

Goal #5: Education and Job Skills to Lead an Independent Life

Why is this Goal Area Important?

Education, job skills and childcare, in addition to the economic climate, contribute to a person's ability to find employment. Although Washington boasts the nation's highest minimum wage, Bellevue residents need to have high wages in order to be self-sufficient. To obtain living wage jobs, workers must possess significant education or job skills. The recent economic downturn highlighted the need for an advanced education as well as the limited number of positions available in King County offering living wages. Affordable, quality childcare is also important so that families can work and provide for themselves, and as many consumers and providers have told us, reliable public transportation is another key component in people being able to access employment.

al development of providers and beginning July 1, 2016 allows children in the Working Connections Child Care Program to get that benefit for a full 12 months even if their family's situation changes.

- In March 2015 King County Metro implemented the Orca LIFT program, a reduced transit fare that gives a discounted fare to people who earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level (\$23,540 for one adult). The outreach effort is being led by staff from Public Health-Seattle & King County who were also involved in enrolling people for health insurance as part of the Affordable Care Act. In East King County, residents may sign up for LIFT at the City of Bellevue Mini-City Hall in Crossroads Mall and the Together Center in Redmond.

What's Working?

- East King County participants in the Washington State WorkFirst program surpassed state averages in median job search placement wages, earnings progression, job retention and exits to employment. For example, median wages for East King County Work First clients were \$15.10 compared to the \$10.81 statewide median wage.¹
- During the 2015 State Legislative session, early learning fared very well for funding in the 2015-2017 biennial budget. The Early Start Act, a bipartisan bill, passed with an investment of \$94.5 million as part of a total early learning budget of \$158 million. Early Start will maintain Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System, Early Achievers, including funds for profession-

Prevalence

Educational Attainment, Age, Race and Gender Effects on Income

- King County is one of the most highly educated communities in the country: 46.1% of

Educational Attainment (Adults 25 years and older)

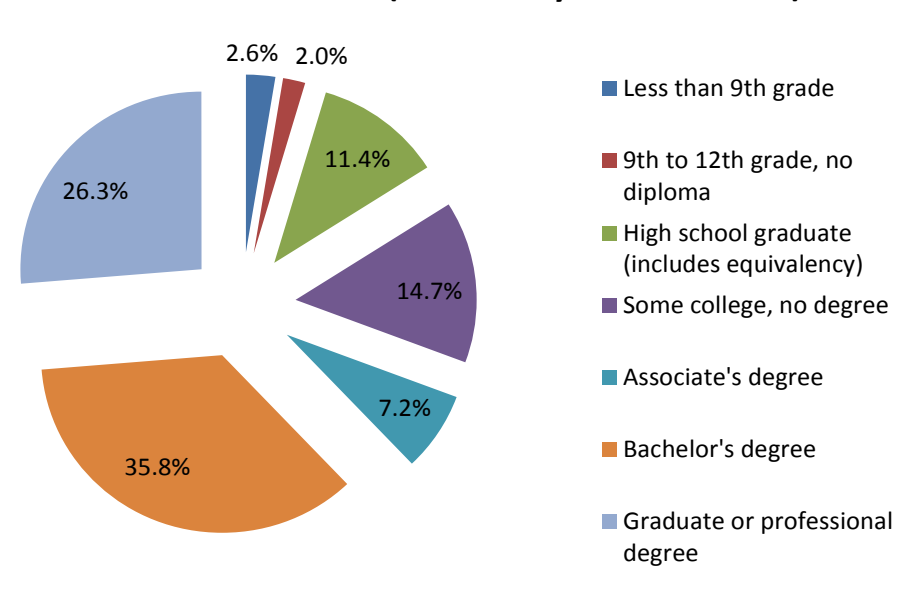


Figure 1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey

county residents hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher. In Bellevue, as Figure 1 shows, the percentage of adults age 25 and older who had earned a Bachelor’s degree or above was 62.1%, an increase from 54% in 2000. Only 2.6% of Bellevue adults (over 25) have less than a high school diploma, the lowest percentage in the state.²

- Higher levels of education typically results in higher pay benefits and lower unemployment rate for persons age 25 and over. Figure 2 shows national unemployment rates compared to median weekly earnings by education attained.³
- Data shows that the “wage gap” between men and women is significant. Families

the wage gap in the U.S.: for every dollar a male earned, a woman earned 79.3 cents.⁴ The gap was the smallest in Washington D.C. and the largest in Louisiana. Overall lower earnings coupled with care giving responsibilities puts women, especially single women with children, at greater risk for poverty than men; for a single woman with children the poverty rate statewide as well as in Bellevue is higher than for two parent families with children.

- The aging of the population has enormous implications for the workforce. More older adults are delaying retirement or returning to the workforce because they need employment to make ends meet. According

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment		
Education attained	Unemployment rate in 2014 (Percent)	Median weekly earnings in 2014
Doctoral degree	2.1	\$1,591
Professional degree	1.9	1,639
Master's degree	2.8	1,326
Bachelor's degree	3.5	1,101
Associate's degree	4.5	792
Some college, no degree	6.0	741
High school diploma	6.0	668
Less than a high school diploma	9.0	488
All workers	5.0	839

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics April 2015

Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics April 2015

Figure 2

depend on women’s wages more than ever, but women working full time, year round are typically paid less than full-time, year-round male workers in every state. Nationally, women working full time, year round typically make only 78.3 cents for every dollar a man makes and the size of the disparity varies by state. Additionally, women represent about two-thirds of workers who make minimum wage in the U.S. In 2013 Washington State ranked 21st in

to the U.S. Census in 2014, 6% of the U.S. workforce was 65 years or older, compared to 4% in 2000, and the workforce aged 50-64 years old was 32% of the workforce compared to 24% in 2000.⁵ According to a 2012 AARP survey, more older adults (37%) were less confident that they would find a job quickly with good pay and without moving compared to 24% in 2007; the reasons cited by the survey respondents were the economy and age discrimination.⁶

Economic Recovery in Washington State and King County

- The unemployment rate in Washington State in June 2015 was 5.3%, significantly lower than in June 2014 (6.1%),⁷ and much lower than in 2011 during the recession when it peaked at 8.3%. However the rate is still not at pre-recession levels (2007, 4.64%). During the recession, the unemployment rate in the Seattle-Bellevue-Everett Metropolitan Division also increased, from 3.9% in 2007 to 8.3% in 2011. In 2012, the unemployment rate began to decrease to 5.6%, and in June 2015, the rate dropped even further to 4.0%.⁸

“Though the job market is picking up, there are still many people needing help to find jobs, including someone helping match them to jobs.”

Key Informant Interview, Crossroads Mini City Hall, volunteer

- Despite the lower unemployment rate, data indicates that the recovery has been uneven. The state as well as King, Snohomish and Pierce counties has recovered the number of jobs lost during the last recession. During the 2010-2013 recovery the number of jobs paying \$54 an hour or higher, usually requiring more education or training, represented the largest growth. Those jobs paying \$12 to \$53.99 an hour have not seen the same growth. Other indicators to support uneven growth include the number of recipients in the State food stamp program, and the number of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch. For example, even post-recession, nearly one in six King County residents received either federal or state food assistance benefits.⁹ (Note: See Goal 1 for more information on the impact of the recession on Basic Needs.)
- In 2013 626,000 (40%) of children statewide lived in households earning less than the basic needs threshold, 200% of the federal poverty level (in 2013, \$47,248 for a family of four). The percentage is higher for children of color: 67% of Latino and 63% of

Black children live in poverty. Children living in poverty are more likely to lack health insurance, have lower scores in reading in third grade, and are less likely to graduate from high school in four years. Again, children of color are over-represented in these outcomes.¹⁰ In 2011, an analysis by the Washington Budget and Policy Center showed that a lifetime of restricted opportunity meant a loss of \$240 million in wages for the current working population of blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans in Washington State. As the state, and Bellevue, becomes more diverse, this data has even more impact. Those earnings could have been used to start a business, buy a home, or send a child to college, all actions that contribute to the vitality and health of a community.¹¹

Unemployment Assistance Provides Support

- Unemployment insurance is a federal/state benefit most often implemented by states as a tax on employers. It is calculated using a percentage of an individual's past year's earnings rather than financial need. Therefore, individuals who worked low-paying jobs before unemployment often fall deeper into financial hardship while unemployed. Some workers, many of them who earn low wages, are not covered under unemployment insurance so they do not have any “back-up” salary when they lose their jobs.¹²
- In King County, initial unemployment insurance claims are steadily decreasing. In June 2014 there were 17,585 claims; in June 2015, these claims dropped to 14,555. State-wide, between June 2014 and June 2015, initial unemployment claims also decreased (from 70,505 to 57,224). However, another group of workers who have exhausted their unemployment benefit entitlements, known as “exhaustees” are increasing: in June 2014, there were 53,802 in King County and in June 2015, there were 64,571. The increased number of exhaustees in the State shows a similar increasing pattern.¹³
- Studies show that people on unemployment benefits spend their money on the

basics, with nearly 70% going to food, housing and transportation. As a result of having unemployment insurance, the amount of money an unemployed household spends on food decreases 7%, but would decline a total of 22% without benefits. In 2007, unemployed Washington households spent two thirds of their income on food, housing and transportation.¹⁴ With the rising cost of living in all these areas, the percentage spent is now likely higher.

Recent and Future Job Market

- In spring 2014, there were 97,203 job vacancies statewide compared to 51,934 in spring 2012, a 52% increase. Most job vacancies are found in the West Urban region, (66,045 or 68% of all job vacancies). King County is part of the West Urban region.¹⁵
- Three industry groups accounted for about 11% of all vacancies in 2015: healthcare/ social assistance, retail, and accommodation and food services, similar to 2012. One out of 12 vacancies were in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) area, available mostly in the West Region. The survey found that more than two thirds of openings required only a high school diploma or had no requirement, though that was the minimum requirement and the employer could hire someone with more education. About 50% of vacancies required previous experience; this has been decreasing steadily each year. More than one-third required a license or certification. The average wage paid statewide was \$13.95 an hour compared to \$13.67 an hour in 2013. Employers hired 168,143 people statewide in 2014 compared to 117,729 people in 2012. Six percent of those were covered by unemployment insurance between January and March 2014 similar to 2012.¹⁶
- From 1970 to 2000, job growth in Bellevue exceeded population growth such that Bellevue went from having 1 job for every 3 residents in 1970 to having 1.2 jobs for every resident in 2000. From 2000 to 2010 Bellevue's economy experienced two economic cycles with peaks in employment occurring

in 2000 and 2008 and troughs occurring in 2004 and 2010. If one just looks at the two data points of 2000 and 2010, one sees a decline in employment over the decade due to the first point being at the peak of the dot com bubble and the second point being at the bottom of the great recession. However, if one considers the peaks and troughs and looks at the overall trend, employment has been increasing in Bellevue since 1995 at an average annual rate of about 1.8 percent per year. With continued growth in population and the addition of Bellevue's most recent annexation areas Bellevue's job to population ratio is projected to be about 1.1 in 2014.¹⁷

Minimum Wage vs. Living Wage

- Washington State's minimum wage in 2015 is \$9.47, the highest in the country. However, an adult making the minimum wage working full time and supporting two children is under the federal poverty level (FPL), \$20,090 for a family of three.
- A "living wage" is often defined as the minimum income needed to purchase basic necessities without help from public assistance. Living wage calculations often include the cost of housing, food, transportation, health care, taxes, childcare and household, clothing and personal items. One way to determine a living wage, developed by the Center for Women's Welfare at the University of Washington, calculates a Self-Sufficiency Wage, or the amount of money a certain family type would have to earn in order to live without public supports or assistance, also shown in Figure 3.¹⁸ The web-based King County Self-Sufficiency Calculator computes self-sufficiency wages for different family types anywhere in the county. The numbers in Figure 3 from the Self-Sufficiency Standard have been calculated for Bellevue residents but costs would be similar for all of East King County. The calculation has adjusted higher housing and childcare rates.
- Using the calculations from Figure 3, in King County, the lowest calculated living wage for a single adult is \$4.10 more than

2014 Living Wage Bellevue WA	
Family Type	Self Sufficiency Standard Bellevue, WA
Single Adult	\$13.57/hr.
	\$28,667.51/yr.
Single Adult with a school aged child (6-8 years)	\$23.70/hr.
	\$50,050.69/yr.
Single Adult with a school-aged child and a toddler (12-24 months)	\$34.29/hr.
	\$72,428.82/yr.
Two Adults (both working) with a school-aged child and a toddler	\$18.35/hr./adult
	\$77,513.63/yr.
Two Adults (one working) with a school-aged child and a toddler	\$36.70/hr.
	\$77,513.63/yr.

Figure 3
The Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State

the current minimum wage and a living wage for a single adult with two children is \$24.82 more.

“Some people work 3 part time jobs just to get by. Employers are looking for people with English skills.”
Key Informant Interview, Latina Cultural Navigator

- In 2014, according to the Job Gap Report, in addition to higher wages to provide living wages for families, work supports like paid sick leave can help working families be healthy and provide job stability. Another finding from the study is that low-income households lack the resources to handle their debt loads that include student loans, mortgage payments and bills for catastrophic health care events.¹⁹

Community Perceptions

- Forty percent of 2015 phone/online survey respondents rated *people having jobs that do not pay enough for the basics of food, shelter and clothing* as a major/moderate problem in their community. This is higher than the

rating in 2013, and the same as in 2011. This problem area ranks second amongst all the community problem areas.

- Ratings of *Unemployment* as a community problem had continued to significantly increase every year since 2003, peaking in 2011 at 55%. For example, in 2007, only 16.7% of respondents reported unemployment as a major/moderate community problem. In 2013, *Unemployment* was considered a major/moderate problem by 35% of respondents, a significant decrease compared to 2011 and dropped further in 2015 to 27%, moving from the first tier to the second tier of community problems.

- At the household level, 15% of respondents in 2015 ranked *not being able to find work that supports yourself or your family* as a major/moderate problem, about the same as 2011 and 2013.

- Almost half (43%) of 2015 consumer survey respondents said that *not being able to find work that supports yourself or your family* was a major/moderate problem in their household, about the same as the 2013 survey. Twenty three percent of consumer survey households contain an adult who has difficulty with basic reading or filling out a job application.

- At least half of the 54 providers who completed an online survey identified unemployment or low wage jobs as a lingering, negative effect of the economic downturn.
- In 2015 the phone/online survey asked a series of questions about employment issues rather than the effects of the recession as had been done in previous surveys. Sixty-nine percent of respondents (7 out of 10) were employed, half were employed full-time with only 8% unemployed. Of the residents who were employed, 10% have more than one job. Nearly half stated they could not afford their mortgages or rent on only one paycheck.
- Staff at the King County Library in Bellevue has added programs that provide assistance to job seekers, including drop in employment assistance with WIC Empowerment Services, and having librarians with laptops at the Crossroads Mini-City Hall help teach people how to apply for jobs on line. Hope-

link offers similar employment assistance at Mini-City Hall as well.

- Two specific populations that staff at Bellevue College identified as having challenges in job search are students who have underlying learning disabilities and post-prison students. Some students were not ever diagnosed with a learning disability and as an adult it is more difficult to address; these students are often underemployed or unemployed. For students with a prison record, they are not eligible for financial aid and have challenges getting jobs.
- Participants in several community conversations brought up the need for more access to computers for job search and applying for jobs, as well as for more universal, free or low cost access to the internet. Even though some agencies and the libraries offer some access to the internet, access is time limited and can be problematic for parents to utilize if there is no onsite childcare while they are using the computers or they are filling out a complicated job application.

child care centers and 2,480 in family child care homes. The remainder of the slots are in exempt school age programs and school age programs. The East King County total represents an 18.5% decrease compared to 2010.²²

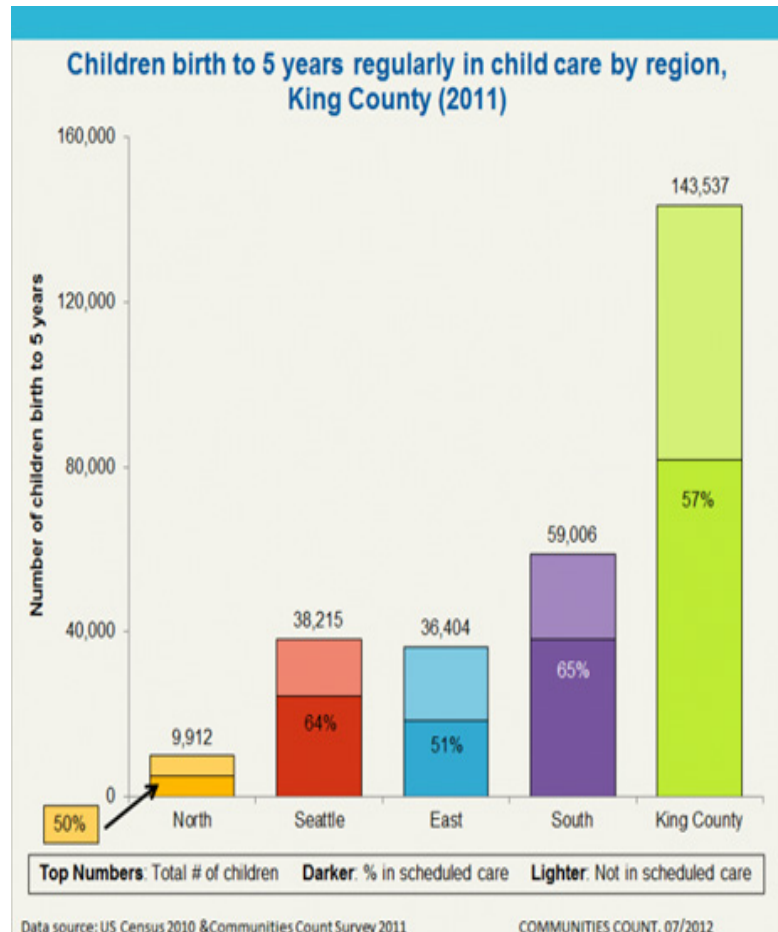


Figure 4

Childcare Childcare Availability

- More than half of children in King County birth to five years old are in regularly scheduled childcare, as Figure 4 shows.²⁰ Even though in most parts of the State the number of child care providers and the total capacity for children in care has decreased, as of February 2015, there were 2,090 licensed childcare homes and centers in King County, an increase compared to 2008 when there were 1,977; 67% of them are center-based and 25% are family childcare. In King County, there were 59,019 slots in 2013 compared to 51,875 slots in 2008.²¹ Child Care Resources, the resource and referral agency in King County, reported that in June 2015 in their database in East King County there were 491 child care centers and child care homes, representing 21,527 slots; 16,711 in

- For many families their first choice is extended family (referred to as family, friend & neighbor care), especially for infants and toddlers. As children grow, and parents seek out child care, families may experience barriers including cost, transportation, and cultural or system navigation. Nearly 21% of children ages 0-5 are cared for by a family member, friend, or neighbor (FFN) as their primary care arrangement. In King County, this would be about 60,000 children; for 28,000 of those children, they are the primary source of care while parents are working or attending school.²³ Families more likely to have FFN childcare arrangements include those who are low or mod-

erate-income, Latino, African American, refugees and immigrants, and those with a child with special needs. Given the growing number of refugees and immigrants with young children settling in Bellevue, it is likely that many of these families use FFN care.

“Affordable childcare is a big problem, especially for infants. Childcare for when kids are sick is also a big problem. Parents can lose their jobs if they stay home with a sick kid. Before and after school is not affordable, either.”

Community Conversation, Providers Network participant

- Issues such as language and culture, location and transportation, hours of operation, quality concerns and cost all affect childcare availability for a family. About 21% of providers in King County offer what is called “non-standard” hours such as childcare after 6:30 pm, overnight and/or during weekends. This accommodation has increased over the past several years as more parents working night shifts and weekends usually have a very difficult time finding licensed childcare.

“There is lots of follow up needed for a job when people have barriers: language, transportation, not knowing how to look on places like Craig’s list.”

Key Informant Interview, Jubilee REACH staff

Childcare Affordability

- Childcare for an East King County family with an infant and pre-schooler in full-time care can cost between \$24,492 and \$32,396/year. Childcare costs in East King County are the highest in the County. Currently, East King County childcare centers have an average cost of \$18,980/year for an infant, 21% of the Seattle-Bellevue 2015 median household income. Family childcare, although a less-expensive option, costs \$13,156, 15% of median household income.²⁴ According to a survey of childcare providers in King County, childcare costs can exceed the cost of housing or college

tuition, especially if using rates for full time care for an infant at a child care center.²⁵

- The State’s childcare subsidy program Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) serves low-income families earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level that are working or participating in a DSHS approved training activity. For some families that qualify for subsidies they may still have a substantial co-pay: a single mother early \$38,000 a year would pay \$554 per month for two children in childcare, about 17.5% of her annual income. For parents who do not qualify for subsidies and earn the median income, childcare costs for an infant could consume between 15% and 52% of the family budget.²⁶
- Many childcare centers and homes accept only a few families using WCCC subsidies because the reimbursement rates are lower than market rate; this can present a financial hardship for providers. As of June 2015, of the 493 childcare centers and family childcare homes in East King County, 228 report accepting state subsidies, about the same as 2 years ago.²⁷

Childcare Quality

- High quality childcare has been shown to help children get ready for success in school and in life but childcare quality varies considerably around the state. Research shows that the quality of early education has a direct impact on future success: when children impacted by early education disparities enter kindergarten, they can fall up to two years behind their peers.²⁸ In 2011, the State Department of Early Learning (DEL) rolled out Early Achievers, the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System that offers training, awards, scholarships, coaching and consultation to early learning providers in childcare centers. This began as a voluntary, no-cost program that will help providers improve the quality of their care. In Washington State almost 2,000 providers have joined since July 2012. In King County, there are 699 child care centers, family child care, and Head Start and State Pre-School sites enrolled in Early Achievers.²⁹ During the 2015 State Legisla-

tive session, the program became part of the Early Start Act, and by August 1, 2016, Early Achievers will be mandatory. Additional funds were allocated for technical assistance and training for providers to participate in the Early Achievers program, and organizations like Child Care Resources will provide this support.

- Though the quality needed for children in childcare is highly influenced by childcare staff, childcare staff receives fairly low wages for their work. In Washington, a teacher in a childcare center makes, on average, \$29,592/year while a kindergarten teacher earns on average \$50,627.³⁰ The lack of competitive wages makes it difficult to recruit and retain educated childcare workers. In 2012 the turnover rate for teaching assistants and teachers in King County was 38% and 18% respectively, far greater than the turnover rate found among elementary school teachers. High turnover rates have two negative impacts: they cost the employer additional costs to recruit, hire and train new workers, which is especially significant for child care providers that operate on slim margins. Another impact is the effect on the child, as studies have shown that high turnover discourages the development and maintenance of consistent relationships between children and their caregivers.³¹

Community Perceptions

- People's perception of affordable and quality childcare as a community problem increased significantly from 2009 to 2011. In 2013 only 14% of phone/online survey respondents said that *lack of quality childcare* was a major/moderate community problem compared to 20% in 2011, and 30% rated *lack of affordable childcare* compared to 39% in 2011. In 2015 in the phone/online survey only the respondents who indicated that they had children in the household under age 18 were asked questions about childcare, so previous results are not comparable. However, of those who were asked the questions about childcare, 40% rated this issue as a major/moderate problem in the community.
- In the past, fewer phone/online survey

respondents ranked *not being able to find affordable or quality childcare* as a household problem than as a community problem. The rankings for affordable and quality childcare in 2013 were 8% and 5% respectively, about the same as 2011. However, in 2015 when only respondents with children under age 18 were asked the childcare questions, 21% rated it as a major/moderate problem making affordable and quality childcare the top ranked household problems. Respondents for whom English was not their primary language spoken at home where more likely to rate this a major or moderate problem compared to those who spoke English as their first language (34% vs 16%).

- In Child Care Resources' provider survey, staff mentioned that the main barriers to finding childcare for working parents was eligibility, language, transportation and cost.³²

Specific Populations

- Note: See *People with Disabilities, Older Adults, Youth and Immigrants and Refugees* sections for more information on education and job skills within these populations.

Transportation

- The percentage of Bellevue residents commuting to work by means other than driving alone has steadily increased from 26% in 2000 to 33% in 2008-2010 to 35% in 2011-2013. An increasing percentage of residents took public transportation to get to work. In 2011-2013, about 13% of residents used public transportation to get to work, up from only 7% in 2000.³³
- As Figure 5 shows, workers in households, with incomes below poverty or between 100-149% of the poverty level had the highest proportions of people using public transportation with about 21 and 19 percent respectively. However, public transportation is not inexpensive, especially if the trip includes transfers or a family with multiple members. In 2013, the King County Council approved a motion to establish an Advisory Council to study and recommend potential new fare options to assist in

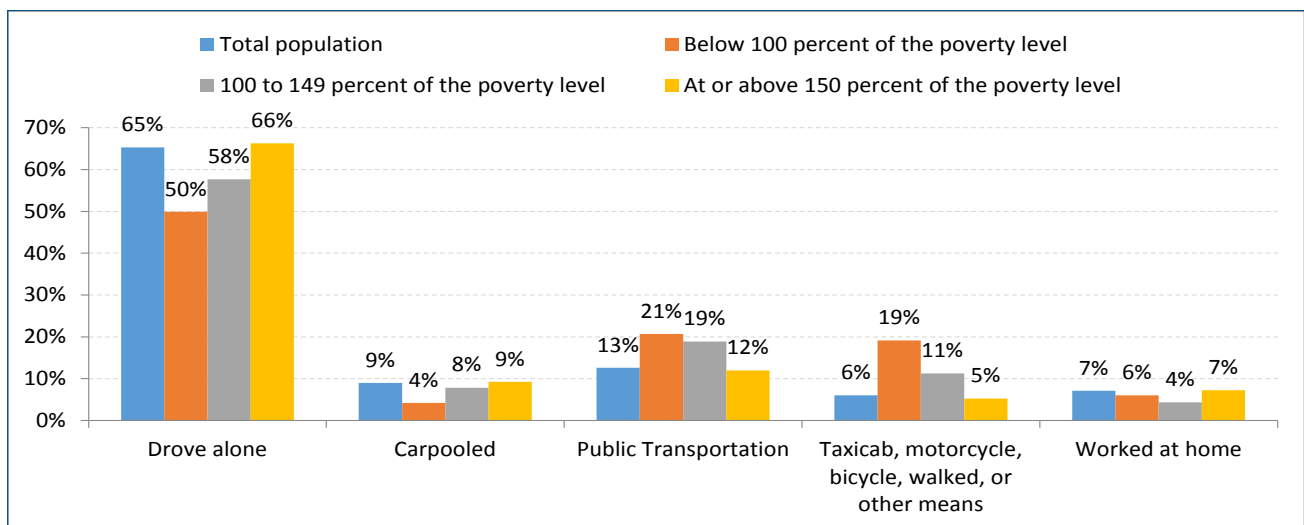


Figure 5 Bellevue Residents' Mode of Travel by Federal Poverty Level
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey

meeting the mobility needs of low-income persons. Previously there was only a discounted fare option for seniors and people with disabilities but none based on income. One of the two groups that would benefit from such a discounted fare is the working poor who struggle to pay for the basics, including transportation. The other group is people with no income and/or are homeless. The recommendation of the Advisory Council was that such a fare be established, as funding allowed; another strong recommendation was that eligibility for this fare would be at 200% of the federal poverty level to include more people who earn low-wages. In March 2015 the Orca LIFT reduced fare program was rolled out allowing people with a minimum of documentation to apply, purchase a card, then load funds on it for use on King County Metro and Kitsap County buses, Sound Transit Link Light Rail and the Seattle Street Car and King County Water Taxi.³⁴

Community Perceptions

- More than one-third of 2015 phone/online survey respondents rated *inadequate public transportation* as a moderate or major community problem, similar to 2013, 2011 and 2009 responses. It was the fourth highest rated community problem in 2015.
- In the last four phone/online surveys (2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015), Bellevue residents cited *inadequate public transportation* as the

highest rated household problem. In 2015 it was rated by 19% of respondents while in 2005 only 11% of residents noted it as a major or moderate household problem.

- Nineteen percent of the respondents to the consumer survey reported *having difficulty finding public transportation to get to work or other places*.
- In the 2015 provider survey, 50% of respondents reported that their clients needed, but could not find, help with transportation. This was the fourth highest rated need identified.
- Both consumers and providers of human services identified lack of bus tickets and services cuts as major gaps. The discount bus tickets that non-profit agencies purchase from King County Metro are the only way many low-income or no-income residents can get to appointments or to work. Residents of the Congregations for the Homeless men's shelter mentioned missed job opportunities because a bus route to a potential job did not have schedules that worked for their new jobs. Employment counselors at Goodwill Industries and Bellevue College discussed the same gaps: lack of money for tickets and inefficient transportation for job seeking and then for employment.

Service Trends

WorkFirst Participation Among Bellevue-area Residents

- WorkFirst is Washington State’s temporary cash assistance program to help low-income families stabilize their lives. Participants must be working or actively seeking a job and assistance is limited to 60 months in a person’s lifetime. The program provides training and education for low-income parents working at least 20 hours per week. In May 2015 there were 32,355 WorkFirst cases in the State; the number has seen fluctuations of increases and decreases due to policy and program changes over the years that affected client eligibility. For example, in 2014 cases statewide increased coinciding with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. The caseloads reached a low point in May 2015, but is expected to increase when the 9% increase in the state 2015-2017 budget for WorkFirst goes into effect. In July 2015, 534 low-income parents in the King Eastside Local Planning Area which includes Bellevue were enrolled in WorkFirst. The median wage earned by King Eastside WorkFirst clients is \$15.10/hour, higher than the statewide median wage for all WorkFirst clients of \$10.81.³⁵

Available Supports and Training for Employment

- The Women’s Center for Career Connections at Bellevue College (BC) helps people enrolled in WorkFirst, immigrants, homemakers, veterans and others to find living-wage jobs and obtain job training through career transition courses, career pathway planning, job placement and net-working connections. Staff report forming a number of collaborations: with employers to provide internships and part-time, seasonal, and full-time jobs; partnerships with STEM associations and funders to provide support to clients interested in STEM careers; collaborations with veterans groups and military bases to promote and leverage services; connections to human service agencies in the area to help clients meet their basic living needs while pursuing job

search or career transition; partnership with WorkSource to leverage services.³⁶

- The Preparing for Work program at Bellevue College (BC) helps meet the refugee/immigrant community’s need for job and English skills training. Three classes are offered: Preparing for Work, On the Job Communication and Working in English. BC served around 1000 immigrant and refugee students in 2014. English language learners focus on skills to choose a career pathway, find and keep a job. Staff reports about an important change to the ESL program because of a new federal law called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA. Under this new law, ESL programs can help students to improve their English skills for academic or job readiness goals. The new law excludes students who want to learn English for life and survival skills or to be active community participants. The implications of WIOA is a gap in services being created for the refugees and immigrants who do not want to improve their English for an academic or job readiness goal.³⁷

“It’s not so easy for a foreigner with no US working experience and no US education degrees to find a job here.”

Consumer Survey

- Washington’s Employment Security Department’s WorkSource Centers around the state provide onsite resources for employers and workers. Unemployed workers can file for unemployment insurance, get information about education and training, and a number of other resources to assist in job search and skills development. WorkSource provides information about program and service eligibility that participants may not know about.³⁸
- HERO House, a clubhouse model for people with chronic mental illness, provides a supported employment program for its members. Supported employment is a key component for people to rebuild their lives. In 2015 HERO House was able to add additional staff to assist members with transitional employment opportunities and a program generalist to increase the

membership overall of the program. HERO House has extensive partnerships with local employers who provide jobs for members.³⁹

- Hopelink's Asset Building Program provides employment support and adult basic education to low-income families in East King County. Staff report that their fewer clients are taking the GED classes because in 2014 the exam became more difficult to pass, and more expensive to take. Another issue is that there are other families who would like to take their classes but are limited by work/family schedules, lack of childcare and transportation.⁴⁰
- The YWCA provides housing, employment and training at The Family Village in Redmond in which a number of former Bellevue residents live. Some of the trends reported by staff include that though there is an increase in job placement at both ends of the spectrum (high wages requiring technical expertise and low wage jobs in growing sectors like retail and health care), more of their clients are "stuck" in low wage jobs, needing sometimes two or three jobs in order to pay the bills. Job retention rates are improving due to more stable jobs. Clients who have been unemployed long term are still having the most problems finding jobs, though there is some improvement there, too. Lastly, lack of affordable housing and transportation are two of the greatest barriers to people finding jobs and getting to jobs.⁴¹

Childcare Supports and Services

- Child Care Resources (CCR) provides assistance to Bellevue families in accessing quality childcare. In 2014 they helped more than 16,000 families in need of childcare to search for matching providers.⁴² They report that changes in subsidy eligibility means that fewer families can receive state funding and, as a result, request other locally funded scholarship programs. As of July 2015, there were 8 families on the waiting list for CCR's Bellevue residents' scholarship program, and wait times have tripled since 2009.⁴³
- There is a growing need in King County for programs specifically providing childcare

to homeless families. Child Care Resources case managers helps families secure stable, quality childcare so they can find housing, look for work, and go to domestic violence related meetings, court or medical appointments. In 2014, the program averaged 28 family intakes per month, compared to 29 in 2013, 32 in 2012, 29 in 2010 and 25 in 2009. The Family Homelessness Initiative and coordinated entry system resulted in reduced referrals during the past few years. CCR has conducted extensive outreach to let families know about the program.⁴⁴

- Child Care Resources also supports a network of Kaleidoscope Play and Learn groups, play groups specifically designed to provide culturally appropriate support for FFN caregivers and parents. More than 60 groups meet weekly around the county, holding sessions in multiple languages led by trained facilitators; participants receive information about child development and community resources. In 2014 Play and Learn groups reached over 3,000 children and informal caregivers; more than 55% spoke a language other than English at home. It also gives young children cared for by FFNs a chance to develop socialization and early literacy skills which will increase their readiness for school. Two Play and Learn groups are currently meeting in Bellevue, one conducted in Mandarin and English and one conducted in Spanish and English.
- Child Care Resources provides training and technical assistance to childcare providers for quality improvement. Staff reports that with the Department of Early Learning licensing changes, more providers are seeking help from CCR for training and one-on-one in-person support and translation/interpretation services.⁴⁵
- In Bellevue, there are Head Start slots at Bellevue College (BC) and the Bellevue School District (BSD). BC provides a Head Start program with 30 slots which are blended with the other child care slots to provide the same rich environment for all students, regards of socioeconomic status, for a total enrollment of 140-160 in their Early Learning Center. Most are BC families but there are also BC staff and faculty

families as well as the families of Costco employees. These families receive priority enrollment and are charged on a sliding fee scale. Most quarters, about 25% of families have their childcare subsidized by DSHS through the Working Connections Childcare Program. In 2014-2015, 37% of students qualified for free meals with the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program. Some of the challenges staff see for their families is lack of transportation, lack of access to alternate care when their child is sick and they need to miss school, more children with special needs, and difficulty with maintaining DSHS funding.⁴⁶

- Bellevue School District has 151 Head Start slots and in 2014 was awarded 60 slots for the state early learning program, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). In 2015-2016, the Bellevue Schools Foundation provided funding for 20 additional slots for low-income children to attend district pre-school. This brings the total to 231 slots for low-income 3 and 4 year olds to attend pre-school in Fall 2015 without cost, a 26% increase over 2014. BSD also provides full day childcare, half day pre-school and before and after-school programs to children six weeks to 5th grade for a total of 2,000 slots. Staff reports that demand for their programs is outpacing the supply with school facilities close to capacity. They are seeing an increase in children whose families are homeless. As of May 2015, there were 155 children on the waitlist for childcare for the 2015-2016 school year. The City of Bellevue scholarships to families are quickly allocated even before the school year begins.⁴⁷

Implications for Action

- The decrease in middle-income job opportunities makes it harder for people at lower incomes to access better jobs. There are more low-wage job opportunities, but along with these come financial instability, dependence on public supports that are dwindling due to budget cuts and less of a chance to obtain additional training to increase skills to find a better job. A living wage for a family living in Bellevue is

higher than in other parts of King County.

- Bellevue residents have a high level of education, however, there are not many vacancies in some of the growing sectors like hospitality that pay a living wage. It will be critical to attract business and industry that pay living wages.
- Barriers to employment such as lack of affordable and quality childcare, limited English speaking skills, the absence of coordinated transportation and lack of training and education opportunities to secure higher wage jobs are key issues to be addressed to help people improve their economic conditions and the quality of their lives.

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