

# BEYOND THE HEADLINES

At a Glance: Jobs, Workers & the Economy



OCTOBER 2012 | FOCUS: KING COUNTY

## South King County's Growing Need for Workforce Investment

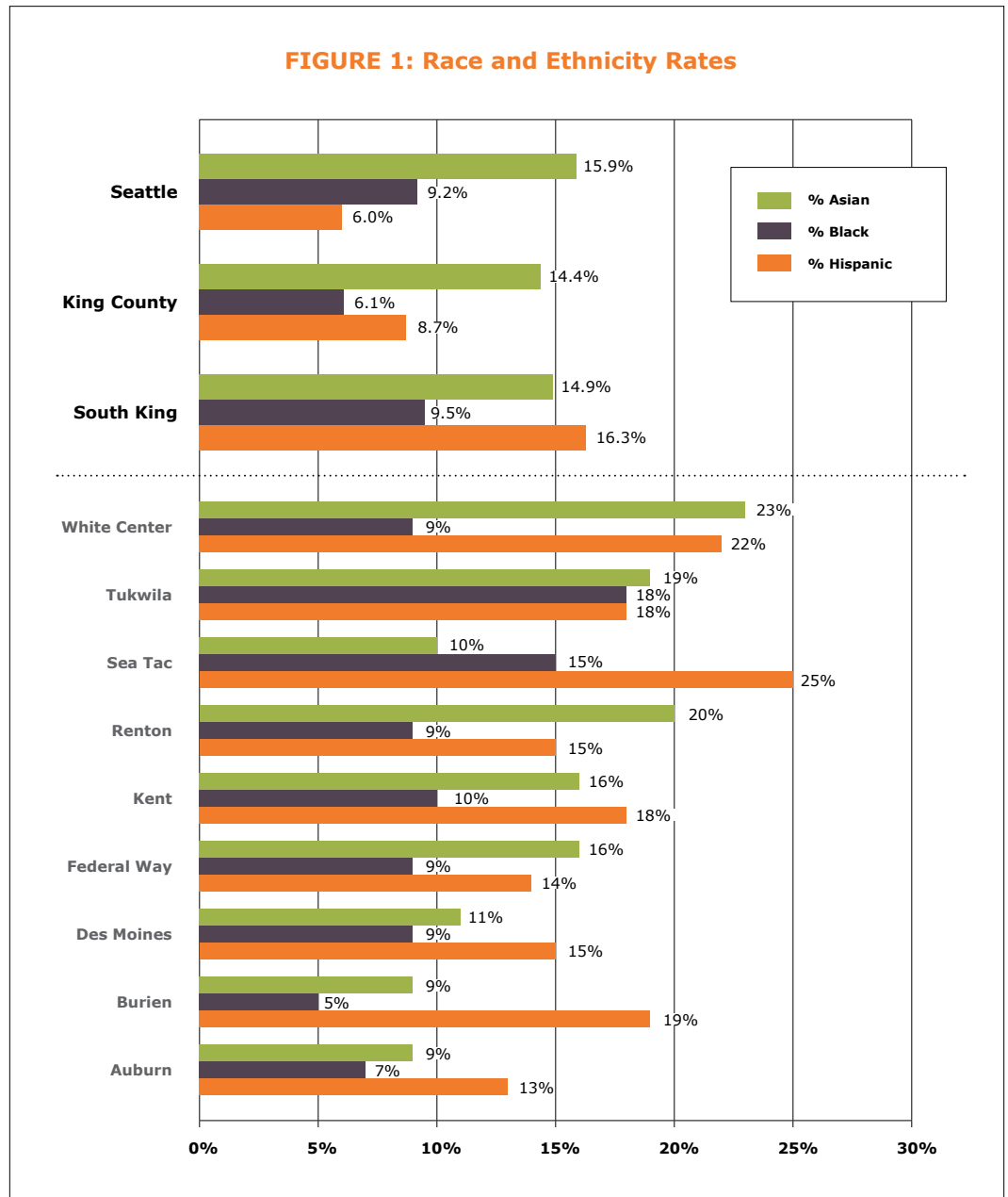
A growing and increasingly diverse talent pool resides in South King County that matches up well with the globally-focused Puget Sound economy. South King County holds a high concentration of well-paying jobs, supported by three

large manufacturing and industrial centers.

To ensure South King County's talent pool achieves its potential to secure these jobs and meet the needs of local employers, there must be increased investment in workforce development in the geography to help address the challenges many of its residents face in terms of low earnings, low skills, high unemployment and high language barriers.

A recent analysis by Seattle Jobs Initiative<sup>1</sup> examined the demographic characteristics of South King County in an effort to better understand

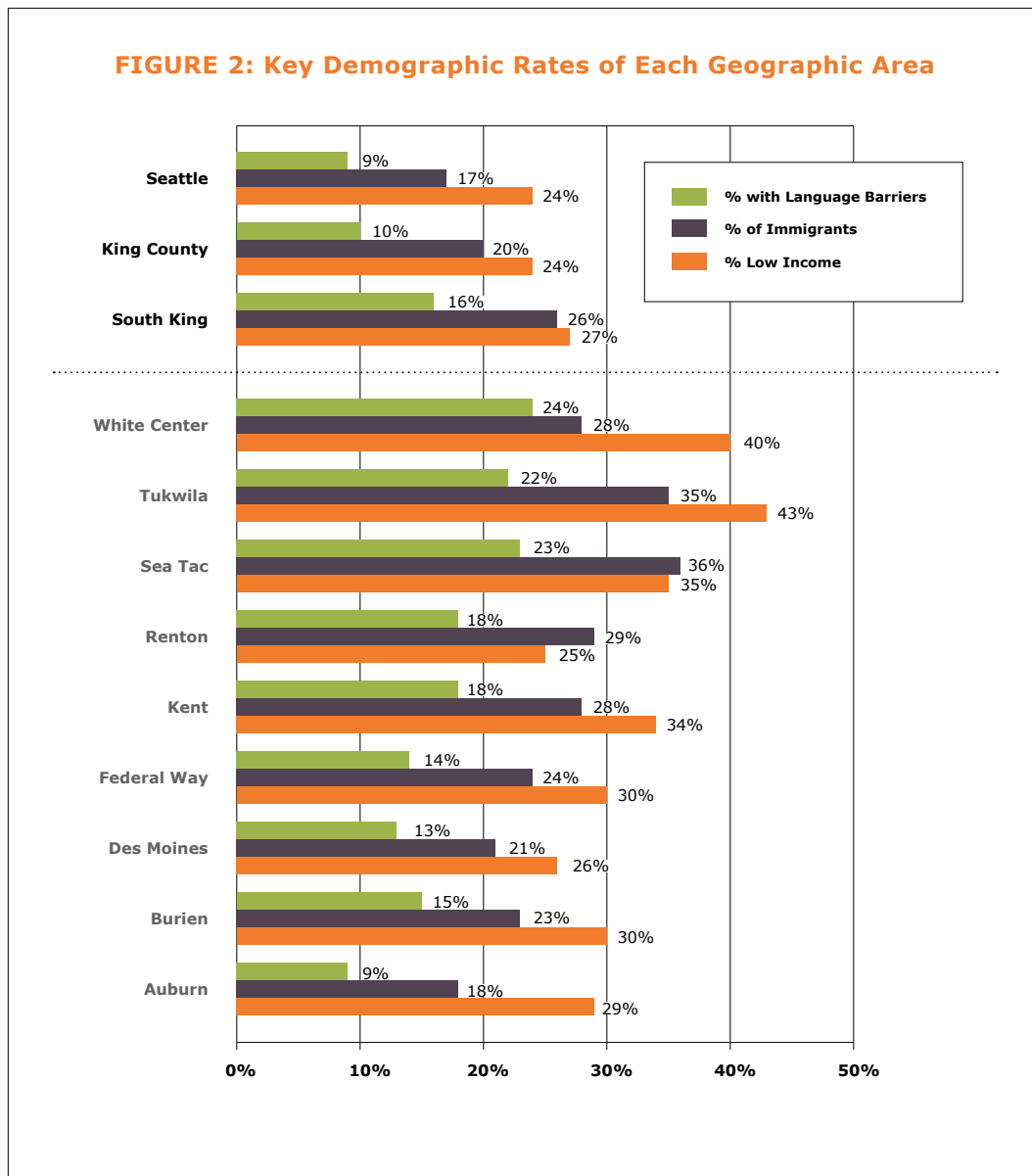
**FIGURE 1: Race and Ethnicity Rates**



the potential – and challenges – of its residents to secure more skills and good jobs. This edition of *Beyond the Headlines* shares some of our findings.

## Diversity of South King County

South King County is a geography that has seen significant growth over the past decade, gaining nearly 70,000 residents from 2000 to 2010. Much of this growth in population is attributable to the migration of people of color out of sound end Seattle neighborhoods<sup>ii</sup>, as well as the arrival of recent immigrants.



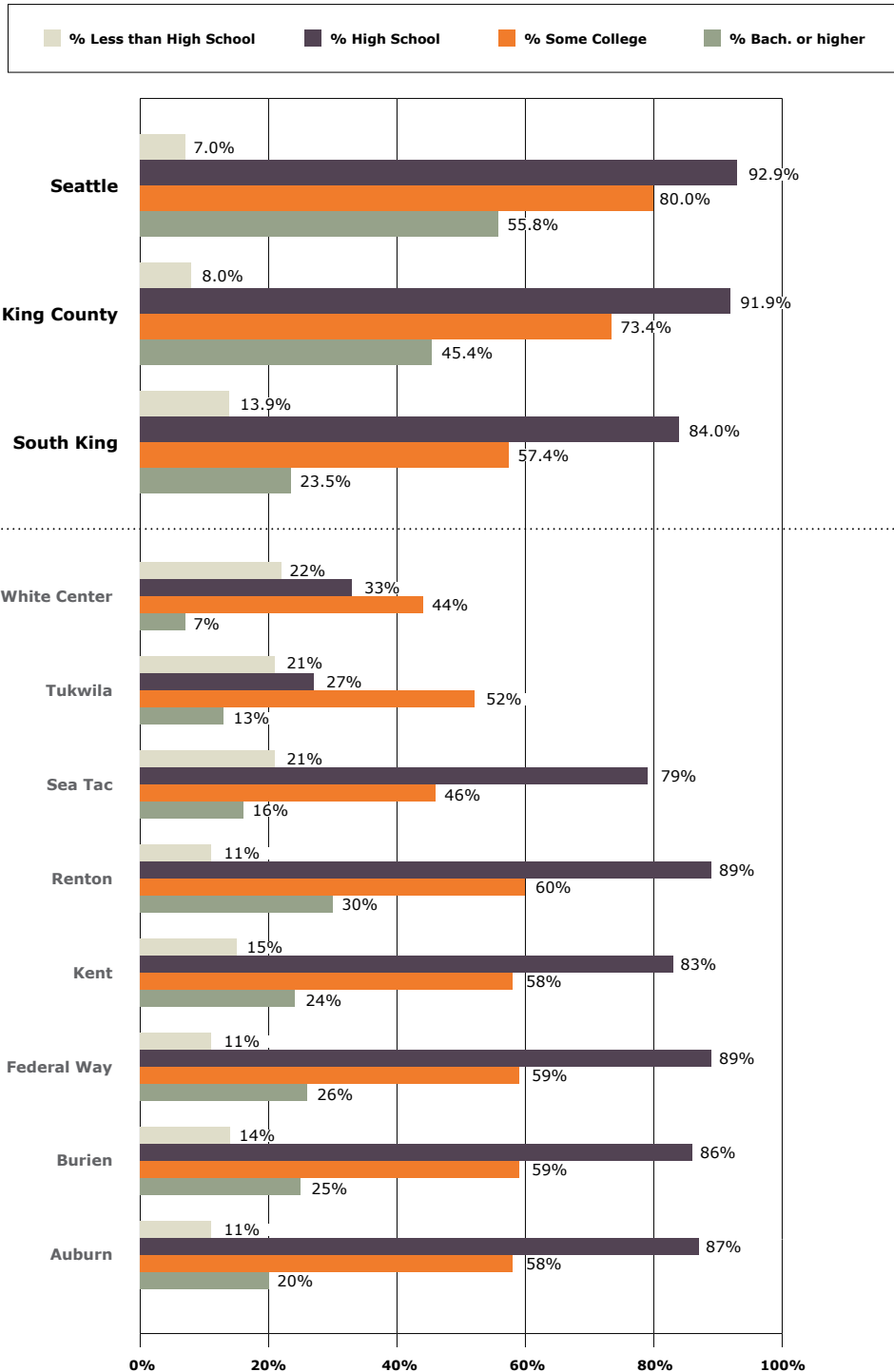
During this ten-year period, the white population in the geography declined by 14 percent, while the population of people of color increased by 66 percent. As depicted in Figure 1, in many South King County cities – such as Renton, Tukwila, Sea Tac, and Kent – a majority of the population is comprised of people of color. While there are fairly similar rates of Asians and Blacks in in South King County as in Seattle, the concentration of Hispanics is much larger in South King County (16.3%) than in Seattle (6%). In fact, in five of the nine South King County cities SJI’s research examined, Hispanics represent the largest racial/ethnic group.

## Income and Immigration

While many low-income individuals and families have migrated from Seattle to South King County, Seattle still holds a larger portion (32%) of King County’s low-income population than does South King County (27%).<sup>iii</sup>

However, South King County exceeds Seattle in low-income population *rates*, as depicted in Figure 2. This chart shows that Tukwila has the highest concentration of low-income residents (43%), followed by White Center and Sea Tac. The findings in Figure 2 also demonstrate a positive correlation between immigrants with language barriers and low-income populations in South King County. For example, the three cities mentioned with the highest concentrations of low-income residents also have the highest immigrant and language barrier rates.

**FIGURE 3: Education Levels**

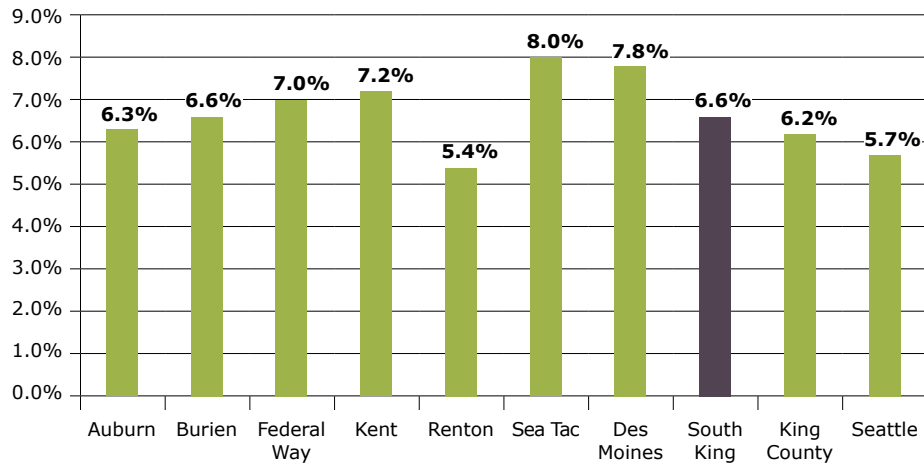


## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels are lower in South King County than in Seattle or King County as a whole, as depicted in Figure 3. For example, the percentage of adults who had not earned a high school diploma or equivalent in South King County (13.9%) is nearly twice as large as for Seattle (8.0%) and King County (7.0%).

Further, only 23% of South King County residents have earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 45% and 55% of residents in King County and Seattle, respectively.

**FIGURE 4: April 2012 Unemployment Rate**



## Unemployment

The April 2012 unemployment rates for all of the South King County cities – with the exception of Renton – were higher than the rates for the whole of King County and for Seattle.<sup>iv</sup> As depicted in Figure 4, the highest unemployment rates are in Sea Tac, Des Moines, and Kent.

- i. Research performed by Jennifer Pritchard, consultant to Seattle Jobs Initiative.
- ii. Turnbull, Lornet and Justin Mayo, "Shifting population changes face of South King County," Seattle Times, February 24, 2011, [http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2014314512\\_censusouthking24m.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2014314512_censusouthking24m.html).
- iii. "Low-income" is defined here as at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- iv. Data is not available for cities with fewer than 25,000 residents so Tukwila and White Center are not included in these figures.

**BEYOND THE HEADLINES:** Policy & Labor Market Updates for Those Working to Help Low-Income and Low-Skill Individuals Advance through Education, Training & Living-Wage Jobs

### About Seattle Jobs Initiative

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today's marketplace.

**Supported by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development**

### Contact Information

For questions or suggestions, please email David Kaz, SJI Director of Policy and Development at: [dkaz@seattlejobsinit.com](mailto:dkaz@seattlejobsinit.com)

