

Washington State Patrol Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Report to Legislature

Required by RCW 43.43.380

February 2025

Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

Overview

As required by [RCW 43.43.380](#), this report highlights key findings related to Washington State Patrol (WSP) salaries, recruitment and retention efforts, and academy class sizes and graduation rates from 2016-2024.

Key Findings

- Recruitment and hiring rates have fluctuated some but have not trended up or down since 2016.
- The academy currently supports a class size of 60 cadets and conducts one to two classes per year.
- Lateral trooper recruitment began in 2024 with 19 hires.
- Voluntary resignation rates have remained steady since 2016.
- The combined annual retirements for troopers and sergeants range from about 13 to 26, varying significantly from year to year.
- WSP experienced a drop-off in the trooper and sergeant head count of about 125 in 2021–2022 largely due to non-disciplinary separations resulting from the COVID vaccine requirement. This reduction has not been replenished.

Conclusion

We cannot say for sure whether salary investments are the primary driver of recruitment, retention, and resignations. Much has changed in law enforcement since 2018, including increased focus on use of force, and the COVID vaccine requirement. However, lateral recruitments and academy class sizes and frequency could be possible areas of focus for future efforts.

Introduction

Background

[RCW 43.43.380](#) directs the Office of Financial Management to report to the governor and transportation committees of the Legislature on the efficacy of Washington State Patrol (WSP) recruitment and retention efforts. Using the results of the 2016 salary survey as the baseline data, the report must include an analysis of voluntary resignations of State Patrol troopers and sergeants and a comparison of State Patrol academy class sizes and trooper graduations.

Data Sources

We analyzed data and information from the following sources for this report:

- 2016-2024 Washington State Patrol salary surveys
- Washington State Patrol Troopers Association (WSPTA) collective bargaining agreements from 2016-2024
- Separation data from the Washington State Human Resources Management System (HRMS)
- WSP Academy class sizes and graduations from 2016-2024

Full Report

Salary Information

This section includes links to salary surveys from 2016–2024, summarized data from those salary surveys, and salary and general wage increases (GWI) from 2016–2024.

Links to Salary Surveys

- [Washington State Patrol Compensation Survey, 2016](#)
- [Washington State Patrol Trooper and Sergeant Salary Survey](#)
(revised per ESSHB 2872, Section 5 from the 2016 legislative session)
- [Washington State Patrol Compensation Survey, 2018](#)
- [Washington State Patrol Compensation Survey, 2020](#)
- [Washington State Patrol Compensation Survey, 2022](#)
- [Washington State Patrol Compensation Survey, 2024](#)

Salary Survey Summary

The table below summarizes annual maximum base salaries at five years of service from the 2016–2024 biennial salary surveys. More detail and information from these salary surveys can be found using the links above.

Table 1 - Salary Survey Summary

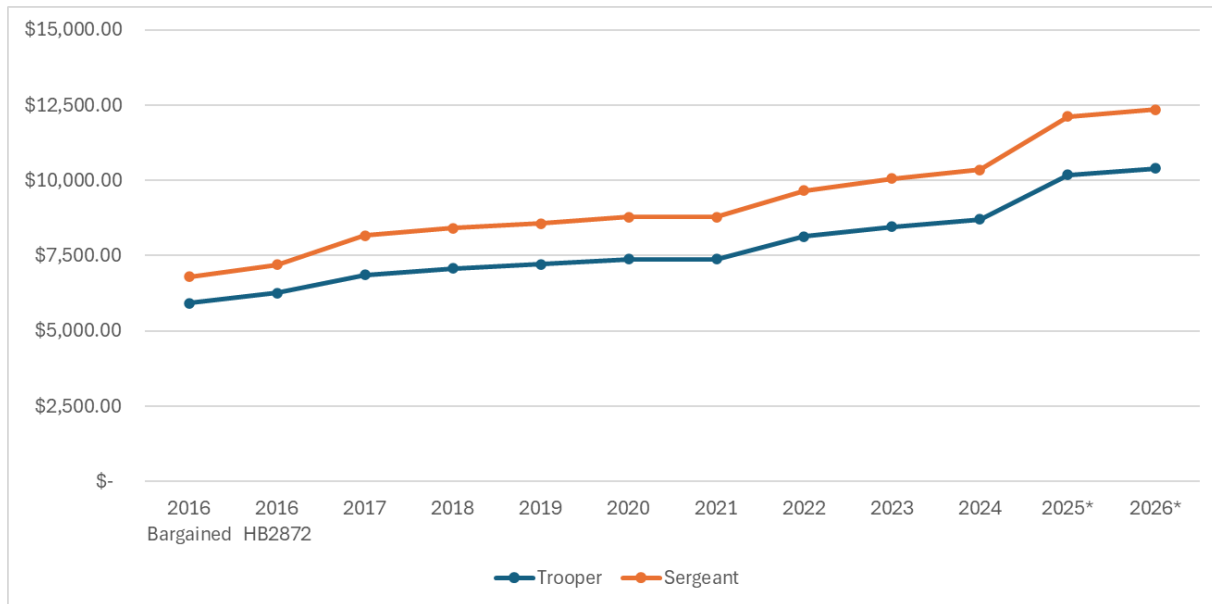
Salary Survey Year	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024
Trooper - Base Pay					
King County Sheriff	\$87,804	\$87,808	\$87,808	\$102,778	\$124,155
Seattle Police Department	\$90,672	\$90,672	\$109,512	\$109,512	\$109,516
Snohomish County Sheriff	\$71,880	\$77,966	\$83,943	\$87,300	\$104,429
Spokane Police Department	\$88,404	\$88,406	\$88,406	\$101,247	\$120,039
Tacoma Police Department	\$80,976	\$83,034	\$90,338	\$109,200	\$122,117
Vancouver Police Department	\$82,440	\$87,468	\$90,084	\$101,328	\$111,708
<i>AVERAGE</i>	<i>\$83,696</i>	<i>\$85,892</i>	<i>\$91,682</i>	<i>\$101,894</i>	<i>\$115,327</i>
Washington State Patrol	\$75,084	\$82,320	\$86,484	\$88,644	\$101,412
Sergeant - Base Pay					
King County Sheriff	\$106,080	\$106,084	\$106,084	\$124,170	\$149,996
Seattle Police Department	\$104,304	\$104,304	\$117,588	\$126,011	\$126,011
Snohomish County Sheriff	\$83,268	\$90,323	\$97,248	\$101,138	\$120,982
Spokane Police Department	\$106,404	\$106,404	\$106,404	\$121,856	\$144,448
Tacoma Police Department	\$97,932	\$101,192	\$109,747	\$132,018	\$147,638
Vancouver Police Department	\$99,204	\$105,252	\$108,408	\$124,284	\$137,016
<i>AVERAGE</i>	<i>\$99,532</i>	<i>\$102,260</i>	<i>\$107,580</i>	<i>\$121,580</i>	<i>\$137,682</i>
Washington State Patrol	\$86,304	\$97,896	\$102,852	\$105,420	\$120,612

Salary survey data is based on a point in time, and is one tool in how we conduct labor negotiations with the Washington State Patrol Troopers Association (WSPTA). Additionally, each jurisdiction’s bargaining cycles are different, and therefore not perfectly aligned. The gap between WSP max base salary and the average of the six jurisdictions, among other factors, is used to inform the general wage increase during the subsequent bargaining cycle.

Salary and General Wage Increases from 2016-2024

The graph below shows actual salary increases for troopers and sergeants from 2016–2024, and projected maximum base monthly salaries based on the [tentative agreement with the Washington State Patrol Troopers Association \(WSPTA\) for the 2025–27 biennium](#). The 2025 and 2026 rates are subject to funding by the 2025 legislative session. All salaries are effective July 1 of each year.

Monthly Salaries for Troopers and Sergeants



* The 2025 and 2026 rates are subject to funding by the 2025 Legislature.

The following table summarizes maximum base monthly salaries and annual GWI for troopers and sergeants from 2016–2026.

Table 2 - Summary of Monthly Salaries and General Wage Increases (GWI) for Sergeants and Troopers from 2016-2026

Fiscal Year	Trooper	Sergeant	Trooper General Wage Increase (GWI)
2016 Bargained	\$5,914	\$6,798	3.0%
2016 ESSHB 2872	\$6,257	\$7,192	5.8%
2017	\$6,860	\$8,158	16.0%
2018	\$7,066	\$8,403	3.0%
2019	\$7,207	\$8,571	2.0%
2020	\$7,387	\$8,785	2.5%
2021	\$7,387	\$8,785	0.0%
2022	\$8,126	\$9,664	10.0%
2023	\$8,451	\$10,051	4.0%
2024	\$8,705	\$10,353	3.0%
2025*	\$10,185	\$12,113	17.0%
2026*	\$10,389	\$12,355	2.0%

** The 2025 and 2026 rates are subject to funding by the 2025 Legislature.*

The 2016 rates were bargained during 2015–17 successor negotiations. As a result of ESSHB 2872, an additional 5.8% increase was provided. The 2017 general wage increase (GWI) percent is based on the rates bargained during 2015–17 negotiations and is not the temporary increase from ESSHB 2872. Due to COVID-19, no general wage increases were bargained during successor negotiations for 2021–23, but rather, a re-opener was provided. During the re-opener, a 10% GWI was provided effective July 2022. The 2025 and 2026 rates are subject to funding by the 2025 Legislature.

Other Compensation

The state makes other investments in trooper and sergeant compensation aside from base pay, including:

- Longevity incentive bonus approved by the Legislature at 26 years in WSPRS retirement system
- Specialty pay (such as armorer, canine handler, detective, motorcycle officer, and SWAT)
- Education incentives for associate's degree (2%), bachelor's degree (4%), and master's degree (6%)
- Premium pay
- Geographic premium pay for higher cost-of-living areas such as King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties
- Limited hiring bonuses enacted by the Legislature.

Voluntary Resignations and Retirements

This section provides information on voluntary resignations and retirements and head counts of trooper cadets, troopers, and sergeants from 2016–2024.

The following table shows the annual voluntary resignations and retirements from fiscal years 2016–2024 for sergeants, troopers, and trooper cadets. There are no apparent trends in resignations or retirements.

Table 3

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Resignations									
SERGEANT						2	2	1	2
TROOPER CADET	4	2	4	5	4	5	3	3	4
TROOPER	19	5	7	7	9	8	12	11	6
Retirements									
SERGEANT	8	3	4	9	6	2	9	5	10
TROOPER	13	14	10	12	9	15	17	8	15

The following table shows the average voluntary resignations from fiscal years (FY) 2016–2024 for sergeants, troopers, and trooper cadets, average headcount as of the last day of the fiscal year, and the average percentage of attrition from FY 2016–2024 due to voluntary resignations. We see a higher resignation rate among cadets, which is consistent with data in the last section on class sizes and graduations.

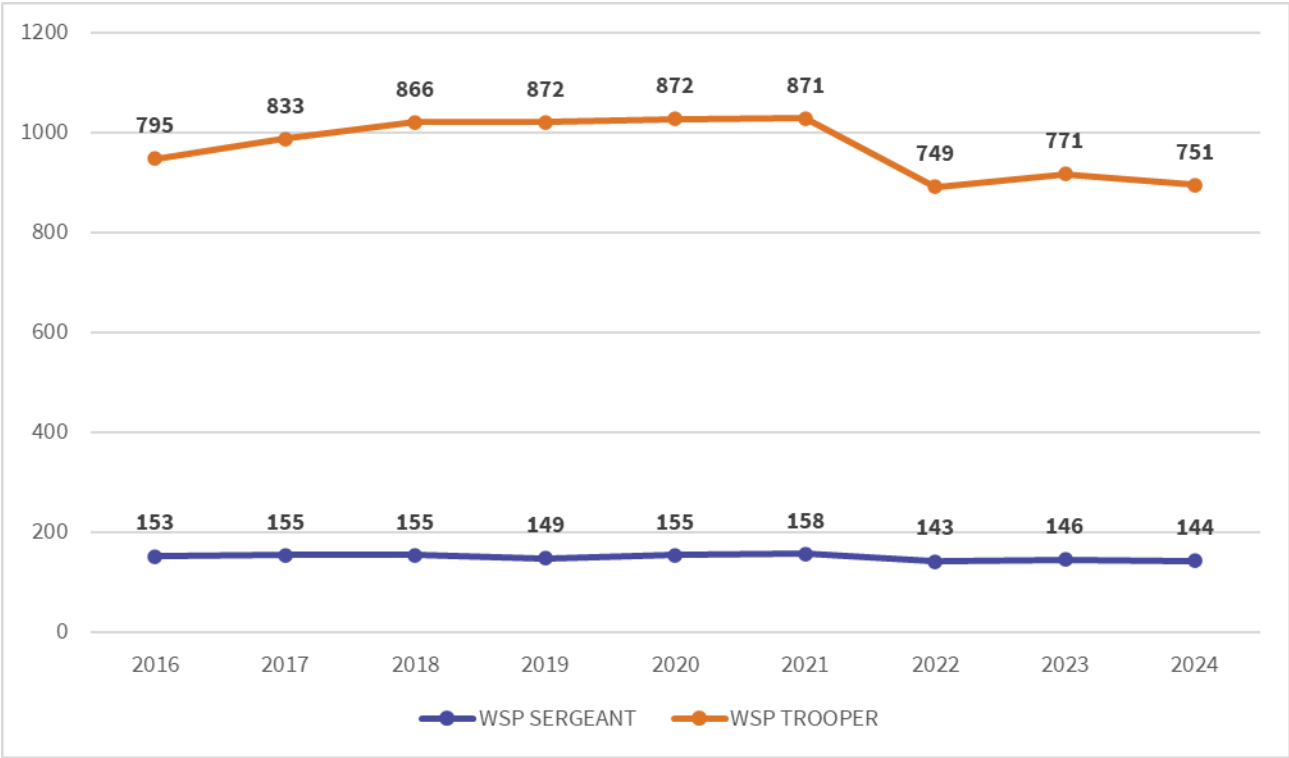
Table 4

	Average Resignations per FY	Average Headcount as of last day of FY	Average % Attrition per FY due to Voluntary Resignation
SERGEANT	0.78	150.89	1%
TROOPER	8.22	820.00	1%
TROOPER CADET	3.78	76.67	5%

Head Counts

The following graph shows head counts on the last day of each fiscal year from 2016–2024 for both troopers and sergeants. In response to the Governor’s COVID vaccine requirement, 125 commissioned and civilian staff received non-disciplinary separations. This contributes to the drop in headcount for the last months of 2021 until the last date of compliance which was May 11, 2023. Additionally, when vacancies occur in the lieutenant/captain ranks, there can then be vacancies within the lower ranks due to promotions. Finally, WSP is also coming out of a retirement wave. All of these factors contribute to the suppressed head count.

Head Counts as of the Last Day of the Fiscal Year



Class Sizes and Graduations

Table 5 - Summary of Trooper Cadet Class Sizes and Graduations from 2016 to 2025

Class	Date	Starting	% Filled	Graduated	% Graduated
106 th	1/25/2016 to 8/3/2016	45	75%	37	82%
107 th	10/17/2016 to 4/26/2017	57	95%	48	84%
108 th	5/8/2017 to 11/15/2017	48	80%	39	81%
109 th	11/27/2017 to 6/6/2018	53	88%	39	74%
110 th	6/11/2018 to 12/12/2018	46	77%	30	65%
111 th	12/17/2018 to 6/26/2019	58	97%	40	69%
112 th	8/26/2019 to 3/11/2020	57	95%	42	74%
113 th	3/16/2020 to 9/30/2020	56	93%	49	88%
114 th	11/30/2020 to 6/30/2021	37	62%	28	76%
115 th	9/13/2021 to 4/13/2022	50	83%	42	84%
116 th	4/18/2022 to 11/16/2022	50	83%	43	86%
117 th	9/12/2022 to 5/24/2023	54	90%	42	78%
118 th	7/3/2023 to 3/27/2024	60	100%	45	75%
119 th	1/29/2024 to 10/8/2024	38	63%	27	71%
120 th	9/9/2024 to 5/4/2025	64	107%	TBD	TBD

WSP recruits for 60 cadets in each class and holds one to two cohorts per year. The class fill rate has a range of 62% to 107%, and an average of 86%. The graduation rate ranges from 65% to 88%, and an average of 78%. WSP overfilled the most recent class, which may be a promising practice to bring up class fill rates, and ultimately graduation rates, as well.

WSP recruited its first class of lateral troopers in the summer of 2024, with 239 applicants and 19 hires.

Lateral recruitments and academy class sizes and frequency could be a possible area of focus for future efforts.

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