



In Need of a Long Welcome

*Supporting the Integration
of Newcomers to Portland*

2016

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Portland's newcomer communities bring considerable assets to the region. Their legacy is one of potential untapped, as they face significant exclusion from economic and civic life, and an environment that is full of challenges without sufficient supports to help them navigate forwards into the fabric of Portland. This report, prepared in partnership with the New Portlander's Policy Council, surfaces the history of newcomer conditions in the region, including a policy history, alongside a literature review on best practices for newcomer integration, new quantitative data on the patterns of newcomer experiences, a chapter on myths and myth-busting, and insights into five newcomer communities: Indigenous Latinos, Tongan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali. The report concludes with the agenda for "a long welcome" for newcomer communities in Portland and the region.

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as confirmation of their unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of newcomers to Portland.

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Executive Summary: The Newcomer Community in Portland

Newcomers to the Portland area are an untapped asset for the social, intellectual, and economic success of the region. It is time for the political, policy and sector-specific leaders to align with the recommendations in this report, and to strongly support newcomers in their effort to gain a solid footing in the region. Time is precious, and the asset base of newcomers risks disappearing: the optimism and emotional wellbeing becomes compromised across time, as the daily grind of poverty, isolation and exclusion take their toll. This report aims to catalyze an awakening to the asset base newcomers bring, and to map out a pathway to their inclusion in Portland's social, intellectual and economic fabric.

This report contains much new information about newcomers to Portland. While originally envisioned as a gathering of existing data from the *"Unsettling Profile"* research reports on the disparities facing various communities of color in Multnomah County, the researchers at the Center to Advance Racial Equity decided to expand their commitment to the project, and planned, at the request of the New Portlanders Policy Council (NPPC) a more expansive, asset-based understanding of the community. In partnership with the NPPC, the project became a more robust collection of insights on the following:

- A history of the policy promises and deliverables that have been valued by newcomers in the region
- New data on the racial disparities facing newcomers to the region, and comparing these with arrival conditions in an earlier era
- Myths facing newcomers and an evidence-based busting of these myths
- Literature review of the "best practices" for newcomer integration
- Introduction to five newcomer communities: indigenous Latinos, Tongans, Iraqis, Iranians and Somalis
- A policy agenda that will yield meaningful inclusion of newcomer communities

The research base for these chapters includes eight meetings with the New Portlander Policy Council to gather information on the policy history and policy agenda chapters, and another 20 interviews with leaders in specific newcomer communities to develop the community-specific chapters. In addition, original data from the American Community Survey was gathered for the data chapter on disparities faced by the community, and for the Middle Eastern chapter which has not before been explored for its disparities. Finally, the literature was used expansively to resource all the chapters, and as a result, more than 240 sources of information were tapped for this report.

Unlike other reports from the Center to Advance Racial Equity, this report is an edited collection. We have been able to tap into an excellent set of community and academic researchers, drawing a diverse set together for leadership in various chapters. We are grateful for this contribution.

So... what have we found? The key message is that newcomers are "in need of a long welcome." Such a perspective focuses on the conditions of the host community, and the importance of its assertive engagement with newcomers and supporting them more effectively and durably. We use the term "welcome" to highlight the importance of the ways that the USA is responsible for signaling and actualizing inclusion of immigrants and refugees. We urge assets-based approach to this welcome, as newcomers hold huge potential to help the economy of the region, through experiences, perspectives, capacities, resources and risk taking. Newcomer communities, if welcomed effectively, can become a source of skilled employment, educated and experienced workers, and communities that have deep problem solving capacity and abilities to network and resource each other, and teach the rest of us the lessons-learned from the community's global experience. The community's racial and ethnic identities also positions it as a considerable resource for diversifying key sectors where workers of color are urgently needed: education, policy development, organizational leadership and health and human services. Given that many in the community are underemployed, and have credentials that are not

being used in the USA, it seems a relatively easy fix to provide better recognition of credentials and experience, alongside generating considerable benefits for clients, patients and consumers to be served by those who share identities and experiences, and the improved employment and economic experiences for newcomers.

There have been brighter times in Portland's past, with the contributions of political leaders providing ideas that can be re-invigorated and reestablished. The gift of these prior experiences is that they show how individual leaders have demonstrated wise and compassionate support for newcomer integration. It is time to rebuild several of these initiatives, particularly in the area of policing which were highly valued in prior decades.

The needs among the newcomer community are considerable: our research shows that today's newcomers of color have a much harder time gaining an economic foothold than just a decade ago, with average (median) incomes dropping from \$14,481/year to just \$9,304/year. During the same time period, and looking at the same length of time in the USA, white newcomers saw their market incomes rise from \$26,769/year to \$47,718/year. These data reflect the wages that are earned. This shows us that there is an employment crisis among newcomers of color who not only struggle financially, but the racial gap has grown from a magnitude of double to quintuple – from two times larger, to five times larger. Simultaneously, it shows us that the greatest needs exist among newcomers of color, and we conducted this analysis including the full range of newcomers of color: Latino, African, Middle Eastern, Slavic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous Latinos.

And this exists despite the fact that the most recent newcomers of color are much more educated than those who arrived about a decade earlier. Only 16% of newcomer of color who arrived between 1994 and 2004 held a university degree, while 25% of those who arrived between 2005 and 2014 held a university degree. One would normally expect that improved education would result in higher incomes, but such enhancements did not result in higher incomes – and in fact, incomes greatly deteriorated in this time period.

We considered that this experience might be occurring, holding a lived experience that the promises of the neo-liberal economic policies (which suggests that economic progress will occur with shrinking income supports, shredding the safety net, fewer jobs in civil service, greater privatization and weakened wage protections) were not manifest among newcomers. We did not expect that there would be such a differential experience between White newcomers and newcomers of color. This demonstrates a highly racialized impact of neoliberalism, stretching into the newcomer community, in ways that are similar among other communities of color in the USA. We had expected that newcomers, in general, would be struggling more. It also suggests that many settlement practices are tied to racial inclusion, and the issues of institutional racism experienced in other communities of color typically extend to our newcomers of color. This report should additionally serve as impetus to continue working on institutional racism across public and private entities that have influence on the settlement of newcomers, including places of training, employment, education, language acquisition, and policing.

As expected, the community of newcomers struggle with numerous economic and employment conditions:

- Few are able to gain access to better jobs, at 24% of workers in management, business and science, compared with 45% of White workers
- Newcomers are over-represented among service occupations, and production and transportation jobs, at 51% of the community in such positions, while only 27% of White US-born workers are in such jobs
- Poverty levels are roughly double that of US-born Whites, at 32% of families raising children, compared to 16% of White, US-born families.
- Child poverty is similarly disparate: foreign-born children have poverty rates of 48%, while White children are at 20%

Why is the situation so dire, and why has it deteriorated so quickly? Our best understanding is that the community struggles under the weight of three economic realities: that the neo-liberal policy environment

continues to spiral into a deepening set of winners and losers, with workers of color, and particularly newcomers of color, being unable to gain a foothold that places them above the poverty line. We also believe that the ongoing neglect of US leadership to provide assistance to recognize foreign credentials, and simultaneously employers who do not recognize foreign experience, and coupled with the imperative for refugee newcomers to take the first job offered to them, creates an irrational policy and practice construct whereby newcomers cannot gain a fair start in the USA. When understanding why White newcomers are not so imperiled, we believe that white privilege protects them from the more dire realities of these policies and practices, while institutional racism narrows the chance of newcomers of color to get such a start.

Part of the reason there are deteriorating conditions are the result of national narratives about who refugees and immigrants are, and the impact of their presence in the USA. Many damaging discourses abound – and it is time for local leaders to understand the real facts behind these discourses, and to become equipped with the evidence that can dissolve these harmful ideas about newcomers. We urge all political leaders and policy makers to read the chapter on “Busting Myths about Newcomers” as essential preparation to being to unlearn what will have normally been infusing – often subconsciously – one’s perspectives of newcomers. At the root of these evidence is that newcomers are assets to the region, bringing experience, innovation, investment, job creation and problem solving abilities. If treated as assets, and meaningfully included in the fabric of the USA, the whole region will benefit. We have much to gain from the inclusion of newcomers: politically, economically, environmentally, intellectually and socially.

We are pleased that this report includes key insights into the lives of five newcomer communities: Indigenous Latinos, Iraqi, Iranian, Tongan and Somali. We aim for the assets of our newcomer communities to be understood. Each chapter has been crafted with the insights of community leaders, with at least four leaders interviewed for each chapter. The chapters intend to provide insights into the assets of each community, the conditions of their arrival and the culturally-informed recommendations for how the community prefers to be served in the areas of education, health and human services. We urge service providers of all types of supports to read these chapters to better understand community experiences. And we urge the same service providers to use this information as a base of understanding, fully recognizing that each individual is likely to diverge from their community’s narrative as much as they are likely to align with it. So please do not use these narratives in limiting ways, but rather to prepare providers to listen deeply to those who are being served.

The report closes with a moral and values-based call for political leaders to stand in solidarity with newcomers. Every political leader needs to proactively affirm that all newcomers are essential to the fabric that is Portland and Oregon. The community must be supported when it is treated in hostile ways, and must be defended when it is attacked, and must be proactively confirmed as legitimate Americans, fully entitled to fair and inclusive treatment. This is the core recommendation of the New Portlander Policy Council.

We also provide an expansive set of policy recommendations, which should be priority reading for all policy makers. In addition to the institutional reforms that are being advocated, there are a set of three Task Forces that are urged:

Task Force #1: Recognize Foreign Credentials

Task Force #2: Repairing the Cultural Bias in the Housing Code

Task Force #3: Law Enforcement Liaison Project

It is time for real inclusion and the extension of “a long welcome” for Portland’s newcomer communities. We urge policy makers to respond to the recommendations in this report, and work in partnership with the NPPC to establish priorities for action.

Introducing Portland's Newcomers

By Ann Curry-Stevens

This chapter provides an introduction to Portland's newcomers, identifying some of their arrival conditions, alongside the policy-rooted experiences they encounter once in the USA. It also incorporates the "business case for immigrant and refugee integration" and how the futures of all residents in the region are deeply intertwined. To begin, we look back at the arrival conditions of newcomers in generations past, illuminating the differential forms of welcome received.

Newcomers arriving in the USA centuries ago were treasured for their settlement capacity. Land gifts were abundant. Two key policies demonstrate this commitment: the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 whereby settlers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Wyoming were given 320 acres (enlarged to 640 acres by the Kincaid Amendment for Western Nebraska) for free between 1850 and 1854, and able to purchase additional acres at the price of \$1.25/acre until 1855. That fee translates into merely \$33 today.¹ The second policy was the Homestead Act of 1862 (which included freed slaves and women, and was relevant for 123 years), that freely gave 160 acres of federal land in the west, with the requirement that one had to live on it, build a home, farm it for at least 5 years, and improve the land. A further stipulation was that one had to be a U.S. citizen to be eligible. This meant that African Americans were eligible as of 1868, and South Asians and East Asians in 1898 – but little high quality land was left by this time. Additional expansions of the Homestead Act continued gifts of up to 640 acres. In total, 10% of U.S. land was given away through these legislative measures between 1862 and 1934. Given that the Chinese were not allowed to be citizens until 1942, and no Native Americans could become citizens until 1942, they missed out completely on these land giveaways.

To get a sense of the value of this gift, we use an estimate from the US Department of Agriculture on the average value of cropland (at \$4,130 per acre), pastures (at \$1,330 per acre),² and timberland (at \$1,700 per acre).³ The average value of an acre is thus \$2,387, and the size of the gift of 320 acres, is today worth approximately \$763,840, with the potential for this to be doubled and additional value added if extra land were purchased.

Today? No such gifts for settlement. The legacy of wealth attainment has been significant for European immigrants who received tremendous income support through these land gifts, and subsequently through measures such as the Government Issue Bill that provided low cost mortgages and free tuition to returning veterans, enabling their economic progress.

Juxtapose this too with the treatment of Japanese immigrants during WWII, when they were rounded up and imprisoned, and often permanently losing homes and businesses, while there were few such instances of similar treatment with Germans or Italians in the same war. For Japanese, even if their identity was 1/16 Japanese (and even if they were born in the USA), they were still imprisoned.

Why do we find such history important? Many in the USA forget their origins as immigrants, and certainly overlook the benefits they have received from the state that allowed their ancestors to establish themselves in the USA, generating wealth and assets that have passed through the generations. When we hear the rhetoric of newcomers as "burdens" or that they should be simply grateful for being allowed into the country, we urge for more humility in remembering the era of generosity and valuing immigrants, and ask for extension of compassion in response to need, and a valuing of the contributions of newcomers to the community.

Today, refugees who are in financial need (and must prove such need exists), are eligible for a few supports: a small grant for settlement needs, cash assistance for 8 months, medical assistance for 8 months, food stamps,

and access to social services for specialized supports such as job search and case management. Families are able to access Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF) for up to five years. We aim to operationalize the cash benefits that refugees are eligible for:

- A grant per refugee of \$1800 to be delivered by community-based organizations (of which \$1,100 must be spent directly on the refugee)⁴
- Refugee Cash Assistance and Medical Assistance Program benefits that exist for 8 months. These amount vary depending on the state of residency, but ranged from a low of \$81/month (Arkansas) to a high of \$539/month (New Hampshire), with Oregon's level in 2013 at \$329/month.⁵ The generosity of the federal government took a sharp downturn after 1980 when refugee supports lasted for three years, to the current level of eight months, which was established in 1991.
- Medical costs are reimbursed by the federal government, and estimates of the value of this benefit are difficult to find.
- For families eligible for TANF, again the rate varies by state, with Oregon's rate (2013) being \$503/month for a family of three. Families in such need can be supported for up to five years.
- Food stamps (or SNAP) have provided U.S. families with approximately \$374/month for a family of three.⁶

In return for these benefits, refugees must take the first available job offered to them, regardless of whether or not it pays a living wage, or if it is in their field of experience. One of the core problems with being required to take the first job offered is that it all but eliminates one's ability to continue to search for relevant or better paying work, subsequently narrowing one's employment pathways towards a career of choice. Refugees must also repay the costs of their airfare to the USA.

The Washington Post recently calculated the cost for settling refugees. They calculated the costs using figures from the National Conference of State Legislatures who worked with the Office of Refugee Resettlement to ascertain the cost. The total costs were \$582 million, and they were expended to settle 70,000 refugees.⁷ The cost per refugee? \$8,314 per person.

Immigrants, on the other hand, have no such settlement assistance (although they can access some human services supports). They are ineligible for the majority of income support programs for five years after their arrival, such as:

- Food stamps (or SNAP) which cannot be applied for except for children under 18, or seniors over 65, or those with disabilities (who are unlikely to be admitted into the USA, so there are comparatively few newcomer immigrants with disabilities)
- Supplemental Security Income – ineligible until they become US citizens
- TANF – ineligible until here for five years
- Medicaid – ineligible until here for 5 years, except for children and pregnant women, but the state may ask for reimbursement of these costs⁸

Undocumented immigrants are completely ineligible for all federal public benefits, including TANF, Home Energy Assistance, Medicaid, and many more.⁹

We ask in concluding this section that we remember the different arrival supports across history: from land giveaways that could total upwards of a million dollars, to the estimated \$8,300 for refugees, and nothing for immigrants and undocumented newcomers that is provided today. Settlement supports fluctuate with changing public discourse: it is time for improved discourse, and to deepen the valuing of all newcomers to the region. We consider this community as an untapped asset, deeply worthy of a long welcome.

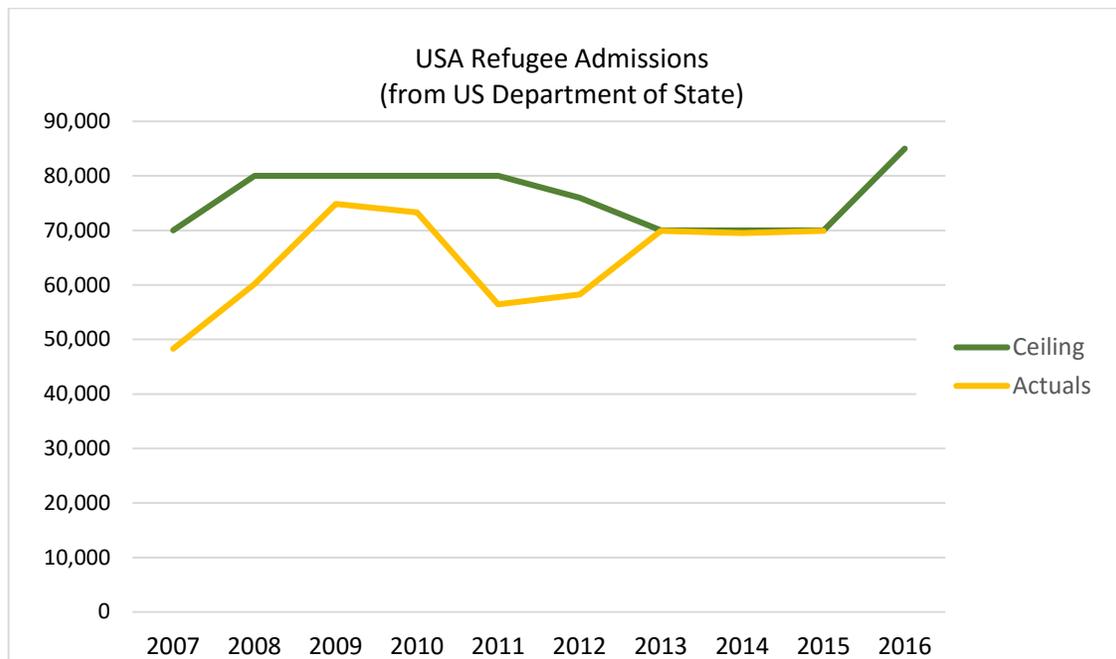
The global context facing refugees

About 60 million people are displaced from their homes worldwide due to conflict or persecution, and almost 14 million were newly displaced in 2014.¹⁰ The crisis is growing, hitting the highest levels in history. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees states, “worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase; one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum.”¹¹

By definition, a person is considered to be a refugee if s/he is outside of her/his country of nationality, or for those who are stateless, outside their country of habitual residence.¹² Evidence supporting the status of individuals as refugees is to be established on the basis of documents, statements or any other information submitted by the applicant or obtained from other sources.¹³

This displacement is global in nature, with increases seen across the globe: in Europe (receiving refugees from the Ukraine and Syria), the Middle East and North Africa (also receiving those from Syria, plus Iraqis and Libyans), Sub-Saharan Africa (primarily from the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somali, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo), in Asia (mostly from Myanmar and Rohingya), and the Americas (from Columbia and other Central American countries).

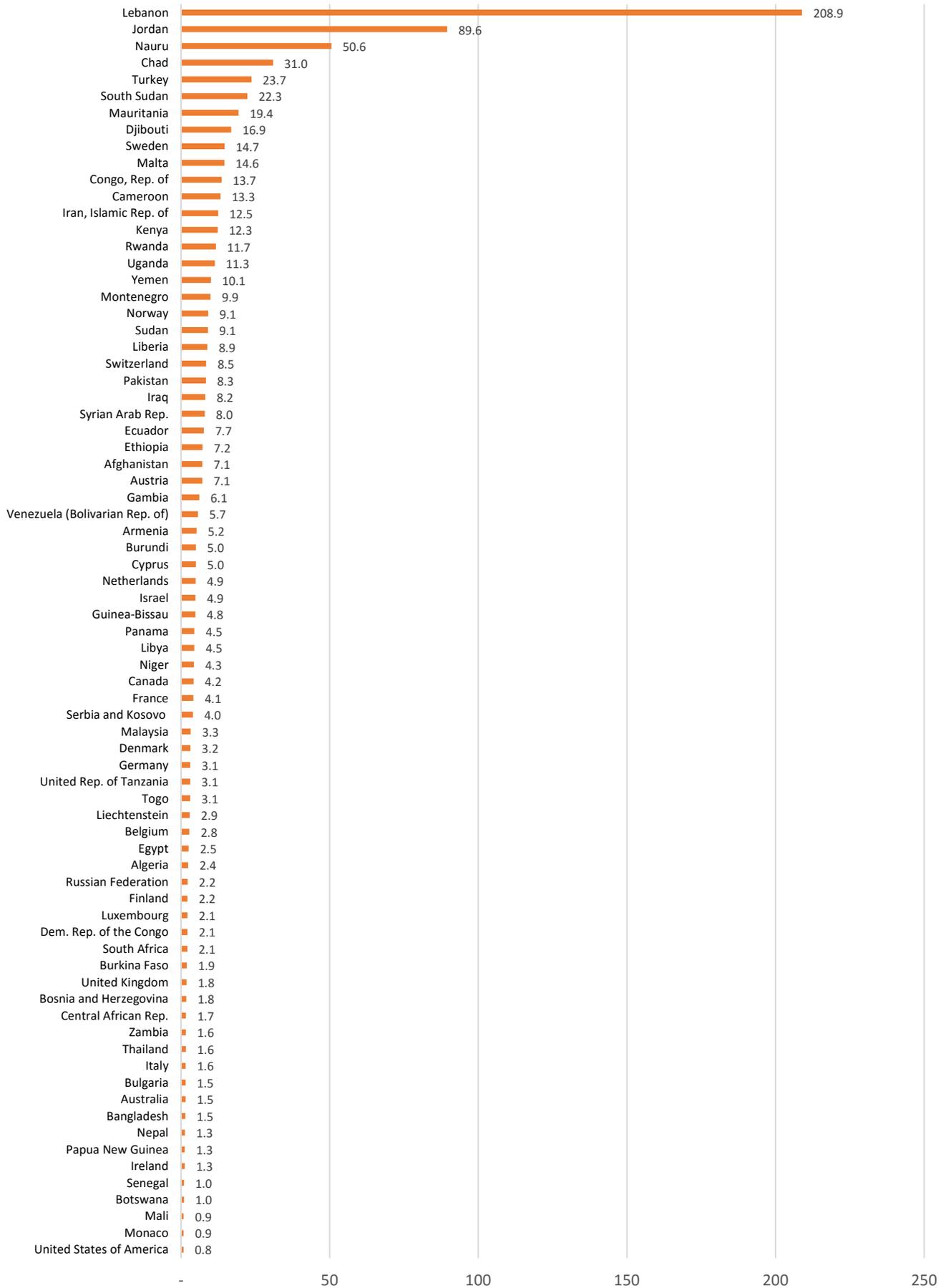
The largest refugee-producing countries have, until the surging refugee crisis of 2015 in Syria, included Afghanistan, Iraq, Somali and Sudan, while Colombia, Iraq, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo which have the largest internally uprooted populations.¹⁴ The USA has accepted, on average, fewer numbers of refugees than Congress decided to finance. Although the targets (called “ceilings” and shown below) are set by the White House, Congress must budget for the department, and does so on a current expenditure level of close to \$20,000/refugee. Typically, a ceiling is placed on acceptance levels, but the nation rarely accepts the ceiling numbers, sometimes falling below targets by as many as 20,000 refugees, and occasionally meeting the ceiling.



While there is deep appreciation for the sizeable number of refugees that the USA accepts and resources, the USA is somewhere around the middle when we identify the level of our commitment. While more than 20% of Lebanon’s population are refugees, only 0.084% of the US population are refugees. We rank 75th in the world’s countries (shown below) ranked by the United Nations.

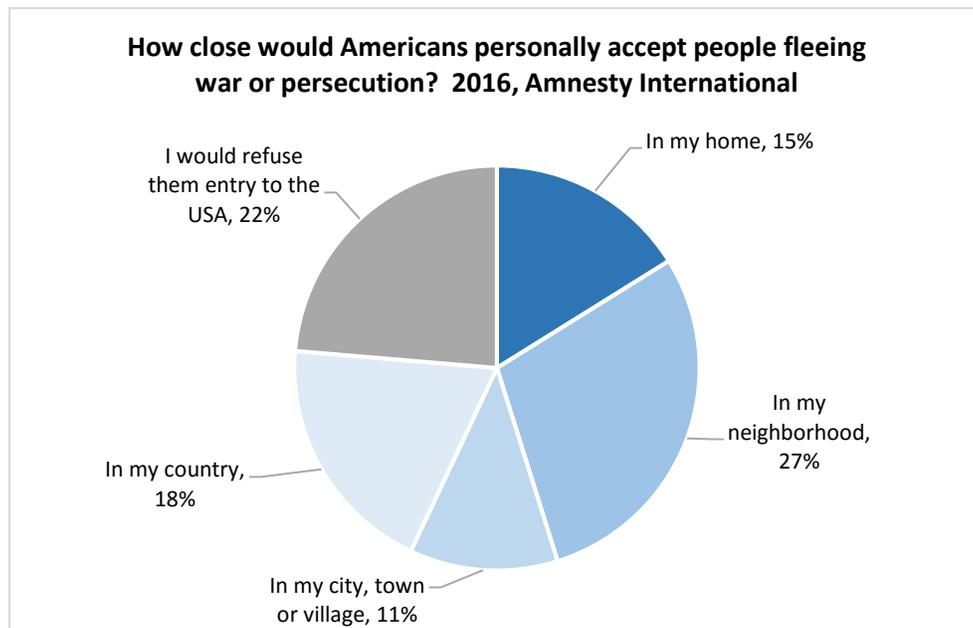
INTRODUCING PORTLAND’S NEWCOMERS

Countries with the largest refugee population per 1000 residents, 2015 (top 75 countries)



We ask that the global context that gives rise to many conflicts be remembered as we consider what more we can do: much strife is generated by poverty, drought, post-colonial wars, exploitation and powerlessness in and of the global “south” (more commonly known as “third world countries”). The type of international policies, including climate policy, advanced by the USA (such as structural adjustment programs, trade agreements, and global warming) is a contributor to many conflicts between countries trying to advance the conditions of their people, while rooted in the persecution and violation of others. Building global policy that works to advantage all must be foregrounded if we are to reduce war, displacement and the deep humanitarian crisis that is growing.

The backlash against refugees, and particularly against Muslim and Syrian refugees that has been demonstrated in the US presidential race, has caused many advocates to pause, wondering the degree of support that exists in the USA for welcoming refugees. There is quite wonderful news out of Amnesty International (2016): fully 63% of Americans want their government to do more to help refugees.¹⁵ While this is slightly lower than the global average of 66%, it runs contrary to the rhetoric that is demonstrated in the election coverage, and the positions held by more conservative candidates. More promising still is that most Americans welcome refugees into their own communities, and approximately one-in-seven Americans would welcome refugees into their own homes. The data below shows the results of the Amnesty survey of 1000 Americans.

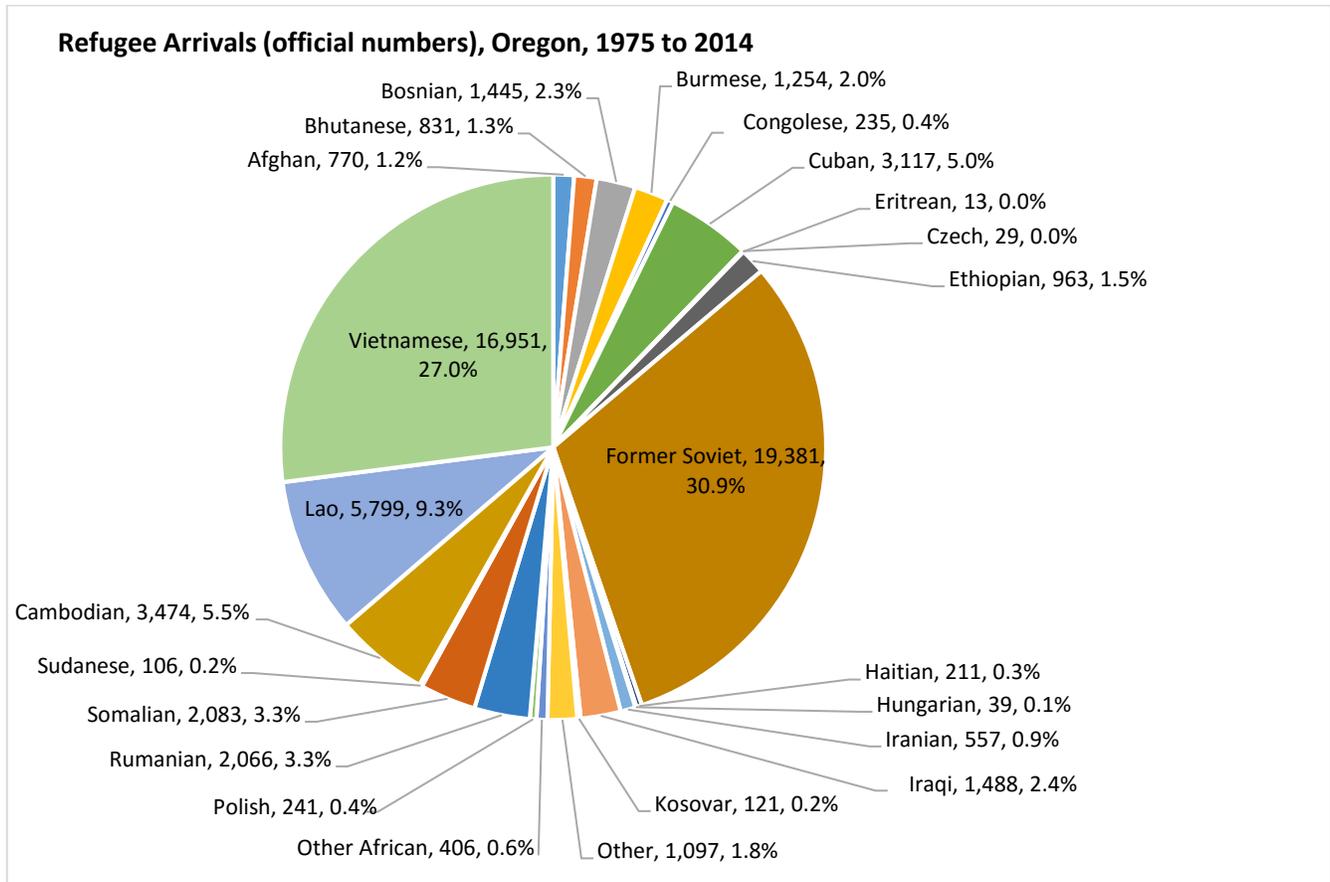


Refugees in Oregon

Refugees who have arrived in Oregon are tracked by the Department of Homeland Security, but only at the point of their arrival. We thus have solid information on the details of the community’s composition, but after arriving, they may disperse within the state or move to additional states. They may also return home. No such information is available on the current status of the community’s profile. We are able to gather information on the acceptance and placement details, and the chart below details the composition. The largest group of refugees is the Slavic community (meaning they come from the former Soviet Union), followed by the Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Cuban Rumanian and Somali community.

In total, 62,677 refugees arrived in Oregon between years 1975 to 2014, accounting for 2% of the U.S.’s total refugee arrivals during this period (nearly 2.9 million). The details of which communities have resettled here are profiled below.

[INTRODUCING PORTLAND’S NEWCOMERS](#)

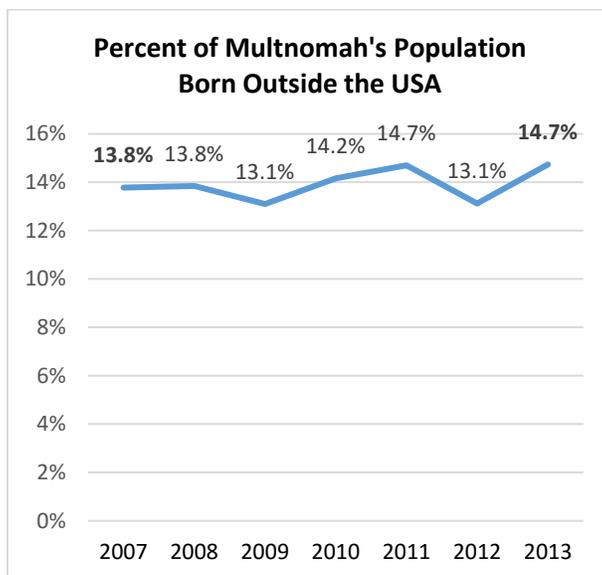


Today, the profile of those arriving as refugees into Oregon are Cuban, Burmese, Bhutanese, Iranian, Iraqi, and Somali.¹⁶

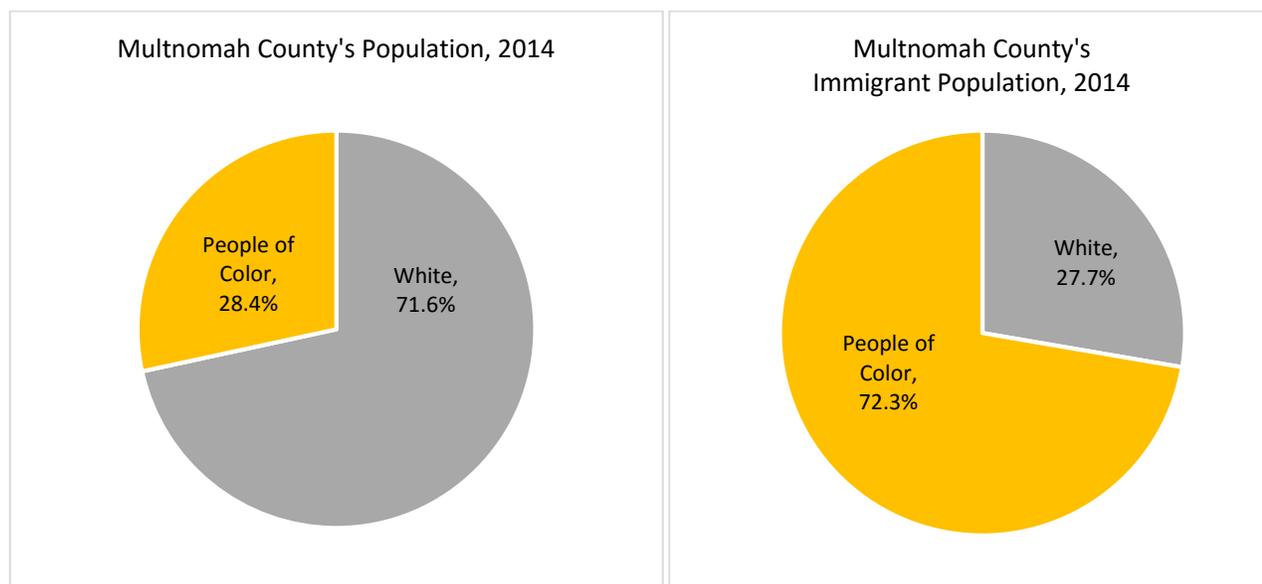
Oregon's Immigrant Community

Portland's immigrant community has become increasingly "racialized" meaning that they are increasingly composed of communities of color, and also that they have become increasingly vulnerable to negative ascriptions of their value to the USA and to the non-immigrant population. While the term "racialization" aims to increase our attention to the fact that race is a social construct (rather than a biological one), it also signal that the welcoming climate of the USA has deteriorated, along with the safety net that has conventionally supported newcomers.

Over the last seven years, Portland's immigrant population has remained relatively constant at about 14% to 15% of the population. That means that one in every six (or seven, depending on the year) people are born outside the USA. The USA is slightly less diverse, at 13.1% immigrant (in 2013). The chart below demonstrates the trends in the Multnomah County data. We anticipate there is an undercount in these data, as many immigrants come from regions of the world where participating in formal census processes are not customary and it is unlikely that all of the community is counted. This is particularly true for large families, for refugee families and for families whose landlords are unaware of the number of people living in the home.



While numbers are growing (albeit inconsistently) across the years, the community has become racially very diverse. Juxtaposing the population of people of color in general in the population, with the portion who are of color in the immigrant population shows a dramatic inverse relationship. While Multnomah County is 28.4% of color, our immigrant community is 72.3% of color.¹⁷



What this means is that integration of immigrants also requires us to take action on institutional racism and its corollary of white privilege. It also signals the shared interests of our immigrant and refugee community with communities of color.

Our Tied Futures

Building on this idea of shared interests, it is essential to understand how the futures of all Portlanders, immigrant and US-born alike, are mutually invested in the successful integration of newcomers. In the chapters that follow, described are an array of troubling statistics (alongside the assets embedded in local newcomer communities), expanding upon the highlights of distress detailed in the "Executive Summary." We know that newcomer communities face a tough road towards integration as they struggle with poverty, unemployment,

precarious housing, and challenges in being well served by local institutions such as health care, education, employment and justice. These challenges hold important consequences for the wellbeing of the entire region:

- If there were no racial gaps in income or employment, the region would generate an additional \$10.83 billion in economic activity – equivalent to 7.3% of our economy – just in the Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton area.¹⁸
- If unemployment were to drop and incomes were to rise, this would generate spending which in turn would boost the economy significantly. The ripple effects of spending is two-times bigger when low income earners have more to spend than when high income earners get more money. We call this the “propensity to spend” and it is about double for low income earners.¹⁹ This means that government policy is wiser to figure out how to grow the incomes and employment options for low income earners than to protect the interests of high income earners.
- The wider economic gains that result from individuals having more money to spend is best when their jobs are secure and consumer confidence is high.

In addition to these region-wide benefits that can come from improved jobs and incomes, providing Portland’s newcomers with social acceptance and economic inclusion will boost the economy in additional ways:

- Newcomers generate high levels of small business development. In Portland, 3% of immigrants and refugees create small businesses.²⁰ This is slightly lower than native-born (at 3.7%). We have much to learn from regions where newcomers outpace native-born, such as Baltimore, Detroit, San Antonio, Chicago, St. Louis and Washington.
- Immigrants are responsible for high levels of job creation through small business. Nationally, immigrants employ 4.7 million people, and generate about ¾ of a trillion dollars in direct economic activity. This is 14% of all activity of small business in the nation.²¹
- Newcomers generate about 10% of Oregon’s total business income. In 2010, this held a value of \$1.1 billion, which was 9.8% of Oregon’s business activity.²²
- Immigrant and minority-owned businesses are more likely to be exporters – at levels twice more likely than majority-own businesses. This means they are at the forefront in opening up access to new markets.²³ These same businesses are six times more likely to conduct business in a language other than English, and three times more likely to generate all their revenues from exports.
- Immigrant and minority-owned firms are vastly more likely to hire workers of color, and serve as a key job engine for improving the employment prospects of newcomers. An often-cited report shows that more than half of minority-owned firms (inclusive of most immigrant-owned businesses) have workforces that are ¾ workers of color. Ninety percent of such firms have workforces that are at least ½ workers of color.²⁴

The assets of newcomer businesses are significant, both for the economic engine they inspire, and the equity advances they implement in hiring diversely. To amplify the point, a business professor states:

If you go into a business and you’re different than everybody else working there, you will choose not to do business there... As business people, you must appeal to your customers because they’re going to be diverse.²⁵

The economic success of immigrant and minority-owned businesses exists despite the barriers they face: difficulty getting loans and when they are secured, they are at lower levels and less favorable terms, and less able to gain government and private sector contracts. Despite the fact that all levels of government have set goals to diversify contracts, they fall far short: by way of example, the State of Oregon set a goal of 10% of its contracts to go to minority and women owned businesses. In 2013, only 1.3% of its contracts went to such firms.²⁶

Closing out this chapter is a final set of insights on costs that could be avoided if we are successful in integrating immigrant and refugee into Portland’s economic fabric:

- Unemployment costs us all, in providing economic and social supports that make up the government’s “safety net” and in foregone tax contributions to that same safety net. People without jobs and with low income pay little to no income taxes, and simultaneously draw from services and income supports. Those who are unemployed are more likely to be in ill health, to be incarcerated (for property crimes, not for crimes against persons), be involved in child welfare and be involved in addictions. As such, they slow the economy.
- Not only are there economic costs to unemployment – families are unable to support their children’s potential, and to support their extended family members when they are in need. In this way, economic costs quickly extend into social costs that in turn become later economic costs. Those who are unable to complete high school have, on average, unemployment rates that are almost three times greater than those with a college degree.²⁷
- Two key studies confirm that the costs of poverty are significant: both poverty in general, and child poverty specifically costs the nation’s economy 4% of our annual GDP.^{28 29} If we can reduce poverty, and put more people to work, our entire economy will benefit.

In short, there is not just a moral and ethical imperative to invest in the success of newcomers to Portland: there is a profound economic argument that urges us to invest in their economic success. Without such supports, and a continuing omission of the “long welcome” that is prioritized in this report, the economic success of the region, and *all* of its residents, is curtailed.

Tracking Portland's Newcomer Policy History

By Ann Curry-Stevens and the New Portlander Policy Council

This chapter documents the history of the rise and fall of energy, commitment and supports for Portland's newcomer communities. Its emphasis are the local policy and leadership initiatives.

What are arrival conditions for newcomers?

Newcomers typically arrive in the USA full of enthusiasm, confident they will manifest their dreams of a better life for themselves and their children. Understanding the differences between immigrants and refugees (including asylum seekers who seek refugee status once on US soil) is important: immigrants have chosen to leave their home countries and have selected the USA as a desired place to live, and thus are better prepared for arrival.

Refugees, alternatively, arrive without having chosen to leave homes. They have been forced out and not given choice in where they land. They generally arrive yearning for their homeland, and awaiting the time when it is safe to return. The grieving process is often delayed as returning proves improbable. That said, they too typically arrive with considerable relief to at least have a home, and to be physically safe from violence and persecution. They too tend to be grateful for no longer living in a refugee camp (as many have experienced), and the chance to reengage in education, get health care, and employment.

Asylum seekers (arriving here without being legally landed as refugees, but with the same home conditions as those who are processed overseas) must go through a legal determination process while here, and live in uncertainty until their refugee status is determined, or they are deported from the USA.

Undocumented immigrants typically live with heightened levels of fear in being discovered and deported. The additional vulnerability they face in needing to stay below surveillance and reporting requirements (of employers, some judicial officials, and regions where reporting of those trying to gain access to benefits for which one is ineligible has been sanctioned) creates abundant stress alongside reworked family relationships that re unsettled as they try to adapt to these untenable conditions. Newly, we are hearing stories about "medical repatriation" whereby hospitals put patients onto planes and move them out of the USA. The rationale is financial: under the Affordable Healthcare Act, hospitals receive limited supports for serving the uninsured, and have been moving such patients (occasionally) back to their home countries.^{30 31} And denial of the legal authority to drive further creates dependence and vulnerability within families. In summary, federal immigration policy alongside some state policy creates stress, uncertainty and fear. Research confirms that these dynamics take their toll on health: newcomers tend to be healthier than native born residents, and hold stronger reports of their own health, with lower risk factors for chronic disease.³² Explanations of these advantages are partly due to the selection process of moving to the USA, with healthier immigrants tending to choose to move (over less healthy immigrants) and others with serious and/or

In 2015, the Somali community launched a cooperatively owned taxi company. Called PDX Yellow Cab (Ph. 503-841-6328), it provides business opportunity for 34 driver-owners. It is recognized as the first Somali-owned business in Portland. They hope to grow to 100 driver-owners. Economic progress is more substantial when owners do not have their earnings reduced by \$630 a week – required when they work for other companies.



chronic diseases being denied entry (among both immigrants and refugees). Additional explanations are the general relief and enthusiasm for being in the USA, for this arrival marks the end of lengthy processes which frequently have been endured for decades (with many refugees having lived in camps for ten to twenty years) or at the very least years as most immigrants facing several years of lengthy application processes. This health advantage disappears however, as immigrants remain in the USA. As the impacts of poverty and low income kick in, as well as perpetual language challenges, and the social and cultural stressors that exist from being a cultural outsider, the consequences of acculturation alongside the frequently thwarted dreams for success for a better life for one's children quickly diminishes one's health status. We thus now understand that immigration and the extensive time it takes to acculturate and gain social and economic footing has a harmful effect on one's health.^{33 34}

What have been some high and low points in the policy environment?

Portland has seen periods of both high and low support for newcomers. Despite the fact that newcomers face serious challenges in integrating into the USA, and that conditions have been made significantly worse during the neo-liberal policy era when the social and economic safety net has been shredded, Portland has been able to create improved conditions. This section highlights some of these initiatives. Individual leaders (typically mayors, or advocates who have been able to influence related leaders) have been at the forefront of innovations to support newcomer integration as elected officials have been able to craft initiatives and departments to improve conditions for communities.

In the early 1980s, Mayor Frank Viancie responded to the arrival of about 20,000 refugees entering Portland from new regions that had not (in large numbers) settled in Portland previously: Southeast Asia, East Africa, Romania and the former Soviet Union. He established a two-person Office of Refugee Affairs. The staffing aimed to support refugees, and community members supported the initiative through the "Portland Refugee Consortium" that involved human service programs and educators in an effort to thread together supports for refugees. The initiative also made gains in working with law enforcement and neighborhood associations. The size of the foreign-born population was 18% (including both immigrants and refugees, but still no supports for immigrants were included in the Mayor's office). On occasion, the staffing level increased to three persons. This era is characterized as one of high problem solving and greater cohesion, and the results served to increase the safety for newcomers and the wider community alike.

The subsequent election of Mayor Bud Clark, who held office from 1985 to 1992, resulted in the continuation of the Office of Refugee Affairs.

The next mayor was Mayor Vera Katz (in office from 1993 to 2005), who unfortunately did not retain this support for refugee communities. She discontinued the Refugee Affairs office, reduced staffing to one person, moved the location of the office to law enforcement and subsequently to the Office of Neighborhood Associations (which later become the Office of Neighborhood Involvement). Subsequent cuts were made, and the refugee-focused staff person was eliminated. At this time, heightened need existed, with the foreign-born population at 19% of Portland's population.

At the forefront of those with excellent reputations in their responsiveness to newcomer opportunities is Mayor Tom Potter, elected in 2005 and holding office until 2009. Mayor Potter also held the position of Chief of Police from 1990 to 1993. He is described as having made "*big and little promises that he kept.*"³⁵ Widely recognized as the greatest ally to newcomer communities, he initiated broad civic engagement and inclusion efforts. Through the range of his initiatives, he is recognized as opening City Hall to democracy in practical ways.

Six initiatives undertaken by Mayor Potter are specifically affirmed by the community:

[TRACKING PORTLAND'S NEWCOMER POLICY HISTORY](#)

1. Introduction and passage of a resolution to “commit to the inclusion of immigrants and refugees in civic and public life”³⁶ which while largely symbolic, served to affirm the importance of newcomer communities in public policy and to be reflected in City budgets.
2. Creating the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs which, through embedding this program in his own office, raised the profile of the needs of newcomers.
3. Creation of a task force to “investigate barriers experienced by Portland’s growing immigrant and refugee population and identify possible solutions.”³⁷ This task force supported 15 community leaders to identify needs, assets and priorities for policy action, and was submitted to the City in 2007. The resulting document, “New Portlanders Speak” became a precursor for the New Portlanders Policy Council.
4. Another result of the “New Portlanders Speak” report, and Mayor Potter’s commitment, was the creation and staffing of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. For the first time, immigrants were included as a community deserving of political attention and responsiveness. He intended to budget for up to four staff within this office (but such levels did not materialize).
5. Support for ongoing civic engagement by immigrants and refugees, through creation of the Diversity and Civic Leadership initiative (that remains in place today), to support capacity building among diverse communities of color and their involvement in Portland’s policy-related activities.
6. As a precursor to building a strategic plan for the city, the Mayor created Vision PDX, a broad civic engagement initiative was designed to gather the insights, hopes and priorities of community members that in turn would form the basis of a strategic plan for Portland. Of the 17,000 participants, half were from communities of color.

Mayor Sam Adams held office from 2009 to 2012, and the more cohesive attention that the prior office held was diminished somewhat, but attention to racial disparities across the region grew tremendously, with the release of the Coalition of Communities of Color and Portland State University’s report, “Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile” and subsequent additional six reports that detailed disparities facing specific communities of color. Under Mayor Adams, the creation of the Office of Equity and Human Rights occurred, alongside the hiring of a Chief Equity Officer, and the inclusion of a robust equity policy within the Portland Plan:

Equity is the foundation of the Portland Plan, and it will be a central focus of all the strategies in the plan. Equity objectives and actions are built into all of the Portland Plan strategies. The Equity Initiative focuses on objectives that have to do with the way the City does business, including human resources, contracting, access, funding and decision-making.

The explicit equity goals that were included in the Portland Plan included the following:

1. Reduce disparities across all plan areas, starting with the most severe inequities
2. Ensure accountability and implementation of the equity initiative
3. Ensure that the City does business in an equitable manner

Commissioner Amanda Fritz supervised the renamed New Portlander Programs (NPP) from 2011 to 2012. NPP was folded into the Office of Equity and Human Relations in 2012. In 2014, the New Portlander Policy Council completed its strategic plan, which included building support for a City commission that would work directly with City bureaus and with City Council. At the end of 2014, NPP was moved to Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

We are now in a time of Mayor Hales’ term, and his priorities have substantially aligned with newcomer community priorities. These include improving ethnic minority community policing, building livable neighborhoods and efforts to assist immigrant business. In addition to these policy enhancements, Mayor

Hales is valued for his high visibility appearances and statements. Under his leadership, City Council passed a resolution to support Muslim inclusion:

... be it resolved, Portland and its Council members stand in support of our Muslim community and call for an end to the continued use of anti-Muslim and anti-immigration hate speech; and be it further resolved, Portland will continue to be a welcoming city to immigrants and refugees from all parts of the world, including many Muslims fleeing their violent and unstable countries.³⁸

Mayor Hales has also been present to personally welcome Guatemalan, Syrian, Iraqi and Afghani refugees.

The New Portlander Policy Council and staff are also deeply appreciative of the leadership shown by Commissioner Amanda Fritz for her role in pressing for the inclusion of immigrants and refugees in the City of Portland's Equity Policy, and for her role in creating and maintaining the "Parks for New Portlanders" program that is detailed in the next paragraph.

We are seeing initiatives emerge at the local level, as bureau and department leaders are acting on commitments to support newcomers. Examples include the following:

- "Equity in Practice" partnerships with our Police Bureau's East Precinct building firm parent/officer relationships in very vulnerable and under-policed neighborhoods.
- Partnerships with East Portland neighborhood associations and with Portland Parks & Recreation centers and services building a strong "sense of place" in livable neighborhoods.
- Jade District organizing and mainstreaming partnership building.
- "Parks for New Portlanders" was created by the Portland Parks and Recreation in 2015 to ensure that newcomer communities benefit from parks and recreational activities. A full time staff resources this initiative, supplemented by seven Community Youth Ambassadors who help organize activities for their own communities. These Ambassadors speak 12 languages including Spanish, French, Burmese, Somali, Hindi, Nepali, Swahili, Kinyarwanda and Ewe.

This month (June 2016), the newcomer community achieved a significant victory. By consensus, the New Portlander Policy Council became the New Portlander Policy Commission. With consistent support from Commissioner Fritz and encouragement from Mayor Hales, the role of newcomers is expanding. Their formal role is to advise all bureaus and elected officials, and adheres to the following mission:

Institutionalizing the City of Portland's commitment to integrating immigrant and refugee communities into the life of the City, by adopting policies and recommended practices that assist City bureaus in creating consistent expectations and processes.

This is a remarkable achievement that holds potential to hardwire commitments and improve the integration of newcomers into Portland's fabric. It becomes the body to move Portland out of a relative lull in energies for attention to newcomers, energy that has been building over the last year, and then has culminated in a critical decision to create the New Portlander Policy Commission.

As we move into a new political era with the election of Mayor Ted Wheeler, the community is hopeful that the commitment that Mayor Wheeler demonstrated when he was the Chair of the Multnomah County Commission towards the needs of communities of color is continued and extended to Portland's newcomers. Needed is political leadership who is both welcoming and affirming, and who gives priority to working with community strengths and shifting the discourse about newcomers – away from being perceived as a drain on the

In 2015, Portland created the "Parks for New Portlanders" program that is led by Som Subedi, pictured here receiving the Spirit of Portland award with Commissioner Amanda Fritz. The program creates culturally-specific sports programs to support the engagement of immigrants and refugees. Subedi, himself a refugee from Bhutan, says: "Our community lives, eats and invests together. They are our valued partners, rather than just some needy population."



community, and a burden to taxpayers and society in general – towards one that affirms their strengths, capacities and assets, with the potential to strengthen the region’s social and economic conditions. In the words of a community advocate:

We need political leaders – people who could speak for us – to show that we contribute billions to the City.

Insights into the important role of the police

Policing is a key institution for newcomers to Portland. In dialogues about the policy history of the region, justice system issues emerged time and again. The importance of the police cannot be overstated. Newcomers need information about their rights, including such things as their rights in the face of an aggressive landlord threatening to evict a family or one that refuses to rent to them, or of a store clerk who demands a 10% fee for “allowing” food stamps to be used. Support too is essential for helping to diffuse neighborhood tensions, as was needed in the face of a hostile community that recently demanded a family be investigated for supposedly eating a missing cat. The result was that the family was too scared to go out in public with this thinly veiled hatred in their housing complex.

Police leadership thus holds an important role in newcomer integration, and one particular policing leader is held in the highest of regard. While only holding this position for 3 years, Chief of Police Tom Potter was instrumental to newcomer communities. Chief Potter (who later became Mayor) quickly gained the trust of newcomers and their advocates. His general approach to addressing community needs was to approach local leaders and say, “tell my staff what you need from us.” One example is the joint effort to eliminate Asian gangs, an initiative that eliminated these gangs in eighteen months, and cleared their criminal activity from the region. When he subsequently became the Mayor, there was much enthusiasm among communities of color. First, he established effective community contacts, and specialist units to support making communities livable. These included the Asian, Russian and African Law Enforcement units, enabling the City and the community to work together and solve problems, and working with city leaders to promote good relationships.

A frequent highlight of this time was the prevalence of “Community Policing Agreements.” These efforts facilitated the inclusion of community leaders to work with city leadership, and to build specific prevention and intervention plans to respond to community needs. One example was the Hmong agreement with police which led to the following intervention plan: when criminal activity was suspected, the police were to contact community elders first, who in turn sent in recognized Hmong women to meet with families to discuss and resolve the issues. This then paved the way for the police to enter the community.

Following Mayor Potter’s time in office, concerns grew about unruly police power that in turn has created alienation. More frequent misuses of police power and a police force that does not listen well to community needs have caused relationships to fracture. Today’s discourse is one of suspicion in both directions – and that is damaging to the newcomer community. In the opinion of advocates, newcomers are at greater risk for ill treatment in housing, predatory practices in relationships with businesses, and general myths that position the community as “illegal aliens” and, more broadly, undeserving of a rightful place in the American fabric of life.

Examples of the unwelcoming and distrusting relationship between police and newcomer communities are many. We share just two stories that flow from both the dangers of weak community relationships, complicated by language issues. The first story comes from reports of the dangers of crossing a road where safety is compromised. In one community, a heavily-used road (Glisan Street) with few pedestrian crossing options received a warning signpost, but the warning was only in English. A few months of organizing was required to get translation of the warning posting in relevant local languages such as Somali and Vietnamese. A very simple solution, but the level of organizing needed to make this change demonstrates how mainstream

services overlook language access. The dangers of no relationship with the community created risk; and community leaders shouldered responsibility for fixing the omission.

In a much more alarming situation, language barriers can lead to death. The police killing of Jose Mejia Poot in 2001 was the result of him being 20 cents short of a bus fare. Police were called by the bus driver (in violation of policy) after he was unresponsive to the driver's demand for the full fare. He was unresponsive due to the onset of a mild seizure. Apprehended by police and later released, he was observed crying and as CopWatch says, "Rather than show compassion and bring him home, the police... [moved him to a psychiatric facility] for evaluation of mental illness."³⁹ The police were called when staff could not subdue him. He was shot and killed when police arrived. It turned out he did not speak Spanish (as staff had assumed); he spoke a Mayan language and could not understand what was happening or why he was being held.

Policing direction and resources generally bypass newcomer communities. In the words of Latino advocates, *"the police today focus on Black communities. We can't get them beyond this focus. They don't seem to have the bandwidth to focus on newcomers. Putting money into the budget would determine such a focus. If money were allocated, it would happen."*

One short-lived positive local initiative was begun by the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office a few years ago. Staff from Africa House was invited to attend roll call every morning for 15 minutes to explain culture and behavior of the community, and the organization created a list of African leaders and African tribal identities in various apartment buildings who became informal liaisons for the police. This ended when Officer Barbara Gibbs moved away from southeast Portland.

Trimet police are also an area of concern. Ticketing is occurring without newcomers being told that a pass is to be carried at all times. Again – and it seems so simple – mainstream staff make the mistakes of omission, and newcomer communities pay the price. Multilingual education requirements are needed: once pointed out to non-newcomers, it is an obvious omission. If partnerships were in place, and if hiring were inclusive of newcomers, then we would be able to narrow the chance that such omissions would occur.

Issues facing undocumented immigrants

All community members have stories of their encounters with the police and many hold fears of being robbed, and the fears are intensified by several orders of magnitude for undocumented immigrants. Fear is pronounced in that an undocumented resident might need medical attention, or might need to flee an unsafe home. Their fear is of being jailed and deported. For parents, this fear extends to their children who would be abandoned in the case of deportation.

Lack of information about rights and due process exist. There is a firewall between local and federal governments that remains fuzzy – many immigrants fear that the local police, local educators and local service providers will report someone to the federal immigration officials who are likely to catalyze an array of heavy-handed responses that will ultimately lead to deportation, despite the firewall.

Most cannot distinguish the levels of authority within the government. Deciphering these is a difficult task. Given its importance, we share some published examples of both challenges and innovations. For many newcomers, a lack of understanding about the structure, function, and different bodies of law enforcement in the U.S. contributes to a lack of trust and utilization of police services. Some newcomers are unaware of community outreach functions of police departments; in New York City, leaders from an umbrella African newcomer group did not know that they are able to approach police departments with concerns on behalf of their communities.⁴⁰ Some Somali newcomers in Minnesota have blamed police officers for crime and the backlog that has slowed the movement of the criminal justice system, which is at odds with "swift justice" that

they are familiar with back home.⁴¹ Some newcomers may not understand what is and is not commonplace during police detention and arrest; for example, handcuffing a suspect is commonplace in the U.S., but in some areas of Africa, only the most dangerous and violent criminals are placed in handcuffs.⁴² In Minneapolis, when federal anti-terrorism investigators approached Somali leaders at a local mosque to inquire about potential terrorist plots or suspects, community members were confused about the difference between the federal investigators and local police officers.⁴³ Once trust has been established between newcomers and police, however, some newcomers may not understand that the police lack the power to create laws and most government policies, and frustrations with all government offices and previous interactions with government officials may be directed towards civil servants who are unable to actually respond to these complaints or make significant changes.⁴⁴

As a result of a series of community forums between New York City police and immigrant community members, brochures that outlined civilian rights and responsibilities in interacting with police were developed in Arabic and several other languages, and an ESL curriculum on police and related protocols was created and distributed throughout the city.⁴⁵

Brooklyn Center, Minnesota's Joint Community Police Partnership offers a 6-week New Americans Academy for immigrant adults that covers basic information such as reasons to call 9-1-1, information about traffic stops and other police procedures, enforcement of city codes, and domestic violence laws.⁴⁶ Similarly, Chelsea, Massachusetts offers a Newcomer Program (and paid Newcomer Advocate on staff) that includes workshops about public safety and materials such as "What to Expect When Stopped by the Police."⁴⁷

The police in Delray Beach, Florida, created a Haitian Citizens Police Academy, conducted entirely in Creole, that worked to empower undocumented Haitian-born community members to become trained in crime prevention and to establish Citizen Observer Patrols that sent Haitian community members into their own communities to prevent crime and to act as liaisons with the police department concerning issues relevant to the Haitian community.⁴⁸ Similarly, police in Corcoran, California created a Citizen Police Academy conducted in Spanish, and graduates of that academy created their own community patrol as well.⁴⁹

In Seattle, the police department has worked closely with a number of newcomer communities and communities of color to create 10 Demographic Advisory Councils to educate community members about policing and educate police about community members. These advisory councils, which first developed in the 1980s, include East African, Filipino, Korean, Latino, Muslim/Sikh/Arab, and Southeast Asian communities. The councils work to address conflicts between officers and community members; promotes cultural competency and training among police officers; and helps to coordinate educational workshops for community members that promote civic engagement. Each council has one dedicated police officer, one designated member of command staff, and one staff member from the department.⁵⁰

We now turn back to the general insights in the issues facing undocumented immigrants. One thing is certain, most of us do not like to depend on the City or the government; rather, we need to work and take care of our families. Healthcare services are essential, but there is that fear of exposing one's identity in the public domain that one is "undocumented immigrant." We also heard stories about an undocumented resident holding a legal driver's license, but being deathly afraid of being robbed and losing the only piece of identification that gave him legal standing in the USA. We heard pride in the voice of Latina families of their self-sufficiency and resilience, yet reduced by fear and rendered timid because of their vulnerability and dependence on a multitude of others for transportation, made worse by dependence on their children to engage with authority figures such as landlords and utility office staff.

The fears held by undocumented residents has been detailed by a research study of 2000 Latinos in four major US cities: 44% of Latinos are “less likely to contact police officers if they have been the victim of a crime because they fear that police officers will use this interaction as an opportunity to inquire into their immigration status or that of people they know.”⁵¹ For undocumented residents themselves, 70% are less likely to report to police when they have been victimized. And in terms of dialogue with the police, close to half of Latinos are less likely to share information about crimes to the police. The consequence of such fears is obvious – lesser secure communities for everyone.

The issue of having a driver’s license is crucial because many undocumented immigrants work at unpopular times of day, when public transportation is very limited or non-existent. They have to provide for their families, and those with little children in school, have to take them to school and pick them up after school. When they cannot perform these functions, they have to encourage their teenagers to have a driver’s license so as to help them in carrying out these functions. This type of arrangement creates an unsafe environment for the teenagers. Another disadvantage is that, the children assume positions of power in the family. They decide when to run the errands, and when not run or perform this driving duty. Serious family conflicts can result, with a ripple effect stretching widely into relationships and issues of cooperation, respect, and understanding.

The pathway to protecting one’s safety is to turn to the police, to health providers, to supervisors and bosses, or to the array of authority figures who are there to receive complaints.

Lack of enforcement for language access

The level of immigrants holding limited English skills is at 51.5%.⁵² The lack of enforcement of Title 6 of the Civil Rights Code is, according to the narratives provided by community members for this report, alarming. Residents often cannot communicate with health providers, police, schools and teachers, child welfare, and an array of other essential service providers. The scope of such details is beyond this report, but needed is a sector-by-sector discernment of “what works,” budget allocations for improvement, and implementation of action plans. While the local region is not responsible for policy, it is responsible for implementation. Working in multiple languages is complex, and ensuring that incremental gains are occurring is an essential pathway forward.

The need to improve the discourse regarding newcomers

We need more affirming narratives to position newcomers as assets to the community. We need to begin to change the narrative, emphasizing the full range of assets that newcomers bring to Portland. These benefits range from creativity and optimism, to skills and willingness to work hard, to experience with a wide range of approaches to problems and social and economic issues from which we can all learn. It is time to defeat the damaging myths and discourses, and to defend newcomers as a desirable and legitimate part of the American fabric of life.

There is a distinct silence from current political leaders on the contributions of newcomers that is only broken on rare occasions. Across the full spectrum of newcomers who participated in this research report, ending this silence was their unanimous top priority for action.

It is also time for the word “entitlement” to be reclaimed from its negative framing. Newcomers need the security of knowing that city services are available to them, and that they have the right to be well served in such use. If newcomers are certain of their rights to equitable services alongside those born in the USA, we will see improvements in police effectiveness, education, public health, and workforce expansion. We will even see improvements in national security – if everyone can communicate and be understood, and simultaneously understand public messaging about security issues – inclusion will result and security enhanced.

Recent Years: Rise of Backlash

The most recent recession has been harsh for newcomers and for communities of color, in general. Economic options have narrowed, and unemployment has been very high. In times of recession, xenophobic attitudes rise, and communities struggle.

The intensity of distress in many countries around the world is worse than in the living memory of many. In the words of one newcomer advocate, “there has been much social disintegration in Mexico and ... lack of support, and communities fearing for their safety.” At the same time, there is little awareness of social conditions that generate refugees and immigrants – and infrequent compassion for both what is happening in their countries of origin as well as newcomer communities in the USA.

It remains a global phenomenon that such large movements of people occur. Neo-liberalism is a core contributor, as protected national boundaries are pulled down for the free trade of goods (but certainly not for the free movement of people), nations become indebted as concepts of self-sufficiency are demolished, and as international financial institutions force indebted nations to hollow out their social supports for their own citizens. It is no wonder that civic unrest deepens, and no wonder that citizens of distressed nations try to leave to find better lives for their children.

Hearts Full of Joy and Sorrow

Newcomer communities are diverse in their culture, traditions, and the burdens they carry. They bring “hearts full of joy and sorrow” and are an asset of untapped insights into the world and the diversity of ways to solve problems, to build community, to survive hardship, to stretch dollars very far, and to raise children able to carry on after they go. The types of social networks they build are incredible, as their relational world is very important... given they are so far away from home.

Immigrants are here to stay. In many cases, they could not go home if they wanted to – their land has been taken over. In the words of advocates,

It is time for our faces to be on billboards – and for us to be seen as the face of the city. We need to be seen as part of the life of the city, the county and the state. And to know that our government cares for us too. We want our narratives to be told. This is our new home.

Newcomers to Portland: Disparities by Race and Year of Immigration

By Anne Sinkey and Kevin Cherry

Introduction

The influx of newcomers to the Portland area has brought new talents, businesses, traditions, foods, art forms, and opportunities for expanding habitual ways of thinking and relating among existing residents. Newcomers also have experiences that hold potential for resourcing the region and some of its most enduring problems: community development, participatory democracy, civic engagement, informal safety nets to address human need, and providing culturally responsive services. For all the richness and diversity that newcomers offer to existing Portlanders, however, most newcomer communities continue to struggle with everyday challenges related to poverty, health care, affordable housing, and education. This chapter provides an overview of selected disparities faced by newcomer communities in Portland and Multnomah County in order to better understand the various challenges that newcomers face in their new home. Before any specific policy recommendations can be made or acted upon, we must first arrive at an understanding of the specific ways in which newcomers have to work extra hard just to live day to day. These data help all of us identify areas that may require specific, targeted investments to ensure effective integration of newcomers into the larger Portland community.

This chapter opens with an overview of challenges to integration faced by newcomers to the United States. Then, we focus on how these play out locally, in Multnomah County, by analysis of data that track disparities between foreign-born Multnomah County residents and native-born residents who identify as White (alone, not Hispanic). These charts offer a glimpse into the overall disparities faced between native Whites and immigrants in our community. The remaining sections of this chapter compare two categories of newcomers in Multnomah County: non-Hispanic White (not Slavic or Middle Eastern/Northern African) newcomers and newcomers of color. Our standard language for these terms are “White newcomers,” and “newcomers of color.” In addition, data for these two groups are compared based on decade of entry to the U.S. to examine whether conditions for newcomers have improved over time, or whether newcomers who have arrived in the past 10 years have fared worse than those who arrived in previous decades.

Research Methods

County data for the first section of this chapter were pulled from American Community Survey (ACS) 3-year estimates⁵³ for Multnomah County, Oregon, reporting for 2011-2013. This section compares data for county residents who identify as White alone (non-Hispanic) and residents who identify as foreign-born (born outside of the United States). While some overlap exists between the two categories, it is small: about 5% of Multnomah County residents who are foreign-born also identify as White alone (non-Hispanic). In addition, this category of White alone has not been disaggregated to exclude Slavic or Middle Eastern/Northern African groups—groups who have been shown to fare much worse on multiple measures than the “White” population overall.⁵⁴ These groups (Slavic and Middle Eastern/North African) have been removed from the category of “White” immigrants in the second section of this chapter.

While aggregate data on newcomers in Multnomah County provide a helpful snapshot into general disparities between newcomers and White residents overall, we wanted more information about disparities within newcomer populations. Specifically, we aimed to discern whether or not the lived experiences of newcomer advocates was in evidence: that newcomers who arrived in the past 10 years or so have fared worse than newcomers who arrived in previous decades. To determine this, we conducted a customized extraction of microfile data from the American Community Survey (ACS). Two ACS datasets were used, including the 2005 and 2013 single-year estimates. The 2005 ACS data examines immigrants groups by “Year of Entry” categories

for 1983-1993 and 1994-2004. The 2013 ACS data examined immigrants groups by the same “Year of Entry” categories (1983-1993 and 1994-2004) in addition to 2005-2013.

We then compared data about those newcomers who arrived in each decade; for newcomers who arrived in the two early decades (1983-1993 and 1994-2004), we compared how well they were faring in 2005 to how well they were faring in 2013. We wanted to know whether these immigrants’ situations had improved over time and, if so, in what areas and how much. This also provided insight into whether recent immigrants to the U.S. and to the Portland area have fared better or worse in measures of integration than did earlier immigrants.

In addition, we wanted to see whether White immigrants were faring compared to immigrants of color. To accomplish this, we chose to remove immigrants from Slavic and Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) countries of origin from our “White” population data. Recent research has shown that although these populations are considered “White” in most measures of race/ethnicity, they tend to fare much worse than their “White” counterparts in many measures. In addition, we removed those who identified as “Hispanic” from the “White” population data for similar reasons.

Integration Challenges and Barriers

At the national level, immigrants have historically been known for second generation individuals to outperform their first generation immigrant parents in educational attainment, occupational status, wealth, and home ownership, which demonstrates upward mobility (at least from a generational perspective). In this way, the immigrant promise for a better life materializes in the second generation.⁵⁵ Some immigrant groups, however, have fared much better than others. As a composite group, Asians and Pacific Islanders, have frequently surpassed Whites in economic measures. That said, however, we know from a local study that when disaggregated, the majority of smaller Asian and Pacific Islander communities face serious racial inequities, looking much more like other communities of color.⁵⁶ Latinos and Black immigrants, in comparison with Whites, have not reached parity in some key measures. Homeownership rates for Latinos and Non-Hispanic Black immigrants are still below rates for non-Hispanic Whites. In addition, Latinos have been unable to reach parity with regards to educational and income status.⁵⁷

Numerous barriers to success are faced by immigrants, and these challenges have been detailed in multiple studies and reports. Some of the most researched areas include:

- Language acquisition
- Employment
- Education
- Housing, including isolation and concentration in low income neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Physical health, including access to health care
- Mental health issues
- Banking and financial literacy
- Access to and availability of services and resources, including government benefit programs
- The justice system

Each one of these challenges to success is also a challenge to successful integration into an immigrant’s new community and culture. An understanding of the overall challenges faced by immigrants is a prerequisite to any understanding of newcomer integration. A brief description of some of these challenges follows, while later chapters will begin to outline best practices that can be used to counteract these formidable obstacles to integration.

a. Language Acquisition

Data show that just under half of foreign-born residents in Multnomah County speak only English or speak English “very well.” However, newcomers who are still learning English face considerable barriers to integration.

Newcomers often discover that the need to immediately find work becomes a barrier to language acquisition. Work demands and often the need to work multiple jobs make it difficult to attend English language classes, which in turn makes it difficult for non-English speaking newcomers to improve employment options. While “language enclaves” offer elements of inclusion and acceptance for newcomers and those who speak little English, when workers only work with others who speak their language, it reduces opportunities for practicing English or being exposed to multiple facets of the workplace. Research with refugees has found that, while older refugees may describe placement in housing with only same-language neighbors as comforting and supportive, younger refugees point out that it is harder to learn English and or learn about social and civic facets of life in their new communities.⁵⁸

Language skills also have an impact on the ability of newcomers to further their education. Immigrant youth struggle to succeed academically while striving to acquire English language skills.⁵⁹ Adult immigrants face additional challenges and barriers when seeking education, as there are fewer ELL options available to adult learners, and language acquisition is more difficult in adulthood than in youth.

b. Employment

Refugee newcomers are expected to find employment within eight months of arrival in the U.S., but non-English speaking newcomers will likely end up in low-paying jobs with long and odd hours or multiple jobs (to adequately support family). Professionals and skilled workers have trouble re-credentialing and then are delegated to jobs for which they are overqualified. The undocumented status of many immigrants leaves them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and many workers fear reporting unfair labor practices due to fear of deportation. Even immigrants who may be in the U.S. legally may fear the deportation of undocumented friends, family members, or neighbors.

Among immigrants who do secure paid employment, discrimination based on skin color remains a problem. Research has shown that immigrants with darker skin color earn less, on average, than their lighter-skinned counterparts, illustrating that unfortunately, newcomers to the U.S. experience the impact of racism in their paychecks.⁶⁰

c. Education

Education has traditionally been seen as an important corridor for the integration and socialization of immigrants. One benefit for many newcomers is the availability of free public K-12 education for their children. However, for children who are ELL (English Language Learners), the Oregon public school system has not served them well. The achievement gap between ELL students and their peers is overwhelming, with much lower scores among ELL students in OAKS tests for math and reading as well as lower graduation rates than English-speaking students. The fact that school districts receive additional funding for ELL students has created an incentive for schools to fail their ELL students. This problem was remedied in the 2015 legislative session with an increase in focus and support for Oregon’s ELL students, heightening targeted and increased spending on these students, and eliminating the prior incentives for schools to keep students in ELL programs so their funding levels were kept high. With the goal of successful integration into regular classrooms, removing this disincentive was important.

For the estimated 1.5 million undocumented children in the U.S., public education through high school is mandated, but only small percentages actually graduate high school and go on to attend college.⁶¹ Higher

education tuition may seem impossible when federal funding is severely limited, and as few as 10 states offer financial aid for undocumented students. Oregon is one of a few states who offers in-state tuition to some foreign-born students under HB 2787, passed in 2013. But ultimately, a higher education degree will have lesser impact on improving socioeconomic mobility of an undocumented worker, when hiring is prohibited by federal law. Immigration reform to provide legal residency and citizenship to the full spectrum of undocumented residents is urgently needed if we are to support the region's economic prosperity.

Just as immigrant workers are more likely to be found in blue-collar and service jobs, most immigrant workers have less vocational training than U.S.-born adults. In the U.S., one third of adults with low literacy skills are immigrants, and one fourth of adults with low math skills are immigrants.⁶² Access to adult education classes (like English-language classes) are dependent on local funding resources, which are also most vulnerable to budget cuts in economic downturns.

d. Housing

When housing information is not available in multiple languages, substantial barriers for non-English speaking immigrants are created. Although they are illegal, racist and discriminatory practices—such as requiring extra money for rent deposits from immigrants or not providing full information about all vacancies—make housing searches very challenging. Immigrants are deterred from considering house purchases due to lack of access to information about home loans and mortgages, insufficient credit histories, as well as ongoing discriminatory lending and realtor practices.

Researchers have long associated racial and ethnic segregation in cities and towns with reduced outcomes for residents of color. Increased housing integration of immigrants and refugees into White and more affluent communities is a necessary element of successful integration.⁶³ Immigrants with lower education levels tend to live in already-segregated neighborhoods shared with other poor and disadvantaged groups in urban areas.⁶⁴ The neighborhoods in which immigrants settle influence integration in a number of ways, such as access to goods and services, proximity to public transportation, crime levels, and interaction with White and English-speaking neighbors.

Some studies have shown that immigrant youth are overrepresented in homeless populations and that such youth have increased barriers to accessing services: a 2010 survey in Toronto, Canada showed that nearly one quarter of homeless individuals under the age of 24 reported that they were not born in the U.S.⁶⁵ Main factors leading to homelessness among newcomer youth include conflict with family, lack of acceptance of sexual identity (LGBTIQ), inability to secure employment, and escape from abuse at home. Cultural expectations surrounding family responsibilities, coupled with unstable housing and even deportation of family members, are especially difficult for newcomer youth to navigate, and can lead to homelessness.

Local Somali high school students created the East African All Stars basketball team, providing an inclusive space where they have created respect and support for each other both on and off the court. Below are most members of the "family" of the East African All Stars.



e. Transportation

Many states ban undocumented immigrants from receiving drivers' licenses. In 2014, Oregon voters overturned SB 833 which would have provided four-year driver licenses to undocumented immigrants. These laws prevent immigrants from obtaining insurance and deter the reporting of accidents to authorities. For migrant workers located far from urban centers, access to public transportation is a problem. Even among immigrants in urban areas, neighborhoods in which immigrants congregate—such as outer east Portland in Multnomah County—are often not well-served by public transit. Without sufficient access to public transit and with no means to drive legally, many immigrants are faced with a decision between driving illegally or limiting their options to employment, school, health care, shopping, and social services to those within walking distance of their apartments in underserved suburban or exurban areas.

f. Physical Health

The impact of stress related to relocation and discrimination, availability (or lack thereof) of healthy or culturally familiar foods, affordability of healthy food, and the burden of often strenuous and exhausting physical labor all take a toll on immigrant health. These barriers to health are especially troubling, as many immigrants arrive in the U.S. and Canada in better health than their native-born neighbors: research has shown lower levels of obesity and chronic health problems, for example, among recent immigrants to Canada. However, this “newcomer health advantage” diminishes over the first few years in their new environment.⁶⁶ Studies of Mexican immigrants have shown that second-generation immigrants show especially poor physical health, much worse than their first-generation elders, which has been associated with increased awareness and internalization of discrimination and “othering” experiences among this second generation.⁶⁷

Africa House (founded in 2006) was the lead organization in establishing a conflict resolution process for addressing residual tensions among African communities in Portland. Its success has expanded the ability of the array of communities to work together on pressing issues.



Participation in health care programs and services by immigrants is greatly impacted if information is not provided in accessible languages and through trusted sources such as community-based organizations. Overall preventative services, as well as cancer screenings, mental health, prenatal, and sexual health services are often underutilized by immigrant families due to lack of knowledge about the programs, trust issues, and/or approaches that do not incorporate cultural beliefs and values.^{68,69} Immigrants are less likely than native residents in the U.S. to have health insurance, as fewer have access to employer-sponsored plans, many are unfamiliar with affordable plans that are available to them, and undocumented immigrants are ineligible for government-sponsored programs.⁶⁹

g. Mental Health

In addition to the barriers to physical health, additional barriers to utilization of mental health services include stigma, unfamiliarity of services in comparison with those offered in the home country, differences in cultural understandings and practices in mental health, and cost. Despite these barriers, immigrants face significant stressors related to past trauma, discrimination, unemployment, poverty, acculturation, and cultural differences in parenting.^{70,71} Refugees, in particular, are ten times more likely to experience symptoms of traumatic stress than native residents.⁷² Acculturative stress is associated with higher risk for depression and anxiety in immigrant populations.⁷³ Both documented and undocumented immigrants experience stress related to acculturation. Among Latinos, fear of deportation has been noted by researchers as a major cause of stress for both documented and undocumented immigrants.⁷⁴ This fear causes similar stress among other immigrant populations as well.

h. Banking and Financial Literacy

Many immigrants are unfamiliar with the financial and banking systems in the United States, unable to establish credit and set up banking and savings accounts necessary to cash checks, receive direct deposits, earn interest, or build credit. Such newcomers become vulnerable to high-interest “payday” loans, as well as international remittance services with high fees. When not kept in a checking or savings account, funds are more likely to be carried and stored in cash, which is at higher risk of theft or loss. Lack of credit can be a barrier to accessing utilities, such as electricity or telephone service, and is a barrier to large purchases such as cars or houses.⁷⁵

i. Access to Services, Resources, and Benefits

Newcomers to the U.S. face a network of resources and benefits that change from state to state and are difficult to navigate, even for residents born in the U.S. Even when specific programs are established to assist immigrants in finding housing, employment, education, and health care, local authorities have significant influence over how such programs are administered.⁷⁶ Many newcomers are wary of interacting with government services due to fears of deportation of themselves or loved ones, or from previous negative experiences with government or police agents.

As dwindling government funding forces more local nonprofits to shoulder the burden of providing services to immigrants, the availability of services becomes limited to those populations of focus for specific organizations.⁷⁷ Such nonprofits may provide much needed services, but provide them inequitably or only to some communities at the expense of others.⁷⁸

j. The Justice System

Many immigrants are distrustful of law enforcement, whether due to fears of deportation of self, friends, or family, or due to experiences of racial or ethnic profiling. Rights and services for immigrant women who may experience domestic violence are not fully understood due to limited language skills, and the utilization of such services may be influenced by conflicting cultural norms and trust in the provider. Poverty, isolation and academic challenges may bring immigrant youth to experience the full weight of the justice system in an adverse manner if they are not presented with positive strategies to counter the stresses of life in their new society. However, despite a focus among researchers and the media on immigrant youth and gang membership—which does remain a problem in many communities—immigrant youth overall have been found to have lower delinquency levels than their native-born counterparts.⁷⁹

Although immigration restrictions were relaxed in the 1960s (in the U.S. and Canada), challenges and barriers have limited the full integration of immigrants to their new home country. The difficulties facing newcomers to the U.S. have been well-documented, and research in this area fulfills an important purpose. Only by examining the experiences of immigrants, the barriers immigrants face, and the level of inequality between newcomers and native-born residents in the U.S., can we understand whether policies and programs intended to improve newcomer integration are working.

Partnerships between newcomer communities and the Portland Police are reflected by the diligence and compassion of Officer Natasha Haunsperger, herself a refugee from former Yugoslavia. Her advocacy resulted in the creation of the Slavic Advisory Council, and her partnership practices with immigrant and refugee communities are recognized internationally. The community holds deep appreciation for these efforts.



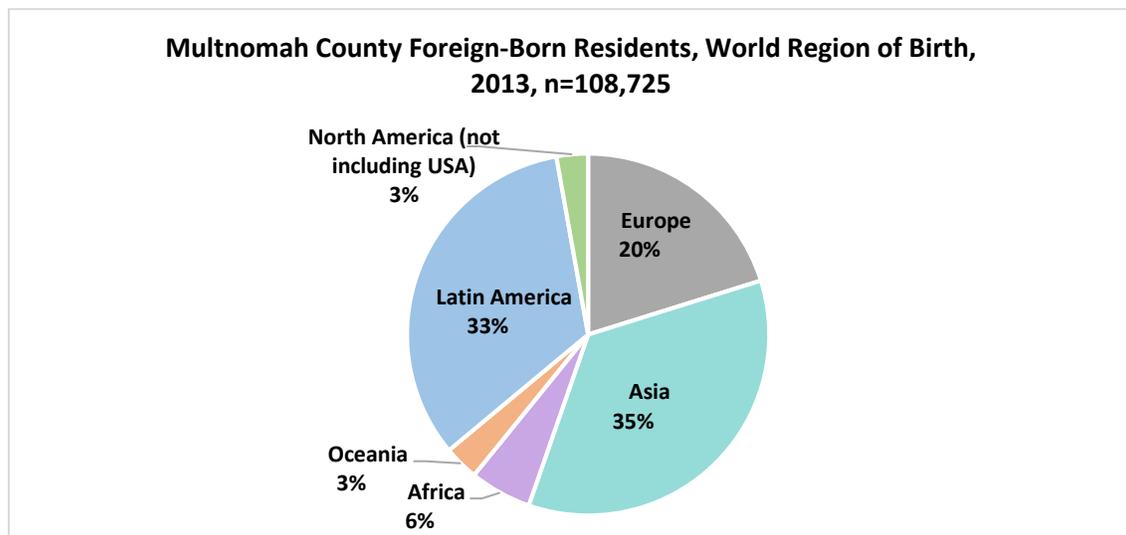
Frequently, the general public rubs up against a belief that with immigration, extremism will also appear. The belief is primarily centered on Muslim extremism, and fears that remain from the 9-11 al-Queda terrorist attacks. New research shows that immigrant communities are actually sources of opposition to extremism, rather than breeding grounds for such politics. Says the authors of the report: “more resilient [immigrant] communities represent the best line of defense against violent extremism.”⁸⁰ These researchers, along with those from a university scholar doing similar work, show that immigrant communities need to be considered influential partners to stem radicalization.

Rectifying the barriers and inequities that challenge newcomer communities hold solid prognosis for offering a pathway towards social and economic success, and reducing the likelihood for justice system engagement. At the same time, we must amplify the positive stories of successful newcomer integration, where both newcomers and the receiving communities benefit from integration in overwhelmingly positive ways. Research in this area is much newer and less developed than research into barriers and disparities. However, understanding successful integration, its benefits, and best practices to support it are just as important as recording difficulties and problems. Without an understanding of what works in promoting successful and mutually-beneficial newcomer integration, the “bad news” story of barriers and inequality can never turn into the “good news” story that we want newcomer integration to become. The remainder of this chapter chronicles some of the “bad news”—ways in which these overall challenges faced by immigrants in the U.S. play out locally, in Multnomah County.

Characteristics of Newcomers to Multnomah County

Diversity is a big part of what makes Portland great: diversity of opinions, neighborhoods, foods, and lifestyles are what makes up the character of the city. The consistent influx of immigrants to Portland and the metro region, including the diverse skills, talents and traditions such newcomers bring, play an increasingly visible role in the city. However, not all immigrant groups are provided the same level of attention, and existing policies related to newcomer integration have impacted various communities in very different ways.

Today, approximately 15% of Multnomah County’s residents are foreign-born.⁸¹ Among residents who were foreign-born, 41% of them became naturalized U.S. Citizens.⁸² The chart below shows the composition of the foreign-born population. Note that Asia includes the Slavic population (from the former Soviet Union), and Latin America includes Mexico, and Central and South America, meaning that the “North America” segment represents Canadian immigrants.



Impact on Economy

The Fiscal Policy Institute recently reviewed contributions of immigrant workers to 25 metro areas in the U.S., including Portland, Oregon.⁸³ Portland saw a huge increase in economic growth (76%) from 1990 to 2005-07, at the same time as the overall percent of immigrants in the labor force more than doubled in size to 14%. However, foreign-born workers are more likely than native workers to be in blue-collar jobs or service occupations. In addition, immigrants to Portland in these fields earn less, on average, than their native-born counterparts in the same industry.

A common argument against immigration is that newcomers are willing to work for cheaper wages than native-born residents, which has the effect of driving down wages for workers overall. However, an analysis of data from 1994-2007 showed that U.S.-born workers' wages increased as a result of immigration, while the only group to see its wages decrease due to new immigrants was earlier immigrants.⁸⁴

Undocumented immigrants were estimated (in 2011) to make up just over 5% of the state's workforce, and just over 4% of the state's population.⁸⁵ These workers paid between \$154 million and \$309 million in estimated taxes (such as Social Security and income taxes), while employers paid between \$121 million and \$243 million in taxes in the name of undocumented workers.⁸⁶ The Perryman Group estimates that \$3.4 billion in economic activity, \$1.5 billion in gross state product, and over 19,000 jobs would be lost if all of Oregon's unauthorized immigrants were removed from the state.⁸⁷

Language proficiency

The most recent waves of immigrants to the U.S. learn English within their first five years after arrival and, as a group, are learning English faster than the last wave of mass immigration at the beginning of the 20th century. Although the shift from first language (non-English) to English occurs at varying rates for first generation immigrants from different countries, English proficiency increases to 80% by the second generation within Black, Hispanic, and Asian groups.⁸⁸

In Multnomah County, just over half (51.5%) of the foreign-born population spoke English "less than very well," while 84% reported their primary language as Spanish or some other language.⁸⁹ Portland Public Schools reported that in 2013-2014, 20% of students spoke a home language other than English, and nearly 8% of students were enrolled in ESL programs. Other than English, the top five languages spoken by students were Spanish (50%), Vietnamese (12%), Cantonese/Chinese/Mandarin (7%), Russian (5%), and Somali (4%).⁹⁰

Disparities between Compiled Newcomer (Foreign Born) Populations and the White US-Born Population, Multnomah County, Oregon

a. Summary

A synthesis of what we believe are the most important findings in this section of the research is as follows: today's newcomers of color have a much harder time gaining an economic foothold than just a decade ago, with average (median) incomes dropping from \$14,481/year to just \$9,304/year. During the same time period, and looking at the same length of time in the USA, white newcomers saw their market incomes rise from \$26,769/year to \$47,718/year. These data reflect the wages that are earned. This shows us that there is an employment crisis among newcomers of color who not only struggle financially, but the racial gap has grown from a magnitude of double to quintuple – from two times larger, to five times larger. Simultaneously, it shows us that the greatest needs exist among newcomers of color, and we conducted this analysis including the full range of newcomers of color: Latino, African, Middle Eastern, Slavic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous Latinos. And this exists despite the fact that the most recent newcomers of color are much more educated than

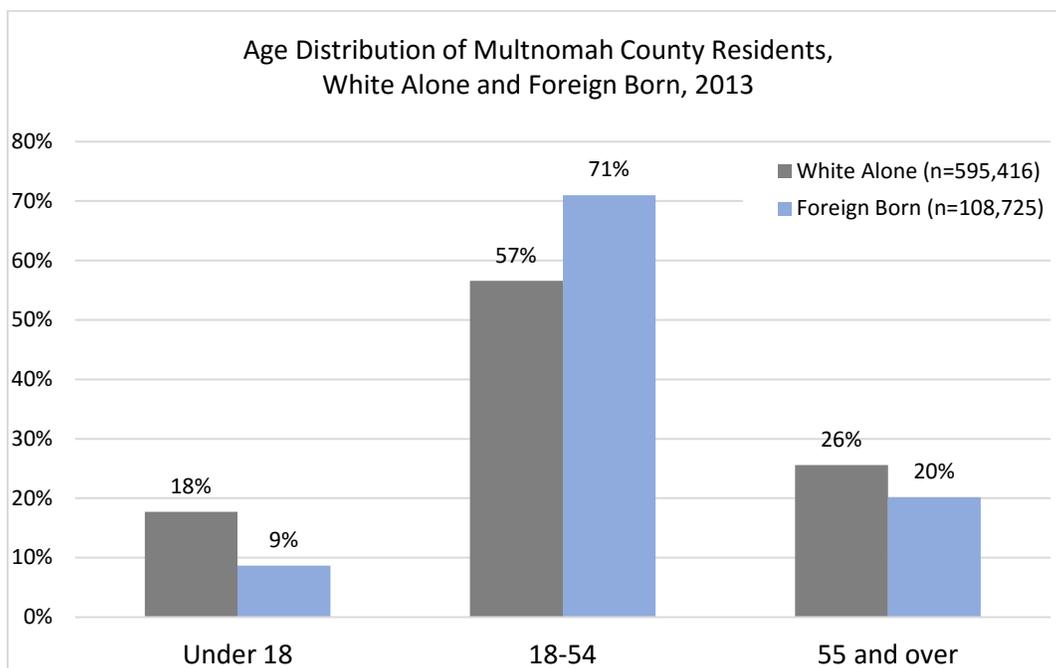
those who arrived about a decade earlier. Only 16% of newcomer of color who arrived between 1994 and 2004 held a university degree, while 25% of those who arrived between 2005 and 2014 held a university degree. One would normally expect that improved education would result in higher incomes, but such enhancements did not result in higher incomes – and in fact, incomes greatly deteriorated in this time period.

Additional Findings:

- Newcomer households on average earn about \$15,000 less per year than White households.
- The poverty rate for newcomer families overall is 260% higher than that of White families, with over a quarter of newcomer families in poverty, compared to just 10% of White families.
- Newcomers are less likely to own homes than are Whites, are more likely than Whites to pay more than 30% of their monthly income on housing, and much more likely to live in housing with multiple other people.
- Newcomers are more likely than Whites to be employed in lower-paid job sectors, with more Whites employed in higher-paid and higher-regarded management and executive position.
- Educational attainment among Whites is much higher than among newcomers, with 33% of newcomers over age 25 lacking even a high school diploma.

b. Age Distribution

According to the American Community Survey 2013 3-year population estimates for Multnomah County, while the median age of U.S.-born White and newcomer communities in Multnomah County is similar—37.8 years for Whites and 38.9 years for foreign-born residents—the distribution of the population between age groups is different between these two groups.⁹¹ Newcomers are more likely to be early-to-middle-aged adults than are White residents, with 71% newcomers between the ages of 18-54, compared to 57% of Whites.

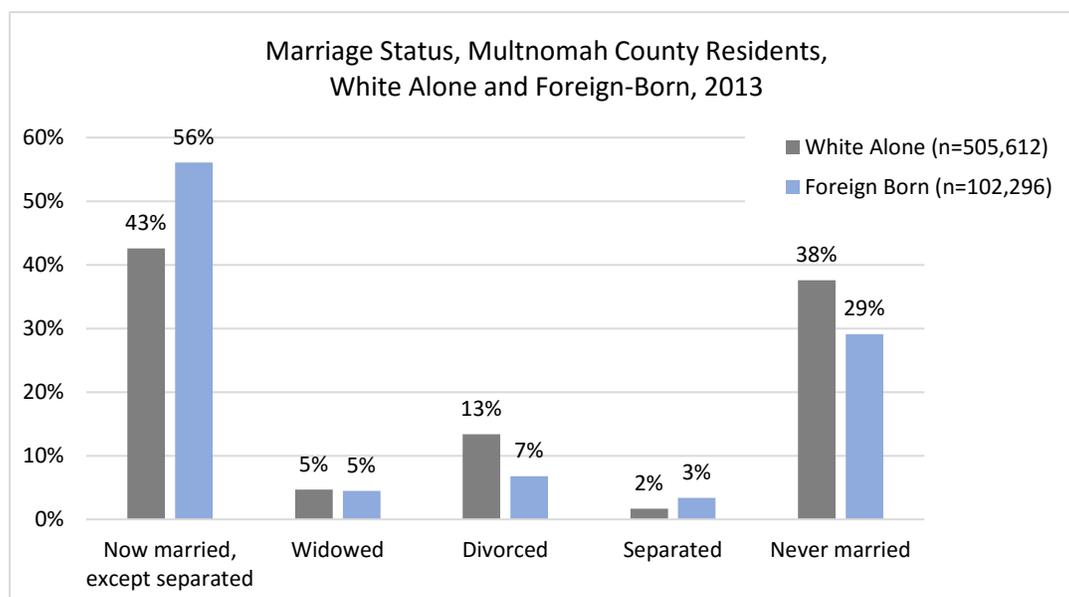


This difference in age distribution contributes to wealth disparities, since younger newcomers have not had time to build up a lifetime of wealth that many White residents have. Rather, most newcomers are well within prime working ages, which is not surprising given that many newcomers come to Portland in search of economic opportunity, especially paid work. This suggests that Whites may be much more likely to have a

retirement savings or pension than are newcomers. Such wealth, then, will impact future generations as Whites will be more able to bequeath savings to their children and communities than will newcomers.

c. *Marriage Status*

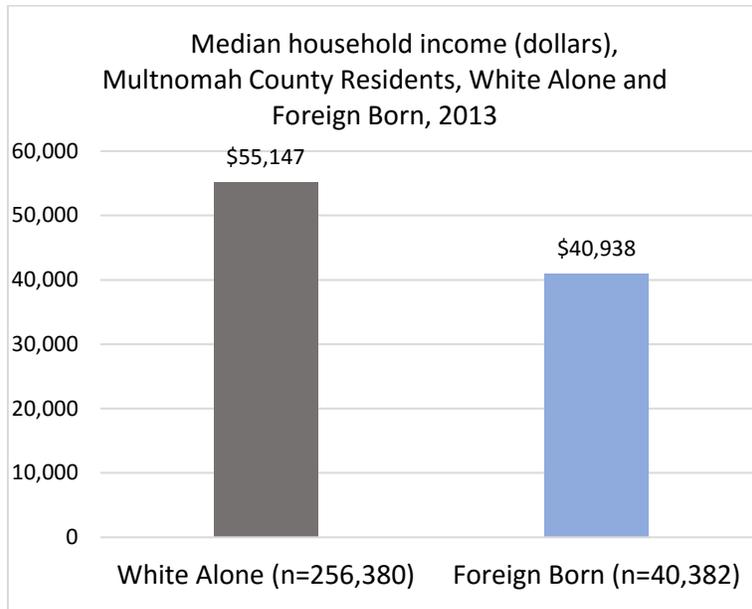
In addition, newcomers to Multnomah County are much more likely to be married than are White residents. Well over half of newcomers over the age of 15—56%—are married, compared to 43% of Whites. In addition, the percentage of divorced newcomers is about half that of Whites, at 7% for foreign-born residents compared to 13% of White residents.



White residents in Multnomah County also tend to have smaller sized households than do newcomers, with Whites averaging 2.3 persons per household, compared to 3.4 for foreign-born households.

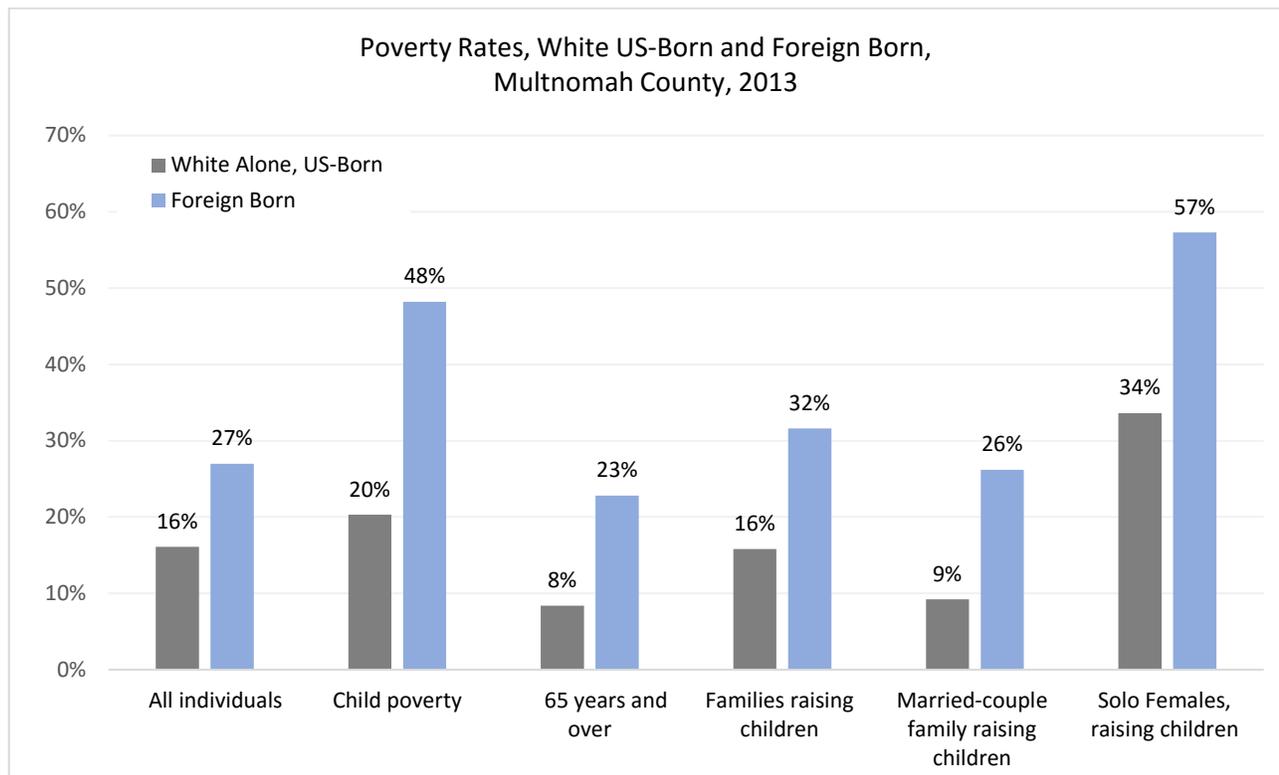
d. *Median Household Income*

Larger household sizes combine with disparities in family incomes to create additional disparities when it comes to housing. The median household income for newcomers is significantly lower than for White residents in our county. Whites average over \$55,000 annually, while newcomers average just under \$41,000 each year.



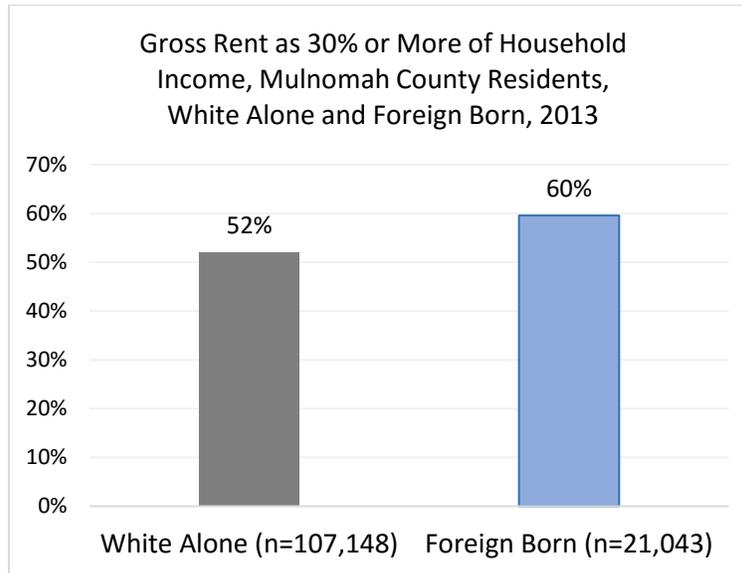
e. Family Poverty Rates

Not only are newcomer households larger than White households; newcomers also earn less money to cover expenses for these additional household members when compared to Whites. Earning less money to care for more people leaves many families in poverty. The poverty rate for newcomer families overall is 260% larger than that of White families, with over a quarter of newcomer families in poverty, compared to just 10% of White families. Across the board, every kind of newcomer family experiences poverty at higher rates than White families. Among single female-headed households with children, one third of White families are in poverty, while well over half (57%) of newcomer families in this category experience poverty.



f. Housing Cost Burden

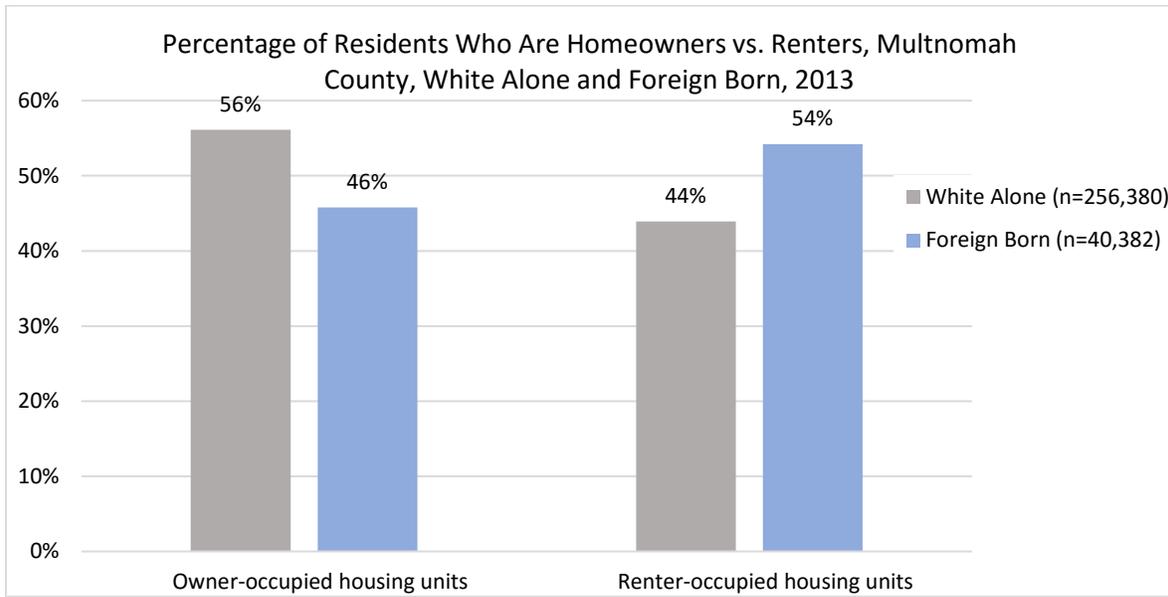
This high number of newcomers experiencing poverty contributes to disparities in housing. Given the extreme lack of affordable housing in Portland, most families must pay more than 30% of their household income on rent.



However, while 52% of Whites in the county find themselves paying more than 30% of their income on rent, a full 60% of newcomers are in the same position.

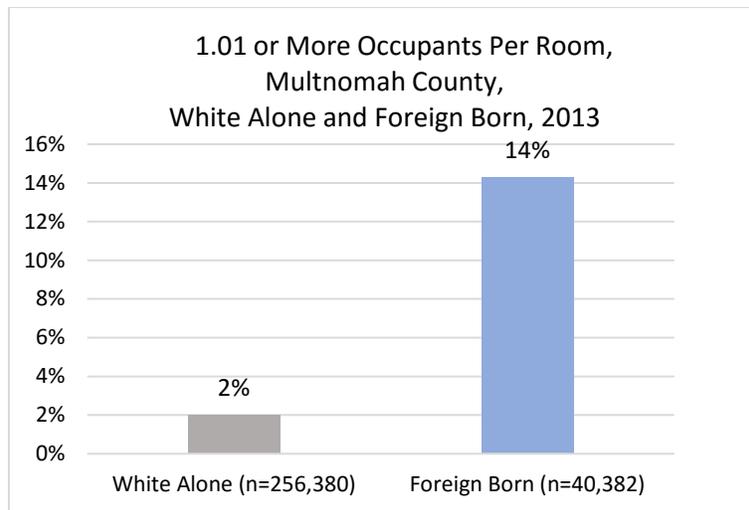
g. Home Ownership Rates

As rents continue to rise, residents who own their own homes have found their property values increasing at exponential rates. Here, too, we see disparities: Whites in Multnomah County are much more likely to own their home than to be renters, which means that rising property values benefits Whites disproportionately over newcomers. The majority of White residents own their own homes (56%), while nearly that same percentage of newcomers (54%) are renters.



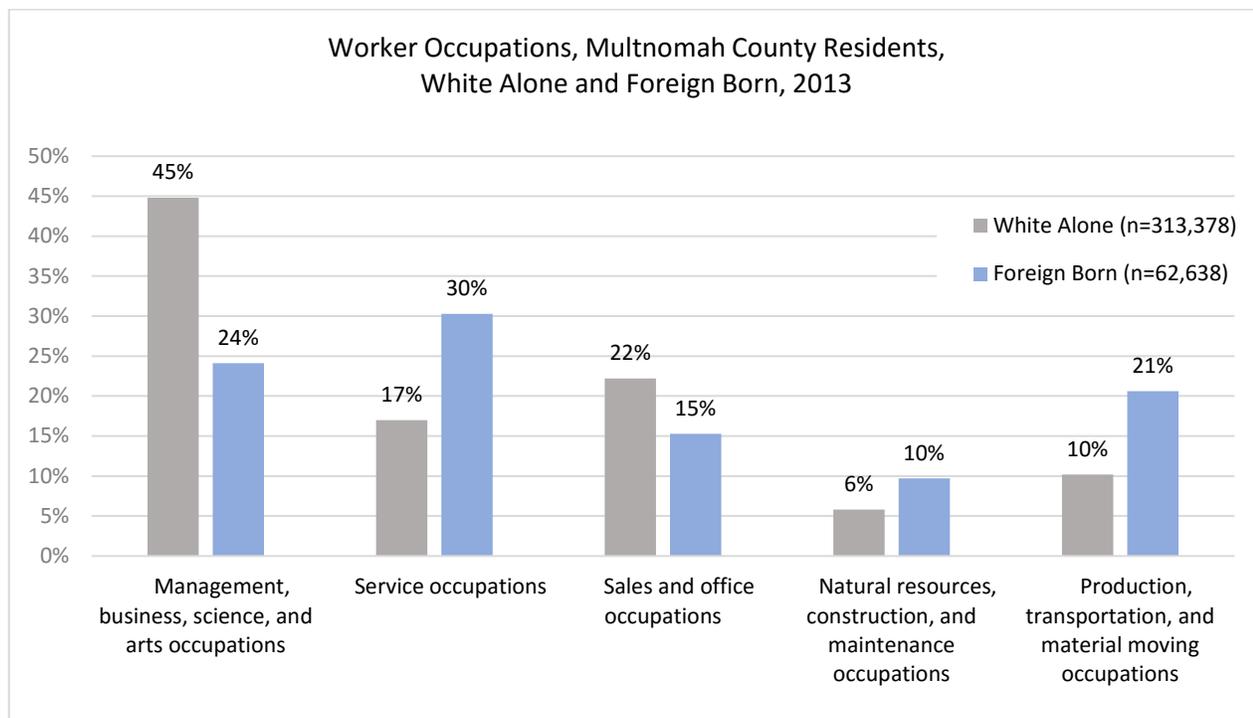
h. Occupants per Room

With larger households, more expensive rental properties, and lower incomes, newcomers also find themselves living in smaller spaces with more people than do Whites. While only 2% of White residents live in a room with another person, over 14% of newcomers do. These occupancy rates also reflect the larger families of many immigrants, their increased likelihood of living in larger kinship groups, and their willingness to house additional kin who have lost their housing.



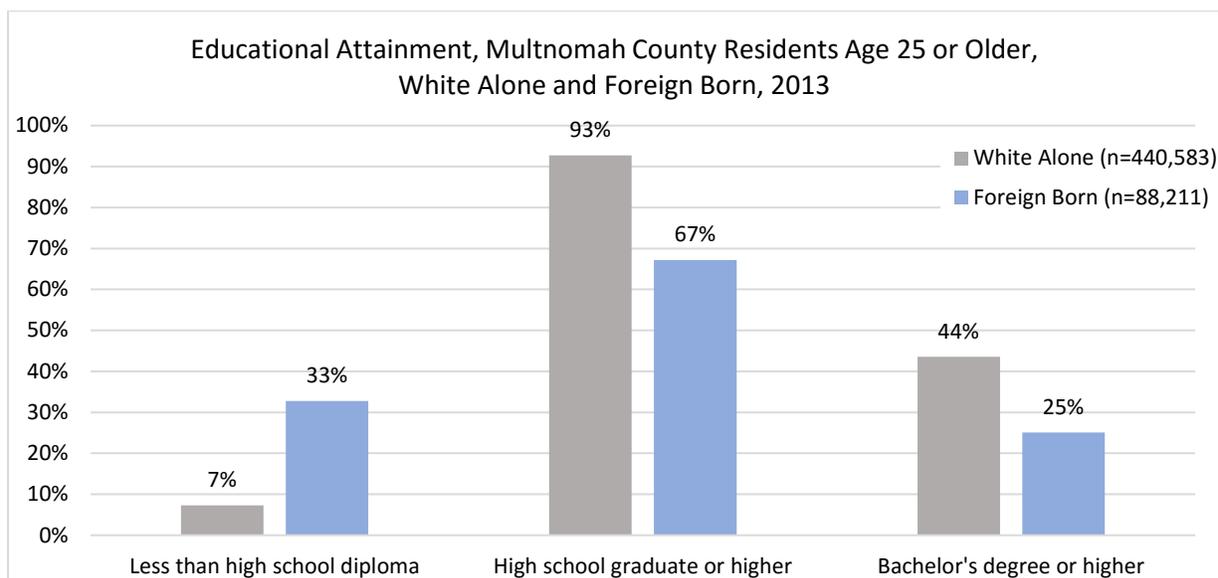
i. Worker Occupations

The fact that so many newcomers to Multnomah County live in poverty can be related to the type of work that newcomers find upon arrival in our area, as well as the amount of education that newcomers have attained. Newcomers are much more likely to find work in lower-paid fields, with a full 30% (of workers age 16 years and older) working in lower-earning service industry jobs (compared to 17% of Whites in service industry positions). Higher-paid jobs in management or science occupations are much more populated by Whites than newcomers, with 45% of Whites employed in management, business, science, and arts occupations, compared to just 24% of newcomers. Meanwhile, newcomers work in production, transportation, and material moving at twice the rate of Whites (21% vs. 10%).



j. Educational Attainment

Many newcomers are limited in the employment opportunities made available to them due to language barriers, racism, and documentation requirements. However, lack of education also contributes to the limited opportunities faced by newcomers as compared to Whites in Multnomah County.



Whereas 93% of Multnomah County's White population are at least high school graduates, only 67% of newcomers can say the same. With 1/3 of all newcomers lacking a high school diploma, being offered the chance to earn a diploma or equivalent would make great strides towards beginning to reduce some of the disparities described above.

These data provide some insight into real differences in the material conditions of life between White Multnomah County residents and newcomers to Multnomah County. The numbers are stark, but the lived experiences of these numbers are even starker. The following sections of this chapter compare data for White newcomer communities to data from newcomers of color to examine disparities in more detail.

Disparities between White Newcomers and Newcomers of Color, Multnomah County, Oregon

a. Summary

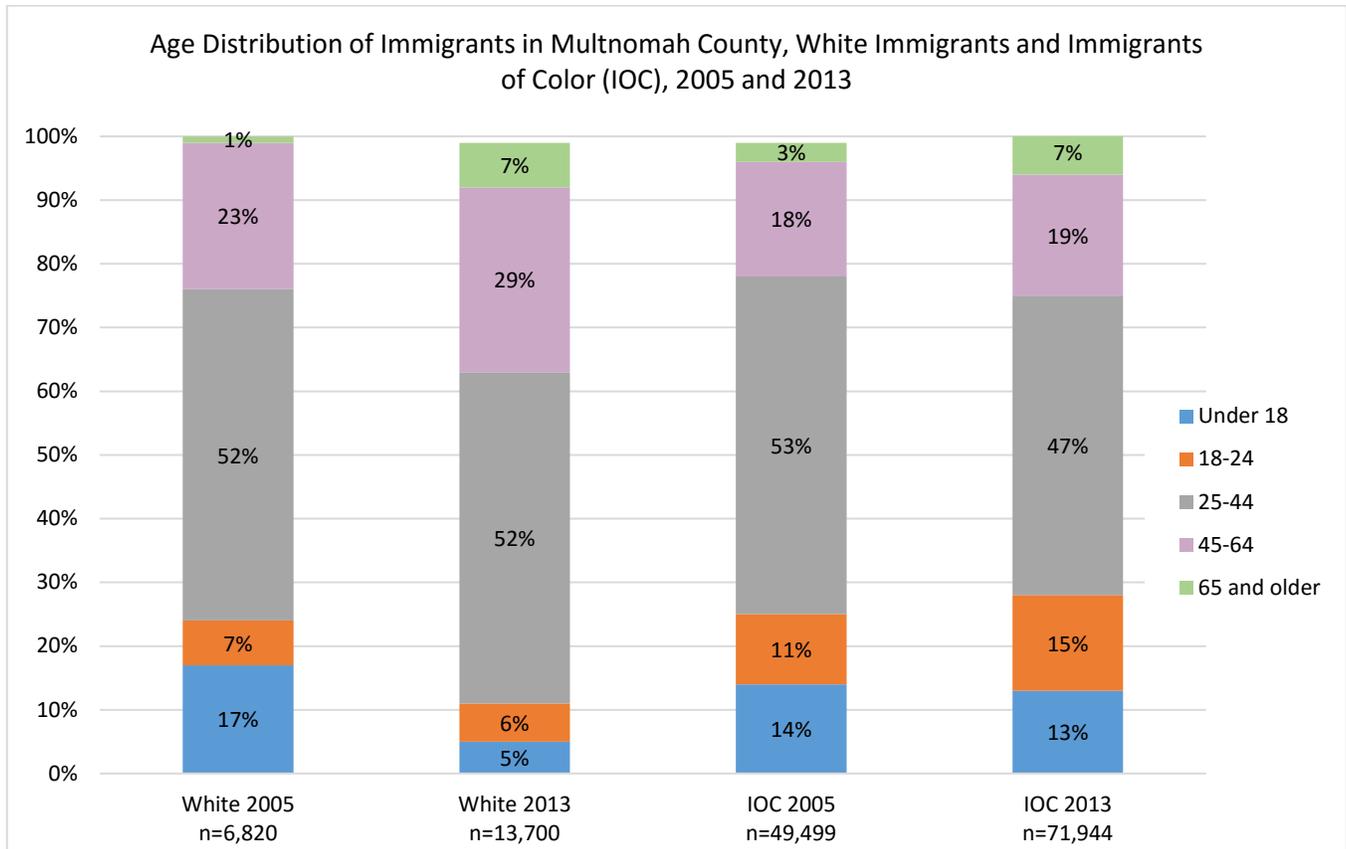
When newcomers arrive in the United States, they enter into a new and often unfamiliar cultural and social environment. This environment offers opportunities, but it also comes with deep, historical traditions of racism and xenophobia. Despite Portland's reputation as a progressive and welcoming city, newcomers to Portland also face disparities in opportunities based on race. As the previous section has illustrated, foreign-born residents in Multnomah County fare worse on a number of outcomes when compared to White residents overall. When we look closer at the communities of newcomers within Multnomah County, our research shows that deep disparities exist even within newcomer communities, with White newcomers faring better than are newcomers of color on outcomes ranging from income to educational attainment.⁹² These data show that newcomers of color face compounded challenges that need to be better understood in order to be addressed.

Key Findings:

- The most recently-arrived White newcomers average higher wages than do recently-arrived newcomers of color, and this disparity has grown significantly since 2005. The most recently-arrived White newcomers now have wages averaging 5 times higher than those among the most recently-arrived newcomers of color.
- The most recently-arrived newcomers of color actually earn less on average in 2013 than did the most recently-arrived newcomers of color in 2005.
- Immigrant households of color experience poverty at three times the rates of White immigrant households. This disparity has held steady over the past 8 years.
- Among renters, newcomers of color are much more likely than White newcomers to pay more than 30% of their household income on rent.
- Educational attainment among White newcomers is much higher than among newcomers of color, with about half of White newcomers earning a Bachelor's degree or higher, and just under half of newcomers of color lacking a high school diploma or GED.

b. Age Distribution

Immigrants of color tend to be younger than White immigrants, and this age difference has increased since 2005. The chart below shows the age distribution for newcomers drawn from two separate data sets: one in 2005 and one in 2013.

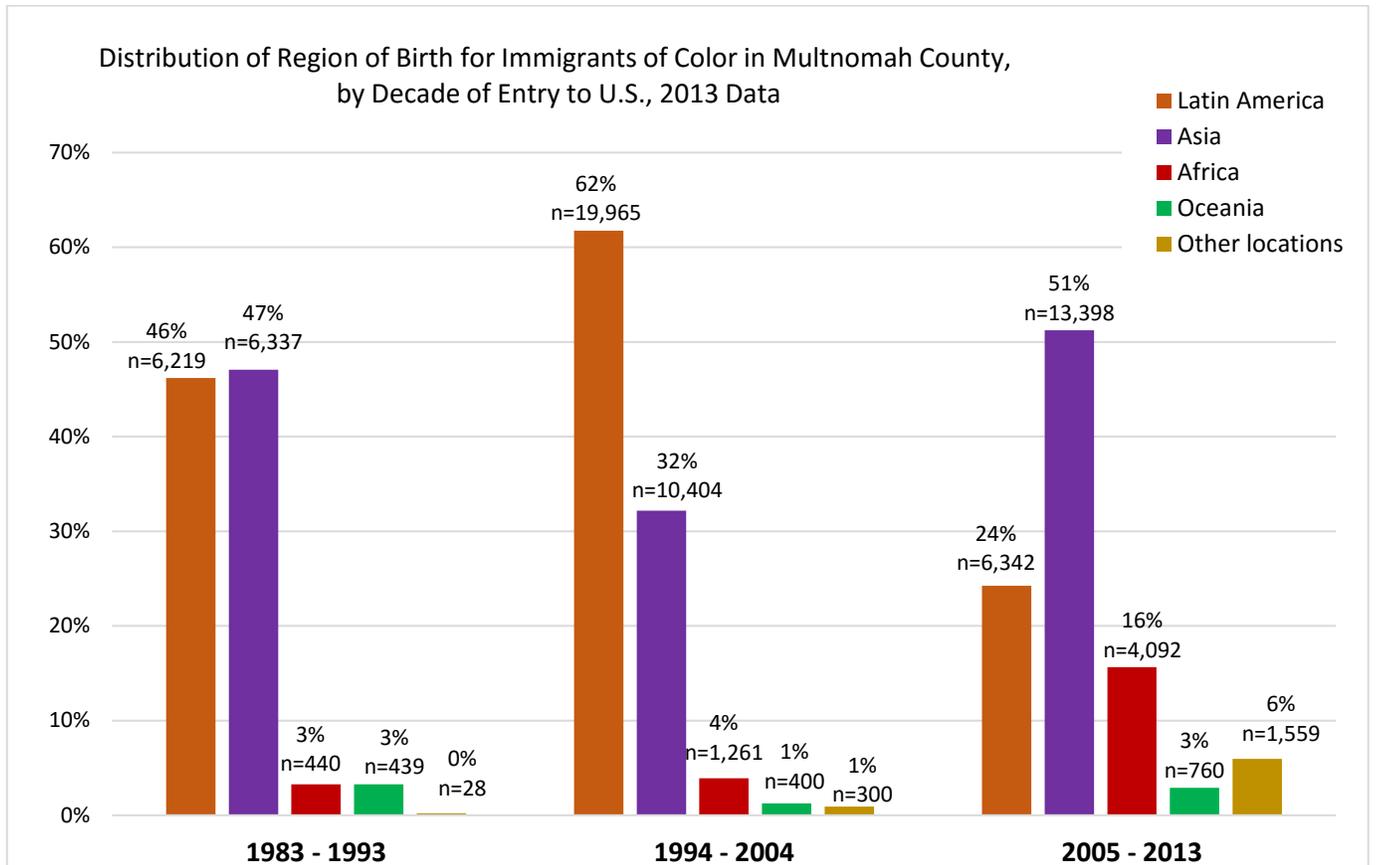


The percentage of older (over 44) White newcomers has increased in recent years. In 2005, 24% of White immigrants were 45 or older, compared to 21% of immigrants of color; in 2013, that percentage increased to 36% for Whites and 26% for immigrants of color. The percentage of immigrants under the age of 25 was similar between groups in 2005, at 24% for White immigrants and 26% for immigrants of color. The percentage of White immigrants under the age of 25 dropped to only 11% in 2013, while the percentage of young immigrants of color increased slightly to 27% in 2013.

c. Region of Birth

As noted elsewhere in this report, worldwide and regional economic and political changes impact the number of newcomers and region of birth for newcomers to the U.S. and to Multnomah County. If we look at the birth regions for newcomers in Multnomah County from 2013 data, we can see that more newcomers arrived recently than arrived in previous decades. In addition, the distribution of newcomers from various regions of the world changes when we look at how long newcomers have been in the U.S.

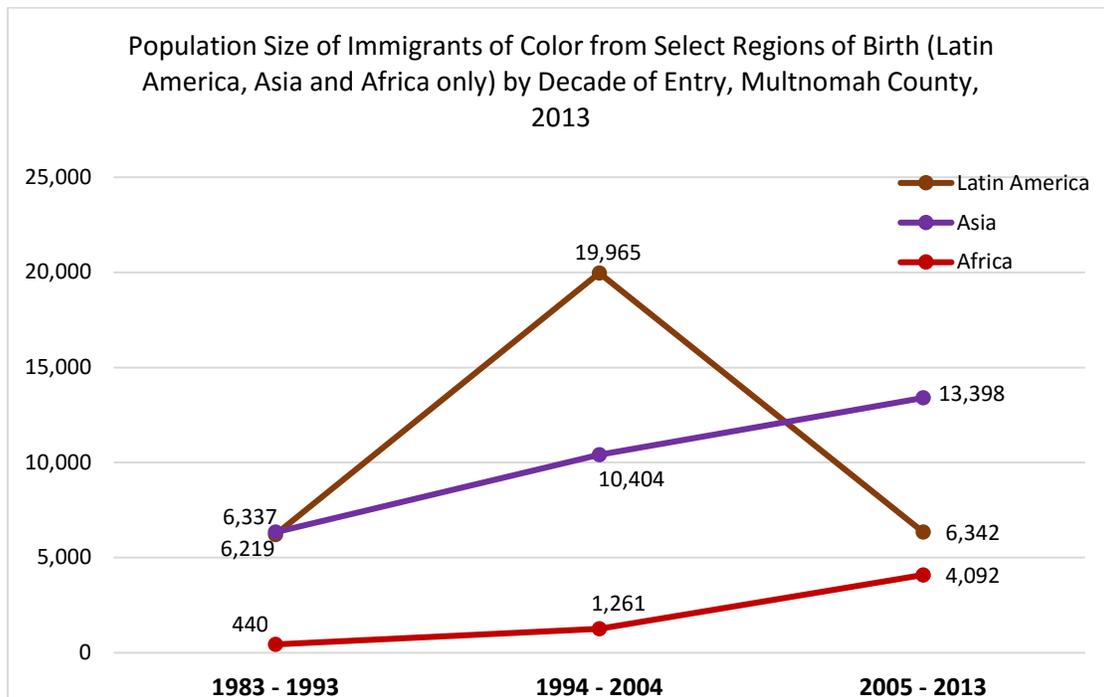
According to 2013 data, most newcomers in Multnomah County were born in Latin America or Asia. Among Multnomah County immigrants of color who entered the U.S. from 1983-1993, immigrants from these two world regions are about equal, making up 46% and 47% of all Multnomah County newcomers of color, respectively.



This distribution shifts when we look at newcomers who arrived in the mid-'90s to early-'00s. A far larger distribution of newcomers of color from Latin America arrived during the following decade (from 1994-2004), with 62% of immigrants of color born in Latin America (compared to just 32% from Asia). This distribution changes again when we look at the most recent newcomers, those who arrived from 2005-2013. Among the most recent arrivals, a larger percentage of immigrants hail from Asia than from Latin America, with 51% from Asia compared to just 24% from Latin America. The percentage of newcomers from Africa increased dramatically during these years as well, growing to 16% of newcomers (n=4,092).

While not included in these charts, the overall number of immigrants who are recent arrivals in Multnomah County is higher than those who arrived in earlier decades, with over 32,000 immigrants (of all races) arriving in Multnomah County from 1994-2004—almost twice the number from the previous decade, which was just over 13,000. The most recent arrivals outpace those who arrived during the previous decade, with over 26,000 immigrants arriving in the 8-year period from 2005-2013.

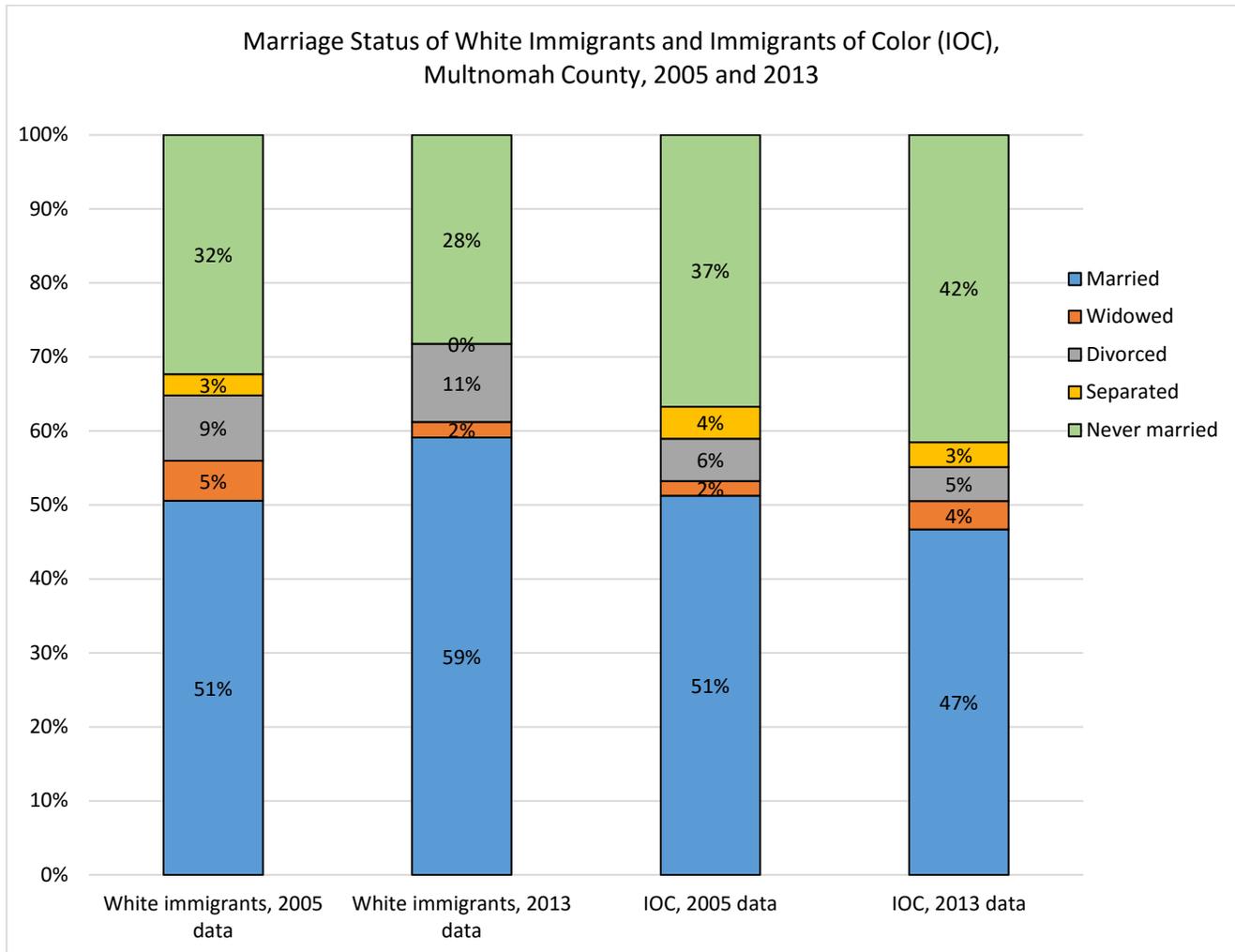
As noted, the largest groups of immigrants in Multnomah County were born in Latin America or Asia, with a spike in the number of Africans who have arrived since 2005.



When we look solely at numbers of immigrants to Multnomah County from these regions, we can see the trend of more immigrants having arrived in more recent years, along with the fact that newcomers from Latin America are more likely to have arrived in the late '90s or early '00s than in more recent years.

d. Marriage Status

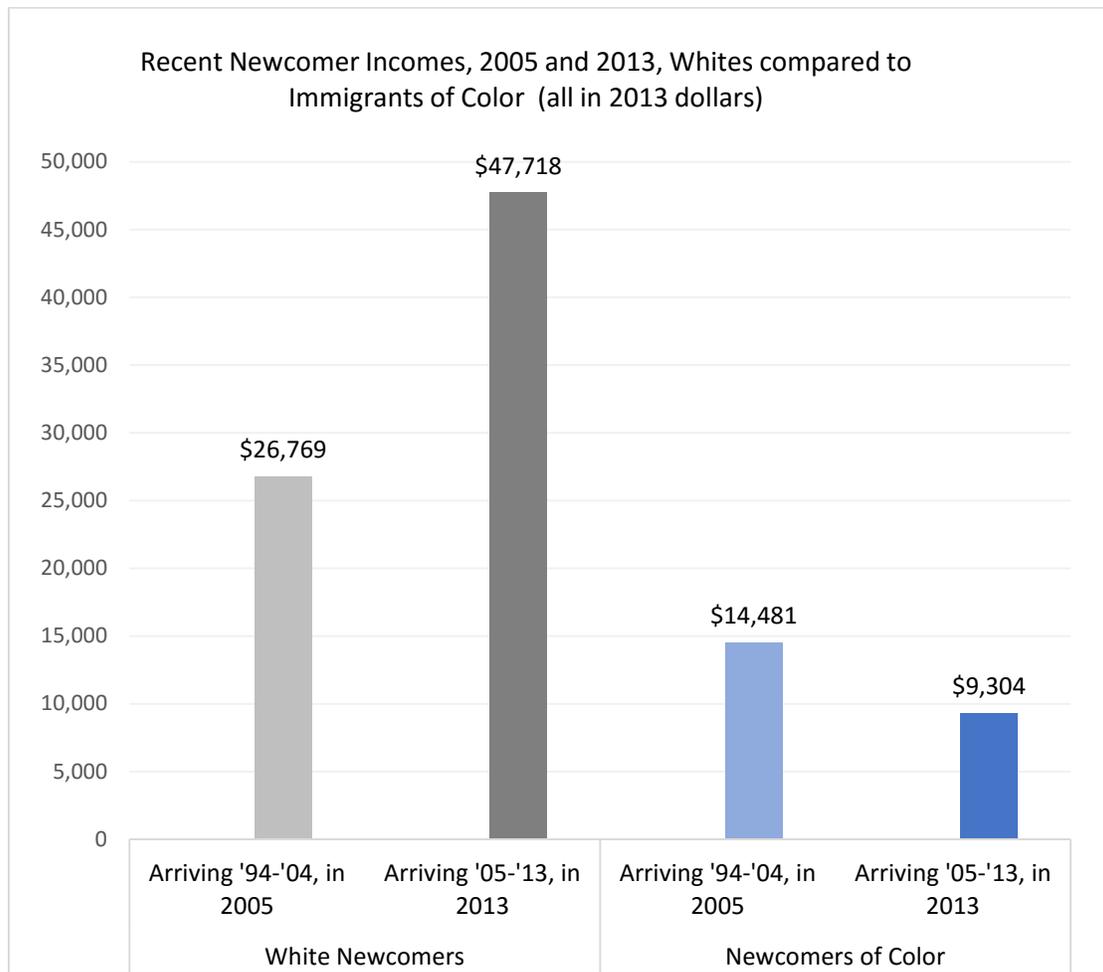
In 2005, about half (51%) of immigrants in Multnomah County were married, with rates equal between White immigrants and immigrants of color. Immigrants of color were slightly less likely to have never been married, with 37% of immigrants of color having never been married in 2005 compared to 32% of White immigrants. Rates of divorced and widowed immigrants were higher among White immigrants, with 9% of White immigrants divorced and 5% widowed in Multnomah County, compared to 6% of immigrants of color divorced and only 2% widowed.



These numbers shift just eight years later. By 2013, White immigrants were much more likely than immigrants of color to be married. Nearly 60% of White immigrants were married in 2013, while the percentage of married immigrants of color fell slightly to 47%. A higher percentage of immigrants of color had never married in 2013 than in 2005—42% in 2013 compared to 28% in 2005—while this percentage fell slightly among White immigrants, from 32% in 2005 to 28% in 2013. Divorces rose slightly among immigrants of color, to 11% in 2013 compared to 9% in 2005.

e. Wages

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, White residents in Multnomah County overall earn significantly more money each year than do newcomers (all races combined). When we look closer within the category of newcomers, we can see that White newcomers fare much better than do newcomers of color when it comes to wages. In addition, if we look at newcomers in Multnomah County who arrived in the U.S. most recently, it is clear that wages for the newest newcomers have gone down in recent years. Newcomers who arrived in the U.S. in the late 1990's and early 2000's earned more when they first arrived than are more recent newcomers (those who arrived in the U.S. from 2005-2013). The magnitude of this difference is startling – as White newcomers have had their economic prospects grow considerably, at almost double that of a decade earlier.

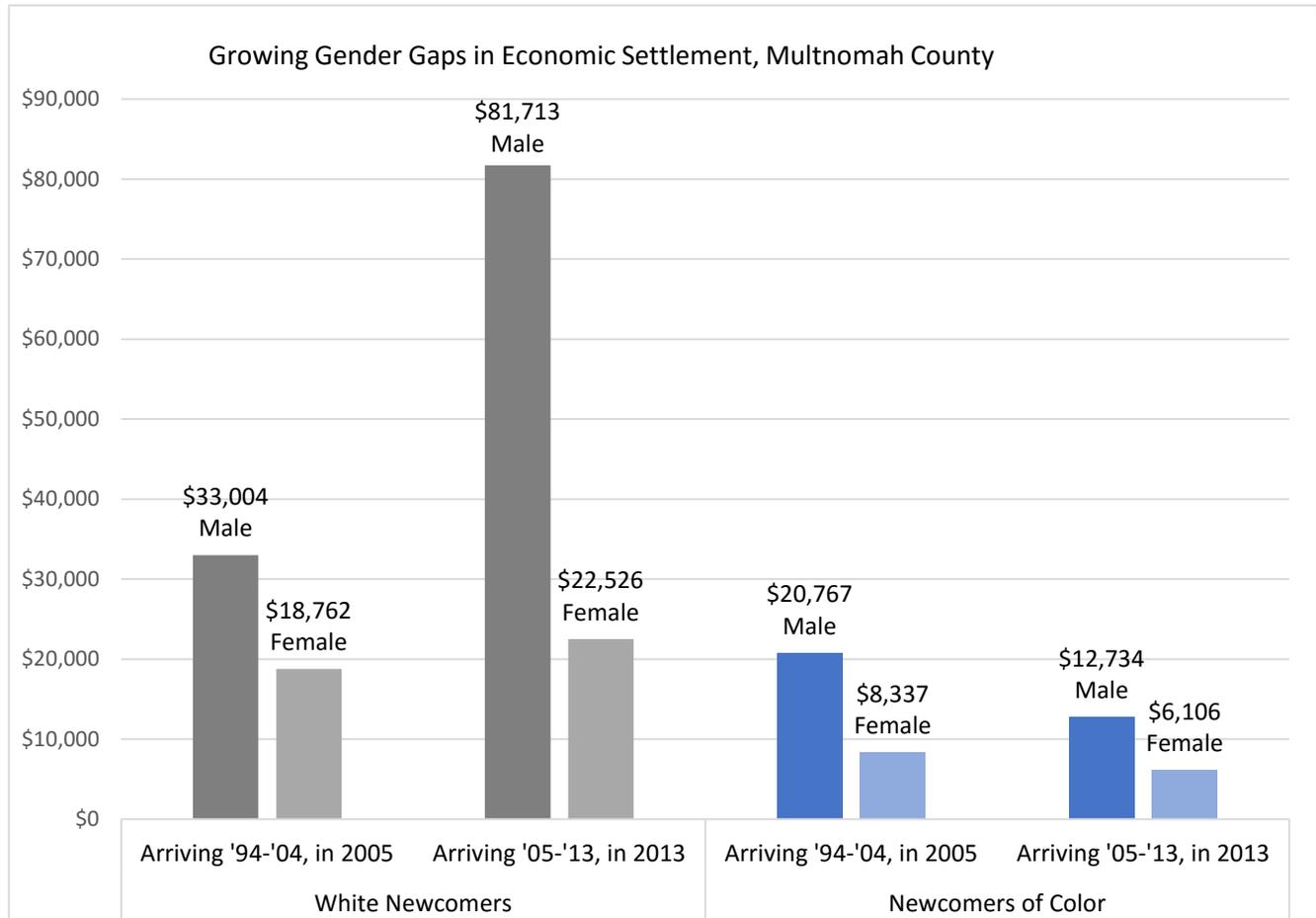


The chart shows the wages of White newcomers and newcomers of color by year of entry to the U.S. Newcomers who arrived between 1994 and 2004 provided wage information in 2005. Eight years later (which we generally call about a decade in our text), newcomers who arrived to the U.S. between 2005 and 2013 are also detailed (in the darker bars).

This chart shows not only that the most recently-arrived White newcomers average higher wages than do recently-arrived newcomers of color; the disparity between White immigrants and immigrants of color has grown significantly from 2005 to 2013. When White newcomers arrived in the late '90s or early '00s, they averaged \$26,769 annually; this average wage almost by 2013, to nearly \$50K annually. Meanwhile, immigrants of color who arrived in the late '90s and early '00s already earned less than White immigrants, averaging only \$14,481 in wages each year. This amount actually fell by \$5000 when we look at recently-arrived immigrants in 2013, whose wages are only \$9,304 a year. The most recently-arrived White newcomers now have wages averaging 5 times more annually than those among the most recently-arrived newcomers of color.

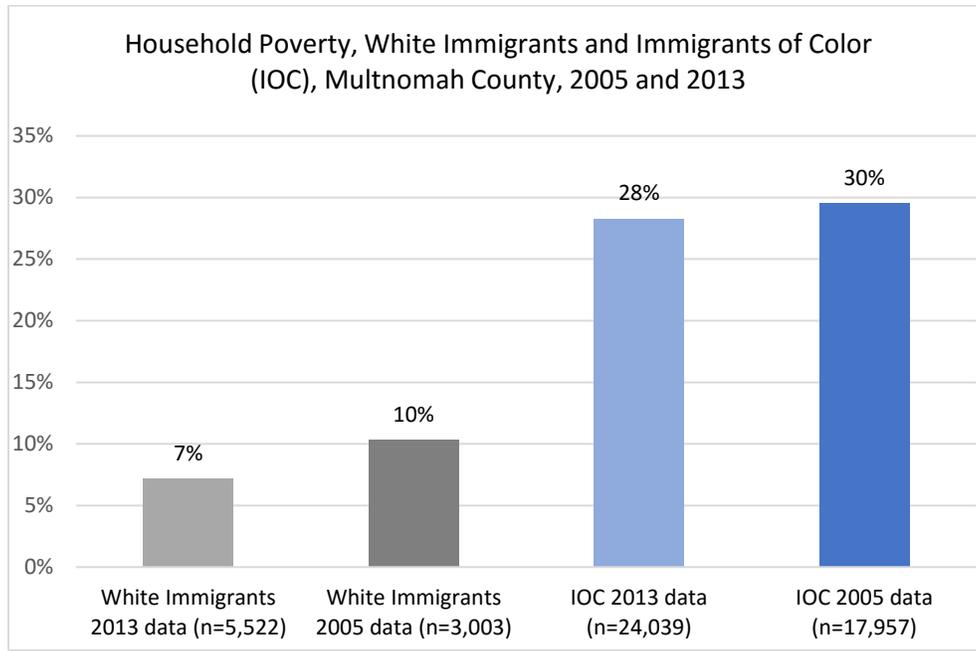
When we look at the gendered dimension to these income changes, we find that there is a massive variation in the status of one's economic condition, depending on both gender and race, with White men gaining tremendous economic benefits in the last decade, which is not matched by those of men of color, who have actually lost ground over the same time period. White women newcomers have gained close to \$4,000/year, but this is nowhere near the gains of White men who now make an additional \$49,000/year. Both male and

female newcomers of color have lost ground, with men losing almost half of their incomes, and women losing about one quarter of their income.



f. Poverty Rates

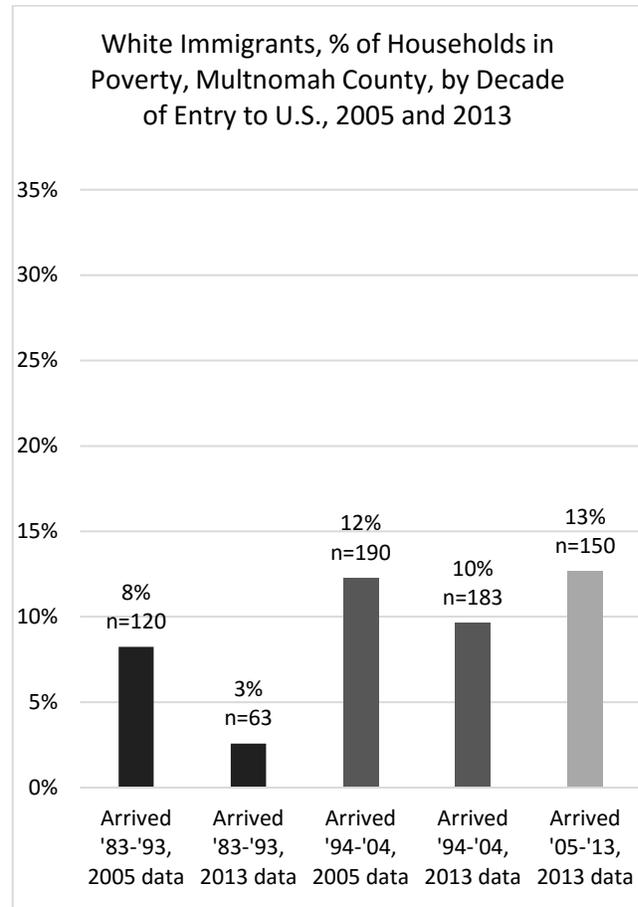
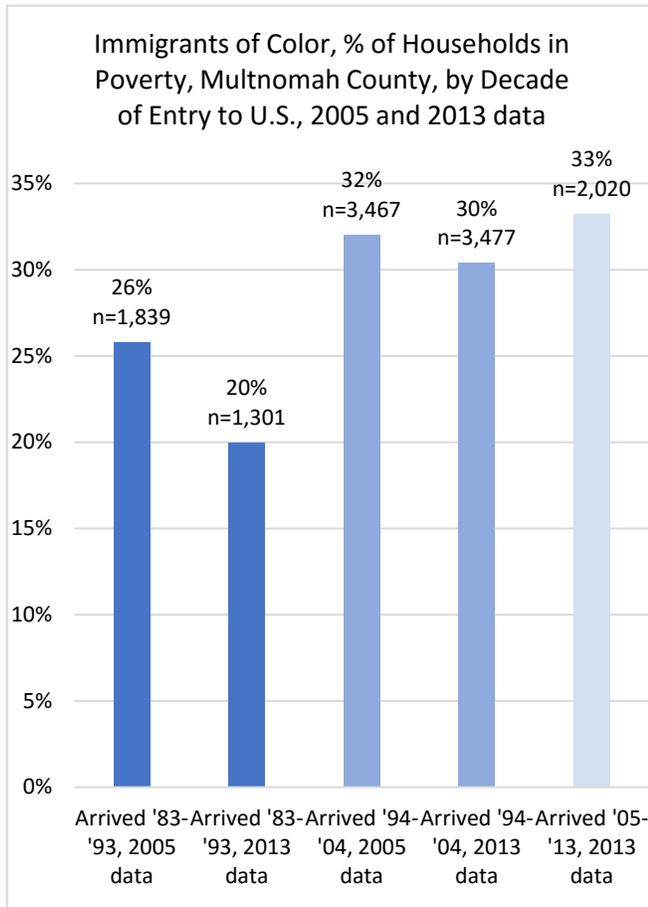
Earlier, we noted that White residents in Multnomah County overall have much lower poverty rates than do immigrants. When we look at immigrants by race, we can see that White immigrants still have lower rates of poverty than do immigrants of color. The chart below shows that while there has been a decrease in poverty rates for all recently arriving newcomers, the rate of poverty for newcomers of color is today four times higher than for White newcomers.



The above chart depicts household poverty rates (determined at 100% of the poverty line) among immigrants in Multnomah County from two data sets: one in 2005 and one in 2013. Both data sets show that immigrant households of color experience poverty at least triple the rates of White immigrant households. The good news is that poverty rates among newcomers were slightly lower in 2013 than in 2005 (by about 3%).

In the data that follows, we were able to look at three decades of arrival times and see a longer time span of arrival experiences among both newcomers of color (the first chart) and White newcomers (the second chart). The visuals need some interpretation: what we see in these charts is that the benefit of being in the country for a longer period of time serves to decrease one's poverty rate: both immigrants of color and those who are white experience a drop in their poverty rate in the second decade that they are in the USA. We see, however, that the magnitude of the effect of time is declining – for both white newcomers as well as for newcomers of color. This is another signal that the economic benefits of being in the country for longer periods of time has been deteriorating.

Note that we have placed both charts on the same scale so the magnitude of variation can be easily grasped.



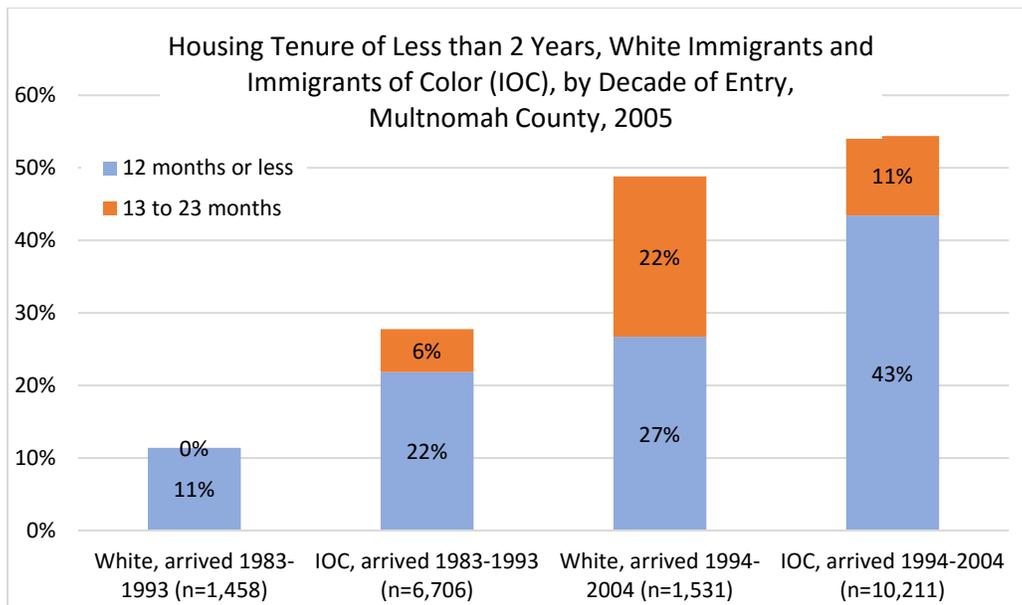
Among both White immigrants and immigrants of color, those who came to the U.S. in the '80s-early '90s had lower rates of poverty than those who arrived from the mid-'90s through the mid-'00s. The above charts show poverty rates for newcomers for three groups: those who came to the U.S. between 1983 and 1993, those who came to the U.S. between 1994 and 2004, and those who came to the U.S. from 2005-2013. For the groups who arrived in the first two time periods listed above, we have compared data from 2005 and 2013 to see whether newcomers who arrived during these time frames have been able to reduce their poverty level after being in the U.S. for a longer period of time. Both groups have been successful at reducing rates of poverty over time, although those who arrived from '94-'04 have seen a lower reduction in poverty rates than those who arrived a decade earlier. The amount of that reduction in poverty rates over time is about the same for White immigrants and immigrants of color: immigrants of color saw a drop in poverty rates of 6% (from 26% to 20%) between 2005 and 2013 for those who arrived '83-'93, and White immigrants of color saw their poverty rates also drop by 5% (from 8% to 3%) during that time. That said, these figures translate into a larger percentage decline for White immigrants than for immigrants of color. For immigrants who arrived a decade later ('94-'04), both Whites and immigrants of color saw poverty rates drop by 2% from 2005-2013 (from 32% to 30% for immigrants of color, and from 12% to 10% for White immigrants).

It is clear that the more recently a newcomer has arrived in the U.S., the more likely they are to belong to a household that is experiencing poverty. As newcomers continue stay in the U.S., they become slightly less likely to be experiencing poverty. However, White immigrants have much lower household poverty rates than do immigrants of color, no matter when they entered the U.S. or how long they have been here. We also see that the pattern of improvements in poverty levels has been shrinking over the last two decades. It is too early to see how our most recent arrivals fare in the coming years.

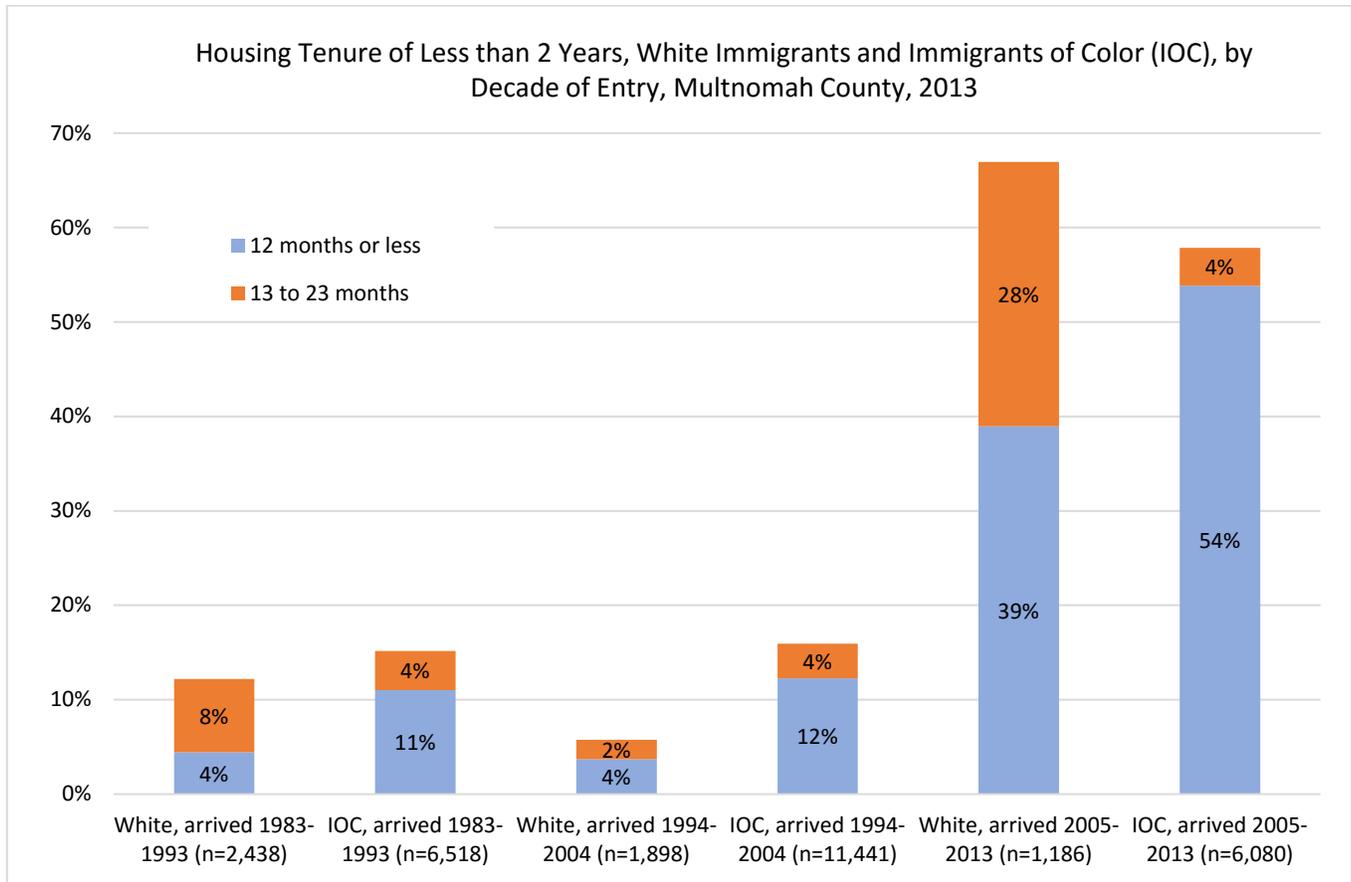
g. Housing Status

Not having a safe, affordable, long-term housing situation causes multiple hardships: children risk losing social supports and educational gains by having to change schools; finances are taxed by application fees and lost deposits; and social networks are disrupted. When we see the high percentage of newcomers who have moved in the past 2 years, it shows that many newcomers have struggled to find that safe, affordable, long-term housing situation that so many Multnomah County residents take for granted.

The charts below show the percentage of White newcomers and newcomers of color who have lived in their residences for less than two years: the first chart draws from 2005 data, and the second chart draws from more recent 2013 data. In addition to showing data for White immigrants and immigrants of color, these charts separate newcomers by decade of entry. This allows us to see whether housing stability tends to improve over time, such that newcomers who have been in the U.S. longer tend to move less often than more recent arrivals. In addition, we can see whether the most recent arrivals to the U.S. are having to move more often or less often than the most recent arrivals in past years.

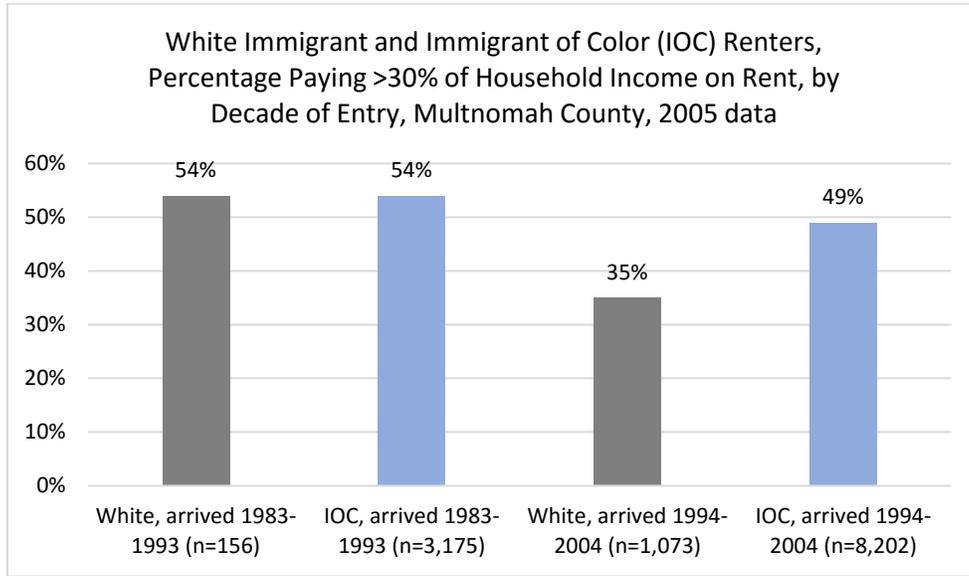


In 2005, the data showed that the most recent arrivals to the U.S. (who arrived from 1994-2004) were more likely to have moved in the past 2 years than had newcomers who had arrived a decade earlier (1983-1993). Among newcomers who had arrived in the previous 10 years, about half had moved within the past 2 years. That percentage was slightly higher among White immigrants (49%) than among immigrants of color (54%).

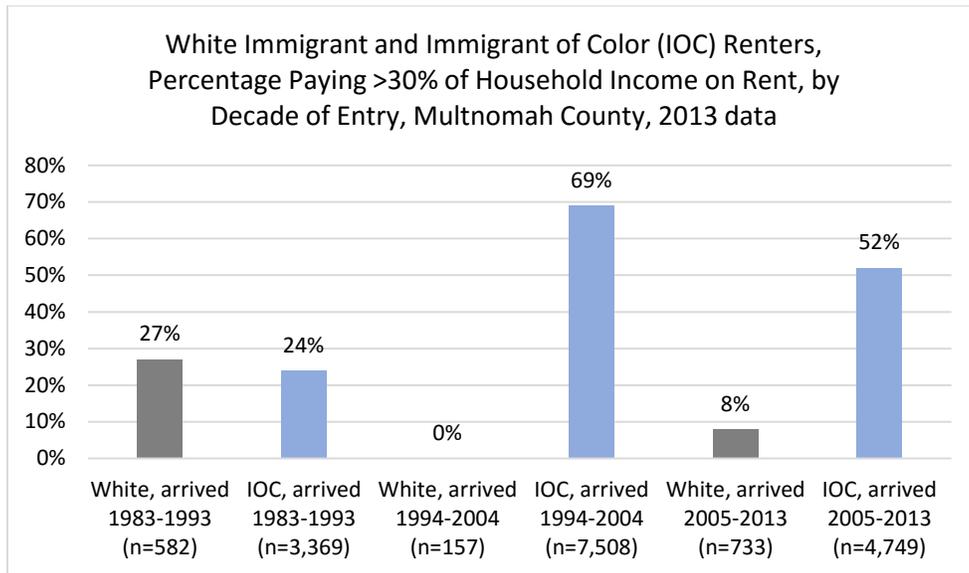


When we compare the 2005 data to more recent 2013 data, again the most recent arrivals to the U.S. are the most likely to have moved within the past 2 years. Newcomers who had been in the U.S. for at least 10 years had much longer housing tenures than did the most recent newcomers (who had arrived from 2005-2013). This suggests that the longer that newcomers have been in the U.S., the more likely are to have lived in the same residence for more than 2 years. However, the data also show that the percentage of the most recently-arrived newcomers who moved in the past two years is much higher in 2013 than it was in 2005, suggesting that housing instability for the most recent arrivals to the U.S. has gotten worse in recent years. In 2005, about half of newcomers who had arrived in the U.S. within the previous decade also had to move within the past two years; by 2013, that percentage rose to 67% for White immigrants and 58% for immigrants of color.

Housing tenure is often related to housing affordability, as residents often find themselves forced to relocate when rental prices increase. A common measure of housing affordability is the percentage that a household pays in monthly rent, with the expectation that most households should not have to pay more than 30% of their monthly income on rent. However, if we look at the percentage of immigrant tenants who do pay >30% of their household income on rent, it is clear that housing affordability is a significant issue among newcomers.



Again, these charts compare data from 2005 and 2013, and include data for White immigrants and immigrants of color according to their decade of entry to the U.S. The 2005 data show that just over half (54%) of newcomers who arrived between 1983-1993, spent more than 30% of their household income on housing, both White newcomers and newcomers of color. The more recent arrivals (those who came to the U.S. between 1994-2004) fared better: about a third (35%) of the most recently-arrived White immigrants spent more than 30% of their household income on rent, while a higher percentage (49%) of newcomers of color spent more than 30% of their household incomes on rent. This suggests that housing affordability had not improved for newcomers who had been in the U.S. for a longer period of time. In addition, in 2005, racial disparities on this measure were only evident among the most recently-arrived immigrants.

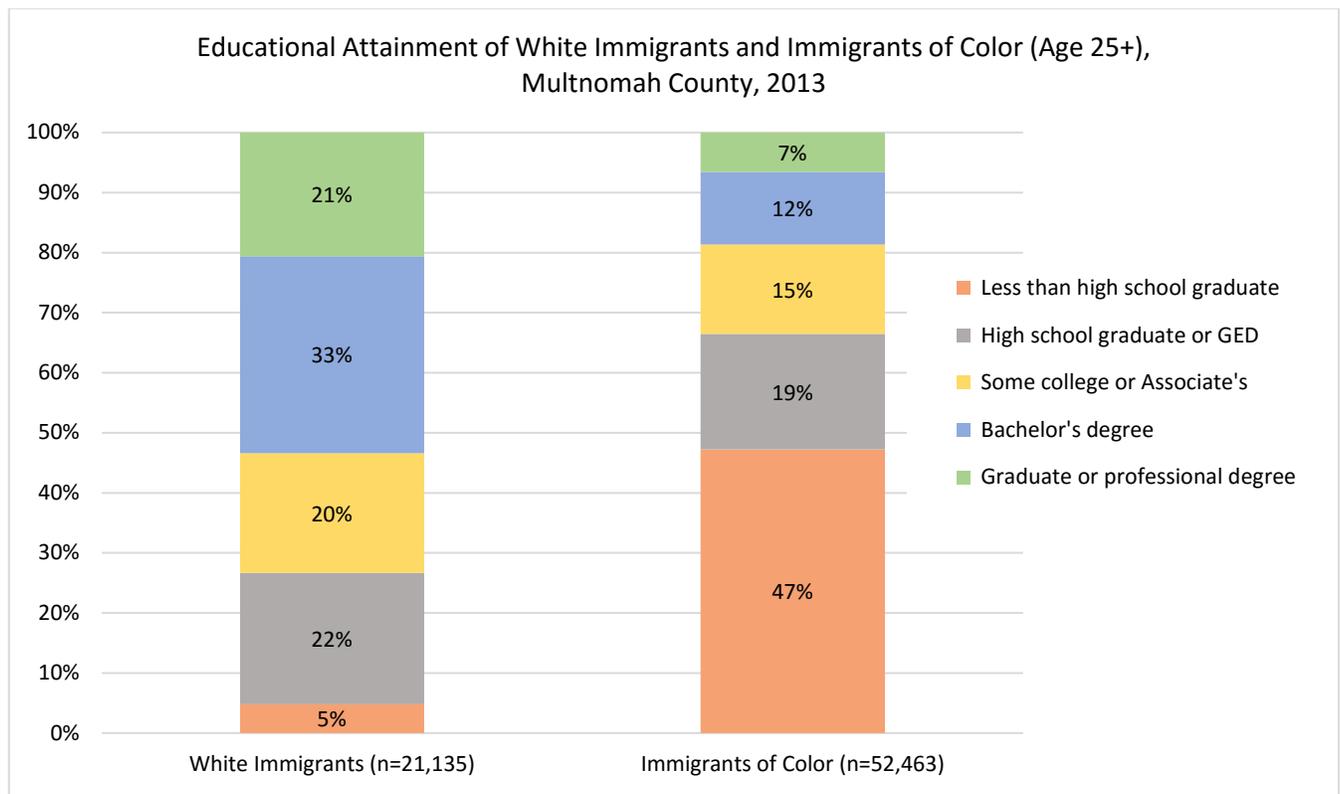


When we compare the 2005 data to more recent 2013 data, racial disparities become much more pronounced. Both White immigrants and immigrants of color who had been in the country for more than 20 years improved their situation, with percentages of renters paying more than 30% of household income on rent dropping from over half to about a quarter (27% for Whites and 24% for immigrants of color). The racial disparities among this group are small, with Whites actually faring slightly worse than immigrants of color. However, when we

shift focus to more recent immigrants (those who arrived to the U.S. after 1994), the percentage of immigrants of color paying more than 30% of household income on rent skyrockets. Nearly 70% of immigrants of color who arrived in the U.S. between 1994 and 2004 and over half (52%) of those who arrived between 2004-2013 pay >30% of household income on rent. Compare that with the data points for White immigrants, of whom none who arrived between 1994 and 2004, and only 8% who arrived after 2005, pay >30% of household income on rent.

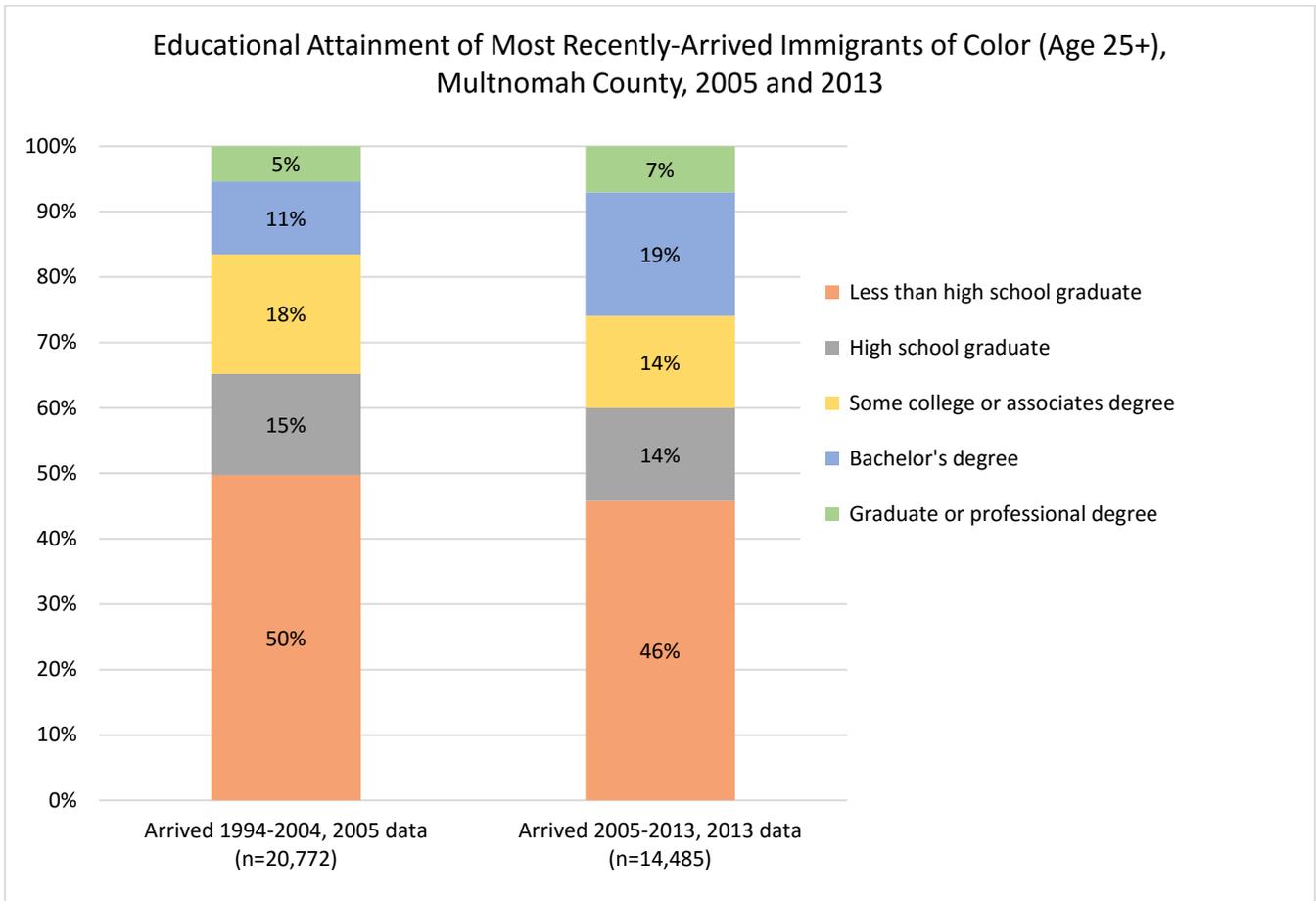
h. Educational Attainment

One of the motivations cited by many newcomers for moving to the U.S. is educational opportunity. Not only does the U.S. provide free public K-12 education; the U.S. also offers numerous opportunities for higher education. However, the ability of newcomers to take advantage of educational opportunities is not equally shared among White immigrants and immigrants of color.

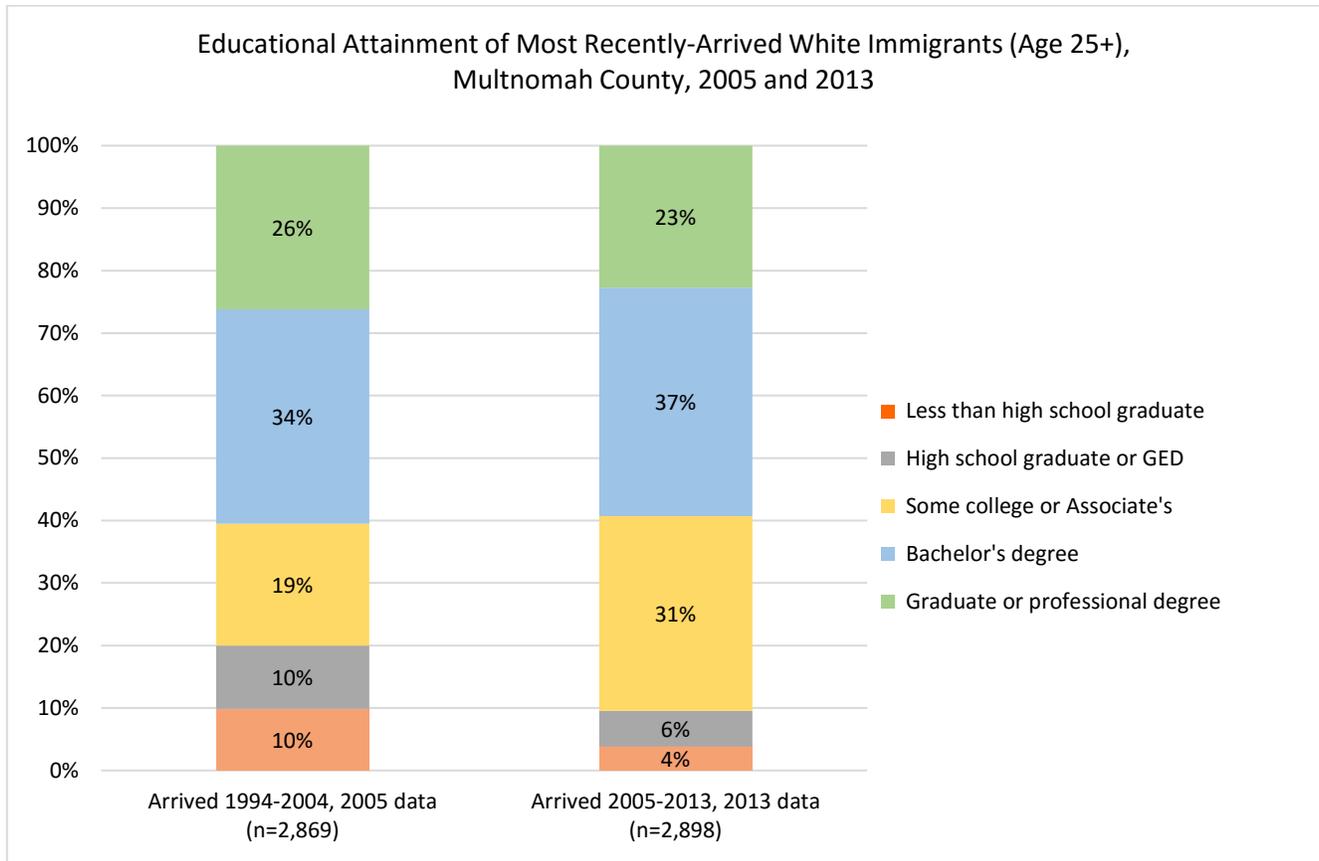


The above chart provides a glimpse into these disparities. According to 2013 data, overall, immigrants of color were much more likely than White immigrants to lack a high school diploma, with nearly half (47%) of immigrants of color in this category, compared to just 5% of White immigrants. In contrast, over half of White immigrants have Bachelor’s degrees or higher (54%), compared to just 19% of immigrants of color. While these data do not indicate which immigrants arrived in the U.S. with degrees and which immigrants earned those degrees while in the U.S., the potential impact of educational attainment on the earning potential and social status of each respective newcomer community cannot be understated.

Comparing data from 2005 and 2013, we looked at the most recently-arrived immigrants to see whether their level of educational attainment had changed over time. The charts below show this data for immigrants of color first, followed by White immigrants.



This chart shows educational attainment for the most recently-arrived newcomers of color age 25 or older from two data sets, one from 2005 and one from 2013. It shows that the most recently-arrived newcomers of color in Multnomah County have gotten slightly more educated in recent years. In 2005, only 16% of the most recently-arrived immigrants of color had Bachelor's degrees or higher, but that percentage jumps to 26% in 2013. Meanwhile, the percentage of newly-arrived immigrants of color with less than a high school diploma dropped slightly during that time, from 50% in 2005 to 46% in 2013.



The most newly-arrived White immigrants also became slightly more educated in recent years. The percentage of recently-arrived White immigrants with a Bachelor's degree or higher stayed the same, at 60%, but the percentage of recently-arrived White immigrants with less than a high school diploma dropped from 10% in 2005 to just 4% in 2013. The percentage of recently-arrived White immigrants with a high school diploma, GED or less dropped in half during this time, from 20% in 2005 to just 10% in 2013. The educational gains among recently-arrived White newcomers from 2005 to 2013 are in the category for those with some college credits or an Associate's degree, which grew from 19% in 2005 to 31% in 2013.

Closing Summary

This chapter provided an overview of newcomer population demographics in Multnomah County to better understand the specific characteristics of the regional immigrant population, as well as the diversity of experiences and backgrounds that newcomers bring to the region. These data give context to the various barriers and challenges faced by most newcomers to our region. As these data show, newcomers overall struggle in many areas much more than do White residents in Multnomah County. Among newcomers, too, opportunities are not equally shared, as White newcomers tend to fare much better economically and are much more likely to have earned college degrees than are newcomers of color. These data illustrate the compound challenges faced by newcomers of color—challenges not only related to settling in a new country, but additional challenges faced due to factors related to racism, discrimination, and lack of equal access and opportunity. These are just some of the various disparities faced by newcomers, and especially newcomers of color, in Multnomah County. Taken together with the qualitative information provided elsewhere in this report, a larger picture of the various challenges faced by newcomers becomes clear, as does potential strategies for ensuring that more newcomers—especially newcomers of color—are provided opportunities to settle and achieve in our community.

Getting to the Truth: Busting Myths about Newcomers

By Cassie Lovett and Ann Curry-Stevens

Introduction

Misconceptions about newcomers begin with fear and a story, and spread through a narrative perpetuated by societal norms and discourse. Once a narrative is established it is very difficult to change the story and its trajectory. From issues ranging from language and jobs, to taxes and public assistance, many Americans hold mistaken beliefs about who newcomers are, what they contribute and why they are in the U.S. This chapter aims to identify popular myths that exist in the U.S. imagination about newcomers in order to dispel them through factual information and data. The eleven myths about newcomers outlined in this chapter are followed by data and information intended to equip the audience with facts to challenge the dominant discourse. We begin with a focus on the current myth about Syrian refugees presenting a grave risk of plotting to attack Americans – as such discourse is prevalent at astounding levels as 2015 comes to a close.

As defined previously, there are different categories of newcomers with various statuses that dictate what privileges are accessible to them in the U.S. The most common distinction used in this chapter is between authorized and unauthorized newcomers or immigrants. Authorized newcomers are legally permitted to reside in the U.S., while unauthorized newcomers are not.

Common Myths Pertaining to Newcomers

A. *“Today’s refugees might be terrorists. We have to block their entry to keep the USA safe.”*

BUSTED: Since 9/11, the risks of being a victim of terrorism on American soil is minute, at about one-in-12,600,000. About two dozen Americans have been killed by “foreign-inspired terrorism” in the USA during that time.⁹³ Almost none of the terrorist acts have involved refugees.⁹⁴

The narrative: While fear is an understandable response to acts of terror, one must not simply respond out of such fear, but rather deal with concerns by an evidence-based assessment of risk. To understand the risk, we look at research that has tracked deaths by terrorism, and compared these with risks from other causes. We also look at the prevalence of convictions of terrorism in the USA by race and immigration status.

The leading cause of death in the USA is from car crashes, and those who live in the USA have about a 1-in-9,000 likelihood of dying from a car crash in a given year,⁹⁵ rising to a chance of one-in-640 in the last 14 years (since 9/11). The equivalent rate of dying from a terrorist act on American soil, since 9/11, is about one-in-12,600,000.⁹⁶ This means that each of us are almost twenty thousand times more likely to die in a car crash than of a terrorism act.

Do such risks cause us to be cautious about driving a car? Yes. Does it cause us to stop being exposed to cars? No. The same is true for refugee acceptance – let us continue due diligence, as the White House explains, whereby “refugees undergo more rigorous screening than anyone else we allow into the United States.”⁹⁷ Each applicant is scrutinized by “enhanced interagency security checks” including the National Counterterrorism Center/Intelligence Community, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the State Department, the US Customs and

In 2016, four local Muslim leaders led a forum on “*The Threat of Islamophobia*” through the City Club of Portland. Their insights are an important ingredient for halting the anti-Muslim hate speech moving across the USA. Speakers were Dr. Kambiz Ghanea Bassiri (Reed College faculty), Homa Miazad (Portland Community College), Wajdi Said (Muslim Educational Trust), Nadia Najim (high school student) and Kayse Jama (Center for Intercultural Organizing).



Border Protection's National Targeting Center-Passenger, the Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight Program, and in the case of Syrian refugees, potentially by the USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate.⁹⁸

We turn now to some behaviors that we should be more afraid of (than terrorism), but the American public tends to shoulder these fears with relative ease. The actual risks of being killed were:

- By starvation – in 2013, the Center for Disease Control reported 3,382 Americans died from nutritional deficiencies, making it 1,900 times more likely to die of starvation than of terrorism.⁹⁹
- By lightning – The CDC reported that about one-in-7,000,000 Americans are killed by lightning each year, making it doubly likely that one would be killed by lightning than terrorism.¹⁰⁰
- By taking prescription drugs – in 2013, the CDC reported that 38,851 Americans died from accidental poisoning, with most being from prescribed painkillers.¹⁰¹ This means that approximately 544,000 Americans have died over the time period since 9/11, making it almost 22,000 times more likely that one would die from taking prescription drugs than from terrorism.

Says one report: “If a potential terrorist is determined to enter America to do harm, there are easier and faster ways to get there than by going through the complex refugee resettlement process.”¹⁰²

B. “They’re all ‘illegals.’ We need to protect our borders from them.”

BUSTED: This belief doesn’t account for the multitude of different newcomers’ immigration statuses and legal rights. Many currently-unauthorized immigrants were once authorized to be in the U.S., but overstayed their visas. In addition, our borders are more secure than they’ve ever been.

The narrative: Browsing the Internet or flipping through a newspaper, various phrases are used to categorize different groups of people who were not born in the U.S. Usually it is difficult to decipher *who* reports are referencing in their coverage because of this ambiguity. Following a major advocacy campaign, “Drop the I-Word” by Race Forward, major news outlets like *The Associated Press* and *LA Times* have banned the use of “illegal immigrant” because it lacks specificity and generalizes a large group of people. When the media discusses newcomers, these distinctions or even acknowledgement of the various categories of immigrants are rarely noted. The term “illegal immigrant” is often used to describe undocumented immigrants and immigrants who have overstayed their visas and are no longer authorized to stay by the U.S. However, the use of “illegal” alone or in combination with “alien” or “immigrant” has been consistently part of a popular narrative used to describe a broad range of immigrants, and it is often considered insensitive. Recently, the media has heightened its consciousness and awareness about the language used to describe these millions of U.S. residents, and when the debate over immigration reform hits the news, “undocumented” or “unauthorized immigrant” has become more commonplace in the shifting discourse.¹⁰³

Authorized and unauthorized: The majority of immigrants in the U.S. are authorized and have some sort of legal status recognizing them as “immigrants.” In 2013, the Portland-metro region had 5,934 Legal Permanent Residents (Green Card holders).¹⁰⁴ Of the 38 million immigrants in the U.S., only about one-third lack legal authorization.¹⁰⁵ Over 40% of unauthorized immigrants still in this country prolonged their stay in the U.S. after temporary visas expired, so they were once legally allowed in the states.¹⁰⁶ Unauthorized immigrants are a small share of most states’ populations and only consist of 5% of the labor force nationally.¹⁰⁷ As estimated by the Migration Policy Institute, 53% of Oregon’s immigrants are considered unauthorized.¹⁰⁸ Immigrants choose to come to the U.S. and stay for many reasons: to flee persecution, improve quality of life, to be near family, or to fill vacant jobs. Newcomers to Portland are not different. Newcomers to Portland share these desires to find better jobs and to be near family and friends.

The border: When compared to other states, immigrants in Oregon who are unauthorized are more likely to have resided in the U.S. for over 10 years.¹⁰⁹ United States Border Patrol enforcement has toughened travel between national borders in recent decades. In the last 12 years, Border Patrol doubled the number of officers stationed on the southwestern U.S. border and increased their budget substantially. In spite of this, the undocumented population doubled during this time period.¹¹⁰ More is spent on immigration enforcement than any of the other federal enforcement programs combined.¹¹¹ Increased border patrol doesn't change the economic, political, or personal motivations driving immigration to the U.S. Pressure to cross the border as an unauthorized immigrant is directly related to a lack of legal pathways for immigrants to come to the U.S. and meet the job market's needs.¹¹²

C. "They will bring extremism with them – we are at risk"

BUSTED: US-based extremism is most pronounced among White domestic-born persons. When extremism occurs in immigrant communities, the best response is to build partnerships to ensure there are pathways of mutuality between justice systems and immigrant communities.

The narrative: The majority of perpetrators of terror-based attacks, between 2000 and 2012, were by violent environmental, animal rights and anti-abortion groups, and an assortment of unaffiliated individuals.¹¹³ Examples of these groups are the Earth Liberation Front, the Animal Liberation Front, and Anti-Abortion Violent Extremists. From the group of known perpetrators (at 161 attacks), six are known to have been conducted by foreign interests. That means that our greatest risk, by far, (at 96.3% of attacks) comes from home-grown groups. When focusing on known terrorist groups (of which there are 125), 20% have a religious foundation. Among those, 33% are rooted in Christianity, 22% are rooted in Islam, 11% in cults, 4% in Hinduism, and 30% are rooted in Judaism.¹¹⁴ Known factors that do place us at risk are not sites of high levels of immigrants and refugees, but rather sites where there is higher poverty and unemployment.¹¹⁵ Of interest, far-right perpetrators of violence live in more white-dominant locations, and environmental perpetrators tend to emerge from higher income, less diverse communities. In short, studies of known terrorist events reveal we are at greater risk of being in an attack from white home-grown perpetrators emerging from non-diverse communities.

When confronting the myth that immigration itself creates not just terror threats (which we have just debunked), but extremist beliefs which might be a "breeding ground" for violence, that too is debunked. A recent Canadian study of four immigrant groups – Afghan, Somali, Syrian and Tamil – demonstrated that the communities are similarly concerned about extremism, and are allies in the struggle to turn youth away from such beliefs, as similarly seen in non-immigrant communities: these communities are "willing allies for rooting out extremism among their often young¹¹⁶ and isolated members." Similar research from Thompson indicates that "on the whole, the communities under examination should not be viewed as 'suspect' but rather as important allies in efforts to prevent radicalization."¹¹⁷ These research advocates for counter-terrorism efforts to move beyond security agencies and into non-profit community groups to identify and support vulnerable youth, becoming known as "community based approaches for countering radicalization."¹¹⁸

D. "They take our jobs."

BUSTED: Job competition among newcomers and native-born U.S. residents isn't common, and newcomers are job creators, not takers.

The narrative: Complementary jobs and skills... not competition: A job market is defined by the number of jobs available in a geographic area in a specific kind of work.¹¹⁹ The job market for native-born U.S. residents is not always the same market that employs newcomers. Much of the time, the skills newcomers bring are complementary skills to that of the native-born workforce. Newcomers come to this country to fill vacant jobs that have no available workers, whether low- or high-skilled. Many immigrants have limited English skills and

lower education levels, making their skills much different from those of native-born residents.¹²⁰ In some cases, businesses are not able to find enough workers with the education needed for highly skilled jobs in the science, technology, engineering and math fields. Industries such as these need and rely on visa programs to expand a newcomer workforce so they can continue to innovate and grow. Some local companies that benefit from a newcomer workforce are Nike, Oregon Health & Sciences University, and Intel.¹²¹ It is worth noting that according to Vedder, et al., during the timeframe during which the U.S. had the greatest influx of newcomers, the unemployment rate was at its lowest. This provides even more evidence that newcomers do not take jobs from native-born residents.¹²² Perhaps the group most affected by new immigration is newcomers who have been in the U.S. for several years, because they possess similar skill-sets as newcomers.¹²³

Job creators: Newcomers are entrepreneurial and create jobs for U.S. residents. Immigrants are over twice more likely to start new business ventures than native-born residents.¹²⁴ In the U.S., 18% of small business owners are immigrants. Overall, immigrant-owned businesses employed 4.7 million workers in 2012.¹²⁵ In the state of Oregon in 2010, 10.7% of business owners in the state were foreign-born.¹²⁶ Locally, the Portland metro area's immigrant-owned business rate outweighs its foreign-born share of the population.¹²⁷ This means in Portland, a higher proportion of foreign-born residents than native-born residents own businesses, which leads to more job opportunities for the local economy. Nationally, immigrants founded 90 of the "Fortune 500" companies; Intel is one of these companies.¹²⁸ Schnitzer Steel was also founded by an immigrant, and today it employs more than 3,600 people and generates \$3.3 billion in revenues annually.¹²⁹ There is ample evidence that newcomers create jobs, not take jobs, including in Portland and Oregon.

E. "Our economy is bad enough, we don't need them bringing us down."

BUSTED: Newcomers boost the U.S. economy, especially as baby boomers retire and new jobs are created.

Workforce needs: A quarter of the U.S. population is beginning to take steps towards retirement, meaning there will be a huge negative impact on the labor force and tax base in coming years. It is anticipated that between 2010 and 2020, there will be 33.7 million job openings to fill the void left by retiring baby boomers (individuals born in the U.S. between 1946 and 1964). This does not include new jobs that will be created due to growth in the market.¹³⁰ Around 22% of new positions created between now and 2020 will demand workers to have master's degrees. Among foreign-born newcomers, 25% more of them have graduate degrees compared to native-born workers.¹³¹ A critical piece of this is that 70% of newcomers come to the U.S. during their prime working age, much of the time already equipped with skills and education to contribute to the workforce without cost to the U.S.¹³² With anticipated vacancies in the labor force and the toll that will put on the U.S. Social Security and Medicare systems, there will have to be ways to mitigate the effects of baby boomers aging out of the job market. One option is to fill these jobs with newcomers and immigrants with working visas. Case-in-point, the U.S. will need newcomers to sustain and grow the economy. Immigrants are critical to economic growth, and it is estimated that immigration provides a net gain of \$10 billion a year for the U.S. economy.¹³³ Much of the discourse surrounding this myth focuses on the strain undocumented or unauthorized immigrants supposedly put on the economy. Locally, if unauthorized immigrants were taken out of Oregon, it would reduce economic activity by \$3.4 billion and 19,259 jobs would be lost.¹³⁴ Thus, local and national job markets need newcomers to sustain, innovate and promote economic growth; without immigrants to fill jobs in this country, our economy would suffer.

F. "More of them means less money for me."

BUSTED: Newcomers actually have a positive effect on income for native-born workers.

Wage increases: When the number of newcomers is higher in a particular geographical area, wages for native-born workers in that area are higher as well. According to a study by Strauss, locations with higher levels of

newcomers also have a lower unemployment rate and higher wages in the native-born population, especially for communities of color.¹³⁵ A study by the Brookings Institution reported that native-born workers' wages increase between 0.1 and 0.6% on average during periods of higher immigration.¹³⁶ In a report by the Economic Policy Institute, wages for native-born workers were found to increase 0.4% due specifically to immigration. Other research studies have found similar increases for the native-born laborers. As mentioned previously, native-born residents and newcomers often have complementary skills, which means they tend to choose different types of jobs for themselves. In places with higher concentrations of immigrants, the native-born population tends to see increased wages.

We also know that, collectively, immigrant presence in the USA stimulates the economy at levels that are higher than their population warrants. Nationally, the immigrant population makes up 13% of the population but contributes 14.7% of the economic activity of the nation.¹³⁷ This confirms an earlier study from 2007 data, where major metropolitan areas, including Portland, saw equivalent numbers of immigrants and contributions to the economy.¹³⁸ This means that immigrants contribute more than their share to the economy, making it unlikely that they drain native-born wages.

G. "They don't even pay taxes."

BUSTED: All newcomers pay taxes regardless of the lack of benefits they receive from them. Also, while newcomers free to do whatever they want with their taxed incomes, the vast majority spend it all in the USA, stimulating the economy with each dollar.

Taxes and foreign investment: Working immigrants (including most undocumented immigrants) have no choice but to pay taxes through their paychecks. Automatic deductions from paychecks for income taxes, Social Security and Medicare come out their paychecks. Among undocumented immigrants, over 50% of them have these payroll deductions in the USA even though they are not permitted to draw upon those benefits.¹³⁹ This means that undocumented immigrants are helping to sustain entitlement programs for other residents in the USA, but don't benefit from these programs themselves.

According to a Cato Institute study, immigrants and businesses owned by them contribute \$162 billion in tax revenue through paycheck deductions.¹⁴⁰ In Oregon, undocumented newcomers contribute up to \$140 million in Social Security taxes a year.¹⁴¹ For Medicare, up to \$33 million goes from undocumented immigrants' paychecks to the federal government.¹⁴² Collectively, undocumented immigrants in Oregon added \$83 million in local, state and federal taxes in 2012.¹⁴³ With the money left in their checks, much of it is put back into the regional economies, whether by paying property taxes through rental payments or buying food, goods and services. In Oregon, it is typical for undocumented households to earn \$36,000 a year, which collectively contributes somewhere between \$2.3 billion and \$4.5 billion back into the local economy.¹⁴⁴ Giving unauthorized immigrants the opportunity and safety to work "on the books" (and thus have payroll deductions) could increase tax contributions by \$38 million in the state of Oregon.¹⁴⁵ Even though newcomers as a whole also send billions of dollars annually to their home countries, it is important to realize that these actions are targeted foreign investments from the USA¹⁴⁶ By sending money back, U.S. immigrants are making it possible for more people to stay in their home countries.¹⁴⁷

H. "They just want the free handouts available in America."

BUSTED: Newcomers' motivations to come to America don't include entitlements and social services; most of the time, newcomers cannot access or don't qualify for assistance programs anyway, even though immigrants pay for these services by paying taxes.

Government assistance: Newcomers relocate to the USA most often to connect with family and get a job. Immigrants participate in the labor force at a consistently higher rate than native-born workers. As previously

mentioned, newcomers pay into our social benefits system through income taxes, despite often times not qualifying for those same benefits. One study estimated that the taxes newcomers pay total up to \$30 billion more than the amount of government assistance and services used by newcomers.¹⁴⁸ This is due to a fact that some unauthorized immigrants never file taxes, so they are unable to receive any sort of refund of the tax dollars withheld from their pay.¹⁴⁹ Other key reasons include lack of eligibility for the social programs due to their immigration status, as well as difficulty navigate the system to obtain assistance in the USA.

Authorized newcomers are able to receive some government assistance depending on their specific circumstances. For some social service programs, newcomers have a waiting period of five years as a resident before they can apply.¹⁵⁰ There are other stipulations for certain types of immigrants. In 2013, 87,000 farm workers traveled to work on farms in Oregon.¹⁵¹ Migrant farmworkers sometimes have the right to expedited nutrition assistance.¹⁵² Economic relief programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) help keep workers and their families fed, and gives flexibility for farmworkers to invest more in the local economy. In terms of health insurance, even with the Affordable Care Act and the provision of healthcare for newcomers, there is limited subsidized health coverage for authorized immigrants and no health coverage provided for undocumented immigrants.¹⁵³

Undocumented or unauthorized immigrants are usually not able to qualify for SNAP (“food stamps”), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), cash assistance, Social Security, Medicare or unemployment insurance. Emergency services can be utilized in cases of pregnancy, domestic violence, childcare benefits or urgent medical needs for all newcomers.¹⁵⁴ If immigrants’ children are U.S. citizens, then those children can qualify for some of these government assistance programs. One program newcomers are able to access regardless of immigration status is Women Infants and Children (WIC), the nutrition assistance program for women and children. This is critical because we know that upward of 22% of children under the age of 6 in the USA have immigrant parents.¹⁵⁵ Access to healthy and nutritious food from conception to birth and through early childhood is critical to successful long-term development and positive health outcomes throughout the life course.

I. “They want to be here but won’t be like us.”

BUSTED: Newcomers are integrating into U.S. society and more quickly than ever before – it just takes time to notice.

Language and socioeconomics: It is common for native-born U.S. residents to accuse newcomers of not integrating or assimilating into dominant society. Integration is a mutual and dynamic process by which newcomers and society co-create cohesive and inclusive communities.¹⁵⁶ Integration can take a long time, and its extent is often uneven when comparing different populations. Language is one indicator frequently considered a measure of integration. Data show that recent newcomers are learning English more quickly than immigrants who entered the USA between 1900 and 1920. Eighty percent of second-generation immigrants report speaking only English, or speaking English very well, and for third generation immigrants, nearly 100% speak English.¹⁵⁷

Socioeconomic advancement is another critical measure of integration. Native-born U.S. residents have a higher share of white-collar jobs than immigrants do; however, 46% of immigrants are employed in white-collar jobs. This percentage is higher than the total percentage employed in all other types of occupations combined. The annual family income earned by immigrant families does not differ much from that of native-born families because there are usually more workers in immigrant families.¹⁵⁸ According to Park and Myers, first generation immigrants' children do better economically than their parents.¹⁵⁹ Evidence of economic mobility from one immigrant generation to the next is a definite sign that integration is happening.

Calling it home: Home-buying, participating in civic life and naturalizing are other signs of integration. Many newcomers are settling in and buying homes in the USA, a study on home ownership in California showed huge increases in Latino immigrant home-buying based on length of residency. For those who were in the USA for 10 years, 16.4% owned homes, whereas 64.6% owned homes if they had been here over 30 years. In addition to home ownership, records show that immigrants are naturalizing (becoming a U.S. citizen) more quickly than in the past.¹⁶⁰ With citizenship comes the right to vote. There are disparities in voter registration when native-born citizens are compared with naturalized citizens. National data from 2008 shows that naturalized citizens from Asia and Latin America are lagging behind, with 57% and 62% of them not registered to vote, respectively. For native-born citizens of voting age, 71% were registered. In terms of actual voting, 64% of native-born citizens reported voting while 54% of naturalized citizens did.¹⁶¹ Locally, there are efforts to support voter registration and political participation in communities of color. One notable example is the local organization Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), who registers 4,500 voters each year. It is obvious that newcomers are integrating into American society, and in places that there are disparities or groups are lagging, it will remain important to examine policies that prohibit and promote integration as a mutual process.

J. "They need to wait their turn."

BUSTED: Waiting for an opportunity to immigrate can take a long time and a lot of money; meanwhile, there are still jobs to be filled in the U.S.

What it takes: It is a difficult, expensive and long road for most people who are hoping to immigrate to the USA. Early in U.S. history, it was much easier for newcomers to enter the USA and maintain residency. Nowadays there are numerous and complex rules and hoops for immigrants to jump through; had ancestors of native-born residents tried to get past the USA borders today, many would not be allowed in.¹⁶² The State Department indicated that 4.4 million people are awaiting progress on their immigration request, and some of these people have been waiting 20 years.¹⁶³ Even if newcomers get to the USA legally, they have to wait five years before applying for citizenship and pay nearly \$700 as a naturalization fee. Many times there are huge backlogs in citizenship applications and the wait can be years long before being processed and tested.¹⁶⁴ That adds up to a lot of bureaucracy, and learning to navigate a new system in a new country can be daunting.

K. "You can't trust them – they're criminals."

BUSTED: Newcomers – authorized or unauthorized – are not criminals for being in the USA, and they actually present less threat than native-born residents.

In 2015, following the rising anti-Muslim speeches in the Republican leadership race, more than a dozen faith leaders came together in Portland to publicly oppose this bigotry. In response, Portland City Council passed a resolution condemning this hatred, declaring the city's support for the Muslim community and affirming Portland's welcome for all immigrants and refugees.



Crime: Even if immigrants are not legally authorized to be in the USA, they are not criminals. The U.S. legal system considers unauthorized presence in the USA a civil, not criminal, matter.¹⁶⁵ Even as the number of unauthorized immigrants has doubled in recent years, the violent crime rate has fallen 34% and property crime has declined 26%. America’s Majority Foundation found that states with higher immigration growth exhibit lower crime rates. Native-born Americans have higher incarceration rates than those of authorized and unauthorized newcomers, per the National Institute of Corrections.¹⁶⁶ Data shows that newcomers are less criminally-involved than their native-born counterparts. A study found male immigrant youth had five times lower incarceration rates than their native-born counterparts.¹⁶⁷ Immigrants pose less of a threat to other U.S. residents than do native-born Americans. Rather, many newcomers experience a culture of fear in the USA that is confirmed by lived experiences of anti-immigrant sentiment from the dominant discourse. Understandably, it makes sense that newcomer communities would be less likely to engage in criminal activities because of fear of being sent away from this new life for which they worked so hard. This is true for both authorized and unauthorized newcomers.¹⁶⁸

L. “They are foreigners... we’ve got to take care of our own, first.”

BUSTED: The majority of immigrants in the USA were born here. And among those not born here, the majority is naturalized – meaning that the USA considers them citizens, and no longer belonging to any country other than the USA.

A nation built by immigrants: The USA is a country of immigrants. Everyone, with the exception of Indigenous persons, can trace their lineage back to another country or continent. The distinction of what makes someone a “real” American and what makes one a “foreigner” is simply a question of the length of one’s memory.

The white American public tends to view most people of color as foreign, and not belonging on American soil. This is a feature of “whiteness” and a form of bias that is rooted in an idea that people of the white race are somehow more legitimately American than people of color. The roots of such a cognitive distortion (or “thinking error”) are based in how white people are socialized to believe in their superiority. It is this stance that needs to be challenged, rather than the need for newcomer communities to defend their right to belong.

Refugee compassion and rationality: When it comes to refugee settlement in the USA, we need to give priority to settling those currently without a home and those facing displacement, violence, and persecution. Our shared humanity needs to be foregrounded over differences based on birth country in these circumstances. Even though some Americans might deny the humanity of refugees, failure to intervene and welcome refugees into the country is likely to be a risky act, because a world with untended human suffering is a world that quickly becomes vulnerable to terrorism and acts of war.

Conclusion

Ample evidence exists that challenges dominant discourses and misconceptions about newcomers. This is far from a complete list of the myths about newcomers that exist in U.S. society. The hope is that this chapter provides facts that the public can utilize to challenge the narratives that currently exist, and that these corrective facts will serve as a stimulus to prompt more exploration of truth in service to newcomers and the value they bring to this country. Though sometimes forgotten, the USA is a nation of newcomers and has been since its inception as a country. Regardless of legal status or authorization, immigrants contribute greatly to the economic fabric and social vibrancy of the USA.

Policies and Practices for Newcomer Integration

By Anne Sinkey, Marie-Elena Reyes and Ann Curry-Stevens

Introduction

As discussed earlier, the challenges faced by newcomers to the U.S. and to Portland are significant, and these challenges vary according to country of origin, race/ethnicity, length of time in the U.S., and education level. However, these challenges are not insurmountable: research and pilot programs from cities and organizations across the USA and Canada provide examples of communities who took concrete steps to understand the needs and strengths of newcomers. Only by understanding how immigrants engage in the region and what they experience can we begin to meet their needs while building on their strengths, and to provide integration opportunities through which the traditions and resilience of new and existing residents build upon each other. Strength lies in diversity, but only under conditions where cultural synergy, rather than absorption, can occur.

This chapter begins with an overview of the idea of integration—ways in which researchers have understood and defined the interaction between native-born and foreign-born communities in the USA. This is followed by a very brief overview of the impact of policy decisions on immigration and immigrants in U.S. history and compares some policies in the USA to those found in other countries. The latter sections of this chapter focus on innovative, tested policies and best practices for newcomer integration drawn from various cities and towns throughout the world.

Understanding the Assets of Immigrants and Refugees

Prior to the bulk of this chapter's focus on the integration tasks held by both immigrants and their new home country that in this case is the USA, we focus attention on the assets with which immigrants and refugees arrive in the country – namely those of abundant aspirations and ambitions.

Framework for Understanding Integration

Researchers have proposed various models to understand the complex, mutual impact of immigration on both newcomers and native residents. While most attention usually is paid to the need for newcomers to change themselves to better “fit” their new home,¹⁶⁹ attention to the fact that this is a two-way process is increasing.¹⁷⁰ As far back as 1974, researchers distinguished between *acculturation*, where immigrants interact with their new home without the need for acceptance from native residents, and *assimilation*, where such interaction includes a desire for acceptance from native residents.¹⁷¹ More recently, other scholars have identified differences between *separatism*, where integration is actively avoided; *assimilation*, where culture from the home country is rejected in favor of the new culture; and *integration*, where elements of both the culture of origin and the new culture combine to create a coherent bicultural identity.¹⁷² Whatever the model, the specific nature of the social and cultural context in which newcomers arrive has a large influence on the manner and extent to which integration occurs; characteristics of local neighborhoods, geographic elements, and other contextual factors have a “moderator effect” on integration of immigrants in a new home.¹⁷³

Colored Pencils (founded by Nim Xuto, and run from 2009-13) hosted gatherings of community artists and performers from diverse cultural groups, aiming to facilitate intercultural learning and to celebrate Portland's cultures. Nourishing individual and collective psyches existed alongside highlighting the assets and cultural contributions of our diverse communities.



In April 1820, John Quincy Adams discussed his expectations of German immigrants in a piece written for the *Niles' Weekly Register*: “they must cast off the European skin, never to resume it. They must look forward to

their posterity rather than backward to their ancestors....”¹⁷⁴ This sentiment—in which immigrants are expected to reject their native culture and fully assimilate into the culture of the USA—continues to be mirrored by many native-born U.S. residents today. The backdrop of discussions on immigrant integration is permeated by persistent fears about immigrants’ ability to integrate into mainstream society. Pew Research Center polls reveal that Americans would prefer less immigration overall, and that a large proportion of those surveyed believe that current immigrants “are not as willing to integrate as immigrants of the past.”¹⁷⁵

However, over the course of four major waves of immigration to the United States, immigrants and their descendants have demonstrated the ability to integrate, as residents in communities in which immigrants arrive continue to learn how best to receive and welcome newcomers. As integration entails mutual change, it is in the best interest of the receiving community to ensure the facilitation of the integration process in prompting favorable economic, political, and social outcomes for immigrant newcomers and their descendants.

As noted by the UN Research Institute for Social Development, social integration is generally understood to be a positive goal, as it is thought to lead to increased identification and solidarity between disparate groups of people, as well as to invite more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. However, a push for inclusion can obscure ways in which existing social, economic, or political systems are themselves problematic, as well as to obscure ways in which alternative systems familiar to newcomers might themselves offer preferable alternatives to existing systems.¹⁷⁶ Imposing integration may not only cause harm by sacrificing diversity for uniformity; it could sacrifice opportunities for innovation and a reconceptualization of existing social systems had those systems familiar to newcomers been taken seriously. A naïve push for inclusion has the risk of ignoring larger systems of exclusion that may be at work. As such, focusing solely in the integration of newcomers into an existing community pulls attention away from the ways in which international migration is a result of large-scale, economic effects of globalization and neoliberalism. As governments and organizations work towards implementing effective integration strategies for newcomers, these larger issues should be tackled simultaneously and be the context through which local policies and programs are understood.

Role of Policy Intervention

Policies are the ways in which frameworks for understanding immigration and integration are implemented, whether for improved opportunity or for harm. Immigration policies outline the requirements for entry, residency, and naturalization for newcomers to a country. Integration programs provide supports necessary for immigrants to access information and services to fulfill naturalization requirements and to become contributing members of the host society. Historically, national economic agendas have steered immigration policies. When immigrant labor was needed for agriculture or building the railroads, for instance, immigration policies were relaxed and laborers were actively recruited (e.g. the U.S. Braceros Program). In times of economic downturn, both the USA and Canada codified racist and xenophobic practices through immigration policy such as the Chinese Head Tax or the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as multiple other waves of exclusion acts aimed at restricting entry to specific ethnic/cultural groups (such as Blacks and Jews in Canada or Chinese, Japanese, and generally Eastern Hemisphere countries in the USA). Only since the 1960s were immigration policies (in both countries) changed to remove language explicitly restricting entry based on race and ethnic origin. In 2015—the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Immigration Act—U.S. immigration policy continues to be mediated by cultural fears related to job losses and terrorism on the one hand, and the realities of USA reliance on immigration for economic growth on the other.

But while government policies related to immigration can mean the difference between successful integration or a stalled start to a new life, most discussions of newcomer integration in the USA focus much more on the responsibilities of individual immigrants than on the important factor of policy. The federal government has played a relatively minor role in the overall integration effort, with its most visible initiative being a website

(www.welcometoUSA.gov) that provides information about integration resources. Lack of federal policy for immigrant integration is linked to circumstances where integration is most challenged: in the overcrowded and underfunded education system within immigrant communities, the legalization process for undocumented laborers, and the economic turndown of current times. The lack of an integrated and comprehensive federal approach to immigration belies the fact that, as Tomás Jiménez of the Immigration Policy Center writes, “immigration is no longer a regional phenomenon, concentrated in a few, mostly border states,” but rather, “immigrant integration is a national issue.”¹⁷⁷ Jiménez and others believe that the federal government would be best served to partner with state and local governments, as well as non-profits and the private sector, to create immigration policies that serve a multitude of communities and interests. Government policy, especially related to the legal status of immigrants, has real lived effects on immigrants’ lives, as well as the extent of immigrant integration.

In contrast, Canadian officials view immigrant integration as the shared responsibility of federal and provincial bodies: the federal government provides basic social services while communities respond to other needs as determined by the specific circumstances of immigrant groups. Additionally, Canada has adopted a multiculturalism policy that recognizes its diversity and bilingual commitment to its society. There, barriers to citizenship are minimal compared to the USA: refugees and economic immigrants may apply for citizenship after three years within the country. However, immigrants who enter the country to reunify with their immigrant family members already in Canada (who agree to sponsor their family member for 10 years) are not eligible for some social benefits until 10 years after their arrival. Delays such as this, and any policy where newcomers are able to live in Canada without becoming permanent residents, are seen as deterrents to integration.¹⁷⁸ While the multicultural orientation to newcomer arrivals is preferred to the assimilation orientation that is present in the USA, Canada has not ensured that racial inequities are addressed, as the majority of Canada’s institutions and systems do not collect either race-based data or data on one’s immigration stature or length of time in the country. Canada is just beginning to address inequities in education, child welfare, and policing – lagging far behind the USA, but perhaps (although we do not know this because disparity analysis is rarely conducted) with smaller challenges to address.

Other countries’ policies also differ from those in the USA. Australian policies do not require that immigrants give up citizenship to their prior countries, and Australia allows residents to apply for naturalization after three years—without extensive English competency exams. Despite efforts for some E.U. countries to develop unified approaches to immigration, policies vary widely from country to country. Norway, Sweden, Holland, France and the U.K. have liberal policies for naturalization, while Italy, Spain, and Poland are relatively restrictive.

Historically, the USA has either defined policy for “Americanizing” immigrants (in the early 1900’s) or adopted no formal integration policy for most immigrants (with the exception of refugees), deferring responsibility for integration to the multitude of independent immigrant-serving organizations, non-profits, and community groups. Various U.S. state legislatures have passed laws to facilitate immigrant integration (in stark contrast to the federal government’s paralysis in passing comprehensive immigration reform). In 2007, state governments passed more bills expanding the rights of immigrants (19%) than contracting their rights (11%). Several state, county, and local governments sponsor programs and/or partner with local non-governmental organizations who advocate for lawful permanent residents (or LPRs; this excludes long-term residents with undocumented legal status).¹⁷⁹ Executive orders elevating newcomer integration to a state priority have been issued in five states (New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maryland, Illinois, and Washington) and concentrate on issues related to language acquisition, jobs, citizenship training, health care and public safety.¹⁸⁰

Policies related to undocumented or unauthorized immigrants hinder integration by forcing immigrants underground, despite the fact that many local and regional economies are dependent upon undocumented

immigrant labor. Some researchers¹⁸¹ describe a “shadow system” that is tolerated by—or, perhaps, created by—government policies, a system whose sustaining hallmark is invisibility. This system provides cheap labor and expands industries in which workers are left vulnerable by their “illegal” status. The system must remain invisible for it to sustain itself, but researchers warn that city and regional planners need to recognize and account for these shadow systems, especially the extent to which local economies are dependent upon them. It is only by bringing these systems to light—and altering policies that force them underground in the first place—that such workers can gain human rights and worker protections, and cities can accurately understand their communities and plan accordingly for their needs as they are, rather than their needs as they appear.

Indeed, city planners play an important role in either dismantling or enforcing social hierarchies that privilege some groups at the expense of others.¹⁸² Researchers in the planning field have recognized the impact of planning on communities of color in particular: aiming for inclusive planning in multicultural society, this scholarship has exposed how striving to make difference invisible in planning decisions can actually make identity and cultural practices the bases for discrimination, marginalization, and dominance in planning.¹⁸³ As such, any city or region who takes equity work seriously needs to pay close attention to the ways in which policy decisions, even the most seemingly insignificant ones, have the potential to negatively impact immigrant communities and prevent successful newcomer integration.

The good news is that increasingly, policymakers and government officials in the USA are understanding the harmful effects of these historical policies towards immigration, and steps are being taken to change immigration policies as well as to implement integration policies that make sense. Successes from other countries offer models to emulate, and experiments on local and regional levels are beginning to build a body of literature from which we can draw best practices. These proactive measures are being taken in response to the specific barriers and challenges newcomers face in the USA as well as in Canada, and are showing that these barriers can indeed be overcome.

Measurement of Integration Success

Successful newcomer integration requires effective partnerships between newcomers themselves, host communities, advocacy organizations at all levels of service, and those who craft public policy and make public investments. Reinforced in the literature is that this process is not one of assimilation, whereby newcomers are expected to align with the traditions and conventions of the host region. Rather, a mutually respectful and adaptive response is desirable so that newcomers are not asked to give up their culture and their traditions, or to forego their interests and desire to belong. As advised by the Integration Working Group of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “immigrants and the receiving community can work together.... To provide resources and opportunities to leverage the human capital that immigrants bring.”¹⁸⁴

While such mutually beneficial integration is the goal, accurately measuring progress towards this goal is a complex process. One internationally recognized measure of integration is the MIPEX, or Migrant Integration Policy Index. The MIPEX is a tool that incorporates 167 policy indicators to rank and rate selected countries on their migrant integration policies. As a well-respected and utilized tool, the MIPEX currently ranks 38 countries and offers a “MIPEX Score” from 0-100 on eight key policy areas:¹⁸⁵

1. Labor Market Mobility: Are immigrants employed in qualified and well-paid jobs?
2. Education: How well are children of immigrants achieving at school?
3. Political Participation: Are immigrants participating in political life?
4. Access to Nationality: How often do immigrants become citizens?
5. Family Reunion: How often do immigrants reunite with family?
6. Health: Is the health system responsive to immigrants’ needs?

7. Permanent Residents: How often do immigrants become permanent residents?
8. Anti-Discrimination: How many complaints were made last year for every person who said they experienced racial/ethnic and religious discrimination?

As noted earlier, successful newcomer integration is associated with numerous benefits for the receiving community, with benefits ranging from economic to cultural. The international MIPEX data reinforce this finding: countries with higher success at newcomer integration are more likely to boast the highest gross domestic product per capita, the highest rates on the U.N. Human Development Index, the highest rates on the Global Competitiveness Index, and the highest rates of entrepreneurship compared to other countries rated in the index.¹⁸⁶

While the country-specific rating information provides a quick reference guide for understanding the status of newcomers in the USA vis-à-vis newcomers in many other countries, these eight policy areas highlighted by the MIPEX can be adopted to better assess newcomer integration on a local level as well. Policies that have been adopted by other countries—policies that are working—are outlined by the MIPEX, and many of them can be mirrored on a local level, even as changes in federal policies and legislation may remain stalled. The following sections outline some examples of policies and best practices for successful newcomer integration that mirror many the MIPEX policy areas.

While the MIPEX tool outlines some measurable arenas in which integration can occur, a 2015 study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Populations measured the extent to which immigrants to the USA overall have integrated into society based on some similar indicators: education, income, occupations, residence, language, family structure, citizenship, religion, crime, health, political participation, and attitudes about social issues.¹⁸⁷ The study found that, overall, newcomers' levels of integration increase over time, and that children and grandchildren of immigrants tend to integrate more than first-generation immigrants. For many indicators, including education, occupation, income, residential integration, language ability, and living above the poverty line, immigrants' situations improve over time, becoming more similar to the situation of native-born residents. However, when it comes to health, crime, and family structure (2-parent households), descendants of immigrants tend to fare worse than their first-generation forbearers.

Best Practices for Integration

A number of integration studies and reports have researched best practices for providing effective services and programs to support integration of newcomers. Some reports suggest best practices at the level of governmental and organizational structure, priority, and function; others focus more specifically on policies and practices related to specific needs, such as education or civic engagement. However, these are all elements of a larger, overall integration strategy whose goals encompass newcomer empowerment, security, control over one's life, community engagement, leadership, and participation in cultural processes that counteract xenophobia and bias.

Tomás Jiménez outlines highlights of an effective immigrant immigration policy by drawing on successes in multiple municipalities and organizations in the USA.¹⁸⁸ These include:

- **Integration is a two-way street:** both newcomers and existing residents are influenced by newcomer integration, and the responsibility for this integration falls on the shoulders of both parties. Some aspects of integration, like learning English and participation in civil society, are important elements of successful integration for both immigrants and receiving communities.
- **It is time for the federal government to take the lead:** local and regional entities have done a lot to encourage newcomer integration, but in the absence of comprehensive federal policies and programs, these local-level initiatives will always be limited in their effect.

- **Integration is more than citizenship.** While citizenship has a huge impact on the quality of life for immigrants, and represents a pinnacle of integration, other aspects—learning English, economic mobility, and participation in public life—are similarly important.
- **Integration requires cooperation.** Everyone benefits from successful immigrant integration, and successful immigrant integration happens through partnerships between government (all levels), NGOs, and the private sector.

a. Affordable housing and relocation services

One of the first needs for immigrants is affordable, safe housing. Local government and nonprofit organizations should collaborate to provide intensive orientations to newcomers, including information on finding and securing housing, and specialized housing locators should be available to assist newcomers as they apply for housing. Providing specialized rental assistance programs and social or transitional housing to immigrants when they immediately arrive can provide an extended window of time while newcomers search for longer-term housing.¹⁸⁹ Particularly in cities with expensive rents and low vacancy rates, such as Portland, newcomers will need special assistance. But while intensive housing supports are pivotal to newly-arrived immigrants, the settlement process should be understood to be a long-term, complex process that requires participation from multiple government and community agencies to be successful.¹⁹⁰

b. Adult education, employment, skills training

Multiple barriers intersect in keeping newcomers from finding employment: lack of language skills, lack of credentials, lack of education, and differences in cultural expectations around workplace norms and behavior. Programs that combine solutions to two or more of these barriers enable multiple elements of integration to occur at once. For example, employment-focused language training has been developed in numerous locales in Europe and North America providing contextualized language training while improving employment opportunities available to newly arrived immigrants, through partnerships with employers, local colleges, and community based organizations. Other promising approaches¹⁹¹ to work-focused language training include:

- Language instruction as part of broader immigrant integration strategies
- Combining vocational certification and language instruction
- Noncredit contextualized language instruction
- Employer-relevant and workplace-based instruction.

Canada’s Enhanced Language Training program for immigrants and Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program are two examples of such integrated training programs for immigrants.

Contextualized language training offered within the workplace or within career placement centers can improve job prospects for immigrants with limited English skills. Learning English and work skills simultaneously can result in opportunities for advancement and better paying positions e.g. moving from positions in the “back-of-the-house” to “front-of-the-house” or into supervisory positions. Two additional model program examples are:

- 1) The LaGuardia Community College Center for Immigrant Employment Training (CIET) which supports immigrant workers advancement in the hospitality industry while improving English language skills (similar to a program in Herndon Virginia¹⁹²); and
- 2) The McDonald’s Corporation *English Under the Arches* which collaborates with community colleges and language experts to deliver a web-based curriculum for limited-English speaking employees (reporting an 85% graduation rate followed by wage increases for graduates).¹⁹³

Programs that assist newcomers with language skills, education, credentialing, and job-seeking skills work well when implemented as a two-way cultural exchange, where immigrants provide cultural education and share experiences as part of the relationship with educators, trainers, or employers. Such models fit with the view of newcomer integration as mutually impacting native born and foreign born residents, and of fostering conditions where both parties are open to change. Such models have shown to be effective in working with refugees, but they likely could benefit all newcomers.^{194 195}

c. K-12 Education

Finding ways to increase community and family involvement in schools is key to successful integration of newcomer children in K-12 schools. Some schools partner with community organizations to provide culturally-specific outreach to migrant and newcomer communities. Establishing structures through which community, family, and school communication and interaction can take place is key to ensuring this contact is sustained over time. Workshops or classes that involve both parents and children are one way to provide this; another is to offer home visit to newcomer families from teachers or administrators.¹⁹⁶

Curriculum that cover the native cultures of newcomers promote healthy multicultural identity that is key to integration and academic success, while culturally competent educators and administrators can help foster an environment where multiple cultures are valued and discussed. Initiatives to diversity staff to include immigrants from key populations can be helpful in bridging cultural gaps. Some schools have hired immigrant facilitators to sit in the classroom and provide specialized support for immigrant students. At minimum, competent interpreters or multilingual school personnel should be available at all schools where languages are a barrier to student integration.¹⁹⁷

d. Citizenship, Political Participation, and Community Engagement

Beyond meeting the immediate needs of housing or education among newcomers, cities and communities need to promote programs that cultivate immigrant leaders who can advocate on behalf of their communities and engage in the political process. When it comes to the MIPEX rating for the United States, our lowest rating (36 out of a possible 100) is for political participation. The fact that only about half of newcomers born outside of the USA have become U.S. citizens, and that only citizens are eligible to vote, means that 7% of the population (almost 22 million people) are denied the most basic right of political participation.

While many avenues for community engagement should be made available to newcomers, nothing can replace the importance of having the right to cast a vote in local and national elections. This right is one of many that come with citizenship—one of the most significant ways in which a community can ensure integration of newcomers into their new home country. The number of immigrants who are provided citizenship is a key measure of effective integration in any given community. However, the USA and Oregon do not fare as well as many other countries on this measure. The MIPEX gives the USA only 61 points (out of a possible 100) when it comes to access to nationality for immigrants. (The score is even lower—54 out of a possible 100—for paths to permanent residency legal permanent residency, or “Green Card” status.)¹⁹⁸ As noted by the Immigration Policy Council, the Department of Homeland Security estimates that in 2010, about 8 million immigrants in the USA were eligible for citizenship but had not applied. In Oregon, just over 27% of state immigrants were naturalized citizens in 2010.¹⁹⁹ This status enables newcomers to vote: in Oregon, 5.8% of registered voters in 2008 were considered “New Americans” (naturalized or children of immigrants who arrived after 1965); however, almost 10% of the state’s population is made up of immigrants. This leaves a large number of Oregon immigrant excluded from voting, the most fundamental form of civic participation, due to their citizenship status.

Indeed, the percent of immigrants who become citizens is lower in the USA than among many other countries, such as Australia and Canada. This and other research collected by the Migration Policy Institute shows that

newcomers to the USA who become naturalized citizens reap economic and social benefits in ways that reflect successful integration. Naturalized citizens earn 50-70% more than noncitizens; are more likely to be employed; and weathered the recent economic recession better than noncitizens. However, the cost to apply for citizenship, coupled with the extensive amount of time (and money) needed to study for language and civics tests, is a barrier to many immigrants who seek naturalization.²⁰⁰

This is a missed opportunity, as naturalization has the potential to increase the positive economic benefit that newcomers already bring to the USA, as well as to increase successful integration into society through avenues such as improved English skills and access to higher education. Lowering the costs associated with naturalization, as well as reassessing the tests required for citizenship, could have the effect of increasing the number of newcomers who become U.S. citizens—to the benefit of newcomers, their families, their communities, and our nation as a whole.

For immigrants who have become citizens and can legally vote, voter registration campaigns such as New York’s “Immigrants Vote! Campaign” have had success by hosting registration events in immigrant neighborhoods; in addition, this campaign brings candidates to immigrant neighborhoods for debates and forums that are more accessible and where immigrants can pose specific questions to candidates about their specific concerns. In the past, city council members in New York City have proposed changing city voter laws to allow non-citizen immigrants to vote in city elections as well.²⁰¹ Locally, the work of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon has led statewide voter registration efforts, and in 2014, enrolled more than 4,400 Asian and Pacific Islanders to vote. They also partner with newcomer serving organizations (CAUSA and the Center for Intercultural Organizing) and collectively educate and support the enrollment of those who take their citizenship oath at the Naturalization Ceremonies, enrolling 90% of new American citizens at such meetings.

Political participation is just one element of community engagement, though. Other ways of encouraging involvement in community issues and organizing campaigns are also important. A local example of the leadership development work undertaken by the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (through their projects funded by the City’s Office of Neighborhood Involvement and the partnership project funded by Meyer Memorial Trust) has catalyzed significant gains in civic engagement. A survey of such engagement was administered with these leadership participants, and the results shared that compared local immigrant engagement of immigrants with national samples. Findings show that we have significantly greater engagement, with community members who have been through the training much more active both civically and politically:

- Nationally, 24% are active members in community groups or organizations, while 51% participated locally
- Nationally, 20% identified they were active in community problem solving, while 62% participated locally
- Nationally, 50% regularly voted in local and national elections, while 95% were similarly engaged at the local level.²⁰²

Some non-local examples include the Ethno-Cultural Seniors Project (Ontario), which engages immigrants who might typically be isolated (such as seniors with limited English skills) with services and civic engagement activities participating in community and city-wide forums while advocating on relevant issues to seniors. Similarly, the Non-Profit Business Training for Leaders of Immigrant Community (Louisville, Kentucky) provides training on creating and running a community organization. Leadership training, community organizing, and political lobbying among immigrant and refugee groups are the objectives of the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition.²⁰³ These are some examples of effective community initiatives that work towards improving political participation through organizing, leadership development, and awareness-raising related to issues of concern to immigrants.

These results show that with some support, immigrants and refugees thrive in terms of engaging civically and supporting public service and community-based problem solving. This defuses the idea that immigrants are only interested in staying within their own communities, reminding us that the community is a considerable asset to the region.

e. Refugee Integration

While most newcomers arrive in the USA and Canada with hopes of a better life for themselves and their children, this desire for a better future is especially stark for refugees. In the case of refugees, for whom repatriation to a home country is not an option due to fear of persecution, imprisonment, or death, programs promoting resettlement are imperative. In such cases, ensuring successful resettlement and integration into the community are clearly a matter of preserving and respecting human rights. By granting asylum and following best practices for integration of refugees, countries fulfill an international responsibility to protect human rights of all peoples. And at micro level, refugees face daily struggles with navigating life in a new country. Says one local refugee advocate:

Daily life was very unpredictable. From using a bus to grocery shopping, and being unemployed and trying to find a job, made each day overwhelming for us. We would easily become lost on big crowded streets filled with cars and big buildings. Anxious and tired, we realized that we had no idea how complex living in America would be.

A synthesis of best practices for the integration of refugees is provided by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees:

- “Restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society;
- Promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society;
- Promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families;
- Promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support;
- Restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law;
- Promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity;
- Counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities;
- Support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership;
- Foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.”²⁰⁴

Within this context, specific survival needs (such as employment or housing) are just one element in a larger framework focused on building capacity both among newcomers and among receiving communities. Among refugees who have experienced loss of trust in government or civil society; prohibition against expressing political or religious views; or extensive experiences of low social status and persecution, it is incumbent upon the receiving community to demonstrate government fidelity, religious freedom and freedom of expression, and opportunities for building familial and community bonds within a welcoming social context.

Alignment with these UN recommendations is seen in the overall summary provided by the Integration Working Group for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) of indicators for successful newcomer integration (that includes both immigrants and refugees):

- “Learning English;
- Employment;
- Housing;

- Education;
- Health;
- Shared values;
- Social bonds, social bridges and social links;
- Cultural identity and ethnicity;
- Safety and stability;
- Civic participation”²⁰⁵

Again, successful integration goes beyond opportunities for employment and housing, but includes larger issues such as social connections and a sense of safety in one’s home and community. A recent report from the Integration Working Group of the Institute for Social and Economic Development outlines recommendations to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) focused on providing services and opportunities for refugees that go beyond specific survival needs and include an explicit focus on integration writ large. From adding flexibility in grant requirements for services that serve refugees to increasing funding for programs that focus on community-building among refugees and receiving communities, these recommendations place existing understandings of “resettlement” into a larger, more fitting, and more effective context of “integration.”²⁰⁶ And while these issues are especially poignant for refugees, they remain just as important for other newcomers as well. Indeed, refugees are afforded a level of support in efforts towards integration, whether from government, religious, or private sector organizations, that is not similarly provided to other newcomers. While the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement may provide services including “cash, medical assistance, employment preparation and job placement, skills training, English-language training, social adjustment and aid for victims of torture,” these services are only offered to approximately 5% all immigrants, as noted by Jiménez (2007).²⁰⁷

f. Structural and Organizational Best Practices

While meeting the practical needs faced by newcomers are vital to promoting newcomer integration, ensuring that service providers are culturally responsive and accountable to communities served is just as important. Governments and municipalities can support practices that benefit newcomer integration, but many related services are offered through provider organizations (in either the public or private sector). If organizations do not effectively enact their own set of best practices, the best of intentions can fall short when implemented into practice. Existing literature on best practices in organizations for promoting newcomer integration incorporate several evidence-based recommendations shown to be effective in various organizational contexts.

(i) User-led Services

One key component of successful providers of services to immigrants is the centrality of immigrant needs and voice to the organization’s mission, structure, and service offerings. Rather than focusing primarily on the needs of the agency or of native-born residents, immigrant-centered service providers foreground client empowerment and user-defined services. Leadership development programs are proliferating among communities of color, and offer newcomers pathways into leadership positions in both organizations and more broadly, into policy roles. Locally, the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) has catalyzed the creation of six culturally specific leadership programs, with several building explicit commitments to newcomers. For more information, look at the CCC’s Bridges program that links the six programs (<http://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/cccleadershipdevelopment/>).

Research demonstrates the importance of creating organizations that are newcomer-led and newcomer-focused.^{208 209} Such organizations are able to become culturally specific service providers, in which the values and assumptions behind U.S.-based models of social and government services, such as child welfare or mental health, can be translated into the meaning and value system of specific newcomer populations. This enables

services to be better understood and accessed by immigrants who may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the nature of U.S. models of health, government, social benefits, or education.²¹⁰

Indeed, among the recommendations of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, placing decision-making power and leadership into the hands of individuals within newcomer communities who experience mental health challenges is pivotal both to that service user but also to the community as a whole. Among their recommendations for service improvement are:

- “A central part of each provincial and regional plan to improve the mental health of [immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural, and racialized, or IREER] groups must include the involvement of IREER communities, consumers, and families in planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.
- Health funders should require that service providers take steps to attract a more diverse workforce and that there is a monitoring of the workforce to assess how it reflects the communities being served.
- Service provider organizations and provincial ministries should develop strategies to enable good candidates from IREER groups to advance into appropriate leadership positions within their organizations.”²¹¹

Again and again, newcomer communities insist that the best way towards improving utilization of health services is to improve representation of their community among health care providers and health policy makers. A huge impact can be made by seeing a familiar surname among a list of doctors, or by knowing that someone who speaks your language will be there to take questions about your health status. We already know that newcomers, overall, come to the USA in better health than their native-born neighbors: these traditional health practices can be strengthened and shared such that they have the potential to impact others, both newcomers as well as native-born residents. The first step to building on existing health traditions is to ensure that newcomers’ community members are represented in leadership positions in health care providers and among public health leaders.

(ii) Cultural Competency and a Focus on Equity

Among organizations that are not newcomer-led, education, policies, and values that promote equity, justice, and cultural understanding are important in creating a culture that respects and responds to the needs of specific newcomer communities. This may take the form of commissions and policies related to equity in government and nonprofits, as well as ongoing cultural competency training for all members of organizations, from managers to front-line staff.^{212 213} Such training is supported again by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which recommends that “cultural competence training should be made available to all who have direct contact with clients and should be provided to existing staff in all service organizations. Training should include interactive, case based discussions and consultation.” In addition, “cultural competence training should become a standard part of the training of all professional care staff. This should be insured through standards of accreditation of training programs and institutions and licensing professions.”²¹⁴ Research has showed that hospitals who adhere to cultural competence training are rated higher by minorities overall on criteria related to communication and staff responsiveness.²¹⁵ A growing body of research continues to show the benefits of implementing equity initiatives with a specific focus on racial equity,²¹⁶ and best practices in the field of organizational equity assessments can continue to inform best practices in newcomer integration as well.

(iii) Organizational Collaboration

While culturally specific service providers can promote integration among newcomers to the USA, the nature of many such organizations, and of many nonprofits overall, is to focus on specific populations or issues at the exclusion of others. This can contribute to the splintering of services which was mentioned as an ongoing barrier for immigrants to Portland in the city’s Immigrant and Refugee Task Force 2007 report.²¹⁷ Organizations and government agencies need to collaborate to ensure no gaps in services to specific populations or specific issue areas.²¹⁸ Collaboration also ensures cooperation rather than competition for

resources, as well as a way to share information, best practices, and provide a unified network and strategy for meeting the diversity of needs among different populations of newcomers.²¹⁹

(iv) Evaluation and Accountability

Part of a unified local or regional strategy among organizations that serve newcomers is an organized set of goals and clear outcomes. Organizations need to implement evaluation measures into all levels of service, and to increased organizational evaluation capacity where needed through targeted training. Such evaluation measures and clear outcomes can ensure accountability to funders, but more importantly, to the communities of newcomers which the organizations serve.²²⁰

Such evaluation should also include performance measures that ensure the needs of newcomer groups are being met, that the amount of services available matches the amount of need in newcomer communities, and that overall research into improving social determinants of health are part of this research and evaluation effort.²²¹

(v) Service Accessibility

Even the best-performing service provider to newcomers will be useless if services are not readily accessible to those who need them. Organizations should aim to be located, or to establish outreach centers, in or near the neighborhoods of those they serve. Proximity to public transit, childcare providers, and other culturally specific services should also be considered. Recruitment formats and methods of service delivery should be diverse and appropriate to the population being served. At the most basic level, service providers should ensure that all materials and publications are offered in relevant languages, and that staff are multilingual to enable communication between the organization and service users.²²² Some locales have utilized mobile technologies to offer apps and content in multiple languages that provide an online “one-stop shop” for city services, educational resources, language training, and opportunities for civic engagement, such as enrollment in citizenship classes or information on voter registration.²²³

Closing Summary

Newcomers to any community bring challenges as well as opportunities for collaboration, growth, and increased cultural understanding. A general understanding of the needs and issues related to newcomer integration, as well as an overview of some best practices from the field, offers an initial look into potential starting points for creating an effective newcomer integration policy in the Portland area. While this review has addressed issues common to immigrants in general, different populations have specific needs that must be understood to provide adequate services to promote integration. However, a review of existing research and successful integration programs illustrates that the significant barriers faced by newcomers can be overcome with targeted programs and policies. These best practices hold hope for a future where the strengths and traditions of all residents, native- and foreign-born, contribute to a rich and equitable community.

Indigenous Latinos in Multnomah County

By Anne Sinkey, Ivonne Rivero and Octaviano Mercialas

Introduction

Like many other immigrant groups, indigenous peoples from Latin America settled in Portland, Oregon in growing numbers during the past 20 to 30 years. These indigenous communities are sometimes called “indigenous Latinos” despite the fact that many do not speak Spanish and do not identify with mainstream Latino culture. Rather, indigenous communities from Latin America are made up of multiple, distinct indigenous tribes and groups with different ancestry, cultural traditions, languages, and experiences than many Latinos. These multiple and complex communities of “indigenous Latinos,” while made up of disparate groups with varying cultural traditions, hold one thing in common: unique community strengths and challenges to integration that need to be recognized separately from the integration issues faced by the overall Latino community in Portland.

Very little research has been done on indigenous Latin American immigrants in Portland; what research that has been done has focused on indigenous immigrants in rural, agricultural areas or small towns elsewhere in Oregon. This profile offers a brief look into the specific demographic characteristics of indigenous Latin Americans; the unique challenges to integration faced by these communities, such lack of translators, discrimination from both mainstream American and Latino communities, and lack of cultural understanding among social service providers; and the special strengths these communities bring to Portland, including overwhelming resilience and rich cultural traditions in areas such as the arts and folk healing. While this profile cannot adequately capture the complexity of indigenous Latin American immigrant communities in Portland, it provides a baseline understanding upon which future research and outreach can build.

Demographics

Dancers from Mexico Tiahui opened a city celebration of newcomers to Portland and officially launched the Parks for New Portlanders project.



Most analyses of indigenous newcomers have failed to consider ways in which indigenous peoples, languages, cultures, and experiences differ from those of dominant communities in the same countries from which they came. This report attempts to differentiate between the experiences of indigenous and non-indigenous immigrants to Portland from Latin America. This distinction necessarily is a shifting and complex one: the legacy of colonialism and slavery in Mexico, for example, contributed to a population where the majority of Mexicans are “Mestizos,” with some mixture of Spanish, African, and indigenous ancestry. While the multi-ethnic and multi-racial nature of Latino populations has been a point of pride among some Latino leaders and individuals, this conglomeration of ancestry has also contributed to ongoing, tacit racial discrimination in Latino culture.

Such complexity is compounded by the fact that the category of “Latino” refers not to a specific race, but rather to a cultural or linguistic (Spanish-speaking) identification. When asked their race, some Latin Americans will answer with their nationality or geographical location. In Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, ethnic categories based on location, language, and ancestry hold more meaning than does the idea of “race” as understood in the United States. The concept of race in Latino society is deeply influenced by centuries of globalization and colonialism, and the idea of being a single race is unfamiliar to many. Among Latinos overall, some may identify as White while others will not. Even non-indigenous Latinos often self-identify in various different ways on Census

forms; only recently have these and other demographic data forms begun to separate “Hispanic or Latino” identifiers from other racial identifiers (such as “African American” or “Asian/Pacific Islander”). This complexity already exists within Latino society: add the extra layer of indigenous ancestry, and the issue of racial and ethnic identification becomes even more complicated. Such complication is not yet recognized by much of mainstream U.S. society. Many existing residents in Oregon have only a vague understanding of the difference between race and ethnicity, and generally treat Latinos and individuals from Latin America as if they were a single race in the same vein as White, African-American, or Asian.

As a result, indigenous Latin Americans do not easily fit within existing race/ethnicity categories available on most U.S. Census and other official demographic forms. An indigenous immigrant from Latin America may technically be “Native American,” but isn’t generally considered to be in the same category as U.S.-based tribes. Some indigenous Latin Americans will identify as “Caucasian” for lack of a better option on Census forms. Some will select “multiple races,” if available. The result is that efforts to identify the number of Latinos overall, and indigenous Latin Americans in particular, is hampered by the imposition of inappropriate racial categories on a diverse and complex population.

In this way, limited cultural understandings of race and ethnicity in the USA contribute to the statistical invisibility of the indigenous Latin Americans newcomers that make up our communities. Alongside an array of advocates who have written about the divergence between race and ethnicity, one author criticizes that in the USA, “Mexican-ness is treated as a racial identity.”²²⁴ Other advocates identify the importance of recognizing the Latino community as a racial group.²²⁵ The terrain of definitions and constructs of race and ethnicity are beyond the scope of this report: suffice to say that the issue adds challenge to trying to identify exactly how many indigenous peoples from Latin America have settled in Oregon, and which indigenous groups are represented. Such insights help us understand the inaccuracies that abound in identifying the size of this community, and remind us that without understanding such numbers, the community is likely to remain relatively invisible, particularly within the policy community.

a. The Indigenous Latin American Population in the USA

The 2010 Census was the first time that data was collected about indigenous residents in the U.S. separately from other racial/ethnic categories. In 2010, the Census recommended that indigenous individuals hand-write their specific indigenous group or tribe name next to the race/ethnicity category for “American Indian or Alaska Native.” Results were then categorized by the USA Census into groupings for “Central American Indian,” “Mexican American Indian,” “South American Indian,” and “Spanish American Indian,” with over 270,000 individuals counted in those categories (alone or in combination with other groups).²²⁶ The category of “Mexican American Indian” was the largest with over 175,000 individuals. However, with minimal outreach to indigenous communities and a lack of Census forms in indigenous languages, many indigenous immigrants from Latin America were likely not counted by the Census. Other estimates put the number of indigenous Latin American immigrants in the range of 500,000 to 1.25 million nationwide.²²⁷

While the exact percentage of “Latino” immigrants who identify as indigenous is unknown, some estimates are as high as 30-40%. Nationwide, the U.S. Department of Labor has estimated that 17% of all farm workers are indigenous Latin Americans, with populations as high as 30% in California.²²⁸ Among farmworkers in Oregon, an estimated 40% are of indigenous origin.²²⁹

b. Indigenous Latin American Population in Oregon and the Portland Area

For as long as Latinos have been present in Oregon, indigenous Latin Americans have been present as well. Communities of indigenous peoples from southern Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America have been developing in the Portland area since the 1980s, although they primarily have been located in the rural areas and small towns outside of Portland. Identifying population demographics is difficult for many reasons,

including the fact that this is a very fluid population: some indigenous individuals or families may travel in and out of Oregon for several years before settling down; others may move to different locations in Oregon throughout the year. Even people who are settled in a specific location may still travel one or two hours to work at different locations and different jobs throughout the year. This movement makes it complicated to pinpoint differences between rural and urban indigenous Latin Americans, since so many communities are constantly shifting location and context.

Just as much existing literature on immigrants from Latin America collapses the experiences and demographics of indigenous and non-indigenous “Latinos,” available information about the indigenous population in Oregon often fails to distinguish between permanent immigrants to Oregon, migrant workers, and seasonal workers. While this report intends to focus on permanent immigrants to Portland, such community experiences are often reported in aggregate with indigenous Latin Americans who do not intend to remain in Portland beyond a specific agricultural season. Experiences between such groups will differ, but many of the motivations for immigration, barriers to integration, and sources of community strength remain similar.

The 2012 update to the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study for Oregon estimates that as many as 37 languages are spoken among indigenous Latin American immigrants in Oregon.²³⁰ A survey of Oregon farmworker health among the Mexican indigenous found significant representation from Mexican states of Oaxaca, Michoacán, and Guerrero, with 12 languages represented, including Mixteco Bajo, Zapoteco, and Triqui (Copala and Itunyoso).²³¹ These farmworkers had lived in Oregon an average of 6.4 years.

The Oregon Judicial Department records the number of requests for assistance with indigenous languages in any given year. For the years 2011 and 2012 combined, a total of 53 such requests were made in Multnomah County. The highest number of requests in Multnomah were for Akateko and Tarasco (Purépecha), but requests were also made for Maya, Mixteco, Mixteco Bajo, Nahuatl, Trique, Q’anjobal, and Quiché languages. Other counties in Oregon recorded requests for Chuk, Ixl, Mam, Tzotzil Chiapas, and Zapoteco languages during those two years.²³²

Leaders in the Portland Latino community have identified indigenous communities in Portland from numerous Mexican states including Veracruz, Morelos, Oaxaca, México, Chiapas, and Michoacán, as well as indigenous communities from Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Honduras. Some of the larger indigenous communities in the Portland area are believed to include the Mixteca, Quiché Mayan, *Yucatán* Mayan, Tarascan, Guarani, Garifuna, Purépecha, and Trique communities. The Quiché Mayan from Guatemala have a presence in North and Northeast Portland, especially near New Columbia. Maya from the *Yucatán* peninsula in Mexico who speak Yucatec have a presence in the Cully neighborhood. The presence of Purépecha people from Michoacán has been noted in Marion, Washington, Clackamas, Multnomah counties.

Among indigenous Latin Americans who live within Portland proper, many have settled in the outlying areas where rent is affordable and where other Latino communities are located. Several families have settled in Cully, New Columbia, and Gresham areas over the past few decades, with many more just outside Portland in Washington County. While some of the older, more established communities are located in these neighborhoods, more and more indigenous immigrants continue to move to other areas of the city, including areas of Southeast and Outer Southeast Portland.

Each one of these indigenous groups and communities has its own distinct character, traditions, culture, language, and motivations for settling in Portland. As Portland continues to become more aware of the many newcomer communities in our midst, each one of these indigenous groups deserves its own attention and specific plan for improved integration opportunities. Some important differences between groups include educational differences, familiarity with urban life, and fluency in Spanish. Some Tarasco have been noted to

be more likely to speak Spanish than other groups, for example, and the ability to speak Spanish helps overcome some of the barriers to services that other non-Spanish speaking indigenous communities face. Some states in Mexico have provided better education and resources to certain indigenous groups as well, which has led some groups to build on their existing education to secure jobs and higher education in the USA more easily than other groups.

The levels of poverty faced by indigenous groups in their home countries varies significantly, as does the level of discrimination, violence, and forced displacement faced by different indigenous groups. Some indigenous Latin Americans arrive in Portland with advanced degrees; others are refugees seeking escape civil war and have been focused more on survival than education or career pursuits.

The differences between groups can be vast. These are just some of the ways in which each community of indigenous Latin Americans in Portland holds a unique experience that should be better understood and respected as part of an effort to improve opportunities for integration into mainstream American society. While each specific community deserves its own deep analysis and profile, unfortunately, such focus is beyond the scope of this report. However, many such community members hold certain experiences in common: specific barriers to integration and specific community strengths that should be utilized in creating relationships that help both newcomer and existing community members mutually benefit from improved communication and expanded sharing of leadership opportunities and resources.

Motivations for Migration

Like many immigrant groups, most indigenous groups from Latin America traveled to the Portland area in search of economic opportunity. However, situations of political unrest and persecution have also motivated various indigenous groups to travel north in search of safety and to flee violence. In the former situation, newcomers are most often male, who may work in the USA for months or years before saving enough money to bring the rest of their families here. In the latter situation, immigrants are not as likely to be men, but could include families who flee together or children who have been separated or orphaned from their families.²³³

Different indigenous groups, as well as groups from different regions, often have very different motivations for travelling to the USA. However, this northern migration (which is often circular, where individuals travel back and forth between Latin America and the USA) has a long history. For example, indigenous P'urepecha men from Michoacan in Mexico came to the USA back in the 1960s as part of the Bracero program. More recently, numerous Guatemalan Maya travelled north to the USA to escape that country's civil war. And the devastating impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the economy of Mexico led thousands of indigenous Mexicans to travel north in search of jobs.

While war, economic policy, and globalization have all impacted migration in the Americas and across the globe, indigenous peoples especially have been victims of displacement from their traditional tribal lands. For example, many Mexican indigenous communities maintained ties to their land through the communal ejido system, which was upended in the 1990s when Mexico allowed ejidos to become privatized and sold. As a result, thousands of indigenous peoples were displaced, forced off their land and onto plantation farms, such as the sugar plantations in Veracruz, Sonoran cotton fields, tomato and strawberry fields in northern Mexico, and then further north to fields in California and Oregon. At the same time, many others moved to urban centers in Latin America in search of work, where some sought education and jobs skills beyond those traditional skills related to farming, fishing, and forestry.

As previously mentioned, during such northern migration, males often travel first, then families come later. The 1986 Immigration and Reform Act (IRCA) and Special Agricultural Workers Program (SAW) enabled many immigrants to become legal permanent residents and to bring family members to the Portland area. Once

families arrive, and as language skills strengthen, newcomers are more likely to settle in the area rather than keep migrating to different areas. Families begin to send children school and acculturate to the area. If indigenous individuals have the opportunity to stay in a place where they are part of a community and where they can live with their family, they are more likely to settle down than to keep moving in search of work. However, some indigenous Latin American immigrants have settled in Portland for reasons beyond their control, such as a workplace accident or health problem that prevented them from continued migration.

The opportunity to rent or own a home is another motivation for settling in Portland. Back in the 1990s, many indigenous newcomers came to Oregon and were buying homes, especially in the years prior to the Patriot Act laws (requiring E-Verify, barriers to gaining identification, and other restrictions that targeted immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants) and the housing boom, when most lower income families were priced out of homes. In the 1990s, a small group of folks would pool resources to help one person with documentation and a job purchase a home in which they all would live. While this has become increasingly difficult (in no small part due to credit restrictions and inflated home prices), many indigenous Latinos who purchased homes during this time have functioned as anchor points around which indigenous neighborhoods and communities have grown and flourished.

As various states and regions in the USA continue to pass more restrictive anti-immigration laws and laws that have a disparate negative impact upon Latin Americans, compounded by laws that have made border-crossing and interstate travel more risky, more and more indigenous Latin Americans have chosen to settle in one place rather than to continue to migrate in search of work. Some have settled in areas seen as less overtly hostile to “Latino-appearing” individuals, and Oregon has been one of those locations. Since construction began on the wall between the USA and Mexico in 1996, immigrants were forced to travel through more remote and dangerous areas of the border. Some individuals who may have previously travelled from Oregon to Mexico during the agricultural off-season have chosen to stay in Oregon year-round to avoid the risk of crossing the border.²³⁴ In addition, families whose children enroll in school in Oregon may choose to stay so that their children can have a more stable education—another incentive to put down roots in Oregon rather than keep on moving to the next temporary employment opportunity.

A large number of indigenous communities from Latin America are employed in field agriculture, in local nurseries and greenhouses, in food processing related to agriculture, and in forestry industries.²³⁵ Oregon’s blueberry and cherry production has increased in the past decade, leading to more jobs in these fields. The growth of the wine industry in Oregon during the past ten years has increased the number of indigenous community members working in wine production. Given the fact that much of this work occurs in rural areas, a large portion of the indigenous community lives outside urban centers, and those who do live in urban centers often travel long distances to their worksites. While most have worked in agriculture, an increasing number of indigenous Latin American immigrants have transitioned into landscaping or restaurant work. Increased English and Spanish language skills among some members of the indigenous community has enabled this movement out of agricultural work and into other occupations that require more interaction with non-indigenous folks.

While a variety of motivations have led various indigenous Latin Americans to immigrate to Portland, their impact on the Portland community has been significant. Indigenous farm workers make up a significant portion of the farmworker population, without which the Oregon agricultural economy would likely collapse. Indigenous workers supply Portland and the Portland area with skilled work in construction and restaurants as well—work which, like farm labor, is too often invisible, unrecognized, and unappreciated. This invisibility is the result of a tacit agreement between workers, employers, and consumers, as lack of documentation has forced these economies into the shadows, if not underground. Racial discrimination and the constant threat of deportation are the enforcement mechanisms keeping the indigenous Latin American immigrant community

from coming out of the shadows. This invisibility contributes to ongoing barriers to integration, as well as persistent segregation of the indigenous community both from the mainstream Latino community as well as from the larger Portland community. Such segregation prevents Portlanders from gaining from the cultural and social enrichment that integration of the indigenous Latin American immigrant community could bring.

Challenges to Integration

As already noted, various communities of indigenous peoples from Latin America have vast differences in history, culture, and experiences. Similarly, these communities face different experiences depending on where in Oregon they have settled, and whether that location is situated in an urban or rural environment. Even within Multnomah County, those living in outlying areas have different experiences than do those who have ventured into the inner-city neighborhoods. Many have moved closer to the city center in search of economic opportunities, for health care, for access to education, and simply because the city is sometimes the only place where necessary social services are offered. Historically, many of the culturally-specific Latino services have been located in towns outside of Portland, such as Woodburn, where the Salud de la Familia Medical Clinic was established in 1979, and Colegio César Chávez, the first Latino college in the USA which was started in Silverton, Oregon in 1973 (and closed ten years later).²³⁶ In recent years, however, more and more Latino-focused and Latino-led service organizations have set up shop in Portland. For those who can speak Spanish, these service providers are reasons to venture into the city. Other indigenous newcomers travel from rural areas to the city of Portland to escape domestic violence and, less often, to escape situations of trafficking and forced labor.

Among indigenous Latin American immigrants to Portland, some have been given opportunities to integrate quite well, enrolling children in school, buying homes, even starting their own businesses. The ability to speak Spanish and/or English is key to such success. Among communities with less familiarity with Spanish or English, services are much harder to access. With poverty a systemic issue among many immigrant communities, including indigenous Latino communities, barriers to basic services are especially devastating. Among the various barriers to integration, language barriers are a common thread. Not only do few people in Oregon speak indigenous languages; some such languages have no standard written form, making communication and transmission of information difficult. Access to indigenous language translators would make significant inroads against these various barriers to integration, including employment, housing, and access to health care.

a. Discrimination

Many indigenous newcomers from Latin America face compounded challenges to integration— into both Latino communities in the USA as well as into existing non-Latino, non-indigenous communities. Whereas Latinos and indigenous immigrants may face discrimination from existing residents in the USA on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, or immigration status, indigenous immigrants face those same forms of discrimination from their Latino immigrant neighbors and co-workers as well. Among indigenous farmworkers in Oregon, 32% have reported that speaking their native language at work caused them to face discrimination.²³⁷ Some indigenous Latin American newcomers perceive non-indigenous Latinos in the USA as competing with them for jobs, resources, and visibility.²³⁸ While undocumented immigrants overall are at increased risk for workplace discrimination, many do not speak out against violations for fear of deportation or lack of resources. Such discrimination against indigenous Latin Americans comes from both White and Latino business owners, often in the form of unequal pay and hostile or unsafe working environments.²³⁹

b. Education

Indigenous children are sometimes ridiculed by non-indigenous Latinos in Oregon schools as racism continues to fester in Latino-American culture. This can lead some students to deny their indigenous identity or to avoid speaking in their native language, which contributes to the danger of indigenous languages being lost (and along with them, the cultural meanings and traditions that go along with them).²⁴⁰ Such discriminatory

treatment by classmates also acts as a barrier to education, which can lead to lower grades and test scores, as well as higher drop-out rates.

Among adults, most indigenous newcomers to Portland have fewer years of schooling than do Latino immigrants overall. For example, indigenous Peruvian children receive an average of 2.3 fewer years of education than do their non-indigenous classmates; this disparity widens to 4 years for children in Bolivia.²⁴¹ This means that many indigenous Latin Americans arrive with lower literacy rates, math skills, and language skills than do their non-indigenous Latino neighbors, which creates additional barriers both to employment as well as to higher education. However, not all indigenous Latinos arrive with little-to-no formal education; some indigenous Latin Americans have college degrees or higher, and are members of esteemed professions throughout the Portland area. Unfortunately, these folks are the exception rather than the rule. In general, indigenous Latin American immigrants have not had opportunities for education in their home countries, and continue to face barriers to education here in the USA.

c. Health care

A 2008 survey of indigenous farmworkers in Oregon found that only 39% had ever been to a health clinic in Oregon, despite 65% reporting their health as “fair” or “poor.”²⁴² Reasons for this include lack of access to affordable or nearby clinics, lack of health insurance, fear of unfamiliar medical practices, and fear of being reported to immigration officials. Once at health clinics, far too many health professionals incorrectly assume that indigenous Latin American immigrants speak Spanish. When indigenous patients fail to understand Spanish in these contexts, health care workers may assume that their patients are resistant, incorrigible, or have mental health or cognitive impairments. At times when indigenous language interpreters are provided, these interpreters sometimes speak a language of a different indigenous tribe or group. The numerous languages represented within the indigenous community makes it unlikely that each language will be known to an interpreter who is also available to assist in a given medical context.

When interpreters are available for helping to translate important medical information to indigenous patients, some key information can be lost in translation. When more than one interpreter is in the room, this possibility is only magnified. It is not uncommon for an indigenous Latin American patient to communicate through a family member who speaks Spanish, and that family member then speaks to a Spanish/English interpreter who, in turn, speaks to the medical staff in English. These multiple layers of communication not only risk the spread of incorrect information; the more people are in the room, the more nervous a patient might feel and the less likely that patient is to ask questions, or to offer important but potentially embarrassing private medical information. Misunderstood or omitted information about surgery aftercare instructions, prenatal infant care, or management of chronic conditions can jeopardize patients’ and their families’ health and wellbeing.

In addition, indigenous Latin Americans interpret health through cultural lenses that ascribe spiritual and psychological meaning to health concerns, and these are rarely known or understood by mainstream health providers.²⁴³ Because of cultural differences in gender roles, some women and families will not make immediate medical decisions without the approval of the male family head, who may be working hours away and not have access to transportation. When there are urgent medical decisions that need to be made, the complications of language are compounded by gender hierarchy in the family; as a result, such decisions may be stalled for hours or days, which can be life threatening.

Occupational health is also an issue for indigenous immigrants, especially among those with dangerous jobs in construction or agriculture. Among indigenous farmworkers in Oregon, dangerous exposure to pesticides is widespread, with training provided to only 57% of workers who claimed to work with pesticides, according to a 2008 study.²⁴⁴ Even for indigenous workers who speak Spanish or English enough to understand occupational safety training, some information may not be relayed in accessible language. Lack of safety training is also

exacerbated by the fact that many indigenous workers face lack of respect due to job discrimination, making such workers more likely to be placed in harm's way.

d. *Distrust of Professionals, Service Providers, and Government Officials*

Language persists as a barrier to integration for indigenous immigrants from Latin America when it comes to communicating and trusting professionals and authority figures such as police officers, judges, government officials, and social service providers. In all of these cases, interpretation services continue to be lacking. Similar to medical personnel, many such professionals assume that indigenous Latinos speak Spanish, and will sometimes become frustrated and blame the indigenous immigrant who is unable to speak Spanish. This lack of language translation services applies to printed materials as well. Some indigenous languages don't have a consistent written form, and many indigenous Latin American immigrants have low literacy skills. Important forms, brochures, and documents are not provided in alternative formats, including audio or video formats, which might enable translation to indigenous immigrants. Some organizations, such as the Oregon Law Center, have made significant efforts in creating culturally appropriate materials, but unfortunately, this is the exception rather than the rule.

Language differences make up just some of the larger cultural differences that are not recognized by mainstream professionals and social service providers. Cultural differences in nonverbal communication play a role as well. For example, in some indigenous communities, it is improper to look face to face or in the eye of an authority figure: people in power are understood to also have the power to harm you, and one must show deference to such an individual. This cultural difference is especially pronounced and visceral in the case of immigrants who have faced trauma, violence and persecution at the hands of government officials in their home countries. This cultural expectation to not make eye contact with authority figures is not understood by police officers, judges, teachers, or others in the USA, and immigrants don't know that their behavior is perceived by others in the USA as showing suspicion or guilt.

These nonverbal communication differences are not well-known but have an impact on the interactions between existing residents and indigenous newcomers. For example, a lack of interpreters, compounded by gender norms and distrust of authority figures, contributes to a lack of reporting of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment among indigenous women. It is clear that multiple layers of difference exist between immigrants and service providers—differences in language, culture, gender roles, and poverty—of which most service providers are unaware when interacting with indigenous communities from Latin America.

More than just a simple cultural difference, this lack of cultural understanding leads to real consequences for the indigenous community in Portland. Latino community leaders have relayed multiple examples of indigenous Latin American immigrants who have been arrested, placed in mental hospitals, and even convicted of crimes that they did not commit simply because of a lack of translators, the unfortunate collision of cultural expectations, and a lack of will on the part of mainstream Portlanders and service providers to ensure that such individuals had the chance to communicate, to tell their side of the story, and to adequately defend themselves.

e. *Employment*

As previously mentioned, one of the main motivations for settling in Portland has to do with economic opportunity, which depends on employment. And while indigenous immigrants to Portland work in a variety of fields, from white collar to blue collar, the majority continue to work in agricultural, construction, and service industries. Networks within the community help ensure that newcomers find employment. For example, indigenous immigrants who may be documented, speak English, are well integrated into mainstream Portland culture may start their own construction business and hire their friends and family to work with them. Such

hiring from within immigrant communities is common within this as well as other, non-indigenous newcomer communities.

This in-network business growth and hiring unfortunately pits some immigrant businesses against each other: some community representatives describe tension between indigenous and non-indigenous Latino companies, as well as between Latino and other immigrant communities. Some indigenous Latino immigrant communities perceive that lighter-skinned immigrants from Eastern Europe reap the benefits of white privilege in that they are preferred by white customers over darker-skinned indigenous-owned companies. This is one more example of how racial discrimination continues to impact the indigenous immigrant community, and how it pits immigrant communities against one another in a situation of economic scarcity.

Transportation to workplaces is another barrier for indigenous Latin Americans. Many members of the community work in rural areas in agriculture or forestry, so public transportation is not an option. However, Oregon's driver license laws became much stricter after the passage of SB 1080 in 2008. This law requires individuals to show proof of a social security number (i.e., citizenship) in order to obtain a driver's license. An attempt to change this law was rejected by voter referendum in 2014. As a result, many indigenous Latin Americans have been denied to right to drive legally, and many who do drive risk being stopped and arrested by police, having their vehicles impounded, or—due to lack of auto insurance—having no way to afford repair or replacement of a vehicle if they are in an accident. SB 1080 essentially demanded that members of the community choose between losing their job or breaking the law.

As a result of the recent economic recession, many construction jobs dried up, and this put many members of the indigenous community out of work. The agricultural industry felt the impact as well, particularly in nurseries and greenhouses, where sales are often tied to new home landscaping orders.²⁴⁵ The recession sped up a process that had been going on for a while, where indigenous Latin American immigrants began to transition out of agricultural jobs located in rural areas and to search for other jobs closer to Portland's urban center. Transition from farm work to urban life can be difficult for indigenous newcomers. When agricultural or construction work dries up, it can be difficult to secure other forms of work. For indigenous individuals whose skills are limited to those jobs found in more rural areas, such as agriculture, gaining new skills can be difficult, in addition to the sudden devaluing of those skills in the urban context and the effect that can have on self-confidence.²⁴⁶

However, not all indigenous Latin Americans have emigrated directly from rural areas: migration patterns have led many indigenous Latin Americans to initially migrate internally to cities, where many gained education, academic degrees, and professional skills. For indigenous professionals who are immigrants in Portland, they often face barriers to recognition of their prior degrees or credentials, and many are unable to seek re-credentialing due to lack of access or affordability. Barriers to re-credentialing lead many highly-skilled immigrants to accept jobs for which they are extremely overqualified. This not only is a blow to immigrant pride and self-respect; the larger Portland community loses out on expertise, experience, and intellect that goes unutilized. Far too many indigenous immigrants have talents and expertise that go untapped due to credentialing issues. Discrimination and bias plays a role as well: many white residents assume that immigrants from Latin America are not highly educated or qualified for skilled jobs. Even immigrants who do work in professional fields may face discrimination and bias based on assumptions about their backgrounds or just because they speak with an accent.

Many indigenous people have two first names and two or more last names, and these names hold significance as a way to trace and respect family history and ancestry. Unfortunately, government agency representatives and service providers too often force indigenous immigrants to change or shorten their names to fit into existing computer systems. This leads to official records of names for indigenous newcomers that are often

incorrect and have been misunderstood or “Americanized” by the individuals who are recording them and who do not know the correct spelling or words. While this is the result of limited record-keeping systems and a lack of flexibility to work around such systems, such practices are highly disrespectful and show a lack of understanding of the importance of names in indigenous Latino culture. By forcing indigenous newcomers to shorten or remove names, workers in health care, records offices, and naturalization offices are essentially forcing immigrants to deny or remove their ancestry and cultural heritage for “convenience” or because it’s required by the “system.”

f. Housing

While indigenous immigrants who work in agriculture and some other occupations in rural areas are sometimes offered housing in “camps” or group bunks for a small fee, immigrants who seek a more permanent home face numerous barriers. Finding affordable housing in Portland is a huge challenge for many people, but it is particularly challenging for indigenous Latin American immigrants, who face challenges of poverty, lack of rental history documentation, racial discrimination, and language barriers in the search for housing. As a result, many people live in multi-generational groups within a single apartment or home, sometimes sleeping three or four families or couples within a one-bedroom apartment.

While this enables multiple families to pitch in and afford a single rental payment, such practices are often frowned upon by landlords and run up against maximum occupancy policies. For fear of being found out or evicted, many immigrants enter and exit their apartments quietly, without becoming familiar with neighbors or community members, which prevents further integration into the community. Such fears also make indigenous immigrants vulnerable to housing discrimination and poor housing conditions, preventing immigrants from reporting discriminatory practices, fair housing, or housing code violations to authorities.

Community Strengths and Accomplishments

Despite significant barriers to community integration in areas related to discrimination, education, health care, employment, and more, indigenous immigrant communities from Latin America have a long history in Portland and the Portland area, and such communities have deep strengths and behind-the-scenes accomplishments that need to be recognized. If Portland city leaders and officials hope to improve opportunities for integration among indigenous Latinos, these leaders will need to learn more about the strengths and contributions of indigenous newcomers, as well as how these community strengths can be built upon.

a. Cultural Identity and Pride

Cultural connection and pride are one source of strength among indigenous newcomers from Latin America in Portland. Whereas many other newcomer populations identify themselves as straddling two national identities, indigenous newcomers more commonly identify with their indigenous heritage than with a specific nationality. This identification is strong, however, and leads to close ties with other newcomers who share that indigenous affiliation.

Many indigenous immigrants are very proud of their indigenous ancestry and take great strides to ensure their children are raised in their traditions. Adherence to the group, to family, and to tradition is very important. It is this sense of connection with others in the indigenous community that feeds indigenous newcomers and keeps them going in spite of barriers to success in their new home.

Despite facing discrimination from both dominant White culture as well as non-indigenous Latino culture, living in the USA provides unique freedoms for indigenous newcomers. While many indigenous communities in Latin American countries have been pressured by the powerful Catholic Church to alter their indigenous traditions and beliefs, once in the USA, even those indigenous peoples who maintain Catholic affiliation are able to practice other aspects of their cultural traditions outside of the church’s watchful eye. One example of this has

to do with parents' choices of names for their children. Once in the USA, indigenous Latin Americans feel free to name their children with traditional indigenous names, whereas back in Latin America they are pressured to choose names approved by the Catholic Church.

This strong sense of coherence within indigenous immigrant communities stretches beyond the Portland area. While this community is highly fluid, with many people coming and going over time, ties that are made while in Portland continue to be preserved even after individuals and families leave Oregon. This helps compensate for the extremely small size of specific indigenous communities in the area by enlarging community networks beyond geographic boundaries.

Community leaders describe a "mandate" within the community to share resources and participate in community events. People will make huge sacrifices of time and money to keep events happening and keep traditions alive. Song, dance, food, rituals, art/crafts, and traditional celebrations are upheld and bring together community members in the active maintenance of traditions. While different indigenous communities will have different specific celebrations or traditions, some events intentionally bring together multiple indigenous communities for common gatherings, and even larger, regional gatherings of indigenous Latin Americans are held every few years in the area. This helps to keep internal community cohesion strong while also forging connections between different indigenous groups.

b. Resilience

The indigenous Latin American immigrant communities that have settled in Portland bring a resilient, multicultural and multilingual legacy that has faced struggles with poverty, discrimination, lack of health care and housing, displacement, loss of tribal lands, and, in some cases, civil war. The fact that such communities are able to continue searching for opportunity and, once finding opportunity, to establish roots and create a thriving community and culture, shows a level of dedication, hard work, and optimism unfamiliar to many in mainstream U.S. culture.

Cultural leaders describe a tradition of persistence in indigenous culture, where indigenous communities draw energy and meaning from the strength of ancient cultures as motivation to fight, persist, and come back from adversity. Indigenous immigrants self-identify with a tradition of persistence that they trace back from before the Conquest, and see this tradition as what has sustained them through centuries of colonialism, persecution, and displacement. Keeping indigenous languages alive is one main part of this tradition, seeing as these languages have survived attempts at total destruction for thousands of years. This identification with a long, proud tradition of resilience is one way that the community persists in the face of contemporary challenges and problems.

c. Religion and Spirituality

As mentioned above, a large number of individuals within indigenous Latin American immigrant communities have been influenced by the dominance of the Catholic Church throughout Latin America. As a result, many indigenous immigrants remain Catholic. Many others identify as evangelical Christians for whom outreach and community activity is a central way in which their faith is practiced. Churches are central meeting places where communities come together, celebrate events, discuss issues, and pass along traditions.

In addition to traditional churches, some community members continue indigenous folk healing traditions that incorporate elements of traditional spirituality through ritual practices. The community may draw on the extensive experience of certain members in folk healing practices, which may mix mainstream and indigenous understandings of the human body. Folk healers provide first aid to community members, but just as important, they offer psychological help, massage, bodywork, herbal and traditional medicines. These folk healing practices integrate the physical, psychological, and spiritual understandings of the world. Folk healing

practices keep traditions alive while providing much-needed medical and psychological care among some communities who can't or aren't able to seek mainstream medical treatment. In a city that houses one of the largest colleges of natural medicine in the USA, such traditional medical expertise is an untapped educational resource.

Suggestions for Improved Integration and Outreach

Even as Latino immigrants have become a stronger, more organized, and more visibly integrated community within the Portland area, indigenous Latin American immigrants have too often been left behind or remained invisible. The various barriers to integration mentioned in this community profile need to be understood as opportunities for improved understanding, outreach, and effective delivery of services. While the indigenous community continues to have several unmet needs, the larger Portland community has been losing out on opportunities to learn and gain from indigenous cultural knowledge, skills, expertise, and strengths. With targeted initiatives intended to improve outreach to indigenous Latino communities in Portland, both indigenous newcomers and existing Portland residents have a lot to gain.

As first steps towards that goal, a few initial recommendations for improved integration include:

- **Improved Community Outreach**
While some community and government leaders have made active efforts to work more collaboratively with Latino communities and organizations in recent years, indigenous Latin American communities have too often been overlooked. Leaders within the Latino community are well-situated to identify indigenous leaders and community representatives who should be actively encouraged to participate in planning activities, resource allocation, and community-based organization initiatives to ensure that indigenous voices are heard and represented. Identifying indigenous churches and requesting collaboration with church leaders would be an easy way to make inroads with indigenous communities in Portland.
- **Overcome Language Barriers**
More resources should be utilized to provide indigenous language translation in health clinics, government offices, and social service offices. At the same time, staff and administrators in these offices need to be educated about the presence of indigenous Latin American immigrants and their specific challenges. It is vital that forms, letters, brochures, and other printed materials are offered in audio or visual formats that better communicate information without relying on printed media. This effort should be undertaken under the leadership of indigenous community members themselves to ensure that translations are accurate and culturally appropriate.
- **Support Cultural Celebrations and Events**
One of the main ways in which indigenous communities keep in contact and maintain cultural identity is through celebrations and events. However, such events are too often cobbled together on shoestring budgets by community members without adequate resources or support from the larger Portland community. Such events deserve to be better resourced, not only to help keep indigenous culture strong, but to also promote understanding about indigenous traditions and contemporary indigenous experiences to the larger Portland population.

While these are just a few ways in which community integration of indigenous Latin American immigrants can begin, these must be part of a larger process of collaboration with indigenous leaders to ensure that integration is mutually beneficial to both newcomers and existing residents, while also ensuring that any initiatives that target indigenous immigrants are led by indigenous community members themselves.

The Somali Community in Multnomah County

By *Abdisalan Mouse, Bashir Abdikadir, and Ann Curry-Stevens*

Introduction

Somalia is in the eastern corner of Africa, neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya across the Gulf of Aden. Somalia is close to the same size as Texas. Little of it is farmable and water supply is very limited. The farmed land in Somali is largely owned by the Somali-Bantu, who are an ethnic minority population whose experiences are detailed a little later in this chapter. The climate reflects its geography – close to the equator, it is hot year round. The country itself is recognized as having a pastoral culture of nomadic communities with a rich oral history of linguistic complexity. The majority of Somalis are Sunni Muslims. Colonial occupation throughout the late 20th century introduced educational institutions that introduced English, Italian and French languages. Due to the legacy of colonialism and the Cold War, many educated Somali citizens are fluent in multiple languages and excel in what would be considered a high competency of social intelligence.



Somali immigrants joined Portland's population beginning in the 1970s as students in Oregon's universities. Subsequently, a large number of Somalis arrived in the United States and Oregon as refugees following the Civil War in 1991 which left devastating destruction to communities in Somalia. Many people were forced to flee to neighboring countries and into refugee camps. The State, nonprofit organizations and the Somali Americans have assisted families in their resettlement, providing essential yet limited resources.

The current estimate of Somalis living in Oregon is 10-12,000. Accurate figures are difficult to obtain, due to the fact that all Black Africans are included as "African American/Black" in conventional databases, and rarely is one's country of origin collected. We are, however, improving such information in our school districts. According to Portland Public School District, Portland has 582 Somali students, identified from the new data collection form used in the district. While we do not have the same numbers from each school district, we anticipate that Multnomah County contains about 822 Somali students. Here is how we created these estimates: earlier research (2011) identified that there were 387 Somali students (established from the language of origin data collected),²⁴⁷ which establishes that there is a growth rate of 50% over the last five years. By applying this growth rate across the districts, the 2011 data identified 548 Somali students in Multnomah County, thereby estimating that today there are 822 students. The Beaverton School District, in dialogues, has identified they serve roughly 300 Somali students. The Somali community lives primarily in Multnomah County. This is a rapidly growing community for a number of reasons. The first is that there are very effective resettlement agencies and secondary migration into the region. Second, in-migration is significant. Oregon is ranked first as the most popular state into which to move, with this pattern being in evidence for the last three years.²⁴⁸ Third, the community is largely young, families are large, and the birthrate is high.

The challenges faced by the Somali community in Oregon are similar to challenges experienced by other immigrant and refugee communities. Core priorities are to expand the availability of English language

instruction, particularly beyond school-aged youth, increase affordable housing, ensure that living wage jobs are available to the community, and extend refugee resettlement supports, without which acculturation and successful integration is delayed.

These barriers have prevented more vulnerable community members (seniors, single mothers, youth at risk, and preliterate adults) to gain the social support needed to thrive and contribute. The unfortunate consequence of barriers has been increased social isolation. This is of great concern to the self-sufficient, functional and vibrant existing Somali population as their determination to succeed is tremendous.

We hope that readers of this report come to understand the assets and challenges of the community, and to use the insights of this report to better serve members of the community. The community is open to continuing dialogue and exploring intercultural partnerships to foster greater understanding between Somali communities and government authorities, mainstream organizations and NGOs. It is hoped that the cultivation of such relationship will contribute to the ongoing collaboration efforts to improve the social, educational and economic sustainability of Somali children, youth and families in Oregon. We also invite local service providers who intend to improve existing resource systems to connect with Somali and African community organizations.

While the insights in this report are provided to help service providers “tune in” to the Somali community, encouragement is urged to see each client and family as unique. Space must be made for individual distinctiveness, and the information provided here must not become limiting or presumptive of what individuals and their families are experiencing. Gaining information on the community is intended to be suggestive, as opposed to limiting.

Arrival Conditions

The majority of Somalis arriving in Portland are refugees, fleeing civil war, famine and drought. While these occurrences are typically thought of as experiences of dynamics in Africa, they have many roots in western and American institutions. To a lesser extent, Somali distress was also influenced by Arab trade routes and slavery. The Somali Bantu community is a minority community that was first relocated as slaves into southern Somalia to serve the Sultanate of Zanzibar in the 1800s. Other Somali minority communities who have settled in Oregon include the Somali Benadiri and the Somali Bajuni who speak Swahili.²⁴⁹

The civic peace, yet relative isolation faced by these communities turned to persecution and violence when they became the first victims of civil war in 1991, and subject to robbery of food stocks, rape and murder. Understanding this turmoil is helpful to understanding the responsibility that the west carries for African economic woes.

Beginning with the colonization of Somalia by the British, French and Italian (circa mid 1800s), trade routes and community relationships were fractured, as territory structures were imposed on the country. While some independence movements occurred peacefully, others were fractious, and the USA provided military and economic support with the goal of opposing Soviet influence that was mounting in the country to its west, Ethiopia. The subsequent withdrawal of US aid, which occurred due to the civil rights violations by the governing military party, occurred on the eve of civil war, which had its early roots in 1988.

The advent of neo-Liberalism in the 1970s and beyond has additionally created strife across Africa, as indebted nations become required to create favorable economic conditions for western corporations and trade relationships (through institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF). The vehicle is known as “structural adjustment programs” that restructures domestic economies to support foreign access to both

production and supply roles. Additional features impose prohibitions on public policy and supports for local communities and economies. Somalia had been relatively self-sufficient in food production up until the late 1970s, but the requirement for Somalia to import grain, followed by a devaluation of their currency, plunged the economy into severe trouble, and impoverished local communities. One of the first consequences was to ravage the assets of the Somali Bantu, and subsequently to further push farmers and rural inhabitants into cities. Urban life was simultaneously devastated by the destruction of the civil service. Writing of the devastation to Somalia and the disaster created by western financial interests, Chossudovsky (1993) gives details about the ways these dynamics intersect to also create drought:

Under the World Bank program, water was to become a commodity to be sold on a cost-recovery basis to impoverished farmers. Due to lack of funds, the state was obliged to withdraw from the management and conservation of water resources. Water points and boreholes dried up due to lack of maintenance, or were privatized by local merchants and rich farmers. In the semi-arid regions, this commercialization of water and irrigation leads to the collapse of food security and famine... in the era of globalization, the IMF-World Bank structural adjustment program bears a direct relationship to the process of famine formation because it systematically undermines all categories of economic activity.²⁵⁰

The net result is that civic unrest is considerable in Somalia, with a government that has collapsed and the infrastructure required to run a country in disarray. Think of destroyed water systems, sanitation, power, health care, schools and food systems being largely demolished. While the devastation has turned to immense personal insecurity, there is rebuilding as communities are working together to rethread systems and supports together to rebuild the nation. Somalia today holds the status as the world's region sixth least likely to be at peace, improving from last place in 2010.²⁵¹



Many Somalis fled the country into refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia. In 2013, these camps held more than 700,000 Somalis.²⁵² The largest, Dadaab, was developed for up to 100,000 refugees and now holds more than 360,000. It is the largest refugee camp in the world. Kenya wants the refugees to be sent back to Somalia, and to shut down the camp. Strife is building in Dadaab, and attacks are sometimes made on the refugee camp.

Somalia had now been in intense political turmoil for over a quarter century now. Its peoples have been forced to flee to various regions of the world. This circumstance coupled with their naturally resilient character endowed them with the ability to adaptive and assimilative to new environment much quicker than average other immigrants and refugees. They are considered highly hospitable as well and generally a collectivist community.

Locally, the African community worked with Portland State University's Department of Conflict Resolution in the "Diasporas in Dialogue Project" to address conflicts brought over with immigration. The success of this project, with considerable regard in existence for its leader, Dr. Barbara Tint, has fostered capacity for collegiality among the range of African communities in Portland today. Among the fourteen team members are three Somalis, Ali Ibrahim, Sa'eed Mohamed Haji, and Rukia Mohammed, who joined Africa House Director, Djimet Dogo to bring lasting peace among African communities in Portland.

For those who come to the USA from a refugee camp, uneven conditions will have been experienced. For some, life in a refugee camp was safer and better than what they had left in Somalia. Education can be

THE SOMALI COMMUNITY IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY

excellent, and students successfully graduate from high school. Some created small businesses. Others became writers, information technology specialization, and health care workers. And too, some will have also experienced persecution, violence and very harsh conditions while in a refugee camp.

The refugee experience, itself, will likely have lasting effects on the mental health of Somalis. In a synthesis of Somali mental health experiences,²⁵³ troubling data is shared. Post traumatic disorders can be anticipated to be at a level between 39% to 100% of the population (compared to about 1% in the general population), and depression can be expected to be in the area of 47% to 72%.²⁵⁴ The reason for the variation in that different studies have resulted in different levels being identified. Arriving and settled Somalis are thus likely to be facing some mental health challenges from the trauma of war and persecution from their lives in Somalia. Terrorizing experiences were prolific, and residues can similarly be terrifying. Seeking support may, however, be difficult both due to the thin resources available and the absence of culturally-specific mental health counseling for the Somali community. It also can be stigmatizing, both due to the difficulty in acknowledging such pain, as well as – for men – the additional patriarchal demands for strength which is interpreted as being able to provide for one’s family, and being unscathed by one’s history.

Know too that the very act of arriving into the USA creates its own mental health challenges. Simply being a newcomer serves as a risk to health, and immigration and the extensive time it takes to acculturate and gain social and economic footing is harmful to one’s health.²⁵⁵ Anxiety about one’s ability to learn the language, navigate a new city, and learn the culture, are deepened by the struggles in getting one’s basic needs met including housing, jobs, education and health care. While supports are in place for the first eight months of a refugee’s arrival – made available through the federal government, and administered locally – the community must take the first job offered to them, even if it does not align with one’s experience or credentials. In many situations, community members take a job far below their expectations and then are unable to secure improvements in working conditions because they are struggling hard to pay the bills, working at low wages and long hours, often at more than one job. Too few hours exist in the day to additionally find a preferred job or improve one’s credentials.

Community and Cultural Assets

Compared to most other Africans, Somalis are considered a relatively homogeneous people in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture and language. Somalis are almost completely Muslim, they all speak Somali (broadly Maxaa and Maay dialects) and their culture is generally based on Islamic teachings and principles. Islam therefore plays a very important role in their way of life; the way most Somalis dress, the food they eat, and the way they raise their children are all based on Islamic principles and values. Their moral compass of faith serves as a continual renewal of development. Values that are emphasized in the culture include unity, family, loyalty, and deference to one’s elders.^{256 257}

Somalis have an entrepreneurial spirit deeply rooted in them. Many Somalis have started their own businesses in diverse forms across Oregon. Despite this enormous spirit, they continuously confront numerous challenges in the creation and operation of their business ventures, including language and cultural barriers, finding capital, accessing the right networks, and learning about tax codes and other regulations at the city or state levels. Addressing the unique needs of Oregon Somali entrepreneurs holds potential to support community members to achieve their goals, expand our region’s business community, and allow all Oregonians to more fully reap the rewards of the state's growing diversity.

Somalis are also deeply rooted in their faith and its traditions, the vast majority of whom are Muslim. The Islamic faith (and all who follow Islam are Muslim) recognizes a single God, called Allah. As Muslims, the

Somali community adheres to strong beliefs about the importance of being people of faith. Features of Islam include recognizing God as gracious, merciful, and beneficent. Muslims are required to give to the poor and needy, and to additionally volunteer throughout the year. Muslims recognize spiritual leaders from other faiths, namely Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and understands them to be prophets who served to bring God’s messages to humankind. Accordingly, the holy books of other faiths that flowed through God’s messengers mean that the Quran, the Torah, the Gospels, the Psalms, and the Scrolls are recognized as holy texts by Muslims. The Quran remains their central holy book as it is understood to have been revealed by God to the prophet Muhammad who brought Islam into being.²⁵⁸

Prayer requirements connect Muslims with their God five times a day – in the morning, at noon, midafternoon, sunset and evening, although some Muslims combine these prayer times. Prayer is an act of “meditation, devotion, moral elevation and physical exercise.”²⁵⁹ The physicality is tied to turning to Mecca and putting one’s forehead on the ground, demonstrating submission and humility before God. Says one Muslim, “It feels awesome to put my head on the cold, hard ground.”²⁶⁰ Making prayer space available in workplaces and education settings is a respectful accommodation to support people of Islam.

Fasting from sunrise to sundown is required of Muslims during the month of Ramadan, selected as a pious month during which time one is expected to read the Quran and demonstrate high spiritual integrity, avoiding lying, gossiping and being angry. Tied to the lunar calendar, Ramadan is typically in the spring or summer. Fasting is not required of children, and illness, age, disability or pregnancy may interrupt a fast.

Cultural practices flowing from Islamic faith includes modesty about personal appearance, and women cover their arms and legs in public, additionally wearing the hijab (head covering). This modesty also appears for men who typically cover their arms and legs, including through the summer heat. Specific care is taken to keep the area between one’s navel and knees covered. Children have more flexibility and are encouraged to make decisions with their parents about how they will dress modestly. Girls will be encouraged to not wear the hijab until they commit to wearing it consistently.

Food and drink requires Muslims to avoid pork and alcohol, and to eat meat only when it is prepared similarly to kosher meat products. Barred as well is taking mind-altering drugs.

In short, Somalis hold strong kinship ties, with large families and strong communal affiliations, orienting to a collectivist culture. The community rallies around those in distress, and aims to shelter kin when they are unable to afford to pay rent or cannot find accommodations. One of the results of this is that the community rarely appears in homeless shelters or street counts, and we encourage those serving such populations to more effectively partner with the community to more flexibly connect with and support those who are in a housing crisis but who might be “couch surfing” or sleeping on the floor of their kin.

Alongside other immigrant groups (and detailed in the opening section of Chapter 5, “*Policies and practices for newcomer integration*”), the Somali community holds high aspirations for family, social and economic success. This is demonstrated in the effort that is expended in settlement processes, work ethics and doing what is necessary to pay the bills (including working two and three jobs), high numbers of adults who gain higher degrees (as demonstrated in the section in this report on education) and high expectations for their children to do well in school. Their drive to achieve much in the USA is a considerable asset, and one that needs to be met by policy makers and programs as assets to be tapped. So too these community assets need to be recognized by wider US society. The range of skills in the community include entrepreneurial activity, high education levels, experience with rebuilding an economy and governance structures following

their collapse, and an experience of civil war and how to address longstanding conflicts between ethnic groups.

The range of Somali business contributions is significant, including small restaurants, grocery stores and a cab company (profiled on p.15).

Family Life

Arriving in the USA is often punctuated with relief as well as anxiety. New worries emerge as families aim to protect themselves as well as to sustain their cultural practices. Somali families were community-based, collectively-oriented in Somalia and also in refugee camps. Community members looked out for each other's children, and older children supervise younger siblings. Daily living typically served to support child development, through caring for farms, livestock, food preparation, getting water or doing other chores. The expectations that exist in the USA for parents to shoulder responsibility for child development, without many of the traditional opportunities for Somali parents to get help, can be difficult to navigate. This can be deepened by the challenges of living in apartments, and being inside more often due to cold winter months. One prominent resource identifies the importance of non-stigmatizing culturally-responsive resources to support parents in learning how to build small and large motor skills, and the need to track milestones in child development.²⁶¹ So too such supports may be helpful for parents who used to have extended community supports for raising children, given that the task in the USA becomes more individually oriented, and families need to cover the full range of parenting activities, including discipline, outings, and physical activity.

Social networks between Somali families serve to let the community resource each other. Sharing information, advice and instrumental daily living needs (from the proverbial "cup of sugar" to clothing to transportation) helps the community survive. Families are relatively patriarchal, with traditional gender roles influencing children and expectations placed on them. Women typically take care of the family, alongside child rearing, food preparation, care of the home and relationships. They also have had robust experiences in farming, particularly in rural areas, and particularly among the Somali Bantu. And yet, with the tough economic times that the Somali community experiences in the USA, Somali women and youth will seek work when times are tough.

Although rarely discussed in public, polygamy is legal in Somalia, with about 20% of the population living in families with one husband and multiple wives, although second wives will typically have had their own homes.²⁶² Prior to immigrating to the USA, men are required to select just one wife and divorce the others. As a result, a high level of Somali women arrived here without the support of a husband, and without the range of supports (including financial) that they provided to the family, which typically has large numbers of children. Adapting to such conditions, including the loss of the marriage may be additional settlement requirements. Perhaps out of sympathy, resettlement officers seem to have a preference over the families run by a single mother than by those where both parents are present.

It is important to note that while both patriarchal and radical Muslim (meaning non-mainstream Muslims) identities suggest that women might be expected to be subservient, Somali women have larger economic roles, and have had freedom to work and travel, and have often headed their own households.²⁶³

Elders are always valued and respected in Somali culture. The community, in particular, values elders who have made much of their lives – in terms of education, status and money. Such elders typically formed governing councils in Somalia, and are deferred to as leaders in the USA. Again, while elders attain broader influence in leadership roles, those with lesser status are afforded respect: "It would not be uncommon for

a poor, uneducated nomad to feel comfortable approaching a high government official as an equal when discussing state affairs.”²⁶⁴

Challenges to Equitable Access and Integration

a. Education

Education is one of the keys for life success, and an important pathway out of poverty. In Oregon, schools are not only centers of education, but they are also centers of community, providing valued social services. Many students in public school face a number of challenges. Somali students face difficulty in the US education as they adjust to new education system and its requirements. Over the past decade, non-dominant children and youth (including immigrants and refugee students) have changed the face of Oregon classrooms, moving in Multnomah County from minority to majority presence in school, and more broadly in Oregon, becoming a third of the student population. English Language Learners (ELL) are the fastest growing segment of the student population in the United States. In Oregon, 10.2% of students are enrolled in ELL programs. Yet despite this need, provision of ELL programs has been woefully inadequate. Local narratives from Somali parents highlight concerns for how long their children are being kept in ELL programs, alongside a strong wish for Somali speakers in such classrooms to better bridge students to engagement with academic success. In the 2014/15 legislative session, ELL funding was revamped, aiming to improve the dynamic of only ¼ of Oregon’s students becoming fully proficient within 5 years, and less than half meeting the yearly expected gains in English skills. Several problems were present in the system: there was a financial incentive to schools to keep students in ELL programs beyond their appropriate time in the program (not inconsiderable when an additional \$3000/student is provided for ELL students), there were few requirements that funding for ELL needed to be spent on ELL, funding was too low, and the little was being done to ensure adequate progress through the ranks of ELL programs. Additionally, compliance reviews, including at Portland Public Schools, showed repeated violations of compliance with ELL requirements. A legislative win in 2015 strengthened the ELL program, requiring tracking of how ELL funds are spent, providing additional funds for ELL improvements, and transparency of ELL results for students.

Somali children face many challenges and struggle in schools, particularly around language which is a major barrier to learning. Until students become capable in speaking, understanding, reading, and writing English, they are significantly disadvantaged in the US education system which is not adequately prepared for immigrant and refugee children. Somali children often fall behind in U.S. schools. There are few programs intended for ELL students. While many programs have not been effective in moving students quickly to learning English, the advent of dual language immersion where students can be understood as having considerable linguistic and cultural assets, as they are not required to discard their original languages. A Somali dual language immersion program was introduced in Portland Public Schools in 2016, with a teacher, Salaad O’Barrowm, who includes lessons in Maay-Maay (the language of the Somali Bantu), Somali and Mahaa. The improved educational outcomes achieved by Latino students in such programs are anticipated for the Somali community. Portland Public Schools also aims to add three more teachers who speak Somali languages for the 2016/17 school year, bringing such language capacity into the remaining schools with large numbers of Somali students.



The children whose first language is not English and they found difficulty to participate equally if they cannot understand the teachers' instructions and reading materials that they were provided. In American schools, it is believed that parent involvement is a significant factor affecting a child's educational success. However, many parents have been experiencing difficulty to involve their children education because of language barriers, lack of support from the schools and due to working various work shifts to earn living to provide one's family. Non-native speakers such as Somali students are most at risk of academic failure while some view schooling as an estranging force that provides unequal opportunities. Given the difficult circumstances that Somali students and their families regularly face in schools and education system in general, the type and quality of education available to these students distressed to learn English.

Portland Public Schools released a progress report on Somali students in 2015.²⁶⁵ In it, the educational needs of the community are identified: the graduation rate is only 58%, while the overall rate in the district is 70%. These students are, however, working hard to achieve. Their attendance rate is almost at the level of white students, at 92.7% of days attended regularly, which is better than most other communities of color. And the students are under-represented in more advanced classes (such as AP, IB and dual credit classes), and severely under-represented in the "talented and gifted" (TAG) program, at just six Somali students in the TAG program while they should hold 64 of such spots. This is the lowest level of any community of color represented in such spaces. Under-representation is the result of not being identified as a potential candidate by teachers, not testing well in these tests, and low levels of parent advocacy pressing for such services to be considered for their children. In a final urgent challenge, Somali students are over-represented in school suspensions or expulsions. While statistically they should only face 11 such discipline events, they face 20 such events. This is a longstanding problem in our local schools, with students of color being treated more harshly than their white counterparts. Prior research indicates that students of color are no more disruptive in class, but they receive harsher discipline for their actions.²⁶⁶ This pattern of more frequent and harsher discipline exists as a result of implicit bias, and sometimes because they are over-surveilled and their behavior noticed and scrutinized by school authorities.

These challenges surface the need for effective parent support to understand the school culture and advocacy roles that can help students be more effectively included in school, and to press for the additional resources that can be helpful for the academic success. These data also provide the imperative for the Somali community to be understood as a community in grave need of effective supports and for community advocates to be invited to join policy tables to discuss their needs and priorities. Culturally responsive programs, teaching and parent involvement is an essential ingredient to this work, alongside efforts to undo institutional racism.

b. Health Care

The 1991 Civil War in Somalia completely destroyed the healthcare institution system, reducing the population to survival mode. Prior to the civil war, Somalia had a free public healthcare system where patients could walk into any hospital clinic to seek medical care attentions. A thriving private health care clinic system also existed.

Due to the civil war, many Somalis fled from their country to escape the destruction, hunger and the death that became widespread. Most of those who escaped made it in neighboring countries, namely Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen where to this day some of the largest Somali refugee camps still exist. The Geneva Convention provided for the resettlement of Somalis from refugee camps to the USA and other parts of the world. Signatories to the Convention provided pathways to settlement, first requiring passing stringent background security checks, as well as health assessments prior to relocation to those countries.

Before departure from refugee camps and other countries, refugees are required to undergo a medical examination to identify health conditions that could prevent entry into the U.S. as defined by public health regulations. Within 30 days of arrival in Oregon, refugees must visit a refugee resettlement agency and go to the Mid County Health Center for an initial health screening which include an emotional and mental health screening following established guidelines established by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.



After the initial health visit, Somalis (and other refugees) receive a more in-depth health assessment by the County health agency, required during the 8-month transition period. Most Somali refugees arrive in the USA with good health. With the deeper screening, previously undiscovered diseases and/or conditions may be diagnosed. These newly-identified conditions are frequently prevalent in the refugee's country of origin, but rare in the United States. For example, refugees may have tropical disease such as malaria, TB, typhoid fever, parasites, malnutrition, and psychological trauma. These health visits frequently pose hurdles such as language barriers and complex health care bureaucracy. When refugees arrive in the United States, there is an 8-month federally-determined program during which new arrivals are exposed to a number of opportunities including skill building, English classes, and self-sufficiency classes. During this time, all refugees are provided with the Oregon Health Plan, and a Medicaid plan that covers all expenses. After 8 months, this assistance ends and refugees are left on their own to become self-sufficient.

Due to disparate and variety of programs with complexity of network of providers for the whole family, Obstacles can be significant, causing them to disconnect from the system. Obstacles include income barriers, incomplete understanding of bureaucratic challenges such as appointment scheduling and navigation of the insurance and not understand the diverse specialties in the health care system. Other limitations faced by Somalis include how to address acute and chronic disease needs; language and cultural barriers further complicate access to health care. Chronic conditions, that may have been considered incidental to life in the refugee's original country, may be viewed as more serious in their adopted country. And a dietary constraint also challenges the community, as Somalis consume more carbohydrate-based food such rice and pasta at levels to which they are unaccustomed.

Preventative health can be challenging for Somali refugees. Many do not obtain preventive health care because they are unfamiliar with the medical services available to them. Also, Somalis may have limited understanding of the value of preventive care. This stems from experience in their original country's healthcare system which rarely addresses issues of preventive care. This pattern extends to prenatal care, and relatively few Somali women are accustomed to doctor's visits to check on the development of the fetus. As a result, most Somali refugees seek medical attention only when they get sick and this has become part of the Somali cultural norm. It is important to remember that many native-born Americans also neglect preventative health care and delay seeking health care until conditions have deteriorated.

Most Somali refugees lived for many years in refugee camps prior to coming to the USA, having traveled different routes, both geographically and psychologically. Good physical and mental health as well as ability to speak English language is critical to successful navigation of the stressful transition to living in a new culture. When Somali refugees arrive in poor health, their burdens are multiplied as they negotiate the health care system during their initial transition phase.

Mental health challenges can exist due to the experiences in Somalia and/or in subsequent refugee camps. The horror of violence, coupled often with grief and loss of loved ones, sometimes with survivor guilt, and occasionally with the terror of having watched the very worst torture of their family members – all creates trauma which can readily manifest as post-traumatic stress disorder. Estimates, as noted earlier, are at 39% to 100% of the refugee population facing this consequence.²⁶⁷ Trauma also exists with the integration challenges, which are much more draining than one had anticipated. While relief had been anticipated, instead economic and social stressors abound, along with worry for how one's children will be able to cope in school. Additional stressors are tied to reworking family relationships and patterns: children outpacing their parents in learning English and US culture, spousal challenges due to economic vulnerability facing men, particularly, when they are unable to fully care for their families, and severe isolation facing the elderly and single mothers. Shifts in culture and the ways that family and community are valued are also a source of stress: the individualist versus collectivist mindset heightens expectations on parents to raise their children without much support from others.

Without being well connected to health providers, and without having culturally responsive and culturally specific health care, the community remains vulnerable. Somalis value an integrated mind, body and spirit approach to health care, and non-conventional approaches to care are required: says one service guideline: "Helping professionals must be willing to get out of their offices and walk and work alongside their clients."²⁶⁸ It is important to know that Somali-specific resources are available for service providers. Begin by looking at the resources cited in this chapter.

Somalis are currently the largest African Muslim group living in tri-county population center of Oregon and they need specific health programs as they struggle with understanding how to navigate the local health care system and securing insurance coverage. The onset of chronic diseases such as depression, hypertension and diabetes that hardly existed prior arrival to USA, continues among the community. For health providers, the overarching recommendation is that sources of ill health will be tied not just to the

Locally, investments in creating Somali community health workers are growing, and significant outreach is occurring to reach women, particularly, to support maternal health.

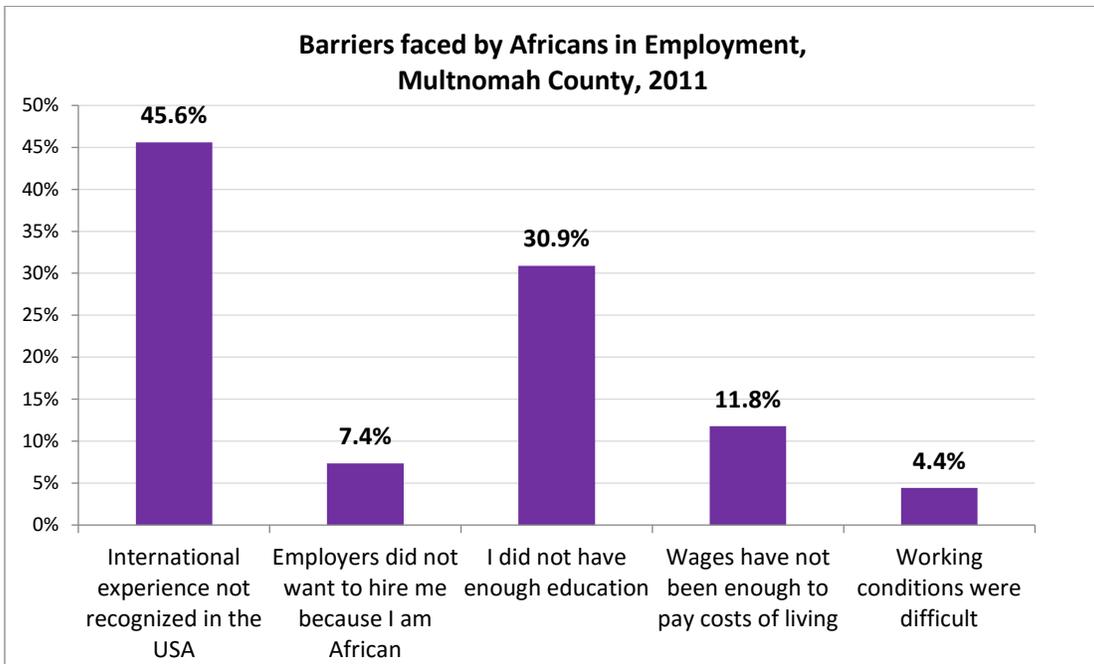


conditions one experienced in their homeland, but also from the settlement conditions being faced in the USA, and that these factors are typically tied to inflexibility and unresponsiveness in the social institutions and discourses prevalent in the USA, and heightened considerably by the difficulty the community has in gaining an economic foothold to care for one’s family.

c. Employment

Like most immigrants of color, Somali immigrants and refugees in Oregon face many barriers to employment. The most common ones include the lack of US experience, lack of information and networking, lack of access to professional licensing due to lack of recognition of their foreign credential, and most crucially, lack of English language proficiency. The majority of Somalis have limited knowledge of the job market in the USA, and getting a job in one’s own field is particularly difficult. Add to this the requirement for refugees to take the first job offered to them (as a condition of receiving federal funds for the first eight months of arrival), and there is a “perfect storm” of economic vulnerability.

Only a few Somali professionals and trades people are employed in their chosen fields. Additionally, they face employment discrimination because of their ethnicity and religious background. Almost overwhelming majority of Somali professionals who have completed different levels of university degrees from abroad and here in the United States are either taxi or truck drivers. An earlier study of Portland’s African immigrants and refugees identified that almost one half of Africans have difficulty getting relevant employment because their foreign credentials are not recognized in the USA.



Source: African Community Survey, 2011.²⁶⁹

A small number professionals are working in their trained field while others are working in other industries or/and running their own small business. In this regard, many Somali professionals have become frustrated and become hopeless. Most Somalis professionals who are underemployed or unemployed feel that these employment barriers are due to limited practical city, county and state government policies and lack appropriate networking and connections.

Moreover, because of family responsibilities here in Oregon and back home, a lot of professionals have to accept any job that becomes available to them to allow paying their household needs. As such, the issues of underemployment/unemployment and thus poverty continue to affect a high number of Somali families in Portland and Metro areas. This, along with language, housing and education issues, is a top-ranking problem encountered by the Somali community.



While transportation is not a major hindrance to employment for majority of Oregonians, it is a challenge for the Somali new arrivals to this city. Due to inefficiencies of service delivery, it takes them a while to figure out their way around Portland and Metro. This handicaps their employability and efforts to integrate. Additionally, there are not Somali professionals who are in senior management or supervisory positions in either public organizations or private enterprises who could have mentored our hard working young men and women to sustainable employment. This vacuum results about cultural competency gap with existing structures and systems in which they are forced to work for and with.

d. Housing

While successful integration of immigrants into other communities is determined by the attainment of several basic needs, adequate and affordable housing remains top priority for the community development and economic progress. Research in the housing market shows that the lack of reliable housing information could be a major barrier when looking for affordable housing.²⁷⁰

Somali Oregonian's current challenges and future prosperity depends upon a looming linkage between affordable housing and economic development. When most Somali refugees arrive in Oregon they receive first eight months of rent assistance hence renting apartment units that are quite different from and had little resemblance their back home left dwellings. Finding an appropriate housing for the large sized Somali families can be challenging and cost sensitive. Renting four to five bedroom houses are the biggest challenges faced by Somali refugees as most of them start from low paying jobs in their first years in America.

It is worth noting that the majority of Somali families used to own their homes back home, and that is why, upon arrival, most of them yearn for a permanent place to call home. To make that reality, some apply to Habitat for Humanity although there is long waiting list. Most continue in low paying jobs and deal with rising rents, hence moving from place to place in an effort to find affordable housing. Others pursue Section 8 housing vouchers that takes several years to obtain.

Lack of affordable housing creates immense hardships for most of the underserved Somali populations. For example in Washington County's Section 8 vouchers takes up to six to seven years forcing many Somali applicants to abandon their applications; in Portland it is about three to four years. In addition, the current housing crisis further exacerbates the situations while many low income Somali families compete with internal migrations and the investment boom in Oregon. The rental crisis has hit the community in unprecedented ways, worsened by the weak civil rights protections the community is provided – they often

do not know their rights, and are unable to protect them due to language and information barriers, alongside legislation-based occupancy barriers that disallows larger families from living in small rental units. The abundant stories of discrimination and simply unfair practices give rise to the urgency of finding solutions to the housing crisis facing Somali renters.

Few Somali refugees might have made real progress in the housing market and middle income families have explored comfortable housing while others bought their own houses. For those who have, many became homeowners through Habitat for Humanity which offers affordable housing programs. Because most Somalis hold Islamic beliefs, families will not enter into traditional mortgages. The Islamic faith prohibits charging interest, yet this is how all America works. This prevents some Somali families entering housing markets with traditional mortgages. At the same time, Somalis understood that there is an alternative Islamic faith-accepted Halal way, such as La-Reba system, or “no interest mortgages,” which are available and perfectly legal in USA.

It is imperative that solutions be found to the low income Somali families housing crisis that is unique with many features: the intersection of language difficulties, cultural norms of occupancy that differ so much from that in US society, low incomes, vulnerability due to poverty, racism and bias of those involved, and the absence of culturally-specific services to assist them navigate the ever changing complexity of housing policies.

To address these challenges, public and private housing markets should explore various way to supplement the market needs for the impacted communities while at the same time immediately increasing the supply of subsidized housing to meet the needs of the low income Somali families. One of the Task Forces recommended in this report aims to address the urgent supply issue. Furthermore, it is necessity for expanded access to translators and policy that requires landlords and housing managers to ensure that conflict and disputes are comprehensible to Somali tenants. It is important that housing is understood as a human right instead of a simply market transaction based on supply and demand.

e. Criminal Justice System

The Somali community holds divergent opinions about the responsiveness of the police force and the larger justice system itself. On one side, there is the deepest appreciation for the ways in which law enforcement has worked collaboratively with the Somali community in the years following the arrest of Mohamed Mohamud following the November 2010 bombing plans in downtown Portland. Relationships have been built, and very promising initiatives introduced. A significant step forward in law enforcement was made when Portland Police Bureau hired its first Somali police officer, Khalid Ibrahim, in Portland Oregon, and the planned addition of a Somali Community Liaison in the 2016/17 Portland Police budget, recently approved by City Council. The Portland Police Bureau continues to recruit Somali Americans and extend their language capacity to integrate additional Somali speakers into their ranks. For many in the community, there is profound hopefulness and appreciation for the responsiveness experienced at the administrative levels in the improvements that are unfolding.

On the other side, experiences of racial bias, or the perception of racial bias, generate low confidence in the Oregon’s justice system. Many Somalis believe that the triple constraints of being black, newcomer, and Muslim are resulting more youth/young male Somalis being prosecuted, convicted at higher rate than whites. Additionally of concern is that many who end up in jail do not receive culturally responsive services such as chaplains who can provide counseling while serving time. While the bias and inequities faced by the community may not explicitly be due to holding Somali identity, this matters little to those who experience injustice. In the post 9-11 era, many examples emerge of complaints include the phenomena such as

“driving while Black” and of “flying while Muslim” particularly when traveling to an outside USA where almost all Somalis are pulled over and singled out from the airport lines upon their return for their dress, looks and names. Many in the Somali community are deeply concerned about this type of profiling and inequitable treatment.

It was these types of concerns that gave rise to advocacy efforts to end profiling. Led by the Center for Intercultural Organizing, Oregon’s House Bill 2002 was passed in 2015. It prohibits law enforcement from the use of profiling based on race, color, national origin, and religious affiliation (as well as other identities). Profiling complaints will also be collected, as stipulated in the End Profiling Act, and a yearly report will be distributed.

In daily life, Somalis often find the criminal justice system to be overwhelming, intimidating and confusing to navigate. This applies to minor offences such as traffic violations or more major infractions. Locally, we know that Somali adults encounter the police due to assaults and domestic violence, while assimilated Somali youth in Oregon commit similar crimes to their white counterparts. It is worth noting that the community lacks Somali attorneys that the community can relate to when seeking support in terms of understanding the entire criminal system. Currently, the community heavily relies on community-based organizations and an array of mainstream attorneys when seeking assistance in the justice and law related matters when they or their loved ones face trouble. Interpretation alone is not enough.

f. Religious Discrimination

The United States guarantees religious freedom. But this is vastly narrowed for Muslims, despite also being covered under these protections. Juxtaposing two different sets of religious support aims to make our point: the outward expression of modesty in the Catholic faith can be practiced by women who choose this career. Modest loose clothing and head covering is worn by nuns. Catholic nuns who wear the veil can generally be encountered in secluded religious environments, and their head covering is part of their convention in public as well. Muslim women who practice modesty in the public sector are, however, questioned antagonistically about why they practice modesty. Both are a demonstration of faith.

Negative religious stereotypes are advanced by both media and employees in public institutions due to a lack of understanding of individuals who pursue a religious lifestyle. This lack of knowledge and respect for people who choose to live a religious lifestyle from a different faith and culture living in the public versus the private sector is a discrimination that Somali Muslims face as an acculturative stress in the experience of integration. It also adds to the risk of delaying full acculturation and integration.

Recommendations

- a. Expand supports to refugees so that they can access improved income supports, alongside resources to achieve professional and business development.
- b. Develop family-friendly policies that address issues in education, employment, housing security and social integration that ensure long term sustainability for refugees.
- c. Invest in the economic development of the Somali community through micro-loan accessibility and urban renewal grants.
- d. Research all national and global models of successful refugee resettlement and social integration.
- e. Designate funding for at-risk refugee youth outreach programs to prevent gang involvement and other radicalizations by offering employment search, training and development as well as extending NGO networks to offer apprenticeships and internships.
- f. Recruit and hire Somali employees with bi-lingual and bi cultural competency as service providers in the health care, housing, employment, and education fields.

- g. Establish community partnerships with existing Somali non-profits to problem solve and offer support to service providers.
- h. Require cultural competency assessments and training for employees in the education, health care, police, court, human services and child protection systems to prevent racial, social and religious discrimination.
- i. Develop ongoing acculturation mentor programs for refugee families based on models used for exchange students being hosted by American families.

Conclusion

We are hopeful that this preliminary report sheds lights on the success, needs as well as struggles of the Somali community. While we seek to undertake a more comprehensive research on each of the areas identified in this report, this introductory report nonetheless generates knowledge for community leaders, natural helpers, service-providing agencies, and different levels of government to plan and develop more relevant programs, resources and strategies.

The Somalis are inherently talented, resilient, business-minded, hard-working and highly adaptable. Limited language skills, however, in addition to poor socio-economic status and multiple cultural barriers negate the Somali community to fully access and use available resources. We encourage readers of this chapter to reach out to the community, to listen deeply to needs and to identify and build up on strengths. Respect for the community and authentic partnerships hold potential to identify meaningful solutions in the face of adversity.

The Middle Eastern Community in Multnomah County

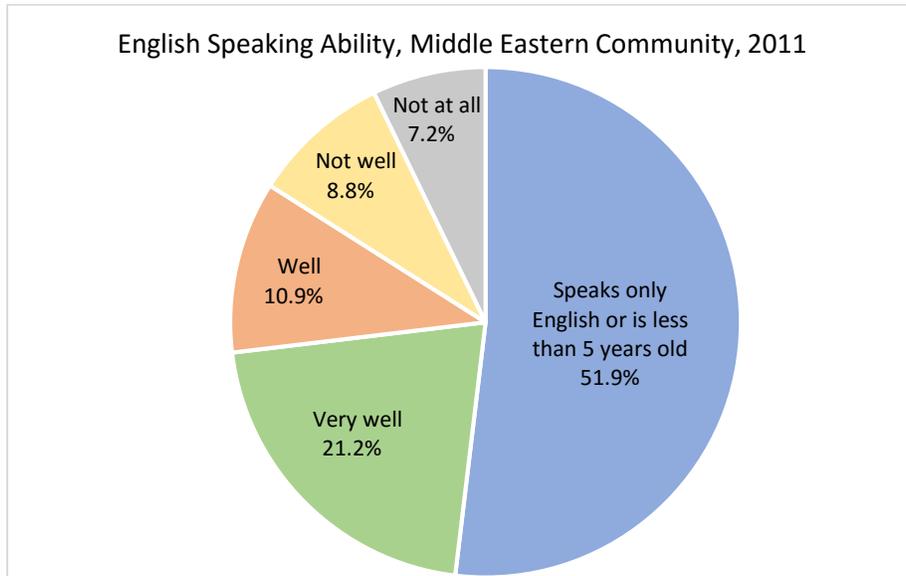
By Anne Sinkey and Ann Curry-Stevens

While increased attention has been paid to some Portland-area communities of color and newcomers communities in recent years, the Middle Eastern community in Multnomah County remains relatively unstudied. In many ways, this is a disparate group, and includes individuals from the northwestern tip of Africa in Morocco and stretching east to Iran. This is also a community with mixed rationales for arriving in the USA. Many are recent refugees, arriving following the Iraqi war, while others have been seeking western opportunities for economic advancement, arriving as immigrants.

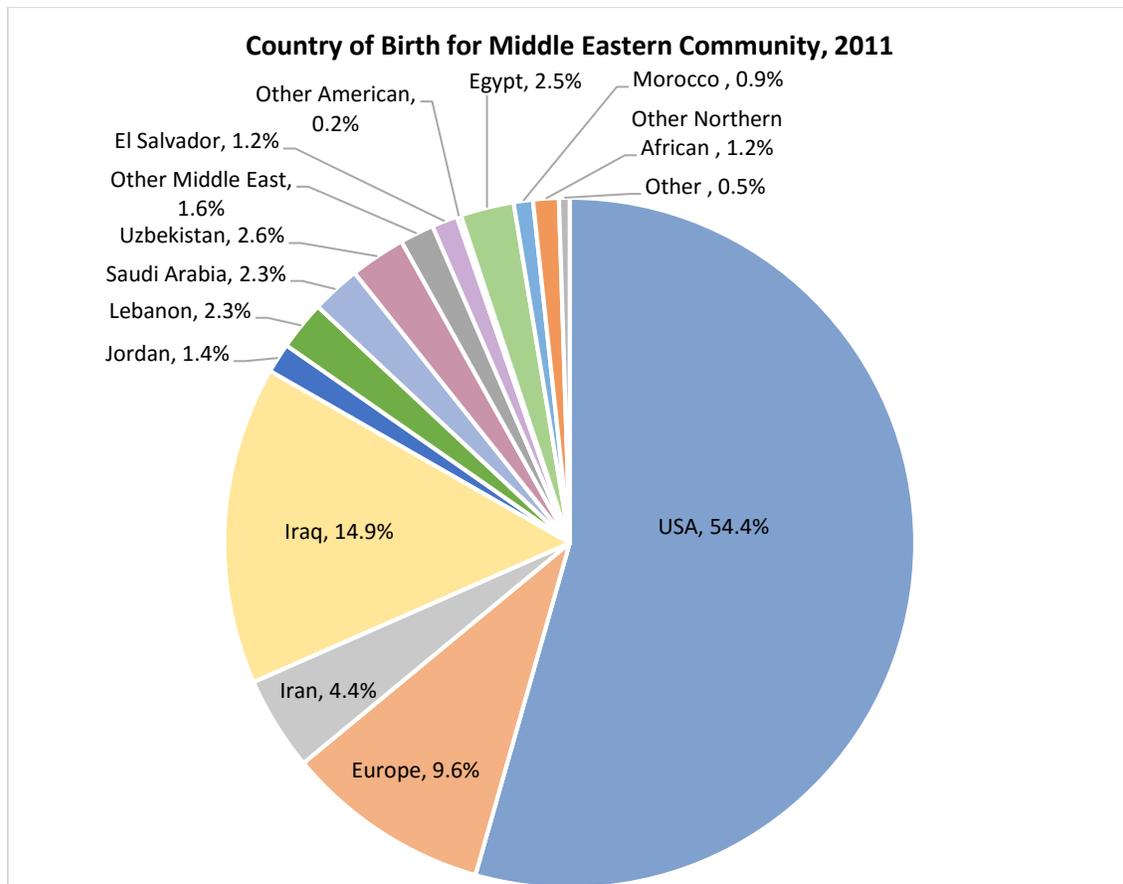
We examined Public Use Microfile Sample (PUMS) data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) from 2009-2011, tabulated via DataFerrett, to gain a better understanding of how well individuals with Middle Eastern ancestry were faring in Multnomah County. Population and household variables were pulled from this data set for individuals who identified as having Middle Eastern ancestry (whether single or multiple-group ancestry). These included: Algerian, Egyptian, Moroccan, Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanian, Lebanese, Syrian, Armenian, Turkish, Yemeni, Kurdish, Palestinian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Mideast, Arab, Arabic, and Other Arab ancestry categories. Data were pulled both for the state of Oregon as well as for Multnomah County. For comparison, we include some data points for Multnomah County residents who are White (alone, non-Hispanic) from the same data set (ACS 3-year estimates, 2009-2011). Please note that the charts use these same data, but for ease of understanding simply call the White (alone, non-Hispanic) population “white,” and indicate the year as “2011” instead of the range which tends to confuse readers.

To date, there are no institutions such as education, health, child welfare or the justice system that report out on the service numbers or experiences such as racial disparities for the Middle Eastern community. This dearth of data means we cannot provide the scope of insights that the other “Unsettling Profile” research series makes available to the policy community. But that will change in the coming years as a new data bill is implemented. House Bill 2134 will require all health and human services run by or funded by the State of Oregon to include the following service figures: Middle Eastern and North African. We anticipate that this commitment will be extended to include education institutions in the coming year. Implementation of this Bill will begin in 2017.

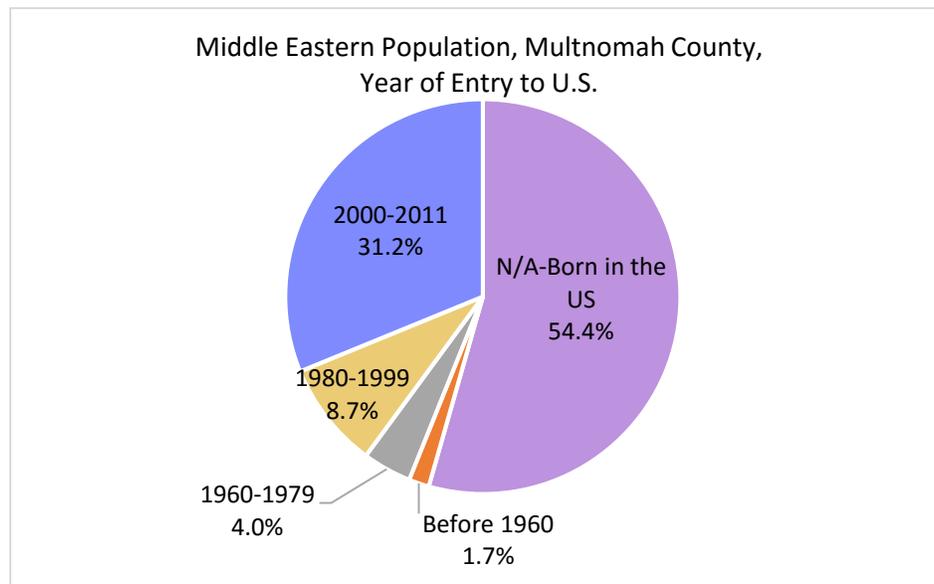
To launch our profile of the Middle Eastern community, we begin by detailing who makes up the more than 8,000 members of the population in Multnomah County. The official count of the Middle Eastern community is 8,032 in 2011, making up 1.1% of the County’s population. But first we need to highlight that we believe there is an undercount of the size of this community, as many have arrived from cultures where participating in activities such as completing a Census or answering the phone call being made by a government official is not customary, and participating in such civic processes is yet to become habit. For a sizeable portion of this community, government officials have been a violent presence in their lives, and engaging with them was avoided wherever possible. As well, we know that a sizeable portion of the community (likely to be 16.0% as shown in the language chart below) would be unable to communicate in English or Spanish, which are the languages used in the administration of the American Community Survey which is the source of information for the data used in this chapter.



We now turn to the origins of the members of this community. Note that these figures will change in the coming years as the refugee crisis in Syria and other Middle Eastern communities amplify our refugee numbers. This is a community rich in diversity with an abundance of life experiences.



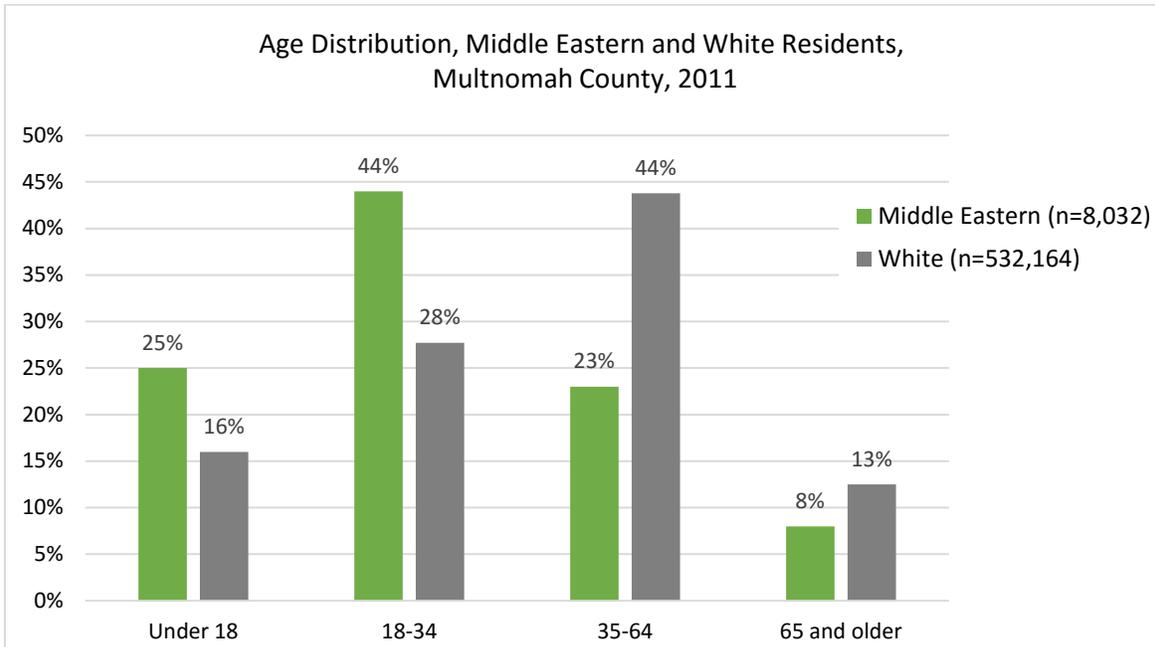
Of the 8,032 members of the Middle Eastern community in Multnomah County, just under half (46%, n=3,661) are foreign-born. Among those foreign-born newcomers, the majority—68% (n=2,505)—arrived between 2000 and 2011.



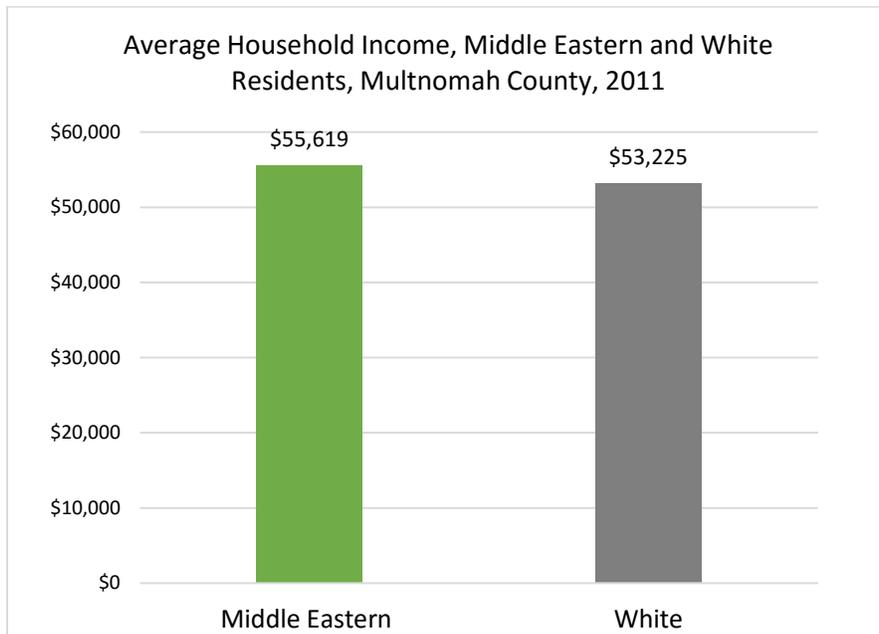
Middle Easterners in the Portland area tend to be newer arrivals than those statewide, where a slightly smaller percentage—57% (n=7,613)—of the foreign-born Middle Eastern population arrived between 2000 and 2011. Statewide percentages of Middle Easterners who are foreign-born are the same as the percentages in Multnomah County: 46% (n=13,242) of the state's 28,791 Middle Eastern residents are foreign-born.

Of course, members of the Middle Eastern community who were born in the U.S. are citizens. Among Middle Eastern residents of Multnomah County not born in the U.S., about 27% (n=978) are naturalized citizens, leaving 72% (n=2,587) remaining foreign-born residents not citizens of the U.S. Also, since over half of Middle Eastern residents of the county are native-born, English language ability is strong for most members of the community. Nearly half, or 48% (n=3,860), of Middle Eastern Multnomah County residents (age 5 or older) speak a language other than just English; among these residents, the majority (67%, n=2,576) speak English well or very well. This also means that the need for English language supports is significant, as 33% of the community does not communicate well in English.

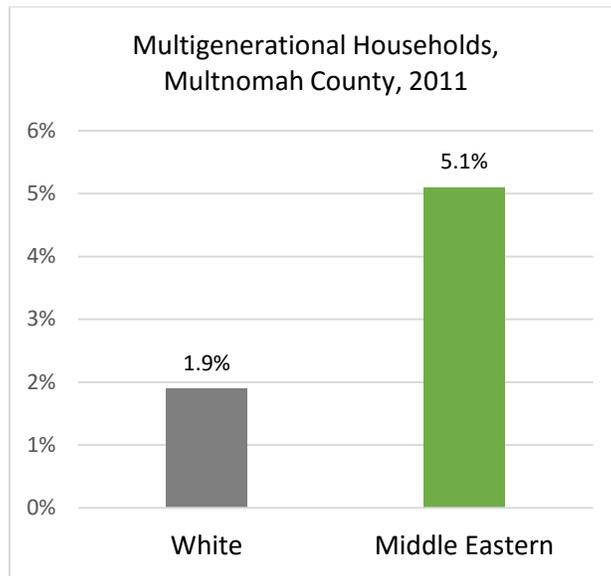
The Middle Eastern population of Multnomah County tends to be slightly younger than the overall White population in the county. Most (44%) Middle Eastern residents of Multnomah County are between the ages of 18-34, but 25% of residents are children under the age of 18. This is higher than the average percentage of non-Hispanic Whites under age 18, which is 16%. A smaller percent of the Middle Eastern population, 8%, is age 65 or older, compared to the overall percentage of Multnomah County White residents in that age range, which is 12.5%.



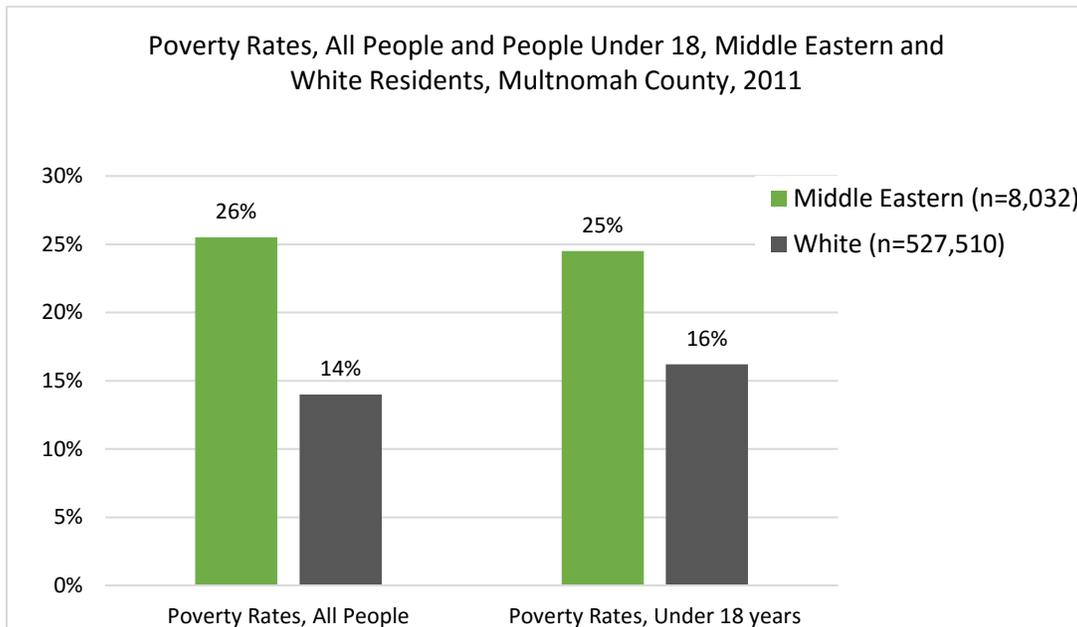
As noted earlier, the Middle Eastern community in Multnomah County is quite diverse, with members from numerous countries. In addition, about a third of the community are relative newcomers to Portland, having arrived since the year 2000. This means that the majority of the community were either born in the United States or have been in the country for quite some time. This diversity within the Middle Eastern community is evident when we look at income and poverty rates. When average household incomes are compared between Middle Eastern and White (alone, non-Hispanic) residents of Multnomah County, incomes are similar, with Middle Eastern households earning slightly more on average than White households. White households average just over \$53,000 a year, while Middle Eastern households average over \$56,000 a year.



Not factored into this data is that the Middle Eastern community holds a very high level of multigenerational households, at levels more than double that of Whites.



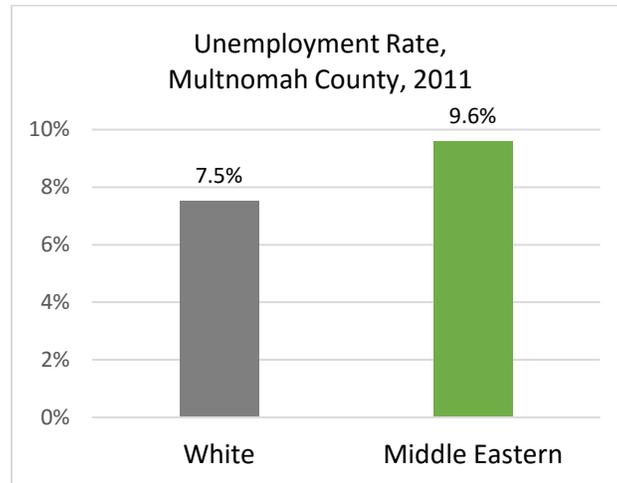
A more accurate understanding of the community’s income situation may best be illuminated through an examination of poverty rates. When we compare poverty rates between Middle Eastern and White residents, it is clear that a much larger percent of the Middle Eastern community experiences poverty—both within the community at large, as well as when we consider child poverty alone. Over a quarter of the Middle Eastern community in Multnomah County live in poverty, while only 14% of Whites do.



These data suggest that a small percentage of Middle Eastern households have been able to utilize opportunities in the United States to become financially successful. These economic success stories are likely raising overall average household income numbers for Middle Eastern families. Indeed, some

perceptions of the Middle Eastern community reflect these successes, which perpetuates a belief that Middle Easterners in Oregon do not struggle economically, or with other issues related to integration. However, a significant portion of the Middle Eastern community has not fared so well. It is clear that a full 26% of Middle Easterners in Multnomah County are struggling financially. The average household income figures unfortunately obscure this fact.

Part of the economic challenge comes through unemployment. Unemployment levels in the recent past, at the closing of the recession, were at levels 28% worse than Whites, as shown in the chart below. While this is there is a pronounced challenge in the community having one's foreign-earned credentials recognized. Coupled with Islamophobia, gaining an economic foothold is difficult.

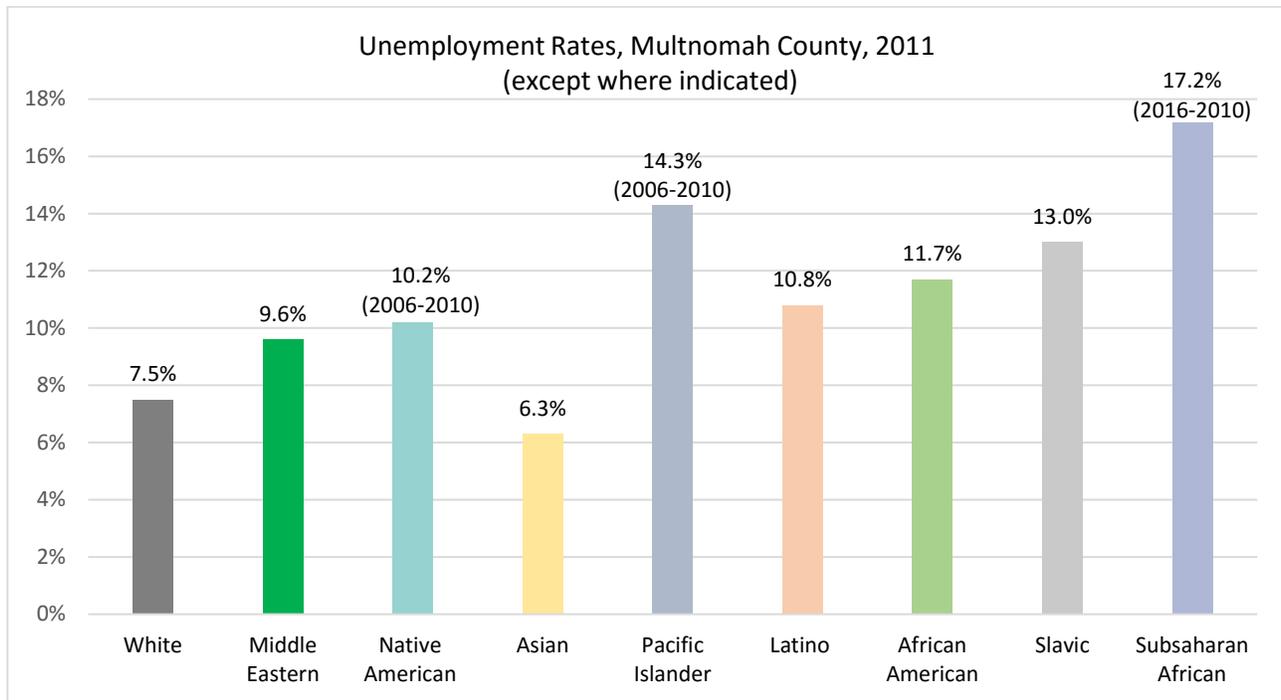


It is helpful to see unemployment rates in comparison across the economic spectrum. Below we see that the Middle Eastern community is faring slightly better than most communities of color, but that its employment access is more similar to other communities of color than to those of Whites.

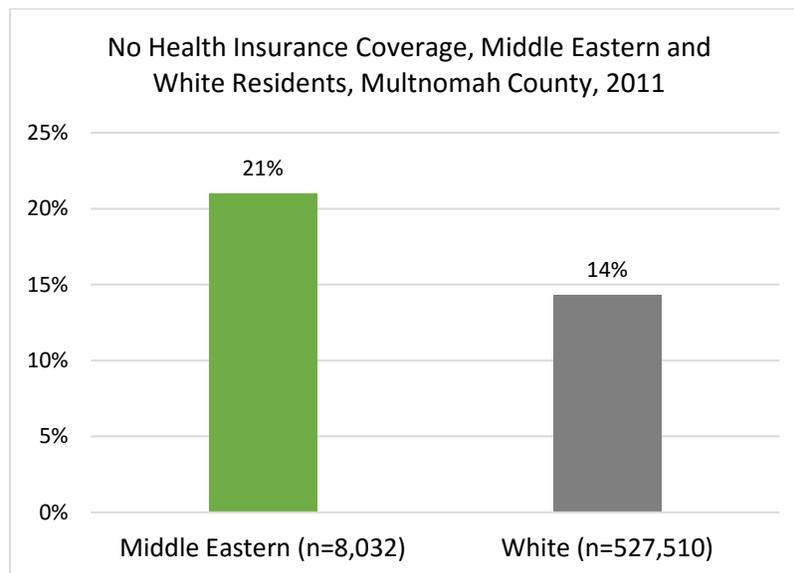
Muslim Educational Trust opened a community center in Tigard in 2014. One of its offerings is an indoor, Olympic-length pool. The address is 10330 SW Scholls Ferry Road (Ph. 503-579-6621).

It offers women-only swim hours, recognizing the modesty with which Muslims dress. It has no windows so as to offer protection for women from being viewed by passers-by.



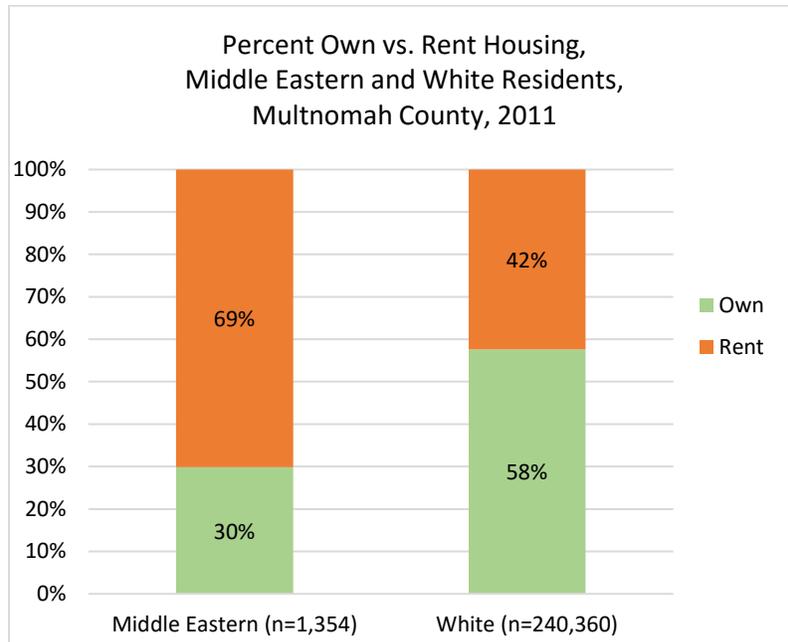


Another disparity between Middle Eastern and overall White residents of Multnomah County is evident in the data around insurance coverage. While these data were compiled before full implementation of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), the numbers reflect unequal access to health care in Portland. While about 14% of White residents were uninsured in 2011, over one fifth, or 21%, of Middle Eastern residents lacked health care. This lack of insurance only compounds other cultural and language-related barriers to health care that are discussed at length elsewhere in this report.

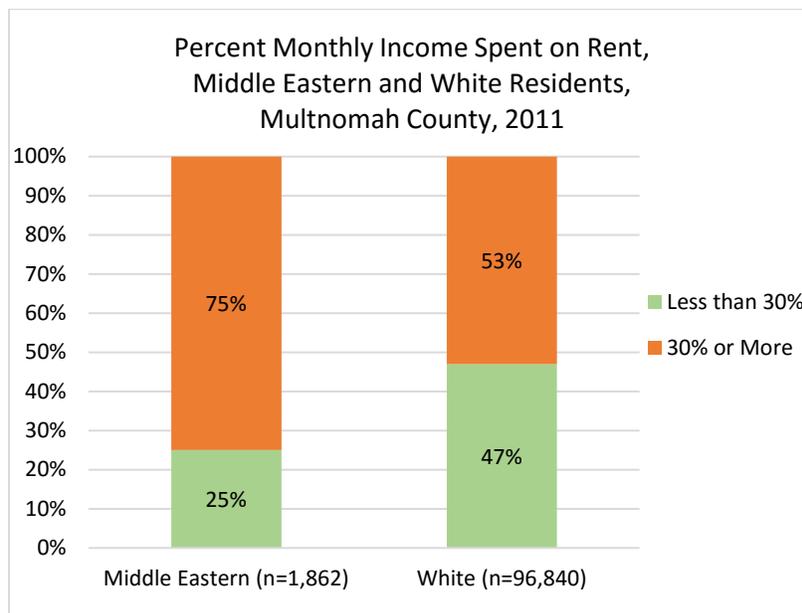


Another indicator of integration as well as economic success is homeownership. When we look at the percentage of Middle Eastern residents in Multnomah County who own homes compared to renters, it is clear that far more Middle Eastern residents rent than own. Nearly 70% of Middle Eastern residents rent

their housing, compared to just 42% of White (alone, non-Hispanic) residents. This means that far more White than Middle Eastern families are building equity each month, and far more White than Middle Eastern families have control over their living situations—not having to worry about disruptions such as rent increases, delayed repairs, or no-cause evictions.



Most housing experts recommend that households spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs, including rent; anything beyond 30% becomes a burden on a household’s financial health. Among renters in Multnomah County, far more Middle Eastern than White households spend more than 30% of their monthly income on rent costs. In fact, $\frac{3}{4}$ of all Middle Eastern renters face this housing cost burden, while just over half of White renters do. Indeed, housing costs in Multnomah County are a burden to the majority of residents. Middle Eastern residents face this burden more heavily than White residents.



These data begin to illustrate some of the complexities of the diverse Middle Eastern community in Multnomah County. While these data do not isolate foreign-born Middle Easterners, these data still illustrate the fact that disparities related to health, poverty, and housing continue to impact Middle Easterners in the Portland area. Despite the fact that some families from the Middle East have been very successful, many other families still struggle to move out of poverty and to afford housing in this area. In addition to these financial struggles, additional issues related to cultural integration impact families as they negotiate differences between their native culture and culture in the U.S. Despite these challenges, Middle Easterners in Portland bring a wealth of education, experience, cultural history, and resilience that benefit all residents of the region.



Islamic School of Muslim Education Trust and Oregon Islamic Academy

Muslims of the Silicon Forest: Why Portland and the Pacific Northwest is home to 20,000 Muslims

By Wajdi Said, Brandon Mayfield, Sahar Bassyouni, and Jawad Khan

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The bulk of Oregon's Muslim population is concentrated in Greater Portland, commonly known as the "City That Works" or "The Rose City." An estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Muslims call Oregon and Southwest Washington home. Oregon, the nation's ninth largest and 27th most populous state, provides abundant employment and recreational opportunities as well as options for higher education and mass transportation. In 2009, factoring in such things as personal freedom, crime, housing availability, education, and public services, the U.S. consulting firm Mercer ranked Portland 42nd worldwide in quality of living – all of which are enjoyed by the city's residents.

Employment opportunities in state's "Silicon Forest" hi-tech sector draw many Muslims, hundreds of whom are employed by Intel, Tektronix, Mentor Graphics, Radisys and similar companies. Muslims also work in research and/or clinical positions at the Oregon Health Sciences University and as professors, instructors and researchers at area institutions of higher learning.

Since the 1990s, many companies have moved their headquarters to Portland, among them such big names as Adidas and Daimler Trucks. Other Portland-based companies include Nike; film animation studio Laika; advertising giant Wieden+Kennedy; financial services companies Umpqua Holdings and StanCorp Financial; Standard Insurance Company; law firms Stoel Rives and Schwabe and Williamson & Wyatt; the data tracking firm Rentrak; utility providers PacifiCorp, NW Natural and Portland General Electric. These companies employ many Muslims in the Portland metro area. In addition, there is a wide array of Muslim-owned consulting or accounting firms, medical and dental practices, restaurants and other small businesses.

Many foreign Muslim students come to Portland to pursue their education and then settle down in the area. Among the local area colleges and universities are Portland State University, at which more than 1,000 Muslims are currently studying, the University of Portland, Lewis & Clark College and Reed College. Some who attend the University of Oregon and Oregon State University graduates also end up calling Portland home. Others have arrived due to push factors – Somalis, Kurds, Bosnians and Iraqis – and are now a vibrant part of the community.

Due to Portland's unique political and cultural environment, as well as its pride in its own diversity, Muslims of all ethnic and other backgrounds and identities feel free to be themselves and celebrate their rich cultural identities. Of the approximately 20,000 Portland-area Muslims, 25 percent are Arab, 25 percent are Somali, 25 percent are South Asian and the remainder is a mix of African American, Turkish, Bosnian, European American, Iranian, and Afghani individuals. Perhaps because no one ethnic group dominates the community's life, a relatively harmonious relationship exists and is enjoyed. For the past 16 years these Muslims have started Ramadan on the same day and celebrated one Eid ul-Fitr. Many masjids and organizations work, sometimes together, to help refugees, the elderly, the unemployed and those who are seeking social services.

One of the community's most important achievements has been in its organizations that have catapulted into the forefront of interfaith dialogue.

For example, the Muslim Educational Trust (MET), a leading organization in the Portland metro area founded in 1993, helped co-found the Arab-Muslim Police Advisory Council (AMPAC), the Interfaith Council of Greater Portland (www.ifcgp.org), the Institute for Christian-Muslim Understanding (ICMU): (www.icmuoregon.org), The Arab-Jewish-Muslim Dialogue, the Islamic Social Services of Oregon State (I-SOS) www.i-sos.org, and the Between Women (Jewish-Christian-Muslim) Interfaith Group. Other key organizations include the Oregon Islamic Chaplains Association and the Islamic Society of Greater Portland.

In the early 1970s, some families began hosting Islamic-oriented social gatherings, an undertaking that eventually culminated in its formal registration as non-profit religious organization Islamic Society of Greater Portland. In 1986, it founded the Muslim School of ISGP at Masjid As-Saber, at the time located in a house that had been converted into a mosque in Southwest Portland.

Like all Muslim communities, Portland-area Muslims are working are passing the baton to the new leaders. In that respect, numerous Muslim youth organizations have sprung up in the area; the Muslim Youth of Portland; the MSAs at Portland State University, Lewis & Clark, Oregon State University, and the University of Oregon; the Somali Youth of Oregon and Oregon's Muslim Youth. There are also quite a few other programs such as Geo Bee, the Art Club, Career Day, the Chess Club, Energy Fair, Poetry Night, Tae-Kwon-Do, Math Carnival, Lego Robotics, Quran Contest, Basketball Club, Jump Rope Club, College Advisory, Weekend School, Buddy Mentorship, Science Fair, Youth Essay Contest, Speech Tournament, MET Youth Ambassadors Club, and Toastmasters Youth Leadership. The pioneer generation of Muslims is leaving behind a great legacy for the next generation.

In the late 1970s, primarily Arab students from Portland State University (PSU) and the University of Portland began holding congregational prayers in various temporary locations. A Saudi PSU student bought a house for a would-be mosque. Eventually funds were raised to build a larger permanent mosque where Masjid As Saber, Oregon's largest mosque, is situated today in SW Portland.

A number of individuals in the West Portland suburbs, some affiliated with ISGP sought a permanent place of prayer located closer to the congregation's house. With money raised by the local Muslim community, the house-converted Bilal Mosque was purchased in 1994. Additional fundraising enabled purchases of other property and structures were added to include a more traditional mosque structure.

The Muslim Community Center of Portland, in NE Portland, established in the early 1970s, is recognized as the state's oldest surviving organized community of Muslims. Most of its founders trace their roots back to over 1.7 million African American men and women who followed Imam Warith Deen Mohammed into Sunni Islam.

The Muslim community in the Vancouver area organized the Islamic Society of Southwest Washington, which acquired its own property in 2007 and erected Masjid Al-Noor.

Members of Portland's Shia community have held services at the Islamic Center of Portland since 1993 and, more recently, acquired and updated Al Mahdi Center in Beaverton. They have been praying together since at least 1983, when an Iraqi student had fled Saddam's Iraq, visited the city and met with other PSU Shia students. The community has grown significantly since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the first and

[MUSLIMS OF THE SILICON FOREST: WHY PORTLAND AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST IS HOME TO 20,000 MUSLIMS](#)

second Gulf Wars. The various Sunni and Shia communities have established respectful and cordial ties with each other.

As the community continues to grow, in part due to the recent influx of refugees, Portland and its surrounding suburbs have seen the establishment of several new mosques to meet all of their needs.

The Muslim communities and mosques throughout Portland and the Greater Portland area have done a commendable job of supporting and interacting among themselves as well as, establishing organizations that seek to unite, educate and help Muslims and the community at large. The Muslims in and around Portland come from varied ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, but generally display an attitude of inclusiveness.

The 9/11 tragedy served as the impetus for gatherings of concerned Muslim and Christian leaders in Oregon and Southwest Washington to identify and strengthen their ties. In the words of the Institute for Christian-Muslim Understanding, an opportunity for “valuing their deepening relationship and desiring to help eliminate negative stereotypes and prejudices which may exist in both faith communities and the public.”

Since 9/11, there have been various instances of profiling of Muslims by local law enforcement (primarily federal). A number Portlanders have, without cause, found themselves on the no-fly list. But perhaps because of the Oregonians’ general inclusiveness and some of the interfaith and community ties, many of the attempts to marginalize the city’s and state’s Muslims have met with serious resistance.

For example, Portland chose not to have its officers perform a function historically reserved for immigration customs officials, citing the mistrust it would create. Also, as a result of the mishandling of Brandon Mayfield, a local Muslim attorney who was wrongly implicated in the 2004 Madrid (Spain) train bombing, city officials temporarily barred Portland police officers from participating in the JTTF (Joint Terrorism Task Force) citing the risk of profiling without probable cause. Oregon is unique in this respect, for it prohibits collecting or storing information based on religious or political associations without reasonable suspicion the subject is involved in criminal activity.

In 2010, with help from Muslim activists, the House Education Committee voted 6-4 in favor of a bill tending Oregon's 87-year ban on school teachers wearing religious attire at work. In addition, several challenges to the nation’s no-fly list involving Portland area Muslims are currently being litigated in Oregon’s federal district court.

Due to Portland’s general atmosphere of openness to diverse thoughts and celebration of personal freedom, interfaith dialogue has been relatively fluid and constructive. Local area centers of worship and affiliated organizations find Portland a good place for dialogue, for all sides are willing to seek common ground and common solutions.

For example, MET has partnered with the Ainsworth United Church of Christ, the First Methodist Church, Beth Israel, the Havurah Shalom Synagogue, Neveh Shalom Synagogue and others. Some of the local area masjids provide Open House tours and information nights. Masjid Bilal regularly hosts George Fox University students and instructors and many local churches and synagogues. The Turkish community and cultural center has forged educational and friendly ties with the Portland Police Bureau.

As a whole, Portland's Muslim community, due to the partnerships and friendships it had forged through years of dialogue and outreach, felt protected and secure after that tragedy. A MET representative also sits on the Arab Muslim Police Advisory Council, which was formed by the Portland Police Department after 9/11. Moreover, the metro area's favorable political environment has allowed the community, led by a visionary leadership, to build relationships with mayors, senators, councilmen, judges, and university presidents.

Bolstered by an active leadership with a vision, Portland's burgeoning Muslim community finds itself on the verge of new horizons — new full-time schools and community centers, updated mosques, newly forged in addition to already strong relationships with city and state leadership, continuing active dialogue with other faith groups, and a feeling of possibility of what can be accomplished. Oregon's Muslim youth are poised to lead the next generation of Muslims.

Early Settlers

Small numbers of Muslims have lived in Oregon virtually since its inception. Judging from some of the native names in the Americas, some were likely here before Oregon became a state (1859), probably as refugees from the ongoing Spanish Inquisition or as displaced slaves. Punjabi immigrants from British-occupied India began arriving after 1906 due to Canadian and other regions' racist restrictions. Many worked at mill jobs from Portland to Astoria. In fact, some of the key member of the Ghadar Party, amongst the first to try to overthrow British colonialism in India, had settled down in Portland.

Muslims from all over the world began trickling into Oregon in larger number during the 1960s in hopes of pursuing their education via the Fulbright scholarship, finding a better life for themselves and their families or fleeing from their war-torn homelands. Many of the first immigrants were from the Middle East and South Asia, followed by refugees from Afghanistan, Chechnya, Somalia and Iraq. Many of them faced various obstacles: a language barrier, a lack of community support and a lack of knowledge about how to become citizens. Over the years, the community has developed programs to ease these people transition by providing ESL classes, job search help, citizenship services orientation, business franchising sessions, and so on.

The newer immigrants face a huge generational cultural gap: full integration into mainstream American society versus positive assimilation and their children's Islamic identity. As more Islamic organizations are established with a special focus on bringing the youth together, the whole concept of the mosque or musalla as a place of worship is evolving into that of a community center that offers recreation, education, and family/community events. In the early days, Muslims tended to convene and meet weekly in each other's homes to socialize and teach their children the Quran and Arabic.

In the early 1970s, African American Muslims established Oregon's first official mosque. The first weekend school appeared in the early 1990 and was followed by a full-fledged full-time Islamic school by the end of the decade. Portland has gone from having three mosques in the 1990s to over 12 Islamic organizations and mosques in the Greater Portland area. The city is home to the Pacific Northwest's first K-12 full-time Islamic school – the Oregon Islamic Academy – which has, so far, graduated five classes of seniors, all of whom have enrolled in 4-year colleges. Moreover, MET and ISGP are actively working to set up Islamic community centers in an effort to build a stronger community and develop an -environment where all Muslims – especially the youth – can intermingle, worship, play, and have fun.

Muslims across Oregon

Being the home to two of Oregon's largest public universities, the cities of Eugene and Corvallis have attracted Muslims both at home and abroad for 50 years. Students and families came to complete their graduate or undergraduate studies; some never left. Muslim students and instructors introduced MSAs in these local universities, and the schools provided space for the weekly Friday prayers and an annual Islamic Awareness Week and International Fair.

The Muslim presence in Corvallis is especially marked by the purpose-built Salman Al-Farisi Islamic Center and the state's first and only Islamic cemetery that is available to all Muslims free of charge. The 10-acre cemetery was established in 1992 and paid for by community donations. This college town is located about 75 miles southwest of Portland. The state capital, Salem, has also attracted Muslim professionals, engineers, and doctors to work in its ever-growing professional community and governmental agencies. Muslim communities in these cities worked long and hard to establish musallas and mosques alongside youth and weekend school programs.

OSU Muslim students founded the Corvallis community in the late 1970s. They raised enough money to begin erecting the Islamic Center, which is now home to a flourishing and diverse community. About 1,000 Muslims, many of whom are OSU students or staff, now live in the Corvallis area.

Two spectacular green-topped white minarets point out the Salman Al-Farisi Islamic Center's location. On Nov. 28, 2010, when it became the target of an arson attack, the entire faith community stood shoulder-to-shoulder with its Muslim neighbors. Its Imam, Yosof Wanly, declined the honor of "Man of the Year" for his community service on the grounds that Islam calls upon people to be humble and not aggrandize themselves.

Muslims in Eugene come from a staggering array of countries, from South Africa to Palestine to China. The Islamic Center of Eugene, also known as Abu-Bakr As-Siddiq Islamic Center, was upgraded in 2012 and can now hold up to 350 persons.



Senator Jeff Merkley visiting the Muslim Educational Trust Community Center, February 26th 2016.

[MUSLIMS OF THE SILICON FOREST: WHY PORTLAND AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST IS HOME TO 20,000 MUSLIMS](#)

Empowering Muslimahs

Neighbor-nets and other halaqas and study circles are shaping the present society and, through mothers, the next generation.

Portland's Muslimahs have been instrumental in pursuing community coherence and Islamic education of their children. Muslim organizations are working to empower them by recognizing and trying to meet their needs via workshops in education, career counseling, fitness, sports, marriage, and parenting. Additionally, Muslimahs are holding home study circles to uplift their spirits, enrich their knowledge of the Quran and hadith, and bring Islam to life through the Seerah. Islamic organizations regularly arrange special workshops and sessions for successful Muslimah and non-Muslim professionals in the public square.

From time to time, Muslim organizations gauge the community's needs, especially those of its women and youth. In response, the MET Community Center houses a private swimming pool and gym, which will have a women-only schedule. All-girl and all-boy athletic teams will be formed and compete with area teams. The center also houses an art museum and gallery in which Muslimahs can hold and lead workshops as well as express themselves through art and design.

Muslim Community Information Sheet

Feel free to contact any of the following Muslim Community leaders, Islamic Centers or Organizations

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Iraqi Refugees in Multnomah County

By Shirin Yekekar, Baher Butti and Ann Curry-Stevens

Introduction

The moral imperative to respond to Iraqi refugees is born of some of the major causes of Iraqi plight: the USA has twice gone to war in Iraq for fraudulent, or at the very least misleading reasons. The first was the Gulf War (1991/92), now widely recognized as an effort to secure an oil supply for the USA. The second (2003-2011) was the US invasion under the pretenses of preventing the use of “weapons of mass destruction.” In addition to civil strife, most notably between the Shi-i and Sunni, the region has been turbulent for decades. This has generated widespread danger across the population, as violence took root, often targeted at anyone helping the USA or at women who were without the protection of men, and were vulnerable to “militias, insurgents, Islamic extremists, and family members seeking to commit honor killings.”²⁷¹ Also at risk are those who worked with US agencies, companies or aid groups, as they have been portrayed as traitors to the country. We are also hearing how higher income Iraqis who held professions such as jewelers and goldsmiths have been targeted for kidnapping and ransom demands.²⁷²

The magnitude of Iraqi refugees seeking a safe place to live is sizable: 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.²⁷³ Additional 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, as is the case with all refugees seeking resettlement in the USA.

Decades of unrest began with Kurdish rebellions in 1975, and became more pervasive in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait (1990) and the Gulf War (1991), the post war rebellion (1991), the US invasion of Iraq (2003) and the subsequent occupation (2003 to 2011) and the western-imposed sanctions, and continuous armed violence that has continued. Throughout these series of wars, millions in Iraq have been killed, tortured, and forced by violence to flee their homes.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than four million Iraqis have been displaced by the war in Iraq and its aftermath.²⁷⁴ Of these, about two million people have resettled in neighboring countries, where many eke out a marginal living in poor, inner-city neighborhoods. Many refugees work in illegal, black market jobs for low wages as laborers, drivers, and restaurant workers. Most Iraqi refugees are living in Syria and Jordan, but Iraqis have also sought refuge in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey. After the beginning of war in Syria in 2011, Iraqi refugees there fled again, many to Turkey.

Although living in neighboring countries with similar cultural traditions may bring fewer cultural or language problems for refugees, two main problems for Iraqi refugees lead them to apply for official refugee status through UNHCR. The first reason is that they cannot return to Iraq safely. Hence, it does not matter whether they live near or far from their home, since they cannot travel to their former home anyway. In addition, many countries close to Iraq do not admit Iraqi refugees as permanent residents, and in time, such Iraqis become illegal residents, or are required by such countries to extend their visas annually, which is a big source of stress for families. This has led some refugees to apply to resettle permanently in Western countries, including the United States.

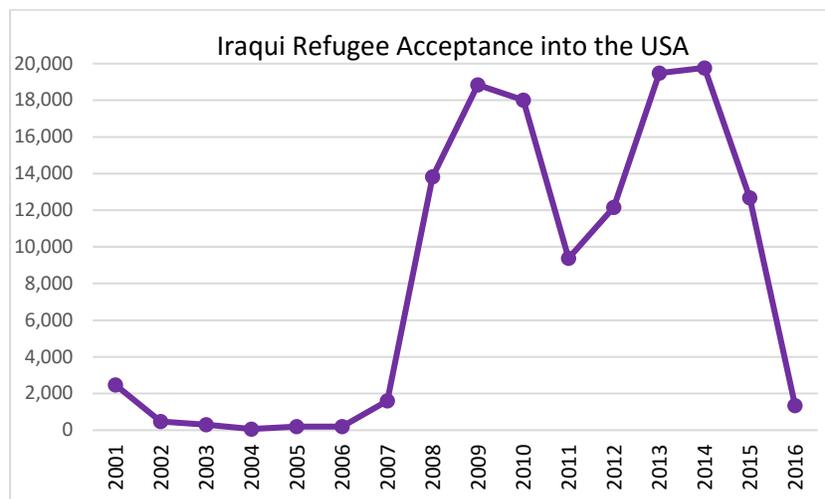
In early February 2007, the United States and the United Nations developed a plan to settle several thousand refugees in the United States. The United States is now almost ten years into this effort to

resettle those refugees who are considered by the UNHCR to be at greatest risk.²⁷⁵ Over ten years (1999 to 2009), the U.S. agreed to receive up to 80,000 refugees annually. The Portland metro area is one of the places that many such refugees have resettled. Since 1975, tens of thousands of refugees have resettled in Oregon, mostly South East Asians, Eastern Europeans, Somalis, although very few Iraqis have made it here. Most refugees initially settle in the greater Portland area, rather than elsewhere in the state.

This is a highly educated community, with many professionals being qualified in Iraq as engineers, lawyers, computer scientists, accountants, physicians and teachers. Few have been able to secure work in their chosen professions.²⁷⁶ No formal synthesis of their backgrounds is available, but narratives reinforce this pattern to be extensive. Lost to the USA is the economic and social capital that could be created if these professionals could gain such employment. As has been said before, the benefit of being able to draw on educational dollars expended by another country is an economic “no brainer,” and the USA is urged to address the “recognition of foreign credentials” as a key factor in economic policy.²⁷⁷

Imagine the plight of facing deep disappointment in having one’s career cut short, struggling very hard to pay the bills, and simultaneously suffering deep trauma, with heightened levels of depression and anxiety, and narrow prospects for a better life. Many have considered returning to Iraq, but conditions there alongside the costs of return reduce such options.

The Iraqi community is a relatively recent presence in Multnomah County, with the vast majority of the community arriving since 2010, in the midst of the 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.²⁷⁸ 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 were given in 2011. Less than 3,000 of the dedicated 17,000 such visas were filled.

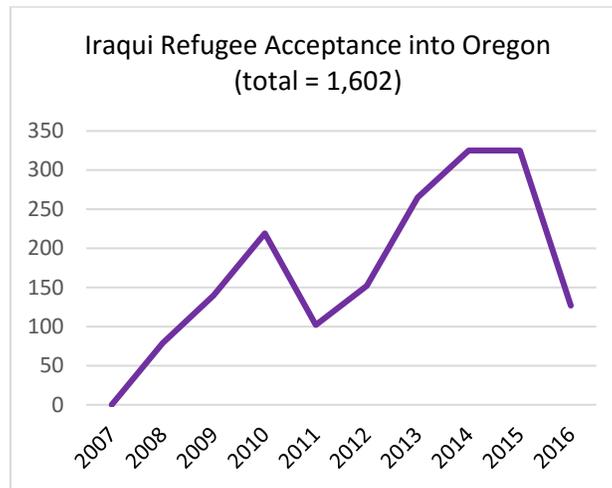


The acceptance of Iraqis as refugees by the USA was a “trickle” to start,²⁷⁹ rising to approximately 19,000 in 2009, 17,000 in 2010 and, with a lull in between, to levels of about 20,000 in 2013 and 2014.

The arrival of Iraqi refugees into Oregon is well-tracked, but migration once one has arrived is not tracked (nor should it be!). This is significant because Oregon is the top destination for those who move within the

[IRAQI REFUGEES IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY](#)

USA, with this pattern being in evidence for the last three years.²⁸⁰ What this means is that the population is likely much larger than these figures suggest. Here are the acceptance levels of Iraqi refugees into Oregon. Almost all local Iraqis in Portland arrived as refugees.



Our current understanding is that there is a significant undercount of this population. The official count (as determined by the Census Bureau) is merely 1,196 in Oregon and 406 persons in Multnomah County.²⁸¹ Earlier work in research by the Coalition of Communities of Color and Portland State University indicated that the undercount was in the vicinity of 40%.²⁸² While the community, even with the estimated undercount factored in, is small, it is one that is struggling significantly. We hope that the visibility initiatives to ensure that various Middle Eastern communities are better understood in future years will magnify the experiences of the community. Such initiatives are supported by House Bill 2134: “An Act Relating to Standards for the Collection of Demographic Data,” which will be operational in 2017.

This chapter incorporates two significant sets of insights into the lives of Iraqi newcomers: relevant literature and interviews with Iraqi refugees in the Portland area. Our goal is to help policymakers and service providers better understand the lives of Iraqi refugees living in our city.

Arrival Conditions and Challenges to Integration

The scope of challenges facing the community are detailed in this section. The challenges include adequate and meaningful employment, poverty and risk of homelessness, trauma and injury and worry for one’s future and particularly for one’s children.

There are many institutions and associations in the Portland area that make every effort to resettle Iraqi refugees and all refugees from other countries and provide them with various services, from finding housing, helping them to find a job to celebrating Iraqi community events. Examples of such organizations are Catholic Charities, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR) and the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). Although service providers try very hard to fulfill the needs of refugees, lack of intimate knowledge about Iraqi history and culture narrows effective service provision, as do employment and language challenges.

a. Employment and Occupation

Upon arriving in the USA, Iraqis (like all refugees) have access to about 8 months of income support. A companion element is that they are required to accept the first job offered to them, even if it is menial work or work in fields that do not align with their credentials. Proficiency in English is also barrier to work,

and English classes are typically not offered in ways that align with their hours of work, and do not provide literacy in the terminology of one's profession, which tends to be an enduring barrier to working in one's field.

Landing a job and handling financial issues are serious challenges for new arrivals. The financial problems they face are enormous, and many Iraqi refugees are constantly stressed about managing monetary issues. This is in large part because many are unable to find work, even in entry level/low-paying positions. Some Iraqi refugees with strong professional backgrounds are reluctant to accept manual/entry level positions, although they are required by law to accept the first position offered to them in the USA. This is a major loss to the regions workforce as Iraqis typically hold professions such as doctors, professors and engineers.²⁸³ Some who apply for entry level jobs are rejected because they are considered overqualified. Many Iraqis have not received enough information before arrival in the U.S. about the difficulties they may face finding work and making money after arrival, and instead are shocked by the difficulties that they face which adds to their overall experience of culture shock.

Unlike some earlier waves of Iraqi refugees, more recent Iraqi refugees never lived in refugee camps. Rather, many arrive having received relatively more formal education than older Iraqi adults whose educations may have taken place largely within refugee camps. Some Iraqi refugees were well-educated and have post graduate degrees and well-paid professionals in Iraq. Prior to the 2003 war, this professional class had a high standard of living, including good health care. This standard of living is usually not maintained when refugees arrive in the U.S. The change in economic standard of living in the U.S. requires significant adjustment for many Iraqis. However, this issue goes beyond merely having less money. In one interview, a highly educated Iraqi refugee couple who were physicians in Iraq provided a clarifying example about why highly educated people with a high living standard made a decision to leave Iraq and become refugees:

My husband and I are physicians. I had a well-known and completely equipped medical clinic in Iraq, so we were rich. Since in the final years of Saddam [the Iraqi dictator], Iraq was restless and unsecure, my son was kidnapped in 2005, when he was 9 years old. He was a little boy and I spent horrible three weeks... [crying]... the kidnappers release him after three weeks by taking lots of money from us. After that I was not able to live peacefully. All the time, I was worried about my children. So, we left everything we had and went to Dubai. UAE did not give us permanent residency. We had temporary visa and we should extend it annually. Since UAE is a Sunni Muslim country and we are Shia, all the time there was this risk that they will not extend our residency status due to religious conflicts and we will be forced to leave Dubai. We were worried about our residency status constantly, it had lots of stress and we were not able to plan long term programs for our lives.

We applied to be admitted as refugees, and we came here. Although we are safe here, we have occupation problem. We used to consider ourselves as highly educated doctors, working as a doctor is our professional career and we do not have the knowledge to do other jobs. To work as a doctor in United States, we need to pass many exams and get certificates, and it is not easy thing to do for us. We know that we lost many things, but we did it because we wanted safety for our children and preventing them from experiencing what we did.

The availability of recertification programs is limited, depending on the field. The recertification process can be expensive, so those working minimum wage jobs may not be able to afford recertification for years, if ever. Those who do not speak English have to master the language first, as such programs are delivered in

English (when they exist). Even those with good English skills may not be proficient in the specialized terminology of their profession.

This difficulty is described by another interviewee:

In my country I worked as an electrical engineer, and for four years I worked administering an important engineering project. Actually we came here hoping to see something better than our country. But unfortunately we didn't find anything like that. I know a lot of people they cannot work with their degrees. They have to evaluate it from American college and American universities and that thing needs a lot of time and a lot of procedures for doing that.

For example, when I came here, I went to the PSU, and I gave them my transcripts, my license and my graduate degree. First of all they asked for sealed certificate and more details about how I get this degree. I had to call back to my country; I needed to find somebody there to put my transcripts in a sealed envelope. And believe me or not, it took six months to get this certificate sealed from my country. Secondly, they asked for TOEFL test requirement. As you may know it needs lots of studying. And afterwards if you take the exam and get the score they want, you have to do another test. They call it GRE. After that you have to take some lectures. It is very hard, complicated and time consuming process for people who are professional people, need job and their first language is not English language. I think getting a new master degree is much easier than going through all of these procedures. I have already wasted one year of my life. Until now I have nothing in hand.

These examples depict some of the difficulties that Iraqi refugees face in seeking employment and in meeting their financial needs. Even skilled trade workers face difficulties finding jobs in their field of expertise.

b. Education

As noted already, Iraqis tend to be highly educated, and face considerable challenges in having their foreign credentials recognized. In most cases, these are insurmountable and Iraqis become underemployed in the USA. A U.S. Government Accountability Office report demonstrated the range of challenges in gaining relevant employment. They cited that even for those with State Issued Visas (who were working for, or on behalf of, the US government while in Iraq) to whom the US is indebted are largely unable to find work: "Most federal jobs in the U.S. require U.S. citizenship and background investigations, and Arabic language positions often require security clearances, which noncitizens cannot obtain."²⁸⁴

Children struggle as well, along with other refugee children, in school. Being behind schedule in one's educational path can be harmful to self-confidence. Alignment may also be a barrier as some students may have learned different content with different pedagogies in Iraq. As well, there is a social appeal to fitting in, and some students begin to believe that everything about the United States is far better than what they had in Iraq, which can be the start of a loss in interest about their home country's heritage. Although adopting the culture of a new country is a way to integrate into American society, losing interest in their home country can create conflict and tension between parents and children. In addition, some refugee high school students may drift towards negative peer groups, often turning to away from schooling both for push-out factors (such as lack of inclusion and relevant curriculum) and for social challenges that might result from untended trauma, discrimination and racial bias, and acculturation difficulties. Teachers and school staff need patience and understanding for students. A good reminder is that positive personal relationships between educators and students are a protective factor for school success. Participating in an unfamiliar classroom, listening to a teacher that speaks in an incomprehensible language, and

communicating with classmates that they have little similarities with them can increase children's level of stress and anxiety.

Teachers and other school staff need to learn about the histories of such children and how to respond in affirming and encouraging ways. While many teachers have a heavy work load, it may not be easy to know how best to relate to refugee students. In such cases, school policymakers should first ensure that school staff read the chapters in this report that help build an understanding of various immigrant and refugee students. In addition, specific trainings and school-based programs (delivered, ideally, by culturally specific organizations with deep connections to newcomer communities) to support such youth. We also encourage schools to include Educational Assistants hired from newcomer communities to help with remedial education, to build connections to the course materials, teachers and students, and to help motivate students to stay engaged in their learning. An assistant can help by using educational strategies not dependent on language skills like playing games, painting or acting. Ideally, this person would speak the child's language as well. When schools are without funds, or who have yet to make such inclusionary equity-based initiatives a priority, they can ask for help from volunteers to assist in this process. We would also expect that these supports (culturally specific organizations, EAs or volunteers) would be charged with sharing insights with teachers so that the educational staff gain cultural appreciation for the full range of students in the school.

c. Religion

The major religion in Iraq is Islam, which is followed by about 95% of Iraqis, and Iraqi Muslims are divided to two sects (Sunni and Shia). The other 5% follow Christianity and other religions (such as Mandaism, Yazidism, and Judaism). The sectarian division has created tension that escalated to armed conflict, and this conflict impacted and stressed the life of Iraqi people. Still, Islam has long been, and continues to be, a powerful social force in Iraq. Islamic rules influence every detail of life including family relationships, trading, clothing style, eating, and marriage. Although practicing Muslim refugees can live according to religious rules while in the USA, this new environment brings some restrictions and difficulties. Portland, like other Western cities, is not well-designed for living according to Islamic rules. Living as a Muslim has caused difficulties for many Iraqi refugees, especially with the growing problem of Islamophobia in the USA. For a more expansive discussion of Muslim traditions, please look at the section "Community and Cultural Assets" in the Somali chapter of this report.

d. Trauma, Physical and Mental Health

Iraqi refugees often arrive with high rates of psychological traumas, injuries, and illnesses. The International Rescue Commission asserts that, "Compared to other refugee groups, Iraqis arrive in the US with higher degrees of emotional trauma and in poorer shape overall."²⁸⁵ The level of trauma among Iraqi refugees who have spent time in Syria is startlingly high: a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control identified that 90% suffer from depression, 82% from anxiety and 68% from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.²⁸⁶ The causes of such distress are their experiences in war and violence:

According to the survey, 77% of respondents had 32 Refugees from Iraq Refugees from Iraq experienced air bombardments, shelling, or rocket attacks; 80% had witnessed a shooting; 68% had undergone interrogation or harassment by militias; and 75% knew someone close to them who had been killed.²⁸⁷

Psychological distress from war experiences impacts refugee children and adults regardless of racial or cultural background. Refugees may experience a sense of helplessness and despair stemming from traumatic experiences in war. Post-traumatic stress disorder is associated with depression, anxiety, poor concentration, sleeping difficulties, nightmares, and survivor's guilt. A large number of refugees from Iraq suffer from these conditions. One in five Iraqi refugees has been tortured or has experienced other

violence, according to data collected by United Nations in Syria.²⁸⁸ Many others have witnessed torture, violence and killings of friends and loved ones.

Research has shown that post traumatic symptomatology may persist for many years. Refugee children tend to suffer significantly from PTSD, with one study showing that every child continued to show post traumatic reactions 4 to 5 years after a traumatic experience.²⁸⁹

The wounds from war are not confined to the battlefield. Iraqi refugees from conflict zones often continue to experience trauma from persecution, imprisonment, torture and resettlement for a long time. Those who have been victims of torture and violence may come with physical wounds, amputations, and traumatic brain injuries. Others may suffer from a large number of physical complaints that require an extensive workup, some of which are untreated medical conditions that have led to greater complications over time.

Many Iraqis have a significant fear of stigma from mental health challenges so they tend to express their emotional distress with physical complaints. Noted in one report was that Iraqi exposure to mental health services is limited to psychiatric hospitals, whose reputation will deter most Iraqis from seeking treatment:

Iraqi psychiatric hospitals are grim places where patients may never leave. Therefore, people have no real concept beyond the hospitals; so they would not want to have anything to do with something that could lead them to be committed to such a place. Some Iraqis worry that psychiatric hospitals are where political dissidents are sent. This fear may stem from having lived in an informant society or in a society without a strong, protected confidentiality in medical care.²⁹⁰

According to the UNHCR, significant health problems among Iraqi refugee children need to be tracked: there are low vaccination rates for children (Measles at 65% and Polio/OPV3 at 75%), and the increasing number of cancer-related deaths among both adults and children, linked to the use of unsafe products in agriculture, war weapon discharge, and reductions in natural resistance due to the long-term effects of war on the population's resistance to disease.^{291 292} Note that these children's preventative health needs may have been addressed in refugee camps prior to their arrival in the USA, but should be screened by health providers.

Preventative health is unevenly available and unevenly used in Iraq. Like in the USA, most seek health care only in response to pain or illness. But the use of doctors is increasingly sophisticated, turning to regular visits when there are serious or chronic diseases, and when there are no-cost check-ups, Iraqis tends to make use of this opportunity.

Health providers should also know that Iraqis are likely to involve the whole family in significant health decisions. This is likely to include hearing the opinions of extended family, but "the final decision is usually made within the immediate family."²⁹³ Supporting the time and process for such inclusion is an important sign of respect.

In addition, increasing poverty has contributed to Iraq's health care crisis. According to a recent study by the United Nations Development Program, one third of Iraq's population lives in poverty. Iraq's Ministry of Health has estimated that half of Iraq's children are suffering from some form of malnutrition. The other important issue relates to unhealthy food practices is the increased risk of getting chronic diseases like hypercholesterolemia (meaning an excess of cholesterol in one's blood), diabetes and hypertension. Such diseases are a challenge more so for those who come from refugee camps than from large cities.

Many refugees are war widows, arriving in the U.S. grieving and with sole responsibility for their children. Many continue to worry about the safety of friends and loved ones in Iraq. One Iraqi interviewee noted, *“we passed through really harsh circumstances; our families, my mother and my siblings still live in Iraq and we were forced to leave them behind and it is a horrible thing.”* All of these factors have affected the psychological well-being of Iraqi refugees.

Carrying trauma is complicated by numerous arrival conditions such as culture shock, acculturation stress and adjustment disorder. The problems get more complicated by the lack of culturally specific/ trauma informed care for refugees with mental health issues, as the waiting lists for the existing services are very long and the condition deteriorates as the refugee keeps waiting after their arrival.

e. Prejudice and Stereotypes of Iraqi Refugees

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. While this prejudiced behavior is not necessarily tied to being Iraqi, and more tied to demonstrating Muslim religious beliefs, the rise of Islamophobia has catalyzed Portland into becoming a less inclusive and welcoming space for Muslims. While many residents reject Islamophobia, it takes few to reduce the experience of welcome. One such example is that of a protest by Christians outside the Portland Rizwan Mosque in November 2015. Their words were inflammatory, saying the Quran was the “doctrine of demons,” that Mohammed was a “pervert” and that Muslims were the “pawns of Satan” and that “God hates Muslims.”²⁹⁴ In response, Abdul Rahim Hubbs stated: “I think when there’s such fear and misinformation about Islam, that it lends to more and more to this.”²⁹⁵

Today, the USA has worsened the experience of Islamophobia as we have a presidential candidate Donald Trump advocating to ban all Muslims from entering the USA. Suggesting that Muslims are a threat to the country has a direct effect for Muslims already in the USA. This goes beyond suggesting that they are a vague threat to now stating they are a danger to the USA. Deplorable and aggressive behaviors by mainstream society has harsh impacts on the community.

This type of intolerance signals that Muslims are not a legitimate part of the fabric of the USA. This is a perpetual form of “othering” that contributes to daily microaggressions that are expressed at the individual level, as members of the Muslim community engage in daily life, at workplaces, in grocery stores, getting health care, and even walking down the street. A research study identified that: “Studies have shown that many Muslims not only experience religious discrimination in their daily lives, but are fully aware of their devalued position in society” and that “perceptions of belonging to a group that is feared in society has itself a distinct effect on Muslim minorities’ health and identification, regardless whether individuals personally experience discrimination in their daily lives or not.”²⁹⁶

Helping to resist this marginalization and devaluation are initiatives such as the New Portlander Policy Council that is currently advocating for definitive and enduring public support for newcomers of all religious traditions. The core recommendation in this report is for our elected officials to publicly stand in solidarity with newcomers, particularly when they are besieged. Additionally, the efforts of organizations that link newcomers to their own communities, and those of other newcomers, in prideful and affirming ways serve to strengthen resilience, identity and culture, are essential for mitigating some of the harmful effects of Islamophobia.

Community Assets and Resources

The community is well-aligned for success in the USA. Iraq is a country with a heritage of open-mindedness, appreciation for diversity and valuing culture and community. Insights flowing from a study of resettlement agency staff reveal the following:

[Iraqis are] generally knowledgeable about Western life, open-minded in their attitudes toward cultural differences, and resourceful. As a group, they often have more formal education, professional work experience, and English language skills than other refugee groups. Those who have joined the workforce have generally proven to be diligent and well-regarded employees. And while Iraqis may find some American beliefs and behaviors confusing and even offensive, they generally respond positively to other aspects of American life. For the most part, Iraqis admire American values of achievement, scientific progress, and freedom and equality.²⁹⁷

Iraqi communities primarily orient around extended families. This is also a community that is more communal than the USA and there is heightened attention to caring for each other, and stepping in to support kin and community when challenges are significant. Communal societies hold potential to help the USA discover ways to build support networks that reach more deeply into a community and to work with more collaboration to address broader social and community issues.

Note that many additional assets are included in the subsequent sections of this chapter. For the sake of brevity, they are not repeated here. Elements include the care and compassion of community members, their resilience and capacity to simultaneously adapt to challenge as well as retaining a commitment to the assets of their heritage. The acts of survival demonstrated in their homeland, and their fortitude to cope with the wide ranging challenges that exist as newcomers to the USA position them well to become fully recognized as an asset to the fabric of Portland.

Understanding the Iraqi People

a. Family Life and Gender Issues

Iraqi families shoulder significant stress and barriers to integration in the USA. To begin, families will often have been separated in the refugee resettlement process. Families are frequently forced apart both by the wars, and by refugee resettlement practices. Men face additional security checks before the US accepts them into the country,²⁹⁸ making it a lengthier process to rejoin their families, and some are denied entry.

Judgments and cultural bias, alongside Islamophobia (which is not particularly targeted at Iraqis, but rather at Muslims more broadly) can stretch a family's ability to cope with adjustments to the USA. According to interviews with Iraqi refugee parents, many of them were worried about being judged as having a Middle Eastern background, or because they came from a country that has been involved in wars—especially wars with the U.S. This issue is crucial during the first months of arrival in the U.S., when refugees have not yet developed a secure and positive relationship with their new environment. Early in the resettlement process, immigrants and refugees are often sensitive about the attitudes of providers and usually notice teachers are behaving in a way that is rude or judgmental towards them and their children, especially when they have questions. Iraqi refugees feel that they are considered to be less civilized by some educators, and worry that such attitudes are influenced by negative media depictions of Middle Eastern culture. The sensitivity may also cause some refugees to misunderstand professional distance as being coldness rooted in prejudice.

One refugee mother in her interview mentioned that:

We should not be judged according to the picture that media represented from us. Service providers should give us the opportunity to introduce ourselves to represent what we are truly. They should

allow us to tell our stories to them. If only they do it, they can be sure that they know us in a way that we really are.

Once here, families face challenges with acculturation, particularly when children and women move into newer traditions more rapidly. Iraqi society is patriarchal, and the family is the basic unit in the social structure. In families, fathers and male siblings tend to make more decisions than their female counterparts. Traditional families also tend to include extended families living together, sharing space and responsibility. In recent years, however, there has been a move toward more nuclear family living arrangements. In addition, Iraqi families expect that children will obey their elders. In traditional families, marriages are arranged by parents, and preferred marriage partners will come from within the same ethnic group. While divorce is legal under Islamic law, it is not common. However, within divorced families, children tend to remain with the father. Divorce is considered shameful, especially for women, so elders in traditional families expect wives to obey their husbands as a way to prevent divorce.

These cultural differences between Iraqi and U.S. family and gender roles can lead to problems for refugee families. In the United States, women are more often considered to be equal to men and to share the same social rights. Once exposed to different cultural expectations in the U.S., Iraqi refugee families may encounter family management problems. In the few first years after arrival, refugee families tend to live according to Iraqi traditions. As time passes, some Iraqis begin to prefer to live in a more western-influenced way. As Iraqi women live in the U.S. longer, many begin to want more freedom. They learn that American law will support them in divorce cases, they can have the custody of children, and that society will not judge them as harshly if they divorce. Having this knowledge may change the balance of power in refugee families, which can in turn become a source of conflict within the family. This depends, however, on the extent of refugee women's involvement in American society. Iraqi refugee men with higher education tend to support more social rights for female members of their families.

Some families will try out this new balance of power between genders and family roles. When women begin demanding more social rights and liberty within traditional Iraqi families, family relationships may become tense. In the worst cases, domestic violence may erupt, as men use violence in an attempt to control "disobedient" wives. Although the society supports victims of domestic violence, Iraqi refugee women prefer not to ask for help from police, shelters or women's agencies, often due to the fear of breaking the family unit, and the belief that domestic violence is a private family matter and should not be revealed to strangers, in addition to the fear of shame and being stigmatized by the community.

Isolation is a serious danger for refugee families and many benefit from improved connections with society and involvement in social activities. In refugee families, usually one parent is the primary breadwinner. Hence, s/he can connect to new society easier than the other parent. In most traditional Iraqi families, the father is responsible for working and the mother takes care of children. As a result, it is necessary for mothers to find a way to connect to society and avoid social isolation.

Another important issue is the combination of intergenerational conflict and cultural conflict. Some Iraqi refugees maintain old tribal and Muslim religious traditions, and these effect all components of everyday life on both personal and public levels. Islam includes specific rules for food and clothing. These rules cause many challenges for refugee families. Although most Iraqi Muslims adhere to all Islamic beliefs and practices, a small proportion of people--especially from the younger generation--prefer to live according to more modern rules. Such individuals may remain Muslim but do not adhere to as strict of religious rules as the older Iraqi Muslim generation. This sometimes results in conflicts among parents and children or husbands and wives. To illustrate, some Iraqi Muslim youth do not restrict their diets to Halal food. Another

issue involves clothing styles among refugee women. Some young female Muslims lose interest in wearing Hijab once in the U.S., unlike when they lived in Iraq, when they were covering their hair and body completely from top to toes.

Iraqi refugee families may see the lack of adoption of Muslim rules as insubordination. Some Iraqi refugee families try to accept these changes and adapt to them. Others try to control “disobedient” family members through emotional manipulation or deprivation. As one of the interviewees explained:

My young children do not care about Halal meat. They eat food in every American restaurant. My daughter does not care about covering her hair completely. They know how much I am upset about it. They know I do not like it at all. They try to hide it from me in order to prevent my upset. I make every effort to convince them to stop unruly behaviors. I talk with them gently, explaining how much it is bothering me. Sometimes I do not talk to them few days to punish them. Punishment is sometimes useful and sometimes does not work.

Parenting is one of the main sources of difficulties among refugee families. Complexity exists around the challenges, fears, hopes, difficulties and conflicts that parents experience. Navigating raising a child in two cultures—Iraqi culture and American culture—is tough, and parents face difficult decisions when it comes to helping their children develop into healthy, well-integrated citizens who preserve and honor their heritage.

Refugee parents face several problems. Although parents only want the best for their children, it can be difficult for them to know what the best course of action is, particularly in a new country. Most parents want their children to integrate into American culture while also preserving the culture of their home country. Dealing with children who are in transition is not easy for parents, and it is harder for parents who are experiencing this same kind of transition themselves.

Many parents remain influenced by traditional Eastern values while trying to accept American culture at the same time. One example of this issue came forward in one of the interviews with an Iraqi refugee in Portland. Even in Portland, most Iraqi Muslim women wear hijab, and it is unusual to see an Iraqi Muslim woman without hijab. In one of the interviews, however, the interviewee was a woman who did not wear hijab. She was the mother of a six year old girl. In the process of the interview, she was asked about the challenges within the Iraqi refugee community in trying to connect children to their home heritage. In response, she said:

“I think it is unnecessary, they came to United States to live like Americans. It is not an important issue to force them to care about our country values or obey traditional rules of Iraq. Parents should not force them to speak Iraqi language or act in the way they used to do in Iraq. They will be Americanized and parents should accept this issue.”

A few minutes later, when asked what she would want service providers (teachers, nurses and police officers) to know about the values of her home country, she said, *“In our culture, we do not talk with our children, especially girls, about sex issues. It’s a shame. I know in American schools teachers talk with student about sex in classrooms. I don’t like it. I prefer they don’t talk with my daughter about sex at all.”*

This example illustrates the confusion refugee parents sometimes experience. They are learning how to raise their children in two cultural traditions through trial and error. This may result in serious conflict with children. Self-help and social service providers can help parents perceive which aspects of American culture can be helpful for them to adopt, and support them in preserving aspects of their traditional culture that can improve their mental health and connect them with their home country.

b. Emotional Complexities facing Iraqi Newcomers

The definition of "shame" in Eastern culture is different than its meaning in Western culture. This difference is significant and requires the attention of many therapists or service workers involved with refugees. Immigrants in the process of experiencing new lifestyles and adopting new cultures may feel pressured to perform acts considered shameful or sinful in traditional cultures. Such acts range from a man shaking hands with a young girl, to accepting a ride home from a colleague, to accepting romantic feelings between same-sex couples.

Many refugees have been forced to leave family members behind in Iraq or other countries. No matter whether they chose to immigrate or were forced, "survivor guilt" is common among refugees. When interviewing immigrants and refugees, many mentioned experiences of sadness when they think about their family and friends who remain in danger in their home country.

While many Iraqis were proud of their jobs and homes back in Iraq, the transition to the U.S.—and often to lower-paid work and lower social status—can cause Iraqi refugees to experience humiliation as well. Many Iraqi refugees had good occupations in their home country and were much respected by other people. In contrast, many refugees lost this social status and economic privilege when they arrived in the U.S. Service providers are advised to consider this loss in status when working with refugees, and to learn more about refugees' cultures and home countries to better address their emotional and mental difficulties.

c. Social Psychology of the Iraqi People

Iraq is the descendant of one of the most ancient civilizations in history. Iraq was known as Mesopotamia from which one of the oldest constitutional systems had originated. Yet, when Baghdad fell in the 12th century, democracy, and social and intellectual progress were halted.

Basically, the Iraqi personality is idealistic, spiritual, dignified, extroverted, emotional, competitive, seeking self-actualization, and creative. Yet, it has been challenged by rulers (typically foreigners since the 12th century) who have been detached from those they rule, and attack from within the country was a routine fear. The effects of this divergent sense of loyalties alongside the founding of the modern Iraqi state in 1921, has been to continue a legacy of conflict between traditionalism and modernism. In addition, Iraqis have often been conflicted on whether to see their governing structures as worthy of patriotism or of rejection. With the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, and subsequent international sanctions and very harsh suppression, the Iraqi people needed to focus on survival. The consequences have been widespread demoralization and rising aggression, civil unrest and fundamentalism growth.

Collective identity and pride in one's country was shattered, and the subsequent instability and fall of multiple governing structures led to a general disillusionment, loss of meaning, and frustration at shattered expectations.

These years of suffering not only caused stress and worries about persecution; it created direct psychological traumas on many in the region. There were the victims of the Eight Years War with Iran and the first Gulf War, twelve years of sanctions, and the second war with the USA. Grievances built, for the killed ones, but also the broken families, the widows, the street children, the families who lost their supporter, the disabled, the prisoners of war, and the suffering of severe socio-economic deprivation. In addition, there were the victims of individual and mass suppression by the dictator's regime.

The social structure was disrupted, beside the injured dignity, by many conflicts and confusion of priorities of patriotism, regaining sovereignty, democracy, and sectarianism\fundamentalism. The flare up of

violence in Baghdad, Mosul, middle, and western regions of the country emerged by the end of 2003. The rebound of excessive use of force by the Coalition forces added more confusion.

This history helps explain the ways in which the country became a both a fertile space for religious fundamentalism, for oppression, and simultaneously for resistance. And the suffering of its people exploded, without the resources or psychological alignment with mental health supports. Those who suffered did so without support to repair the damage. This is also a country that is currently unable to articulate a shared or uniting vision for its people. Such is not due to anything deficient about the populace but rather due to despotic regimes, foreign rulers, civil war, and deep ambivalence as to one's role in civil society – does one resist or align? These collective and internal conflicts are carried into the USA by Iraqi refugees, typically appearing as distrust of the government and a lack of faith in the power of civil society.

It is a country difficult, if not impossible to understand, and the overlay of Islamophobia causes many in the West to dismiss all that the country has to offer and to affirm it respect and its people dignity. We hope these insights help build compassion for its people, and the nation's struggles.

Recommendations for Service Providers

Abundant suggestions surfaced through the course of the interviews conducted for this chapter. Four service sectors are specifically included: higher education, K-12 education, health and policing. Before turning to these sector-specific sets of advice, we encourage readers to turn to a later section in this report, *“Recommendations for Service Providers: Advancing Respect and Responsiveness.”* Contained within this chapter are overarching recommendations for service providers. If followed, we believe that services would become more partnership-oriented, culturally responsive and effective for promoting the inclusion of the Iraqi people.

a. Teachers and School Staff

When a family immigrates to a new country, if they have children, one of their first official contacts with new society will be through school staff and teachers. Interfacing with teachers and school officials is a significant responsibility and important element of integration into a new society. Iraqi refugee parents in Multnomah County offer suggestions for how teachers and educators can assist newcomers in this transition to a new educational system.

The most important task for teachers and school staff is to engage with and build trust with parents by demonstrating interest and acceptance, and practicing trustworthiness and with inclusion. Create a permanent constructive relationship with parents and students. For this to be most effective, work in partnership with immigrant and refugee serving organizations, such that the fullness of family needs can be addressed more holistically, stretching beyond educational efforts and being invested in the family's wellbeing. In turn, when families are better served, students are better able to learn. Relationally, a good relationship with parents can help students to obtain a better education. In addition, for many new arrivals to the U.S., teachers and educators are some of the first Americans Iraqis meet, and need to give a good first impression. Allocating few minutes for talking to them about their country or writing small articles for the school bulletin are some options.

Remember that our newest arrivals (typically less than 12 months) will be learning many things and are often challenged by income, employment and housing. Simply communicating welcome and providing an accessible environment, instead of setting expectations for engagement (that might be overwhelming and create a sense of inadequacy among the newcomers) is advised. Such communications open a pathway to engagement that while not likely to be immediately used, will invite later engagement.

Schools can function as a gateway to new home for refugee parents who are not able to connect to society easily. Refugee parents can gain social contact when they participate in school programs and connect with people. Often the best avenue for engagement is through culturally specific organizations that are working in partnership with schools. Seeing people who look like them, share their language, and center their culture is inviting for engagement. We encourage teachers and administrators to join in some of these meetings, and through this visibility, inviting pathways for engagement will be extended. The benefits for families include helping parents feel useful and self-confident. In this process they can connect to American parents as well as parents of children from other minority groups. Socializing with other parents allows refugee parents to share parental problems and understand that many of their problems are common among other children, which can decrease parental anxiety. In addition to socializing refugee parents, connecting to other parents has also unexpected benefits. By connecting to other parents, refugee parents learn more about American culture, and feel affirmed in areas that are confusing and conflictual. Unmentioned social rules often regulate social behavior, and are often disconnected from conventions in one's home country.

Language will typically be a barrier for Iraqi parents to participate in school activities. There may also be pronounced levels of disinterest from American parents who might not want to include Iraqi families in school activities and governance structures. Schools will need to work with parents to ensure that family engagement for everyone is inclusive.

We encourage professional development for educators across the spectrum of roles to learn about the Iraqi community and to unlearn their own biases, and relearn cultural appreciation and identity affirmation. This work can often best be done by the culturally specific service providers in the region. The schools need to shoulder responsibility for creating an inclusive environment that supports student academic and social achievement.

Health Care Providers

Many Iraqi refugees are practicing Muslims, and religious rules are taken very seriously among most refugees. Although living as a Muslim in a Western country can bring difficulties, Iraqi Muslim refugees generally are able to follow their religion and its rules. Islamic rules obligate people to be careful about contact with people of the opposite sex who are not their close family members. In other words, doctors, nurses and other service providers who are not close family members of Muslims are prohibited from touching bodies of patients of another sex. As one interviewee stated, *"health care service providers should know that it will be a sin for us if a male nurse touch female patient or a female nurse touch a male patient. Although almost [all staff] care about this issue, still there are few cases that they ignore this issue."* One of the interviewees explained the positive reaction of a nurse after reminding her about this issue. She said, *"My husband explained that we prefer that a male doctor do not examine me. So they understood and cared about it. But it was far better that they knew it before we remind them."* Simple education of health care workers about cultural norms such as this can help prevent discomfort and shame among refugees when they seek health care.

In Iraq, when someone need to be hospitalized, all of their friends and family members would come and try to support her/him in any way they could, whether by helping the patient to do daily tasks, taking care of children or by providing them with financial assistance. All of these forms of help can cause refugees to feel more relaxed and comfortable when they are medical patients; having close family members nearby is thought to bring about health more quickly. However, refugees who need to be hospitalized in Portland are

often deprived from such familial support, and when they get sick, they worry about their children, daily chores, and their career. As a result, they experience higher levels of anxiety and stress.

Health care providers have the opportunity to help with this issue. While many health care providers have been trained in working with minority groups, the specific issues that relate to refugee patients should be known to nurses and doctors, which can help patients overcome their anxieties earlier. The importance of this issue becomes more highlighted when illness is long-term, when a refugee does not have friends or relatives in Multnomah County, if they are the main provider for the family, if they lack financial savings, or if they are a single parent who needs to take care of children. In addition, lack of English language proficiency is an additional barrier, as well as lack of awareness about medical rights or laws. This and other newcomer communities need a wide range of supports. While many will be connected to organizations such as IRCO or Muslim Educational Trust, service providers need to inquire about wellbeing beyond physical health and ask about housing, food, employment, income and connecting to someone in times of need. Specific suggestions are made in the section, “Recommendations for Service Providers” in this report. Such an extension of roles is included in a “social determinants of health” framework that has become a legitimate part of health care services.

Health providers who deal with refugees should be trained in trauma informed care. They can help patients connect to mental health services such as counselors or social workers. A social worker can be provided for such patients in all phases of treatment. Social workers can assist with finding affordable child care, financial assistance or with explaining laws to clarify patient rights related to employment while ill.

If health care providers do not understand the cultural context from which refugees are speaking, they risk further shaming and stigmatizing refugees when they discuss actions that make them feel ashamed. Providers should learn deeply about the cultural context of each community they serve, and about what is considered shameful within specific cultures, as well as how to work with refugees experiencing shame and stigma. Essential roles include alleviating stigma for refugees who seek mental health care.

Police Officers

Police officers provide services to refugees. While police officers are trained in dealing with individuals from various cultural backgrounds, interviews with Iraqi refugees in Multnomah County provided insight into special considerations that police officers should keep in mind when dealing with refugees.

Newcomers and refugees from Eastern countries often lack knowledge about laws in the U.S. Their knowledge about most laws is limited to basic rules, such as stopping when a traffic light is red. In many cases any violation of the law is the result of confusion or lack of knowledge about the law rather than intentional ignorance or willful disobedience. If police officers focus on playing an instructional role rather than a punishment role, this can help newcomers to learn how to behave properly in their new society. This does not mean that police officers should excuse refugees from punishment if they disobey the law. By having instructional approach when dealing with refugees, police officers can help both sides to develop a constructive relationship. One of the interviewees’ stories illustrates this point.

I used to park my car in the parking of our residential complex in Portland, OR. Although I passed the driving knowledge test theoretically and practically I had not mastered in few of them and sometimes I was confused in distinguishing what should I know.

One day a large car was parked near the yellow line in parking lot and the only free area for parking was in right side of that. I parked my car on that area and since the other side of parking lot was a column, I parked my car as far as possible to the large car and close to the column in order to

prevent from scratching my car by the doors of large car. Next day, I found a ticket on my car since I passed the yellow line between my car and column. In my country if I did something like that it would be appreciative and in USA I got ticket because I was careful.

At the moment, I was confused and had very bad feelings. Suddenly a police car came and found I have a problem. I described the situation and he explained the related law for me. In order to help me to understand all of the words, he spoke slowly and repeated difficult words. At the end, he told me take picture and send an email to a specific department to explain the situation clearly. The police officer added that in this manner, I may get a chance to cancel the ticket. His behavior was very nice and changed my mood completely. Even I found a friendly attitude toward police officers. At the moment, the behavior of the police officer was more important than the ticket for me. By the way, I sent that email and fortunately my ticket got cancelled.

Refugees want police officers to respect their faith beliefs and help them in acting according to Islamic rules. As mentioned previously in regards to nurses, Muslims are prohibited to touch and be touched by people of the opposite sex. In the event of an arrest, Muslim refugees do not want to be touched by opposite sex police officers and while in custody, Muslims want to be allowed to pray during the traditional daily prayer times. In one of the interviews, an interviewee mentioned:

We, as refugees, try to act such as a good resident but every times in any society there are people who violate the law and as punishment sending to jail. It is important that police officers respect refugees' faith beliefs and prepare prerequisites for them to pray like prepare water for them to do ablution, even if they did a crime.

Understanding one's background, holding respect for the conventions of the community, and being willing to be led by the community's advice is key to inclusion.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Since English language proficiency is a leading challenge facing Iraqi refugees that prohibits successful integration in American society, expanding the availability of free English language courses for Iraqi newcomers is important. IRCO and PCC offer free English classes, but better promotion and availability would help to increase access for refugees. In addition, Iraqi refugees, like all refugee communities, need specific vocational ESL classes. For refugees who are illiterate in Arabic language, bilingual ESL classes could be more beneficial as a beginning in learning English. In addition, policymakers should understand that typical administrative processes, familiar to most Americans, are often bewildering to Iraqi refugees. Access to organizations that provide cultural orientation upon arrival are important to help introduce them to basic institutional structures and systems.

The pathways for recognizing foreign credentials remain inadequate, if they exist at all. Evaluating educational certificates, taking and passing licensing exams and finding a job are not easy tasks for many refugees. In several cases, performing these tasks can be confusing and frustrating for refugees, especially for those without English language proficiency. Such individuals need ongoing assistance from organizations and professionals, who are completely familiar and experienced with performing these duties, and policymakers can assist by devoting more attention to this issue when planning resettlement of refugees. Special attention should be made to providing recertification programs to help refugees who have university degrees, as well as vocational rehabilitation programs for the skilled trade workers to use their fields of expertise.

City planners need to know that many people from different ethnic groups and religions are living in Portland, and the ethnic and cultural diversity in Portland will only increase in the future. Each individual ethnic and racial group may have different needs and their needs should be considered in urban planning. Those involved in urban development programs should ensure that the future Portland will be a better place for living for all of its residents. Considerations such as access to Halal meat in more supermarkets, and offering Halal meat at reasonable prices by supporting culturally specific small businesses would help Muslim refugees feel more welcome and be able to better afford life in Portland.

Refugee women are another group whose specific needs should be considered, especially given the underreported domestic violence experienced by some women in this community. Policymakers can help refugee women be more aware of their rights in the U.S., and inform women of services available to those experiencing domestic violence. Services should be made available to women which support them to manage the specific cultural experiences of shame and other negative feelings may accompany the act of reaching out for help in situations of domestic violence. These services should be culturally specific, and take into consideration the use of cultural brokers to implement the use of community leaders and organizations that can prevent domestic violence while preserving the family constitution which is vital for Iraqi society. And policy makers should adopt policies and programs that make the use of culturally specific agents as an integral part of interventions.

Policymakers should organize services to improve the physical and mental health of refugees, and offer preventative care before illness becomes a crisis. Such health programs should be made a priority for refugee children, especially preventive medicine and vaccinations. Health improvement programs for adults should consider three main components: preventive care, general treatment, and rehabilitation.

Given the prevalence of mental health difficulties among refugees, all mental health service providers including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and counselors should receive special trainings targeted help to refugees. Since refugees have unique problems, like experiencing or being witness to torture, experiences of war and long-term instability, mental health service providers need additional training to best serve refugees. The specific experiences of refugees are further complicated by cultural differences not well understood by most mental health service providers. Policy makers should consider the special mental health concerns of refugees and provide training to help meet those needs.

Iranians in Multnomah County

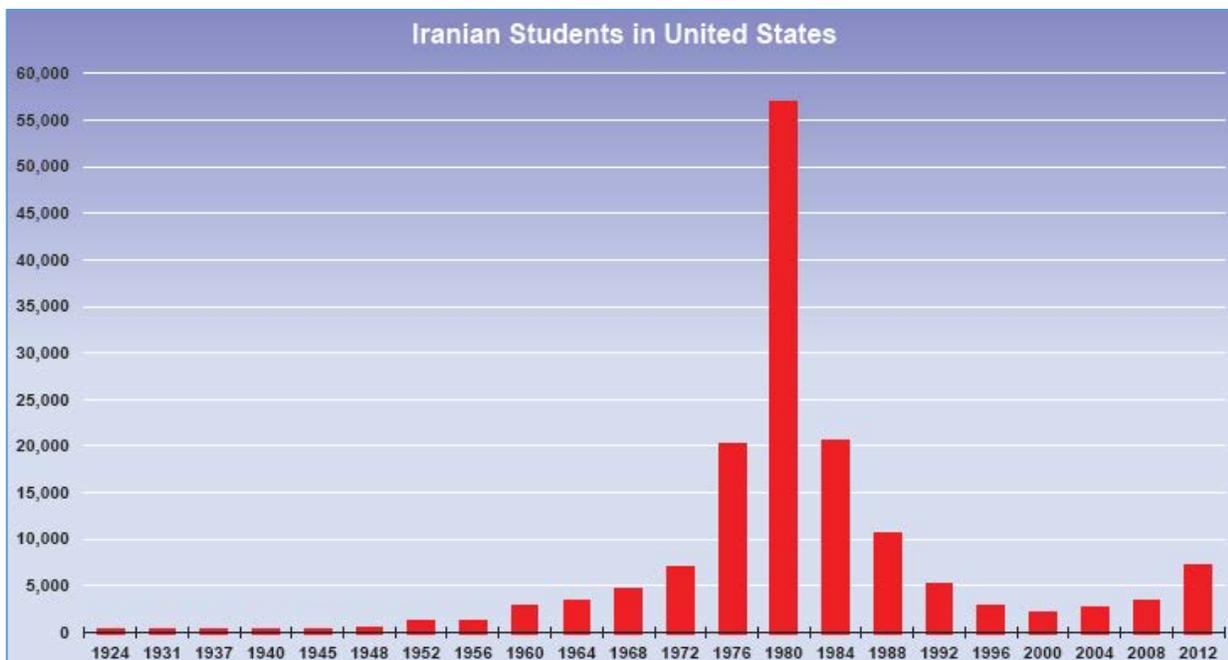
By Shirin Yekekar and Ann Curry-Stevens

Introduction and History

Many Iranians leave their country hoping to find a better life. A much smaller number, at 557, were accepted as refugees into Oregon (from 1975 to 2014). From the mid-20th century to today, the United States has been an attractive destination for many Iranians. Various historical events have accelerated or slowed down this process. Iranian immigration to the United States has occurred in three major waves. These waves differentiate immigrations according to socioeconomic status and motivations for immigration, including both forced and voluntary departures. Although the waves overlap, the three phases provide a framework for conceptualizing the Iranian immigration to the United States in general and to Oregon specifically.

The first phase started in 1950 and lasted until the 1979 Islamic Revolution. After World War II, the Iranian economy recovered and many Iranians became economically prosperous, which increased interest in higher education. Revenue from oil exports permitted a relatively sudden change in Iranian society from traditionalism to modernization, motivating middle and upper class families to send their children abroad for higher education as a means of ensuring socioeconomic security and political access upon return.²⁹⁹ (Iranian Americans Immigration and Assimilation, 2014). Hence, the first wave of immigration was influenced by interest among Iranians in western universities.

Iranian students have had a significant presence in US institutions. The figure below shows that the era peaked in 1980, and is again on the rise.³⁰⁰ The reason for this increase is the increasing political unrest that has occurred in Iran since 2009. While numbers today are relatively small, the vast majority of them are in higher education (82%), and focusing on STEM subjects (75%).³⁰¹ This group is a key asset to the region, bringing high academic credentials to the USA. Of note, 89% are interested in remaining in the USA after graduation. This means that the USA potentially benefits from the education they received in Iran, and their further investment in high level technical careers. This same report, based on a survey of Iranian students, identifies that 56% study engineering and hold potential to contribute to the growth of high tech firms in Oregon.



Universities in Oregon were among the educational destinations for Iranian students. The first generation of the Iranian students who immigrated to Oregon arrived during the 1960s. Iranian students enrolled in schools including Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Lewis and Clark College. After the 1979 revolution, not only did many of these students opt to remain in the United States, but many of their relatives joined them.³⁰² These relatives helped to make up the second wave of immigration.

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. Kurdish refugees joined 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 also 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. This has come as a surprise for Iranian immigrants (similarly with a range of immigrants across the globe) who sought a better life in the USA, reputed to be the 'land of milk and honey.' 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 facets of their new lives.

Finally, a third wave of immigration has been happening from 1995 to the present. This wave includes the immigration of highly skilled and educated professionals. Immigration in this wave has led to a significant "brain drain" in Iran. In general, the term "brain drain" can be defined as "the permanent or long-term international emigration of skilled people who have been the subject of considerable educational investment by their own societies."³⁰³ It is also catalyzed, more recently, by the

According to the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Republic of Iran had a substantial drain of highly educated individuals (15 percent) in the early 1990s. More than 150,000 Iranians left the Islamic Republic each year during the early 1990s. In addition, the political crackdown following the 2009 election protests is said to have created a "spreading refugee exodus" of elite Iranians.³⁰⁴ Losing such intellectual capital harms the home country, while at the same time becomes an asset to the USA.

Throughout these three waves of immigration of Iranians to the United States, many Iranians immigrated to Oregon, especially to Multnomah County. A variety of motivations led Iranians to select Multnomah County as second home, as detailed in the next section.

Why Portland?

a. Reputed Universities

As noted, one main reason that Iranians settle in Oregon is for educational purposes. Reputable universities in Oregon have been a powerful educational magnet that attract many students from all over the world, including Iran. Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Oregon Health and Science University have many Iranian students, and every year each school receives many applications from Iranian students who are interested in living in Oregon and studying at these universities.

Although universities in Oregon are attractive to immigrants, money is a problem for newcomers. In spite of the fact that universities provide high quality education, Multnomah County has a relatively high cost of living,

especially for international students, and when compared to some other cities elsewhere in the USA. International students typically pay tuition rates that are three times higher than in-state students.

Due to economic problems and sanctions, the Iran Rial currency exchange rate has plunged in recent years, and this provide Iranian immigrants, refugees and students with many financial problems. In addition, almost no Iranian students receive financial aid from the Iranian government. Loans, however, are next to impossible to find. Lending agencies (public and private alike) require a US co-signer on a loan. Some US colleges have make direct financial supports available to foreign students, and Iranian students try to cover their expenses by working as research and teaching assistants. While it is hard to afford being a student in the U.S., many Iranian students hope to find a good job opportunity in this county after graduation. The promise of potential employment encourages them to stay in the USA.

b. Job Opportunities

The potential for lucrative job opportunities attracts Iranians to settle in Portland. Many companies are interested in hiring educated immigrants in the Portland metropolitan area, so there are many job opportunities for Iranian Immigrants. For example, many Iranians work for well-known companies such as INTEL, NIKE, and Tektronix. Even among Iranian immigrants who originally immigrated to the U.S. and lived elsewhere in the country, some have moved to Portland because of the job opportunities here.

a. Unique Geographic Location

In addition to previously mentioned reasons, geographical location is another important feature that has motivated Iranians to live in this area. Oregon is located near the two other popular destinations for Iranian immigrants: California and British Columbia, Canada. After the revolution, many Iranians settled in California. In slang language, Iranians call Los Angeles the “second Tehran.” In addition to California, many Iranians live in Vancouver, Canada, which is accessible from a few hours’ drive by car. According to the 2011 Canadian Census, 36,000 Iranians live in the greater Vancouver area, and the community is geographically concentrated in North Shore at levels about 7% of the population. This regional concentration makes their cultural presence strong, with local restaurants, bakeries, bookstores and availability of a Farsi newspaper. As a result, locating close to Vancouver is appealing for many. The unique location of Oregon thus supports Iranian immigrants here easily access other cities with large Iranian immigrant populations, contributing to Multnomah County’s appeal.

b. Weather and Natural Characteristics

The beautiful natural area and mild weather of Portland should be mentioned as another reason why Iranians choose to live in this area. The Portland metropolitan area has a special climate. It is marked by warm, dry summers as well as damp, chilly winter days. This climate is ideal for Iranians. While some Americans find the rainy winters boring, many Iranians enjoy the rainy climate, which contrasts with the lack of precipitation that was experienced back in Iran.

c. City Size

Large cities in Iran are known for traffic congestion. Residents of these cities spent tremendous amounts of time for in-city trips and commuting between workplace and home. The size of Portland means that it does not have such problems. Although there is heavy traffic in some parts of the city during rush hour, it is negligible compared to a city such as Tehran and other big cities in Iran. Therefore, many Iranians like to live in Portland.

Cultural Assets

The Iranian culture is rich in many ways and world-renowned for its contribution to humanity.³⁰⁵ Iran and its predecessor, Persia, is responsible for the brick (back in 6000 BC), the windmill (799 AD), wine (5000 BC), the first banking system (500 BC), the first taxation system (500 BC), and cookies (700 AD) and ice cream (400 BC). Persians are the founders of algebra and trigonometry, and played an important role in the development of modern medicine. The great poet, scholar and mystic Rumi (1207-1273) was Persian. More recently (2003), jurist Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work on human rights.

Persia was an incredible base for a range of cultural activities, and Iran continued that tradition, as weaving rugs, art, dance, painting, calligraphy, singing, theater, and cinema are maintained as traditions. Although not well supported by the clerical rules of Khomeini or his follower, Khamenei, the arts have endured.

In 2010, the US House of Representatives and Senate passed the Nowruz Resolution that “recognizes the cultural and historical significance of Nowruz, expresses appreciation to Iranian Americans for their contributions to American society, and wishes Iranian Americans, the people of Iran and all those who celebrate the holiday a prosperous New Year.”³⁰⁶ When the US Senate passed the resolution, they added encouragement for Iran to celebrate Nowruz peacefully and supported the right of Iranians to exercise the freedom of assembly, expression and speech.

For those who know little of the Iranian community, Nowruz (or New Day) is an ancient Persian celebration of the first day of spring (typically on March 21), and the start of the New Year in the Iranian calendar. It is celebrated by many countries in the Middle East, and by Iranians around the world. Its messages center on core themes of “reflection and renewal, forgiveness and respect for family elders.”³⁰⁷ The ceremony was borne about 1000 BC, mostly to recognize the spring and the onset of crop growth and the spring equinox. While a secular holiday, and celebrated for more than 3000 years, it is held as a holy day for Zoroastrians.

Faith traditions in Iran are dominated by the Shi’a branch of Islam, as more than 9 in 10 Iranians identify in this way. Islam has been the official religion of the country since 640 AD. Less than 1% of the country identifies as non-Islamic. The traditions of the Islamic faith are best identified in the “*Somali Community in Multnomah County*” chapter in this report. The Iranian government does not recognize non-religious Iranians, so we are unlikely to know the reach of the faith diversity in the country. We know it, however, in the USA. The diversity is much greater, with only 31% identifying as Muslim, 11% as atheist, 8% as agnostic, 7% as Baha’i (officially outlawed in Iran), 5% as Jewish, 7% as Christian and the remainder either much smaller or undeclared. Of interest, the community is becoming even more diverse in recent years. Fully half of Iranians now indicate that religion is not important at all in their life.³⁰⁸

Much rhetoric exists about the degree to which Middle Eastern communities support radical religious groups. Here we have data on the scope of these beliefs among Iranian Americans, measured through a survey in 2016.³⁰⁹ There is unified beliefs that the Iranian community does not support religious extremism.

| Belief about the degree of support for ISIS or other religious extremist groups or ideologies in the Iranian American community, 2016 | |
|--|-----|
| There is a great deal of support | 0% |
| There is some support | 2% |
| There is very little support | 2% |
| There is no support at all | 85% |
| No sure | 10% |

We bring attention to this data because of the harmful and erroneous beliefs that many Americans hold about the tolerance of various Middle Eastern communities for religious extremism.

Embedded in the sections that follow are additional assets such as a collectivist society, extended definitions of families, and the “sense of place” that is important to those in the community.

Integration Barriers and Challenges

Problems faced by immigrants range from cultural assimilation to language proficiency and monetary problems. The specific challenges faced by immigrants, as well as the extent of those challenges, depend on social factors, like the culture of the departed society, or personal factors, such as language skill or the education level of the immigrant. The integration challenges of Iranian immigrants can be categorized into two main groups: social/cultural and access/inclusion. The first group of challenges are cultural challenges which result from the difference in cultures between Iranian society and American society. All immigrants face cultural challenges regardless of whether they are rich or poor, highly educated or uneducated, speak English or cannot, have a job or are unemployed. The second group of challenges stems from the ways in which the community is excluded from accessing social and economic inclusion. Many themes that are identified elsewhere in this report also apply to Iranians. Those specified below emerge from the priorities identified by the range of participant who were interviewed for this chapter. At the same time, the exact natures of cultural challenges are different from one person to the next.

In order to understand cultural challenges, it is necessary to have a discussion about the main differences between Iranian and American culture, and how these differences limit the social integration of Iranian immigrants into their Portland community.

a. Social/Cultural Integration Challenges

(i) Iranian Collectivism and American Individualism

The first dissimilarity between the U.S. and Iran relates to collectivism in Iranian culture. Iranian collectivism emphasizes the needs and goals of the group as a whole over the needs and wishes of each individual person. In Iranian culture, relationships with other members of the group and the interconnectedness between people play a central role in each person's identity. Most Iranian immigrants try to preserve this aspect of their cultural identity. However, immigration itself leads to detachment from previously interconnected groups, and many immigrants suddenly find themselves in an individualist culture which considers individual needs and goals prior to those of groups. Although there are many positive aspects to a liberal society that allows people to follow their individual goals and needs, it is not easy for many Iranians to adopt this perspective right away. As explained by one Iranian immigrant to Portland, told *“we came from a collectivist society to an individualist one... we are lonely individuals and it is not easy to deal with.”*

One consequence of this cultural shift from collectivism to individualism can be mental health problems for immigrants, including depression. To avoid such outcomes, Iranians employ different coping strategies to adapt to this shift in cultural values. Such strategies include creating small friendship groups with other Iranians with very close interconnected relationships, or preserving connections with family and friends back in Iran.

Although coping strategies like these can help to provide relief from stress and alleviate the loneliness of living in a new place, these emotion-focused strategies are limited in what they can do. Problem-focused strategies are needed as well, that attack the root of the problem instead of only addressing the emotional consequences. It is very vital that policy makers consider cultural differences as a serious issue and provide Iranian immigrants with proper mental health services when needed.

Note that collectivism is a cultural asset for the USA. While so much of US society is individually oriented, collectivism, and experiences with collectivist societies, needs to be treated as an understanding of social, cultural and economic alternatives that could help the nation build better ways to ensure that the wellbeing of all residents is given higher priority and more concerted policy attention. Collective societies have lower levels of income inequality, and progressive policies are better welcomed. While there are assets of individual societies, it would be hard to argue that the USA currently holds an orientation that is working well for the nation.

Supports for collectivist cultures are warranted in policy. Examples could include providing culturally-affirming gathering spaces where community members can gather, and initiating policy dialogues on important issues for the community which would support the emergence of shared insight and consensus-based decision making.

(ii) Family and Family Relationships

Another challenge faced by immigrants relates to different definitions of family, family relationships and personal boundaries in U.S. and Iranian society. American definitions of family usually include parents and children, while Iranians define families as more expansive. While modern Iran sees many extended families who no longer live together in the same home, this pattern is new, and for the majority of families, homes still consists of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins in addition to parents and children.

Families have very close relationships, and these bonds are preserved from childhood to adulthood. One Iranian Immigrant interviewed in Portland has an American wife, and he mentioned:

I have very close relationship with my extended family. Although we live in different places all over the world, we have preserved our connections with each other and enjoy it. Since my wife is American, she is surprised about such charming extended family relationship and is interested in it.

Close family relationships are assets for its members. As assets, these close ties have a positive impact on caring for children, on paying for housing, on providing a safety net in the event of job loss or ill health. They also provide a greater likelihood of having access to meaningful social networks and mutual aid resources, which in turn have a positive influence on health, mental health and general happiness and wellbeing.

With immigration, these relationships can become strained. Expectations differ around family roles and values. In the USA, parents are solely afforded formal decision making influence in matters that affect children. And spouses are the only decision maker when one's partner is in ill health. Consider decision making structures for health care where one person makes a decision, or where a child being assessed by a school is considered only from the family perspective, as opposed to an extended family or even community perspective. Visitation rights are limited to a nuclear family in the justice system. Including only the nuclear family becomes an act of cultural unresponsiveness.

In Iranian culture, the father is the head of the household. He is responsible for taking care of other family members. Although mothers participate in this process, the father is the manager of the family, even in modern families. Children and, in more traditional families, wives as well, are obligated to obey the family rules which are determined either by the father or by the patriarchal culture of society. While there is typically no "right" or "wrong" to a culture's orientation, the USA discarded patriarchy more than a generation ago, and this places Iranians in fairly harsh judgement by Americans. This is a painful disjuncture at times.

Most Iranian families have more limitations for their daughters compared with sons. This inequality is more pronounced in Muslim families. For example, many families let their sons go out with friends at night. In contrast, daughters must be at home in the evening. Such different rules for young men and women extend

beyond the family. Iranian society has many unequal and restricted social rules for girls. They extended from rules about clothing and makeup to expectations around virginity and premarital sex.

In addition, most children stay in their parents' house until they marry. This means more than just sharing physical space for a longer period of time; it means that children remain under the supervision and even control of their parents much longer than do most other American children. Such a structure allows for parental guidance for longer, and allows for families to conserve traditions, relationships, support and finances.

In immigrant Iranian families, disobeying the family rules, deciding to live independently, and ignoring religious obligations are the main complaints of parents whose relationships with their children are impacted by the cultural expectations in American society. When children adopt American values over Iranian values, relationships between parents and children suffer. Children who adopt American culture and sever ties to Iranian culture are seen as showing disrespect and pose serious problems for Iranian immigrant parents.

One of the immigrants interviewed for this project discussed a situation in which an Iranian immigrant father requested that his daughter return home by midnight, to which the daughter replied *"it's not your business, I am older than eighteen and you cannot rule me."* The father was shocked and confused by this response. While typical of American culture, such a response is unusual and disrespectful within Iranian culture. It is a small example of challenges faced by Iranian parents that impede their integration process. In worst cases, such family tension can cause families to feel regret, fearing they made the wrong decision to immigrate to the USA.

Parents use a range of approaches to cope with this disjuncture, most of which are also used by most parents in the USA. These include negotiating solutions with children to establish acceptable alternatives, removing resources such as allowance and if this does not work, then ceasing to pay for core needs, and removing affection. These align well with dominant US discipline strategies. An additional resource that Iranian parents use occasionally is to head back to Iran for stretches of time, removing them from the cultural influence of the USA.

The parenting challenge that causes considerable angst for Iranian parents is the worry that more firm parenting will push away the child, or get them into trouble with child welfare agencies. Working long hours tends to push parents into more punitive and controlling parenting styles, and the risk of fractured relationships with children deepens. Iranian families, like the majority of newcomers, worry that their children will reject their heritage and possibly even their family. Some quotes from those interviewed for this chapter reveals the pain of such choices, and sometimes is dealt with through denial – but that might actually be an accurate interpretation:

- *Disobeying [a] few rules is not an important issue and it cannot lead to big troubles for children.*
- *All immigrant families have the same problem with youths; it is an inevitable cost of immigration.*
- *Adolescents are involved with more complicated problems inside of Iran and the behavior of my children are not as bad as them.*
- *This is American society, and we cannot admit human liberty as a right and at the same time force children to live according to our traditional values.*

Asking for help is a lesser chosen option by Iranians as most parents prefer not to get help from counselors for family issues. There are several reasons for this. Many parents believe that if they ask for help from an American counselor, that counselor will not understand their situation and cultural background and may try to convince the parents not to force children to obey traditional rules. Some parents are afraid of being confronted with that situation. Moreover, parents consider themselves as the delegates of their home country's culture. In Iranian culture people do not show the reality of their lives to strangers. They try to hide

the unpleasant parts and share just the nice aspects of private life with others. Therefore, asking for help about an issue that has cultural roots is not an easy thing to do for Iranian immigrant parents.

While there are distinct challenges for immigrants and for Iranians that emerge from cultural divides, we hope that this narrative opens a universal appeal for parents of all nationalities and backgrounds: raising children is difficult work and all struggle with deciding what is best at any given time. Parents, regardless of their background, can benefit from warmth and acceptance. This is particularly so for newcomers who also face additional barriers to inclusion in US society.

b. Access/Inclusion Challenges

Besides cultural issues, many Iranians encounter other problems living in an American society. While Iranian immigrants in Multnomah County are a diverse group, which makes it hard to generalize the challenges of their integration, for the purposes of this description, Iranian immigrants can be classified into two main groups.

The first group is people who had a high socio-economic status in their home town in Iran. They were deeply connected to their families and friends. Some of them were highly respected and reputed in their community and possessed jobs that provided a strong social identity for them. Immigration for this group tends to be hard, and members of this group may integrate into a new society slower than others. People in this group were often either forced to leave Iran (e.g. human rights problems in Iran or to follow family immigration) or had an illusion of immediate success in the USA. They may compare their current life with their previous life and constantly feel regret for what they had left behind. It is highly probable for the people in this group to face serious problems with integration in the new society. However, human behavior is unpredictable and there are exceptional cases in every society.

The second group consists of people who did not have a very well-established life in Iran. They were perhaps moderately successful in their professional career and they did not have very close emotional relationship with their friends and family members.

Major challenges of integration of the Iranian community into their new society are outlined below.

(i) Language

Language is the key to communication in any community. Ability to understand, read and write in English is the most necessary skill for living in Portland for Iranians, and the first step to succeed in the new home is the ability to communicate in English. Unfortunately, the Iranian education system does not effectively teach English language to its students. Unless individuals in Iran learn English language by themselves, most of the high school graduates, even university graduates, can rarely speak about a topic in English for five minutes, let alone write a short paper. This means that language is a serious barrier for Iranian integration in Portland society.

Opening bank accounts, buying cell phone and wireless plans, renting apartments, and receiving Social Security Numbers are activities that need to be done in the first days of arrival to the U.S. Immigrants should receive support for these engagements, but rarely do so. It is very hard and confusing for those without English proficiency to succeed in these early encounters.

(ii) Landing a Job

Integration in a new society is dependent on having a satisfactory socio-economic status, and finding a proper job is one of the fundamental steps toward achieving this. Related to this issue, Iranians can be categorized in two groups: Iranians who have spent enough years in the U.S. to have resettled into a new society, and the other group, which are newer arrivals to the U.S.

Along with the three waves of immigration from Iran to the U.S., different groups of Iranians moved to Portland at different points in time. People who came here during the first and second waves of immigration have more established lives. These individuals tend to have fewer issues with finding jobs, as they have lived here long enough to have established themselves in a career.

Many other Iranian immigrants, especially new arrivals, used to have professional career opportunities in Iran. Many of these former professionals now work in Portland as factory workers or store cashiers to cover their basic needs, as they are not able to find professional jobs in their previous fields. There are several reasons behind this problem. As mentioned before, the first problem is language, where lack of English skill prevents immigrants from moving into industries in which they used to be employed. The second problem arises from university degrees. Universities in Iran are classified in two main groups: state universities and private universities. Students in state universities do not pay tuition or fees during their education. When they graduate from the university, they are not granted graduation certificates until they fulfill compulsory service inside Iran. They just receive a letter of approval which is valid to work as an expert inside Iran and is not translatable to industries outside of the county. This is the government's strategy to force students to work inside the country for a few years equal to the time that they were provided free education.

Mandatory military service for young men in Iran further complicates this problem. Even if young men study in private universities and pay for their own education, they are not allowed to receive their final certification until they have finished two years of mandatory military service. This leads many educated people to have had professional jobs inside of Iran, but they cannot claim the advantages of having a university degree in the U.S. and are forced to take jobs for which they are overqualified.

(iii) Restricting Social Communication to Other Iranians

Many newcomer community members communicate almost exclusively with people from their home country who share their culture and language. Although this intra-group communication can provide them with emotional well-being, it can hinder them from integration into American society. As mentioned previously, most Iranian new arrivals would need to improve their language skills to effectively communicate with those outside of their Iranian immigrant community, and spending time with Iranians alone cannot help them improve their skills. We ask the reader to note that staying connected with one's culture can narrow the speed of inclusion, yet it protects one's sense of wellbeing, and often keeps larger distress such as depression at bay.

(iv) Complicated Processes for Receiving Services

It is not easy for new arrivals to find out how to meet their various needs. This problem is more pronounced among refugees and people who had to leave Iran suddenly and were not given time to prepare. Many Iranians have problems understanding how to open a bank account, buy a cell phone, get a Social Security number, and in vital cases receive medical services. In Iran, the medical system is very different than the system in the USA.

In the US, people who need medical services need to visit a general practitioner at the first step and then are referred to a medical specialist, while in Iran, individuals may see medical specialists directly. This process adds to expense and complexity of the treatment process. As a result of confusion and expense related to the different medical system in the U.S., many refugees ignore their health problems.

(v) Visa Problems and Establishing a "Sense of Place"

Finding a new home is the main motivator for people to leave their country and immigrate to a new place. The Oxford dictionary defines home as "a place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household." Although this definition mentions the emotional feature of home related "family", it almost depicts home as a merely physical place. However, social researchers believe "home" has a

wider and more comprehensive meaning; defining it only according to its physical features restricts the broad meaning of home. Therefore, it is necessary to define home according to its social characteristics. This issue is more highlighted when we talk about people from eastern cultures, like Iranians.

Considering the social meaning of home, it has a close relationship with the concept of "sense of place." In other words, home is a place that people have "sense of place" about. "Sense of place" or place attachment is defined as a strong boundary that people create with special places which they like, and return to, and feel safe and comfortable when they are in that place.³¹⁰

Having such an attitude toward the idea of "home" can change its meaning from a public concept to a personal concept that can be interpreted differently from one person to another or one culture to another. Hence, it is necessary to discuss the meaning of this "sense of place," its role in the social integration of the Iranian community, and some strategies that can help policy makers to provide "sense of place" for Iranian immigrants.

Having a "sense of place" encourages involvement within the community and helps people create neighborly bonds. It encourages people to be involved, to enjoy where they live or work, and to interact more with their surroundings. Having a "sense of place" fosters a safe environment for all. When a "sense of place" is achieved, and people want to live and work in a certain community or area, increased social participation can result. When we discuss social integration for immigrants, having the "sense of place" can be a symbol that shows social integration has occurred. An ideal situation of social integration should create this "sense of place" for immigrants.

According to the interviews that have been conducted with Iranian immigrants in Multnomah County, the most serious problem in obtaining "sense of place" for Iranian immigrants is their visa status. In order to clarify this issue, it is necessary to explain the Iranian visa procedure.

Iranians usually immigrate to United States via three main ways. One group of Iranian immigrants arrive as refugees. Although being accepted as a refugee is a very long, difficult and time-consuming process for them, after being accepted as a refugee, immigrants often have few official supports to help them meet their primary needs. Refugees are allowed to work, and it is not very hard for them to find jobs, especially with the support of institutions such as Lutheran Community Services or IRCO. Refugees officially can go back to Iran and visit their friends and family members whenever they want, but they usually do not do that, because their visa status can easily be cancelled. To apply for the type of visa issued to refugees, they needed to submit evidence to prove they are in serious danger in Iran. Even after years have passed and if circumstances in Iran have changed, many prefer to not return to Iran because it could put their ability to return to the U.S. in serious danger. Although Iranian refugees have this issue, many such refugees in Multnomah County make up for it by staying connected to immigrants in other west coast cities. Los Angeles is close to Oregon, and Los Angeles is a hub for Iranian immigrants. Living in Los Angeles is much easier for refugees who do not know English because the Iranian community is quite large there and L.A. Iranian immigrant culture is similar to that found Iran. Therefore, people can find jobs, go shopping, and communicate with others even though their English skills are not very strong.

Another group of Iranian immigrants come to Portland through the visa application of a family member (e.g. parents, siblings). On average it takes ten years to complete the process of visa petition for family members. People who immigrate by this type of visa tend have less problems with integration than other groups. They have family who support them, which helps them more easily find jobs, and they can travel to Iran without the fears of visa revocation experienced by refugees.

The third way Iranians arrive in Multnomah County is through enrollment in higher education. In comparison with previous groups, most of the Iranian immigrants in Multnomah County consist of students. By the start of every academic year, many new students come to Oregon universities from Iran. However, the needs and problems unique to students have been considered less than other groups. There is an assumption that Iranian students come from rich families that can pay for all the services they need, and after receiving their education, they go back to their country to occupy their reserved job opportunities. The reality is completely different. Actually, many are extremely talented and smart people who spent much of their lives pursuing study and research, but they know there is limited opportunity for them inside of Iran, so they do not see any choice other than immigration. This is illustrated by the fact that it is a rare event that students, as non-permanent residents, go back to their home countries after their education is complete. In fact, many students are from families with average socio-economic status in Iran and, because of the very low currency exchange rate of Iran, these students still face financial challenges in meeting their primary needs in the U.S. They cannot apply for American loans, and they are often not allowed to apply for job opportunities, and those who do apply must overcome cultural prejudices against Iranians to convince employers to hire them. In addition, family members who are on dependent visas are not allowed to hold jobs, regardless of how educated or experienced they are in different fields. Most Iranian students apply for American universities because education in United States works as a gate for them to immigrate permanently to the United States. They hope to find a solution for their visa status that resolves their residency problem.

The other problem for many students is that in recent years, the U.S. embassy has been issuing "single entrance" visa types for most students. This means that whenever they leave the country, their visa will be canceled and they would have to apply all over again to come back to the United States. The result of such restrictions is that most students prefer not to risk visa cancellation in the middle of their education, so they are deprived from visiting family and friends during school. This may lead to emotional problems for students.

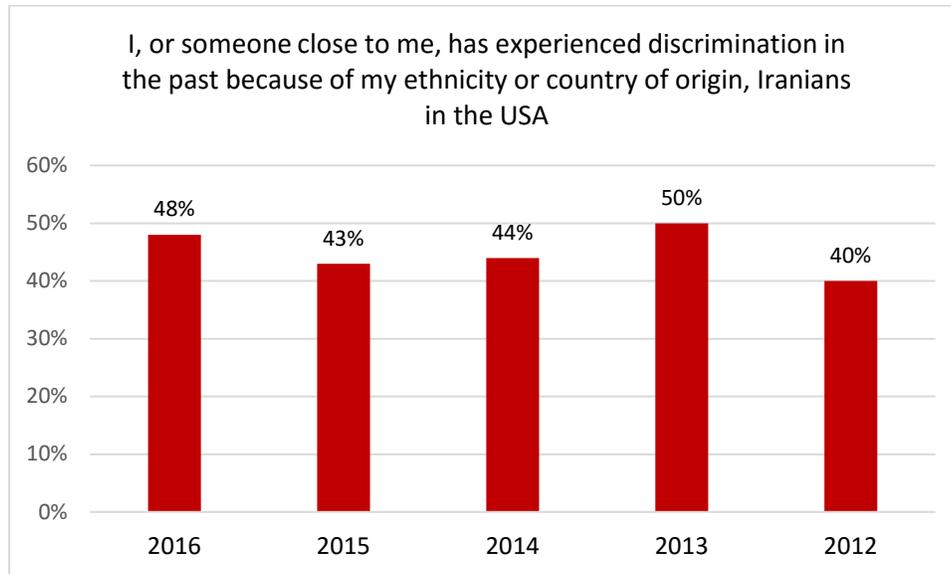
One of the interviewees mentioned a memory about this issue that illustrates the difference between the attitude of people who have a "sense of place" compared to those who do not have such feelings:

After the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, there was distress between Iranian community about the possible reaction of few extremist Americans toward them as Iranians... therefore a meeting was held with the participation of Mayor and Police Chief of Portland. In this meeting a person from young generation who was student, talked about this issue that we are guests in this city and we expected Portlanders behave us in a way that a host does with his guests. In the middle of his talking, we interrupted him and complained that we are not guests. Portland is our city, our home. We care about beauty of this city, its nature. If we see someone littering, we will warn him. We care about saving energy. If there is a problem about this city, we would participate in repairing it like other Portlanders. We care about this city as we care about our home.

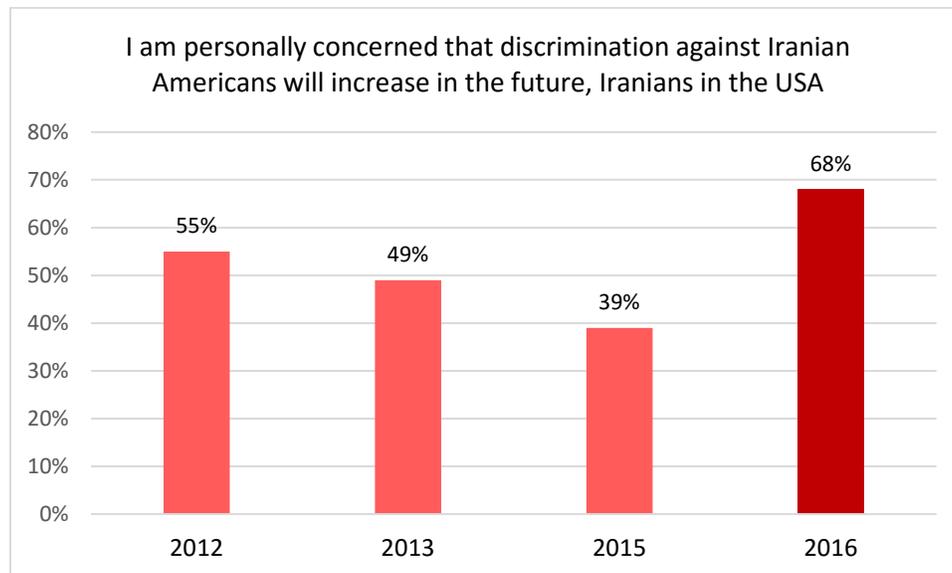
This example clearly depicts the difference between the people with and without sense of place, and shows that some Iranian immigrants have strong feelings that Portland does provide this "sense of place" for them.

(vi) Stereotyping and Racism

Most communities are unable to articulate the scope of discrimination they experience; Iranians are able to do so. Through the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans a survey is conducted annually to detail their experiences. While not disaggregated regionally, the community largely affirms that these surveys reflect their experience. Some findings are very important and are shared below. Remember that these insights are believed to be reflective of the regional experiences facing the community. We begin with the prevalence of discrimination faced by Iranians in the USA. About a half of the community has experienced discrimination over the last five years.



Not only does this survey tap into experiences of discrimination, it looks to the future to tap perspectives for forthcoming discrimination: “Two-thirds (68%) of Iranian Americans worry that rhetoric used by some presidential candidates against immigrants, Muslims, or Iranians will lead to increased discrimination against them.” What had been shrinking levels of concern has almost doubled this year. This is attributed to the harsh perspectives directed at Muslim and Middle Eastern communities in the current presidential election, on behalf of Republican candidates. Below shows this pattern, alongside the surge in 2016.



On top of these concerns about existing and predicted increases of discrimination, there is concern about leaving the country and the repercussions in return: of those who plan to return to Iran to see family, 57% of Iranians are concerned they will face greater scrutiny by US law enforcement.

As the problems faced by immigrants are complicated, there is no straightforward solution. Any possible solution needs to be considered from different dimensions. However, it is obvious that both Portlanders and immigrants both will benefit from comprehensive solutions.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Few communities make use of surveys across a population to establish policy priorities. Iranian Americans are unique in their use of surveys to establish such insights. The results of a 2015 national study are shown below.³¹¹

| Of the following list of issues affecting Iranian Americans, which two are most important to you personally? (Choose two) (2015) | |
|---|-----|
| Improving understanding of Iranian culture in the US | 33% |
| Ensuring that the image of Iranian Americans in the US accurately reflects our values and our accomplishments | 31% |
| Facilitating greater understanding between peoples of the US and Iran | 26% |
| Lifting US trade embargo to support commercial ties with Iran | 25% |
| Making visa issuance to family and friends less difficult or burdensome | 19% |
| Helping Iranian Americans get elected to political office and increasing the political influence of Iranians Americans in the US | 17% |
| Assisting new immigrants from Iran get situated in the US | 8% |
| None of the above | 8% |
| Not sure | 17% |

This chart affirms the importance of the community's visibility and influence. This aligns well with the recommendations of the New Portlanders' Policy Council, for awareness of newcomer assets and their inclusion into the fabric of the USA. Note that while the prioritizing of the issue "assisting new immigrants from Iran get situated in the US," it was previously held as a much higher priority, at the third choice, just below improving understanding and ensuring that the image of Iranians is accurate. We anticipate that this priority has slipped for two reasons: that the rate of immigration is slowing, and that other issues have become more pressing as the onset of the presidential race and primaries began. There is little like a slate of candidates that one opposes to stir the importance of political representation and specific foreign policy issues. This community is largely Democrat, at about three times the level of Republican in earlier years of this survey, and Democratic support jumping to being eight times higher than for Republicans in 2016.

We turn now to detail the policy priorities that emerged in our community interviews.

a. Social and Mental Health Services

Since many of the barriers to integration among Iranian immigrants are about cultural issues, it is necessary that policy makers provide immigrants with appropriate resources to help in resolving mental and social conflicts. These services should be offered by a psychologist, social worker or a counselor who is completely familiar with the cultural issues of the Iranian community in Portland, preferably by a person from the Iranian community. Many Iranians believe American mental health experts cannot understand their cultural differences and cannot help them with their problems. As one interviewee mentioned, *"as a young man how I can explain to an American psychologist that I have problem with semi naked women in the streets?! An American therapist cannot understand it and it is also [becomes] shame[ful] for me."*

b. Language Proficiency

Language is a crucial element needed for integration in American society. Although there are a few inexpensive or free English language classes for immigrants, as most of interviewees mentioned, such services are not high quality. In other words, these tutorial services are too basic; in order to obtain proficiency in English language, immigrants need to participate in expensive, higher-level English language courses that often they cannot afford. Offering free or inexpensive language tutorial programs for more advanced language learners and with higher quality can empower immigrants to learn the English language and handle their personal and social activities by themselves more independently.

c. Facilitate Employment

Integrating into new society involves several elements. One of the crucial factors that enables an immigrant or refugee to integrate is their ability to meet fundamental needs. Although there is some financial aid for refugees, such aid is not robust enough to create a fulfilling life. Thus, it is vital for new arrivals to quickly find employment.

As mentioned before, this process is more complicated for newcomers than for immigrants who have been in the U.S. for a while, and newcomers have less chance of finding a good job. Career advising centers could help immigrants and refugees by informing them about the process of job applications, guiding them through job interviews and connecting them to networks of professionals, which can be a huge help for newcomers.

In addition, in order to overcome barriers to newcomers finding jobs, policy makers need to find a solution for educated people for whom they have had higher education, but lack official degree documentation. Unfortunately, the process of sending the sealed copy of graduation documents from Iran to United States can take several months. Due to political conflicts, some conservative state universities in Iran do not send documents to American universities at all. This can create serious problems in the process of evaluating academic degrees of immigrants and refugees in the United States.

d. Support the Artistic Aspects of Iranian Culture

Iranian culture is deeply artistic. The community has a proud and distinguished tradition in dance, painting, calligraphy, singing, theater, cinema and various types of live performances. Due to religious restrictions of the government inside Iran, many of these cultural art forms do not receive proper support. Many artists and cultural performers are forced to emigrate, since they are banned from working in their professional fields inside of Iran. Although it is a sorrow that an artist cannot work in his/her home country, living in the United States provides unique opportunities for artists. The existence of many Iranian art institutes in the Portland metro area prove that many of Iranian artists live in Portland and, if adequately supported, have the opportunity to create and promote Iranian cultural art in Portland. If policy makers support Iranian artists, these artists can increase community participation and contributions. Artists need facilities in which to hold their exhibitions, salons for their live performances, and financial support for create new works that add to the body of Iranian cultural art. This is a community whose experience of place and inclusion would greatly benefit from cultural investments.

e. Support Iranian Nonprofit Organizations

There are nonprofit organizations in Portland that expand and promote Iranian culture and introduce it to people from other countries. These institutions survive just with the passion of their board members and generous donations of members. The Iranian Student Association of Portland (ISAP) is the only Iranian association that has financial support from Portland State University. Other institutions hold many ceremonies annually and try to get Iranians together and preserve Iranian traditional ceremonies. This passion deserves to receive more official support. If funds for these associations could increase, they could develop their activities and support other Iranian cultural programs.

The Tongan Community in Multnomah County

By Anne Sinkey, Kolini Fusita and Momota Kiole

Introduction

Since the 1970s, individuals and families from the Polynesian islands of Tonga have traveled to Portland, Oregon in search of economic and educational opportunities. Despite living in Portland for nearly 50 years, the Tongan community remains, for the most part, under the radar—all the while contributing to Portland’s construction industries, excelling in school athletics, and caretaking for Portland’s elderly and vulnerable residents.

One reason for the lack of visibility of the Tongan community in the Portland, Oregon area is due to its small size. Because Tongan and other Islander communities are usually subsumed under race/ethnicity categories for “Asian and Pacific Islander” or “Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander” groups, it can be difficult to determine exact population statistics. Estimated population numbers for Tongans in Portland vary widely, and range from 500 (2010 American Community Survey) to 1200 (Coalition of Communities of Color).³¹² Local leaders estimate the number of Portland Tongans to be around 700.

Despite their small size, the Tongan community in Portland has faced disproportionately large barriers to success and integration. For the most part, Tongans remain isolated and interact with other Tongans. Interaction between Tongan and other Islander communities, such as Samoan or native Hawaiian, is minimal. But in part because of these struggles and this isolation, the Tongan community has developed over the years into an extremely strong, tight-knit, supportive, and giving community.

Tongans in Portland have survived by drawing on their cultural values of family, faith, hospitality, and community. Tongans look out for one another as family, and care for each other’s children and elders as if they were their own. While the community is not well-integrated as a newcomer community in Portland, both Tongans and other communities in Portland stand to benefit by improved communication, resource sharing, and equity.

Why Portland?

Since the very beginnings of the Portland Tongan community back in the 1970s, Tongans have travelled to Portland in search of employment and economic opportunity. Members of many Tongan families left Tonga in search of better jobs and economic prosperity, travelling to places such as Australia and New Zealand, but also to the United States. Most Tongans choose to move to Portland because friends or family members already live here. Many arrive without plans for housing or employment, but rely on the hospitality of friends or family to support and house them once they arrive.

The majority of Tongan men work in construction, while the majority of Tongan women are employed in caregiving occupations, often in private homes or in senior communities, and often alongside other Tongans. Although many Tongan newcomers are highly educated and held white-collar jobs in Tonga, once in Portland, many Tongans no longer find employment in their former fields. Many Tongans lack the necessary paperwork to meet minimum employment requirements for American employers (resume, work history, references), so they choose not to interact with other Portlanders when seeking work and rely almost solely on networking with other Tongans.

The desire to provide a better future for their children is another strong motivator for many Tongan newcomers to Portland. Because Tonga lacks opportunities for higher education, youth must leave Tonga if

they want to attend college. The U.S. is perceived to have some of the best colleges and universities, and many are drawn to the U.S. to provide opportunities for higher education for their children.

Before their arrival, many Tongans perceived the U.S. as a land of opportunity. This hope is sometimes lost when Tongans are faced with the reality of U.S. economic, employment, and housing systems, where Tongans find that resources and opportunities are not readily provided for them. This disappointment is compounded by cultural differences: in Tonga, cultural expectations promote sharing and supporting others in your community. If someone is in need of housing, someone else will offer a room in their home; if someone is in need of food, someone else will share groceries or cook a meal or two. This community-oriented mindset contrasts with the individualism and competition typical of American culture.

The relative isolation of the Tongan community in Portland is, in part, a response to a lack of resources and opportunities offered in Portland overall: the tight-knit community ensures support, sharing of resources, and networking to find jobs and housing for other Tongans. The Tongan value of sharing and community, coupled with lack of opportunity outside the Tongan community, has caused Tongans to remain isolated and relatively segregated for the decades that they have been Portland residents.

While many people who are native Tongans live outside of Tonga, the sense of “home” among Portland Tongans is split between the U.S. and Tonga. Most Tongans in Portland keep property in Tonga, and while Portland may be a long-term home, it is seen as a second home. Many elderly Tongans choose to return to Tonga for a simpler life and to be around other Tongans rather than remain isolated in Portland. Tonga is perceived to be a less stressful, simpler place to live, and is seen as a place to which many would like to return. Among some Tongans in Portland, the U.S. is seen as a place to live and work for the majority of life, but it is still a secondary home, while Tonga will always remain one’s primary home.

Challenges and Barriers to Integration

While Tongans have create a successful, strong newcomer community in Portland, serious challenges face the community and contribute to the lack of full integration into Portland’s larger society and culture.

a. Bicultural Experiences of Tongan Youth

Parents often work multiple jobs and are often out of the home, so many Tongan youth are not well supervised outside of school hours. Issues of basic economic survival supersede issues of preservation of tradition between generations. Usually the only day Tongans don’t work is Sundays, when they attend church. Because of the lack of parental presence to educate them about their cultural heritage and to help promote positive ethnic and cultural identity development, some Tongan youth identify with other cultural traditions, including those from other communities of color. Many youth find themselves to be the only Tongans in their schools or circles of friends. Such youth experience confusion about their cultural identities: they have not been taught much about their own Tongan culture, but cannot authentically claim others’ culture. This can be a barrier to friendships and healthy identity development and risks contributing to negative behaviors and isolation.

Some Tongan youth find sports to build their futures. The story of Semise Kofe and Sione Taumoe’anga was told in the Oregonian in 2014 as the boys built a pact to embrace their faith, their sport (football) and make it to and through university.



A number of Tongan families have left Tonga in search of opportunities, which has caused many families to be split apart, with children sometimes growing up on separate continents from their parents. This is a source of

great sadness and heartbreak among Tongans. As such, family cohesion is extremely important among Portland Tongans, not only for economic reasons but also for cultural survival. The value of family comes with responsibilities: the responsibility of youth to provide for the family, and the responsibility to respect and provide for one's elders. Tongan youth are expected to stay at home and work after finishing school, or to remain at home if they attend college. Tongans who leave their families or communities behind bring shame to their families and church families, as this is seen as a serious loss to the community.

b. Language Barriers

Many older Tongans in Portland do not speak English, which can cause troubles for Tongan children. Since Tongan adults usually work during the days, if elderly Tongans have meetings or appointments to visit doctors, social security services, etc., students are pulled out of school to act as translators for their elders. This can cause students to miss several days of school each month. Parents usually know enough English to not need translators. At the same time, most Tongan youth are only exposed to Tongan language a few hours a week, perhaps at home or at church. As the older generation passes, the Tongan language is at risk of being lost among the next generation of Tongans in Portland.

c. Health Care

Lack of health care is an issue in the Tongan community in Portland. Since most Tongans work for each other or in unofficial capacities, health benefits are not provided. The majority of Tongans lack health insurance. Most Tongans in Portland are not aware of public assistance or subsidized health care, although Tongan youth are often enrolled in Oregon health plans through assistance from teachers and staff at public school. Although Tongans care for each other's health, especially in their elders, there is a difference in cultural expectations regarding health care. Many Tongans see health problems as inevitable, and do not seek out preventative care.

The Tongan community has unmet mental health needs, in part because Tongan culture is disconnected from individuals who are trained to identify and treat mental illness. Tongans view health issues as highly private, and are not likely to share information about physical or mental illness, or to seek out help from outsiders for health issues. The fear of rumors and judgment is too strong—the flip side of having a strong community with efficient internal communication networks.

d. Police and Government Officials

Tongans in Portland generally fear the police due to immigration enforcement. This fear extends to other individuals considered to be associated with the government. Even Tongans who are documented immigrants may avoid contact with the police and government officials as a way of protecting others in the community who may lack documentation.

e. Gentrification and Affordable Housing

Tongans in Portland used to live primarily in northeast Portland, but gentrification of that area caused many to be priced out of their homes. Most of the community moved east, to East Portland or Gresham, in search of lower rental prices. Now, these prices have begun to rise as well, so some Tongans have begun to seek out other neighborhoods that are more affordable. However, the exodus of the community out of northeast Portland hit the community hard and devastated families and networks in the community. Because of this experience, some Tongans are less likely to move again in search of cheaper rents, since the last community relocation was so devastating. This remains a major issue in the Tongan community in Portland.

f. Access to Tongan Goods and Services

While some island markets provide culturally appropriate foods and goods to Portland Tongans, no specifically Tongan markets or stores exist. Although members of the community would like to have a Tongan store or

business, many don't know what it would take to start their own business, or don't even consider it as a possibility.

g. The Centrality of Church and Family

There are six Tongan churches in Portland, and they play a central role in the community. The community churches regularly host meetings, events, and celebrations where Tongans congregate, share information, celebrate cultural traditions, and discuss community issues during Kava circles. Immigration, politics in Portland and the U.S., Tongan politics, and economic opportunity all are topics regularly discussed in Kava circles. Conflicts within the Tongan community in Portland are mediated through church leaders, family leaders, and community leaders.

Church and faith are extremely important to the Tongan community. Portlanders outside of the Tongan community sometimes assume that Tongans hold indigenous or eastern religious beliefs, and are not aware of the centrality of Christianity to the community. Most Tongans attend church every Sunday, so they cannot work or attend other events on Sundays. Asking Tongans to not attend church on Sunday is akin to asking them to give up one of their strongest modes of connecting to their family and the rest of the community.

New arrivals to the Tongan community in Portland are most often identified through contact at church. Church plays a large role in keeping communication networks strong among the Tongan community, as it is the location where Tongans learn news about Tonga, about friends and family in other cities and countries, and about issues and problems locally and abroad.

From Invisibility to Visibility

As mentioned, Tongans have lived as “newcomers” to Portland for nearly 50 years, yet the community has remained relatively unknown to the larger Portland community. But the accomplishments of Tongans are visible, even if Tongans themselves are not: for example, Tongans have contributed to a number of large construction projects in the city, and many Tongan women provide care and companionship to our city's elderly citizens behind closed doors. In this way the community has built and sustained Portland from behind the scenes. But some achievements—like those among star athletes in local schools—are more visible. The presence of Tongans as key players in high school sports teams has not only been a source of pride for the Tongan community; it has helped to raise the profile of some local schools as well.

Tongans in Portland feel their small community size will prevent city officials from caring about their issues. Their small size, coupled with their continued separation from the other communities in Portland, prevents Tongans from working for improved resources or opportunities for their community. For many Tongans, the idea of self-advocacy outside of the Tongan community isn't even considered as a possibility. Few, if any, other Tongans have done it, and many assume that city leaders or elected officials wouldn't prioritize issues of relevance to Tongans anyway.

When representatives from city or civic organizations have approached Tongan community members in the past, it has often led to broken promises, or has been approached in such a way that Tongans still feel like outsiders and foreigners in their own city. Tongan leaders express some frustration with representatives from government and service organizations who approach the Tongan community asking “how can we better serve you?” but do not take steps to include Tongans as part of their own staff or leadership. The unfortunate effect is that Portlanders' efforts to assist Tongans in Portland are seen as half-hearted intentions that aren't follow up by action and inclusion.

While IRCO and APANO have played a role in helping to advocate for Tongan interests in Portland, these organizations have not been able to create strong ties between Tongan and other communities of color in the

city. However, Tongan leaders express a desire to work more closely with other communities of color to pool resources, find common ground, and to come together to create a larger, more influential community.

Tongans remain interested in politics, often closely following political and social issues back in Tonga, and many in the community desire to play a larger, active role in political life and social issue advocacy in Portland. However, many feel intimidated or don't know the first steps to take, or don't even consider participating based on the feeling that their opinions aren't valued by the larger community. During elections, discussions about social issues and Tongan representation arise, but many don't know how to register to vote, how to vote, or how to get information about elections. The desire to become more involved is present; the path towards that involvement remains unclear. Fear, intimidation, and a lack of knowledge keep Tongans from self-advocating and becoming more involved in the larger community, but local organizations and city officials don't actively reach out to Tongans either. Tongans want to be valued and to have their needs taken seriously by the larger community. As one Tongan leader said, "We're very hungry to share what we have to share."

Recommendations for Improved Integration of the Tongan Community in Portland

a. Improved Representation and Visibility

Tongans need representation among city officials and social service organizations. As more and more Tongans become city employees, social workers, public health nurses, and nonprofit board members, Tongans will become more aware of opportunities for leadership, education, and employment. But leaders in these organizations need to make a concerted effort to reach out to the Tongan community, to seek out Tongan opinions and experiences, and to invite Tongans to self-advocate on behalf of their community. Even having a few Tongan community members as employees in fields of education, health care, or as police officers would make a big difference. Tongans in such positions would enable these individuals to serve as connections between the Tongan and larger Portland communities, building bridges, explaining opportunities, and connecting Tongans to resources that are underutilized among the community. Images used in promotional materials and advertisements produced by government and social service agencies play a role as well: the impact of seeing a Tongan face on a brochure or billboard would go a long way towards showing that such services and agencies are indeed for Tongans, and that Tongans will be welcomed and included there.

The best way for this to happen would be for leaders in Portland government and community agencies to approach Tongans in their churches, to attend their community events, and to request inclusion in Tongan Kava circles. Instead of waiting for Tongans to come knocking on the mayor's door, representatives from other Portland communities need to take the first step in reaching out, listening, and valuing what Tongans have to say. But listening can only go so far: community members must begin to actively create opportunities for Tongans to gain employment in fields other than construction and caregiving; to sit on committees and boards of directors; and to be actively recruited to be part of decision-making processes.

b. Training Opportunities

The Tongan community in Portland has proven to be resourceful and resilient, establishing their own employment networks that provide jobs for new Tongans when they arrive in Portland. But Tongan success in construction and caregiving occupations has meant that many Tongans lack training or experience in other fields. Opportunities for training, education, skill-building, and leadership development specifically targeted to Tongans (preferably by Tongans) would open up new career paths for the Tongan community in Portland. Such opportunities would also improve community integration by enabling connections between Tongans and other communities in Portland.

c. Creation of a Community Meeting Space/Community Center

While the Tongans are incredibly tight-knit and network through a system of local Tongan churches, creating a single, large meeting space would improve the ability of Tongans to meet one another, network, and share

opportunities. Such a venue would provide a central location for cultural celebrations that are so important to the Tongan community, where dancing, traditional cooking, holidays and events could bring the community together as one. Currently, the community rents space from churches, but many of these are not large enough to accommodate the entire community or are too expensive to host multiple, large events. Such a location could also serve as a geographic center for the community, and an antidote to the family dispersal that has been a consequence of economic necessity and of gentrification.

d. Improved Resources for Elders

Family is central to Tongan life and culture, and respect for one's elders is an important element of Tongan values. However, many elders in the community are isolated at home and cut off from social contact and opportunities to stay connected to Tongan culture and community. With parents at work, children at school, and lack of understanding of English, many elderly Tongans feel like prisoners in their own home. Tongan elders often only leave their homes on Sundays when they attend church. As a consequence, a number of Tongan elders choose to return to Tonga, where they can be around other Tongans, rather remain in the U.S. This again causes Tongan family separation—perpetuating a history of Tongan isolation through migration—as well as the loss of elders who play key roles in the preservation and teaching of Tongan language and culture.

A building or place for elderly Tongans to meet and socialize with other Tongans, play games, discuss Tongan issues, and celebrate Tongan holidays/traditions would be extremely beneficial. If Portland wants to keep Tongans from returning home and leaving their families behind, creating space for older Tongans to socialize would be a key step.

e. Language Preservation

With the exception of Sunday church services, the majority of Tongan youth in Portland are not exposed to their native language. Currently, no formal system of language training is in place to keep Tongan youth familiar with the language spoken by their elders and ancestors. Language plays a central role in cultural tradition and understanding, and the loss of Tongan language use among future generations of Tongans in Portland would be devastating to the preservation of Tongan culture. Resources should be provided to help Tongans offer language classes that keep Tongan language alive in Portland.

f. Connection with Other Communities of Color

As mentioned, Tongans in Portland are quite isolated, and very little contact occurs between Tongans and other communities of color. This is a missed opportunity for Tongans to build coalitions with other groups who have similar interests and resource needs, and to begin to integrate into other newcomer communities in Portland as well. Since Tongans worry that their community is too small to be taken seriously by local leaders, building coalitions would enable Tongans to build upon existing momentum by advocacy groups and community organizations working towards improved equity in Portland. At the same time, other communities of color would have the opportunity to connect to a strong, giving, caring community of Tongans who want to make a difference, but don't know how to take those first steps.

Recommendations for Service Providers: Advancing Respect and Responsiveness

By Ann Curry-Stevens

In order to achieve effective practice with newcomer communities and clients, service providers need to learn intentionally, align their services to the needs of the community, and modify how services are delivered such that they can best be respectful and responsive. Here is a beginning pathway towards such service delivery. Learning these competencies a lifetime process, alongside the very important efforts to build organizational reforms such that newcomers are welcomed and included into the fabric of Portland.

In this chapter, the term “we” and “us” refers to white and/or non-newcomer service providers, of which the author is one.

1. “Unlearn” one’s own biases, assumptions and stereotypes

The biggest barrier to respecting and responding to newcomer communities is that service providers are not empty canvases, ready to see, hear and respond to those in front of them. What happens is that service providers (and everyone, in fact) come with filters through which service users are seen, listened to, and understood. This filter is the result of our socialization. It is filled with preconceptions that distorts reality, and attributes a range of bias-laden perceptions onto the service user. The task of the service provider is to “unlearn” these biases, a process of critical self-awareness that requires one to notice, deconstruct the harmful underpinnings of racial bias, and then relearn more accurate information. For services to become respectful and responsive, workers must be actively engaged in this type of critical self-reflection.

2. Learn the histories and contexts of those being served

Understanding the history of arrival conditions and of the conditions in clients’ home communities helps the provider “tune in” to the likely experiences of community members in the USA. Alongside learning about Iraqis, learn too about how the USA has treated Iraq and her refugees. Learn as well about immigration policy and the refugee determination process so that you better understand the impediments to settlement that are being imposed within the USA, sanctioned by policy. Begin with this text, and then establish a learning plan to build out a deeper understanding. Part of this learning must include direct engagement with the community through attending community events and engaging with its culture. Understanding this background allows the service provider to anticipate client fears and concerns, as well as assets, and undoubtedly will support the worker to deepen their understanding of and appreciation for their resilience. With this knowledge, the worker can understand ways in which trust might be blocked, motivation for engagement curtailed, and, in response, how opportunities to work collaboratively can be expanded.

3. Do not “essentialize” the community

While learning about histories and contexts is very important, a service provider must make space for learning about each individual and their family. Discovering background understanding is key, yet it must remain in the background so that the distinctiveness of the client is understood.

4. Take time to listen, and listen deeply

Clients need to be heard to be understood, and through this process, trust can develop. Listen to understand, and listen deeper to comprehend the injustices facing the client... and notice and refuse to let ourselves presuming and interpret – which are dangerous ways of filling in the clients’ experiences with our own biases, assumptions and stereotypes. Building trust is completely within the role of the

practitioner, as trust is built when the service provider demonstrates trustworthiness. Guidelines for demonstrating trustworthiness includes being reliable and doing what you say you will do, and going beyond this and doing more than promised. It also means standing by clients when things get tough. And it means taking risks in disclosing yourself to the client, and affirming clients when they take risks in disclosing to you. It also means letting yourself care for your clients, being moved by their experiences and discarding the ways you distance yourself from them. It involves “risk[ing] another sleepless night with a broken heart”³¹³ in the ways you care for those you serve.

5. Understand trauma and its specific dimensions for the community

Trauma-informed care is making important inroads into responding to the short- and long-term harms that can reside in the bodies of newcomers, as well as in the communities themselves. Experiencing war and persecution, as well as dislocation and leaving one’s own community to seek a better life in the USA (particularly when that becomes narrowed by the narrow economic opportunities available to newcomers) comes with stress which can manifest in curtailed health and wellbeing. Some elements of moving to the USA are associated with shame, guilt and humiliation. Serving newcomers requires providers to understand trauma, and its most damaging form – post-traumatic stress disorder – is essential. This knowledge needs to be embedded in service systems, and should be a core requirement for professional development.

6. Understand how institutions and organizations can be traumatizing

More newly understood for service providers, but certainly not for newcomers and communities of color, is that mainstream services themselves can be invalidating and traumatizing. While much of the trauma-informed service provision efforts are mostly oriented to settings that can trigger a traumatic response in clients (such as a noisy waiting room)³¹⁴ there is emerging attention to issues such as narrow eligibility requirements to be served, hefty rules that require documents that are not available, limits on how many times a client can be seen or inaccessibility due to language. These access difficulties are also aligned with practices that are dismissive or pathology-oriented that suggests that clients are not to be trusted with their understanding of the challenges they face. At the very least, we look for practitioners who can listen to the frustrations of service users, and validate these experiences. Over-defending the organization will result in clients experiencing trauma and they will be likely to not return. At best, practitioners will be invested in improving the organization’s climate and cultural responsiveness. We simultaneously encourage service providers to shoulder responsibility for our own missteps, and that we contribute to difficult relationships and the reticence to connect that service users hold. Not only must we find fault with our organizations, but so too we need to be willing to invite and hear feedback about how effective (or ineffective) our practices are.

7. Build cultural competence/humility

It is not expected that service providers have cultural competence – and in fact this is a term that is largely rejected because it communicates that (a) communities are static and “knowable,” and (b) that practitioners can be competent in understanding another’s culture.³¹⁵ Preferred is the idea of cultural humility that emphasizes what practitioners do not know, and that they aim to better understand, and that they shoulder the responsibility for gaining this understanding with each client they serve. It is a lifelong path towards understanding. Core principles for doing this effectively is to be actively aware of one’s own acculturated perspectives, absorbed from their upbringing and reinforced by dominant society’s messages about “others.” As awareness emerges, practitioners are expected to be actively deconstructing these messages and replacing them with community-validated messages about the groups involved. The general orientation of this process of “re-learning” is away from harsh judgements and justifications for exclusion and oppression, and towards compassion, inclusion, and appreciation. With this shift in

awareness will come more inclusive and affirming practices. We move, as fields of service providers, towards respect and responsiveness. This transition allows service providers to experience dignity.

8. Stretch... and understand the range of needs that exist for clients

Many mainstream organizations have a compartmentalized approach to addressing needs. For example, health care providers often treat only illness, and miss focusing on the broader social determinants of health. As experts in their service areas, they tend to retain a limited understanding of wellbeing. Such is also true of systems such as child welfare that has neglected to focus enough on issues of poverty and racism, retaining their professional focus on the expertise systems providers have in child rearing and abuse. One tangible piece of advice is to inquire about a range of issues tied to newcomer challenges. Ask the following, regardless of your expertise and role limitations, and if challenges are identified, then make sure you have a list of resources to share with the client. Here are the questions:

- Do you have trouble paying the bills?
- Are you able to feed your family?
- If you have trouble paying the bills, are you getting the income supports that you are eligible for?
- Do you have places to turn to when you get down and don't feel like there's much hope?
- Are you connected to people in your community? In your own religion?
- Is your housing okay? Is it stable and safe?
- Do you have immigration challenges?³¹⁶

9. Build your organization's movement towards being culturally responsive

Organizations themselves frequently hold histories as being insensitive and unresponsive to community needs and priorities. Sometimes these histories pre-exist our involvement with the community, yet create a deterrent for newcomers seeking services, as such reputations endure. Other times, these reputations are from current events. Either way, an organization has work to do to build the ways that we recognize and affirm newcomers. It is recommended that newcomer-serving organization conduct an assessment of racial equity within the organization. The Coalition of Communities of Color led the creation of such an assessment tool that incorporates racial, linguistic and ethnicity issues. It is freely available at www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org and can be implemented independently with a core team of staff, leading to the creation of an action plan that can assist the organization become more culturally responsive. Such an effort is best done with the support of the Executive Director, who is ideally committed to rigorous reflection and brave acknowledgement of missteps and invalidating practices. A culturally responsive organization does not have its imperfections eliminated, but rather knows its errors and omissions and is making progress on addressing them.

10. Don't do it alone... partnerships are essential!

Expertise exists on how to reach, support and effectively serve newcomer communities. This expertise exists within numerous culturally specific organizations such as IRCO, Muslim Educational Trust, Asian Family Center, Africa House, Latino Network, El Programa Hispano, and Slavic Community Center of NW. Additional organizations have built specializations in serving newcomers such as Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, and Catholic Charities. In addition to these human service organizations, many newcomer communities have established their own associations which aim to build the visibility and recognition of the community and to empower its leaders to influence public policy and assist in the development of effective services for the community. Examples (and there are many so this list is a small sample) include the Somali American Council of Oregon, Zomi Association, American Burmese Association of Oregon, Oregon Association for Liberia, Togo Community Organization of Oregon, Nepali Association of Oregon, and Oregon Bhutanese Community Organization. Most of these organizations are willing to partner with mainstream services to enhance the relevance and

responsiveness of services for newcomers. But don't call on them after you have gotten a grant and after you've promised to reach a community when grant monies are already in your coffers. And certainly don't call on them when you've failed at outreach efforts and have only a couple of months left to achieve gains. Such practices are usury and exploitive. Call on them when you think there may be an opportunity to improve how the community is served, and ask them to partner when ideas are in development, before budgets have been decided, and when the partner organizations can still be leaders in the grant (as opposed to the mainstream organization being in the lead). Make sure partnerships are authentic as opposed to tokenistic.

11. Ensure standards and specifics of service delivery are reviewed by the communities served

It takes courage for a mainstream service organization to defer to community groups to assess the cultural responsiveness of the organization's practices, and to guide its improvements. Yet this bravery to be self-revealing and to ask for – and be willing to be led by – such input is key to quality improvement. While these types of assessments can take many forms, such as community valuation assessments, and expert panels where the community itself are poised as the experts in asserting the assets and needs of the community, the best possible response is that of a structural commitment to community voice and influence. Structures that support such innovations include a "Community Advisory Board" and reserving a non-tokenistic number of community members to sit on the Board of Directors. In this way, the organization provides governing influence to the community and accountability structures to ensure that improvements are made.

12. Hire local newcomers

Organizations are expected to hire from the community and ensure that their workforce reflects those they serve, or those they are supposed to serve (which ever level of diversity is greater). There are many reasons for this hiring missive, but they fall broadly into two categories: the economic impetus for newcomer communities to improve their employment options is significant (as other parts of this report reveal). Without more employment opportunities, the communities will retain their marginality and be denied options for using their wisdom and assets to improve service delivery. The second is in service accessibility and quality, for as community members become part of the service delivery system, service users will be more likely to use these services, and to be treated with dignity. If we can ensure that our organizations listen to such staff, they will have greater ideas about how to increase their cultural responsiveness.

13. Work effectively with translators and interpreters

Effective interpretation (for verbal communication) and translation (for written communication) takes time and skill. Effectiveness is more than simply hiring someone to provide this service. Unfortunately, Oregon has yet to acknowledge the skills needed for interpretation and does not require specific certification or cultural training for interpreters, which allows weaker interpreters to gain employment in the industry. This can cause damage to newcomers when relaying vital medical or legal information, or even in explaining a child's absence from school. Service providers can provide a buffer by pushing for highly trained interpreters to be on staff and requiring proof that interpreters are culturally informed and sensitive to specific newcomer populations. Here is a sampling of the types of competence required of the organization trying to expand its access and relevance:

- Identifying interpreter skills needed, in a context-specific manner, so you can identify the terminology that is needed from the interpreter. These might include medical terminology, education concepts, or those of the client being served such as a refugee experience, or educational background. Specificity supports making effective hiring.

- Preparing the interpreter for the specific session by clarifying roles and goals of the session, the types of notes to be taken, and the session-specific content such as a medical assessment tool, or a report card for school, or a discipline procedure. Helping the interpreter know the
- Scheduling the session needs extra time. Ideally, the session time will be doubled so that the goals can be met. Alternatively, the service provider can halve the content they wish to cover, should the standard appointment time be needed.
- Leading the session requires an adjustment of style, including the need to slow down so that interpretation can take place. Three other style adjustments are needed: enunciate clearly, avoid colloquial speech, and use humor carefully.³¹⁷ Colloquialisms and humor often do not have equivalents in other languages and often do not translate well.
- Speak to and look at the service user, and not the interpreter, so that the service-based relationship is bolstered. That said, it is important to check in with the translator occasionally through the session to see if the speed is okay, and if anything needs clarification or repetition. Make sure at the close of the session that you thank them for their work, which is difficult and requires considerable skill and attention.



14. Get involved in policy advocacy!

Organizations that serve newcomers need to be putting effort into the upstream causes of downstream distress.

While not all practitioners need to be doing this, every organization needs to ensure that such engagement occurs. It is far from enough to advocate when one's funding is in jeopardy. Advocate for issues such as affordable housing, immigration reform, living wages, recognizing foreign credentials, racial profiling and more. Look at the list of recommendations in the next chapter of this report and get involved. Sometimes this might mean joining a coalition that is working on this issue, and sometimes it might mean organizing your own constituents to visit your region's elected officials. It's time to make sure that the distress experienced by newcomers is not solely shouldered by communities themselves and their service providers. It is time to put more efforts into addressing root causes.

In conclusion, there are important ways that service providers can build their responsiveness to and respect for newcomers who use our services. We affirm how important our roles are, and how we can build a much more fertile and useful set of practices. We believe that if we adhere to this advice, and remember that it is a lifelong task, then we will become more partnership-oriented, culturally responsive, effective and useful for promoting the inclusion of newcomer communities.

Policy Recommendations: An Agenda for a Long Welcome

By Ann Curry-Stevens & the New Portlanders Policy Council

Newcomers will continue to arrive in Portland in perpetuity, ebbing and flowing in response to global tensions and the desire for a better and safer life. Many arrive on American shores seeking what was a historically a hospitable environment, with the promise of milk and honey, success and affluence, with a reputation of being a land where hard work, dedication and brains would allow one success – if not for oneself, then certainly for one’s children. Today’s neo-liberal era is, however, characterized by a policy environment that advances shredding the safety net, and an economic environment that grows the gap between rich and poor, and deteriorates living standards for all but the most affluent. Social impacts too have shifted the general climate of welcome. Today, even the middle class is imperiled (as huge levels of personal debt threaten those approaching retirement as well as students who are beginning their careers with sizable education debt), and an ethos of fear, self-protection and shrinking generosity is the welcome that Portlanders provide to our newcomers. Of course there are abundant exceptions to this, and warmth is demonstrated by many, but few of today’s newcomers of color are able to gain a foothold in the economic ladder, and this economic exclusion begets isolation and neglect.

On the global landscape, inequality also surges. It has long been understood that economic inequality creates unrest, as millions are cast into the role of window shoppers,³¹⁸ and civil unrest and wars erupt as ways to respond to scarcity for many and affluence for the few. Responses of persecution, torture, and oppression are prevalent around the globe and universally warrant condemnation. Responsibility needs to be shouldered, however, outside of these regional struggles. For those of us inside the USA, our understanding of global issues needs to improve. We are partly responsible for catalyzing these conditions. We have been placing unjust expectations on many nations around the world to modify their economies to meet our needs, and requiring many governments to adjust their policies to support our corporations, by allowing them entry and pushing for expanded production and extraction rights. The major vehicle for this restructuring are the requirements imposed by the IMF and the World Bank on indebted nations to align with “structural adjustment programs” that imposes international orientation of one’s economy instead of maximizing benefits for one’s own citizens. While a full historic accounting of this is beyond the scope of our report, it is critical for all of us to notice our responsibility: the US economy has benefitted from generations of global relations that are relatively exploitive of many countries. In doing so, we unsettle local economies, local relations of power, and promote deep marginalization of many societies: often the breaking point comes over religion, land or culture, but the unsettling cause is routinely economic and a direct result of the growing impoverishment of many nations around the world.

While this message is one that needs most to be heard in Washington, we ask our local policy leaders and thought leaders to consider what Portlanders could do to shoulder such roles and move forward to improve the outcomes for our newcomer communities.

For too long, and as the policy history chapter amplifies, innovations and valued initiatives have been tied to personalities, and thus vulnerable to leadership changes. It is time to make sure that recommendations become embedded in policy, and that they remain stable even with leadership transitions. And for far too long, the dominant discourse about newcomers is that they are a drain on the region’s resources, and simply made welcome due to the charitable impulses of the USA. We need to make sure that the social, intellectual and economic benefits of newcomers are understood. Newcomers hold potential to help the region thrive – to bring investments, to advance creativity in problem solving, to build new businesses and innovations in industry – and the future of the region is truly dependent on the success of newcomer inclusion. Newcomer assets include diligence and hard work, the ability to stretch a dollar, compassion to support one’s kin and community, civic engagement and a willingness to respond to the call of duty, and innovating ways to support

community health and wellbeing. These assets need to be capitalized upon, and turned into our collective capital, rather than trodden down and diminished through isolation and neglect (at best), and shame, xenophobia and violence (at worst). It is time for strong leadership to raise up this community.

The Central Appeal to Public Leaders

The first request is for our elected leaders to proactively affirm that all newcomers are essential to the fabric that is Portland and Oregon. Speaking out is needed to support the community. When indignities are loaded onto the community, the injustice needs to be voiced. When wars and turmoil besiege newcomer families in their home country – they need warm encouragement and active enlisting of support. When community members are spoken of in derogatory ways, newcomers need defending. In short, newcomers want to rely on the support of political leaders to assert the moral authority of inclusion; we need a strong public discourse that values all Portlanders.

An example is worthy of repeating. When children from Central America sought refuge in the USA away from violence, Oregon’s former Governor Kitzhaber spoke in their defense. Subsequent support from Mayor Hales was deeply valued across newcomer communities. These public comments protected the community from backlash. Here’s how that unfolds: without the moral authority of our elected officials asserting that we need to stand in support of communities under siege, others feel license to put down the community, to mistreat them, to reap disrespect at the community, and sometimes to lash out with bad behavior. In another example, former Governor Kitzhaber attended the Oregon Latino Agenda for Action – just for lunch and a short speech, but it meant a lot to the community. Families took lots of photos of the Governor with their children. The meaning of such a visit was pronounced: “he built aspirations in our children.”

We ask for all elected officials to confirm that newcomers are valuable to Portland, and that each community is to be supported in their identity and self-determination, and simultaneously that assimilation is not the pathway to integration. Newcomers bring considerable assets with them to the USA; they must be treated as valuable, and all Portlanders need to be encouraged to align with this perspective.

We also ask for our elected leaders to become equipped to notice myths and be committed to interrupting them when they occur. Says one advocate, “It is not so much about the words; it is about the deeds.” Stepping up and demonstrating solidarity with newcomers, including advocating when disparaging attitudes and words are expressed is a useful way to educate others and to disrupt the damaging discourses that floods into many of the dialogues that shape our lives. The chapter on the topic in this text should be required reading for all public workers.

Policy Recommendations

We now begin our policy-specific recommendations. The New Portlanders Policy Council (NPPC) holds potential to enhance the governing capacity of the government: among its members are the assets to provide insights on equity issues, expertise on how to better reach and serve newcomer communities, the ability to advise Bureau leaders, and to give voice to changing demographics, flagging patterns of new arrivals and the needs they have, and simultaneously to provide a sounding board for new expenditures and initiatives, and to narrow the possibility that investments might be misdirected. The NPPC holds potential to be useful to the City of Portland (and other jurisdictions) in ways that can improve cost-efficiency and increase effectiveness. We encourage electeds and policy staff alike to draw on the NPPC as advisors and partners in figuring out how best to reach and to serve newcomer communities.

Concrete policy enhancements, organized topically, form the remainder of this chapter.

A. Equity and Human Rights

1. **Asset-oriented awareness campaign:** Raising awareness about both the value of immigrants and the effects of discriminatory immigration practices is key to building the visibility and positive regard for newcomers. It is essential that we directly combat the “*mean Portlander*” anti-immigrant discourse that exists quite widely. A member of the NPPC recently had a neighbor say to him, “*even though you’re a US citizen, and you vote, you’ll never be an American.*” When he asked why, the neighbor said, quite matter-of-factly, “*because you’re black.*”
2. Key elements for such a campaign would ideally include:
 - a. Increase the visibility of newcomers and the assets they bring to the region, highlighting gains that have and can be made through their successful inclusion.
 - b. Emphasize the collective economic benefits that occur in the region when inclusion works effectively. Economic growth will benefit all residents, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status.
 - c. Integrate myth-busting content in the awareness campaign such that those who oppose newcomer welcome would have their arguments opposed publicly.
 - d. Defend international aid to countries from which newcomers emerge. It is well beyond time for international aid of sufficient size and quality that supports international development and peacemaking across the many continents of Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. We also need an end to economic exploitation and harmful structural adjustment programs. Should domestic improvements occur, the impetus to leave one’s homeland would lessen.
 - e. Affirm the practice of remittances being passed from US newcomers to family and kin in their home countries. Such a practice is not cause for interpreting economic success (and thus justifying pulling away economic supports) but rather a deep commitment to those who are in need. Remittances, like international aid, help stabilize home countries.

Partnering with Multnomah County’s Health Department is a suggested implementation process, for it has experience with public awareness campaigns.

3. **Leadership support:** Newcomers are poised to share insights into what their communities need, as well as pathways into these communities. Says one advocate: “*We are building a new citizenry of the U.S. that can promote and defend our rights.*” Newcomers are able to identify the constraints that exist in their encounters with mainstream institutions, and have ideas on how to problem solve these challenges. Sometimes they simply need experience and confidence to step into such roles, and other times they need training in advance of such roles. The Diversity and Civic Leadership initiative from the City is, in the words of an advocate, “an amazing contribution... and faces challenges in how to sustain and grow it over time. Sometimes, even after being here for a few generations, navigating ‘the system’ is tough.” The program needs to be extended in order to support graduates in ongoing ways: “*The belief that ‘one and you’re done’ is not effective with newcomers.*” We need a new benchmark for civic engagement: “We can only slack off once people are into higher policy roles. The new mandate needs to focus on building capacity and retain and sustain newcomers in their emerging roles.”
4. **Equity initiatives** need to stretch more robustly into the public service domain of both the City and County activities.
 - a. It is time to include newcomers as a community in equity initiatives for employees in our public institutions. While sharing a racial identity with other communities of color, the data in this report gives rise to the importance of disaggregating by recentness of time in the USA so as to enable us to know the baseline of the community and to monitor its progress.
 - b. On the service side, we also need to understand who is accessing public services, and the degree to which newcomer communities are effectively being served.
 - c. Budgeting for equity needs to be a recognized dimension of integration of equity policy in the City and the County.

5. **Civic engagement** needs to be fully embedded in all City bureaus and government offices. The value of ensuring that resources reach the right communities, and in culturally responsive ways is an imperative. For this to happen, bureaus need to integrate into the community. The current experience is that inadequate outreach is typical, and when input is sought, staff are not prepared to listen, facilitate real input, or respond to the input they are provided.
6. **Visibility for all newcomers of color is a civil rights issue.** Without accurate data systems that support newcomers to self-identify and to “show up” in databases and assessments of racial equity, the understanding of problems and solutions is narrowed. Research and database reforms are essential to ensure that there is routine and accurate disaggregation of the newcomer 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 newcomer 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.
 - Require compliance and reporting 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 newcomer communities by the American Community Survey to support the identification of racial equity issues among newcomers communities in the region.

B. Employment and Economic Inclusion

Newcomer communities need to be reflected in civic leadership and public office. The wider community, and particularly youth, needs to be able to identify with our civic leaders. Our public service workers need to be infused with newcomer staff. When youth come to visit public offices, they need to see people who look like them. Only this will convince them that such careers are possible.

We have got to be able to humanize the application process – not everyone has been able to navigate the digital divide. Many newcomers who are in their 30s and 40s have a wealth of knowledge, but not technical experience. Some cannot deal with computers. How can we bring this talent into the workplace?

1. City bureaus need to be more open and assertive in hiring newcomers.

- a. Dedicate resources for preparing themselves for such hiring and retention activities. The example of the “retirement movement” was raised in our discussions and the intention that the City human resources’ staff developed to recruit in newcomer communities. But they sent all-white staff to do this recruitment. This needs to diversity, so that recruitment efforts are staffed by newcomers. Again, seeing oneself in those who do the recruitment is important.
- b. It is also important to provide supports for helping newcomers navigate the job application process, including how to develop application packages, and to prepare for interviews.
- c. Retention and upward mobility is key. Current workforce profiles have most immigrants at the lower levels of the employment ladder.
- d. The bilingual differential of 5% at the County has been important for retaining staff. Yet at the same time, applicants have been asked not to disclose anything about ethnicity or language in City applications.

2. **Infill short-term skill acquisition supports** for newcomers who needs additional supports. An innovative idea is to invest such funds in a “pay it forward” approach using professional development dollars.
3. **Fortify investments for entrepreneurs.** Develop and fortify technical assistance programs and nontraditional financing for small businesses. These have been less successful in reaching and serving newcomer communities. We explicitly want Small Business Administration and the Portland Development Commission to build a targeted outreach and support system to help open doors for licensing, small business loans, and addressing tangible needs for business development
4. **Create a niche in Oregon’s green economy.** Expand newcomers’ entrepreneurial presence in the emerging green economy through partnerships with sustainability-focused nonprofits, local government and higher education.
5. **Promote cross-generational leadership “learning - transition” programs.** Develop cross-generational leadership and mentoring programs that increase financial literacy and invest in leadership development.
6. **Provide paid skills training programs** of short duration that prepare workers for specific occupations and/or jobs. These could be informed by local employers’ needs and technological expectations.
7. **Provide on-the-job training** for the first month of employment for immigrant and refugee workers that subsidize employer’s wages paid to workers and that would be rebated if the worker successfully transitions to become a regular employee. This would enable our community to be more rapidly employed (and not delayed for a training period) and provide supports for employers to hire our community members.
8. **A workers’ rights information campaign** is needed to advise workers of their entitlements on working conditions, the rights to unionize, and the programs and services available to them for both prevention and for intervention when things go wrong.
9. **Keeping public transportation costs low and routes accessible** and convenient is essential to support employment. Given the failure of the City and the County to ensure that affordable housing is available to those in need, providing subsidies for newcomer communities who are unable to locate near their jobs is suggested.
10. **Human resources departments should be encouraged to modify their classification systems** to make waivers permitted. Instead of credentials, look for demonstrated skills.
11. Establish an **“Immigrant and Refugee Employee Resource Group”** at the City of Portland. This can be modeled after the one that exists at Multnomah County. Not only should such group provide mutual aid and support, but it should be recognized as a source of expertise for the institution. Their expertise should be honored and treated as an organizational asset.
12. **It is essential that employment be considered a human right.** Newcomers are exhausted with lengthy job searches and low prospects for finding living wage jobs. Providing real options for a positive future is essential for improving the wellbeing of the community.
13. The community is **vulnerability to predatory loans** – homeownership, higher education, credit cards, and immigration legal procedures are places where predatory practices exist. To the newcomer, offers of easy credit seem like great opportunities, but in reality they are frequently predatory. Public education about the ways that predation occurs and how to protect oneself is needed.

Task Force #1: Recognize Foreign Credentials

It is time for a robust, welcoming and easy-to-access system for recognizing foreign credentials. For the regulated professions, concrete, transparent, appropriate and low-cost equivalence measuring must be made available. Despite some interest from the City and the State in moving on programs that allow employers to quickly assess foreign credentials, and/or to provide programs that quickly and cheaply bring those with incomplete equivalence of their home credentials to the US standards, nothing has taken shape in the prior four years since the Coalition of Communities of Color put this issue into their recommendations. Several years have passed since the City received a proposal from the Center to Advance Racial Equity for building the foundations for a greater regional plan, without a formal response and the community has experienced

another ebb and flow of interest in taking action on this issue. It is time, and the urgency is great, for implementing such a task force. The history of the USA in this area is relatively imperial – where few international credentials are perceived to be equivalent to that of the USA, simply on the basis of one’s geography as opposed to the actual credentialing training itself. The elements of such action include:

1. **Create a Task Force that builds an action plan** for all levels of government and relevant service providers to implement. This Task Force could be initiated by any elected official, and then stakeholders from the community, higher education, business, and other levels of government to the table could be invited to join. Dedicated funds must exist so that the Task Force is staffed, and that the activities below are conducted within a year. We must not be in this same situation in 2017. The leadership of this group would ideally be those who hold urgency on this issue, and they would partner with the elected official who is willing to initiate the Task Force. The urgency missive would be helpful in ensuring action results in a year.
2. **Activities of the Task Force need to include:**
 - a. Conduct a literature review and environmental scan on the “best and promising practices” in evidence around the globe for this work. Canada is a recognized leader in this field, and a scan of its public access websites demonstrates both substance and process considerations in this work.³¹⁹
 - b. Conduct an assessment of newcomers to assess their priorities for credentialing supports. Look both at professions and at trades, as well as higher education certification.
 - c. Create an action plan that establishes priorities for action. Priorities should be established not just by the depth and breadth of need, but also the nimbleness of the service providers to ramp up such programs. Moving on plumbing or electrician certification is likely to be a faster process than medical doctors.
 - d. Create a website to disseminate the information garnered by the Task Force. Bringing this content into the public arena is important for establishing a footprint on this issue, as well as to signal to other jurisdictions what is being undertaken (and helping to spread such information may catalyze additional jurisdictions in the USA to act on this). The absence of the US presence in this field is a grave omission, and local jurisdictions could in turn influence the national arena.
 - e. Launch at least one pilot project that provides a low-cost, time efficient and employment-oriented credentialing program for newcomers who are unable to have their credentials recognized.
 - f. Establish plans for additional credentialing services to be created in the coming years.
 - g. Create a tracking system to make sure that those who participate in credentialing services are gaining appropriate employment and wages.
 - h. Begin, as quickly as possible, recognizing foreign credentials for employment with the City and other public institutions. This could be implemented in occupations that can be readily assessed. We know of a few initiatives that could serve to guide such inclusion practices: Marion and Clackamas counties have innovative approaches to teacher integration, and OHSU is bringing nurses in from the Philippines.
 - i. Begin, as quickly as possible, to provide local advocacy and job search supports to unemployed workers to find jobs where credentials are not recognized. It is particularly tragic to find, after arriving in the USA, that one’s credentials are not recognized.

C. Driver’s Licenses and Resident Identification Cards for Undocumented Immigrants

Advocacy for driver’s cards was won but subsequently lost in recent years, with the loss being detrimental to the safety and security of all who live in the region. Currently a civil rights legal suit has been filed to overturn the constitutionality of Ballot Measure 88 that overturned the bi-partisan bill passed into law the prior year, on the basis that the ballot measure involved the state in immigration law that should have been the responsibility of the federal government.³²⁰

1. **Support the civil rights complaint seeking the reinstatement of driver’s cards for undocumented Oregonians** in whatever ways possible. This suit holds promise to improve the quality of life of very large

numbers of newcomers, and to increase safety on roads for us all.

2. **Provide municipal identity cards for undocumented residents across Oregon.** Cities around the country are adding identity cards for all residents, such as New York, Los Angeles, Washington DC, New Haven and Oakland. These cards provide the proof of identity that allows residents to open bank accounts, register their children for school, borrow books from a library, and get admitted to a hospital.³²¹ The benefits of such formal identity cards stretch beyond the help they provide the owners of such cards: by making banking easier, we reduce the number of those who are “unbanked,” which in turn reduces crime as being unbanked is akin to what has become known as “being a walking ATM machine.” Such persons are highly vulnerable to crime. Holders of such cards are also more likely to report crimes to the police and to cooperate with them as witnesses. The benefits were tracked in New Haven, demonstrating that crime had decreased by 20% in the first two years of the cards release.³²² These cards also build potential for entrepreneurial activity to occur, as many business activities require formal identification documentation. Opened are economically-associated opportunities for signing leases, bank accounts, and taking out loans. Additionally, the cards provide an access pathway to affirmative actions to promote civic engagement and inclusion, as they have been used to provide free access to municipal activities such as museums, zoos and recreation activities. Says the NYC commissioner in the Office of Immigrant Affairs, “There is a sense of opening of doors and equalizing of access, even in respect to culture in NYC...”³²³

D. Health

The narratives in the community chapters speak of the array of challenges facing newcomers. They reinforce a prior publication’s report on health concerns:

The pattern of health needs are tied to three significant factors: (1) refugee and newcomer needs, (2) health information and health promotion activities, and (3) unwelcoming and disaffirming health service providers, who are sorely in need of cultural understanding and culturally responsive service adaptations. Examples include significant concern over the quality of services received and the absence of culturally responsive health providers.³²⁴

Needed, in response, are more relevant services, ideally provided by culturally specific service providers, or at the very least with specialized units serving newcomers, with comprehensive redress of racism, racial and cultural bias in both service provision and the organizational itself. In addition, services need to anticipate the bias that newcomers have to avoid seeking help for mental health services, in particular:

Underuse of mental health services is documented in the research. Newcomers who have been in the country for less than 15 years are much less likely to use mental health services than longer term immigrants and native-born residents, and that this pattern is particularly true for women. Addressing stigma on a community wide basis, in addition to addressing the bias and lack of cultural competence held by service providers is recommended.³²⁵

The specific recommendations are these:

1. **Provide culturally specific health services** for the newcomer community. While we recognize that culturally specific services reaching the full spectrum of newcomer communities will be cost prohibitive, it is essential that at least one community-based provider develop a full range of newcomer health services in a pan-newcomer approach, staffed with an array of health providers of color with both experience as newcomers, as well as a deep understanding of the needs facing multiple newcomer communities. This service must include mental health services, and maternal health services.
2. **Cultivate health-focused newcomer leaders.** Increase the presence and leadership of newcomers in health policy development. Lived experience needs to be incorporated as an asset in both understanding such communities and being a conduit to facilitate inclusion of community perspectives.
3. **Expand the culturally specific community health worker program,** provided through Multnomah County. Health providers must increasingly reflect communities being served, and expertise is needed for addressing the health needs of immigrants and refugees.

4. **Invest in public health and prevention education.** Create increased public and philanthropic partnerships to increase public health and education outreach in chronic disease prevention and reproductive health through social media, community partnerships and events.
5. **Require health providers expand their cultural responsiveness** in service provision and other organizational domains. While culturally specific health services are the preferred service delivery model, all providers need to increase their capacity to serve newcomers. While the Coordinated Care Organizations are expected to incorporate health equity, few levers exist that ensure effective results exist. A concerted effort of health providers and newcomer advocates need to establish protocols for adherence to such expectations.

E. Housing and Human Services

1. **Assertive information sharing:** Newcomers need to understand the services that are available to them, and how to access them efficiently. Newcomers need access to accurate information about the resources available, the conditions for accessing services, the pathways to citizenship, advocacy practices for supporting our children, and options for involvement in building social justice and racial equity for the newcomer community.
2. **Address the housing crisis facing newcomers:** It is imperative that solutions be found to the housing crisis that is unique for many features: the intersection of language difficulties, cultural norms of occupancy that differ so much from that in US society, low incomes, vulnerability due to poverty, racism and bias of those involved, and the absence of culturally-specific services outside Multnomah County to assist with housing.
3. **Affordable housing:** The supply of subsidized housing must be increased immediately. Not only is the shortage of affordable housing resulting in family instability as they move to find cheaper rent, and children needing to change schools, but it is also contributing to ongoing mismatch between services and service users, which ultimately costs more to relocate and reimagine how to reach newly relocated families. This transition also creates new transit needs in the outskirts of the County. Section 8 housing procurement offers the County and City an immediate pathway to expand the supply of affordable housing, while longer term projects get off the ground.
4. **Interpreter and translator access:** We highlight the necessity for expanded access to translators for landlords who have discussions with tenants about anything that might lead to their eviction. We advocate for Housing Code additions that requires landlords and housing managers to ensure that conflict and disputes are comprehensible to tenants who are unable to communicate in English.
5. It is important that **housing is understood as a human right** instead of a consumption item to be purchased in the private market and vulnerable to the practices of landlords. Portland needs to move on this issue immediately.

Task Force #2: Repairing the Cultural Bias in the Housing Code

a. Occupancy Standards: Many newcomers have large families. Newcomers often have cultural norms where large numbers of extended families and friends live under one roof. Also prevalent are the families who allow other families to live with them, as stepping in to be helpful to keep their friends and relatives off the street. As cultural norms, and in times and places where housing is very expensive and land at a premium, these are incredibly adaptive and valuable practices. They should be honored and even learned from, as the City's rental crisis explodes, and we need to turn to innovations in how to safely house Portland's residents. The conventional solution for large families is to move into their own homes where scrutiny is much reduced, but this option is very narrow due to low incomes in the community and the high costs of homeownership.

In Portland, these cultural norms pose many households for conflict with landlords and City bylaws. From the Housing Code, we find the following stipulations.

29.30.210 Sleeping Room Requirements: Every room used for sleeping purposes... shall comply with the following minimum requirements for floor area: 1. Shall have a minimum area of at least 70 square feet of floor

area, except that where more than two persons occupy a room used for sleeping purposes, the required floor area shall be increased at the rate of 50 square feet for each person in excess of two. No portion of a room measuring less than 5 feet from the finished floor to the finished ceiling shall be included in any computation of the room's minimum area.

29.30.220 Overcrowding: No dwelling unit shall be permitted to be overcrowded. A dwelling unit shall be considered overcrowded if there are more residents than one plus one additional resident for every 100 square feet of floor area of the habitable rooms in the dwelling unit.³²⁶

This translates into a requirement that if five people were to sleep in a bedroom, the bedroom would need to be 220 square feet, or more than 12x18 feet. It seems to us that if these people could exit a room safely in the event of a fire, then the occupancy standard is demonstrating merely a cultural norm, as opposed to a safety issue. The Fair Housing Council of Oregon began to crack open such a dialogue when they heard complaints with apartments being denied to families on the basis of occupancy limits.³²⁷

Today, many tenants often try to hide the numbers of those residing in an apartment. This is a source of continual stress. Imagine trying to hide the numbers of people staying in one's home – prohibiting children from playing outside, and only entering the house when it is dark outside. Such were examples from those we spoke with. It is time to address this directly, and establishing a Task Force to explore occupancy standards would enable newcomers to work collaboratively with the City and with landlord representatives to figure out a solution.

b. Language Access: Given that the Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing, and that “race” and “origin” protections have been operationalized to include language access, it is imperative that communications occur in the tenants' language when they do not speak enough English to understand and be understood. While this will not protect from discrimination, it will narrow the likelihood that misunderstandings occur, that early intervention to address problems will hold potential to reduce conflicts and that residency conditions will be understood by the tenants. Similarly, communication can flow from residents to the landlords and problems from their side communicated and, ideally, addressed.

In the health sector, translation and interpretation is becoming a standard practice to ensure cultural responsiveness is infused in services. Given the importance of accessing and sustaining housing for both the health and the wellbeing of newcomers, we must give priority to such access. At present, language access is threadbare, only provided when tenants have contacts with those who can interpret and translate, and where such persons can come to intervene. Threading together a safety net is imperative, and must become a policy mandate.

We recommend the creation of a Task Force with the following goals:

1. To work in a **shared leadership** of the Task Force with an elected official who is willing to spearhead this Task Force, in partnership with a community leader whose constituents face this issue regularly. This lived experience will create an urgency to move forward on the issue.
2. To **examine the cultural norms** that infuse the Housing Code, and discern the elements of occupancy that are tied to safety from those that are tied to cultural norms and landlord preferences. It is also critical when conducting this review that all elements of the Code that potentially could lead to eviction are made linguistically available.
3. To identify the policies that are required to ensure that all tenants – regardless of the language they communicate in – **fully understand and can participate in all dialogues** that relate to any issue that holds potential to result in an eviction. These dialogues may be in either written or verbal encounters. These need to be crafted as policy additions to the Housing Code, and other relevant policy codes so they become mandated practices, and actionable for violations.

4. To **create a solution** for increasing the occupancy standards of allowable persons in an apartment, and to ensure that all tenants have protections in dialogues and conflicts with landlords.

F. Service Delivery Model: Culturally Specific Services and Authentic Partnerships

1. We need full recognition that culturally specific services are the best way to reach and support newcomers of color. To achieve this, we need to expand the availability of culturally specific services and secondly, accountability measures are needed when mainstream services promise to serve newcomers of color.
2. 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.
3. Authentic partnerships are required to move all agenda items forward. This means:
 - Consult with the NPPC and other newcomer advocacy groups as recommendations are considered. Seek advice on how to effectively move issues forward and who to include in the process.
 - Bring newcomer advocates to the table early in the process when the plans can be informed by their expertise
 - Chair meetings in ways that are aligned with the culture of community partners, and accessible to such stakeholders
 - Establish decision making processes where community partners have real influence
 - Continuing to involve partners throughout the process, including hiring, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives
 - Ensure that non-tokenistic roles are available to community advocates throughout the partnership

G. Staffing and Budget for the New Portland Policy Council/Commission

The members of the NPPC are enthusiastic of the City Council's decision to create a Commission. This stature opens their influence to extend across the City's services and departments, and they look forward to this transition. With it must come expanded staffing and budget. Resources need to be available for this expanded role of the NPPC and enable it to match the aspirations of the City itself for deepening its commitment to newcomer integration. Both staffing and budget are required for the NPPC to actualize its mission:

Institutionalizing the City of Portland's commitment to integrating immigrant and refugee communities into the life of the City, by adopting policies and recommended practices that assist City bureaus in creating consistent expectations and processes.³²⁸

The following priority provides a beginning understanding of the budget required by the NPPC to meet their mission and to respond to this report:

1. **Expand the staffing of the New Portlanders Program** in the following way:
 - b. **Add two one-year contract positions** that will advance the ability of the NPPC to implement a set of priorities as established in this report. While the priorities need to be established closer to the time when funding is made available (when the prognosis for real results can be better assessed), it is likely that the staff roles would be to implement the three task forces, to provide research support to expand the documenting of additional newcomer communities initiated in this report, and to conduct the research for the task forces detailed in this report.

H. Civic Engagement and Cultural Affirmation

Being an outsider to one's host country is a painful experience. It leaves one unsure of oneself and without a stable identity or established expectations. One remains an outsider until you see this as "your country." And, unfortunately, the host country (in this case the USA) also extends this outsider identity long after one is likely to perceive oneself as being at "home." The attributions of "outsider" or more harmful ones of "foreigner," "illegitimate" or "alien" are dumped on the community at significant levels. Civic involvement helps promote connections to wider society, and marks a key transition point to becoming more invested in the local community. The investments of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement's Diversity and Civic Leadership, alongside Meyer Memorial Trust's investment in culturally specific leadership programs through the Coalition

of Communities of Color have activated scores of newcomers of color into civic engagement. We have been able to track some of their achievements and know that more than 100 newcomers are increasing involved each year in public policy and service innovations. Add to this additional advocacy engagement by a wider array of culturally specific leadership programs, and there is a surging set of engaged newcomers in the local region, despite a dominant discourse that prefers to keep newcomers on the outside of society.

We aim for an “intercultural identity” to be promoted, instead of assimilation. Expecting newcomers to give up their home identities strips them of too much that has grounded and affirmed all of who they are. And even if in the USA for decades, when native-born Whites assert newcomers are still outsiders, it is unreasonable to expect the community to stand on the outside, without the protective and remedial identity affirmations that one’s home culture provides. Giving up the old in the interests of adopting the new is an erroneous path to integration. Welcoming and affirming both is key to integration success. It is key that policy makers (and the general public) understand that retaining connections to one’s home country and to one’s local community in the USA is **not** a sign of rejecting the host community.

Entitlement to respect and self-determination need to be foundations of the long welcome that is sought. It is in everybody’s interest that newcomers will call 9-11 and expect law enforcement to serve the caller. The alternatives will be dire – using whatever is available to protect oneself (including violence), having local “gangs” ready to step forward to provide protection, living in fear of stepping outside one’s own community, and building a culture of not reaching out to the police would have its own repercussions likely to damage families in irreparable ways.

I. Law Enforcement

Given that law enforcement is both a culturally infused set of behavioral and compliance standards, and that law enforcement officers also practice in ways that are culturally infused, it is key that all in law enforcement become aware of this cultural bias, and work towards greater inclusivity in how law enforcement is practiced. Newcomer communities are deeply marginalized in law enforcement, and the innovations that have been developed in prior years need to resurface and broaden across the region. The priorities for action are as follows:

1. Establish improved community relations, which are founded on trust, culturally specific community liaisons, and culturally responsive law enforcement. Not only are such conditions needed for effective policing, but simultaneously for improving the safety needs for newcomer community members. This should be operationalized via the Task Force #3 identified below.
2. The Police Department needs to hire a community liaison staff. This model worked effectively in Seattle; yet we have cut this position in Portland. The role of this staff is to ease the relationship and integrate communities into law enforcement ... bringing information from the community into law enforcement
3. Make sure that key goals of law enforcement (such as the priority to work with the mentally ill) include elements of how to engage with newcomers... who also are mentally ill! And hold them accountable for meeting these goals.
4. Add training requirements of how to communicate when English is not spoken ... basic element of police effectiveness
5. Gang violence supports to be better invested in prevention to higher risk youth
6. Hire newcomers into the police force
7. Include content on Justice Department settlement and how to enforce progress
8. Better information on civil rights, and the roles of various law enforcement workers (including ICE) needs to be provided across the community, particularly among the undocumented community. Undocumented residents hold deep fears of deportation, and are thus reluctant to involve the police in almost all conflicts and queries. A standard set of explanations is needed to ensure policing can be accessed without deportation fears. A common way the difference is explained is such: “distinguish

green/blue police officers... blue ones don't refer to ICE but if they send you to court, then the court sends you to ICE." A model exists in Seattle on how to do this effectively.

9. We draw attention to the law enforcement recommendations that are emerging in the "Black Lives Matter" movement, called "Campaign Zero" and which contain local policy agendas for policing reforms. These are recommendations specific to Black persons, and not necessarily tied to being newcomers, but want to confirm that these directions align with the law enforcement improvements that we desire:
<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/55ad38b1e4b0185f0285195f/t/55dce731e4b07137c6a819b9/1440540465863/CampaignZERO+Local+Policy+Agenda.pdf>

Task Force #3: Law Enforcement Liaison Project

It is now time to establish a partnership between law enforcement and the NPPC and additional community advocates to design and implement a program whereby each newcomer community has publicly recognized liaisons who work in partnership with the police to support safety of everyone. The model envisioned is that this Task Force would operate for a year to certify volunteers in taking on community liaison roles. These liaisons will stay in place at the end of the year. The community will do the recruitment and training, being resourced by one of the contract staff hired into the Newcomer Office in the City of Portland. Ideally these roles will become funded by the Police Bureau, but perhaps after they have demonstrated their trust and established how the program will be successful. Such an innovation in community policing should be appealing for funders, and grant funding should be secured to continue it beyond the first year.

As this Task Force begins operations, its first task must be a community education project that provides newcomer communities with information about the legal system, resident rights and entitlements, and that debunks the idea that all police involvement will lead to ICE referrals – while providing accurate information about the roles of various levels of police. Remember the central notion that secure immigrants and refugees will contribute to security for all.

J. Education

The greatest yearning of newcomers is for the success of their children. Education provides potential for meaningful work, for incomes that can support a family, and for inclusion in U.S. society in important ways. Education provides pathways to become valued members of society, as professional and managerial roles open up with solid education, and these in turn open up status and visibility of both the individuals and the entire community. Two excellent gains were made in recent years: tuition equity for students seeking higher education, and improvements in ELL funding for Oregon's schools. Additional improvements are needed:

1. Provide comprehensive supports for newcomer students that face an intolerably high disparity on the achievement gap with White communities. English Language Learner students typically hold the worst outcomes (including graduation, attendance, and standardized test scores) and the highest racial disparities locally and across Oregon. Expanding access to academic, linguistic and family supports can greatly improve these outcomes. The preferred service model is through culturally specific organizations, and secondly through culturally responsive organizations. It is imperative that ELL

In 2009, the Portland police wrongly arrested two Hmong teens. Deeming their apology insufficient to repair the damage, Polo Catalani brought the police to the home of a Hmong leader to apologize, with a gift of two chickens, to heal the damage done, because "respect is not in words; respect is in deeds."



This story is just one of hundreds that can be shared on the contributions of Polo Catalani to the wellbeing of immigrants and refugees in Portland.

improvements be focused on across Oregon. Recent standardized test scores reviewed for another research project (and thus limited to a tally of just eight middle and high schools) show that less than 5% of ELL students are passing such tests (and these are the new Smarter Balanced tests). Graduation rates, statewide, continue to be at levels that are close to half that of White students.³²⁹

2. Increase retention supports in higher education and also in high school through the use of mentors and through dismantling the institutional racism that continues in higher education.
3. 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.
4. Successful parent engagement leads to stronger student performance. Key elements that are desired are:
 - a. Access to culturally specific services to provide family supports that assist with settlement
 - b. Readily available and accurate translation and interpretation services
 - c. Diversification of the availability of staff to meet with parents and for teachers to reach out routinely to parents so they can be meaningfully connects to teachers
 - d. Foster authentic parent involvement through empowerment training, teacher competency trainings and train-the-trainer programs, with a focus on cradle-to-career supports
5. Sometimes newcomer children are placed in grades according to their age, but they have not had sufficient preparation for such grade-level placements. Sometimes this is the result of having been in refugee camps without solid education. Providing a year-long “catch up” with intensive supports in both English and additional course work can help ameliorate many years of grief for students and their families who find their children always lagging behind. Couple this with more accurate assessment of the achievements of students who come to the USA, and we believe newcomer children will thrive academically. We recommend pilot project funding for such an initiative. This may not be relevant for all children, and the specifics of such supports need to be assessed with each community.
6. We need accurate and routine information on how newcomer children and youth are doing in school. Accordingly, we ask all school boards and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to ensure that the full range of communities of color, alongside that of newcomers be identified in databases. The standards introduced in House Bill 2134 should be extended into ODE and across Oregon. This bill identifies uniform standards for collection of demographic data on race, ethnicity, preferred languages and disability status. As well, the cohesive work that Portland Public Schools has done on collecting demographic data can also serve as a model for such efforts.
7. Our children need to enter schools where teachers and staff look like them and understand their culture and the conditions of their arrival in the USA. Improved recruiting and hiring of teachers of color must be made a priority, as well as equity efforts inside each school board to retain and promote these teachers through the ranks. In addition to its importance in understanding racial, cultural and immigrant experiences, the presence of educators of color in the classroom provides important modeling for children. Says one leading Latino advocate: *“Children can’t be what they don’t see.”*
8. All teachers who engage with newcomer children need to understand the history, the challenges and the conditions in which such students encounter their world. Understanding will provide an important link to reducing the isolation and vulnerability of students.
9. Promote an improved discourse about speaking non-English languages. Children carry a heavy burden for being valued when they speak English. This can result in rejecting their language of origin. As children establish their value in the English world, this actually cuts into the nurturing role of parents. As spoken by one newcomer advocate: *“Society gives kids the role of being bearers of dominant culture.... While of course we need English, but not at the expense of our roots and our family and our hundreds of years of history. ELL becomes a form of oppression that is given legitimacy.”*
10. School boards need to build rapid systems for recognizing foreign professional and experiential credentials so that newcomer educators can be hired into the schools to both increase racial equity in

hiring, and also to create a more welcoming, affirming and culturally responsive academic environment.

11. Limited English Proficiency programs must be of the highest quality. Parents must be assured that all school boards meet federal regulations in LEP programs.

K. Adult English Training and Naturalization Supports

Two very basic needs exist for newcomer adults to integrate into the region: gaining English skills and attaining U.S. citizenship status. Here are the requirements to expand success in these areas:

1. Adults must have access to high quality, convenient, and free English language training. The role reversals involved when children hold English language capacity and their parents do not, places significant burdens on the family.
2. Among those who have jobs, few have time for classes. Provide incentives for employers to make on-the-job English language training available
3. Expand ELL supports, ideally tying them to places where newcomers congregate naturally, such as workplaces, schools, community centers, and neighborhood meeting rooms.
4. Make ELL programs vocationally oriented so that newcomers can learn the English language terminology in their professions.
5. The federal government stopped funding ESL classes resulting in too little supply, and more highly divergent quality of training. We need the City and County to step forward to fill this gap, and to ensure that training is embedded in trusted culturally specific and community based organizations. Such services need to be professional (instead of volunteer provision)
6. Naturalization programs are currently of uneven quality. The community wants to improve the quality by increasing credentials required for conducting citizenship training
7. Assistance is needed to help people file applications for citizenship. Few know that the federal government waive the fees if one is senior or low income. The current fee schedule is cost prohibitive. Other regions have tapped federal funds for such programs, but so far, this does not exist locally.

L. Higher Education

Institutions of higher education provide opportunities for newcomer communities to move into well paid and meaningful employment. To support newcomer integration, we ask the City and County leaders to work with leaders in higher education to achieve the following:

1. To identify fields where there is under-representation of newcomer communities and, more broadly, communities of color, and set priorities to assertively recruit, strategically retain, and effectively support getting jobs.
2. Create programs designed, in low cost and timely ways, to accredit foreign credentials.

M. Extended Settlement Services as a Pathway to Inclusion

Fundamental settlement services are identified as those services that help newcomers find housing, learn English, and gain employment. We need to extend our understanding of settlement supports to include ensure that the insights from the literature review on best practices for newcomer integration are reflected in efforts to expand settlement services. Recognizing that mainstream culture simultaneously needs to become more welcoming, and that the awareness campaign spoken of earlier in this section be implemented. Having newcomers adapt to their surroundings, but not ensuring that wider society will welcome newcomers will result in newcomers being isolated and fragmented and their assets will not be realized by the region.

1. We also need to ensure that the full range of service providers (operated by both the government and by community based organizations) are inclusive and culturally responsive. If a service is available but neither inclusive nor culturally responsive, then its usefulness will fall short. Ensuring that each organization is on a robust pathway towards becoming culturally inclusive and responsive must be implemented in policy.

2. Newcomers need to be taught how various systems and institutions work. These need to be broadly funded, and need to be staffed by those who can reach into newcomer communities and also to reach those who are isolated from such networks. Some priorities are:
 - a. How to understand the instructions received from doctors and pharmacists
 - b. How to understand the school system and the expectations for student performance and parent engagement
 - c. Legal rights and responsibilities, including how various judicial systems interact with immigration policy and which ones hold authority to deport undocumented immigrants
 - d. Housing rights and responsibilities, including contact information for advocates
 - e. How to navigate public transit
 - f. Perhaps most easily, how to use “Google Translate” such that newcomers communications can be readily supported
3. The inadequacy of the time for financial supports to refugees needs to be addressed. We need to expand income supports for refugees beyond the 8-month limit for singles and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for families.
4. 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.
5. Availability of high quality cultural interpreters: All public offices need to make interpretation and translation available to uphold civil rights requirements as well as to promote inclusion. Significantly improved availability of cultural interpreters and translation services across institutions and services. The current pattern of preferring the cheapest service is inadequate. Recommended is the creation of a policy that establishes the requirements for interpreter use in public services. Much language for this exists in existing professional standards and ethics documentation in the field.
6. U.S. 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 U.S. 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.
7. 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.
8. Newcomers are experts in the solutions to racial and cultural inequities and community-based distress. Newcomers must be engaged early, often and with meaningful ability to influence the outcomes in creating and evaluating services and programs that serve newcomers.
9. Cultural interpreters are considerable community assets who should be tapped for their insights on priorities for inclusion. Abundant stories have been shared about their experiences, with one being:

“[Interpreters] serve as their 411... newcomers miss so much information on even very basic unknowns. For example, ‘can I pick up a fallen tree and use the wood?’ ... They often stay in touch with us for years... there usually isn’t anyone else able to respond [to their questions]... we become aware of so many things that need to be addressed.”

Implementation and Conclusion

We recognize this is a robust set of recommendations that need to be prioritized, in partnership between policy makers, elected officials and community leaders, mostly notably with the members of the New Portlanders Policy Council. It is time to make sure that the fullness of the potential contributions of newcomers to the region are leveraged for the betterment of all residents. And it is time for public institutions to make real “*the long welcome*” that will serve us all.

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