

Latinos and the Jobs of the Not-So-Distant Future

This brief report makes the case for immediate public investment in adult education and training to improve the employment prospects for Latinos in a changing labor market.

Latino Employment Statistics for March

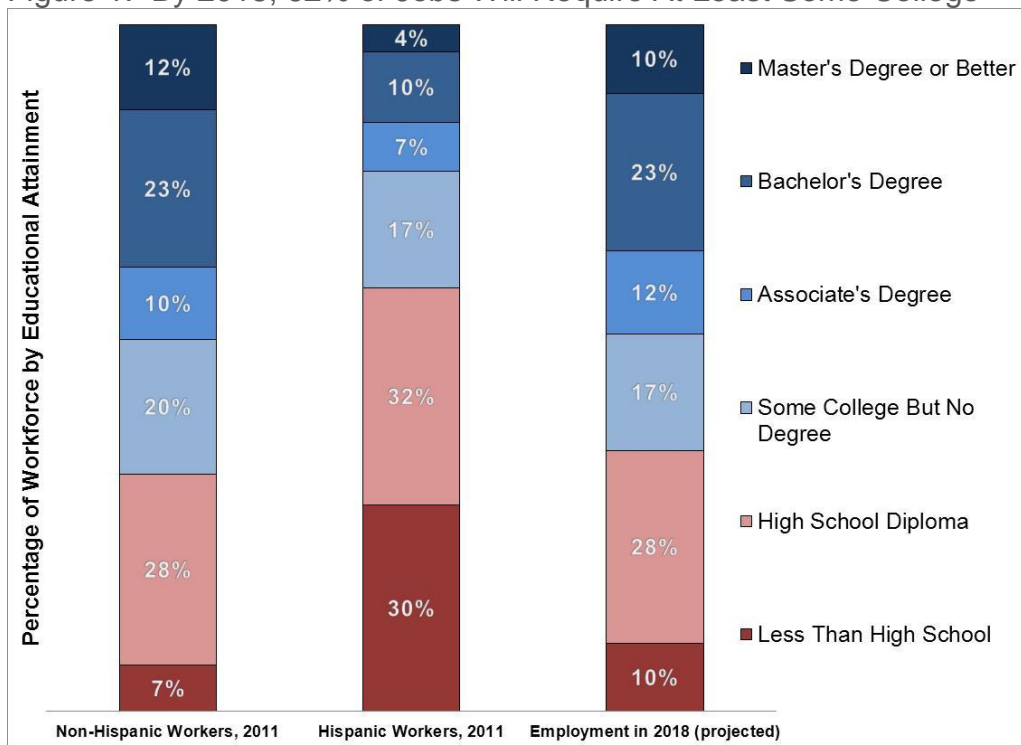
The [latest report](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) shows weaker job growth in March. Employment rose by 120,000 jobs between February and March, compared to an average gain of 246,000 jobs per month over the past three months. The national unemployment rate held at 8.2%, while the Latino unemployment rate fell slightly from 10.7% to 10.3%. This change is partially due to a decline in the number of Latinos actively searching for work.

More Jobs Will Require At Least Some College Education

With the ratio of jobseekers to job openings slightly better than [four to one](#), competition for jobs in post-recession America is severe. Workers with lower educational attainment—including the 62% of Latino workers who have only a high school degree or less—find themselves at a disadvantage. As Figure 1 shows, this trend is likely to worsen in the next several years. By 2018, only 10% of the jobs in the U.S. economy will be open to workers with less than a high school degree. Yet today, one-third of Latino workers are at this level of education.

Technological advancements and the shift to a knowledge-based economy will require that by 2018, 62% of workers have at least some college education. Non-Hispanic workers are relatively prepared for this shift; by contrast, only 38% of Latinos in the workforce today would qualify for these jobs.

Figure 1. By 2018, 62% of Jobs Will Require At Least Some College¹



Investments in Adult Education and Training Must Reach Latino Workers

Given that Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. workforce, public policy solutions must aggressively work to narrow the educational gap between Latinos and other adults. The current disparities are unsustainable for Latino workers and for employers that rely on them.

Businesses cannot take on these challenges alone. Now, more than ever, there is an essential role for the federal government to play in educating and training working adults who have aged out of the public school system. The publicly funded workforce development system is largely governed by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which is a federal policy. But for Hispanics, who often face [a combination of challenges](#) including limited educational attainment, limited basic skills, and [limited English proficiency](#), a one size-fits-all approach combined with severe funding constraints has meant those who most need the system's benefits are the [least likely to get the services they need](#) to prepare them for employment and careers.

Congress is currently considering reauthorizing WIA and making much-needed reforms to better meet the needs of today's American workforce, but some proposals look to consolidate programs to improve the system's effectiveness. In fact, for Latinos—as well as veterans, the disabled, and other groups with special needs—program consolidation puts them at risk for even lower access to services. A better answer is to improve coordination among these crucial programs.

Even [low-wage Latino workers are considerably better educated today](#) than they were just a few decades ago; in 1979, about 62% of low-wage Latino workers had less than a high school degree, but that number was just 40% in 2011. Progress is possible, but much more needs to be done.

In the coming weeks and months, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) will be weighing in with analysis of legislative proposals in Congress to reauthorize WIA to better prepare Hispanic workers for the jobs of tomorrow.

For more information about NCLR's policy priorities for workforce development, please contact Emma Oppenheim at eoppenheim@nclr.org.

¹ NCLR calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, March Supplement, 2011; and Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010).