Opportunity Imbalance: Race, Gender, And California’s Education-To-Employment Pipeline

Focus on Latinos

Latinos are a major driver of California’s overall population growth. Comprising 39% of the state’s population, Latinos live throughout urban and rural regions. California’s Latinos, particularly Latina women, have made rapid improvements in educational outcomes over time, although large wage inequities persist.

High school graduation rates for Latino students have improved steadily and are now only slightly behind the state average. Despite these improvements, the rate at which Latino high school graduates are eligible to enroll at a UC/CSU lags the state average.

High school graduation rates for Latino men and women are highest in the state in Orange County and the Inland Empire—both over 85% compared to the 81% state average. UC/CSU eligibility rates for high school graduates are highest for Latinos in Los Angeles at 45%, compared to the 37% state average.

Latino college students primarily enroll in community colleges and are underrepresented at four-year colleges. These trends hold for both men and women.

The share of Latinos with at least an associate’s degree is much lower than the state average but is improving over time—more so for women than men.

47% of Latino college students earn an associate’s degree within 3 years or a bachelor’s degree within 6 years, compared to the state average of 55%. Improvements in Latino high school completion and college enrollment have not yet translated into proportional gains in college outcomes.
Workforce participation rates are high for Latinos, although the workforce participation gender gap is larger for Latinos than for any other racial/ethnic group.

Latinos are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Consequently, Latinos in the workforce earn less than the state median wage for the top fields in which they are employed.

However, trends show younger Latinos choosing higher-paying jobs. The share of Latinos aged 25 to 34 who are employed in low-wage fields like building and grounds maintenance (median wage: $19,563) has dropped, while the share in middle-wage occupations like sales (median wage: $33,713) is increasing.

Among working adults, Latino men and women both earn well below the state median. Latino men earn 27% more than Latina women, a smaller gap than the state gender gap of 32%.

**Sources**

1 Recognizing that there is not complete agreement on the best terminology, we use the term “Latino” throughout this brief to refer to men, women, and other Latino/a/x California residents.

Fig 1: California Competes’ calculations of California Department of Education data for 2015-16
Fig 2: California Competes’ calculations of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data for 2015-16
Fig 3: California Competes’ calculations of IPEDS data for 4-year cohort starting in 2010 and 2-year cohort starting in 2013
Fig 5: California Competes’ calculations of American Community Survey data accessed through American Factfinder, California Department of Education data, and data from the UC and CSU
Fig 4, 6, 7, 8: California Competes’ calculations of American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2016 five-year estimate data