



"I am always experiencing racism."
**KING COUNTY COMMUNITIES
SPEAK THEIR TRUTH ABOUT RACISM
2021**



**UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES
OF **RACISM** FOR KING
COUNTY FAMILIES**

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GET INVOLVED

The 10 communities reflected in this series heard about the café discussions from the Community Café Collaborative or through their work with King County and were the first to express interest in hosting café discussions. There are many other communities who face racism whose experiences are not represented in this series. We would love to hear from community partners who are interested in interpreting and sharing racism findings for other BIPOC communities such as: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, parents in multiracial households, and LGBTQ BIPOC communities.

Please reach out to the Best Starts for Kids evaluation team at bsk.data@kingcounty.gov to discuss this opportunity further.



INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In this series, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) parents and caregivers in King County describe their experiences of racism. [Oppressive systems and racism continue to create disparities in access to services, education, economic attainment, and life expectancies for communities of color.](#) The findings in this series describe experiences with racism that include bullying in schools; discrimination in public spaces; negligence at the doctor’s office; being overlooked for job opportunities; frustration, self-doubt, and mental burden to cope with perpetrations of racism; and others.

While this series focuses largely on interpersonal racism, racism at the individual level doesn’t happen in isolation. Institutional and systemic racism are the largest drivers in disparities and inequities and allow space for individual-level racism to occur. Systemic racism needs to be addressed to make meaningful improvements in disparities.

This series includes findings for 10 communities: African American, Afro-Latina/x/o, Cambodian (Khmer), Ethiopian, First Peoples (American Indian/ Alaska Native), Hispanic/Latina/x/o, Middle Eastern/North African, Pasifika (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), Somali, and Vietnamese communities. The survey results come from the King County 2019 Best Starts for Kids Health Survey, a survey of 6,000 parents and caregivers with children in elementary school and younger, in which we asked about seven specific experiences of racism.

The summary of what we heard from community discussions comes from a 2021 series of community cafés, where families from these 10 communities were asked to reflect on racism survey responses from their racial/ethnic community. We have done our best to use the same words families used to describe their experiences with racism, but we have edited for spelling, capitalization, or to spell out acronyms. You can find more detail about the approaches that were used in the [Detailed Methods section](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We’d like to acknowledge and thank the many people who contributed to this project:

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2016

Best Starts Children and Youth Advisory Board identified racism as a key issue for the Best Starts for Kids evaluation staff.



2018

Community partners and King County staff identified seven questions relating to racism to include in the Best Starts for Kids Health Survey.



2019

Nearly 6,000 parents and caregivers of children in 5th grade and younger participated in the Best Starts for Kids Health Survey.



2020

King County staff analyzed survey responses and heard from stakeholders about the need for community interpretation of findings.



2021

Spring 2021:

The Community Café Collaborative led language-specific discussions with families in 10 communities: African American, Afro-Latina/x/o, Cambodian (Khmer), Ethiopian, First Peoples (American Indian/Alaska Native), Hispanic/Latina/x/o, Middle Eastern/North African, Pasifika (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), Somali, and Vietnamese.

Summer 2021:

King County staff and the Community Café Collaborative summarized themes and common threads across the café discussions.

[NOW] Winter 2021:

In partnership with the Community Café Collaborative and families reflected in this series, survey results and findings from the 10 community café discussions are shared.

WHAT DID BIPOC FAMILIES SAY ABOUT RACISM IN THEIR COMMUNITY?

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their communities. The 10 communities included are: African American, Afro-Latina/x/o, Cambodian (Khmer), Ethiopian, First Peoples (American Indian/Alaska Native), Hispanic/Latina/x/o, Middle Eastern/North African, Pasifika (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), Somali, and Vietnamese. For more information about the café findings, please see the [full Community Café Collaborative report](https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf): <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>

Families face racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and racism is under-reported.

Racism impacts the way families use services and engage with educational systems. Eight out of ten communities thought the survey findings for their community under-reported experiences of racism. Data about racism should be gathered in different ways to represent the full range of experiences with racism.



“No. The statistics are not correct. It could be 100% of the people here. I think it’s because people are so used to these types of encounters, it’s not seen as racism. But still it’s damaging even if you don’t have the right words for it.”

– First Peoples Café participant



Families are commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings.

Many survey respondents shared that they often faced racism from strangers and co-workers. A few families also experienced racism while spending time with families and friends.

“In 2011, two kids were playing in the park, another white family was playing in the park, at the end they asked where are you from. After responding Afghanistan, their faces changed and they just took their kids and left. I felt shocked and upset.”

– Middle Eastern/North African Café participant

Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child's school.

Families described racism in schools in [2017 and 2019 data dives](#) – cafés with families to reflect on other survey results.

“Please listen to your children. If they don't want to go to school, it's because something is wrong. Support your children, maybe they're experiencing discrimination and they don't know how to recognize it.”

– Latinx Café participant

Most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system.

In the African American café, one participant related that she went to a hospital a couple times a week for an ailment and was sent home with pain pills, but when going to a different facility, with Black doctors, she was treated for the issue in a more comprehensive way. Families shared that the COVID-19 pandemic compounded and accentuated these racist experiences.

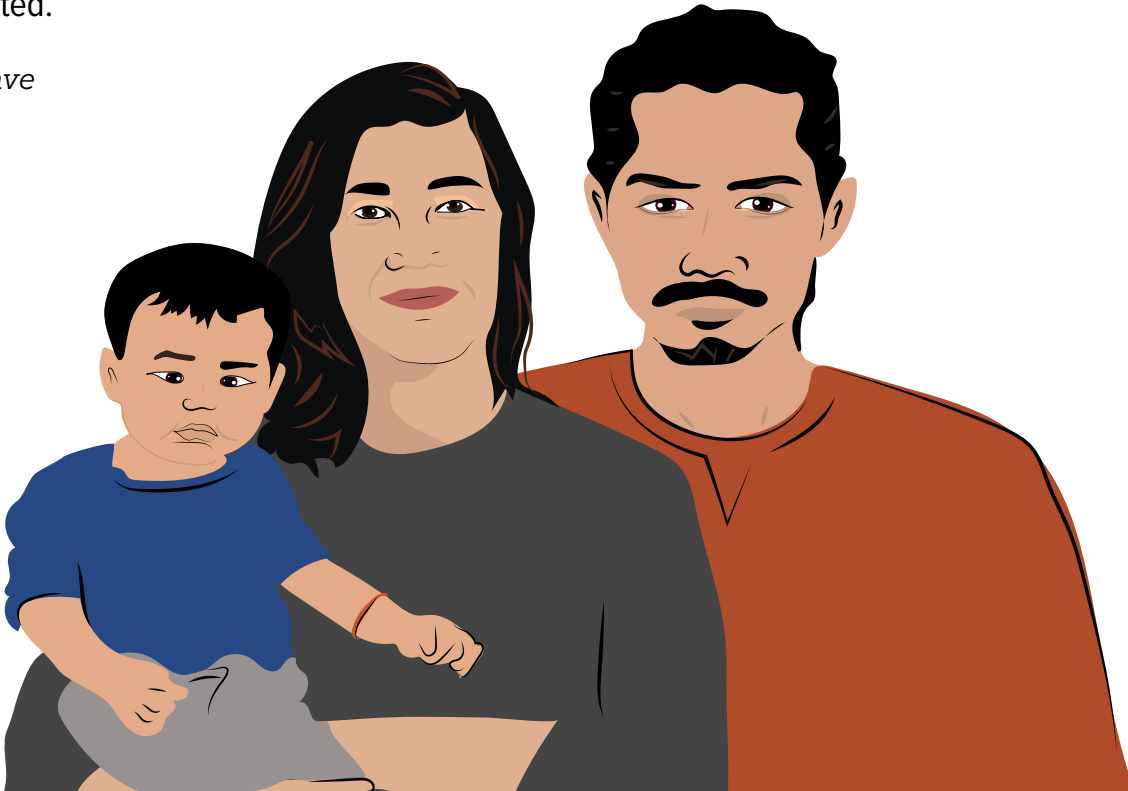
Families received support through their cultural communities.

Families felt supported by cultural or language communities, not necessarily their immediate neighbors, and as neighborhoods gentrified, participants felt less supported.

“The neighborhoods are changing and don’t have the same dynamic. Gentrification is changing the neighborhoods...”

– African American Café participant

You can also learn more about what families said in the [full Community Café Collaborative report](#): <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>.





AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>

71%

of African American parents said they experienced racism.

Among African American parents who experienced racism:

58% while receiving medical care

58% at child’s activities

49% at child’s school

Other common settings included at **work**, in **public places**, and in **social settings**.

307

African American parents took the survey in 2019.



Image credit: Carolyn Solitaire



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

Participants in this café thought the percentage of African Americans experiencing racism in the survey data was too low. Racism is pervasive in their daily lives, almost to the point of saturation. Some expressed that it was hard to pinpoint what is a microaggression when the interactions are commonplace. They thought BIPOC might not even see microaggressions for what they are: racism.

Most café participants had experienced racism while receiving and/or attempting to receive adequate healthcare. These are instances that were universal for the community pre-pandemic but have been compounded and accentuated by the effects of COVID. One participant related that she went to a hospital a couple times a week for an ailment and was sent home with pain pills, but when going to a different facility, with Black doctors, she was treated for the issue in a more comprehensive way. All the participants agreed that they would like to explore this thread of daily racism in more detail.



“People should not be experiencing racism in receiving medical care and at a child’s school. That is a big problem.”
– African American Café participant

“The neighborhoods are changing and don’t have the same dynamic. Gentrification is changing the neighborhoods.”
– African American Café participant



Notes:
African American parents are defined as parents who selected the “African American” group on the survey and did not select Somali, Ethiopian, or another African country. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected African American and Vietnamese on the survey would have their responses counted in both African American and Vietnamese results). Photos generously provided by members of the African American community.



AFRO-LATINA/X/O PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgfgf>

Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

The group agreed that there is a lot of discrimination that Afro-Latinos face, even within the Latino community (colorism, Spanish speaking vs. non-Spanish speaking, accent shaming, biases against those who present more indigenous, etc). Some expressed that they didn’t experience racism, but went on to describe everyday experiences that can be defined as microaggressions. The group brought up the roots of bias/discrimination several times. Some pointed to these experiences in home countries and in adoptive families.



“If they hear our accent or see us (judge by our looks) automatically start assuming things.”
– Afro-Latino Café participant

“Many times we choose to ignore the microaggression to protect ourselves, so we don’t get hurt.”
– Afro-Latino Café participant

“Sometimes racism is not visible.”
– Afro-Latino Café participant

“We are taught racism should not affect us so our response is - I didn’t even notice.”
– Afro-Latino Café participant



41%
of Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents said they experienced racism.

Afro-Latino parents reflected on survey findings for all Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents due to small sample sizes for Afro-Latino parents.

Among Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents who experienced everyday racism:

46% while receiving medical care
37% at child’s activities
30% at child’s school

Other common settings included at **work**, in **public places**, and in **social settings**.

1,023
Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents took the survey in 2019.



Notes:
The Afro-Latino café discussion was facilitated in Spanish. The café hosts for this community identified participants as Afro-Latino, so we have used Afro-Latino when describing café findings. The BSK Health Survey was available online and by phone in Spanish. Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents are defined as parents who selected the Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Cuban or Puerto Rican, Other Latina/x/o groups, or wrote a Hispanic or Latina/x/o response in the open-ended category like “El Salvadorian” on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Mexican on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Hispanic/Latina/x/o results). Photos generously provided by members of the Afro-Latino community.

CAMBODIAN (KHMER) PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>

74%
of Cambodian (Khmer) parents
said they experienced racism.

**Among Cambodian (Khmer)
parents who experienced
everyday racism:**

- 54%** while receiving medical care
- 57%** at child’s activities
- 63%** at child’s school

26
Cambodian (Khmer) parents took the
survey in 2019.



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

Most café participants agreed that the language barrier is at the root of most of their racist experiences, such as communication barriers not being addressed by schools and workplace discrimination. Participants talked about constantly feeling looked down upon or undervalued. There was also a general feeling that schools did not care about the Cambodian community since there was a lack of effort to improve communication between families and schools. They cited flyers and other communication from schools only being distributed in English.

Café participants also felt that the number of participants taking the survey and the number of Khmer people who know about the survey needs to be improved, and that the data does not reflect their community due to the low participation rate.



“Even I am able to speak English and have good education and I worked as an interpreter for schools and hospitals, but I still heard people said that I am not a seed that was planted here in the United States.”
– Cambodian (Khmer) Café participant

“I feel that schools don’t care about our Cambodian community.”
– Cambodian (Khmer) Café participant

“Even though we have the same skills and can speak English well like other Americans, we cannot complete at the same level as them because employers do not value our knowledge and skills.”
– Cambodian (Khmer) Café participant



Notes:
The Cambodian café discussion was facilitated in Khmer. Cambodian parents are defined as parents who wrote in “Cambodian” or “Khmer” in the open field for “Another race” on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Cambodian and Somali on the survey would have their responses counted in both Cambodian and Somali results). Photos generously provided by members of the Cambodian (Khmer) community.



ETHIOPIAN PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgfg>

Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

The Ethiopian community, largely immigrant, faces racism every day. Participants stated that they feel discrimination in numerous areas of their lives including their children’s schools, in the workplace, on public transportation, and while receiving healthcare. Many said they feel judged for the color of their skin and their accents.



“When sweeping the front of my house, there was a white man and asked...can you call the owner of the house? He assumed that I was the maid, but I told him it’s my house.”
– Ethiopian Café participant

“When I went shopping, I was choosing the clothes, but the salesperson came and she told me to stop touching all the clothes. I just folded them. I said I am here to shop. She assumes I can’t afford to pay for the brand cloth that they were selling.”
– Ethiopian Café participant

“When my children were enrolled in school, I was told they need an English class, but my children were born here and they speak perfect English.”
– Ethiopian Café participant



38%

of Ethiopian parents said they experienced racism.

Among Ethiopian parents who experienced everyday racism:

58% while receiving medical care

62% at child’s activities

43% at child’s school

Other common settings included at **work**, when **shopping**, and in **public spaces**.

106

Ethiopian parents took the survey in 2019.

Image credit: Tewodros Ayele

Notes:
The Ethiopian café discussion was facilitated in Amharic. Ethiopian parents are defined as parents who selected the Ethiopian race/ethnicity group on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Ethiopian on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Ethiopian results). Photos generously provided by members of the Ethiopian community and artwork by Maitre Artist Afework Tekle.

FIRST PEOPLES’
(AMERICAN INDIAN/
ALASKA NATIVE)
EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

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52%

of American Indian/Alaska Native parents said they experienced racism.

Among American Indian/Alaska Native parents who experienced racism:

- 53% while receiving medical care
- 52% at child’s activities
- 48% at child’s school

Other common settings included at **work**, in **public places**, and when **shopping**.

120

American Indian/Alaska Native parents took the survey in 2019.



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

“Microaggression” is not a well-known term, and many BIPOC may not recognize their experiences as such. For this reason, the group thought the survey data was not accurate. This community faces racism in all aspects of their lives and believes that more education should be done universally about their histories, cultures, and experiences.

In the First Peoples’ café, families talked about blatant discrimination in schools such as students dressing in “native” attire and pretending to speak native languages or broken English, and sports teams using “native” mascots in exploitative ways. The group mentioned that schools often turned a blind eye overall to this racism. Authenticity and having to defend one’s “Native-ness” were another topic of conversation that was brought up several times.



“No. The statistics are not correct. It could be 100% of the people here. I think it’s because people are so used to these types of encounters, it’s not seen as racism. But still it’s damaging even if you don’t have the right words for it.”
– First Peoples’ Café participant

“She was worried that her son would be teased if he grew out his hair. If it’s not respecting the culture, it isn’t respecting the child. Because now he has to put on a facade...students experiencing microaggression incidents in the classroom which led to one child choosing to cut their hair...we don’t feel welcome enough.”
– First Peoples’ Café participant



Image credit: Maggie Gilham & Shannon Lindberg

Notes:
The café hosts for this community identified participants as First Peoples, so we have used First Peoples when describing café findings. American Indian or Alaska Native parents self-identified as American Indian or Alaska Native on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected American Indian/Alaska Native and Somali on the survey would have their responses counted in both American Indian/Alaska Native and Somali results). Photos generously provided by members of the First People’s community.

HISPANIC/LATINA/X/O PARENTS' EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child's school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>

41%

of Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents said they experienced racism.

Among Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents who experienced everyday racism:

46% while receiving medical care

37% at child's activities

30% at child's school

Other common settings included at work, when shopping, and in public spaces.

1,023

Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents took the survey in 2019.

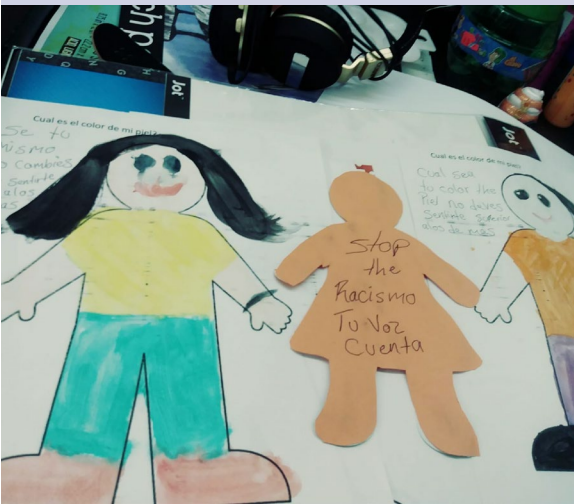


Image credit: Carmen Casillas



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

One major theme of the café was the role parents needed to take to improve racism, especially as it pertained to their children. They talked about the need to end multi-generational racism and even racism and discriminatory behavior between people of color by speaking out, advocating to a higher authority, and being teachers and role models for their children.

Another recurring theme was that non-English speakers experienced more microaggressions, even from some other Latinx people who may have had more education or a higher job status than them. “We have personal prejudices that go from generation to generation, and because of these trends we intentionally or unintentionally discriminate. We need to take away our prejudices and teach our children to do the same because we too have somehow discriminated against each other.”

They believe there needs to be a change among white people, that there is a lack of empathy with people from other countries and that people in power have made racism worse. In school, children need to be exposed to different cultures and more work needs to be done to address everyday racism experienced by Latinx students in school.

Participants also shared challenges with interpreters in health care settings.



“Please listen to your children. If they don’t want to go to school, it’s because something is wrong. Support your children, maybe they’re experiencing discrimination and they don’t know how to recognize it.”

– Latinx Café participant

“At work, because of your accent they think that you can’t do the job, and that limits us and makes us feel bad...and it makes us feel inferior.”

– Latinx Café participant

“Whatever your color, the skin doesn’t make you superior than others.”

– Latinx youth Café participant

“Stop the Racismo, Tu voz cuenta.”
English Translation: “Stop the racism. Your voice matters.”

– Latinx youth Café participant



Notes:
The Latinx café discussion was facilitated in Spanish. The café hosts for this community identified participants as Latinx, so we have used Latinx when describing café findings. The BSK Health Survey was available online and by phone in Spanish. Hispanic/Latina/x/o parents are defined as parents who selected the Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Cuban or Puerto Rican, Other Latina/x/o groups, or wrote a Hispanic or Latina/x/o response in the open-ended category like “El Salvadorian” on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Mexican on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Hispanic/Latina/x/o results). Photos generously provided by members of the Latinx community.



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

The term “racism” did not resonate with the participants as something that happens in or to their community. It is viewed as something that happens in the context of Black versus White in American culture. However, there were stories shared that could be defined as everyday racism or microaggressions. Some participants thought that if more people took the survey, particularly people who do not speak English well, the results might look different.

There was a mixed reaction to the data as it relates to community experiences. Some participants identified with experiences of discrimination they have felt as an immigrant, specifically negative sentiments related to their home countries. Participants used other words for daily racism like “discrimination” or “judgement.” In general, the consensus was that the data did not resonate with their (limited and short) experiences in the United States. Many shared the idea that the racial categories presented with the data were too broad and not specific enough.

“In 2011, two kids were playing in the park, another white family was playing in the park, at the end they asked where are you from. After responding Afghanistan, their faces changed and they just took their kids and left. I felt shocked and upset.”
– Middle Eastern/North African Café participant

MIDDLE EASTERN/
NORTH AFRICAN
PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES
OF RACISM

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Notes:
The Middle Eastern/North African café discussion was facilitated in Dari. Middle Eastern or North African parents are defined as parents who selected the Middle Eastern or North African group on the survey or wrote in a Middle Eastern or North African country (e.g., Turkey) in the “Another race” group. Multiracial people are reflected in each group that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Middle Eastern or North African on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Middle Eastern or North African results). Photos generously provided by members of the Middle Eastern/North African community.

PASIFIKA (NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER) PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>

39%

of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander parents said they experienced racism.

Among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander parents who experienced racism:

72% while receiving medical care

70% at child’s activities

65% at child’s school

Other common settings included at work, when shopping, and when in public spaces.

95

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander parents took the survey in 2019.



Image credit: Toka Valu

Depicted here is a typical day at a PICA-WA food distribution site. In times of hardship, our Pasifika communities have always responded by rallying to support each other, a demonstration of the resilience of our community.

Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

The percentage of people experiencing microaggressions was too low and racism occurred in many places, including at school and at work. Reasons the results were not accurate included the low number of participants. One person suggested the survey was “taken lightly.” The group thought the question regarding community support was confusing.



“The numbers are way too low. I am always experiencing racism.”
– Pasifika Café participant

“They get looked at in a different way. Most all spoke of their negative school experiences such as not being treated the same, feeling judged, that they get looked at differently, kids being treated like they are the problem...”
– Pasifika Café host

“We have many talents but have been limited. Nobody asks us what we know but say they know what we can do.”
– Pasifika Café participant



Notes:
The café hosts for this community identified participants as Pasifika, so we have used Pasifika when describing café findings. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander parents are defined as parents who selected Native Hawaiian, Samoan, or wrote in another Native Hawaiian or Pacific Island race in the “Another race” group (e.g., Marshallese) on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Samoan on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Samoan results). Photos generously provided by members of the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander community.



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

This community faces racism every day. Many participants stated that they are judged for their skin color, attire (including head scarves), religion, language, and accents, but feel largely invisible and discounted. Participants thought more of the Somali community should have been surveyed in order to get more accurate results. The group also thought that if the interpretation of “neighborhood” in the second data point was the wider Somali community, the percentage would be higher.



“This injustice of racism has been going on before Somalis come to America and it did not get better. The system is built to benefit white people only.”

– Somali Café participant

“I feel like we don’t have a voice in this city and our voice doesn’t matter.”

– Somali Café participant



SOMALI PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgff>

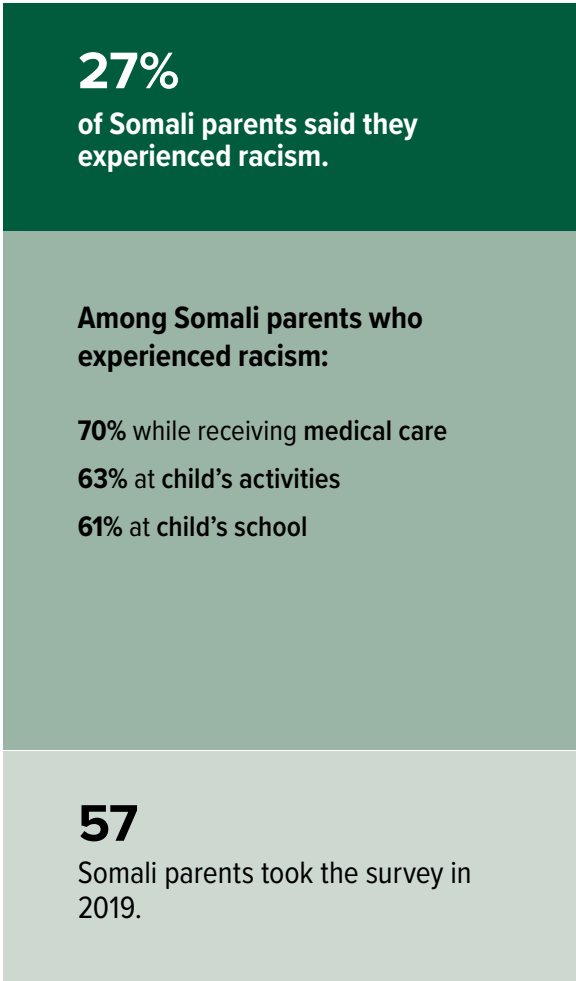


Image credit: Fahiima Abdulle & Hanni Hassan

Notes:
The Somali café discussion was facilitated in Somali. The BSK Health Survey was available online and by phone in Somali. Somali parents are defined as parents who selected the Somali group on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Somali on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Somali results). Photos generously provided by members of the Somali community.

VIETNAMESE PARENTS' EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2019 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the 10 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzgf>

29%

of Vietnamese parents said they experienced racism.

Among Vietnamese parents who experienced racism:

36% while receiving medical care

44% at child’s activities

36% at child’s school

Other common settings include at **work**.

166

Vietnamese parents took the survey in 2019.



Image credit: Tammy Dang



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

In general, most participants experienced small discrimination in some form or another at work, in schools, and while receiving healthcare. The idea that it is “racism” was not entirely agreed on by the group. Several participants conveyed that because of language barriers, it was difficult to advocate for their children and families at school, in the doctor’s office, and at work. Because of this many felt they are sometimes overlooked or disregarded.

“

“In general, most participants experience small discrimination in some form or another at work, in schools, and while receiving healthcare.”

– Vietnamese Café host

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“Participants thought the amount of Vietnamese survey participants was too low and thought maybe it was because the survey was not seen as important. The translation of the survey questions was not clear, in that it was hard to understand some of the concepts for the everyday person.”

– Vietnamese Café host

Notes:
The Vietnamese café discussion was facilitated in Vietnamese. The BSK Health Survey was available online and by phone in Vietnamese. Vietnamese parents are defined as parents who selected the Vietnamese group on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and Somali on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and Somali results). Photos generously provided by members of the Vietnamese community.



Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

Participants from the West African café reacted to these data points by asking why the numbers were so low. They agreed that the numbers did not reflect the frequency at which racism is experienced, although they appreciated the wide range of West African countries represented in the BSK health survey data. Experiences of racism were universal among café participants. The stories shared described racism at interpersonal levels, in childcare settings, and especially in interactions with management at work. Several times, stories were shared where the racism was brought to the attention of someone in a leadership role, and it was denied. Participants shared how, often, “people act like it’s perfectly acceptable to make stereotypes about African immigrants” or act surprised to “find an African person in a position to help them with their life”. They recommended providing examples of experiences in the survey questions or collecting these data through discussion, because survey respondents may not be connecting their personal experiences to the questions as they were written. Finally, participants reflected on how powerful it would be to hear about experiences of racism directly from children and youth, who may be hiding these experiences from adults in their lives.



“No matter where we are, we have no right to abandon where we come from all our traditions, and we have the duty to teach our children about our culture.”
– West African Café participant

“The image out there about Africa in the Western world is negative. People believe we are not up to standard based on the color of our skin.”
– West African Café participant

“For us in this meeting today, we need to know our values and what will be taught to our children. As parents, it must be us who teach our children.”
– West African Café participant



WEST AFRICAN PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

This series has been updated to include findings from a 2022 community café with West African families. In the series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2021 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the now, 11 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child’s school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings for the initial 10 communities who participated in 2021, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzqf>

29%
of West African parents said they experienced racism.

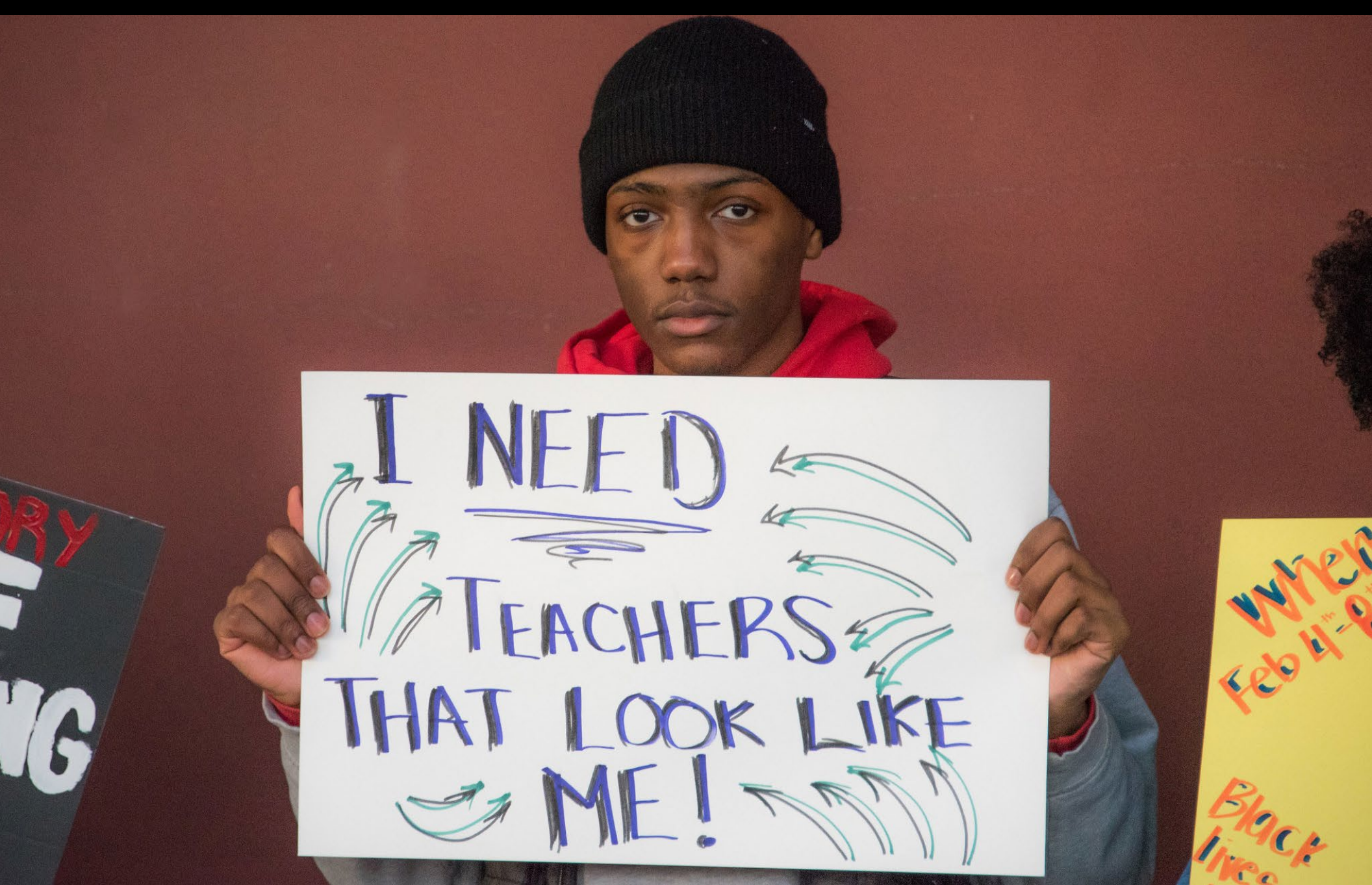
Among West African parents who experienced racism:

- 56% in a public setting
- 50% in the workplace
- 33% in a business/retail setting
- Other common settings included while **receiving medical care**, when **looking for housing**, and in obtaining **financial services**.

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West African parents took the survey in 2021.



Notes:
The West African café discussion was facilitated in English. West African parents are defined as parents who wrote in any of the following countries: Ascension, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, or Tristan da Cunha on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and wrote in a West African country on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and West African results). Photos generously provided by members of the West African community.



DETAILED METHODS

WITH BEST STARTS FOR KIDS HEALTH SURVEY

Who took the survey, and how?

In 2019, nearly 6,000 parents and caregivers in King County with children 5th grade and younger participated in the Best Starts for Kids Health Survey. The survey was available in 6 languages (Chinese, English, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese) online and by phone with an interviewer. A paper survey that arrived by mail was available in English.

How did we ask about experiences of racism?

Drawing from a research-validated survey, all parents who took the survey were asked seven questions about racism that addressed microaggressions due to assumptions of inferiority - the topics that community partners prioritized.

The questions were: In the last 12 months, how often have you experienced the following events (0 times, 1-3 times, 4-6 times, 7-9 times, 10+ times)?

- Someone assumed that you would not be intelligent because of your race
- Someone acted surprised at your scholastic or professional success because of your race
- Someone assumed that you would not be educated because of your race
- Someone told you that you were “articulate” after she/he assumed you wouldn’t be
- Someone assumed that you would have a lower education because of your race
- Someone assumed that you held a lower-paying job because of your race
- Someone assumed that you were poor because of your race

Parents who indicated that they had experienced any of the microaggressions above were asked whether they experienced these microaggressions while getting medical care, at their child’s activities, at their child’s school, and/or at another setting where they were asked to write in the setting.

How did we ask about racial/ethnic identities?

Parents were also asked to select all groups from the list below that matched their race/ethnicity: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian Indian; Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean; Vietnamese; African American; Somali; Ethiopian; Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano; Cuban or Puerto Rican; Other Latinx/a/o; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian; Samoan; White; or Another race (specify).

Parents who had more than one racial/ethnic ancestry (multiracial parents) had their responses counted in results for each community they identified with.

What were the demographics of survey participants?

Among parents who participated in the survey in 2019:

- 25%** had an income less than \$50,000 each year
- 66%** took the survey online, and 25% by phone
- 5,253** completed the survey in English (89%), 434 in Spanish (7%), 66 in Vietnamese (1%), 96 in Chinese (1.6%), 43 in Russian (0.7%), and 41 in Somali (0.6%).

What do we mean by racism?

In 2018, King County staff worked with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community partners to identify questions related to racism to include on the 2019 BSK Health Survey. At that time, community members shared that they were experiencing an increase in racial microaggressions - intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect statements and behaviors that are racist and harmful to BIPOC individuals. Through community discussions, we heard a strong preference to replace the word microaggression with the word racism. BIPOC families shared that the term microaggression implies a small effect, but in reality, microaggressions can have a large impact on the people experiencing them.

Why do we use the word parents?

We are using the term parents because most people who took the survey described themselves as parents (99%). However, there were other people who care for children answered as well, including grandparents, relatives, and others.





DETAILED METHODS

WITH BEST STARTS FOR KIDS HEALTH SURVEY

COMMUNITY CAFÉ DISCUSSIONS OF SURVEY RESULTS

How were the community café discussions held?

In early 2021, the Community Café Collaborative partnered with King County staff to hold community-based dialogues called cafés led by trained parent leaders called hosts. Cafés were held in 10 BIPOC communities: African American, Afro-Latina/x/o (in Spanish), Cambodian (in Khmer), Ethiopian (in Amharic), First People's or American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latina/x/o (in Spanish), North African/Middle Eastern (in Dari), Pasifika or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), Somali (in Somali), and Vietnamese (in Vietnamese). Café participants had not necessarily taken the BSK Health Survey.

In each café, we shared survey results for all seven experiences of racism combined (parents who experienced any of the seven types of racism one or more times in last 12 months). Families were asked to help us better understand the survey results for their community, whether findings resonated with them, and any additional context needed. During cafés, the term “everyday racism” was used to describe the racism questions on the survey. However, the term everyday racism did not resonate with all café participants and was sometimes confused with racism everyday.

Hosts of the cafés summarized major themes from each café in a “harvest sheet,” which was written in English. In each community-specific findings section, the major takeaways, insights, and themes were taken from the harvest sheets written by hosts. Quotes from cafés were included to highlight key themes.



STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

- The 2019 BSK Health Survey included responses from over 6,000 parents with young children across King County. While this is a robust sample, the data are specific to parents and not the experiences of all BIPOC people in King County.
- To our knowledge, this is the first population-based survey of parents and caregivers with young children to assess experiences of racism.
- The 10 communities reflected in this project heard about the project from the Community Café Collaborative or through their work with King County and were the first to express interest in hosting café discussions. There are many other communities who face racism whose experiences are not represented in this project.
- The survey asked only seven questions about racism, which gives us a limited snapshot of racism experienced by King County parents.
- By asking local families from 10 BIPOC communities to reflect on survey responses from their racial/ethnic community, we add context about what resonates and what is missing from the survey results.





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