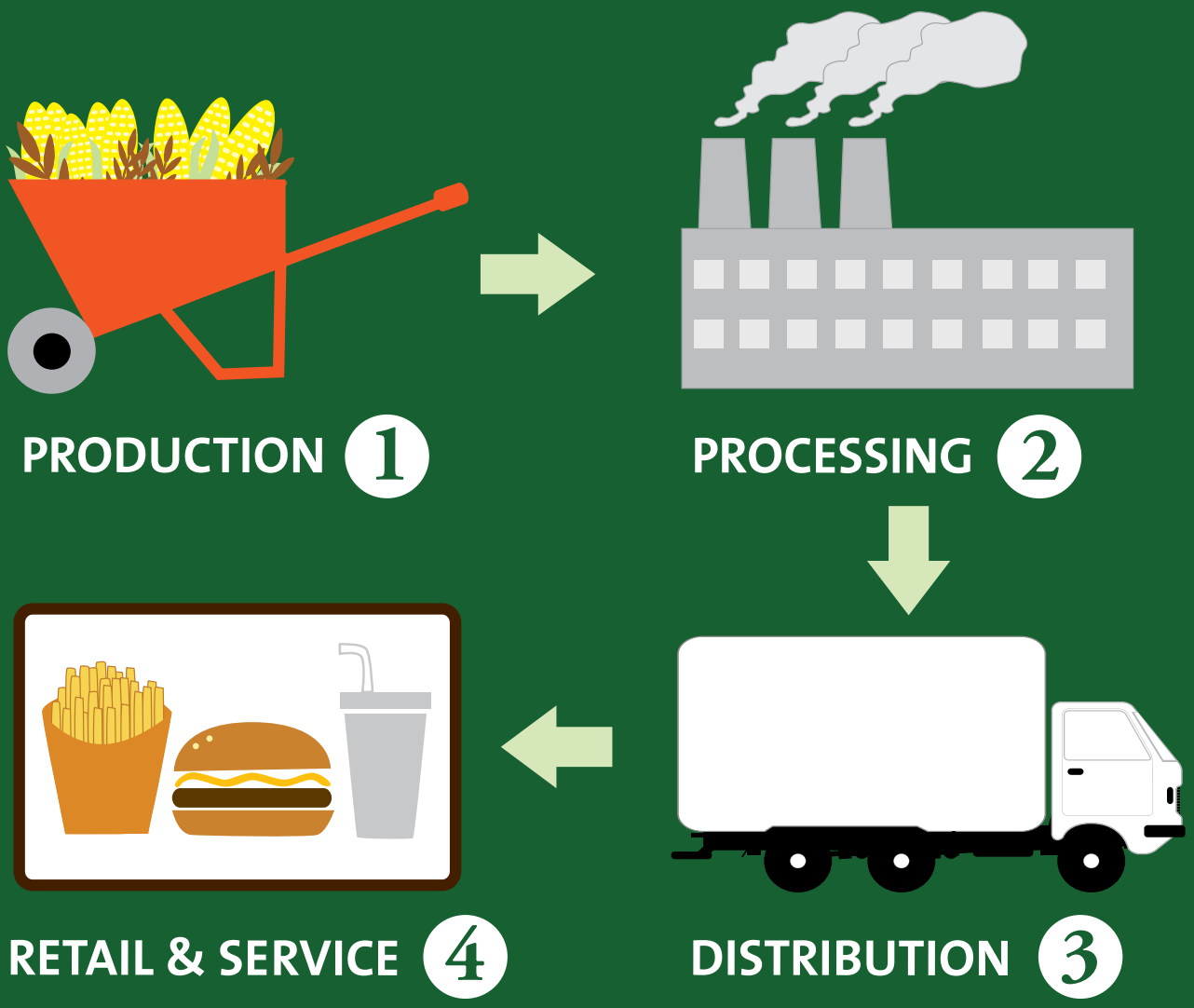
THE COLOR OF FOOD



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APPLIED RESEARCH CENTER
Racial Justice Through Media, Research and Activism
arc.org

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INTRODUCTION

Food justice seeks to ensure that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed and eaten are shared fairly. Food justice represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.[1]

In the United States, more than 20 million people are workers in the food chain,[2] over 11 million of which are full-time employees earning an income.[3] Movements to make healthy food accessible to everyone are increasing in popularity, which is an important step towards achieving food equity for people of color. However, more attention must be paid to the often-invisible labor that produces and prepares the food that we put on the table.

The *good food movement* (see "The Good Food Movement" sidebar) narrowly focuses on the relationship between the producer and consumer, and to the environmental benefits of sustainable agriculture.[4] Consumers strive to directly relate to the process of food production, getting to know the conditions under which their eggs or vegetables were raised. They purchase food directly from the farmer or grow the crops themselves, shortening the time and space between when the food is first planted as a seed and when it is eaten by the consumer.

THE GOOD FOOD MOVEMENT

Contemporary food production, like much of our economy, is dominated by large corporations, and these corporations produce edibles through an industrial process.[5] The food chain is incorporated in the world capitalist system, where crops are grown in the global or domestic south, often in fields of monoculture crops, using bioengineered seeds and subjected to harsh pesticides; then the products are packaged and shipped to the end consumer.[6] What we see on the supermarket shelves or serve to eat is a food product, alienated from the natural and social world.

The *good food movement*—also known as *eco-food, slow food, real food, local food* or *the sustainable food movement*—is a reaction to the world food system. It's driven largely by the middle class, nostalgic for a preindustrial mode of food production, who demand organic food grown locally by independent farmers. The roots of this tradition stem from Thomas Jefferson, who believed that a nation of small farmers would be morally virtuous, economically independent and the citizenry of an equitable republic.[7] However, Jefferson's vision ignored or glossed over the slave labor that powered agrarian economies, the history of colonization and the displacement of people of color from their land.[8]

1. Gottlieb, Robert, and Joshi, Anupama. *Food Justice*. The MIT Press, October 2010.
2. Based on analysis by the Data Center, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 2010.
3. For the purposes of this report, we defined a food worker as someone who was employed in a food-related industry and earned a positive income in the past year.
4. Personal communication with Saru Jayaraman, Co-Director, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United. February 11, 2010.
5. Francis, Charles A. et al. "Agroecology: The Ecology of Food Systems." *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*. 22: 99-118 (2003).
6. Patel, Raj. *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing. April 2008.
7. Jefferson, Thomas."Notes on the State of Virginia." Published: 1781–1782. http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefVirg.html
8. Personal communication with Eric Holt-Giménez, Executive Director, Food First / Institute for Food & Development Policy. January 26, 2011.

The overarching desire is for a sustainable food system—for the earth, consumers, and family farmers. Consumers vote with their purchases, favoring produce sold in a farmer's market over a chain supermarket, supporting an urban farm in a community of color by subscribing to a monthly box of vegetables and fruits, or redistributing fruit foraged from backyards to the community.

However, the food chain provides employment for millions of workers in other sectors, some unseen to the eye of the consumer, such as processing and distribution. A movement based on a holistic understanding of food justice needs to encompass the chain of food production that connects seeds to mouths. The food chain includes the workers that help to plant the seeds, harvest the crops, package the food, deliver the product and serve the meal to consumers. The future of good food must not ignore these workers and their livelihoods. Food justice must involve increasing their wages and improving their working conditions, so that they too can enjoy healthy and sustainable lives.

People of color are often limited to low-wage jobs in the food industry, especially recent and undocumented immigrants who can easily find seasonal work harvesting crops in the fields. At least six out of every 10 farmworkers is an undocumented immigrant.[9] Also, the food industry continues to grow even during economic recession, offering more job opportunities. The nation, as a whole, lost 1.9 percent of jobs between December 2007 and December 2008, yet the restaurant industry only contracted by 0.5 percent in the same time frame.[10]

Often, workers in the food chain suffer low wages and exploitative conditions. Farm labor, for example, has a higher rate of toxic chemical injuries than workers in any other sector of the U.S. economy, with an estimated 300,000 farmworkers suffering from pesticide poisoning annually.[11] Service workers in the restaurant industry, which serves food to consumers at the end of the chain, face unfair labor practices ranging from employers withholding wages to not getting paid for overtime.[12] Also, many sectors of the food chain are excluded from the protections of federal labor laws. This includes farmworkers, tipped minimum wage workers such as those in restaurants, and the formerly incarcerated. These workers fall under the rubric of excluded workers, who lack the right to organize without retaliation, because they are excluded from labor law protection or the laws are not enforced.[13]

Food workers also suffer from lack of access to healthy food. Numerous studies document high rates of food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger among farmworkers. In California, a 2007 study found that 45 percent of surveyed agricultural workers were food insecure, and nearly half were on food stamps.[14] A similar survey in North Carolina documented that over 63 percent of migrant and seasonal farmworkers were food insecure, with almost 35 percent experiencing hunger.[15]

9. Southern Poverty Law Center. "Injustice on our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry." November 2010.
10. Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York and New York City Restaurant Industry Coalition."The Great Service Divide: Occupational Segregation and Inequality in the New York City Restaurant Industry.". March 31, 2009.
11. "Like Machines in the Fields: Workers without Rights in American Agriculture." OxFam America (2004), p. 2-3.
12. Bernhardt, Annette et al. "Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers: Violations of Employment and Labor Laws in America's Cities." September 2009. http://www.unprotectedworkers.org
13. "Unity for Dignity: Expanding the Right to Organize to Win Human Rights at Work." Excluded Workers Congress. December 2010.
14. Wirth, Cathy et al."Hunger in the Fields: Food Insecurity among Farmworkers in Fresno County." California Institute for Rural Studies. November 2007.
15. Borre, Kristen et al. "Working to eat: Vulnerability, food insecurity, and obesity among migrant and seasonal farmworker families." *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 53: 443–462 (2010).

DESCRIPTION OF THE FOOD CHAIN WORKERS ALLIANCE

The Food Chain Workers Alliance is a coalition of worker-based organizations whose members plant, harvest, process, pack, transport, prepare, serve and sell food, organizing to improve wages and working conditions for all workers along the food chain. The Alliance was founded in July 2009. By coming together in the Alliance, members have greater power to improve the wages and working and living conditions of food workers and their families. The Alliance also challenges institutionalized racism and strives to balance the immense corporate power over our food system in order to work towards ending poverty and therefore hunger, and to truly achieve food sovereignty, sustainable food production, environmental justice, and respect for workers' and community rights. Members of the Alliance include Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, Center for New Community, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Brandworkers International.

This report brief is intended to support the collaborative efforts of advocates and researchers–such as those at the Food Chain Workers Alliance, the Data Center and Food First–who are working diligently to bring attention to the invisible labor that populate the food supply chain. Like these advocates, ARC is committed to identifying solutions through which food workers can make their jobs and lives sustainable for themselves and their families. *The Color of Food* explores the universe of workers that populate the food chain, from food's inception as seed to when it reaches our plates at home or in restaurants. Generally, such broad explorations of the color and gender of the food workforce have been rare. This mapping of the race, class and gender of food workers will be a baseline from which the food justice movement can dream of a new supply chain, one that sustains and nourishes its labor, as well as its consumers.

METHODS

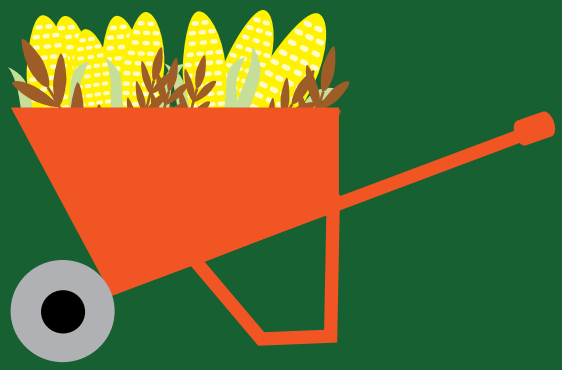
ARC used economic and demographic data from the American Community Survey (ACS) taken over a three-year period, 2006 to 2008. We focused on the following five food industries:

- Agriculture, fishing and hunting
- Food Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade of Groceries and Farm Products
- Retail Trade of Food and Beverages
- Food Services

More than 900 occupational categories populate these five industries (see the "Food Occupations" sidebar for a partial list.) This report brief discusses these categories as they relate to four stages of the food system: production, processing, distribution and service. [see info-graphic]

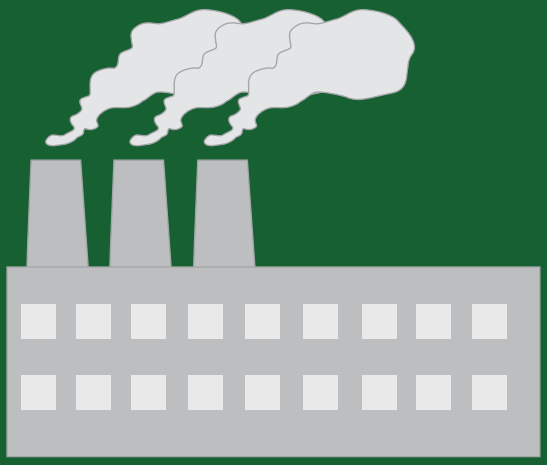
4 STAGES OF THE FOOD SYSTEM

Food passes through many hands before reaching the consumer's plate.



PRODUCTION 1

First, a seed is planted and cultivated or an animal is raised for its meat. This *food production* stage involves physically strenuous work characterized by hazardous conditions and low wages.

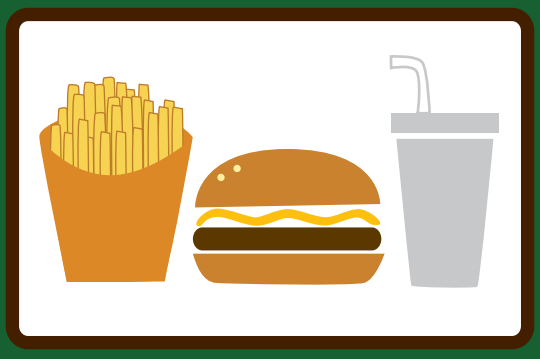


PROCESSING 2

Next, the raw materials are *processed* into a form palatable to the consumer. The labor in this stage typically involves workers running machines or other tools in a manufacturing facility.

DISTRIBUTION 3

The third stage is *distribution*, where food is transported from factories to wholesale centers, and then delivered to the retail market.



RETAIL & SERVICE 4

We consumers receive the food from the hands of *service workers* who prepare our food to eat, sell it to us, or serve it to us.

FOOD OCCUPATIONS

FOOD PREPARATION AND SERVING OCCUPATIONS:

Cooks measure, mix, and cook ingredients according to recipes, using a variety of equipment, including pots, pans, cutlery, ovens, broilers, grills, slicers, grinders, and blenders.

Waiters and Waitresses take customers' orders, serve food and beverages, prepare itemized checks, and sometimes accept payment.

Dishwashers clean dishes, glasses, pots, and kitchen accessories by hand or by machine.

FARMING AND FISHING OCCUPATIONS:

Graders and Sorters grade, sort, or classify unprocessed food and other agricultural products by size, weight, color, or condition and discard inferior or defective products.

Agricultural Workers, including Animal Breeders, have numerous and diverse duties, including planting and harvesting crops, installing irrigation, and delivering animals.

FOOD PRODUCTION OCCUPATIONS:

Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry and Fish Processing Workers convert animal carcasses into manageable pieces of meat, known as boxed meat or case-ready meat, suitable for sale to wholesalers and retailers.

Food Cooking Machine Operators and Tenders operate or tend cooking equipment, such as steam-cooking vats, deep-fry cookers, pressure cookers, kettles, and boilers to prepare a wide range of cooked food products.

Food and Tobacco Roasting, Baking, and Drying Machine Operators and Tenders use equipment to reduce the moisture content of food or tobacco products or to prepare food for canning.

FOOD TRANSPORTATION AND MATERIAL MOVING OCCUPATIONS:

Drivers/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers are responsible for picking up and delivering freight from one place to another. Some may have sales responsibilities, such as delivering and arranging for goods to be sold in grocery stores.

Laborers and hand freight, stock, and material movers manually move materials and perform other unskilled, general labor. These workers move freight, stock, and other materials to and from storage and production areas, loading docks, delivery vehicles, ships, and containers.

Hand packers and packagers manually pack, package, or wrap a variety of materials. They may label cartons, inspect items for defects, stamp information on products, keep records of items packed, and stack packages on loading docks.

Source: Descriptions from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 edition, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The data was a sample of the general population that would accurately represent currently employed, full-time workers in the food system. Therefore, only those employed, working over 25 hours a week, and earning an income from employment were selected for analysis. Farmers and ranchers were filtered out of the sample, because their income comes not from a salary, but from business revenue. This sample represented over 11 million workers in the food system, employed from 2006 to 2008. Wages were calculated for the median salary earned from employment per year and by hour.[16]

16. The Census reports an interval for the usual hours worked per week. Therefore, we took the median of the interval and multiplied that by the number of weeks worked to get the total hours worked by the respondent in a year. This figure was then divided into the annual median wage to obtain the median hourly wage.

FOOD CHAIN OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

The food system provides low-wage employment, often forcing workers to live in conditions that are close to poverty. The median wage across the food chain is $21,692 or $11.05 an hour. That is well below the self-sufficiency standards, a measure of how much income is needed for a family in a given location to meet its basic needs (see "Comparison of Hourly Wages for Food Workers with Self-Sufficiency Standard" sidebar). Twelve percent of food workers live at the poverty threshold (defined by the federal government in 2008 as $10,400 for a household of one or $21,200 for a family of four).[17]

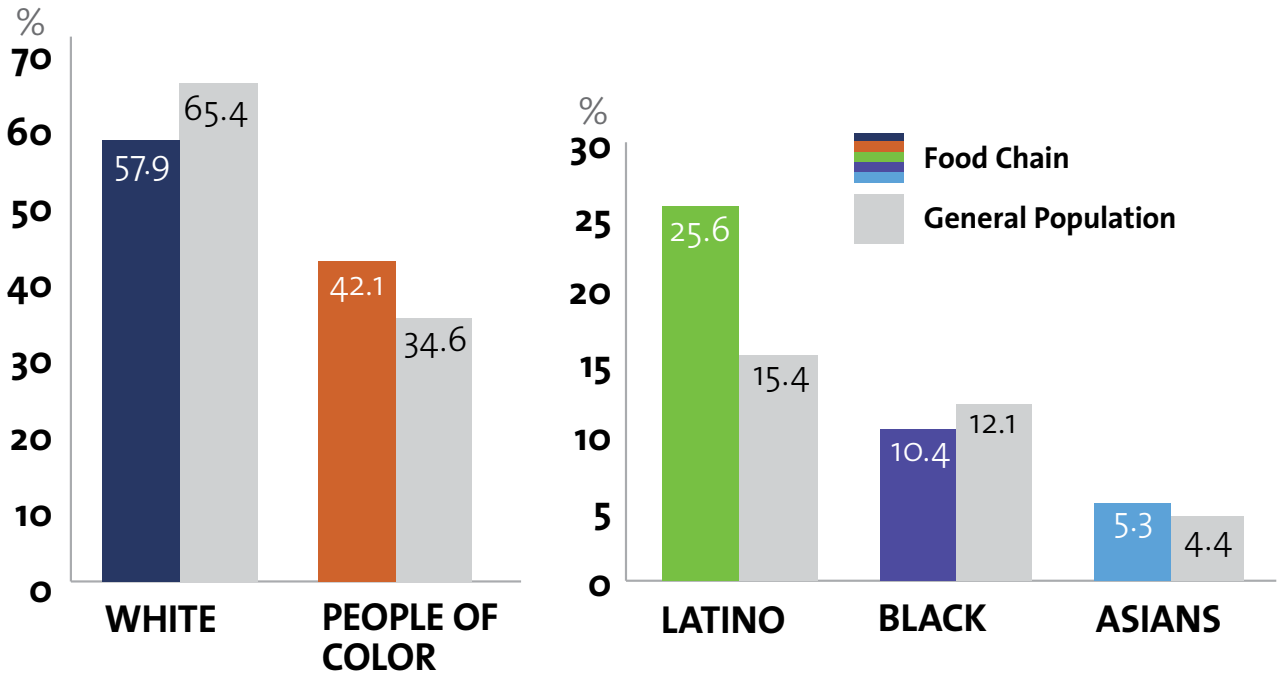
COMPARISON OF HOURLY WAGES FOR FOOD WORKERS WITH "SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD" FOR METROPOLITAN AREAS[18]

The self-sufficiency standard was calculated as the wage needed to sustain a family with one preschool and one school-age child.

Boston, MA	$28.83
San Francisco, CA	$26.97
Seattle, WA	$23.80
Philadelphia, PA	$22.26
Sacramento, CA	$21.55

Cleveland, OH	$20.21
Denver, CO	$19.43
Atlanta, GA	$18.37
Portland, OR	$14.83
Median Food Worker	**$11.02**

Figure 3. Comparison of Food Workers to Population by Race



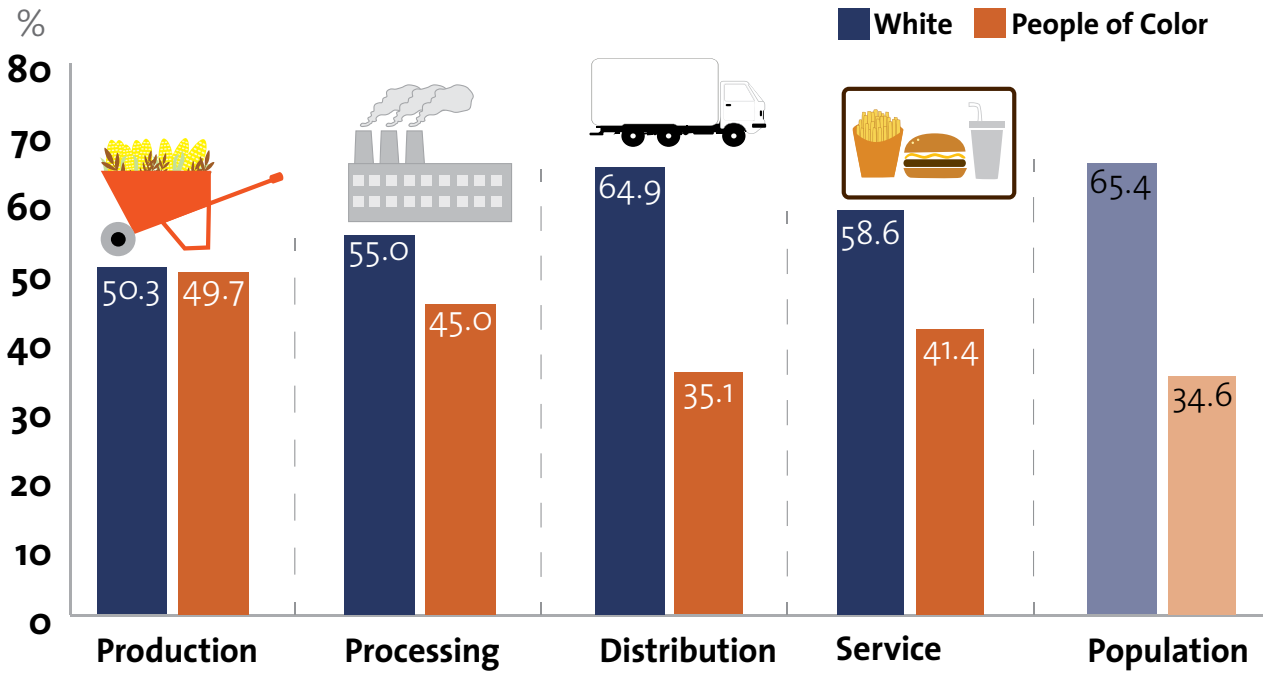
17. 2008 Federal Poverty Guidelines, http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08poverty.shtml (accessed 12/17/10).

18. The Self-Sufficiency Standard. Center for Women's Welfare. University of Washington School of Social Work. http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org

In our post-industrial society, more jobs are available in the low-wage service sector, which require little to no skills, than there are in manufacturing and distribution.[19] Union membership in manufacturing and distribution was higher, at 10 and 29 percent respectively, than the national rate of 12 percent in 2008.[20] Food production and service/retail had few unionized labor, at 3 and 2 percent. More than 60 percent of food workers are employed in the service sector, and less than 15 percent in food manufacturing. Collectively, people of color are overrepresented in food production and processing occupations (see Figure 4). Disaggregated, a disproportionate number of workers of color hold these bottom-tier jobs, especially Latinos. More than 70 percent of workers who grade and sort through farm yields are Latino.

Food service workers labor in a gloves-off economy, where labor abuses are rampant.[21] Our findings were that food service workers as a whole made low wages, but in most of these occupations, people of color made less than whites (see Figure 5B). For example, half of all white bartenders earned $11.41 an hour, while the median hourly salary for bartenders of color was 77 cents less per hour than that of their white counterparts.

Figure 4. Food Sectors by Race



19. Lane, Julia et al. "Too Many Cooks? Changing wages and job ladders in the food industry." *Regional Review*, Q4-Q1 2003.
20. Hirsch, Barry T. and David A. Macpherson. "Union Membership, Coverage, Density and Employment by Industry, 2008." Unionstats.com, union membership and coverage database from CPS.
21. Bernhardt, Annette et al., editors. *The Gloves-off Economy: Workplace Standards at the Bottom of America's Labor Market.* Labor and Employment Relations Association. Cornell University Press: September 2008.

Key Finding #1: People of color typically make less than whites in the food system, including within specific occupations.

Figure 5A. Median Annual Wage, Population by Race

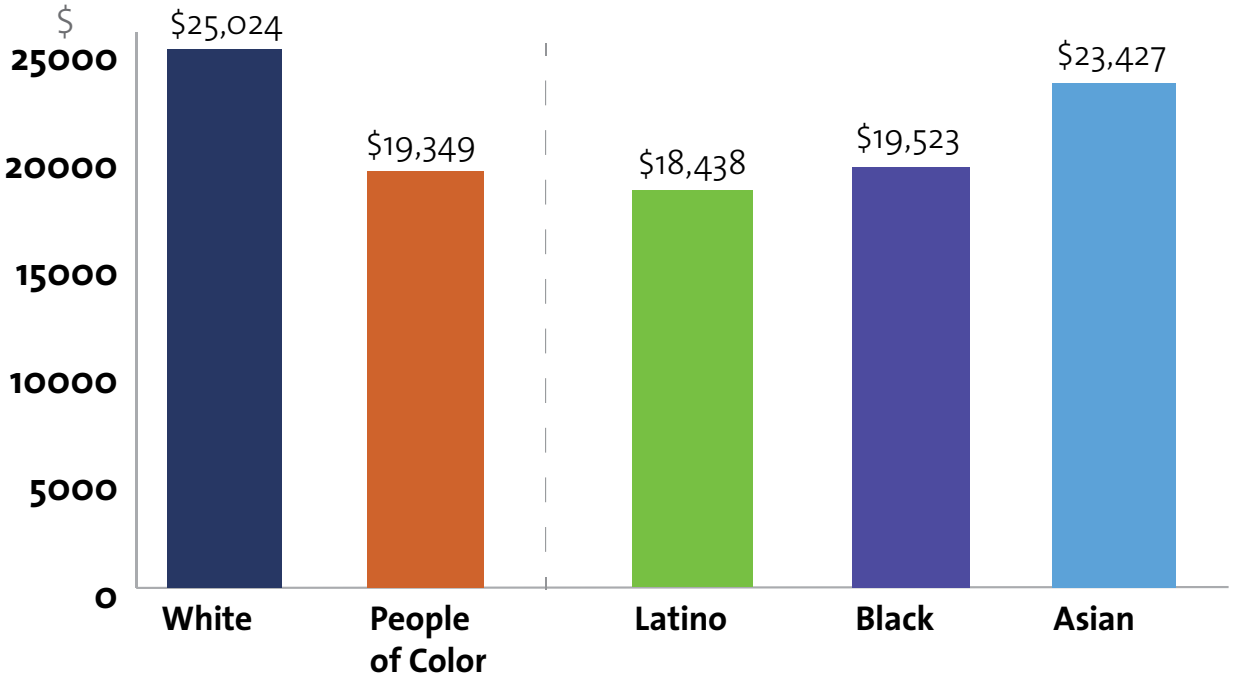
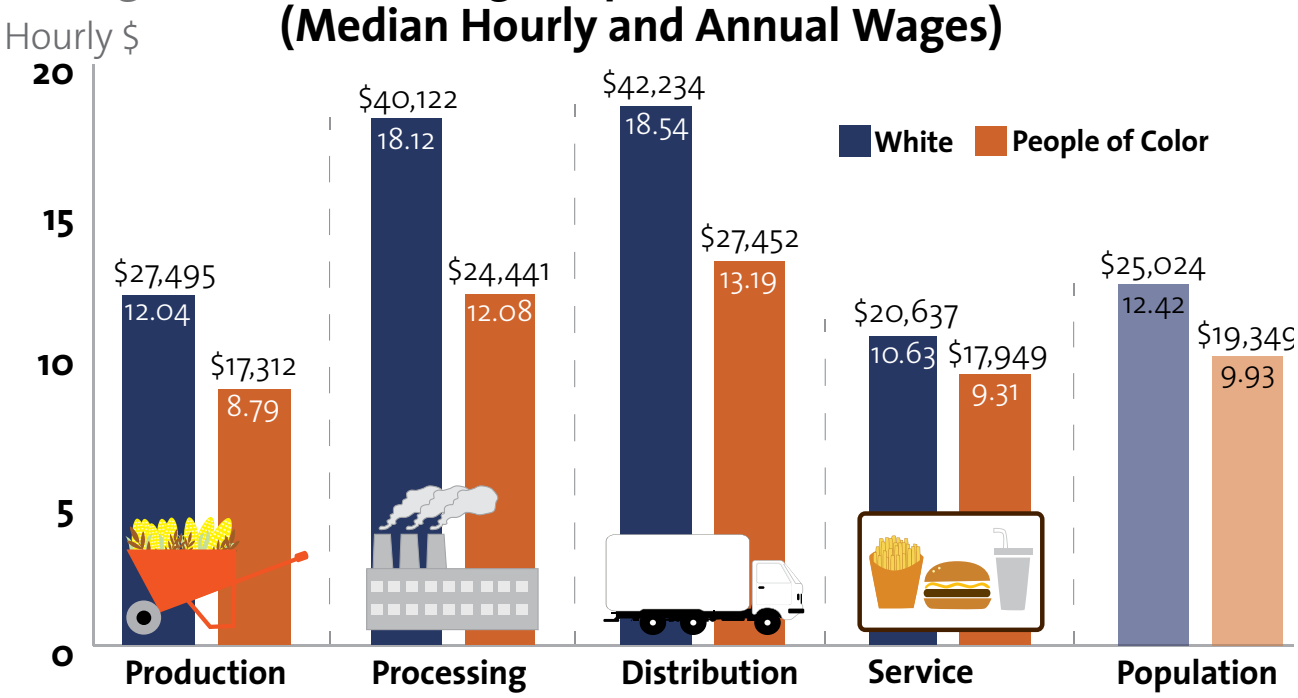


Figure 5B. Racial Wage Gap in the Four Food Sectors (Median Hourly and Annual Wages)



White men earned the highest wages of all race and gender groups working in the food system. For every dollar of median income a white man earned, men of color made 20 to 40 cents less (see Figure 6). Being a woman posed a severe penalty in wages for food workers. White women earned 63 cents for every dollar in median wage that a white man made. Women of color fared much worse: Asian women made 68 cents, Black women made 53 cents, and Latina women made 50 cents.

Figure 6. Race and Gender in the Food Chain

Race & Gender	Ratio of Median Annual Wages
White Men $1.00	
Asian Men $0.83	
Black Men $0.71	
Asian Women $0.68	
Latino Men $0.66	
White Women $0.63	
Black Women $0.53	
Latina Women $0.50	

Key Finding #2: Few people of color hold management positions in the food system.

Whites dominate high-wage jobs in the food system. Occupations such as chief executives and restaurant managers enjoy higher wages than the rank and file. The median income for management was $40,544, more than double the $20,608 median income of the rank and file (see Figure 7A).

Almost half of all white men who worked in the food chain were employed as managers (see Figure 7B). A quarter of all white women performed managerial roles. Across the entire food system, three out of every four managers were white.

Figure 7A. Distribution of Managers and Annual Median Wage

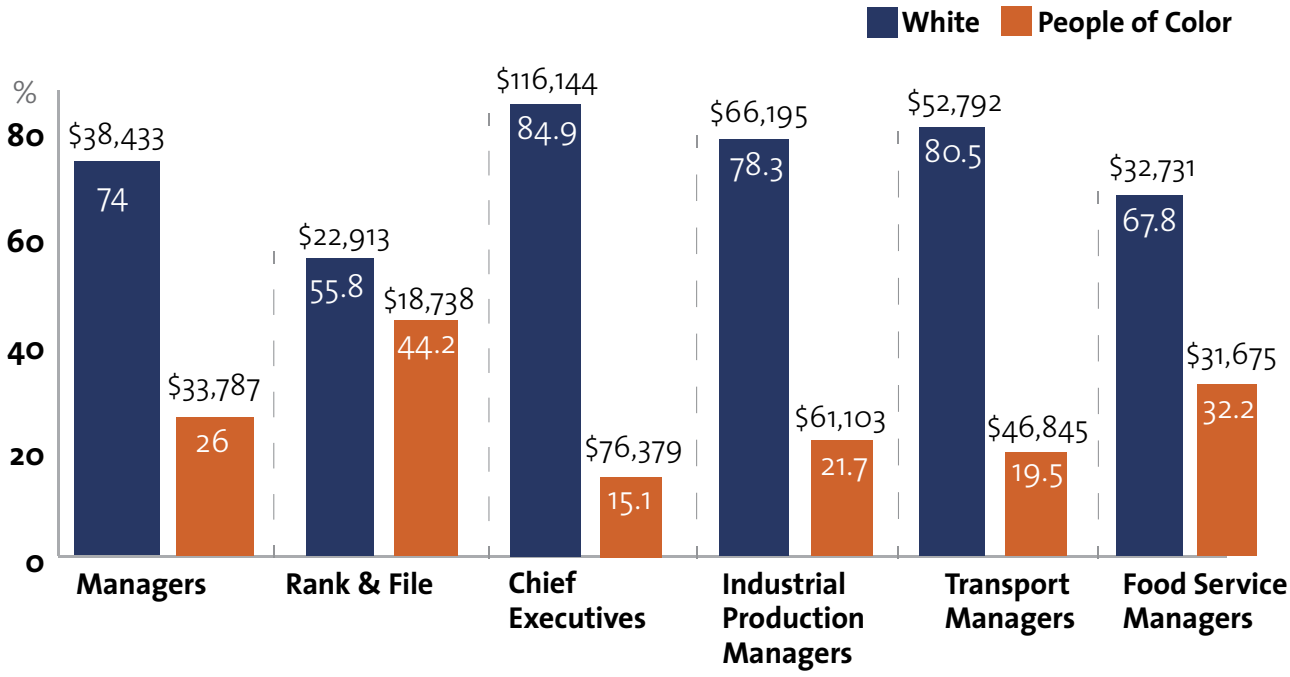
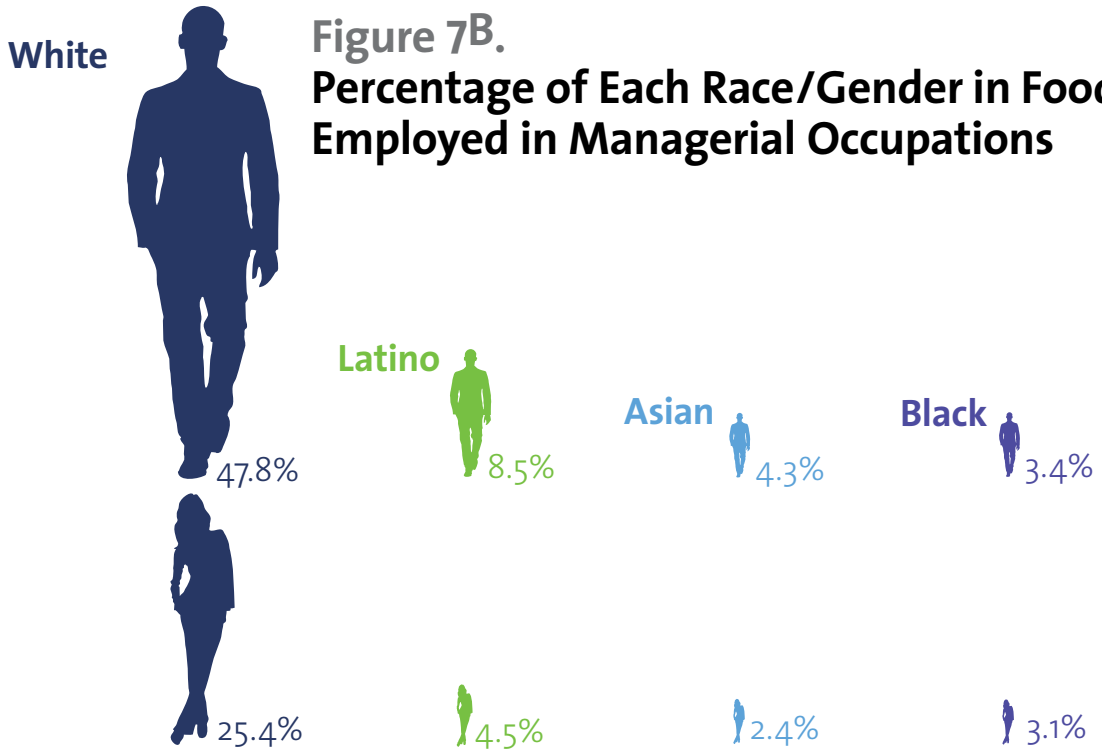


Figure 7B. Percentage of Each Race/Gender in Food Chain, Employed in Managerial Occupations



Workers of color populated rank-and-file positions at a higher rate than management positions. Forty-four percent of rank-and-file workers were people of color, while only 26 percent of managers and only 15 percent of managers were people of color.

When gender is considered, the disparities are even more striking. Latina women make up less than 5 percent of all managers in the food chain, while Asians and Blacks are at 3 percent or less.

Key Finding #3: People of color are overrepresented in low-wage jobs in the food system.

People of color are employed in low-wage sectors at higher rates than their numbers in the general population. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, 34.6 percent of the general population are people of color. However, they made up 50 percent of food production workers and 45 percent of the food processing sector (see Figure 3). On the flip side, although whites make up 65 percent of the general population, only 50 percent of food production workers, 55 percent of food processing workers, and 58 percent of food service workers are white. More whites are employed in food distribution, which pays a median wage of $37,273, an income higher than what half of food workers make.

STAGE ONE: Food Production

Food producers carry out a wide range of tasks involved in incubating edibles from its inception as a seed or animal, ranging from raising plants or livestock to operating large machinery on a farm. Most agricultural workers learn their skills on the job in under a month, while animal breeders require more education.[22] Most of this work is done outside, in direct contact with the farm or fields. These are land-based occupations, performed for centuries by people who tilled the land or raised animals for slaughter.

Workers of color comprised almost half of the workers in this sector (see Figure 8). We suspect that the actual numbers may be higher. Historically, the U.S. Census Bureau undercounts migrant and seasonal farmworkers.[23] A study carried out by the Census Bureau in 1992 using alternative counting methods found that many farmworkers deliberately omitted information about household members to the Census Bureau, either out of fear of losing government assistance or confusion about what was being asked.[24] Our methods of looking only at workers who are employed full-time in the food chain filters out those who are only working part-time, and may inflate the wages for farmworkers (see Figure 9). In contrast, the National Agricultural Workers Survey found that the average salary for farmworkers was between $10,000 and $12,999.[25]

The food-production category with the greatest overrepresentation of people of color was Graders and Sorters, at over 83 percent. Whites comprised only 16 percent of workers in that occupation.

22. *Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-2011*. Labor Dept., Labor Statistics Bureau. 2010.
23. Crawford, Benjamin et. al."Decennial Census: Lessons Learned for Locating and Counting Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers." U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-03-605. July 2003.
24. Garcia, Victor (1992) Counting the uncountable, immigrant and migrant, documented and undocumented farm workers in California: results from an Alternative Enumeration in a Mexican and Mexican American farm worker community in California and Ethnographic Evaluation of the Behavioral Causes of Undercount. Ethnographic Evaluation of the 1990 Decennial Census Report #12.
25. Personal communication with Joann Lo, Coordinator, Food Chain Workers Alliance. January 28, 2011.

Figure 8. Distribution and Median Wages of Food Production Workers

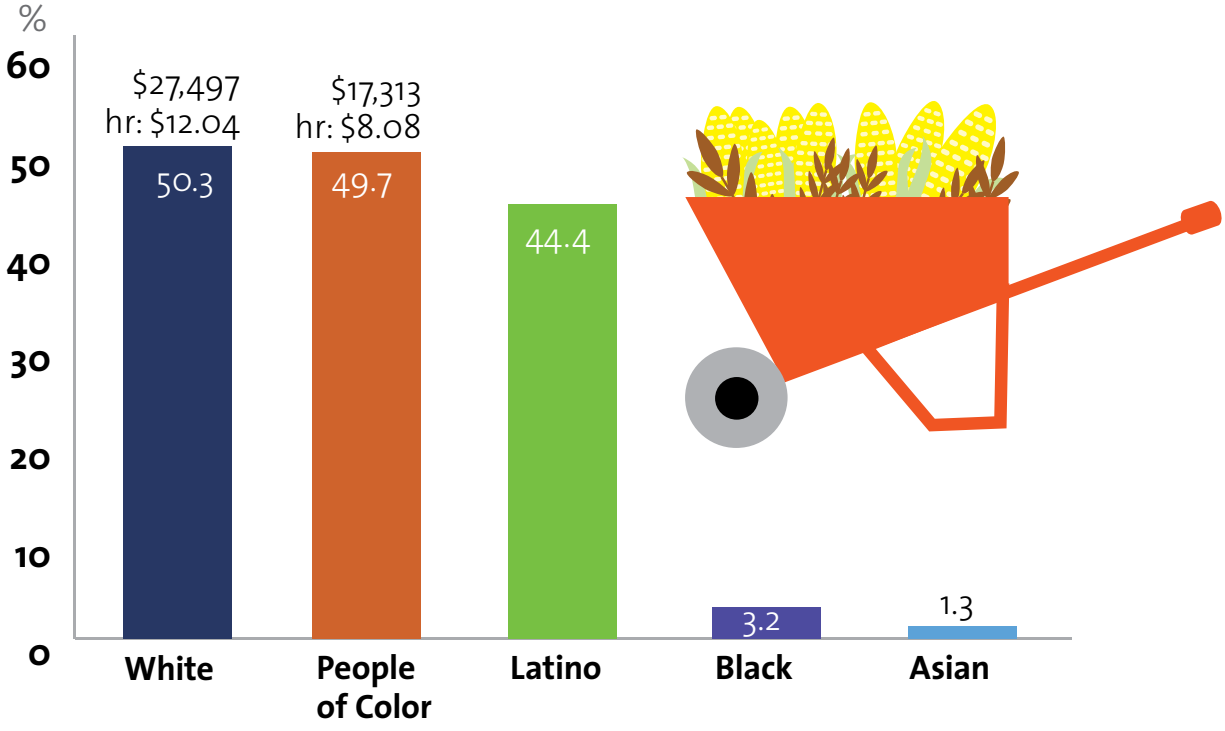
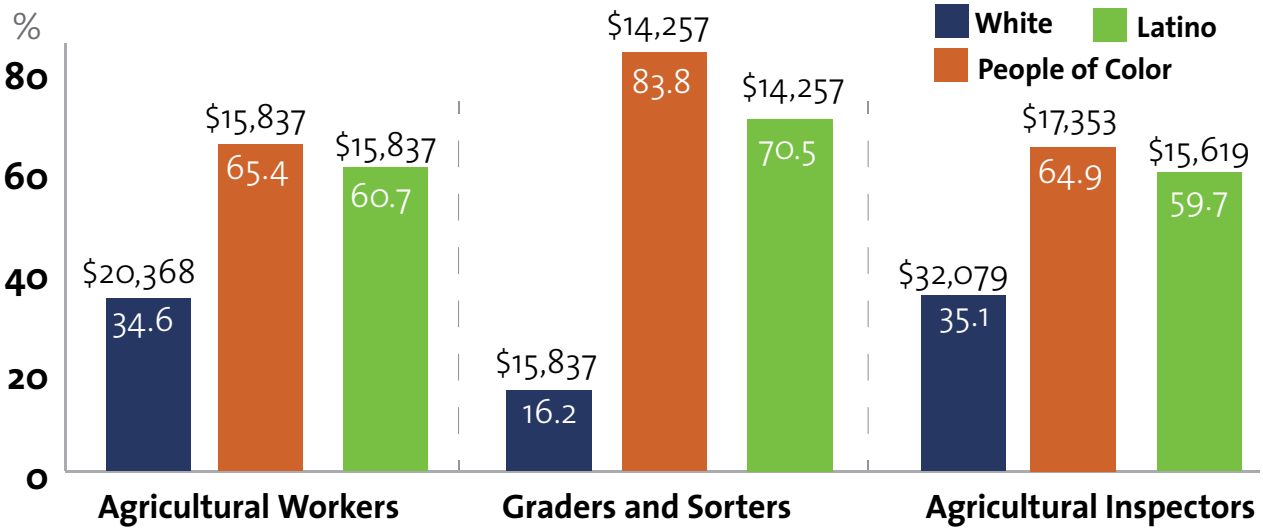


Figure 9. Distribution and Median Wages of Select Food Production Workers



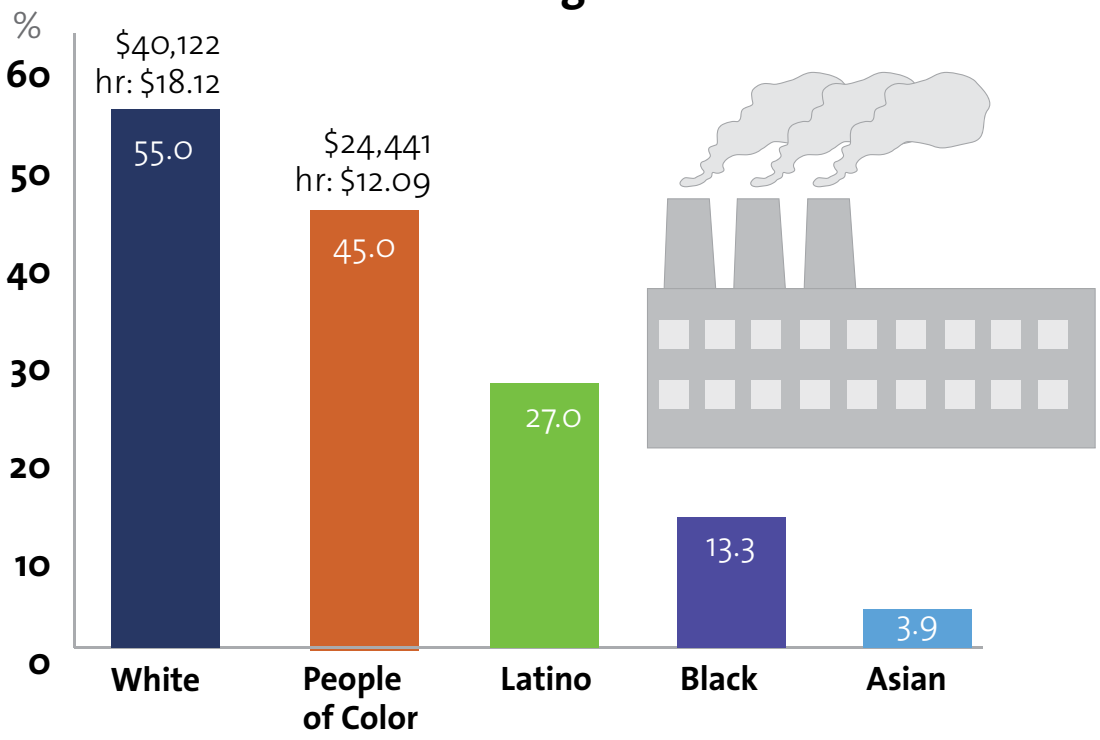
STAGE TWO: Food Processing

Processing workers take agricultural materials and convert them into finished food products. The employers in this sector paid higher median wages to their workers than employers in food production. Again, wages were positively correlated to the number of white workers. Workers of color outnumbered white workers in all professions, except the one that paid the highest: food machine operators.

Food processing has one of the highest rates of injury and illness incurred in the workplace in 2008.[26] Much of the work involves repetitive, physically demanding work and use of dangerous tools and machinery to cut, slice, or grind.[27] However, much of the workforce lacks access to adequate care, one that is linguistically and culturally competent, to treat their work-related injuries. Nor do they receive adequate training from their employers to operate machinery in a safe manner.

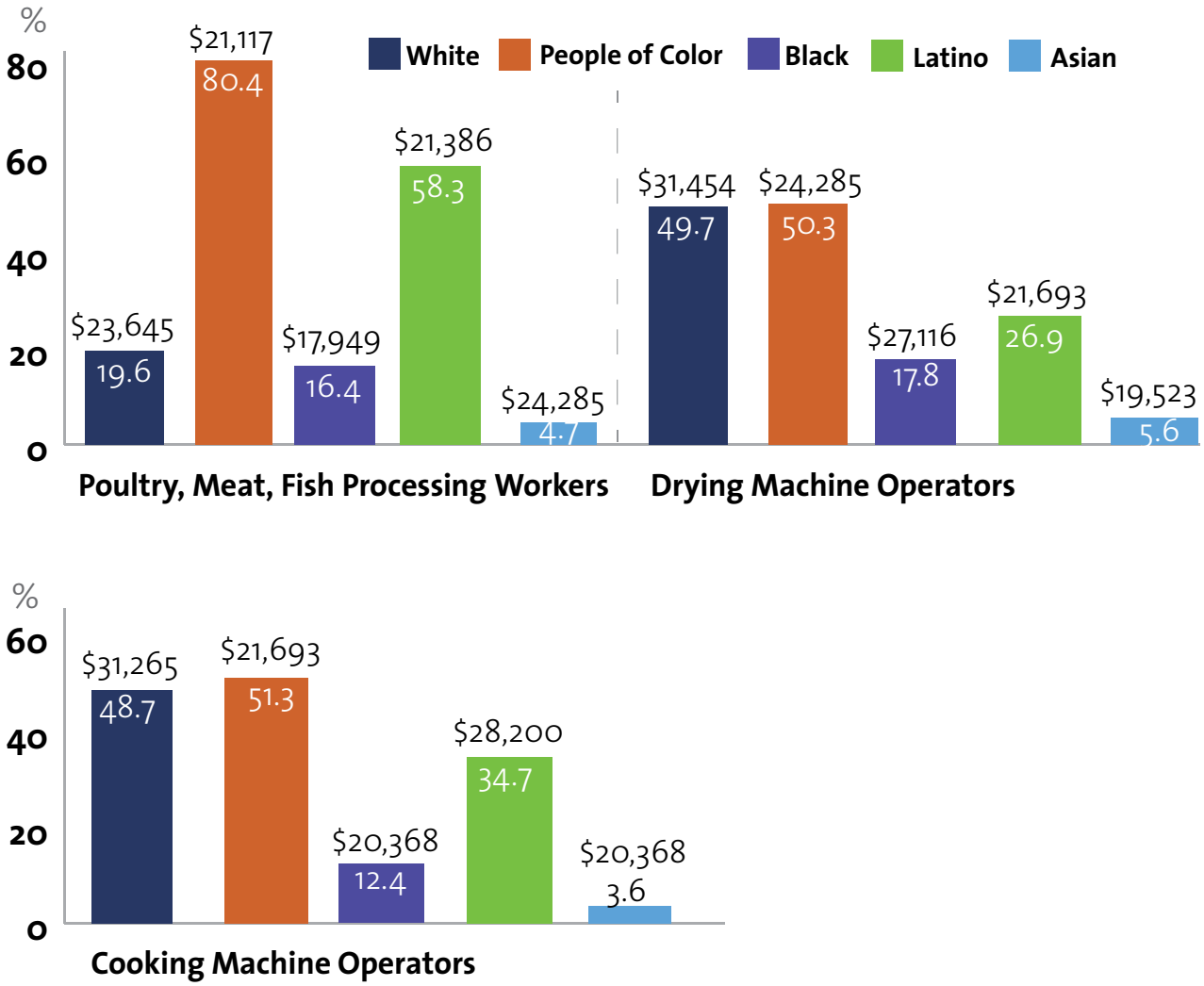
An industrial corridor between the border of Queens and Brooklyn, in New York, is populated with food factories described by Brandworkers International Executive Director Daniel Gross as "food sweatshops."[28] Workers in these processing facilities are mostly recent immigrants from Latin America and China; they face wage theft, hazardous working conditions, and abusive management. One worker, Juan Baten, a 22-year old father of a seven-month old daughter from Guatemala, was recently killed on the job in a tortilla factory in Brooklyn. He was crushed to death by a dough mixing machine, a loss that could have been avoided had workplace safety laws been enforced.

Figure 10. Distribution and Median Wages of Food Processing Workers



26. Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Annual News Release 2008. Bureau of Labor Statistics. October 29, 2009.
27. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Career Guide to Industries, 2010-11 Edition*, Food Manufacturing, on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/cgs011.htm (accessed February 4, 2011).
28. Gross, Daniel. "Death in a New York Food Sweatshop: The Killing of Juan Baten." Counterpunch. February 2, 2011.

Figure 11. Distribution and Median Wages of Select Food Processing Workers



Latinos were highly represented among poultry, meat, and fish cutters, at 58 percent. However, they made less than whites in comparable positions.

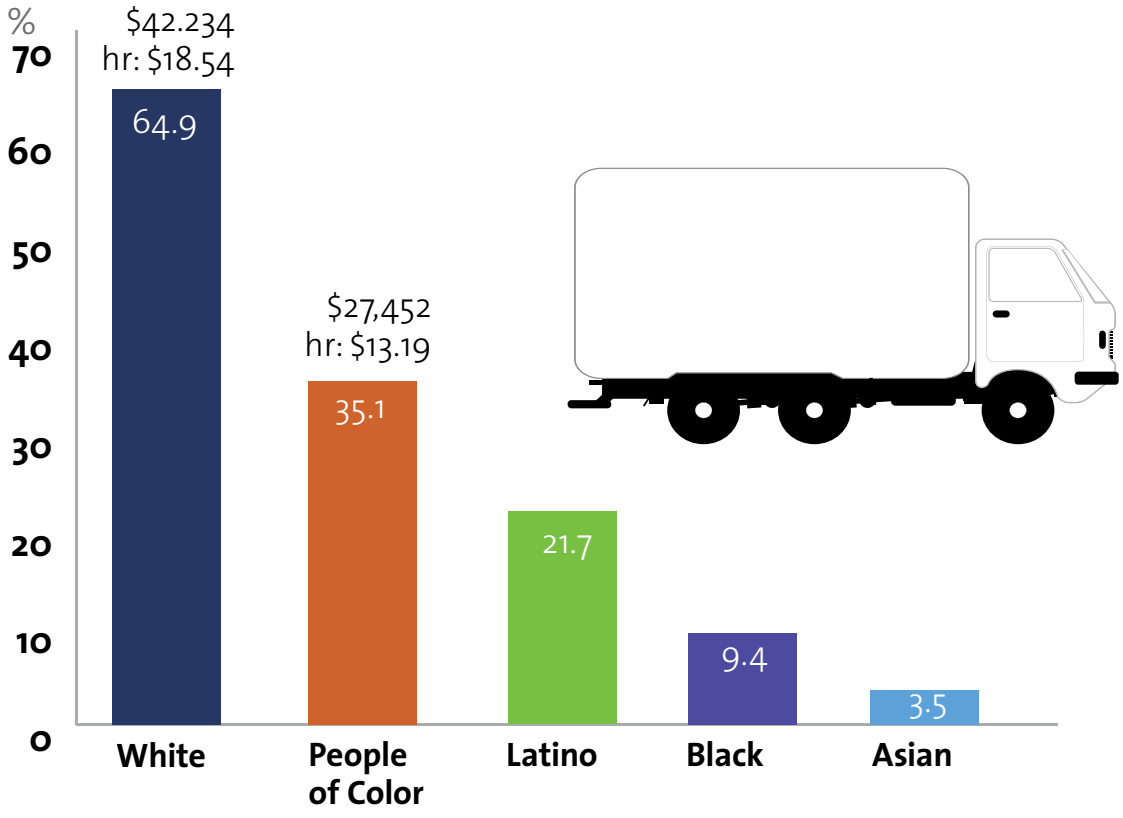
STAGE THREE: Food Distribution

Distribution laborers, such as drivers and material movers, deliver food products to an intermediate or final destination. This sector offered better pay than others, with three out of six occupations paying higher than the median wage in the food industry. This sector, as a whole, has the highest union density across the food chain, 29 percent of its workers are members of labor unions, but the low-wage workers in the field are not collectively organized. These workers, who labor in jobs such as freight laborers or hand packagers are mostly people of color and receive wages below the national median.

Workers of color in distribution made significantly less in wages than their white counterparts. Half of white distribution workers earned $42,234 a year, whereas workers of color took home $27,452, a difference of $14,782 (see Figure 12).

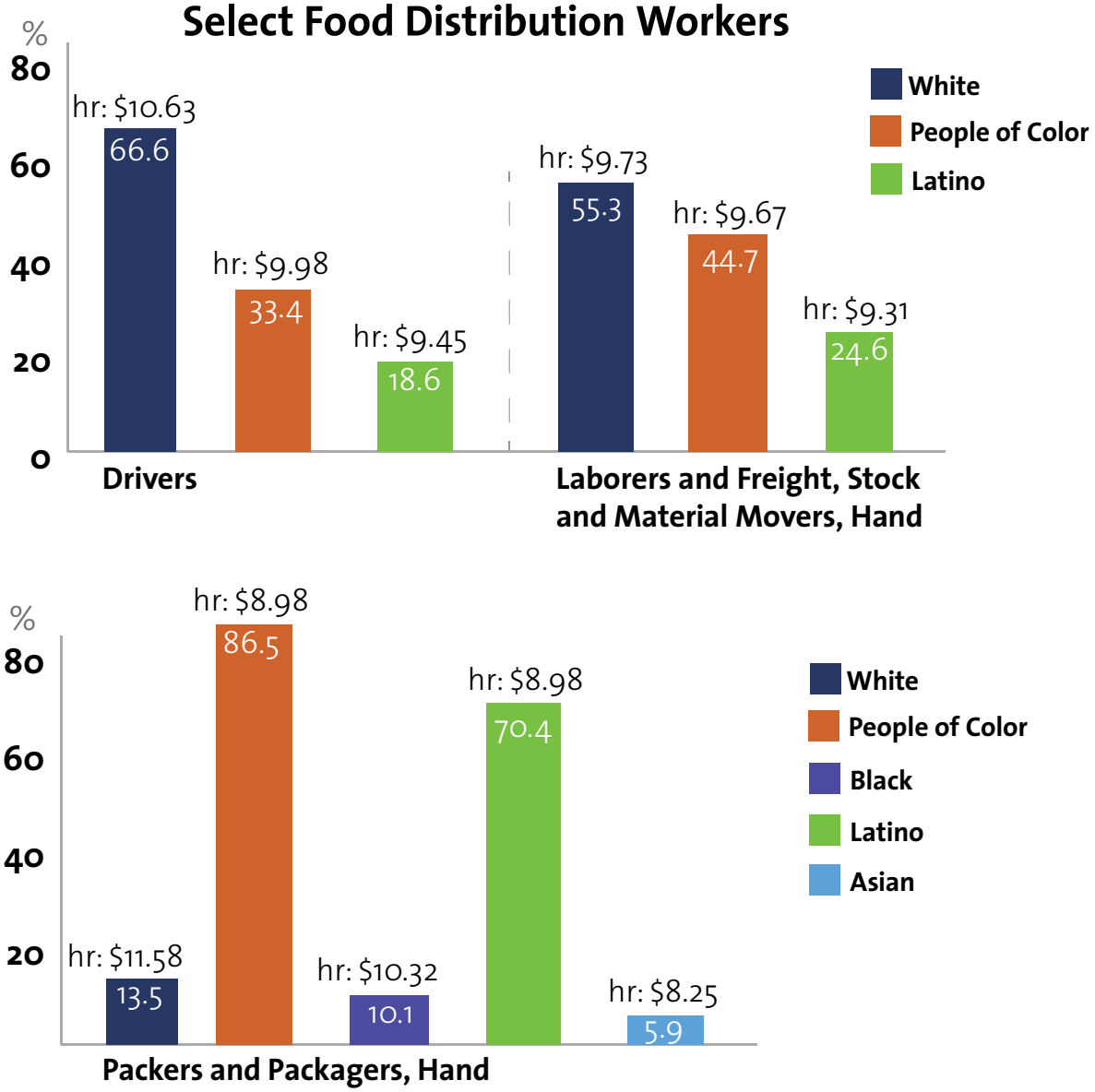
The southwest suburbs of Chicago are dotted with warehouses that serve as regional distribution centers for big box retailers, such as Wal-Mart. Over 150,000 workers are employed in these warehouses, mostly as "perma-temps", who are laid off and rehired by temporary staffing agencies.[29] These workers earn a low wage, receive few benefits, and no opportunities for advancement. Employers often stir racial tensions through discriminatory practices, in order to pit Black worker against Latino, and deter collective organizing.[30]

Figure 12. Distribution and Median Wages of Food Distribution Workers



29. Lydersen, Kari. "A Thriving Industry Build on Low-Compensated Temp Workers." N*ew York Times*. August 26, 2010.
30. Lydersen, Kari. "The Buzz: Warehouse Workers Bridge Racial Divides, Push Reform Legislation." *In These Times*. November 1, 2010.

Figure 13. Distribution and Median Hourly Wages of Select Food Distribution Workers



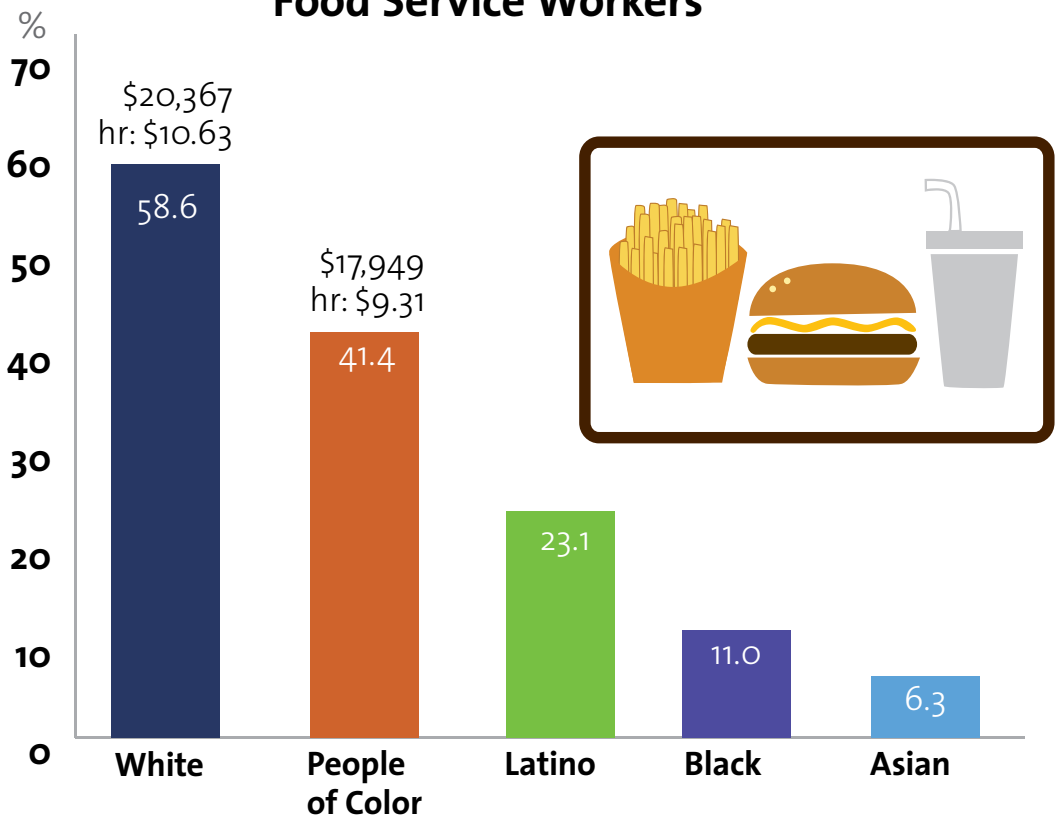
Although Latinos comprised 70 percent of packers, they made less than whites. The median wage for Latino packers was $17,787, whereas white packers earned $21,692.

STAGE FOUR: Food Service & Retail

Service and retail workers serve or sell food directly to the end consumer. This is the most familiar face of the food chain to many of us: the waiter at the restaurant, the cashier at the grocery store, or dishwasher working in the back of the house. The Restaurant Opportunities Center United (ROC) has done extensive research in different cities across the nation, documenting that restaurants pay their employees low wages, offer few benefits in a field with dangerous working conditions, and seldom advance or increase pay or advance workers in their careers.[31] Workers of color in five metropolitan areas were concentrated in these low wage jobs, whites in the better paying ones.

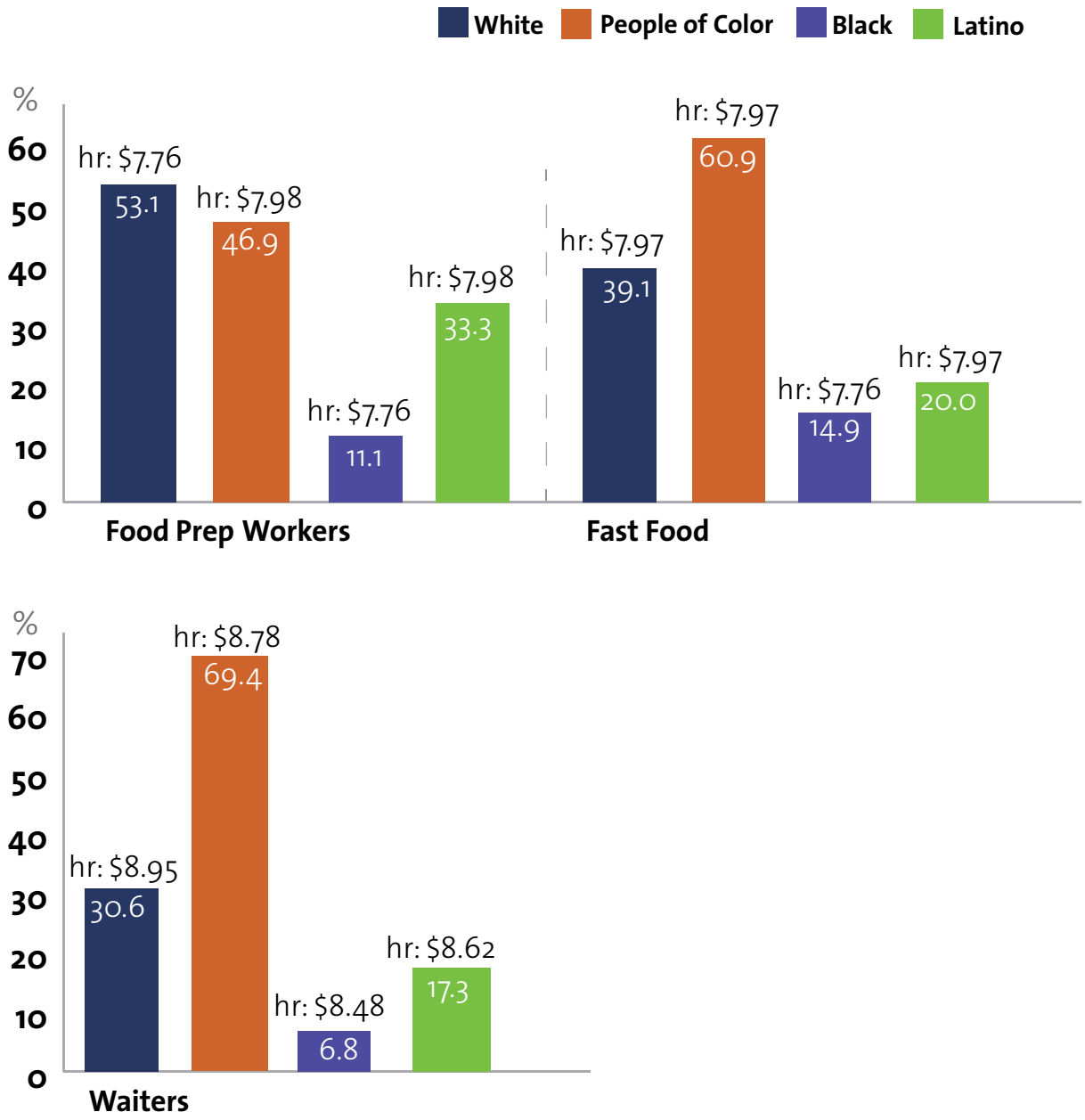
Our findings based on national data also reveal that retail and service workers of color made less than their white colleagues. Half of white workers made $10.63 or less, whereas the median hourly wage for workers of color was $1.32 less per hour (see Figure 14). That's $2418 less in annual median wage. Workers of color were also concentrated in low-wage service jobs, such as food preparation workers or fast food, at 53 percent and 39 percent, respectively.

Figure 14. Distribution and Median Wages of Food Service Workers



31. Restaurant Opportunities Center United. "Behind the Kitchen Door: A Summary of Restaurant Industry Studies in New York, Chicago, Metro Detroit, New Orleans and Maine." February 9, 2010.

Figure 15. Distribution and Median Hourly Wages of Select Food Service Workers



MOVING FORWARD

For many, the impulse to eat "good food"—be it artisan-crafted bread, goat cheese purchased directly from the maker, or eggs from a hen in a family's backyard—is a reaction against the industrialization and corporate control of the food system. Increasing numbers of consumers are demanding locally grown food, without pesticides or hormones, and either raising their own food or cultivating relationships with the producers of their edibles.

A movement for food justice must advocate for the dignity of and respect for the workers who help to produce, process, distribute and serve us our food. This will require us to build meaningful and durable bridges between the food, labor and racial justice movements.

This report establishes that racial disparity in wages and representation can be found in most occupations along the food chain. **This is baseline data, which should be tracked both backwards and forwards**, seeing if there are trends in the composition of the food workforce over time. This will be particularly important when key legislation is implemented that impacts the flow of labor into and out of the food industry. A pattern of stringent anti-immigration laws —such as the one recently enacted in Arizona—will hinder recent and undocumented immigrants as well as people of color perceived to be undocumented immigrants from seeking work in many parts of the country, unless more can be done to **articulate and advocate for a functioning, sane and humane immigration system that respects the human dignity of workers, including those whose labor is so critical to the food we consume on a daily basis.**

More funding is needed for research to establish working conditions and career mobility in the food chain. Government data cannot help to identify the career pathway of food workers. However, interviews with workers can be carried out in the four sectors to understand job stability in a food-related occupation and whether advancement in the food sector is possible. Employers also need to be surveyed to see what factors play into whether they hire or promote a worker.

Food workers need more opportunities to take leadership in defining what is good for them and their families. Sustainability can take the form of higher wages, health and retirement benefits, safe and healthy working conditions, and opportunities for advancement. This is action research that needs to be done in every sector of the food industry to ensure that the entire system sustains its producers, as well as its consumers.

Special thanks to the Surdna Foundation for its support of this report.

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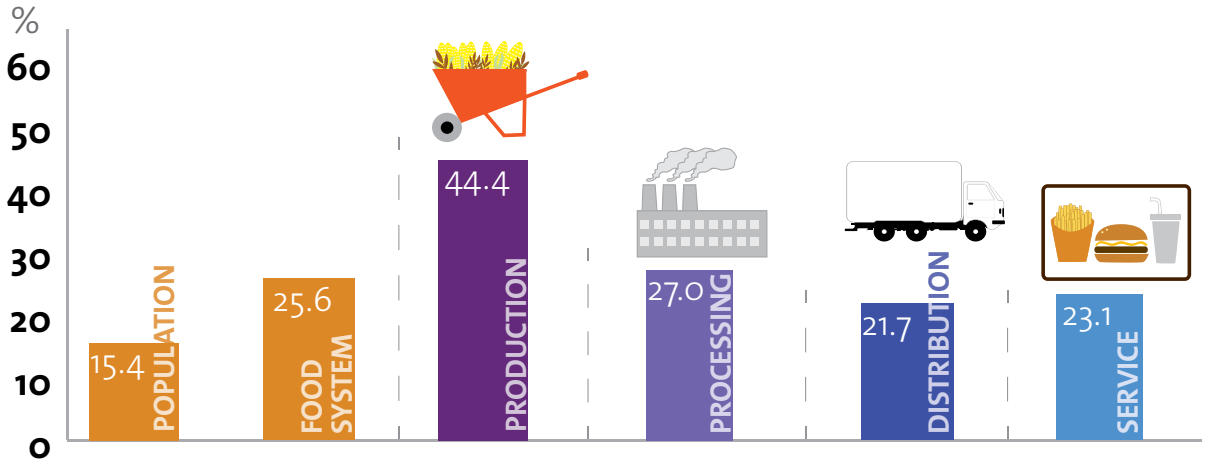
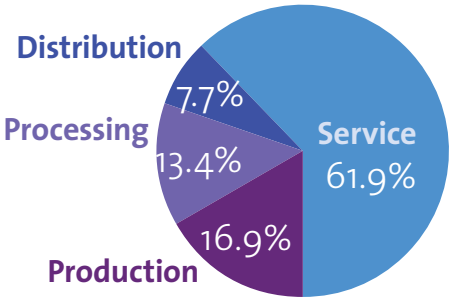
APPENDICES

Appendix A. Latinos Working in Food Chain

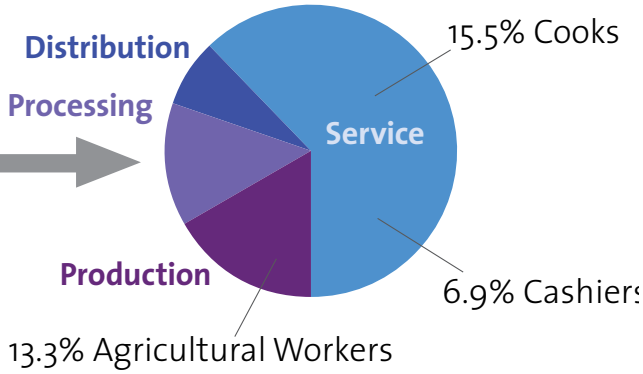
Latinos Working Within Sectors



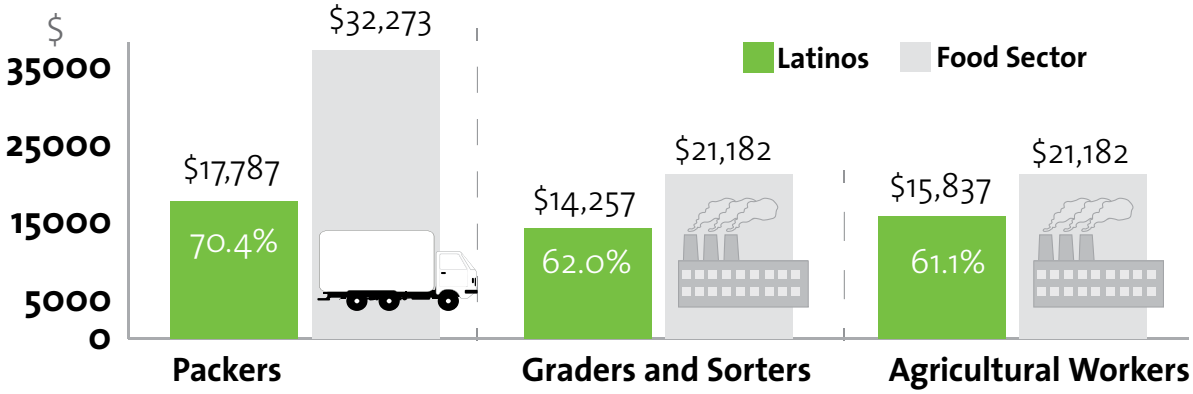
Latino Food Chain Workforce



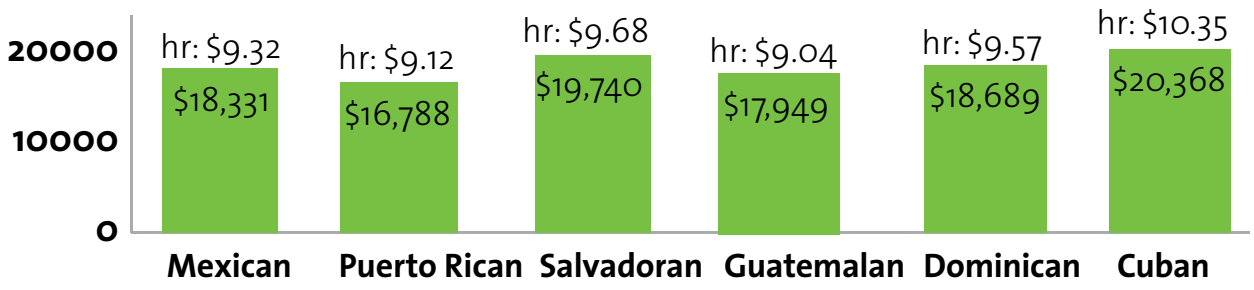
Most Popular Occupations

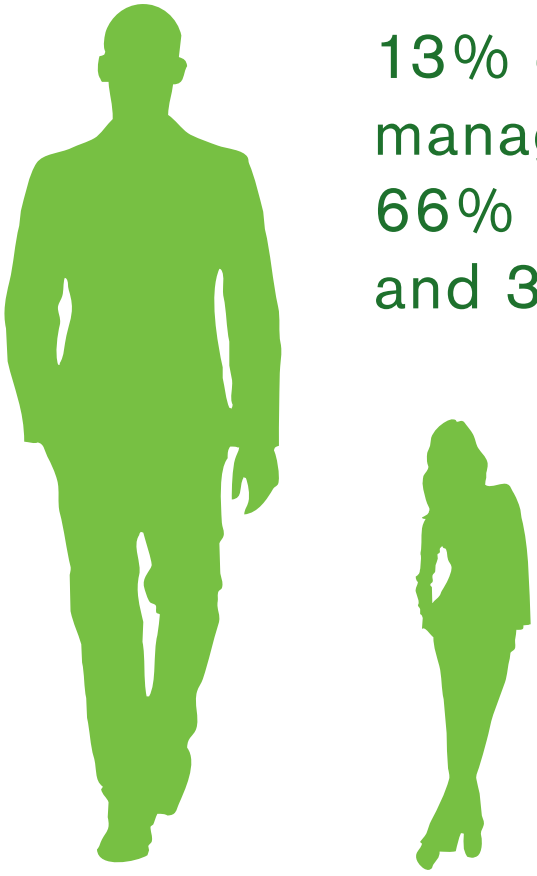


Select Occupations, Annual Median Wages



Latino Median Annual Wages, by Ethnicity

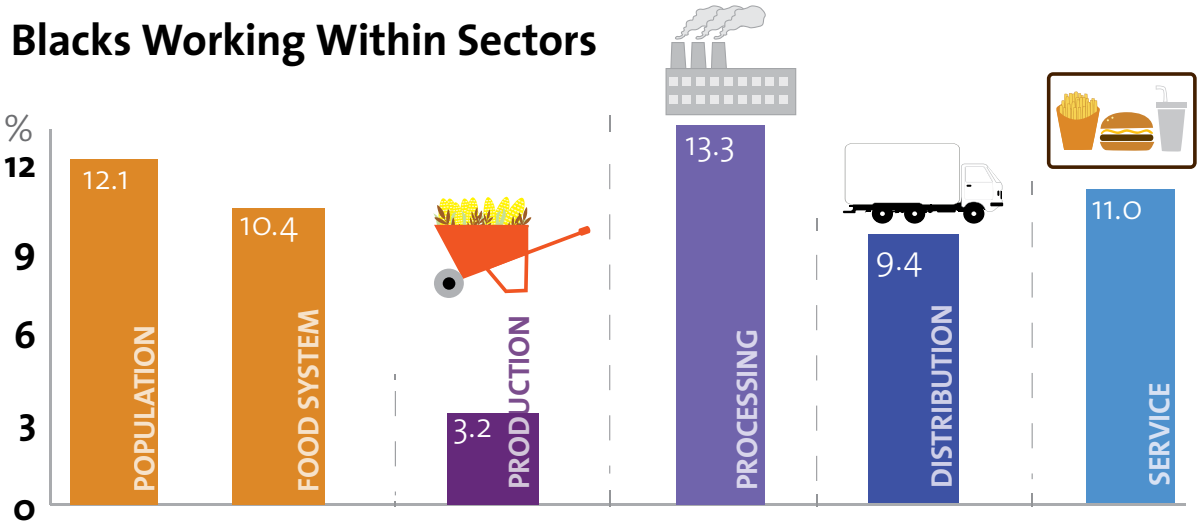




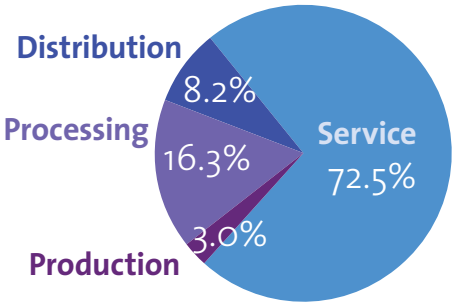
13% of food industry managers are Latino: 66% are men and 35% are women.

Appendix B. Blacks Working in Food Chain

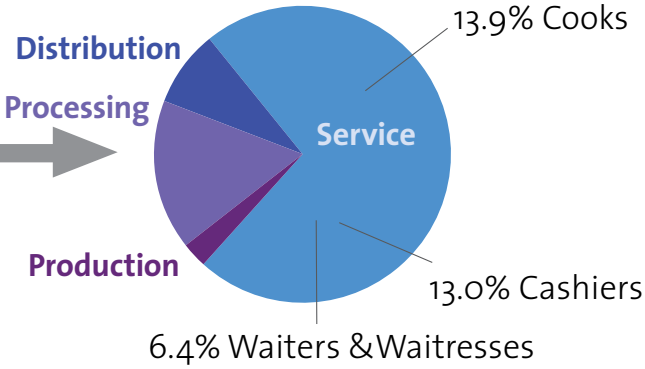
Blacks Working Within Sectors



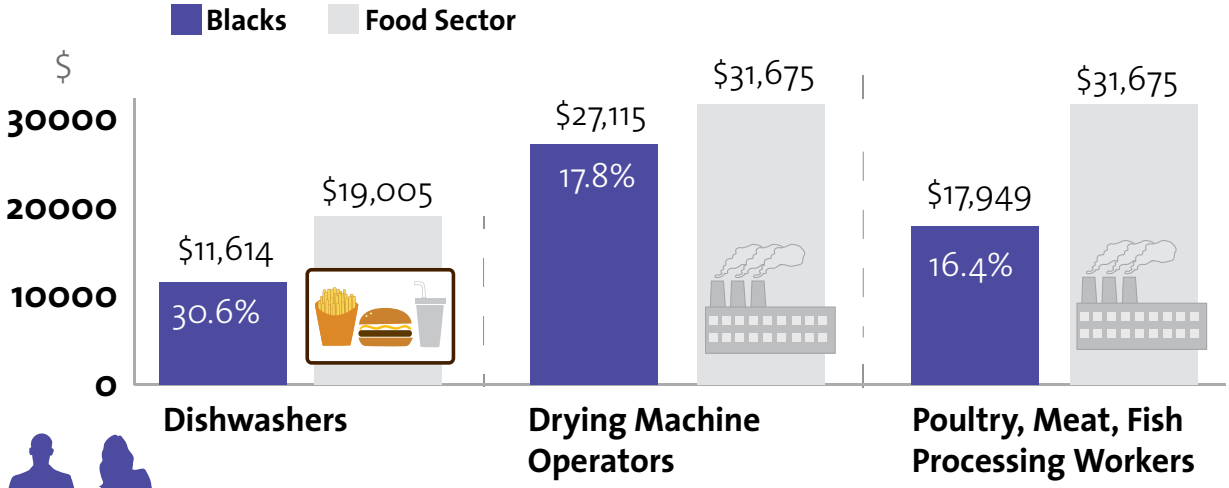
Black Food Chain Workforce

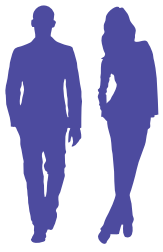


Most Popular Occupations



Select Occupations, Annual Median Wages

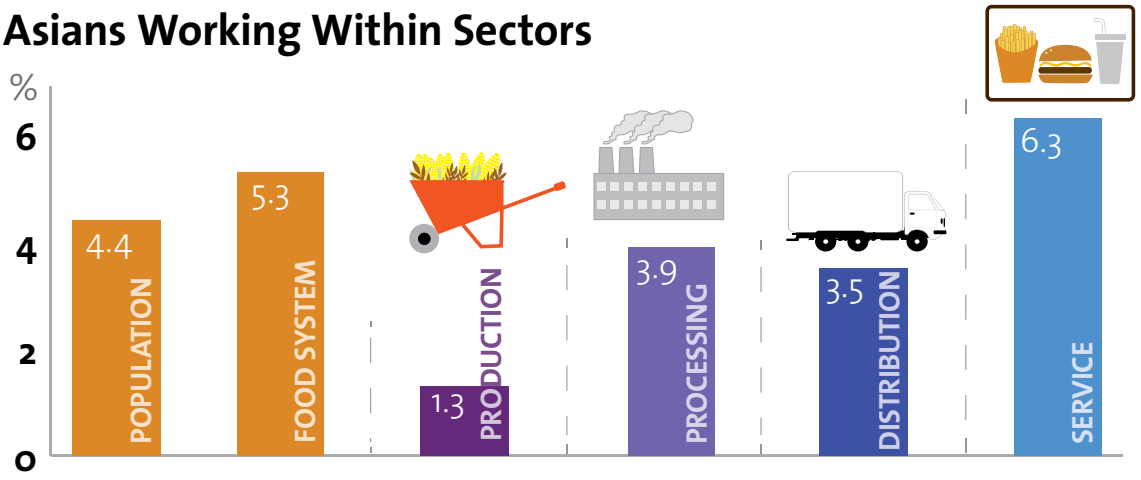




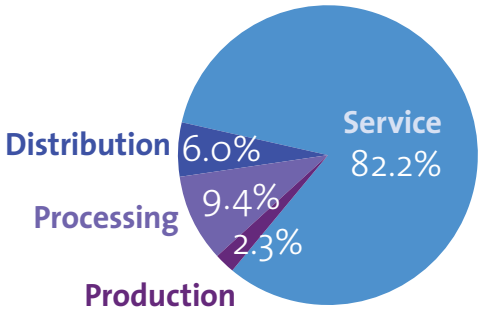
7% of food industry managers are Black: 52% are men and 48% are women.

Appendix C. Asians Working in Food Chain

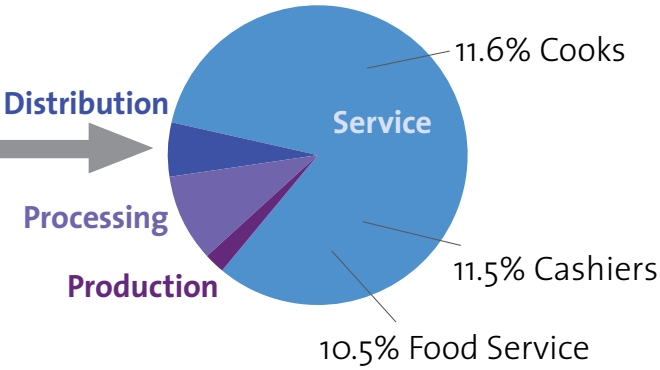
Asians Working Within Sectors



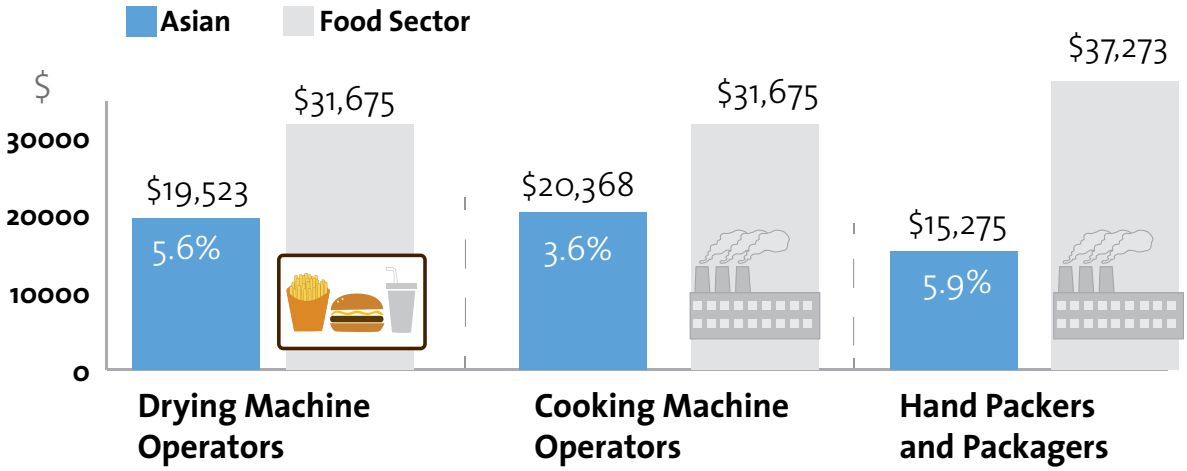
Asian Food Chain Workforce



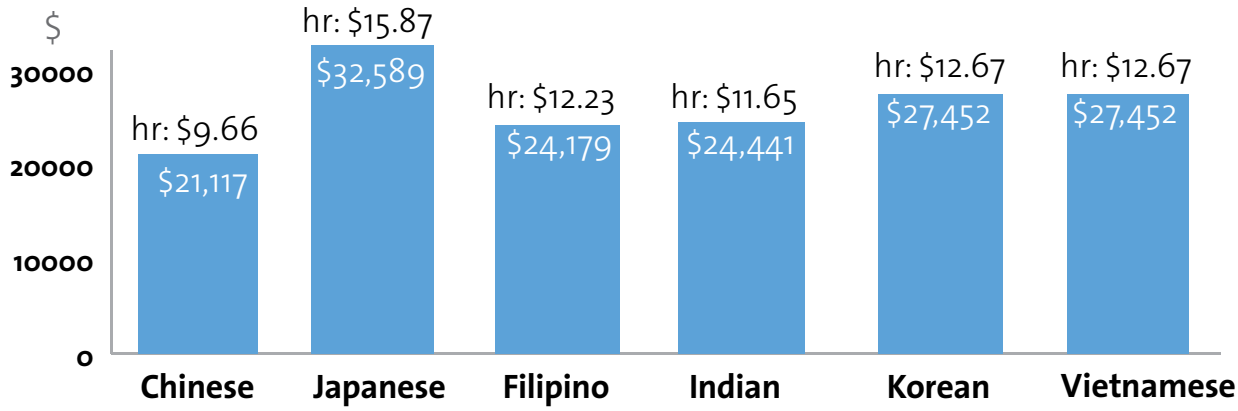
Most Popular Occupations

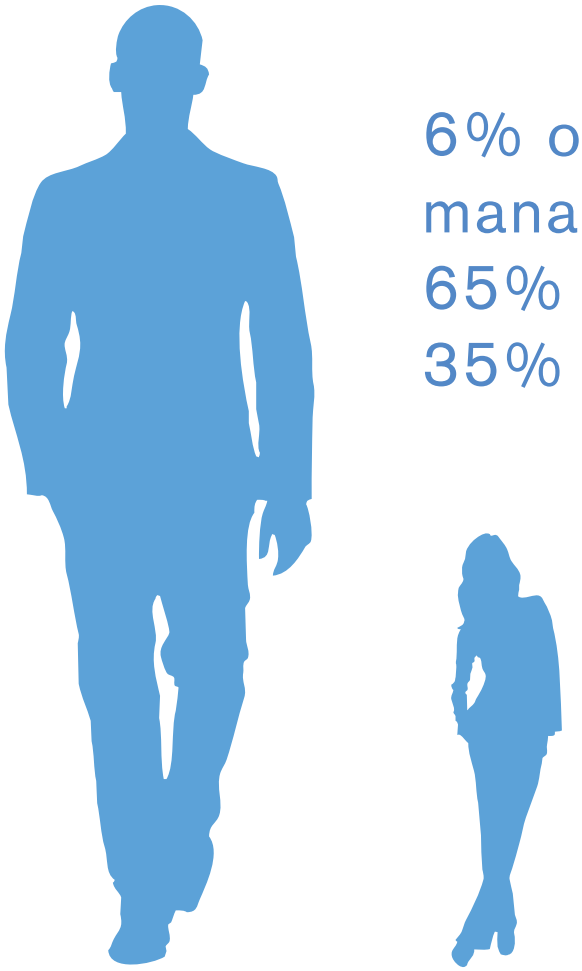


Select Occupations, Annual Median Wages



Asian Median Annual Wages, by Ethnicity

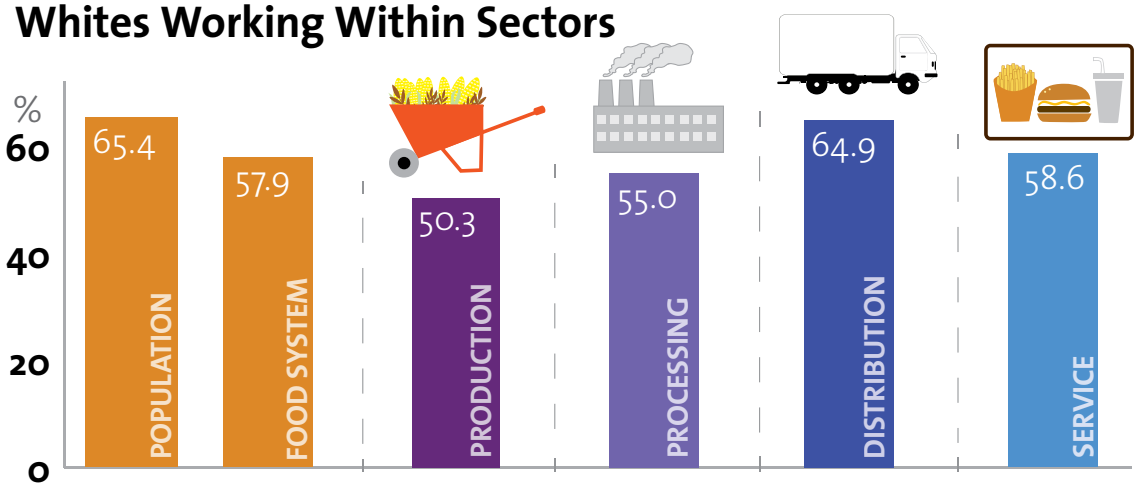




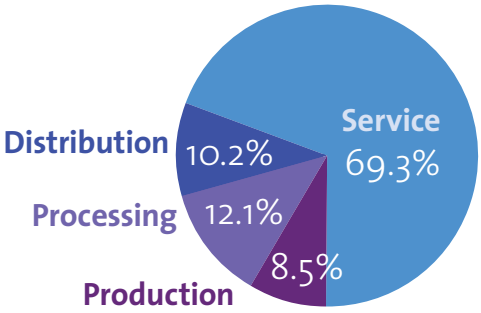
6% of food industry managers are Asian: 65% are men and 35% are women.

Appendix D. Whites Working in Food Chain

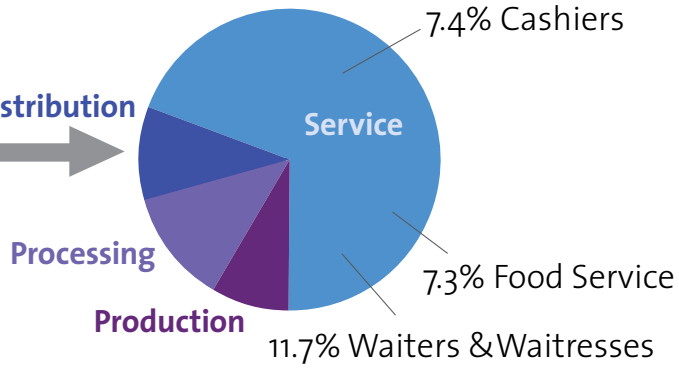
Whites Working Within Sectors



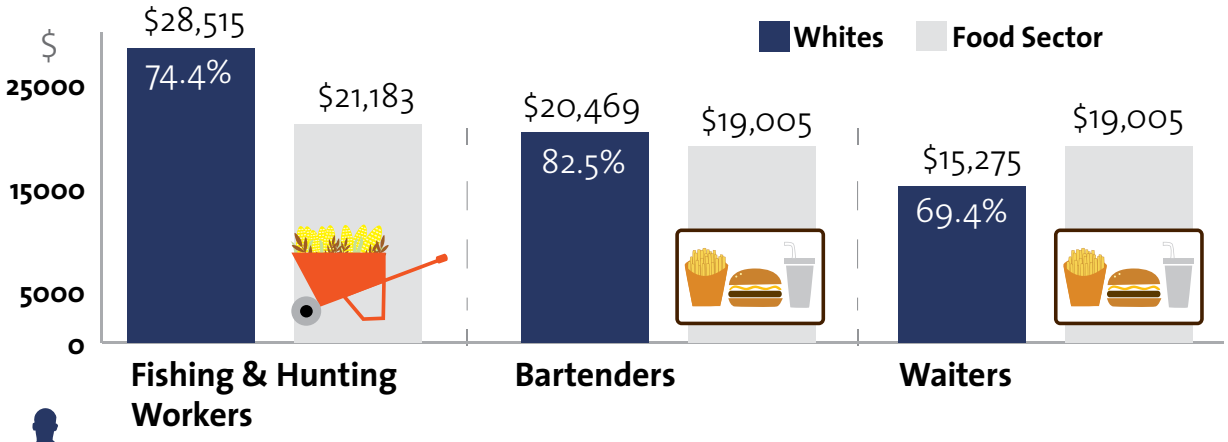
White Food Chain Workforce

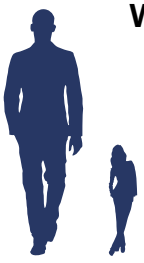


Most Popular Occupations



Select Occupations, Annual Median Wages





74% of food industry managers are white: 65% are men and 35% are women.