



African Immigrants & Refugees in Multnomah County

Djimet Dogo, Manager, Africa House

Koffi Dessou, Africa House Board of Directors

Lee Po Cha, Associate Director, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
(IRCO)

Dr. Ann Curry-Stevens, School of Social Work, Portland State University



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



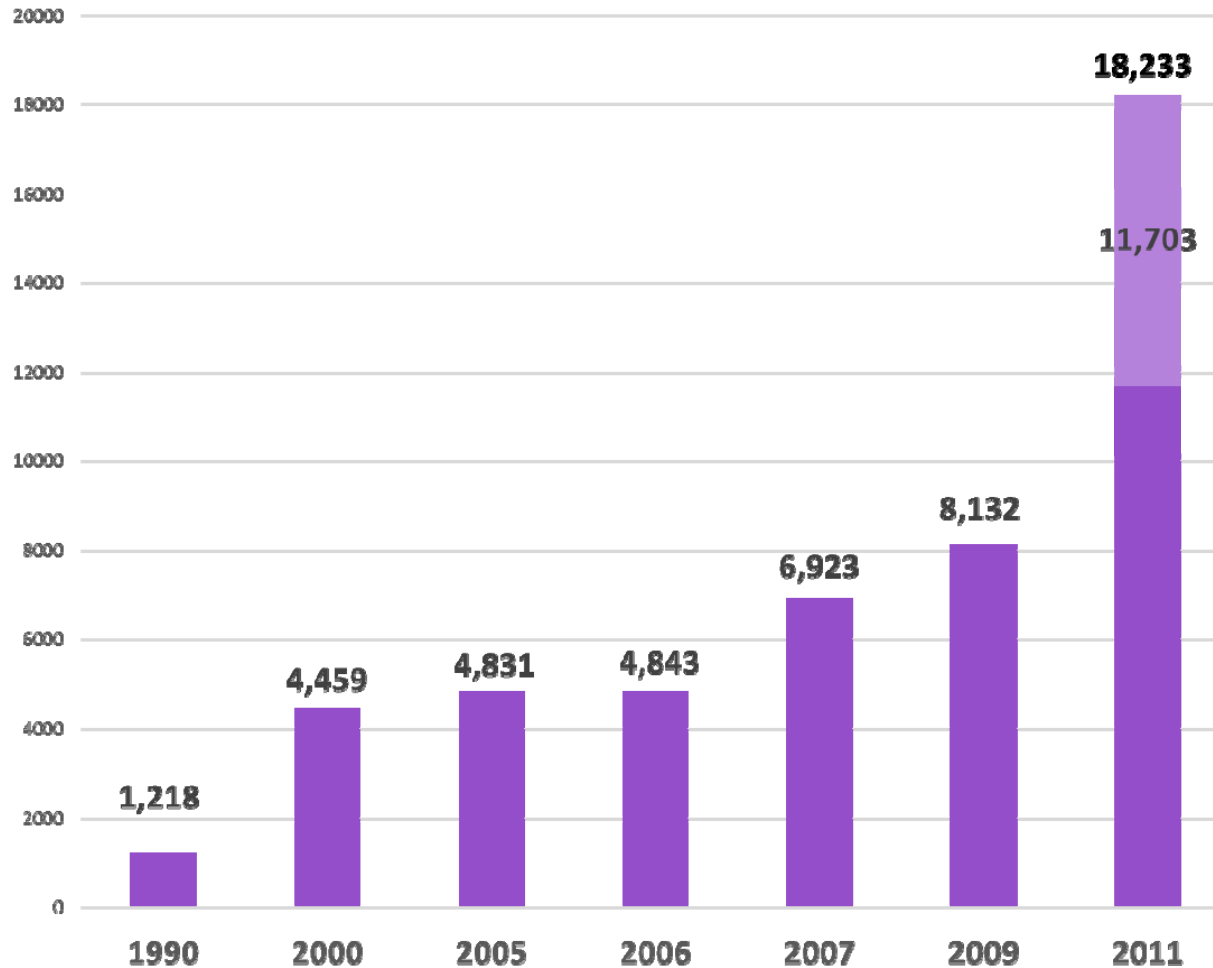
Summary of Findings

- Pronounced disparities
 - With Whites pronounced
 - With Africans nationwide
- Economic struggles severe
 - Incomes very low
 - Very high poverty levels, rapidly deteriorating
- High distress in employment
 - Highly educated, underemployed, underpaid
 - Not gaining jobs prepared for
- Community remains invisible due to data systems
- Rapidly growing community

Population growing quickly

- Birthrate almost double that of Whites (at 7.6% versus 4.7% annually among women of childbearing years)
- 1-in-5 refugees into Oregon are from Africa
- And significantly undercounted
 - Our estimates are 55.7% based on differences in administrative systems between Census Bureau and ODE database, and for adults – our own participation survey in Census 2010
 - Smaller than published undercount of 85.5% through administrative variations including arrival records, birth records, survey data and local narratives

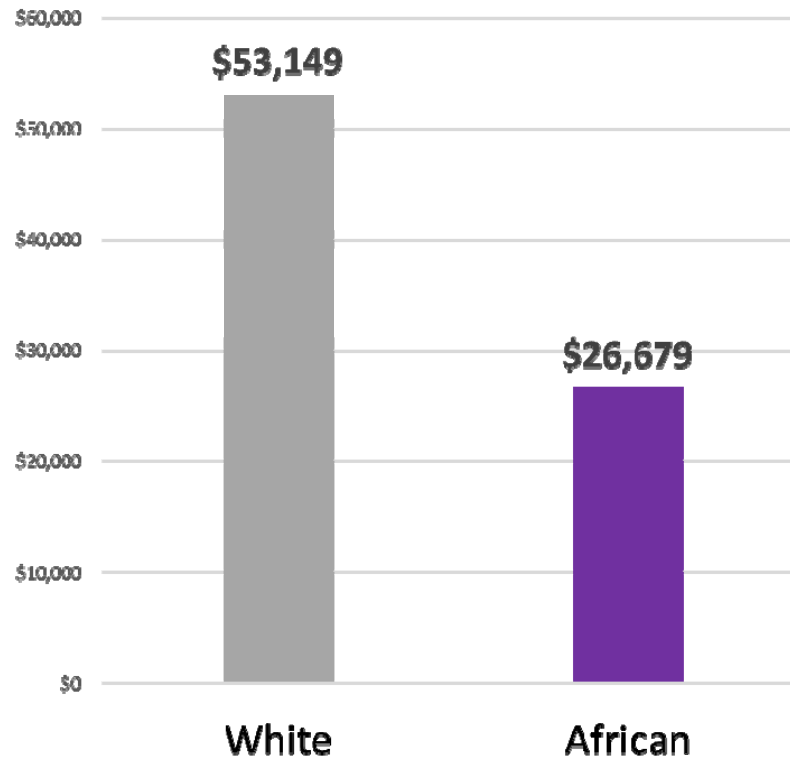
African Population, Multnomah County



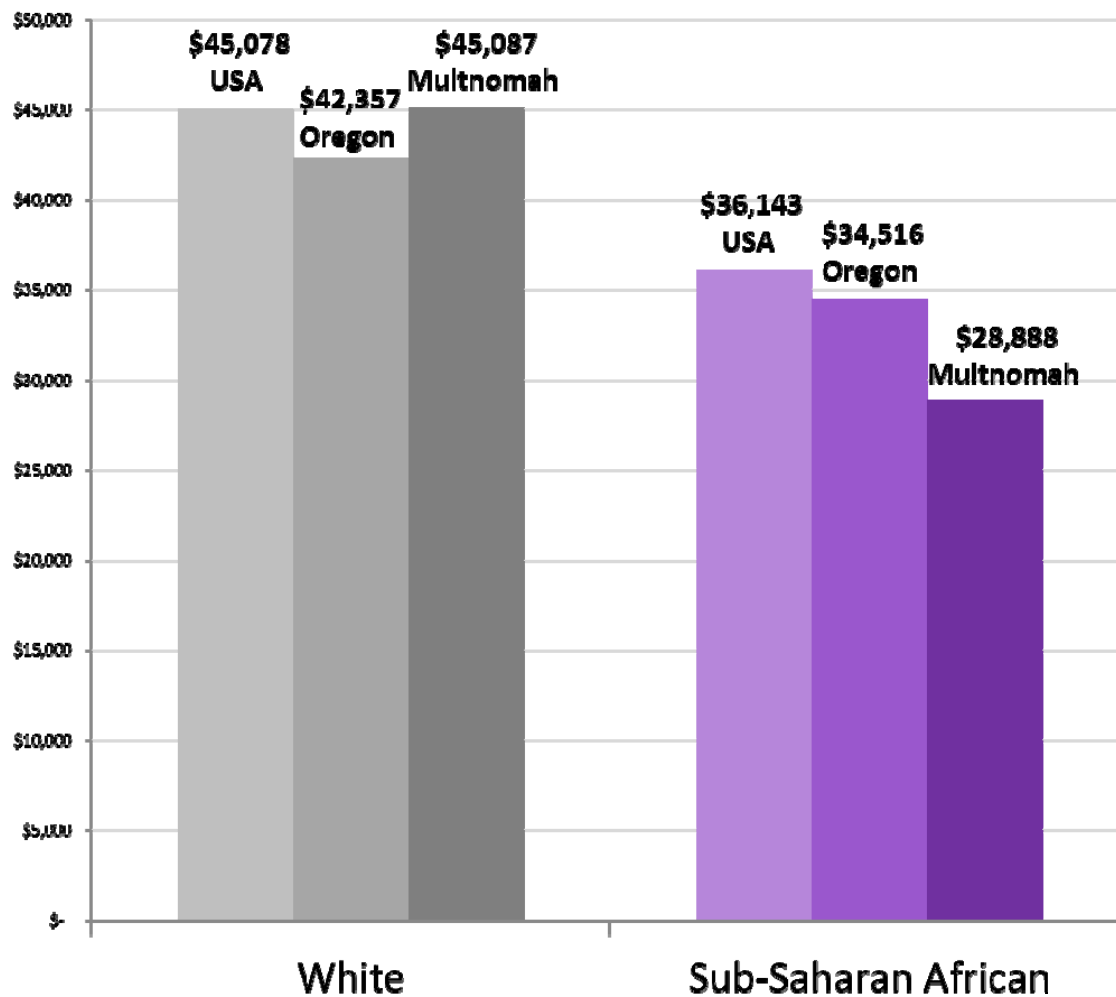
And growing rapidly
at almost twice the
rate of White
community (7.6% of
4.7% of women
annually)

Economic Struggles

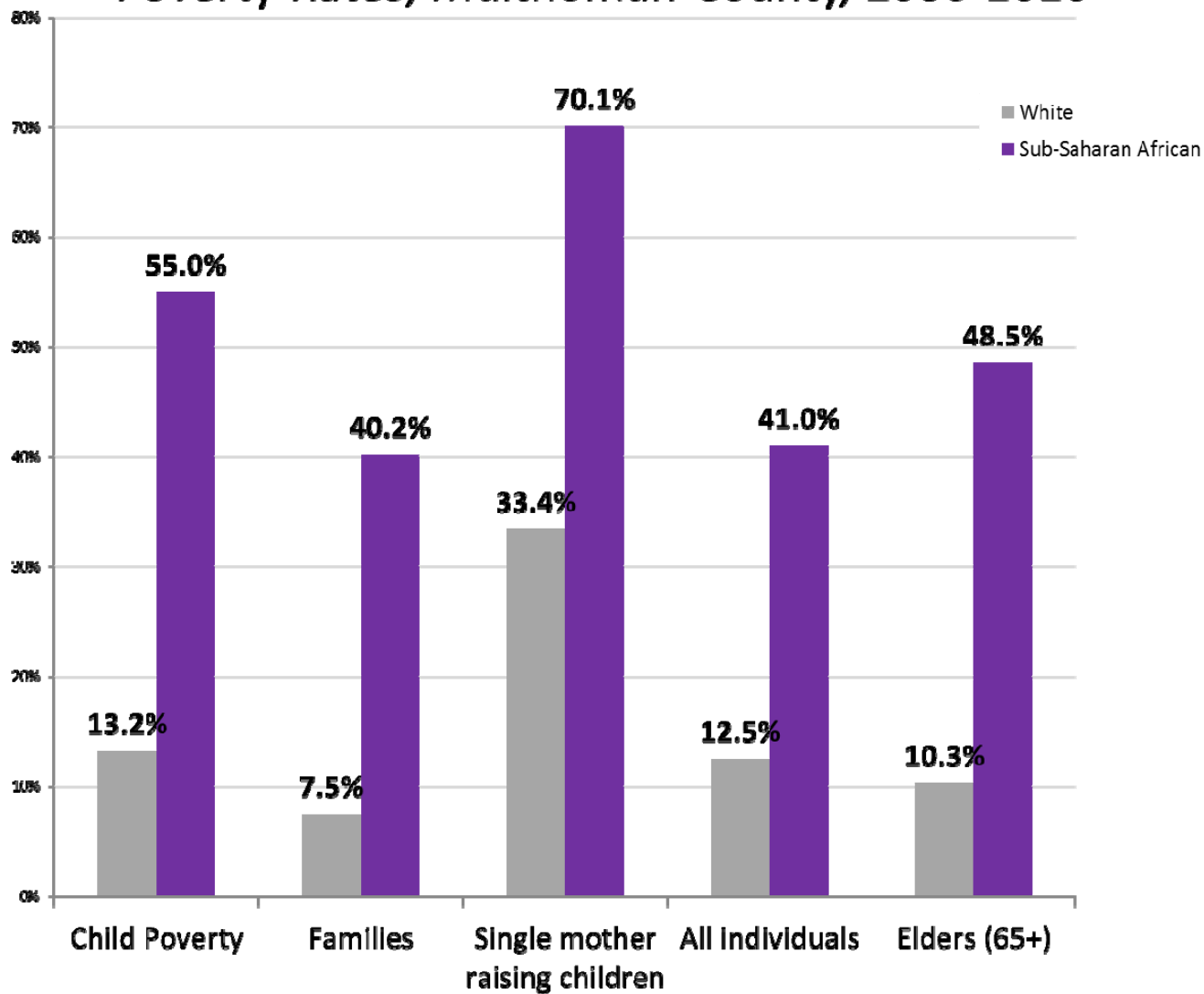
Annual household income,
Multnomah County, 2008



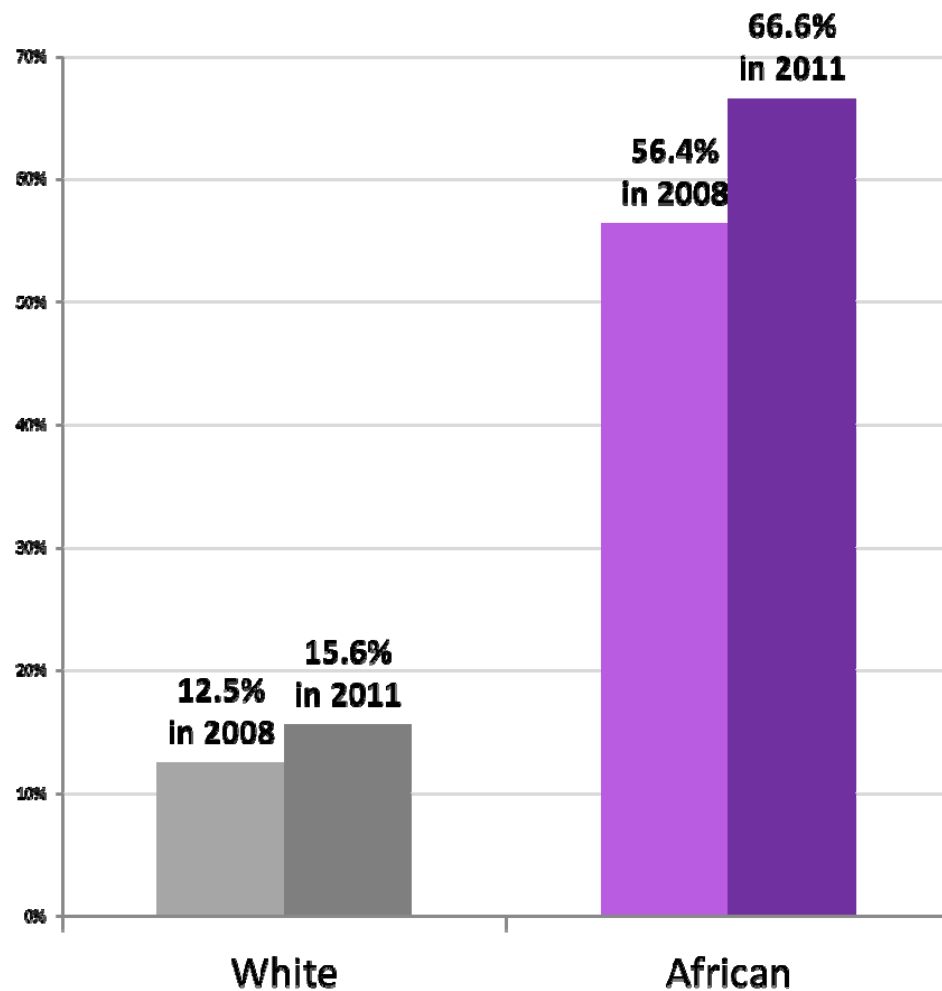
Earnings, Full-time Year-Round Workers, 2006-2010



Poverty Rates, Multnomah County, 2006-2010

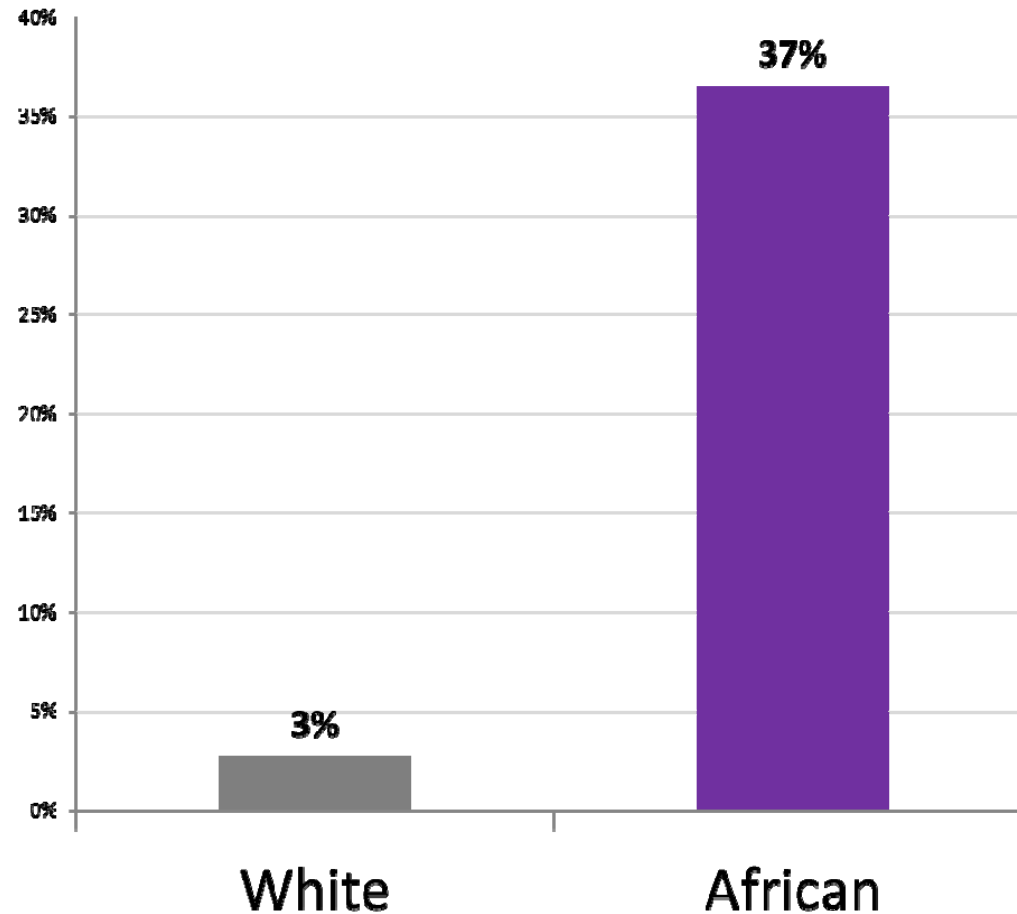


Child Poverty, Multnomah County

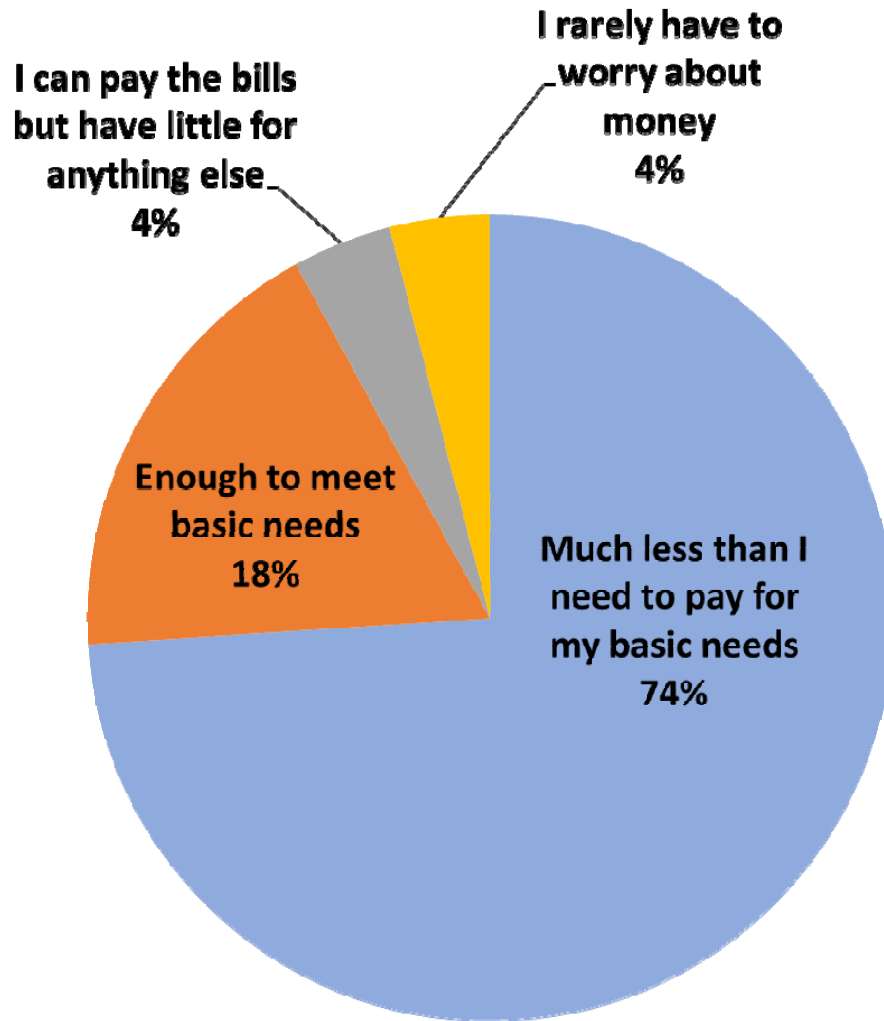


Deepened
Marginalization by
Language...

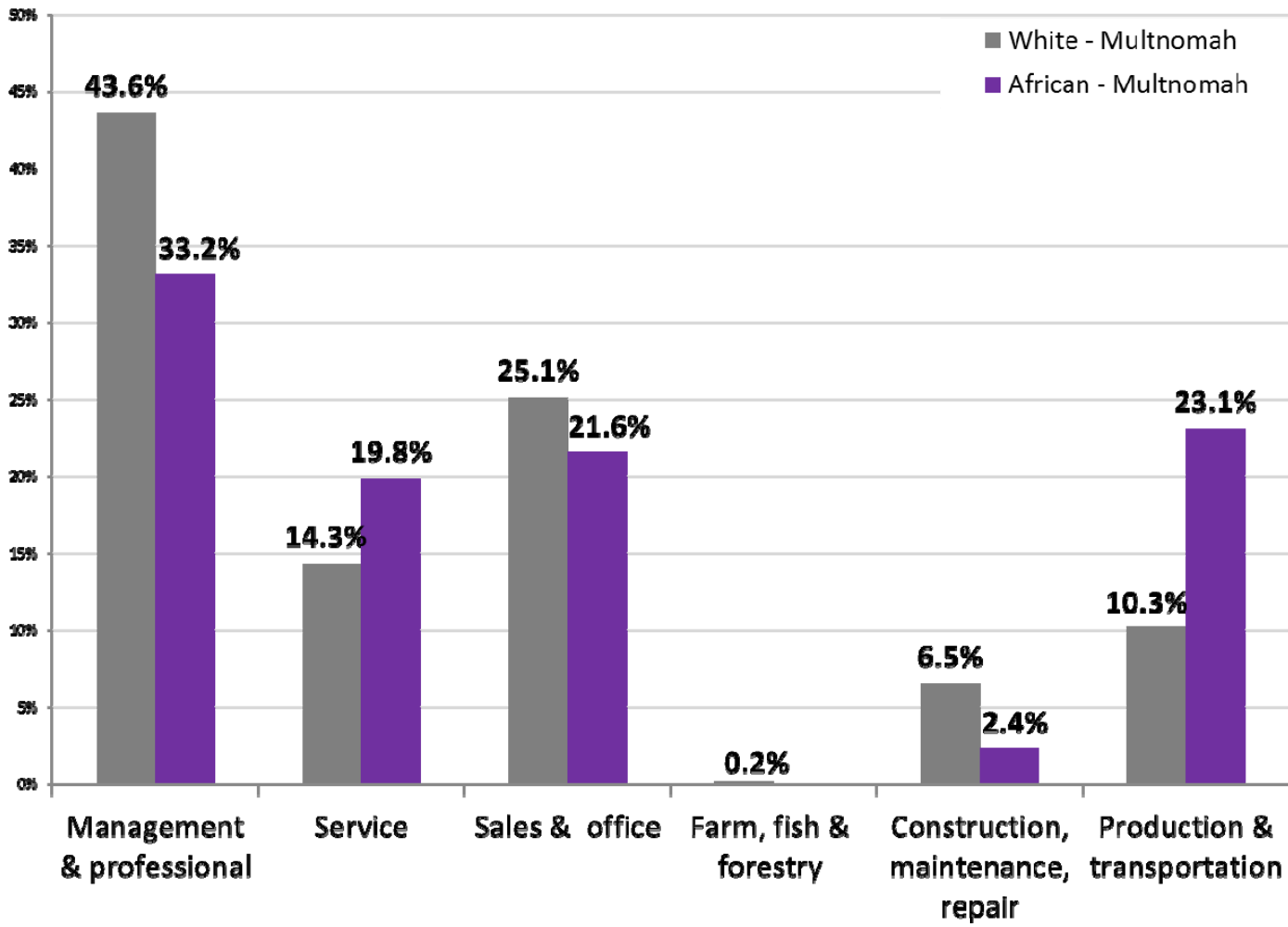
Speak English "Less Than Very Well" Multnomah County, 2006/10



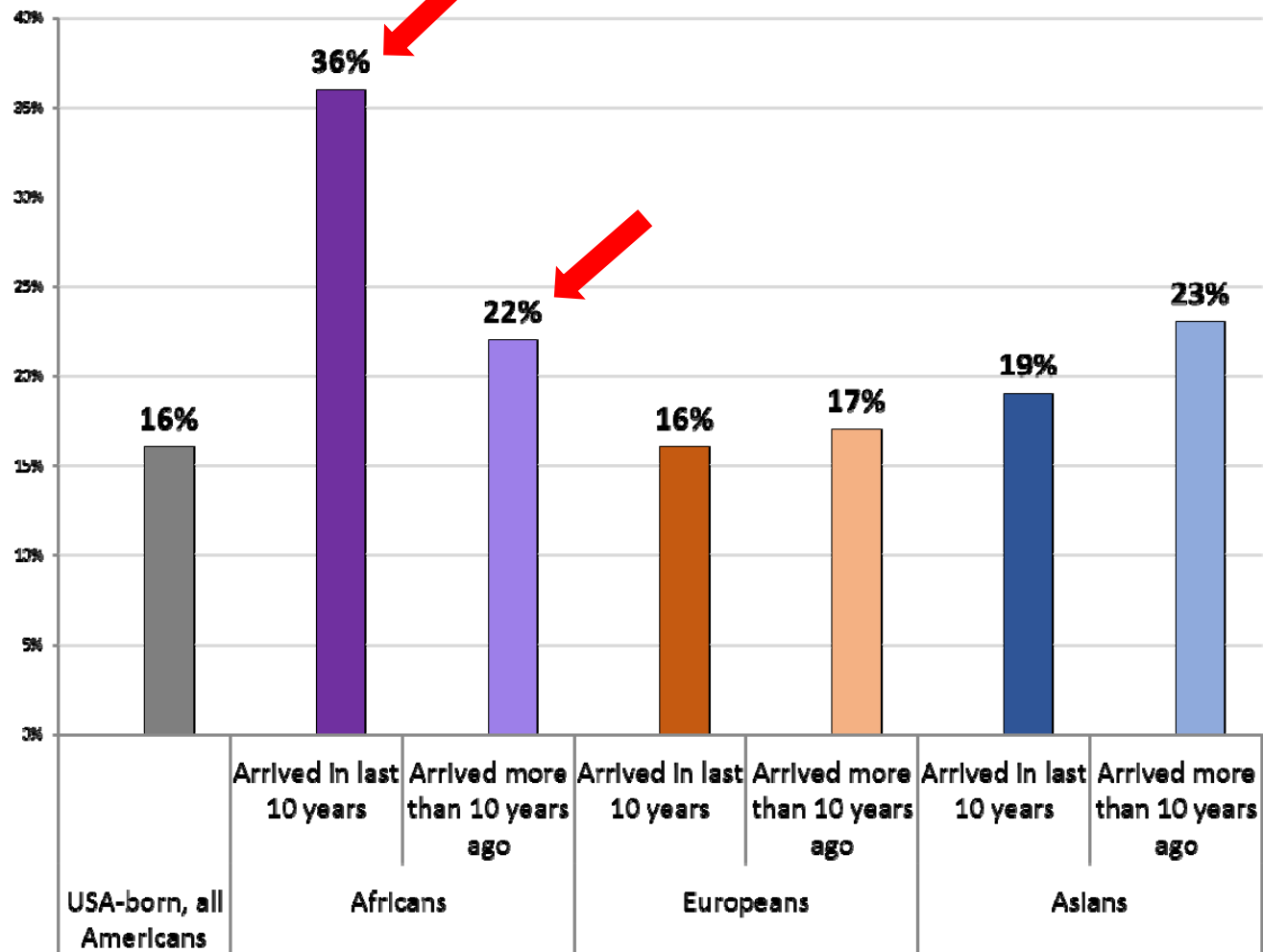
Economic Situation, African, Multnomah County, 2011



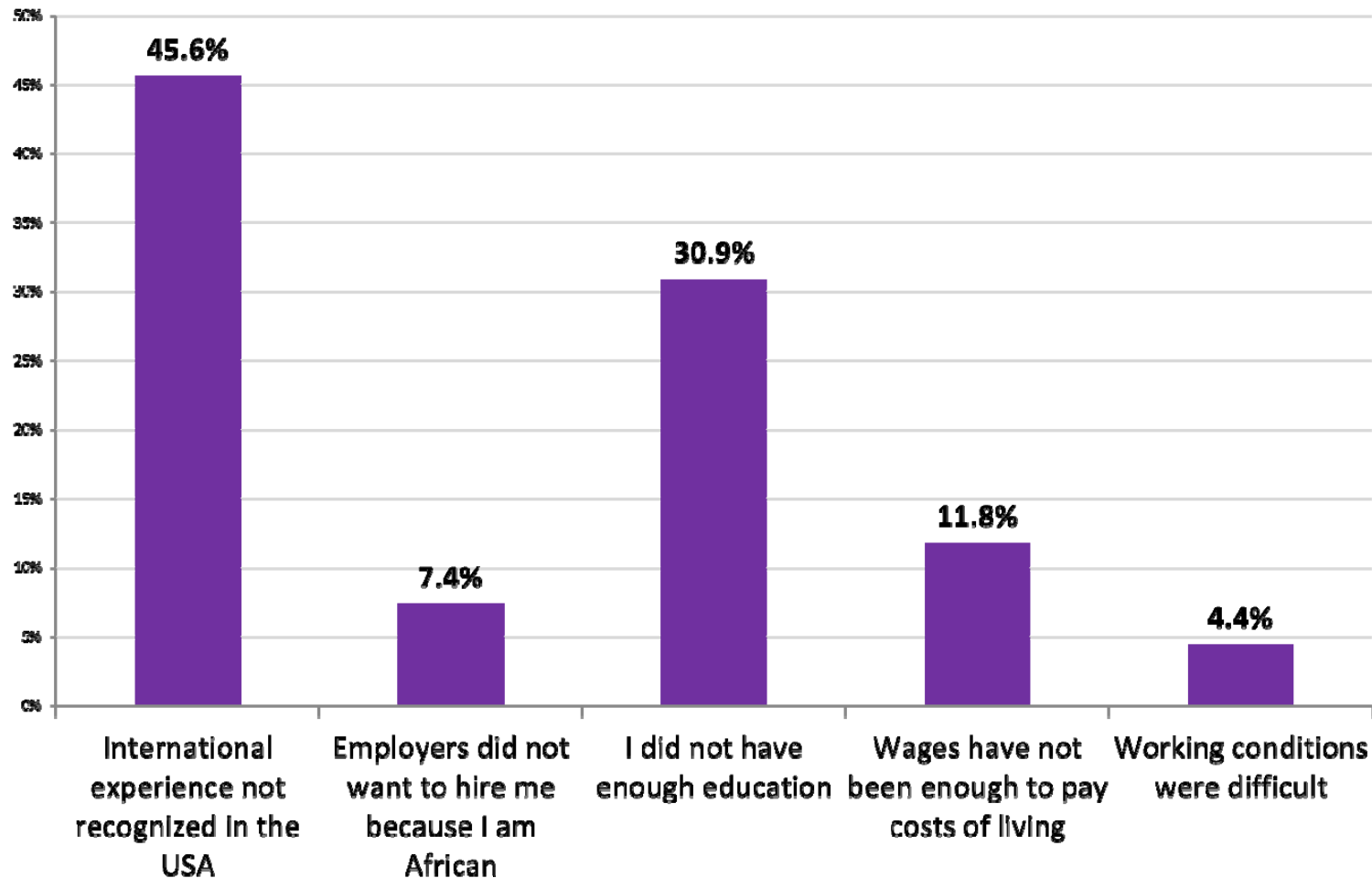
Occupational Profile, Whites & Africans, 2008



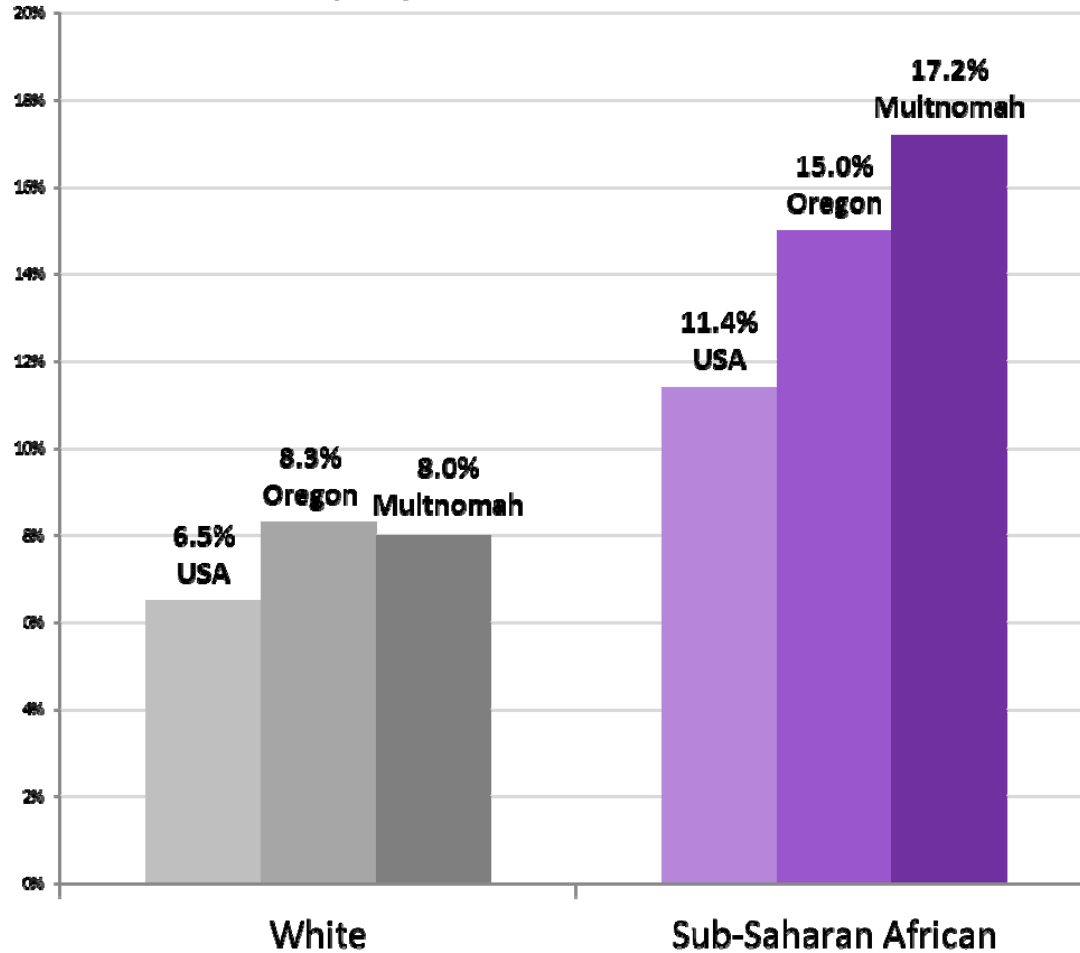
Share of High-Skilled US Immigrants working in Unskilled Jobs, 2009, USA



Barriers faced by Africans in Employment, Multnomah County, 2011



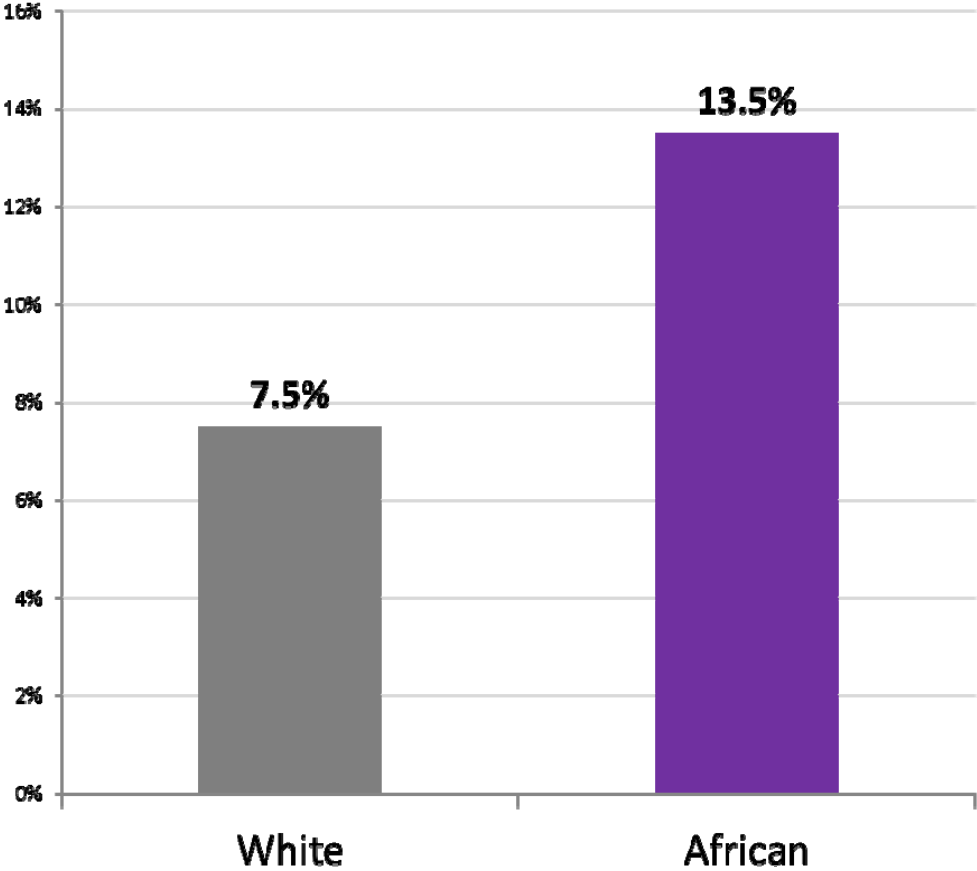
Unemployment Rates, 2006-2010



Local Health Disparities

- Minimal visibility of needs
 - Difficult to identify needs and support getting formal help
 - Oregon Health Authority's Office of Equity & Inclusion beginning to identify this community
- Informal supports exist but are reduced when Africans leave Portland
- Refugee health needs
 - 20% of immigrants, and 44% of refugees suffer from depression and anxiety disorders, compared to 7% in population
- Access barriers
 - Language, health provider bias, knowing resources
 - "Most health services are ripe with mistrust, stigma, too high costs, and clinician bias" (US Surgeon General, 1999)
- Hospital culture
 - Disrespect, fear, humiliation, longer waits, and racism not uncommon
- Locally-specific needs exist
 - Education on local laws, rights, services and customs

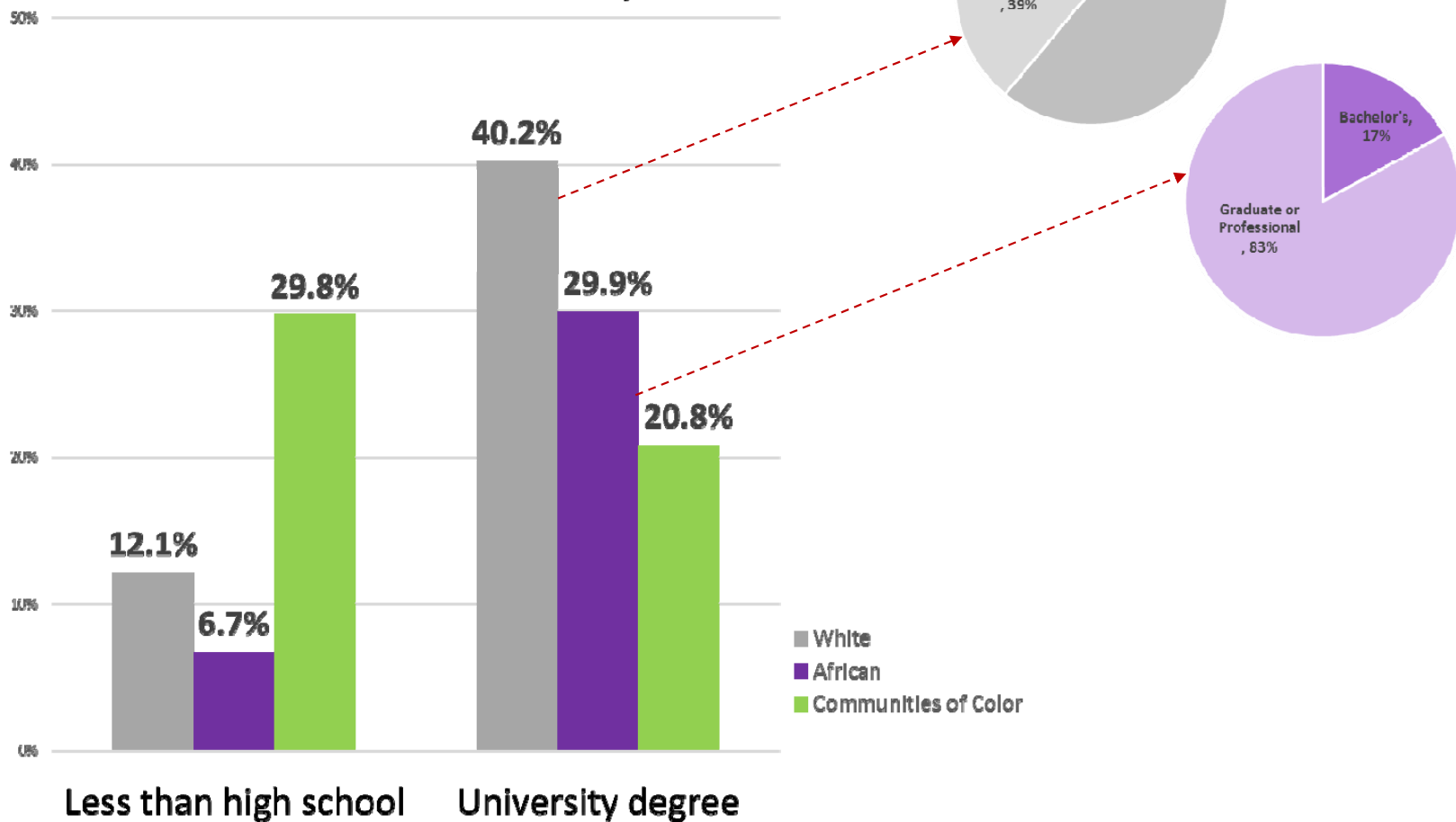
Without Health Insurance,
Multnomah County, 2011



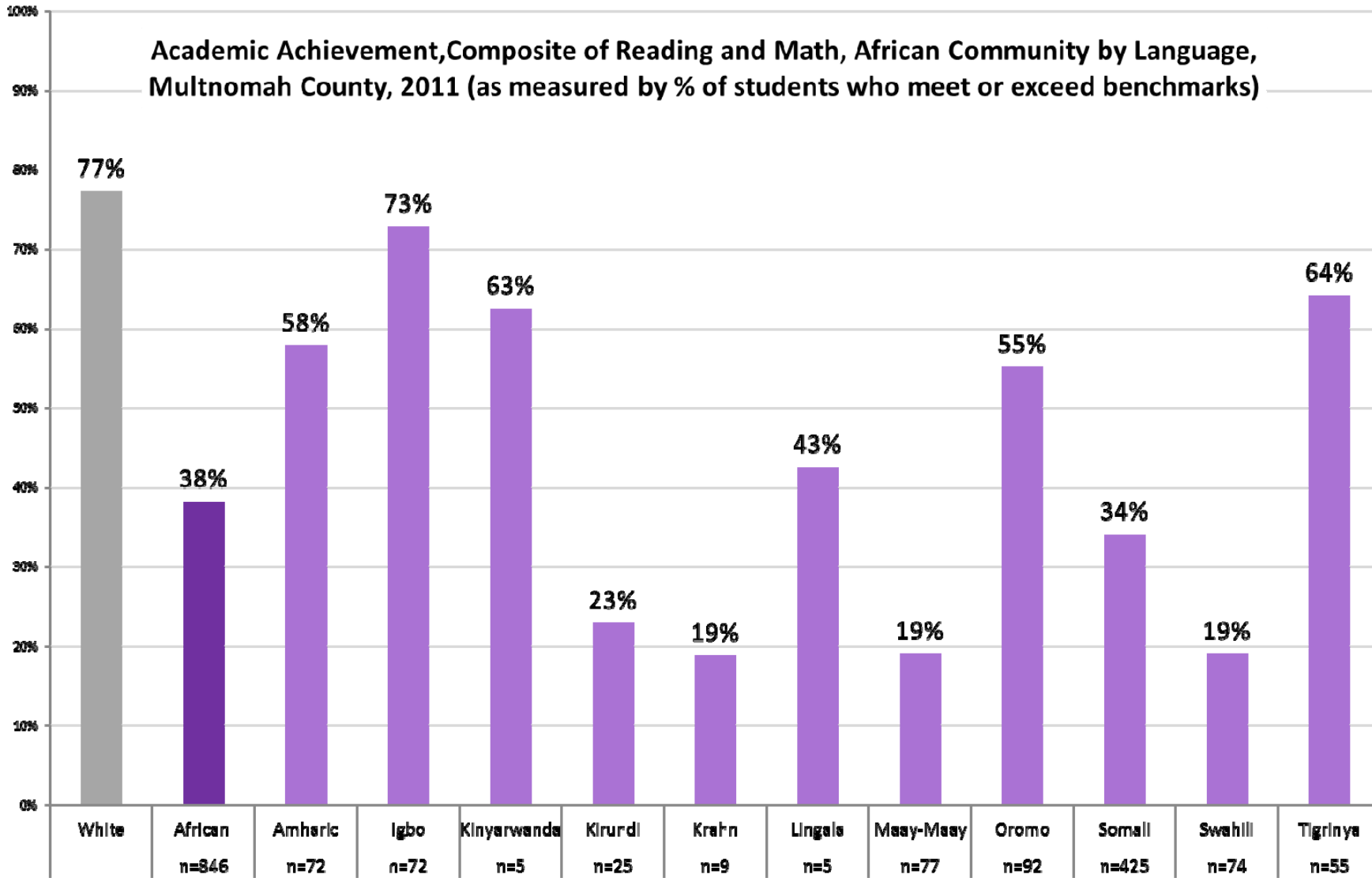
Education

- Highly educated, especially at graduate level
- Growing numbers...
 - Not completing high school
 - Not going further than high school
- Deeply troubling for some African communities

Educational Attainment, Multnomah County, 2008



Academic Achievement, Composite of Reading and Math, African Community by Language, Multnomah County, 2011 (as measured by % of students who meet or exceed benchmarks)



See p.50 of report for countries tied to these languages

Data Systems and Visibility

- Community invisible – encompassed under “African American” or “Black”
- Language (in education system data) helps identification
 - But as proxy measure, has challenges
- Need to be able to disaggregate
 - By refugee status
 - By ancestry
 - By year of arrival in USA
- Also remember this is a deeply undercounted community

Where are Africans visible?

8 of 28 systems = ¼ of systems

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

26. Criminal justice

27. Access to public housing

28. Homeless numbers

*... Meaning Africans
are invisible in ¾ of
systems!*

Successful Refugee Integration depends on...

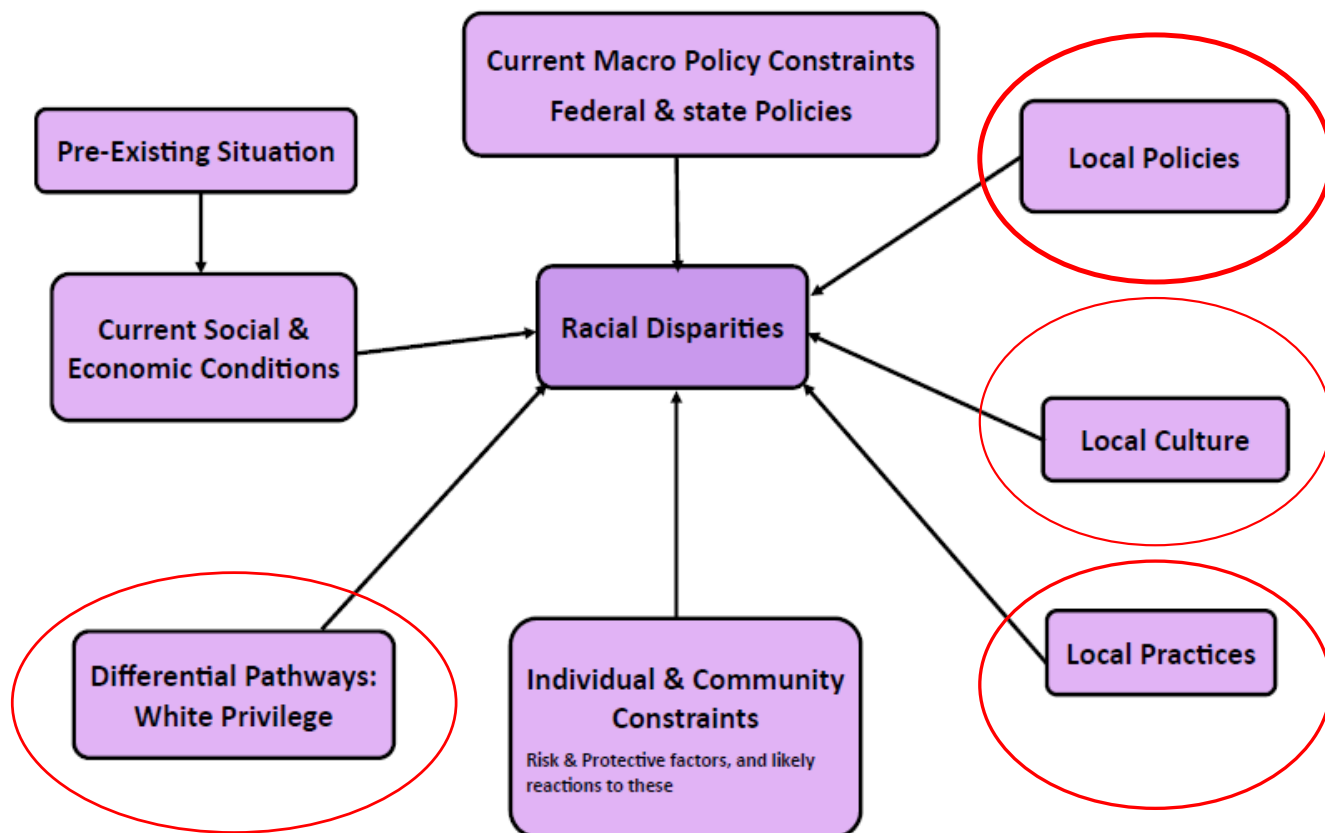
- Learning English
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Health
 - Shared values
 - Social bonds, social bridges, and social links
 - Cultural identity and ethnicity
 - Safety and stability
 - Civic participation
- *Institute for Social and Economic Development, 2007*

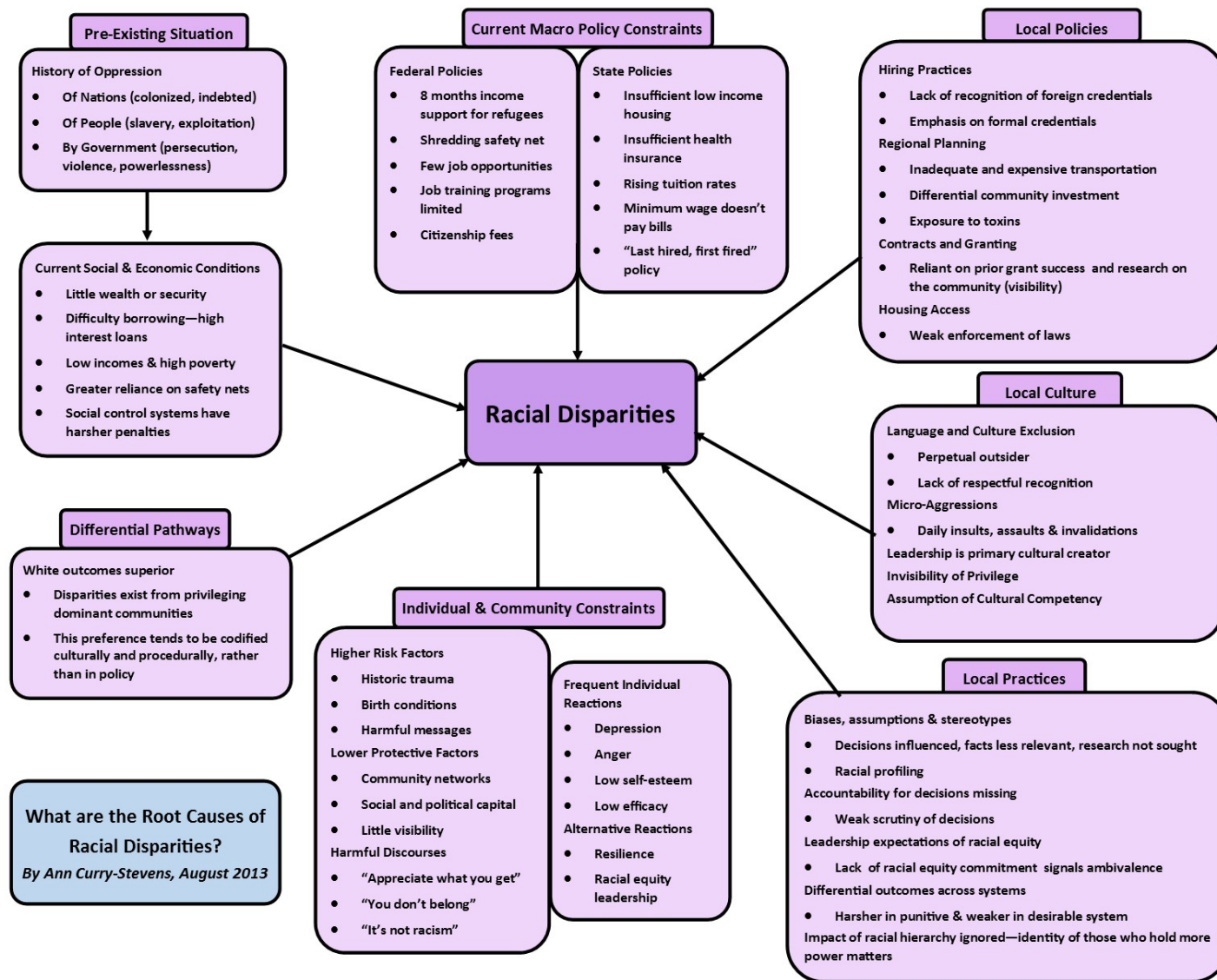
Why do disparities exist?

- Partly a function of history, and other factors beyond our control
- Local governments have influence on a wide array of policies, programs and cultural conditions
- Political leaders and administrators have the ability to use their power
 - To advance/resist reforms
 - To influence policies, practices and culture
 - Retain responsibility for enacting equity
- And all of us have the ability to influence our own formal and informal spheres

What are the Root Causes of Racial Disparities?

By Ann Curry-Stevens, August 2013





Recommendations

1. Employment

a. Recognition of foreign credentials

- Develop a pilot project for a profession such as teachers to support such credentialing
 - Would serve schools, students and African community alike
- Central clearinghouse of information on how to become credentialed
- Local model “Workforce Improvement with Immigrant Nurses” (WIIN) at Clackamas Community College

b. Employment training programs

- **Paid** skills training can remedy the requirement for refugees to take first job offered
- **On-the-job** training for first month as subsidy to employer’s payment to employees

Example from Canada
of a comprehensive
approach to
recognizing foreign
credentials...

[HOME](#) [ABOUT THE CENTRE](#) [PUBLICATIONS](#) [CONTACT US](#) [FRANÇAIS](#)

 Canadian Information Centre
for International Credentials | Centre d'information canadien
sur les diplômes internationaux 

[ASK US](#) [SEARCH](#)

[FOREIGN CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT](#) [STUDYING IN CANADA](#) [WORKING IN CANADA](#) [STUDYING ABROAD](#) [EDUCATION IN CANADA](#) [EDUCATION IN THE WORLD](#)

[Home](#) > [Foreign Credential Assessment](#)

Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Recognition in Canada

[Canada's International Academic Credential Evaluation and Assessment Services](#) will compare your studies to studies done in one of Canada's education systems.

[Recognition of qualifications for employment in Canada](#) — If you want to work in Canada, this fact sheet outlines how you will need to proceed, depending on whether your occupation is regulated or not. Our [Profiles for selected trades and professions](#) will also guide you through the process.

[Admission to Canadian universities and colleges](#) — Because higher education institutions make their own admission decisions, this fact sheet explain what you need to know to apply to them directly. Additionally, the resources below will help you locate the institutions and programs of your choice and verify their status. [Directory of Universities, Colleges and Schools in the Provinces and Territories of Canada](#)

[Information for Canadians Planning to Study Abroad](#) — In this fact sheet, Canadians contemplating study abroad are strongly advised to obtain guidance on the status and acceptability of their chosen program, institution, and credential prior to making any commitment.

[Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Canada](#) — This fact sheet explains the PLAR process, which helps adults demonstrate and obtain recognition for learning acquired outside of formal education settings.

[Recognition of Refugee Qualifications](#) — Canada offers protection to people who are eligible to claim refugee status. The recognition of their qualifications often poses specific problems.

QUICK LINKS

- [The Alliance of Credential Assessment Services of Canada \(ACESC\)](#)
- [The Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada \(ARUCC\)](#)
- [The Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators \(CNNAR\)](#)

PUBLICATIONS

- [Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Academic Credential Assessment](#)
- [Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials](#)

2. Housing

- Increase supply of low-income housing
 - Particularly for large families
 - Address constraints in access to section 8 housing vouchers
 - Target limited housing displacement funds to Africans
- Provide culturally-specific mediation services to reduce evictions
- Enforce non-discrimination policies

3. Health Services

- The African community has no culturally-specific health service
 - Key goal: Create an African health service
 - Focus: Mental health and chronic disease, plus more general services
- In mainstream health services, improve access & cultural responsiveness
 - Create African-specific health navigators to work with African patients
 - Expand funding for pilot projects underway with the Multnomah County Health Department that is training African community health workers
 - Currently not enough money for even 1 FTE African community health worker
- Ensure funding goes to culturally-specific organizations like Africa House
 - Without such direct funding, such organizations continue to be asked to assist without compensation

4. Data systems

- Ensure African visibility across institutions and departments
- Currently Department of County Human Services has a “visibility initiative” underway to provide greater visibility for small communities
 - City can require administrators to implement similar changes
- Key elements
 - Distinguish “African” from “African American”
 - Add language, refugee status, nativity, and length of time in USA... text on next page
- Coalition provides consultation on such data improvement initiatives

Data Collection Recommendations

- Sample from the Coalition's "Research Protocol" ...

3. What languages other than English did you grow up speaking or currently speak at home? Please print below.

4. Please mark all of these that apply to you.

- ☐ I arrived in the USA as a refugee or asylum seeker
- ☐ I was born in the USA
- ☐ I am an immigrant to the USA
- ☐ My parents were immigrants to the USA
- ☐ I am an Indigenous person (meaning your ancestors were original peoples of any nation conquered or colonized by others)

5. If you are an immigrant, how long have you lived in the USA? Please check only one box.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 8 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 years to 15 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 months to less than 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 15 years |

5. Education

- Educators and administrators need to learn African experiences, particularly the trauma involved in refugee experiences
- Customize assessments of student knowledge
 - Currently too rapid and overly determined by age
- Improve English language supports for students and parents
- While these are School District responsibilities, please ally with the community to advocate with School Districts
- City can provide immediate assistance with Gang Services
 - Without schooling, youth sometimes turn to gangs
 - Immediate request... allow IRCO to redeploy remaining grant funding to Africa House for use with African gangs (instead of returning it)

Closing Comments and Questions

Thank you!

- Djimet Dogo, Manager, Africa House
 - Phone: 971-271-6530
 - Email: djimetd@irco.org
- Koffi Dessou, Board Member, Africa House
 - Email: koffi.dessou@portlandoregon.gov
- Lee Po Cha, Associate Director, IRCO
 - Email: leec@mail.irco.org
- Ann Curry-Stevens, Associate Professor, PSU
 - Phone: 503-725-5315
 - Email: currya@pdx.edu