

Freeing Our Futures: How Data Can Inform New Economic Strategies for Boys and Men of Color

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RISE for Boys and Men of Color is a field advancement effort that aims to better understand and strategically improve the lives, experiences, and outcomes of boys and men of color in the United States.

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Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
II. INTRODUCTION	5
III. METHODOLOGY	8
IV. PROFILE OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOR: PRESENT CONDITIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.....	9
a. Employment.....	9
b. Education	11
c. Workforce Disconnection	12
V. PIPELINES OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOR: SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES	14
a. Getting into the Pipeline: Barriers in the Education System	14
b. Moving through the Pipeline: Discrimination in Hiring Practices.....	15
c. Once in the Pipeline: The Racial Wage Gap.....	16
d. The Other Pipeline: Imprisonment and Mass Incarceration	21
VI. FALTERING STRUCTURES FOR YOUNG MEN OF COLOR: TRENDS IN THE REGIONAL ECONOMY	23
a. Poverty by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity.....	23
b. Industry Employment by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity	24
c. Regional Geographic Considerations	26
VII. PIPELINES, PATHWAYS, AND POWER: LESSONS, INSIGHTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
a. Building New Pipelines.....	28
b. Forging One’s Own Pathway	29
c. Building Power.....	30
VIII. THE WAY FORWARD: CONCLUSION.....	33
IX. REFERENCES	34
X. APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY.....	37
XI. APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (FOR PRACTITIONERS).....	40
XII. APPENDIX C: SELECTED INTERVIEWEE LIST	42

This report is dedicated to Ray Javier Junior Valles (2000–2017) and the countless youth whose creativity, compassion, and courage in the face of challenge inspire us every day.

Executive Summary

Over the last decade, there has been an important surge in attention to the challenges facing boys and young men of color in the United States. Such initiatives as My Brother's Keeper focus on the alarming educational, employment, and health outcomes among these populations. Yet young men of color represent the future of the United States: between 2010 and 2050, the population of young men of color (ages 10 to 24) is expected to increase by 5.5 million people—spurred by increases in Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), and other nonwhite racial groups while the white young male population will decline by 3.6 million.

However, we cannot get to a universally beneficial set of solutions unless we “disaggregate” the data to understand differences even as we develop shared goals. It is important to take a serious look at the “diversity within the diversity.” For example, by disaggregating data on Latinos by nativity and by immigration status, we can better understand the compounded economic challenges facing the undocumented. Undocumented and mixed-status households often not only have to survive on lower wages but also, in some places, have to live without access to basic social and health services and with the massive mental and physical toll of insecurity.

Education and employment data provide a broad sense of the present conditions faced by young men of color and allow a glimpse into their prospects in a demographically and economically changing United States. This report analyzes education and employment outcomes and the workforce disconnections that occur between the two. Taking a disaggregated look at standard workforce indicators, such as educational attainment, unemployment, and “disconnected” youth, allows for a deeper contextualization of the life outcomes for young men of color.

The established “pipelines” to economic success in the United States often hide the systemic barriers and racial gaps that remain in place. There is a systemic failure to create pipelines geared toward mobility for young men of color. Even if young men of color manage to overcome the barriers in education and direct employment access, they too often find themselves facing substantive racialized wage gaps that dramatically reduce their opportunities for mobility. Additionally, even if education outcomes were improved, wages raised, and job quality improved, young men of color enter all the systems with a historical disadvantage in terms of wealth and the economic security it brings.

Part and parcel to this are the occupational structures in place and the challenges of a changing economy. However, opportunities are emerging for developing power and autonomy within the workforce. Tackling these macro issues means moving away from short-term job placement models to long-term social programs and partnerships. Collaborations across industries and sectors at local and state levels are proving it is possible to garner political will and resources through targeted, innovative projects.

Pushing for innovation requires building power. The magnitude of challenges ahead will require developing or scaling-up long-term social programs through government, private, and nonprofit partnerships. Additionally, traditional unions and new organizing strategies can develop agency and autonomy for young men of color in and out of the workforce, including “making” new markets to reflect demographic and economic changes. Boys and men of color are the workforce of the future. Ensuring they can thrive in their careers requires understanding just who these men are, and disaggregating data provides an avenue for this understanding. We hope this report will shine a light on the faces behind the numbers.

The Future of Boys and Men of Color, and Boys and Men of Color as the Future

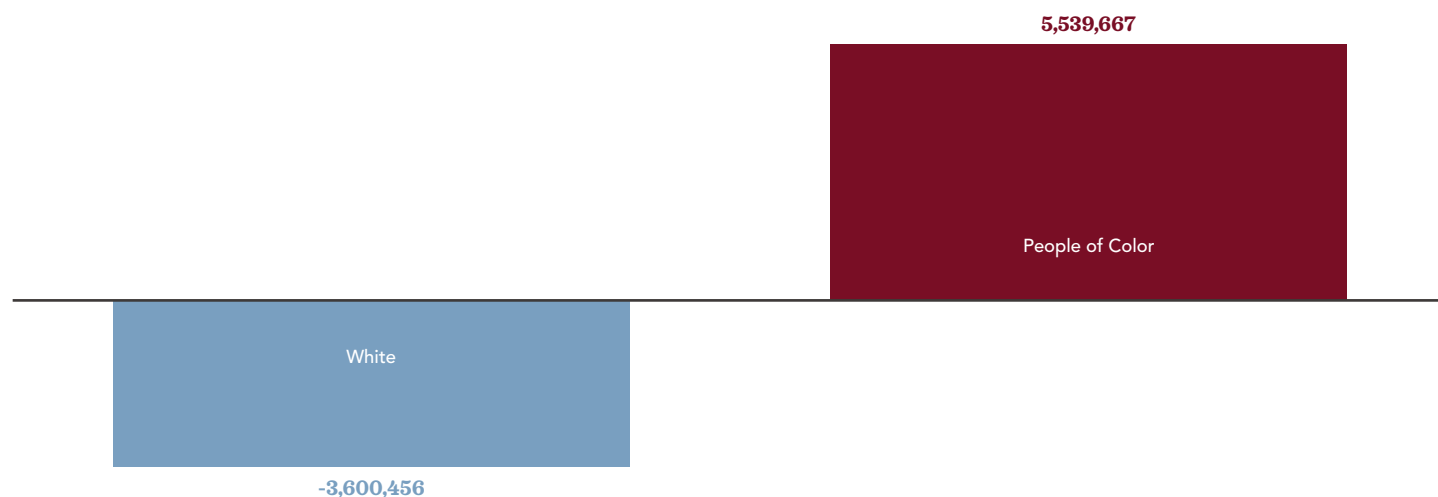
Over the last decade, there has been an important surge in attention to the challenges facing boys and young men of color in the United States. Exemplified by such initiatives as My Brother's Keeper, much of the new philanthropic, academic, and advocacy programming centers on the alarming educational, employment, and health outcomes among these populations, both absolutely and relative to young women of color and white young men. It has become painfully clear that young men of color are being locked up in prisons, locked out of meaningful opportunities, and locked into poverty.

And yet young men of color represent more than a set of struggles or lost opportunities: in many ways, they also represent the future of the United States. Between 2010 and 2050, the population of young men of color (ages 10 to 24) is expected to increase by 5.5 million people, while the white young male population will decline by 3.6 million (Figure 1). It is no exaggeration to say the sustainability of the U.S. economy and society will be determined by the outcomes of young men of color—and by the investments we make today to help provide them avenues to tap into their vast potential.

But while many may agree that improving outcomes for men and boys of color is important for the future of the United States, that still leaves the question of how we get there. Of course, part of this undertaking is building the political will for policy change—which is precisely why this sort of common-ground argument is important. But we cannot get to a universally beneficial set of solutions unless we take a serious look at the “diversity within the diversity”—that is, by “disaggregating” the data to understand difference even as we develop shared goals.

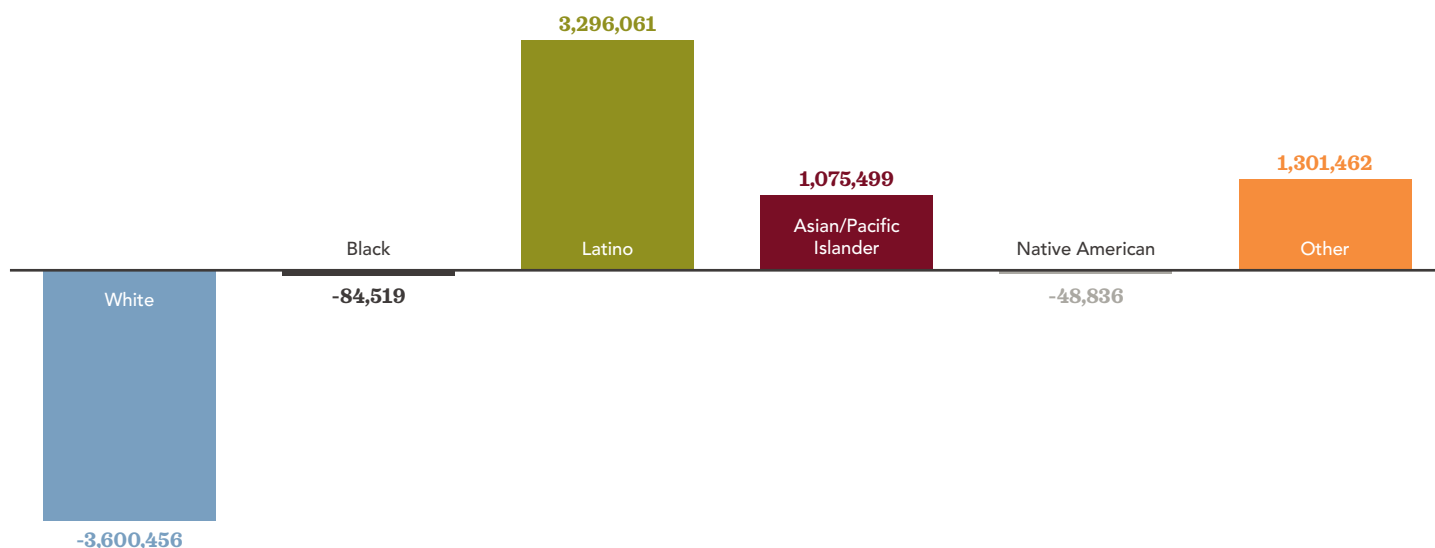
For example, when we break down the data by population, we see that Latino young men represent the largest share of growth from 2010 to 2050—3.3 million—followed by 1.1 million Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) and 1.3 million “other” young men (Figure 2). In fact, Black and Native American population numbers will remain relatively stable. This means that the immigration system—a system that causes insecurity and economic exploitation but is not always front and center in discussions of men and boys of color—will play a huge part in shaping the future of those boys and men.

FIGURE 1 NET CHANGE IN U.S. MALE POPULATION AGES 10 TO 24 YEARS, 2015 TO 2050 (PROJECTED)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 National Population Projections, Table 1. Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2014 to 2060. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj/totals/2012/2012-summary-tables/np2012-t1.xls>

FIGURE 2 NET CHANGE IN U.S. MALE POPULATION AGES 10 TO 24 YEARS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2015 TO 2050 (PROJECTED).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 National Population Projections, Table 1. Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2014 to 2060. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj/totals/2012/2012-summary-tables/np2012-t1.xls>

On the other hand, recent events from Ferguson, Missouri, to Baltimore remind us that young Black men in urban neighborhoods and smaller towns face overpolicing and incarceration rates that far exceed similar data for Latinos (which still exceed those for whites). Opening up opportunities for Black young men requires a full-throated challenge to the extent and nature of criminalizing policies in low-income communities combined with significant attention to the challenges of reentering the labor market after having been snared in the criminal justice system.

Data disaggregation is also helpful to broaden alliances and make connections between experiences. For example, the “model minority” moniker often applied to AAPI youth masks the fact that Pacific Islander, Cambodian, and Filipino men face particularly dire employment prospects. Meanwhile, although Black young men are often invisible in the narrative on immigration, Black immigrants are more likely to be detained and deported for criminal convictions than the rest of the immigrant population (Morgan-Trostle, Zheng, and Lipscombe 2016). In short, disaggregating within the disaggregation can deepen our analysis, refine our policy approaches, and strengthen connections between groups.

Introducing this complexity does not negate the need to emphasize clear parallels among the experiences of all young men of color, particularly the ways in which structural racism locks them out of opportunity. Moreover, many such young men may be living side-by-side in working-class and poor communities of color. But understanding how their experiences differ can help us more effectively address challenges faced by various groups of boys and young men of color. For example, increasing the employment prospects for formerly incarcerated youth—disproportionately Black young men—means specifically addressing barriers in the hiring process and on-the-job dynamics. Ameliorating the experiences of undocumented immigrants, though, will require both short-term technical certification for existing skill sets and long-term workplace organizing and immigration reform.

In this report, we home in on the questions of economic opportunities for boys and young men of color and look to contribute a new understanding of how disaggregated data can inform multifaceted strategies for improving our shared future. We provide a national-level quantitative profile of boys and men of color with disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, sex, age, and nativity for AAPIOs, Blacks, and Latinos. When sample size allows for it, we also include Native Americans. We generally focus on younger men, with the specific age breaks defining “young” varying depending on the variable. We highlight a variety of dimensions of the economic situation of boys and young men, including but not limited to employment, wages, educational attainment, health insurance, and poverty.

DEFINING BOYS AND MEN OF COLOR

Broadly, the data presented in this report categorize people based on their individual responses to the American Community Survey. Unless otherwise noted, people are grouped into six mutually exclusive racial/ethnic groups based on their response to two separate questions on race and Hispanic origin as follows:

- “White” refers to all people who identify as white alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Black” and “African American” refer to all people who identify as Black or African American alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Latino” refers to all people who identify as being of Hispanic origin, regardless of racial identification.
- “Asian American and Pacific Islander” and “AAPI” refer to all people who identify as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Native American” refers to all people who identify as Native American or Alaskan Native alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Other” refers to all people who identify with a single racial category not included above, or who identify with multiple racial categories, and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “People of color” refers to all people who do not identify as of Hispanic origin or white alone.

Drawing from interviews with expert organizers, practitioners, and civic leaders working on economic opportunity, we also lift up lessons, insights, and recommendations for the field. Linking disaggregated data with insights from those on the ground, we work backward from the employment and education data to understand how people get to where they are economically or, even more important, how they get stuck. We trace how traditional pipelines to economic opportunity may be failing boys and young men of color—and how we can repair these pathways. We also look to how we can reimagine and recreate opportunity structures to ensure present and future generations of young people of color not only succeed economically but also have a voice in shaping what their future looks like.

However, we recognize our research has certain limitations. First, our interviews were largely limited to the Los Angeles region. While we outline the rationale for this geographical limitation in the methodology section, we are aware that our qualitative data and interviewee lessons thus focus on a specific regional and state context and that some recommendations might look different elsewhere. Further, owing to the limited criminal justice data available (as we highlight in the report), we relied on existing research to highlight the racial disparities around criminalization and mass incarceration. Finally, when looking at economic outcomes, our analysis focuses on income rather than wealth—which would have included additional measures of household capital accumulation.

We want to point out three additional caveats as we begin. First, although we address specific communities and categories in our data (and detail the reasons for doing so in the appendices), the reality is they often overlap, and many young men belong to numerous intersecting communities and hold complex identities. Second, although we often highlight challenges to inform policy, we recognize that young men of color have myriad capacities and strengths, with those illustrated by the way in which they manage to survive a mostly inhospitable system. Third, while we present data and offer policy discussions, we realize that change really only takes place when communities themselves lift up their voices through community organizing and movement building. Our hope is that this data profile provides a bit of a scaffold for that broader task ahead.

Methodology

This report bridges a broad literature review, with quantitative economic and social data and semi-structured interviews with practitioners in the field of workforce development. The quantitative data presented in this report are generally calculated by the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII), a partner institution of the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), and are based on a pooled sample of 2010–2014 American Community Survey microdata from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (Ruggles et al. 2015).

We calculate all variables from a pooled sample that includes the years 2010 to 2014. There are some downsides to taking a multiyear approach. For example, drawing from the pooled sample is likely to overstate current unemployment rates since the economy has improved over the 2010–2014 period; indeed, 2010, the first year of our sample, is when the economy was first emerging from the Great Recession. But what we sacrifice in terms of recency of the data, we gain in terms of a larger sample size that allows us to disaggregate by race, nativity, immigration status, and other characteristics (such as education level), which is the critical goal here. Moreover, the recency issue is only important for the very few “fast-moving” variables such as employment; it is less important for “slow-moving” variables such as education in which a pooled data set is likely representative of contemporary conditions. A final plus of a pooled sample is that it allows us to apply a tagging system for respondents most likely to be undocumented and parse out how immigration status can affect the aforementioned variables.¹

To select our variables, we conducted a broad literature review (including academic and white papers) centered on the obstacles young men of color face entering and moving through the workforce. This literature review reinforced the need for disaggregated data, as many reports and articles discussed improving the quality of data on the undocumented, Latino, AAPI, and “other” subgroups of young men as important future directions for research. We bring elements of our review into this report; additional sources are also listed in the bibliography for further exploration.

We also selected additional variables based on interviews with seven practitioners in workforce development. These leaders in the field hailed from technical and community colleges, workforce training programs, economic justice organizing, and programs focused on formerly incarcerated young men. Many interviewees have decades of experience in this arena. We interviewed each participant for one to two hours in a location of their choice, using a semistructured interview guide.²

We chose to focus on organizations based in or serving populations in the Los Angeles region. While we recognize that many cities and regions have vastly different economic, demographic, and political situations—and so would need to adjust the policy recommendations accordingly—Los Angeles is home to a wide diversity of Black, AAPI, Latino, and Native American boys and men of color. Because of this, practitioners have often had to think of interlocking solutions and programs to advance the prospects of boys and young men of color, something that might contribute to a sort of national menu for building cross-cutting strategies and goals.

The variables we focus on were selected by analyzing existing literature and by looking at our interview data, as explained below. The variables include

POPULATION VARIABLES

- Gender
- Age group
- Race/ethnicity
- Nativity and immigration status

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VARIABLES

- Educational attainment
- Disconnected youth
- Unemployment
- Self-employment rates
- Median wages and the share of workers earning at least \$15 an hour
- Industries
- Poverty rate
- Working poverty rate
- Health insurance rates

¹ For more details on our quantitative methods, including the estimates for undocumented populations, please see Appendix A.

² We provide a copy of the interview guide in Appendix B. Appendix C has a partial list of interviewees (several asked to remain anonymous).

Profile of Young Men of Color: Present Conditions and Future Prospects

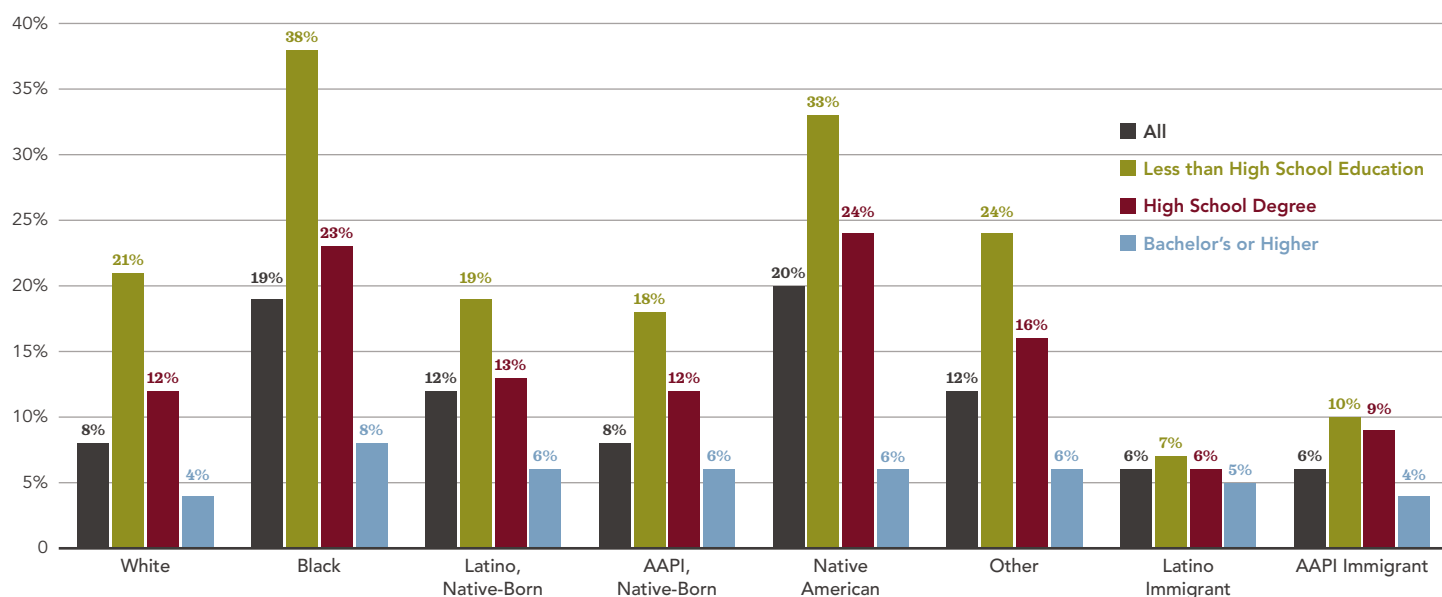
For many young men of color, employment and education are often viewed as primary stabilizing forces in their lives—and avenues to economic success. Education and employment data can give us a broad sense of the present conditions faced by young men of color *and* a glimpse into their prospects in a demographically and economically changing United States. Disaggregating this data gives us a stronger sense of how conditions might differ across communities, a step toward asking *why* we see the outcomes we do (and the differences among them) and how we can change such realities.

EMPLOYMENT

We begin by looking at unemployment rates. How have U.S. men ages 25 to 34 fared in accessing work? Here the big news is somewhat familiar to anyone who has looked at labor market data: Black and Native American men have much higher unemployment rates, experiencing a 19 percent and 20 percent unemployment rate, respectively, compared with 8 percent among white and AAPI native-born men. Native-born Latino and other men are in between the two, at 12 percent, while Latino and AAPI immigrants have the lowest rates of any group, at 6 percent (Figure 3).

Drilling down further, the employment gap that Black and Native American men face skyrockets among those with less than a high school degree; Black men in this group face 38 percent unemployment and Native American men 33 percent unemployment. Notably, Black and Native American men with high school degrees still have higher unemployment rates than nearly every other group among those with less than a high school education; it is only when comparing all groups with a college degree that the unemployment gap diminishes significantly. Another striking pattern shows up in the relative stability of low unemployment rates across educational levels for Latino immigrants, but a look at the disaggregated data tells another story, an issue we address later.

FIGURE 3 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIVITY, AND EDUCATION



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: A person is unemployed if they are in the labor force and currently looking for work. The unemployment rate is the share of unemployed persons out of the total labor force (the sum of those currently employed and those unemployed).

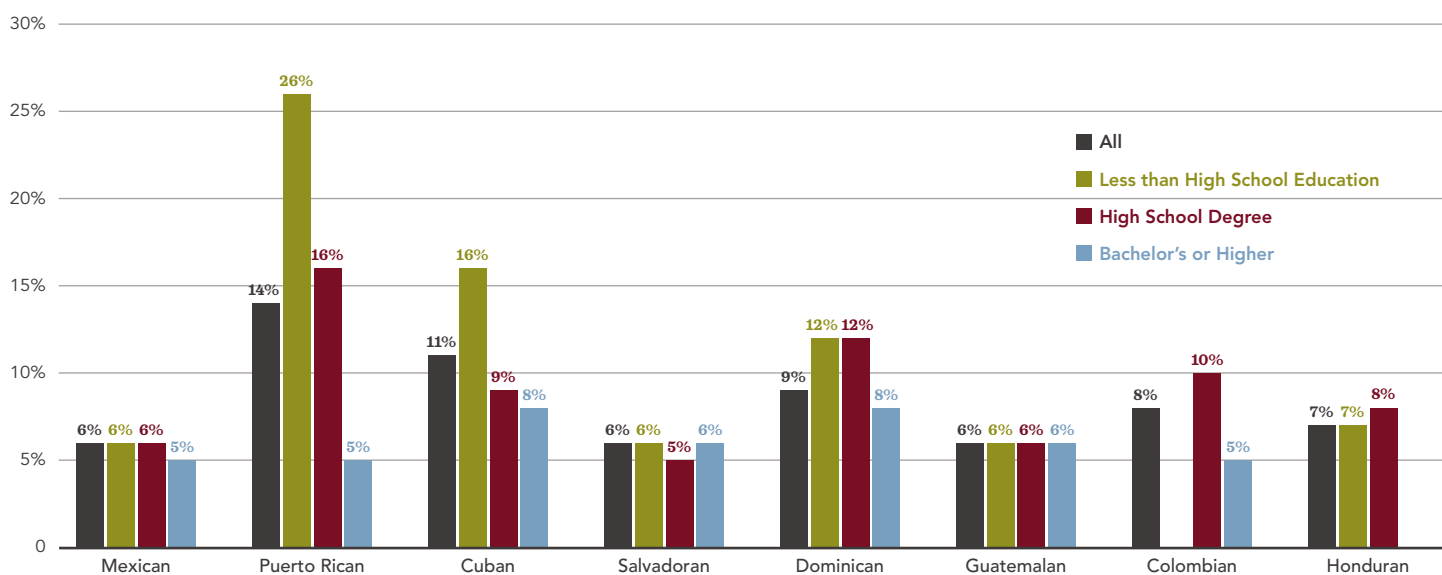
Missing from this picture of course are women: while men face varying unemployment across groups, over the last 60 years, the employment gap between men and women has narrowed tremendously. White women experienced only a nine-point “gender employment rate differential” compared with white men in 2008, a drop from 55 points in 1950, but among Black women this rate was negative. In other words, Black women were much more likely to be employed than men (Hester, Meyer, and Raphael 2012). This is even truer after 2008: Black women had a 4 percent lower unemployment rate than Black men overall among those ages 25 to 34.

Many well-studied factors explain gender-based employment differentials—the increased participation of women in the workforce, declining fertility and marriage rates, and increased educational attainment among women—but the key difference is that Black men’s employment rates continue to drop at rates that far surpass any other group (Hester, Meyer, and Raphael 2012; Holzer, Offner, and Sorensen 2005). Part of this is because African American men seem to bear the brunt of cycles of economic dislocation. In some cases, research has found that for every 1 percent increase in unemployment, Black men experience a 3 percent reduction in local employment (Holzer and Offner 2002). The rates for youth are even starker: while the rate of employment for white young men (ages 25 to 29) decreased 11 percentage points between 1970 and 2010, the rate for Black young men dropped by twice this amount (Neal and Rick 2014).

Employment data also do not fully capture the impacts of mass incarceration, which hits young Black men overwhelmingly hard. The unemployment rate is supposed to consider the “active” labor population and as such does not include those in prisons and jails (Petit 2012). Some estimates suggest that including this population can drop the employment rate of Black young men (ages 16 to 34) by upward of 20 percent (Holzer, Offner, and Sorensen 2005). And while much has been written about Black-white employment differentials, Native American populations, less often discussed in the scholarly literature, experience unemployment rates similar to Black populations. There is one difference, however: the gender differences between men and women are reversed, with Native American women ages 25 to 34 without a high school degree experiencing a 3 percent higher unemployment rate than Native American men of a similar educational cohort.

Similar to Black young men, Latinos are more susceptible to macroeconomic shocks. The Great Recession dramatically worsened the employment situation for Latino men: from 2007 to 2010, Latino unemployment jumped from 6 to 15 percent, a situation worsened by their concentration in hard-hit states (Mather and Jacobsen 2010). However, unlike Black men, Latino men have experienced a bounce-back in the years since; looking at 2016 unemployment data from the March supplement of the Current Population Survey, Latino, AAPI, and white young men (ages 25 to 34) all have unemployment rates below 7 percent, while Black and Native American young men have rates of almost 13 percent.

FIGURE 4 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG U.S. LATINO IMMIGRANT MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY ANCESTRY AND EDUCATION



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: A person is unemployed if they are in the labor force and currently looking for work. The unemployment rate is the share of unemployed persons out of the total labor force (the sum of those currently employed and those unemployed).

While the overall rates for Latino and Asian American men hover near those of white populations, rates begin to fluctuate dramatically when data are further disaggregated (Figure 4). For example, unemployment varies among different Latino immigrant subgroups when we further disaggregate by ancestry. Over one-quarter of Puerto Rican young men without a high school degree are unemployed, far outpacing all other groups.³ Nonetheless, as educational attainment rises, the unemployment rate for Puerto Ricans falls in line with other Latinos. In contrast, Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants have some of the lowest unemployment rates of all Latinos but have the highest rates of working poverty among immigrant Latino men. An additional look at the data shows that the same groups—Mexicans in particular—experience the highest working poverty rates out of all immigrants of any race.⁴ While only 3 percent of Puerto Rican young men are working poor, the rate is over 10 percent for Mexicans.

Clearly, data are essential to contextualizing the specific employment obstacles different men of color face; while access to jobs is crucial for Caribbean Latino immigrants, for Mexicans and Central Americans the struggle centers more on jobs that pay a living wage.

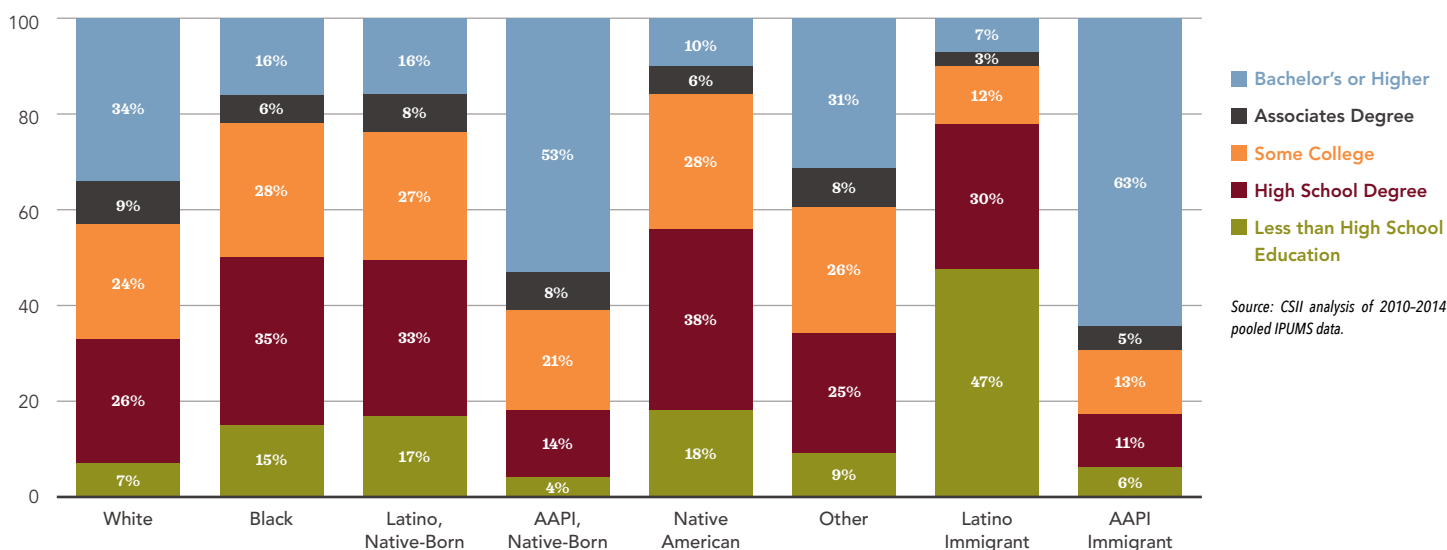
EDUCATION

When looking at unemployment among young men, education quickly comes to the surface as one dynamic or possible explanation: perhaps the young men in question did not get enough schooling to find work. The way in which the aforementioned unemployment rates vary by educational achievement also tells us, as does decades of other research, that educational access and attainment are fundamental in shaping employment prospects (Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah 2011; Day and Newberger 2002). At the same time, the fact that there are racial differentials even when controlling for education suggests that structural racism is embedded in various ways in labor markets—some stemming from overt discrimination and some from more diffuse factors such as job networks.

Still, education matters, and lower educational achievement rates for young men of color overall often show up early, with this population presenting with lower GPAs as early as eighth grade (Fortin, Oreopoulos, and Phipps 2015). This suggests that even reaching a certain threshold, such as a high school degree, does not ensure a higher-quality education or one that meets students’ needs. Nevertheless, educational attainment rates do provide us with critical insight into how outcomes, such as employment and earnings, differ among young men who are on a supposedly equal playing field and where the gaps exist in achieving those outcomes.

Young men of color face severe challenges to accessing quality education, which makes overall educational attainment highly stratified by race: 34 percent of white men ages 25 to 34 have a bachelor’s degree compared with 16 percent of Black and native-born Latinos and 7 percent of immigrant Latinos (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY



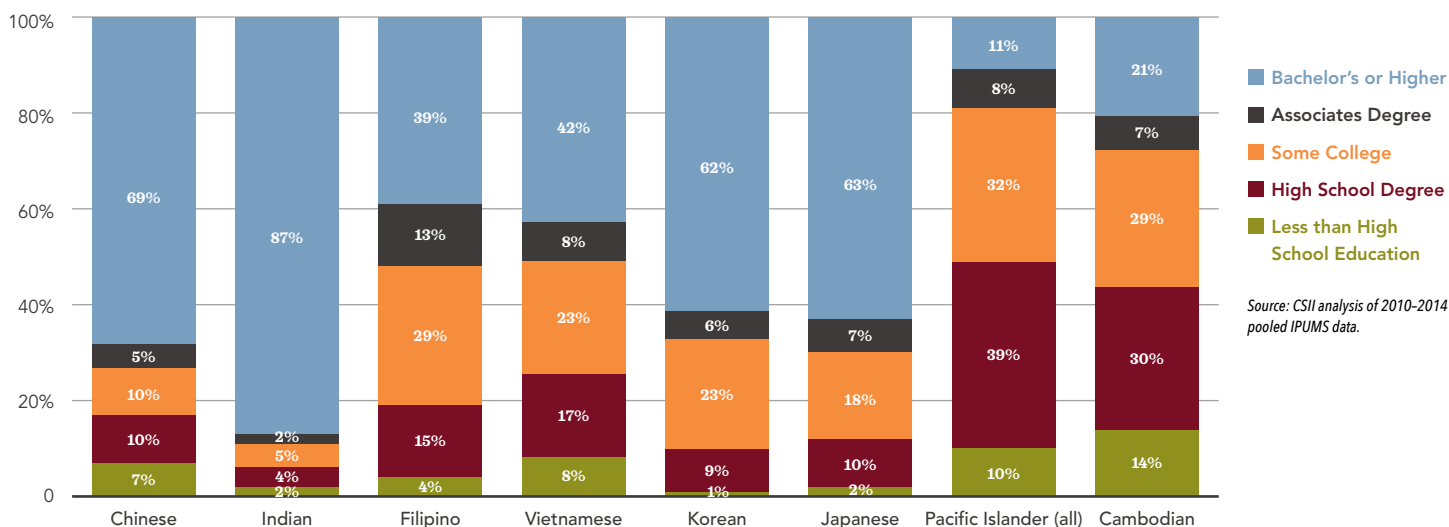
³In our calculations, we include all Puerto Ricans living in the United States regardless of nativity, highlighted in many of our comparisons of Latino immigrants. Given the status of Puerto Rico as a U.S. colony, giving residents of this island citizenship, few Puerto Ricans can be classified as immigrants; but many do migrate to the mainland United States, and they are a significant Latino subgroup.

⁴We define working poverty here as full-time workers ages 25 to 34 with a family income that places them below the indicated federal poverty threshold based on their family size and composition.

But like unemployment, education rates require closer examination to understand the specific context of each subgroup. In our analysis of data on Latino immigrants, we find: 50 percent of Salvadoran, 52 percent of Mexican, and 63 percent of Guatemalan immigrant young men have less than a high school degree, but only 7 percent of Colombian men and 16 percent of Cuban men have similar low levels of formal education. For the native-born, rates change significantly, though a similar pattern holds: only 12 percent of Mexican and 16 percent of Salvadoran native-born young men ages 25 to 34 have a bachelor’s degree compared with a third of Colombian and Cuban young men. Similarly, though 63 percent of AAPI immigrant young men have a bachelor’s degree, educational attainment differs even more radically: 87 percent of immigrant men from India and 63 percent from Japan have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with only 11 percent of Pacific Islander and 21 percent of Cambodian immigrants (Figure 6).

What this tells us is that young men of color are entering the labor force on very different footings—some with many more years of formal education than others. In the case of Indian and Colombian populations, for example, there is a strong likelihood this education was achieved abroad and that they entered the country with more secure legal status. For many migrants—Cambodian, Central American, and Mexican—migrating to the United States does not necessarily lead to notable educational gains. Again, exploring the diversity within the diversity allows us to gain insights that a broad-brush approach would omit.

FIGURE 6 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG U.S. AAPI IMMIGRANT MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY ANCESTRY



WORKFORCE DISCONNECTION

It is important to note that while Latino and Black young men face barriers to accessing education and employment, they may still accumulate much more work experience than their peers. Latino and Black young men, compared with their white “millennial” peers (ages 16 to 30), are more likely to have longer accumulated work experience: 10.1 years for Latinos, 9.38 for Black young men, and 8.16 for white young men (Harvey 2014). In other words, Latino and Black young men are more likely to have started working at a younger age. However, only among Latino young men has this been proven to increase the chances of employment, as is the case with education (Harvey 2014). Of course, as noted below, this does not speak to job quality, as many jobs taken by Black and Latino youth at earlier ages can be low-paying, high-demand jobs, with little opportunity for growth.

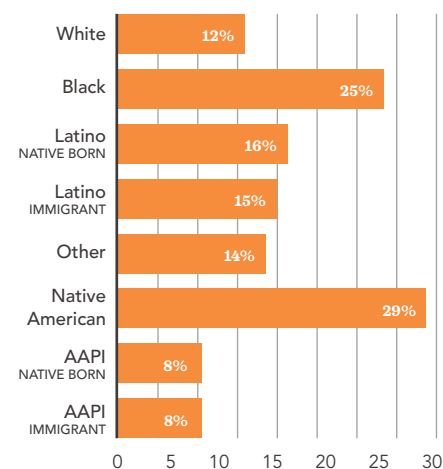
At the same time, the barriers to employment and educational access have led to widespread “disconnection” (defined as being neither in school nor at work) among youth, which means that many young men of color in the United States are not connected to formal work or school institutions (Guyer, Bennett, and Subramani 2010). As one interviewee noted, the combined disparities in education and employment opportunities leave many young men of color far from the starting line. And for some, it may knock them out of the race altogether.

Recent evidence shows that as of 2014 Latinos experience a 12 percent high-school “dropout rate” (down from a staggering 32 percent in 2000), Black youth a 7 percent dropout rate, whites 5 percent, and AAPIs 1 percent. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that for young men of color, the “status dropout rate” (the rate of young men ages 16 to 24 not enrolled in school and without a high school diploma or equivalent) was 8.7 percent for Black young men, 19.9 percent for Latino young men, and 5.4 percent for white young men (Toldson 2014). Our own data show that 29 percent of Native American and 25 percent of African American men ages 16 to 24 are “disconnected” compared with 8 percent of AAPI young men (Figure 7). Black and Native American youth are among the few groups for which women experience disconnection at lower rates (albeit by small margins): 26 percent of Native American young women and 19 percent of African American women are disconnected. Among Native Americans, access to opportunities are stratified by tribe (and likely, geography): Alaskan Native young men are cut off from work and school institutions at 36 percent and Sioux at 37 percent versus Cherokee youth at 17 percent.

So our data suggest a level of complexity that needs to be taken into account in any strategy. But our interviews with education, workforce development, and community-based organizations further reveal that even these overarching employment and education numbers do not fully capture the important differences among populations—nor do they give us a sense of how to direct resources to transform these conditions. Doing so requires examining the specific ways in which young men of color move through the pipelines that lead to opportunity—and where they find themselves stuck, pushed out, or funneled into pathways that lead to dead-end jobs, incarceration, and even early death.

FIGURE 7

DISCONNECTED YOUTH AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 16 TO 24 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Disconnected youth are defined as people ages 16 to 24 who are not working or enrolled in school.

NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH AFTER STANDING ROCK

The organizing and protests at Standing Rock in 2016 have placed the experiences of Native American youth in the United States in the public eye. But while some attention was focused on the experiences of land expropriation and environmental destruction, we must also grasp how current events fit into the economic conditions of Native American youth. Those younger than age 25 represent more than 41 percent of the Native American population (Center for Native American Youth 2016a). Take the example of young men who identify as Sioux. Some stand to suffer directly from the Dakota Access Pipeline, which would traverse waterways near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Only 10 percent of Sioux young men ages 25 to 34 receive an associate’s or higher degree. Thirty-seven percent of Sioux young men ages 16 to 24 are neither employed nor connected to a school institution. At least 37 percent of Sioux young men ages 25 to 34 live below the poverty line, and nearly two-thirds live at 200 percent or below the poverty line.

Addressing the challenges facing Native American populations means supporting them where they live: as of 2016, 60 percent of indigenous American Indian/Alaska Native youth live in metropolitan areas. About 22 percent live on reservations (Center for Native American Youth 2016b). Therefore, protecting land and ecology is at once essential to the culture and the survival of Native American youth as many live in the direct path of environmental disaster. Alaskan Yup’ik youth and Biloxi-Chitmacha-Choctaw youth have been among the first “climate refugees” in the United States (Goldenberg 2013; Wendland 2016).

Cumulative inequalities bear strongly on the lives of Native American youth. Thirty-six percent of boys and girls younger than 18 live below the poverty line and 63 percent below 200 percent of the poverty line. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaskan Native youth ages 15 to 24, which is the highest of any group in the United States (Executive Office of the President 2014; Hyde 2011). The Center for Native American Youth (2016a) points to Standing Rock as “a defining moment for a generation,” coalescing a new generation of youth engagement. Nevertheless, the question remains: how much will recent events redefine the approach of philanthropic, social, and economic support organizations, and place the experiences and hopes of Native American youth at the center?

Pipelines of Young Men of Color: Systemic Barriers to Economic Opportunities

The disaggregated data on employment, education, and workforce disconnection sound many alarms about young men of color—and about the American future. But disaggregation is not just about offering a portrayal of current conditions; it can very much help us with the diagnosis for future prospects. Now that we better understand the who, data broken down by different subgroups also help make sense of the why and how. Key questions include the following: Why are certain populations walled off from better-paying opportunities? How do the pipelines to economic success and educational attainment break down? And how do people get locked out of these pipelines altogether?

In this section, we explore what it is like to be a young man of color attempting to move through commonly accepted “pipelines” to economic success in the United States: excelling in school, securing a job, moving ahead in a workplace, and of course, getting paid. By coupling disaggregated data with previous research and interviews from the front lines of workforce development, we are able to detail how it is that we are looking at the systemic failure to create pipelines geared toward mobility for young men of color. As Lola Smallwood Cuevas, director of the Black Worker Center explains, “If we’re only focusing on the deficits of the individual and not on the system ... we don’t shine a light on what the employers and systems can do to fix their own problems.”

GETTING INTO THE PIPELINE: BARRIERS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Often, the conversation about workforce development starts with the idea that training helps people of color open the doors to opportunity. But just how hard is it for young men of color to get the keys in the first place?

As noted above, the rates of educational attainment differ dramatically between populations, and understanding these gaps requires looking at schools themselves. When we look at school “dropouts” from high schools, we are likely using the wrong terminology. Educational practitioners and scholars are now speaking much more about how students in low-income communities and communities of color are subject to a range of factors contributing to “push out” that quite literally makes schooling inhospitable (Bradley and Renzulli 2011).

A central example of “push out” is the overuse of suspension and expulsion for young men of color, with the rise of “zero tolerance” education policies and the overuse of exclusionary discipline for small infractions. For more than 30 years, researchers and organizations have demonstrated that Black and Latino young men have been disproportionately suspended or expelled compared with white young men (Children’s Defense Fund 1975, 2008; Skiba et al. 2002). Moreover, the pattern stems from the system, not the individuals: there is no evidence that young people of color “misbehave” at any higher rates than white youth from either a nationwide or school system perspective (Peguero and Shekarkhar 2011).

Policies such as overuse of suspension and expulsion have been singled out as lowering academic achievement scores, leading to an overall drop in academic performance, and resulting ultimately in higher dropout rates (Bradley and Renzulli 2011; Fine 1991; Mendez and Knoff 2003; Morrison and D’Incau 1997; Noguera 2009; Teske 2011). New research also tells us that punitive disciplinary policies correlate to lowered postsecondary enrollment and future income (Terriquez, Chlala, and Sacha 2013). The overwhelming data on the harmful effects of overuse of suspension and expulsion in high schools, as well as community organizing by youth groups throughout the United States, has led to new interventions to halt the “push out.” School districts in such cities as Los Angeles and Fresno, CA and Chicago, IL, have passed policies that directly bar the use of suspension and expulsion for certain everyday behavioral infractions and replace these punishments with restorative justice programs that help heal the harm caused by certain infractions and create healthier school environments for boys and young men of color (Schiff 2013).

But even when young men of color complete high school, the quality of their educational experience varies dramatically. For example, Laurence B. Frank, president of the Los Angeles Trade–Technical College (LATTC), one of the few community colleges in the region to serve more young men of color than women of color, notes that 93 percent of entering students “assess as unprepared for college.” Students’ access to college-preparatory courses, after-school programming, tutoring, school counseling, and a wide range of resources and curricula essential to higher education dramatically differs and is often linked to socioeconomic status, neighborhood, and other factors that interlink with race and immigration (Garner and Raudenbush 1991; Schneider, Martinez, and Owens 2006). Coming in lacking such resources, LATTC’s President Frank explains, leaves students playing a difficult game of catch-up: those who may be four levels behind in one subject have to jump into a basic college math course and then may have to repeat the course multiple times. According to California’s state requirements, a student cannot retake a course more than three times. To work around this, LATTC has created a specialized “technical math” program that helps students pass the math test required for certain trade unions and avoids students getting snared in a dispiriting pattern of repeating classes.

Managing the demands of completing basic requirements while preparing for the workforce is thus one of the biggest reasons for dropout at LATTC and other similar schools serving young men of color. The other reason, President Frank notes, is life and family obligations. As the rates of educational attainment also signal, Latino and AAPI immigrant young men coming to the United States often forgo high school altogether to meet the needs of individual and family survival and in the face of unique barriers as migrants. Immigrant students’ socioeconomic status and English-language proficiency level have both been linked to their rates of high school completion (Condelli et al. 2010; Lew 2003, 2004). This helps explain in part why we see extensive disparities among immigrant populations, especially non–native English speakers.

LATTC is also working on an issue that infrequently gets attention but is crucial for intergenerational advancement: Adult education strategies to meet the needs of immigrant workers who may have had even lower formal education rates and who continue to have pressing work obligations. Like many of the interventions discussed in this report, this work hinges on a key partnership with community-based organizations, in this case the National Day Labor Organizing Network, to reach out to workers and to determine how best to structure the program to meet this population’s needs.

MOVING THROUGH THE PIPELINE: DISCRIMINATION IN HIRING PRACTICES

For the young men working their way through the pipeline, often the first question that comes to mind is “how do you find a job?”

Job discrimination has been a persistent issue among employers: numerous studies show how Black and Latinos cannot even get to the stage of a job interview, screened by names or addresses that identify them as people of color (Pager 2007; Pager and Shepherd 2008). In fact, one study showed that white applicants with criminal records fared on par with applicants of color with no criminal record (Pager 2007; Pager and Shepherd 2008). While this is startling evidence of racial discrimination, it is not singular: other research has shown how employers made racialized judgments on recruiting, screening, and hiring potential employees based on racial biases (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Waldinger 1993).

Employers often explain racially disparate hiring practices by suggesting, for example, that Black men lack “soft skills,” such as the ability to interact with customers and coworkers and motivation (Moss and Tilly 2003). Managers supposedly made their judgments about workers’ “attitudes” by claiming that they had negative experiences, such as high turnover or instability, in locations that had a majority of Black workers and customers. Sometimes, the evidence base is even flimsier: managerial judgments can be based on images of Black men from the media or experiences outside the workforce—for example, seeing many Black homeless people (Moss and Tilly 2003). In citing diffuse examples and focusing on qualities that are harder to quantify, employers are often able to insulate themselves from criticism or reform.

With the dismantling of affirmative action, countering discrimination at a broader level becomes more complex. Some organizations such as Year Up attempt to bridge the gap directly between employers and potential employees of color by tackling this question of “soft skills.” Founded in 2000, Year Up has been tested and successfully operates in 17 regions nationally, and has served more than 10,000 low-income young adults ages 18 to 24. As the organization’s external relations manager, Travis Keene, describes it, Year Up’s training focuses on skills, such as communications and professional expertise, that many young people do not get exposed to because they do not have the privilege of interacting with those in higher-paying occupations. Ordinarily, many of the positions Year Up connects young adults to would require a postsecondary degree, and the organization helps propel young adults directly into a professional career track and toward higher education.

Year Up coaches in an intensive cohort system that provides high support but also has a point system where participants can lose their place in the training if they fail to appear on time regularly or do not adhere to other basic ground rules that are modeled on an office environment. Year Up's model is realistic about the fact that young people of color are afforded less "slack" than white young men, and so provides young people of color comprehensive training in a way that also gives them a supportive team environment to draw from as they navigate the professional world. Year Up and other related programs do not ignore the need for technical skills training either; they have created a model that offers "stackable credentials" that may not align directly with a traditional degree but do build on each other and have recognition in the given field.

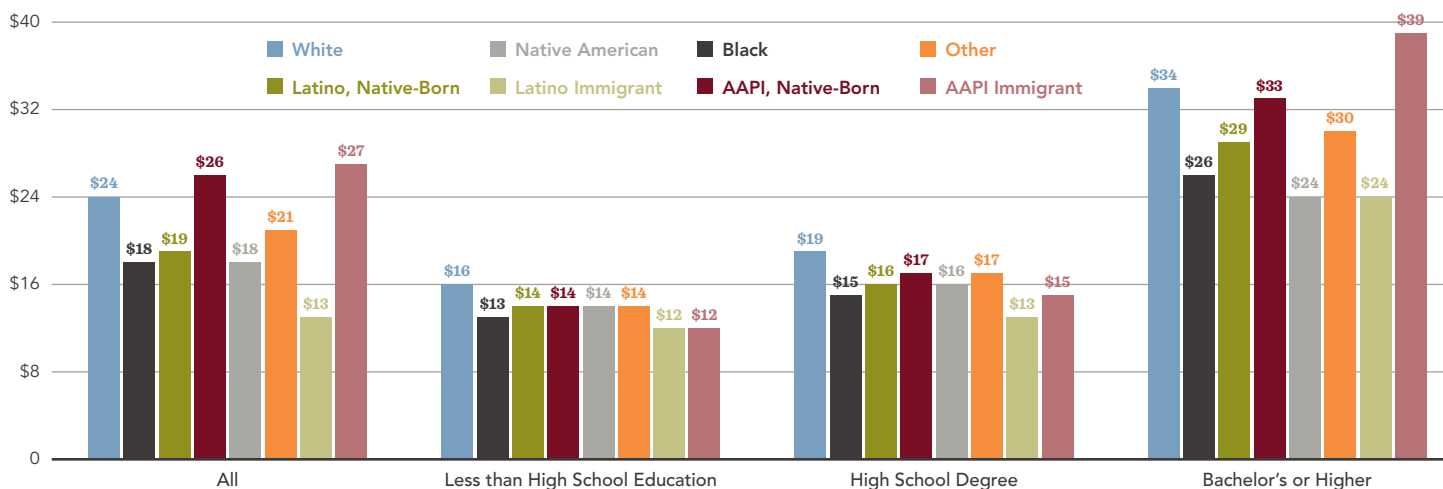
The training period is followed by a six-month internship at participating corporate partners. Partnerships vary by regions, matching industries that are expanding locally: for example, the Boston location includes more opportunities in the financial sector, and California's locations include more information technology and business communications positions. As one of our interviewees explained, employees agree to this because it is a "try before you buy" model. For employers, it can work as a six-month extended interview. These interactions break down barriers and overcome misconceptions by showing that young men of color are passionate and ready to work. The program can help stop employers from immediately firing a worker or reacting rapidly against them, instead giving workers a chance to learn on the job, to make mistakes and still have a chance—to be fully human employees—much in the same way that benefits other (usually white) workers.

Yet, Year Up (and similar programs) does not do this work in a vacuum: It builds long-term relationships with corporations and professional organizations in order to change perceptions and create longer-term opportunity ladders. Year Up, in particular, lobbies more broadly, using campaigns such as the "Grads of Life" to get employers to recognize the experience young men and women of color have even without degrees and the benefits this experience brings to the workplace. Other organizations focused on economic equity have turned to more specific projects to target the hard barriers of employment discrimination, including "ban the box" efforts to remove questions about criminal justice history from job applications (see below). Policy alone is not a silver bullet to ending discrimination in hiring, but it does eliminate one further barrier that affects young men of color. But as the next section shows, some barriers can appear to be insurmountable.

ONCE IN THE PIPELINE: THE RACIAL WAGE GAP

Even if young men of color manage to overcome the barriers in education and access to direct employment, and are able to navigate around biases in the workplace, they too often find themselves facing substantive racialized wage gaps that dramatically reduce their opportunities for mobility. Figure 8 (calculated for full-time employees) makes one obvious point. It shows that the more educated receive higher wages, but it also reveals a less recognized point: the consistent pattern of men of color of almost every group making less than their white counterparts at similar educational attainment levels (among year-round full-time workers). The single notable exception is AAPI immigrant college graduates, who have the highest median hourly wages overall at \$39. While this might indicate that at least one group has broken through the racial wage gap, further disaggregation shows that there is significant divergence among AAPI immigrants. College-educated Chinese and Indian immigrant men have median wages over \$40 an hour, while Filipino, Korean, and Cambodian men all make around \$30 an hour—wages more similar to native-born Latinos than to whites. Employers often explain racially disparate hiring practices by suggesting, for example, that Black men lack "soft skills," such as the ability to interact with customers and coworkers and motivation (Moss and Tilly 2003). Managers supposedly made their judgments about workers' "attitudes" by claiming that they had negative experiences, such as high turnover or instability, in locations that had a majority of Black workers and customers. Sometimes, the evidence base is even flimsier: managerial judgments can be based on images of Black men from the media or experiences outside the workforce—for example, seeing many Black homeless people (Moss and Tilly 2003). In citing diffuse examples and focusing on qualities that are harder to quantify, employers are often able to insulate themselves from criticism or reform.

FIGURE 8 MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES (2014 \$) AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 25 TO 64 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIVITY, AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

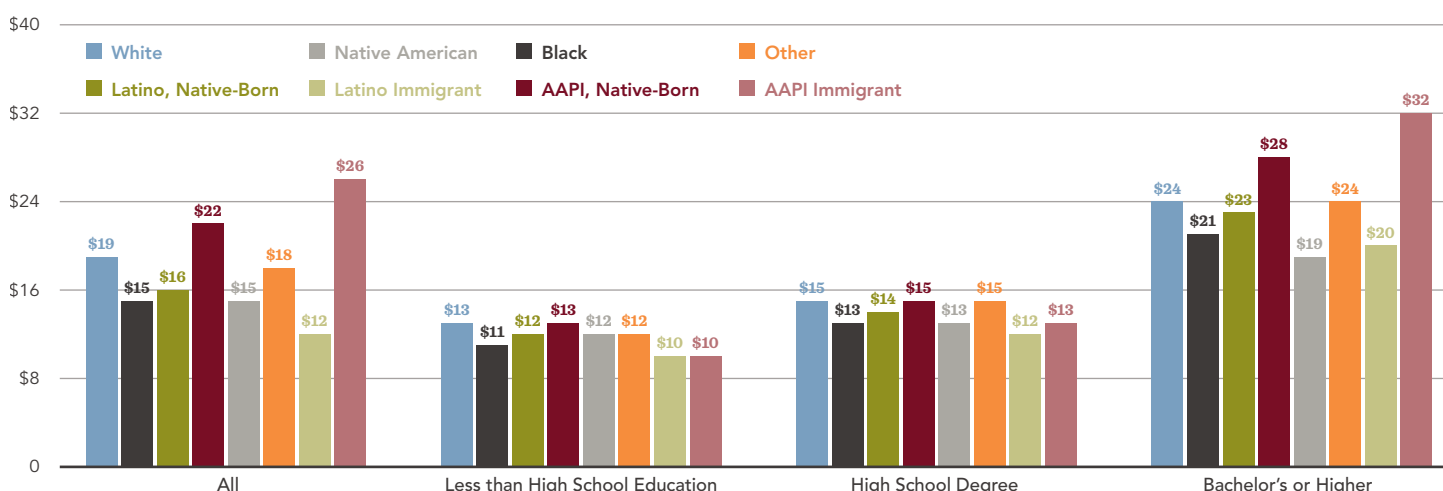


Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Wages are reported for full-time workers between the ages of 25 and 64. A full-time worker works at least 50 weeks in a year for at least 35 hours a week. All amounts are in 2014 dollars.

Furthermore, when homing in on the racial wage gap among young men, the difference between AAPI workers and all others is even more pronounced—among those ages 25 to 34, both immigrant and native-born AAPI men outpace white workers (as shown in Figure 9). Indeed, hourly wages for young college-educated AAPI immigrant men are about 32 percent more than the hourly wages for the same cohort of white men (Figure 9); the comparable figure for those ages 25 to 64 is about 12 percent more (Figure 8). Similarly, among the college educated, young native-born Latinos make almost the same as college-educated whites, but when we expand to include ages 25 to 64, the gap between the former and latter increases.

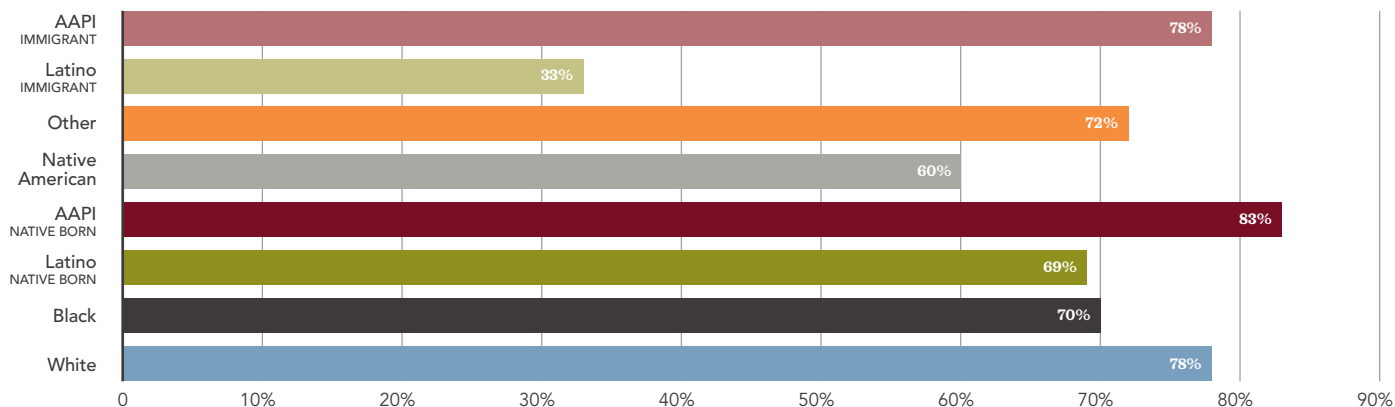
This could be a signal that some degree of discrimination for the younger cohort is on the decline—or that earnings for workers of color do not increase over time at the same rate as for white workers. At the same time, it is important to note that regardless of age, Black, Native American, and Latino immigrant workers all lag significantly behind white workers, pointing to the persistence of anti-Blackness in the labor market, the disadvantages suffered by Native Americans, and the likely racialized impacts of immigration status. In any case, it is clear that two things can be true at the same time: college completion is critical to economic advancement and any overall explanation of outcomes needs to go beyond educational attainment.

FIGURE 9 MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES (2014 \$) AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIVITY, AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Wages are reported for full-time workers between the ages of 25 and 34. A full-time worker works at least 50 weeks in a year for at least 35 hours a week. All amounts are in 2014 dollars.

FIGURE 10 EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE RATE AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 27 TO 36 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY

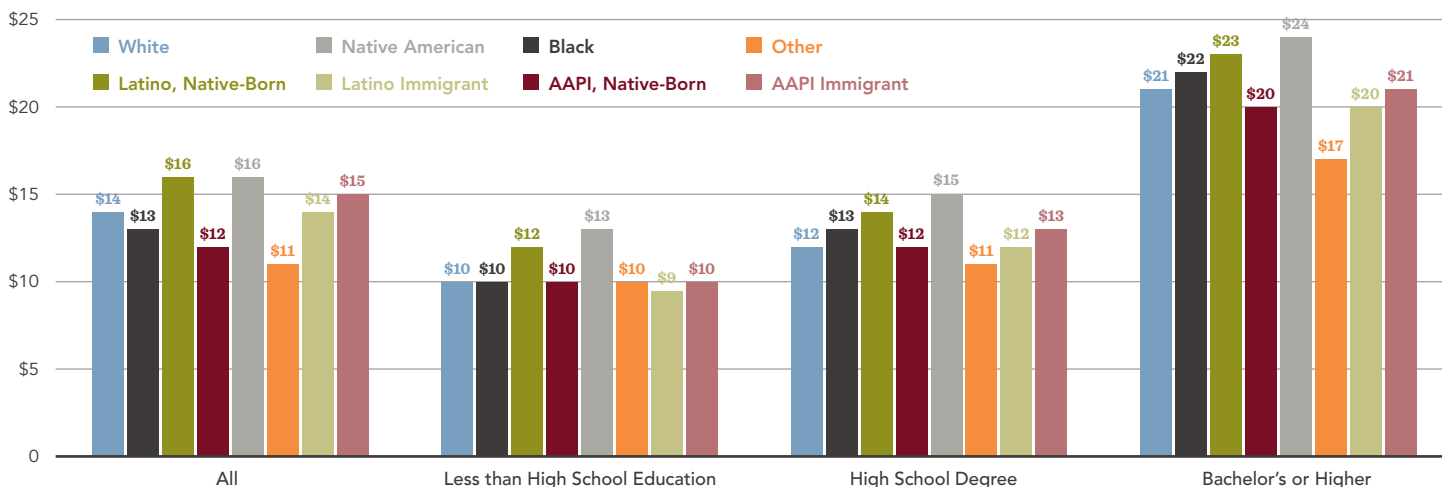


Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data.

Aside from the wage differentials, younger Black and Latino male workers are also less likely than young whites to be offered benefits associated with “good jobs,” such as health insurance and retirement packages. For example, employer health insurance rates among full-time workers show a stark difference by race and nativity. This is depicted in Figure 10; note that we employ a slight modification in the age cohort in order to restrict data to young men who are no longer eligible to be covered under their parents’ health insurance in order to get a better estimate of health care access through their employer. The pattern is striking: while AAPI young men are likely to have higher-quality employment than whites (at least judging from employers’ willingness to provide health care), the reverse is true for every other group of young men of color. Particularly striking is the very low rate for Latino immigrant young men: it is far less than half the rate for young white male workers.

The role of nativity in general and legal status in particular on the outcomes of young Latino men is critical. In Figure 11, we disaggregate Latinos by nativity, immigration status, and education. The immigration status penalty for the undocumented actually increases with greater levels of educational attainment; college-educated undocumented Latino men on average make about three-quarters of what all college-educated Latino men do. In general, the wage gap for undocumented immigrants can be largely attributed to the fact that people denied legal status cannot access the full benefits of their educational attainment. They either are blocked from numerous professional-level jobs that use the “E-Verify” system that requires valid social security numbers for a government electronic check or are fearful this system may be used. Instead, a pathway to citizenship can also be a pathway to better pay: Figure 11 shows how at every educational level, naturalized Latinos earn about the same or more than native-born Latinos.⁵

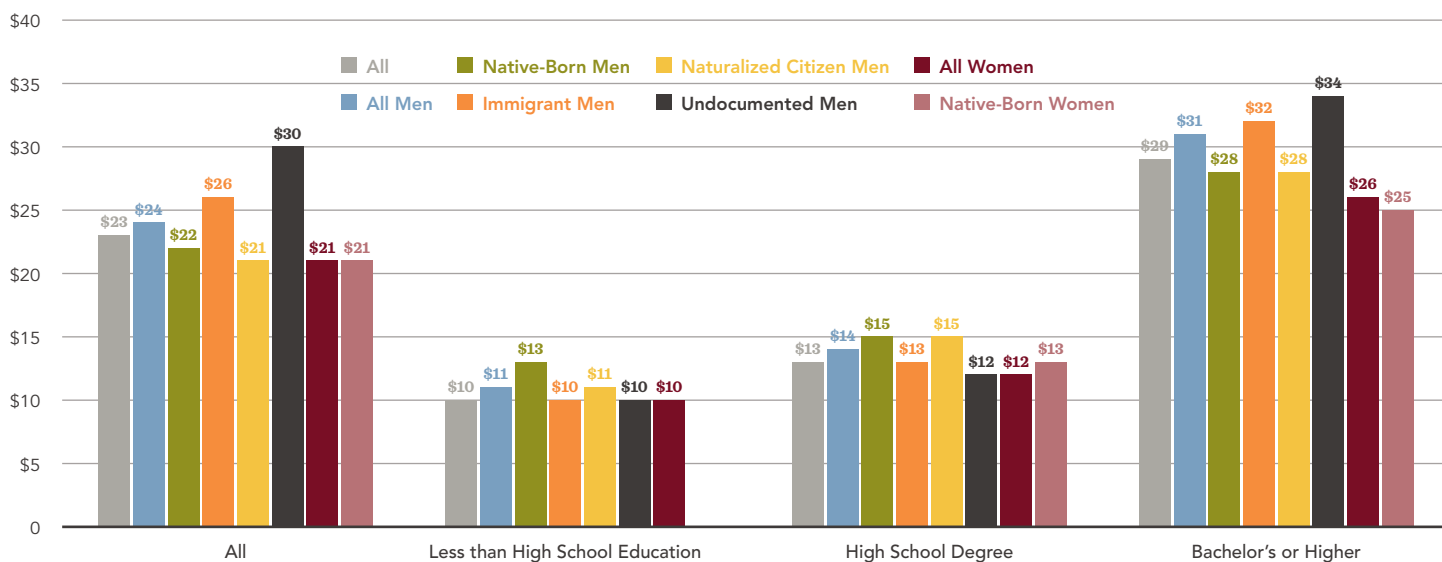
FIGURE 11 MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES (2014 \$) AMONG U.S. LATINOS AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY GENDER, IMMIGRATION STATUS, AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Wages are reported for full-time workers between the ages of 25 and 34. A full-time worker works at least 50 weeks in a year for at least 35 hours a week. All amounts are in 2014 dollars.

⁵Note that this pattern is for groups in the same age cohort. Comparisons between men of all ages would distort the picture because of differing median ages for each nativity cohort.

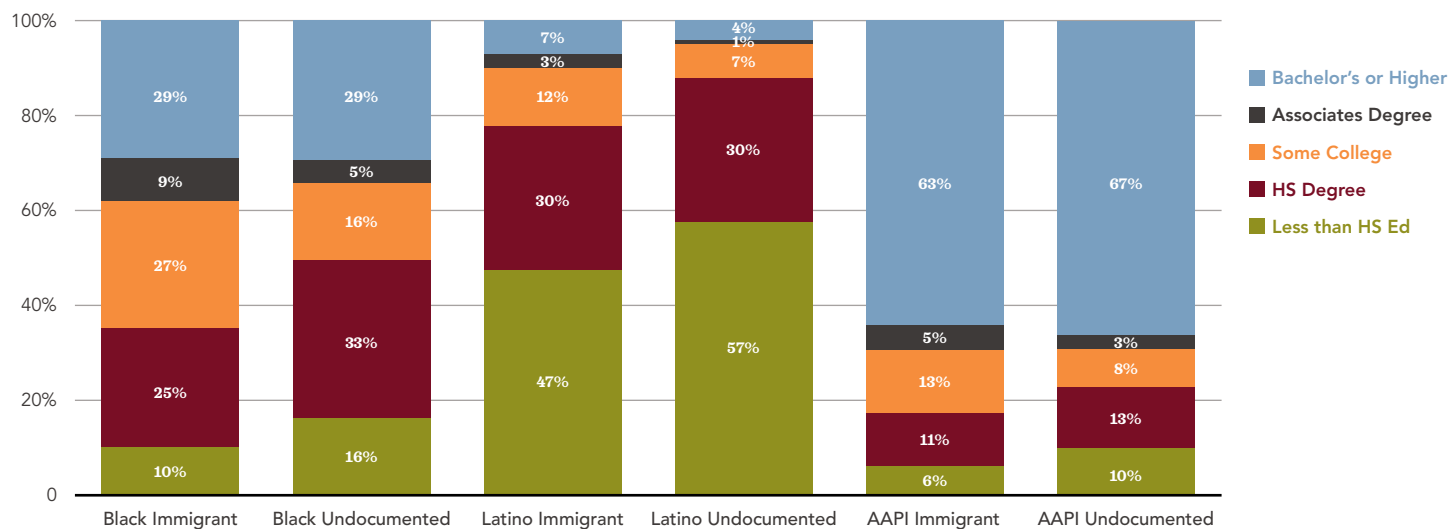
FIGURE 12 MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES (2014 \$) AMONG U.S. AAPI POPULATIONS AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY GENDER, IMMIGRATION STATUS, AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Wages are reported for full-time workers between the ages of 25 and 34. A full-time worker works at least 50 weeks in a year for at least 35 hours a week. All amounts are in 2014 dollars.

Disaggregating the data around wages and education for AAPI men uncovers a much different pattern. As Figure 12 shows, the data suggest that college-educated, undocumented AAPI men earn the highest wages out of any group. The reasons for this divergence between Latino and AAPI undocumented men among those with access to higher education may be a result of our estimation procedure—in which our designation of documentation status may be more reliable for Latinos—or this may indicate something in the data itself, such as different labor market placements. In any case, it is clear that disaggregating the dynamics and outcomes of each group is necessary in order to craft effective strategies for improving economic outcomes.

FIGURE 13 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG U.S. IMMIGRANT MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND IMMIGRATION STATUS



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data.

This divergence among the undocumented is visible in additional indicators, including with educational attainment. As may be expected, Latino undocumented immigrants tend to have lower educational attainment compared with all Latino immigrants, while the opposite is true for AAPI immigrants. Black immigrants (shown in Figure 13) fall in between the two, with undocumented young Black men having similar levels of college achievement compared with all immigrant Black men but with a larger percentage having reached only a high school degree or less.

Limited options exist to easily rectify the lack of secondary education: GED acquisition has been proven to give little added value to job applicants compared with those with high school diplomas or with dropouts who never take the GED (Tyler 2003). And among Latinos, evidence shows that those who had long-term contact in U.S. schools earned substantially less than white dropouts and Latinos who received their education mostly abroad—suggesting again the need for improving school quality (Fry 2003).

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Finally, even if education could be improved, wages raised, and job quality improved, young men of color enter all the systems with a historical disadvantage in terms of wealth and the security that brings. Understanding the starting lines can complicate the picture; for example, by some estimates Mexican youth actually make the largest leaps in social mobility among immigrant groups, considering the lack of human and economic capital they face as children (Lee and Zhou 2015). Still, as William Darity and colleagues note, “An analysis of who holds America’s wealth makes clear how life outcomes can diverge radically, in particular for those subject to systemic historically rooted discrimination” (Darity et al. 2015). Thus, a greater understanding of other wealth accumulation and other structural forces is needed to be able to craft effective strategies for young men of color to succeed in the workplace.

PIPELINES ACROSS GENERATIONS: DISPARITIES IN WEALTH

Economic security in the United States requires far more than a paycheck: financial assets vitally affect the ability to achieve economic stability across generations. Yet wealth is one place where progress toward equity has been (disastrously) slow to come. As of 2013, the median white household held \$13 in net wealth for every dollar held by the median Black household, or \$10 for every dollar held by the median Latino household (Traub, Meschede, and Shapiro 2017). Even where Black and Latino households have similar earnings and educational backgrounds compared with their white counterparts, these households still face a substantive racial gap in financial assets (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Traub, Meschede, and Shapiro 2017).

Up until 2008, one way Latino and Black families had been slowly gaining a foothold was through home ownership, one of the more commonly accessible forms of economic capital and fixed assets in the United States. But when housing values, particularly in working-class communities, plunged during the course of the Great Recession, African Americans lost 53 percent and Latinos 66 percent of their household wealth (Kochhar, Fry, and Taylor 2011). Latinos were particularly hard hit: their median home equity declined by half, from \$99,000 to \$49,000, as home ownership plummeted (Kochhar, Fry, and Taylor 2011). Beyond immediate economic shocks, the fact is that research has again and again shown that “wealth begets wealth” and that the historical patterns of racial exclusion and inequality in the United States put people of color far behind when it comes to the capacity to save and build assets (Conley 2010; White 2016).

Of course, like any other economic or social reality, the differences in wealth within broader populations are significant. Among Latinos, for example, first-generation households fare worse in terms of wealth accumulation (Elmelech 2006, 2008). But more work needs to be done to understand where wealth patterns diverge or converge, and why. Data on wealth, though, is hard to come by: some of the main data sources on wealth do not disaggregate beyond broader racial identifications, and many forms of non-U.S. holdings (including Native American treaty land) are not measured (Leigh 2006). Making sense of the prospects for young men of color will require digging deeper into the different ways they are denied or provided the opportunity to build from and accumulate a strong economic foundation, one that goes beyond a paycheck.

THE OTHER PIPELINE: IMPRISONMENT AND MASS INCARCERATION

On any given day in 2010, at least one in ten Black men ages 20 to 39 were institutionalized—defined as residing in a prison or an institution for the mentally ill, disabled, or elderly (Neal and Rick 2014). More than one-third of Black young men ages 25 to 29 who did not have a high school degree were institutionalized in 2010. These facts are just the tip of the iceberg of what Michelle Alexander (2012) calls the “new Jim Crow” of mass incarceration, or the prison-industrial complex. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) notes, the archipelagos of incarceration that scar the United States are “a monumental aspect of the ghastly public infrastructure underlying a chain of people, ideas, places, and practices that produce premature death” along racialized lines. Part of that premature death reaped by incarceration is the way in which prisons radically affect employment outcomes. Most recently, a growing amount of data shows the multigenerational effects of mass incarceration, as children of incarcerated parents are more likely to struggle in school and suffer from poor mental and physical health (Morsy and Rothstein 2016).

Young Black men are most directly affected by mass incarceration, but the prison-industrial complex has reached far into other communities of color, particularly after the explosion of the prison system in the 1990s. Latinos represented 20.4 percent of the state and federal prison population by the end of 2015 (Carson and Anderson 2016). The closest estimate to the number of AAPIs in prison is about 8.3 percent of the state and federal system; however, that group is usually classified under the “other” category (Carson and Anderson 2016). Complicating the picture of the AAPI, Latino, and Black immigrant imprisonment is the expansion of deportation of migrants with a criminal record. Southeast Asians, for example, have been found to be arrested and deported at disproportionately high rates, usually based on a relatively old conviction (Jung et al. 2015). There are also thousands of people in immigrant detention who are not deported, which also balloons the populations removed from work and life opportunities. And as mentioned in the report introduction, Black immigrants are often at the crossroads of criminalization and deportations.

Once tracked into the prison-industrial pipeline, men of color find it much harder to get out. Men of color, especially younger and poorer men, are more likely to be sentenced to prison terms and receive disproportionately long sentences (Mustard 2001; Spohn 2000). So many of these men are spending their formative years for work and for advancing their education behind prison walls. As Bikila Ochoa of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) explains, while there are “great programs around the country like the Prison University Project at San Quentin or the Bard Prison Initiative in New York that have exposed incarcerated individuals to rigorous higher education curricula, those programs are too few and far in between.” The opportunities for education in prison frequently “do not compare” to those one can access outside. An individual “can get six different degrees” in prison, Ochoa explains, but it will not compare in terms of the preparation that comes from attending technical or four-year colleges outside of the prison walls. Many young men get released from prison and enter (or reenter) the higher-education system, only to find themselves frustrated with how poorly they have been prepared for true success.

Any employment in prison likewise differs dramatically, shaped by the norms of survival in this setting. Upon release, when entering the workforce directly, men who have spent significant time in prison struggle to adjust to their new settings. Ochoa explains that there are many questions that come up, even in such male-driven industries as construction: one example is how to deal with on-the-job banter. Jokingly making fun of a coworker on a construction worksite in the city has far different consequences than in the prison yard. As such, ARC works with partners such as LATTC to integrate the broadest possible “soft skills” into their apprenticeship programs to prepare participants for the context of trade work.

This of course assumes that one can find work after release, given the levels of employment discrimination faced by those who have been incarcerated (with, as noted above, particularly large employment penalties for formerly incarcerated individuals of color). Such discrimination has been in fact institutionalized through employment applications that ask about incarceration for felonies and misdemeanors. Known as “the box,” such questions can both give employers justification to discriminate but also signal to former prisoners that they are not welcome to apply. Thanks to organizing by criminal justice groups, more than 150 cities and counties have instituted “ban the box” policies as of early 2017 (Rodriguez and Avery 2018). Organizations such as ARC go a step beyond to speak directly to employers and to encourage major corporations to hire formerly incarcerated workers. Likewise, LATTC also focuses on industries where there may not be such an ingrained level of bias. Frank, the LATTC president, noted how transportation is an example of an industry that is a good pathway for people in the college’s reentry program in part because “there’s a culture that allows people to not feel like they need to dig deep into people’s past in order to be able to hire them.”

Our interviewees made clear to us that once you are pushed out of the right pipelines, it is extremely difficult to catch up. ARC members and staff, many of them formerly incarcerated themselves, expend significant effort to help people get back on track. But they consistently face the challenge of formerly incarcerated individuals: do they invest in college, a space where they are rarely welcome or supported, or get to work right away to meet their immediate needs and settle into a short-term, low-mobility “job” instead of a career? Some of ARC’s programming, such as its apprenticeship partnership with LATTC and its Manifest Work program—a pipeline through the film industry from “grunt work” to established union positions—attempts to hit both areas. It gives employees a buffer period to get to know their employer and workplace norms but also to establish some base of educational training. Although ARC’s programs are currently operating at smaller scales, they hold significant potential when scaled up as they go beyond just dropping men of color back into the workforce pipeline without holistic support. Additionally, ARC and its partners are also challenging the biases of those in select industries and creating a cultural shift that does not exclude those who have been caught up in the prison pipeline and mass incarceration.

MASKED INCARCERATION: DATA GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING THE PRISON PIPELINE

While this report has a wealth of data on many of the socioeconomic indicators that shape the lives of young men of color, one area is prominently missing: data on crime and incarceration. Given the lack of transparency in the prison system, estimates are hard to come by, and the United States sorely needs to produce better data on arrests, processing, and incarceration that capture how these intersect with racial inequality, poverty, immigration, and more. The notable lack of consistent national data for Latinos, for example, is troubling; sources such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics National Corrections Reporting Program and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reports are limited and often incongruent in how they report data on race and ethnicity, and they rarely allow for disaggregation (Morín 2016). Native Americans, often absent from the discussion on mass incarceration, are underseen victims of the prison pipeline, and better data are needed to understand sentencing disparities (U.S. Sentencing Commission 2016). And as the incarceration rate for women continues to increase, more data are needed on understanding what is driving this growth (Swavola, Riley, and Subramanian 2016).

Faltering Structures for Young Men of Color: Trends in the Regional Economy

We have argued that it is important to look at systems that help to determine the economic outcomes of boys and men of color. When we consider these systems together, we can see how we find stark differences not only in employment and education but in other markers of economic opportunity—such as poverty rates—for young men of color.

POVERTY BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY

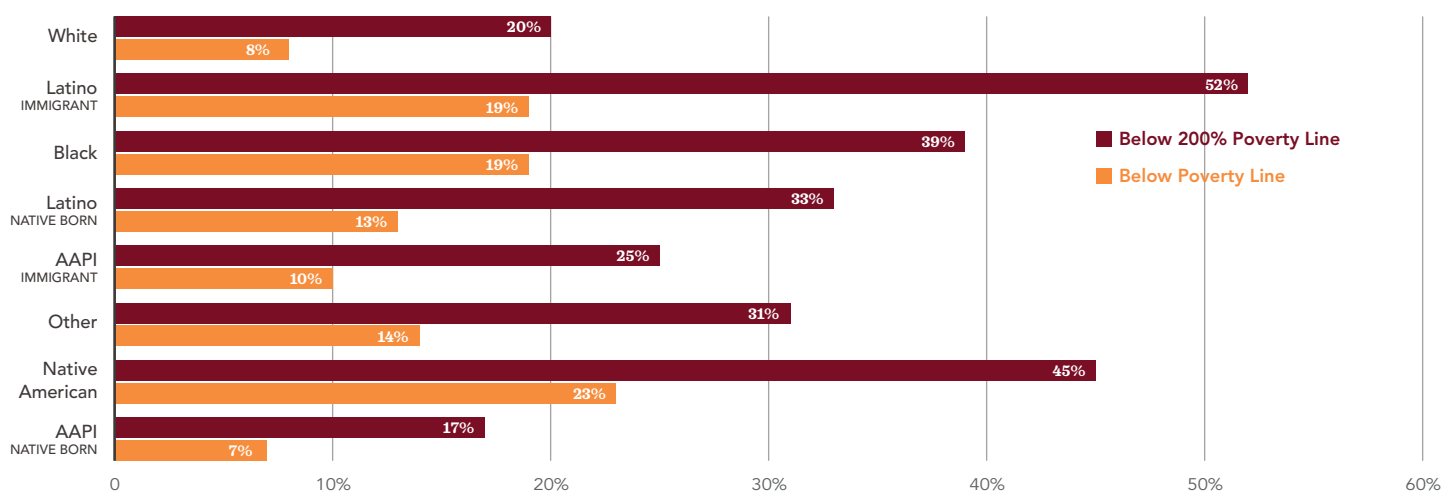
Other than native-born AAPIs, every other major group has higher poverty rates than white men, with Native American, Black, and immigrant Latino men having rates more than double that of white men (Figure 14).

But of course, considering the importance of disaggregation again gives us a stronger sense of how poverty may differ across groups: when comparing across race and immigration status, for example, the difference in poverty rates among the undocumented becomes clearer. While the poverty rate is higher for the undocumented when compared with all immigrant men, for AAPI men the opposite is true (Figure 15). By drilling down to deeper levels of disaggregation, we can gain a clearer picture of how structural drivers of inequality—such as a broken immigration system—affect groups differently.

Of course, the biggest system driving inequality is the economy itself—and analyzing the broad economy is important to generate effective strategies to create more secure livelihoods. Preparing young men for work and careers—and to build wealth—requires deep partnerships between employers, public institutions, labor unions, grassroots organizations, social service and health providers, and many more. And all that needs to be grounded in an understanding of the contemporary economy.

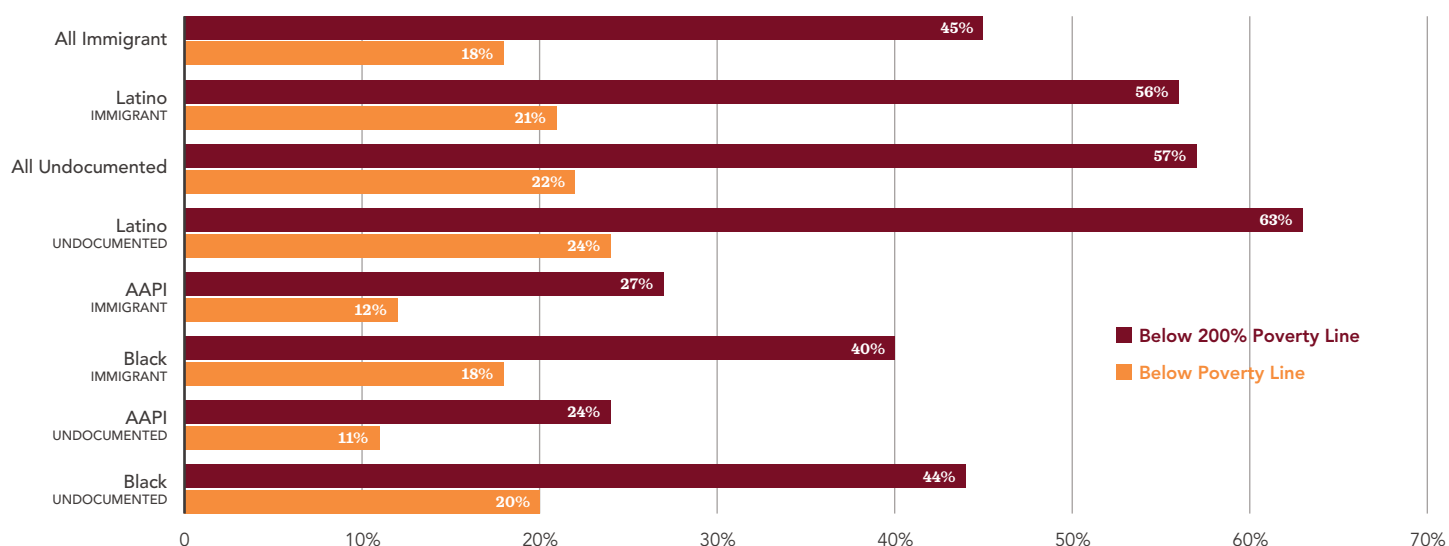
It also needs to be grounded in a willingness to go beyond just helping people of color “manage” their realities. After all, if the economy itself is malfunctioning, it is hard for any approach to yield positive outcomes. Disaggregated data can help craft strategies that tangibly address the experiences of youth and men of color, but the more detailed information can also enlist people to change their environments. In this latter task, building power is key, and data can help individuals recognize their specific struggles while linking them together to collaboratively define their own future.

FIGURE 14 POVERTY RATE AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: These percentages include individuals living below the indicated federal poverty threshold based on their family income, size, and composition. Universe includes all people not living in group quarters.

FIGURE 15 POVERTY RATE AMONG U.S. IMMIGRANT MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND IMMIGRATION STATUS (LISTED IN ORDER OF POPULATION SIZE)



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: These percentages include individuals living below the indicated federal poverty threshold based on their family income, size, and composition. Universe includes all people not living in group quarters.

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY

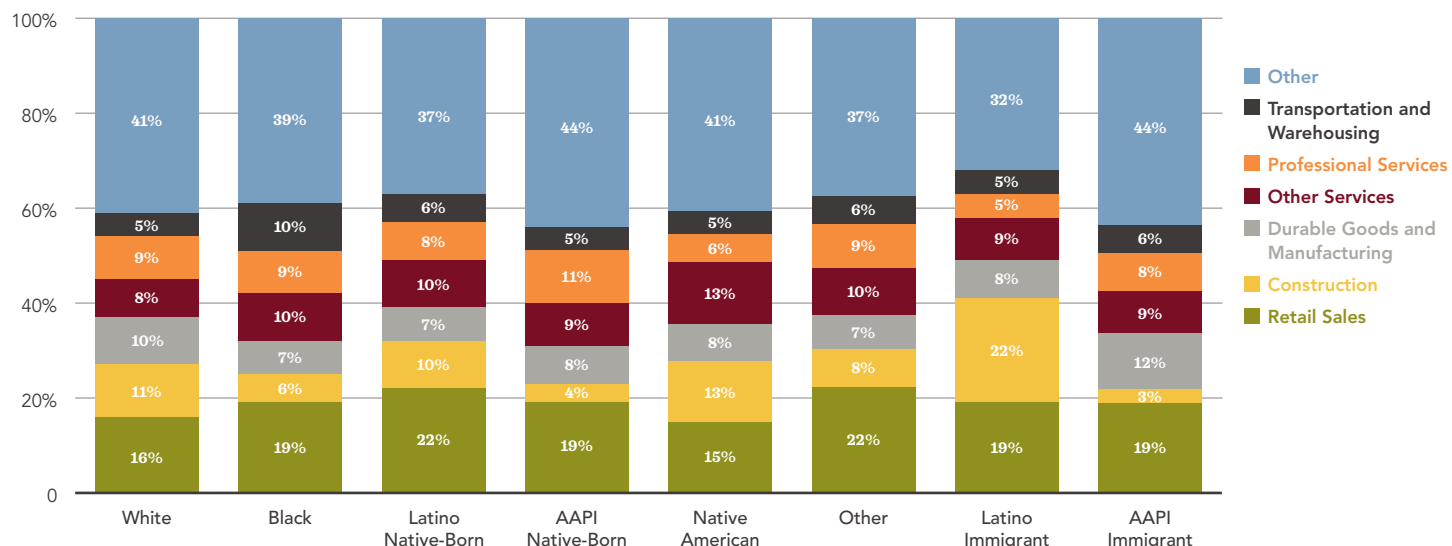
From a big-picture perspective, 11 percent of all men ages 16 and older—regardless of racial identification—work in construction. When one looks more closely at the rates on industry share, the numbers fluctuate much more by different populations. For example, among Latinos, 10 percent of native-born men participate in construction compared with 22 percent of immigrant men and 28 percent of undocumented men (Figure 16). Across the categories of immigrant men, Honduran, Mexican, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran men work in construction at much higher rates than other Latino groups (Figure 17).

Other industry categories also fluctuate in greater numbers by racial identification and immigrant generation and status. More than 20 percent of native-born Latino men are working in retail sales. For white men, approximately 16 percent are working in the industry (Figure 16). In our analysis of Black men, about 19 percent are working in retail and a higher percent (26 percent) of undocumented Black male immigrants are working in the sector.

Latino immigrant men and Native American men also have comparably high rates of participation in other services, a category composed of car washes, automobile and electronic repair services, in-home care, and various personal services. Of course, participation rates here would likely be much higher if we included women of color, given the category includes domestic work and child care. Seventeen percent of all Latinas ages 16 or older participate in “other services,” and interestingly, only 7 percent of Latino undocumented men participate in this work compared with 10 percent of naturalized citizen and native-born men. For Native American men and women, the share of workers in other services is even higher, at 13 and 20 percent, respectively; additionally, both groups also have high participation rates in public administration.

Looking at industries typically associated with white-collar occupations, 8 percent of Latino and 11 percent of AAPI native-born men work in professional services (Figure 16). This field includes both corporate supplies and advertising but also maintenance and other services to buildings. For almost all groups, the largest share of workers is concentrated in other categories, which includes information technology, public administration, military, and health care. When one looks directly at various racial identifications, certain categories pop up that can be insignificant in another setting: 8 percent of Salvadoran and Honduran, 16 percent of Mexican, and 17 percent of Guatemalan immigrant men work in agriculture, a category negligible in almost every other racial group (Figure 17). Looking even deeper at AAPI and Black immigrant groups, about 20 percent of Filipino and Nigerian men work in health care, far outpacing all other ancestry groups included in our analysis across any racial category.

FIGURE 16 SHARE OF MAJOR INDUSTRY AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 16 AND OLDER BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Industry of employment is reported for the civilian, noninstitutional population ages 16 and older, who are employed. While 16 broad industry categories exist, only the top 6 industries for the population universe are reported.

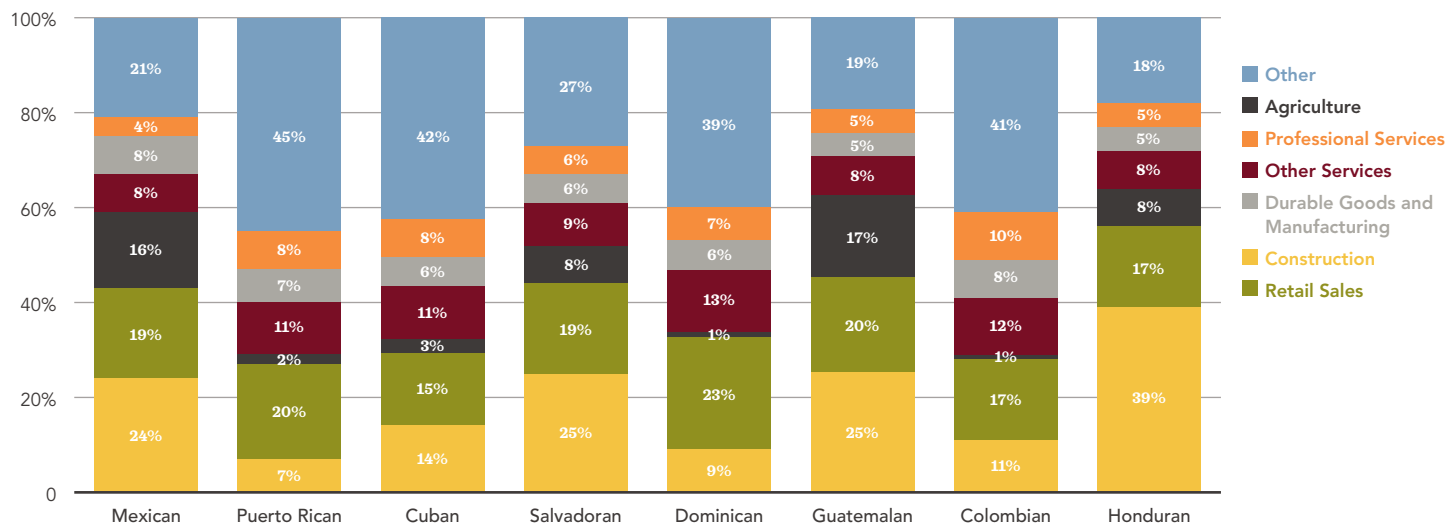
The prevalence of service fields, such as retail, signal the transformations in the overall economy that has created a “barbell” effect, with low-wage services on one end and such professional services as finance, insurance, real estate, and technology on the other. This has not totally erased manufacturing opportunities but has certainly lessened them: 8 percent of Latino and 12 percent of AAPI immigrant men participate in durable goods manufacturing compared with 10 percent of white men and 7 percent of Black and Latino native-born men (Figure 16). Durable goods include electronics and items that will last more than three years versus goods designed for quick use, such as packaging, food items, medication, cigarettes, and other consumer goods. Industries producing the former pay higher, are likely unionized, and are typically what policymakers refer to when they talk about restoring manufacturing in the United States. Among AAPI immigrants, Cambodian, Japanese, and Vietnamese men are concentrated in durable manufacturing as well.

We should note that people do not simply select into the existing industry opportunities: it is not that any of the groups have a natural predilection for washing cars versus selling insurance. Of course, one factor is education—certain industries require certain degrees or training—but industry employment is also reinforced and perpetuated by the networks people use to find work and where the work is located. An example that came through in our interviews focused on the Los Angeles construction industry, where informal networks that were originally centered on whites now help Latinos find work. While no precise data exist, anecdotal evidence and media suggest that warehouse industries—a fast-growing part of the global economy—may have a more “don’t ask, don’t tell” culture regarding criminal records, affording entry-level jobs for communities disproportionately affected by policing.

Trade unions are another form of networks—and of worker power. Unions have historically been stratified by race and tended to provide fewer opportunities for workers of color. The picture is different now in some sectors, and trade unions vary a great deal between regions. In Los Angeles, for example, the union movement has increasingly seen a source of organizing strength in immigrant communities, which has opened up access, including the redoubling of efforts to organize Black workers as well (Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2010; Pastor 2015).

The key then is influencing varying employment networks through strategic partnerships, long-view planning, and decentering current market “hot spots” in favor of cohesive pipelines that recruit targeted populations. At LATTTC, this has meant establishing key partnerships with all the trades (such as carpenters, laborers, and electricians), and, as Larry Frank put it, working toward “every single union job that’s out there . . . because then it is not just a job; it can be a career.” Toward this end, LATTTC partners with Second Call in South Central Los Angeles, an organization that recruits those just released from prison and gives them the mentorship and training to first pass the testing for electrical trade union participation and subsequently advance in their career track.

FIGURE 17 SHARE OF MAJOR INDUSTRY AMONG U.S. LATINO IMMIGRANT MEN AGES 16 AND OLDER BY ANCESTRY



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Industry of employment is reported for the civilian, noninstitutional population ages 16 and older, who are employed. While there are 16 broad industry categories, only the top 6 industries for the population universe are reported.

Shaping job and industry access also means paying attention to where things are growing. Year Up, for example, has crafted numerous regional training programs that go beyond a broad industry, such as information technology, and capture growth areas, such as digital security. One area where many are looking to develop this cross-cutting approach is health: a recent report by the Greenlining Institute points out that California’s health sector is expected to grow 27 percent through 2020, with 6.7 million Californians gaining access to insurance (Medina and Saporta 2015). Young men can be prime candidates for providing culturally competent care—but they require opportunities, such as “linked-learning” high school programs, that include technical and experiential curricula (in health), support from the health care industry, and efforts to develop understanding of health needs for themselves.

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

The location of jobs is also critical: many young men of color lack adequate means to physically reach potential work opportunities. The sprawling pattern of job growth has resulted in employment following suburbs in spreading across America’s metropolitan regions. This affects Black job seekers two times as much as Latinos and minimally affects white workers, as isolation from jobs tends to correspond with segregation in an area (Stoll 2005).

This is not a new phenomenon: previous research also showed that Latino and Black young men were harder hit by job decentralization, or the movement of jobs away from certain inner cities to the suburbs, that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s (Raphael, Stoll, and Holzer 2000). Now that jobs are moving back to the inner city, people of color are widely being displaced through rising rents; although the evidence regarding gentrification is complex (Freeman 2011), it is clear that many young men of color are being priced out of these areas and are having to move to outer-ring, working-class suburbs and face new challenges to accessing work. In recent years, research (including our own) has shown how communities of color are experiencing pushout in very specific forms of suburbanization (Wander 2016).

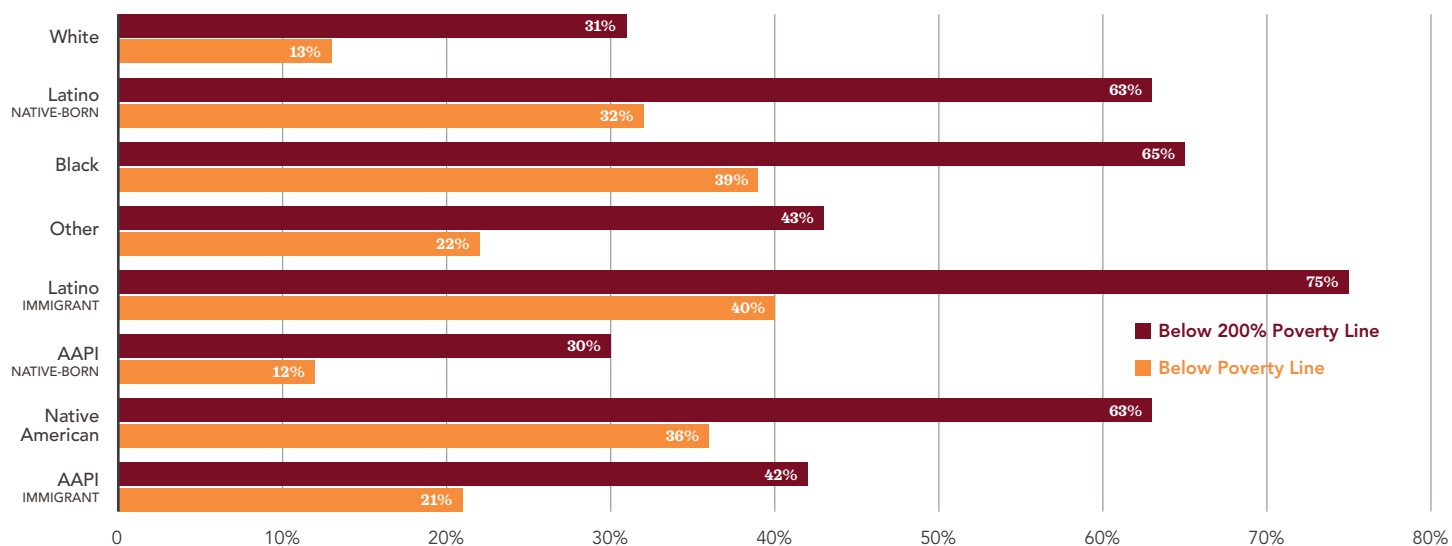
Thinking about place also helps us consider the cumulative effects of living in underresourced environments. Economic disconnection can be both linked to and a driver of violence and trauma: “Economic instability and lack of control over one’s environment,” a multiagency report from law, public health, and policy experts on boys and young men of color explains, can “create chronic stress, which creates trauma, which, in turn, tends to spur violence” (Drexel School of Public Health et al. 2010). These experiences span the course of a lifetime: parental stress can affect the development of an unborn child, and this trauma can continue to affect young men and boys as they grow up facing the adversities of economic marginalization, racism, and violence. Epigenetic research demonstrates that the biological and health effects of poverty and other forms of biological stressors—for example, malnutrition—in fact are transmitted across generations, affecting well-being today.

When thinking about the next generation of workers, we see how the worsening prospects for young and adult men (and women) is tied to even more dire circumstances for boys. Looking at poverty alone, the chasm among groups grows even wider if we restrict our view to children younger than 18 years (Figure 18).

Taking place and community into consideration does not just mean thinking about the cumulative traumas and disconnections; communities are also places of connection where people raise families (however they are defined) together, share resources, and create opportunity. Strategies need to also focus on going beyond jobs and developing such community—including through resources like child-care access. One of our interviewees noticed this disconnect: “Workforce development is a family process, and much more emphasis needs to be on supporting mothers of young men, particularly around work.” Nine states (and a number of municipalities) have school-related leave policies, which allow employees unpaid or paid leave (depending on the location) to take care of their children’s school-related duties; making such public policies universal would make a large impact (National Conference of State Legislatures 2014).

The California Conservation Corps (CCC) was lifted up as a model of a universalist policy and program that can be especially beneficial to young men of color and can enhance the communities in which they are located. CCC centers are community oriented, engaged in working for many years in the same communities. CCC’s director of energy programs, Bill McNamara, highlights that CCC centers tend to reflect the makeup of the community in their staff and corps. Moreover, part of their sustainability and longevity is their built-in, all-encompassing approach. They provide their own version of empowerment and team building in house, and they also have built strong connections with social service, mental health, and health organizations that serve their constituents. Some sites also tackle probably one of the largest drains on incomes in the present economy—rent—by offering shared living arrangements. (This is especially true for programs that take participants to work in remote and rural sites, such as national parks, but several urban centers also offer housing.) Within a political context where many legacy institutions are struggling to maintain themselves, there is something to be said for a workforce program that continues on in the biggest state in the country.

FIGURE 18 POVERTY RATE AMONG U.S. BOYS YOUNGER THAN 18 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY (LISTED IN ORDER OF POPULATION SIZE)



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: The percentage of individuals living below the indicated federal poverty threshold based on their family income, size, and composition. Universe includes all people not living in group quarters.

Pipelines, Pathways, and Power: Lessons, Insights, and Recommendations

BUILDING NEW PIPELINES

Recommendation #1: Prepare boys and young men of color for well-paying, engaging careers while also building new career pipelines and long-term social programs.

When asked about their vision for the future, many of our interviewees made one thing clear: in the face of macroeconomic challenges, workforce issues for men of color cannot simply be resolved by a short-term model of placing anyone in any low-wage job. Such positions do not lead to any long-term economic success. As the data reflect, men of color have access—though to different degrees—to ample low-paying service work that does not provide a sustainable livelihood. Technical schools or apprenticeship programs offer a potential pathway for boys and young men of color, but programs must be built in a way that strengthens training opportunities while also opening up actual employment in a sector and creating appropriate intermediaries. These approaches require providing information about jobs and opportunities, while increasing incentives to the private sector and intermediaries responsible (Spaulding et al. 2015). Such strategies do not have to be the sole domain of technical schools: universities, if made more accessible, can also be important partners broadening educational attainment while also leveraging their influence to open up new economic opportunities.

As one interviewee noted, how and which industries and sectors will grow is far harder to predict than funders and policymakers often assume. Since we do not exist in a planned economy, and given the rapid pace of global economic transformation, workforce development organizations must make high-risk decisions on how and where to invest resources. Building up partnerships with employers can take five to ten years of trying to link people with the training and opportunities that matter, by which time the opportunity may have faded. Certification programs for participants in workforce development programs can help give added value and a new entry point for young men to break into an industry, but sometimes employers do not recognize the certification or only do so for a short period.

Instead, the focus could shift to developing (or expanding) large-scale, long-term social programs through government, private, and nonprofit partnerships. In today's austerity climate, these collaborations may sometimes seem like a pipe(line) dream, but local and state-level models are proving it is possible to garner political will and resources through targeted, innovative projects. Such partnerships do not have to start from the ground up; in California, the CCC continues to persist as a model to emulate in many ways and an institution to build upon. Additionally, the ballot initiative process in California has given voters and grassroots organizations the space to develop initiatives that can mandate smart and inclusive economic development.

This was certainly the case with California's Proposition 39 (the 2012 Clean Energy Jobs Act), which pushes for clean-energy jobs and community college partnerships. After the initiative passed, a UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education report suggested that the proposition's success required prioritizing structured state-certified apprenticeship, prioritizing retrofitting and installation contractors that hire from disadvantaged communities, and aligning training with state certification (Zabin and Scott 2013). According to CCC's Bill McNamara, the Corps was directed to provide training and certification for Proposition 39's energy-efficiency projects. CCC provided free education and formed energy auditor crews across their different centers, many of which are based in low-income communities of color.

The energy crews service community colleges and Department of General Services sites, and have now expanded as contractors to private-sector sites, helping determine how the site can better conserve energy and move to renewables. This program trains and employs hundreds of young people of color and gives them a leg up in an industry with well-paying jobs that is only expected to grow, while also meeting an important need for California: alternative energy and environmental health. In this case, grassroots voter initiatives dovetailed with technical training, community college education, and publicly funded institutions to create a model of workforce development that tackles deep-rooted economic inequalities.

As one interviewee noted, when thinking about creating development projects at the local level, “What we hope to make clear [in this new context] is that there has to be a watermark for racial justice on infrastructure, and the city and county must lead on antidiscrimination protections.” As the Proposition 39 case shows, this means explicitly addressing questions of racial equity—but it also means building sustainable pipelines to well-paying, engaging work by generating economic growth in the first place.

Traditionally, workforce developers have thought about meeting the market (providing employees a first job) or molding the market (providing training to individuals for enhanced mobility). The new frontier is making the market—that is, using both economic modeling to determine where jobs will be and public policy, such as procurement or addressing climate change, to predict, facilitate, and create new employment (Benner, Leete, and Pastor 2007). This requires not just service but advocacy and so a whole new set of partnerships with social and racial justice organizations.

FORGING ONE’S OWN PATHWAY

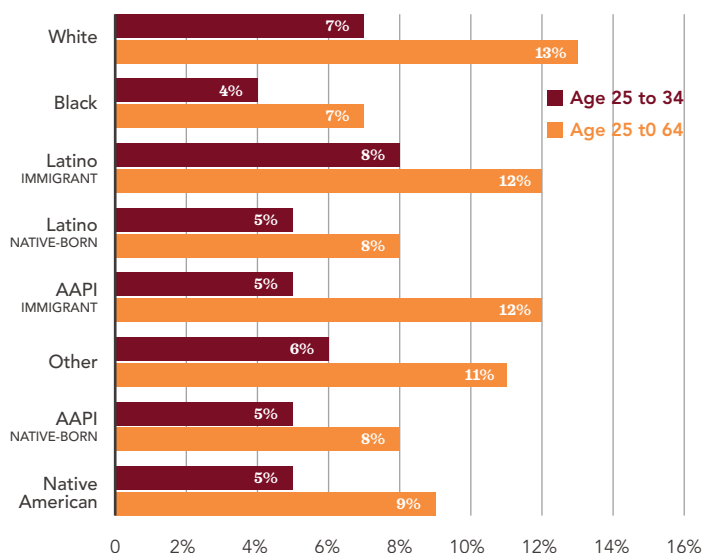
Recommendation #2: Facilitate access to capital or pooled assets to promote new business formation and entrepreneurship.

One long-term goal that moves beyond the pipeline mechanism is to **provide avenues to self-determination in the workplace**. Many of our interviewees noted the need to be better with promoting start-up of small businesses and entrepreneurship among young men of color, especially as documentation status (both with immigration and criminalization) can be a significant barrier to entering traditional pipelines. These new businesses need not be purely individualistic; as the Black Worker Center’s Smallwood Cuevas put it, “I think we need to explore cooperatives and social enterprise, and make social enterprise part of the small business conversation, where workers actually own their own businesses.” She went on to cite the Marcora Law in Italy, **where workers who are laid off from certain industries can access capital to start their own business and maintain economic autonomy**. New research in fact shows how the Marcora Law has been essential to managing economic crisis, allowing unemployed workers to recuperate failing businesses and to take ownership over these enterprises with positive results (Vieta 2015).

In general, rates of self-employment are higher for white men than for men of color—but that masks a very important pattern: for every ethnic group, immigrants tend to outpace their native-born counterparts in the rate of business formation (Figure 19). At the same time, businesses owned by people of color tend to be small and employ fewer people; clearly, there is an opportunity to build on the evident entrepreneurial energy, but such success is often bound by practical constraints, such as funding, some of which could be addressed by better access to capital and the development of cooperative models that can pool assets. These strategies often get neglected; as several interviewees noted, workforce development efforts tend to focus on short-term solutions, such as job placement, while ignoring the potential provided by meaningful self-employment and especially the sort of cooperative approaches that can generate wealth beyond one individual.

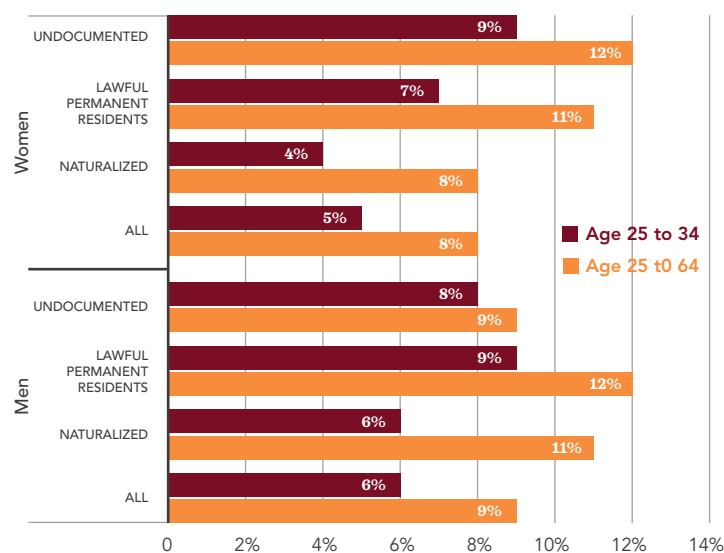
Of course, some of the high rates of self-employment among immigrants speak not only to self-starter energy but also to sheer economic necessity: facing labor market discrimination and uncertain legal status, it might be best to develop one’s own livelihood. The latter dimension can be seen when we disaggregate to the largest immigrant ancestry group (Mexicans) and examine the pattern by legal status and by gender (Figure 20). As can be seen, among men between the ages of 25 and 34, the undocumented are generally as likely as those immigrants with legal status to be self-employed. To some extent, this may represent a sort of defensive posture, but it is one that can be used to generate independence and wealth.

FIGURE 19 SELF-EMPLOYMENT RATES AMONG U.S. MEN BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Self-employment rates are reported for the employed civilian, noninstitutional population.

FIGURE 20 SELF-EMPLOYMENT RATES AMONG U.S. MEXICANS BY IMMIGRATION STATUS AND GENDER



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Self-employment rates are reported for the employed civilian, noninstitutional population.

There is a further detail in Figure 20 that brings us back to the idea of “making” markets. Note that it is undocumented women who have the highest self-employment rate of any group among Mexican adults. Domestic work and care labor represent a large segment of this self-employment work; 96 percent of this workforce is female, and 46 percent immigrant (Burnham and Theodore 2012). This is often quite contingent labor—that is, part-time and with few protections—yet it is essential to the functioning of the broader economy and society. And it need not be a bad way to make a living: the market can be remade with better conditions.

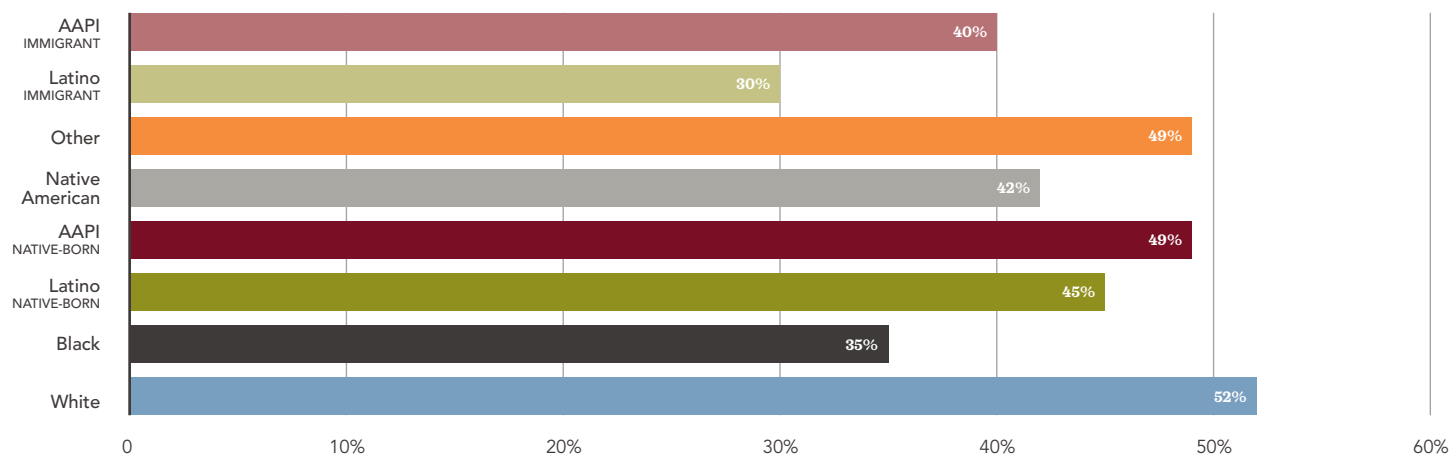
Recognizing this, the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) has helped domestic workers secure well-paying, protected work while bringing together the workforce to demand legislative solutions, such as the state-level Domestic Worker Bills of Rights passed in seven states, and developing the leadership of domestic workers to organize others and to engage in policy campaigns (Ito et al. 2014). This sort of energy and leadership—by women who face some of the toughest workplace conditions—provides deeper lessons for moving workforce development beyond job placement programs and into the long-term restructuring of employment conditions that face communities of color.

BUILDING POWER

Recommendation #3: Build organized power among boys and young men of color to address systems changes not only to improve economic outcomes but also to reshape civic engagement.

The NDWA story serves as a lesson for where the future of workforce development could go—and it reminds us that getting there is not automatic but requires systematic strategies to build and deploy power. It is no coincidence that the importance of unions and traditional labor protections were highly cited in our interviews. Unions do more than provide job networks; they can also redefine many of the structural factors that keep certain industries paying low wages. Unions traditionally organizing in factories may have been undercut by the shift in the economy and by federal and state interventions making it more difficult to organize, but some inroads have been made in service sectors. Starting most famously with the 1990s Justice for Janitors campaign and leading to the fast-food worker–led Fight for \$15 since 2015, certain unions have taken on “social movement” approaches that bring labor together with faith-based, grassroots, and other community groups to achieve gains in a sector or for low-wage workers overall (Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2010). Among lower-skilled young workers, workers of color are less likely to be making more than \$15 an hour (Figure 21).

FIGURE 21 SHARE OF U.S. MALE WORKERS AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE WHO MAKE OVER \$15 AN HOUR (2014 \$) BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY



Source: CSII analysis of 2010-2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: The share of workers earning at least \$15 an hour is reported for civilian, noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers between the ages of 25 and 34. A full-time worker is defined as someone who worked at least 50 weeks in the year, for at least 35 hours a week. For the share of workers earning at least \$15 an hour, the shares are based on wages in 2014 dollars.

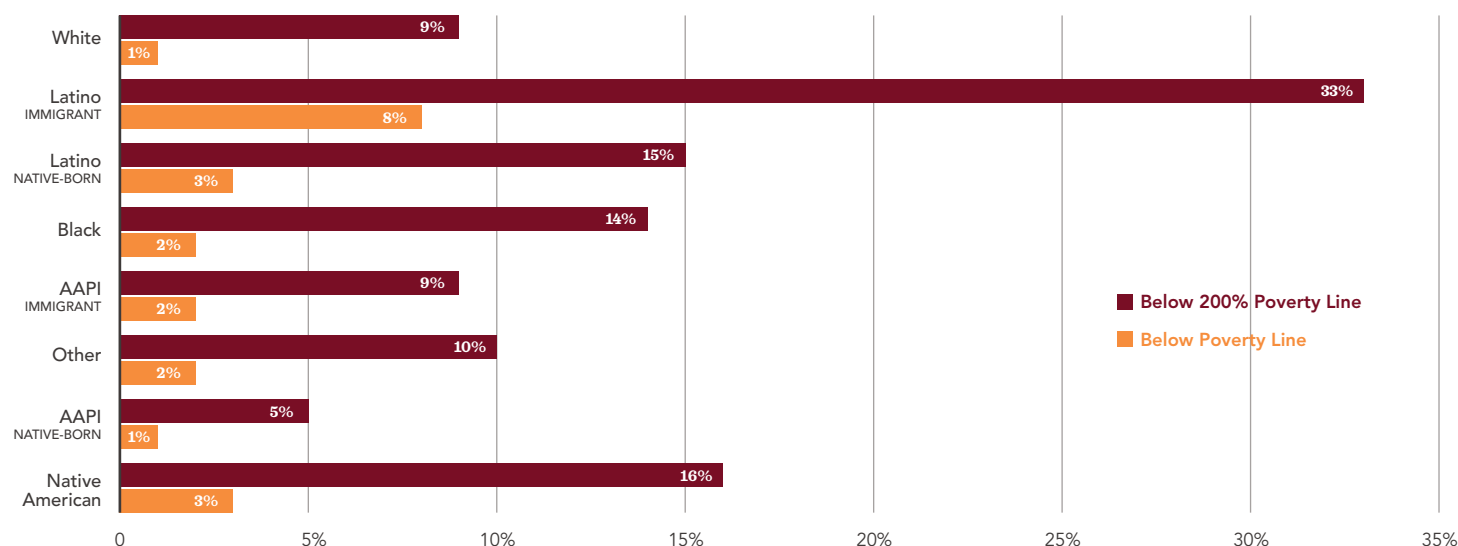
Unions answer this shift to some degree through cross-cutting engagements around wages and workplace discrimination and abuse that go beyond industry, such as minimum wage or wage theft campaigns. But as the broader economic and employment landscape continues to change, new ways of thinking about worker empowerment are needed. Some interviewees highlighted the need to go beyond the workplace to also organize in the communities where workers live in order to take on structural poverty. Speaking about the Black Worker Center’s expanding framework and the limitations of current workforce development models, Smallwood Cuevas explains how “it is time to rethink some of these models in this moment, particularly if their funding gets cut. Is it time to think about a movement for unemployed youth and unemployed people to make demands of local, regional, state, and national institutions? It’s a longer-term proposition but [perspectives] are slowly shifting.”

And it is not just employment; as we have stressed, the issues of job quality are particularly important to young immigrant Latino men. Among Latino immigrants ages 25 to 34, 8 percent work full-time but still live below the federal poverty line, a rate of working poverty more than twice as high as any other group. More alarmingly, 33 percent of Latino immigrants ages 25 to 34 work full-time and still live below 200 percent of the poverty line, while around 15 percent of native-born Latino, Black, and Native Americans face the same (Figure 22). Too often, even if young men of color manage to secure full-time jobs, they still live on the fringes with little opportunity for socioeconomic mobility. Clearly, workforce strategies need to go beyond simple employment numbers and recognize the different crises that groups face.

One way to do this is to implement youth-organizing models that build leaders and power in youth development spaces. Models such as Juntos in Philadelphia actively work to organize youth to reform their schools and in so doing help build leadership and engagement with schools. They also draw from intergenerational strategies that involve families in the organizing. Rather than focusing solely on the most high-achieving immigrant youth, Juntos works to address the inequalities that prevent all immigrant students from achieving a college education. The organization helps improve ESL education and trains school staff and teachers on how best to serve undocumented youth. Research also demonstrates how youth organizing in particular helps increase civic engagement but also students’ engagement with their schools and educational institutions (Terriquez 2011, 2015).

If one theme has also been clear from the disaggregated data in this report, it is the ways in which undocumented young men and women across the board face compounded economic challenges: in other words, immigration status provides serious roadblocks to all kinds of mobility. While we can learn much from looking at the particular struggles of undocumented immigrant young men, immigration status is a household experience. Boys and young men raised in households with undocumented parents or siblings live daily with the prospect of losing their caretakers and loved ones. Our own recent data analysis shows the scale of mixed-status households, with over five million citizen children living with at least one undocumented relative in the country (Mathema 2017). Immigrant and mixed-status households must learn to survive on lowered wages, without access to basic social and health services, and with the massive mental and physical toll of insecurity.

FIGURE 22 WORKING POVERTY RATE AMONG U.S. MEN AGES 25 TO 34 YEARS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVITY (LISTED IN ORDER OF POPULATION SIZE)



Source: CSII analysis of 2010–2014 pooled IPUMS data. Note: Working poverty is defined here as the share of full-time workers between the ages of 25 and 64 living at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. A full-time worker works at least 50 weeks in a year for at least 35 hours a week.

One can craft numerous strategies to circumvent the limits placed on undocumented workers and those with expired visas or work permits, such as focusing on entrepreneurship or protecting day laborers, but any serious consideration of the economic and political future of the United States must include comprehensive immigration reform. These reform strategies need to take seriously the ways in which young men are already criminalized and, instead of reinscribing these policies, actually give immigrants a real chance to regularize their status regardless of their past (Lauby 2016). Certain social movement unions have been important to pushing forward this agenda, but it is going to take far more action to challenge the ways in which excluding immigrants has just become the status quo.

Again, youth of color have recently been building power in this way, linking criminal justice and immigration reform beyond the limits of the DREAM Act narratives through the #Not1More campaign and other efforts to directly protect communities from deportation (Abrams 2016; Lauby 2016). Collaborations between organizations, such as Mijente and the Black Youth Project in Chicago and elsewhere, are making explicit the criminalization that Black and Latino communities face, and building toward shared opportunities for both across gender and racial lines (Alcindor 2017).

Reckoning with the nation’s anti-immigrant, anti-Black past and present—and its continual neglect of Native American concerns both on the reservation and in our urban areas—is key. Those who do not grapple with these dynamics—who seek to paper over the systemic stressors in favor of a more palatable focus on programmatic best practices—are likely to find their eventual progress stymied. Historical experience suggests, and our interviewees insist, that the only way we will address the challenge is through the sort of power building and policy advocacy that can make change occur.

Fortunately, young people themselves have jumped into this fray. One key takeaway for us is that workforce development and education are important tools and that there are system shifts that need to take place. But this must be coupled with an approach that sees young men of color not as problems to be fixed but rather as potential agents of the change we need. This implies a role for community organizing and leadership development, not simply to improve economic outcomes but to fundamentally reshape civic engagement.

The Way Forward

Boys and men of color are the workforce of the future. Planning for a future where they can thrive in their careers requires understanding just who these men are. This report has shown the power of disaggregating data and digging deeper into the stories and conditions that many young men of color face. It also means understanding that young men of color do not live siloed lives, that often there are shared struggles among different populations but also specific obstacles for certain groups. And perhaps most important, it means that planning for their future requires planning for their families, friends, and future coworkers as well.

While this may seem a daunting task, organizational leaders interviewed here, and many hundreds more around the country (often invisible to the public eye), are providing avenues to look toward and lessons on effective strategies that take seriously the value and capacity of young men of color. As we were reminded in researching this report, “Half the stuff we don’t need to invent; it is already out there.” That is, the programs and strategies exist: they just need to be embraced by political and civic leaders and then scaled up to meet the size of the challenges we face.

The data we have presented can play a role in this broader effort. Detailed empirical analysis is important for making the right diagnosis of problems, generating a clear profile of strengths, and devising effective solutions. Presented correctly, it can help create an atmosphere in which difference can be highlighted not to divide groups but to point to the specific needs that must be addressed under the banner of common goals. And among the most unifying of those goals is our very future as a nation.

It is hard to imagine a thriving America if so many groups remain locked into poverty, locked out of opportunity, and literally locked up by an all-consuming prison system. It is certainly hard to visualize an America getting past its legacy and reality of racism and living up to its promise of opportunity if the economic gaps and leaks in the mobility pipeline continue to be ignored. The types of policy reforms and programmatic directions suggested in this report are critical to advancing economic security for young men and women of color, but there is a deeper (and, for some, inconvenient) truth: they are also critical for the country as a whole.

Clearly, it will be difficult for an economy to thrive when ever-larger numbers of people are kept from working in ways that allow them to live healthy lives, as well as to generate material security for those in their environment and those who will follow them. Yet young men of color are more than just potential workers, consumers, or savers. They are also future leaders and community builders, fathers and partners, friends and neighbors. Engaging young men of color in transforming the economy takes us many steps farther: it helps ensure that as we create opportunity, we also reshape institutions and structures entwined with the U.S. history of racism and inequality. Placing the diverse experiences of young men of color at the center affords us the possibility not only to secure our shared tomorrow but to construct a reality that honors the capacities, strengths, and visions of diverse communities that lie just below the surface—to start building a better future today.

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APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

To include data on undocumented immigrants and lawful permanent residents, we also used a pooled sample of 2010–2014 IPUMS data, the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation, and national aggregate estimates for the undocumented by country of origin. The major contribution of the quantitative analysis presented in this report is the level of disaggregation: beyond looking at broad racial and ethnic categories by age and gender, we also disaggregate by nativity and immigration status and by detailed ancestry groups. While the focus of the analysis is young men between the ages of 16 and 35 for all of these groups, we provide additional analysis that includes women and older age groups.

RACE/ETHNICITY

Broadly, the data presented in this report categorize people based on their individual responses to the American Community Survey. Unless otherwise noted, people are grouped into six mutually exclusive racial/ethnic groups based on their response to two separate questions on race and Hispanic origin as follows:

- “White” refers to all people who identify as white alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Black” and “African American” refer to all people who identify as Black or African American alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Latino” refers to all people who identify as being of Hispanic origin, regardless of racial identification.
- “Asian American and Pacific Islander” and “AAPI” refer to all people who identify as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Native American” refers to all people who identify as Native American or Alaskan Native alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Other” refers to all people who identify with a single racial category not included above, or who identify with multiple racial categories and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “People of color” refers to all people who do not identify as either of Hispanic origin or white alone.

NATIVITY AND IMMIGRATION STATUS

In this report, nativity is broken out broadly to identify those who are “U.S.-born” and those who are “immigrant,” with these categories further broken down into “naturalized immigrants,” “lawful permanent residents,” and “undocumented immigrants.” “U.S.-born” refers to all people whose survey responses indicated that they were born in the United States (including U.S. territories and outlying areas) or that they were born abroad of at least one U.S. citizen parent. “Immigrants” refer to people who indicated they were born abroad, outside of U.S. territories, and to non-U.S. citizen parents.

Our further disaggregation of the immigrant population was not fully available in the census survey data, as the deepest level of granularity of these data identify whether a foreign-born respondent is a naturalized immigrant (i.e., a citizen) or not (i.e., not a citizen, which includes both lawful permanent residents and other documented immigrants and undocumented immigrants). As mentioned earlier, we used a data set generated by USC PERE’s sister research center, the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, that compiled pooled IPUMS microdata files between 2010 and 2014, the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and national aggregate estimates for the undocumented by country of origin. We use responses from SIPP to derive legal status predictors since this survey actually has questions on documentation upon arrival to the United States and current legal status. We then apply these predictors in order to determine which cases in the microdata are most likely to be unauthorized and then tag them as such. For a more detailed explanation of the method (which also includes stratification by probability samples), see the Methodology section of “DAPA Matters: The Growing Electorate Directly Affected by Executive Action on Immigration” (Pastor, Jawetz, and Ocampo 2015); note that for this report we have applied the method to a more recent vintage of the U.S. Census data.

ANCESTRY

On top of having further disaggregation by immigration status, data in this report are also provided by ancestry within the mutually exclusive racial/ethnic groups outlined above, except for the multiracial “other” group. For this reason, ancestry groups actually appear across racial/ethnic groups (e.g., the “Panamanian” ancestry group shows up in both the Black and Latino racial/ethnic groups). For all groups, except Native Americans, we characterized ancestry based on the “ANCESTR1” variable in IPUMS, which is the first response (of up to two) to “What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?” Since for Native Americans the most common response to ANCESTR1 is “American Indian (all tribes),” we used the detailed race responses in the RACED variable to identify specific Native American tribes.

We assigned ancestry groups within the broader racial/ethnic groups by first examining the most common responses in ANCESTR1. The detailed groups were also organized into broader groups by geography corresponding to the ancestry of origin (e.g., the “Laotian” detailed ancestry group is included in the “Southeast Asian” broader ancestry group). Additionally, a residual “Other” broad ancestral category was defined for each racial/ethnic group to include people whose ancestry question was too ambiguous or too small to include in either the detailed ancestry category or the broader ancestry groups. It is important to note that for the Black race group, the Other category is largely composed of people who identify as “African-American” or “Afro-American.” Finally, the number of detailed groups within each broader group was limited to eight plus an additional residual group, a result from the method being derived for use on the National Equity Atlas (nationalequityatlas.org), which has limits on the number of detailed ancestry groups that can be reported under its broad ancestry group. For example, while the “Malaysian” ancestry is included in the broad “Southeast Asian” ancestry group, it is the ninth largest group and as such was not broken out in this analysis.

We tried to keep the broader ancestral groupings as consistent to people’s actual identities and as intuitive as possible, but owing to the limitations of U.S. Census data collection, this is not always an easy feat. Generally, we could lean on census categorizations, but for the broad grouping of Native American tribes, we relied heavily on maps of Native American regions and applied the most common groupings (e.g., Northwest Coast, Great Plains, etc.). For Middle East/North African ancestral groups within the white population, we included all ANCESTR1 responses under the “North African and Southwest Asia” group in the IPUMS documentation.

VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

While the data set compiled for this report includes a fair number of indicators, the report itself only highlights a portion of them. The definitions for them are as follows:

Educational attainment is reported for adults between the ages of 18 and 64 in five mutually exclusive categories. “Less than high school” indicates any level of schooling short of a high school diploma or equivalency (GED); this would include no schooling at all. “High school degree” indicates the person graduated from high school or obtained a GED. “Some college” indicates that one or more years of college credits were received but no degree was obtained, while “associate’s degree” indicates that a person received an associate’s degree. Finally, “bachelor’s degree or higher” encapsulates those who earned a bachelor’s degree and all of the degrees beyond that level of education: master’s, professional, and doctoral degrees. Some other variables are further disaggregated by these education levels.

Disconnected youth refers to youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor employed.

Unemployment is reported for the civilian, noninstitutional population in the labor force between the ages of 25 and 64. To be in the labor force, a person must be employed or have been actively looking for work within the last 4 weeks of which the survey was taken. Therefore, unemployment refers to those who are actively looking for work but who are not employed.

Self-employment rates are reported for the employed civilian, noninstitutional population between the ages of 25 and 64.

Median wages and the share of workers earning at least \$15/hour are reported for civilian, noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers between the ages of 25 and 64. A full-time worker is defined as someone who worked at least 50 weeks in the year, for at least 35 hours a week. For median wages, values are reported in 2014 dollars. Likewise, for the share of workers earning at least \$15 an hour, the shares are based on wages in 2014 dollars.

Industries are generally reported as the top 6 industries for a group, with the balance of industries categorized as “Other.” However, there are 16 industry categories in which a larger group of industries falls, as classified by the 1990 Census Bureau industrial classification scheme.

- Agriculture—also includes forestry, fishing, hunting, and trapping
- Mining
- Construction
- Nondurable Goods Manufacturing—generally refers to the manufacturing of goods that are immediately consumed or last fewer than 3 years (e.g., food, paper, and clothing)
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Durable Goods Manufacturing—generally refers to the manufacturing of goods that are meant to last at least 3 years because they do not quickly wear out (e.g., bricks, cars, and appliances)
- Utilities
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Finance and Real Estate
- Professional Services
- Health Care Services
- Information—includes printing and publishing, communications, and computer and data processing
- Educational Services
- Other Services
- Public Administration

Poverty status refers to people who live below the federal poverty threshold based on their family income, size, and composition. Note that poverty status is collected for most but not all people. We report two levels of poverty: those living below the threshold (“100 percent federal poverty level”) and those living below two times the threshold (“200 percent federal poverty level”). As a point of reference, in 2016, the federal poverty threshold was \$24,300 for a family of four.

Working poverty is reported for the civilian, noninstitutional population between the ages of 25 and 64. Working poverty refers to the share of the working-age population that is both working full time and living below the federal poverty threshold (as previously defined).

Health insurance rates are reported for those between the ages of 18 and 64 and simply indicates whether or not a person has health insurance coverage and of what type.

A Note on Sample Size

While the IPUMS microdata allow for the tabulation of detailed population characteristics, it is important to keep in mind that because such tabulations are based on samples, they are subject to a margin of error and should be regarded as estimates—particularly for smaller demographic subgroups. In an effort to avoid reporting highly unreliable estimates, we do not report any estimated ratios or measures of central tendency (e.g., means and medians) that are based on a universe of fewer than 100 individual survey respondents. For example, when we look at disconnected youth for Latino immigrants, we do not report results in cases where the unweighted count of Latino immigrants between the ages of 16 and 24 is less than 100. However, even with this restriction in place, users should not assume that small differences in indicator values between demographic subgroups are statistically significant.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Background and Landscape: Boys and Men of Color (BMOC) and Economic Opportunities

1. How did you come to do the work that you do (pathway to current position)? What role does your organization play? What is your role in the organization?
 - a. *PROBE: Have you worked for any other workforce and economic development organizations? Where/how did you receive your training in this field?*

II. Emerging Support Networks and Strategies

2. What model does your organization utilize to increase economic opportunities for BMOC?
 - a. What populations do you target specifically?
 - b. What do you think are the successes of this model?
 - c. What are the challenges of this model?
 - d. What is one major change you would like to see in the model?
3. What kinds of organizations do you partner with in your economic opportunities/workforce development work? In what way?
 - a. *PROBE: Are there particular partner organizations and services that you believe have done particularly well? What groups do they serve or work with? What do you think accounts for their success?*
 - b. *Are there other, nonpartner organizations you believe are successful in workforce development/economic opportunities for BMOC? Why do you think they work?*
4. What gaps do you see in the existing BMOC workforce development infrastructure?
 - a. *PROBE: Do you know of particular strategies or examples of interethnic collaboration? What about other forms of collaboration with specific institutions or sectors (e.g., faith-based, unions, industries)?*

III. Challenges to Workforce and Economic Opportunities for BMOC

5. How would you describe the state of the workforce development field today, in general and for people of color specifically?
6. What do you think accounts for the growing interest in the needs of boys and men of color? Do you see this interest in your field?
7. What are the greatest barriers and challenges boys and young men of color in the United States face in participating in the workforce and succeeding economically?
 - a. *PROBE: Are there any issues unique to different subgroups of boys and young men of color in the United States?*
8. How does the social and economic position of boys and young men of color in the United States affect their opportunities in the workforce and the economy more broadly?
 - a. *PROBE: How do these social and economic factors play out directly for BMOC of different racial and ethnic identifications? If necessary: What about immigration status? What about compared to women and/or gender-nonconforming folks?*
9. Have you worked in any other city/state around these issues? In what ways do you think Los Angeles or California is unique in its economic/workforce challenges and opportunities?

IV. Looking Ahead: New Models and Possibilities

10. What are the top three (3) issues or characteristics people involved in workforce/economic development need to know specifically about working with boys and men of color?

a. *Note: If the organization works with specific subpopulations, shape this question to address this by adding, "in particular regarding ..." at end.*

11. We want this project to be useful to those working in this field. What sort of demographic data would be most useful to thinking about the current context and future challenges?

V. Final Thoughts

12. Are there any pressing things you want to make sure are part of the record? Were there any questions we should have asked that we did not?

13. Finally, do you have any recommendations of other organizations, advocates, educational institutions, and civic and community leaders we should speak with?

a. *PROBE: Ask for specific contacts if available.*

APPENDIX C

Selected Interviewee List

Laurence B. Frank

President, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College

Travis Keene

External Relations Director, Year Up Los Angeles

Bill McNamara

Director of Energy Programs, California Conservation Corps

Bikila Ochoa

Policy Director, Anti-Recidivism Coalition

Lola Smallwood Cuevas

Director, Los Angeles Black Workers Center

RISE is a joint initiative co-led by Equal Measure and
Penn GSE Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.



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