



# KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Kymer Waltmunson, County Auditor

## Protection Orders: User-Focused Approach Could Help Address Barriers

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LAW, JUSTICE, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

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# Key takeaways

- Processes are complicated and participants are often self-represented
- Disparate outcomes by race
- Barriers will remain without improvements
- Collaborative and user-focused continual improvement is necessary

# Civil protection orders

Domestic violence



Antiharassment



Vulnerable adult



Sexual assault



Stalking



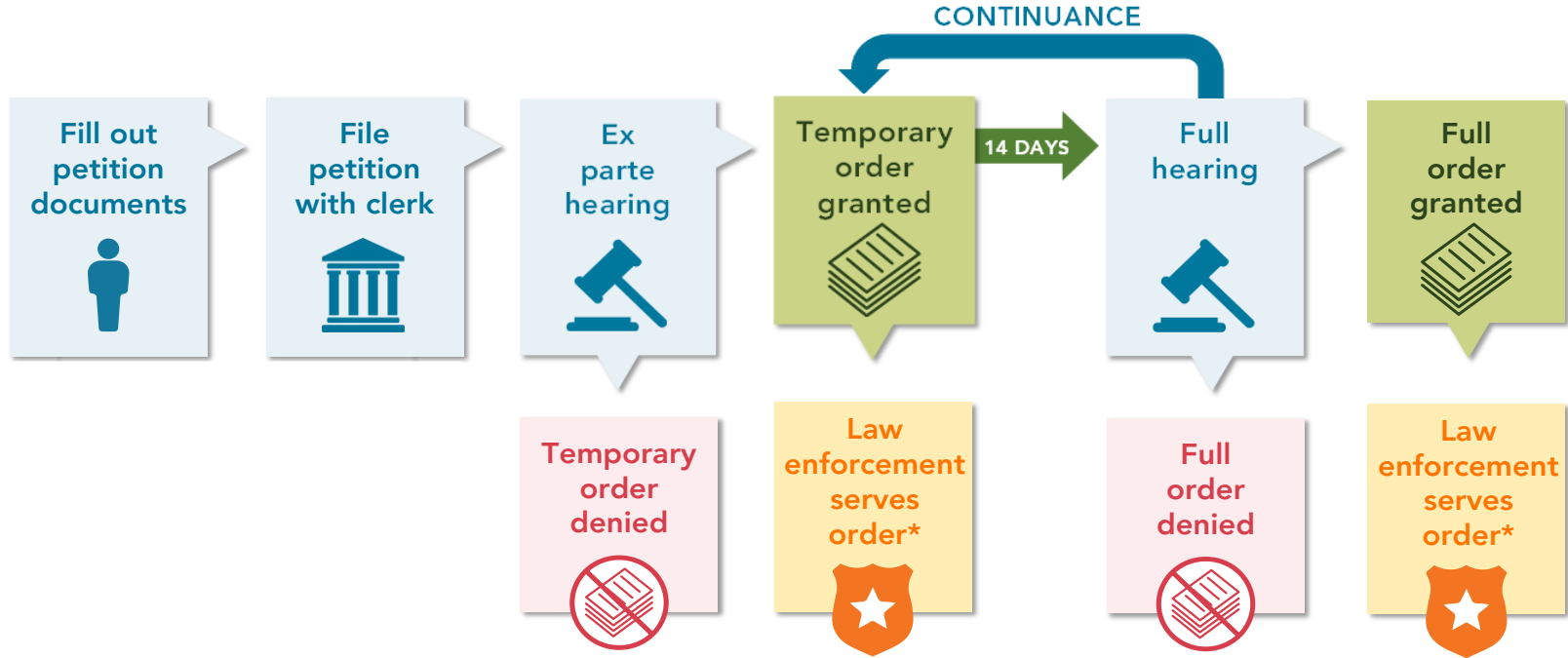
Extreme risk



# Civil protection orders

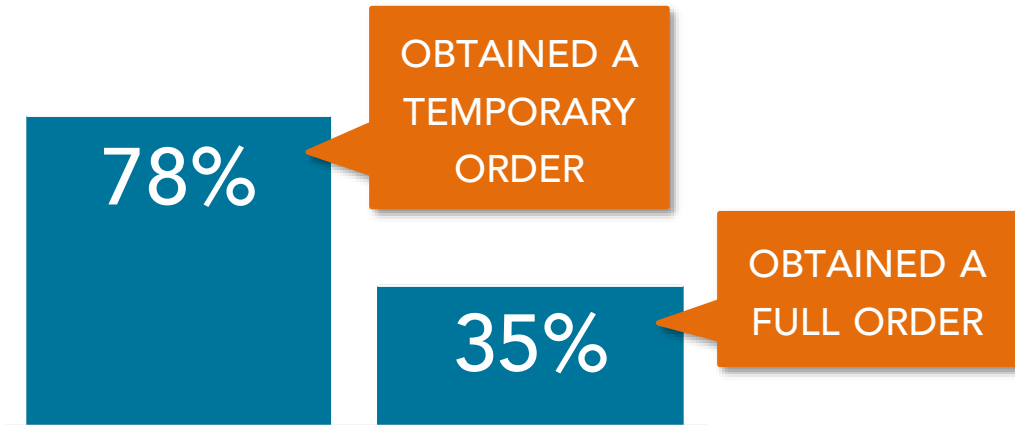
- Intended to be accessible to self-represented participants
  - Petitioners
  - Respondents

# What is the process to obtain an order?

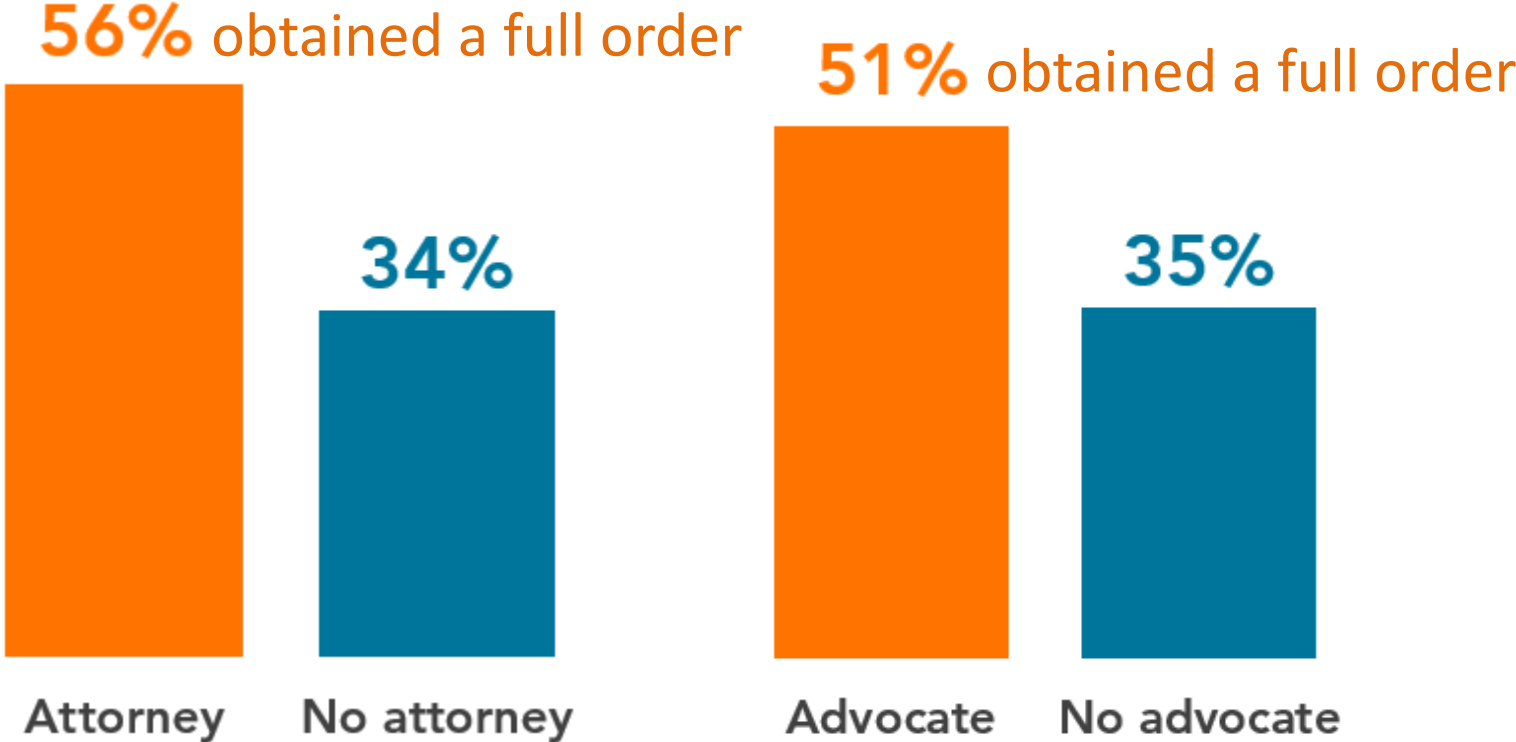


# Effectiveness of orders

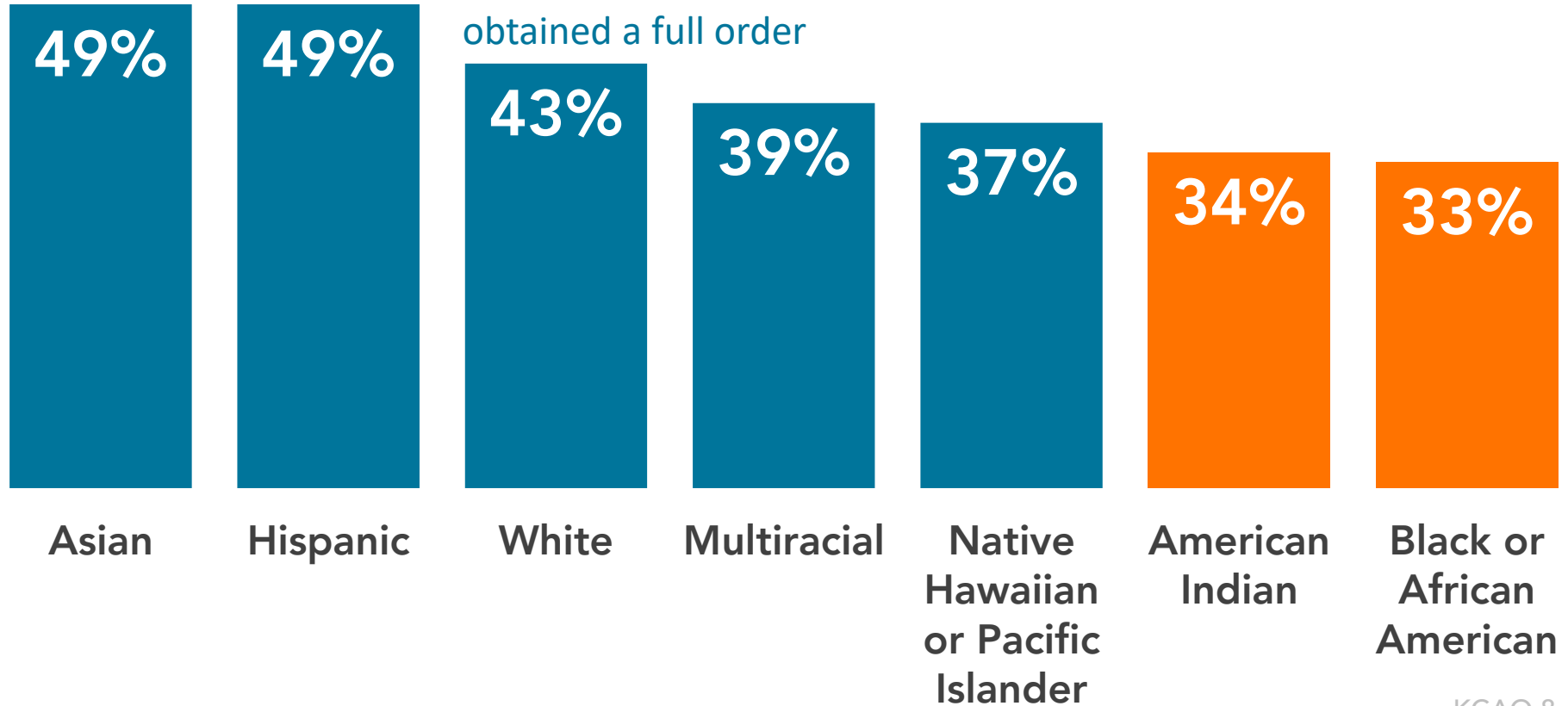
- Full protection orders effective in reducing violence
- Temporary orders may not have same effectiveness



# Disparate outcomes



# Disparate outcomes





# Recommendations

- ▶ Track more detailed data about outcomes
- ▶ Use data analysis to improve processes and address disparities

# Key barriers to protection order access

- Limited assistance for self-represented participants
- Limited language support
- Need for user-focused and collaborative continual improvement

# Limited assistance for participants

- Attorneys and advocates can mitigate barriers
- Most petitioners do not have an attorney or a personal advocate
- Clerk's Office assists with process-related questions

# Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to increase resources for self-represented petitioners

# Limited language support

- No language support for navigating virtual hearing process
- Required forms must be completed in English
- Some guidance available in English only
- Protection orders available in English only

# Recommendations

- ▶ Update language access plan
- ▶ Ensure key forms and instructions are available in other languages
- ▶ Expand language support in virtual hearings
- ▶ Communicate language support options

# Need for continual improvement

- Individuals working to improve processes
- Challenges in collaborating with the courts
- No court-led effort to coordinate and facilitate continual improvement
- Need for user input into development of improvements

# Recommendations

- ▶ Create a workgroup or collaborative mechanism
- ▶ Collaborate with stakeholders to address user challenges
- ▶ Ensure effective implementation of statewide reforms



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# Thank you

Full report available online at  
[KingCounty.gov/Auditor](http://KingCounty.gov/Auditor)

Questions?