

Among the Nine States with Significant Latino Populations, Colorado Has the Largest Gap between White and Latino College Attainment, Says New Georgetown University Report

Twice as many Whites (39%) in Colorado earn bachelor's degrees compared to Latinos (19%)

(Washington, DC, August 7, 2018) – Colorado, one of nine states with more than one million Latinos, is one of the most-educated states in the country. Fifty-six percent of adults have a high-quality certificate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or higher. Yet, Latinos are not sharing equally in the good fortune. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center), only 19 percent of Latinos who enrolled in a Colorado public college earn a bachelor's degree compared to 39 percent of Whites. *Rocky Mountain Divide: Lifting Latinos and Closing Equity Gaps in Colorado*, finds that nearly half of Latino children (49%) have parents with only a high school education or less.

Compared to White parents, Latino parents are less likely to have a college degree, let alone ever enroll in college. By contrast, 89 percent of White children in Colorado have at least one parent with at least some college education and more than 60 percent of these children have at least one parent with a bachelor's or graduate degree.

Colorado has the second-most educated population, but the fifth lowest on-time high school graduation rate. In addition, Colorado's on-time high school graduation rates for Latinos are markedly below the national average for Latinos: only 68 percent graduate from high school within four years compared to 78 percent nationally. The on-time high school graduation rate among all students is 77 percent compared to the national average of 83 percent. White high school students in the state graduate at the same rate as the national average.

“Colorado has a huge opportunity to close the postsecondary attainment gap between Whites and Latinos, which is the highest among states with large Latino populations,” said Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center and lead author of the report. “As the fastest growing racial and ethnic group in the state, Colorado would do well to ensure that Latinos have access to the right college and career guidance.”

The data show that Latino college students in Colorado are clustered at the sub-baccalaureate level. More than 50 percent of Latinos enroll in certificate or associate's degree programs, compared to 33 percent of Whites. Latinos, who make up 22 percent of high school graduates in the state, are overrepresented at public two-year colleges (26%) and underrepresented at four-year colleges (14%).

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Latino students with high scores on college entrance exams are less likely than Whites to enroll in selective colleges. Only 53 percent of Latinos with ACT scores in the top quartile enrolled in Colorado's public selective colleges compared to 65 percent of Whites in the same category. This is important because students at selective colleges are much more likely to graduate. About 70 percent of Latinos with high ACT scores who enroll in a public selective college complete within five years compared to 40 percent who enrolled in a public open-access college.

The overall completion gap between Whites and Latinos is almost 20 percentage points. However, when Latinos and Whites have similar test scores and enroll in similar colleges, the completion gap significantly narrows to an average of 7 percentage points.

“Colorado is an example to the nation because of its unabashed focus on achieving educational and economic equity for all racial and ethnic groups in the state,” said Tanya I. Garcia, associate director of postsecondary policy research and co-author of the report. “I hope this analysis helps state leaders revisit their specific credential attainment goals.”

Other key findings include:

- Whites (15%) are much more likely than Latinos (5%) to enroll out of state.
- Approximately 42 percent of Latino Colorado high school graduates immediately enroll in college compared to 63 percent of Whites.
- About 31 percent of Latinos complete a postsecondary credential within five years of college enrollment compared to 49 percent of Whites.
- Latinos (76%) who completed a postsecondary credential are slightly more likely than Whites (72%) to enter the Colorado labor market within a year after graduation.
- Whites (21%) are more likely to have a good job that pays \$35,000 or more per year compared to Latinos (15%).
- California is the only other state with the same postsecondary attainment gap between Whites and Latinos (35 percentage-point difference) while Florida has the smallest gap overall (12 percentage-point difference).

“Without a doubt, more Latinos need to graduate from high school in order to have a fighting chance of earning the middle class incomes that Whites in Colorado are more likely to enjoy,” said Megan L. Fasules, research economist at the Georgetown Center and co-author of the report. “That’s one area in Colorado’s college to career pipeline that needs significant attention.”

Rocky Mountain Divide: Lifting Latinos and Closing Equity Gaps in Colorado can be accessed at cew.georgetown.edu/Colorado.

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