



Artist credit: Dr. Hubert Massey

PROSPERIDAD ECONÓMICA:

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE OUTCOMES
FOR DETROIT'S LATINO/HISPANIC COMMUNITY

DETROIT
FUTURE
CITY

OVERVIEW

The Latino/Hispanic¹ community has been an integral part of Detroit for more than a century. Despite its longstanding contributions to the city's cultural and economic fabric, the Latino/Hispanic community confronts significant disparities in accessing resources, opportunities, and services that hinder their full participation and advancement in the Detroit economy. These disparities extend to various dimensions of economic well-being.

In 2021, Detroit Future City released "The State of Economic Equity in Detroit" report, which tracks Detroit's progress toward a more economically equitable future in which all Detroiters are meeting their unique needs, prospering, and fully and fairly participating in all aspects of economic life within a thriving city and region. The economic equity indicators in the report revealed that Latino/Hispanic Detroiters encounter challenges around economic well-being similar to those experienced by Black Detroiters, though challenges that are unique in their own right. In particular, the community faces disparities in access to quality education and employment opportunities, many of which were brought into sharper focus and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Increased investment and concerted efforts to bridge the education-employment gap are imperative for addressing systemic inequalities. Addressing these equity gaps can result in better economic outcomes for Latino/Hispanic Detroiters, and the region as a whole can benefit from a more skilled and diverse workforce, which can drive economic growth for the future.

Education, especially, is widely recognized as a pathway to economic mobility and stability. Research has shown a high correlation between educational attainment, employment rate, and earning potential.ⁱ The level of educational achievement significantly influences the ability of individuals to participate and excel in the workforce, with employment outcomes having an important bearing on long-term economic prosperity.ⁱⁱ

This brief highlights and examines the connections between education and workforce for the Latino/Hispanic community in Detroit, shedding light on disparities across critical equity issues within these focus areas. Additional insights on the context surrounding these challenges were informed by a research advisory group that works with, and reflects, the community, as well as national research and trends.

¹ This brief uses the term "Latino/Hispanic" to refer to all individuals of Latin American descent or Spanish origin. We acknowledge and respect that individuals within the community have diverse experiences and identities, and may identify with other terms, including "LatinX", "Latine," and "Latina." We recognize the distinction and importance of these identities, and our choice of language is not intended to disregard them.

Because of data limitations, the census and education data reported in this brief consider the entirety of the Latino/Hispanic community.

It is important to note, however, that Detroit's Latino/Hispanic community is not a monolith. The community represents diverse nationalities, ethnic heritages and cultural identities. Though some of their experiences overlap with each other or mirror those of other demographic groups, subgroups within the community each face unique, often polarizing, challenges. Inequities exist not only across each group, but also within.

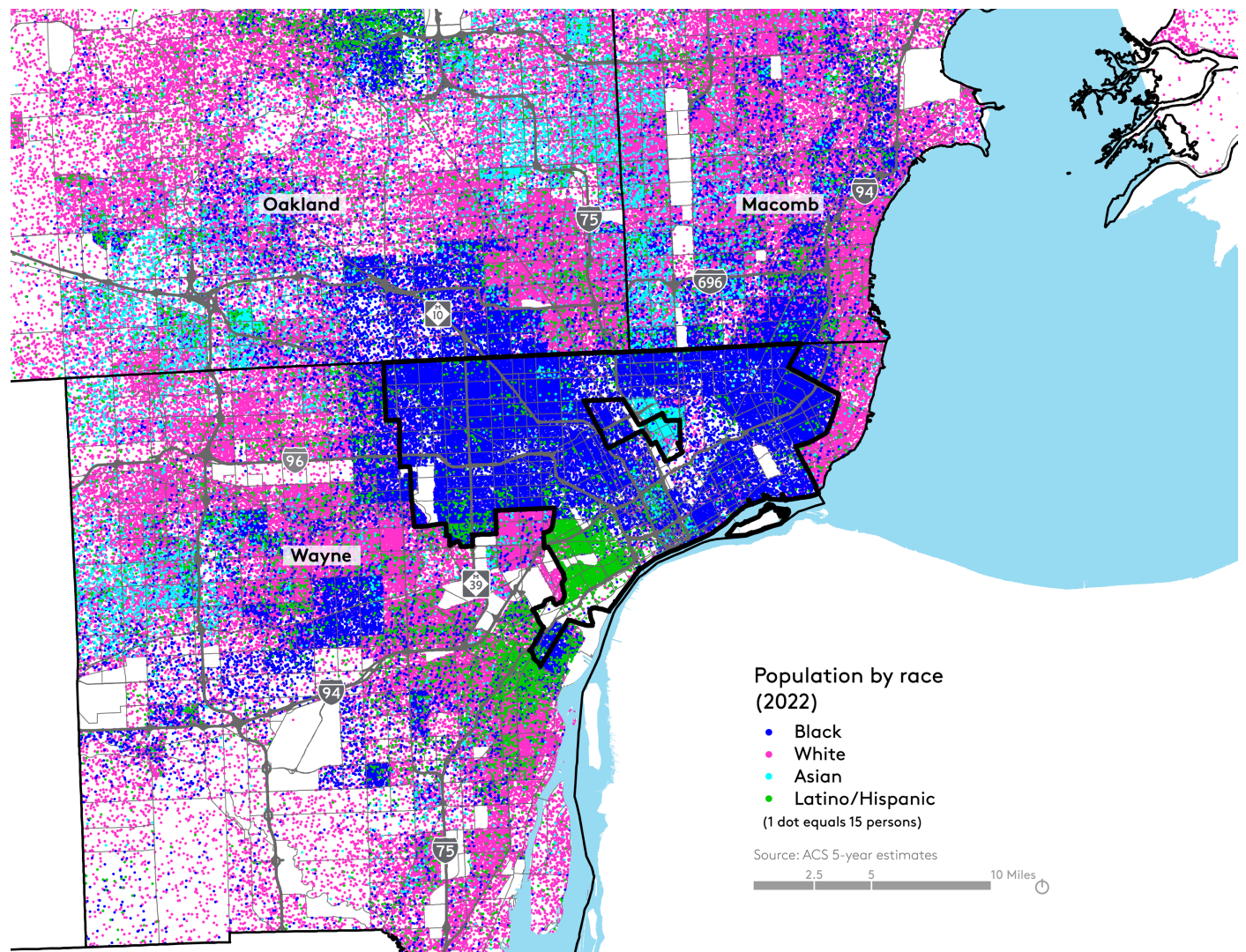
Data limitations prevent us from fully delving into these nuances, but solutions to address these equity gaps should take into account the unique needs and challenges within this community.



The Latino/Hispanic community in Detroit

Today, the city's Latino/Hispanic population is concentrated primarily in southwest Detroit, in the Claytown, Springwells, Central Southwest, 48217, Warrendale and Warren Avenue Community neighborhoods. The number of Latinos/Hispanics in the city fluctuated over the last decade, with their share in the city stabilizing around 7.5% by 2022. In 2022, the city was home to 48,054 Latinos/Hispanics, of which 70% were born in the U.S., with the rest being foreign-born².ⁱⁱⁱ

Detroit's 48,054 Latino/Hispanic residents are primarily clustered in southwest Detroit.



² Foreign-born refers to any person not born in the United States. This includes naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are not U.S. citizens. This is in alignment with how the U.S. Census Bureau reports nativity data.

Educational outcomes for Latino/Hispanic Detroiters

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

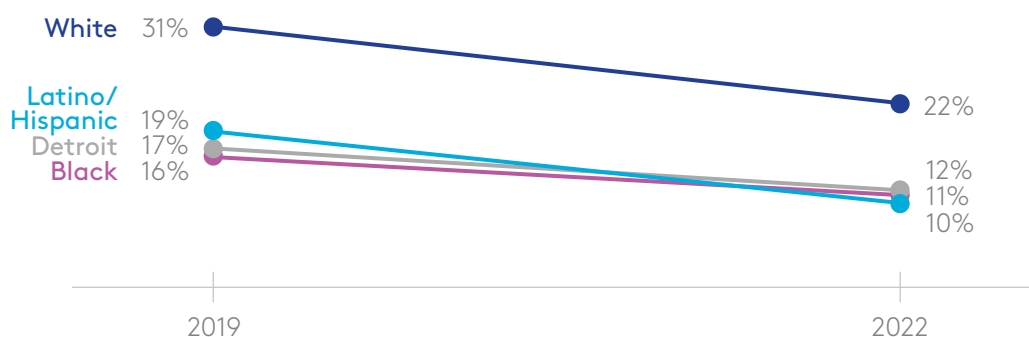
Reforms are essential in elevating third-grade English/Language Arts proficiency for Detroit's Latino/Hispanic students.

English/Language Arts (ELA) proficiency at the end of the third grade serves as a crucial early benchmark of a child's educational progress, with lower competency in foundational skills, such as reading, correlating to increased school dropout rates.^{iv} Research also suggests that students who have trouble meeting ELA benchmarks find it difficult to gain ground academically in the later school years.^v This not only discourages future learning, but can also undermine their future earning potential.

In 2022, only 10% of Latino/Hispanic third-graders³ in the city were proficient in ELA. This compares to 27% in the region and 29% statewide. Between 2019 and 2022, there was a citywide 5-percentage-point drop in third-grade ELA proficiency, impacting racial/ethnic groups across the board. Notably, the decline was most pronounced among Latino/Hispanic students—a significant decrease of 9 percentage points. These low proficiency rates reflect the disproportionate impact of COVID on academic learning for students of color, and also indicate the need for reforms and investment to raise proficiency rates and position students for success in their future learning.

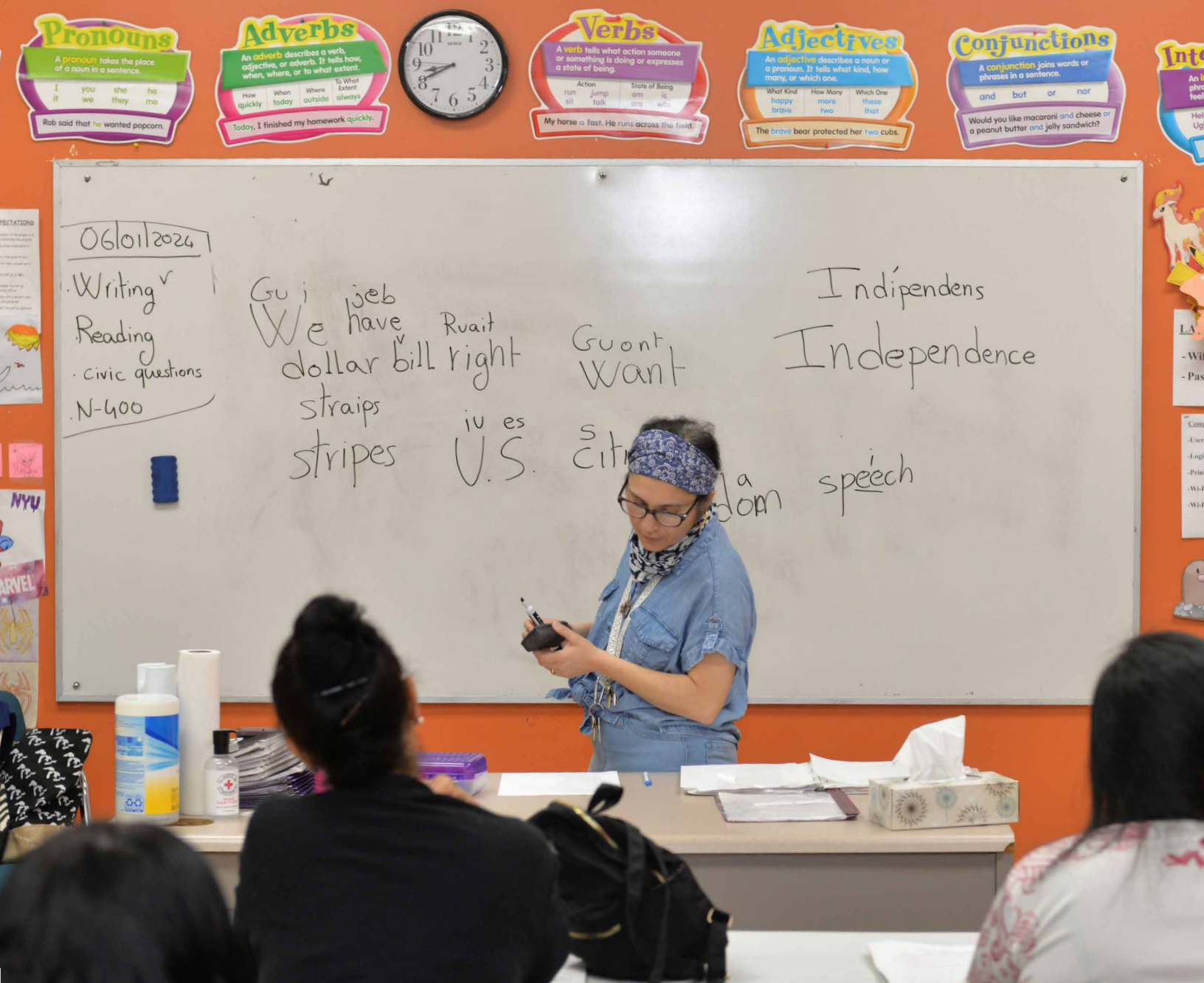
Between 2019 and 2022, third-grade English/Language Arts proficiency declined by 9 percentage points for Latino/Hispanic students.

Third-grade English/Language Arts proficiency in Detroit, by race, 2019 and 2022



Source: Michigan Department of Education, 2019 and 2022

³ Because of data limitations, English/Language Arts proficiency is calculated for all Latino/Hispanic students, irrespective of nativity.



Insights

Advisory group members noted that additional resources are needed to support Latino/Hispanic students' success in the classroom. Within the classroom, there is a need for additional funding, experienced teachers, high-quality programming, and more multicultural and multilingual support. Student learning is also shaped and impacted by factors such as physical infrastructure of schools, access to transportation, access to technology, housing stability, food security, neighborhood conditions and the students' social system, especially family dynamics.^{vi}

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Ensuring Latino/Hispanic Detroiters are completing high school requires action on many fronts.

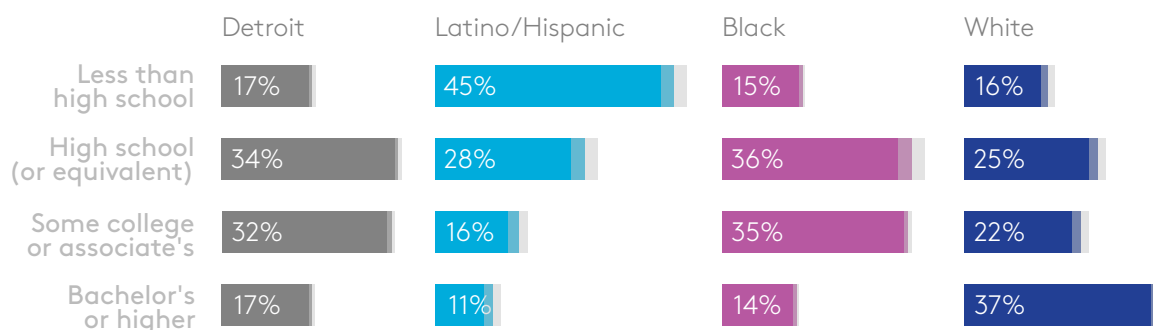
A high school diploma is a standard prerequisite for most jobs, and for higher education opportunities. Research suggests that individuals with high school diplomas are better prepared for college and more likely to complete a four-year degree, therefore increasing their career prospects. This accelerates their earning potential and their ability to prosper economically.^{vii} The General Education Development (GED) credentials are a widely recognized alternative for students who have been out of school longer, and offer similar benefits to that of a high school diploma. However, the GED is often perceived differently than a diploma by educators and employers.^{viii}

A considerable share of Latino/Hispanic Detroiters⁴ 25 and older have not completed their high school education or its equivalent. In 2022, this figure stood at 45% for Latino/Hispanic Detroiters, 28 percentage points higher than the city average, and exceeding both the Black and white population by 30 and 29 percentage points, respectively. Comparatively, the share of Latinos/Hispanics in the state who did not complete high school was 23%, nearly half that of those in the city. Furthermore, high school and some college or associate's degree completion rates among Latinos lagged behind citywide averages by 6 percentage points and 16 percentage points, respectively.

Latino/Hispanic students drop out before completing high school at significantly higher rates than other major race groups in the city.

Educational attainment in Detroit, ages 25+, by race, 2022

■ Margin of error *



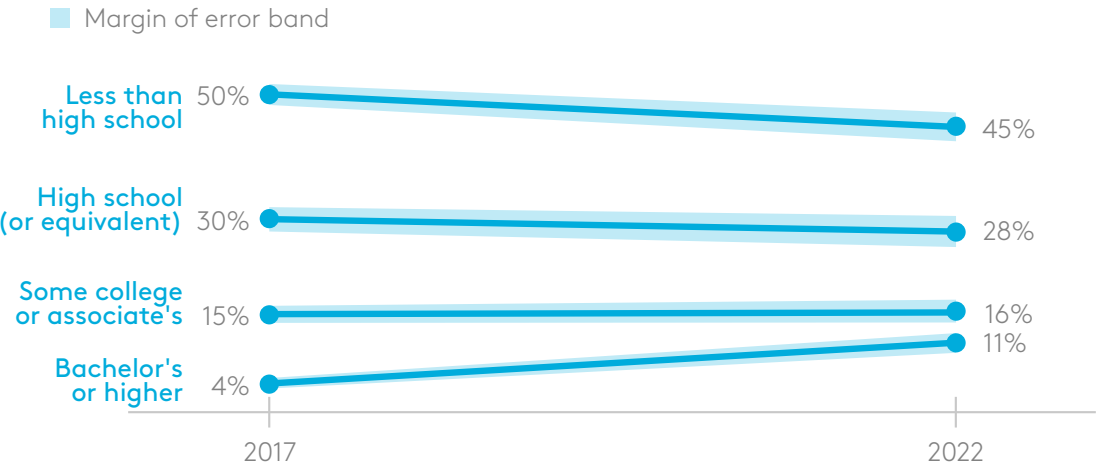
Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2022

⁴ Educational attainment is calculated for all Latinos/Hispanics, irrespective of nativity.

* The U.S Census Bureau's American Community Survey provides estimates with margins of error at the 90% confidence interval. In other words, the Census Bureau is 90% confident that the real value of a data point falls within a certain range or margin of error. On bar charts, the margin of error is represented by shaded gray regions, and on line charts by shaded colored bands.

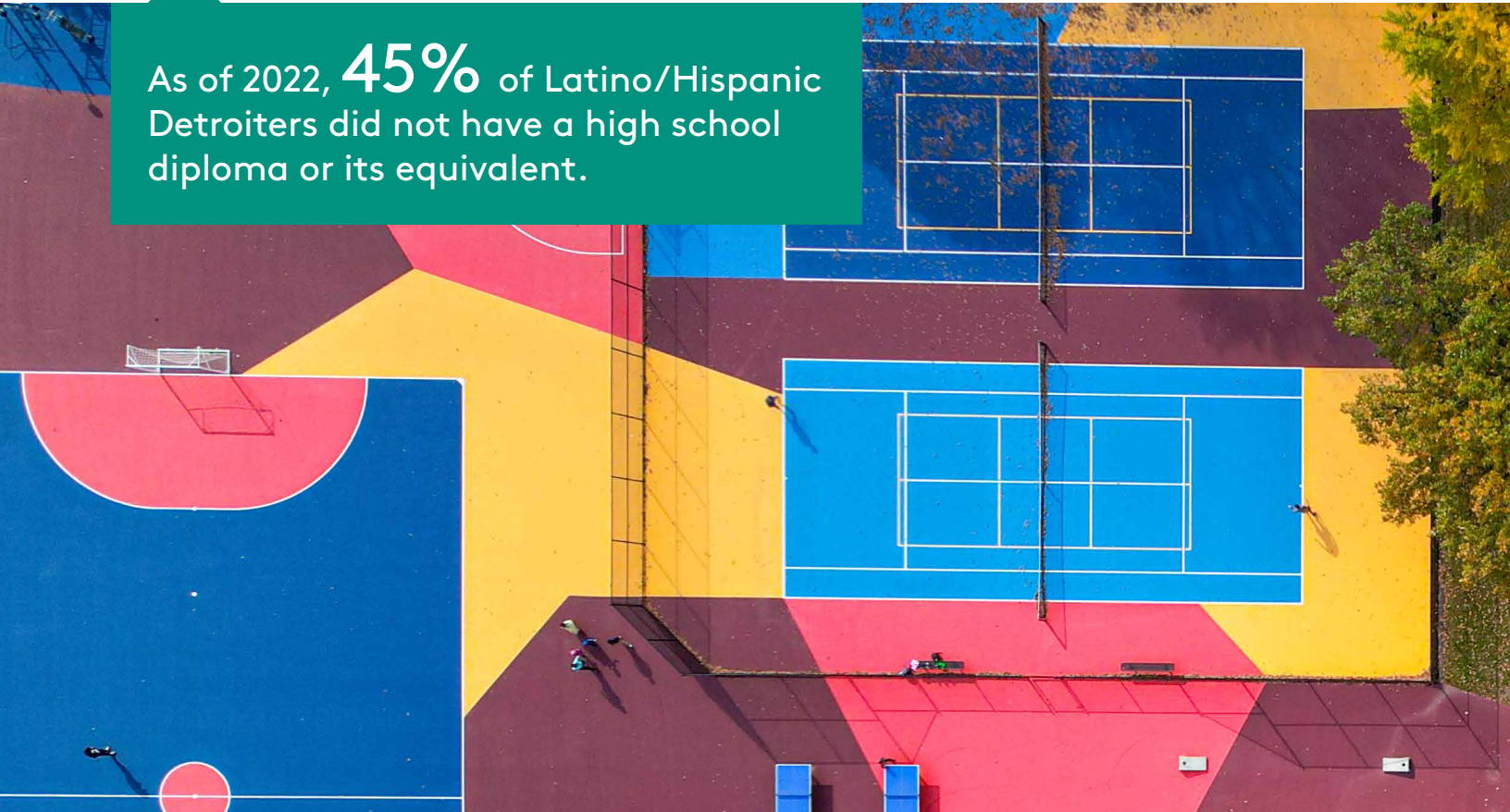
While the COVID-19 pandemic very likely worsened existing challenges, data predating the pandemic reflect persistent struggles for Latino/Hispanic Detroiters. Between 2017 and 2022, despite a decrease in the share of those not completing high school, the high school and some college or associate's degree attainment rates remained statistically unchanged.

Educational attainment rates for Latinos/Hispanics sustained through the pandemic, with the high school non-completion rate showing little improvement.
Educational attainment for Latinos/Hispanics in Detroit, ages 25+, 2017 and 2022



Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2017 and 2022

As of 2022, **45%** of Latino/Hispanic Detroiters did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

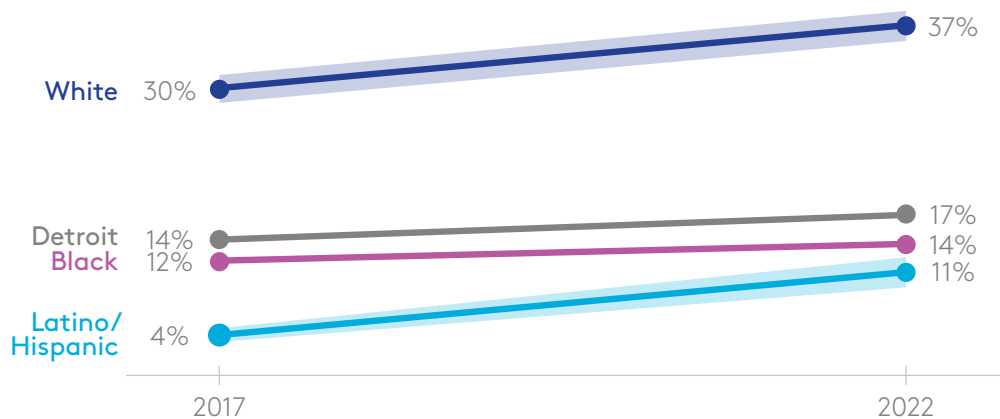


Breaking down hurdles is key to boosting the bachelor's degree attainment rate for Latino/Hispanic Detroiters.

As of 2022, only 11% of Latino/Hispanic Detroiters⁵ 25 or older hold a bachelor's degree or higher, a stark contrast to 37% of white residents. Despite shifts in attainment rates for both demographics since pre-pandemic 2017, significant disparities persist, with Latinos/Hispanics falling behind the city's overall average. These disparities become even more pronounced when comparing state and national standards. Michigan's Latino/Hispanic community achieved a bachelor's degree or higher attainment rate of 23%, and the nation's Latino/Hispanic community standing at 19%.

Despite modest improvements in the attainment rate, Latinos/Hispanics continue to fall behind the city's overall average.

Bachelor's degree or higher attainment for Latino/Hispanic Detroit residents, ages 25+, 2017 and 2022



Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2017 and 2022

Insights

The advisory group noted that many Latino/Hispanic Detroiters may be the first in their family to have completed high school or college, despite having lived in the city for multiple generations. The community recognizes the need for multigenerational support and adult education as the educational experiences of parents likely play a pivotal role in shaping the educational outcomes of subsequent generations.^{ix} Additionally, Latino/Hispanic students and their families often experience challenges in accessing basic wraparound services that influence achievement gaps. Issues such as transportation and access to physical and mental health care remain significant concerns. Latino/Hispanic students often shoulder familial commitments and financial responsibilities early on that can prevent them from participating in afterschool programs, or completing high school diplomas and advanced degrees.

⁵ Bachelor's degree or higher attainment is calculated for all Latinos/Hispanics, irrespective of nativity.

CTE PROGRAMS

Addressing student retention in career and technical education programs can propel young Latino/Hispanic talent into nontraditional career pathways.

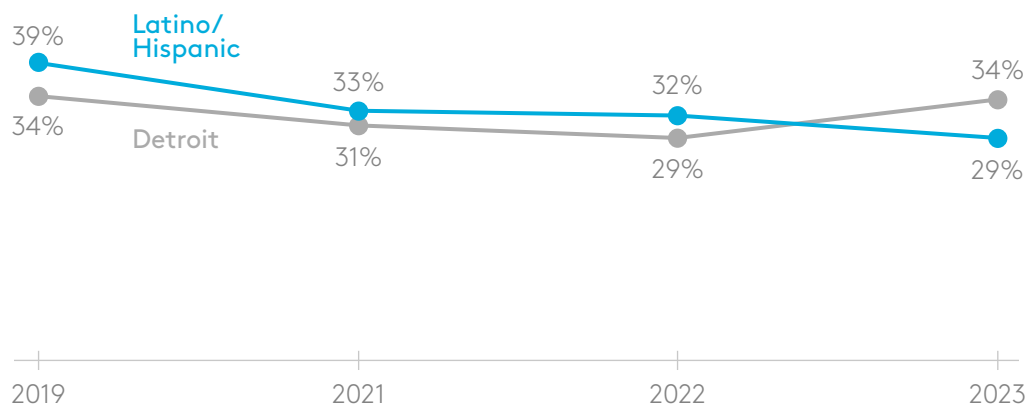
Though advanced education through a bachelor's degree is an important goal for many and can carry benefits such as higher wages, it isn't the sole career pathway. Career and technical education (CTE) programs can provide an additional career route by offering academic, technical, and skills-based training for well-paying skilled positions. These programs can support the cultivation of a workforce proficient in sought-after skills, thereby contributing to a stronger employment base.^x

The image shows the exterior of Guerero's Barber Shop. The building is white brick with a prominent corner entrance. The entrance is framed by a decorative archway with blue and red painted details. The columns on either side of the entrance are painted with a red, white, and blue chevron pattern. The sign above the entrance reads "Guerero's BARBER SHOP" in blue and red lettering. A green callout box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text "29% of Latino/Hispanic students completed their CTE program requirements in 2023." A small sign in front of the entrance says "OPEN".

29% of Latino/Hispanic students completed their CTE program requirements in 2023.

The CTE completion rate is the share of students enrolled in a CTE program who have completed all standards in the program. In 2023, the overall CTE completion rate⁶ in the city was only 34%, trailing behind the state’s 44%. Latino/Hispanic students⁷ in the city boasted a 39% CTE completion rate in 2019, but experienced a 10-percentage point decline by 2023. In contrast, Latinos/Hispanics in the state had a completion rate of 42% in 2023. The downturn for CTE completion in 2023 for Latino/Hispanic students in Detroit warrants attention to ensure not just equitable access to high-quality programs^{xi}, but also alignment of student goals and program curriculum with industry and job market needs.^{xii} On the other end, aligning jobs with occupations that provide a middle-class wage would also incentivize students to complete CTE programs.

Latino/Hispanic students experienced a 10-percentage-point decline in CTE completion rates between 2019 and 2023.
Career and technical education completion rates in Detroit, by race, 2019-2023



Source: Michigan Department of Education, CTE Reports, 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023
Note: Data not considered for pandemic year 2020

Insights

Ensuring that educators and programs can accommodate students with a wide range of interests and abilities can help drive student retention. Creating opportunities for students and guaranteeing the availability of stable, fulfilling employment upon completion of their training can further support students in successfully completing their studies. There is also an opportunity to reduce barriers to accessing workforce development programs. In particular, federally funded programs may have expanded data collection requirements around nativity and naturalization status, which can discourage program participation.

⁶ The CTE completion rate is calculated for only schools within the Detroit Public School Community District.
⁷ Because of data limitations, the CTE completion rate is calculated for all Latino/Hispanic students, irrespective of nativity.



The education-workforce connection

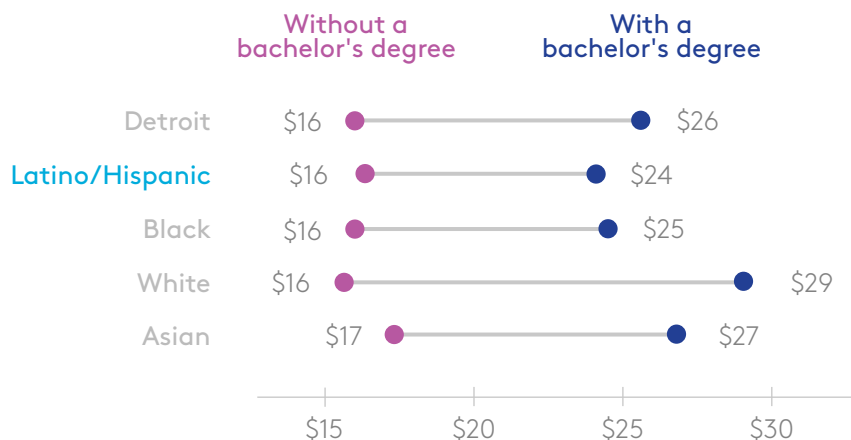
WAGES BY EDUCATION

A bachelor's degree increases Latino/Hispanic students' earnings, but supports are needed to reduce substantial wage gaps.

In the education-employment landscape, a predictable increase is observed in median hourly wages for those with a bachelor's degree. However, the disparity between races in median hourly wages for those with the same level of educational attainment is an indicator of racial inequality. As of 2021, on average, Detroiters with a bachelor's degree earn \$10 per hour more than those without. For Latino/Hispanic Detroiters, this wage gap is \$8 per hour. However, even with a bachelor's degree, Latino/Hispanic Detroiters command about \$5 less per hour than their white counterparts with the same educational level. Disparities even persist between the city and the region. Latinos/Hispanics in the region holding a bachelor's degree earn \$36 per hour. This wage discrepancy underscores ongoing challenges with pay equity across racial and educational lines as well as access to well-paying jobs.

Latino/Hispanic Detroiters with a bachelor's degree earn \$24 per hour, \$5 less per hour than their white counterparts.

Hourly wage for job holders with and without a bachelor's degree in Detroit, by race, 2021



Source: American Community Survey, IPUMS, 5-year estimates, 2021

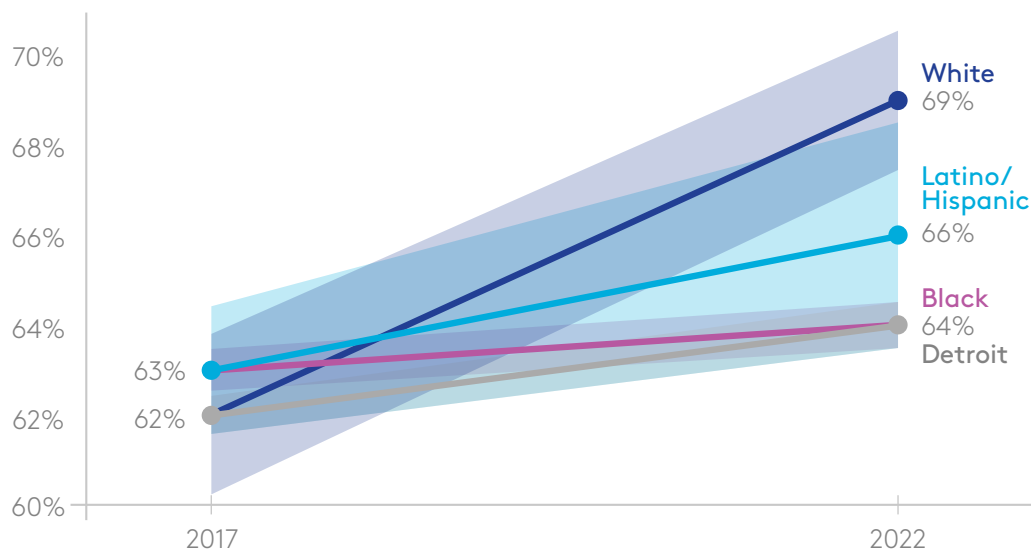
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Strengthening supports for Detroit's Latino/Hispanic community can sustain and improve their labor force participation and unemployment rates.

One of the markers to determine the overall health of the labor market, and therefore the strength of the economy, is the labor force participation rate, which represents the share of the population engaged in the workforce.⁸ Detroit's labor force participation rate, calculated for residents between ages 16 and 64, improved by 2 percentage points between 2017 and 2022, sustaining through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Latino/Hispanic population also saw a slight uptrend, from 63% to 66%.⁹ This mirrors the change in the national Latino/Hispanic labor force participation rate in the same timeframe, which increased from 72% to 74%.

Labor force participation rates for the Latino/Hispanic population has slightly increased.

Labor force participation rate in Detroit, by race, 2017 and 2022



Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2017 and 2022

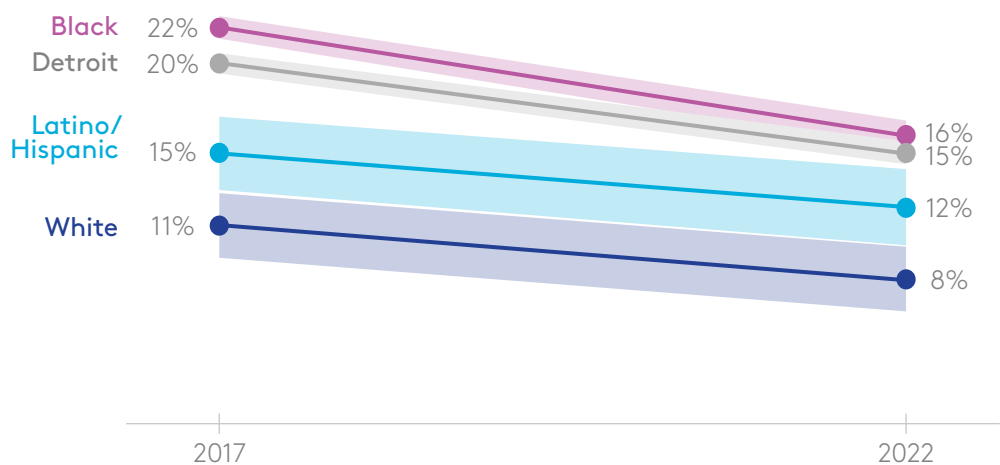
⁸ The labor force participation rate takes into consideration the civilian employed population, and includes employees that earn wages, as well as those self-employed.

⁹ Due to the margins of error, there is no statistical difference between the labor force participation rates of Latinos/Hispanics and white or Black population.

Another important marker is the unemployment rate, which reflects the share of people in the labor force actively looking for work but do not currently have a job. Between 2017 and 2022, unemployment¹⁰ in the city dropped 5 percentage points, from 20% to 15%, marking a significant improvement despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The unemployment rate for Latino/Hispanic Detroiters also decreased, from 15% to 12%. However, racial disparities for this metric have persisted in the city, with the Latino/Hispanic population continuing to have the second highest unemployment rate when compared with the Black and white population. This indicates continued challenges for Latino/Hispanic workers who are seeking employment.

Racial disparities in the unemployment rate continue to persist among major racial/ethnic groups.

Unemployment rate in Detroit, by race, 2017 and 2022



Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2017 and 2022

In 2022, **66%** of Latino/Hispanic Detroiters participated in the labor force.

¹⁰ The unemployment rate is calculated for ages 16 to 64.

YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT

Efforts must aim for increased representation of Detroit's Latino/Hispanic community in full-time and year-round positions across high-wage sectors.

The distribution of full-time and year-round employment in the labor market serves as a measure of unmet potential, and possibly job quality.^{xiii} In 2022, 82% of Detroit's employed population ages 25 to 64 was engaged in full-time employment, working 35 hours or more a week. The share of Latino/Hispanic workers working full-time in the city was even higher, reaching 84%. On the other hand, Latino/Hispanic workers had lower rates of year-round employment, at 77% compared to the city's overall rate of 82%. Almost a quarter of the Latino/Hispanic workforce was not working 48 weeks or more in the year. This was 5 percentage points lower than the city's overall rate.^{xiv}

As of 2021, a significant portion of Latino/Hispanic workers in the city, 29%, held positions categorized as accessible but low-wage, while 35% were employed in middle-wage jobs,¹¹ and 35% had jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or higher.^{xv}

84% of employed
Latinos/Hispanics
worked **full-time** in 2022.

77% of employed
Latinos/Hispanics worked
year-round in 2022.

Insights

Although Latino/Hispanic workers in Detroit exhibit slightly higher rates of full-time employment than the city's overall rate, research has shown that they are typically underrepresented in high-wage sectors and overrepresented in low-wage industries, when compared to their non-Latino/Hispanic counterparts.^{xvi} Though Latinos/Hispanics are engaged in diverse occupations, they are also more likely to hold seasonal employment that sees an uptick a few months in the year. Among other external factors, limited educational attainment is a significant contributor to the concentration of Latino/Hispanic workers in low-skill and low-wage jobs.

¹¹ Detroit Future City's 2022 "Middle-Wage Jobs" report defines middle-wage jobs as those accessible to workers without a bachelor's degree, that also pay workers more than the local labor market's median wage. In Detroit, the top industries offering middle-wage jobs are general medical and surgical hospitals, activities related to credit intermediation, and motor vehicle manufacturing.



82% of Latino/Hispanic
Detroiters had health
insurance in 2022.

In turn, the types of jobs that Latino/Hispanic workers engage in contribute to lower earnings, limited opportunities for advancement, and limited access to employer-provided benefits like health insurance.^{xvii} In 2022, Latinos/Hispanics had the lowest health insurance coverage¹² of any demographic in Detroit, at 82%, as opposed to the city's overall rate of 92%. National research indicates that Latinos/Hispanics have also struggled to access public programs that promote access to health care opportunities. Limited awareness, education, income, employment status, and language and structural barriers within the health care system are some of the contributing factors.^{xviii} Individuals with insurance coverage are more likely to have improved health outcomes,^{xix} and are therefore able to better participate in the economy, leading to higher incomes and overall economic prosperity.^{xx} Even beyond economic benefits, access to health care forms the foundation of a thriving community.

¹² Health insurance coverage is calculated for the civilian noninstitutionalized population, and for all Latinos/Hispanics irrespective of nativity. Data do not distinguish between different types of insurance coverage.

Closing achievement and opportunity gaps

The Latino/Hispanic community has a long and rich historical connection to Detroit, marked by traditions, heritage and entrepreneurial spirit. Their contributions in business, arts and culinary fields, among others, have established them as an enduring presence in the city's cultural and urban landscape. Throughout this past century, they have developed a strong and vibrant community that has helped build and define Detroit. Within the community, there also exist many nuanced identities, encompassing birthplaces, nationalities, and ancestries, that make their experiences not only unique but highly valuable.

However, systemic inequities around educational access and workforce opportunities are pronounced across this community and felt across all identity groups. It is undeniable that a strong educational foundation serves as a catalyst for upward mobility, and its connection to workforce outcomes is significant, especially for the Latino/Hispanic community. Closing equity gaps means recognizing the different ways in which disparities manifest across and within identity groups. Effectively tailoring solutions and supports to that end is paramount to achieving equitable outcomes.

This brief highlights disparities in education and related supports that affect workforce outcomes for Latinos/Hispanics. In essence, rates of third-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) proficiency, high school completion, and advanced education that are lower than other major race groups considerably impact Latino/Hispanic employment outcomes and their participation in year-round occupations. Even with a bachelor's degree, Latino/Hispanic Detroiters have the lowest median hourly wage compared to Black, White, and Asian workers with the same educational attainment in Detroit. Their relatively higher rates of labor force participation are offset by lower year-round employment and higher representation in low-wage sectors. Moreover, the marked decline in completion of career and technical education (CTE) programs since the pandemic further undermines Latinos/Hispanics' potential in the job market. As of 2022, 11% of the city's population younger than 18 years old was Latino/Hispanic.^{xxi} This statistic and the above findings underscore the need to invest in education and warrant a deep dive into related equity issues.

Detroit Future City's 2023 report on growth occupations highlights the leading industries driving employment growth¹³ in Metro Detroit. These include health care and social assistance, manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical services, finance and insurance, and construction. However, it is concerning that only 13% of Latino/Hispanic Detroiters were employed in these growth occupations.^{xxii}

¹³ Detroit Future City defines growth occupations as jobs that are growing at the same or higher rate than the region as a whole and have increased wages between 2014 and 2019, pay at least a middle-class wage of \$25 per hour, or \$52,000 per year, in 2019, and employ at least 300 people in the Metro Detroit region.

Improving educational outcomes for the future Latino/Hispanic workforce is critical to ensuring Latino/Hispanic Detroiters can compete and participate in the rapidly evolving job market, ensuring access to growth occupations and middle-class wage opportunities. As such, solutions should include:

- **Addressing existing disparities and investing in educational solutions.** Concerted efforts should be made to increase third-grade ELA proficiency and high school graduation rates among Detroit's Latino/Hispanic population to create more opportunities to achieve a bachelor's degree and meet minimum job requirements related to literacy and numeracy.
- **Aligning educational pathways and college majors to meet the demands of growing industries.** Recognizing growing industries and creating industry and job market-driven educational pathways and partnerships that offer reskilling and upskilling opportunities beyond just traditional education would be important steps toward creating a strong talent pool within the Latino/Hispanic community.
- **Improving access to, and outcomes of, job-training skills and workforce readiness programs.** To generate positive impact on employment rates, there is a wider need to invest in high-quality training and workforce programs that connect Latino/Hispanic Detroiters to the skills needed in growing industries. Offering financial resources to make training and upskilling more affordable for students, as well as wrap-around services, would also encourage retention in such programs.
- **Reducing unique barriers in opportunity and participation.** Multigenerational social and academic supports should be developed and offered to Latino/Hispanic families, so they are better able to assist successive generations in navigating education and employment pathways. Systemic barriers and hiring practices should be analyzed to ensure qualified Latino/Hispanic workers have access to opportunities. Likewise, data collection helps workforce development program providers understand the people they serve and identify solutions, however, addressing concerns around sensitive data is just as crucial to encourage participation of some eligible candidates that may otherwise be discouraged because of their ethnic heritage.
- **Strengthening wraparound services.** Beyond just education and job training, strengthening wraparound services like transportation, child care, physical and mental health care, and bilingual and bicultural supports for Latino/Hispanic students, workers and their families can close achievement and opportunity gaps, and go a long way in growing Latino/Hispanic success in education and the workforce.

The Latino/Hispanic community, despite its relatively modest population, remains an integral part of Detroit's narrative, greatly influencing social, cultural and economic growth in the region and the state. Even during times of crisis, this often-overlooked demographic has emerged as a dependable pillar, carrying the national economy forward. As the city continues to embrace its multicultural heritage, it is important to recognize the potential of Latinos/Hispanics and ensure that their contributions are fully acknowledged and their needs adequately addressed. This is critical for driving social progress and advancing economic equity among Latino/Hispanic residents in Detroit.



Data Notes

- 1 This brief uses the 5-year estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Given the size of the Latino/Hispanic population in Detroit, these estimates have smaller margins of error and are therefore more reliable.
- 2 Comparisons should not be made between 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 estimates that reference the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 5-year releases because these estimates include multiple years of overlapping coverage.
- 3 Sometimes, margins of error can overlap; when doing comparisons across time or groups, it's important to confirm that two data estimates are actually different from one another. Where possible, Detroit Future City confirmed estimates were statistically different and noted where they were not.

End Notes

- ⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). More education: Lower unemployment, higher earnings. Retrieved from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/emp/education-pays-handout.pdf>
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- ^{xii} Beyond the Numbers: Using Qualitative Data to Understand CTE Student and Employer Needs. (2022, November). Retrieved from Strategic Data Project, Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University: <https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/blog/beyond-numbers-using-qualitative-data->

[understand-cte-student-and-employer-needs](#)

^{xiii} Kroeger, T., & Gould, E. (2017, May). The Class of 2017. Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED588042.pdf>

^{xiv} American Community Survey, IPUMS 5-year estimates. (2021).

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