

Police Detective

Investigate serious crimes instead of answering calls. Not an entry job: you become a police officer first, then earn your way in.

TYPICAL PAY

\$116,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$80k to \$139k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Police services, major crime and specialized units, courts

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Then the same path as any police officer: requirements, testing, hiring, police college.
- 2 Get hired as a police officer** 1 to 3 years including waiting
 Testing, background, fitness, then Ontario Police College (13 weeks) or your province's academy. Quebec requires a college police diploma first.
- 3 Patrol** 3 to 5 years
 Job Bank lists several years as a police officer as the requirement. Most services want 3 to 5 years on the road before you can apply to investigative units.
- 4 Selection and courses** Months to a year
 Apply to a unit, interview, then courses in general investigation, interviewing and major case management through your provincial police college or the Canadian Police College in Ottawa.
- 5 Detective rank** After 5 to 10 years total
 Some services promote to detective constable or detective; others treat it as an assignment. Either way, seniority and results decide who stays.

Pros and cons

- + Real investigative work and a case to own
- + Top of the police pay grid plus overtime
- + More weekday and daytime shifts than patrol
- Years of patrol before you get in
- Exposure to the worst things people do
- Callouts at any hour on major cases

Good to know

Ontario changed the rules after Bernardo

After a 1990s review of how police handled the Paul Bernardo investigation, Ontario made major case management mandatory for serious crimes, so different police services share information through...

Disclosure is the job

A 1991 Supreme Court of Canada decision, Stinchcombe, requires police and prosecutors to hand over all relevant evidence to the defence. Detectives spend a large share of their time organizing that...

Optional boosts

Homicide and major crimes. Sex crimes and child exploitation. Fraud and financial crime. Cybercrime.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Police detectives, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 Job Bank: Police investigators, requirements
 Vancouver Police: Recruiting (pay grid, investigative units)
 Ontario Police College

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/police-detective>



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