

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Clark County

racial equity community needs assessment

2023

contents

Introduction	3
Message from YWCA Clark County Chief Executive Officer	4
Environmental Snapshot	6
YWCA Clark County's Efforts to Advance Racial Equity	18
Findings	25
References	26
Appendix: Stakeholder Interview and Survey Questions	27

introduction

The primary objective of this Racial Equity Community Needs Assessment was to identify gaps in services and inform the organization's strategic planning process, with an emphasis on identifying opportunities for YWCA to lead community conversations and programmatic responses that advance racial equity.

This report includes an analysis of trends in the community that touch the mission and work of YWCA Clark County, including an environmental snapshot that serves as a summary of multiple datasets related to regional poverty, affordable housing, gender-based violence, policing, and health outcomes. Throughout the environmental snapshot, racial disparities are noted when data was available. Many of the reports and datasets reviewed for this environmental snapshot include racial equity in their calls to action, which are amplified here. Having a summary of these important datasets in one place also allows for an intersectional orientation to these community challenges.

In conducting the Racial Equity Community Needs Assessment, it is crucial to acknowledge that the data collected in the environmental snapshot may not comprehensively reflect the experiences and needs of individuals of all genders, including those who identify as gender-inclusive, transgender, non-binary, and beyond. We recognize the significance of gender inclusivity and the distinct challenges faced by various gender identities within our community. Our unwavering commitment is to ensure that the voices of all individuals are acknowledged, heard, and that their specific needs are thoroughly addressed throughout our initiatives. Together, let's foster an inclusive and equitable environment for everyone.

Moreover, in our pursuit of racial equity, we firmly recognize the significance of intersectionality. Coined by scholar and activist Kimberly Crenshaw, intersectionality highlights the interconnectedness of various social identities, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability. Recognizing intersectionality is vital as it helps us understand that the experiences of women of color are diverse and multifaceted. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to consider the experiences of disabled women of color, whose challenges are compounded by the intersections of race and disability. By incorporating an intersectional lens into our efforts, we aim to ensure that our initiatives are more comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable for all members of the community we serve.

In addition to a review of existing datasets and reports, stakeholders were engaged in interviews and an online survey to get community input about the needs and challenges of BIPOC communities in Clark County and YWCA's role in addressing those needs. The needs assessment process and report were managed by Steinkopf Strategies, LLC, in collaboration with a team of three YWCA staff members and one Board officer. The environmental snapshot was completed in July 2022, with datasets and reports available at that time, and stakeholder engagement activities were completed in Spring 2023.

message from the chief executive officer

Dear Community Members,

On behalf of the board and staff of YWCA Clark County, I am honored to present you this Racial Equity Community Needs Assessment Report, focusing on the needs of BIPOC communities in Clark County and the role of YWCA in addressing those needs. Our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all is our north star and the impetus behind this assessment. We firmly believe that eliminating racism is vital to empowering women and fostering a more inclusive society where every individual can thrive.

Racism and sexism are deeply interconnected, and the struggle for gender equality cannot be fully realized without addressing racial disparities. Discrimination based on race and gender often intersect, leading to even greater barriers for BIPOC women. By dismantling racist structures and promoting racial equity, we create an environment where women of all backgrounds can access equal opportunities, be heard, and have their voices valued.

Moreover, the eradication of racism will play a crucial role in eliminating all forms of violence. Racial discrimination perpetuates a cycle of violence and oppression that affects not only BIPOC communities but society as a whole. When we stand united against racism, we break down the systems that breed violence and division. This includes violence against women, which disproportionately impacts BIPOC women. By fostering a society that respects and values diversity, we can build a safer and more harmonious community for everyone.

Our primary objectives for this needs assessment were to amplify local reports and datasets shedding light on racial and gender disparities in health and well-being and to engage diverse stakeholders in understanding the needs, strengths, and experiences of BIPOC communities in Clark County.

The insights gleaned from this report indicate that our community has a substantial amount of work to do. It is abundantly clear to us that the community desires a more proactive and visible role for YWCA in advancing racial equity and racial justice. We are resolute in our commitment to enhancing communication, visibility, and accountability to the community regarding this critical work, as outlined in our 2022-2024 Racial Equity Plan.

We extend our gratitude to the Community Foundation of SW Washington for their funding support of this community needs assessment process and report. Additionally, we would like to express our deepest appreciation to the numerous stakeholders who actively engaged with us, whether by serving on our Racial Equity Advisory Committee, participating in stakeholder interviews, or responding to our community survey. Your input has been invaluable in shaping this report and will serve as a guiding force as we move forward.

This report represents not only a comprehensive summary of the needs, challenges, and strengths of BIPOC communities in Clark County but also a call to action. We must join hands, embrace the challenges before us, and work collectively to create a more inclusive and equitable community for all of us.

Sincerely,

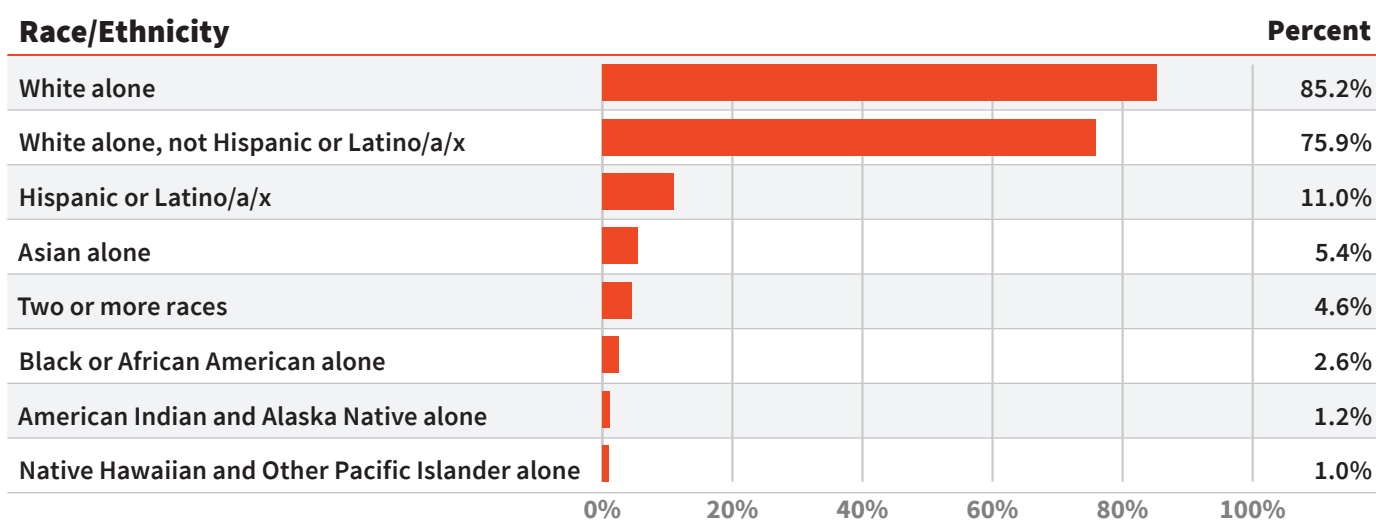
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brittini Lasseigne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brittini Lasseigne
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Clark County

environmental snapshot

Clark County Washington is home to a growing population of 511,404 people, according to recent census data. The overall population of Clark County increased by 18% between 2010 and 2020. Clark County is the 3rd most populous county in the Portland metro area and includes urban and suburban communities as well as unincorporated areas. Over 10% of current Clark County residents are foreign-born and over 15% of households speak a language other than English at home. About 15% of Clark County residents are BIPOC. Vancouver is more diverse than Clark County as a whole, with 28% BIPOC residents.

Race and Hispanic Origin in Clark County

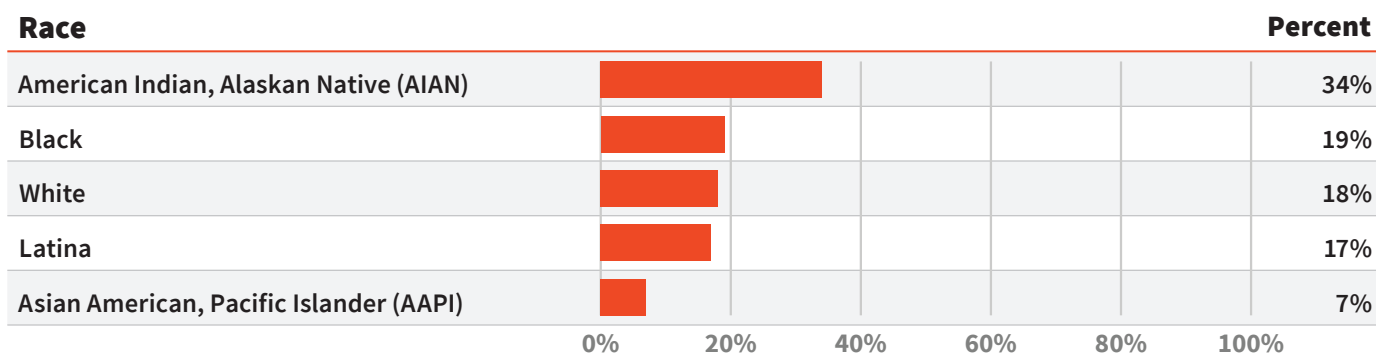


In December 2021, the Clark County Council formally recognized health disparities that have been highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic and passed a resolution declaring racism a public health emergency. The Council charged the Clark County Department of Public Health to assess internal policies and procedures to address and reform structures and processes that contribute to race-based decisions and actions and recommend policy changes and improvements to the Board of Health and Clark County Council. The Clark County Council also tied new requirements for public funding used by local jurisdictions to serve BIPOC communities at the same rate as those experiencing poverty in that community. The first program guided by this requirement was the Eviction Rent Assistance Program. Clark County is exceeding goals for this program by working with partners designated as “By and For Organizations,” i.e., organizations operated by and for the community they serve.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Domestic violence and sexual assault mostly harm women and LGBTQ+ people—particularly those who are Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, or living in poverty. Fully 45% of women in Washington State report having experienced sexual violence during their lifetime, which is higher than the national average of 1 in 5 women. As many as 83% of Washington women living with a disability have been a victim of sexual assault. According to the Washington State Department of Health, women with a history of sexual violence experience higher rates of physical health problems such as asthma, high blood pressure, frequent headaches, chronic pain, and difficulty sleeping, in addition to mental health issues. Indigenous women experience significantly higher rates of sexual violence than any other group.

Prevalence of Rape and Sexual Assault By Race



About 41% of women in Washington state report having experienced domestic violence at some point in their lifetime, higher than the national average of 37%. About 32% of Washington men also report domestic violence; although more women (27% compared to 11%) report experiencing negative impacts of domestic violence such as injury, PTSD symptoms, concern for their safety, fear, and missed work or school. Domestic violence fatalities increased by 18% in 2020.

The CDC estimates that murder is the 6th leading cause of death for Native women. Washington ranks 2nd in the U.S. (behind Alaska) in the highest number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons cases. An Urban Indian Health Institute survey of 71 cities across the U.S. found 45 unique cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls in Seattle, the highest in the nation.

In their 2021-2022 Biennial Report, the Women’s Commission recommended the following solutions to increase safety for women and girls in Washington State:

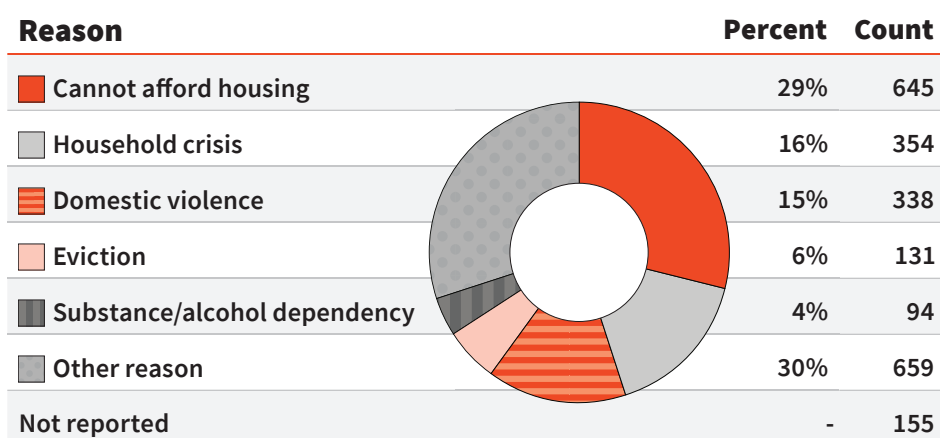
- Fund survivor services.
- Establish pathways to justice for gun violence victims.
- Promote victim-centered, trauma-informed responses in the legal system.
- Support efforts to reduce gender-based violence against indigenous women and girls.

HOUSING SECURITY

As is the case throughout the Portland metro region, affordable housing is a major community concern. The most recent Community Needs Assessment conducted by Clark County identified housing assistance as the topmost need identified by survey respondents (49%), followed by food assistance, asset-building opportunities, mental health services, and employment assistance.

There is significantly more need for low-income housing than there is housing available. The vacancy rate of rental properties in Clark County has hovered around 1% for many years. Lack of affordable housing coupled with stagnant wages has left more and more Clark County households “rent burdened,” defined by HUD as spending more than 30% of household income on housing. The 2019 Healthy Columbia Willamette Collaborative Community Needs Assessment indicates that from 2012-2016, 39% of households in Clark County were paying 35% or more of their income toward rent. There is no sign of this easing up as rent rates continue to rise. The lack of affordable housing stock is a major driver of homelessness and housing insecurity in Clark County:

Reasons for Homelessness (from Clark Co HMIS)



According to the 2021 Clark County State of Homelessness Report, there were 4,036 households experiencing houselessness, up from 3,972 in 2020¹. These households represent 6,285 individuals. Of those experiencing houselessness in Clark County, 24% were families, 21% were seniors, and 35% were BIPOC. People of color represent 15% of the Clark County population, so are overrepresented among people who are houseless or at risk for houselessness. Yet, there are barriers to equitable access to services: while BIPOCs experience houselessness at disproportionate rates, they do not access shelter and housing programs at the same rate they experience houselessness. In 2021, BIPOC households made up 35% of households that experienced houselessness, yet comprised only 23% of households accessing shelter and 29% of households placed in a housing program. Ending houselessness in Clark County is not possible without addressing the systemic racism that leads to disproportionately higher rates of houselessness and housing insecurity in BIPOC communities.

According to the 2018-2022 Clark County Homeless Action Plan, to effectively reduce the number of people experiencing houselessness, the Housing Crisis Response System needs to grow across all intervention types. Key focus areas in the plan include increasing low-barrier interim housing consisting of emergency shelter and transitional housing for youth, domestic violence survivors, and people exiting systems of care.

These calls to action were outlined in the 2021 *Clark County State of Homeless Report:*

- Implement anti-racist practices in the Homeless Crisis Response System.
- Increase permanent housing options for those below 50% of the median income.
- Increase housing program capacity within the Homeless Crisis Response System.
- Expand the HMIS database to ensure publicly funded programs are entering data into HMIS.
- Improve homeless youth tracking.
- Prioritize finding housing for veterans and those experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Break down silos between systems of care.

¹ We opted to include data from the 2021 Clark County State of Homelessness Report as a more comprehensive report as opposed to the more limited data in the recent Point In Time count.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Recent census data indicates that 8.7% of the population in Clark County lives below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, an economic measure used to decide whether a person's or family's income level qualifies them for certain federal benefits and programs. The Federal Poverty Level is supposed to represent the set minimum income a family needs for food, clothing, transportation, shelter, and other necessities. However, the formula does not take childcare costs into consideration, assuming that one parent is home with children.

The 2020 Clark County Needs Assessment identified these factors as drivers of poverty in Clark County:

- High rents
- Lack of jobs offering a livable wage
- Stagnant wages while the cost of living continues to rise
- Student loan debt
- High monthly transportation costs
- Regressive tax structure
- Institutionalized racism

The following programs were identified as priorities to help people move out of poverty:

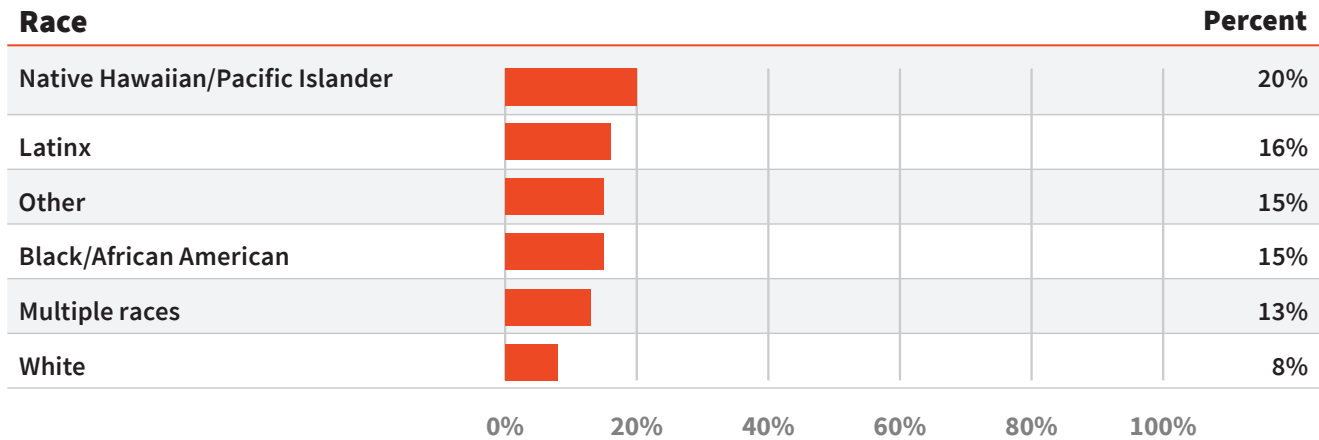
- Affordable housing
- Affordable childcare
- Student loan forgiveness
- Financial literacy
- Literacy
- Rent caps
- Flexible client assistance
- Address equity in BIPOC communities
- Better outreach to communities in need
- Culturally competent programs and services



“Poverty is a complex issue and it is far from being equally distributed in our community, region, and country. The prevalence of racial discrimination, which has become institutionalized in our systems spanning from education to health care to housing access to financing, has imprinted a legacy of inequality that has been sustained and embedded throughout our country’s laws and policies. Persistent racial disparities in poverty result from cumulative, systemic disadvantage over not just one life course, but generations. And this cycle of exclusionary policies targeting Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color exacerbates why race frequently is correlated with poverty.”

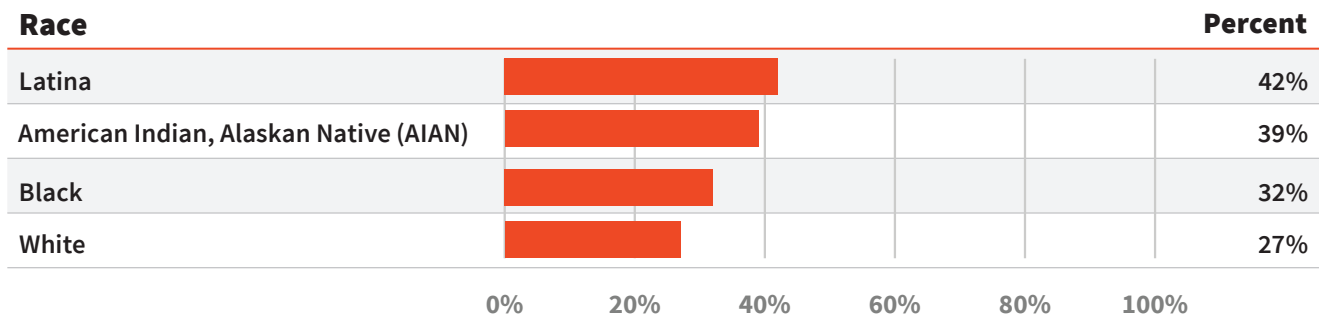
–2018-2020 Washington Commission on Women Biennial report

Poverty Rate by Race in Clark County



There are 274,000+ households headed by women in Washington, and 26% live at or below the Federal Poverty level. According to 2017 data, only 49.3% of the 311,716 eligible women and children participated in the WIC program. In 2019, only 52% of eligible children accessed Washington State’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) or Head Start.

Single Mothers in WA Living Below Federal Poverty Level (2019)

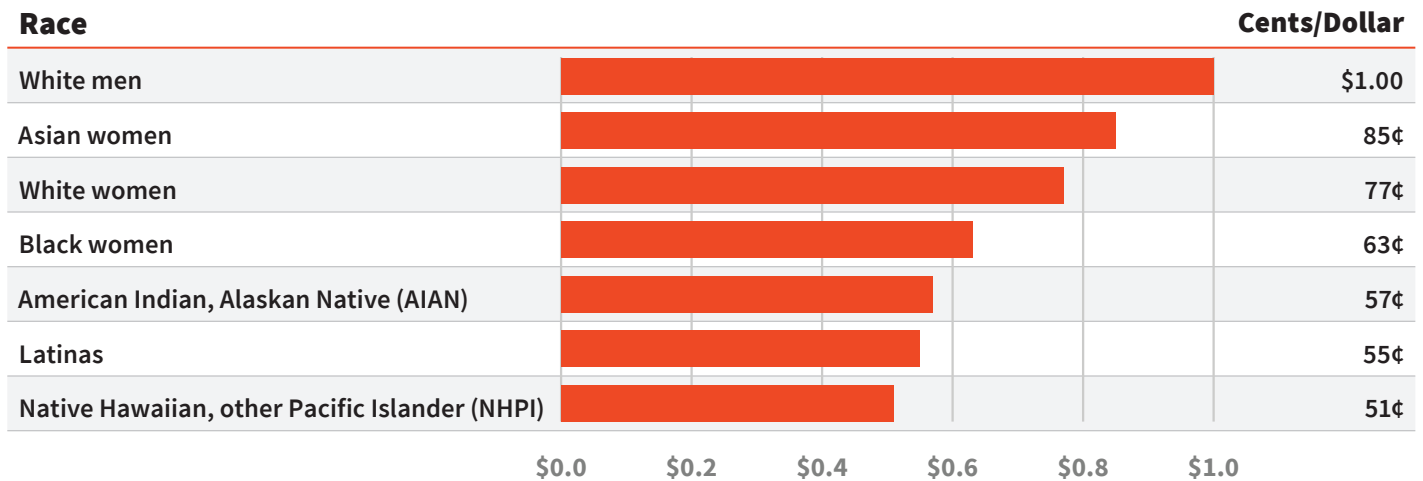


The pandemic exacerbated existing inequities for women and children. Fully 25% of women in Washington who became unemployed during the pandemic reported the job loss was due to lack of childcare, which was twice the rate for men who were surveyed. Six in 10 children in Washington State were without access to care at the start of the pandemic.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Women are the sole or primary breadwinners in 41% of U.S. households with children, yet their earnings and their earning potential decrease significantly when they become mothers. Washington State ranks 34th in the nation in gender pay parity, with women making 22% less than men on average. The gender pay gap in Washington State has widened since 2014 when it was 81 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Now it's 78.2 cents. The wage gaps are higher for women of color:

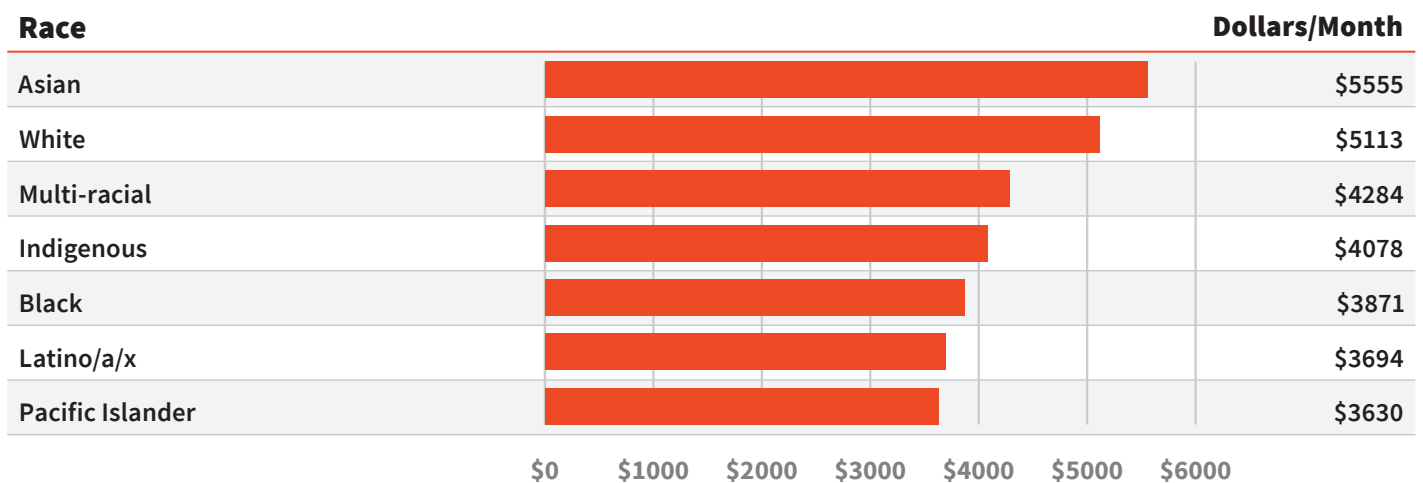
Gender Pay Gap

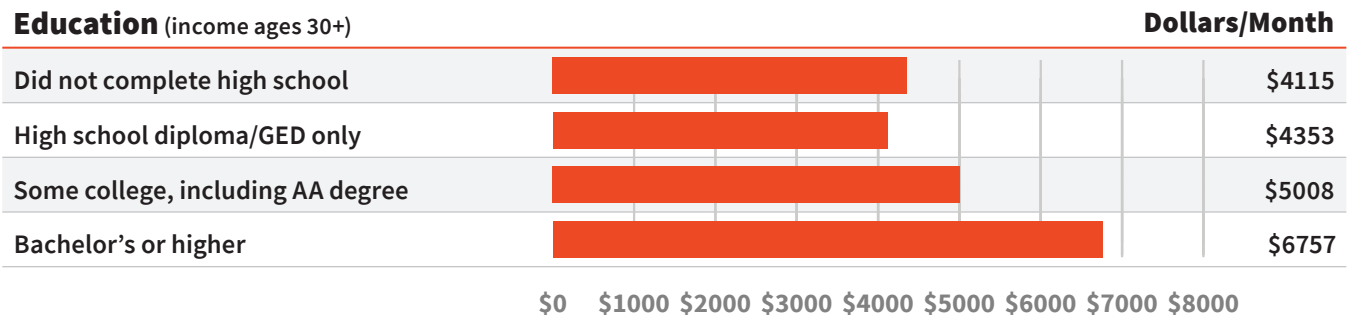
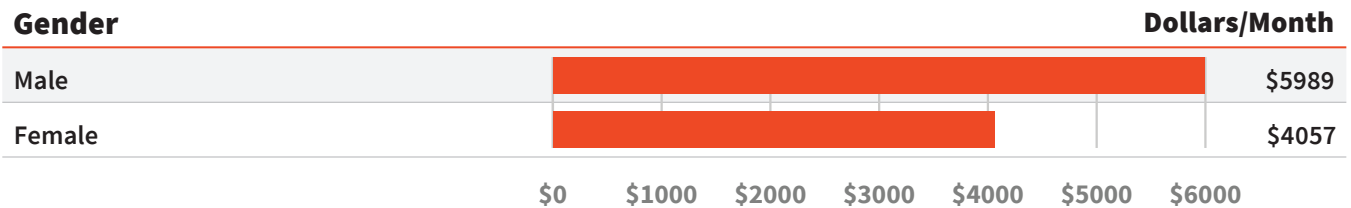


Average monthly wages in Clark County show disparities based on race and gender:

Ave Monthly Wage of Clark Co Workers, 2019

Combined average for all races is \$4943 per month

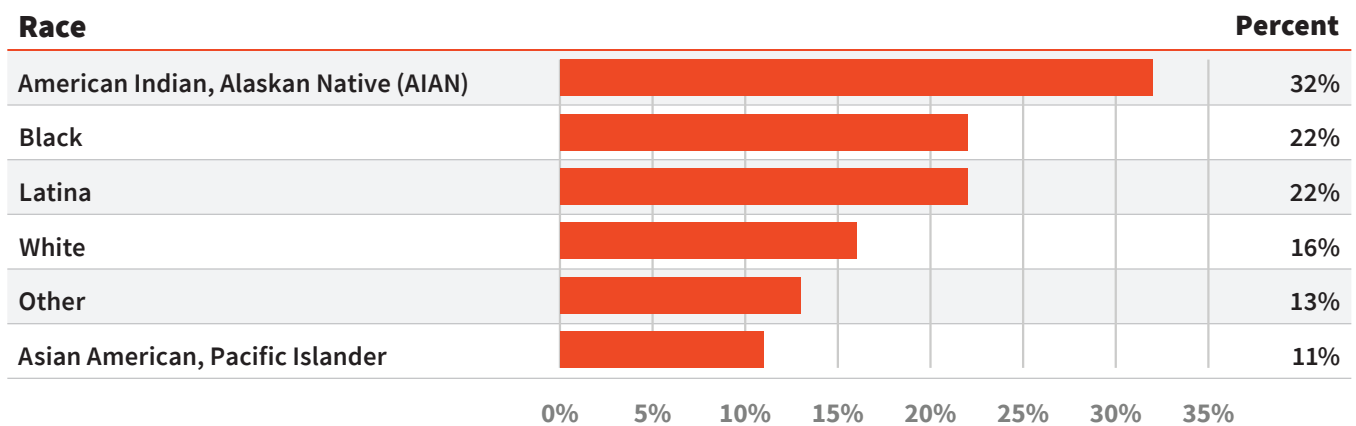




HEALTHCARE PRIORITIES

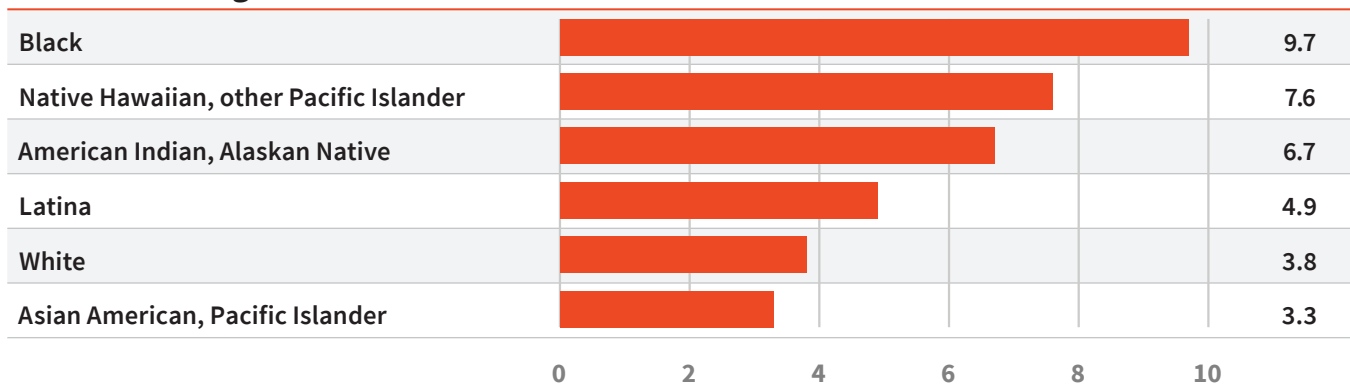
Access to quality, affordable health care is critical for the well-being of everyone in the community. The 2018-2020 Biennial Report commissioned by the Washington State's Women's Commission indicates that 9.1% of women aged 19-44 in Washington state are uninsured. Women of color also report poorer health status and have higher infant mortality rates.

WA Women Who Report Fair or Poor Health Status (2019)



Infant Mortality Rate per 1000 Live Births in WA (2018)

Race of Birthing Parent



The 2021-2022 Biennial Report from the Women’s Commission of Washington highlights behavioral health disparities experienced by women: 135,000 Washington Women received a mental health diagnosis in 2020 and 65% of all Washingtonians who received a diagnosis of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder were women. According to PeaceHealth’s Vital Bridge with the Community: 2022-2025 Community Health Needs Assessment, there is a significant need for connections between service providers and BIPOC communities. Community Health Workers, Peer Support Specialists, and community health advocacy programs should be expanded along with collaborations between health care and social service providers in support of social determinants of health.

THE CHILDCARE CRISIS

Southwest Washington is home to 47,000 children under age 6. According to the *2021 State of the Children: Early Learning & Care report*, 37% of children under 6 are living in poverty and 53% of children under 6 have all parents in the workforce. Fully 47% of children under 6 with all parents in the workforce do not have access to early learning in a licensed childcare or ECEAP/Head Start program. In the fall of 2019, 33% of children in the region started their first day of kindergarten unprepared. This situation became dire with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis: 30% of licensed childcare capacity was lost due to the crisis in June 2020.

The benefits of investing in early childhood care and education are many and well-documented. Not only do these investments provide a strong foundation for young learners, but they are also linked to a stronger economy, increased caregiver job stability, and a reduction in upstream costs for special education, healthcare, and criminal justice spending later in life. Every dollar invested in early childhood development yields a 7x return in the community.

Childcare costs place a tremendous burden on families. The average cost of child care (per child) in Washington State is \$14,063 annually. Working Connections Child Care is a subsidy program that helps income-eligible families pay for child care. Subsidy rates are currently far below the market rate for childcare. The maximum subsidy is \$7,837. Providers who accept Working Connections subsidies incur a financial loss when the subsidy rate is below the actual cost to provide care.

It is worth noting that workers in the early learning and care system are 83% female. They make far less than their K-12 peers: childcare teachers make, on average, \$14.59 per hour, preschool teachers make \$16.57, and kindergarten teachers make \$36.76 per hour. The average full-time childcare teacher makes \$28,797 compared to a self-sufficiency wage of \$55,106 for one adult with a toddler. Shockingly, 25% of childcare teachers with one dependent qualify for WIC.

THE FOSTER CARE CRISIS

Black/African American and Native American children are 2-3 times more likely to be placed in foster care than white children even though the incidence of child maltreatment is the same across all racial/ethnic groups. A 2020-2021 statewide survey of young adults with experience in foster care indicates that transforming foster care is key to addressing many upstream challenges. Findings from this report indicate:

- 33% of those with foster care experience drop out of high school
- 50% experience homelessness
- 25% are involved in the justice system
- 24% report poor mental health

A 2022 study by the Washington Department of Social and Health Services found that 17% of youth aging out of the system from July 2019 through June 2020 were homeless within a year. Most of these young people were BIPOC. The more positive a foster youth's experience with services, the less likely they were to run away or experience homelessness. YWCA Clark County's Independent Living Skills program helps foster youth transition out of state care through education, financial assistance, and resources for housing and employment; but the program is severely underfunded.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND RACE

In late 2021, the ACLU and NAACP of Vancouver called for the U.S. Department of Justice to open a federal investigation into the pattern of deadly force, disparate policing, and favoritism toward known white supremacist extremist groups by actors in the Vancouver Police Department and Clark County Sheriff's Office.

This call for a federal investigation followed the deaths of eight people by law enforcement between 2019 and 2021. Of those eight, roughly 63% were Black or Pacific Islander. The other three had been unhoused and struggling with mental health issues. Nearly all of the eight shootings have been ruled justified. In their joint letter to the U.S. Department of Justice, the ACLU, and NAACP argued that available data sources show uneven policing practices when it comes to traffic stops, use of force, and the demographic background of people who are incarcerated in Clark County.

A 2021 report from Task Force 2.0, Race and Washington's Criminal Justice System: 2021 Report to the Washington Supreme Court, indicates consistently disproportionate treatment of Black people and other racial minorities by law enforcement and the courts, including:

- **Stops.** Racial minorities tend to be stopped disproportionately.
- **Searches.** Racial minorities tend to be searched disproportionately.
- **Use of force.** Racial minorities, with the exception of Asian Americans, are more likely to be the victim of police use of force. Individuals who are Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders are 3.3 times more likely than a white person to be killed by the police.
- **Arrests.** Black and Indigenous persons are consistently arrested disproportionately. Black people are arrested for drug offenses at a rate 2 times that of white people despite consistent findings that Black and white people in Washington State use and sell drugs at similar rates.
- **Convictions.** Black people were 2.7 times more likely to be convicted than white people. Indigenous people are 1.5 to 1.7 times more likely to be convicted than white people.
- **Legal Financial Obligations.** Black persons, Indigenous persons, and Latinx are sentenced to LFOs more frequently and at higher rates than white people and Asian Americans/NHOPIs.
- **Incarceration Sentences.** Felony sentences for non-drug offenses indicate BIPOC defendants receive longer sentences than white defendants.
- **Death penalty.** A Black defendant in a capital case was 4.5 times more likely to be sentenced to death than a similarly situated white defendant.

GENDER + RACE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Findings from a 2021 report from the Gender and Justice Commission, *How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now*, indicate that gender matters in the treatment of court users (including litigants, lawyers, witnesses, jurors, and employees) and the adverse impact of these gendered effects is most pronounced for BIPOC women, LGBTQ+ people, women in poverty, and people at the intersection of these identities and statuses.

Gendered barriers to accessing the courts in Washington state include:

- Costs (user fees, childcare, attorneys) are prohibitive for single mothers, BIPOC women, LGBTQ+ people, and people living with disabilities.
- Lack of affordable childcare limits the ability of low-income women to get to court.
- Lack of court interpreters and translated materials disadvantages people with distinct communication needs.
- BIPOC women are not well represented in jury pools.
- Women, particularly BIPOC women, continue to face bias and pay disparities in the legal profession.

Gendered impact of the increase in convictions and incarcerations:

- While men of color have suffered the brunt of mass incarceration, the number of women incarcerated in Washington State grew exponentially and largely in the shadows between 1980 and 2000. Their numbers continue to increase while the very high incarceration rates for men decrease.
- Black, Indigenous, and women of color are convicted and sentenced at rates 2 to 8 times higher than white women.
- Jail and prison programs and policies are developed for men and often do not meet the needs of women or transgender and gender-nonconforming people.
- Incarcerated mothers are more likely than fathers to be primary caregivers. Mothers are thus more likely to lose their children to out-of-home care during their incarceration.
- Racial disparities in arrests negatively influence pretrial bail decisions, which influence plea deals, affect charging decisions, and create a higher likelihood of incarceration and longer sentences for both men and women of color.
- There is little data on the gender impacts of legal financial obligations (LFOs). The available research suggests that while men face higher LFOs, women face greater challenges trying to pay both their own LFOs and those of people close to them.

ywca efforts to advance racial equity to date

YWCA Clark County is a multi-service organization dedicated to providing life-changing services to 12,000+ adults, children, and families each year. The mission of YWCA Clark County is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. The vision (and ultimate goal) of YWCA Clark County is to create a community free of racism and all forms of oppression.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

In early 2022, YWCA Clark County convened a Racial Equity Advisory Committee (REAC) to assist in a Racial Equity Assessment process. This group of five external stakeholders met three times in January-February 2022 and included representatives from the NAACP, Cowlitz Tribe, and Council for the Homeless, as well as an immigrant rights attorney. REAC engaged in racial equity focus groups with these focus areas:

- Organizational Commitment, Leadership & Governance
- Racial Equity Policies & Implementation Practices
- Organizational Climate, Culture & Communication
- Stakeholder Voice & Influence
- Workforce Composition & Quality
- Community Collaboration
- Data, Metrics & Continuous Improvement

Reflections and comments from REAC participants indicate YWCA has not been very public with antiracism statements and its commitments to antiracism work. One committee member indicated that they are “looking for some movement and some action.” Another group member asked, “How is YWCA showing up to support marginalized and non-dominant communities?” The group agreed that there is little public knowledge about any concrete racial equity plans YWCA may have. The mission statement indicates a dedication to eliminating racism, but that frame doesn’t include a commitment to racial equity. In other words, what’s actionable here? According to one REAC participant, “The mission says ‘eliminating racism,’ but the organization does not have a specific program that actually addresses that issue.”

Participants also recognized that YWCA Clark County has been more engaged in equity work in the last 18-24 months than ever before, including an active presence at the SW Washington Equity Coalition (SWEC). They view their advisory group as a reflection of this and want to see continued community dialogue. They would like to see ongoing community collaboration to stay connected to the issues the community cares about and they think YWCA should be creating spaces for ongoing dialogues. According to one participant, “We stop growing when we think we know it all and think we have all of the answers.” They are eager to see more community engagement and collaboration to surface racial justice and recognize that YWCA is a logical convener for this work.

RACIAL EQUITY GOALS

In light of the history of racism in the region, persistent disparities and injustice faced by people of color in the community, and an explicit commitment to eliminating racism in its mission, YWCA Clark County has adopted a racial equity policy to declare that racial justice is imperative for our collective work. YWCA Clark County has adopted the following goals in its 2022-2024 Racial Equity Plan:

- 1.** Share information about YWCA’s racial equity work, increasing communication with both staff and external partners.
- 2.** Establish racial equity goals for YWCA Clark County Board of Directors.
- 3.** Operationalize the Racial Equity Committee with by-laws and a DEI policy.
- 4.** Identify models for increasing the recruitment, retention, and promotion of people of color.
- 5.** Develop key priorities around cultural competencies among staff and leadership.
- 6.** Create and apply a framework that ensures decisions are made with an equity lens agency-wide.
- 7.** Engage BIPOCs in the community needs assessment process and program design.
- 8.** Engage external partners in racial equity work.
- 9.** Establish intentional outreach and expand services to build relationships with communities we are not currently serving.
- 10.** Create an organizational policy for interpretation and continue to improve language-based services.
- 11.** Implement results of a facility audit for signage, art, and culturally specific materials for children.
- 12.** Increase involvement in anti-racist public policy initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In response to REAC recommendations, we comprehensively engaged leaders of color in government, healthcare, education, and foster care, along with community partners, former board members, donors, and Southwest Washington Equity Coalition members. When leaders of color were unavailable, qualified white allies were thoughtfully included. A tailored set of questions was crafted for stakeholder interviews and an online survey, ensuring focused insights. Eight stakeholders, including 4 REAC members, participated in interviews, and 26 stakeholders, including allies, provided valuable input through the survey. This approach enabled diverse perspectives and enhanced our understanding, aligning with YWCA's commitment to inclusive and equitable representation.

There was almost universal agreement among stakeholders that the community does not have adequate safe spaces for both adults and youth of color.

“Most nonprofits are white-led or majority-white-staffed organizations. It is usually these groups who hold community spaces or offer community services. We need more culturally specific or BIPOC-led organizations funded well to create these spaces.”

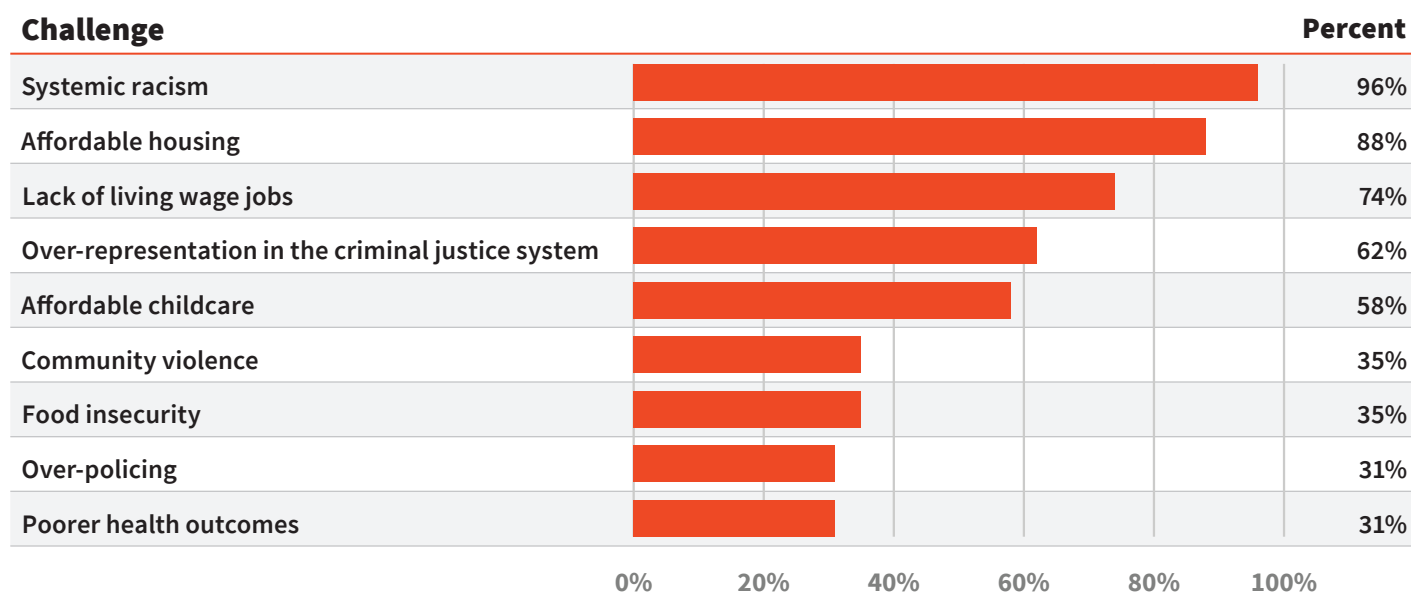
“There are few spaces where BIPOCs can go to ‘just be.’”

“I do believe that minority youth in Clark County have very few safe places to turn to, particularly with the recent nationwide gun problems that appear to be racially motivated.”

About 86% of the interviewees and stakeholder respondents indicated that there were not adequate supports for households made up of people of color and 14% said they were unsure.

“I do not think there are sufficient supports or resources for any marginalized individuals in Clark County regardless of race, but people of color face additional barriers.”

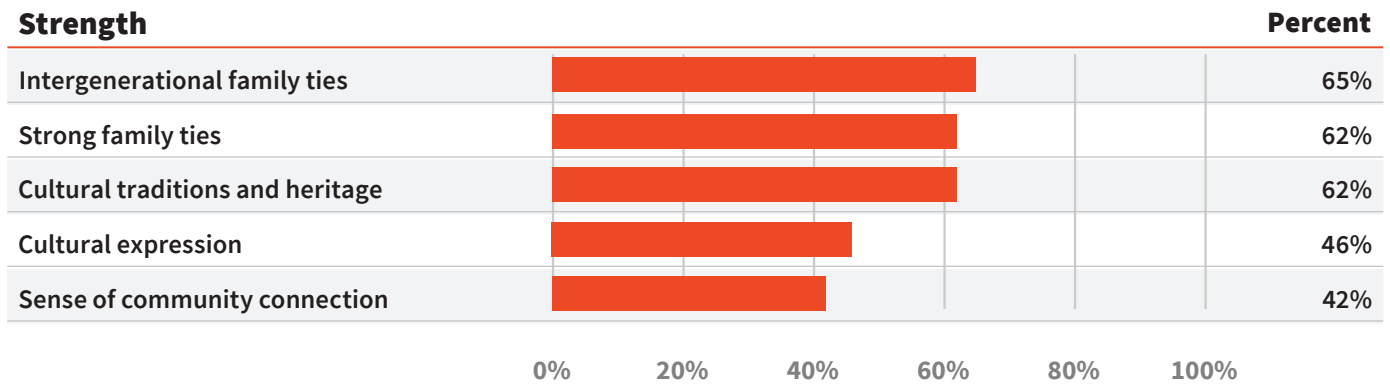
Stakeholders who responded to the survey were asked to identify what they thought were the top 5 challenges facing communities of color in Clark County. Here’s what they told us:



Survey respondents indicated that affordable housing and systemic racism had the most urgency, followed by a lack of living wage jobs. These top concerns were echoed by stakeholders who participated in 1:1 interviews.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

YWCA Clark County was also interested in hearing from stakeholders regarding their thoughts about the strengths of BIPOC communities in Clark County. Here’s what they told us:



Of those stakeholders who participated in an interview, 50% also indicated community connection as a top strength of Clark County’s BIPOC communities. Several interviewees also noted the effective community organizing and advocacy work of culturally specific groups.

“We have strong advocates for different culturally specific groups, for example running for office, giving testimony in Olympia, etc. The tenacity is there to make sure their communities aren’t overlooked.”

“Resilience in the face of constant challenge.”

what does YWCA mission mean to stakeholders?

The mission of YWCA is to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. There were a wide variety of responses from stakeholders about what this mission meant to them, in both the interviews and the survey responses. Many survey respondents indicated that the mission means supporting the needs of women and BIPOC people and advocating on their behalf.

“I love the mission. To me this means to support and work for people of color and women in our community, thereby creating a better community for everyone.”

“Their mission is the ideal end state. It means active program work that addresses this, community engagement, advocacy, and robust fundraising to meet the needs of people in a flexible way that doesn’t require them to only work through systems.”

“The mission means that programming and events center women of color and all survivors.”

“I’ve always been impressed that eliminating racism is first on this list. That garners more trust from me that YWCA is working toward this.”

One interviewee indicated that they saw YWCA’s mission as a call to action. Several indicated they wanted to see YWCA be more intentional about its mission focus and shift to an anti-racism focus.

“It’s a call to action...not just realizing it but acting on it, which means a constant evolution of services.”

“I see them needing to put more emphasis on the first part of the mission statement.”

“When I think of the mission about the racism piece, I feel like their mission is more non-racist but not anti-racist.”

This desire and expectation around intentionality became clearer when asked how they saw YWCA putting this mission into action.

“I see an intense desire to center racial equity in their programming but I don’t know what their programming is other than the DV work.”

“All three elements of the mission should come into play when working on a program.”

“They have amazing staff who I’ve worked with for years and they have the energy for it. But there seems to be a breakdown with planning and implementation.”

Several indicated they want YWCA to show up more and be more visible in its positions on racial justice.

“When the Clark County Council has issues with a proclamation of Black History Month, YWCA should take a stand.”

“Bring back the Stand Against Racism event.”

WHAT ROLE CAN YWCA PLAY IN MEETING NEEDS AND ADVANCING RACIAL JUSTICE?

There were a variety of responses from survey respondents regarding what YWCA Clark County can do better or do more of to advance racial justice:

Role	Percent
Policy advocacy	54%
Coalition-building	54%
Direct services	50%
Community education	50%
Community convenings	42%

“Expand partnerships to increase supports. Accept meaningful donations that are culturally affirming for folx of color, like hair products.”

“Invest in culturally specific services.”

There was a synergy between those who responded to the survey and those who participated in the interviews. When asked what potential role YWCA could play in meeting the needs of BIPOC communities in Clark County, 50% of the stakeholders who participated in 1:1 interviews indicated community convenings were important.

“Create spaces to bring communities of color to the front.”

“Host multi-cultural festivals or community events.”

“Create and convene a coalition that meets regularly to talk together about how organizations can support each other and share best practices.”

About half the group interviewed also indicated policy advocacy work as an important way to meet the needs of BIPOC communities and advance racial equity. Several mentioned greater partnerships with BIPOC groups and culturally specific providers. There was strong interest in centering the voices of BIPOC constituents in developing priorities for community convenings and policy advocacy work.

“If the YW is really committed to eliminating racism, there really needs to be a strong voice at the policy level.”

“Increase access to affordable childcare and increase advocacy for youth facing inequitable discipline.”

“Center BIPOC voices and then take a back seat to that.”

HOW CAN YWCA BE MORE ACCOUNTABLE TO COMMUNITIES OF COLOR?

When asked how YWCA can be more accountable to communities of color, stakeholders who were interviewed had a variety of responses, with 40% indicating they want to see regular communications from the organization and a stronger social media presence. Stakeholders also had these suggestions for increasing accountability:

- Diversify the board and staff
- Talk more about the full breadth of services YWCA offers
- Offer cross-cultural training to staff and community partners
- Bring more BIPOC groups into program planning and evaluation
- Acknowledge the organization's history of harm and create a pathway for repair

findings

YWCA's mission focus on eliminating racism resonates with people. Stakeholders are eager to see YWCA increase its presence in the community when it comes to taking a public stand for racial equity and racial justice. They want to see YWCA activate its mission to eliminate racism with intentionality and a commitment to center the voices and experiences of BIPOC women. Stakeholders also want to see a commitment to advance this racial justice work from "eliminating racism" to being actively anti-racist. There is trust that YWCA can do this work and help lead the way for the wider community.

Another area for consideration in terms of activating the mission is developing culturally responsive and culturally specific programs within YWCA's program focus areas and competencies. YWCA is well-respected for its work in addressing gender-based violence. Developing culturally responsive programs within the domestic violence program portfolio could be powerful. Culturally responsive approaches to help address the community's joint affordable housing and homelessness crises would be powerful as well, and fundable given the regional government's focus on addressing these issues.

Based on multiple cross-sector reports, there is wide community agreement that the housing crisis is another major priority for the community and this was confirmed in stakeholder engagement activities. Looking at the homelessness and affordable housing crises through a racial justice lens is increasingly recognized by community partners as critical. As an organization whose mission centers on eliminating racism and with a history of providing emergency and transitional housing services to survivors of domestic violence, YWCA can play an important role here.

The near-universal agreement that the community lacks safe spaces for BIPOC adults and youth is an important finding. As a trusted resource, YWCA is in a unique position to create those spaces, as well as to advocate for them. Along these lines, there was also interest in seeing YWCA play more of a convening role in bringing community groups together to talk about race and building coalitions that will support policy change. Authentic and meaningful opportunities that build community belonging are a powerful force for social change.

references

To get a better understanding of the operating environment for addressing community needs and priorities with regard to racial equity and racial justice, the following datasets and reports were reviewed:

- Clark County Washington 2020 Community Needs Assessment Report
- 2021 Clark County State of Homelessness, Council for the Homeless
- 2021 Homeless Crisis Response System Report
- 2019-2022 Clark County Homeless Action Plan
- 2022 Clark County Point-in-Time Count
- State of the Children Report: Early Learning & Care
- 2021 Mockingbird Survey of Foster Care Report
- Kelsey Turner, “Slipping through the cracks: from foster care to homelessness,” The Columbian, Jan 29, 2023.
- A Vital Bridge with the Community: 2022-2025 Community Health Needs Assessment, PeaceHealth SW Medical Center
- Healthier Clark County InfoMap
- Washington State Women’s Commission 2021-2022 Biennial Report
- Washington State Women’s Commission 2018-202 Biennial
- 2021 Gender Justice Study: Executive Summary + Recommendations
- Race and Washington’s Criminal Justice System: 2021 Report to the Washington Supreme Court, Task Force 2.0: Race and the Criminal Justice System, 2021.
- 2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now, Gender and Justice Commission, Washington Courts Administrative Office of the Courts

Additionally, these organizational documents were reviewed for this report:

- Feb-Dec 2020 Annual Plan
- YWCA Clark County Racial Equity Policy 6.2017
- YWCA Clark County Racial Equity Plan 2022-2024
- REAC Advisory Committee, 2022 Racial Equity Assessment
- March 2022 Financial Statements
- FY22 Consolidated Budget

appendix

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

questions about our community

1. Do you think there are adequate safe community spaces for BIPOC adults in our community? Can you identify some of those spaces?
2. Do you think there are adequate safe community spaces for BIPOC youth in our community? Can you identify some of those spaces?
3. Do you think there are adequate supports for BIPOC households in our community?
4. Based on your knowledge and experiences, what are the top challenges you see facing BIPOC communities in Clark County? Feel free to list top challenges for a specific community that you identify with.
5. Which challenge do you think has the most urgency?
6. What are the top strengths of BIPOC communities in Clark County? Feel free to list top strengths for a specific community that you identify with.

questions about YWCA

1. The national mission of YWCA is “To thrust our collective power towards the elimination of racism, wherever it exists, by any means necessary.” What does the national mission for YWCA mean to you?
2. How do you see YWCA Clark County putting this mission into action?
3. Based on what you know about the programs, services, and communications outreach of YWCA, what role does the organization currently play in meeting the needs of BIPOC communities in Clark Co?
4. What is getting in the way of meeting the needs of BIPOC communities in Clark Co?
5. What potential role can YWCA play in meeting the needs of BIPOC communities in Clark Co?
6. What potential role can YWCA play in building resiliency in BIPOC communities in Clark Co?
7. What can YWCA do better or do more of to advance racial justice in our community?
8. Do you have any thoughts about how YWCA can be more accountable to BIPOC communities in Clark Co?