

# Bike Helmets in King County

*Background and Summary of Key Research and Data*



Presentation to the King County Board of Health  
June 17, 2021

**Public Health**  
Seattle & King County



# King County's Current Bike Helmet Rule & Regulation

---

- King County's all-ages bike helmet [requirement](#) was established in 1993 and updated in 2003 to include Seattle
- Requires bike riders and passengers to wear protective helmets on public roads, bike paths, any right-of-way, and publicly owned facilities
- Fines of \$30 are assessed, along with additional court costs
- First-time infractions can be dismissed upon proof a helmet was obtained
- Fines may be waived or alternatives provided by the court (such as reduced fines, community service hours, or an extended payment period)

# Helmet Laws in Other Jurisdictions

---

- 25 states and many local jurisdictions have helmet laws (see [helmets.org](http://helmets.org))
- Over 100 of these are restricted to children under 16 (and sometimes younger)
- The below Washington localities have laws that apply to all ages unless otherwise specified\*
  - Aberdeen
  - Bainbridge Island
  - Bremerton
  - DuPont
  - Eatonville
  - Fircrest
  - Gig Harbor
  - Lakewood
  - Orting (*under 17 years-old*)
  - Port Angeles
  - Port Orchard
  - Poulsbo (*under 18 years-old*)
  - Puyallup
  - Spokane
  - Steilacoom
  - University Place
  - Vancouver

\*In addition, 10 cities within King County have helmet laws: Auburn, Bellevue, Des Moines, Duvall, Enumclaw, Hunts Point, Kent, Milton, Renton, and SeaTac

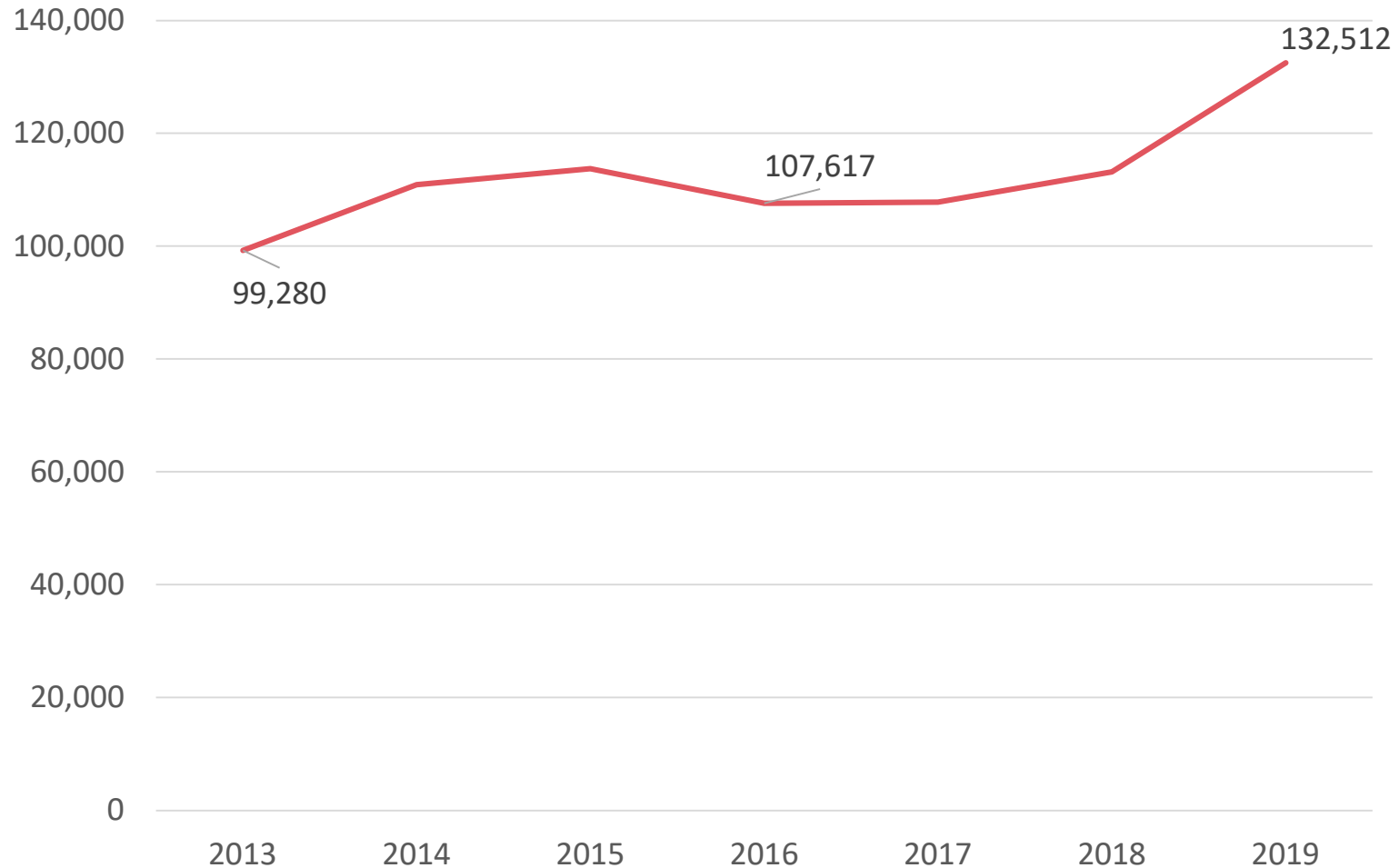
# Summary of Research on Helmet Laws

---

- Bike helmet laws are associated with significant reductions in injuries (-20%) and serious injuries (-55%), including traumatic brain injuries (Hoye, 2018)
- King County's helmet requirement is associated with a significant decrease in the severity of head injuries, as well as bicycle-related fatalities (Kett, et al., 2016)
- King County's comprehensive safety program—including the all-ages helmet requirement—reduced child deaths by 62 percent between 2000 and 2009 (PHSKC Press Release, 2012)

# Bike Ridership in Seattle has Increased Over Time

- Bike ridership appears to have increased from 2013 to 2019 based on counts of bikers crossing the Fremont Bridge in June of each year



Source: [2020 Traffic Report](#), Seattle Department of Transportation, Table 14 on p. 39.

## Free and Low-Cost Helmets Available throughout King County

- Programs and organizations can buy low-cost helmets (<\$10 each) in bulk online through Prorider Economy Bike Helmets or Helmets R US
- In addition, free and low-cost helmets can be procured by individuals at a dozen locations throughout King County (*see table below*)

Organization Supplying Helmets	City	Details
Bike Works	Seattle (two locations)	Free
Bothell Fire Department & EMS	Bothell	Currently on hold
Cascade Bicycle Club	Seattle	\$10 with sliding fee available
King County Fire District #27	Fall City	<\$10; fittings currently on hold
King County Fire District #16	Kenmore	Currently on hold
Redmond Police Department	Redmond	<\$10; fittings currently on hold
Woodinville Fire & Rescue	Woodinville	\$10 suggested donation
Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority	Kent	Free for area residents
Seattle Children’s Hospital	Seattle	Free
Valley Regional Fire Authority	Auburn, Algona, Pacific	Free for youth; \$5 for adults
King County Fire District #16	Northshore	Currently on hold
Valley Medical Center	Renton	Currently on hold

## Racism is a Public Health Crisis

- On June 11th, 2020, [King County declared racism a public health crisis](#).
- On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, BOH Resolution 20-08 declared racism a public health crisis.
- King County Government and Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) is committed to implementing a racially equitable response to this crisis, centering on community.
- This requires developing stronger and better resourced partnerships with community organizations and leaders to disrupt and dismantle racism and protect the health and well-being of our all our residents, regardless of race or location

# Racism is a Public Health Crisis

---

- 2021-22 Budget and Policy priorities
  - ▣ Down payment and community investments
  - ▣ Shifting and transforming the criminal legal system
  - ▣ Explicitly anti-racist and focusing on well-being of Black and Brown communities
  
- Shifting from punitive systems and investing in approaches grounded in public health
  - ▣ Metro fare enforcement
  - ▣ 9-1-1 responses in unincorporated King County
  - ▣ Security at schools



---

# *Questions?*

**Public Health**  
Seattle & King County 