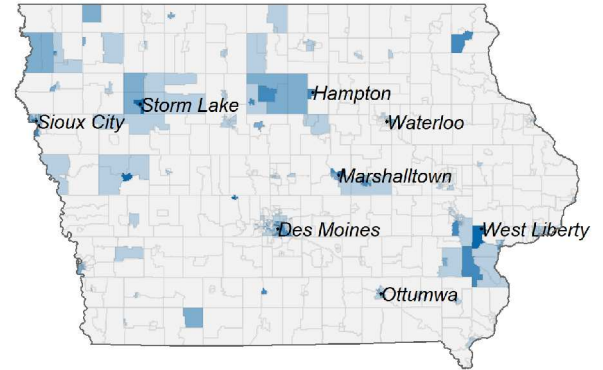


# Nuestro Iowa

Statistics and stories across the state

*February 2023*



nuestro 

## Forward

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Iowa is in the midst of great change and great opportunity. Our state is now home to people who speak 177 different native languages. When we examine our population growth, 44% of that growth is due to immigration. These traits in our growth can lead our state forward.

Immigrants are people with courage and determination; people who have the resilience necessary to start a new life in a new country. Immigrants are people who have developed the skills of overcoming difficulties and finding new pathways to success. As a result, our state's growth can lead us to enhanced innovation, educational achievement, entrepreneurship and rich cultural experiences.

The data and stories shared in this second report from the Latinx Project offer a roadmap to ensuring these positive outcomes.

The Iowa Department of Human Rights is committed to connecting Iowans with their government, and, importantly, to helping government more effectively connect with Iowans. One critical part of our purpose is to advocate within government to create and improve systems so that they are responsive to the needs of Iowans, with a particular emphasis on those populations with Offices created in Iowa Code. This includes the Office of Latino Affairs, along with the Offices on the Status of African Americans, Status of Women, Persons with Disabilities, Deaf Services, Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and Native American Affairs.

We are best able to make an impact when decision makers understand the needs, accomplishments, and interests of Iowans. The way to do that is to connect people with data, and share illustrative experiences and stories that help make the data personal and real. This report is invaluable for its weaving together of both.

People are complex. For people in vulnerable circumstances, life can be even more complex. Examining the totality of experience for people is important to bring about positive change and growth. This report delivers beneficial regional input for the Department's state-wide data initiative, and it provides information necessary to help government agencies be more responsive to the changing needs of Iowans.

We encourage you to use this report to inform and enhance your work, or to support the work of other Iowans who are committed to helping all who call our state home to flourish.

San Wong, Director  
Iowa Department of Human Rights

Sonia Reyes  
Iowa Department of Human Rights  
Office of Latino Affairs



## Iowa Latinx Project overview, vision, and mission

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Latino Iowans are a highly entrepreneurial, community-minded segment of the Iowa population – a vital part of the school system, workforce, and towns where we live. We are the fastest-growing population segment, and our contributions to the state make us essential to Iowa's future economy and community. Our state would struggle with stalled economic growth, population stagnation, and workforce shortages without us. Yet many Latino Iowans face significant challenges in economic mobility, and we are not fully welcomed in the state. Our youth are particularly key to Iowa's long-term success, yet our state underinvests in Latino youth education and development. Across Iowa, our community would flourish with more flexible adult education options and expanded bilingual services. Further, we are underrepresented in leadership positions, education, policy and decision-making, and many key business sectors.

The Iowa Latinx Project was launched to highlight the contributions of the Latino Iowans and to address disparities in income, poverty, education, homeownership, and health. This report and dashboard expand on the 2021 Central Iowa Report. This 2023 research combines statistics and community stories to provide a baseline of information to inform data-driven advocacy and advancement of Latino Iowans.

The Iowa Latinx Project is directed by a collaborative leadership team. The 2022-2023 all-volunteer team was drawn from six towns across economic and social sectors representing the diversity of Latino leadership in Iowa. Together, we worked throughout 2022 and into spring 2023 to analyze the data presented in *Nuestro Iowa Statewide* and develop strategies to advance our community and our state broadly.

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### Mission/Misión

To accelerate Latinx collective impact by advancing representation, nurturing community development, and fostering intercultural understanding through research and collaborations.

Acelerar el impacto colectivo de los latinos al impulsar la representación, estimular el desarrollo comunitario y fomentar el entendimiento intercultural mediante la investigación y las colaboraciones.

### Vision/Visión

A welcoming state where everyone thrives

Un estado acogedor donde todos prosperen

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## Executive Summary

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Latino Iowans are a youthful, highly entrepreneurial, collective-minded segment of the Iowa population - an invaluable part of the school system, workforce, and community. As a fast-growing population, our contributions to the state make us essential to Iowa's future.

Nuestro Iowa Statewide (Our Iowa) is a snapshot of the Iowa Latino community. Through statistics and community stories, it explores demographic trends, economic contributions, housing, immigration, education, and health. The report includes a community-designed list of priorities for action and a comprehensive list of community assets to aid in forming a data-driven strategy for advocacy and advancement. The statistics were contextualized by the Latinx Project team and community members through a series of workshops. Together, the stories and statistics offer a picture of the Latino experience in Iowa.

The Iowa Latino community has grown more than 13-fold since 1969, comprising 7% of the population. By 2050, the community will nearly double to 408,000 residents, making up 12% of the state's population. Without the growth from the Latino community, Iowa's projected population would be stagnant.

Around 4,700 Latino-owned businesses generate about \$1.1 billion annual revenue in Iowa. The community provides about 94,000 workers across all industries and collectively earns approximately \$3.6 billion annually, contributions that are key to Iowa's economic success. Community participants valued representation in all economic settings and young people are inspired to be the representation they didn't see themselves growing up.

However, disparities exist in income, poverty, homeownership, education, and health. Compared with the white, non-Latino population, median income among Latino households is 21% lower, homeownership rates are 18 percentage points lower, and poverty rates are about 10 percentage points higher. Around 35% of Latinos age 25+ have not completed high school, compared with 5% of the white population. Further, around 30% of white Iowans have completed a Bachelor's degree or higher compared with 15% of Latinos. While disparities in high school graduation rates have closed over time, a nearly 12 percentage point gap remains.

These education disparities are a key factor driving disparities in income, poverty, and homeownership. Residents discussed how these topics are interconnected in the lives of adults and youth and expressed the need for a variety of adult and youth education programs. Community participants further cited racial bias, salary negotiations, lack of promotion opportunity, the need for immigration reform, and language barriers as potential explanations for income disparities. Participants discussed the lack of financial education, lack of culturally competent mortgage services, exploitation of undocumented households, and challenges faced by first-time homebuyers as factors contributing to homeownership disparities and cited bilingual real estate agents and helpful banks among additional factors that increase homeownership rates.

Only 78% of Latino/a residents aged 19-64 have health insurance coverage compared with 95% of white, non-Latino/a residents. Latinos are much less likely to have a usual source of medical care, are more likely to have gone without care because of cost, are less likely to have had a recent dental visit, and are less likely to have had certain recommended screenings or vaccines (e.g. colon cancer screening and the flu or pneumonia vaccine). Despite these disparities, life expectancy and overall health outcome statistics are better for the Latino community than most other racial or ethnic groups. Finally, Covid-19 hit the Latino community hard in the beginning of the pandemic as Latinos disproportionately work in front-line industries. Community members described the high cost of care, the lack of mental health and dental care access, and the lifelong impacts of these disparities.

# Latino Community Overview

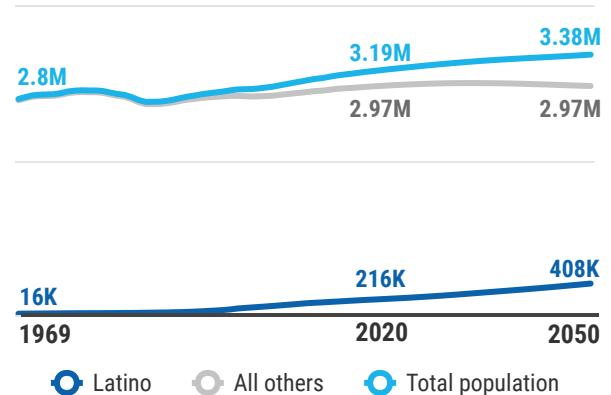
**"We're a community full of excellence."  
- High school teacher, Sioux City**



## Overall Iowa population growth comes from the Latino population

As of the 2020 Census, Latinos comprise 6.8% (215,986) of the overall Iowa population. The Latino population has grown rapidly and will be key to Iowa's future growth. Latinos represented more than half of Iowa's overall population growth from 1969 to 2020 and will comprise the majority of the state's growth going forward. Without Latinos, Iowa's population growth would be stagnant through 2050.

### Latinos drive Iowa population growth Iowa Population (1969 - 2050)



Source: Decennial Census (2020). Forecast: Iowa State Data Center Woods and Poole

Latinos contribute to the cultural, economic, and social fabric of Iowa. Iowa will flourish in the future only with these contributions. Community members responded to statistics about Iowa's growing Latino population with ideas about the importance of representation across sectors, participation in civic life, efforts at multicultural understanding, and Latino hopes and dreams. As their children grow up and seek opportunities, the loss of young people to other, more welcoming states was a future concern.

"It's motivating that you have people around you who are positive. There are people who are prospering, getting ahead. That's motivating. Marshalltown has good leaders who inspire. It has organizations that help Latinos and families in the town. Help us to get better work. Wherever you go, you see Latinos in leadership roles."

-Health care worker and mother

"We are so proud and so grateful to see Latino Council Members in West Liberty. We feel supported. We feel heard. We feel comfortable going up to the city meeting and requesting and asking, because our people are there, and they understand."

- Student and nursing assistant

"Being so multicultural in Storm Lake, people come here for a reason. We're growing for a reason. It makes me proud of Storm Lake. People come in, and they are so grateful. I'm lucky to interact. It's amazing the hopes they have. The dreams. They come with a willingness to try even though it's hard. We accept each other. How do we keep our young people here? This is the next challenge."

- Banking professional and mother

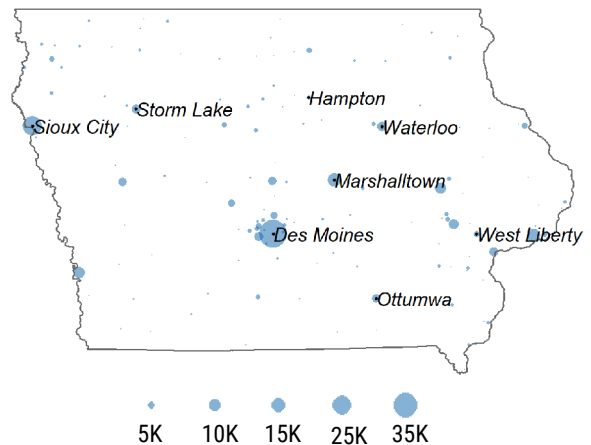
## Latino community overview

Des Moines has the largest Latino population (33,480), followed by Sioux City (17,961), Davenport (8,981), Marshalltown (8,634), Council Bluffs (6,508), Cedar Rapids (6,502), Iowa City (5,451), Waterloo (4,793), and Storm Lake (4,599).

Other Latino populations represented include Ottumwa (4,013), West Liberty (2,250), and Hampton (1,249).

### 2020 Latino total population by city

Latino population for all places with >100 Latinos

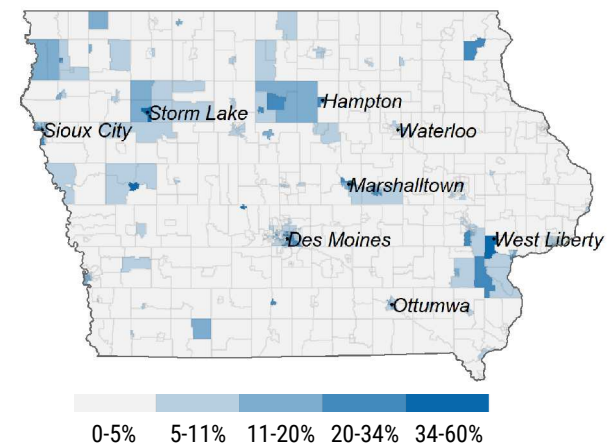


Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census (2020)

Latinos live throughout the state in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Many populations of Latinos are well represented in the project across the state.

### 2020 Latino population percentage

Latino population percentage by Census tract



Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census (2020)

## Experiences living across Iowa

"The cool thing about being Latino in the Midwest is that you are meeting the people who are starting the first Latino grocery story. The first restaurant. You are here with the game changers who started it all. You are connected with what is new."

-Teacher, Sioux City

"In this town, your kids are going to see you can confidently see Latinos in charge. You can trust that you're getting accurate information. We have information on how to study, to buy a house, to do the things we need to get ahead."

-Public sector employee and mother, Marshalltown

"I was born and raised here. I grew up in the school district. Growing up, we didn't have a huge Latino population. It was new to Storm Lake. I was part of a generation that witnessed racism towards their parents and endured racism in the community and in the businesses. I grew up where we experienced deportation and police brutality in the town. These experiences are part of who I am."  
-Mental health professional, Storm Lake

"The immigration story isn't over. We have new arrivals from puertorriqueños to Micronesians and Laotians. Venezuelans. Tyson is recruiting people in Guam. New people keep coming"

-Financial services professional and mother, Storm Lake

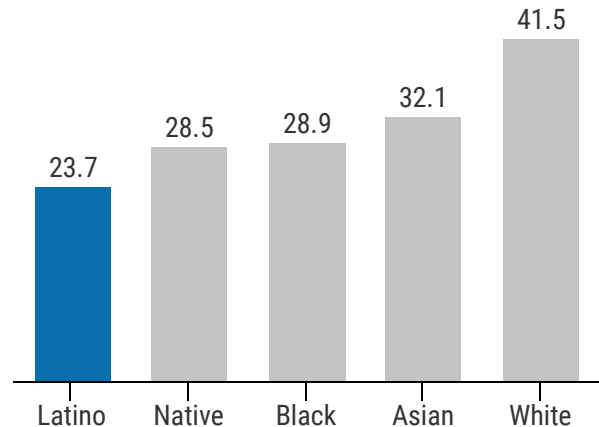


## Latino Iowans are younger than other groups

Latinos are much younger on average with half of the population younger than 23.5 and half older. Other populations of color are young on average while the white population skews older. This is one of the main factors driving the expected demographic change in coming years; to understand the demographics of the future, look to our youth.

### Latino population skews much younger

Median age by race/ethnicity statewide



Source: American Community Survey 1-year estimates (2021)

Latinos' younger average age means that they will be important to the state as future leaders and workforce. Compared with other ethnicities in Iowa, Latinos are more likely to be a young person in school. Youth voices matter to the state, as they are over half of the Iowa Latinx population.

"It's a great thing to be first generation, me and my brother. I'm so proud. Somehow, some way, we always try to find the bright side. *'Échale ganas mi hija.'* Our parents weren't able to have it all, but *'aprovecha las oportunidades que tienes.'*"

-College Student, Ottumwa

"Culture is important. When I meet someone from a different culture. I can connect. It opens my mind more. It can make you nicer, kinder. Representation for ourselves is important, but also that people who aren't from the same culture as us can get to know us. It's good to embed that from a young age."

-College Student, Ottumwa

"In 35 years, I have seen this transition. I've seen the transition with this generation. You younger people are making a difference. You're learning through dual language program. I'd say the progress is coming."

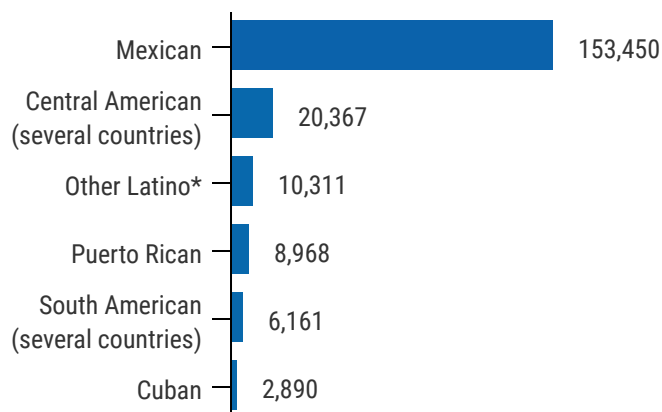
- Pastor, West Liberty

## Where Latino Iowans are from

The Iowa Latino community is diverse in terms of ancestry (ethnic origin, "roots" or heritage). While most of the community is Mexican (~76%), there are large populations with ancestry from Central American countries. This includes substantial numbers with Guatemalan (8,482), Honduran (3,014), and Salvadoran (6,802) ethnic origin. Colombian (2155), Peruvian (896), Ecuadorian (819), and Venezuelan (726) are the most common South American heritages.

\*'Other Latino' includes estimates of the Latino population that didn't self-affiliate with one of these communities

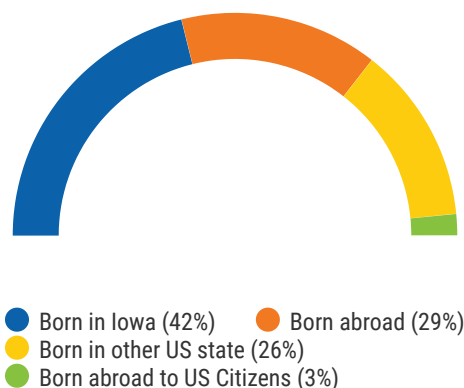
### The Latino community is very diverse



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

Nearly half of Latino Iowans were born in Iowa (42%), Around 29% are immigrants who were born in another country, while 26% were born in some other US state and migrated to Iowa. Finally, about 3% were born abroad to US citizens.

### Iowa is the predominant birthplace



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

Community members shared diverse stories of how they arrived in the town where the story session was held. Some came from far away. Others lived in the town all their lives. Some came when their parents arrived to find work in meat processing or manufacturing. Others told stories of their grandparents' arrival long ago. Some Iowa stories began with the individual coming to fill a job in counseling or education. Latinos continue to arrive to Iowa seeking new opportunities.

"My parents brought me here as a 3-year-old. I have been here 23 years."

-Manufacturing worker and father  
Marshalltown

"I was born in Minnesota. I came down when my parents moved here to work in meat processing."

-College student, Ottumwa

"I grew up in West Liberty. I was a child in the 80s and 90s. My family came from Del Rio. My *tias* came to work in the fields for Heinz. My dad followed them after the Marines and got a position in the packing plant in West Liberty. He met my mom, the rest is history."

-Higher education employee,  
West Liberty

"My parents came from Guatemala to get a better life. We had to go back because my uncle was kidnapped. It was a whole legal situation. When we came back, I had completely forgotten English. But now I'm here and I'm at school doing student council, music, band. Lots of things."

-High school student, Sioux City

## The need for bilingual services across Iowa

The lack of bilingual services creates a significant barrier to success for Spanish-speaking Latino Iowans. Story session participants reported that bilingual services fostered more unity and inclusion in areas such as health care, workforce development, and banking. Parents are excluded as full collaborators in their children's education. English classes are difficult to access due to scheduling that conflicts with work obligations.

Additionally, employers often undervalue bilingual language skills. Professionals who speak Spanish get burned out because of constant requests to be translators on top of and frequently outside of their work area.

"My dad was one of the first professionals hired who could interpret. He had a better understanding of what people needed."  
-Social worker, Sioux City

### Where Spanish is needed

"There is a lot of need for help in Spanish. To pay a bill. It's all computers and it's all in English. There is no one to help with the process of paying a bill if I don't know how to use a computer."

-Cleaning professional, Waterloo

"My uncle had a workplace accident and he could get compensation, but he couldn't speak the language and didn't know how to get the help for that. My parents helped him, but if it weren't for my parents, he wouldn't have taken that step."

-College student, Ottumwa

"If you go to State of Iowa webpage, they don't have information in Spanish for starting business. Only the IRS helps a little, they do give instructions. People want their businesses to grow. We need more information in Spanish."

-Nonprofit founder and entrepreneur, Waterloo

"My district is 90% English-speaking teachers. They don't have that connection between the teacher and the parents. The parents don't feel comfortable coming to the teachers. I know only a few people speak Spanish at the high school. They need to talk to the kid. As a teacher, you can build the relationship."

-Academic success professional, Storm Lake

### Bilingual & Translation Experiences

"Representation is very important. My friends say they hate to go to the clinic because they worry they might not be translating right. The more representation, the stronger our community is. Bilingual staff are important."

-College student, Ottumwa

"I'm used inappropriately. If I'm a therapist or victim's advocate, my role isn't to interpret for the police or the front desk."

-Social worker, Storm Lake

"I remember when I worked in the clinic. I had to interpret, but they didn't pay me extra for this. They said that it was because I was Hispanic, it was natural that I could speak both languages!"

-Entrepreneur, Waterloo

"I am seeing how important it is for me to get here. They need someone bilingual. Students come to me come just to talk, not only for academic reasons. They want someone to speak their language. The ESL students have never seen someone who looks like them. They are aware, 'she's here now and she's here to help.'"

-Education professional, Sioux City

# Economics and Workforce

**"Right now, I work in meat processing. I don't earn enough. My goal is to study and create a career that earns more."**

**- Marshalltown worker & father**

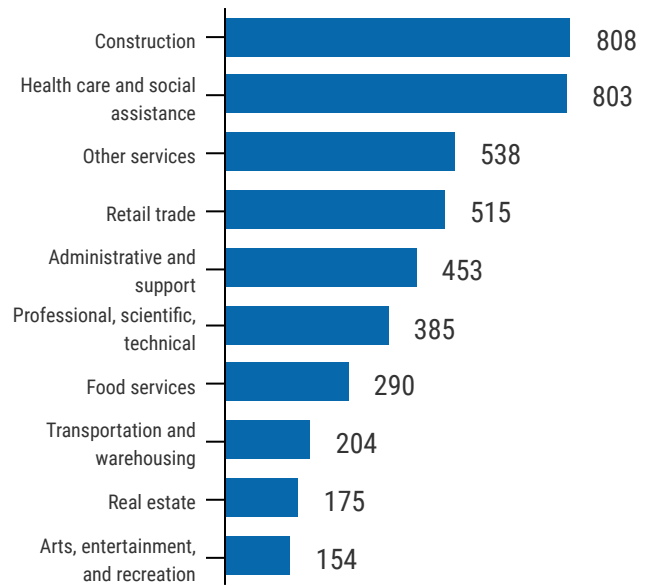


## Latino-owned businesses

There are 4,695 Latino-owned firms in Iowa generating nearly \$1.1 billion in annual sales. Latino business owners own firms in a variety of industries led by construction firms, health care/social services, retail trade, administrative support, professional services, and food services.

Among these businesses, 436 have paid staff and those firms collectively generate \$911 million in sales. Top industries with paid employees include food services (162 firms), retail trade (99), construction (40), and professional, scientific, and technical services (38).

### Latino-owned firms



Source: US Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners (2012)

Latino entrepreneurs take pride in their success and the services they provide to their communities. Social networks, starting small, family collaboration, and having a growth mindset have been key to building their businesses and increasing personal earnings. Small business ownership allows for more time with family. A story session focused on entrepreneurship was hosted in Waterloo.

"I was talking to my uncle about cars. We said, 'It would be great to have a car sales lot.' I talked with my mom about the requirements for car sales. We noted that we could buy this building and meet the requirements. We have taken risks. Some things went badly, but we keep learning and doing the best we can. We have the best car sales in Waterloo. Little by little, we're doing it."

- Auto saleslot owner

"I worked cleaning windows. And I made business cards for cleaning. I offered deep cleaning first. But then more clients came for regular cleaning. Then they wanted me to clean exteriors, too. I got references from others, too. And my business grew."

- Cleaning services owner

"After doing road concrete work, I didn't like it anymore. I had to leave my family all week. I only got to see them on weekends. It wasn't working for me. My father-in-law worked painting, and he knew carpentry and remodeling. Since he knew it, I said, 'let's get together and see if I can do this.' I wanted to spend time with my family and not leave them abandoned all week. I wanted to start something for myself and see if I could advance."

- Construction firm owner

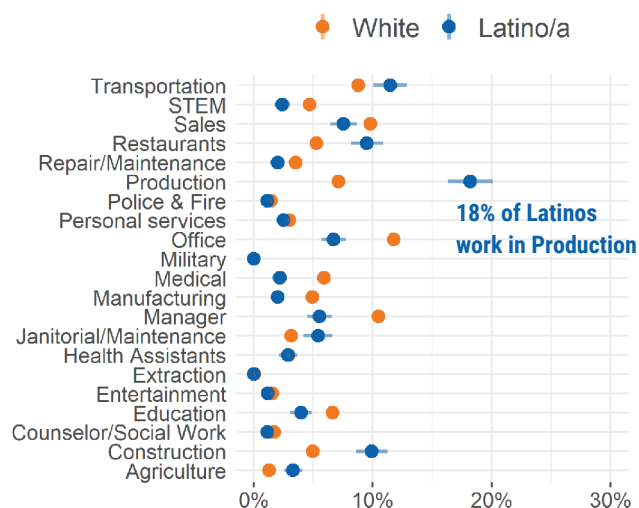
"I graduated as a chemical engineer in Mexico. I'm not working now. But I'm starting a business of baking for catering. I'm studying English online. And I'm selling skin and hair care products."

-Entrepreneur and mother

## Employment by industry

There are around 94,000 Latinos employed in Iowa's workforce, comprising about 6% of Iowa's workforce and earning about \$3.6 billion per year, contributing greatly to the state's economy. Latinos work in a wide array of industries. However, Latinos are underrepresented in some occupations. Compared with the white population, Latinos are less likely to work in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM), Office occupations, Medical, Sales, Manufacturing, Management, and Education. Latinos are more likely to work in Transportation, Restaurants, Production, Janitorial, Construction, and Agriculture occupations.

### Differences in occupation by ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata 5-year estimates (2015-2019)

### The need for representation

Conversation participants valued Latino representation in all economic settings. When this happens, the community can be sure that the professionals with whom they work understand their particular circumstances. Youth gain role models when deciding on a career. Young people said that they were inspired to be the representation that they did not see themselves growing up.

"I choose nursing because I like talking to people and interacting. You get involved. A person's journey to healing or getting healed is important. My cultural background is what I bring to the table. I don't speak Spanish, but I can relate to their experience. What makes them comfortable? What kind of food might your grandma like to eat in the hospital?"

-Nursing student

"We Hispanic professionals have a responsibility. If someone is interested in social work or speech pathology, I would call someone and ask if they could job shadow you. If they want to be a nurse, who do I know who's Hispanic and a nurse? We can't force them to go to school. Sometimes you have them job shadow who will tell them what it took to go through school. There are not very many Latino people they can job shadow."

-Academic success specialist

"It's important to have people who are Latinos as teachers. When we were growing up, we'd look at our parents and think, 'Our parents didn't do that, so we can't do that.' We need more representation of people like us in the schools. Just because our parents didn't do that, it doesn't mean that we can't."

-political science Student

"Representation really matters. Free counseling services for employees matters, free mental health services, but the staff are white. We hear this from students. We refer them, but they don't feel comfortable. They feel they can't relate. I thought he couldn't relate. I'd feel judged. They couldn't understand. But once you do find someone, you know there are only a couple of options for therapists. It's too great a barrier."

-Therapist

"You don't see Hispanics doing office work. Not having that representation, you don't see persons like you working these jobs. Why don't you become the person you wanted to see growing up and show that to someone else?"

-High school student

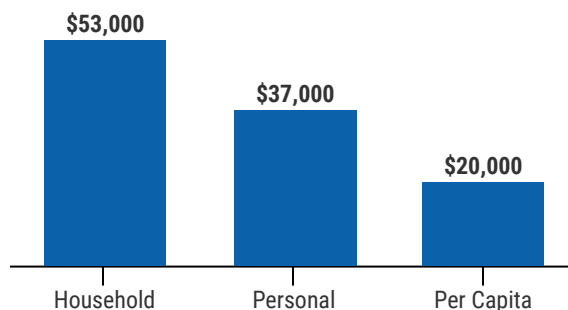
## Income patterns

Half of Latino households earn more than \$53,000, half earn less. The median full-time Latino worker in Iowa earns \$37,000 annually.

Per-capita income, which is a measure of aggregate earnings divided by the number of people is \$20,000, meaning the average Latino is living on \$20,000/year.

### Average income of Latinos

Median household, personal, and per-capita income



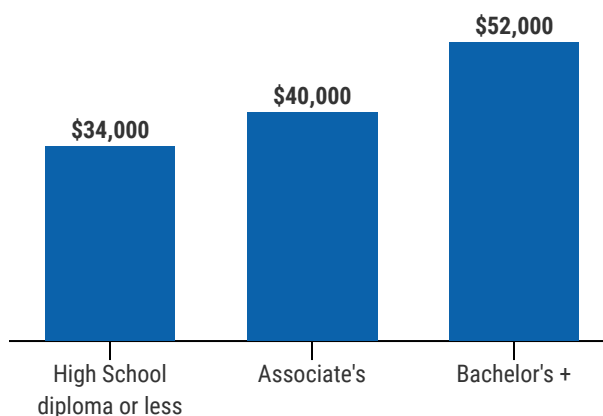
Source: Household and personal income: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021), personal income: US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year (2019), adjusted to 2021 dollars

Educational attainment significantly affects earnings. On average, Latinos with Bachelor's degrees or higher earn \$18,000 more than Latinos with a high school diploma or less. When considering inflation, this adds up to about \$850,000 more earned over a 30-year career.

Even after controlling for age, gender, hours worked, and industry, higher educational attainment is associated with more earnings.

### Income increases with education

Median annual income of full-time Latino workers



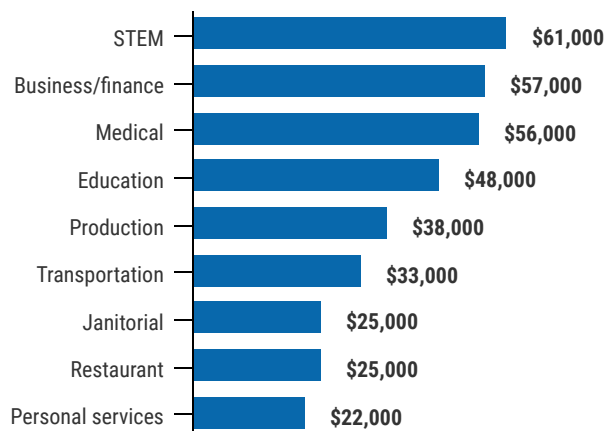
Source: US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year (2019), adjusted to 2021 dollars

Incomes vary widely across and within industries across the state. Latinos working in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields earn the most on average with a median pay of \$61,000. Other high-earning industries include Business and Finance and Medical fields.

Median pay for production industry employees (which includes meat packing and manufacturing) was \$38,000, while restaurant employees earned \$25,000 on average. Employees working in personal services (which includes housekeeping, hairdressers, childcare workers, etc.) earned \$22,000.

### Income varies by industry

Median earnings of full-time Latinos (select industries)



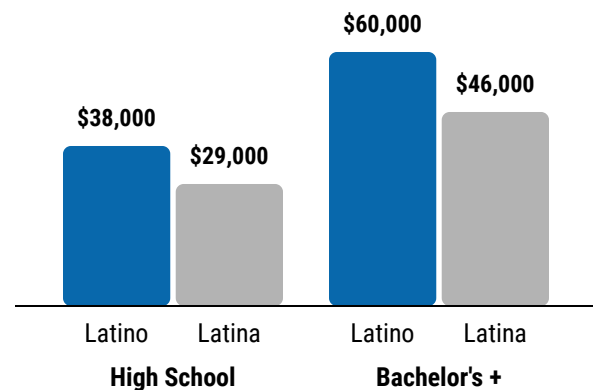
Source: US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year (2019), adjusted to 2021 dollars

## Gender and work

There is a substantial pay gap between Latinos and Latinas and these disparities persist regardless of education and remain even after controlling for industry, hours worked, age, and presence of children in the household.

### Gender gap in pay

Median earnings of full-time Latinos

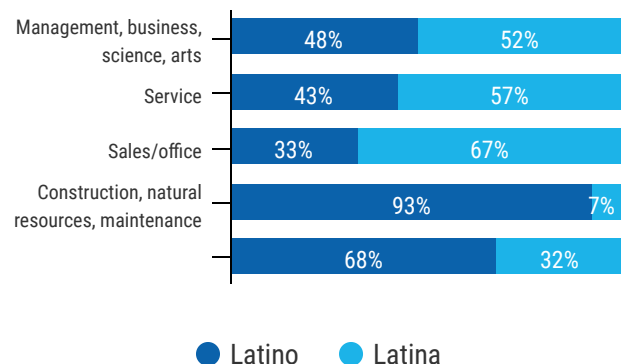


Source: US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year (2019), adjusted to 2021 dollars

There are substantial differences in industry employment by gender among Latinos. Men represent larger portions of the Latino workforce in construction, production, transportation, and material moving industry jobs while women are majorities of the Latino workforce in sales, office, and service sector jobs. Latinos and Latinas are equally represented in management, business, science, and arts jobs.

### Industry differences by gender among Latinos

Proportion of Latino workforce by industry and gender



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

**How gender shapes work experiences.** Story session participants analyzed that the pay gap is due to needing more confidence, discrimination, being first-generation, and juggling motherhood with work. They worked in jobs that reflected the observed industry differences by gender. More service, sales, and office staff were women, while more production and construction staff were men. Women were more frequently working in jobs where they were pulled into additional translation duties. Jobs that did not require college paid more in industries with high proportions of men, such as manufacturing. Younger women professionals felt the challenge of being a first generation professional as well as gratitude towards their mothers for their hard work.

"When I started working, I was the only woman there. They were promoting getting women in this role. I had to work with men who thought this wasn't appropriate work for women. They had to assert their power I had to demonstrate that I was competent to do the job."

-IT specialist,  
Marshalltown

"The person sitting next to me was the first woman in the department of technology. Now there are many more. We are almost the majority. Once someone breaks the glass ceiling, others feel more comfortable."

-IT specialist  
Marshalltown  
(separate participant)

"A lot of Latinas settle. There are certain people who require an extra push. I have had young females who have graduated from college, working in jobs that don't require a degree. I approach them and tell them about a job opening. They say 'thanks', but they never apply."

-HR professional,  
Storm Lake

"I was out for maternity leave and nobody told me anything about the better job coming open. A friend told me about it. If a manager wanted me to grow, he would tell me, 'You've been doing the job for two or three years, you should do it.' They hired someone else. They didn't encourage me to apply, what is there for me to expect? Why should I even apply?"

-Financial services,  
Storm Lake



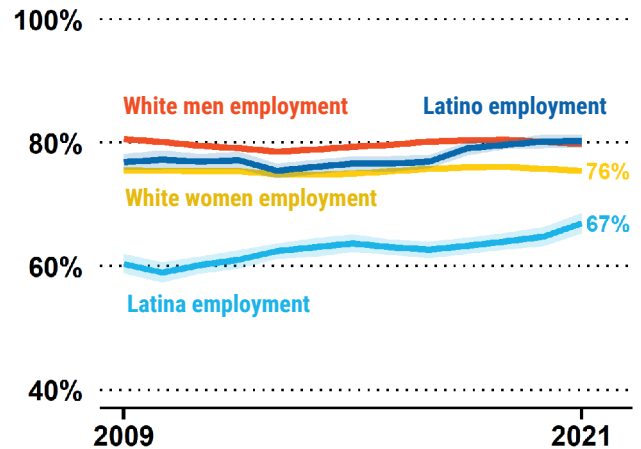
## Gender and employment participation

Employment rates (the number of civilians ages 16-64 who are employed as a share of all civilians ages 16-64) are similar between Latino and white men at around 80%. A small gap observed in the 2010s has closed. However, there is about a nine percentage point gap between Latinas and white, non-Latinas, although this gap is closing too.

This gap is largely explained by differences in labor force participation; about 79% of white women and 72% of Latinas ages 16-64 were either employed or looking for a job.

### Latina employment % lower, but gap is closing

Employment rate (%) by ethnicity and gender



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year estimates

Story session participants explored diverse forms of workforce participation. Women described how they and their mothers prioritized caring for the family. Sometimes, this means being a stay-at-home-mom. Other times, it means full time paid work to support the family. Two incomes are needed to achieve goals like home ownership.

"When I first got my license, Latinos were buying \$100K homes. Now, they buy \$250K. Both are working, usually in meat processing or construction. They get to the point, telling me, 'we want house, cars, vacations. It takes both of us working.' Women are making same amount as husbands, maybe only \$5,000 difference."

- Real estate agent,  
Marshalltown

"My mom was a stay-at-home mom. Her role was to stay home, have food for my dad ready, to have breakfast and lunch. That is what she wanted to do. My dad worked production for a while and then moved up."

-Mental health professional,  
Storm Lake

"My mom worked in meat processing for 20+ years. She was a single mom making less than \$18/hour. Raising 3 girls earning 20 grand, 25 grand a year. It's better for me. I do what I do for myself. But I also do it for my mom."

-Nurse,  
Sioux City

"I have small children so I'm not working, but I'm trying to do consignment. I also sell my own things online."

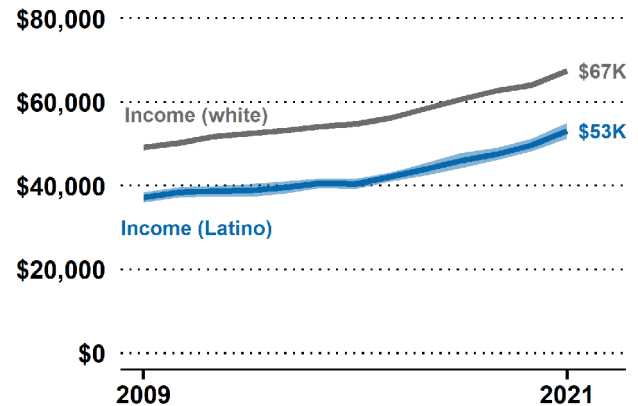
-Mother and consigner,  
Waterloo

## Income disparities

In 2021, the median household income of Latinos was \$53,000, while white households earned an average of \$67,000. This gap has persisted over time. Similar gaps have persisted in personal and per-capita income.

### Gap in household income by ethnicity

Median household income of Latino and white Iowans



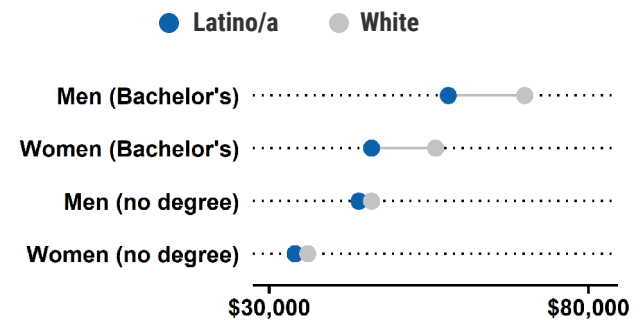
Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates

There could be many explanations for these differences. For example, the Latino population is much younger on average and workers later in their career earn more. Some Latinos are undocumented and this limits their options for well-paying jobs. But even after controlling for gender, age, educational attainment, hours worked, undocumented status, and industry, Latinos still earned about 5% less per year on average and this is driven by a gap among college degree holders.

While higher educational attainment clearly predicts higher earnings among Latinos, a significant gap in pay still exists between Latinos and white employees with Bachelors degrees or higher. This suggests that a degree alone isn't enough to close these gaps.

### Gap largest among college educated

Predicted average full-time income after adjusting for age differences, work hours, documentation status, and industry\*



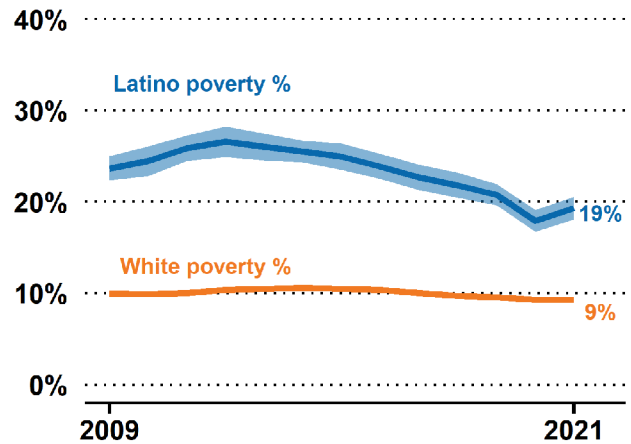
Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata (2015-2019)  
\* Model assumes full-time, 45-year-old employee working 45 hours/week

## Economics and Workforce

A gap exists in poverty rates. While 19.3% of Latinos in Iowa are living with incomes at or below the federal poverty level, only 9.3% of white Iowans are in poverty, but this gap has notably changed over time. In 2012, about 27% of Latinos were living in poverty.

### Gap in poverty rates has closed somewhat

Percent with household income below federal poverty level

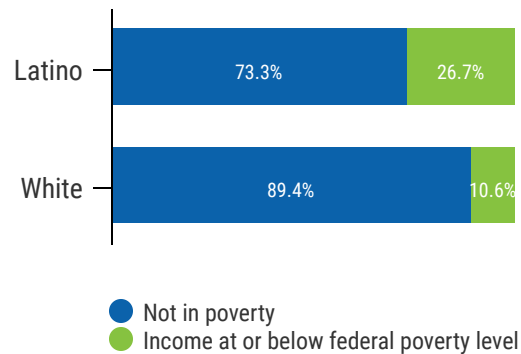


Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year estimates

Around 27% of Latino children under the age of 18 are living in poverty (household incomes below the federal poverty level) compared with 10.6% of white children.

### Children in poverty

Percent of children under age 18 living in poverty



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year estimates (2017-2021)

## Reflecting on disparities

Story session participants reviewed the data on income disparities and cited racial bias, education disparities, salary negotiations, lack of opportunity for promotion, lack of unionization, immigration status, and language barriers as potential explanations for disparities. Participants suggested solutions could include policy changes to prevent salary bias, more education, and flexible opportunities for adult language learners.

### Lived experiences

"That's what happened to me at my prior job. I was a HR assistant at the job. The white workers were the generalists. I'm recruiting, I'm hiring, and I'm doing all processes using my bilingual skills. I'm doing everything that a white generalist would do, but only getting assistant pay." -Insurance agent

"We talk between ourselves at work about differences in pay, but we don't talk to the bosses about wages because we're afraid of getting fired. The majority are Latinos. There's no union. That would be impossible." -Greenhouse worker

"You have to prove yourself so much more, but are you given an equitable opportunity? If we do something, they say, 'I knew you would do it, because you work hard.' You have to work hard, and they have a stereotype that we are hard workers, so you're not seen as talented, just a hard worker." -Community college staff

"I have worked in places with a union and without a union. There should be more unions. This is a way that workers are treated more fairly. They can't pay you less."

- Meat processing worker

### Immigration & language

"I hate how meat processing companies take advantage of our older generation. They've been there with the same pay for so many years. Without papers, the people who have been there a long time are afraid to step up for a raise. They should know their worth, and it's irritating how companies take advantage of people because they're scared." -College student

"Most of the people from my church are undocumented or in the process of getting their papers. You are limited to a small number of jobs because you don't have papers. They should have more opportunities to have jobs." -High school student

"I can divide the Latino community in two. Those who don't speak English and those who do. Those who don't speak English have a lot to give. The school of life taught them a lot. They have so much to offer, but one thing is holding them back. The English." -College student and festival organizer

### How to close the gap

"People who have higher degrees make more money. We need our community members to have some college education because they'll make more money." -Therapist

"Discussing wages has been a new topic for a lot of people. Before, we didn't talk about it, 'don't ask.' I notice people opening up a little more because they're realizing we have to talk about it in order for things to be equal." -HR professional

"Financial literacy and career education teaching how to negotiate your salary. I was fortunate to have a few mentors on my side who told me to go for more. You justify why you want to earn more. This is what else I have here and what else I have to offer." -Scientist

"There need to be more efforts to teach English with schools open for adults to learn. There needs to be more time flexibility because people get out of work and are very tired after their shifts." -Administrative assistant

# Housing and Households

**"Even the condos are super expensive, even for one bedroom. Whether you have a family or not, whether you are a professional or not. It's hard."  
- Scientist, Storm Lake**

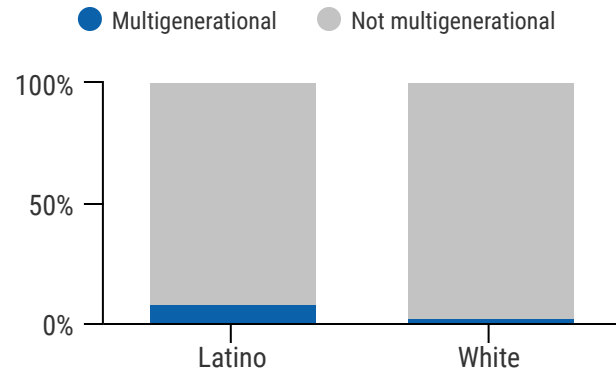


## Household characteristics

About 8% of Latino family households have grandparents living in the household. This compares with about 2.6% of white households.

### Latino families are more multigenerational

Percent of multigenerational family households

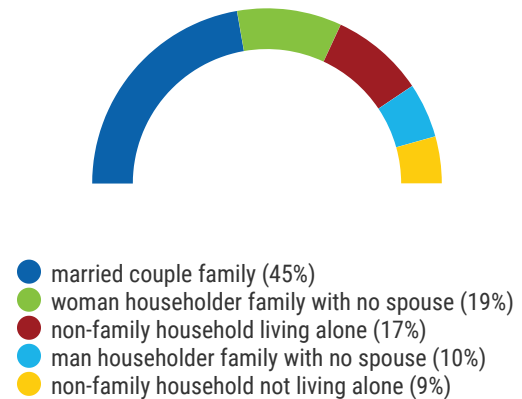


Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

A plurality of Latino households were married couple families, comprising 45% of households followed by women householders with families and no spouse, non-family households living alone, men householders with family and no spouse, and non-family households not living alone.

### Plurality of Latinos are married couple families

Household composition of Latinos in Iowa



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

## Lived experiences, diverse family settings

"I live with my husband and a one-year-old daughter."

-College student,  
Ottumwa

"We're quite a few at my house. I live with my mother-in-law and sister-in-law. 2 kids and my wife."

-Manufacturing worker,  
Marshalltown

"I have two kids 11 and 12. We live with my fiancé, 3 dogs and 3 ferrets. It's a busy home."

-Elected official,  
West Liberty

"I grew up in Sioux City. I'm grateful to grow up here, Latino and queer in Iowa."

-Teacher,  
Sioux City

"I was born in Mexico, raised in Chicago. I live in an apartment."

-Scientist, Storm Lake

"My husband and I have been married for 24 years, living in Iowa for 22 years. We have 3 kids. I feel proud of living here in Iowa."

-Small business  
owner, Waterloo

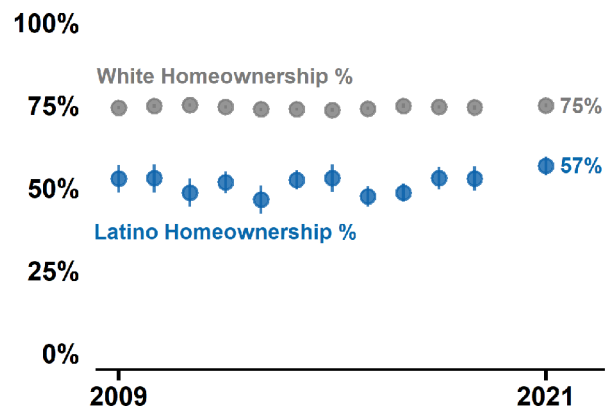
## Disparities and differences in homeownership rates

As of 2021, about 57% of Latino households own their homes compared with about 75% of white households. While this gap has closed over time, several factors help to explain these differences. Because Latinos tend to be younger, have less income and educational attainment, experience more geographic mobility, and have higher rates of undocumented immigrants, they tend to have lower homeownership rates.

After controlling for these factors, Latino homeownership rates are higher than expected in Marshalltown (78%), Council Bluffs (60%), Cedar Rapids (58%), and Davenport (62%).

### Gap in homeownership rates

Homeownership rates by ethnicity in Iowa

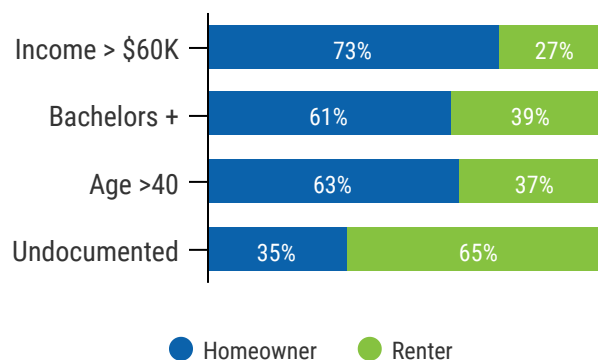


Source: American Community Survey one-year estimates (2020 data unavailable)

Many factors drive differences in homeownership rates among Latinos. About 73% of higher income Latinos (>\$60K/year) own their homes, as do 61% of Latinos with Bachelor's degrees, and 63% of Latinos over 40. Younger Latinos and those with less educational attainment and income are much less likely to own their homes as are Latinos who are likely undocumented.

### Latino homeownership varies across groups

Percent of homeowners by select demographic groups



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples (2015-2019)

Community members identified reasons for the disparities including the need for financial education, challenges of being first time homebuyers, the exploitation of undocumented households, and lack of culturally competent mortgage services.

"Some Latinos don't speak English well. When they go to look for a loan, they meet with a Caucasian officer. They talk to them and they miss a little or a lot of information. The officer misleads the client. They don't offer anyone translation, when I know in the bank there are people who speak Spanish." -Community outreach assistant, Storm Lake

"There isn't information for Latinos to buy homes. How to buy a house, a duplex, an apartment. There are many kinds of loans, they don't teach people how to do this. We need someone to help us, to give us classes to buy a house. Can you buy it with cash? What if you don't have cash? Many people don't know. I would say that to progress, to get a better place to live, this needs to be taught." -Auto sales shop owner, Waterloo

"I'm thinking about banking. I do a lot of home loans. I need to do a better job educating the community. Letting them know you don't have to pay 20% down. You don't have to pay cash. Educate the population in West Liberty. That's a goal for 2023." -Banker, West Liberty

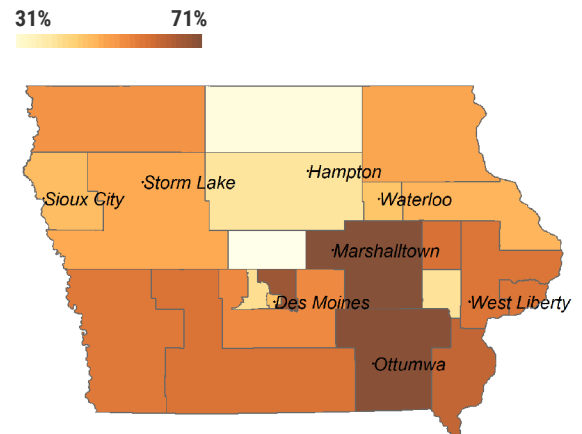
"It's very difficult to find a place. I rent currently. I have my debt because of my master's degree and my car. I can't get a loan, and there's not a lot of good home choices out there." -Scientist, Storm Lake

## Homeownership higher in some counties

While 57% of Latinos are homeowners, homeownership varies greatly across the state. In major college towns such as Iowa City and Ames, homeownership rates are lower. Homeownership is similarly lower in Des Moines and Sioux City, although homeownership is high in the eastern Des Moines suburbs. Homeownership rates are particularly high in and around Marshalltown and Ottumwa and southeast Iowa generally.

### Latino homeownership high in Southeast

Latino homeownership average percentage (2015-2021)

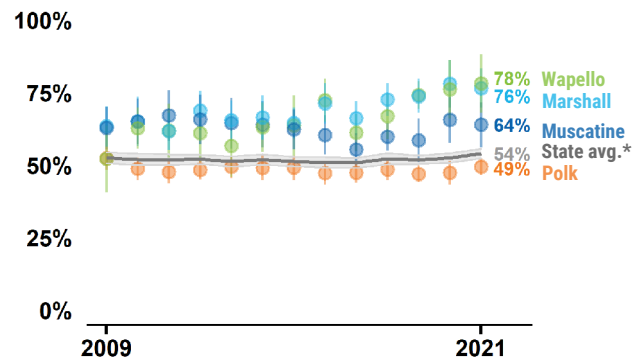


Source: American Community Survey five-year estimates (2015-2021)

Latino homeownership rates vary substantially by county. Homeownership rates have been consistently higher than the state average in recent years in Wapello (Ottumwa), Marshall (Marshalltown), and Muscatine (West Liberty). Homeownership is a little lower than average in Polk County (Des Moines) and much lower than average in counties with large college student populations (e.g. Johnson and Story).

### Latino homeownership higher in some counties

Latino homeownership rates by select counties



Source: American Community Survey five-year average

\*State average in 2021 is slightly lower because it is a five-year average

Latinx Project leadership and story session participants valued home ownership. In counties with higher home ownership rates, participants named factors contributing to this positive momentum: a strong drive to own, helpful banks, bilingual real estate agents, and residents who were confident they would get the help they needed to complete the transaction.

"When we went to buy a house, there are people like Magaly (a local Latina real estate agent) who helped us. They help us understand what are the steps to buy a house. In the case of our parents, they saved, but they didn't know the steps they had to do. They would pay their rent." -Manufacturing worker, Marshalltown

"It's the culture that you want to feel that this is your house. When I pay rent, it will never be mine. I want the stability that it is mine, and that's it. There are people who don't care, but Hispanics care about this a lot." -IT professional, Marshalltown

"Hispanics will work as much as possible. We are fighters. We will do anything to reach our dreams. Our house is our dream. Hispanics are buying more and better houses. Now they are buying a house of \$200K. Soon they will buy at \$300K. Our parents bought the more humble, smaller. We are buying better homes." -Real estate agent, Marshalltown

"When I was ready to buy a house, Magaly was there. For my husband and me, we didn't know how to do all the steps of getting a mortgage. I took a lot longer than I should have to buy a house because my husband didn't have an ITIN. I had a stable job, but I didn't have credit. Someone who just got here, who doesn't understand this. It's important to learn how to learn these things." -School technologist, Marshalltown



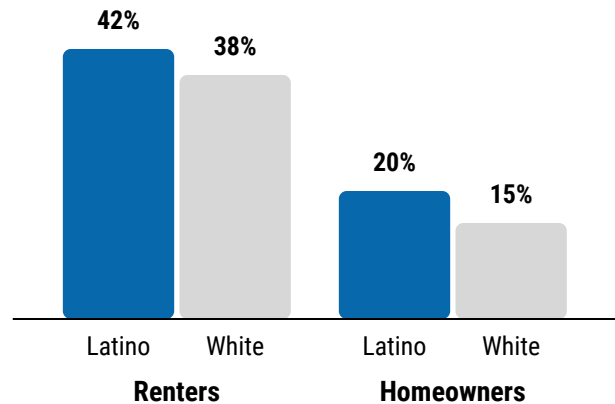
## Housing and households

Renter households are much more likely to be experiencing housing cost burden, defined as paying more than 30% of income on housing. Latinos are also significantly more likely to experience housing cost burden than white households.

Around 42% of Latino renters pay more than 30% of their incomes toward rent. About 21% are considered severely housing cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income toward rent.

### Renters experience more housing cost burden

Percent of households with housing payments > 30% of income

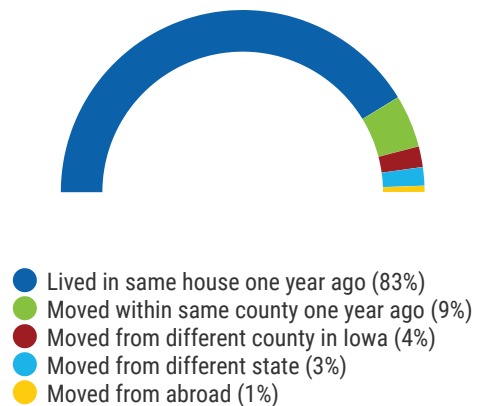


Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples (2015-2019)

The Latino population in Iowa is a little more geographically mobile. Around 17% of Latinos moved in the last year compared with about 13% of the white population. Previous research by the Latinx Project found that the higher rates of moving were due in part to landlord treatment of undocumented renters, job changes, and problems with contract lending.

### Nearly 20% of Latinos moved in the last year

Percent of Latinos by geographic mobility



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

# Education

**"Education is important. It's the ticket to get from point A to point B."**

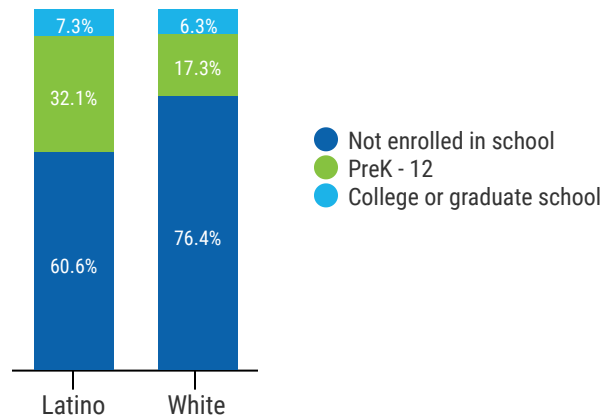
**- HR professional, Storm Lake**



## Latino students are important to Iowa schools

Reflecting the younger age of the population, about 32% of Latinos are enrolled in pre-K through high school compared with 17% of white Iowans. About 61% of Latinos are not in school, compared with 76% of white, non-Latinos. Among Latinos, 7.5% are college students, similar to proportions of the white, non-Latino population.

### More Latinos are enrolled in school



Source: US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

Latino youth are a significant portion of the Iowa school age population. To help explain why this matters, high school students from Sioux City shared their unique contributions and perspectives.

"Our student council is so diverse. At the state convention, there were many white people, and they stared at us. You got so many looks. It's scary, but it makes me feel proud. Everyone was white in the gym. We were so rare. It made me feel proud because I'm a part of a community that knows diversity."

"I'm motivated to go to college. My mom graduated from here, and went to nursing and graduated from college. I see her and want to do it as well. My mom did it. She didn't know English, she got here, she did it. She got her master's, she went back and got her doctorate. We can do it."

"At the beginning of the year, I was bad in math. I didn't understand anything. I kept raising my hand, and the teacher kept helping me. And now I understand."

"A lot of students drop out just to work because that's all they know. Their parents work. Hispanics and Latinos are known for being hard working. Just work work work. We just see our parents working and working. So kids drop out, think that all they can do is work, the hard stuff like being in factories."

"Me, myself, I'm a very unmotivated person. I wait to the last minute to do a lot of things. I see my grades drop and I think, 'maybe I should do my work' I need reminders to do things."

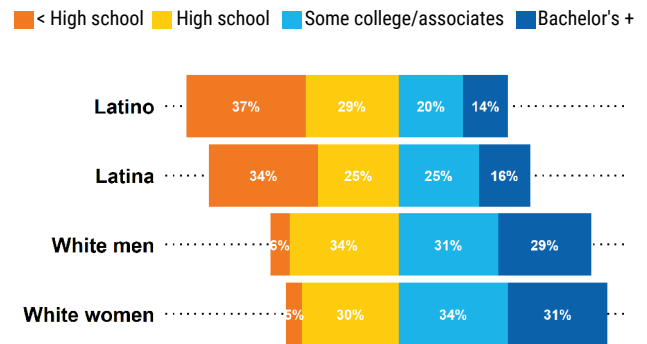
"There's a need to show kids more of what they can do. They can take a step. As students, we can do more. We can do something to help our students. We can represent, connecting to schools from across Sioux City."

## Education disparities

There are significant differences in educational attainment by ethnicity and gender in Iowa. Around 37% of Latino men age 25+ have not completed high school or a GED compared with 5% of white women. Conversely, about 14% of Latino men have completed a Bachelor's degree or higher compared with 31% of white women.

### Disparities in educational attainment

Educational attainment by gender and ethnicity

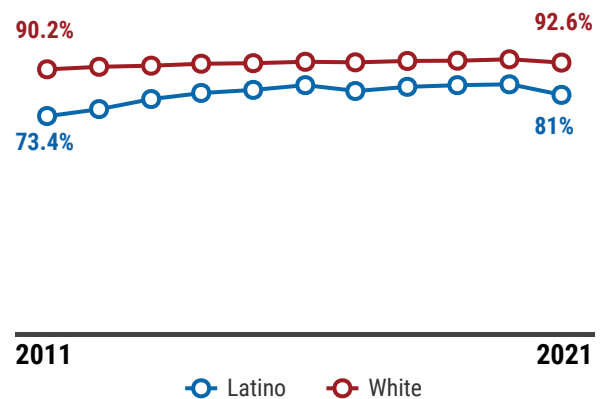


Source: US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2016-2020)

While the gap between high school graduation rates between Latino and white students has closed over time, a significant difference remains. There was a notable drop from 2020 to 2021, with Latino graduation rates dropping from about 85% to 81%.

### Disparity in high school graduation rates

Four-year high school graduation rate by ethnicity



The high school graduation rate gap between Latino and white youth has closed, but they vary across the state. If more Iowa Latinos earned their high school diploma, associate's and bachelor's degrees, their families would have higher incomes, home ownership rates, and wellness. The entire state would benefit through healthier and wealthier communities. Story session participants reviewed these statistics and made the following recommendations:

"Let them know about resources that are out there for them. I heard of some resources, but I didn't reach out. I was too afraid. I didn't want to get help. A couple years later, here I am back in school. There are resources I was able to get, but he resources are hidden."  
- College student, Ottumwa

"Make more programs like Al Exito for exposure to different things."  
-College student, Ottumwa

"How will my mom know what I need to take if she had no idea what I should take? Parents are too busy. We need to educate the parents on how important it is. Counselors, schools, and parents need to work together."  
-Financial services, Storm Lake

"The dual language is super important here. I was a part of it when I was in school, pre-K through senior year. Being able to use my native language in school was very important. I was able to practice my Spanish in school and at home."  
- College student, West Liberty

"A path to citizenship would change kids' lives so they don't have to fear their parents being taken away. They would do better in school."  
-College student, Ottumwa

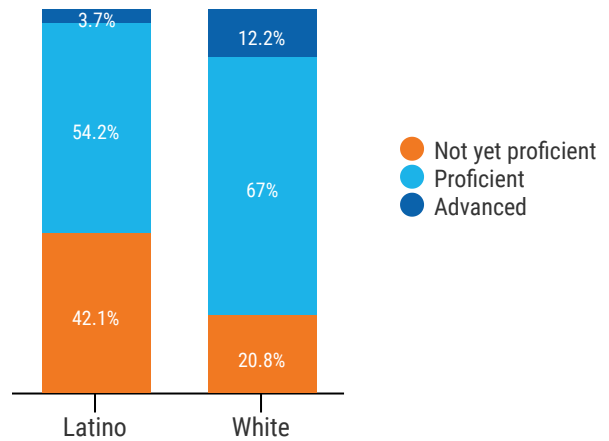
"We need better opportunities to go to welding, to go to a skilled trade. If this were more affordable, even without scholarships, students would want to go to have the welder's certificate. They would go to food processors and get better jobs as a maintenance worker instead of only cutting up meat."  
- College student, Ottumwa

## Academic proficiency, college majors

There are notable disparities in performance on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress English Language Arts Test. Around 42% of Latino public school tenth graders scores were considered "not yet proficient", compared with 21% of white test takers.

### Disparities in Language Arts Test Scores

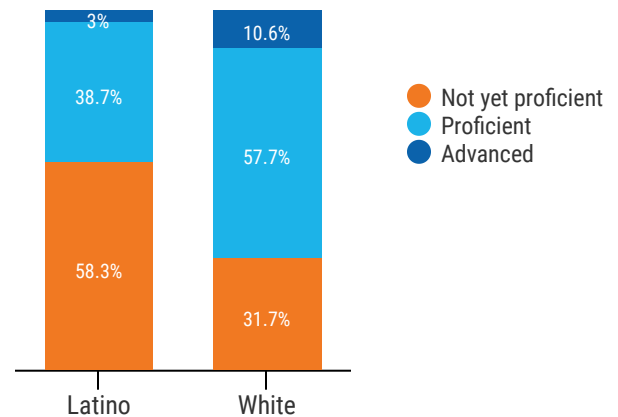
Iowa Tenth Graders by Performance Level (2020-2021)



There are notable disparities in performance on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress Mathematics Test. Around 58% of Latino public school tenth graders scores were considered "not yet proficient", compared with 32% of white test takers.

### Disparities in Math Test Scores

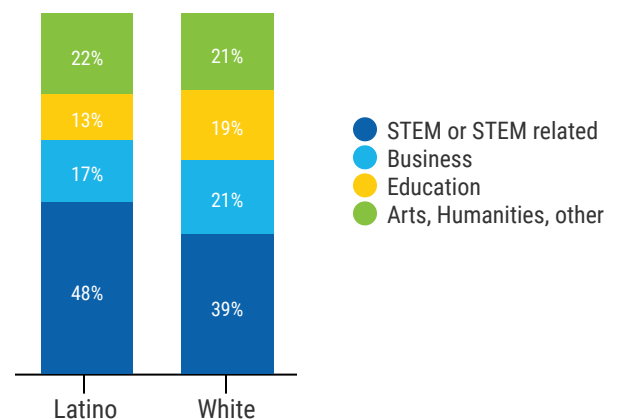
Iowa Tenth Graders by Performance Level (2020-2021)



Nearly half of Latinos who've completed college earned degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) or STEM-related fields compared with 39% of white college graduates. White students were a little more likely to complete degrees in Business or Education.

### Latinos are more likely to major in STEM

Field of first college degree



## The need for adult education

The need for additional learning does not end at adulthood. Across the state, Latino communities want more and better access to adult education. Marshalltown parents discussed the topic in-depth, but participants across Iowa mentioned the concern. Flexible, GED and post-secondary opportunities, in-person English language classes, financial planning, homeownership, driver education, small business ownership, and how to vote are all desired and needed, including bilingual options. Session participants wanted more opportunities for Latino Iowans to access these knowledge resources.

"We need flexibility to study, and we want to study. My husband could only study in the winter due to work, but the class required a year-round commitment. People learn more with pencil and paper, but only computer education is available."

- Nurse, Marshalltown

### Many types of adult education are wanted.

"The program is not set up for student success. I have a student in her 3rd year of college, and she hasn't started her nursing classes. Five years of money. She has kids. At the end of the 5 years, she'll just have her RN. Her BSN is another 2 years. By the time she has her master's, she would have had 8 years of school. Can we support the people who want to help our community?" -Community college staff, Sioux City

"There needs to be more efforts to teach English with schools open for adults to learn. There needs to be more time flexibility because people get out of work and are very tired after their shifts. Also, many people are not going to learn by going to a computer online. We need classes with childcare and flexibility for completion." -Veterans administration worker, Marshalltown

"I see many Latinos who don't know how to drive. Are there options to learn how to drive? Everything is in English. Nothing in Spanish. Can there be a course or a way to learn? People say they don't know how to drive, and that's an important necessity." -IT worker, Marshalltown

"Bigger states like California have more support for immigrants who want to study, or build capacity. There is no support here to do things. If you don't have papers, you can't study here. In Wisconsin, Chicago, California, it doesn't matter if you have papers. Here in Iowa with more Republicans, it's more difficult to get services." -Nurse, Marshalltown

# Immigration

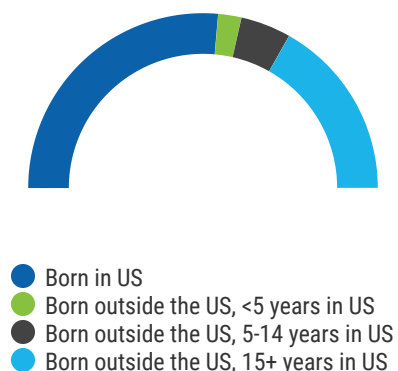
**"A path to citizenship would mean freedom for so many people." - Social worker, Sioux City**



## Birthplace and life outcomes

Around 52% of Latino adults over the age 18 were born in the US. About 4% were born outside the US and have been living in the US for less than five years, while 9% have been in the country for 5-14 years. Roughly a third were born outside the US and have been living in the US for 15 or more years.

### About half of Latino adults were born in the US

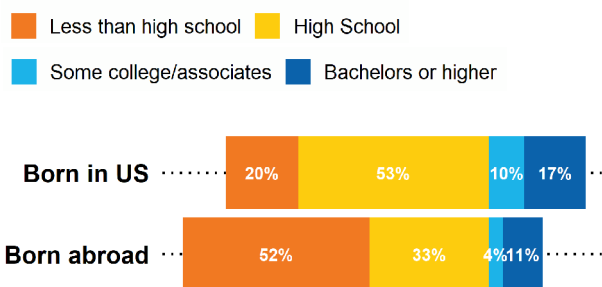


Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-years (2017-2021)

Around 48% of Latino immigrants born abroad age 25 and older have completed at least a high school education compared with 80% of Latinos born in the US, driven primarily by large differences in completion of high school. Latinos born in the US also have higher rates of college completion.

### Latinos born in US have higher educational attainment

Educational attainment of Latino adults age 25 years +

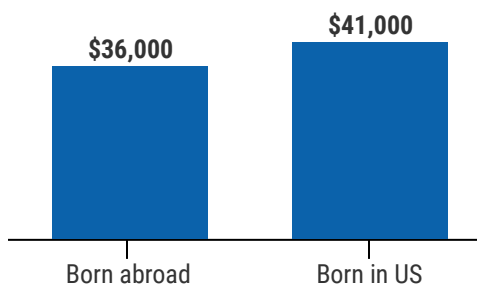


Source: US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year samples (2015-2019)

On average, Latinos born in US earn more. After controlling for differences in age, hours worked, and documentation status, Latinos born in the US earn almost 15% more than immigrants.

### Latinos born in the US earn more

Average personal income for full-time Latino workers controlling for age, hours worked, and documentation status



Source: US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year samples (2015-2019), adjusted to 2021 dollars

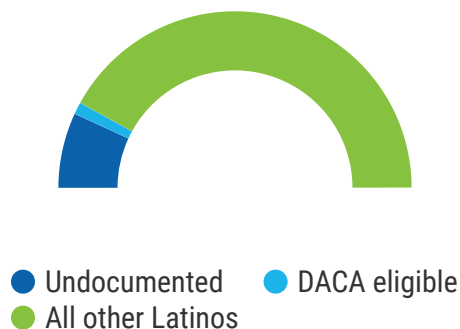


## Undocumented lowans and a path to citizenship

While there are no official estimates of the undocumented population, it is possible to estimate the number of likely undocumented Latinos in Iowa using a process detailed in the sources and methods section. Around 16% of Iowa Latinos are undocumented and about 2.2% are eligible for deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA).

### Around 16% of Latinos are undocumented

Estimated percentage of undocumented Latinos

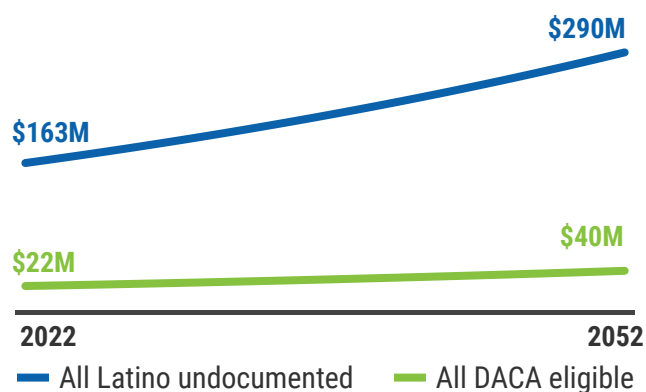


Source: Estimates from US Census Public Use Microdata 5-year samples (2015-2019).  
See process described in sources.

A pathway to citizenship for undocumented Latinos in Iowa would open up access to job opportunities, boosting incomes and providing a large stimulus to the economy. This would spur additional demand for goods and services, increasing gross state product and eventually leading to increased wages for all workers. On average, undocumented workers would earn an additional \$5,400/year as a result of citizenship. Full citizenship for all undocumented residents would lead to \$6.6B total additional dollars earned over 30 years. Full citizenship for all DACA eligible would lead to \$910M additional dollars earned over that period.

### Citizenship for undocumented Latinos would boost total income by \$6.6B over 30 years

Additional annual dollars earned in the Latino community



Source: modeled estimates based on statistical analysis of US Census Bureau Public Use Microdata 5-year samples (2015-2019) and Iowa State Demographer forecast

Story session participants described the economic benefits of a path to citizenship for families and individuals. Legal status would present opportunities for homeownership, higher savings rate, increased consumer buying power, and a more prosperous local economy.

"It would take away the fear, the fear of getting ahead. People say, 'I can't do it, because I don't have papers.' I can't go to Des Moines because it's dangerous. I can't get a new job because I don't have documents. It would be a huge benefit."

-Manufacturing worker, Marshalltown

"Undocumented students need financial aid eligibility. It starts in High School. Some students, if they are not legal, can't apply for all these scholarships."

-College student, West Liberty

"A path to citizenship would mean driving without fear of being pulled over. People can't even go out and around. They live afraid"

-Nurse practitioner, Sioux City

"There are a lot of Venezuelans who are coming in who have a lot of talent. They want to start businesses. We have DACA students, and they have an education but they can't get a job. Let's focus on what they can do."

-Elected official, West Liberty

## Immigration reform: Much more than economics

Everyone reviewing the data named immigration reform as a high priority. A path to citizenship promises community, family, and personal benefits. Participants considered the economic outcomes less important than how legal status would improve aspects of life.

Children would be given back their childhood. Students could complete educational pathways more easily. Families would feel less worried and anxious. Mental and physical health would improve. They shared what policy makers should consider about this issue, too.

"I'm a DACA recipient. I started my process when I was 16. Citizenship would be a huge relief, and you have to go through so much. It's 3 years, 20 years, it's a whole long process. It would be a huge weight off my shoulders."

-College student, Ottumwa

### How a path to citizenship would matter

"For us as kids, seeing our parents work so hard. Citizenship would be a dream to see. When my parents got their residency after so long living here, I cried. It was emotional and amazing. After working 40 plus years. My dad is 52, still working out in the cold weather. Its great that they are living here and not being called that (ill\*gal). It would change kids lives so they don't have to fear their parents being taken away." -College student, Ottumwa

"It sucks that there are kids who are born here, and their dad is deported, and they have to grow up without their dad, 2000 miles away. A lot of our families came here because there were job opportunities to work in the (meat processing) plants. We were in California, and we went to Sioux City because there were jobs. To think this could happen at the plant, it is devastating." -High school student, Sioux City

"My husband has papers, but when we had a family member who was dating an undocumented person it was a big change. I never had to think about that. There was always a worry. Hopefully he comes back from where he's going. Hopefully he doesn't get stopped. Worrying that your boyfriend or husband might not come back because he's working." -Mental health professional, Storm Lake

### What policy makers should know

What do policy makers need to understand about the immigration issue and the need for a pathway to citizenship? Leaders and discussion groups said that elected officials should know:

"They just came here to work. The problems are in their home country. They want to get out of there and keep their families safe. They aren't doing anything bad." -High school student, Sioux City

"You should make an easier path for people working so long. My mom has been here 25 years. Make it an easier path for people who have been here their whole lives contributing economically." -College student, Ottumwa

"Politicians don't want to accept that this is the reality. The dairies, the meat packing are filled with undocumented immigrants. People are working with someone else's papers." -HR Professional, Storm Lake

"More awareness of not only what undocumented go through, but also their families. Their families are in constant fear." -High school student, Sioux City

"Some white people think that when an immigrant gets legal status, they're going to pay taxes. That's ignorance. They already pay taxes." -HR Professional, Storm Lake

# Health and COVID-19 effects

**"There are a whole bunch of Latino Iowans who lost relatives to COVID. They keep their feelings bottled up." - Nurse practitioner, Sioux City**

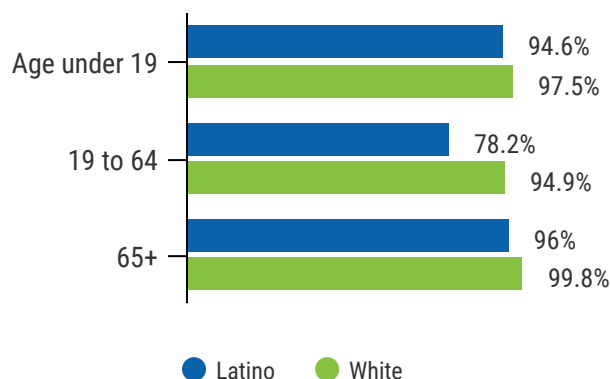


## Health care access and quality

There are notable differences in health insurance coverage by ethnicity, particularly among adults ages 19-64, where there is a 16.7 percentage point gap in coverage. Insurance coverage rates are high among those under 19 and over 65 among both white and Latino Iowans.

### Disparities in health insurance access

Percentage covered by health insurance by ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (2017-2021)

Reflecting lower overall levels of health care access, Latinos were more likely to go without care because of cost, have higher out-of-pocket medical spending, and are less likely to have a usual source of care. High out of pocket medical spending is defined as 10% or more of income or 5% or more if living under 200% of the federal poverty level.

### Health care access

Health care access	Latino	White
Adults who went without care because of cost (%)	20	7
High out-of-pocket medical spending (%).	8	6
Adults with a usual source of care (%)	59	85

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER system

Latinos were less likely to have had colon cancer screening, less likely to have had a recent flu shot, less likely to have had the pneumonia vaccine, and less likely to have had a dental visit. However, Latino children were more likely to have had a recent medical and dental preventive care visit.

### Health care quality

Health care quality measure	Latino	White
Adult women who received mammogram %	78	81
Adult women with cervical cancer screening test (%)	83	86
Adults with colon cancer screening test (%)	47	73
Adults with a recent flu shot (%)	38	51
Older adults who received the pneumonia vaccine %	41	75
Children with medical and dental preventive care visit (%)	81	74
Adults with a dental visit (%)	62	70

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER system

## Health care access

Story sessions with college students and health care professionals focused most on this topic. Community members expressed additional concerns about health care and insurance. They shared stories about the need for culturally competent practitioners and the problem of being underinsured. More Latino healthcare professionals are needed.

Health insurance is too expensive and offers too little access for the cost. It excludes many Latinos on the basis of immigration status and income. State insurance has the "cliff effect," where families lose insurance if they make only slightly too much money.

"I busted my chin falling off a car when I was a sophomore. I told my mom, 'I'm ok, I'm not going to the hospital.' Because I remembered my dad hurt himself bad, and they didn't call the hospital because he couldn't afford it. Now my parents have the insurance, and they encourage me to go to the walk in clinic." - College student

### Medical insurance access not the only issue

"ER and urgent care are hit so hard at night. Workers can't leave during the day. They have to work to support their families. I saw lots of our community come into the ER for non-emergencies. My coworkers weren't understanding. The community health center started opening at night so they can see people." -Nurse and social worker, Sioux City

"I helped a lot of people at the clinic. If someone comes in with an assumed name, I have to talk to them. They need to seek health care with their birth name. They'd say, 'I have one name for my covid shot, and I have my work name.' Because of the need to hide, we can't keep each other healthy." -Clinic volunteer, Storm Lake

"I had great dental insurance. She looked into that and took us to our appointments every six months. But soon, that will change because I won't be a student. I'll be working. Hopefully, I can work with a company that gives me health care and dental." -College student, Ottumwa

"My mom just straight up said we ain't going to the doctor. My mom would rather take a pill she brought from Mexico. But looking back, it could have been for insurance reasons. The home remedies that her mom taught. It comes down to what we can afford and making do." -College student, Ottumwa

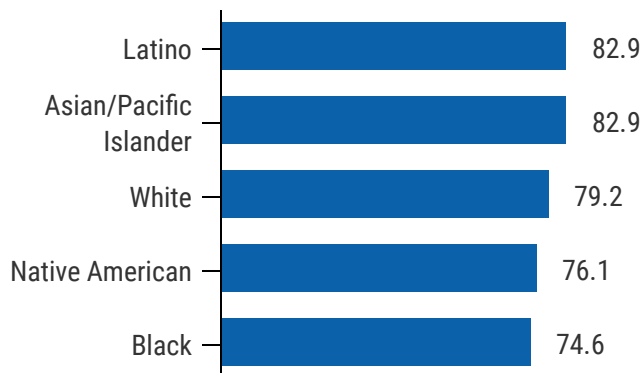
"Even though my mom was ill\*gal, I had insurance as a kid. But I didn't when I turned 18. Even at a young age, I was learning I didn't have the same opportunities that my friends have. It was kind of mind-blowing. If I got sick or injured, I was out of luck." -Nurse practitioner, Sioux City

## Health and COVID-19 effects

Latinos have higher life expectancy than most other racial/ethnic groups. On average, Latinos live to 83-years-old, comparable to Asian or Pacific Islanders and significantly higher than white, Native American, or Black Iowans.

### Life expectancy

Years of life expectancy at birth



Reflecting better overall life expectancy and health, Latinos have lower rates of mortality by nearly every cause, except homicide mortality.

### Age-adjusted mortality rates by cause

Mortality cause	Latino	White
Cancer mortality/100K	80.5	155.7
Coronary heart disease mortality/100K	50.3	103.6
Poisoning mortality (includes drugs)/100K	8	14
Homicide mortality/100K	3.5	2
Lung disease mortality	10.3	45.2
Motor vehicle crash mortality/100K	10	11
Stroke mortality/100K	18.4	32.3
Suicide mortality/100K	6.6	17
Unintentional injury mortality/100K	29.7	43.8

According to Census Bureau Pulse surveys, about 48% of Latinos reported having had a previous COVID-19 diagnosis, compared with about 40% of white Iowans. Around 76% of Latino Iowans have received at least one COVID-19 vaccination, comparable to the rate of white Iowans.

### Previous COVID-19 Diagnosis



### Received a COVID-19 Vaccine

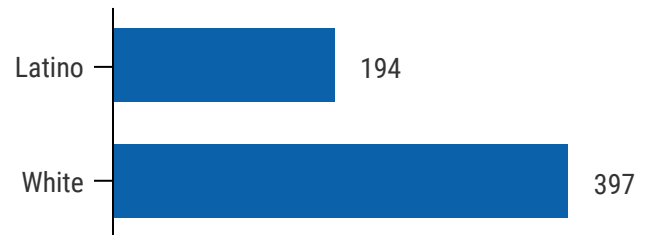


## COVID-19 effects

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provisional COVID-19 Iowa death counts as of September 21, 2022 are 421 Latino deaths and 10,715 white deaths. Normalizing for population differences shows the death rate/100,000 people is about twice as high among white Iowans.

### COVID-19 deaths/100,000

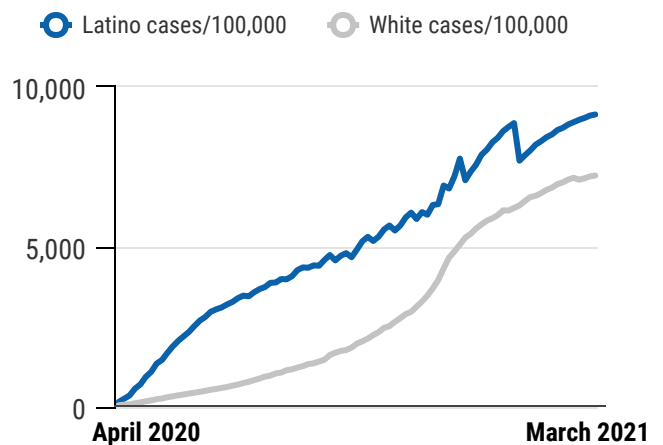
Provisional death counts as of September 2022



Early in the pandemic, COVID-19 spread quickly through the Latino community in Iowa with cases/100,000 rising rapidly and much faster than the white population. This is likely due to Latinos disproportionately working in meat production and other front-line industries.

### COVID-19 rose sharply early in the pandemic

Total cumulative cases per 100,000 people

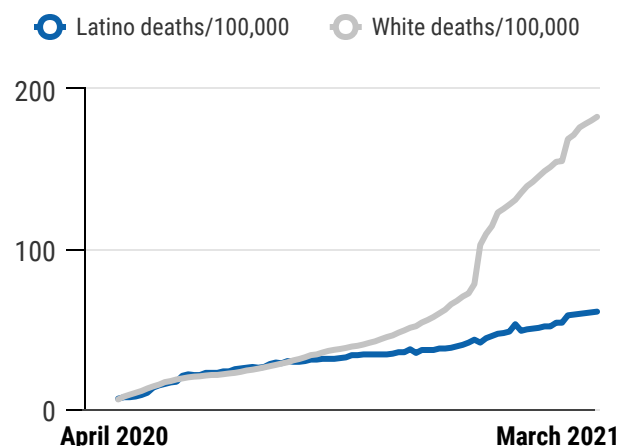


However, despite the rapid rise in cases, total death rates increased similarly early in the pandemic followed by a sharp increase in deaths among white Iowans around December 2020 associated with the sharp rise in cases a little earlier.

The white population skews older and has higher age-adjusted mortality and lower life expectancy generally; these factors may explain some of the differences in COVID-19 outcomes.

### COVID-19 deaths early in the pandemic

Total cumulative deaths per 100,000 people

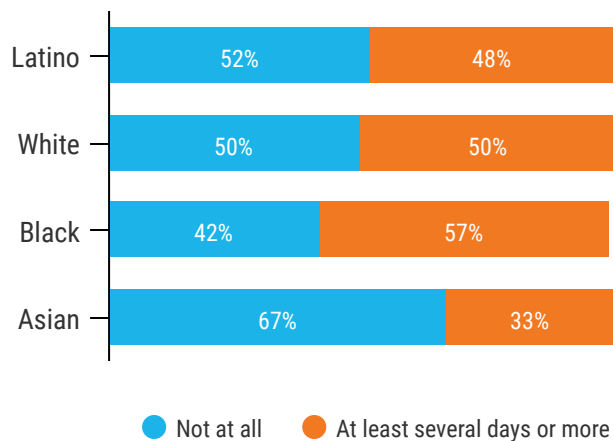


## Mental health

According to the average of the seven US Census Bureau pulse surveys taken from January to August 2022, about half of Latinos are experiencing symptoms of anxiety. Black lowans were the most likely to report these feelings and Asians were the least likely.

### Symptoms of anxiety experienced in past 7 days

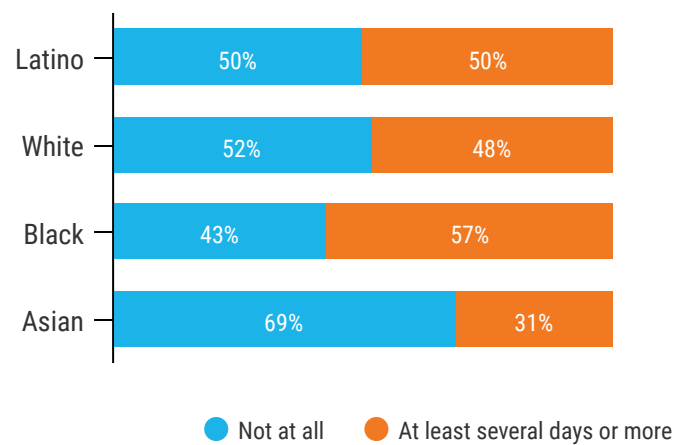
US Census Bureau Pulse Survey Weeks 42-48 Average



Similar to overall feelings of anxiety, the average of the US Census Bureau Pulse Surveys from January to August 2022 showed about half of Latinos felt unable to stop or control worrying at least several days or more.

### Not able to stop or control worrying

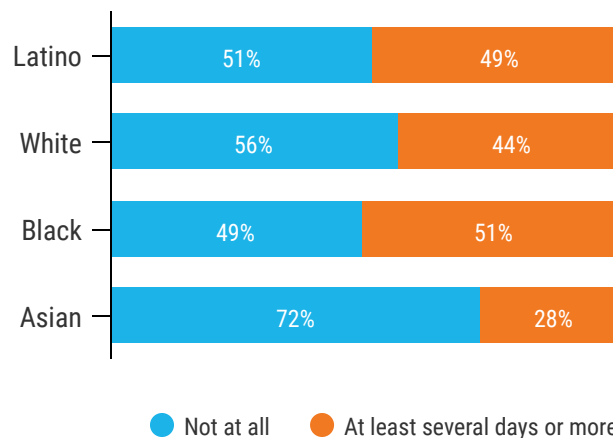
Frequency of symptoms in last seven days



According to Census Bureau Pulse Surveys from January to August 2022, about half of Latinos reported feeling down, depressed, or hopeless at least several days or more.

### Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

Frequency of symptoms in last seven days





### COVID-19 effects: "We were hit hard and hit first."

COVID-19 had early, devastating effects on Latino communities across Iowa. In 2020, many Iowa Latinos worked in food production, warehouses, and construction where social distancing was impossible. Now that illness and death rates have decreased, participants reflected on the impacts of coronavirus in communities across Iowa.

"The first people who passed away from COVID were people in the packing factories. Hispanics without education and less medical knowledge. They were to work. They were blindsided by COVID. They had no idea what to expect. Not enough people are upset about it. Not enough people are talking about it."

-Nurse practitioner,  
Sioux City

"During COVID, a lot of us were unsatisfied how big meat packing corporation was handling it. They were slow to make changes. People died from COVID. People who worked there. We were trying to raise awareness of lack of responsibility that meat packing were taking. In the end, the meat packing plant won. They gave away free food, all that publicity stuff they do to seem they're community focused. In the end, they didn't have any public consequences."

-Mental health professional  
Storm Lake

"When COVID hit, people were lying about symptoms because they didn't want to get off work. Men are stubborn as it is. Men have to feed the family. They are less willing to take off work. They are in jobs where they can't take any time off."

-Nurse practitioner,  
Sioux City

### Mental health needs: "Hispanic counselors are far and few between."

Sioux City professionals focused on mental health data. They emphasized the stigma around seeking mental health care, as well as the need for cultural competency, school-based resources, and more Latino practitioners. Reviewing data on rates of anxiety and hopelessness, healthcare professionals believed that the statistics underrepresented mental health concerns in the Latino community. Participants speculated that cultural differences in interpreting survey questions may lead to the suspected undercount of mental health issues in the report data.

"It's seen as a sign of weakness if you have mental health issues. Growing up with an older generation, there was that stigma. It's hard to convince parents sometimes that their kids need mental health care. 'You don't have time to be depressed,' my mom would say, 'you'll feel fine, just sleep it off.'"

-Social worker,  
Sioux City

"In Iowa, mental health care is not prevalent. Over the summer, I wanted to go to a therapist to learn what it was like. It took a minute to get in. A month or two. The opportunities are there for me, but for patients, it's not easily accessible. My biggest goal is to finish college and become a psychologist. Once I was in the therapist's office, it was reaffirming what I wanted to do."

-College student,  
Ottumwa

"Part of it is Hispanics have not been represented in the science of psychology. It's not culturally responsive since psychology started. But I think it's changing slowly. Psychology is becoming more culturally responsive. It's tough, because there are stigmas in our community about mental health."

-Therapist,  
Sioux City

# Sources and Methods

**"We are at that time when things are changing. This story session, right here, is what needs to happen." - High school student, Sioux City**



### Sources

Data element	Source
Population	2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau
Employment, workforce, income, poverty	American Community Survey 2016-2020 five-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Population forecasts	Woods and Poole demographic forecast, Iowa State Data Center
High school graduation rates	Iowa Department of Education
Educational attainment	American Community Survey 2016-2020 five-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Homeownership disparity model data	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2015-2019, US Census Bureau
Income disparity model data	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2015-2019, US Census Bureau
Estimating benefits of citizenship	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2015-2019, US Census Bureau
Life expectancy	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation
Health care access	American Community Survey 2016-2020 five-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Immunization rates	National Immunization Survey, Public Use Data File
Mortality causes and rates	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER system
COVID-19 cases and deaths	The COVIDtracking project, <i>The Atlantic</i>

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### Statistical methods

#### Homeownership model

Disparities in homeownership were modeled using weighted logistic regression models where homeownership was modeled as a function of ethnicity, age, immigration, recent geographic mobility, educational attainment, and household income along with interaction terms for public use microdata area. All of these variables were statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level. The model was used to predict homeownership rates and to identify how each factor explains the gap in homeownership by ethnicity.

#### Income model

Disparities in income were modeled using linear regression where household income was modeled as a function of ethnicity, age, educational attainment, gender, hours worked, industry, and college degree field. Interaction terms were specified to capture ethnicity-educational effects. All of these factors were statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

#### Forecasts

Forecasts of total earnings through 2050 were modeled using the Woods and Poole demographic forecast model combined with labor inflation adjustments and per-Capita income assumptions with and without closing the gap in disparities. Forecasts of homeownership and poverty were similarly modeled using the Woods and Poole demographic forecast combined with disparities assumptions.

### Measuring the undocumented immigrant community and estimating effects of citizenship

The undocumented immigrant community was estimated using the public use microdata sample from the US Census Bureau. Undocumented immigrants are not identified in the survey; however, methodologies have been developed to identify likely undocumented immigrants. This analysis followed the approach originally developed by [George Borjas](#) of Harvard University, which was later used in a [nation-wide analysis](#) conducted by Giovanni Peri and Reem Zaiour of the University of California, Davis.

### Estimating the undocumented Latino population

The process for estimating the likely undocumented population in Central Iowa is as follows:

1. Remove citizens
2. Remove those receiving Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, Medicare, or military insurance
3. Remove veterans
4. Remove those working in the government sector or currently serving in the armed forces
5. Remove those who reside in public housing, receive rental subsidies, or have a spouse who does
6. Remove those with occupations that require licensing
7. Remove people with authorized immigrant or citizen spouses
8. Remove people who arrived before 1980

### Estimating the DACA eligible population

The DACA eligible population is a subset of the undocumented population who were younger than 16 years old at arrival, are 15 years or older, were born after 1981, have resided in the US since 2007, and are enrolled in school or graduated from high school.

### Estimating the wage and economic benefits of citizenship

Undocumented workers have limited access to many jobs. A linear regression model was used to estimate the wage increase that would occur resulting from citizenship by regressing the income of Latinos on age, age squared, sex, educational attainment, and undocumented status.

### Community story sessions methods

Statistics from this report were reviewed by 64 Latino Iowans. Reviewers included the Latinx Project Collaborative Leadership Team and participants in community story sessions. The Collaborative Leadership Team convened and led seven 90-minute story sessions. They reviewed statistics about demographics, economics, housing, households, education, immigration, and health. They shared stories to explain the context behind the numbers. Story sessions were held in Marshalltown, Ottumwa, Sioux City (two sessions), Storm Lake, Waterloo, and West Liberty. Session participants included English language conversations with social work and health professionals, high school students, professional Latinas, and college students. Spanish sessions included stories from small business owners and working parents. Their thoughtful considerations generated crucial information to contextualize the quantitative data.

In the story sessions, Leadership Team members guided conversations through questions related to the data. What would it mean if Iowa's estimated 34,500 undocumented Latinos gained a path to citizenship? What are reasons for the wage gap between Latino and white Iowans? What are the best ways to support Iowa's 4,695 Latino-owned businesses? How can high schools and students themselves improve college readiness? How do you understand disparities in homeownership, and what can be done? Through careful analysis and incorporation of stories, participants offered insights to guide strategies for future action. All quotes in this report are direct words from story session participants, with minor editing for clarity and length.

Participants in the group said that more conversations of this type would create strong agendas for change and build connections within communities.

### Story session participants

#### Marshalltown

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Gabriela Duban  
Yadira Guzman, Facilitator  
Magali Marquez\*  
Janet Merlos García  
Jesús Merlos García  
Guadalupe Mondragón  
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Wilfrido Morales Rivas  
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Eduardo Ramírez  
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#### West Liberty

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JJ García  
Carmela Lechuga  
Luz Martinez  
Ed Moreno\*  
Mario Padilla

### A note on terms: Latinx, Latino, Latina

The Latinx Project is a collaborative initiative in Iowa. The collective team chose to use the term Latinx, with an 'x', to envision a community that is inclusive of all genders and nonbinary individuals. "Latinx" was adopted to represent the committees' inclusivity and to present a gender-free alternative to "Latino/Latina" which automatically genders the language.

In order to use a more widely circulating term, *Nuestro Iowa* uses the words Latino, Latina, and Latino/a to describe the community. Latino follows the Spanish language norm of having the masculine form of a noun or adjective represent all in the group, regardless of gender. Latinos can refer to men and women, or just men. Latina refers to women only. Latino/a is a more gender-inclusive expression.

Hispanic is not used in this report because the term excludes members of our community with ethnic origins in Latin America but whose roots do not reflect Spanish origin, such as Brazilian and Indigenous people. However, Hispanic is a familiar and useful term for some members of the community.

There is no universally accepted term to describe the effort to assign a U.S. racial/ethnic identity to our community. Language is evolving, and this evolution is reflected in the name of the Latinx Project and the terminology used in the report.

## Leadership team and sponsors

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### Collaborative Leadership Team

**Des Moines**

Dawn Martínez Oropeza\*<sup>^</sup>  
Erica Johnson<sup>^</sup>  
Rob X. Barron<sup>^</sup>

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**Waterloo**

Claudia Rivera

\*Iowa Latinx Project co-leader

<sup>^</sup>Founding Latinx Project member

The Iowa Latinx Project is a research and advocacy project whose vision is *a welcoming state where everyone thrives*. The Iowa Latinx Project founding members selected the Collaborative Leadership Team. The sixteen members represent a diversity of industries and life experiences while sharing a desire to work together to eliminate the economic, civic, and social health divides that face the Iowa Latino community.

Team members worked during 2022 and spring 2023. Through their review of data, convening of community story sessions, and ongoing collaboration, they have laid the groundwork for action to realize the vision of the project. The project seeks to create data-driven strategies to eliminate disparities and highlight community assets.

### Latinx Project Sponsors

**Financial support:**

Al Éxito  
Delta Dental  
Ottumwa Legacy Foundation Bright Ideas  
Mid-Iowa Health  
United Way of Central Iowa

**In-kind support:**

Indian Hills Community College, Ottumwa  
Marshalltown Public Library  
PaTi's Libelulas, Waterloo  
Sioux City West High School  
St. Mark Lutheran Church ELCA, Storm Lake  
We Lead, West Liberty

### Consultants

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Darcie Vandegrift, Co-Founder and Qualitative Principal  
Kim Eng Ky, Data Scientist

Yadira Guzman (independent consultant, research on working parents and childcare)