

Cluster 5 “White Center”

Census Tract #: 265, 266, 268

Brief Summary

Demographic Characteristics

Total Population: 14,841

Total Family Household: 5,146 (68.2%)
55.2%

% of Single Parent Headed Household: 33.6%
71.4%

% of population < 5 years of age: 7.3%
27.7%

% of population > 65 years of age: 8.3%

Total Household: 7,542

Families with children < 18 yrs. old:

% Female Headed Household:

% of population < 18 years of age:

Education

% of residents with no formal education completed: 5.8%--the highest level among all clusters

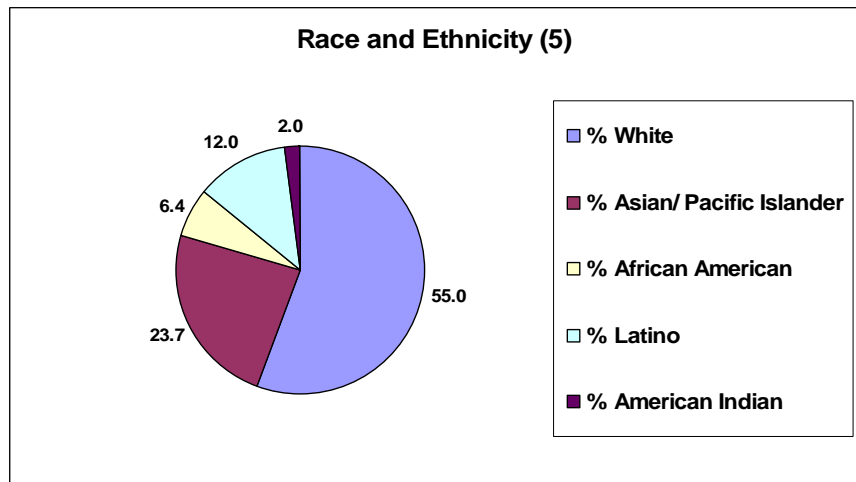
% of residents with < 12th grade education: 30.2%

% with Bachelor's Degree: 7.6%

% with Master's Degree or >: 2.8%

Non institutionalized Children/Youth (ages 5-20) with disability: 9.7%

However, this cluster by far has the highest % of total disability with 81.9% compared to an average of 21.6% for all the other clusters studied in this project.



Economic Characteristics:

Total < Poverty Level: 16.8% Children/youth (ages 5-20): 21.7% Elderly: 9.4% Adults: 15.9%

- Families earning < than 50K: 63.8%-- highest percentage among all clusters.
- Families earning > than 50K: 36.2%
- The range of families earning < 50K is 48.4% (tract 266) to 89.6% (tract 265).

Percent living below 200% of Poverty level is 34.3% in White Center compared to 19.6% in King County.

Renter occupancy: 53%% with tract 265 having the highest rate of renters at 77.5%. In this cluster, tract 266 has the highest % of home ownership at 70.7%.

Crime Statistics

Approximately 150 violent crimes are committed in White Center annually (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) with aggravated assault being the most common of these crimes. In terms of Property Crime there are approximately 840 larcenies (e.g. shoplifting), 240 burglaries, and 260 car thefts per year.

Survey Findings

Only 17 individuals associated with this cluster responded to the survey, 10 were white (58.8%) and 64.7% were female. 10 respondents were Asian/Pacific Islanders (9.4%). The average age in years was 35. The distribution across relationships to the cluster was the most diverse among all clusters. Six each were residents, worked in the cluster, and were business owners (each 35.3%). Only 1 respondent was a property owner. Six identified themselves as Asian/Pacific Islanders and no respondents were Latino. This is noteworthy given the strong presence of Latinos in this community. 82.4% of the respondents felt safe in this neighborhood all or most of the time with 76.5% feeling safe to walk in the neighborhood. These perceptions of safety are significant as they are higher than the average % for all clusters studied in this project, 72.6% and 64.6% respectively. These high perceptions of safety can dispel some of the negative associations with crime that outsiders maintain about White Center.

The three most important things that make them feel safe are: 1) alcohol drinking (35.3%), 2) being a victim of crime (23.5%) and hearing about crime (23.5%) and 3) poverty (23.5%) as well as few positive youth activities (23.5%) and slow police response (23.5%). (Note: though the % for numbers 2 and 3 are the same, number 2 had only responses of most important while number 3 included answers both most important and important). These factors reflect respondents' awareness of the contribution of structural risk factors such as poverty and alcohol to safety and crime. This suggests that community work and engagement has contributed to raising consciousness of these risk factors. Only 23.5% of respondents indicated that they took extra precautions to address the threat or fear of safety in this community compared to the average of 40.7% across all clusters in this project.

The three most important factors that make the respondents feel unsafe are: 1) being a victim of crime (34.9%), 2) hearing about crime (31.1%), and 3) seeing crime (18.9%). Youth crime was rated very low, only 5.7%. The following items were rated highest as perceived to be a major or significant problem in the community: 1) trash (76.5%), 2) drug use (70.6%) and 3) drug sales (64.7%). Burglary was identified as a significant problem by 52.9% of respondents, graffiti by 47.1% and shootings by 35.3% yet in terms of social disorder as indicated by drug sales, loitering, gang members, homeless population, prostitution, graffiti, and police activity, there were only 4 total instances observed combined.

The events most known to have occurred in this neighborhood are property theft, drug sales, drug use, and breaking in/stealing, all reported by 8 respondents (47.1%). Low in comparison to other cluster, only 11.8% know of murder to have occurred White Center. The perception that crime has increased somewhat or significantly in the past 12 months is held by 47.1% of respondents and over the past 3 years by only 23.5%. Nearly half of the respondents (47.1%) indicated that they know the neighbors well.

Noteworthy: 17.6% of the respondents indicated that there were many services for youth in this neighborhood. However, no one responded that there were many services for the elderly. Overall, 47.1% of the respondents felt people are invested in making the neighborhood safe, 29.4% reported that businesses were engaged in the neighborhood but only 11.8% of the respondents are engaged in block watch activities. This lack of involvement is also indicative of the lack of any home owners among the respondents.

Observational Findings

In comparison to all clusters, Cluster 5 has the least number of census tracts. It has the least number of business stores (3.7%) in comparison to every other cluster studied in this project which all have at least 23% of such establishments. Also, it has only 1 identified green space. The cluster with the next fewest green spaces had 47. Cluster 5 has only 1 large grocery store. In terms of litter and graffiti very little was observed and it had the lowest percentages of these items in comparison to all other clusters. Also, it has a very low % of a boarded up or vacant home (4%).

Noteworthy: This cluster was found to have the 2nd most adult entertainment sites (15.8%) and a high percentage of billboards (15.9%). In comparison to other clusters, Cluster 5 has the fewest meeting places, including café/diners, churches, coffee houses, beauty salons, and nail stores. It also has the fewest signs of identification of the community.

Summary

This cluster is a landing center for many immigrants and refugees from diverse backgrounds and countries. Highlighting the immigrant influence in White Center is the percent of population who entered the US between 1990 and 2000, 16.4% compared to 7.6% in King County. Other comparisons with King County: the % of foreign born from Asia is remarkably higher in this cluster (63.2%) compared to 51.4%; %who speak Spanish is 8.9% compared to 4.2%; and % percent of people who are linguistically isolated is 13.7% in White Center compared to 4.7% in King County.

Noteworthy: 15.9% of the students in this cluster who entered high school did not graduate which is the highest percent among all clusters. Tract 265 has the 2nd highest % of residents among all tracts studied in this project who have not completed any formal schooling at 11.3%.

Level of mobility: 50.1% of resident are living at the same residence in 2000 as they were in 1995 compared to 47.6% in King County. This continuity can be interpreted in 2 ways: 1) immigrants are stuck in low paying jobs and cannot afford to move out of the area and 2) residents experience support for cultural values and norms and choose to remain in White Center due to identification with the community. Likely, both are contributing factors.