

In Need of a Long Welcome: Supporting the Integration of Newcomers to Portland

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New study for New Portlanders Policy Council

- Comprehensive, strengths-based review of experiences
 - About 160 pages; more than 250 references
 - Chapters cover
 - Policy history
 - Updated disparities
 - Foreign born newcomers compared to white population
 - Foreign born newcomers of color compared with white newcomers
 - Middle Eastern community
 - Literature review of best practices for newcomer integration
 - Myth busting
 - Best practices for newcomer integration
 - Quantitative data on the Middle Eastern community
 - **Five community profiles... asset based**
 - Indigenous Latinos
 - Iraqi refugees
 - Iranians
 - Tongans
 - Somalis
 - Policy recommendations



Key Finding #1: Arrival Conditions

- Optimism
 - “Immigrants and refugees arrive in the USA full of enthusiasm, confident they will manifest their dreams of a better life, particularly for their children”
- Early learning
 - Untapped asset of experiences and depths of knowledge to address problems and conflicts
- Later learning
 - Resource that is let down by the social, educational and economic systems in the region

#2: Stark disparities with whites

- Earn \$15,000 less per year than White households
- Poverty rate 2.6 times worse
- Employed in low pay sectors
- Education attainment – $\frac{1}{3}$ of newcomers lack a high school diploma (compared to $\frac{1}{14}$ of whites)

#3: Consequences of “untapped assets”

- Economic loss to the region
 - If no racial gaps in income/employment existed
 - Extra \$10.83 Billion (7.3%) in economic activity would exist in Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton in 2012 (as per Policy Link)
 - If incomes increase, workers have money in their pockets
 - Stronger economic multiplier than with more affluent workers
 - “Propensity to spend” almost double among lower income earners (Parker et al, 2008)
- Narrows new economic activities
 - Newcomers generate high levels of small businesses
 - 3% in Portland metro region, slightly lower than US-born (3.7%) (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012)
 - But many cities have stronger data – Baltimore, Detroit, San Antonio, St. Louis, Chicago, Washington...
 - Minority businesses
 - Hire diversely, at more than $\frac{3}{4}$ workers of color
 - Build new markets as 2xs more likely to export (US Dept of Commerce, Minority Business Dev. Agency)

“Untapped assets” increases economic “drag”

■ Costs of unemployment

- Are less likely to...
 - Pay taxes
 - Support their family's potential
- Are more likely to...
 - Be in ill health, be poor, be incarcerated due to property crimes, be involved in child welfare, be involved in addiction

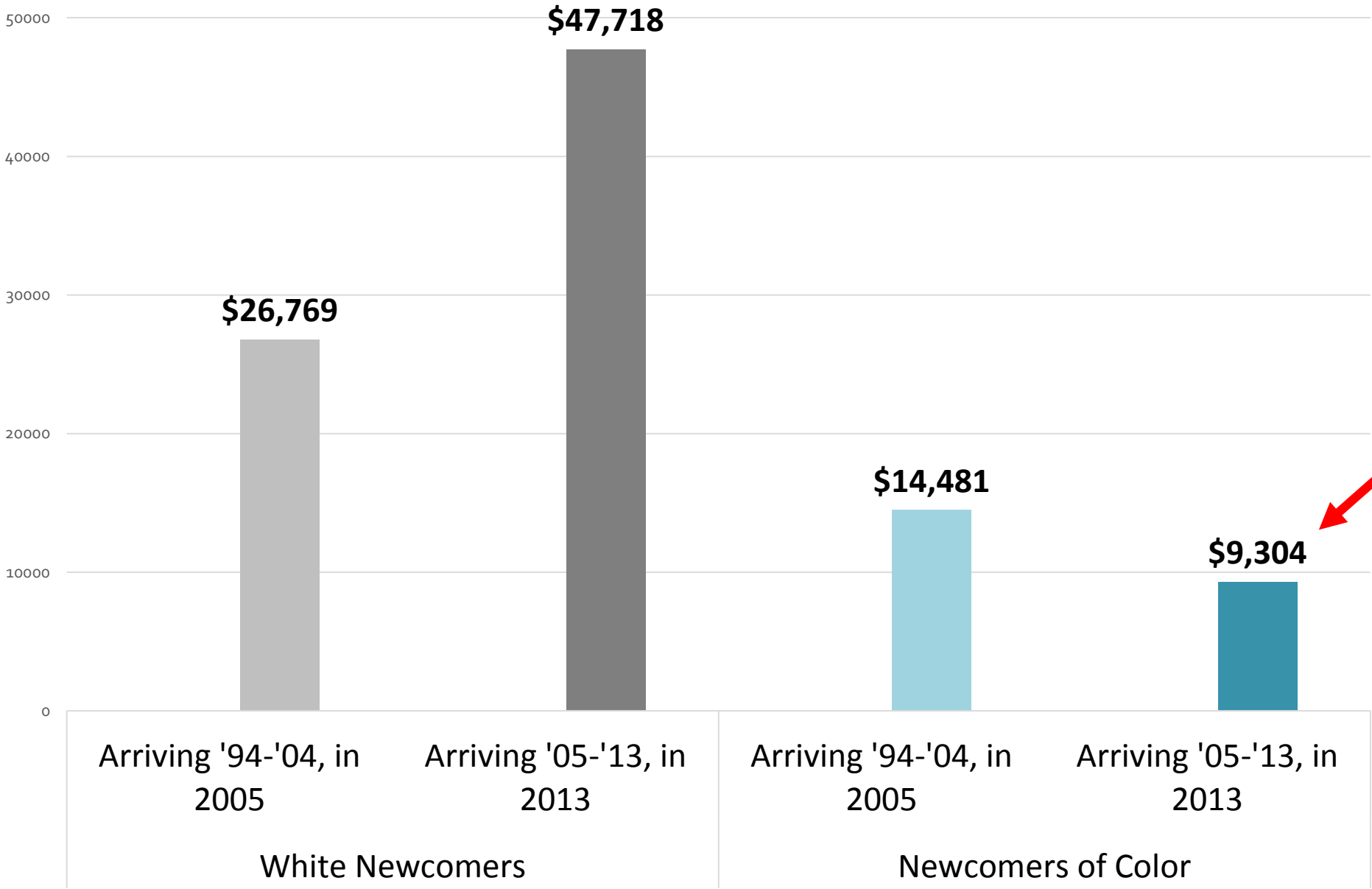
■ Poverty

- Poverty drags down the economy by 4% of GDP (US GAO, 2007)
- Child poverty estimated to cost us 4% of GDP (Center for American Progress, 2007)

#4: Urgency to support newcomers of color

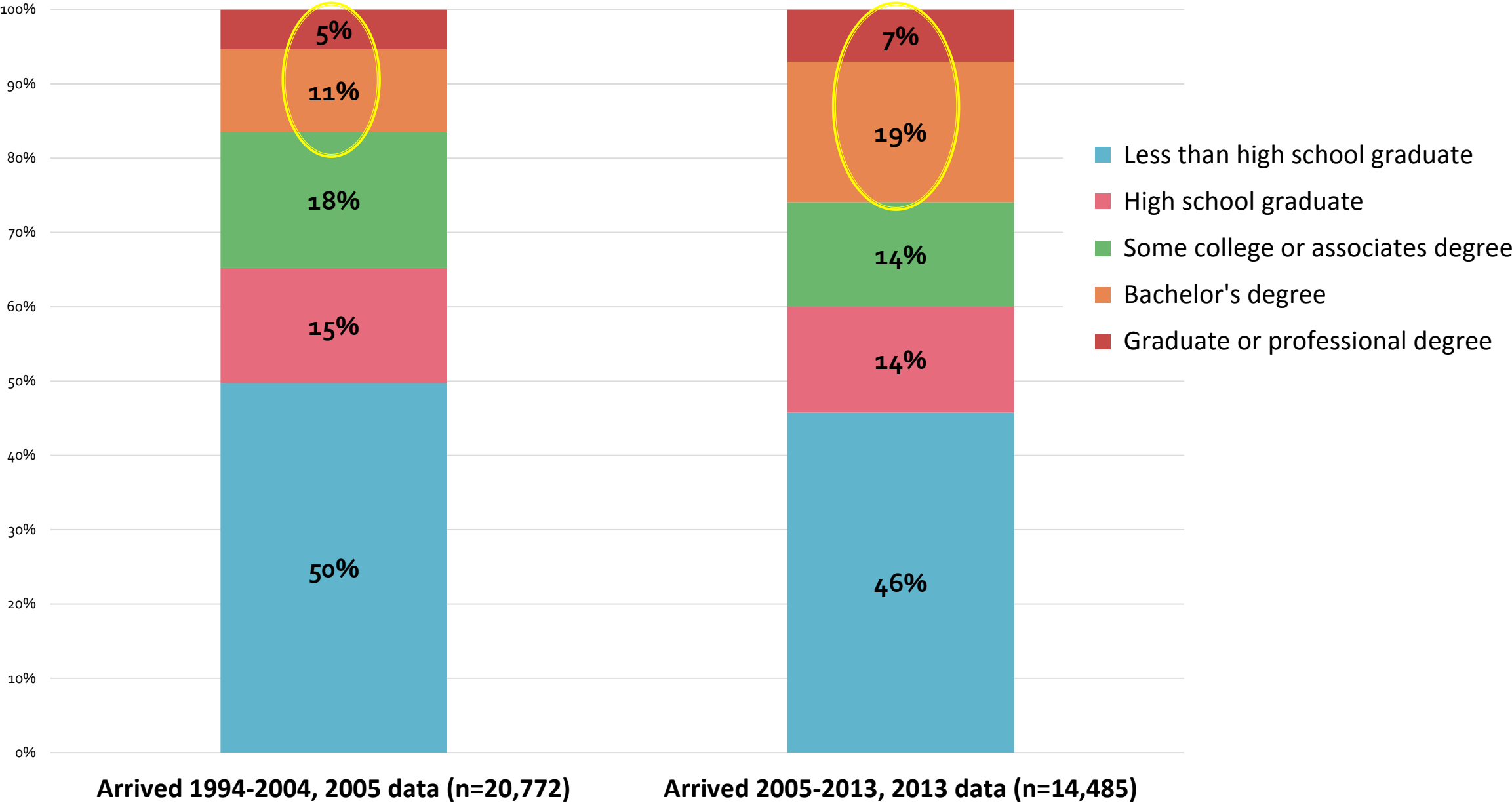
- Getting a foothold is much tougher than a decade ago, with disparities deteriorating
 - DESPITE having much higher education levels...

**Recent Newcomer Incomes, 2005 and 2013,
Whites compared to Immigrants of Color (all in 2013 dollars)**



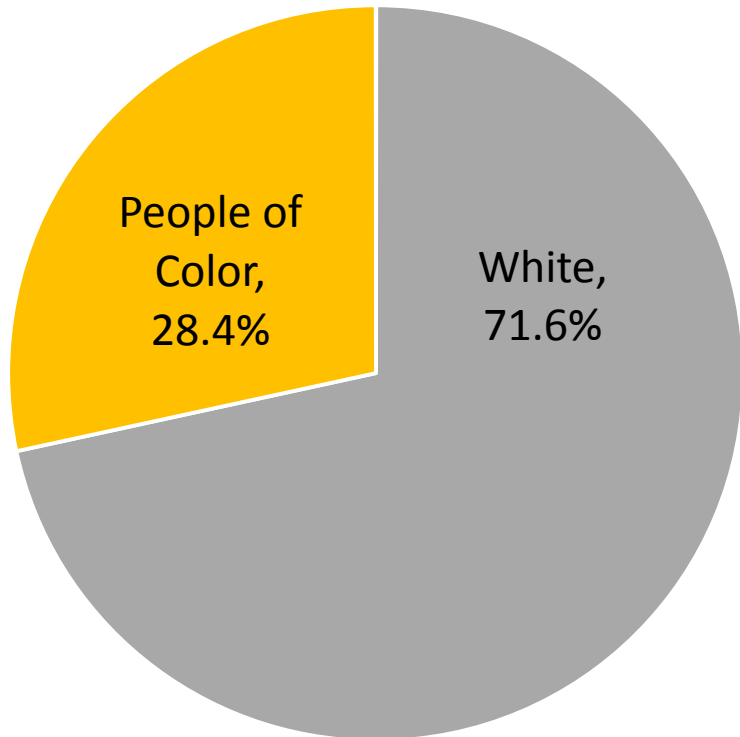
**Educational Attainment of Most Recently-Arrived Immigrants of Color (Age 25+),
Multnomah County, 2005 and 2013**

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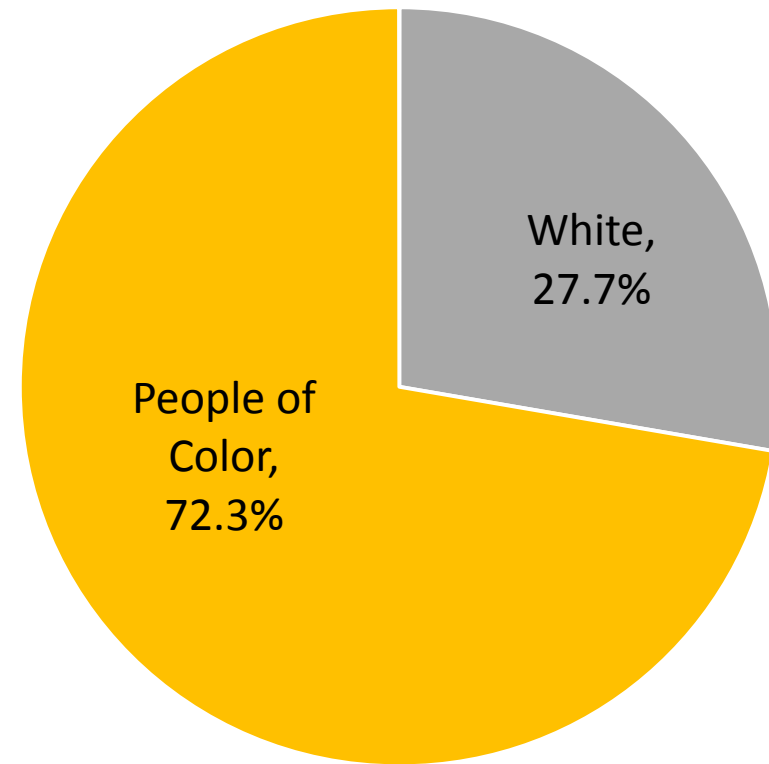


Reach of this pattern?

Multnomah County's Population,
2014



Multnomah County's
Immigrant Population, 2014



#5: Local & current history – highs and lows of supports for newcomers

- Great initiatives under the leadership of Mayor Tom Potter
 - Policing
 - Deep partnerships with the police, particularly the “Community Policing Agreements” that built, among other initiatives, culturally specific law enforcement units
 - Community wants to rebuild these initiatives
 - Diversity and Civic Leadership Programs
 - Created Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs
 - Opened City Hall to democracy in practical ways
- Following was period of relative silence until...

Current enthusiasm

- Mayor Hales' efforts
 - High visibility appearances and statements
 - Resolution to support Muslim inclusion
 - Welcoming Guatemalan, Syrian, Iraqi and Afghani refugees
 - Initiating and resourcing NPPC to become a commission
- Commissioner Fritz
 - Introduced and maintains inclusion of immigrants and refugees in City of Portland's Equity Policy
 - Created and maintains Parks for New Portlanders' Program

#6: Myth Busting... a sample

- How immigrants and refugees are understood needs to improve
 - Are not a terrorist threat
 - Refugees are the most highly vetted group of those coming into the USA
 - NO refugees, and almost no immigrants, have been charged with terrorism since 9-11
 - Are not a drain on public services
 - Undocumented workers
 - 50% pay payroll taxes, and make contributions to services they cannot claim
 - Don't bring down the economy
 - If undocumented workers were removed from Oregon's economy, would reduce economic activity by \$3.4 Billion, and more than 19,000 jobs would be lost
 - Are job creators, not job takers
 - Immigrants 2xs more likely to start a new business than native born Americans

#7: Newcomer assets

- Newcomers hold diverse and rich range of experiences that should be tapped for...
 - Innovation and problem solving
 - Economic growth potential
 - Early supports while optimism is high

#8: Settlement/Resettlement Priorities

- Learning English
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Health
 - Shared values
 - Social bonds, social bridges and social links
 - Cultural identity and ethnicity
 - Safety and stability
 - Civic participation
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- ... in other words, a welcoming and inclusive environment, alongside supports for adaptation and improved support for basic human needs

How to measure settlement success

- **Labor Market Mobility:** Are immigrants employed in qualified and well-paid jobs?
- **Education:** How well are children of immigrants achieving at school?
- **Political Participation:** Are immigrants participating in political life?
- **Access to Nationality:** How often do immigrants become citizens?
- **Family Reunion:** How often do immigrants reunite with family?
- **Health:** Is the health system responsive to immigrants' needs?
- **Permanent Residents:** How often do immigrants become permanent residents?
- **Anti-Discrimination:** Complaints of racial/ethnic and religious discrimination?

Recommendation #1: Public Leadership Stance

- For public leaders to proactively affirm that 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

#2: Build an inclusive environment in Portland

- Asset-oriented awareness campaign
 - That busts myths
 - That emphasizes capacities
 - That shares leaders' commitments
 - That identifies benefits for all

#3: Build Culturally Responsive Services

- Definition
 - Respectful of, and relevant to, the beliefs, practices, culture and linguistic needs of the community
 - Describes the capacity to respond to the issues of the community, and requires knowledge and capacity at the systemic, organizational, professional and individual levels
- Success depends on
 - Organizational collaboration and partnerships with culturally specific organizations
 - Ensuring the organization is accessible to and inclusive of those being served
- Evidence-based outcomes
 - Evaluation and accountability are thorough

#4: Workforce Supports

- Recognition of foreign credentials
 - Task Force status recommended
 - Many are being pushed into entry level positions and cannot find recertification options
 - Our survey of 72 African adults = 45.6% had international experience not recognized in the USA
- Awareness campaigns should improve employer attitudes

#5: Housing Access and Retention

- Affordable housing is a priority
- More immediate is to repair the cultural bias in the housing code
 - Create a Task Force to address
 - Housing occupancy rules that contradict cultural norms
 - Protect from sanctions that are the result of bias, communications challenges and cultural practices

Final Note

- Recent survey by Amnesty International (27,000 sample, 1000 in USA)
 - 63% of Americans want their government to do more to help refugees

How close would Americans personally accept people fleeing war or persecution? (Amnesty International, 2016)

