



# UNEVEN GROUND

**HOW RACE AND ORIGIN IMPACT ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY IN WASHINGTON STATE**

*A report by the Economic Opportunity Institute*

## **About the Author**

Kelli Smith is a Senior Policy Associate at the Economic Opportunity Institute. She earned her J.D. at the University of California, Davis, School of Law.

## **Acknowledgments**

The author gratefully acknowledges the following individuals: Marilyn Watkins, Policy Director at the Economic Opportunity Institute; Chloe Winther; Mares Asfaha; Tatsuko Go Hollo, whose contributions to this report and publication, *Chutes and Ladders: How Economic Mobility is Changing in an Inequality Society*, provided the foundation for this project; and those who volunteered their time and shared their stories with us to inform and enrich this report.

Cover photo by K Eiholzer via Flickr Creative Commons (<https://flic.kr/p/s2X9GU>).

# **UNEVEN GROUND**

**HOW RACE AND ORIGIN IMPACT ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY IN WASHINGTON STATE**



# Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Measuring Mobility: Myths and Reality.....	3
Immigrants in Washington.....	4
People of Color in Washington.....	5
Overlaps and Differences: Immigrants and People of Color.....	7
A Closer Look at Place.....	9
Children and Families.....	13
Children in Poverty.....	13
Education and the Opportunity Gap for Children of Color.....	16
Higher Education.....	19
Other Barriers to Higher Education.....	21
Jobs, Earnings and Wealth.....	23
Industry and Occupation.....	23
Earnings, Income and Poverty.....	26
Conclusion.....	31
Sources and Notes.....	32



# Executive Summary

Founded as a nation of immigrants, the United States has remained so throughout its expansion and development, and today, immigration continues to shape and reshape the country and its states. The U.S.'s history as an immigrant nation has created the rich racial and ethnic diversity that strengthens our society and creates the unique American experience that enables our country and Washington state to thrive.

But while most public dialogue still revolves around the ideal that every hardworking person has an equal opportunity to succeed here – regardless of their status at birth – the facts tell us that is simply not the case. The troubling reality is that people of color and immigrants are simply not afforded the same opportunity that is made available to many White and native-born Washingtonians.

In Washington state circa 2015, people of color and foreign-born individuals face significant disadvantages at each stage of life; conversely, White and native-born people disproportionately receive, and benefit from, more economic opportunity than others. Not surprisingly, a wide variety of measures of economic security and indicators of upward mobility show that on average, Whites consistently experience better outcomes than people of color, and the native-born population consistently experiences better outcomes than the foreign-born population.

Children of color and those in immigrant families are more likely than White or native-born children to be in poverty, face academic challenges in school, and be suspended or expelled. They are more likely to fall through the cracks before graduating high school, and they are much less likely to get into, be able to pay for, or complete college. They are also more likely to grow up and work in low-skilled and physically demanding jobs that pay less and provide less financial security in the long run. This is true in some cases regardless of educational attainment. One in five immigrants works in a job where their education or experience is underutilized.

The compounding result of these unequal opportunities is that at almost every turn, it is difficult for the people who are part of Washington's fastest-growing populations to achieve upward economy mobility. It is harder for people of any race or background who are born poor to move up the income ladder than it is for those who are born better off. And it is harder for people of color to move up the income ladder than it is for White people – regardless of the income of their family of origin.

Unless we reject policies that – intentionally or not – hamper opportunity for families of color and immigrant families while lifting up White and native-born families, lines of class, race, and ethnicity will harden and continue to divide us generation after generation. That is not a recipe for promoting economic dynamism, social and civic improvement, an engaged electorate, or other essential foundations of a sound and lasting economy, society and democracy.

*This report provides a broad assessment of the economic status of immigrants and people of color in Washington state, using aggregate data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources to provide important measures of economic stability and indicators of mobility. It analyzes these measures across general racial and ethnic categories, gender, nativity and citizenship to provide a baseline from which to identify Washington's pressing disparities in opportunity and explore possible solutions.<sup>1</sup>*





# Introduction

## Measuring Mobility: Myths and Reality

One way to measure a society's level of success in ensuring equal opportunity for all its people is to measure economic mobility – how likely a person is to move up or down the income ladder over time. If opportunity is broadly available to demographically different segments of the population, each would be expected to show similar degrees of mobility in comparison to the other. However, if one or more groups consistently receive a greater degree of opportunity, their outcomes (as measured by mobility) will differ markedly from those with less opportunity.

*Absolute mobility* compares a person's income to another in the past – for example, to that of their parents at the same age. *Relative mobility* compares a person's income relative to their peers, based on the income bracket they were born into. While Americans commonly believe a person can be born poor and – with hard work – attain wealth, the reality is this degree of upward relative mobility is extremely uncommon.<sup>2</sup>

Americans generally experience high absolute mobility, meaning they generally have higher incomes than their parents did at the same age – and low relative mobility, meaning those born into one income group are unlikely to move significantly up or down the income ladder in their lifetime. Only 4% of those born in the bottom income quintile make it to the top.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in general, people born at the bottom and top of the income ladder tend to stay there. Seventy percent of Americans born at the bottom of the income ladder never even make it to the middle.<sup>4</sup>

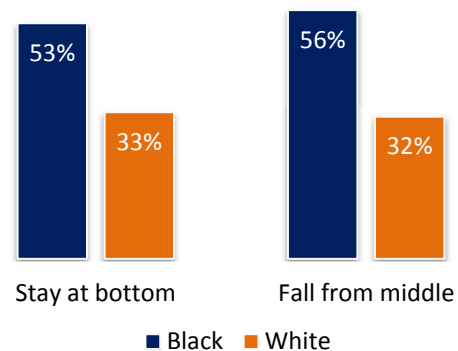
The factors that influence economic mobility interrelate in ways that restrict opportunity among immigrant communities and communities of color. Human capital – things like educational attainment and employment – are unquestionably key factors that promote economic security. A college degree is one of the strongest indicators of upward economic mobility in our country.<sup>5</sup> But a person's status at birth, including race, ethnicity, nativity and gender, also plays a significant role – too significant a role in many cases.<sup>6</sup>

People of color are not only less likely to be able to access the educational and employment opportunities most likely to increase their chances of upward mobility – but they are also less likely to experience upward economic mobility even when those factors should work in their favor.<sup>7</sup>

Unequal opportunity creates disparate levels of economic security between people of color and immigrants, and their White and native-born counterparts. The inequities are evident in nearly all measures of economic stability.

Without significant structural and policy changes, and especially as immigrants and people of color comprise a greater share of Washington's population each year, unequal opportunity based on race and nativity will continue to present an increasingly crucial and pressing set of challenges for our state.

**A SNAPSHOT OF FAMILY INCOME MOBILITY FOR WHITE AND BLACK AMERICANS, 2012**



Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts<sup>8</sup>

## Immigrants in Washington

### Amrita | Renton, WA | Mid-20s

Amrita's parents immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1980s, shortly before she was born. For Amrita, success means doing the work she is passionate about and being able to live on her own. "I remember my mom and I talking – it was my last summer of living at home during college – and we said, success for me, would be never coming to live back home."

With a college degree and a stable salary, she is able to afford an apartment in Seattle and considers herself middle class, but it's still hard to make ends meet. "I'm currently making more than my father; I still can't pay for everything. I just don't get how that adds up when my parents have been able to pay for having three daughters with the incomes they've had."

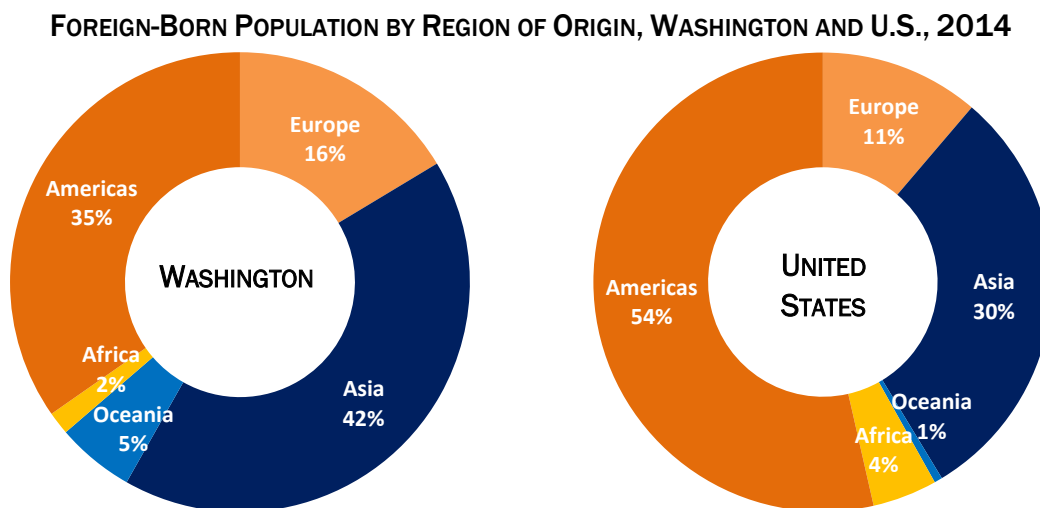
Asked whether she thinks her standard of living is higher than that of her parents, she says, "That's my goal – is I'll maintain my standard of living. Or I'll be better. I think it will be better than theirs. I mean, I think that was their whole idea of coming to America and raising kids with this mentality, was that they get to have a better life than them. So fingers crossed, that's what happens."



The United States is a nation of immigrants, and Washington reflects our country's history with a large population of immigrants from across the globe. The diversity and rate of growth of Washington's immigrant population set our state apart from much of the rest of the country, and add vitality to our state's economy.

Washington is the nation's 13th most populous state, and is home to the nation's 10th largest immigrant population.<sup>9</sup> In 1990, immigrants made up only 6.6% of the state's population; today, the share of foreign-born residents has more than doubled to 13.4%.<sup>10</sup> There are nearly one million immigrants living within the state, and immigrants' share of the total population in Washington is growing faster than for the U.S. as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

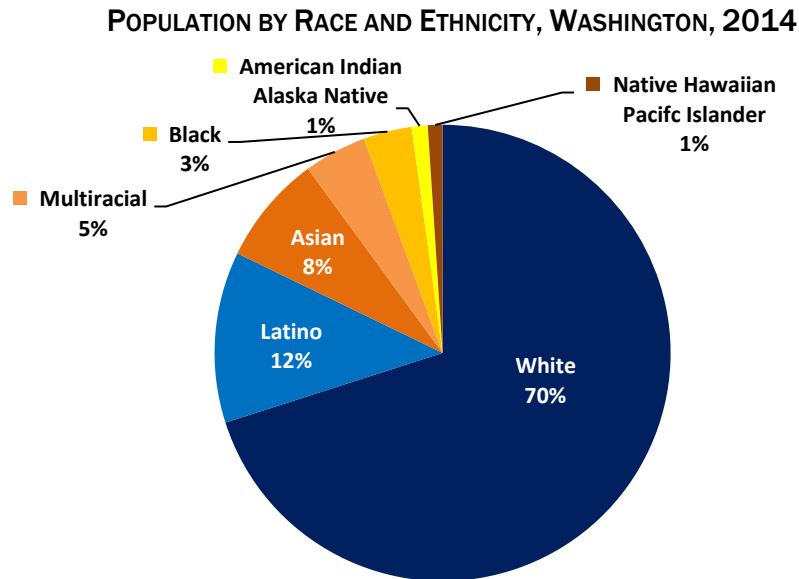
Washington has a particularly diverse immigrant population compared to the rest of the country. While over half of the immigrant population in the U.S. has its origins in the Americas, particularly Latin America, the largest share of immigrants in Washington is from Asia, followed by the Americas and Europe, a reflection of our state's Pacific Rim location and dynamic economy.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of Asian immigrants in Washington are from Eastern Asia (including China, Japan and Korea) and Southeastern Asia (including Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam). Latino immigrants in Washington are largely from Mexico, and European immigrants mostly have origins in Eastern Europe (particularly Ukraine and Russia).<sup>13</sup>



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>14</sup>

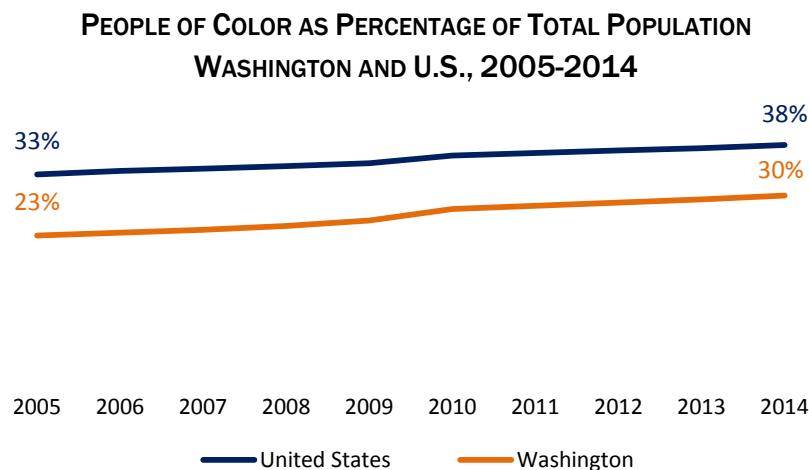
## People of Color in Washington

Today, the fastest growing populations in Washington are people of color. Out of the 7.1 million residents of Washington, 2.1 million are people of color – just under 30% of the state’s population.<sup>15</sup> The Center for American Progress projects that by 2030, half of all children in Washington will be children of color, and by 2054, half of all Washingtonians will be people of color.<sup>16</sup>



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>17</sup>

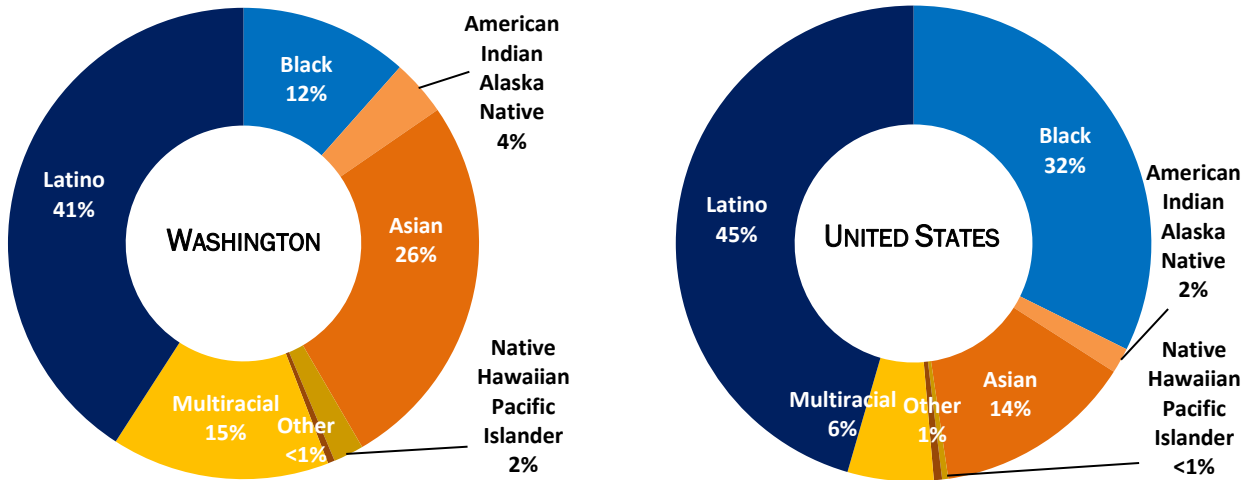
Washington is home to a smaller share of people of color than the nation as a whole, but the state is gradually catching up, with the share of people of color growing faster here than in the U.S. over the last decade.<sup>18</sup> Between 2005 and 2014, the share of people of color in Washington increased 48%, compared to a 27% increase across the nation over the same period.<sup>19</sup>



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2014 American Community Surveys<sup>20</sup>

As with Washington’s immigrant population, the distribution of people of color differs in significant ways from the U.S. as a whole. In both the state and the country, Latinos make up the largest portion of people of color, but Washington is home to relatively more Asians and relatively fewer Blacks.<sup>21</sup> These differences reflect some of the distinctions in the immigrant population of Washington compared to the U.S., as well as the history of domestic migration within the U.S. over the past century and a half.

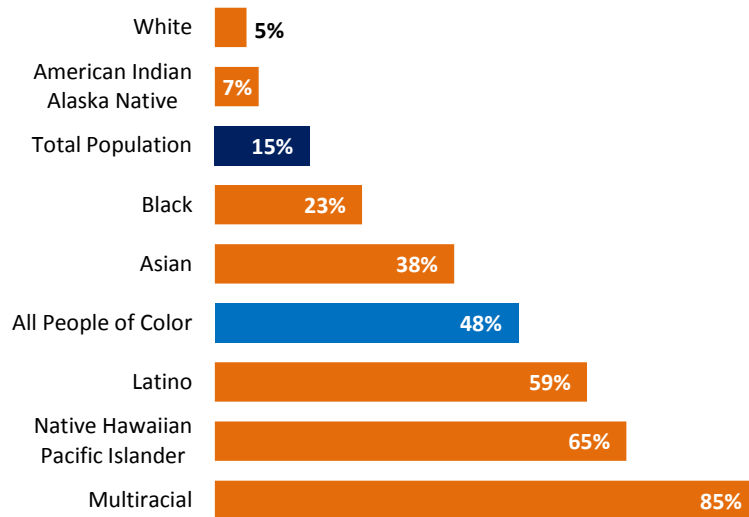
## PEOPLE OF COLOR BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON AND U.S., 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>22</sup>

Those who identify as Multiracial constitute the fastest growing racial-ethnic group in Washington, growing 85% since 2005, followed by Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. Notably, although the population as a whole grew by 15% between 2005 and 2014, the number of Whites increased by only 5%, and the number of all people of color grew by nearly 50%. In an economy where Whites consistently experience better outcomes than people of color, these divergent population growth trends underline the necessity to identify and reverse policies that restrict opportunity and upward mobility among communities of color.

## PERCENT POPULATION CHANGE BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2005-2014



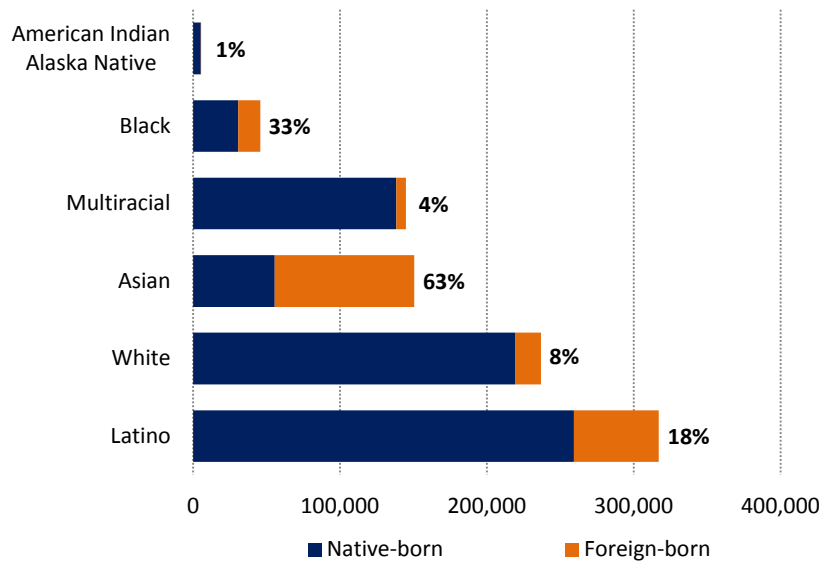
Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2014 American Community Surveys<sup>23</sup>

## Overlaps and Differences: Immigrants and People of Color

There is a great deal of overlap between people of color and the foreign-born population in Washington. One in three people of color in Washington is an immigrant, and three in four immigrants are persons of color.<sup>24</sup> Most population growth among people of color is attributable to people born in the U.S., but significant growth over the last decade is due to immigration.

Just over half of Washington's immigrants entered the country before 2000, 30% entered between 2000 and 2009, and 15% entered after 2010. Since 2005, overall population growth in the state has been driven mostly by the U.S.-born population (both domestic migration and births), but immigrants constitute a significant portion of growth, too. Immigration has had the greatest growth impact in the Asian and Black populations, with 63% and 33% of population change, respectively, attributable to immigration in the last decade.

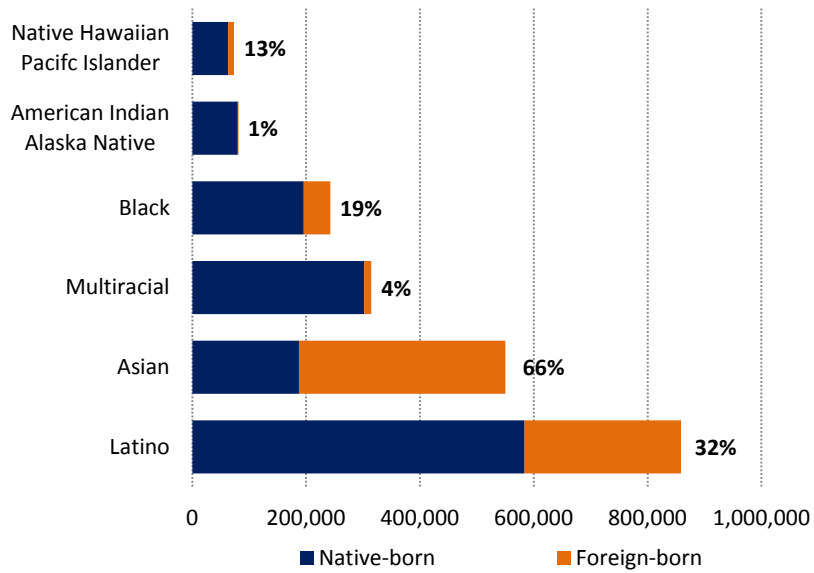
**POPULATION GROWTH ATTRIBUTABLE TO NATIVE- AND FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2005-2014 (% = % FOREIGN-BORN)**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 and 2014 American Community Surveys<sup>25</sup>

These immigration growth trends both reflect and result in the notable differences between racial-ethnic groups when it comes to nativity. Asians, the third-largest racial-ethnic group in Washington, are more than twice as likely as any other group to be foreign-born.

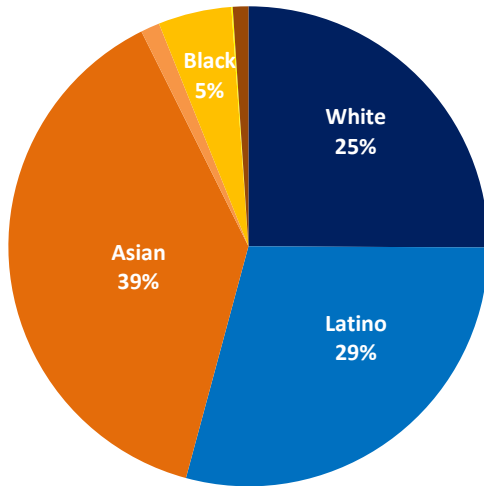
**PEOPLE OF COLOR BY RACE AND ETHNICITY AND NATIVITY,  
WASHINGTON, 2014 (% = % FOREIGN-BORN)**



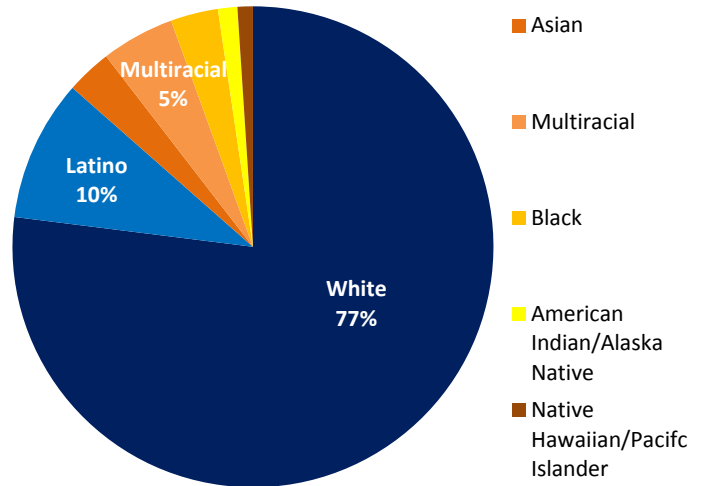
Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>26</sup>

While Whites make up 77% percent of the native-born population, only 25% of Washington’s immigrants are White, hailing mostly from Europe. Asians and Latinos make up the bulk of Washington’s immigrants, combining for just under 70% of the foreign-born population.<sup>27</sup>

**FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014**



**NATIVE-BORN POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>28</sup>

## A Closer Look at Place

### Jamil | Seattle, WA | Early 30s

Jamil's parents, who immigrated to the U.S. from Tanzania in the early 1970s, are both of Indian descent, so Jamil grew up as one of the only Indian kids in his neighborhood. Shaped by his childhood experiences, he found his passion when he started working with youth of color. "I almost want to say it chose me in a certain way."

He never wanted to go to college, but went because his parents urged him to apply. He didn't enjoy it much until he started taking ethnic studies courses: "I found a purpose there, because I began to discover why there was so much inequality, and why I was treated a certain way growing up, and these kinds of things. . . . Probably growing up as a person of color in a very White neighborhood without having anybody to look up to or anything, right? Because I was Indian, there's nobody. We got Gandhi and Apu . . . I wanted to give the support I never got."

"[My family is] very lucky – very lucky. In retrospect, the more work I do in different neighborhoods, with different communities, with different families . . . I feel very grateful for the opportunities that I've had, and for the chances they took and were able to take because of the privileges that they were given. . . . They came on a student visa, so even though they were immigrants and they were poor, they came on a student visa. It's a totally different kind of outlook. They didn't come in as refugees. Some of my family did come in as refugees, and their lifestyle was totally different. I remember visiting and being like, 'Whoa, you guys live totally different than us!' So I feel very humbled to be given those opportunities, and then hopefully just try and make the best of it for myself and helping other people."



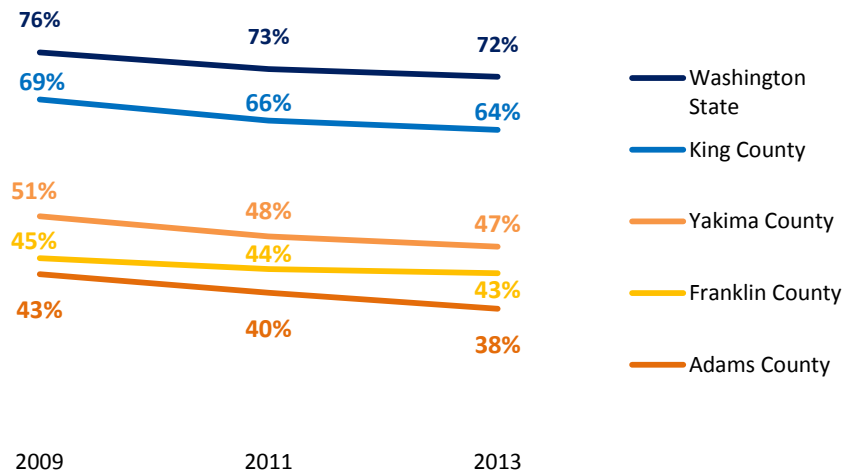
Many factors affect where a person decides to live: industry and occupation, the presence of large urban centers or a rural setting, family ties, or the availability and quality of housing, health care, and education. For many immigrants, the presence of a familiar cultural community is an additional and significant consideration.

The differences in economic outcomes among foreign-born communities in Washington illustrate that the immigrant experience is not the same across the board. Opportunity for educational attainment in country of origin matters, but once in the U.S., inequities by race, gender, and class continue to shape outcomes for immigrants and their children.

Overall, although nearly 30% of Washingtonians are people of color, only 9% of all Washingtonians and 5% of people of color live in diverse zip codes – that is, zip codes where no racial-ethnic group makes up more than 50% of the population.<sup>29</sup> Seventy percent of people of color live in just 5 of the 39 counties in Washington, with 37% in King County alone.<sup>30</sup> The result is that, while Washington's population continues to become more diverse, the experience of most Washingtonians in their own neighborhoods is a significant White majority.

While most counties in Washington are majority White, there are some exceptions. Adams, Franklin and Yakima Counties have populations that are majority people of color, predominantly Latino.<sup>31</sup> All Washington counties, with the exception of Lincoln County (which, at 92.9% White, is the least diverse county in the state) saw an increase in the share of residents of color between 2009 and 2013.<sup>32</sup>

## WHITES AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION, WASHINGTON STATE AND SELECTED COUNTIES, 2009-2013

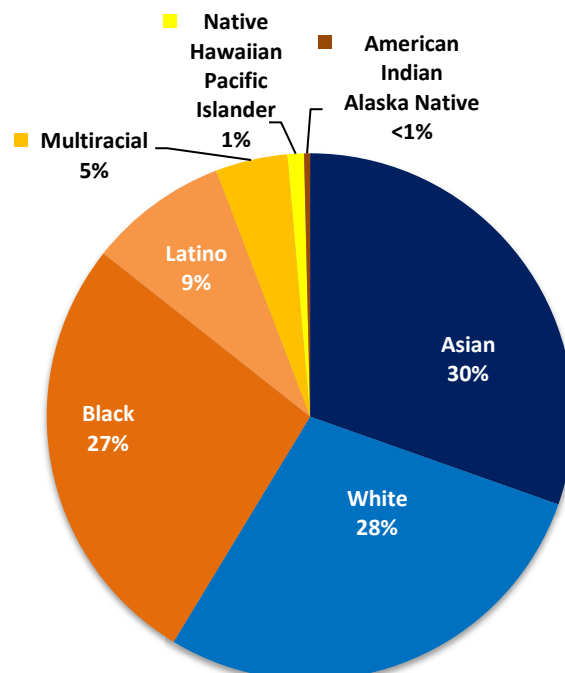


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Surveys.<sup>33</sup>

Washington is home to what has (somewhat controversially) been described as “the most diverse zip code in the United States”.<sup>34</sup> Despite the controversy, the zip code in question, 98118, covering Seattle’s Rainier Valley neighborhood, is the most racially and ethnically diverse zip code in Washington state, and diversity in South Seattle has persisted over time.<sup>35</sup> While a great number of Seattle zip codes are majority White, in 98118, the largest racial-ethnic group (Asian) makes up just 30% of the population.<sup>36</sup> Nearby zip codes covering Seattle’s Rainier Beach neighborhood (98178) and Seattle’s Beacon Hill, Georgetown and South Park neighborhoods (98108) follow closely behind using the same measure of diversity.<sup>37</sup>

98118 is also home to the state’s third-largest foreign-born population, with 36% of its residents identifying as foreign-born.<sup>38</sup> The largest immigrant community in Washington is 98052 in Redmond (19,710 immigrants), followed by 99301 in Pasco (17,324 immigrants) and 98118 in Seattle’s Rainier Valley (15,735 immigrants). These three communities provide a snapshot of immigrant communities across the state.<sup>39</sup>

## POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 98118 ZIP CODE, 2013

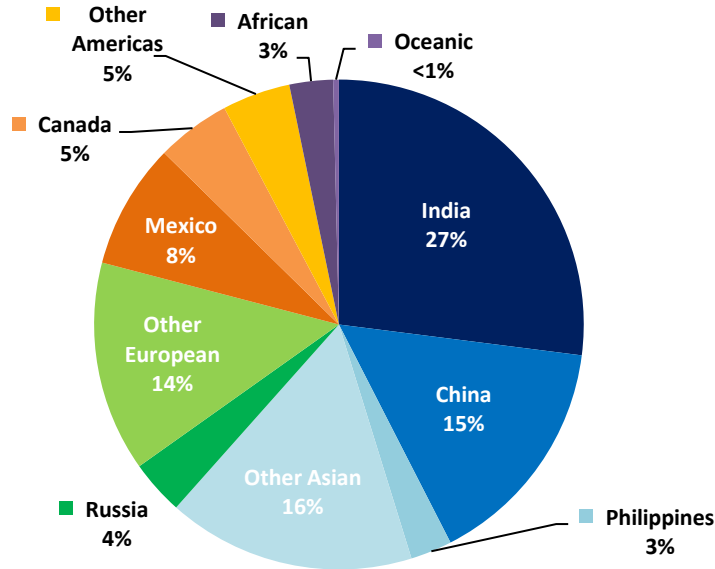


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey<sup>40</sup>



Immigrants in 98052 (Redmond) are mostly Asian and White, highly educated with strong English-speaking ability, working predominantly in professional occupations in the business, management and science industries. A large majority make more than \$75,000 a year, with just a 6.4% poverty rate.<sup>41</sup> The most common place of origin is Asia, with one in four immigrants coming from India.<sup>42</sup>

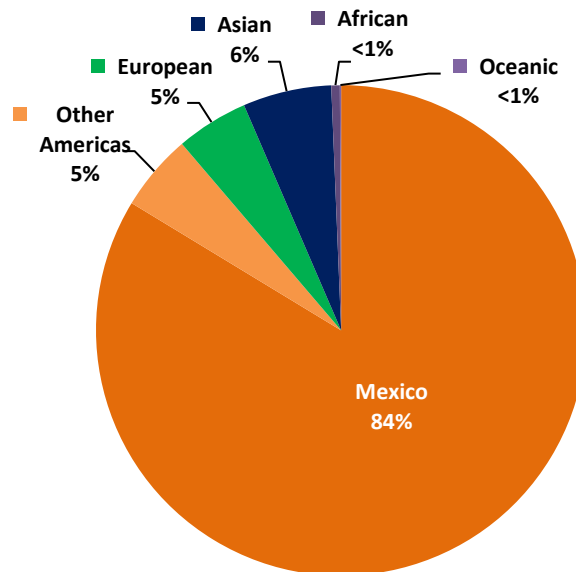
**FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 98052 ZIP CODE, 2013**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey<sup>43</sup>

Immigrants in 99301 (Pasco) are mostly Latino, with relatively low educational attainment and English-speaking ability. Many work in natural resources, construction, maintenance and agricultural jobs, and most make less than \$25,000 a year.<sup>44</sup> An overwhelming majority of immigrants in 99301 hail from Mexico.<sup>45</sup>

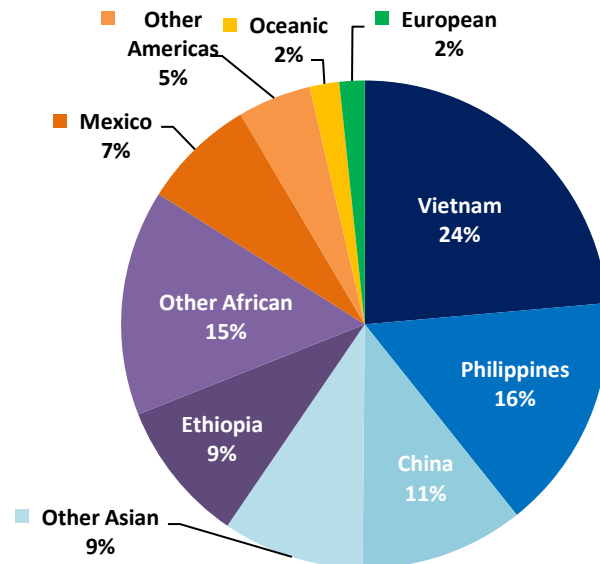
**FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: 99301 ZIP CODE, 2013**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey<sup>46</sup>

Immigrants in 98118 (Seattle-Rainier Valley) are mostly Asian and Black, with moderate educational attainment, low English-speaking ability, working mostly in service occupations in the educational, health care, and social assistance industry. Two-thirds make less than \$35,000 per year.<sup>47</sup> The most common regions of origin for immigrants in 98118 are Asia and Africa, with nearly a quarter coming from Vietnam and almost one-fifth from Eastern Africa.<sup>48</sup>

### FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: 98118 ZIP CODE, 2013



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey<sup>49</sup>

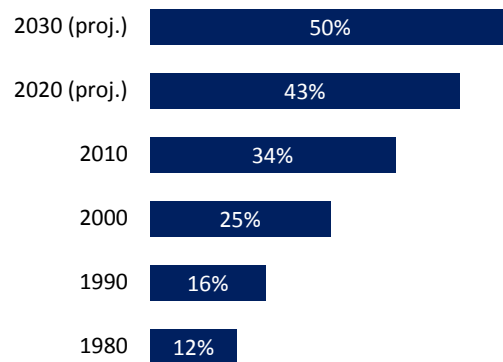
## Children and Families

Children make up a comparatively small share of the foreign-born population – 7% compared to 25% of the native-born population.<sup>50</sup> But Washington is also home to over 400,000 second-generation immigrant children, comprising 27% of all children in the state.<sup>51</sup>

Experts project that by 2030, half of all children in Washington will be children of color, the continuation of a decades-long growth trend: in 1980, children of color made up 12% of our state’s children; today, they represent 38%.<sup>52</sup>

The data show that the experiences of and opportunities available to first- and second-generation immigrant children and children of color are significantly different from White children and those raised in native-born households.

**CHILDREN OF COLOR AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL CHILDREN, WASHINGTON, 1980-2030**



Source: Center for American Progress<sup>53</sup>

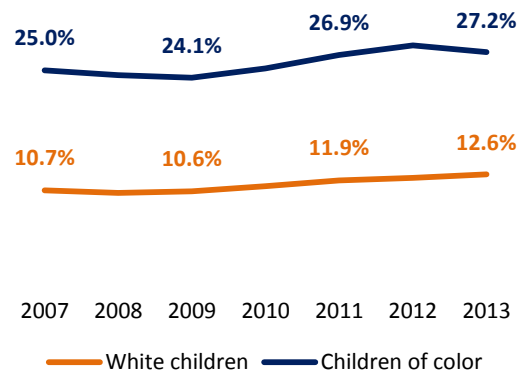
## Children in Poverty

Americans raised in wealthy families are likely to remain wealthy, and those raised in poor families are likely to remain poor. In the study of economic mobility, this phenomenon is known as “stickiness at the ends”.<sup>54</sup> While those that benefit from this system may see these results as perfectly acceptable, the strength of our middle class, our economy, and ultimately our democracy depends on our state’s ability to stem the perpetuation of poverty among the same families, generation after generation. As one scholar put it, “No one in the middle and upper-middle classes would accept it if their children had a 70 percent chance of dropping out of the middle class. We should resist accepting that poor children – who do not choose their parents – have only a 30 percent chance of making it to the middle class.”<sup>55</sup>

Nearly one in five children in Washington lives in poverty. The majority of them are White, but children of color are far more likely to be born into poor families.<sup>56</sup> Since the Great Recession, poverty rates have increased across the board for children in Washington, and kids of color remain more than twice as likely to live in poverty as White children.<sup>57</sup>

Growing evidence confirms that children are affected long-term by the stress of growing up in poverty and the compounding impacts of adverse childhood experiences, increasing the urgency of implementing policies that bolster economic stability for children and their families.<sup>58</sup> In order to promote financial security for all families, state and local policies must provide equality of opportunity at all ages, including and especially during childhood.

**CHILDHOOD POVERTY RATES FOR CHILDREN OF COLOR AND WHITE CHILDREN, WASHINGTON, 2007-2013**

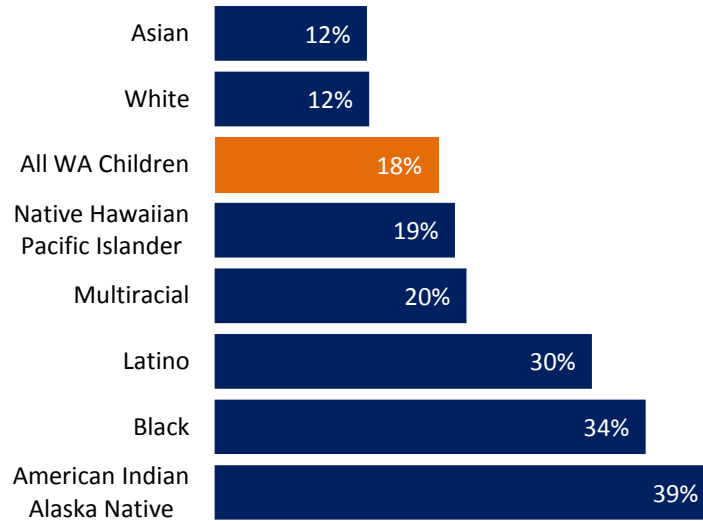


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2013 American Community Surveys<sup>59</sup>

## Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are strongly related to childhood poverty. While White and Asian children have just a 12% chance of growing up in poverty, American Indian and Alaska Native kids are more than three times more likely than them – and more than twice as likely as all kids statewide – to be poor. Black and Latino kids are not far behind with poverty rates of 34% and 30%, respectively.<sup>60</sup>

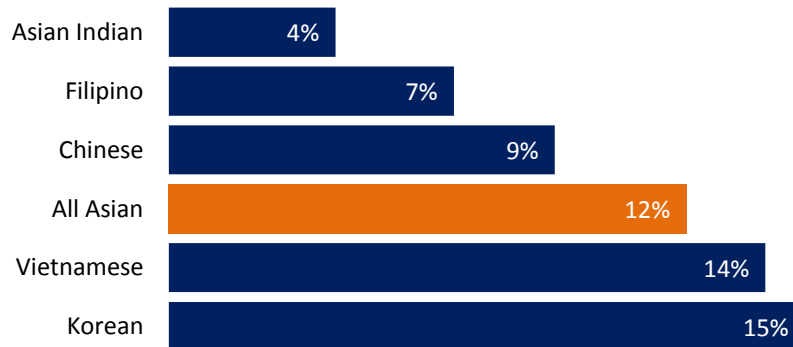
### CHILDHOOD POVERTY RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>61</sup>

The Census’s general race and ethnicity categories sometimes conceal important complexities in the data. For example, although the first look at the data suggests that Asians fare better in many measures of economic stability than other people of color, there is wide variation within the very broad ‘Asian’ designation. Whereas the childhood poverty rate for all Asian-identified children is 12%, the poverty rates among subgroups range from 4% to 15%.

### CHILDHOOD POVERTY RATES OF ASIAN CHILDREN, WASHINGTON, 2014



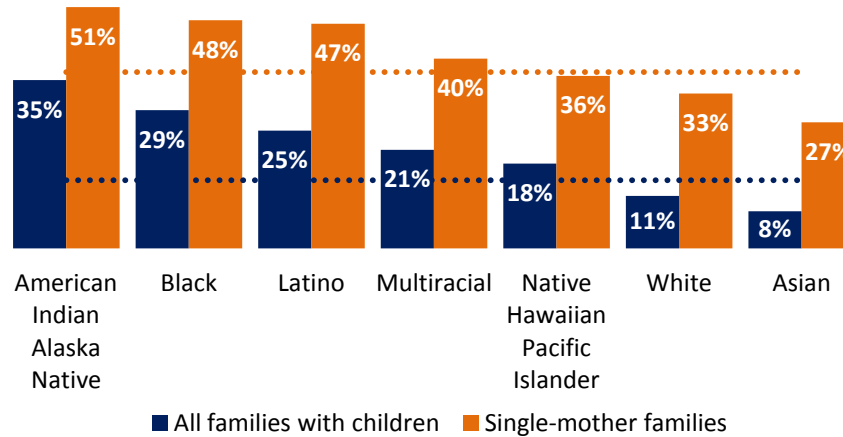
Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>62</sup>

These results hold even though kids of color are more than twice as likely to grow up in married-family households, and married-family households’ poverty rates are less than one-third that of all families with children in Washington.<sup>63</sup> With only three in ten Americans born in the bottom income quintile ever making it to the middle, it is reasonable to expect that, without significant changes, these racial disparities in poverty will continue for generations to come in Washington.<sup>64</sup>

## Family Structure

Kids raised in households headed by single mothers are more than twice as likely to live in poverty compared to all Washington families with kids, and the chances for poverty increase for kids of color raised by single mothers.<sup>65</sup>

### POVERTY RATES AMONG WASHINGTON FAMILIES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014

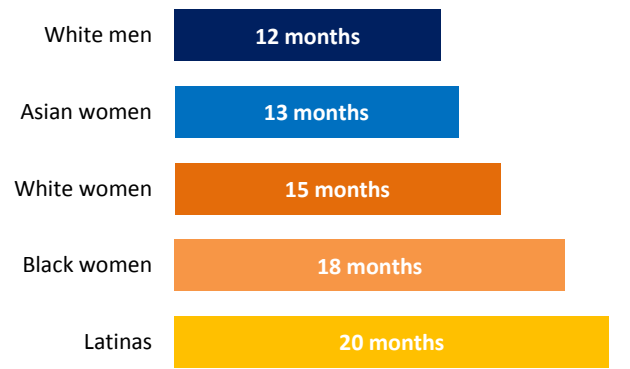


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey.<sup>66</sup>  
Dotted lines are statewide averages.

## Gender Wage Gap

The gender wage gap exacerbates these disparities, and it is even wider for most women of color than for White and Asian women. On average, it takes a Latina or Black woman at least a year and a half to make what a White man does in a year in the U.S.<sup>67</sup>

### WORKING MONTHS REQUIRED TO MAKE WHAT A WHITE MAN MAKES IN ONE YEAR, UNITED STATES, 2014, FULL-TIME YEAR-ROUND WORKERS



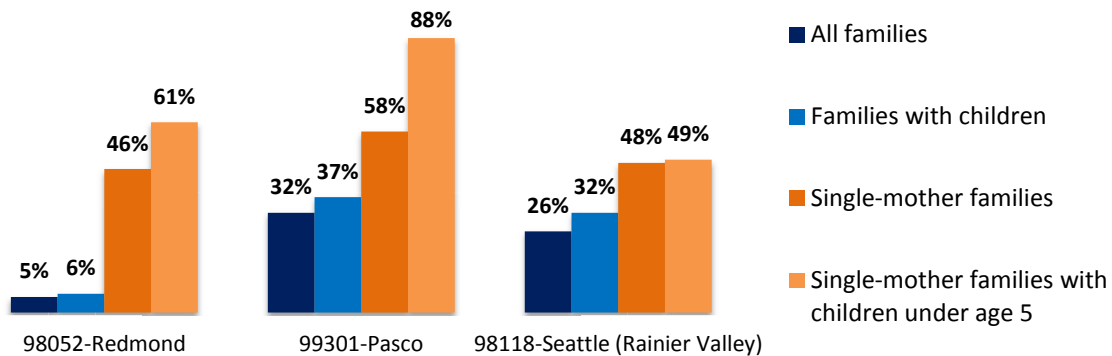
Source: EOI analysis of data from Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>68</sup>

## Place of Origin

As with kids of color, children of immigrants are more likely than children of native-born parents to grow up in two-parent households, yet more likely to be poor.<sup>69</sup> For families with children, more than 18% of foreign-born families live in poverty compared with 13% of native-born families.<sup>70</sup> And, as with kids of color, immigrant children raised in households headed by single mothers are more likely than their native-born counterparts to be poor: 35% of native-born single-mother families and 46% of foreign-born single-mother families live in poverty.<sup>71</sup>

Poverty rates are highest among single mothers with young children, especially in Latino immigrant communities. For instance, the 99301 zip code in Pasco is home to the state’s second-largest immigrant population, and 88% of its immigrant population is Latino.<sup>72</sup> Compared to the other two zip codes with the largest immigrant communities (98052 in Redmond and 98118 in Seattle), Pasco’s poverty rates are higher across the board, and jarringly higher in single-mother families. In Pasco, nearly 9 out of 10 immigrant, single-mother families with children under 5 are living in poverty.<sup>73</sup> In Redmond, the poverty rate jumps from 6% for all families with children to 46% for single-mother families.<sup>74</sup>

### POVERTY RATES AMONG IMMIGRANT FAMILIES, SELECTED WASHINGTON ZIP CODES, 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey<sup>75</sup>

## Education and the Opportunity Gap for Children of Color

The existence of an educational opportunity gap between children of color and White children, both in Washington and the U.S., is well-documented. And even though poverty negatively affects educational outcomes, higher rates of poverty among children of color is not solely responsible for the unequal educational outcomes in our schools. In fact, the disparity in Washington persists even after accounting for income levels, with a consistent 20- to 30-percentage point gap in student achievement between White children and children of color.<sup>76</sup>

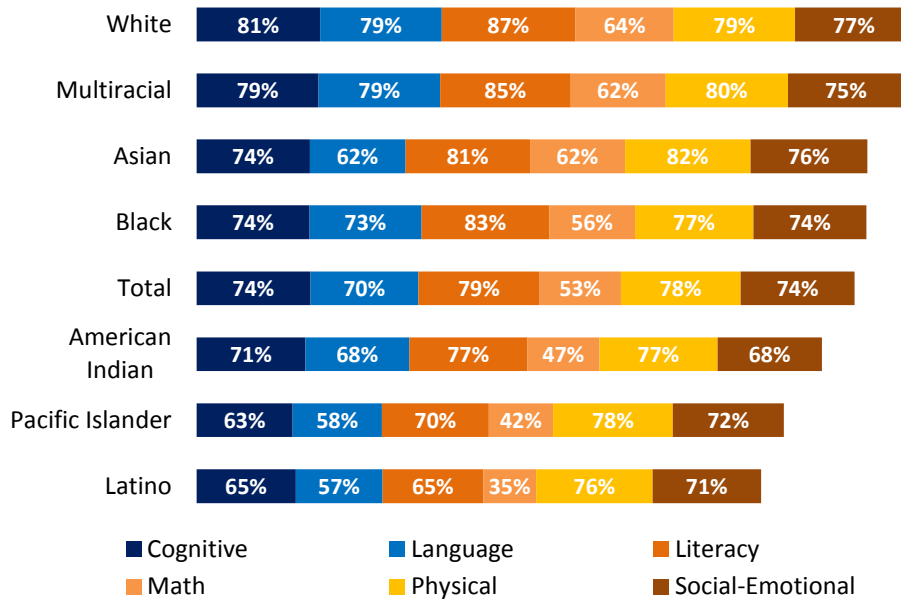
That said, disadvantages like poverty, lower family income and language isolation – which are more prevalent in the lives of children of color – are very real, and they reinforce the gap between kids of color and White kids in ways that further harm the former.

Hunger and poverty can affect kids as early as infancy. Elevated levels of food insecurity and hunger are lingering effects of the Great Recession, and Washington still has not reached pre-Recession levels of food security.<sup>77</sup> Today, an estimated 300,000, or 19% of Washington children, live in households without sufficient income to ensure all members will have enough to eat.<sup>78</sup> Rates of food insecurity are highest among Black and Latino families.<sup>79</sup>

Hunger inhibits development in infants and toddlers and has been linked to negative outcomes for school-aged kids, such as lower child intelligence scores, lower test scores, greater likelihood of repeating grades, and trouble getting along with peers.<sup>80</sup> This means that poverty and hunger disproportionately undermine the educational opportunities of kids of color long before they first enter the classroom.

Given the disproportionately higher rates of poverty among kids of color, it should come as no surprise that they are less likely to be kindergarten-ready in Washington than their White peers, across almost every skill area.<sup>81</sup> Children in immigrant families experience similar disadvantages when it comes to educational opportunity. Compared to children in native-born families, children in immigrant families have lower reading and math test scores, lower early learning enrollment and lower high school graduation rates.<sup>82</sup>

### SHARE OF STUDENTS THAT DEMONSTRATE KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY SKILL AREA, RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014



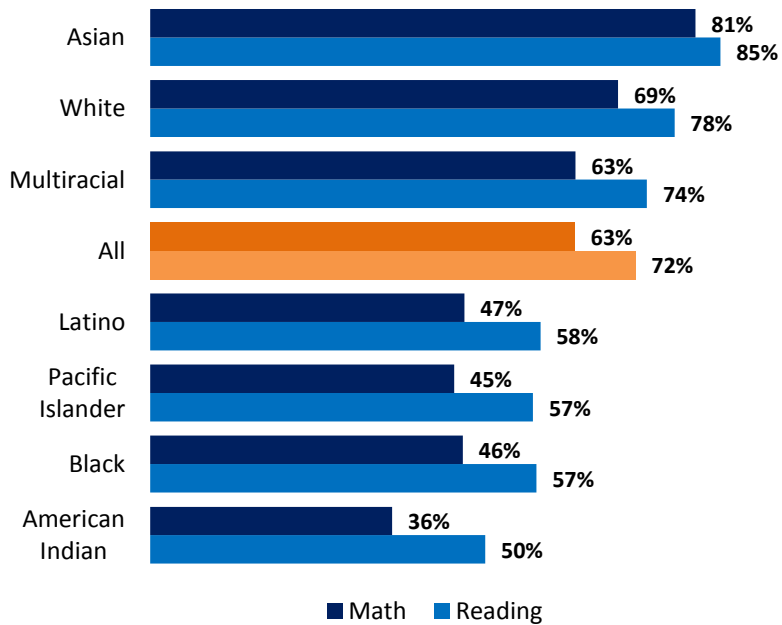
Source: EOI analysis of data from Kids Count Data Center<sup>83</sup>

These outcomes are the result of an economy and educational system biased in subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways against kids of color. The gap persists well after kindergarten, further dividing the kids with advantages from the kids with disadvantages. At each stage in the educational process, some children are given a boost up, while other kids are further marginalized. This makes it harder each year for disadvantaged kids to make up ground.

One result of these compounding factors is that kids of color generally fall below the average in reading and math standards at higher rates than White children.

In the third grade, for example, Latino, Black, Pacific Islander, and American Indian children all meet reading and math standards at lower rates than the statewide average.<sup>84</sup> These disparities persist throughout elementary and middle school, with consistent and negative results across race and ethnicity for eighth-graders.<sup>85</sup>

### THIRD GRADERS MEETING READING AND MATH STANDARDS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2013

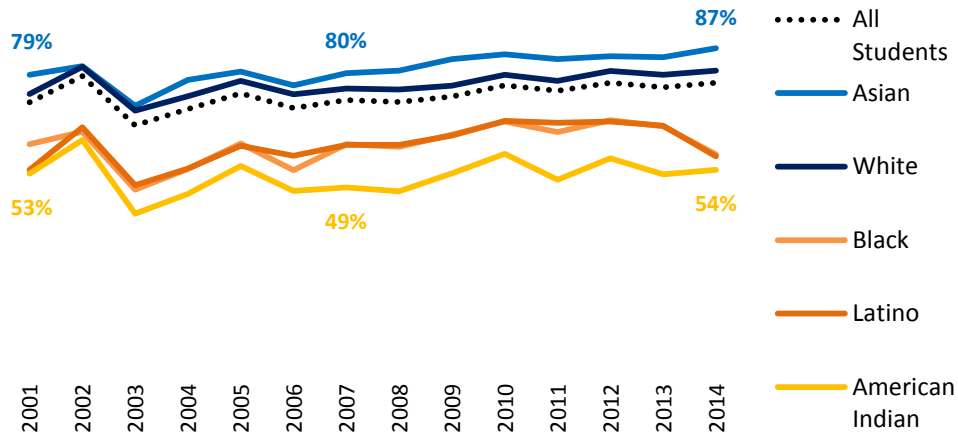


Source: EOI analysis of data from Kids Count Data Center<sup>86</sup>

As these data illustrate, race and ethnicity play a significant role in educational outcomes, even early on. So does English language ability, an issue which is overwhelmingly more likely to touch the lives of children of immigrants than children of native-born parents.

The percentage of children in immigrant families who have difficulty speaking English has gone down over the last decade and a half (from 22% in 2000 to 14% in 2013), but there are still 46,000 children in immigrant families in Washington who have difficulty with English, compared to 7,000 (or 1% of) children in native-born families.<sup>87</sup> In 2013, 97% of Washington fourth graders who were English language learners scored below the proficient level in reading (compared to 47% for English-only learners).<sup>88</sup> Children who are not meeting reading proficiency by fourth grade are four times more likely than proficient readers not to graduate from high school.<sup>89</sup> American Indian, Black, and Latino students are less likely than other students to graduate from high school, and in 2014, Black students graduated at their lowest rate since 2006.

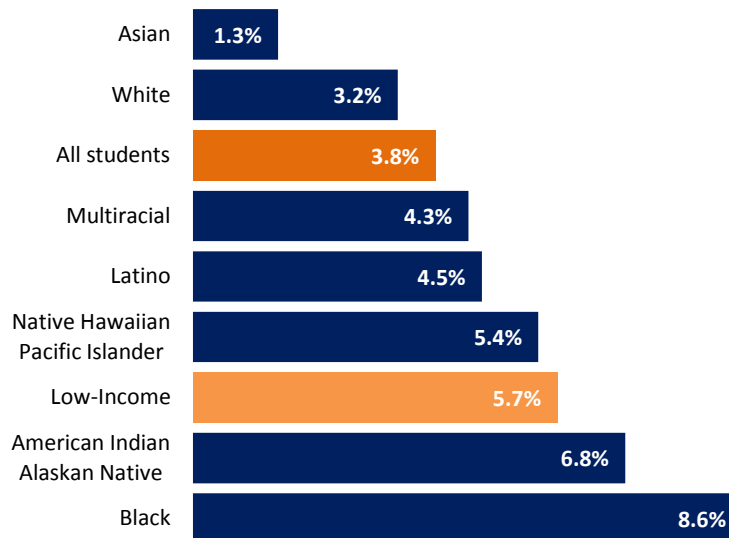
### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2001-2014



Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction<sup>90</sup>

Educational disparities exist outside of academic achievement, as well. Discipline rates mirror academic outcomes, with Asian and White children being suspended or expelled at a lower-than-average rate. Again, these outcomes are not rooted solely in income or poverty. Low-income kids have an overall discipline rate of just 5.7%, lower than that of both American Indian and Black children.<sup>91</sup>

### K-12 DISCIPLINE RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction<sup>92</sup>



# Higher Education

Qualitative interviews with first- and second-generation immigrants revealed a recurring theme: their parents immigrated to the U.S. to increase higher education opportunities for their children. The data seem to reinforce these anecdotal accounts. In fact, the data suggest that not only is educational attainment a draw to the U.S. for parents of young kids, but it is also a draw for college-age adult immigrants.

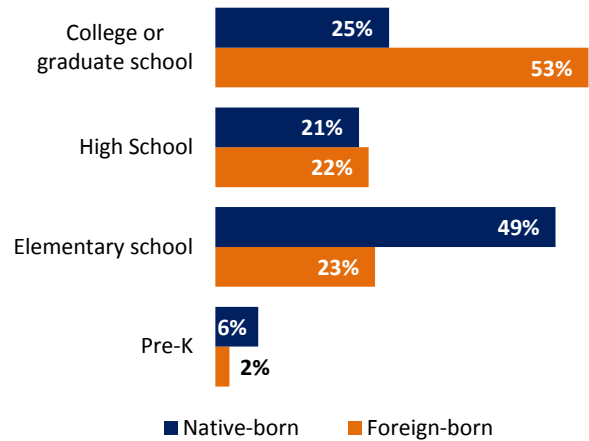
While children in immigrant families in Washington are more than four times more likely to have parents with less than a high school degree (22% of immigrant families versus 5% of U.S.-born families in 2013), foreign-born Washingtonians themselves are more than twice as likely to be enrolled in college or graduate school as their native-born peers.<sup>93, 94</sup>

Washington is more highly educated than the U.S. as a whole.<sup>95</sup> However, there is wide variation in educational attainment across race. According to the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), the state agency responsible for administering state financial aid programs:

*“Most of Washington’s future population growth is expected to come from groups that historically have been less likely to participate in and complete postsecondary programs. Subject to a lingering opportunity gap in our state, these groups are often collectively referred to as ‘underrepresented’ in postsecondary education. Since 2000, Washington’s – and the nation’s – population growth has been almost entirely due to increases in underrepresented populations.”*

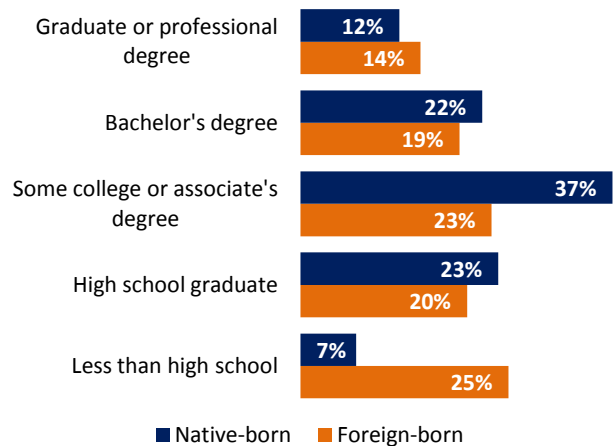
Washington’s Latino population has grown more than 70 percent since 2000.<sup>96</sup> The data present a troubling picture for this fast-growing population. In every other major racial and ethnic group, the majority of adults over 25 have completed at least some college. For Latinos, only 40% have at least some college, and 37% have not completed a high school diploma – nearly four times the statewide total for the lowest level of educational attainment.<sup>97</sup>

**SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY NATIVITY, WASHINGTON, 2014, POPULATION AGE 3 AND OLDER**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>98</sup>

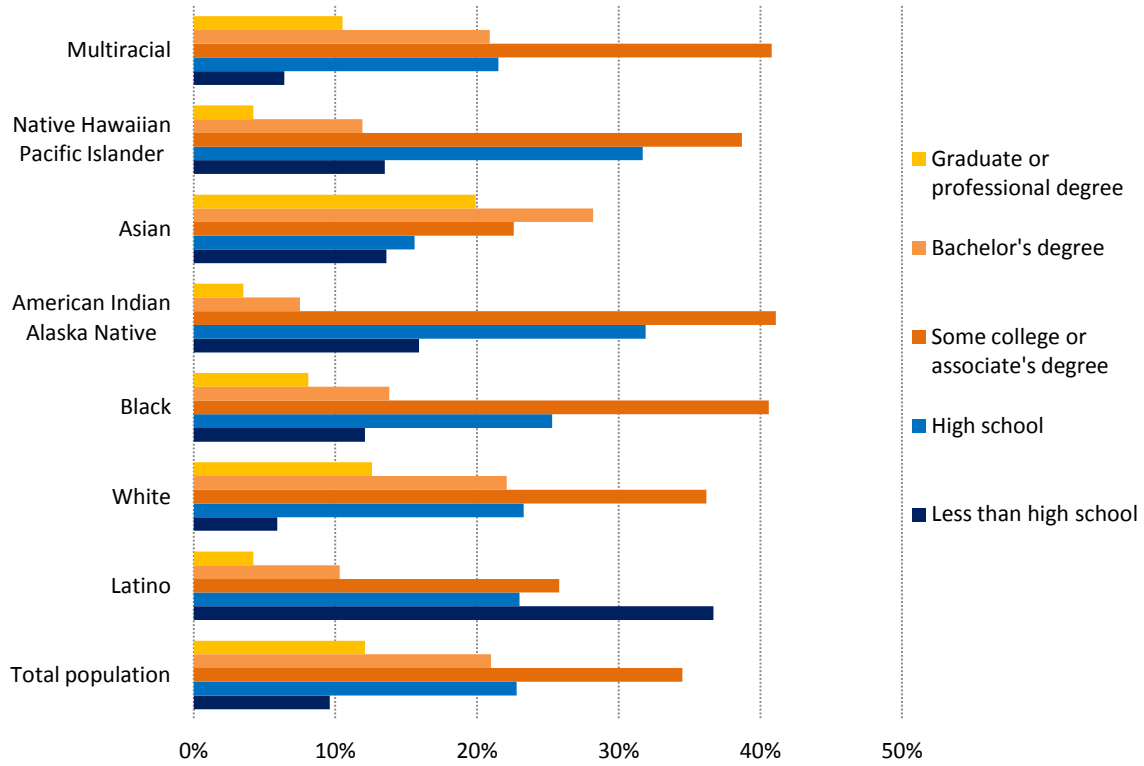
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY NATIVITY, WASHINGTON, 2014, POPULATION AGE 25 AND OLDER**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>99</sup>

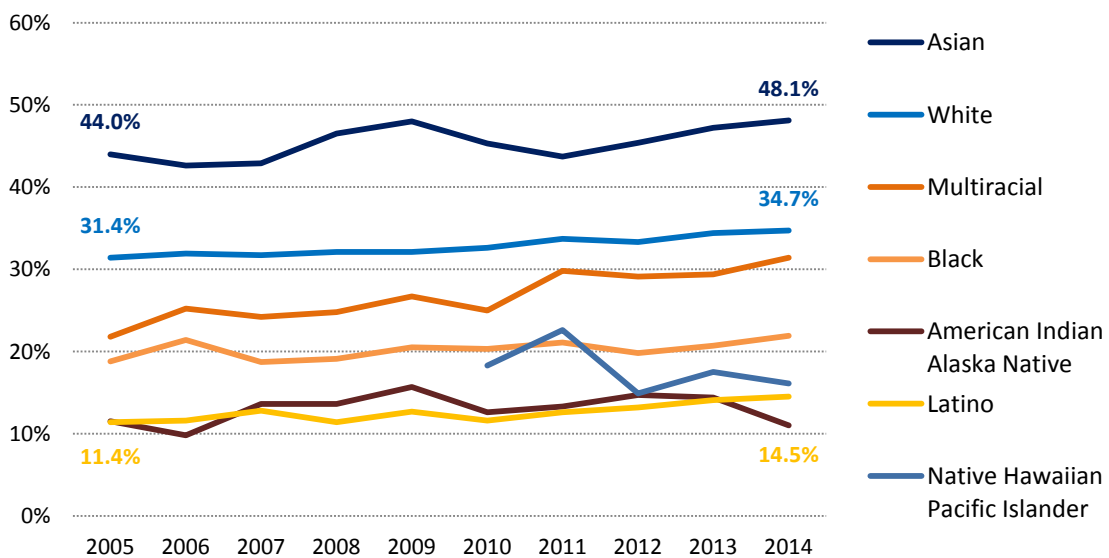
Asians have the highest educational attainment rates, and American Indian and Alaska Natives have the lowest. Multiracial Washingtonians have had the greatest increase in attainment rates, increasing nearly 10% over the last decade, while Latinos and Native Hawaiians remain near the bottom.<sup>100</sup>

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>101</sup>

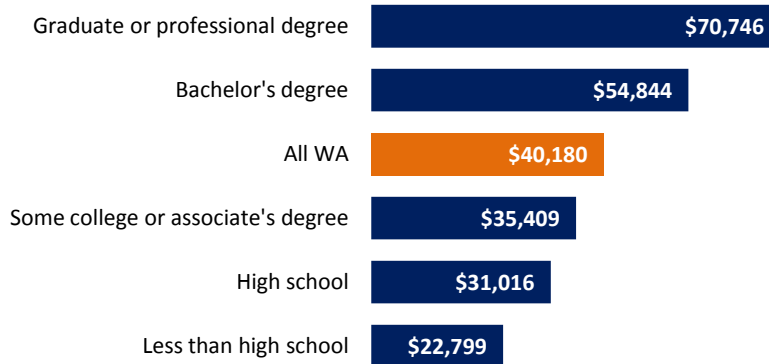
### PERCENT OF POPULATION WITH AT LEAST A BACHELOR'S DEGREE BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2005-2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2014 American Community Surveys<sup>102</sup>

Degree attainment rates mirror the differences across race in poverty rates of children, reading and math test achievement in elementary school, and high school graduation rates. Educational attainment is one of the strongest factors affecting job opportunities, income and wealth, and therefore, plays an enormous role in economic stability and upward mobility. With Latinos, Blacks, American Indians, Native Hawaiian and Multiracial adults consistently falling below the statewide average in educational attainment, we can expect to continue to see limited upward economic mobility among these groups.

### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, WASHINGTON, 2014



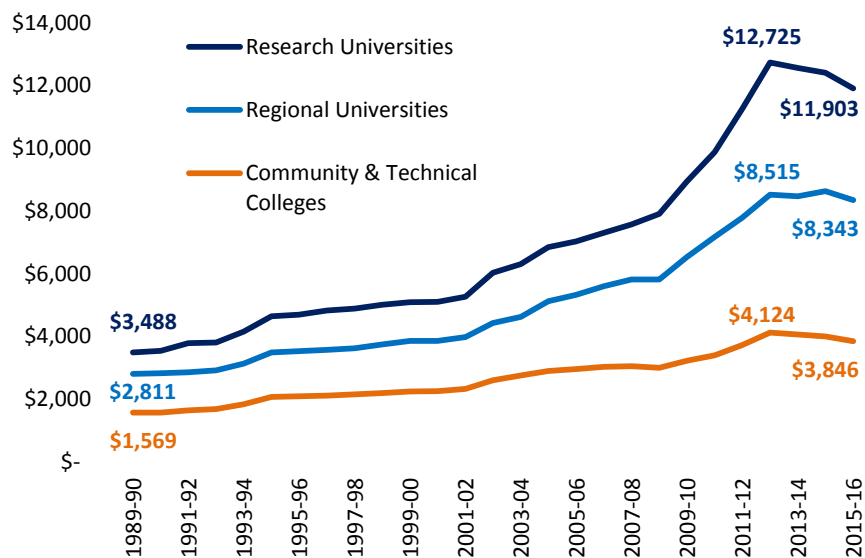
Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>103</sup>

### Other Barriers to Higher Education

Many factors influence a student’s decision to go to college, their level of success in class, and how they fare after graduation. Having a parent who went to college and family members familiar with the application process helps ease the way. The high cost of higher education in Washington is also a determinative factor in the minds of many potential students, particularly from low- and middle-income households.

Tuition at our research universities has more than tripled since 1990, and until Washington passed the Dream Act/REAL Hope Act in 2014, undocumented immigrants had no access to state financial aid.<sup>104</sup> Of course, tuition is not the only cost for college; students must also pay for housing, food, transportation and books. There is also an opportunity cost of foregone income from work – income that the student’s entire family may be relying on.

### TUITION AND FEES AT WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, WASHINGTON, 1989 – 2016



Source: EOI analysis of tuition rates obtained from Washington Student Achievement Council, Office of Financial Management and institutions’ published rates. All amounts in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Young people of color who do go to college face additional barriers. In qualitative interviews with students and graduates of color, interviewees reported feeling significant isolation on college campuses, based on their race. This affected their ability to access academic resources, their grades and even their spending habits.

Even after college, many graduates of color, in particular those from immigrant families, have financial obligations to help care for their families, both at home and abroad. These cultural differences can make it even more difficult for people of color and immigrant families to get on equal footing with graduates from wealthier families with fewer familial obligations.

### **Alisha | Seattle, WA | Early 20s**

Alisha's parents worked hard to make sure she was able to go to college. They enrolled her in a private high school where she had the help of a one-on-one counselor to help her through the process of choosing and applying for colleges and financial aid. Ultimately, she chose Whitman, a private school in Walla Walla. When she got there, she found herself in unfamiliar territory, and experienced significant isolation as a student of color. "I felt like there were resources available to me, but I don't feel like people made that clear or expected us to find them on our own, and . . . a lot of students of color that come to Whitman are first generation. I'm a first-generation working-class student, so I wouldn't even know how to seek out those resources unless someone tells me that they're available."



She made it her mission to help others who felt the way she had. "[I]t got to the point where a lot of my time on campus was spent on making sure that happened for other students, and trying to draw attention to that problem with the admin. So I'm a little bit jaded now because I feel like my college experience could have been a lot better had I had that support from the beginning instead of having to fight for it for so long. 'Cause I shouldn't have to fight for you to pay attention to the issues on campus and make sure I'm having a good time because this is new for me – no one in my family has done this. I don't know what to expect, and to be thrown into the water and be like 'Okay, sink or swim' . . . it was hard for a while and I was pretty jaded and really angry about it. But I realized at some point I could either be angry about it or try to work to change it. So that's a lot of what I did on campus, was trying to like help other students adapt to the college, to Whitman and help the admin see that this is an issue that's happening. We need to pay attention to our students who don't come from traditional backgrounds [where] their parents went to school or their siblings went to school. It's like a norm for them. It's not a norm for everyone else. I think that mindset was in a lot of the heads of admin and that's where the lack of support came from."

She and her family were caught off guard by the cost of books and materials. "My first semester, I went to the bookstore to buy my books, and I spent about \$800 on my books. I broke down in the bookstore and started crying 'cause I had no idea how expensive books were, and I was like 'How am I gonna do this for four years? This is just a semester of books. What's gonna happen next semester? I don't have this money to spend.' So I had to charge it and then my dad had to pay it, and that wasn't budgeted in whatever he needed to pay, so it was kind of a stressful thing. It got paid for and everything was fine, but the reality hit me like 'Wow, college is really expensive!'"

Alisha's financial struggles weren't limited to tuition and books. She also found herself feeling pressure to spend money that she didn't have to maintain friendships and fit in: "[A] lot of the people at Whitman come from backgrounds where they have a lot of financial support or they have the extra finances to do fun things, so I felt the pressure to keep up with that. . . . I had a campus job, but campus jobs don't really pay much. It's just like a seven-hours-a-week kind of thing, and there's books you have to pay for and supplies. But I would always use that money to go out with friends or whatever just so I wouldn't seem like the poor kid who couldn't afford to do anything. And that was something that I . . . struggled with: trying to hang out with friends and then not come off as this poor kid, even though I am this poor kid, and having to call my family and ask them for money to help pay my rent or help buy my books or whatever, 'cause I like had to find a way to navigate that balance between 'OK, I don't have this money, but I don't want them to think I don't have this money, so I'm gonna spend money I don't really have to spend just to do something.'"

# Jobs, Earnings and Wealth

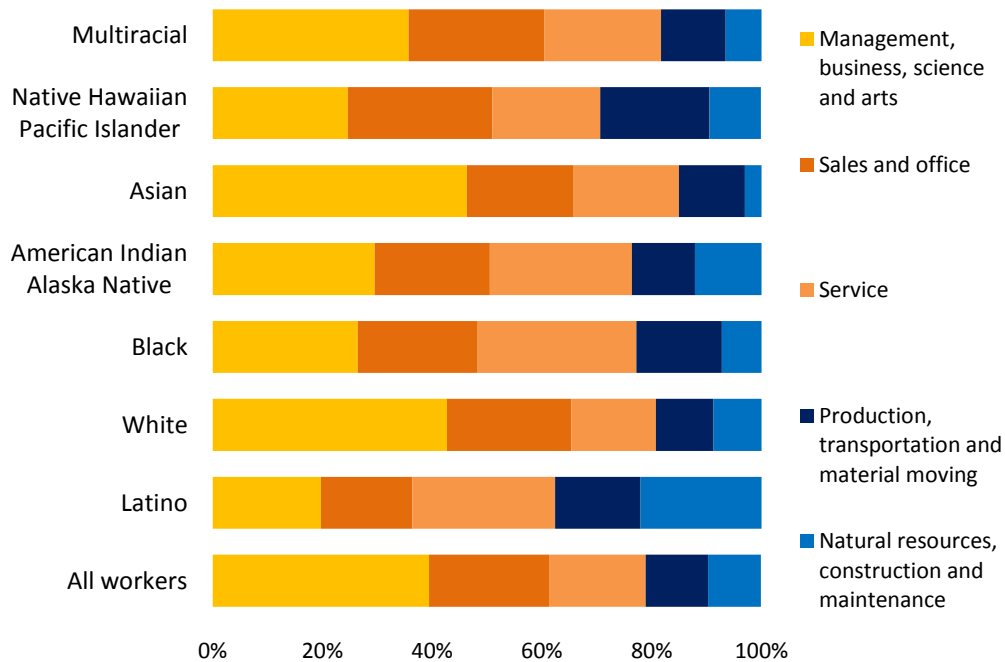
## Industry and Occupation

Variations in occupation by race in part reflect disparities in educational attainment, but both deliberate and unconscious bias can play a role in hiring and promotion decisions as well. Restricted opportunities in employment often result both in lower annual incomes and less access to such critical benefits as paid leave, health insurance, and retirement savings.

The largest single employment sector in Washington is education, health care and social assistance. This industry represents a wide array of occupations, from teachers and professors to in-home health care workers and social workers. Likely because it is so broad a category, it is not dominated by any one racial or ethnic group, although the industry does employ a greater share of native-born workers than foreign-born workers.<sup>105, 106</sup>

The greatest variation in occupation can be seen in the management, business, science and art occupations where White and Asian workers are heavily represented compared to Black and Latino workers, and the natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations, where Latinos are nearly twice as likely as any other racial-ethnic group to occupy those jobs.<sup>107</sup> Management, business, science and art occupations are more likely to be high-skill jobs that require higher levels of educational attainment; the opposite is true for natural resources, construction and maintenance. These results track with the educational attainment levels of the groups that populate them (high rates of educational attainment for Asians and Whites, and lower rates of educational attainment for Latinos). In fact, 13.5% of Latinos in Washington work in agriculture, making them more than four times more likely than any other racial-ethnic group to work in that industry.<sup>108</sup>

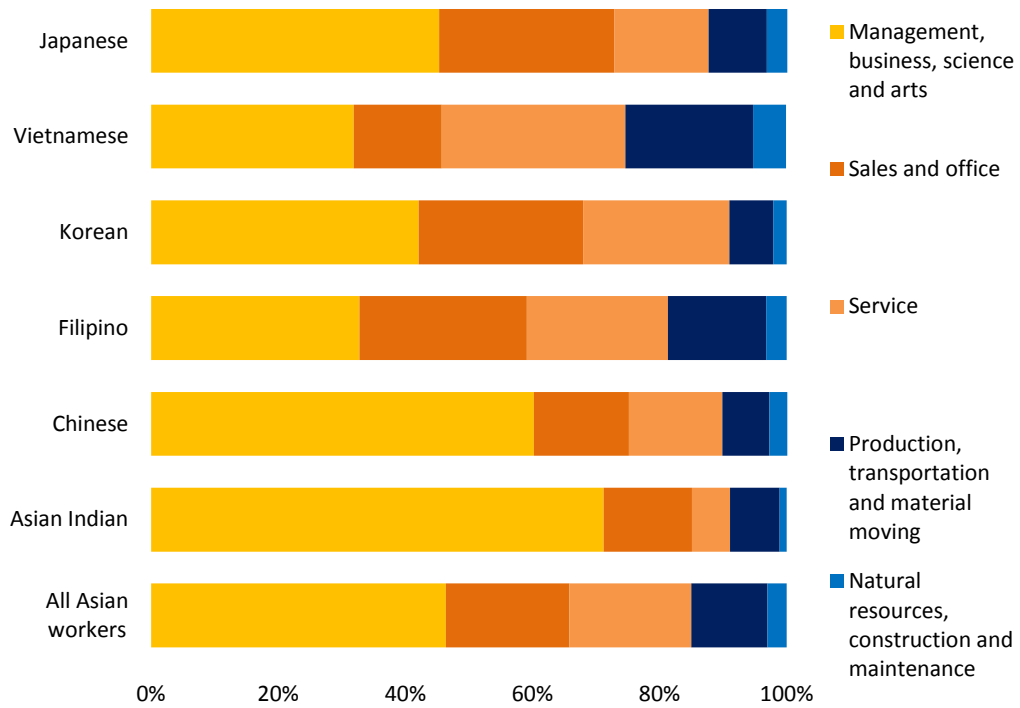
**OCCUPATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey.<sup>109</sup>

Again, there is wide variation among subgroups of general race categories, with Asian Indian and Chinese workers significantly more likely to work in the most high-skill jobs than other Asian workers.

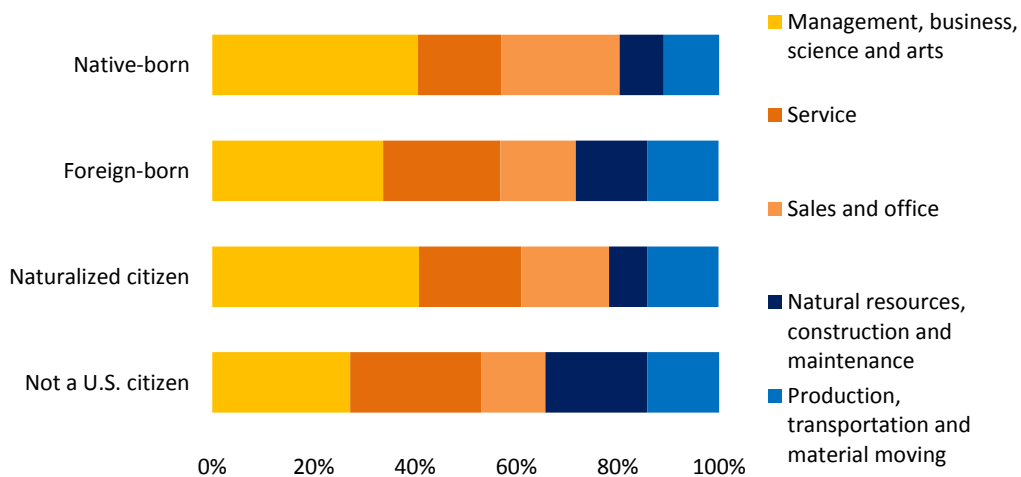
### OCCUPATIONS OF ASIAN WORKERS, WASHINGTON, 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey.<sup>110</sup>

Washington’s foreign-born workers are more likely to work in blue-collar occupations (production, transportation, and material moving; natural resources, construction and maintenance; and service occupations), while native-born workers are more likely to work in White-collar jobs (sales and office occupations or in management, business, science, and arts occupations).<sup>111</sup> The data also show significant differences based on citizenship. Naturalized citizens and native-born citizens share similar patterns, while non-citizens are more heavily represented in natural resources, construction and service occupations.<sup>112</sup>

### OCCUPATION BY NATIVITY AND CITIZENSHIP, WASHINGTON, 2014



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey.<sup>113</sup>

One plausible reason for the differences in occupations between native and foreign-born workers is educational attainment. Whereas only 6.6% of native-born residents lack a high school diploma, nearly 25% of the foreign-born population has less than a high school education.<sup>114</sup> This translates to foreign-born workers being employed more often in lower-skilled industries and occupations.

But educational attainment cannot tell the entire story. Although Washington's foreign-born workers are more likely than native-born workers to hold advanced degrees (14.2% versus 11.7%), nationwide, one in five immigrant workers are in jobs where their education and experience are underutilized.<sup>115, 116</sup>

### **Yasir | Kent, WA | Mid-30s**

When Yasir graduated from college in Iraq in 2003, American troops had just invaded and the country was in chaos. With jobs limited to construction, working for the U.S. military, or journalism, Yasir decided to try his hand at being a reporter. Quickly, journalism became his passion. He eventually landed his dream job with the New York Times in Baghdad, and despite the trauma of the war around him, life was good for Yasir.

He and his wife, an engineer, lived in a nice house in downtown Baghdad with their kids. They had jobs they liked, were close with their nearby extended family, and they had a full social life. However, Yasir began to receive death threats because of the stories he was working on. As an employee of an American company, he was eligible to apply for a refugee visa, and after doing some research, he and his family decided to move to the Seattle area.

Life in Washington has been a new kind of challenge. His family used their savings to move, and by the time they arrived in the U.S., there wasn't much left. He connected with a refugee assistance organization, which helped him find an apartment and gave him a few months of financial assistance. It also provided job-seeking assistance, but it wasn't easy for the organization to find a job for somebody with Yasir's experience and education:

"For them, I was an issue. For someone who has a background like me, and who is educated, I was an issue for them. Because it's not easy to find – and other people, they would like just put them in a restaurant, or anywhere." When he was coming to the end of the financial assistance period, he felt pressure to find a job – any job. "The help will stop, and you will be on your own. You have to accept the reality. You have to take whatever they are offering. I mean, they are not saying that, but the reality is like this. And I was like, what should I do? I would do anything – the things they were offering me, stuff like security. And I told them, the problem with security is, I am a person who has nothing to do with security. I don't see myself as a security officer. And then the other jobs that they get me, like maintenance, like plumber, stuff like this. And I have no problem with jobs, I'm sure I can do much better than these things."

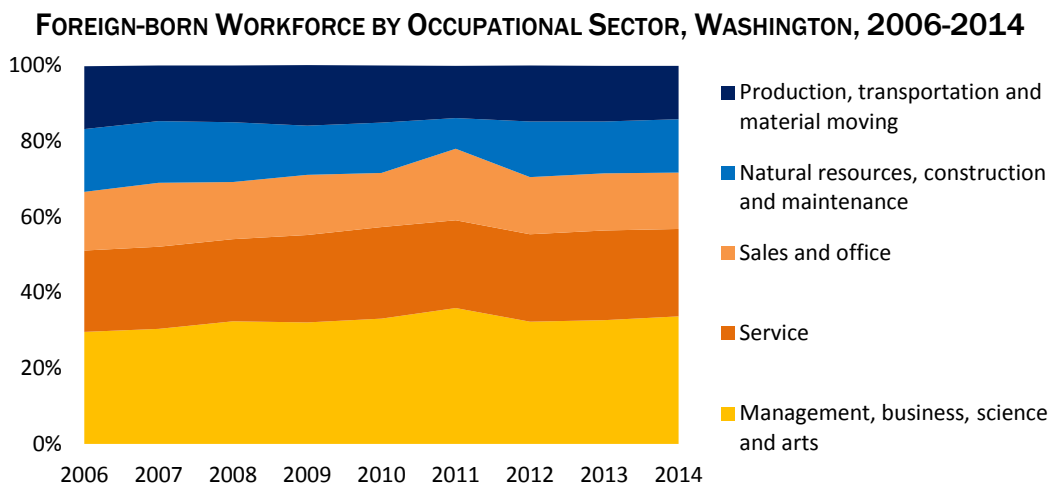
Yasir eventually found a job on his own, delivering pizzas. In his interview, he was nervous about telling the manager that he'd been a journalist because he'd been warned against being seen as overqualified. "But then I was like, look, but delivering the pizza is just like delivering the news, you have to be quick! You have to be on time – I think it's relevant." He liked delivering pizzas, because it gave him a chance to familiarize himself with the area and talk to people. He didn't like the other parts of his job. "I was mopping, and it come to my mind, is that the thing I am here for? Is this my goal? Is this how I end up? I don't have anything against doing any job, but it's difficult, you know?"

Yasir still hasn't found a job in journalism, but now he works as a paraeducator for English language learners. For him, what's most important is that his kids are safe and have opportunity, and he believes that even though he's had to make personal sacrifices, the move has been worth it. "I'm glad I did it. It's a great opportunity. Yeah, it's a new thing for me and my family, especially for my kids. I mean, it's not about me at all. It's all for my kids."



## Recent Changes

Over the last decade, Washington’s foreign-born workforce has increased its presence in management, business, science and arts, likely a reflection of the continuing effects of the Seattle area’s tech boom, which began in the 1990s and continues to grow the information and technology industries in the area.<sup>117</sup> Over the same period, Washington’s foreign-born workforce occupied fewer jobs in natural resources, construction and maintenance and production, transportation and material moving. These data signal a gradual move from low-skilled to high-skilled jobs among Washington’s immigrant workers.<sup>118</sup>



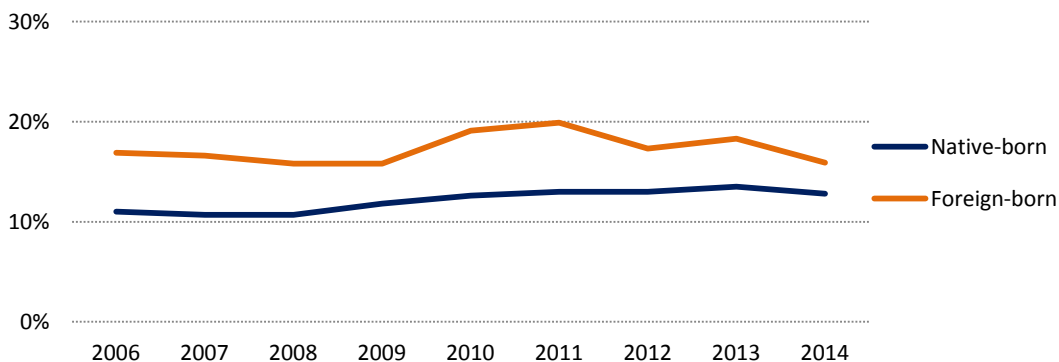
Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2014 American Community Surveys<sup>119</sup>

## Earnings, Income and Poverty

Generally, the foreign-born population and people of color experience higher rates of poverty in Washington than the native-born and White population. Lower earnings, lower educational attainment, and limited job opportunities paint a troubling economic picture for Washington’s foreign-born workers, workers of color and their families. These factors have negative impacts on financial security and put a significant portion of Washingtonians at greater risk of poverty.

The data also suggest the groups most likely to be poor are also the groups most likely to be affected by volatility in the economy. However, while foreign-born Washingtonians experienced more unpredictability during the Recession, it appears that the poverty gap between them and their native-born peers is narrowing in recent years. For native-born residents, the poverty rate has increased steadily since the onset of the Great Recession, reaching a 10-year high of 13.5% in 2013.<sup>120</sup> Immigrant poverty rates have been more susceptible to fluctuations in the economy, growing as high as 19.9% in 2011 but reaching lower than pre-Recession levels in 2014.<sup>121</sup>

### PERCENT OF POPULATION BELOW FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL BY NATIVITY, WASHINGTON, 2006-2014

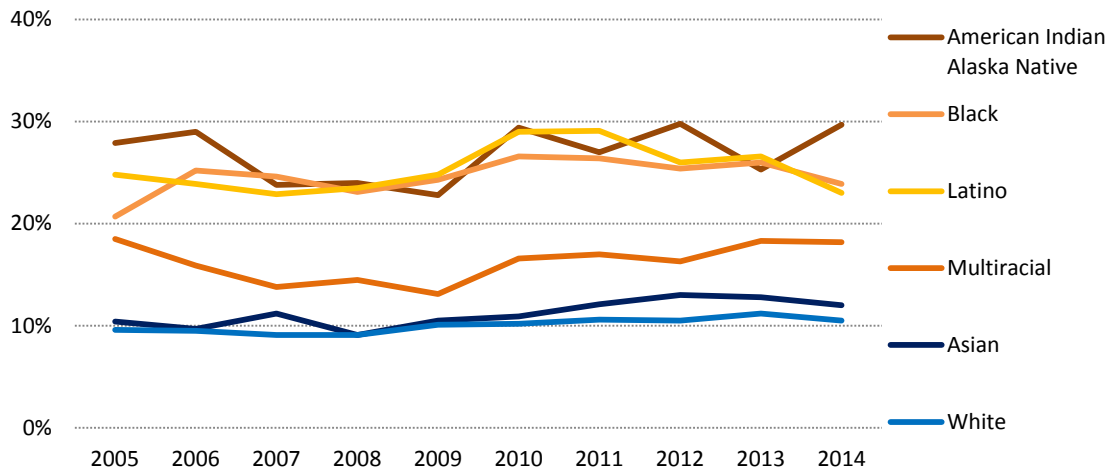


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2014 American Community Surveys<sup>122</sup>



During the Recession, people of color saw similar poverty patterns to foreign-born Washingtonians. While the groups with higher poverty rates experienced more volatility during and in the aftermath of the Great Recession, Whites experienced more gradual increases in poverty.

### PERCENT OF POPULATION BELOW FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2006-2014



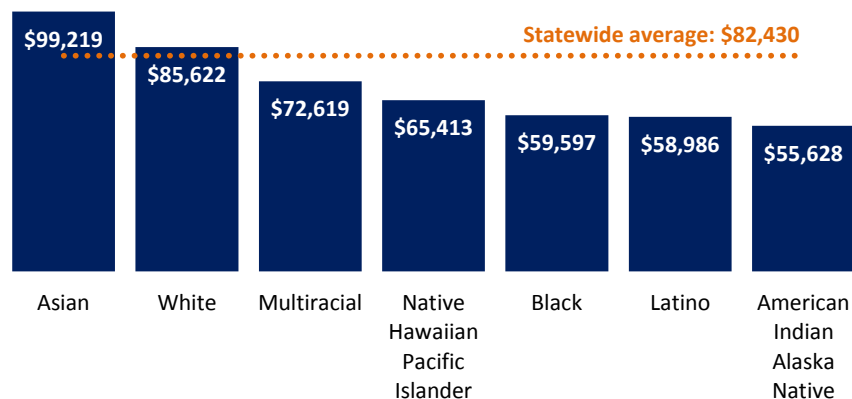
Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2014 American Community Surveys<sup>123</sup>

### The Role of Race

Fifty years after the U.S. banned discrimination in employment on the basis of race, race and ethnicity continue to influence people’s ability to get a job or a promotion and how much they earn. But the effect of race and ethnicity in education and workforce preparation are only part of the story.

The data suggest the effects of race and nativity also play a part in job opportunity and compensation at the time of employment, even for similarly educated workers. In 2014, Black households with earnings made, on average, almost \$6,000 less per year than Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and just over \$600 more per year than Latinos, despite the fact that Black Washingtonians are more likely than both groups to hold a Bachelor’s degree or better.<sup>124</sup>

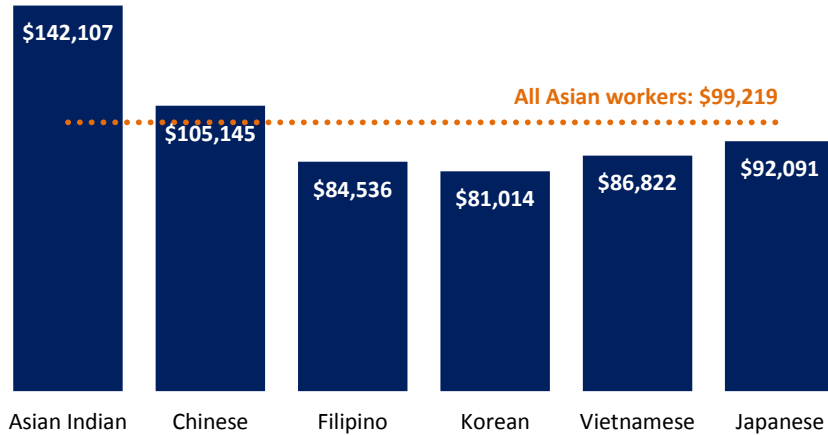
### MEAN HOUSEHOLD EARNINGS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014, HOUSEHOLDS WITH EARNINGS



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>125</sup>

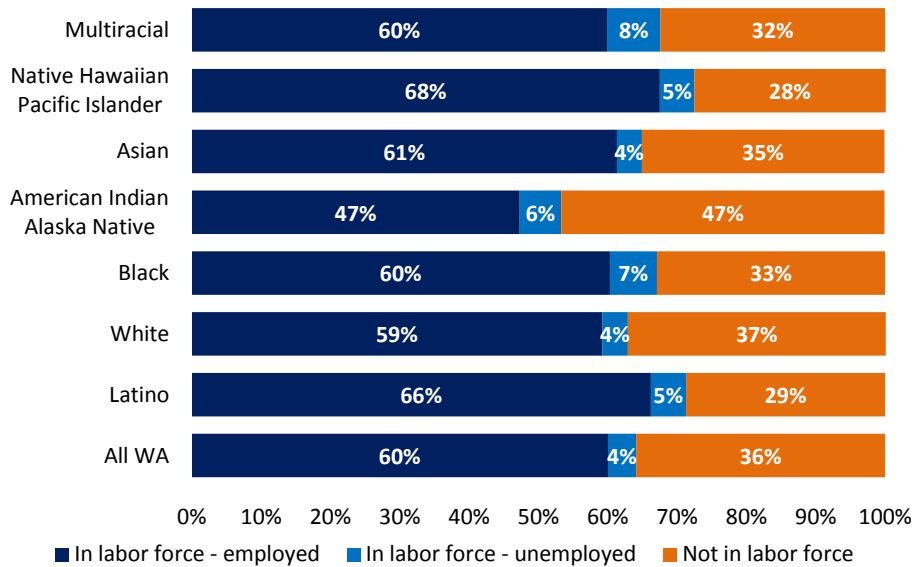
Tracking with occupation trends, Asian Indians and Chinese workers earn far more than their other Asian counterparts do. Black households are among the lowest-income households and the most likely to be in the labor force and unemployed.<sup>126</sup>

### MEAN HOUSEHOLD EARNINGS OF ASIANS, WASHINGTON, 2014, HOUSEHOLDS WITH EARNINGS



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>127</sup>

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014, POPULATION AGE 16 AND OLDER

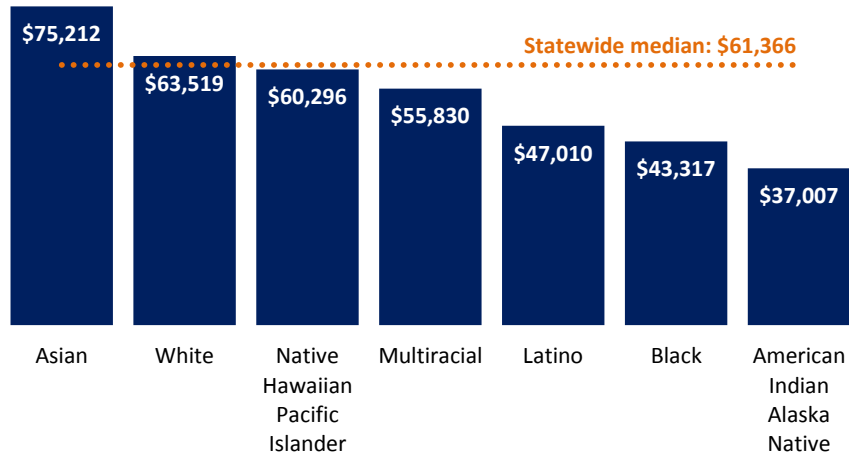


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>128</sup>

Earnings are just one type of household income. And while one might expect household income levels to align with employment rates, they do not. For instance, in Washington, Whites are less likely to be in the labor force and employed than Latinos, but the household incomes of Latinos are significantly lower than those of White households. Whites are also much less likely than Latinos to be in the labor force at all, with 37% of Whites out of the labor force compared to just 29% of Latinos.<sup>129</sup>

These data not only illustrate the wage disparity between Whites and Latinos but also imply that White Washingtonians are more likely to have enough non-earnings income – or have accumulated enough wealth – to be out of the labor force, but still maintain comparatively high household incomes.

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, WASHINGTON, 2014

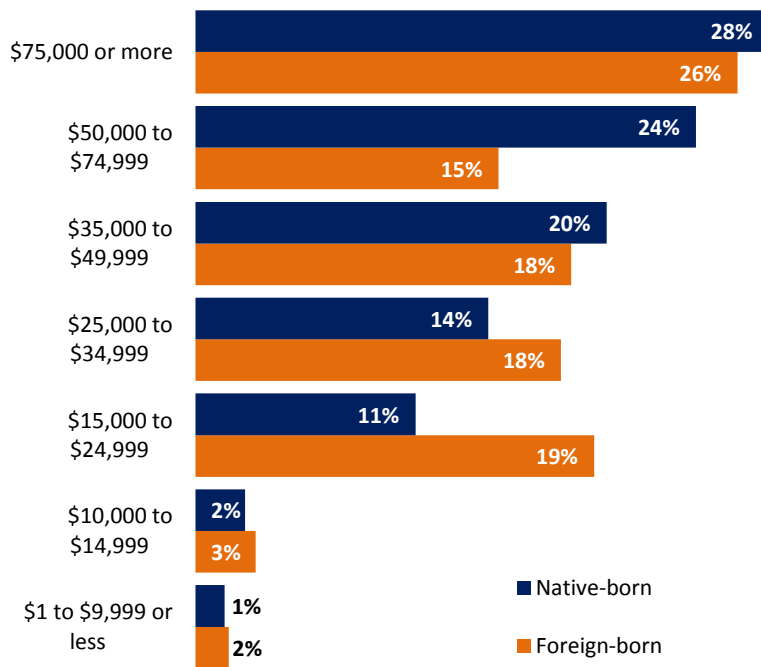


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>130</sup>

As with people of color, foreign-born households have lower mean earnings and household incomes than native-born households, but being employed and in the workforce helps narrow the gap. Immigrants are more likely than native-born Washingtonians to be in their prime working years: 42% of Washington immigrants are between the ages of 25 and 44, compared to 25% of native-born residents.<sup>131</sup> Likely as a result of this age distribution, immigrants make up a disproportionately large part of Washington’s workforce: while they comprise only 13.4% of the general population, they account for more than 16% of the state’s employed workforce, though they generally earn less.<sup>132</sup>

The largest share of workers in Washington earns over \$75,000, but native-born workers are concentrated at the top of the income scale, while foreign-born workers are concentrated in the middle, more likely to earn less than \$50,000.<sup>133</sup>

## ANNUAL EARNINGS BY NATIVITY, WASHINGTON, 2014, POPULATION WITH EARNINGS

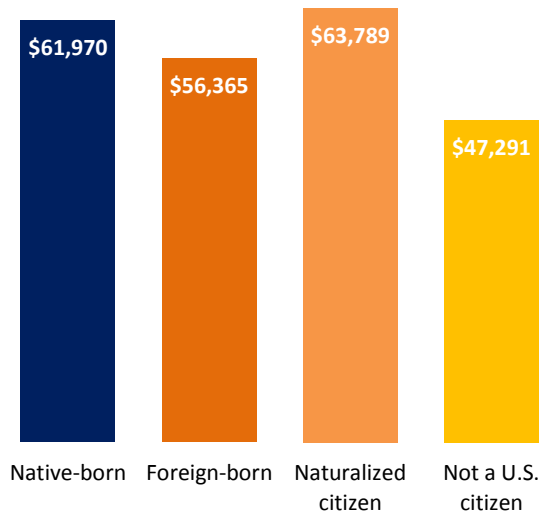


Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>134</sup>

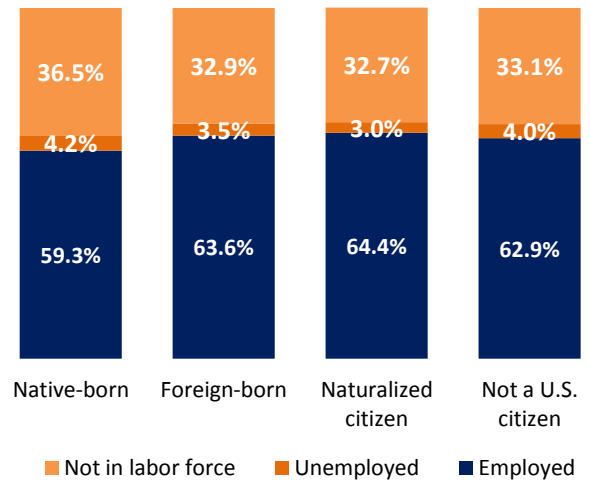
Employment status does not vary widely based on citizenship, but household income does, and the gap between foreign-born and native-born households is larger when it comes to household *income* than for household *earnings*.

In 2014, the median household *income* for native-born residents in Washington was \$61,970 compared with \$56,365 for foreign-born households.<sup>135</sup> For households with *earnings*, native-born households had earnings of \$80,468 compared to \$78,689 for foreign-born households.<sup>136</sup> The data show that the primary drivers of lower household incomes for immigrants are the much lower incomes of non-citizen immigrant workers. In fact, naturalized foreign-born workers had higher household incomes in 2014 than native-born workers, but foreign-born workers' income falls below that of native-born workers when non-citizen workers are factored in.<sup>137</sup>

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY NATIVITY AND CITIZENSHIP, WASHINGTON, 2014**



**EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY NATIVITY AND CITIZENSHIP WASHINGTON, 2014**



Source: EOI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey<sup>138</sup>

Differences in earnings between workers of color and White workers – and between native- and foreign-born workers – are telling. It is more revealing, however, to note even greater differences among those groups when it comes to total household income. Not only do White families earn more, the data suggest that they accumulate and maintain more wealth. This allows them higher household incomes, even with lower labor force participation than their peers, widening the income gap even further.

A good education and hard work can help a person achieve upward relative mobility, but it seems that there is no substitute for the passing on of accumulated wealth from one generation to another. Even controlling for income, people of color are less likely to experience upward mobility across generations. A national study of mobility conducted by Pew's Economic Mobility Project found that, even though most Americans born in the bottom three quintiles surpass their parents' wealth, this was not true for Black Americans, with only 23% raised in the middle surpassing their parents' wealth compared to 56% of Whites.<sup>139</sup> Further analysis revealed that the only income bracket in which a majority of Blacks surpassed their parents' wealth was the bottom quintile, in which 65% of Blacks are raised (compared with 11% of Whites).<sup>140</sup>

# Conclusion

The factors examined here provide evidence of the close alignment between poverty and educational opportunity in childhood, and income and wealth in adulthood. These indicators of economic stability are not only interrelated; they are explicitly affected by race, ethnicity, nativity, citizenship and gender – and they ultimately affect economic opportunities over a lifetime.

Washington’s immigrants and people of color simply face harsher economic and social conditions, so it is not surprising to see White and native-born Washingtonians being and staying better off than people of color and immigrants.

As Washington’s communities continue to grow and diversify, it is necessary to develop and shape policies that best meet the needs of our modern workforce, society and economy. All Washingtonians, regardless of race or country of origin, deserve a safe environment that enables a work-life balance, an educational system that opens its doors to them and prepares them all equally for success, and homes and thriving communities that support people and families from all backgrounds. Doing that requires a close examination of state, local and federal policies with a goal toward developing an environment that purposefully promotes the success of immigrants and people of color, and provides for truly equal opportunity for financial security for all families.

Immigrants from different regions come to Washington with different backgrounds, skills, and abilities, and therefore contribute to Washington’s economy in nuanced ways. However, as a whole, foreign-born Washingtonians and Washingtonians of color are losing out on much of the opportunity available to their White and native-born counterparts. In turn, Washington is losing out on their talent, skills and creativity. Not only are children of color more likely to enter school at a disadvantage, children of color and immigrant children have a continuing uphill battle to fight to get to and through college, and a harder time getting good jobs with decent pay when they become adults.

When, as these findings illustrate, people of color and immigrants face consistent disadvantages compared to their White and native-born peers, it threatens even greater income inequality here in Washington and across the nation.

Given these findings, it is especially important to adopt policy changes that we know will have a substantial positive impact on childhood outcomes by decreasing disparities and increasing opportunity. In Washington, that includes:

- Ensuring that culturally competent quality child care and early learning are accessible to all kids;
- Supporting an amply funded K-12 system that works to close the opportunity and discipline gaps;
- Decreasing college tuition and fully funding financial aid so it is available to all aspiring students;
- Raising the minimum wage;
- Ensuring that all people have access to adequate health coverage and care;
- Closing the gender wage gap; and
- Providing statewide paid family and medical leave and sick leave.

Policymakers must work not simply to increase opportunity for everybody, but to deliberately narrow the opportunity gap that threatens immigrant communities and communities of color.

# Sources and Notes

---

- <sup>1</sup> It is important to recognize the limitations of aggregate race and ethnicity data reported by the Census. The purpose of this particular report is to provide a broad view of common measures of economic stability and mobility. Aggregate data is suited to that purpose. However, across all of the factors explored in this report, nuances exist which can be illuminated by analyses of disaggregated race and ethnicity data, as well as exploration of the intersections between race, ethnicity, gender, citizenship, age and other factors. It is our intention that this report will serve as a launching point for those analyses.
- <sup>2</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Moving on Up: Why Do Some Americans Leave the Bottom of the Economic Ladder, but Not Others?" Nov. 2013, available online at <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/0001/01/01/moving-on-up>.
- <sup>3</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Moving on Up: Why Do Some Americans Leave the Bottom of the Economic Ladder, but Not Others?"
- <sup>4</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Moving on Up: Why Do Some Americans Leave the Bottom of the Economic Ladder, but Not Others?"
- <sup>5</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Moving on Up: Why Do Some Americans Leave the Bottom of the Economic Ladder, but Not Others?"
- <sup>6</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Moving on Up: Why Do Some Americans Leave the Bottom of the Economic Ladder, but Not Others?"
- <sup>7</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Moving on Up: Why Do Some Americans Leave the Bottom of the Economic Ladder, but Not Others?"
- <sup>8</sup> Uhlaner, Susan K. The Pew Charitable Trusts. July 2012. "Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations." Available at <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/0001/01/01/pursuing-the-american-dream>.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 Population Estimates, "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). Grieco, Elizabeth *et. al.*, "The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2010," U.S. Census Bureau, May 2012, available online at <http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2012/acs/acs-19.html>. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B05006 for United States and Washington State, "Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population in the United States," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). ("ACS Table B05006, 2014 1-Year Estimates.")
- <sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table DP02 for Washington State and United States, "Selected Social Characteristics in the United States," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). U.S. Census Bureau, "The Foreign-Born Population: 2000," Census 2000 Brief, December 2003, available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-34.pdf#page=3>.
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0501 for Washington State, "Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). ("ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.")
- <sup>12</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>13</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>14</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B02001 for United States and Washington State, "Race," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). ("ACS Table B02001, 2014 1-Year Estimates.") As used in this report, the term 'people of color' refers to those who self-report as either 1) any race besides 'White alone' in the American Community Survey Race category or 2) 'Hispanic or Latino' in the American Community Survey Ethnicity category. While throughout this report, 'Latino' will refer to those who self-report as 'Hispanic or Latino', the reader should note that the two terms are not interchangeable in all cases.
- <sup>16</sup> Griffin, Frey, and Teixeira. "The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1980-2060," Center for American Progress, February 24, 2015, available online at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/progressive-movement/news/2015/02/24/107166/interactive-the-demographic-evolution-of-the-american-electorate-1980-2060/>.
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201 for Washington state, "Selected Population Profile in the United States," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). ("ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.")
- <sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B03002 for United States and Washington State, "Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). ("ACS Table B03002, 2014 1-Year Estimates.")
- <sup>19</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>20</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>21</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>22</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2014 1-Year Estimates. The following race and ethnicity categories have been abbreviated: Latino ("Hispanic or Latino"); Black ("Black/African American"); Multiracial ("Two or more races").
- <sup>23</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>24</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>25</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2005 and 2014 1-Year Estimates. 2005 data not available for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders.
- <sup>26</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>27</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>28</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>29</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

---

<sup>30</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>31</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>32</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>33</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2009, 2011 and 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>34</sup> Campbell, Amber, Rainier Valley Post, "98118 America's Most Diverse Zip Code? Who Said?" August 8, 2010, available online at <http://rainiervalleypost.com/98118-americas-most-diverse-zip-code-who-said/>.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon, Locke, and Ulberg. "Ethnic Diversity in South Seattle," in *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1998. The Census uses Zip Code Tabulation Areas, which it defines as "generalizes areal representations of the United States Postal Service ZIP Code Service areas." <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/zctas.html>.

<sup>36</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>37</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>38</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>39</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>40</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>41</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>42</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>43</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>44</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>45</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>46</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>47</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>48</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>49</sup> ACS Table B05006, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>50</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B05009 for Washington State, "Age and Nativity of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Number and Nativity of Parents," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). ("ACS Table B05009, 2014 1-Year Estimates.")

<sup>52</sup> Griffin, Frey, and Teixeira. "The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1980-2060."

<sup>53</sup> Griffin, Frey, and Teixeira. "The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1980-2060."

<sup>54</sup> Uhlan, "Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations."

<sup>55</sup> Winship, Scott, "Income Inequality in America: Fact and Fiction," *The Manhattan Institute, e21 Economic Policies for the 21st Century*, No. 1, May 2014. Available online at [http://www.economics21.org/files/e21ib\\_1.pdf](http://www.economics21.org/files/e21ib_1.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>57</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2007-2013 3-Year Estimates.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adverse Child Experience (ACE) Study, available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>.

<sup>59</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2007-2013 3-Year Estimates.

<sup>60</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>61</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>62</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>63</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>64</sup> Uhlan, "Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations."

<sup>65</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>66</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS Reports, "Highlights of women's earnings in 2014," November 2015, available online at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/earnings.htm#demographics>.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS Reports, "Highlights of women's earnings in 2014."

<sup>69</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>70</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>71</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>72</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>73</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>74</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

<sup>75</sup> ACS Table B03002, 2013 5-Year Estimates.

- 
- 76 Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, "Closing the Opportunity Gap: 2015 Annual Report," January 2015, available online at <http://www.k12.wa.us/Workgroups/EOGOAC.aspx>.
- 77 Children's Alliance, "Hungry in Washington," September 2015, available online at <http://www.childrensalliance.org/no-kidding-blog/hungry-washington-families-children-experience-greater-food-insecurity>.
- 78 Children's Alliance, "Hungry in Washington."
- 79 Children's Alliance, "Hungry in Washington."
- 80 Meredith Hickson, *et al.*, Children's Healthwatch, "Too Hungry to Learn: Food Insecurity and School Readiness," September 2013, available online at <http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/publication/too-hungry-to-learn/>.
- 81 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Share of Students that Demonstrate Kindergarten Readiness by Skill Area, by Race/Ethnicity (State-Level)," 2014-15 for Washington state, available online at [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org). ("Kids Count, 'Kindergarten Readiness.'")
- 82 Donald J. Hernandez and Jeffrey S. Napierala, "Children in Immigrant Families: Essential to America's Future," Foundation for Child Development, June 2012, <http://fcd-us.org/node/1232>.
- 83 Kids Count, "Kindergarten Readiness."
- 84 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Third Graders Meeting Reading and Math Standards by Race/Ethnicity (State-Level)," 2013-14 for Washington state, available online at [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org). ("Kids Count, 'Third Grade Reading and Math.'")
- 85 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Eighth Graders Meeting Reading and Math Standards by Race/Ethnicity (State-Level)," 2013-14 for Washington state, available online at [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org).
- 86 Kids Count, "Third Grade Reading and Math."
- 87 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Children Who Have Difficulty Speaking English by Family Nativity" for Washington state, available online at [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org).
- 88 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Fourth Graders Who Scored Below Proficient Reading by English Language Learner Status," for Washington state, available online at [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org).
- 89 Hernandez and Napierala, "Children in Immigrant Families: Essential to America's Future."
- 90 Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Graduation and Dropout Statistics Reports, 2001-2014. For years 2001-2007, Asian and Pacific Island categories were combined. Graduation rates are 4-year adjusted cohort rates.
- 91 Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Discipline Rates for 2014 School Year, available online at <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/DataAnalytics.aspx>. ("OSPI Discipline Rates.")
- 92 OSPI Discipline Rates.
- 93 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Children Whose Parents All Have Less than a High School Degree by Family Nativity," 2013 for Washington state, available online at [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org).
- 94 ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 95 U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501 for Washington State and the United States, "Educational Attainment," available online at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov).
- 96 Washington Student Achievement Council, 2013 "The Roadmap: A Plan to Increase Educational Attainment in Washington." Available at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/the-roadmap>.
- 97 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 98 ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 99 ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 100 ACS Table S0201, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 101 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 102 ACS Table S0201, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 103 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 104 Buhain, Venice. "Dream Act becomes law in Washington, as REAL Hope Act," The Capitol Record, February 26, 2014, available online at <http://www.capitolrecord.org/2014/02/dream-act-becomes-law-in-washington-as-real-hope-act/>.
- 105 ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 106 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 107 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 108 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 109 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 110 ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 111 ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- 112 ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.



- 
- <sup>113</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>114</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>115</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>116</sup> Jayapal and Curry, "Building Washington's Future: Immigrant Workers' Contributions to Our State's Economy," OneAmerica, 2009, available online at [www.weareoneamerica.org](http://www.weareoneamerica.org).
- <sup>117</sup> Washington State Employment Security Department, "King County Profile," September 2015, available online at <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/regional-reports/county-profiles/king-county-profile>.
- <sup>118</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2006-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>119</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2006-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>120</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2006-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>121</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2006-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>122</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2006-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>123</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>124</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2005-2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>125</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>126</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>127</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>128</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>129</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>130</sup> ACS Table S0201, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>131</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>132</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>133</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>134</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>135</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>136</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>137</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>138</sup> ACS Table S0501, 2014 1-Year Estimates.
- <sup>139</sup> Uhran, "Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations."
- <sup>140</sup> Uhran, "Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations."



**Economic  
Opportunity  
Institute**

*Building an economy that works - for everyone.*

The Economic Opportunity Institute is an independent and nonpartisan public policy center using research, education and advocacy to shape public debate and advance public policies that help build an economy that works – for everyone.

As a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, we are fully funded by the charitable contributions of those who believe in our work and want to see it succeed. Learn more at [www.eoionline.org](http://www.eoionline.org).