

Refugees and Immigrants

Between 1990 and 2000, the ethnic and racial diversity of Bellevue increased substantially, and still continues to change. In 1990, the U.S. Census reported that 86.5% of Bellevue residents indicated a single race as White. In the 2000 U.S. Census, this percentage dropped to 74.3%, a higher level of diversity than for King County. Estimates from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey show even more dramatically the growth in Bellevue's diverse population, many of whom are refugees and immigrants.

"Someone recently said: if you close your eyes, you can hear the whole world spoken in Bellevue."
Provider Survey, VIBES, Bellevue School District

What's Working?

- During the 2008 State Legislative session, Governor Gregoire issued an Executive Order for the New Americans Initiative, which established a statewide Policy Council and Naturalization Campaign to assist legal permanent residents in obtaining citizenship. Funding from private foundations as well as some State funds developed cross sector partnerships to work collaboratively with immigrant and refugee communities to more effectively integrate them so they can fully realize their economic potential and enable full civic participation. In the 2009 session, the Initiative was not funded, but One America, a local non-profit agency, has applied for about \$1.2 million of the \$12 million in stimulus money for naturalization services and is working with local partners, such as Chinese Information and Service Center, to implement it if they are successful.
- Of the 160 people enrolled in Jewish Family Service's English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes, 93% improved their scores in post-tests in basic sentence construction. In Hopelink's Eastside Literacy Program ESL students experienced similar success: 91% increased their ability to communicate in English.

Prevalence Specific Race and Ethnicity Characteristics in the County and Bellevue

Some of the following data was reported in the City of Bellevue publication, *U.S. Census 2000, Citywide and Regional Trends, Volume 1, January 2003*. Additional data is from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates and can be found in the *Community Profile* section in this report.

- Since 1980, the proportion of Non-White in Bellevue has more than quadrupled from about 7% of the population in 1980 to 14% in 1990, 26% in 2000, and finally, 31% in 2006-2008. If one includes the Hispanic or Latino population, then the percentage of minorities is even higher at approximately 35% of Bellevue's population. Bellevue's Asians and Hispanics are the fastest growing racial and ethnic groups in the city. The population for both these groups more than doubled between 1990 and 2006-2008.
- Bellevue's Asian population is a substantial portion of the overall City population (23%), and Asians account for almost three quarters of Bellevue's non-white population. While Chinese residents make up the largest portion of Bellevue's Asian population (40%), Asian Indians have had the fastest rate of growth since 1990, increasing in population by over 930%.
- The Black or African American community grew at a rate half that of the City as a whole. While the Bellevue population grew more than 26% since 1990, the Black or African American community increased only 13%. According to 2006-2008 ACS estimates, Black or African Americans still make up only 2% of the Bellevue population, well below the King County percentage of 5.4%.
- According to the 2006-2008 ACS, 33.3% of Bellevue residents spoke a language other than English at home. This is a higher percentage than King County (23%), Seattle

(21%), and Washington State (16%). Almost half of Bellevue’s non-English speakers speak an Asian language; the next highest percentages speak either an Indo-European language (33%) or Spanish (14%).

- Over 31% of Bellevue residents in 2006-2008 were foreign-born; this compares to 25% in 2000 and 13% in 1990. In comparison, only 18% of Seattle residents and 12% of Washington State residents were foreign-born in 2005-2007.
- In 2006-2008 almost 27% of Bellevue households speaking Spanish and over 26% of households speaking Asian and Pacific Island languages reported being “linguistically isolated” compared to 7.8% of all Bellevue households.

Definition of Refugee

- Refugees are people who, based on a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, leave their native country and apply to another country for residency. A refugee is granted legal status and protection before entry into the U.S., such as in a refugee camp, except in some cases when the President can allow some countries to process refugees in their country of origin. In 2008, nationals of Cuba, Vietnam, republics of the former Soviet Union and Iraq could be processed in this manner.¹

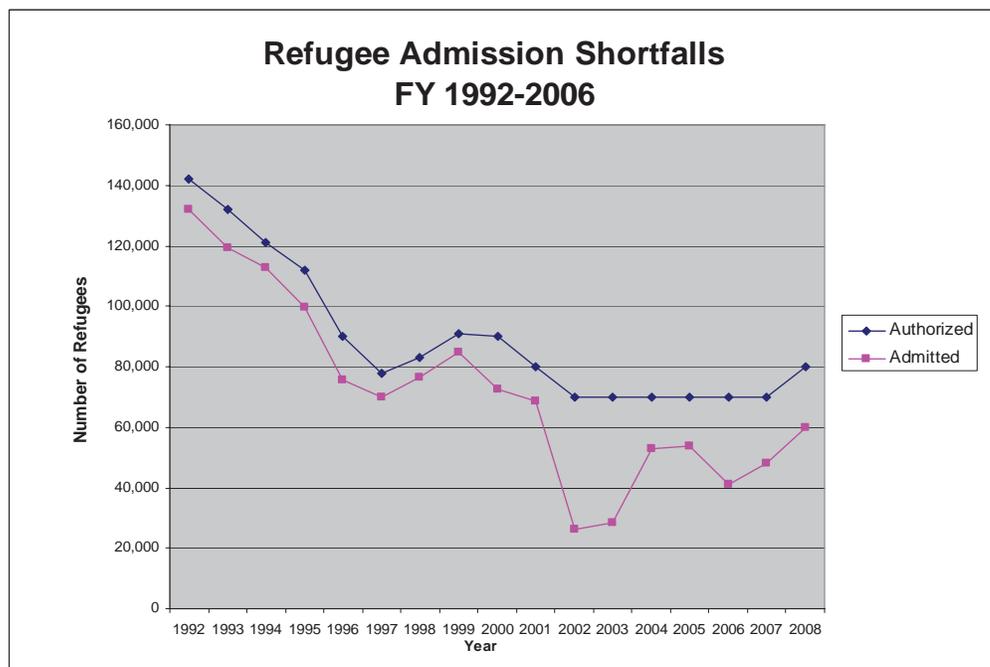
World and National Refugee Trends

- According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, at the end of 2008 there

were some 42 million refugees worldwide. This number is larger than previous years due to a sharp slowdown in repatriations and more prolonged conflicts resulting in longer displacement. This total includes 16 million refugee and asylum seekers, and 26 million people uprooted within their own countries.²

- At the beginning of each fiscal year, the President works with Congress to establish the number of refugees who may be admitted in the coming year, with a quota from each of the regions of the world. The graph below indicates the shortfall between how many refugees were authorized for admission compared to how many were actually admitted. As depicted in the graph, numbers of refugees being legally admitted in the U.S. have generally declined over the past fifteen years, reaching an all time low of 27,029 in FY 2002, subsequent to the 9-11-

| Year | Ceiling | Number of Refugees Admitted |
|------|---------|-----------------------------|
| 2002 | 70,000 | 27,029 |
| 2003 | 70,000 | 28,422 |
| 2004 | 70,000 | 52,868 |
| 2005 | 70,000 | 53,813 |
| 2006 | 70,000 | 41,150 |
| 2007 | 70,000 | 48,218 |
| 2008 | 80,000 | 60,108 |



01 attack. Between 2002 and 2007 refugee admissions ceilings were set at 70,000/year, yet much lower numbers were actually admitted, as the chart on the previous page indicates. In federal fiscal year 2008, the refugee admissions ceiling was increased to 80,000, due to the expected resettlement of Iraqi, Bhutanese, and Iranian refugees in the Near East/South Asia region.³ The proposed admission ceiling for 2009 is 80,000.⁴

to enter the United States to become lawful permanent residents from countries that have not been designated by the U.S. as having refugee eligibility. Immigrants have chosen for a variety of reasons to leave their homes to go to another country. By comparison, refugees are those who feel forced to leave their homes due to persecution. Asylees are foreign nationals currently residing in the U.S. who have the same fear of persecution and death as refugees if they return to their

| Refugee Arrivals by Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2006 to 2008 (Ranked by 2008 Country of Nationality) | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| Country | 2008 | | 2007 | | 2006 | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Total | 60,108 | 100.0 | 48,218 | 100.0 | 41,150 | 100.0 |
| Burma | 18,139 | 30.2 | 13,896 | 28.8 | 1,612 | 3.9 |
| Iraq | 13,823 | 23.0 | 1,608 | 3.3 | 202 | 0.5 |
| Bhutan | 5,320 | 8.9 | -- | -- | 3 | -- |
| Iran | 5,270 | 8.8 | 5,481 | 11.4 | 2,792 | 6.8 |
| Cuba | 4,177 | 6.9 | 2,922 | 6.1 | 3,143 | 7.6 |
| Burundi | 2,889 | 4.8 | 4,545 | 9.4 | 466 | 1.1 |
| Somalia | 2,523 | 4.2 | 6,969 | 14.5 | 10,357 | 25.2 |
| Vietnam | 1,112 | 1.9 | 1,500 | 3.1 | 3,039 | 7.4 |
| Ukraine | 1,022 | 1.7 | 1,605 | 3.3 | 2,483 | 6.0 |
| Liberia | 992 | 1.7 | 1,606 | 3.3 | 2,402 | 5.8 |
| Other | 4,841 | 8.1 | 8,086 | 16.8 | 14,651 | 35.6 |

-- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing Center (WRAPS).

country of origin. A different application process and rules apply to those who are seeking asylum in the U.S.⁶

- The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrant Services (BCIS), formerly the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, under the Department of Homeland Security, implements immigration policy passed by Congress, including establishing quotas by country for the number of new immigrants allowed to settle in the U.S. annually as well as rules regarding their treatment and benefits. Unlike refugees, immigrants are not entitled to medical and cash benefits for up to eight months after their arrival

- In 2008, the leading countries of origin for refugees in the U.S. were Burma (30%), Iraq (23%), Bhutan (8.9%) and Iran (8.8%). After a period of several years of decline, the total number of refugees admitted to the United States increased by 25% from 48,218 in 2007 to 60,104 in 2008. The annual average number of refugee arrivals declined from approximately 100,000 during the 1990s to 50,000 during the 2000 to 2006 period. This decline is partly due to changes in security procedures after 9/11 and admission requirements resulting from the USA Patriot Act of 2001 and the Real ID Act of 2005.⁵

in the United States.⁷ In 2008, the U.S. admitted 1,107,126 immigrants obtaining legal permanent resident status, a 12.5% decrease compared to 2006.⁸

- The Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) passed by Congress in 1996 reformed the federal welfare system. It also drastically reduced or eliminated entitlements such as Social Security and food stamps for all immigrants who entered the country after August 22, 1996. The discontinuation of eligibility for benefits has continued to deeply impact human services agencies because they struggle to find other sources of funding to serve immigrants.

Differences in Definition: Immigrant, Asylee and Refugee

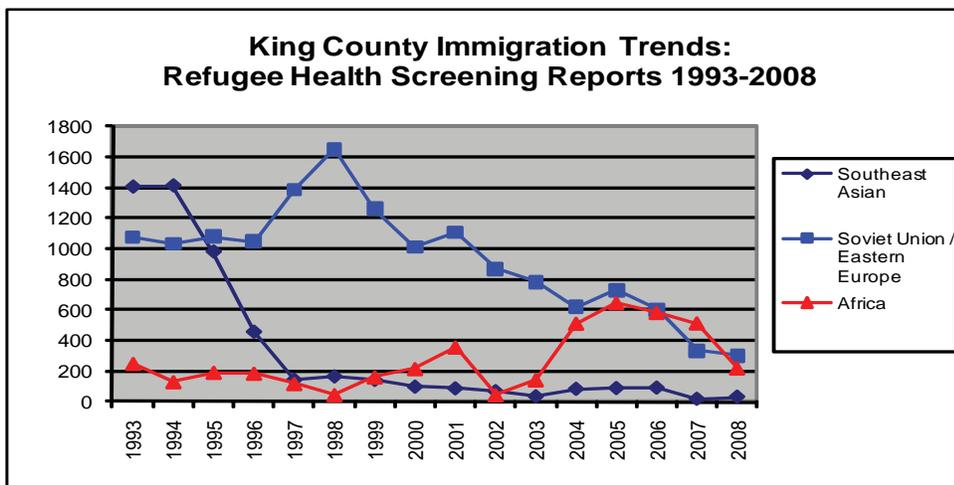
- Immigrants are people who have petitioned

Washington State and King County Trends

- Exact figures on the total population of both immigrants and refugees are generally unavailable, since most sources do not account for the high levels of internal migration. The 2006-2008 American Community Survey estimates that 792,894 Washington State residents are foreign-born, with 1,002,329 Washington residents speaking a language other than English at home.⁹ Both refugee and immigrant numbers are probably higher as language barriers, cultural considerations, and other factors make both groups more difficult to quantify than U.S.-born citizens. Washington ranks tenth in the U. S., resettling 2,254 refugee arrivals, representing about 3.7% of total new refugee arrivals to the U.S. in 2008. Between October and June 2009, 1,698 refugees had already arrived in Washington State.¹⁰
- Between 2006-2008, Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS)¹¹ in Washington State assisted an estimated 2,200 new refugees with their physical, social, cultural and economic needs. Washington's largest arrivals have shifted to more diverse groups from Southeast Asian, such as Burmese and Bhutanese. Refugees from the former Soviet Union and Somali are still a large portion of the total. This growing demand for services puts a strain on existing community resources to meet basic needs including

housing, employment, and health services.¹²

- For those refugees arriving directly in King County, Public Health-Seattle & King County provides figures based on initial health screenings required of all refugees. Data from 1995 through 2008 indicate a declining trend of arrivals, particularly during 2002 and 2003, when totals were barely over 1,000, less than half compared to the mid 1990s. In 2003, the largest group of refugees continued to be from the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, with 795 arrivals. The next largest group came from Africa, primarily from Somalia. The last were arrivals from the Near East/South Asia, which includes Burma, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In 2004, the total number of refugees screened increased to 1,264. The most dramatic individual increase in 2004 as shown on the chart on the previous page is the number of refugees from African countries, with 510 arrivals, just slightly less than the traditional leaders, those from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who had 619. Between 2003 and 2004, the number of refugees from Africa resettling in King County increased by 210%. In 2005, there were 1,538 people screened, with the largest number from the former Soviet Union, and in 2006, 1,383. In 2007 and 2008, there was a slight decrease overall, with 1,159 and 1,194, respectively. In 2007, the largest groups were from the former Soviet Union, Somalia, and Burma. In 2008, 196



Source: Public Health - Seattle & King County

Bhutanese refugees were resettled here coming from camps in Nepal. The other large groups were from the former Soviet Union, and Burma.¹³

Refugee and Immigrant Groups in Bellevue

- In Bellevue, anecdotal information from providers' surveys

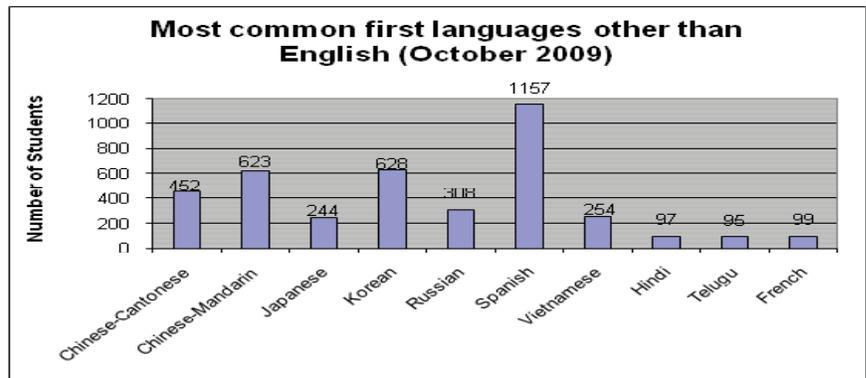
and key informant interviews indicate that the largest groups of refugees encountered for human services are still from the former Soviet Union, followed by Vietnamese. The largest group of immigrants in Bellevue using services are Hispanic/Latino, primarily from Mexico; the next highest groups of immigrants include Chinese and Koreans.

- Though some providers are beginning to see a small increase in East and West African refugees living in Bellevue, these communities tend to exist in larger numbers in South King County and Seattle. However, in several Community Conversations with providers, such as staff from Child Care Resources, more Somali, Oromo and Ethiopian families are being seen. Jewish Family Service (JFS) reports that King County is resettling new refugees from Bhutan in Bellevue and in Kent; Bhutanese refugees are expected to be the largest new group arriving in King County this year.¹⁴
- Two other groups of immigrants increasing in number in Bellevue are from Iran, speaking Farsi, and from East India, speaking Hindi, Gujarati, and Poonjabi as well as English.

Service Trends Need for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) Classes for Children and Adults

- As of October 2009, 81 languages and dialects were spoken by Bellevue School District students. The top ten languages are Spanish, Korean, Chinese-Mandarin, Chinese-Cantonese, Russian, Vietnamese, Japanese, French, Hindi and Telugu.¹⁵
- Many children of refugees and immigrants are not enrolled in the schools' ESL

programs because they are bilingual, so the number of children from families whose first language is not English is probably much higher than the ESL enrollment numbers indicate. 30% of BSD students speak a language other than English (either the "home" language or "first language)." A student might be considered "bilingual" but still might be in ESL, depending on his/her



Source: Bellevue School District. October 2009

level of English proficiency-as determined by ESL screening assessments.¹⁶

- Hopelink's Eastside Literacy Program provides beginning-level ESL classes for those who have little or no English skills, or are not literate in their own language. Staff report that there are wait lists for classes, with more people coming to increase literacy skills as they are laid off from their jobs. In addition to ESL classes, training for

"Newly arrived refugees often have minimal or no English language skills. Some are pre-literate. They are among the most challenging populations to assist in becoming self-sufficient within the few months of assistance provided by federal resettlement funds. At the same time that local resources are being stretched to breaking, we are seeing an increase in refugee arrivals."

Provider Survey Jewish Family Service

computers skills, financial classes on banking and budgeting are also available.¹⁷

- Jewish Family Service (JFS) also provides vocational ESL classes, including one for parents with younger

children in which childcare is provided. JFS reports a significant increase in the number of clients seeking employment referral services, with caseloads rising by about 40% over the past year.¹⁸

- Refugee Women’s Alliance reports that there is a need for specific ESL vocational training with an emphasis on passing State qualifications. Intermediate level classes to help English Language Learners increase their proficiency are not available.¹⁹
- Jubilee REACH, a family center in the Lake Hills neighborhood, offers free ESL classes with Play and Learn childcare provided, alleviating one barrier frequently mentioned.

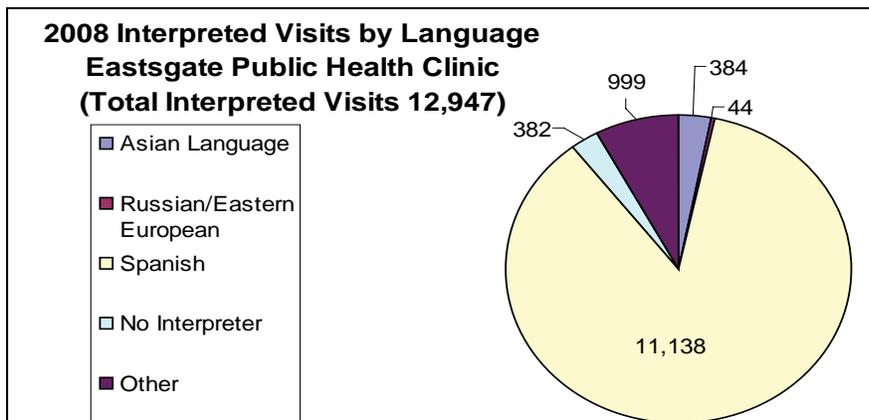
“Refugees and immigrants need services that cannot be delivered in English. The need for services is on the increase as more refugees and immigrants settle in King County, yet the system struggles to meet their needs. One reason is that the data on the number of refugees and immigrants are not disaggregated; they are subsumed under other ethnic categories.”
Provider Survey, Refugee Women's Alliance

Other Language-Related Needs

- Beginning in 1998, Public Health-Seattle and King County began to report a dramatic increase in the need for interpreters for its clinics. Although this may be partly attributed to newly arrived refugees and immigrants, Public Health cites internal (within the U.S.) migration as the primary source of this increase. In 1998, county-wide, over 38,000 encounters with clients (not including the Women, Infants & Children - WIC Program) required interpreter services. By 2006, this number had grown to over 71,000. In 2008, there were almost 77,000 interpreted visits.
- At the Eastgate Public Health Center, where many Bellevue residents go for services, 12,947 interpreted visits were provided in 2008, similar to 2006. Of these 11,138 were in Spanish (86%), compared to 95% in 2006. (See chart below). In 2002, only 6,852 interpreted visits were provided, indicating that the demand for service in a language other than English has almost doubled in six years.²⁰

Need for Information about Resources

- The City of Bellevue has been working on many ways to make access to information by English Language Learner residents easier. In 2003, a Spanish webpage was added to the City’s website with information for resources such as police, fire, and health and human services. In 2007, the City added Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian web pages to their website; recently, a Korean option was added. The City has a Language Line available that will provide interpreters who speak over 150 languages and dialects within minutes to assist employees in speaking with customers that do not speak English. The Bellevue Fire Department created and released multiple outreach videos and public service announcements (PSA) in Spanish, Russian, and English. The PSAs are not just for television; for example, videos in Spanish giving information about the City, are also used at public events. Bellevue is also working with the King County Joint Information Center to translate emergency



Source: Public Health - Seattle & King County, July 2009.

communications into several languages in addition to English. City departments are translating their materials into multiple languages.²¹

- The Eastside Cultural Navigator Program uses bilingual/bicultural staff stationed at several key sites around East King County, including Crossroads Mini-City Hall and the Family

Resource Center in Redmond, to be liaisons and advocates, helping refugee and immigrant populations to better navigate complex systems, such as healthcare and state social services, to better utilize existing resources. Chinese Information and Service Center is the lead agency for this program which began in December 2006, with staff

available who speak Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese, Russian and several East Indian dialects. They serve many low-income residents of the city who have

difficulty accessing other services because of language and cultural barriers. Some of the ways Navigators can assist include helping a new resident register their child for school, signing up for energy assistance, or finding housing resources.

- The Crisis Clinic Community Information Line reports a significant increase in foreign language calls. One indicator is that the cost of their Tele-Interpreter line increased from \$14,000 to over \$36,000 between 2006 and 2008.²²

Employment

- As the economy worsened in 2009, and unemployment increased, refugees and immigrant communities were one of the hardest hit. Jewish Family Service, which provides vocational ESL classes for a wide variety of refugees and immigrants in Bellevue, hosted one such Community Conversation including people from at least ten different cultures and ethnicities. Over half of the 21 participants stated that even with JFS assistance, they were not able to find jobs.²³
- The Preparing for Work program at Bellevue College (BC) served over 4,000 Bellevue residents in 2008. Staff help English Language Learners (ELL) develop

their language and networking skills to assist them in their job search. Students also write resumes and do mock interviews with business professionals. Staff comment that in this current economic climate, finding jobs for ELL students is especially challenging.²⁴

- Cultural Navigators from the CISC program and Asian Counseling and Referral Service report that more of their clients are recently out of work and are asking for help for the first time. The biggest need initially is for jobs and job training to become employable in a new field.²⁵

"Many of the refugees coming in now are truly struggling. In some cultures, not having money means you are lower class. Most needed are food, shelter and mental health services, but it is hard to ask for help."

Key Informant Interview, Refugee Women's Alliance

Culturally Specific Nutrition

- According to providers and consumers, there is a growing need for culturally relevant nutrition programs for underserved populations. One specific gap noted is for more fresh food replacing some of the canned and packaged food which is the mainstay at many food banks. This issue is especially problematic for many older adults from other cultures.
- Refugee Women's Alliance provides outreach to English Language Learners who may be eligible for the Basic Food Plan, formerly known as food stamps. Staff provide information in Russian/Ukrainian, Somali and Spanish to people who did not know they could receive this State benefit.²⁶ Emergency Feeding Program has long offered two culturally-sensitive food bags--one designed specifically for Latino families and another for Asian families. They are currently developing a bag designed specifically for families who have arrived here from East Africa, available by fall of 2009.²⁷
- In 2008, 19 to 53%²⁸ of the clients served at the food bank at the Hopelink Bellevue Center have limited English proficiency, down from 20 to 60% in 2007. Total numbers of those with limited English proficiency are increasing, but the percentage

is decreasing as fluent English speakers seek assistance in relatively greater numbers than in past years. The number of clients that speak Spanish as a first language is increasing. In 2008, 48% of limited English proficiency clients spoke Spanish as a first language, up two percent from 2007. In contrast, 34% of limited English proficiency clients spoke Russian, down nearly four percent from 2007. The number of clients speaking Southeast Asian languages (Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese) rose slightly from 2007 (2.5%) to 2008 (3%), and the number of limited English proficiency speakers of African languages (Amharic, Swahili) remained at less than one percent.

"I can get to the doctor, but he does not speak Cantonese."
Community Conversation, Jewish Family Service

Culturally Specific Childcare

- In 2000, Child Care Resources reported that there were 118 bilingual providers on the Eastside out of the 338 listed in their database. Due to increased support and training efforts, as of July 2009, the number has grown to 392 providers offering bilingual care, out of a total of 463. Among childcare providers listing one language in addition to or other than English, the four largest groups were: 25% Spanish, 10% Russian, 19% other, which includes Vietnamese, Somali, Japanese, Chinese and French, and 9% Farsi.²⁹ Even with this increase, there is still a gap for such services for parents who want their children to be cared for by people from their own cultures.
- A recent Early Childhood longitudinal study revealed that disparities based on factors such as race and income do have a measureable affect on child outcomes as early as nine months of age. Infants and toddlers from racial/ethnic minority groups, whose home language was not English, and/or who had mothers with low maternal education scored lower on cognitive and positive behavior ratings. One of the implications suggested from this study was

to start early supporting and encouraging families, and to increase the quality of early care in both home based and center based settings.³⁰

Issues for School-Aged Children and Youth from Diverse Communities

- In Community Conversations and interviews with leaders in diverse communities in Bellevue, it was frequently mentioned that young adults and teens are faced with identity problems, caught between two or more cultures. They may live in traditional homes, but do not identify with their parents and cultural traditions. *Note: For more information, see the School-Aged Children and Youth section in this report.*

Legal Issues

- The need for free or low-cost legal assistance for immigration and family law issues provided in languages other than English continues to grow. Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) reports an increased demand for services in languages other than English. ELAP has two specialized clinics for this population group—the immigration clinic that deals with immigration law issues and the multilingual clinic that provides assistance on any civil legal issue with bilingual interpreters in Spanish and Russian.³¹ Another area of need identified was workshops on legal and civil rights and options regarding immigration issues.
- Community Conversation participants, including Healthy Start and Cultural Navigator program staff, reported the concerns of their clients about potential anti-immigration sentiments and discrimination due to the economic downturn and high unemployment rates.

Health and Mental Health

- Disparities exist and continue to broaden the divide between many minorities and Whites in King County. According to *Communities Count 2008: Social and*

Health Indicators Across King County, in East King County, there was no significant decrease in the average stress score in 2007 compared to 2001. However, data from the survey countywide showed that people of color, people with less than a college-level education, and people who have incomes less than \$50,000 experience more stress than others. Even though East King County had the lowest rate of uninsured adults in the county, Hispanic/Latino adults countywide had the highest percent of uninsured adults by race/ethnicity.³² With Hispanic/Latino people identified as one of the fastest growing groups in Bellevue, it is likely that they represent a large proportion of the City's uninsured adults.

- Due to changes in Medicaid, the health insurance plan funded with federal and state dollars for low-income people, cuts to the State's Basic Health Plan, and decreased funding for Public Health, the majority of adult immigrants, including those who are undocumented, do not have access to health care. This puts tremendous pressure on health care providers, including mental health agencies, dentists, medical clinics and hospital emergency rooms, who often provide care without reimbursement.
- HealthPoint reports an increasing number of clients who need uncompensated care, many of whom are English Language Learners. At their Redmond Clinic, the top languages spoken other than English are: Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Mandarin, and Farsi.³³ (For more information, see Goal #3).
- Providers also emphasize the growing need for bilingual and culturally competent mental health counselors, intake workers, medical personnel, and other staff, as well as translated materials. Therapeutic Health Services' Eastside Recovery Center offers substance abuse counseling in Spanish and Russian provided by counselors from those cultures. Mental health agencies serving immigrant and refugee groups are seeing increased numbers of no- or low-income

children, youth and adults without Medicaid benefits or insurance, and a new influx of Middle Eastern populations such as Iranians and Iraqis. Staff from Asian Counseling and Referral Service reported that more of their clients are experiencing stress due to the economic downturn, including job loss, substance abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence. Due to unemployment, many cannot afford to buy their medications.³⁴

- Many group participants from Community Conversations discussed the difficulty of getting health insurance, and, if they were eligible, navigating through the healthcare system. This can be a confusing experience with many barriers such as not having interpreters, lack of information about services, and services that are not culturally sensitive.

Parent Support

- According to staff from agencies that work with children, youth and their families such as Youth Eastside Services (YES), Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC), and Bellevue Boys and Girls Club, many limited-English speaking parents and guardians describe encountering barriers when communicating with teachers and staff at their children's schools. Bilingual staff members are not always available and translated materials are not always sufficient for the needs.
- Many local agencies and organizations are addressing the need for families who need additional assistance and support when parenting in this culture. CISC provides parenting classes for Chinese parents. Kindering Center provides a support group for parents who speak Spanish. Asia Pacific Language School Learning Center provides parenting education for its large percentage of Asian families. In addition, through a collaboration with a number of local providers, the Healthy Start program offers home visiting, parent education and support to young, first-time parents from

prenatal through age three; this program has a number of staff who speak Spanish.³⁵

Community Perceptions

- In 2009, 26% of households where English is not the main language spoken rated at least six of the household problem areas as major or moderate problems, compared to 12% of households in which the main language is English. In the same survey, 23% of households who identified themselves as non-Caucasian rated six or more problem areas as major or moderate, compared to 12% of those who identified themselves as Caucasian.
- In the phone survey, a question was added in 2001 asking if the respondent had experienced racial or ethnic discrimination. The percentage who rated this a major or moderate problem fluctuated from 4% in 2001, to almost 7% in 2003, back to almost 5% in 2005 and 2007 then 6.58% in 2009.
- Among respondents to the 2009 Consumer Survey, over half cited *not being able to speak, read or write in the English language* as a major or moderate problem. This issue ranked first of 29 household problems, compared to sixth in the 2007 survey results.

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents to this survey identified themselves as non-Caucasian.

- Community Conversations with various multi-cultural community groups in 2009 revealed that there is a continued, high need for human service organizations to provide interpretation for those who do not speak English, and for English-as-a-Second-Language classes, at all proficiency levels. Another common theme was not surprising in this down economy: unemployment. There is strong competition for many of the low-wage jobs that immigrants once were

"There is fear that if you make a mistake, ask to change your schedule, ask for time to go to the doctor, they will cut your hours or fire you. There is a lot of pressure right now."

Community Conversation, Kinderling Center, Circulo di Mamas parent group

able to get easily; now, non-immigrants with higher education and training are getting these jobs.

- In Key Informant Interviews with members of the Chinese, East Indian, Latino, and Iranian communities, the theme of people needing to learn English was also echoed. Speaking English will help them find better jobs and ultimately, for many, allow them to gain citizenship.
- Another need expressed frequently in discussions with immigrant and refugee communities is for venues to celebrate their cultural and ethnic heritage, such as poetry readings, music and dance. Many of these activities are not available outside of Seattle, which poses transportation barriers.
- Some immigrants and refugees report housing discrimination, such as receiving notice to leave without cause, or difficulty finding housing. Due to fear of deportation, many immigrants will not report these acts of discrimination.

Implications for Action

- The need for more culturally and linguistically competent human services staff grows each year. Throughout the community, there is a need for information to be available in languages other than English, such as that provided through the Cultural Navigator program. Due to the economic downturn, increased needs for employment, health insurance, basic needs and legal assistance are emerging, amongst immigrants and refugees who have not previously needed to ask for help before.
- Requests for English-as-a-Second-Language classes at all levels for adults are increasing significantly, a result of larger numbers of refugees and immigrants living in Bellevue as well as a greater demand for better language skills to secure jobs in this era of high unemployment. More opportunities for

people to learn English, especially those that offer childcare, are needed.

- Non-English speaking parents need assistance helping their children in school. This can include having more bilingual staff, materials for parents translated in their native languages, and events to educate parents about the school system and culture in the U.S.
- Increased opportunities are needed for people to have cultural events and activities to increase awareness in the community about the richness of these cultures and engage new Americans in meaningful dialogue. There are more ways yet untapped to utilize the strengths and assets that the many immigrant and refugee groups have brought here with them, to enrich and strengthen the whole community.

Endnotes

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3. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Op. cit.
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6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. 2008 Yearbook of Immigration. (2009, July). Available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2008/RFA-supplementalID.xls>.
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