

HISPANAS ORGANIZED *for* POLITICAL EQUALITY



2024 Economic Status of Latinas in California

A STATEWIDE REPORT AND ROADMAP TO
ACHIEVE ECONOMIC PARITY





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A Statewide Report and Roadmap to Achieve Economic Parity

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Economic Status of Latinas in California report is a comprehensive analysis that sheds light on the strides made and the challenges faced by Latinas in achieving economic parity.

Hispanas Organized for Political Equality® (HOPE) presents its fourth report on the Economic Status of Latinas in California, highlighting Latina progress toward economic parity and the barriers they encounter as they strive for better lives and greater financial security. National, state, and regional indicators of Latina economic, leadership, health, and educational progress are updated and compared to their White peers. A series of interviews with a cross-section of Latinas representing various metropolitan regions of the state contextualize the data and provide insights into how they can be better supported in their career and business trajectories. The findings show uneven educational outcomes, wage and leadership inequities, and population shifts as Latinas adapted to high inflation and continued to recover from the devastating economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are finding success despite these impediments, while others struggle.

POPULATION FINDINGS

- California has the largest Hispanic population and the highest concentration of Latinas of any state. In 2022, Latinas comprised 20% of the total population (7.78 million) and 40% of all women.
- While California experienced a net decline of -1.3% of the total population between 2020 and 2022, the population of Hispanics stayed relatively stable, increasing by approximately 350,000. In most of the largest metropolitan regions where Hispanics are concentrated, their share of the total population increased.
- The regions with the largest populations of Latinos/as are the Los Angeles metropolitan region, the Inland Empire, and the San Diego metropolitan region. Of the top five regions by population of Latinos/as, the Fresno region has the highest concentration (55%).

ECONOMIC FINDINGS

- Latinas with any earnings in California were paid only 42 cents for every dollar earned by a White, non-Hispanic man in 2022, compared to 71 cents for White women.
- In 2022, Latino household income in California was only 73% of White household income, increasing from 69% in 2020. Latino per capita income was 55% of White per capita income.
- The unemployment rate for Latinas in California dropped to 4.9% in 2023, below the pre-pandemic level, after reaching 12.6% in 2020.
- The Latino homeownership rate in California increased by 3.7 percentage points between 2021 and 2022, while the Total rate remained unchanged. The homeownership rate in the Bakersfield metro region grew by 3.5 percentage points and by 2 percentage points in the Inland Empire while falling nearly 5 percentage points in the San Jose metro region.

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL LITERACY FINDINGS

- The number of Latina-owned employer businesses in California grew 26.5% between 2018 (16,560) and 2021 (20,943).
- Latina-owned employer businesses in California (20,943) generated nearly 147,000 jobs with an annual payroll of \$5.92 billion.
- Latina interview respondents expressed regret that their level of financial literacy is limited, especially regarding retirement savings and budgeting for California's high cost of living. They expressed ongoing concern about the effects of inflation on their household and their community's general economic health.

EDUCATION FINDINGS

- In 2022, 56% of students enrolled in K-12 public schools were Hispanic, increasing from 54% in 2017. Over half of all children enrolled in the state's public schools are Hispanic.
- The high school graduation rate for California's Latinas dipped to 87% in the 2022-23 academic year but remained higher than the overall state graduation rate of 86%. The gap in the graduation rate between Latinas and White women (91%) was 4 percentage points, less than in 2019.
- The rate of chronic absenteeism among public K-12 Latino students (28.9%) remains more than double what it was before the pandemic and far exceeds that of White students (19.7%).
- In 2022, 33% of Latino graduates took an AP exam in high school, increasing from 27% in 2012. By comparison, 38% of White graduates took an AP exam in high school in 2022, up from 32% in 2012.
- More than 18% of Latinas aged 25 and over in California had at least a bachelor's degree in 2022, nearly 2 percentage points above the 2018 figure but significantly less than nearly 48% of White women.

HEALTH FINDINGS

- Life expectancy at birth declined by 4.1 years for Latinas and 3.1 years for Black women between 2019 and 2021, compared to 1.8 years for White, non-Hispanic women, an indicator of the outside effect of COVID-19 on their mortality rates. Life expectancy at birth is rebounding, but at a slower pace for Latinas than for White women.
- 40% of Black women and 37% of Latinas reported experiencing discrimination while receiving maternity care. Between 2018 and 2020, the maternal mortality rate among Black women in California stood at 45.8 per 100,000 births, surpassing that of any other racial group. Although lower for Latinas, at 14.8, their maternal mortality rate remains disproportionately higher compared to their white counterparts and surged by 44% nationally during the pandemic.
- The uninsured rate for Latinas in California was a historic low of 8.8% in 2022, compared to the total rate of 6.5%, but both are expected to rise as pandemic-era policies expire. The 2022 national uninsured rate for Latinas was three and a half times the uninsured rate for White non-Hispanic women.

LATINA LEADERSHIP FINDINGS

- In 2021, only 1.5% of corporate board seats in the state were held by Latinas. The representation of Latinas on corporate boards in California doubled between 2020 and 2021 but remained exceptionally low. Latinas held 3.3% of board seats in 2023.
- Among appointments made by the governor to the state's public serving government boards and commissions Latinos account for only 17.3% of all appointments made in 2023, and Latinas represent 9% of all appointments.
- The number of Latinas elected to statewide office have risen multifold since 2015. The percentage of Latina state senators was above parity at 25.0%. The number of Latina state senators and representatives combined increased from 6 in 2015 to 24 in 2024. Latinas elected to national office continues to be extremely low, with only 4 Latina congressional members out of the 52 U.S. House of Representatives seats filled by Californians.

INTRODUCTION

Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) releases its fourth report on the Economic Status of Latinas in California, providing updated national, state, and regional indicators that track Latina economic progress as the nation recovers from the financial losses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings summarize how Latinas navigate the post-pandemic realities of inflation and high-interest rates while contending with systemic barriers to their educational and financial success. HOPE highlights areas of progress and necessary steps forward to support the economic and political parity that Latinas seek and that HOPE has fought to advance over the past 35 years.

Latinas comprise one-fifth of California's population and showcase educational advancements and growing purchasing power, yet disparities persist. While they show positive economic trends, Latinas, as a group, remain vulnerable due to lower per capita incomes and educational attainment compared to their White counterparts. Wealth gaps, including disparities in homeownership and asset diversification, leave them susceptible to market fluctuations and recessions. Persistent gender wage gaps and pandemic-induced learning losses present challenges to realizing their full potential. Resilient in past recessions, Latinas often turn to entrepreneurialism during economic uncertainty. Preliminary data show this trend was consistent following the economic downturn resulting from pandemic-era closures.

Latina representation in leadership roles in corporations and the public sector continues to be very low despite improvement at the state-elected level. An underrepresentation of Latinas in critical decision-making roles hampers their overall economic and political progress. Interviews with a cross-section of Latinas from across the state reveal a sense of cautious optimism reflecting concerns for personal, family, and community well-being, even by those whose personal finances are secure.

The report highlights the necessity of systemic change to help Latinas achieve economic parity, uplift communities, and ensure the state's future prosperity. Latinas contribute a wealth of skills and talents to California's overall interests. They are keen entrepreneurs and emerging civic and political leaders. Their substantial impact on consumer spending underscores the importance of Latinas to the success of the state's economy. HOPE's policy recommendations provide a roadmap to address some of the barriers they face. Recognizing and fostering Latinas' economic contributions is essential for California's continued prosperity, enhancing the state's competitiveness in the national and global market.

POPULATION TRENDS

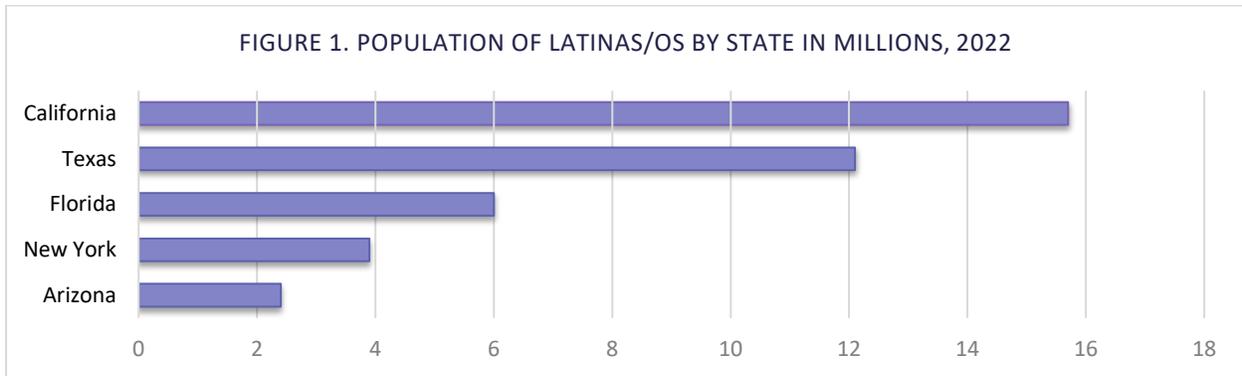
Latinas/os¹ are the second-largest demographic group in the United States, increasing from 35.3 million in 2000, or 12.5% of the country’s total population, to 63.7 million in 2022, or just over 19% of the total population (Table 1).¹ The Latino population grew by 1.6% between 2021 and 2022 and is predicted to increase by 54% to 98 million by 2060, when they will represent 27% of the population.² One out of every five Americans is Hispanic; by 2060, one out of every four will be Hispanic.³ By comparison, the population of White, non-Hispanics declined from 64% in 2010 to 59% of the total U.S. population in 2022.

Hispanics are a diverse group, originating from many countries. More than half (58%) are of Mexican origin (37.2 million), followed by Puerto Ricans (5.8 million) and Salvadorans (2.5 million). Spanish, spoken by over 42 million people in the nation in 2022, is the most common language spoken at home after English.⁴

The number of Latinas, or Hispanic women, in the U.S. rose to 31.4 million in 2022 or 9.4% of the total U.S. population— up from 25 million in 2010 when they represented just over 8% of the total population.⁵ The number of Latinas increased by one million between 2020 and 2022. Latinas represented nearly 19% of all women in the country and are projected to be 27% of all women by 2060, when one in every four women will be a Latina.⁶

TABLE 1. HISPANIC POPULATION, U.S.

	U.S. Hispanic Pop in millions	% of Total Hispanic U.S. Pop	Latina U.S. Pop in millions	% of Total Latina U.S. Pop
2060 projection	97.994	26.9%	48.834	13.4%
2022	63.664	19.1%	31.387	9.4%
2021	62.629	18.9%	30.8	9.3%
2020	61.838	18.7%	30.4	9.2%



¹ The terms Hispanic and Latina/o are used interchangeably in this report to refer to people whose origin is Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Spanish-speaking Central or South American countries, or other Hispanic/Latino, regardless of race, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. The terms carry socio-political and historical connotations that can determine the preference for one term over another.

California, the most populous state in the nation with approximately 39 million people, also has the largest Latino/a population of any state, 15.7 million or 40.3% of the state’s total population in 2022. Texas (12.1 million) and Florida (6 million) have the next largest Latino/a populations. Latinas (7.78 million) represent 40% of all women in California (Figure 1).^{7, 8} Although the state experienced a net decline of -1.3% of the total population between 2020 and 2022, the population of Hispanics remained relatively stable, increasing by approximately 350,000 (Table 2). As the state’s overall population resumes positive growth, the population of Hispanics is also expected to rise proportionally.

TABLE 2. HISPANIC POPULATION, CALIFORNIA

	CA Hisp Pop in millions	% of Total CA Pop	Latina CA Pop in millions	% of Total CA Pop	% of All CA Women
2022	15.732	40.3%	7,779,831	19.9%	39.9%
2021	15.754	40.2%	7,779,212	19.8%	39.7%
2020	15.380	39.2%	7,644,611	19.4%	38.6%

The concentration of Hispanics in some of the largest urban regions surpasses the state average, including in the Los Angeles metropolitan region, the Inland Empire, and the Fresno and Bakersfield metropolitan regions (Table 3). In smaller regional centers such as Merced (63%) and El Centro (86%), Hispanics comprised an even larger share of the total population.

Notably, in nearly all of the largest metropolitan regions where Hispanics are concentrated, their share of the total population increased between 2020 and 2022, even when their numbers decreased. The Los Angeles metro region, where housing and the cost of living are high, experienced a net population decline even as the share of Hispanics grew between 2020 and 2022 to nearly half of the population (45.4%). The exception is the San Jose metropolitan region (Silicon Valley), where the cost of living is notoriously high, which lost about 20,000 Hispanics, and their share remained relatively flat.

The number of Latinas increased by over 135,000 between 2020 and 2022, reaching nearly 20% of the state's total population and representing almost 40% of all women. One out of every five people in the state was a Latina in 2022, and 40% of all women were Latinas. In many of the largest metropolitan regions in the state, including Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, Fresno, and Bakersfield, Latinas represent one in four or one in five women (Table 3). In smaller regions such as Merced and El Centro, Latinas represent an even higher percentage of all women. Two out of every five women in the state are Latinas. These figures highlight the potential for Latinas to exert influence in the state and within their communities.

TABLE 3. POPULATION OF HISPANICS IN CA IN TOP MSAS, 2020 TO 2022

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)	2020 Pop in millions	% of Total Pop of MSA	2022 Pop in millions	% of Total Pop of MSA	Latina % of Total Pop 2022	Latina % of All Women 2022
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim	5.923	44.8%	5.839	45.4%	22.6%	49.0%
Riverside-San Bernardino (Inland Empire)	2.368	51.5%	2.521	54.0%	26.7%	53.7%
San Diego-Carlsbad	1.126	33.9%	1.146	35.0%	17.5%	35.4%
San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley	1.024	21.8%	1.019	22.3%	11.0%	21.8%
Fresno	0.528	53.4%	0.558	55.0%	27.1%	54.6%
Sacramento-Roseville-Arden-Arcade	0.510	21.8%	0.551	22.8%	11.3%	22.3%
Bakersfield	0.481	53.9%	0.520	56.8%	27.5%	56.4%
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara	0.519	26.1%	0.505	26.0%	12.8%	26.2%
Merced	0.165	60.2%	0.183	63.2%	30.9%	63.1%
El Centro	0.153	84.7%	0.154	86.1%	42.9%	87.7%



California has the highest concentration of Latinas of any state. Latinas comprise 20% of the total population and 40% of all women.

Hispanics of Mexican origin are by far the most highly represented at just over 80% of the state’s total Hispanic population. However, their proportion declined from 82% in 2020 as the proportions of Hispanics of other origins have increased, following a longer-term trend (Table 4).⁹ Although their numbers are considerably lower, the percentage of Hispanics of Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, Honduran, Venezuelan, Peruvian, and Columbian origin increased between 2020 and 2022.

TABLE 4. TOP THREE POPULATIONS OF HISPANICS IN CA BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 2020 AND 2022

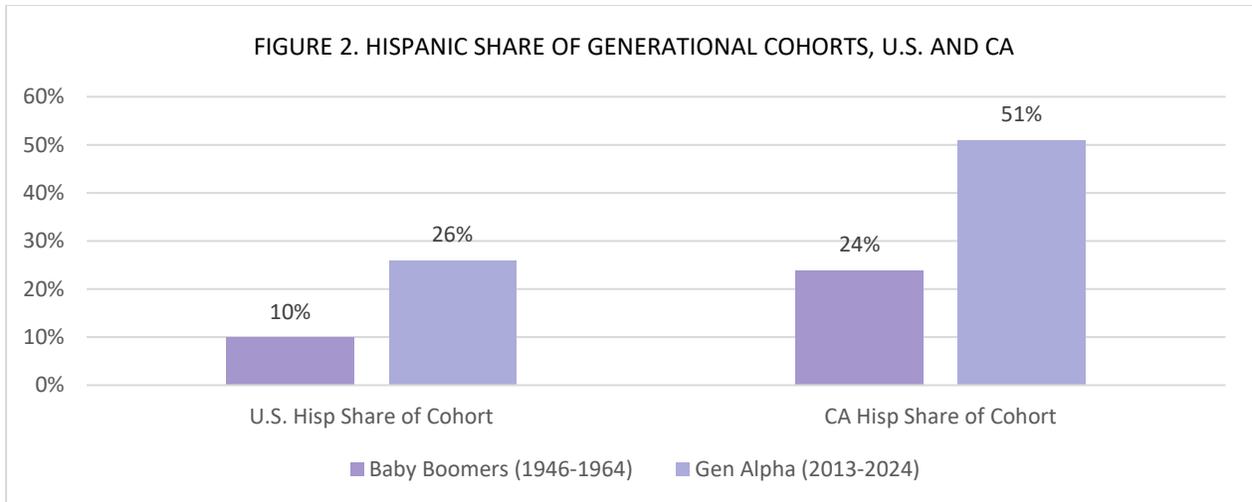
	2020 Population	% of All Latinos	2022 Population	% of All Latinos
<i>Mexican</i>	12,635,258	82.1%	12,673,519	80.6%
<i>Salvadoran</i>	719,841	4.7%	751,141	4.8%
<i>Guatemalan</i>	434,671	2.8%	520,535	3.3%

California’s total native-born population increased to 68.2% in 2022, virtually the same as for Latinas, continuing an upward trend as more Hispanics are born in the state and immigration has slowed.¹⁰ An upward trend is also evident in the state's largest metropolitan regions, except the Bay Area (Table 5). Gateway cities such as the Los Angeles, Bay Area, and El Centro metropolitan regions had the lowest percentage of Latinas who were native-born. In contrast, Sacramento and Fresno have the highest rate of native-born Latinas among the largest urban centers. An estimated 80%, or 1,949,761, of all undocumented residents in California were of Latin American origin in 2019.¹¹

TABLE 5. POPULATION OF LATINAS BY MSA AND NATIVITY, 2018, 2022

<i>State and Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)</i>	2018	2022
	% of All Latinas who are Native-born	% of All Latinas who are Native-born
<i>California</i>	66.3%	68.3%
<i>Fresno</i>	75.2%	77.5%
<i>Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim</i>	61.9%	63.9%
<i>Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario (Inland Empire)</i>	71.0%	72.8%
<i>San Diego-Carlsbad</i>	64.3%	70.3%
<i>San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley</i>	64.4%	63.5%
<i>Sacramento-Roseville-Arden-Arcade</i>	75.1%	77.9%
<i>Bakersfield</i>	71.2%	75.3%
<i>San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara</i>	69.0%	67.6%
<i>Merced</i>	64.4%	70.8%
<i>El Centro</i>	61.9%	61.8%

The median age of the nation’s total population rose to 39 years in 2022 after dropping to 38.2 in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This recent upward trend mirrors a broader pre-pandemic upward trend, increasing from 37.2 in 2010, indicating that the population as a whole is aging. Nevertheless, Hispanics are a relatively young group compared to other demographic groups, comprising more than double the share of the youngest generation compared to Baby Boomers at both the national and state levels (Figure 2). In the U.S., 25% of Generation Z (born 1995 to 2012) and 26% of Generation Alpha (born 2013 to present) were Hispanic in 2022, well above their 19% share of the total population. The younger generations are comprised of larger proportions of Hispanics than older generations. At 27 years old, the oldest members of Generation Z have already entered the workforce and will be followed by proportionally greater numbers as the youngest generations mature.



Compared to the median age of 30.7 for the nation’s Hispanic population, the median age of the White, non-Hispanic population was 43.0, a gap in age of 12.3 years. However, this gap has narrowed since 2019, before the COVID pandemic, when Hispanics were, on average, 13.9 years younger than non-Hispanic White people. The gap in median age between Latinas and White women in 2022 was even larger at 14.4 years. Latinas are much younger than White women, but this gap also narrowed during the pandemic, decreasing from a gap of 15.0 years in 2019 as Latina mortality was higher during the pandemic (Table 6).^{12, 13}

TABLE 6. COMPARISONS OF MEDIAN AGE, 2019-2022

	U.S.						California					
	Latina Women	White Women	Hispanic Women	Latina & White Women	Latina & Hispanic Women	White & Hispanic Women	Total CA Pop	Latina Women	White Women	Hispanic Women	Gap Btwn Latina & White Women	Latina & Hispanic Women
2022	39.0	31.0	45.4	14.4	37.2	39.9	37.9	31.5	48.6	17.1	38.9	42.3
2021	38.8	30.9	45.2	14.3	36.9	39.6	37.6	31.3	48.1	16.8	38.9	42.1
2020	38.2	30.0	45.1	15.1	36.0	38.5	36.7	30.2	47.8	17.6	38.3	41.1
2019	38.5	30.3	45.3	15.0	36.5	39.2	37.0	30.5	47.9	17.4	38.0	41.8

The median age in California was 37.9 in 2022, while the median age of California’s Hispanic population increased to 31.5 years. Latinas in the state are even younger than non-Hispanic White women in the state than nationally, by 17.1 years in 2022, narrowing to 16.8 in 2021 due to COVID-related deaths from a gap of 17.4 years in 2019.

FIGURE 3. POPULATION PYRAMID (BY AGE), LATINAS VS. WHITE WOMEN IN CA, 2021

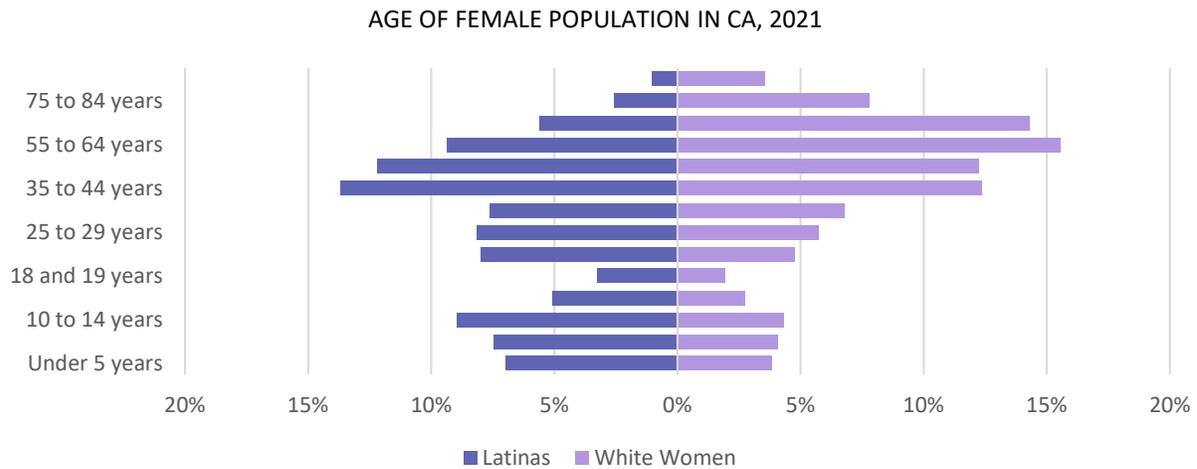


Figure 3 highlights the relative youth of Latinas in California compared to White women. The most significant population bulges are for older White women starting at age 35 and at the highest in the 55-to-74-year age range while Latinas also start at age 35 but taper through 64 years. A smaller but significant population bulge is evident for Latinas under the age of 14 (Generation Alpha) compared to the much smaller number of young White females.

Even before COVID-19, the epidemic of opioids and other drugs, gun violence, car accidents, and chronic diseases had been eroding the average life spans of Americans from the peak in 2014, but the pandemic struck the Hispanic population particularly hard.¹⁴ Between 2019 and 2021, Hispanics suffered a large decline of 4.1 years in life expectancy at birth, or 5%, due primarily to increased mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic, which contributed most of the total mortality. Hispanic life expectancy declined from 81.9 years in 2019 to 77.8 years in 2021.¹⁵ American Indian and Black women experienced a drop of 5.8 and 3.1 years, respectively, during the same period. By comparison, life expectancy at birth of White, non-Hispanics declined 2.1 years and Asian American women by 1.8 years (Table 7). The gap in life expectancy between Latinas and White women dropped to about half a year in 2021 from a gap of over 3 years in 2019, another indicator of the outsize effect of COVID-19 on Latina mortality.

TABLE 7. LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, U.S., 2019 TO 2022

	Total	Hispanics	White, non-Hispanic	Latinas	White Women	Black Women	Asian Amer Women	Amer Indian & Alaska Native Women
2022	77.5	80.0	77.5	82.8	80.1	76.5	86.3	71.3
2021	76.4	77.8	76.7	81.1	79.5	75.0	85.6	69.2
2020	77.0	77.9	77.4	80.7	80.1	75.4	85.9	70.7
2019	78.8	81.9	78.8	84.4	81.3	78.1	87.4	75.0

Preliminary data show that U.S. life expectancy at birth is rebounding but has not regained pre-pandemic levels, rising to 77.5 years in 2022 compared to 78.8 in 2019.¹⁶ Latina life expectancy at birth rose 1.7 years to 82.8 years, and White women to 80.1 years. The 2022 gap in life expectancy between these two groups (2.7) is approaching the pre-pandemic gap of 3.1 years as excess mortality due to COVID-19 decreases.

LATINAS LEADING

"I plan to run for city council! I want to help develop the infrastructure that invests in Latinas."

—Leticia, early 50s, San Diego

"Outside organizations turn to me as an expert regularly and I'm considering starting a consulting business. But [my bosses] see me as the help rather than a leader."

—Nancy, early 40s, Oakland



While significant progress has been achieved, Latina representation in leadership roles within both the corporate and public sectors remains drastically disproportionate to the large Latina population in California. Achieving parity in representation is a matter of equity and correlates with tangible outcomes such as economic growth for our communities. Corporate boards wield substantial influence over the policies and practices of the world's most prominent companies, while elected officials hold crucial decision-making authority over hundreds of billions of dollars constituting the nation's largest state budget. Both entities represent the centers of power in our state, shaping policy and the allocation of resources. Without Latina representation in these roles, Latina voices are absent from critical decision-making forums that impact lives and livelihoods. This section provides a brief overview of the status of Latinas in key leadership roles in California, encompassing corporate boards, elected offices, and appointed positions.

Latino representation on corporate boards is abysmal— they are the least represented demographic group despite their large and growing numbers. In 2023, 60% of Fortune 1000 companies nationally had no Hispanics on their boards, but this improved from 2010 when 87% lacked any Latino board representation. Only 5.4% of Fortune 500 board seats and 4.9% of Fortune 100 seats were Hispanic.¹⁷ Latinas fare even worse. They are the least represented demographic among Fortune 500 board seats; in 2022, they filled 1.2%, or 73, board seats, compared to 22.5% for White women.

In California, only 43% of Fortune 1000 companies had at least one Latina/o on their boards in 2022, compared to the previous year when Latinos were represented in only 31% of these companies.¹⁸ However, 82% of publicly traded companies based in California had no Latinos on their boards in 2022. In 2021, only 1.5% of board seats in the state were held by Latinas. Representation of Latinas on boards in California doubled between 2020 and 2021 but remained very low. Latinas held 3.3% of board seats in 2023.

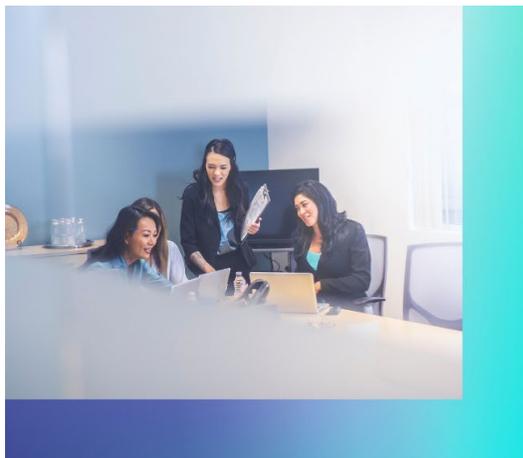


HOPE IN ACTION



HOPE supported the passage of two bills, SB 826 in 2018 and AB 979 in 2020, to ensure greater representation on California’s boards. Both bills have been challenged and are under appeal. Progress made while the laws were in effect more than doubled the share of board seats filled by women from 15.5% in 2018 to 32.7% in 2023. However, few of these women were Latinas, highlighting the need to further diversify the pool of candidates for corporate board positions.¹⁹

California’s gubernatorial appointees do not reflect the state’s diverse population, and transparency around the demographic data of appointees is also lacking. According to a [HOPE report](#), Latino, Black, AAPI, and Native American Californians were underrepresented among appointments made by the Governor’s office during 2023.²⁰ Latino Board members and commissioners account for only 17.3% of all appointments, and Latinas represent 9% of all appointments made in 2023.



SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

GOVERNMENT BOARDS serve the public interest, overseeing specific areas of governance, providing input and recommendations to government officials on specific issues, and shaping public policies and decisions that affect our communities, including how resources are allocated per region and the determination of state contracts.

CORPORATE BOARDS serve and are accountable to shareholders, responsible for providing oversight, financial planning, and strategy to publicly traded companies inclusive of hiring, promotion and pay policies.

TABLE 8. CALIFORNIA LATINAS HOLDING ELECTED OFFICE, 2015 TO 2024

	2015		2021		April 2024	
U.S. Representatives*	5	9.4%	5	9.4%	4	7.7%
CA State Senators	2	5.0%	9	22.5%	10	25.0%
CA State Representatives	4	5.0%	12	15.0%	13	16.3%

* Percentages for 2023 reflect a drop in the number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives from California from 53 to 52.

Representation of Latinas in elected office at the state and national levels is progressing unevenly (Table 8). The number of Latinas elected to national office continues to be very low. Of the 52 U.S. House of Representatives seats filled by Californians, only 4 were Latinas in early 2024. Latinas elected to statewide office are faring relatively better, rising multifold since 2015. The percentage of Latina state senators was above parity at 25.0%. The number of Latina state senators and representatives combined increased from 6 in 2015 to 23 in 2024.²¹

LATINA FIRSTS: KEY APPOINTMENTS MADE BY GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM

These leaders are the first Latinas to serve in these positions of power in the state of California.

- **Chief Justice Of The California Supreme Court, Patricia Guerrero, 2023**
- **Surgeon General Of California, Dr. Diana Ramos, 2022**
- **California Epa Secretary, Yana Garcia, 2022**
- **Director Of General Services, Ana Lasso, 2021**

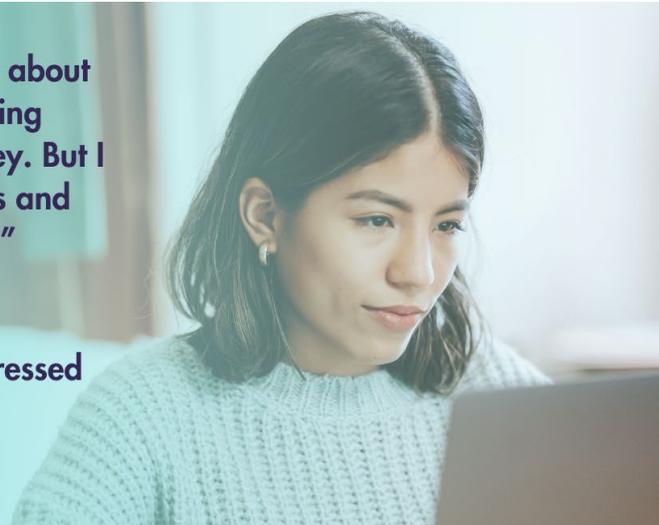
LATINAS SPEAK ON FINANCIAL ISSUES

"I feel fortunate not to have to worry about my basic expenses. I think about saving and not being reckless with my money. But I have so much to learn about finances and how to capitalize on my investments."

–Adrianna, mid-30s, Bakersfield

"The cost of living is so high. I feel stressed all the time."

–Stephanie, mid-20s, Modesto



Inflationary pressures so soon after the economic devastation and social upheaval during the pandemic were top of mind for every Latina who was interviewed for this report. A common theme among interview respondents was the high degree of financial stress they were experiencing, regardless of the actual state of their personal finances. They echoed findings from a study reporting that Americans' levels of financial stress had increased significantly over the summer of 2023 as they contended with high inflation, high-interest rates, and a lack of savings.²²

The same study reported that saving for retirement was also at risk as 40% of workers were not contributing to a retirement vehicle such as a 401(k) or employer-based plan, and 56% were not saving enough to retire comfortably. Another study found that most Americans (55%) are very concerned about their ability to be financially secure in retirement, with 73% reporting that inflation has increased their concern.

Furthermore, 87% of Americans feel that Congress should act now to shore up Social Security benefits rather than waiting until the next decade when the fund will run short.²³

Unlike in previous HOPE research,²⁴ Latina interview respondents were only cautiously optimistic about their current and future economic standing, expecting better outcomes over the next ten years but apprehensive not only for their own household's current status but also the financial struggles they perceive among family and fellow community members. Several Latinas commented at length on the pressure of financial obligations toward their parents. They feel their retirement plans may be compromised as their parents, who could not save for retirement, need substantial financial assistance as they age. A young Latina in her 20s wonders how she will balance indispensable contributions to her parent's household and considerable student debt against her plans for homeownership and interest in starting a business.

Interview respondent sentiments were consistent with reports that despite relatively healthy economic indicators, consumer confidence in the economy sank even lower through 2023 than during the lockdown.²⁵ After peaking at 9.1% in California in June 2022, inflation rates have decreased, but housing, health care, and child care continue to be burdensome for many.²⁶ A report found that 49% of California's Latinx households struggled to pay for basic living expenses in the summer of 2023 due to the high cost of living, and even more low-income households struggled (63%).²⁷ Overall, U.S. household debt reached \$17.5 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2023 as debt and delinquencies from mortgages, auto loans, and credit cards rose.²⁸

The Latina interview respondents who reported that they are saving for retirement voiced doubt about their lack of expertise in managing their retirement portfolios and wondered what they might accomplish if their financial literacy were higher. A respondent in her 50s regretted that "we don't talk about money in general in our community. There's nowhere for us to learn these things." Most respondents commented on the need for assistance in improving their financial literacy and that of their communities, including finding trusted professional guidance.

Another theme that varied from previous HOPE research was less enthusiasm about the value of homeownership. While every woman interviewed agreed that homeownership could be an excellent investment and most either owned a home or were saving to purchase one, there was less confidence in homeownership as a wealth-building instrument than respondents in previous studies expressed. Several individuals highlighted the challenge of accumulating funds for down payments on excessively priced real estate, coupled with high interest rates. They also remarked on the near impossibility of using investment properties as a strategy to generate wealth since rents would not cover high mortgage payments.

Several Latinas who were interviewed are financially successful, reaping the rewards of successful businesses and professions. As a group, however, many conveyed greater uncertainty than Latinas interviewed in previous HOPE reports, expressing concerns about their own, their family's, and their community's financial well-being, even if their personal finances were stable. Yet, regardless of their current financial challenges, every woman expected their prospects to improve over the next one to two years. The Latinas who struggled financially demonstrated resilience in the face of challenging circumstances. For instance, a woman in her 60s facing difficulties paying rent was willing to consider the extreme measure of moving to Mexico but remained optimistic about her options. Prior HOPE research shows that despite high rates of dissatisfaction with the economy and the high cost of living, among other issues, Black, Asian/Pacific Americans, and Latinos report that living in diverse California is an important part of their identity, outweighing their race, political party, and religion.²⁹ Moving out of the state is a last resort for many.

THE STATE OF LATINA EDUCATION

LEARNING LOSSES AND THE OPPORTUNITY GAP IN EDUCATION



The Opportunity Gap refers to the conditions and barriers inherent in systems that disadvantage students throughout their educational careers and limit their opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Education is still widely regarded as the best path to greater financial success. According to government data, the higher the level of educational attainment, the higher the earnings and the lower the rate of unemployment.³⁰ A postsecondary education represents the best pathway for social mobility, financial security and access to political and economic power structures, and a well-educated workforce bolsters the domestic economy through greater productivity. Latinas have made significant progress in educational attainment, outearning Latino males in degree attainment and closing gaps with their White female peers. However, persistent disparities in outcomes result in an opportunity gap that diminishes their ability to reach their educational and life goals.³¹

Schools with predominantly diverse racial/ethnic groups and low-income students often lack essential resources for academic success, facing issues such as underfunding, limited access to advanced courses and gifted and talented programs, a higher percentage of English Learners (ELs), and a shortage of qualified teachers. These disparities contribute to an opportunity gap, resulting in lower standardized test scores and decreased college readiness compared to students in majority White schools.

In 2013, California established the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a groundbreaking new funding mechanism designed to address educational disparities across school districts by allocating funds based on student demographics and needs. Under the LCFF, school districts receive additional funds per higher needs student (low-income students, English learners, and foster youth) and have more autonomy in spending decisions to address specific educational challenges. Since its enactment, the state has distributed roughly \$600 billion to school districts and school spending per pupil has increased by nearly 65% compared to before the LCFF was established.³² Nearly a decade later, research indicates that the LCFF has been effective in improving educational outcomes in higher need districts (i.e. districts with a large percentage of low-income, ELL and foster youth), showing progress on standardized test scores, increased graduation rates, and college readiness.

Despite this progress, the impact of the LCFF in closing educational equity gaps is limited based on how districts distribute the additional funding they receive for their higher-needs students. Data from pre-pandemic student cohorts indicates that greater progress was achieved in narrowing educational disparities between the highest- and lowest-income school districts compared to those between low-income and non-low-income students.

Additionally, as student race or ethnicity is not factored into the determination of "high need," the capacity to assess the Local Control Funding Formula's impact on reducing racial equity gaps is constrained by the correlation between student race and factors like income, English learner status, or foster status.³³ Addressing these structural issues is crucial for fostering a resilient and inclusive educational system that meets the diverse needs of all students and prepares the next generation to effectively enter a changing workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic disruptions intensified concerns about the opportunity gap, particularly for the state's Latino students. Extended periods of remote and hybrid learning revealed shortcomings in teacher instruction, support for ELs, and access to technology, resulting in significant academic setbacks. Learning losses among California's students are a pressing concern that threatens to deepen the impact of existing disparities.³⁴ Despite over two years since students returned to in-person classrooms, steep drops in test scores have proved to be difficult to reverse. Disparities in learning losses are particularly pronounced among underserved communities, where access to quality education and resources have been historically limited, and who already face barriers that limit their access to opportunities in the educational system. The ongoing challenge lies in mitigating the impact of learning losses to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all California students.

The growth in Latino enrollment in both U.S. and California public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools reflects the growth of the Latino population and its relative youth. Total enrollment in California's K-12 public schools trended downwards by 5.5% between Fall 2017 and Fall 2021 and is estimated to further decrease by 16% through Fall 2031.³⁵ Conversely, the percentage of Latino students has grown steadily during the same period. In 2022, 56% of enrolled K-12 public school students were Latino, increasing from 54% in 2017. Well over half of all children enrolled in the state's public schools are Latino, and their share is projected to continue growing.³⁶ Yet K-12 public school teachers are not representative of the diversity of the state's students. In the 2018-19 school year, 21% of K-12 public school teachers were Latino, with 15% Latina teachers and 6% Latino male teachers, far below parity.³⁷

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS



English language learners are more likely to face educational and economic barriers to their future financial security.

Over 44% of California's population spoke a language other than English in 2022— the most common language spoken after English was Spanish (28.3%). Statewide, 11% of Spanish speakers five years old and over spoke English less than "very well."³⁸ The percentages of the populations of the Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Merced, and Riverside metropolitan regions that speak English less than "very well" run higher than the state average (12-18%). The number of English Learners in California's K-12 public schools is the largest in the nation at 19% of all enrolled students. The top three foreign languages EL students spoke in the 2022-23 K-12 school year were Spanish (82%),

followed far behind by Vietnamese with less than 2% of EL students. Of the Spanish-speaking EL students, over 421,200, nearly half (46.2%) are Latinas.³⁹

English language learners are more likely to face educational and economic barriers that can compromise their future economic security. Students whose first language is not English perform worse on standardized tests, achieve significantly lower graduation rates, and are more likely to be illiterate than students whose first language is English. The ability to acquire English-language proficiency has life-long socio-economic ramifications.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

The rate of chronic absenteeism among Latino students remains more than double what it was before the pandemic and far exceeds that of White students.



Chronic absenteeism, or students absent for 10% or more of the days they were expected to attend, soared among all California K-12 public school students during the COVID-19 pandemic, peaking during the 2021-22 school year and continuing at over double the pre-pandemic rate during the 2022-23 school year (Table 9). Chronic absenteeism threatens students’ ability to prepare to succeed in the workforce, which in turn compromises California’s economic future. While rates have been highest among African American and American Indian or Alaska Native students, Latino students have also experienced rates high above the state average and far exceeding that of White students. More than one-third (35.4%) of Latino students were chronically absent during the 2021-22 school year, and 29% were still chronically absent in 2022-23.⁴⁰ Female absentee rates for each demographic group were virtually the same in 2023. However, the chronic absentee rate for Latina English Learners was markedly higher than for all Hispanics in the 2021-22 school year and continued elevated in the 2022-23 year.

TABLE 9. CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AMONG CA K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

	Statewide	Hispanic	Latina English Learners	Non-Hispanic White	Black	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian American
2022-23	24.9%	28.9%	30.4%	19.7%	36.6%	36.3%	10.2%
2021-22	30.0%	35.4%	37.8%	23.2%	42.5%	43.6%	11.4%
2020-21	14.3%	17.1%	17.9%	10.0%	26.8%	26.9%	3.9%
2019-20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2018-19	12.1%	13.4%	13.2%	9.9%	22.5%	21.8%	4.3%

**Data not collected due to mass school closures during COVID-19 lockdowns.*

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION



The high school graduation rate for California's Latinas rose to 88% in the 2021-22 academic year, higher than the overall high school graduation rate of 87%.

As with other educational indicators, high school graduation rates faltered in either 2020 or 2021 in the midst of the pandemic. The national high school graduation rate jumped to a high of 87% in 2020 before dipping to 86% in 2021, reversing a years-long upward trend. The same dip occurred for Hispanic and White graduation rates in 2022 (Table 10).⁴¹ The gap between Hispanic and White graduation rates remained constant at 7 percentage points, down from 8-9 percentage points in 2017 and 2018.^{42, 43}

TABLE 10. U.S. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES, 2017-2021

	Total	Hispanics	Non Hispanic White
2021	86%	82%	89%
2020	87%	83%	90%
2019	86%	82%	89%
2018	85%	81%	89%
2017	85%	80%	89%

TABLE 11. CA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES, 2017-2023

	Total	Hispanics	Non-Hispanic White	Latinas	Non-Hispanic White women	Latina English Learners	Latina Foster Youth	Asian Amer Women	Black Women
2023	86%	84%	90%	87%	91%	76%	66%	96%	82%
2022	87%	85%	91%	88%	93%	74%	66%	96%	83%
2021	84%	81%	88%	85%	91%	72%	61%	95%	79%
2020	84%	82%	88%	86%	90%	73%	65%	94%	82%
2019	85%	83%	89%	86%	91%	71%	61%	95%	81%
2018	83%	81%	87%	85%	90%	72%	61%	95%	79%
2017	83%	80%	87%	85%	90%	71%	58%	95%	79%

California's high school graduation rate reached an all-time high of 87.4% in 2022, jumping 3.4 percentage points from 2021 (Table 11). Latinas graduated at an even higher rate of 88% in 2022. The gap between Latinas and non-Hispanic White women grew to 5.5 percentage points in 2021 before declining to 4.4 percentage points in 2022. Latina English Learners (ELs) face even greater disparities in high school graduation. Their graduation rate was nearly 14 percentage points lower than for Latinas.⁴⁴ The graduation rate for Latina foster youth has improved significantly (66%) since 2017 but trails Latinas even more than Latina ELs.⁴⁵

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Standardized tests are designed to objectively measure students' knowledge and skills but often fail to capture the abilities of students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Standardized testing has been criticized for potentially reinforcing educational inequalities, as students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional challenges in preparing for and taking these exams.⁴⁶ Latino students score lower on standardized tests than their White and Asian American counterparts, placing them at a competitive disadvantage for scholarships, internships, entry into elite programs and institutions, and other opportunities. Yet standardized tests are widely used to evaluate students' academic proficiency and schools' overall performance, aiding in the comparison of student and school performance on a broader scale. Many high-profile universities have recently reinstated the SAT/ACT requirement for undergraduate admission after years of forgoing standardized test scores, particularly during the pandemic lockdown.

K-12 students generally performed worse on assessment tests during the pandemic, and students from low-income Hispanic neighborhoods were particularly hard hit as they were more likely to be chronically absent and had less and poorer quality internet connectivity.⁴⁷ The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measures student knowledge and skills in mathematics and reading content areas. The 2022 results showed that all students nationally performed significantly worse, several points lower than in 2019 before the pandemic. Scores for mathematics were lower for Grades 4, 8, and 12 compared to 2019. The gap between Latino and White students, already wide in 2019, grew from 18 to 21 points for Grade 4. The gaps between low-poverty and high-poverty scores (35 points) and between English Learners (EL) and non-ELs (41 points) for Grade 12 were considerably higher than the scores for all students in 2022 and especially significant since Hispanic students are more likely to fall into those categories than White students.⁴⁸ Test results in California were not as poor as nationally.⁴⁹ Instead, they showed only slight improvement for students, while the gap in proficiency between Hispanic and White students remained large.

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) math and English language arts/literacy 11th-grade proficiency tests of Common Core concepts assess high school students' likelihood of success in college-level courses. The 2023 test results show that student learning and preparedness for college have not bounced back to pre-pandemic levels. Only 55% of 11th-grade students met or exceeded English state proficiency standards in 2023, down from 57% in 2019. Eleventh-grade students performed even worse on the math test; 27% met or exceeded math standards compared to 32% in 2019. Latino student performance, already lower, dropped two percentage points from 48% in 2019 to 46% in 2023, mirroring the drop for all students. In math, Latino students dropped 4.5 percentage points to 15.8% from 20.3%. The gap in scores for both tests between Latino and White students during the same period remained unchanged at over 21 percentage points for English and 24 percentage points for math.⁵⁰

The percentage of the class of 2022 that scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam was 21.6% nationally. In California, the rate was higher at 26.7% but declined since 2019, when it peaked at 29.5%. Latino high school students are less likely to be enrolled in AP classes and other advanced classes than their White peers, but progress has been made in AP exam participation by race/ethnicity between 2012 and 2022 in California. In 2022, 33% of Latino graduates took an AP exam in high school, increasing from 27% in 2012. By comparison, 38% of White graduates took an AP exam in high school in 2022, up from 32% in 2012.⁵¹ Unfortunately, **60% of AP exams taken by low-income students score less than a 3, too low for college credit**, and critics argue that other advanced programs, such as dual enrollment, offer better opportunities for high school students to earn college credit.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

In California, dual or concurrent enrollment programs offer valuable educational opportunities for high school students, who accounted for 10% of the state's Fall 2021 community college enrollment.⁵² In the 2021-22 school year, 10.2% of all public high school students enrolled in a community college course.⁵³ These initiatives enable students to simultaneously earn high school and college credits, providing a head start on their higher education journey and lowering college tuition costs. Dually enrolled Latina/o high school students can explore a variety of college-level courses, gaining exposure to different academic disciplines and career paths. This enhances their academic readiness and helps to demystify the college experience. Additionally, dual enrollment programs address educational disparities by providing underrepresented students access to college-level coursework and resources, ultimately fostering a more equitable educational landscape in the state.

Latina/o and low-income students are underrepresented in these programs. Among 12th graders, 15% of Latina/o students participate compared to 18% of White, 25% of Asian American, and 11% of Black students. There is also a shortage of qualified instructors, available courses, and awareness of the benefits, including that participation can promote success among middle- and lower-achieving students.⁵⁴



In 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 368 into law, a bill authored by Assemblymember Chris Holden and co-sponsored by HOPE and The Education Trust–West. Among other things, AB 368 was key in providing a definition in state law for students who are "underrepresented in higher education," including students who are first-time college students, low-income, current or former foster youth, homeless, students with disabilities, and students with dependent children. In doing so, it clarifies the intent of CCAP partnerships to expand dual enrollment opportunities for these student populations. AB 368 also mandates the Community College Chancellor's office to report to the Legislature, key demographics on CCAP participation and success, such as student enrollment numbers (by gender and ethnicity) and course completion rates. Together, these strategies enhance access to dual enrollment programs and provide the state with tools to develop data-informed strategies that better assess and expand these programs for our most vulnerable students.

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT AND OUTCOMES

The share of Hispanics enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions nationally increased from 17% of all students in 2019 to 20.6% in Fall 2021. In California, 43.8% of students enrolled in all degree-granting postsecondary institutions in Fall 2021 were Hispanic, up from 42% in Fall 2017. White students were 27.5% in Fall 2021.⁵⁵ Of all the students enrolled in the California Community Colleges (CCC) in the Fall 2022 quarter, 50% were Latino, the same as in Fall 2019, and 55% of the total enrolled female population were Latinas in Fall 2022, increasing from 52% in 2019.⁵⁶ Hispanic students were nearly 48% of all California State University (CSU) students in Fall 2022, up from 43% in Fall 2019.⁵⁷

College enrollment among recent high school graduates has dropped since the start of the pandemic. Of recent high school completers in the U.S. in 2022, 58% of Latinos enrolled in college, down from 63% in 2019. The percentage of non-Hispanic White recent high school completers who enrolled in college also dropped from 68% to 64%.⁵⁸

The same pattern was evident in California, where the statewide college-going rate dropped from 65% in 2019 to 62% in 2021. White recent completers dropped from 72.5% to 68% and Hispanics from 58% to 55%. Female recent high school completers are more likely to enroll in college than male recent completers, and they experienced less of a drop through the pandemic than men between 2019 and 2021. Nevertheless, the college-going rates of Latinas (61.7%) and Black women (61.2%) were over 12 percentage points lower than for White women in 2020-21 (Table 12). Black women experienced a much larger drop in their college-going rate between 2019 and 2021 than either Latinas or White women. Latina foster youth recent completers are less likely to enroll in college and experienced a larger drop, from 57% to 52.5%. Finally, Latina EL recent completers were even less likely to enroll but saw an increase to 41.5% from 40% in 2018.⁵⁹

The percentage of Hispanic high school students meeting UC/CSU requirements increased through the pandemic to nearly 45% in 2021 before dipping to 43.5% in 2022.

TABLE 12. RECENT CA HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETERS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION, 2020-21

	College-Going Rate	Percentage Drop from 2019	University of California	California State University	California Community College	Private 2- and 4-Year College	Out-of-State 2- and 4-Year College
Latinas	61.7%	2.3	6.4%	13.8%	34.4%	3.5%	3.5%
White Women	73.8%	2.7	8.2%	10.6%	32.8%	4.1%	19.9%
Asian Women	88.0%	0.1	28.1%	16.3%	26.7%	5.9%	11.0%
Black Women	61.5%	5.4	6.1%	11.8%	28.0%	4.5%	11.2%
All Students	62.2%	2.7	7.9%	11.6%	31.9%	3.2%	7.6%

*Asian category excludes Filipinos and Pacific Islanders

A greater percentage of recent Latina high school completers enrolled in the University of California (UC) system and private colleges in the 2020-21 academic year during the pandemic compared to 2019, while enrollment rates for the CSU system, community colleges, and out-of-state colleges fell. The same trend could be seen for White women.

TABLE 13. PERCENTAGE OF CA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING UC/CSU REQUIREMENTS⁶⁰

	Total	Hispanic	White	Latinas	White Women	Asian* Women	Black Women
2023	52.4%	44.6%	57.9%	50.6%	62.8%	82.0%	49.0%
2022	51.4%	43.5%	57.2%	50.2%	63.0%	81.6%	48.0%
2021	52.1%	44.7%	56.6%	51.2%	62.1%	80.9%	49.3%
2020	50.9%	43.8%	56.0%	50.2%	61.6%	79.4%	47.1%
2019	50.5%	43.6%	55.2%	50.1%	60.6%	79.3%	46.5%

*Asian category excludes Filipinos and Pacific Islanders

The percentage of the state’s Hispanic high school graduating students who met UC/CSU admissions requirements increased unevenly through the pandemic to nearly 45% in 2023 (Table 13), solid progress from 2013 when only 29% of Hispanic high school graduates met UC/CSU requirements. Latina ELs meeting UC/CSU requirements in 2023 rose to 28.1% from 27.5% in 2022, and Latina Foster youth increased from 25.1% in 2023 from only 23.5% in 2022. The share of UC undergraduate students who are Hispanic inched up from just below to just above 25% of all undergraduate students between Fall 2019 and Fall 2022 but increased more significantly from 22.5% in Fall 2015. Latinas comprised over 15% of all UC undergraduate students in Fall 2022 compared to 13% in 2015.⁶¹

TABLE 14. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, AGES 25 AND OLDER, 2018, 2022⁶²

	U.S.						CA					
	2018			2022			2018			2022		
	Total	Latinas	White women									
Less than HS Grad	11.7%	29.1%	6.4%	10.4%	25.3%	5.2%	16.2%	33.5%	5.0%	15.3%	29.8%	4.1%
HS Grad	26.9%	26.7%	26.2%	26.1%	26.7%	24.9%	20.7%	25.2%	17.9%	20.5%	25.3%	16.9%
Some College (includes AA)	28.9%	25.7%	30.8%	27.9%	25.7%	29.7%	28.8%	26.3%	33.5%	27.2%	26.4%	31.3%
BA/BS Degree	20.0%	12.6%	22.3%	21.6%	14.8%	24.1%	21.3%	10.5%	26.2%	22.5%	12.6%	28.2%
Graduate or Prof Degree	12.6%	6.0%	14.3%	14.0%	7.5%	16.1%	12.9%	4.4%	17.4%	14.4%	5.7%	19.6%

More than 18% of Latinas in California had at least a bachelor’s degree in 2022, compared to nearly 48% of White women, a gap of 30 percentage points.

In 2022, 22.3% of Latinas in the U.S. aged 25 and over had at least a bachelor’s degree— the share of Latinas with at least a bachelor’s degree improved by 3.7 percentage points since 2018 (Table 14). However, there was a gap of 18 percentage points between Latinas and White women, the same as in 2018. In California, 18.3% of Latinas had at least a bachelor’s degree in 2022, a significant increase from 14.9% in 2018. By comparison, only 14.7% of Latino males 25 and over had at least a bachelor’s degree. Compared to 47.8% of White women 25 and older who have at least a bachelor’s degree, the gap in California between Latinas and White women is considerably larger in the state at 29.5 percentage points and even larger than the gap of 28.7 percentage points in 2018. Although significant gaps between Latinas and White women persist, the rates of baccalaureate and graduate or professional degree attainment for Latinas continue to improve.

The national 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who first enrolled at 4-year degree-granting institutions improved from 62% for the 2012 cohort to 64.5% for the 2015 cohort. The 6-year graduation rate for Latinas also increased from 60.4% for the 2012 cohort to 62.6% for the 2015 cohort but trailed behind White women, who increased from a 68.6% graduation rate to 70.5%. However, the gap in graduation rates between Latinas and White women has steadily decreased to only 7.7 percentage points for the 2015 cohort from 8 10 percentage points for the 2006 cohort.⁶³

TABLE 15. UC SYSTEM, SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATES, 2003 - 2016 COHORTS

	Hispanics	Non-Hispanic White	Latinas	White Women	Gap Btwn Latinas & White Women
2017	78.5%	87.1%	81.3%	89.3%	8.0
2016	79.5%	88.1%	81.9%	89.4%	7.5
2015	79.8%	88.0%	82.5%	90.2%	7.7
2014	78.7%	87.8%	81.9%	90.2%	8.3
2013	79.0%	87.3%	81.5%	88.9%	7.4
2003	72.3%	82.8%	74.2%	84.1%	9.9

The six-year graduation rates for Latinas from the UC system had steadily improved until the 2016 cohort and continued to decline for the 2017 cohort (81.3%). The gap between the graduation rates of Latina and White women has declined unevenly from 10 percentage points 20 years ago but rose to 8.0 percentage points for the 2017 cohort (Table 15).⁶⁴ While Latinas have improved their acceptance rates at the UC system, more should be done to ensure they graduate on time.

A college education translates to increased earning power with each successive degree, as Table 16 shows. Median annual salaries at the start of a career for 25 to 34-year-olds working full-time and year-round jump with each postgraduate degree attained. Additionally, STEM degree holders in engineering, computer science, and information technology earn over \$16,000 more annually among 25 to 34-year-olds compared to those working in non-STEM fields.⁶⁵ However, White workers, on average, earn higher starting salaries than Hispanic workers with the same education except at the master’s or higher degree level, where the difference is small. Earnings are also higher on average for men than for women.⁶⁶

TABLE 16. MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS, BY DEGREE, 2022⁶⁷

	Hispanic	White	Average for Workforce
High School Degree	\$37,680	\$41,810	\$39,710
Associate Degree	\$42,180	\$45,470	\$45,000
Bachelor's Degree	\$52,000	\$65,000	\$61,610
Master's or higher Degree	\$69,180	\$69,840	\$74,590

POSTSECONDARY FACULTY

Faculty are not representative of the students in California's public postsecondary institutions. Latina/o students are more likely to succeed when they have Latina/o faculty who can serve as role models and mentors.⁶⁸ Despite the large numbers of Latina/o students at degree-granting post-secondary institutions, only 3.0% of all full-time faculty were Latina faculty in Fall 2022, and 2.8% were Latino faculty. Although these figures are low, they have incrementally increased from 2.7% and 2.6% respectively in 2020. White women comprised 31.8% and White men comprised 33.6%. Latinas are even less represented (2.5%) among tenured faculty positions that are higher ranking, better paid, and secure from termination without cause.

Nearly 20% of the California community colleges tenured or tenure-track faculty were Latino men and women compared to over 54% of White faculty in 2023 (Table 17).⁶⁹ The percentage of Latina tenured or tenure-track faculty rose to 11.1% from 8.4% in 2015, or 32% growth over eight years. Asian American women faculty have seen more modest growth while growth for Black women faculty has remained stagnant since 2019. A wide gap of 18 percentage points between Latina and White women faculty has decreased from over 24 percentage points since 2015 as the percentage of White women faculty has declined. In 2022, 24% of educational administrators were Hispanic (14.1% Latinas), compared to 42% who were White.

TABLE 17. TENURED/TENURE-TRACK FACULTY, CA COMMUNITY COLLEGES, FALL 2015 TO 2022

	Hisp	White	Latinas	White Women	Black Women	Asian Amer Women
2023	20.0%	53.6%	11.1%	29.0%	3.4%	6.6%
2022	19.3%	55.3%	10.8%	29.8%	3.3%	6.5%
2021	18.5%	56.6%	10.3%	30.4%	3.4%	6.3%
2019	17.0%	58.5%	9.4%	31.2%	3.4%	5.9%
2015	15.0%	61.9%	8.4%	32.9%	2.9%	5.6%

In 2021, the student-to-faculty ratio was higher in California than in the U.S. The California ratio averaged 15.1 students per faculty at 4-year public institutions compared to 13.7 nationally and 20.3 students per faculty at 2-year institutions compared to 16.8 nationally.⁷⁰ On average, California's community college faculty teach five more students per course than faculty at 4-year institutions, although this figure has come down from seven more students in 2016.

"[My student debt delayed] my ability to purchase a house. It took me years post-graduation to save for a down payment. And I wouldn't be able to afford my home now."

–Leticia, early 50s, San Diego

"I know I wouldn't have this job without my [college] degree, and I'm grateful, but I'll start making payments on my student loans next month, and I'm worried about how I'll manage."

–Stephanie, mid-20s, Modesto

Incurring student loan debt for a postsecondary degree can still be a good investment. However, as tuition costs have risen in the past two decades, students are forced to borrow more as part of their financial aid package. The average price of an undergraduate 4-year education increased in the decade between the 2010-11 and 2020-21 academic years by 13% at public institutions and 14% at private nonprofit institutions. In California, the average cost of in-state public tuition and fees alone rose to \$8,400 annually.⁷¹

The possibility of incurring an overwhelming level of student loan debt is a genuine concern that entails a careful assessment of the financial value of the investment, which depends on the amount of the student loans and whether the student leaves college with a degree. Finding a good job after graduation also factors into the equation, as students who graduated with record-setting student debt into the poor job market of the last recession can attest.⁷²

"Half of adults who went to college said that the lifetime financial benefits of their higher education exceeded the financial costs... one-fifth said that the costs are higher."

–U.S. Federal Reserve⁷³

The national student debt stood at \$1.77 trillion as of the third quarter of 2023, with 92% of that debt in federal student loans versus private student loans. Over half (54%) of the 2021 undergraduate cohort graduated college with student loan debt.⁷⁴ The typical undergraduate owed \$29,100 at the national level upon graduating in 2021. Latina students owe \$27,029, less than the \$31,346 owed by White women. Student debt in California was lower than the national average—\$21,125 in 2020, and 46% of graduating students graduated with debt.⁷⁵

Student debt in California was lower than the national average—\$21,125 in 2020, and 46% of graduating students graduated with debt. –TICAS

Women who earn bachelor's degrees are more likely to borrow a larger amount, \$2,700 more, than men and take two years longer to repay those loans than men.⁷⁶ This higher debt load is exacerbated after graduation as interest starts to accrue and women run into the gender wage gap. The typical Latina owed \$29,302 in 2020 one year after graduation.⁷⁷

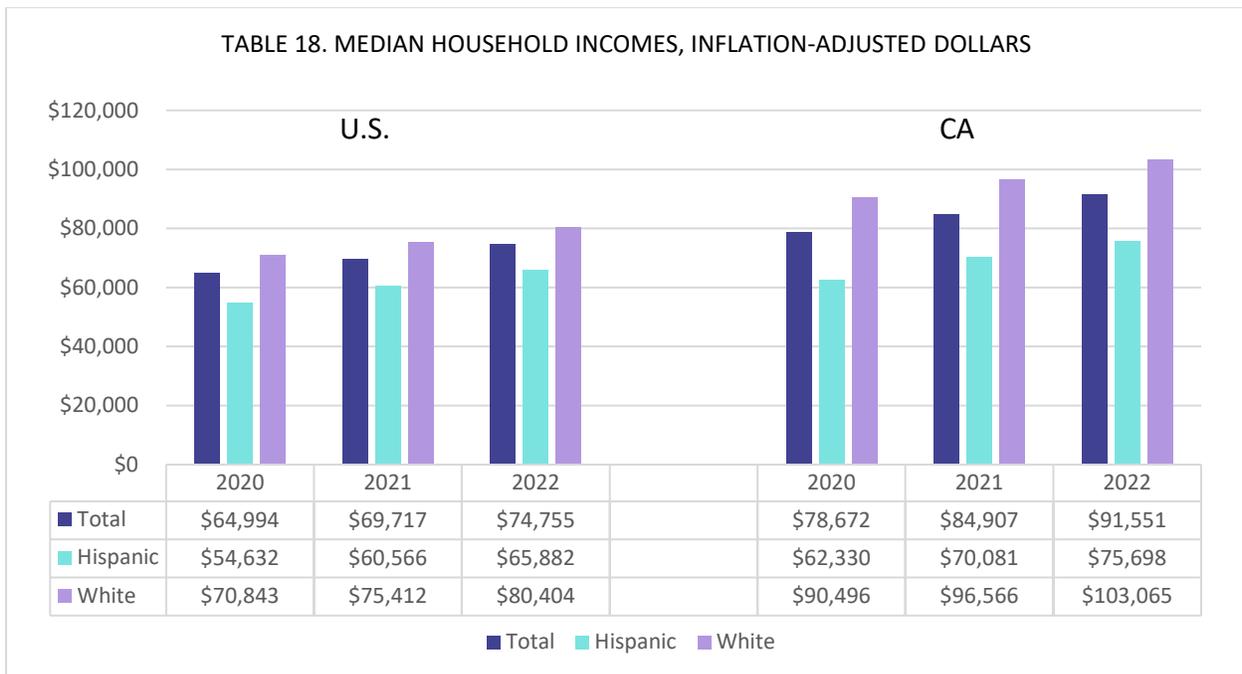
Student debt is a financial burden with far-reaching impacts that can limit disposable income. For many, paying basic living expenses leaves little savings to purchase a house, build an emergency fund, open a business, and invest toward retirement. Significant milestones such as marriage and having children are often postponed.⁷⁸ The Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plan can significantly benefit Latinas facing student loan challenges. It is designed to alleviate the burden of high education costs by tailoring monthly repayment schedules based on income and family size. For Latinas who encounter wage gaps and economic disparities, the IDR plan offers a flexible and manageable approach to repaying student loans and reducing the risk of economic strain. The IDR plan can empower Latinas to pursue higher education without the fear of overwhelming debt, fostering financial stability and educational opportunities for a more inclusive and equitable future.⁷⁹

INCOME AND THE LATINO MARKET

Latino household income in California was only 73% of White household income in 2022, increasing from 69% in 2020. Latino per capita income was 55% of White per capita income.



The typical annual Latino household income was 82% of the typical White, non-Hispanic household, a difference of \$14,500 in 2022 (Table 18). While the gap is significant, it is narrower than the gap in 2020 of \$16,200, pointing to above-average growth in Latino household incomes.⁸⁰ Median household incomes are generally higher in California than national figures, but the gap between Latino and White household income is also greater than nationally. Latino median household income was only 73% of White household income, a difference of \$27,600 and a considerably larger gap than at the national level. The gap narrowed since 2020, but only by \$566 compared to \$1,700 nationally.



Per capita income, or income earned per person, accounts for typically larger Latino households that pool contributions from more people living in a household (Table 19).⁸¹ The national Latino median per capita income (for ages 16 and older with earnings) in 2022 was \$26,830, only slightly more than half (54.7%) of the per capita income of non-Hispanic Whites. The per capita income gap improved from 2018 when it was 51.4%; the median Latino per capita income was 3.3 cents higher relative to White per capita income than four years prior.

Hispanics are less likely to be employed in the highest-paying occupations, which results in lower earnings than for White and Asian workers. Only 25% of employed Hispanics work in the “Management, professional, and related” job category compared with 43% of White workers; 30% of employed Latinas and 22% of Latino males work in this high-paying category, compared to 48% of White women. Instead, Latinas are overrepresented (57%) in lower-paying jobs in service occupations such as housekeeping and in sales and Office occupations, compared to 44% of White women. Latinas are also more likely to work in education and health services (29%).⁸²

TABLE 19. MEDIAN ANNUAL PER CAPITA INCOME, 2022

	Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic	Income gap (cents to the dollar)
U.S.	\$26,830	\$49,045	54.7¢
California	\$27,240	\$66,508	40.9¢
Bakersfield	\$20,585	\$42,387	48.6¢
El Centro	\$21,598	\$40,324	53.6¢
Fresno	\$22,567	\$49,664	45.4¢
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim	\$27,053	\$73,080	37.0¢
Merced	\$21,810	\$41,302	52.8¢
Modesto	\$22,797	\$46,313	49.2¢
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario	\$25,323	\$48,652	52.0¢
San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad	\$30,271	\$63,494	47.7¢
San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley	\$38,334	\$97,536	39.3¢
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara	\$34,406	\$102,381	33.6¢

In California, Latino per capita income was even lower at only 40.9%, or 40.9 cents for every dollar of White per capita income, but an improvement from 38.5% in 2018. Latino per capita income continues to lag far behind White per capita income, especially in the Los Angeles, San Jose (Silicon Valley), and San Francisco metropolitan regions at less than 40 cents for Latinos for every dollar for White non-Hispanics. At the national and state levels, as well as in the largest metropolitan regions, the ratio of Latino per capita income to White per capita income improved since 2018, except in the Silicon Valley, which decreased from 34.8%.

The U.S. Latino market is larger than India, the 5th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of \$3.2 trillion in 2021.

– 2023 Latino Donor Collaborative U.S. Latino GDP Report, Seidman Research Institute

Despite lower household and per capita incomes, the sheer number of Latinos combines to form a substantial economic engine. In 2021, the U.S. Latino market was the 5th largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$3.2 trillion, growing 2.5 times faster than non-Latino GDP.⁸³ Latino GDP and consumer consumption growth over the past decade was due to growth in income through increased educational attainment and entrepreneurialism combined with population growth.⁸⁴ At \$682.4 billion, California’s Latino GDP is the largest Latino state economy and is projected to drive the state’s economy as the Latino population grows.

WAGE INEQUALITY



*“I see women getting less pay in administrative roles. I've been ... on search committees and I feel like women get less pay a lot of times.”
—Christina, mid-30s, Inland Empire*

The wage gap remains a persistent challenge for Latinas, highlighting systemic disparities in pay compared to their White counterparts. Latinas earn significantly fewer cents on the dollar for every dollar earned by White men. This wage gap has detrimental consequences for Latina workers, impacting their financial security and overall well-being even into retirement.

Various factors contribute to the wage gap. For example, occupational segregation, where Latina workers are concentrated in industries and occupations such as the care industries with significantly lower pay, perpetuates the income disparity. Latina workers are younger on average, meaning that they have attained less education and are less likely to hold senior positions with higher wages. Women are more likely to work part-time and seasonally than men.⁸⁵ They are also more likely to take time off or exit the workforce to bear children and for childcare, which impacts their earning potential.

Discrimination and bias also play a role in perpetuating the wage gap. Latinas experience unequal treatment in the workplace, with fewer educational and career advancement opportunities that hinder Latina’s access to higher-paying jobs. Additionally, average earnings in occupations with larger numbers of women are lower, and women are on average paid less than men in the same occupation, doing the same work. For example, Latina nurses are, on average, paid 25% less than White male nurses.⁸⁶

“A third of the gap between full-time, year-round working men and women’s wages can be explained by worker characteristics, such as age, education, industry, occupation, or work hours. However, roughly 70% cannot be attributed to measurable differences between workers. At least some of this unexplained portion of the wage gap is the result of discrimination.” —U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau⁸⁷

The typical working woman with any earnings (either full- or part-time) in the U.S. earns less than the typical man—73 cents for every dollar earned by a man in 2022, or a wage gap of 28 cents. This wage gap is considerably wider between Latinas and White, non-Hispanic men at 52 cents for every dollar earned and a wage gap of 48 cents (Table 20). White women earn 74 cents for every White male dollar. White women saw an increase in inflation-adjusted earnings between 2021 and 2022, while the gender earnings ratio remained the same for Latinas.

The typical Latina working full-time in California loses \$2,104,400 over a 40-year career compared to a White man. – National Women’s Law Center⁸⁸

TABLE 20. THE WAGE GAP COMPARED TO WHITE, NON-HISPANIC MEN^{89, 90}

	U.S.						California					
	All Women w Earnings			Full-time/Yr round			All Women w Earnings			Full-time/Yr round		
	All Women	Latinas	White Women	All Women	Latinas	White Women	All Women	Latinas	White Women	All Women	Latinas	White Women
2022	.73	.52	.74	.84	.57	.81	.77	.42	.71	.89	.45	.81
2021	.73	.52	.71	.82	.57	.78	.75	.41	.70	.88	.45	.81

* Including part-time and part-year workers in wage gap calculations provides a more realistic picture of the gender wage gap since women are more likely to work part-time.

The cumulative effects of the wage gap compound over the course of a career, resulting in significant differences in lifetime earnings. The lifetime cost of the wage gap over a 40-year career for the typical Latina working full-time and year-round is \$1,218,000 compared to the typical White man. For all Latina workers, the cost is \$1,169,200 over a 40-year career.⁹¹ A Latina would have to work until the age of 90 to equal what the average White man would earn by the age of 60.⁹²

Latinas in California face a greater wage gap than nationally. Latinas with any earnings made only 42 cents for every dollar earned by a White man in 2022, a 58-cent wage gap (Table 21). By comparison, White women earned 71 cents and had a much narrower wage gap of 29 cents. Both groups saw a slight improvement from the previous year.

The lifetime cost of the wage gap over a 40-year career for the typical Latina in California is \$2,104,400 compared to the typical White man. A Latina would have to work until the age of 110 to equal what the average White man would earn by the age of 60.⁹³

Addressing the wage gap for Latina women in California requires a multifaceted approach. Implementing policies that promote pay transparency, address occupational segregation, and provide support for career advancement can contribute to closing the wage gap and building an equitable workforce. The California Equal Pay Act codifies pay transparency and equal pay protections for workers.⁹⁴ Advocacy for fair labor practices and continued awareness about the impact of the wage gap on Latina workers are essential components of building an equitable and inclusive economic landscape to increase their earning potential and professional growth trajectories.



HOPE IN ACTION



HOPE is a proud signatory of The California Equal Pay Pledge. The Equal Pay Pledge is a partnership between the Office of the First Partner, the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, and the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency to close the pay gap in California. Signatories of the Equal Pay Pledge commit to conducting an annual company-wide gender pay analysis, reviewing hiring and promotion processes and procedures to reduce unconscious bias and structural barriers, and promoting best practices that will close the pay gap to ensure fundamental equity for all workers. Since its launch in April 2019, over 200 companies have signed the pledge across both the private and public sector. You can join HOPE and take the [Equal Pay Pledge here](#).

UNEMPLOYMENT

The overall 2022 and 2023 U.S. unemployment rates of 3.6% are the lowest in decades in a labor market that has continued strong, essentially at pre-pandemic levels (Table 21). Latinas experienced consistently higher unemployment rates during the pandemic and as the country and state recovered than White women, peaking in 2020. The gap between the unemployment rates for Latinas and White women is narrower than in 2019, both nationally and in the state, but increased at the national level in 2023.

TABLE 21. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, 16 AND OVER⁹⁵

	U.S.				California			
	Total	All Hispanic	Latinas	White Women	Total	All Hispanic	Latinas	White Women
2023	3.6%	4.6%	4.6%	3.1%	4.7%	5.1%	4.9%	4.3%
2022	3.6%	4.3%	4.4%	3.1%	4.2%	4.4%	4.7%	4.0%
2021	5.3%	6.8%	7.2%	4.6%	7.2%	7.9%	8.5%	7.1%
2020	8.1%	10.4%	11.4%	7.6%	10.2%	11.7%	12.6%	10.5%
2019	3.7%	4.3%	4.7%	3.2%	4.1%	4.8%	5.2%	4.2%

The top metropolitan regions with large Latino populations also saw low unemployment levels in 2022 (Table 22). Many regions were at least at pre-pandemic levels; some were significantly lower, although the Los Angeles and San Francisco regions each increased by 0.4%. In August 2023, regional unemployment rates increased, with some regions experiencing more than a one-percentage-point increase. Notably, El Centro, which tends to see higher unemployment rates than other urban centers, increased by five percentage points after a relatively low rate in 2022.

TABLE 22. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, AGES 16 AND OVER BY MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS OF CALIFORNIA, 2019-2023⁹⁶

	2019	April 2020	2020	2021	2022	Aug 2023
Bakersfield	7.8%	18.7%	12.8%	9.9%	6.9%	8.1%
El Centro	20.7%	22.2%	22.2%	17.5%	14.7%	19.7%
Fresno	7.3%	16.9%	11.7%	9.1%	6.4%	7.0%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim	4.1%	18.8%	11.5%	8.2%	4.5%	5.4%
Merced	8.2%	18.7%	12.5%	10.3%	7.7%	8.6%
Modesto	6.1%	17.5%	11.0%	8.3%	5.4%	6.5%
Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura	3.6%	13.9%	8.7%	6.2%	3.7%	4.6%
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario	4.0%	14.7%	9.9%	7.4%	4.1%	5.3%
Sacramento-Roseville-Arden-Arcade	3.6%	14.0%	8.9%	6.4%	3.7%	4.5%
San Diego-Carlsbad	3.2%	15.0%	9.4%	6.5%	3.4%	4.3%
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward	2.6%	13.2%	8.3%	5.6%	3.0%	4.0%
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara	2.6%	12.0%	7.2%	4.9%	2.7%	3.9%
Stockton-Lodi	5.9%	17.8%	11.5%	8.6%	5.2%	6.2%

Hispanics drive growth in the labor force with consistently high labor force participation rates (63.8%) well above Whites (60.2%) in 2023 (Table 23).⁹⁷ They made up 19% of the total labor force in 2022, up from 18% the previous year, and are projected to account for 78% of net new workers through 2030.^{98, 99} The Latina labor force participation rate, 56.0% in 2023, is also consistently higher than White women (54.7%).¹⁰⁰ The labor force participation rates in California mirror national trends across groups but at slightly lower rates.

TABLE 23. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, 2021 - 2023^{101, 102}

	U.S.					CA				
	Total	Hispanic	White	Latinas	White Women	Total	Hispanic	White	Latinas	White Women
2023	60.3%	63.8%	60.2%	56.0%	54.7%	59.1%	61.8%	59.4%	54.4%	52.9%
2022	62.2%	66.3%	62.0%	57.3%	57.1%	59.3%	62.6%	59.5%	54.0%	52.4%
2021	61.7%	65.5%	61.5%	55.8%	55.4%	56.7%	58.6%	57.1%	49.9%	50.2%

LATINA OWNED BUSINESS

"It's enjoyable, I do love it. [When I started my business] I just thought let's see what happens, and I ended up selling a lot ... that first year and every year after that. I wasn't used to making that kind of money!"

–Adrianna, mid-30s, Bakersfield

"I've dreamed of having a restaurant using family recipes. I even have the name picked out."

–Leticia, early 50s, San Diego



Hispanic-owned businesses in the U.S. made up 6.9% of all employer businesses in 2021, an increase of over 74,400 firms, or 22% growth, since 2018. These businesses saw nearly 26% growth in revenue in the same period. However, Hispanic-owned businesses tend to have less revenue and smaller payroll than non-Hispanic owned businesses and secure smaller government and corporate contracts.^{103, 104} Despite the pandemic closures, Hispanic-owned business metrics were positive for revenue, number of employees, and payroll. Moreover, the percentage of all employer businesses that are Hispanic owned grew steadily through 2019 (Table 24).

TABLE 24. HISPANIC-OWNED EMPLOYER BUSINESSES IN U.S.

	# Hisp Employer Businesses	Sales, Revenue (thousands)	# Employees	Annual Payroll (thousands)	% of All Employer Businesses
2021	406,086	\$572,911,936	2,985,954	\$124,404,221	6.9%
2020	375,256	\$472,264,280	2,939,740	\$105,582,859	6.5%
2019	346,836	\$463,280,122	2,930,548	\$108,355,725	6.0%
2018	331,625	\$455,644,682	2,972,140	\$101,103,299	5.8%

Latinas had the highest rate of new business creation, following a trend from past recessions when they were faced with financial difficulties.^{105, 106} Between 2019 and 2022, Latina-owned employer businesses grew 15.6%, faster than White-owned businesses. Latina-owned employer businesses are also recovering well from the pandemic closures—revenue increased sharply in 2021 after dropping in 2020 (Table 25). Latina-owned employer businesses had similar positive growth through the pandemic, although at a slower pace than total Hispanic-owned businesses.

TABLE 25. LATINA-OWNED EMPLOYER BUSINESSES IN U.S.

	# Employer Businesses	Sales, Revenue (thousands)	# Employees	Annual Payroll (thousands)	% of Women-owned Employer Businesses
2021	103,793	\$115,755,049	698,615	\$26,647,860	8.1%
2020	99,873	\$93,070,746	692,461	\$22,521,800	8.1%
2019	89,785	\$97,393,882	731,527	\$23,758,685	7.4%
2018	84,496	\$91,103,725	722,654	\$21,975,675	7.4%

California has 15.5 million Latinos with \$320 billion annual purchasing power and 800,000 Latino business owners.

—Latino Corporate Directors Association¹⁰⁷

Hispanic-owned employer businesses in California numbered 88,920, with 690,768 employees and an annual payroll of \$31,798,548 in 2021. They represented 11.4% of all employer businesses in the state. Employer businesses owned by Latinas alone numbered nearly 21,000, or 24% of all Hispanic-owned employer businesses (Table 26), although the number increases by 50% when including Hispanic employer businesses co-owned equally by women and men.¹⁰⁸ Combined, there were 396,475 employer and non-employer firms in California in 2019. The number of Latina-owned employer businesses in California grew nearly 26.5% between 2018 and 2021. Latina-owned businesses suffered declines in either 2020 or 2021 through the pandemic, unlike at the national level, but several top metrics have either recovered or are near recovering from 2019 levels.

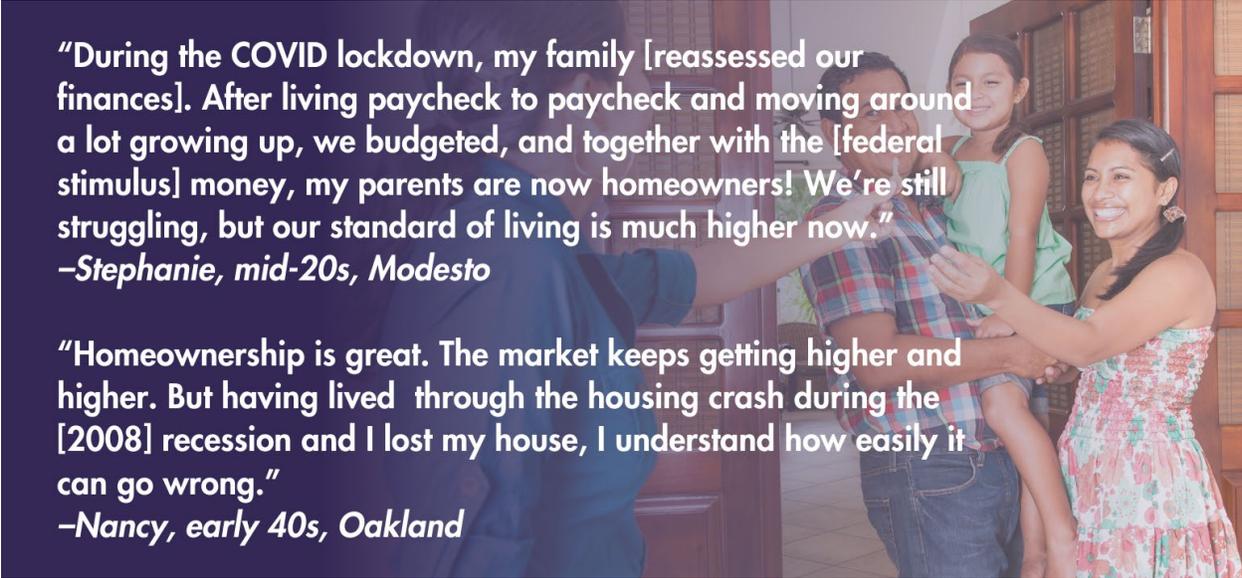
TABLE 26. LATINA-OWNED EMPLOYER BUSINESSES IN CALIFORNIA

	Latina-owned Employer Businesses				Latina-owned Non-employer Businesses		
	# Employer Businesses	# Employees	Annual Payroll (thousands)	% of Women-owned Employer Businesses	# Latina Non-Employer Businesses	Sales, Revenue (thousands)	% of Women Non-Employer Businesses
2021	20,943	146,902	\$5,920,573	11.8%	*	*	*
2020	21,516	143,035	\$5,093,572	12.5%	*	*	*
2019	18,475	157,576	\$5,947,036	11.4%	378,000	\$9,122, 622	26.6%
2018	16,560	150,962	\$4,495,348	11.0%	367,000	\$8,599,209	25.8%

*Data not available as of April 2024.

Several interviewed respondents either operate their own businesses or aspire to establish one. They mentioned the potential for higher earnings compared to salaried positions and the added benefits of increased freedom and flexibility. Christina, a woman in her 30s who identified as possessing a strong work ethic and natural leadership skills, remarked, “When you have your own business, your success is up to you.”

HOMEOWNERSHIP



“During the COVID lockdown, my family [reassessed our finances]. After living paycheck to paycheck and moving around a lot growing up, we budgeted, and together with the [federal stimulus] money, my parents are now homeowners! We’re still struggling, but our standard of living is much higher now.”

–Stephanie, mid-20s, Modesto

“Homeownership is great. The market keeps getting higher and higher. But having lived through the housing crash during the [2008] recession and I lost my house, I understand how easily it can go wrong.”

–Nancy, early 40s, Oakland

The median home sales price in the U.S. was \$457,500 in 2022.¹⁰⁹ While home prices have slipped through 2023 to \$417,700 in the fourth quarter, the median value of a house (market value minus mortgage and loans) increased 44% from 2019 to 2022, making homeownership an excellent investment when inflation is high and the stock market is volatile.^{110, 111}

Despite the soaring price of real estate and high mortgage interest rates, owning a home is still financially beneficial for those who can afford it.¹¹² The single largest factor in building wealth for Latino households is accruing home equity as real estate appreciates and mortgage debt decreases. But scraping together the cash for a downpayment and associated closing costs can be daunting for those struggling to cover their living expenses. Younger people who have not had time to accumulate savings are especially likely to be priced out of the housing market.¹¹³ Nevertheless, first-time Hispanic home buyers— typically 10 years younger than White buyers— are driving the upward trend in homeownership.¹¹⁴

Homeownership rates in the country peaked in 2020 as demand increased during the first year of the pandemic before dipping down in 2021 (Table 27). Between 2021 and 2023, the total and White non-Hispanic homeownership rates were virtually flat, but the Latino rate increased by one whole percentage point. Latino homeownership is only two-thirds of the White homeownership rate, but the trend toward closing the gap has continued for over a decade as Latinos comprise a growing share of homebuyers.¹¹⁵

TABLE 27. ANNUAL HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES, U.S. AND CA^{116, 117, 118}

	Home-ownership Rates, Total in U.S.	Home-ownership Rates, Hispanics in U.S.	Home-ownership Rates, White, non-Hisp in US	Gap in Rates - Hisp & White	Home-ownership Rates, Total in CA	Home-ownership Rates, Hispanics in CA	Home-ownership Rates, White, non-Hisp in CA	Gap in Rates - Hisp & White
2023	65.7%	49.5%	74.3%	24.8	55.8%	-	-	
2022	65.9%	48.7%	74.4%	25.7	55.3%	48.6%	64.5%	15.9
2021	65.5%	48.4%	74.1%	25.7	54.2%	45.6%	64.5%	18.9
2020	66.6%	50.1%	75.0%	24.9	55.9%	44.9%	63.4%	18.5

The median value of home equity in California was higher for White households than for Latino households: \$450,000 vs \$330,000 in 2020. –Brookings Institution

California has the second lowest homeownership rate in the nation, behind New York. The state homeownership rate is more than 10 percentage points behind the national rate, and the Latino homeownership rate (48.6%) is 16 percentage points lower than the White non-Hispanic rate (64.5%). The Latino homeownership rate for California mirrors their national rate, as Latino homebuyers in the state make disproportional gains in the state’s housing market. Between 2020 and 2022, the gap in homeownership rates between Latinos and the White homeownership rates in California declined by 2.6 percentage points as Latinos have purchased homes at above-average rates. However, only 39.7% of all Latinos in the state hold equity in their own homes, compared to 58.4% of white households.¹¹⁹

Notoriously high real estate prices and low inventory keep California homeownership rates lower than other states. The median home price was \$822,300 in 2022 and is predicted to rise to \$860,300 in 2024, an increase of nearly 5% in two years.¹²⁰ Unsurprisingly, only 17% of Latino households in the state could afford a median-priced home.¹²¹ Latinos have accounted for 76% of homeownership growth since 2013, often relying on the combined resources of multigenerational, extended families to afford the purchase.¹²²

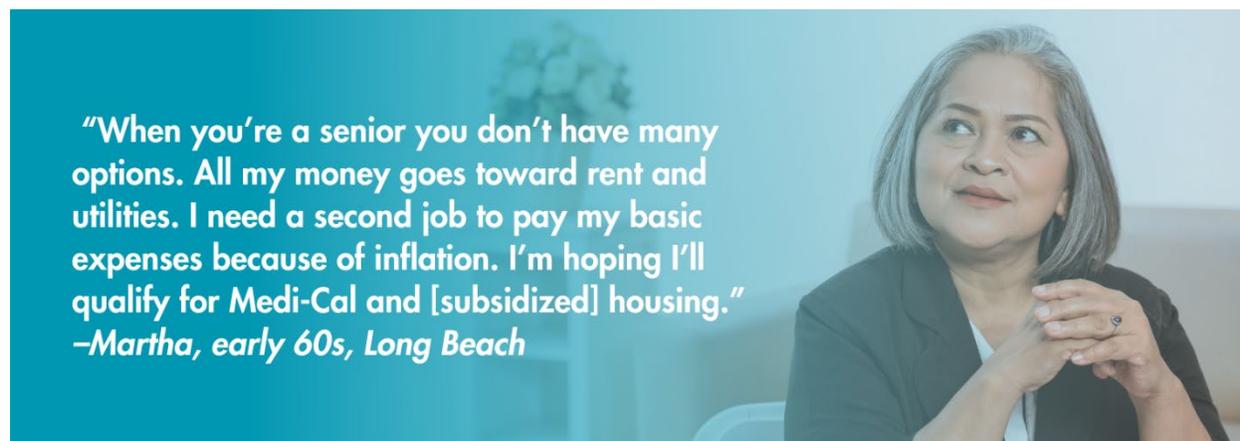
The cost of real estate in the state’s urban centers is even higher than the state median. The median home price in metropolitan Los Angeles was \$847,400 in 2022 and well over \$1.4 million in the Bay Area and Silicon Valley. Many Latinos who were priced out of expensive housing markets moved to more affordable areas. Latino homeownership has surged in the Inland Empire, where the homeownership rate was nearly 23 percentage points higher than in the Los Angeles metro area, which, along with San Jose, has the lowest homeownership rates (Table 28). The homeownership rate grew by 2 percentage points in the Inland Empire and by 3.5 percentage points in the Bakersfield metro region while falling nearly 5 percentage points in the San Jose metro region. The median cost of a home in the Inland Empire was a more affordable \$534,900, creating a draw for prospective homebuyers priced out elsewhere. Higher homeownership rates in the Central Valley also reflect the more affordable median cost of homes there.¹²³

TABLE 28. LATINO HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES IN TOP METROPOLITAN REGIONS, 2020-2022

	Bakersfield	Fresno	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim	Riverside- San Bernardino – Ontario (Inland Empire)	San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad	San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara
2022	55.5%	46.2%	38.7%	61.3%	42.2%	42.0%	35.4%
2021	53.7%	46.4%	39.7%	59.3%	39.8%	40.7%	40.3%
2020	52.0%	45.1%	39.2%	59.1%	41.0%	41.2%	40.2%

The impact of rising inflation is evident in median monthly rents that increased to \$1,300 nationally in 2022 but were 44% higher in California at \$1,870 and skewed even higher in dense urban regions such as Los Angeles (\$1,887) and San Jose (\$2,601) where households are more likely to be in financial distress.¹²⁴ In 2022, 44% of the state population and 61% of the population of Los Angeles were renters.

WEALTH AND POVERTY



Poverty rates fell below pre-pandemic levels as the effects of the economic shock of COVID-related closures waned. Before the pandemic, the national poverty rate had been steadily declining since 2012 as the effects of the Great Recession diminished. Yet everyday life has become increasingly unaffordable for many as inflation continues to bite into the value of wages and savings.

Latinos are more likely to live in poverty and they endured greater financial losses than White non-Hispanics during the pandemic. The 2022 national Hispanic poverty rate (16.8%) is much higher than the White, non-Hispanic rate (9.5%). The gap in the poverty rates between Hispanics and the total population narrowed both nationally and in California between 2020 and 2022.¹²⁵

Latina poverty rates have also declined steadily since the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown (Table 30). The 2022 poverty rate for Latinas in the U.S. dropped to 18.7% from 19.3% in 2020, but the gap with White women was 8.3 percentage points (Table 29). However, in 2021, the gap was nearly 10 percentage points. The poverty rate for Latinas was more than double that of White women. However, the gap in poverty rates between Latinas and White women has narrowed significantly since 2012, when the gap was 15.5 percentage points.¹²⁶

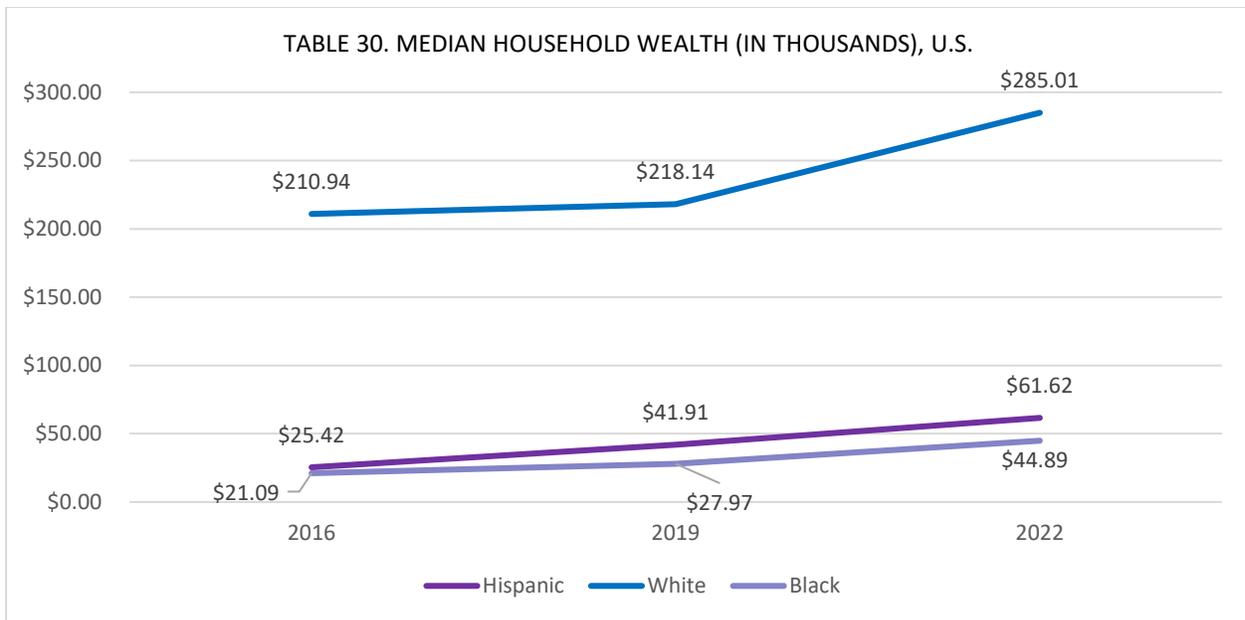
TABLE 29. POVERTY RATES

	U.S.						California					
	Total	Hispanic	White non-Hisp	Latinas	White women	Gap	Total	Hispanic	White non-Hisp	Latinas	White women	Gap
2022	12.6%	16.8%	9.5%	18.7%	10.4%	8.3	12.2%	14.9%	9.2%	16.4%	9.8%	6.6
2021	12.8%	17.5%	9.5%	18.8%	8.9%	9.9	12.3%	15.1%	9.0%	16.7%	9.6%	7.1
2020	12.8%	18.3%	9.3%	19.3%	10.4%	8.9	12.6%	16.2%	8.8%	17.9%	9.4%	8.5

Poverty rates for Latinas are higher than for Latino males in all age categories. In 2022, 16.9% of Latinas aged 65 and over lived in poverty, compared to 13.5% of Latino men 65 and over. Additionally, the poverty rates of White women 65 and over diverged less from the total rate than the poverty rate for Latinas 65 and over. Older Latinas were more likely to feel the effects of the economic disruption than older White women, a pattern seen during previous economic downturns. White women are much less likely to suffer financial reversals during economic downturns than Latinas, and they recover more quickly.

California’s poverty rates also gradually dropped between 2020 and 2022, roughly tracking national rates. However, poverty rates for Latinas in California were 2.3 percentage points lower than national Latina poverty rates in 2022— fewer Latinas live below the poverty line in the state than nationally. Moreover, the gap in poverty rates between Latinas and White women decreased from 8.5 percentage points to 6.6 percentage points between 2020 and 2022, far more than the drop in the gap between women nationally (Table 30).¹²⁷

Median wealth, or the difference between assets and liabilities, has increased significantly between 2019 and 2022 in the U.S. Median wealth was \$396,000 in 2022, while Asian household wealth stood at \$536,000, by far the highest median wealth. Although Hispanic wealth grew by 47% between 2019 and 2022, the gap in wealth between White and Hispanic households increased by over \$47,000 as White households made even greater gains. White, non-Hispanic households had a median net worth of \$285,000 in 2022, compared to only \$61,600 for Latino households. In fact, the ratio of wealth between White and Hispanic families has grown steadily since the Great Recession as White household wealth has grown disproportionately.¹²⁸ The typical Latino household held only about 20% of the wealth held by the typical White household (Table 30).¹²⁹



Such disparate levels of wealth are partly due to differences in asset class ownership and sources of income. White families are more likely to own the types of assets that drive wealth acquisition and that experienced the highest increases during the pandemic: homes, stocks, and businesses. Latino household wealth is more likely to consist of homes, which do appreciate over time, and vehicles, which do not. Housing contributes the largest source of wealth for Hispanic households; the net worth of Latino homeowners is 27.7 times greater than that of Latino renters.¹³⁰ However, Latino households are less likely to own other assets that appreciate over time. They have considerably less savings on average than White households and are less likely to benefit from an inheritance. Other sources contributing to Hispanic household wealth since 2019, such as unemployment benefits, federal stimulus funds, and food stamps, were only temporary pandemic relief efforts.

In California, the typical White household held nine times the wealth of the typical Latino household. –Brookings¹³¹

In California, the median wealth of White households was about nine times that of Latino households in 2020. Latino households are less likely to own retirement accounts, hold assets in financial institutions, and have home equity than White households, and the value of the assets they do own are worth less than those of White households.¹³² Only 41% of Latino households in California hold retirement accounts compared to 68% of White households, and the median value of those accounts is \$30,000 and \$115,00, respectively. Hispanic households' median net worth, or wealth, was \$52,600 compared to \$474,800; the typical White household owned nine times the wealth of the typical Latino household.

The median value of Latino household retirement accounts is \$30,000, compared to \$115,000 for White households.

Disparities in Latino wealth relative to other groups are expected to lessen as they attain greater levels of education, improve their homeownership rate, and increase their holdings in retirement accounts and other wealth-building instruments. However, the Latinas interviewed echoed previous HOPE findings that they feel underprepared to maximize their retirement plans and would like to improve their financial literacy.

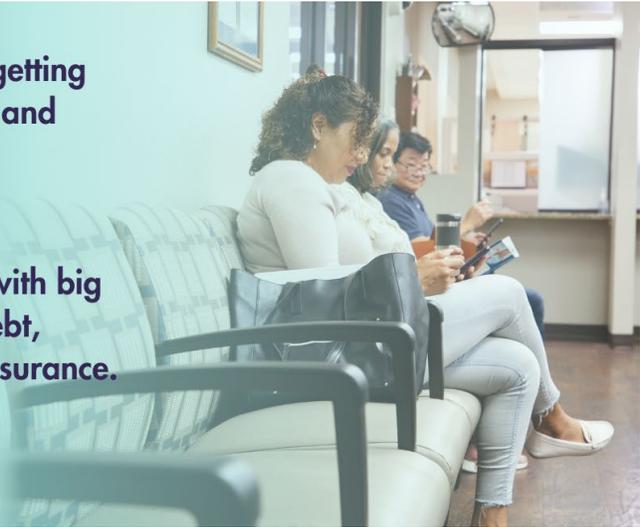
HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE AND MEDICAL DEBT

“[My husband’s and my] parents are getting older. They didn’t plan for their future and [their high] medical bills... I worry.”

– Daisy, mid-40s, Los Angeles

“I’m a cancer survivor, which left me with big problems. Medical debt, credit card debt, thousands of dollars not covered by insurance. So now I have no retirement savings.”

– Martha, early 60s, Long Beach



Economic and political parity can only be achieved when Latinas and their families have equal access to quality, affordable healthcare. Research indicates that the physical well-being of communities plays a pivotal role in bolstering economies. When employees enjoy better health, they exhibit higher rates of attendance, increased productivity, improved mental health, and a greater likelihood of engaging in education and skills development. Moreover, a flourishing economy typically brings about enhanced job opportunities, better benefits such as health insurance, and higher wages. With increased income, individuals are more likely to invest in higher education, consequently leading to advancements in both health outcomes and income levels.¹³³ The intersection of healthcare with short-term and long-term financial stability becomes most apparent when considering the challenges individuals encounter in accessing and affording medical services, as well as the considerable costs associated with delaying timely healthcare.

The cost of health care is a source of anxiety and financial stress for many. The percentage of people with high medical cost burden, where their out-of-pocket expenses for health care are greater than 10% of their annual income, was 16.8% in the U.S. and 12.8% in California in 2021.¹³⁴ Medical bills are the country's primary source of personal debt with a total of \$140 billion owed and 17.8% of people with medical debt in collections in 2020.¹³⁵ More than half of all adults have medical debt: 56% of insured adults and 59% of uninsured adults, and 23% owe more than \$10,000.

Concern about paying medical bills and the financial hardship they can cause affects both the insured and uninsured as the cost of healthcare spirals. Even for the insured, medical debt is easy to incur between high co-pays and deductibles after a medical emergency, a medical procedure or treating a chronic illness. Out-of-pocket costs coupled with the cost of insurance premiums and an inability to work due to health issues can easily lead to bills going into collections and medical bankruptcy, with devastating consequences for one’s financial status and future health care. Those without health insurance have fewer options, facing daunting health and economic outcomes.

The uninsured rate for people of all ages at the national level decreased from 8.6% in 2021 to 8.0% in 2022, continuing a downward trend (Table 31). These historically low rates are expected to rise to 10.1% by 2033 as temporary policies instituted in response to COVID-19 expire.¹³⁶

The 2022 uninsured rate for Hispanics (16.8%) was double the total uninsured rate and more than three times the White uninsured rate. Hispanics have much lower health insurance coverage compared to other groups due to their greater likelihood of holding jobs that do not offer insurance, difficulty affording insurance premiums, and citizenship/residency status.¹³⁷ For adults ages 18-64, one in four Hispanic adults (25.0%) were uninsured, far more than White (6.9%), Black (10.1%), and Asian adults (2.7%) in the first quarter 2023.¹³⁸ Among adult women ages 19-64, Latinas and American Indians were least likely to have health insurance (20% uninsured rate) and White and Asian adult women were most likely to be insured, with only a 6% uninsured rate, while 10% of Black adult women were uninsured.¹³⁹

In California, the uninsured rate declined to 6.5% in 2022, the lowest rate ever achieved, after peaking at 30% in 2010.¹⁴⁰ The Hispanic uninsured rate of 10.6% is 60% higher than the total rate and more than three times as high as the White, non-Hispanic uninsured rate (3.2%), but it also declined to a historically low level. For the state's adult women ages 19-64, 8% were uninsured in 2022, but 13% of low-income adult women ages 19-64 were uninsured.¹⁴¹

TABLE 31. UNINSURED RATES (ALL AGES)¹⁴²

	U.S.			California		
	Total	Hispanic	White, non-Hisp	Total	Hispanic	White, non-Hisp
2022	8.0%	16.8%	5.3%	6.5%	10.6%	3.2%
2021	8.6%	17.7%	5.7%	7.0%	11.7%	3.4%

Hispanic children under the age of 19 were the least likely to have health insurance coverage (8.6%) for the past two years compared to children of other race/ethnicities. By comparison, the rate of being uninsured for white, non-Hispanic children was less than half at 4.1% in 2022, although this figure increased from 3.4% the previous year.¹⁴³

The negative health and financial outcomes of low insurance rates among Latinos are exacerbated by racial bias in healthcare. According to a 2023 report from the Center for Disease Control, approximately 29% of women experienced discrimination while receiving maternity care.¹⁴⁴ Reports of discrimination were highest among Black (40%), multiracial (39%), and Hispanic (37%) women, with notably higher rates observed among those who were uninsured. Existing reporting requirements for adverse health events in hospitals lack demographic data collection, hindering efforts to grasp the extent of this issue in California.

Between 2018 and 2020, the maternal mortality rate among Black women in California stood at 45.8 per 100,000 births, surpassing that of any other racial group. Although lower for Latinas, at 14.8, their maternal mortality rate remains disproportionately higher compared to their White counterparts.¹⁴⁵ These disparities became even more concerning during the COVID-19 pandemic when they experienced a national surge of 44%.¹⁴⁶ Apart from the devastating loss of life and the associated hospital costs, these disparities have long-term implications. Children raised in single-parent households face additional economic disadvantages for communities of color.

The impact of COVID-19 was disproportionately felt by Latinos, shedding further light on the disparities in health outcomes based on race and ethnicity in both the United States and California. Statewide, they represented 55% of confirmed cases and 46% of deaths as of March 2021 despite being only 39% of the population at the time. By comparison, White non-Hispanics represented 20% of cases and 31% of deaths and comprised 37% of the population.¹⁴⁷ Aside from the health risks of contracting COVID-19, the costs associated with time lost from work and the possibility of developing long-COVID can be significant.

CONCLUSION

"It's been hard, [but] I'm optimistic that the next year will bring us good change. I feel curious ... and excited [about what's next]."
–Stephanie, mid-20s, Modesto

"I just took a huge leap of faith and I'm making it work."
–Christina, mid-30s, Inland Empire



This report updates indicators on the economic status of Latinas, providing context for how they are responding to post-pandemic financial pressures. The Latinas who were interviewed paint a picture of cautious optimism as they contend with high inflation and interest rates in a state with a high cost of living and as they have watched for signs of a possible recession. Latinas are pivotal in California's economy, contributing significantly to various sectors and driving economic growth. As a rapidly growing demographic, Latinas bring a wealth of skills and talents and take on vital roles that contribute to California communities' overall functionality and well-being. Additionally, Latinas are eager entrepreneurs, creating and running businesses that further stimulate economic activity, foster innovation, and create job opportunities.

Yet Latinas are more likely to experience barriers in their educational and business trajectories, have fewer opportunities for advancement, and face a discriminatory wage gap. However, Latinas are young, entrepreneurial, and emerging civic and political leaders. Their substantial impact on consumer spending underscores their importance to the success of the state's economy. Their purchasing power shapes market dynamics and plays a crucial role in sustaining and diversifying the business sector.

Latinas comprise a large proportion of California's school-aged children and the college-going population, foretelling the more significant influence they will wield in the state as these younger generations enter the labor market and take on leadership roles. Recognizing and fostering Latinas' economic contributions is essential for California's continued prosperity, enhancing the state's competitiveness in the national and global market.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This report documents a historical baseline for the economic status of Latinas, showcasing uneven educational outcomes, wage and leadership inequities, and population shifts as Latinas continue to recover from the devastating economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. HOPE offers the following policy recommendations to decision makers to address the barriers that impact Latinas' economic mobility across education, health care, representation, and access to economic capital.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Our report highlights that Latinas are entrepreneurs and are cautiously optimistic about their current and future economic standing. While they are expecting better outcomes over the next 10 years, they remain concerned not only about their own household's status but also the financial struggles they perceive among family and fellow community members. Their financial success depends on investments that expand access to economic capital, allow for intergenerational wealth building, increase access to financial literacy programs, and sustain growth for Latina small businesses.

FINANCIAL LITERACY AND BUILDING WEALTH:

- **Expand tax credits or subsidies for individuals who support parents and older relatives.** Many Latinas are not just planning for their own financial future; they are also investing in the livelihoods of the generations before them. Latina respondents in HOPE's interviews commented at length on the pressure of financial obligations toward their parents. Other research also underscores these instances of *reverse* wealth transfers between children and parents, where children offer financial assistance to their parents for daily expenses and retirement needs.¹⁴⁸ Policymakers should explore opportunities to support these *reverse* intergenerational wealth transfers, particularly in immigrant households between children and their parents who do not have the capital to invest in retirement or savings.
- **Continue pandemic-era investments in social safety net programs for low-income and undocumented Californians.** To mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, California invested in a series of temporary safety-net programs targeting vulnerable communities including expanded child tax credits and food and cash assistance. Research shows that these pandemic relief programs mitigated poverty substantially in 2021, with statistics showing stark increases in poverty correlated to the sunset of those temporary programs in 2022.¹⁴⁹ Our report highlights that older Latinas were more likely to feel the effects of the economic disruption than older White women, a pattern seen during previous economic downturns. As Latinas continue to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, and the state navigates budget shortfalls post pandemic, policy makers should protect investments in safety net programs to vulnerable communities and expand access to programs targeting seniors. One such program is the Cash Assistance program for Immigrants, which targets those who are 65 and older but currently excludes undocumented immigrants from participating. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, California is home to an estimated 17,000 undocumented seniors 65 and older, many of whom would benefit from this proposed expansion.

- **Conduct a targeted education campaign about California’s CalSavers Program.** In 2016, the State established the CalSavers Retirement Savings Program at the California Treasurer’s Office. State-based retirement programs like CalSavers offer a valuable opportunity for Latinas who do not have an employer-sponsored retirement plan to access retirement security. Almost half (47%) of the workers in California who are estimated to be eligible for CalSavers are Latino.¹⁵⁰ To maximize the benefit of this public retirement program, the State should invest in a targeted educational campaign for Latinas that explains the benefits of participation, engages employers and Latina small businesses, and partners with local organizations to expand the reach of the messaging. Policymakers should also consider collecting data on the demographics of Californians who have enrolled in CalSavers since its establishment to better assess gaps in participation and target educational outreach to populations of interest.

WAGE INEQUALITY

Addressing the wage gap for Latinas in California requires a multifaceted approach. Implementing policies that promote pay transparency, address occupational segregation, and provide support for career advancement can contribute to closing the wage gap and building an equitable workforce. California has been a national leader on gender equity and pay gap policy, notably through SB 973 (Jackson, 2020) which requires certain employers to report pay and demographic information for their employees to the Department of Civil Rights and SB 1162 (Limón, 2022) which requires employers to publish pay scales with job postings. Both laws strengthen pay transparency and address workplace discrimination, but more needs to be done to address the disproportionate wage gap for Latina workers. HOPE recommends the following:

- **Establish mechanisms to reward Equal Pay Pledge signatories for their commitment.** The Equal Pay Pledge is a partnership between the Office of the First Partner, the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, and the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency to close the pay gap in California. Signatories of the Equal Pay Pledge commit to conducting an annual company-wide gender pay analysis, reviewing hiring and promotion processes and procedures to reduce unconscious bias and structural barriers, and promoting best practices that will close the pay gap to ensure fundamental equity for all workers. Since its launch in April 2019, over 200 companies have signed the pledge across both the private and public sector. Policy makers should explore opportunities to build upon this meaningful work and find ways to reward companies for completing their gender-pay analysis.
- **Invest in workforce diversity programs that expand occupational opportunities for Latinas.** Latinas experience unequal treatment in the workplace, with fewer educational and career advancement opportunities that hinder Latinas’ access to higher-paying jobs. State budget investments in programs that expand career pathways for Californians, such as apprenticeships, and high quality earn-and-learn programs, foster exposure opportunities for Latinas to step into fields where they are currently underrepresented and expand their economic mobility.

Latina entrepreneurs are a key economic engine for the state. This report highlights that California's number of Latina-owned employer businesses grew nearly 23% between 2018 and 2021. Despite this, Hispanic-owned businesses tend to have less revenue, smaller payrolls than non-Hispanic owned businesses, and secure smaller government and corporate contracts.¹⁵¹ Our recommendations include increasing targeted resources for Latina-owned business and expanding data collection to better assess the economic impact of minority-owned and women-owned businesses in the State. Our recommendations include:

- **Expand financing opportunities and invest in resources that provide tailored technical assistance for women-owned and minority-owned small businesses.** HOPE recommends continued state and federal investments in women-business centers, which serve as vital resources for Latina small business owners to access entrepreneurial guidance, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Additionally, expanding financing opportunities, such as loans tailored to accommodate fluctuating capital costs due to inflation, is essential. Latina entrepreneurs often face unique challenges in accessing capital, and offering flexible financing options can help mitigate these obstacles and fuel business expansion. By investing in both infrastructure and financial instruments tailored to the specific needs of Latina-owned enterprises, policymakers can cultivate an environment where these businesses thrive, driving economic prosperity for Latina entrepreneurs.
- **Improve current mechanisms to evaluate data on minority-owned and women-owned small businesses.** Policy makers should evaluate data that disaggregates metrics for individual small businesses, including their annual revenue, number of employees, and the demographics of the small business owner. Given the varied definitions of small businesses within state law and the diverse array of programs available to support them, improving current data systems that store this information would enable policymakers to accurately assess the landscape and tailor outreach efforts to address the specific challenges faced by minority-owned and women-owned businesses. By facilitating informed decision-making and targeted interventions, this database would serve as a valuable tool in promoting equity and fostering the success of California's diverse small business community.
- **Invest in programs focused on growing the number of Latinas participating in supplier diversity programs in the private and public sector.** Latina-owned businesses continue experiencing pay gaps in addition to securing drastically smaller contracts that take longer to secure. Increased awareness around the state's "Source Diverse Source Local" program can create more on-ramps for Latinas. Additionally, policymakers can simplify the process for acquiring certifications, including the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Women Business Enterprise (WBE), which would allow Latina small businesses to more easily qualify for initiatives targeted for MBEs and WBEs.

K-12 EDUCATION

Latinas comprise a substantial proportion of California’s school-aged children and the college-going population, foretelling the greater influence they will wield in the state. This report highlights disparities in educational outcomes for Latinas when compared to their white counterparts, particularly for Latina English language learners (EL) and Latina foster youth. Closing educational gaps for all Latinas unlocks their full potential, enhancing access to college and career opportunities that expand their long-term economic mobility. Our recommendations include:

CLOSING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME GAPS

- **Increase oversight of Local Control Action Plans to ensure fidelity to the goals of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF):** To promote equity, school districts must increase and improve services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth in proportion to the amount of additional funding (supplemental and concentration funding) they receive. Policymakers should consider incorporating feedback from stakeholdersⁱⁱ that call for more accountability mechanisms in the review of local control action plans to ensure that districts meet their equity obligations, including requiring specificity in the kinds of programming they are implementing to serve high needs students.
- **Ensure the needs of EL students are incorporated into the 2023 MATHEMATICS FRAMEWORK FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS:** The California State Board of Education approved the 2023 MATHEMATICS FRAMEWORK FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS WHICH PROVIDES INSTRUCTIONAL guidance for educators that affirms California’s commitment to ensuring equity and excellence in math learning for all students. Policymakers should ensure that intentional language support is weaved into instructional materials to address the needs of multilingual learners and close equity gaps.

DIVERSIFY THE TEACHER WORKFORCE

This report highlights gaps in the representation of Latina educators when compared to the diversity of the student population in California. In the 2018-19 school year, 21% of K-12 public school teachers were Latino, with 15% Latina teachers and 6% Latino male teachers, far below the 55% of all K-12 public school students who were Latino that year. Students are better served when they see themselves reflected in the leaders who guide them through their educational journey. HOPE recommends the following:

ⁱⁱ Realizing the Promise of LCFF: Recommendations from the First Ten Years, Public Advocates: <https://publicadvocates.org/realizing-the-promise-of-lcff-recommendations-from-the-first-ten-years/>

- **Maintain ongoing preparation and professional development programs:** As outlined by the California Department of Education (CDE) Educator Diversity Advisory Group, the state must continue investing in programs at the state, county, and local levels that increase professional development opportunities and support the retention of educators of color. This includes “grow your own” programs, such as mentorship for new educators, affinity group support, and reimbursements for testing certification fees and test preparation.
- **Increase the representation of bilingual educators:** To better support English language learners specifically, HOPE recommends that policymakers facilitate the credentialing process for bilingual educators and expand opportunities for educators to participate in bilingual authorization programs. This includes incorporating recommendations from coalitions like Californians Togetherⁱⁱⁱ, that call for working with public and private universities to expand bilingual authorization programs and increase the number of faculty and universities offering bilingual certification programs. It also includes waiving fees for current native speakers of other languages to apply for and receive their bilingual credentials.

HIGHER EDUCATION

While the share of Hispanics enrolled in postsecondary institutions has increased nationally, gaps in degree completion and graduation rates still exist. Additionally, this report notes that confidence in the return on investment in pursuing a college education is wary, given concerns with affordability and the barriers in securing a fulfilling, high paying career post college. Increasing access to postsecondary institutions equips Latinas with skills and knowledge that are essential in today's competitive global economy and supports their economic mobility. Our recommendations outline strategies to increase access to college, make it more affordable, and develop pathways that bridge college to career pathways for Latinas.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

In California, dual, or concurrent, enrollment programs offer valuable educational opportunities for high school students. These initiatives enable students to simultaneously earn high school and college credits, providing a head start on their higher education journey and lowering college tuition costs. These programs enhance their academic readiness and help demystify the college experience. Despite the benefits of dual enrollment programs, Latinas are underrepresented and more needs to be done to remove systemic barriers to participation and maximize the transfer of credits to colleges.

- **Remove systemic barriers to participation:** Policymakers should pursue regulations that remove barriers to entry for dual enrollment programs, such as the existing requirement that the school principal approve dual enrollment participation for the College and Career Access Pathway.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bridging California's Bilingual Teacher Gap in Early Childhood Education by Elizabeth Alvarado, PhD, Senior Policy Associate, Californians Together: <https://californianstogether.org/dll-teacher-gap/>

Removing the Principal’s approval for students to participate would mitigate unintended biases and help address equity gaps in student participation for these programs.

- **Maximize the benefits of participation:** One of the key benefits of taking part in dual enrollment programs is the ability for those courses to be transferred and counted towards two or four-year college credits. As noted by the Public Policy Institute in their *Dual Enrollment in California* report, more than 70% of community college dual enrollment courses are transferrable to UC or CSU; 16% are transferrable to CSU only and 11% are not transferrable^{iv}. Policymakers and educators should work to maximize dual enrollment course participation by ensuring that those courses count towards college credit. This includes increasing collaboration between the CSU, UC, and community colleges so that dual enrollment coursework can count towards A-G requirements.
- **Connect dual enrollment coursework with career pathway certificates:** Conduct more research to study how career-focused dual enrollment course options can connect existing high school career pathways with a college degree or certificate pathway. Dual enrollment programs offer an opportunity for students to start taking career-focused courses that bridge the gap between high school, college, and career pathways. Stakeholders should explore how dual enrollment and career education courses can be leveraged to ensure underrepresented students can have timely access to high-wage, fulfilling careers and not just funneled into vocational pathways.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

- **Reform California’s Cal Grant system to make it more equitable:** The Cal Grant program, California’s primary state-funded financial aid program, is outdated and needs reform to maximize its impact on college affordability in the state. The current system includes barriers to eligibility that increase equity gaps in access, such as when students graduate from high school prior to enrolling at a university or the age of transfer to a four year. HOPE aligns our recommendation with several stakeholders who have called for Cal Grant to be consolidated into two awards: Cal Grant 2 for community college students and Cal Grant 4 for students attending four-year universities. Implementing this reform would increase access for 130,000 students. Our data shows that more than 65% of those students are Latinx, more than 50% are women and more than 65% are first-generation college students.
- **Encourage participation in the income-repayment plan for student loans:** For Latinas who encounter wage gaps and economic disparities, the income repayment plan offers a flexible and manageable approach to repaying student loans and reducing the risk of economic strain. This plan can empower Latinas to pursue higher education without the fear of overwhelming debt, fostering financial stability and educational opportunities for a more inclusive and equitable future.¹⁵²

^{iv} Dual Enrollment in California Promoting Equitable Student Access and Success, Olga Rodriguez and Niu Gao, with research support from Bonnie Brooks and Gabriel Gutierrez-Aragon: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/dual-enrollment-in-california/>

Our report highlights that Latinas face compounding challenges to accessing healthcare coverage and experience disparate treatment when seeking healthcare, manifested through poor health outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened longstanding inequities, resulting in higher rates of job and insurance loss, driving medical debt, and worsening existing health disparities like maternal mortality. HOPE's policy recommendations call for expanded access to health insurance and care, especially for undocumented Latinas.

- **Protect current state investments to expand Medi-Cal coverage to undocumented adults and expand other coverage opportunities for those who exceed income-eligibility thresholds.** California's historic expansion of Medi-Cal coverage to all income-eligible adults, regardless of immigration status, officially launched in January 2024. According to a projection by the Legislative Analyst's Office in 2021, approximately 235,000 adults over the age of fifty would gain ongoing health coverage through full-scope Medi-Cal post-2022, due to the state's efforts.¹⁵³ The expansion of coverage to undocumented adults not only addresses health inequities but also fosters economic mobility and reduces poverty. Researchers estimate that extending state-funded coverage to all undocumented immigrants could decrease poverty among non-citizens by up to 2.9 percentage points, equivalent to lifting 125,000 people out of poverty (assuming that all income-eligible, uninsured undocumented residents enroll in Medi-Cal). *HOPE recommends that policymakers continue to protect historic investments in full-scope Medi-Cal coverage to all income-eligible adults. As the state weathers budget shortfalls and recovers from the pandemic, it is critical to continue to expand resources for our most vulnerable communities.*
- Our report underscores that while the uninsured rate among Hispanics in California has reached a historically low level, it remains three times higher compared to their white counterparts. This disparity is particularly striking for undocumented Latinos, despite state initiatives aimed at expanding coverage. Given the State's commendable efforts, the uninsured rate for all undocumented residents under the age of 65 (irrespective of eligibility category) is projected to be at a historic low of 27% in 2024 but is still higher when compared to the rate for citizens and lawfully present immigrants (7%).¹⁵⁴ While undocumented residents come from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, a significant proportion are Latino, contributing to the higher-than-average uninsured rate among Latinos in the state. This is partially due to the remaining undocumented adults aged 50 and older who are ineligible for Medi-Cal because their incomes exceed the Medi-Cal threshold. Approximately 65,180 uninsured undocumented adults aged fifty and older are estimated to be left out of the expansion because of these income limits.¹⁵⁵ *Policymakers should explore strategies to expand healthcare coverage to this remaining population, including by allowing their participation in the State's Covered California market.*
- **Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for existing laws requiring implicit bias training in healthcare.** Despite continued advancements in medical care, stark racial disparities in maternal health have persisted for decades and is a burden disproportionately borne by communities of color. The Latina maternal mortality rate is disproportionately higher than it is for their white

counterparts and raised concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic when it surged by an alarming 44%. In 2019, the Legislature passed the California Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act (the Act) to address these disparities in maternal health outcomes. The law requires hospitals and other facilities to train perinatal care providers on unconscious bias in medicine and racial disparities in maternal deaths. In August 2021, the Department of Justice (DOJ) launched an investigation to ascertain compliance with the Act and found that more needs to be done to ensure the goals of the Act are met. Specifically, there is a need for an enforcement mechanism, public transparency of compliance data, firm compliance deadlines, and additional specificity and clarity so that facilities are better equipped to know which providers need to be trained. Policymakers should explore mechanisms to address the continued racial disparity in maternal morbidity rates and change the way that healthcare providers recognize and overcome their own implicit bias when treating pregnancy.

LATINA LEADERSHIP

One in every five Californians identify as Latina, yet Latinas remain underrepresented in the U.S. Senate, on the judicial bench, in statewide offices, and at the local and county level. Our under-representation extends to influential appointed board and commission positions. Just 2 % of water board seats are held by Latinas. Latina representation is non-existent on influential Governor-appointed commissions such as the California Public Utilities Commission.. One of the strongest and most viable pathways to elected office is serving on local boards and commissions. Increasing representation and amplifying Latina voices in government is essential for fostering inclusive economic growth and addressing the unique challenges faced by Latinas in the State. HOPE recommends the following measure to address disparities in Latina representation in positions of leadership:

- **Publish the demographic data currently being collected on gubernatorial appointments.** Since 2021, HOPE has sponsored legislation to require critical demographic reporting on Gubernatorial appointments. Three iterations of the bill that have passed through the Legislature were vetoed by the Governor who previously cited a cost burden, the reliance on self-data, and the Administration's current efforts to appoint diverse individuals to the state's board and commissions.

In response to the latest veto of Senate Bill 702 in October of 2023 authored by Senator Monique Limon, HOPE embarked on an analysis of the demographic data of gubernatorial appointees made publicly available via press release posted on the Governor's website. Our preliminary report of appointments made by the Governor's office between January and October 2023 showed that only 9.6% of appointees were Latinas, in a state where Latina adults over the age of 18 make up 14.4% of the total population.

Diverse representation is essential to building a robust multiracial democracy and our call to action remains: the work to advance transparency must start inhouse within the Governor's office. The collection of gubernatorial appointee's demographic data is a critical step to achieving gender, racial and ethnic equity in California's boards and commissions. This annual report would serve as a tool to shed light on where inequities in representation exist, encourage outreach to communities of interest to ensure everyone has a seat at the decision-making table.

METHODOLOGY

Data from various government sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. and California Departments of Education, and others, were analyzed to provide demographic and economic metrics comparing Latinas with other major demographic groups at the national and state levels, and at regional or local levels where data were available. Additional data and background materials come from various reports, briefs, and polls citing primary and secondary data.

Due to substantial disruptions to the 2020 U.S. Census data collection process and significant nonresponse bias, researchers at the U.S. Census Bureau updated data from the 2020 Census to account for the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and caution comparison of data from 2020, 2021, and 2022 to data from previous years.

A series of interviews with 7 women who self-identify as Latinas representing various regions of California, work sectors, self-employed entrepreneurs, and ages were conducted in Fall 2023 to provide context to the data and better understand how to support their economic advancement and career trajectories. The respondents ranged in age from mid-20s to early 60s and were recruited from throughout the state but are oversampled in urban regions where Latinas are concentrated. Quotes and examples from these interviews are used throughout the report to illustrate the data findings.

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