

# Public safety

2024



Increase fiscal tools and resources to support police officer recruitment and retention (**HB 2211/SB 6076, and SB 5424, HB 2024**).

## Background:

Public safety is a core responsibility of city government. Cities employ the most law enforcement officers in Washington. Washington's communities are safer places to live, learn, work, and play thanks to high-quality public safety services delivered by municipal staff.

But cities face historic vacancies in law enforcement and are struggling to recruit and retain police officers.

- **Nearly 75%** of cities foresee hiring new officers as a major challenge;
- **Nearly 40%** of current law enforcement officers are either eligible for retirement, or will become eligible in the next few years; and
- **41%** of cities anticipate that retirements or resignations will impact their public safety staffing.

Source: 2022 AWC City Conditions Survey

## Many officers are eligible for retirement



As cities work to create and maintain professional, community-oriented police departments, it will take strong partnership from the state to improve public safety through expanded recruitment and retention efforts.

## Strong cities need:

- **Additional funding tools to support officer recruitment and retention**, including updating the Public Safety Sales Tax to allow an option to implement by councilmanic authority and providing greater flexibility.
- **Expanded access to mandated training**, including more BLEA regional academies to get new officers on the street faster.
- **Changes to eligibility requirements** to allow those in DACA status to serve as police officers and allow part-time positions to be covered in the LEOFF 2 pension system.
- **Additional tools to address auto theft and property crime**, including increased investment in auto-theft prevention and enforcement programs, as well as regional property crimes task forces and prosecution.

## Washington's police officer to population ratio has decreased

For every 1,000 residents:

In 2000:



In 2022:



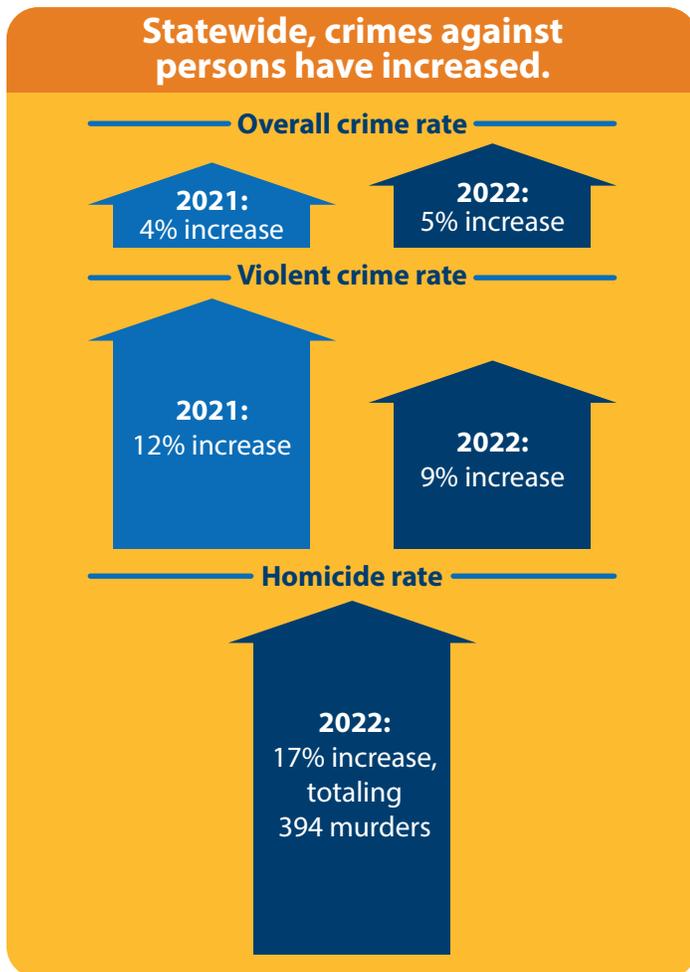
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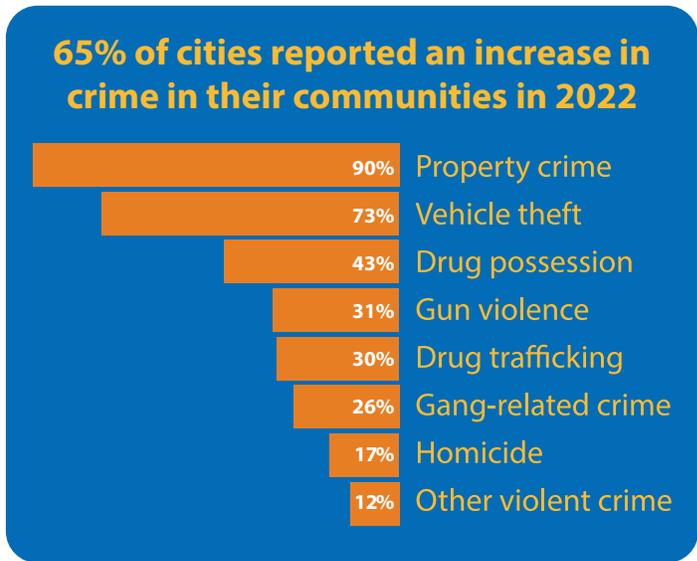
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At the same time that cities are experiencing historic challenges with officer recruitment and retention, they are also experiencing an increase in crime.



**“One of the biggest effects of the vacancies has been longer response times to 911 calls.” – Vancouver Police Chief Jeff Mori**



Source: 2022 AWC City Conditions Survey

In response to increased crime, many cities are bolstering public safety funding. **65% of cities** report a planned increase in funding over the prior year, including **28% of cities** that plan to increase funding by more than 10%.

**“In 2022, Washington had the highest property crime rate in the region and the second highest property crime rate in the country.”**

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program

The added cost burden, combined with limited revenue options for cities, requires cities to shift resources away from other popular and important services such as parks and recreation and street repair.

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