

Black/White Disproportionality of VUFA 2 Charges and Dispositions in King County

King County Department of Public Defense

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Summary of Findings

An analysis of available data reveals that, in King County, charges of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm in the Second Degree (“VUFA 2”) are brought against Black youth approximately 31 times more often than white youth per capita, and against Black adults approximately 8 times more often than white adults per capita.

The youth analysis examined charging data for VUFA 2 (RCW 9.41.040) for January 2022 through November 2024, while the adult analysis examined both charging and disposition data, for those with and without felony histories, from 2021-2024. While both analyses should be considered approximate only, the underlying data for the adult analysis was obtained from the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, which notes that its race data is “unreliable and inaccurate” (see Appendix A).

Based on available King County data, VUFA 2 charges are:

- 31 times more likely to be filed against a white youth than a Black youth
- 9 times more likely to be filed against a Black adult than a white adult
- 8 times more likely to be filed against a Black adult with a felony conviction history than a white adult with a felony conviction history
- 11 times more likely to be filed against a Black adult without a felony conviction history than a white adult without a felony conviction history

And a VUFA 2 disposition is:

- 10 times more likely to be given to a Black adult than a white adult
- 10 times more likely to be given to a Black adult with a felony conviction history than a white adult with a felony conviction history
- 9 times more likely to be given to a Black adult without a felony history than a white adult without a felony history

Methodology

Adult data: On January 31, 2025, the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office provided a list of all adult VUFA 2 charges and dispositions to date for cases filed between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2024, including race data for each defendant. The data was provided with caveats about how the dataset was constructed using complex queries that may have resulted in errors, and in particular the race data was inaccurate, as stated on the public dashboard. (See Appendix A.) The number of charges and dispositions for defendants of each race was compared to King County demographic data regarding the overall population size of each racial group from the 2020 Census (<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive/governance-leadership/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/demographics>) to calculate the extent of the racial disproportionality.

Juvenile data: On November 24, 2024, the Juvenile Court Services division of King County Superior Court provided a list of all VUFA 2 charges filed against youth from January 1, 2022, to date, and included the available race/ethnicity data associated with the youth in each case. The number of cases for each race/ethnicity group was compared to 2024 Washington State Office of Financial Management demographic data regarding the race/ethnicity of all youth aged 0-17 in each racial group, available via the King County Population Dashboard at King County’s Communities Count website (<https://www.communitiescount.org/population-dashboard>), to calculate the extent of the racial disproportionality.

Both datasets: Exactly comparable groupings were not available across datasets in either the youth or adult cases. Details about the standardization of the adult and juvenile datasets can be found in Appendices A and B. The results listed in the summary above were found to be statistically meaningful based on a series of chi-square goodness-of-fit tests (see Appendix C for details). The disproportionality calculations and likelihood rates can be found in Appendix D.

Appendix A: Adult Charging/Disposition and Population Data

Racial disproportionality calculations should only be considered approximate because (1) the charge/disposition race data does not account for multiracial identification, as the census data does; (2) the race data collection methods are inconsistent, as explained below; and (3) the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) reported that the queries used to produce the adult dataset are complex and subject to human error.

The KCPAO lists this extensive caveat regarding race data on its website (<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/pao/about-king-county/about-pao/data-reports/dashboard>):

For the race/ethnicity and gender of defendants we must rely entirely on what law enforcement reports. Our ethical and legal responsibilities prohibit us from speaking directly with defendants in criminal cases. Over 30 separate law enforcement agencies submit cases to the PAO; each of those agencies has separate policies and systems for collecting demographic data, which can result in varying levels of reporting. ... [The race categories used] create data quality problems by only allowing a single selection, being generally outdated, and grouping race and ethnicity together. These data problems are compounded by inconsistent reporting and collection of this data. Unfortunately, this results in the PAO having very unreliable and inaccurate race and ethnicity data. Collecting accurate race, ethnicity, and gender data is critical to achieving equity and fairness in the criminal justice system. The best data on race and ethnicity is self-reported; meaning that the person contacted by law enforcement decided how they would be identified.

The notes below outline how the charging/disposition and population datasets were standardized so as to ensure comparability, preserve population totals, and avoid exclusion bias.

Races listed in KCPAO's charge/disposition data:
American Indian/Alaska Native
Asian/Pacific Islander
Black/African American
Hispanic/Latino
Unknown
Other
[Blank]
White/Caucasian

King County 2020 Census Race and Ethnicity		
<i>Race</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Non-Hispanic White	1,230,600	54%
Black and African American:	147,800	7%
Asian	449,700	20%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	19,400	1%
Native American and races not listed	25,300	1%
Hispanic and Latinx*	243,000	11%
Multiracial	153,800	7%
TOTAL	2,269,600	101%*

* does not total 100% due to rounding

Data from: <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive/governance-leadership/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/demographics>

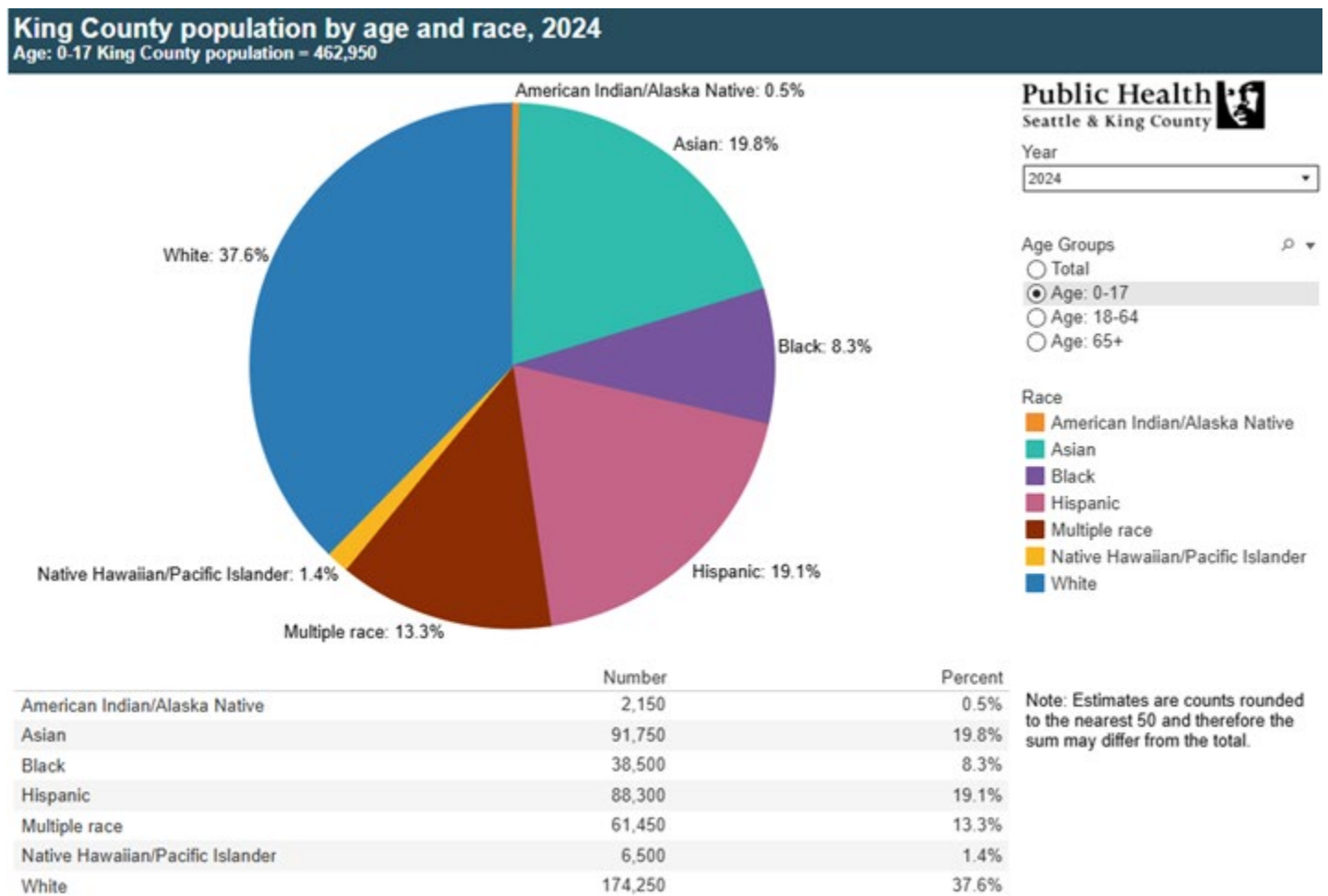
Race/ethnicity list used for statistical analysis	Standardization note
AIAN	PAO American Indian/Alaska Native; KC Native American and races not listed
Asian/NHOPI	PAO Asian/Pacific Islander; KC Asian and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander
Black	PAO Black/African American; KC Black and African American
Hispanic	PAO Hispanic/Latino; KC Hispanic/Latinx
White	PAO White/Caucasian; KC Non-Hispanic White
Unknown/Other	PAO Unknown and Other and Blank; OFM Multiracial

Appendix B: Juvenile Charging and Population Data

On November 24, 2024, the Juvenile Court Services division of King County Superior Court provided this list of all VUFA 2 charges filed against youth from January 1, 2022, to date at that time:

Youth charged w VUFA2 2022 2024 by RACE	Distinct Count of JCN VUFA 2022_2024
American Indian	3
Asian and Pacific Islander	19
Black	125
Hispanic	60
White	18
Unknown	1
TOTAL	226

The screenshot below was taken of 2024 Washington State Office of Financial Management demographic data regarding the race of all youth aged 0-17 in each racial group, from the King County Population Dashboard at King County's Communities Count website (<https://www.communitiescount.org/population-dashboard>), on December 12, 2025:



Data source: Washington State Office of Financial Management

PHSKC, APDE; 7/2025

The juvenile racial disproportionality figures in this report should not be considered precise because, among other possible reasons, the King County Juvenile Court (KCJC) data race does not account for multiracial identifications, as the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) data does. The notes below outline how the two datasets were standardized so as to ensure comparability, preserve population totals, and avoid exclusion bias.

Race/ethnicity list in King County Juvenile Court data:
American Indian
Asian and Pacific Islander
Black
Hispanic
White
Unknown

Race/ethnicity list in Office of Financial Management data
American Indian/Alaska Native
Asian
Black
Hispanic
Multiple race
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
White

Race/ethnicity list used for statistical analysis	Standardization note
AIAN	KCJC American Indian; OFM American Indian/Alaska Native
Asian/NHOPI	KCJC Asian and Pacific Islander; OFM Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Black	KCJC Black; OFM Black
Hispanic	KCJC Hispanic; OFM Hispanic
White	KCJC White; OFM White
Unknown/Other	KCJC Unknown; OFM Multiple Race

It should also be noted that the King County Population Dashboard at King County’s Communities Count website provides the following caveat about the OFM data:

King County population by age and race

Data sources

Population data (age by race/ethnicity) are from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), Forecasting Division, July 2025. Rates may differ from previously published rates due to changes in denominators.

Race/Ethnicity

This presentation includes seven mutually exclusive race categories:

- AIAN: American Indian/Alaska Native only – non-Hispanic
- Asian: Asian only – non-Hispanic
- Black: African American only – non-Hispanic
- Hispanic: Hispanic as a race
- Multiple race: multiple race – non-Hispanic
- NHPI: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander only – non-Hispanic
- White: White only - non-Hispanic

People who reported as being more than one race are classified as multiple race and people who reported as being Hispanic/Latino, regardless of being another race, are classified as Hispanic.

Appendix C: Chi-square Analysis

For the purposes of determining the potential disproportionality of VUFA 2 charges and dispositions, the authors employed a chi-square goodness-of-fit test. This test evaluates whether the observed distribution of cases across categories differs from an expected distribution. In this analysis, it tests whether the racial distribution of those charged/convicted of VUFA 2 differs from what would be expected if charging/disposition were proportional to the county population of those residents by race. The chi-square framework evaluates the entire racial distribution at once, accounting for the fact that over-representation in one group necessarily implies under-representation in others.

In all cases listed in the Executive Summary, the chi-square test was highly statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$), indicating that the racial distribution of those charged and disposed differs substantially from the county population. This provides strong evidence of racial disproportionality in VUFA2 charging and dispositions.

To identify which groups contributed most to this disproportionality, standardized residuals were examined. Standardized residuals represent the difference between observed and expected counts expressed in standard deviation units; values exceeding ± 2 are typically considered statistically meaningful. Also included is a calculation of the rate each racial group is more likely to be charged/disposed compared to the white population in King County.

Overall, the chi-square analysis demonstrates pronounced racial disproportionality in charging and dispositions, with Black individuals dramatically over-represented and white individuals substantially underrepresented relative to county population proportions. The magnitude of the standardized residuals indicates that these patterns are not attributable to random variation and represent large, substantive disparities.

Appendix D: Standardized Residual Calculations

Note: Standardized residuals represent the difference between observed and expected counts expressed in standard deviation units; values exceeding +/- 2 are typically considered statistically meaningful.

AD-1. Juvenile VUFA2 Charges

Race	Number of cases in which youths were charged with VUFA2 in KCJC from 1/1/22-11/24/24	% of cases	King County youth population (age 0-17) in 2024	% of county population	Expected Charged	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	3	1.3%	2,150	0.5%	1.049687	1.903595	13.5
Asian/NHOPI	19	8.4%	98,250	21.2%	47.96824	-4.18259	1.9
Black	125	55.3%	38,500	8.3%	18.79672	24.4961	31.4
Hispanic	60	26.5%	88,300	19.1%	43.11039	2.572341	6.6
White	18	8.0%	174,250	37.6%	85.07345	-7.272	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	1	0.4%	61,450	13.3%	30.00151	-5.29479	0.2
Total	226	100.0%	462,900	100.0%	226	--	--

AD-2. Adult VUFA2 Charges, All Charges

Race	Number of cases in which adults were charged with VUFA2 2021-2024	% of cases	King County population in 2024	% of county population	Expected Charged	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	3	0.7%	25,300	1.1%	4.626146	-0.75605	0.9
Asian/NHOPI	42	10.1%	469,100	20.7%	85.77569	-4.72662	0.7
Black	171	41.2%	147,800	6.5%	27.02547	27.69485	8.5
Hispanic	13	3.1%	243,000	10.7%	44.43294	-4.71555	0.4
White	167	40.2%	1,230,600	54.2%	225.0172	-3.86766	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	19	4.6%	153,800	6.8%	28.12258	-1.72024	0.9
Total	415	100.0%	2,269,600	100.0%	0	--	--

AD-3. Adult VUFA2 Charges, Felony History

Race	Number of cases in which adults were charged with VUFA2 2021-2024	% of cases	King County population in 2024	% of county population	Expected Charged	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	3	1.0%	25,300	1.1%	3.366496	-0.19975	1.1
Asian/NHOPI	32	10.6%	469,100	20.7%	62.4199	-3.85031	0.6
Black	121	40.1%	147,800	6.5%	19.66673	22.84999	7.7
Hispanic	7	2.3%	243,000	10.7%	32.33433	-4.45531	0.3
White	130	43.0%	1,230,600	54.2%	163.7474	-2.63726	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	9	3.0%	153,800	6.8%	20.4651	-2.53438	0.6
Total	302	100.0%	2,269,600	100.0%	0	--	--

AD-4. Adult VUFA2 Charges, No Felony History

Race	Number of cases in which adults were charged with VUFA2 2021-2024	% of cases	King County population in 2024	% of county population	Expected Charged	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	0	0.0%	25,300	1.1%	1.259649	-1.12234	0.0
Asian/NHOPI	10	8.8%	469,100	20.7%	23.35579	-2.76358	0.7
Black	50	44.2%	147,800	6.5%	7.358742	15.71912	11.3
Hispanic	6	5.3%	243,000	10.7%	12.09861	-1.75333	0.8
White	37	32.7%	1,230,600	54.2%	61.26974	-3.10057	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	10	8.8%	153,800	6.8%	7.657473	0.846529	2.2
Total	113	100.0%	2,269,600	100.0%	0	--	--

AD-5. Adult VUFA2 Dispositions, All Dispositions

Race	Number of cases in which adults were disposed with VUFA2 2021-2024	% of cases	King County population in 2024	% of county population	Expected Disposed	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	11	1.7%	25,300	1.1%	7.178886	1.426138	2.2
Asian/NHOPI	61	9.5%	469,100	20.7%	133.1073	-6.24998	0.7
Black	285	44.3%	147,800	6.5%	41.93832	37.5328	9.7
Hispanic	20	3.1%	243,000	10.7%	68.95136	-5.89513	0.4
White	244	37.9%	1,230,600	54.2%	349.1833	-5.62885	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	23	3.6%	153,800	6.8%	43.64082	-3.1245	0.8
Total	644	100.0%	2,269,600	100.0%	0	--	--

AD-6. Adult VUFA2 Dispositions, Felony History

Race	Number of cases in which adults were disposed with VUFA2 2021-2024	% of cases	King County population in 2024	% of county population	Expected Disposed	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	8	1.8%	25,300	1.1%	4.86024	1.424189	2.4
Asian/NHOPI	44	10.1%	469,100	20.7%	90.11614	-4.85793	0.7
Black	200	45.9%	147,800	6.5%	28.39302	32.20543	10.3
Hispanic	9	2.1%	243,000	10.7%	46.68135	-5.51512	0.3
White	161	36.9%	1,230,600	54.2%	236.4036	-4.90416	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	14	3.2%	153,800	6.8%	29.54565	-2.85997	0.7
Total	436	100.0%	2,269,600	100.0%	0	--	--

AD-7. Adult VUFA2 Dispositions, No Felony History

Race	Number of cases in which adults were disposed with VUFA2 2021-2024	% of cases	King County population in 2024	% of county population	Expected Disposed	Standardized Residual	Rate Compared to White
AIAN	3	1.4%	25,300	1.1%	2.318646	0.447461	1.8
Asian/NHOPI	17	8.2%	469,100	20.7%	42.99119	-3.96403	0.5
Black	85	40.9%	147,800	6.5%	13.54529	19.41496	8.5
Hispanic	11	5.3%	243,000	10.7%	22.27	-2.38816	0.7
White	83	39.9%	1,230,600	54.2%	112.7797	-2.80417	1.0
Unknown/Multi/Other	9	4.3%	153,800	6.8%	14.09517	-1.35714	0.9
Total	208	100.0%	2,269,600	100.0%	0	--	--