

# Degree Attainment for Latino Adults: National and State Trends

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Understanding the economic and social benefits of more college-educated residents, over 40 states during the past decade have set goals to increase their state’s share of adults with college credentials and degrees. In many of these states, achieving these “degree attainment” goals will be directly related to their state’s ability to increase the shares of Black and Latino adults in those states that have college credentials and degrees, particularly as population growth among communities of color continues to outpace the White population and older White workers retire and leave the workforce.<sup>1</sup> From 2000 to 2016, for example, the number of Latino adults increased 72 percent and the number of Black adults increased 25 percent, while the number of White adults remained essentially flat.

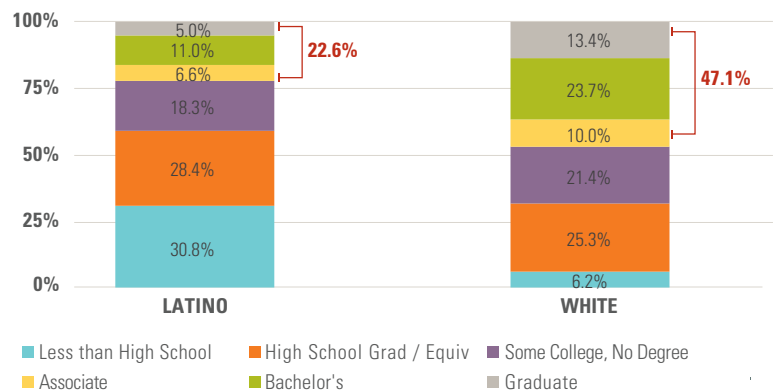
Nationally, there are significant differences in degree attainment among Black, Latino, and White adults, but degree attainment for these groups and the attainment gaps between them vary considerably across states. In this brief, we explore the national trends and state-by-state differences in degree attainment for Latino adults, ages 25 to 64 in 44 states.<sup>2</sup> We examine degree attainment for Black adults in a companion brief.

## National Degree Attainment Trends

Compared with 47.1 percent of White adults, slightly more than 22 percent of Latino adults have earned some form of college degree (i.e., an associate degree or more). For perspective, current degree attainment levels of Latino Americans are about 10 percentage points lower than the attainment levels of White adults in 1990 — over a quarter of a century ago.

Specifically, degree attainment among Latino Americans trails the rate for White adults by 24.5 percentage points (see Figure 1), but a closer look at the data indicates that the differences in degree attainment are not uniform across all levels of attainment. The gaps are more prominent at the higher levels (i.e., bachelor’s and graduate), which offer greater financial returns, job

FIGURE 1 DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO AND WHITE ADULTS, 2016



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau’s 2016 American Community Survey.

## Why Is Degree Attainment Important?

As the American economy continues to become more knowledge-based, a college degree becomes more and more essential. By 2020, about 65 percent of American jobs will require some form of college, compared with just 28 percent in 1973.<sup>3</sup> Generally, unemployment rates are lower for people with higher educational attainment, and wages are higher.<sup>4</sup> Compared with high school graduates with no college degree, bachelor’s degree completers (with no graduate-level training) are nearly two times less likely to be unemployed and earn nearly \$25,000 more annually. Furthermore, bachelor’s degree completers — on average — earn nearly \$1 million dollars more over their lifetime than high school graduates that haven’t attended college.<sup>5</sup>

Given these personal economic benefits of completing college, degree attainment is often thought of as an individual benefit. However, these personal economic advantages result in larger social benefits, such as increased tax revenue and less reliance on public assistance or social “safety net” programs.<sup>6</sup> In addition, increased levels of educational attainment are associated with less crime and incarceration, better health, more volunteerism, higher levels of voting and political engagement, and more charitable donations and philanthropic contributions.<sup>7</sup>



security, and employment options in the labor market.

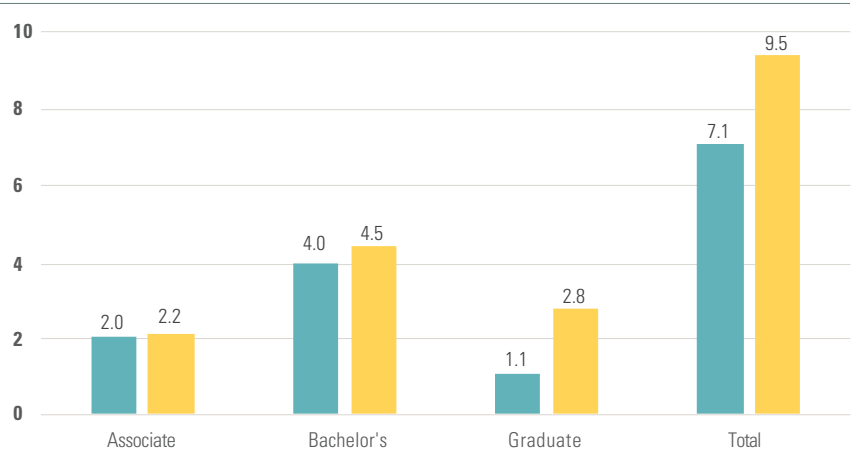
The gap in attainment between Latino and White adults at the associate degree level is the smallest (i.e., 3.4 percentage points). But at the graduate degree level, only 5.0 percent of Latino adults have earned a degree compared with 13.4 percent of White adults — a gap of about 8 percentage points. The discrepancy is largest at the bachelor's degree level, where the gap is 12.7 percentage points. Just 11.0 percent of Latino adults have attained a bachelor's degree compared with 23.7 percent of White adults.

There have been gains in degree attainment over time for Latino adults, but these gains have not been enough to close a persistent gap in Latino and White attainment. Since 2000, White degree attainment has increased by 9.5 percentage points, while Latino degree attainment has increased slightly more than 7 percentage points (see Figure 2). For Latino adults in 2000, associate degree attainment was 4.5 percent, and bachelor's degree attainment was 7.0 percent. The White associate and bachelor's degree attainment rates in 2000 were 7.8 percent and 19.3 percent, respectively. Gains in associate degree attainment and bachelor's degree attainment are about the same for Latino and White adults. With respect to graduate level attainment, the rate was 3.9 percent for Latino adults in 2000, compared with 10.6 percent for Whites. For Latino adults, gains at the graduate degree level are only 1.1 percentage points, less than half the 2.8 percentage point gain for Whites.

When you look at attainment by age, the overall gap in attainment is larger for younger Latinos given the limited growth in degree attainment for Latinos compared with White adults (see Figure 3). The attainment rate for young Latino adults (ages 25 to 34) is just about 4 percentage points higher than the rate for older Latino adults (ages 55 to 64), compared with an approximately 9 percentage point improvement between younger and older White adults. While the gap between older Latino and White adults was slightly more than 21 percentage points, attainment for young Latino adults, ages 25 to 34, is approximately 27 percentage points lower than that for their White peers. For 35 to 44 year olds, the attainment gap between Latino adults and White adults is even higher at nearly 30 percentage points.

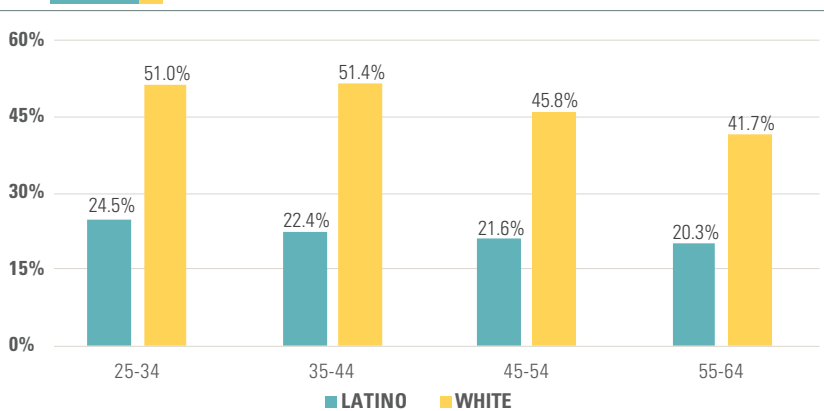
The national trends in degree attainment for Latino adults, including the slow growth in the attainment rate, are shaped mostly by 10 states that account for 78.2 percent of Latino adults (see Figure 4). California, Texas, Florida, and New York account for over three-fifths of Latino

**FIGURE 2** PERCENTAGE POINT GAINS IN DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO AND WHITE ADULTS SINCE 2000



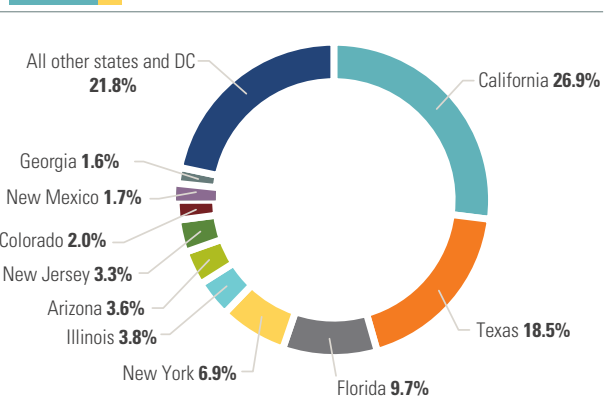
Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey and the 2000 Decennial Census.

**FIGURE 3** DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO AND WHITE ADULTS BY AGE, 2016



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey.

**FIGURE 4** LATINO ADULT POPULATION BY STATE, 2016



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey.



adults nationally, while Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, Colorado, New Mexico, and Georgia add up to an additional 16 percent of Latino adults. Many other states have smaller shares of Latino adults, but have seen rapidly growing Latino populations the last few decades. A closer look at trends in each state can shed more light on Latino attainment.

## State Attainment Trends

In this section, we examine state-level data on the following: 1) Latino degree attainment, 2) Latino attainment change since 2000, and 3) attainment gaps between Latino and White adults. Narratives describing the data are below, but state ranks, grades, and ratings for each of the three indicators can be found on Table 1 on page 4. We also include a map showing how states compare on Latino degree attainment and attainment gaps on page 5.

### 2016 Latino Degree Attainment

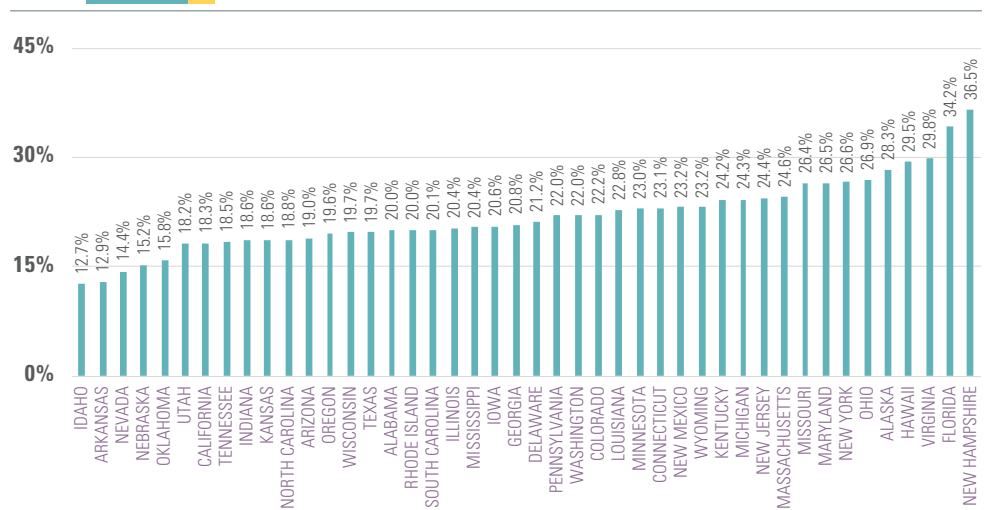
When you examine differences in degree attainment for Latino adults by state, most states have rates that fall within roughly 5 percentage points of the national average, which is approximately 22 percentage points (see Figure 5). But there are several states that stand out at both the high and low end of the distribution.

On the high end, New Hampshire, Florida, Virginia, Hawaii, and Alaska all have degree attainment rates that are close to or exceed 30 percent. The outlier in this group is Florida, where one-fourth of adults are Latino; the other states have Latino population shares below 10 percent. Several states in New England and the Mid-Atlantic — New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Hampshire — are among the top 10 states for Latino degree attainment. In this group, New York stands out with its Latino share of adults at 18.3 percent — the fourth largest Latino population in the country.

On the lower end of the attainment distribution for Latino adults are Idaho, Arkansas, Nevada, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. These states have degree attainment rates that are near or below 16 percent. Idaho has the lowest degree attainment rate for Latino adults at 12.7 percent, and Arkansas has the second lowest at 12.9 percent. These states with lower attainment tend to be more sparsely populated and have lower than average shares of Latino adults. However, Nevada is an exception with most adults living around Las Vegas and a share of Latino adults around 26 percent. The share of Latino adults is 10.6 percent in Idaho, but less than 10 percent in Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Arkansas.

It is also noteworthy that none of the 10 states with the lowest Latino attainment rates are in New England or the Mid-Atlantic. Hawaii and Alaska are the only states in Pacific and Mountain states with attainment rates in the top 10, and both have small shares of Latino adults. Among states near the border with Mexico that have large shares of Latino adults, Colorado (ranked 19<sup>th</sup>) and New Mexico (15<sup>th</sup>) have attainment rates near the national average (22-23 percent), while California (38<sup>th</sup>), Texas (30<sup>th</sup>), and Arizona (33<sup>rd</sup>) hover between 18 and 20 percent.

**FIGURE 5** DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO ADULTS BY STATE



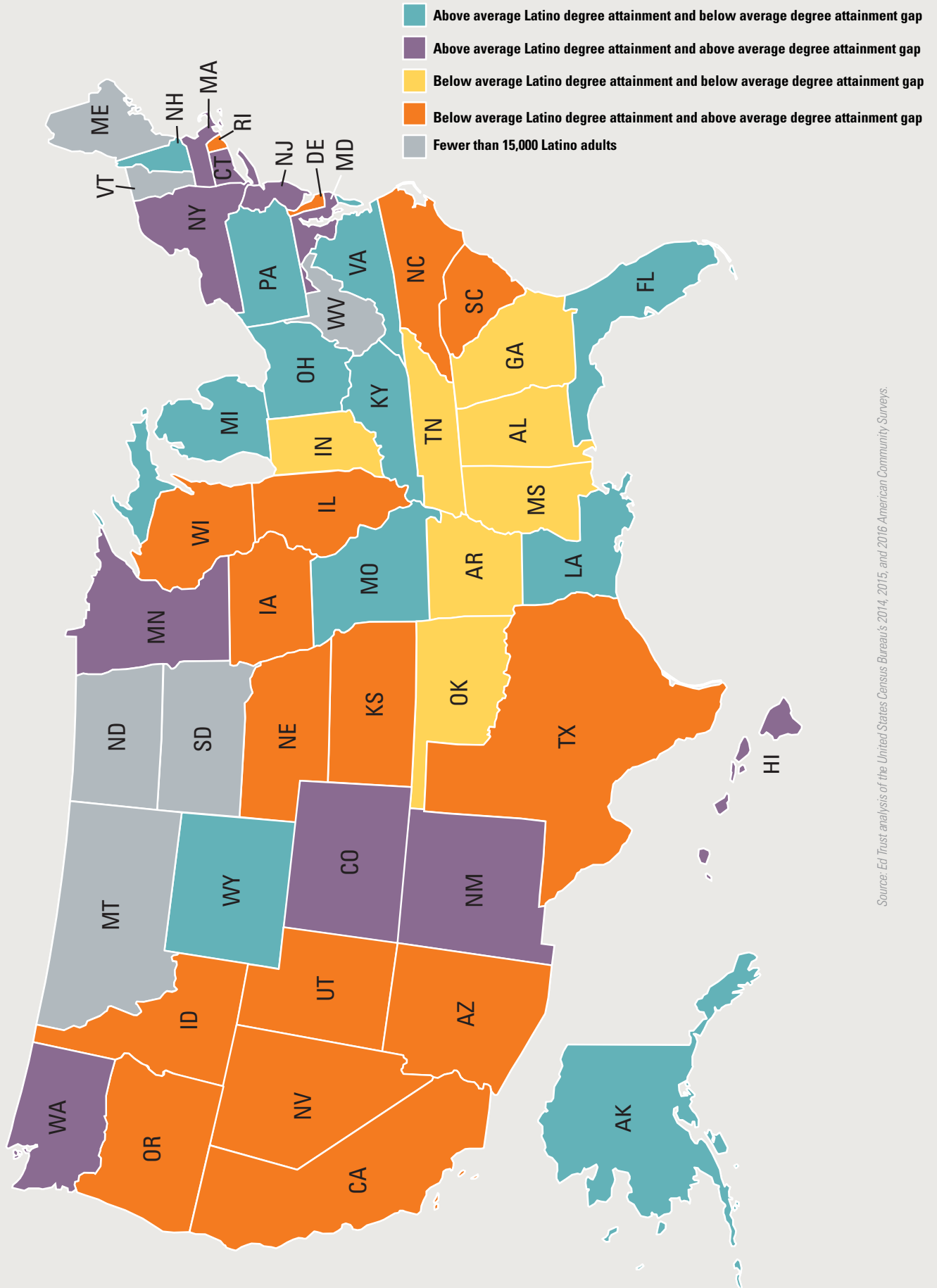
Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2014, 2015, and 2016 American Community Surveys.



Table 1: Latino Degree Attainment Indicators by State

State	Percentage of Adults that are Latino	Degree Attainment Rate			Change in Degree Attainment			Degree Attainment Gap			
		Latino Attainment	Latino Attainment Rank	Grade for Latino Attainment	Latino Attainment Change Since 2000 (percentage points)	Latino Attainment Change Since 2000 Rank	Grade for Change in Latino Attainment	Latino-White Gap (percentage points)	Latino-White Gap Rank	Rating for Latino-White Gap	Gap Change Since 2000 (percentage points)
Alabama	3.6%	20.0%	29	D+	0.2	40	F	17.6	11	below average	7.8
Alaska	5.8%	28.3%	5	A	0.6	39	F	15.4	7	below average	4.6
Arizona	28.8%	19.0%	33	D	5.8	16	B-	26.9	27	average	0.8
Arkansas	6.1%	12.9%	43	F	3.0	34	D	19.8	14	average	4.9
California	36.2%	18.3%	38	D	5.9	15	B-	35.1	44	above average	1.8
Colorado	18.9%	22.2%	19	C	6.5	10	B+	34.1	43	above average	1.8
Connecticut	14.6%	23.1%	16	C+	6.7	8	B+	31.9	40	above average	1.7
Delaware	8.3%	21.2%	22	C-	3.1	33	D+	23.2	19	average	2.8
Florida	25.5%	34.2%	2	A+	8.2	2	A	10.0	1	below average	-0.5
Georgia	8.5%	20.8%	23	C-	3.3	31	D+	23.0	18	average	4.3
Hawaii	9.0%	29.5%	4	A	7.0	7	B+	26.5	26	average	1.0
Idaho	10.6%	12.7%	44	F	2.6	35	D-	27.0	28	average	4.4
Illinois	15.8%	20.4%	26	C-	7.3	5	A-	30.0	39	above average	2.4
Indiana	5.8%	18.6%	36	D	3.3	32	D+	19.5	13	average	5.9
Iowa	4.8%	20.6%	24	C-	4.9	23	C+	24.5	22	average	6.6
Kansas	10.2%	18.6%	35	D	5.5	18	B-	27.8	33	average	3.0
Kentucky	2.9%	24.2%	13	B-	6.0	14	B-	10.1	2	below average	3.7
Louisiana	4.9%	22.8%	18	C+	-1.7	44	F	12.8	4	below average	9.2
Maryland	9.1%	26.5%	8	B+	0.0	42	F	27.0	29	average	9.0
Massachusetts	10.2%	24.6%	10	B-	5.1	21	C+	32.8	41	above average	4.5
Michigan	4.2%	24.3%	12	B-	5.4	20	C+	17.3	10	below average	2.5
Minnesota	4.5%	23.0%	17	C+	4.6	26	C	29.5	37	above average	7.4
Mississippi	2.7%	20.4%	25	C-	2.1	38	D-	16.4	8	below average	5.4
Missouri	3.4%	26.4%	9	B+	4.6	27	C	13.9	6	below average	4.4
Nebraska	9.2%	15.2%	41	F	3.8	30	C-	33.2	42	above average	6.5
Nevada	25.9%	14.4%	42	F	5.5	19	C+	23.6	21	average	2.9
New Hampshire	3.0%	36.5%	1	A+	4.5	29	C	11.6	3	below average	3.1
New Jersey	19.4%	24.4%	11	B-	7.4	4	A-	29.5	38	above average	2.8
New Mexico	45.9%	23.2%	15	C+	6.1	13	B	27.2	30	average	0.1
New York	18.3%	26.6%	7	B+	9.1	1	A+	28.7	36	above average	0.9
North Carolina	8.1%	18.8%	34	D	4.7	25	C	28.1	34	average	6.4
Ohio	3.1%	26.9%	6	B+	5.7	17	B-	13.3	5	below average	3.3
Oklahoma	8.7%	15.8%	40	F	2.4	36	D-	21.8	16	average	5.4
Oregon	11.0%	19.6%	32	D+	6.4	12	B	24.9	23	average	2.1
Pennsylvania	6.2%	22.0%	21	C	5.1	22	C+	22.3	17	average	5.0
Rhode Island	13.2%	20.0%	28	D+	7.1	6	B+	27.7	32	average	0.7
South Carolina	5.0%	20.1%	27	D+	0.1	41	F	23.5	20	average	9.0
Tennessee	4.5%	18.5%	37	D	-0.4	43	F	18.7	12	average	9.4
Texas	36.2%	19.7%	30	D+	6.7	9	B+	27.7	31	average	1.2
Utah	13.0%	18.2%	39	D	4.5	28	C	28.4	35	average	4.0
Virginia	8.6%	29.8%	3	A	4.8	24	C	21.6	15	average	4.6
Washington	10.4%	22.0%	20	C	6.4	11	B	25.9	24	average	0.9
Wisconsin	5.7%	19.7%	31	D+	2.3	37	D-	26.2	25	average	8.2
Wyoming	8.9%	23.2%	14	C+	7.9	3	A	17.2	9	below average	-0.9

LATINO EDUCATION ATTAINMENT AND LATINO-WHITE ATTAINMENT GAP BY STATE



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2014, 2015, and 2016 American Community Surveys.

### Attainment Change Since 2000

Since 2000, 40 states we examined have seen increases over 1.0 percentage points in degree attainment for Latino adults, while six states have seen little change in attainment (see Figure 6). Typically, larger states with higher percentages of Latino adults experienced higher or above average change, while many smaller states with lower percentages of Latino adults exhibited very little change in attainment.

Florida and New York stand out as states with large Latino populations that have improved the most. Florida has increased Latino attainment by 8.2 percentage points, while New York has seen the most improvement with a 9.1 percentage point gain. Other states in the top 10 on attainment change include New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island in New England and the Mid-Atlantic along with Texas, Illinois, Colorado, Hawaii, and Wyoming. In the South, only Kentucky, Texas, and Florida rank in the top half of states.

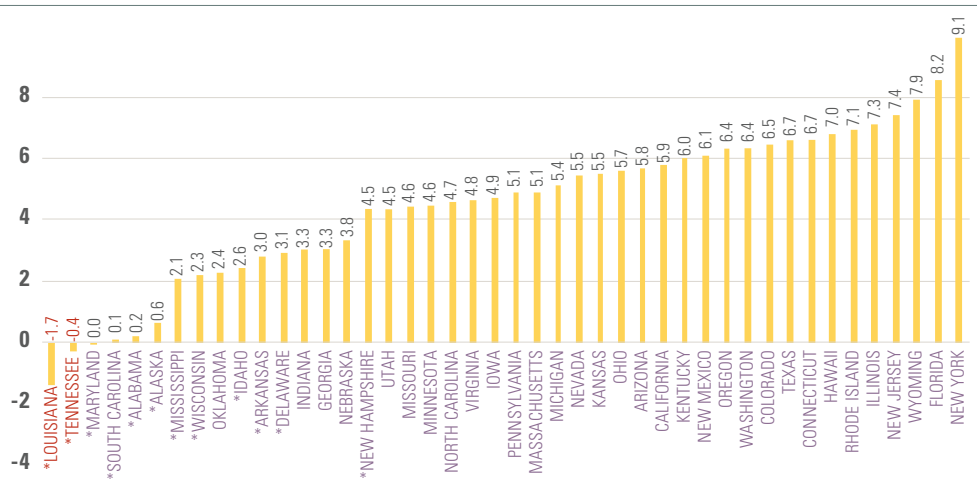
Several states experienced very little change in attainment levels over the past decade and a half. Maryland, Tennessee, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, and Alaska all saw little change in Latino attainment. These

states only account for about 3 percent of all Latino adults, but have experienced rapid migration of Latino adults since 2000. With a 2.6 percentage point gain in attainment since 2000, Idaho is the only state in the bottom 10 that has a Latino share of adults over 10 percent. Among Pacific and Mountain states with high percentages of Latino adults, California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada all show change close to the national average at about 6 percent.

### Attainment Gaps Between Latino and White Adults

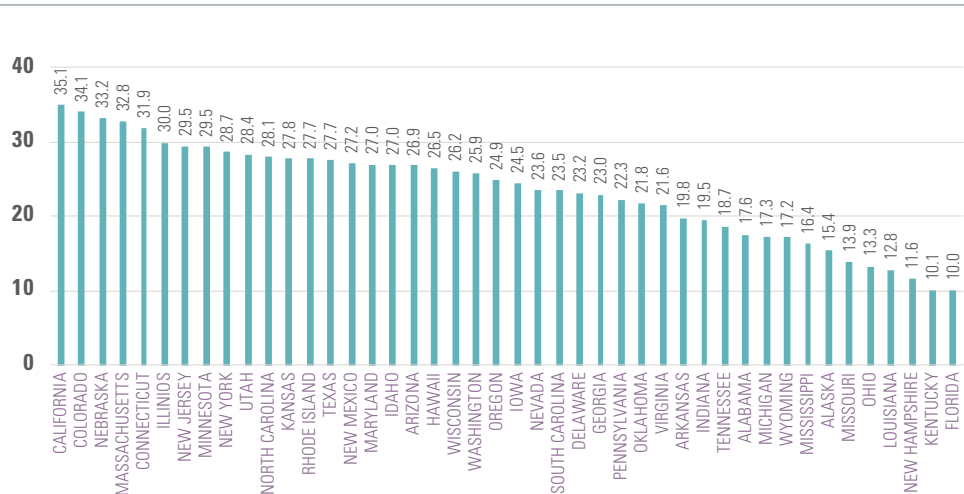
In every state in our sample, there is a gap between degree attainment rates for Latino and White adults. And in half of the states that gap that exceeds 25 percentage points (see Figure 7). At about 10 percentage points, Florida and Kentucky have the smallest

**FIGURE 6** PERCENTAGE POINT GAINS IN DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO ADULTS SINCE 2000 BY STATE



\*Change in degree attainment rate not statistically significant from zero based on an independent sample t-test at the 95 percent level of significance  
Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2014, 2015, and 2016 American Community Surveys and the 2000 Decennial Census.

**FIGURE 7** PERCENTAGE POINT GAP IN LATINO AND WHITE DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR ADULTS BY STATE



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2014, 2015, and 2016 American Community Surveys.





attainment gaps in the country; however, their gaps are partly a function of having low-to-average attainment rates for White adults. Florida again stands out for having a low attainment gap and a large share of Latino adults, whereas Kentucky has a much smaller Latino community. The next three states with the smallest gaps (New Hampshire, Louisiana, and Ohio) have shares of Latino adults below 5 percent. Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Alaska, and Wyoming are also among the 10 states with the smallest attainment gaps. These states have attainment rates near or above the national average, but all have percentages of Latino adults below 10 percent.

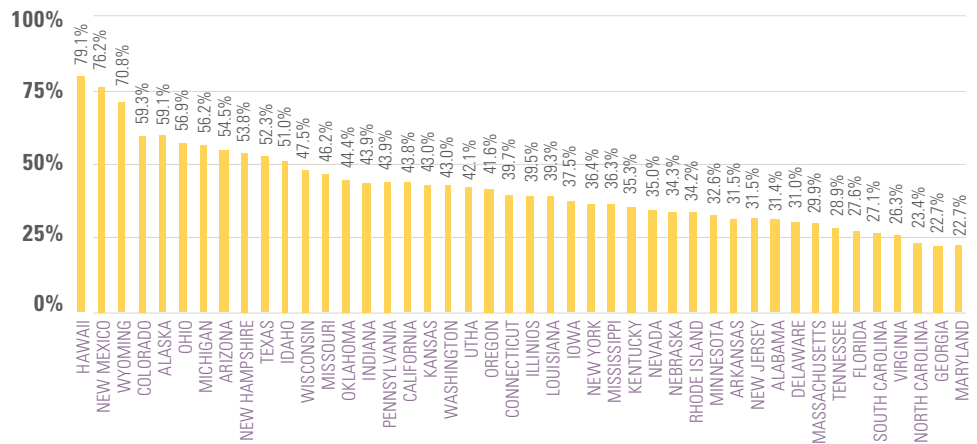
On the other end of the spectrum, California, Colorado, Nebraska, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Illinois all have extreme inequality in degree attainment between Latino and White adults, with gaps of at least 30 percentage points. These gaps are especially problematic because these states account for about one in three Latino adults. California has the most Latino adults of any state and the largest gap at 35.1 percentage points. Colorado has a gap at 34.1 percentage points and the eighth largest Latino adult population.

## Diversity of Latino Adults

Although typically grouped together into a single statistical category, Latino adults represent diverse ethnic communities that have reached differing levels of degree attainment. About 42 percent of Latino adults were born in the 50 states and District of Columbia, while the remaining 58 percent were either foreign born or born in a territory of the United States (e.g., Puerto Rico). However, this composition varies greatly by state (see Figure 8). For example, over two-thirds of Latino adults are native-born in New Mexico, Hawaii, and Wyoming; while less than 25 percent are native-born in Georgia, North Carolina, and Maryland. New Mexico and Colorado are the only border states with Mexico that has well over a 50 percent share of native-born Latino adults.

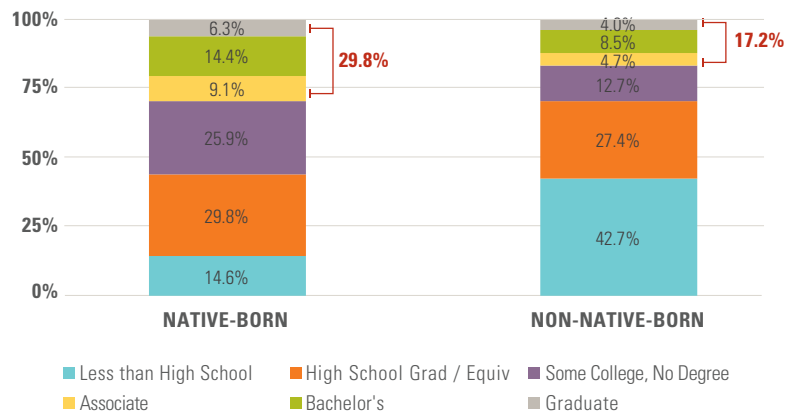
Native-born Latino adults are much more likely to hold some form of college degree. The attainment rate for this group is 29.8 percent, compared with 17.2 percent for Latino adults born outside the United States (see Figure 9). Among native-born Latino adults, about 85 percent have attained at least a high school diploma or equivalent degree, compared with barely 57 percent of Latino adults who were born outside the United States. However, it is important to note that the attainment rate for native-born

**FIGURE 8** SHARE OF LATINO ADULTS WHO ARE NATIVE-BORN BY STATE, 2016



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Surveys.

**FIGURE 9** DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO ADULTS BY BIRTHPLACE, 2016



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey.



Latino adults is nearly 20 percentage points less than the attainment rate for White adults.

Latino adults are also diverse in terms of their country or territory of origin (either through birth or ancestry). A clear majority (60.8 percent) of Latino adults identify as Mexican-American, but others commonly identify as Cuban-American (4.2 percent), Puerto Rican (9.5 percent), or another ethnic group from Central or South America (25.5 percent). Latino degree attainment is generally lower among Mexican-Americans compared with the other three categories (*see Figure 10*).

Degree attainment for Mexican-Americans is 17.4 percent compared with nearly 30 percent for Puerto Ricans and nearly 40 percent for Cuban-Americans. Varied representation of Latino ethnic groups across the country and in states, in part, explains why some states have much higher attainment rates compared to the nation as whole (*see Figure 11*). For example, Florida has the second highest Latino attainment rate and the third largest Latino population, but nearly half of its Latino adults are either Cuban-American or Puerto Rican compared to only one-seventh of Latino adults in the United States.

A few factors explain gaps in attainment between subgroups of Latino Americans. Latino Americans born in the United States are citizens and benefit from having access to educational supports, such as in-state tuition at public universities and community colleges and eligibility for federal and state financial aid. Similarly, adults who were born in Puerto Rico are American citizens and typically have had greater access to higher education (before and after migration) than other Latino Americans. Cuban immigrants also benefit from the ability to apply for permanent residency status within one year of arrival, regardless of whether they were authorized to enter the country.<sup>8</sup> Latinos in other ethnic groups, particularly if they or their parents were unauthorized immigrants, do not benefit from these advantages.

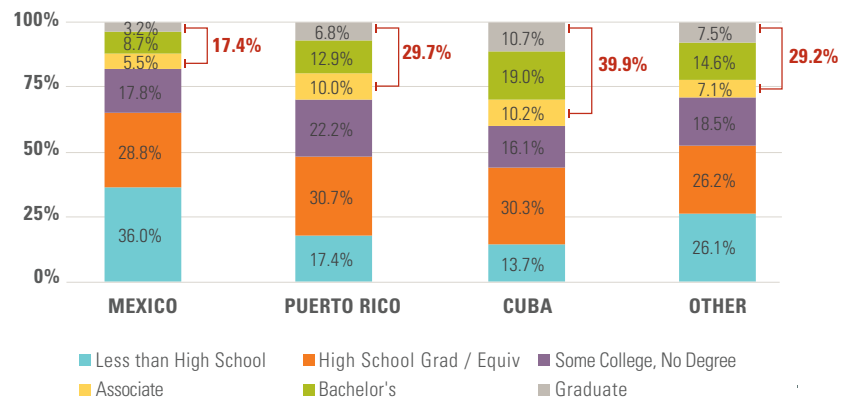
Another factor is that Latino adults born outside the United States vary widely in their educational attainment and socioeconomic status prior to migration. For instance, many Cuban-American adults have arrived in the United States with higher levels of educational attainment and social capital than the average Latino immigrant. Research suggests that how immigrants differ educationally from non-migrants in the home country can influence the college enrollment and attainment of subsequent generations.<sup>9</sup> Thus, differences in educational attainment prior to migration may contribute to sustained gaps in attainment between subgroups of Latino Americans.

## Conclusion

As states continue to pursue their goals to increase the share of adults that have some form of postsecondary credential, it is imperative that states enact policies, interventions, and incentives that will enable more Latino students to successfully navigate the traditional educational pathway to degree completion and help Latino adults — who may have dropped out of college, never enrolled, or grew up outside the United States — find a pathway to completing a college credential or degree. The data in this brief show that Latino attainment rates in many states are far too low and significantly trail rates for White adults.

We know that racial and ethnic gaps in attainment are the result of various factors, such as historical — and current — economic, social, and educational barriers that systemically disadvantage and stifle the progress of Latino people in this country. Many Latinos immigrate to the United States with less education, wealth, and social capital than other immigrants. Too many Latino immigrants face the threat of deportation and lack access to key educational supports, such as in-state tuition and financial aid. Research shows these barriers slow the upward social mobility of Latino immigrants and their families.

**FIGURE 10** DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINO ADULTS BY ORIGIN, 2016



Source: Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey.





More broadly, Latinos also experience inequities linked to discrimination and prejudice against non-White Americans. Inequities in the criminal justice system are clear examples that influence educational attainment. We know that our education system, on average, sends Latino students to schools with less funding and resources,<sup>10</sup> fewer experienced teachers,<sup>11</sup> less rigorous curricular options,<sup>12</sup> and fewer school counselors.<sup>13</sup> Making matters worse, teachers and schools often do not meet the needs of bilingual students or develop curriculums that are culturally relevant for Latino students. These systemic barriers can only be addressed through interventions and policies that prioritize eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, especially those that stifle opportunities for first- and second-generation Latino Americans.

## About the Data

FIGURE 11: ADULT LATINO DEGREE ATTAINMENT AND LATINO DEMOGRAPHY OF SELECT STATES

STATE	Latino Attainment	Latino Attainment Rank	Percentage Mexican-American	Percentage Puerto Rican	Percentage Cuba-American	Percentage Other Latino Origin
New Hampshire	36.5%	1	17%	32%	5%	46%
Florida	34.2%	2	12%	20%	29%	38%
Virginia	29.8%	3	20%	13%	2%	64%
Hawaii	29.5%	4	27%	34%	2%	37%
Ohio	26.9%	6	45%	29%	3%	24%
New York	26.6%	7	13%	28%	2%	58%
Maryland	26.5%	8	16%	9%	2%	73%
Massachusetts	24.6%	10	7%	38%	2%	54%
New Jersey	24.4%	11	13%	25%	4%	57%
Kentucky	24.2%	13	49%	11%	14%	26%
Connecticut	23.1%	16	11%	52%	2%	35%
Louisiana	22.8%	18	38%	6%	4%	52%
<b>United States</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<i>n/a</i>	<b>61%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>26%</b>
Pennsylvania	22.0%	21	17%	47%	2%	33%
Delaware	21.2%	22	39%	31%	3%	27%
Rhode Island	20.0%	28	9%	23%	2%	66%

*Note: Latino degree attainment figures are based on Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau’s 2014, 2015, and 2016 American Community Surveys. The United States and Latino ethnic group demographic data are based on analysis of the 2016 American Community Survey. The states included in the table are those that have Latino populations where fewer than half of adult Latinos are Mexican-American.*

In this brief, we use data from the United States Census Bureau to examine degree attainment at the state and national level. Degree attainment is defined as the percentage of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 that have some form of postsecondary degree (i.e., an associate, bachelor’s, or graduate degree). For the national degree attainment estimates, we used the United States Census Bureau’s 2016 American Community Survey. These data include adults in all states, the District of Columbia (Washington D.C.), Puerto Rico, and overseas military installations.

The degree attainment estimates for states were calculated using three-year averages of data from the United States Census Bureau’s American Community Surveys from 2014, 2015, and 2016. We used a three-year average to mitigate the influence of sampling error and single-year anomalies for states with small populations. To further address the influence of sampling error, we excluded states from the analysis that had an average estimated population of Latino adults below 15,000 in 2014-2016. For Latino adults, six states did not meeting this threshold: Maine, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Vermont.

We did not eliminate states from the analysis that had an estimated Latino population that was below 15,000 in 2000 for three reasons. First, the 2000 data were only included in one indicator — the change in attainment since 2000. Second, the 2000 Decennial Census is more robust than the annual ACS surveys, limiting the effect of sampling error and providing more precise data. And finally, we wanted to include these states because Census data indicated they had rapid growth in the number of Latinos.



Grades were assigned to each state based on how well each state compared with the other states on the degree attainment rate and the change in degree attainment. We standardized the distribution of scores for each category by transforming each data point into a z-score (subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation across states). Grades were assigned based on the z-score's position on the normal curve. The cutoff scores for the grades were: F grades had z-scores below -1.036; D grades had z-scores above -1.036 but below -0.385; C grades had z-scores between -0.385 and 0.385; B grades had z-scores above 0.385 but below 1.036; and A grades had z-scores above 1.036. Pluses and minuses were added for further delineation by splitting each grade band into three equal portions based on the area under the normal curve.

We also rated the degree attainment gap between Latino and White adults. The gap was rated as either "above average," "average," or "below average." An "above average" rating means that the state's degree attainment gap was 0.75 standard deviation above the average gap across all states. A "below average" rating means that the state's degree attainment gap was 0.75 standard deviation below the average gap across all states.

**Endnotes**

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## **ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST**

The Education Trust is a nonprofit organization that promotes closing opportunity gaps by expanding excellence and equity in education for students of color and those from low-income families from pre-kindergarten through college. Through research and advocacy, the organization builds and engages diverse communities that care about education equity, increases political and public will to act on equity issues, and increases college access and completion for historically underserved students.

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