

Pandemic Impacts on Victims of Sexual Assault and their Families

October 21, 2021



**King County
Sexual Assault
Resource Center**

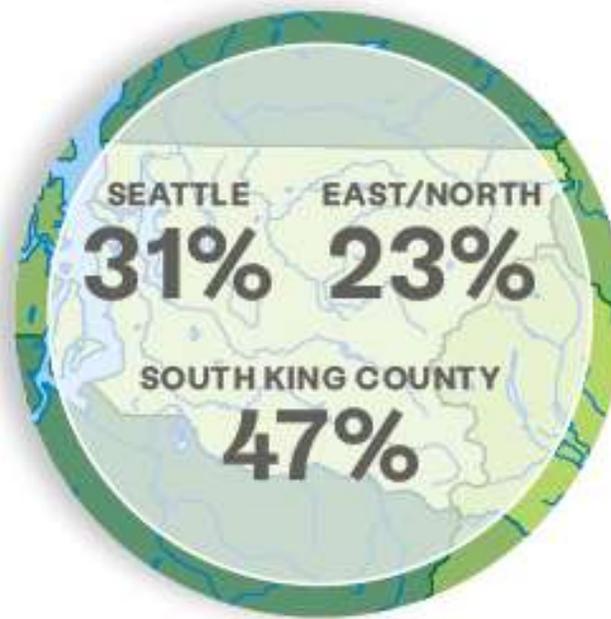
At King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC), the numbers of people seeking help continue to stay at the record high levels.

In 2020 we responded to over 4,500 victims throughout King County, we expect to assist at least that many in 2021.

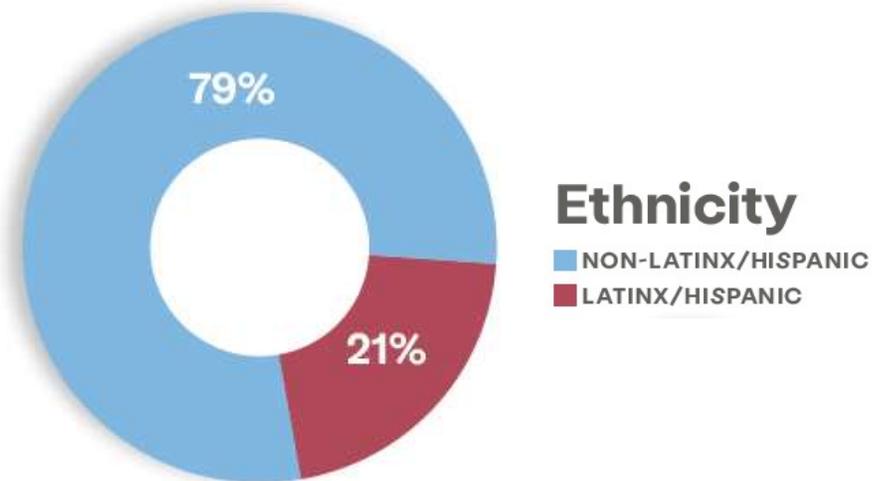
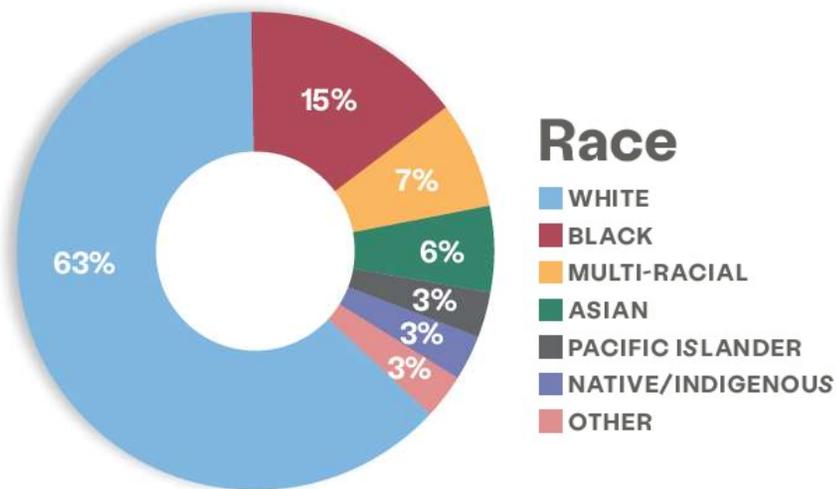
Client Numbers



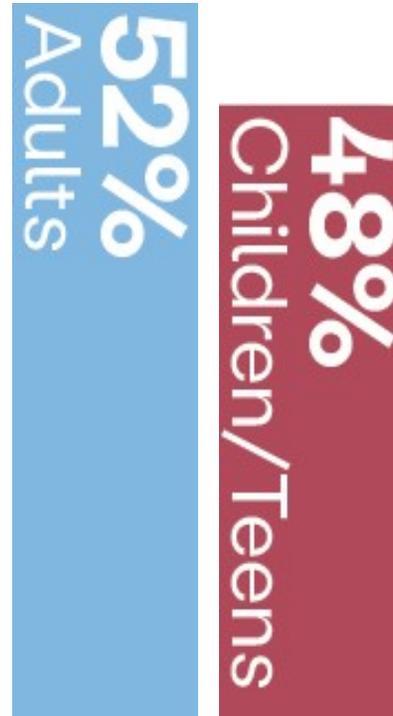
Client Services by Region



Client Demographics



Client Ages



3 Areas of Impact

Mental Health

- Exacerbated trauma symptoms
- Reduced clinical capacity and success in telehealth

Increased Vulnerability

- For Children
- Securing protection became much more difficult
- Backlog and Delays

Increased Stress

- Community
- Survivors
- Staff

Thank you





Effect of the Pandemic on Survivors of GVB - Overview

Merril Cousin | Executive Director | she/her
Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence



About the Coalition

- **Mission:** To end gender-based violence and promote equitable relationships through collective action for social change.
- **Vision:** Together we can create safe and just communities where all people thrive.
- **Our Work:** We support the efforts of our diverse members as they work to end gender-based violence & serve survivors. We work for protective legislation, policies, & funding to improve how our communities handle domestic violence, sexual assault, & other forms of gender-based violence. We connect professionals across disciplines to share ideas, & offer trainings about current challenges and best practices.



Increased Demand for Services

- A June 2020 survey of GBV programs in Seattle/King County showed **56% experienced an increase in the numbers of survivors seeking help**. **ALL** said that the severity/complexity of survivors' needs increased.
- Most cited survivor concerns/needs:
 - Increased violence
 - Housing instability
 - Food insecurity
 - Job loss/need for financial assistance
 - Loss of transportation
 - Legal options limited
- Disproportionate impacts
- Needs have increased significantly since then



Impacts on Agencies

- Increased operating costs related to COVID
- Increased need for flexible client assistance
- Assistance/flexibility for adaptations ie social distancing; technology, PPE
- Difficulty in hiring diverse staff
- Livable wage for GBV staffing
- Addressing secondary trauma and increasing workload
- Challenges in private fundraising
- Uncertainty in future public funding



- **GBV programs have experienced long-term gaps in capacity.**
- Despite clear links between Gender-Based Violence and homelessness, physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, & gun violence, **funding for survivor services has not been adequately prioritized.**
- For example, King County has experienced rapid population growth over the last 10 years; however, King County GF contracts have not even included inflationary increases, let alone increased levels of funding to address the increased need.
- Sexual and domestic violence survivors need specialized services, prevention programs, and community-based safety alternatives.



We believe survivors of GBV
deserve proven and
evidence-based models of
support and intervention...



Evidence has demonstrated **that flexible, survivor-centered advocacy** is particularly important.

“DV Housing First” **was successful in helping 86% of clients gain or maintain stable housing**, and also decreased the level of danger for most participants.

Survivors identified that the individualized services and flexibility of the program, coupled with the financial assistance, were key to:

- rooting survivors in the community.
- **helping improve survivors’ mental health & chemical dependency issues.**
- fostering survivors’ sense of dignity.
- **enhancing culturally relevant services.**
- **making services inclusive of survivors of all genders.**
- supporting parenting and children’s well-being.
- **preventing homelessness**, saving lives, and giving hope.

Survivor-Driven Advocacy- Includes problem-solving, safety & support planning, information & referral, navigating systems, advocating on behalf of a client, and community outreach (esp. for culturally specific programs).





Our Recommendations



Recommendations

Cities' & King County 2022 Budgets

- Support significantly increased funding for survivor-driven advocacy
- Immediate opportunities with Seattle and King County Councilmembers – active recommendations from CEGV and SHSC (Seattle) for increased funding for advocacy

Other Considerations – longer term

- COVID Budgets
- Veterans, Seniors, Human Services Levy (VSHSL) Renewal- expand Survivor Driven (Mobile) Advocacy & Prevention investments

Action Needed

- Letter/recommendations
- Public hearings/comment opportunities