

Latinas make inroads but face unique challenges

By [Astrid Galván](#) and [Russell Contreras](#)

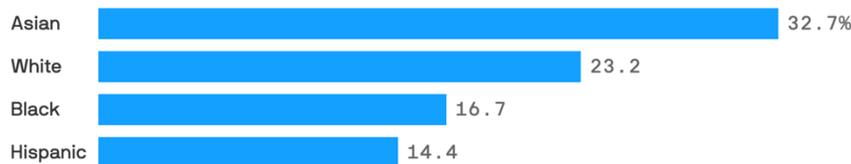
March 7, 2023

Data: U.S. Census; Note Asian, Black, and white includes individuals who reported only one race; Chart: Tory Lysik/Axios Visuals

Latinas are outpacing Latino men in college enrollment and making other inroads but still face pay disparities and barriers to economic prosperity.

Share of U.S. women 18 or older with a bachelor's degree in 2022, by race/ethnicity

Out of civilian noninstitutionalized population



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The big picture: Latinos are a growing segment of the population and major contributors to the [U.S. economy](#), but Hispanic women make less money than men and face unique challenges that are both cultural and institutional.

By the numbers: Latinas are still paid around 57 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men even as they enter the workforce in record numbers, says an [analysis of census data by UnidosUS](#).

- Median wages for Latinas are \$30,551 per year, compared to the median wage of \$57,005 for white, non-Hispanic men, the analysis calculated.
- Nearly 30% of Latina-led households live below the poverty level, according to the [U.S. Census](#).

The stark differences are in part due to the fact that Latinas tend to take on more caregiving, says Silvia R. González, director of research for climate, environmental justice, and health projects at the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute.

- González says [labor participation during the pandemic](#) — when Latinas left the workforce at the highest rate of any demographic — was driven by family responsibilities and the types of jobs Latinas are most commonly in, such as retail and food services, which saw huge job losses in 2020.
- "We're not still fully recovered — we do need resources to ensure that Latinas are able to fully participate in our economy."
- That includes better access to child care, González adds.

The intrigue: Around 35% of Latinas ages 18 to 24 were enrolled at least part time in college in 2021, compared with 28% of Latinos of the same age group, according to a [Pew Research Center analysis](#) of census data.

- [Census data](#) shows that more than 14% of Hispanic women had a bachelor's degree in 2022 compared to 12% of Hispanic men.

There are 19 Latinas serving in Congress (14 Democrats and five Republicans), according to the [Center for American Women and Politics](#).

- Since former Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) was elected in 1989 as the first Latina to serve in the U.S. Congress, 29 Latinas have followed.
- More than 150 Latinas serve in state legislatures (2.1% of all state legislators) and there are only three Latina mayors in the top 100 most populous cities, the center said.

The bottom line: "Before the pandemic, Latinas were already struggling, and then the pandemic made it much worse," says MamásConPoder vice president Xochitl Oseguera. The organization mobilizes and advocates for moms.

- Oseguera says it will take generations to undo the setbacks, but she's hopeful.
- She notes more Latinas are starting businesses and organizing for their rights, especially younger generations.
- "We're gonna make a big change in the overall future of this country," Oseguera adds.

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