

A PROFILE OF THE FOREIGN-BORN IN THE PORTLAND, OREGON TRI-COUNTY AREA

Katherine Lotspeich
Michael Fix
Dan Perez-Lopez
Jason Ost

October 2003

*Prepared by The Urban Institute for the Building the New American Community Project.
Support for this report was provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement,
Administration for Children and Families.*

 THE URBAN INSTITUTE

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| I. Introduction | 3 |
| II. Data Sources..... | 3 |
| III. Profile of the Foreign-Born in the Portland Tri-County Area | 4 |
| A. Rapid and Recent Growth of the Foreign-Born..... | 4 |
| B. Diverse Countries of Origin | 5 |
| C. Undocumented Immigration from Latin America | 5 |
| D. Immigrants Dispersed Throughout the City of Portland and Outlying Counties | 6 |
| E. Differing Settlement and Concentration Patterns by Group..... | 7 |
| F. Poverty Higher among Foreign-Born, but Naturalized Citizens Similar to Natives.. | 8 |
| G. Different Dispersal Patterns for Foreign-Born and Natives Living Below Poverty .. | 8 |
| H. Limited English Proficiency in the Tri-County Region..... | 9 |
| I. Language Diversity with Spanish Dominant..... | 9 |
| J. Linguistically Isolated Households | 10 |
| K. Recent Arrivals Contribute to Low Naturalization Rates | 11 |
| IV. Conclusions..... | 11 |
| V. Bibliography..... | 13 |

List of Figures

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1. Period of Entry for the Tri-County Area's Foreign-Born..... | 4 |
| Figure 2. Regions of Birth for the Foreign-Born in the Portland Tri-County Area..... | 5 |
| Figure 3. Birthplaces for Portland Tri-County Immigrants Arriving in the 1990s: INS versus Census 2000 Data..... | 6 |
| Figure 4. Share of the Tri-County Area's Total Population that Is Foreign-Born, by Census Tract..... | 7 |
| Figure 5. Share of the Tri-County Area's Foreign-Born Population with Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Level, by Census Tract..... | 9 |
| Figure 6. Share of the Tri-County Area Households that Are Linguistically Isolated, by Census Tract..... | 10 |

I. Introduction

The Building the New American Community demonstration project is an experiment in refugee and immigrant integration in which the cities of Lowell, Massachusetts; Nashville, Tennessee; and Portland, Oregon, formed coalitions to identify integration challenges in their communities and address them collaboratively.¹ These cities were assisted by a national team of policy analysts, advocates, and researchers from the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Immigration Forum, the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, The Urban Institute, and the Migration Policy Institute.

To assist the coalitions in understanding the size, composition, and characteristics of their newcomer communities, The Urban Institute has prepared a demographic profile of the foreign-born population for each site. These profiles include data on immigrant population growth, diversity, settlement patterns, English language ability, poverty, and citizenship trends. Data on immigrants and refugees can be used as a tool by the coalitions to attract future funding opportunities, target services such as English as a Second Language classes or job training, or strengthen media outreach and advocacy efforts.

This profile of the Portland Tri-County area includes the city of Portland and Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties. The Portland Tri-County profile is accompanied by The Urban Institute's publication, *The New Neighbors: A User's Guide to Data on Immigrants in U.S. Communities*, which can further assist coalition members in finding and using data on the foreign-born in their communities.

II. Data Sources

The data in this profile are from the 2000 Census. Census data make it possible to map settlement patterns in great detail and to analyze their implications for communities at the national, state, and even local levels. Detail on numbers of immigrants², their countries of origin, the languages they speak, and their English proficiency is available down to the level of the Census tract—a geographic area no larger than many city neighborhoods.

¹ Funding for the Building the New American Community coalitions is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

² In Census data, the foreign-born population corresponds to what is usually defined as the “immigrant” population. The foreign-born population includes only those people born outside the United States (and its territories) who were not U.S. citizens at birth, whether they are currently U.S. citizens or not. Often, local estimates of the immigrant community include children born in the United States and spouses of the foreign born plus other second- or third-generation adults. (The second generation encompasses individuals born in the United States with one or two foreign-born parents; the third and higher generations includes those born in the United States with both parents born in the United States.) These differences in defining who is an immigrant can make local estimates appear larger than the Census numbers. Census 2000 did miss some people (and counted a number of people more than once). In general, the net undercount in Census 2000 is thought to be rather small but can vary from place to place. The Census Bureau has published some estimates of Census 2000 undercounts and overcounts, mostly for race groups. See <http://landview.census.gov/dmd/www/pdf/pp-54r.pdf> for further information on Census 2000 net estimates.

Another data source used in this profile is the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) *Statistical Yearbook*, which reports on annual legal immigrant admissions to the United States.³ The INS public-use data are administrative data drawn from records of legal immigrant admissions. Because undocumented immigrants—those without authorization to stay in the United States legally—are not included in these data, the INS data represent only a portion of the annual flow into the country. Through comparing the INS and Census data on foreign-born country of birth, it is possible to identify indirectly the presence of undocumented immigrants in an area.

III. Profile of the Foreign-Born in the Portland Tri-County Area

A. Rapid and Recent Growth of the Foreign-Born

In 2000, the Portland Tri-County area had a foreign-born population share (12 percent) that was slightly higher than the nation (11 percent). The city of Portland’s foreign-born population (13 percent) was also a little more than the Tri-County area and the nation.⁴ The Tri-County region’s foreign-born population has grown rapidly since the mid-1990s: nearly one-third of the immigrant population arrived after 1995 (see figure 1) and half (53 percent) arrived since 1990. The Tri-County area has comparatively higher immigrant concentrations than the state of Oregon, which has a foreign-born population of 9 percent. Oregon’s foreign-born population grew by 108 percent during the 1990s, which made it the sixteenth fastest growing immigrant state in the country. The average foreign-born growth rate among states was 57 percent.

Figure 1. Period of Entry for the Tri-County Area’s Foreign-Born

| Period of Entry | Share of all foreign born |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Total | 100.0% |
| 1995 to 2000 | 31.6% |
| 1990 to 1994 | 21.1% |
| 1985 to 1989 | 14.7% |
| 1980 to 1984 | 9.9% |
| 1975 to 1979 | 7.5% |
| 1970 to 1974 | 3.4% |
| 1965 to 1969 | 2.7% |
| Before 1965 | 9.0% |

Source: Census 2000

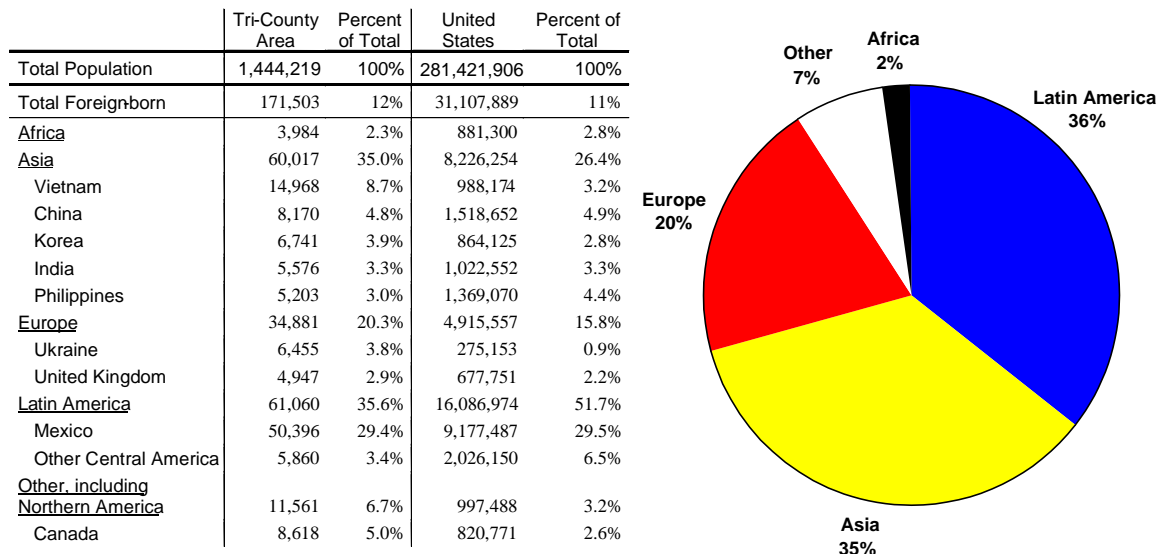
³ On March 1, 2003, all functions of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were transferred from the Department of Justice to the Department of Homeland Security. The INS was split into separate agencies for enforcement and for processing of immigration and naturalization applications. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services is the new agency responsible for processing of immigration and naturalization applications.

⁴ According to the Census 2000, there were 171,503 foreign-born persons in the Portland Tri-County area and 68,976 foreign-born persons in city of Portland.

B. Diverse Countries of Origin

Latin Americans are the largest foreign-born group in the Tri-County region (36 percent) and Mexicans make up 29 percent of the total foreign-born population in the area, the largest single country represented (figure 2). There are also significant shares of immigrants from other regions of the world including Asia (35 percent) and Europe (20 percent). Immigrants from Africa make up 2 percent of the foreign-born. Asians are primarily born in Vietnam, China, Korea, India, and the Philippines. Europeans mostly come from Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Romania. Nearly half (45 percent) of the Tri-County region’s African foreign-born population is from eastern Africa, which the Census Bureau defines as Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Figure 2. Regions of Birth for the Foreign-Born in the Portland Tri-County Area*

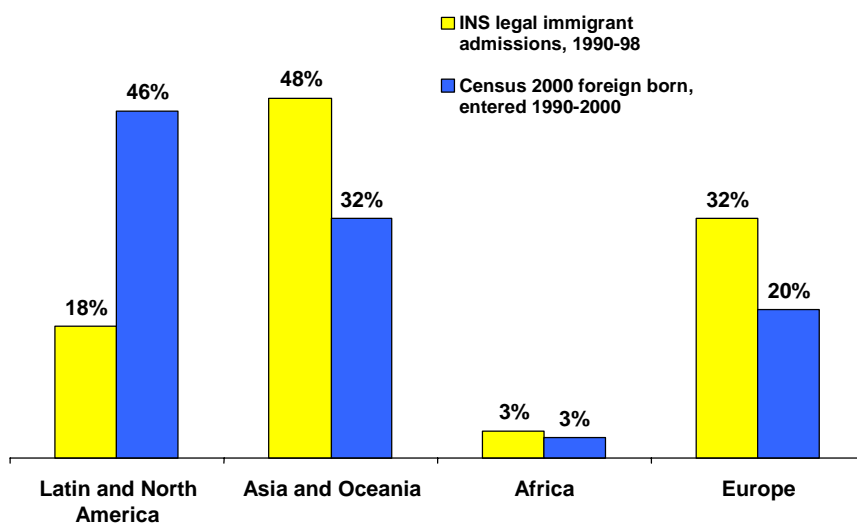


* Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties

C. Undocumented Immigration from Latin America

The INS admissions data paint a different picture of immigrants’ countries of birth. The data on regions and countries of birth for the Tri-County area displayed in figure 2 include all immigrants, regardless of legal status and when they came to the United States. But INS admissions data only include records for *legal immigrants* admitted in a given year. Figure 3 shows the comparison of immigrants admitted from 1990 to 1998 using the INS data and immigrants who arrived between 1990 and 2000 using Census data.

Figure 3. Birthplaces for Portland Tri-County Immigrants Arriving in the 1990s: INS versus Census 2000 Data



According to the Census data, 46 percent of Portland Tri-County’s immigrants who arrived during the 1990s were born in Latin or North America, more than twice the 18 percent estimated by the INS admissions data. INS data show that 48 percent of the 1990s entrants were born in Asia versus 32 percent shown in the Census data. Shares born in Europe and Africa are also higher in the INS than the Census data.

These differing datasets help us understand the legal status of the various immigrant groups in the Portland Tri-County area. The high percentage of Latin American immigrants found in the Census but not in the INS data suggests that many are undocumented. The predominance of Asians and Europeans in the INS versus the Census data indicates that most of these immigrants are legally present. While there are other possible explanations for the differing results obtained from the datasets,⁵ our basic conclusion is that illegal immigration explains the rest of the difference in these numbers.

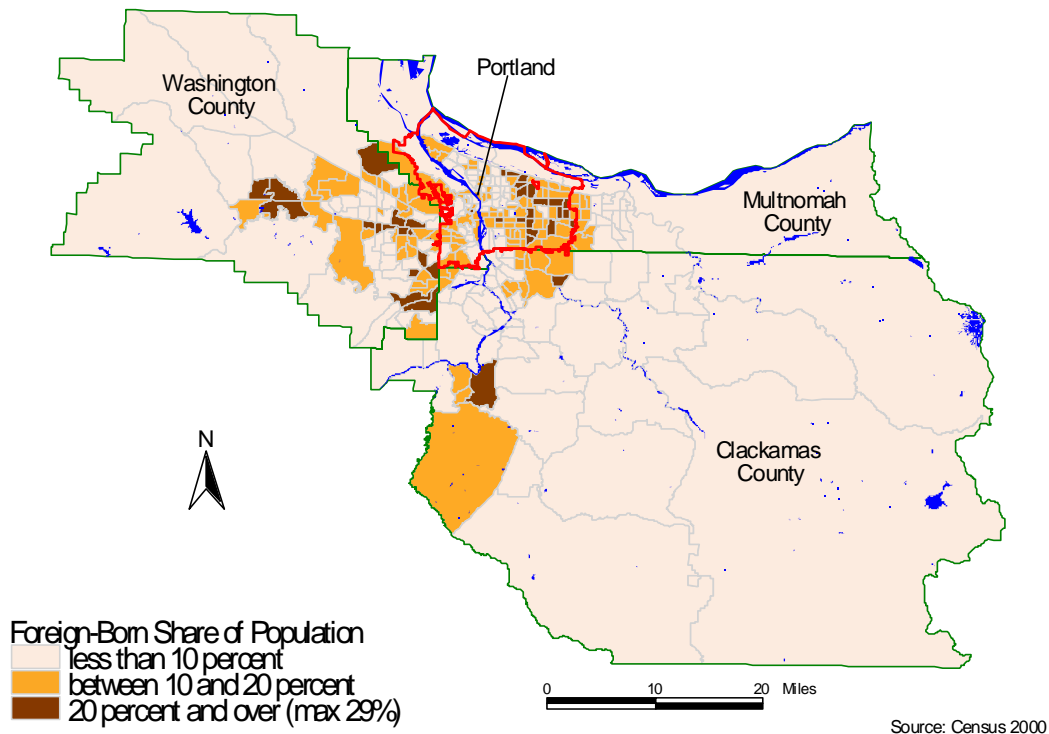
D. Immigrants Dispersed Throughout the City of Portland and Outlying Counties

The foreign-born population is dispersed throughout the Tri-County area (figure 4). The highest foreign-born concentrations in this area—ranging from 20 to 29 percent—are found in Census tracts in eastern Portland (including the neighborhoods of Parkrose Heights, Russell, Hazelwood, Powellhurst Gilbert, Centennial, Lents, and Pleasant Valley) and in Washington County (Forest Grove, Cornelius, Hillsboro, Oak Hills, West

⁵ Other possible reasons for differences between the two sources include different time spans covered by the data (1990–98 for INS versus 1990–2000 for the Census); incorrect assignment of “intended” place of residence in the INS data; undercounting of some groups in the Census; and possible out-migration of immigrants to other states or outside the country before they appear in the Census data.

Haven-Sylvan, West Slope, and Raleigh Hills).⁶ The far northwestern corner of Washington County, southeastern Clackamas County, and eastern Multnomah County have relatively few immigrants, with most tracts containing fewer than 200 immigrants.

Figure 4. Share of the Tri-County Area's Total Population that Is Foreign-Born, by Census Tract



E. Differing Settlement and Concentration Patterns by Group

Mexicans, the largest foreign-born group in the Tri-County area, have mostly settled outside of Portland in Multnomah and Washington counties. Mexicans make up 25 to 39 percent of the tracts in Gresham in Multnomah County and in Hillsboro in Washington County. The Asian population is found primarily in eastern Portland and in Hillsboro and Beaverton in Washington County, where they make up between 10 and 25 percent of some Census tracts. The Asian groups in these areas are rather diverse, but there is a concentration of Vietnamese immigrants (5 to 8 percent of tract population) in Portland, specifically in the area bounded by Killingsworth Street NE, Holgate Boulevard SE, 51st Avenue, and 96th Avenue. Ukrainians, Russians, and Romanians are clustered together in eastern Portland to the south of Burnside Street and in Sunnyside and Happy Valley in Clackamas County. Africans have mostly settled in the northeastern neighborhoods of the city of Portland, but these tracts have a maximum of 6 percent

⁶ Census tracts are defined by the Census Bureau to approximate neighborhoods. The average Census tract in the Portland Tri-County region has approximately 4,614 people. Nationally, Census tracts have between 2,500 and 8,000 people.

African immigrants living in them. All tracts outside of Portland have fewer than 100 foreign-born Africans.

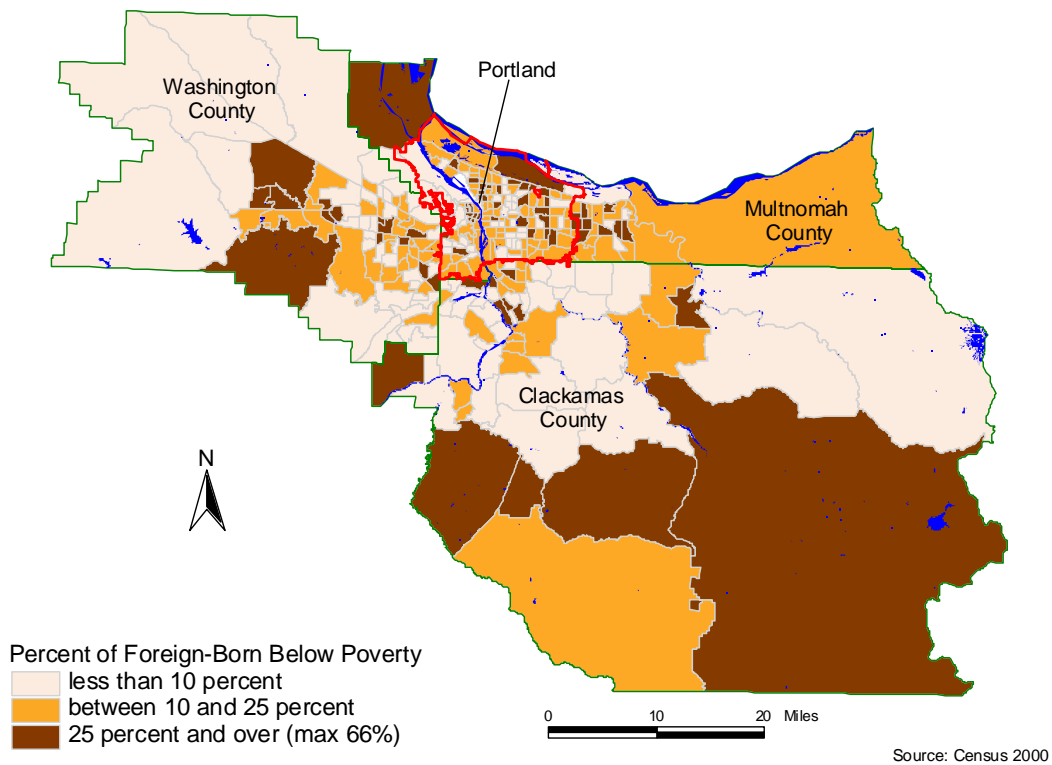
F. Poverty Higher among Foreign-Born, but Naturalized Citizens Similar to Natives

In the Tri-County area, 10 percent of the total population lives below the poverty level (\$17,050 for a family of four in 2000) compared with the national average of 12 percent. The foreign-born in the Portland Tri-County area are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than natives: 18 percent live below the poverty level compared with 8 percent of natives. A different picture emerges when comparing poverty rates of naturalized citizens and noncitizens among the foreign-born. Almost three times as many noncitizens (23 percent) live below the poverty level when compared with naturalized citizens (8 percent). Natives and naturalized citizens have similar poverty rates (8 percent).

G. Different Dispersal Patterns for Foreign-Born and Natives Living Below Poverty

Poverty in the Portland Tri-County region is heavily concentrated (more than 25 percent of a Census tract) in central Portland (Downtown, Chinatown, Eliot, and Kerns neighborhoods), the city of Gresham in Multnomah County, and Forest Grove in Washington County. Foreign-born populations below the poverty level also reside in these areas, but high concentrations (more than 25 percent) of the foreign-born living below poverty extend far beyond these areas and into southeastern Clackamas County, Washington County, and much of the area in city of Portland east of the Willamette River. These areas coincide with the settlement patterns of Asian and European (Russian, Ukrainian, and Romanian) immigrants in Portland and Latin American immigrants outside of the city of Portland. Figure 5 shows the settlement patterns of the foreign-born in the Portland Tri-County region who live below the poverty level.

Figure 5. Share of the Tri-County Area's Foreign-Born Population with Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Level, by Census Tract



H. Limited English Proficiency in the Tri-County Region

Census data can be used to identify people who are limited English proficient (LEP). Using Census data we define LEPs as persons who speak a language other than English and who speak English “well,” “not well,” or “not at all.” In the Portland Tri-County area, 8 percent of the total population and 52 percent of the foreign-born population five years and older is LEP, rates which are nearly identical to national figures. Proficiency in English is one of the key measures of immigrant integration used by Urban Institute and other researchers, because LEP immigrants tend to hold less desirable jobs, earn lower incomes, and generally fare worse on most indicators of well-being. The Urban Institute has also found that food insecurity and other hardship measures were more closely associated with LEP than with either legal status or length of residency in the United States (Capps, Ku, and Fix 2002).

I. Language Diversity with Spanish Dominant

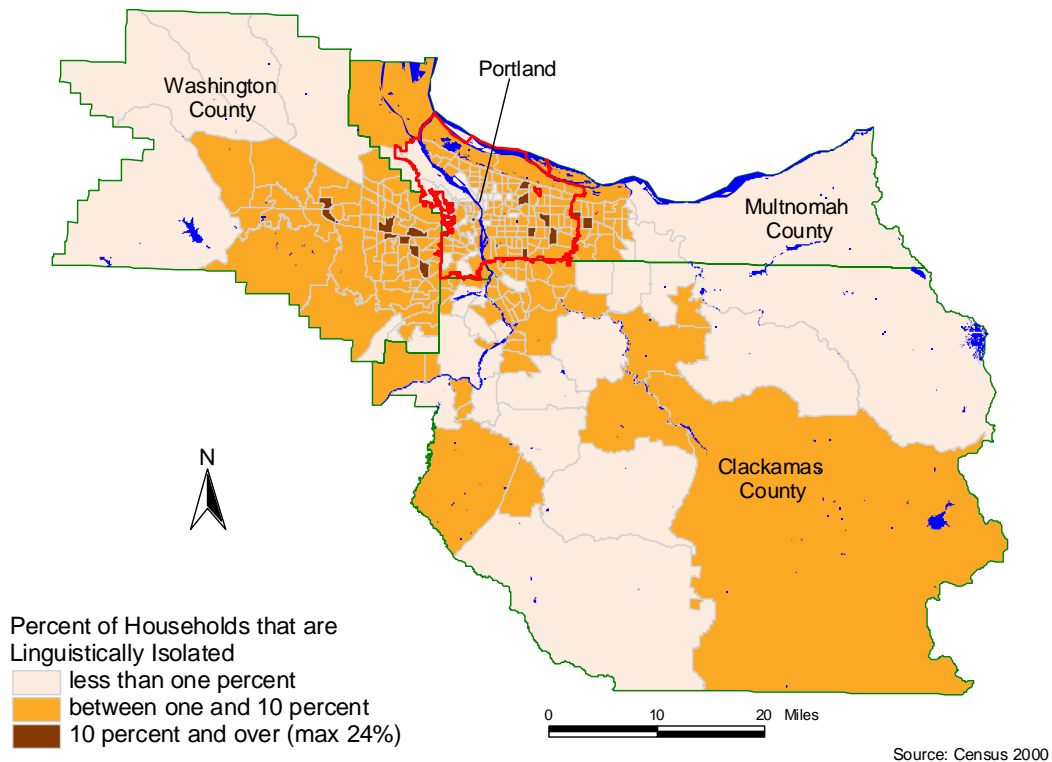
The majority (51 percent) of youth (ages 5 to 17) in the Portland Tri-County area who are LEP speak Spanish, but there are also significant numbers of LEP youth who speak other Indo-European languages (24 percent) and Asian Pacific Islander languages (23 percent). According to Census 2000, other common languages spoken by youth include Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and other Slavic languages. Adult LEPs

(ages 18 and over) in the Tri-County region are also most likely to speak Spanish (48 percent), but considerable shares of LEP adults speak Asian Pacific Islander languages (31 percent) and Indo-European languages (19 percent). Some of these languages include Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese, German, Korean, French, Japanese, and Tagalog. Linguistic diversity in a region creates challenges for access to public services and makes it difficult to provide interpretations and translations of so many languages.

J. Linguistically Isolated Households

Census data can also be used to identify “linguistically isolated households”—defined as those in which no person age 14 or older either speaks English as a first language or speaks English “very well.” In the Portland Tri-County area, 24,800 households (4 percent) are linguistically isolated, a rate similar to the national average. As shown in figure 6, there is an overlap between linguistically isolated households and Census tracts within which poor immigrants are concentrated—most notably in the Tri-County area in northeast and southeast Portland, western Washington County, and eastern Clackamas County. In the city of Portland, these tracts contain Europeans (Russian, Ukrainians, and other Europeans) and Asians. In Washington County, linguistically isolated tracts have high concentrations of Mexicans.

Figure 6. Share of Tri-County Area Households that are Linguistically Isolated, by Census Tract



K. Recent Arrivals Contribute to Low Naturalization Rates

Thirty-four percent of the Tri-County region's foreign-born are naturalized citizens, a rate that falls below the national average of 40 percent.⁷ Nearly one-third (32 percent) of the Tri-County area's foreign-born population, however, arrived between 1995 and 2000, and recency of arrival is highly correlated with non-citizenship.⁸ Asians make up the largest share of naturalized citizens (50 percent) in the Portland Tri-County area, followed by Europeans (24 percent), Latin Americans (16 percent), and Africans (3 percent).

Asians as a group have the region's highest naturalization rates (48 percent), although nearly half (45 percent) arrived after 1990. Nationally, 51 percent of the Asian population is naturalized. Thirty-four percent of Portland's Africans are naturalized, a rate slightly lower than national levels (36 percent). Thirty-nine percent of Europeans in Portland are naturalized compared with 55 percent nationally. Only 15 percent of Latin Americans in Portland are naturalized compared with 30 percent nationally. Latin Americans' low naturalization levels are partially explained by undocumented Latin American immigration to the region.

IV. Conclusions

This profile suggests that Portland's foreign-born population has a number of defining characteristics that coalition members and policymakers focusing on integration should consider:

- The foreign-born population in the Portland Tri-County area is characterized by recent arrivals—more than half of Portland's immigrants arrived after 1990. Recent entrants are more likely to be limited English proficient, have lower levels of education, and earn less than other immigrant groups. Recently arrived immigrants may also have less experience dealing with institutional and coalition structures.
- Although the largest share of the Tri-County region's immigrants comes from Mexico, the immigrant population is diverse, representing many different countries of origin, many of which have settled in clusters across the region. Clustered settlements make it possible to deliver culturally specific services, but pose challenges to integrating these groups into the larger receiving community.
- Our comparison of INS and Census data indicates that the Portland region's immigrant population contains a sizeable population of undocumented immigrants from Latin America.

⁷ Census 2000 shows that 40 percent of the foreign-born are naturalized citizens. Various Urban Institute studies have found that naturalized citizenship tends to be overreported in census and survey data (e.g., Passel and Clark 1998). Urban Institute estimates corrected for this overreporting show that 32 percent of the foreign-born are naturalized citizens in 2000 (Fix, Passel, and Sucher 2003).

⁸ Immigrants eligible to naturalize include legal immigrants who have been in the United States for at least five years or in the country for at least three years and married to a U.S. citizen.

- There is a striking dispersal of poor foreign-born populations beyond urban Portland and into areas of the region where poor natives do not live. This settlement pattern has implications for service delivery, because poor immigrants who live outside of these urban areas may not have the same access to services available to the general population.
- While the Tri-County region's LEP population is predominantly Spanish speaking, there is great language diversity and a high level of linguistic isolation. This linguistic diversity and isolation creates challenges to language access policies and to the public education system for youth and adults.
- Naturalization rates of immigrants in the Tri-County region are lower than national rates, but nearly one-third of the immigrant population arrived after 1995. Low naturalization levels reinforce the civic engagement focus of the Building the New American Community project in Portland.

V. Bibliography

- Capps, Randy, and Jeffrey S. Passel. 2003. "The New Neighbors: A Users' Guide to Data on Immigrants in U.S. Communities." Baltimore, MD: The Urban Institute and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Capps, Randy, Leighton Ku, and Michael Fix. 2002. "How Are Immigrants Faring After Welfare Reform? Preliminary Evidence from Los Angeles and New York City." Final report to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Fix, Michael, Jeffrey Passel, and Kenneth Sucher. 2003. "Trends in Naturalization." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Immigrant Families and Workers* Brief No. 3.
- Fix, Michael, and Randy Capps. 2002. "The Dispersal of Immigrants in the 1990s." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Immigrant Families and Workers* Brief No. 2.
- Fix, Michael, and Wendy Zimmermann. 2001. "All Under One Roof: Mixed Status Families in an Era of Immigration Reform." *International Migration Review* 35(2 Summer): 397–419.
- Passel, Jeffrey S., and Rebecca Clark. 1998. "Immigrants in New York. Their Legal Status, Incomes, and Taxes." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Passel, Jeffrey S., and Wendy Zimmermann. 2001. "Are Immigrants Leaving California?" Research Paper. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Reardon Anderson, Jane, Michael Fix, and Randy Capps. 2002. "The Health, Behavior, and Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Assessing the New Federalism* Survey Brief B-52.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2002. ACE Division II. Summary of Estimated Net Coverage. Washington, D.C. Available at <http://landview.census.gov/dmd/www/pdf/pp-54r.pdf>. (Accessed April 17, 2003).
- U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (2001). *Statistical Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.