# Wheat Ridge Police
# Professional Standards Unit
# 2021 Annual Report

Approved

The Professional Standards Unit is responsible for several areas within the Police Department. Their primary duty shall be to ensure the integrity of the Wheat Ridge Police Department. The Professional Standards Unit's areas of responsibility include but not limited to the development, implementation, and supervision of recruitment and selection processes within the department, police department awards/recognition program, and internal investigation activities.

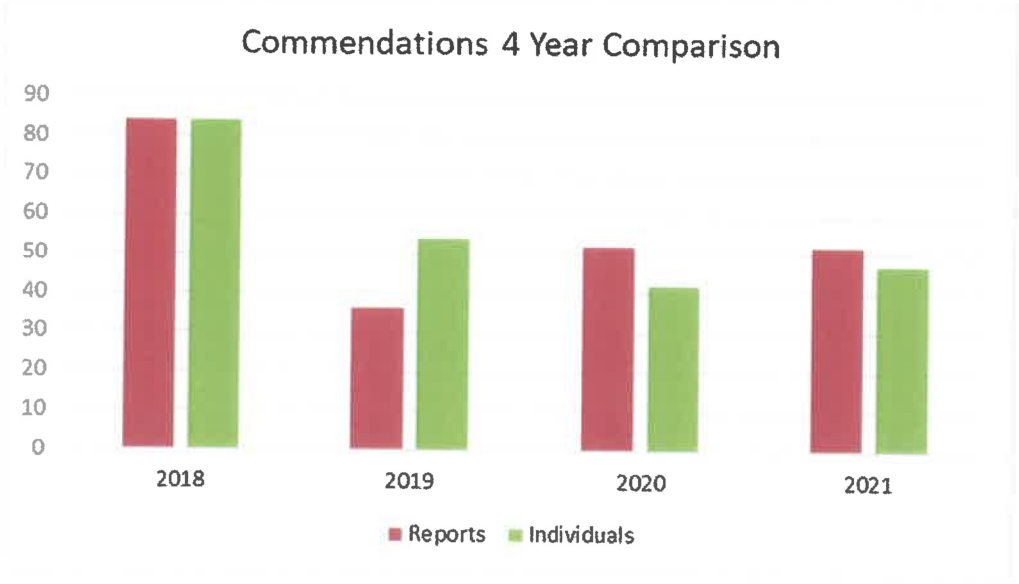
The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) accepts positive and negative comments from the public, professionals, and staff in regard to police services and member conduct. PSU investigates and maintains records on commendations, complaints, use of force incidents, employee-involved accidents, the early warning system, and eluding and pursuit events.

The PSU office researches, recommends, develops and writes policy revisions, and other responsibilities as assigned by the Chief of Police.

The areas of responsibility for PSU are outlined in the Annual Report. Information contained in the PSU 2021 Annual Report is compiled from the yearly activities of PSU.

## Commendations

The Wheat Ridge Police Department provides recognition to those employees and citizens whose actions exemplify the qualities of our Core Values, specifically: Courage, Integrity, Respect, Perseverance, and Initiative. The Department recognized 47 individuals for exceptional performance, involving 52 separate instances in 2021. The Department received a wide range of compliments from citizens, ranging from motorist assists to life-saving efforts. The table below reflects a four-year comparison related to commendations.



**Challenge Coins**

In 2021, 21 Challenge Coins were presented to 20 employees. The graph below represents a four-year comparison of Challenge Coins presented to employees.

**Department Awards**

The following individuals received an award during 2021. Awards are issued throughout the year or at the Police Department Annual Awards Ceremony.

**Medals:**

**Meritorious Achievement**

Community Services Officer Tim Haines
Community Services Officer Kade Ishmael
Community Services Officer Barb Webb
Community Services Supervisor Marie Trujillo
Officer Joseph Mallory
Officer Barry Malloy

**Life Saving**

Officer Marc Fisher
Officer Daniel Reshew
Officer Brian Mikolajczak (X's 2)
Officer Stephen Espinosa
Sergeant John Simpson

**Commendation**

Officer Josie van Veen

**Distinguished Service**

Commander Lucas Hunt
Commander Shellie Salser
Commander Jon Pickett
Sergeant Daniel Whittle
Sergeant John Simpson
Sergeant Scott Bellomy
Sergeant Keith Weimer
Corporal Tony Wardell
Corporal Jeremy Schmitz
Detective Tyson Shaul
Detective Kira Smith
Detective Justin Paugh
Officer Dwayne Baker
Officer Tyler Clary
Officer Terah Hooper
Officer Kendall Rezac
Officer Krista Cuney
PIO Sara Spaulding

**DUI Officer of the Year**

Officer Josie van Veen

**Employee of the Year**

Michelle Stodden

**Officer of the Year**

Detective Mark Slavsky

**Recruitment**

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic and the social distancing regulations that were in effect, the Police Department Recruitment Team did not attend as many in person recruitment events and previous years. Members of the Recruitment Team included: Sergeants Betsy Sailor and Bobbi Dawkins; Officers Allan Fischer, Barry Malloy, Jeremy Bauth, Krista Cuney, Detective Kyle Eversole and Records Technician Amanda Schweda.

Recruitment Team members attended two virtual job fairs and three in person job fairs. Recruitment team members went to Red Rocks Community College's academy to speak with 6 unsponsored persons, none of which were successful in the Wheat Ridge Police Department recruitment process. A recruitment open house was held in August of 2021 but was poorly attended.

PSU facilitated the hiring process for all positions within the Police Department and assisted with internal transfers. PSU worked closely with the Human Resources Division to develop recruiting strategies and marketing techniques.

Hiring Processes, Promotions & Demographics

In 2021, 475 people applied to be sworn police officers with the City of Wheat Ridge. This is an increase from 2020 (189). An important note is most recruitment efforts in 2020 were cancelled due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, which would account for the low number of applicants.

Note: *Gender/Ethnicity information is not required during the application process. The percentages detailed below are of the total information available.*

- 81% of the applicants were men
- 19% of the applicants were women
- 61% of the applicants where Caucasian
- 10% of the applicants were African-American
- 20% of the applicants were Hispanic
- 1% of the applicants were Asian/Pacific Islander
- 1% of the applicants were American Indian
- 7% of the applicants identified as "Other" or "Prefer not to Answer"

During 2021, the Department hired no lateral police officers; however, 6 recruit police officers were hired. The demographics for those hired in 2021, were three Caucasian females, one Hispanic male, and two Caucasian males.

**Department, Community, and Enforcement Demographics**

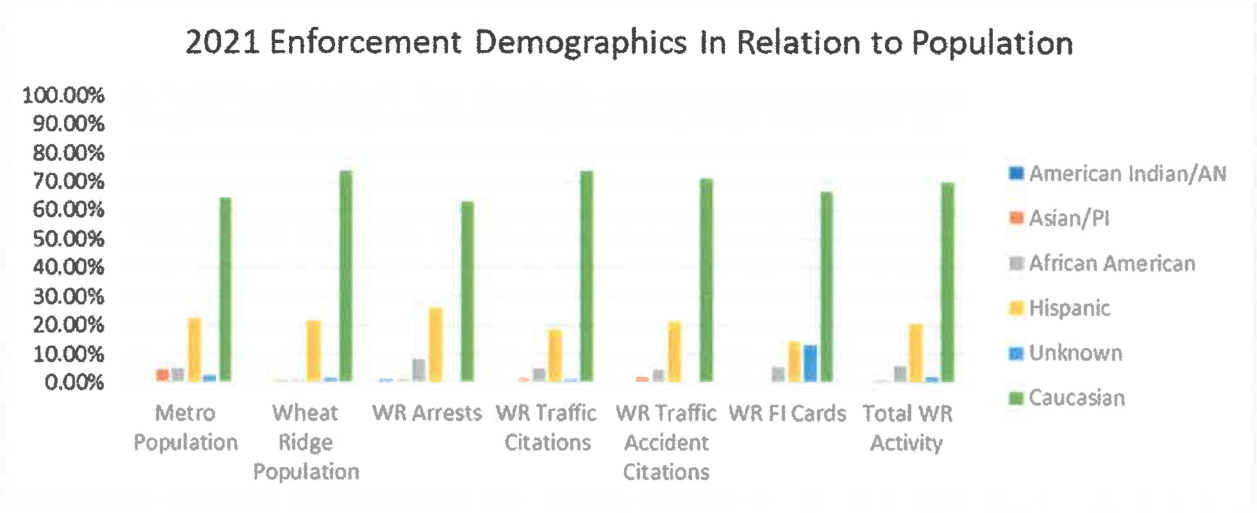
The City of Wheat Ridge is a Home Rule Municipality located in Jefferson County Colorado. Wheat Ridge is a western suburb of Denver. The Wheat Ridge Police Department strives to achieve staffing demographically aligned with our service community. The most recent data regarding demographics in Wheat Ridge is found in the 2021 estimate provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. While these are the estimated demographics of the city residents in 2021, these statistics do not include the individuals traveling through, commuting to, or temporarily residing in Wheat Ridge. For this reason, caution should be used when directly comparing Wheat Ridge resident demographics to police employee demographics.

The 2021 United States Census Bureau showed that Caucasian men and women make up 73.8% of the Wheat Ridge population. At the end of 2021, the Wheat Ridge Police Department consisted of 91.7% Caucasian officers.

Hispanic officers accounted for 6.0% of the department's sworn staff at the end of 2021; whereas, the service population is approximately 21.4% Hispanic. African-American officers accounted for 1.2% of the department's sworn staff at the end of 2021; whereas, the service population is approximately 1%.

The Department employed one Asian officer (1.2%) in 2021; whereas the service population is approximatley 1.3% of the Wheat Ridge population. The Department did not employ American Indian/Alaska Native officers in 2021.

The below chart represents an analysis of the percentage of total WRPD enforcement actions in 2021 from arrests made, traffic citations issued, traffic summonses issued as a result of traffic accidents, and field contact cards in relation to population demographics of Wheat Ridge and the Denver Metropolitan Area (data obtained from the 2021 estimate):




An analysis of the above data shows:

The Caucasian population comprises 73.8% of the Wheat Ridge population and 64.6% of the overall Denver metropolitan population. In 2021, 69.7% of WRPD contacts and enforcement actions involved the Caucasian population.

The Hispanic population comprises 21.4% of the Wheat Ridge population and 22.6% of the Denver metro population. In 2021, 20.7% of WRPD contacts and enforcement actions involved the Hispanic population.

The African-American population comprises 1% of the Wheat Ridge population and 5.2% of the Denver metro population. In 2021, 6.0% of WRPD contacts and enforcement actions involved the African American population.

The American Indian population comprises 0.8% of the population of Wheat Ridge and 0.5% of the Denver metro area. In 2021, 0.6% of WRPD contacts and enforcement actions involved the American Indian population.

The Asian/Pacific Islander population comprises 1.3% of the population of Wheat Ridge and 4.6% of the Denver metro area. In 2021, 1.2% of WRPD contacts and enforcement actions involved the Asian/Pacific Islander population.

Wheat Ridge contact and enforcement actions were listed as 1.8% unknown in Niche RMS.

**Biased-Based Profiling**

Bias-Based Profiling complaints are thoroughly investigated and subjected to an administrative review. Complaints are typically investigated by the named department member's direct supervisor. The supervisor takes into account the citizen's concerns, department policies, and municipal, state, and federal law. The investigating supervisor thoroughly documents the results of the investigation and makes a recommendation regarding disposition. The documented investigation is then forwarded to each link in the named department member's chain of command. The case is reviewed by each successive member, each of whom documents their findings and makes their recommendation for disposition. The Chief of Police makes the final review of the investigation and taking into account each previous recommendation and issues a final disposition.

There was one bias-based profiling allegation received in 2021. A female reported the incident and named three male officers. The female alleged that officers would not arrest her husband for domestic violence crimes because he is white and she is black. This allegation was thoroughly investigated and there was no evidence to support the allegation.

**Pursuits**

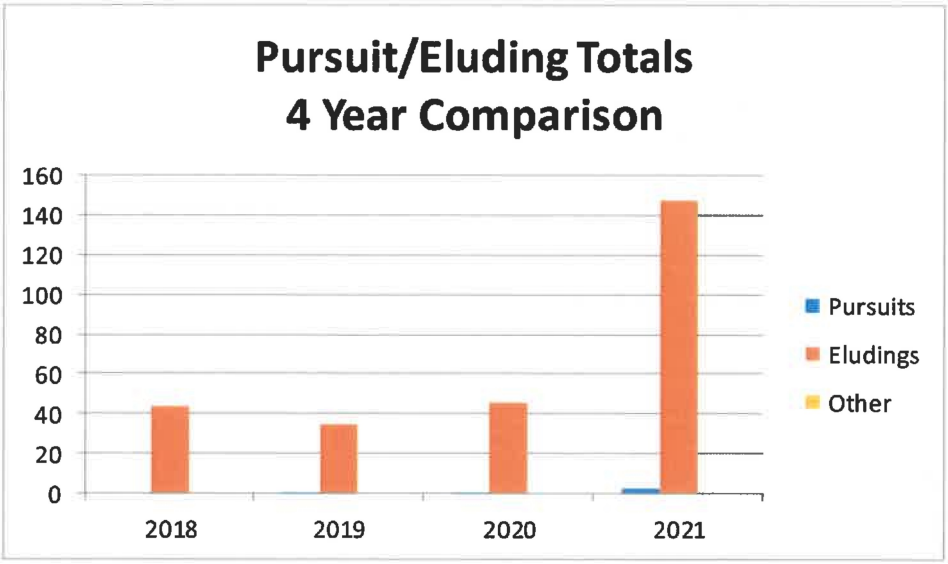
The Wheat Ridge Police Department defines a *pursuit* as the active attempt by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend the operator of a motor vehicle who, having been given an audible and visual indication to stop, attempts to avoid apprehension by maintaining or increasing speed or using other evasive tactics, and ignoring the attempts of the officer to stop the driver.

Eluding is defined as the act of knowingly attempting to evade a peace officer while driving a motor vehicle, and the officer disengages pursuing the vehicle—following department policy and procedure.

In 2021, there were 150 total incidents in which suspects failed to yield to police officers. Two were deemed a justified Pursuit while the third incident was deemed an unjustified pursuit.

| 2021 | 1st Qtr | 2nd Qtr | 3rd Qtr | 4th Qtr | Total | Justified | Not Justified |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pursuits | 0 | 01 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Eluding | 40 | 51 | 31 | 25 | 147 | 147 | 0 |

The chart below illustrates a four-year comparison of Pursuit/Eluding totals.




Full pursuit and eluding information and analysis are more completely detailed in the 2021 Pursuit Analysis Report.

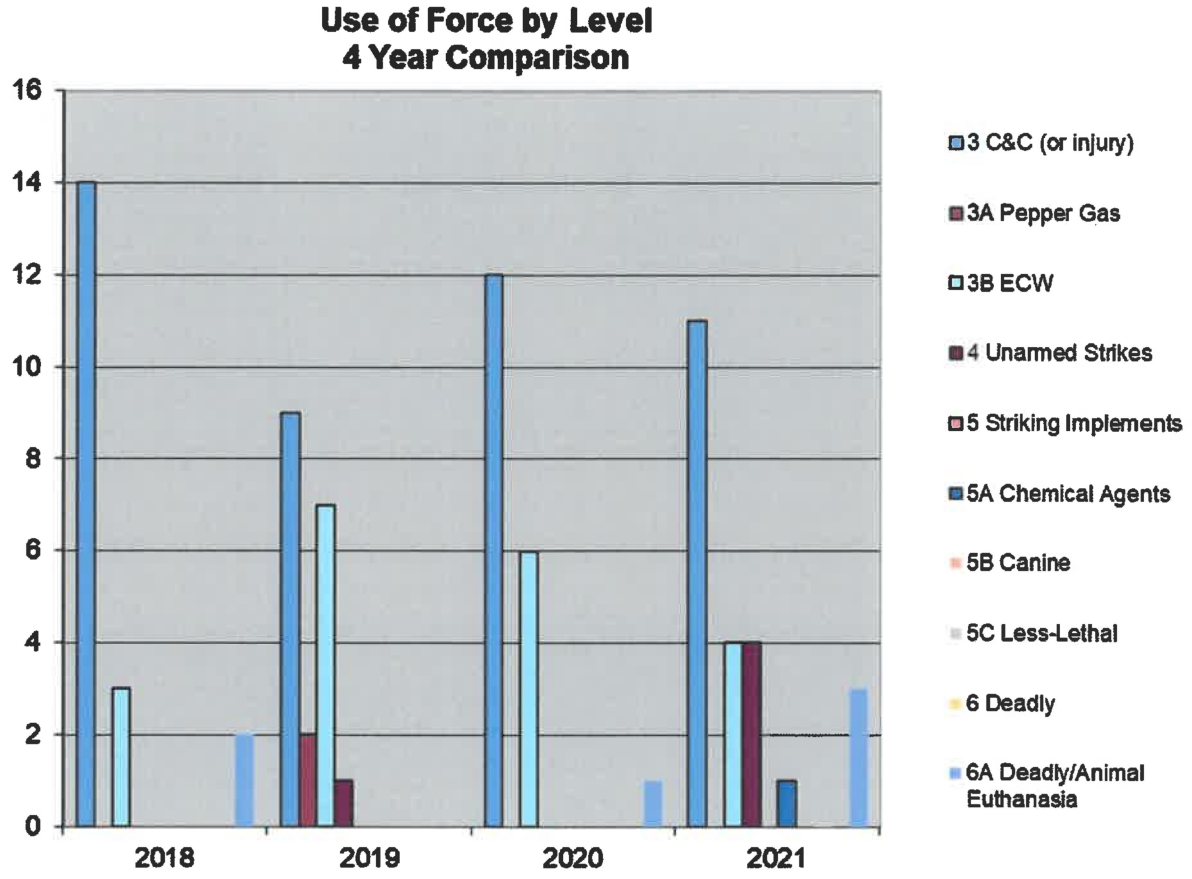
**Response to Resistance**

Officers are required to complete a Use of Force report when they use force greater than Level 3, control and compliance, or whenever any person sustains an injury. *Control and compliance* is defined as the use of some combination of leverage and strength to generate compliance, including joint locks, pressure points, takedowns, and come-along techniques. Supervisors review the reports and make recommendations as to whether the incident needs further investigation.

PSU received 24 reported Response to Resistance incidents in 2021. Response to Resistance incidents have remained fairly consistent with 21 in 2020, and 19 in 2019.

## Response to Resistance Incidents
## 4 Year Comparison

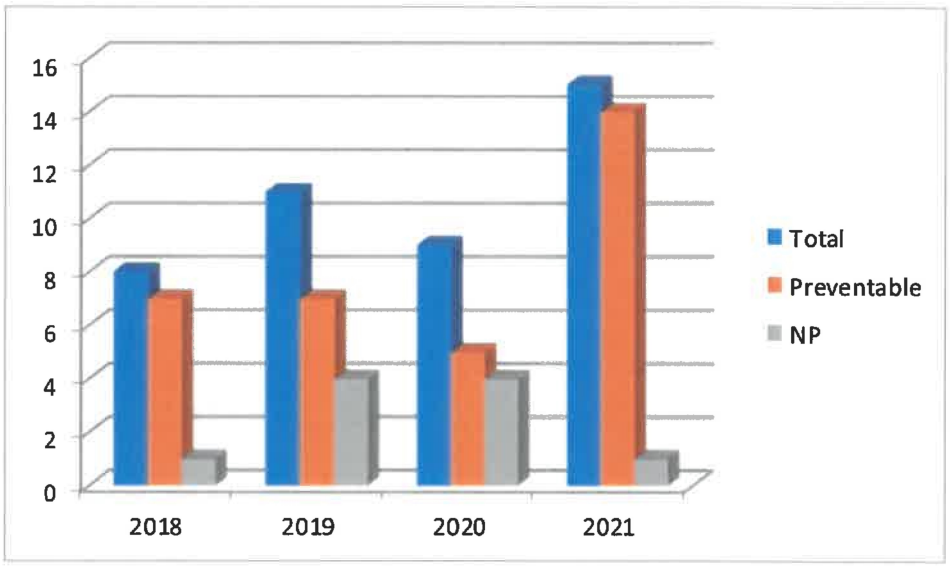
Level D Response to Resistance (Control and Compliance) remained the most widely used level of response to resistance. The chart below illustrates a four-year comparison of reported Response to Resistance incident by force level.




Refer to 2021, Use of Force Analysis report for complete information and analysis of the use of force incidents.

**Employee Involved Traffic Accidents**

Wheat Ridge Police employees were involved in 15 accidents in 2021. One was deemed not preventable, while 14 were preventable. In reviewing accidents over the past four years, preventable accidents involving employees have increased. The most common reasons for the accidents are backing, parking car to car, and crashing into stationary objects while making a turn. The graph below shows a four-year comparison.



## Complaints Investigated in 2021

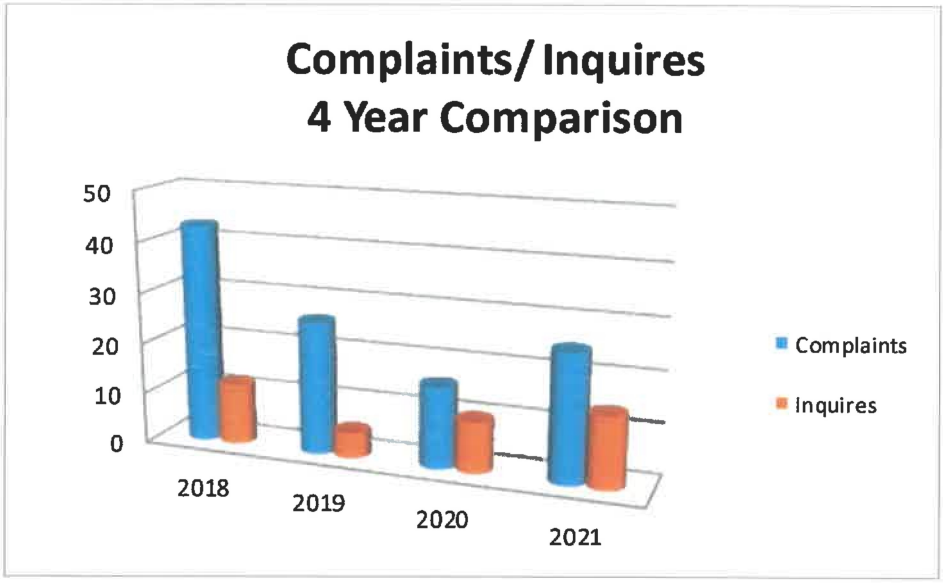
| Misconduct Allegation | S | NS | EX | UNF | PF | MED |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.42.02 Directives & Expectations | 1 | | | | | |
| 3.42.03 Laws | | | | | | |
| 3.42.04 Truthfulness | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| 3.42.05 Conduct Unbecoming | 1 | | | | | |
| 3.42.06 Respect for Others | 3 | 1 | | | | |
| 3.42.07 Customer Service | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| 3.42.08 Police Authority | 1 | | | | | |
| 3.42.09 Neglect of Duty | 4 | 4 | | | | |
| 3.42.10 Care of Property and Equipment | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| 3.42.11 Conflict of Interest | | | | | | |
| 3.42.12 Use of Force (complaints only) | | | | | | |
| 3.42.13 Pursuits (complaints only) | | | | | | |
| 3.42.14 Traffic Accident | | | | | | |

| Explanation of Abbreviations | |
|---|---|
| **S**= Sustained Complaint | **EX**= Exonerated |
| **NS**= Not Sustained | **UNF**= Unfounded |
| **PF**= Policy Failure | **MED**= Mediation |

PSU received and the Department investigated 39 complaints in 2021; one was classified as a major investigation which involved on-duty conduct. The remaining investigations were classified as follows, fourteen Minor, three Administrative, two Divisional and sixteen Inquires.

The 39 complaints involved 38 officers. Out of the total officers, one officer had four complaints made against them, and seven officers had two complaints made against them in 2021.

The graph below shows a four-year comparison.




**Complaint Analysis:**
The Wheat Ridge Police Department investigates all complaints against the agency or its employees, including those made anonymously. All complaints are investigated objectively and in a timely fashion.

Wheat Ridge Policy 3.43.05 (B) outlines the process to keep the complainant notified of the investigation status and the results of the investigation upon conclusion.

Wheat Ridge Policy 3.43.02 Complaint Definitions outlines the three complaint categories as, Inquiry, Divisional, and Misconduct. The Misconduct category has two subcategories, Minor and Major Allegations. The severity of the allegation will determine the assigned complaint category.

Wheat Ridge Policy 3.43.10 Disposition Classification outlines the seven disposition classifications for any allegation of misconduct. The dispositions include, Inquiry, Unfounded, Exonerated, Not Sustained, Sustained, Misconduct Not Based on Complaint, and Policy Failure. The disposition is based on the evidence or lack of evidence in a complaint investigation.

**Completion Time:**
In cases of Inquiries, Divisional, and Minor complaints, every reasonable effort was made to ensure that the investigation was completed and a disposition reached within 30 days. In cases of Major complaints, additional time was generally necessary due to the complexity of the investigation. In those cases, every reasonable effort was made to ensure completion within 60 days. In all cases, the Chief of Police may grant extensions; department members who are the subject of the investigation are notified of the extension.

In 2021, case completion time varied considerably, for a variety of reasons:

Inquiries: The average time to complete an inquiry case in 2021was 24 days. The shortest completion time was one day; the longest was 57 days.

Divisional: The average completion time for Divisional complaints in 2021 was 11 days. Both complaints were investigated in 11 days.

Administrative: The average completion time for Administrative complaints in 20201 was 48 days. The longest case was an in-depth case that involved other departments within the City.

Minor: The average completion time for Minor complaints in 2021 was 36 days. The shortest completion time was 8 days; the longest was 74 days. The long case involved an in-depth case where extensive follow up was required.

Major: One Major investigation was conducted in 2021. The completion time for the investigations was 58 days.

**Source of Complaints:**
According to the 2020 Census provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, Wheat Ridge is home to approximately 32,398 residents. 39 complaints, including inquiries, were received in 2021, a complaint to citizen ratio of 1/.00120378.

Of the 39 total complaints/inquiries received in 2021, two resulted from incidents that occurred at a location outside the city. Both incidents involved off duty behavior in the City of Brighton.

Out of the total complaints/inquiries received in 2021, twenty-four were initiated by a citizen, seven by Wheat Ridge PD employees, and eight by administrative means.

**Patrol Operations and Support Services:**
Out of the 39 cases, 29 involved personnel assigned to the Patrol Operations Division. Three complaints (7%) involved a member of the Community Services Team, one complaint (3%) involved a member of the Records Team, four complaints (10%) involved members of the Investigations Team, two (5%) involved Administration and the remaining 28 (75%) involved patrol officers.

**Complaint by call type:**
The number one investigated complaint was Citizen Complaints. There were no viable trends with relation to the call for service type. Of those included were traffic, domestic violence, harassment, disturbance, and suspicious persons calls.

**Complaint by allegation:**
The Department's highest complaint allegations were Neglect of Duty (twelve) and Respect for Others (six) in 2021. Of the twelve Neglect of Duty complaints, five were sustained, and seven were not sustained. Of the six Respect for Others complaints, three were sustained and three

were not sustained. Of the six Respect complaints, three were sustained, and three were not sustained.

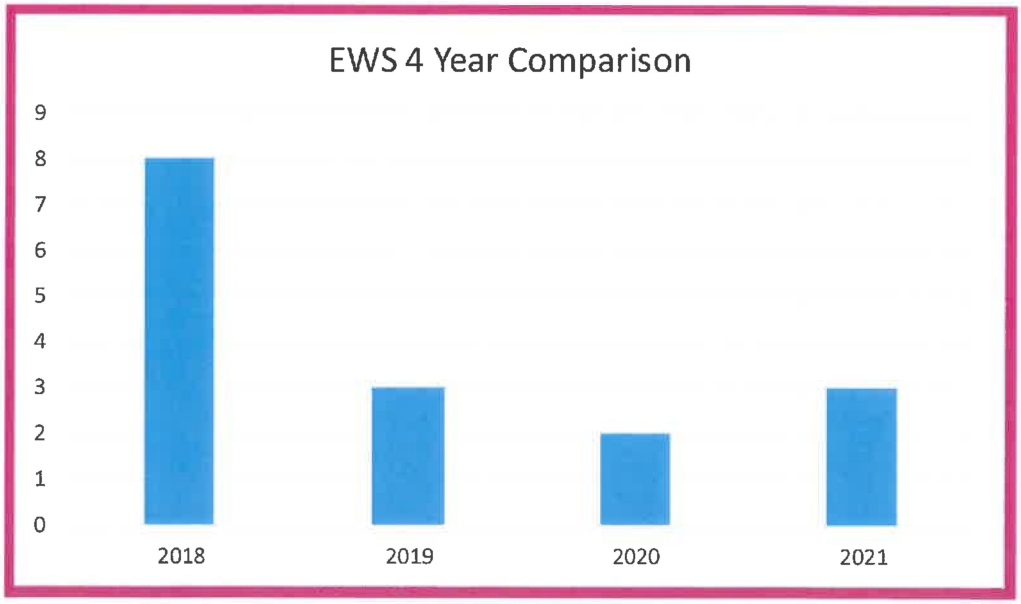
**Complaint by case type:**
When viewed by case type, the overwhelming majority of cases continue to be classified as minor investigations.

**Early Warning System**
The Early Warning System was developed to identify employees who may be having difficulties with specific functions of their job performance, or who may be having behavioral issues. Police Department policy requires a supervisory review of the Professional Standards history of employees who have:

- Received two sustained complaints or four complaints, regardless of disposition, within a 12-month time period.
- Been involved in two preventable traffic accidents, while operating a City-owned vehicle, within a 12-month time period.
- Is involved in four or more use of force situations, regardless of disposition, during any 12-month period that require a Use of Force report, as defined in Policy 5.03.03

The review consists of reviewing each case to determine patterns or practices that require correction, either through counseling or directed training.

**Early Warning System Analysis:**
In 2021, three Early Warning System (EWS) special reviews were initiated. One employee received two sustained complaints within a 12-month period, and two employees were involved in four use of force incidents within a 12-month period, which generated the EWS alert. The below charts show a four-year comparison related to Early Warning System alerts.



Officer's respective supervisors and chain of command reviewed each of their performance. One officer had been terminated. It was determined no further action was necessary for the remaining two officers.