

*Building a Thriving Central Texas*

# **ADVANCING LATINO FUTURES**

2021 Status Report



**Hispanic Impact Fund**  
AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Mural by Christin Apodaca, Photograph by Andrew Anderson

## A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

We are proud to present *Building a Thriving Central Texas: Advancing Latino Futures*. This report is meant to spotlight what life is like for Hispanic families and individuals as we work, play, and live out our lives in the region, including indicators on where our demographic is making social and economic progress and where improvements are needed.

For more than a decade, Austin and Central Texas have continued to experience profound change. Since the creation of the Hispanic Impact Fund in 2017, which focuses on the economic security and advancement of Latinos, we have seen rapid population growth and economic development in the region. However, many Latinos who call Central Texas home are left out of this booming economy and the opportunities it presents due to systemic barriers in education, health, society, and the workforce. This perpetuates a racial wealth divide deeply felt by many Latino families across generations.

Most recently, our community was ravaged by the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri. Latinos as a demographic group were hit hardest by the pandemic in Central Texas, accounting for nearly half the deaths and hospitalizations since March 2020. As Latinos worked many of the in-person jobs that kept the economy going and on track for recovery, many were asked to put their economic security at odds with their health and safety.

*Latinos are essential, not expendable.*

As 33% of the region's growing population, our hope is this indicators report highlights opportunities for community partnerships and initiatives to advance Latino futures. Findings in this report are drawn from lived community experience and rigorous data collection with the goal of exploring how Latinos in Central Texas live, work, and play.

We hope you will join our efforts. Throughout this report, you will learn more about the Hispanic Impact Fund at Austin Community Foundation and the landscape of challenges and opportunities facing Latino families across Central Texas. Latinos are the past, present, and future of Central Texas. Together, we can use data to shed light on the disparities in our community and invest in solutions to overcome them. We invite you to join us on this journey to build a more equitable Central Texas.

Sincerely,

**Yvette Ruiz** (*she/her/hers*)

*Co-Chairs, Hispanic Impact Fund*

**Sergio Rodriguez** (*he/him/his*)

# ABOUT

## AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Austin Community Foundation is a catalyst for generosity in Austin. We bring together philanthropists, dollars and ideas to build a better Austin today and tomorrow. Our work and leadership is focused on closing the opportunity gap through advancing economic security and affordable housing. Since its inception in 1977, the Foundation has granted more than \$413 million to nonprofits across Central Texas.

### OUR APPROACH:

- / **Inform.** We apply data to understand the greatest needs to close the opportunity gap in Central Texas.
- / **Invite.** We bring funders, leaders and organizations to the table.
- / **Invest.** We make a collective impact by informing and engaging donors and fundholders and together making philanthropic investments that shape Austin's future, today.



## THE HISPANIC IMPACT FUND

The Hispanic Impact Fund is a signature program of Austin Community Foundation. Our mission is to bridge the racial wealth divide and advance economic opportunity for Latino families in Central Texas. We do this as a collective of corporate and individual philanthropy, supporting access to the Latino-serving nonprofits of our region across three strategic impact areas: early childhood education, health & wellness, and job skills & entrepreneurship.

Since 2017, Hispanic Impact Fund investors have awarded \$655,000 to 17 local nonprofits, serving 4,500 Latino families across the region. This includes expanding access to early childhood education with dual generation programming for over 370 families, providing culturally competent physical health, mental health, and health education services to 2,100 families, and enrolling nearly 2,000 individuals in job skills and entrepreneurship training programs for those looking to advance in the workplace or expand their small businesses.

You can learn more about our collective community efforts at: [austincf.org/hispanic-impact-fund](https://austincf.org/hispanic-impact-fund)

# METHODOLOGY

This report was developed in collaboration with local and national Latino consultants from designEDengagement, PBC. The data that appears in this report is publicly available through the United States Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators (A<sup>2</sup>SI) Community Survey, Prosperity Now, governmental databases, Predictive DataLab, and other trusted research institutes.

Additionally, Austin Community Foundation worked with designEDengagement, PBC to collect community perspectives that capture the Latino experience as it pertains to the current state of economic opportunity in Central Texas. Over 100 perspectives were collected during focus groups with Latino community members that spanned the Central Texas region, including lived experience and socioeconomic status. Quotes from these focus groups that represent a shared perspective are offered throughout the report to highlight the Latino lived experience in Central Texas.

You can learn more about the human-centered approach of designEDengagement, PBC at: [designedengagement.com](https://designedengagement.com)

## GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, the geographic area covered in the report includes the Central Texas region, which describes Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties.



## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In the United States, there is a complex discussion between the terms **Hispanic**, **Latino**, and **Latinx** for individuals of Latin American descent. And if you were born in Texas, there is an additional identifier – Tejano – that further adds to that complexity.

While many Latinos identify based on their country of origin, there is a need to measure our shared experience, as we will highlight in this report. According to the Pew Research Center, Hispanic was put into use by the United States (U.S.) government in the 1970s after Mexican Americans and other Spanish-speaking organizing groups demanded the federal government officially collect data on Spanish-speaking populations.<sup>1</sup> The term Latino was first used by the federal government in the 1990s when many Latino groups cited that the term Hispanic embraced the Spanish colonialism of the Americas.<sup>2</sup>

The term Latinx is the newest pan-ethnic term, rising in popularity since 2016 and cited as a gender-neutral, community-inclusive term and popular among those with multiple identities, such as individuals of Latin American descent that also identify as Dreamers, undocumented, LGBTQ+, and/or disabled.<sup>3</sup>

These terms are valid because they represent *real people and experiences* across multiple generations. Each term is used by individuals and institutions alike to identify and collect data on the white and non-white individuals across our community. For the purposes of this report we have adopted the term Latino.



# INTRODUCTION



Mural by Will Watch Crosby, Photograph by Julie Garcia

Building a Thriving Central Texas: Advancing Latino Futures explores both the rich contributions of Latinos and the opportunity to support their progress through a data-driven and community-led report. As you will see, despite a long history in the region and growing population, Latinos face structural and systemic barriers in advancing their futures.

The report examines the contributions and challenges Latinos face from cradle to career through four critical areas:



**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION**



**HEALTH &  
WELLNESS**



**JOB SKILLS &  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



**LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT**

## 1 IN 3 CENTRAL TEXANS ARE LATINO

The purpose of this report is to share a clear picture of data-driven and community-centered insights that highlight both the contributions of Latinos and the inequities that directly affect their progress. We strongly believe that by highlighting these inequities, we can begin to collectively create innovative solutions to support the advancement of the Latino community in all parts of society and build a thriving Central Texas.

The data and community perspectives we present demonstrate the tremendous contribution Latinos make to the Central Texas region as well as the challenges they face to live, work, and play and achieve the same quality of life as their white counterparts.

With Latinos as the largest ethnic group in the Central Texas region – with promise to continue growing – Central Texas would benefit exponentially if all residents had equitable access and opportunity to thrive.

# LATINOS IN CENTRAL TEXAS

## POPULATION

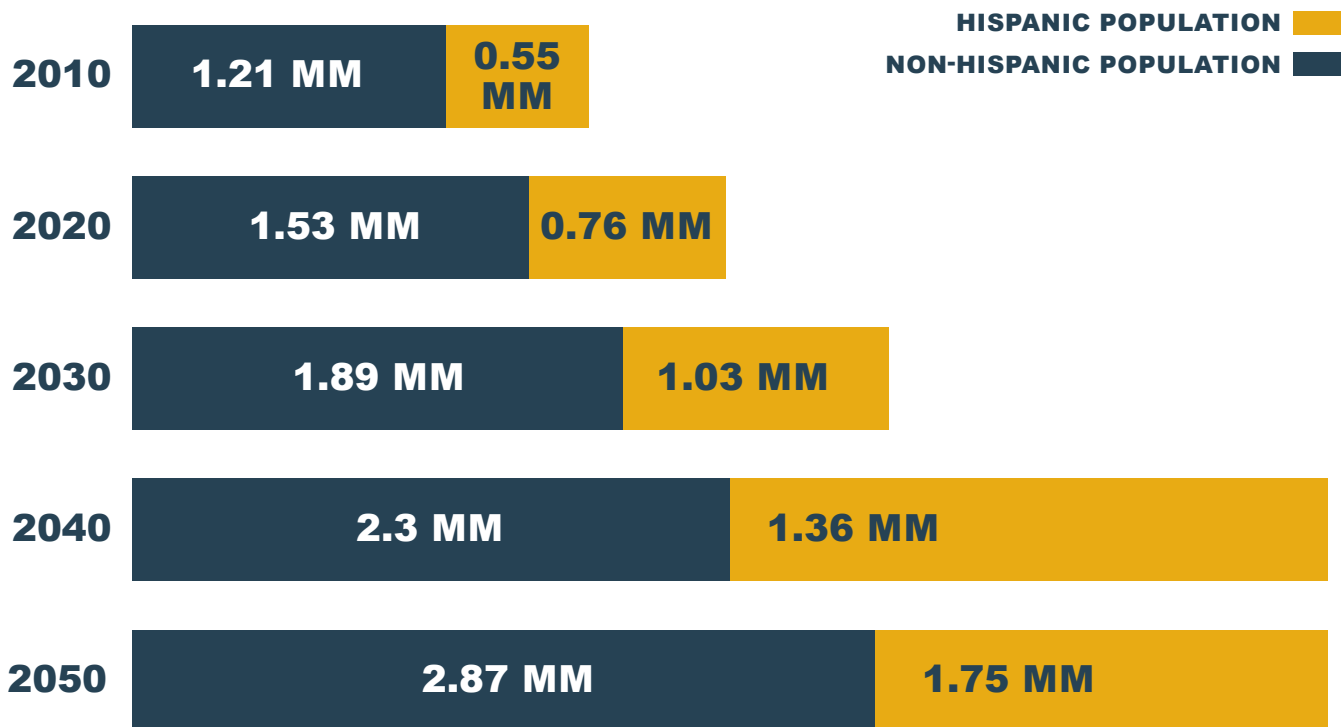
Central Texas is a rich and vibrant community that is experiencing rapid growth with about 150 new people moving to the region each day.<sup>4</sup> The Central Texas population is nearly 2.5 million with **one in every three people identifying as Latino**, which means nearly one million Latinos now call the region home.<sup>5</sup>

- / Latinos make up 33% of the total population in Central Texas.<sup>6</sup>
- / Central Texas is forecasted to remain a majority-minority region, with Latinos on track to become the largest demographic.<sup>7</sup>
- / By 2050, Latinos are projected to be the largest ethnic group in Central Texas at 38%, slightly surpassing the white demographic.<sup>8</sup>
- / The Latino population is expected to grow by 130% from 2020 to 2050, whereas the total population is only expected to grow by 100%.<sup>9</sup>



*It is hard not to see us. There are so many of us.*

## CENTRAL TEXAS POPULATION PROJECTION <sup>10</sup>

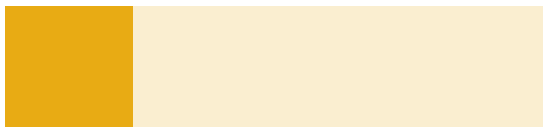


# PLACE OF BIRTH

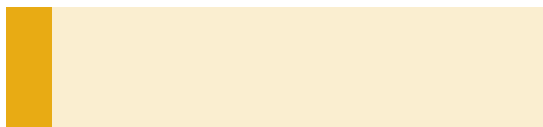
Latinos have a long history of contributing to every facet of the Central Texas region, even before Texas was part of the U.S. Thousands of Latinos who identify as Mexican American are descendants of families who were native to the Central Texas region when it was still under Mexican rule in 1836.<sup>11</sup> Although there are many Latino immigrants, it is a common misconception that all Latinos emigrated from a Latin American country.



**75%** of Latinos in Central Texas were born in the U.S.<sup>12</sup>



**18%** of Latinos in Central Texas are foreign born, not U.S. citizens.<sup>13</sup>



**7%** of Latinos in Central Texas are foreign born, naturalized citizens.<sup>14</sup>

The U.S. Census uses the term "foreign born" to refer to anyone who is not a U.S. Citizen at birth.

This includes naturalized U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (immigrants), temporary migrants (such as foreign students), humanitarian migrants (such as refugees and asylees) and undocumented migrants. The Census Bureau collects data from all foreign born who participate in its censuses and surveys, regardless of legal status. Thus, undocumented migrants are included in Census Bureau estimates of the total foreign-born population.<sup>15</sup>



Mural by Raul Valdez, Photograph by Julie Garcia

Additionally, Latinos are often classified as a monolith usually being profiled as having Mexican heritage when in reality Latinos in Central Texas have roots from any or multiple of the 33 Latin American countries, as well as other countries and territories.

# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

LATINOS IN CENTRAL TEXAS <sup>16</sup>	2016	2019
Less than high school diploma	26%	24%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	26%	27%
Some college or Associates degree	24%	23%
Bachelor's degree	17%	18%
Graduate or professional degree	6%	7%

## AGE



Latinos make up 43% of the total youth population in Central Texas.<sup>17</sup>



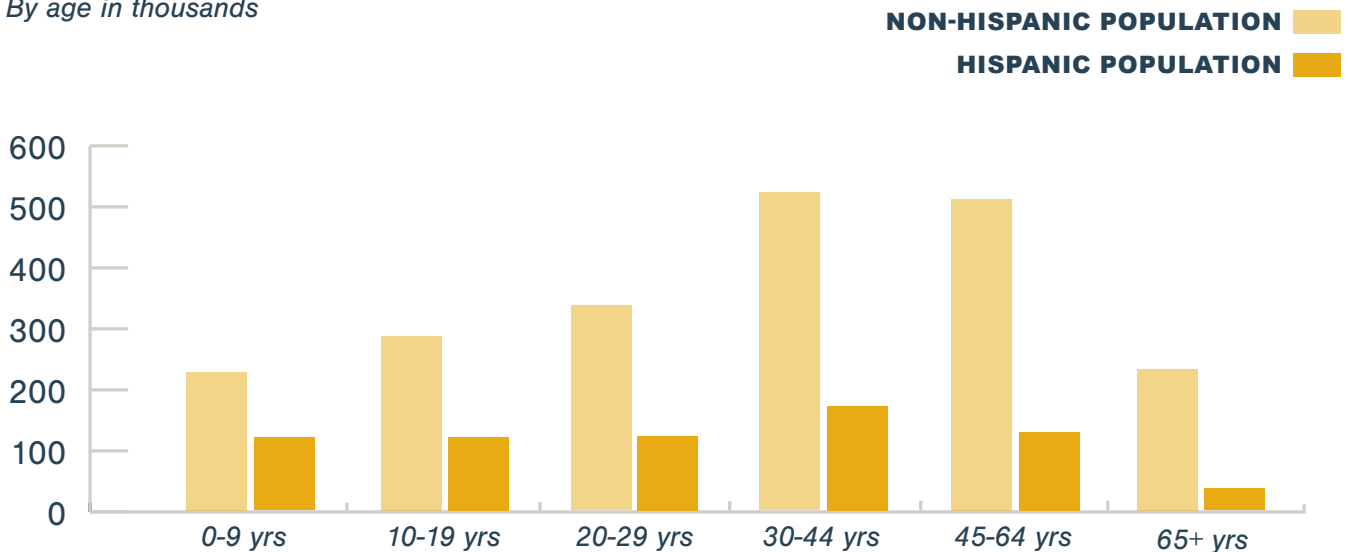
Young adults and the working-age population (19-64 years) make up the majority of the Latino population at 64%.<sup>18</sup>



Latino youth (18 and under) grew by 24% from 2010 - 2020. This demographic previously grew by 73% between 2000 - 2010.<sup>19</sup>

## 2019 HISPANIC POPULATION <sup>20</sup>


By age in thousands





# RACIAL WEALTH DIVIDE

## HOUSEHOLDS WITH ZERO NET WORTH <sup>21</sup>

 **30%**  
OF BLACK HOUSEHOLDS

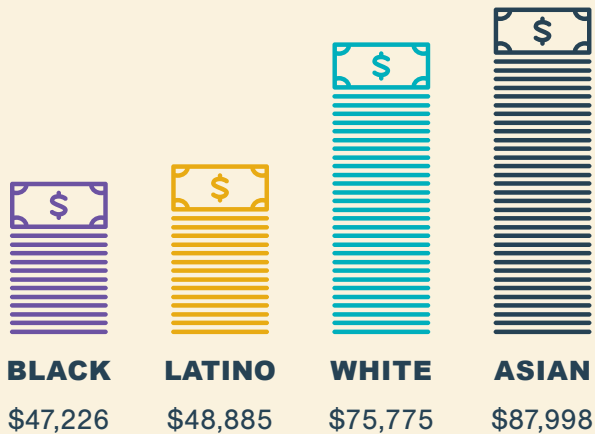
 **27%**  
OF LATINO HOUSEHOLDS

 **15%**  
OF WHITE HOUSEHOLDS

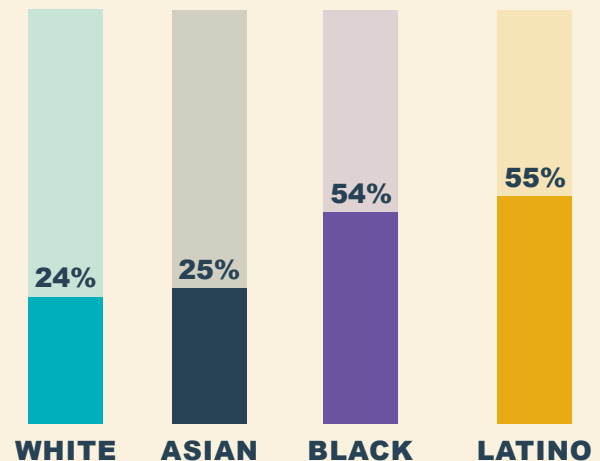
 **11%**  
OF ASIAN HOUSEHOLDS

*Despite being one of the nation's fastest growing regions, a major tech center, and the level of economic opportunity boasted in the media, Latinos in the Austin Metropolitan Area face deep economic inequality.*

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME <sup>22</sup>



## LIQUID ASSET POVERTY BY RACE <sup>23</sup>

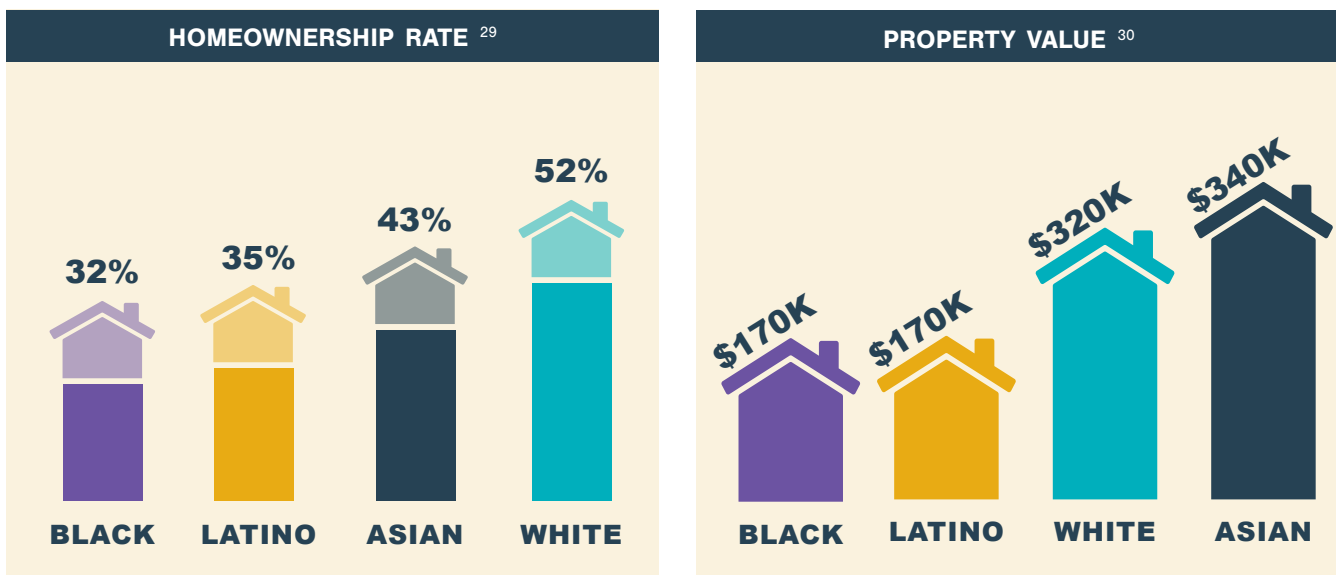


## IN THE AUSTIN METRO...

- / The poverty rate for Latinos (18.2%) is more than quadruple the poverty rate for whites (3.8%).<sup>24</sup>
- / The disparity in poverty rates is even more dramatic for children in Travis County. 24% of Latino children live below the federal poverty level, compared to 5% of white children.<sup>25</sup>
- / The median Latino household earns almost \$27,000 less than the median white household.<sup>26</sup>
- / The liquid asset poverty rate for Latinos is more than twice the rate for whites. A family lives in liquid asset poverty if they don't have enough money or assets to replace three months of basic living expenses in the event of a sudden job loss, medical emergency, or another financial hardship.<sup>27</sup>
- / 26% of Latino households have zero net worth, compared to 16% of white households.<sup>28</sup>

# RACIAL WEALTH DIVIDE

## HOMEOWNERSHIP



Homeownership can provide pathways to upward economic mobility, but both structural racism and market conditions can undermine homeownership as an asset-building vehicle. Housing builds assets and wealth when homeowners are able to afford to buy a home, successfully pay subsequent mortgage payments, and benefit from their home's equity and price appreciation. Although rental housing programs also exist to build assets, less longitudinal evidence supports whether and how they support long-term asset building.<sup>34</sup>



The Latino homeownership rate in Austin is just 35%, compared to 52% for white homeowners.<sup>31</sup>



The average Latino property value in Austin is about half the average white property value.<sup>32</sup>



Latinos in Austin pay 6x the median family income when purchasing a median-priced home, while the median white family pays 4x their annual income for the same purchase.<sup>33</sup>



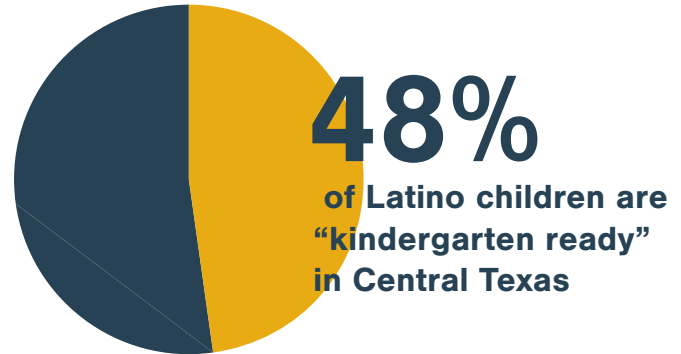
*I do have access to things, but I am a white Latina, with a college education. It is not the same for my friends who have darker skin or thicker accents. So, they should be invited to the table too.*

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Kindergarten-readiness is essential for improving long-term academic outcomes for Latino children. Ensuring access to affordable, high-quality pre-K and early childhood education starting at age 3, strengthens the pipeline from cradle to career for Latino families. A child who is prepared for kindergarten is four to five times more likely to pass Texas reading and math assessments by the 3rd grade.<sup>35</sup> By focusing on the young children in our community, we can improve education outcomes for years to come.

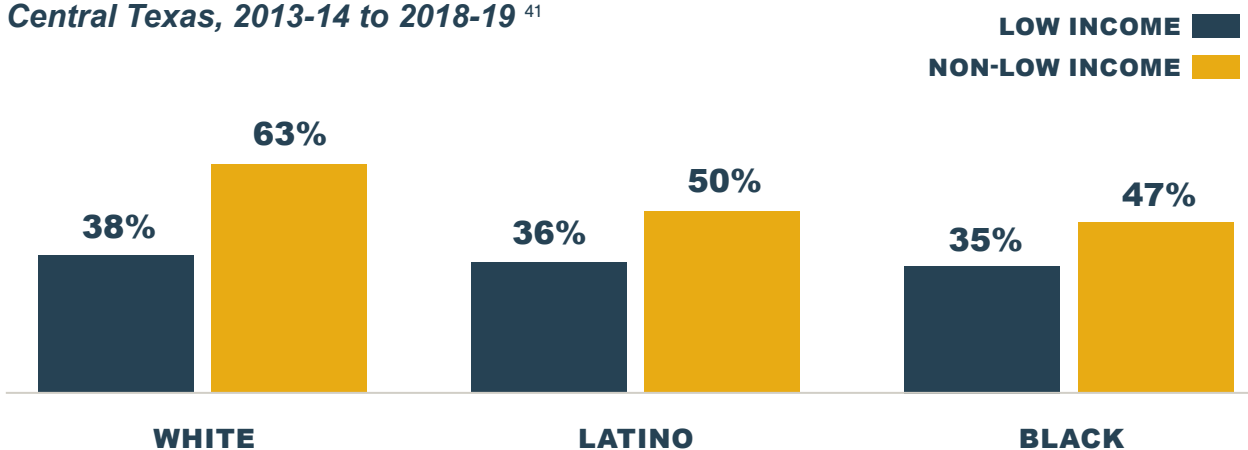
- / Less than half (48%) of Latino children entering kindergarten in Central Texas are deemed “kindergarten ready” at the start of the school year.<sup>36</sup>
- / In low-income Latino families, only 36% of children are considered kindergarten ready.<sup>37</sup>
- / Low-income kindergartners with pre-K experience were almost 3 times more likely to be kindergarten ready than their peers without pre-K.<sup>38</sup>
- / Social-emotional readiness is a major component of kindergarten-readiness. Before the pandemic, Latino social-emotional readiness for kindergarten was rebounding at 56%.<sup>39</sup>
- / Latinos benefit the most out of any other race or ethnicity when enrolled in at least 80 days of pre-K the year before starting school.<sup>40</sup>



*I prefer my children go to a pre-K that is teaching them important things, such as the alphabet and numbers, than to be left with relatives when I go to work. And that’s what happens a lot, because obviously the family is not going to charge you. A quality, inexpensive option is necessary.*

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Central Texas, 2013-14 to 2018-19 <sup>41</sup>



# HEALTH & WELLNESS

Access to affordable, preventative health care is a key factor in helping Latino families avoid unexpected health crises and resultant financial ruin. Focusing on preventative, culturally competent health education and access to quality mental and physical health services can lead to improved health outcomes for our community.<sup>42</sup>



just over  
**1 in 5**

Latinos in central Texas are uninsured

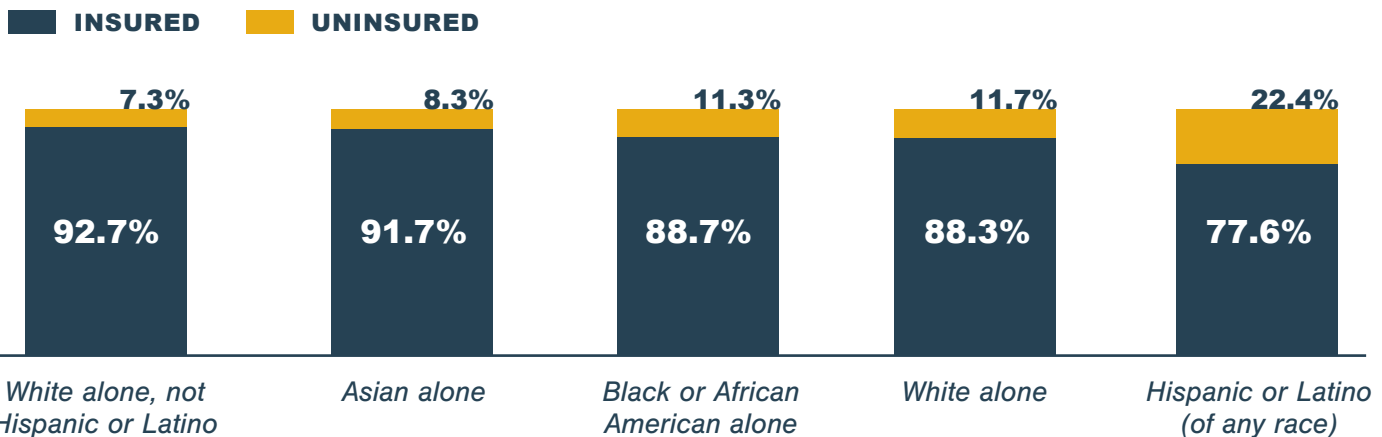


*As a new business owner, income can fluctuate, and I may have insurance that might not take the physician I am going after. So that for me has been a barrier. I just want access to knowledge and someone who supports my health in a way I see aligned with my lifestyle and my vision for my health.*

## IN CENTRAL TEXAS...

- / 1 in 4 working-age Latino adults have no primary healthcare provider.<sup>43</sup>
- / 22% of Latinos are uninsured, compared to only 7% of whites.<sup>44</sup>
- / Latino adults are more likely to be overweight, which is a predictor for many health challenges.<sup>45</sup>
- / 1 out of every 2 Latinos will develop diabetes in their lifetime. Latinos are at a 66% greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes than their white counterparts.<sup>46</sup>
- / Latinos with diabetes are 50% more likely to die from the disease than whites.<sup>47</sup>
- / As with other chronic conditions, 1 in 5 Latinos with diabetes report having depressive symptoms. Latinos are less likely than whites to seek treatment for depression.<sup>48</sup>
- / 64% of Latinos who receive health information, regardless of the source, changed their diet or exercise regimes.<sup>49</sup>

## PERCENTAGE OF UNINSURED <sup>50</sup>



# JOB SKILLS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Many Latinos are confined to minimal incomes, accelerating the racial wealth divide. To combat this, we must train and equip Latinos with the skills needed to obtain high-demand, living-wage jobs with opportunities for advancement. We must also assist Latino entrepreneurs in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to expand their businesses.

<b>MOST COMMON JOB SECTORS BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN 2020</b> <sup>51</sup>	<b>LATINO</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>GENERAL POPULATION</b>
Management, Business, science and arts occupations	34%	58%	36%	50%
Service occupations	23%	15%	21%	15%
Sales and office occupations	20%	19%	22%	20%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	14%	6%	3%	8%
Production, transportation, and material moving operations	10%	5%	17%	7%

- / Latinos make up about 31% of the workforce in Central Texas.<sup>52</sup>
- / Nearly 3 out of 4 Latinos are in the paid labor force.<sup>53</sup>
- / Unemployment rates for the Latino population have been consistently higher than the unemployment rate for the white population.<sup>54</sup>
- / Over the last 10 years, there has been an increase of 8% in the proportion of Latino business owners.<sup>55</sup>
- / However, nearly half of businesses owned by Latinos in Austin have revenues of less than \$100,000 per year.<sup>56</sup>
- / One in four Austin area residents feel limited “somewhat” or “a great deal” by their lack of English language skills in their ability to get a job. This perception is stronger among Hispanics where nearly 40% of Latinos report feeling limited by English literacy.<sup>57</sup>



***We’re lucky in Austin that we have jobs. What we need to do is ensure that we’re filling those gaps in the job market and teaching the skill sets that are actually needed so that Latinos can create long-term career paths with the jobs that currently exist in the market.***



**4 out of 10**  
 Latinos in Central Texas report feeling limited by English literacy.



# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Latino leadership matters. Although Latinos in Central Texas represent a third of the population, they are not proportionately reflected in key leadership positions across all sectors. Supporting the advancement of Latino leadership and creating pipelines of youth, emerging, and established Latino talent are critical to building a thriving Central Texas.

## CORPORATE SECTOR REPRESENTATION



- / Latinos represent 18.5% of the U.S. population but only 4% of business executives in the U.S.<sup>58</sup>
- / Austin ranks 40th among the 50 largest U.S. cities in Latino executive representation.<sup>59</sup>
- / Latinos in Austin are 29% of the overall workforce and hold 7% of all executive positions.<sup>60</sup>
- / For comparison, San Antonio ranks 12th out of the top 50 – Latinos are 53% of the overall workforce and 20% of the city’s executives.<sup>61</sup>

## NONPROFIT SECTOR REPRESENTATION



- / Latinos barely represent 5% of nonprofit board members in the U.S.<sup>62</sup>
- / 27% of nonprofit boards report their membership being all white.<sup>63</sup>
- / People of color have never represented more than 18% of board membership in the U.S.<sup>64</sup>
- / 60% of all nonprofits report serving people of color.<sup>65</sup>

## PUBLIC SECTOR REPRESENTATION



- / A 2021 survey of the Texas Legislature found there were 46 Latino legislators and 110 white legislators.<sup>66</sup>
- / If the Texas Legislature proportionately reflected Texans, there would be 72 Latino legislators and 74 white legislators.<sup>67</sup>
- / None of the 7-member Central Texas delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives are Latino.<sup>68</sup>
- / Currently, 3 out of 10 (30%) Austin City Council seats are held by Latinos.<sup>69</sup>



***We need to get more Latinos to visualize themselves in leadership roles. I don't think that everyone's clear on what the pipeline looks like to move into leadership. There are many opportunities from elected positions to boards and commissions. Latinos are such a large portion of the population, the representation isn't equal to reflect our numbers.***



Mural by Felipe Garza, Photograph by Julie Garcia

## CONCLUSION

Latinos are the future of Central Texas. At 33% of the population, the largest growing demographic of the region, Latino contributions to culture and economy can be felt everywhere. From the businesses Latinos own, to the art, food, and music everyone enjoys. Latinos are Central Texas. Yet, even as Austin and Central Texas thrive economically, Latinos are often left behind.

However, we refuse to accept these current realities as permanent, and we can change them together. By investing in data-informed and community-led solutions to expand access to early childhood education, health & wellness, job skills & entrepreneurship, and leadership development, together we can advance Latino futures and build a thriving Central Texas.



***Latinos make up a notable percentage of the Central Texas population and we miss a significant economic opportunity if we fail to invest in advancing Latino futures.***

## ENDNOTES

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