The Slavic Community in Multnomah County:
An Unsettling Profile

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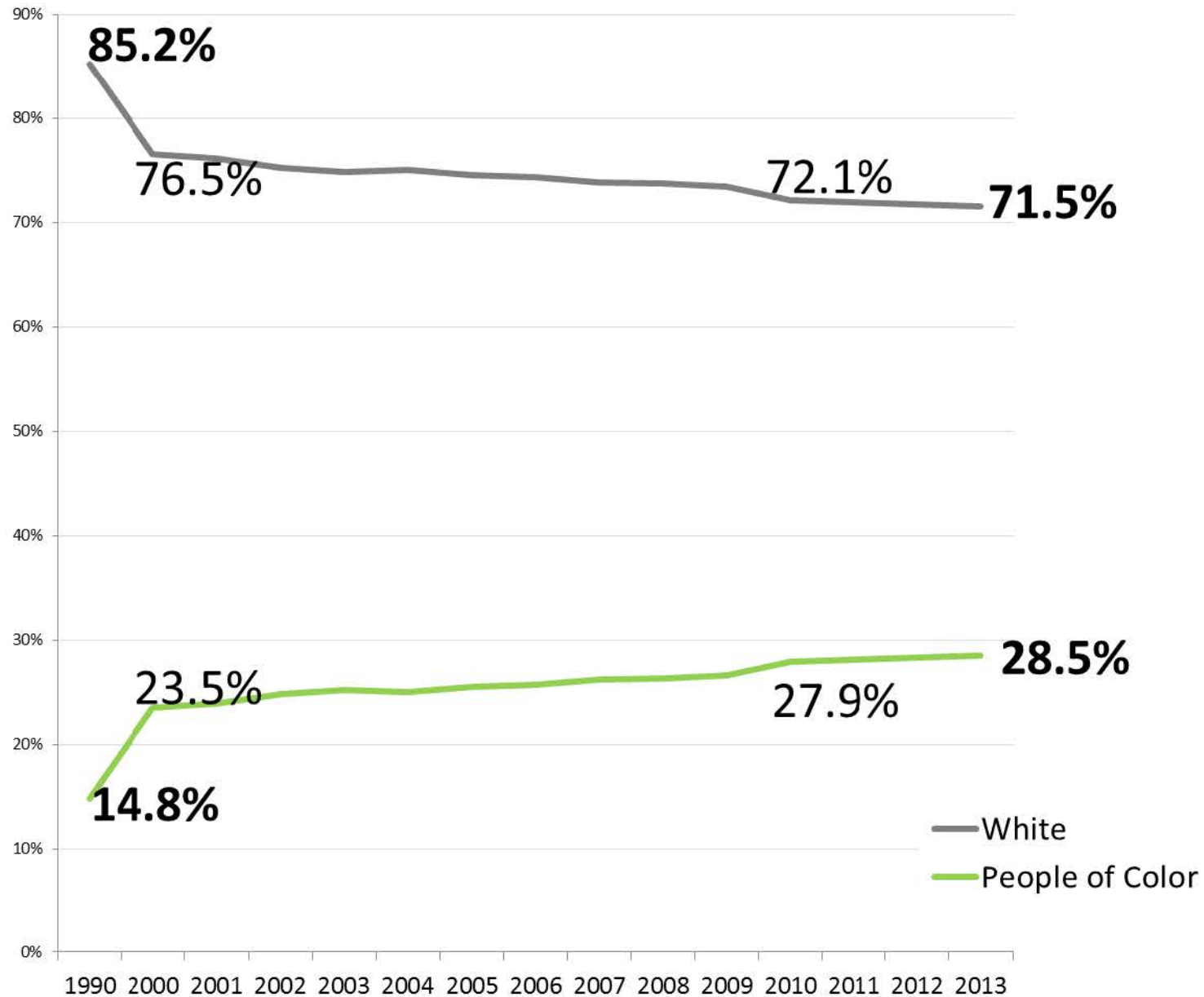**Dr. Ann Curry-Stevens,** Associate Professor, Portland State University

Coalition of Communities of Color
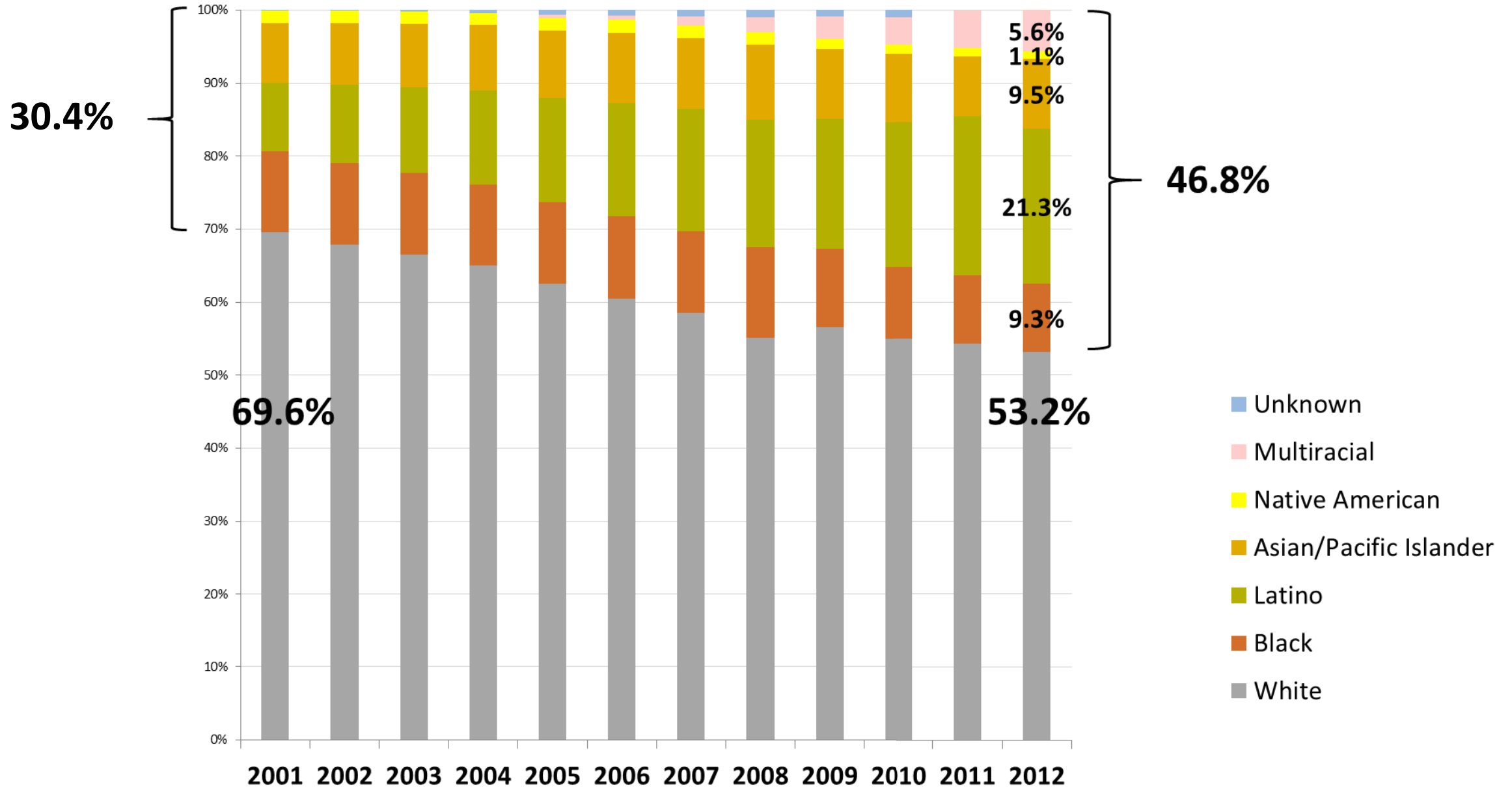
The Coalition's mission is:

- To address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities

- To organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity

Population of Multnomah County

- **85.2%**
- 76.5%
- 72.1%
- **71.5%**
- 23.5%
- **14.8%**
- 27.9%
- **28.5%**

White

People of Color

1990 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

Race/Ethnicity of Students in Public Schools, Multnomah County

30.4%

46.8%

5.6%
1.1%
9.5%
21.3%
9.3%

69.6%

53.2%

Legend:
- Unknown
- Multiracial
- Native American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Latino
- Black
- White

Years: 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

NOTE: When we add the approx. 5000 Slavic youth to this chart in 2012, kids of color = 53.1% = majority culture is of color!

Slavic community = people from the former Soviet Union

- Russia
- Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania)
- Ukraine
- Belarus
- Moldovia
- Azerbaijan
- Armenia
- Georgia
- Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan)
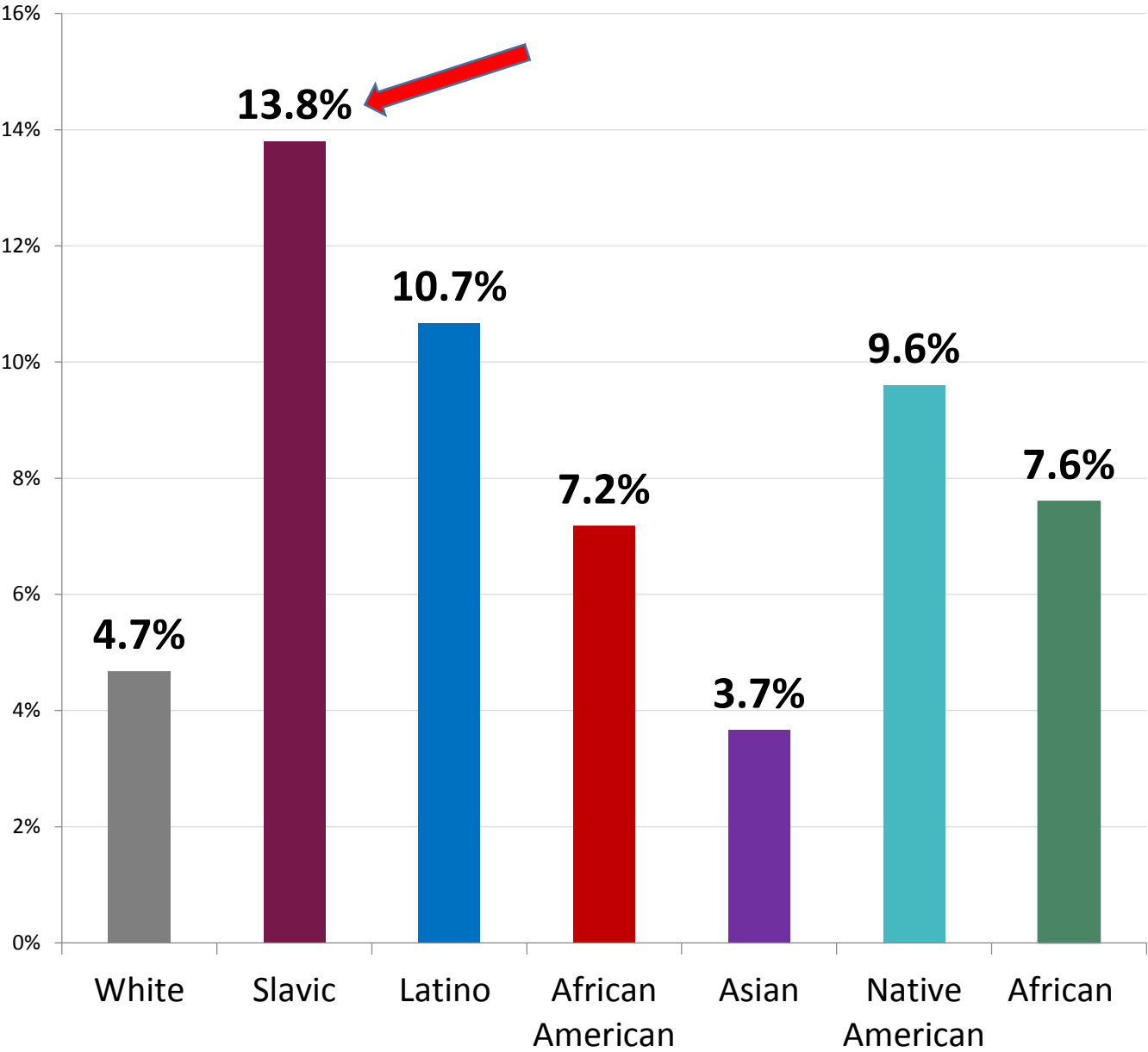

Commonwealth of Independent States

Region rapidly diversifying; strong Slavic presence

- Largest immigrant group after Latino

- Largest refugee community

- Most common language after English and Spanish

- Geographically dispersed

- Without strong community hubs

- Emerging from "sleeping" influence (said Mayor Potter), to "emerging" influence as more from the community gain visibility and voice

- Civic engagement beginning to be supported

Fertility Rate, Women from 15 to 50,
Multnomah County, 2011

White	4.7%
Slavic	13.8%
Latino	10.7%
African American	7.2%
Asian	3.7%
Native American	9.6%
African	7.6%

How big is the community?

- Significant undercounts
  - The result of language, moving, literacy, without a phone, large families, and avoiding participation due to distrust of the government
  - Estimated undercount is 31.6%
  - Population is over 22,000, and thus approx. 3% of the County's population

Where have disparities been uncovered?

1. Population counts
2. Education
3. Occupation
4. Unemployment
5. Poverty levels
6. Access to food banks
7. Government procurement and contracting
8. Small business numbers
9. Hiring in public service
10. Incomes
11. Wealth
12. Bankruptcy
13. Lending institutions
14. Housing discrimination

15. Voter registration and voting
16. Volunteering
17. Public office
18. Philanthropy funding
19. Police hiring
20. Juvenile Justice
21. Child welfare
22. Health insurance
23. Health disparities
24. Racial harassment
25. Health risk behaviors (varied results)
26. Criminal justice
27. Access to public housing
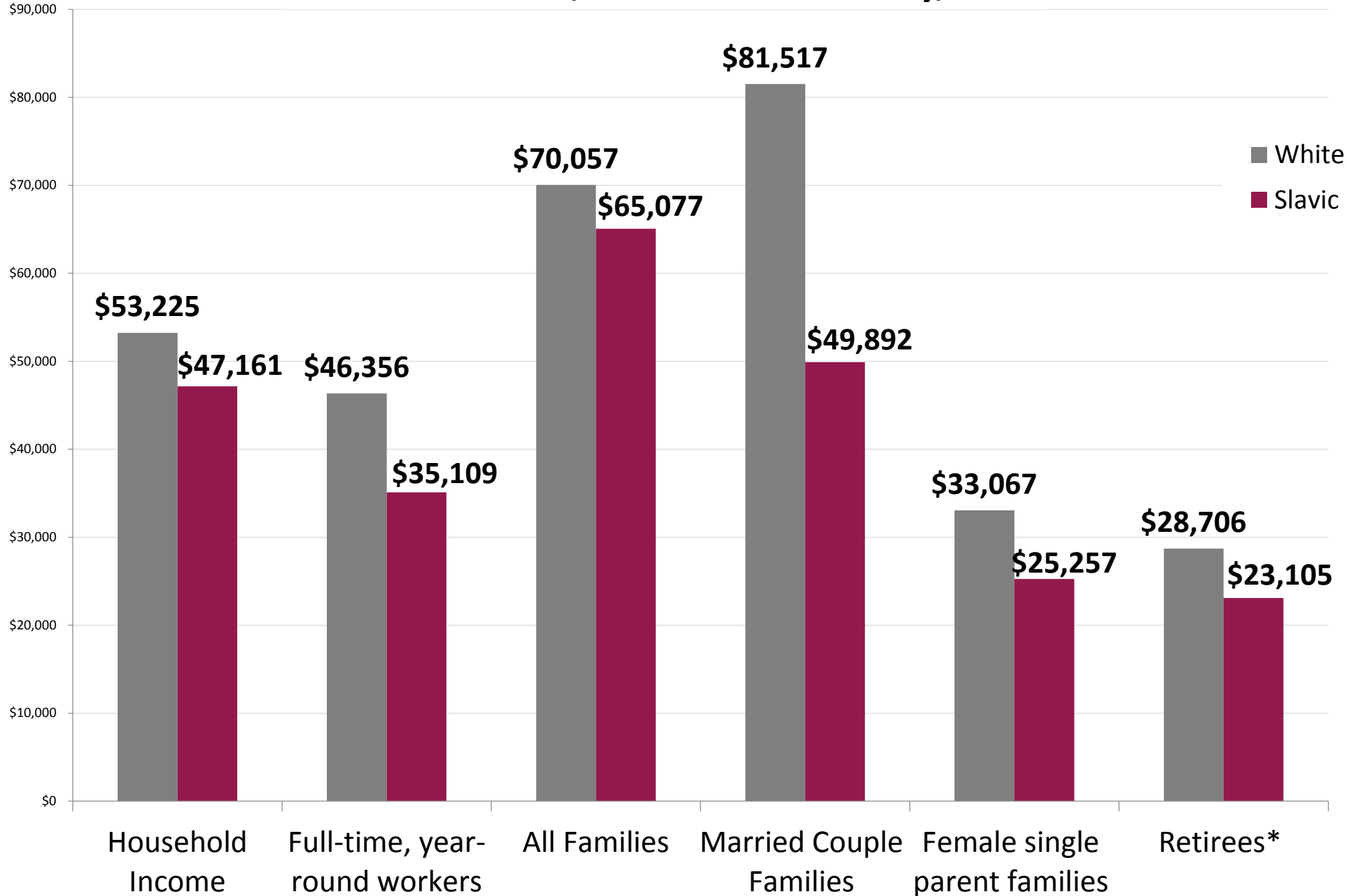28. Homeless numbers

= domains where Slavic data exists

Key Findings

- The Slavic community is mostly invisible, as only 8 of 28 systems identify community members
  - In most areas, we don't know how they fare
  - In the known areas, they face huge challenges
  - We thus suspect they do not fare well in other institutions and systems
- This community faces similar disparities as other communities of color
  - Struggling to gain a toe-hold in the region economically, academically, and occupationally
- The community has been decimated by the recession, exhibiting the worst losses of any community of color
- Despite challenges, optimism among many of its young leaders
  - Though we do not know how non-leadership youth are faring
    - No data from juvenile justice, school discipline, youth health, or child welfare systems
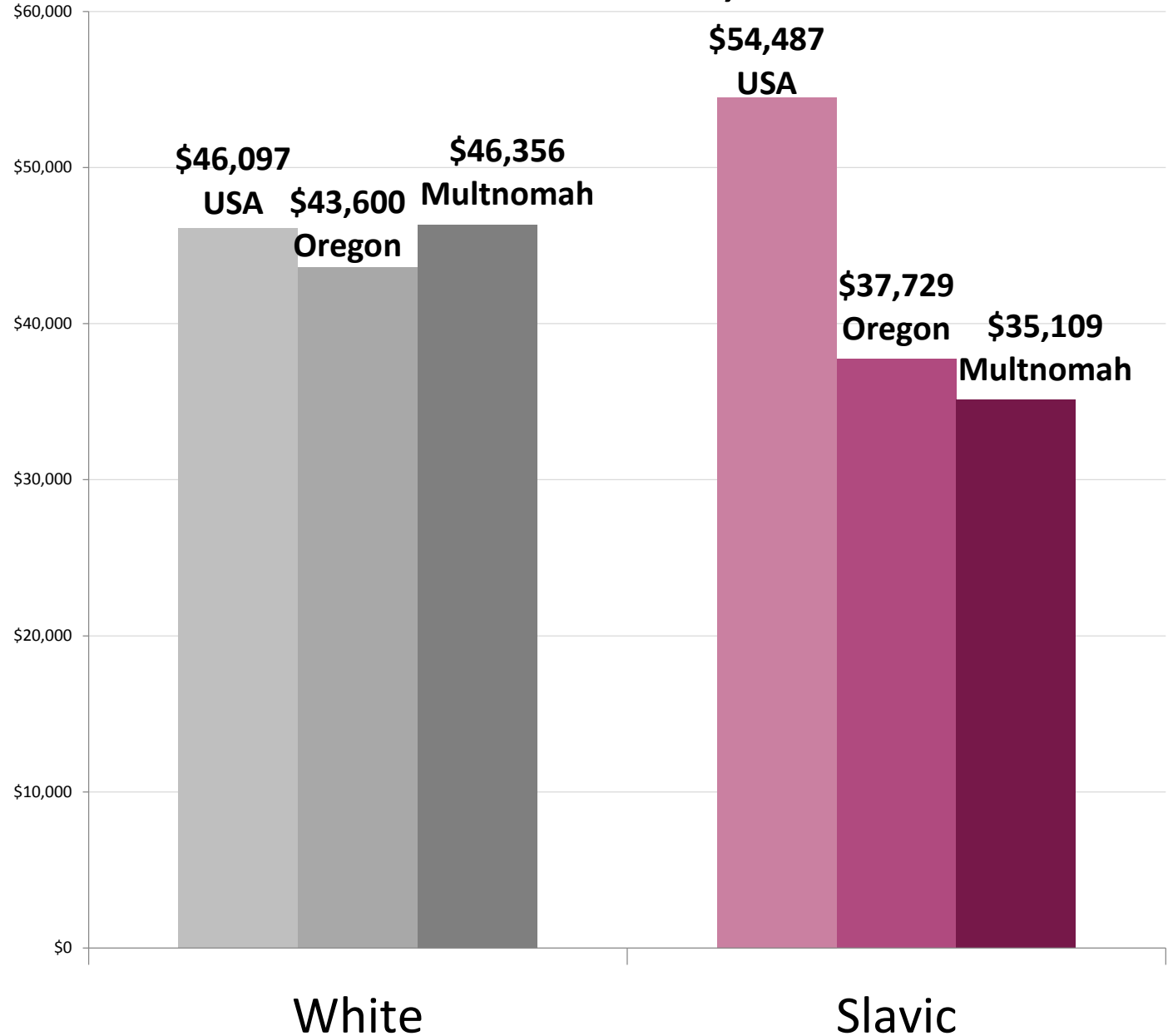
Data Systems & Required Improvements

- Community is designated "white" in most systems
  - And subsets rarely capture refugee status or language spoken
- Improvements being made through House Bill 2134
  - "Slavic" is a mandated category in "racial or ethnic identity" on data collection and intake forms
    - Applies to OHA and DHS , and their agency contractors and subcontractors
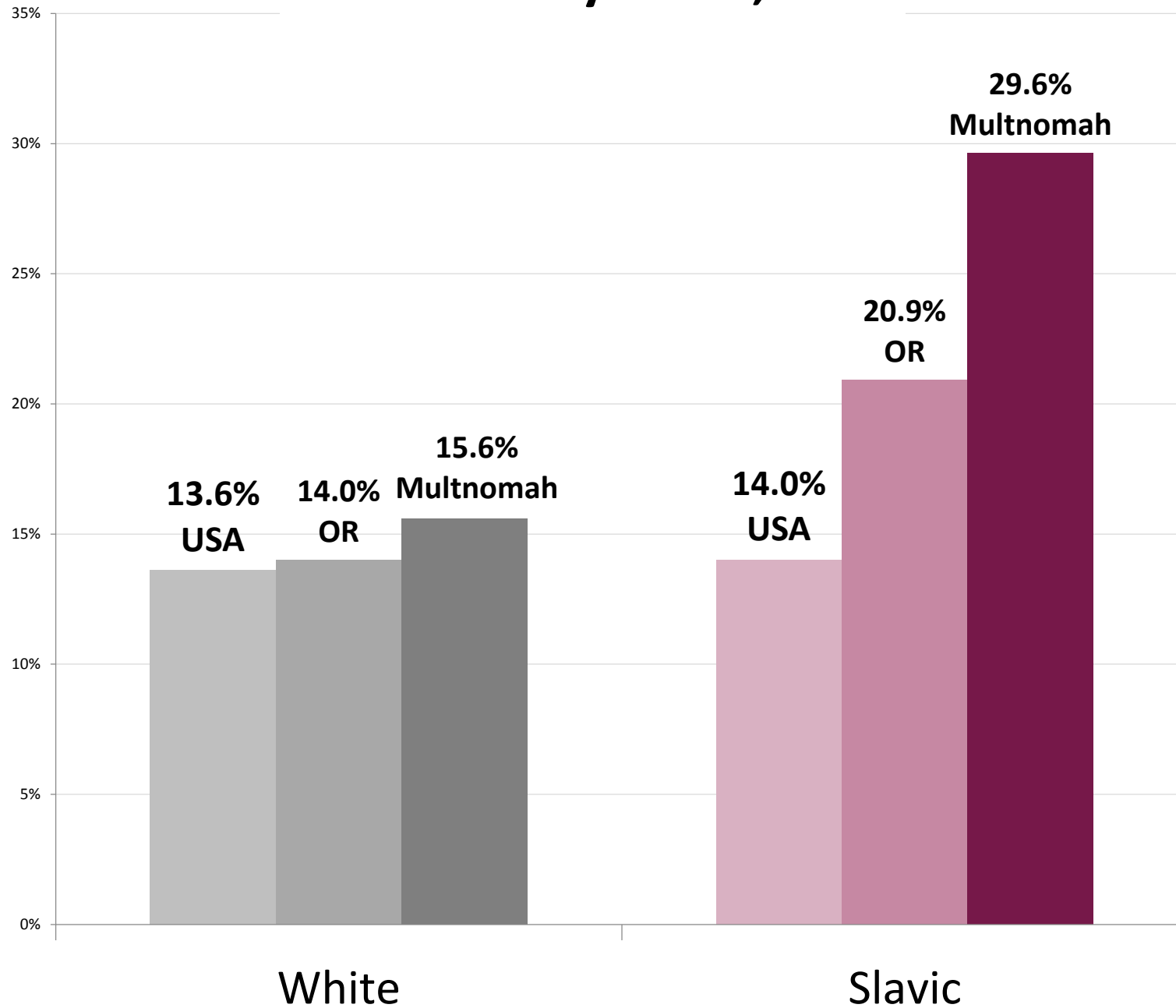   - Reporting is required in February 2016

Annual Incomes, Multnomah County, 2011

Annual Incomes for Full-Time,
Year-Round Workers, 2011
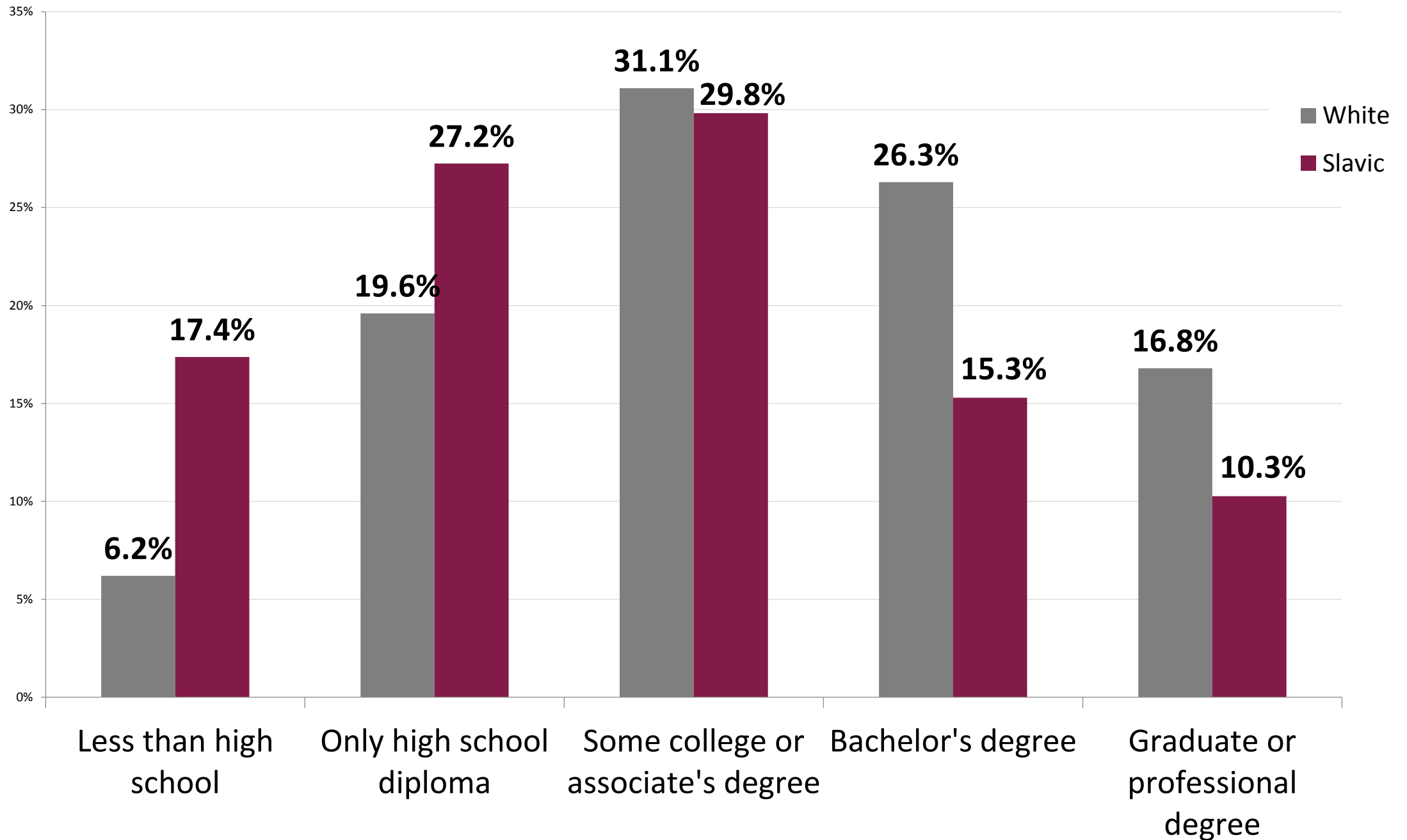
White
- $46,097 USA
- $43,600 Oregon
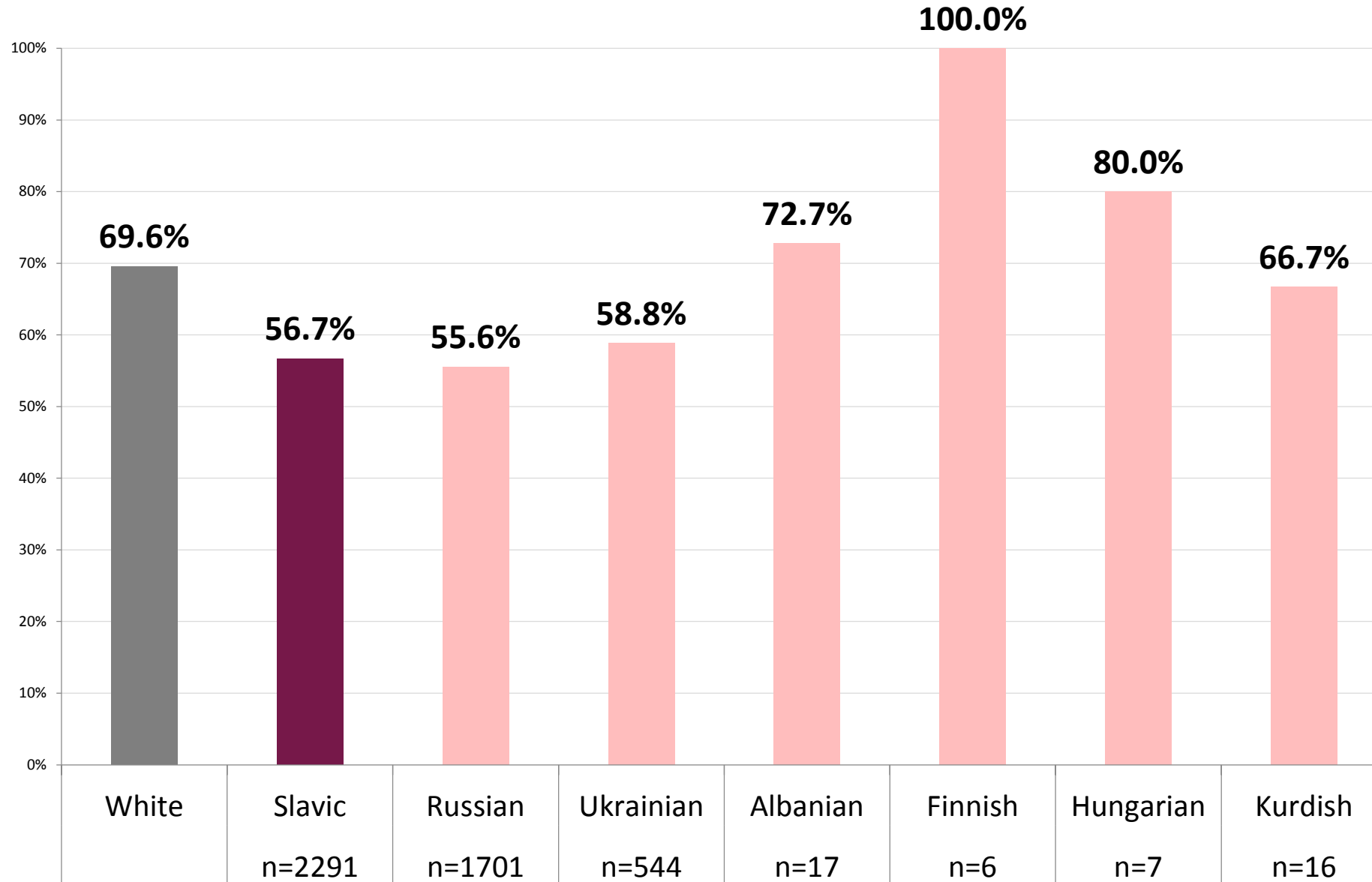- $46,356 Multnomah

Slavic
- $54,487 USA
- $37,729 Oregon
- $35,109 Multnomah

Child Poverty Rates, 2011

White

- 13.6% USA
- 14.0% OR
- 15.6% Multnomah

Slavic

- 14.0% USA
- 20.9% OR
- 29.6% Multnomah

Educational Attainment, Multnomah County, 2011

Legend:
- White (gray)
- Slavic (maroon)

Category	White	Slavic
Less than high school	6.2%	17.4%
Only high school diploma	19.6%	27.2%
Some college or associate's degree	31.1%	29.8%
Bachelor's degree	26.3%	15.3%
Graduate or professional degree	16.8%	10.3%

Achievement Gap, Math, Multnomah County, 2011
(% of students who meet or exceed testing benchmarks)

White	Slavic	Russian	Ukrainian	Albanian	Finnish	Hungarian	Kurdish
69.6%	56.7%	55.6%	58.8%	72.7%	100.0%	80.0%	66.7%
	n=2291	n=1701	n=544	n=17	n=6	n=7	n=16

Achievement Gap, Reading & Literature, Multnomah County, 2011
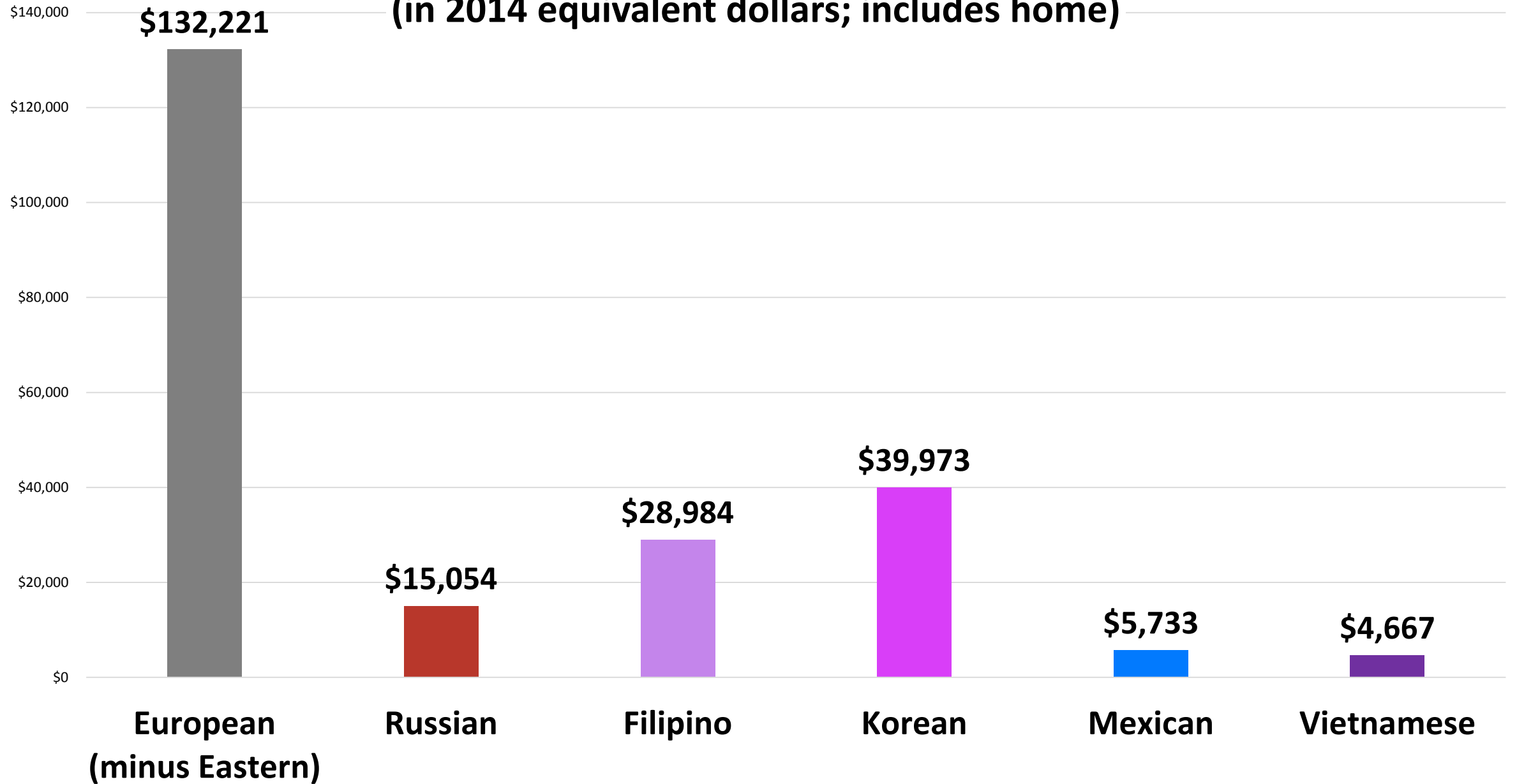## (% of students who meet or exceed testing benchmarks)

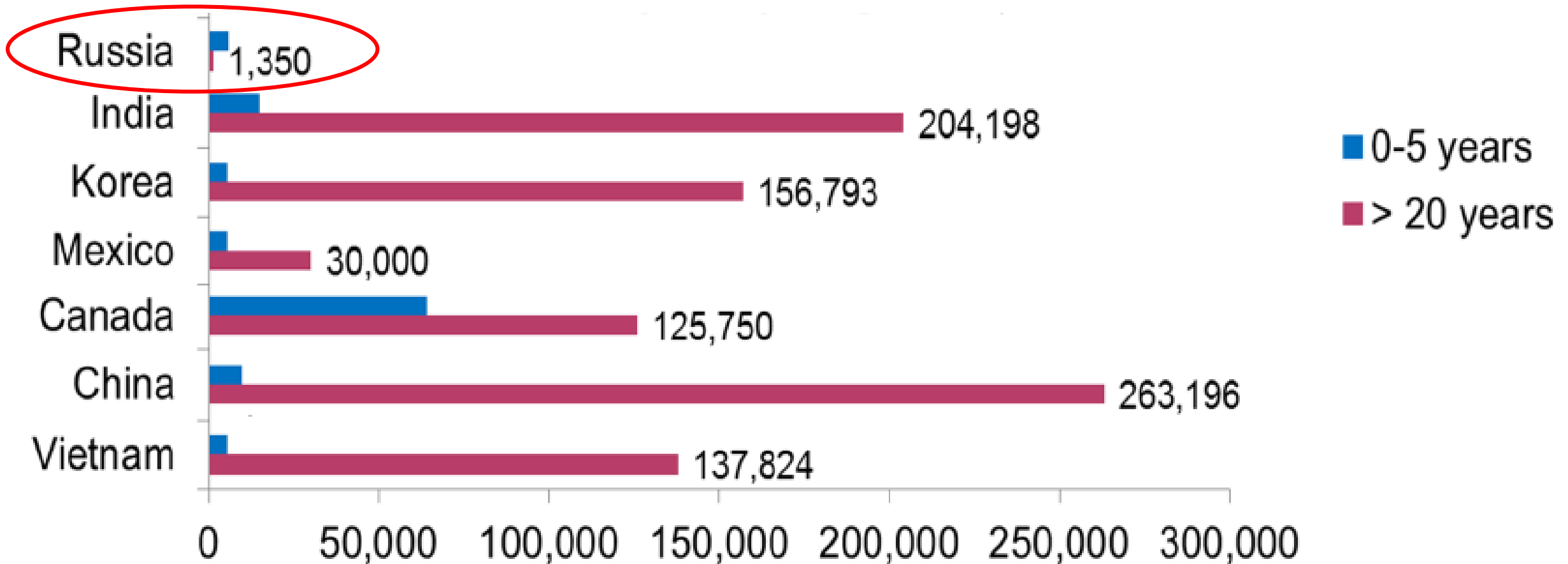| White	Slavic	Russian	Ukrainian	Albanian	Finnish	Hungarian	Kurdish
84.9%	68.0%	69.6%	62.0%	69.2%	100.0%	100.0%	71.4%
	n=2291	n=1701	n=544	n=17	n=6	n=7	n=16
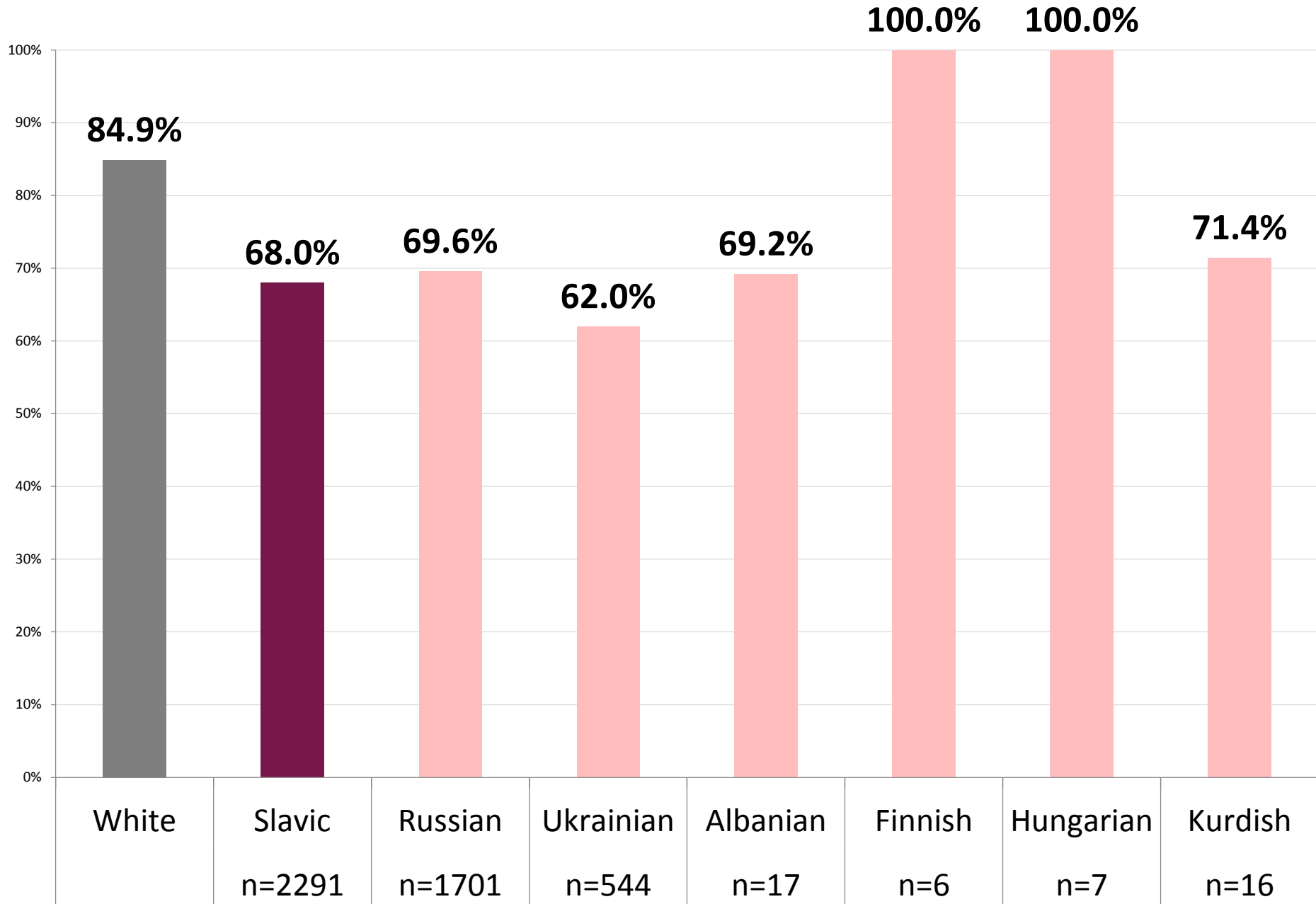
Wealth of Russian Immigrants

- The benefits of wealth
  - Is the personal safety net
    - To protect from job loss, death and illness
  - Able to pass assets to children
  - Able to take financial risks
    - Like changing jobs, going back to school, opening a business, moving neighborhoods

**Total Wealth of Immigrants, USA, 1992
(in 2014 equivalent dollars; includes home)**

$132,221 — European (minus Eastern)
$15,054 — Russian
$28,984 — Filipino
$39,973 — Korean
$5,733 — Mexican
$4,667 — Vietnamese

Total Wealth of Immigrants, USA, 2003

Russia — 1,350
India — 204,198
Korea — 156,793
Mexico — 30,000
Canada — 125,750
China — 263,196
Vietnam — 137,824

Legend:
- 0-5 years
- > 20 years

X-axis: 0, 50,000, 100,000, 150,000, 200,000, 250,000, 300,000
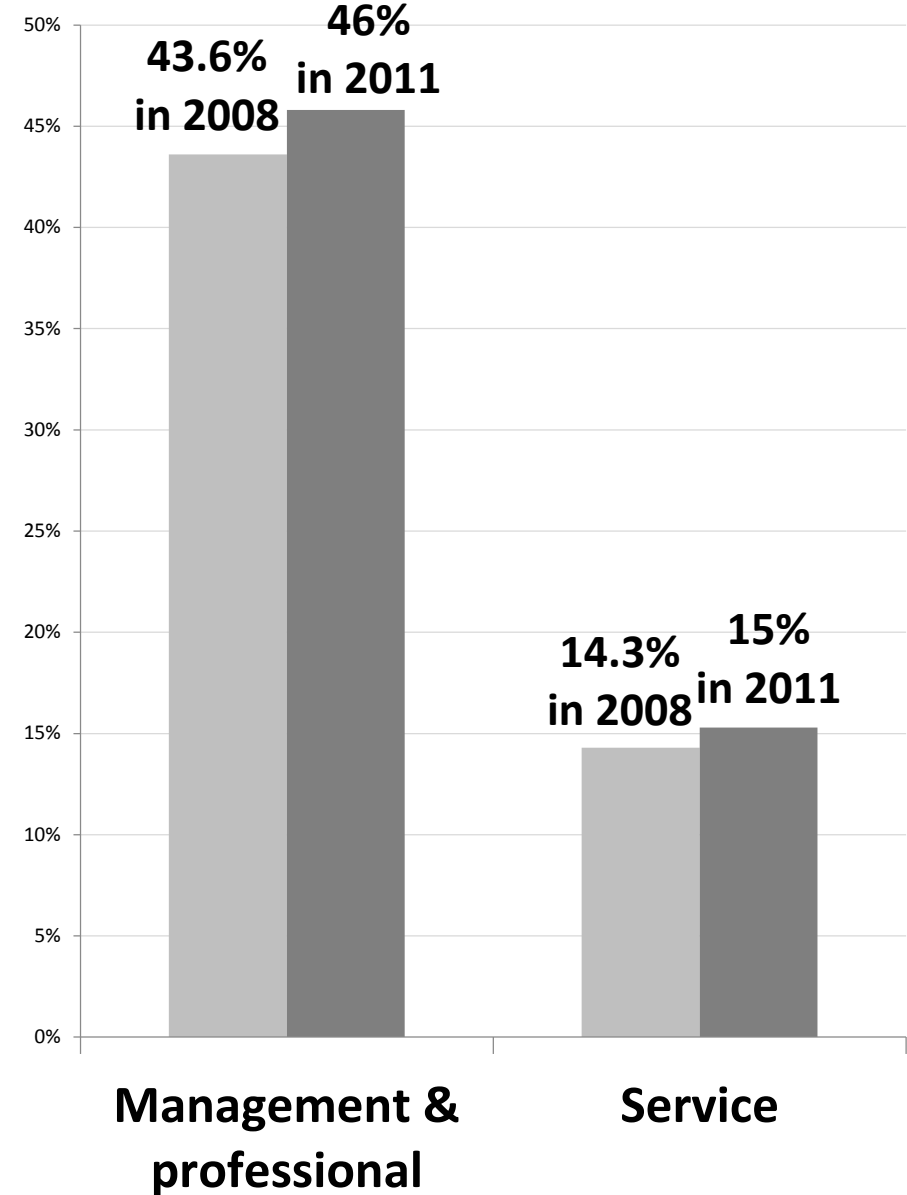
Impact of this Recession: Between 2008 and 2011...

- Levels of employment in good jobs shrunk by about 50% while they doubled in service jobs

- Incomes were decimated with the average household losing ¼ of their annual income.
  - Married couple families lost, on average, more than $20,000 per year

- Poverty levels got worse in every category
  - Child poverty rates surged from 16% to 30%

- Unemployment more than doubled from 5.6% to 13.0%

- More of the Slavic community lost their homes
  - Homeownership rates dropped from 57.6% to 54.4%
 - The average Slavic homeowner lost $100,000 of home equity in three years; the White community lost $24,000

**Slavic Employment in "Good" and "Bad" Jobs, Multnomah County**

Management & professional: 43.5% in 2008, 23.7% in 2011

Service: 11.2% in 2008, 21.9% in 2011

White Employment in "Good" and "Bad" Jobs, Multnomah County

Management & professional: 43.6% in 2008, 46% in 2011
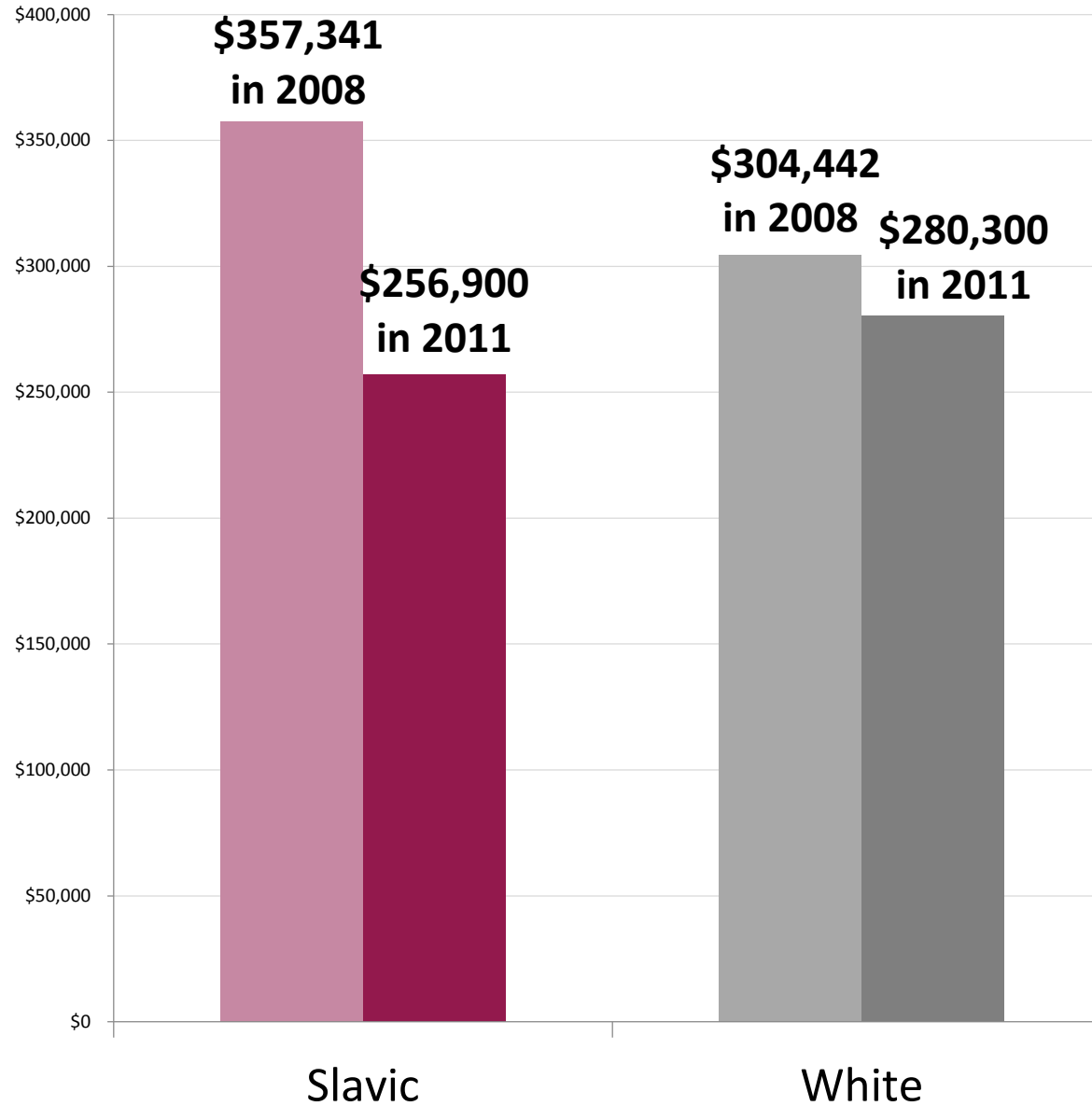
Service: 14.3% in 2008, 15% in 2011
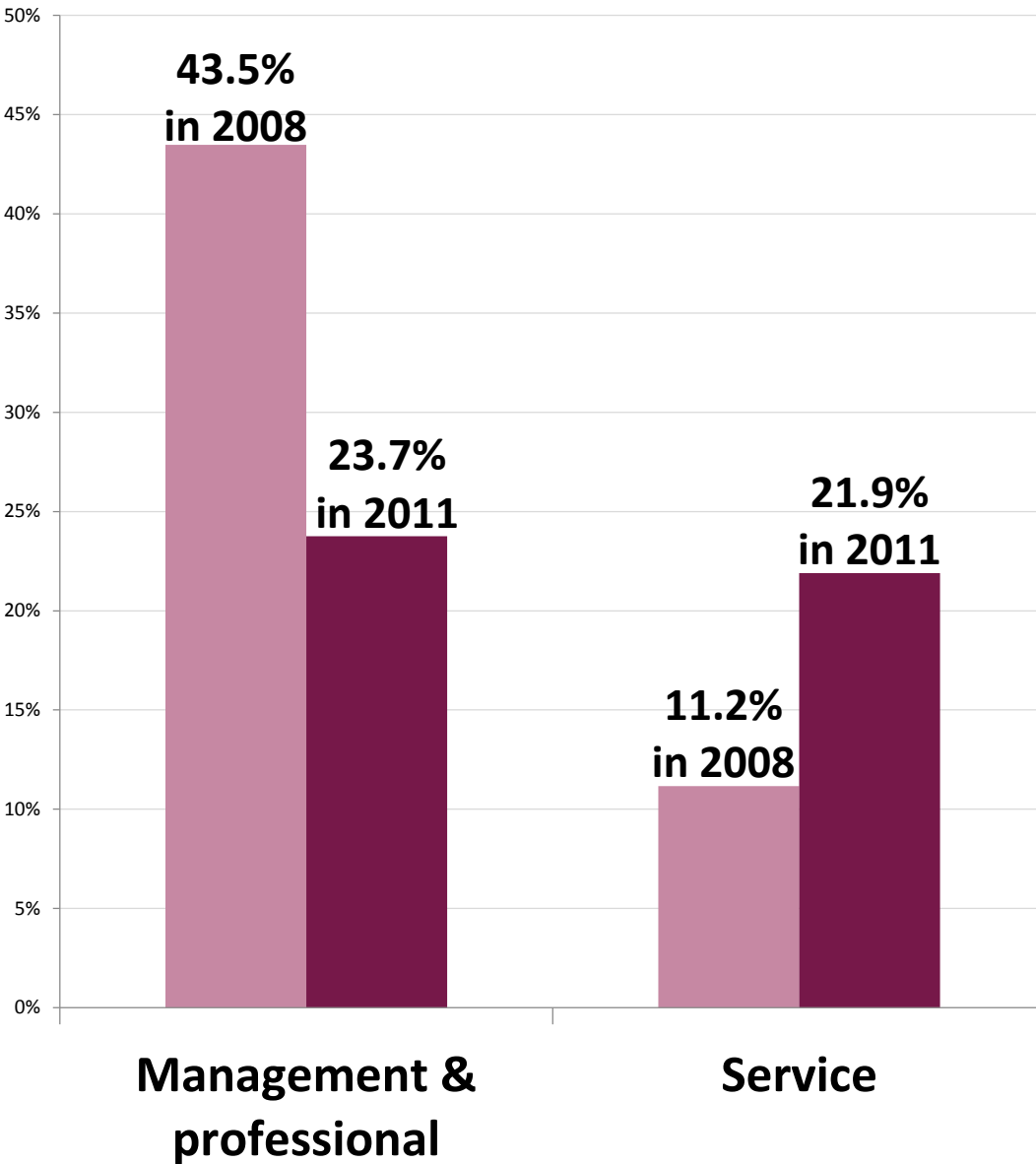
Rapidly Worsening Poverty Rates, Multnomah County, 2008 and 2011
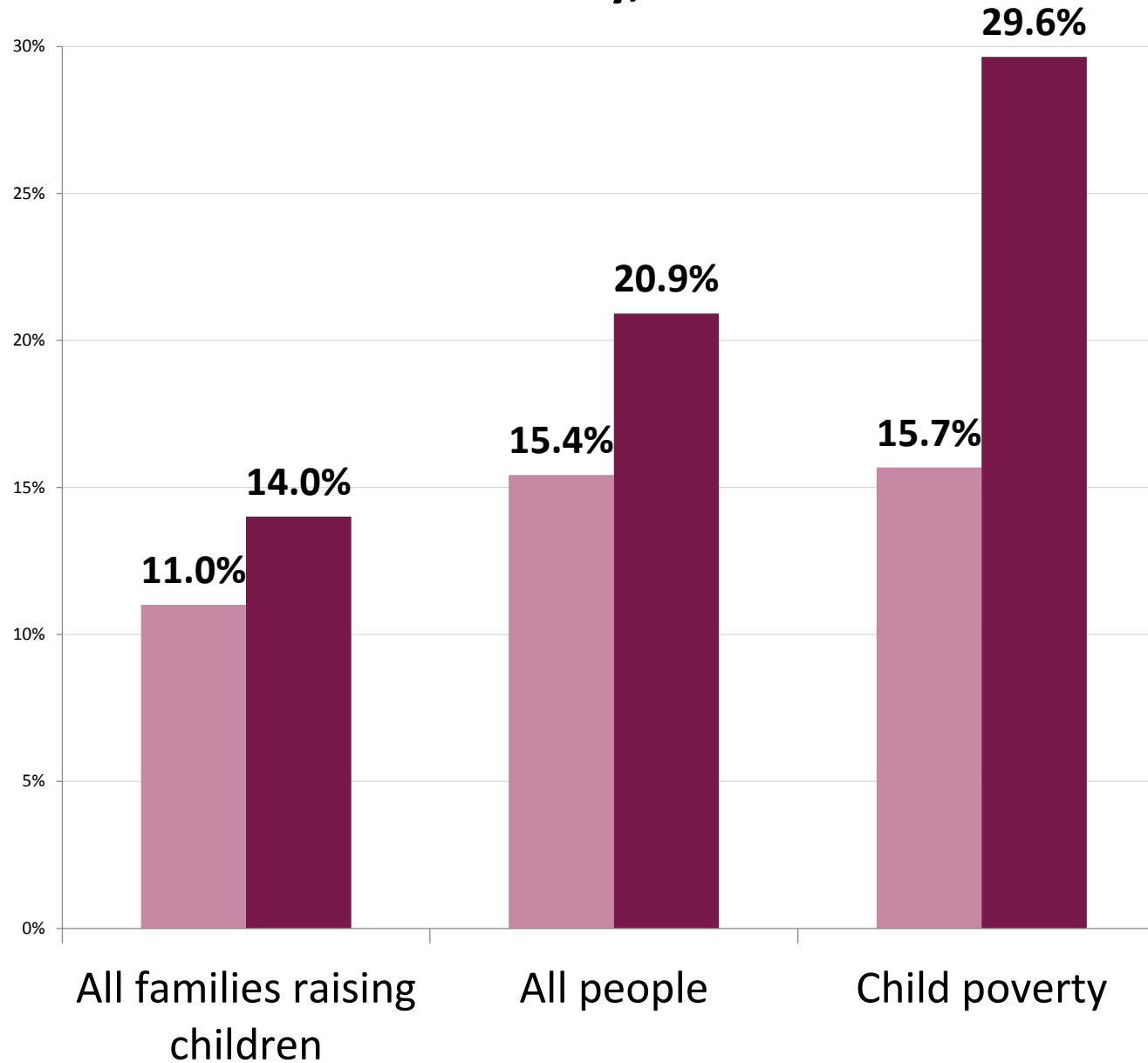
Unemployment Rates, Multnomah County, 2008 & 2011
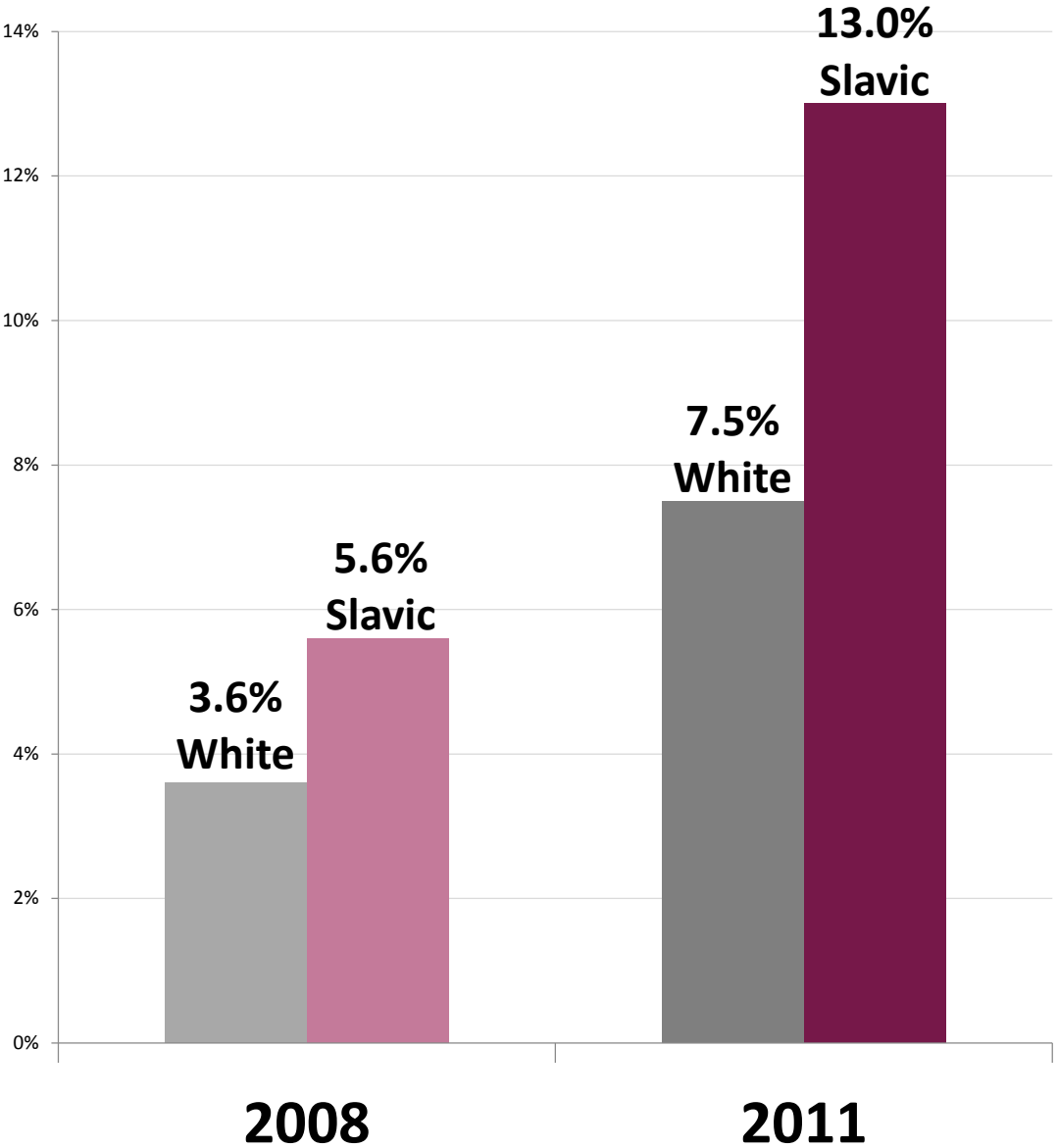
Value of Owned Homes, Multnomah County (in 2011 constant dollars)

$357,341 in 2008

$256,900 in 2011

$304,442 in 2008

$280,300 in 2011

Slavic

White

Summary: Community's Precarious Situation

• Urgent need for investments, visibility, services, engagement in public policy

Recommendations

1. **Data Systems -** Add "Slavic" as a racial category in all City data systems, including City contracts

2. **Workforce -** Increase the hiring, retention and promotion of Slavic workers in the City

3. **Communications -** Develop Slavic-specific communication materials and strategies to increase awareness in the Slavic community about City services

4. **Capacity-Building –** Invest in partnerships with the Slavic community to build the community's capacity to increase community outcomes and provide wraparound culturally-specific services.

Additional Recommendations…