What Are the Indicators?

The list of 38 indicators is below. The indicators under Natural and Built Environment and Arts and Culture are new. Individual indicators are reported starting on page 7. COMMUNITIES COUNT will be updated with the most recent data available for each indicator approximately every 3 years.

Basic Needs and Social Well-Being

- Adequate Food
- Affordable Housing & Homelessness
- Living Wage Income
- Income Distribution
- Social Support
- Freedom from Discrimination

Positive Development Through Life Stages

- Family-Friendly Employment Benefits
- Parent/Guardian Involvement in Child's Learning
- Quality, Affordable Child Care
- School Readiness
- Academic Achievement
- Risk and Protective Factors in Youth
- Participation in Life-Enriching Activities

Safety and Health

- Perceived Neighborhood Safety
- Crime
- Family Violence
- Motor Vehicle Injuries and Deaths
- Pollution in Neighborhoods
- Infant Mortality
- Teen Births
- Stress
- Tobacco and Alcohol Use
- Physical Activity and Weight
- Restricted Activity Due to Physical/Mental Health
- Health Insurance Coverage and Access

Community Strength

- Neighborhood Social Cohesion
- Involvement in Community Organizations
- Institutional Support for Community Service
- Ease of Access to Shops and Services

Natural and Built Environment

- Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Land Cover
- Farmland Treated with Chemicals
- Commute Choices

Arts and Culture

- Participation in Arts and Culture
- Presence of Arts Organizations
- Employment in Arts and Culture
- Funding for Arts and Culture

Special Focus on Homelessness and Early Childhood Development

In response to stakeholder recommendations, a more in-depth focus was added for two issues of great interest and concern: homelessness and early childhood development. The section on Homelessness provides the historical context on causes and promising policies to address and prevent it. Qualitative information is presented from interviews with service providers who work with homeless individuals and families, and from six focus groups with people who were currently or recently homeless, and working or looking for work. Focus groups were held with single men, women with children, people living in Tent Cities, Native Americans, and young adults.

The section on Early Childhood Development summarizes recent knowledge of what children need during infancy and the toddler years, especially with regards to nurturing and its impact on social and emotional development as an underpinning for cognitive development. School readiness is explained in terms of developmental domains and an indicator of school readiness at the neighborhood level is presented for three King County school districts.

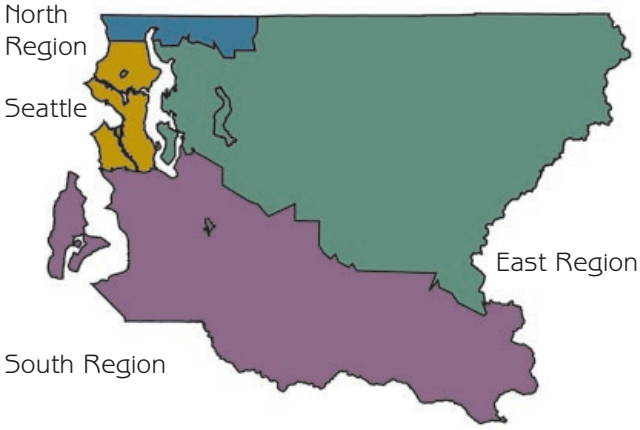
New Indicators for Natural Environment and Arts & Culture

The addition of indicators about the natural environment and arts and culture rounds out the measures called for in the valued conditions of King County residents. Five new indicators of the natural and built environments have been developed by Sustainable Seattle: Air Quality, Water Quality, Land Cover, Farmland Treat with Chemicals, and Commute Choices. Four new indicators of the vitality of King County's arts and culture scene have been developed locally, based in part, on new survey data and on national data prepared by The Urban Institute Arts and Cultural Indicators Project: Participation in Arts and Culture, Presence of Arts Organizations, Employment in Arts and Culture, and Funding for Arts and Culture Activities.

How to Understand the Data and Terms

Region: Whenever possible, indicators are reported for King County as a whole and for four regions within the county, as shown in the map. The exact boundaries of the regions depend on the data source used. Unless otherwise noted in the Data Source section of the indicator, the region boundaries are based on aggregated ZIP codes. (See Appendix for a list of ZIP codes and census tracts in each region.) While smaller than the county, a region is still a high level of aggregation. Better yet would be to measure these indicators in communities within regions. Data collection at the community level, however, is very costly.

The Four Regions of King County



Crude, Age-Specific, and Age-Adjusted Rates: A rate in this report is usually expressed as the number of events per 100,000 population per year. When this applies to the total population (all ages), the rate is called the crude rate. When the rate applies to a specific age group (e.g., age 15-24), it is called the age-specific rate. The crude and age-specific rates present the actual magnitude of an event within a population or age group.

When comparing rates between populations, it is useful to calculate a rate which is not affected by differences in the age composition of the populations. This is the age-adjusted rate. For example, if one population has a higher death rate and more older people, it will not be easy to determine if its rate is truly higher or if it reflects the higher death rates that naturally occur among older people. The age-adjusted rate is a rate that mathematically removes the effect of the age composition. By convention, we adjust the rate to the age distribution of the 2000 U.S. population.

Rolling Averages: For populations of small size (American Indians in King, for example), small changes in the number of events will cause the rate to fluctuate substantially from year to year. To help stabilize the rate and observe the time trend of an event, rates are sometimes aggregated into "rolled" averages, such as in 3 or 5 year intervals, across the total observed period. For example, if there is a highly fluctuating rate caused by low numbers of events for years 2000 through 2004, the rates are instead reported as three-year rolling averages: 2000-2002, 2001-2003, and 2002-2004. For an example of a rolling average, see the chart titled, "Motor Vehicle Crash Death Rates" on page 69.

Neighborhood Poverty Level: To examine the relationship between poverty level and health indicators, the census tracts in King County are ranked by the percentage of population living below the Federal Poverty Level in 1999. We then divided the neighborhood groups into three categories in which more than 20%, five to 20%, and less than 5% of the population were living below poverty. These groups are labeled as "high poverty," "medium poverty," and "low poverty" neighborhoods respectively.

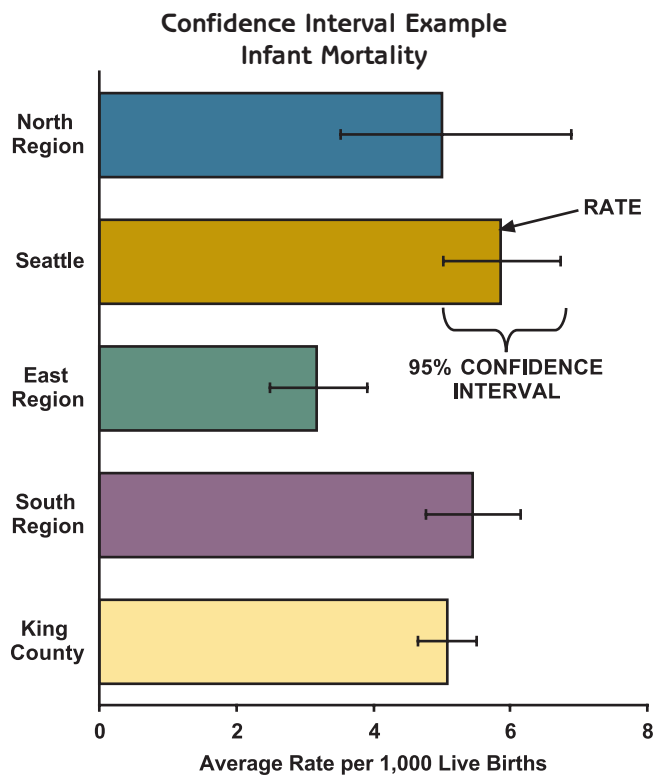
Race/Ethnicity and Racism: Most researchers believe that race and ethnicity are markers for complex social, economic and political factors that are important influences on community and individual health, and that differences in rates of most diseases and injuries are not due to biologic or genetic factors. Many communities of color in this country have experienced social and economic discrimination and other forms of racism, which can negatively affect the health and well-being of these communities. We continue to examine and present data by race/ethnicity because we believe that it is important to understand which racial/ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by significant health issues. We hope this understanding will lead to strategies that address these issues, as well as the social and economic inequities that underlie them.

In the Community Health Survey, the number of respondents in some racial and ethnic groups was too small for reliable data analysis. This required grouping some populations together and reporting broader and less meaningful categories, such as "white" and "all other races." This is clearly a compromise of meaning. However, our commitment to reporting whatever statistical disparities exist across our racial and ethnic groups led to accepting this compromise and using the broad categories, rather than being unable to identify and report differences where they exist.

In this report, the names given to race groups for most indicators are those used by the U.S Census Bureau in 2000: African American, American Indian/ Alaska Native (abbreviated by AN), Asian/Pacific Islander, and white. Persons of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity may be counted in any of the race groups.

Confidence Intervals: When comparing rates between different groups in King County with bar graphs, the 95% confidence interval or margin of error is shown for each rate to assess how much the rate is likely to vary due to chance. For each estimated rate, one would expect the rate to fluctuate, but to remain within the confidence interval 95% of the time. The larger the population under consideration, the smaller the confidence interval, and thus the more reliable the rate. When comparing two rates, if the confidence intervals do not overlap, the difference in the rates is considered statistically significant, that is, chance or random variation is unlikely to be the reason for the difference.

The following graph is an example which shows the average infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births and 95% confidence interval by region in King County. The infant mortality rate for Seattle appears to be higher than the rate for all of King County. However, since the higher end of the confidence interval for King County is greater than the lower end of the confidence interval for Seattle, their confidence intervals overlap. Therefore the difference between the two rates is not statistically significant. The confidence interval for the East Region, however, does not overlap with the intervals for Seattle. As a result, we can state that the infant mortality rate for Seattle is significantly higher than the rate for the East Region, but does not differ significantly from the other regions.



Statistical Significance: Differences between groups are examined for each indicator including differences by age, income, education, gender, race, marital or relationship status, and poverty level of area. Unless otherwise stated, all differences mentioned in the text are statistically significant. If not mentioned at all, readers should assume that differences were tested but not found to be statistically significant.

The potential to detect differences and relationships (termed the statistical power of the analysis) is dependent in part on the number of events and size of the population, or, for surveys, the number of respondents, or sample size. Differences that do not appear to be significant might reach significance with a large enough population or sample size.

For instance, in a survey, sampling error (shown as confidence intervals) can vary widely depending on sample size. For a sample size of 210, confidence intervals can range up to 50% of the survey estimate. (In this case, a rate must be at least two times another rate to detect a statistically significant difference.) However, for a sample size of 1,000, the confidence intervals range up to only 20% of the survey estimate (here, a rate can be only 40% higher than another rate to detect a difference). For a few indicators in this report, these are the approximate sample sizes for North and South Regions, respectively. Therefore, readers should treat findings of non-significance based on smaller numbers of events or sample sizes—and those involving wider confidence intervals—with caution.