



Community Engagement

Photo provided by Indian American Community Services.

Background & Methodology



Photo provided by Solid Ground, taken by Michael B. Maine.

Background and Methodology

Overview

Data for this needs update were gathered using a mixed method approach that included input from community members (including consumers of human services), human services providers, and other community leaders. Outreach and engagement strategies were built upon the existing trust and relationships that the City of Bellevue’s human services staff has with both providers and community members. These existing partnerships were essential to developing authentic and inclusive spaces for community engagement throughout the data collection process. HMA used the following methods to learn about the services, gaps, and perceptions of human services needs for the residents of the City of Bellevue:

- Designed and deployed a **community survey**, translated into 10 languages (English, Spanish, Chinese-Simplified, Chinese-Traditional, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Russian, Lingala, and Kinyarwanda)
 - The survey was originally translated into the 8 most common languages in Bellevue and then translated into 2 subsequent languages (Lingala and Kinyarwanda) in response to community partner request. The most common non-English languages in Bellevue were identified through Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data from the U.S. Census Bureau. These data are collected as a part of the American Community Survey. In compliance with Title VI, languages identified as either 5% of the area’s population or 1,000 individuals (whichever is less) are used as guidance when translating documents.
- Designed and deployed a **provider survey** for human services organizations serving individuals within the City of Bellevue



- Attended 3 **network/coalition meetings** with human services providers to gather input
- Conducted 8 individual and group **key informant interviews**, with population-specific subject matter experts (e.g., disability, probation, cultural communities)
- Conducted 4 **focus groups**, each of which invited participants from a particular demographic community within Bellevue
- Reviewed themes from 10 **panel presentations** (by both providers and community members) to the City of Bellevue Human Services Commission

Additionally, the HMA team reviewed data from the following sources:

- Reports and data from other human services and related assessments in the region
- Reports and data from other City of Bellevue initiatives and programs
- Reports and data from a variety of publicly available sources including: American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, and the Washington State Office of Financial Management, Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and others

The community engagement plan was designed to gather perspectives from diverse voices within the Bellevue community. To achieve this, demographics of respondents were monitored throughout the community engagement process, which allowed the team to adjust methodology where needed to gather input from communities that had not yet been reached.

For example, additional focused survey outreach was conducted with communities that were underreached within the survey data at multiple points throughout the data collection process. Additionally, interviews were utilized



in the latter stages of the assessment, to reach communities from whom additional input was needed.

The community engagement plan was designed to gather perspectives from diverse voices within the Bellevue community. To achieve this, demographics of respondents were monitored throughout the community engagement process, which allowed the team to adjust methodology where needed to gather input from communities that had not yet been reached.

Surveys

Two surveys were developed and administered as part of the needs update: a provider survey and a community survey. Both were administered online through the Qualtrics platform. For the community survey, paper copies were also available at community centers across Bellevue. Copies of the surveys are included in **Appendices A and B**.



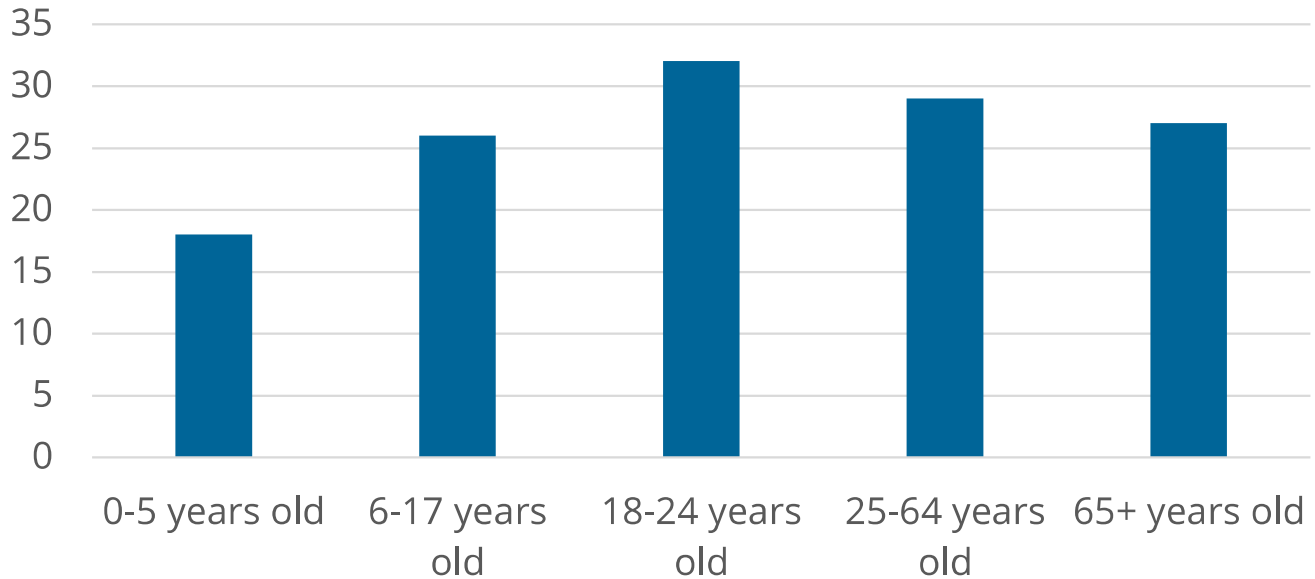
Provider Survey

The provider survey was distributed to human services organizations serving the Bellevue community and was open for responses for approximately 6 weeks in the summer/early fall of 2023. Organizational demographics were monitored throughout the survey response period and additional phone and email outreach was conducted to ensure a representative response that encompassed organizations ranging in size and focus area.

There were 57 responses to the provider survey. A complete list of responding organizations is presented in **Appendix C**. Organizations represented included a range of size (44% with an annual budget greater than \$5M, 27% between \$1M and \$5M, 29% under \$1M) and scope (housing, food/nutrition, employment, education, behavioral health, child and family services, and culturally specific supports). More information about services provided is presented in the **Themes Shared by Community Providers and Key Informants** section below. Respondents held a range of roles across the organizations, with approximately 75% holding either executive leader or program manager/director positions. With a few exceptions, responding organizations tended to provide services to Bellevue and other Eastside residents (e.g., Kirkland, Redmond, Issaquah, Sammamish), with many also serving other parts of King County. Respondents reflected organizations that serve individuals across the age spectrum (see **Figure 1** below).



Figure 1. Provider survey: Age groups served by responding organizations



Community Survey

The community survey was completed by 927 individuals. Of those responses, 868 individuals completed the survey in English, 36 in Spanish, and the remaining 23 across the remaining 8 languages. The survey was open for approximately 8 weeks in the summer/early fall of 2023. Community survey participants were recruited through a variety of means, including a press release published by the City of Bellevue in the city's eight most common languages, direct emails to participants in Bellevue's recreational programs, direct emails to providers of human services, and through discussion at provider meetings, interviews, and focus groups. Flyers advertising the community survey were created and translated into the eight most common Bellevue languages. Flyers were distributed via social media and community





Photo provided by Mary's Place.

distribution lists, both by the City of Bellevue and the Bellevue School District. Additionally, organizations and community groups amplified the community survey on their social media channels, including WhatsApp. Flyers were also available at the Family Connection Centers within Bellevue School District, which are available to families year-round. Individuals who live and/or work in Bellevue were eligible to complete the survey. Of the respondents, 81% reported that they currently live in Bellevue and approximately half (49%) reported that they currently work in Bellevue.

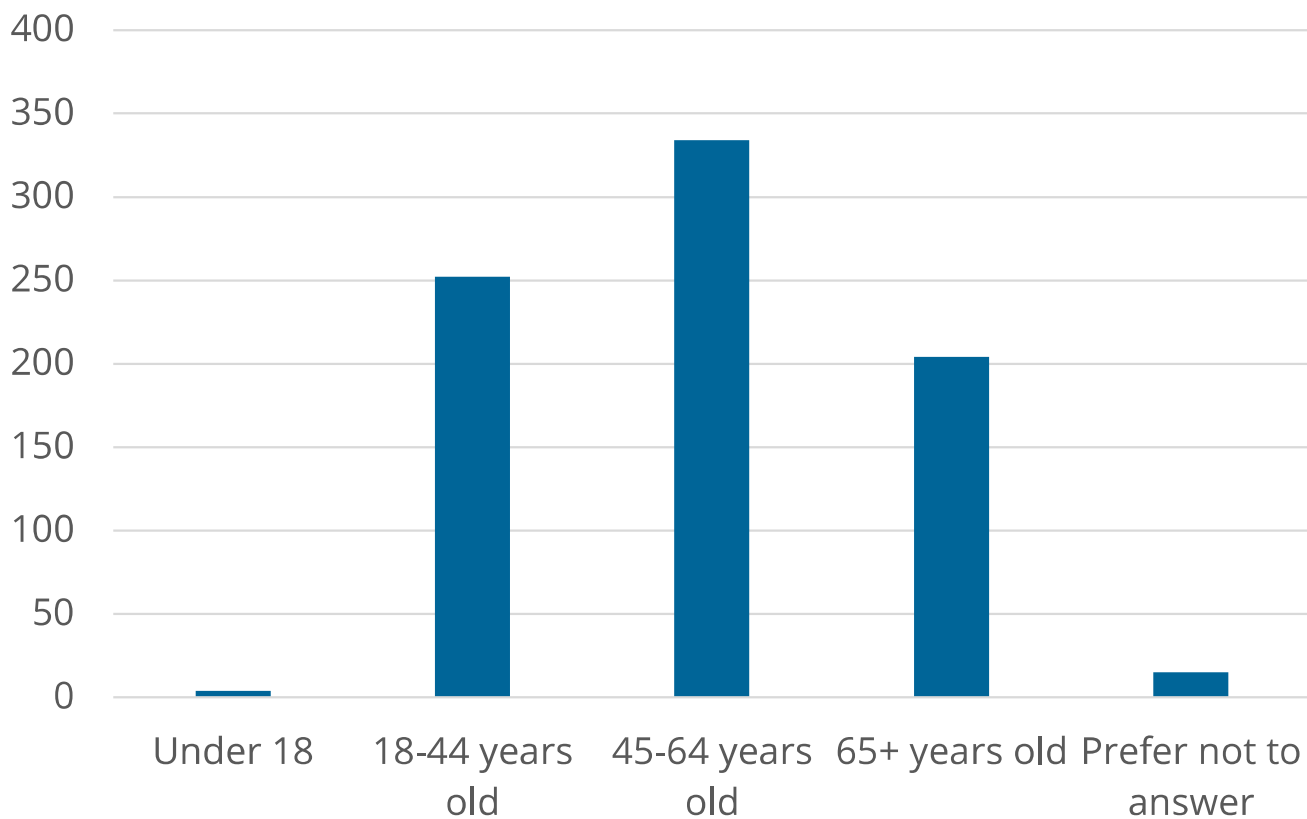


When considering income of survey respondents along with human services utilization, we can conclude that the survey effectively reached low- and moderate-income Bellevue residents.

Survey respondents represented a range of ages, with 75% falling between 18 and 64 years of age (**Figure 2**). Approximately two thirds (67%) of respondents identified as female, 24% identified as male, and 2% identified as nonbinary, gender fluid, or transgender (with the remainder choosing not to endorse a category). With respect to sexuality, 80% of respondents identified as straight and 6% as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual (with the remainder endorsing unsure or choosing not to endorse a category). Approximately 14% of respondents identified themselves as living with a disability and 21% reported that there is a person with a disability living in their home.



Figure 2. Age of community survey respondents



In general, survey respondents represented the range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of Bellevue residents. There were several communities for which the percentage of survey respondents was lower than recent population estimates. A comparison of survey respondent demographics with population estimates is presented in **Figure 3** below. Of note, individuals identifying as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin represented 5% of survey respondents, compared to 8.6% of the population. Similarly, individuals identifying as Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) represented 24.6% of survey respondents, compared to 41.6% of the population.



Figure 3. Community survey demographics by percent, in comparison to population of Bellevue (2022 American Community Survey, 1-Year Data Profiles)

	Survey Respondents	Population of Bellevue
Gender		
Female	66.8%	48.1%
Male	24.2%	51.9%
Nonbinary, gender fluid, or transgender	1.7%	No data available
Sexuality		
Gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual	5.7%	5.2% ¹
Disability status		
Living with a disability	14.4%	7.3%
Person living with a disability in their home	20.4%	No data available



	Survey Respondents	Population of Bellevue
Age		
Under 18	0.005%	19.5%
18-44 years	31.1%	40.8%
45-64 years	41.3%	26.3%
65 or older	25.2%	13.4%
Race		
Black or African American	2.8%	2.9%
Asian American, Pacific Islander (AAPI)	25%	42.1%
White	57.3%	39.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	0.2%
Other Race or More than One Race	6.5%	11.9%
Prefer Not to Answer	7.8%	N/A
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin		
Yes	5.4%	8.6%

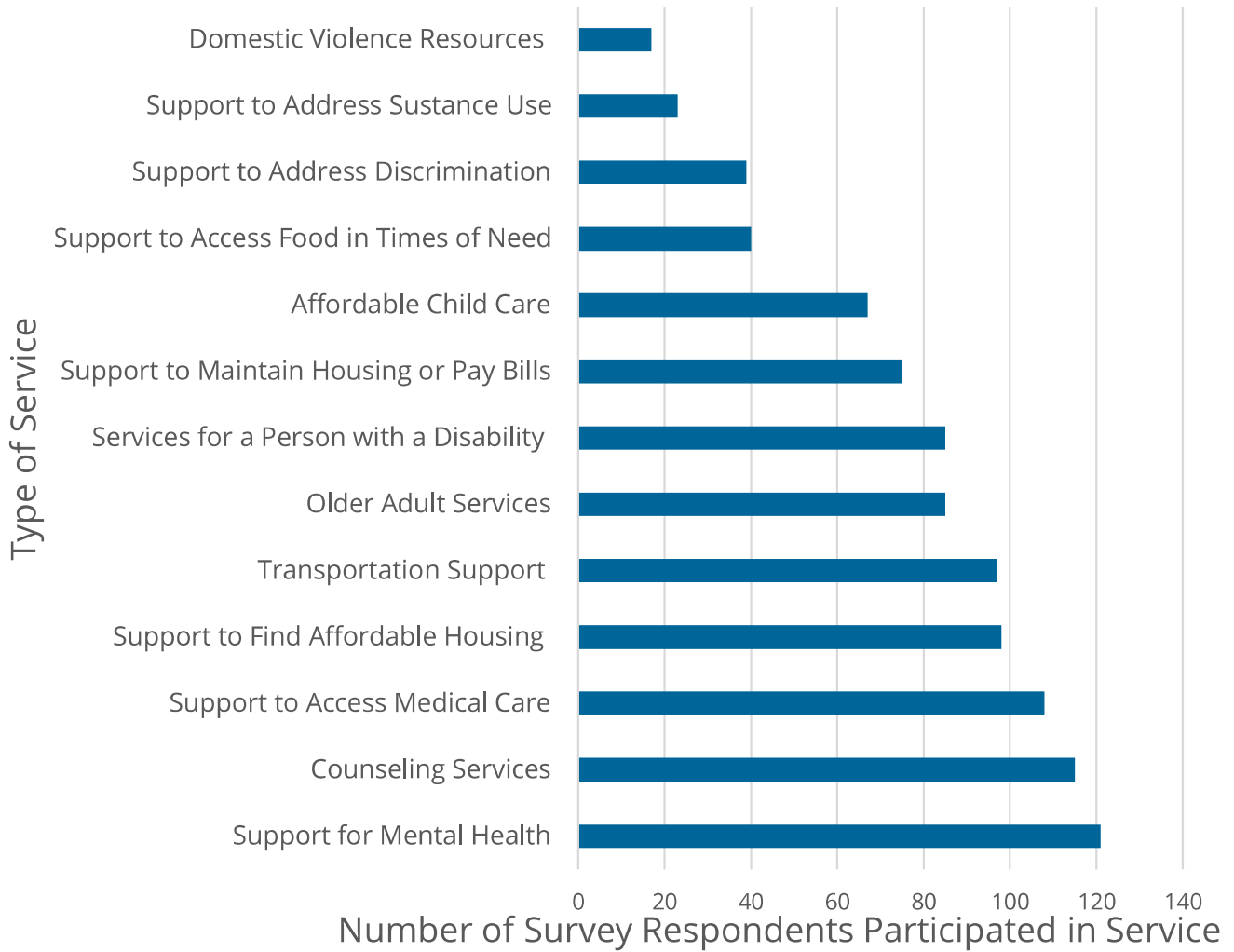


When considering income of survey respondents along with human services utilization, we can conclude that the survey effectively reached low- and moderate-income Bellevue residents. The Area Median Income (AMI) provides a regional measure of income and is adjusted by family size. In 2023, the AMI for a family of four in Bellevue was \$146,500. Based on this metric for a family of four, at least one fifth (17%) of survey respondents reported an income that was in the *very low-income* or *low-income* range, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. While the structure of the data collected did not allow for the breakout of the upper end of the *low-income* range or the *moderate range*, the rate of human services utilization amongst survey respondents gives us some capacity to infer how many individuals may have fallen into these categories (likely an additional 20%-30% of respondents). Of note, the *moderate-income* range for a household of four in the City of Bellevue is \$73,250 to \$117,200.

More than half (53%) of survey respondents reported having participated in at least one human service in the last two years, suggesting that the survey did, as intended, reach consumers of human services. The range of service participation is presented in **Figure 4**, with support for emotional needs/mental health, counseling services, and support to access medical care/insurance rated as the three most common services accessed.



Figure 4. Community survey: Which of the human services below have you (or a loved one) participated in?



Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted to gather community-specific information about human services needs. The selection of focus groups was based on outstanding questions from prior needs updates, a consideration of communities represented in other data sources, and the interest and capacity of partners to support focus group participation. Each focus group was offered in collaboration with a relevant service provider(s) or community center. The HMA team worked in collaboration with partners to identify a date, time, and location (virtual or in person) of the focus group and partners led outreach for each focus group. The goal of this approach was to include trusted community messengers in the design, outreach and in some cases the facilitation of these conversations. Focus groups were semi-structured and guided by a set of questions developed to understand individual experiences with human services in Bellevue and opportunities for change. The focus group guide is included in **Appendix D**. Detailed notes were taken in each focus group and subsequently reviewed for themes, which are summarized in the results section below. HMA provided focus group participants a \$25 electronic gift card as an acknowledgement of the time and expertise they contributed.

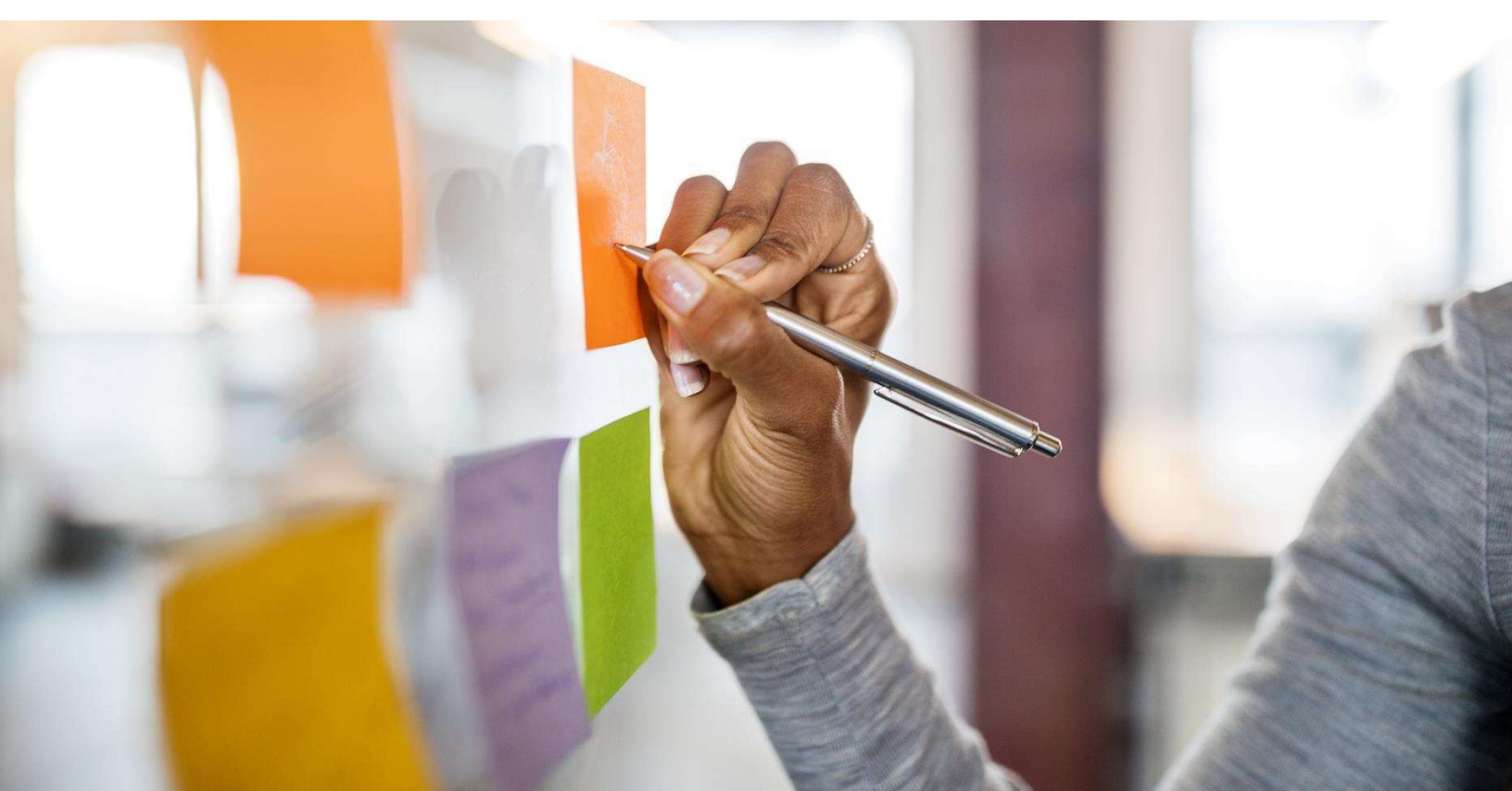


Figure 5. Focus groups

Focus Group	Date & Time	Participants	Location	Partner
LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, or Two-Spirit)	8/22/23 4:00-5:30 pm	21	Virtual	Pride Across the Bridge
Older Adults	8/28/23 1:00-2:30 pm	12	North Bellevue Community Center	North Bellevue Community Center
Latinx (Conducted in Spanish)	9/12/23 5:00-6:30 pm	11	Virtual	4 Tomorrow
African Community	9/21/23 5:30-7:00 pm	20	South Bellevue Community Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africans on the Eastside • Congolese Integration Network • Ubumwe Women’s Association • WA State Coalition of African Community Leaders



Network/Coalition Meetings and Key Informant Interviews

Data were gathered at three network/coalition meetings relevant to human services in Bellevue: Nourishing Networks, the Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee (EHAC), and the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council. Additionally, HMA conducted key informant interviews with community providers/SMEs to gather additional data on areas where there were gaps in the survey and focus group data and/or where the survey and focus group data led to additional questions to be explored. Focus areas for interviews included: disability community (2 interviews), providers serving the immigrant and refugee community (2 interviews), and the Bellevue Probation Division (1 interview). Both the interviews and data gathering at network/coalition meetings were semi-structured and guided by a set of questions developed to understand the provider/SME's perspective on human services needs for the population they serve. The interview guide is included in **Appendix D**. As in the focus groups, detailed notes were taken in each engagement and subsequently reviewed for themes, which are summarized in the themes sections below.



Figure 6. Network/coalition meetings and key informant interviews

Meeting/Interview	Focus Area
Nourishing Networks	Food security
Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee	Housing and homelessness
Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council	Faith communities
City of Bellevue Probation	Justice-involved residents
City of Bellevue Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI, and Equal Opportunity Officer	Disability
City of Bellevue Community Services Supervisor, Highland Community Center	Disability
Executive Director, Muslim Community Resource Center	Immigrant and refugee community
Board Chair, Immigrant Women’s Community Center	Immigrant and refugee community



Panel Presentations to Human Services Commission

Between January 2022 and October 2023, community members and providers participated in 10 panel presentations to the City of Bellevue Human Services Commission. Each presentation was focused on a particular demographic community of Bellevue residents or a service/issue focus area. A list of presentations is presented in **Figure 7** below. Presentation materials were reviewed for themes and incorporated into both the **Themes Shared by Community Members** and **Themes Shared by Community Providers and Key Informants** sections below.

Figure 7. Panel presentations to the Human Services Commission

Focus Area
Providers for individuals with disabilities
Youth
Providers for older adults
Providers for the Latinx community
Providers for the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community
Providers for the African Diaspora community
Recruiting/retaining staff for human services
Root causes of homelessness
Housing Connector
Communities Rise



Themes Shared by Community

Community members described a healthy community as one characterized by strong relationships, inclusivity, support, and a sense of belonging.

Community members described a healthy community as one characterized by strong relationships, inclusivity, support, and a sense of belonging.

Themes Shared by Community

In focus group discussions, community members described a healthy community as one characterized by strong relationships, inclusivity, support, and a sense of belonging. Participants noted that community health requires that community members feel connected, respected, and have a sense of security. Compassion, diversity, and a shared understanding of the issues affecting members of the community were identified as essential elements of community well-being. A description of key themes that emerged from community input is below. Themes are not presented in order of prevalence. Where applicable, differences in the presentation or prevalence of the theme by race or community is noted.

Community members identified service gaps across the human services continuum and related areas, including public transportation, recreational activities, job resources, behavioral health services, food security, and affordable housing. **Affordable housing and cost of living were cited as the most common concern across community focus groups.** Disparities in wealth and standards of living within the community are a significant concern, and many community members expressed a desire for a unified standard of living regardless of income. These gaps are described in greater detail in the **Service Areas** sections of this report. Community members frequently identified the need to focus on long-term strategies and solutions to address the root causes of issues like housing affordability, lack of child care, and access to critical behavioral health services and support.



Changing Demographics

Many community members noted Bellevue’s growth and diversification (**Figure 8, Figure 9, and Figure 10**), and the ways that the human services infrastructure has struggled to adapt to the changing needs of the community. Community members highlighted the value of supporting organizations led by the communities they serve and the need for increased access to culturally and linguistically specific services. Between 2000 and 2022, the percentage of Bellevue residents identifying as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) more than doubled and the percentage of foreign born residents grew at a similar pace (growing from 25% to 43% over that same time period). This theme was particularly prevalent in discussions with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community members, who emphasized that there are a lack of resources and human services providers who meet their language and cultural needs. When speaking about finding needed resources amidst language challenges, one community member noted,

“When you are dependent on your child to speak for you and your child is in school, your only access is through leaders that you trust.”

Another BIPOC community member expressed that, when they need additional support, they want to be able to turn to, *“Someone who speaks my language, someone with relevant lived experience.”* Another noted that they want support from *“someone who is going to identify with [their] culture”* and that this is often hard to find.



Figure 8. Bellevue population trend (Washington State Office of Financial Management)

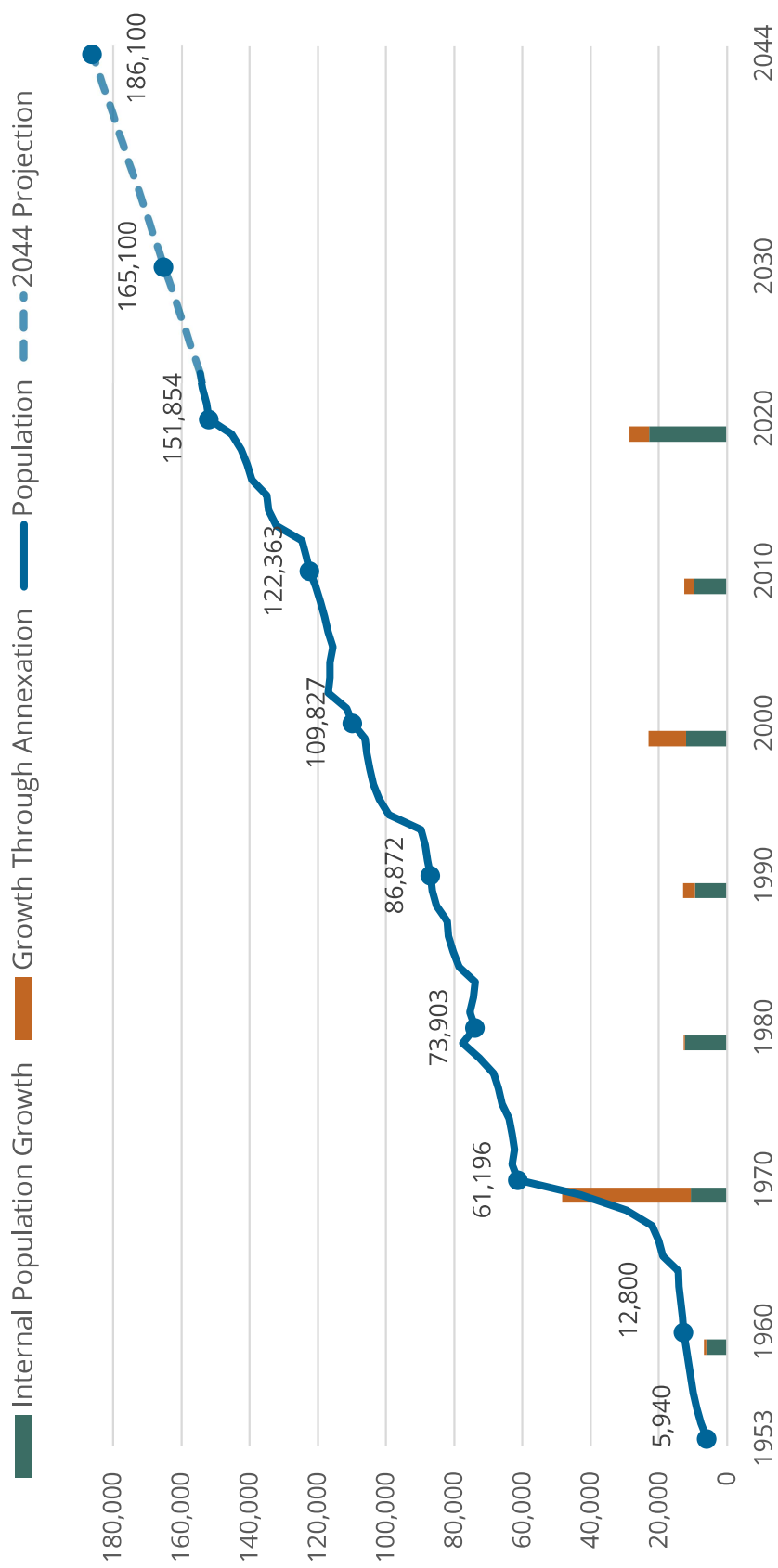


Figure 9. Percent of Bellevue residents identifying as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) (US Census Bureau, American Community Survey).

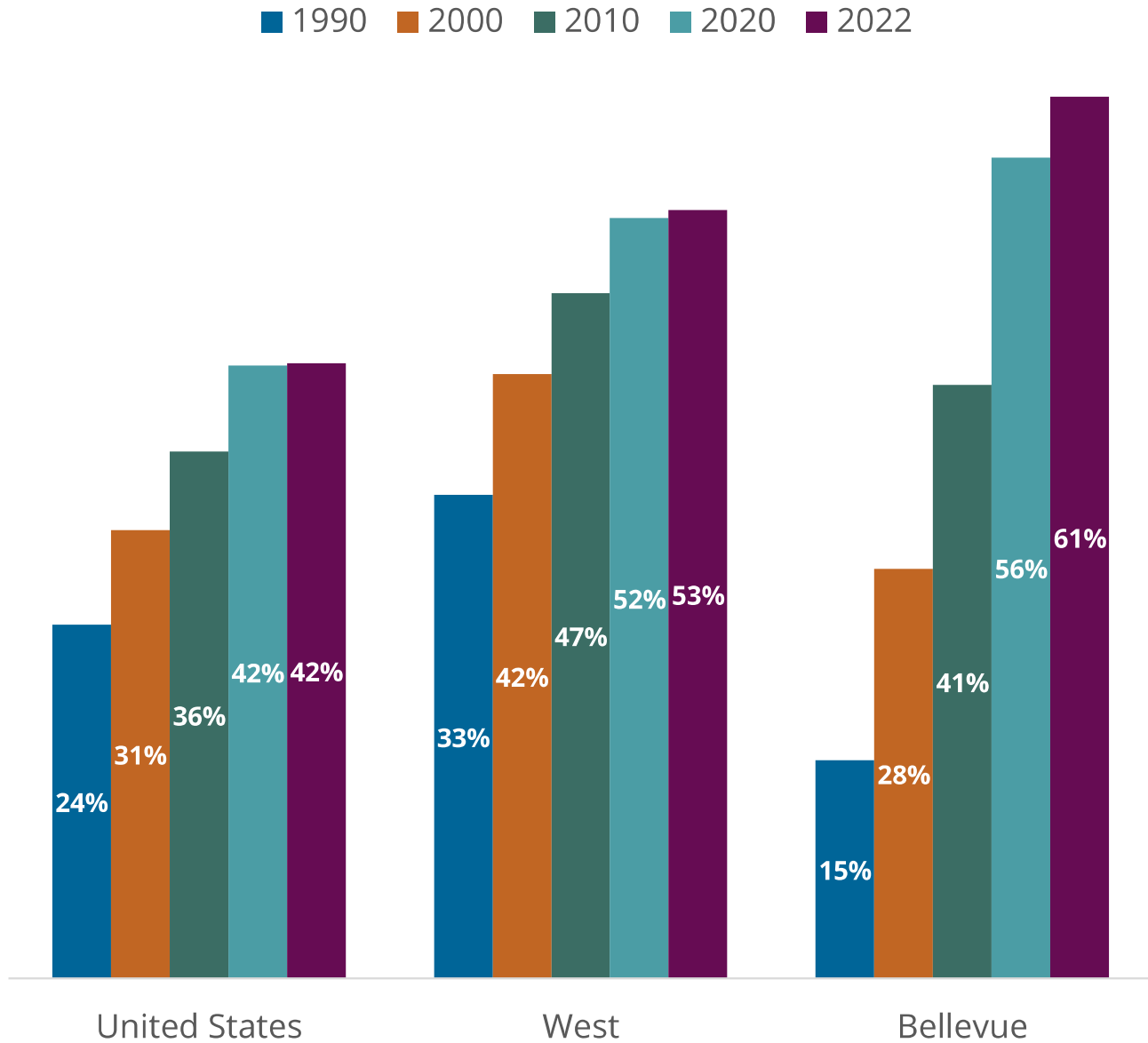
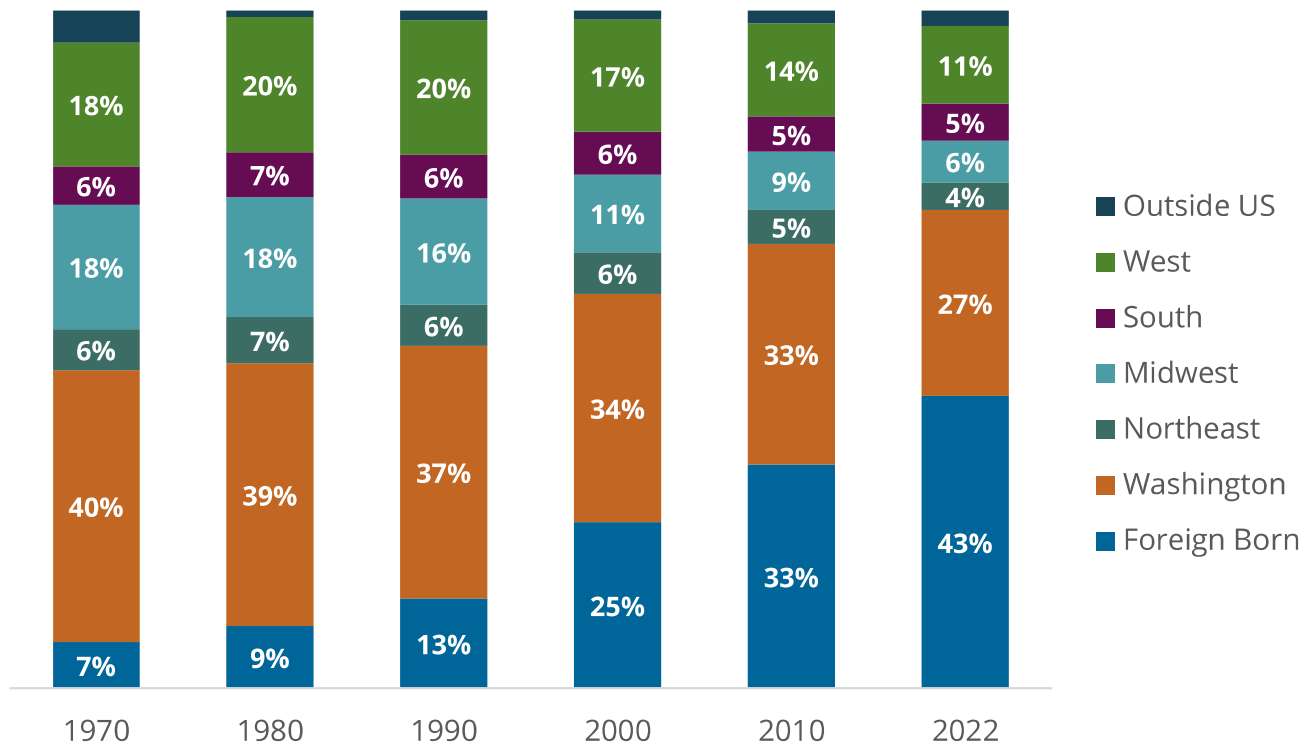


Figure 10. Percent of Bellevue residents by place of birth (US Census Bureau, American Community Survey)



Note on Figure 10. The Census uses “Foreign Born” to describe anyone born outside of the United States who was not a United States Citizen at birth, while “Outside US” refers to individuals who were born outside of the United States to a United States Citizen parent or parents.

In addition to race and place of birth, the Bellevue community represents a broad range of other types of diversity, including language (Figure 11), age (Figure 12) and disability status (Figure 13). While Figure 13 presents data on rates of disability by race/ethnicity, both cultural factors and access challenges may impact the rates of disability identification for certain demographic groups. Data should be interpreted with this consideration in mind.



There is not data on sexuality available for the City of Bellevue. However, approximately 5.5% of the adult population in the Seattle/Tacoma Metropolitan area identifies as LGBTQIA2S+, which places it third in the nation for largest LGBTQIA2S+ population by metropolitan area².

Figure 11. Regional comparison, percent of residents with limited English proficiency and who speak a language other than English (American Community Survey, 2022)

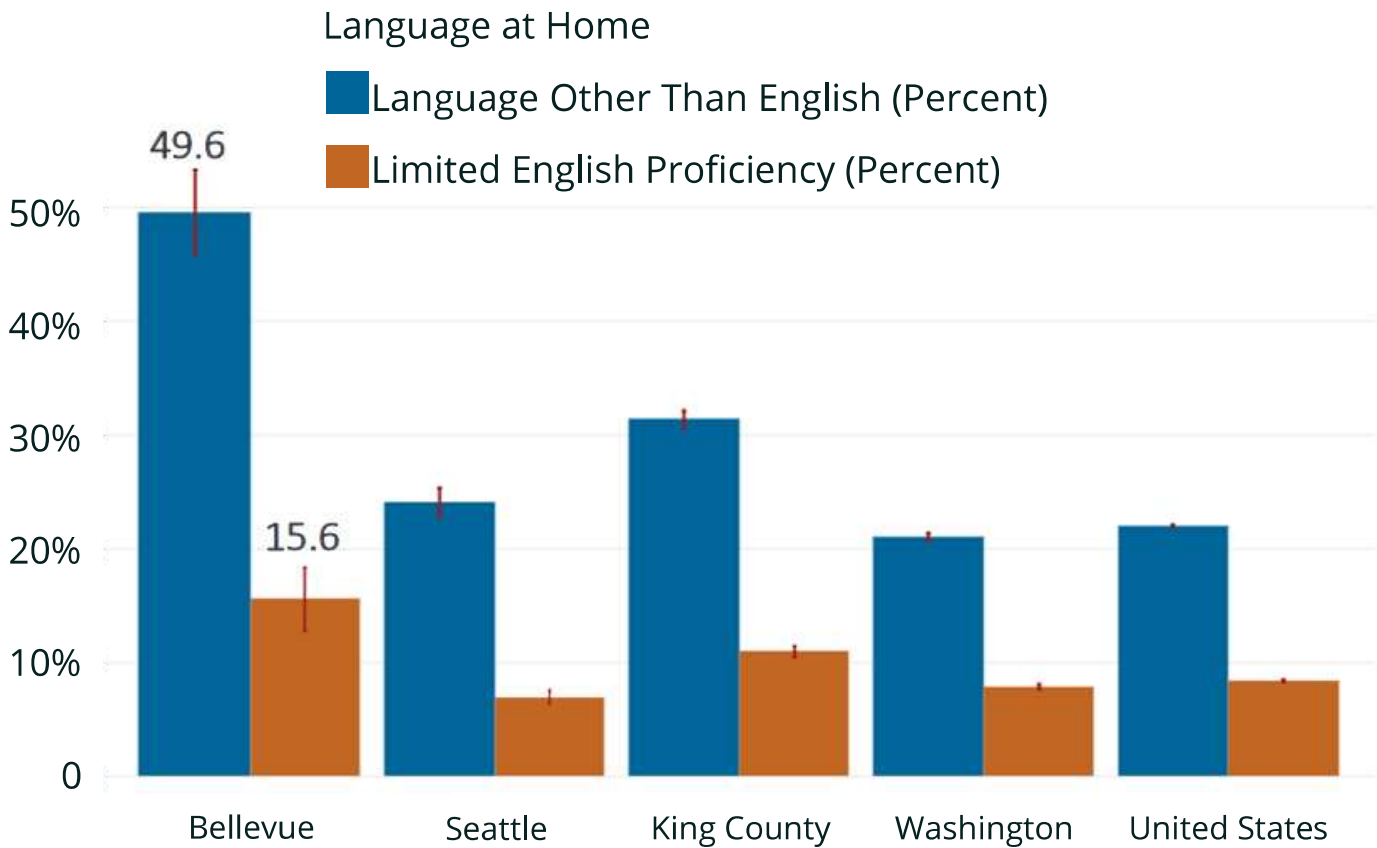


Figure 12. Percent of Bellevue residents by age (American Community Survey, 2017-2021)

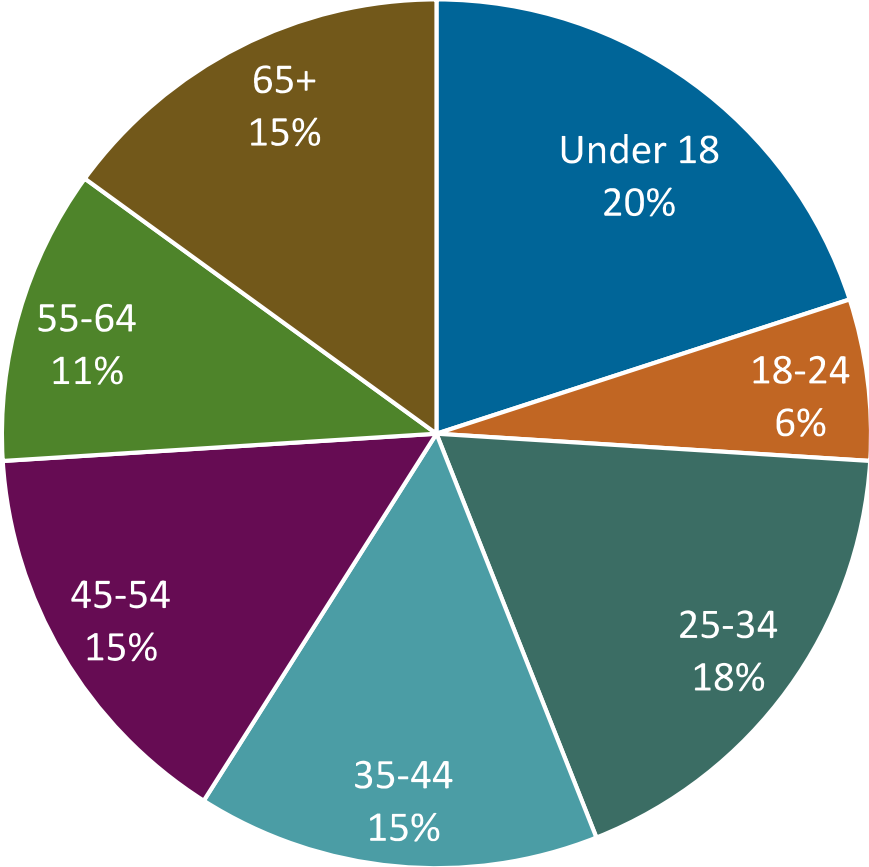
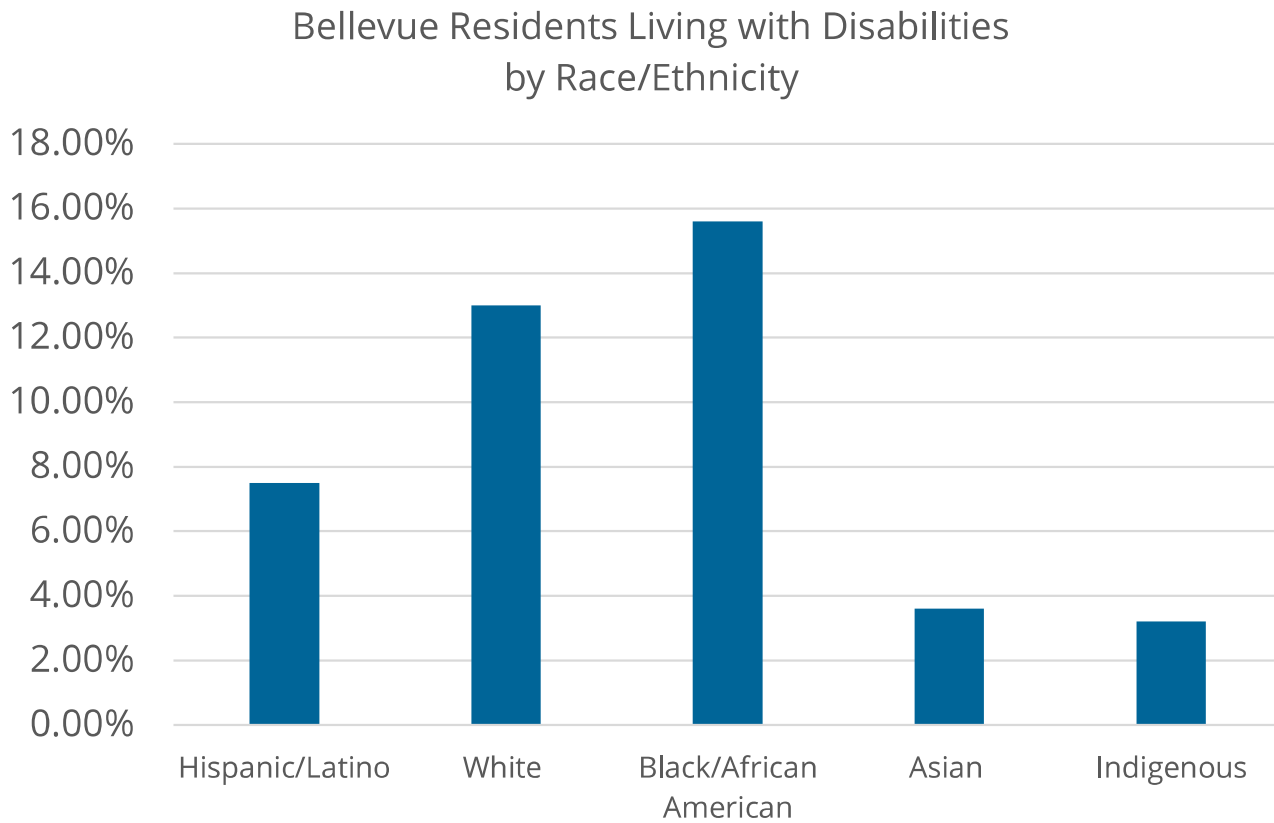


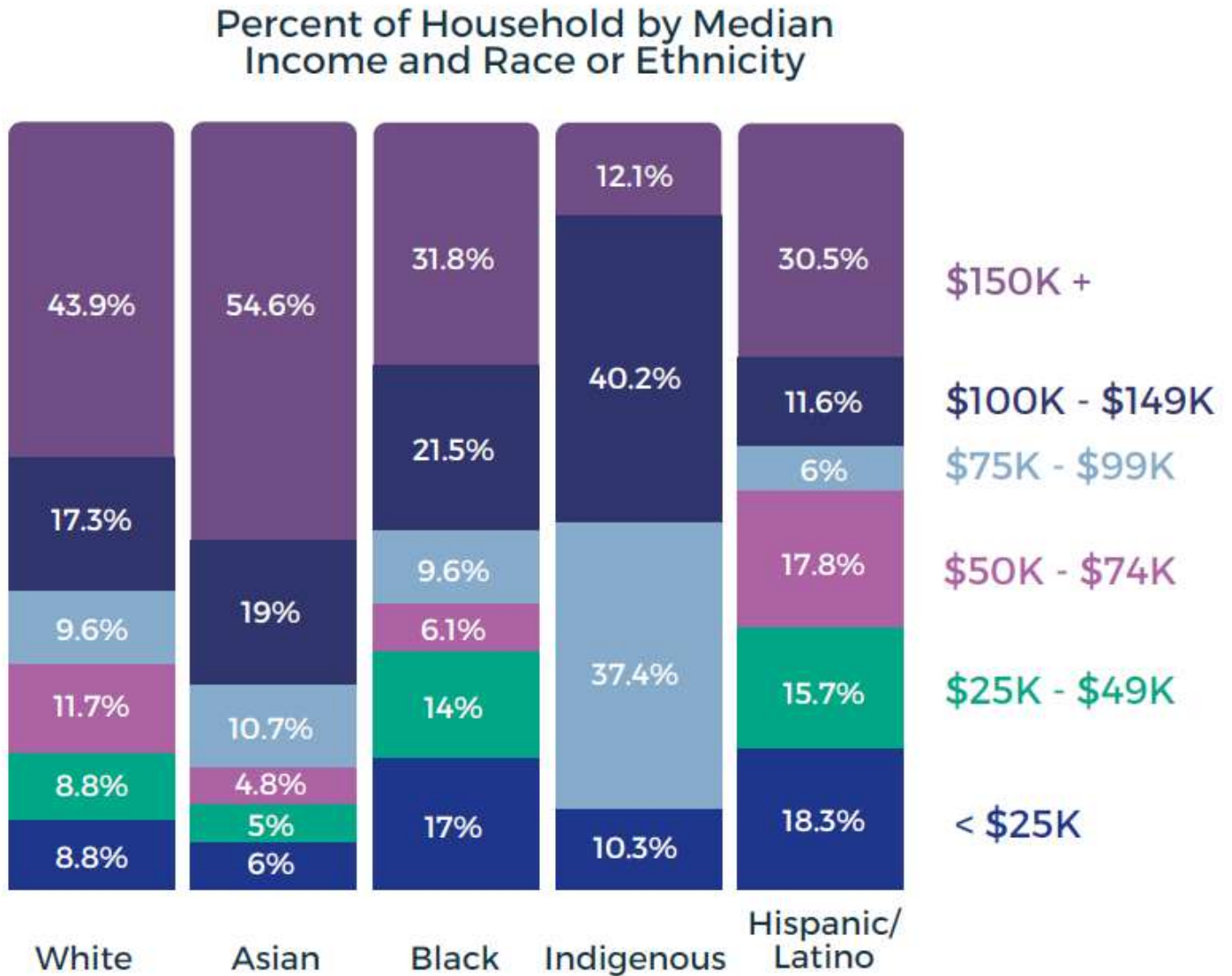
Figure 13. Percent of Bellevue residents living with disabilities, by race/ethnicity (American Community Survey, 2017-2021)



The changing demographics of Bellevue also intersect with income, with income disparities across racial groups. White and Asian American Pacific Islander residents of Bellevue have the highest proportion of residents with income over 150K, with Black and Hispanic/Latino residents having the highest proportion of residents with incomes under 50K (**Figure 14**).



Figure 14. Percent of households by median income and race ethnicity, Bellevue residents (American Community Survey, 2017-2021)



Disproportionate Impact by Race and Language

The different experiences of residents based on their race and language, which impacts well-being in the City of Bellevue and access to human services was echoed throughout engagement methods. Racial disparities by service area are presented in the **Service Areas** section of this document. In the community survey, knowledge of where to access services varied by race/ethnicity (**Figure 15**). While 48% of survey respondents overall reported that they would know where to access services, this was true of only 42% of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and 39% of Black or African American residents. Similarly, both Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Black or African American respondents were less likely to endorse that they were able to receive human services from an organization who supported their language and cultural needs, compared to survey respondents overall (**Figure 16**). This number was particularly low for Black and African American respondents, only 9% of whom felt that they were able to access culturally/linguistically specific human services in Bellevue. The above results should be considered in the context of survey recruitment strategies. Given that survey recruitment relied heavily on community-based providers sharing the survey with those they serve, individuals who responded to the survey were more likely to be current service recipients. As such, survey respondents may have a greater familiarity with where to access services than Bellevue residents overall.

In focus groups, BIPOC community members also highlighted a sense of “invisibility” they feel in Bellevue, coupled with a desire for ongoing engagement with the City to build understanding of their community’s needs. This provides opportunities to build on and expand the deep engagement the human services team has already begun with community providers and community members, through panel presentations with the Human Services Commission, regular community outreach events, and other initiatives designed to build relationships with consumers of human services and those who have not historically had a voice at the table in designing human services.



Figure 15. Percent of survey respondents who participated in human services and know where to access services by race/ethnicity (community survey)

	All	Asian American Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
Participated in human services	54%	46%	80%	50%
Would know where to access services	48%	42%	39%	48%

Figure 16. Percent agreement with community survey question: “I was able to receive this service from an organization who supported my cultural and language needs”, by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	% Agree/Strongly Agree
All	43
Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI)	30
Black or African American	9
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	44



Knowledge of Available Resources

Community members identified challenges in finding information about available resources due to “outdated websites” and “ineffective search engines”. This was particularly prevalent in discussions with older adults, individuals for whom English is not a first language, and those serving individuals with disabilities. Focus group participants noted the difficulties they encountered navigating the City of Bellevue’s website, highlighting the number of pages they often need to move through to access information about needed services. **In the community survey, more than half (52%) of the survey respondents indicated that they would not know where to go if they had a need to access a human service.** Both survey respondents and focus group participants highlighted the need for more paper-based communication, to augment online platforms. Multiple community members noted that they missed the human connection that has been lost through the expansion of online resources. In one example, a community member shared:

“I struggle with the lack of human support...i.e., most things going through a computer. Phone support is severely lacking. I’d love to partake in more [services]. There are plenty of services offered. I just can’t access them.”

Some community members noted frustration about only being able to access services that meet their needs outside of the City of Bellevue. This was particularly prevalent in the LGBTQIA2S+ focus group, where residents shared the experience of only being able to find resources that meet their gender and sexuality needs in the City of Seattle.



“Most of the queer community [finding available and appropriate resources] is by word of mouth, not as much choosing the one closest to you, but more where can you even get it. You may have to travel a distance to get places.”

Figure 17 provides the perceptions of service availability amongst community survey respondents who sought human services. The data represents, among individuals who indicated that they sought this service, what percentage felt that they were able to find the service in their community.

The three services that individuals indicated the least likelihood of being able to find the support in their community were: support to address discrimination or racism, support to address needs about substance use, and support to find affordable housing.



Figure 17. Percent agreement with survey question: “I was able to find this service in my community”

Service Area	Agree/Strongly Agree
Support to address discrimination or racism	25%
Support to address needs about substance use	27%
Support to find affordable housing	33%
Services for a person with a disability	38%
Affordable child care	38%
Older adult services	42%
Support for emotional needs/mental health	46%
Transportation support	51%
Support to maintain housing or pay bills	58%
Support to access medical care/insurance	58%
Counseling services	59%
Support to access food in times of need	60%
Domestic violence resources	75%

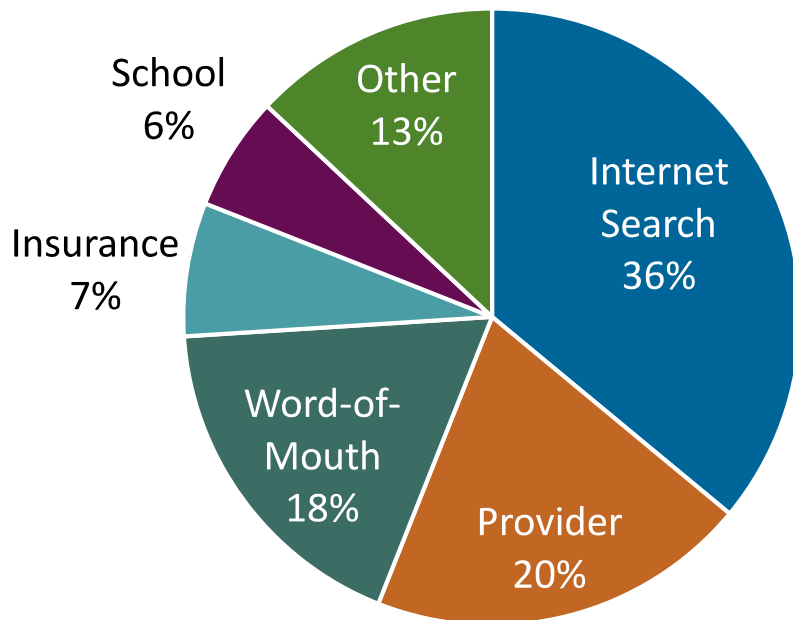


Across respondents, there was an identified need for a centralized, easily accessible directory of essential services. One community member noted that a strength of Bellevue is the “network of human services providers”, but added the caveat that:

“The average person does not know how to access [these providers], has never heard of 211, or even if they have, cannot get through without being on hold for 20 minutes.”

For those who did get connected to services, internet search and referrals from other organizations/providers were the most common pathways for connections to services (**Figure 18**).

Figure 18. Percent of survey respondents for each response to question: “If you accessed human services, how did you get connected to services?”



Information about Available Resources: Current Approaches

The City is continually evolving their approach to increase the accessibility of information about human services resources to City residents. Examples of current approaches include:

- Listing community resources on the Human Services page of the City of Bellevue website, available in multiple languages.
- Providing access to phone support via a human services call number, where residents can reach a team member during business hours to get connected to a needed community resource. Staff can provide support via the language line to meet resident language needs.
- Mini City Hall at Crossroads Mall, which residents can visit and speak with multi-lingual staff and connect with community-based organizations who provide co-located support.
- Chatbot on the City of Bellevue website, which helps visitors navigate to the information they are seeking.
- Access to information via community centers, where community-based organizations post flyers and host events.

In addition to city-specific resources, the City collaborates with key resource networks like 211, through both funding and coordination. Continuing to expand and evolve approaches to sharing information about human services with Bellevue residents will be key to improving access to support and, by extension, community well-being.



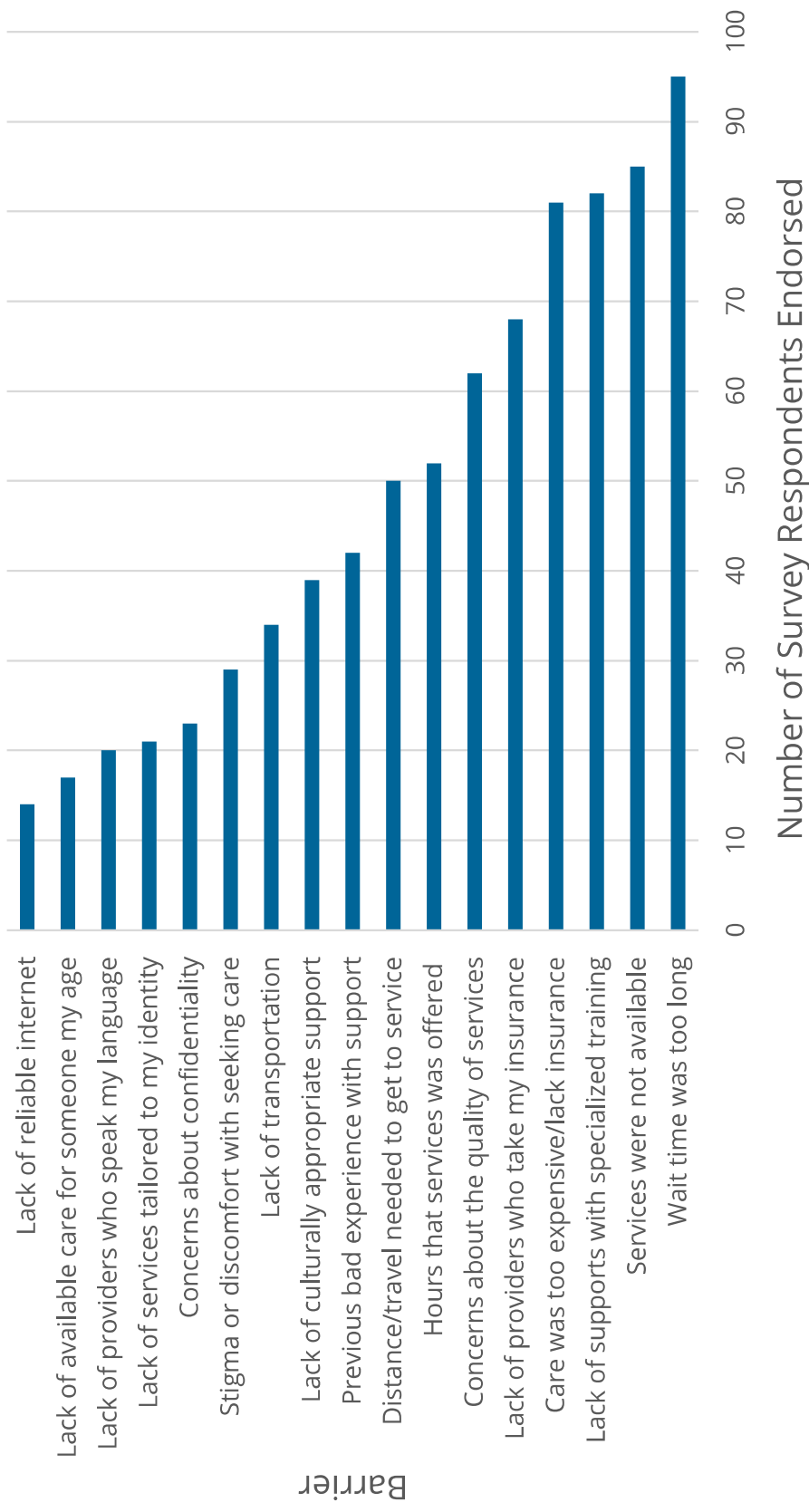
Barriers to Service Access

Community members described a range of barriers to accessing human services. **Identified challenges were diverse and included difficulty locating and accessing mental health therapists, limited safe spaces for certain cultural, age, or other groups, lack of awareness about available services, limited access to recreational spaces, and reliance on word-of-mouth and online sources for information.** Community members also highlighted how language and cultural barriers hinder access to services, as do limitations on hours of accessibility (e.g., lack of access to services on evenings and weekends). Transportation challenges, particularly for seniors, were frequently noted as a barrier to accessing essential services. A summary of identified barriers to accessing human services (as identified in the community survey) is presented in **Figure 19**.



Photo provided by Youth Eastside Services.

Figure 19. Number of community survey respondents who endorsed each service barrier



Collaboration and Coordination

Community members emphasized the importance of collaboration, both among service providers and between the City and service providers. In several conversations, community members reflected on the role that the City can play in facilitating collaboration and being nimble in responding to needs that organizations identify. In one example, a community member identified two ways that the City can better meet the human services needs in the community:

- Make quicker decisions to meet the need of the community
- Involve community members who identify as low-income/undocumented in more decision making

Co-Design with Impacted Communities

Across conversations, there was an emphasis on inclusivity and consideration of the diverse backgrounds of Bellevue's residents, including immigrants, refugees, and those experiencing homelessness. Community members noted that trust is vital; communities that trust each other share resources and support neighbors during difficulties. Equitable distribution of resources, including housing, child care, healthcare, and human services funding, is necessary. There were expressions of isolation and frustration of certain communities, with one participant in the African Diaspora focus group asking,

“What will it take for us to be visible?”



Community members emphasized the value of organizations created and led by and for the communities they serve and spoke to the critical role these organizations play in connecting individuals to needed supports:

“Providers that serve specific immigrant communities are critical as a one stop shop as they have relationships with the communities that they are in.”

Community members expressed appreciation for the opportunity for engagement in this needs update. The desire for ongoing co-creation of human services programs and models that meet the needs of communities, particularly those furthest from opportunity, was noted throughout the data collection process. Community members repeatedly emphasized that representation at decision-making tables is necessary to ensure community voices are heard. There was an expressed desire that this needs update not be the single engagement point but rather a part of an ongoing conversation, and a request that the City return to communities who contributed perspectives to share the results of the needs update and work together to design solutions to improve community well-being. As one community member noted,

"Seeing the real people is important when making decisions."



Themes Shared by Community Providers & Key Informants



Photo provided by Youth Eastside Services.

Themes Shared by Community Providers and Key Informants

The themes shared by providers and key informants were, in many respects, consistent with those from the broader community. Additionally, Bellevue human services providers shared perspectives on the funding and operational challenges in the sector, many of which have been exacerbated as the city, state, and nation emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responding organizations provide a broad range of human services to the residents of Bellevue (**Figure 20**) and indicated a desire to expand their services in many areas in response to community need (**Figure 21**). However, organizations expressed that, while they see the need for expansion, staffing and funding limit their capacity to offer their services to more residents. Workforce challenges emerged repeatedly throughout conversations with community providers, with respondents repeatedly highlighting the difficulty hiring and retaining staff, particularly in a high-cost region like East King County. These challenges are being echoed throughout the state and country, along with the significant pay gap between human services/non-profit care fields and employees in other industries. **A recent wage equity analysis by the University of Washington found that employees in the human services sector make approximately 30% less than employees in other fields with comparable skills and responsibilities**³. Relatedly, the 2023 King County Nonprofit Wage and Benefits Survey report found that 71% of the nonprofit workforce surveyed were considering leaving their current position due to pay.⁴ These economics present significant short- and long-term challenges to the human services sector in Bellevue and beyond.



Figure 20. Provider survey: Services currently offered within your organization

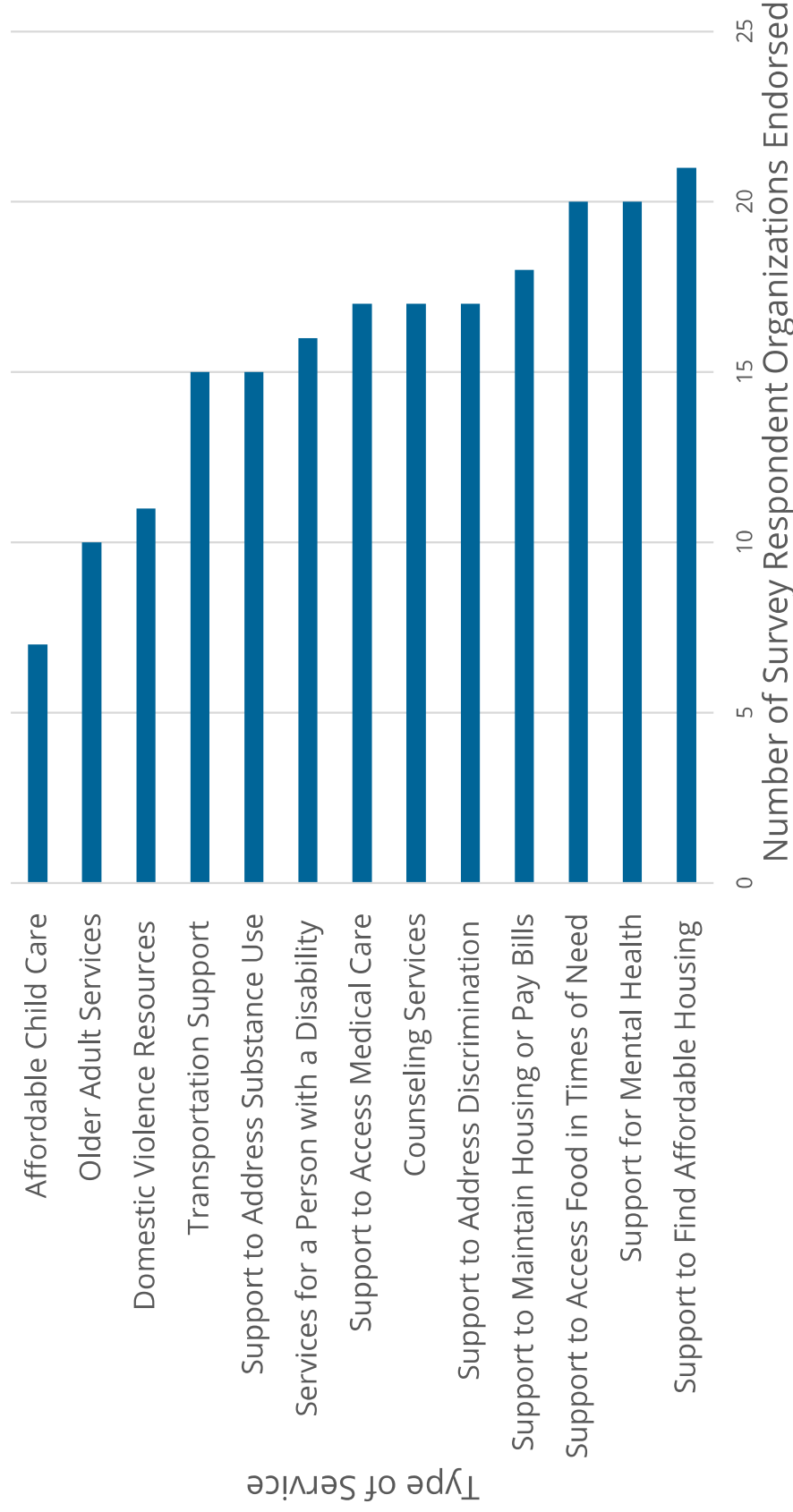
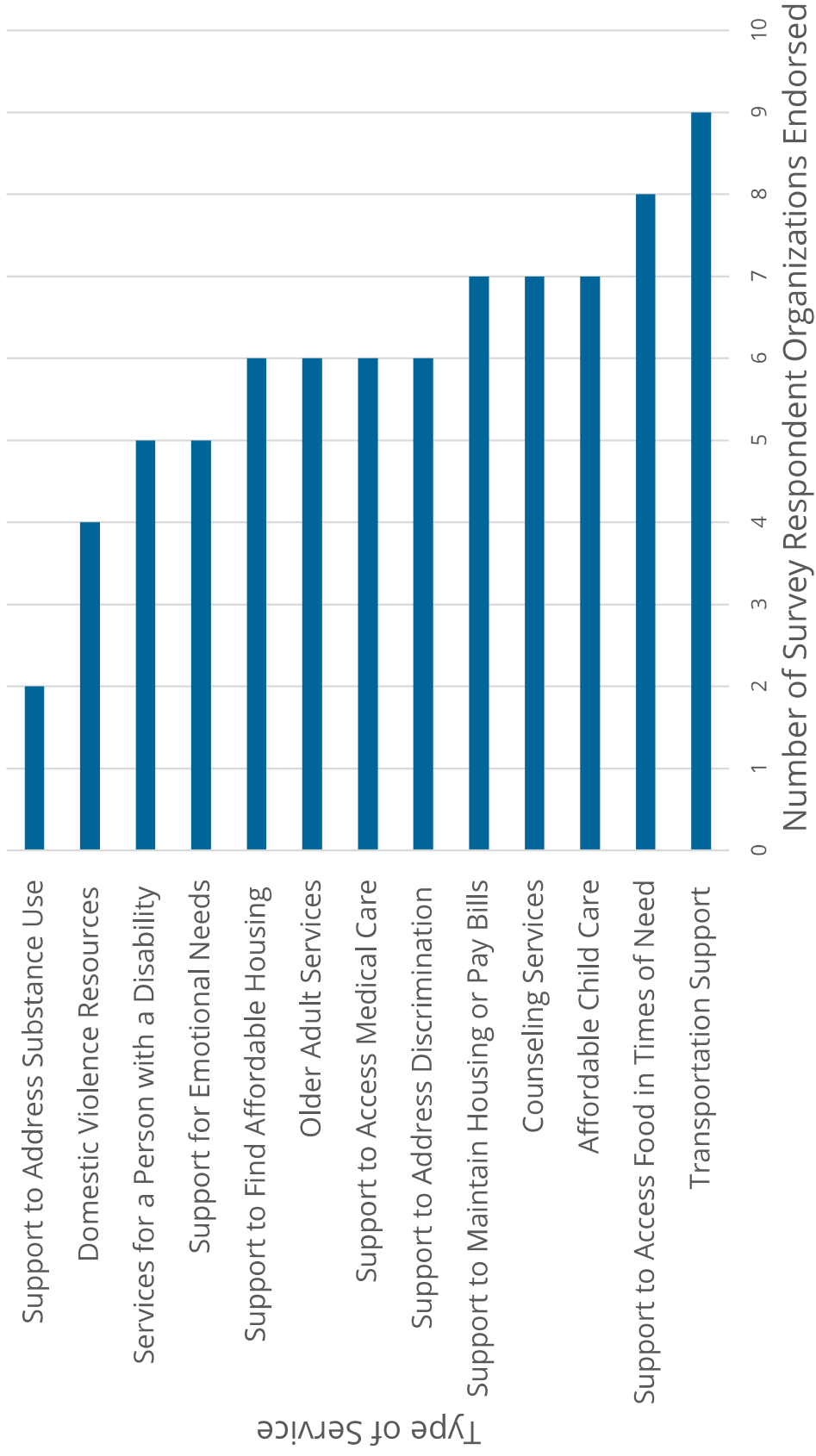


Figure 21. Provider survey: Services that your organization doesn't offer but would like to offer or services you would like to expand



Changes in Funding

Nearly two thirds (61%) of the responding organizations noted changes in the availability of funding sources, and accompanying concerns about the loss of service provision and access that will likely follow from these changes. A selection of provider comments emphasizes this point:

- The amount of funding has decreased. The needs grow deeper every day, and the funding has and is continuing to decrease.
- All levels of funding resources are seemingly decreasing due to the pandemic becoming endemic.
- There are several one-time funding opportunities, but this is not sustainable. We have seen increased state funding, but a decrease in individual giving and grants.
- County and state rarely fund human services in East King County. We applied for 3 BSK (Best Starts for Kids) grants and 4 municipal human service grants and received only funding from Bellevue and Issaquah.
- Foundation, corporate, and individual giving has declined. The volume of gifts is about the same, but the amount has declined in some instances by 50%. City and County gifts are declining in 2023 as final COVID-related dollars from the federal government are being exhausted.
- Ongoing funding is relatively flat, and expenses continue to increase.

When asked about the reimbursement for service model many regional government funders currently operate under in contracting with agencies, 70% indicated that their organization would benefit from a switch to providing funding to agencies in advance of the service being provided.



The City of Bellevue implemented this funding model during the COVID pandemic and intends to continue it moving forward.

Among other benefits, this approach allows smaller, community-driven non-profits who may not have the cashflow to sustain services within a reimbursement model to apply for Bellevue Human Services funding.

Barriers to Expansion

Many providers noted unmet service needs in the community, including services they would like to expand or add to their continuum of care. However, funding, staffing, and capacity present significant barriers to this expansion. As one provider noted, “We haven’t found stable, efficient partners to engage...for the size of the need that’s in the community”.

Access to physical space to provide services was also identified as a need in both the provider survey and multiple community focus groups.

Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services

Like community members, providers emphasized the need for expanding culturally and linguistically specific services in Bellevue. As noted in Figure 11, nearly 50% of Bellevue residents speak a language other than English at home and 15.6% have limited English proficiency. As the demographics of the city continue to change, this need will increase. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate that the percentage of Bellevue residents identifying as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) continues to increase (**Figure 9**), as does the percentage of Bellevue residents who are foreign born (**Figure 10**). Between 2010 and 2022, the percentage of Bellevue residents born outside of the US has nearly doubled (from 25% to 43%), a change that demands significant shifts in the human services system. While there is not parallel data available on the race/ethnicity and place of birth for human services professionals in Bellevue, there is an acknowledgment of a historic and significant gap where human



services providers have often not been reflective of the communities they serve.

Both provider and community perspectives suggest that neither the human services infrastructure nor human services investments have kept pace with Bellevue's changing demographics.

Approaches to Increasing Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services

The City of Bellevue has recognized the value of supporting organizations that are grounded in the communities they are intended to serve and taken steps to understand the extent to which current investments meet the need for culturally and linguistically specific supports.

- Analyzing funding information by disaggregated data, for both requested funds (applications) and awarded funds, to understand the extent to which investments are being made in organizations that are created for and led by BIPOC communities, as well as the percentage of new agencies and programs being funded (versus organizations that have previously received City of Bellevue Human Services funding).
- Expanding outreach to agencies that have not previously received City funding, particularly those providing culturally and linguistically specific services.
- Increasing regular training and access to resources for both Bellevue Human Services Staff and the Human Services Commission focused on equity in human services funding.
- In distributing federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the Human Services Commission focused on removing as many barriers as possible to prioritize applications with services to communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff supported the process in the following ways:



- To reduce the burden of applying, staff created an accessible application that only required information necessary to make funding decisions and ensure that agencies were qualified to receive federal funding.
- Staff required that agencies meet one-on-one to encourage small, grassroots organizations to learn about the application process and answer any questions.
- Before reviewers evaluated the applications, the Diversity Advantage Team provided an overview of the City's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging work. Human services staff began each deliberation meeting with a Creating a Culture of Equity moment to center the work in equity principles.
- Staff offered technical assistance to agencies throughout the application and review process, including support in identifying services units and outcomes, completing the budget form, and answering any other questions related to the application.

Continuing and expanding this work will be essential to effectively meet the evolving needs of Bellevue residents.

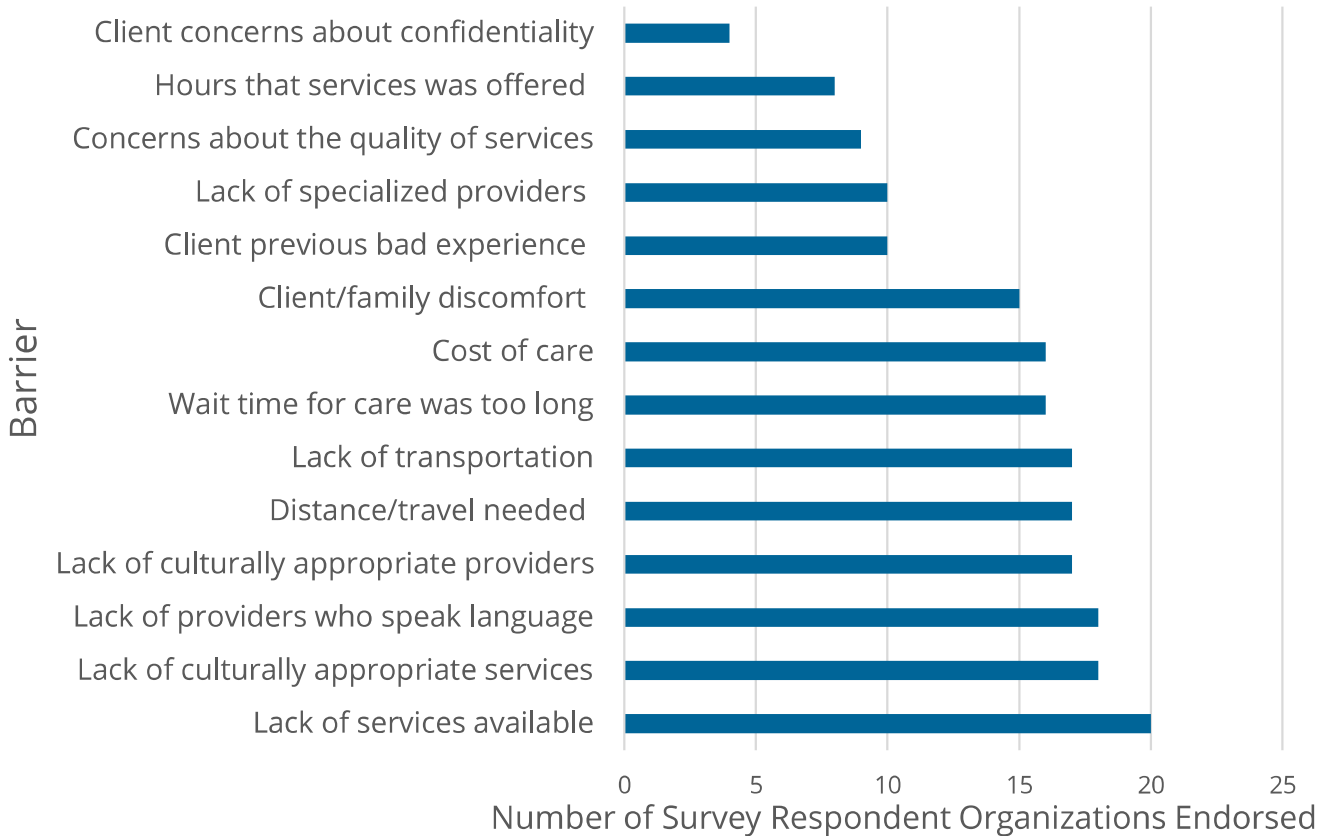
Barriers to Service Access

In the provider survey, respondents provided input on the barriers they encounter when referring a client to another community resource or support (**Figure 22**). **The top 3 barriers encountered were: lack of services available, lack of culturally appropriate services, and lack of providers who speak the client's primary language, with the latter two emphasizing the need for increased access to culturally and linguistically specific services discussed above.**



However, as **Figure 22** indicates, there were many additional barriers endorsed at similar frequency, highlighting needs that need to be considered when looking at service gaps within the City.

Figure 22. Provider survey: When referring a client/family to other community resources/supports, what barriers to accessing care does the client encounter?



Opportunities for Collaboration and Collective Impact

Across interviews, surveys, and focus groups, providers highlighted the unique role that the City has in convening partners for collective impact. Providers identified the need for the City to take a larger role in facilitating collaboration and coordination amongst providers, encouraging, and supporting deepening partnerships between organizations, and incorporating provider voice into the design and implementation of human services funding. The following selection of answers offered by providers illustrates this theme in response to the question, “What would improve human services in the City of Bellevue?”:

- The City brings a different perspective. Bring all stakeholders to the table, has resources that we don’t have. Bring us all together to figure out how to subdivide and work the problems.
- More city-led collaboration for stakeholders and funding agencies [is needed].
- Work together with other departments in Bellevue (economic development, planning, etc.) to proactively address the displacement of nonprofits.
- Helping providers partner with one another and being the leader to bring partners and organizations together.
- Better understanding of the providers’ work and challenges AND better clarity through education to service providers about how the City of Bellevue makes human services decisions (especially funding/financial).
- Facilitating increased communication and connections among organizations funded by the City of Bellevue, so that we are better aware of how we can support each other and our clients.
- Coordination and a focus on funding organizations that are truly Eastside and not Seattle-based organizations looking to increase their footprint but don’t really represent our community’s voice.



- Consistent consultations like this survey will help improve human services in the City of Bellevue, because they provide tailor-made recommendations for policy design and funding that respond to actual needs.

Collaboration and Convening: Current Approaches

The City invests in collaboration and convening as a strategy to improve human services for Bellevue residents. This work includes both convening



Photo provided by Indian American Community Services.

events for key stakeholders and financial investments in convening organizations and initiatives:

- Funding and partner agency for **Eastside Pathways**, a Cradle to Career collective impact initiative that convenes service providers to improve outcomes for children and families.
- Member of the **Eastside Human Services Forum**, which gathers community input through convening events on critical human services topics.
- Member of the **Alliance of Eastside Agencies**, which provides a place for human service providers to network and build collaboration.
- Provider and community presentations to the Human Services Commission, to facilitate understanding of trends in human services needs.
- Co-hosting quarterly **Coffee Chats** in partnership with other Eastside Cities, which bring together members of the City's human services team and community providers, as a strategy for outreach and relationship building, particularly with smaller, BIPOC-led organizations.
- Participation in a variety of community advisory and provider groups, including the **Bellevue Network on Aging, Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee, Nourishing Networks, Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council, Eastside Easy Rider Coalition**, and others.

Continuing to explore innovative strategies for collaboration and partnership will support the City in driving collective impact across the Bellevue human services ecosystem.

