

The background features a stylized illustration of the Golden Gate Bridge in orange, set against a light blue sky with white clouds. In the foreground, four graduates are shown from behind, wearing blue caps and gowns, holding up yellow tickets. The landscape includes green pine trees, a yellow sun, and wind turbines in the distance.

# The Golden Ticket

How Raising Postsecondary Attainment Rates to 70 Percent for All Demographic Groups Would Unlock Decades of Prosperity in California

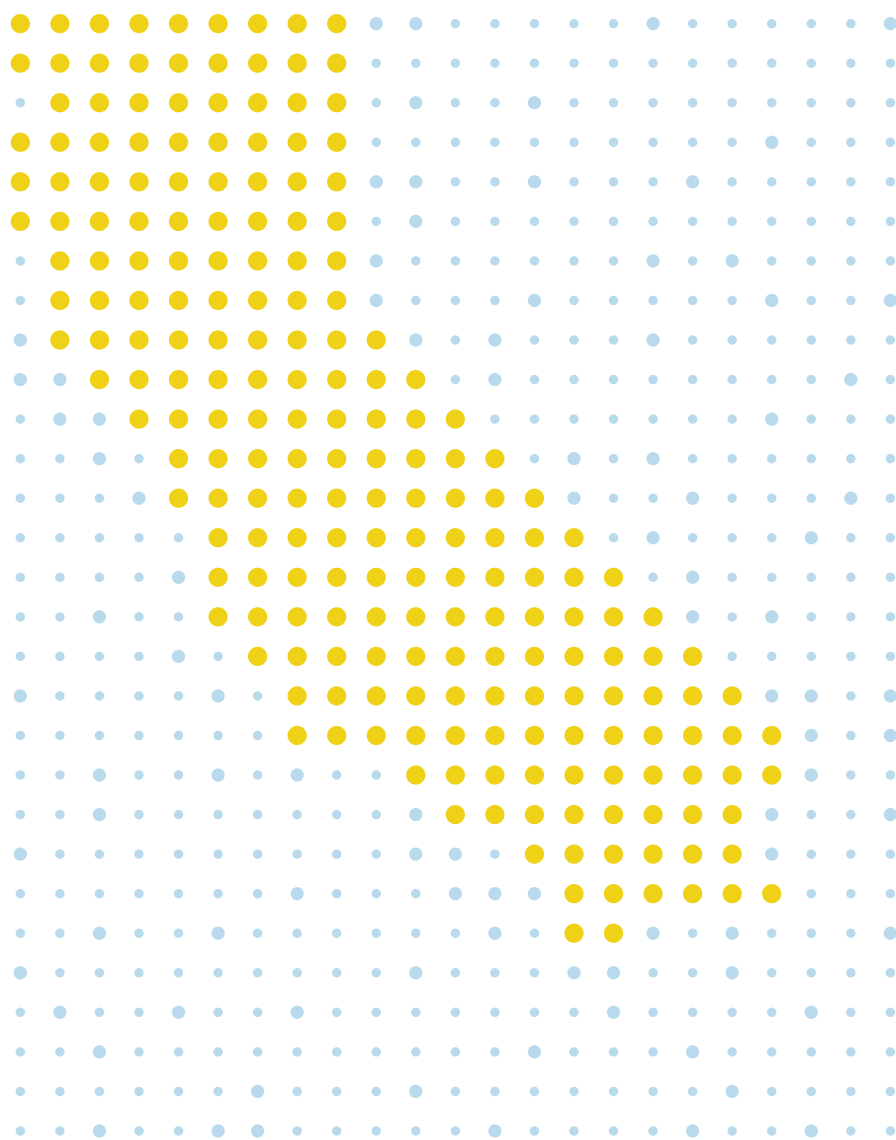
2026

Zachary Mabel | Irene Koo | Jeff Strohl

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
McCourt School of Public Policy

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of College Futures Foundation or any of its officers or employees. All errors and omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

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# Introduction

In today’s knowledge economy, increasing postsecondary attainment is critical to ensuring that people have the skills and training they need to succeed in the workforce. By 2031, nearly three out of every four jobs nationwide are projected to require education or training beyond high school.<sup>1</sup> With the number of college-educated workers approaching retirement far outpacing the projected number of younger workers with equivalent educational qualifications, and with current immigration policies limiting the supply of foreign-born college-educated workers,<sup>2</sup> raising attainment rates among the US-born population will be essential to maintaining the country’s economic prosperity.

Increasing postsecondary attainment not only better aligns workers’ education and skills with the country’s labor-force needs but also enables more workers to secure good, high-paying jobs and achieve economic mobility.<sup>3</sup> Within five years, 85 percent of “good jobs” will likely be held by workers with at least some education or training beyond high school.<sup>4</sup> Research consistently shows that workers with a postsecondary credential see higher lifetime earnings than workers with a high school diploma alone.<sup>5</sup> In addition to benefiting from the earnings premium associated with a credential, individuals with postsecondary education also have a lower likelihood of unemployment; are more likely to have access to other benefits, such as employer-

subsidized healthcare plans, retirement packages, flexible work schedules, and paid leave; have better health outcomes; and demonstrate higher rates of civic engagement.<sup>6</sup>

The economic and societal benefits of credential attainment have long justified public investment in postsecondary education. While the underlying rationale for this investment has not changed, state efforts to frame postsecondary value as part of a broader economic strategy, and to expand opportunity to individuals from all walks of life, have grown in scope and urgency. California is a case in point. In 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom established the goal of raising the statewide attainment rate to 70 percent by 2030, pledging to invest \$39.6 billion in the higher education system and other career education pathways to support the state’s economic future.<sup>7</sup> At present, a much smaller share—approximately 56 percent—of working-age Californians hold a postsecondary degree or a certificate, certification, or occupational license.<sup>8</sup> If statewide attainment growth follows current trends, this share will rise to 66 percent by 2035—falling short of the projected demand for college-educated workers in California, which is expected to approach 70 percent by 2030.<sup>9</sup>

A more prosperous future for California will require more postsecondary education and training for

1 Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023.

2 Clemens, “Skilled Immigration on the Chopping Block,” 2025; Smith et al., *Falling Behind*, 2025; and White House, “Fact Sheet,” 2025.

3 Carnevale et al., *What Works*, 2023; and Strohl et al., *The Future of Good Jobs*, 2024.

4 In previous work, we describe “good jobs” as those that pay at least \$43,000 and a median of \$74,000 for workers ages 25–44 and at least \$55,000 and a median of \$91,000 for workers ages 45–64 (all in 2022\$). Strohl et al., *The Future of Good Jobs*, 2024.

5 Broady and Hershbein, “Major Decisions,” 2020; Carnevale et al., *The College Payoff*, 2021; and Ma and Pender, *Education Pays 2023*, 2023.

6 Morris et al., *The Major Payoff*, 2025; Johnson and Cuellar Mejia, *Higher Education as a Driver of Economic Mobility*, 2018; and Carnevale et al., *Learning and Earning by Degrees*, 2024.

7 EdSource, “Higher Education,” 2022; and Campaign for College Opportunity, “Governor Newsom’s Historic Budget Invests in the Future,” 2022.

8 College Futures Foundation and California Education Lab, *Reaching California’s Attainment Goals*, 2025; and Carnevale et al., *Learning and Earning by Degrees*, 2024.

9 Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023.

its residents, not only to meet the state’s future workforce needs but also to improve access to good jobs and support economic mobility. Yet large segments of California’s population are at risk of being left behind, with current attainment patterns revealing troubling disparities by race/ethnicity, economic background, age, and geography. If not addressed, these long-standing disparities—driven, in part, by low attainment rates among historically marginalized groups that account for nearly half of California’s overall population—threaten to hold back California’s economic progress and cement huge opportunity gaps. Reaching California’s current statewide attainment goal would help align the state’s talent supply with its growing economy but would not necessarily ensure that all groups have equal access to economic security and upward mobility. In fact, reaching a 70 percent statewide attainment rate through outsize gains from groups with already high levels of degree or credential completion is likely to widen prosperity divides for decades to come.

Given this concern, College Futures Foundation—an organization focused on aligning postsecondary attainment with greater economic mobility—has set a more ambitious goal of raising attainment rates to at least 70 percent for all groups of working-age adults in California, including underserved learners, by 2035. With College Futures Foundation’s support, we set out to determine how California and its residents would benefit from achieving this goal for all demographic groups.

We find that there would be an enormous impact from increasing attainment to 70 percent across all demographic groups. While achieving this goal will require historic levels of public investment, totaling hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade, our estimates show that the returns would quickly surpass the initial investment and generate total monetary benefits worth 30 times the public costs. After only the first five years of investment,

the average annual net gain from higher earnings, increased tax revenues, consumption-driven economic expansion, and savings from reduced public spending would total \$65.5 billion.

Over the entire 50-year payback period we model—covering the full career spans of all young adults who earn a credential over the next decade—the state and its residents would see \$4.4 trillion in net monetary gains, equivalent to \$214,000 per working-age adult.<sup>10</sup>

This anticipated impact is greater than the size of the entire state economy today and 40 percent larger than the state’s inflation-adjusted historical economic growth over the past 50 years.<sup>11</sup> It is also nearly twice as large as the anticipated impact if the statewide attainment rate were to reach 70 percent but some groups fell short of the goal. The difference reflects the fact that current and projected attainment rates for many underrepresented groups remain well below 70 percent; reaching the target for all demographic groups would therefore require substantially more individuals to earn a credential compared with achieving a 70 percent statewide attainment rate while perpetuating equity gaps.

Importantly, although bachelor’s degrees deliver the highest monetary gains overall, attainment gains at all levels would have a transformational impact for California and its residents. Even if all newly credentialed individuals earned sub-baccalaureate awards (a certificate, certification, occupational license, or associate’s degree), the expected monetary impact of increasing attainment to 70 percent for all demographic groups would be around \$4 trillion. Thus, credentials at all levels offer routes to economic advancement in California, and strengthening all credential pathways is essential to meeting California’s future workforce needs and ensuring that prosperity is broadly shared.

10 This per capita figure does not represent the economic gains each working-age adult is expected to realize, as most of the benefits would accrue (via earnings gains) only to those who earn new credentials. Nonetheless, converting overall impact estimates to per-person metrics can be useful for interpreting magnitudes, especially in cases like this one where the overall dollar amount is extremely large.

11 Most of the economic gains would accrue directly to individuals (via after-tax earnings gains) rather than through economic expansion. Thus, we include comparisons to California’s economy only to help convey the magnitude of such a large dollar amount. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Department of Finance, Gross State Product in California from 1963–2022, 2025; and US Bureau of Economic Analysis, State Annual Summary Statistics from 1998–2024, 2025.

As we show in this report, however, California has a long way to go to increase attainment overall and close equity gaps. While certain racial/ethnic groups already have attainment rates above 70 percent, others are projected to have rates remaining below 60 percent a decade from today in the absence of additional policy efforts and statewide investment. For instance, while the Hispanic/Latino population is the largest racial/ethnic group in California (constituting 41 percent of the population<sup>12</sup>), Hispanic/Latino men and women currently have the lowest postsecondary attainment rates of all demographic groups in the state (31 percent and 39 percent, respectively). Because the Hispanic/Latino population is so large and their projected attainment rate is well below 70 percent, reaching the target for this group alone would require credentialing nearly 1.75 million more individuals than projected over the next decade.

Our analysis also examines the monetary impacts of increasing postsecondary attainment by economic background, age group, and state region. We find the following:

- If California achieved a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups, gains among previously low-income adults would drive more than half of the total monetary impact, even though these adults represent less than 20 percent of California's working-age population.
- Any path to reaching the 70 percent target must focus on both young and older adults, in part because future young-adult populations will be too small to drive all of the necessary attainment gains.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, our analysis finds that adults earning a credential later in life experience meaningful economic returns, making credential completion a sound investment for many older adults and their families.
- Attainment rates also vary significantly by geographic region. The Central Valley and

Inland Empire—regions where hands-on jobs in agriculture, construction, production, maintenance, and the service sector predominate—have the lowest current and projected attainment rates across the state (less than 45 percent now, and less than 55 percent in 2035). As a result, attainment gains in these regions would produce outsize impacts on a per capita basis. Nevertheless, in every region, at least five demographic groups are projected to fall short of the 70 percent attainment target by 2035. All regions therefore stand to benefit from accelerating attainment progress among historically underrepresented groups.

Reaching a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups in California will be an enormous task, particularly given the magnitude of the attainment increase required for historically underrepresented groups. We estimate that reaching just the projected overall attainment rate of 66 percent will require \$122 billion in public spending on higher education over the next decade. Meeting the more ambitious 70 percent attainment target across all demographic groups would require an additional \$198 billion by our estimation—bringing the total investment to \$321 billion over the next decade, more than eight times Governor Newsom's planned multiyear investment in California's public higher education system.<sup>14</sup> Achieving this goal will also take targeted, scaled efforts to support low-income students, older adults, and other learners who are more likely to face barriers to enrollment and degree completion.

Despite these challenges, it's clear that sustained investment and a commitment to closing equity gaps would greatly expand economic opportunities for California's residents. As in times past, the state has the opportunity to take bold action that delivers transformative results. The question is whether it will act with the urgency this moment demands to expand prosperity for all Californians.

12 Johnson and Cuellar Mejia, "Fact Sheet," 2026.

13 We define young adults as those ages 25–36 in 2035 (ages 13–24 in 2023). See Part 3 of this report for more details on our analysis by age group.

14 EdSource, "Higher Education," 2022; and Campaign for College Opportunity, "Governor Newsom's Historic Budget Invests in the Future," 2022. Our estimates for public higher education spending—for the projection scenario and the target scenario—do not sum to the estimated total investment of \$321 billion due to rounding.



## Part 1.

# Racial/Ethnic and Gender Disparities in Postsecondary Attainment

California boasts the largest public higher education system in the US, comprising three segments: the University of California (UC); California State University (CSU), the largest public four-year university system in the country; and California Community Colleges, the largest community college system in the country. In addition to its 145 public colleges and universities, California is home to approximately 150 private nonprofit colleges and 160 private for-profit institutions; collectively, these postsecondary institutions enroll nearly 3.6 million students across the state (accounting for about 14 percent of all postsecondary enrollments nationwide).<sup>15</sup>

With such a robust infrastructure of colleges and universities, California is well positioned to

achieve the goal of increasing postsecondary attainment. That's good news, given that demand for college-educated workers is rising nationwide and in California, and most good jobs—those that pay family-sustaining wages—go to people with postsecondary credentials.<sup>16</sup>

California ranks in the top third of all states in terms of the share of the working-age population with a postsecondary credential.<sup>17</sup> As of 2023, 56 percent of working-age Californians held a postsecondary degree or a certificate, certification, or occupational license.<sup>18</sup> If attainment growth follows current trends, this share will increase to 66 percent by 2035,<sup>19</sup> falling short of both Governor Newsom's goal of 70 percent statewide by 2030 and College Futures' more ambitious target—at least 70 percent across

15 US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2024; and Johnson and Cuellar Mejia, *California's Higher Education System*, 2019.

16 Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023; Carnevale et al., *Learning and Earning by Degrees*, 2024; and Strohl et al., *The Future of Good Jobs*, 2024.

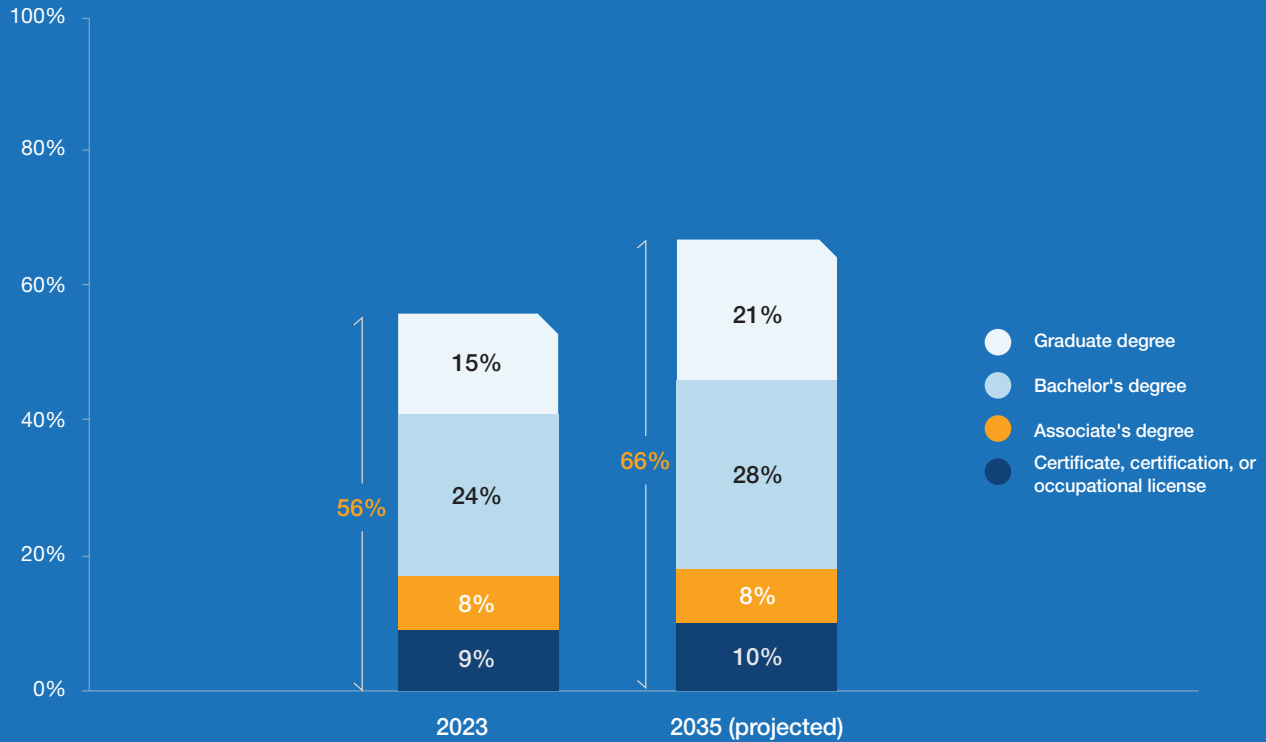
17 Lumina Foundation, *A Stronger Nation*, 2024.

18 College Futures Foundation and California Education Lab, *Reaching California's Attainment Goals*, 2025.

19 For details about how we projected attainment rates in 2035, see Appendix A.

all demographic groups by 2035. In the absence of additional policy efforts and state investment, most of the projected attainment growth through 2035 is expected to result from gains at the bachelor's degree and graduate degree levels (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Sixty-six percent of working-age Californians are projected to hold a postsecondary degree or credential in 2035 if attainment follows current trends.**



Note: Attainment rates by credential level may not sum to the overall rate due to rounding.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; the US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and the US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

Although the overall statewide attainment rate has steadily increased over time,<sup>20</sup> this progress masks considerable gaps between different racial/ethnic groups, as well as across economic backgrounds, ages, and geography. Given persistent disparities in attainment across the state, reaching 70 percent for all demographic groups will require large increases in enrollment and completion for certain subpopulations, most notably Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, and underrepresented

American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Asian (AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian) adults. In the following sections, we present our findings on projected attainment rates by race/ethnicity and sex and discuss potential policy interventions and state-level investments needed to support greater enrollment and degree completion among underrepresented groups.

20 Carnevale et al., *Learning and Earning by Degrees*, 2024.

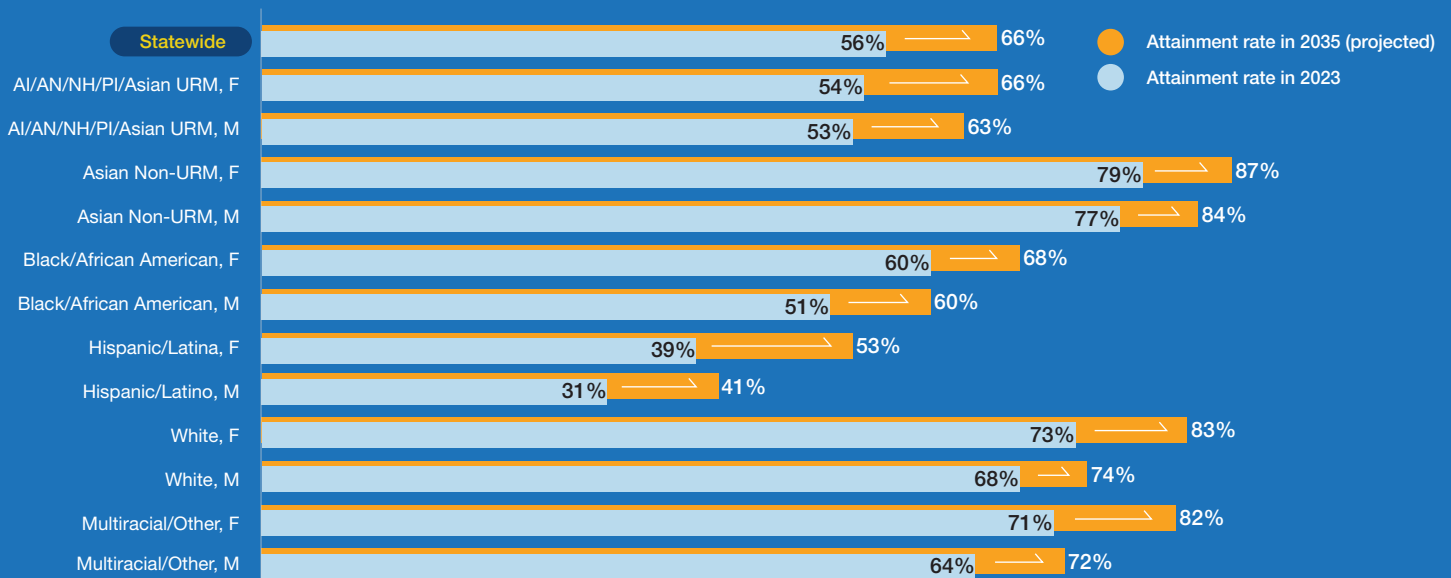
## Many demographic groups are projected to fall short of the 70 percent attainment target in 2035, with Hispanic/Latino men and women furthest behind.

To understand how close each demographic group is to reaching the attainment goal, we estimated how many more individuals from each group would need to earn a postsecondary degree or credential for the group to reach a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035. Using annual statewide attainment data from 2009 to 2023 for the population of working-age Californians (ages 25–64), we projected attainment rates by race/ethnicity and sex through 2035, resulting in attainment projections for 12 subgroups.<sup>21</sup>

We find that 6 of the 12 race-by-sex groups in our analysis—underrepresented AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian,<sup>22</sup> Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino men

and women—are projected to fall short of the 70 percent attainment target by 2035. Only four groups (non-underrepresented Asian/Asian American men and women, white women, and multiracial/other women) already have attainment rates higher than 70 percent (as of 2023), and only two additional groups (white men and multiracial/other men) are currently on pace to reach the 70 percent target by 2035 (Figure 2). Our projections indicate that 2 million more working-age Californians are likely to hold a postsecondary credential by 2035, but an additional 1.84 million adults would need to earn a credential for all demographic groups to reach the 70 percent target.

**Figure 2. Half of all race-by-sex groups in California are projected to have postsecondary attainment rates below 70 percent in 2035.**



Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; the US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and the US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

<sup>21</sup> For more details on how we projected attainment rates in 2035 for each group, see Appendix A.

<sup>22</sup> In our analysis, we distinguish among groups of Asian/Asian American individuals with credential attainment rates above and below the statewide average today. Although Asian/Asian American individuals as a whole have the highest postsecondary attainment rate of any racial/ethnic group in the US, this categorization obscures large differences across ethnic subgroups. For example, as of 2019, only 15 percent of Bhutanese American adults held a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 75 percent of Indian American adults, suggesting the importance of evaluating underrepresented ethnic groups separately when possible (Kim et al., “Population Trends and Educational Attainment,” 2024; Halloran, “Redefining Success,” 2025; and Budiman and Ruiz, “Key Facts About Asian Origin Groups in the U.S.,” 2021). We therefore differentiate among adults who are members of underrepresented versus non-underrepresented Asian/Asian American groups. Due to the small sample of underrepresented Asian/Asian American individuals in the data, we aggregated this group with other underrepresented populations for estimation purposes. The AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian underrepresented minority (URM) category thus includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese populations. The Asian/Asian American non-URM category is primarily made up of Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean populations.

California has a majority-minority population and is one of the most racially diverse states in the country, but multiple racial/ethnic groups remain underrepresented among credential holders. For instance, the Hispanic/Latino population is the largest racial/ethnic group in the state, representing approximately 41 percent of the population, and this group is projected to represent a growing share of the population for many years to come.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as of 2023, Hispanic/Latino men and women had the lowest postsecondary attainment rates—31 percent and 39 percent, respectively—of all racial/ethnic groups. As a result, reaching the 70 percent postsecondary attainment goal for Hispanic/Latino working adults alone would require credentialing nearly 1.75 million more individuals than projected over the next decade.

The current and projected attainment rates for women are higher than those of their male counterparts across every racial/ethnic category, reflecting the fact that women in the US currently earn the majority of postsecondary degrees at all levels and outpace men in both enrollment and college completion.<sup>24</sup> The largest gender disparity in current attainment rates is between Black/African American men and women (9 percentage points), but we project that a larger gender divide will emerge between Hispanic/Latino men and women (12 percentage points) by 2035.

## Reaching the 70 percent goal for all demographic groups will require an additional \$321 billion in public investment over the next decade to expand access and support student success.



While certain demographic groups are on track to surpass the 70 percent attainment target in the next decade, many others are projected to fall short. Narrowing the gaps and raising attainment among underrepresented groups will require both enrolling more individuals from these groups and increasing their likelihood of completion. For example, among working-age adults, the enrollment gap between white men and Hispanic/Latino men with at least a high school diploma exceeds 20 percentage points (81 percent versus 58 percent). And among college-goers, Hispanic/Latino men are nearly twice as likely as white men not to have earned a credential (24 percent versus 13 percent).<sup>25</sup> Given the enormity of these gaps, it's clear that adults from underrepresented groups face many barriers

23 Johnson and Cuellar Mejia, "Fact Sheet," 2026.

24 Hurst, "U.S. Women Are Outpacing Men in College Completion, Including in Every Major Racial and Ethnic Group," 2024; and Nietzel, "Women Continue to Outpace Men in College Enrollment and Graduation," 2024.

25 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023. We calculated the noncompletion rate as the share of working-age adults with some college but no degree divided by the sum of this share and the share with an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree.

to attainment, and greater investment is needed on multiple fronts.

Even absent further intervention, we estimate that simply reaching the projected overall attainment rate of 66 percent by 2035 (from 56 percent today) will require an infusion of \$122 billion in public higher education expenditures over the next decade. Reaching the more ambitious goal of 70 percent across all demographic groups will likely require an infusion of \$321 billion.<sup>26</sup> These figures far exceed the state’s initially planned investment of \$39.6 billion in public higher education outlined in Governor Newsom’s 2022–23 budget.<sup>27</sup> In short, meeting both the statewide attainment goal in 2030 and the more ambitious goal for all demographic groups by 2035 will require sustained and unprecedented public investment well beyond what has been committed to date.

California has demonstrated a strong commitment to helping low- and middle-income students and other underserved learners achieve prosperity through credential attainment. For instance, the state already invests more per full-time-equivalent student than the national average, with funding for the UC, CSU, and CCC systems and the state’s financial aid program representing approximately 10 percent of the state’s General Fund, more than goes toward state corrections, transportation, and environmental protection.<sup>28</sup> In-state tuition costs within the UC and CSU systems are generally lower than those of other national four-year universities, and tuition costs within the CCC system are the least expensive in the country.<sup>29</sup> California also has generous financial aid programs, ranking among the top 10 states in the amount of grant aid awarded per student.<sup>30</sup>

The state has also made important strides toward improving the accessibility, affordability, and value of postsecondary education and training for all students, regardless of their pathway into or through postsecondary education.<sup>31</sup> But with many Californians still struggling to earn in-demand credentials, the state must pursue additional ways of building a learner-centered postsecondary system. Such approaches could mean lowering tuition and non-tuition costs and making those costs more predictable for students and families, addressing students’ holistic needs beyond the classroom, strengthening advising pathways, breaking down the silos between education/training and work, and ensuring that credentials deliver opportunities for economic advancement to Californians of all demographic backgrounds.

Meeting future workforce demands, strengthening the state’s economic future, and closing attainment gaps across racial/ethnic groups will require increasing postsecondary enrollment and completion among millions more Californians over the next decade. While accommodating such significant increases will require historic levels of investment from the state, we find that these costs would be small compared with the returns they would generate, even over a relatively short payback period of 10 years. In Part 2, we document the monetary impact for California and its residents if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate over the next decade.

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26 These cost estimates account for the additional instructional spending, academic and student support resources, and need-based financial aid likely required to enroll and graduate more learners from historically underrepresented groups. For more details on how we estimated public higher education expenditures, see Appendix A.

27 EdSource, “Higher Education,” 2022; and Campaign for College Opportunity, “Governor Newsom’s Historic Budget Invests in the Future,” 2022.

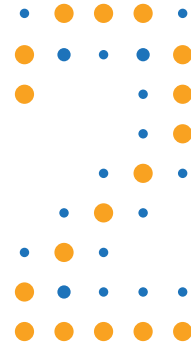
28 Graves, *Guide to the California State Budget Process*, 2025; and Cook et al., *California’s Higher Education Funding Landscape*, 2024.

29 Cook et al., *California’s Higher Education Funding Landscape*, 2024.

30 Cook et al., “Fact Sheet,” 2019.

31 For example, California’s 2022–23 state budget included funding to close equity gaps in graduation rates by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, reduce time to degree completion, and require completion of college financial aid applications among all high school seniors, including undocumented students. Campaign for College Opportunity, “Governor Newsom’s Historic Budget Invests in the Future,” 2022; and Zhou et al., *College Enrollment Under California’s New Financial Aid Application Policy*, 2025.





## Part 2.

# The Anticipated Monetary Gains from Raising Attainment Rates to 70 Percent Across All Demographic Groups in California

California's future prosperity depends on increasing access to postsecondary education and, in turn, supporting access to good jobs that lead to greater economic mobility. Because opportunity is increasingly tied to completion of education or training beyond high school,<sup>32</sup> large segments of California's working-age population with low credential-attainment rates are at risk of being left behind for good.

Achieving an attainment rate of at least 70 percent across all demographic groups in California by 2035 would require historic levels of public investment in higher education, amounting to hundreds of

billions of dollars over the next decade. Yet the economic returns would quickly surpass the up-front investment. Our estimates show that the additional higher education spending would begin to pay for itself in just over five years and would continue delivering benefits for decades.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, achieving the target attainment rate for all demographic groups would not only expand individual opportunity but also strengthen California's economy for decades to come.

Over the second half of the 10-year investment period needed for all demographic groups to reach a 70 percent attainment rate, the average

<sup>32</sup> Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023; Smith et al., *Falling Behind*, 2025; and Strohl et al., *The Future of Good Jobs*, 2024.

<sup>33</sup> In other words, the expected return on the decade-long investment would accrue so quickly that positive net gains would materialize even before the full investment is completed.

annual net gain from higher earnings, increased tax revenues, consumption-driven economic expansion, and savings from reduced public spending would total \$65.5 billion—and these benefits would continue to accrue through 2075.<sup>34</sup> Over the entire 50-year payback period—covering the full career spans of all young adults newly credentialed over the next decade—the cumulative impact would reach \$4.4 trillion for California and its residents.

An impact of this scale would be transformative. For context, California’s economy grew by \$3 trillion (in 2024 dollars) over the past five decades.<sup>35</sup> The projected monetary impact from achieving at least a 70 percent attainment rate for all demographic groups would therefore exceed the state’s historical economic growth by 47 percent over an equivalent 50-year payback horizon.

## HOW WE ESTIMATED THE MONETARY IMPACT

To quantify the **monetary impact** of reaching at least a 70 percent attainment rate for all groups, we calculated the difference in anticipated monetary gains between two attainment scenarios:

- a **projection scenario**, in which each group’s attainment rate in 2035 is based on the growth trend from 2009 to 2023
- a **target scenario**, in which every underrepresented group achieves at least the target attainment rate by 2035

The anticipated **monetary gains** under each scenario represent the aggregate net benefits beyond what would accrue if current attainment rates held constant over this period. To calculate the aggregate net benefits, we multiplied per-person values calculated for each race-by-sex-by-education group across seven economic measures (see “Economic Measures Included in Our Estimates”) by the total number of working-age adults in 2035 at each education level. If attainment rates held constant from today, 11.7 million working-age Californians in 2035 would hold a postsecondary credential. Our attainment projections indicate that number is likely to increase to 13.7 million over the next decade, while achieving the target scenario would require the number of credentialed adults to increase to 15.5 million by 2035.

34 Our analysis evaluates the impact of increasing postsecondary attainment rates to 70 percent by 2035 among working-age adults (ages 25–64). Assuming the investment period begins today and the monetary gains accrue over individuals’ working lives, the gains would accrue through 2075 (50 years from the date of our analysis), reflecting the career span of the youngest adults in this age cohort.

35 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the State of California, Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, 2023; US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Real Gross Domestic Product by State, 2024; and US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Historical Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, August 2025.

## ECONOMIC MEASURES INCLUDED IN OUR ESTIMATES

Our analysis accounts for seven sources of public and private costs and benefits:

- additional public higher education expenditures needed to accelerate attainment growth
- after-tax lifetime earnings gains (net of individuals' own education costs)
- additional federal and state personal income tax revenues
- consumption-driven economic expansion
- public savings from reduced spending on public assistance programs
- public savings from reduced healthcare spending covered by public insurance
- public savings from the reduced likelihood of incarceration

## Bringing all underrepresented groups up to at least a 70 percent attainment rate would generate total monetary benefits 30 times the public costs.

If attainment growth continues along its current trajectory, 66 percent of adults ages 25–64 will hold a postsecondary credential in 2035 and six race-by-sex groups will fall short of the 70 percent target. These projected increases in attainment would deliver about \$6.1 trillion in total monetary gains to California and its residents over the next 50 years.

If instead all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035, the total monetary gains would climb to \$10.5 trillion. This difference of \$4.4 trillion represents the anticipated impact of achieving the target attainment rate for all underrepresented groups.

Most of this impact (\$3.3 trillion, equivalent to \$162,000 per working-age adult in the state) would

flow directly to individuals in the form of higher lifetime after-tax earnings. However, the public returns would also be substantial, consisting of

- \$745 billion in additional federal and state personal income tax revenue,
- \$439 billion in consumption-driven economic expansion,
- \$21 billion in public assistance expenditure savings,
- \$66 billion in public healthcare expenditure savings, and
- \$4 billion in incarceration expenditure savings.

Together, these public benefits—totaling \$1.3 trillion, or \$61,000 per working-age adult—would greatly exceed the \$198 billion in additional public higher

education spending required for all demographic groups to achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (Table 1).

**Table 1. Achieving at least a 70 percent attainment rate in 2035 for all demographic groups in California would generate \$4.4 trillion in economic impact, equivalent to \$214,000 per working-age adult in the state.**

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$122 billion	-\$321 billion	-\$198 billion	-\$10,000
Lifetime earnings (post tax)	\$4.1 trillion	\$7.4 trillion	\$3.3 trillion	\$162,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$1.4 trillion	\$2.1 trillion	\$745 billion	\$36,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$590 billion	\$1 trillion	\$439 billion	\$21,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$31 billion	\$52 billion	\$21 billion	\$1,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$113 billion	\$179 billion	\$66 billion	\$3,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$4 billion	\$8 billion	\$4 billion	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6.1 trillion</b>	<b>\$10.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$4.4 trillion</b>	<b>\$214,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Per capita estimates are calculated using the projected population of Californians ages 25–64 in 2035. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, DataVista, 2025; California State University, CSU Student Success Dashboard, 2025; California Department of Finance, State and County Population Projections, 2025; Harris et al., "Policy Brief," 2024; Roehrkasse and Wildeman, "Lifetime Risk of Imprisonment in the United States Remains High and Starkly Unequal," 2022; University of California, Information Center, 2025; US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Price Parities by State and Metro Area, 2024; US Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement), 2024; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October Supplement, 2017–19, 2022, and 2023; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016; US Department of Education, Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B), 2018; US Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2017; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2017 and 2023; US Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 2020; and US Department of Health and Human Services, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2022.

If the statewide attainment rate were to reach 70 percent by 2035 but some groups were to fall short of the goal, the impact would also be transformative, generating substantial returns (\$8.5 trillion over the 50-year payback horizon).<sup>36</sup> But the total impact, at \$2.4 trillion, would be \$2 trillion less than in the target

scenario, and not all demographic groups would share in the benefits. Thus, accelerating attainment more equitably across all demographic groups would be a win-win—almost doubling the overall impact (\$4.4 trillion versus \$2.4 trillion) while ensuring the gains are broadly shared (Table 2).

**Table 2. California and its residents would miss out on \$2 trillion in potential economic gains if the state reached the 70 percent overall attainment goal without all demographic groups reaching the target.**

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from now to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if the statewide attainment rate reaches 70 percent by 2035 but some groups fall short (statewide scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if the statewide attainment rate reaches 70 percent by 2035 but some groups fall short (statewide minus projection)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve an attainment rate of 70 percent or higher by 2035 (target minus projection)	Difference in impact (target minus statewide)
<b>Direct economic measures</b>						
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$122 billion	-\$186 billion	-\$321 billion	-\$63 billion	-\$198 billion	-\$135 billion
Lifetime earnings (post tax)	\$4.1 trillion	\$5.7 trillion	\$7.4 trillion	\$1.6 trillion	\$3.3 trillion	\$1.7 trillion
Federal and state tax revenue	\$1.4 trillion	\$2.0 trillion	\$2.1 trillion	\$560 billion	\$745 billion	\$185 billion
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>						
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$590 billion	\$824 billion	\$1 trillion	\$234 billion	\$439 billion	\$205 billion
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$31 billion	\$39 billion	\$52 billion	\$9 billion	\$21 billion	\$13 billion
Public health expenditure savings	\$113 billion	\$145 billion	\$179 billion	\$32 billion	\$66 billion	\$34 billion
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$4 billion	\$5 billion	\$8 billion	\$1 billion	\$4 billion	\$2 billion
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6.1 trillion</b>	<b>\$8.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$10.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$2.4 trillion</b>	<b>\$4.4 trillion</b>	<b>\$2.0 trillion</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Per capita estimates are calculated using the projected population of Californians ages 25–64 in 2035. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

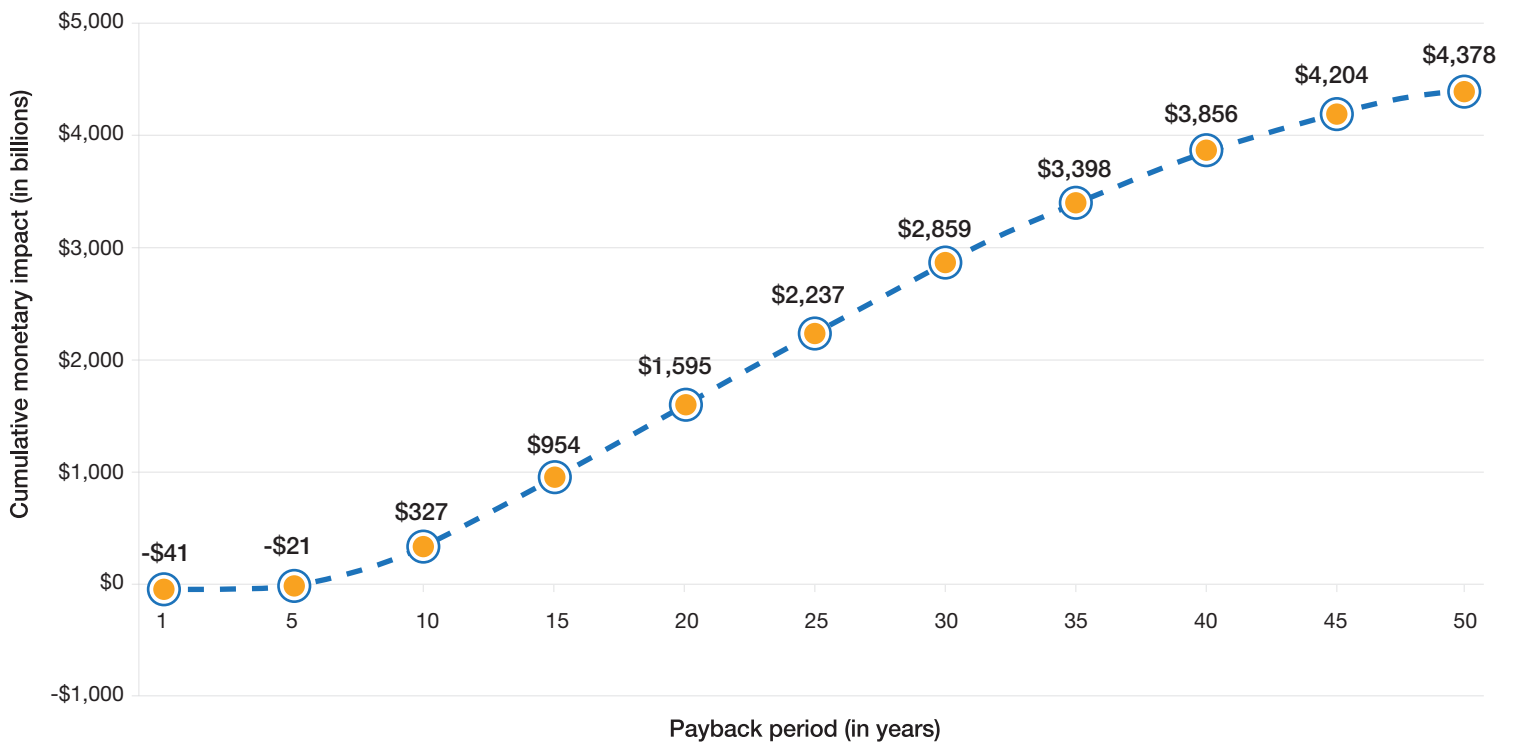
<sup>36</sup> In both scenarios, we modeled attainment gains through 2035 (rather than 2035 for the target scenario and 2030 for the statewide scenario) to compare the gains over a consistent time horizon. For the statewide scenario, we assumed that each race-by-sex group's attainment rate in 2035 would increase proportionally from the projected rate to meet the statewide goal, thereby preserving the projected attainment disparities between groups. In this case, two of the six underrepresented groups—underrepresented AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian women and Black/African American women—would reach the 70 percent target, while the other four—underrepresented AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian men, Black/African American men, and Hispanic/Latino men and women—would make progress but continue to fall short of the target.

## The monetary benefits from all demographic groups reaching the attainment target would quickly exceed the public costs.

Because accelerating the pace of attainment growth beyond current trends will require large up-front public investments, the monetary benefits of all demographic groups achieving at least a 70 percent attainment rate would not immediately exceed the costs. Public outlays would initially outweigh the monetary gains, producing a cumulative net loss of \$21 billion over the first five years.<sup>37</sup>

However, after the first five years of investment, the cumulative impact would turn positive and then grow steadily in subsequent years. By year 10, the cumulative impact would reach \$327 billion (Figure 3), with an average annual impact of \$65.5 billion per year in years 6 through 10. After 10 years, the average annual impact would rise to \$96.8 billion.

Figure 3. Reaching the target attainment rate for all demographic groups would produce \$327 billion in additional monetary gains over the first 10 years.



Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. This analysis assumes the additional public spending required to reach the attainment goal begins today and the monetary gains accrue over individuals' working lives (ages 25–64). For adults age 25 in 2035, the benefits would therefore accrue through 2075 (50 years from the date of our analysis).

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

<sup>37</sup> When estimating the cumulative impact over time, we assumed all public higher education outlays would be frontloaded over the first 10 years, with spending declining by 20 percent annually over this period.



## The monetary impact from increasing attainment would be large regardless of whether Californians earn four-year degrees or shorter-term credentials.

Our estimate of the monetary impact of reaching at least a 70 percent attainment rate for all demographic groups by 2035—\$4.4 trillion—assumes that individuals earning new credentials between today and 2035 would earn a mix of certificates, certifications, and licenses; associate’s degrees; and bachelor’s degrees.<sup>38</sup> This approach is both the most realistic and reflective of the multiple pathways through which individuals can attain a credential. At the same time, this assumption obscures how the specific mix of newly earned credentials affects the anticipated impact. To examine this assumption explicitly, we modeled three alternative target scenarios in which all

credential gains occur through a single credential type: either non-degree credentials (i.e., certificates, certifications, or occupational licenses); associate’s degrees; or bachelor’s degrees.

If all demographic groups reached the 70 percent attainment goal and all newly credentialed individuals earned a bachelor’s degree, the total impact to California and its residents would be \$4.8 trillion, or \$400 billion larger than our estimate if all demographic groups experienced gains through a combination of different credentials. However, even if all new credential holders earned a certificate, certification, or occupational license, or all new credential holders earned an associate’s degree, the anticipated impact—around \$4 trillion—would remain massive and similar in magnitude.

In other words, while the difference between the three hypothetical scenarios underscores the higher long-term value of a bachelor’s degree,<sup>39</sup> accelerating credential attainment at all levels among



38 Specifically, for each race-by-sex group, we assumed the number of credentialed individuals earning a certificate, certification, or license; associate’s degree; or bachelor’s degree would increase in proportion with each group’s projected credential distribution in 2035.

39 Carnevale et al., *The College Payoff*, 2021.

underrepresented groups would have a tremendous impact. Even the least impactful scenarios would deliver nearly \$200,000 in additional per capita gains (Table 3).

The bottom line is clear: There are many pathways to economic advancement through credential attainment, and all must be strengthened to broaden and democratize who will experience prosperity in California’s future.

**Table 3. Reaching the target attainment rate for all demographic groups would deliver around \$4 trillion in total impact, even if all newly credentialed individuals earned sub-baccalaureate awards.**

Credential type earned by new credential holders	Estimated gains if each demographic group’s attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
Certificate, certification, or occupational license	\$4.7 trillion	\$8.7 trillion	\$4.1 trillion	\$199,000
Associate’s degree	\$4.6 trillion	\$8.5 trillion	\$3.9 trillion	\$189,000
Bachelor’s degree	\$6.1 trillion	\$10.9 trillion	\$4.8 trillion	\$232,000

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Per capita estimates are calculated using the projected population of Californians ages 25–64 in 2035. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.



## Most of the total impact would derive from attainment gains among Hispanic/Latino men and women and low-income adults.

Our impact estimates include only the monetary gains that would be realized by accelerating attainment beyond what is projected for each group. Because half of all race-by-sex groups are projected to reach the 70 percent attainment rate without further intervention, we find that all of the anticipated monetary impact is driven by the additional benefits resulting from underrepresented groups reaching at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035.<sup>40</sup> More specifically, the total impact is entirely driven by underrepresented AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino adults, though each group's contribution to the statewide impact varies.<sup>41</sup>

Among these groups, attainment gains for Hispanic/Latino men and women would drive the lion's share of the total impact, for two reasons: First, Hispanic/Latino adults make up a large share of California's working-age population (nearly 41 percent as of 2023). Second, as discussed in Part 1, Hispanic/

Latino adults' projected attainment rates in 2035 are the lowest of all race-by-sex groups in the state (41 percent for men and 53 percent for women), meaning the difference between the projection and target scenarios for Hispanic/Latino adults is especially large. Reaching the target attainment rate for Hispanic/Latino men and women would thus require credentialing more than 1 million additional men and 700,000 additional women beyond current projections.

Accomplishing this milestone would account for nearly all (\$4.2 trillion) of the \$4.4 trillion statewide impact. On a per capita basis,<sup>42</sup> the additional attainment gains among Hispanic/Latino men and women would deliver \$730,000 and \$352,000 in further monetary gains per person, respectively—far exceeding the average per capita impact of \$147,000 across the four other underrepresented race-by-sex groups.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For groups already projected to meet or exceed 70 percent by 2035, we maintained the number of credential holders at the projected level.

<sup>41</sup> We were unable to estimate monetary impacts at the intersection of race/ethnicity and income because of data limitations in the ACS. As a result, the estimates reported separately by race-by-sex and by income level cannot be reconciled to produce intersectional results (for example, the impact resulting from attainment gains among low-income white men) and should be interpreted independently. For details on our methods of impact disaggregation, see Appendix A.

<sup>42</sup> For all subgroup analyses, per capita estimates are calculated using the projected 2035 population of adults ages 25–64 in each demographic group. These results do not represent the economic gains each individual is expected to realize, as some benefits (such as earnings gains) would accrue only to those who earn new credentials, while others (such as public healthcare expenditure savings) would extend to individuals beyond the group. Nonetheless, the per capita estimates help us determine whether each group's aggregate contribution to the statewide impact differs due to the amount of attainment progress needed to reach the 70 percent target or simply due to population size.

<sup>43</sup> When calculating each group's contribution to the total monetary impact, we accounted for differences across demographic groups and education levels in all seven of the economic measures included in our estimates. See Appendix A for more details on our methodology.

To reach the target attainment rate, about 65,000 more Black/African American men (beyond the projected increase) would need to earn a postsecondary credential by 2035. If successful, their attainment gains would produce an estimated \$161 billion in impact (equivalent to \$250,000 per capita).

In total, these three groups—Hispanic/Latino men and women and Black/African American men—would account for roughly 1.8 million new credential holders and the vast majority of the total monetary impact to California and its residents (Table 4).

**Table 4. Increased attainment among Hispanic/Latino adults would drive the vast majority of the statewide monetary impact.**

Group	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	\$61.2 billion	\$78.9 billion	\$17.7 billion	\$98,000
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	\$60.5 billion	\$93.8 billion	\$33.3 billion	\$187,000
Asian Non-URM, F	\$473.9 billion	\$473.9 billion		
Asian Non-URM, M	\$438.3 billion	\$438.3 billion		
Black/African American, F	\$162.1 billion	\$189.1 billion	\$26.9 billion	\$43,000
Black/African American, M	\$165.4 billion	\$326.2 billion	\$160.8 billion	\$250,000
Hispanic/Latina, F	\$1.2 trillion	\$2.6 trillion	\$1.4 trillion	\$352,000
Hispanic/Latino, M	\$1.1 trillion	\$3.9 trillion	\$2.8 trillion	\$730,000
White, F	\$1.1 trillion	\$1.1 trillion		
White, M	\$991.1 billion	\$991.1 billion		
Multiracial/Other, F	\$161.6 billion	\$161.6 billion		
Multiracial/Other, M	\$150.6 billion	\$150.6 billion		
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$6.1 trillion</b>	<b>\$10.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$4.4 trillion</b>	<b>\$214,000</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander. All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Per capita estimates are calculated using the projected population of adults ages 25–64 in each race-by-sex group in 2035. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario. The estimated monetary impact is only calculated for demographic groups that are not projected to reach 70 percent attainment by 2035, given that the impact measures the difference between the target scenario and the projection scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

Attainment gains among low-income Californians would also contribute an outside share of the total monetary impact.<sup>44</sup> Although low-income adults represent less than 20 percent of California’s working-age population, they would generate more than half of the total monetary impact (\$2.4 trillion) due to the fact that only one-third of low-income working-age adults currently hold a postsecondary credential and this group’s attainment rate is projected to increase to just 43 percent in 2035.<sup>45</sup>

Low-income Californians’ per capita contribution to the statewide impact (\$664,000) is thus second only to that of Hispanic/Latino men.

Attainment gains among higher-income individuals would produce the remaining \$2 trillion in aggregate impact, but their anticipated per capita contribution is much smaller (\$117,000) due to their higher current and projected attainment rates (Table 5).<sup>46</sup>

**Table 5. More than half of the total impact would result from attainment gains among low-income adults, despite this group representing less than 20 percent of California’s working-age population.**

Group	Estimated gains if each demographic group’s attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
Low-income (< 150% FPL)	\$952 billion	\$3.4 trillion	\$2.4 trillion	\$664,000
Not low-income	\$5.1 trillion	\$7.1 trillion	\$2.0 trillion	\$117,000
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$6.1 trillion</b>	<b>\$10.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$4.4 trillion</b>	<b>\$214,000</b>

Note: FPL = federal poverty level. All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Per capita estimates are calculated using the projected population of adults ages 25–64 in each household income group in 2035. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

44 We define low-income individuals as those living in a household with earnings below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. This definition adheres to the eligibility guidelines for some means-tested programs in California, including eligibility for fully subsidized health insurance premiums under Covered California and the California College Promise Grant. However, because California has one of the highest costs of living in the US, this definition excludes some individuals whose earnings exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level but who still have limited resources when cost-of-living differences are considered.

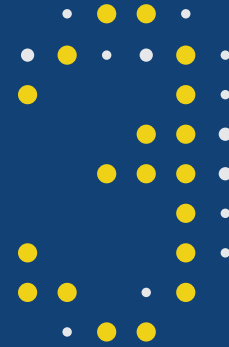
45 This estimate includes monetary gains for individuals whose credential attainment moves them out of low-income households, as well as gains for individuals who remain in low-income households after earning their credentials. Regarding the latter, our projections indicate that if attainment continues to rise alongside the concentration of low-income students in low-value programs, the share of adults who remain low-income after earning a credential will increase. Nevertheless, credential attainment is expected to move most individuals who were previously low-income out of such households.

46 In 2023, 60 percent of non-low-income Californians ages 25–64 held a postsecondary credential, with the share projected to rise to 70 percent in 2035. However, some race-by-sex groups within the non-low-income population are not projected to reach the 70 percent attainment rate in 2035. Achieving the target attainment rate across all race-by-sex groups would therefore require further attainment gains among these subsets of the non-low-income population.

Increasing the postsecondary attainment rate to 70 percent across all underrepresented groups in California would require unprecedented levels of public investment in higher education, but our analysis shows that the additional monetary gains would surpass the costs after five years.

Furthermore, the impact would extend beyond the private returns to individuals and their families, ensuring that collective prosperity becomes a defining aspect of California's future. Over the full payback period spanning five decades, in addition to \$3.3 trillion dollars in higher after-tax earnings, the state and its residents would experience \$1.3 trillion dollars in increased tax revenues, consumption-driven economic expansion, and savings from reduced public spending.

Realizing this impact will require significant additional public investment in higher education as well as a substantial increase in the number of working-age adults returning to school and completing a credential. Part 3 examines why credentialing older adults is essential to achieving a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups in California by 2035.



## Part 3.

# The Critical Importance of Increasing Credential Attainment Among Older Adults

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The economic potential of reaching a 70 percent attainment rate across all underrepresented groups in California is immense, but realizing that potential hinges on a crucial requirement: that enough older adults already in the workforce will earn postsecondary credentials over the next decade.<sup>47</sup>

Historically underrepresented groups in California will not reach a 70 percent attainment rate by expanding traditional college pipelines alone, in part because these groups' projected young adult populations are simply not large enough to supply the required increase in attainment. If every single young adult in California earned a credential by 2035 and the attainment rate for older adults remained unchanged,

almost all underrepresented groups would still fall short of the target.

Some may question the cost-effectiveness of investing in older adults. After all, early educational investments often yield higher lifetime returns than later investments.<sup>48</sup> Still, older adults represent an indispensable share of California's talent base, and many of them will need new knowledge, skills, and abilities to compete for good jobs in an evolving labor market.<sup>49</sup> For them, the question is whether earning a postsecondary credential later in life is feasible and would make them better off over their remaining time in the workforce. Our analysis indicates that most newly credentialed older adults

<sup>47</sup> We define young adults as those ages 25–36 in 2035 (ages 13–24 in 2023) and older adults as those ages 37–64 in 2035 (ages 25–52 in 2023). In all our estimates, we assumed newly credentialed young adults would graduate by age 25 and older adults would graduate at age 37, which is the median age of older adults in California with a high school diploma but no college degree. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Cunha and Heckman, "The Technology of Skill Formation," 2007; Deming, "Four Facts About Human Capital," 2022; and Heckman, "Schools, Skills, and Synapses," 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Li, "Reskilling and Upskilling the Future-Ready Workforce for Industry 4.0 and Beyond," 2022.

would see a positive return on their investment, even after accounting for their own costs from tuition and fees, forgone earnings, and student loans.

Nevertheless, returning to college as an adult presents real challenges, such as balancing coursework with the demands of work schedules, parenting, caregiving, and paying out-of-pocket education costs amid other household expenses. These realities help explain why most college undergraduates are under age 25.<sup>50</sup>

Still, older adults are projected to contribute meaningfully to California's attainment growth over the next decade.<sup>51</sup> Nearly 50,000 older adults from underrepresented groups are projected to earn their first postsecondary credential by 2035, accounting for nearly one-third of the total projected credential gains across these groups.

These projected gains reflect the growing focus on adult learners in California, from re-enrollment initiatives to investments in additional financial aid for student parents to more flexible academic schedules.<sup>52</sup> Still, older adults' projected attainment growth is far below what will be needed for all demographic groups to achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate. More than 520,000 additional older adults from underrepresented groups would likely have to earn a credential by 2035 to meet the target.<sup>53</sup>

In short, California's postsecondary systems must create more points of access in more places to serve enough older adults to meet the 70 percent attainment goal for all demographic groups. These systems also need to deliver more consistent value to students, young and old alike, to ensure that investments in education and training beyond high school deliver long-lasting value to individuals and society.

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50 In California, the median age of all undergraduates is 21. Even in short-term, career-focused certificate programs, the median age of participants is only 24. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2020.

51 Across all groups, young adults are projected to account for 52 percent of California's attainment gains from 2023 to 2035, with older adults accounting for the remaining 48 percent.

52 Bernhard, "Advancing Adult Learner Success Through Strategic Enrollment Management," 2025; California Community Colleges, *Vision 2030*, 2025; California Alliance for Student Parent Success, "AB 2458 (Berman)," 2024; and Uriostegui et al., *Year One Evaluation*, 2025.

53 This estimate assumes that, under the goal scenario, older adults would continue to account for the same share of all working-age adults' attainment gains as under the projection scenario.

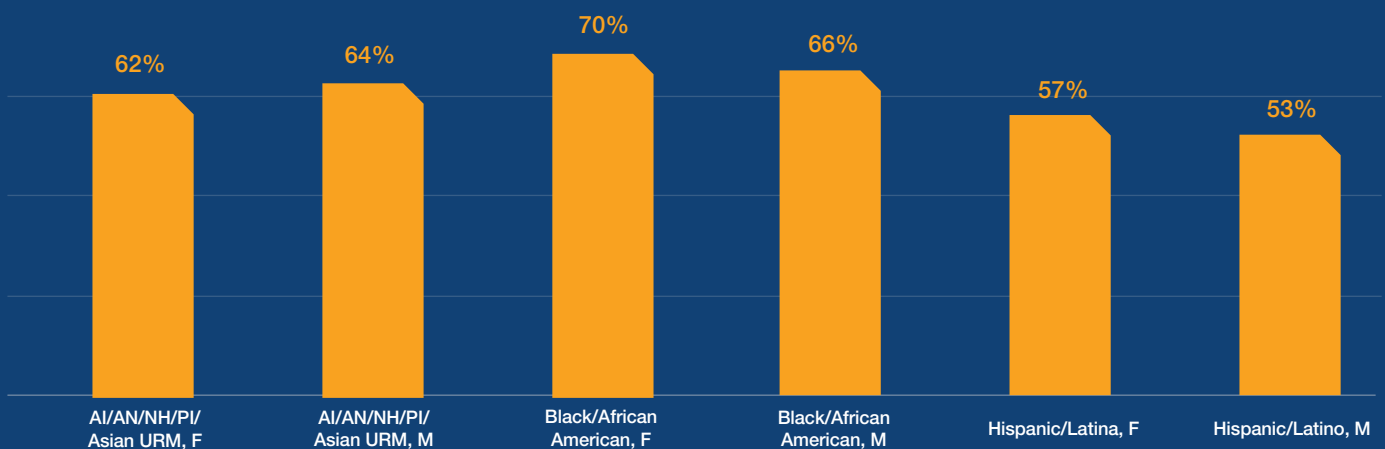
## Most underrepresented groups would not reach a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 even if all young adults earned a postsecondary credential.

The scale of progress required for all demographic groups to reach the target attainment rate becomes clear when imagining a scenario in which every young adult earns a credential by 2035 while older adults make no attainment gains from today to 2035.<sup>54</sup> Even in this implausible hypothetical, most underrepresented groups would still fall short of the 70 percent target. Only Black/African American women would reach the target, and doing so would require young Black/African American women’s attainment rate to exceed their projected rate by 31 percentage points.<sup>55</sup> For the remaining five underrepresented race-by-sex groups, attainment among working-age adults would not exceed 66 percent. Accelerating

attainment among older Hispanic/Latino men is especially critical. Even if every young Hispanic/Latino man earned a credential by 2035, the overall attainment rate for Hispanic/Latino men ages 25–64 would be just 53 percent (Figure 4).

Demographics alone will therefore make it impossible for young adults to contribute all of the necessary attainment progress to reach at least a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups by 2035. Increasing attainment among older adults is not merely a welcome addition to achieving broader progress—it is a prerequisite to ensuring that economic opportunity is distributed more equitably by race, sex, and class in California.

**Figure 4. If all young adults earned a postsecondary credential but older adults made no attainment progress, most underrepresented groups would still fall short of a 70 percent attainment rate in 2035.**



Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander. Young adults are defined as those ages 25–36 in 2035; older adults are those ages 37–64.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Department of Finance, State and County Population Projections, 2025; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

<sup>54</sup> In other words, we set older adults’ attainment rate in 2035 to the observed rate in 2023 in this analysis.

<sup>55</sup> In 2023, 62 percent of Black/African American women ages 25 to 36 held a postsecondary credential, with the share projected to increase to 69 percent by 2035.

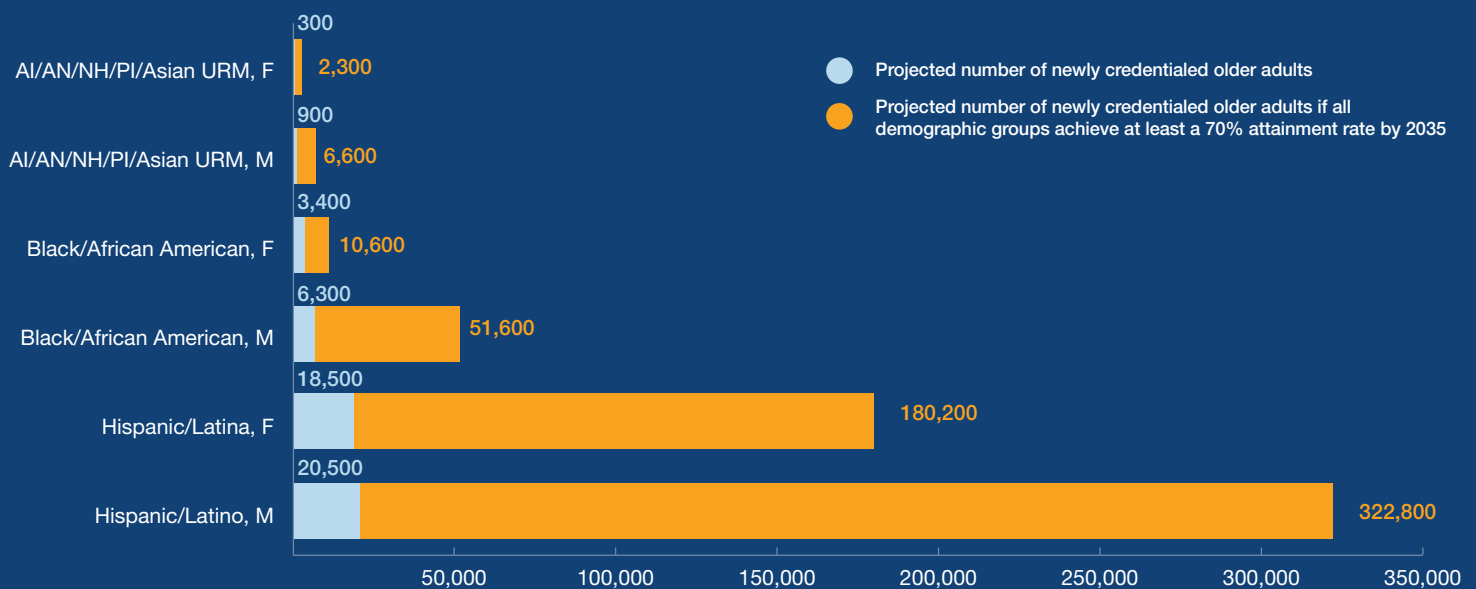
## For underrepresented groups to achieve the target attainment rate by 2035, more than 11 times as many older adults than projected would need to earn credentials.

Older adults from all demographic groups are projected to make attainment gains over the next decade, including about 6,300 Black/African American men, 18,500 Hispanic/Latina women, and 20,500 Hispanic/Latino men. But far more progress is needed for working-age adults of all backgrounds to reach a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035. This is because older adults will account for nearly two-thirds of working-age adults from underrepresented groups in 2035 but only about one-third of the overall attainment gains made by these groups over the next decade. The projected number of newly credentialed older adults from underrepresented groups will thus fall far short of the number necessary to reach the attainment target for all demographic groups. More specifically, the number of newly credentialed older adults from underrepresented groups would need to

increase by roughly 11.5 times current projections for all demographic groups to reach the target.

For older Hispanic/Latino men, the projected attainment shortfall is particularly large. More than 300,000 older adults would likely need to earn a credential by 2035 to reach the target attainment rate for this group, six times greater than the projected increase in older adult credential holders across all underrepresented groups combined. Even among Black/African American women—whose projected attainment rate of 68 percent is closest to the target among all underrepresented groups—older adults’ attainment gains would likely need to be three times greater than projected to meet the 70 percent goal (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Among Hispanic/Latino men, more than 300,000 additional older adults would need to earn a credential to reach the 70 percent attainment target by 2035.**



Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander. Older adults are defined as those ages 37–64 in 2035.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Department of Finance, State and County Population Projections, 2025; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.



## Earning a credential later in life delivers meaningful earnings returns.

Some might question whether older adults would personally benefit from returning to college given the shorter payback horizon to recoup their investment. Our analysis suggests the answer is usually yes. Even after accounting for students' out-of-pocket tuition, fees, student loan interest, and forgone earnings, lifetime after-tax earnings gains are positive for credential holders at all ages from 25 to 52.<sup>56</sup>

As expected with a shorter payback period, lifetime earnings gains diminish with age at completion—but the gains are still substantial at every age. Even at age 52, an adult completing an associate's degree can expect to earn roughly \$60,000 more over their remaining career than a peer with some college but no credential and about \$90,000 more than someone with only a high school diploma. Those completing a certificate, certification, or occupational license or a bachelor's degree at age 52 can expect even larger net lifetime earnings gains, exceeding \$125,000

(Figure 6). In other words, later-career educational investments still pay off for individuals and their families.

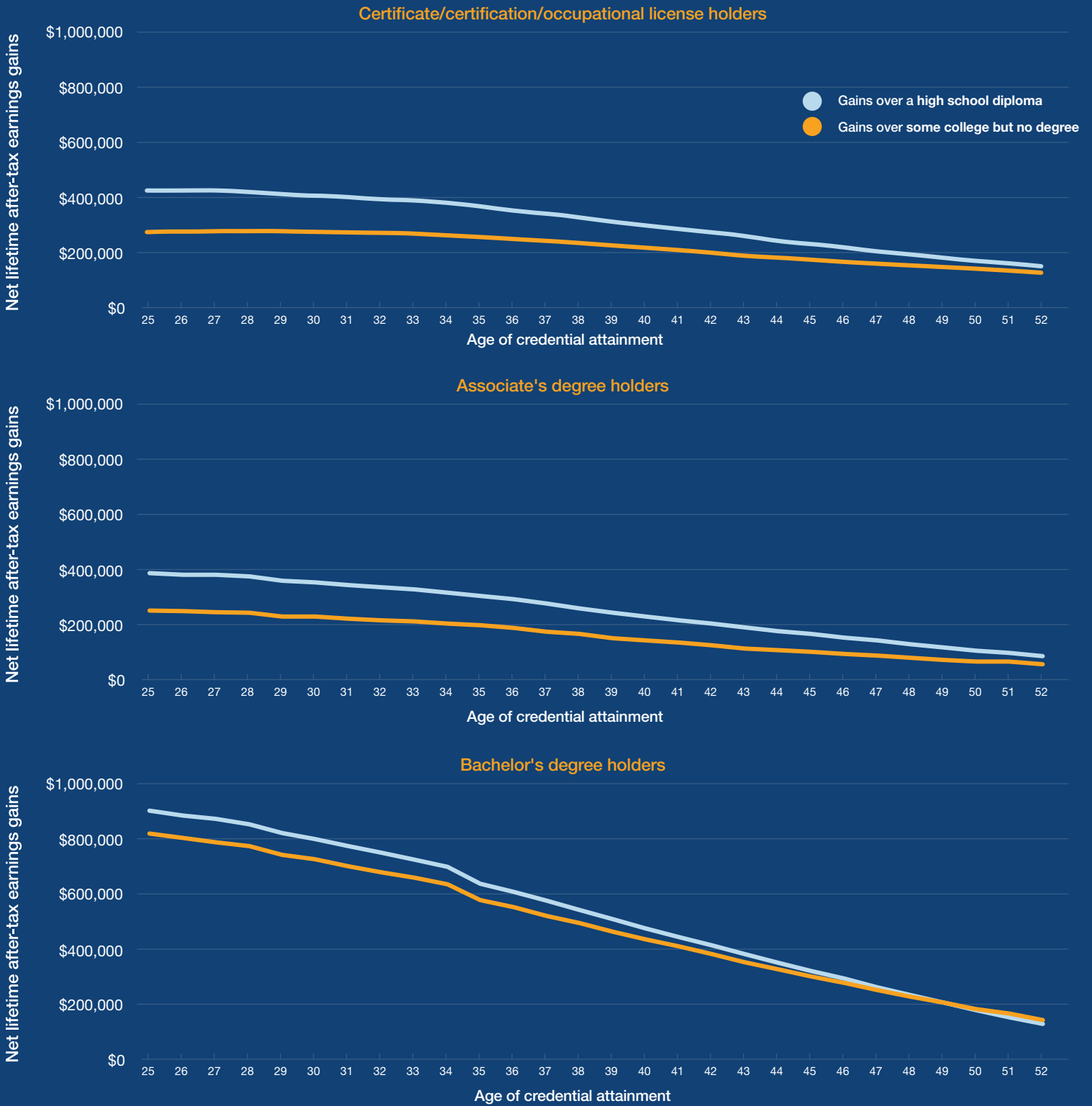
Most older Californians who gained a postsecondary credential would find themselves in a better economic situation, earning more than enough to offset the costs of investing in their future. In many cases, other household members would also benefit from these attainment gains—reducing financial stress that contributes to precarious home environments, increasing the next generation's chances of earning a college credential and securing a good job, and expanding family access to healthcare and financial tools for building transferable savings and wealth.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> For this analysis, we limited the sample to adults who are working age in both 2023 and 2035 (those ages 25–52 in 2023 and 37–64 in 2035). The fact that individuals across this age span are likely to see positive returns is notable, given that older adults typically face higher opportunity costs to enrolling in college than do younger adults. The median earnings for older adults in the labor force who do not have a college credential and are not enrolled in school are roughly twice those of similarly situated young adults. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009–23.

<sup>57</sup> Alon and McDossi, "Inherent Advantage," 2025; and Kaushal, "Intergenerational Payoffs of Education," 2014.

Figure 6. Lifetime after-tax earnings gains are consistently positive for Californians who earn a new credential between ages 25 and 52, even after accounting for educational and opportunity costs.



Note: All values are reported in 2024\$.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, DataVista, 2025; California State University, CSU Student Success Dashboard, 2025; University of California, Information Center, 2025; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2017–19, 2022, and 2023; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016; US Department of Education, Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B), 2018; US Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2017; and US Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 2020.

## If all demographic groups reach at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035, older adults' attainment gains would drive one-quarter of the total monetary impact.

Older adults' contributions are indispensable to achieving the goal of 70 percent attainment across all demographic groups. Still, most of the overall monetary impact would result from young adults' attainment gains. Two factors explain this finding. First, young adults are projected to experience faster attainment growth than older adults, earning credentials at roughly twice the anticipated rate of older adults over the next decade. Second, individuals earning credentials at younger ages benefit from longer payback horizons, allowing more time for individual-level gains and state-level benefits to accumulate.

Thus, we find that young adults would generate three-quarters (\$3.3 trillion) of the total monetary impact from all demographic groups achieving at least a 70 percent rate by 2035, while older adults would account for one-quarter (\$1.1 trillion) of the total impact. On a per capita basis, the difference is

even starker: Attainment gains among young adults would generate \$530,000 in impact per person, while gains among older adults would deliver \$79,000 in impact per person (Table 6).

At the same time, the monetary gains contributed by older adults if all demographic groups reach the target attainment rate would be six times larger than their gains under current projections. In contrast, the gains contributed by young adults if all demographic groups reach the target rate would only be 1.5 times larger. This reflects the fact that reaching the attainment target by 2035 would require older adults to achieve much more rapid attainment progress than young adults. Taken together, these findings reinforce that California must pursue a dual strategy—supporting further attainment progress among younger learners while aggressively scaling efforts to credential older adults—to fully realize the enormous potential impact.

**Table 6. If all demographic groups were to achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035, most of the monetary impact would derive from young adults' attainment gains.**

Group	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
Young adults	\$5.8 trillion	\$9.1 trillion	\$3.3 trillion	\$530,000
Older adults	\$231 billion	\$1.4 trillion	\$1.1 trillion	\$79,000
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$6.1 trillion</b>	<b>\$10.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$4.4 trillion</b>	<b>\$214,000</b>

Note: Young adults are defined as those ages 25–36 in 2035; older adults are ages 37–64 in 2035. All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Per capita estimates are calculated using the projected population of Californians ages 25–64 in 2035. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

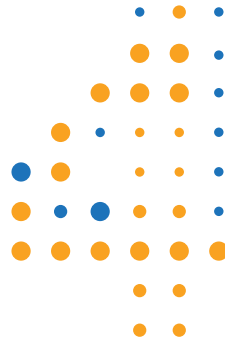
Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

Any path to reaching a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups must prioritize older adults and redesign postsecondary programs and supports around their needs, including their needs as working learners.

First and foremost, postsecondary education and training must meet working adults where they are—in the workforce—and remove the logistical, financial, and structural barriers that make returning to school difficult. Doing so will require more flexible, responsive, and integrated postsecondary and workforce systems that embed learning with work; strengthen education-to-career advancement pathways; and ensure that adults' basic needs do not derail their enrollment, persistence, and completion. Programs must be designed for adults' schedules by offering expanded high-quality online options, more flexible course scheduling, and pathways that allow learners to progress at their own pace. The state must also reduce barriers to effective reskilling and credentialing models—both within and beyond traditional postsecondary institutions—to better serve adults seeking short-term, workforce-aligned credentials. Additionally, the state must ensure that postsecondary education and training programs, short-term and otherwise, are high quality and deliver economic value to graduates.

If put forth as part of a coordinated statewide strategy with adequate and sustained funding over time, these efforts would help build a system in which large-scale attainment gains among older adults are truly achievable. The payoff—prosperity shared among all groups of Californians over the next half century—would ensure a brighter and more equitable future for the state and residents of all ages.





## Part 4.

# Ensuring All of California's Regions Experience a Prosperous Future

The importance of expanding credential attainment among older adults, discussed in the previous section, underscores another truth: Achieving a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups is not just about who earns new credentials, but also where attainment progress occurs. California's future depends on ensuring that prosperity reaches every corner of the state, not only those regions that already benefit from high attainment and strong local economies.

California is as geographically diverse as it is large. In the Bay Area—the high-tech capital of the world—only about one-third of the population identifies as American Indian, Pacific Islander, Black/African American, or Hispanic/Latino, and the median household income exceeds \$130,000. In stark contrast, more than half of the population in the Central Valley—California's agricultural heartland—is Hispanic/Latino, and most households in the region earn less than \$80,000 annually.

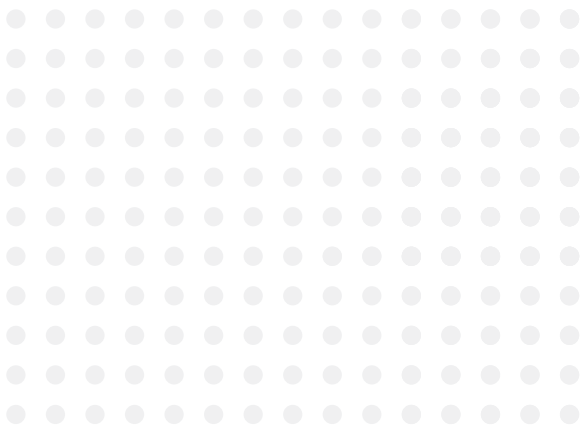
This section examines the regional progress required to reach California's attainment goal and the anticipated economic impact if every region succeeds.<sup>58</sup> Because of the state's geographic diversity, some regions will need to accelerate attainment growth much more rapidly than others. Population size also varies widely across areas, meaning both the total and per capita monetary impact of achieving the 70 percent goal will differ substantially by region. When accounting for the differences in population across each region, the Central Valley and Inland Empire (which both have large working-age populations) would see the greatest monetary impact from reaching a 70 percent attainment rate across all demographic groups.

Importantly, our impact estimates throughout this report assume that working-age adults who earn a postsecondary credential will see higher lifetime earnings than they would without a credential. In other words, realizing the statewide, regional, and individual monetary gains depends on newly

<sup>58</sup> We defined California's regions according to Governor Newsom's California Jobs First initiative. For additional information about the initiative, visit <https://jobsfirst.ca.gov/>. Due to data limitations in the American Community Survey, we were not able to produce regional estimates for two areas in California with low population densities: the Eastern Sierra and the Redwood Coast. For additional background information about the other 11 regions in our analysis, see Table B1 in Appendix B.

credentialed adults acquiring high-quality, well-paying jobs—and their ability to do so depends both on the quality of credential programs and whether California’s diverse local economies can absorb an increase of millions of skilled workers over the next decade. While our job projections indicate that the statewide demand for college-educated workers will be sufficient,<sup>59</sup> it’s unclear whether every region of the state—for example, regions whose economies are predominantly dependent on agriculture, construction, the service sector, and other more hands-on occupations—will be able to meet the demand for good jobs if all demographic groups were to reach a 70 percent attainment rate. To avoid a scenario in which residents earn a new credential but have to migrate elsewhere for job opportunities, thus further entrenching regional economic disparities across California, the state must invest in economic development strategies to sustain a more skilled and credentialed workforce and ensure that every region can enjoy the benefits of increased attainment.

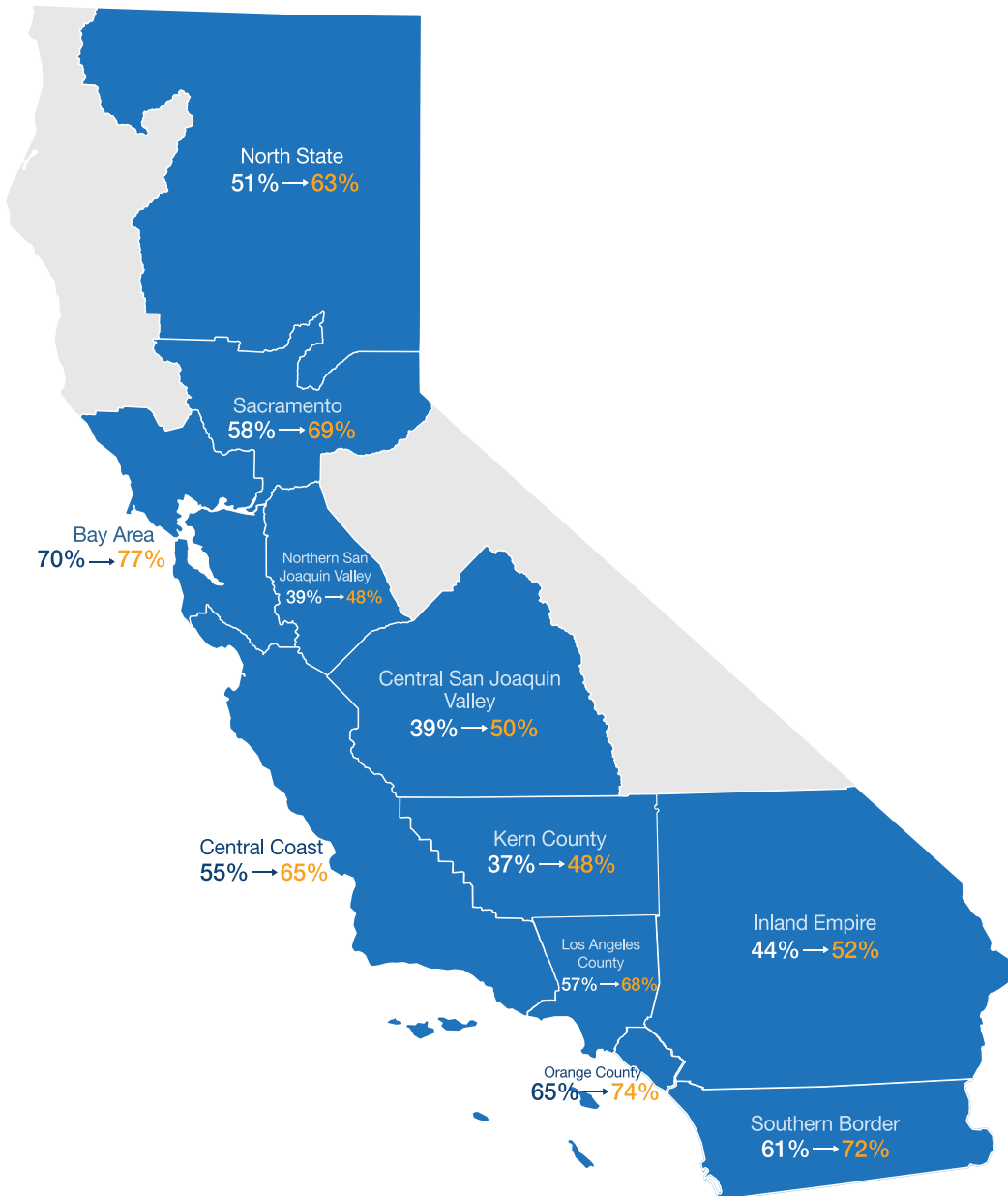
## Most regions will fall short of the 70 percent goal without accelerated progress.



As of today, the Bay Area is the only region in California where at least 70 percent of all working-age adults hold a postsecondary credential. By 2035, just two additional regions—Orange County and the Southern Border—are projected to reach an overall attainment rate of 70 percent, while Los Angeles County and the Sacramento region are projected to come close. Most other areas, however, remain far behind Governor Newsom’s overall attainment goal. Strikingly, less than 40 percent of adults in the Central Valley—comprising the Northern San Joaquin Valley, Central San Joaquin Valley, and Kern County—currently hold a postsecondary credential (Figure 7).

59 Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023.

Figure 7. Only three regions—the Bay Area, Orange County, and the Southern Border—are on pace to achieve an overall attainment rate of at least 70 percent by 2035.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

Attainment disparities by race and sex vary across regions, but the pattern is consistent: In every region, at least five demographic groups are projected to fall short of a 70 percent attainment rate in 2035. The Central Coast, Los Angeles County, Orange County, and Southern Border regions have the most groups on pace to reach the target. In contrast, no groups in Kern County are projected to reach the goal, and only one group (non-underrepresented minority [URM] Asian/Asian American women) in the Northern San Joaquin Valley and two groups (non-URM Asian/Asian American women and white women) in the Central San Joaquin Valley are projected to achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035.<sup>60</sup>

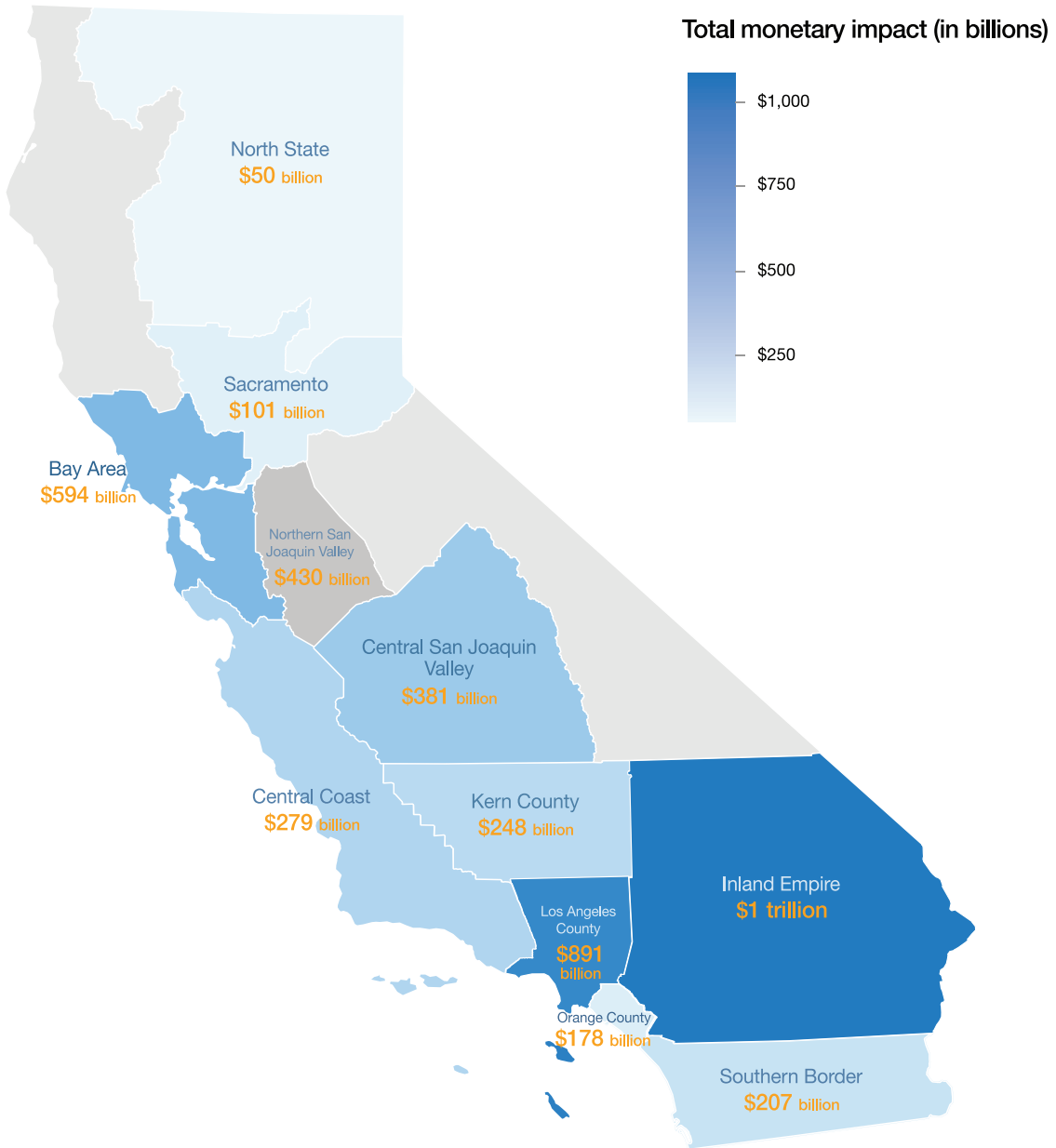
These findings highlight that even regions with relatively high overall attainment still face stark inequities by race/ethnicity and sex. Closing attainment gaps between racial/ethnic groups *and* ensuring that all areas of the state enjoy the monetary gains from increased attainment will require not only expanding access to postsecondary education but also creating local economies capable of absorbing and rewarding a more highly educated workforce.

## The anticipated monetary impact in each region varies based on population size and proximity to the attainment goal.

In absolute dollars, the Inland Empire alone would contribute roughly \$1 trillion to the statewide total—the largest of any region—while the North State region would contribute the smallest amount, about \$50 billion. The average regional contribution, after adjusting for area population differences, is \$563 billion. The Inland Empire’s above-average impact reflects its large population and relatively low current attainment rate, while the North State’s smaller total reflects both its smaller population and closer proximity to the attainment goal (Figure 8).

60 Current and projected attainment rates for each race-by-sex group are reported by region in Appendix B.

Figure 8. The Inland Empire would contribute more than \$1 trillion in monetary impact if all demographic groups in the region achieved a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035.



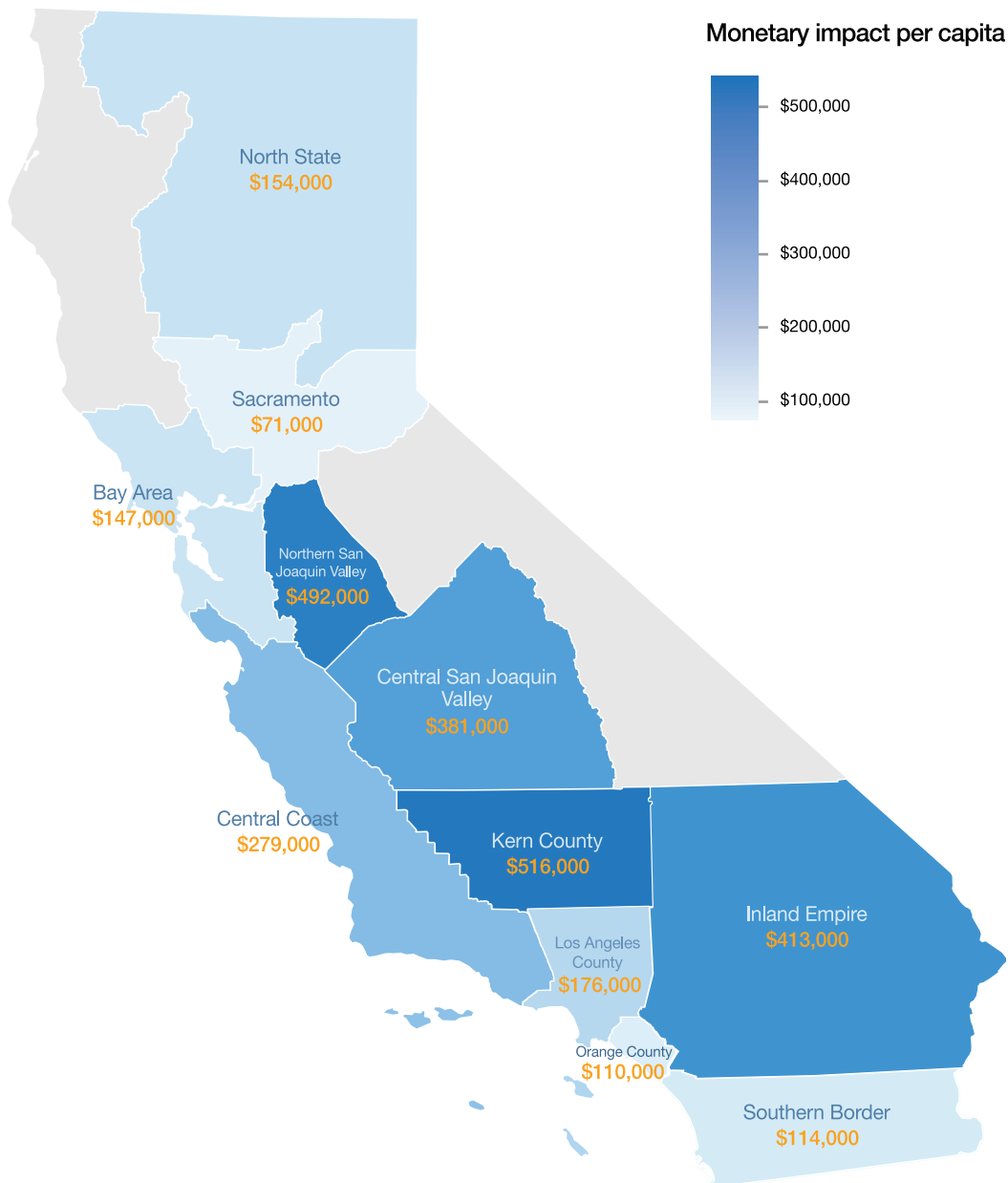
Note: All values are reported in 2024\$.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

Each region's relative impact becomes clearer when viewed on a per capita basis. While the anticipated statewide average impact is \$214,000 per capita, five regions—the Central Coast, Central San Joaquin Valley, Inland Empire, Kern County, and Northern San Joaquin Valley—would contribute an above-average impact when accounting for the size of the working-

age population in each area. Kern County—where 37 percent of adults currently hold a credential and attainment is only projected to reach 48 percent by 2035—would generate the largest per capita impact: \$516,000 per working-age adult. By contrast, the Sacramento region would contribute the smallest per capita impact at \$71,000 (Figure 9).

Figure 9. The monetary impact of increasing postsecondary attainment varies by region, ranging from less than \$75,000 to more than \$500,000 per working-age adult.



Note: All values are reported in 2024\$.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table 1.

Fully realizing these regional impacts hinges on a critical assumption: that every area will have sufficient demand for credentialed workers over the next decade. If 70 percent of adults earn a postsecondary credential but employers in certain regions require fewer skilled workers, the anticipated monetary benefits will not materialize.

Statewide, the demand outlook for college-educated workers is promising. Our most recent job projections indicate that by 2031, about 68 percent of all jobs in California will require at least some postsecondary education or training—and that share is expected to continue rising.<sup>61</sup> With projected employment growth concentrated in jobs requiring a college degree,<sup>62</sup> it is reasonable to expect that credentialing 70 percent of the workforce by 2035 will align with California’s overall labor demand over the next decade.

The fundamental question of whether California’s labor markets can absorb so many newly credentialed workers stems from regional economic differences across the state. The Central Valley, parts of the Inland Empire, and other rural parts of California—where hands-on jobs in agriculture, construction, production, maintenance, and the service sector predominate<sup>63</sup>—may not yet have sufficient job demand to fully utilize a credentialed workforce. Ensuring that these regions can fully participate in California’s future economic success will therefore require not just higher rates of educational attainment but also economic development strategies that attract and expand industries reliant on skilled workers.

Achieving inclusive prosperity across California will thus require coordinated regional educational and economic development strategies. Such efforts would align investments to accelerate attainment in most regions, narrow attainment gaps in all regions,

and expand quality employment opportunities in parts of California where they are scarce. Developing cohesive plans to grow both the supply and demand for skilled workers is the ticket to ensuring that all Californians, regardless of where they live, have a fair chance to thrive.

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61 Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023.

62 Carnevale et al., *After Everything*, 2023.

63 California Jobs First, “Regional Data Tool,” 2025.



# Conclusion

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Earning a postsecondary credential remains one of the most reliable paths to a well-paying job that affords economic security and allows individuals to thrive. Yet, at present, only 56 percent of working-age Californians (ages 25–64) hold a degree or a certificate, certification, or occupational license.<sup>64</sup> If statewide attainment growth follows current trends, the share of working-age adults with a credential will increase to just 66 percent by 2035.

Accelerating attainment progress is imperative if the state hopes to meet its future workforce demands and experience continued innovation and economic growth. But ensuring that the gains associated with increased attainment accrue more equitably and deliver shared prosperity will require the state to address persistent disparities in attainment by race/ethnicity, economic background, age, and geography. Realizing the promise of a more equitable future in California will only be possible if the state commits to historic investments in higher education

and training for its residents across all demographic groups over the next decade.

As we demonstrate in this report, raising attainment rates to at least 70 percent for all demographic groups by 2035 would have a transformative impact on the state and its residents—and the monetary returns would outweigh the up-front costs within six years. Over the full payback horizon spanning 50 years, the total anticipated impact of achieving the attainment target for all demographic groups would exceed the size of the entire state economy today and surpass California’s historical economic growth over the past 50 years.

Importantly, our analysis also finds that all possible credential pathways—bachelor’s degrees; associate’s degrees; and certificates, certifications, or occupational licenses—confer substantial monetary gains, suggesting that the state should pursue strategies to accelerate attainment across

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64 College Futures Foundation and California Education Lab, *Reaching California’s Attainment Goals, 2025*; and Carnevale et al., *Learning and Earning by Degrees, 2024*.

credential types. To reach the 70 percent target across all demographic groups, the state must also pursue a dual strategy of credentialing both young and older adults. Although lifetime earnings gains diminish with age at credential attainment, we find that most working-age individuals earning a credential later in life would still see meaningful economic returns, making credential completion a valuable investment for these older adults and their families.

Accelerating credential attainment among underrepresented groups at the pace and scale required to meet the 70 percent goal will take an unprecedented level of investment to support enrollment and increase the likelihood of completion. To make postsecondary education and training more accessible, the state must invest in efforts to reduce the logistical, financial, and structural barriers to pursuing a credential. In addition to the state's generous financial aid and scholarship programs and existing initiatives, such policies might include automatically enrolling eligible students in state safety net programs to help cover substantial nontuition costs such as housing, transportation, food, and healthcare; reducing the credit enrollment requirements for state financial aid eligibility; expanding the number of high-quality online programs; implementing a statewide re-enrollment initiative targeting learners with some college but no credential; and automatically awarding retroactive credentials to qualifying adults with prior learning experience.

The evidence makes clear that raising attainment rates to at least 70 percent across all demographic groups in California would drive significant economic growth and mitigate long-standing inequities that have left too many individuals and communities behind. Expanding access to postsecondary education for underserved populations and supporting individuals' completion of degrees and credentials; accelerating attainment among younger and older adults alike; and ensuring that all regions

of the state stand to benefit from a credentialed, skilled workforce will set California on the path to a more prosperous and just future.

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# Appendix A. Data Sources and Methodology

This appendix describes our approach to estimating the economic impacts of increasing postsecondary credential attainment rates for all demographic groups in California to 70 percent or higher by 2035.

We used data from 20 sources in our research. Table A1 provides an overview of the primary sources we used to assess postsecondary credential attainment and construct each of the economic measures in our impact analyses.

## Overview of Data Sources

Table A1. Data sources used to measure postsecondary attainment and estimate economic impacts

Measure	Data sources
Postsecondary credential attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23</li> <li>Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 2014 and 2018</li> <li>Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016</li> </ul>
Public postsecondary expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2017 and 2023</li> <li>Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2012–17</li> <li>Time-to-degree statistics reported by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, California State University, and University of California system, 2025</li> </ul>
Lifetime earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23</li> <li>Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 2014 and 2018</li> <li>Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016</li> <li>Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&amp;B), 2008–18</li> </ul>
Individual education costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 2020</li> <li>American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23</li> <li>Current Population Survey, October Education Supplements (CPS ED), 2017–19, 2022, and 2023</li> <li>Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2012–17</li> <li>Time-to-degree statistics reported by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, California State University, and University of California system, 2025</li> </ul>

Measure	Data sources
Federal and state personal income tax revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23</li> </ul>
Consumption-driven economic expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23</li> </ul>
Public assistance expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Community Survey (ACS), 2023</li> </ul>
Public healthcare expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC), 2024</li> <li>Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS), 2022</li> </ul>
Incarceration expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s three-year return-to-prison (recidivism) rate, 2024</li> <li>US Bureau of Justice Statistics’ Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016</li> <li>Lifetime risk of imprisonment estimates from Roehrkasse and Wildeman (2022)</li> <li>Annual per capita cost of incarceration from Hwang and Duara (2024)</li> <li>Median number of years imprisoned at time of release derived from Harris et al. (2024)</li> </ul>

In addition to the sources listed in Table A1, we used three other sources in our work. In all of our results, we report dollar amounts in 2024 dollars. We adjusted nominal values to real values using the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series (R-CPI-U-RS). In some analyses, we also used the Bureau of Economic Analysis’s Regional Price Parities by State and Metro Area (RPPs) to account for higher costs of living in California relative to the nation overall and across different parts of the state. Lastly, we used 2035 population projections by race/ethnicity, sex, age, and county developed by the California Department of Finance to aggregate the anticipated monetary benefits of increasing postsecondary credential attainment across all forecasted working-age Californians in 2035.

Data from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) spanning 2009 through 2023 served as the core dataset.<sup>1</sup> We used these data to assess college degree attainment rates in 2023; to project degree attainment rates in 2035; and to measure pre- and post-tax lifetime earnings, federal and state tax revenue by education level, consumption-driven economic expansion, and Californians’ reliance on public assistance.<sup>2</sup>

The ACS includes data on individuals who enrolled in college but does not indicate whether those who did not earn a degree obtained another type of postsecondary credential (a certificate, certification, or occupational license). We therefore used data from the 2014 and 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the 2016 Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) to estimate the share (50 percent in 2023, with a projected increase to 69 percent in 2035) of individuals in the ACS samples with some college but no degree

1 We excluded the 2020 ACS sample due to issues with data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
2 Earnings over the previous 12-month period are reported directly by survey respondents in the ACS. In contrast, the ACS does not collect information about respondents’ tax obligations; rather, the US Census Bureau estimates these tax obligations using the National Bureau of Economic Research’s TAXSIM tool and information collected from respondents to construct Supplemental Poverty Measures (SPMs). Details about the Census Bureau’s tax estimation approach are provided in Fox et al., “The Supplemental Poverty Measure Using the American Community Survey,” 2020. We also used the SPM components to measure individuals’ receipt of public assistance. These components include the dollar amounts respondents received in food and nutritional benefits (from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; and National School Lunch Program); housing assistance; energy assistance; and refundable tax credits through the Earned Income Tax Credit program.

and holding a certificate, certification, or occupational license. We also used the SIPP and ATES data to estimate earnings differences between adults ages 25–64 with a postsecondary credential but no degree and those with some college but no credential or degree. We used the 2008/2018 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:08/18) to estimate median earnings by age of bachelor’s degree attainment and adjust the earnings of adults completing a bachelor’s degree after age 25.

We estimated the public costs of educating Californians in certificate, associate’s, and bachelor’s degree programs using 2017–18 data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) on full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollments and federal, state, and local funding.

We calculated the individual costs of enrolling in postsecondary education or training using seven data sources. We used the 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) to estimate the costs of tuition, fees, books, and supplies, as well as the total student loan amounts borrowed by credential level. We also used the NPSAS to estimate students’ total earnings while enrolled, which we combined with earnings in the ACS among non-enrolled, non-degree holders to estimate forgone earnings. To determine the weights to assign to the population of high school graduates versus individuals with some college but no credential when estimating forgone earnings, we used data from the Current Population Survey October Supplement spanning 2017–19, 2022, and 2023.<sup>3</sup>

The total cost of education—to both individuals and taxpayers—also depends on the amount of time students are enrolled. We used the 2012/17 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:12/17) to calculate the average number of years to certificate completion. We used time-to-degree statistics reported by the California Community Colleges’ Chancellor’s Office, California State University, and the University of California to calculate the average number of years individuals took to earn an associate’s degree and a bachelor’s degree in California.

We used two sources to estimate healthcare spending paid through public insurance programs. We estimated the share of Californians ages 25–64 covered by a public health insurance program using the 2024 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC). For individuals covered by such programs, we estimated the dollar value of medical care paid by public health insurance using the 2022 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS).

We used four sources to estimate incarceration expenditures. We obtained the three-year recidivism rate for individuals released in fiscal year (FY) 2018 from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). We calculated the educational attainment distribution of incarcerated individuals using the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI). We combined these sources with estimates of the lifetime risk of imprisonment in the US from Roehrkasse and Wildeman to derive estimates of the lifetime incarceration rate by race/ethnicity,<sup>4</sup> sex, education level, and age group (ages 25–36 and 37–64). We used the per capita cost of incarceration in California derived from CDCR’s in-custody counts and the FY 2023 state budget, as reported by Hwang and Duara.<sup>5</sup>

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3 As noted earlier, we excluded the 2020 and 2021 Current Population Survey October Supplement data due to discrepancies arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 Roehrkasse and Wildeman, “Lifetime Risk of Imprisonment in the United States Remains High and Starkly Unequal,” 2022.

5 Hwang and Duara, “As California Closes Prisons, the Cost of Locking Someone Up Hits New Record at \$132,860,” 2024.

# Projecting Postsecondary Credential Attainment in 2035

We estimated the educational attainment distribution of Californians ages 25–64 in 2035 separately by race/ethnicity and sex using a three-step process:

- In Step 1, we used the pooled ACS data from 2009 to 2023 to forecast the change in each group’s educational attainment distribution through 2035. We used both a single-exponential and a double-exponential smoothing procedure to construct projections based on the actual changes realized, ultimately using whichever procedure minimized the prediction error from 2009 to 2023 for each race-by-sex-by-education-level grouping.
- In Step 2, we used the SIPP and ATES data to estimate the nationwide share of individuals with some college but no degree holding a certificate, certification, or occupational license in 2023 and 2035, which we applied to the state-specific ACS data to obtain statewide and regional estimates for California. We used a fractional logit regression model to generate these projections; with only three data points available to use for predictions (2014, 2016, and 2018), the regression approach produced more reasonable estimates than an exponential smoothing procedure.
- In Step 3, we used the results from the preceding step to disaggregate the observed shares of adults with some college but no degree into those with and without a certificate, certification, or occupational license.

We repeated this procedure after restricting the ACS data to adults ages 25–64 residing in each economic region to produce region-specific credential attainment projections.

We also repeated this procedure separately for three age groups (25–36, 25–52, and 37–64), using the statewide ACS sample to project credential attainment gains from 2023 to 2035 separately for young (25–36) and older (37–64) working-age adults. Because most young adults in 2035 are not old enough to have completed a credential today, we forecasted their credential attainment gains by multiplying their projected population count in 2035 by the difference between the projected attainment rate for adults ages 25–36 in 2035 and the observed rate for the same age group in 2023. In contrast, because older adults in 2035 are already working age today, we forecasted their attainment gains by multiplying their projected population count in 2035 by the difference between the projected attainment rate for adults ages 37–64 in 2035 and the observed rate of adults ages 25–52 in 2023.<sup>6</sup>

## Economic Measures

We estimated the net economic impact of increasing postsecondary credential attainment rates by comparing lifetime costs and monetary benefits across seven measures—public higher education expenditures, net lifetime after-tax earnings, federal and state tax contributions, consumption-driven economic expansion, public assistance expenditures, public healthcare expenditures, and incarceration expenditures. The following sections describe how we calculated each of these measures.

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<sup>6</sup> This approach reflects the fact that adults ages 25–52 in 2023 will be ages 37–64 in 2035. The difference in attainment rates between adults ages 37–64 in 2035 and those ages 25–52 in 2023 thus provides an estimate of the projected gains for a consistent group of individuals who are working age in both 2023 and 2035.

## I. Public higher education expenditures

We estimated public per-student costs of educating Californians in postsecondary programs using institution-level IPEDS data on full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollments and federal, state, and local funding. We aggregated the enrollments and funding levels across institutions by the primary credential level awarded to estimate annual public expenditures per FTE student by credential type. To estimate the costs for individuals with some college but no credential, we multiplied the per-FTE estimates by the share of such individuals initially pursuing each credential type, as estimated from the BPS:12/17 data.<sup>7</sup> We then multiplied the annual estimates by the average years of enrollment to obtain estimates of cumulative public expenditures per FTE student by education level (Table A2).

**Table A2. Annual and cumulative public higher education expenditures per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student, by educational attainment level**

Education level	Annual public expenditures per FTE student	Cumulative public expenditures per FTE student
Some college but no credential	\$16,610	\$45,668
Certificate, certification, or occupational license	\$14,584	\$14,827
Associate's degree	\$15,628	\$56,027
Bachelor's degree	\$20,997	\$95,725

Note: All values are inflation-adjusted to 2024\$.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2017 and 2024; US Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2017; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2017 and 2023; California Community College Chancellor's Office, DataVista, 2025; University of California, Information Center, 2025; and California State University, CSU Student Success Dashboard, 2025.

We used these cumulative costs to estimate the additional public spending required to achieve the projected attainment gains through 2035. To reach the target attainment rate of at least 70 percent for all demographic groups, we increased the costs for all additional graduates by 68 percent, reflecting the additional instructional spending, academic and student support, and need-based financial aid likely needed to graduate more students from historically underrepresented groups.<sup>8</sup>

## II. Net lifetime after-tax earnings

We calculated lifetime after-tax earnings for adults ages 25–64 by race-by-sex group and education level using the pooled 2009–23 ACS data set. We adjusted after-tax earnings for inflation to 2024 dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index retroactive series using current methods (R-CPI-U-RS). We then computed lifetime after-tax earnings by constructing an age-earnings profile of the statewide or regionwide working-age population by education level. We constructed two versions of the age-earnings

<sup>7</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2012–17.

<sup>8</sup> In Carnevale et al., *The Cost of Economic and Racial Injustice in Postsecondary Education*, 2021, we increased the costs by 84 percent based on the average spending difference nationwide between selective institutions and other institutions. Because per-student spending on instruction, student support, and need-based aid is 9.5 percent higher in California than the US average, we lowered the adjustment to 68 percent ( $1.84/1.095 = 1.68$ ), which represents a reduction in cost adjustment proportional to the state's higher education funding levels relative to the national average.

profiles by (1) single-year ages and (2) eight five-year age groups spanning ages 25–64.<sup>9</sup>

For age-earnings profiles constructed using five-year age groups, we multiplied the median earnings for each age group by five before computing the sum. We used this alternate calculation when the average sample size for a given education level was less than 100. This binned approach smooths out large earnings deviations in small samples that may result from the single-year approach.

We calculated lifetime after-tax earnings as the sum of median annual after-tax earnings over the 25- to 64-year period, minus the costs of enrolling in postsecondary education or training (see later in this section for details on the costs we considered in this calculation). We separately calculated the earnings and costs for younger versus older credential-completers to account for the fact that individuals earning a credential later in life typically accumulate lower lifetime earnings and face steeper costs (via forgone earnings) than younger credential-completers.

In all of our economic impact calculations, we assumed that newly credentialed young adults would earn a credential by age 25 and newly credentialed older adults would earn a credential at age 36.<sup>10</sup> For example, based on these assumptions, the total after-tax earnings for associate’s degree holders ages 25–64 represent lifetime after-tax earnings for a person who earned an associate’s degree at age 24 and never completed a bachelor’s degree. In contrast, the sum of after-tax earnings for high school graduates ages 25–36 and after-tax earnings for associate’s degree holders ages 37–64 represents the estimated lifetime after-tax earnings for an individual who earned an associate’s degree at age 36 after having never previously attended college.

After calculating overall lifetime after-tax earnings by education level, we estimated unique values for each race-by-sex group by adjusting the overall values to account for differences between each race-by-sex group’s median annual earnings and the overall median annual earnings in California or within a specific economic region. For example, the median annual earnings of Hispanic/Latino men with a bachelor’s degree in California are equal to 89 percent of the median annual earnings for all bachelor’s degree holders across the state. Thus, we assigned Hispanic/Latino men with a bachelor’s degree 89 percent of the lifetime after-tax earnings of all bachelor’s degree holders in the state.

We then adjusted each group’s lifetime after-tax earnings by subtracting their median costs of pursuing postsecondary education or training at each credential level (Table A3). We factored three types of costs into these calculations: **direct costs**, consisting of tuition and fees, books, and supplies; **forgone earnings**, representing the net difference between individuals’ cumulative earnings if they had not enrolled and their earnings while enrolled; and the **cumulative interest** accrued from all undergraduate student loans.<sup>11</sup> For the interest calculations, we assumed a standard 10-year repayment period for certificate, certification, occupational license, and associate’s degree completers and a standard 15-year repayment period for bachelor’s degree completers. We also assumed a 5.1 percent interest rate and an average annual inflation rate of 2.1 percent over the payback period.<sup>12</sup>

9 Using data from the 2008/2018 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, we compared median earnings by age of bachelor’s degree attainment with the age-earnings profiles of bachelor’s degree holders in the ACS. Based on this comparison, we adjusted the earnings for adults completing a bachelor’s degree after age 25, since new degree recipients typically earn less than the age-based estimates suggest during the first 10 years following completion. Our calculations assume that bachelor’s degree recipients newly credentialed after age 25 earn 90 percent of the age-specific median in their first year after completion, which increases by 1 percentage point per year until reaching parity with the age-specific median in year 11. From that point through age 64, we set their annual earnings equal to the age-specific median value.

10 We defined young adults as those ages 25–36 in 2035 (or, equivalently, ages 13–24 in 2023) and older adults as those ages 37–64 in 2035 (or, equivalently, ages 25–52 in 2023). We assumed newly credentialed older adults would graduate at age 37, given the fact that this is the median age of older adults with a high school diploma but no college degree.

11 We based the loan interest calculations on the median cumulative amount borrowed—including \$0 for nonborrowers—by race/ethnicity and credential level among California undergraduates.

12 The assumed inflation rate is equal to the average rate from 2007 to 2024. Likewise, the assumed interest rate is equal to the average federal unsubsidized borrowing rate for undergraduates over the same period. Although private loan interest rates are often higher than public loan rates, most undergraduates in California do not take out private loans. In 2017, less than 15 percent of California’s undergraduate students who first entered college in 2011–12 ever borrowed from private sources. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Department of Education, 2012/17 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, 2017.

**Table A3. Cumulative after-tax earnings net of education costs among Californians, by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group**

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college, no credential		Certificate, certification, or occupational license		Associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, F	\$297,000	\$693,000	\$295,000	\$766,000	\$412,000	\$1,060,000	\$382,000	\$989,000	\$525,000	\$1,271,000
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, M	\$395,000	\$922,000	\$412,000	\$1,061,000	\$492,000	\$1,262,000	\$517,000	\$1,345,000	\$648,000	\$1,584,000
Asian Non-URM, F	\$307,000	\$695,000	\$279,000	\$747,000	\$446,000	\$1,120,000	\$371,000	\$965,000	\$487,000	\$1,232,000
Asian Non-URM, M	\$390,000	\$895,000	\$374,000	\$982,000	\$492,000	\$1,247,000	\$455,000	\$1,185,000	\$677,000	\$1,702,000
Black/African American, F	\$363,000	\$860,000	\$343,000	\$864,000	\$466,000	\$1,207,000	\$442,000	\$1,116,000	\$553,000	\$1,340,000
Black/African American, M	\$393,000	\$908,000	\$413,000	\$1,048,000	\$484,000	\$1,237,000	\$478,000	\$1,215,000	\$583,000	\$1,432,000
Hispanic/Latina, F	\$321,000	\$763,000	\$303,000	\$781,000	\$421,000	\$1,097,000	\$365,000	\$942,000	\$447,000	\$1,102,000
Hispanic/Latino, M	\$426,000	\$1,008,000	\$440,000	\$1,125,000	\$520,000	\$1,337,000	\$498,000	\$1,276,000	\$570,000	\$1,396,000
White, F	\$358,000	\$795,000	\$324,000	\$795,000	\$456,000	\$1,123,000	\$411,000	\$1,034,000	\$503,000	\$1,224,000
White, M	\$515,000	\$1,161,000	\$529,000	\$1,322,000	\$637,000	\$1,582,000	\$600,000	\$1,516,000	\$765,000	\$1,844,000
Multiracial/Other, F	\$344,000	\$785,000	\$309,000	\$784,000	\$444,000	\$1,125,000	\$410,000	\$1,045,000	\$519,000	\$1,266,000
Multiracial/Other, M	\$423,000	\$964,000	\$428,000	\$1,103,000	\$525,000	\$1,326,000	\$515,000	\$1,332,000	\$668,000	\$1,632,000
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$389,000</b>	<b>\$901,000</b>	<b>\$390,000</b>	<b>\$989,000</b>	<b>\$485,000</b>	<b>\$1,229,000</b>	<b>\$452,000</b>	<b>\$1,154,000</b>	<b>\$582,000</b>	<b>\$1,430,000</b>

Note: All values are inflation-adjusted to 2024\$. Cumulative per-person values are calculated by summing age-specific median after-tax earnings among individuals in the labor force and not enrolled in school, for ages 25–36 and 37–64, respectively. “Some college” includes individuals without a postsecondary credential, as well as individuals with a certificate, certification, or occupational license or an associate’s degree. Education costs include tuition, fees, books, supplies, forgone earnings, and cumulative interest accrued from student loans. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.


Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), 2017–19, 2022, and 2023; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016; US Department of Education, Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B), 2018; US Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 2020; US Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2017; California Community College Chancellor’s Office, DataVista, 2025; University of California, Information Center, 2025; and California State University, CSU Student Success Dashboard, 2025.

### III. Federal and state tax contributions

The US Census Bureau provides estimates of federal and state tax contributions in the ACS data using the National Bureau of Economic Research's TAXSIM tool and ACS respondent data. These estimates are reported at the tax-unit level rather than the individual level. To estimate individual-level contributions, we allocated each unit's total estimated tax contribution across all persons in the filing unit based on their share of the unit's annual earnings.<sup>13</sup> We then constructed age-tax profiles by race-by-sex-by-education level, applying the same method used to calculate lifetime after-tax earnings, to estimate lifetime individual tax contributions (Table A4).

Table A4. Cumulative per-person federal and state tax contributions among Californians, by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college, no credential		Certificate, certification, or occupational license		Associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, F	\$28,000	\$104,000	\$46,000	\$162,000	\$61,000	\$217,000	\$88,000	\$290,000	\$198,000	\$554,000
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, M	\$36,000	\$137,000	\$59,000	\$214,000	\$67,000	\$243,000	\$87,000	\$287,000	\$208,000	\$584,000
Asian Non-URM, F	\$43,000	\$163,000	\$74,000	\$267,000	\$100,000	\$356,000	\$114,000	\$374,000	\$230,000	\$646,000
Asian Non-URM, M	\$48,000	\$181,000	\$86,000	\$310,000	\$98,000	\$352,000	\$114,000	\$374,000	\$242,000	\$681,000
Black/African American, F	\$23,000	\$87,000	\$34,000	\$122,000	\$45,000	\$162,000	\$64,000	\$208,000	\$140,000	\$392,000
Black/African American, M	\$42,000	\$160,000	\$66,000	\$237,000	\$75,000	\$271,000	\$89,000	\$292,000	\$179,000	\$503,000
Hispanic/Latina, F	\$19,000	\$72,000	\$38,000	\$135,000	\$51,000	\$181,000	\$62,000	\$203,000	\$133,000	\$374,000
Hispanic/Latino, M	\$27,000	\$104,000	\$57,000	\$204,000	\$65,000	\$232,000	\$81,000	\$268,000	\$150,000	\$420,000
White, F	\$61,000	\$233,000	\$79,000	\$283,000	\$105,000	\$379,000	\$118,000	\$386,000	\$237,000	\$667,000

Table continues on next page 

<sup>13</sup> In filing units with zero earnings in a given year, we allocated the total tax contribution equally across all adults in the filing unit.

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college, no credential		Certificate, certification, or occupational license		Associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
White, M	\$74,000	\$283,000	\$108,000	\$388,000	\$123,000	\$441,000	\$141,000	\$465,000	\$291,000	\$817,000
Multiracial/other, F	\$43,000	\$163,000	\$51,000	\$183,000	\$68,000	\$245,000	\$82,000	\$268,000	\$203,000	\$570,000
Multiracial/other, M	\$54,000	\$206,000	\$79,000	\$282,000	\$89,000	\$320,000	\$106,000	\$349,000	\$221,000	\$623,000
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$39,000</b>	<b>\$149,000</b>	<b>\$70,000</b>	<b>\$251,000</b>	<b>\$83,000</b>	<b>\$298,000</b>	<b>\$102,000</b>	<b>\$335,000</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>	<b>\$632,000</b>

Note: All values are inflation-adjusted to 2024\$. Cumulative per-person values are calculated by summing age-specific median tax contributions for ages 25–36 and 37–64, respectively. “Some college” includes individuals without a postsecondary credential, as well as individuals with a certificate, certification, or occupational license or an associate’s degree. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

#### IV. Consumption-driven economic expansion

To estimate the indirect impact of increased earnings on economic growth, we multiplied the aggregate increase in pre-tax earnings by a factor of 1.105. This economic multiplier, defined as  $1/(1 - \text{marginal propensity to consume})$ , reflects the expected increase in total economic output from greater consumption in response to individual income gains. The marginal propensity to consume (MPC) represents the share of additional income that individuals tend to spend rather than save. While the MPC varies across individuals and contexts, we conservatively assumed that individuals would spend an average of 9.5 cents of every additional dollar earned from long-run earnings gains associated with postsecondary credential attainment.<sup>14</sup>

#### V. Public assistance expenditures

Using ACS data, we estimated the median amounts of food and nutrition benefits, housing assistance, energy assistance, and refundable tax credits received by Californians ages 25–64 as measures of public assistance. We calculated these medians by race, sex, and education level, then multiplied them by 13 and 27 to estimate the total benefits received by adults ages 25–36 and 37–64, respectively. To estimate public assistance receipt for adults with a postsecondary credential but no degree and those with some college but no credential, we multiplied the medians for adults with some college but no degree by the earnings differentials between these two groups, as estimated from ATES and SIPP data (Table A5).

<sup>14</sup> This assumption is based on empirical estimates in Fisher et al., “Estimating the Marginal Propensity to Consume Using the Distributions of Income, Consumption, and Wealth,” 2019, which examines changes in income and consumption over multiyear periods. Many other studies report a larger MPC; see, for example, Baker et al., “Income, Liquidity, and the Consumption Response to the 2020 Economic Stimulus Payments,” 2023; and Fagereng et al., “MPC Heterogeneity and Household Balance Sheets,” 2021. But these estimates are typically derived from immediate responses to unearned income shocks such as stimulus payments or lottery winnings and therefore do not reflect the likely consumption response to long-run earnings gains over the career life cycle, during which individuals are more likely to allocate a larger share of additional income to savings.

Table A5. Cumulative per-person public assistance expenditures among Californians, by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college, no credential		Certificate, certification, or occupational license		Associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, F	\$8,600	\$17,900	\$9,000	\$18,000	\$6,000	\$13,000	\$6,100	\$12,600	\$3,600	\$7,600
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, M	\$6,500	\$13,400	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$4,000	\$9,000	\$4,400	\$9,100	\$2,800	\$5,900
Asian Non-URM, F	\$5,900	\$12,300	\$6,000	\$13,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$10,400	\$2,500	\$5,200
Asian Non-URM, M	\$5,000	\$10,400	\$4,000	\$7,000	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$4,200	\$8,800	\$2,200	\$4,600
Black/African American, F	\$22,200	\$46,100	\$20,000	\$42,000	\$15,000	\$31,000	\$12,400	\$25,800	\$4,700	\$9,800
Black/African American, M	\$11,500	\$23,800	\$8,000	\$17,000	\$7,000	\$15,000	\$6,500	\$13,500	\$3,500	\$7,200
Hispanic/Latina, F	\$11,600	\$24,100	\$12,000	\$25,000	\$9,000	\$19,000	\$7,000	\$14,400	\$4,800	\$9,900
Hispanic/Latino, M	\$7,400	\$15,300	\$6,000	\$13,000	\$5,000	\$11,000	\$5,100	\$10,600	\$2,600	\$5,500
White, F	\$5,800	\$12,100	\$5,000	\$11,000	\$4,000	\$8,000	\$4,200	\$8,700	\$2,400	\$5,100
White, M	\$4,500	\$9,400	\$4,000	\$8,000	\$3,000	\$7,000	\$3,400	\$7,000	\$1,600	\$3,300
Multiracial/Other, F	\$8,600	\$17,900	\$9,000	\$18,000	\$6,000	\$13,000	\$6,100	\$12,600	\$3,600	\$7,600
Multiracial/Other, M	\$6,500	\$13,400	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$4,000	\$9,000	\$4,400	\$9,100	\$2,800	\$5,900
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$8,100</b>	<b>\$16,800</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$5,100</b>	<b>\$10,700</b>	<b>\$2,600</b>	<b>\$5,500</b>

Note: All values are inflation-adjusted to 2024\$. Cumulative values are calculated by multiplying the median annual amount of public assistance received among adults in each range by the corresponding number of years in the range (13 and 27, respectively). "Some college" includes individuals without a postsecondary credential, as well as individuals with a certificate, certification, or occupational license or an associate's degree. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2023; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

## VI. Public healthcare expenditures

We estimated public healthcare spending in three steps:

- In Step 1, we estimated the share of Californians ages 25–64 covered by public health insurance by race/ethnicity, sex, and education level using 2024 CPS-ASEC data. We then used the earnings differentials between adults with a postsecondary credential but no degree and those with some college but no credential to derive separate coverage estimates for each group.
- In Step 2, we estimated the national median amount of medical care spending by public programs among publicly insured adults by race/ethnicity, sex, and education level using 2022 MEPS data. We adjusted these values using the Bureau of Economic Analysis's RPP data to reflect California's higher cost of living, then multiplied the values by 13 and 27 to estimate total public healthcare spending for adults ages 25–36 and 37–64, respectively.
- In Step 3, we multiplied the adjusted median values by the share of publicly insured adults in California to obtain overall public healthcare spending estimates for the full adult population in the state (Table A6).

**Table A6. Cumulative per-person public healthcare expenditures among Californians, by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group**

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college, no credential		Certificate, certification, or occupational license		Associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, F	\$40,100	\$83,300	\$48,700	\$101,200	\$36,400	\$75,600	\$25,700	\$53,400	\$30,100	\$62,500
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, M	\$16,500	\$34,300	\$13,500	\$28,000	\$11,900	\$24,600	\$7,200	\$14,900	\$20,400	\$42,300
Asian Non-URM, F	\$32,100	\$66,600	\$27,500	\$57,200	\$20,600	\$42,700	\$24,200	\$50,200	\$17,300	\$35,900
Asian Non-URM, M	\$13,200	\$27,500	\$8,300	\$17,200	\$7,300	\$15,200	\$7,400	\$15,500	\$10,900	\$22,600

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Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college, no credential		Certificate, certification, or occupational license		Associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
Black/African American, F	\$38,300	\$79,500	\$36,200	\$75,100	\$27,000	\$56,100	\$19,200	\$39,900	\$5,700	\$11,800
Black/African American, M	\$15,800	\$32,800	\$10,100	\$21,000	\$8,900	\$18,500	\$5,300	\$11,100	\$3,900	\$8,000
Hispanic/Latina, F	\$32,900	\$68,300	\$32,500	\$67,500	\$24,300	\$50,400	\$21,700	\$45,000	\$5,000	\$10,300
Hispanic/Latino, M	\$14,600	\$30,200	\$8,900	\$18,400	\$7,800	\$16,200	\$5,700	\$11,900	\$3,100	\$6,500
White, F	\$34,000	\$70,700	\$36,300	\$75,400	\$27,100	\$56,300	\$33,300	\$69,200	\$7,700	\$16,100
White, M	\$15,300	\$31,700	\$11,200	\$23,200	\$9,800	\$20,400	\$9,000	\$18,700	\$5,300	\$11,000
Multiracial/Other, F	\$40,100	\$83,300	\$48,400	\$100,600	\$36,100	\$75,000	\$25,700	\$53,400	\$30,100	\$62,500
Multiracial/Other, M	\$16,500	\$34,300	\$13,400	\$27,900	\$11,800	\$24,600	\$7,200	\$14,900	\$20,400	\$42,300
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$26,500</b>	<b>\$54,900</b>	<b>\$26,100</b>	<b>\$54,200</b>	<b>\$22,000</b>	<b>\$45,700</b>	<b>\$20,800</b>	<b>\$43,200</b>	<b>\$11,400</b>	<b>\$23,600</b>

Note: All values are inflation-adjusted to 2024\$. Cumulative values are calculated by multiplying the median annual amount of medical care spending covered by public health insurance programs among adults in each age range over the corresponding number of years in the range (13 and 27, respectively). "Some college" includes individuals without a postsecondary credential, as well as individuals with a certificate, certification, or occupational license or an associate's degree. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Price Parities by State and Metro Area, 2024; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), 2024; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016; and US Department of Health and Human Services, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2022.

## VII. Incarceration expenditures

We estimated public incarceration spending in four steps:


- In Step 1, we used the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 2016 SPI to calculate the educational attainment distribution of incarcerated individuals in state and federal prisons by race and ethnicity.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The Survey of Prison Inmates data do not distinguish among individuals with some college but no credential; individuals with a certificate, certification, or occupational license; or individuals with an associate's degree. We did not use earnings differences to estimate separate lifetime incarceration rates for these groups because their earnings gaps are small and the link between such earnings differentials and the lifetime likelihood of incarceration is not well established.

- In Step 2, we combined these education-group shares with race-by-sex-group estimates of the lifetime risk of incarceration in the United States and the ratio of first incarceration before and after age 40 from RoehrKasse and Wildeman to estimate lifetime incarceration rates by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group.<sup>16</sup>
- In Step 3, we estimated the lifetime per capita cost of incarceration by multiplying the annual per capita cost of incarceration in California in FY 2023 (\$132,355) by an estimate of the median number of years California’s incarcerated population was imprisoned at time of release (1.42 years), as derived from Harris et al.<sup>17</sup> For individuals who are only incarcerated once, this yields a lifetime cost of \$187,503. Based on California’s recidivism rate, 83.2 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals in the state do not return to prison within three years. For the other 16.8 percent of individuals, we assumed one additional period of incarceration over similar duration, thereby doubling the lifetime cost to \$375,006 for these individuals. The weighted average lifetime cost among individuals who recidivate and those who do not is therefore \$219,003.
- Lastly, in Step 4, we multiplied the lifetime incarceration risk estimate by the weighted average lifetime per capita cost estimate to obtain cumulative per-person incarceration spending estimates among working-age Californians by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group (Table A7).

Table A7. Cumulative per-person incarceration expenditures among ever- and never-incarcerated Californians, by race/ethnicity, sex, education level, and age group

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college or associate’s degree		Bachelor’s degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, F	\$279	\$89	\$167	\$53	\$56	\$18
AI/AN/NH/PI/ Asian URM, M	\$444	\$327	\$283	\$208	\$87	\$64
Asian Non-URM, F	\$17	\$4	\$10	\$2	\$3	\$1
Asian Non-URM, M	\$135	\$47	\$86	\$30	\$27	\$9

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16 RoehrKasse and Wildeman, “Lifetime Risk of Imprisonment in the United States Remains High and Starkly Unequal,” 2022.

17 Harris et al., “Policy Brief,” 2024.

Race-by-sex group	High school diploma		Some college or associate's degree		Bachelor's degree	
	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64	Ages 25–36	Ages 37–64
Black/African American, F	\$133	\$33	\$43	\$11	\$11	\$3
Black/African American, M	\$1,170	\$234	\$380	\$76	\$100	\$20
Hispanic/Latina, F	\$76	\$36	\$30	\$14	\$11	\$5
Hispanic/Latino, M	\$546	\$219	\$214	\$86	\$80	\$32
White, F	\$121	\$38	\$78	\$25	\$32	\$10
White, M	\$355	\$115	\$227	\$73	\$94	\$30
Multiracial/Other, F	\$159	\$95	\$101	\$60	\$29	\$17
Multiracial/Other, M	\$602	\$218	\$382	\$138	\$118	\$43
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$318</b>	<b>\$94</b>	<b>\$140</b>	<b>\$41</b>	<b>\$49</b>	<b>\$15</b>

Note: All values are in 2024\$. Cumulative values are calculated by multiplying the likelihood of ever being incarcerated in each age range by the average lifetime per-person cost among incarcerated individuals. "Some college" includes individuals without a postsecondary credential, as well as individuals with a certificate, certification, or occupational license. AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Recidivism Report for Individuals Released in Fiscal Year 2018–19, 2024; Harris et al., "Policy Brief," 2024; Hwang and Duara, "As California Closes Prisons, the Cost of Locking Someone Up Hits New Record at \$132,860," 2024; Roehrkasse and Wildeman, "Lifetime Risk of Imprisonment in the United States Remains High and Starkly Unequal," 2022; and US Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016.

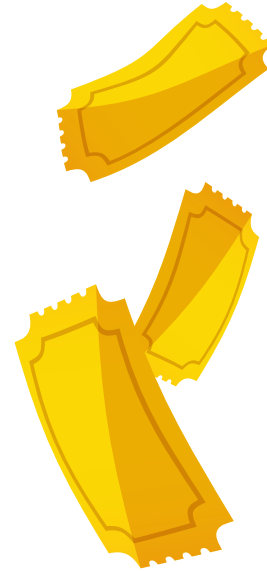
# Estimating the Overall Monetary Impact of All Underrepresented Groups Reaching a 70 Percent Attainment Rate by 2035

To estimate the monetary impact, we started by measuring the cumulative, per-person monetary value associated with each education level separately for adults ages 25–36 and 37–64.

We measured these per-person values as follows:

## Monetary value

- = (after-tax earnings + federal and state tax revenue
- + consumption-driven economic expansion)
- (public education cost + individual education cost
- + public assistance spending + public healthcare spending
- + incarceration spending)



We then multiplied the values by the number of working-age Californians at each education level to estimate the aggregate monetary value today and under different attainment scenarios in 2035.

We assumed that all newly credentialed young adults would earn a degree, certificate, certification, or occupational license by age 25 and thus multiplied the number of completers at each credential level by the per-person monetary value from ages 25–64 corresponding to each credential type. In contrast, we assumed that all newly credentialed older adults would complete their program of study at age 36. We therefore first calculated a weighted average of the per-person monetary value for ages 25–36 among high school graduates and individuals with some college but no credential, using their projected shares in 2035 as the weights. We then multiplied the number of older completers at each credential level by the sum of this weighted non-credential value average and the corresponding per-person value among credential holders ages 37–64 to calculate the aggregate monetary value for older adults.

After calculating the aggregate monetary value by education level, we estimated the monetary gains under two future attainment scenarios by calculating the difference in aggregate monetary value under each scenario relative to the value today. The gains are thus driven by the higher monetary value associated with credential attainment compared with non-attainment and the greater number of credentialed individuals under the attainment scenarios compared with today. We considered two scenarios:

- **projection scenario**, reflecting the net aggregate gains from today if each group’s attainment continued to grow through 2035 at its observed trend since 2009
- **target scenario**, reflecting the net aggregate gains from today if every group achieved at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

Under the projection scenario, 13.7 million working-age Californians are expected to have a postsecondary credential in 2035 (up from 11.7 million in 2023). Under the target scenario, 15.5 million individuals would need to have a postsecondary credential by 2035. In the target scenario, we increased the number of newly credentialed adults ages 25–64 in each group until their combined share reached 70 percent. For groups projected to fall short of the target, we proportionally increased the number of additional certificate, certification, or occupational license holders; associate’s degree holders; and bachelor’s degree holders based on each group’s projected credential distribution in 2035.<sup>18</sup> For groups already projected to meet or exceed the target attainment rate, we maintained the number of credential holders at the projected level in 2035.

Lastly, after estimating the anticipated monetary gains from today under each scenario, we calculated the anticipated monetary impact of reaching a 70 percent or higher postsecondary attainment rate for all underrepresented groups in California by 2035 as the difference between the monetary gains under the target scenario versus the projection scenario.

## Estimating Monetary Impacts by Subgroup

We directly estimated anticipated monetary gains and impacts by race-by-sex and age group, as these demographic characteristics are not affected by changes in income or educational attainment. In contrast, we indirectly estimated gains for adults in low-income and non-low-income households due to data limitations from using cross-sectional earnings data. Direct estimates would have a downward bias because attainment gains are expected to move many low-income adults into higher income brackets. Thus, the earnings of credential holders in low-income households are substantially lower than the expected earnings of newly credentialed adults who were previously in a low-income group.

To address this bias, we calculated the weighted averages of the per-person race-by-sex economic measures, using the race-by-sex distribution of adults in low-income households as the weights. We then multiplied the number of adults in low-income households at each credential level by the corresponding weighted average for each economic measure to obtain estimates for this subpopulation. We derived analogous estimates for adults in non-low-income households by subtracting the estimated values for low-income adults from the overall monetary gains and impact estimates.

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<sup>18</sup> The only exception is the analysis of economic impact by credential level, for which we constrained all attainment gains to occur within each credential level to estimate the anticipated differences in impact by credential mix.



# **Appendix B. Demographics, Credential Attainment Rates, and Economic Impact Estimates by Economic Region**

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Table B1. Demographic and economic characteristics of California’s economic regions

Region	High school diploma		Racial/ethnic representation						Economic measures			
	Total	Ages 25–64	America Indian/Pacific Islander	Asian/Asian American	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latino	White	Multiracial/Other	Labor-force participation rate	Unemployment rate	Median household income	Annual business revenue per capita
Bay Area	7,548,019	4,154,004	0.6%	29.8%	6.1%	24.0%	35.4%	4.2%	66.3%	4.5%	\$130,634	\$109,000
Central Coast	2,324,938	1,133,080	0.3%	6.4%	2.1%	44.9%	43.5%	2.8%	62.6%	5.1%	\$101,236	\$77,000
Central San Joaquin Valley	1,821,578	898,094	0.6%	8.2%	4.3%	57.9%	26.9%	2.1%	62.3%	8.8%	\$73,170	\$61,000
Inland Empire	4,712,849	2,429,226	0.5%	8.3%	7.8%	52.5%	28.2%	2.6%	63.7%	5.8%	\$89,288	\$55,000
Kern County	918,623	454,669	0.5%	5.5%	5.7%	55.8%	30.2%	2.3%	59.3%	9.4%	\$69,533	\$65,000
Los Angeles County	9,714,246	5,367,643	0.3%	15.8%	8.5%	47.1%	25.7%	2.5%	66.4%	6.5%	\$89,153	\$84,000
North State	601,947	287,147	1.4%	3.7%	1.7%	18.5%	69.9%	4.8%	55.7%	6.2%	\$63,931	\$65,000
Northern San Joaquin Valley	1,653,003	829,454	0.8%	13.1%	5.5%	47.8%	29.5%	3.4%	63.8%	7.6%	\$80,180	\$73,000
Orange County	3,152,352	1,687,948	0.3%	23.3%	2.0%	33.8%	37.5%	3.2%	66.6%	4.4%	\$112,881	\$107,000
Sacramento	2,742,721	1,412,038	1.0%	14.9%	6.9%	22.7%	49.3%	5.2%	64.1%	5.2%	\$89,145	\$66,000
Southern Border	3,466,948	1,851,325	0.6%	12.4%	5.0%	36.7%	41.4%	3.8%	66.7%	5.2%	\$83,395	\$83,000
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>39,169,917</b>	<b>20,953,009</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>	<b>34.5%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>\$101,199</b>	<b>\$84,000</b>

Note: All currency values are reported in 2024\$. Statewide population counts exceed the sum across the economic regions listed because two regions—Eastern Sierra and Redwood Coast—are excluded due to data limitations.

Source: State of California, Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development, Regional Data Tool, 2025.



Table B2. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Bay Area region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	56%	64%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	58%	66%
Asian Non-URM, F	83%	93%
Asian Non-URM, M	82%	91%
Black/African American, F	60%	67%
Black/African American, M	51%	48%
Hispanic/Latina, F	44%	50%
Hispanic/Latino, M	35%	44%
White, F	81%	86%
White, M	77%	87%
Multiracial/Other, F	75%	80%
Multiracial/Other, M	69%	77%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>77%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Bay Area

Table B3. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Bay Area region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$23 billion	-\$50 billion	-\$27 billion	-\$7,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$783 billion	\$1.2 trillion	\$416 billion	\$103,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$387 billion	\$520 billion	\$132 billion	\$33,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$127 billion	\$186 billion	\$59 billion	\$15,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$5 billion	\$8 billion	\$3 billion	\$1,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$16 billion	\$26 billion	\$9 billion	\$2,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$470 million	\$969 million	\$500 million	\$120
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1.3 trillion</b>	<b>\$1.9 trillion</b>	<b>\$594 billion</b>	<b>\$147,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, DataVista, 2025; California State University, CSU Student Success Dashboard, 2025; California Department of Finance, State and County Population Projections, 2025; Roehrkasse and Wildeman, "Lifetime Risk of Imprisonment in the United States Remains High and Starkly Unequal," 2022; University of California, Information Center, 2025; US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Price Parities by State and Metro Area, 2024; US Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series, 2009–24; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2024; US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey October Supplement, 2017–19, 2022, and 2023; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016; US Department of Education, Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B), 2018; US Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2017; US Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2017 and 2023; US Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 2020; and US Department of Health and Human Services, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2022.

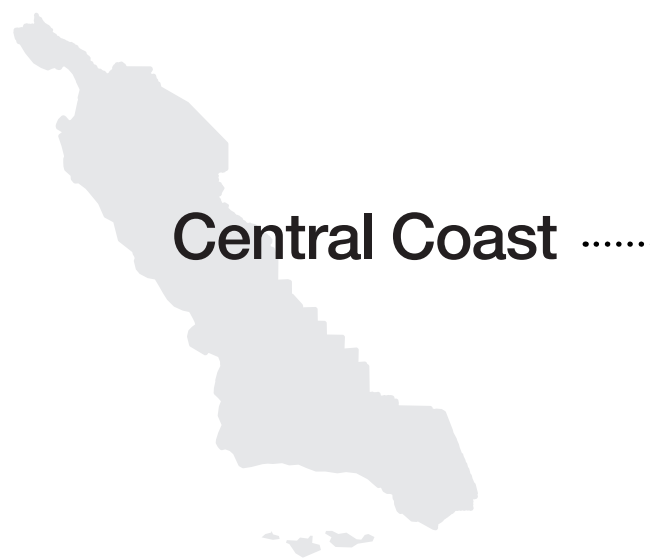


Table B4. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Central Coast region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	61%	74%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	54%	54%
Asian Non-URM, F	81%	87%
Asian Non-URM, M	78%	84%
Black/African American, F	71%	76%
Black/African American, M	53%	31%
Hispanic/Latina, F	41%	58%
Hispanic/Latino, M	31%	43%
White, F	76%	89%
White, M	69%	75%
Multiracial/Other, F	72%	78%
Multiracial/Other, M	65%	57%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>65%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Central Coast

Table B5. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Central Coast region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$8 billion	-\$21 billion	-\$13 billion	-\$11,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$221 billion	\$424 billion	\$203 billion	\$176,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$86 billion	\$142 billion	\$56 billion	\$49,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$33 billion	\$61 billion	\$28 billion	\$24,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$2 billion	\$3 billion	\$1 billion	\$1,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$8 billion	\$12 billion	\$4 billion	\$3,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$173 million	\$451 million	\$278 million	\$240
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$342 billion</b>	<b>\$622 billion</b>	<b>\$279 billion</b>	<b>\$243,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.

# Central San Joaquin Valley .....

Table B6. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Central San Joaquin Valley region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	46%	56%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	40%	42%
Asian Non-URM, F	64%	70%
Asian Non-URM, M	58%	60%
Black/African American, F	50%	60%
Black/African American, M	39%	49%
Hispanic/Latina, F	35%	52%
Hispanic/Latino, M	25%	35%
White, F	62%	71%
White, M	55%	65%
Multiracial/Other, F	63%	66%
Multiracial/Other, M	51%	66%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>50%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Central San Joaquin Valley

Table B7. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Central San Joaquin Valley region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$4 billion	-\$21 billion	-\$17 billion	-\$17,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$190 billion	\$493 billion	\$304 billion	\$314,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$37 billion	\$87 billion	\$49 billion	\$51,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$24 billion	\$62 billion	\$38 billion	\$39,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$1 billion	\$3 billion	\$2 billion	\$2,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$4 billion	\$9 billion	\$5 billion	\$5,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$179 million	\$551 million	\$371 million	\$380
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$253 billion</b>	<b>\$634 billion</b>	<b>\$381 billion</b>	<b>\$395,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



# Inland Empire .....

**Table B8. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Inland Empire region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex**

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	50%	61%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	54%	70%
Asian Non-URM, F	74%	79%
Asian Non-URM, M	72%	59%
Black/African American, F	56%	55%
Black/African American, M	48%	55%
Hispanic/Latina, F	36%	49%
Hispanic/Latino, M	28%	39%
White, F	59%	69%
White, M	53%	62%
Multiracial/Other, F	62%	73%
Multiracial/Other, M	51%	48%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>52%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Inland Empire

Table B9. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Inland Empire region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$7 billion	-\$50 billion	-\$44 billion	-\$17,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$386 billion	\$1.2 trillion	\$789 billion	\$316,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$96 billion	\$260 billion	\$163 billion	\$65,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$52 billion	\$155 billion	\$103 billion	\$41,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$3 billion	\$7 billion	\$5 billion	\$2,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$10 billion	\$25 billion	\$15 billion	\$6,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$387 million	\$1.2 billion	\$815 million	\$330
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$542 billion</b>	<b>\$1.6 trillion</b>	<b>\$1 trillion</b>	<b>\$413,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



# Kern County .....

**Table B10. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in Kern County, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex**

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	43%	65%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	43%	64%
Asian Non-URM, F	65%	66%
Asian Non-URM, M	58%	65%
Black/African American, F	49%	56%
Black/African American, M	34%	42%
Hispanic/Latina, F	32%	49%
Hispanic/Latino, M	22%	33%
White, F	55%	69%
White, M	46%	53%
Multiracial/Other, F	49%	53%
Multiracial/Other, M	48%	48%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>48%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Kern County

Table B11. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in Kern County if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$2 billion	-\$12 billion	-\$10 billion	-\$20,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$105 billion	\$298 billion	\$193 billion	\$402,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$24 billion	\$59 billion	\$35 billion	\$74,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$14 billion	\$38 billion	\$25 billion	\$51,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$643 million	\$2 billion	\$986 million	\$2,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$2 billion	\$6 billion	\$3 billion	\$6,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$84 million	\$277 million	\$193 million	\$400
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$144 billion</b>	<b>\$391 billion</b>	<b>\$248 billion</b>	<b>\$516,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



# Los Angeles .....

**Table B12. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Los Angeles region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex**

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	53%	68%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	50%	60%
Asian Non-URM, F	76%	87%
Asian Non-URM, M	75%	81%
Black/African American, F	60%	70%
Black/African American, M	52%	63%
Hispanic/Latina, F	37%	55%
Hispanic/Latino, M	30%	46%
White, F	78%	89%
White, M	73%	80%
Multiracial/Other, F	75%	81%
Multiracial/Other, M	69%	75%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>68%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Los Angeles

Table B13. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Los Angeles region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$40 billion	-\$86 billion	-\$45 billion	-\$9,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$1.1 trillion	\$1.8 trillion	\$675 billion	\$134,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$354 billion	\$505 billion	\$151 billion	\$30,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$157 billion	\$246 billion	\$89 billion	\$18,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$10 billion	\$15 billion	\$5 billion	\$1,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$37 billion	\$53 billion	\$16 billion	\$3,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$1.2 billion	\$2.1 billion	\$898 million	\$180
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1.6 trillion</b>	<b>\$2.5 trillion</b>	<b>\$891 billion</b>	<b>\$176,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



## North State .....

**Table B14. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the North State region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex**

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	48%	61%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	38%	55%
Asian Non-URM, F	55%	88%
Asian Non-URM, M	66%	84%
Black/African American, F	62%	68%
Black/African American, M	42%	59%
Hispanic/Latina, F	50%	71%
Hispanic/Latino, M	37%	49%
White, F	59%	71%
White, M	53%	62%
Multiracial/Other, F	54%	42%
Multiracial/Other, M	48%	54%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>63%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... North State

Table B15. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the North State region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$3 billion	-\$6 billion	-\$3 billion	-\$8,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$64 billion	\$103 billion	\$39 billion	\$119,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$19 billion	\$28 billion	\$8 billion	\$25,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$9 billion	\$14 billion	\$5 billion	\$16,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$518 million	\$689 million	\$170 million	\$520
Public health expenditure savings	\$2 billion	\$3 billion	\$464 million	\$1,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$75 million	\$123 million	\$48 million	\$150
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$93 billion</b>	<b>\$143 billion</b>	<b>\$50 billion</b>	<b>\$154,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.

# Northern San Joaquin Valley .....



**Table B16. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Northern San Joaquin Valley region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex**

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	38%	43%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	42%	58%
Asian Non-URM, F	62%	70%
Asian Non-URM, M	54%	60%
Black/African American, F	48%	53%
Black/African American, M	40%	45%
Hispanic/Latina, F	33%	48%
Hispanic/Latino, M	22%	30%
White, F	56%	67%
White, M	46%	58%
Multiracial/Other, F	54%	60%
Multiracial/Other, M	47%	48%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>48%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# Northern San Joaquin Valley

Table B17. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Northern San Joaquin Valley region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$4 billion	-\$22 billion	-\$18 billion	-\$21,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$171 billion	\$507 billion	\$336 billion	\$383,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$43 billion	\$105 billion	\$62 billion	\$71,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$23 billion	\$66 billion	\$43 billion	\$49,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$1 billion	\$3 billion	\$2 billion	\$2,000
Public health expenditure savings	\$4 billion	\$10 billion	\$6 billion	\$7,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$133 million	\$477 million	\$344 million	\$400
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$239 billion</b>	<b>\$669 billion</b>	<b>\$430 billion</b>	<b>\$492,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



# Orange County .....

**Table B18. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in Orange County, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex**

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	56%	66%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	58%	65%
Asian Non-URM, F	85%	89%
Asian Non-URM, M	85%	89%
Black/African American, F	68%	70%
Black/African American, M	60%	65%
Hispanic/Latina, F	41%	61%
Hispanic/Latino, M	34%	51%
White, F	77%	86%
White, M	73%	78%
Multiracial/Other, F	77%	77%
Multiracial/Other, M	73%	79%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>74%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Orange County

Table B19. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in Orange County if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$8 billion	-\$16 billion	-\$8 billion	-\$5,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$300 billion	\$430 billion	\$131 billion	\$81,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$106 billion	\$140 billion	\$34 billion	\$21,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$44 billion	\$61 billion	\$18 billion	\$11,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$2 billion	\$3 billion	\$893 million	\$550
Public health expenditure savings	\$9 billion	\$12 billion	\$3 billion	\$2,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$264 million	\$433 million	\$169 million	\$110
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$453 billion</b>	<b>\$631 billion</b>	<b>\$178 billion</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



Table B20. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Sacramento region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	49%	54%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	48%	60%
Asian Non-URM, F	70%	75%
Asian Non-URM, M	68%	72%
Black/African American, F	58%	72%
Black/African American, M	49%	55%
Hispanic/Latina, F	48%	71%
Hispanic/Latino, M	39%	59%
White, F	68%	75%
White, M	62%	72%
Multiracial/Other, F	62%	69%
Multiracial/Other, M	57%	58%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>69%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# ..... Sacramento

Table B21. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Sacramento region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$10 billion	-\$14 billion	-\$4 billion	-\$3,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$330 billion	\$406 billion	\$76 billion	\$53,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$104 billion	\$122 billion	\$18 billion	\$13,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$47 billion	\$57 billion	\$10 billion	\$7,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$2 billion	\$3 billion	\$381 million	\$270
Public health expenditure savings	\$8 billion	\$9 billion	\$799 million	\$560
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$302 million	\$411 million	\$109 million	\$80
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$482 billion</b>	<b>\$583 billion</b>	<b>\$101 billion</b>	<b>\$71,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.



# Southern Border .....

Table B22. Current and projected postsecondary credential attainment rates among adults ages 25–64 in the Southern Border region, overall and by race/ethnicity and sex

Group	Attainment rate in 2023	Attainment rate in 2035 (projected)
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, F	53%	69%
AI/AN/NH/PI/Asian URM, M	58%	75%
Asian Non-URM, F	81%	87%
Asian Non-URM, M	79%	87%
Black/African American, F	55%	64%
Black/African American, M	54%	65%
Hispanic/Latina, F	46%	63%
Hispanic/Latino, M	38%	53%
White, F	76%	87%
White, M	72%	81%
Multiracial/Other, F	73%	79%
Multiracial/Other, M	68%	71%
<b>Regionwide</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>72%</b>

Note: AI = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; Asian URM (underrepresented minority) = Bhutanese, Cambodian, Hmong, Kazakh, Laotian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese; F = female; M = male; NH = Native Hawaiian; PI = Pacific Islander.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23; US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 and 2018; and US Department of Education, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), 2016.

# Southern Border

Table B23. Anticipated monetary gains and impact in the Southern Border region if all underrepresented groups achieve at least a 70 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2035

	Estimated gains if each demographic group's attainment growth from today to 2035 follows current trends (projection scenario)	Estimated gains if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target scenario)	Estimated impact if all demographic groups achieve at least a 70 percent attainment rate by 2035 (target minus projection)	Estimated impact per capita
<b>Direct economic measures</b>				
Public postsecondary expenditures	-\$14 billion	-\$24 billion	-\$10 billion	-\$5,000
Lifetime earnings (post-tax)	\$412 billion	\$569 billion	\$156 billion	\$86,000
Federal and state tax revenue	\$142 billion	\$178 billion	\$36 billion	\$20,000
<b>Indirect economic measures</b>				
Consumption-driven economic expansion	\$60 billion	\$81 billion	\$21 billion	\$11,000
Public assistance expenditure savings	\$3 billion	\$4 billion	\$1 billion	\$600
Public health expenditure savings	\$12 billion	\$15 billion	\$3 billion	\$2,000
Incarceration expenditure savings	\$432 million	\$643 million	\$210 million	\$115
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$616 billion</b>	<b>\$823 billion</b>	<b>\$207 billion</b>	<b>\$114,000</b>

Note: All values are reported in 2024\$. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. The monetary gains are calculated over a 50-year payback period, capturing the full career spans of young adults who would earn credentials over the next decade under each scenario.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from all sources listed in Table B3.

***The Golden Ticket: How Raising  
Postsecondary Attainment Rates to 70 Percent  
for All Demographic Groups Would Unlock  
Decades of Prosperity in California***

can be accessed online at

[cew.georgetown.edu/california-postsecondary-attainment](http://cew.georgetown.edu/california-postsecondary-attainment).

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