

Families Thrive

How Best Starts measures joy



Supporting a baby from birth to adulthood requires an interwoven set of supports that address basic and social needs. These supports are called protective factors and [research shows](#) these factors are directly linked to better well-being for children, their families, and their communities.

The protective factors we measure

Family resilience: Families have skills and strategies to face challenges, crises, and/or trauma.

Social supports: Families have support from family, friends, neighbors, and community to meet emotional needs.

Knowledge of parenting and child development: Families have age-appropriate expectations for children's abilities and use consistent, effective child-care techniques.

Concrete supports: Families have basic needs, services, and resources to help cope with stress.

Children and babies are thriving: Children and babies are curious about learning, demonstrate resilience, bond with their caregivers, and are affectionate, tender, smile, and laugh often.

Protective factors are a useful strengths-based tool to understand where we can provide more supports for families.

Learnings from the Best Starts for Kids Health Survey

Data on King County families' protective factors comes from the [Best Starts for Kids Health Survey](#), a survey of King County families with children in elementary school or younger.

Learning #1: The more protective factors babies and children have, the higher the likelihood they report better health.

77% of families with [one protective factor](#) report good or excellent health in their children

94% of families with [five protective factors](#) report excellent or very good health in their children



Prioritizing policies and programs that build and strengthen family protective factors is an investment in community health and well-being.

“

The Guiding Good Choices workshop taught me how to explain and to set important family rules for our children. I learned to have more empathy with my children, to understand their age, and what they are going through.

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- Participant of a Best Starts Positive Family Connections partner workshop



Learning #2: King County families are resilient and many can obtain concrete supports, but we have room to grow in ensuring young people are thriving and families have social-emotional supports.

Figure 1: Proportion of King County families that have each protective factor

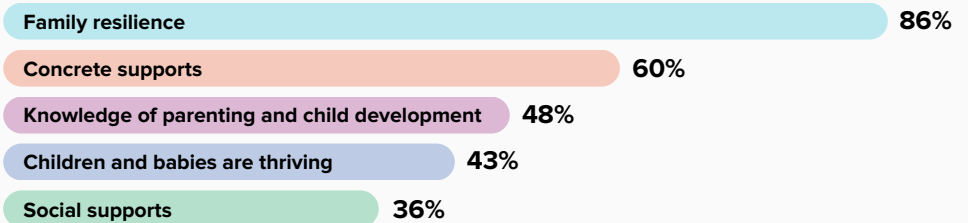


Figure 1: The vast majority, 86%, of King County parents/caregivers had skills and strategies to persevere when faced with challenges, crisis, and trauma (defined as family resilience). Yet only 36% of King County children and babies lived in families that reported having social support from family, friends, and neighbors that helps provide for emotional needs. While 60% of children lived in families that had access to basic needs and services, just 43% of King County children were thriving, which means they built strong bonds with loved ones, were emotionally resilient, and were curious and excited to learn, according to their parent or caregiver. Meanwhile, nearly half of families reported knowledge of parenting and child development that demonstrated consistent, age appropriate expectations.

Learning #3: Families experience varying access to protective factors by race/ethnicity, family income, region, child's age, and parent/caregiver age, sexual orientation, and education level.

On average, King County families had 2.7 out of 5 protective factors. But protective factors vary among King County families, which highlights inequities by many demographic factors.

Compared to the county average, **families report having more protective factors** if they:

- are Asian-Indian or White
- make over \$150,000 annually
- live in the Seattle region
- have children under age 5
- have advanced education

Families report having fewer protective factors compared to the county average if they:

- are Mexican American
- make less than \$75,000 annually
- live in the South county region
- have children in elementary school
- a parent/caregiver is less than 30 years old, has a high school/GED education or less, or identifies at LGBTQ+

Explore the [Best Starts for Kids Health Survey dashboard](#) to find more protective factors data broken down by demographics and geography.