



# The Asian and Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County: *An Unsettling Profile*

A partnership between



Coalition of  
Communities of  
& Color



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Coalition of  
Communities of  
Color

about

mission

The Coalition of Communities of Color was founded in 2001 to strengthen the voice and influence of communities of color in Multnomah County, Oregon.

*The communities of color unite as a coalition to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities. The Coalition will organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.*

Portland State University upholds its vision to:  
“Let Knowledge Serve the City.” The academic partners in this research from the School of Social Work hold commitments to social justice and racial equity.

*The School of Social Work is committed to the enhancement of the individual and society. We are dedicated to social change and to the attainment of social justice for all people, the eradication of poverty, the empowerment of those who are oppressed, the rights of all individuals and groups to determine their destiny, and the opportunity to live in cooperation.*

about

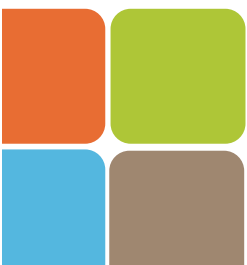
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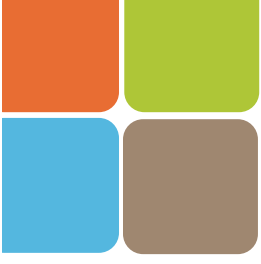


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**This report was prepared to ensure that the experiences of communities of color are widely available for:**

- Policy makers interested in better understanding the issues facing communities of color and the agencies that provide services for them.
- Advocates wanting firm footing in detailing the disparities between communities of color and White populations.
- Researchers considering how to improve better assessment of services, data collection practices and expand beyond conventional measures to define experiences facing communities of color.
- Educators wanting to expand their resources.
- Grant writers seeking to statistically document trends and challenges.





**The Coalition of Communities of Color gratefully acknowledges  
the assistance from the following partners:**

*Thank You!*



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FOUNDATION**

*The Community's Partner for Better Health*

**United Way of the  
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Dear Reader,

*The Asian and Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile* is one of six community-specific reports published by the Coalition of Communities of Color. This report builds on the *Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile* publication in 2010, that provided a comprehensive and comparative study of the inequities facing communities of color, immigrants and refugees. The findings, backed up by accurate and extensive data, are indeed unsettling, highlighting the persistent and in some cases growing disparities facing our communities. We see this as a wake-up call for public officials and policy-makers, and an opportunity for increased partnership and collective action for the advancement of racial equity.

As Asian and Pacific Islander members of the Coalition, Asian Family Center of IRCO and Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon are proud to have been part of the development of this report. We are deeply appreciative of the broad and deep participation from Asian and Pacific Islander community members and allies over the last 3 years in the development of this report. These contributions, alongside the rigorous academic research and analysis, have helped produce a powerful and detailed portrayal of the state of Asian and Pacific Islanders. This will be a key tool in educating our communities and the communities at large, and for promoting a new policy environment that supports, rather than harms communities of color.

One key recommendation in this report is to improve standards that ensure the disaggregation of data collection by race, ethnicity and language. This report documents the experiences of over 20 Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups, who are both largely diverse in language and culture, while at the same time profoundly linked by the impact of racism. The current standards that collect information about our community in one or two large categories masks the experiences of specific ethnicities preventing policy-makers from understanding the real issues that affect our communities. The false picture resulting from aggregated data too often leads us to accept the myth of the “model minority.” This report recognizes the disparities within distinct Asian Pacific American communities, and the role that advocates and public officials have in addressing these issues.

We want to acknowledge the partnership among key groups that made this report possible. The member organizations of the Coalition of Communities of Color have worked steadfastly since its formation in 2001 to focus on the broader public policy issues that affect all communities of color. The data and findings from the six community-specific reports for Asian and Pacific Islander, African American, African immigrant and refugee, Native American, Latino, and Slavic communities, provide a critical knowledge base to drive institutional and policy reforms that support racial equity. This report is a call to action.

We are grateful to the funders for this project: Northwest Health Foundation, Multnomah County, City of Portland, the United Way of Columbia–Willamette, and Portland State University.

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## Preface

This is an early notice to the readers of this report: it is a tough read, as the central framework is one that compares the starkly different experiences that the Asian and Pacific Islander community have from Whites. We have intentionally juxtaposed these two different sets of experiences in order to bring the experiences of the API community into focus. In many ways, this report amplifies what the API community has perceived throughout a lifetime that is frequently interrupted by unfair treatment, lack of equity and institutions that continue to treat those in the community as outsiders, even while many have lived in the county for generations. In essence, the reader's response to the data in this report will be in large part determined by one's identity. White readers will undoubtedly be much more troubled by this report.

Why is this so? All of us would like to believe that racism is simply a matter for the history books and that the US has completed that chapter of the text. But the evidence is ample in this report that our systems and institutions result in grave disparities that are connected to one's identity. This is a pattern that occurs across communities of color in Multnomah county. The authors of this report interpret that it is more difficult to hear given that we consider ourselves (all of us) to reside in a particularly progressive region of the USA.

So to consider that this region is ripe with racial disparities is troubling. It is not how we like to consider ourselves. And indeed, racism is rarely an intended outcome of the ways in which our systems and institutions operate. None of us intentionally tolerate racism, and those who authored this report believe that we have a region replete with many who have abundant goodwill and good intentions.

Racism – particularly its institutional and systemic dimensions – does not, however, exist by intention. It is instead measured by its outcomes and its impact. And in this way, we sound the alarm bell for the region is home to abundant disparities. These disparities harm communities of color, giving rise to narrowed health and wellbeing, and lessened options for self-determination and positive futures.

Unfortunately, we need to heighten discomfort even more, because racism does not occur without its corollary of white privilege. While we all abhor racism, many in society are unaware of white privilege – particularly Whites. White privilege is understood to be the set of benefits that accrue to White people as the beneficiaries of policies and practices (often unconscious and unintended) that favor Whites. Examples of this include being given the benefit of the doubt, being believed instead of suspected, or being presumed innocent, or competent, or deserving. One researcher has likened these to a knapsack of “special provisions, maps, passports, codes, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”<sup>1</sup>

The authors of this report assert that these correlated dynamics of racism and white privilege are in evidence in Multnomah county.<sup>2</sup> These dynamics are deeply embedded in the various institutions in our lives – and coupled with insidious racial stereotypes that seep into our consciousness, it is almost like it is in the air we breathe.

We work from the assumption that the bulk of society wants to get rid of these inequities. Providing the research base that can lead us to effective action is the purpose of this report – we regret that the path

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forward involves discomfort. But action commitments first involve building awareness of the problem, its reach and its depth. Such is the contribution of this report.

Please know that the Asian and Pacific Islander community supports the creation of White allies in this work to advance racial justice. The community wants and needs allies for racial justice.

## Executive Summary

This report is the most comprehensive undertaking to detail the experiences of those in the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community in Multnomah county<sup>3</sup> to date. Discoveries made within this report are significant: racial disparities facing the community are pronounced as community members are unable to achieve racial equity in employment, education, occupation, incomes, housing and more. This summary emphasizes the nature of these differences, particularly in comparison with the national Asian and Pacific Islander experience, and interprets these findings, reaching a conclusion that the API community faces, as do other communities of color, particularly toxic local conditions that are borne of current and historic institutional racism and its corollary of white privilege. This summary concludes with a set of urgent policy recommendations: those that are specific to the API community and those that have been endorsed across communities of color by the Coalition of Communities of Color and which the API community sees as essential to its own prosperity and wellbeing.

Multnomah county's Asian and Pacific Islander community is diverse. Although the community is now spreading out into other parts of Oregon, historically, the API community has been most populated in the Portland area due to employment and to maintain ties to the larger ethnic enclaves.<sup>4</sup> This introduction does not serve to simply recall past history, but also to frame current experiences. Although in some areas of the lived experience, Asian and Pacific Islanders in Oregon seemingly fare better than other communities of color, it is important to recognize the long history of racism and discrimination and the differing receiving contexts that immigrants experience upon arrival. It is also essential to recognize that the Asian and Pacific Islander community here in Multnomah county fares considerably worse than Asian counterparts as measured as a composite across the USA.

The national situation facing Asians and Pacific Islanders is, on the other hand, quite rosy: the community has better incomes, education, and occupations coupled with reduced use of social programs and services, when compared with Whites. Below is a brief scan of this comparison.

2009, USA	White	Asian
Occupation: Management or professional employment	39.0%	47.1%
Income: Median annual income (Full time, year round workers)	\$44,054	\$46,451
Education: Holds a university degree	30.9%	48.8%
Income Support: Gets food stamps/SNAP	6.0%	5.1%
Unemployment Rate (from August 2011)	7.9%	7.1%

Source: American Community Survey, 2009. Unemployment rate from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011.

This is indeed a rosy picture, one that might lead to optimism about the issues facing this community. Certainly, these data reinforce the idea that Asians have attained "model minority" status and advance

the discourse that equality between people of color and Whites is attainable. There are harmful consequences of this myth that affect the Asian Pacific Islander community widely. At the personal level, the myth induces inadequacy for anyone who does not measure up to the ideal of being “intelligent, industrious, enduring, obedient and highly successful.”<sup>5</sup> Various counseling centers in universities around the USA have been tending to this issue,<sup>6</sup> particularly since heightened issues of early school leaving and suicide attained national recognition.<sup>7</sup> At Cornell University, 55% of completed suicides were students of Asian descent (who were primarily, but not exclusively US residents), despite being only 14% of the student population.<sup>8</sup>

The “model minority” myth has wider sociological impacts. To begin, the myth suggests that Asians have reached equality with Whites; yet despite the chart above, there are many areas where parity has not been reached, including poverty levels, the achievement gap in schooling, failing to graduate high school and more. Secondly, the myth reinforces the idea that simply working harder or smarter will assure that individuals can overcome disadvantage and discrimination. On an individual level this might be true, for in the absence of systems that ensure equity, the sole solution is individual effort. Such an approach, however, does not serve the community well: the myth deflates the imperative for systemic reforms. Implicitly (though not explicitly), this myth upholds that the path towards equity is simply to be addressed by individual fortitude. And thirdly, the myth advances what is mostly rhetoric about Asians being “near Whites” with a danger following that “often excludes them from the political discourse on race and inequality as they do not face racism, have no social needs, and have no problems as with the other minority groups.”<sup>9</sup> As such, the myth narrows the solidarity that exists among people of color, advances a damaging discourse about the hyper-valuation of individual fortitude to overcome discrimination, and holds the potential to harm those in the API community when measuring up to these idealized standards is not possible.

While the national discourse on Asian achievement is problematic, API experiences in Multnomah county poses much greater challenges as this report reveals pronounced racial inequities. The key finding of this report is that the profile of the API community much more closely parallels other communities of color than Whites and the success of the API community at the national level is not experienced here. In almost every institution examined by this report, the API community fares worse than Whites. This is true of incomes, poverty rates, educational attainment (at both the low end and high end of measures), most educational achievement gaps, occupations, health care, some health outcomes such as low birth weight births, housing, political representation, hiring in the civil service, youth being held in detention and short term stays in child welfare.

A sampling of these disparities is included below. In the chart it can be seen that sometimes the experiences of the Asian community can be three times worse (such as the chances of having graduated high school, or the poverty rate among single parent families).

2009		Multnomah County	
		Whites	Asian
Educational Attainment			
	Less than high school	6.3%	20.5%
	Bachelor's degree	25.8%	23.8%
	Graduate/professional degree	16.1%	12.5%
Occupations			
	Management & professions	44.7%	36.4%
	Service	14.3%	20.0%
Incomes			
	Family median	\$71,296	\$57,807
	Full time year-round workers	\$44,262	\$35,967
	Married couples raising kids	\$81,636	\$63,931
	Female raising kids	\$37,485	\$28,270
	Per capita	\$32,740	\$22,035
Poverty rate			
	All families raising children	7.3%	13.0%
	Married couple families	3.3%	9.9%
	Female single parents	22.9%	25.1%
Housing value (median)		\$298,300	\$260,300

Source: American Community Survey, 2009.

One logical question emerges: why are disparities worse here than across the nation for the API community? There are two lines of inquiry that help illuminate an understanding of this issue. The first is the composition of the API community as we wonder if there are more refugees here, or more recent immigrants here, or fewer members of more affluent Asian communities. The second question is whether the API community follows the pattern of other communities of color, and that the nature of racism and white privilege is deeper in Multnomah county, thus influencing worse outcomes for the API community. In essence, our question is whether or not this is a problem born of the community itself, or one that has been loaded onto the API community by the racial inequities in Multnomah county. Each possibility will be reviewed in turn.

When we explore the first line of inquiry – that of whether the composition of the community might explain for these variations – we see some signs that the composition of immigrants and refugees is distinct from the national profile. The local API community differs significantly from that of the national profile, but not in the direction that one would anticipate. We anticipated that Multnomah county would be home to a larger portion of new arrivals, and a smaller number of native-born residents. But such is not the case.

The region is home to a larger percent who are native-born Asians (meaning born in the USA), at 47.1% compared with 40.1% at the USA-level. Within the API community, there are smaller numbers of new arrivals, with 15% arriving in the last ten years, compared with 18% at the national level. Neither feature was expected. Having a larger native-born population should improve our data – not deteriorate

it, as the general wisdom is that the longer one resides in the USA, the greater the likelihood that one holds improved conditions. We also find that the most affluent of the Asian communities (Chinese and Japanese) are in fact more numerous in Multnomah county. The tally of these two communities in Multnomah county is 31% while the USA average is 28%. The conclusion from these data suggests that the experience of the API community is not suffering from a shortfall of Asian communities with greater affluence.

Another layer of the “composition hypothesis” is that the region might be home to a larger number of refugees, and since most arrive without financial resources (and are eligible for income support for the first eight months of their arrival in the USA), they are the most poor of the Asian communities. While we do in fact find that there are more refugees in the community than across the USA (38% compared with 16%), there are early signs that this might not account for the variance.<sup>10</sup> We were able to look closely at the experience of those from Vietnam. The Vietnamese make up 30% of the API community (compared with 11% at the national level). But when we look at the experiences of the Vietnamese locally, we find that there are much worse outcomes here than across the USA. As the reader will see in later sections in this report, the local Vietnamese have significantly worse outcomes in all areas on which data was available: incomes, occupational profile, educational attainment and unemployment. Again, this was an unexpected finding as the researchers anticipated a similar profile of Vietnamese in Multnomah county and the USA itself. If the Vietnamese experience was approximately similar, we could have more clearly said that the refugee composition was likely partly responsible for pulling down the overall Asian experience. These data findings in fact point to the second hypothesis more robustly – for Multnomah county is being revealed to catalyze worse outcomes even for those holding the same ancestry. While we cannot say for certain that the experience of the Vietnamese is similar to other refugee-based communities, this is as good as our data gets. It is certainly the largest refugee community, and thus more likely to hold an influential role across the entire refugee-based communities.

Turning to the second line of inquiry, we explore the nature of institutional racism within the institutions and systems in the region as to their contribution to the dismal outcomes for the API community. For this, we turn to the experience among other communities of color. In each community (Native American, Latino, African American, African Immigrant and Refugee, and Slavic), disparities are worse here than national averages, and worse here than in King county (home to Seattle), and in many cases worsening in recent years. Given this pattern, we believe that the same dynamic is true within the API community. Furthermore, the lived experience of those in the community illustrates that racial discrimination and racial bias are rampant in the region. We know, as the reader will see further into this report, that the policy history facing the API community has been particularly egregious and the community has been harshly treated within Oregon.

Over the last two centuries a number of federal and state policies were implemented to challenge the successful incorporation of Asian and Pacific Islanders into the Oregon landscape. Immigration policies barring API entrance was a common tactic employed by the polity. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Asian immigrants were increasingly restricted from migrating to the US. At the same time, the US experienced its greatest immigrant wave in history; European immigrants arrived in unprecedented numbers. For many of the early Asian and Pacific Islander community, it was clear that being an Oregonian meant being White. The history of Oregon’s Asian and Pacific Islander community is the story of the movement of exploited workers, lured into the region by businesses and bosses, and often pitted

against the native White population in efforts to drive down wages. That the end result was often violence, racism, and discrimination should come as no surprise.

The passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 formalized the reception and resettlement practices for refugees across the nation, bringing the US into compliance with international laws, and ending former practices of quotas based on national origin.<sup>11</sup> A relatively generous welcoming environment was established through this policy that contained transparent practices for seeking asylum and refugee protection, and committed reliable financial aid for both refugees directly and for resettlement supporting organizations. It did, however, establish certain criteria for moving refugees off state aid as quickly as possible by requiring refugees to take the first job available and also to move to independence as rapidly as possible, namely to “insure that cash assistance is made available to refugees in such a manner as not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency” and that employment resources are available “to achieve economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible.”<sup>12</sup> These requirements have recently been interpreted to require that refugees accept the first job offer made in order to move off state financial support rapidly. The consequence of such a policy is to foreclose and narrow options for refugees to recertify many of their internationally-gained qualifications. This narrows the possibility for refugees to attain the same level of professional occupations that they held or became qualified for in their country of origin, and means for many that they lose their pathways to affluence and more meaningful employment.

The API policy history has unspoken and insidious impacts on life today. The history of legislated anti-Asian treatment and labor exploitation sets the context for both acceptance of racial disparities, and influences the overall discourse of how the API community is treated, understood and positioned by mainstream culture. Common dynamics including being perpetually marginalized as “foreigners” (even when one may have been in the USA for decades), being economically exploited, being overly sexualized as exotic, being the target of racial violence, and being constrained by stereotypes that on one side portray the community as sneaky and arrogant, and on the other side as submissive and deferential. Almost 20 years ago, the Commission on Civil Rights detailed a wide array of civil rights violations and extended the impact of stereotyping:

[Stereotypes] may blind employers to the qualifications of individual Asian Americans and hence contribute to the glass ceiling that impedes Asian Americans’ success in managerial careers. It may also lead teachers and counselors to discourage Asian American students from even pursuing non-technical careers.<sup>13</sup>

This report specifically addresses the employment discrimination that results from damaging stereotypes and discourses about those in the API community:

Asian Americans face a number of barriers to equal participation in the labor market. Many of these barriers are encountered to a greater degree by the foreign born, who often confront linguistic and cultural barriers to finding employment commensurate with their education and experience, but even third- or fourth-generation Asian Americans find their employment prospects diminished because employers have stereotypical views of Asians and prejudice against citizens of Asian ancestry. Employment discrimination, to varying degrees is a problem facing all Asian Americans.<sup>14</sup>

Here is our best understanding of what is happening in the region for the API community that explains why racial disparities are so pronounced: while the community is host to a large number of refugees

(compared to national averages), our one window into this experience suggests that it is not the different composition that best explains the lack of success of those in the API community. Neither can other composition issues explain the variance – the API community has greater numbers of conventionally affluent Asians, more native-born Asians and fewer new arrivals than national averages. Accordingly, we reject the idea that it is the composition of the API community that accounts for its deeper challenges. Instead, alongside other communities of color, we assert that there are particularly toxic conditions of institutional racism and white privilege in this region that hold greater influence over the experiences of the API community and it is the combination of institutional racism and white privilege that primarily drives the community's challenges. Accordingly, we entreat our civic leaders to place racial equity in the foreground of policy priorities. Urgent action is needed.

On the economic front, we need to assert that the transitions to what has been called the “new economy” or rather one that is marked by greater reliance on the market to address needs, has been a failure for the community. This transition over the last generation has been correlated by withdrawal of government policies to support those who are struggling in the market to find sufficient work at decent enough wages to pay the bills and provide for one's family. The key message is that the promises of less government intervention have not served communities of color well, and large numbers in the region were effectively blocked from sharing in the affluence of higher income residents of Multnomah county who economically thrived over the last generation.<sup>15</sup> The “new economy” in the USA today (and that has been emerging over the last 30 years) has seen the safety net shredded, many fewer supports for immigrants and refugees, and shrinking promise for catching up with non-immigrant communities:

The exploitation of immigrant workers is certainly not new – earlier waves of immigrants also faced discrimination and took up some of society's dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. What has changed is the prospect for immigrant workers' labor market success and integration into American community life, politics and society.<sup>16</sup>

Two significant policy changes have diminished opportunities for advancement of immigrants: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of the same year have significantly narrowed access to income support programs and legal protections from discrimination. The net impact is to “completely reinvent a welfare system that had been in place for more than six decades.”<sup>17</sup> Gone for many were entitlements to support within the first five years of settlement (with the exception of 8 months of support for refugees, and for families raising dependent children) and removed were eligibility for many public benefits, unless one obtains citizenship.

Citizenship requirements are expansive, including the requirement that we have lived in the USA for a minimum of 5 years (reduced to 3 years if one is a spouse to a US citizen), speak, write and read basic English, pass a test on US history and government, be at least 18 years old and be of “good moral character.” In addition, one must have the \$680 fee to begin the process. This fee is not refundable should one withdraw or be denied the application. The two biggest barriers are English skills and the fee. Learning English is limited by opportunity, literacy, and ultimately by government investments in such programs.<sup>18</sup> The application fee most deters those in poverty and in low income. Waiting lists abound for English language training, with a recent study of 184 providers across the nation revealing that the majority have waiting lists that can be as long as three years. Additional difficulties are created by access – the majority of immigrants want night or weekend classes, but such availability is very limited. A recent study showed only 6% of such classes were available during these preferred times.<sup>19</sup> Cost is

another limiting factor with all government-operated programs running at capacity, and private providers are usually too expensive for new immigrants.

We acknowledge that more research would be helpful to draw these conclusions definitively. But such data is rarely available. Beyond just serving the purposes of this research report, the API community is eager to see data for all its communities. Urgent is the need to see the experiences of children in the school system, youth in juvenile justice, young adults in higher education, and for all: health, policing, incomes, poverty, occupations, educational attainment, linguistic isolation, health care and hiring in public service. We know from this report that many API communities are struggling.

Two data practices severely impact our ability to understand local API communities. First, the decision of the Census Bureau to drop the long form from Census 2010 has decimated the data available to us to learn about the API community. As the reader will see in this report, the researchers have drawn heavily upon 2000 Census data compiled by the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum – a group that worked with the microfile data from Census 2000 to provide information for various API communities. This has been a valuable source of information for this report, but it cannot be updated as no long form was conducted in Census 2010. Many people think that the American Community Survey (ACS) offers a viable alternative, but the sample is too small to provide us with reliable information beyond the three largest Asian communities. Quite simply, when the Census used the long form, there was a robust enough size to report out on most API communities. But the ACS completes surveys on only 1.8% of the population – sufficient to profile large communities and for the USA as a whole, but entirely inadequate for gaining insights into smaller communities. This means that we will never be able to gain the insights available in 2000 for a full range of API communities, and a tragic loss for those in the API community who need to understand the experiences of specific communities.

Second, administrative databases rarely offer disaggregated data on the API communities. The dearth of data on the various communities within the API community is pronounced. It is rare that we are able to disaggregate the data by ethnicity, refugee status, language or origin. While we understand that there may be costs involved in routinely analyzing such data, the nature of the API community warrants exploration as comprehensively as possible. Disaggregated data would help us understand much better the degree to which various API communities struggle and would help us establish some priorities for addressing racial equity and programs to serve the communities.

To this end, the Coalition of Communities of Color is finalizing a “*Data Protocol*” to provide concrete guidance on collection of data on all communities of color. While we understand that there may be financial issues that limit the possibility of tracking, we urge that this be given priority. One researcher admonished the research community to respond to the plight of invisibility: “societies never become effectively concerned about social problems until they learn to measure them.”<sup>20</sup>

There is abundant flexibility within existing administrative databases to collect information on race, ethnicity, origin, language spoken at home, refugee state and length of time in the USA. Such data collection would ensure that researchers would be able to provide disaggregated information routinely and/or by request. While the API community aims for routine practices, at the very least collection of these data, and coding them into databases would allow for such analysis upon request.

In conclusion, the Asian and Pacific Islander community in Multnomah county has faced a particularly egregious policy history, and suffers from deep racial disparities that, to a large degree, the USA-wide API community is protected from. Conventional ways to understand this locally toxic situation is to consider the impact of the composition of the local API community and examine the proportions that are new arrivals, native-born, from affluent API communities, and refugee. When investigated in this report, the portion of new arrivals, native-born, and affluent community presence in fact should be protective factors in racial disparities. Only the large refugee community would contribute to downward pressure on the API experience. But here, when looking at the largest refugee community – the Vietnamese community – parity between the local and USA-wide community does not exist as conditions for the Vietnamese are much worse in Multnomah county. Thus the Vietnamese experience causes us to assert that institutional racism and the influence of a racist past hold greater explanation potential than the composition of the community. We are forced to conclude that the twin practices of institutional racism and white privilege operate with such intensity in the local region that significant disparities result for the API community.

We turn now to a synopsis of the concrete policy reforms that are to be given priority in redress of the racial disparities that challenge the API community. These reforms are expanded upon in the final section of the report, *Policy Recommendations*. We make the following recommendations for addressing the needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander communities in points one through five, and then detail the policy recommendations that are shared by the plurality of all communities of color (points six through sixteen).

**1. *Poverty reduction***

The impediments that API communities face in narrowing disparities and advancing towards racial equity with Whites are rarely diminishing through regular participation in education and the labor market. Additional supports are required to facilitate parity. These include measures to ensure prompt, accurate and low cost recognition of foreign credentials and work experience. In addition, expanded supports are needed for refugees.

**2. *Social Inclusion and Language Training***

An alarming amount of those in various API communities are linguistically isolated and have less than good English language skills. This creates barriers to social inclusion and to participation in civil society, as well as in attaining education and employment. Solutions include expanded access to English as a Second Language programs, improved availability of cultural interpreters and translation services across institutions and services, supports to gain US citizenship, and social inclusion of the API community in building a responsive policy environment by ensuring that community leaders are provided a key role in developing policies that affect the API community.

**3. *Education Equity***

Many API communities are struggling academically, as illustrated in the disaggregated data by language. It is essential that our priority language communities receive intensive and comprehensive supports to ensure their educational success (in achievement and in graduation). So too a large and growing number of API youth and adults are prohibited from attending higher education due to prohibitive tuition fees. Both rising tuition rates and charging out-of-state tuition rates for undocumented residents are to blame. And once entered in higher education, too many youth drop out as a result of complex factors.



**4. *Visibility for the Entire API Community***

Research and database reforms are essential to ensure that there is routine and accurate disaggregation of the API community by origin, by refugee status, and by length of time in the country. We also press for research reforms at the national level that would ensure that the experiences of our local communities can be fully articulated every two or three years.

**5. *Attention to Priority Communities***

Our most distressed communities are Cambodian, Thai, Hmong, Korean, Tongan, Samoan, Asian Indian and Laotian. And while we have only one data point for some communities (achievement scores on educational benchmark tests), the rates of their distress in this education score is so terrible, we have decided to place these communities in the priority list: Karen, Pohnpeian, Rohingya, Nepali (typically of Bhutanese origin in this region), Chuukese and Burmese. These fourteen communities are those experiencing the deepest distress, and those warranting most immediate attention through programs and services.

We conclude this *Executive Summary* by detailing the policy recommendations that are the foundation for racial equity across communities of color.

- 6. *Reduce disparities with firm timelines, policy commitments and resources.*** Disparity reduction across systems must occur and must ultimately ensure that one's racial and ethnic identity ceases to determine one's life chances. The Coalition urges State, County and City governments and school boards, to establish firm timelines with measurable outcomes to assess disparities each and every year. There must be zero-tolerance for racial and ethnic disparities. Accountability structures must be developed and implemented to ensure progress on disparity reduction. As a first step, plans for disparities reduction must be developed in every institution and be developed in partnership with communities of color. Targeted reductions with measurable outcomes must be a central feature of these plans.
- 7. *Expand funding for culturally-specific services.*** Designated funds are required, and these funds must be adequate to address needs. Allocation must recognize the size of communities of color, must compensate for the undercounts that exist in population estimates, and must be sufficiently robust to address the complexity of need that are tied to communities of color.
- 8. *Implement needs-based funding for communities of color.*** This report illuminates the complexity of needs facing communities of color, and highlights that Whites do not face such issues nor the disparities that result from them. Accordingly, providing services for these communities is similarly more complex. We urge funding bodies to begin implementing an equity-based funding allocation that seeks to ameliorate some of the challenges that exist in resourcing these communities.
- 9. *Emphasize poverty reduction strategies.*** Poverty reduction must be an integral element of meeting the needs of communities of color. A dialogue is needed immediately to kick-start economic development efforts that hold the needs of communities of color high in policy implementation. Improving the quality and quantity of jobs that are available to people of color will reduce poverty.
- 10. *Count communities of color.*** Immediately, we demand that funding bodies universally use the most current data available and use the "alone or in combination with other races, with or without Hispanics" as the official measure of the size of API communities. The minor over-counting that this creates is more than offset by the pervasive undercounting that exists when

outsiders measure the size of these communities. When “community-verified population counts” are available, we demand that these be used.

- 11. Prioritize education and early childhood services.** The Coalition prioritizes education and early childhood services as a significant pathway out of poverty and social exclusion, and urges that disparities in achievement, dropout, post-secondary education and even early education must be prioritized.
- 12. Expand the role for the Coalition of Communities of Color.** The Coalition of Communities of Color seeks an ongoing role in monitoring the outcomes of disparity reduction efforts and seeks appropriate funding to facilitate this task.
- 13. Research practices that make the invisible visible.** Implement research practices across institutions that are transparent, easily accessible and accurate in the representation of communities of color. Draw from the expertise within the Coalition of Communities of Color to conceptualize such practices. This will result in the immediate reversal of invisibility and tokenistic understanding of the issues facing communities of color. Such practices will expand the visibility of communities of color.
- 14. Fund community development.** Significantly expand community development funding for communities of color. Build line items into state, county and city budgets for communities of color to self-organize, network communities of color, develop pathways to greater social inclusion, build culturally-specific social capital and provide leadership within and outside communities of color.
- 15. Disclose race and ethnicity data for mainstream service providers.** Mainstream service providers and government providers continue to have the largest role in service delivery. Accounting for the outcomes of these services for communities of color is essential. We expect each level of service provision to increasingly report on both service usage and service outcomes for communities of color.
- 16. Name racism.** Before us are both the challenge and the opportunity to become engaged with issues of race, racism and whiteness. Racial experiences are a feature of daily life whether we are on the harmful end of such experience or on the beneficiary end of the spectrum. The first step is to stop pretending race and racism do not exist. The second is to know that race is always linked to experience. The third is to know that racial identity is strongly linked to experiences of marginalization, discrimination and powerlessness. We seek for those in the White community to end a prideful and inaccurate perception that Multnomah County is an enclave of progressivity. Communities of color face tremendous inequities and a significant narrowing of opportunity and advantage. This must become unacceptable for everyone.

Advancing racial equity depends on eliminating the multitudes of disparities profiled in this report. The authors of this report, and the communities represented within, aspire to catalyze an understanding of the challenges facing communities of color and to provide us all impetus to act, to act holistically, and to act under the leadership of communities of color who have the legitimacy and the urgency to remedy many of the shortcomings that besiege Multnomah county.

Following the close of this *Executive Summary*, we turn first to the issue of data adequacy and then to a detailing of typically little-known policies that forms the basis of institutional racism, the residue of which remain today. With this policy history detailed, we then focus on the challenges and solutions to pervasive undercounts of the API community. Then to the racial disparities that form the bulk of this report – and the various ways in which we were able to disaggregate the data across various

communities. The following communities are profiled at the composite level: the Asian and the Pacific Islander community, and also those who arrived during various waves of immigration, including the experiences of those who were born in the USA. Then we have, to the best that data permits, the following communities profiled in detail:

- Chinese
- Filipino
- Pacific Islander communities, with details available for Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan and Guamanian or Chamorro
- Refugee communities including Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian
- A more expansive review of the Vietnamese community
- Smaller Asian communities including Asian Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and Thai

The report then shifts to detailing the bright spots on the policy landscape, details of recent trends and changes (from 2007 to 2009), and concludes with a full articulation of essential policy reforms that will address racial disparities and advance racial equity – with the corollary that improving the lives of those who struggle has the ripple effect of improving quality of life across the region. Prosperity for communities of color will build prosperity for all. Indeed, drawing from the United Nation’s Human Development Index, across the USA, we holds the position of #4 in the world, but when inequality among the population is factored into human development (specifically in education, income inequality and life expectancy), the USA drops to position #12 globally, illustrating the well being of our most vulnerable communities brings down our overall vitality as a community.<sup>21</sup>

## Data Adequacy

Data adequacy has been a significant problem for the Asian and Pacific Islander community. The API community has been very interested in detailing the various Asian communities within the overall Asian and Pacific Islander community, as identities along ethnic lines are typically more important to community groups than an overall identity as Asian. We know, from this report, that there are some API communities that struggle more than others, but that drawing conclusions as to which suffer the most is almost impossible as we are relying on data that is dated for as the reader will see, the researchers have had to rely on data from the year 2000 for an array of smaller communities.

While the API community wants and needs accurate data to understand the nature of the challenges and respond accordingly, it is also in the interests of mainstream society to enable finer tuning of resources and to support cost-effective interventions. Rather than a widespread response to the entire community, better data would support better research, and this in turn would support more targeted interventions with the greatest promise for narrowing disparities and subsequently for improving quality of life across the entire community.

Data challenges have been numerous. Briefly, they fall into the following categories: the first being inappropriate aggregation across categories, the second being an absence of disaggregated data at all, and the third being an absence of data for small communities. And sometimes there are additional problems due to the presence of the “model minority” myth that suggests that Asians have obtained parity with Whites and no longer require monitoring. Such is the situation with labor statistics (which often do not include separate categories for the API community, such as unemployment), and with

wealth data (which too do not include current measures of affluence, even at the national level). While such parity may exist at the national level, the impact of creating a system based on these national profiles means that they are not tracked at the local levels.

While most data are tracked by race, the overwhelming reliance on an aggregated “Asian” or “Asian and Pacific Islander” category makes it impossible to understand what is happening to specific API communities. There are many specific questions that the API community holds about various communities, and education tends to be at the top of many lists. Recent experiences with Portland Public Schools illustrate the ways in which data and its analysis remains inadequate. In 2011, Portland Public Schools passed the “*Racial Educational Equity Policy*,” the wording of which overlooks the disparities facing the API community – a result of the dominant discourse about the API community’s educational success and also the result of aggregated data. When the reader reviews this report’s section on education, there are contradictory insights in the status of education for the community: the success the API community attains in graduation rates (higher than Whites) co-exists with pervasive data that shows APIs to have one-in-five who have not graduated high school, compared with the level of one-in-sixteen for Whites. And the achievement gap (as measured by the disparities in standardized testing scores) shows that, mostly, the API community does not perform as well as Whites. The data in this report begins to break apart the educational experiences of smaller communities. The Pacific Islanders have a rate that is slightly higher than the API composite – at almost one-in-four who have not graduated high school (with dates being a composite measure of the 2005-09 period). When we look at other API communities (only possible for the year 2000), we find a massive range of educational attainment – as only one-in-twenty five Japanese have not graduated high school, while almost one-in-three Asian Indians have not been successful in high school. This very wide performance of the school system in meeting the needs of various API communities illustrates the urgent need to generate disaggregated data from our school boards on educational performance.

So too we need these data for mainstream databases such as the American Community Survey and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The first solution is to return the long-form for Census 2020, which would ensure that data would be available, as it was with Census 2000 on much more full community details. While this is a priority, it would not give us data until 2021 – which is too long to wait. We ask that the Census Bureau conduct special runs of the American Community Survey in such a way as to over-sample from smaller communities of color and report on these communities at least every three years. This is a costly approach, but one for which the infrastructure already exists. The impact would be to reduce the margin of error (meaning the uncertainty created by collecting data from small sample sizes) and allow for greater insights into the specific communities of color in the region.

The third solution is to mandate our local administrative systems to first collect data according to origin and refugee status, and to mandate that the API data analysis report on both the API experiences, as well as those in smaller communities. Again, the infrastructure is already in place – practices simply need to be changed to ensure that data are coded more specifically and analysis and reporting occur with both the aggregated and disaggregated information. Because most of these administrative databases collect and analyze data on all those who use the service (such as all students, all clients, all patients, all those arrested and all those convicted), there is rarely a problem with small sample sizes. It is essential to expand local data collection and analysis practices in this way.

While the API community applauds the American Community Survey for its use of a racial identity question that allows more expansive options for identifying one's API membership (by specifically naming the origins of Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, and Asian Indian), only very limited reporting of the community experiences are reported in ACS documentation at the local level. The Census Bureau's new approach is to conduct multi-year analysis and generate reports on either 3-year or 5-year time periods. For the 3-year measure, communities need to number at least 20,000 for reporting, and for the 5-year measure, smaller communities are reported, such as the Pacific Islander community. The 5-year measure does not, however, provide reports on the status of communities such as the Vietnamese or Japanese. It is also problematic in terms of trend identification and accuracy – for the 2005 to 2009 data includes both recession and recovery time periods and as a result does not do justice to either time period.

This research report aimed to fill all these gaps but the authors have had to sometimes use outdated data and data that is overly aggregated as “Asian” in conventional databases. Essentially, our work is “as good as it gets” because of inadequacies in the status of the databases. Correspondingly, improved data collection and analysis is a priority for the policy agenda of this community.

Here is an overview of the data that the researchers have used in this report. Several sources have been used:

1. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.  
We have used this database in four ways in this research report: the 2007-2009 data for the “Asian alone or in combination with other races” community. This data gives us the “big picture” composite profile of the community – unfortunately the Pacific Islanders were not added to this dataset. We needed to use the 3-year averages as the single data year (such as 2009) does not cover the Asian community as its size is below the 65,000 minimum count. Secondly, we used the 5-year data (2005-2009 averages) for the Pacific Islander community. Third, we commissioned a custom run of the 2006-2008 data in the ACS database by the Population Research Center at Portland State University to disaggregate the Asian dataset to the levels that were robust enough in size to have data of sufficient quality to reveal, meaning that the margin of errors due to small sample sizes was within tolerable limits and that we believed an accurate profile could be achieved. Only three communities fit this requirement: Vietnamese, Chinese and Filipino. In addition, the Population Research Center also provided us with disaggregation based on the duration of residency in the USA, including native-born status. This helped profile waves of immigration and the different outcomes created by length of time in the country. Fourth, we used some older data from ACS in order to capture the changes across time periods such as 2000 for changes in poverty rates and 2007 in our section on *Recent Changes in Disparities*.
2. Census 2010 for updated population counts.
3. Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHP) which disaggregated data from the Census 2000 by ethnicity across the nation and made these data available on their website. This allowed for many smaller communities to be documented in this report.
4. Administrative databases such as the Oregon Department of Education, and Multnomah County's Department of Juvenile Justice. The majority of these databases report service data by the API community, meaning that Asian and Pacific Islanders are amalgamated.

The decision of the Census Bureau to drop the long form in Census 2010 is devastating for our ability to understand what is happening with our communities. When this decision was made, it meant that we

would never again be able to ascertain the level of detail in this report for smaller Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the county. Due to the great work of APIHP, we have a significant level of detail available for the year 2000. But the sample size of the American Community Survey (intended to be the replacement for the long form) is too small to reveal information for any group smaller than our largest three communities. The experiences of all remaining communities are simply wiped out – and rendered invisible by the decision of the Census Bureau.

As one can imagine, having better data is a key priority for the API community. Several data priorities are essential to illuminating the experiences of the API community:

1. Return the long form in Census 2020. While seemingly an issue for the distant future, we now need to proclaim that the long form is an essential ingredient in assessing racial equity and parity. Since the long form was administered to 20% of residents, it provided a source of data unmatched by any other venue, and allowed for most API communities to move out of invisibility and into focus.
2. Require the Census Bureau to over-sample every two or three years within API communities to allow for profiles to be developed for these communities.
3. Ensure that all local administrative systems collect data by both race and origin to allow for the experiences of the API community to be documented as both a composite and also in disaggregated community-specific ways.
4. Within these administrative practices we have some pressing priorities:
  - a. School board data – we need to understand graduation rates, dropout rates and discipline rates disaggregated across API communities, including English Language Learner and Special Education programs. We are pleased that this report contains the first-ever release of achievement data disaggregated by language. It is a good start, and must be seen as just the beginning.
  - b. Higher education data – we need to understand for whom our education systems (colleges included) are successful and to pinpoint where reforms are urgently needed.

## **Introducing the Asian & Pacific Islander Communities of Multnomah County**

The Asian and Pacific Islander (API) presence in this region dates back several centuries, and like other communities of color has been significantly marked by inequities and discrimination. The history of the API community in Oregon has been set in the context of federal and state legislation which serve to frame conditions under which the community arrived in the region, while also shedding light on some of the discrimination that many Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants experience in Oregon. Although Oregon's Asian and Pacific Islander population is diverse, there are many similarities across those of various ethnicities, particularly in the patterns of reception and incorporation into the region's fiber and identity.

The key message is that the API community has always been treated as outsiders – and not a legitimate part of the fabric of the USA, even when residents have been here for generations and lifetimes. From the earliest times of API presence in the USA, the community met the needs of businesses and government agendas. Recruited for their labor, workers arrived to build railroads and work mines, and later to serve as farm workers and sometimes to strengthen military force. Typically, exclusionary

policies and anti-miscegenation laws followed, serving to limit the spread of the population and prevent the API community from gaining legitimacy in the US. Details of these policies appear in the next few pages of this report.

Typically, this introductory section of these research reports (the “*Unsettling Profile*” series) contains the history of the community as it has existed in the region. But given the distinctiveness of each ethnicity within the API community, a separate history has been written about each community. To support the reader’s understanding of each community, we have opted to locate these histories at the start of each relevant section of this report.

Unifying features of the API community are the types of discrimination that have existed, the challenges of being perpetual outsiders, even when one has lived for generations in the USA, and the ongoing institutional racism and white privilege that exists which serves to maintain the community as marginalized, isolated, without sufficient resources, and without the legitimacy that typically comes to immigrants and refugees. The policy history facing the API community illustrates a long and deeply entrenched history of institutional racism and the community, as illustrated in the *Executive Summary*, still bears the impact of this history, coupled with modern-day features of less visible forms of discrimination and racial bias.

Over the last few years, the largest API communities in Multnomah county have become more diverse. Today, the three largest Asian communities in Multnomah county are Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino. The Hmong, Asian Indian, Pacific Islander, Vietnamese, and Thai communities are among the fastest growing in the region.<sup>22</sup> And new arrivals include the Bhutanese, Burmese, Nepalese and Bangladeshi – the first time these communities officially appeared in official datasets is the 2010 Census. The diversity of the Pacific Islander community remains about as diverse as in 2000, with the population that is Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Guamanian or Chamorro, and Fijian continuing to be 62% of Multnomah county’s Pacific Islander community in 2010.

The range of ancestral and ethnic diversity is broad and deep across the API community. As local histories demonstrate, the Asian and Pacific Islander community is resolute and strong and has overcome many obstacles from both the public and the polity. We must not, however, presume that the process of acculturation or assimilation will result in the cessation of racial disparities. Like other communities of color, racial disparities are pronounced and profound, and warrant robust policies to advance racial equity. While relying on time has served many newcomer communities, today such “wait-and-see” approaches are unwarranted. Look simply to the experiences of the Native American and African American communities, and we find that generations have not resulted in sufficient improvements for community affluence or wellbeing. Proactive policies are essential for the future of us all.

## Policy History

The policy landscape facing Asian communities has been marked with outright and aggressive discrimination and more moderate forms of a process of erecting barriers to social inclusion and cultural appreciation. In the table below, we have reproduced the details of policies specifically aimed to limit the rights and entitlements of the Asian community in the USA.

Year	Law/Policy
1790	U.S. Congress limits citizenship by naturalization to free White aliens.
1850	Oregon Donation Land Act that gave free land to White settlers and prohibited non-Whites from getting such land.
1854	Chinese are denied right to testify in courts against White defendants, making them subject to violence with impunity.
1856-57	Oregon Territory Legislature passes a bill that allows a \$2 per month tax of all Chinese miners.
1857	Chinese and <i>Kanakas</i> were to pay \$2 per month for mining in Jackson County.
1857	In Josephine and Jackson counties, any Chinese or <i>Kanakas</i> engaged in any kind of trade or barter among themselves were to pay \$50 per month for the "privilege."
1857	The State Constitution of 1857 which states that "no Negro, mulatto, or Chinese could vote..." and that "no Chinese immigrating to Oregon after the adoption of the Constitution could hold a land or a mining claim or even work on a mining claim" is ratified by U.S. Congress. The Constitution also denied the rights of citizenship to both Chinese and African-Americans. African-Americans became eligible for U.S. citizenship in 1927; Chinese in 1943.
1866	Oregon passes anti-miscegenation laws and explicitly names prohibitions for intermarriage between Whites and Chinese and Hawaiians. This bill remains in existence until 1961.
1870s	Proposal to prohibit baskets being carried by suspending from or attaching to poles carried across one's shoulders. (This was how the Chinese transported the laundry for most of the City of Portland).
1870	By congressional act, Blacks become eligible for U.S. citizenship; Asians, however, do not.
1873	In Portland fines are handed out to any person found sleeping in a room containing less than 500 cubic feet of space per person. (The target being the inhabitants of Portland's overcrowded Chinatown. When this is passed and the city began to haul Chinese out of Chinatown by the carloads for violating this ordinance, the city jail became overcrowded. Those incarcerated found themselves guilty of breaking the law there, too).
1875	The Page Act of 1875 was the first federally enacted exclusion legislation and it targeted Asian contract laborers and women, along with convicts from any country. The bill aimed to "end the danger of cheap Chinese labor and immoral Chinese women." It did not slow Chinese men arriving to work but virtually stopped all Chinese women from immigrating.
1879	Oregon Senator James H. Slater introduced a bill which would allow Chinese to live and travel in the United States, but deprive them of the right to work. It was not passed.
1882	Chinese Exclusion Act halts Chinese immigration for 10 years. Exceptions included government officials, tourists, and teachers. This was the first U.S. citizenship by naturalization law specifically to single out one nationality for discriminatory treatment. Renewed a number of times and repealed in 1943.
Early 1900s	Amendment to the U.S. constitution proposed denying the right to become citizens to the American-born children of Asian parents.
1907	U.S. government adopts a law restricting the entrance of Japanese with a "Gentlemen's Agreement."
1907	Expatriation Act is approved by U.S. Congress. The Act declares that American women who marry foreigners did so at the cost of the loss of their American citizenship.
1911	U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service confirms that only Whites and Blacks may become naturalized U.S. citizens.
1913	California law holds that persons ineligible for citizenship may not own land or property. Within a few years, Oregon and seven other states follow California's lead.
WWI	Anti-Asiatic Association is formed in Hood River.



Circa 1917	Farmers in Crook and Deschutes counties passed resolutions forbidding the "residence, employment, commercial or agricultural activity, or the lease of sale of land to members of descendants of the Japanese race."
1917	Congress passes the Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the "Asiatic Barred Zone Act." The Act extends the Chinese Exclusion Act (see 1882 above) to include all Asian immigrants.
1917	"Oregon legislature received the first bill to curb [Asian] ownership of real estate."
1919	The Oregon legislature considers barring women and girls from restaurants operated by Asians.
1919	Oregon passes an amendment which prohibits aliens from obtaining an Oregon fishing license.
1920	The Oregon legislature petitions Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution to deny the right to become citizens to American-born children of Asian parents.
1922	Expatriation Act (see 1907 above) is repealed, except for White women marrying Asian men. In this case, the women continued to lose their citizenship.
1923	The U.S. Supreme Court rules Indians, from the Asian continent, ineligible for U.S. citizenship.
1923	Aliens ineligible for citizenship cannot own any interest in agricultural land by purchase, land for mining purposes, or timber land. The law, "Alien Property Act of 1923" specifically bars Japanese from purchasing or leasing land in Oregon.
1923	Oregon law allows counties, towns, cities, and municipalities to refuse granting a business license to anyone not a citizen of the United States wanting to engage in the following businesses: pawnbroker, pool hall, card room, dance hall, soft-drink establishment. (This was held to be constitutional and within the power of the state.) Also, an alien engaged in the following businesses must display a large card in full view showing the owner's and employees' nationality(s): grocery, meat market, fruit stand, hotel, apartment house, etc.
1923	Oregon passes an amendment calling for each county assessor to make a list annually of all Chinese and Japanese who "own, lease, or operate" real property. This was to help enforce the above laws.
1924	Immigration Act sets immigration quota of 2 percent for the nationals of a given country living in the United States in 1890. No one ineligible for citizenship can immigrate (this section called the "Oriental Exclusion Act"). Combined with 1790 congressional act, this Act effectively halts immigration of non-Whites except nationals. Philippine nationals' immigration opens to fill jobs once held by Japanese.
1934	Filipino-Americans, previously excluded from federal anti-Asian laws, lose their status as US nationals.
1941	December 7: Japan bombs Pearl Harbor. United States enters World War II. This provides for a resurgence of anti-Japanese hostility. Japanese who had been long-time residents, or even born in this country, became identified with the enemy. Their loyalty was automatically questioned, leading to their imprisonment.
1942	Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt authorizes U.S. Army to remove civilians from the Western Defense Zones, which comprised a large portion of the West Coast states. Although Germany and Italy were also war enemies of the U.S., only persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from these zones. Individuals of German and Italian ancestry were not directly affected by the Order.
1942	Portland's city council rescinds all business licenses issued to Japanese in Portland.
1943	Chinese are allowed to become U.S. citizens. The Magnuson bill passed by Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act. The bill is mostly symbolic, however, as the quota restriction on Chinese immigrants was set at a maximum of 105 per year.
1944	US Supreme Court upholds internment of Japanese Americans as constitutional.
1944	GI Bill that supports returning veterans in getting free tuition and low mortgages for home purchasing. Such benefits were minimal to people of color as redlining, prejudice and other barriers to accessing this resource were pronounced. In total, about 2% of the \$120 billion spent by the federal government went to people of color. <sup>23</sup>

1945	Oregon legislature passed a law prohibiting aliens from working on farms, living on farms, and even stepping onto farm fields. Declared unconstitutional in 1949.
1946	Bill passed by Congress allows wives and children of Chinese American citizens to apply for immigration outside of quota system limitations.
1952	Japanese are allowed to become U.S. citizens.
1953	Refugee Relief Act permits non-Europeans to be admitted to the USA as refugees.
1965	Passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act. This bill eliminates the national-origins quota system of immigration. The new policy allows for 170,000 immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere and 120,000 immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. In addition, the Act includes a provision allowing for reunification of immediate family members. Cellar predicted, however, that few immigrants from Asian would migrate to the U.S. under this provision, because they had "very few relatives here." While this Act ends preference for European-based immigration, it gives priority to professionally skilled and educated workers, which while of benefit to the USA, has served as a "creaming" practice, causing countries of origins to lose their best and brightest talent. This Act also gives priority to family reunification and skilled workers in areas where the USA is under-resourced.
1968	Fair Housing Act prohibits the redlining of residential districts by real estate and mortgage companies, but Oregon continues to tolerate such practices until the 1990s by the real estate industry.
1984	Filipino WWII veterans denied US citizenship (after being granted this right in 1940). Appeals to the US Supreme Court in 1988 were unsuccessful. Congress in 1990 finally overturned this decision.
1986	Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 outlawed the practice for employers to hire "illegal" immigrants. While it benefited those who had been here since 1982 (by naturalizing them), it contributed to employer-based backlash against migrants who were perceived to be "illegal." The second consequence was the trend towards subcontracting work – where employers were not legally responsible for the employment practices of subcontractors and thus able to sidestep the intent of the Act. Unfortunately, subcontracted working conditions have been associated with low wages and poor working conditions.
1988	Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 providing \$20,000 compensation to the Japanese who were unjustly interned. Says the President of the USA: "we gather here today to right a grave wrong... 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry living in the United States were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in makeshift internment camps. This action was taken without trial, without jury. It was based solely on race, for these 120,000 were Americans of Japanese descent."
1994	California's ballot measure is passed by voters to deny public education, welfare and health services to undocumented residents. Later overturned as unconstitutional by various courts.
1996	Passage of two federal policies that significantly restrict access to income support programs and limit fair treatment and judicial rights for immigrants and refugees to the USA: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.
2011	In Oregon, the Tuition Equity Bill fails to pass that would have given in-state tuition rates to undocumented young adults. At the federal level, the DREAM Act fails to pass that would have allowed undocumented young adults a clear pathway to citizenship.

Source: Table adapted with permission from Oregon State University. From *Asian Americans in Oregon: A portrait of diversity and challenge* (EM 8450).

Why does this history matter today? Patterns of exclusion and discrimination have a significant impact on incomes and the accumulation of wealth. The results is that Asian families have been denied access to traditional wealth-generating engines such as free land allotments, home ownership, government assistance for business development, and income protection during times of unemployment. Citizenship too has been tied to eligibility for housing, business ownership and access to state-generated income supports.

The impact of these discriminatory policies throughout history means that the Asian and Pacific Islander community has been late in building assets. And given that the community's full entitlements are recent, and the savings rate is nearly zero in today's economy (and that of the last ten years), little wealth and income security exists among API families. In turn, this has a dramatic impact on the economic security and multi-generational wealth creation of the community as a whole and individuals within it. As a result, the API community has compromised ability to transmit wealth to its younger members, and to finance their youths' education. The ripple effects of the absence of a decent cushion of economic security are felt beyond education and into health, employment and even access to legal protections.

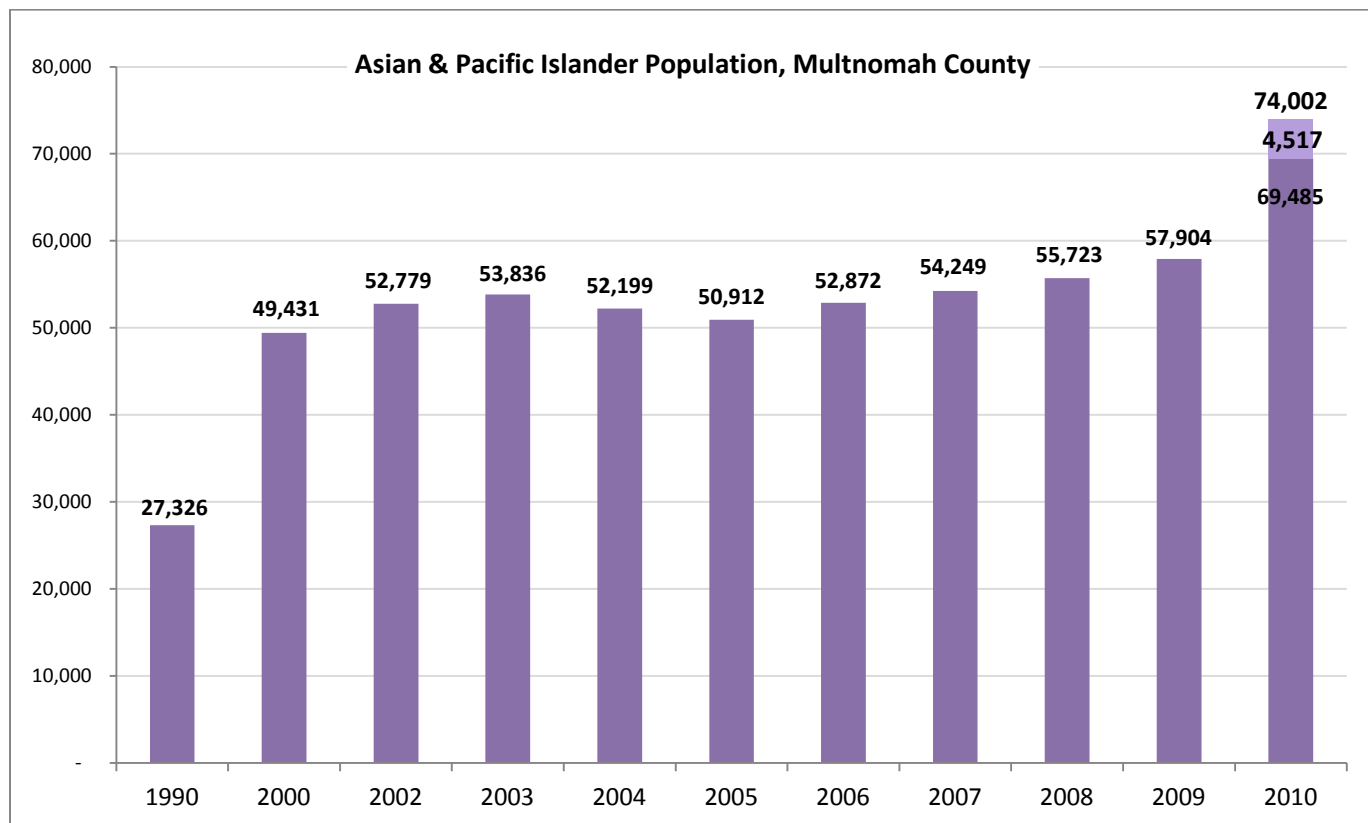
One dynamic tends to hide this history: that of the extraordinary success stories that some from within the API community have been able to achieve. These exemplars are actually exceptions to the reality of the long and deep exploitation, marginalization and violence experienced by the community. Notice, too, that these success stories shore up the notion of the API community as thriving and as the "model minority." Again, they are exceptions to reality.

In summary, this policy history details the institutional racism that has been pronounced and pervasive across the entirety of the history of the API community in the USA. Legal hostilities include denial of naturalization, denial to own land, White rage (and impunity from prosecution) against Asian laborers, seizure of Japanese land and possessions, the cancelling of business licenses for the Japanese in Portland, and most recently the failure to support the Tuition Equity Bill that would have provided undocumented young adults improved access to higher education. The impact is the creation of an unwelcoming environment which prevented API community members from building personal wealth and provided no opportunity to engage in civic life, and to build community. These practices made the community invisible. This history coincides with extensive preferential treatment for the White citizens of the USA, and allowed Whites to move far ahead of APIs in all areas of prosperity, health and power. Coupling this divergence of experience with that of a few (typically non-local) exceptional success stories, and the stereotype of the "model minority" becomes an infuriating backdrop against a local context of deep disparities which have been, to date, mostly invisible.

## Conventional Population Counts

The 1990 Census reported 27,326 people as Asian or Pacific Islander in Multnomah county.<sup>24</sup> By 2000, 49,431 people so identified.<sup>25</sup> In 2010, with 69,485 people, Asians and Pacific Islanders constituted about 9.4% of Multnomah county's overall population. When we include the "community-verified population count" of a 6.5% undercount as measured by the Census Bureau, we obtain a population size of 74,002 in 2010. This additional number is our best effort to verify the size of the undercount that exists in the community which is an issue that the Coalition of Communities of Color has been surfacing

in these “*Unsettling Profile*” research reports. Details of this count and the rationale for the methods selected are contained within the next section of this report.



Source: 1990 Census, 2000 Census, 2010 Census and American Community Survey, selected years. Please note that the 2010 figure is “alone or in combination with other races” and is data previously unavailable for the API community.

We know these official numbers provided by the US Census Bureau represent an undercount of the Asian and Pacific Islander community. All communities of color face such problems, particularly as they are much more likely to be urban, poor, and in less stable housing arrangements. In addition to these poverty-related causes, there are barriers to participation in being counted for other reasons. For former refugees or those coming from totalitarian regimes, community members may be reluctant to share information with the Census Bureau or official canvassers because of concerns about how their information will be used or how they will be treated. Essentially, fear and distrust can be patterns of relationships with the state that are carried into this county. And some of this fear has been generated here in relationship with the US government. The imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WWII served to chill such relationships and introduce significant distrust. Documentation such as the Census Bureau databases served to permit the US government to identify and seize many in the Japanese community.

To solve this problem with undercounts, API communities (in fact all our communities of color) have been engaged in defining – on our own terms – the size of our communities of color. Referred to as “community-verified population counts,” we have been actively assessing the size of the undercount and remedying this situation by creating our own counts.

*The Asian & Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*

## Community-Verified Population Counts

Participation in Census occurs every 10 years, and while participation is mandatory, many still do not participate. It is well-recognized that some people do not participate in Census, yet no accommodations for this under-participation occur. This means that the population counts gathered through the Census process are defined to be the accurate count of the population, and of each community of color. The durability of the Census population counts lasts 10 years, with adjustments made for population growth and decline, and the Census counts serve to stratify every other survey conducted by the government. For example, if 7% of the population is determined to be Asian and Pacific Islander (through the Census), then when the American Community Survey is conducted, they will similarly aim for 7% of the sample to be from the API community, with adjustments made in each subsequent year for estimating how the population will likely have changed. The lifespan of the Census population counts thus stretches for 10 years, and into every other mainstream survey which bases its stratification practices on the Census figures. Getting population counts “right” is thus essential for the visibility of the Asian and Pacific Islander community not just for now, but for the following ten years.

We know, however, that there is an undercount of communities of color in the Census. To address the undercount, this research project aims to establish more accurate numbers of those within the API community (and other communities of color have concurrently done such research with the details contained within other “*Unsettling Profile*” publications).

This section begins by detailing the reasons for non-participation and then identifies an additional “community-verified population count” methodology to better define the size of the API community. We conclude with calculations that determine the size of the community.

## Reasons for Non-Participation

There are a number of reasons that many within the Asian and Pacific Islander community will not have participated in the surveys upon which most of the research in this report is based. These are listed below:

- **Having English language skills:** All surveys are conducted in English with a secondary offering of Spanish and far fewer in other languages. The level of those who speak English “less than very well” is 9.1% in the county, and divided into 4.3% who are Spanish-speaking and 4.8% speaking another language.<sup>26</sup> We thus have a population with 4.3% who cannot participate when surveys are conducted in English or Spanish. The most relied-upon survey for this research report is the American Community Survey and it is available in only English and Spanish. An interviewer might have an additional language to resource respondents but nothing is required of the ACS to ensure participation.
- **Have a telephone:** An estimated 2.2% of the White population of Multnomah county does not have a phone while 3.7% of households of color do not have a telephone, which results in more accurate data being collected from White households.
- **Having stable enough housing to participate:** Situations of homelessness, frequent moves and “couch surfing” will reduce participation as one needs an address to be “found” by most surveys. Research at the national level shows that being a renter (as opposed to owning one’s

home) dramatically increases the likelihood of not being counted: at 4.3% for renters instead of 0.1% for owners. When disaggregated by race, more pronounced differences appear. Among the API community, renters face an undercount of 7.0% while owners are not undercounted.<sup>27</sup>

- **Ability to read the surveys:** Most surveys are initiated by a mailed form. Without an ability to read, one does not understand the purpose, the instructions or the questions. And typically when people lacks basic literacy skills, they avoid the surveyors who might follow up with a phone call or a visit to expand participation options. Looking at “high school graduation” as a proxy for literacy (an imperfect proxy, we know, but such is the nature of available data), we know that 6.3% of the White population has not completed high school while 28.0% of people of color have not completed high school, and among the Asian community the number is 20.5%.<sup>28</sup>
- **Ability to be “found” by surveyors:** Even if housing, phone, language and literacy accessibility exists, sometimes community members still do not receive communications (although this number is likely to be small). We believe that the proxy for this dynamic is poverty as one may have precarious living and working conditions such that mailboxes might be shared or might not exist, forwarding addresses not completed, and busy irregular schedules that might result in someone not having the time and/or energy to respond to surveyors. Again, there is a racial bias in poverty rates, with Whites having poverty levels of 13.0% while that of people of color is 43.2%.
- **Understanding the importance of participation and having a culture of participation:** As communities acclimatize to the USA, a culture of participation develops to support practices such as surveys and censuses. Accordingly, newer communities will be less oriented to the importance of these practices and the ways in which participation matters. Newcomers are much more numerous among communities of color than among White communities: 26.8% of people of color arrived in the USA since 2000, while the equivalent figure for Whites is 2.1%.
- **Having a history of distrust with the US government:** There have been two significant violations of the history of federal data for the persecution of its residents – the first was that of Native American families for the seizure of Native children to be removed from their families and placed in residential schools to ensure their “civilization” into US society. The second was the tracking down of Japanese Americans and their imprisonment during WWII. While the Census Bureau promises privacy and confidentiality, these historic violations leave some communities of color with uncertainty about participation. Even if they receive all forms, can understand them, and have a culture of participation, this violation of trust leaves many skeptical and thus participation rates are likely low. There is likely an additional age bias in how this issue influences participation rates, with older members of communities of color holding a more vivid memory of this violation and being less likely to participate.
- **Having a distrusting relationship with one’s own government:** For refugee communities in particular, many API communities have experienced persecution by one’s own government in their home country. State bodies often used violence, imprisonment, torture and killing of community members. Accordingly, keeping a low profile with the state is an act of self-preservation. There are two dimensions to this dynamic: the first is to not participate at all, and the second is to participate but not to identify features of one’s identity that gave rise to the persecution. This is the “ancestry” category and is important as it is the source of data for identifying the size of many particular communities of color.
- **Degree of racism faced in the USA:** When one experiences racism – whether it is institutional, cultural or individually-enacted racism – one is less likely to hold a prideful embrace of one’s racial identity. Furthermore, there is research that illustrates that when surveys are

administered by Whites, there is a lesser likelihood that one will identify as a person of color. The dynamic is both a combination of internalized oppression, and self-protective features whereby one wants to hold an identity that is similar to the “person in charge” such that one is less likely to be “othered” or otherwise marginalized by the institution conducting the survey.

At this point, we hope that the reader appreciates why communities of color are less likely to both participate in surveys and also to identify themselves as a person of color. Given that these surveys (particularly Census population counts) are relied upon to determine the size of the community, the accuracy of these population counts are called into question. Quite simply, communities of color are undercounted.

### Evidence of Undercounts

We are not the first to make such an assertion. The Census Bureau itself has determined that there is an undercount of numerous communities in the years that followed Census 2000. But revising the population counts required an act of Congress, and Congress twice refused to accept these upwards revisions. The most generous interpretation of these refusals is financial – for with upwards revisions, the federal government would be responsible for increased funding to state and local governments. Another interpretation would be the impact of newer numbers that would have increased the counts of more poor urban centers, which generally are more likely to be Democratic. Given that Congress was controlled by the Republicans at the time, and that these numbers are used for redistricting purposes and thus affecting the numbers of elected officials across the country, it would likely have led to an increased number of Democratic-leaning districts.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the cause, this example is illustrative that population counts are more than demographic practices – they are political and deeply influenced by the constructs that support and that limit participation.

In the charts below, we compile the existing data on the various undercount measures that have been conducted by mainstream institutions (the first chart) and conducted via traditional methods that compare different population counts in conventional databases (the second chart). There are two purposes to listing these undercounts: the first is to illustrate the growing documentation of undercounts within very conventional institutions, and the second is to illustrate the magnitude of some of these undercounts that range from 1% to 97%.

Community	Institution	Size of Undercount
Multnomah County, total population	Census Bureau	0.94%
Asian and Pacific Islander, USA	Census Bureau (1990 Census) <sup>30</sup>	2.3%
API young men, USA	Census Bureau (1990 Census)	10%
Undocumented Residents	Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS)	10%
Immigrants	Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS)	2.5%
State of California	California's Department of Finance	3.9% (of Census 2010)
New York City	NYC Planning Department	2.6% (of Census 2010)
Aboriginals, Canada	Statistics Canada - review of Census 2001	38.5%

Traditional Methods	Population	Size of Undercount
Compare ODE with ACS, Multnomah	All Public School Attendees	7.6% (1.1% for White students and 15.7% for students of color)
Compare Office of Refugee Resettlement with ACS, Oregon	Iraqis	59.5%
Compare ODE with ACS, Multnomah	Students of Color	14.8%
Compare Office of Refugee Resettlement with ODE, Multnomah	Burmese	57.8%
Compare ODE with ACS, Multnomah	Somali	97.4%
Compare ACS with traditional health survey, Boston	Brazilian	29%
Compare Census with Birth/Death Records, California	All races & nativity of mother	13.2% for native-born API mothers; 13.7% for foreign-born API mothers

We want to highlight one of these undercounts: communities of color have been highlighting that they believe the school system has more accurate counts of their communities than the American Community Survey (ACS). We have identified that this is indeed true: when compiling the total data from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) with the numbers from ACS, we find that ACS has an undercount of students ranging from age 5 to 17 that is 7.6%. We included the numbers of home schooled students, but were not able to include the number of students who were not in school, so it is likely that even this 7.6% is itself undercounted as well. When we disaggregate this undercount by race, there are pronounced differences: the undercount of White students is 1.1%, while the undercount of students of color is 15.7%.

There are different degrees of undercounting among different populations (as evidenced above). For the API community, there are differences based on citizenship status, age, and ethnicity. By using different methods to subdivide the API community, we believe there will be a more robust and accurate establishment of the size of the undercount in the population.

### Asian & Pacific Islander Undercount

Turning now to the determination of the API undercount, we will triangulate the results, meaning that we will use a total of three methods to determine the size of the API undercount. This averaging of results serves to increase the reliability of these results.

The three methods are as follows:

1. Using the immigrant undercount as established by the INS
2. Using the ODE undercount for students of color, and the API Census Bureau's undercount for non-youth
3. Using API community estimates of the size of specific populations



### Method #1: Department of Homeland Security's Immigrant Undercount

The Department of Homeland Security (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or INS) has established the immigrant undercount at 2.5%. The INS informed its decision from Marcelli (2000)<sup>31</sup> and additionally determined undercount rates to be the following:

- Undocumented residents were undercounted at 10%.
- Temporary residents (non-immigrants) were undercounted at 10%, since as recent arrivals they would be unsure about whether they should complete a census form as temporary residents.
- For legal residents, the INS set the rate of census net undercount at one fourth of the rate for unauthorized residents, or 2.5%.<sup>32</sup>

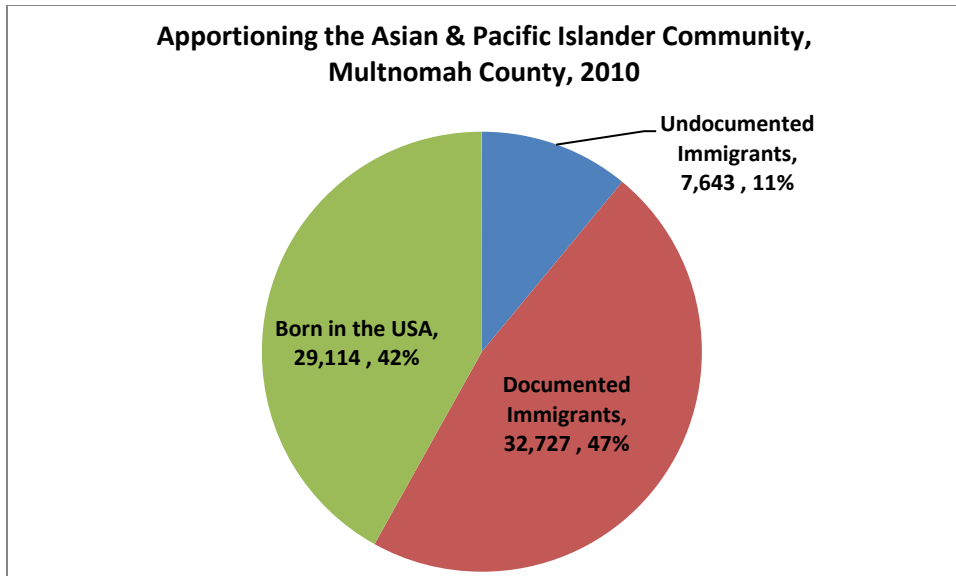
Therefore, the Department of Homeland Security produces estimates assuming a 10% undercount in ACS data for undocumented immigrant residents and nonimmigrant (temporary) residents, as well as a 2.5% undercount for documented foreign-born residents.<sup>33</sup>

Notice that we do not have an undercount estimated by the Department of Homeland Security for the native-born Asian population. There are very few studies that compare undercounts for native-born racial minority groups with foreign-born groups. One such study compared birth records with the Census 2000 data in California and identified that, on average, the native-born population was 42% better counted than the foreign-born. We will use this figure as a proxy for the difference between the immigrant and native-born population within the API community. We use the Census Bureau value of 0.94% as the undercount of the native-born API community. For the documented foreign-born residents, we use 1.05% (calculated as 42% of 2.5%).

Use of these figures will provide one of the three measures of the community's undercount. Three different calculations are needed, each based on the size of the community's proportion in these categories:

1. Undocumented residents – these numbers are difficult to determine. We will use the figure from the Pew Hispanic Center which is the leading organization for estimating the size of these populations. They estimate that 11% of the Asian community (3.1 million people) are undocumented.<sup>34</sup>
2. Immigrants – once the 11% is removed from the total Asian population, there remains 89% to apportion. In Multnomah county, 52.9% of the population is foreign born. This means that we are estimating that 47.1% of the total Asian community is a documented immigrant.
3. Born in the USA – of the remaining 89% of the population, 47.1% are documented immigrants. The remaining 41.9% of the total population is native-born (as illustrated in the chart below).

Given that these data do not exist for the Pacific Islander community, we will use the same apportionment to ensure that the total API community is included in these calculations. The chart below shows the total numbers of the API population in each category.



Source: Pew Hispanic Center for undocumented figure, American Community Survey for the percentages of immigrant and native-born, with all three applied to Census 2010 figures.

With the above figures, we can apply the different undercount measures to each population. The table below provides these estimates:

2010	% of population	Population count	Undercount %	Undercount number	Revised population count
Undocumented Immigrants	11.0%	643	10%	764	8,408
Documented Immigrants	47.1%	32,727	2.50%	818	33,546
Born in the USA	41.9%	29,114	1.05%	306	29,420
Total	100.0%	69,485		1,889	71,374
<b>Undercount Value</b>					<b>2.7%</b>

Source: Author's calculations drawing from the above sources for the magnitude of the undercounts and applying these to each of three component parts of the API community.

Thus through this method of using conventional methodologies from established institutions to determine the size of the undercount we find a total undercount of the API community of 2.7%.

### Method #2: Oregon Department of Education & Census Bureau by Age

With this method, we disaggregate the API community by age, and apply three different methods to each of these age groups (required due to the absence of consistent data by age and race):

- ODE student counts to establish the size of our school-aged community
- Research by Pitkin & Park (2005)<sup>35</sup> to determine the size of the preschool and younger population
- The Census Bureau's undercount of the API community for the remainder of the adult population

The table below shows calculations for each group.

<b>2010</b>	% of population	Population count	Undercount %	Undercount number	Revised population count
Infants & children (under 5)	8.7%	6,045	13.20%	798	6,843
In public schools (age 5 to 17)	19.1%	13,272	15.20%	2,017	15,289
Older than 17	72.2%	50,168	2.30%	1,154	51,322
Total	100.0%	69,485		3,969	73,454
<b>Undercount Value</b>					<b>5.4%</b>

Source: Author's calculations drawing from the above sources for undercount measures and applied to Census 2010 counts.

We thus have an undercount of the API community that totals 5.4%. It is larger than the first estimate as we have used methods that are less conventional, although we have given primacy to data sources that are conventional themselves – such as Oregon Department of Education's student records and data gathered in California in birth and death records for the API community.

### **Method #3: Community-Verified Population Counts**

As noted already, various ethnic groups in the API community are likely to have different undercounts based on the intensity of the reasons for non-participation (that are listed earlier in this section). Several of our smaller API communities have estimated the size of their communities, drawing from membership lists of community organizations and from engagement with the community. These estimates are typically the largest of the measures we have used. Listed below are these estimates.

	ACS count (2010)	Oregon's Refugee Program	% of Oregon's population that lives in Multnomah	Community Count in Multnomah County	Undercount (in #)	Undercount (in %)	Qualifiers
Asian Indian	3,509			1736	-1,773	-102.1%	No undercount
Bhutanese	190	209	N/A		19	9.1%	Presumed all live in Multnomah and no migration or births
Burmese	792		N/A	1550	758	48.9%	no migration or births
Cambodian	1,248	3,474	37.1%	1289	41	3.2%	no migration or births
Hmong	1,674			2250	576	25.6%	
Laotian	3,392	5,799	52.8%	3062	-330	-10.8%	No undercount & no migration or births
Thai	1,110			2,000	890	44.5%	
Vietnamese	15,270	16,946	43.7%	7677		0.0%	no migration or births
Iraqi		438	N/A	750	312	41.6%	
Tongan	551			1200	649	54.1%	
<b>Average Undercount of these Estimates</b>						<b>11.4%</b>	

Source: Where noted, we have used the ACS for 2010, Oregon's Refugee Program statistics, and the American Community Survey (2009) to determine the reallocation from state to county for establishing formal counts.

There are high degrees of variance, ranging from 0% to 54.1% undercount. To explain for these variations, we direct attention back to the list of factors that contributes to undercounts. With such a comparison, we find that some communities face stronger discrimination, poverty, language challenges, and history of state-based persecution in the country of origin. We also acknowledge that we had no way of determining the migration of those in the API community into this region – important since the Refugee Program only tracks those who arrive initially into Oregon. Keep in mind, however, that Oregon is the 7<sup>th</sup> most desirable state for final settlement of refugees who enter the country and then move elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

While the community is satisfied with this estimated figure of 11.4%, it is unclear whether or not we should have used any negative numbers in the final calculation (with the Asian Indian and Laotian numbers being negative). With the resources available to us at this time, and with the very wide variation in community conditions and likelihood of participating, more study would be useful to move towards more accurate estimates of the API undercount. This figure has tallied the populations of 28,174 API members (from ACS numbers, and ORP numbers when needed), which is equivalent to 40.6% of the API community. It is a robust enough measure for our purposes.

We now want to review the numbers drawn from the three different methods: by immigration status, by age and by community estimates. These are 2.7%, 5.4% and 11.4% (respectively). The average of these three methods is 6.5% – and this is the undercount that we deem appropriate for use across the entire API community in Multnomah county.

## The Big Picture: Profiling the Asian (and sometimes API) Community

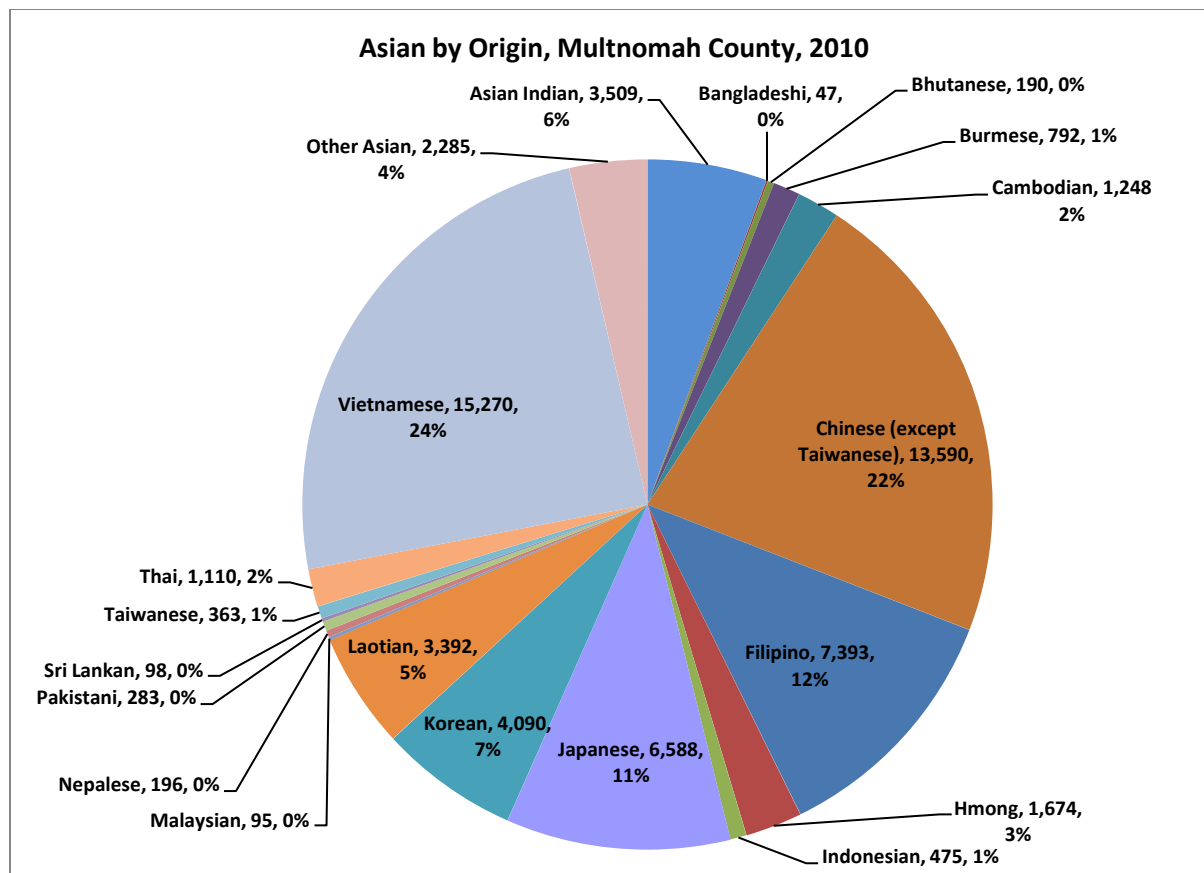
### Population Demographics

Multnomah county's Asian population is very diverse, drawn from many walks of life with varied history and experiences. Just over half of Asians were born outside the USA (which according to the American Community Survey is 54%). About a third speaks only English at home (31.8%), while 68.2% percent speak a language other than English at home.<sup>37</sup>

The largest API communities are the Vietnamese and Chinese communities – each holding approximately ¼ of the Asian population. The next largest communities are the Filipino (at 12%), Japanese (at 11%), Korean (at 7%), and Laotian community (at 5%). Please know that there is a specific section of this report that profiles at greater depth the experiences of the three largest Asian communities (made possible by their numbers). Additional API communities are detailed later in this report, wherever data was available:

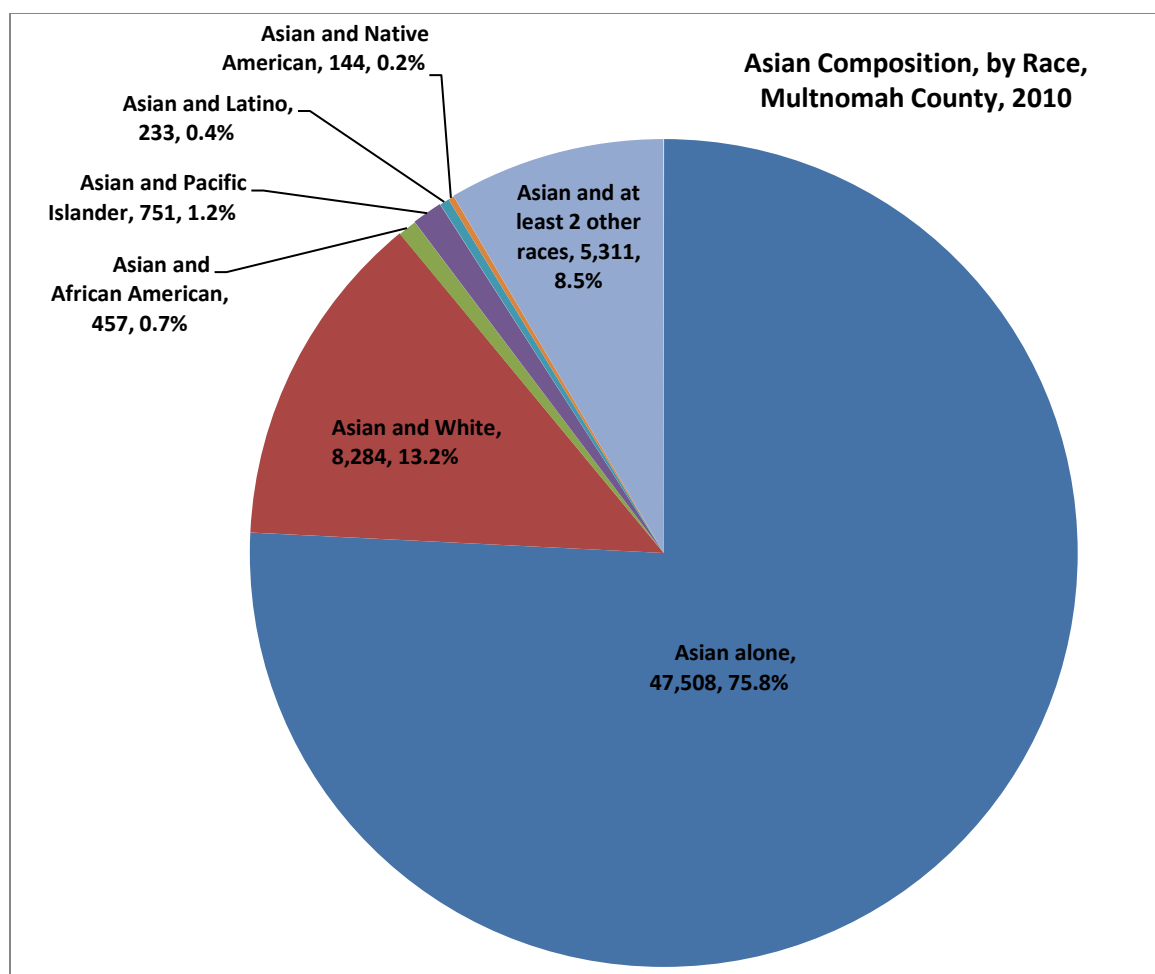
- **Refugee-based communities**, with Vietnamese as its own section, and also Cambodian, Hmong and Laotian. Additional narratives for the Burmese, Karen, Bhutanese, Iraqi and Iranian communities are provided.
- **Pacific Islander communities**, as both a composite as well as disaggregated details for the Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Guamanian or Chamorro communities, as well as an additional narrative for the Fijian community are provided.
- **Smaller Asian communities**, namely Korean, Japanese, Indonesian, Asian Indian and Thai, with an additional narrative on the Sri Lankan community.

As noted in the *Executive Summary* and *Data Adequacy* sections, we have been curtailed in a fuller profiling of the complete range of API communities because data has not been available. We have added community details wherever data was available.



Source: Census 2010.

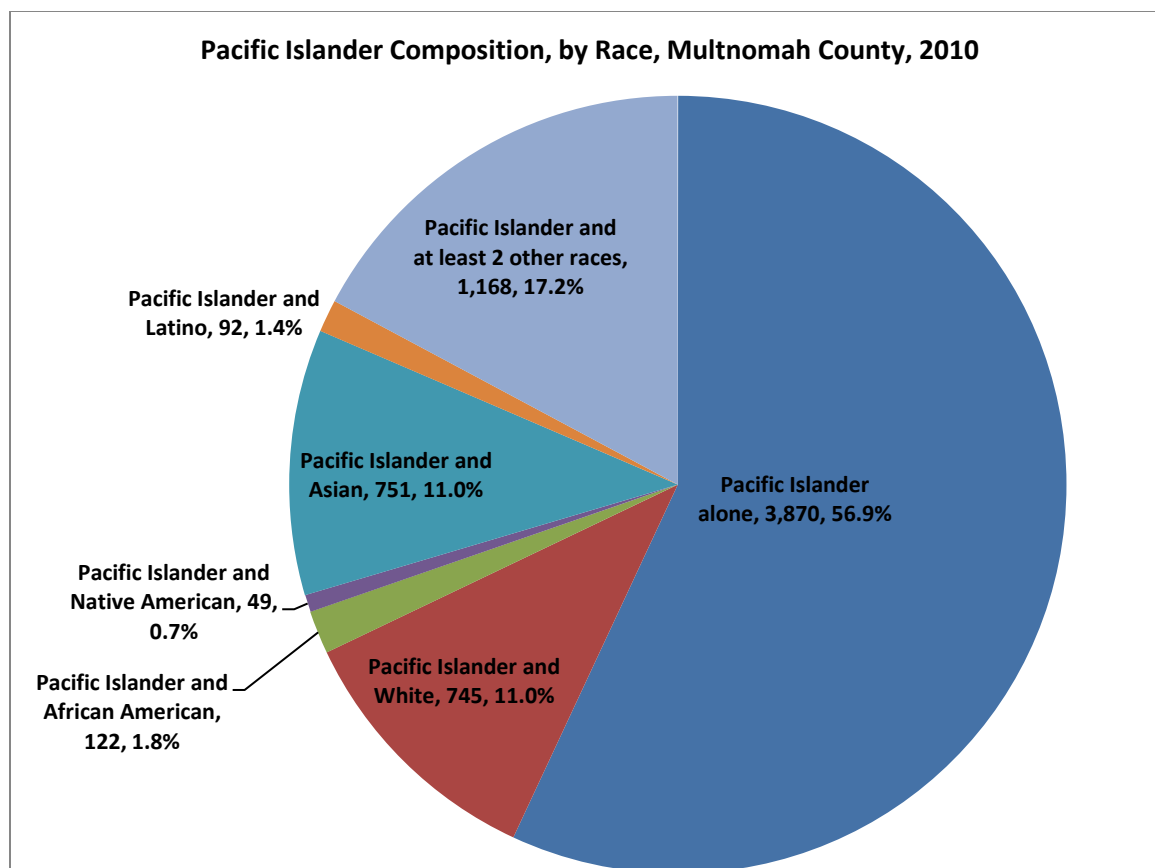
Sometimes, queries exist about the degree to which communities of color share identities with other communities of color. This can be important for program design, sharing resources and establishing working groups based on shared identities. The Asian community tends to be more uniform in its composition, with only 12% of its population sharing identities with other communities of color.



Source: Author's calculations from Census 2010.

Here we see that the primary identity is that of solely Asian, and secondarily being both Asian and White. The third most frequent identity is that of more plural identities – of holding three or more identities. The community is only marginally racially connected with other communities of color, at a level of 1.3% if one excludes Pacific Islanders. Those who are very diversely identified (holding at least three racial identities) is comparatively large at 8.5% of the community.

The Pacific Islander community is more diverse, with a total of 32% of its community sharing identities with those from other racial groups, of which 17.2% are those who hold at least three racial identities.

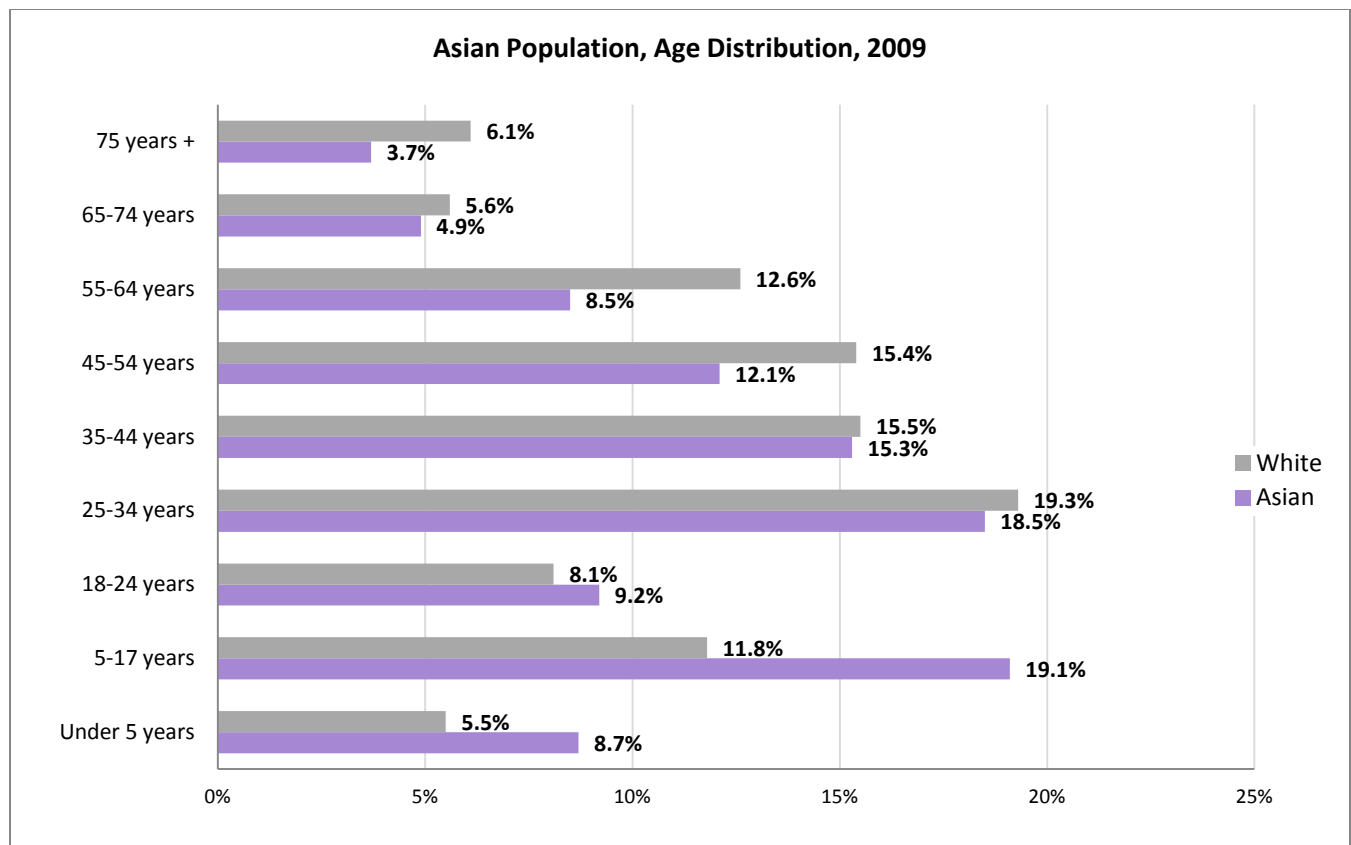


Source: Author's calculations from Census 2010.

Here the Pacific Islander community holds more diverse racial identities than the Asian community, although not much more cross-identified with Native Americans (at 0.7% instead of 0.2%), with Latinos (at 1.4% instead of 0.4%) and African Americans (at 1.8% instead of 0.7%).

The Asian community is youthful, with 29% being under 18, compared to 23% of the total population. The portion of Asians who are under 35 stands at 53% (37.1% are under age 25). The median age for Asians in Multnomah county is 33.6 years, compared to 40.1 for Whites.



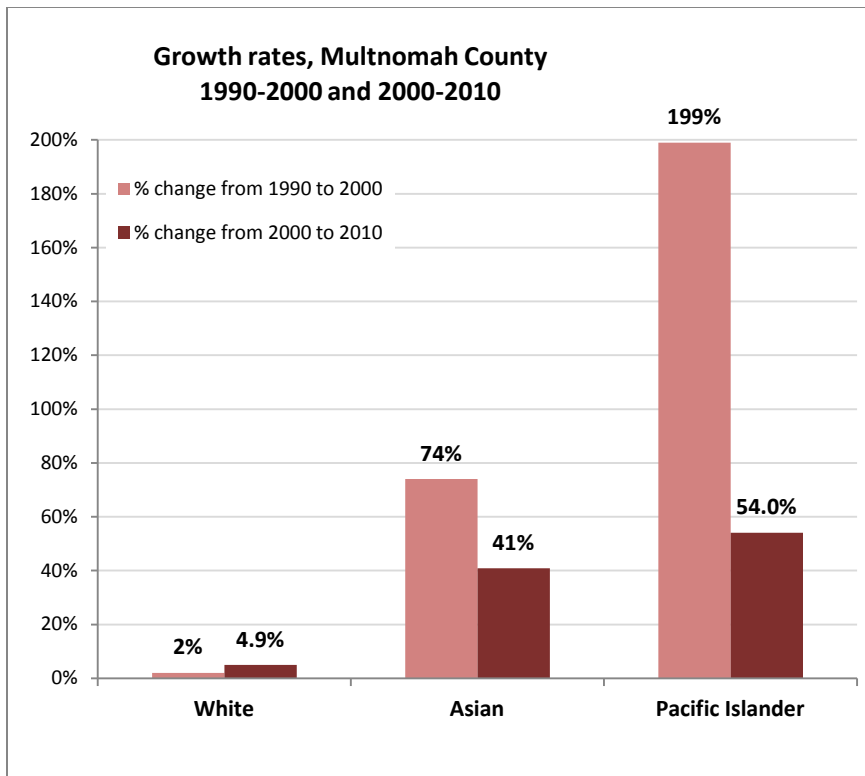


Source: American Community Survey, 2009.

A higher percentage of Asians than Whites in Multnomah County live in family households with children under 18 years of age (33.5%, as compared with 22% of Whites).<sup>38</sup> This is not surprising, given that the community is young, with a greater number of people in the traditional childbearing years. While current numbers place APIs at 8% of Portland's population, numbers are anticipated to grow as young people come of age and begin their own families, becoming a larger portion of Portland's population in the years to come.

As was identified in the first research report in this series, communities of color made up 26.3% of the population in Multnomah county, and this has increased to 27.9% by 2010. But among our school-aged youth, the proportion is 45% of our students in public schools in the area. This highlights the rapidly changing demographics in the area. This point is made more clearly when looking at the composite of communities of color, of which the API community makes up 9.4% of the children and youth in our local public schools.

In comparison with White communities, the pace of population growth is much more rapid. Yet, pronounced changes have occurred in the last 10 years. The pace of growth in the Asian and Pacific Islander communities was extremely high a decade ago, with rates that ran as high as 100 times greater than those of Whites. Notice in the figure below that rates have slowed considerably, but are still greatly outpacing those of White communities.

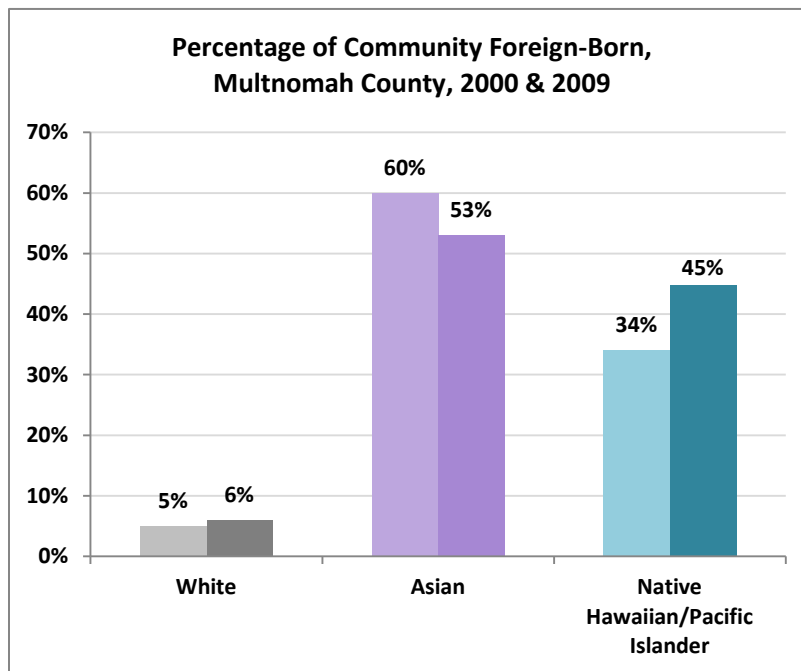


Source: Author's calculations drawing from 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2000 American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

We thus have a pronounced “settling” of both the Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Growth rates are slowing quickly, though still outpacing White communities. While we do not fully understand the reasons for this slowing of growth rates, we tap into our knowledge of these communities and share our best understanding. To begin, immigration into the USA is more difficult than in years prior, with greater surveillance and constraints experienced here and abroad. Border policing is greater, making it harder for refugees to make it across national boundaries. So too are the general perceptions of the US immigration landscape and the benefits offered here for immigrants and refugees. The discrimination and institutional racism experiences in the USA are becoming more widely known overseas, and the appeal of moving to the USA is reduced – particularly as some immigrants return to Asian countries with stories about how difficult it was to take care of their families and the barriers to helping their children get ahead. Other reasons include a shifting world stage of unrest and civil/international wars. The Asian continent and Pacific Islands are more stable than in years past and fewer people are trying to flee their own countries. Finally, the impact of the current economic downturn makes movement here less attractive for potential immigrants.

What does this mean for these communities? As immigrant communities establish themselves in the USA, there have typically been economic gains made with English language acquisition, US work experience, domestically gained education, and general establishment of the community such that it resources its members more effectively. In essence, with immigration levels slowing, we should (and do, as the reader will see in this report) have some improvements in the economic performance of the API community. When coupled with the data in the two figures below, we see signs that these changing demographics should have a positive impact on the economic situation of the community. That said, by

no means does this mean that the changing demographic will “solve” the array of disparities faced by the community – merely that their intensity should be somewhat reduced.



Source: Author's calculations of data from 2009 American Community Survey (2005-2009 for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 2009 data) and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

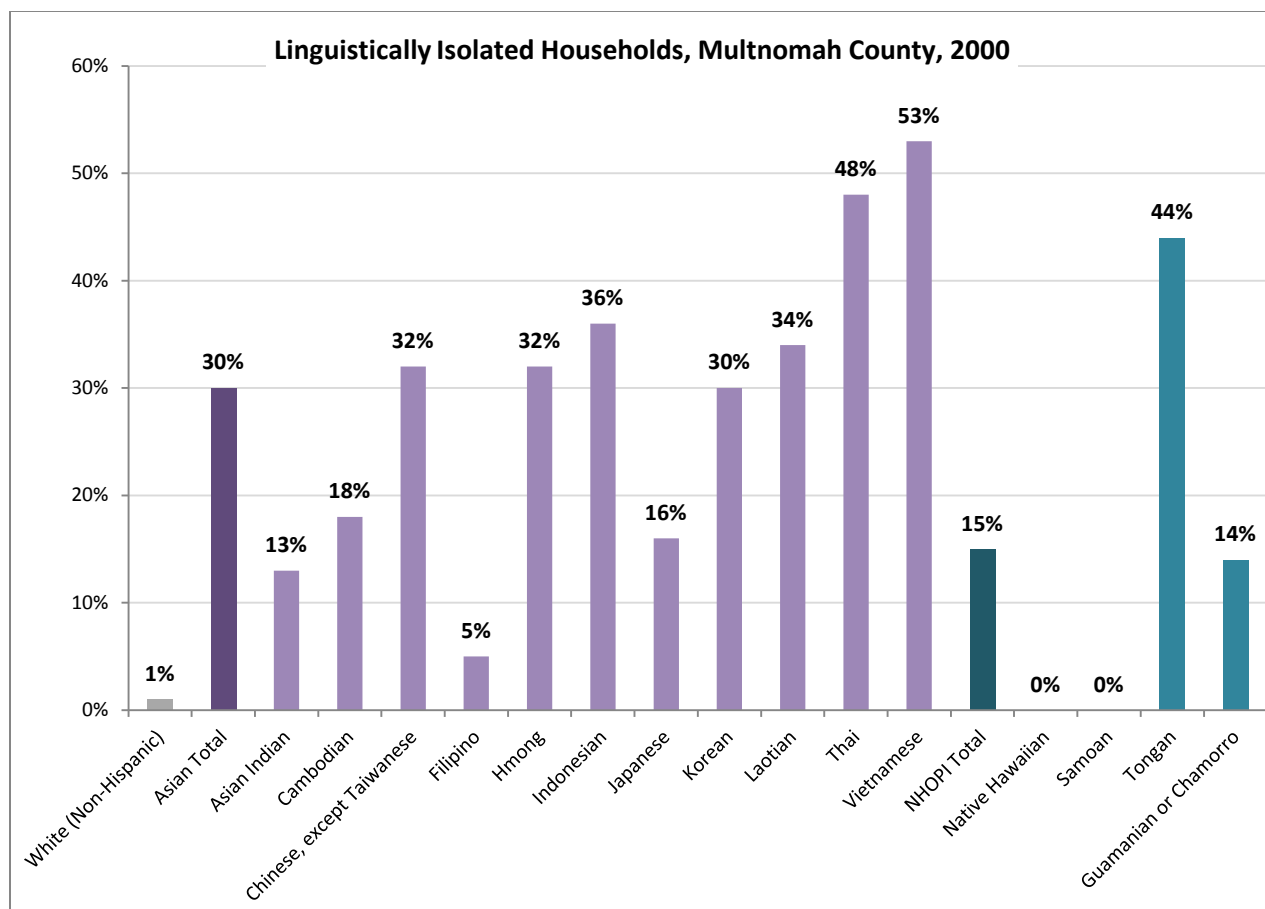
This figure above shows us that the slowing of growth in the Asian community means that Asians are thus more likely to be born in the USA today than 8 years ago. Let's explore what impact this is likely to have on API communities. We will look at data on the comparison of various economic and social indicators between native born and foreign born communities. While these data are not available for differentiating these characteristics of White and communities of color, they do provide insight into how the Asian community (with its rising pace of those who are native born) might be influenced by this shifting demographic.

<b>2008</b>	<b>Native born</b>	<b>Foreign born</b>	<b>% difference</b>	<b>Impact for foreign born</b>
Less than high school education	6.9%	34.2%	396%	<i>worse</i>
Hold a university degree	38.1%	23.7%	-38%	<i>worse</i>
Employed in management & professions	42.0%	25.3%	-40%	<i>worse</i>
Employed in service occupations	15.1%	25.6%	70%	<i>worse</i>
Retirement income	\$22,246	\$20,575	-8%	<i>worse</i>
Median household income	\$51,211	\$42,046	-18%	<i>worse</i>
Poverty rate of families raising kids	13.9%	23.9%	72%	<i>worse</i>
Poverty rate of married couple families	2.8%	13.2%	371%	<i>worse</i>
Poverty rate of female single-parents	35.6%	55.0%	54%	<i>worse</i>
Linguistically isolated households	0.5%	37.4%	7380%	<i>worse</i>
Paying more than 30% of income on mortgage	35.6%	48.0%	35%	<i>worse</i>
Paying more than 30% of income on rent	49.6%	51.6%	4%	<i>worse</i>
Rate of overcrowding (more than 1 occupant/room)	1.1%	12.1%	1000%	<i>worse</i>

Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2008.

From the above chart, we can see that in each dimension, the foreign born community is at a significant disadvantage. This means that a demographic shift towards being native born (as is the case with the Asian community) is more likely to be associated with improved economic and social conditions. When looked at through our desired lens of how an increase in the percentage of native born Asians is felt on the community as a whole, we can assume that this will have a positive ripple effect on these and related social and economic conditions. Remember that this transition will not account for all the changes in patterns but can help us identify some of the contributing factors to changing experiences in the community.

Another dimension of challenges that typically accompanies those who have recently arrived in the country is that of linguistic isolation. Linguistic isolation means that all in the household speak English "less than very well" and also do not have access to someone at home who is over 14 years old and speaks English. Here many API communities struggle as social and economic inclusion will be narrowed by challenges in communication.



Source: Data tables for Multnomah County from the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

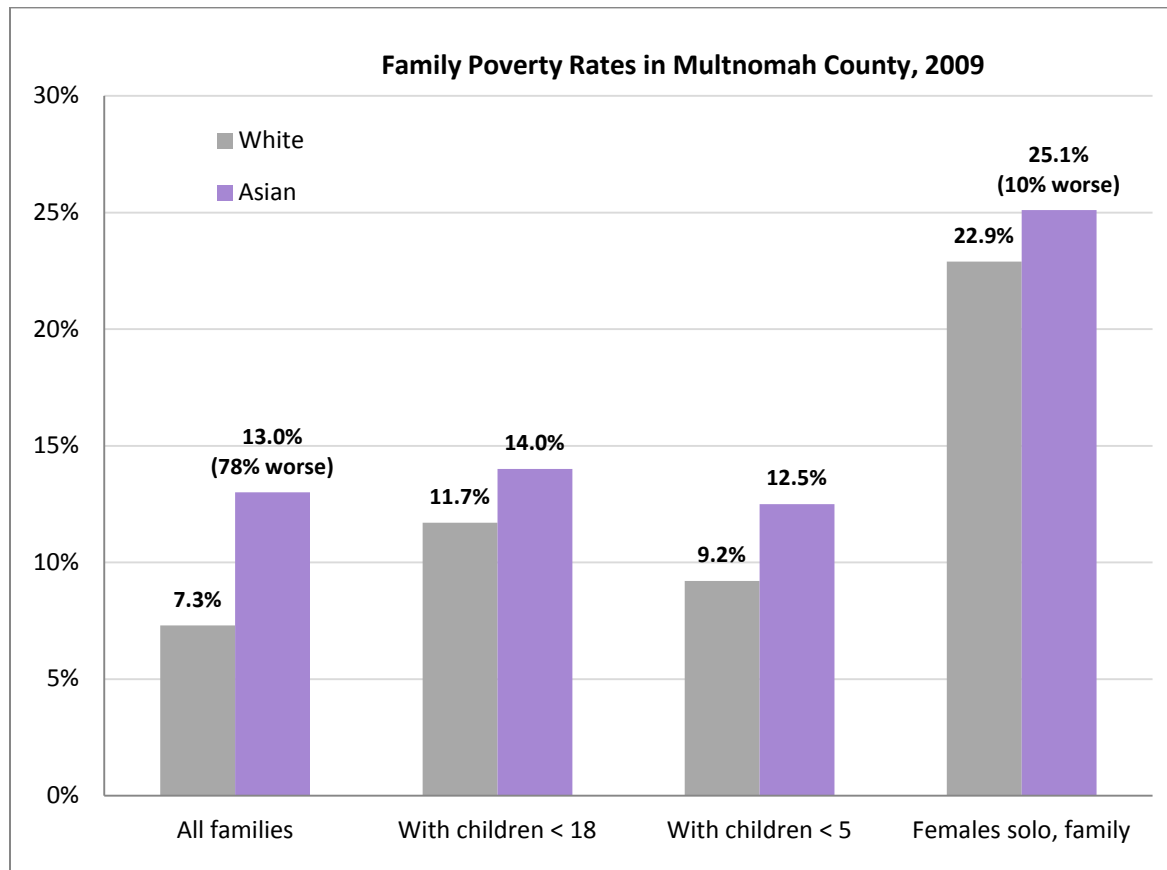
Language isolation can be addressed through opportunities for language training and supports to participate in such learning. The community has been harmed by cuts to language training programs for adults. So too it is harmed by the shortcomings of language programs provided in-school for API children, where local school boards have neglected to ensure the adequate supports for children for whom they bear a legal responsibility. In Portland Public Schools, state and federal mandates for providing English Language Learner programs have been violated in 13 of the past 17 years, and by magnitudes of approximately 80% of the requirements.<sup>39</sup>

## Poverty Levels

Poverty must be fully appreciated for its depth and reach. Money means you have enough to eat, a safe and heated place to live, the ability to get around, and access to healthcare. It also provides resources for parenting, to stave off illness, security to sustain one at school, and security to withstand job loss and risk-taking like going back to school.

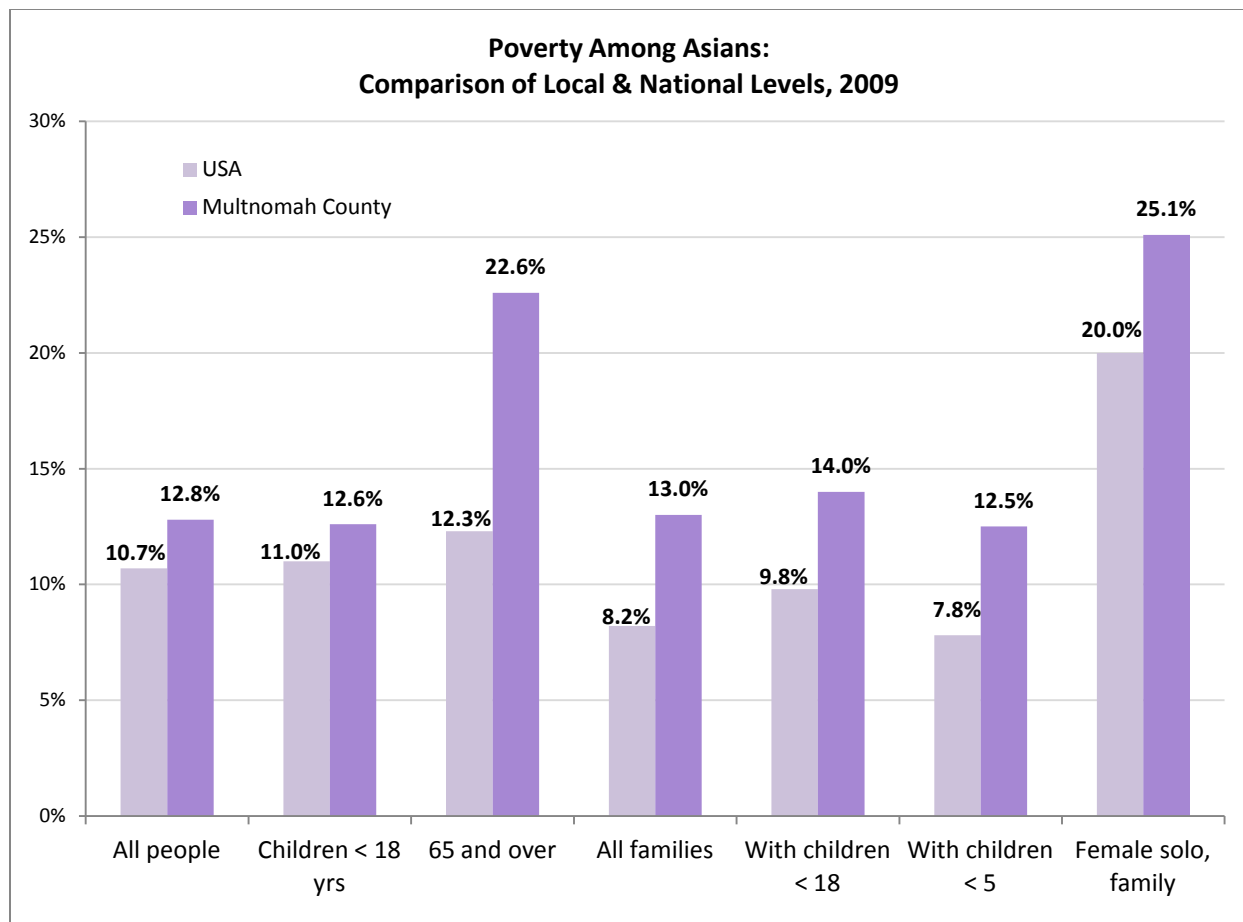
Poverty rates within this community show that Asian families are more likely to be poor than White families. We can see from the graph below that at a minimum, the poverty rates of Asians are 10%

worse; at most, they are 78% worse. This level of impoverishment needs immediate attention at all levels of intervention.



Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009

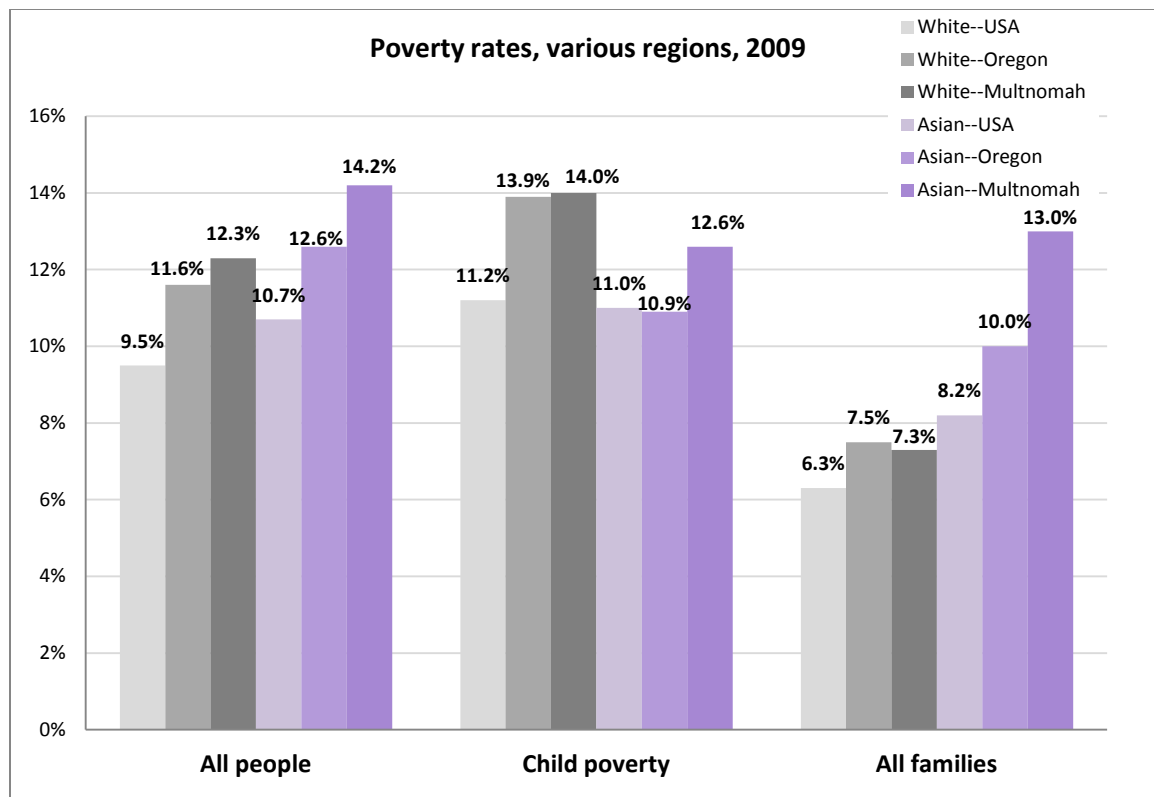
The experience of Asians is worse in Multnomah County than elsewhere in the nation. Below is a chart that compares the same poverty measures for Asians here locally with the national levels.



Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009.

These numbers show us that all categories of Asians fare worse here in Multnomah county than national averages. The elderly and families with children under age 5 fare much worse. On average, Asian families locally fare 58% worse here than nationally, while Asian individuals fare 20% worse locally.

When we add the Oregon data to our analysis of regional variations in poverty rates, the disturbing pattern for Asian communities facing harsher local conditions becomes more pronounced.

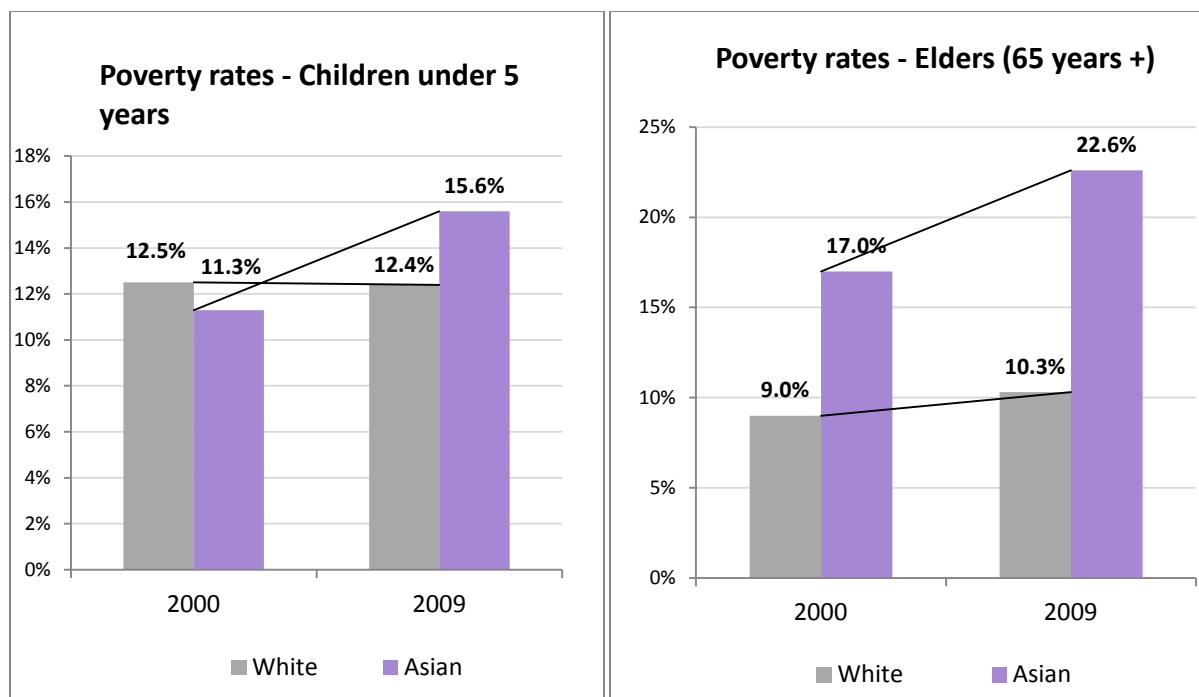


Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009.

Above we see that the closer one gets to the urban experience within our county, the more likely an Asian is to be living in poverty. This suggests there are specific conditions here in Multnomah county that cause poverty levels to be higher for Asians than for Asians elsewhere. Notably, this type of differential experience is not experienced as deeply by the White community – poverty levels remain more constant wherever the measures are assessed. This leads us to consider how the nature of local conditions is particularly toxic to Asian communities.

Poverty among the Asian community is worse here than statewide, as well as worse than the national averages. But has it been improving over time? Examining how different groups have been faring over time shows the economic hit the most vulnerable members of the Asian community have taken over the last decade.





Source: American Community Survey, 2009 and Census 2000.

Elderly Asians (aged 65 and up) experienced a 33% increase in poverty in the last decade. While elderly Whites also experienced an increase in poverty, Asians were disproportionately impacted. In addition, poverty rates increased 38% for Asian children under age 5, while early childhood poverty among Whites declined slightly. As a result, the disparity in poverty between very young White and Asian children grew substantially over this time period.

Thus we see that poverty in the Asian community is worse than the national averages, worse than for Whites, and the situation has not shown improvement over the course of the last decade for the most vulnerable citizens, young children and the elderly. The Asian community must receive significant supports in the areas of direct income support to lift families and individuals out of poverty, so that they can have a fighting chance of improving their health and well being, prosperity and ability to launch their children into a positive future.

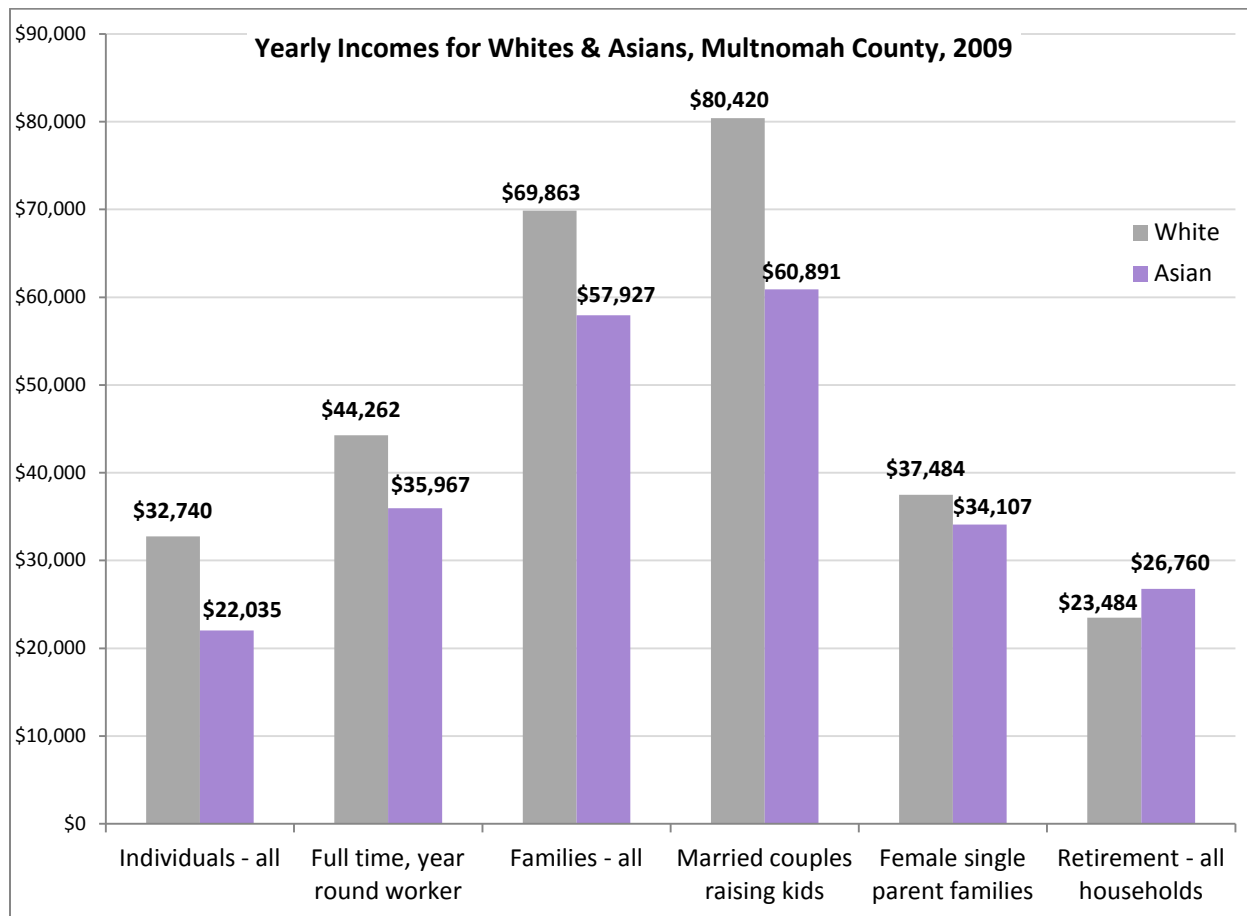
Answers to the question “why?” require us to turn attention to features of the landscape that are directly tied to poverty levels: incomes, education, occupations, unemployment, and costs such as housing and education. For API elders, particularly, poverty rates have risen dramatically as a result of more stringent public assistance eligibility. The changes made in 1996 to limit the access to social security income have hit the elderly API community hard. No longer are immigrants who arrived after 1996 eligible for income support if they are not citizens of the USA, although some exceptions can be made; in other situations, seniors without citizenship (such as refugees) may be eligible but only for a maximum of seven years.

The transition in policy was borne of a belief that the USA was becoming a magnet for immigrants due to the availability of social security income. Such a belief became the dominant discourse in social policy around income support programs – a transition that has gravely limited the economic wellbeing of low

income community members. While ideally we would like to see this discourse change, a more pragmatic approach is to support the naturalization process for the API community as securing US citizenship is the most reliable pathway to access income support programs.

## Incomes

As one can imagine, high poverty rates are going to coexist with low incomes. The income of a full-time, year-round Asian worker is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  the amount a White person earns, meaning that Asians earn just 81 cents for every dollar earned by Whites.

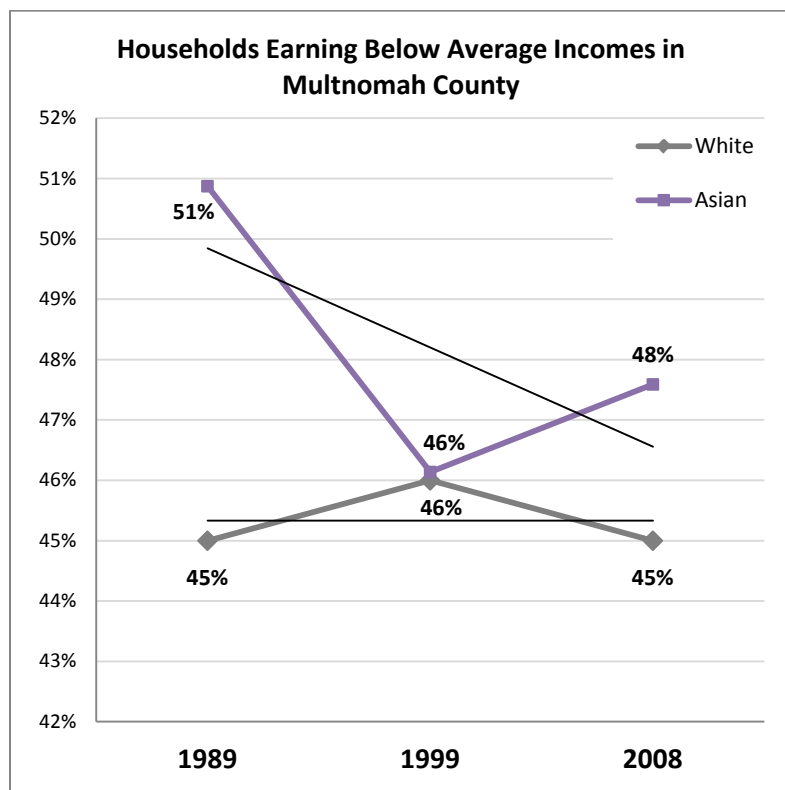


Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009.

This disparity widens for families and per capita income, though narrower for female single parent families and retirees. The widest gap is for married couples raising children where such families earn only 76 cents on the dollar earned by White families. And the net impact of income across all individuals (the per capita income) – illustrating the incomes that individuals live on, regardless of age or family configuration – is  $\frac{2}{3}$  that of Whites, at just 67 cents on every dollar for Whites.

Note these are median incomes, meaning that these are average people being compared. These numbers are not skewed by a few extremely high income earners among Whites.

While one might expect (or hope) for the gap to be narrowing over time, it is not. In fact, the gap between the incomes of Whites and Asians, after closing at the turn of the decade, is growing again. In 2008, the number of Asian households earning below average incomes in Multnomah county was on the rise, while the number of White households earning below average incomes was on the decline. The evidence is before us that Asians are losing economic ground quickly, and again falling behind comparable Whites.



Source: Author's calculations of 1990 Census, Census 2000, and American Community Survey, 2008.

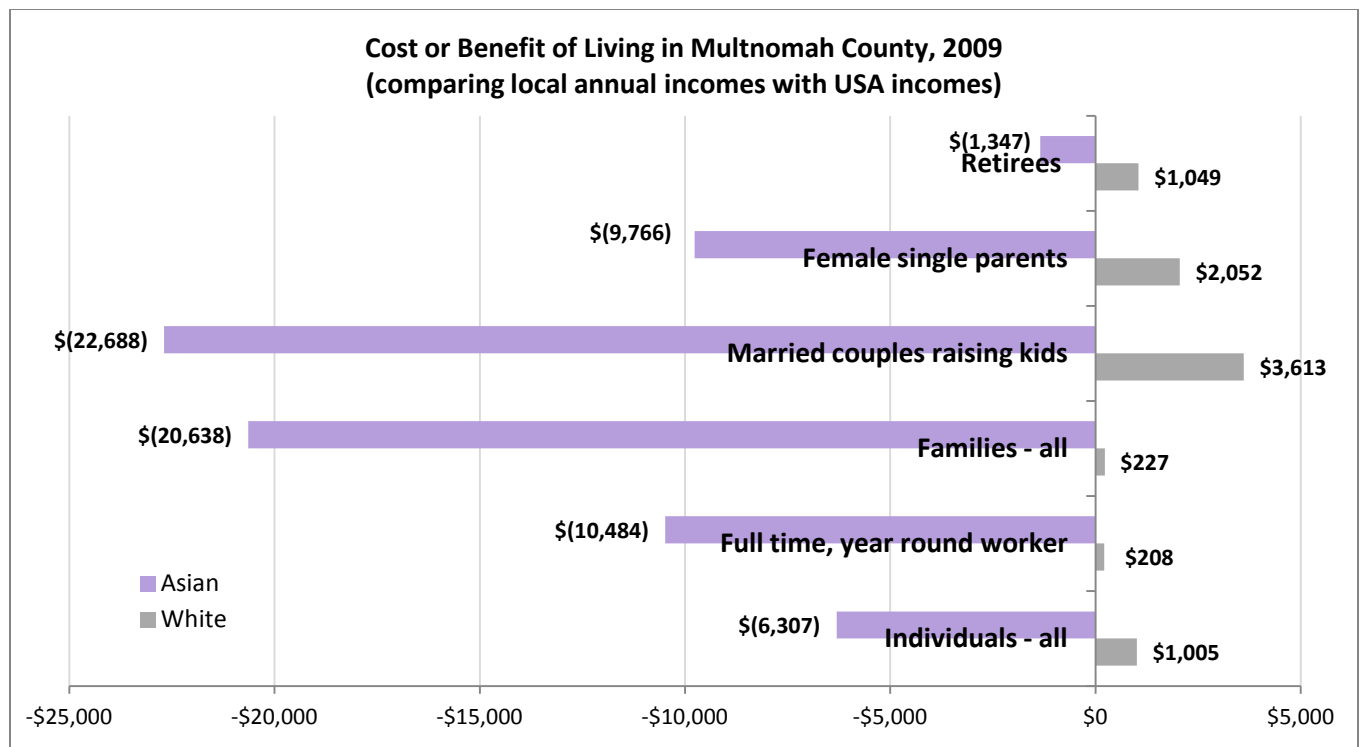
This is a distressing pattern. The conclusion we can draw from the above data is that while the number of White households who earn below average incomes stay relatively constant over the last generation, the numbers of Asian households earning low incomes is on the rise, and that the gap between the two is much wider today than it was a decade ago (despite being narrower than two decades ago). The trend lines show a rapidly deteriorating situation for the Asian community with more families earning lower incomes.

When looking at incomes in greater detail, the trend shown in poverty rates holds – incomes for Asians locally are worse than national averages. The chart below shows how different family types fare worse here than the national averages. For every income measure explored, we can see that Asians consistently bring home less income here than their counterparts elsewhere in the nation.



Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009.

Looking again at the above figures, we want to highlight the variations that occur as a result of living in Multnomah county. Using the data from the above chart, the difference between national and local data is reflected below for Whites and for Asians.

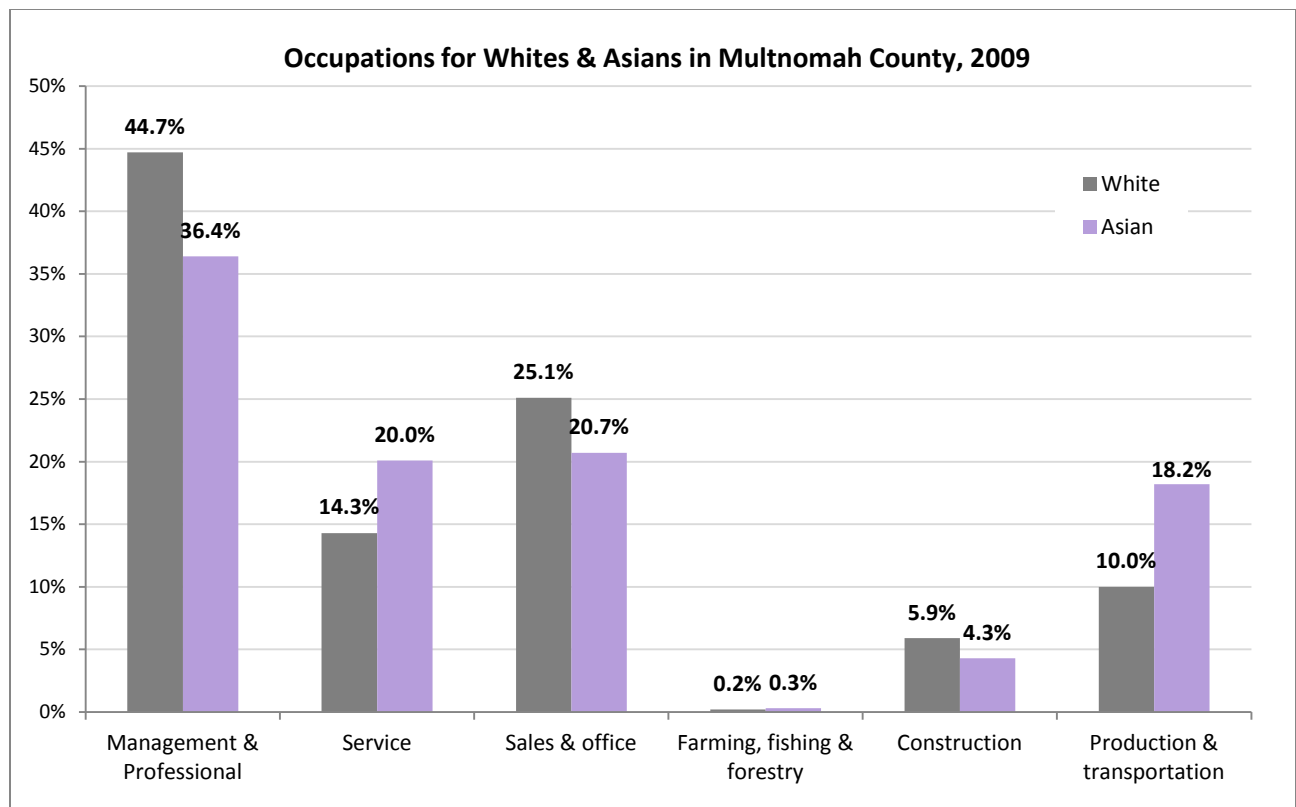


Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009.

The impact for Asians living in this region are big, and the largest among communities of color. Asian incomes take a hit when living in this county, of a magnitude unmatched in the region. Harder still is that the incomes of White families receive a bonus for living in the area. This differential valuing of the labor of Whites compared with Asian families shows how the region is inhospitable for communities of color, while it differentially provides perks for White incomes.

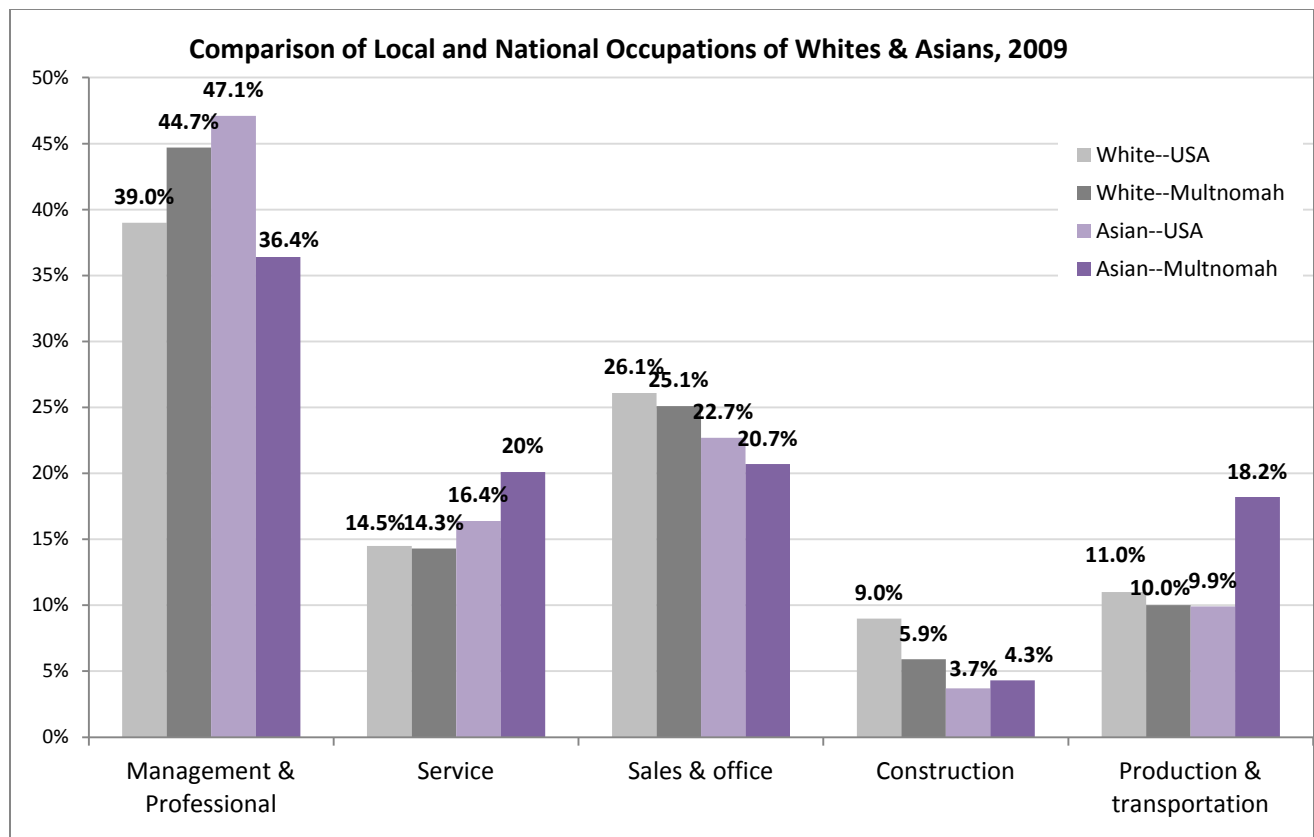
## Occupations and Job Prospects

Asians in Multnomah County have dimmer job prospects than Whites. The chart below shows how considerably fewer Asians are able to access the choicest of jobs – those in the managerial and professional categories. Asians are more likely to work in service and production and transportation occupations than Whites. For the one-in-five who do work in sales & office occupations, bosses are proportionally more likely to be White than Asian. Only about a third of Asians work in positions of authority (in management and professional occupations). By comparison, 44.7% of Whites work in management and professional positions.



Source: American Community Survey data, 2008.

Occupational prospects for Asians locally are worse than national averages. The chart below compares occupations of Asians here with those of Asians nationally. As with other measures, Asians fare worse here than the national averages. We can see that Asians here have less access to the choicest jobs. Comparatively, Whites here fare better or about the same as their national counterparts.



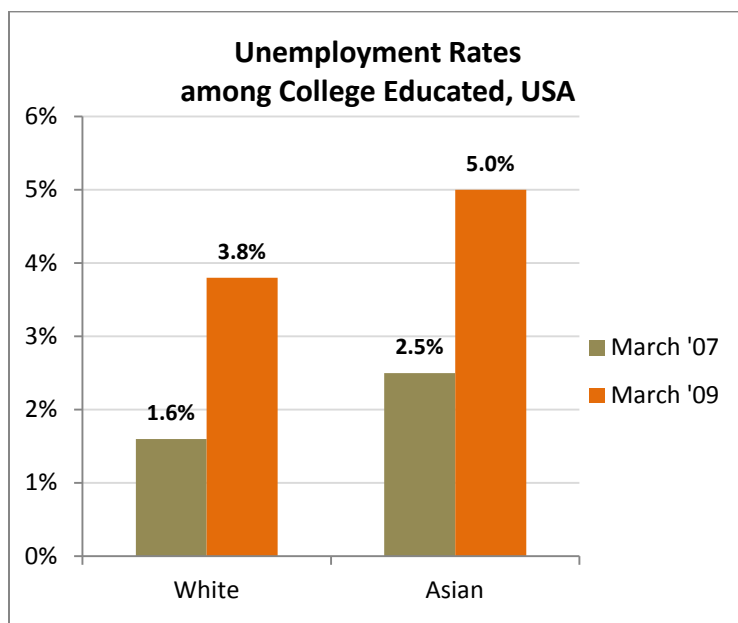
Source: Author's calculations of American Community Survey, 2009.

The most up-to-date employment data are not available locally by race and ethnicity. However, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) does offer some approximations, although these unemployment data are calculated very differently than the customary national and state data. The definition of unemployment in the ACS asks if someone is looking for work in the past 4 weeks – requiring them to count people whose job search is “active” meaning they are making calls. This serves to narrow the numbers of those who count as unemployed. So too are measures of those collecting unemployment insurance payments. Such a measure doesn't count anyone who was ineligible for unemployment insurance, who has not received payments yet, and whose benefits have expired.

From the American Community Survey, we find that the local unemployment rate for Asians is 4.8%, which is close to the same rate as for Whites (at 5.3%). We know, however, that this economic recession is having a much more dire impact on low income earners, those with less strong connections to the labor market, and on people of color. Given that recent data shows that 8.6% of those in the labor force in Multnomah County were unemployed (July 2011), we can expect that the unemployment rate for Asians here is probably well above the level recorded by the ACS and higher than the 7.7% national average for Asians.<sup>40</sup>

We would all like to believe that higher education serves to protect one from both low income and unemployment, such is not true, particularly among communities of color. In the below chart, we see that unemployment rates, even among those with college educations, did not protect the Asian

community from unemployment. Unfortunately, looking at the set of bars on the left, we find that in this economy, neither were educated Whites protected from unemployment.



Source: Austin, A. ( 2009).<sup>41</sup>

Compared with other communities of color, the Asian community has suffered equivalently with Latinos in terms of loss of employment among college-educated workers, and not as badly as African Americans.<sup>42</sup> And overall, the Asian community faces an uneven employment situation as will be illustrated in later sections of this report. There is some good news here in that parity seems within reach, as opposed to other communities of color where employment is more deeply stratified and stronger barriers to equitable employment exist.

### Housing, Homelessness and Housing Affordability

A key way to explore housing is to see how many are excessively burdened with the costs of keeping themselves housed. A key target is to keep housing costs below 30% of one's income. Almost half of local Asian renters are so imperiled. In addition, 52.4% of Asian homeowners are paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs, while only 40.1% of Whites are.<sup>43</sup> Local housing costs have been rising in recent years and are threatening the income situation of Asian residents.

Homeownership is a significant engine for wealth accumulation, as housing assets are one of the three key factors that create wealth. The first is inheritance, the second is income and the third is housing values (as an asset that appreciates in value). Notably, the median house value among Whites in Multnomah County is \$298,300, while the median house value for Asians is only \$260,300, or 14.6% less.<sup>44</sup>



The history of homeownership policy is an important element of today's disparities: the significant federal investments in supporting post-war homeownership was very limited for people of color. The GI Bill of 1944 that supported returning veterans in access to low mortgages for home purchasing shared meager benefits for communities of color. Redlining (meaning purchasers were directed where to purchase homes), prejudice and other barriers to accessing this resource were pronounced. In total, about 2% of the \$120 billion spent by the federal government went to people of color.<sup>45</sup> This historic discrimination coupled with preferential treatment for White families provides the foundation for the housing disparities we see today due to the essential role housing plays in accumulating wealth that in turn becomes inherited affluence for the next generation.

Today, housing discrimination continues through the levels at which mortgages are granted. The data below compares both these items for households with the same levels of income. The "tiers" are actually levels of incomes, allowing us to see how similarly wealthy households compare on these measures. The data shows that while loan denials are about the same for Asians and Whites (when incomes are the same), with the exception of the highest income earners who do face discrimination in loan approval patterns. In addition, at the bottom and top tiers, Asians show much lower home ownership rates.

	Home Ownership Rate			Loan Application Denial Rate		
	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<b>White</b>	77%	58%	48%	7%	10%	11%
<b>Asian</b>	60%	58%	34%	9%	11%	11%

Source: Housing and Development Corporation, City of Portland, 2004<sup>46</sup> Definitions for the terms used are:

Tier 1 = households with incomes more than 95% above the median income (wealthiest)

Tier 2 = households with incomes 80-95% over the median income (mid-range)

Tier 3 = households with incomes 50-80% over the median income (poorest homeowners)

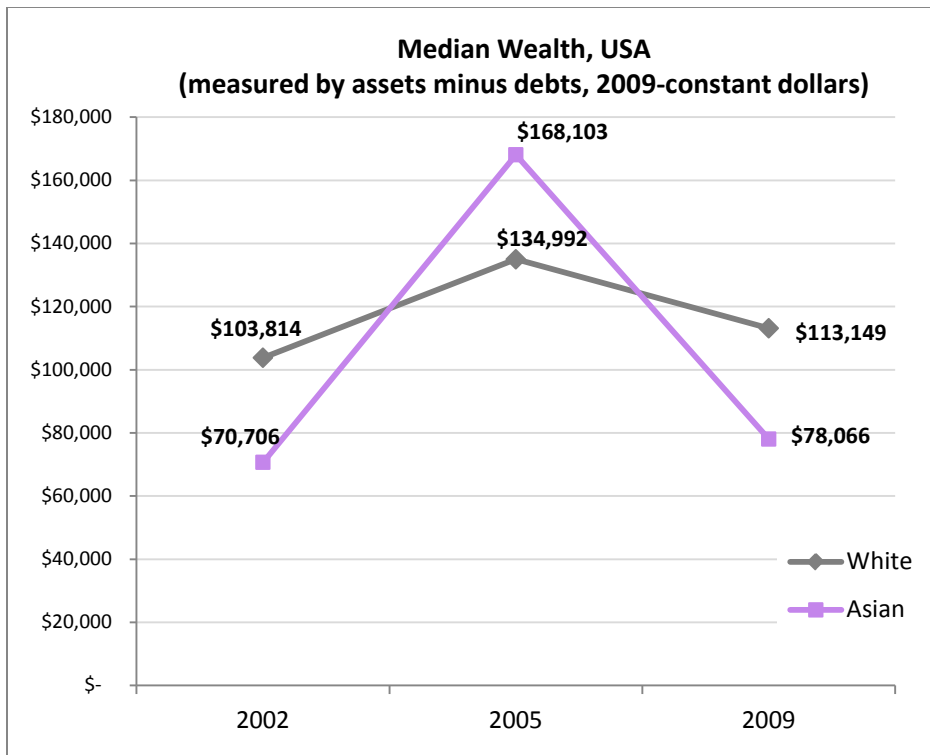
Homeownership rates across the entire community are roughly equivalent for Asians and Whites – at 61.8% and 60.2% respectively. This is good news for the API community, as improvements have definitely occurred since the above research was done in 2004. Note, however, that the historic pattern of low homeownership has hindered the API community from robust wealth generation and also from the benefit of the nation's largest housing program: the Home Mortgage Interest Deduction. The net impact of this program is to provide, on average, about \$500/year to those households earning from \$40,000 to \$75,000 annually. High-income households (above \$250,000/year) gain on average \$5,459 annually from the program.<sup>47</sup> Those who do not own homes cannot receive these benefits, and those who are eligible receive benefits according to income – high-income earners (of which Whites are much more likely to earn) reap much larger benefits from the program.

At the low end of how people are housed are the homeless. Every two years, the homeless are counted, in what is called the "Street Count." In this measure, the API community is underrepresented. While it is definitely positive to have low counts of homelessness (equivalently being unsheltered, in an emergency shelter and in transitional housing), we are doubtful as to the accuracy of this measure. Despite being a total of 9% of the population of the county (as contained in Census 2010 reports), the API community makes up a total of 3% of the unsheltered, 3% of those in emergency shelters, and 3% of those in transitional housing.<sup>48</sup> The API community rarely ends up on the street – the culture, instead, is more collective and community members typically take in those who have lost their housing, preferring to

double-up and triple-up, than let one wander the streets. A second explanation is also possible, and warrants investigation: that the human services (shelters and transitional housing) have created barriers in accessing such services, resulting in lower usage levels by the API community in shelters and transitional housing. A final point about homelessness: the levels of the API community that is unsheltered doubled from 2009 to 2011. While numbers are still small (at 35 people), the number unsheltered in 2009 was 19. Numbers in housing services did not increase, and even dropped dramatically for the Pacific Islander community (particularly) in shelters (from 22 people to 9) and in transitional housing (from 29 to 23). Patterns of income and housing burden, however, suggest that demand for housing support programs should have gone up, but service access actually deteriorated, indicating that barriers to service access likely exist and may in fact be worsening.

The net impact of the housing system is that Whites benefit from a wealth-generating system that has worked in their favor for generations – from land ownership rights, to land give-aways, to government-subsidized and guaranteed loans, to favored tax policy for homeowners, while Asian communities were denied equivalent access. Couple this policy history with economic conditions facing the API community, including lower incomes, lower homeownership rates, and lower housing values, creates the net impact of curtailed economic affluence and housing security.

Historic and modern-day exclusion from the homeownership market denied the community the ability to build wealth. Wealth (the sum total of assets minus debts) serves as a protective factor for income fluctuations and it enables one to take risks, such as opening a business or returning to school. Below we see the net impacts of wealth generation across the last decade. Note that these data are not available for either the state or the county.



Source: US Census Bureau for 2002 figure; Pew Research Center for 2005 & 2009 figures. All values have been adjusted to 2009-constant dollars to ensure the values are comparable.

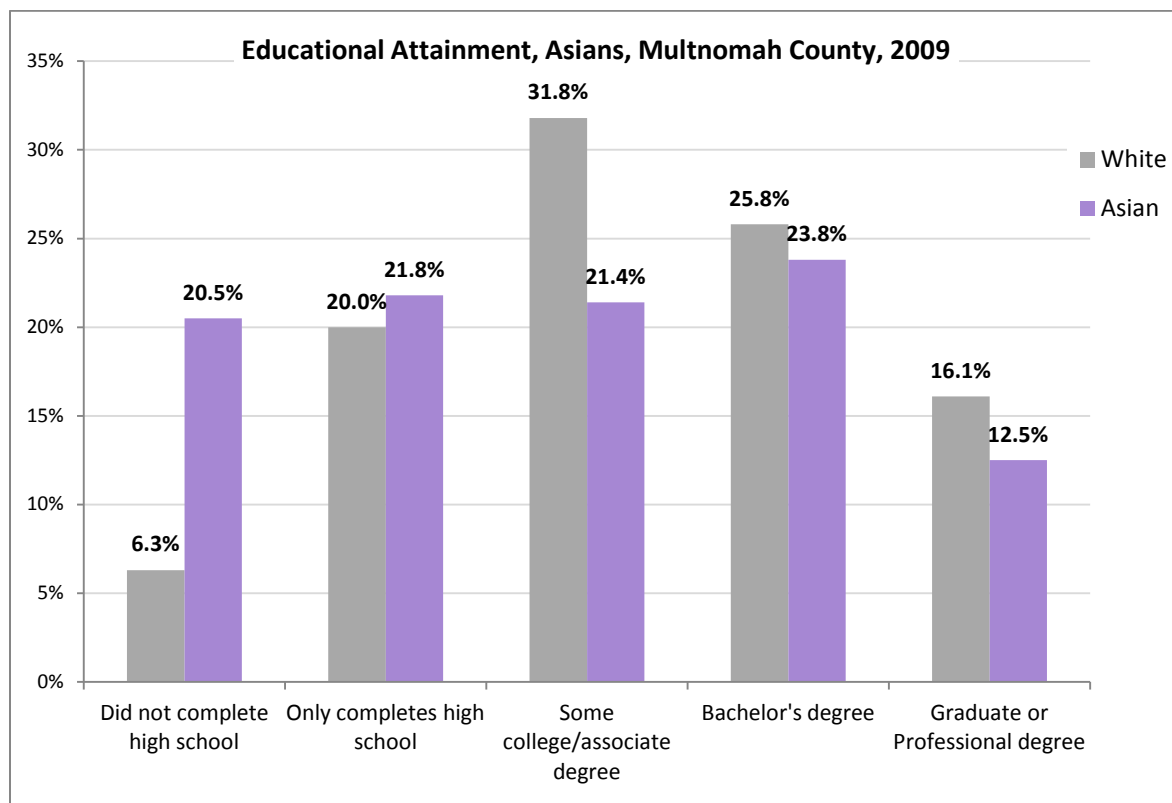
The wealth chart above shows that today, Asians hold 69 cents in wealth for every \$1 held by Whites. Key factors here are home ownership, incomes and historic access to wealth-generating policies. At the higher end of the economic scale, the API community has historically faced policy-based prohibitions in access to housing. Farther back, the community has been denied access to business activity, has faced pronounced labor exploitation, failure to be provided legal protections, outright imprisonment and thievery of possessions and land, and more (please review the *Policy History* section for more details). At the same time this type of damage was not done to White communities – resulting in deeply uneven access to wealth generation.

Today, housing access continues to harm the affluence of the community. While home ownership levels have finally reached parity with Whites, the benefits of such an asset have been considerable eroded in the 2005 to 2009 time period, which is marked by a recession that has been felt much more harshly among those who have large mortgages and among people of color.

## Education

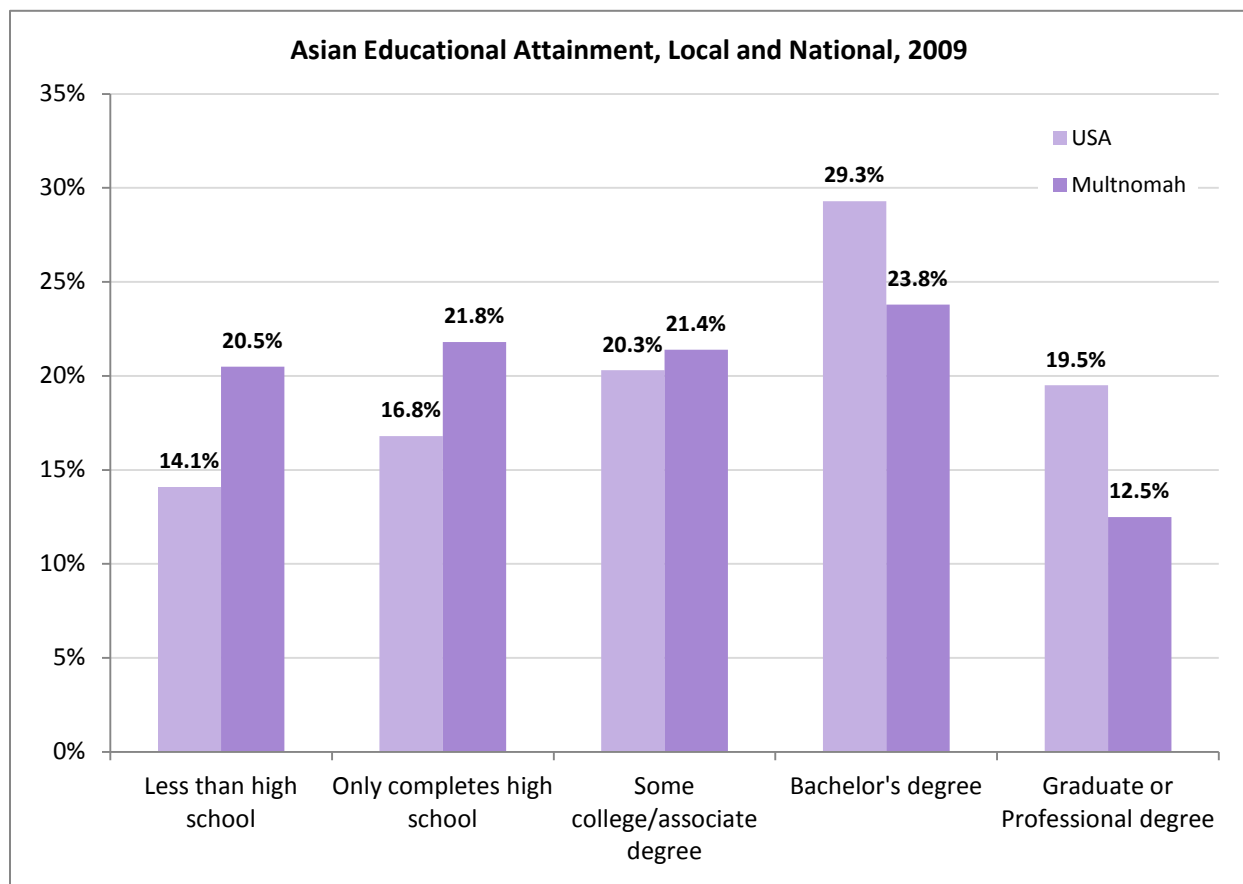
The educational attainment profile for adults (graphed below) includes all adults, so the total for all Whites is 100%, and so too for Asians. Looking to the far left of the chart, we see that 20.5% (or one-in-five) of the Asian community has not completed high school. This is particularly troubling when compared with White achievement, as only 7% of Whites (or one-in-sixteen) have not graduated high school. At the high end of the educational scale, Asians are lagging behind Whites in obtaining college or graduate and professional degrees.

*The Asian & Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*



Source: Author's calculations using data from American Community Survey, 2009.

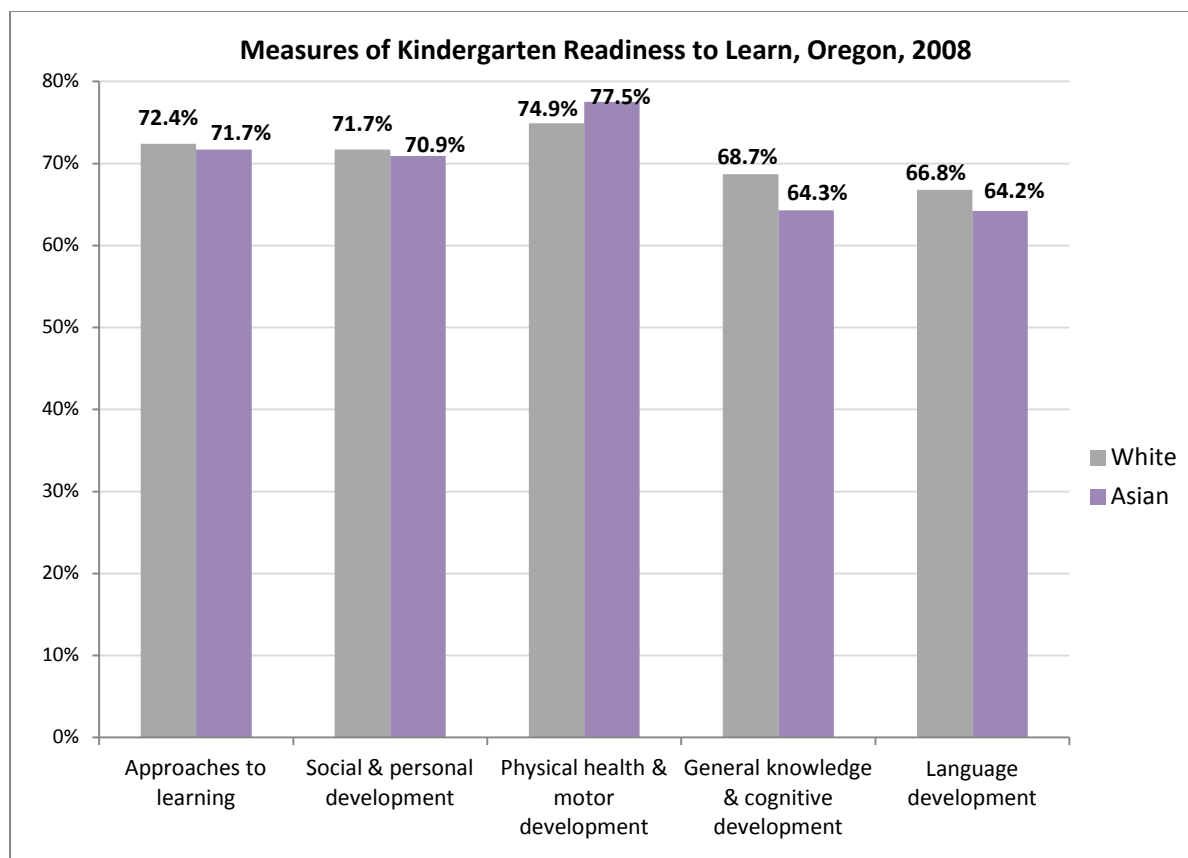
As in other sectors explored in this report, the educational attainment profile of the Asian community here in Multnomah county is much worse than national averages. The chart below compares local educational achievement levels of Asians with their national counterparts. We can see that Asians nationally are much less likely to have failed to complete high school and much more likely to have obtained bachelors and higher university degrees than Asians in Multnomah county.



Source: Author's calculations using data from American Community Survey, 2009.

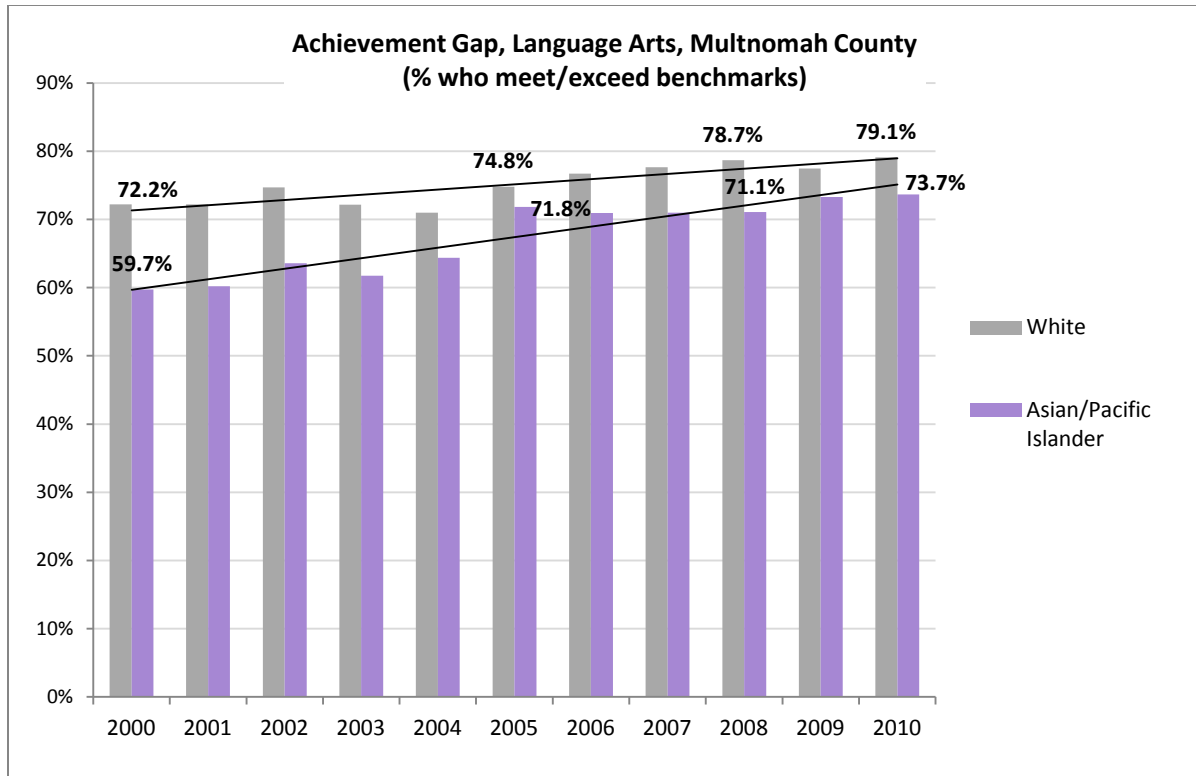
The community faces significant barriers in accessing work that is tied to occupations. A recent study of Oregonians revealed that 18% of college-educated Asian immigrants are employed in unskilled occupations.<sup>49</sup> Referred to as “brain waste” it suggests that policy makers need to build economic opportunities that reflect the Asian community’s skills and capacities, and also ensure that there are strong programs to help the community transfer internationally-earned credentials to the local context.

We turn now to look at specifics of the current education system’s ability to work with API children. When API children enter public school in Kindergarten, there is already a gap with White children in terms of readiness to learn. Looking below, the level is not large, but one does exist. These data are from across Oregon and are the teachers’ interpretations of student readiness for school.



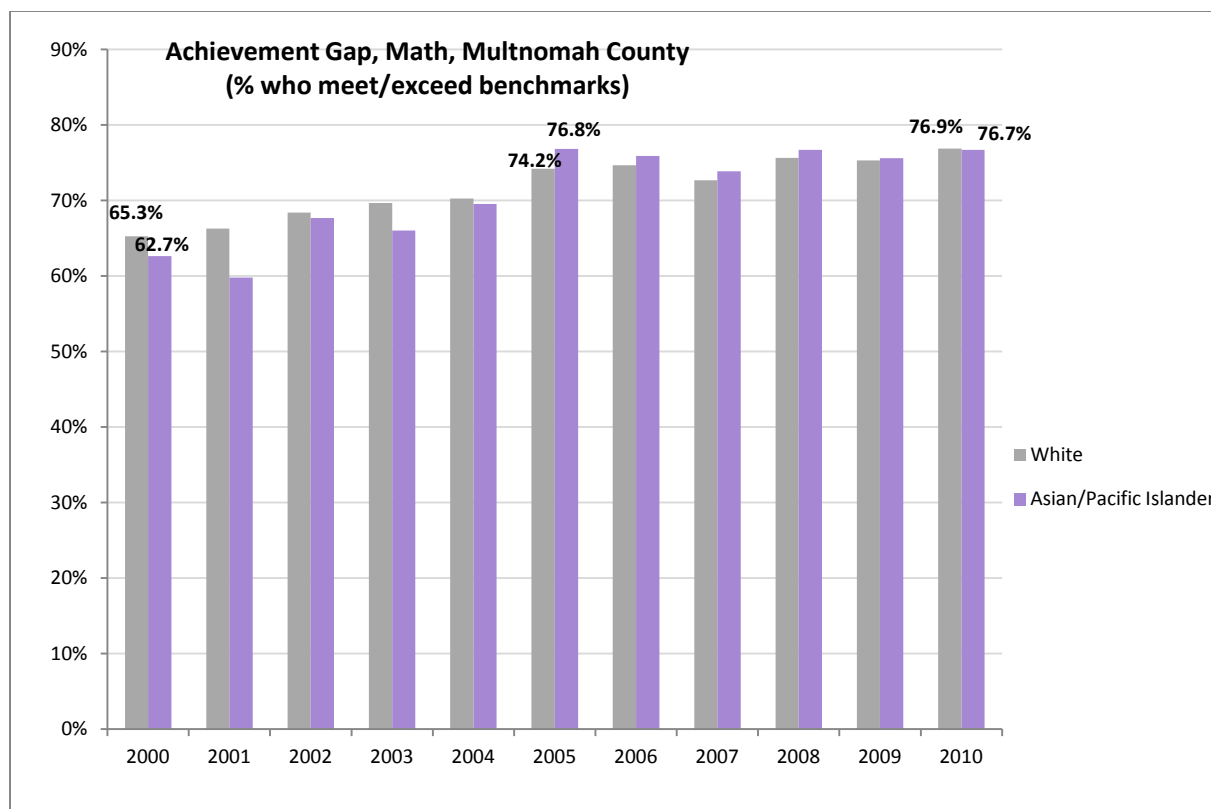
Source: Oregon Department of Education's Kindergarten Readiness Survey, 2008. These data are measured by teachers' assessments of the numbers of their students viewed as being ready to learn in each of the domains listed above.<sup>50</sup>

We now turn to standardized testing scores, which is typically known as the "achievement gap." The review of test scores shows a narrowing disparity between White and Asian students when it comes to English and Language Arts, and today's disparities are the narrowest that exist among communities of color. We are pleased with this result. Gains are likely the result of a combination of individual and family effort (such as work habits), the prioritizing of academic achievement, unintended negative benefits from the myth of the model minority that contributes to more close support and attention in school for API students, and the changing composition of Asian immigrants (as the pace of immigration slows and English language skills improve).



Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk for data to 2008, ODE website for data in 2009 and 2010.

Achievements continue to improve in the area of math to the point that achievement scores equal those of White students. This is the only place in the fullness of review of the achievement gap where the performance of a community of color is better than that of White students. For a 5-year period from 2005 to 2009, API students outperformed White students.



Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk for data to 2008, ODE website for data in 2009 and 2010.

Close review of the above chart shows that the out-performance of API students has again given way to White preeminence in this area – we do hope that this does not signal a reversing trend.

For this report, we have been able to prepare a detailed analysis of the achievement gap by language. Student records require two entries concerning language: first language and language spoken at home. Where parents entered that their children spoke a language other than English in either of these two categories, we extracted those data and tallied them by the specific language. In the chart below, we illustrate the achievement gaps in Reading and Literature, and in Math – reporting the data in a composite of the six largest school boards in Multnomah county. This is the first time such data have been made available and this is an important addition to our collective knowledge base of the performance of local students in the API community. We look forward to more disaggregation of data, and are eager to see cohort graduation rates, discipline rates, dropout rates, special education and free/reduced lunch information also being shared in this manner. The API community is also interested in tracking these students onto post-high school experiences, and to seeing entry into higher education and success in these settings.

Several data explanations are needed to clarify these charts. Only six school boards across Multnomah county are included in this research: Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, Portland and Reynolds. Unfortunately, the remaining two boards (Corbett and Riverdale) have not shared their data. Please note that the API composite figure includes all those who identify their race as either Asian or Pacific Islander, and includes both fully English speakers and those in the charts below who have a

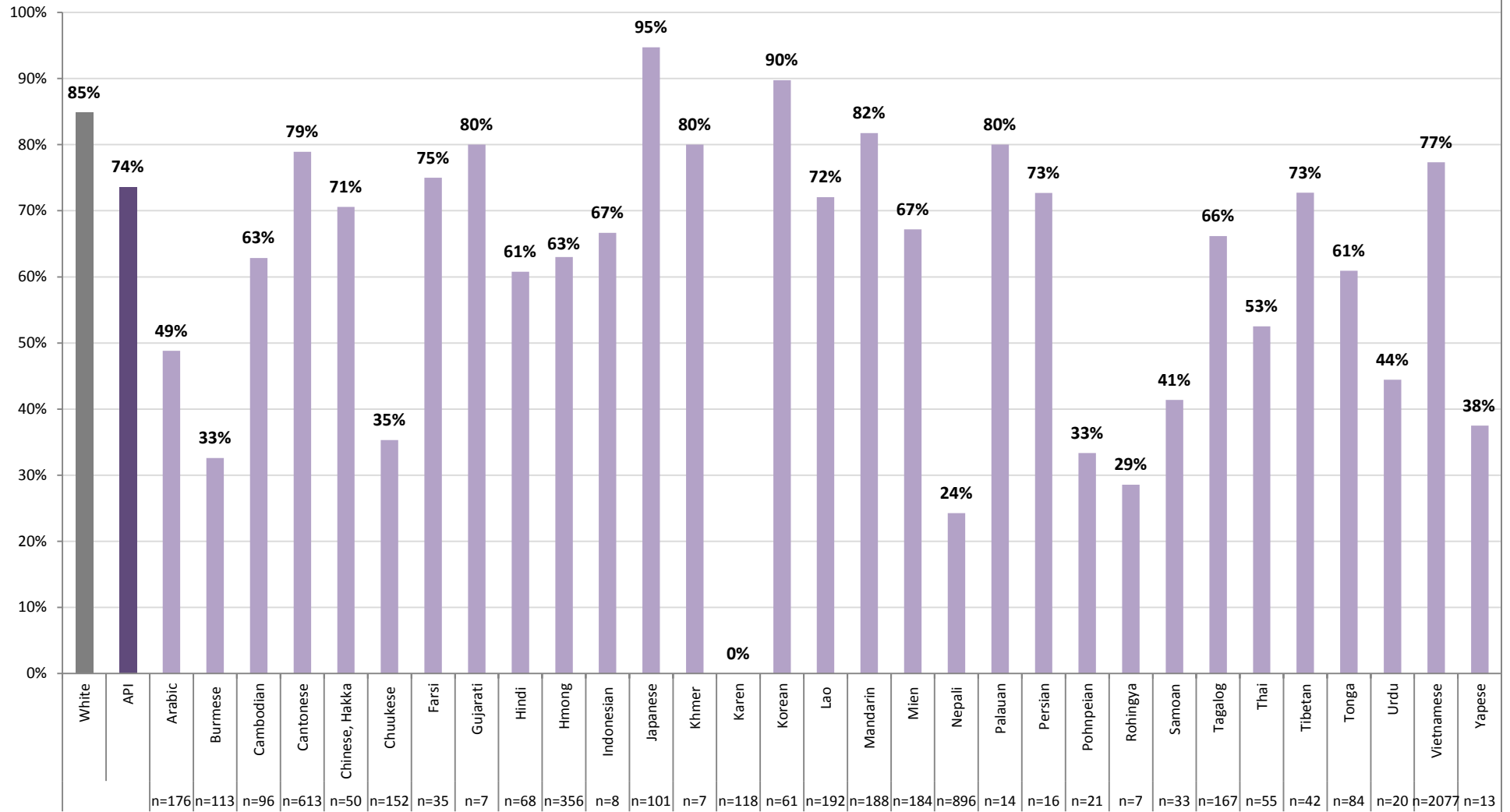


language other than English in their family. The total of the API students who speak a language other than English (at home and/or as their first language) is 4,441. The total size of the API community across these six boards is 4,587, indicating that the vast majority of API students (97%) have a language in addition to English in their lived experience. Please also note that these student numbers (the “n”) omit students in grades k-2 and occasionally in early high school in the six school boards noted above. This is because these are the only grades where the Oregon’s standardized tests are officially recorded. Numbers would obviously be higher if the full grade range were to be included. A final data note: all communities with less than five students cannot be reported due to privacy issues.

Please note that in the below charts, the researchers have measured achievement only by those who took the tests. There are large numbers of API students who did not take these tests (on average of 24% in math and 27% in reading, with fluctuations for specific communities that run as high as 58%) and this is a matter for exploration with the school boards.

Middle Eastern communities in Multnomah county have been invisible in both the Census process as well as in local databases. These communities have a new and growing presence in the region, arriving primarily as refugees. While their “official” designation in the Census and ACS databases is as White, their home country is officially part of the Asian continent. But culturally, their identity is rarely that of Asian. To support the visibility of these communities, we include those who speak Arabic in the charts that follow.

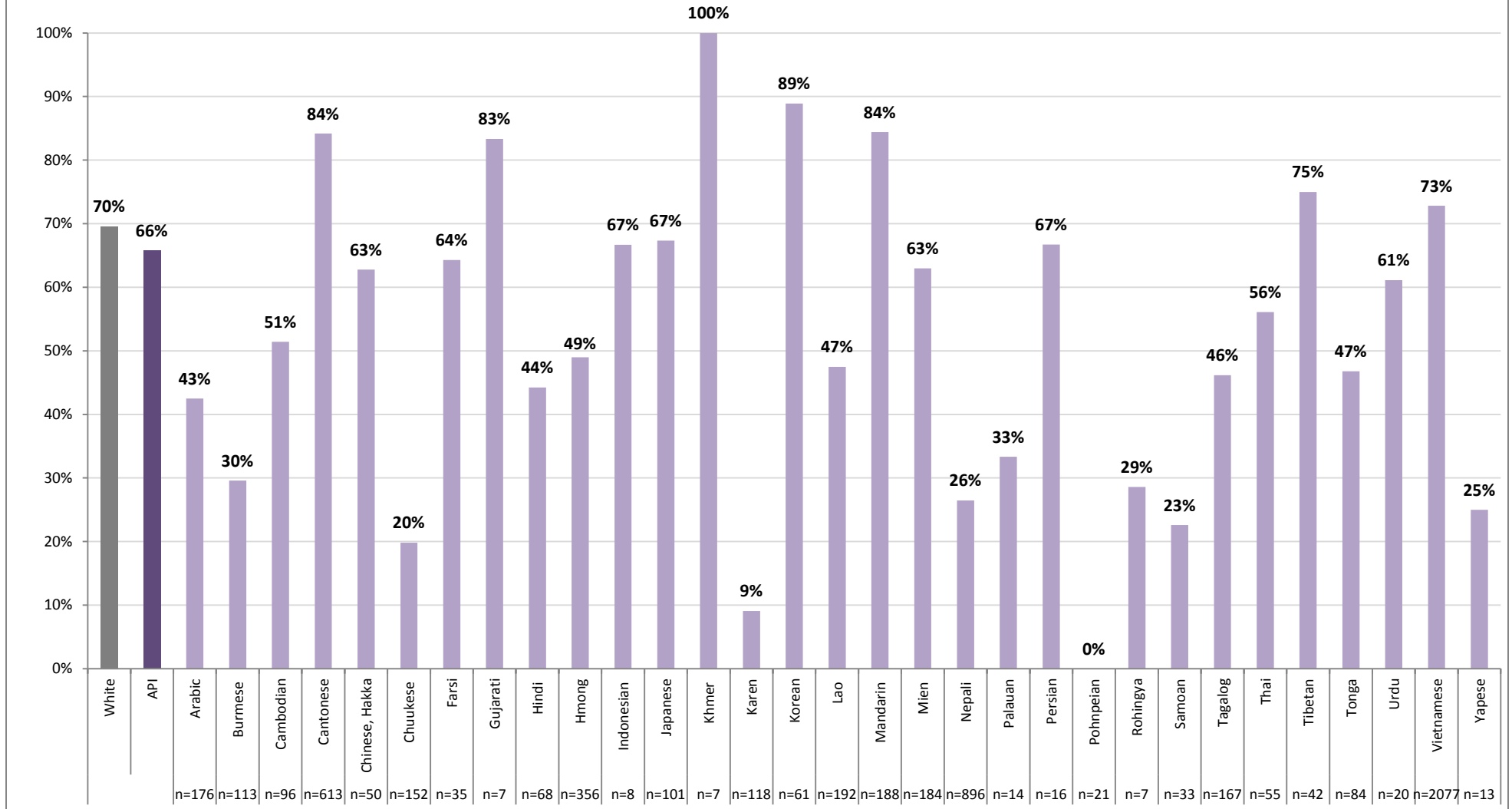
**Academic Achievement, Reading & Literature, API Community by Language, Multnomah County, 2011**  
(as measured by those students who meet or exceed benchmarks)



Source: Data collected from six School Boards by Dr. Pat Burk, Portland State University, and tallied by Myste French.

*The Asian & Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*

**Academic Achievement, API community by language, Math, Multnomah County, 2011**  
**(as measured by those students who meet or exceed benchmarks)**



Source: Data collected from six School Boards by Dr. Pat Burk, Portland State University, and tallied by Myste French.

Concerns mount when looking at the details of the above charts. There are many communities who see more than ½ of their children and youth fail to meet benchmarks established by the State of Oregon. While the API community is concerned for any student who is not excelling in school, it is a shock to see that more than one-in-four students fail to meet minimum benchmarks reflecting adequate school performance.

<b>2011 Ranking</b>	<b>Language-Based Community</b>	<b>Mean Score for Meeting or Exceeding Reading &amp; Math Scores</b>
1	Karen	5%
2	Pohnpeian (Micronesia)	17%
3	Nepali	25%
4	Chuukese (Micronesia)	28%
5	Rohingya (Burma)	29%
6	Burmese	31%
7	Yapese (Micronesia)	31%
8	Samoan	32%
9	Arabic (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Syria, Libya and others)	46%
10	Hindi (India)	53%
11	Urdu (India & Pakistan)	53%
12	Tonga	54%
13	Thai	54%
14	Hmong	56%
15	Tagalog (Philippines)	56%
16	Palauan (Palau & Guam)	57%
17	Cambodian	57%
18	Lao	60%
19	Mien (China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand)	65%
20	Indonesian	67%
21	Chinese, Hakka	67%
22	Farsi (Iran, Afghanistan)	70%
23	Persian (Iran, Afghanistan)	70%
24	Tibetan	74%
25	Vietnamese	75%
26	Japanese	81%
27	Cantonese	82%
28	Gujarati (India, Pakistan, Africa)	82%
29	Mandarin	83%
30	Korean	89%
31	Khmer (Cambodia)	90%

Source: Drawn from data provided by six school boards in Multnomah county, 2011. Highlighted languages (in green) are countries of the Pacific Islands.

*The Asian & Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*

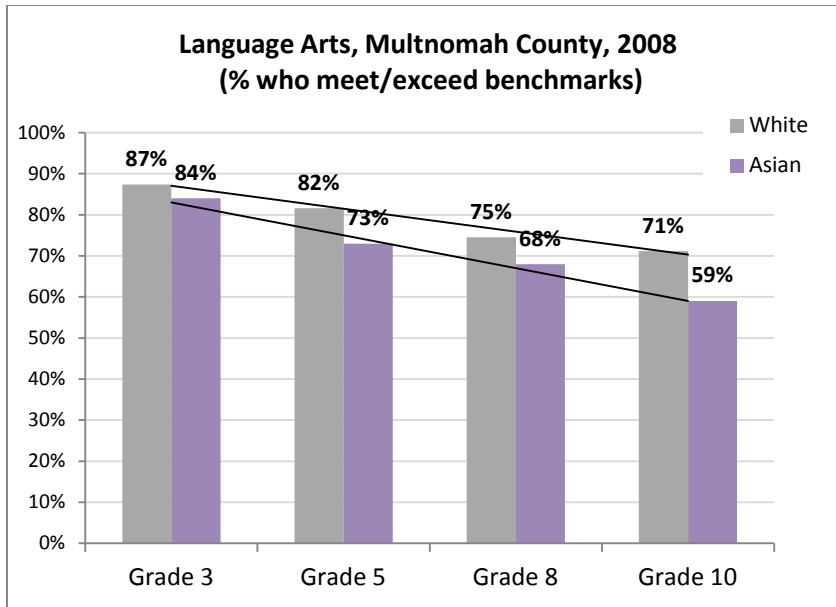
The API community has long been asserting that there is very wide variation among the success of its students in the local region, and this is the first time that there is evidence to back up this experience. It is now time to get to work, to give priority to those communities where performance is worst and ensure that these ratings improve in the very near future.

A note about these data: there are 14 additional language-based API communities who are not reflected in the above data. The chart illustrating these communities is below. The reasons for these students not having their scores reported is that there are too few students speaking these languages to share. If we were to share the scores, privacy concerns would exist. The cut-off for sharing data is below five students (in the grades listed above, meaning that the size of these communities of students may be larger than five).

<b>Additional API Languages</b>
Assamese
Bengali
Cebuano
Fijian
Indian
Kazakh
Malay
Marshallese
Panjabi, Eastern
Pashto, Southern
Sindhi
Singhalese
Tamil
Trukese

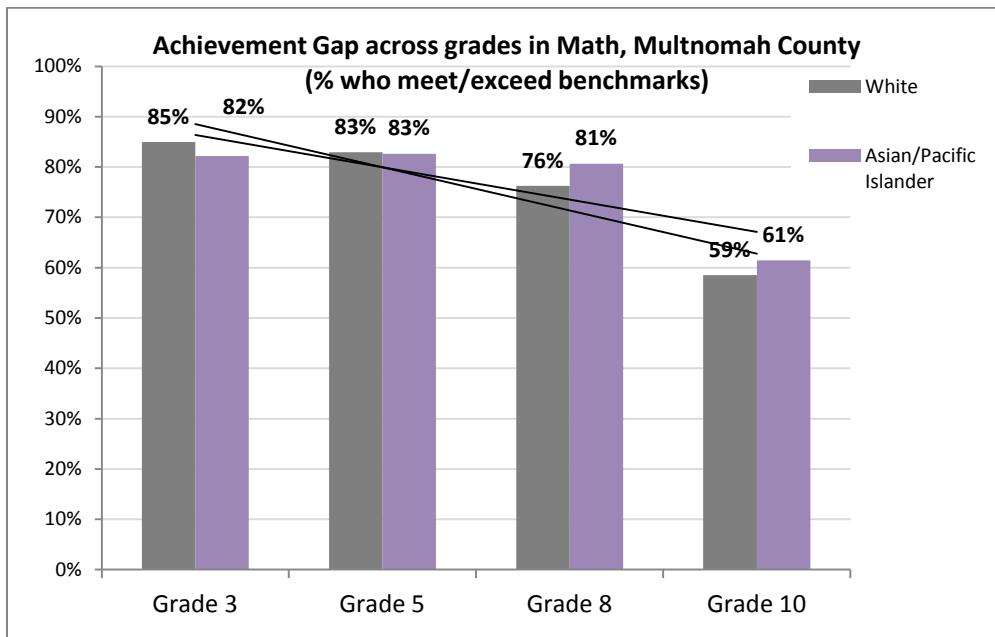
Source: Extracted from data files from six largest school boards in Multnomah county, 2011.

When we turn our attention to disparities within grade levels, we see that in Language Arts API students follow the trend among other communities of color – with the gap widening as students move into higher grade levels. The graph below shows that while Asian students enter 3<sup>rd</sup> grade almost on par with White students in terms of reading ability, by 10<sup>th</sup> grade Asian students are falling much further behind their White counterparts. In addition, notice that there is still a “failure” rate of 40% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students.



Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk.

This disparity in reading ability has persisted over time. Turning to Math scores, we see that there is a reversal of the pattern of the gap between Whites and communities of color expanding through school years. Here we have Asian students outperforming Whites as they move into middle school and high school.

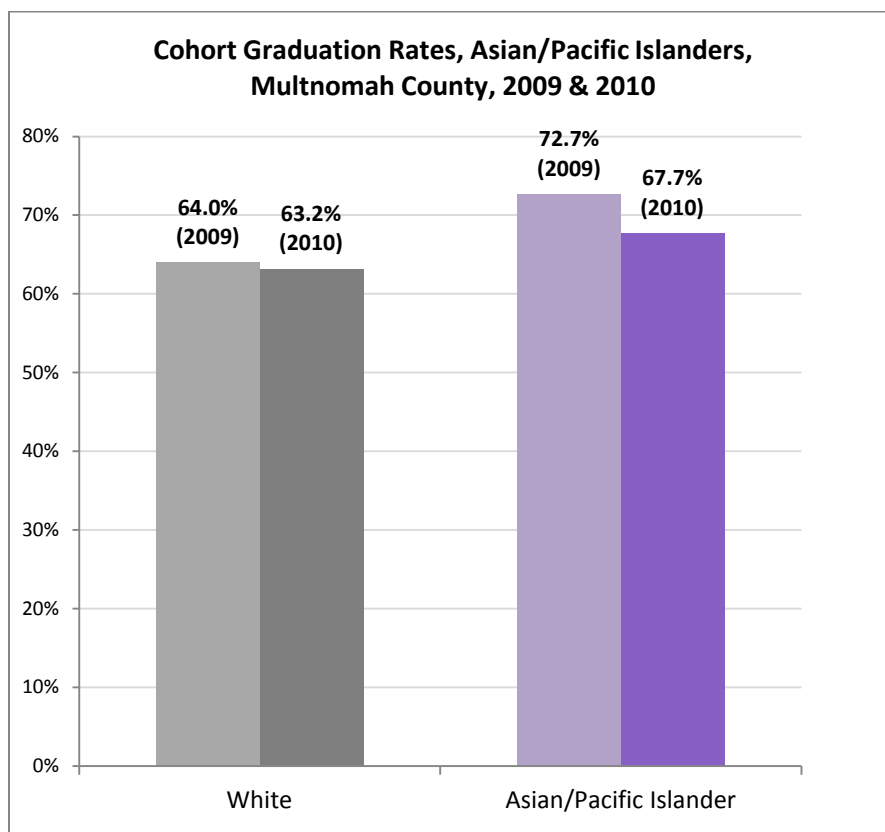


Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk.

While reading appears to be a concerning area for Asian students, they are faring well in mathematics, keeping pace with their White counterparts over time and at each grade level, and even out-performing them.

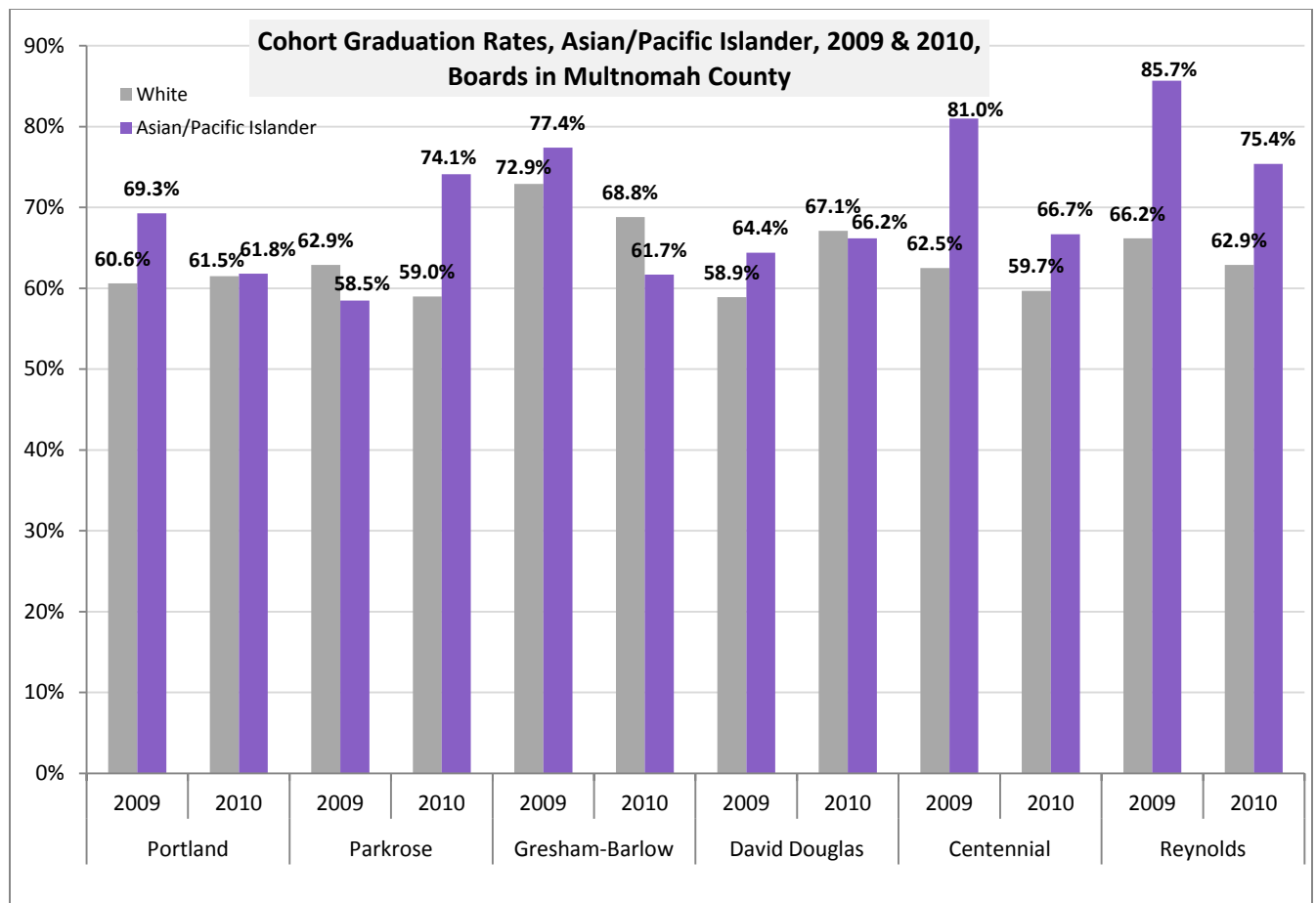
Next we will turn our attention to graduation and dropout rates. Data released in May 2010 by the Oregon Department of Education reveals for the first time the cohort graduation rate,<sup>51</sup> or the number of students who graduated with a regular diploma within four years of entering high school. The second year of this study was released in April 2011 with the results of both years revealed below.

While Asian and Pacific Islander students perform better than Whites, the advantage they have earned is deteriorating. In 2009, 73% of API students graduated on time with a regular diploma, but this level slipped to 68% in 2010. This is a significant loss in one year and an experience that must be halted immediately.



Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data on cohort graduation rates for 2005/06 to 2008/09 cohort, and for 2006/07 to 2009/10 cohort.

The cohort graduation rate clearly illustrates where each and every Oregon student is ending up after four years in high school. This measure gives us a more robust picture of what is happening to API students than previous methods of calculating graduation rates. The cohort graduation rate varies by district, with Portland and Gresham-Barlow closely tied for performing worst in graduating Asian students, graduating only 62% of our students. Reynolds school district performs the best, graduating 75% of its Asian students, though this level is considerably lower than the previous year's level of 86%.<sup>52</sup>



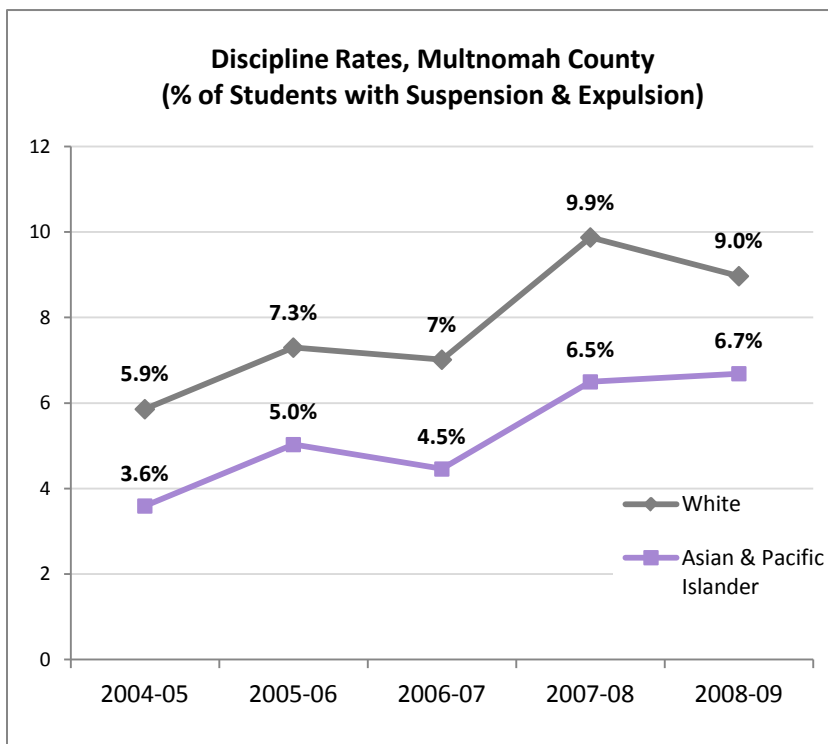
Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data on cohort graduation rates.

In the above chart, we can see that Asian & Pacific Islander students are typically outperforming White students in all but Gresham-Barlow and David Douglas districts (in 2010). This is good news for the community, which continues to be challenged by low educational levels across the community. Over time, these overall “educational attainment” data should improve. But notice that we have not been able to disaggregate these data for specific API communities. Ideally data reforms will be adopted in the very near future and we will be able to disaggregate cohort rates for specific API communities. The API community aims to advocate with school boards to support better identification and research reporting on various Asian populations.

The cohort graduation rate puts into perspective other measures looking at students who become disengaged from the education system. The drop-out rate has been seen as a measure of the number of students who cannot complete their schooling and withdraw or who are pushed out of the education system. A look at traditional drop-out rates (assessed by how many students begin and complete grade 12) shows less than 5% of Asian students leaving school in recent years. However, the cohort graduation numbers discussed above show how traditional drop-out rates fail to show the cumulative effect of student disenfranchisement with the education system. With more than one-in-three Asian and Pacific Islander students in 2010 failing to graduate on time, a less than 5% drop-out rate is misleading as to how are students are faring in the high school system.



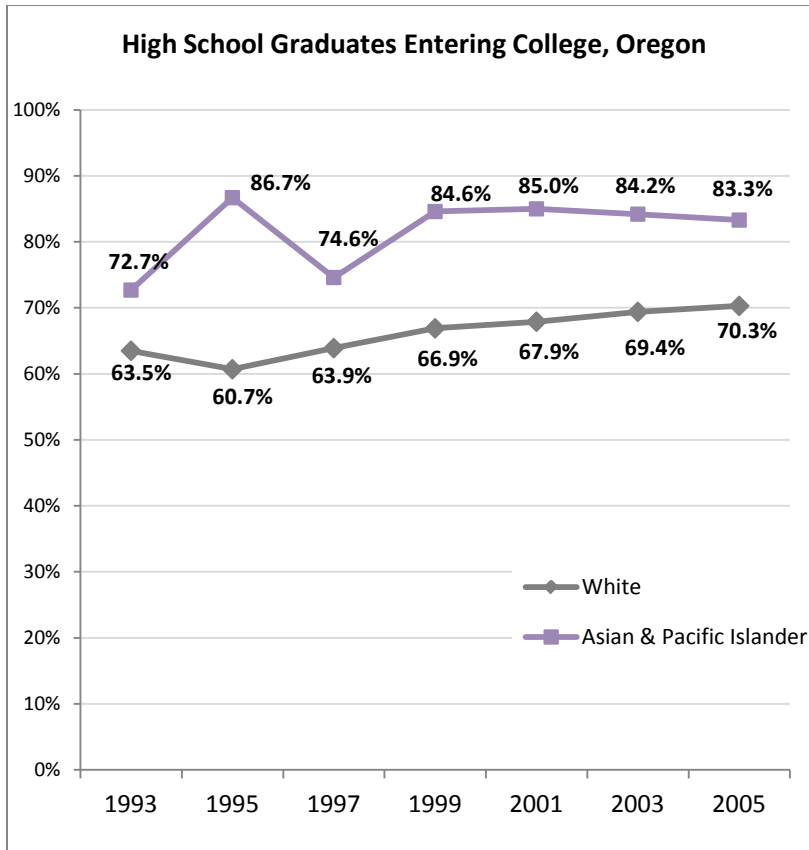
One protective factor for the API community is its under-involvement in school discipline. This is one area where API students are much less burdened than other communities of color in a detrimental system. It is possible that API students are receiving the benefit of the “model minority” myth and are being protected by the discourse that they are unaggressive and deferential to authority.



Source: ECONorthwest analysis of ODE data on student suspensions and expulsions by demographic characteristics and county, 2004-05 to 2007-08.

Above we see that while there is a substantial gap between the discipline rates of Whites and the API community, scrutiny of these practices needs to be continued. Notice that the discipline rate of API students has been rising steadily since 2006/07.

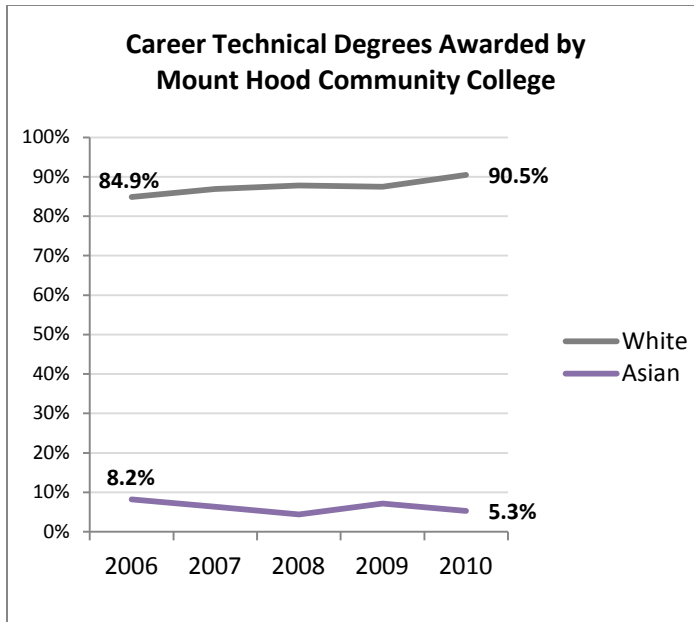
What happens to API youth after high school, if they are able to successfully graduate with a diploma? For this, we turn to a survey of all Oregon’s high school graduates to see what they opted to do after graduation. Below are the results of this survey, and while API students outperform Whites in going on to higher education, concern still exists.



Source: Oregon University System, 2006.<sup>53</sup>

The concern is that API students are facing a declining level of participation in higher education in recent years, at the same time while White participation has been steadily increasing. The story is still a bright spot for the API community, although continued monitoring is necessary. It is likely that the narrowing of grants, higher tuitions, and a weak economy (particularly as it narrows employment prospects for new college graduates) are the cause of declining API enrollment.

Portland's second largest community college, Mount Hood Community College, shared more detailed data with us directly – although they do not routinely post this information online. Graduation rates are fortunately available. While Asians make up 8.6% of the county's population, APIs make up just 5.3% of those awarded technical degrees in the most recent year. This is the largest degree program in the College.

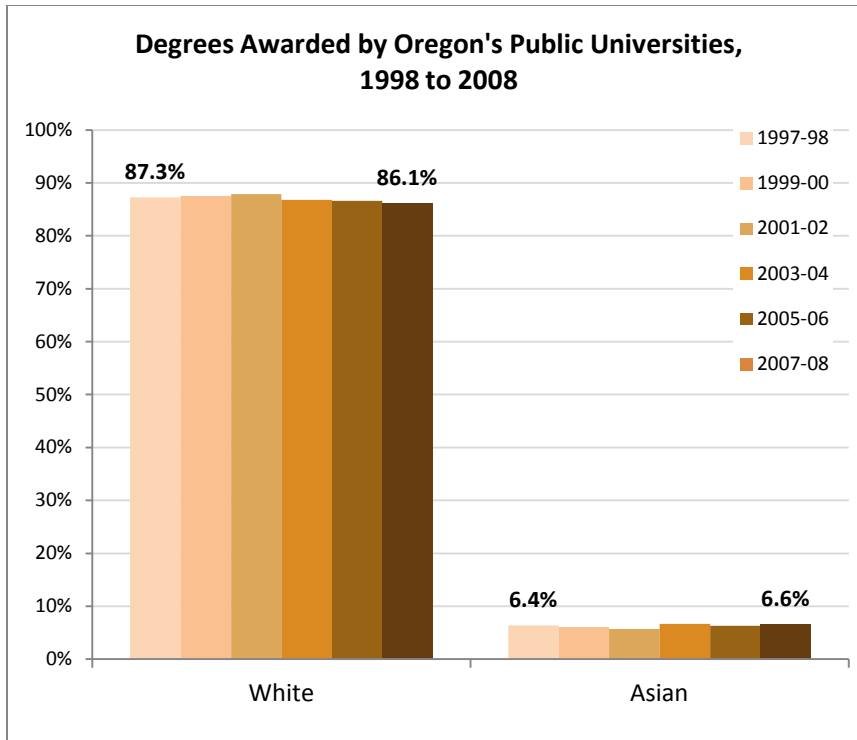


Source: Data provided by Mount Hood Community College.

The above information shows that there is a troubling trend at Mount Hood Community College whereby White students are increasingly likely to gain this degree, while Asian students face less likelihood than five years ago to successfully graduate with their degree.

Multnomah county's largest community college, Portland Community College, does not share its graduation rates by race. It does, however, share retention rates of students on their various campuses. Here, Asian & Pacific Islander students hold their ground with White students and there are no disparities in retention rates.

This education section closes by looking at degrees awarded by Oregon's public universities in the last 12 years. Given the relative success of Asians in the education system, one would expect high levels of post-secondary educational participation. However, as the Asian population has grown over time, becoming a larger segment of the population, the percent of degrees awarded to Asians by Oregon's public universities has remained constant.

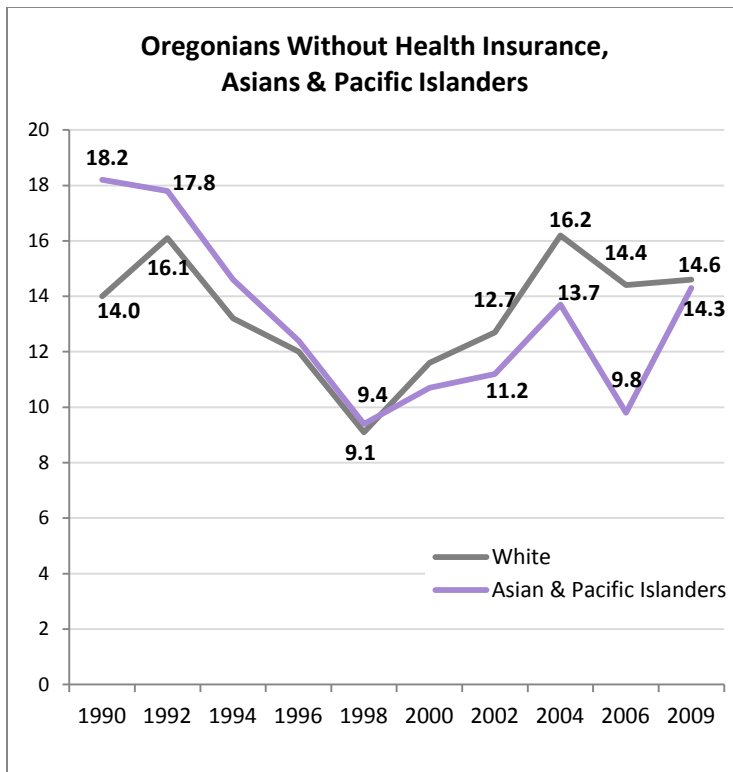


Source: Author's calculations of data from Oregon University System Fact Books, selected years.

In summary, education is an area of strength for the Asian community and an arena in which APIs are generally making gains. This does not however suggest that API communities experience equity with White children and youth – it is imperative to disaggregate these data and extend the work begun in this study to illustrate how specific API communities are faring in programs such as English Language Learner, and special education. The API community welcomes the opportunity to work with school boards and institutions of higher education to move forward on improved research practices and local solutions to the needs of specific communities.

### Health and its Barriers

Health care access is, today, relatively equivalent for Whites and for the Asian and Pacific Islander community, but disparities have been through wide swings over the last two decades. And if local APIs follow the national trend (with 16.1% in the API community having no insurance, compared to 10.4% Whites<sup>54</sup>), the Asian and Pacific Islander community will likely return to the pre-1998 era whereby fewer within this community will have health care compared with Whites.



Source: Oregon Population Survey, Oregon Health Policy & Research, 1990-2006.<sup>55</sup> Data for 2009 is from the American Community Survey.

In 2006, there was one of the widest gaps in health care coverage in two decades, with more Asians having health insurance than Whites. By 2009, this had deteriorated rapidly, and the Asian community posting the largest curtailing of coverage of any period over the last twenty years. For API children, data are available on enrollment in Oregon's Healthy Kids program. Asian children make up 3.3% of Oregon's poor children, but receive less than their fair share of access to the Healthy Kids program – at just 2.8% of those enrolled.<sup>56</sup> Given that this is an entitlement program, all eligible API children should access this program. Barriers to accessing this program include simply knowing that Healthy Kids is an entitlement program and knowing what is needed to enroll one's children.

Once insurance is secured, health care barriers continue. Patterns of low use result from feeling unwelcomed at medical clinics, knowing where to obtain eligible services, travelling long distances to receive care, being uncertain of coverage levels (particularly in dental coverage), and worries about supplemental costs.<sup>57</sup>

An essential dimension of health is the ability to live free from racial harassment. Many students of color experience harassment, with 26.5% of grade 8 students in Multnomah county reporting that they had experienced "harassment about your race or ethnic origin" at or on the way to school in the prior 30 days.<sup>58</sup> This number falls only slightly when surveying grade 11 students – to 24.7%. This is a startling high figure, yet not unexpected. Other research shows that 65% of military personnel of color experienced racial harassment while adults and at their place of employment.<sup>59</sup> There is no exact science for measuring racial harassment. Some indicators based on attitudinal surveys reveal a troubling state of affairs: only 17.1% of Americans believe that Asians can access housing without discrimination.<sup>60</sup>

When we turn our attention to getting jobs, the numbers are even worse: discrimination is perceived to exist at deep levels for Asians (84.9%). Of note is that the studies conducted locally by the City of Portland about housing discrimination do not include a test of landlord discrimination against those in the Asian and Pacific Islander community. Again, the dominant discourse is that the API community does not suffer from such experiences – a discourse that this research report aims to permanently cease.

The presence of discrimination and harassment leads to stress and worry, with harmful impacts on blood pressure and heart disease. It also leads to a set of experiences of marginalization and powerlessness that continue to deny racial equity and racial justice – even the freedom of living without discrimination.

The measurement of health disparities has been problematic as there are some significant disparities that have remained invisible due to the inappropriate amalgamation of all those within the Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Such amalgamation has obscured the community's health status. As a result of these findings, we urge caution on presumptions of equity when no disparities have been found to exist for the API community. Instead, we urge that research recognize that country of origin be incorporated into research so that API communities can at last be better understood. It may prove that ancestry holds a significant role in health variations within the API community.

As a result, the available health data on Asians and Pacific Islanders are of limited value because of the attempt to encompass the broad API group, in spite of the enormous diversity among the communities included. Without disaggregating the data, it is impossible to detect broad variations in health status among API populations, hiding serious health problems between subgroups.<sup>61</sup>

For example, while a recent study showed that Asian and Pacific Islanders have incidence rates of cervical cancer similar to White women in the U.S.,<sup>62</sup> this trend does not hold true of all Asian groups in this country. Vietnamese-American women have rates of cervical cancer 5 times higher than Whites.<sup>63</sup> Vietnamese-American women also have a cervical cancer incidence rate that is 7.4 times the incidence rate of Japanese-American women (43 vs. 5.8 per 100,000 women).<sup>64</sup> In many states, Vietnamese women have the highest rate of cervical cancer of any ethnic group.<sup>65</sup> As another example, take the case of obesity and high blood pressure: in general, API adults have lower rates of being overweight or obese and lower rates of hypertension as compared to Whites.<sup>66</sup> Pacific Islanders are, however, 30% more likely to be obese and to have higher blood pressure than White adults.<sup>67</sup> While most health indicators for APIs overall suggest that this population is one of the healthiest in the USA, there is great diversity within this group and marked health disparities exist for specific segments that can be obscured by aggregated data. We suspect that these findings are the tip of the iceberg of ethnic variations of both incidence rates as well as response to medical treatment.

Despite the limitations in the data for the API group, there are some health disparities faced by the API community meriting attention. We know that nationally, Asians suffer disproportionately from tuberculosis and Hepatitis B. In 2007, tuberculosis was 24 times more common among Asians, with a case rate of 26.3 as compared to 1.1 for the White population.<sup>68</sup> Asians also have a high prevalence of the following conditions and risk factors: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, HIV/AIDS, smoking, and liver disease. The leading causes of death for APIs nationally are cancer, heart disease, stroke, unintentional injuries (accidents), and diabetes.<sup>69</sup>

Among Pacific Islanders (PI) explicitly, many community members face serious health issues. Prevalence of chronic health conditions associated with heart disease, the leading cause of death in the USA, is high among PI adults. Heart-related chronic health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity are also associated with other life-threatening illnesses. Cancer incidence and deaths are disproportionately high for both PI men and women, especially Samoans and Native Hawaiians. Both adults and adolescents have disproportionate burdens of mental health problems, and the latter contemplate, plan or attempt suicides at a higher rate than all other racial groups in the USA. Both adults and children have some of the highest asthma rates of all races. And the rates of marijuana and illegal drugs are higher among Pacific Islander youth than their peers in most other racial groups, as are the rates of violence and victimization. Health disparities, when measured across the USA, affect Pacific Islanders early on in the life cycle, with infant mortality, low birth weight, and preterm births of some Pacific Islander ethnic groups disproportionately higher than for most other racial and ethnic groups.

Mounting evidence is emerging from perhaps the most insidious dimension of cultural bias: that the mainstream health industry has worked from the assumption that all human bodies are alike – instead, this presumption is being increasingly deemed damaging to the health of those in the API community, particularly in the field of mental health. Increasingly health researchers are finding that treatment regimens cannot be generalized across communities as there are differences in drug metabolism according to ethnicity. In one collection of these findings, researchers have found ethnic differences in the effects of blood pressure drugs, neurotransmitters, sedatives, anti-psychotic medications, and pain inhibitors.<sup>70</sup> With attention to this issue initiated by the US Surgeon General in 1999, the report states:

There is mounting awareness that ethnic and cultural influences can alter an individual's responses to medications. The relatively new field of ethnopsychopharmacology investigates cultural variations and differences that influence the effectiveness of pharmacotherapies used in the mental health field. These differences are both genetic and psychosocial in nature. They range from genetic variations in drug metabolism to cultural practices that affect diet, medication adherence, placebo effect, and simultaneous use of traditional and alternative healing methods... there is wide racial and ethnic variation in drug metabolism.<sup>71</sup>

The Surgeon General's report also details the shortcomings of conventional health services to communities of color, emphasizing issues of mistrust, stigma, cost, and clinician bias in service delivery. Some additional features of cultural bias includes lack of sufficient attention to the religious and spiritual frames with which different API communities understand health and disease, lack of attention to folk and traditional health practices, differences in non-verbal communication, lack of knowledge of dialects (even when translation is provided), and family inclusion in treatment plans.<sup>72</sup> Each API community has its own traditions, beliefs, protocols and conventions, and health care practitioners are urged to at the very least become competent in these specifics to ensure that appropriate care is available for API communities.

Preferred would be to expand the array of culturally-specific health care providers in the region so that API community members enter health care spaces as insiders instead of outsiders, and are staffed by personnel who have a lived experience of their particular community. Such service would increase the likelihood that the API community uses services more preventatively and earlier in the course of disease.

Contributing factors to poor health outcomes for Asians and Pacific Islander include language and cultural barriers, stigma associated with certain conditions, and lack of health insurance.<sup>73</sup> Consider

what happens when members of Asian and Pacific Islander communities cannot be served in languages in which they are fluent, when APIs arrive in this country without knowledge of the complexities of the health care system and the health insurance system, with health care providers who are not culturally competent, and in a context of health knowledge that has not been adequately researched for those who are Asian and Pacific Islanders.

In a recent gathering of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), members shared stories of their experiences in health care. Most present faced challenges in accessing quality health care. Here are four of the many stories among the experiences of those present:

*Growing up, I had to provide translation of medical terminology and for the health care providers for my sick relatives. As a youth with no knowledge of medicine, this was a very scary time in my life because I felt I couldn't mess up.*

*Whenever I call to schedule appointments, they will hear my accent and transfer calls continuously. I notice a major difference in the kind of care they give me.*

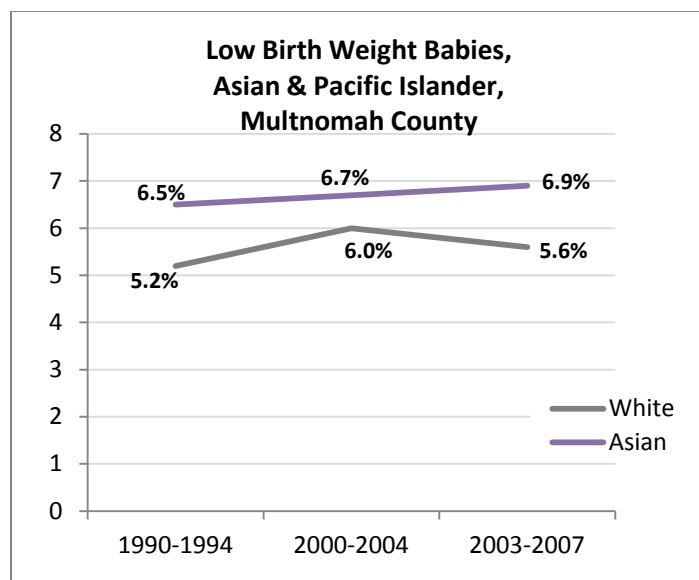
*My sister was sick for 10 years before she was finally diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She wasn't diagnosed early enough because they said Asians rarely got it. Within 10 years, the disease just got worse.*

*My wife began experiencing stomach pains too hard to ignore... Throughout the visit, they would not find a local Burmese interpreter, someone who could explain to me what was happening with my wife. They had me talk to somebody over the phone who could not physically show me how to use the equipment they gave me or the medication I was supposed to give my wife. When we left the hospital, they gave me two pieces of paper and promised to have it translated. They said it was too expensive to have it translated. They promised to have a live interpreter at the hospital to explain to me what will happen next and what I could expect for when we went home. There was no one there. They promised that someone would come to our house to show me how to care for my wife and ease her pain. No one came.*

These health challenges exist as a result of culturally inappropriate care. It is time to advance real solutions and expand both the cultural competence of mainstream health providers at the same time as the availability of culturally-specific health services are expanded.

Locally, the health of those in the API community has deteriorated. Data on local racial disparities is available from Multnomah County's Health Equity Initiative. In their first study, disparities were found to exist in two areas: low birth weights and lack of prenatal care. In their second study, low birth weight disparities disappeared, but high homicide rates were identified. Asian women remained less likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy than Whites, and Asians in Multnomah county have a homicide rate almost twice as high as Whites.<sup>74</sup> In the most recent study (and gathering data to 2007), these disparities continue and another has been added to the list: low birth weight babies.<sup>75</sup> This deterioration is of deep concern to the API community, particularly as the community had made gains in the early 2000s, but these gains are lost by later in the decade.





Sources: Multnomah County Health Department, 2006, 2008 & 2011.<sup>76</sup> These are measured as percents of live births.

Low birth weights are correlated to an assortment of troubling physical conditions including learning disabilities, failure to thrive, increased hospitalization, and a host of emotional, cognitive and social conditions such as delays in social development and shyness.<sup>77</sup> In adulthood, those who were born at low weights are at higher risk for unemployment and low income,<sup>78</sup> as well as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.<sup>79</sup> The API community is deeply troubled by this trend.

Many in the API community arrived here as refugees. The refugee experience is one that has been closely tied with significant mental health challenges. While economic supports are provided for refugees for a period of eight months, and those with families are eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, there is a requirement to take the first job one is offered, even if the wages cannot support the family and even if it is a position considerably below the professions in which one is experienced and credentialed. As a result of this underemployment and ongoing issues of racial discrimination and social exclusion, coupled with the health challenges of being a survivor of dislocation and violence, Asian refugees are at considerable risk for mental health challenges such as depression and social isolation.

The impact of this pattern is that local refugees are much more likely to require mental health services across all age levels of the Asian population as the prevalence of refugee-related trauma (particularly post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD) spreads across all ages of refugees. This will pose a supplemental need for supportive educational contexts, as the impacts of PTSD and other mental health challenges stretch into all areas of life.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that 10% of refugees have chronic pre-war mental health issues, another 10% have psychosocial dysfunctions that affect themselves and their communities, and the remainder face significant distress and suffering.<sup>80</sup> In total, more than 50% of refugees are in need of mental health supports. Summarizing these experiences, the WHO reports:

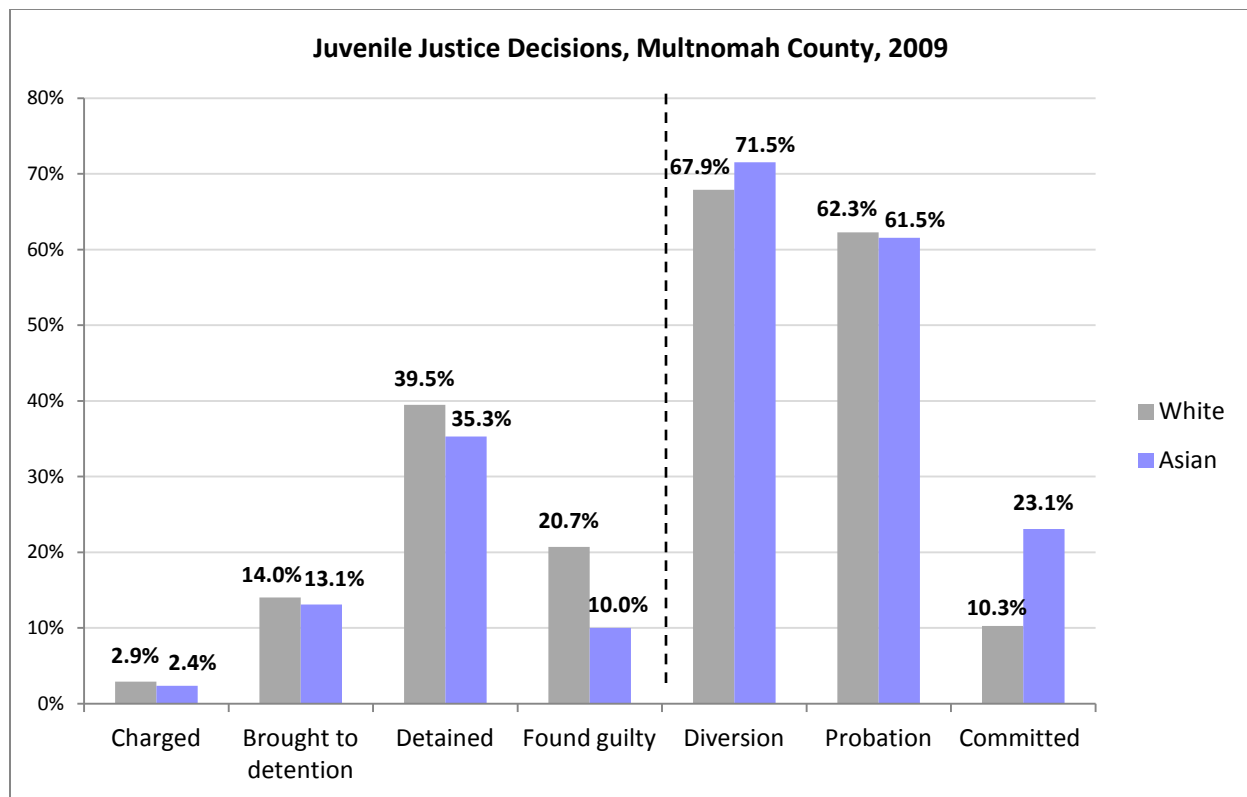
Traumatic experiences such as killings, material losses, torture and sexual violence, harsh detention and uprooting, all affect people's behavior for generations. Life in overcrowded camps, deprivations, uncertainty over the future, disruption of community and social support networks lead to psychosocial dysfunctioning.<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore, the duration of needed supports extends for generations, rather than the brief state of formal supports provided by the Federal government. Three supplemental challenges exist: language barriers in receiving care, the absence of culturally-appropriate services, and the reluctance many have in seeking assistance for health difficulties, particularly mental health supports.

### **Juvenile Justice and Adult Corrections**

Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice (DCJ), in examining representation issues in juvenile justice, has confirmed that the experience of minority youth in the justice system differs from their White counterparts. The ways in which this experience differs varies by community.

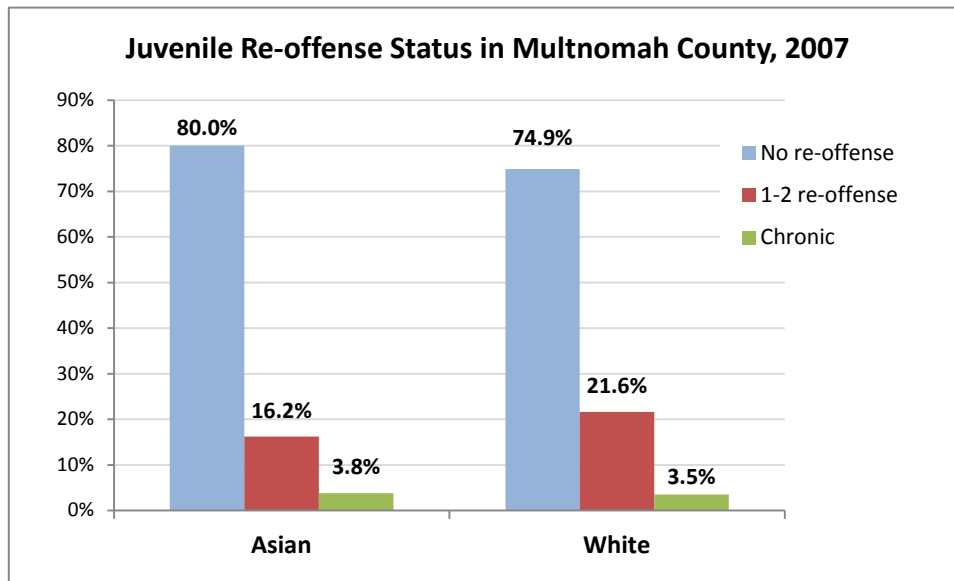
The most recent analysis of juvenile minority representation undertaken by DCJ reveals that for most youth of color, the proportion of youth referred to the criminal justice system is greater than the proportion residing in the county. This is not, however, the case for Asian youth. The proportion of Asian youth referred to the criminal justice system was somewhat less than the proportion residing in the county. Only 2.4% of Asian youth were charged by the police in 2009; thus about half as many Asian youth were referred into the juvenile justice system with criminal charges as one might expect, given this population's size.<sup>82</sup>



Source: Author's calculations based on data from Wu & Rhyne (2010).<sup>83</sup>

When Asian youth did have a run-in with law enforcement in 2009, they were about as likely to be brought to detention as White youth, and less likely to be detained. As for the dispositions of their cases, Asian youth were somewhat more likely to be required to participate in a diversion program, equivalently likely to be placed on probation, yet much more likely to be given a custodial sentence.<sup>84</sup> Rates are more than double that of Whites.

Asian youth are somewhat less likely to re-offend than Whites. While they are about as likely as Whites to be chronic re-offenders (see chart below), Asians make up only a small proportion of recidivists in Multnomah County's juvenile justice system.<sup>85</sup>



Source: Wu & Rhyne (2009).

Some of the positive trends seen for youth in the juvenile justice system are mirrored in the adult correctional system. Statistics available from the Department of Corrections on adults reveal that in October of 2009, Asians and Pacific Islanders were under-represented in the Oregon Department of Corrections population in Multnomah County, making up 3% of the non-incarcerated community corrections population but 6.4% of adults in the county.<sup>86</sup>

The starting point of engagement in the adult correctional system is being stopped by the police. In this process, Asians are not more likely to be stopped by police, although other communities of color are much more likely than their numbers warrant to be so stopped. The next stage of involvement is in being searched by police – it is here that those in the API community are more likely to be unnecessarily searched.<sup>87</sup> When searched, however, illegal items (drugs, weapons or the products of illegal activity like theft) are less likely to be found on those from the API community than Whites. The conclusion here is that using racial identity to inform the police as to when to search is an ineffective crime control measure and needs to cease. The City of Portland's police department officially recognized in 2006 that it used racial profiling in policing but is publicly committed to reducing this practice.

At the latter part of engagement with the criminal justice system (being incarcerated), Asian and Pacific Islanders are under-represented in the incarcerated population in Oregon. The Oregon-wide data (the absence of correctional facilities in the county makes examining the state-wide data necessary, as residents are spread over the whole state), shows that Asian and Pacific Islanders experience a -57% level of disproportionality with Whites when it comes to incarceration, meaning they are about half as likely to be in the incarcerated population as Whites.<sup>88</sup>

Overall, there are some early signs that the experiences of API youth in the juvenile justice system needs some close attention as the level of committals to custody sentences is higher than numbers warrant. So too our police departments are likely to be over-scrutinizing the behaviors of the adult API community –

a practice that does not bode well for advancing racial justice. Bias reduction, strong accountability practices and improved hiring and retention of API officers are important practices to be continued.

## Child Welfare

Child welfare systems are vulnerable to disproportionality. A look at the child welfare data for children and families of color in Multnomah county shows how race and ethnicity influence family's experiences with this system in the county.<sup>89</sup> Through a review of the essential "decision points" in child welfare, we can study whether or not, and by how much, decisions are made that lead children of different races and ethnicities to have different experiences in the system.

This text will highlight some of the features of these decision points, as we "walk" through the child welfare system and review data on decisions made along the way. To begin, Asian families were reported to the Child Protective Services (CPS) hotline at lower rates than White families.<sup>90</sup> In fact, Asian families were the least likely of any group to be reported to the CPS hotline/intake. This trend results in under-representation of Asians at this stage of the child welfare continuum—Asian families in Multnomah county were 4 times less likely to be reported to CPS than they were represented in the county's general population.

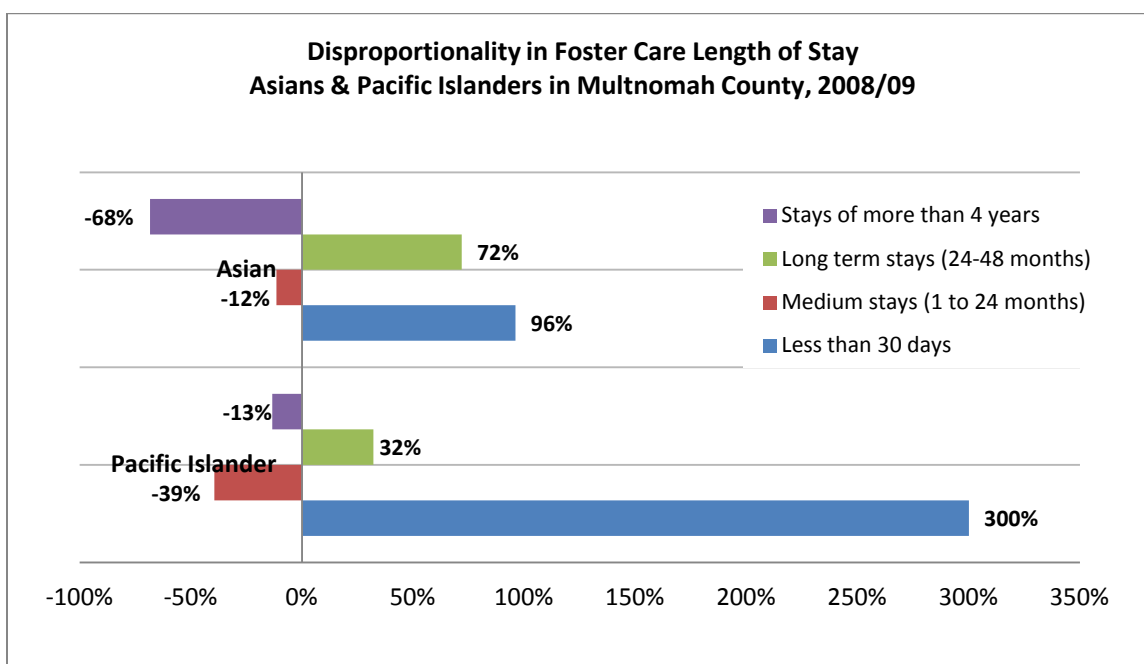
Once a report has been made to the CPS hotline, a worker receiving the call uses set screening criteria to decide whether the report warrants a full assessment/investigation. At this stage, Asians (69.4%) and Pacific Islanders (67.2%) were more likely to be referred for an assessment than Whites (56.7%).<sup>91</sup>

At the next point on the child welfare continuum, the point where an assessment gets conducted, workers make a decision about whether a reason exists to be concerned for the safety of the children in the home. In Multnomah county, Asian families were about as likely as Whites to have rulings that lead to greater involvement with the child welfare system for these families. Pacific Islanders, however, were the least likely group in Multnomah county to be found guilty of the charges that brought them to family court.<sup>92</sup>

When children are removed from their homes, they enter foster care. When we examine how many Asian families are losing their children to child welfare, we find that 5 of every 1,000 Asian children in Multnomah county are in foster care.<sup>93</sup> This is higher than the national average; nationally there are only 2 Asian children (per 1,000 child population) in foster care.<sup>94</sup>

Once a child is removed from the home, it is important to see how quickly the child is reunited with family.<sup>95</sup> Thus an important measure is how long children stay in care. Of the children who were in care during a six-month study period,<sup>96</sup> Asian and Pacific Islander children were over-represented in shorter stays but underrepresented in very long stays. Asian and Pacific Islander children were placed into foster care for short lengths of time at levels higher than White children. At the opposite end of the spectrum, they were in care more than four years at lower rates than White children. However, in long term stays of 2-4 years, both Asian and Pacific Islander children experienced disproportionality, with Asians likely to be in care 2-4 years at rates approaching double those of Whites.<sup>97</sup>

In the below graph, we reproduce the length of stay data reported in the above text. With the concentration of Whites in foster care at each length of stay taken as the benchmark of 1, this chart shows how Asians and Pacific Islanders fare in stays of various lengths.



Source: Adapted from Miller, Cahn, Bender, Cross-Hemmer, Feyerherm, & White (2009).

The pattern here appears to illustrate that Asian and Pacific Islander children have more rapid return to their families than White children, with fewer children who remain in care longer than 4 years. This part of the story is good news for Asian and Pacific Islander families. However, when children do not return quickly, they tend to stay in care longer term (2-4 years) at higher levels than White children.<sup>98</sup>

In summary, the good news for Asian families is that they are under-represented in the child welfare system overall. However, while Asian children are under-represented according to their population size locally, they still experience foster care placement at higher rates in Multnomah county compared to national levels. In addition, they disproportionately experience long term stays (2-4 years) in foster care compared to White children.

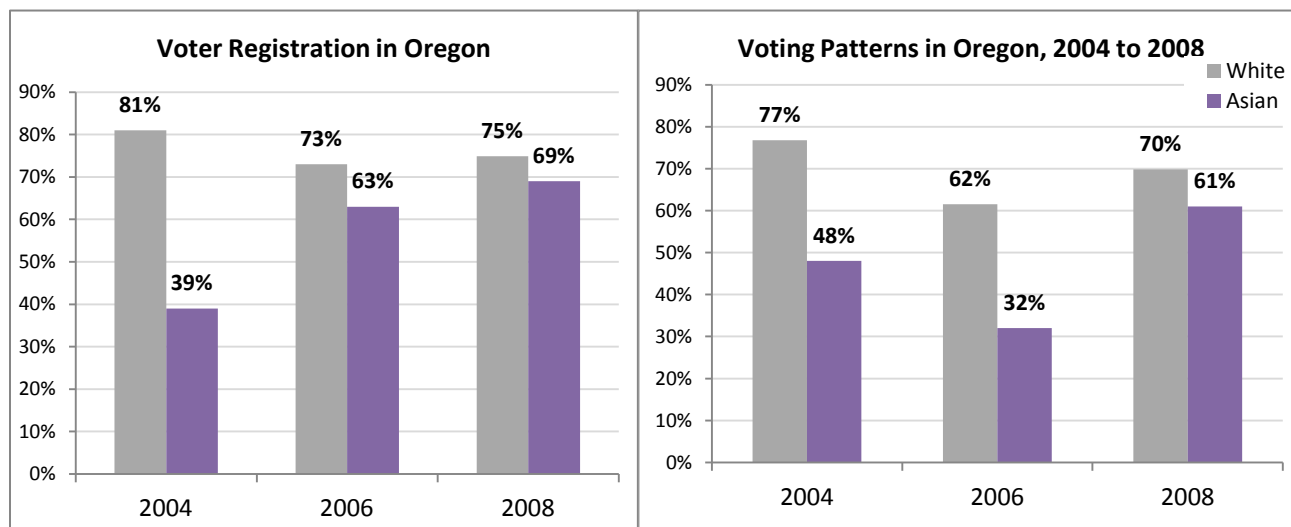
## Civic Engagement

The levels of civic engagement in a community, or the level people in the community are taking individual and collective actions to identify and address issues of public concern, are one indicator of community-wide well-being. Civic health and social capital have well-established connections to issues such as crime, education, public health, and democracy.<sup>99</sup> Voting and volunteering are the most frequently measured forms of civic engagement.

There are two sets of data available that relate to voting. The first is “voter registration” (signaling a lasting intention to participate in elections) and “voter turnout” (actual numbers of people who voted).

We will look at both in turn. The charts below report data on the percentages of citizens voting and registered to vote. As the tables below illustrate, for Asians in Oregon the 2008 presidential election brought about increased levels of voter registration and turnout.

Levels of voter registration among Asians approached the levels of Whites in 2008; this is in contrast to voter registration in the previous presidential election year (2004), when levels of registration among Asians were half those of Whites.<sup>100</sup>



Source: November Current Population Survey 2004, 2006, and 2008.

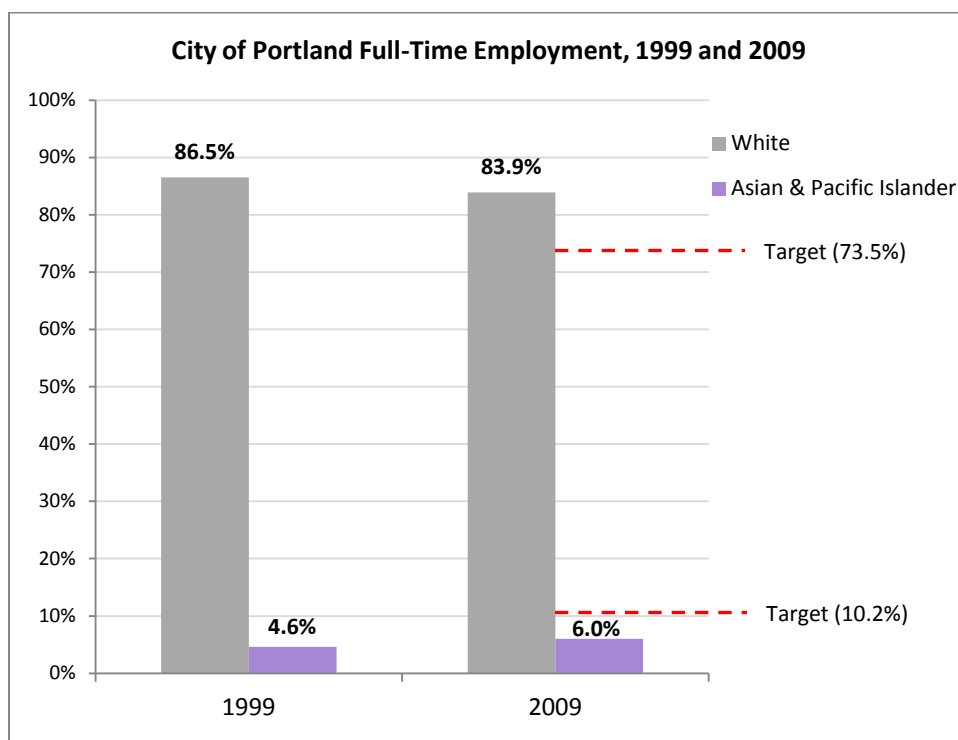
In terms of voting, with voting levels above 60%, Asians in Oregon turned out at higher levels than the national average (49%) for their racial group in 2008.<sup>101</sup> In addition, levels of reported voting among Asians in Oregon increased in 2008 from the previous presidential election year (2004).<sup>102</sup> While participation in the 2008 election showed improvements in civic engagement for Asians, Asians still lagged behind their White counterparts in terms of voter turnout. Fully 70% of White Oregonians reported voting in 2008.

The current economic recession seems to be taking a toll on civic engagement overall. *America's Civic Health Index* for 2009 found that 72% of Americans cut back on time spent volunteering, participating in groups, and doing other civic activities in the past year.<sup>103</sup> However, even in these difficult times, levels of volunteering among Asians rose slightly from 2006 to 2009.<sup>104</sup>

Locally, there is much to take pride in. The efforts of groups such as the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) has spent the last 14 years catalyzing and supporting the civic engagement of the API community in policy debates and advocacy practices to support building a responsive policy environment that advances racial equity. So too the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) has supported the emergence of local leaders, coalitions and networks designed to empower and cultivate community voice and influence over the policy landscape. Together, and with many other API associations and community groups, there is much heightened awareness, engagement and advocacy influence building across the Asian and Pacific Islander community in Multnomah county. Grassroots efforts at building civil society are firmly rooted and becoming a durable feature of the policy landscape.

We now look at hiring in the civil service in the City of Portland and Multnomah County. In Multnomah County, 6.0% of employees are from the API community while 78.5% are White. The target for such representation should be 7.3% for API employment, and 73.7% for Whites. The API community is thus being limited in its access to these jobs and Whites are hired at levels beyond which their numbers warrant.

In the City of Portland, 6% of the full-time workforce is from the API community. The target for such hiring should approx. 10.2%, which would be the level of employment the API community would have if racial equity were in place in City hiring. If equity is in place, the City would be hiring from the community at levels reflective of the population's actual numbers. City jobs are good jobs, with decent wages and working conditions. The API community, as shown below, is deeply under-represented in this civil service, and the White community is over-represented.



Source: Office of Management and Finance, City of Portland, 2010.

At Portland Community College (the region's largest community college), the API community does not fare well as employees of this campus. The API community makes up only 5.2% of administrators and managers, and only 4.7% of faculty members. With a student population that is 71.5% White, the College faces an urgent need to diversify, as only 13.0% of its teaching faculty is of color. Even those hired this year fare no better, as hiring practices remained firmly White, as 86.2% of its faculty hirings were White.

A final dimension of civic engagement requires us to turn the lens towards mainstream society to see how well the API community is supported by philanthropic organizations and the amount of funding that the API community receives by foundations in Oregon. The news is not good, as below we see that while the API community is 4.9% of Oregon's population, it receives only 0.1% of the funding.



2008, Oregon	Size of Population	Amount of Foundation Funding
Whites	80.4%	90.4%
Asian & Pacific Islanders	4.9%	0.1%

Source: Foundation Center, 2010.<sup>105</sup>

As a sector that has significant potential to support civic engagement of the API community, foundations give White communities much more than their fair share of economic support. There is urgent need for improvement in this sector, particularly because it is one of the few sectors that could effectively support civic engagement across the community. The API community looks forward to this sector grappling with this issue and establishing firm commitments to promote racial equity across the region.

### Comparison with King County

The damaging conditions facing the Asian community, while not unique to Multnomah county, are worse than the neighboring region of King county, home to Seattle. The chart below is complex, so let's take our examination in stages. First, look at just the Asian experience in every measure – across all, the conditions facing the Asian community are significantly more challenging. This will be illustrated more clearly in graphs later in this section. Next, look at the calculation of disparities which measure the gap between Whites and Asians. Here, four of five measures are worse.

2009	Child Poverty		Rent Burden (paying 30% or more)		Full time, year round median income		Occupation as managmt/prof		Education attainment (with university degree)	
	Multnomah	King	Multnomah	King	Multnomah	King	Multnomah	King	Multnomah	King
White	14.0%	5.5%	48.9%	43.9%	\$44,262	\$57,822	47.4%	50.9%	41.9%	48.4%
Asian	12.6%	9.3%	51.2%	41.9%	\$35,967	\$48,618	36.4%	49.2%	34.8%	51.1%
Disparities	-10.0%	69.1%	4.7%	-4.6%	23.1%	18.9%	30.2%	3.5%	20.4%	-5.3%
Disparities	Better		Worse		Worse		Worse		Worse	

Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2009.

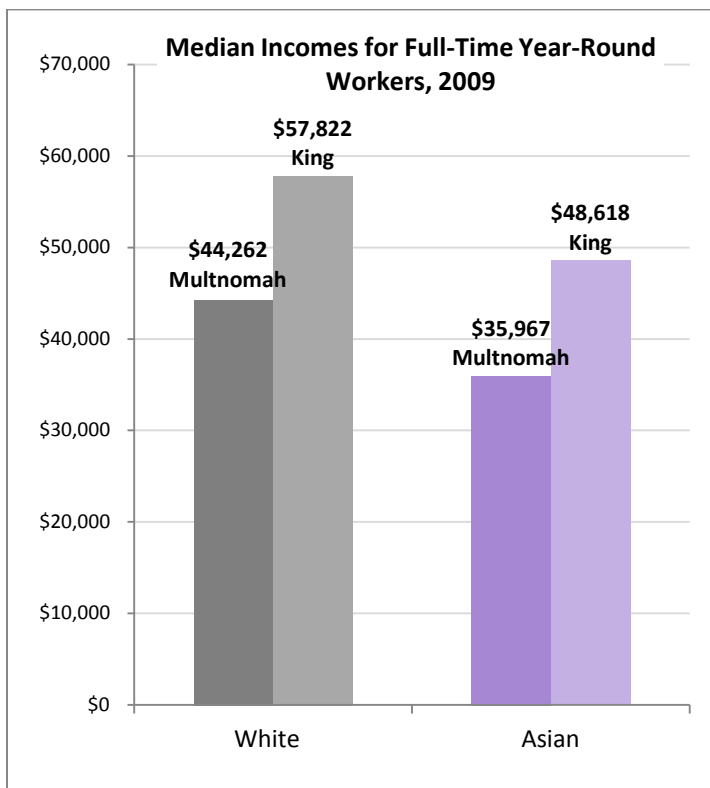
Finally, let's scan the magnitude of these variations (summarized below). There is an average "worse" at 282%, which is close to a magnitude of three times wider disparities. In short, one can see that the conditions that might lead to a thriving Asian community do not exist here, yet they exist (comparatively) less than 170 miles to the north.

Child poverty	791%	better
Rent burden	202%	worse
Individual incomes	22%	worse
Better occupations	763%	worse
University degrees	485%	worse
<b>Average "worse"</b>		<b>282.4%</b>

The disparities are worse here than in King county, and the magnitude of these variations is large. Additional features of this comparison are important to highlight, by showing explicitly how the local

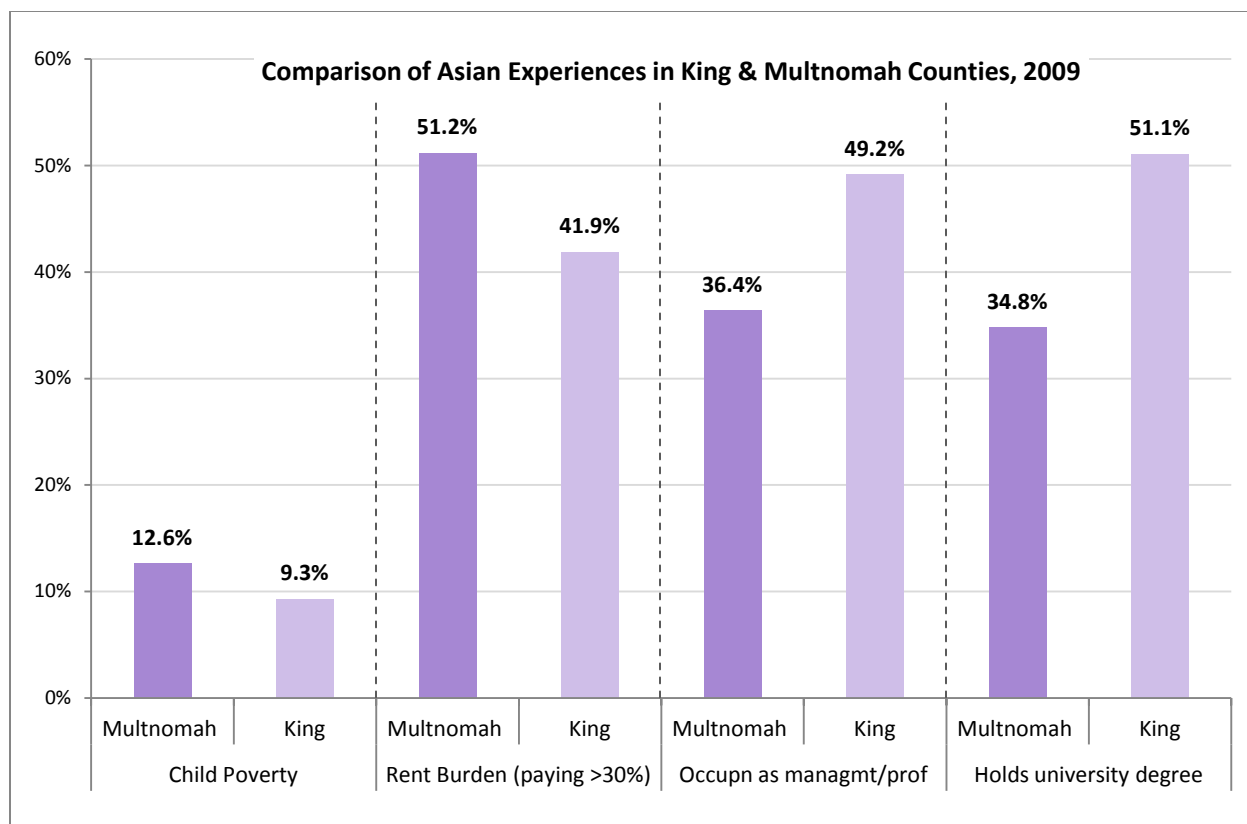
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experience compares with those of King county. First, let's look at annual incomes of full-time, year-round workers. Asians locally are unable to attain incomes that attain parity with those in King county.



Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2009.

And despite there being a much lower disparity in child poverty here, the rate of child poverty in Multnomah county is still 35% higher locally than in King county for the Asian community. Look below for details of these comparisons.



Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2009.

Above we can see that on every measure that Asians are faring worse in Multnomah county – as rent burdens affect 20% more of the Asian community, employment in management and professional occupations is about 30% worse, and the number of Asians holding a university degrees is a steep drop of 45% worse levels, compared with Asians in King county.

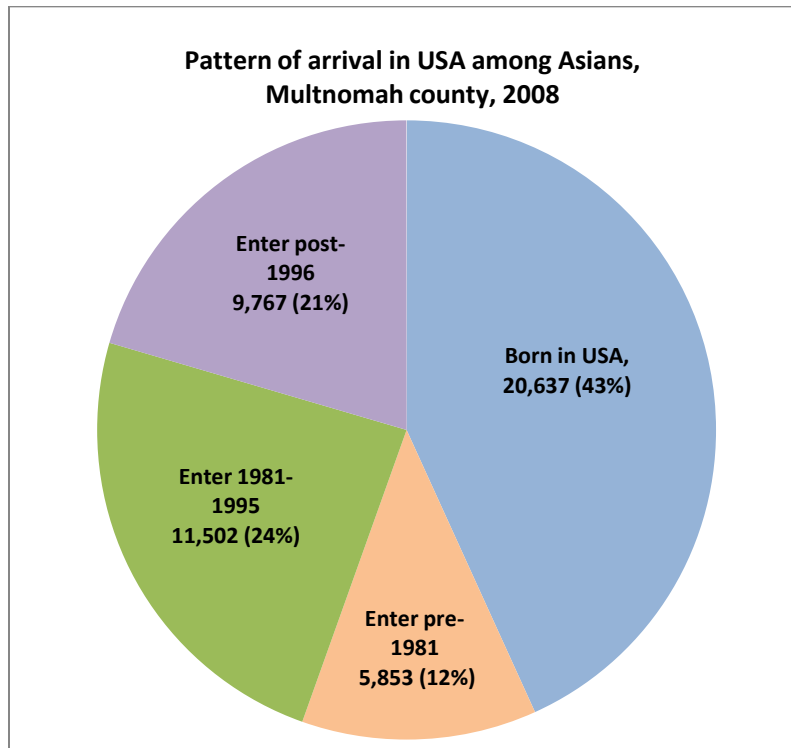
## Waves of Immigration

We have been able to access data on the Asian community and its various waves of immigration through a custom data run of the American Community Survey in 2008. Four distinct waves of Asian arrivals into Multnomah county (as both immigrants and refugees) have been disaggregated from the data. Sufficiently large numbers of community members allowed us to look at the following waves of immigration:

- Earliest waves, resulting in community members being born in the USA
- Year of entry before 1981
- Year of entry between 1981 and 1995
- Year of entry after 1995 (1996 to 2008)

## Arrival patterns

In the below figure, we can see that the majority of the Asian community was born in the USA. This is a surprising finding given that we had initially assumed that the relatively dismal economic performance of the Asian community (compared with the national averages for Asian experiences) was due to a preponderance of recent immigrants in the demographic landscape.

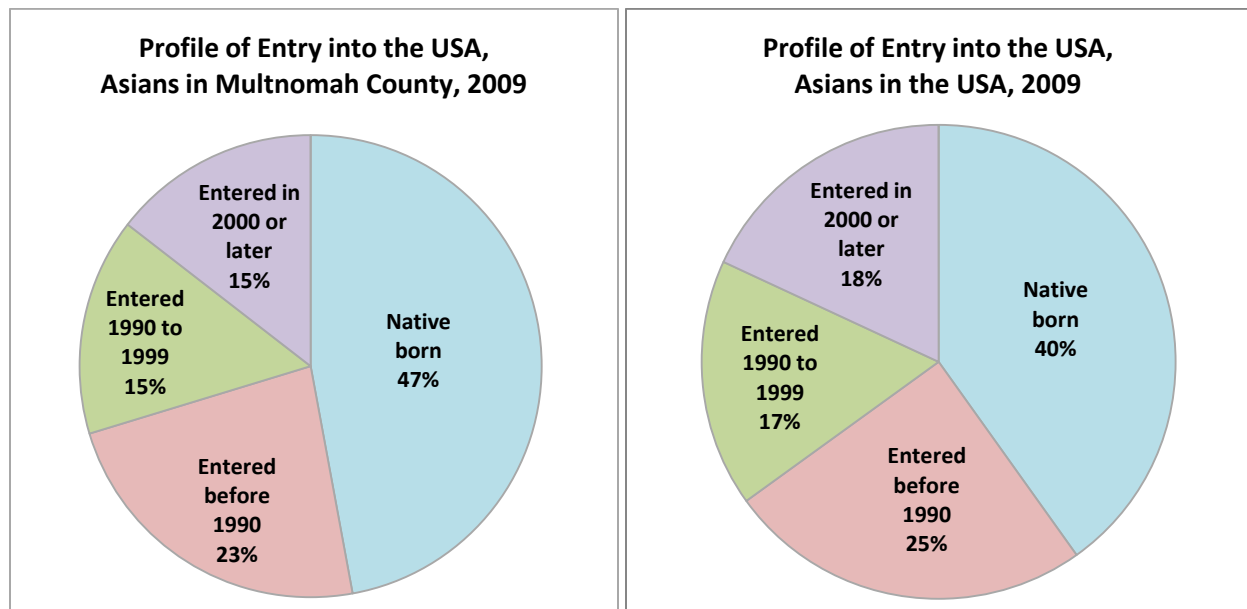


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU.

That said, we need to make comparisons with the US-equivalent data to see if the local Asian profile is much different than the US profile. The size of the “born in the USA” Asian community across the USA averages 38% – actually smaller than the portion in Multnomah county. This causes us to put to rest an earlier hypothesis that API’s weak economic and social performance is due to having a higher level of foreign born Asians in the area.

Let’s look more fully at the local Asian arrival pattern and compare these with the USA pattern. The reason this is so important is that we have been trying to explain the weak economic and social performance of the Asian community when compared with the USA profile for Asians. As detailed on p.92 of the Coalition of Communities of Color’s first research report,<sup>106</sup> and updated to 2009 for the *Executive Summary* of this report, the local Asian experience bears much greater resemblance to other communities of color than its national counterparts which actually outperforms Whites in many measures such as education, income, poverty and occupation. We have been trying to make sense of this variance and the data shared in this section of this report begins to illuminate that our hypotheses are not in evidence. Our working hypothesis had been that immigration patterns were significantly different than the US Asian profile and that the region had a larger portion of new immigrants and a smaller portion of US-born Asians in the region.

Well... such is not the case. The patterns of arrivals into the USA show us that there is a different pattern at the local and national level, but this pattern does not explain the lower achievements of the API community in Multnomah county. To highlight the comparison between the USA Asian profile with the Multnomah county Asian profile (already posted above), we will reproduce both below.



Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2009.

What does this comparison reveal? The first is as already described – that there are a higher portion of Asians who were born in the USA. The second is that the most recent arrivals (arriving after 2000) are smaller than the USA-level of recent arrivals to the USA. This pattern puts to rest another of our hypotheses – that we have a higher level of new immigrants than the USA-level data. In fact, the local API community has an even smaller level of new immigrants.

This leaves only one more hypothesis to check – that we have a higher portion of Asians who arrived here as refugees. Unfortunately, data is not available for this measure as conventional research tools do not ask of one's legal status (except whether or not one obtains citizenship) on conventional databases. Instead, we will look at the percentage of the community profile that is from typically refugee-generating countries and do a comparison with similar USA-level data.

% of Asian community in USA & Multnomah County from Refugee-Generating Countries		
	USA	Multnomah County
Vietnamese	11%	27%
Cambodian	2%	3%
Hmong	1%	1%
Laotian	1%	7%
Sri Lankan	0%	0%
Burmese	0%	0%
Bangladeshi	1%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>38%</b>

Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2008.

But before we can assert that a high portion of refugees are the cause of the local Asian challenges, we have one more piece of data to look at – the comparisons between the local Vietnamese experience and the national Vietnamese experience. As the reader will see in the latter part of this report, the local Vietnamese have a much worse experience than the average for the Vietnamese community across the USA. Incomes are greatly suppressed, as are occupational profile and educational attainment. So too is the local unemployment rate among the Vietnamese, with local Vietnamese having almost double the level of unemployment. Unfortunately, this is the only community for whom we are able to do this comparison as the data disaggregated for other refugee-based communities is not available.

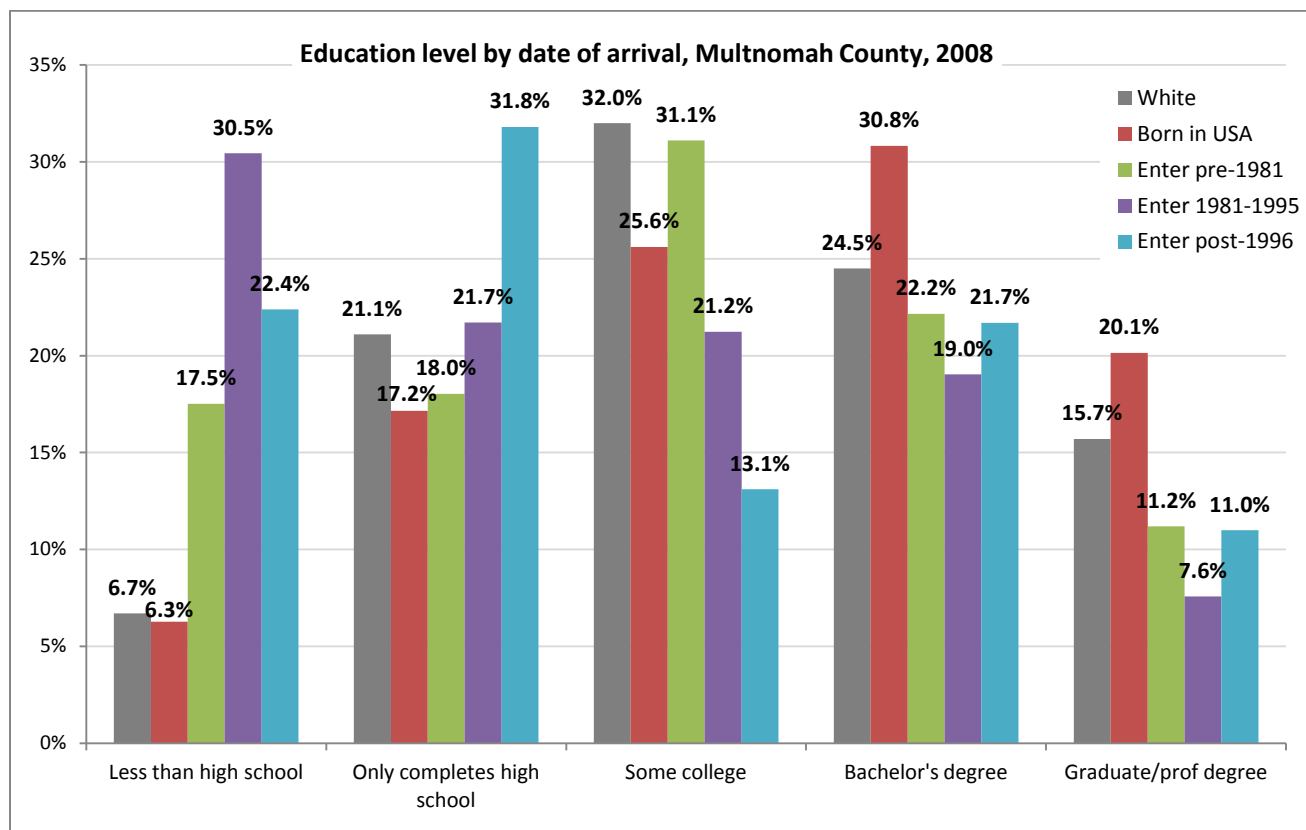
Multnomah county's pattern of arrivals from the Asian continent does indeed illustrate that significantly more of the API community are likely to arrive as refugees. At a level more than double that of the USA averages, the region is home to many more refugees than Asian communities elsewhere in the USA. But in the only direct comparison the researchers were able to conduct (the Vietnamese), the lived experience is dramatically worse locally than nationally – and thus causing us to reject the hypothesis that it is the composition of the API community that contributes to the weak local experiences. So too is the composition of the community based on dates of arrival into the USA: in this dimension, there should be an enhancement of the local community, as fewer newcomers and more native-born APIs live here compared to the national totals. The net impact suggests that it is not the composition of the local API community that accounts for the corrosion of the local API experience.

From the above data, we can determine that the challenges facing the API community (when compared with the API community nationally) cannot be explained by the patterns of arrival into the USA, nor in all likelihood that the larger portion of refugees that live in Multnomah county (again, compared to national averages) can account for these differences. The data contained in this section on timing of arrival to the USA do not explain for the local experiences of the API community. Our second hypothesis, by default, is more strongly evident in explaining these disparities. We advance the supposition that it is the particularly insidious and expansive forms of institutional racism that account for such variations.

## Education

Patterns exist depending on date of arrival in the USA, with the most educationally successful being those who were born in the USA. This success is visible in the very low levels of those who do not complete high school and in the very high levels of those who obtain a university degree (at a total of 50.9% of the population of USA-born Asians, compared with 40.2% of Whites).

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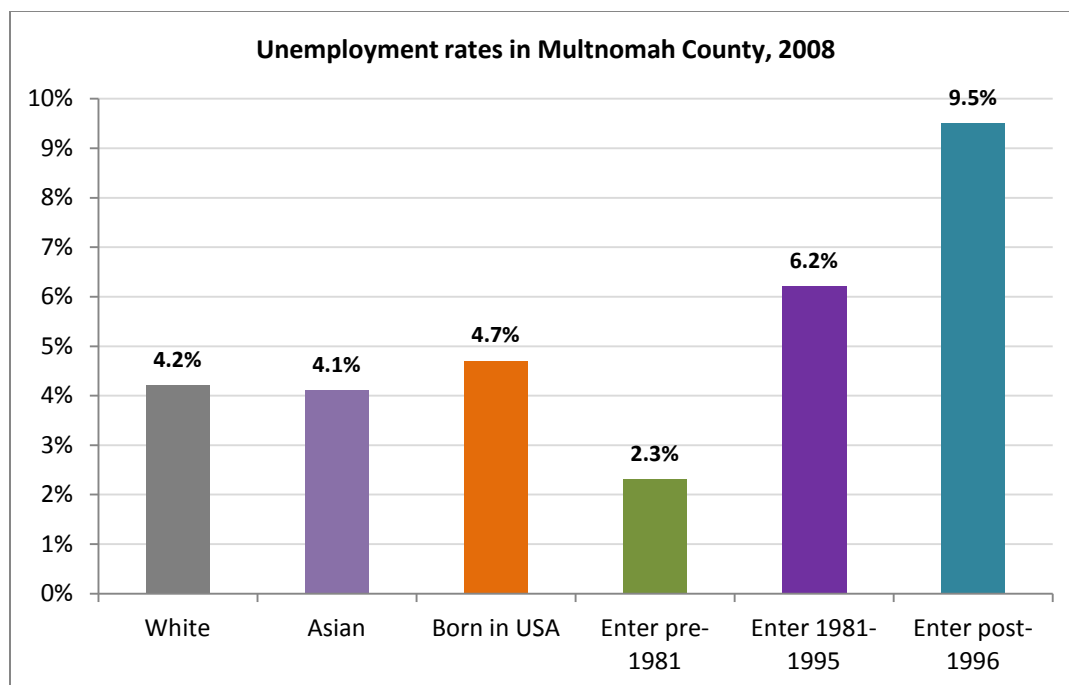
Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU

Yet this pattern is not repeated in any other community. For all Asians migrants<sup>107</sup> to the USA, their education achievement levels are lower than Whites.

Also of interest is that there is not a consistent pattern of duration in the USA being related to educational attainment. One might expect that the longer one is in the country, the higher one's education would be – but this idea does not hold up when faced with the data. In fact, the patterns are very uneven, with the longer term residents being more likely to graduate high school than more recent arrivals. This group, however, is equivalently able to attain university degrees as the most recent arrivals, and both are better able to get such degrees than those who arrived between 1981 and 1995.

## Unemployment

The unemployment rate back in 2008 was equivalent between Asians and Whites. That said, it quickly rises higher for those who have arrived most recently, indicating that their connections to the workforce are less durable and more tenuous than longer-term residents. For the most recent arrivals (in the last 12 years), the unemployment rate is at a disastrous 9.5% - and this is before the depth of Oregon's recession hit and left us with an average unemployment rate of over 10% across the state at the time of these data, but somewhat improved today at 9.1% (November 2011). Unfortunately, insufficient survey size means that these data are not reported for the API community or any other community of color.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU

Those who entered before 1981 entered during the era of the “golden age of capitalism” where prospects for affluence were positive – as improving wages, jobs, working conditions and career options were marked features of this economy. By the early 1980s, the job market slowed and the overt neo-liberal attack on wages and working conditions were underway, along with free trade agreements which shipped jobs overseas and narrowed economic conditions in the USA. Immigrants and refugees who entered after 1981 entered this constrained labor market which held worse conditions for immigrants of color where foreign credentials and experience were not equitably valued by employers. Notice the deterioration in employment as one moves through these periods in time.

Explaining why the “born in USA” category is in the middle of these three immigration eras is a little complex. Our best interpretation is that this figure captures an age dynamic, where while the likelihood of improved employment options is narrowed by age – and that this population includes very youthful workers, while Asians who arrived in these periods were more uniformly ready for work due to having acquired stronger English skills, had more years of education, and already had some work experience that was not ignored by US employers.

While unemployment is worst among recent Asian arrivals, and access to higher education is worst among this group, remember that education does not serve to protect communities of color from unemployment, particularly in this recession. Comparing college-educated adults, the Asian unemployment rate (USA-level data) is 32% higher than for Whites (at 5.0% instead of 3.8%).<sup>108</sup> Unfortunately, no current statistics are available for unemployment figures by race in the local region.

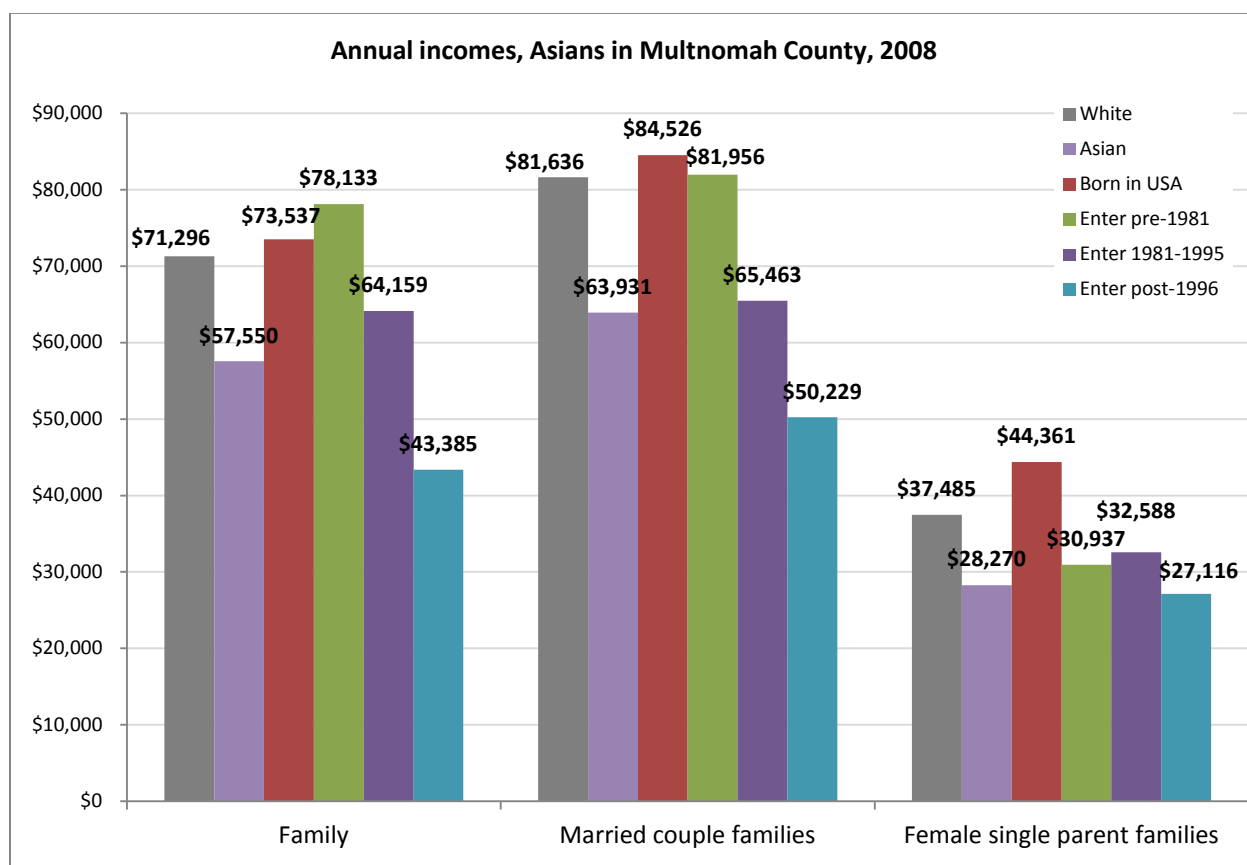
One of the most distressing realities is that this pattern of unemployment reveals that the promise of “just wait it out, and you’ll eventually gain equity in employment” is a false promise. Immigrants today are much less likely to achieve the same standards of living as immigrants who arrived in the USA in past



generations. The patterns of integration and equity attained by ethnic groups such as Italians and the Irish have been destabilized by the intersection of neo-liberal changes in the labor market (towards worse wages, higher unemployment rates, and a shrinking job supply) coupled with racism and a pervasive pattern of institutional racism that narrows employment opportunities for communities of color.

## Incomes

Reproducing the White and Asian income figures reminds us of the magnitude of income disparities facing Asian communities. More complexity comes to the surface as we see how the era of arrival influences these outcomes. The first key finding is that the region's most recent arrivals are most challenged in the earnings arena, being at the lowest end of incomes in every family income configuration.

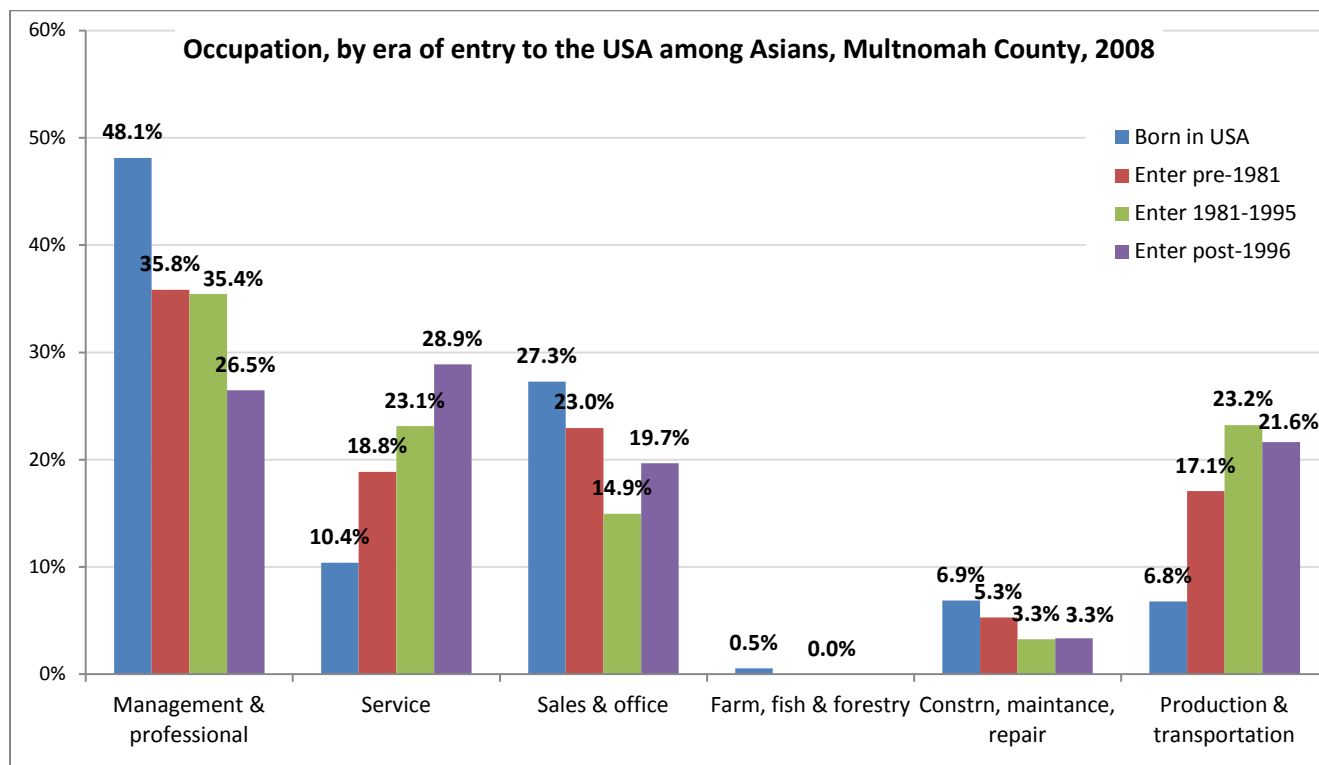


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU.

Other findings reveal that there is a general pattern with very minor exceptions that the longer one is in the USA, the better one's income becomes. On the converse side, the shorter one is in the country, the more rapidly one's income situation deteriorates – with a very steep slope of losses being experienced by this community. This does not mean, however, that length of duration in the country is a protective feature against low income – as other data in this research shows.

## Occupations

In the details that follow, we can see that there is wide variety of occupational “success” for different communities. In general, the longer someone from the Asian community is here, the better one’s access to management and professional jobs (the better jobs) and the less one is likely to be working in service jobs (the worst jobs for pay and working conditions).



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU.

Along with these employment characteristics is amplification of the desirability of various categories of jobs. Those born in the USA have the greatest choices open to them and as the length of stay in the USA shortens, the fewer jobs are available to such workers. We thus can interpret that service jobs are the least desirable (as these have the strongest stratification by length of residency), and second least desirable occupation is that of production and transportation. The most desirable occupation is that of management and profession employment, second are sales and office and third, construction, maintenance and repair.

Chances for Asians to obtain employment in more desirable occupations are greatly improved by increasing one’s length of stay in the country – something one typically has little ability to influence. It would be desirable to share this information with those considering immigration, because far too many Asian (and other) immigrants believe they will be able to attain employment in their desired fields when they come to the USA. These data suggest that breaking into employment in the more desirable fields will be difficult upon entry into the USA. We also can learn from these data that reforms are needed so as to remove institutional barriers for entry into these positions in order to advance racial equity.

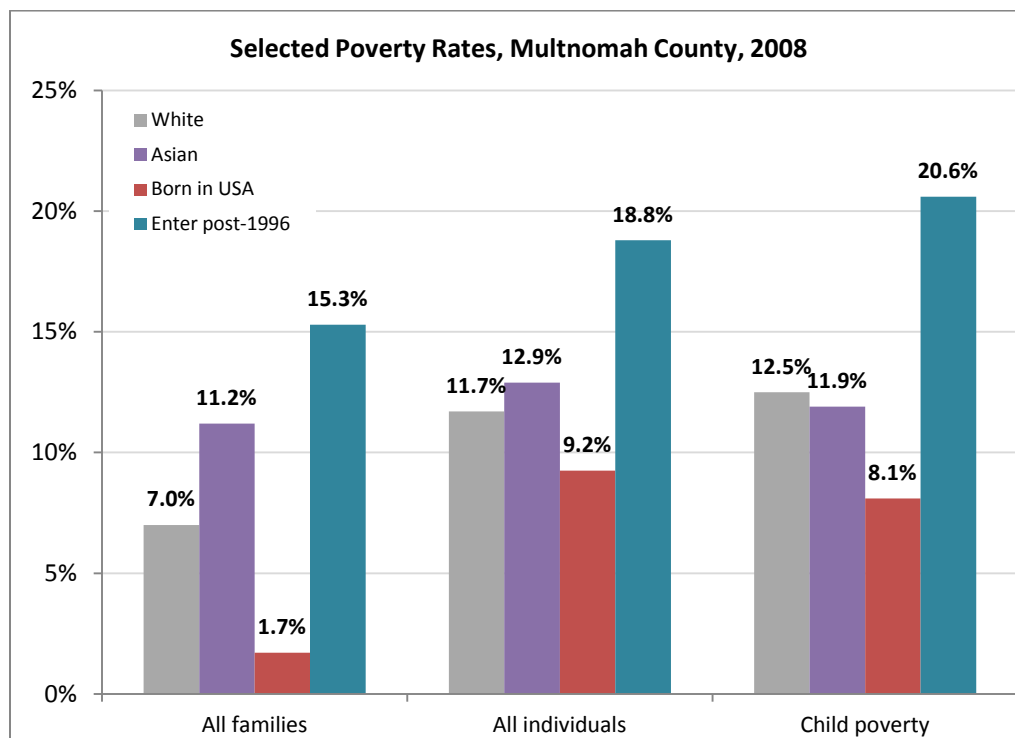
Immigrants frequently arrive in the USA with foreign credentials and foreign work experience, but the federal government has failed to provide a robust recertification or recognition process for such workers. Other nations have recently built such programs into their economic development strategy and Canada, the UK, Australia and Europe have initiatives that have outstripped the USA. Of note, the most recent posting of centralized information on the US Department of Education website is from 2007 and most of the links are no longer active. Rather than an affirming and welcoming document, the opening text reads as follows:

There are over 50 professional fields that are licensed in all U.S. states and territories, of which a majority require some formal postsecondary education or training as a prerequisite for entry. Not all of these professions have specialized credential evaluation services, nor do all of them have procedures for recognizing non-U.S. qualifications.<sup>109</sup>

The region is advised to make such recognition of foreign credentials a key ingredient of economic development strategy, for not only does it provide key cost savings for the government (in terms of essentially not having to pay for this education), but that it is an essential anti-poverty initiative when it forecloses the chance that highly employed immigrants and refugees end up underemployed and unemployed. Foreclosing this “brain waste”<sup>110</sup> makes common sense and good economic development.

## Poverty Levels

Selected family poverty rates are revealed below, again showing the wide variation depending on length of stay in the USA. It is alarming, however, how much greater the poverty level is for recent arrivals to the USA – with levels going as high as 20.6% for child poverty, while the overall Asian figure is almost half that.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU.

Here again, length of stay in the USA serves as a protective feature against family poverty.

## Conclusions

This research into the social and economic experiences of Asians disaggregated by era of entry into the USA (including those born here) shows that the most recent arrivals face the worst set of barriers to successful participation in the USA, as measured by poverty rates, incomes, education, unemployment and access to better jobs that provide improved incomes, working conditions and reduced levels of labor exploitation. This is a pattern that, to some degree, shows signs of improving as Asians gain US experience and credentials. In most cases, there is a glass ceiling to such achievement, but the ceiling appears to be better than many other communities of color. But this is an uneven pattern, marked by one's origin, as will be illustrated in the next section of this report.

## Community-Specific Experiences

At this point in our report, we turn to profile various ethnic groups within the Asian and Pacific Islander community. For the three largest communities (Vietnamese, Chinese and Filipino) we are able to provide a fairly robust profile of the social and economic conditions facing these communities. We then follow with a profile of the communities that together make up the vast majority of the Pacific Islander community: Native Hawaiians, Samoan, Tongan and Guamanian communities. These communities are only possible to examine for the year 2000, as the community is too small to warrant profiling within the American Community Survey, even at the Oregon-wide level. While outdated, this will be “as good as it gets” for the foreseeable future until local databases improve. Following this effort, we will turn to profile additional smaller Asian communities – again using the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHP) work with the Census 2000 data.

## The Chinese Community

Chinese immigration into Oregon begins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As early as 1822, state representative John Floyd urged Congress to settle 2,000 Chinese laborers to the region. Despite opposition from white settlers, Chinese laborers migrated, mainly looking to make money so they could return to China and provide for their families. These sojourners, immigrants who planned on returning to their native country, were hired to do manual labor: mining, railroad construction, laundry, fish canning, and cooking. Some men started small businesses to serve the growing Chinese community. Similar to Chinatowns in other West Coast towns, the early Chinese community in Oregon was made up predominantly of men; an 1870 population statistic lists Chinese male population at 3,232 in contrast to the Chinese women at 98.<sup>111</sup>

Tensions often rose between White and Asian laborers, as employers often pitted the two groups against each other in an effort to drive down wages.<sup>112</sup> This pattern of racial tension rising from native-White groups viewing immigrants as a labor threat is one that was experienced by *Kanakas* earlier and repeats itself often in American and Oregon history.<sup>113</sup> Although Chinese immigrants played a critical role in building the railroads, White workers physically prevented the Chinese from attendance at the

ceremonial driving of the golden spike, the symbol of joining of the two railroads.<sup>114</sup> In 1856-57 the Oregon Territory Legislature approved a \$2 per month tax of all Chinese miners (equivalent to \$50.70 today, or \$608/year). This taxation is noted as the first formal discrimination of the Chinese in Oregon.<sup>115</sup> Reflecting anti-Asian sentiment in the country at large and the west in particular, there would be a number of other anti-Asian legislation passed over the next two centuries.

Until 1882, the majority of Chinese immigrants lived outside of Multnomah county. In 1870 there were 634 Chinese living in Jackson County compared to only 508 in Multnomah county.<sup>116</sup> These numbers increased in subsequent decades. After passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, federal legislation banning the Chinese from entering the US, Chinese communities throughout Oregon migrated towards Multnomah county, where they found employment as cooks, barbers, laborers, and business owners.<sup>117</sup>

Following the Civil War and the end of slavery, when many were working towards granting civil rights to African American citizens, Oregon passed its miscegenation law, prohibiting intermarriage between Whites and “negroes, Chinese, *Kanaka*, and Indians.”<sup>118</sup> Other states carried their own miscegenation laws, but Oregon’s was noticeably different in its inclusion of Chinese, *Kanaka*, and Native Americans. In fact, Oregon had already passed a previous law (in 1862) prohibiting the marriage between Blacks and Whites.<sup>119</sup> Oregon’s miscegenation law was finally repealed in 1951 while Washington’s miscegenation law had been repealed in 1868.<sup>120</sup>

In 1887 more than 30 Chinese miners were massacred in Hells Canyon in northeast Oregon.<sup>121</sup> The massacre and the cover up by the local community are reflective of the hostile environment that existed in Oregon for Chinese residents. Chinese miners were paid ¼ of the wages of White workers,<sup>122</sup> yet animosity from White workers was still directed at Chinese workers, due to racial prejudice and also because they were often hired before White workers were hired.

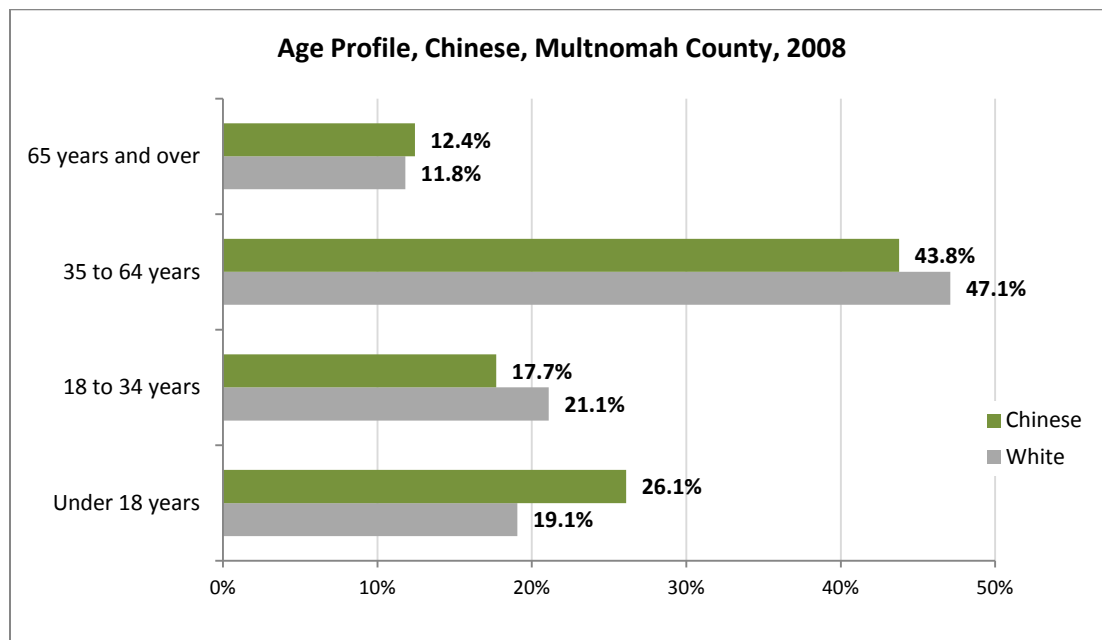
Despite the fact that Chinese in Oregon experienced enormous discrimination and hostility, there have been success stories over the last two centuries. For instance, from 1880 to 1910 Portland’s Chinatown was “second only to San Francisco’s”.<sup>123</sup> The Kam Wah Chung Museum in John Day, on the National Register of Historic Places, reminds visitors of the once-thriving Chinese community in this town. From 1887 to 1948, two of John Day’s most prominent citizens were Ing “Doc” Hay and his partner, Lung On. Dr. Hay treated both Chinese and White clients in his medical practice.<sup>124</sup>

The Chinese community holds standing as the oldest Asian immigrant group of the region, though Pacific Islander communities from Hawaii predated the Chinese. As such, we would expect that the greatest economic progress would have been made, as avenues for assimilation and inclusion would be anticipated. But such is not so, as the Chinese community also faced significant policy barriers to progress, as profiled above and detailed in the specific anti-Asian policy initiatives that have been pronounced through local and national history.

These barriers narrowed options for the Chinese to gain wealth that normally accrued through land ownership, employment, citizenship rights, and marriage to those more affluent. For long periods through Asian history, these rights were denied to the community. In the text that follows, we see the fallout of these policies as the common pathway towards equality was denied the community.

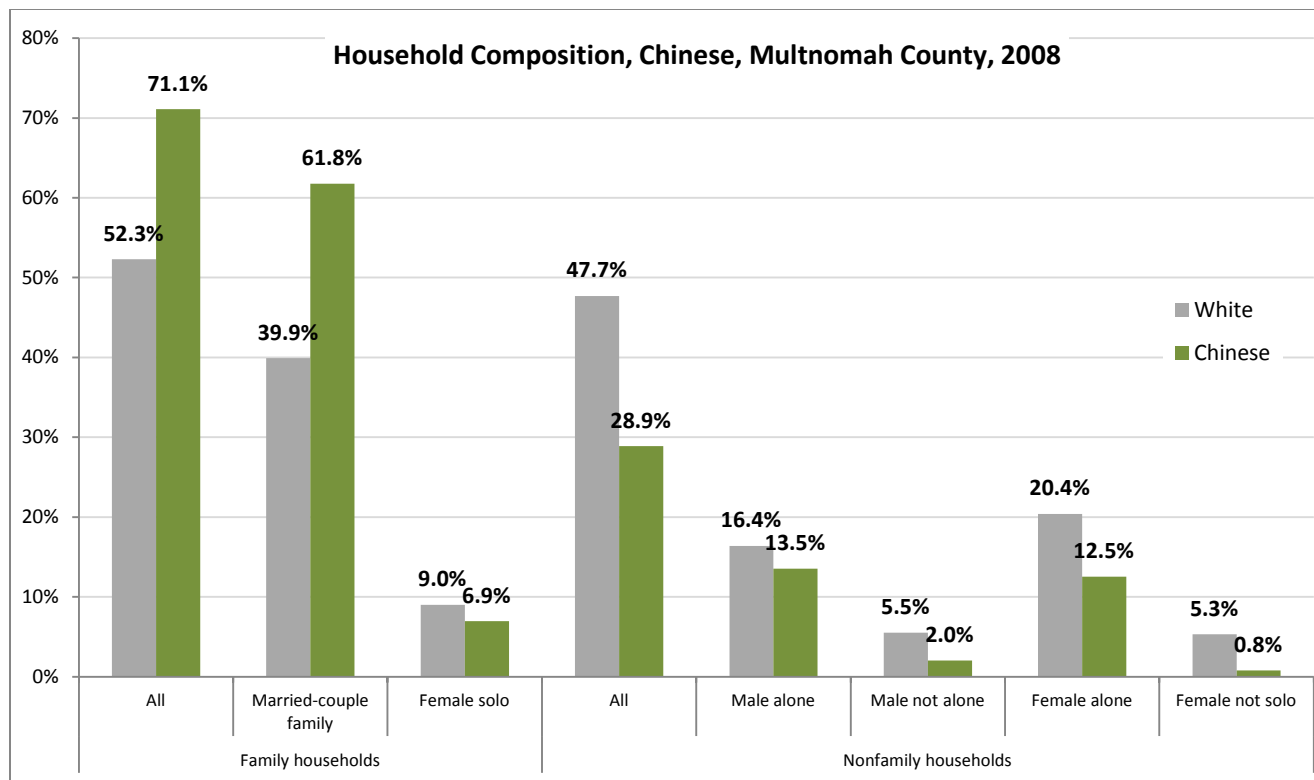
## Demographics

Our community's demographic profile holds the closest similarity with Whites than any other community of color. Chinese hold roughly the same age distribution as Whites among adults, with a somewhat greater number of children than Whites.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Chinese are, however, much more likely to live in families, particularly in married couple families. Correspondingly, they are less likely to live alone and particularly less likely to be females living alone or with friends and non-married partners. This pattern reflects Chinese culture, as the community strongly values immediate families and multigenerational families. In addition, children are almost four times more likely than Whites to be living with grandparents.

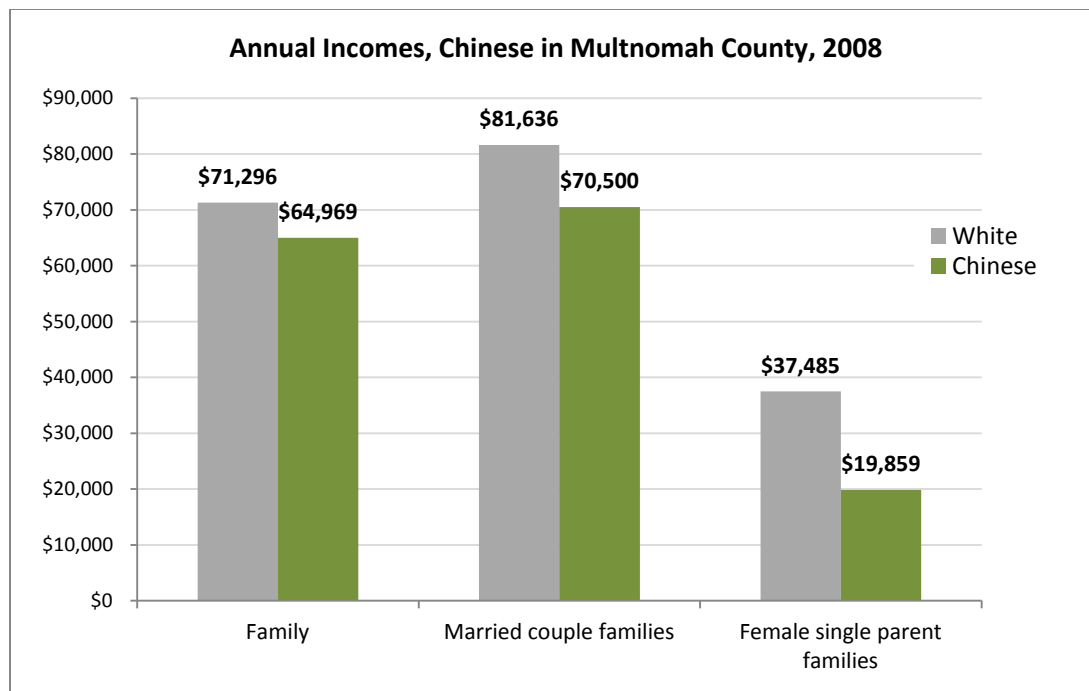


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

The Chinese community tends closely to youth, keeping young adults within their families much longer than Whites. Part of this dynamic is social and part is economic. Launching into independence is expensive, and dollars do not stretch far. In addition, the levels at which independence occurs varies between men and women – for while the rate of independence for Chinese men alone is close to that of Whites (13.5% compared with 16.4% for Whites), the rate of women living alone is almost half that of Whites – at only 12.5% compared with 20.4% for White women.

### Economic Progress

Turning to the Chinese economic situation, we see below the benefits of long-term acculturation with Whites, but still the lack of equity must be highlighted. Incomes remain below that of Whites, but levels are only 9.7% less when comparing families of all types.



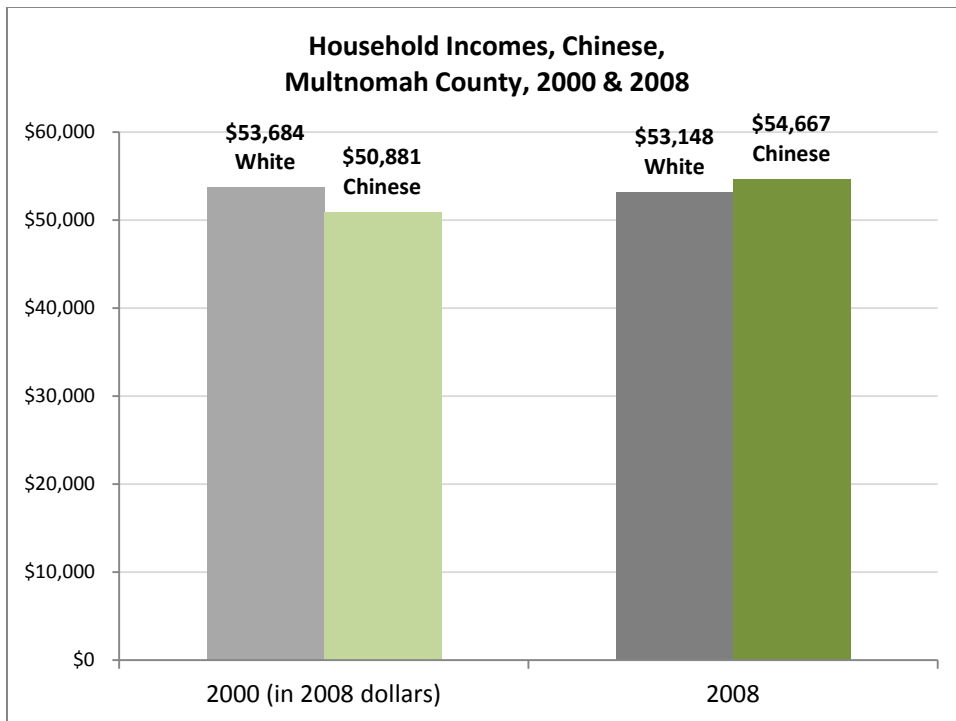
Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

This gap grows for married couple families, and escalates dramatically for single parent families. Chinese single mothers try to pay the bills with incomes that are \$17,626 **less** than White single mothers.

A big question for the Chinese community is how trends are changing over time. One source for these data is the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) which worked with the Census 2000 data sets and disaggregated them for various communities. This allows us to gain insights into how the Chinese community has changed economically (and in a few other features) across the last 8 years. Though this dataset is limited to a more narrow set of experiences, we find it illuminates certain themes that have been directly experienced by the community.

Through this dataset, we can gain insights into Chinese income changes between 2000 and 2008, but only for household incomes. Household income is not a measure that we have used often in this research as it combines all forms of households – those who are living on their own, with friends, families raising children and seniors. It is, however, the only piece of long term trend data for income that we have. We see below that the comparative situation for the Chinese community has changed – moving from having less income than Whites in 2000, to having more in 2008.

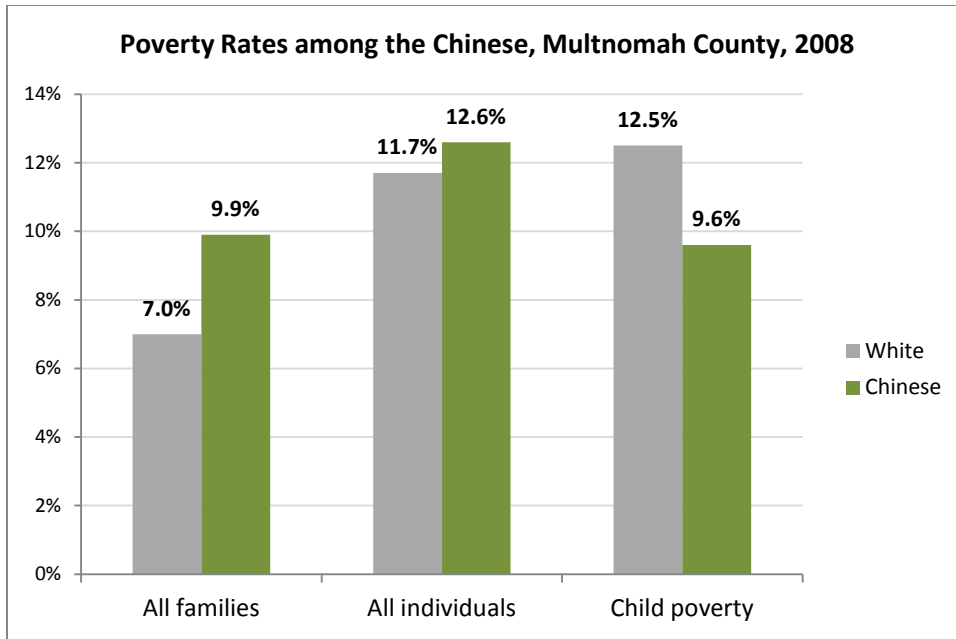




Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).<sup>125</sup>

In the above chart we can see that the incomes of the Chinese community have increased by \$3,786 which is not an insignificant amount but which does not raise the community into a much more significant level of affluence. We can say, however, that the economic prosperity of the Chinese community is improving through this decade.

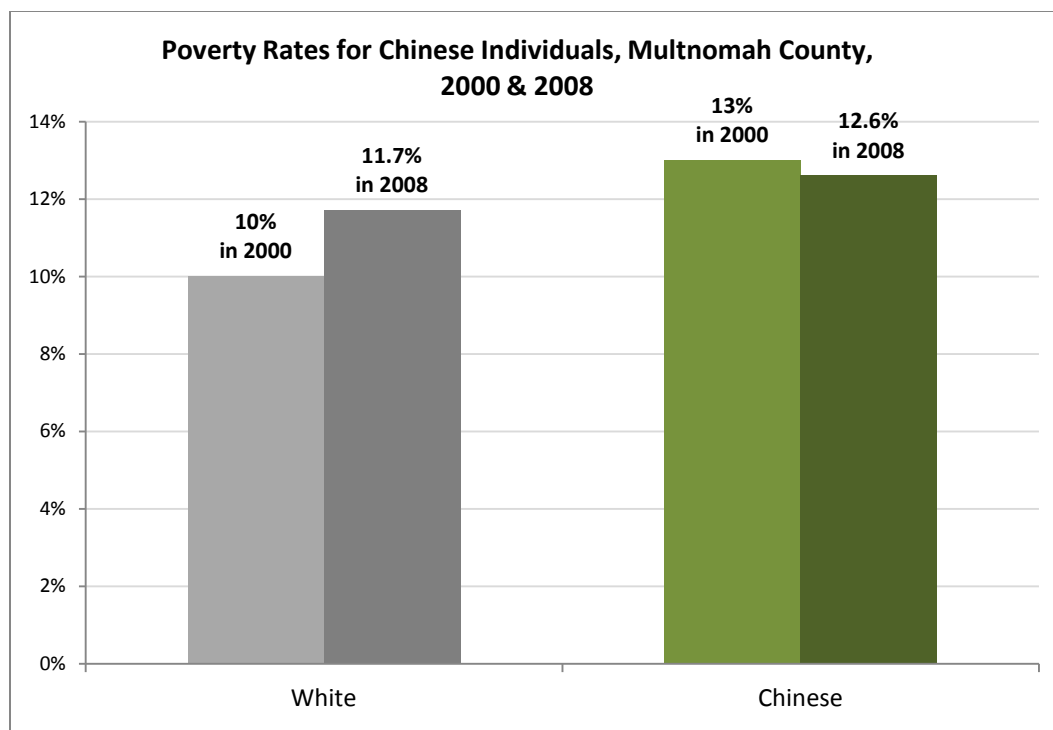
When we turn attention to poverty levels, we find mixed results. Levels of family poverty and overall poverty counts are higher than among Whites. That said, child poverty rates are significantly lower among Chinese children than White children. For Chinese youth, this is good news.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

When considering how to make sense of these differences (low levels of child poverty coexisting with very low incomes among children living with mothers parenting alone), it appears that the economic situation facing Chinese single mothers is very dire, but that they are not numerous enough to transfer a depressing influence onto the overall child poverty rate. This interpretation is supported by the chart titled “Household composition” which illustrates that Chinese have only  $\frac{1}{4}$  as many single-mothers as the White community. This said, we remain concerned about any level of child poverty, but recognize that this issue is affecting the Chinese community less expansively than among Whites.

The longitudinal look we have available to us in the area of child poverty is for individuals – and here again we see movement in a positive direction for the Chinese community, as opposed to the White community where numbers are deteriorating more rapidly.

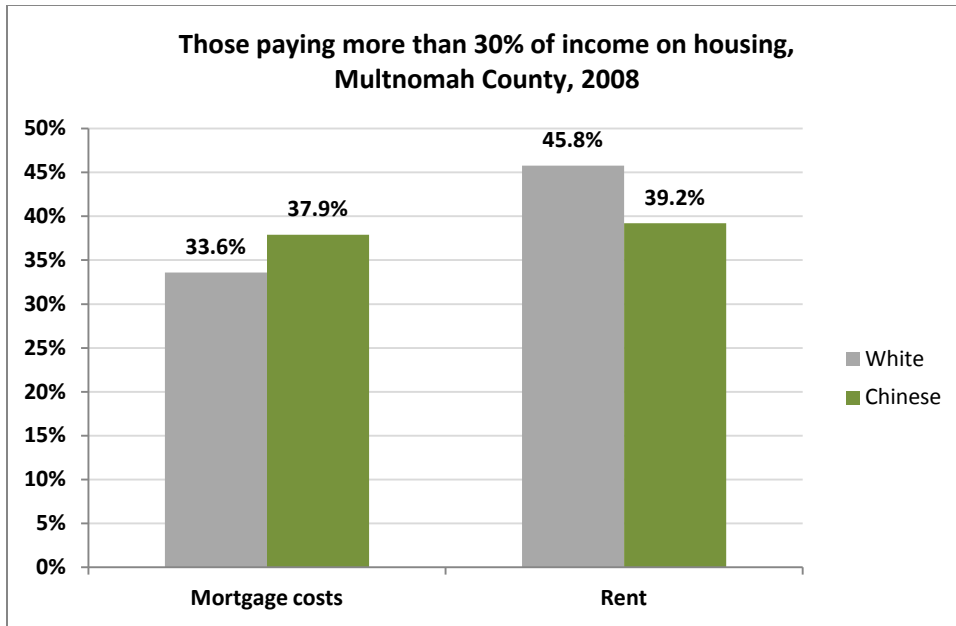


Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

In the above chart, we can see that the gap between Whites and the Chinese community is narrowing, but that poverty within the Chinese community is still worse than in the White community when the total level of poverty for all individuals is considered.

One of the ways in which the community's long-term success in the region can be measured is through an exploration of housing – homeownership rates, house values and the size of the burden one carries to remain housed. Our first data point is in homeownership rates. Here Chinese excel, with significantly higher rates than Whites. Almost three-in-four Chinese households own their own home – at 73%, while only 62% of White households are homeowners. We do not, however, know the value of this housing which is an important predictor of the affluence of the community – for it is the single greatest asset among average working people and is the largest driver of intergenerational wealth for non-elites.<sup>126</sup> We do know that the total Asian community has a house with an average value in the county of \$260,300, or 15% less than that of Whites whose home value averages \$298,300.

Turning to the housing burden that is carried by community members, we find that housing costs require less out of paychecks when rent must be paid, but more from paychecks when housing is owned.

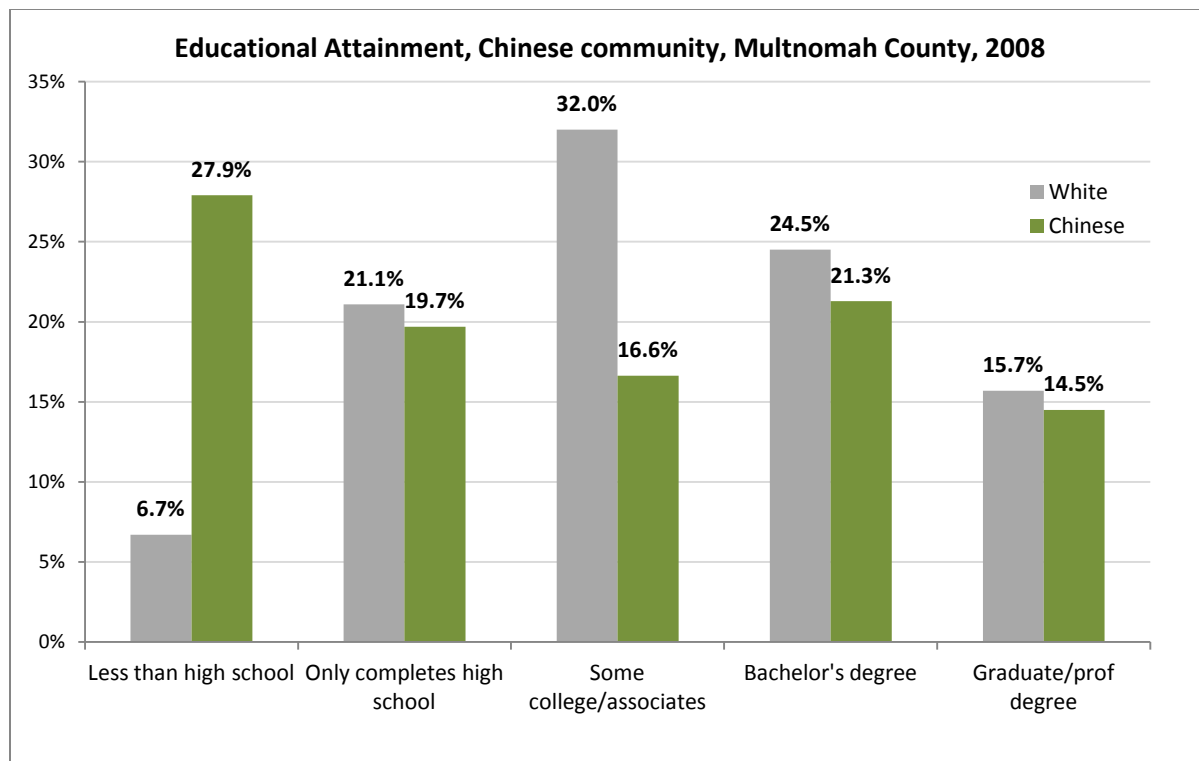


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

When we disaggregate this burden further, we look at data that shows Chinese are paying more than 50% of incomes on housing. In this area, about one-in-six of Chinese are either mortgaged or rent burdened (15.4% and 16.1% respectively). While these people are precariously positioned in terms of long term housing security, these levels are relatively low, particularly for a region known for its high housing costs.

### Education and Employment

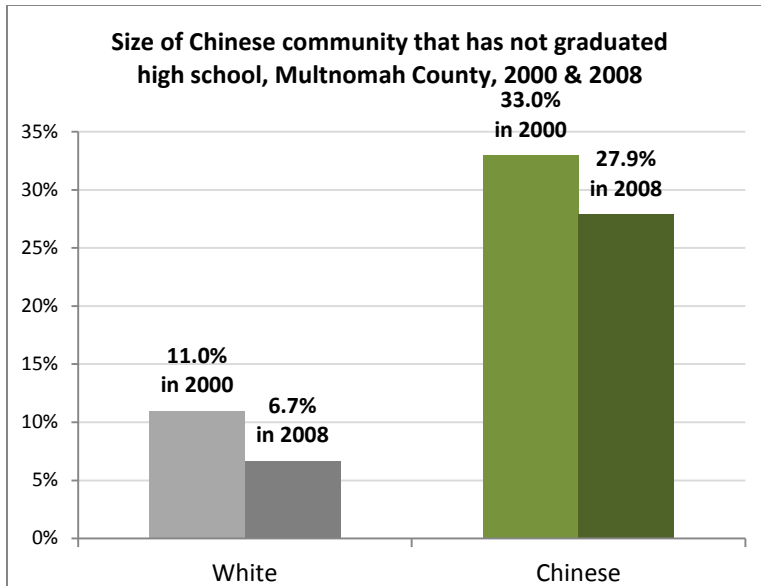
In education, the Chinese are a community that continues to be challenged by high numbers who have not successfully graduated high school. Despite being long-term residents of this region, relatively few in the community have graduated high school. Making matters worse, disparities numbers have barely budged in a decade (as is profiled later in this section).



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

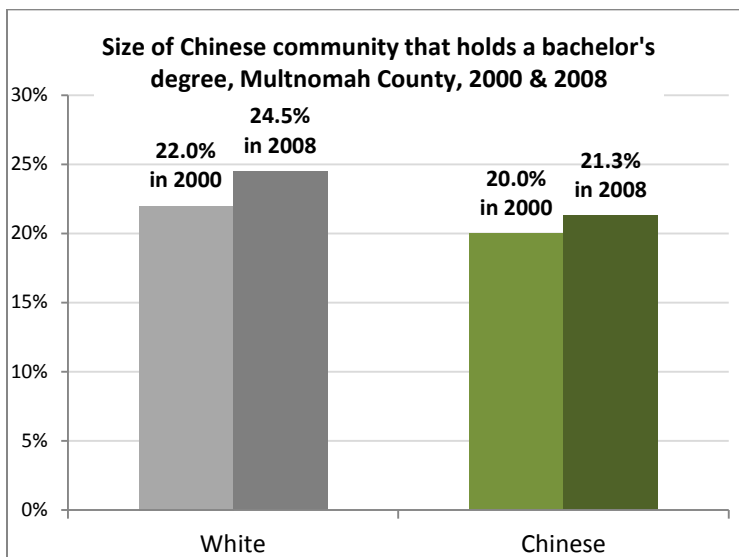
In the above chart we can see that despite very large numbers of Chinese not graduating high school, Chinese come close to Whites in terms of how many access university degrees, particularly graduate and professional degrees. This is very good news for the long-term economic prognosis for the community. We will, in fact, see later in this section that this has translated into good jobs, although as noted earlier Chinese remain at lower incomes than White equivalents.

We now look at how well this trend has improved over time. The numbers among the Chinese community who have successfully obtained a high school degree have improved – from 67% of the population in 2000 to 72% today (the inverse numbers of the chart below). But given that an even stronger improvement has been achieved among Whites, the disparity level has barely budged. Today, disparities have edged up slightly since 2000, at 71.4% worse compared with 66.7% worse in 2008.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).<sup>127</sup>

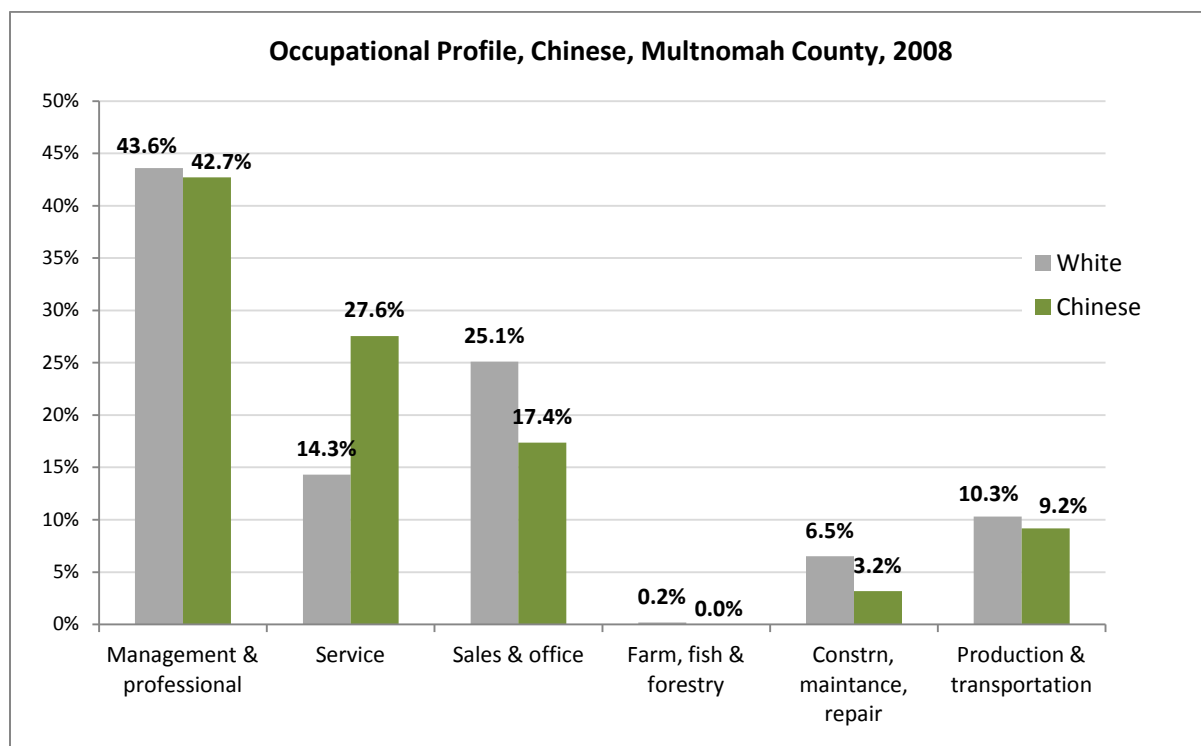
And yet, the trend towards more Chinese having a high school degree remains good news, for the improvements in education for the Chinese community is resulting in real gains for the community. Notice, however, that there remains a significant disparity, for while only one-in-fifteen Whites have not graduated high school, more than one-in-four Chinese have not obtained these levels of education. When we explore the composition of those in higher education, we see that the Chinese community closely approximates Whites. Higher education is a strength, with many obtaining degrees. More than one-in-three (35.8%) hold a university degree. This trend improves over the last 8 years as shown below.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).<sup>128</sup>

At these higher levels of education, disparities are relatively narrow (compared with other communities of color) but the gap is unfortunately widening between Chinese and Whites. Gains made for Whites over the last 8 years are seen to lesser degrees among the Chinese. Higher education remains a strong point for the Chinese, and the community aims for young people to expand their strength in higher education.

Education ultimately results in the types of occupations one can secure. In the Chinese community, parity has almost been gained with Whites in terms of access to management and professional jobs. This is a notable achievement. The community still, however, holds many fewer jobs in sales and office positions, and much higher representation in the service industry.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

This profile is relatively positive, as we see promising signs for gaining access to better wages and working conditions, and the Chinese presence at the managerial and professional levels is one of the most promising signs that can help transition away from negative stereotypes and biases against Asian workers. In these positions, we envision that gains will stretch more broadly across the community, as such community members become more visible role models for youth and also as their influence stretches into recruitment, hiring and successful retention. We anticipate that this occupational profile holds promise to open doors for youth and young workers to move into better jobs across the region.

The unemployed numbered 5.1% in 2008, while Whites held an unemployment level of 4.2%. While this is far from great news, it is markedly better than those within the Vietnamese community who could not find work at double the level of Chinese. Remember, too, that this recessionary economy has more strongly harmed low income workers and workers of color,<sup>129</sup> and thus today's unemployment levels

may be worse among the Chinese – though no data source exists to help us know current unemployment levels in the API community as a whole, or even by racial identity at all.

### Summary

As one of the longest-standing communities among Asians in Multnomah county, we would expect to see stronger signs of parity with Whites. While there are some areas of particularly strong equity in evidence, we are disheartened that greater gains have not been made.

Equity (or near equity) is in evidence among the Chinese in being able to access management and professional employment, and in success in graduating with university degrees. It is these features about which we are most optimistic. Lack of racial equity for the Chinese community is most strongly in evidence in high school graduation rates, and incomes particularly for single mother families. It is urgent to add supports for those in this experience – as income levels at \$19,859 are intolerably low. Child care supports, housing and housing subsidies and access to training programs are essential to assist single mothers to have success in the workplace and in balancing the checkbook.

Finally, we encourage all administrative systems to ensure that sufficient data are available to assess progress towards racial equity.

### The Filipino Community

Filipino immigrants have a long history along the West Coast of the USA.<sup>130</sup> Recognized as having four waves of immigration, their history began here as early as 1587, with settlements built to support the Spanish galleon trade routes from Manila to Acapulco, forcing Filipinos into such service. Their residency in the USA was the result of flight from Spanish ship captains. The second wave of immigration was the result of the US colonization of the Philippines and the US-Filipino War from 1898 to 1902 that resulted in the deaths of more than 2 million Filipinos. American colonizers expanded the spread of English and US culture. In 1903, 103 high income Filipinos were allowed to leave for the USA to attend university. Other Filipino men left for farming and fishing employment, seeking a better life for themselves – with the goal of returning to the Philippines as rich men. Unfortunately the low wages available to them trapped them in the USA and even the return home was out of reach. Laws that outlawed their marriage to White women, coupled with an absence of Filipino women in the USA resulted in this community never gaining a strong foothold in the USA. In the post-war era of 1945, the US opened its doors to Pacific immigrants and permitted their inclusion in the military. The fourth wave of immigration began in 1965 with expanded immigration opportunities. While expanding immigration numbers and removing limits on specific countries, it has served as a “creaming” process of the most educated and most highly trained professionals in the Philippines. Known popularly as the “brain drain,” this final wave of immigration continues today and continues to appeal to doctors, lawyers, nurses, engineers and those from the military.

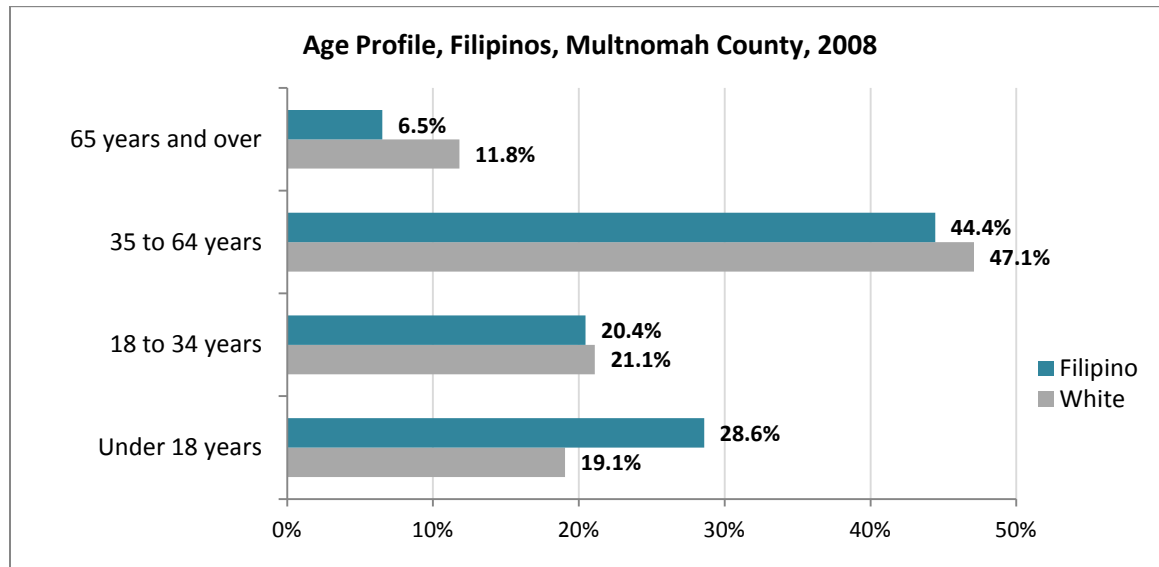
We thus have a Filipino community in this region of the USA that is a composite of those who have been here for generations, those who arrived in the post-WWII era of surging incomes and opportunities, and those who arrived later, who have brought their assets including high levels of education with their arrival.



## Demographics

Today Filipino number 7,393 people (via Census 2010) and stand as the third largest of Asian communities in the region. We believe, however, that this number is undercounted, although we are uncertain of the extent of this undercount.

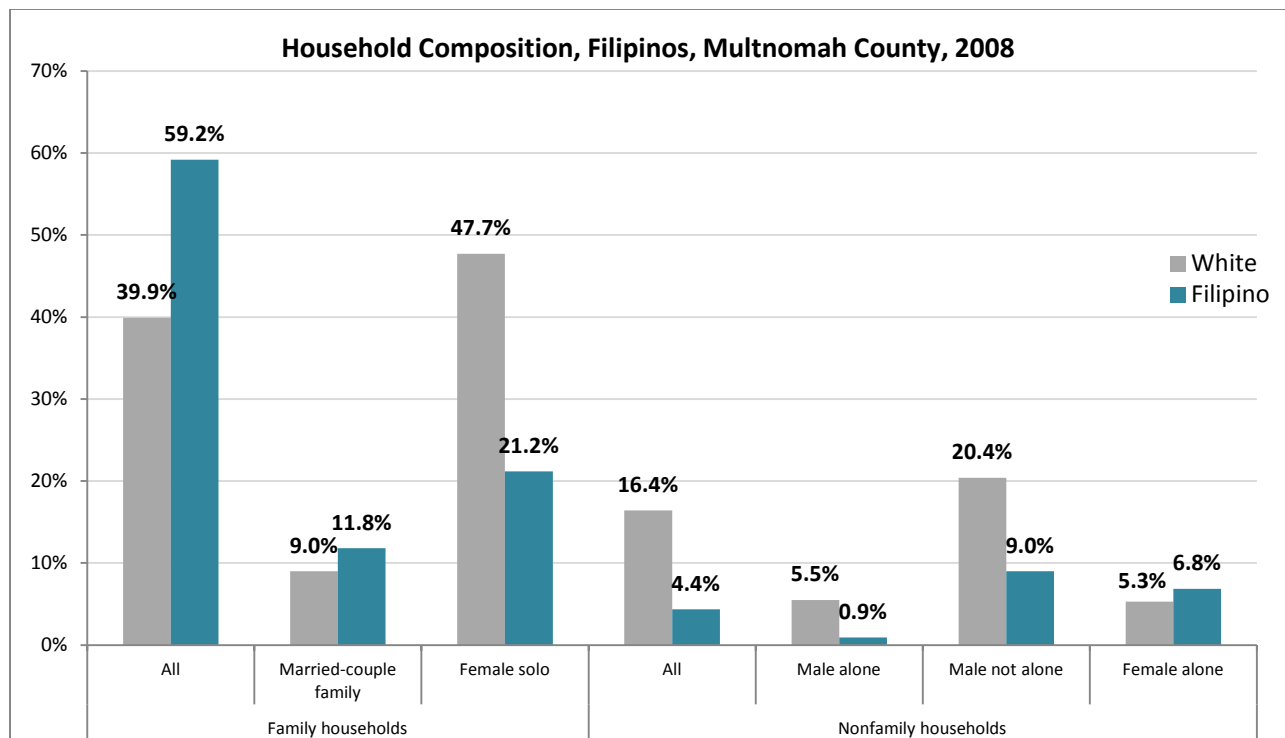
The Filipino are a community that holds a similar profile to other Asian communities, with a large number of the community under the age of 18, and relatively small numbers older than 65.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Many more Filipinos are likely to live in families, although the numbers of single parent families is much smaller than among Whites. In this way, Filipinos follow patterns similar to other Asian communities. Filipinos are much more likely than most other Asian communities to live in intergenerational families, as 13.4% of grandparents live with their grandchildren – levels that are almost ten times higher than Whites (at 1.6%), Chinese (at 5.6%) and Vietnamese (at 4.0%).

The community parts ways, however, when looking at the ways young women move into independence, with 7.7% of the community living alone of whom the vast majority are women.

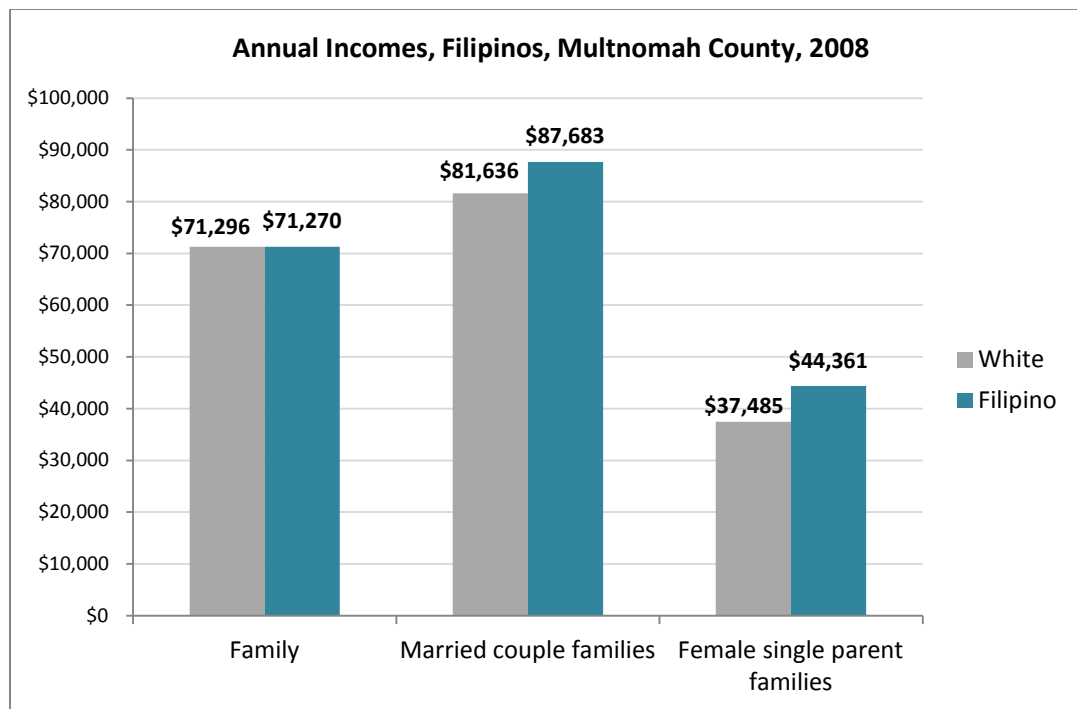


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

We hypothesize that many of these women are employed as caregivers and housecleaners. They may have little economic security or real independence as they may occupy little more than a room in the homes of much more affluent Whites, and may live lives where working conditions are likely challenging and few employment rights exist.

### Economic Progress

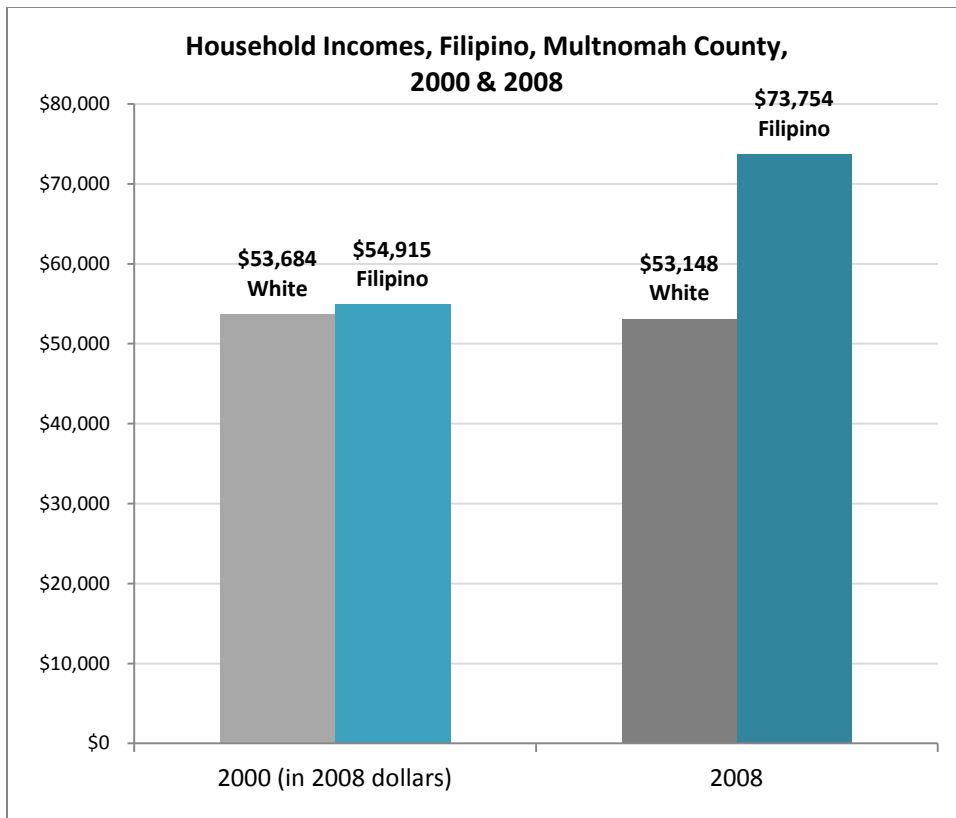
The Filipino economic situation is one of its great strengths: incomes are higher than Whites.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Of the data we have been able to secure, Filipinos stand alone in this position of high economic affluence. High Filipino incomes are part of the relatively few dimensions of the local Asian experience that follows the myth of acculturation among the community, illustrating that income parity has been achieved with Whites.

We wonder if this is a recent trend or one that is longstanding. To answer that question, we turn to the only data point that is available for the community – that of household incomes for two dates: 2000 and 2008. Here we see that income parity was reached back in 2000, and that the Filipino community has become much more affluent since that time, culminating today in an income level for households at \$73,754/year.

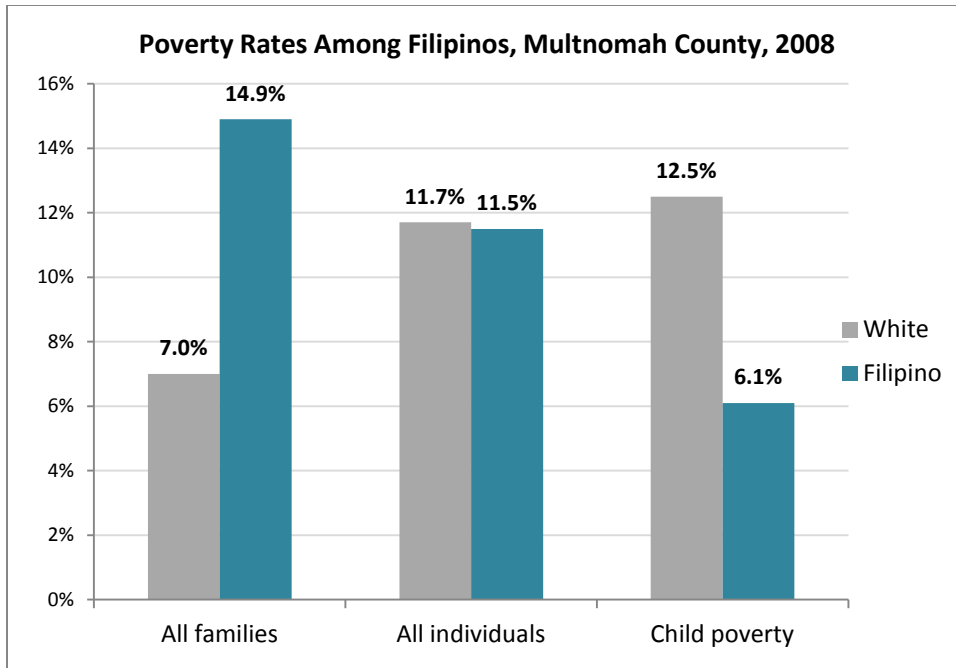


Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).<sup>131</sup>

While this household affluence is likely to improve somewhat by the presence of income-earning youth, and perhaps the presence of grandparents who are also still earning income, we do note that the community does bear benefits from two significant features: the first is that many in the community have resided in the USA for generations, and the second is that many arrived here already affluent and/or with professional credentials and educations that were sought after by the USA.

Looking at Filipino longevity in the region, we find that among the three largest Asian communities, this community has the lowest percent of foreign-born. At “only” 47% foreign-born, this is much lower than the rates within the Chinese population (at 59%) and the Vietnamese population (at 76%).<sup>132</sup> This dynamic is nowhere near the level of foreign-born in the White population, which stands at 5.7%.<sup>133</sup> Despite a large number of the Filipino community being foreign-born (which typically serves as a risk factor for low income, as noted in an earlier section that compares foreign-born and native born experiences), the community has been able to secure incomes that are even higher than Whites. This stands as a testament to the community’s capacity.

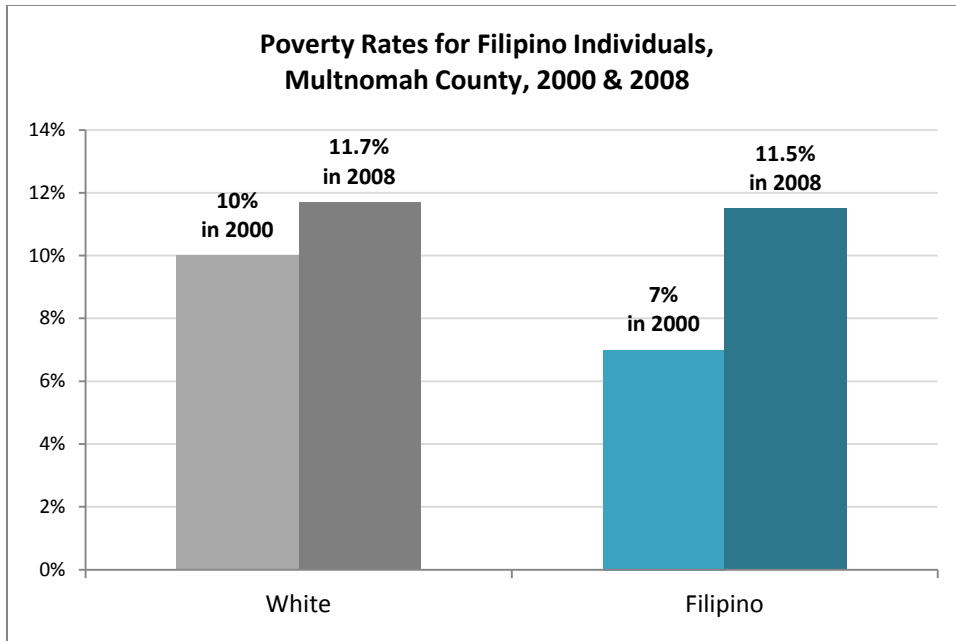
Despite these high average incomes, co-existing are a high percentage of families living in poverty – the family poverty rate is double that of Whites.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

On the other end of this spectrum, child poverty is at levels that are half of those in the White community. The level is closer to levels attained in Scandinavian countries with very strong social safety needs. With the safety net in tatters (across the USA), the Filipino community has largely been able to protect its children from poverty through high incomes, low levels of single parent families, and, as the reader will see in the next section, high education levels.

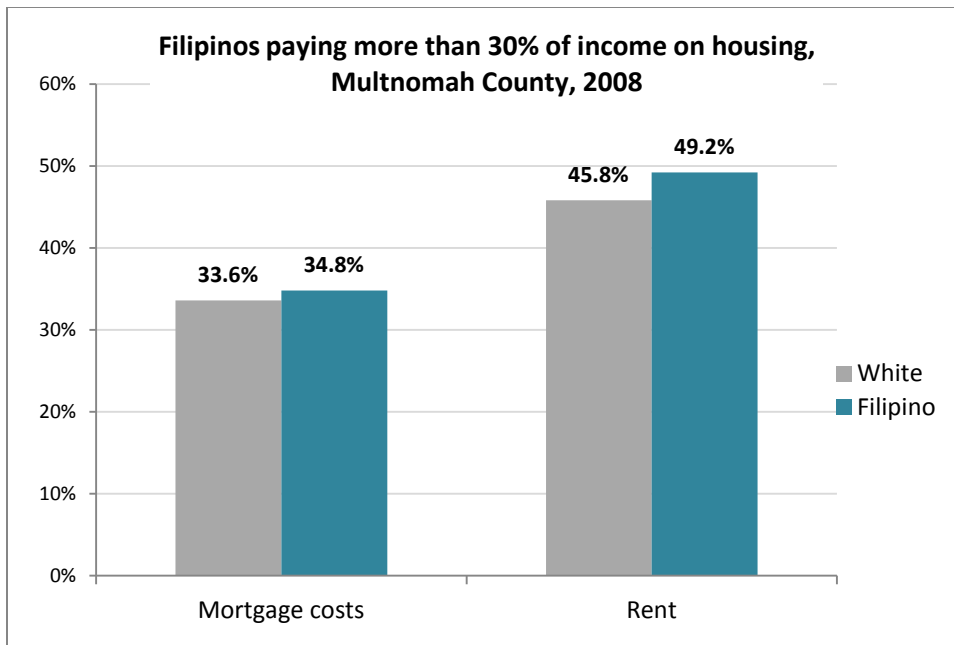
We still wonder, however, if poverty rates are improving or deteriorating. This insight can only be gleaned from one data point – that of individual poverty rates. Below, we see that the Filipino poverty rate has been worsening rapidly over the last 8 years.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Poverty rates have worsened for both Filipinos and for Whites, though Filipinos have lost much more ground than Whites – deteriorating to 11.5% from the earlier level of only 7%. To explain this, we suspect that there is a bi-modal experience within the Filipino community, with some of the community being blocked from affluence as a result of their family status, precarious employment and/or their responsibility caring for ageing parents. In essence, we suspect that there may be a significant gender divide in poverty and affluence levels.

One indicator of the intersection of wellbeing and affluence is the degree of precariousness one has in housing. For insights, we turn to how much of one's income is spent on housing costs. Below we see the separation between renters and owners.

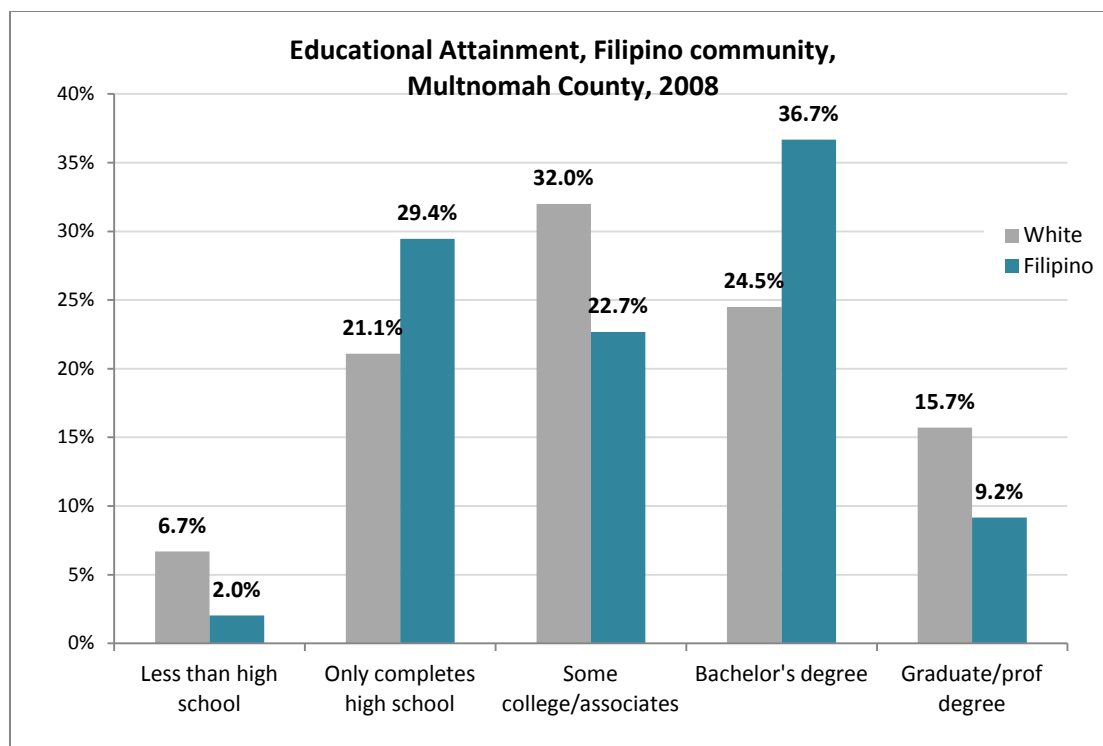


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Filipinos hold relative parity with Whites and are similarly burdened by housing expenditures. The community has slightly more renters facing difficulty paying for housing, as almost 50% of the community of renters pays more than 30% of income on rent. When we look at those who spend more than 50% of income on rent, this number is at 16.9%. The numbers of Filipinos so burdened is equivalent with Chinese but much less than Vietnamese. More have been able to enter the housing market, and 80% of Filipino households own their own homes, whereas only 62% of Whites own homes. Given the importance of homeownership as an avenue to generate wealth, we are pleased with this situation, although stand in a place of caution as more in the Asian community are likely to hold mortgages in the subprime market as the Asian and Pacific Islander community is somewhat more likely to be denied opportunities to take out loans in the prime market than Whites, although to a lesser degree than other communities of color.<sup>134</sup>

### Education and Employment

Here is another area in which the Filipino community shines. Defeating all notions of difficulty getting through high school, only 2% of the community is without a high school diploma. This is an accomplishment as most API communities are deeply challenged in this area. So too are Filipinos successful in obtaining a bachelor's degree.

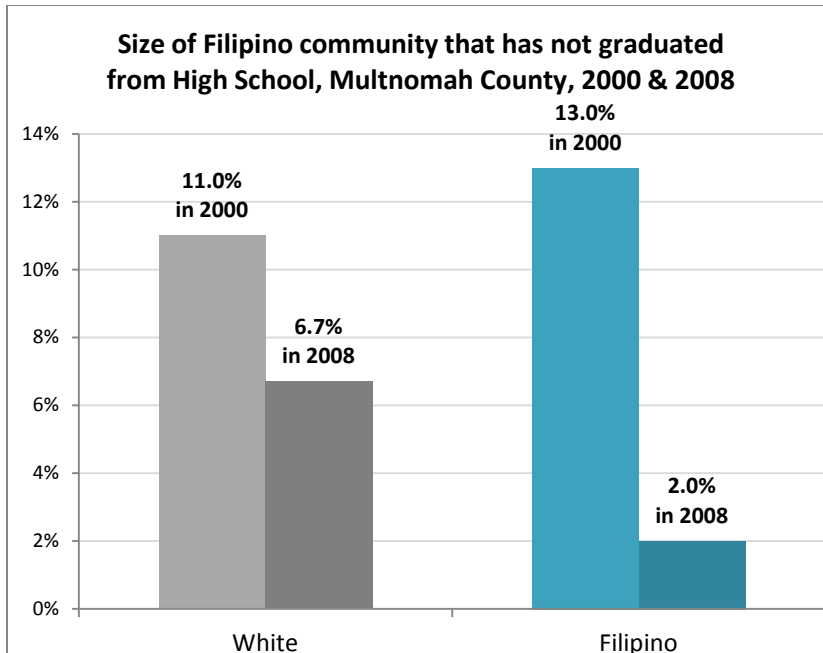


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

More than ⅓ of adult Filipinos hold bachelor's degrees, and when combined with graduate and professional degrees, the experience rivals that of Whites. Among Filipinos, 45.9% hold at least one university degree, while only 40.2% of Whites are so educated. Whites hold considerably more professional and graduate degrees, but the overall education level among Filipinos surpasses that of Whites.

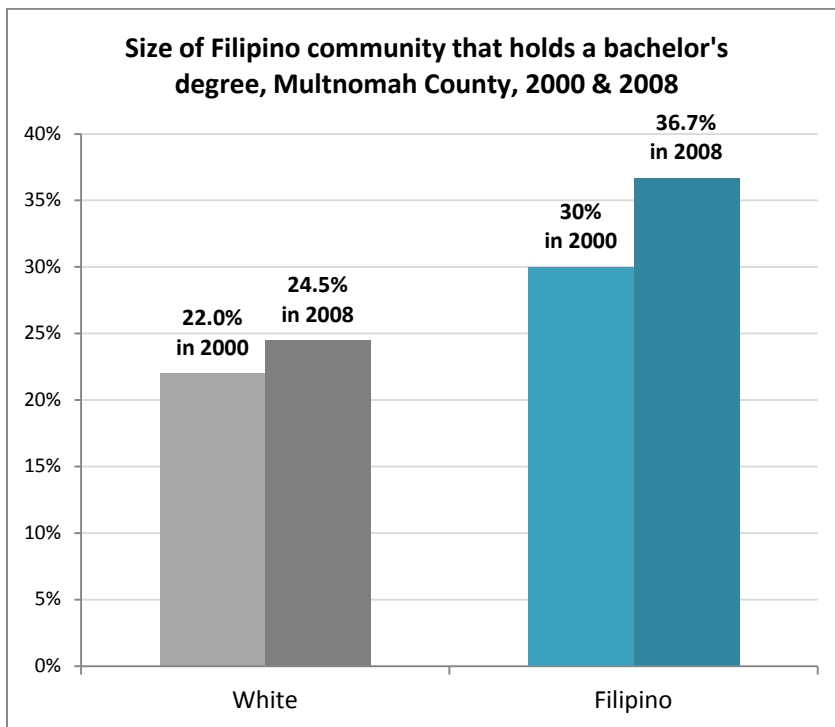
This pattern has been in strong evidence over the last 8 years. Almost no Filipinos have failed to graduate from high school, and now hold a level of education that is more than three-times better than Whites.





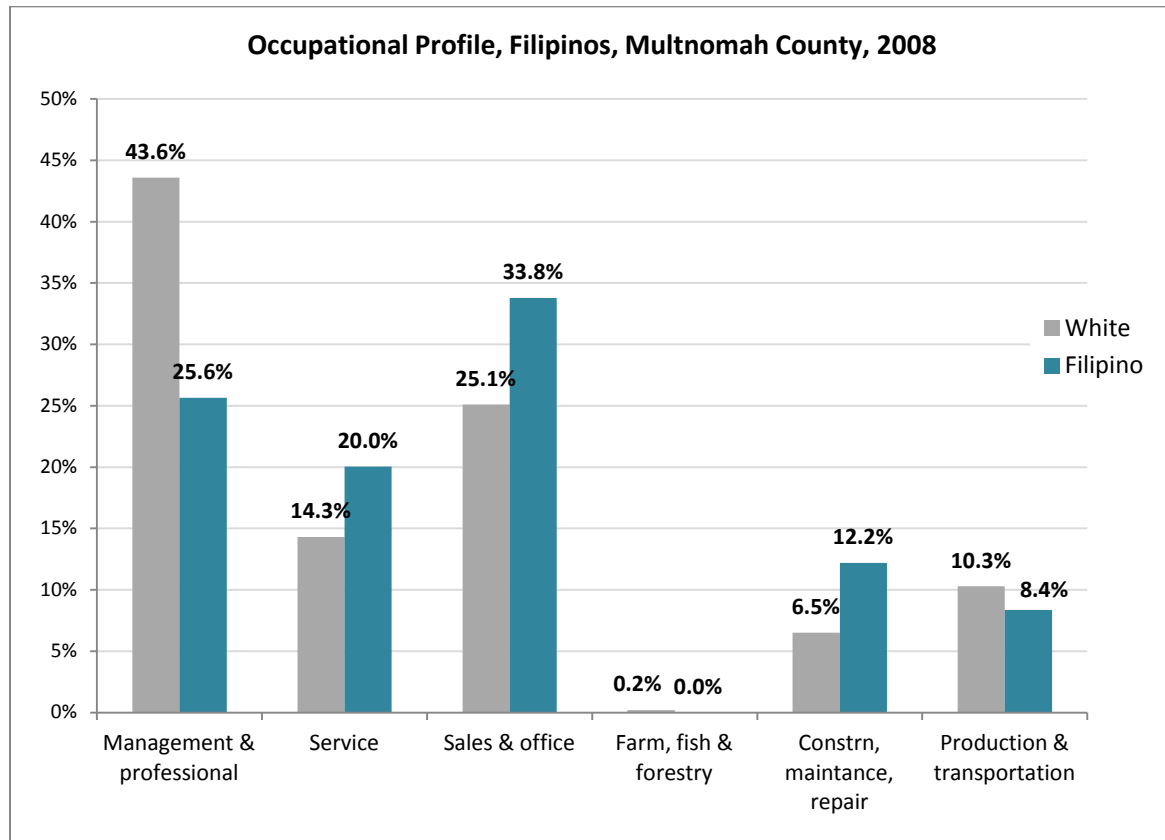
Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

At the high end of the education spectrum, the community has made significant though less pronounced gains.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Filipino educational gains have surpassed that of Whites in successful completion of post-secondary degrees, as illustrated above. But has the Filipino community been able to turn this into successful employment? Turning to the chart below, we see that this has not occurred. Despite high levels of education, Filipinos are blocked from their fair share of management and professional employment.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Filipinos hold approximately half of the requisite number of management and professional jobs needed to achieve parity with Whites. This barrier is not created by lack of adequate education, as the community holds extraordinarily high levels of education. Something else is occurring, and many have been taking up employment in service, sales and office work yet blocked from the best jobs.

Our interpretation of this experience is that excellent educations have not provided the community with the “silver bullet” to good careers, although high educations have narrowed experiences of low income although not poverty (except for child poverty). Our analysis then centers on dynamics of institutional racism and the ways the community is blocked in employment and retention in good jobs. This must become a strong part of the racial equity agenda if Filipinos are to be able to communicate to their youth compelling reasons for staying in school and forsaking tempting alternative paths through the world that could include leaving school.

## Summary

The Filipino community is relatively affluent and experiences of low income are generally narrower than those of Whites. The length of time the community has lived in the USA as well as the educations and affluence brought with the community from the Philippines has increased its chances of success in this region. The Filipino community has, however, been blocked from taking the full benefit of extremely high levels of education – blocked by institutional racism that fails to recognize foreign credentials and fails to provide sufficient supports and opportunities through good employment. It is time to rectify these barriers to full and earned inclusion in society.

## The Pacific Islanders

### Native Hawaiian

Hawaiian Islanders, or *Kanakas*, first came to the region in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. European fur-trading companies, such as the Hudson's Bay Company in Fort Vancouver, recognized the *Kanakas* seamanship and the value in a *Kanaka* labor force. By the 1840s, 40% of laborers at Fort Vancouver were Hawaiian; their numbers were large enough that *Kanaka* Village was built outside of the Fort.<sup>135</sup> An English minister, writing to London, described the *Kanakas*' treatment as little better than slaves: they were often physically punished or imprisoned.<sup>136</sup> Protestant missionaries in Oregon also employed *Kanakas* as laborers. The missionaries arrived in Oregon in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the purpose of religious conversion of Oregon's Native American population; they retained *Kanaka* labor to build their missions, plant crops, and provide other manual labor. Over time, *Kanaka* labor became popular as it proved reliable and cheap, and the White labor force retaliated. Anti-*Kanaka* sentiments arose that ultimately aided in the dispersal of the community. One outcome of this discrimination resulted in a provision denying *Kanakas* the ability to own land, similar to Blacks, Chinese, and Native Indians.<sup>137</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Kanaka* community, once thriving, virtually disappeared. Many went back to the Islands or to California while a number intermarried with, and were absorbed into, the Native American population.<sup>138</sup>

Today, the community is regaining its prominence in the region as the largest of the Pacific Islander (PI) communities in Multnomah county, with 1,793 members as measured in Census 2010, and making up 26% of the PI population. The community has been challenged by invisibility throughout the last generation as numbers that had diminished over the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were slowly etching upwards again.

### Samoan

There are between 50,000-60,000 Samoans who live in the USA and who claim Samoan descent. Some believe that there are now more Samoans in the US than in Samoa while others insist that this is unlikely. Australia and New Zealand have large populations and it would certainly be true that more Samoans live outside of their country than in it. The average age of American Samoans is fairly young; indeed, over 50% of Samoans in the US are engaged in some type of educational pursuit. The largest US-based Samoan populations are in the Hawaiian Islands, Los Angeles, the whole coastline of southern California, and in Salt Lake City. Virtually all Samoans come to this country as immigrants and a recent survey suggested that financial and educational opportunity is the main reason for immigration. It is reported that Samoans are now more likely to be engaged in low paying work while there are a rising number of undocumented Samoans in the USA.

Cultural ties are quite important. Well over half of Samoans will return to visit at least one time and many visit Samoa many times. But though the family connection is strong the acculturation process has been somewhat devastating. There are now attempts to reconnect young Samoans with their cultural heritage and language and to inform them of the “traditional” ways. There have been reports of prejudice, especially in regards to the criminal justice system. Such experiences illustrate that Samoans experience the same kind of cultural and linguistic difficulties as do immigrants from other regions.

Some health challenges are pronounced, including high-blood pressure and diabetes (and related health difficulties) which are common in the USA. Some of this is due to the adoption of typical American diets and a more sedentary lifestyle.

### **Tongan**

Almost all Tongans have arrived into the country and this region as immigrants. The largest number of Tongans arrived locally in the late 1970s with numbers slowing considerably by the late 1980s. A subsequent wave of Tongans arrived in the late 1990s to seek better economic conditions and improved educational opportunities. However, many Tongans have no consistent, if any, job experience. And many Tongans find language acquisition difficult. A very high percentage of community members are linguistically isolated, meaning no one in the home over the age of 14 is able to communicate in English. These two elements make finding work much more difficult. Most jobs are entry-level and there are a number who work under the table.

There has been a growing percentage of employed men as the community has settled in the region. Labor force participation has been growing very slowly but steadily, with this participation expected to have positive impacts on annual incomes for those in the community. Combining a cultural shift and economic necessity, more Tongan women are finding employment, though such numbers are still small. When employed, many Tongan women are working as non-professional care-givers in private homes and in elderly assistance residences.

Four significant health issues challenge the community: hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and gout. All are features linked to diet and likely too to the social determinants of health where income, social exclusion, racism, housing and education play a pronounced role in health and wellbeing. It is important to note that the same diet in Tonga would not place community members at risk, as the lifestyle is much more active. Such activity narrows the likelihood of health difficulties. The vast majority of deaths among Tongans can be attributed to these issues.

Some Tongans return to their home country when they get older and if they have contributed enough to social security by working. Family ties are honored in this way.

### **Guamanian or Chamorro**

The Chamorros (Guamanians) are the indigenous inhabitants of Guam, the largest of the islands of the Marianas archipelago and the most populous American possession in the Pacific. In 1984 Guam had a population of 115,000 of which about half were Chamorros and the remainder US military personnel, other US citizens and immigrant contract laborers from the Philippines and elsewhere in the Pacific. It is now believed that Guamanians make up considerably less than half of the population of Guam. Guamanians are US citizens who are not able to vote in US elections if they still reside in Guam. Guam has a non-voting representative in the U.S. Congress who happens to be an ethnic Guamanian.

We are not entirely sure how many native Guamanians have come to the contiguous United States. It is a fairly small number and there are less than 1,000 in the greater Portland area. English is now one of the principal languages of Guam and there are more English speakers there than native Chamorro speakers. There are, however, enough Guamanians in the US to begin organizing for preservation of native culture and language. These activities mirror the same kind of activism that is also present in Guam where they attempt to preserve identity, culture and language through a variety of political and educational actions.

### Fijian

Fiji is both a strategically located island in the South Pacific, and a robust economy that for many years well served its residents. But political strife has led to three coups (both military and civilian) since 1987, and many who can afford to emigrate have left the country. The transition from a British colony to independence in 1970 allowed the indigenous population to form the ruling party, but subsequent racial strife emerged when in 1990 a new labor coalition party effectively marginalized those Fijians of Indian heritage (approximately 43% of the population).<sup>139</sup> The majority of immigrants to the USA arrived in the early 1980s and numbers increased after the 1987 coup but quickly lessened as emigrants from Fiji opted to enter Australia instead of the USA. Numbers leaving Fiji continue to be high, but fewer are arriving in the USA. The reasons for leaving are encapsulated below:

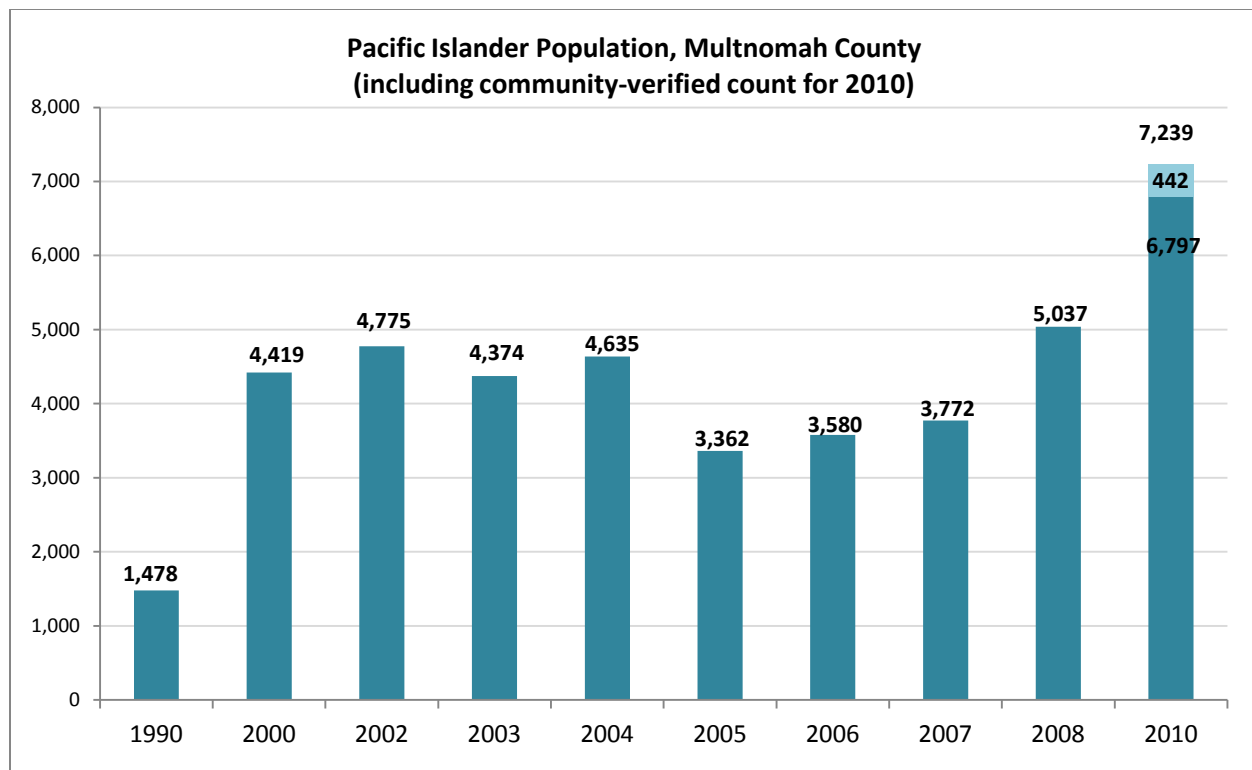
Indo-Fijians are leaving Fiji in large numbers for several reasons. Political uncertainty is the most important. Independence in 1970 had promised the possibility, or at least the hope, of more inclusive politics and equitable power-sharing between the two major communities. However, this promise vanished in the wake of ethnically divisive elections. Feeling locked out, Indo-Fijians began leaving Fiji in slowly growing numbers. The trickle became a torrent after the coups of 1987. The political culture of racial patronage the coups spawned effectively marginalized the community. Employment opportunities in the public sector, formerly dominated by the Indo-Fijians, diminished as appointments and promotions frequently became dominated by indigenous ethnicity and political patronage. People left because they saw few prospects of advancement for themselves, and especially for their children.<sup>140</sup>

The Fijian community in Portland is small but closely knit with mutual aid and networking characteristic of the community. A Fijian association links many along the West Coast of the USA.

### Demographics

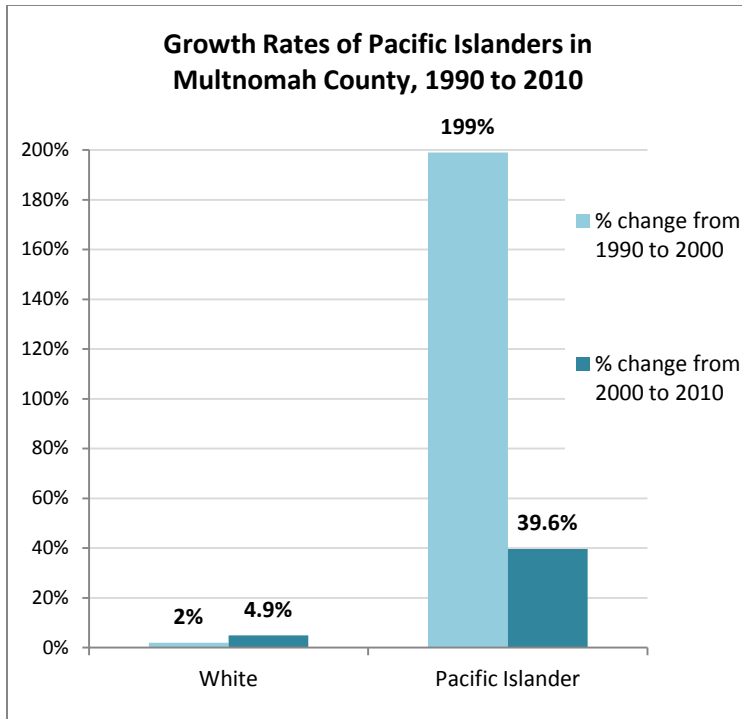
The number of Pacific Islanders officially (through Census 2010) totals 4,029 in 2010 when the community is defined as those who are “only” Pacific Islander. When multiple racial identities are included, this number rises to 6,169 people. This means that of the population, 65.3% hold a single race of Pacific Islander, while 34.7% hold multiple identities. This does not mean that this community identifies as “multiracial” but that when asked to fully identify one’s race, additional racial identities are named. The most strongly shared identity is that of Asian, and secondly that of White.

In the chart below, we see signs of robust community growth and a small but sizable community that is beginning to command attention as a distinct racial group.



Source: Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) for 1990, Census 2000, American Community Survey for 2002 to 2008, and Census 2010. Note that in 1990 only one race could be entered so this is the “alone” number, and for 2010, the population is “alone or in combination with other races, with or without Hispanic.” Without the overlap with Hispanic, the population in 2010 would number 6,169.

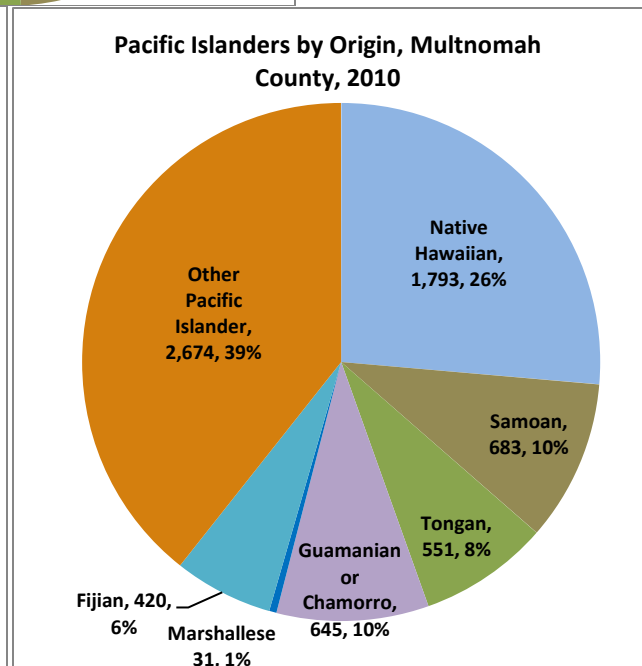
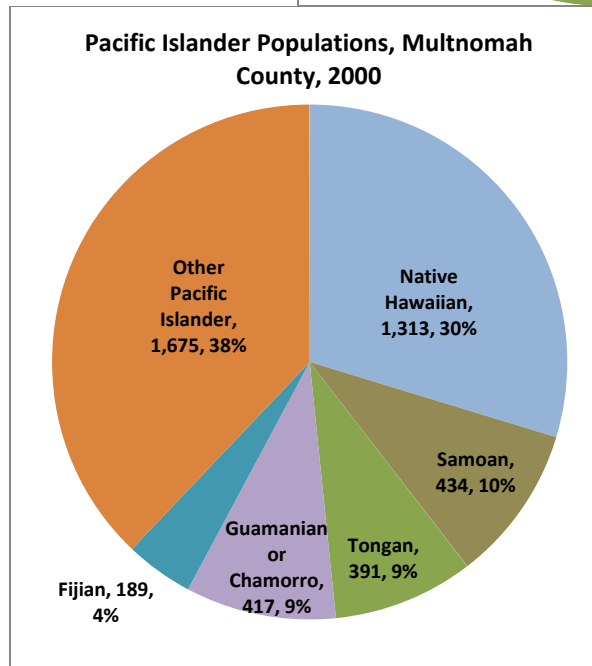
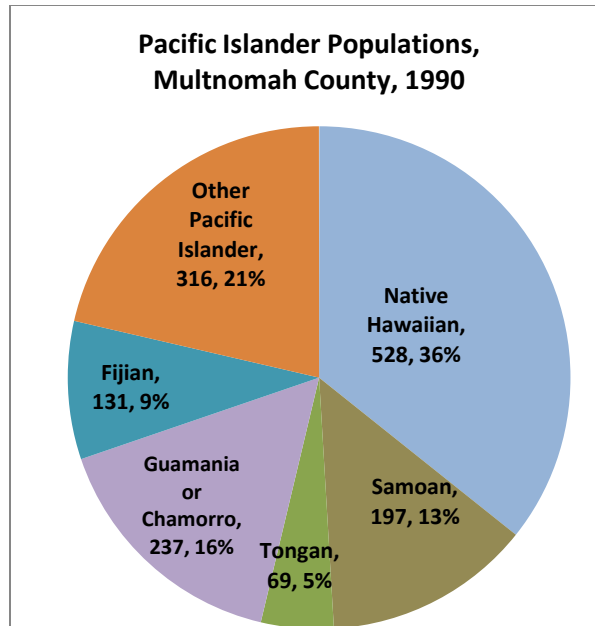
Looked at another way and in the chart below, we see the population’s growth pattern through the last two decades. While White communities are growing very slowly (although still over the last decade totaling 4.9% growth), the pace of growth among Pacific Islanders has far outstripped that of Whites, at levels that today are almost ten times higher at almost 40%.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), and Census 2010 for the 2010 data.

This growth rate has slowed from higher levels in the previous decade. But when one integrates the data from the last two charts together, we can see that this lesser growth rate (of the 2000-2010 period) compared with that of the 1990-2000 period has been modified by the drop between 2004 and 2005, and the slow recovery from that drop. Today, the pace of growth is very high.

Turning now to the profile of the Pacific Islander communities in 2000, we can see that the largest is the Native Hawaiian community followed more distantly by the Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro and Tongan communities. Together these four communities compose 71% or almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the community members here. The total size of the Pacific Islander community in 2000 was 4,419 people. Today it is 6,797, representing a total growth over ten years of 54%.



Source: Custom runs of Census 1990 and 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). Data for 2001 is drawn from Census 2010.

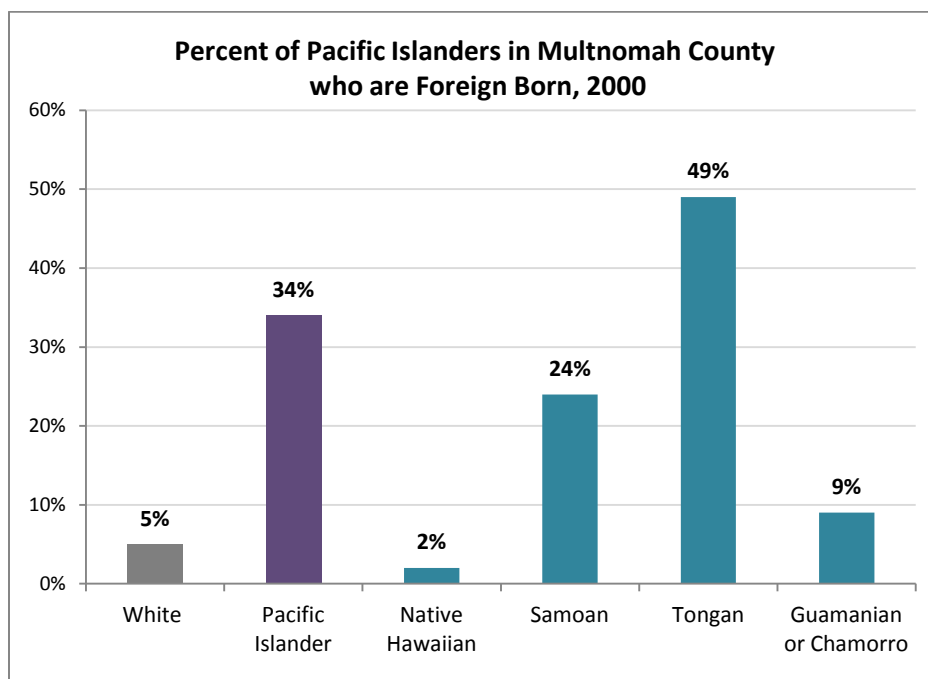
Comparing these three charts illustrates the growing diversity of the communities. While the details are hidden in the “other” categories, more communities are arriving in the region from countries such as Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Nauru, Tuvalu, Vanautu, Marshall Islands and Cook Islands.

The profile of this community remains relatively constant over the three decades. The size of each community has at least doubled, with the exception of the “other” category which has grown more than



eight-fold. Native Hawaiians have more than doubled, but this community makes up a smaller portion of the overall Pacific Islander community. Overall, the community is becoming more diverse.

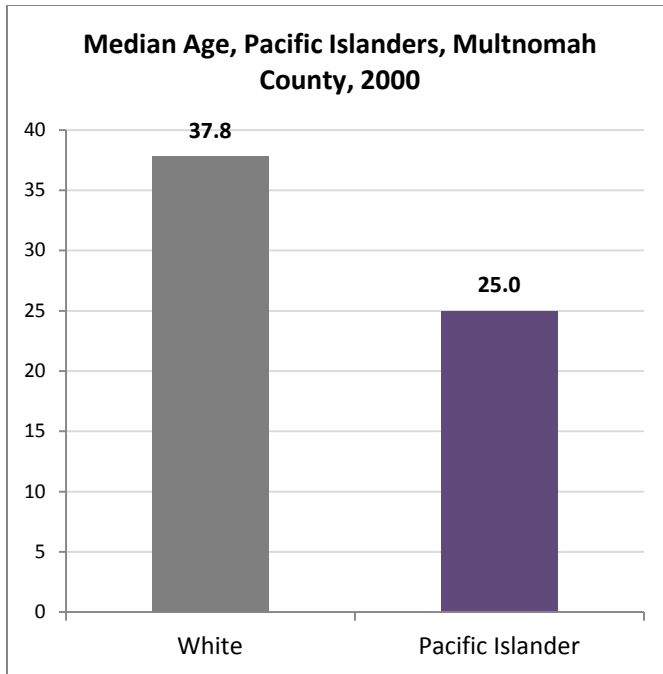
The expansion of the Pacific Islander community coincides with a large percentage of the community being born outside of the USA. This is particularly so for the Tongan community, of whom half are born outside the USA. The overall average community size being born outside the USA is about seven times higher among Pacific Islanders than among Whites. Notice, however, that those born in Hawaii will have US-born identities, as too are those born in Guam (although Guamanians hold the status of “US nationals” as opposed to “US citizens” – a distinction which limits voting rights as opposed to more expansive citizenship rights). As a result, we are cautioned against the dominant discourse that might look at the data below and quickly interpret it to mean that those immigrants from Hawaii or from Guam might have resided in the region for a long period of time.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

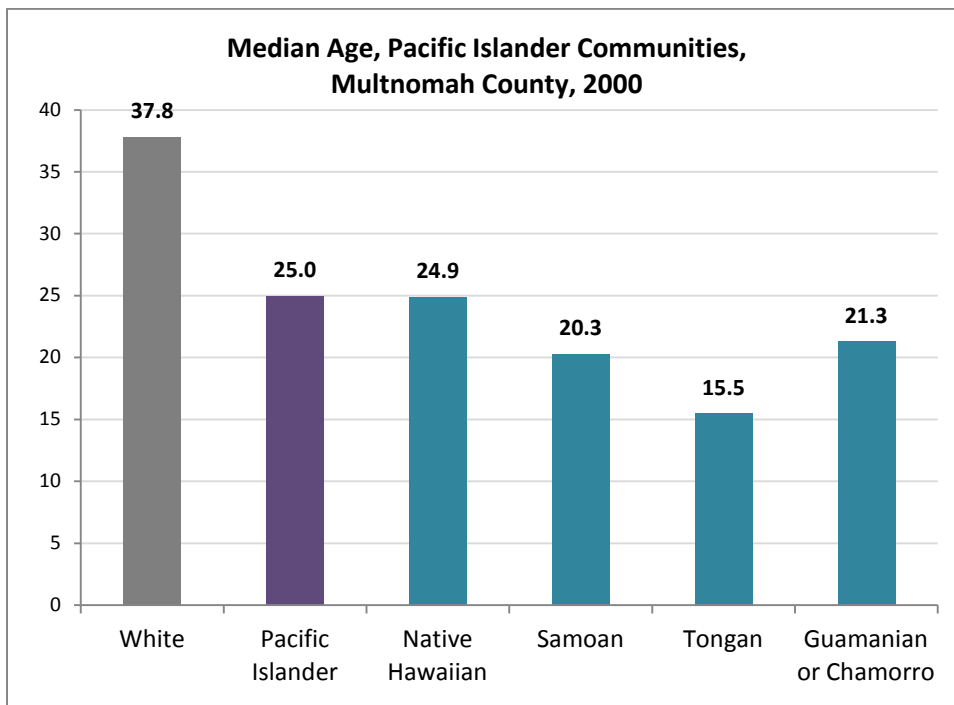
Instead, the above chart suggests we need to recognize that a very large portion of the Pacific Islander communities will be recent arrivals to Oregon, even though many within this community will already be citizens of the USA.

The Pacific Islander community is much younger than Whites – at almost 13 years younger on average.



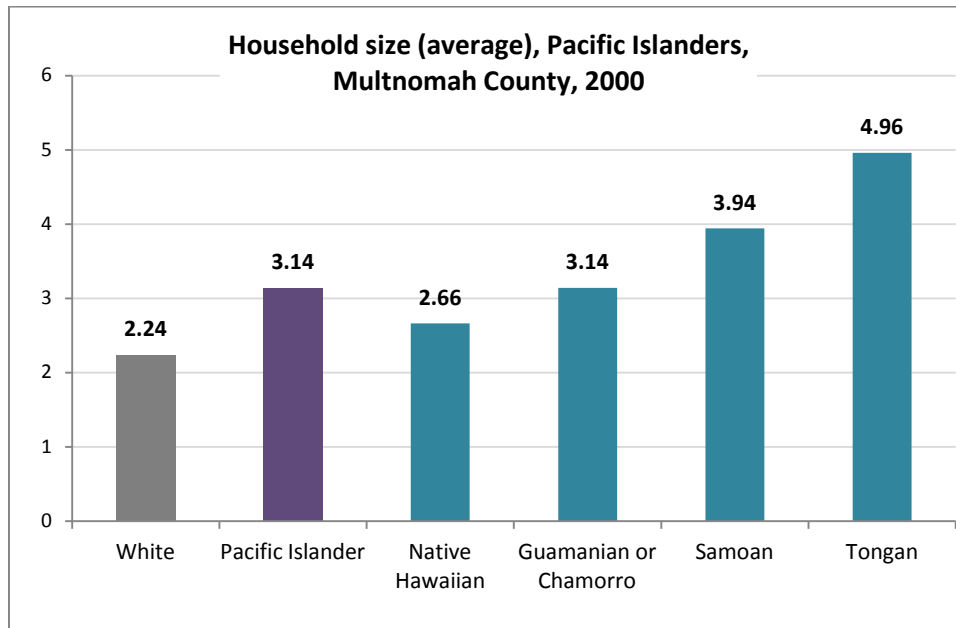
Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Within the community, Tongan residents are the youngest. All, however, are dramatically younger than Whites.



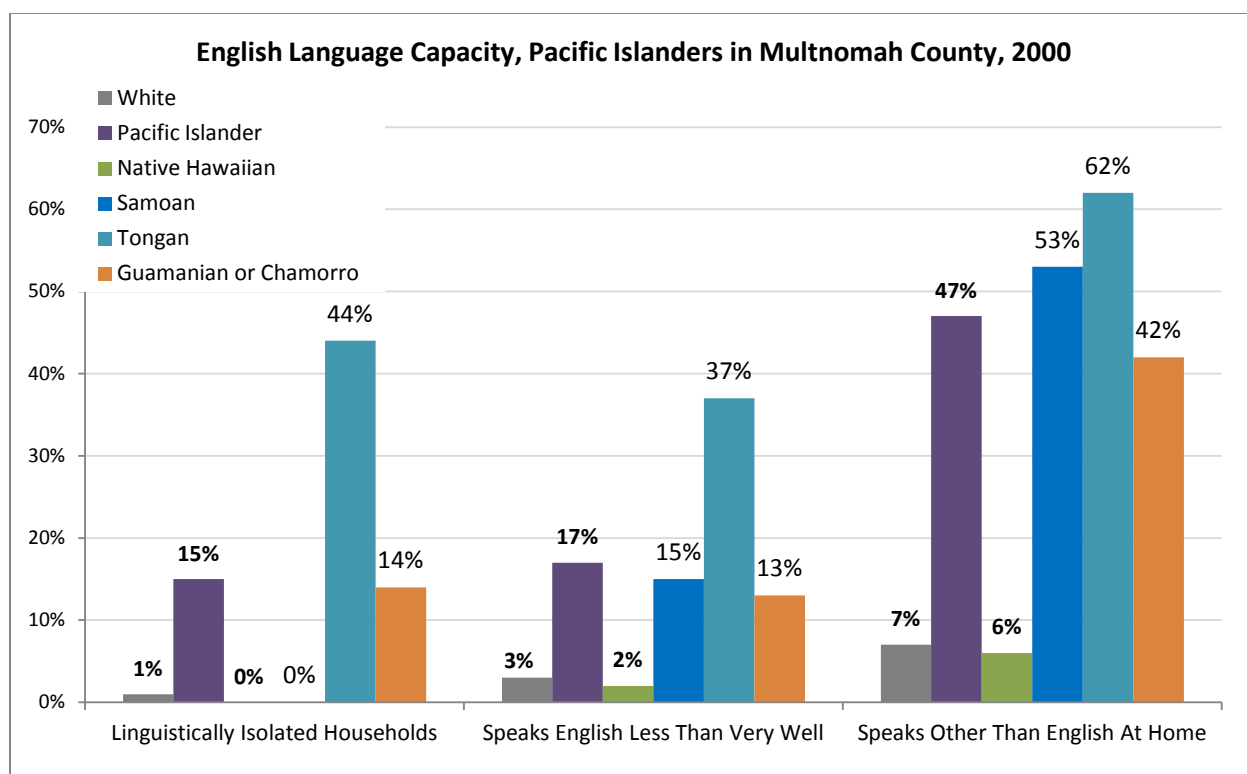
Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

The Pacific Islander community lives in households that are larger than Whites. What is unclear is the degree to which this is a choice based on culture and preference, or whether this pattern is born of economic need.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

When we continue our review of the demographic characteristics of this community, we are able to gain some understanding of the degree to which these communities will be challenged by communicating in English. On average, the Pacific Islander community experiences much deeper challenges in this area than the White community. In addition, the Tongan community is the most challenged in English communication.

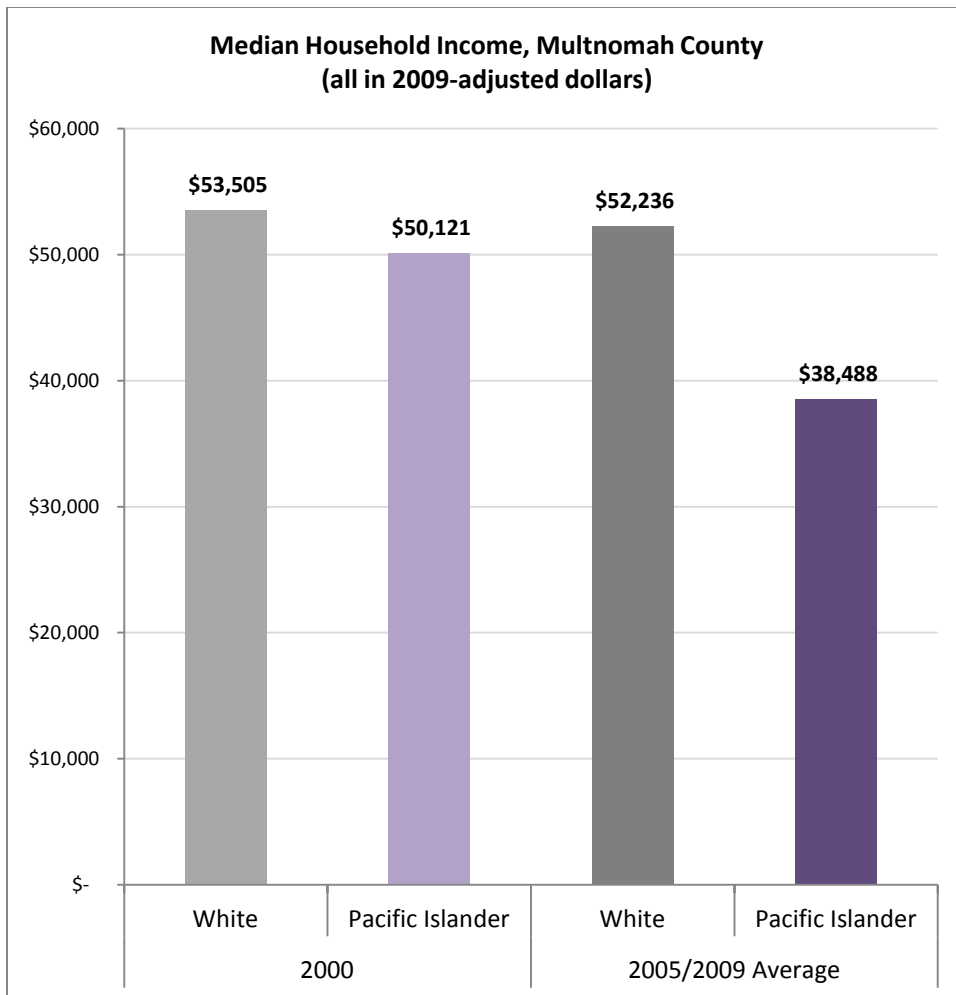


Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). The definition of “linguistic isolation” means that there is no one in the household over 14 who speaks English very well (so as to be able to translate for others).

Language access is difficult for a large section of the Pacific Islander community, with the exception of those from Hawaii. This must draw attention to the need for a combination of ESL classes for adults as well as a strong ESL component in schools for Pacific Islander students, and also for access to translators and services that can be attained in one’s native language.

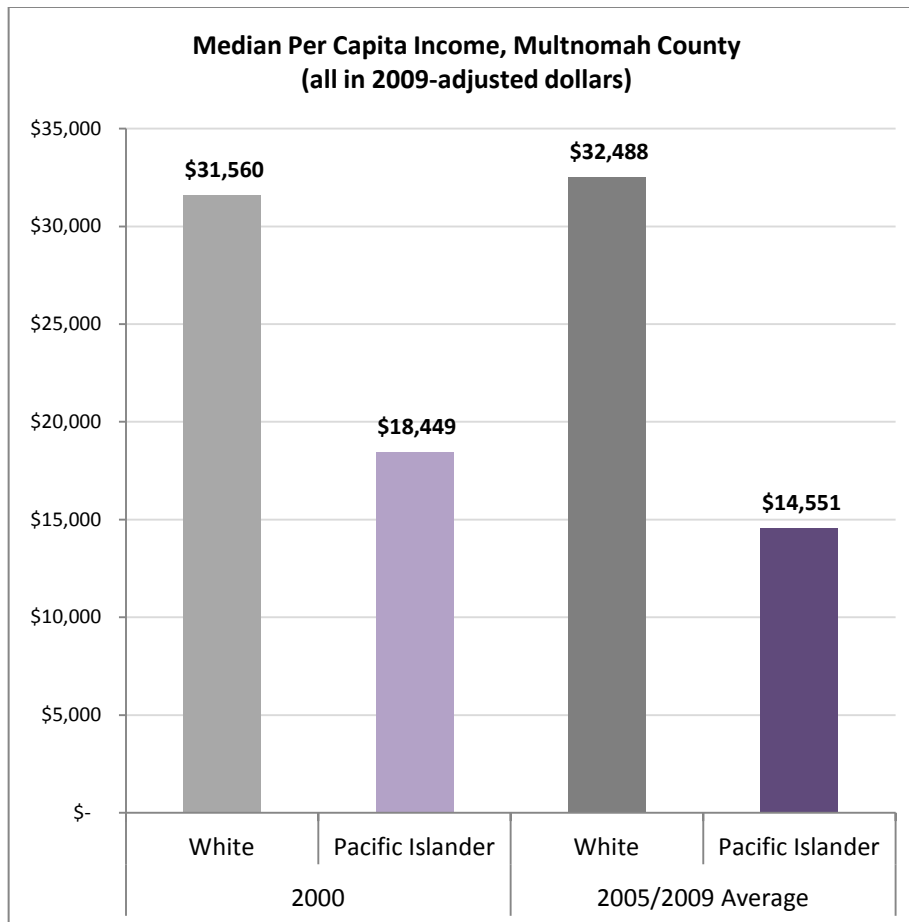
### Economic Progress

The Pacific Islander community struggles with adequate incomes. While parity seemed within reach in 2000, significant gaps have emerged in recent years. As a composite population, below we see that household incomes have deteriorated significantly for the PI community, while they have stayed relatively constant for Whites. Accordingly, the disparity has risen dramatically. In 2000, Pacific Islander households were able to earn 94 cents on every dollar earned by Whites, but by 2009, this had dropped to only 74 cents on the dollar.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), and American Community Survey for 2005/2009 data.

Turning to per capita incomes, two important trends are occurring: like the household income chart, the White community is holding relatively steady over the years. Similarly, the disparities deepened. One variation is that White incomes are actually increasing over the time period while Pacific Islander incomes are deteriorating. The net impact is that Pacific Islanders were living on just 58% of what Whites were living on back in 2000, but that alarmingly, this has slipped to just 45% of the incomes that Whites live on.

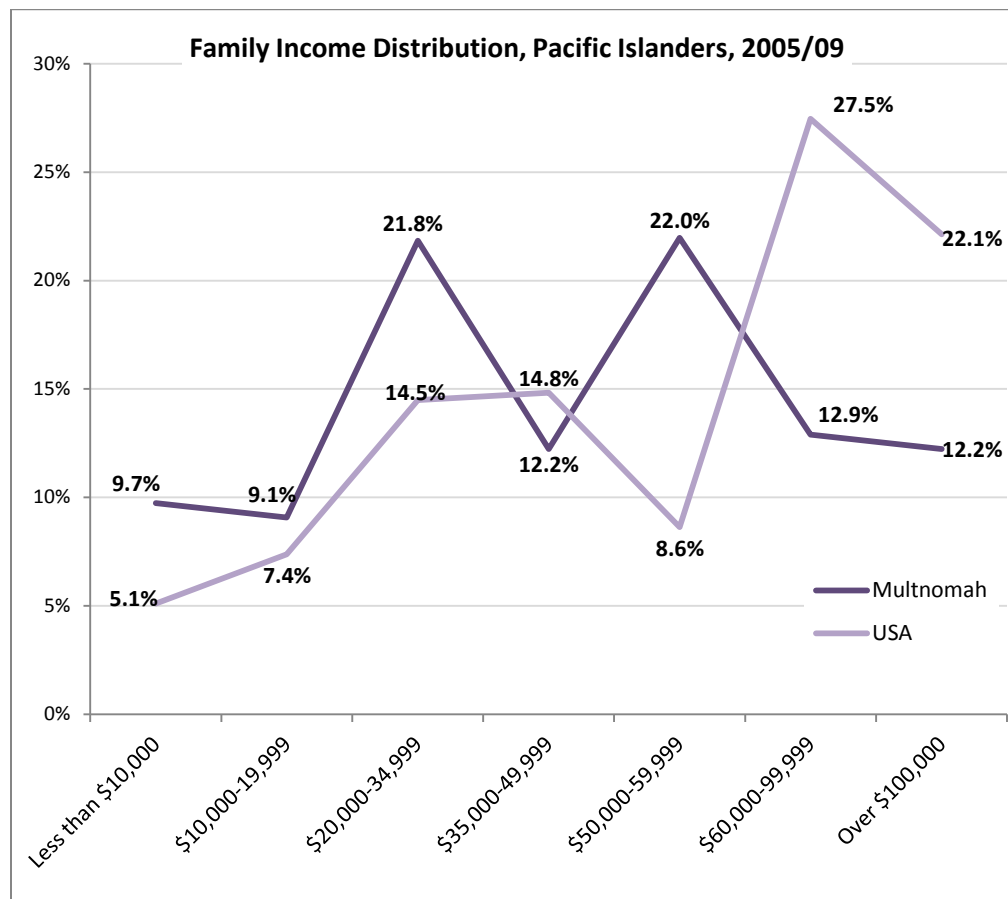


Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), and American Community Survey for 2005/2009 data.

Within the Pacific Islander community, there has been tremendous variance in incomes. We ask the readers to remember that economic data at this small community level is only available for the year 2000. Across households, there are household incomes that are equivalent to Whites (Native Hawaiian and Tongan), better than Whites (Samoan) and worse than Whites (Guamanian or Chamorro). When individual incomes are revealed, however, incomes plummet for all PI communities – suggesting that the more positive economic profile among households is moderated by family size (larger than Whites, as illustrated above) and the presence of multiple wage earners in a household.

We will turn next to a more complex chart that illustrates the distribution of the Pacific Islander population, by income group. This is the best way to profile the class structure of the community, and here we are comparing the PI community in Multnomah county, with the PI community across the USA. If class structure were to be ideal, we would have very low numbers in poverty and low income, and high numbers in middle class and upper income levels, and low numbers in very high incomes. The reason we do not want to have high numbers in the ranks of the very wealthy is because typically these community members develop considerable economic and social distance from the rest of the community and cannot be relied upon to work in the interests of the non-affluent community members. Economic solidarity tends to lead to social solidarity.

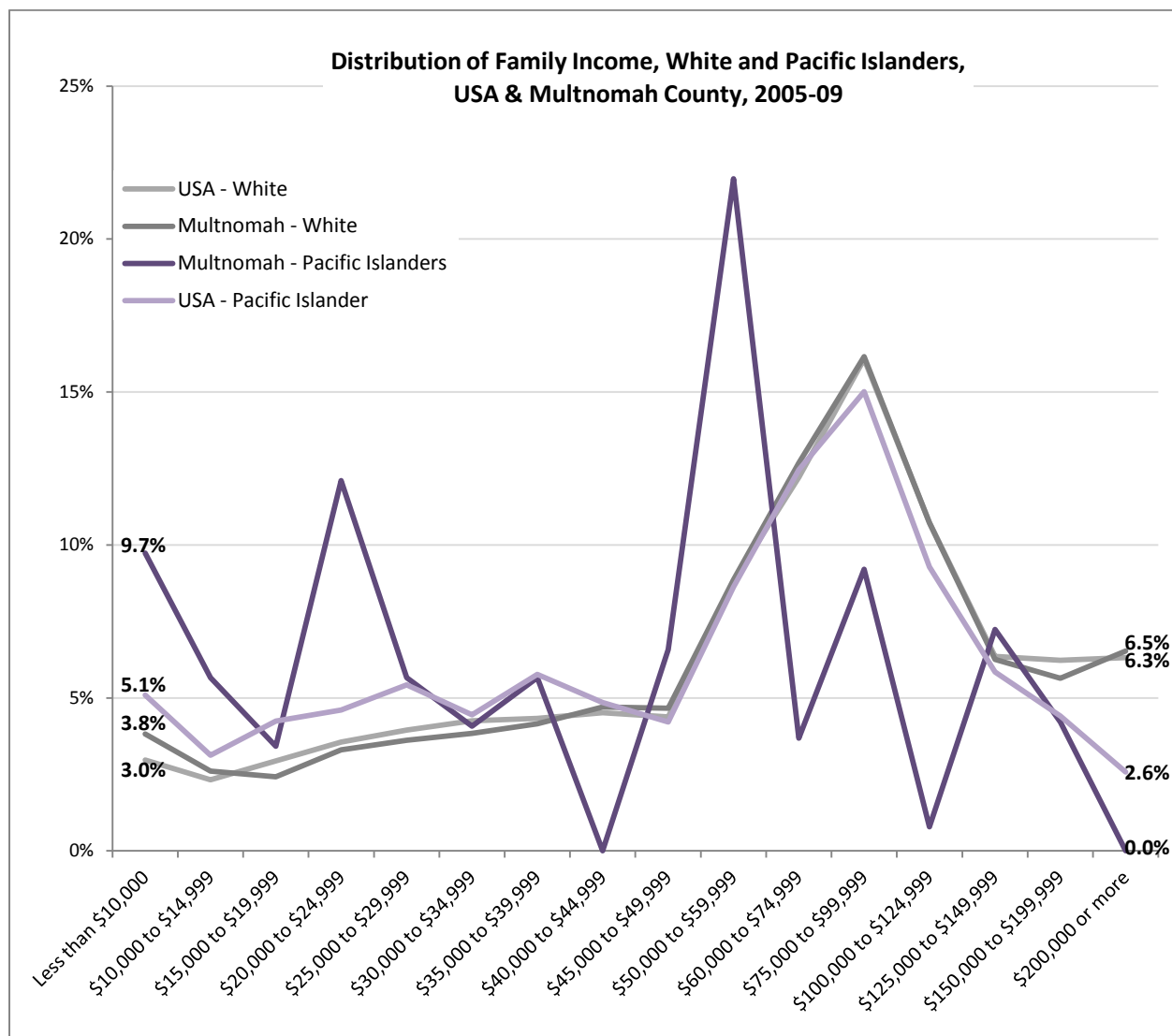
So, what class structure exists within the Pacific Islander community? In the chart below, the reader can see that the local PI community has many more poor and low income earners and many fewer high income earners, when comparing the community to the USA-level data.



Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2005-2009.

Looking at the figures to the left, we find that the local PI community fares worse than the community across the USA for all incomes up until \$35,000. It is in these low incomes where the community is over-represented. For incomes coming close to \$60,000 and higher, the Pacific Islander community in Multnomah county falls short – with constrained access to high income options that exist elsewhere in the USA.

Now we will add White family income distribution to the chart and explore the patterns of racial disparities in two ways – how do local Pacific Islanders compare with Whites and how do each of these groups compare with their national profiles? The researchers have left the complexity of all data points in this chart, illustrating a few important trends: at the high-income range, Pacific Islanders are blocked out of top paying incomes, especially for local PIs. The local PI community does hold one forte, and that is the in the area of mid-range incomes (for families earning \$45,000-\$60,000 per year). But a more disturbing insight is that the local PI community is deeply challenged at the low end of the income range, and while less so, even the US-wide PI community is over-represented in all incomes below \$40,000. White families at both the local and national level are under-represented at these same income levels.

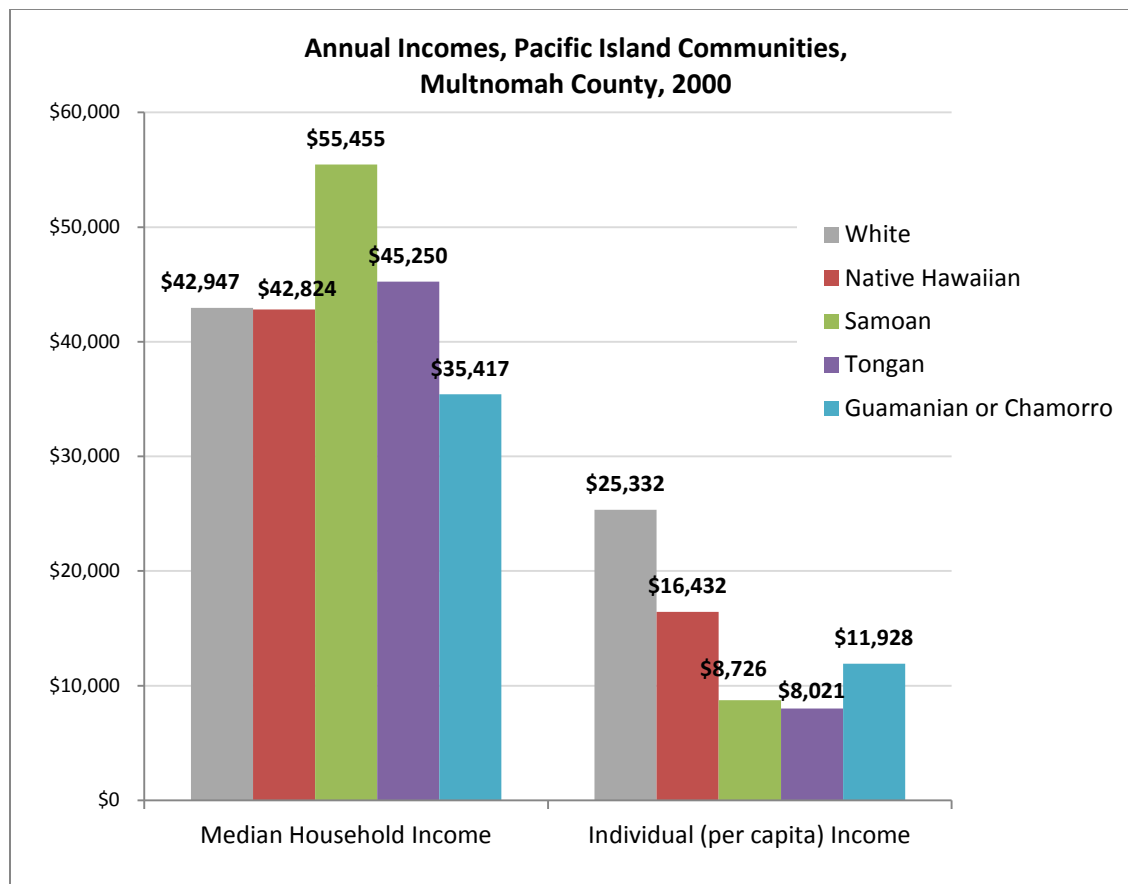


Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2005-2009.

In summary, the Pacific Islander community is more deeply challenged today to earn a decent living than it was in 2000. Income levels are lower, poverty rates are higher, disparities with Whites are growing, and there is a particularly toxic environment locally that is precluding local Pacific Islanders from reaching the standards that are possible in the national averages.

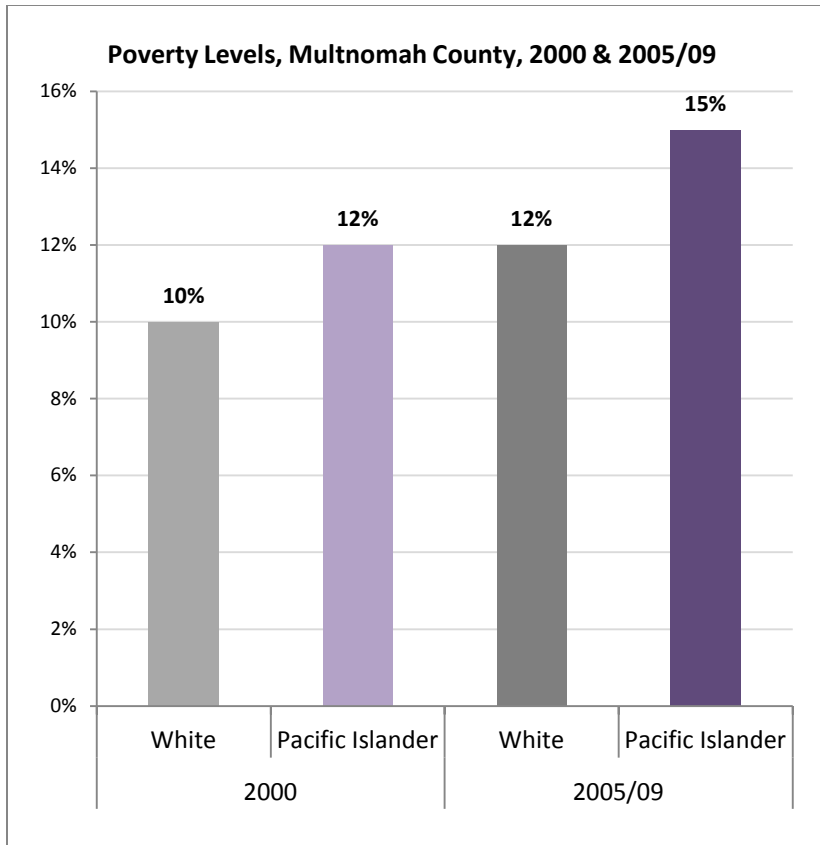
Now we will turn to the economic conditions facing smaller Pacific Islander communities, remembering that such data are only available for the year 2000. We remind the reader that this problem will not be addressed with the files from Census 2010 as the Census Bureau's decision to drop the "long form" that collected detailed economic and social data means that such data will not again be available. This problem may not ever be solved as the sampling standards used for surveys such as the American Community Survey are too small to provide reliable information.





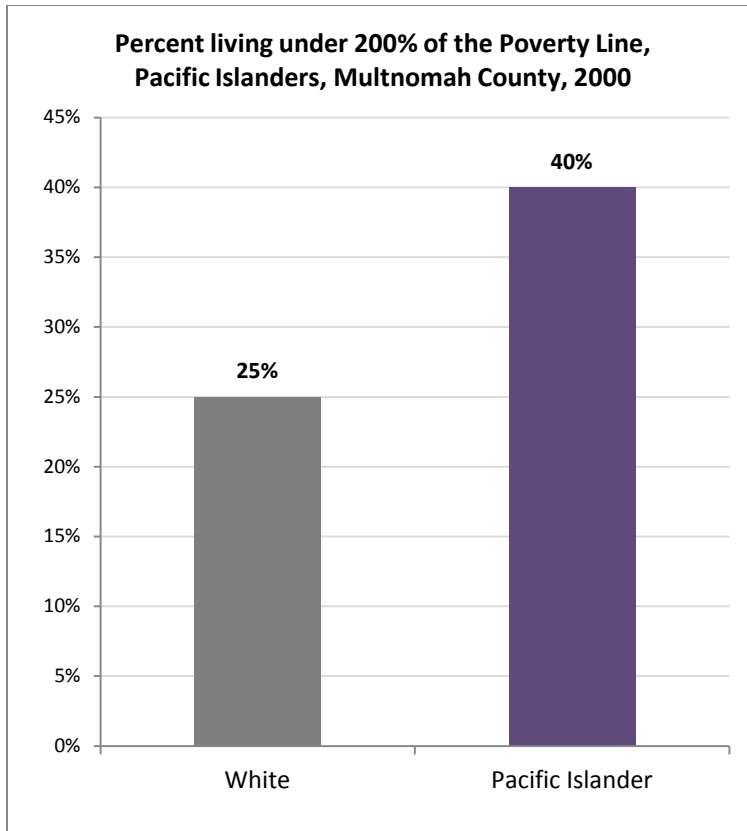
Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

With low annual incomes typically comes heightened depth of numbers living in poverty. This is so for the community – with 20% more Pacific Islanders living in poverty than among the White community in 2000 and this disparity rising to 25% by 2009.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), and American Community Survey for 2005/2009 data.

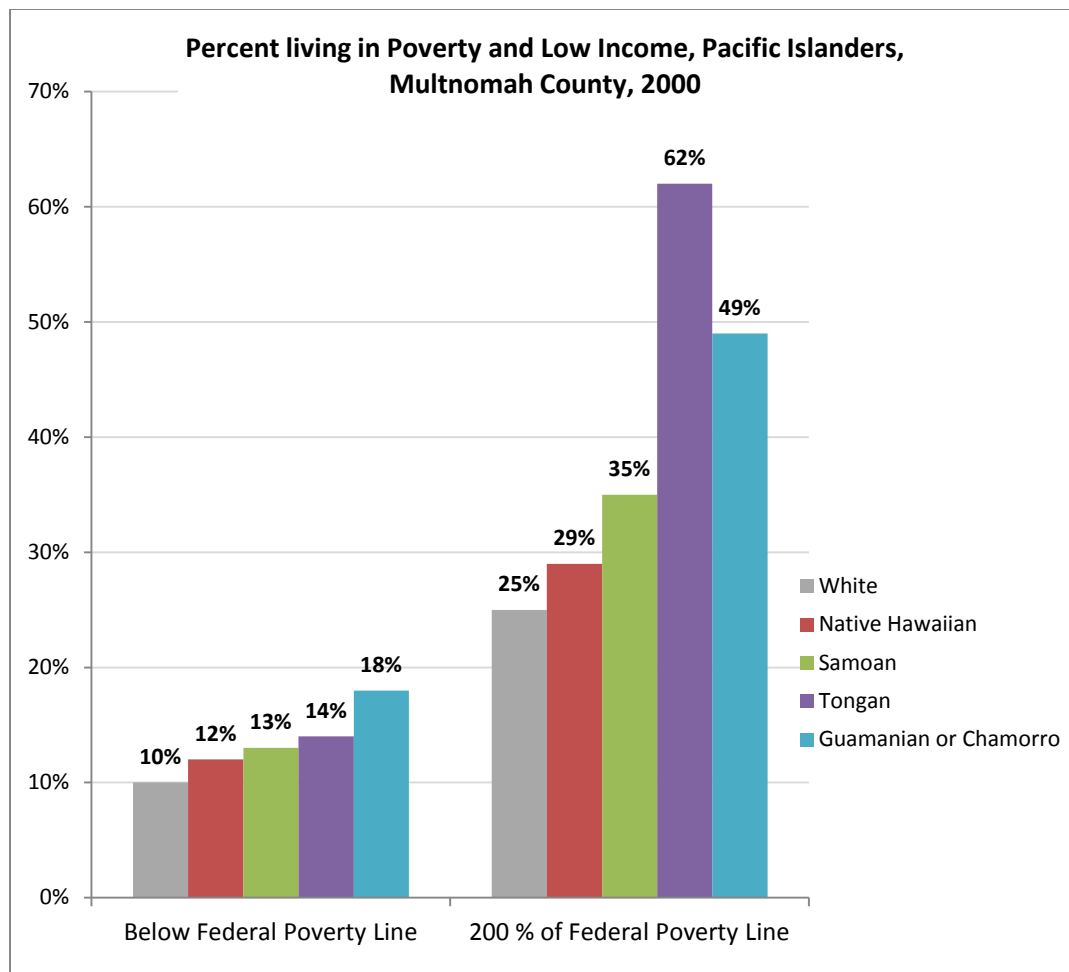
The startling variance, however, comes when we look at low income living – those who live at levels that are more than the poverty line, but only up to double the poverty line. We typically characterize those who earn incomes above poverty, but lower than 200% of the poverty line as low income. This does not mean that those at the middle income range do not also have trouble paying their bills, but they hold a level of affluence unmatched by those who are low income.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). The “200% of Federal Poverty Line” figure includes those living in poverty as well as those in low income up to double the poverty line.

This chart shows that in 2000 there were 60% more Pacific Islanders living at low incomes or in poverty than Whites. This proportional gain will have been created by vastly more Pacific Islanders living in low income than Whites (with these high levels required to bring the overall count of those in the category to be bumped up so much higher than those in poverty). We thus have a deep problem with low income wages and, in all likelihood, lack of access to sufficient work to move one’s economic status higher.

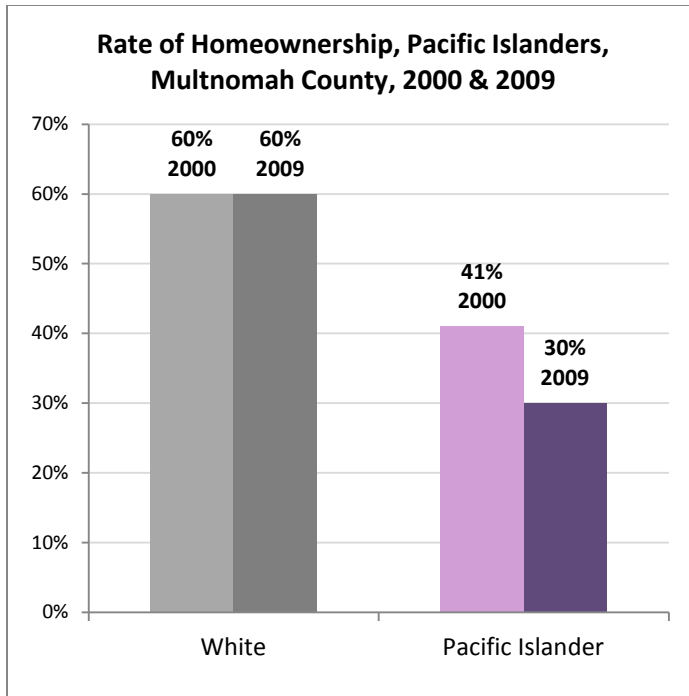
Looking at the various Pacific Islander communities shows that every community for whom data was available has higher levels of poverty and low income than Whites.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

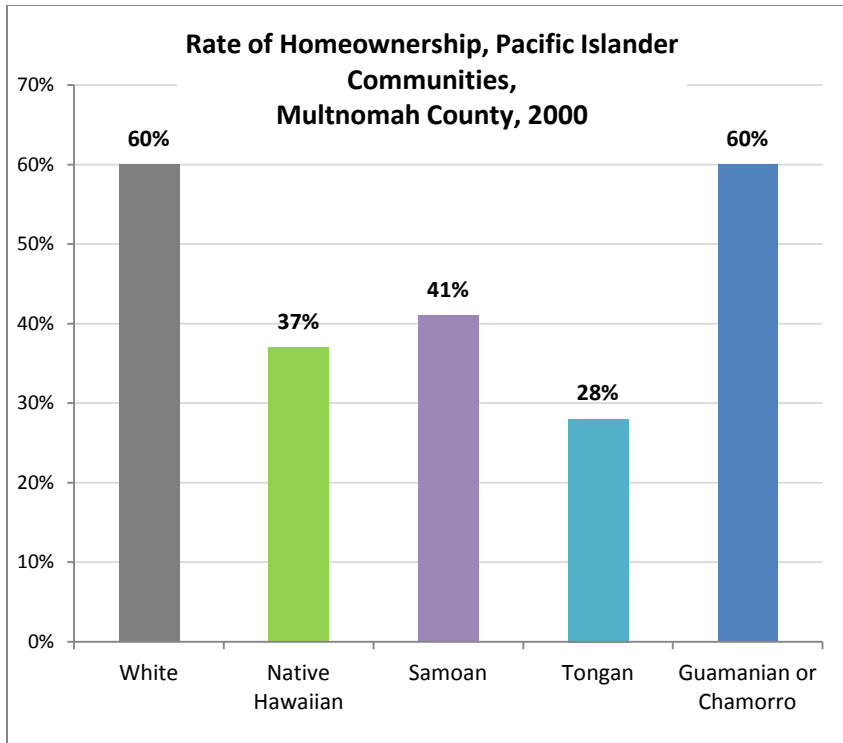
The low income levels are disturbingly high – for all PI communities. Above we see that approximately one-in-three, to more than one-in-two live in low income. This will assuredly mean that community members have difficulty in paying the bills, particularly in housing (as this is typically the largest of household bills). Unfortunately data on the relative size of this burden is not available for PI communities.

One measure of affluence is income (which escapes many in the PI community). A second measure is homeownership. In this area, the PI community back in 2000 had homeownership rates that were 32% lower than Whites; today that rate has plunged and now stands at 30% at a rate that is 50% lower than for Whites.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF); American Community Survey, 2009.

Homeownership is a particularly salient feature of class structure as it is the most important asset owned by non-elites (who also own stocks, investments and multiple additional assets). The value of a house provides a basis for wealth upon which one can draw – in terms of taking out loans for returning to school, refinancing it to pay for starting up a business, and which forms the primary basis for the inheritance of the next generation. How well do Pacific Islander communities do in securing this asset?

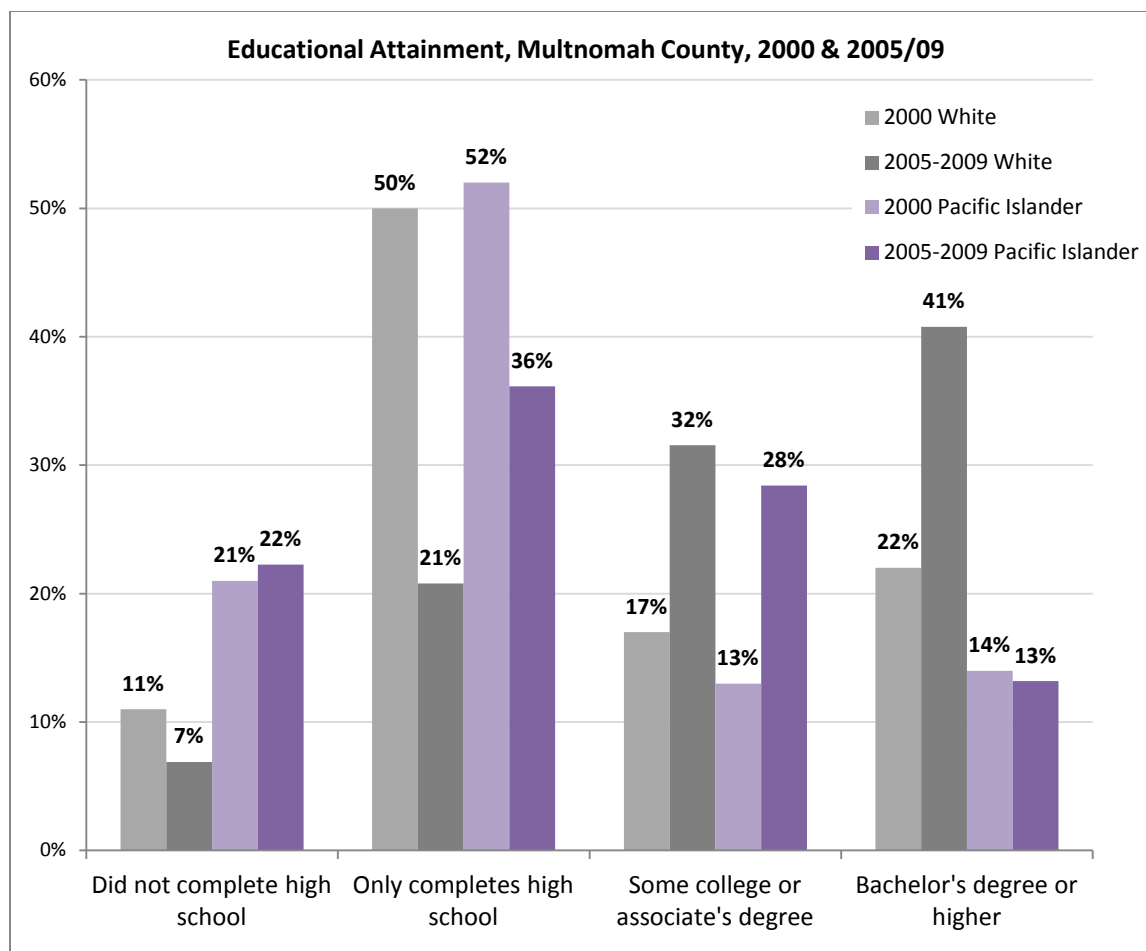


Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Not so well! Among Tongans, only one-in-four are able to buy a house. Among Native Hawaiians and Samoans, approximately two-in-five are able to purchase housing. It is only Guamanians who are able to approximate the housing ownership rates of Whites. Missing, however, from this picture is the value of this housing – for high value housing is better able to gain in value, and also it is a larger asset, which has ripple effects throughout the benefits that flow from homeownership. It is likely that the house values of those in Pacific Islander community are very low, as the figure for the Asian community (as an entirety) is 24% lower than Whites (at \$260,300 instead of \$298,300), and the Pacific Islander community is generally less affluent than the overall Asian community.

### Education and Employment

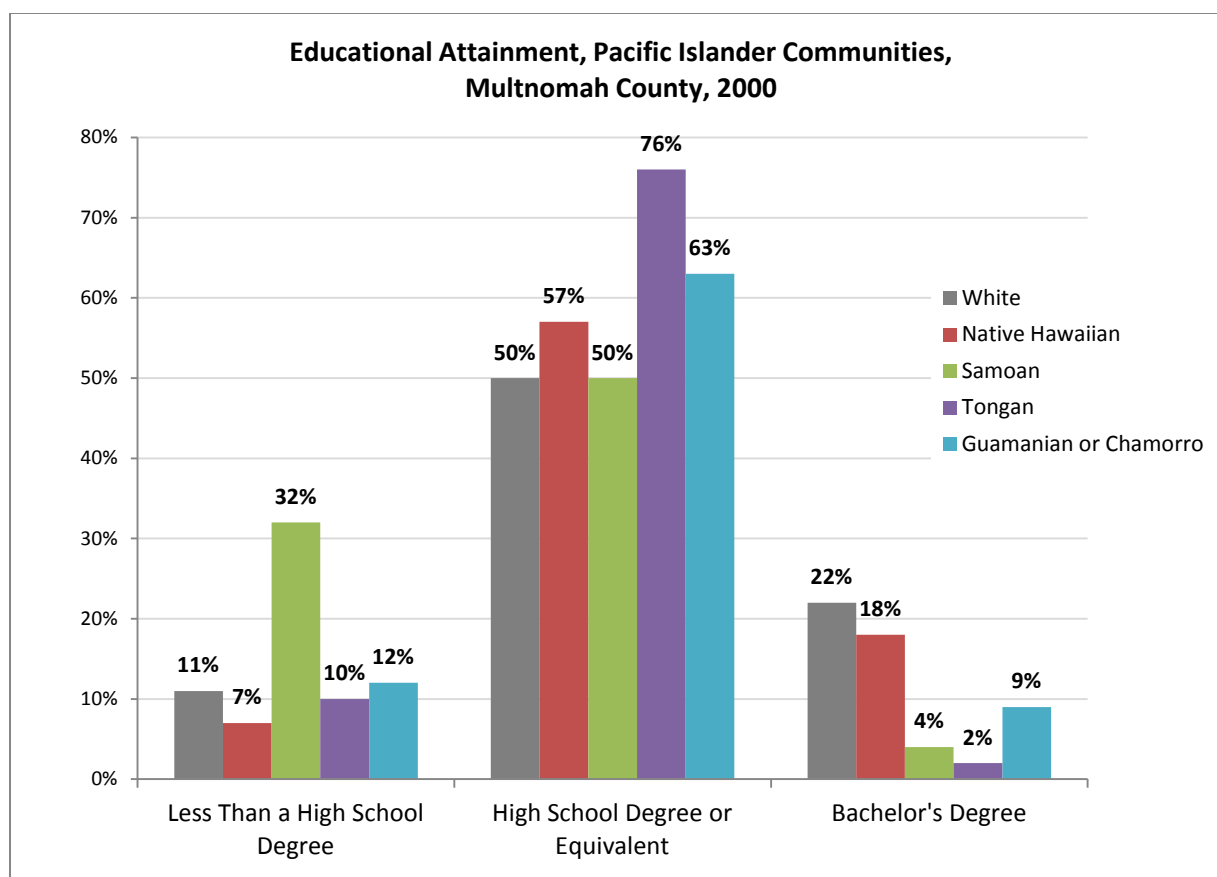
One significant feature of one's earning potential, as well as one's health and well being is that of education. How well have Pacific Islanders accessed strong education? From the chart below, we can interpret, again, not so well. The PI community in 2000 has had no more success in graduating high school, while the White community surge out of high school, and became deeply successful in higher education at both the college and university levels. And in every dimension measured below, disparities have grown significantly over the decade.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). Data for 2005/2009 is drawn from the American Community Survey.

Today in Multnomah county, the Pacific Islander community has weaker educational outcomes than Whites. There has been an important gain at the college-level, with the community more than doubling its participation. It is at the degree-level where the disparities become most pronounced – almost one-in-two Whites holds a Bachelor's degree or higher, while only one-in-eight Pacific Islanders are credentialed in this way. This is an important ingredient in income disparities, for without higher level degrees and credentials, the community will not be able to access better jobs or incomes.

Within the Pacific Islander communities, there is wide variation. It is interesting to note the left hand side of the chart below. This shows us that we have roughly equivalent rates of not having graduated high school, with the exception of the Samoan community which has triple the likelihood of not graduating high school.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Higher education is a distant dream for many, particularly Samoans and Tongans, yet also for Guamanians who are still at levels less than half of Whites. Even for Native Hawaiians who are most highly educated (among those for whom data are available), the access rate is less than one-in-five, compared with Whites who have rates better than one-in-five.

Little data is available to reveal how youth are currently doing in the public education system, early childhood system, or in higher education. The very first data available disaggregating achievement data in our public schools by language offers the very first glimpse into the Pacific Islander community – and has been profiled in the “big picture” section of this report.

## Summary

There are wide variations in experience for those within the Pacific Islander community. In almost every measure where data was available, PI outcomes are worse than Whites – sometimes very much worse. The levels of economic distress, particularly in the area of low income living, and the narrow possibilities that Pacific Islanders have in higher education, contribute to an emerging sense of urgency for action. The deterioration of poverty rates, incomes and homeownership for the Pacific Islander community over the last decade is pronounced and deeply troubling. Comprehensive address of barriers to success in the various institutions examined is needed to ensure that we have access to a positive future. Our children are waiting.



It is essential that information on Pacific Islander experiences be made widely available. This requires changed practices among institutional administrators and researchers. It is no longer acceptable for all experiences to be solely subsumed within the larger category of “Asian and Pacific Islander” as this renders the community invisible and the unique challenges of many communities to be obscured.

## Refugees in Multnomah County

### An Introduction to Refugee Communities

**Southeast Asian** refugees and immigrants makeup a significant number of post-1965 immigration. In Oregon, this includes people from Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma and the Hmong community. Over the last few decades an even greater number of Southeast Asian immigrants have settled in Portland as part of a secondary migration, many coming from California and other parts of the US. Immigration from this region commenced just prior to and directly following the fall of Saigon and the subsequent passage of the Indo-China Migration and Refugee Resistance Act. **Cambodians** fleeing from the Khmer Rouge also arrived on Oregon soil in 1975. In 1976, following the passage of the Immigration Act of 1976, Laotians began immigrating to Oregon.<sup>141</sup> The majority of Cambodians are Buddhist with most of the remaining community being Christian. There is one major Buddhist temple in West Linn in Clackamas county that attracts most local Cambodian Buddhists.

The **Burmese** community in Multnomah county is one of the smaller Asian communities, but the 2010 Census marked a turning point in outreach to the Burmese community. A high concentration of the local Burmese community live in east Portland and most members of the community are newcomers or former refugees. Anecdotally, high disparities face the Burmese community across important sectors like education, income, and health. The majority of local Burmese are Buddhists who came from the villages of the Irrawaddy Valley in Burma. This community has mostly arrived in the last few years.

Burma had been a British colony for over a hundred years (from 1880s to 1950), and shortly after the country gained independence, Burmese immigrants came to the USA, mostly having been educated back home or in England. They arrived to extend their studies or to obtain better job opportunities in the USA. A lot of these immigrants had families here, so we have both first and second generation Burmese in the USA. It was not until 2004 that the USA enacted a large-scale resettlement process for refugees from Burma, the majority of whom are from the ethnic groups Karen, Chin and Mon. Between 2004 and 2008, the USA resettled over 64,000 refugees from refugee camps in Myanmar (the country’s official name).

The experience of Burmese refugees is not different than other refugees who came before them – but the tragedy is that the welcoming conditions are no better than in decades prior: the conditions and services for refugees arriving in Multnomah county is not improving. New communities are facing the same hardships as those who arrived 30 years ago – a failure of the County and the City to improve services to its newest arrivals. This is a troubling pattern illustrating the ways in which the region lags in taking care of its newest residents.

The **Karen** are recognized as a distinct Burmese community. The Karen are an ethnic minority population from Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. They are the largest ethnic minority in Myanmar, constituting approximately 10% of the population.<sup>142</sup> Ruling dictators have supported the targeting of

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the Karen for decades, particularly in the eastern section of the country bordering Thailand.<sup>143</sup> With up to a million Karen in hiding in Myanmar, many have fled to avoid persecution. As of 2006, there were 140,000 Karen refugees living in Thailand, most of who live in overcrowded refugee camps and who have not been allowed outside these camps for decades.<sup>144</sup> It is estimated that approximately 300 Karen (about 50 families) have settled in the Portland area since 2007. There are currently four churches and/or church services that provide a faith-based gathering for the community. While the identity of these refugees are diverse religiously, academically, politically and occupationally, the majority were farmers and many children were born into the camps where education was sporadic.

The Karen have mostly settled in the Lents and Powellhurst-Gilbert neighborhoods of outer southeast Portland. Local needs are pronounced, encompassing issues related to jobs, wages, language, health care, health insurance, access to interpreters, housing access, and social service accessibility. While the Karen share an identity and often a language with the Burmese, the political situation has rendered the community apprehensive of relationships with the Burmese, even though heritage, culture and language are sometimes shared. As a newcomer refugee community, the Karen need supports to resource the community and to advocate for improved access to health, education and human services.

**Vietnamese** immigration into Oregon began shortly following the fall of Saigon in 1975 when 1,600 Vietnamese arrived.<sup>145</sup> All of these immigrants arrived with refugee status. Divided into two waves, the earlier refugees left early after the fall and were generally able to exit Vietnam due to their relative affluence, education and English language skills. The later arrivals (post-1978) fled first into refugee camps or faced tremendous persecution. Many in this wave faced the horrors of torture, starvation, malnutrition, assault, rape and robbery, often with children being witnesses.<sup>146</sup> Their levels of trauma have been profound. Mental health problems have been significant, and the capacity to link with supports difficult, particularly upon arrival in the USA. The majority of Vietnamese arrived as part of the group that faced trauma and persecution. Although the majority of Vietnamese reside in the core metropolitan area, more and more are moving further out to the suburbs as cost of living and housing increases.

Refugees from **Laos** arrived shortly after the first Vietnamese in the mid-1970s, with some coming directly from refugee camps in Thailand while others participated in a secondary migration from California in order to reunite with friends, families and the larger Laotian community.<sup>147</sup> The Lao community is comprised of five ethnic groups: the Lao, Hmong, Mien, Taidam and Tailu. The largest numbers are Lao, Hmong and Mien. The Lowland Lao refers to Lao who are not ethnic Hmong or Mien. Most Lowland Lao are Buddhist, especially those who are first generation or who are elders. The Hmong are intensely clannish and put a great deal of trust in their clan leaders who play an important role in the Hmong community. The Mien lived in the highlands of Laos before coming to Portland. They also have a clan system and leaders, though not as strong as that of the Hmong.

One refugee community “disappears” from most data as they are amalgamated into either the Vietnamese or the general “other Asian” category: these are the **Mien**. The Mien have a long history of migration and flight. As an indigenous rural population, they have frequently lived outside the formal democratic processes and have been marginalized by their social, geographic and economic isolation. Thought originally to be from China, they moved to a variety of Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. The Mien have been a largely rural people and a large percentage of Mien have been farmers. As a rural people, they have had limited opportunities for education and have often

lived without electricity or piped water. The Mien were often neglected or were invisible to the central governments of the countries in which they lived. An example of this isolation is the observation that there was no written Mien until an attempt was made to create a written language using Roman characters in the 1950s. One community member reported that there was a meeting in Portland, which he attended, that was an attempt to modify Thai script as written language more likely to be used. Most Mien of the first generation of refugees are unable to read or write in their native language.

Mien started coming to the USA as refugees when the Vietnam War was winding down. The Mien in Laos had been recruited by the American military as part of the “secret” war in Laos as the US attempted to stop shipments of weapons to North Vietnam. As the war was ending, it became clear that the Mien might be persecuted if they remained. One community spokesperson talked of experiences in a “re-education” camp, which were designed as a tool for revenge, for repression and for indoctrination by the Vietnamese government on community members who had supported the Americans or the old government.

Thousands of Mien fled Vietnam in dangerous and difficult circumstances, escaping to refugee camps in Thailand. It took some time for third countries of refuge to welcome Mien refugees. The result was that some Mien were forced to live in refugee camps for many years. Movement to the USA occurred in the mid-1970s, with most arriving in the 1980s and ending, for the most part, in the 1990s. Most Mien in the USA live on the West Coast, the largest number in California.

For this first generation of Mien refugees, language and profound cultural shock (with US highly technological and urbanized life-style) creates extremely difficult issues to deal with. Community leaders estimate that less than half of that original generation of refugees ever learned to speak English. Many children became the chief conduits of culture and interpretation for the family. Now that they are in the second and third generation, acquisition of English is no longer an issue and these generations have been acculturated. Indeed there is some alarm over the continuing loss of Mien language and culture.

The Mien are deeply connected to their families. If they are able to financially, the Mien make many trips to meet with family members and friends who still live in Laos or other parts of Southeast Asia. It is not clear whether this connection will be as strong in the future, but there are Mien organizations that help with arrangement of celebrations and other important Mien cultural events so at least that aspect of Mien culture is robust.

The **Hmong** hold an important role in the history of the USA. Historically a rural mountain tribe in Laos, they were forced from their homes by Communist aggressors shortly after Laos achieved independence from France in 1954. A strong resistance movement, led by General Vang Pao, caught the attention of the US as it entered the Vietnam War. Contracted by the CIA, Pao’s army became “America’s secret army” in the war, and helped protect US soldiers, suffering great costs themselves:

Over 35,000 Lao soldiers, along with many women and children, lost their lives on behalf of the United States. When the United States abandoned its efforts in Vietnam it also abandoned the Secret Army of Laos along with the promises made to them. The Hmong who were loyal to the United States fled to refugee camps in Thailand [beginning in 1975]. Many were killed trying to escape the Communists. From the refugee camps many eventually made it to other countries.<sup>148</sup>

This represents a death rate of more than one-in-two Hmong soldiers as approximately 60,000 were recruited by the CIA. A powerful quote from the Hmong illustrates both the responsibility of the USA for the Hmong experience as well as the vulnerability of the Hmong people: “We helped America fight communism. In 1975, they left and we ran into the forest. Now we ask for their help. We are all about to die.”<sup>149</sup> Instead, the USA abandoned the Hmong and other supporters from Lao and Mein communities. It was not until 1997 that the USA publicly acknowledged the supports that were leveraged from the Hmong.

Recognized as political refugees, the Hmong began their arrival into Oregon in 1975. Large-scale resettlement of the community was refused by the USA. While initially a magnet for refugees, secondary migration out of the region (and into California) accelerated in the 1980s as the region had not built services for the community or sufficient financial supports for the Hmong community. A small but robust Hmong community has been expanding its presence in the region since the late 1990s, and today it officially numbers 1,700 but community leaders perceive the number to be at least double this level. Some Hmong remain in the jungles of Laos and surrounding countries, facing persecution and sporadic but dire forced repatriation from Thai refugee camps into Laos as recently as 2009. Their situation remains precarious in Laos, and as follows in this report, so too in the USA, as the Hmong community is one of our most distressed API communities in the region.

The Hmong have been successful in one important legislative gain in the USA – the Hmong Veterans’ Naturalization Law – which allows Hmong soldiers who worked to aid the US government between 1961 and 1978 and their wives and widows a waiver for the English language requirement in their naturalization exams, but only for a time-limited period that lasted from 2000 to 2003.

Most recently, the **Bhutanese of Nepali origin** have arrived in the region, after Bhutan’s decision to expel them and revoke their citizenship on the basis of their ethnic identity, their Hindu religion, and with rhetoric of being “anti-national.” The King of Bhutan was intent on rejecting the mostly southern Bhutanese who generations ago had been recruited from Nepal to labor in the country and had become part of the fabric of the country. Widespread arrests, burning of homes, rapes and torture began in 1991.<sup>150</sup> Forced expulsions began and over ¼ of the population of Bhutan has since voluntarily fled or been forced into refugee camps in neighboring Nepal. Typically, these refugees have stayed in these camps for nearly 20 years, only recently being permanently resettled; more than ¼ still remain in these refugee camps. Their arrival in Multnomah county began as the USA and the world community finally began to accept them in 2007. The USA has accepted approximately 22,000 as of 2010, and has committed to resettling 60,000 Bhutanese.<sup>151</sup> Challenges include language, housing and employment.

Middle Eastern communities in Multnomah county have been invisible in both the Census process as well as in local databases. These communities have a new and growing presence in the region, arriving primarily as refugees. While their “official” designation in the Census and ACS databases is as White, their home country is officially part of the Asian continent. They rarely identify, however, as Asian. To support the visibility of those in the Middle Eastern community, we include two such communities below and also seek to call attention to their needs as refugees.

The **Iraqi community** has recently arrived in Multnomah county, with the vast majority of the community arriving since 2003 at the start of the second US war with Iraq, arriving as refugees fleeing the Iraq war and the violence directed at some who assisted the Coalition forces in Iraq. Those who

aided the US military received a Special Immigrant Visa with speedier processing as a result of the violence directed at them as a result of their role. That said, the program in 2010 was deemed a bureaucratic failure for its low acceptance rate and excessive timelines.<sup>152</sup> Given the supposed indebtedness of the US government to this community, the program was intended to quickly accept eligible applicants and to extend financial supports, with priority given to those whose lives were in the greatest danger. The number of such visas, however, has been decreasing each year and only 50 will be given in 2011. Less than 3,000 of the dedicated 17,000 such visas were filled.

The acceptance of Iraqis as refugees by the USA was a “trickle” to start,<sup>153</sup> rising to approximately 19,000 in 2009, 17,000 in 2010 and 3,875 in the first quarter of 2011.<sup>154</sup> Almost all local Iraqis here are refugees. The magnitude of refugees seeking a safe place to live is massive: approximately 230,000 are registered with the UNHCR outside Iraq (in Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and the Gulf States) and an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced within Iraq.<sup>155</sup> Other Iraqis who want to come to the U.S. apply for regular refugee status. There are many Iraqis who have been waiting for their entrance visas for many months but are in a large bottleneck due to the very tight security and background checks being made on behalf of the State Department. There are large communities of Iraqis in neighboring countries waiting for permission to come to the US. One of the problems facing the community is the difficult task of family reunification.

Issues facing Iraqi women include cultural issues generated by the wearing of hijabs – with mistreatment frequently experienced. Iraqi women face being stared at, jokes made, threatening gestures made, and attempts to snatch it off a woman’s head have been reported. Another issue facing educated and professional Iraqis is the necessity to work at an entry level job while waiting to become proficient in English and starting the needed steps to using their professional degrees in the U.S.

Many Iraqi refugees come to the U.S. with physical and mental health issues because of the war. Traumatic brain injuries, horrendous bullet and shrapnel wounds and the loss of family or friends contribute to the difficulty in resettlement. As a result, large numbers of referrals to physicians and mental health providers occur to address depression and post-traumatic stress disorders. Because of these medical problems a number of Iraqis have applied for SSI Disability which can be a very lengthy process and which outcome cannot be predicted. Coupled with lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience, the economic situation facing Iraqis is very difficult – discouragement, depression and lasting unemployment are pronounced features of the community.

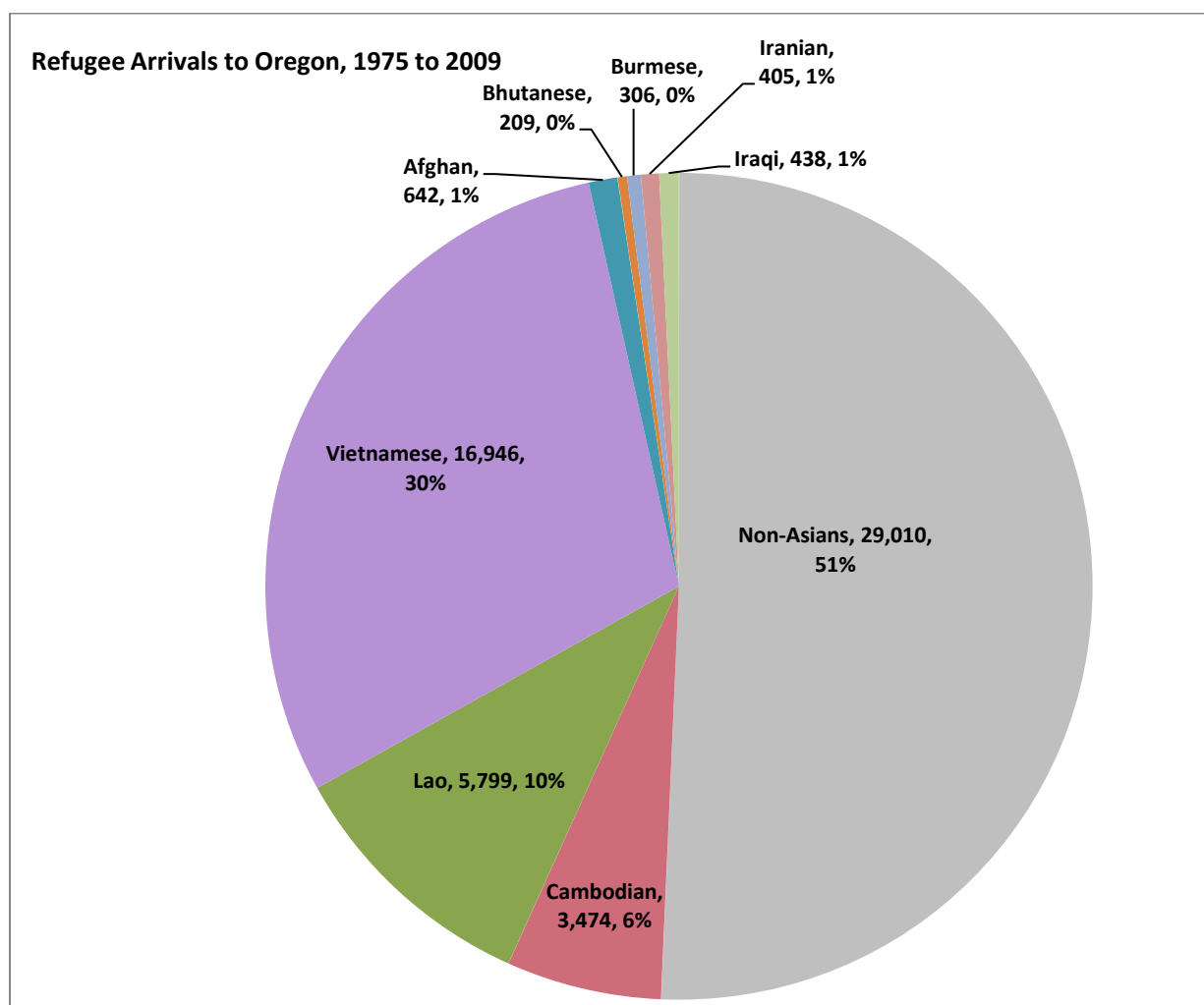
Most **Iranians** in Multnomah county arrived following the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, seeking to escape the rising power of conservative clerics, narrower options for individual freedoms, and executions of the Shah’s supporters. There were a mixture of immigrants and refugees in that population. There have also been Kurdish refugees joining the larger Iranian refugee community, fleeing from a failed independence movement in Iran in 1976, and the subsequent widespread death sentences fueled the impetus of Kurds to flee the country, with some making their way to Portland.

A number of Baha’is have arrived as refugees to Portland. The Revolutionary Government of Iran does not recognize Baha’i as a legitimate form of religious expression and the repression against them in Iran has been severe.

All of these populations have found acclimation difficult: jobs are scarce and frequently low paying. Language struggles are pronounced as it is difficult for older Iranians to learn a new language, and for many there is a lack of financial support, especially as the men are culturally expected to be the main providers for the family. Other difficult issues include transportation and dependency on children being the interpreters and translators. Men have the greatest difficulty with these facts of their new lives.

### Demographics & Arrival Patterns

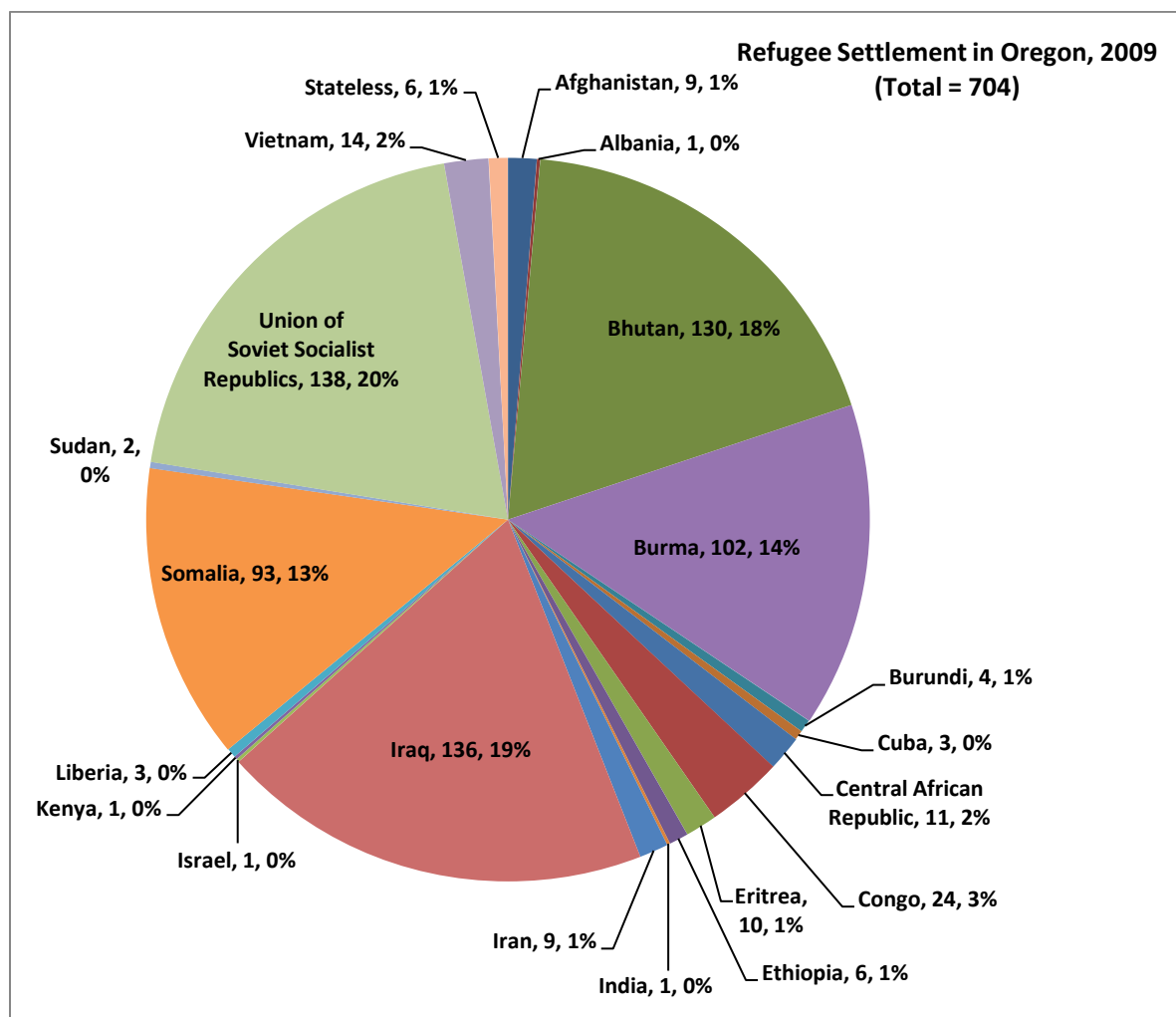
Refugees in Multnomah county are primarily Asian. A total of 49% of the entire refugee arrivals to Oregon hold a racial identity that is conventionally considered Asian. Below we see the composition of this community and the diversity of Asian communities that have arrived in the region. Please note that these numbers do not include “secondary migration” which covers those who land elsewhere in the USA but that then might move to Oregon. This number is likely large, as Oregon is the 7<sup>th</sup> most desirable state for final settlement of refugees who enter the country and then move elsewhere.<sup>156</sup>



Source: Oregon's Department of Human Services, State Refugee Program, 2010.<sup>157</sup>

Within refugee communities, three communities make up 94% of the Asian refugee group: Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian. When we add the additional groupings of Bhutanese and Burmese (and Hmong whose numbers do not appear in the above chart as their numbers were allocated by the State Refugee Program to the “other” category), the full tally of Southeast Asian refugees is at 27,577 over the last generation of 34 years.

In addition to the arrival patterns across the last generation (as profiled above), we have data on the most recent year of refugee arrivals into Oregon. As a result of global politics and changing patterns of persecution, Asian communities in the past year have seen relatively large numbers arriving from Bhutan, Burma and Iraq, with these three communities now comprising ½ of arriving refugees.

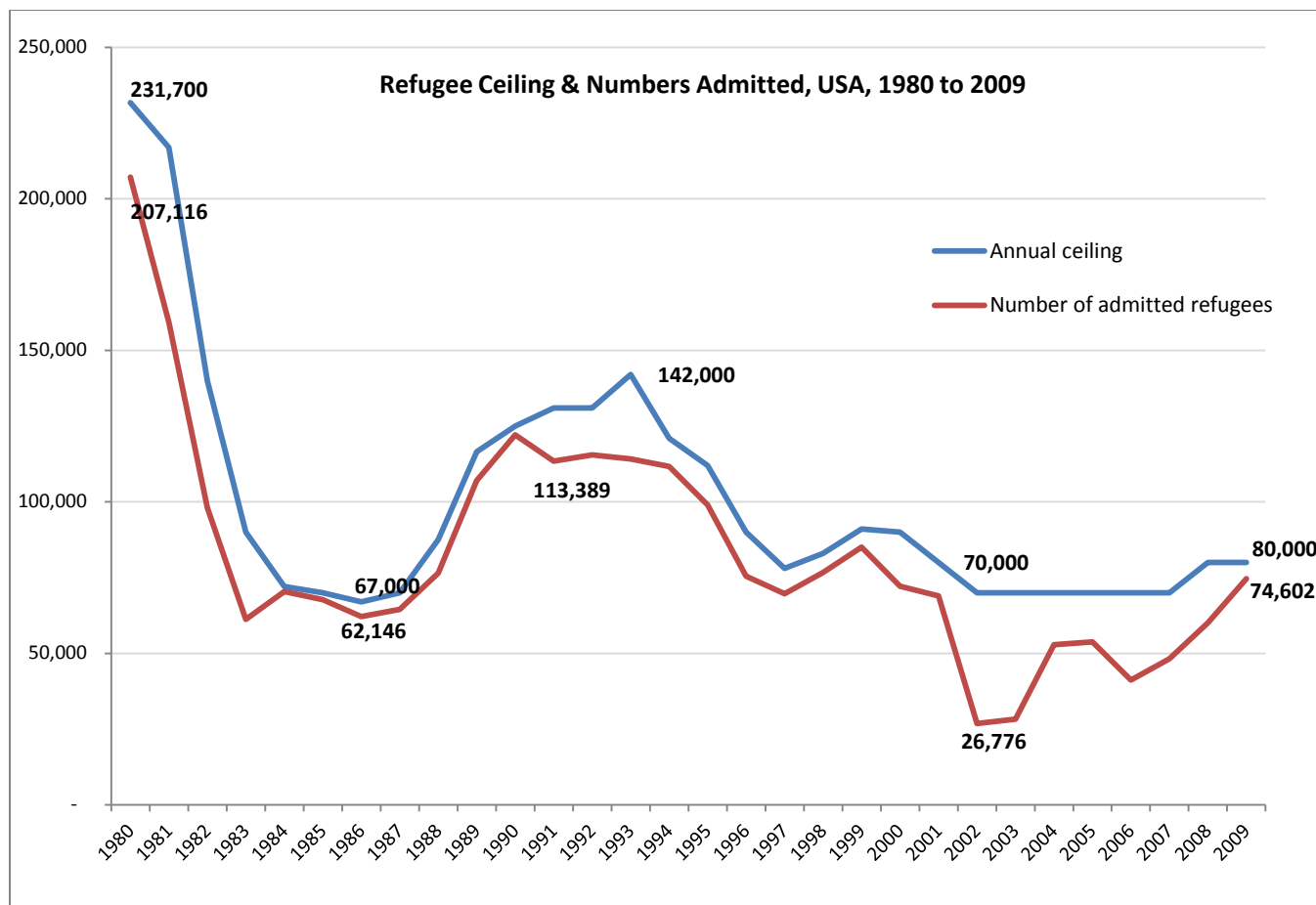


Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2010.<sup>158</sup>

With this change in composition, new local needs emerge, including an expanded set of language provision in health and human services, and expanded needs for understanding the experiences of refugees from these communities.

Of all refugees arriving in Oregon since 1975 (and excluding those that settled here after moving from elsewhere in the USA), a total of 49.3% came from Asian countries, with 48.5% arriving from Southeast Asia. These patterns are, however, expected to shift dramatically in the years to come.

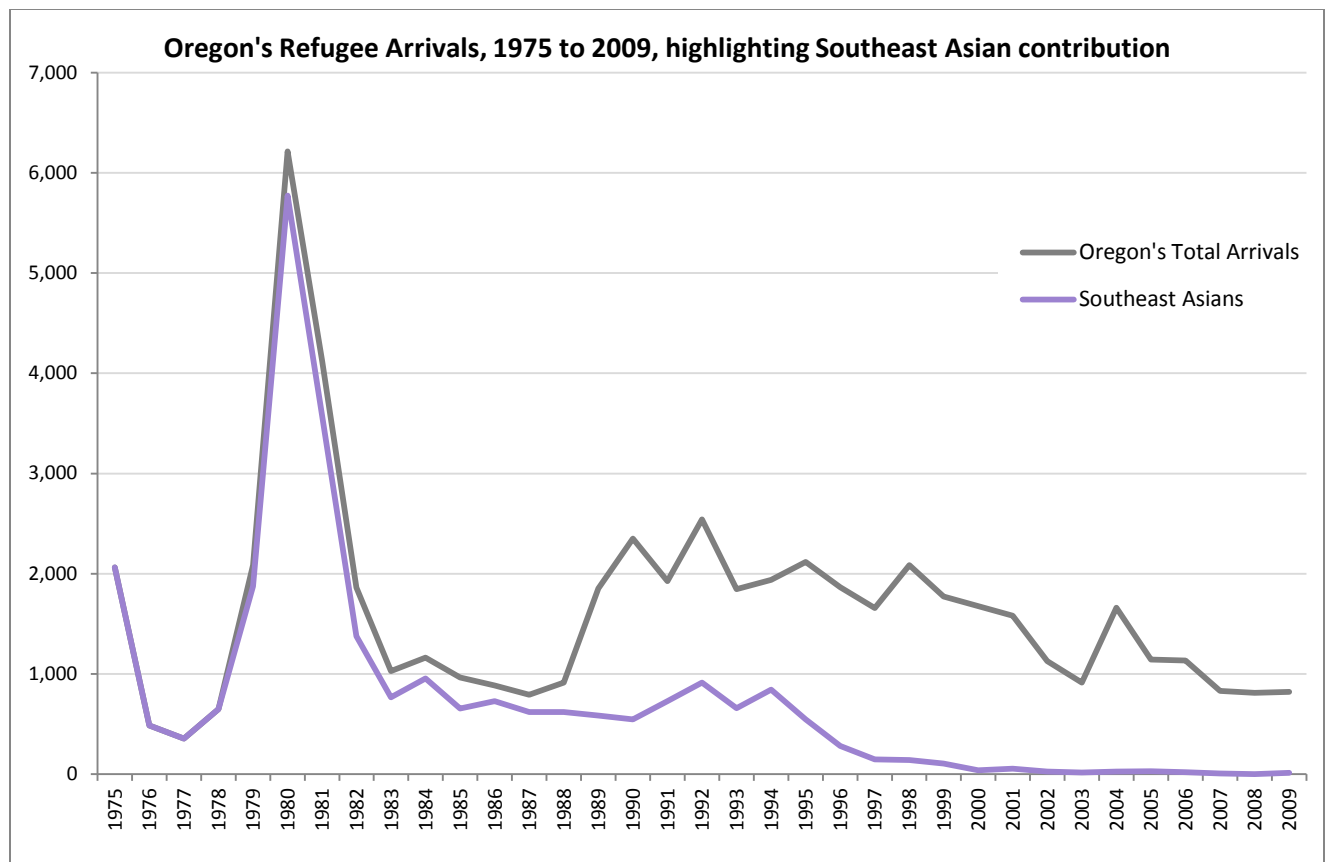
A long-term look at refugee patterns shows how numbers have shifted over the last 30 years across the entire USA: while refugee numbers are down dramatically from their height in 1980, numbers have been growing steadily since 2002. The federal government determines ceiling levels annually, and while numbers have been rising as a result of global patterns of war, drought and violence, the federal government can drop the ceilings if they deem it appropriate.



Source: Department of Homeland Security, 2010.<sup>159</sup>

Below we see the profile of this community and the ebb and flow with which it has held a presence in Oregon.





Source: Oregon's Department of Human Services, State Refugee Program, 2010.<sup>160</sup>

The pace of migration into Oregon has slowed considerably from a high of almost 6,000 in 1981, to a low of only one Southeast Asian in 2008. With the direction of refugee acceptance again directed to Asians, albeit not in the southeast but rather the countries of Iraq and Iran, we are likely to see a surge of refugees into this broader community in the coming years.

The Vietnamese in Multnomah county are the largest of the Asian refugee communities and are substantive enough to have been able to generate a fairly comprehensive set of data on the community from the American Community Survey in 2008. This allows us to build a more full and current set of insights into struggles and strengths within the community and these data are included in the section following the profile of the Cambodians, the Hmong and the Laotians. Please note that 24% of the Vietnamese community was actually born in the USA as this refugee-based community began arriving after the 1975 fall of Saigon. Though we define this community as a refugee community, in reality its profile is more mixed between original refugees, their children and newer immigrants.

#### *Cambodians, Hmong, Laotians and Vietnamese in Multnomah county*

Please note that the data used in the remainder of this section draws exclusively from Census 2000 – meaning that it is now ten years old. While this is far from desired, it is the only local data available for those countries which generate refugees. The data also fall short because they are based on the entire population of those who come from these countries of origin, and thus combine those who are refugees and those who might also be immigrants. Given, however, that these are large refugee-generating

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countries, it is unlikely the data have been significantly affected by this constraint, but we are not sure as to the size of the effect. It is likely that the refugee experience among, for example, the Laotians is worse than that reported below, but we have no way with the current status of the data to know the size of this expected deterioration in condition. It would take a sizable local research project to determine this.

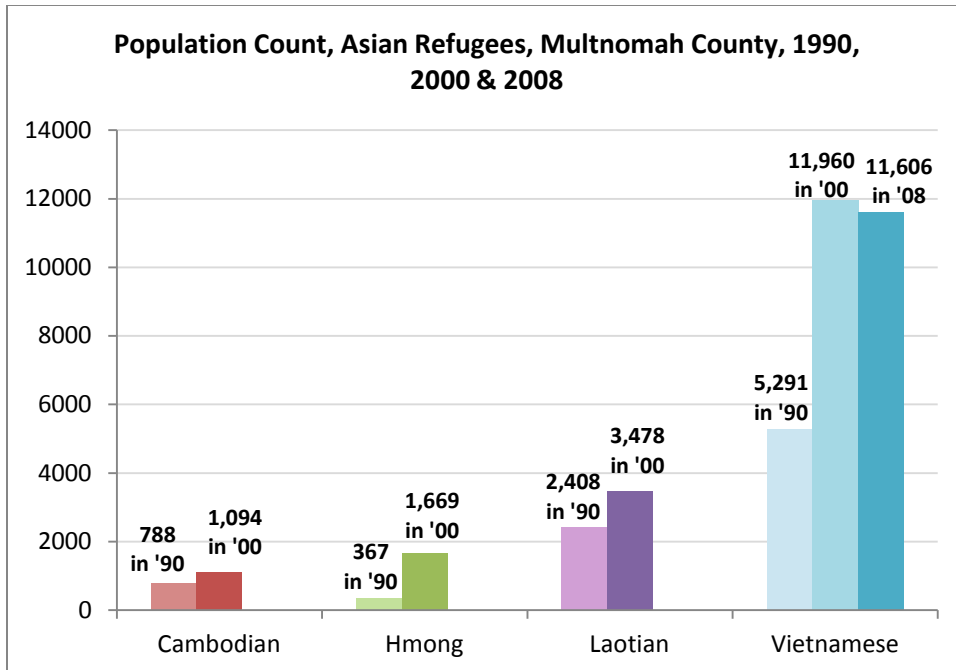
### *Burmese, Bhutanese, Iraqis and Iranians in Multnomah County*

Resettling those who live in refugee camps outside their home countries is a priority for the United Nations, and it is here that the Burmese, Bhutanese, Iraqis and Iranians number large. Yet, we have almost no information about their collective experiences in the region. These communities are relatively new as “refugee-generating” nations but while numbers are low, needs are frequently high. There is a section on the health of refugees within the larger *Health and its Barriers* section of this report. Expanded economic supports, access to culturally-specific mental health services, language acquisition programs and long-term settlement services are urgently needed in these communities which will grow significantly in number in the coming years.

Unfortunately, there is no data on the local health or wellbeing experiences of these communities, with the exception of the brief profiles listed at the opening of this section on *Refugees in Multnomah County*, and the data on the achievement gap for school-aged children disaggregated by language in the *Education* section of this report.

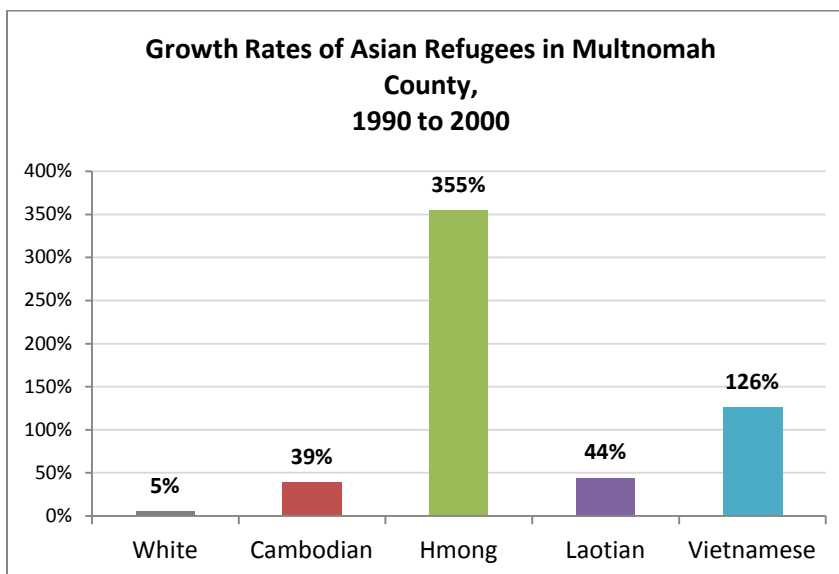
### **Demographics**

Returning our focus to the four refugee countries for whom data is available, we see small but growing numbers among all but the Vietnamese, whose numbers are largest but for whom the population might be shrinking with out-migration. Community leaders do not, however, believe that numbers are actually in decline – but rather interpret that an undercount explains for the apparent decline.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

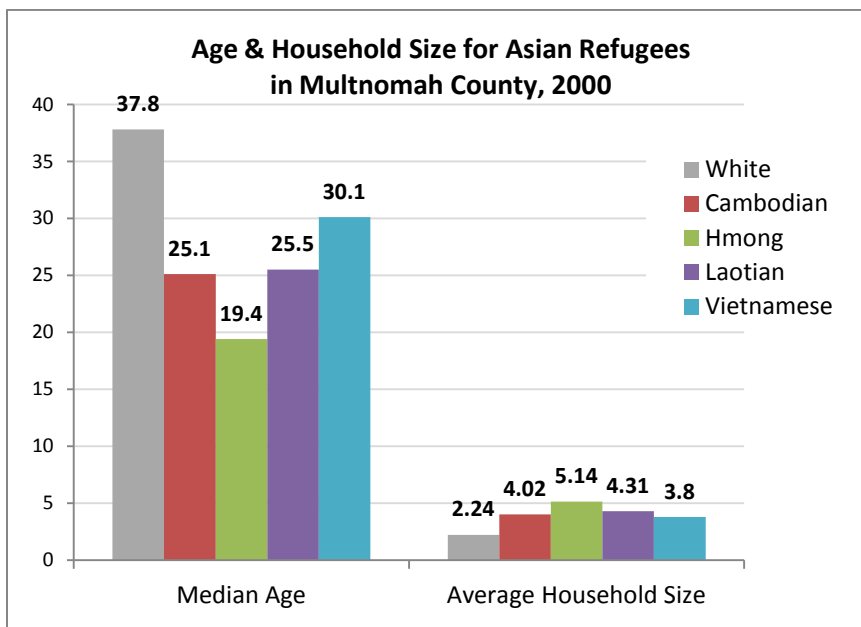
The Hmong are growing most rapidly, a trend that is likely to slow in the coming years as the USA has lowered its acceptance of the Hmong. The most recent figure available across Oregon is within the American Community Survey which identifies 2,729 Hmong living in Oregon. The Hmong remain a large presence in the refugee camps in Laos and the need for increased refugee resettlement is high, and should the US government more fully respond to this urgent need, will likely increase population numbers locally as the draw to move to a relatively established Hmong community will be high.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

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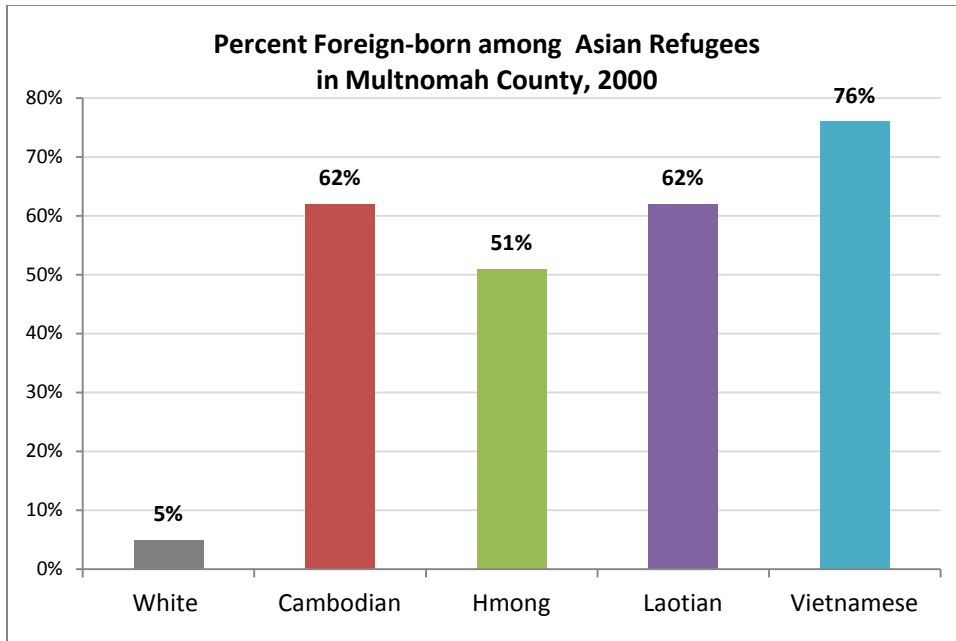
Household size is not a reflection of normal patterns within each culture, as there are pronounced limits on maximum numbers of people permitted in each home as set by landlords and public housing administrators. These limits preclude extended family living arrangements, although strong family ties are simultaneously maintained. With a young average age for each community, and the youngest for the Hmong, we can see that immediate families are larger.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

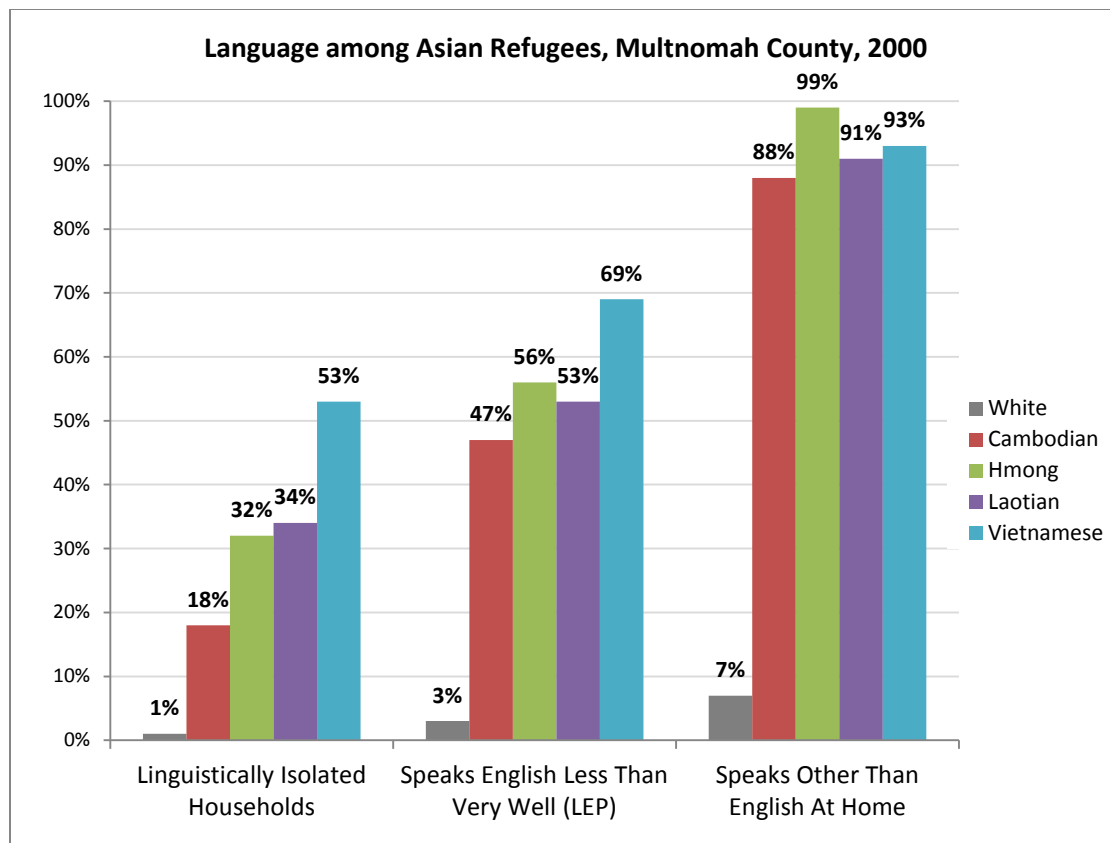
Remember that with high family numbers come greater challenges in finding affordable housing. There are very few larger apartments and landlords often give strong preference to smaller households. As many refugee families have households that are almost twice larger than Whites, there will undoubtedly be challenges in finding safe and affordable housing – a fact that is borne out by narrative experiences within this community.

Housing challenges are deepened with settlement challenges and all Asian refugee communities have a very high percentage of foreign-born people in the community. This level is at least ten times higher than for Whites – a fact that heightens the need for strong and durable settlement services. Among the Asian community, the standard time period for acculturation to be achieved is three generations, which is equal to 75 years.<sup>161</sup>



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

It is fair to say that Asian refugee communities struggle with English communication, as a very high level of linguistic isolation exists. So too at the individual level as half of the members of each community speak English less than very well.

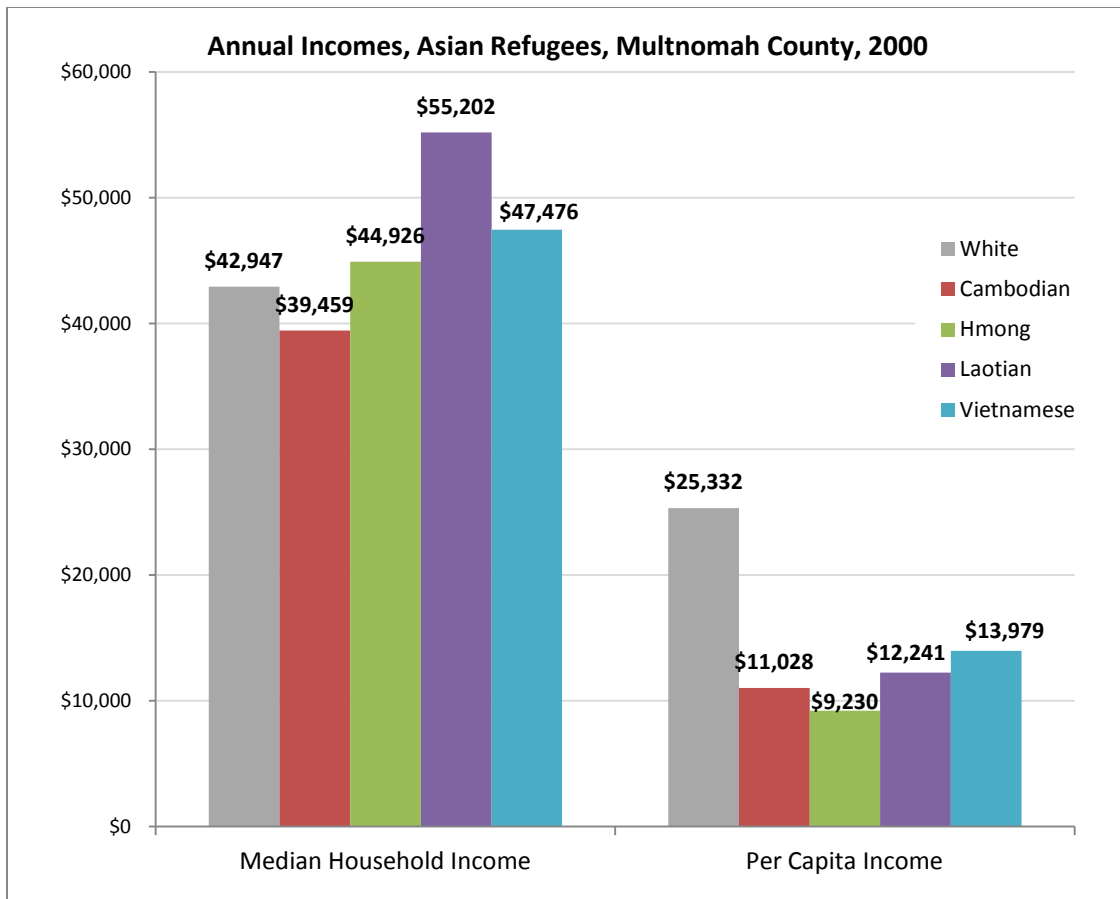


Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

The message within this data is that, collectively, we need to ensure that services, supports and translated materials are made available to refugee communities. Without these expanded language supports, challenges exist in education (as students cannot get help at home with their school work, and parents cannot talk with their children's teachers), health care (as health care providers cannot understand the experiences of their patients and patients cannot comprehend instructions for care and medication), and employment (as employers will not hire those with whom they cannot communicate, and potential employees will rarely seek work when they cannot communicate in the language of employers). As well, the dizzying array of forms that are part of daily life can only rarely be addressed – everything from newspapers to job postings, to instructions for assembling furniture, to how to use public transit, to how to take a driver's license to how to take medicine. Language supports are essential for the entire community's health and wellbeing as well as social inclusion and civic engagement.

### Economic Progress

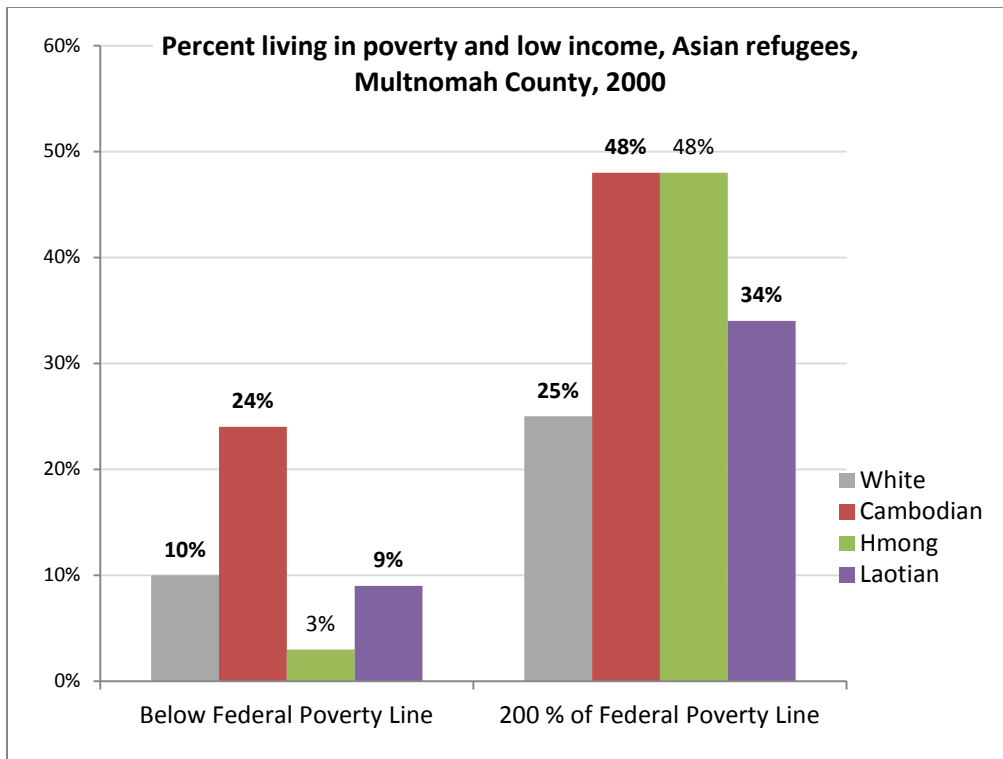
Among Asian refugee communities, household incomes are mostly higher than Whites (for the year 2000). This was a surprise and it may be offset by the numbers of those working in the household and the likelihood that there is more than one family living together. When we look at per capita incomes, the levels are universally lower than Whites – and typically less than half these incomes.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Confirming our hypothesis cannot occur with the data available. It is also very likely that the jobs, incomes and occupations available to refugees in the Asian community are limited by a damaging interaction of institutional racism and social exclusion caused by language and educational limitations. Improved data would assist in understanding the extent of these causal factors – but not, however, required for action to be taken to promote improved services, employment, wages and wellbeing.

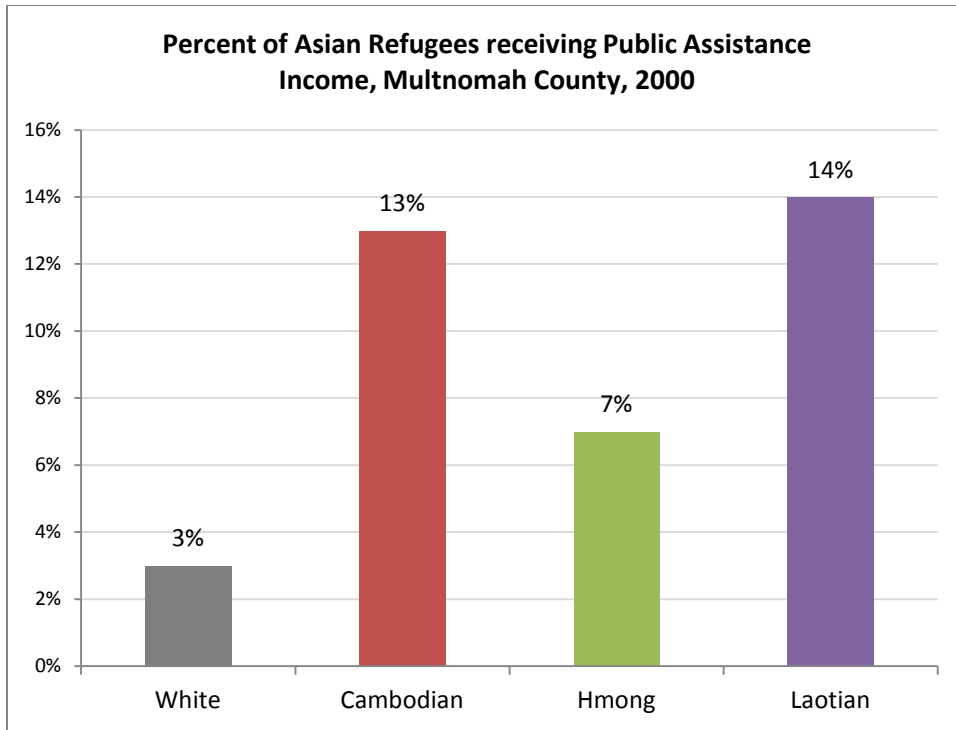
All these refugee communities hold a distressing high level of low income living (the set of bars on the right of the below chart). It is again a surprise that more are not living below the poverty line – but this may be a feature of a higher number being eligible for public assistance, as the subsequent chart reveals. Refugees are eligible for a total of 8 months of social assistance, refugee families are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and sufficient settlement supports are available on their arrival to ensure that appropriate applications are made to these income support programs. This is our best interpretation of why such relatively low numbers are in poverty, but such high numbers are living in low income.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

One exception for this trend is the Cambodian community that has very high levels of poverty. This is likely the result of their relatively long duration of residency in the USA, and the likelihood that many in the community are no longer eligible for income support programs. The Hmong and Laotians (within the group for whom data are available) are more recent arrivals than the Cambodians.

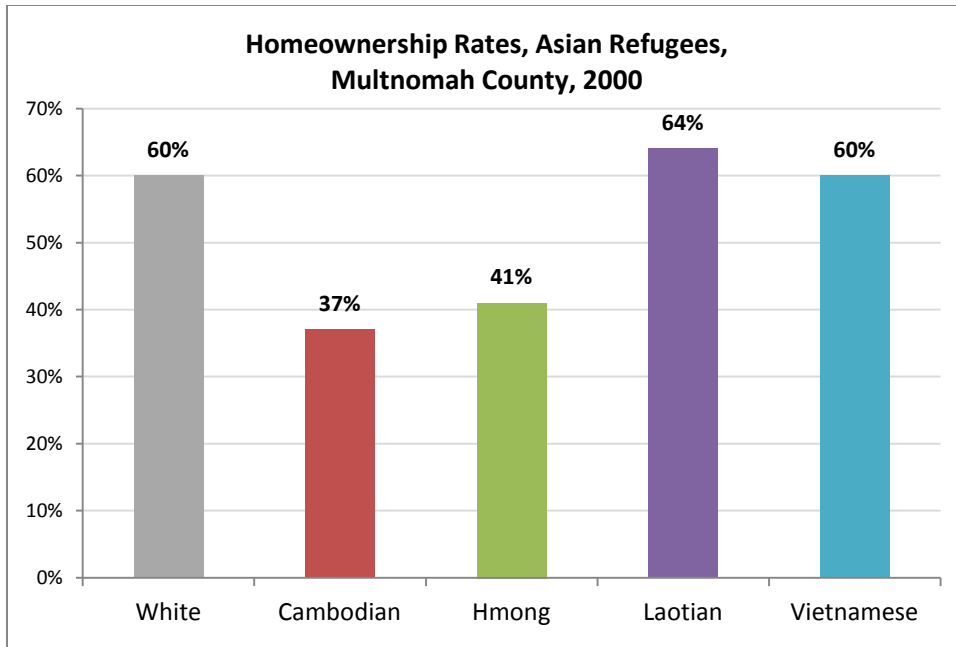




Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

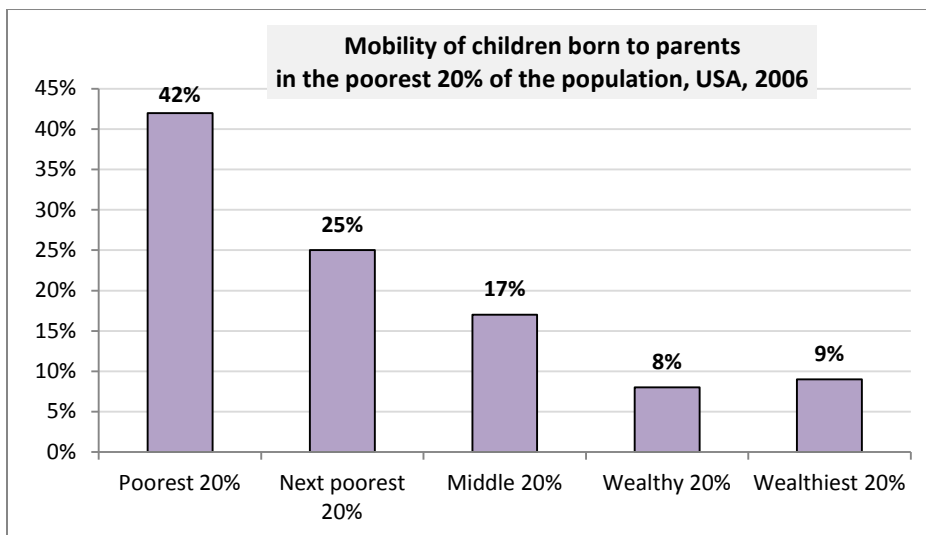
The above chart shows us that a high number of people are applying for public assistance, and this is likely to be correlated with high levels of eligibility. As a population, refugees have greater access to entitlement programs for income than other communities – for this there exists a sense of gratitude. Given the depth of challenges that Asian refugees face, income support aids survival. Such supports are, however, time limited and restricted to families and naturalized citizens which is a constraint made difficult due to the shortage of English language learning programs and correspondingly high levels of language isolation.

A final dimension of economic progress is that of homeownership. Below we see a varied rate, with longer term refugee communities holding ownership rates equivalent to those of Whites and newer ones less able to gain such an asset.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

While these data might lead one to say, “just wait, your affluence will come,” the API community is concerned that there is a long-term trend towards much deeper barriers to moving out of poverty and into a middle class life. Nationally, there has been a hollowing out of the size of the middle class, making upwards income mobility much more difficult if one is poor to begin. This was illustrated in the Coalition’s first research report<sup>162</sup> and warrants repeating here.



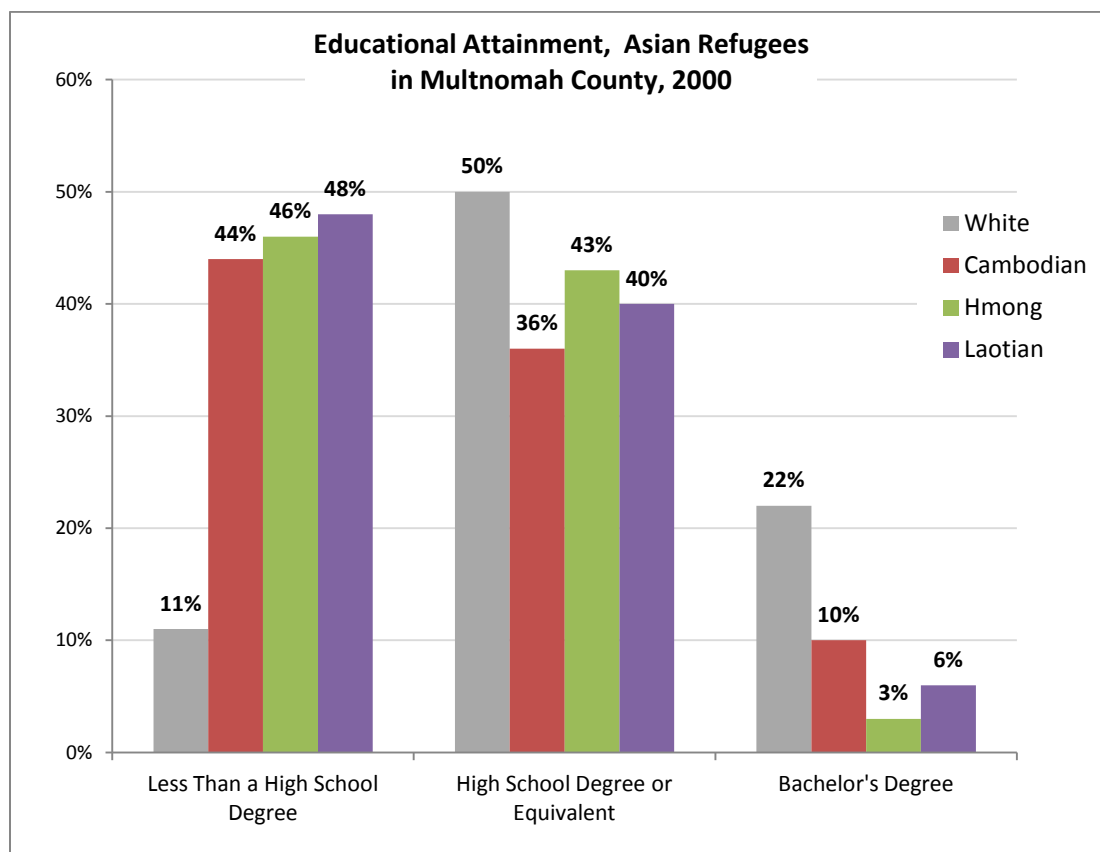
Source: Isaacs, Sawhill & Haskins (2008) from The Economic Mobility Project, using Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Census Bureau, with data averaged over 4 years.<sup>163</sup>

While not disaggregated by race, there is additional research that shows that there is a much greater likelihood that economic divides will be more firmly entrenched by race. Those most likely, over the

course of a generation, to move up the economic ladder are White children, but those most likely to move down to poorer incomes are Black children.<sup>164</sup> While this research has not been conducted with other communities of color, it is expected that similar patterns exist across these populations.

### Educational Attainment

All Asian refugee communities struggle with educational success, both here and in their homelands. As one can imagine, communities that are persecuted typically have narrow options for public education. If this persecution develops into war, a war-torn country is not able to sustain regular education programs. When one flees the country and moves into a refugee camp, so too are educational programs curtailed. And when one arrives in the USA, without language skills and housing and economic security, education is difficult to access.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). The Bachelor's degree numbers include only those who hold a Bachelor's degree and exclude those with higher degrees.

Avenues for higher education are also narrow, and the above chart illustrates the narrow options that exist – the best performing community has only 10% of its population holding a bachelor's degree while the Hmong only access such credentials for less than one-in-thirty of its members.

## Summary

In summary, we need extended supports for social inclusion – through language, health care, education and employment. Our communities' progress is curtailed by the array of limited options available to Asian refugees. Refugees hold the promise for the nation to live out its moral mandate to justice and to human rights' protections from persecution and violence. Supports must make real the promise for a successful future for all those in the community.

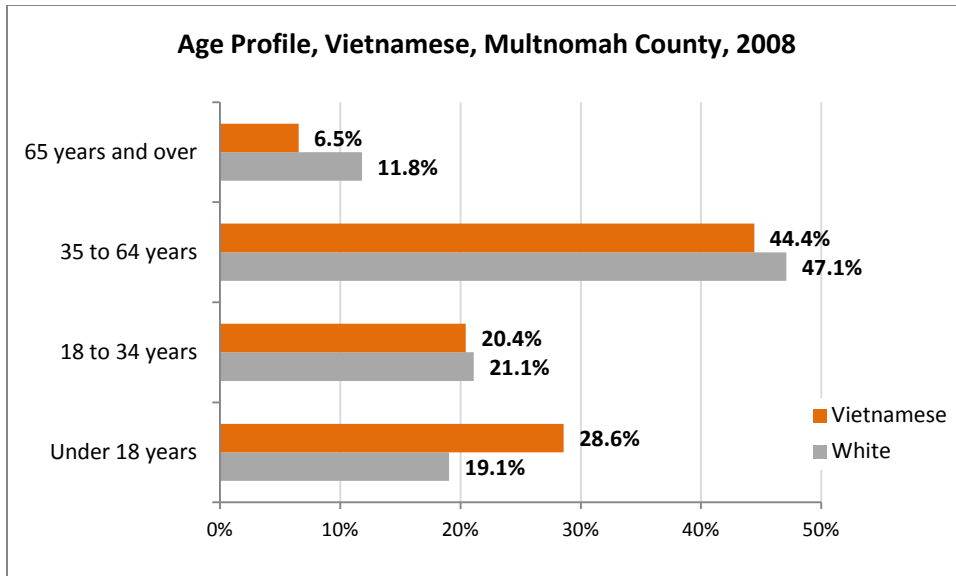
## The Vietnamese Community

Vietnamese immigration into Oregon began shortly following the fall of Saigon in 1975 when 1,600 Vietnamese arrived.<sup>165</sup> All of these immigrants arrived with refugee status. Divided into two waves, the earlier refugees left early after the fall and were generally able to exit Vietnam due to their relative affluence, education and English language skills. The later arrivals (post-1978) fled first into refugee camps or faced tremendous persecution. Many in this wave faced the horrors of torture, starvation, malnutrition, assault, rape and robbery, often with children being witnesses.<sup>166</sup> The level of trauma has been profound, with heightened mental health problems resulting, impeded and/or interrupted education experiences, and difficulties in seeking supports upon arrival. The majority of Vietnamese arrived as part of the group that faced trauma and persecution. Although the majority of Vietnamese reside in the core metropolitan area, more and more are moving further out to the suburbs as cost of living and housing increases.

## Demographics

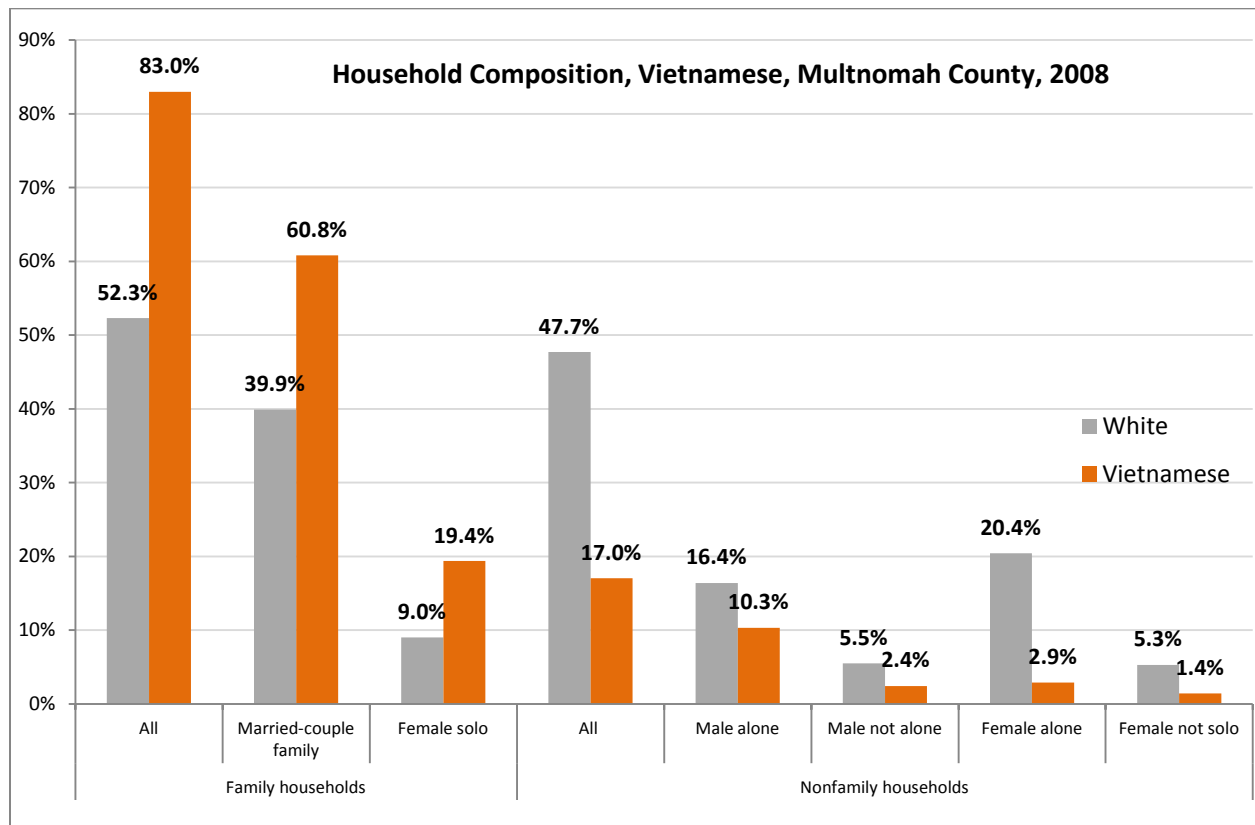
The Vietnamese community is the largest within the API community, and numbers (through the American Community Survey) 11,606 in 2008. That said, this number is likely undercounted. Recorded Vietnamese refugees number 16,946 as of 2009 across Oregon, with patterns illustrating that the vast majority of this number reside in Multnomah county, with research conducted in 1993 defining that the Vietnamese was then undercounted by 53%.<sup>167</sup> One cause of this undercount is likely to be the strong in-migration patterns occurring into Multnomah county as a result of "employment opportunities, the pull of an established ethnic community... better training opportunities, reunification with relatives, or a congenial climate."<sup>168</sup> Additional causes are the patterns that cause undercounting among all urban communities of color: poverty, frequent moves, no phone, language limitations, and reluctance to complete the forms due to patterns of distrust established with the state in one's country of origin or gained here in the USA. While our community estimation did not illustrate an undercount for the Vietnamese, we think that with further research an undercount would likely emerge.

This community is young, with small numbers of seniors. The profile of adults is relatively similar, but those at the margins of the age range (elders and children) are disparate with Whites.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

When we now turn to the ways in which the Vietnamese community lives, we find that there are a much higher number in families, and also more than double the number of White families headed by women.

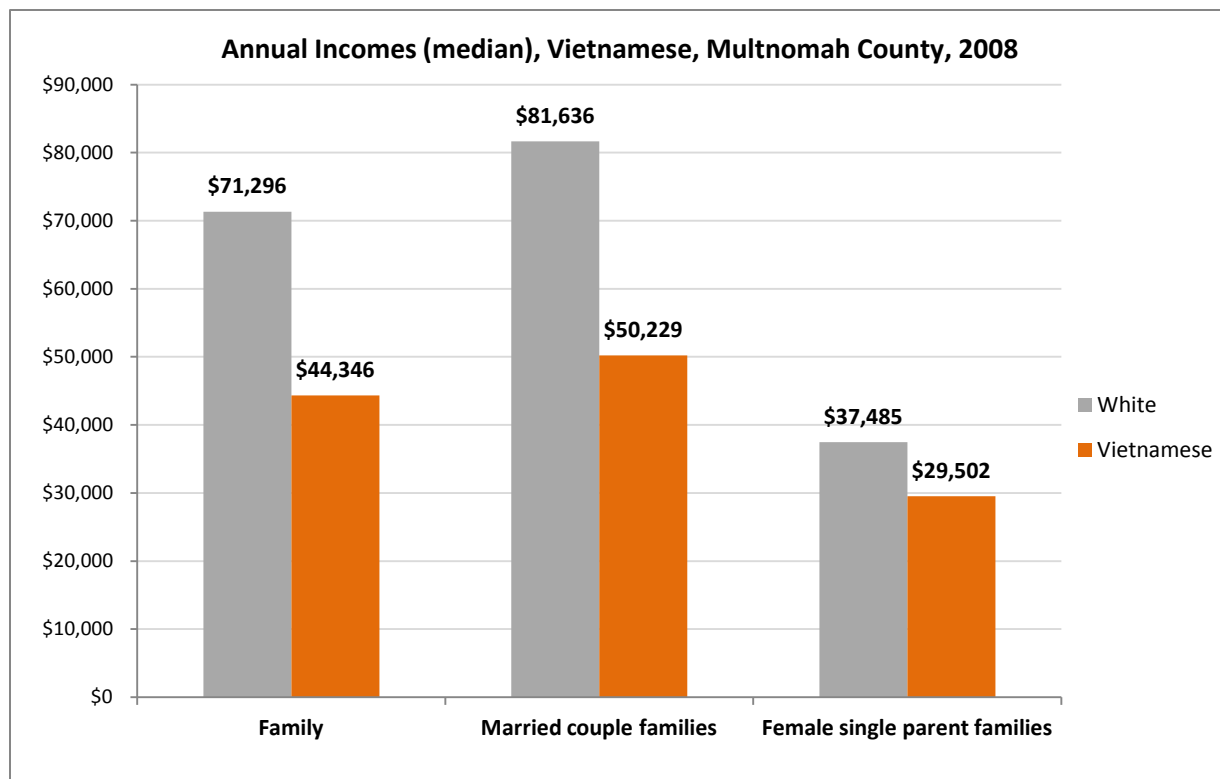


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

In the above profile we find that the Vietnamese community is much more likely to be in families and much less likely to live independently of family members, particularly women. The greatest disparity is for females living alone, where almost ten times more White women live alone than Vietnamese women.

### Economic Progress

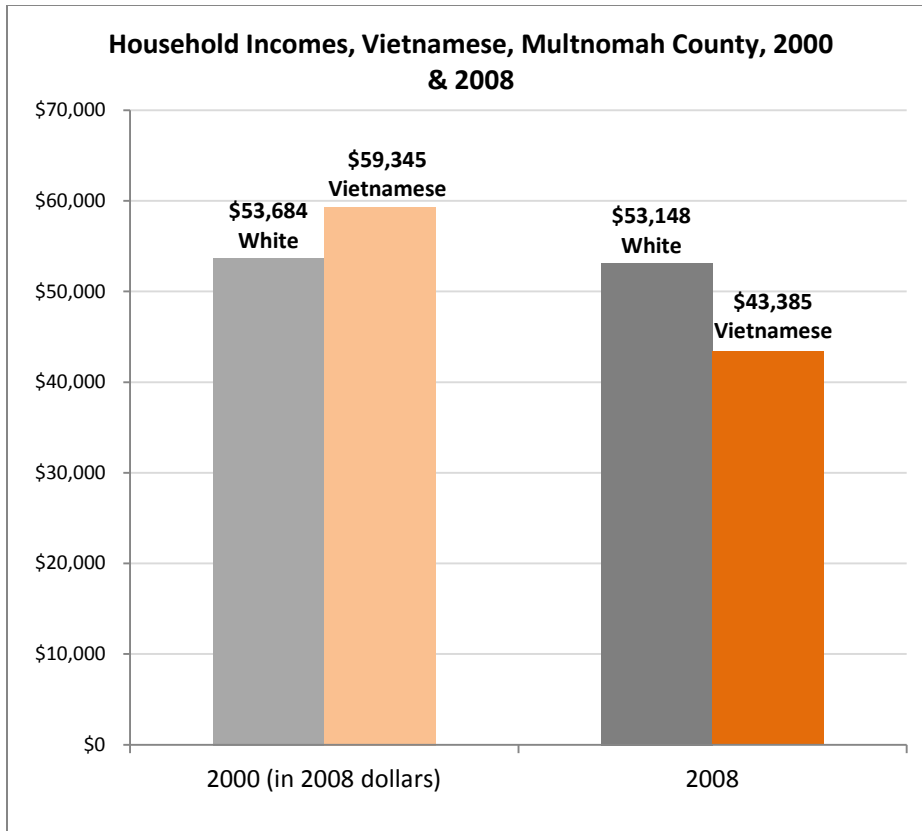
The Vietnamese community lacks affluence, with median incomes at levels that come close to being half of those of Whites.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

These incomes reveal a deep economic vulnerability, and one that is tied to finding insufficient employment. The Vietnamese unemployment rate in 2008 was 9.2%, while that of Whites was less than half at 4.2%.<sup>169</sup> Disparities with Whites are pronounced and introduce many challenges to childrearing, and also to surviving income swings and changes in costs of living.

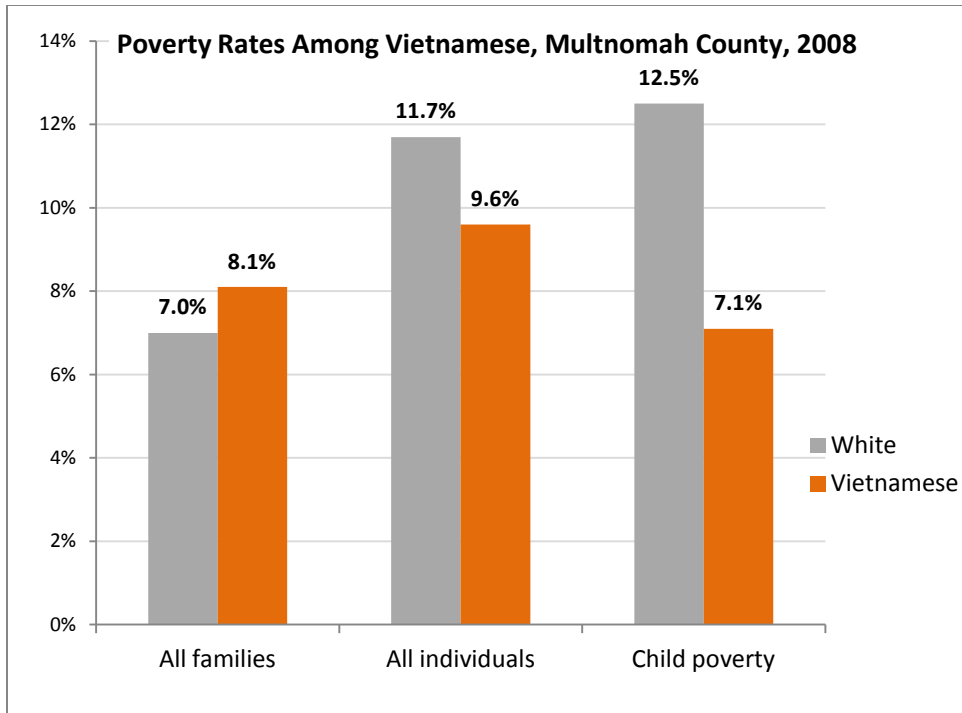
Over time, the situation is worse – revealing a rapidly deteriorating economic situation for the Vietnamese community.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).<sup>170</sup>

Here we can see that the affluence among Vietnamese households in 2000 has been lost, as the average household income has dropped by \$16,000/year. This is a huge loss for the community and a sign that the hold of the Vietnamese community in the region is very precarious.

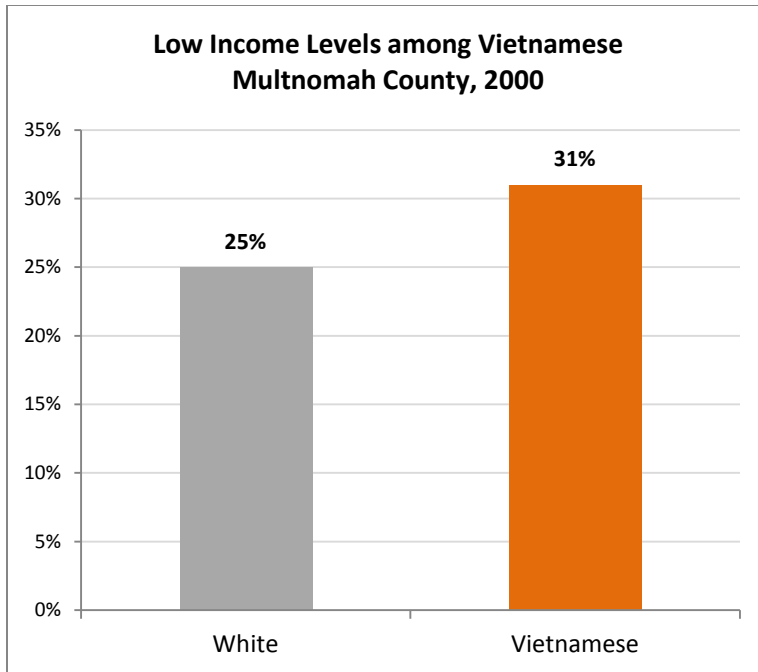
One might imagine that low incomes are closely tied to high poverty rates – but such is not the case for the Vietnamese community. Surprisingly, the Vietnamese family poverty is only slightly higher than that of Whites, and markedly lower than Whites in the area of child poverty.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

What might account for this situation that was not predicted – for typically low incomes are closely associated with even higher poverty rates (meaning that disparities with Whites deepen the lower one gets in income). The responsible feature must be that low income living (at levels higher than poverty rates, but lower than median incomes) is much more pervasive among Vietnamese than among Whites. Data for this experience is available for 2000, but not for more current years.

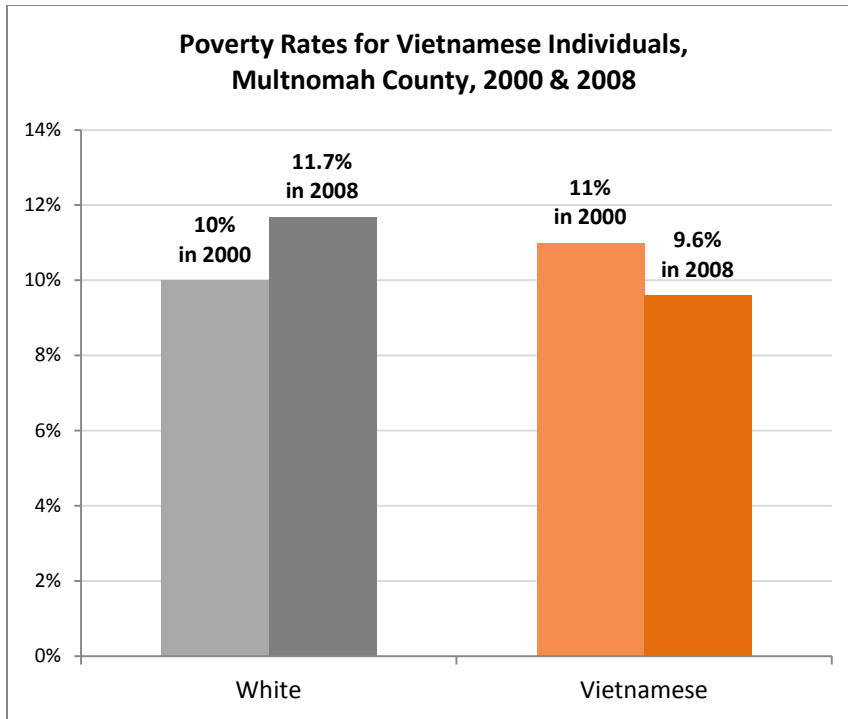




Source: Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) using Census 2000 figures. Low income means those living under 200% of the poverty line.

As expected, the Vietnamese community has higher levels of low income living than Whites. This reveals that while the community has lower levels of poverty, they are deeply over-represented among those living above the poverty line but less than 200% of the poverty line. We can thus conclude that the Vietnamese community is deeply plagued by low incomes, although protected from abject poverty due to factors such as multiple households living together, and having higher numbers of employed people in the household. These numbers also tell us that this is a community that is not affluent, and we can appropriately surmise that struggles abound with paying for the basics of routine expenditures.

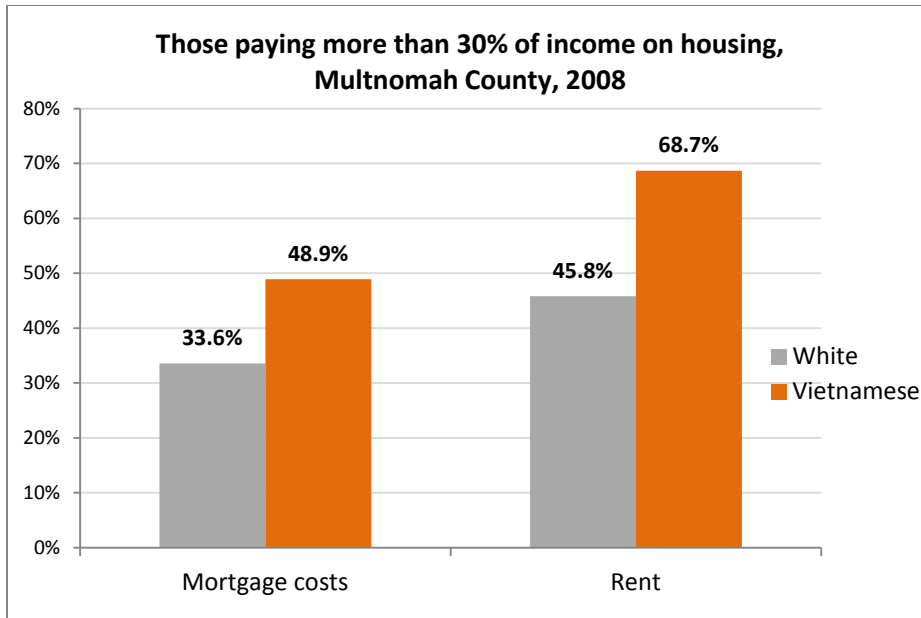
When looking at changes in poverty levels across time, we find surprisingly positive data that shows poverty levels when measured across the entire population to be dropping.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Poverty levels among Whites deteriorated between 2000 and 2008, while improvements were noted for the Vietnamese. As a result, we have an inverting of the direction of disparities over the last 8 years. While we applaud poverty levels dropping for the Vietnamese community, we are concerned that levels of White poverty have deteriorated.

The community's ability to survive on low incomes is illustrated by its ability to afford housing. This is typically measured by those who are spending more than 30% of income on housing, and deemed to be burdened by housing costs. Below we see that Vietnamese households are struggling much more than Whites in this area.



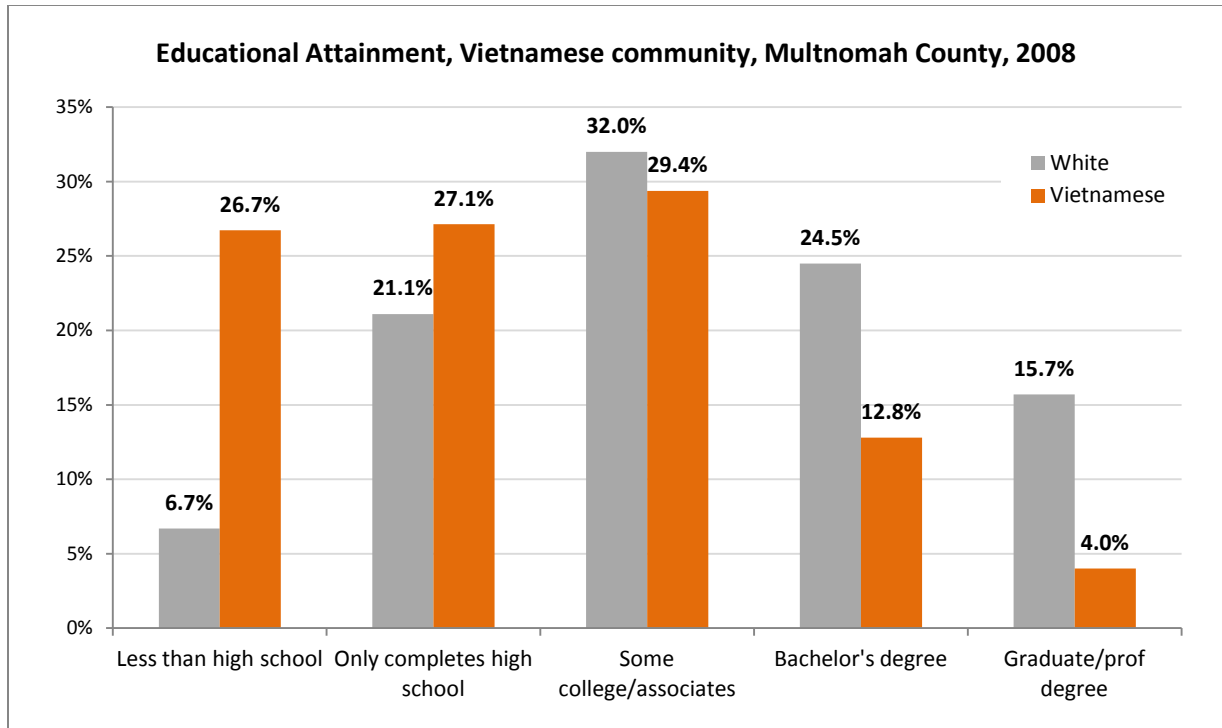
Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

With high levels of the community being in the ranks of low income living, almost half the community struggles to cover the costs of their mortgage, and more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  struggle to pay their rent. Those that pay more than 30% are deemed to be “housing burdened.” Even worse,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of owners pay more than 50% of their income on rent, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of renters similarly struggle to cover their costs. Respectively, these numbers are 35.8% (owners) and 25.4% (renters) paying more than 50% of their income on housing. These housing costs are seen to place their residents at high risk of losing their housing altogether – to evictions, to foreclosure and to bankruptcy.

### Education and Employment

Turning now to look at the features of the Vietnamese experience that provide community members with sufficient (or insufficient) money with which to live, we look at education, occupation and employment levels.

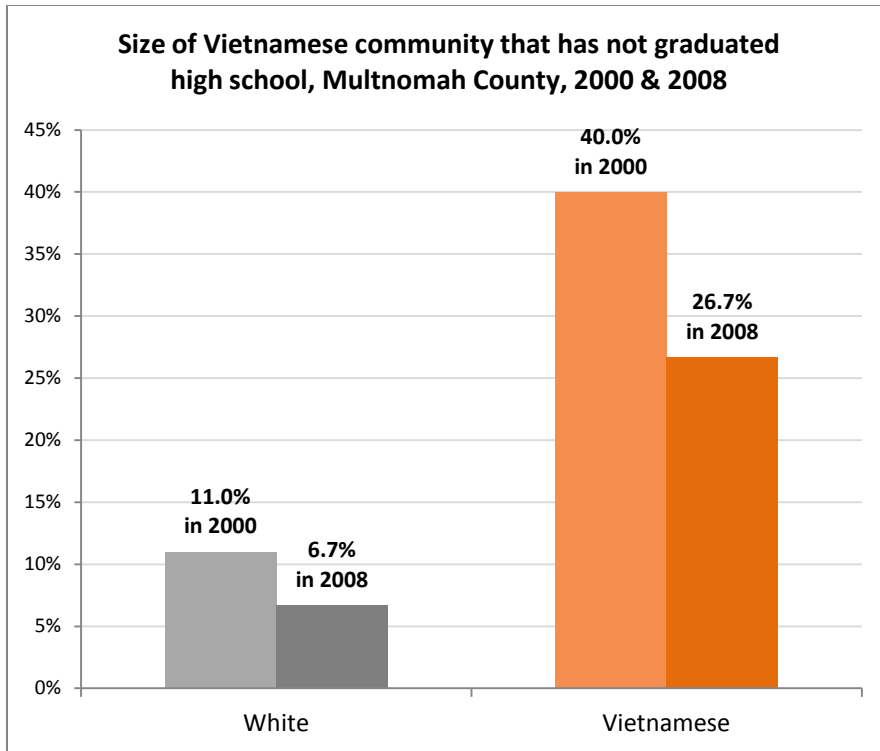
Below we see the vast disparities that exist for the Vietnamese community. The community has not fared well in the education system – both here, as they have lived in this region since 1975, and in the home country, as many arrived here from refugee camps. Today, more than one-in-four Vietnamese people have not graduated from high school, while only one-in-fifteen Whites has not experienced this success.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Vietnamese are simultaneously blocked from higher education, facing relatively little success in gaining a bachelor's degree and even less in graduate programs. At this highest level, only one-in-twenty five of Vietnamese people have a graduate or professional degree, while more than one-in-six such Whites gains such success.

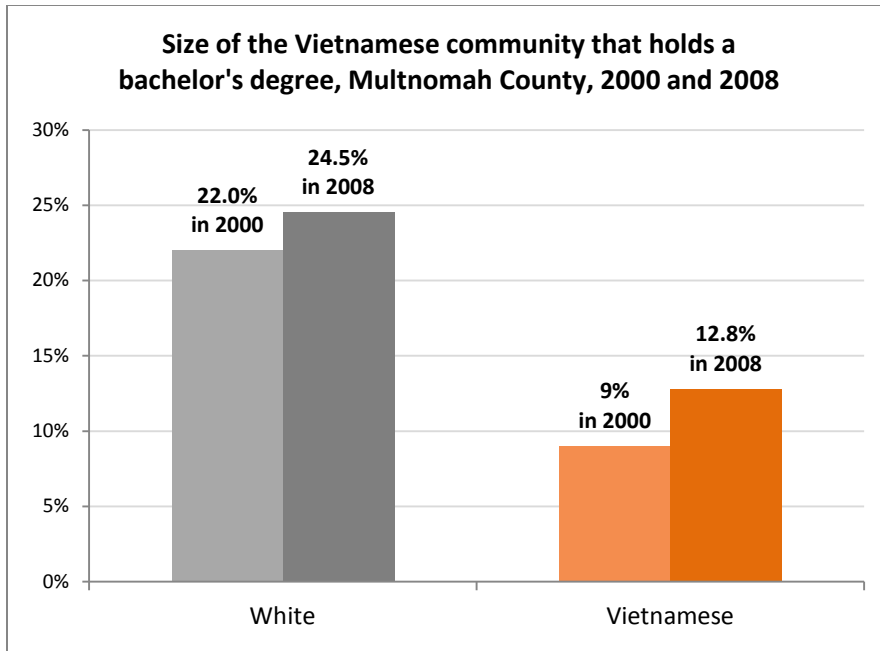
How have these rates changed over time? In ways that directly benefit the community. This is a very good sign of significant improvements for the Vietnamese community today almost one-in-four adults has graduated high school.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Despite these positive gains made, notice that very wide disparities continue to exist as only one-in-fifteen Whites have not graduated high school. So while we applaud gains made, know that we still hold out for much greater progress in this area.

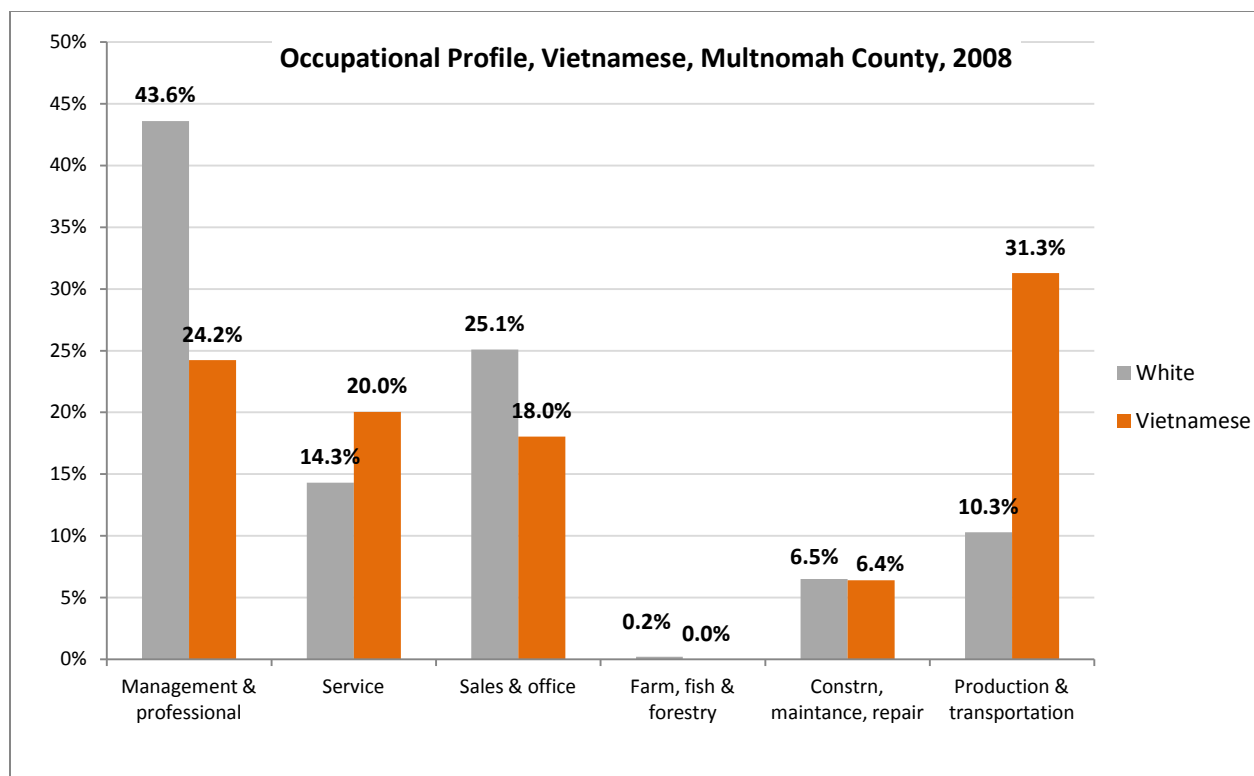
At the high end of education, we look at how well Vietnamese are gaining a foothold in higher education, and the trend in obtaining important bachelor's degrees. This all-important measure of educational success is showing gains, but the disparity is narrowing slowly with Whites.



Sources: Population Research Center, PSU, the American Community Survey and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Twice more Whites are likely to hold bachelor's degrees than those within the Vietnamese community. When considering the impact of this trend, the community has gone from having a one-in-eleven likelihood of holding this degree to a one-in-eight chance of such educational success. Given that this change has occurred within an eight-year stretch, this is excellent progress.

As one can imagine, having little education translates directly into worse jobs. In the chart below, the best jobs are shown on the left – in management and professional ranks. Here, Vietnamese have little presence, in comparison with Whites.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

The areas where Vietnamese hold more work are in production and transportation and in the service industry. These are jobs typically associated with the worst working conditions, namely low wages, insecure employment, and unpredictable hours with few benefits.

The disparities facing Vietnamese are profound in terms of education and employment, for when one asks to speak to the person in charge or the expert on the situation, it is much more likely that such people will be White (even when we standardize for the size of the population). The Vietnamese community holds much less than its fair share of such jobs.

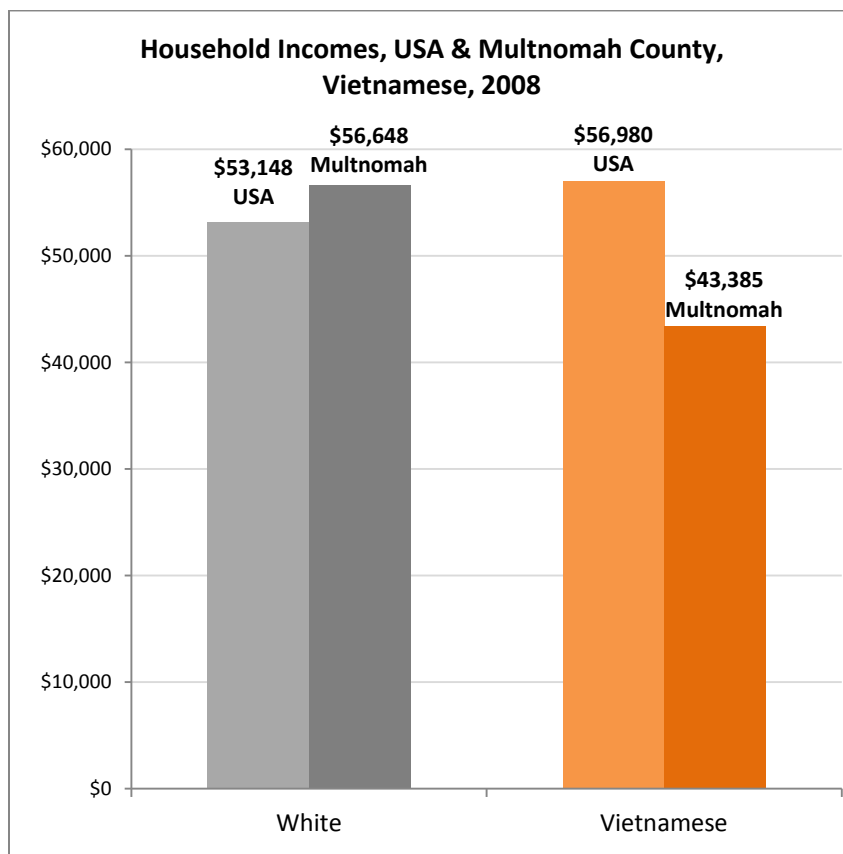
Not only do Vietnamese not have decent jobs, but it is very hard to even find enough of them. The unemployment rate in 2008 was 9.2% – a time when that of Whites was less than half that rate at 4.2%. As we know, unemployment rates have skyrocketed since that time, and there is a likelihood that Vietnamese unemployment has deteriorated even further than that of Whites, as it is clear that this economy is having a more devastating impact on marginally employed people of color than on Whites. In the Coalition’s first report, researchers highlighted that low-income workers face unemployment rates that are ten-times higher than high-income earners.<sup>171</sup> Few protections from unemployment exist, particularly in the area of solid educations that would expand the community’s employability.

### Comparisons with USA Vietnamese

One of the hypotheses considered in this report was whether the cultural composition of the Asian community in Multnomah county served to account for the variation the region’s Asians have with the

national composition. Earlier in this report we profiled that there were many more residents from refugee-generating countries than the USA average. Here we have an opportunity to explore the viability of this hypothesis.

Below is the comparison of incomes between the Vietnamese in Multnomah county with the average experience across the USA. We can see that even among the Vietnamese, there is a considerable disadvantage in living here.

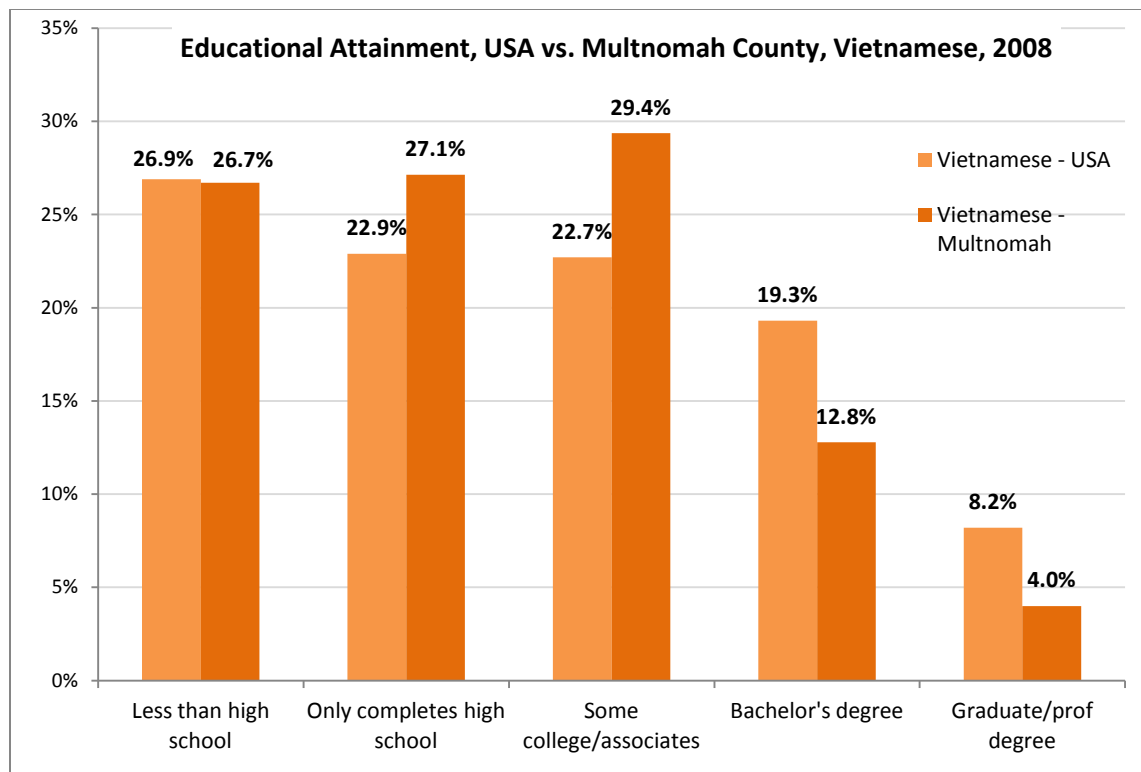


Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Adding impetus to our growing conclusion that there exists more institutional and systemic racism here in the region is that this depression of incomes is not experienced by Whites, but that the reverse is true as White communities have an income benefit in living in this region. This differential experience whereby the Vietnamese opportunities are suppressed, but those for Whites are elevated is of significant concern for the health and wellbeing of the Vietnamese community.

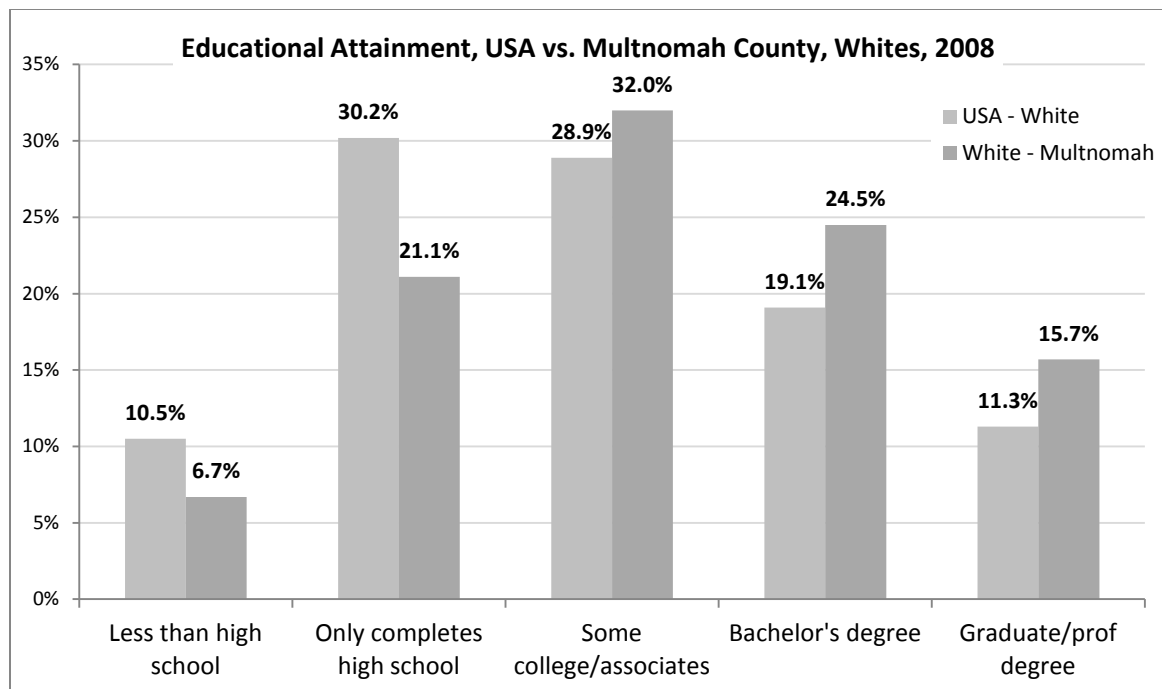
We are also able to look at this comparison for three more features: education, occupation and unemployment. The local Vietnamese community has much less access to higher education in universities than national averages. The portion of local Vietnamese who hold degrees is 16.8% compared with 27.5% nationally.





Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

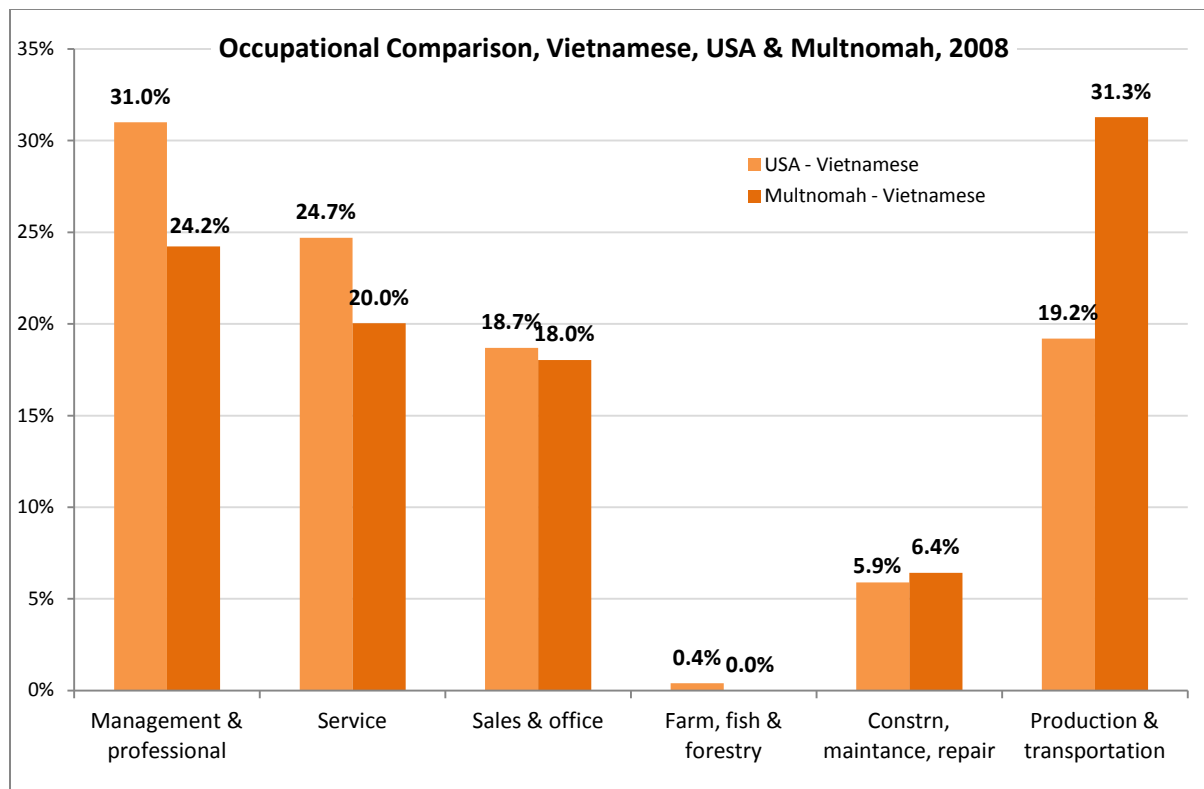
Again, adding further disparities is the situation where Whites experience preferable experiences here compared with their experiences nationally. Below we can see that significantly more of the White population has successfully completed high school, and significantly more than across the nation have gone on to higher education.



Source: American Community Survey, USA and Multnomah County, 2008.

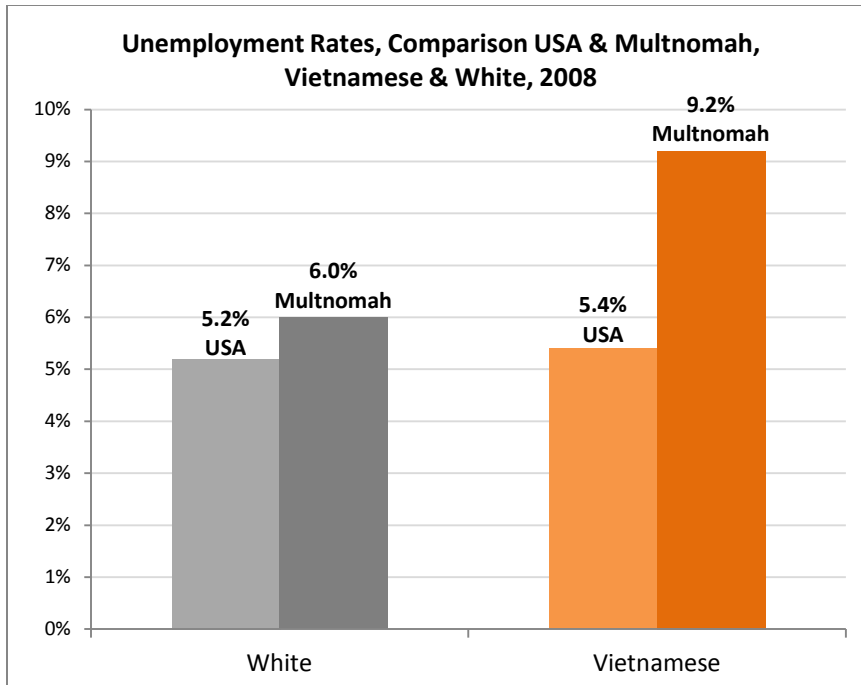
This differential experience is deeply illustrative of the dynamic in Multnomah county which results in inequities not just between Whites and people of color, but also in comparison with their respective communities across the nation. The conclusion from these data are that there is deeper institutional racism here than, on average, across the nation.

Looking at occupational profiles we see that many fewer Vietnamese are able to gain the best jobs in management and professional arenas, when compared with national averages. This is both a translation of lesser educations into weaker labor market experiences, but also of institutional racism in practice.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

Finally, we turn to unemployment rates and see that while the local experience (in 2008) was worse as well for Whites in the local region, this deterioration was much worse for the Vietnamese in Multnomah county.



Source: Custom run of American Community Survey, 2008, by the Population Research Center, PSU, and published data from American Community Survey for Whites.

We can conclude from this section that the local experiences of the Vietnamese are significantly worse than those, on average, across the USA. Such data disprove the hypothesis that the Asian and Pacific Islander experience is worse here due to having a higher proportion of residents from refugee-generating countries (of which the Vietnamese is the largest). It is much more likely that the particular nature and intensity of institutional racism in Multnomah county gives rise to the deplorable local statistics. The Asian and Pacific Islander community does not illustrate the characteristics of a “model minority” and the extent of racial disparities and inequities warrant an immediate commitment to redress of the problem and an advance of racial equity.

### Summary

The Vietnamese are a community that is clearly struggling – despite the fact that they hold a place of prominence as the largest Asian community in the region; features of this struggle include low incomes, weak employment, high housing burdens, little success in education and very high unemployment levels. The community faces challenges in being blocked from higher education, the best jobs, decent incomes and access to affordable housing. Vietnamese are also blocked from parity with Whites in terms of access to home ownership, which is a traditional engine for building wealth and economic security. Failure of conventional services to provide a stronger set of asset building strategies, such as improved graduation rates, language acquisition skills, larger numbers of jobs with better working conditions, and real help to adjust to the trauma of the losses community members suffered leaving their home countries as refugees.

We believe that there has been a profound underestimation in the region of the needs of Vietnamese – purveyed by two distinct factors: beliefs that the Asian community had gained parity with the general population, and the myth of the model minority. The first has been debunked in the larger general

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section of this report on the Asian community as an entirety for equity with Whites has generally stalled in the region. The second concerns the need to break the myth of Asian communities as model minorities, for it suggests that they alone can pull themselves out of systems that are disadvantageous. Indeed, the Vietnamese community is facing immense barriers to racial equity and a commitment is needed from the broader community and the leaders of civic institutions to remove these barriers to future progress and inclusion.

### **Smaller Asian Communities in Multnomah County**

In this section, we are pleased to be able to share previously unreleased information on smaller Asian communities in Multnomah county. We draw from a database provided by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) who were able to disaggregate the Asian and Pacific Islander data within the 1990 and 2000 Census and make available these measures for Multnomah county. This provides for us a rare set of insights into smaller immigrant communities, and although these data are now 11 years old, we believe they are illustrative of the conditions facing smaller Asian communities. And until local communities begin to collect, analyze and disaggregate the Asian communities in these same ways, this is as good as these data are going to get. The decision of the Census Bureau to drop their long form of data collection (that collected information on a wide array of social, economic and demographic conditions) means we will not likely ever get such detailed information again.

In the sections that follow, we share with the reader the local histories of the arrival of the smaller Asian communities into the region.

#### **Japanese**

The first recorded Japanese settler, Miyo Iwakoshi, came to Oregon in 1880. Her arrival marked the beginning of a small but steady flow of Japanese settlers who sought to flee economic conditions in Japan which included few opportunities for moving out of a peasant class of workers. By the 1890s, noticeably after the Chinese Exclusion Act (and the shrinking of the supply of Chinese laborers), large number of Japanese immigrants came to Oregon. Many of these immigrants found employment on the railroads and in the work that the Chinese and *Kanakas* were no longer welcome to do.<sup>172</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Japanese immigrants sought employment on farms, particularly on the eastern side of Multnomah county.<sup>173</sup> By 1905, the railroad labor force was 40% Japanese.<sup>174</sup>

Much of the tension between Japanese and Whites in Oregon centers on Whites' perceptions that the Japanese were displacing them as landowners and farmers. Early on, many of the Japanese immigrants who cleared land for farmers, particularly in the Hood River area, received payments of undesired land – “stump or brush land”.<sup>175</sup> The Japanese first cultivated strawberries, a crop that White farmers did not care to grow, because it required stooping. During WWI, the Japanese expanded their farming to include apple and pear orchards. One year, the Japanese farmers bought land in equal quantity as White farmers in the region. Fears of being under-priced by Japanese farmers led to anti-Japanese sentiments deepening, with the culmination of the formation of the Anti-Asiatic League in 1919.<sup>176</sup> The primary goal of the League was to prevent the Hood River Japanese community from purchasing or leasing any more land.<sup>177</sup> Farmers in Crook and Deschutes counties had passed resolutions with the same intent around 1917.<sup>178</sup> Finally, in 1923 the Oregon legislature passed the Alien Land Law forbidding non-citizens (i.e., all non-Whites, but the timing and social context of this passage directs the law at Asians in general and the Japanese, in particular) from purchasing land.<sup>179</sup> As is often the case, the fear of an immigrant

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takeover proved greater than the actual threat: in Hood River in 1920, the Japanese owned only 2% of the land.<sup>180</sup> Although some Japanese immigrants were able to still remain on their property, many lost their farms when they were forcibly removed from homes, farms, schools and jobs following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.<sup>181</sup>

In 1925, the “Toledo Incident” involving a mob of over 50 White men forced the evacuation of Japanese laborers and their families from Toledo, Oregon.<sup>182</sup> This followed the 1904 Oregon State Federation of Labor placing restrictions on Japanese employment. In 1907, the Oregon Bureau of Labor asked that restrictions be placed on Japanese immigration, indicating that “Japanese immigrants were bringing a lower standard of living into the state.”<sup>183</sup>

In 1942, the US government implemented one of its most infamous racial policies, “Executive Order 9066” that led to the incarceration of an estimated 120,000 Japanese Americans, of whom  $\frac{3}{5}$  were US citizens.<sup>184</sup>

City councils, elected officials and civic organizations across Oregon, by early 1942, joined the call for the removal and imprisonment of the Japanese.<sup>185</sup> Early that year, 75 to 80 community leaders were arrested by the FBI and before the close of the year, the *Oregonian* newspaper boasted the forced removal of the Japanese community: “Portland to be the first Jap-free city.” Portland’s city council rescinded all business licenses issued to Japanese in Portland.

At the time of the evacuation, beet farmers in Malheur County recognized their labor shortage and pressured state and federal authorities to consider evacuating the Japanese to eastern Oregon to assist in the beet fields. Beet sugar was in large demand by both the alcohol industry and the government – beet sugar was used in ammunition production. The Oregon Plan divided the state into 3 zones. The first two zones were made up of Japanese-Americans who were sent to internment camps. 4,500 Japanese Oregonians were imprisoned in camps, typically no better than sheds, horse stalls and tents.<sup>186</sup> The Japanese in Zone 3 were housed in barracks but were allowed to earn wages working on beet farms and other “public works” venues.<sup>187</sup> A number of Japanese Oregonians voluntarily evacuated to Malheur County, the center of Zone 3. In all, 33,000 Japanese Americans from Oregon, Washington and California participated in the Oregon Plan, exchanging imprisonment for paid labor, and were placed in Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, and Utah. In December 1944, the government rescinded the internment orders, and in January 1945, Japanese Americans were allowed to return home.

The return home was not, however, easy. The return was marked by:

...vigilante violence and the agitation of pressure groups to keep out Japanese Americans permanently. Homes, farms and businesses left behind were occupied by people unwilling to return these properties to their rightful owners. Some homes were razed and decimated, and Japanese Americans were targets of terrorist shootings. More acts of violence and terrorism were committed against Japanese Americans at the end of the war than the beginning...<sup>188</sup>

Approximately half of Oregon’s Japanese chose not to return to Oregon. Among those who returned, many resettled in Ontario and developed a small but thriving Japanese community.<sup>189</sup> Today, the official count of Japanese in Multnomah county is 6,588, many of whom are the descendants of those incarcerated during WWII, and who felt the devastating economic losses after returning to the region.

## *Korean*

Koreans began immigrating to Oregon in the early 1900s to work on the railroads, in mines, and similar low-skilled labor as the Chinese, Japanese, and *Kanaka* immigrants before them. The Korean immigrant community was mostly male until Korean “picture brides” (matchmaking based on pictures of possible brides in Korea and family recommendations) started to migrate to the state between 1910 and 1924. Another increase in the migration occurred following the Korean War, between 1951 and 1964, when wives or children of American servicemen came to the region. Much of the migration since 1965 is a result of the family reunification clause in the Hart-Cellar Act.<sup>190</sup> The Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 opened the doors for the “new” immigrants. This policy replaced the previous quota system that privileged certain sending countries. The Act of 1965 set to allow for more equality in immigration. Additionally, the Act included a family reunification provision.

Koreans also arrive in the region as adoptees, as large numbers of Korean infants and children have been adopted into the USA since the end of WWII, with numbers growing significantly at the end of the Korean War in 1953. Such children are typically orphans, mixed-race babies, and more recently, the children of unmarried mothers. Official recognition and supports for such international adoptions were established by Korea in 1954. The numbers of Korean children adopted into the USA are estimated to be approximately 100,000 between 1955 and 1998.<sup>191</sup> The reasons for such practice are complex:

Social attitudes in South Korea also contributed to the continuation of intercountry adoptions: nominal government support for single mothers; the trend toward family size reduction from the 1960s through the one-child policy of 1986; a pervasive stigma regarding adoption; and an ongoing belief that abandoning a child could provide the child with the benefit of an opportunity for a better future.<sup>192</sup>

Korean adoptees are the largest contingent of international adoptees, although annual patterns have changed with China and Russia surpassing Korea by 1990.<sup>193</sup> Today, fewer than 2,000 Korean children and infants are adopted into the USA annually. Emerging research is showing that adoptees experience an array of issues with inclusion into their new families and new home: racism, discrimination, stereotyping, loneliness, loss and hurt in being “given up,” defeated hopes for a better life, and sometimes joy with the new life.<sup>194</sup>

## *Thai*

All Thais have come to this country as immigrants. There was a large group of refugees from refugee camps in Thailand in the 70’s, but these were not ethnically or culturally Thais though sometimes mistakenly identified so. Many have been drawn to the Salem area due to the presence of a Thai Buddhist monk who works at a nearby temple in Turner, OR. This is the only Thai Buddhist monk in Oregon and this person holds considerable influence and authority in the Thai community in Oregon. The vast majority of local Thais are practicing Buddhists (estimated by the community to be about 90%). About ⅓ of all US Thais live near Los Angeles, so the Portland/Salem group is comparatively quite small, with an official count in the 2010 Census of 1,110 in Multnomah county.

Generally, there is a perception that many Thai immigrants are doing quite well economically, but there is an on-going smaller group of Thais who continue to struggle economically. Some of this is due to low educational levels of Thais coming here. Many Thais in Portland have come here as students. Others have come because of family reunification, and also because of business opportunities. On-going

struggles for Thais include unsettled immigration issues and health care, especially for those who are not eligible for state-sponsored insurance plans or who are not yet able to secure work-related health insurance.

Thais tend to be a very private people, a cultural trait. There are no Thai-specific organizations in Portland, but when crisis occurs or when an event is planned the community response will be quite significant. The most significant Thai celebrations center on the Wat Buddhist Temple in Turner, OR (near Salem).

### *Indonesian*

Over 300 years (beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) the Dutch colonized Indonesia and controlled social, political and economic life.<sup>195</sup> The geographic location led it to be a key economic powerhouse in Southeast Asia. The Indonesian independence movement began in 1949 and was won in 1949; in the midst of this effort, the Japanese occupied the country during three years of WWII. Its incumbent ruler, however, mismanaged the economy and conditions worsened. Social and economic turmoil contributed to a form of civil war, with a quarter of a million people killed through the region in the mid to late 1960s. It was this violence and economic distress that catalyzed significant emigration among Chinese Indonesians – but short as peace was returned and the US limited immigration numbers.

There continues a small but steady trickle of immigration from Indonesia into the USA: sustained by students seeking an American education and, for many, the chance to become US citizens, and those who are seeking greater economic opportunities. Compared to Chinese, Filipino and Japanese communities, Indonesian numbers are very small.

Pronounced cultural and linguistic diversity exists in Indonesia and this diversity continues with immigration into the USA – and there are no established communities in the area. Diversity of language, class, religion, geography and ancestry limits the likelihood that social ties develop and shared culture grows. Simultaneously, the community has not been integrated into the mainstream of US life – making for a rather unsettled community development process. Many are encouraged to return to Indonesia and receive additional impetus from the 1993 legislation that limits emigration if it disrupts domestic development.

### *Asian Indian*

In the 1960s, Indians began to come to this country in large numbers and there has been a steady migration to the USA since then. There are basically three types of emigrants to this county. There are a very few Indian refugees, and community members estimate that it is much less than 1%. Then there “H1” and other “H” type temporary visas to the United States. These represent a sizeable minority of Indians in Oregon. H1 status means that these arrivals are employment specific and they can stay in this country only as long as the employment lasts. Finally, the vast number of Indians come to this country as immigrants for a variety of economic and educational reasons. A large number of these immigrants come with a high-level of technical skills as well as being well educated.

There are three Hindu Temples in the greater Portland area and the involvement of the Indian community is quite large. Most Indians are Hindu and there is a desire to keep this connection while in



America. Because India is such a large country with many different language and cultural backgrounds, many of the cultural associations are linguistically and culturally specific. There are strong kinship connections between Indians and families back in India. Many Indians support their relatives in India and most will travel to India several times for reconnection. Family ties are very important. Finally, because of globalization, the amount of cultural shock when coming to the US has been minimized in the last few years, though there is still some. For example, for many, Indian cuisine is important and certain types of American food are not tolerated.

### **Sri Lankan**

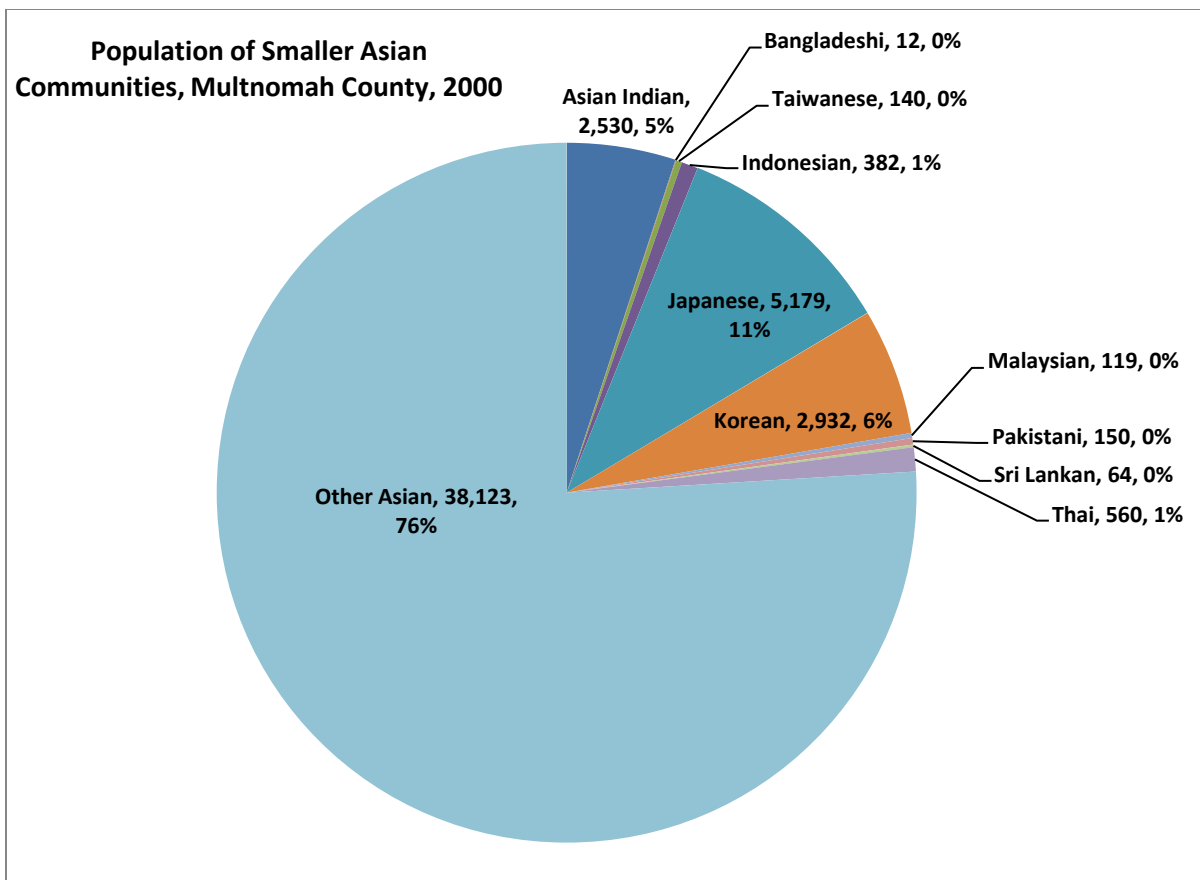
Sri Lanka is situated in the Indian Ocean close to India, and it has held a role as a naval base between West and Southeast Asia. Formerly a British colony, early years of immigration to the USA occurred with employers bringing laborers to work as farm workers. Indenturing practices left the community vulnerable to exploitation and most were powerless to move out of their obligations to their employers.

Independence from Britain was secured in 1948 and the community, for several decades, generated few immigrants. In times of peace, Sri Lanka is a prosperous nation with relatively high per capita incomes. In 1983, civil war began as hostilities between the ruling Sinhalese and the marginalized Tamil escalated into violence. There was a significant exodus over the next 25 years, as many sought to escape the violence. Often paying exorbitant fees to traffickers, a small but significant number of Sinhalese ended up in Oregon. Civil war in Sri Lanka officially ended in 2009, but movements towards peace had been underway for at least a decade. In the context of hope for peace, numbers of Sri Lankan Oregonians have returned to their homeland, hence explaining the reduction in numbers observed in charts below.

### **Demographics**

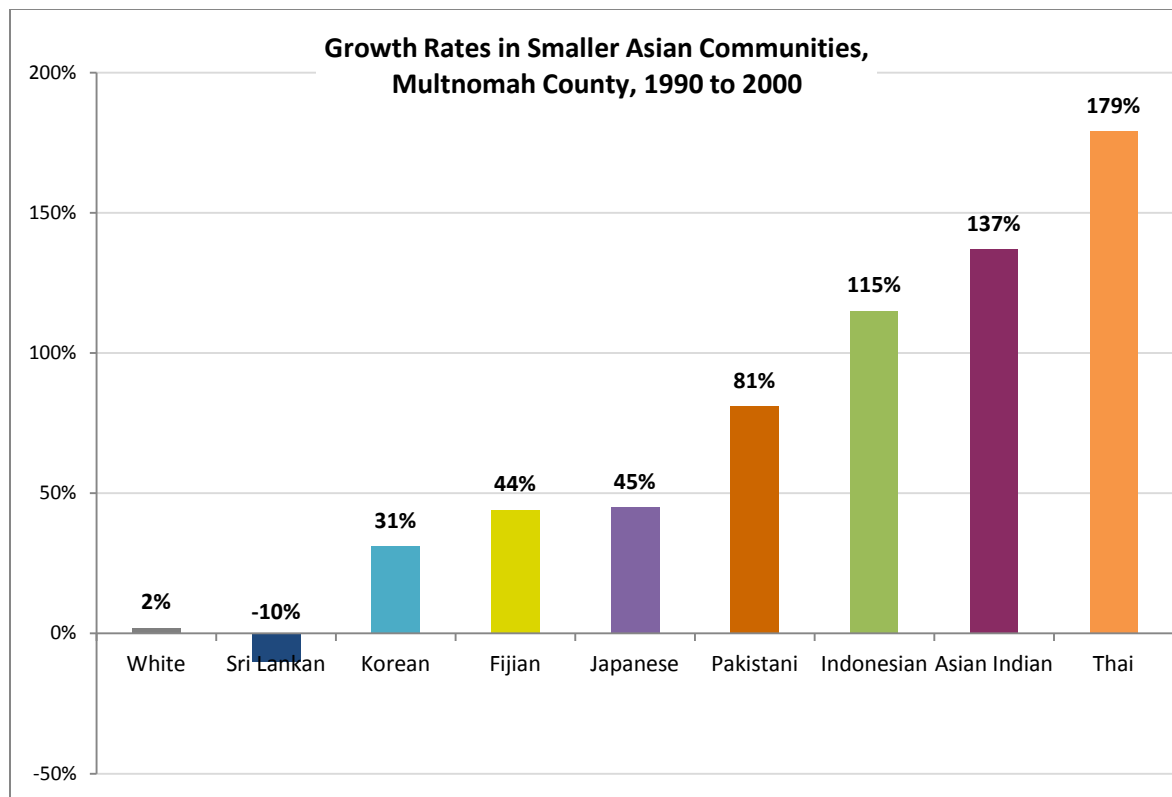
Our smaller Asian communities collectively make up 12,039 people in 2000 – a number that is likely to have grown by over 28% since 2000. This would make these communities total more than 15,000 people. In our estimation, this is a substantial undercount, although smaller in magnitude than the refugee-rooted communities.

The origins of smaller Asian communities are detailed below. Of note is the breadth of diversity in this community. Included in the measure that is “Asian” includes communities as diverse as Thai and Pakistani, along with language and cultural differences, historic dissimilarities and varied patterns of arrival in the USA.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

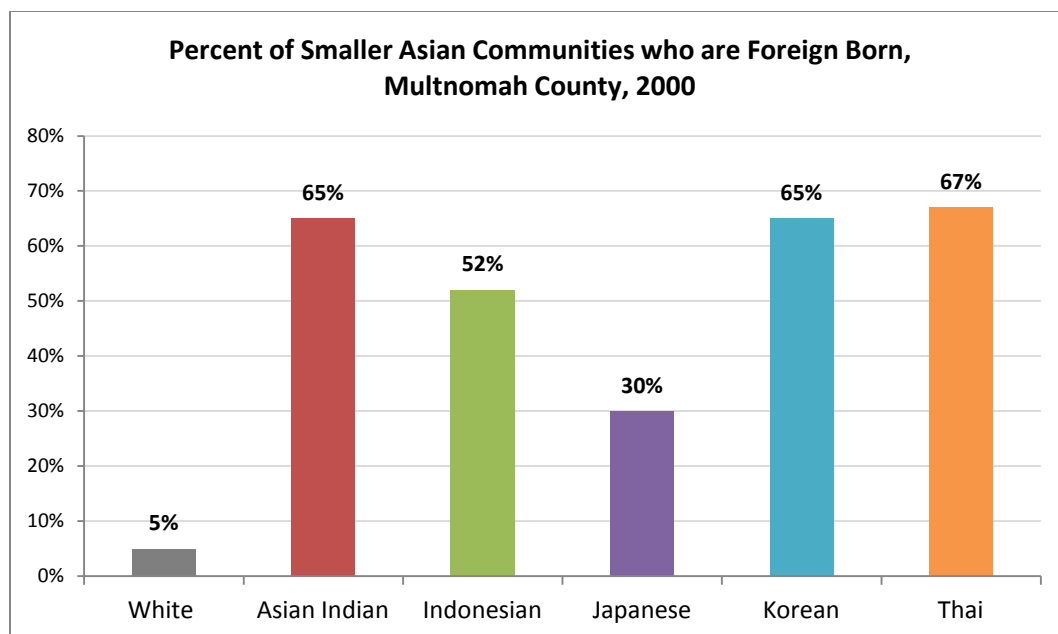
The growth rate of these communities was tremendously high between 1990 and 2000, and is likely to have slowed in the 2000 to 2010 decade as has been the pattern for the overall Asian community. Notice, however, that all communities have been growing rapidly (with the exception of the Sri Lankan community) much more rapidly than Whites.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

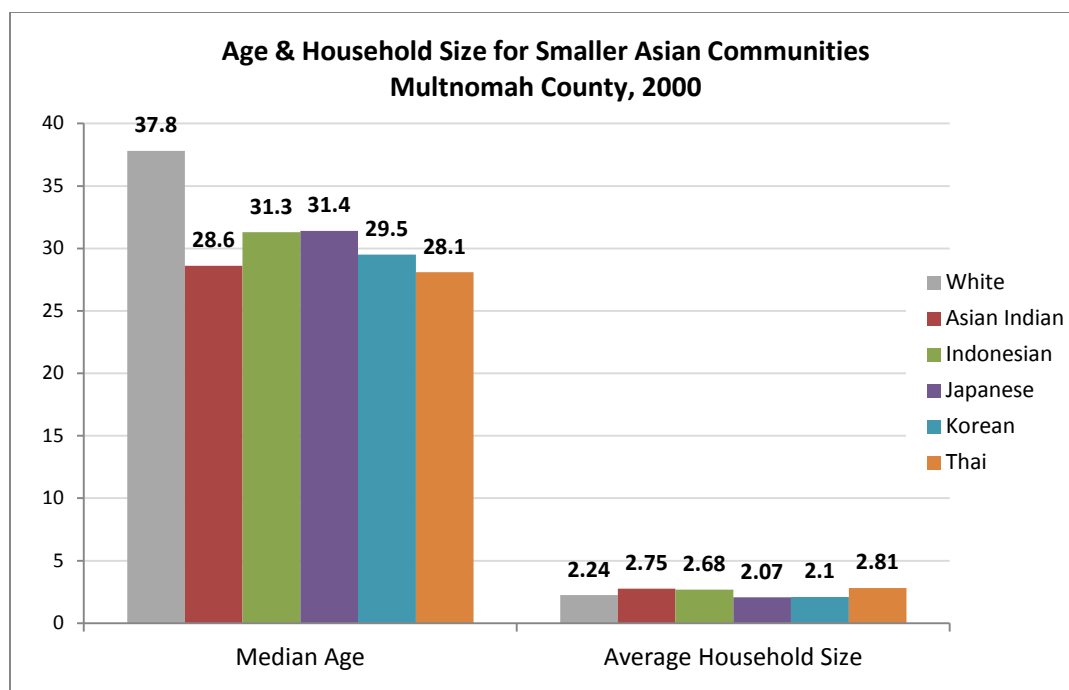
Coupled with the chart below, we can see that the Japanese community is a relatively stable community with the longest roots in this country, while still rapidly outpacing growth of the White community. Other communities have faster growth rates, ranging between 52% and 67% over the decade between 1990 and 2000. Remember that the pace of growth reflects three dynamics – the first being the desirability of this region for the community, and this typically reflects the condition of these communities in terms of its culture, its welcoming environment and its ability to network and support its members. The second condition is the existence of relatives and friends who might offer settlement supports and resources. The third is the general condition of the local economy and such issues as job availability, housing affordability and living wages. It is this third dimension which has deteriorated in the most recent decade, and we will certainly see a shrinking of these growth rates when data becomes available.

The number of communities profiled now shrinks as available data is constrained. Please know that the details we have available for the remainder of this section will not be updateable in 2010 when the next Census comes out. The decision to drop the long form (which the APIAHF used to create the datasets for 1990 and 2000) ends accessibility to this information. This will render API communities invisible.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

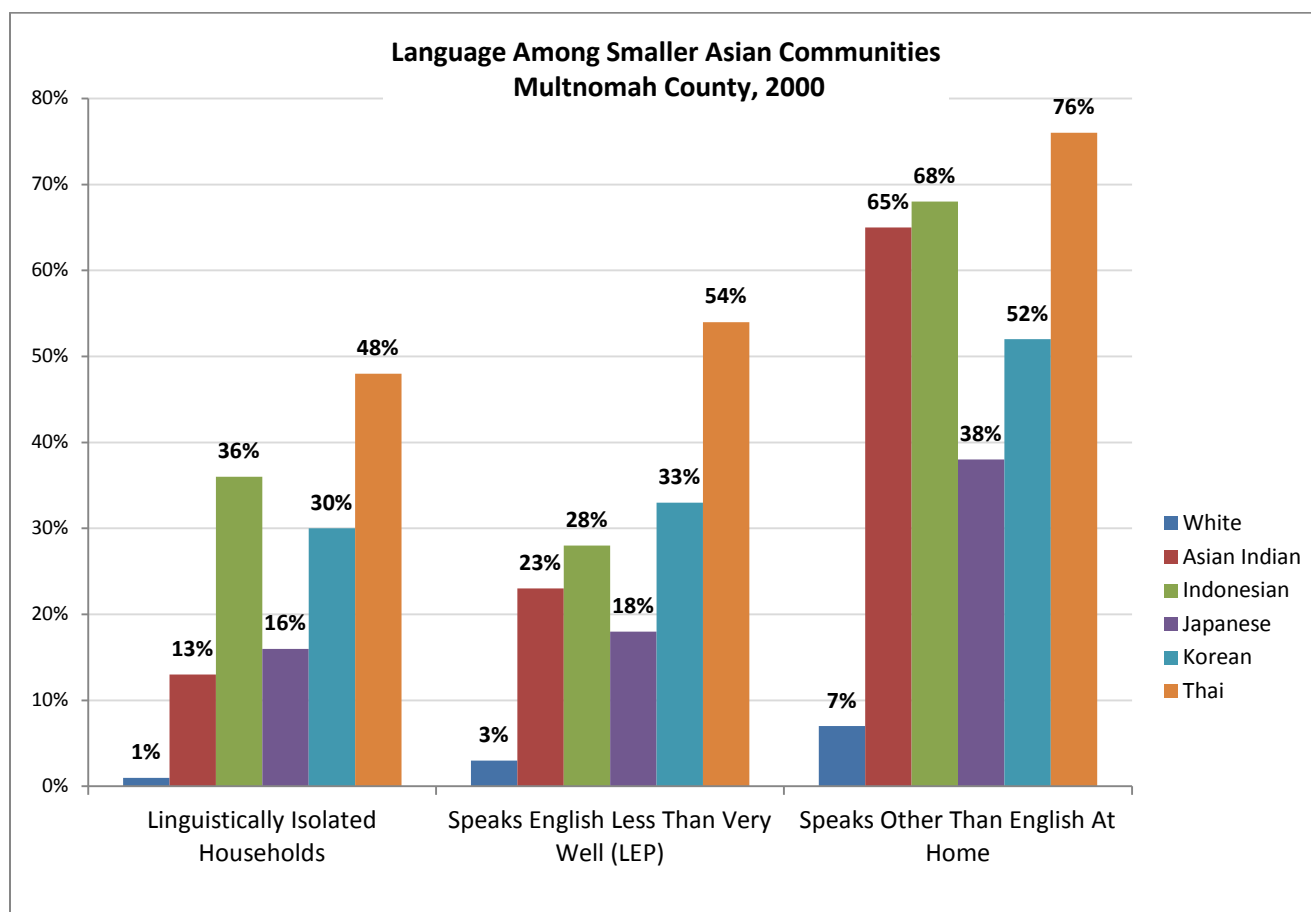
As is the case with all Asian and Pacific Islander communities, these smaller API communities are young and households are mostly larger than Whites – both as the result of necessity but also the result of culture and conventions, for the API community opens its homes for each other when friends and neighbors face calamity. That said, these smaller non-refugee households are much smaller than refugee counterparts and we can expect, therefore, that the income and poverty situation is likely to be better among these immigrant communities, as we do observe in later parts of this section.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Despite having much of the community foreign born, approximately one-in-four households do not have members who are able to communicate in English. The outlier to this pattern are the Thai who have had limited supports for such social integration. This community is one of the smallest (at just 1% of the Asian community), and language access has been difficult.

When we juxtapose the foreign-born data with the language acquisition, we notice that while more than one-in-two are foreign born, they have less than half that rate of English language competency. This should lay to rest the idea that Asian communities are reluctant to learn English and to value social inclusion with mainstream American society. It is essential that ongoing supports for learning English be provided, and not be tied solely to schools, to refugee status, or to more dominant languages.



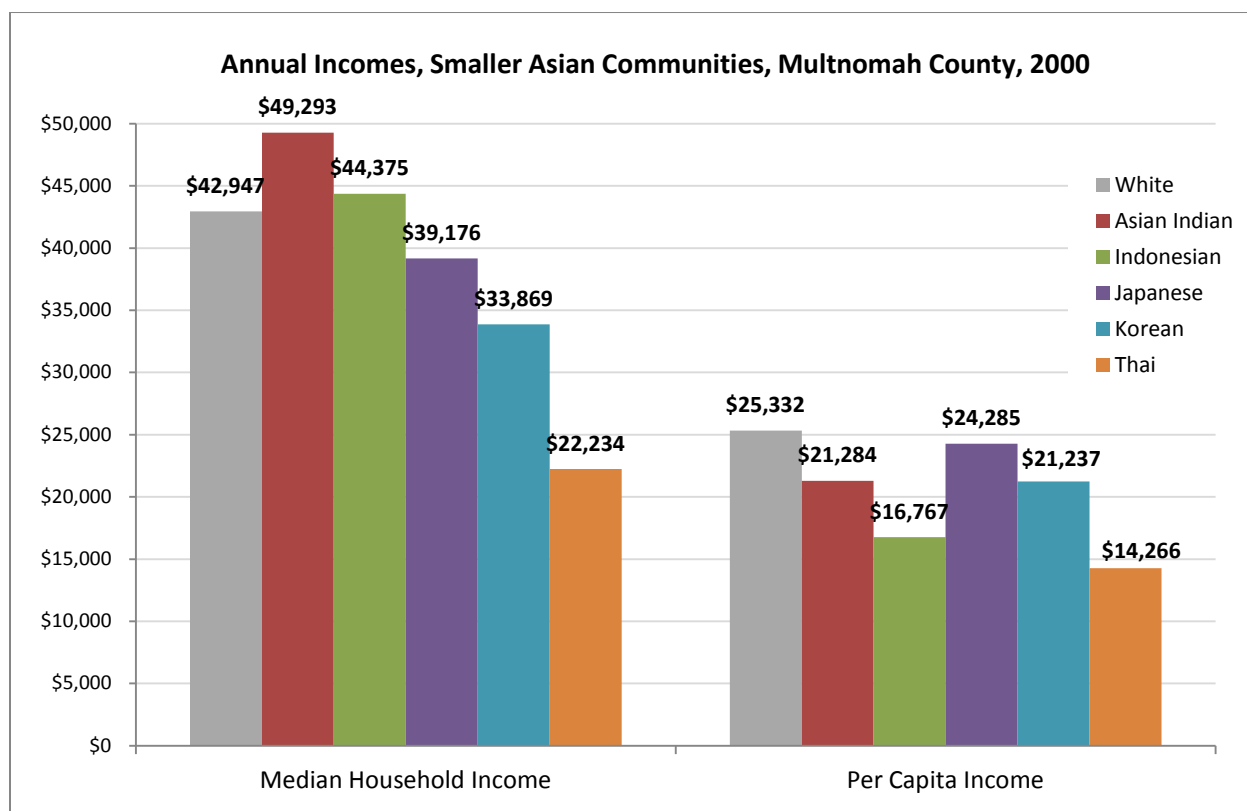
Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).  
Linguistic isolation means that there is no one in the home who is over 14 who speaks English “very well.”

When looking at linguistic isolation, it is important to recognize that English language is limited for many in smaller Asian communities. This means that services must be provided for those in need of supports in languages other than English and other than the largest Asian languages. Health care tops that list – funding for culturally-specific services must expand so as to ensure access for all communities. Another imperative embedded in these data is that many in these communities will not be able to provide information for surveys or for research purposes (if not available in their language). Accordingly, we

need to resource more local efforts to both understand and to provide services to address the needs of those in Asian communities. It also means that we need to place greater importance on community needs assessments such as the ones prepared by the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization.<sup>196</sup> This organization's (and others) ability to hold a place of trust for immigrant and refugee groups, to hear community voices and priorities, and to make such information available to all is an essential contribution that mainstream research practices cannot approximate.

### Economic Progress

Given the rhetoric about the economic success of Asians in the USA, one would expect that some local Asian communities would be thriving. From the data below, we see only two communities which have greater economic success than Whites: Asian Indians and Indonesians – but when we factor in household size, this advantage disappears. The myth that Asians are a model minority which has been able to achieve high incomes must clearly be laid to rest.



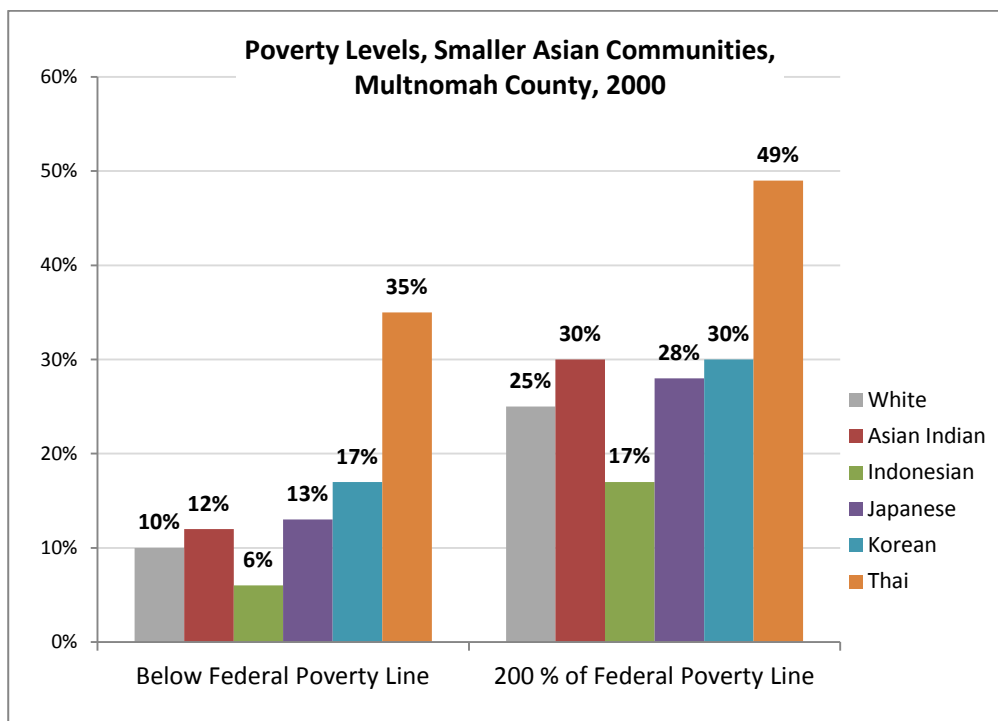
Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

The community facing the greatest economic struggle is that of the Thai, which also has the weakest English language exposure. When considering both factors together, it is likely that living wages and adequate employment access is out-of-reach due to language limitations.

As one might predict, high poverty rates follow low incomes. The Thai community struggles enormously with both poverty and low income. And so too do most of the other API communities. The Indonesian

community is seemingly protected from both low income and poverty, but notice that they hold a very low per capita income. Our best understanding of this is that the community's diversity is limited and most hold incomes that are below average, but above low income. Another factor is that this community likely holds very few affluent members, which would suggest that the community has few opportunities for advancement but is sustained with relatively few members in poverty.

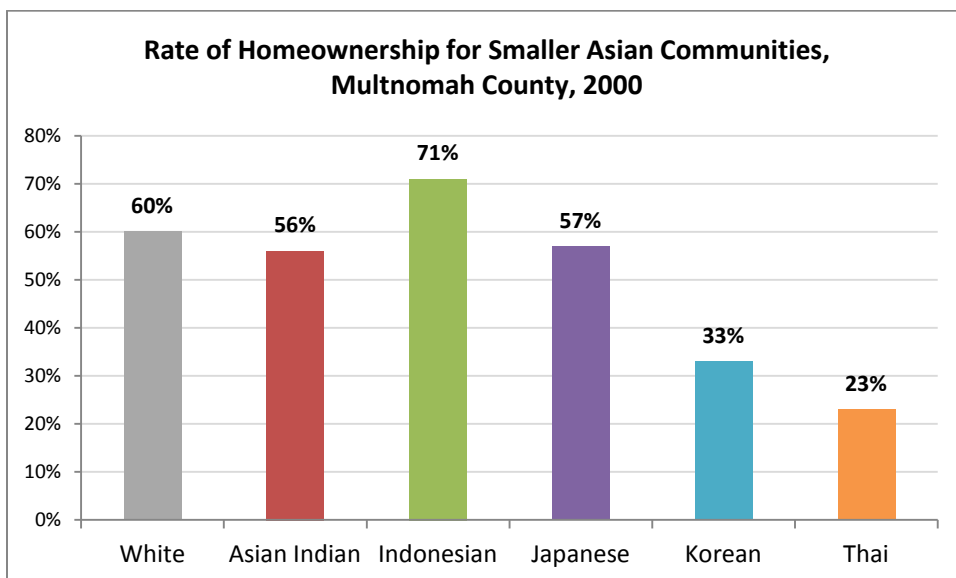
Also notice that where the Asian Indian community held relative economic affluence, the community is also besieged by high levels of poverty and low income. Economic affluence clearly does not spread across all in the community and a local narrative needs to be shared to help explain this pattern. The myth about this community – even held within the local Asian community – is that many have arrived here with considerable wealth and professional accreditation. Affluence has then helped support involvement in higher education. The dominant myth is amplified in the following quote: “They are engineers and medical doctors, professors and entrepreneurs, venture capitalists and CEO's. Asian Indians, as they are often called are an incredible success story in the USA.”<sup>197</sup> Across the USA, Asian Indians averaged the highest household incomes of any community, at \$74,830 and significantly higher than Whites who held household incomes of \$45,367.<sup>198</sup> This translates into an improvement of 65% over Whites – but in Multnomah county, this advantage deteriorates to only 15% higher than Whites.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Overall the picture is far from strong – all smaller Asian communities have rates of poverty and low income that are higher than that of Whites (with the exception of the Indonesian community which has been profiled above). Low incomes will have an impact on homeownership rates, and below we see this to exist in the region. Remember that homeownership is the most important element of intergenerational wealth for non-elites. This is how we accumulate some degree of affluence that can be

passed to children. Without homes, renters spend this same money in rent, and the benefits of these assets flow to others – not to one’s own family.



Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

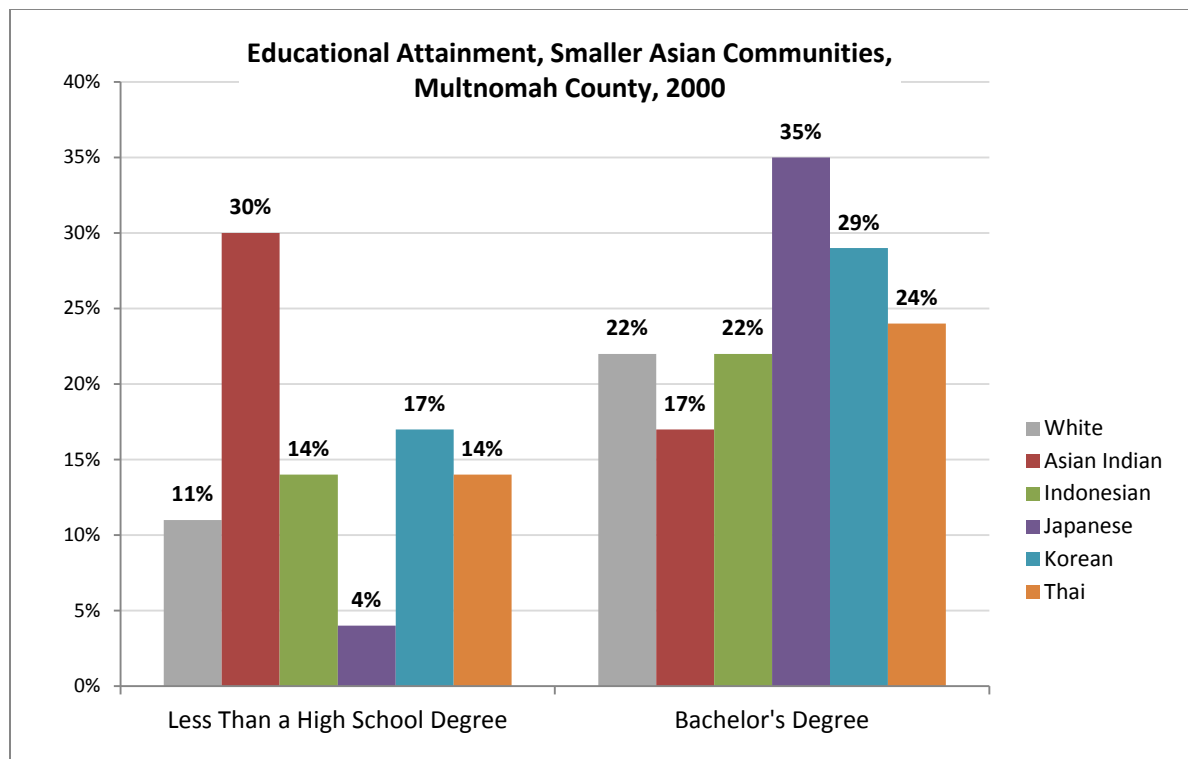
Very few Thai have access to homeownership and so too is access narrow for Koreans. This serves as a permanent destabilizing influence on the entire community as it remains much more vulnerable to fluctuations in rent and in supply. Upkeep and related safety issues in the rental market will also feature prominently in the community’s experience. Being able to transition to homeownership is desirable and such supports are needed for Korean and Thai communities.

Equivalent levels of homeownership exist for Asian Indians, Indonesians and for the Japanese community. While this is a positive sign, the experience may not be as stabilizing as for Whites if more are in the subprime market, if house values are low, if the bank or mortgage company owns most of the value of the house, and if one has recently become a homeowner (when house values have been deteriorating). Indicators are that these are indeed issues for these smaller Asian communities but due to a shortcoming in the data, it is not possible to empirically prove this to be true. The current state of our access to data precludes this possibility.

## Education

As with other communities of color, access to higher education is an important pathway out of poverty. Not that it is guaranteed, but without it, employment prospects are very narrow. Below we see that smaller Asian communities (with the exception of Asian Indians) are able to succeed in gaining educations – mostly at levels that are better than Whites. This is one area where there are significant differences between refugees and immigrants in the Asian community as immigrants have vastly higher levels of educational attainment than refugees.





Source: Custom runs of Census 2000 data by the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF).

Further learning from the above data show us that Asian Indians are not, as the myth suggests, achieving great success in Multnomah county. Education levels are low, showing that the community does not experience easy navigation through to completion of high school, nor in accessing higher education. At the national level, 64.4% of Asian Indians hold a university degree<sup>199</sup> – while only 17% of those locally have such access. This is a profound difference and one that illustrates that the local Asian context differs significantly from the national context and discourse.

### Summary

The pattern of local Asian experiences failing to follow national patterns is again observed within smaller Asian communities. Notice our tendency to look for variables other than institutional racism to explain the weak economic and educational experiences facing Asians in Multnomah county. And notice too that each explaining variable fails to provide much explanation here... leaving us to consider that institutional racism plays a significant role in the challenges facing Asians in Multnomah county.

It is time to ensure customized local solutions to services, to ensure that culturally-specific services are expanded for the entire API community and to ensure that the complexity of the community is increasingly revealed through better data practices, better service access and improved economic, educational and language supports to promote the ability of all to care for one's family and to resource each other in their communities.

## Bright Spots

To begin our discussion of “bright spots” in the situation facing the Asian and Pacific Islander community, let us begin first with community members who bring and have brought such assets to the region, and whose optimism (particularly among new immigrants), energy and wisdom hold such deep potential to help move us forward on the path to racial equity. International experiences, whether they be of paths not to follow (and thus cautionary wisdom) or fruitful ones where harmony and healthy communities have been experienced are essential ingredients for building a better economy that serves all who reside in the region. Collectively, all of us who live in this region need to better understand the ways in which racism, and particularly institutional racism, has harmed communities of color. Wisdom is situated in the bellies of those who have been denied power and influence, and communities of color offer today an option to work together. Our ethnic communities can add to our understanding of the kind of integration of services needed to move families effectively towards self-sufficiency. Today we can advance real cross-racial working relationships – for such relationships offer us a path towards racial equity. The wisdom of pain and suffering is matched by the wisdom of what needs to change to advance justice. And solutions that advance racial equity are those that will increase the prosperity of the region for all its residents, for people of all colors and identities.

And Multnomah county has a solid enough legacy of having welcomed many from what have been called “our wobbly world’s worst regimes”<sup>200</sup> and have extended supports through resettlement agencies and mutual assistance associations to help build networks of support and compassion. The API communities that have settled here and grown considerably in the last decade show how histories have woven together and how the common fabric of an API identity has emerged. When combined with the fact that Portland ranks high in terms of the numbers of refugees accepted into the area for a city and an economy of our size, we really already have an abundance of goodwill in place that serves as a foundation to move forward to tackle the thorny and pervasive elements of deep racial disparities.

While the local API community fares much worse than its national population, there are features of the local experience that are promising. The first is in the area of education where Asian and Pacific Islander students surpass other communities of color and come close to approximating the experiences of White students. The API community, when measured as an entirety, is the highest performing community of color, with narrow gaps of entering Kindergarten students, narrow and generally diminishing achievement gaps throughout school, better discipline rates and greater likelihood of entering higher education than Whites. As well, graduation rates for the new cohort data show a narrow gap between Whites and API students. And across the entire community, bachelor’s degrees are obtained at rates close to those of Whites. This is all very positive news.

When we disaggregate the community by language, we find that there are two API communities that perform in Reading at levels higher than Whites: Japanese and Korean-speaking students. The enhanced performance is illustrated in much greater numbers in Math scores: here we find that Cantonese, Gujarati (typically from India), Khmer (from Cambodia), Korean, Mandarin, Tibetan, and Vietnamese students outperform that of Whites. One sole community – Korean – has better scores than Whites on both measures.

Many in the API community believe education to be the major pathway out of poverty. While we aim to close all remaining disparities across education, we understand that there is a hopeful landscape across education that offers encouragement for our children. We ask the reader, however, to remember that

when we are able to disaggregate data by language (and ideally by other dimensions of ancestry), significant concerns emerge for many in the API community.

We are secondly most pleased with the narrowing gaps in disparities when measured across institutions. The reader will find this chart in the next section and see that many disparities are narrowing. Real gains have been made in poverty levels, in occupational attainment, and in how burdened the community is by housing costs. Most promising is the gains the community has made in incomes, with disparities narrowing significantly, even in this current economy. Many of those in API communities have been able to pull themselves out of poverty, get better jobs and improve their financial standing to support their family on a regular basis. This stretch of performance is also encouraging.

As we near the end of this research report, we return to the complexity of the Asian and Pacific Islander community and conclude with this assessment of those communities which seem to be on a promising trajectory towards economic sufficiency:

- Chinese – with lower child poverty rates, higher household incomes, poverty rates equivalent to the national Chinese population, growing numbers who have graduated high school, and an occupational profile that has almost received parity with Whites in the best jobs.
- Filipino – with higher annual incomes than Whites, much lower child poverty rates (but deteriorating poverty levels for all individuals), and vast improvements in educational attainment (at both the lowest and highest ends of the spectrum).
- Japanese – with the strongest English skills, and incomes and poverty rates that are only slightly worse than Whites, the community has been thriving in the area of education. Only 4% of Japanese have not graduated high school and more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  hold a university degree – more than a third higher than the level held by Whites. This is a community where children are also doing well in achievement scores, particularly in Reading.
- Korean – while less is known about the current dimensions of this community's economic situation, we now know that the Korean community is the only community that outperforms Whites in both Reading and Math achievement scores.
- In addition, those historic API communities that immigrated to the USA many years ago and now hold a high percentage of the population who are native born (to the USA) are doing better than more recent immigration and refugee groups. Yet, we caution that longevity in the USA does not appear to be a promising path towards economic well-being: attaining parity with Whites seems to be out-of-reach for many communities of color, regardless of their length of time in the USA.

We had anticipated that a few of our communities would have a positive prognosis when reviewing accomplishments as a composite, but evidence in this report illustrates that such is not the case:




























- Vietnamese – as an older refugee-based community, having arrived when income and employment supports were more expansive, we expected a more positive prognosis. While the income situation was relatively positive a decade ago, the situation has deteriorated rapidly in the last ten years. Poverty rates are, however, mostly better than Whites and there have been improvements in graduating from high school, but participation in higher education is still very low. Language continues to be a deep challenge for this community
- Pacific Islander – we had anticipated a positive prognosis for this community, as it is an immigrant community with generally strong cultural ties and community supports, but such is not the case. The data available for measures of both 2000 and 2009 show dramatically deteriorating incomes, poverty rates and homeownership.

This is a preliminary portrait of the vitality of specific Asian and Pacific Islander communities. It is premature to state unequivocally that any community is well on its way to parity with White communities. It is, however, possible to assert that it is essential that better data be generated for the various ethnic groups within the API community – and we urge the reader to remember the fullness of the data challenges facing the community and the urgency with which reforms to research and database administration practices are needed.

## Recent Changes in Disparities

The trend in disparities is relatively positive, with disparities in occupation, poverty, housing and incomes mostly improving. The table below shows measures for which we had data on disparities for the API community in the last three years, allowing us to take a longer term view on whether racial disparities are growing or shrinking. Of these 27 measures, 16 were improving but one improvement was because of rapidly deteriorating conditions for Whites, resulting in a drop in disparity level... certainly not the direction of disparity reduction that we seek. On 10 measures, conditions facing the API community are deteriorating. A final measure shows no change.

While these data look relatively optimistic (compared with other communities of color), it is important to draw attention to the fact that disparities between Whites and the Asian and Pacific Islander community (with most of these measures being just those of Asians) are pronounced in 13 of the 27 measures in the chart below. We determine a “pronounced” disparity to be one that has worse conditions of more than a 10% magnitude, though advance the idea that no disparity is acceptable. If no disparity is acceptable, the API community instead faces disparities in 18 of the 27 measures.

		Size of Disparity 2007	Size of Disparity 2009	Direction of Change
		% worse for Asians	% worse for Asians	from 2007 to 2008
<b>Occupation</b>				
	Management & professional jobs	24.9%	22.8%	
	Service jobs	45.5%	39.9%	
<b>Poverty</b>				
	All Individuals	39.1%	4.1%	
	Child poverty	56.3%	11.1%	
	Elders (65+)	172.7%	119.4%	
	Family poverty, kids <18	69.1%	78.1%	
	Married couple families	229.0%	200.0%	
	Female single parent, kids <18	28.5%	-8.8%	
<b>Housing</b>				
	Rent Burden	11.2%	4.7%	
	Mortgage Burden	38.1%	35.1%	
	Homeownership	-4.8%	-2.3%	
	Home value (owners only)	9.2%	14.6%	
<b>Education</b>				
	Attainment of a university degree	12.2%	15.4%	
	High School Cohort Graduation rate*	-13.6%	-7.1%	
	Discipline rate	-55.6%	-34.3%	
	Academic test scores - Math**	-1.7%	0.3%	
	Academic testing - reading/literature**	10.7%	7.3%	
<b>Incomes</b>				
	Full-time, full-year worker	24.1%	23.1%	
	Family	26.5%	20.6%	
	Retirement	17.0%	-13.9%	
	Female single parent	25.0%	9.9%	
<b>Health</b>				
	Health insurance***	-49.9%	-2.1%	
<b>Unemployment</b>				
	Unemployment rate	11.1%	10.4%	
<b>Criminal &amp; Juvenile Justice</b>				
	Frequency of juvenile detentions	33.8%	-11.9%	
	Frequency of youth being criminally charged	-34.0%	-20.8%	
	Adult incarceration rate****	-57.8%	-57.1%	
<b>Comparison with King County</b>				
	Composite of 5 measures	58.1%	282.4%	

\*Please note that these rates are for 2009 & 2010

\*\*Please note that these rates are for 2008 & 2010

\*\*\*Data for 2006 and 2009 were used for these two time periods

\*\*\*\*Data for 2009 and 2010 were used here



Indicates disparities are improving, but due to the worsening conditions of Whites

Indicates a change of less than 1 percentage point

*The Asian & Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*

## Establishing Priority Communities

We have covered the scope of available data on the disparities facing different Asian and Pacific Islander communities. A frequent question then follows: which communities are struggling the most deeply? We now have the answer to that question.

But before we answer this, we bring forward a few cautions: the first is that we are limited by the available data. We were able to gather the experiences of only three communities for 2008: Vietnamese, Chinese and Filipino. For another wide array of communities, we were only able to gather one feature of their experience: current education achievement scores (their scores on the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, or OAKS test) and whether students were able to meet or exceed the benchmarks illustrating academic competency. These data are more limited as they were only available by language (either first language or language spoken at home), and although these languages tend to line up according to country or community, this is not always the case. The chart that follows thus includes both language scores from the OAKS test (and summarized earlier in this document), but these ratings sometimes do not line up according to ancestry or origin. Note that for some measures, such as Asian Indian and Chinese, we have calculated weighted averages of the language scores that are typically associated with these countries and regions in order to create a score in the “Education today” measure.

This adds to another issue of concern: in a number of situations, the older data (from 2000) were used as they were the most recent (and only) available for the community. Some of these indicators have deteriorated since 2000, while at other times there have been some improvements. So while we believe that the data used provide us with important insights into the status of each community, there are some concerns in using these older data. Given that the Census Bureau decided to drop the long form of the Census 2010 returns, we will not have more recent data available... perhaps ever. One advocacy effort is to press the Census Bureau to “oversample” among communities of color and particularly among the API community through the administration of the American Community Survey every two years, which would allow us to gain much better data on API communities.

In the chart that follows, know that we have used the most current data available for each data point. "Means" reflect the mean language scores that are common to that country. For communities with no entries, there were students of this origin, but of too small numbers to reflect their achievement scores. The table below illustrates the scoring we used to determine levels of distress.

Levels of Distress		Low English	Poverty	Low Income	Less than High School	Doesn't meet Educ. benchmarks	Doesn't own home
High		Over 40%	Over 20%	45% or higher	40% or higher	80-100%	52% or more
Moderate		30-39%	19-20%	36-44%	21-39%	46-79%	48-51%
Low		20-29%	16-18%	30-35%	13-20%	36-45%	44-47%
Lowest + worse than White		6-19%	13-15%	26-29%	8-12%	29-35%	39- 43%
At or better than White		0-5%	0-12%	0-25%	0-7%	0-28%	38% or better

	Speak English Less than Very Well	Poverty	Low Income	Education - less than high school	Education today: Does not meet standards	Does not own home
White	3%	12%	25% (2000)	7%	28%	38%
Arabic					54%	
<b>Asian Indian (n=3,509)</b>	23%	12%	30%	30%	mean = 52%	44%
Assamese						
Bangladeshi						
Bengali						
Bhutanese						
<b>Burmese (n=792)</b>					69%	
<b>Cambodian (n=1,248)</b>	47%	24%	48%	44%	43%	63%
Cantonese					18%	
Cebuano						
Chinese	49%	13%	32%	28%	mean = 19%	27%
Chinese, Hakka					33%	
<b>Chuukese (n=152 children)</b>					72%	
Farsi					30%	
Fijian						
Filipino	17%	12%	25% (2000)	2%	44%	20%
Guamanian or Chamorro	13%	18%	49%	12%		40%
Gujarati					18%	
Hindi					47%	
<b>Hmong (n=1,674)</b>	56%	3%	48%	46%	44%	59%
Indonesian	28%	6%	17%	14%	33%	29%
Iranian						
Iraqi						
Japanese	18%	13%	28%	4%	19%	43%
<b>Karen (n=300 approx)</b>					95%	
Kazakh						
Khmer					10%	
<b>Korean (n=4,090)</b>	33%	17%	30%	17%	11%	67%
<b>Laotian (n=3,392)</b>	53%	9%	34%	48%	40%	36%
Malay						
Malaysian						
Mandarin					17%	
Marshallese						
Mien					35%	
Native Hawaiian	2%	12%	29%	7%		63%
<b>Nepali (n=896 children)</b>					75%	
Pakistani						
Palauan					43%	
Panjabi, Eastern						
Pashto, Southern						
Persian					30%	
<b>Pohnpeian (n=21 children)</b>					83%	
<b>Rohingya (n=7 children)</b>					71%	
<b>Samoa (n=683)</b>	15%	13%	35%	32%	68%	59%
Sindhi						
Singhalese						
Sri Lankan						
Tagalog					44%	
Taiwanese						
Tamil						
<b>Thai (n=1,110)</b>	54%	35%	49%	14%	46%	77%
Tibetan					26%	
<b>Tongan (n=551)</b>	37%	14%	62%	10%	46%	72%
Trukese						
Urdu					47%	
Vietnamese	69%	10%	31%	27%	25%	30%
Yapese					31%	

*The Asian & Pacific Islander Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*

Our most distressed communities are Cambodian, Thai, Hmong, Korean, Tongan, Samoan, Asian Indian and Laotian. And while we have only one data point for some communities, the rates of their distress in this education score is so terrible, we have decided to place these communities in the priority list: Karen, Pohnpeian, Rohingya, Nepali (of Bhutanese origin), Chuukese and Burmese. These fourteen communities are those experiencing the deepest distress, and those warranting most immediate attention through programs and services.

Within this set of 14 communities, we have the following collection:

- Four Pacific Islander communities: Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Samoan and Tongan
- Five small and new refugee-based communities: Hmong, Karen, Rohingya, Burmese and Bhutanese of Nepali origin
- Two older refugee-based communities: Cambodian and Laotian
- Three older immigrant communities: Asian Indian, Thai and Korean

Please note that there was no strategic decision to select across the types of communities, but rather these communities were identified by their experiences of key issues that are associated with deep distress.

## Conclusions

As has been illustrated time and again through this report, the Asian and Pacific Islander communities experience significant disparities on many measures compared with White communities. Most pronounced, however, is how local Asian communities fail to excel in the ways that Asian counterparts do elsewhere in the nation. The myth of economic, educational and employment success must be put to rest.

Furthermore, several hypotheses have been debunked in this study. The first is that the heightened presence of refugee communities is a major feature of the lesser Asian performance in the region. Our study shows that the largest refugee community – the Vietnamese – cannot attain the income or educational levels that their counterparts do across the country. The second hypothesis is that it is the era of arrival in the USA that is more to blame for lack of progress. In fact, we are coming to believe, with data to support this pattern at the national level, that newer immigrant and refugee communities are very unlikely to move close to parity with Whites as time progresses. The nature of the economy, the shredding of the social safety net, policies such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (that significantly narrowed access to income support programs, including for the elderly if they have not become citizens), being curtailed by low incomes and minimal assets, and ongoing racial discrimination and practices of institutional racism leave the entire API community, communities of color as a whole, and White allies very concerned for the future prognosis of creating social and economic inclusion for all.

Finally, we conclude by amplifying the dire need for improved research practices in our major human and educational services so that we can routinely unpack how and where local solutions are needed. These data are not forthcoming from the Census Bureau either with the American Community Survey or Census 2010. We must fill the gaps and ensure that wherever possible disparities can be disaggregated for smaller API communities.



We are able to supplement the gaps in our knowledge with the work of IRCO and its 2010 review of community needs. Here are the top three recommendations:

1. Extend refugee benefits for those who arrive as refugees. It is harder today to build employability and to integrate into US society. As a result, supports must be extended for longer periods of time. Without these supports, lifetimes of reliance on social assistance are anticipated.
2. Health services must be expanded for seniors, refugees (who typically arrive with histories of trauma), and those with limited English language – in addition to expanding coverage for those without health insurance. Culturally-specific health providers are the recommended delivery system. In addition, supports for navigating the existing health care system, including processes for applying for health insurance, is urgently needed.
3. Improved access to employment and job training is essential, along with avenues to ensure that underemployment does not occur and that recognition of foreign credentials is maximized. API residents want to work and want supports to assist in preparing for occupations that reflect their expertise and that offer a pathway out of poverty.

## Policy recommendations

Urgency and immediacy are the required responses to the dire situation facing many Asians and Pacific Islanders. Inaction is impossible. Failing to act means legitimizing poverty and spiraling distress. Inaction will seal the fate of this community to marginalization, damaging levels of distress and ongoing exclusion from mainstream society. Failing to take action as this research compels will be the 21<sup>st</sup> century's version of colonization.

A number of policy recommendations are logical outcomes from this research report. Below these policies, we reaffirm the importance of the policy recommendations being advanced by the Coalition of Communities of Color. To begin, we highlight the policies that are of priority for the API community.

### **1. Poverty reduction**

The impediments that API communities face in narrowing disparities and advancing towards racial equity with Whites are rarely diminishing through regular participation in education and the labor market. Additional supports are required to facilitate parity. These include

- Robust programs to support the recognition of foreign credentials and foreign work experience.
- Expanded income supports for refugees beyond the 8-month limit for singles and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for families.
- Full recognition that culturally-specific services are the best way to reach and support communities of color. To achieve this, two requirements are needed with the first being expanded availability of culturally-specific services and the second being limits placed on mainstream services that promise to serve communities of color – these services must be required to specify which communities they intend to serve, including specific naming of API communities.
- A corollary to the above policy is to ensure that no mainstream organization be allowed to make promises to serve the community without explicit partnership agreements with these specific communities of color.

## **2. Social Inclusion and Language Training**

An alarming amount of those in various API communities are linguistically isolated and have less than good English language skills. This creates barriers to social inclusion and to participation in civil society, as well as in attaining education and employment.

- Real improvements to access to English as a Second Language courses are needed that are provided locally, are of the highest caliber, and are at convenient hours. Partnership with culturally-specific organizations is the recommended delivery mechanism.
- Significantly improved availability of cultural interpreters and translation services across institutions and services, so that all within the API community are able to communicate with service providers and government agencies.
- US citizenship is an important avenue for social inclusion. More importantly, however, is its importance in gaining access to income security programs since the creation of the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act in 1996. Access to income support programs, and particularly to pensions for the elderly is restricted if one has not become a US citizen. Naturalization classes are essential to supporting this process and, again, need to be delivered through culturally-specific organizations. When more stringent eligibility standards were imposed in 1996 for receiving public assistance, elderly API community members were hit hard and have suffered from higher poverty levels as a result.
- Social inclusion and the chance to influence government policy depend on being invited to policy-making tables. Such invitations typically depend on the existence of allies at various levels of government. Instead, we aim for such inclusion to become standard activities of good policy practice. Policies that mandate community consultation and participation (with real power allocated to such partners) are the desired approach.
- Support the development of API leaders such that the community can be more seriously involved in policy development, in political leadership and in the civil service.
- Communities of color are experts in the solutions to racial inequities and community-based distress. API stakeholders must be engaged early, often and with meaningful ability to influence the outcomes in creating and evaluating services and programs that serve API community members.

## **3. Education Equity**

Many API communities are struggling academically, as illustrated in the disaggregated data by language. It is essential that our priority language communities receive intensive and comprehensive supports to ensure their educational success (in achievement and in graduation). So too a large and growing number of API youth and adults are prohibited from attending higher education due to prohibitive tuition fees. Both rising tuition rates and charging out-of-state tuition rates for undocumented residents are to blame. And once entered in higher education, too many youth drop out as a result of complex factors.

- Provide comprehensive supports for our priority communities which face an intolerably high disparity on the achievement gap with White communities.
- Increase retention supports in higher education and also in high school through the use of mentors and through dismantling the institutional racism that exists in higher education.
- Ensure that English Language Learner (ELL) students have access to full academic course offerings, and ensure that all ELL programs are in compliance with federal regulations. Too often, ELL students “languish” in such programs without adequate language supports and education progress.
- Pass the Tuition Equity bill in the Oregon legislature.

#### **4. *Visibility for the Entire API Community***

Research and database reforms are essential to ensure that there is routine and accurate disaggregation of the API community by origin, by refugee status, and by length of time in the country. The following are principles for the advancement of these reforms:

- Active encouragement for people of color to identify their race and origin accurately and with as many identifiers as community members desire.
- Allow for self-designation of identity, having major groupings pre-named, with additional open spaces for supplemental identities. Develop these categories in consultation with the API community to reflect local conditions which are dynamic.
- Wherever possible, have data collection tools administered by those who share the same race as those completing the form, and in their local language wherever possible.
- To require compliance and report using these same practices in all contracts, subcontracts and grants.
- Ensure that disaggregated data are available to the community and that the general public can readily access these data.
- Every two or three years, conduct an oversampling of the API community by the American Community Survey to support the identification of racial equity issues within and across specific API communities in the region.

#### **5. *Attention to Priority Communities***

Our most distressed communities are Cambodian, Thai, Hmong, Korean, Tongan, Samoan, Asian Indian and Laotian. And while we have only one data point for some communities (achievement scores on educational benchmark tests), the rates of their distress in this education score is so terrible, we have decided to place these communities in the priority list: Karen, Pohnpeian, Rohingya, Nepali (who are primarily of Bhutanese origin), Chuukese and Burmese. These fourteen communities are those experiencing the deepest distress, and those warranting most immediate attention through programs and services.

Now we turn to detail the policy recommendations that have been developed and endorsed by the Coalition of Communities of Color to address racial disparities and to advance racial equity. These measures will address the needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander community.

- 1. *Reduce disparities with firm timelines, policy commitments and resources.*** Disparity reduction across systems must occur and must ultimately ensure that one's racial and ethnic identity ceases to determine one's life chances. The Coalition urges the State, County and City governments, including school boards, to establish firm timelines with measurable outcomes to assess disparities each and every year. There must be zero-tolerance for racial and ethnic disparities. Accountability structures must be developed and implemented to ensure progress on disparity reduction. As a first step, plans for disparities reduction must be developed in every institution and be developed in partnership with communities of color. Targeted reductions with measurable outcomes must be a central feature of these plans. Elements of such an initiative would include:

- Policies to reflect these commitments are needed to ensure accountability exists in legislation.
- Accountability structures must be developed and implemented to ensure progress on disparity reduction. As a first step, plans for disparities reduction must be developed in

every institution and be developed in partnership with communities of color. Targeted reductions with measurable outcomes must be a central feature of these plans.

- Disparities must be understood institutionally, ideologically, behaviorally and historically. Institutional racism must be a major feature of disparity reduction work.
- Effectively resource these initiatives and place control of these initiatives in the leadership of communities of color who will lead us to real solutions.
- Accountability and transparency must feature across all institutional efforts.
- Annual updates must be conducted and the results available to the general public.

- 2. *Expand funding for culturally-specific services.*** Designated funds are required, and these funds must be adequate to address needs. Allocation must recognize the size of communities of color, must compensate for the undercounts that exist in population estimates, and must be sufficiently robust to address the complexity of need that are tied to communities of color. Recognizing the complexity and depth of need that exists for communities of color requires that we are provided with a higher funding base in recognition of the urgent need for ameliorative interventions. Service providers within culturally-specific services must be involved in establishing funding formulas for such designations.

Culturally-specific services are best able to address the needs of communities of color. These services have the following unique features:

- *We provide respite from racism. People of color enter culturally-specific services as insiders instead of outsiders.*
- We hold the trust of our communities. Mainstream services do not, and relationships are instead marked by distrust. This supports our ability to respond to community needs and to work in solidarity with them to address larger injustices.
- Accountability to the specific community of color for whom services are delivered.
- Top leadership (Board of Directors or equivalent) are primarily composed of community members who share the same racial and ethnic identity. This means they have a lived experience of racism and discrimination and will address these at all levels of practice.
- Located in the specific community of color that is being served and reflect the cultural values of the community throughout their services. Users of such services are likely to be welcomed and affirmed.
- Staffed and led primarily by those who share the racial and ethnic characteristics of the community. This means we have walked a similar path as those we serve, and have experienced the types of racism typically targeted against the community. This provides deep and lasting commitments to eliminating racism in all its forms.
- Such services are typically involved in many advocacy practices, and are involved in challenging institutional racism in its many forms. Given this engagement, service users are more likely to have their needs better understood and more hopeful about prospects for change. As their organizations are involved in social justice efforts, this increases the social capital of the community and its members.

- 3. *Implement needs-based funding for communities of color.*** This report illuminates the complexity of needs facing communities of color, and highlights that Whites do not face such issues or the disparities that result from them. Accordingly, providing services for these communities is similarly more complex. We urge funding bodies to begin implementing an

equity-based funding allocation that seeks to ameliorate some of the challenges that exist in resourcing these communities.

4. **Emphasize poverty reduction strategies.** Poverty reduction must be an integral element of meeting the needs of communities of color. A dialogue is needed immediately to kick-start economic development efforts that hold the needs of communities of color high in policy implementation. Improving the quality and quantity of jobs that are available to people of color will reduce poverty.

Current economic development initiatives and urban renewal activities do not address equity concerns nor poverty and unemployment among communities of color. Protected initiatives to support access of minority-owned businesses to contracting dollars, along with small business development initiatives must ensure equitable distribution of resources and the public benefits that flow from such investments.

5. **Count communities of color.** Immediately, we demand that funding bodies universally use the most current data available and use the “alone or in combination with other races, with or without Hispanics” as the official measure of the size of our communities. The minor over-counting that this creates is more than offset by the pervasive undercounting that exists when outsiders measure the size of our communities. When “community-verified population counts” are available, we demand that these be used.
6. **Prioritize education and early childhood services.** The Coalition prioritizes education and early childhood services as a significant pathway out of poverty and social exclusion, and urges that disparities in achievement, dropout, post-secondary education and even early education be prioritized.

Significant reductions in dropout rates of youth of color, improvements in graduation rates, increased access to early childhood education (with correlated reductions on disparities that exist by the time children enter kindergarten) and participation in post-secondary education and training programs is essential for the success of our youth.

7. **Expand the role for the Coalition of Communities of Color.** The Coalition of Communities of Color seeks an ongoing role in monitoring the outcomes of disparity reduction efforts and seeks appropriate funding to facilitate this task. Disparity reduction efforts will include the following:
  - Establishing an external accountability structure that serves an auditing function to keep local and state governments accountable. This leaves the work less vulnerable to changes in leadership.
  - Creating annual reports on the status of inequities on numerous measures, similar to the disparity tally included in this document.
  - Continuing to work with mainstream groups to advise on changes in data collection, research and policy practices to reduce disparities, undercounting and the invisibility of communities of color.
8. **Research practices that make the invisible visible.** Implement research practices across institutions that are transparent, easily accessible and accurate in the representation of

communities of color. Draw from the expertise within the Coalition of Communities of Color to conceptualize such practices. This will result in the immediate reversal of invisibility and tokenistic understanding of the issues facing communities of color. Such practices will expand the visibility of communities of color.

Better data collection practices on the race and ethnicity for service users needs to exist. Self-identification is essential, with service providers helping affirm a prideful identification of one's race and ethnicity as well as assurances that no harm will come from identifying as a person of color. We also want people to be able to identify more than one race or ethnicity, by allowing multiple identifiers to be used. The "multiracial" category is not helpful because no information about one's identity is possible. The Coalition of Communities of Color then wants research practices and usage statistics to accurately and routinely reveal variances and disproportionality by race and ethnicity. The Coalition will consult with researchers and administrators as needed on such improvements.

9. **Fund community development.** Significantly expand community development funding for communities of color. Build line items into state, county and city budgets for communities of color to self-organize, network our communities, develop pathways to greater social inclusion, build culturally-specific social capital and provide leadership within and outside our own communities.
10. **Disclose race and ethnicity data for mainstream service providers.** Mainstream service providers and government providers continue to have the largest role in service delivery. Accounting for the outcomes of these services for communities of color is essential. We expect each level of service provision to increasingly report on both service usage and service outcomes for communities of color.

Data collection tools must routinely ask service users to identify their race and ethnicity, and allow for multiple designations to be specified. These data must then be disclosed in an open and transparent manner. The Coalition of Communities of Color expects to be involved in the design of these data collection tools. Outcomes by race and ethnicity need to be publicly available on an annual basis.

11. **Name racism.** Before us are both the challenge and the opportunity to become engaged with issues of race, racism and whiteness. Racial experiences are a feature of daily life whether we are on the harmful end of such experience or on the beneficiary end of the spectrum. The first step is to stop pretending race and racism do not exist. The second is to know that race is always linked to experience. The third is to know that racial identity is strongly linked to experiences of marginalization, discrimination and powerlessness. We seek for those in the White community to aim to end a prideful and inaccurate perception that Multnomah county is an enclave of progressivity. Communities of color face tremendous inequities and a significant narrowing of opportunity and advantage. This must become unacceptable for everyone.

The legacy of our past stretches into today, deepened and confounded by ongoing structural and cultural inequities. While we would like to believe that racism is a matter only of history, the evidence before us is that it is not. Racist practices of the past have decimated our community, our culture and

our well being, and they continue today. Indeed, the depths to which mainstream society in Oregon has gone to in denial and minimization of racism are likely the cause of the trend that as we move closer to the Asian and Pacific Islander experience in this county, the worse our disparities are.

## Appendix #1: Data Terminology Notes

### Definitions

**Asian and Pacific Islander (API)** = all API communities

### Explanations

Many of the data in this report are taken from the American Community Survey (ACS). This survey has aimed to make data on more communities available in recent years and simultaneously reduce the costs of conducting the survey. In order to achieve this, the ACS has reduced its sample size and “fixed” the problem of high margins of error by averaging data over a three-year time period. Such is the case for all communities of less than 65,000 people – which is the situation for the Asian community.

Please also note that the ACS does not report on the “API” composite – rather, it reports out only on the Asian community, and additionally states that the Pacific Islander community is of too small a number to report. So while we would have liked to have shared, in the *Big Picture* section, about the entire API community, such a composite measure was not available.

The ACS does, however, report on the Pacific Islander community across a five-year time span (2005 to 2009). Again, small sample sizes require this averaging across years in order to establish reliable enough data to report. But we have problems with this huge time era for reporting, as it contains both recessions and recovery time periods. We have used these data sparingly as the data, while accurate, is very likely to be misleading in terms of being an appropriate interpretation of current economic and social conditions. We have used this 2005-2009 dataset to detail the “current” conditions of the Pacific Islander community in that section of the report.



## **Appendix #2: Multnomah County's philosophy and implementation of culturally-specific services**

### **Philosophy of Culturally Specific Service Delivery**

Multnomah County believes that funding should follow the client and not the other way around. In the business world, this is known as “customer choice.” Over years of service delivery to communities of color it has been made clear that consumer choice for people of color and ethnic communities is based on three dimensions: comfort, confidence, and trust. These dimensions are strongest in an environment where the organizations and/or institutions providing the services reflect the values, histories and cultures of those being served. Agencies which hire one or two culturally specific staff members do not provide an environment where comfort, confidence and trust are maximized for clients. Communities of color are characterized by significant language and cultural differences from the majority culture of the United States. One of these characteristics is a personal or relational way of interacting with service providers, rather than an impersonal bureaucratic way of interacting with service providers, which is more common in mainstream culture. This fact makes it important that the overall “feel” of an organization be familiar and comfortable to the client receiving services. While the specifics of these characteristics vary in the African American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Slavic and the many African and Refugee cultures in Multnomah county, all of these communities share the need for a culturally specific style of personal interaction, language, and organizational culture.

Indeed, in our experience not only do members of the various communities of color prefer to seek services from culturally-specific providers, but there are many issues that clients may not have the trust to openly discuss and confront outside a culturally-specific context. Some of these issues include but are not limited to domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, gang involvement, financial hardships, youth sexuality, and family and relationship problems. Thus, culturally-specific services are not only the preferred service provider for many people of color and immigrants, in many cases they may be the only provider in which individuals and families will feel comfortable asking for and receiving appropriate services.

### **Values Statement**

Multnomah County values and celebrates the rich diversity of our community. Through diversity comes a sense of community. Community provides a wealth of experience and different perspectives that enriches everyone's life. Communities in Multnomah County have a long tradition of supporting each other through families, churches and community organizations. Cultural minorities are more likely to engage individuals and organizations that are intimately knowledgeable of the issues of poverty and minority disproportionality facing the community today, and further, whose services are culturally specific, accessible and provided with compassion. Therefore, we are committed to providing a continuum of culturally specific services including prevention, intervention and anti-poverty services throughout Multnomah County that ensures the welfare, stability and growth of children and families who are part of at-risk, minority populations. By so doing, these individuals will be able to contribute and participate in the civic life of our county.

### **Criteria for Culturally Specific Service Providers**

The following section identifies specific criteria that Multnomah uses to identify and designate organizations which have developed the capacity to provide culturally specific services. The following

criteria should be used in Request for Proposals, contracting, and other funding processes to determine the appropriateness and eligibility of specific organizations to receive culturally specific funding. Both geographic hubs and culturally specific service organizations should be required to meet these criteria in order to receive funding from the resources that are dedicated to culturally specific service provision. These agency characteristics are expected to be in place at the time the organization applies for culturally specific services and not be characteristics or capacities that the agency proposes to develop over a period of time after contracts are signed. The criteria include:

- Majority of agency clients served are from a particular community of color: African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino, African and Refugee, and Slavic.
- Organizational environment is culturally focused and identified as such by clients.
- Prevalence of bilingual and/or bicultural staff reflects the community that is proposed to be served.
- Established and successful community engagement and involvement with the community being served.

**Contracting Implementation:**

Steps will be taken throughout all phases of the Request for Proposals process to ensure that Multnomah County contracts are given to organizations that have the capacity to provide the best culturally specific services. Those steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Refer to the definition of culturally specific service providers when reviewing funding applications.
- Create and implement an effective process to validate the accuracy of an organization's claim that they're a culturally specific service provider using the aforementioned definition and eliminate applications that do not meet the criteria.
- Include a requirement to submit past performance documentation regarding County contracts to ensure contracting with the most qualified providers and to achieve the highest quality of service delivery.
- Verify with partnering organization(s) that the relationship(s) referred to in an application exist and that the scope of work is targeted toward the work Multnomah County is supporting.
- Include representation from the communities that are proposed to be served on committee and review panels for their respective communities.

### Appendix #3: Language definitions<sup>201</sup>

**Ally:** “A member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression which gives her or him privilege. For example, a white person who works to end racism, or a man who works to end sexism” (Bishop, 1994, p. 126).

**Anti-Oppressive Practice:** a person-centered philosophy; and egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people’s lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies on their interaction and the work they do together. (Dominelli, 1994, p.3)

**Communities of color:** Four communities are traditionally recognized as being of color – Native American, African American, Asian and Latino. To these four groups, the Coalition of Communities of Color also recognizes and includes two communities: Slavic and African immigrant and refugee. Note that there is some tension in whether Latinos are a racial or an ethnic group. Most databases define them as a separate ethnic group, as opposed to a racial group. In Multnomah county, we define Latinos as a community of color and primarily understand the Latino experience as one significantly influenced by racism.

**Cultural competence:** A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or professional and enable that system, agency, or profession to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The goal is to build skills and cultures that support the ability to interact effectively across identities. The word **culture** is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. The word **competence** is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively. Five essential elements contribute to a system, institution or agency's ability to become more culturally competent: valuing diversity; having the capacity for cultural self-assessment; being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact; having institutionalized cultural knowledge, and; having developed adaptations to service delivery and reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity (Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Isaacs, 1989)

A significant critique is emerging about the capacity of “cultural competency” to address racial disparities. The basis of this critique is that it idealizes the ability of mainstream service providers to work outside their own cultural context and provide services to communities of color. As a response to racial disparities, cultural competency fails to generate the comprehensive reforms needed to promote racial equity. So too this “movement” fails to legitimate the urgent needs of communities of color and the requisite funding of culturally-specific organizations.

**Cultural proficiency:** See “cultural competence.”

**Discourse:** “A set of assumptions, socially shared and often unconscious, reflected in the language, that positions people who speak within them and frames knowledge” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.114).

**Discrimination:** “The prejudgment and negative treatment of people based on identifiable characteristics such as race, gender, religion, or ethnicity” (Barker, 1995, p.103).

**Disparities:** Are differences between population groups in the presence of any form of incidence or outcomes, including access to services. Disparities include both acceptable and unacceptable differences (adapted from Multnomah County Health Department, Health Equity Initiative).

**Diversity:** “Diversity refers to the broad range of human experience, emphasizing the following identities or group memberships: race, class, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age marital status, political belief, religion, mental or physical disability, immigration status, language and linguistics” (Portland State University, 2009).

**Dominant discourse:** Refers to the prevailing discourses that typically consolidate a set of myths about particular groups of people and then reproduce these myths through language, images, and generalized beliefs about who such people are and what they are capable of. These discourses are created by those with privileged identities and serve the function of maintaining oppressive systems such as racism, thus becoming an act of oppression themselves. When these characterizations are reproduced widely, they become the accepted way of speaking about and understanding particular groups of people. An example is the dominant discourse around “Black” and all this implies, and the corollary of “White” and all this implies.

**Ethnicity:** Refers to arbitrary classifications of human populations based on the sharing common ancestry including features such as nationality, language, cultural heritage and religion.

**Exploitation:** “When a person or people control another person or people, they can make use of the controlled people’s assets, such as resources, labor, and reproductive ability, for their own purposes. The exploiters are those who benefit and the exploited are those who lose” (Bishop, 1994, p.129-130).

**Indian:** This term has been used colloquially to refer to American Indians and/or Native Americans. While we recognize that this term more accurately refers to those with heritage in the country of India, its colloquial use in the USA has appeared in many of the reference documents used in this report. We prefer, however, the term “Native Americans” to reference those of indigenous heritage who live in the USA.

**Individual racism:** “The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both an unconscious and conscious level, and can be both active and passive” (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin & Lowe, 1997, p.89).

**Inequities:** Are disparities that result from a variety of social factors such as income inequality, economic forces, educational quality, environmental conditions, individual behavior choices, and access to services. Health inequities are unfair and avoidable (adapted from Multnomah County Health Department, Health Equity Initiative).

**Institutional racism:**

- “The network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups.

The advantages to Whites are often invisible to them, or are considered “rights” available to everyone as opposed to “privileges” awarded to only some individuals and groups” (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin & Lowe, 1997, p.93).

- Institutional racism consists of those established laws, customs and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities (existing both in history and currently)... whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions (Jones, 1972, p.131).
- Institutional racism is understood to exist based on the experiences of people of color, rather than intention to create inequities. One does not need to “prove” intent to discriminate in order for institutional racism to exist. Institutional racism exists by impact rather than intention.

**Internalized Dominance:** Occurs “when members of the agent group accept their group’s socially superior status as normal and deserved” (Griffin, 1997, p.76).

**Internalized Oppression:** Occurs “when members of the target group have adopted the agent group’s ideology and accept their subordinate group status as deserved, natural, and inevitable” (Griffin, 1997, p.76). Furthermore, “oppressed people usually come to believe the negative things that are said about them and even act them out” (Bishop, 1994, p.131).

**Mainstream services:** These are large service organizations that are largely devoid of specific services for communities of color, or having minimal or tokenistic responses to the specific needs of these communities. They operate from the presumption that service needs are independent from racial and cultural needs, and that staff can be trained in “cultural sensitivity” or “cultural competence” to ensure delivery of quality services regardless of clients’ race and ethnicity.

**Marginalized/margins:** “Groups that have a history of oppression and exploitation are pushed further and further from the centres of power that control the shape and destiny of the society. These are the margins of society, and this is the process of marginalization” (Bishop, 1994, p.133).

**Power:** “A relational force, not a fixed entity, that operates in all interactions. While it can be oppressive, power can also be enabling” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.116).

**Prejudice:** “An opinion about an individual, group, or phenomenon that is developed without proof or systematic evidence. This prejudgment may be favorable but is more often unfavorable and may become institutionalized in the form of a society’s laws or customs” (Barker, 1995, p.290).

**Privilege:** “Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do. Access to privilege doesn’t determine one’s outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them” (Peggy McIntosh).

**Racialized:** “Process by which racial categories are constructed as different and unequal in ways that have social, economic and political consequences” (Galabuzi, 2006, p.251).

**Racism:** “A system in which one group of people exercises power over another or others on the basis of social constructed categories based on distinctions of physical attributes such as skin color” (Galabuzi, 2006, p.252).

**Relative Rate Index (RRI):** Is a methodology for measuring rate differences between groups to estimate disparity of a phenomenon. It involves calculating the occurrence rate of a reference and a second group and comparing the resulting ratio to 1. For a more in depth discussion of RRI and methods for calculating, see U.S. Department of Justice (2006). *Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Washington D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

**Social justice:** “Social justice is both a process and a goal that (1) seeks equitable (re)distribution of resources, opportunities and responsibilities; (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) empowers all people to enhance self-determination and realize their full potential; (4) and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action” (Portland State University, 2009).

**Stereotype:** “An undifferentiated, simplistic attribution that involves a judgment of habits, traits, abilities, or expectations and is assigned as a characteristic to all members of a group regardless of individual variation and with no attention to the relation between the attributions and the social contexts in which they have arisen” (Weinstein & Mellen, 1997, p.175).

**Systemic racism:** “Refers to social processes that tolerate, reproduce and perpetuate judgments about racial categories that produce racial inequality in access to life opportunities and treatment” (Galabuzi, 2006, p.253).

**Tokenism:** “A dominant group sometimes promotes a few members of an oppressed group to high positions, and then uses them to claim there are no barriers preventing any member of that group from reaching a position with power and status. The people promoted are tokens, and the process is called tokenism. Tokens can also be used as a buffer between the dominant and oppressed groups. It is harder for the oppressed group to name the oppression and make demands when members of their own groups are representing the dominant group” (Bishop, 1994, p.136).

**White:** Refers to the racial identity of Caucasian, regardless of ancestry or ethnicity. While conventional definitions of being White can include being Latino as well, we exclude such a definition from this text. In our situation, being White means having the racial identity as Caucasian, without being Latino.

**Whiteness:** Whiteness refers to the social construction of being White that coexists with privilege in all its forms, including being on the privileged end of history, including colonization, slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. It also includes being the beneficiaries of institutionalized and systemic racism, dominant discourses, internalized racism and individual acts of discrimination and micro-aggressions of racism in everyday life.

**White Privilege:** “White privilege is the other side of racism. Unless we name it, we are in danger of wallowing in guilt or moral outrage with no idea of how to move beyond them. It is often easier to deplore racism and its effects than to take responsibility for the privileges some of us receive as a result of it...Once we understand how white privilege operates, we can begin addressing it on an individual and institutional basis” (Paula Rothenberg, 2008, p.1).

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<sup>95</sup> While we use the past tense writing in this section (as we are reporting on the findings of a research study conducted on data from 2009), the historic view of how often we remove children has not changed over time. There is no reason to believe that child welfare practices in Multnomah County have changed since this research was conducted.

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<sup>96</sup> To determine which children in foster care might experience longer lengths of stay in foster care, data from a cohort of children (n=1,966) who were continuously in foster care (did not exit care) during a six-month analysis period was analyzed.

<sup>97</sup> Miller, Cahn, Bender, Cross-Hemmer, Feyerherm, & White (2009).

<sup>98</sup> Miller, Cahn, Bender, Cross-Hemmer, Feyerherm, & White (2009).

<sup>99</sup> National Conference on Citizenship, Civic Enterprises, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement & Saguaro Seminar (2009). *America's Civic Health Index: Civic Health in Hard Times*. Washington, D.C.: National Conference on Citizenship.

<sup>100</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2004, 2006, and 2008). Current Population Survey. Table 4a: Reported voting and registration of the total voting-age population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, for states: November 2004 retrieved January 20, 2010 from: [www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2004/tab04a.xls](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2004/tab04a.xls). Table 4b Reported voting and registration of the total voting-age population, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, for states: November 2006 retrieved January 20, 2010 from: [www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2006/tab04b.xls](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2006/tab04b.xls).

Table 4b Reported voting and registration of the total voting-age population, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, for states: November 2008 retrieved January 20, 2010 from: [www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/table%2004b.xls](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/table%2004b.xls).

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Table 4b Reported voting and registration of the total voting-age population, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, for states: November 2008 retrieved January 20, 2010 from: [www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/table%2004b.xls](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/table%2004b.xls).

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- <sup>200</sup> Thanks to Polo Catalani for this term and many of the phrases in the opening paragraphs of this section of the report. His unbridled enthusiasm for noticing and affirming all that is good and positive in New Portlanders and, in fact, all residents of the region is contagious.
- <sup>201</sup> Many of the terms here were found in Campbell, C. (2003). *Anti-oppressive social work. Promoting equity and social justice*. Downloaded on April 25, 2009 from <http://aosw.socialwork.dal.ca/glossary.html>.