

# A Profile of Pacific Islanders in Oakland, California



Center on Culture, Immigration and Youth Violence Prevention,  
National Council on Crime and Delinquency

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## Cover information

Map Source: <http://www.topsecret.net/intelink/werzit/maps/oceania.html>

Pictures (clockwise from top right corner):

Family Reunion Fa'a Samoa—the Samoan Way (2005), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/wiphey/33097418/>

Dancer at National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Oakland, CA (2003)

Dancers at the Tongan Cultural Centre in Tongatapu, Tonga (2007), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/unincorporated/531209406/in/set-72157600313252988>

Tongan children (2005), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nicole1980/67424927/in/set-72157594270978152>

Uganda vs. Samoa (Rugby 7s), Melbourne XVIII Commonwealth Games (2006), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kiaorabro/114994827/>

Ready for Sunday church, Vava'u, Tonga (2001), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nicole1980/633690/in/set-72157594270978152/>

Lotus in Guam (2005), <http://flickr.com/photos/santos/45292766/>

Hip Hop Tonga, AYPAL May Arts Performance (2007)



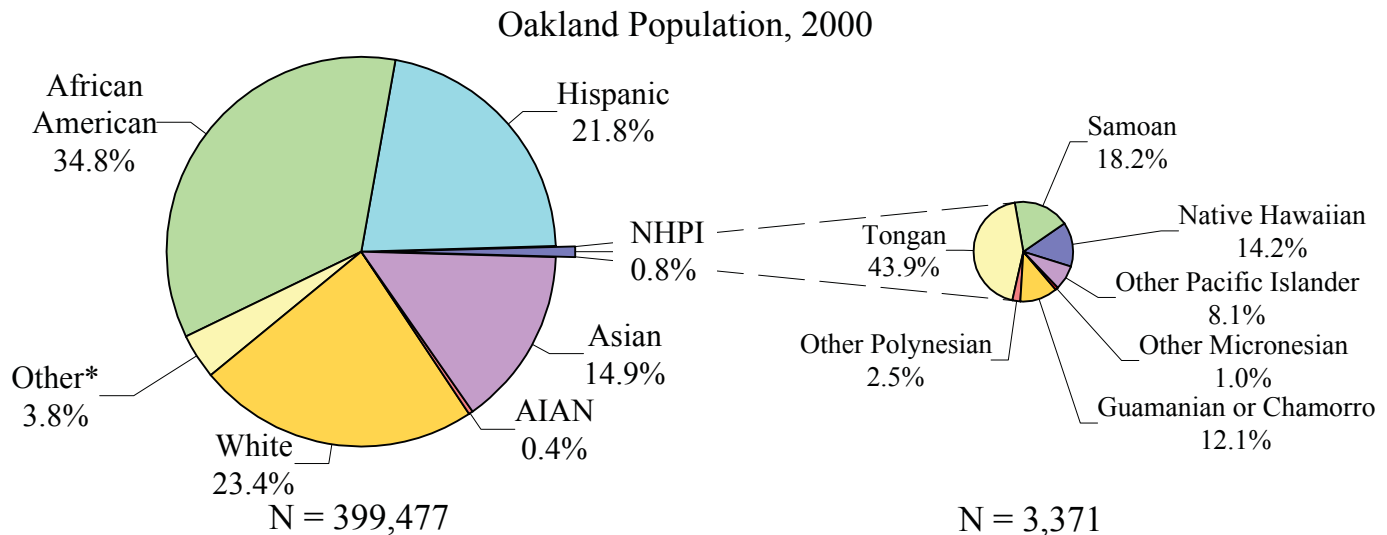
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## A Profile of Pacific Islanders in Oakland, California

Pacific Islanders represent less than one percent (1%) of Oakland’s population and as a result may be overlooked or categorized with other disparate communities. Although small in numbers, this community has its unique issues and concerns including the distinctly different groups (such as Polynesian and Micronesian) that comprise the Pacific Islander community itself. At the same time it shares issues in common with other immigrant communities (e.g., Latino and Asian) that should not be overlooked as Pacific Islanders develop a Pacific Islander American identity.



Source: U.S. Census 2000. AIAN refers to American Indian or Alaskan Native and NHPI refers to Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. All ethnic groups are alone except for NHPI and its subcategories which includes alone or in combination with another race/ethnic group.  
 \*Other includes both Other Ethnic group and Two or More Ethnic groups.

Since this profile is specific to the Oakland, California Pacific Islander community, its scope is limited by population (e.g., primarily Tongan, Samoan, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, and some Fijian individuals—there are not enough Fijian households or families to be included in the Census data) and location; not only are they not representative of all Pacific Islanders but their experience may be unique to Oakland (vs. other San Francisco Bay Area communities, Los Angeles, or California’s Central Valley). Hopefully, it will become clear that although other groups originating from Oceania (e.g., Papua New Guinea, New Zealand (Maori), or Solomon Islands) are not included, it would be a disservice to assume their experiences or circumstances would be the same as other Pacific Islanders in Oakland or in other locations since each group is unique.

### Oceania subsections

**Micronesia:** Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, U.S. Territories of Guam and Wake Island, Palau, Northern Mariana Islands, Nauru, and Kiribati.

**Polynesia:** Hawai’i, New Zealand, Easter Island, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna.

**Melanesia:** Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia.

While evaluating the following charts and graphs, please bear in mind the following. A high percentage of Pacific Islanders are multi-ethnic and therefore may be included in statistics for a

different ethnic group. Census data included in this report represents the ethnic group alone or in combination with another, so the total may not be the sum of the separate groups. For instance, if an individual reported in the Census as being both Tongan and another Pacific Islander group, they would be represented in both of those groups. The numbers are already very small, so the risk of counting individuals twice was acceptable in order to try to include all members of the community.

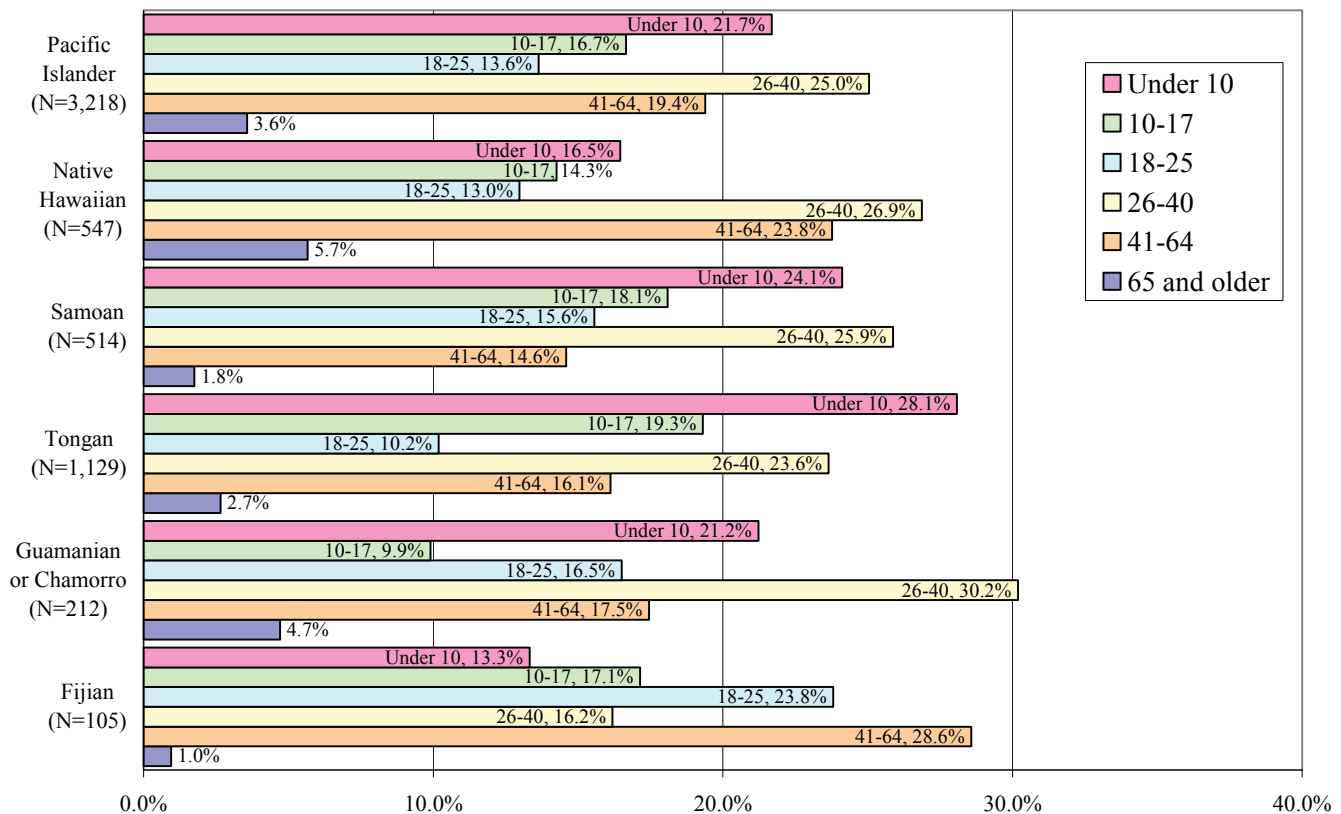
In addition, the Pacific Islander group may at times be greater than the sum of the separate groups because some members of a group were not disaggregated into a separate group because of small numbers (e.g., Melanesians including Fijians) but they are still included in the Pacific Islander category.

Finally, the Pacific Islander group ‘Guamanian and Chamorro’ refer to Micronesian people from Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands who are also sometimes referred to as ‘Chamoru.’

### Population

- Compared to the total Oakland population, Pacific Islanders have a higher proportion of young people.
- Over a third of the Pacific Islander population was under 18 years old at Census 2000 as compared to 25% of the Oakland population.
- Less than 4% were 65 years or older.
- Most notably, almost half (47%) of Tongans were under 18 years old and over a quarter (28.1%) were under 10 years old.

**Population Distribution by Age**

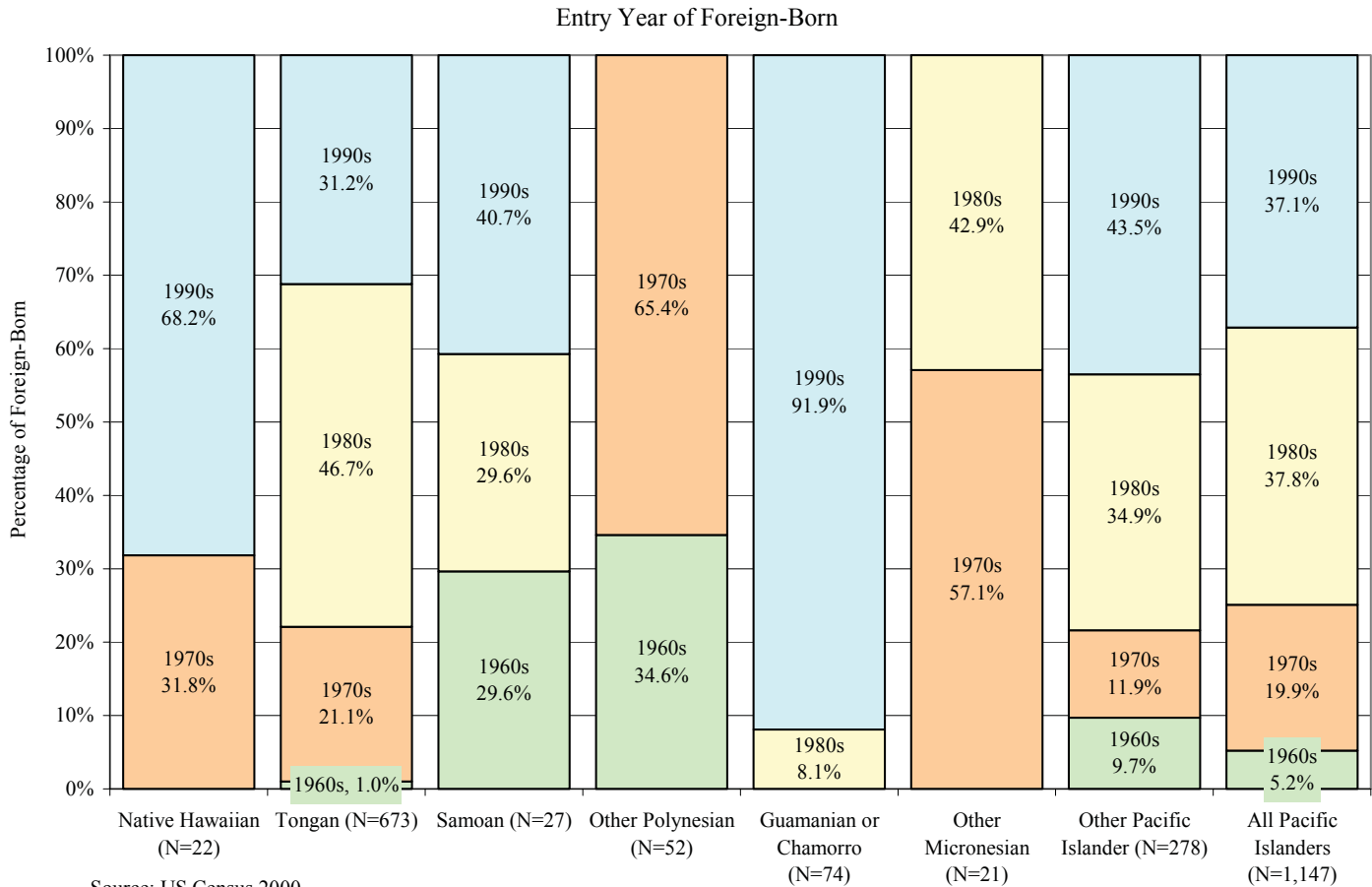


Source: US Census 2000

Note: The sum of the individual categories may not equal the total group since some categories may not be disaggregated from total.

## Immigration

- Approximately a third (34%) of Oakland’s Pacific Islander population was born outside the US.
- Of Pacific Islanders not born in the US, over half entered the US after 1985.



Source: US Census 2000

Note: The sum of the individual categories may not equal the total group since some categories may not be computed separately from total. In addition, 1990s includes up until March 2000 and 1960s includes entrance before 1960 as well.

## Families and Households

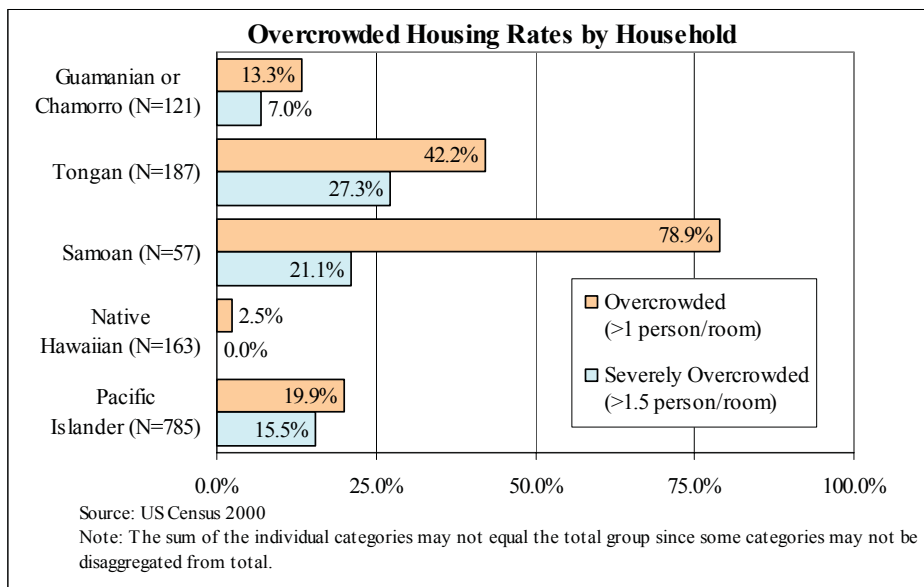
- Households include everyone at a residence, whereas families are two or more people in the residence who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. When the average household size is larger than the average family size, the average household contains members that may include extended family although they are not defined as such by birth, marriage, or adoption. Similarly, when the average household is smaller than the average family size, a large percentage of people may be living alone, with a partner, or with friends.
- The average Pacific Islander household is 60% larger than the average Oakland household, although the average Pacific Islander family size is only 30% larger.

### Average Sizes

	Household	Family
Oakland Average	2.6	3.4
Pacific Islander	4.2	4.7
Native Hawaiian	2.2	3.5
Samoan	8.7	4.9
Tongan	6.9	6.0
Guamanian or Chamorro	3.1	3.1
Fijian	--	4.1

Source: US Census 2000

- Not only do households and families have more members, but a third of all Pacific Islander households are overcrowded or severely overcrowded according to the US Census.
- In addition to having over 2.5 times the average household members (6.9 vs. 2.6), more than a quarter of all Tongan households are severely overcrowded with more than 1.5 people per room. Over two thirds (69.5%) of all Tongan households are overcrowded or severely overcrowded.



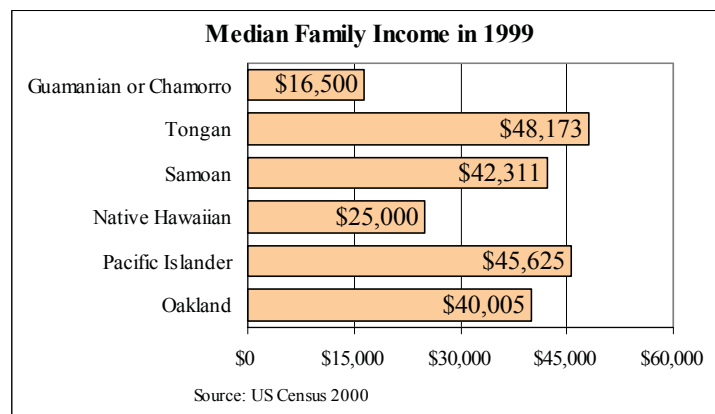
### Religion

- Although no formal statistics about religious practices or beliefs (the US Census is not allowed to ask any questions regarding religion) are available, this section will itemize some of the local resources in Oakland.
- The local phonebook identifies six Samoan and Tongan-specific related places of worship (not to mention local Catholic and Latter Day Saint [Mormon] places of worship): Samoan First Assembly of God (9431 Cherry St), First Tongan Assembly of God (Mac Arthur Ave), Church of Tonga Tauataian (1901 Fruitvale Ave), Free Church of Tonga (1901 Fruitvale Ave), Melrose Tongan United Methodist Church (54th Ave & Wentworth Ave), Fale Maama Tongan United Methodist Church (2385 103rd Ave).

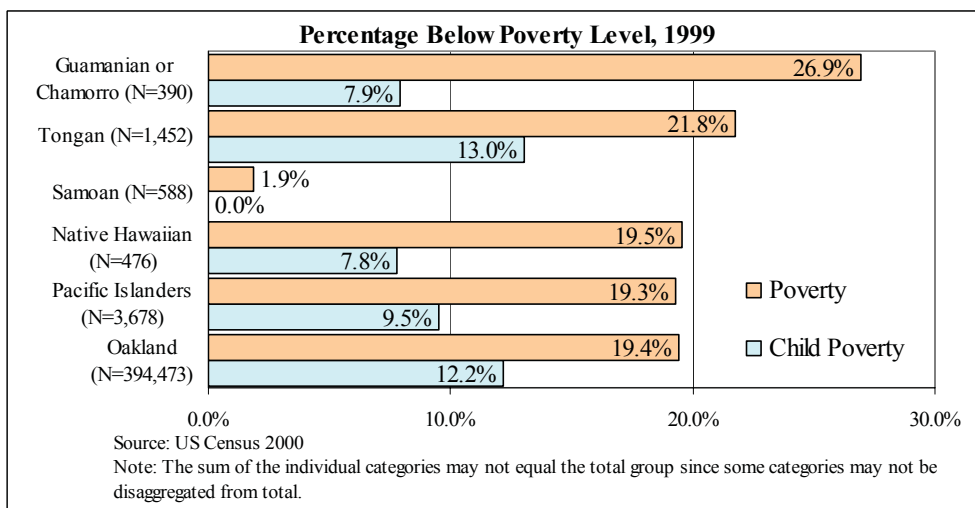
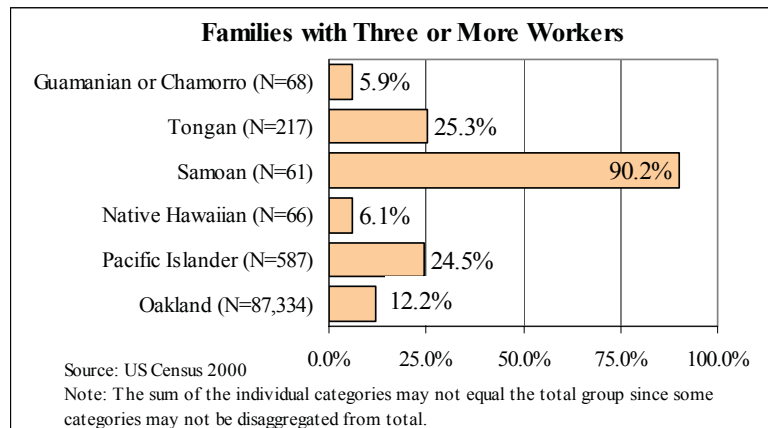
- Christianity is the primary religion in Oceania. Different denominations were introduced and influenced by Christian missionaries who traveled to the region. For instance, in Tonga (NoMoa.com 2007):
  - Methodist missionaries arrived in 1826. The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (the Methodist Church in Tonga—Siasi Uesiliana Tau'atina 'o Tonga) was later established in 1924 by Queen Salote Tupou III in order to unite the Free Church of Tonga and the Wesleyans.
    - Separating from the Wesleyan Church in 1885, the Free Church of Tonga was founded by the first King, George Tupou I.
      - Church of Tonga broke away from the Free Church of Tonga in 1928.
  - Roman Catholic missionaries (Bishop JP Pompallier and French Marists) were granted permission to stay in Tonga in 1842.
  - Latter-Day Saint missionaries originally arrived in Nuku'alofa in 1891 from the Samoa Mission and a Tongan Mission was founded in 1916.
  - Seventh Day Adventist missionaries arrived in 1895.
  - Missionaries for the Assemblies of God (AOG) arrived in 1906.

## Income

- The median income for Pacific Islander families was slightly higher than Oakland as a whole at \$45,625 (vs. \$40,005), but varied within ethnic groups.



- Income directly correlates to the groups who have three or more workers in the family; the highest median incomes are correlated with high percentages of multiple workers. Most striking is that less than 10% of Samoan families have fewer than three workers contributing to the family's income.



- Although the percentage of Pacific Islanders living below the poverty level is similar to Oakland’s overall population, the overall living conditions are very different (e.g., number of people in families and households, the high percentage of overcrowding, and families with multiple sources of income).

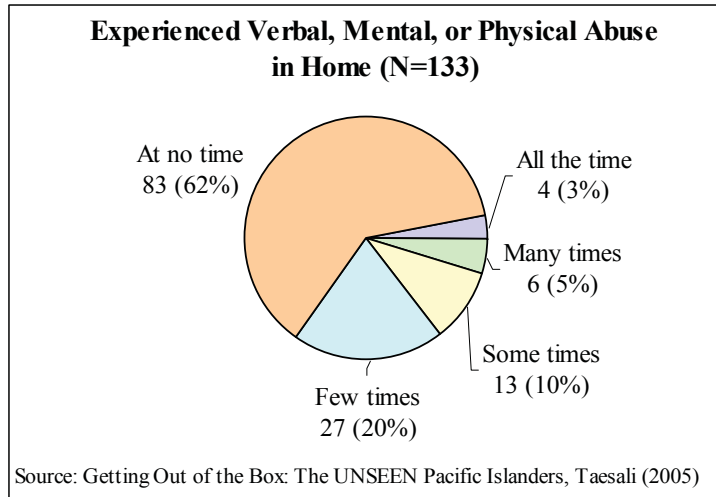
## Issues at Home

- According to a survey of Pacific Islander adults (Taesali 2005):
  - For resources (e.g., emergency cash, translations, advice), half (50.0%) of survey respondents (N=82) would seek out family members and the rest would use religious avenues (ask God and church) and friends (43.9% and 6.1%, respectively).
  - Traditionally, physical discipline is an accepted practice in Pacific Islander ancestral homelands. Of the parents interviewed (N=121), almost half (46%) agree that physical discipline is useful to foster better behavior from their child. Of the parents who agreed (N=56), less than a fifth (17.8%) strongly agreed about discipline, whereas the parents who disagreed (N=65), almost two-thirds (64.6%) strongly disagreed. When the parents (N=124) were asked how many times they had used physical discipline in the past week to improve a child’s behavior,

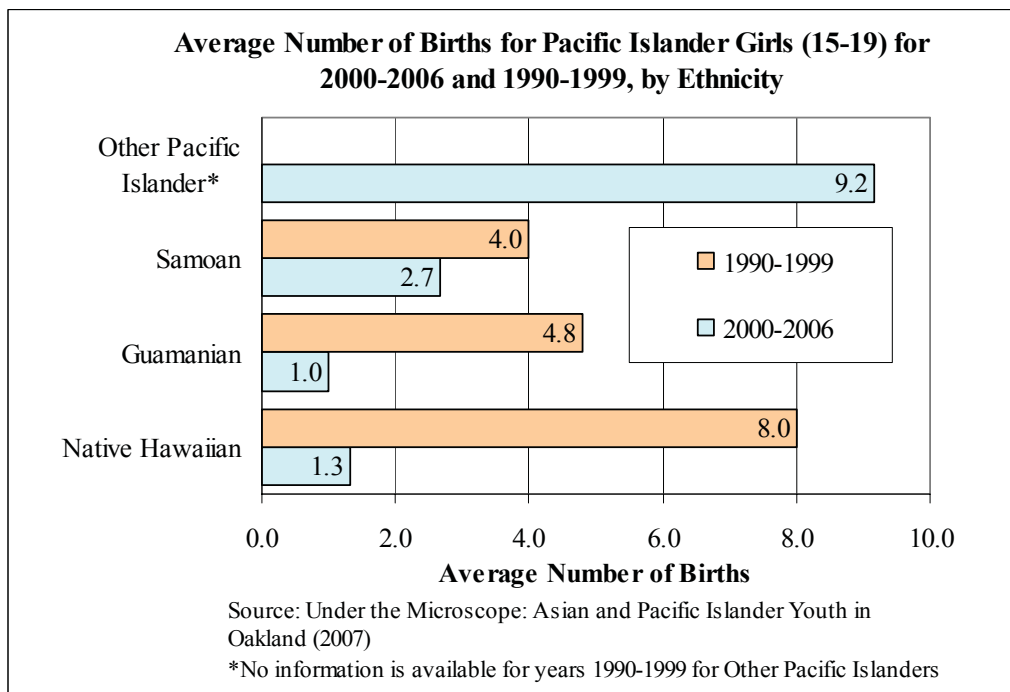


almost half (46%) had never used physical discipline, a third (32.6%) had once or twice, and almost a quarter (22.6%) had done so three or more times.

- Domestic violence is a largely taboo subject and not one that the adult focus group was interested in addressing. More than a third (37.6% or 133) of adult respondents had experienced some verbal, mental, or physical abuse in the home.



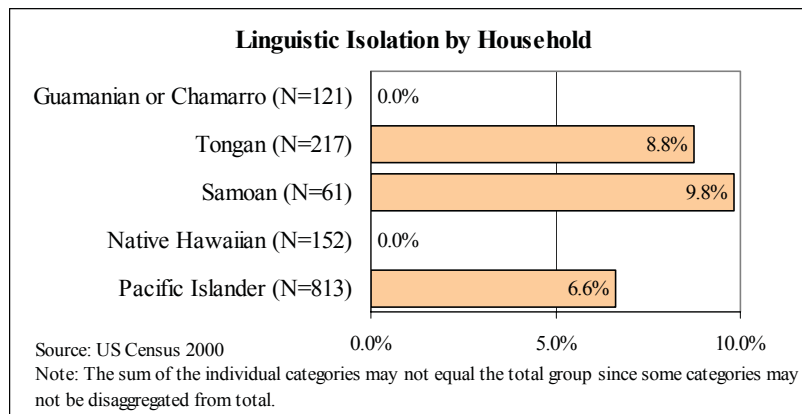
- The average number of births has dropped substantially for Samoan and Guamanian girls between the periods of 1990-1999 and 2000-2006. However, the differences may be due to mis-categorization since Tongans, the most populous Pacific Islander ethnicity, are noticeably absent.



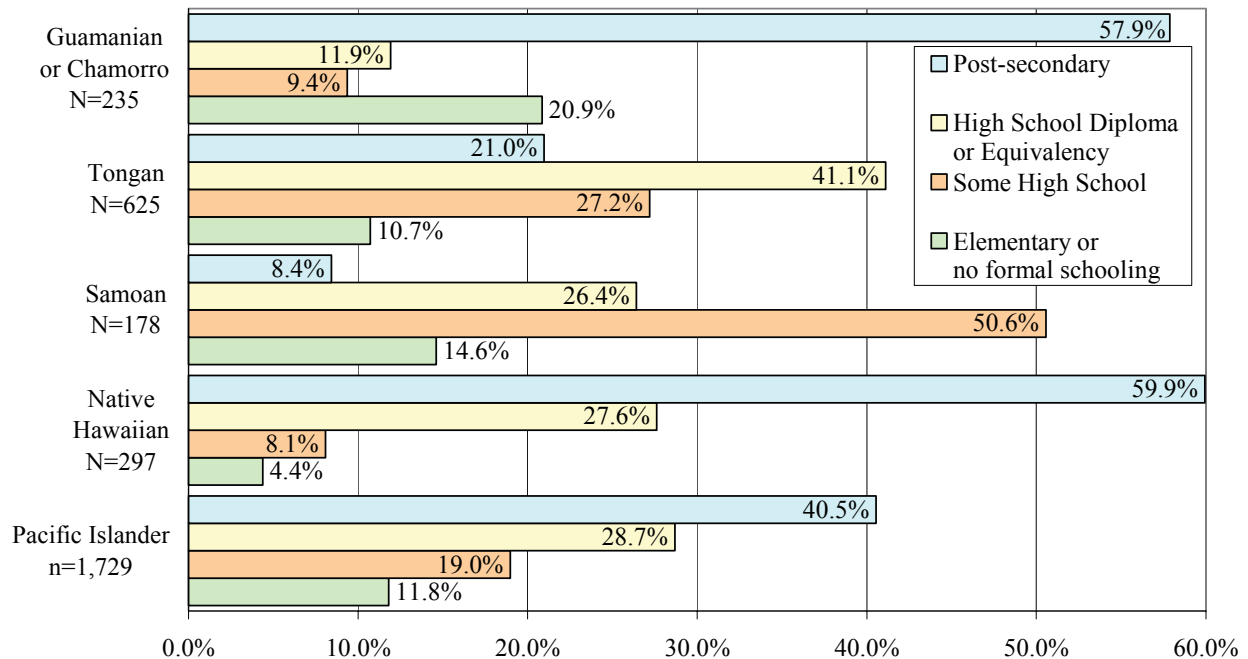
- Pacific Islanders have the lowest rate of early prenatal care for Alameda County (Iton 2006). However, with the small Pacific Islander population numbers and possible mis-categorization of ethnic group (e.g., due to multiple ethnicities), interpretation of these results require caution in order to prevent inaccurate conclusions.

### Linguistic Isolation

- Less than 10% of Pacific Islander households are linguistically isolated. Linguistic isolation refers to all household members over 14 years of age having some difficulty with English (do not solely speak English and speak English with a proficiency of less than ‘very well’)



## Educational Attainment for Population 25 years old and older



Source: US Census 2000

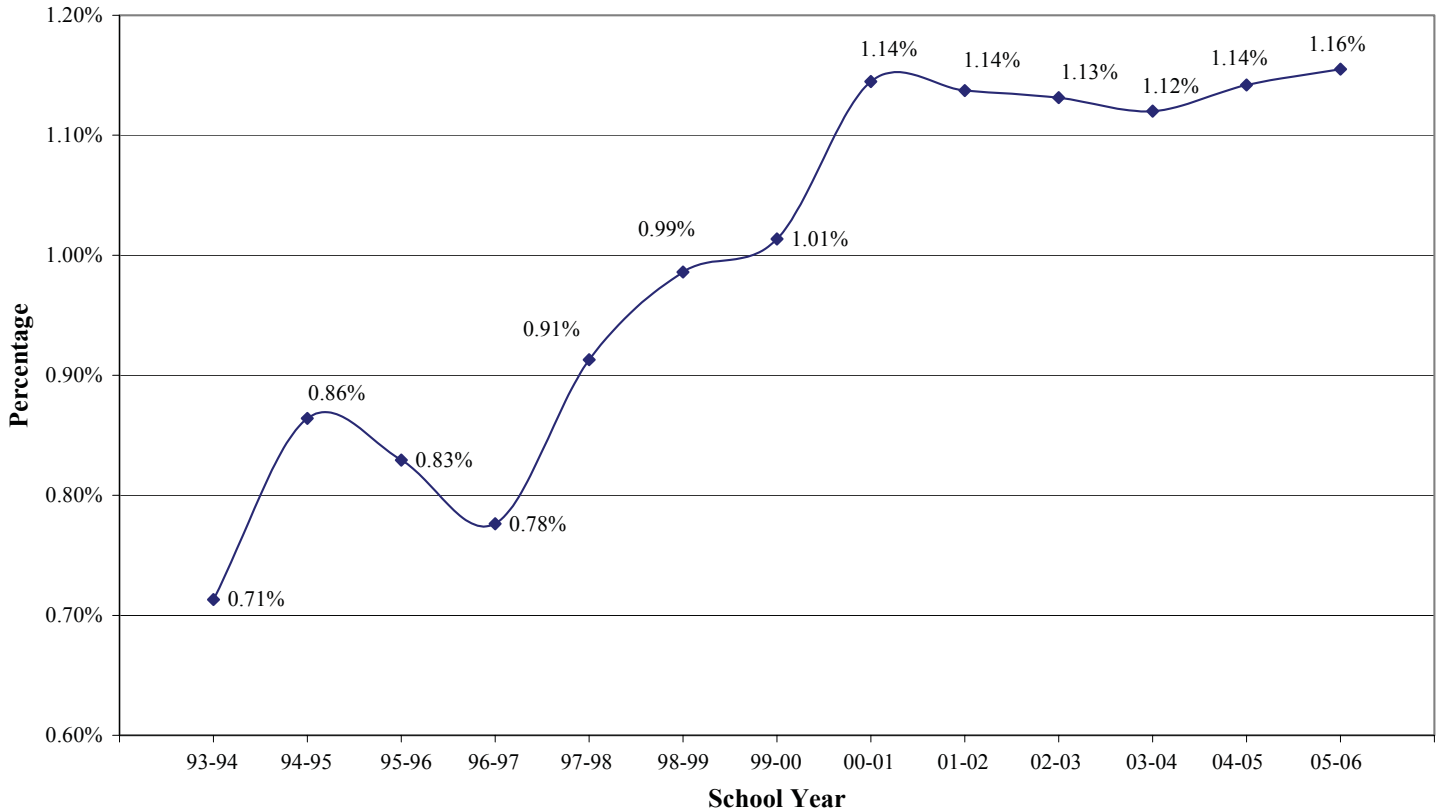
Note: The sum of the individual categories may not equal the total group since some categories may not be disaggregated from total. Some High School includes 9th grade or higher and Post-secondary includes some college or a degree (Associates, Bachelors, Masters, PhD).

## Education

- More than two-thirds (69.2%) of Pacific Islanders have at least a high school diploma (or equivalent status). Nearly a quarter (21.0%) of Tongans completed some college-level coursework or have an advanced degree.
- From a database of Oakland high school students in the 2006-2007 school year, Pacific Islanders comprised 1.1% of the students (117 of 9,908). That database revealed the following about Pacific Islander students:
  - Students were primarily enrolled at Skyline (21.4%), Oakland Tech (12.0%), and Castlemont Business and Tech High (11.1%).
  - The students were fairly evenly male and female (54.7% and 45.3% respectively) and spread out throughout 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades (9 – 32.5%, 10 – 21.4%, 11 – 24.8% 12 – 21.4%). Unfortunately, different ethnic groups other than Pacific Islander were not identified.
  - Pacific Islander students had an overall passing grade point average (GPA) of 2.38 which was slightly higher than the overall average of 2.35 Oakland high school students.
  - Although a smaller percentage of PI students took Advanced Placement (AP) classes than the total student population (10.3% vs. 13.3%), those who did had a larger average number of AP classes (1.75 vs. 1.33) than other students who took AP classes.
  - California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) English Language Art (ELA) results: 60.3% of Pacific Islander students passed (75.7% of all students passed) and the average score was 357.62 (vs. 365.03 for all students).

- California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Math results: 64.6% of Pacific Islander students passed (73.4% of all students passed) and the average score was 355.34 (vs. 366.66 for all students).
- Enrollment information from the Oakland Unified School District (2007) shows that the percentage of Pacific Islander youth enrolled has grown steadily since 1993 and stabilized at around 1.15% of the Oakland student body by 2000.

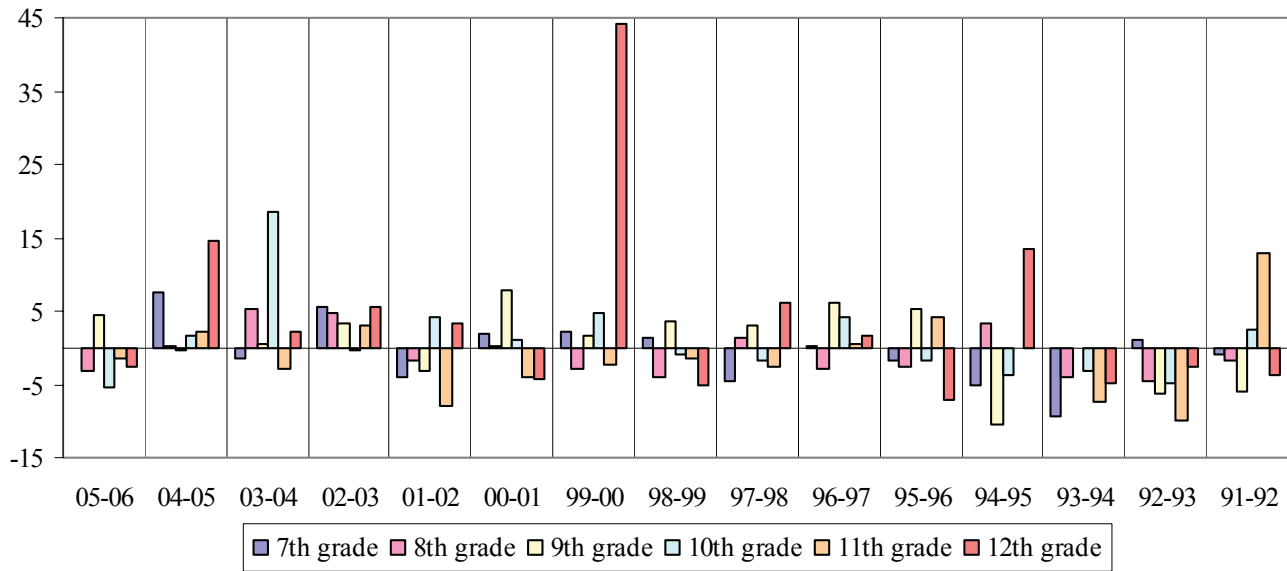
**Percentage of Pacific Islander Students Enrolled in Oakland Unified School District, 1993-2006**



Source: Oakland Unified School District School & District Data, <http://dataportal.ousd.k12.ca.us/>

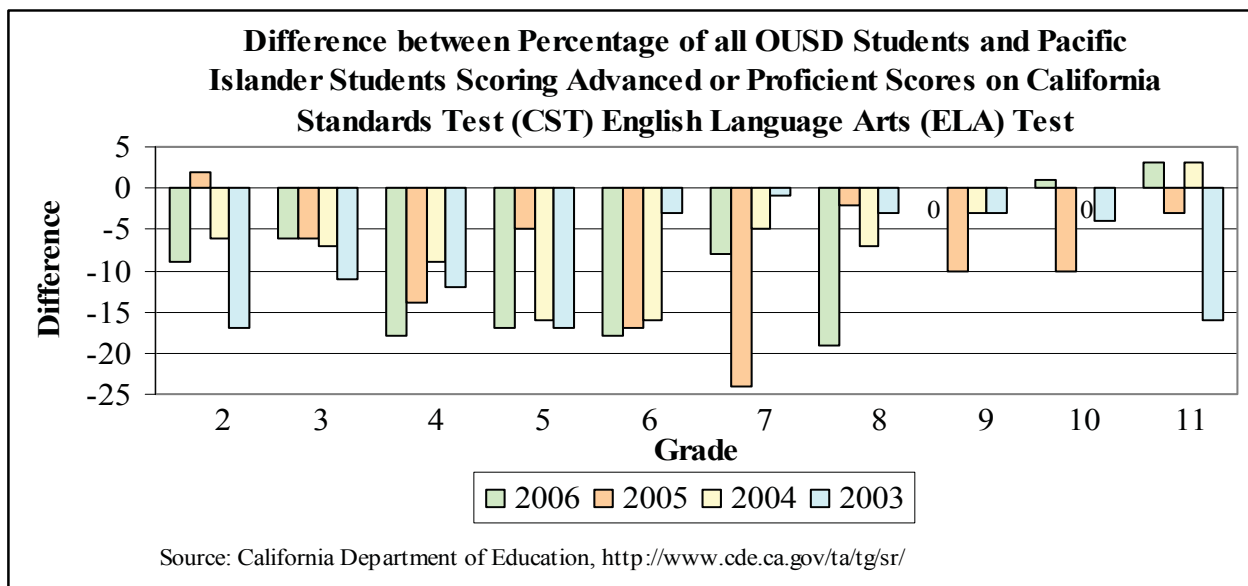
- The percentage of Pacific Islanders who drop out from 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade is not substantially different from other OUSD students. From the 1991-1992 school year through the 2005-2006 school year, the drop out percentages rarely varied 10% more or less than the drop out percentages for all OUSD students according to the California Department of Education (2007).
  - The difference in drop out percentage was never greater than 10% below, but exceeded 10% in some years for 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> graders.
  - The average difference for all 15 years is within one percent (for all grades except for 12<sup>th</sup> grade because of one year when five of ten Pacific Islander students didn't return to school).

### Difference in Drop Out Percentages between Pacific Islander and all OUSD students



Source: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

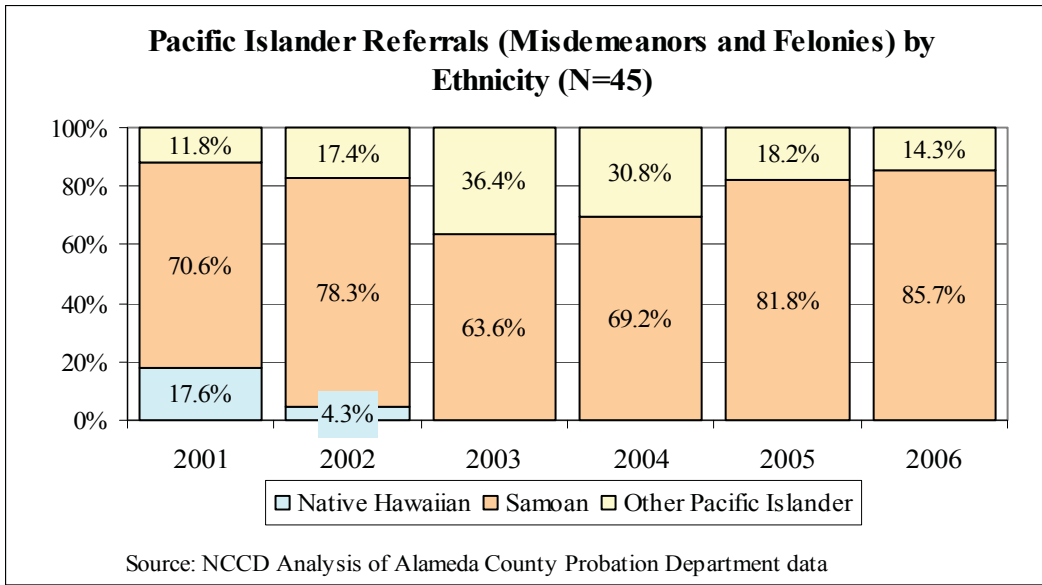
- California has a goal for all students to score as proficient or advanced on the California Standards Test. Students in grades 2-11 are tested for English-language arts (ELA), as well as other subjects such as math, science, social studies, etc. This comparison between Pacific Islander students and the rest of the OUSD students is only with the ELA tests since they are administered to all students (whereas other subjects are not). Comparing achievement levels between grades is not possible, but comparisons within a grade can be made between years.
  - A zero value indicates that there is no difference between the percentages of Pacific Islander students and all students who had proficient or advanced scores; a negative value indicates that the percentage of Pacific Islander students was less than OUSD students who scored at the goal level.
  - For most years, the biggest discrepancy in achievement occurs during grades four through six.
  - The most consistently similar scores (and even some instances of the percentage of Pacific Islander youth being a little higher than OUSD students) occur during high school.



- According to the 2002 California Healthy Kids Survey administered to Oakland Unified School District youth (Lai & Tov 2004):
  - Under “school victimization on school property in the last 12 months”: Pacific Islander youth (N=14) had the smallest percentage for having been in a physical fight and being harassed due to race, ethnicity, or origin, and second smallest percentage for having been offered illicit drugs and being harassed in general on school property.
  - Under “perception of safety”: Pacific Islander youth (N=12) had the lowest rating of sense of safety at school (2.58) and second lowest rating of sense of safety in neighborhood (3.00) on a 4-point scale where 1=Very Unsafe, 2=Unsafe, 3=Safe, and 4=Very Safe.
- According to Getting Out of the Box: The UNSEEN Pacific Islanders (Taesali 2005), which used a focus group with 10 youth:
  - Youth feel like their personal options in schools are limited by being perceived merely as representatives of a group rather than an individual (e.g., all Tongan students at a school being expelled because of one Tongan youth’s actions).
  - Due to the small size of the group, youth also feel that they need to support other members and assert their cultural pride even if that includes physical violence.

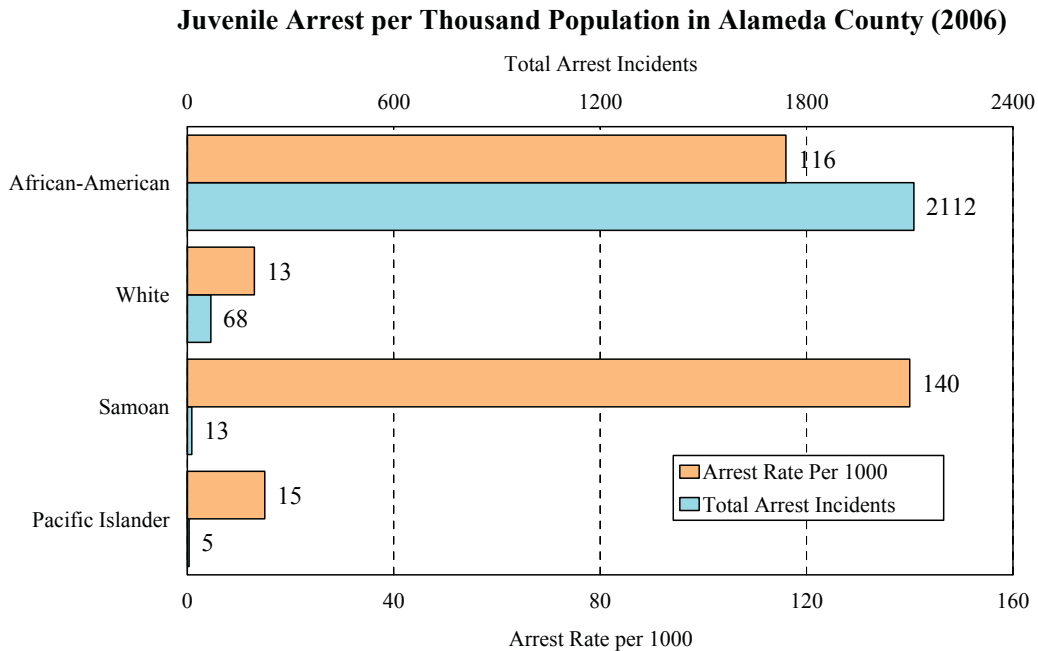
## Juvenile Justice

- Pacific Islander youth were responsible in Oakland for just over a half percent (0.6%) of felony referrals to probation and less than a quarter percent (0.2%) of misdemeanor referrals in 2006. Although disaggregating by Pacific Islander groups has limited usefulness since the numbers involved are so small, it still shows some interesting characteristics.
  - Although Tongans are the most populous of Oakland’s Pacific Islander groups, they do not appear in the Alameda County Probation records: instead Samoan youth are the most prominently represented in Alameda County Probation data. Whether Tongans are represented in the Other Pacific Islander category, mis-categorized as another group, or simply not represented is beyond the scope of this analysis.



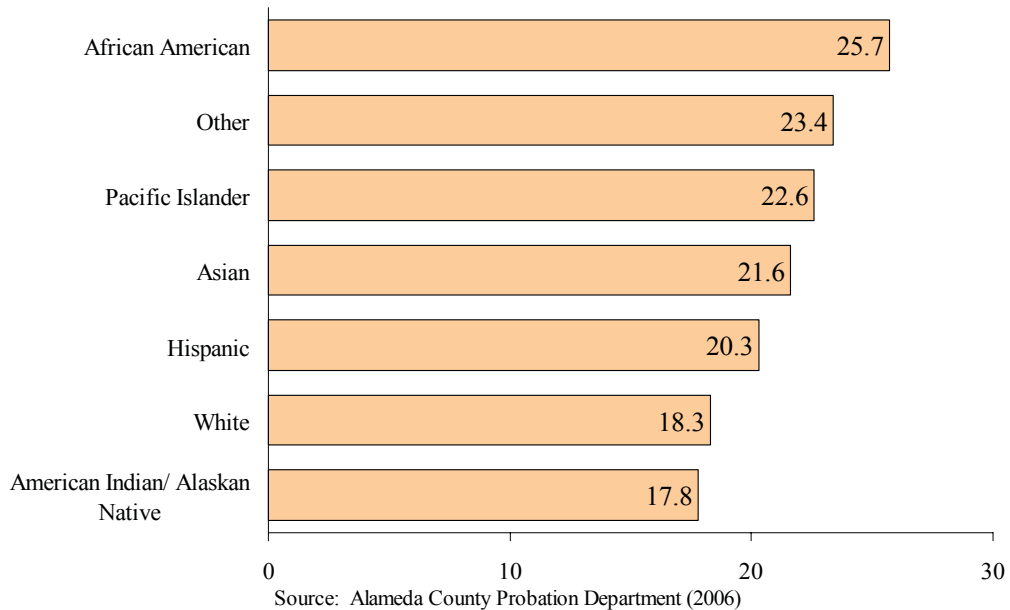
### Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)

- DMC refers to when the proportion of a minority group involved with the criminal justice system is either higher or lower than their proportion in the population.
- Pacific Islander youth are twice more likely than White youth to be arrested/booked at Juvenile Hall in Alameda County in 2006.



- The arrest rate per 1000 for Samoan youth is the highest for all ethnic groups in Oakland. The arrest rate is determined by dividing the number of arrests by juvenile population (obtained for the US Census) and multiplied by 1,000.
  - Although Tongans are the most populous of Oakland’s Pacific Islander groups, they do not appear in the Alameda County Probation records. Whether Tongans are represented in the Other Pacific Islander category, mis-categorized as another group, or simply not represented is beyond the scope of this analysis.
  - In addition, classifying Tongans as Samoans artificially inflates the arrest rate because the juvenile population of Tongans is larger than Samoans (an equal number of arrests but a higher population would lead to a smaller arrest rate).
- Pacific Islanders have the third highest average number of days spent in detention for all youth booked into Alameda County Juvenile Hall. The average number of days is 23.7.

**Average Number of Days Youth in Alameda County Spent in Detention by Race/Ethnicity (2006)**





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