

King County Opportunity Youth Overview



Demographics of opportunity youth and systemic barriers to employment

Seattle Region Partnership

Connecting Business to our region's talent pipeline



The Seattle Region Partnership (SRP) is a multi-sector initiative founded by the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Seattle Foundation, City of Seattle, and King County. Established in 2016, SRP was created to streamline the way that business connects to the region's workforce, economic, and education systems, providing local residents access to middle-wage careers. SRP serves a critical function of ensuring our partners are connecting to a regional talent pipeline, while simultaneously working to create a coordinated, equitable, and responsive workforce system.

Defining Opportunity Youth

Who are opportunity youth?



While there are several definitions for opportunity youth, we define opportunity youth as young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working.

Why Opportunity Youth Matter

Not investing in Opportunity Youth has social and economic implications



There are more than 5.5 million young adults in the US who are disconnected from work and school¹. Almost 19,000 of those young adults reside in King County. Their contributions to the workforce are often undervalued due to myriad socioeconomic and workforce barriers such as poverty, racial bias, and lack of exposure to career connected learning opportunities; making it difficult for young adults to obtain and sustain employment.²

According to an Urban Alliance policy brief “each young person who disconnects from school or work costs an estimated \$704,020 over his or her lifetime in lost earnings, lower economic growth, lower tax revenues, and higher government spending. The aggregate taxpayer burden is \$1.56 trillion and the social cost of \$4.75 trillion.”¹

Why Opportunity Youth Matter

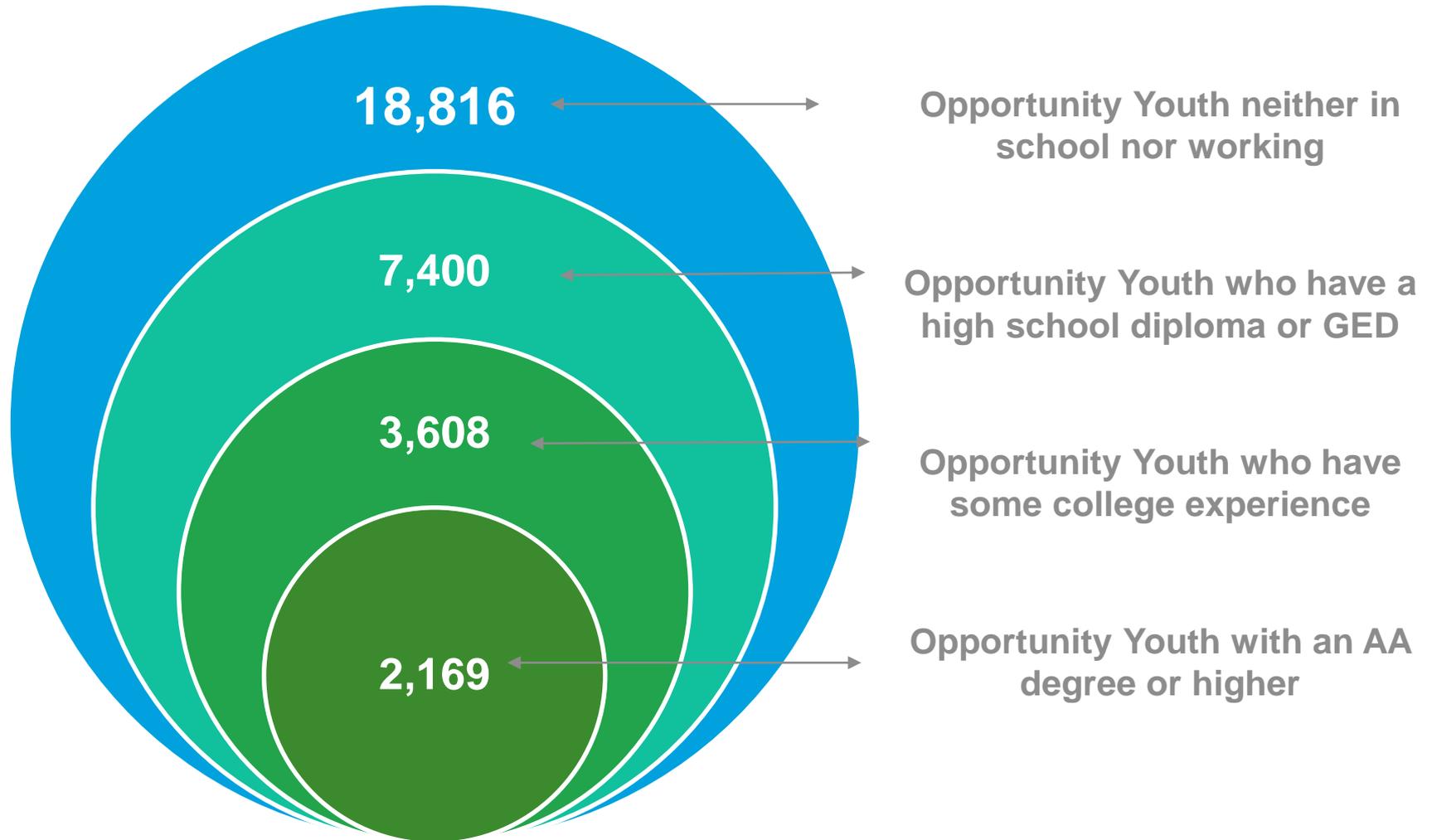
A Talent Pipeline Solution

Greater Seattle has a booming economy with unrepresented regional growth, yet there is a gap between local trained workers and employer demand. It is projected that in the next five years, 740,000 jobs will go unfilled due to lack of trained talent.* To remain a global competitor, we need a local talent pipeline that promotes business growth and provides local residents access to develop skills, get training, and start a career.

Employers are looking for dedicated employees who can fill their in-demand positions and our region is filled with young people ready to learn and eager to work. Connecting youth to these entry-level positions in high-demand careers will put youth on a path to self-sufficiency while helping employers solve their talent pipeline needs.

King County Opportunity Youth

Opportunity Youth by the numbers



King County Opportunity Youth

Missed Opportunity

There are nearly 19,000 opportunity youth residing in King County. Over 5,000 of these young adults have some college experience and many have obtained an associate degree or higher.

Employers are disconnected from a valuable talent pool that can demonstrate the skills necessary to gain entry-level jobs in the high-demand industries in our region.

By connecting employers to this untapped talent pipeline, we can address the region's talent shortage.

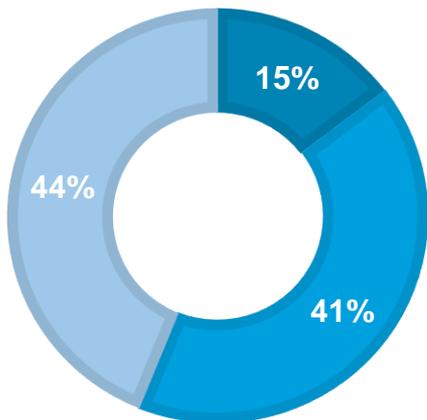
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Opportunity Youth Demographics

Opportunity youth are disproportionately youth of color between the ages of 19 and 24. Most opportunity youth reside in South King County, in cities with low-to-medium household income.

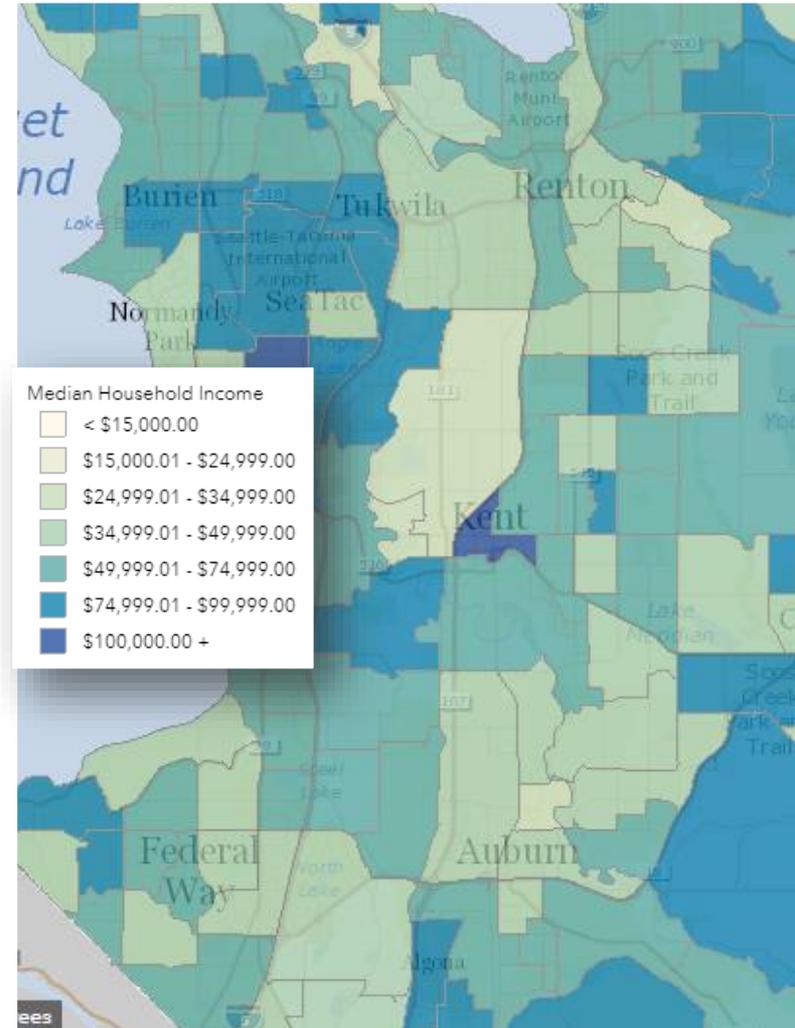
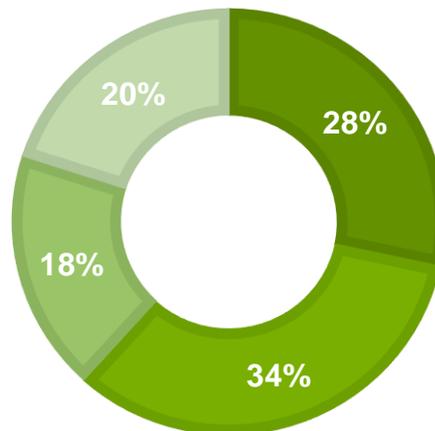
OPPORTUNITY YOUTH BY AGE

- 16-18 yr olds
- 19-21 yr olds
- 22-24 yr olds



OPPORTUNITY YOUTH BY RACE

- Latino/Hispanic
- Black
- Other non-White
- White



ImageSource: King County iMaps data

Barriers to Serving Opportunity Youth

Selected input from youth ecosystem stakeholders

Lack of employer access

Many youth serving organizations do not have direct access to and strong partnerships with employers.

Scarcity of resources

"There are simply not enough resources for serving opportunity youth. The need is great and funding is stretched thinly across multiple organizations, programs, and initiatives."

Cost of living

"As the cost of living continues to rise, youth start to abandon their educational opportunities in exchange for entry-level work to meet their immediate needs."

The bootstrap myth

"There is a terrible myth about youth not wanting to work. Some employers believe kids need to pick themselves up by their bootstraps and get to work."

No employment opportunities for 16 and 17 year olds

"We don't have any avenues for youth under the age of 18 to enter into employment."

No pathways to promotion

"Our youth are able to get jobs, but there is no career pathway for them once placed into entry-level employment."

Heavy focus on in-school youth

Many youth programs focus on GED and high school diploma completion. However, *"data shows a high concentration of youth in the county actually have their high school diplomas."*

No service coordination

There is no coordinated system for serving opportunity youth. *"Seattle, and the region, is program rich but systems poor"*.

Barriers to Serving Opportunity Youth

Systemic barriers to obtaining and/or maintaining employment



Transportation: Inefficient transportation can hinder economic mobility. For youth living in parts of South King County, commuting to work or school is too expensive or time consuming with certain parts of the region not having adequate public transit access or no service at all outside of peak commuting hours.

Justice involvement: Justice-involved youth face discrimination (e.g. check the box) and other explicit and implicit bias.

Homelessness: Obtaining and maintaining employment is difficult when youth do not have stable housing.

Racism, gender-bias, and sexual orientation discrimination: Women, youth of color, and LGBT youth face higher levels of unemployment and discrimination.

Contact Seattle Region Partnership



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