

FOR RELEASE
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Statements attributable to:
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WASHINGTON LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES REPORT VIOLENT CRIME, MURDERS, AND VEHICLE THEFTS HAVE INCREASED, DRUG ARRESTS DOWN, AND FEWER OFFICERS IN 2021

(Lacey, WA) – Violent crimes and murders increased, while the number of officers available to respond decreased in 2021, according to a report released this week by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC). The annual Crime in Washington report (2021 CIW document) tracks crime and arrest data from contributing law enforcement agencies throughout Washington.

The Crime in Washington 2021 report is compiled with data from 232 state, county, municipal, and Tribal agencies and is designed to give residents, elected officials, and law enforcement data-driven information about crime in their communities.

The report shows that there were 325 murders in 2021 (CIW page 31), an increase of 5.9 percent over 2020, following a 47 percent increase the year before. This is the highest number of murders recorded since WASPC began collecting this data in 1980.

Violent crime overall increased 12.3 percent; robbery increased 10.0 percent, and aggravated assaults increased 15.4 percent.

Drug arrests and fraud incidents were down significantly, which contributed to an overall statistical reduction in crime numbers. There was a 60.9 percent drop in drug offenses, and a 73.6 percent fewer arrests related to drug use (CIW page 51), mainly due to the State Supreme Court's Blake decision, which significantly changed the ability to charge a criminal offense for personal possession of any drug, including heroin, fentanyl, and methamphetamine. Identity theft dropped from 36,358 in 2020 to 7,704 in 2021, a 78.8 percent reduction (CIW page 42). This drop was related to the spike in 2020 pandemic-related fraudulent claims to the state.

The total number of commissioned officers statewide in 2021 was 10,736, a net loss of 495 from 11,231 in 2020. With population increases, the number of officers per thousand residents fell from 1.47 to 1.38 officers per thousand in 2021. This is the lowest per capita rate of officers since WASPC began tracking this data in 1980, and is the lowest rate in the nation. The national average per capita rate is 2.33 officers per thousand (FBI 2022 data, Table 77).

Facts at a Glance

- The total population for the State of Washington is 7,772,506, compared to 7,656,066, an increase of 116,440 residents (WA Office of Financial Management).
- A total of 592 hate crime incidents were reported, an increase of 26 percent over 2020 (CIW page 71).
- Full-time commissioned officers totaled 10,736, compared to 11,231 in 2020. This represents an overall 4.4 percent statewide reduction in staffing (CIW page 551).

- There was a total of 1968 assaults on law enforcement officers in our state in 2021 (CIW page 84).
- Motor Vehicle Theft increased 27.3 percent in 2021, and Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts increased 100.0 percent.

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WASPC was founded in 1963 and consists of executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. With more than 900 members it includes elected county sheriffs, and 240 police chiefs, as well as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of several federal agencies. WASPC is the only association of its kind in the nation combining representatives from local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement into a single body, working toward a common goal. WASPC's function is to provide specific materials and services to all law enforcement agencies in the state, members, and non-members alike.