LINC COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Prepared for The Center for Children & Youth Justice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) was founded in 2006 and adopted the Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM) of the National Gang Center, a project funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). CCYJ then established Leadership, Intervention, and Change (LINC)[1], an initiative focused on the communities of south King County Washington. LINC takes a collaborative, intervention-based approach to addressing youth violence. LINC serves as a coordinating agency to support other agencies and school districts serving at-risk youth.

In 2023, LINC contracted with Geo Education & Research (Geo) to update their 2018 Community Assessment to provide LINC and their partners and supporters an updated comprehensive look at the status of the communities LINC serves. This report provides current data on community demographics, information on the school districts in south King County, research on gang violence in the region, perceptions of youth on a survey of their health and safety, and perceptions of LINC community partners. Findings from this report are intended to inform future project planning and to provide information to reassess and realign implementation planning (as needed) including adoption of strategies and practices across a continuum of supports – prevention, intervention, suppression, and re- entry.

Findings

There continues to be a great deal of diversity in the south King County region. The percentage of people of color ranges from 30.2% (SeaTac) to 58% (Southeast Seattle). The rate of poverty and unemployment is high in the LINC cities. Whereas King County overall has a poverty rate of 9.3%, the cities served by LINC range from 7.9% to 12.4% (Tukwila) with a weighted average of 10%. Also, several cities in the region have levels of post-secondary academic achievement well below the overall county average.

The health indicators from the LINC communities show many areas of concern, particularly in life expectancy, general health, homicides, and firearm-related deaths. The data reported by the Health Department do not attribute the deaths to any cause, but data presented previously on the gang related activities in the LINC region add some context to these data.

Academic achievement in the LINC service region is low. Despite achieving at least the minimum high school graduation requirements, none of the LINC districts besides Seattle show even 50% of their students meeting academic standards in literacy, math, or science. Even Seattle is just over 50% in math. It would not be surprising if these young people, the majority of whom in most LINC Districts are from low-income families, experience challenges as young adults in becoming productive citizens.

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[1] https://ccyj.org/our-work/reducing-gang-violence

Gangs continue to have a tragic impact on communities. The gangs are highly organized and violent. Just in one community (Federal Way) there are over 20 gangs although their membership overlaps and there are many affiliations among them. Clearly guns are readily available to young people and the range of crimes they commit is extensive. Progress to address the LINC goal to actively engage youth who are gang-related in pro-social activities is crucial to protecting communities in King County.

The responses to a LINC Community Partners Survey conducted as a part of this assessment highlight many aspects of the gang problem in south King County. Despite the perception of the majority of the respondents that gang activity is increasing in the region, a lack of resources, lack of involvement or commitment by key agencies, and uncoordinated efforts are continuing challenges. To fully address this crisis, the community partners call for collaborative work, coordination among agencies, and providing supports in a broad range of areas that impact youth, their families, and their communities.

Overall Summary

The findings of the 2023 LINC Community Assessment reinforce the need for organizations such as LINC to continue and indeed increase their support of at-risk youth in the south King County communities. The cities in the LINC service area that are showing the most growth and diversity are also showing the most need for coordinated services to intervene and prevent youth involvement in anti-social activities.

The rate of poverty and unemployment is high in the LINC cities. Likewise, youth in the LINC service area struggle in school and have levels of post-secondary academic achievement well below the overall county average. If young people are not preparing themselves for careers and productive engagement within society, they may turn to other forms of expression that are counterproductive to the safety and quality of life in their communities. The health indicators from the LINC communities presented above also highlight some of the negative outcomes indicative of cities in distress.

The available data show that gangs continue to be highly active in the LINC service area and continue to have a tragic impact on communities. The community partners who contributed their locally grounded observations regarding the gang situation highlight the need for greater resources and the collaborative effort of citizens, government, and supportive agencies - everyone with a stake in the success of all community members in south King County - to support the work of LINC, and all agencies which work to connect youth with services, to increase and coordinate support. Only by bringing communities together to support their young people can the region realize the LINC goals to "create systemic and community-wide change to reduce gang/group involvement and improve outcomes for youth and families."

Recommendations

Based on the data presented in this Community Assessment, Geo offers the following recommended steps to take to further enhance the work of LINC and support the accomplishments of its goals.

1) **Create new or better approaches to helping youth to exit gang involvement.**
   a) Ensure that youth who are gang/group-involved have a voice in services to address their specific needs.
   b) Provide a network of support for incarcerated and previously incarcerated youth.
   c) Recruit and train mentors and credible messengers who have lived experience with gangs and help them engage with youth in, or at risk of, joining gangs (e.g., The Big Homie Program in Tacoma).

2) **Work with partners to develop more socially acceptable activities for youth prone to gang involvement, especially activities that encourage the development of pro-social bonds among youth and positive relationships with responsible adults, for example:**
   a) Diversion programs with meaningful supports, building protective factors and connections, address issues of trauma-informed care, and upstream prevention;
   b) Community engagement, and programs that stimulate the mind and provide a sense of self-worth; and
   c) Structured education and job support.

3) **Support development of more community-centered healing resources with engagement by law enforcement.**

4) **Improve connections with law enforcement.**
   a) Improve participation by law enforcement personnel at Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Team (MDIT) meetings.
   b) Work with south King County law enforcement agencies to develop a reliable source of information on gang involvement and youth violence from which community partners could draw regular reports.

5) **Work with community partners to facilitate the development of more early intervention strategies for family conflicts and for youth with anger management issues (e.g., GIRLS project by Bold Solutions in Tacoma).**
   a) Work with community service providers to help them connect with school districts to increase the availability of trauma informed care for youth at risk.
   b) Work more collaboratively with schools and community partners to address prejudice, racism, bullying, violence, criminal behavior, drug use, and violence, while realizing that it is not the sole responsibility of schools to address these problems that originate outside of schools.
   c) Facilitate proactive engagement by parents of young people (especially pre-teens) at risk of becoming gang involved.

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6) **Create and implement self-evaluation measures for each MDIT so that they can track and enhance their progress working with youth.**

7) **Establish multiple consistent, clear, and easily accessible ways for youth to tell service providers what they need, what they want, and what support will make a difference to them.** In addition, develop ways to share youth insights across service providers, communities, and funders.

8) **Create a data dashboard on progress toward LINC goals.**

9) **Update the LINC Strategic Plan based on the data in this Community Assessment.**

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Research on the Root Causes of Youth Violence

The following portion of this report presents the findings of a review of the research on the root causes of violence involving youth.[2] It is not intended to be comprehensive; rather it is a survey of consistent findings in the literature which suggest key strategies relevant to the work of reducing youth violence and the associated trauma in all of its forms.

Definition of Violence

The literature usually defines violence as aggression with the goal of extreme physical harm, such as injury or death.[3] Youth violence is further defined by The Centers for Disease Control as, "the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24. It can include fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness." [4] This report considers all forms of violence and the attendant trauma including both violence against youth and violence initiated by youth.

Trends

A National Perspective

According to the Centers for Disease and Prevention Control (CDC), in 2020, firearm-related injuries became the leading cause of death among children and adolescents (ages 1-19). Until 2016, firearm-related injuries in the U.S. were second only to motor vehicle crashes (both traffic-related and non-traffic-related) as the leading cause of death among children and adolescents. As of 2020, this was no longer the case. From 2019 to 2020, the rate of increase in firearm-related deaths for youth was 29.5%—more than double that of the general population (13.5%). This included deaths from all types of violence (suicide, homicide, unintentional, and undetermined). The increase was seen across most demographic groups and most types of firearm-related deaths.[5]

According to a study by researchers at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the U.S. Department of Defense, and Georgia State University's School of Public Health, **more than 38,000 U.S.**

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[2] A substantial portion of the information provided in this section is taken from Geo Education & Research, 2023. Disrupting and Healing Trauma Associated with Youth Violence: Root Causes, Service Gaps, and Proven Strategies. https://www.imaginejusticeproject.org/_files/ugd/3cb5c5_988719c1e1a9459fb0f35e34b4701117.pdf
[3] Bushman, B. J., & Huesmann, L. R. 2010. Aggression. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), Handbook of Social Psychology (5th ed., pp. 833– 863). New York, NY: Wiley
[4] https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence
[5] Lois K. Lee, M.D., M.P.H., Katherine Douglas, M.D., and David Hemenway, Ph.D. 2022. New England Journal of Medicine 386:1485-1487

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children were homicide victims between 1999 and 2020[6]. The study found that in the past decade, the overall rate of homicides in children has grown about 4.3% each year, with a steep rise seen between 2019 and 2020, when the number of youth who died by homicide rose 27.7%. The homicide rates are more alarming for black male teens ages 16 to 17 being 18 times higher than that for white males and 4.6 times higher than for Hispanic males.

Washington State

Parallel to the national trend, in Washington, gun violence is the leading cause of death among children and teens. In Washington, an average of 60 children and teens die by guns every year, of which 54% are suicides and 43% are homicides. This is significantly different from the national trend in which 35% of all gun deaths among children and teens are suicides and 60% are homicides.[7]

From 2016 to September 2022, there were 1,148 firearm-related homicide victims in the State of Washington, according to data from the Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS), which is managed by Criminal Justice Division of the Washington Office of the Attorney General. Approximately 37% were White males, 23% Black males, and 13% Hispanic males, compared to the 2021 overall state population of 78% White, 4.5% Black, and 14% Hispanic.[8] There were far fewer Asian/Pacific Islander victims (5%), and fewer females homicide victims—White 12%, Black 3%, and Hispanic 2%.

Table 1 | Number and Percent of Total Suspects by Race and Gender Characteristics of Homicide Suspects Under Age 20 in Washington State 2016-2022

	State of Washington
White	46 (3.4%)
Black	72 (5.4%)
Hispanic	61 (4.6%)
Asian / Pacific Islander	8 (0.6%)
Native American	5 (0.4%)
White	6 (0.5%)
Black	3 (0.2%
Hispanic	2 (0.1%)
Asian / Pacific Islander	0 (0%)
Native American	1 (0%)
Total Suspects under 20	**204 (15.5%)**
Total Number of Suspects of all ages	**1,318**

Source: Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS) 2022

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[6]Rebecca F. Wilson; Beverly L. Fortson; Hong Zhou, MS; et al. 2022 Trends in homicide rates for US children ages 0 to 17 years, 1999 to 2020. JAMA Pediatrics
[7]2022 update, everytownresearch.org/EveryStat Gun Violence in Washington
[8]https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/WA

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Table 5 below, shows the high incidence of suicide, homicide, and violence in the LINC service areas in south King County. Homicide and firearm-related deaths are both highly prevalent in all LINC communities.

Key Root Causes of Youth Violence and Impacted Populations

Racism and Discrimination

Communities of color, and specifically youth of color, are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and resulting trauma.

Numerous scholarly and lived experience publications regarding racism in the United States have received a lot of attention recently, notably the work of Ibram X. Kendi who wrote, "Racism takes several forms and works most often in tandem with at least one other form to reinforce racist ideas, behavior, and policy. Types of racism are ... individual racism, ... interpersonal racism, . . . institutional racism, and . . . structural racism."[9] Likewise, Ijeoma Oluo, author of So You Want to Talk About Race, talking about the role of education in perpetuating institutional racism in an interview with the School Library Journal said, "The numbers don't lie. If we don't engage with those numbers and decide to actively be a part of the solution, we are saying some fairly racist things about where these numbers come from. ... You either believe that black families are four times more dysfunctional than white families, that black students are twice as unmotivated in school as white students, that they are three times more criminal than white students, or you believe there's a systemic problem."[10]

In the US, Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are most vulnerable due to living under a system of White supremacy. Racial trauma, or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes. When people experience an emotionally painful, sudden, and uncontrollable racist encounter they are at risk of suffering from a race-based traumatic stress injury.

Experiences of race-based discrimination can have long lasting psychological impacts on individuals and their communities. In some individuals, prolonged incidents of racism can lead to symptoms like those experienced with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This can manifest both mentally and physically as depression, anger, recurring thoughts of the event, or physical reactions (e.g., headaches, chest pains, insomnia). Some or all of these symptoms may be present in someone with RBTS and symptoms can look different across different cultural groups. It is important to understand that unlike PTSD, RBTS is not

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[9]https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist
[10]https://www.slj.com/story/educators-and-race-a-conversation-with-author-ijeoma-oluo-on-tackling-systemic-racism-in-us-education

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considered a mental health disorder. RBTS is a mental injury that can occur as the result of living in a racist system or experiencing the impact of racism.

Researchers found strong relationships between race-based traumatic stress and trauma symptoms indicating that race-based traumatic stress are significantly related to trauma reactions (e.g., dissociation, anxiety, depression, sexual problems, and sleep disturbance).[11]

An emerging line of research is exploring how historical and cultural traumas affect survivors' children for generations to come. Many things are passed down . . . and in some cases, trauma can be inherited, as well. Generational trauma (also known as intergenerational trauma or transgenerational trauma) is a field of study that researchers have a lot to discover regarding its impact and how it presents in people who experience it.[12]

The numbers do indeed tell a disturbing story. Nearly 60% of firearm homicide victims in the United States are Black Americans, yet Black Americans account for less than 18% of the population.[13]

A 2013 study found that among Black Americans the likelihood of having someone within their social network die by firearm at some point during their lifetime was more than 95%.[14]

There are also highly disproportionate impacts of trauma and subsequent violence within the Native American communities nationwide. Based on data collected by the Association of Native American Affairs, "Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, homicide, stalking, and sex trafficking disproportionately affect Indigenous people in relation to other racial and ethnic groups. Women, girls, and two-spirit individuals are especially impacted by this violence. Most alarming is that 84.3 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime.

- American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.5 times as likely to experience violent crimes and at least 2 times more likely to experience rape or sexual assault crimes compared to all other races.
- More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women, or 84.3 percent, have experienced violence in their lifetime.
- Homicide is the third leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women between 10 and 24 years of age and the fifth leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women between 25 and 34 years of age.

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[11]Carter, R. T., Kirkinis, K., & Johnson, V. E. 2020. Relationships between trauma symptoms and race-based traumatic stress. Traumatology, 26(1), 11–18
[12]Bezo, B., & Maggi, S. 2018. Intergenerational perceptions of mass trauma's impact on physical health and well-being. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 10(1), 87–94
[13]Jacoby SF, et al. 2018. The enduring impact of historical and structural racism on urban violence in Philadelphia. Social science & medicine
[14]Kalesan B, Weinberg J, & Galea S. 2016. Gun violence in Americans' social network during their lifetime. Preventive medicine

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- In 2017, the top three cities with the highest number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIWG) cases were Seattle, WA (45); Albuquerque, NM (37); and Anchorage, AK (31). The top three states were New Mexico, Washington, and Arizona.
- In the U.S. and Canada, an average of 40 percent of the women who were victims of sex trafficking identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native."[15]

Beyond race, there is also a significant concern among LGBTQIA+ individuals who are targets of violence due to their identity – especially gender identity. According to the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, "gendered assumptions impact LGBT folks as much as, if not more so than, heterosexuals[16]." Gender socialization is widespread, internalized, and these assumptions and values come from both outside and within the LGBTQIA+ community. Myths about who can be assaulted or who are the perpetrators are prevalent; however, sexual violence can happen to, and be perpetrated by, an individual of any gender or gender identity.

While gender is not a predictor of assault, often individuals are targeted, assaulted, "bashed," and harassed because of, or in connection to, gender identity and/or gender nonconformity. Anti-Violence Programs note that 85% of hate crime victims identify as queer or questioning and 20% identify as transgender or gender non-conforming. In the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey estimates that 44% of lesbian women and 61% of bisexual women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes. This same survey found that 26% of gay men and 37% of bisexual men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes.

There may be an actual or perceived lack of accessible and competent sexual assault services for LGBTQIA+ survivors. Marketing, outreach, websites, brochures, logos, and agency names that appear geared toward cisgender women create barriers to services for LGBTQIA+ survivors. Survivors may even have fear of further violence and harassment from the people they turn to for help."[17]

Poverty and Income Inequality

Poverty is associated with higher homicide rates. A recent study provides new insight into how different social and economic circumstances could be driving gun violence in the US.[18] The study focuses on socioeconomic status, income inequality, and other social determinants of health through the analysis of 13,060 gun-related deaths in all US states. Analyses were based on 13,060 firearm-related deaths in 2015, with 11,244 non-mass shootings taking place in 8,673 census tracts (CTs) and 141 mass shootings in 138 CTs.

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[15]https://www.indian-affairs.org/nativepeoplesandviolence.html
[16]https://www.wcsap.org/resources/culturally-specific/lgbtq/advocacy-considerations
[17]https://www.wcsap.org/resources/culturally-specific/lgbtq/advocacy-considerations
[18]Daniel Kim, 2019. Social determinants of health in relation to firearm-related homicides in the United States: A nationwide multilevel cross-sectional study, Journal of PMED:1002978

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This study finds that the rich-poor gap, level of citizens' trust in institutions, economic opportunity, and public welfare spending are all related to firearm homicide rates in the US.

> Six of the eight LINC communities have poverty rates above the state average of 9.9%, with a high of 12.4% in Tukwila. (See Table 3 below.)

The study also found that the strongest association was between gun homicides and social mobility, or the ability of people to move to a higher social status than that of their parents (i.e., areas with less social mobility have higher rates of homicide). This study used geolocated gun homicide incident data from the US in 2015 to explore the independent associations of key state-, county-, and neighborhood-level social determinants of health—social mobility, social capital, income inequality, residential racial and economic segregation, and public spending with neighborhood firearm homicides and mass shootings in the US.

The Impact of Trauma

Significant research has been done into the interrelationships between trauma and youth violence with the recognition that **trauma can be both a cause and effect of violence**. The National Institute of Justice in their report "Examining the Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Involvement in the Justice System" finds that, ". . . adolescents who witnessed violence or were victimized by violence were more likely to be charged with a crime against a person at a later time. Court outcome severity was higher for this group — that is, youth exposed to violence in this sample experienced more adjudication, were more likely to be assigned to residential placement, and were more likely to be put on probation." Additionally, research showed that ". . . exposure to community violence is associated with changes that lead toward more court involvement and more severe court outcomes." In looking at factors that influence the strength of the relationship between exposure to violence and juvenile court involvement, "they found that academic progress reduces the strength of the relationship between exposure to violence and juvenile court involvement, while psychological symptoms of hopelessness as a result of exposure to violence strengthen the likelihood of court involvement[19]."

Easy Access to Guns

In Communities of Color everyone is impacted by gun violence and the resulting trauma. Exposure to gun violence can have lifelong impact on youth brain development, health, and well-being, which exacerbates existing social and economic inequities, contributing to increased gun violence.

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[19]https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/examining-relationship-between-childhood-trauma-and-involvement-justice-system

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A study that examined 500 African American youth, found that direct exposure to violence was the best predictor of whether an individual would later engage in gun related crimes.[20]

A survey of youth ages 12-24 in the city of Baltimore found that 42% had witnessed a shooting, compared to 4% of suburban youth.[21] Note that 62% of Baltimore is Black and only 27% are White non-Hispanic or Latino.[22]

A survey of middle school children enrolled in the Richmond, Virginia public school system found that 94% of children reported hearing gunshots, and 44% of boys and 30% of girls reported having witnessed a shooting.[23] Richmond is 46% Black and 41% White non-Hispanic or Latino.

> Within the LINC school districts, on the State Healthy Youth Survey, between 19% and 25.8% of 10th graders report availability of guns within their community.

Lack of Opportunities and Perception of Hopelessness

Widespread community exposure to gun violence exacerbates already existing social and economic inequalities and further perpetuates gun violence.

An analysis of gun violence in Washington DC found that ten additional gunshots in a census tract in a given year were linked to one less new business opening, one more business closing, and 20 fewer jobs.[24] An analysis of gun violence in Oakland found that each gun homicide in a census tract in a given year was related to five fewer job opportunities in the subsequent year.[25]

The Family and Neurobiological Factors

A great deal of attention has been paid to the role of the family and home environment in relation to anti-social behavior of youth.[26] These findings, however, need to be seen in the context of children of color growing up in environments shaped by generations of poverty and systemic racism and the trauma and stress this creates.

It has been established that chronic and traumatic stress resulting from adverse childhood experiences can shape development and have lifelong effect on health and wellbeing. For example, family violence

[20]McGee ZT, Logan K, Samuel J, & Nunn T. 2017. A multivariate analysis of gun violence among urban youth: The impact of direct victimization, indirect victimization, and victimization among peers. Cogent social sciences
[21]Gladstein J, et al. (1992)
[22]https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/baltimorecitymaryland
[23]White KS, et al. 1998. Impact of exposure to community violence on anxiety: A longitudinal study of family social support as a protective factor for urban children. Journal of child and family studies
[24]McGee ZT, Logan K, Samuel J, & Nunn T. 2017. A multivariate analysis of gun violence among urban youth: The impact of direct victimization, indirect victimization, and victimization among peers. Cogent Social Sciences
[25]Irvin-Erickson Y, et al. 2017. Gun Violence Affects the Economic Health of Communities. Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center
[26]https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence

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and conflict, child physical abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, traumatic separation from caretakers are all contributing factors.[27]

Many of the well-documented risk factors for youth violence arise in the family, including harsh and rejecting parents, interparental violence, child abuse and neglect, chaotic family life, inconsistent discipline, and poor monitoring by parents of children showing early signs of aggression.[28]

Personality Traits and Exposure to Media Violence

Past behavior is one of the best predictors of future behavior.

Individuals who are characteristically aggressive or impulsive and exhibit difficulties in self-control are more likely to engage in later acts of aggression, violence, delinquency, and crime.[29]

Exposure to media violence is significantly related to violent criminal behavior.[30] Other research has found that exposure to media violence can desensitize people to violence in the real world and that, for some people, watching violence in the media becomes enjoyable and does not result in the anxious arousal that would be expected from seeing such imagery.[31]

Alcohol, Drug Use and Mental Health

Access to drugs and alcohol among youth has long been shown to be related to anti-social behavior and acts of violence.[32] Alcohol and substance abuse have long been associated with risk for youth violence.

Although severe mental illness is linked with somewhat higher risk of violent acts, only 4% of violent acts are attributable to severe mental illness.[33]

Many individuals who develop substance use disorders (SUD) are also diagnosed with mental disorders, and vice versa.[34] Although there are fewer studies on comorbidity among youth, research suggests that adolescents with substance use disorders also have high rates of co-occurring mental illness. Over 60 percent of adolescents in community-based substance use disorder treatment programs also meet diagnostic criteria for another mental illness. Also, having a mental disorder in childhood or adolescence can increase the risk of later drug use and the development of a substance use disorder. One study found

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[27]Petruccelli K, Davis J, Berman T, 2019. Adverse childhood experiences and associated health outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Child Abuse & Neglect. 97: 104127

[28]Dodge, Greenberg, & Malone, 2008; Loeber & Farrington, 1998, 2012; Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Stoddard et al., 2013

[29]E.g., Loeber & Farrington, 1998

[30]Paik, H., & Comstock, G., 1994. The effects of television violence on antisocial behavior: A meta-analysis. Communication Research, 21, 516 –546

[31]American Psychological Association. (2013, November 1). Violence in the media: Psychologists study potential harmful effects. https://www.apa.org/topics/video-games/violence-harmful-effects

[32]E.g., Herrenkohl, Lee, & Hawkins, 2012; Loeber & Farrington, 2012; Whiteside et al., 2013

[33]Appelbaum, 2013). Of these acts, few involve guns (Appelbaum & Swanson, 2010

[34]Kelly TM, Daley DC, 2013. Integrated Treatment of Substance Use and Psychiatric Disorders. Soc Work Public Health. 28(0):388-406

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that adolescent-onset bipolar disorder confers a greater risk of subsequent substance use disorder compared to adult-onset bipolar disorder.[35] Similarly, other research suggests that youth develop internalizing disorders, including depression and anxiety, prior to developing substance use disorders.

> On the Healthy Youth Survey, between 10% and 18.2% of eighth graders and between 8.3% and 20% of 10th graders perceive drugs to be available in their communities.

Gender Differences

Decisions to incarcerate girls are largely driven by reasons other than public safety and directly contradict best practice, such as to discipline noncriminal violations (like running away), to protect the young person's own safety, or to provide access to services that all young people have a right to receive in their community.[36] According to Vera Institute, racial disparities have increased rather than decreased, meaning that girls of color are most impacted by girls' increased representation in the system. While Black girls are 35% of the juvenile justice population, they are only 13% of the U.S. population. The pathway to incarceration is different for girls—a history of sexual abuse or other adverse childhood experiences and having been in the foster care system are more prevalent among incarcerated girls. For example, while 20% of girls in the US will experience child sexual abuse, state-level studies have found much higher rates, up to 81% for girls in the juvenile justice system, with girls often reporting multiple incidents of sexual abuse.[37]

The Role of Climate change

Numerous cross-sectional and time-series studies using real-world heat and violence data demonstrate that cities and regions with higher temperatures tend to experience more violent crime than cooler regions, even after controlling for a dozen sociocultural factors such as age, race, poverty, and culture of honor. Other studies have assessed temperature and violence within the same geographic region over time. Across hours, days, months, and even years, similar trends emerge: **when it is hotter, violence increases.** From Chicago to Brisbane to Vancouver to Dallas, whether looking at domestic violence or physical assault, the same relationship emerges.[38]

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[35]O'Neil KA, Conner BT, Kendall PC. 2011. Internalizing disorders and substance use disorders in youth: comorbidity, risk, temporal order, and implications for intervention. Clin Psychol Rev. 31(1):104-112

[36]Vera Institute of Justice Initiative to End Girls' Incarceration

[37]Melissa Sickmund. A. Sladky, and W. Kang, 2021. "Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2019." US Department of Justice

[38]Anderson, C. A., & DeLisi, M. 2011. Implications of global climate change for violence in developed and developing countries. In J. P. Forges, A. W. Kruglanski, & K. D. Williams (Eds.), The psychology of social conflict and aggression (pp. 249–265). New York, NY: Psychology Press

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Further, as reported by the U.S. Department of Human Services, **"The neighborhoods people live in have a major impact on their health and well-being.** . . . Many people in the United States live in neighborhoods with high rates of violence, unsafe air or water, and other health and safety risks. Racial/ethnic minorities and people with low incomes are more likely to live in places with these risks. In addition, some people are exposed to things at work that can harm their health, like secondhand smoke or loud noises."

Interventions and policy changes at the local, state, and federal level can help reduce these health and safety risks and promote health. For example, providing opportunities for people to walk and bike in their communities—like by adding sidewalks and bike lanes—can increase safety and help improve health and quality of life.[39]

Further, "Indirectly, the physical environment may influence mental health by altering psychosocial processes with known mental health sequelae. Personal control, socially supportive relationships, and restoration from stress and fatigue are all affected by properties of the built environment. More prospective, longitudinal studies and, where feasible, randomized experiments are needed to examine the potential role of the physical environment in mental health. Even more challenging is the task of developing underlying models of how the built environment can affect mental health. It is also likely that some individuals may be more vulnerable to mental health impacts of the built environment. Because exposure to poor environmental conditions is not randomly distributed and tends to concentrate among the poor and ethnic minorities, we also need to focus more attention on the health implications of multiple environmental risk exposure."[40]

Evidence of the relationship between the physical environment and the economic level of the community can perhaps be seen in this 2020 survey of the tree canopy in south King County (Figure 1) which shows relatively few trees in the lower income areas of the county.[41]

[39]https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/neighborhood-and-built-environment#cit1
[40]https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3456225
[41] https://gis.davey.com/pugetsound/

Figure 1 | South King County Tree Canopy Cover Distribution

Legend:
- Bare Soil
- Grass/Low-Lying Vegetation
- Impervious Surfaces
- Open Water
- Tree Canopy
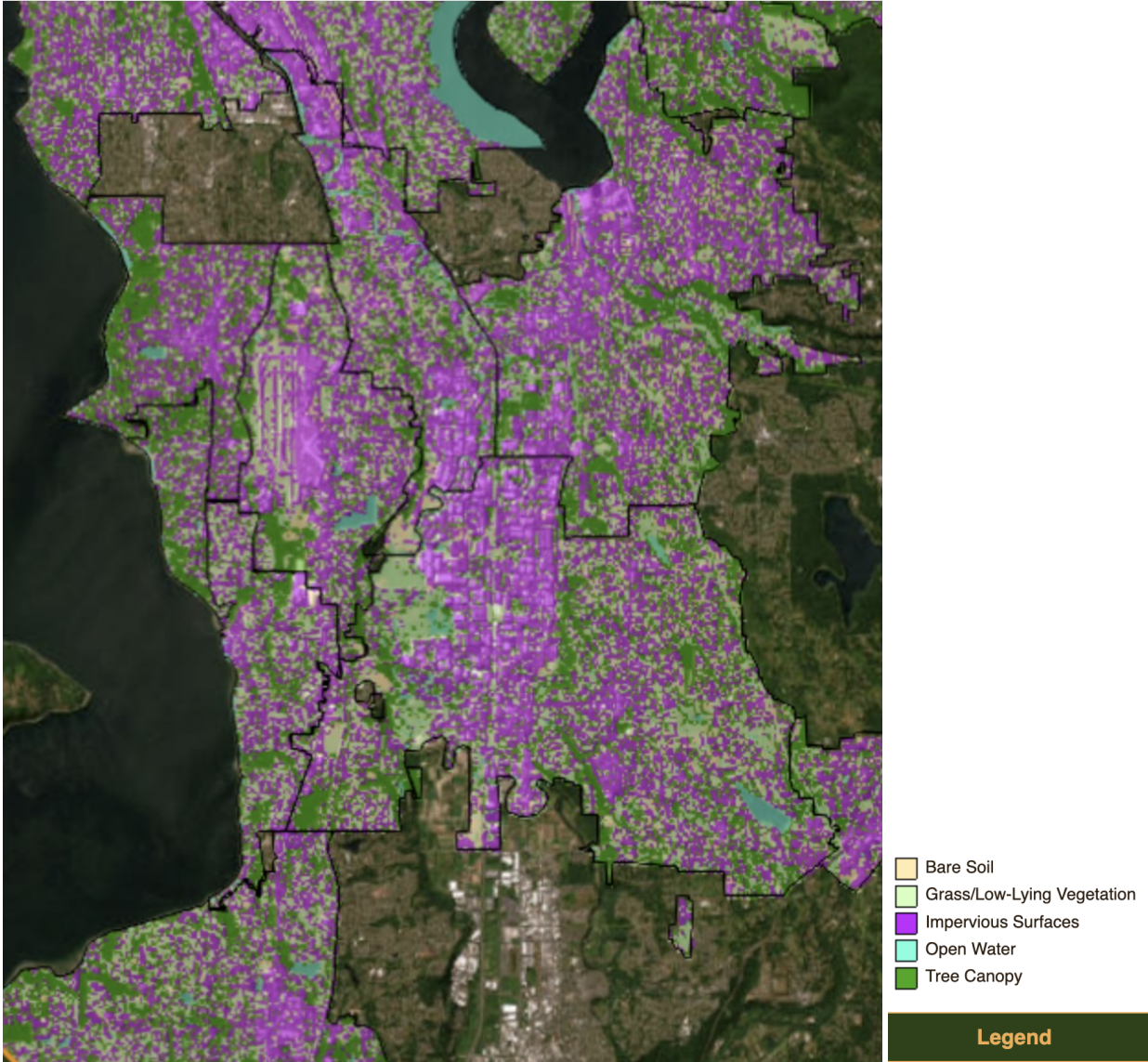
Summary of Root Causes

The root causes of youth violence in shown Table 2 were identified through the review of the research detailed in this report and validated through interviews and discussions with key informants in a study conducted by Geo for the Peace Point Initiative in 2023.

Table 2 | Root Causes of Youth Violence from Interviews, Discussions and National Research Studies

Causes Identified from Interviews and Discussions	Causes Found in National Research Studies
Poverty	Poverty, income inequality
Racism & discrimination, oppression	Societal racism and discrimination
Racism in schools	
Drug sales, substance abuse	Alcohol and substance abuse
Law enforcement	
Housing insecurity, redlining	Housing insecurity, homelessness
Mental health issues	
Lack of funding	Differences in public spending by economic status
Lack of job opportunities	Lack of job opportunities
Adults in authority do not earn the trust of youth	
Law enforcement does not have the trust of youth	
Generational community level trauma	
Trauma experienced personally and indirectly	Adverse childhood experiences, trauma
Lack of strategies to heal from trauma	
Inequitable discipline policies in the schools	
Bullying	Bullying
Homophobia and transphobia	
Escalated interpersonal grievances	
Disconnection to community	
Lack of parenting skills	
Absentee parents	
Disconnection to family	Negative family environment
Not keeping children in their families or communities of origin	
Neglect	
Abuse	Sexual abuse
Early childhood experiences	Intra-parental violence
Exposure to violence from early childhood	Child abuse, youth exposure to firearm violence
Lack of positive role models, adult mentors	

Table 2 | Root Causes of Youth Violence from Interviews, Discussions and National Research Studies (continued)

Causes Identified from Interviews and Discussions	Causes Found in National Research Studies
Access to weapons	Access to firearms
Lack of social emotional learning	
Lack of coping skills	
Gentrification	
Trespassing and no loitering policies	
Lack of respect for authority	Lack of trust in social institutions
Lack of social interaction	
Lack of social skills	Lack of discipline
Lack of communication	
Social Influences	Violence in the media
Social media	
Lack of activities	
The Covid pandemic	
Lack of health care	Racial differences in access to health care
Lack of trust in health care	
Lack of BIPOC health care providers, especially in behavioral and mental health	
Lack of services	
Youth feeling hopeless	Perception of hopelessness
Concern about the future, climate change	Impact of climate change and the physical environment on mental health
Blaming communities of color for the problems	
Few community members in change maker roles	
Lack of people stepping up to help	
People don't know how to step up	
People do not know history of BIPOC groups	
Not valuing and paying those who try to make change	

The Challenge of Gangs and Youth Violence

Violence committed by and inflicted on youth is not a new phenomenon and continues to devastate families and communities throughout the United Sates. Gang activity has been a major contributor to the surge in violence across the country in recent years. Shootings and other acts of violence by youth, both targeted and random, dominate the headlines. Many strategies to address this crisis have been implemented, from increased enforcement and longer sentences, to alternative sentencing and more counseling and intervention-based programs. (For a recent review of the research on the root causes and

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impacts of youth violence, see Geo Education and Research, 2023, *Disrupting and Healing Trauma Associated with Youth Violence: Root Causes, Service Gaps, and Proven Strategies[42]*.)

In the U.S., from 2019 to 2020, firearm-related homicides, including community violence, increased by 39% for youths and young adults aged 10–24 years, with rates of suicide by firearm increasing by 15% in the same age group. In 2020, firearm-related injuries caused more deaths of persons aged 1–19 years than any other injury or other cause of death. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, there are glaring racial disparities. In 2020, the rate of homicides by firearm among Black males aged 10–24 years was 21.6 times as high as that among White males of the same age[43].

A study in Chicago examined the role of community violence in explaining the relation between socio-economic status (SES) and academic outcomes. Results support that lower SES was associated with lower academic achievement, and violent crime[44].

Nationwide, and indeed internationally, gangs have had profoundly negative impacts on youth, communities, and society as a whole. They destabilize local economies, commit crimes of violence including murder and assault, and disrupt the lives of thousands of people. (CITATION)

The federal definition of a gang as used by the Department of Justice is:

> An association of three or more individuals whose members collectively identify themselves by adopting a group identity, which they use to create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation, whose purpose in part is to engage in criminal activity and which uses violence or intimidation to further its criminal objectives[45].

According to the National Gang Center Office of Justice Programs, as of August 2023, there are 33,000 violent gangs active in the United States. "Street gangs can present significant challenges to the safety of communities and the well-being of children, youth, and families. To begin to break the cycles of gang crime and violence, it is critical to build comprehensive solutions across a spectrum of prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies[46]." Even small gangs can provide substantial challenges to law enforcement agencies. *Reducing Violent Crime in American Cities: An Opportunity to Lead* (Police Foundation, 2017, p. 51) noted that, "*Gang members, their affiliates, and youth are increasingly resorting to gun use to conduct business, resolve conflicts, and assert dominance....These smaller gangs and gang affiliates create a unique set of problems for law enforcement.*"

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[42] https://tinyurl.com/peacepointyouthviolenceGeo
[43] http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su7201a3
[44] Ruiz LD, McMahon SD, Jason LA. The Role of Neighborhood Context and School Climate in School-Level Academic Achievement. Am J Community, 2018.
[45] https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/what-gang-definitions

[46] National Gang Center, Office of Justice Programs, US Dept. of Justice 2023

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According to data collected by World Population Review[47] as of March 2023, there were 33,000 identified gangs in the United States, with a combined membership of over 1 million. According to their report, gangs active in Washington included Bandidos, Hombres, Amigos, Destralos, Canyon Riders, Unforgiven, Warriors, Brother Speed, Free Souls, Ghost Riders, Gypsy Jokers, Hells Angels, Nomads, Resurrection, Iron Horseman, Mongols, and Outsiders. These are just the gangs with national affiliation; many youth gangs operate independently of any larger gangs[48].

LINC Organization and Goals

The Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) was founded in 2006 and adopted the Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM) of the National Gang Center a project funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). "The NGC is an integral component of the Justice Department's mission to provide innovative leadership in coordination with federal, state, local, and tribal justice systems to prevent and reduce crime. The NGC disseminates information, knowledge, and outcome-driven practices that engage and empower those in local communities with chronic and emerging gang problems to create comprehensive solutions to prevent gang violence, reduce gang involvement, and suppress gang-related crime[49]."

Leadership, Intervention, and Change (LINC) (https://ccyj.org/our-work/reducing-gang-violence/) is an initiative focused on the communities of south King County Washington. LINC takes a collaborative, intervention-based approach to addressing youth violence. A grant funded project within the Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ) based in Seattle, Washington. LINC serves as a coordinating agency to support other agencies and school districts serving at-risk youth in the Puget Sound region.

As a part of this initiative, in 2011 CCYJ established the LINC Steering Committee a regional gathering of high level officials and community representatives from King County. The LINC membership includes policymakers with decision-making authority including law enforcement, prosecution, juvenile probation/parole, juvenile court, school districts, social services, and local government.

"The LINC Steering Committee model is designed to break down the systemic and procedural barriers that dissuade cross-system collaboration, coordination, and integration. Based on an understanding of the complexities of youth violence and the recognition that no single branch of government, jurisdiction, or agency is equipped to effectively address this issue alone, LINC seeks to promote a comprehensive response in which community organizations, schools, law enforcement, and local government agencies work together to develop policy goals and action strategies that reflect the current landscape of youth violence and utilize the best information, research, and practices available[50]."

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[47] https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/gangs-by-state

[48] https://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/article/a-moment-with-gabriel-morales-local-gang-1292977.php

[49] https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/comprehensive-gang-model

[50] https://ccyj.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/LINC.Community.Assess.Full_.2018.pdf

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LINC Goals

In the short-term, LINC:

- Creates individualized intervention plans with input from youth who are gang/group-involved,
- Engages youth who are gang/group-involved in direct services to address their specific needs, and
- Connects youth and their families with services to support their needs and safety.

In the long term, LINC:

- Improves coordination of agencies serving youth who are gang/group-involved,
- Leverages existing resources to better serve youth who are gang/group-involved,
- Reduces gang/group-related violence in the community,
- Supports all five Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM) core strategies,
- Creates systemic and community-wide change to reduce gang/group involvement, and
- Improves outcomes for youth and families.

To reach these goals, LINC convenes a bi-weekly staffing meetings of multi-disciplinary intervention teams (MDITs) to share information and on-going work and to debrief the outcomes of youth served by the agencies. There are three LINC MDITs. The boundaries of all but Seattle LINC are defined as the school district boundaries.

- LINC 1 – Renton, Tukwila, and Highline
- LINC 2 – Federal Way, Kent, and Auburn
- Seattle LINC – Neighborhoods in south Seattle

Figure 2, below, shows the muti-agency, multi-disciplinary approach of LINC.

Figure 2 | LINC Service Model

For a comprehensive overview of LINC and how it provides services see the LINC Manual here.

A major emphasis of the LINC partnerships is on supporting youth who are involved, as participants or as victims, with youth gangs[51]. Nationwide, and indeed internationally, gangs have had profoundly negative impacts on youth, communities, and society as a whole. They destabilize local economies, commit crimes of violence including murder and assault, and disrupt the lives of thousands of people[52].

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[51] In some instances, groups of people who are not organized into formal gangs exhibit the same behaviors as gangs. However, since "group" is a broad term with a wide range of meanings in common use, the term "gang" will be used throughout this report to refer to both structured gangs and violent/criminal groups.
[52] https://youth.gov/youth-topics/preventing-gang-involvement/adverse-effects

Figure 3 shows the school districts with which LINC works.

Figure 3 | LINC Participating School District Boundaries[53]

[53] South Seattle is the part of the Seattle School District in which LINC is engaged. This map was developed by the Puget Sound Educational Service District Road Map Project which has developed other useful information on these districts.
(See: https://roadmapproject.org/our-region/)

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2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT UPDATE

In 2018, Maike and Associates conducted a community assessment to provide LINC and their partners and supporters a comprehensive look at the status of the communities LINC serves. This report updates that work and provides current data on community demographics, information on the school districts in south King County, research on gang violence in the region, perceptions of youth on a survey of their health and safety, and perceptions of LINC community partners.

The purpose of this regional update is to provide a current understanding of the existing factors that may be contributing to and/or influencing group/gang involvement and violent crime. Findings from this report are intended to inform future project planning and to provide information to reassess and realign implementation planning (as needed) including adoption of strategies and practices across a continuum of supports – prevention, intervention, suppression, and re- entry.

Community Demographics

The population of the LINC communities has grown since the 2018 Community Assessment, with Auburn (+7,386) showing the most growth, and Kent a close second (+6,878). (Seattle population data are included here for the first time; in 2018 those data were reported separately.) All communities and the State showed increases in the percentages of their populations who are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, including Hispanic or Latino residents). Currently, BIPOC residents as percentage of the population total 34.9% in Washington, 45.0% in King County, 37.8% in Seattle, and between 49.1% and 70.2% in the various cities of south King County. There were slight increases in the percentages of residents who were born abroad and who speak English as a second language. The percentage of residents who have a high school diploma either increased or remained substantially the same The percentage is currently 54.0% in King County, 65.9% in Seattle, and between 24.0% and 35.3% in the various cities of south King County. Unemployment rates are generally higher, but poverty rates are lower.

Additionally, the percentage of King County residents who are born outside the country has been increasing to where they represent nearly 26% of the population. "From 2010 to 2022, King County's foreign-born population grew by 186,000 a remarkable 47% increase."[54]

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[54] https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/new-king-county-milestone-one-quarter-of-residents-born-outside-u-s/

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Table 3 | Community Demographics 2023[55]

	WA	KING CO.	Auburn	Burien	Federal Way	Kent	Renton	SeaTac	Seattle	Tukwila
Population	7,785,786	2,266,789	84,858	50,806	97,873	134,392	104,047	30,525	749,256	21,377
Population Change Since 2018	6.4%	1.7%	8.7%	-0.4%	1.1%	5.1%	3.0%	5.4%	0.8%	6.3%
Male	50.5%	50.8%	50.1%	51.3%	50.8%	51.2%	50.0%	54.3%	50.7%	54.1%
Female	49.5%	49.2%	49.9%	48.7%	49.2%	48.8%	50.0%	45.7%	49.3%	45.9%
White	65.1%	55.0%	50.9%	47.9%	39.9%	40.2%	43.2%	32.8%	62.2%	29.8%
African American	4.6%	7.4%	7.2%	9.0%	17.0%	12.2%	8.0%	22.3%	6.8%	19.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.0%	1.0%	1.7%	0.4%	0.9%	0.5%	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%	0.8%
Asian	10.5%	21.7%	12.0%	14.6%	14.3%	22.1%	24.3%	13.5%	16.3%	24.1%
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.8%	0.9%	2.8%	0.7%	2.2%	2.1%	1.0%	3.2%	0.2%	3.5%
Two or More Races	5.3%	5.6%	11.0%	9.0%	12.0%	9.8%	11.4%	8.2%	8.8%	6.5%
Hispanic or Latino	14.0%	10.5%	17.4%	22.6%	16.9%	16.2%	15.6%	21.7%	7.2%	18.0%
All People of Color	34.9%	45.0%	49.1%	52.1%	60.1%	59.8%	56.8%	67.2%	37.8%	70.2%
Speaking a language other than English at home	*20.3%*	28.9%	31.0%	33.7%	36.3%	42.5%	37.3%	48.1%	22.1%	46.2%
Foreign Born	14.7%	24.2%	22.8%	24.9%	26.1%	32.2%	28.4%	38.9%	14.7%	39.2%
Unemployed	5.3%	5.7%	6.9%	5.7%	7.2%	7.6%	6.4%	8.2%	5.3%	7.1%
In poverty	9.9%	9.3%	9.6%	11.7%	11.3%	11.3%	7.9%	10.7%	10.0%	12.4%
High school diploma	91.9%	93.7%	88.8%	83.0%	89.5%	87.2%	90.0%	84.3%	95.5%	81.5%
BA or higher	37.3%	54.0%	26.6%	29.0%	29.7%	27.8%	35.2%	24.0%	65.9%	25.6%

Individual City Profiles

Auburn

The City of Auburn is the 14th largest city in Washington State and 7th largest in King County, with a population of approximately 85,000 people according to U.S. Census data. This is about a 9% increase since the 2018 Community Assessment. Centrally located between Tacoma and Seattle in south King County, Auburn shares a border with the City of Kent to the north, and the City of Federal Way to the west. As seen in Table 3, male and female residents are similarly represented, and most of the residents have at least a high school diploma (88.8%), slightly below the state rate (91.9%). About 6.9% of Auburn residents are unemployed, and 9.6 percent of individuals live below the poverty level (down from 14.4% in 2018). The residents are about equally White/non-Hispanic and people of color. The percentage of

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[55] Source: US Census Quick Facts 2023. Unemployment data only from American Community Survey, Census Bureau, 2021 estimates

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residents who are foreign born is 22.8%, above the state rate (14.7%), with over one-quarter of the population speaking a language other than English at home (28.9%).

The **Auburn School District[56]** has a student population of 17,896. 71.3% of the student body are people of color, and 64.3% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.[57]

Burien

The City of Burien is a young city, incorporated in 1993, with a population of nearly 51,000 residents according to 2023 U.S. Census data (Table 3). The City is bounded by six miles of shoreline along the Puget Sound to the west, with the city of SeaTac to the east, White Center to the north, and Normandy Park bounding its southern border. Male and female residents are similarly represented, and 83% of the population has at least a high school education (below the State rate). The percentage of the population that is unemployed in Burien (5.7%) is slightly above the state average (5.3%), however, 11.7% of residents are living in poverty – above the State norm but down from 17.4% in 2016. Over half of the population (52.1%) are people of color, approximately 17 percentage points above the State average. Among minority groups, Hispanic/Latinos comprise 22.6%, with 14.6% of the population Asian, and 9.0% African American. Just over one-third of residents (33.7%) speak a language other than English at home – considerably above the State rate – and one-quarter (24.9%) are foreign born, which is about 10 percentage points above the State norm (14.7%).

Burien is a part of the **Highline School District**. Highline has a student population of 18,077. 82.3% of the student body are people of color, and 69.5% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

Federal Way

The City of Federal Way has a population of approximately 98,000 and is the fifth largest city in King County. Federal Way is located west of I-5, with Des Moines to the north and the Puget Sound and Tacoma to the southwest. Census data (Table 3) indicate that the city is more diverse than the State population as a whole, with over half (60.1%) of the residents being people of color, which is about a 10 percentage point increase since 2018. The population includes 16.9% who are Hispanic/Latino, 14.3% who are Asian, and 17.0% who are African American. Slightly more than half of the residents are male and most of the residents have at least a high school diploma (89.5%). Approximately 7.2% of Federal Way residents are unemployed, and 11.3% of individuals live below the poverty level. Over one-third of residents (36.3%) speak a language other than English at home and 26.1% are foreign born – both at rates above the State as a whole.

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[56] School District information throughout this section were retrieved from the Washington State Report Card at https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us
[57] By comparison 50.8% of all public school students in Washington are people of color, and 49.9% are considered low income.

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Federal Way School District has a student population of 21,701. 79.8% of the student body are people of color, and 74.4% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

Kent

The City of Kent is the sixth largest city in Washington State, and third largest in King County, with a population of approximately 134,000 people. The City's western border is shared with the Cities of Des Moines and SeaTac, with Tukwila and Renton to the north, and Auburn to the south. As indicated in Table 3, gender is similarly represented and most residents have at least a high school diploma (87.2%), a rate below the State average. About 7.6% of Kent residents are unemployed, similar to other LINC cities, and 11.3% of individuals live below the poverty level. The majority of the community is comprised of people of color (59.8%), nearly 25 percentage points above the State level. Asian (22.1%) and Hispanic/Latino (16.2%) residents comprise the largest minority groups. The proportion of residents who are foreign born is 32.2%, over double the State rate (14.7%), with 42.5% speaking a language other than English at home.

The **Kent School District** has a student population of 25,462. 71.8% of the student body are people of color, and 59.2% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

Renton

According to U.S. Census data (2022), the City of Renton has a population of approximately 104,000 and is the 9th largest city in the State of Washington and 4th largest in King County. Centrally located on the west side of the county, directly south of Lake Washington, Renton shares a border with Seattle to the north, the city of Tukwila to the west, and Kent to the south. Male and female residents are equally represented, and 90 percent of the population has at least a high school education. The percentage of the population that is unemployed (6.4%) in Renton is above the State average (5.3%), with (7.9%) residents living in poverty (a decline since the 2018 assessment). Over half of the population (56.8%) are people of color, more than 20 percentage points above the state rate. Among minority groups, Asians comprise 24.3%, with 15.6% of the population Hispanic/Latino, and 8% African American. Over one-third of residents (37.3%) speak a language other than English at home – considerably above the State rate – and 28.4% percent are foreign born, more than twice the State rate (14.7%).

The **Renton School District** has a student population of 15,282. 78.7% of the student body are people of color, and 53.7% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

SeaTac

The City of SeaTac is 10 square miles in area and has a population of approximately 30,500 according to U.S. Census data. The city boundaries surround the Seattle–Tacoma International Airport (approximately 3 square miles in area), which is owned and operated by the Port of Seattle. SeaTac is located approximately midway between the cities of Seattle and Tacoma, and includes the communities of Angle

Lake, Bow Lake, McMicken Heights, and Riverton Heights (established prior to the city's incorporation). The city is a culturally and economically diverse community, with a large majority minority population (67.2%) – almost twice that of the State rate. Among minority groups, 22.3% of residents are African American, 21.7% are Hispanic/Latino, and 13.5% of the population are Asian. Male residents comprise a majority of the population (54.3%) and 84.3% of residents have at least a high school education (below the State rate of 91.9%). Ther percentage of residents living in poverty has declined significantly from 18.5% to 10.7% since the last assessment, but 8.2% are unemployed, the highest rate among the LINC communities. The percentage of residents who are foreign born is 38.9%, well above the State rate (14.7%), and nearly half of the population (48.1%) speak a language other than English at home, well above the State rate (20.3%).

SeaTac is a part of the **Highline School District**. Highline has a student population of 18,077. 82.3% of the student body are people of color, and 69.5% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

Seattle

Seattle is by far the largest city in Washington at almost 750,000 residents – 10% of the total State population. It is in the center of the greater Seattle region, which includes many of the other LINC cities to the south and other large population areas to the north and east. Seattle is bounded by Bellevue to the east and the Puget Sound to the west. (It should be noted that LINC primarily serves south Seattle, but no census data are available that represent just those neighborhood served.) The city is the least ethnically diverse community within the LINC region, with a minority population of 37.8%. Asian (16.3%), African American (6.8%) and Hispanic/Latino (7.2%) residents comprise the largest minority groups. Seattle has a similar percentage of male and female residents, and 95.5% of the population has at least a high school education (the highest in the LINC region). 5.3% of Seattle residents are unemployed, the same as the state average, and 10% live in poverty. Just over a fifth of the city's population (22.1%) speak a language other than English at home and 14.7% are foreign born, identical to the State percentage.

The **Seattle School District** has a student population of 51,537. 54.5% of the student body are people of color, and 35.4% are considered low-income based, on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

Tukwila

The City of Tukwila has a population of approximately 21,000 people. Tukwila is located in the heart of southwest King County, running along I-5 from south Seattle past the I-405 interchange to Kent. Tukwila shares a border with SeaTac to the west and Renton to the east. The city is one of the most ethnically diverse communities within the LINC region, with the largest majority minority population (70.2%) of the communities served by LINC. Asian (24.1%), African American (19.2%) and Hispanic/Latino (18%) residents comprise the largest minority groups. Tukwila has a higher percentage of male residents (54.1%) and 81.5 percent of the population has at least a high school education (below the State rate and the lowest percentage in the LINC region). 12.4 percent of Tukwila residents live in poverty which is substantially less

that the 21.5% poverty rate reported in 2018. 7.1% are unemployed. Nearly half of the City's population (46.2%) speak a language other than English at home and 39.2% percent are foreign born, considerably above the State rate of 14.7%.

The **Tukwila School District** has a student population of 2,737. 89.4% of the student body are people of color, and 80.9% are considered low-income, based on their participation in the free and reduced lunch program at their school.

Comments

The population of King County has grown by 1.7% since the last Community Assessment in 2018. Accordingly, all of the cities served by LINC have grown as well, with the exception of Burien which has declined slightly. The most growth has been in Auburn at 8.7%, well above even the state growth at 6.4%.

There continues to be a great deal of diversity in the south King County region. The percentage of people of color ranges from 30.2% (SeaTac) to 58% (Southeast Seattle). The rate of poverty and unemployment is high in the LINC cities. Whereas King County overall has a poverty rate of 9.3%, the cities served by LINC range from 7.9% to 12.4% (Tukwila) with a weighted average of 10%. Also, several cities in the region have levels of post-secondary academic achievement well below the overall county average.

The following section will look at health statistics by cities as health outcomes play a powerful role in the stability of communities. According to the National Library of Medicine, "With reference to the association between health and social-welfare problems, it is found that among families with reported illnesses, accidental injuries and hospitalizations . . . 12 per cent have social-welfare problems currently in contrast to only 5 per cent among families with no reported illness, accident, or hospitalization."[58]

General Health Indicators in the LINC Communities

Every 3-4 years, the Seattle & King County Public Health Department publishes rankings of the 48 health reporting areas in the County. They publish multiple rankings on a wide variety of measures. For the purpose of this report, their most recent findings from October 2022 are presented in the areas of General Health Indicators and Injury and Violence[59].

The following tables show through color coding the ranking of the LINC communities relative to other reporting areas in the County. Blue indicates the area is among the healthiest on that indicator, and red indicates the area is among the least healthy. Because of the way the County reports their data, some LINC cities are shown by geographic region. There are no findings just for south Seattle, so the data from southeast Seattle are presented below.

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[58] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2690263/
[59] Their complete data set can be accessed at https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/health/data/city-health-profiles.

Table 4 | General Health Indicators Ranking Among Reporting Areas (October 2022)

Health Reporting Area	Life Expectancy at Birth	Fair or Poor Health	Frequent Mental Distress	Unhealthy Days (18+ days)	Unhealthy Days (65+ days)	Disability %
Auburn North	1 (red)	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	1 (red)
Auburn South	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	1 (red)	n/a	1 (red)
Burien	1 (red)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	1 (red)
East Federal Way	1 (red)	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	1 (red)	1 (red)
Federal Way Central	1 (red)	1 (red)	3 (green)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)
Federal Way Dash Point	1 (red)	2 (orange)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	1 (red)
Kent – East	1 (red)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	1 (red)	n/a	1 (red)
Kent - Southeast	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)
Kent – West	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	n/a	1 (red)
Renton – East	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	4 (blue)	4 (blue)	2 (orange)
Renton – North	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	1 (red)	n/a	3 (green)
Renton - South	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)	3 (green)	3 (green)
Southeast Seattle	2 (orange)	1 (red)	1 (red)	3 (green)	2 (orange)	2 (orange)
SeaTac/Tukwila	1 (red)	1 (red)	2 (orange)	1 (red)	1 (red)	1 (red)

Color Coding 1-4, Low to High: 1 (red) | 2 (orange) | 3 (green) | 4 (blue) | n/a – Data not available

Table 5 | Injury and Violence Ranking Among Reporting Areas (October 2022)

Health Reporting Area	Suicide	Homicide	Firearm-Related Death	Firearm in Home
Auburn North	orange (2)	red (1)	red (1)	red (1)
Auburn South	red (1)	n/a	red (1)	orange (2)
Burien	orange (2)	red (1)	red (1)	orange (2)
East Federal Way	green (3)	n/a	red (1)	red (1)
Federal Way Central	orange (2)	red (1)	red (1)	red (1)
Federal Way Dash Point	orange (2)	red (1)	orange (2)	orange (2)
Kent – East	blue (4)	orange (2)	orange (2)	orange (2)
Kent - Southeast	blue (4)	red (1)	orange (2)	orange (2)
Kent – West	red (1)	red (1)	orange (2)	orange (2)
Renton – East	green (3)	n/a	orange (2)	green (3)
Renton – North	red (1)	n/a	orange (2)	green (3)
Renton - South	green (3)	orange (2)	red (1)	orange (2)
Southeast Seattle	blue (4)	red (1)	orange (2)	green (3)
SeaTac/Tukwila	orange (2)	red (1)	red (1)	orange (2)

Color Coding 1-4, Low to High — 1 (red) · 2 (orange) · 3 (green) · 4 (blue) · n/a – Data not available

Comments

Clearly the health indicators from the LINC communities show many areas of concern, particularly in life expectancy, general health, homicides, and firearm-related deaths. The data reported by the Health Department do not attribute the deaths to any cause, but data presented previously on the gang related activities in the LINC region add some context to these data.

Student and School Characteristics within LINC School Districts

Decades of research have confirmed that **experiences with violence are associated with a variety of adverse behavioral and mental health and academic outcomes for children and adolescents**. In a study to examine the relation between neighborhood violent crime (via police reports) and academic performance (via school-level standardized test proficiency rates) researchers found that greater numbers of crimes close to school buildings is related to lower levels of academic performance.[60]

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[60] Boxer P, Drawve G, Caplan JM. Neighborhood Violent Crime and Academic Performance: A Geospatial Analysis. Am J Community Psychol. 2020 Jun; 65(3-4):343-352. doi: 10.1002/ajcp.12417. Epub 2020 Feb 3. PMID: 32017143.

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In order to understand the experiences and background of youth in any community, it is important to know about their schools. Students spend half of their waking hours in school and a great many of the factors that influence their present and future lives are connected to school and their experiences there.

Table 6 | K-12 Enrollment Demographics for LINC Region Schools 2022-2023

	WA	Auburn	Burien*	Federal Way	Kent	Renton	SeaTac*	Seattle	Tukwila
K-12 Enrollment	1,096,431	17,896	18,077	21,701	25,462	15,282	18,077	51,537	2,737
Male	51.5%	51.5%	51.9%	51.4%	51.7%	51.4%	51.9%	51.4%	50.2%
Female	48%	48.5%	47.6%	48.3%	48.1%	48.5%	47.6%	47.5%	48.1%
Gender X**	0.4%	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	1.1%	1.7%
White	49.2%	29.7%	17.7%	20.2%	28.2%	21.3%	17.7%	45.5%	10.6%
African American	4.7%	8.3%	14.4%	15.5%	13.4%	14.6%	14.4%	14.6%	18.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.2%	1.1%	0.7%	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	0.4%	0.7%
Asian	8.7%	13%	14.6%	13.1%	21.8%	24.6%	14.6%	12.3%	24.2%
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1.4%	5.6%	3.4%	6.2%	3.4%	1.2%	3.4%	0.5%	4.2%
Two or More Races	9.2%	9.4%	9.2%	11.1%	9.5%	10.4%	9.2%	12.7%	6.1%
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	25.6%	32.8%	40.1%	33.4%	23.4%	27.7%	40.1%	13.9%	35.5%
All People of Color	50.8%	70.3%	82.3%	79.8%	71.8%	78.7%	82.3%	54.5%	89.4%
Non-Native English Speakers	13.4%	27.6%	33.8%	26.9%	25.7%	23%	33.8%	13.7%	39.6%
Free or Reduced Price Meals	49.9%	64.3%	69.5%	74.4%	59.2%	53.7%	69.5%	35.4%	80.9%
K12 Homelessness	3.3%	1.1%	7.3%	4.9%	2.0%	3.8%	7.3%	2.8%	9.4%
4 Year Adjusted Graduation Rate**	82.3%	85.7%	83.5%	87.1%	89.1%	83%	83.5%	87.6%	86.7%

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
*Burien and SeaTac are part of the Highline School District
**Chose not to identify as male or female
*** Adjusted Graduation Rate = Students are included in the cohort based on when they first entered 9th grade. The cohort is "adjusted" by adding in students that transfer into the school and by subtracting students who transfer out of the school.

Academic Achievement In Linc School Districts

Table 7 shows the achievement scores are based on the percent of students in each district who met the expected level of performance on the annual statewide achievement tests in spring of 2022 (the most recent scores available).
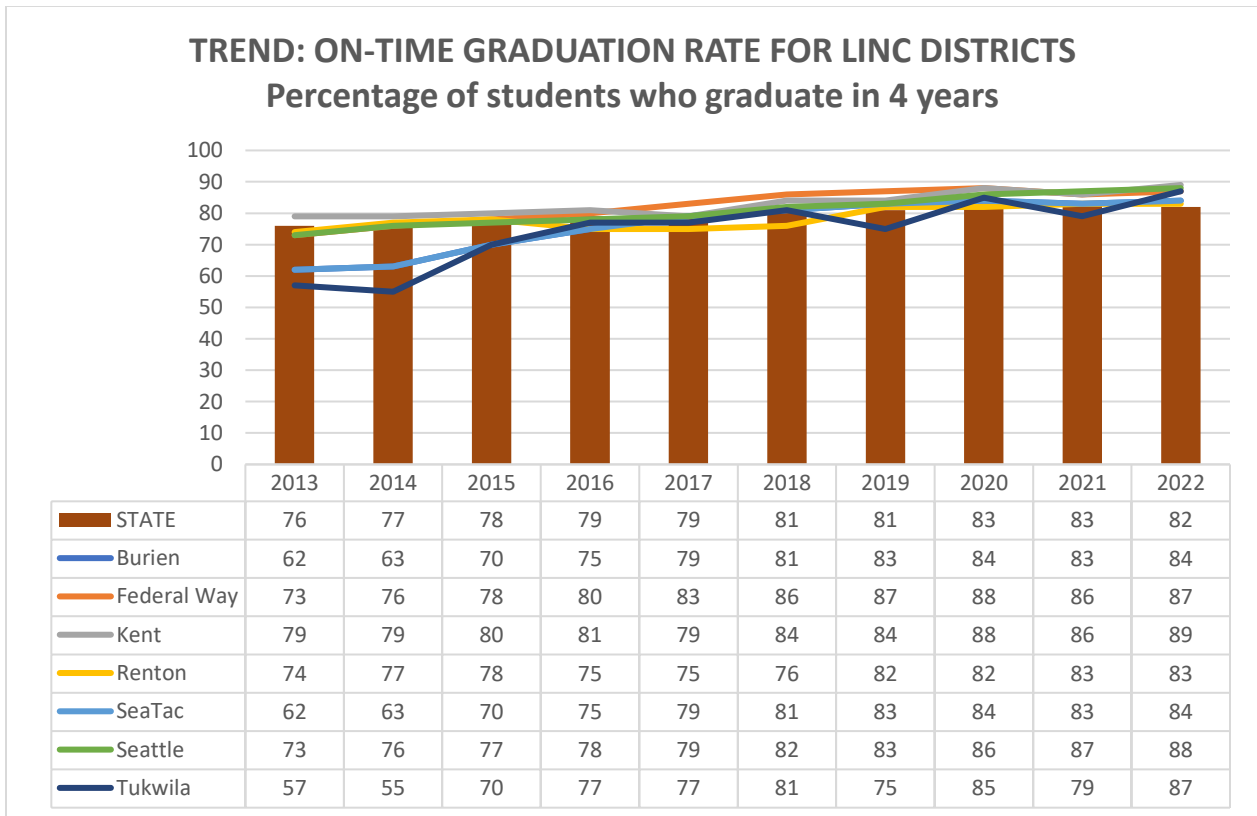
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Table 7 | Academic Achievement by School District for 2022

District	English language arts (% meeting standard)	Math (% meeting standard)	Science (% meeting standard)	Graduated in 4 years (%)
Auburn	43.6	30.2	35.1	86
Burien (Highline S.D.)	33.4	21.5	26.8	84
Federal Way	35.6	21.7	27.1	87
Kent	47.9	33.7	39.7	89
Renton	42.9	32.5	33.3	83
Sea Tac (Highline S.D.)	33.4	21.5	26.8	84
Seattle*	62.7	51.6	48.5	88
Tukwila	29.6	16.7	26.1	87
Washington State	50.7	37.7	42.7	82

Source: https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/

* Note: LINC serves mostly south Seattle but data are not available for just that area of the District.

Figure 4 | On-Time Graduation Rates by School District 2013-1022

TREND: ON-TIME GRADUATION RATE FOR LINC DISTRICTS
Percentage of students who graduate in 4 years

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
STATE	76	77	78	79	79	81	81	83	83	82
Burien	62	63	70	75	79	81	83	84	83	84
Federal Way	73	76	78	80	83	86	87	88	86	87
Kent	79	79	80	81	79	84	84	88	86	89
Renton	74	77	78	75	75	76	82	82	83	83
SeaTac	62	63	70	75	79	81	83	84	83	84
Seattle	73	76	77	78	79	82	83	86	87	88
Tukwila	57	55	70	77	77	81	75	85	79	87

Comments

Although the graduation rates of all the LINC school districts exceed that of the state overall, these data a mitigated by the fact that this is the graduation rate of youth who entered high school. It does not include those who dropped out before 9th grade. Also, despite achieving at least the minimum high school graduation requirements, none of the LINC districts besides Seattle show even 50% of their students meeting academic standards in literacy, math, or science. Even Seattle is just over 50% in math. It would not be surprising if these young people, the majority of whom in most LINC Districts are from low-income families, experience challenges as young adults in becoming productive citizens.

Washington State Healthy Youth Survey

Nationally, although the overall percentage of students ages 12-18 who reported that gangs were present at their school decreased from 20% in 2009 to 9% in 2019, there were some measurable differences in student reports of gang presence by student and school characteristics in 2019. For instance, higher percentages of Black (15%) and Hispanic (12% students compared to White (6%) and Asian (4%) students reported the presence of gangs at their school.

Furthermore, the percentage of students who reported avoiding one or more places in school because of fear of attack or harm was higher for students of two or more races (11%) and for Black students (7%) than for Hispanic (5%), Asian (4%), and White (4%) students. More urban cities (6% vs. rural 4%) and public-school students (5% vs private school 2%) reported fear of attack or harm in school[61].

To better understand the impact of gangs and violence in LINC community schools, Geo examined data from the **Washington State Healthy Youth Survey** (HYS)[62]. This survey is jointly sponsored by Washington State's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Health, Social and Health Service Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, and the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board.

The HYS has been administered to students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 every two years since 2002. (The HYS was not administered in 2020 due to COVID's impact on schools. It resumed in 2021.) Survey data are gathered from a simple, random selection of public schools throughout Washington State. No individual responses are ever reported; the lowest level of data reporting is the average per grade level at a school.

The HYS includes a number of questions that measure risk and protective factors for gang/group involvement, youth violence, and juvenile delinquency at the community, school, family, and individual/peer levels. Two HYS questions significant to this assessment measured whether students

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[61] *National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Students' Reports of Gangs at School. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.* COE - Students' Reports of Gangs at School (ed.gov)
[62] Home - Healthy Youth Survey (askhys.net)

reported a gang presence in their schools, as well as whether they (the student) belonged to a gang: "Are there gangs at your school?" and "During the past 12 months, have you been a member of a gang?"

The data presented below are from the HYS conducted in October 2021. (The HYS was administered in October of 2023, but the results will not be released until late February 2024.) Results focused on responses from 8th and 10th grade students in the LINC school districts and provide comparison data from the Washington State sample. Data were obtained from the respective LINC school districts and the Washington State Department of Health. It is also important to note that all the HYS data are self-reported by the students, but OSPI analyzes the HYS data each year to identify responses which are likely the result of students not taking the survey seriously; those responses are eliminated.

The HYS asks students many questions related to their own and their community's safety. (Not all students answer all of the questions; the results of two forms of the survey are compiled to develop the average responses.)

For the purpose of this report, data were collected from the LINC school districts on five direct questions and three "indicators" which are a summary of several other questions compiled by OSPI.

All of the LINC districts provided their HYS data, however in Highline an insufficient number of 8th graders completed the survey, and the state did not report these results.

The following figures show the percent of students responding "yes" to the question.

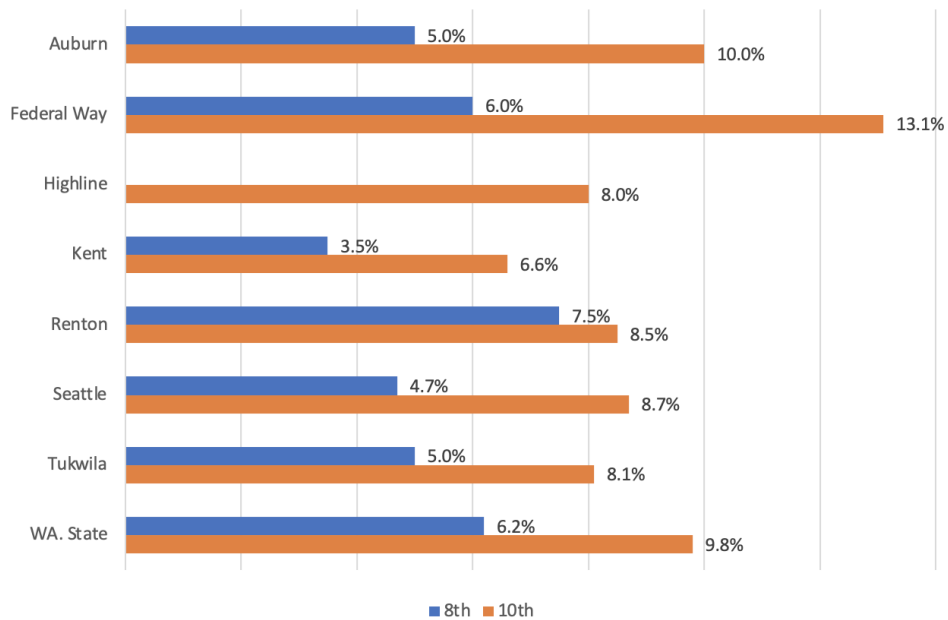**Figure 5 | Are there gangs in your school?**

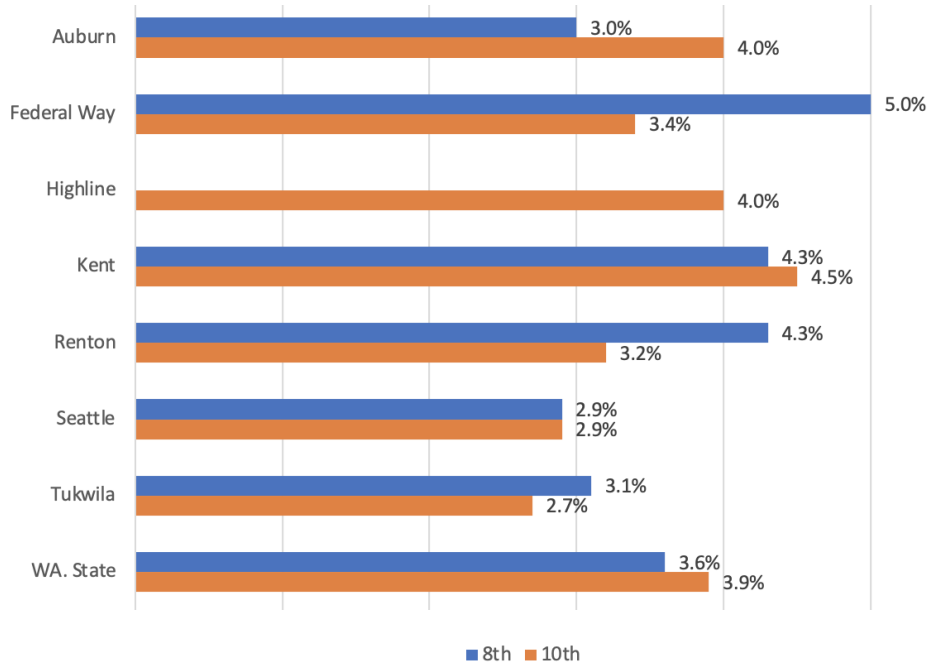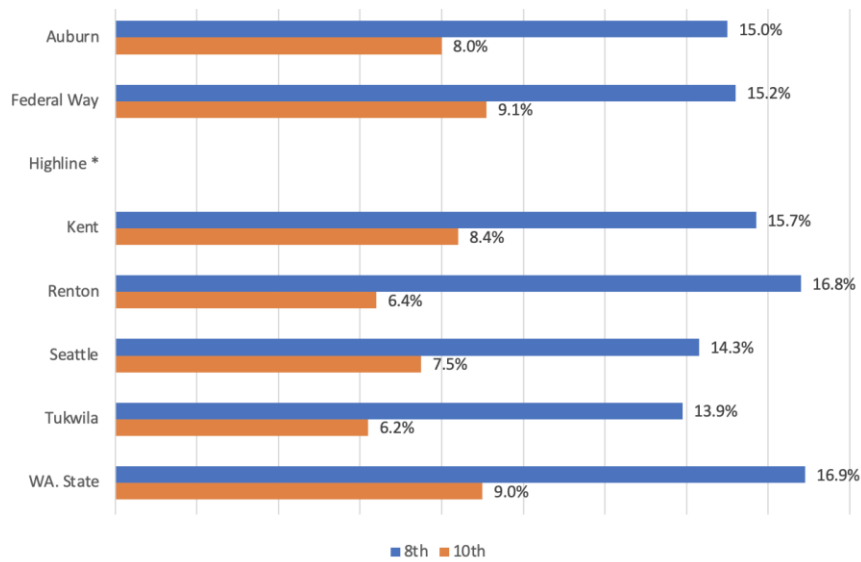**Figure 6 | During the past 12 months, have you been a member of a gang?**

District	8th	10th
Auburn	3.0%	4.0%
Federal Way	5.0%	3.4%
Highline		4.0%
Kent	4.3%	4.5%
Renton	4.3%	3.2%
Seattle	2.9%	2.9%
Tukwila	3.1%	2.7%
WA. State	3.6%	3.9%

■ 8th ■ 10th

Figure 7 | During the past 12 months, were you in a physical fight?

District	8th	10th
Auburn	15.0%	8.0%
Federal Way	15.2%	9.1%
Highline *		
Kent	15.7%	8.4%
Renton	16.8%	6.4%
Seattle	14.3%	7.5%
Tukwila	13.9%	6.2%
WA. State	16.9%	9.0%

■ 8th ■ 10th

* No results were reported to this question from Highline.

Figure 8 | During the past 30 days, did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?
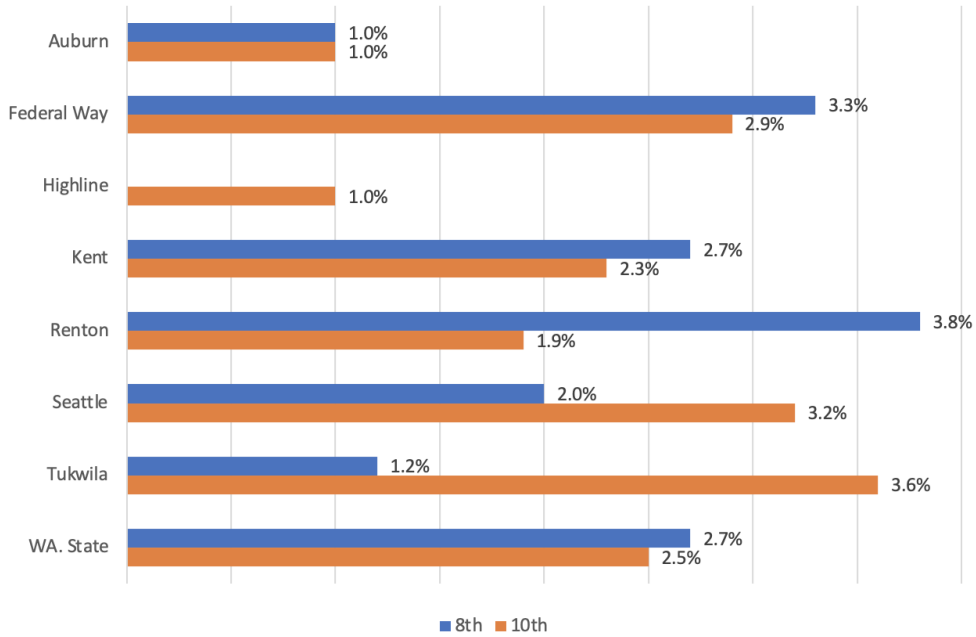
The following three items are a composite of responses to several questions related to each concept.
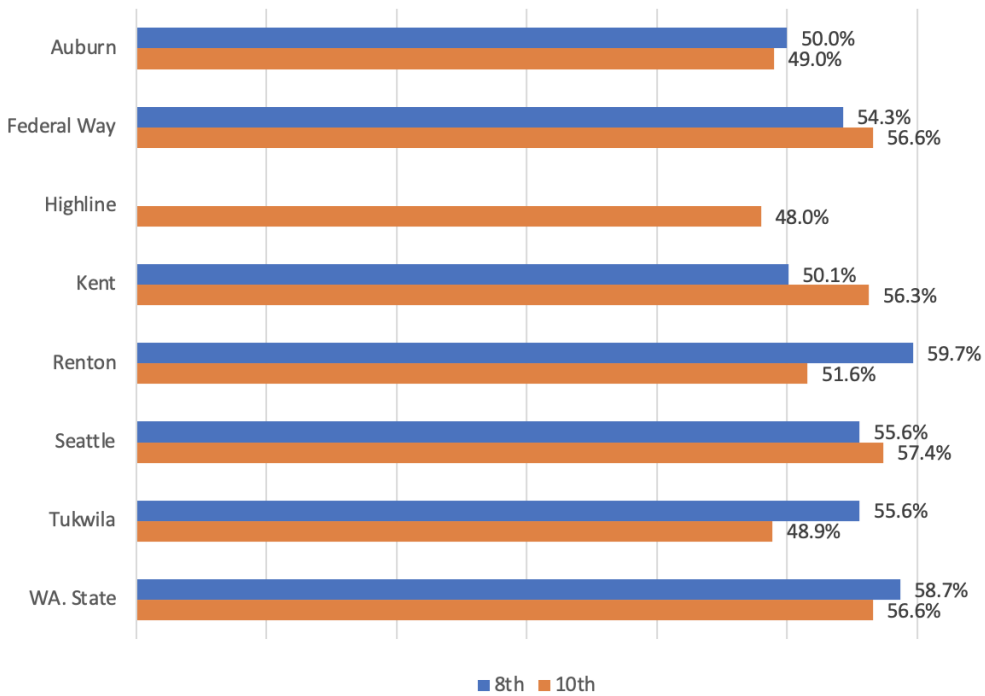
Figure 9 | Low commitment to school

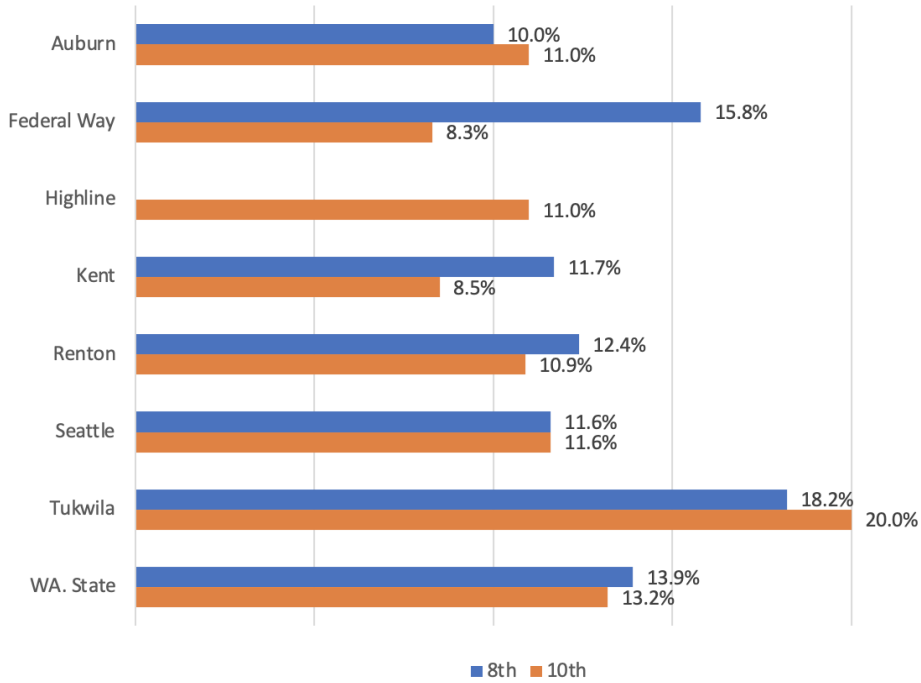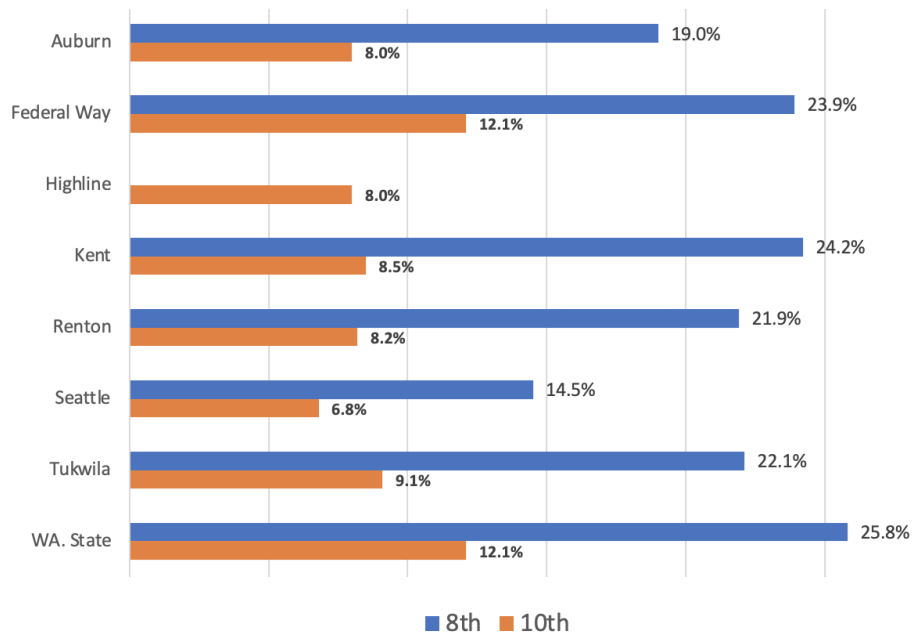**Figure 10 | Community risk – Perceived availability of drugs (% of youth at risk)**

	8th	10th
Auburn	10.0%	11.0%
Federal Way	15.8%	8.3%
Highline		11.0%
Kent	11.7%	8.5%
Renton	12.4%	10.9%
Seattle	11.6%	11.6%
Tukwila	18.2%	20.0%
WA. State	13.9%	13.2%

Figure 11 | Community risk – Perceived availability of guns (% of youth at risk)

	8th	10th
Auburn	19.0%	8.0%
Federal Way	23.9%	12.1%
Highline		8.0%
Kent	24.2%	8.5%
Renton	21.9%	8.2%
Seattle	14.5%	6.8%
Tukwila	22.1%	9.1%
WA. State	25.8%	12.1%

Comments

The following tables show the rank of each LINC region school district in terms of the percentage of youth reporting high levels of each activity or risk in their school. The districts are ordered from the most risk to the lowest.

Table 8 | HYS Rankings Grade 8

Gangs in School	Gang Member	Fight in School	Carry Weapon	Low School Commitment	Drug Risk	Guns Risk
Renton	Federal Way	Renton	Renton	Renton	Tukwila	Kent
Federal Way	Renton	Kent	Federal Way	Tukwila	Federal Way	Federal Way
Tukwila	Kent	Federal Way	Kent	Seattle	Renton	Tukwila
Auburn	Tukwila	Auburn	Seattle	Federal Way	Kent	Renton
Seattle	Auburn	Seattle	Tukwila	Kent	Seattle	Auburn
Kent	Seattle	Tukwila	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Seattle

Table 9 | HYS Rankings Grade 10

Gangs in School	Gang Member	Fight in School	Carry Weapon	Low School Commitment	Drug Risk	Guns Risk
Federal Way	Kent	Federal Way	Tukwila	Seattle	Tukwila	Federal Way
Auburn	Auburn	Kent	Seattle	Federal Way	Seattle	Tukwila
Seattle	Highline	Auburn	Federal Way	Kent	Auburn	Kent
Renton	Federal Way	Seattle	Kent	Renton	Highline	Renton
Tukwila	Renton	Renton	Renton	Auburn	Renton	Auburn
Highline	Seattle	Tukwila	Auburn	Tukwila	Kent	Highline
Kent	Tukwila		Highline	Highline	Federal Way	Seattle

The tables illustrate that, although there is variability by question, Renton, Kent, and Federal Way show the most risk indicators for youth in middle school with Seattle at a low level, but in high school Seattle, Federal Way, Tukwila, and Kent are perceived by their students as having the greatest risk.

GANG ACTIVITY IN THE LINC SERVICE AREA

In order to gather up-to-date data on gang activity in the region, Geo staff reached out multiple times to the law enforcement agencies in the LINC service area, including police departments and the sheriff's office. Despite repeated attempts to gather this information, as of the time of this report only two agencies responded. The data presented below are based on those responses and additional information gathered from national sources and local media. The fact that the King County Sheriff's Gang Unit was disbanded in 2014 and not reinstated until 2018 may have caused a disruption in the collection of data.[63]

Crime and Violence in King County

Reports of shootings and deaths by firearms in the Puget Sound region can be found in the local media almost daily, and Seattle area shootings are reported nationally as well.[64] [65] According to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Crime Strategies Unit, in the first quarter of 2023 there were 348 shootings, with 17 firearm homicide deaths and 50 non-fatal shooting victims – a total of 67 shooting victims in the county.[66]

Figure 12 | Distribution of Shooting Victims by Age
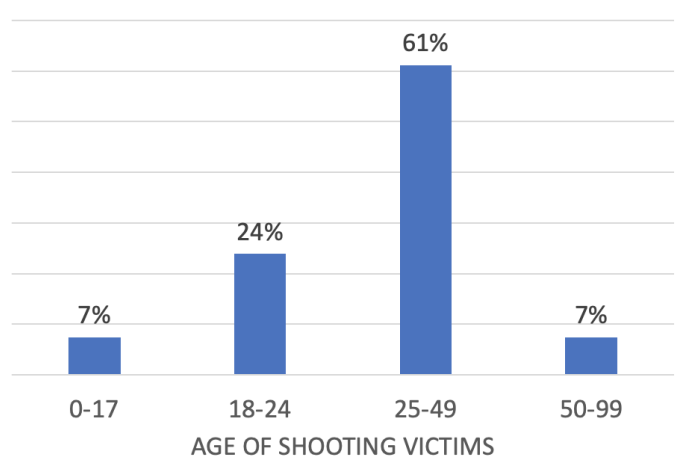
Clearly the impact of being a victim of a shooting in King Count falls most heavily on those ages 25-49. According to the report, 87% of these victims were men. Although no exact statistics were included, the report indicated that Black individuals were the greatest proportion of the victims, followed by non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanic and Latinos third, Asian and Pacific Islanders fourth, and multiracial individuals last.

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[63] https://www.fox13seattle.com/news/with-300-gangs-and-counting-king-county-leaders-look-to-revive-disbanded-gang-unit
[64] https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/police-investigating-deadly-shooting-downtown-renton/SOKXPRAIIJCE3AMGXJG3XIGCUQ
[65] https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/23/us/des-moines-shooting.html
[66] https://www.kentreporter.com/opinion/south-king-county-gangs-facts-and-figures-justice-bobbe-bridge

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Table 10 | Proportion of Shootings by LINC Community

City	Shootings	% of King Co. Pop.	% of Shootings	Differential
Seattle	157	33%	45%	12%
Auburn	30	3%	9%	6%
Kent	29	6%	8%	2%
Federal Way	19	4%	5%	1%
Renton	17	5%	5%	0%
Other Cities	96	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: Not all LINC communities were listed in the published report.

Seattle showed the greatest differential (12%) between its percentage of the County population and percentage of shootings, followed by Auburn (6%). The other cities listed in the report had shootings proportional to their populations.

Responses to Gang Audit

Multiple requests were sent to all of the police departments in the LINC cities asking for information regarding gang activity in their jurisdiction. Only two responses were received – Kent and Renton. Their responses are provided below.

Kent Police Department

Please name the groups/gangs known to be operating within your city/jurisdiction:

- Hoovers (primarily young black males)
- East Union Street Hustlers (primarily young black males)
- Playboy Sureños (primarily young Hispanic males)
- Sleeze Gang (primarily young black males)
- United Lokotes (primarily young Hispanic males)

Please describe the gang/group in terms of:

. . . estimated current numbers of active members

No real grasp on actual numbers

. . . specific location at the center of this gang's activities

Kent doesn't have any real specific gang territories. Members are scattered about the city

. . . core criminal activities in which the group is engaged

All of the listed gangs are involved in shootings, firearms violations, robberies, auto theft

. . . level of violence of the group

All could be categorized as somewhat violent, with moderate organization

. . . affiliation with any national or international crime organization

Unknown affiliation with any national level/ organized crime groups

Renton Police Department

Please name of one the groups/gangs known to be operating within your city/jurisdiction.
- United Locos (UL)
- King United Sureños (KUS)

Please describe the gang/group in terms of:

. . . estimated current numbers of active members
- UL 45 Members
- KUS 18 Members
- Estimated 63 Total

. . . general demographic makeup (gender, race, ethnicity, age)
Male, Hispanic and Ages 13-30 Years of Age

. . . specific location at the center of this gang's activities
The active area of the gang activities is entire North Renton area

. . .core criminal activities in which the group is engaged
Theft, vehicle theft, assaults, drug dealings, firearm dealings, shootings, assaults, sexual assaults, and murders

. . . level of violence of the group
100% extremely violent

. . . level of organization of the group
100% highly organized

. . . affiliation with any national or international crime organization
Sureños

Which groups are in conflict with this group, and which seem to be in an alliance?
- In conflict with Barrio King Locos (BKL)
- In alliance with all other Sureños

Federal Way Police Department

Please name the groups/gangs known to be operating within your city/jurisdiction.

1. Highway Hoover, which is closely associated/allied with the following sets:
   a. Sleeze – 6 associations extremely likely. Group tags/photos (social media) indicate 20+ (members). Diverse makeup. Territory is Fed Way/Kent/Auburn. Murder, drive-bys, stolen

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vehicles, robberies for MJ and vapes. Appears to be led by young adults/juveniles. Heavily recruits via social media.

b. Reggie – 3 associations extremely likely. Group tags/photos indicate ~6 (members). Diverse makeup. Territory is Federal Way. Robberies/territory intimidation/stolen vehicles. Unknown leadership, but very closely affiliated with Sleeze members. Heavily recruits via social media.

c. Glitch – 3 associations extremely likely. Group tags indicate ~8. (members) Mainly African American. 288th & Pac area. Murder/drive-bys/drugs. Leadership is in their 20s. Heavily recruits via social media.

d. Touch Money Gang (TMG) – 3 associations extremely likely. Unknown how large it is – I believe this set is very young. Seems to be heavily associated with both Hoover and GGG. Very diverse makeup. Territory is Decatur area & Burien/Des Moines. Members associated with Robberies, stolen vehicles, drugs. Appears to be led by juveniles. More private social media use.

e. 1st Circle – 12 associations extremely likely. Gets larger by the day – extremely influential. Very diverse group. Associated with 1st Ave in FW, but also Star Lake area. Members associated with drive-bys, robberies, stolen vehicles, assaults. Appears to be led by juveniles, but guided by Glitch. Heavily recruits via social media.

f. Hot Boiiz – 5 associations extremely likely. Group tags indicate 10 (members). Mostly African American. Territory is Park16/Todd Beamer area. Known for fights/assaults with injuries. Led by juveniles. Heavily recruits via social media.

2. 5 Star Damu – 8 associations extremely likely – but only a couple are FW residents – more South Seattle. Diverse makeup. Appears to have OG members as leadership. Murders/Robberies/Stolen vehicles. Less social media presence.

3. Holly Park
   a. Grimey Gangsta Gorillaz (GGG) – also allied with Sleeze & Reggie Hoovers. 4 FW associations extremely likely. Group photos/tags indicate a very large number of possible associations. FW members appear to generally drop out of Middle School in the Saghalie/Illahee area. Mostly African American members in FW. Associated with Murders, robberies, assaults, stolen vehicles, drugs, prostitution of minors. Appears to have OG leadership. Heavily recruits via social media.

   b. Dead on $ight (DOS) which I believe is also called Shoot on Sight (SOS) – 1 known FW member. Unknown group numbers. I don't know much about this group except that one known FW member dropped out of high school and was recently arrested for murder. No known social media presence.

   c. Down With the Crew (DWTC) – No known associations in FW. Unknown leadership. No known social media presence.

4. Central District
    a. Everybody Eats (EBE/21) – beefing with most of Federal Way gangs… 6 associations in FW area. Mainly African American. Unknown group numbers. Territory is in the central district and kids who've moved out of that area into FW. FW range is Lakota area to Thomas Jefferson. Known for Robberies, stolen firearms that I'm aware of. Private social media presence.

5. Highway Goonz (3) – at least 4 associations. Largely Pacific Islander makeup. Mirror Lake/TJ area. Known for sporadic robberies, not too active. Leadership appears to be in 20s. Very little recruiting behavior on social media.

6. Sureños – primarily Latinos. Very little recruiting behavior via social media in comparison to some other sets/gangs.
    a. Pacific North line Mobb (PNL) – newer set. More diverse than some of the other sets. Unknown numbers. Mostly active in Auburn-Renton area… Sounds like primarily Firearms/vehicle oriented crime. Unknown leadership.
    b. Kings Underground (KU) – 2 likely FW associations. Appear to be active from FW to Renton. A lot of graffiti, dispensary robberies.
    c. Kings Locos (KL) – 1 likely FW Association. Active from FW to Renton. A lot of graffiti and firearm offenses.
    d. United Locos (UL) – A lot of graffiti regarding this set in FW, but no known associations – I think they are more likely a Seattle set.
    e. 30th St – 3 associations likely. Decatur service area. Less active lately, but around 5 years ago, was active in drive-bys.
    f. Westway (21) – It's difficult to find out very much about this set, so I don't think they are very active, or they've been taken over by Hoovers moving into the area. Very active 5 years ago with violent crime. OG leadership. Decatur service area. More diverse makeup.
    g. Rancho San Pedro (RSP) – Used to have a large FW presence; seems to have moved into Auburn. Unknown associations. Involved recently in minor assaults that I'm aware of.
    h. Playboy Sureños (PBS) – Seems to be more oriented towards Kent. No known associations in FW. Associated with the car races.

7. 18th St – 2 known associations. Unknown group numbers. Central FW area. Firearm related offenses. OG leadership.

- **General Observations via statements made on social media on why kids turn to gangs:**
    - Children do not feel safe physically.
        - Peers – peers in gangs at school, show firearms on social media or inside the bathrooms, threaten to kill each other.
        - Family – domestic violence, homelessness, or history of gang involvement.

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- Environment – roaming bands of children looking to beat up lone children at apartment complexes, drive-bys, consistent need of police to keep them safe, but also the failure of the criminal justice system to keep victims or witnesses safe. Victims becoming Suspects –> If the adults don't take responsibility and advocate for safe communities, juveniles then take that responsibility upon themselves for survival.
- Children do not feel safe mentally
    - Drugs – supplied by the gangs for their effort within the gang, numbs what they've done, their current situation.
    - Phones & social media – a consistent, addictive bombardment of information, bullying, bad behavior.
    - Trauma – Drugs/social media and trauma all have an impact on brain development.
    - Peers/adults – criticism, never feeling good enough, not being placed correctly in programs to help them succeed (IE learning disabilities or ELL classes), rumors, vigilante justice.
    - No one is listening. No one knows how to help me. Lack of "windows/mirrors" to be show that others have been in similar situations and that there is hope to escape and be successful.
- Children feel like they are stuck – that the gang & their resultant death is expected & to make the best of their life in the meantime.
- Children are being groomed to enter the gang – and the grooming largely occurs on social media and at school. It's hard to care or to feel like you have power if you are constantly surrounded in violence – lack of hope.

Gang Information from Local Media

Through a telephone interview with *The Seattle Times,*[67] the following information was obtained.
- Gangs that have youth members in South Seattle are - Union Street Hustler; Down with the Crew; SHAKK in White Center; Grimmy Gangster Guerillas; Holly Park street gang; United LeCote (mainly Latino); South Side LeCote. There is also Reckless Marshal Kings in Auburn who are from the Marshall Islands.
- These gangs are involved in gun violence, drug related crimes, and bank fraud.
- The racial make-up of the gangs is mainly Black and Latino with some Asian such as Azian Boys.
- According to a presentation by Joe Gagliarti, a detective from King County Sheriff's Department in 2019, there were 116 gangs in King County with 15,000 members.
- There have been three gang-related homicides this year - two of them involve young people. One in March in Renton and one in July in Des Moines.

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[67] Seattle Times 11/9/2023 Personal Communication

Comments

Although it is difficult to obtain detailed information on youth and gang violence in the LINC service area, data found show that gangs continue to have a tragic impact on communities. The gangs are highly organized and highly violent. Just in one community (Federal Way) there are over 20 gangs although their membership overlaps and there are many affiliations among them. Clearly guns are readily available to young people and the range of crimes they commit is extensive. Progress to address the LINC goal to actively engage youth who are gang-related in pro-social activities is crucial to protecting communities in King County.

LINC COMMUNITY PARTNERS SURVEY

In the fall of 2023, 28 LINC community partners responded to an anonymous survey regarding the nature and scope of gang activity in their communities, the associated risks, community perceptions of the problem, and which strategies to address it have been successful or unsuccessful. The questions were designed to determine the extent to which the community partners see progress toward achievement of the LINC goals provided in the Introduction. Their responses are summarized below. (Note that in some cases the specific meaning of a response may be unclear, but as this survey was designed to assure anonymity, we are unable to ask for clarification.)

Are Gangs a Problem in Your Community?

Do you believe gangs are a problem in your community? If yes, what kinds of problems do gangs present in your community? Check all that apply.

Only one person did not believe gangs were a problem in their community, so clearly this continues to be a pervasive issue within the LINC service areas. Most of the options provided in the question were selected by most of the community partners with *fear in the community* and *increase in weapon crimes* most frequently mentioned. (Note that respondents to this question were able to add their own items to the list provided in the survey, so only the individual who added it voiced an opinion on the last item.)

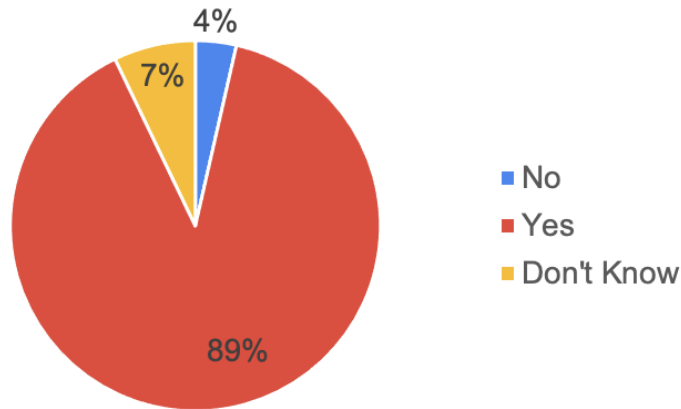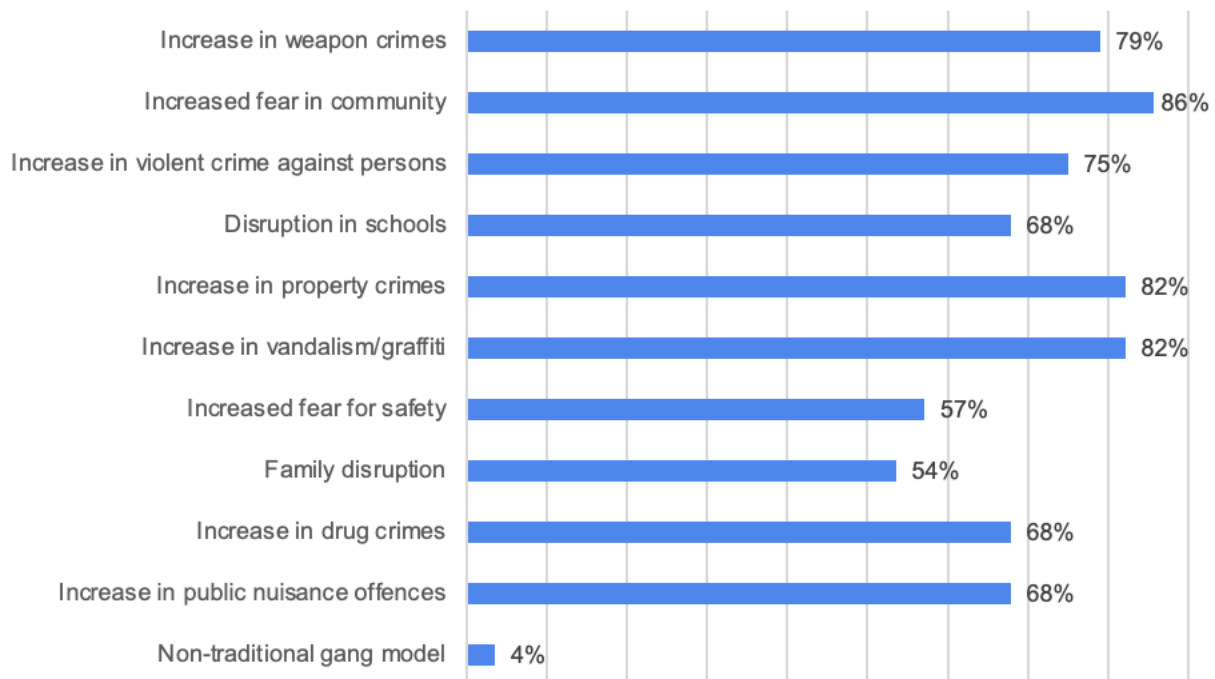**Figure 13 | Responses to Question 1 – Do you believe gangs are a problem in your community?**

- No
- Yes
- Don't Know

4%
7%
89%

Figure 14 | Responses to Question 1A - What kinds of problems do gangs present in your community?

|	
Increase in weapon crimes	79%
Increased fear in community	86%
Increase in violent crime against persons	75%
Disruption in schools	68%
Increase in property crimes	82%
Increase in vandalism/graffiti	82%
Increased fear for safety	57%
Family disruption	54%
Increase in drug crimes	68%
Increase in public nuisance offences	68%
Non-traditional gang model	4%

Reasons for Gang Activity in Your Community

Why do you believe there is gang activity in your community? Check all that apply.

There was more of a diversity of responses to this question. *Bonds to family/friends in gangs* (93%) *Lack of socially acceptable activities for youth (82%)*, *poverty*, and *family problems* (86%) are seen as major factors in gang involvement by almost all the community partners. (Note that respondents to this question were able to add their own items to the list provided in the survey, so only the individuals who added them voiced an opinion on the last six items.) Issues that are built into the structure of society include

poverty, racism, and prejudice. These are impossible to solve in any one program but can still be addressed. The other items are issues that can be and are being more directly addressed by LINC.

**Figure 15 | Responses to Question 2 - Why do you believe there is gang activity in your community?**
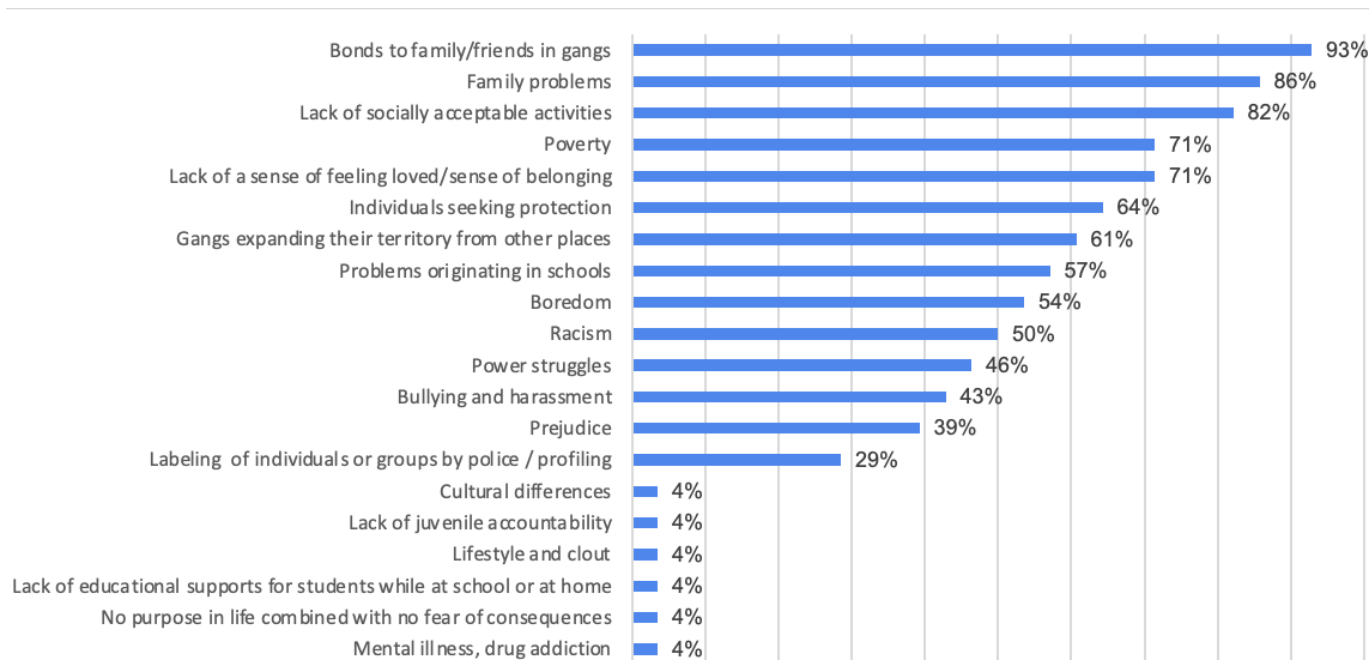
Is the Extent of Gang Activity Changing?

Do you believe that over the last five years gang activity has been increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same level among the youth in your community? Why do you think so?

About two-thirds of the community partners believe that gang activity has been increasing. No-one felt it is staying the same. Reasons for perceived increases which had repeated mentions include lack of pro-social activities (6 mentions), youth feeling a lack of connection (4 mentions), lack of accountability / consequences (3 mentions) , and impact of social media / online activities (3 mentions).

Figure 16 | Responses to Question 3 - Do you believe that over the last five years gang activity has been increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same level among the youth in your community?
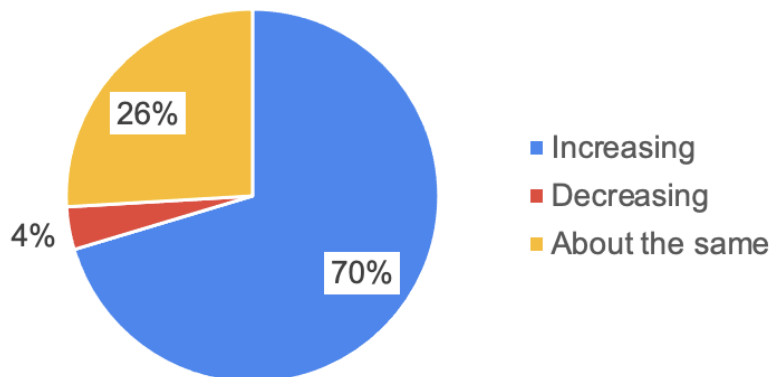
Responses to Question 3A: Why do you think so?

- More gang related violence and the age of youth engaged in gangs are younger
- Because we are seeing them in areas that we have not before due to cost of living and social media
- Lack of supervision, lack of pro-social activities in the community, lack of accountability
- Lack of activities for young people, lack of connection due to the pandemic - searching for connection and acceptance
- Lack of viable options of activities and resources for youth
- My community has had some interpersonal violence at a pretty steady level over time - blipped up during covid, but that was true everywhere in King County.
- Appears stabile based on crime, violence, and community/school feedback
- It is hard to say. There are different gangs now and more gangs, but I think membership is the same.
- That's probably not the most educated guess, but I think perception of crime and criminal activity is also more fluctuating than the reality.
- There is a lack of support and engagement with youth, no programs, jobs, or engagement for ideas for students to be productive citizens.
- Youth seeking protection and belonging to something outside themselves
- I've been hearing about new gangs coming online as well as increased gang activity in South King County.
- Gang activity is generally something very difficult to measure. My feeling is purely based on anecdotes, and I don't get the sense that it is appreciably worse or better.
- There are no consequences for criminal activity for juveniles unless it results in serious injury or death. We are not setting expectations for youth and instead allowing chaos. Juveniles need expectations but the supports to meet the expectations.
- Social media allows postings that show the glamorous side of gangs which aids in recruiting
- Covid exacerbated issues for youth as majority of them in our community were left alone at home while their parent(s) were deemed essential workers.
- Massive increase in violent crime such as robberies and car jackings with very young offenders

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- Social media is the main reason. Also, the change in charging makes juveniles more attractive to gang leadership - as they get out of jail faster and their charges are less likely to follow them. Juveniles have access to other juveniles at school - prime targets for dealers - as they create a supply of kids who need drugs. Kids get bullied at home/at school - find love/safety with the gang.
- Because of the number of shootings in the neighborhood reported.
- Just not enough opportunities for youth for they know they have choices to do better and not be scared to try
- Music, lack of extracurricular activities, lack of parental involvement and supervision, family power struggle
- More community organizations, such as us
- Because of the increased in violence and more gangs are being created at a rapid rate.
- It has increased because sub sections of each original groups were created. It has become a tree with many branches.
- Younger youth are being recruited

Law Enforcement Response to Gangs

What is the general response in your community to gangs by law enforcement?

The community partners observed that law enforcement response to gangs is impacted by insufficient staffing and resources as well as dealing with changes at the state level. Perhaps consequently, they saw an emphasis on reactivity and punitive measures and a lack of proactive efforts to stop gang violence before it occurs. One response did list a number of initiatives by law enforcement including building partnerships and instituting restorative practices. This description of the situation in south King County suggests that the LINC goals are correctly focused on building connections and providing resources to the community.

Responses

- Ignore it
- Lock them up -dismiss behaviors by labeling it a gang problem and not being accountable
- LE state they can only do so much, especially for kids who are younger.
- Unsure
- Lock gang members up . . .
- Profiling
- We respond to and address criminal behaviors- not individuals. We do extensive outreach with community partners and through school, work on healthy programming alternatives, use restorative practices for misconduct in school and society, and leverage financial/grant resources by working across disciplines.
- Not sure
- No other options, but we know that should be the last option.
- Seeking answers and government resources/responses

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- Differs by city/ Police Department. Many talk about the struggles they have around enforcing laws due to changes at the state level... they've also painted many of the "transformative approaches" as adding to the problem.
- Mainly, it is suppression.
- Law enforcement does not have enough staffing or resources to proactively respond. In addition, school resource officers have been removed to the youth detriment.
- Nothing specific
- Not enough response due to lack of staffing. Law enforcement suffers from low staffing which leads to responding to criminal acts instead of being pro-active in preventing crime.
- Strictly reactive. Due to a number of factors such as diminishing resources/staffing, there is zero proactive effort among LE to stop gang violence.
- Ignorance
- Locking them up
- Judging on how they look and skin color
- Issue
- Negative
- Unsure
- Most hope to seek them out and lock them up.
- Ignorance & punishment

How do Public Officials Respond to Gang Issues?

What is the general response in your community to gangs by public officials?

The response to gangs by public officials is characterized by six community partners as non-action and even denial that there is a gang problem. Two respondents cited public officials creating programs and support networks, but five of the responses perceive a lot of talk but little action. These observations by the community partners directly address the need for progress on the LINC goals of *leveraging existing resources* and *coordination of agencies*.

Reponses

- They don't know what to do.
- Not calling it a gang problem because then you would have to address it with resources
- They know it's a problem but don't really discuss how they're helping with it.
- Creating community programs to address gang violence
- Unsure
- Provide money to organizations but no coordination of services, processes, or philosophies.
- Alarmist messaging
- They fund the above resources, programs, and support networks.
- Not sure

- Right now, in general, we're entering a time of more fearmongering and tougher on crime rhetoric, so I think that translates to conversations about gangs.
- Tougher on crime
- Public forums
- Differs by city/ Mayor. Similarly, they talk about the struggles around handling the situation, lack of support from all levels of government and specifically in south King County, wanting more "tough on crime" measures.
- A combination of suppression and intervention
- Public officials seem too cautious to check the current juvenile criminal legal system.
- What gangs??
- Denial that they exist or that there is any problem whatsoever is the normal response.
- Ignorance
- Creating initiatives
- Not understanding their story or background
- Issue
- Negative
- Unsure
- Ignore them or send the police
- Focused on other things

How do Educators Respond to Gang Issues?

What is the general response in your community to gangs by educators?

The responses to this question paint a picture of educators who are aware of and concerned about the problem of gangs and try to support youth within their limited resources. (Note the comment to question 4 that school resource officers have been removed in some locations.) Seven community partners observed that educators, despite being fearful, want to be more proactive. Progress toward the LINC goals of *creating individualized intervention plans* and *engaging gang-involved youth in direct services* will be key to helping educators become key players in addressing the needs of youth.

Responses

- Ignore it or pass them to different schools
- To study it more and that takes the resources away from community and prolongs interventions
- Educators are worried for the safety of themselves and others while at school/in the community, they are concerned for the student and family situation but can only do so much.
- Unknown
- Some fear, but also looking to provide support
- Look to others for intervention
- Unsure

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- Same as above- build in support networks, limit criminal justice involvement for juveniles where possible, engage family members, assist with job placement, academics, and safety planning.
- Not sure
- I think they know that these are often expressions of other social problems and basic needs that aren't being met.
- Educators are seeing the impact firsthand in real time.
- Provide alternative learning and social/emotional
- Unsure
- Helplessness
- Public educators note resources and also truancy resources have also decreased.
- Provide resources
- Educators and schools don't respond to gangs, they provide education and strive for safety for those attending school.
- Desire to understand why kids gravitate towards gangs. Desire to be more proactive. Fear.
- ignorance, but they know that something is different and are trying to understand.
- They generally put them out of school.
- Issue
- Positive
- Outreach and mentorship
- Some ignore and some seek to help
- Acknowledgement of the issue

How to Other Community Leaders Respond to Gang Issues?

What is the general response in your community to gangs by other community leaders?

Although they mentioned several efforts by community leaders to address the problem of gangs, five community partners do not see a coordinated effort to address the issue, resulting in siloed work. Community leader response varies by community, ranging from denial to proactive steps such as creating a mentorship program leveraging the impact of those with lived experience. LINC's ongoing work to improve coordination of agencies serving youth who are gang-involved speaks directly to improving the response of the community.

Responses

- Some try to address it
- Acceptance – it's just the way it is
- They know it's a problem but don't really discuss how they're helping with it or could perhaps not even know what to do.
- Creating mentorship programs with people with lived experience
- Unsure
- Individual organizations respond the way they think is best which usually results in siloed work

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- Depends on what community
- Same as all above answers
- Not sure
- Right now, it's had to be one of staunch opposition because with the proliferation of guns and shootings, the casualties of conflict are becoming more severe. Plus, paired with acts of random violence stemming from mental illness in the region, it creates a perception of little safety.
- They are victims of the offenses.
- Speeches
- Again, this depends on where you live. I think Seattle has a pretty strong community-led movement to support this work, but you don't see this as much in south King County.
- Intervention/understanding
- Same as public officials . . . What gangs???
- Misplaced blame on systems such as schools or law enforcement instead of on the breakdown of family
- I think they are trying to help and trying to address it... public officials don't want to acknowledge an increasing gang problem occurred on their watch though... so it's easiest to ignore and not provide resources to address. I think it makes sense to put these community leaders that want to do something about it in our schools.
- Find a way to connect with them.
- Understanding where they are having problems
- POSITIVE, appreciated, important
- Unsure
- Find ways to build relationships and foster care for the individuals a part of the groups.
- Prevention & intervention

Reducing Gang Problems

What should be done to reduce the gang problem in the community? Check all that apply.

Once again, there was a great deal of agreement by the community partners on what should be done. Choices selected by almost all respondents were *increase support programs in schools (96%)*, *recreation programs (93%)*, and *community re-entry support (89%)*. (Note: respondents to this question were able to add their own items to the list provided in the survey, so only the individuals who wrote added them voiced an opinion on the last five items.)

Figure 17 | Responses to Question 8 - What should be done to reduce the gang problem in the community?
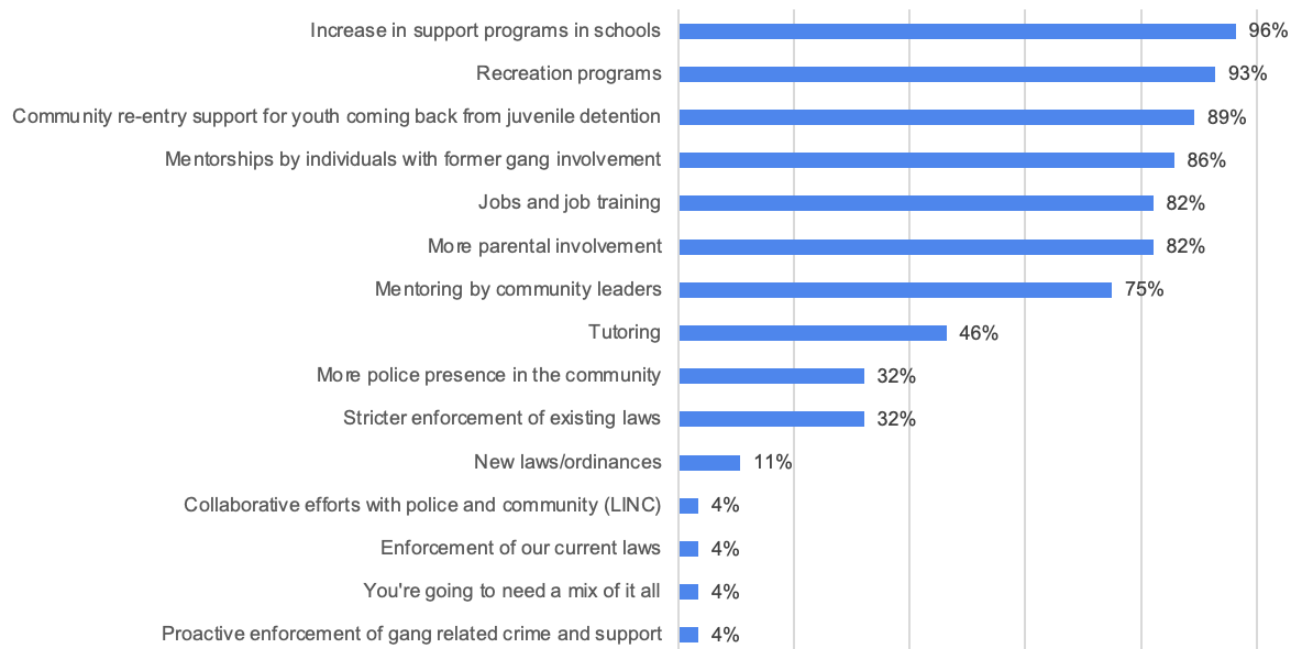
Most Effective Responses to Gang Issues

What has been the most effective response to gangs by law enforcement, government agencies, social service agencies, schools, etc.?

Clearly the community partners see building relationships and partnerships as key to responding to the gang crisis. Nine of the 19 respondents specifically cite this approach. Increasing coordination among community partners, such as is being done in the LINC program, is seen as a way to provide a broad range of resources which will make support for youth more available and impactful. Supports cited include prosocial activities, housing, substance abuse support, response to trauma, and job support. To the extent that these strategies are being currently implemented, they will move the community forward in achieving many LINC goals, especially *reducing gang-related violence, creating systematic and community-wide change,* and *improving outcomes for youth and families.*

Responses

- Partnership with folks with lived experience
- Collaborations like LINC that are intentional
- Communication and coordination across systems
- Mentorship programs with lived experience leaders
- Diversion programs, sports, after school programming
- Partnerships with all agencies
- Diversion programs with meaningful supports, building protective factors and connections, upstream prevention

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- Collaborative actions based on shared interests- particularly effective in prevention and early intervention
- To get to know the youth and look at the layers of trauma that lead to survival mode.
- Coordinating agencies that bridge silos, that wrap around the young people involved.
- Community engagement, and developing engagement programs that stimulate the mind, and arts, and provide a sense of self worth
- Relationships
- Unsure
- Violence disruptors and credible messengers
- Structured education and job supports
- Not really sure
- Accountability
- Proactive approach with a dedicated Gang Unit, or Violent Offender Task Force in conjunction with aggressive prosecution on the LEO side. I also believe family interventions need to occur while the children are much younger. The hooks of the gang life are deeply imbedded by early teenage years.
- CONSISTENT outreach through MULTIPLE avenues and MULTIPLE mentors in COOPERATION with LAW ENFORCEMENT and EDUCATORS with access to Mental health, drug abuse, housing assistance, etc. We have to give them hope that they aren't destined to die in a few years with only their reputation to their name. We HAVE to get them to see themselves as having a successful future within our current society's norms and laws.
- A collaboration of service providers coming together to provide a suite of services.
- Helping youth to engage in programs and activities
- Consistently showing up for the young person and meeting them where they are at
- Outreach programs being visible in communities.
- Putting community organizations in leadership positions to build relationships with the young people in groups
- Diversion programs

Least Effective Responses to Gang Issues

What has been the least effective response to gangs by law enforcement, government agencies, social service agencies, schools, etc.?

Ignoring the issue and *stricter enforcement of laws without support services* (13 mentions) were frequently cited as ineffective in curbing gang involvement. A lack of engagement with youth to address the root causes of youth violence result in, "the perfect storm that the community is experiencing now." Many of impacts of gangs and youth violence that the community partners now see in their communities will ideally be reduced as the partnership makes more progress toward the LINC goal of *creating systemic and community-wide change to reduce gang involvement*.

- Ignoring it
- stricter laws and more police that doesn't address the root causes
- Everyone working in silos, not communicating, or collaborating with each other; the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing
- More law enforcement presence
- Poor intervention and de-escalation approaches
- Incarceration, suspension, and other punitive approaches that don't get to the root
- Siloed activities and/or blaming other disciplines
- Incarceration alone does not seem to be working.
- Sending everyone involved to jail, erecting barriers upon release, making it difficult to choose a more prosocial path forward
- prison pipeline
- Hands off approach or non-engagement
- unsure
- Suppression
- Diversion programs with no accountability, outcome reporting, or a look back when youth do not engage
- What is occurring now. No proactivity from LE, little or no prosecution for violent felony crimes creates, "The perfect storm" that the community is experiencing right now.
- We can't do anything about it, so just look the other way.
- Locking people up.
- Locking them up
- Hand cuffs
- Lack of resources and activities for youth
- Locking them up
- Suppression

Additional Suggestions

If there is anything else you would like to add, please provide it here.

As reported in earlier questions, collaboration, conversations, and addressing community and family issues are highlighted by the community partners from a variety of perspectives.

Responses

- It would be great to have conversations on how King County is addressing this issue as a collective. I'm still trying to learn the purpose of Youth Linc in addressing the matter. It would be helpful to know more prevention and intervention supports and how the issue is being addressed at different levels and how we can work together as a community.
- Collaboration is key to success.

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- A lot of the time the groups young people affiliate with aren't "official" gangs but social/family/neighborhood groups that are more informal, I wouldn't limit this analysis to gangs with names.
- Gangs exist because society has rejected certain groups of individuals. They become anti-social because there is no society that accepts them. So, they create their own community/society. Until we make our communities and society inclusive of all people where everyone has the opportunity to prosper and thrive, we will always have gangs.
- A consistent statistic of youth involved in gangs is lack of a father figure and/or no parental supervision.
- Programs such are these are making a huge impact in these communities
- People desensitize themselves to these youth and young adults by saying "gangs." The government used that when they called the Middle Eastern people "insurgents." Just like they called loosely dressed black people "thugs." It takes away the individualism and puts a jacket they feel less bad about when ridiculing, killing, or locking up. That term needs to be changed and every young person in the group should be addressed individually.

Summary of Responses to Community Partners Survey

The thoughtful responses to this survey highlight many aspects of the gang problem in south King County. Despite the perception of the majority of the respondents that gang activity is increasing in the region, a lack of resources, lack of involvement or commitment by key agencies, and uncoordinated efforts are continuing challenges. To fully address this crisis, the community partners call for collaborative work, coordination among agencies, and providing supports in a broad range of areas that impact youth, their families, and their communities.

The ideas and suggestions of the community partners, if implemented and supported with adequate and consistent resources, have the potential to enable the south King County communities to make significant progress in achieving the short- and long-term goals of LINC and their community partners.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The findings of the 2023 LINC Community Assessment reinforce the need for organizations such as LINC to continue and indeed increase their support of at-risk youth in the south King County communities. The cities in the LINC service area that are showing the most growth and diversity are also showing the most need for coordinated services to intervene and prevent youth involvement in anti-social activities.

The rate of poverty and unemployment is high in the LINC cities. Likewise, youth in the LINC service area struggle in school and have levels of post-secondary academic achievement well below the overall county average. If young people are not preparing themselves for careers and productive engagement within society, they may turn to other forms of expression that are counterproductive to the safety and quality

of life in their communities. The health indicators from the LINC communities presented above also highlight some of the negative outcomes indicative of cities in distress.

The available data show that gangs continue to be highly active in the LINC service area and continue to have a tragic impact on communities. The community partners who contributed their locally grounded observations regarding the gang situation highlight the need for greater resources and the collaborative effort of citizens, government, and supportive agencies - everyone with a stake in the success of all community members in south King County - to support the work of LINC, and all agencies which work to connect youth with services, to increase and coordinate support. Only by bringing communities together to support their young people can the region realize the LINC goals to "create systemic and community-wide change to reduce gang/group involvement and improve outcomes for youth and families."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data presented in this Community Assessment, Geo offers the following recommended steps to take to further enhance the work of LINC and support the accomplishments of its goals.

1) **Create new or better approaches to helping youth to exit gang involvement.**
   a) Ensure that youth who are gang/group-involved have a voice in services to address their specific needs.
   b) Provide a network of support for incarcerated and previously incarcerated youth.
   c) Recruit and train mentors and credible messengers who have lived experience with gangs and help them engage with youth in, or at risk of, joining gangs (e.g., The Big Homie Program in Tacoma).

Questions to consider: How will LINC determine which approaches are better? Is there a need for a youth advisory group to ensure youth who are gang-involved or at risk of becoming involved are continuously integrated in selecting, implementing, and evaluating how the new approaches are impacting them?

2) **Work with partners to develop more *culturally relevant*, socially acceptable activities for youth prone to gang involvement, especially activities that encourage the development of pro-social bonds among youth and positive relationships with responsible adults, for example:**
   a) Diversion programs with meaningful supports, building protective factors and connections, address issues of trauma-informed care, and upstream prevention;
   b) Community engagement, and programs that stimulate the mind and provide a sense of self-worth; and
   c) Structured education and job support.

Questions to consider: Which current of potential partners have programs that meet the above criteria? What are the gaps in services to address both upstream prevention as well as addressing immediate needs? Are the activities culturally relevant to the populations being engaged?

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3) **Support development of more community-centered healing resources with engagement by law enforcement.**

Questions to consider: What specific resources will be most beneficial and who is responsible for providing them? To what extent is law enforcement engaged?

4) **Improve connections with law enforcement.**
   a) Improve participation by law enforcement personnel at Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Team (MDIT) meetings.
   b) Work with south King County law enforcement agencies to develop a reliable source of information on gang involvement and youth violence from which community partners could draw regular reports.
   c) Decide if, when, and how credible messengers can work with law enforcement.

Questions to consider: What is extent are law enforcement personnel involvement in this work? Does their involvement impact the extent to which gang/group impacted youth can openly express their voices without fear of negative consequences? If so, how can this fear be alleviated?

5) **Work with community partners to facilitate the development of more early intervention strategies for family conflicts and for youth with anger management issues (e.g., GIRLS project by Bold Solutions in Tacoma).**
   a) Work with community service providers to help them connect with school districts to increase the availability of trauma informed care for youth at risk.
   b) Work more collaboratively with schools and community partners to address prejudice, racism, bullying, violence, criminal behavior, drug use, and violence, while realizing that it is not the sole responsibility of schools to address these problems that originate outside of schools.
   c) Facilitate proactive engagement by parents of young people (especially pre-teens) at risk of becoming gang involved.

Questions to consider: Which community partners are currently providing early intervention programs? What are the gaps in early intervention programs within each LINC region?

6) **Find or create programs that can help families find the stability they need to be better able to support their children and protect them from the influences of gang culture.**
    a) For families with pre-teen children, parent engagement is imperative.

7) **Establish multiple consistent, clear, and easily accessible ways for youth to tell service providers what they need, what they want, and what support will make a difference to them**. In addition, develop ways to share youth insights across service providers, communities, and funders.

8) **Create and implement self-evaluation measures for each MDIT so that they can track and enhance their progress working with youth.**

9) **Create a data dashboard on progress toward LINC goals.**
   a) Track engagement and services.
   b) Track youth in court processes, including diversion.

10) **Update the LINC Strategic Plan based on the data in this Community Assessment.**

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