



# Postsecondary National Policy Institute

## LATINO STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2020, 21.8% of [U.S. undergraduate college students](#) were Latino, the second largest ethnic group enrolled at the undergraduate level[i]. While the number of Latino college students is increasing overall, these students continue to be overrepresented in open-access and community colleges and underrepresented in four-year institutions.

## ENROLLMENT

- Thirty-six percent of Latinos aged 18–24 [enrolled in college in 2020](#), decreasing the enrollment gap between Latino students and Whites to 5 percentage points, compared to a gap of 11 percentage points in 2010.
- 3,689,700 Hispanic students (20.3% of all students) were enrolled in postsecondary education in [Fall 2020](#), down from 3,785,900 in Fall 2019.
- Between 2000 and 2020, Hispanic [post-baccalaureate enrollment](#) increased by 207% (from 110,800 to 340,900 students).
- College enrollment rates for [Hispanic men](#) increased from 2010 to 2020 (28% vs. 30%) while rates for White men decreased in that same period (41% vs. 37%). Though enrollment rates for White women did not change substantially from 2010 to 2020, Hispanic women enrollment rates increased by 6 percentage points (36% to 42%).
- According to the [National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey](#), 69% of Latino students enrolled in public institutions in 2016, a higher percentage than any other race/ethnicity group besides Native American/Alaskan Native:
  - 28% attend public four-year institutions
  - 41% attend public two-year institutions
  - 10% attend private non-profit institutions
  - 11% attend private for-profit institutions
- Latino students are *overrepresented* in public two-year associate degree programs.
  - Twenty-eight percent of students [enrolled in public two-year institutions](#) in Fall 2020 were Latino, despite Latino students only being 20% of the entire student population

- Fifty-four percent of all [Latino undergraduates](#) were enrolled in [Hispanic-Serving Institutions \(HSI\)](#) in the Fall of 2020.
  - Latino students make up 48% of all non-international [enrollment at HSIs](#).

## DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- Completion rates are increasing among Latino students:
  - The percentage of Latinos aged 25-29 with [at least an Associate's degree](#) increased from 21% in 2010 to 34% in 2021
    - The number of White students of the same age who had earned at least an associate degree increased from 49% to 56% over the same time period, meaning the attainment gap between these two groups narrowed from 28 percentage points to 22.
  - The percentages of individuals at the [bachelor's or higher degree level](#) increased between 2010 and 2021 for those who were Asian (from 56 to 72 percent), White (from 39 to 45 percent), Black (from 19 to 26 percent), and Hispanic (from 13 to 23 percent).
- Graduation rate gaps still remain. Bachelor's degree-seeking Latino students had a [6-year graduation rate](#) of 59% in 2020, compared to 67% of White students
- Despite increased completion rates for Latinos overall, foreign-born Latinos are less likely to have earned an associate degree or bachelor's degree than Latinos born in the United States.
  - As of 2021, 19% of the [immigrant Latino population](#) had earned a bachelor's degree compared with 23% of U.S.-born Latinos. The share drops to just 11% when excluding South American immigrants.
- In the 2019-20 academic year, there remained gaps in degree conferment by race/ethnicity:
  - Latino students comprised 26% of [all associates degrees conferred](#), compared to 51% of White students, 12% of Black students, 7% of Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 0.8% of Native students.
  - Latino students comprised 16% of [all bachelors degrees conferred](#), compared to 61% of White students, 10% of Black students, 8% of Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 0.5% of Native students.

## FIRST-GENERATION STATUS

- Latinos are much more likely to be first-generation college students than other racial/ethnic groups. In the [2015–16 academic year](#), almost half of Latinos (44%) were

the first in their family to attend college, compared to Black (34%), all (29%), Asian (29%), and White (22%) students.

- In 2021, 19% of Hispanic children under age 18 [lived in households where no parent](#) had completed high school, a higher rate than that of children of other racial/ethnic groups.
  - Nine percent of American Indian/Alaska Native children, 19% of Pacific Islander children, 8% of Black children, 3% of Asian children and 3% of White children under age 18 lived in households where no parent had completed high school.

## FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- Latino students often face many financial hurdles.
  - In the [2015-16 academic year](#), 76% of full-time Latino students received some type of federal aid, compared to 67% of White students, 50% of Asian students, and 88% of Black students.
  - Sixty percent of Latino college students received a Pell Grant. Overall, they make up 22% of all full-time Pell Grant recipients.
- Latino students received, on average, [\\$12,140 in Federal financial aid](#), slightly lower than the average of all students (\$13,020). When viewing Federal and non-federal aid, however, Latino students received the second lowest average amount, greater only than American Indian/Alaskan Native students.
- In 2018, 34% of Latinos holding an associates degree [borrowed a federal student](#) loan, compared to 64% of Latinos holding a bachelor's degree.
  - The average Federal student loan debt of a Latino graduate in 2018 was \$21,240 for associates degree holders and \$24,050 for bachelor's degree holders.
- A significant percentage of Latino students [enter college as low-income students](#).
  - 32% of independent Latino students make less than \$30,000 per year.
  - 33% of dependent Latino students make less than \$50,000 per year.
- A majority of Latino students [worked a non-work-study job](#) while enrolled (59%), a similar share as all students regardless of race/ethnicity.
  - A majority of Latino students worked [more than 30 hours a week](#), in some cases overtime, to finance their education. Thirty-three percent of Latino students worked 40 hours or more, 19% worked 30 to 39 hours, 26% worked 20 to 29 hours, and 21% worked 1 to 19 hours.

**Updated September 2022**

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[i] Terms used in this report (Latino, Hispanic) reflect the terms found in the data source material.