

## National Snapshot of the Hispanic Population: August 2020

By Margie Vela, PhD

Demographics in the United States are changing rapidly. With this change, the make-up of the K-12 student population is increasingly Hispanic and multiracial. The Digest of Education Statistics predicts that percent white population of K-12 students will continue to decline through 2029, while percent Hispanic and multiracial student populations will continue to grow (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>. These data are important predictors for the future populations of colleges and universities and give us a clear indication that we must work towards a more inclusive and equitable education system.

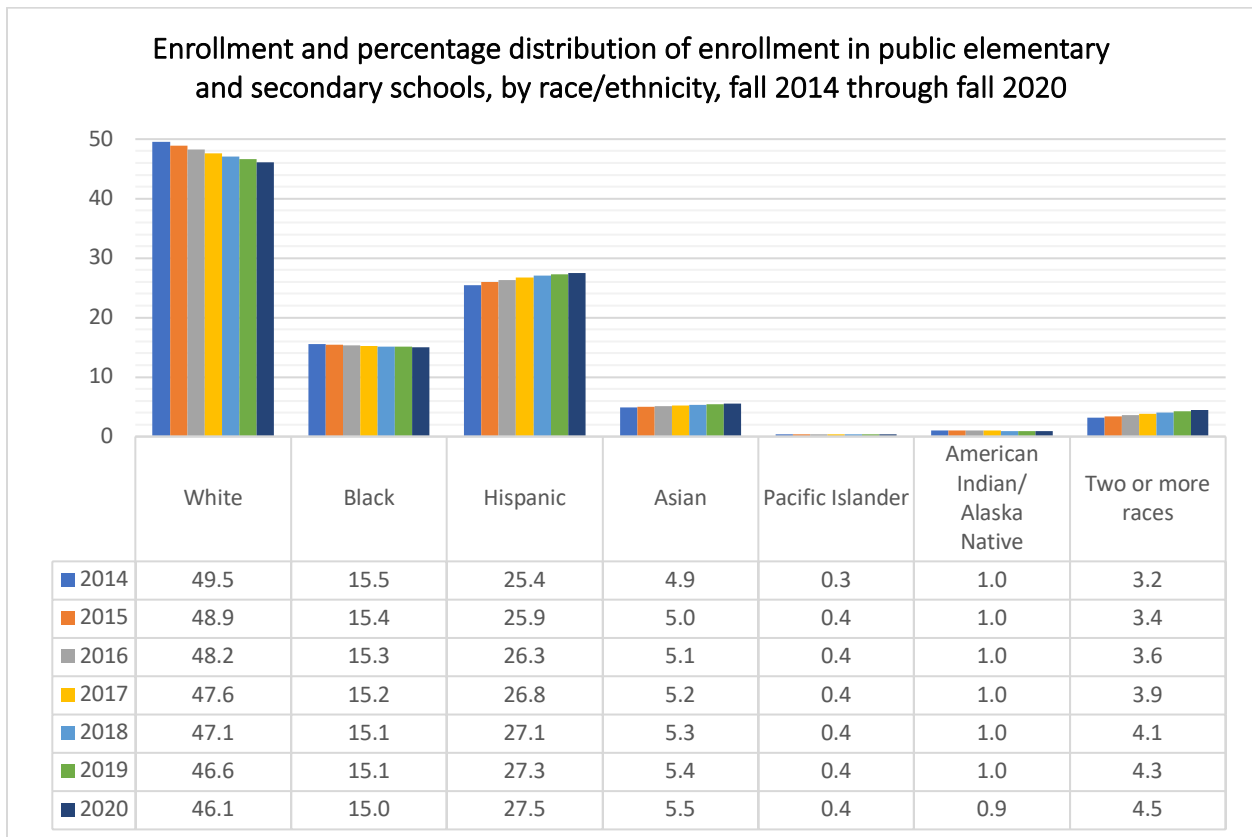


Figure 1. Data derived from the National Center for Education Statistics: Digest of Education Statistics. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_203.50.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_203.50.asp).

Institutions of higher education are also increasing access to higher education for first-generation, low-income and minority student populations. Yet recent educational attainment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that the percent of 25-year-old and older population in the Hispanic/Latinx community who achieve less than a high school diploma

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, (2020). Digest of Education Statistics. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_203.50.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_203.50.asp).

outpaces all other races. The Hispanic/Latinx population also has the lowest bachelor’s degree or higher educational attainment when compared with White, Black and Asian populations, among others, in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> See Figure 2.

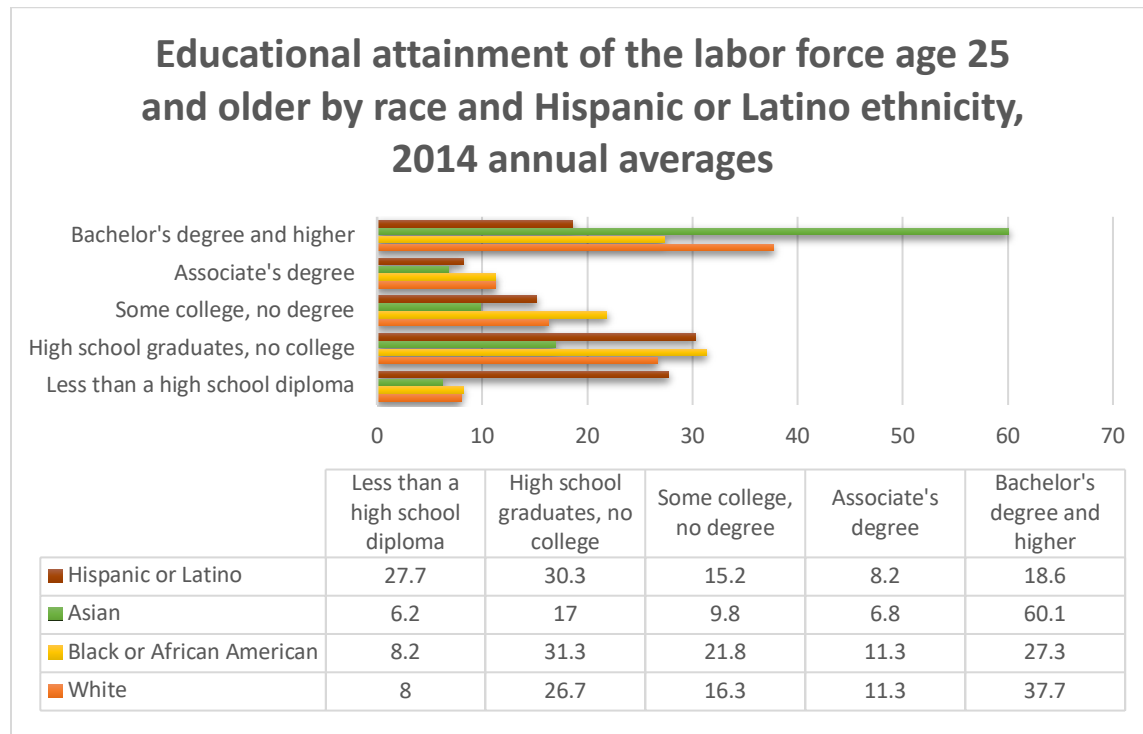


Figure 2. Data derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/educational-attainment-and-occupation-groups-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm>.

Recent college enrollment demonstrates a growing number of Hispanic/Latinx students enrolling in 2- and 4- year institutions. A snapshot of U.S. demographics, as determined by the 2015 Census<sup>3</sup>, indicates that colleges and universities across the country must continue to work towards a more diversified the faculty, establish inclusive practices and policies, and improve educational outcomes for the changing student demographic.

Additionally, educators and administrators should take note of the high percentage of students engaged in the civilian workforce, who are currently employed while matriculating. According to current labor force statistics<sup>4</sup>, the rate for Hispanic/Latinx 2019 high school graduates who

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2014). Educational Attainment and Occupation Groups by Race and Ethnicity in 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/educational-attainment-and-occupation-groups-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm>.

<sup>3</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2010). BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Back to College. Degree Attainment by Age 22. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2010/college/data.htm#nls>

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2020). Economic News Release: Labor force status of 2019 high school graduates and 2018-2019 high school dropouts 16 to 24 years old by school enrollment, educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, October 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgsec.t01.htm#>

were in the labor force in October of 2019 was higher than all other racial and ethnic groups considered for this study. Also noteworthy, is that Hispanic/Latino college students in this demographic who are also enrolled in college are participating in the labor force at the highest rate when compared to other races and ethnic groups considered for the study. This population also has the lowest rate of college enrollees not participating in the labor force<sup>5</sup>. See figure 3. This indicates that Hispanic/Latinx students will seek employment while working on their degrees. It would serve this population well to be employed on campus in experiential learning, rather than working off-campus in non-academic service jobs. As educators and grant writers, we have an opportunity to fill this need through programs that give our students experience in their fields of study.

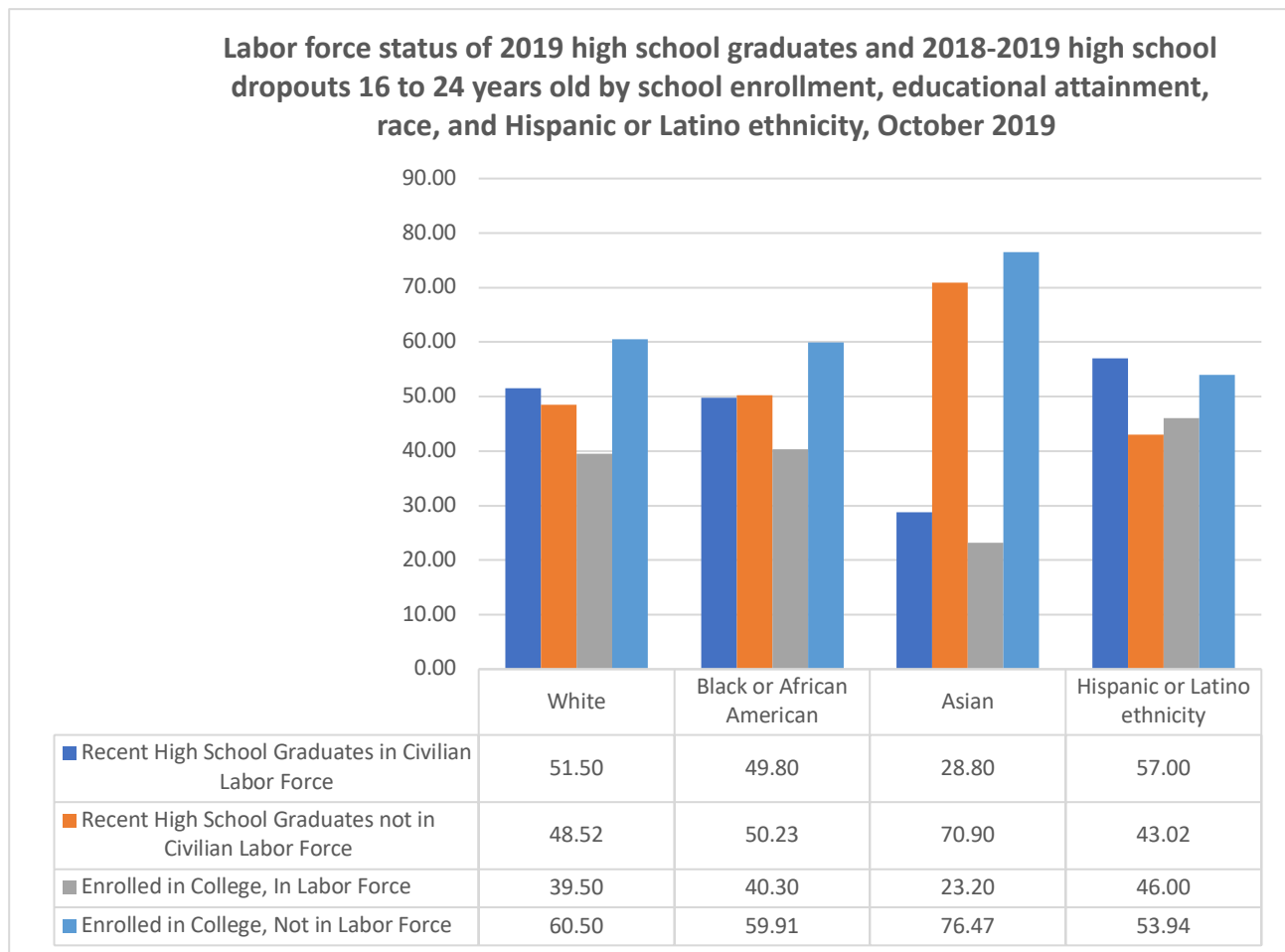


Figure 3. Data derived from Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.t01.htm#>

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). *Economic News Release: Labor Status 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.t01.htm>.

Without engaging complex statistical analysis for correlation or causation, we can safely assume that income and other socio-economic and family educational attainment factors may be considerations for understanding this trend of working while attending school. Hispanic/Latinx average weekly income earnings are the lowest of any other ethnic or racial group considered in the report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>6</sup>. The average weekly income of the Black population is slightly higher than the Latinx population in the U.S., and the disparity in the earnings of Hispanic/Latinx when compared to Whites and Asians is considerable, according to this report. See Figure 4.

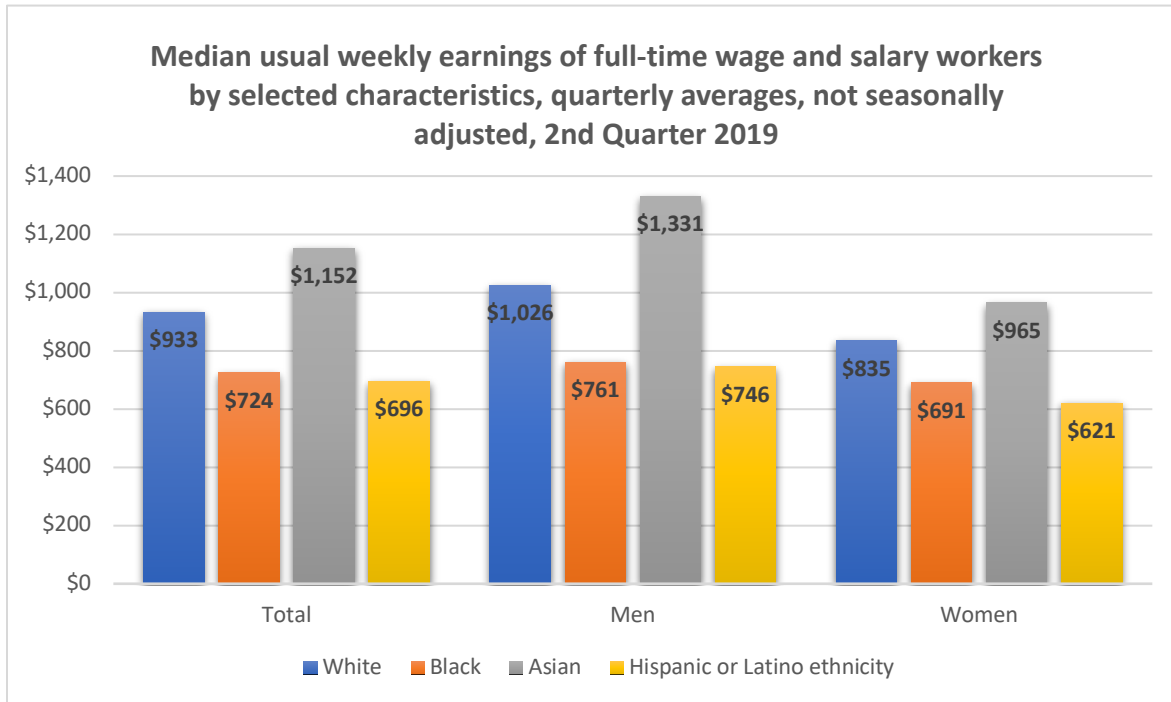


Figure 4. Data derived from Bureau of Labor Statistics. News Release: Usual Weekly Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers, 2nd Quarter 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf>.

Another factor to consider is the current degree attainment of the Latinx community as this not only gives us insight into how many students have a family member to help them navigate middle school advanced mathematics courses, high school course selection, and STEM in higher education (indicators of success in STEM majors), but also gives us an indication of the strength and effectiveness of the pipeline in STEM within higher education for Hispanic/Latinx students. See Figure 5 for the distribution of degrees conferred in the Hispanic/Latinx population as a percentage of total degrees conferred to U.S. citizens and permanent residents<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). News Release: Usual Weekly Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Digest of Education Statistics: 2018 Tables and Figures. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_318.45.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_318.45.asp).

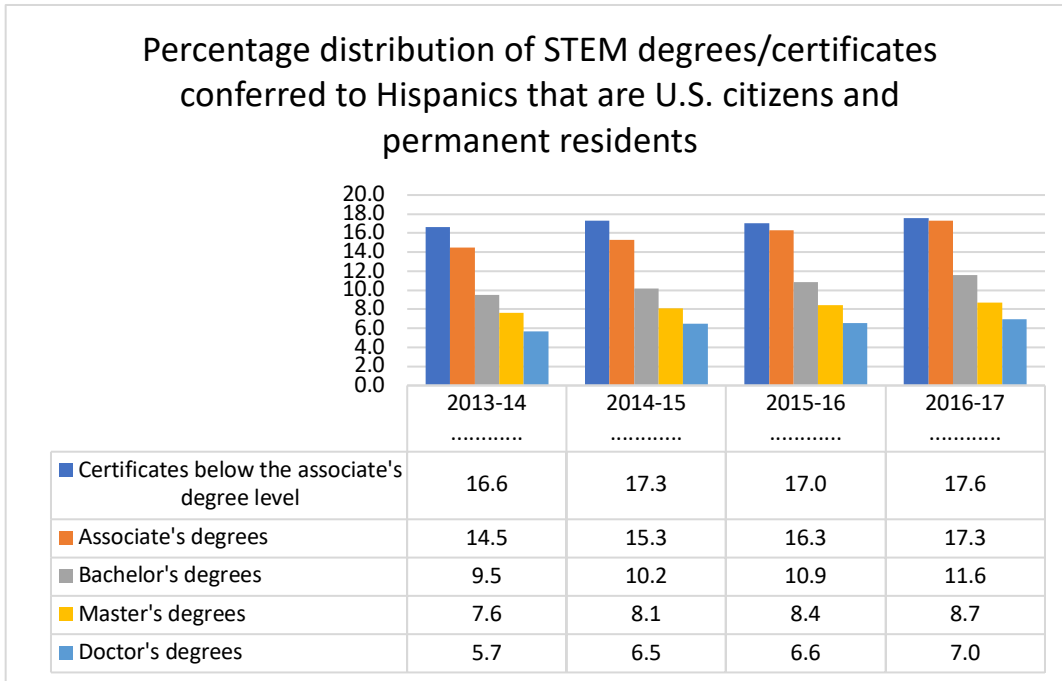


Figure 6. Data derived from National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_318.45.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_318.45.asp).

Additionally, a metric worthy of consideration is educational attainment within the total U.S. Hispanic population. Current Population Survey figures for 2018 report information as seen in Figure 6, which demonstrates an opportunity to strengthen the pipeline of Latinx and Hispanic completion at all educational levels<sup>8</sup>. While these figures show a substantial improvement over 2015 U.S. Census figures, there is prospect for increasing educational achievement.

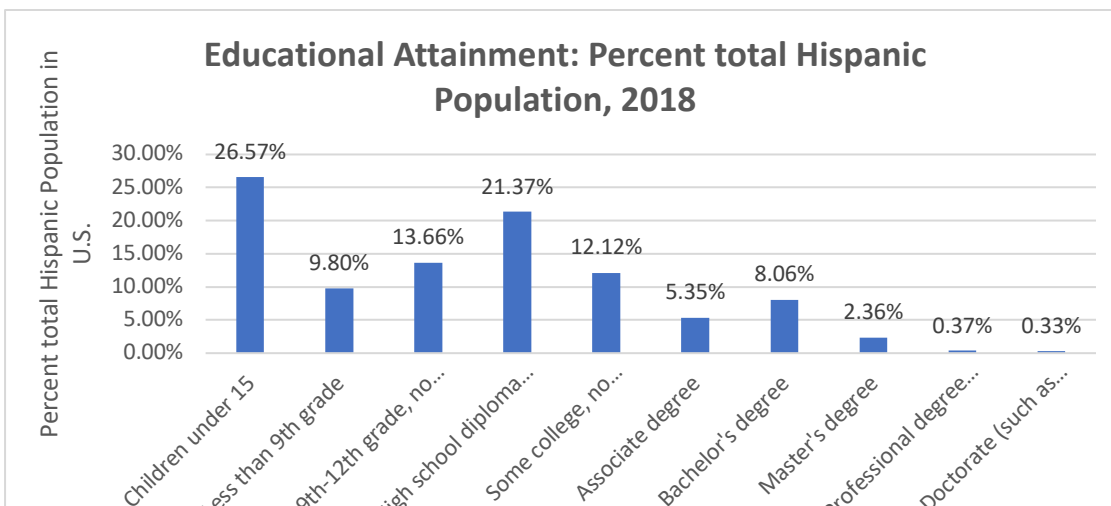


Figure 5. Data derived from Current Population Survey by the United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>.

<sup>8</sup> United State Census Bureau. (2020). *CPS Table Creator*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>.

The data reviewed in this snapshot, give us clear indications that we have work to do to improve educational and socio-economic outcomes for the Hispanic/Latinx population. The state of this population indicates that students in the Latinx community are positioned uniquely within the U.S. student population, and it is important to remember that students also have individual needs that cannot be determined by national statistics. It is imperative to take these data into consideration when thinking about the best ways to serve the Hispanic population in general, and still consider the distinctive requisites of the students at your institution, and the individual students' needs.