Migration of Pacific Islanders to Oregon:
Assessing Quality of Life Facilitators and Inhibitors

Kapiolani Micky
Micronesian Islander Community

Scott Drinkall
Environmental Law Institute

Tokyo, Japan
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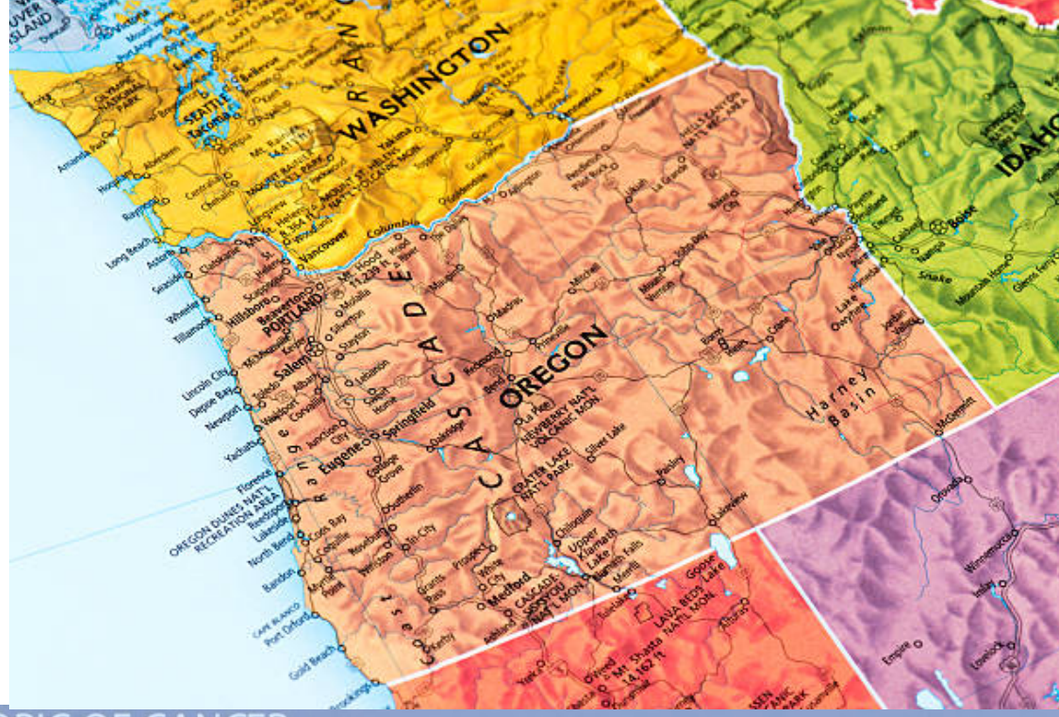
法政大学
HOSEI University



TROPIC OF CANCER

0 500 mi
0 500 km
Mercator Projection

20°N

Philippine Sea

Northern Mariana Islands (U.S.)

Saipan
Tinian

Guam (U.S.)

PACIFIC OCEAN

MICRONESIA

N
W E
S

Caroline Islands

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Yap

PALAU
Melekeok

Truk
Pohnpei
Palikir
Kosrae

MARSHALL ISLANDS
Majuro

10°N

Tarawa

EQUATOR

NAURU

KIRIBATI

0°

Yaren

Research Questions

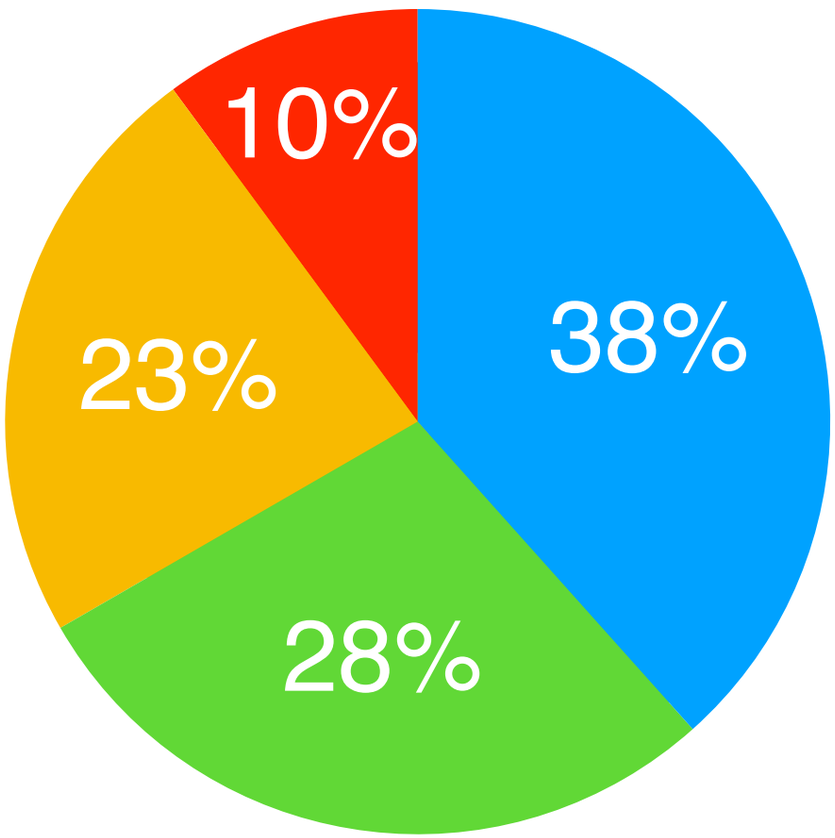
- What are the community profiles of first-generation Chuukese, Marshallese, and Palauans in Oregon?
- What are the challenges and opportunities to facilitate a high quality of life in Oregon?

Research Design

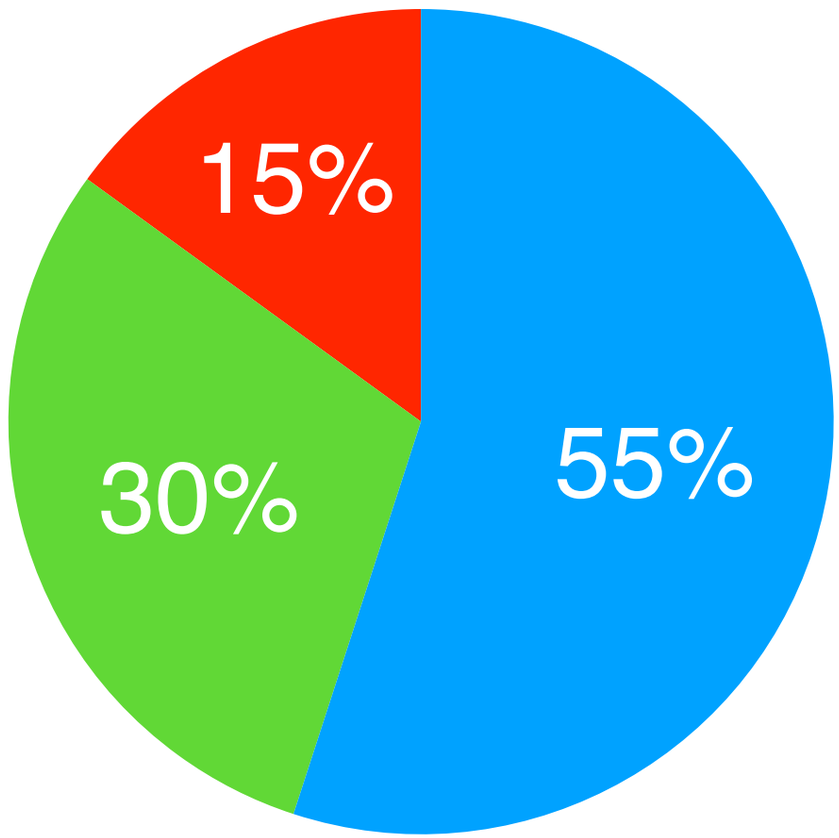
- 3 months, 76 interviews
- 39 Chuukese
- 20 Marshallese
- 17 Palauans

Stepping Stones

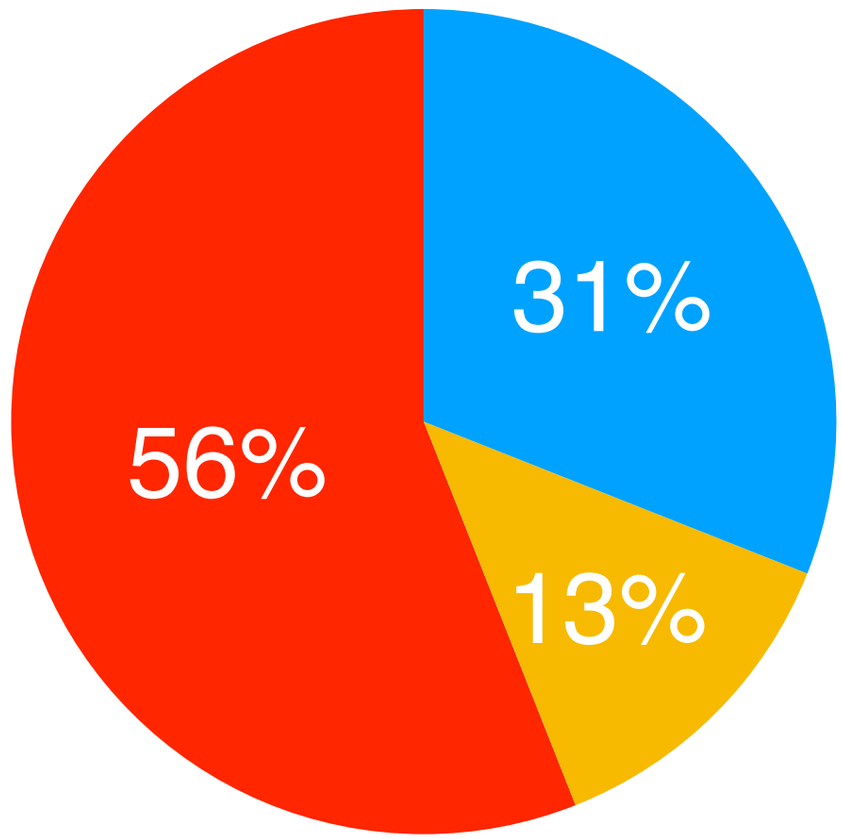
Chuukese



Marshallese



Palauan



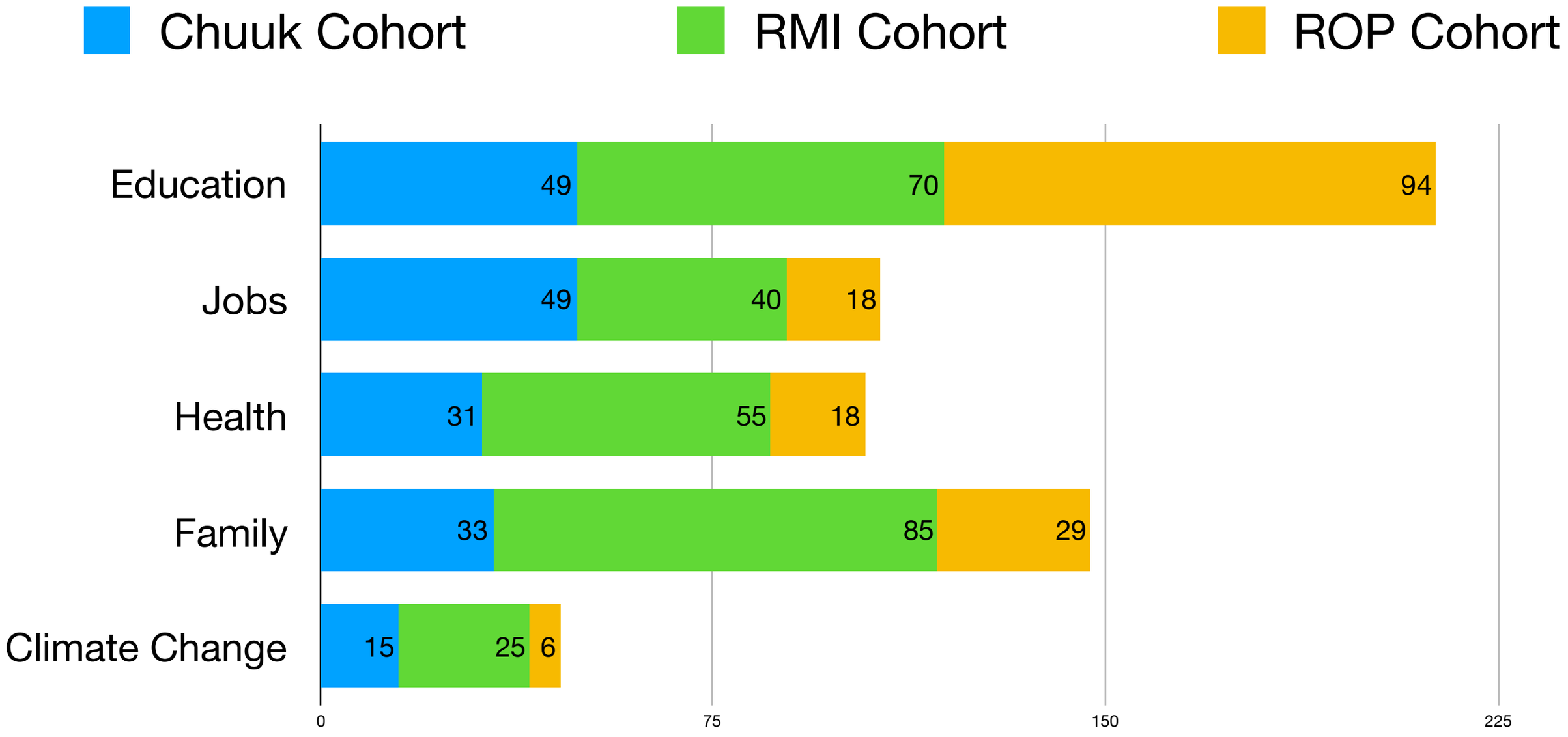
Origin Nation Hawai‘i Guam Other

“In senior year of high school I made up my mind to go to school outside Chuuk. It didn't take me long because I know what I want.”

“It was planned two years prior to me leaving for Oregon. I wanted to return home to see my family after living in Guam for several years. My aunt said I had to go and I left after one year of returning home to see my family.”

“Dad told me to go to the U.S. tomorrow”

Emigration Drivers



FSM Comparison Data

	College of Micronesia Students	General Chuukese Population in Oregon
Sample Size	198	39
Year	2018	2018
Data Collection Method	Survey	Semi-Structured Interview

Emigration Drivers

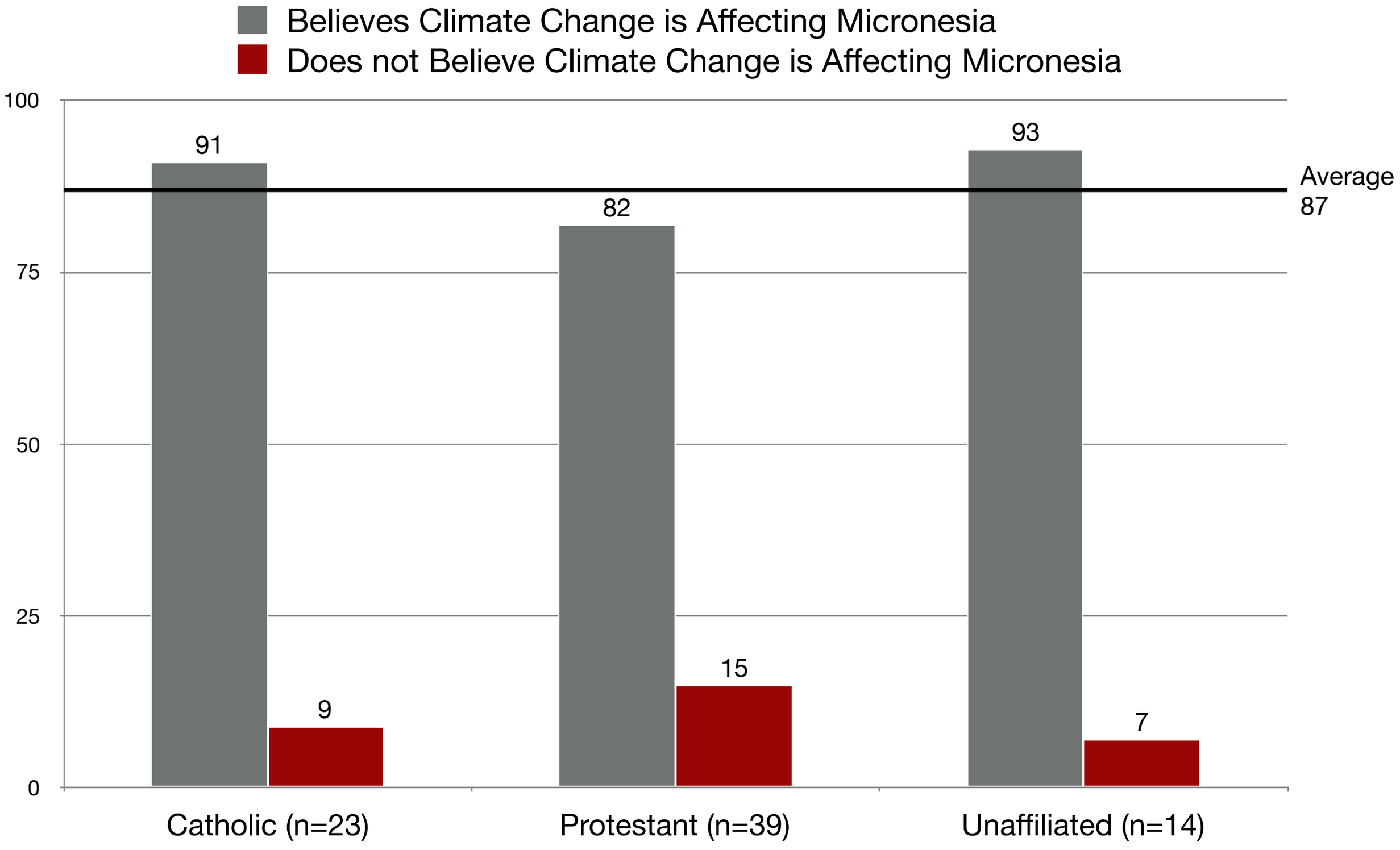
	College of Micronesia Students	General Chuukese Population in Oregon
1	Education	Education (tied)
2	Jobs	Jobs (tied)
3	Family	Family
4	Health	Health
5	Extreme Weather / Sea Level Rise	Climate Change

Climate Change Perceptions

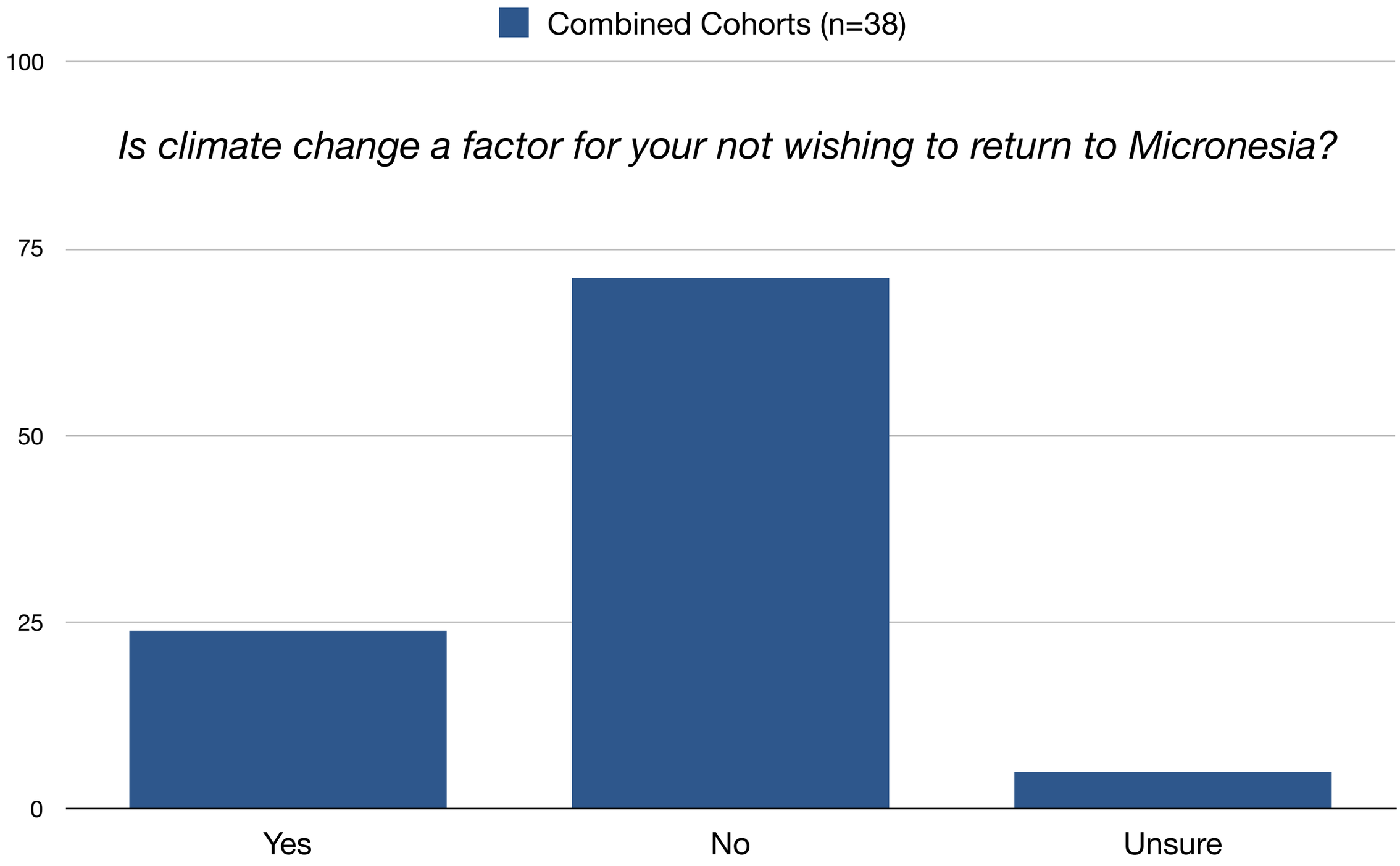
	College of Micronesia Students	General Chuukese Population in Oregon
	"The Sea Level is Rising"	*"Climate Change is Affecting FSM"*
Yes	74%	79%
No/Unsure	26%	21%

“Climate change is an issue today, but not in the 1990s and early 2000s. Since 2012, the issue became more apparent with high tide and is why people are coming [to the US] now.”

Climate Change & Religion



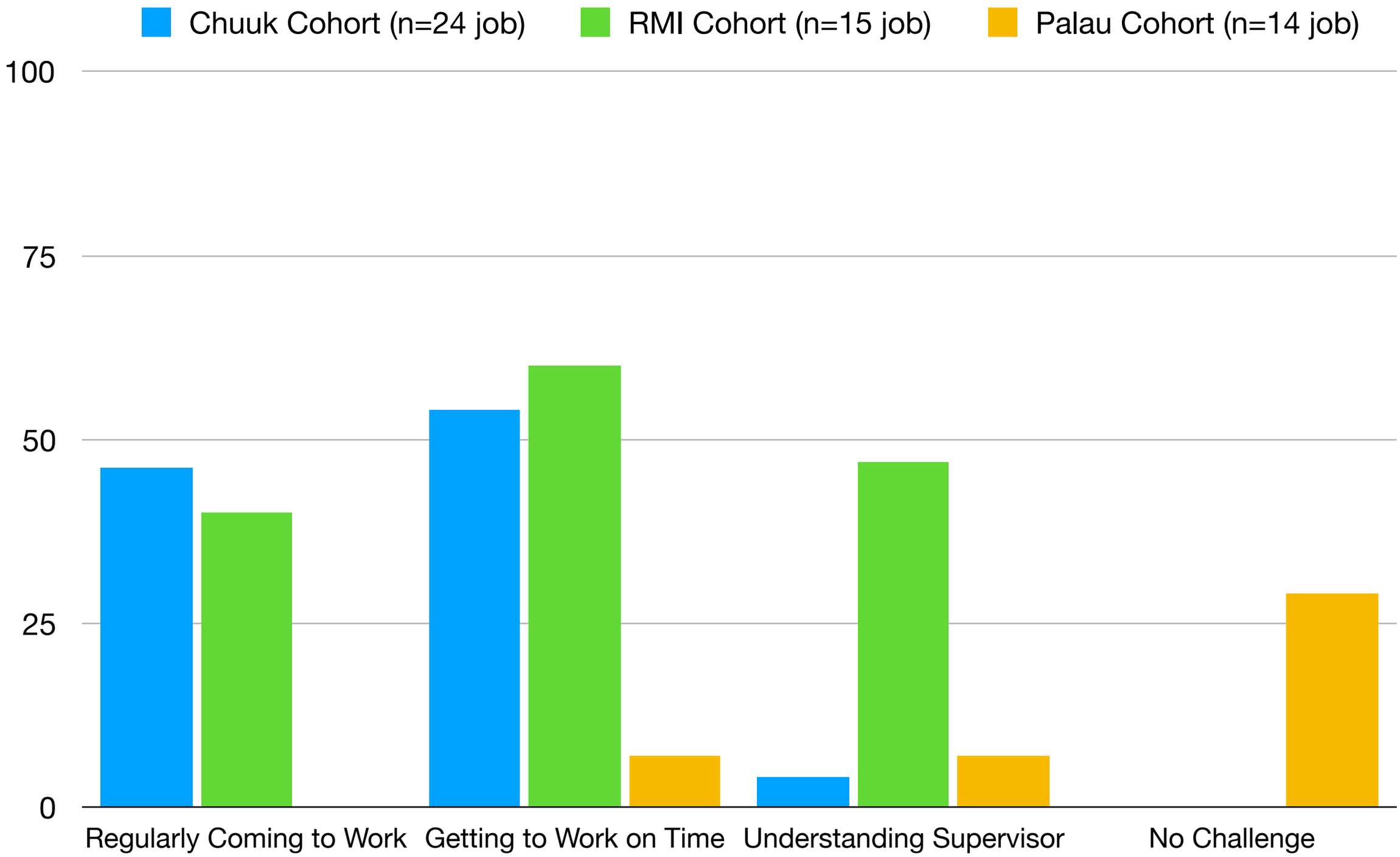
Climate Change as a Driver for Not Returning



Employment Expectations

	College of Micronesia Students	First-Generation Chuukese Population in Oregon
“Have the Necessary Skills to get a Job After Emigration?”	61%	
“Employed After Migration?”		63%

Challenges Maintaining Employment

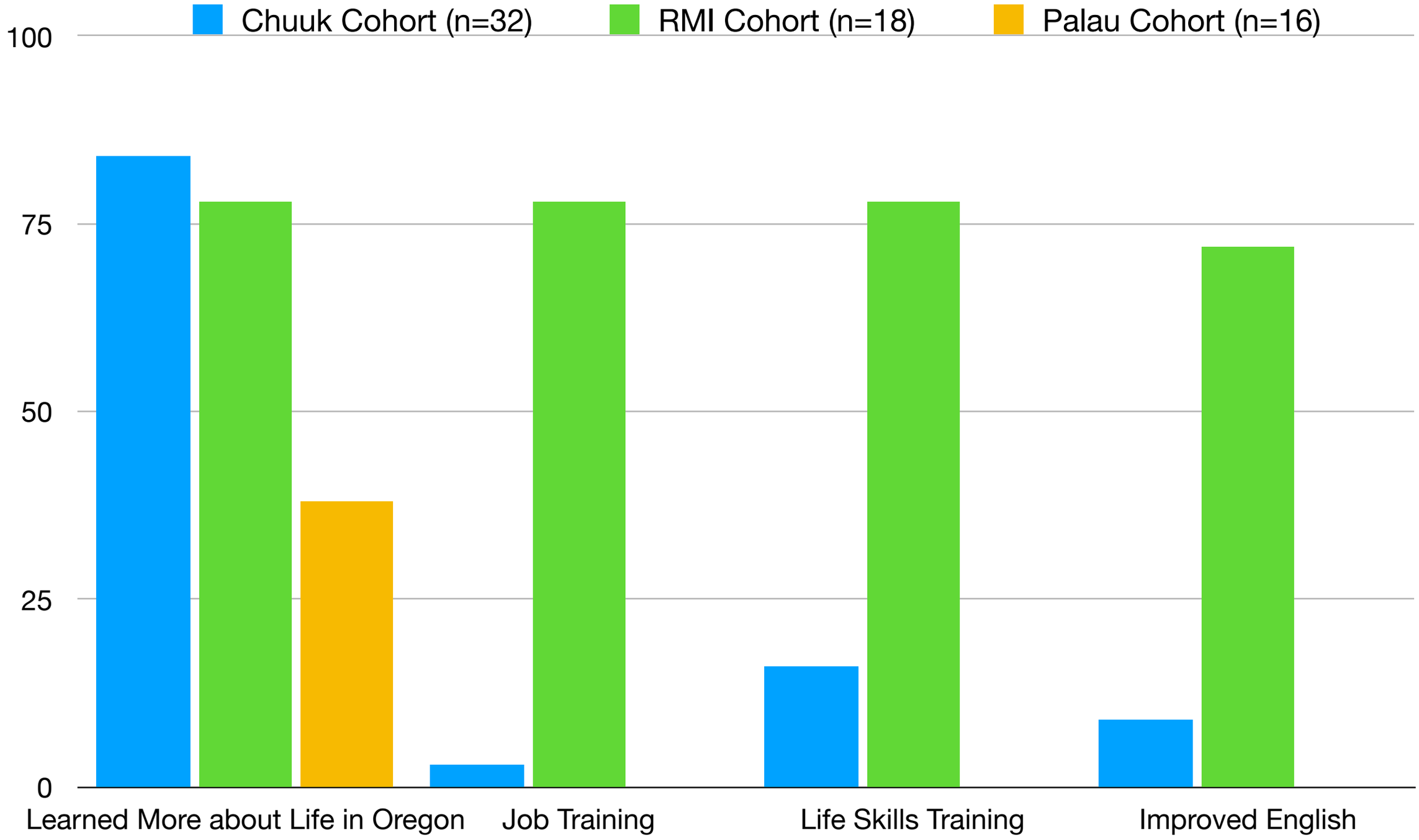


Challenges Maintaining Employment

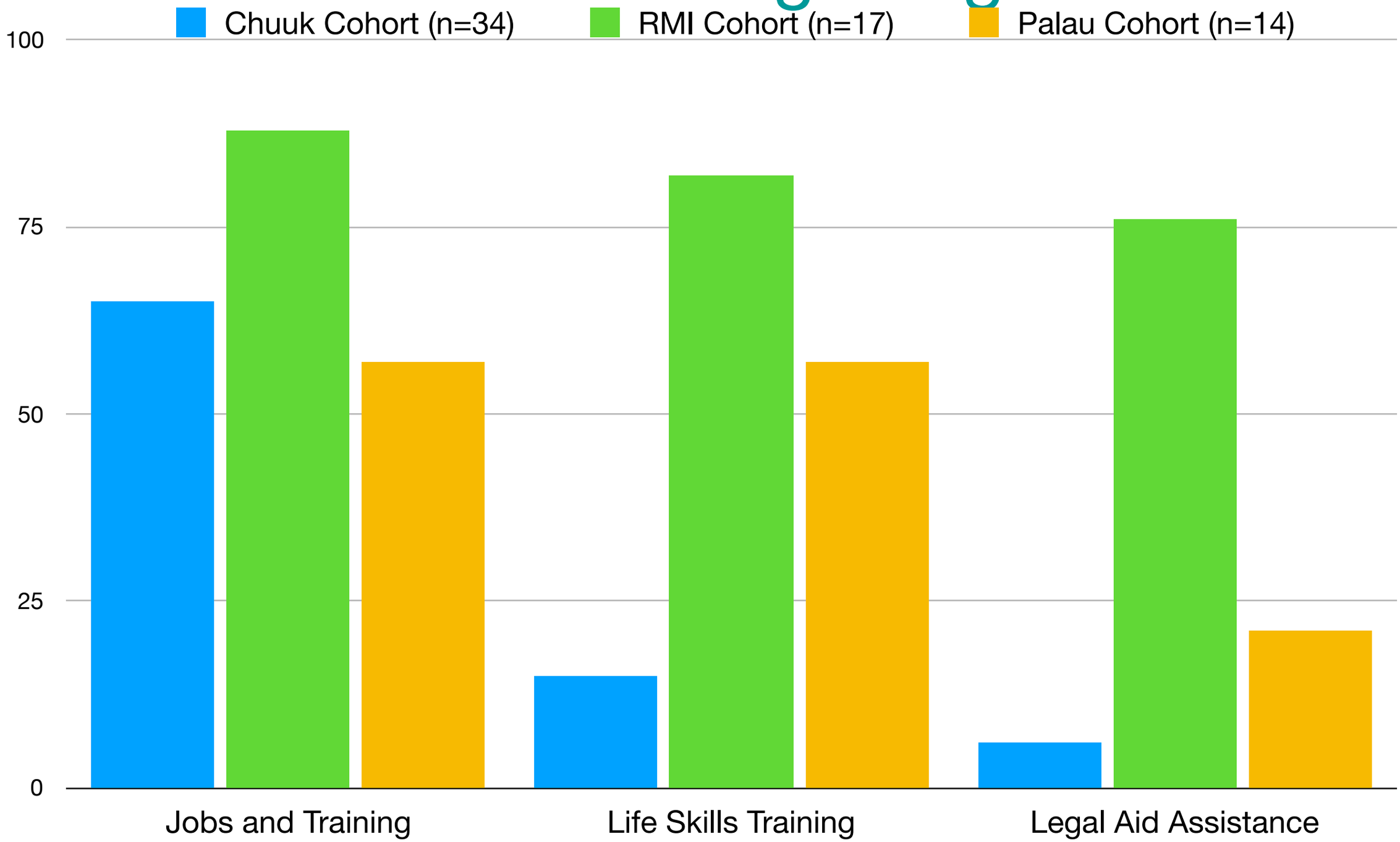
“I rely on public transportation (bus), taxi, or friends of my mom to get to places I need to go. Otherwise, I stay home.”

“In our culture, the family we are related to, if someone passes away, we help each.”

Improving Quality of Life Before Emigrating



Improving Quality of Life After Emigrating



“It’s a huge jump. There is no subsistence living here [the U.S.]. It may be a shock for some to have to work here. I was raised somewhere where you feel secure on the other side of the road or up the hill. They are Chuukese. My kids [in the U.S.] live in a different world. Parents struggle with how they will lay out the rules.”

Building Capacity	Action	Potential Outcome
Training Prior to Departure	Sending nations and partners to administer briefings that encompass all aspects of daily life in the U.S.	Better equipped migrants will be better prepared to deal with the challenges.
Education Advocacy	Provide greater awareness of financing options as well as legislative advocacy for federal student aid. Improve access through scholarships, grants, and a streamlined application process.	Increased college enrollment and graduation rates, resulting in greater opportunity to break the “styrofoam ceiling."
Workplace Coordination	Coordinate with employers to recognize unique needs of the COFA communities (transportation issues, family obligations, etc.).	Employees will gain a more reliable employee and employees will better meet expectations in the workplace.
Community Space	In concert with Pacific Islander groups, establish a physical community space.	A dedicated space will allow for improved facilitation of trainings with community members, and workshops with NGOs and universities.
Partnerships	Establish partnerships with community leaders, international organizations, NGOs, universities, and citizens.	Improved transition and overall quality of life

Departure Points

Outer islands vs main island

Gender

Religion

Generations (and identity)

ありがとうございました!