



# The Slavic Community in Multnomah County

Oleg Kubrakov

Lee Po Cha

Dr. Ann Curry-Stevens

Nina Mityuk

# Overview

- Research project
- Introducing the community
- Key findings
  - Profile of experiences
  - Impact of this recession
- Recommendations



# 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



# Origins of the Research

- The context among policy makers
  - Facing invisibility and exclusion in policy development
    - Rarely invited to the table
    - Once there, had to waste much time making the arguments for the needs of the community
  - Lack of understanding of racial issues and challenges
  - Didn't pass the "raised eyebrows" test
    - When shared information, suspicion was pronounced



- Six-year history of partnered research
- Initiated by the Coalition
- Grant funding of \$552,000
  - City, County
  - Foundations (Northwest Health Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Community Fund, United Way)
  - PSU
  - In-kind contributions from Coalition members



# Academic Partner

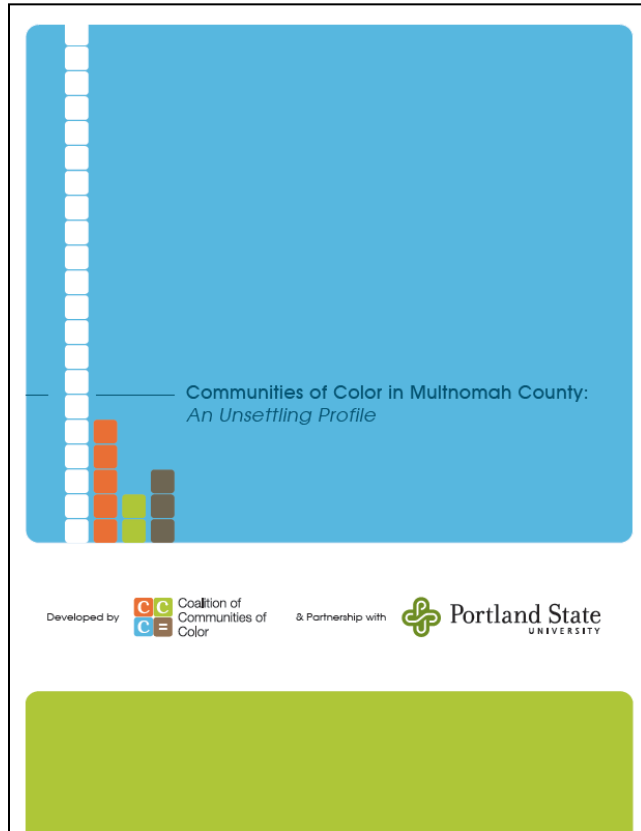
- PSU
  - “Let knowledge serve the city”
- School of Social Work
  - “The School of Social Work is committed to the enhancement of the individual and society. We are dedicated to social change and to the attainment of social justice for all people, the eradication of poverty, the empowerment of those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

# 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*

# First Report – June 2010



- Integrated for “communities of color”
- Significant media and policy attention
- Presentations to civic leaders, bureaus, school boards, foundations...

[Breaking News, Multnomah County »](#)

## Communities of Color Coalition finds 'toxic' conditions for Multnomah County minorities

By Janie Har, The Oregonian  
May 06, 2010, 5:33PM

A new report by a coalition of minority groups labels Multnomah County "uniquely toxic place" for people of color, where minorities consistently lag behind whites on nearly every indicator, from poverty rates to jobs.

Conditions here are worse than in other parts of the country and continuing to slide, said lead researcher Ann Curry-Stevens, an assistant professor of the graduate school of social work at [Portland State University](#).

## New Research on Urban Indian Community Arms Leaders With Tools for Change

By Leah Gibson November 9, 2011



On November 2, policy makers, Native American leaders, National Congress of American Indian's conference attendees and other Native professionals witnessed the release of the unique report *The Native American Community in Multnomah County: an Unsettling Profile*. This research is the product of a collaboration among the Coalition of Communities of Color, Portland State University, the Portland Indian Leaders' Roundtable and the Portland urban Indian community, melding academic research and community input.

The report incorporates community-based participatory research, a method that equally prioritizes the findings of the researcher and the voices of the community. Unique to this report, the collaborators have taken every measure to ensure that demographic information is not only accurate but reflects the lived experiences of the community.

## Investing in Lasting Change: The Benefits of Advocating for Communities of Color

By Thomas Aschenbrenner  
President, Northwest  
Health Foundation

Opinion

[Daily Vanguard](#)

## Portland minorities at a disadvantage

Study shows that Portland is not as progressive as it appears

By Courtney Graham

Vanguard staff

**Published:** Tuesday, May 25, 2010

**Updated:** Tuesday, May 25, 2010



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Portland State recently released a report in conjunction with the Coalition of Communities of Color that found that communities of color—including newly profiled African immigrants and Slavic communities—are substantially disadvantaged compared to their white counterparts in Multnomah County.

## Portland isn't as white as figures show, coalition contends

Published: Saturday, December 19, 2009, 10:00 AM Updated: Saturday, December 19, 2009, 8:06 PM



By Nikole Hannah-Jones, The Oregonian

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## Needed: A way to keep score on area's racial disparities

By The Oregonian Editorial Board  
May 25, 2010, 1:09PM

We now know the score, and it's deeply disturbing:

Whites winning. Everyone else in Multnomah County losing.

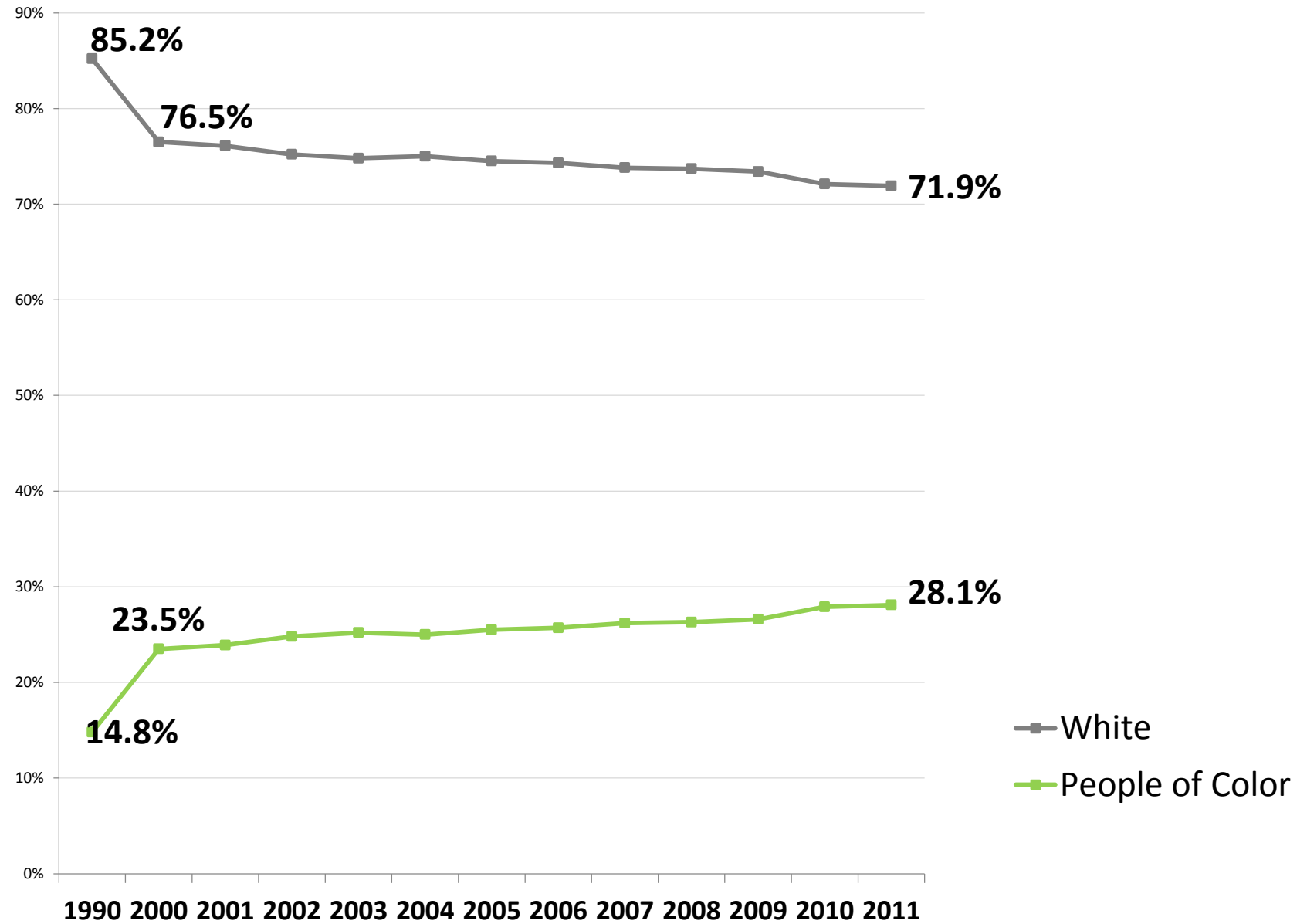
Of course, it's not that simple. It's fair to say that few Oregonians are doing brilliantly in this economic climate. Nevertheless, many are not and minorities are doing worse, far worse, than their white counterparts. According to a recent report, "Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile," minority communities earn half the income of whites, or \$16,636 vs. \$33,095 per year.

# Subsequent Reports

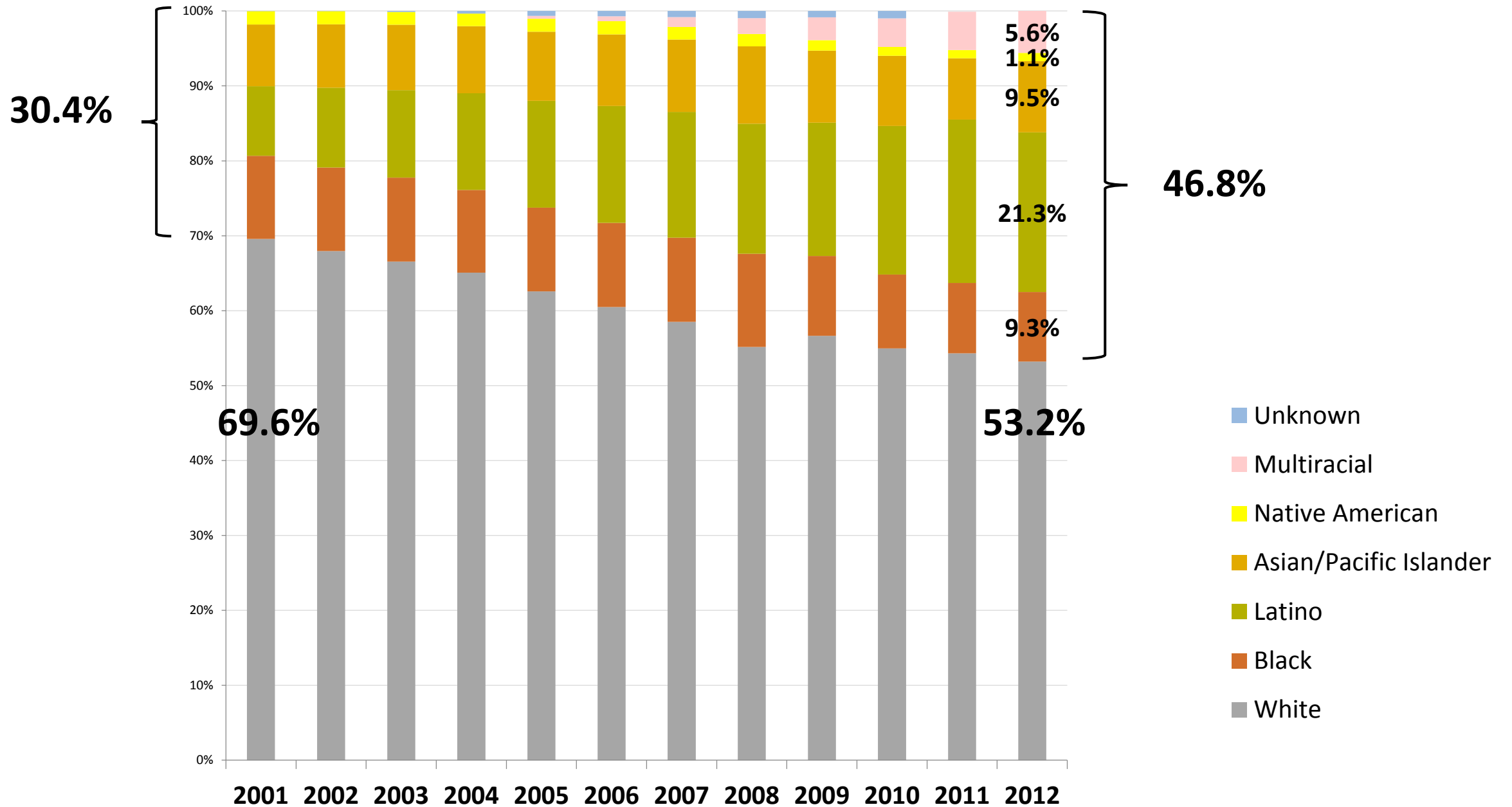


- Native American
- Latino
- Asian & Pacific Islanders
- African
- African American
- Slavic... TODAY!

# Population of Multnomah County



# Race/Ethnicity of Students in Public Schools, Multnomah County



# Slavic community = people from the former Soviet Union

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



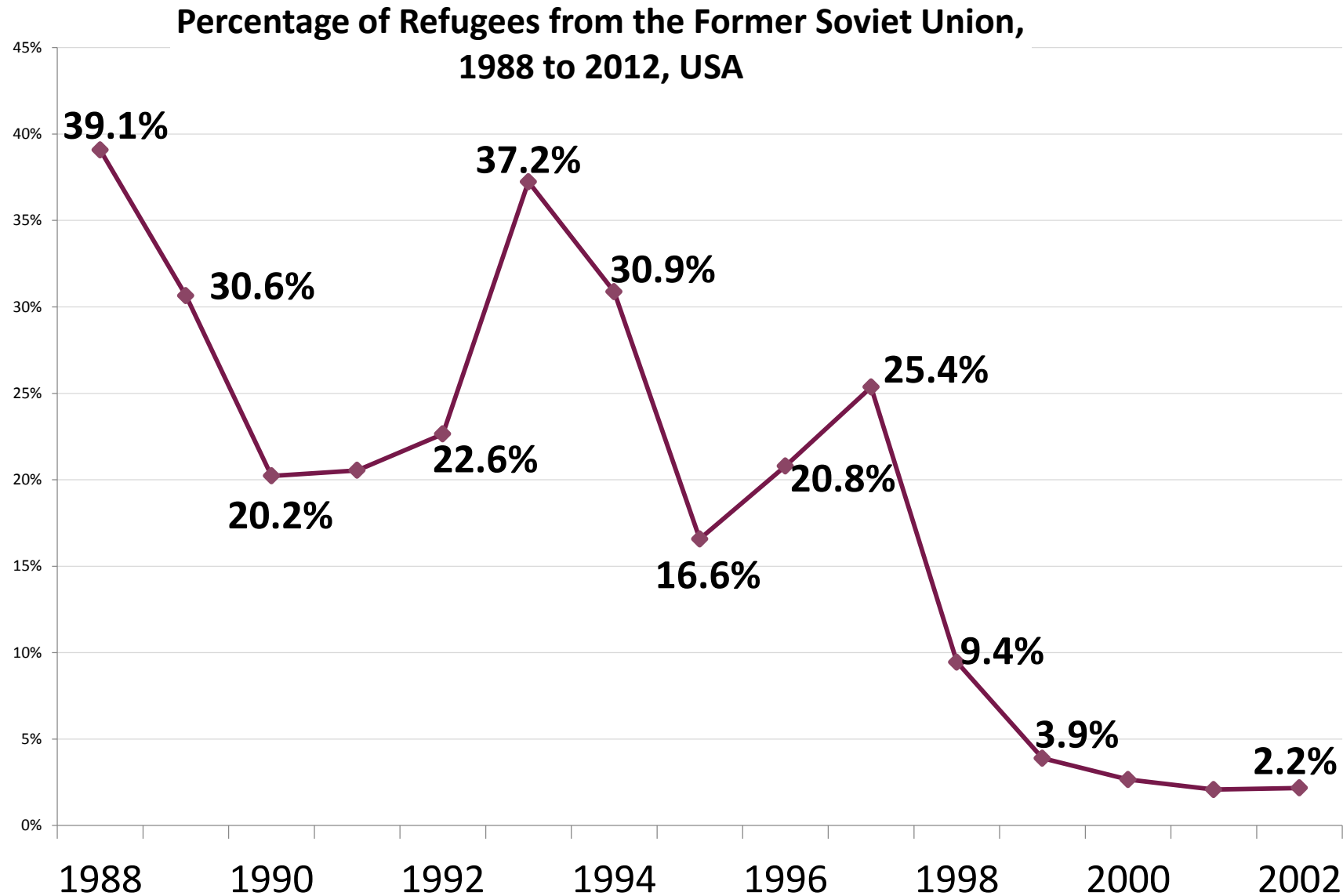
# History of Arrival

- Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Russian Orthodox members moved here, and largely unable to retain roots
- Close of Russian Revolution in 1922, fleeing violence
- End of Soviet Union
  - 1988 – President Gorbachev allows religious minorities to leave
  - 1989 – USA recognizes Soviet religious minorities as refugees
- Arrived with history of persecution
  - Denied employment and access to higher education
  - Imprisoned
  - Faced high levels of violence

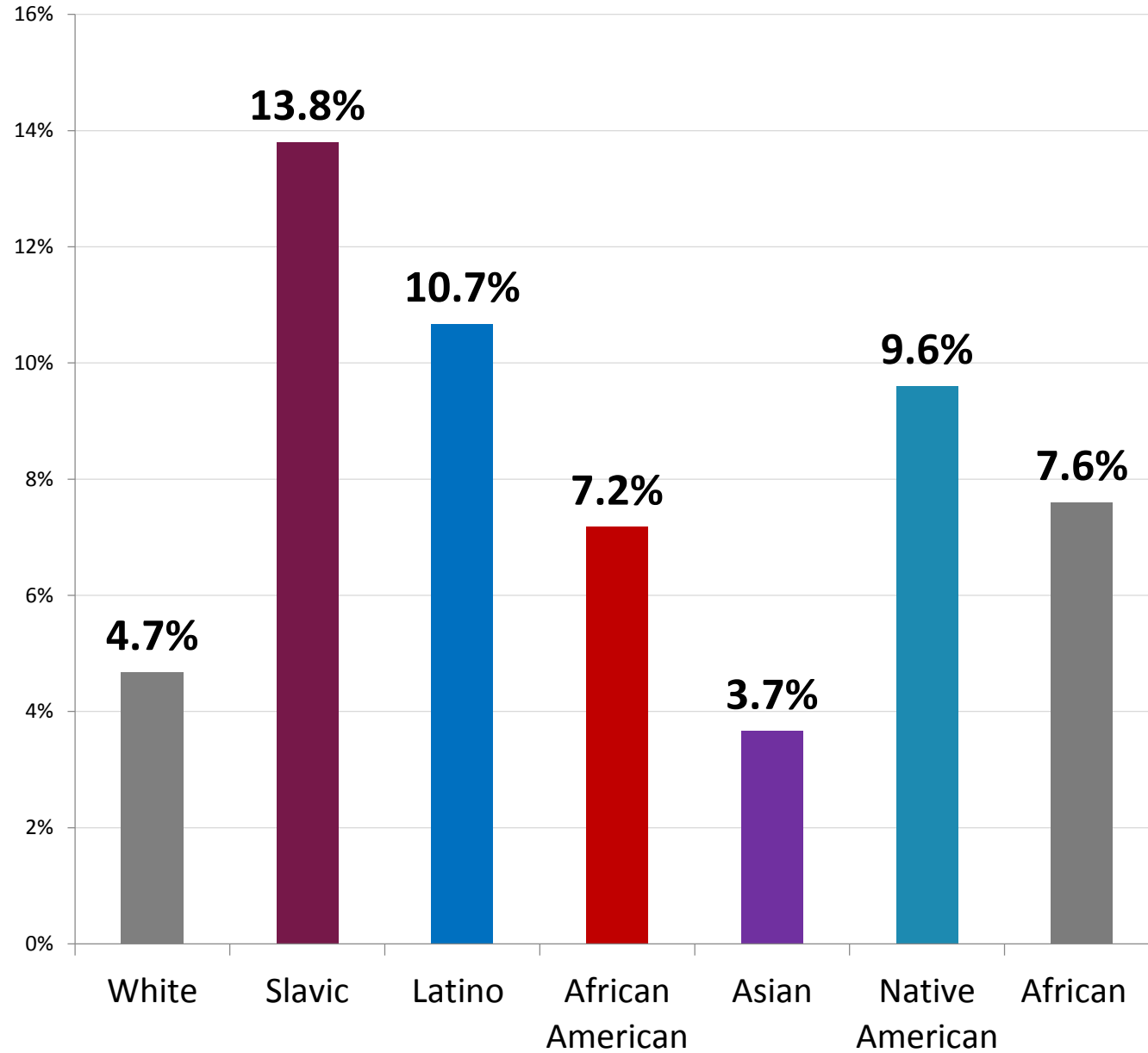
# Region rapidly diversifying; strong Slavic presence

- Largest immigrant group after Latino
- 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

# Immigration levels slow; fertility rates high



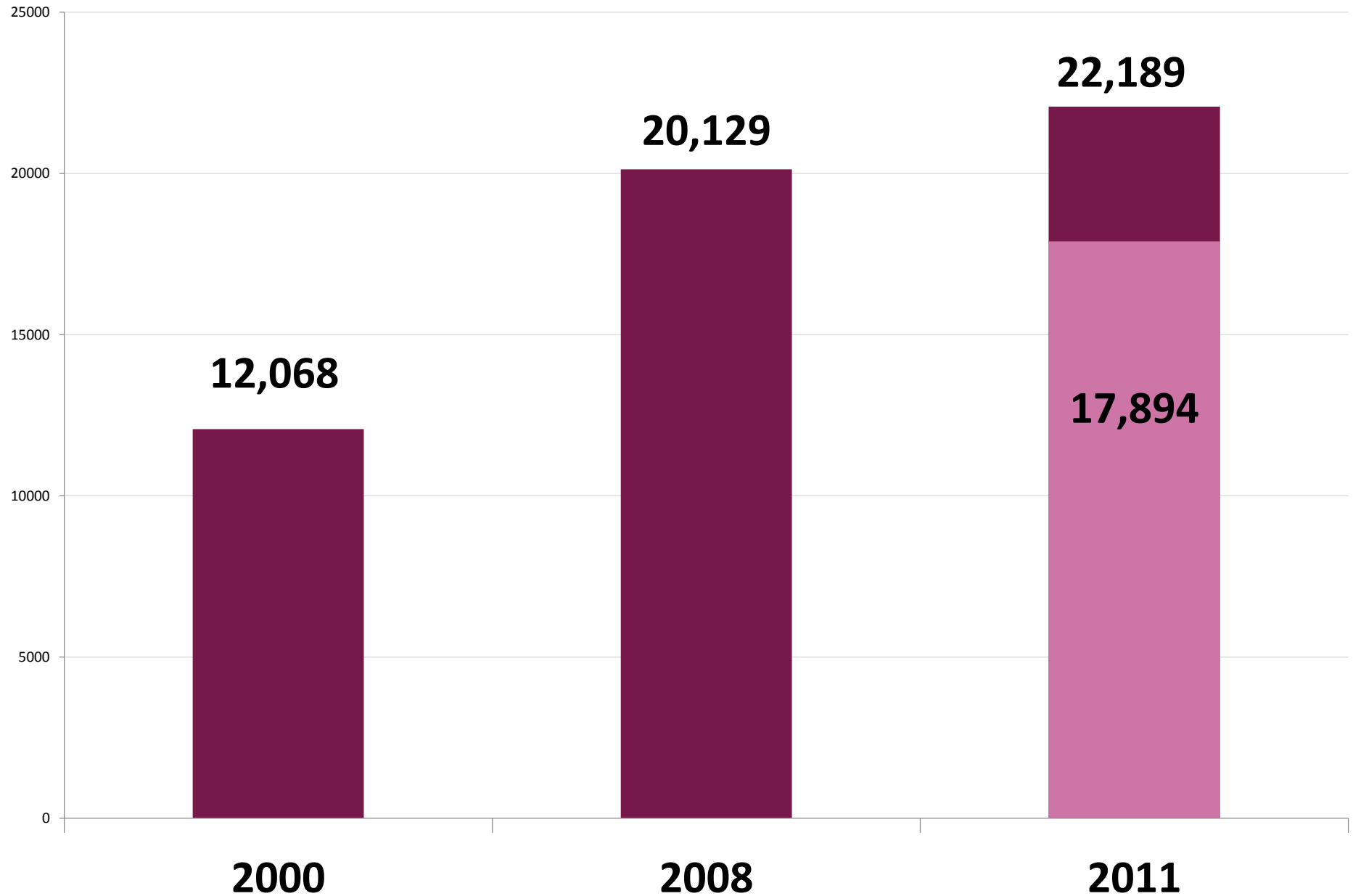
# Fertility Rate, Women from 15 to 50, Multnomah County, 2011



# How big is the community?

- Significant undercounts
  - We estimate at

# Slavic Population in Multnomah County





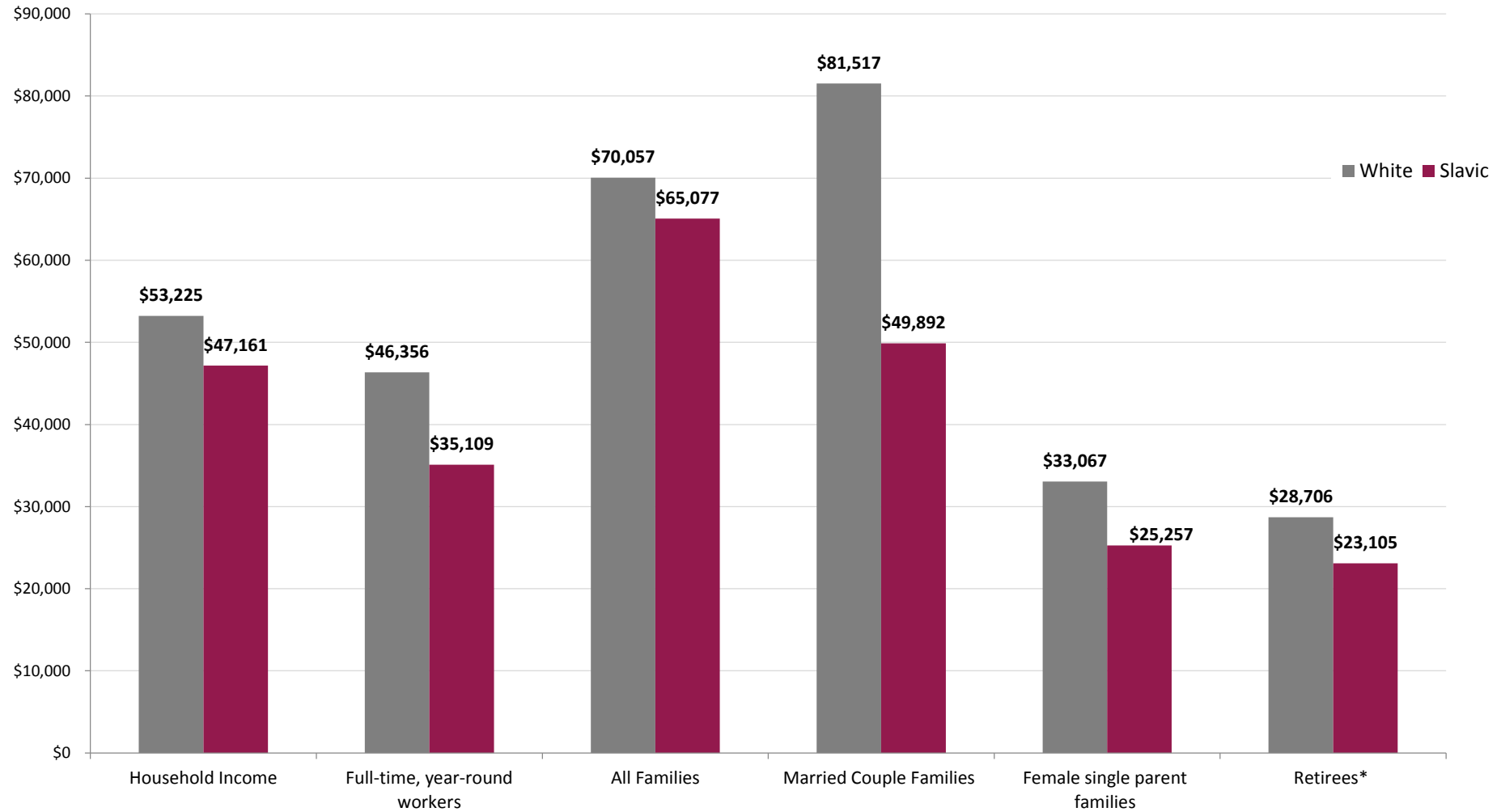




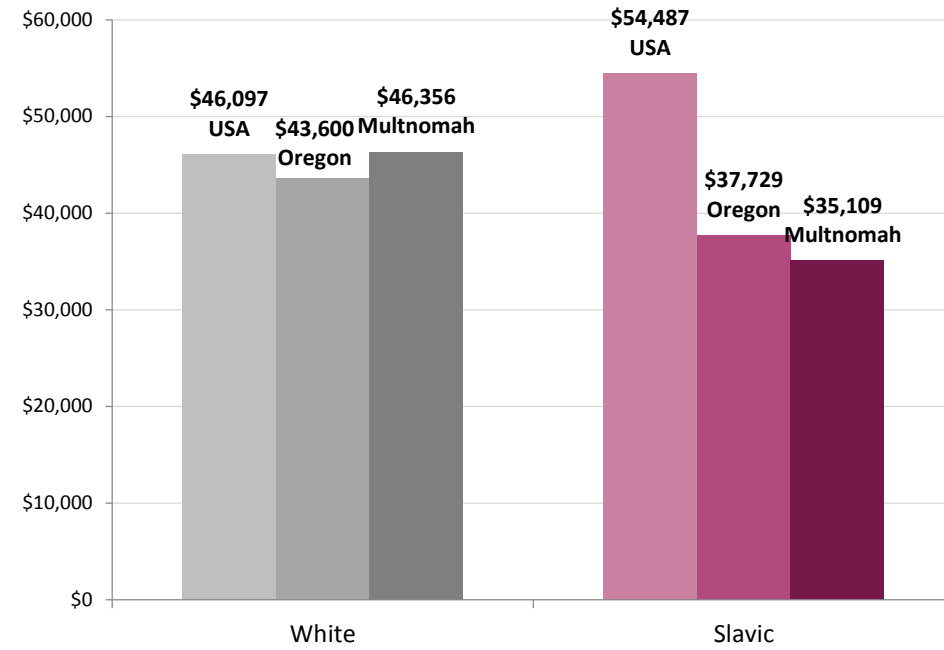
# The Slavic Experience

- First time any specific data on this community is available
- Education is very high with 39.3% having a university degree
  - Almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Slavics have a graduate degree while Whites have only 15.7% at this level
  - Yet those who do not graduate high school are high, outnumbering by 2:1 those Whites who don't graduate high school
- Incomes are less than Whites, sometimes much worse
- Poverty – in every measure, have worse poverty rates than Whites
- This very highly educated community is unable to protect itself from poverty & unemployment at the levels of Whites
  - This suggests they face significant employment barriers as a result of their identity

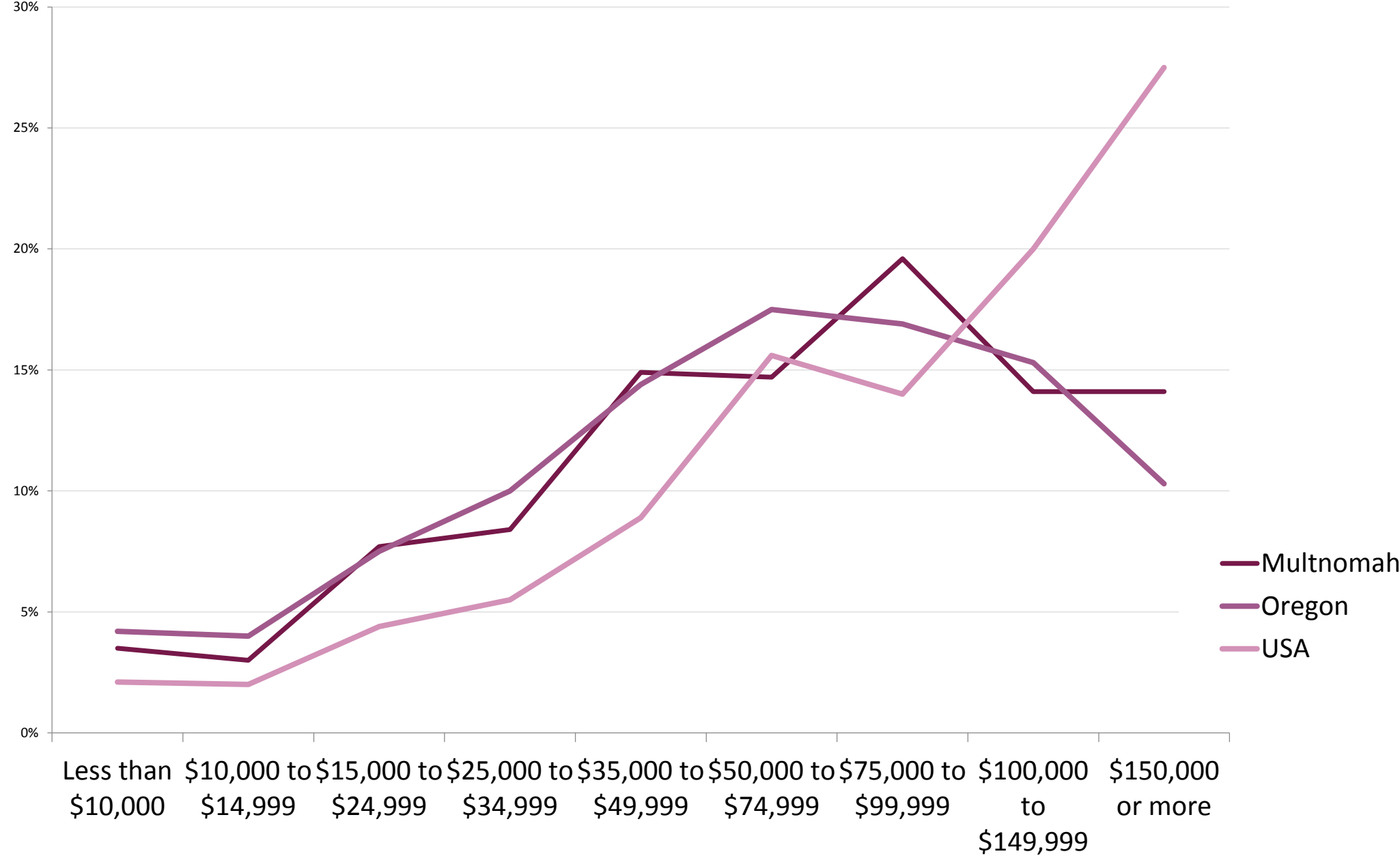
Annual Incomes, Multnomah County, 2011



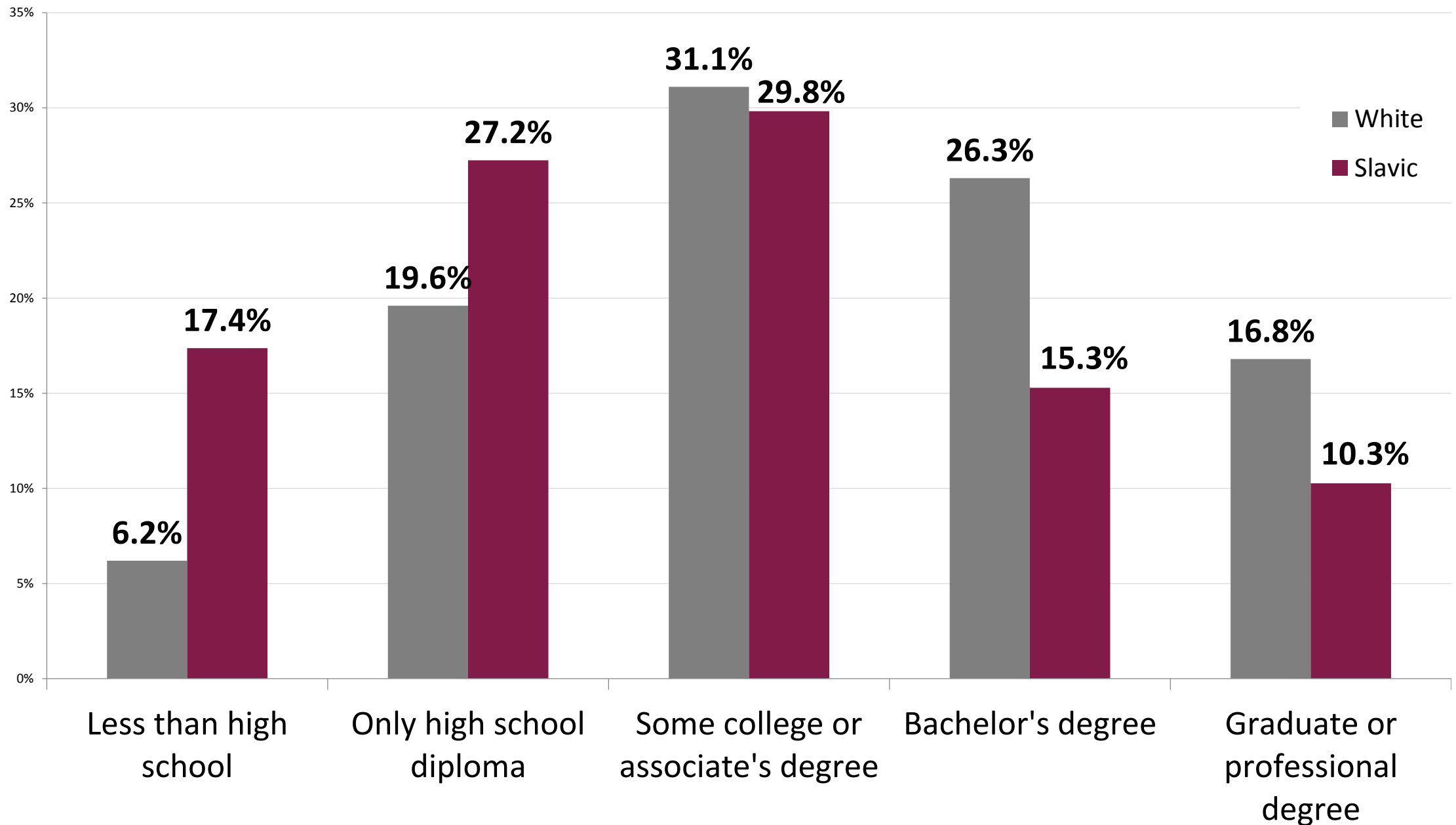
**Annual Incomes for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, 2011**



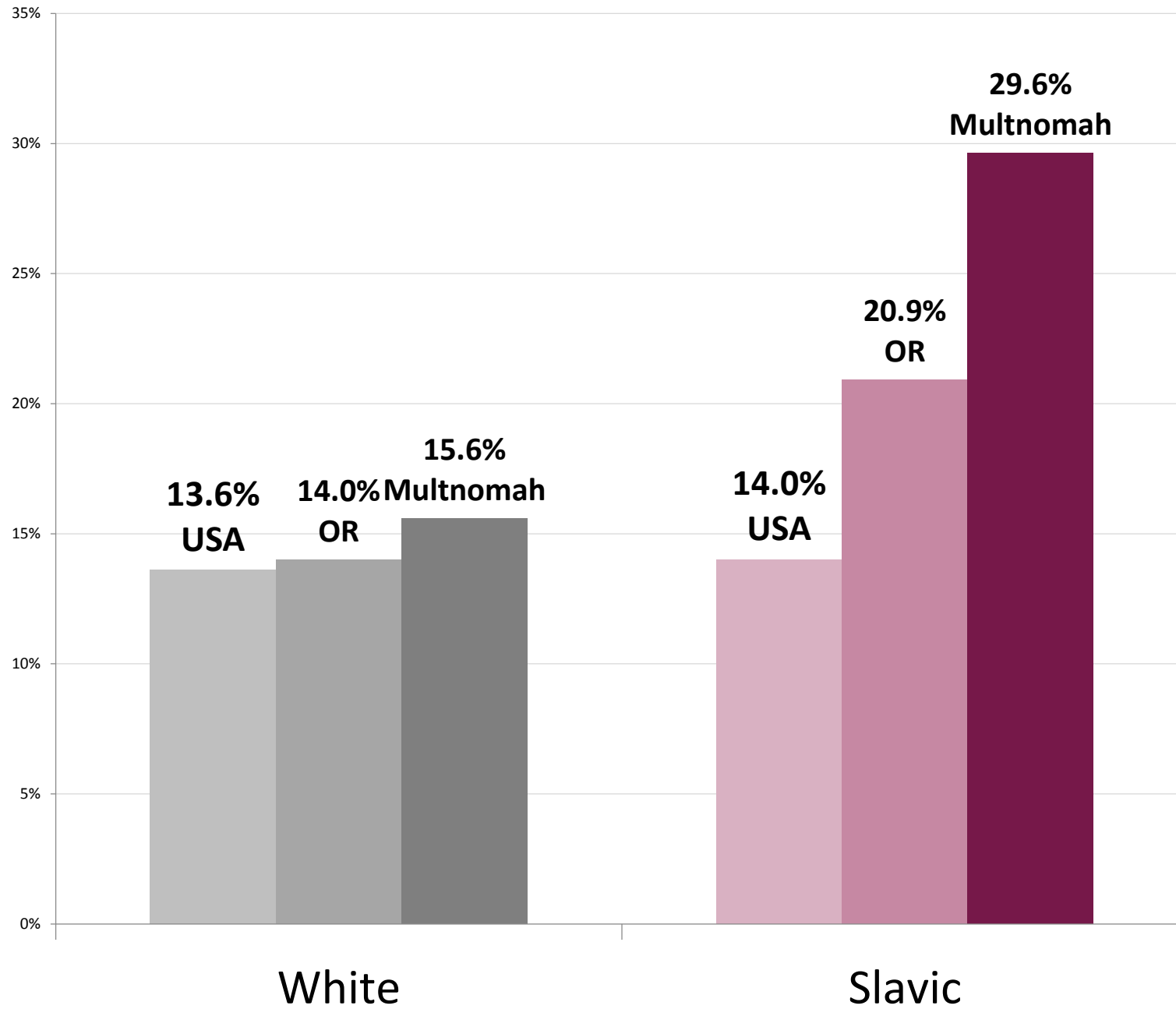
# Family Income, Russian, 2006 to 2010



# Educational Attainment, Multnomah County, 2011



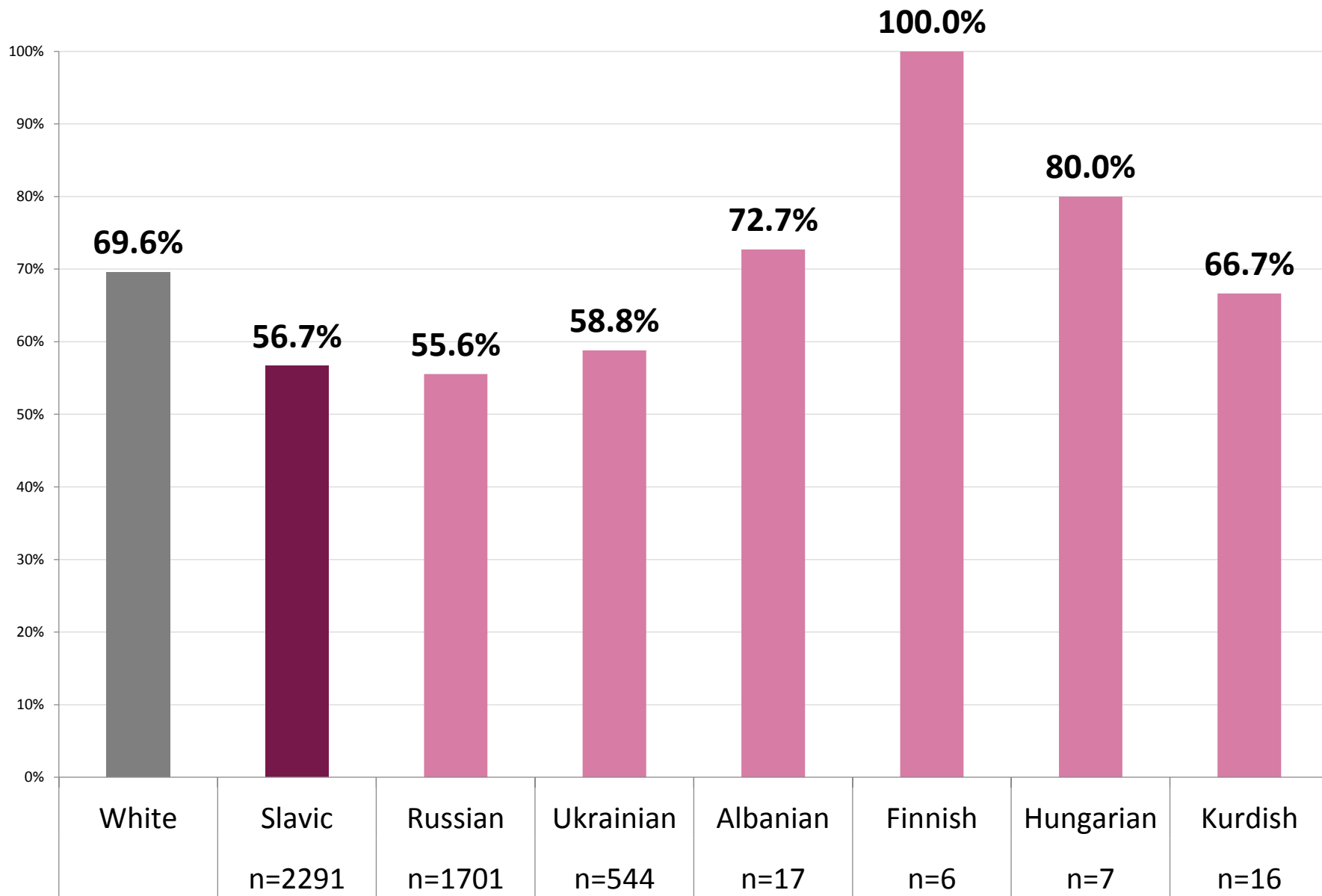
# Child Poverty Rates, 2011



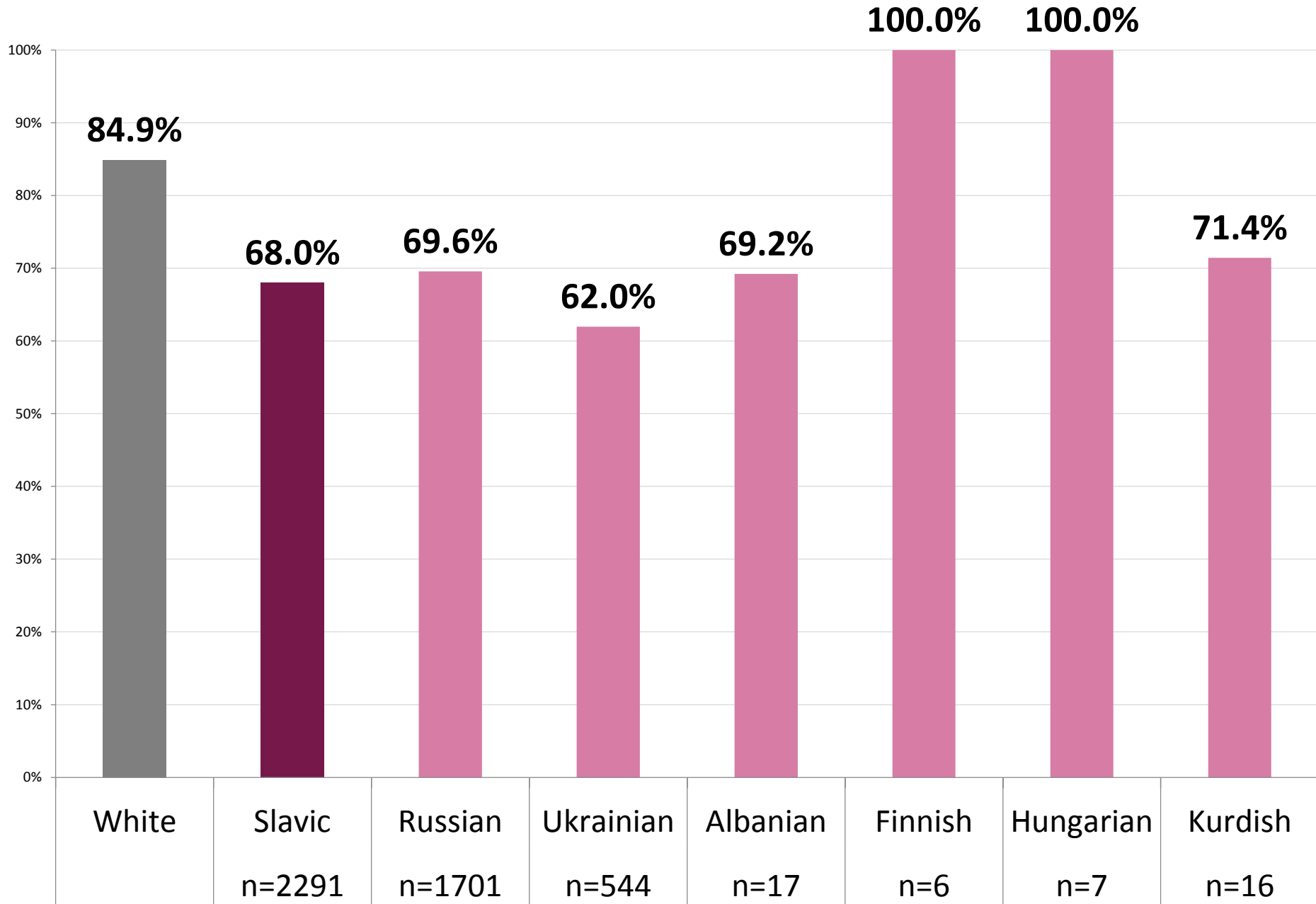
# Data Systems & Required Improvements

- 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

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



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

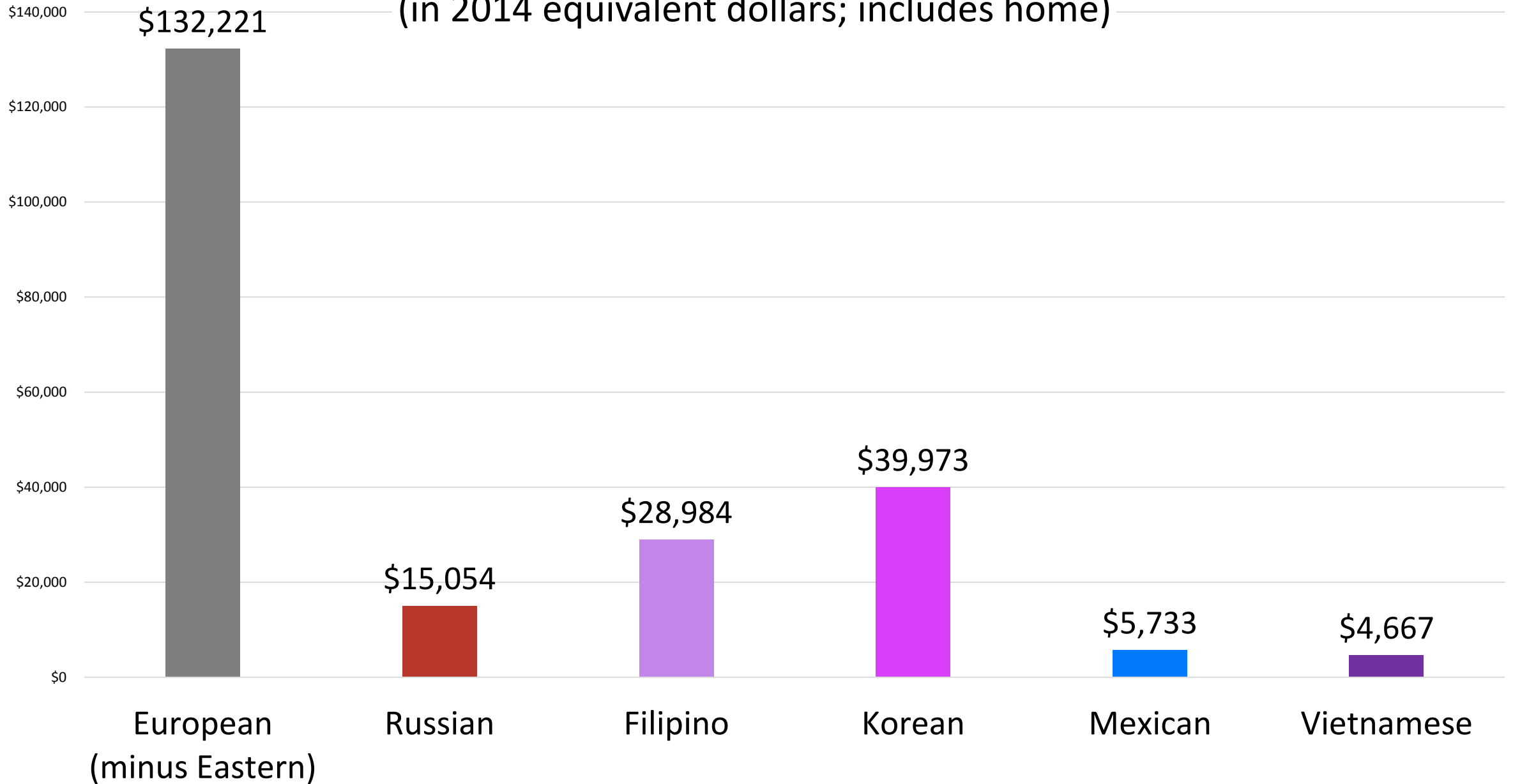


# Wealth of Russian Immigrants

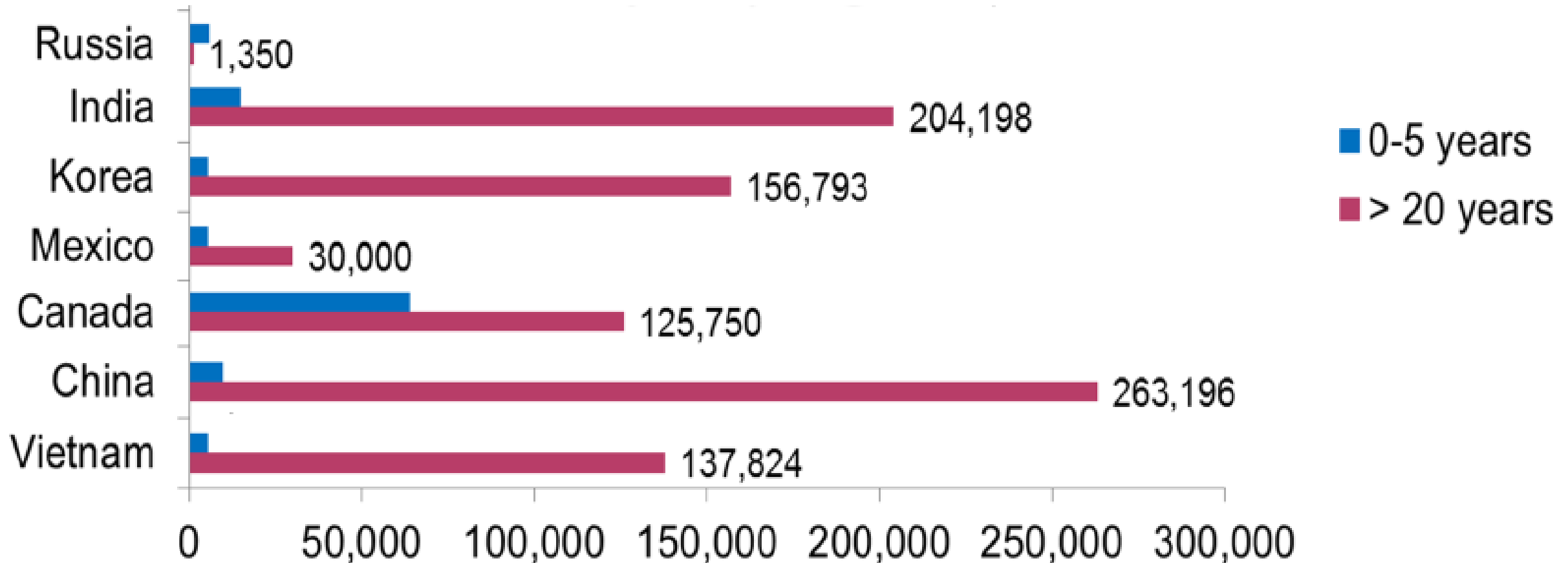
- Wealth
  - Is our personal safety net
    - to protect us from job loss, death and illness
  - Allows us to pass assets to our children
  - Allows us to take financial risks, like changing jobs, going back to school, opening a business, moving neighborhoods

# Total Wealth of Immigrants, USA, 1992

(in 2014 equivalent dollars; includes home)



# Total Wealth of Immigrants, USA, 2003



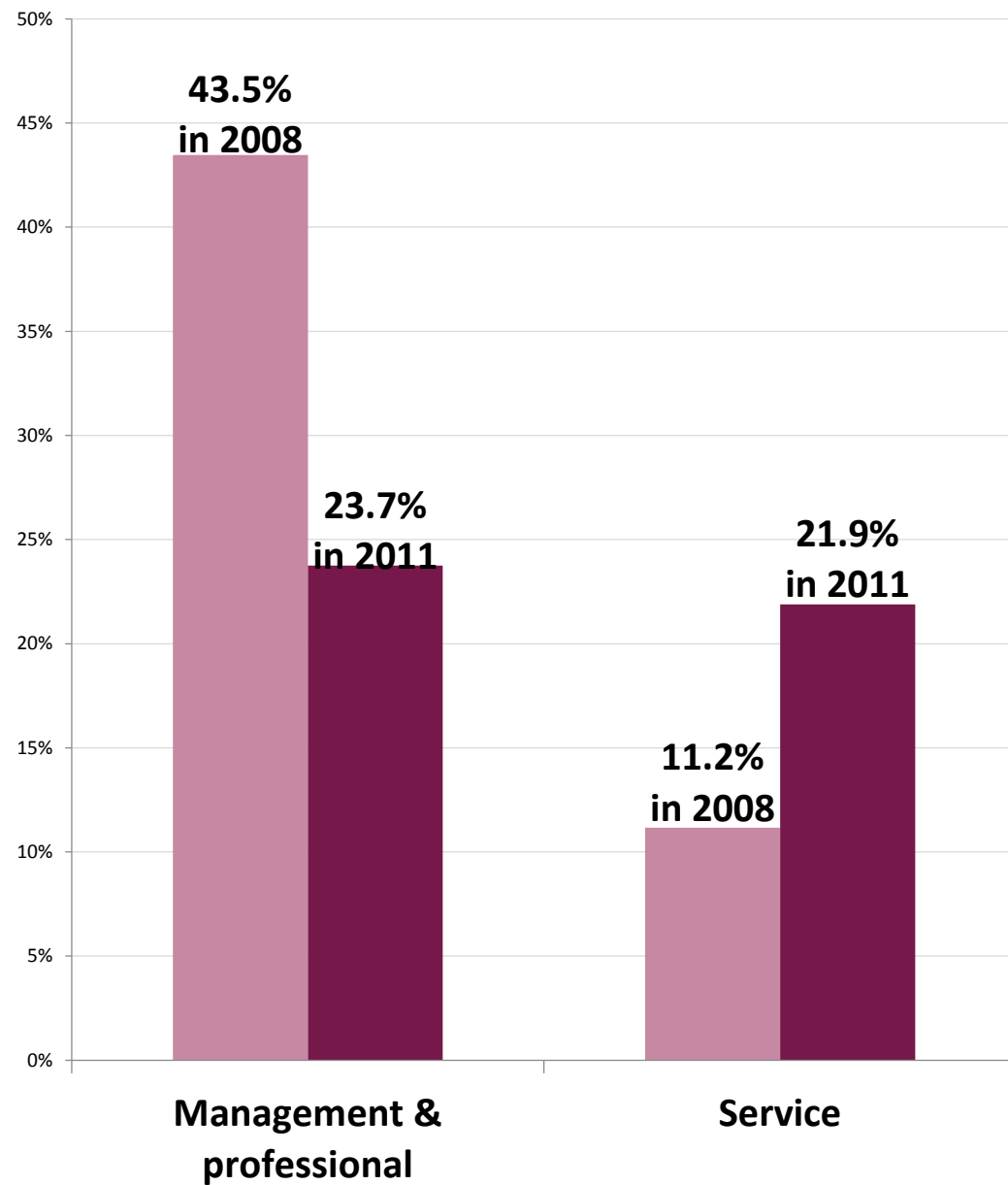
Source: New Immigrant Survey, 2003

Figure Author: Borelli, 2014, downloaded from [http://wealthinequality.org/Immigrants\\_and\\_Wealth.html](http://wealthinequality.org/Immigrants_and_Wealth.html).

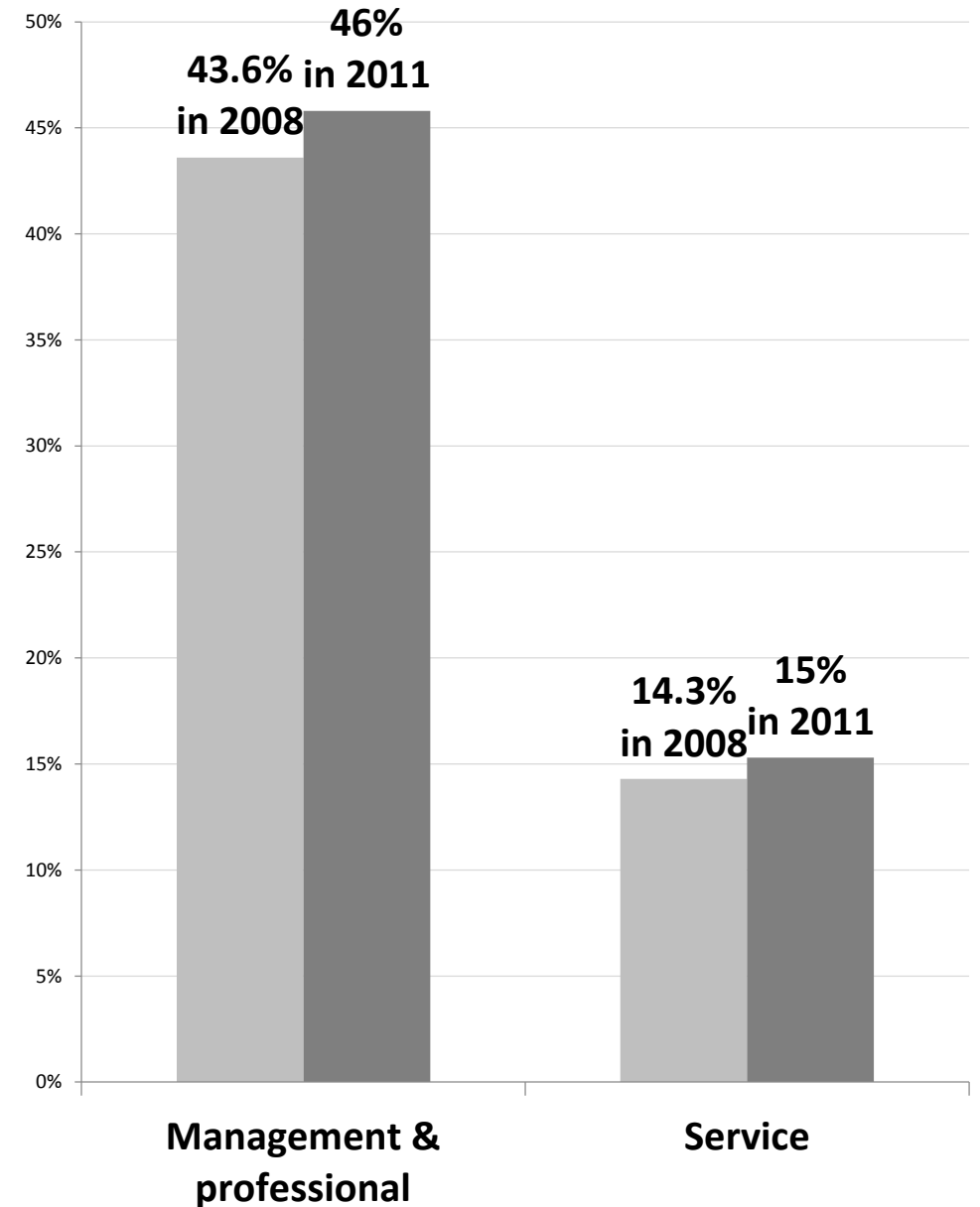
# Impact of this Recession

- 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  $\frac{1}{4}$  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

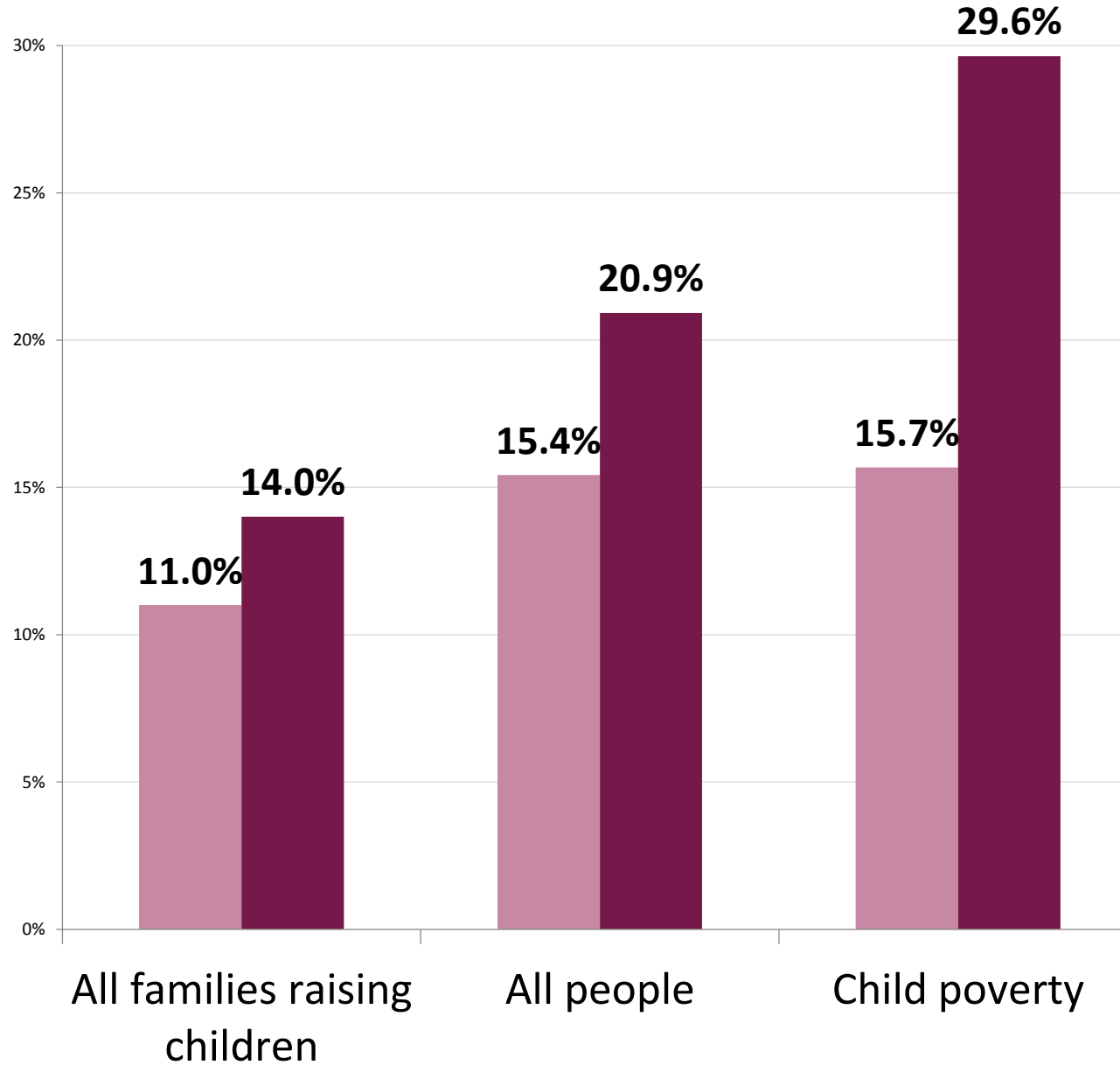
**Slavic Employment in "Good" and "Bad" Jobs, Multnomah County**



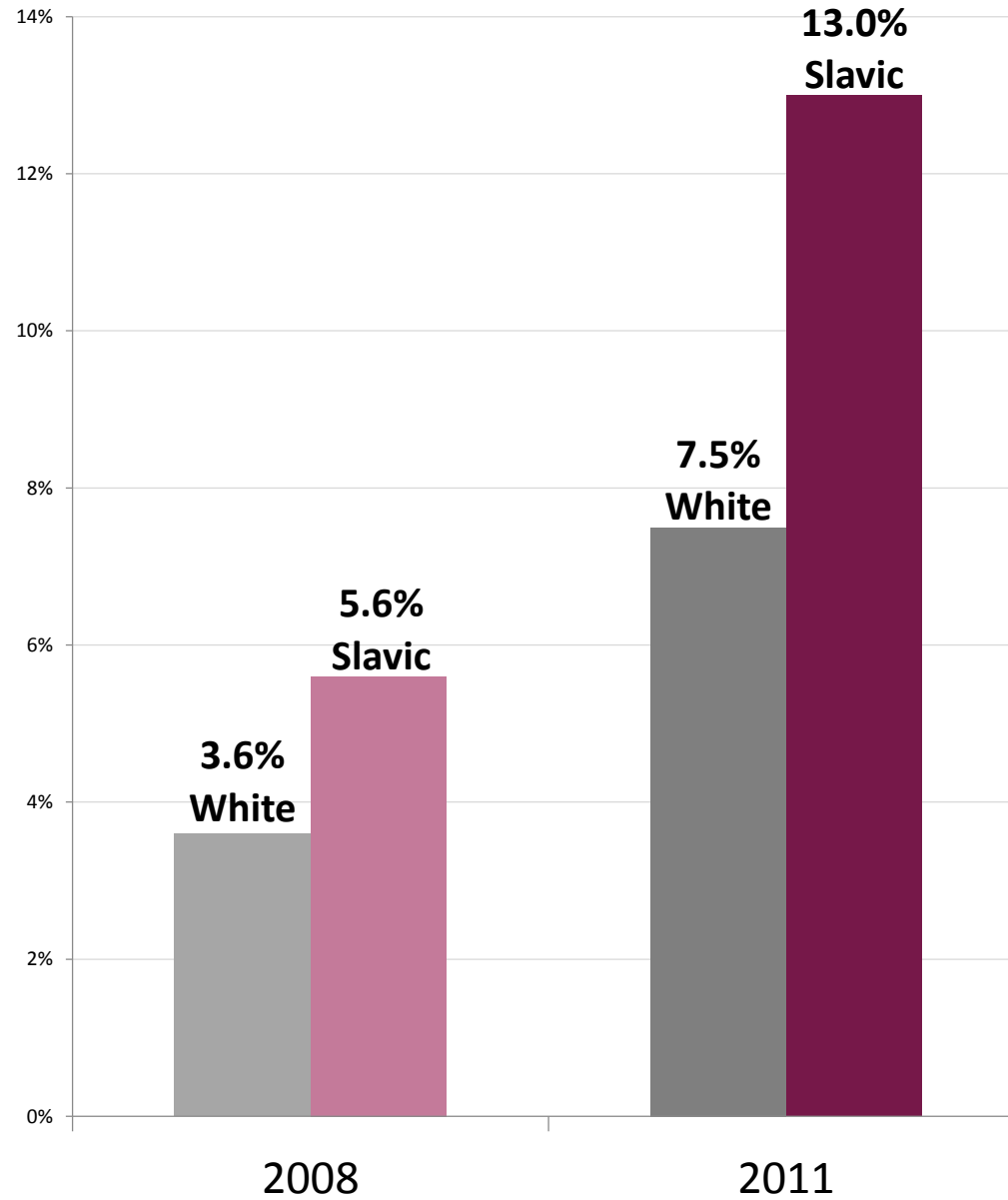
**White Employment in "Good" and "Bad" Jobs, Multnomah County**



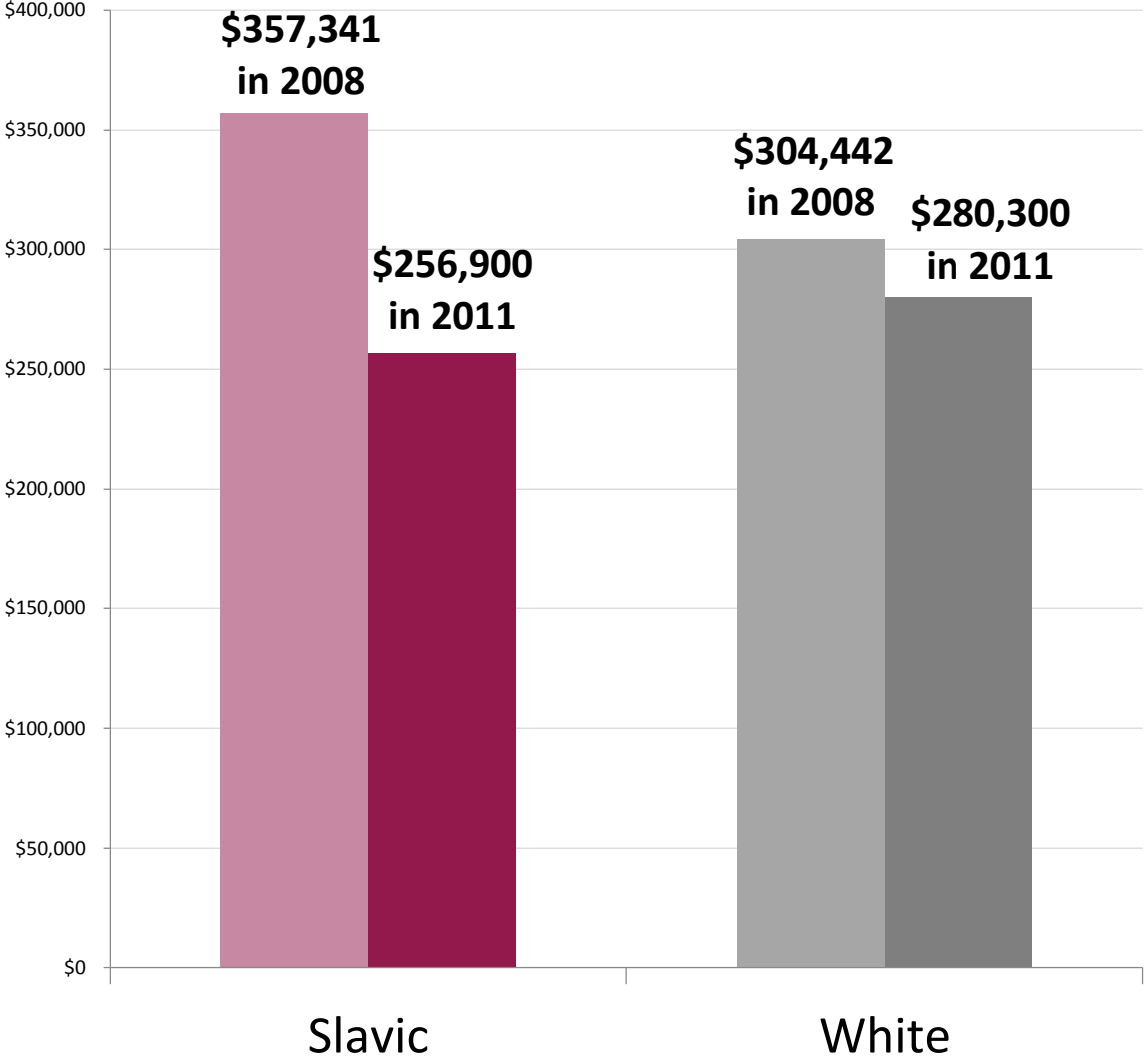
## Rapidly Worsening Poverty Rates, Multnomah County, 2008 and 2011



# Unemployment Rates, Multnomah County, 2008 & 2011



**Value of Owned Homes, Multnomah County  
(in 2011 constant dollars)**



# County-wide Recommendations

1. **Data Systems** - Add “Slavic” as a racial category in all County data systems, including County contracts.
2. **Workforce** - Increase the hiring, retention and promotion of Slavic people in the County.
3. **Communications** - Develop Slavic-specific communication materials and strategies to increase awareness in the Slavic community about County 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.

# Department-specific Recommendations

1. A collaboration with the **Department of County Human Services** to develop Slavic-specific funding and programming in a) **Domestic Violence**; b) **Mental Health & Addiction**; c) **Aging**; and d) **Homeless Services**.
2. A collaboration with the **SUN Service System** to develop Slavic-specific funding and programming in a) **Parent Education**; and b) **School Retention**.
3. A collaboration with the **Department of Community Justice** to develop Slavic-specific funding and programming in **Juvenile Services**.
4. A collaboration with the **Health Department** to develop Slavic-specific funding and programming in **Health Education**.