

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE OREGON RACIAL EQUITY REPORT EXAMINES 23 PIECES OF LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE 2011 REGULAR SESSION that would have the most direct impacts — positive or negative — on all Oregonians, particularly communities of color. It evaluates and grades each chamber of the legislature, and also provides information on individual legislators’ responses to these bills.

This report addresses racial equity related to five major areas: civil rights and criminal justice, education, economic justice, health, and immigrant and refugee issues. A final category, institutional racism, examines legislation that reinforces or increases racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes. Bills featured in the report include:

CIVIL RIGHTS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

HB 2707 Diverting youth out of adult jails
SB 412 Tribal police
HB 3376 Felony set asides
HB 2880 Voter modernization
HB 2953 Use of lethal force

EDUCATION EQUITY

SB 248 Full day kindergarten
HB 3471 Foster care and college access
SB 742 Tuition equity

ECONOMIC EQUITY

SB 612 License labor contractors
SB 827 Home loan modification
HB 2519 Oregon virtual bank
HB 3640 Refund anticipation loans
HB 2861 Equal pay for equal work

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE

SB 655 Creation of immigrant and refugee commission
SB 845 Drivers License

HEALTH EQUITY

SB 99 Oregon health insurance exchange
SB 433 Expanding access to cancer treatment
HB 3110 Improving birth outcomes
HB 3650 Coordinated care
SB 97 Cultural competency
SB 695 Toxic BPA

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

SB 405 Increasing racial profiling of campus police
SB 766 Reinforcing environmental racism in industrial siting

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During the 2011 session, the Senate received a C and the House received a D. These grades are serious, and show the need for more collective leadership from lawmakers in addressing racial equity and inclusion. The 10 bills that became law are a good starting place, and the 11 other proactive pieces of racial equity legislation featured in the report can help ensure full inclusion and equity, benefitting all Oregonians to create shared prosperity, a greater democracy, and a thriving state.

In order to see that outcomes and opportunities can benefit all Oregonians now and into the future, state lawmakers should consider the following recommendations:

- **BE EXPLICIT ABOUT ADDRESSING RACIAL EQUITY.** Based on the persistent racial disparities and changing demographics, it is imperative that the Oregon Legislature pay more explicit attention to racial equity in the policy making process. Racially equitable solutions exist and are being proposed by Oregon lawmakers. This report features a broad range of proactive racial equity policies considered by the State Legislature during the 2011 legislative session.
- **IMPLEMENT RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENTS.** Racial equity impact statements estimate the disparate racial impacts of public policies. They are a useful tool for legislators to take into account racial impacts, including unintended consequences, when crafting policy solutions. For more details on racial equity impact statements, see page 8.
- **DISAGGREGATE DATA FOR ALL RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS.** During the course of researching this report, clear data gaps emerge for communities of color based on how state, county, and local governments track race and ethnicity. In order to have a clearer understanding of the outcomes of all Oregonians, racial and ethnic data collection and disaggregation must be a part of how Oregon does business.

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS OREGON'S FIRST RACIAL EQUITY REPORT ASSESSING THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE 2011 OREGON LEGISLATURE supported policies that advance opportunity and racial equity in order to close disparities, protect against discrimination, and promote civic participation for all Oregon residents.

Oregon has a deep history of racial inequality and exclusion. It is largely untaught in schools and it is not a part of our civic dialogue. A brief review of Oregon's racial history can help us begin to understand our current challenges.

In 1843, the Oregon Territorial Legislature voted to ban slavery in the state, not because of a strong anti-slavery sentiment, but because early Oregon settlers wanted to create an all-White society that would be free of the "racial problems" threatening to cause civil war in the rest of the United States.¹ Early settlers drove many Native American tribes from their villages in search of gold or other resources; meanwhile, the Oregon Territorial Legislature banned the sale of ammunition or guns to Native Americans, deepening their disadvantage in the face of outright violence and land grabs by early settlers.²

Throughout the early 1900s, cities throughout Oregon adopted "sundown laws" that required Black people to leave the city limits by sundown.³ During the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II, the Portland Expo Center became a temporary detention center used to hold more than 3,600 people.⁴ And in 1948, the Vanport flood left thousands of Black Oregonians without homes

and forced them into low-income areas in north Portland.⁵ The limited recognition and rights of communities of color during Oregon's early history provides the context for our current racial inequities and disparities.

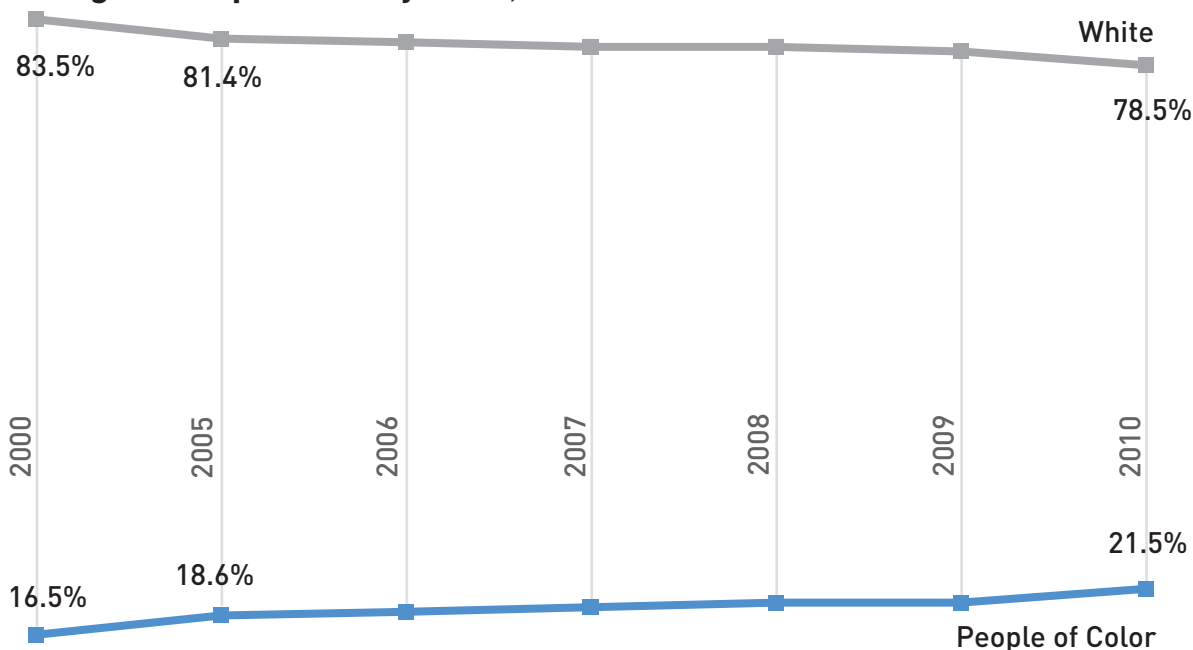
Portland is the Whitest major city in the U.S., and new data shows the city has become more White at its core in the past 10 years.⁶ Today, it's widely understood that Oregon has one of the highest proportions of White residents in the country. Because of these beliefs about the demographics of the state, issues of racial equity are frequently seen as less significant and less urgent, and are often easily brushed aside.

But Oregon is changing. In the past two decades, Oregon's communities of color have grown significantly. In 1990, people of color in Oregon were 9.2% of the population. Only a decade later, people of color made up 16.5% of the state's population. According to recently released U.S. Census figures, in 2010 people of color made up 21.5% of Oregon's population.⁷ Even Portland has seen growth—people of color grew from 25 to 28% of the city's overall population in the past decade.⁸ Displacement due to gentrification, foreclosures, and other changing economic conditions have caused people of color in Portland to leave the city's inner core—but even in these uncertain times, communities of color in the Portland metro region have grown overall.

These statewide demographic changes also have ramifications for the State Legislature. In close to 50% of Senate districts, constituents of color make up more than 20% of the population. More than 40% of House legislative districts have at least 20% people of color or higher. This report provides legislators with new information about the experiences of people of color in the state of Oregon. Legislators ignore these growing constituencies at their own risk.

Oregon is known for taking bipartisan action to address major challenges facing the state.

Oregon's Population by Race, 2000 to 2010⁹



TERMS AND TERMINOLOGY

Throughout the report, we use the terms people of color and communities of color. By this we mean communities that share the common experience of being targeted and oppressed by racism. We also use the term immigrants and refugees, and in this context we are referring to immigrants and refugees of color. We use the terms Black, Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, Native American, and White throughout the report.

Where data is available for specific ethnic groups within broader racial categories, we have made an effort to utilize this data and cite it appropriately. In addition, we have extensively footnoted and cited sources so interested persons can look directly at the sources for any clarification needed about the data and terms used in specific citations, charts, and graphs.

The hard truth is Oregon faces stark racial disparities. Oregon's communities of color are more likely to be sicker, have lower income, and experience poorer overall outcomes than White Oregonians. The lived experience of people of color in the state continues to break down along color lines:

- White women in Oregon earn an average of \$34,152. Latina women in Oregon earn a full 40.5% less, while Asian American women earn 4.1% less.¹⁰
- Wage disparities for communities of color cross many sectors of Oregon's economy from manufacturing to service to clerical work. When doing the same jobs, Whites earn between 25-50% more than people of color.¹¹
- Oregon's overall child poverty rate is 21.6%.¹² In Multnomah County, while one in eight White children live in poverty, nearly one in three children of color live in poverty. For Native American children younger than 5, the poverty rate jumps to more than 55%.¹³
- 67% of Whites own homes compared to 47% of people of color.¹⁴
- Nationally, nearly 44% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students of color report being harassed at school because of *both* their race and their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁵

Racial disparities in Oregon reach across all areas. They are smothering economic growth and hurting everyone. Yet they do not need to be a permanent feature of our lives. Policy matters. Oregon can have policies and institutional practices that either reinforce the prevailing disparities or reverse them. State leaders and government officials are in a unique position to respond to our changing demographics and inequities by advancing racially equitable opportunities and outcomes for all Oregonians.

Already, Oregon is known for taking bipartisan action to address major challenges facing the state. In 1971, Oregon became the first U.S. state to pass a "Bottle Bill," which required a container-deposit. Oregon has set the bar on innovative policy in adopting death with dignity, expanding health care for all through the Oregon Health Plan, and broadening opportunity for civic engagement by adopting vote-by-mail. We can and must extend this innovative thinking to one of the state's most pressing challenges—addressing disparities in opportunity.

WHAT IS RACIAL EQUITY?

Proactive racial equity policies seek to eliminate racial disparities and advance equitable outcomes for all communities. Policy that supports racial equity targets the institutional and structural barriers that lead to poor outcomes for communities of color. Race-neutral or color blind policies, whether intentional or not, can widen existing or cause new racial inequities.