

King County Local Food Initiative 101: Improving Local Food Access in King County

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2024 LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVE REFRESH

PRACTICUM PROJECT: ISSUE PAPERS ON FOOD ACCESS IN KING COUNTY

Goal: Create evidence-based reports on topics related to food access to support decision making processes and policy development of King County's Local Food Initiative.

WHAT IS THE KING COUNTY LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVE?

The Local Food Initiative (LFI) is a regional strategy designed to guide public and private stakeholders to create an equitable, healthy, and sustainable local food system. The LFI is managed by King County Department of Natural Resources and King County Conservation District. A primary goal of the LFI is to improve healthy food access for King County residents, with particular emphasis on reaching low-income and historically marginalized communities.



FUNDING:
This project was funded by King Conservation District.

METHODS:

- Literature review
 - Academic, peer-reviewed articles
 - Gray literature (publicly available community reports)
- Data review
 - County, state and national survey data
- Subject matter expert consultation
 - Public Health – Seattle & King County staff

KEY FINDINGS:

➤ Historic racist policies shape(d) King County's local food system.

This is reflected in reports and data on food access topics, including:

- Neighborhood food access
- Enrollment rates in nutrition assistance programs
- Disparities in rates of food insecurity

➤ South King County and certain neighborhoods in South Seattle have poorer access to food across dimensions of food access.

This is reflected in:

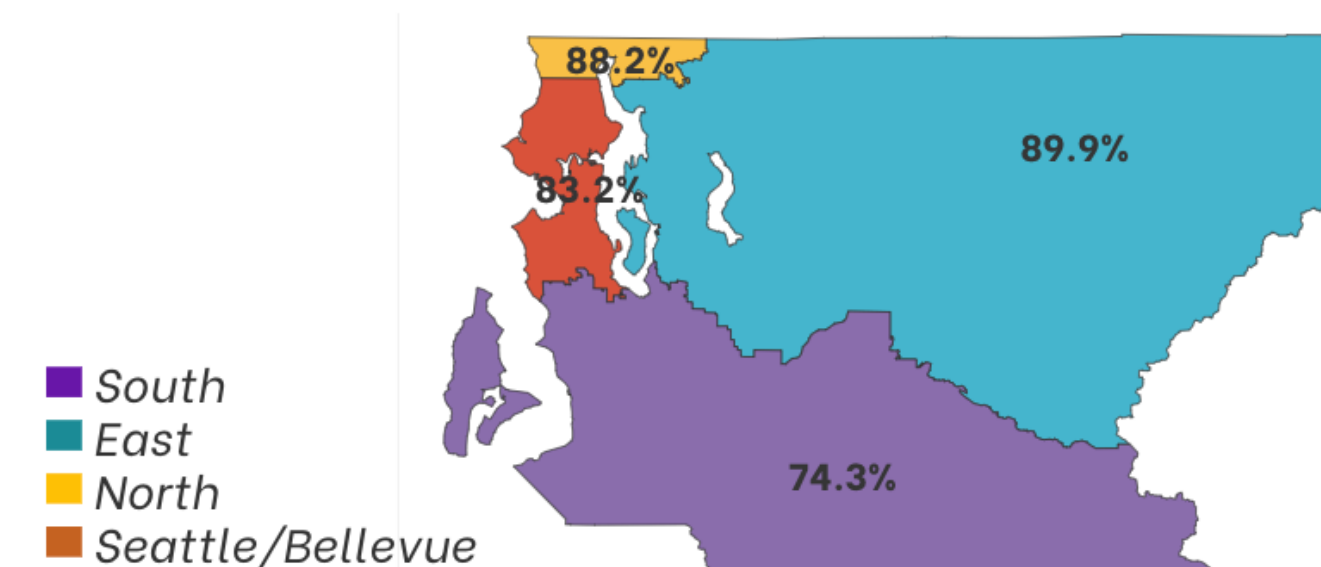
- Affordability of food relative to income
- Healthy Food Priority Areas
- Participation rates in nutrition assistance programs
- Food bank service gaps



<https://www.harvestgainsthunger.org/kcfs/>

In 2019 & 2021, a lower percent of caregivers in South King County neighborhoods reported that they could usually or always find affordable fresh fruits and vegetables compared to the percent of caregivers in Seattle and Bellevue, North King County and East King County neighborhoods.

Source: Best Start for Kids, Regional Survey



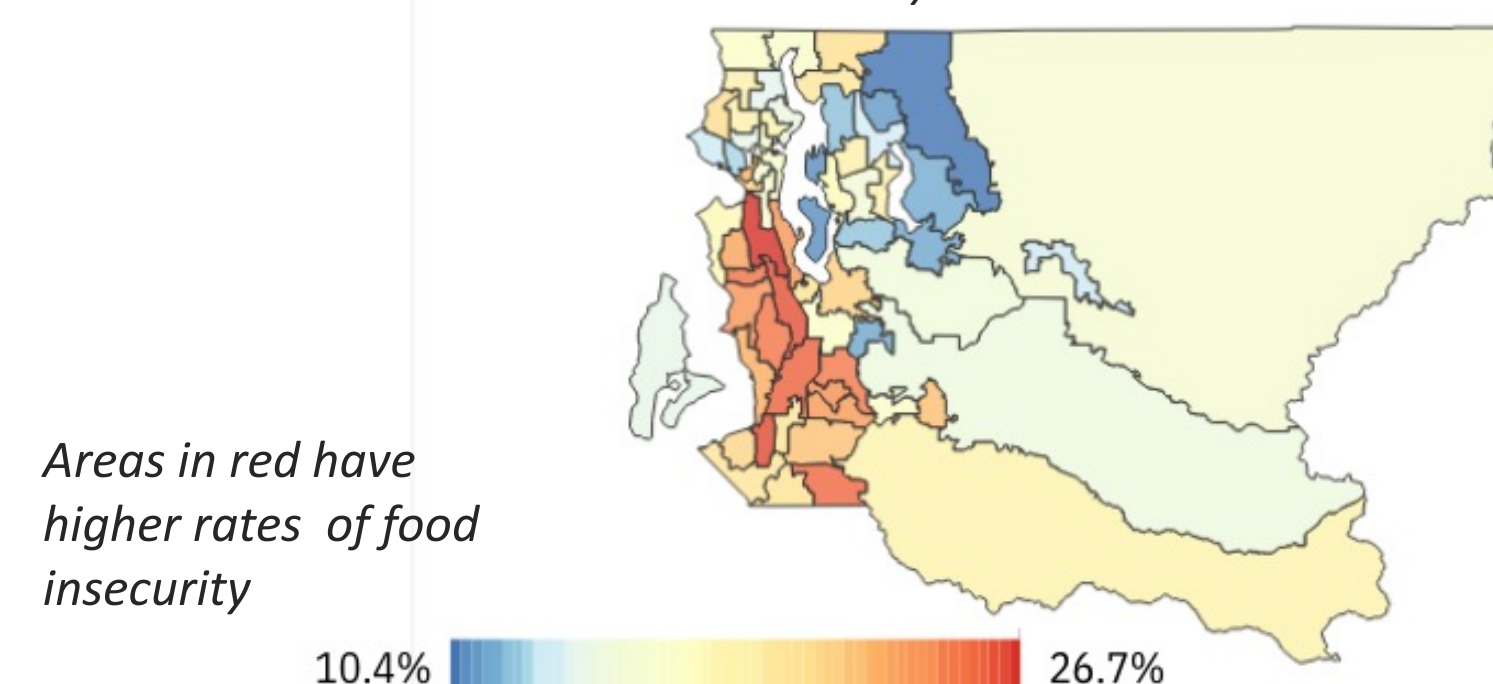
➤ Food Insecurity in King County is disproportionately experienced by race, place, immigration status, gender and sexual orientation.

This is reflected in:

- Disaggregated rates of food insecurity
- Disaggregation of measures associated with food insecurity (e.g., nutrition assistance programs, free and reduced price school meals, food bank and meal programs demand).

Food Insecurity, King County overall (average: 2018-2021)

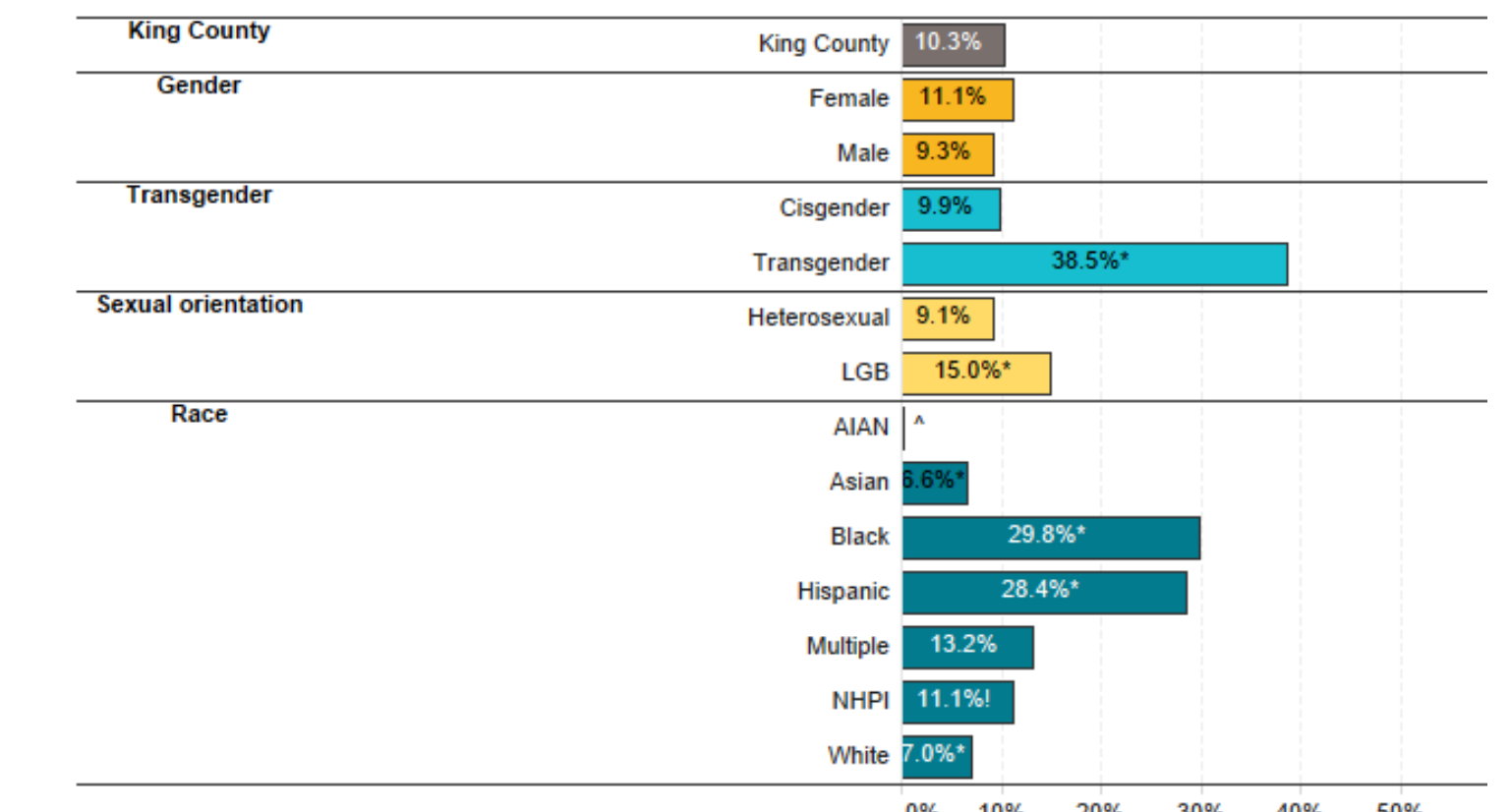
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System



Areas in red have higher rates of food insecurity

Food Insecurity in adults, King County (average: 2018-2021)

Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System



LFI AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

Nutrition assistance programs available in King County address food insecurity by giving households funds to purchase foods. These programs make local food more affordable while connecting more people to our local food system. The LFI is actively supporting nutrition assistance programs at farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture and other points of local food access.



Examples of nutrition assistance programs that connect consumers to local King County foods.

MOVING FORWARD

The next step in the LFI project is to create feasible and actionable policy recommendations that leverage the local food system to improve food access in King County.



Photo: <https://seattlefarmersmarkets.org/food-access>