

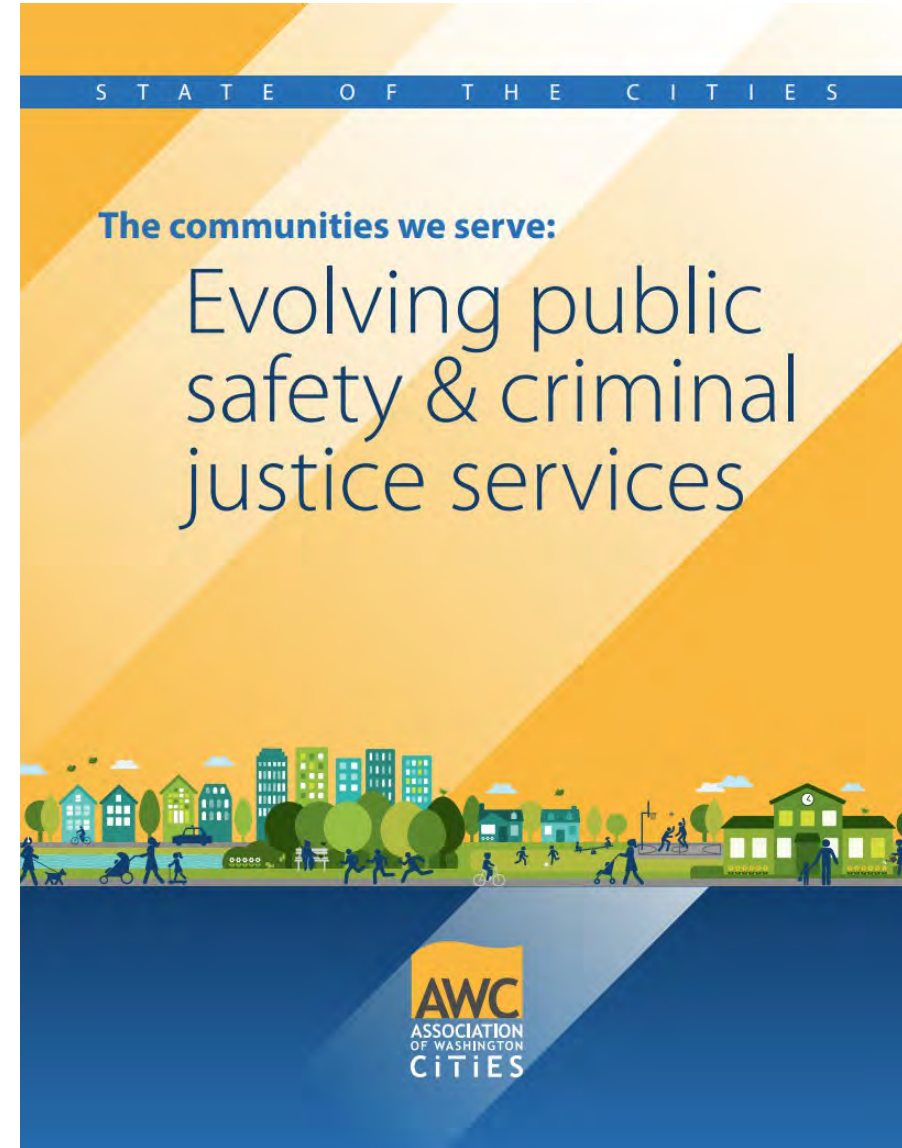
AWC Report: Public Safety & Criminal Justice

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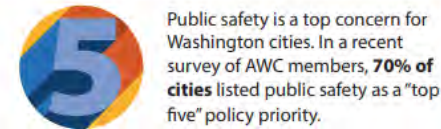


Public safety is a top public concern

- Crime rates are increasing
- While overall crime rate has increased, the rate of violent crime has increased faster
- Vehicle theft continues to be a significant issue
- Costs of public safety are increasing, and cities are further bolstering public safety funding as resources allow

1 Public safety is a top priority for cities

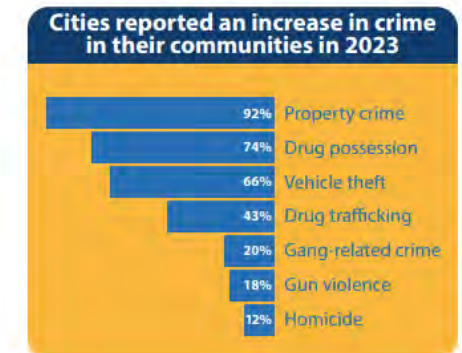
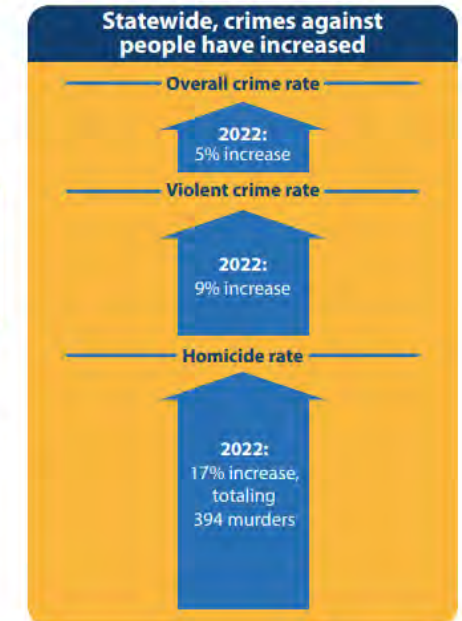
Public safety is a core responsibility of city government. Washington's cities are made safer places to live, learn, work, and play thanks to high-quality police, court, prosecution, public defense, and jail services delivered by municipal staff. Some cities are direct providers of some or all of these services, and cities without their own police department partner with neighboring cities or their county to provide public safety services.



Cities are experiencing an increase in crime, especially violent crime and other crimes against people, property crimes, vehicle theft (including catalytic converters), and drug possession.

In response to increased crime, many cities have bolstered public safety funding. **62% of cities** reported that they planned to increase funding for public safety over the prior year, including many cities that planned to increase funding by more than 10%.

Increase in crime



Funding the public safety system

On average, nearly half of a city's operating budget is spent on police officer and firefighter salaries, emergency medical services, courts, and jails. The majority of those expenses include costs for vital public safety personnel.



Source: State Auditor's Office; general fund, special revenues.



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Source: Office of the State Actuary

How do cities fund public safety?

- Property tax
- Sales tax
- B&O taxes
- Intergovernmental revenues
- Charges, fines, and fees
- Licenses and permits
- Other local taxes
- Miscellaneous revenues
- Nearly half of a city's general fund budget is devoted to public safety, and nearly 2/3 when including criminal justice

What about traffic ticket revenue?

- State receives about 2/3 of the revenue, and the local ticketing jurisdiction retains 1/3 of the revenue.

Traffic tickets – Where does the revenue go?

One misconception is that cities retain all traffic ticket revenue. This is simply not true.

Although local law enforcement officers write the majority of ticket infractions in Washington, cities split the revenue they receive with the state general fund and dedicated funding sources.

The base fine for each infraction is set by the Washington Supreme Court.

Overall, traffic ticket revenue is down significantly in recent years, causing deficits in many of the programs funded with traffic fines.

Breakdown of a \$145 ticket

	City revenue	State remittance
City or county issuing the ticket	\$48.11	
State general fund		\$57.89
Judicial Information System (JIS) Account JIS is the primary information system for Washington state and local courts. It serves as a statewide clearinghouse for criminal history information.		\$23
Trauma Care Account This account funds the trauma care system, including EMS, trauma care services, rehabilitation, and related planning and development.		\$5
Traumatic Brain Injury Account Supports statewide comprehensive community planning related to traumatic brain injuries.		\$5
Driver Licensing Technology Support Information technology systems used by the department to communicate with the Judicial Information System, manage driving records, and implement court orders.		\$6
Subtotals	\$48.11	\$96.89
Total		\$145

Cities only receive 1/3 of typical traffic ticket fines

Recruitment and retention challenges



55% of the state's commissioned law enforcement officers are city police

Cities in 2020 reported that public safety costs were the area within municipal budgets most likely to increase. The primary cost driver for public safety, like many city services, is wages and benefits.

Washington's police officer to population ratio has decreased

For every 1,000 residents:

In 2000:



In 2022:



Washington state is facing historic vacancies in law enforcement, and cities across the state face challenges with hiring and maintaining police officers necessary to do critical work.

Despite already having one of the lowest numbers of law enforcement officers per capita in the country, Washington cities are also dealing with extra stressors:

- **70%** 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.

Many officers are eligible for retirement



This problem is not unique to Washington. A national survey in 2020 found that police departments are only filling about 93% of budgeted positions available. An ongoing national debate regarding police culture, use of force, and law enforcement generally, has impacted the public's view of law enforcement as a career. This, combined with in-state challenges such as delays for officers to be accepted into the CJTC BLEA and the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have further exacerbated the problem locally. These challenges are compounded by the aging demographics of our state's police force, with 37% of officers eligible for retirement now or in the next few years. Some of these challenges can be addressed at the state level, others must be solved at the local level, and some involve national cultural shifts that will likely take years to resolve.

Law enforcement recruitment and retention

- Washington's law enforcement officer to population ratio has historically been one of the lowest in the country, and today is lower than in 2000
- Nearly 40% of current officers are either eligible for retirement, or will be eligible soon
- CJTC still with a backlog for the Basic Law Enforcement Academy Classes
- Large numbers of resignations, in addition to retirements
- Preventative traffic patrol is usually a lower-level priority, particularly when violent crime rates are up

Behavioral health crisis first response

- 988 and 911
- Co-responders, with law enforcement, fire, and/or EMS
- Need for entire continuum of behavioral health services

2 The changing role of crisis first response

Cities are not traditionally direct behavioral health service providers, yet law enforcement officers are increasingly dispatched to behavioral, mental health, and substance use crises. Nationally, behavioral health and substance use concerns represent roughly 20% of 911 calls. A crisis of this type can be both tragic and dangerous for the individuals, families, and communities involved.

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides much of the federal funding to states for behavioral health programs. This funding is further distributed to counties, behavioral health administrative service organizations (BHASOs), accountable communities of health (ACHs), and ultimately to service providers.

In communities across the state, extreme disparities exist in access to frontline first responders, behavioral health resources, and drug treatment. Cities are often on the front line trying to address the problems created by the lack of available services and are asked to resolve issues during a crisis.

The Legislature has made significant investments in this system in the past few years, but major gaps still remain. Many communities do not have local options to divert people into drug treatment—or the nearest service center is often located many miles away from the community.

Washington is experiencing historically high numbers of drug overdoses

In 2021:

2,264 fatal overdoses

4,901 nonfatal hospitalizations

People in crisis need...



Someone to talk to



Someone to respond



Somewhere to go

Additionally, complicated and overlapping systems often mean that the responder who shows up first to the scene of a crisis may not be equipped to handle it.

A number of cities are adopting alternative response programs that complement or replace a traditional law enforcement response with one that takes a holistic approach to an individual's needs. Many situations require professionals trained in a different set of skills than law enforcement officers. Community diversion options like mental health co-responders, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), and Community Advocates for Referral and Education Services (CARES) programs have proven successful as alternatives for responding to crises.

- **25% of cities** have an arrest and jail alternatives program (e.g., LEAD);
- **39% of cities** pair a behavioral health or mental health co-responder with law enforcement when appropriate;
- An additional **19% of cities** have fire-based co-responders (e.g., CARES); and
- **16% of cities** operate mobile crisis response.

Additionally, 25% offer pre-trial diversion and 27% operate a therapeutic, community, or substance use disorder court.

Courts

Washington Supreme Court
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals from the Court of Appeals • Administers the state court system
Court of Appeals (Division I – Seattle; Division II – Tacoma; Division III – Spokane)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals from lower courts
Superior Court (serve the county, or cluster of counties, in which they are located)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil matters • Domestic relations • Felony criminal cases • Juvenile matters • Appeals from courts of limited jurisdiction
Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (district and municipal courts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misdemeanor criminal cases, including driving under the influence, reckless driving, and fourth degree assault • Traffic, non-traffic, and parking infractions • For municipal courts: violations of municipal or city ordinances • Domestic violence protection orders • Civil actions of \$75,000 or less • Small claims up to \$10,000

Municipal courts	Operated by one city to serve its own court needs.
Community courts	Hosted by one city to serve its own court needs as well as those of one or more neighboring cities through interlocal agreements.
District courts	County courts with jurisdiction over both criminal and civil cases. District courts may serve an entire county or a portion of a county. Many cities contract with district courts to provide services within city limits.
Municipal departments	Operate as part of a district court. Cities generally provide facilities and staff while paying the county for services of a district court judge.
Traffic violations bureaus (TVBs)	Operate under supervision of the municipal or district court serving the city. A TVB expedites the handling of traffic cases not requiring any judicial involvement or potential incarceration.

Court system – where do cases go?

- State Supreme Court
- State Courts of Appeals
- County Superior Courts
- County District Courts
- City Municipal Courts
- Community courts, therapeutic courts

Any questions?

