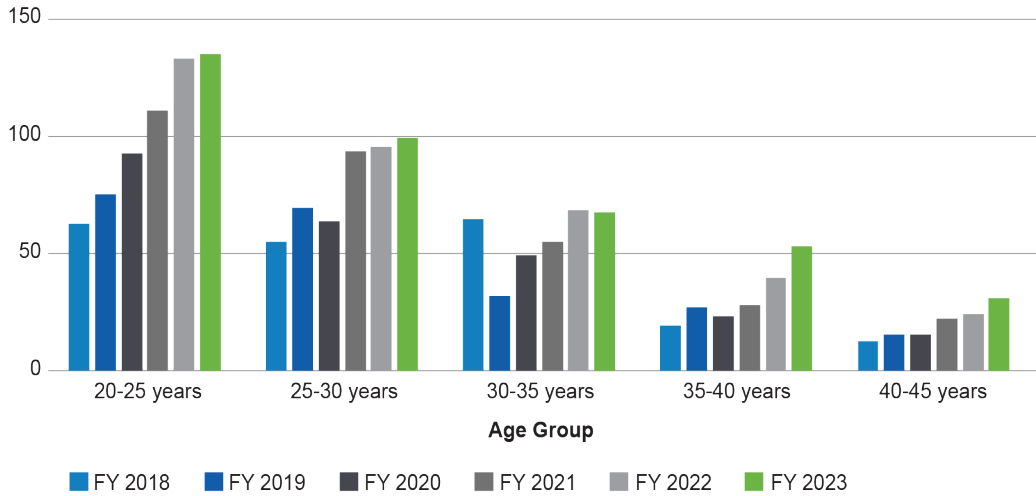
Figure 100. Overview of headcount changes among personnel in Metro 1 areas.



Exits by Age

Over the years, certain age groups have consistently had higher exit numbers. Notably, the age groups 20-25 and 25-30 show upward trends in exits for Metro 1 areas, indicating an increasing number of departures among the younger workforce.

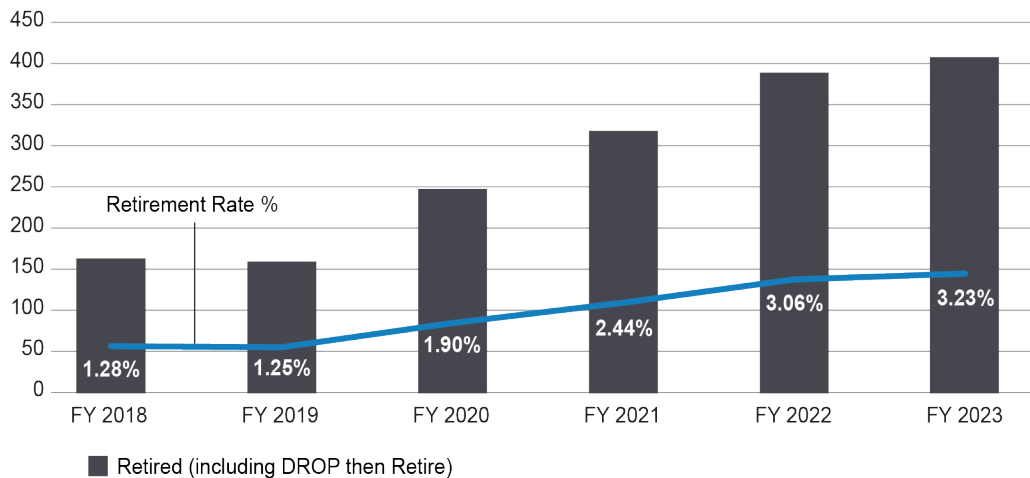
Figure 101. Exits by age among personnel in Metro 1 areas.



Retirements

Retirement data in Metro 1 areas highlights a gradual increase in the retirement rate over the years, rising from 1.28% in FY 2018 to 3.23% in FY 2023.

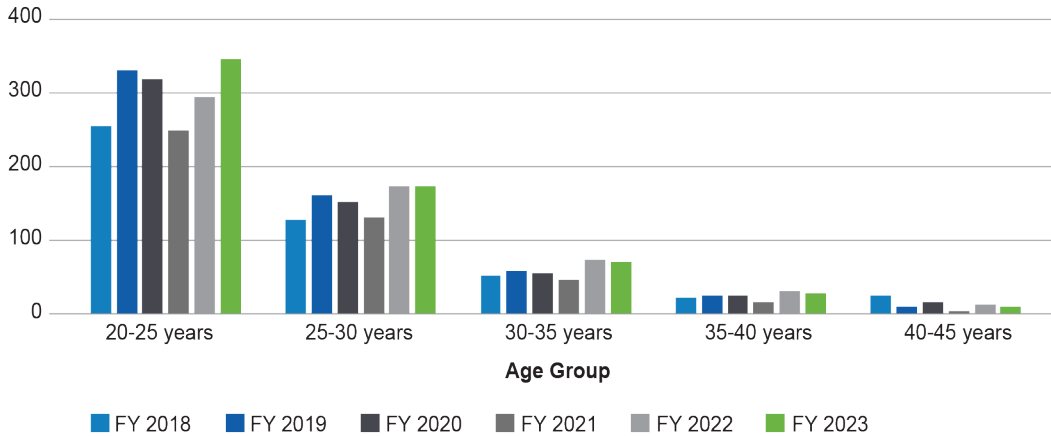
Figure 102. Retirements and retirement rate among personnel in Metro 1 areas.



New Hires by Age

There was an overall fluctuation in the number of new hires within Metro 1 areas over the study period, with the highest number recorded in FY 2023. The age group 20-25 consistently had the highest number of new hires since FY 2021.

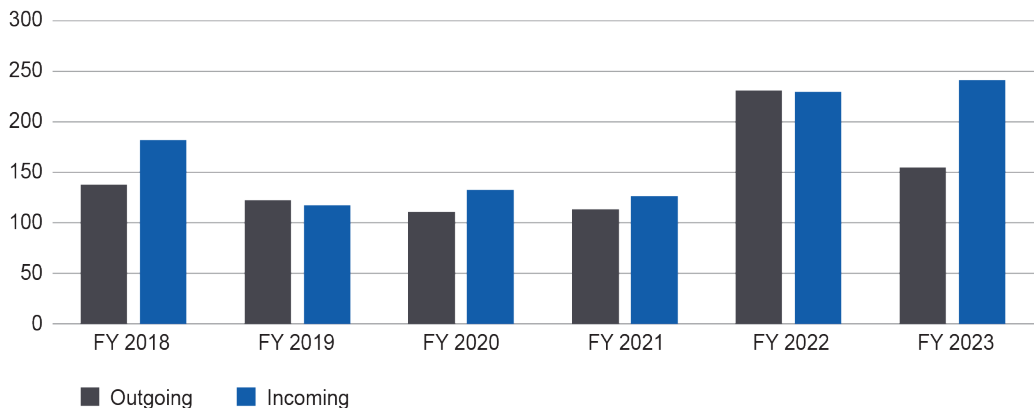
Figure 103. New hires and hiring rate among personnel in Metro 1 areas.



Outgoing and Incoming

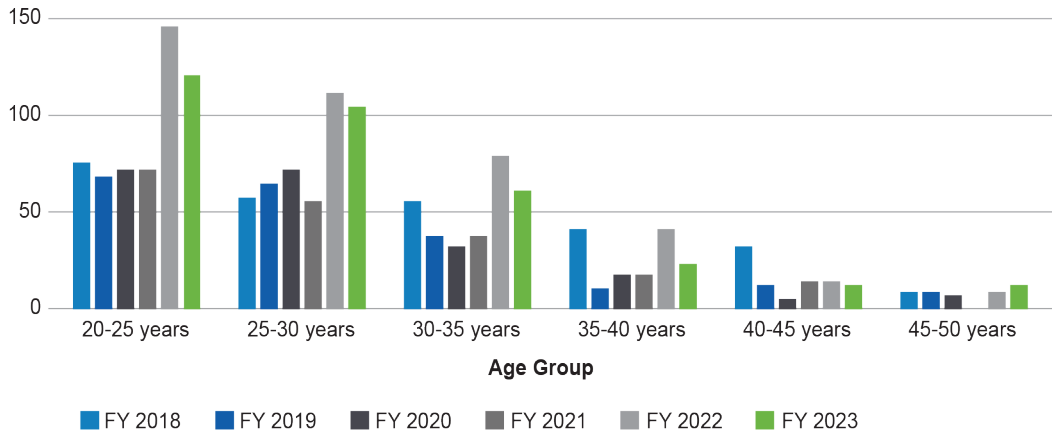
In FY 2019, the number of outgoing and incoming employees within Metro 1 areas was relatively balanced.ⁱ However, in FY 2020 and FY 2021, the number of incoming employees slightly exceeded the number of outgoing employees, with incoming significantly exceeding outgoing in FY 2023. These recent trends indicate that Metro 1 generally has more incoming employees than outgoing, with some exceptions (FY 2019 and FY 2022.)

Figure 104. Outgoing and incoming employees among Metro 1 areas.



ⁱ Outgoing and incoming employee measures are inclusive of lateral moves, returns to work, and retirements followed by transfers to another agency (see definitions).

Figure 105. Outgoing lateral moves by age among personnel in Metro 1 areas.



Metro 2

Metro 2 areas, defined based on population criteria, represent urban areas with a city exceeding 50,000 residents or multiple key cities in the region, along with a county population greater than 250,000. This definition characterizes Metro 2 areas as moderately populated urban regions, typically encompassing significant urban centers with substantial public safety demands.

Active Headcount

The active headcount increased over the study period, with the most substantial growth occurring between FY 2022 and FY 2023 as the headcount rose from 1,988 to 2,072 employees.

Figure 106. Total headcount of personnel in Metro 2 areas.

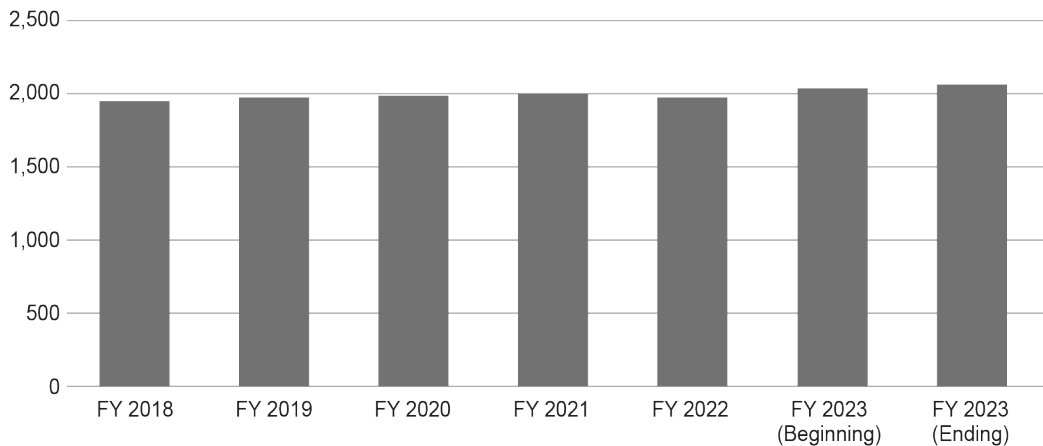
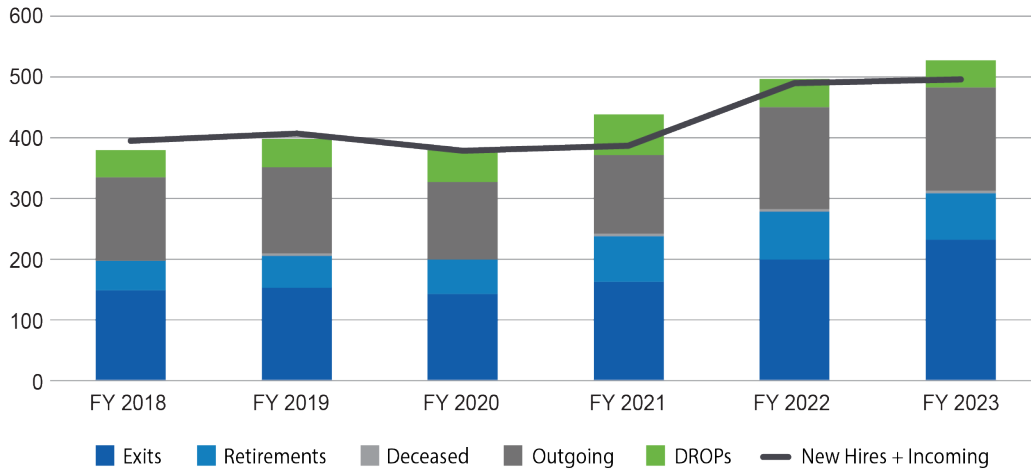


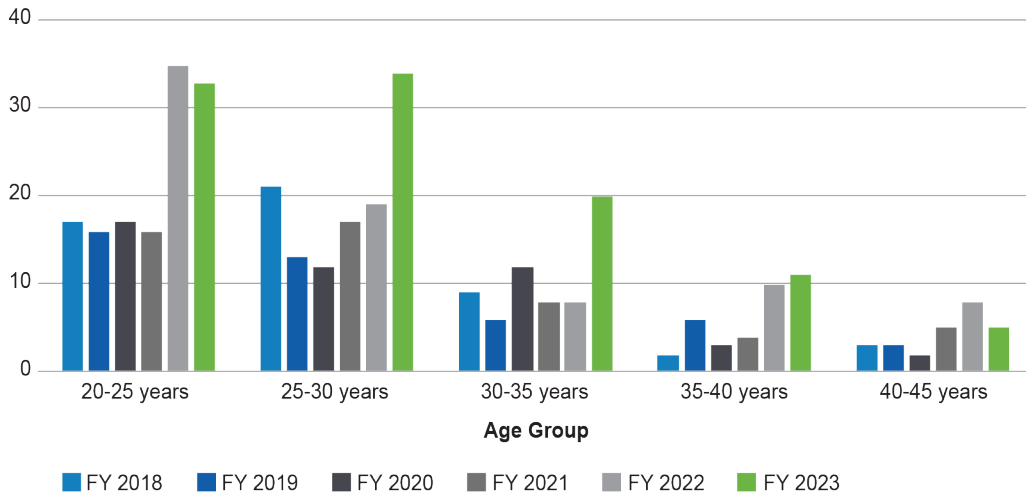
Figure 107. Overview of headcount changes among personnel in Metro 2 areas.



Exits by Age

Over the years, there were fluctuations in exits within different age groups within Metro 2 areas. In FY 2023 and FY 2023 in particular, there were significant rises in the number of exits among younger age groups (20-25 and 25-30). This trend indicates a potential need to focus on retaining employees early in their careers.

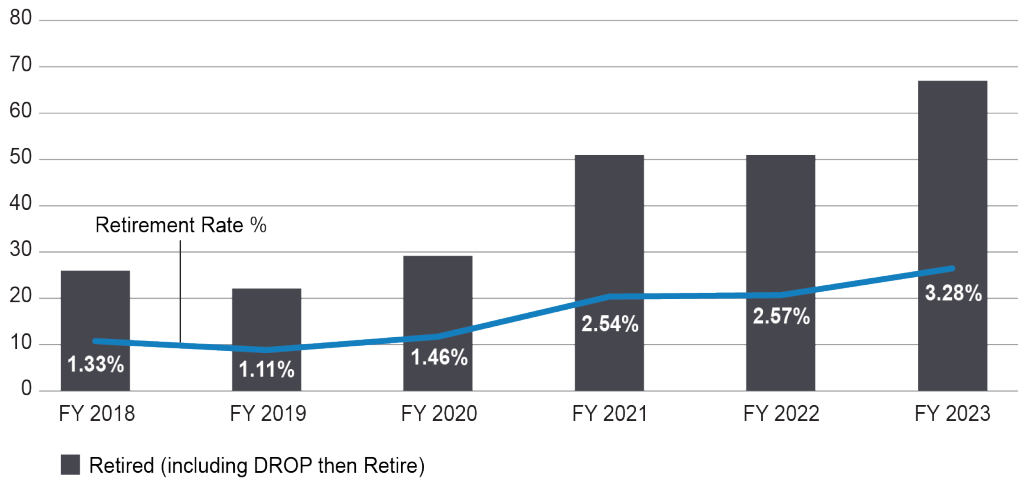
Figure 108. Exits by age among personnel in Metro 2 areas.



Retirements

The data for Metro 2 shows fluctuations in retirement rates. The retirement rate increased from 1.33% in FY 2018 to 3.28% in FY 2023, indicating a rising number of retirements.

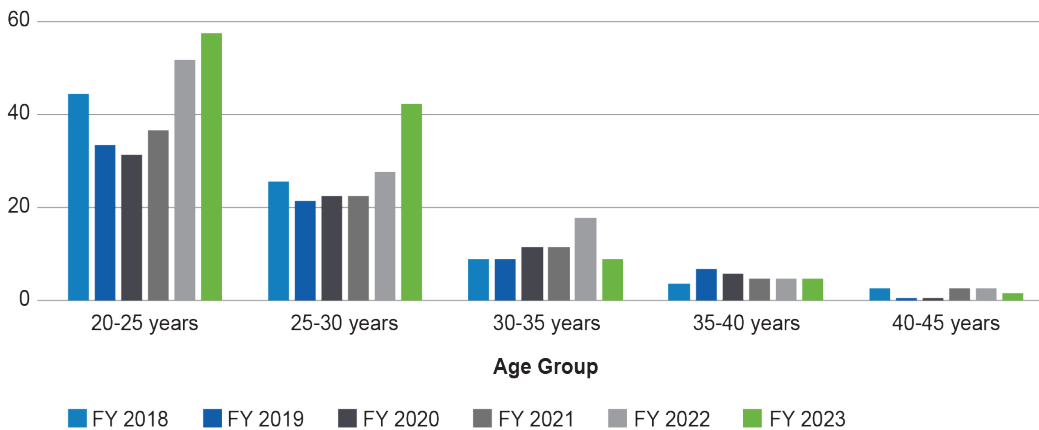
Figure 109. Retirements and retirement rate among personnel in Metro 2 areas.



New Hires by Age

There was an overall increase in new hires within Metro 2 areas over the study period, with the highest number recorded in FY 2023. Age group 20-25 consistently had the highest number of new hires, with a significant increase in the number of new hires in the 25-30 age group in FY 2023.

Figure 110. New hires and hiring rate among personnel in Metro 2 areas.



Outgoing and Incoming

Throughout the study period, the number of incoming employees exceeded the number of outgoing employees within Metro 2 areas. In FY 2022, there was a significant jump in incoming employees; this trend stayed relatively steady into 2023.

Figure 111. Outgoing and incoming employees among Metro 2 areas.

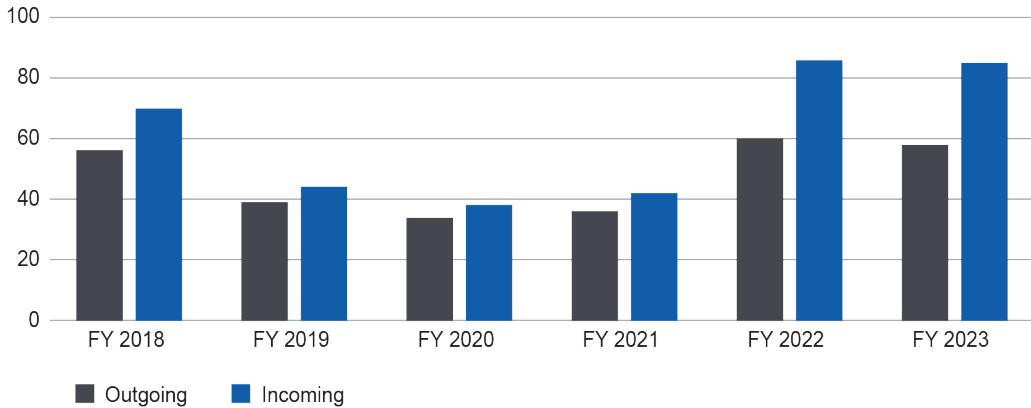
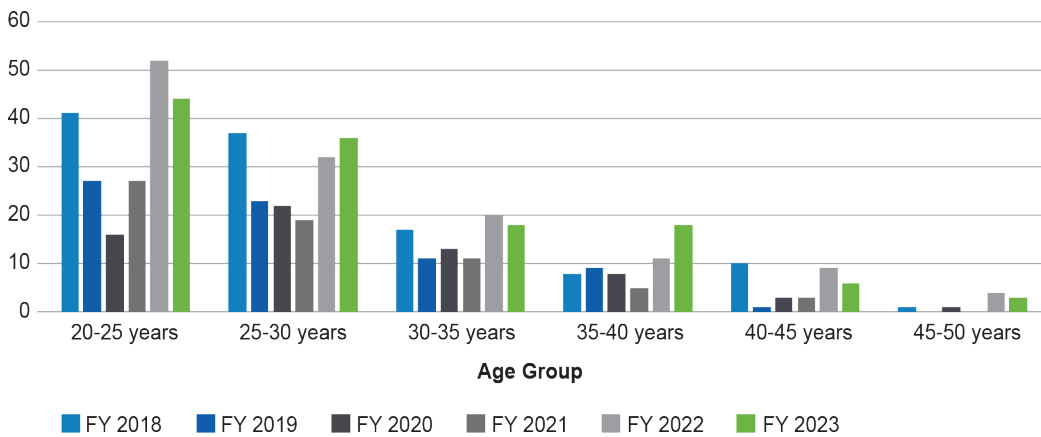


Figure 112. Outgoing lateral moves by age among personnel in Metro 2 areas.



Metro 3

Metro 3 characterizes areas with cities and counties that do not meet the more stringent criteria of Metro 1 or Metro 2. It typically encompasses regions with lower population density and urbanization. Metro 3 areas are often made up of smaller cities, towns, and counties that still require a public safety workforce to meet the needs of their communities.

Active Headcount

The active headcount data in Metro 3 areas from FY 2018 to FY 2023 indicates a relatively stable workforce, with minor fluctuations in headcount. The headcount saw a gradual increase, with a rise in FY 2023. Overall, Metro 3 seems to have experienced slight growth in its public safety workforce.

Figure 113. Total headcount of personnel in Metro 3 areas.

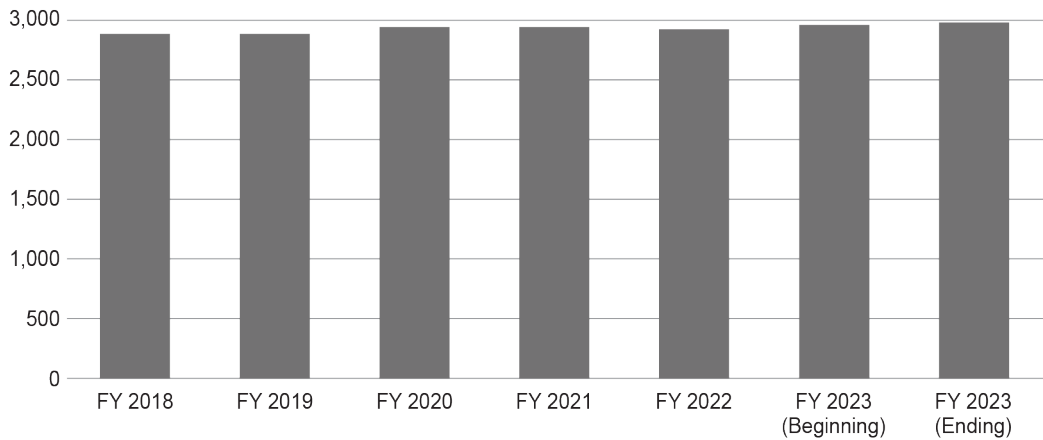
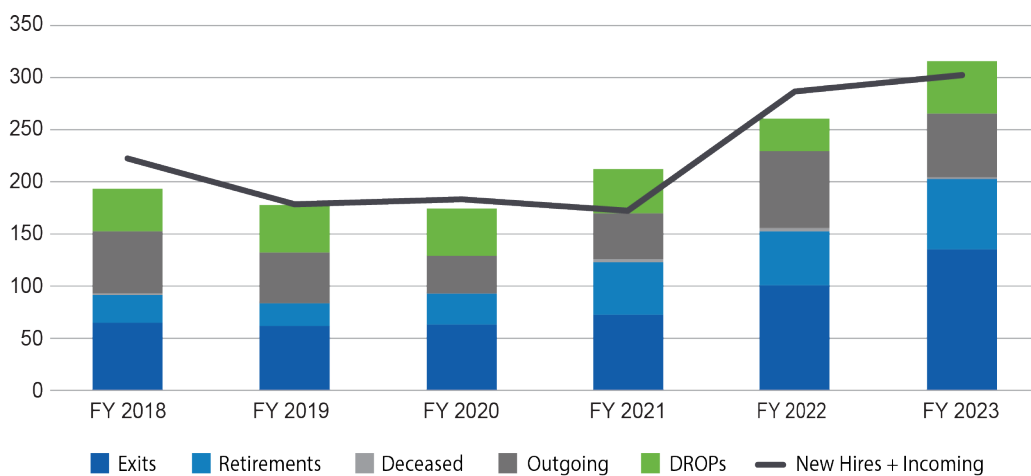


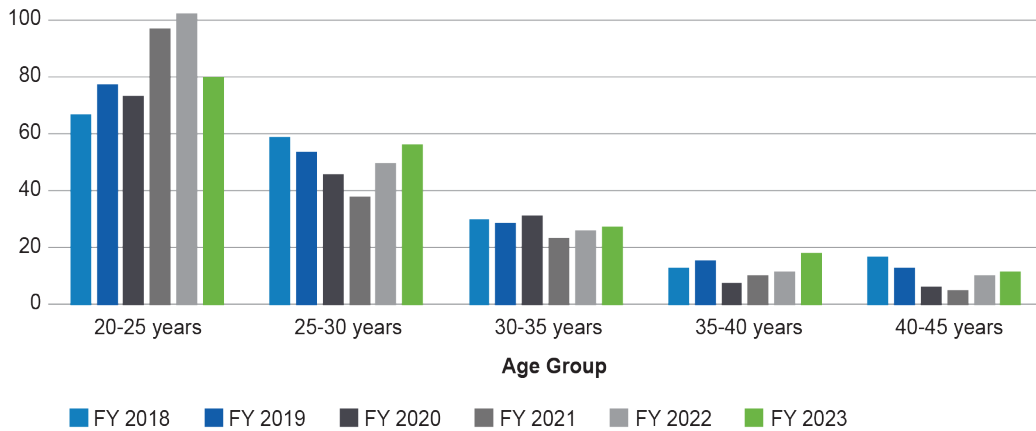
Figure 114. Overview of headcount changes among personnel in Metro 3 areas.



Exits by Age

Age groups 20-25 and 25-30 in Metro 3 areas consistently had higher exit figures, consistent with the trend seen in Metro 1.

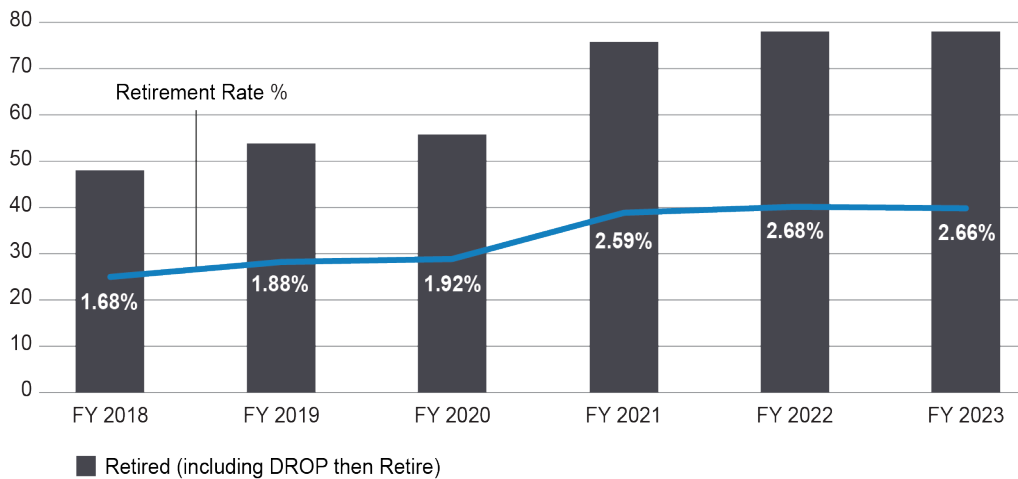
Figure 115. Exits by age among personnel in Metro 3 areas.



DROPs and Retirements

The retirement rate within Metro 3 areas shows a gradual increase, rising from 1.68% in FY 2018 to 2.66% in FY 2023.

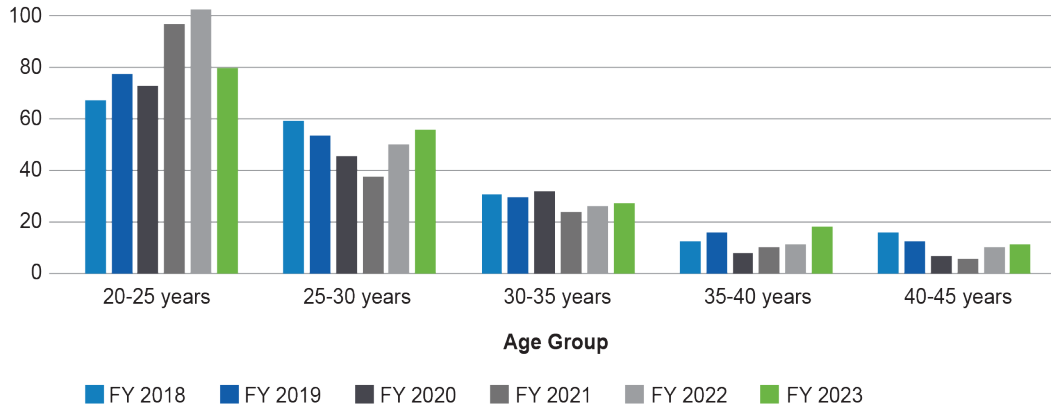
Figure 116. Retirements and retirement rate among personnel in Metro 3 areas.



New Hires by Age

The data on new hires in Metro 3 indicates a small increase in new employees joining the public safety sector. Age group 20-25 consistently saw the highest number of new hires, although new hires in this age group declined in FY 2023 while new hires in the age group 25-30 rose slightly.

Figure 117. New hires and hiring rate among personnel in Metro 3 areas.



Outgoing and Incoming

In Metro 3 areas, the number of outgoing employees has consistently outpaced those incoming by a substantial margin during the study period. Although the gap between outgoing and incoming employees has narrowed somewhat in the FY 2021-FY 2023 period, outgoing employees still outnumber incoming employees, indicating a potential long-term issue with workforce attrition in Metro 3 areas.

Figure 118. Outgoing and incoming employees among Metro 3 areas.

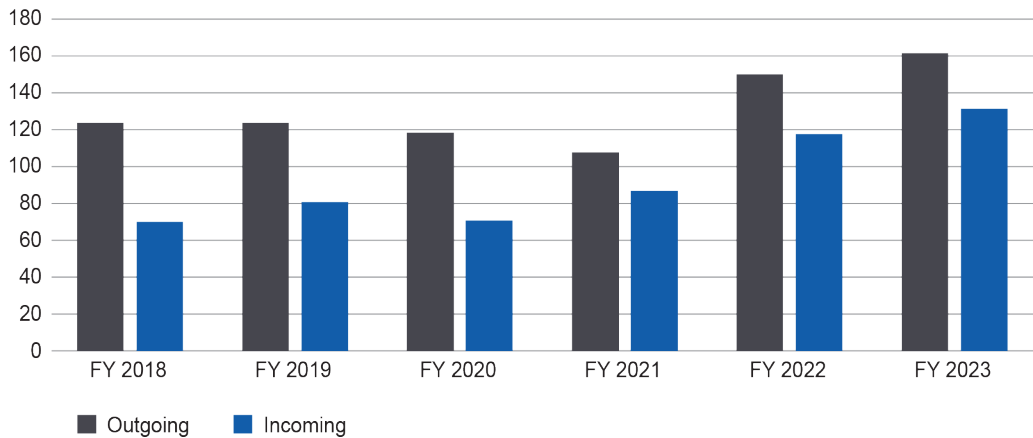
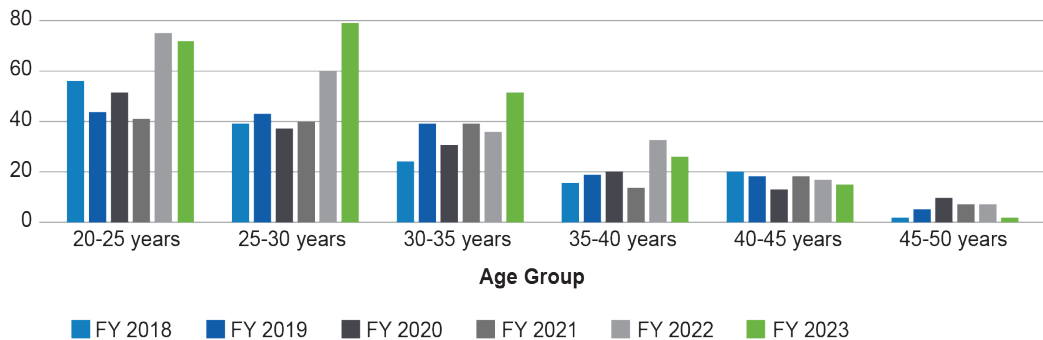


Figure 119. Outgoing lateral moves by age among personnel in Metro 3 areas.



End Notes

- 1 "Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS)," State of Arizona Research Libraries, Arizona Secretary of State, August 30, 2020, https://azlibrary.gov/sla/agency_histories/public-safety-personnel-retirement-system-psprs.
- 2 Jason Sandvik, Christopher L. Griffin, Jr., Seung-Ho An, David Dow, Laura McCann, and Samantha Barrera, "Arizona Fire and Law Enforcement Recruitment Survey", 2023; Jason Sandvik, Christopher L. Griffin, Jr., Seung-Ho An, David Dow, Laura McCann, and Samantha Barrera, "Arizona Law Enforcement Retention Survey", 2023; Dierdra Bycura, Fefei Zhang, Osei Akoto Kwarteng, Ian Syfert, Hulan Edward, Emma Raney, and Gabriella Diaz, "Arizona Fire Service Retention Survey", 2023; Shannon Portillo, Samantha Badger, Andrew Bertucci, Beth Huebner, Ulrich Jensen, Teirstayn Jones, Joseph Schafer, David Swindell, and Kathryn Tapp, "Policy Review and Public Service Leader Interviews for Retention and Recruitment", 2023.
- 3 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Arizona Job Openings and Labor Turnover–June 2023," BLS Website, retrieved August 23, 2023, https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/jobopeningslaborturnover_arizona.htm#table1.
- 4 Stephen Miller, "2022 Salary Increases Look to Trail Inflation," Society for Human Resource Management, Sept 2021, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/compensation/pages/2022-salary-increases-look-to-trail-inflation.aspx>
- 5 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "State and Area Employment, Hours, and Earnings," BLS Website, retrieved August 30, 2023, https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/SMU0438060000000001?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true; U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, "CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)," BLS Website, retrieved August 30, 2023, <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUUR0000SA0>.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ARIZONA'S
LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL

Arizona Public Safety Personnel
Retirement System Data Analysis



nau.edu

1900 S Knoles Dr. Flagstaff, AZ 86011 • (928) 523-5018