

Communities Count 2005



A REPORT ON THE STRENGTH OF King County's Communities



This summary report was prepared from *Communities Count 2005: Social and Health Indicators Across King County*, which was issued on December 9, 2005. Details of the social and health indicators used throughout this report are available in the complete report, which is available at www.communitiescount.org.

Copies are also available from:

- Public Health – Seattle & King County: 206-296-6817
- King County Children and Family Commission: 206-296-3430
- All King County and Seattle Public Libraries

Acknowledgements

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A Report on the Strength of King County's Communities

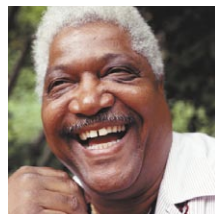


Photo by Jim S. REACH



Photo by Youth In Focus

Communities Count

Communities Count 2005 is the third report to look at the "people and community indicators" for King County. Residents from all parts of the county and from different backgrounds have told us what they value and what worries them.

More than 1,500 King County residents participated through a random telephone survey and a series of focus groups and community forums. From this work, a set of indicators was selected as the most meaningful to residents regarding the overall health of King County. For detailed information or copies of the full report, please visit www.communitiescount.org

COMMUNITIES COUNT is a collaborative initiative of public and private organizations. The King County Children and Family Commission provided initial vision and funding. Public Health – Seattle & King County provided overall leadership, technical support, and prepared the full report.

Communities Count Partners:

- City of Bellevue Parks and Community Services Department
- City of Seattle Human Services Department
- King County Children and Family Commission
- Public Health-Seattle & King County
- Sustainable Seattle
- The Seattle Foundation
- United Way of King County



About King County

Photo by Youth in Focus



Photos by Youth in Focus

The King County population in 2004 was 1,808,300, an increase of 4% since the 2000 Census. King County's largest city, Seattle, had a 2% increase in population.

King County's fastest growing age groups are people aged 45 to 64 and 75 and older. In 2000, the number of people aged 45 to 64 surpassed the number of children under 18 for the first time since 1980.

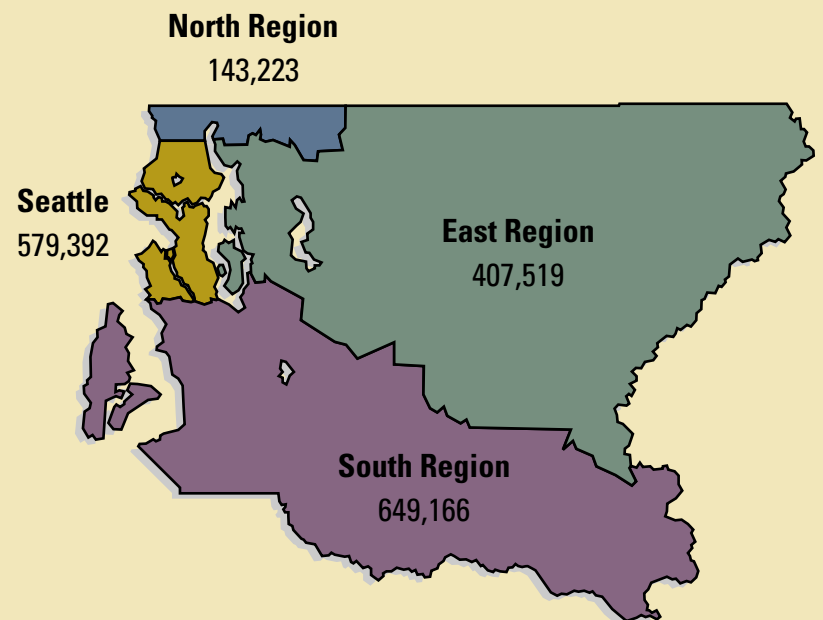
The County is increasing in racial diversity. For King County as a whole, and for Seattle, South and North regions, the Hispanic/Latino population grew the fastest of any race/ethnicity group.

The percent of King County residents who are immigrants increased substantially, from 9.3% in 1990 to 15.4% in 2000. This proportion increased in all King County regions, with the largest increases in East and South Regions.

There are over 46 languages spoken in King County and almost one in five people speak a language other than English. Among the major language groups, the highest percentage of Asian/PI language speakers are in Seattle (10.5%) and East Region (8.0%). The highest percentage of Spanish speakers are in the South region (5.1%). Seattle (20.2%) has the most foreign language speakers of any region and North (14.8%) the fewest.

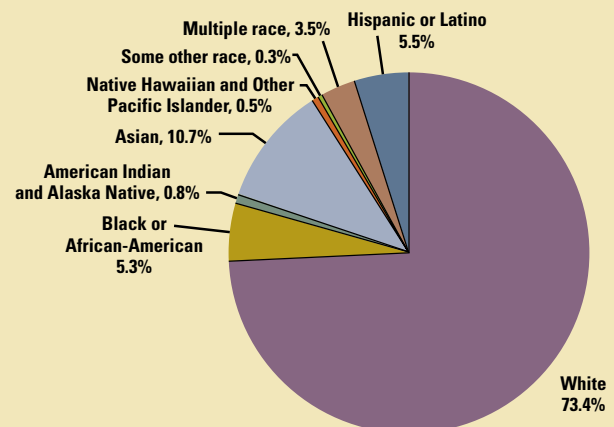


King County Regions



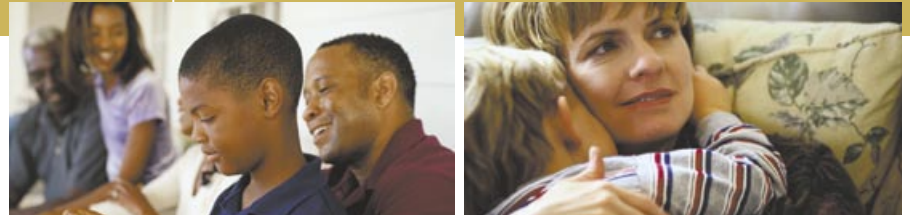
Source: 2003 population estimates, WA State Department of Health

King County Population by Race & Ethnicity



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Basic Needs

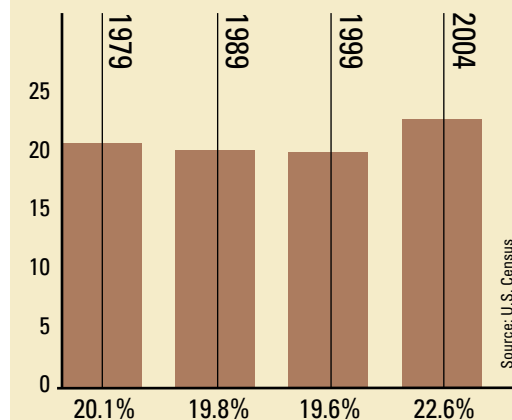


What is a 'living wage'?

A living wage income is at least twice the federal poverty level. For a family of four in 2004, the living wage income was \$38,600. For a single person under 65, this level was \$18,100.

Food, housing and enough money to pay for life's daily necessities top the list of what King County residents say is important for everyone. Over twenty-two percent of our neighbors don't make enough money to make ends meet. More than ten percent of adults surveyed in 2004 said that they had run out of food some time in the past year.

Less than a living wage in King County



...people in households without a living wage



The gap between rich and poor continues to grow

There is a growing gap between the richest and poorest in King County, as measured by income. Together, the poorest twenty percent of the population – or those households making less than \$24,500 a year – earned less than four percent of the county's total income in 2004. Yet the richest fifth – households with annual incomes in excess of \$104,000 – accounts for 47 percent of the county's total income.

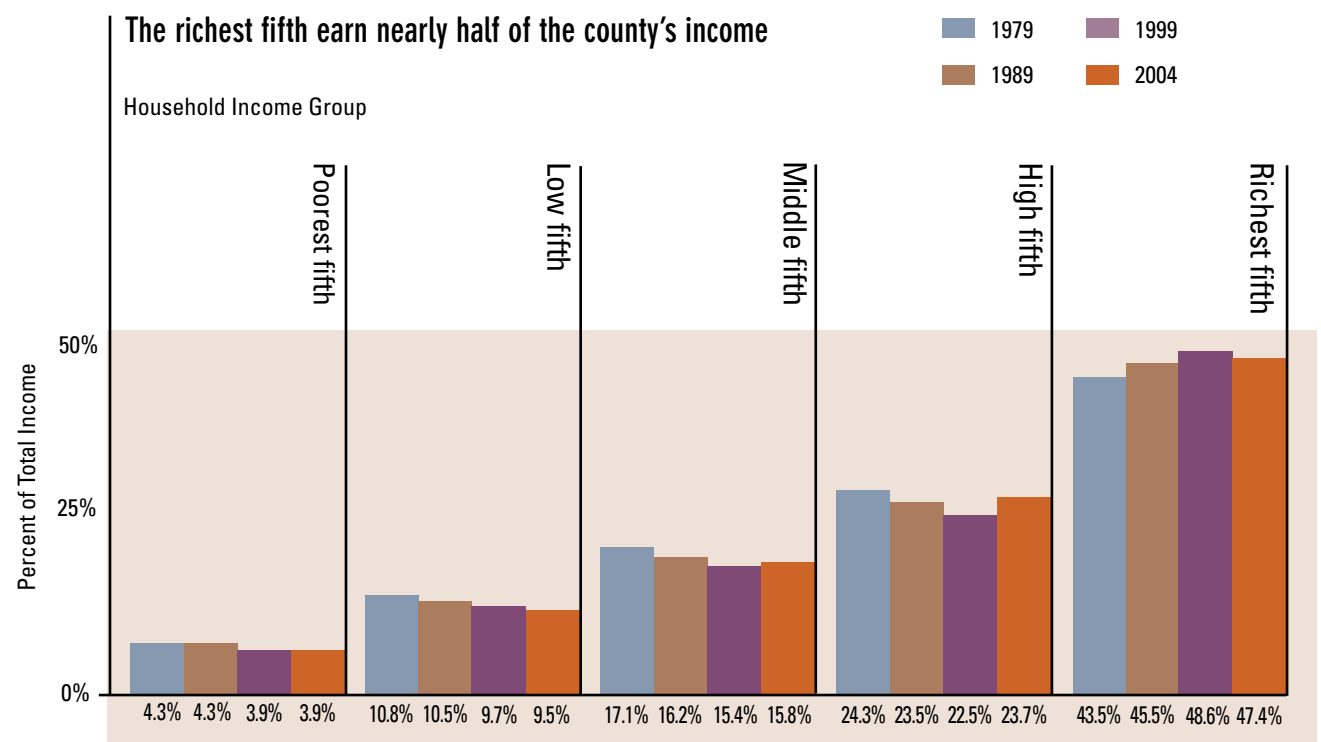
In addition to the social consequences of economic inequality, a wide gap between the rich and the poor has a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of the entire population. Studies conducted throughout the United States show that as the gap between rich and poor widens, crime goes up, participation in voting declines, and death rates increase for people at all income levels.

More than one in five people in King County do not receive a living wage

Everyone needs enough income to pay for the basic necessities of daily living: food, shelter, clothing, and transportation are not available to everyone.

Across King County 22.6 percent of people had incomes below a living wage in 2004. This proportion has increased from 19.6 percent in 1999.

The richest fifth earn nearly half of the county's income



Source: U.S. Census

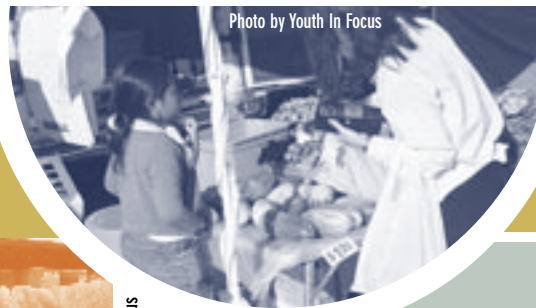


Photo by Youth In Focus



Photo by Youth In Focus

Home ownership takes a larger share of income

The American dream of owning your own home is out of reach for many King County residents because of an increasing gap between what families can reasonably afford, and actual home sale prices in the local market. The median price of a single-family home in King County has increased \$49,000 in three years to \$293,000 (in 2004). A middle income family could only afford to pay \$246,000. Low income home buyers face an affordability gap that is even larger, and is increasing. In 2004 a low income family could afford to pay only \$124,000, which is less than half the median sale price.



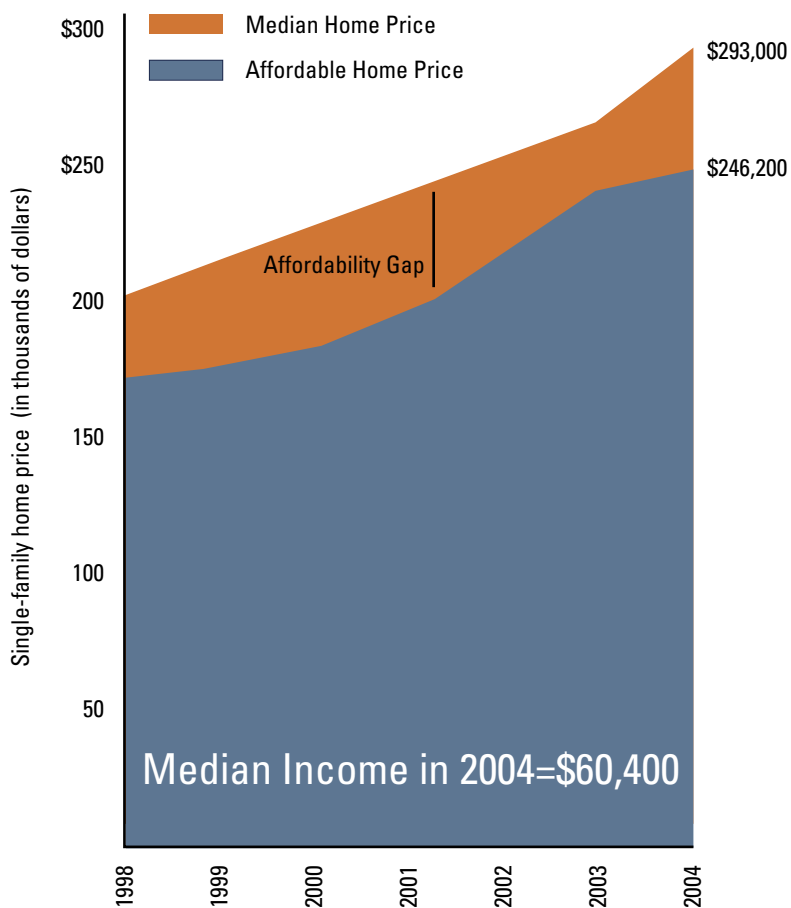
Running out of food

More than ten percent of adults in King County said that they ran out of food during the past year, and did not have money to buy more. Washington State ranks fifth in the nation in hunger. King County food banks served 111,470 households between July 2003 and June 2004.

Not enough rental housing is affordable

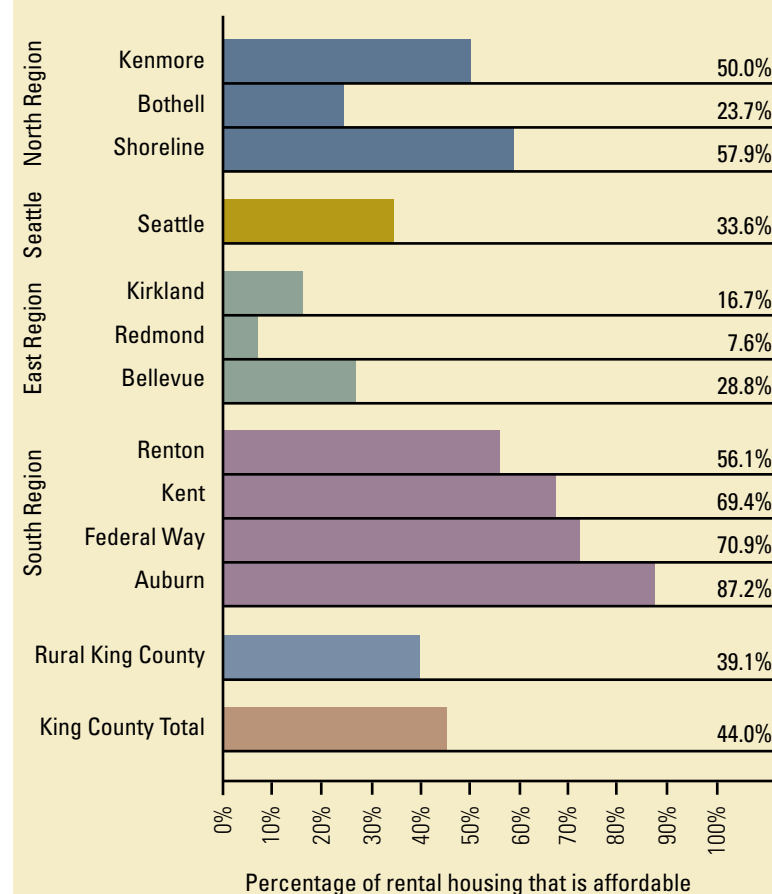
Many low-income individuals and families have a hard time finding apartments or houses that they can afford to rent. A family earning less than \$30,200 a year cannot afford the average King County rent of \$804, unless they spend more than the recommended 30% of their income on housing. Cities in South King County have a greater proportion of rentals that are affordable to low income households than cities in other regions. All regions saw an increase in affordable rental housing since 2002.

Median income will not buy a median-priced home



Source: King County Office of Regional Policy & Planning. Median price means half the houses cost more than that amount, and half cost less.

Affordable rental housing for low income people



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Children

Early Childhood

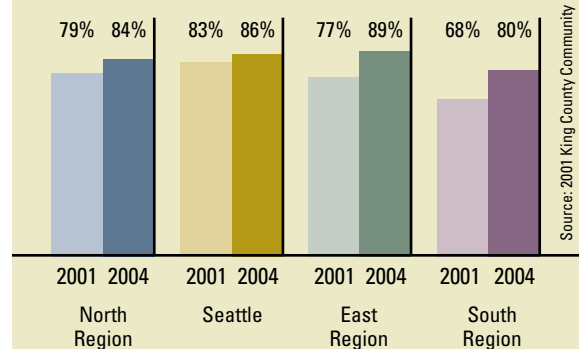


Photo by Youth In Focus

Readiness to learn

Reading or telling stories in any language helps to prepare young children for school. These activities promote language development and, later on, reading comprehension and overall success in school. There are now no significant regional differences in this topic, though in 1999, South Region lagged behind the rest of the county.

Parents prepare children for learning by reading and storytelling



Not enough public funding for early care and education

Public funding of early care and education, particularly Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), is already reducing some of the gaps in pre-school attendance, but is totally inadequate to reach all of the children who are eligible and who might benefit. In King County, only 30% of eligible children will receive these valuable early services. Almost 8,000 three- and four-year-olds who are eligible for Head Start and ECEAP will not be served by these programs in the 2005-2006 school year.

What we know about early childhood development:

- From birth, all children are wired for feelings and learning.
- Nurturing relationships are essential.
- Early environments matter.
- Culture influences all aspects of early development.
- The care that children receive in the early years influences later success in school.

Why focus on early childhood development?

Parents and society have a crucial role in early childhood development. What happens in the early years has powerful, lifelong effects. Many social, economic, and neighborhood conditions such as access to health care and quality child care; living wage; safe neighborhoods; parental education; and family-friendly employment benefits have a tremendous impact on the resources and opportunities available to families with young children.

What Is School Readiness?

School readiness means: (1) children's readiness to enter school; (2) schools' readiness for children, and (3) family and community supports that contribute to the readiness of children. Research shows that children who start behind stay behind (National Education Goals Panel).

Readiness Goes Beyond Academics

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures five areas of school readiness:

- physical health and well-being
- emotional maturity
- social competence
- language and cognitive development
- communication skills and general knowledge

Community-level School Readiness

Bellevue, Highline, and Shoreline School Districts carried out the Early Development Instrument (EDI) survey in order to provide their communities with evidence of how ready

for school their kindergarten-age children are. Results were mapped by the neighborhoods within each school district. (There are no results for individual children.) This information tells us how many children within neighborhoods are not fully prepared for school. Knowing specific areas of development where children are lagging helps communities to decide which local environments need improvements to eliminate gaps in school readiness.

Results of EDI Survey

School District-wide	Not prepared, at least 1 area	Not prepared, at least 2 areas
Bellevue School District	26.3%	11%
Highline School District	29.4%	13.7%
Shoreline School District	29.2%	13.2%

Source: King County Survey of Community-Level School Readiness

Children

Childhood is a key period of every person's development, and we want all children to have:

- Healthy, happy lives
- Quality child care
- Academic achievement



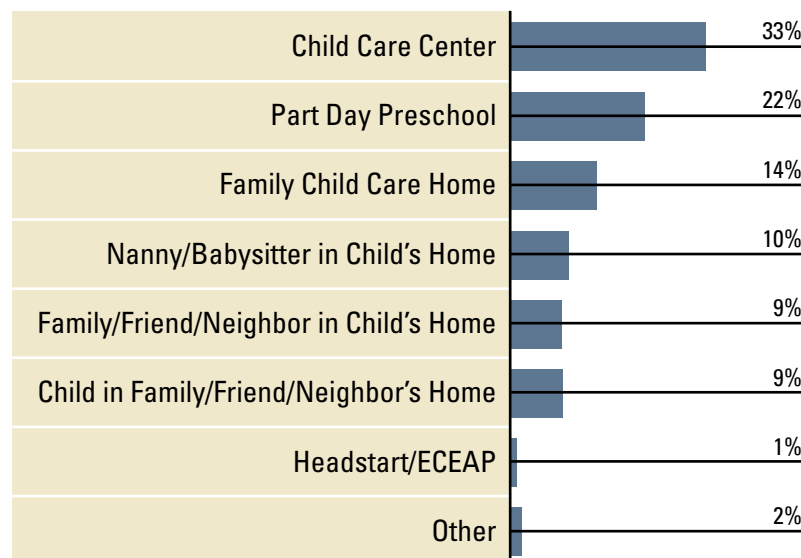
Photo by Youth In Focus

More than half of all parents using regularly scheduled child care were dissatisfied with some aspect of their children's care. Their most common concerns were about the quality of care and the cost of care. Infant care is the most expensive. Costs range from an average of \$689 per month in South Region to \$1,109 per month in East Region.

The majority of young children spend their child care time in licensed child care settings, such as a child care center or family child care home.

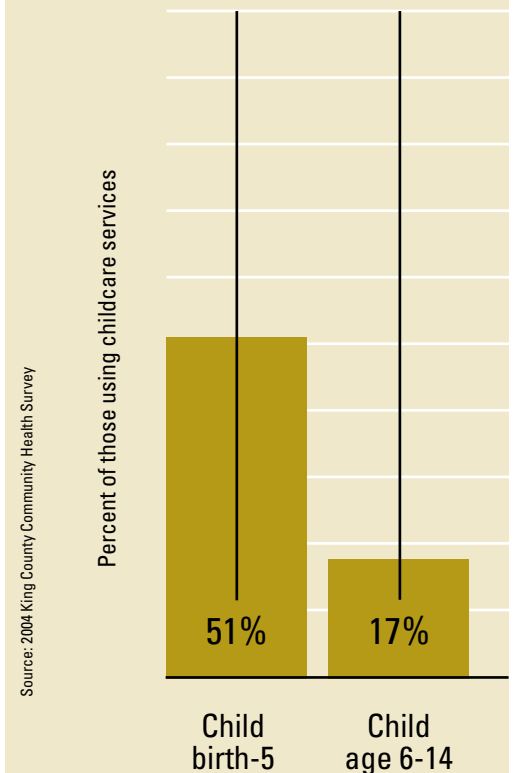
School age children are more likely than young children to be looked after by family members, friends, or neighbors.

Young children (birth-5) in various types of care



Source: 2004 King County Community Health Survey

Half of our youngest children are in regularly scheduled child care



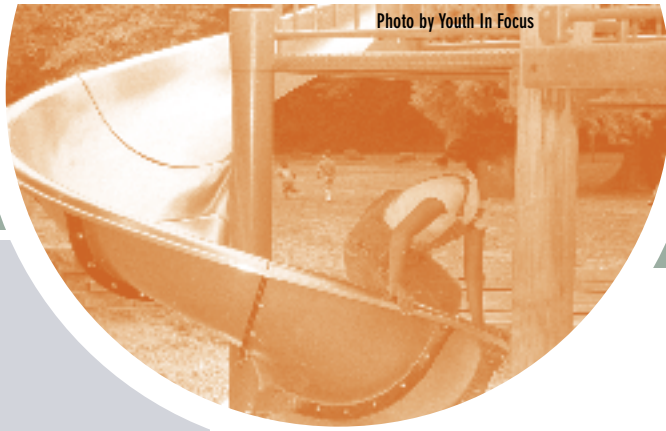
Families rely on quality, affordable child care

During the first five years of life, crucial brain development occurs that affects the rest of a person's life. Increasing numbers of young children spend much of this time with child care providers other than their parents.

According to a county-wide survey:

- Just over half of King County children ages 5 and younger spent time in some type of **regularly scheduled child care**.
- Forty-five percent of these young children were in child care for at least 25 hours a week.
- Among school-age children, 17% were in organized before- and after-school activities or various types of child care.

Children



Protecting our children

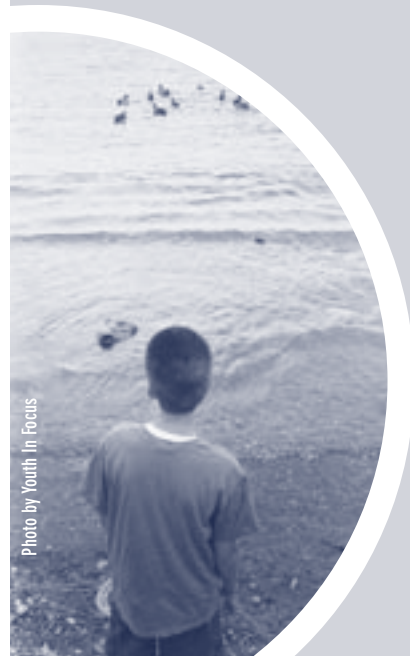
Child abuse is the physical, psychological or sexual mistreatment, or physical neglect of children by their parents or guardians. The most common form of child abuse is neglect. Suspected cases of child abuse are referred to Washington Child Protective Services (CPS). CPS staff screen these reports, and investigate cases involving roughly 3 percent of all children (ages birth to 17) in King County each year. Many more cases go unreported.

Number of King County children reported to be abused

Accepted referrals to Child Protective Services for children (ages birth to 17)

	Total Children Birth-5	Total Children Birth-17	Percent of All Children Birth-17
2000	4,553	11,993	3.1%
2002	4,007	10,511	2.7%
2004	3,923	9,899	2.6%

Source: The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration, Case and Management Information System

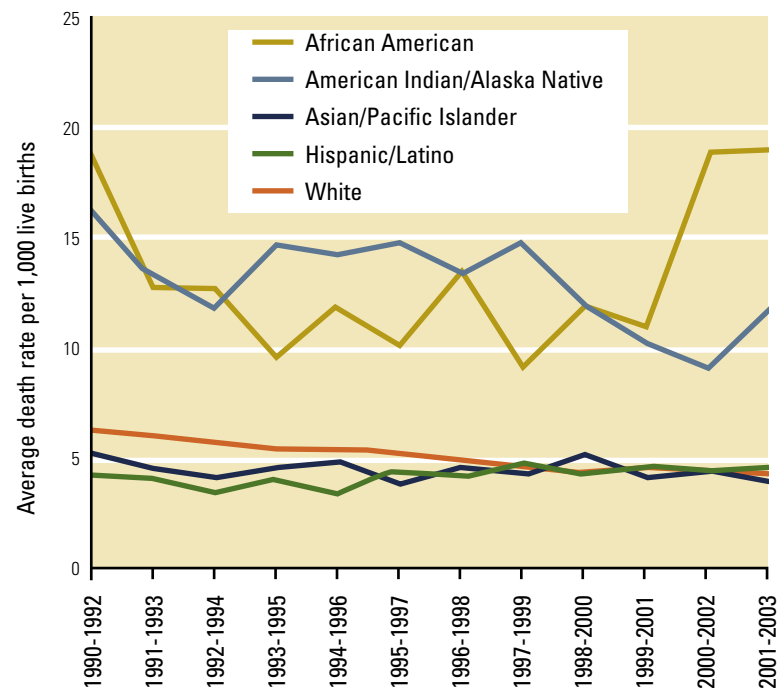


Infant mortality rates are down in King County, but not for all communities equally

In King County and throughout the nation, infant mortality rates have been declining steadily since the 1980s. In 2003, 114 infants under one year of age died in King County. Infant death rates remain significantly higher for African Americans and American Indians/Alaska Natives than for other racial and ethnic groups.



Infant death rates by race



Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

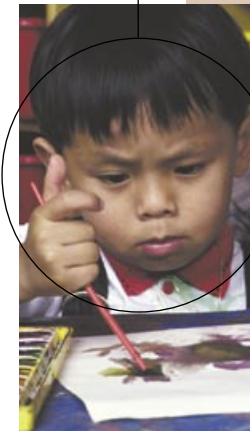
Photo by Youth In Focus



Over 10,000 more children living in poverty

Nearly 50,000 children under the age of 18 in King County were living in poverty in 2004. This number has jumped by approximately 10,000 children since 1999. At the same time, an increasing percentage of King County residents of all ages lived in poverty, from 8.4% in 1999 to 10.4% in 2004.

Children growing up in poverty are at greater risk of health problems, and are not as likely as their peers to achieve academic success.



More children living in poverty

Percent and number of children ages 0-17 living below 100 percent of federal poverty level

Percent in 1989	Number in 1989	Percent in 1999	Number in 1999	Percent in 2004	Number in 2004
9.8%	32,595	9.9%	37,954	13.26%*	49,865

*Based on 2004 population sample estimate

Source: 1990, 2000 U.S. Census and 2004 American Community Survey



Photo by Youth In Focus



More 4th graders meeting standards

Most King County school districts had higher percentages of 4th graders meeting state standards in math, reading and writing in 2004 than in 2000. And, compared with Washington State as a whole, most King County school districts had more students meeting the standards. However, school districts in King County show wide variation of 10th graders meeting state standards: 29 percent of sophomores met state math standards in one district, and 79 percent in another district met the same standards.

Math, reading and writing scores for each King County school district are available at <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

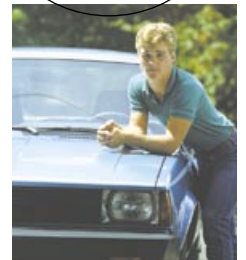
Teens



Photo by Youth In Focus

All teens need support from their families and communities, to:

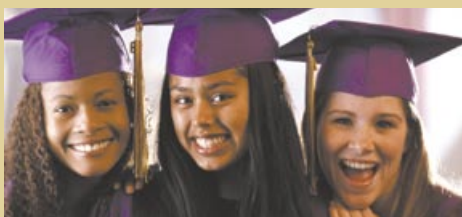
- Excel academically
- Avoid risky behaviors
- Grow into emotionally healthy adults



Graduation Rates for Classes of 2001, 2002, 2003

School District	2001	2002	2003
Auburn	79.0%	76.4%	75.8%
Bellevue	82.8%	76.2%	78.4%
Enumclaw	88.9%	92.2%	88.8%
Federal Way	70.3%	65.4%	61.6%
Highline	60.9%	57.0%	43.2%
Issaquah	89.3%	88.7%	86.0%
Kent	85.1%	82.2%	67.7%
Lake Washington	81.3%	86.2%	84.8%
Mercer Island	95.5%	93.4%	95.2%
Northshore	87.2%	90.4%	86.4%
Renton	77.2%	51.4%	59.2%
Riverview	78.5%	86.2%	88.5%
Seattle	74.1%	53.2%	50.2%
Shoreline	72.2%	79.8%	82.7%
Skykomish	66.8%	57.1%	80.0%
Snoqualmie Valley	66.7%	61.5%	53.8%
Tahoma	64.8%	65.5%	66.7%
Tukwila	67.3%	61.5%	62.8%
Vashon Island	80.5%	73.1%	77.9%

Source: Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction



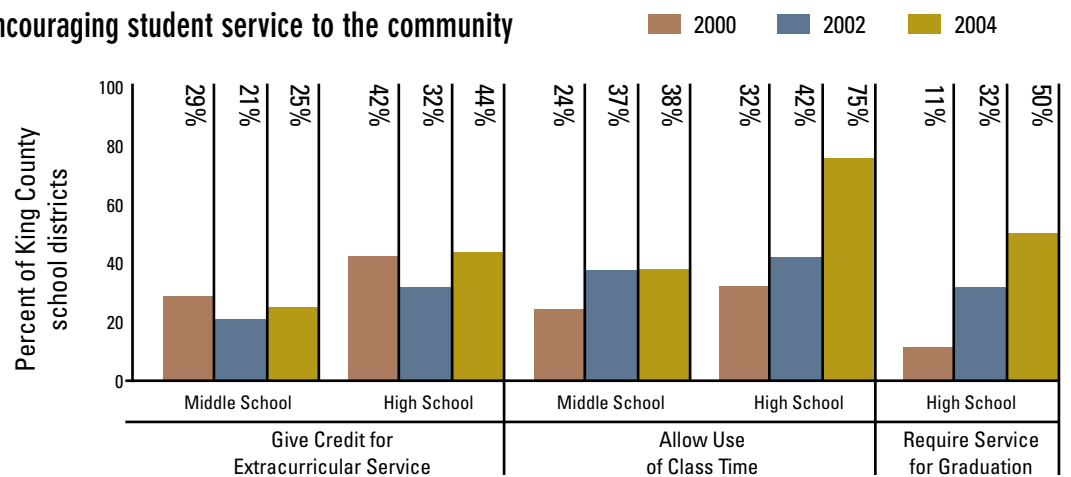
Graduation rates for Classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003

King County School Districts now report “On Time” graduation rates, based on tracking entering students from 9th grade through completion of high school (based on graduation or obtaining a GED or adult diploma). Local graduation rates ranged from 43% to 95% in 2003. Eight of the 19 districts had graduation rates less than 75%.

Encouraging Youth Community Service

Service to others and to the community is an important shared value in our society. Policies that encourage students to participate in community service and learning reinforce this important aspect of young people’s development. There is increasing support for student involvement in community service and learning among King County school districts.

Encouraging student service to the community



Source: 2005 Survey of School District Policies/Practices that Support Student Service to Community



Risk and protection among King County's youth

Protective factors are the elements of a social environment that help young people develop in positive directions, while risk factors are conditions in life that may push youth towards unsafe behaviors, such as violent acts and alcohol abuse. Examples of protective factors include having the opportunity to participate in activities such as arts groups, clubs, or sports; having positive relations with peers; receiving positive recognition from parents and teachers; and having an understanding of right and wrong. Research shows that such experiences can protect youth from the negative influence of risk factors such as alcohol, tobacco, or other drug abuse, violence, and delinquent behaviors. In surveys of 8th graders in Washington and King County, certain risk and protective factors stand out:



Youth report having some protective factors in their daily lives.

- Over three-quarters said that they had opportunities for community involvement.
- Three out of five students had opportunities for positive involvement at school.

However, many youth do not connect with their schools and neighborhoods.

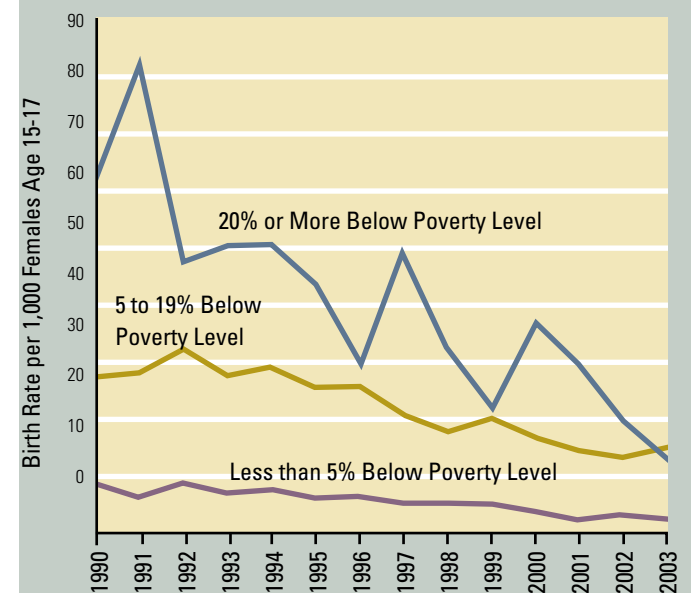
- One in three students reported that they felt little commitment to their schools.
- Half of students reported low connectedness to their neighborhoods.
- Two in five reported experiencing academic failure.

Teen births decreasing – but higher in poorer neighborhoods

Infants born to mothers under 18 are at greater risk of death and more likely to be low birthweight. Young mothers and their children tend to have fewer educational, economic and social opportunities.

- Teen birth rates are decreasing across all of King County, especially in Seattle.
- This is true for teens from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, except for Latinas, among whom the birth rate has been increasing since 1997.
- Birth rates among teenage girls in the poorest neighborhoods in King County have dropped steeply, but are still higher than those for girls who live in wealthier areas.

Teen births by neighborhood poverty level



Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

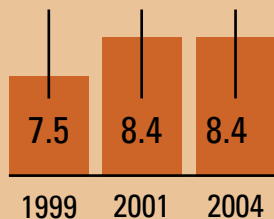
Adults

Stress

Adults across King County reported more stress in 2001 than they did in 1999 – and the average stress index remained at this higher level in 2004. Experiences such as lack of control over work and home life, anxiety, insecurity, low self-esteem, or social isolation have powerful effects on health.

In 2004, fewer people expressed confidence in their abilities to handle personal problems than they did in 2001.

King County Stress Index



Source: 2004 King County Community Health Survey

Family-friendly benefits

Benefits available for workers and their families, such as paid or unpaid family, medical and personal leave, child care benefits, telecommuting options, and retirement plans, affect how people plan for their own and their families' needs. A state-wide survey shows that larger employers are more likely to offer paid leave to their full-time employees than smaller firms. Part-time employees are much less likely than full-time employees to have access to paid vacation, sick leave, or retirement benefits.

Larger employers more likely to offer benefits

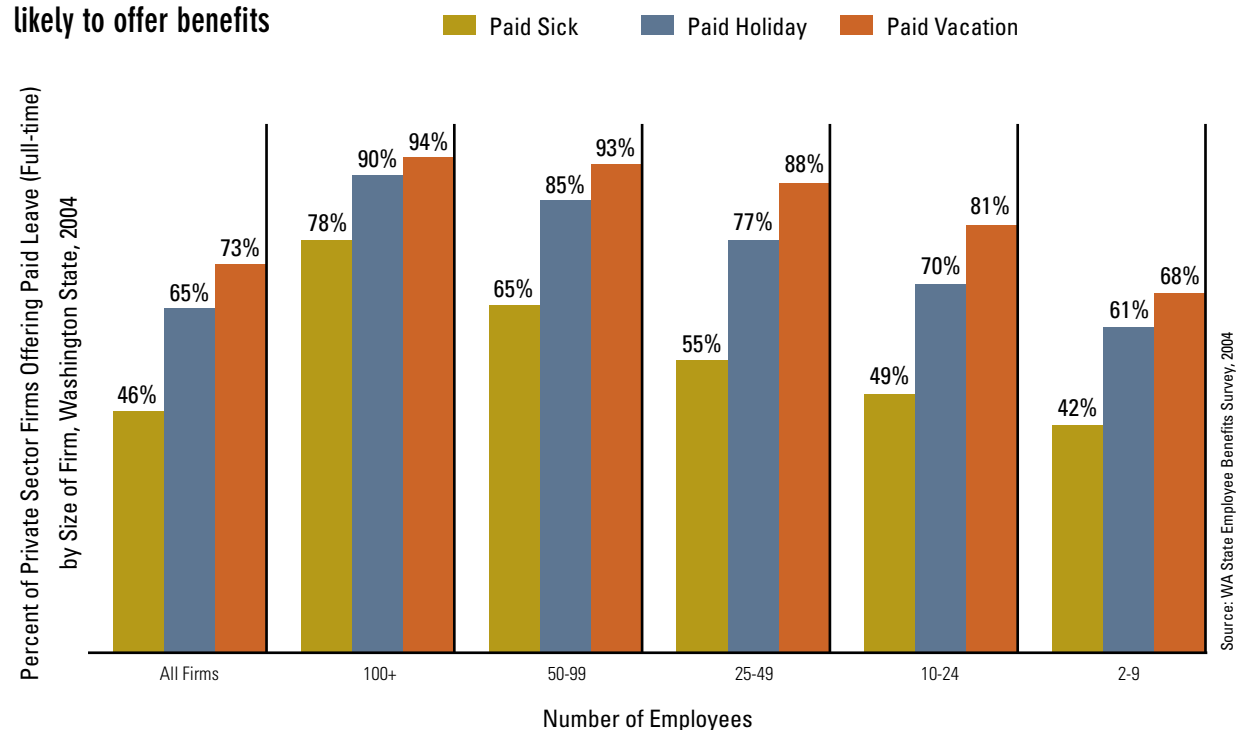


Photo by Youth In Focus

Adults, whether married or single, with children or not, share similar desires:

- Satisfying and decent jobs
- Time for families, friends, and communities
- Balanced lives



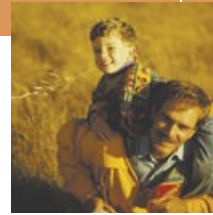
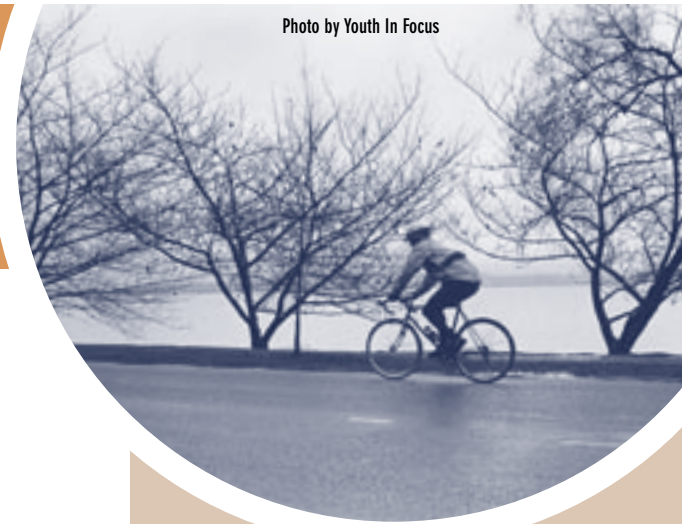
Social support

Social support refers to the emotional and practical resources all people need, such as help when they're sick or a trusted person with whom to talk. These factors have a protective effect on health and well-being.

- People who are white report more social support than people of other races.
- People with incomes of \$50,000 or more have higher levels of support than people with lower incomes.
- People who live in a couple relationship have more social support than others who are separated, divorced, widowed or never married.

Health

Photo by Youth In Focus

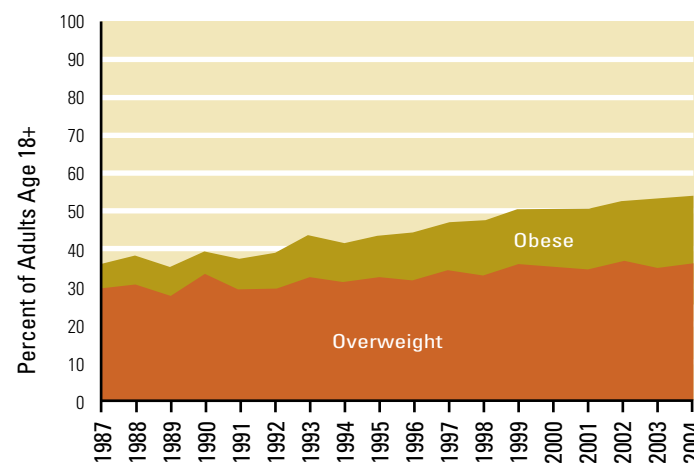


Being physically active and keeping weight down are part of leading healthier lives. Overall, fewer adults are smokers, though more than a quarter of young adults (18-24) smoke. Smoking among 12th graders has declined in the County, in Washington, and nationally. The rate of binge drinking among adults has been stable over the past decade.

Weighing too much ... exercising too little

Over half of King County residents are overweight or obese. About half of adults (55%) report that they exercise moderately about 30 minutes a day, five times a week (the recommended level of physical activity).

Half of us are overweight or obese



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

One in six lack health insurance

The percentage of adults without any health insurance is at an all-time high since 1991. Within King County, 15.5% of adults are uninsured, up from approximately 11 percent in 2000. The highest proportion of uninsured adults is in South Region (18%), and the lowest is in East Region (9%).

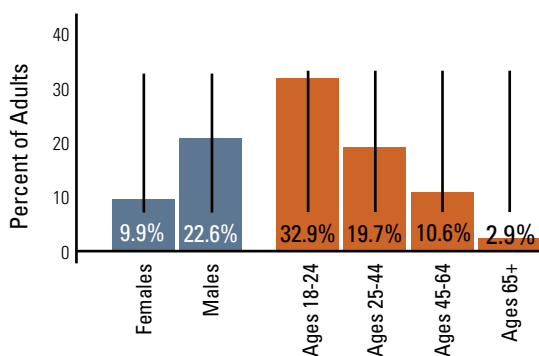
The working poor are hit hardest by health insurance costs. They may earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, earn too little to buy their own coverage, or work part-time or for companies that do not offer insurance to their employees. Even people who have insurance have increasing out-of-pocket costs.



Young adults binge drink more

The rate of binge drinking (5 or more drinks on one occasion in the last month) among King County adults declined over the past decade. Binge drinking is higher among young adults and men.

Binge drinking

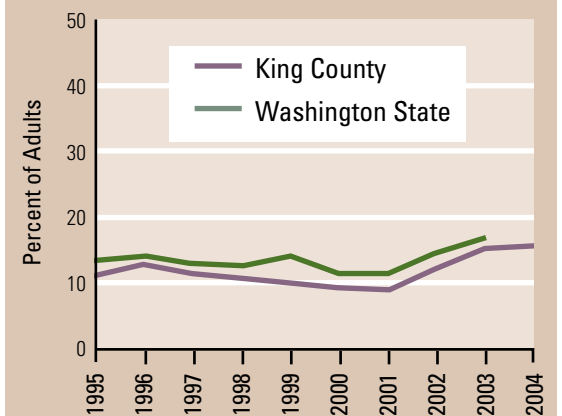


Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

Smoking decline has leveled off

Sixteen percent of adults in King County smoke, compared with 21% nationally and 19% in Washington. This is part of a significant county-wide decline since 1987. Who smokes varies by education, race, income, and by region. A fifth of people in South Region smoke, while just under 11% do in East Region. Rates are also higher for those without a high school diploma (33%) than for those with a college degree (9%).

Adults with no health insurance, King County and Washington State

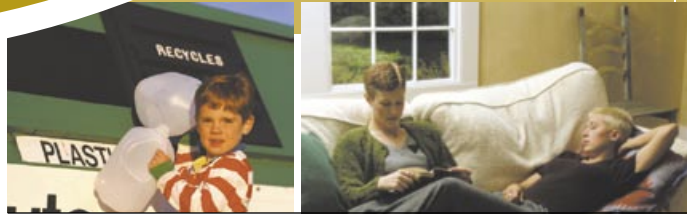


Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

Community

Violent crime has decreased significantly

Violent crime is down significantly in King County. From a high of 93 violent crimes per 1,000 people in 1987 it dropped to 60 per 1,000 in 2003. Violent crimes include murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Motor vehicle thefts are an exception to this trend: they have increased in all four regions of King County.



Most people share a similar vision for their communities

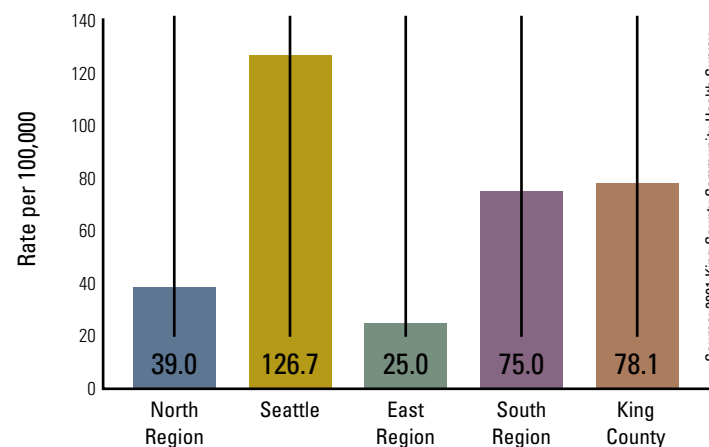
- Safe and secure neighborhoods
- Opportunities for community involvement
- Tolerance among people



Many hate crimes are racially motivated

Over half of hate crimes in King County are racially motivated. Sexual orientation (18%), religion (14%), and ethnicity or national origin (15%) were the other motivations among the 92 offenses reported to police in 2003.

Domestic violence rates by region, 1999-2003



Domestic violence continues to be a major problem

In 2003, there were 11,968 domestic violence offenses reported in King County. This includes 16 murders and 82 rapes, as well as 3,114 reported violations of no contact or protection orders. Since domestic violence is often not reported, the actual number of cases is likely higher. Since 1997, the rate of serious domestic violence crimes has increased in the South Region, and decreased for the whole county, and in Seattle. Seattle continues to have the highest rate of serious domestic violence crimes, and East Region the lowest.

Too many people experience discrimination

All people should be treated fairly and not discriminated against. About one in four of the people surveyed said that they had experienced some kind of discrimination during the last year, most often in a public place or at work. There is a significant difference in experiences of discrimination according to people's income or race/ethnicity.

Percent of King County residents who say they were discriminated against

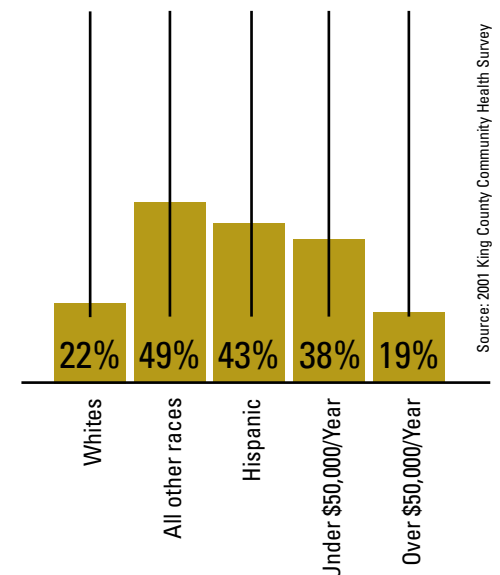




Photo Youth in Focus



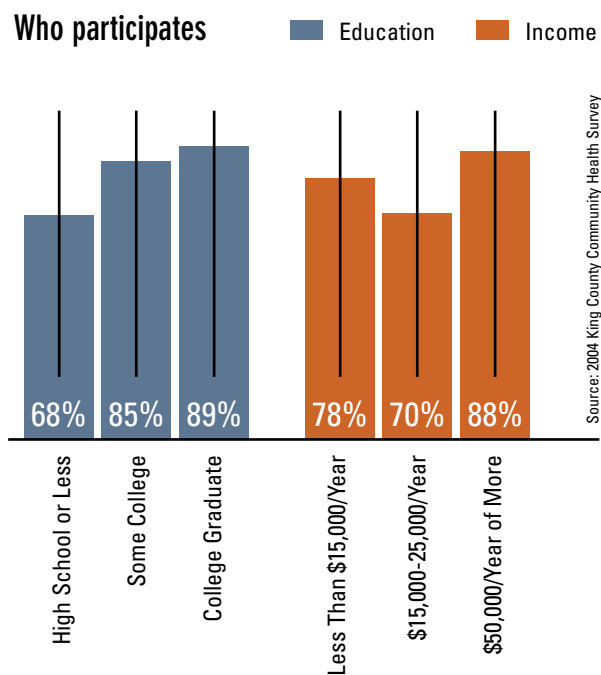
Photo by John Welke, REACH



Photo by John Hunt, REACH

Involvement in our communities

More than four out of every five adults in the County are active or very active in at least one community organization, such as a neighborhood group, civic club, arts or cultural organization, political organization, school or religious group. People with higher incomes (over \$50,000) are more active in community organizations than those who earn between \$15,000 and \$25,000 a year, and those who have completed college are more active than people with a high school education or less.



We feel safe but worry about our children's safety

Most people in King County do not worry about safety, but those who live in South Region reported feeling less safe than people in the other regions. Concerns centered around children's safety at school or in the neighborhood.

- People living on less than \$50,000 a year feel less safe than those who earn more.
- More whites report feeling safe in their neighborhoods than do people of other races.
- Women feel less safe than men.

How we view our neighborhoods

How strongly do you agree with the following statements:	Percent of King County residents answering "strongly agree" or "agree" 2004
...This is a close-knit neighborhood.	54%
...People in this neighborhood can be trusted.	82%
...People around here are willing to help their neighbors.	84%
...People in this neighborhood don't share the same values (reversed for scale).	22%
...People in this neighborhood generally don't get along well with each other (reversed for scale).	8%

Would you say it is very likely, likely, unlikely, or very unlikely that your neighbors could be counted on to intervene or do something if:	Percent of King County residents answering "very likely" or "likely" 2004
...children were skipping school and hanging out in the neighborhood?	60%
...children were spray-painting graffiti on something in the neighborhood?	86%
...children were showing disrespect to an adult?	59%
...a fight broke out in front of their house?	82%
...a fire station closest to their home was threatened with budget cuts?	68%

Source: 2004 King County Community Health Survey



Photo Youth in Focus

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

“Why don’t they go out and get a job?”

Many who are homeless have disabilities which make it impossible for them to work. Close to a quarter of the people in emergency shelters and transitional housing do seek and find work as they confront the daily challenges of shelter hours, bathing, doing laundry, and finding ways to look presentable and maintain personal dignity. To understand how they fare, six focus groups were held with single men, women with children, women and men living in Tent Cities III and IV, Native Americans, and young adults. Here are three stories from the groups.

“No money, no rent; no rent, no home.”

Erica is in her 50s, and has been homeless for about a year and a half. She and her teenage daughter live in transitional housing in South Region. Erica is completing a training program which she hopes will lead to full-time employment.

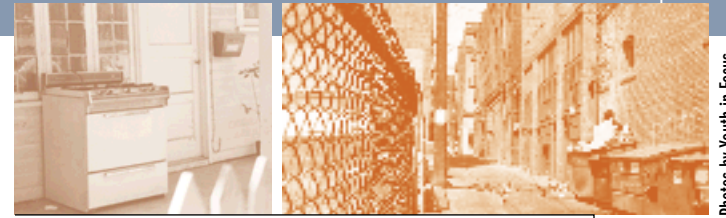
I’m living in transitional housing. My daughter and I went through a combination of personal health issues, loss of job, child support interrupted, my mother dying, and it all kind of happened in an 18 to 20 month period. And no money, no rent; no rent, no home.

I don’t think the majority of us are homeless due to not wanting to work. Once you get financially strapped, regardless of the background cause, all of a sudden you’re behind on your rent, the lights are off, your phones are off, that snowball builds and it builds and it builds, and it ends up being a desperate situation, and you’ve got so damn many issues to deal with, problems to resolve, that you just don’t know where to start. Nobody chooses homelessness, nobody chooses unemployment. Nobody chooses the situation that got them there, but it starts out with one thing, and then it gathers speed and it gathers size, like a snowball going down hill....

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH) is made up of representatives from non-profit organizations, businesses, local government, homeless advocacy groups, faith communities, and people who are homeless. CEH has developed a “Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness” consisting of three key strategies:

1. Prevent homelessness
2. Move people rapidly from homelessness to housing
3. Build the public and political will to end homelessness

For more information about the CEH, please call (206) 205.5506 or visit <http://www.cehkc.org/>



Photos by Youth in Focus

Why are so many in our community homeless? And why has this problem grown in the last 30 years?

Factors that contribute to increasing homelessness include:

- Decrease in affordable housing for low-income families and singles (both market rate and subsidized)
- Poverty and low wages
- Lack of access to health care
- Decreasing employment opportunities for people with a high school education or less
- Not enough treatment or community supports for people with mental illness or substance abuse problems



Photo by Boyd REACH

Who is homeless in King County?

On any given night, an estimated 8,300 people in King County were homeless in 2004. Homeless families and individuals who used shelters were part of a survey, which gives us some information about who is homeless in King County.

- 27% were children under age 18 (most of them under five years old).
- 40% were women, and 60% were men.
- There were 44 pregnant women.
- 27% had no income from any source.
- 23% had been homeless for two years or more, up from 12% in 2003 and 8% in 2002.
- Over 1 in 5 homeless households reported their last permanent address was in South, East, or North King County.
- One third reported a disability:
 - 38% mental illness
 - 36% alcohol/substance abuse
 - 16% mental illness and substance abuse
- One in ten people reported domestic violence or physical abuse in the past year.



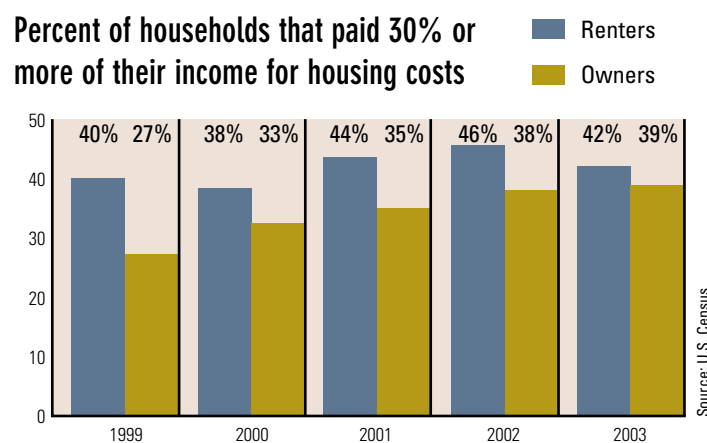
Photo Youth in Focus



Photo by Richard Whitefeather, REACH

Housing costs and homelessness

Housing is usually the most costly part of a household budget. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that a person or family spend no more than 30 percent of income on housing costs. A mother with one child who works at a full-time, year-round job that pays \$10 an hour earns \$20,800 a year. Using HUD guidelines, she should pay no more than \$520.00 a month in rent. However the average two bedroom apartment in King County rents for \$804. In 2003 approximately 40% of renters and owners in King County paid 30% or more of their household incomes for housing.



People with low incomes who spend more than they can afford on housing are at risk of becoming homeless. When someone loses a job; has serious health problems; experiences a violent family life, or goes through even a short period without work, financial and psychological burdens increase. People who struggle to make ends meet each month try everything they can to keep a roof over their heads. They commonly exhaust their savings, stay with family or friends for a while, or sleep in their cars. For too many people in King County and around the country, this is how they become homeless.

“There is no such thing as housing for 215 bucks.”

For almost a year, **Steve** has lived in a tent encampment. He has two children: one in college, and one who lives with his ex-wife. He worked for many years as a computer technician; now he works construction through a temporary employment agency.

A lot of people lost their jobs in the last few years, and I know this was the case with me. I had a really difficult time at first comprehending just how bad the job market had become. Six or seven years ago, you could get a job any time. I’ve been basically surviving and I’ve been making the child support payments with a little bit of money left over. Last week I had to replace my work boots, forty bucks, the cheapest pair of steel toes you can get anywhere. I’m keeping my head above water, but that’s about all I’m accomplishing, barely.

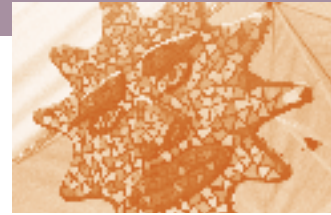
I saw in the paper where they were talking about for housing to be affordable it should not cost more than 30 percent of your income. Let’s see, the job that I just got, I net about 60 dollars a day, three days a week. \$180 a week, \$720 a month. 30 percent... is 215 bucks. [That’s] what they would consider to be affordable, so that I have money for food, transportation, and so on. There is no such thing as housing for 215 bucks.

“You’re an ex-convict. We cannot accept you.”

Stanley works part-time at a local social services agency, in a job he started as a volunteer. He spent time in jail for a felony conviction.

I got out of jail 14 years ago with 40 dollars gate money and the clothes on my back. I went to [a day labor agency] and I used my prison I.D. and my Social Security card to start. I worked a couple of days, I saved up money, I went and got my driver’s license, and I saved up enough money to get into a hotel room [but that way] you’re never gonna save up enough money to get your own place. So I figured, “Well, I’ll just sleep out in the street until I save up enough money.” Well, I saved up enough, and the first apartment place that I went to, filled out the application, and the first thing that comes back is: “You’re an ex-convict, we cannot accept you.” I go to low income housing: same thing. “You’re an ex-convict. We cannot accept you.” The chances of me getting any place is like zero to none because of my past record. I’m still trying, I put applications in, but nobody will take me. My belief is they should have some type of housing for people with a sordid past like that to rent an apartment. I haven’t done anything in over 15 years, 16 years, back before I was even 30.

Arts & Culture

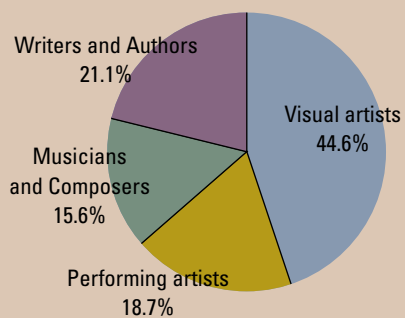


Photos by Youth In Focus

Employment in Arts & Culture

There is a broad range of talented people in the creative sector of our economy. Most information sources refer to artists as only those who self-report their main occupation as being an artist. As a result, those artists with a primary occupation other than art are often under-reported.

Percent of Artists by Discipline, 2000



Source: U.S. Census

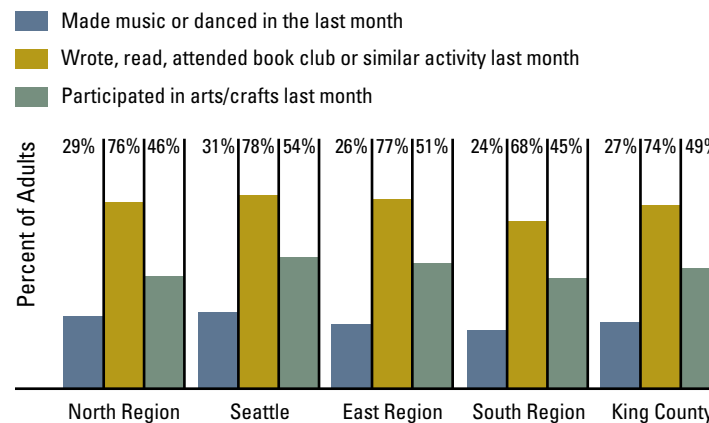
- Almost half (45%) of all artists living in King County are visual artists (painters, sculptors, potters, photographers, etc.). Musicians and composers accounted for the smallest share, 16% of all artists.
- The greatest concentration of arts employment in King County was in Seattle. East Region has the next highest while the North and South Regions had the lowest concentrations of arts employment.
- More than 40% of employed artists in the county are self-employed. 10% of the general workforce is self-employed.
- Artists were also more likely to work for a non-profit employer (12% of artists, compared to 7% of the general workforce), and to have second jobs.

Photo by Youth In Focus

Arts and cultural programs:

- Enrich the fabric of our lives
- Engage people in activities beyond work and family
- Bridge differences across diverse groups and cultures
- Have economic and cultural impacts that increase the vitality of regional communities

King County residents actively participate in artistic and literary hobbies



Source: 2004 King County Community Health Survey

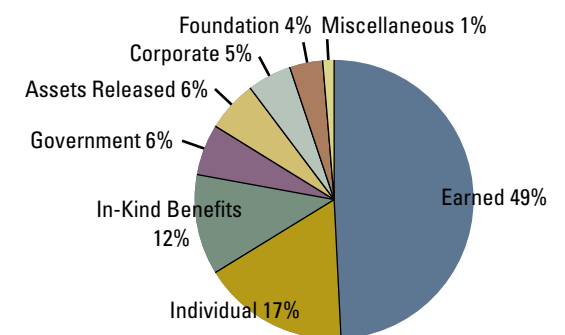
In a 2004 study, approximately 3 out of 4 adults said that during the past month they wrote, read, or participated in a book club. Half of adults did some sort of arts and crafts, and between one-quarter and one-third of adults made music or danced.

All residents were more likely to have attended music or dance performances than to have attended drama productions, plays, or lectures.

One third of King County residents were actively involved in an organization such as an arts, culture, music or theater group.

Funding

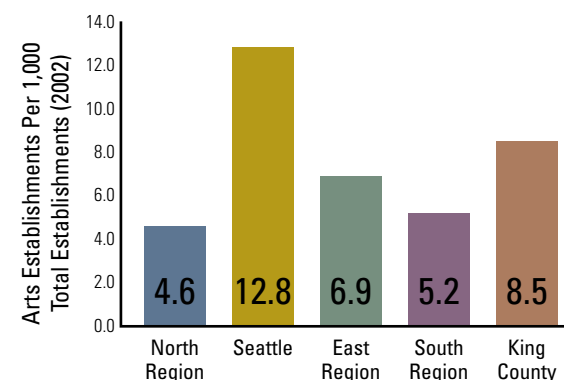
In 2003, King County arts and cultural organizations received \$248.2 million in total income from all sources. Almost half (49%) of the total income of arts organizations came from earned income (e.g. tickets, admissions, retail sales). Music and theater organizations received the greatest share (32% and 25% respectively) while dance organizations had the smallest share (8%).



Six percent of all funding for arts and cultural organizations in 2003 came from government sources. City governments provided the greatest share (41%) of this funding, followed by State (29%) and County (22%) governments. Federal dollars accounted for only 8% of total government monies.

Arts establishments in King County

There has been an increase in the share of arts establishments in King County, from 7.8 per 1,000 establishments in 2000 to 8.5 per 1,000 in 2002.



Source: 2002 County Business Patterns, Zip Business Patterns, U.S. Census

Natural and Built Environment



Photo by Youth In Focus



Photo by John W., REACH



Photo by Joseph M., REACH

King County residents value natural surroundings, trees and greenery on streets and roadways. There is a common vision for a clean environment and for protection of natural resources including air, water, land and wild creatures.

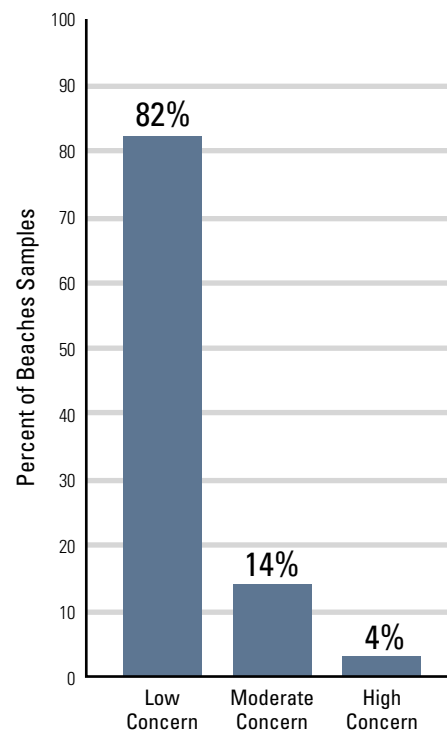
Air quality has improved but is still of concern

- Concentrations of air pollutants in King County have decreased over the last decade due to better control of air pollution.
- Ozone and fine particulate matter remain a concern and are driving the air quality ratings in King County. On-road vehicles, burning of wood and yard waste are the main culprits for these pollutants.
- These substances can cause health problems particularly for children, the elderly, people with weakened immune systems and people with respiratory problems.

Water quality has room for improvement

- Over 80% of the swimming beaches that were monitored over time for fecal coliform pollution were designated of low concern in 2000 and 2004. High concentrations of Canada Geese have been a significant cause of fecal coliform in lakes.
- Juanita Beach and Meydenbauer Bay Beach had the highest percent of samples of high and moderate concern.
- King County's urban streams have significant levels of pesticides and broken down pesticides, mostly from products sold for residential use.
- Pesticides harm aquatic wildlife and human health. They can also harm the reproductive and endocrine systems of both humans and salmon.

Sampled swimming beaches contaminated with coliform, 2004



Source: King County Department of Natural Resources

Forests are declining but still the dominant land cover in King County

- Satellite images show less grass/farmlands and forests and more urban land, clear-cut and regenerating forest in King County in 2002 than in 1996 due to increased development and declines in the timber industry.
- There are 31,000 acres of public lands including parks, open space and resource lands protected and managed by King County.
- Forests, urban parks and open space provide recreational opportunities to people and crucial habitat to salmon, eagles and a host of other species. Healthy forests moderate the climate and improve air and water quality. Farmland provides fresh produce, stimulates the economy and buffers urban development.

More organic farms, fewer farmers using chemicals

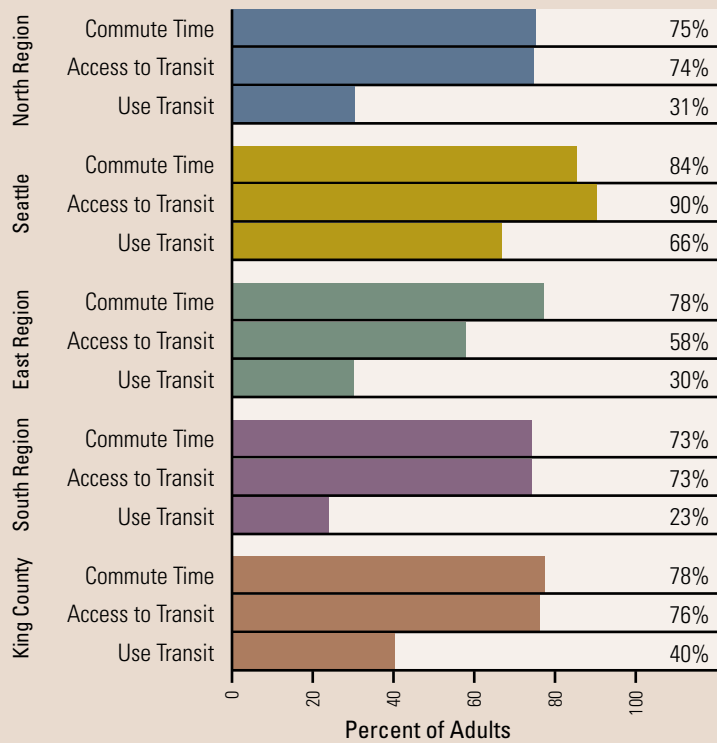
- The overall use of chemicals for agricultural purposes has decreased by 3% between 1997 and 2002.
- The number of certified organic farms in King County has tripled from 7 to 23 between 1995 and 2004.
- Farmers who work with pesticides have elevated risks of developing health problems such as neurological disorders

Natural and Built Environment



Photo by Youth In Focus

Percent of adults who are satisfied with commute time and access to public transit and percent who use public transit



Source: 2004 King County Community Health Survey

Commuter Choices... a majority of residents drive alone to work

- Over two thirds of King County employees drive alone to their places of work. The proportion of workers who carpool, use public transportation, bike, walk or use other means to commute to work has remained steady since 1990.
- According to 2004 survey data, the majority (78%) of King County residents are satisfied with their commute time. About the same percentage are satisfied with their access to public transit. More residents of Seattle are satisfied with access to public transit than residents of other regions of the county.
- Less than half of King County's adult population (40%) reported that they use public transportation. The heaviest use is in Seattle (66%) and the lowest use is in South Region (23%).
- On-road vehicles are a leading contributor to air pollution, which also contributes to environmental and human health problems. Traffic congestion causes stress and reduces the amount of time spent with family or exercising. Incorporating alternative means to commute to work, such as by biking or walking, can improve health.



Photo by Youth In Focus