

## Chief Matthew Murray's Office

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200 S 3<sup>rd</sup> Street | Yakima, WA 98901  
Telephone: (509) 575-6211



February 1, 2022

Dear Yakima Community,

As your Chief of Police, I continually work to advance the relationship between the Yakima Police Department and the community. As in any relationship, open and honest communication is the hallmark of the trust the community bestows upon its police. I am writing this letter to discuss a wide variety of public safety issues that impacted Yakima during 2021. They range from crime statistics, to safety issues, to community challenges and successes. As always, I invite your questions and comments... we work for you.

### Crime

As with most data, there are numerous ways to look at crime statistics. The oldest (and most familiar to the general community) is the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR). This method records reported incidents<sup>1</sup> of crime in a designated community. Often those statistics are compared to other cities or past years to get a sense of trends related to crime. In UCR, an incident (no matter how many different crimes occur or how many victims are reported) is categorized by the highest crime committed. The FBI also utilizes the NIBRS<sup>2</sup> reporting system. Under this system, each crime and each victim are tallied. To better explain, if a suspect carjacks a car with four people in it and robs all four of their wallets, then shoots one person before stealing the car – it would be counted as one incident of first degree assault in UCR and perhaps 10 incidents in the NIBRS system. Neither is right or wrong – or better or worse. They just measure different things.

For this letter, I will use UCR as it is the oldest (established in 1930) and most familiar when discussing crime generally. YPD reports both UCR and NIBRS data to the FBI. We also provide this data in real-time on our [website](#) (Information Hub – About YPD – Crime Statistics). This page denotes REPORTED crime for the current year. There is also a tab on the bottom left for data for the past five years.

We posted similar data on our [Facebook page](#) on November 14, 2021. Frankly, the response and comments surprised me. There were a large number of people who were highly skeptical and challenged many aspects of the data. I believe many of you will also react with surprise. So, before I even start to report the numbers, please note that the data comes directly from all crime reported to the Yakima Police Department. Not all of these crimes are assigned to detectives for further follow-up. These are raw numbers, not proportional to the population. They do not account for crime that occurs but is not

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<sup>1</sup> Part 1 Crimes Defined (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/offense-definitions>)

<sup>2</sup> NIBRS Crime Reporting <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr/nibrs>

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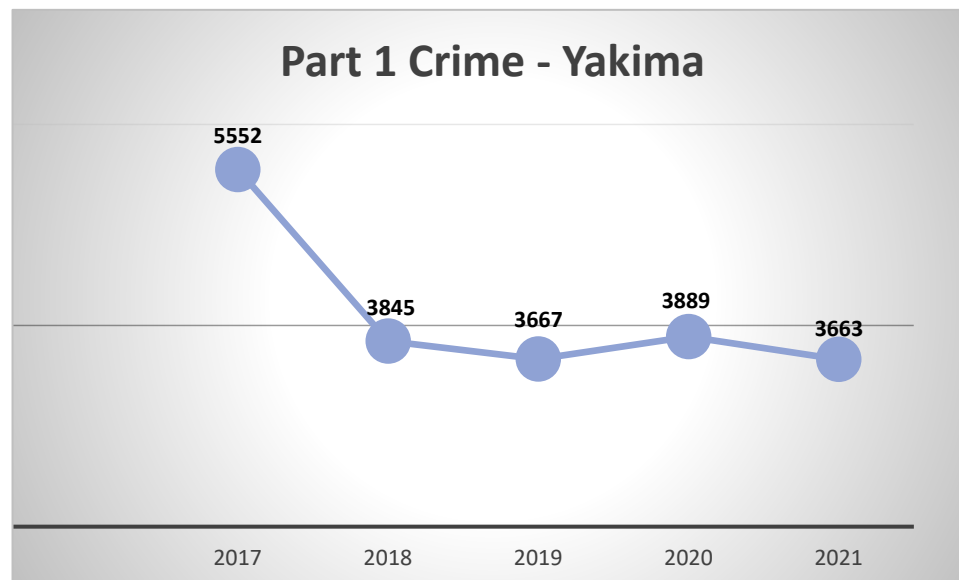
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reported. The data for 2021 was collected in the exact same manner as the previous five years.

Finally, I want to be transparent about data integrity. In 2022 we will launch our new data analysis unit (city council authorized two additional analysts for a total of three). I believe that as this team begins working with our data, they will very likely identify areas for improvement. However, for the purposes of this letter, the data being compared was entered, validated, and maintained in the same manner each year. So, in very Yakima terms, it is “apples to apples.”

### Part 1 Crime



(34% decrease in five years; 6% decrease since 2020)

This is a remarkable improvement and one the community should celebrate! There remains plenty of work to be done, but my hope is that the community shakes the mantra of ‘a dangerous crime-ridden city that is worse than ever, because the data demonstrates the belief isn’t true. Here are some individual crime types and their trends:

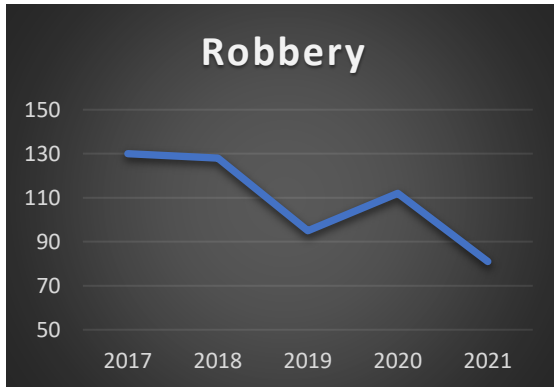
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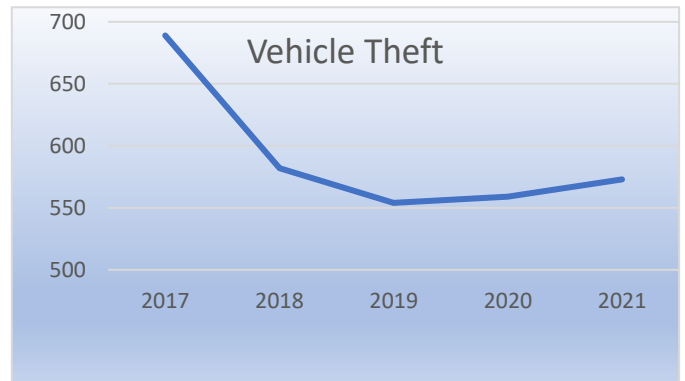


### Robbery



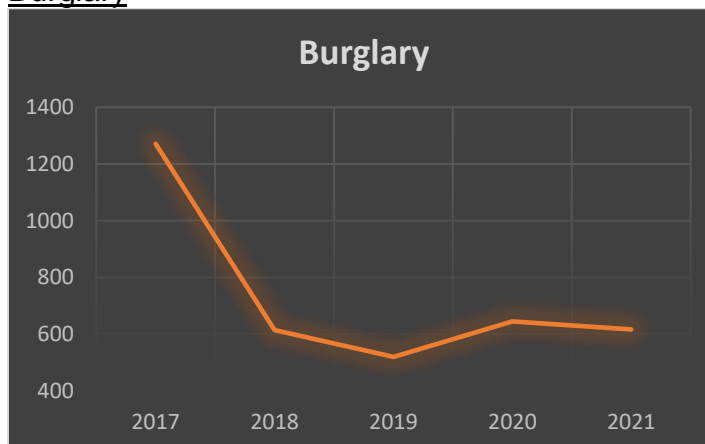
(38% decrease in five years; 28% decrease since 2020)

### Motor Vehicle Theft



(17% decrease in five years; 3% increase since 2020)

### Burglary



(51% decrease in five years; 4% decrease since 2020)

You might be wondering about homicide statistics? I will give them to you here, but first I must tell you that I don't personally believe homicides are a good measure of crime. They are typically so much smaller (in number) than other types of crime, that one or two in either direction makes a very large percentage shift. Also, there are so many factors involved in a homicide that are not part of the crime, like how far the ambulance is from the hospital or how quickly help arrives to treat the victim (among others). I believe that felony assaults are a better measure, so I will include those as well. You will note this is an area for improvement (17% increase over five years).

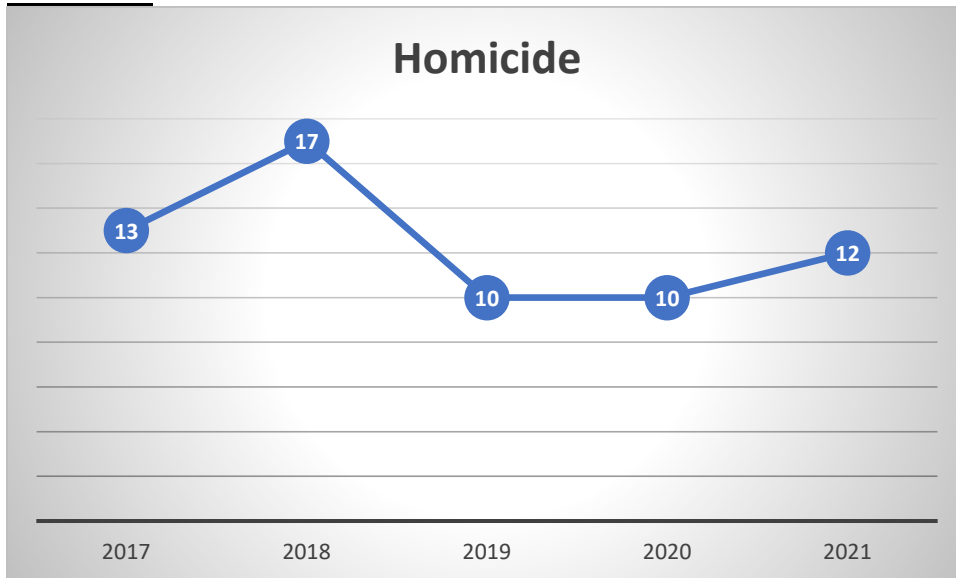
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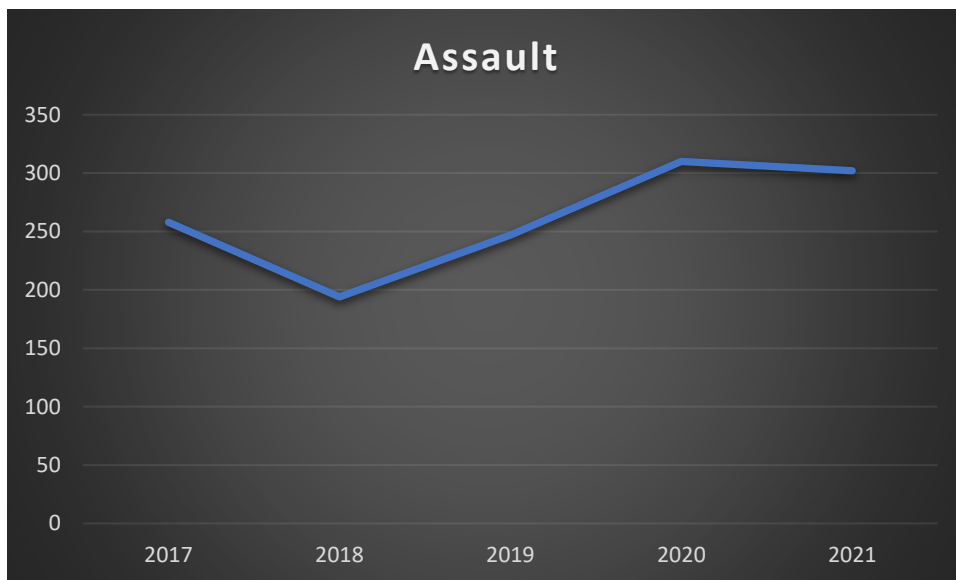


### Homicide<sup>3</sup>



(8% decrease in five years; 30 % decrease since 2018, and 10% increase over 2020 (we had a justifiable homicide in 2021. Our Major Crimes Unit also solved 100% of their cases – an amazing achievement! )

### Assault



(17% INCREASE in five years; 3% decrease over 2020)

<sup>3</sup> Homicide is the killing of one human being by another. When a homicide is criminal, it is a murder. There are times that homicide is justifiable – like in the case of self-defense. There was one justifiable homicide in 2021.

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The year 2021 was particularly bad for traffic issues in Yakima. We had more traffic fatalities (eight incidents with ten fatalities) than anyone can remember. Not surprisingly, alcohol and/or drugs was a factor in 60% of the deaths. We also had twelve vehicular assault investigations, eleven of which (91%) involved impaired drivers. YPD did make 353 arrests for DUI – which seemed very high to me. I spent nearly 30 years as a police officer in the Denver Police Department, and after a quick check of their numbers (approximately 365<sup>4</sup> DUI arrests per year), the problem becomes clearer. Yakima's population is roughly 97,000 while Denver's is about 715,000<sup>5</sup>. If Yakima had the same rate of DUI arrests it would be 49 and if Denver had Yakima's DUI rate, it would have 2,602. This is a serious community problem!

A couple more notes about crime before I move on. The most common day and time for auto theft is Monday between 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. This is because cars are being stolen when owners leave the keys inside as they warm the car up. So the best way to reduce auto theft is actually in the hands of the community – either get an automatic system to warm your car or scrape your windows and drive cold for a few blocks!

### Domestic Violence

There is a great deal of discussion in our community about gang violence. We definitely have more than our share of gang crime, but it **pales in comparison to acts of domestic violence**.

In 2021, the Yakima Police Department responded to or investigated, fewer than 300 incidents deemed to be gang motivated. Since we began keeping detailed records of intimate partner domestic violence calls, we have had over 1,000 incidents in six months<sup>6</sup>. So extrapolated over a year, there are seven times more domestic violence incidents than gang incidents. There have also been eight domestic violence homicides over the past two years, and five gang-motivated homicides. Our community partner, YWCA, reports that they are averaging 10,000 calls of domestic violence a year (many victims do not report to police).

You may recall that 2021 started with a domestic violence homicide<sup>7</sup> and ended with two more. Our community simply has to change this narrative.

<sup>4</sup> <https://crime.denverpost.com/crime/traffic-accident-dui-duid/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/denvercountycolorado>

<sup>6</sup> <https://yakima.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/05f039481ba445f09199a35363cfec64>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/crime\\_and\\_courts/homicide/man-accused-of-brutally-killing-mother-of-his-child-charged-with-murder-in-fatal-crash/article\\_98ccb8fa-3aeb-553a-99ae-1365838af341.html](https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/crime_and_courts/homicide/man-accused-of-brutally-killing-mother-of-his-child-charged-with-murder-in-fatal-crash/article_98ccb8fa-3aeb-553a-99ae-1365838af341.html)

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In late 2019, Detective Michael Durbin of the Special Investigations Unit, sent me a proposal to change the way domestic violence cases were addressed. It was forward-thinking and showed clear potential for a major impact. We adopted most of his strategy in the spring of 2021, and the results have been incredible.

I am happy to report that an enormous number of community partners (from legal system partners like the City and County prosecutors, to non-profit groups like the YWCA, to government service providers like CPS and the Yakima School District) came together to form a coalition to address domestic violence. This group meets every month to address issues and hold each other accountable. A smaller part of this same team meets EVERY workday morning to review all the domestic violence cases that come through police contact and triage them to determine the best response.

I would be remiss in not mentioning that Lieutenant Chad Janis and Detective Michael Durbin have done an amazing job at getting this effort off the ground. There are too many individuals and organizations to thank here, but I will in a footnote below!<sup>8</sup>

There have been so many changes implemented by YPD and our community partners as a result of this work that I don't have the space to list them all. I would encourage anyone with an interest in this topic to watch the City Council Study Session on February 22, 2022. I have also included a link to our [Intimate Partner Violence Dashboard](#) if you would

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<sup>8</sup> I would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their dedication and commitment to the Yakima Domestic Violence Coalition and the collaborative community approach to reduce domestic violence in our community: Yakima Police Department; Cpt. Jay Seely, Yakima Police Department; Cpt. Shawn Boyle, Yakima Police Department; Commander Maritza Det. Mike Durbin, Yakima Police Department; Lt. Chad Janis, Yakima Police Department; Cmdr. Maritza Davis, Yakima Police Department (City Jail); Lt. Chad Stephens, Yakima Police Department; Lt. Tory Adams, Yakima Police Department; Det. Erin Levy, Yakima Police Department; Det. Ileana Salinas, Yakima Police Department; Brian Buchert, Yakima Police Department (Support Services); Elected Prosecutor Joe Brusic, Yakima County Prosecutor's Office; Jared Boswell, Yakima County Prosecutor's Office; Julia Davis, Yakima County Prosecutor's Office; Sara Watkins, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Cynthia Martinez, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Jeffrey Schaap, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Brooke Wright, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Erin Moore, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Teresita Tamez, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Amanda Brusic, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Maria Rosales, City of Yakima Prosecutor's Office; Donald Loen, Yakima County Probation Program Administrator; Jason Delia, Yakima County Probation Services; Maria Balles, Yakima County Probation Services; Maria Valencia, Washington State Probation/Department of Corrections; Jose Terrarzas, Washington State Probation/Department of Corrections; Nicholas Nanez, Washington State Probation/Department of Corrections; Ashley Houfek, Washington State Department of Corrections/Probation; Executive Director Cheri Kilty, YWCA; Erika Muniz, YWCA; Claudia Rocha, DCYF; Lacie Simpson, DCYF; Renee Tabor, DCYF; Debi Gregory, DCYF; Molly Rice, DCYF; Vice President Christopher Devilleneuve, Comprehensive Healthcare; Crystal Shipley, Comprehensive Healthcare; Courtney Hesla, Comprehensive Healthcare; Stacey Locke – Yakima School District; Sara Cordova – Yakima School District; Omar Santoy – Yakima School District; Director Jeremy Welch, Yakima County Department of Corrections; Chief Bill Splawn, Yakima County Department of Corrections; Sgt. Michael Blake, Yakima County Department of Corrections; Corporal Heidi Gosney, Yakima County Department of Corrections; Richard Casares, Community member (Father of a victim); Debbie Brockman, ASPEN Victim Advocacy; Emily Nelson, ESD 105; Deirdre Demel, Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital; Judge David Elofson, Yakima County Superior Court; Erica McNamara, SUNCOMM; Jessica Humphreys, Yakima County Superior Court; Executive Director Bob Romero, YMCA; CEO Mike Johnson, Union Gospel Mission; Esther Magasis, Yakima County Department of Human Resources; Mike Kay, Camp Hope; Emily Washines, Community Advisor; Verlynn Best, Yakima Greater Chamber of Commerce; Candi Shute, Yakima County Juvenile Court; Raquel Crowley, Office of Senator Patty Murray; Pastor David Hacker, St. Michael's Church; City Manager Bob Harrison, City of Yakima; Suzi Carpino, Camp Hope; Emree Weaver, Yakima Herald Republic; Janet Kerns, Yakima Union Gospel Mission; Sean Brown, Yakima Union Gospel Mission; Tammy Ayer, Yakima Herald Republic; Maria Lopez, Yakima Valley Chamber of Commerce; Lisa Kupuza, Yakima YWCA; Victoria Baker, Yakima Valley Chamber of Commerce; Quinn Dalan, Director of Yakima Volunteer Attorney Services; Julie Wartell, independent analyst; David Brown, Veterans Affairs Coordinator; Jessica Herbert, Analytics by IDEA

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like to see detailed information we have begun collecting about this issue. I encourage anyone who would like to attend or join the domestic violence coalition to contact Detective Durbin ([Michael.Durbin@yakimawa.gov](mailto:Michael.Durbin@yakimawa.gov)).

### Gang Violence

There is no question that Yakima continues to have a violent gang problem. However, I want to assure the community that we have allocated significant resources to address it, we have developed a proven comprehensive strategy to reduce it, and we have been a major player in creating partnerships with federal agencies and task forces to cast all available tactics at the gang members we have identified (through objective measures) as the most likely to shoot someone else or to be shot themselves. This strategy is very similar to the one outlined in the book, "Don't Shoot", by David Kennedy (which I asked the community to read last summer).

The following is a short synopsis of our plan to reduce gang violence, the partnerships that have been formed to address it, and some significant arrests we made in 2021.

### The Plan to Reduce Gang Violence

As I mentioned above, there is a substantial amount of research, and many books dedicated to the topic of reducing and preventing gang violence. That said, I am limited to a few paragraphs for the purpose of this general public letter. I would encourage anyone who wants to get more informed about our strategy to read "Don't Shoot".

There are 93 US Attorneys in the United States. Yakima is in the Eastern District of Washington. Each office designates a place or crime for their "Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) effort (to assist local law enforcement with reducing crime). Yakima County is the location for our District.

When I arrived in Yakima (May 2019), YPD and the Eastern District were just launching the PSN effort – which was focusing enforcement on the worst offenders while working with local non-profit organizations to offer an alternative to gang violence. I wholeheartedly agreed with that approach and YPD has been fully engaged in this strategy ever since. We have a remarkable partner (The Walkabout Yakima – or WAY program) who works closely with the Gang Unit to identify and provide wrap-around services to those identified as the most likely to shoot or be shot. Their efforts (and results) have been dramatic and are clearly helping improve public health and reducing violent crime!

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This strategy is easier said than done, but our teams have done an admirable job. I will detail a significant case below, but the people identified (as the most likely to shoot or be shot) were often later encountered in criminal incidents (as both suspects and victims). Many were arrested and faced serious charges. Others took the offer to change and began to do that. I believe this is a promising strategy and we are working with other system partners to further adopt it.

### Team effort (partnerships)

One of our main focuses in addressing gang crime has been to work more closely with our partners. It is clear to us that Yakima's gang members often travel throughout the Valley and commit crimes in other jurisdictions. Yakima County Sheriff Udell and I agreed early on, that one of the best tools available to all of us was to create a county-wide gang task force. This would enable investigators to operate anywhere within the County and to focus on the groups and individuals who are creating the worst impact.

I am happy to report that FBI Resident Agent in Charge Peter Orth and the Yakima FBI office have graciously agreed to lead this effort, and during the summer of 2021 a proactive gang task force launched, and numerous federal indictments have already been achieved as a result.

I would also note that we (especially the YPD Corrections Division) and the City's graffiti abatement team have been working extremely hard to take away graffiti as a means of gang communication. We picked a particular neighborhood with high gang incidents and a large amount of gang graffiti. We drive through the entire neighborhood every day and enter tickets for the abatement team and corrections (volunteers from YPD corrections did a LOT of this work). In fact, we entered 663% more requests in one year (841 in 2019 and 5,580 in 2020). The effort is clearly a success as most graffiti (in the Garfield Elementary neighborhood) is abated within 24 hours and there is little or none left!

### Notable cases and arrests

The following was written by Gang Unit Detective Saldana:

*"On 09/14/21, shots were fired at a residence in the 900 block of E. Chestnut Ave. A retaliatory shooting took place at N. 6th St. and E. Lincoln Ave within a few minutes. Because officers were available to respond quickly and because members of this community were willing to assist the investigation, detectives ultimately made three arrests in this case. And, with the incredible assistance of our federal partners, more arrests were made in related cases. In addition, two vehicles were seized as evidence,*

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*five guns were seized directly related to this case, and four more guns were seized in related cases. Finally, an undeniable aspect of this case was that the victims were suspects and the suspects were victims, showing few people are all bad and everyone is deserving of a voice and justice.*

*Two juvenile males went to the hospital with minor injuries, but these were just the physical injuries sustained that day. The impact of these interconnected shootings on the community was profound. Neighbors on E. Chestnut Ave. have expressed to police their fears, frustrations, and hopelessness, and they are not the only ones. Anyone in the vicinity of these shootings was at risk of also being shot or struck by one of the recklessly driven vehicles. Each community member suffered trauma upon witnessing or even hearing about these incidents, and it remains in our memory. It is the hope of the Yakima Police Department that we have made a difference. We cannot undo the harm or the trauma, but we want to provide a little hope. Let these arrests be a tangible reminder that we work tirelessly to hold violent offenders accountable.*

*This is an example of a success story that's easy to show off: look! We made arrests. The truth, however, is that the accurate measurement of a successful investigation is how we interact with our community. Do our community members feel heard? Do we cooperate with our community members to gather evidence? Of course, bad things happen no matter what any of us do, but can we all respond in a way that leaves us feeling like we're not alone? That's what the Yakima Police Department tries to do. Sometimes we're successful in that, sometimes we're not, but we keep trying to do better."*

I can personally attest to the positive impact I've seen in the community after this successful collaborative effort. The neighborhoods where they were most active have improved safety, less graffiti, and a higher quality of life for the community.

### Other Interesting Numbers

- Yakima officers made a total of 43,567 contacts in 2021
- Yakima officers initiated 24,581 traffic stops and issued 11,801 citations
- Yakima officers made 4,197 arrests (1,434 felony and 2,763 misdemeanor)
- Yakima police officers responded to roughly 42,000 calls for service,<sup>9</sup> when added to traffic stops that is over 66,000 interactions for police services.
- The Internal Affairs Office received five citizen complaints against officers (4 were sustained) and eight internal complaints (4 sustained and one pending). This means that 1 one-hundredths of 1% of calls result in a complaint (.019%).

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<sup>9</sup> The final numbers for 2021 have not been completely analyzed.

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- Yakima police officers documented 116 times that they used force on another person in 2021. This means that fewer than 2 tenths of 1% of calls result in the use of force (.17%). There were no internal affairs investigations for inappropriate force in 2021.

### Yakima Police Department Budget and Staffing

Let me begin by saying that YPD is fully funded. In fact, (as good stewards of tax dollars) we expend less than we are budgeted and typically return large sums to the city's general fund at the end of the year. The City Manager and City Council have actually increased our budget, investing in both technology and strategic positions (like tripling our crime analyst capacity) to help us reduce crime. None of the staffing issues outlined below are a result of funding. In fact, if City Council increased our budgeted police positions tenfold, it would not change the problem. I will get more specific in each area, but essentially we are losing officers faster than we can replace them, the time elapsed between hiring a new police officer and them becoming a fully functioning police officer is lengthy, and there have been a high and unprecedented number of long-term disability claims further diminishing available police officers.

The reason I bring all of this up is that YPD's ability to respond to crime and address traffic issues is significantly affected.

The Yakima Police Department is budgeted for 143 sworn police officers. As of today's date, we have 127 officers (-9% budgeted staff). This is primarily due to police officers leaving the profession at higher rates and in the middle of their careers. Most cities in America are facing similarly stark staffing issues. Some of the officers who leave tell me they are frustrated with law changes, the general view of society about its police, and the increasing danger and stress on them and their families. Some are leaving Washington State to be a police officer in what they view as states with more favorable laws and attitudes about their police. None of this is within my control.

The other staffing challenges are more complicated and far more difficult to remedy.

In Washington State, all police officers must attend the state training academy (this takes five months). However, we must hire an employee, before the academy will grant us a spot – further exacerbating this time period is that the current wait time to get into the academy is between two and six months. Finally, new officers must successfully complete field training – which takes approximately four months. That means that from the day we hire a recruit, to the day they can go onto the street and handle calls, is over a year and sometimes as long as 18 months. We currently have ten officers in one of the phases of training (-7% budgeted staff).

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The final issue impacting our staffing is long-term leave. These cases are all unique but can range from three months at the birth of a child, to physical or mental injuries lasting over a year, or military service commitments. These cases are a part of the state's workman's compensation system, and recent state legislative changes have expanded qualifying injuries (for example Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD))<sup>10</sup>. This is an employee protection and is part of movement to provide police employees better emotional support. Unfortunately, it has a large impact on staffing. There are currently eleven police officers and three corrections officers on long-term leave, and there have been twenty-five over the past two years (-7.5 % budgeted staff).

With these various staffing challenges, YPD down nearly a quarter of our authorized strength.

The primary responsibility of municipal law enforcement is to respond to community calls for assistance (through 911). The second responsibility is to investigate serious criminal offenses. So as staff reduces, we have to shift resources from less critical areas of the department to those two primary responsibilities. Doing this impacts the services we are able to provide to the community. Our traffic Unit has been reduced by 75%, our property crimes investigations team is down 60%, and our narcotics investigations team is down 30%. These police resources had to be shifted to patrol so that we could perform our primary function. Again, this is similar to the reality that the vast number of police agencies in the United States are facing and is **not a result of funding**.<sup>11</sup>

Here in Yakima, we are working on a staffing study to help us make critical decisions moving forward. It will help us answer tough questions about staffing and the services which will be impacted. I want to be transparent, - some of these will likely affect members of our community. We may stop responding to some types of calls and require online reporting as the only alternative (low-level thefts and certain traffic collisions are examples). I recognize that this will be frustrating for some in our community, but I ask for your grace and understanding that we are in a situation where we have little control of the forces which are shaping this reality. Like any organization, we simply cannot provide the same level of service with a quarter or more of our staff unavailable to work.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=51.32.185> ;

<sup>11</sup> <https://mynorthwest.com/3210808/rantz-mayor-admits-seattle-police-staffing-crisis-too-late/> ;  
[https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/239416\\_IACP\\_RecruitmentBR\\_HR\\_0.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/239416_IACP_RecruitmentBR_HR_0.pdf) ; <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/police-staff-shortages-hiring-bonuses/281-fc1931d1-70c5-49ce-a06d-f1a844bbf304> ;  
<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2021/12/17/ashville-police-face-critical-staffing-shortage> ;  
<https://www.wral.com/staffing-crisis-means-durham-police-officers-sometimes-told-not-to-enforce-laws/20028378/> ;  
<https://minnesotareformer.com/briefs/mpd-overtime-explodes-due-to-staffing-shortage/> ;  
<https://theblackwallstimes.com/2021/06/18/were-going-to-have-to-reduce-some-services-police-department-struggling-from-recruitment-shortfalls/>

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### Community Challenge – Drug Overdose

As I have mentioned previously, there is a great deal of attention on gang violence in the city of Yakima. And, to be fair, we have more than our share! However, I believe that issues like domestic violence and drug abuse are affecting far more people and get far less attention.

In 2021, the Yakima Fire Department (YFD) responded to 276 overdose calls in Yakima, and administered Narcan (a life-saving drug that counteracts overdoses) 93 times (at a cost of nearly \$100 per dose). It is fair to say that without this effort by YFD, we would have more than double the already extreme numbers of overdose deaths in Yakima.

In 2021, there were a total of 11 murders (criminal homicide). Three were domestic violence homicide cases and four other homicides were gang motivated. But the city of Yakima had **69 people die of drug overdose** (59% of the cases with identified drugs were from Fentanyl). That means that drugs are killing people 627% more than homicide and 1,725% more than gang homicide incidents! Yakima County has 3.2% of the population for the State of Washington, but it has 17% of the overdose deaths<sup>12</sup>.

The role of police and illicit drug use has been drastically reduced – but the issue has a big impact in our community. I acknowledge and am grateful for the work being done surrounding substance abuse by individuals and organizations in our community, but I feel it is important to put this problem in perspective.

### From my soapbox

As the Yakima Chief of Police, I often have community members ask my opinion about issues affecting Yakima. In a sense, I guess this is a bit of validation that I am considered a leader in the community. And if that is true, then I would be remiss in not raising issues of concern from time to time. So I humbly ask you to read the end of this letter, give it some thought, and look in the mirror to determine if you need to make some changes.

First, I am constantly asked, “What can I do” to help reduce crime in Yakima. My answer is usually to get involved, support a charity doing work with high-risk community members, or volunteer your time working with at-risk youth. There is SO MUCH YOU CAN DO and the need is dire.

I will also tell you that the level of disobedience to traffic laws in Yakima has stunned me. I live at a corner with a four-way stop and can watch cars violate the law a dozen times EVERY HOUR. Some cars literally drive straight through stops signs as if they don't exist. When I pull cars over, most drivers immediately say, “I stopped”. But after we chat, they

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<sup>12</sup> <https://adai.washington.edu/WAdata/deaths.htm> ; <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/washington-population>

*“Make respect a part of every interaction.”*

## Chief Matthew Murray's Office

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200 S 3<sup>rd</sup> Street | Yakima, WA 98901  
Telephone: (509) 575-6211



quickly realize that really they didn't. Stop means stop, not pause. For every minute one of our officers has to expend delivering a warning, issuing a ticket, or investigating an accident caused by such behavior, they are not spending that minute reducing crime. But before you say, "Yeah, I see (others) doing that all the time too..." – look at your own driving and find ways to change your own behavior. I can tell you that the vast majority of people I stop in Yakima live very close to the location where the infraction occurs.

The next issue I want to raise is not unique to Yakima. In fact, it is certainly a culture change within our country and there are indications that it is a global change.

George Washington University Law professor Jonathan Turley recently wrote, "We are a nation addicted to rage. Yet the liberating quality of rage is that it is pure and absolute without the burden of reason or recognition."

I am not qualified to speculate on why, but the signs of the truth in this statement are everywhere. People, when seeing something they don't like or agree with, often jump straight to blame or vitriol. There is no room for discourse nor is there often anything related to the actual fact behind the attack. It has gotten so bad, that people merely scan the headlines and begin their scree. This happens on social media, in letters to the newspaper, letters to government officials, tips to reporters, frivolous complaints, and probably other places I haven't thought of. It is frustrating, time-consuming, and exhausting.

My wife is a school teacher at Garfield Elementary School. When she taught in Colorado, one of the rules at her school was to "assume the best." The idea is that rather than looking for the worst in people or their position, you come to an interaction assuming they mean well. That there is likely common ground to be had and often, that we both want the same thing but have a different approach. I have learned to adopt this at work and at home. And I cannot tell you how much more effective my interactions have become – and as a result – a far greater efficiency. Honestly, I think most people are pretty good. We tend to assign negative characteristics and a negative view of their position (assuming that they clearly have bad intentions) as a mechanism to "win" our argument or prove our point. Enough. It is breaking us apart.

Please, consider adopting this mantra (or at least working toward it). Assume the best in others, in your local government, community leaders, neighbors, and yes, even rivals.

I will end with the hope that 2022 is a great year for you and for our community. I have high hopes that we can adequately address the challenges before us and work together to make real progress.

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I recognize that some will agree with my report and others will not. I welcome both points of view and encourage people to communicate your thoughts to me. We work for you and your voice is relevant to how we operate in our shared community.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matt" being more prominent than the last name "Murray".

Chief Matthew Murray  
Yakima Police Department

*"Make respect a part of every interaction."*