



JOINT STATEMENT

July 11, 2024

KITSAP COUNTY CRIME STATISTICS AND REPORTING

On July 9, 2024, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) released their annual Crime in Washington Report for 2023. Crime statistics have been very volatile over the last five to ten years as the country faced the pandemic and then recovered. In many cases crime was on the rise both before the pandemic and after. In the recently released report there is still cause for concern as post-pandemic crime rates in some cases have risen to levels above pre-pandemic levels. The annual WASPC report is compiled from statistics provided by member agencies across the state and provides data on crime rates for the state as well as local jurisdictions. WASPC is reporting improvement locally in numerous categories for 2023 over 2022 although as previously noted these rates in some cases still exceed pre-pandemic level.

As partner agencies in Kitsap County, local law enforcement agencies including the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, Bremerton Police Department, Port Orchard Police Department, Poulsbo Police Department and the Bainbridge Island Police Department all share the same report management system which is the basis of the data that is provided to WASPC for their annual report.

We want to note that there was an aberration in the statistical reporting for 2023 which should be kept in mind when reviewing local crime data. In May of 2023 all the local agencies implemented a new report management system which was the result of a project to develop and implement which took well over a year. This meant there were two completely separate reporting systems for 2023 and that crime data from the old system needed to be migrated to the new system. In addition, during the development of the new system, we learned that some crime codes in the old system may have been inadvertently incorrect and there may have been some instances of underreporting or over reporting crimes. At the same time, some of the coding that was developed for the new system was found to require coding changes and was still being developed as we adapted to its use. An effort to train officers and records staff to use the new system for more accurate reporting also continued into the last half of 2023 and into 2024.

As local law enforcement executives, we would urge caution on using 2023 crime data with a hundred percent accuracy. The new report management system does allow for greater reports and data collection, and it is expected that this system should serve our needs going forward. Crime trends, which as a practice should be considered on a multi-year basis, will better reveal themselves in the next several years.



The WASPC numbers provided in the 2023 report do provide some optimism as far as improvement in crime rates. We do believe that some crime categories such as auto theft and some property crime may have improved but are concerned that some violent crime offense still appear high and anecdotally our local officers are reporting that they are encountering more armed subjects. The 2024 crime rates to date show neither a dramatic increase nor decrease. Each agency tracks its own crime statistics, and those numbers vary by jurisdiction and reported by each jurisdiction.

As local law enforcement leaders we work together to address crime issues and crime in any one of our jurisdictions affects all of us as a whole.

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Chief Joe Clark
Bainbridge Island Police Department

Chief Matt Brown
Port Orchard Police Department

Chief Tom Wolfe
Bremerton Police Department

Chief Ron Harding
Poulsbo Police Department

Sheriff John Gese
Kitsap County Sheriff's Office

For Immediate Release – July 11, 2024 3:15pm