

Request for Community Feedback

Traffic Safety and Enforcement

Who we are

The King County Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO) provides independent oversight of the King County Sheriff's Office. We conduct objective reviews and independent investigations, and make evidence-based policy recommendations that are guided by the community and rooted in equity.

What we are asking from you

OLEO reviews and recommends changes to the Sheriffs' Office policies, practices, and trainings. To make these recommendations, OLEO wants to hear from you to understand your experiences, priorities, and recommendations. There is a QR code link to a survey you can take on the next page.

What we will do with your feedback

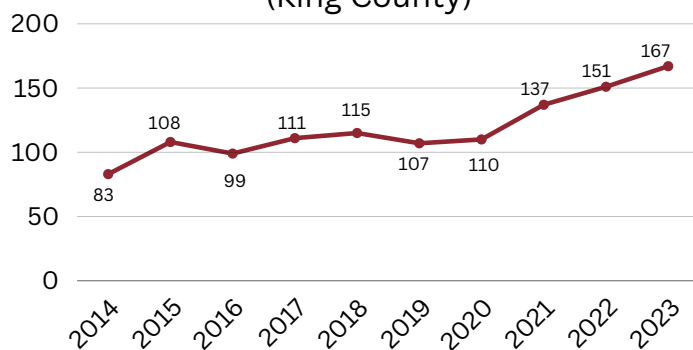
Using everyone's feedback we will work with all our community partners to write recommendations that will be sent to the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office will review them, and they can choose to accept the recommendations or not. We will keep our community partners informed on updates from the Sheriff on whether they accept our recommendations.

Background

What we know

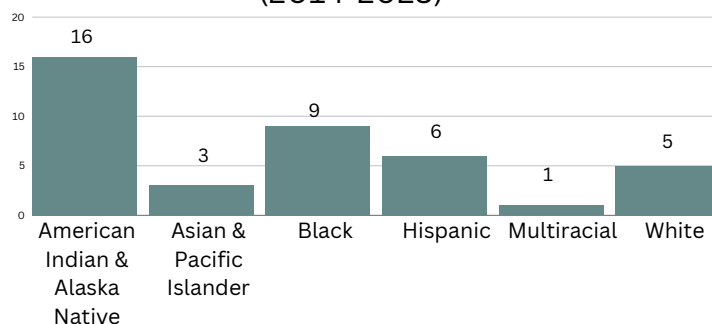
- Traffic deaths in King County have been **increasing** in recent years.
- There are significant **racial disparities** in traffic deaths within the county. Native American residents have the highest traffic death rate, followed by Black residents.
- Traffic stops are one of the **most common** ways that law enforcement interact with the community.

Traffic Deaths by Year
(King County)



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission Coded Fatal Crash (CFC) Files retrieved October 2024 ([Link](#))

Traffic Death Rate per 100,000
(2014-2023)



Source: OLEO Analysis of Washington Traffic Safety Commission Coded Fatal Crash (CFC) Files retrieved October 2024 ([Link](#)) and 2020 Decennial Census ([Link](#))

What we know - continued

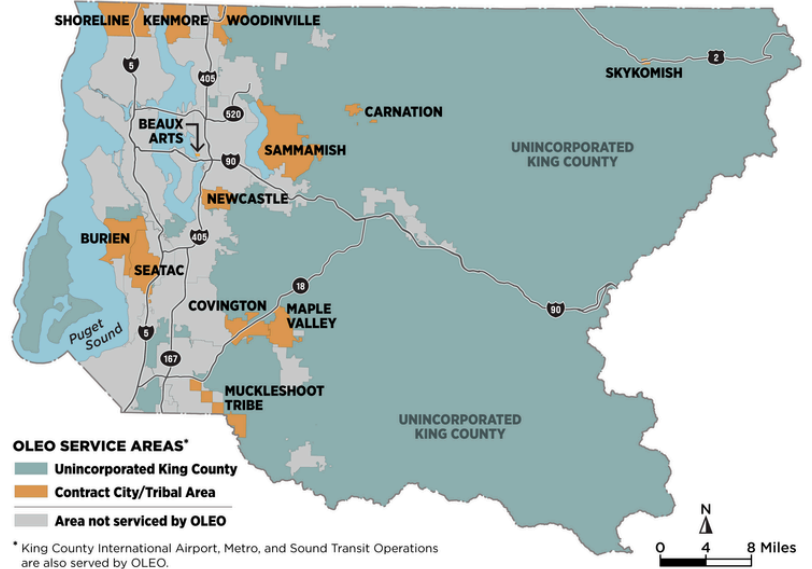
The King County Sheriff's Office made approximately **62,000** traffic stops from 2019-2021.

Source: King County Auditor's Office, Traffic Enforcement: Strategies Needed to Achieve Safety Goals Files retrieved November 2024 ([Link](#))

The King County Sheriff's Office provides police services in unincorporated areas of King County, King County airport, Metro, Sound Transit, partnering contract cities and the Muckleshoot Tribe.

Contract cities can set their own goals and priorities for traffic safety and enforcement.

- Although many traffic stops (54%) are for **moving violations** like dangerous driving, speeding, and running stoplights, the King County Auditor found that 37% of traffic stops made by the Sheriff's Office in a 3-year period were for **non-moving violations** like having expired registration, broken tails lights, and parking violations.
- The Auditor also found that communities within King County **experience traffic enforcement differently**. In part, this is because there are different priorities and decision-making in unincorporated King County and cities that contract with the Sheriff's Office.



What we don't know

- Nationally, traffic stops not related to safety have been used as a pretext or “excuse” to stop, detain, or search people for evidence of more serious crimes unrelated to the reason for the initial stop. Often these “pretext stops” are used in a racially biased manner. But the King County Sheriff's Office doesn't collect the type of data that would allow us to measure if there are racial disparities in traffic enforcement in our county.



[Scan or click to take survey](#)