

# ADVANCING WORKFORCE EQUITY IN CHICAGO

## A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

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# **ADVANCING WORKFORCE EQUITY IN CHICAGO**

## A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

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This report was produced by the National Equity Atlas, a research partnership between PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute.

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# 1.0 FOREWORD

In this time of social upheaval and racial reckoning, Covid-19 has forced us to confront deep vulnerabilities in our economic system. The measures that have long been accepted as signaling a healthy economy—booming stock market, low unemployment, record corporate profits—hid the painful truth that the US economy is built on far too many low-wage, low-quality jobs and deeply entrenched racial occupational segregation that has left 100 million people in the US economically insecure.

Our nation cannot afford another inequitable “recovery” like the one that followed the Great Recession. Dismantling structural racism must be at the center of our response to this crisis, which presents an opportunity to redesign a more just, inclusive, and sustainable economy: one built around jobs that actually boost the economy, not just prop it up, and one that values the well-being and dignity of all workers so that they may achieve their full potential.

Racial inequities are entrenched in the workforce development system. While the problems of workforce inequity are national, many of the best solutions are local—and the *Advancing Workforce Equity* series represents the insights of disaggregated data and the transformative power of local leadership, design, and influence in five US regions that are poised to put this research into action: Boston, Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Achieving workforce equity is a key component of building a thriving and inclusive economy that benefits all workers, residents, and communities. It will require coordination, collaboration, and integrated solutions across multiple systems. This calls for a systems thinking mindset and bold action. Business leaders and employers must adopt new mindsets and new practices that prioritize workforce equity and good jobs. Policymakers and philanthropic and community

organizations must align their resources and efforts toward ensuring that working people can be uplifted rather than dislocated and insisting on high standards of job quality for all workers. The time is now.

**Michael McAfee, President and CEO, PolicyLink**

**Amanda Cage, President and CEO, National Fund for Workforce Solutions**

The *Advancing Workforce Equity* project supports regional workforce partners to develop explicit, data-driven equity strategies. The communities involved—Boston, Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco, and Seattle—are partners in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions national network of workforce practitioners. Each city formed equity workgroups to guide the work, identify the key drivers of inequity, and prioritize actionable strategies to advance equity through their policy efforts, programs, and investments.

The work is documented in this series of reports, which will serve as the basis for long-term equity-focused efforts. This work is a collaboration between the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and the National Equity Atlas, a partnership between PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute.

## 2.0

# PREFACE

The Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance is excited and proud to see this important report come to fruition. For us it is a significant step on our continuing journey to put racial equity at the center of our collaborative's mission and day-to-day work. Data-driven inquiry and critical policy analysis have always guided our journey, and we are grateful for all the thought partners and teachers who have provided us and so many others with this guidance. In particular we want to thank the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, PolicyLink, USC Equity Research Institute, Burning Glass, and all the contributors to this report with whom we have engaged so much over the past year. We appreciate their shared wisdom, and we are inspired by our collective energy and commitment.

Although the multiple crises of this past year have been unprecedented, the underlying inequities they lay bare and amplify are not. Rather they are rooted in generations of systemic and structural racism. For some, the story told here in this report will not be new. It reinforces an impressive body of work across the country and especially Chicago, through which rigorous data analysis reveals stark racial segregation and disparities, and their crushing cost to our communities. However, we believe it is significant that these regional analyses center the workforce and the labor market. Too often labor market disparities and the systemic racism at their root get less attention than other issue areas like housing, criminal justice, or education. And while all these issue areas intersect, we believe the labor market is so integral it warrants the kind of focused analysis this report provides. We see the Blueprint for Action as a set of guideposts for our own work, for the continuation of the journey. We hope our partners and collaborators, old and new, will join us along the path.

**Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance**

## 3.0 SUMMARY

In the Chicagoland area, as in the rest of the nation, deep racial inequities are built into the regional economy. Residential segregation, gaps in educational attainment, employer bias and discrimination, and barriers related to housing, transportation, and supportive services systemically disadvantage people of color in the labor market. And the changing structure of the economy, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, threatens to deepen these longstanding inequities. Racial gaps in employment and wages are stubbornly entrenched, and the acceleration of automation and digitalization puts workers of color at a higher risk of job dislocation than their White peers.

This regional analysis is part of the *Advancing Workforce Equity* project building on the insights of our previous research, *Race, Risk, and Workforce Equity in the Coronavirus Economy* and *Race and the Work of the Future*, to inform a tailored, ground-level blueprint for advancing workforce equity.<sup>1,2</sup> It provides a data-driven evaluation of racial inequities in workforce outcomes in Chicagoland, examining how systemic racism manifests in the labor market, how the Covid-19 pandemic is impacting these dynamics, and how automation is projected to affect industries and workers in the area. We analyze labor force data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, disaggregated data on wages and employment from the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, data on current and historical job demand and automation risk in the United States from Burning Glass Technologies, and other sources of local data for the region. Unless otherwise noted all data presented in this report are based on the authors' original analysis of these sources (further details can be found in the methodology). In this report, the Chicagoland region is defined as inclusive of Cook, Dupage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties in the state of Illinois.

Our key findings include the following.

- **As the workforce grows more diverse, racial inequity carries mounting economic costs.**
  - ***People of color are a large and growing share of the region's workforce, but they are not sharing equitably in its prosperity.*** Workers of color make up 47 percent of the Chicagoland workforce ages 25-64, and 59 percent of the next-generation workforce (the population under 25). But Black and Latinx workers are more than twice as likely as their White counterparts to earn wages under \$15/hour.
  - ***Racial economic exclusion hampers the region's economic growth.*** In 2018 alone, racial gaps in wages and employment for working-age people cost the Chicagoland economy about \$136 billion in lost economic activity. With racial equity in income, the average annual incomes of Black, Latinx, and Native American workers would effectively double.
- **The structure of the regional economy and labor market reinforces racial gaps in employment and wages.**
  - ***Occupational segregation is stark.*** Despite the growing diversity of the Chicago metro workforce, clear patterns of occupational segregation persist. White workers are overrepresented in many higher wage professional occupations, while workers of color are largely crowded in lower paying jobs.
  - ***The region faces a shortfall of good jobs that do not require a college degree.*** Overall, about 41 percent of workers are in good jobs (defined as stable, automation-resilient jobs with family-sustaining wages). But the share drops to 13 percent among workers in jobs that require no credentials beyond a high school diploma. This good-jobs gap has significant racial equity implications, considering that more than a third of Native American and Black adults, 44 percent of US-born Latinx adults, and three-quarters of Latinx immigrant adults have no education beyond high school.

- **People of color—especially Black and Latinx residents—face systemic and structural barriers to opportunity.**

— ***Equity in higher educational attainment is essential, but insufficient, to achieve racial economic inclusion.*** Racial inequities in employment and wages persist across all levels of educational attainment. On average, White workers with only a high school diploma earn the same as Black workers with an associate’s degree (\$21) and earn more than Latinx workers with an associate’s degree (\$20). While higher education tends to narrow racial gaps in labor force participation and employment, it does not close gaps in median hourly wages.

- **The Covid-19 pandemic is compounding pre-existing racial inequities and economic inequality, and is likely to further disrupt the labor market by accelerating automation and digitalization.**

— ***Workers of color are disproportionately left out of the early jobs recovery in labor-market demand.*** Online job demand is returning most quickly in occupations where people of color were concentrated before the crisis, but unemployment remains elevated among Black and Latinx workers relative to their White counterparts.

— ***People of color face disproportionate risk of automation-driven job displacement.*** Latinx workers face the highest average automation risk in Chicagoland (61 percent), followed by Black and Native American workers (53 percent each), while White workers face the lowest average risk (39 percent).

## The Blueprint for Action

This report reveals the need for a comprehensive approach to advance workforce equity—where racial income gaps have been eliminated, all jobs are good jobs, and everyone who wants to work has access to family-supporting employment. It is an invitation to employers, policymakers, philanthropy, training providers, and community organizations to create and execute a robust agenda to dismantle systemic barriers to opportunity for people of color, scale future-ready approaches to training and credentialing, invest in automation resilience strategies to ensure that working people can be uplifted rather than dislocated by technological advancements, and guarantee high standards of job quality for all workers.

A cross-cutting racial equity agenda for the region's workforce is the cornerstone of an equitable economic recovery and a Chicago economy in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. The Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance Equity Working Group defines an equitable workforce as one in which race, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic characteristics no longer predict one's outcomes in the labor market. All people have equitable access to jobs that are safe, pay a living wage, offer benefits, provide career pathways, and opportunities for mobility. The workforce—both public and private—is representative of the general population at all different levels of skill and pay across occupational groups and sectors. To close the gaps, near-term efforts should focus on communities most impacted by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities while working collaboratively to transform policies, institutions, and structures in the long term.

Their recommendations to inform the efforts of funders, employers, and community-based organizations working to advance workforce equity in Chicagoland include the following:

1. Use sector-based workforce development strategies to build pathways into good jobs for workers of color.
2. Improve job quality and economic security for workers of color.
3. Develop strategies to close racial gaps in the social determinants of work.
4. Elevate and amplify worker voice and worker power.

## 4.0

# INTRODUCTION

Chicagoland's economy is strong, diverse, and massive. The area's geographic location, transportation infrastructure, and highly educated workforce give it a strong business advantage, and the greater Chicago metropolitan area is home to dozens of Fortune 500 companies.<sup>3</sup> With a regional GDP of more than \$640 billion in 2018, it would have ranked 21st among the largest *national* economies in the world.<sup>4</sup>

A global financial hub, the region's economy is also driven by business and professional services, transportation and logistics, and medical and life sciences. In recent years it has also enjoyed faster growth in advanced industries than many peer cities, and still retains a strong manufacturing base, despite declining employment in the sector.<sup>5,6</sup>

Chicagoland's impressive economic output is driven by more than four million people who work in the region—but not all of them are sharing in the region's prosperity. For too many workers, low and stagnant wages are paired with rising costs—especially rent. Rental housing prices in Chicago have continued to rise, even as the population has been in decline for many years.<sup>7,8</sup>

Black residents, in particular, have long suffered from elevated unemployment rates, among the highest of any large US metro.<sup>9</sup> Working poverty is also a challenge: in 2017, 12 percent of Black workers, 14 percent of Native American workers, and 20 percent of Latinx workers were both working full time and also economically insecure (with family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level).<sup>10</sup> In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the structure of work is rapidly evolving and these racial inequities are widening. While scores of white-collar employees continue to do their jobs from home, more than 250,000 workers—disproportionately people of color—remained unemployed in the Chicago

Metropolitan Statistical Area.<sup>11</sup> Others are still working but are suffering from decreased income, while contending not only with the health risks of Covid-19 but also with its rippling social effects, such as lack of childcare and cuts to public transportation.

Automation and digitalization are transforming leading industries and occupations in the Chicago area labor market, just as the region's changing demographics are transforming the labor force. In the midst of the public health and economic crises of the coronavirus pandemic and a broad-based racial justice movement spurred by the murder of George Floyd, there is a renewed sense of urgency to achieve racial economic inclusion in Chicagoland, and the workforce system is a key piece of the puzzle.

**5.0**  
STRUCTURAL RACISM DRIVES  
WORKFORCE INEQUITIES



Inequitable workforce outcomes arise out of the deep history of racial exclusion in the region, including redlining, racial segregation, and disinvestment in communities of color; inequitable investments in education; discrimination, bias, and systemic racism in employment practices; and racial inequity in the criminal-legal system. Many occupations in which people of color are concentrated—agricultural, domestic, restaurant, and gig workers—are not protected by certain federal labor standards such as minimum-wage and overtime laws. The key dynamics perpetuating workforce inequity in the Chicagoland region include the following.

- **Structural changes in the economy and labor market demand.** From 2005 to 2015, manufacturing employment in the Chicago metropolitan area fell by more than 16 percent, continuing an ongoing trend accelerated by deindustrialization, automation, and other large-scale economic trends.<sup>12</sup> This sharp decline of manufacturing jobs, which had long provided a pathway to economic security for workers without a college degree, has exacerbated racial economic inequities in the Chicago region. At the same time, job growth has been substantially concentrated in low-wage service-sector jobs that leave many workers and families economically insecure and without access to benefits or opportunities for career advancement.

The impact of shrinking public-sector employment has also contributed to racial gaps in employment and income, disproportionately affecting Black workers. These and other dynamics are also contributing to population decline in Chicago, which our analysis shows is most dramatic among Black residents.

- **Residential segregation and educational inequities.** Residential segregation remains stark in Chicago, which is often cited as one of the most segregated cities in the nation.<sup>13</sup> Growing income and wealth inequality are mapped onto this spatial divide, and residents of wealthy neighborhoods rich in opportunity benefit not only from quality schools, but also from access to the social capital of well-connected personal and professional networks, which can also play an important role in employment opportunities.<sup>14</sup> Without access to these resources, and in the face of discriminatory employer practices, both conscious and unconscious bias in hiring, and inadequate policy protections, people of color are more likely to be unemployed or crowded into low-quality jobs. Housing-cost burden is also a major financial stressor for many households in Chicagoland. Rising rents and gentrification have displaced many low- and middle-wage workers and people of color out of their neighborhoods and away from employment centers, and housing instability is a serious barrier to finding and keeping a job.

Higher educational attainment is associated with higher wages and lower rates of joblessness for workers across all racial/ethnic groups, but it does not eliminate racial gaps. In the Chicagoland region just 8 percent of working-age Latinx immigrant adults, 24 percent of Black and US-born Latinx adults, and 33 percent of Native American adults have at least a four-year degree, compared with 53 percent of White adults. These gaps are rooted in racial and economic segregation that concentrates children of color and low-income children in schools that are systematically underfunded and neglected. High school graduation rates have improved significantly over the last five years, but too few students are finishing school prepared for college or a career.

- **Systemic and institutional racism in the labor market.** National research indicates that racial bias and discrimination in recruitment and hiring remain significant barriers for people of color. National research has indicated that with identical resumes, White applicants (or applicants with “White-sounding names”) are called back 36 percent more often than Black applicants, and 24 percent more often than Latinx applicants.<sup>15</sup> And seemingly race-neutral employer hiring practices like credit checks and criminal background checks present further disproportionate barriers for people of color. In Cook County, Black residents are 10 times more likely to be arrested than White residents.<sup>16</sup> These interactions with police unnecessarily disqualify Black residents from many jobs that require an occupational license. Credit checks conducted as part of a job-application process also unduly burden Black and Latinx candidates, who are less likely than other groups to have access to safe and affordable banking that supports wealth and credit building.<sup>17</sup>
- **Uneven geography of opportunity.** Workforce stability depends on more than expanding education and training and ensuring equitable hiring practices. Workers must be able to access job opportunities that are either close to where they live or accessible via affordable and brief commutes, underscoring the important overlap of workforce development, affordable housing, and transportation equity to address the spatial mismatch in jobs and housing. People of color in Chicago are more likely than their White peers to be housing-cost burdened, and more likely to rely on public transportation—resulting in longer unpaid commute times.<sup>18</sup> Across the Chicago metropolitan area, Black workers who use public transportation to get to work spend an average of 53 minutes traveling each way—a 63 percent longer commute than the overall regional average.<sup>19</sup> Where economic development incentives like tax-increment

financing, corporate subsidies, and other development funding streams have been highly concentrated in a handful of heavily invested areas, they leave underfunded, majority low-income and majority people-of-color communities behind.

These manifestations of structural racism in Chicagoland continue to shape and constrain the opportunities available to workers, and drive the racial inequities we see across workforce indicators.

**6.0**  
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE  
UNDERSCORES THE URGENT NEED  
FOR RACIAL EQUITY

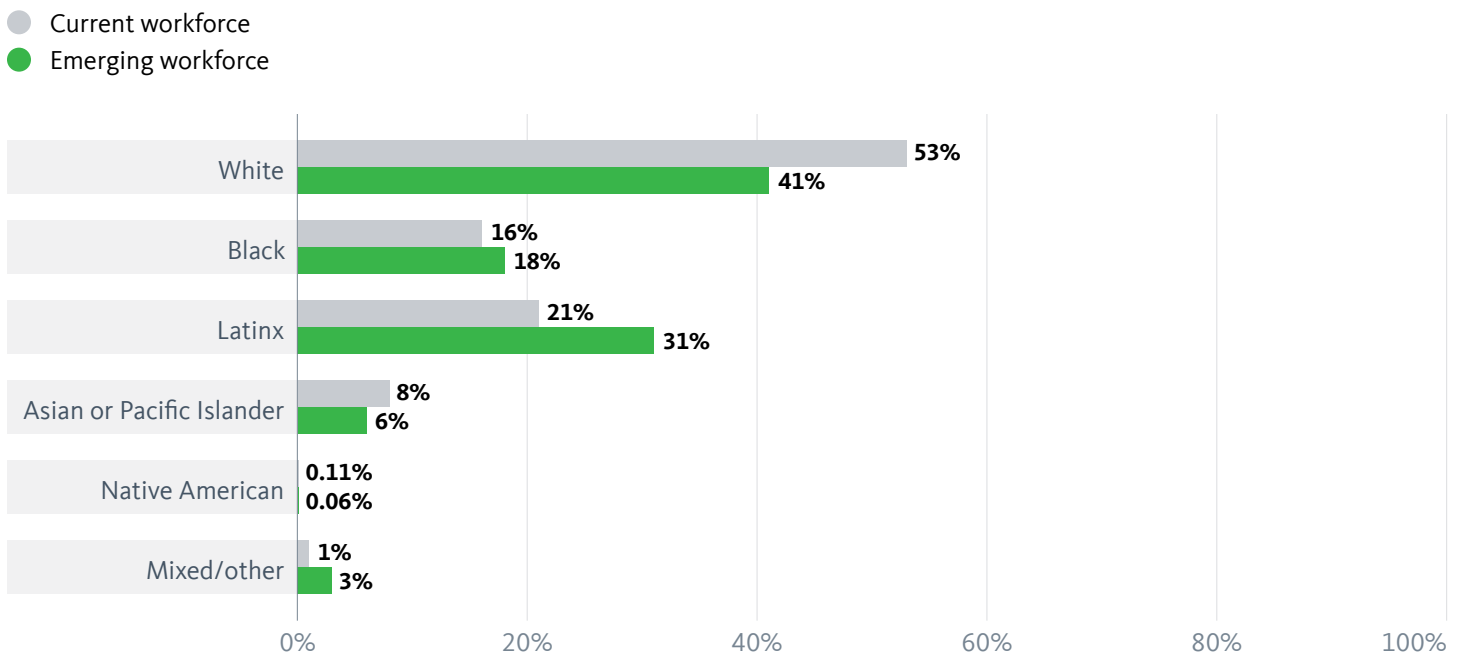


By 2045, the United States is projected to be a majority people-of-color nation, and Chicago is well ahead of this national trend. As the population continues to diversify, advancing workforce equity and racial economic inclusion more broadly is increasingly critical for the region’s economic prosperity.

## Workforce Demographics

**Nearly half of Chicago’s current workforce, and almost 60 percent of the emerging workforce, are people of color.**

**Current and Emerging Workforce Demographics by Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2018**



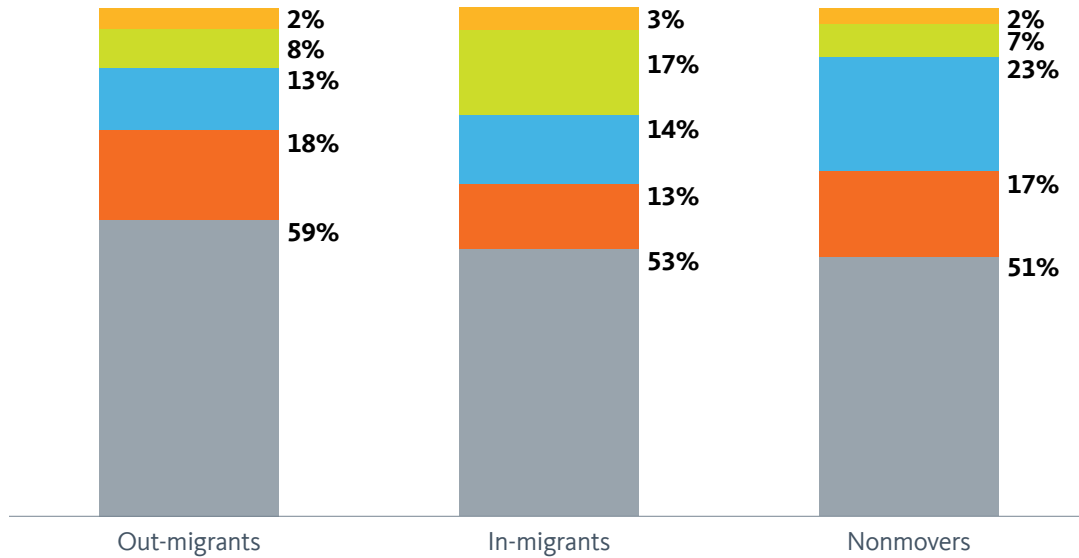
**Source:** Authors’ analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe of emerging workforce includes all people under 25 years of age, while current workforce includes the employed population between the ages of 25 and 64.

People of color comprise about 47 percent of the current workforce in the Chicago region. Latinx workers account for about 21 percent of the workforce, with Black workers at 16 percent, and Asian or Pacific Islanders accounting for 8 percent. The demographics of Chicagoland workers will continue to shift as older workers retire and increasing numbers of young people of color age into the workforce. Among the emerging workforce (those under the age of 25), people of color comprise nearly 60 percent of the population, with Latinx youth alone accounting for about 31 percent.

## A greater share of residents moving into Chicagoland are people of color, compared to those leaving the region.

### Migration Status in the Last Year by Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- White
- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Mixed/other



**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes current residents of the Chicago region age one or older and those who resided in the region during the year prior to the survey (excluding those currently living outside the US). Data reflect a 2014-2018 average.

People who have moved into the Chicago region recently are more diverse than those who left the region in the last year. Around 17 percent of people moving into the region were Asian American or Pacific Islander, compared with just 8 percent of those moving out of Chicagoland. Conversely, Black residents made up about 13 percent of in-migrants, but 18 percent of those leaving the region. The Latinx population is least changed by migration: 14 percent of new residents in the region are Latinx, compared to 13 percent of those leaving Chicagoland. Moreover, the Latinx population comprises nearly a quarter of nonmovers, reflecting the large Latinx “homegrown” youth population.

People who have moved to Chicago recently tend to have higher levels of educational attainment than those leaving the region. Among working-age adults (25-64), about 60 percent of those who moved to Chicagoland had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 52 percent of those who moved away from the region. This level of educational attainment was lowest among nonmovers at 41 percent.

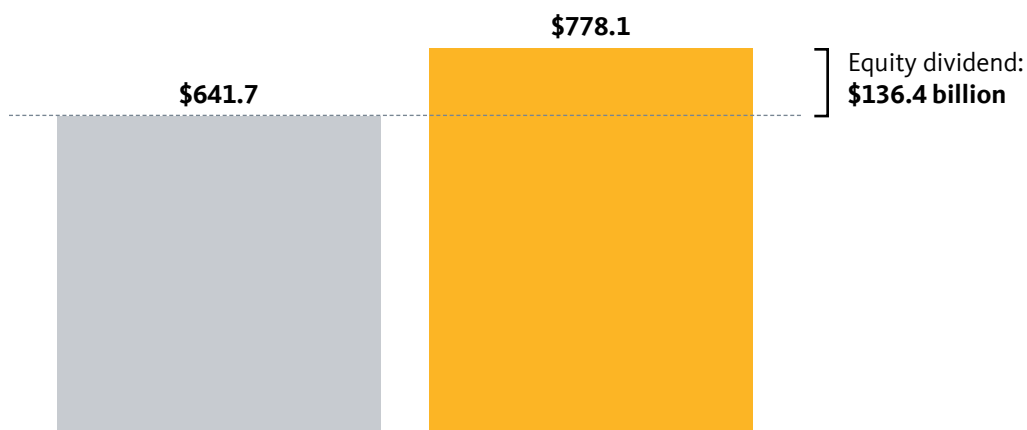
## Racial Equity Is a Win-Win for Workers and the Economy

**The region's GDP could be more than \$136 billion larger if racial gaps in income were eliminated.**

### Actual GDP and Estimated GDP with Racial Equity in the Workforce (billions), Chicagoland Region, 2018

● GDP in 2018

● GDP if racial gaps in income were eliminated

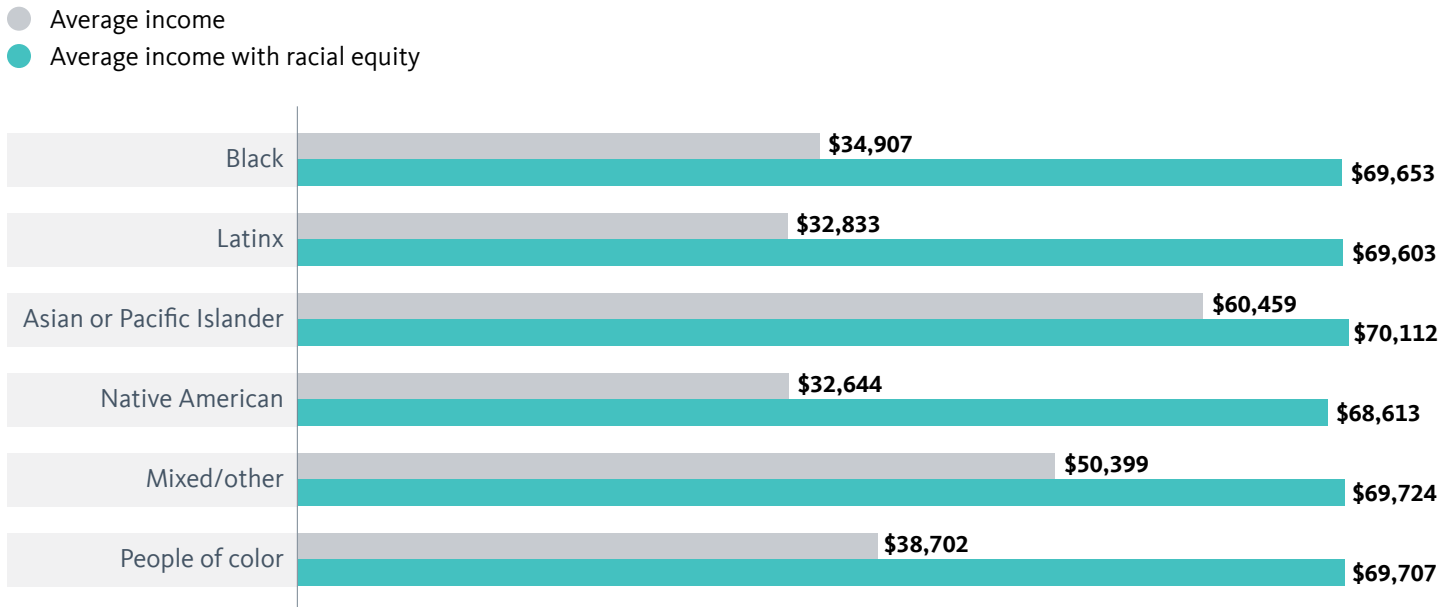


**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the population ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average. Values are in 2018 dollars. See the methodology for details on the analysis.

Workforce equity and shared prosperity are key ingredients for a successful and sustainable economy. These factors will only continue to increase in importance as the population grows and diversifies. In 2018 alone, the Chicagoland regional GDP could have been about \$136 billion larger, a 22 percent increase, if racial gaps in employment and wages were eliminated (i.e., if workers in all racial/ethnic groups were employed at least at the same rate, and earned at least the same average wages as their White peers, adjusted for age).

## Racial equity would double the average incomes of Black, Latinx, and Native American workers to more than \$68,000 per year.

### Income Gains with Racial Equity in the Workforce, Chicagoland Region, 2018



**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the population ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average. Values are in 2018 dollars. See the data and methods for details on the analysis.

Latinx residents in Chicagoland would see the largest increase in income with racial equity from around \$33,000 to \$70,000 (a 112 percent increase). Average incomes for Black workers would rise nearly as much from around \$35,000 to \$70,000, while the average incomes for Native American workers would more than double, from \$33,000 to \$69,000.

Achieving racial equity in income would require closing gaps in both wages and employment, although income gains would primarily come from equalizing wages. Overall, racial gaps in wages account for 74 percent of income inequality experienced by people of color, while gaps in employment account for only 26 percent. The share of the gap attributable to differences in wages is highest for Latinx workers (85 percent) while it is lower for other workers of color (around 60 percent).

## 7.0

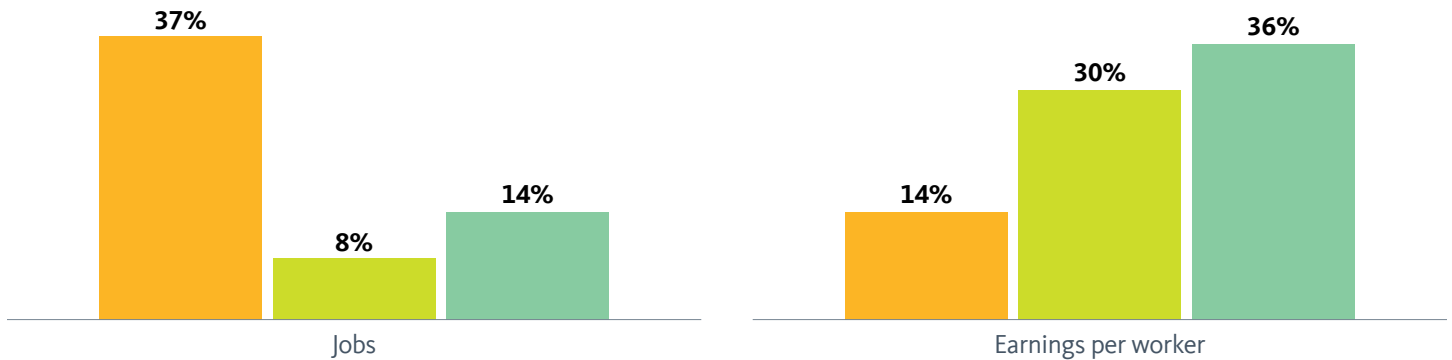
# LOPSIDED GROWTH PERPETUATES RACIAL ECONOMIC INEQUITIES



## Low-income jobs grew more than middle- and high-income jobs, while high-income workers experienced the greatest growth in earnings.

### Growth in Jobs and Earnings by Wage Level, Chicagoland Region, 1990–2018

- Low-wage
- Middle-wage
- High-wage



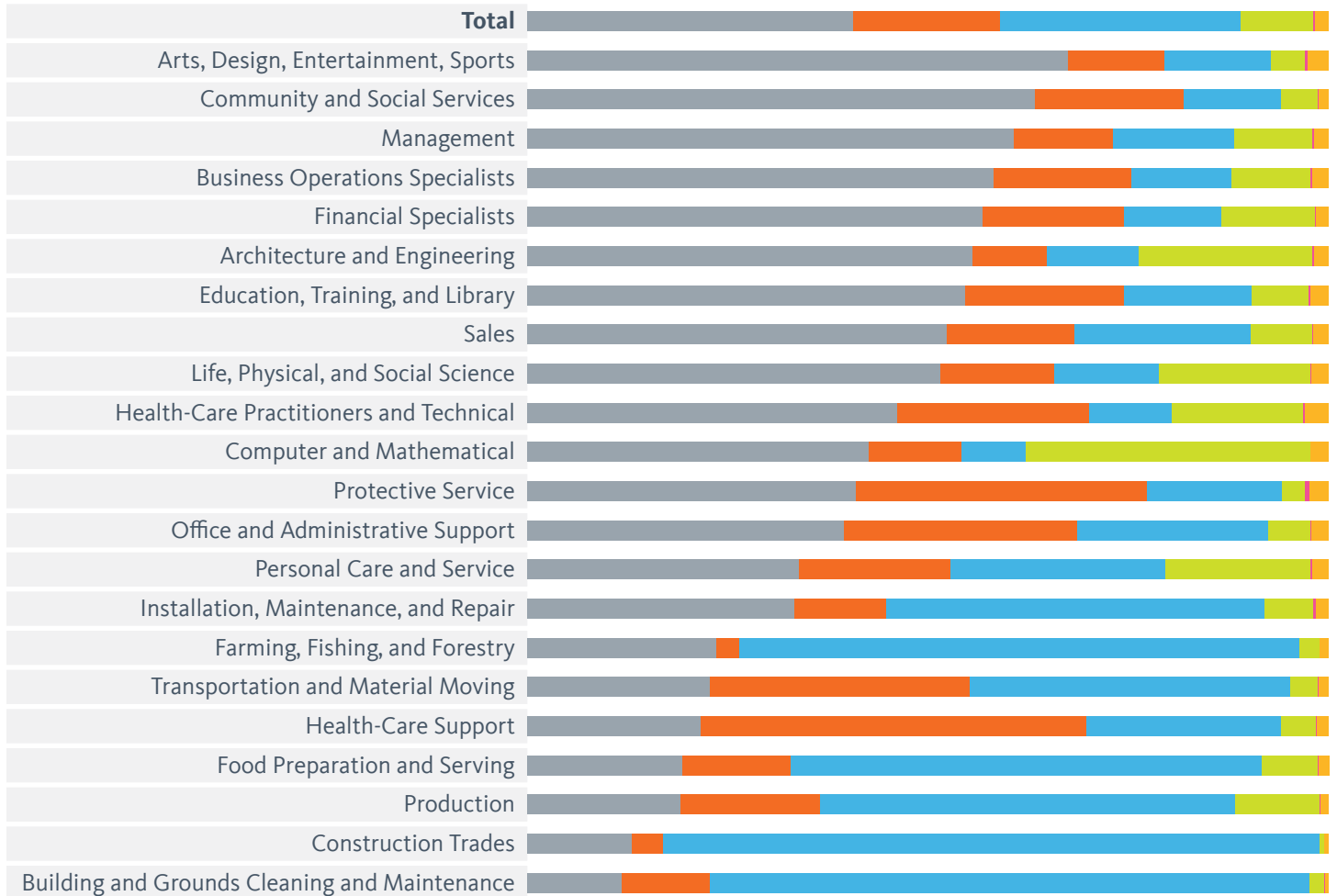
**Source:** PolicyLink/USC Equity Research Institute, National Equity Atlas, [www.nationalequityatlas.org](http://www.nationalequityatlas.org). Available at: [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Job\\_and\\_wage\\_growth](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Job_and_wage_growth). **Note:** Universe includes all jobs covered by the federal Unemployment Insurance (UI) program.

Over the last three decades, Chicago has experienced somewhat modest job growth, which has been fastest among low-wage industries. Low-wage jobs have grown by around 37 percent, while high-wage jobs grew by just 14 percent. Middle-wage jobs posted the smallest growth, at only 8 percent. At the same time, earnings growth has been disproportionately captured by middle- and high-wage workers, who have seen their wages increase by 30 and 36 percent, respectively, compared to only 14 percent for low-wage workers.

# Black and Latinx workers are underrepresented among high-wage industries and occupations.

## Occupational Groups by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- White
- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Mixed/other



**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the employed population ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average.

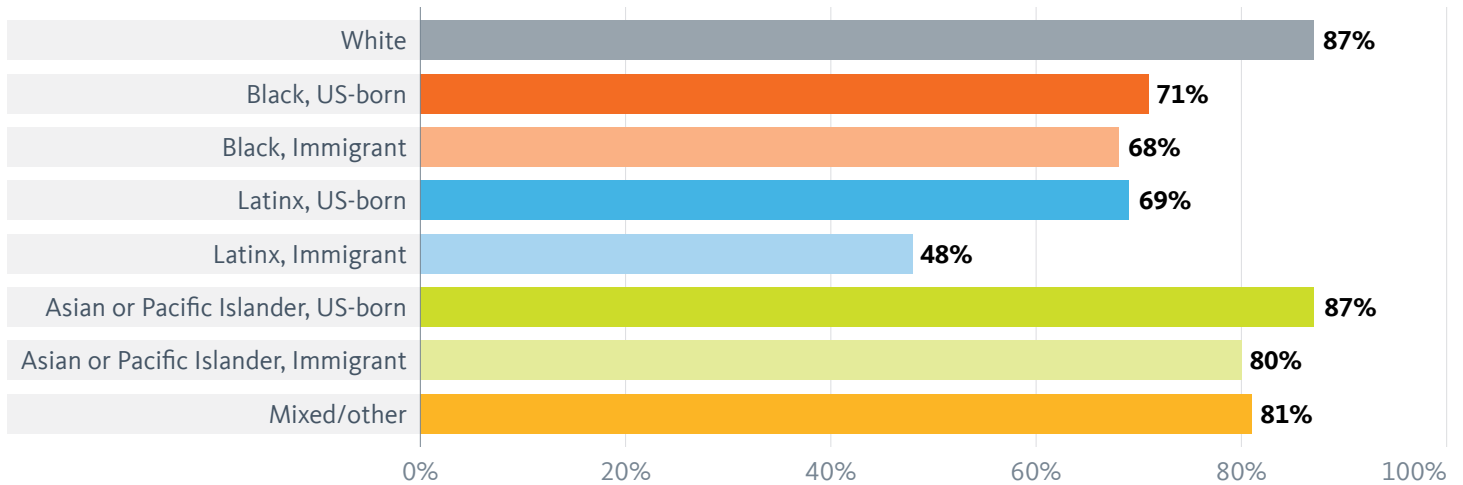
The labor market is occupationally segregated, understood as the uneven distribution of workers across different occupations by race/ethnicity. Black workers make up about 14 percent of the overall workforce in Chicagoland, but 36 percent of workers in health-care support and 31 percent in protective service occupations. Black workers account for only 6 percent of workers in construction trades, and 7 percent of those in life, physical, and social sciences occupations.

Latinx workers account for about 21 percent of all workers in the region, but around half of workers in food preparation and serving; farming, fishing, and forestry; production; and building, grounds cleaning, and maintenance occupations. In all of these industries, immigrants comprise about two-thirds to three-quarters of the Latinx workforce. By contrast Latinx workers are highly underrepresented among financial specialists, computer and mathematical, life, physical, and social sciences, and health-care practitioners and technical occupations, where they comprise less than 10 percent of the workforce.

## Wages

**Fewer than half of Latinx immigrants and just over two-thirds of Black and US-born Latinx workers earn at least \$15/hour.**

**Share of Workers Earning at Least \$15/hour by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, Chicagoland Region, 2018**



**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes civilian noninstitutionalized full-time wage and salary workers ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average. The \$15/hour wage threshold is based on 2018 dollars. Data cannot be reported for Native Americans because of small sample size.

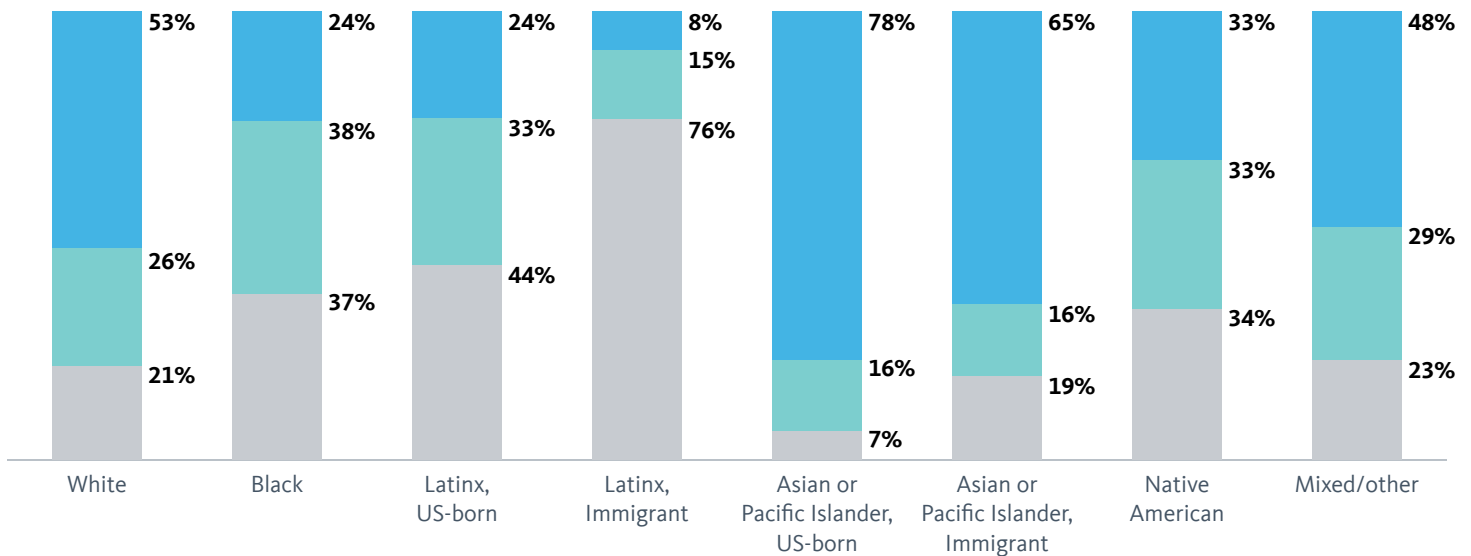
Racial gaps in the share of workers earning at least \$15/hour have been stubbornly persistent over the past several decades. White workers are 23 percent more likely than their Black counterparts and 81 percent more likely than Latinx immigrant workers to earn this basic living wage. Fewer than half of Latinx immigrant workers are paid this basic minimum wage, along with about seven in 10 Black and US-born Latinx workers. By contrast, 87 percent of White workers make at least \$15/hour.

# Higher Education

Fewer than one in 10 Latinx immigrants and one in four Black and US-born Latinx adults in Chicagoland have a bachelor's degree.

## Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- High school diploma or less
- Some college or associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher



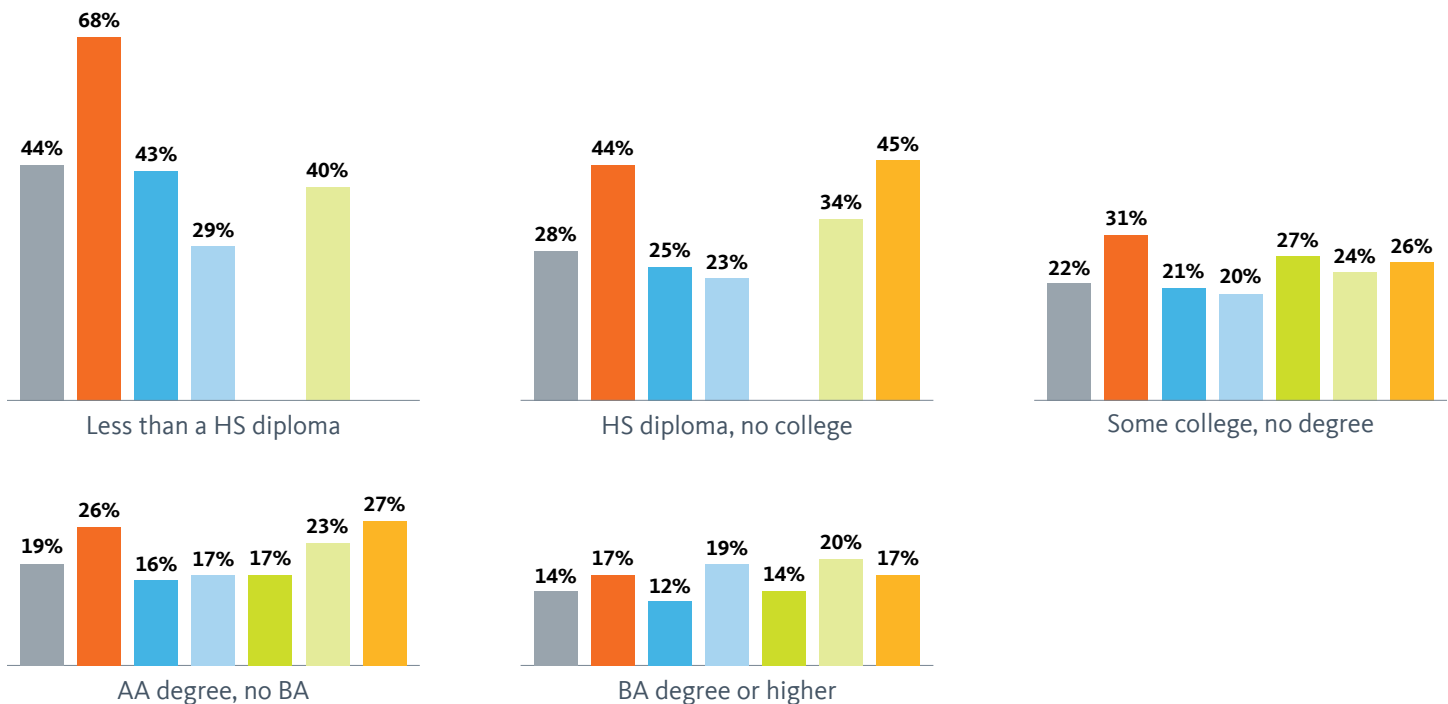
**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the population ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average.

Increased educational attainment tends to correlate with lower unemployment, higher wages, and reduced vulnerability to automation. In the Chicagoland region, these benefits disproportionately accrue to White and Asian or Pacific Islander residents: more than half of White adults have at least a four-year degree, along with nearly two-thirds of Asian or Pacific Islander immigrants and four-fifths of US-born Asian or Pacific Islanders. By contrast, fewer than one in 10 Latinx immigrants have a bachelor's degree or higher, along with about one in four US-born Latinx and Black adults.

## Across racial/ethnic and nativity groups, joblessness declines steadily as educational attainment increases, but racial inequities remain.

### Joblessness by Educational Attainment, Race/Ethnicity, and Nativity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- White
- Black
- Latinx, US-born
- Latinx, Immigrant
- Asian or Pacific Islander, US-born
- Asian or Pacific Islander, Immigrant
- Mixed/other

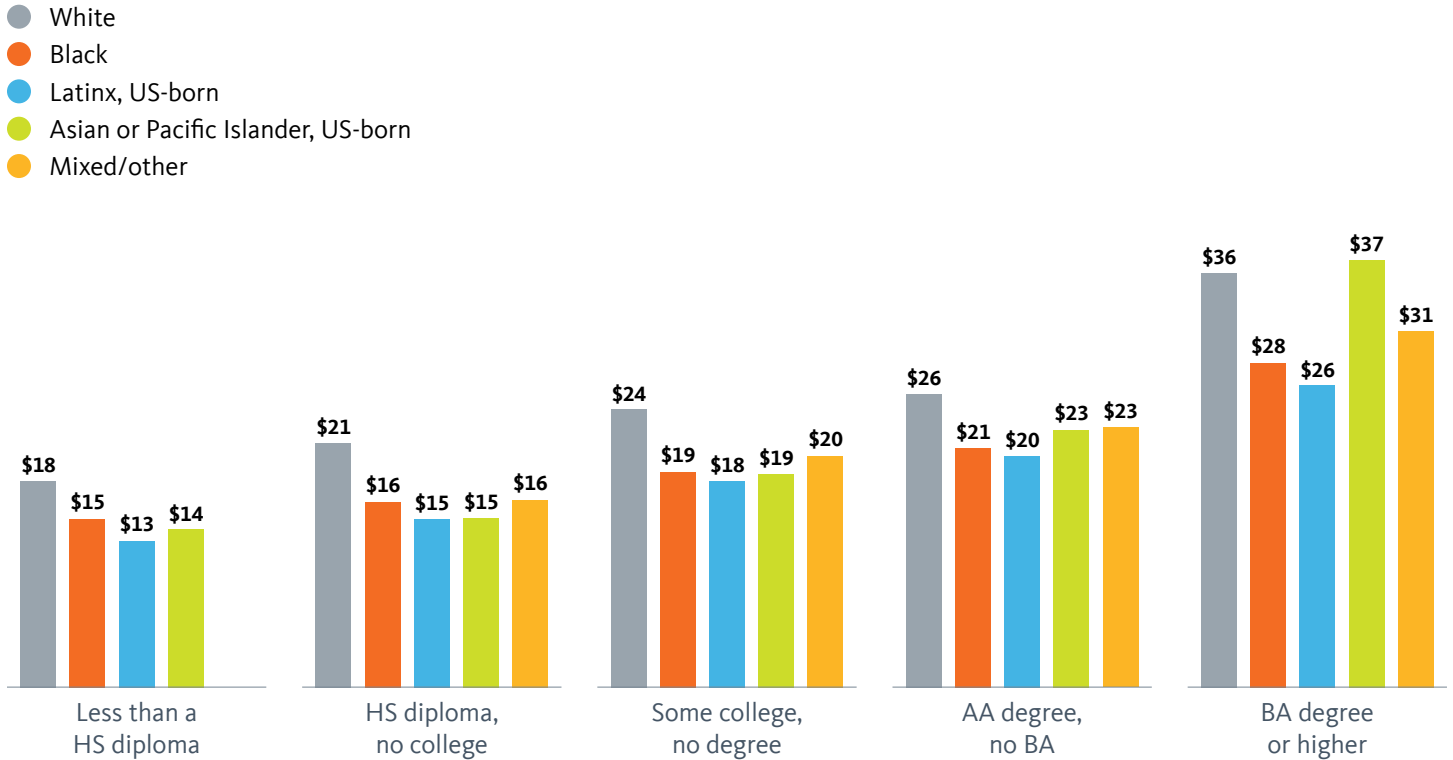


**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the civilian noninstitutionalized population ages 25-64. Joblessness is defined as those unemployed or not in the labor force as a share of the total population. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average; Native American workers, and Asian or Pacific Islander workers at some educational levels, are not included because of small sample size.

Higher educational attainment narrows racial gaps in employment, but it benefits too few Black and Latinx workers. Among those with less than a high school diploma (or equivalent), joblessness is a major issue for Black workers, with over two-thirds either out of the labor force or unemployed. As education increases, jobless rates for Black workers decline markedly, but remain elevated compared to their White counterparts at each level of education. Jobless rates for Latinx and Asian American or Pacific Islander workers also decline with more education, but rates are higher for Latinx and Asian American or Pacific Islander immigrant workers with a BA or higher than they are for White workers.

## Black and Latinx workers earn substantially less than their White counterparts at every level of educational attainment.

### Median Wages by Educational Attainment and Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2018



**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes civilian noninstitutionalized full-time wage and salary workers ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average; Native American workers are not included because of small sample size. Values are in 2018 dollars.

Higher educational attainment is also associated with higher median wages for all racial/ethnic groups; yet racial gaps persist across educational cohorts, with Black and Latinx workers earning less than their White counterparts at each successive level of education. White workers earn more than all other groups except among those with a bachelor's degree or higher, while Asian or Pacific Islander workers have the highest median wages. Black and Latinx workers earn substantially less than their White counterparts at every level of educational attainment.

And the relative wage gains are not equivalent: higher educational attainment correlates with greater gains in wages for some groups than for others. The median hourly wage premium for earning an associate's degree as opposed to a high school diploma is highest for Asian American or Pacific Islander workers at 53 percent (an \$8/hour increase). The same educational achievement carries a 31 percent median wage increase for Black workers (\$5/hour) and a 33 percent median wage increase for Latinx workers (\$5/hour). The difference in wage gains from a high school diploma to BA degree or higher is even more pronounced: a 147 percent gain for Asian or Pacific Islander workers (\$22/hour), compared to a 75 percent gain for Black workers (\$12/hour) and a 73 percent increase for Latinx workers (\$11/hour).

## 8.0

# WORKERS FACE A SHORTAGE OF GOOD JOBS



As the data above reveal, not everyone who wants to work in Chicago has a job, and not all workers are paid a basic living wage. As the economy and labor market evolve toward advanced industries and services, far too few workers are benefiting from the region’s growth. Workforce development agencies, intermediaries, and policymakers need to both grow the quantity of good jobs and ensure equitable access to those jobs.

To better understand the shortage of good jobs in the region, we analyze access to good jobs in Chicago by race, ethnicity, and level of required education, using the localized definition of good jobs summarized in the table below.

### Characteristics and Examples of Good Jobs by Typical Education Requirements, Chicagoland Region, 2019

**Characteristics of good jobs:**

- Living-wage compensation: Average wage for the occupation is sufficient to sustain a working family of two working adults and two children—\$36,109 in Chicago.<sup>20</sup>
- Stable or growing base of employment: The number of jobs is projected to grow or to remain relatively stable for the next decade—employment in the occupation is not declining by more than 10 percent over 10 years, or more than 2 percent over 10 years for small occupations.
- Automation resilient: The occupation has a probability of computerization lower than 50 percent, given the full array of tasks that comprise the role.

**Example occupations accessible to workers with a high school diploma or less:**

- First-line supervisors of retail sales workers
- Food service managers
- Financial clerks

**Example occupations accessible to workers with a postsecondary certificate or license, or vocational training through an apprenticeship:**

- Computer numerically controlled tool operators and programmers
- Electricians
- Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters

**Example occupations accessible to workers with an associate’s degree:**

- Registered nurses
- Air traffic controllers and airfield operations specialists
- Respiratory therapists

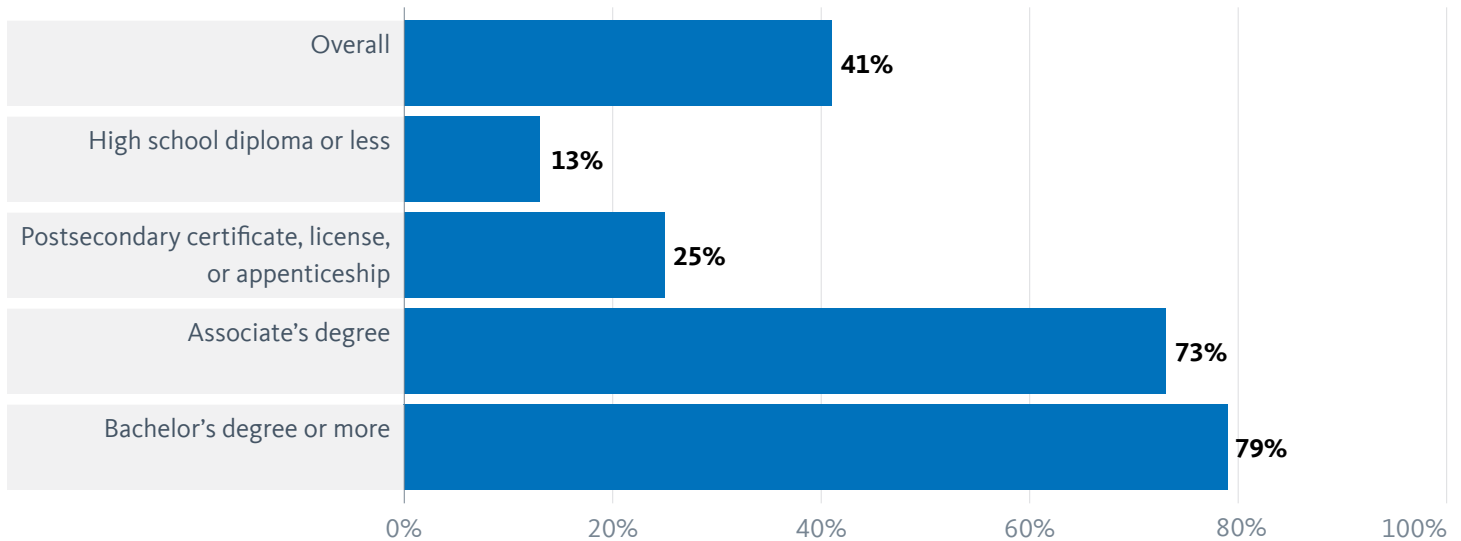
**Example occupations accessible to workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher:**

- Financial managers
- Software developers
- Management analysts

# More Than 2.5 Million Workers in Chicagoland Do Not Have Good Jobs

Only two in five Chicago workers are in good jobs.

Share of Workers in Good Jobs, Overall and by Educational Requirements, Chicagoland Region, 2019



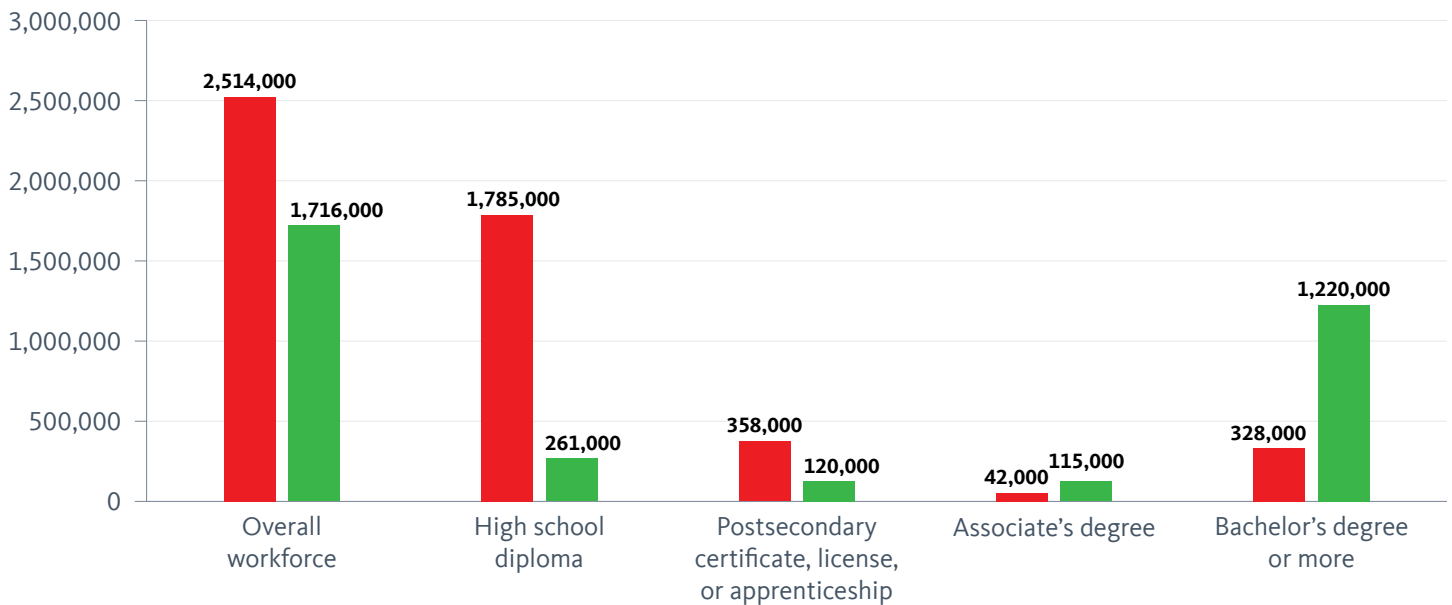
**Sources:** Employment from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Burning Glass job posting data and 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.

The good jobs deficit in Chicago is deep: only 41 percent of the region's 4.2 million workers are in good jobs. The share of workers in good jobs increases as the level of education required for the job increases, but even among occupations that require nondegree postsecondary certifications, licenses, or apprenticeships, only 25 percent of workers are in good jobs. The vast majority of jobs that require postsecondary degrees (associate's and higher) are good jobs, but these educational requirements are a systemic barrier for many.

## Two million Chicago jobs require no more than a high school diploma, but only 13 percent of them are good jobs.

### Distribution of Employment by Educational Requirements and Job Quality, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- Workers not in good jobs
- Workers in good jobs



**Sources:** Employment from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Burning Glass job posting data and 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.

The distribution of Chicago's good jobs by education underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to create more good jobs, upgrade existing jobs, and develop race-conscious workforce development strategies to ensure people of color can access good jobs. Given that fewer than a quarter of Black and Latinx adults in Chicagoland have a bachelor's degree, workforce intermediaries must consider interventions that will improve the quality of the jobs available to these workers.

One approach is to grow employment in the occupations that provide the largest number of good jobs that do not require a college degree, though this might require some postsecondary training. These include supervisory positions in retail, food service, manufacturing, construction and other industries, several trades, nursing, and other occupations described in the table below. Presently, workers of color are underrepresented in 13 of the 15 largest occupations that provide good jobs that do not require a college degree. The two exceptions are first-line supervisors of production and operating workers, where Latinx workers make up 39 percent of the workforce, and licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses, where Black workers make up 44 percent of the workforce.

## Good Jobs that Do Not Require a College Degree, with Occupational Characteristics, by Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

Occupation	Total Employment	10 Year Growth Rate	Automation Score (Probability of Computerization)	Average Income in Chicago	% Workers of Color
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	71,204	-3%	28%	\$55,357	40%
First-line supervisors of non-retail sales workers	38,485	-2%	8%	\$105,756	30%
Sales representatives of services, except advertising, finance, and travel	30,666	1%	39%	\$99,315	20%
Police officers	26,065	1%	10%	\$78,888	41%
Food service managers	25,800	4%	8%	\$50,627	48%
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	24,059	0%	2%	\$62,186	57%
Electricians	18,327	0%	15%	\$67,181	30%
Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents	14,546	2%	2%	\$161,623	19%
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	14,052	0%	6%	\$44,920	72%
First-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers	11,354	3%	17%	\$80,690	28%
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	10,546	4%	35%	\$66,245	24%
Firefighters	10,210	1%	17%	\$88,615	23%
Supervisors of transportation and material moving workers	7,529	6%	22%	\$49,837	51%
Flight attendants	6,079	7%	35%	\$48,285	36%
Computer numerically controlled tool operators and programmers	5,479	14%	36%	\$45,168	50%

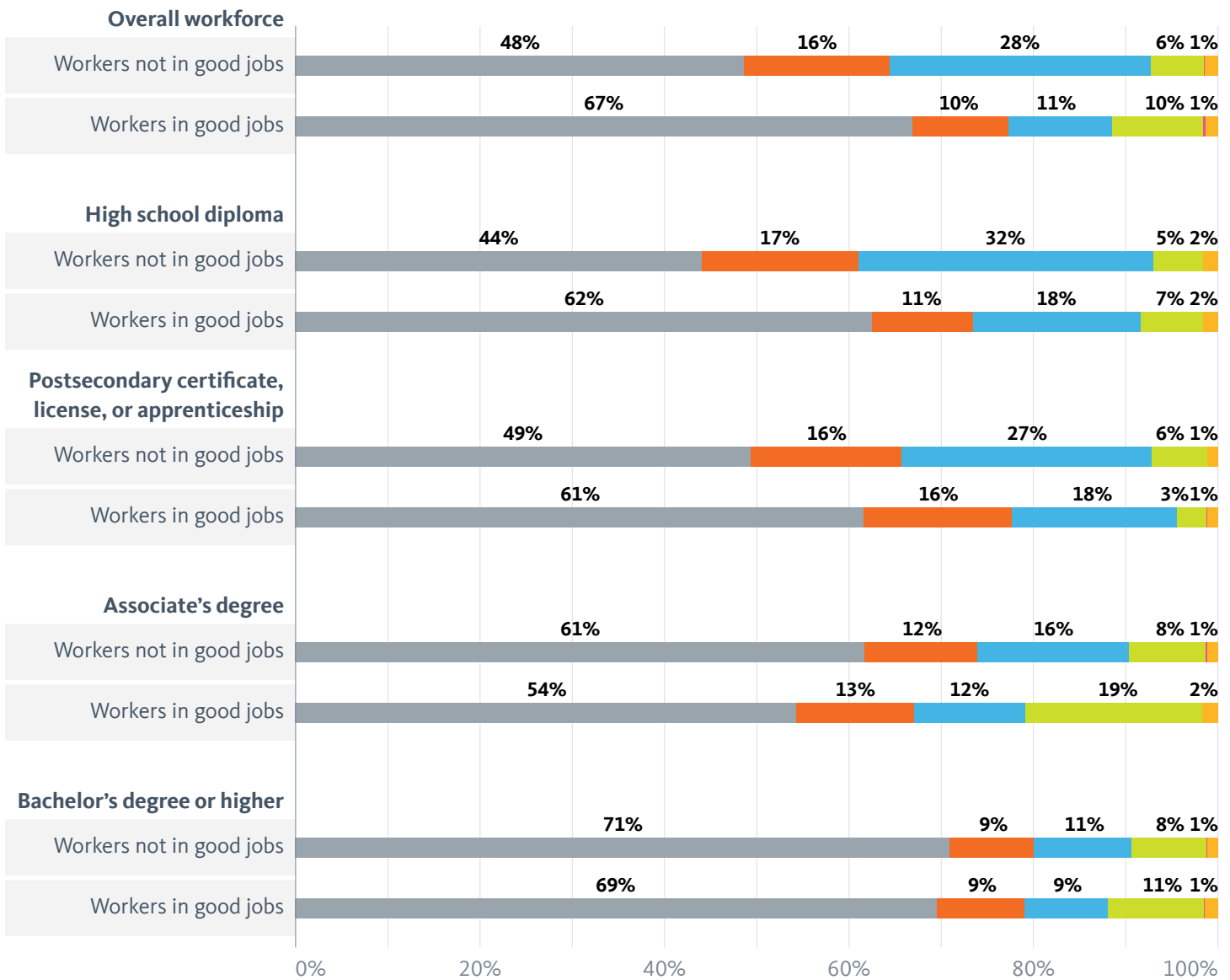
**Sources:** Employment from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Burning Glass job posting data and 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Cells highlighted in red indicate underrepresentation of people of color relative to their representation in all occupations that do not require a college degree.

# Major Racial Inequities Exist in Access to Good Jobs

White workers are overrepresented in good jobs overall, and particularly overrepresented in good jobs that do not require any postsecondary education.

Distribution of Workers by Race/Ethnicity, Job Quality, and Educational Requirements, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- White
- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Mixed/other



Sources: Employment from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Burning Glass job posting data and 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.

Examining good jobs by race and education requirements, we find large inequities: White workers are overrepresented in good jobs overall, and particularly overrepresented in good jobs that do not require a college degree—the very jobs that the vast majority of workers of color are qualified to obtain given the barriers to higher education described above. Among workers in nondegree jobs, workers of color constitute more than half of those not in good jobs but just a third of those in good jobs. Only 9 percent of workers of color in jobs that require only a high school degree are in good jobs, relative to 17 percent of White workers. And 20 percent of workers of color in jobs that require nondegree postsecondary training, such as a certificate or apprenticeship, are in good jobs, compared to 29 percent of White workers.

## **Available Jobs in 2019 Could Have Closed Racial Gaps in Access to Good Jobs**

In 2019, there were enough openings for good jobs over the year to close the racial equity gaps in good jobs at each level of educational attainment. For example, to close the racial gap in good jobs for jobs that require no more than a high school diploma, 45,000 workers of color would need a job upgrade; in 2019, there were 58,000 openings for good jobs at this educational level.

Still, 79 percent of the 505,000 good jobs available in 2019 required a bachelor's degree or more, underscoring the need for workforce intermediaries and employers to reexamine credentialing requirements and design pathways into these jobs for workers without a four-year degree, wherever possible.

Access to the three key dimensions of good jobs (family-sustaining wages, large or stable base of employment, and automation resiliency) varies tremendously between racial/ethnic groups. We found systematic inequities that have important implications for equitable workforce strategies:

- Crowding in low-wage occupations is the primary reason that workers of color without a college degree face an equity gap in good jobs. Only 36 percent of workers of color in jobs that require no more than a high school diploma are in occupations with average wages above the regional living wage, compared to more than half of White workers (52 percent). That gap grows for workers in

jobs that require nonacademic postsecondary training such as a certification, license, or apprenticeship: 52 percent of workers of color are in above-living-wage occupations compared to 70 percent of White workers. Workforce intermediaries must ensure that nonacademic postsecondary training diminishes racial gaps, rather than expanding them.

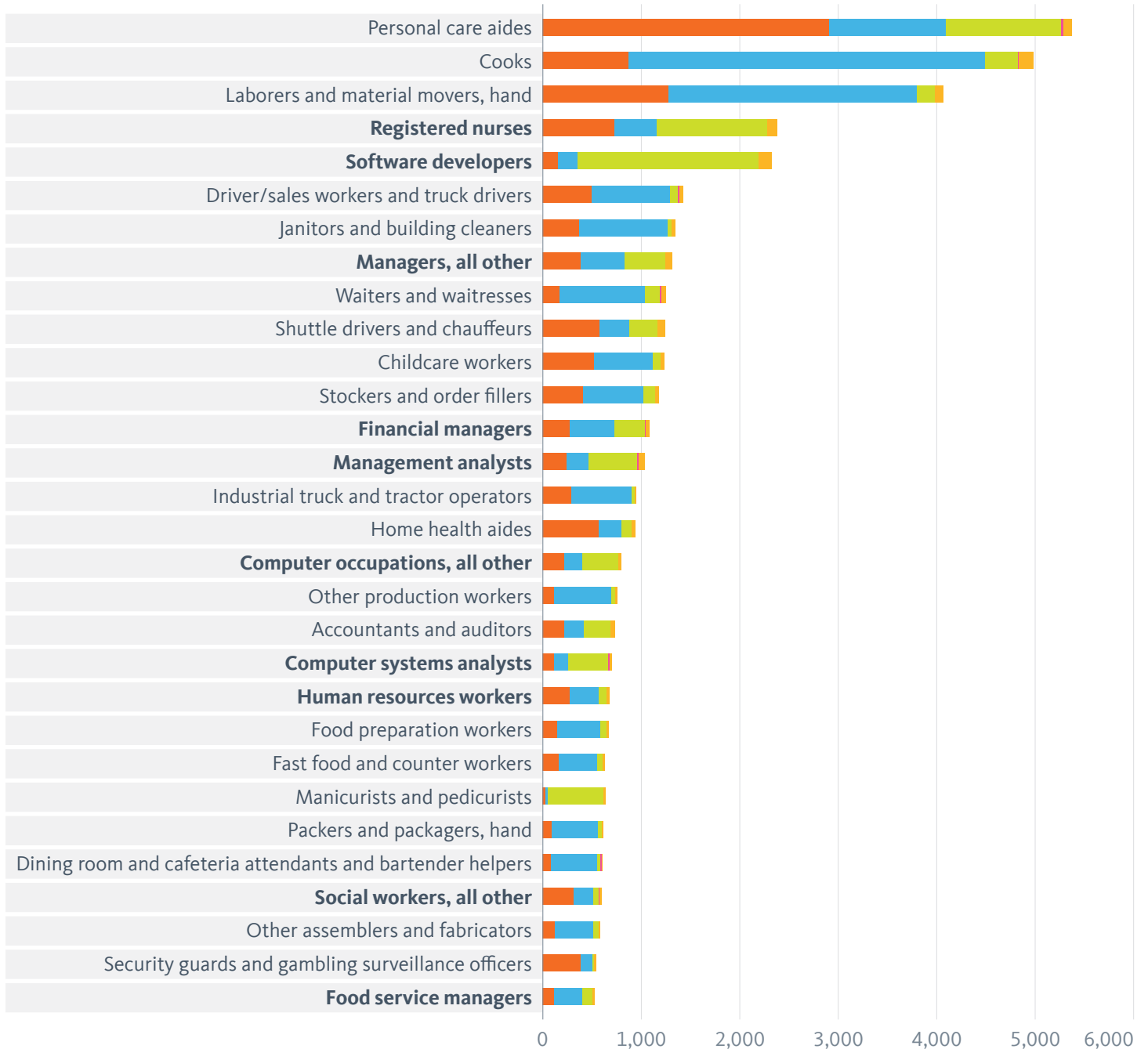
- Latinx workers face greater automation risk than their peers regardless of the level of education required for the job. Only 14 percent of Latinx workers in occupations that require no more than a high school diploma are not at risk of automation, compared to 23 percent of White workers. Latinx workers also face greater automation vulnerability among occupations that require nondegree postsecondary training: 32 percent are not at risk, compared to 42 percent of White workers. Latinx workers also face higher automation risk than workers from demographic groups in occupations that require an associate's degree or higher. Interventions to mitigate automation risk, such as expanded unemployment for automation-induced job displacement, and career pathway programs that shift workers away from at-risk careers, should include language and accessibility features that take into consideration the high concentration of Latinx workers in at-risk jobs.
- Among jobs that require no more than a high school diploma, White workers are overrepresented in occupations where employment is shrinking: 57 percent of White workers in high school-level jobs are in occupations with stable or growing employment, compared to 67 percent of workers of color. Workforce development strategies must be oriented around sectors that are stable or growing so that the same workers are not caught in a cycle of training and displacement.

Delivering workforce equity in the Chicago region will require not only generating more good jobs, but also ensuring that people of color are hired for them. Without policies and programs that connect workers of color to growth in good jobs that do not require a college degree, these opportunities will disproportionately benefit White workers. Additionally, programs and policies that benefit all workers should take into account accessibility constraints faced disproportionately by people of color, such as language and transportation.

## Projected job growth for Latinx and Black workers is heavily concentrated in low-quality jobs.

### Occupations Projected to Add the Most Workers of Color by Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2020–2030

- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Mixed/other



**Sources:** Burning Glass modeling for occupational growth, and 2018 5-Year ACS microdata from IPUMS for demographic characteristics of occupations. **Note:** Occupations marked in bold are classified as good jobs.

The Chicago workforce is growing, and about 55 percent of job growth over the next 10 years is projected to be in good jobs. But not all workers are poised to benefit: if occupational segregation remains as it is today, good jobs will continue to be concentrated among White workers. Just two of the 10 occupations projected to add the most Black workers, and none of the 10 occupations projected to add the most Latinx workers, are good jobs. Seven of the top 10 growing occupations for Asian or Pacific Islander workers are good jobs, along with five of the top 10 for White workers.

## 9.0

# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WORK PERPETUATE RACIAL INEQUITY

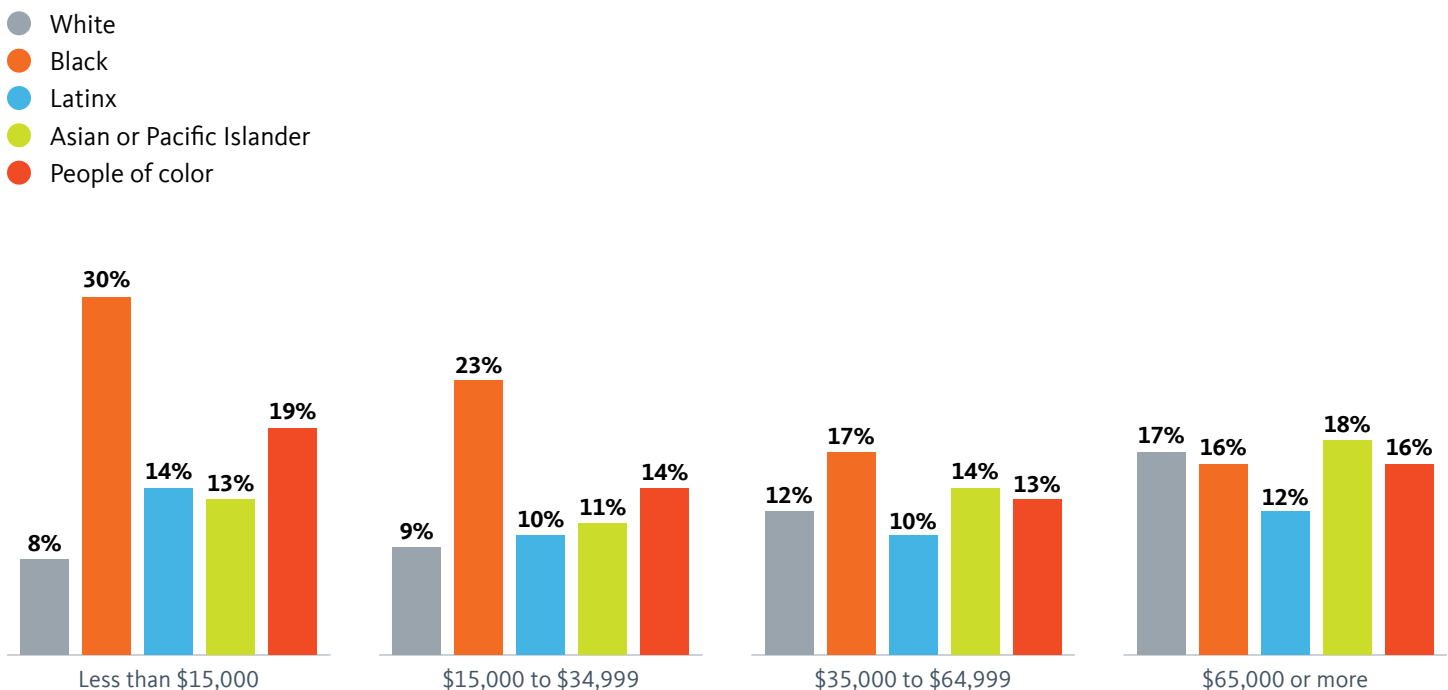


Racial inequities in employment, wages, and job quality are clearly linked to racial gaps in higher education and to employer practices on credentialing requirements, hiring, pay, and promotion. But additional social factors such as family income and wealth, health and health care, transportation, housing quality and affordability, and access to reliable childcare also restrict job opportunities for workers. These “social determinants of work” fall outside the direct scope of traditional workforce development and educational efforts focused on worker training, placement, and career advancement, but they are critical components of an equitable workforce system.

## Transportation

**Low-income Black workers are most likely to rely on public transportation for their commute.**

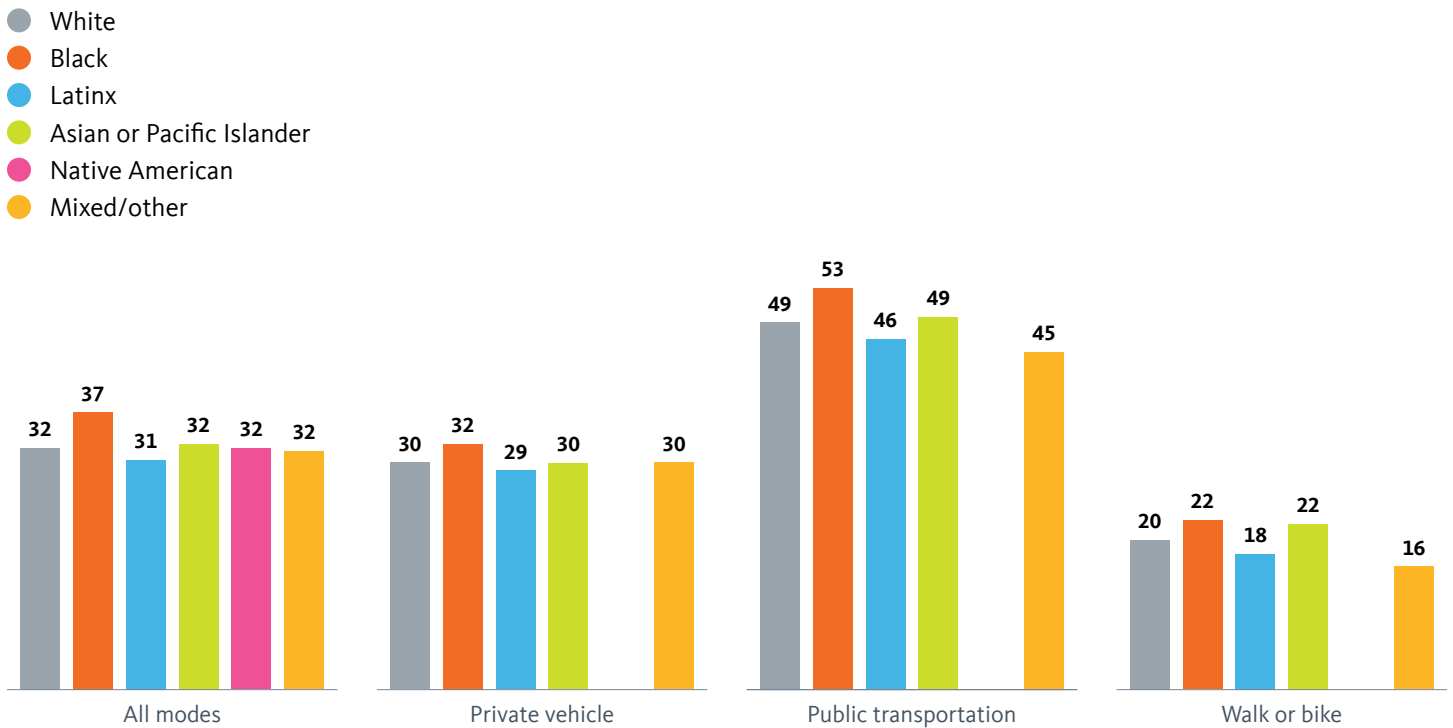
**Percent of Workers Using Public Transit by Race/Ethnicity and Earnings, Chicagoland Region, 2018**



**Source:** Authors’ analysis of data from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes persons age 16 or older with earnings who worked outside the home during the week prior to the survey. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average; Native American workers and other/mixed race workers are not included because of small sample size.

## Black workers using public transportation face the highest average travel times to work.

### Average Travel Time to Work, in Minutes, by Race/Ethnicity and Mode, Chicagoland Region, 2018

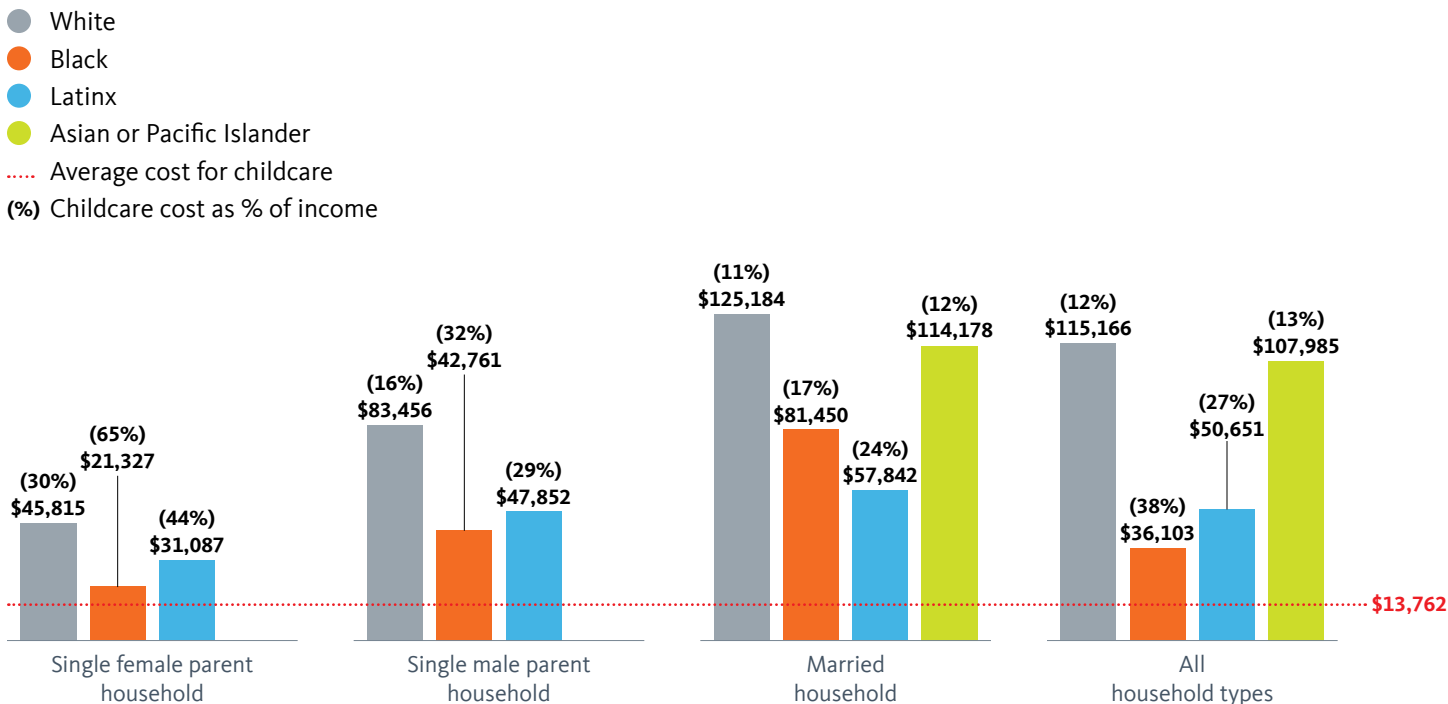


**Source:** Authors' analysis of data from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes persons age 16 or older who worked outside the home during the week prior to the survey. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average; data for certain racial/ethnic groups and transit modes are not included because of small sample size.

Many workers rely on public transit in the Chicagoland region, with 14 percent using public transit to get to work compared with only 5 percent of workers nationwide. Among workers earning less than \$65,000 per year, Black workers are most likely to use public transit to get to work; for those with higher earnings, rates of public transit use are slightly higher for White and Asian American or Pacific Islanders. Nearly one in three Black workers earning less than \$15,000 per year rely on public transit to get to work while one in four earning between \$15,000 to \$35,000 do. Despite being among the most avid transit users, Black workers using public transportation face the longest one-way commute times of any group (53 minutes)—nearly two unpaid hours each workday.

## Childcare places a higher financial burden on Black and Latinx households.

### Median Income and Childcare Cost for Households with One Childcare-Aged Child, Chicagoland Region, 2018



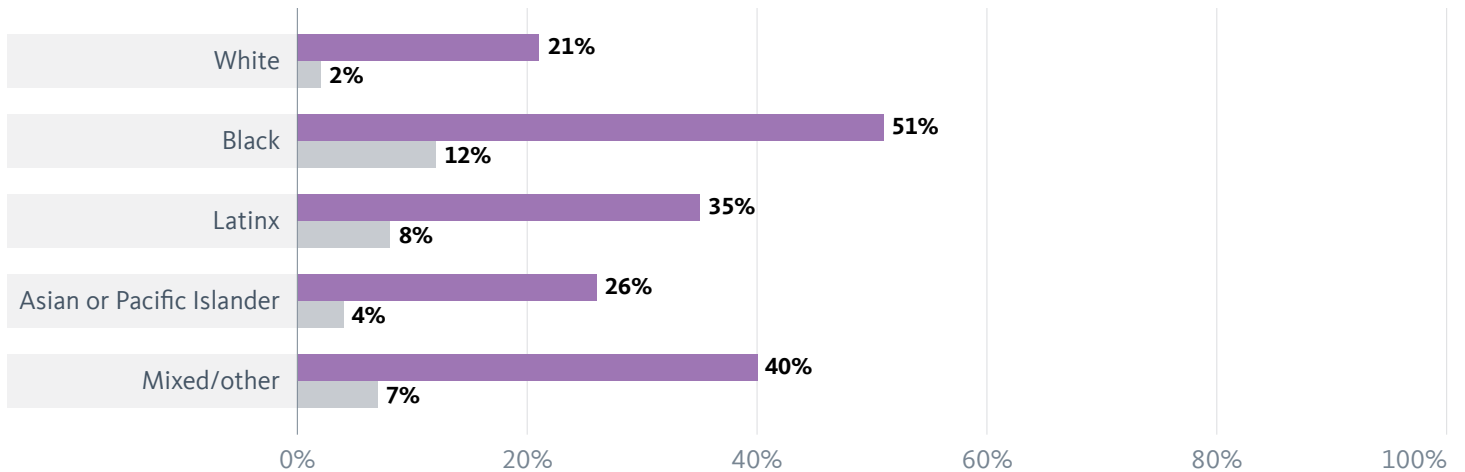
**Source:** Authors' analysis of data from the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA and estimates of childcare costs from Child Care Aware of America. **Note:** Universe includes households with one child under the age of five. Data is not reported for household types and racial/ethnic groups with insufficient sample sizes. Average annual cost of care at a daycare center for one infant child in Illinois in 2019 was \$13,762. Data on median household income reflects a 2014-2018 average. All values are in 2019 dollars.

The average annual cost of childcare for one child is almost \$14,000 in Illinois, which places an enormous burden on single parents—particularly single mothers of color. This cost of care for one child is equivalent to about 65 percent of the median income for Black single mothers and 44 percent of the median income for Latinx single mothers in Chicagoland.

## More than half of economically insecure Black workers receive cash assistance or SNAP benefits.

### Working Households Receiving Cash Assistance or SNAP Benefits by Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

- Below 200% of poverty
- At or above 200% of poverty



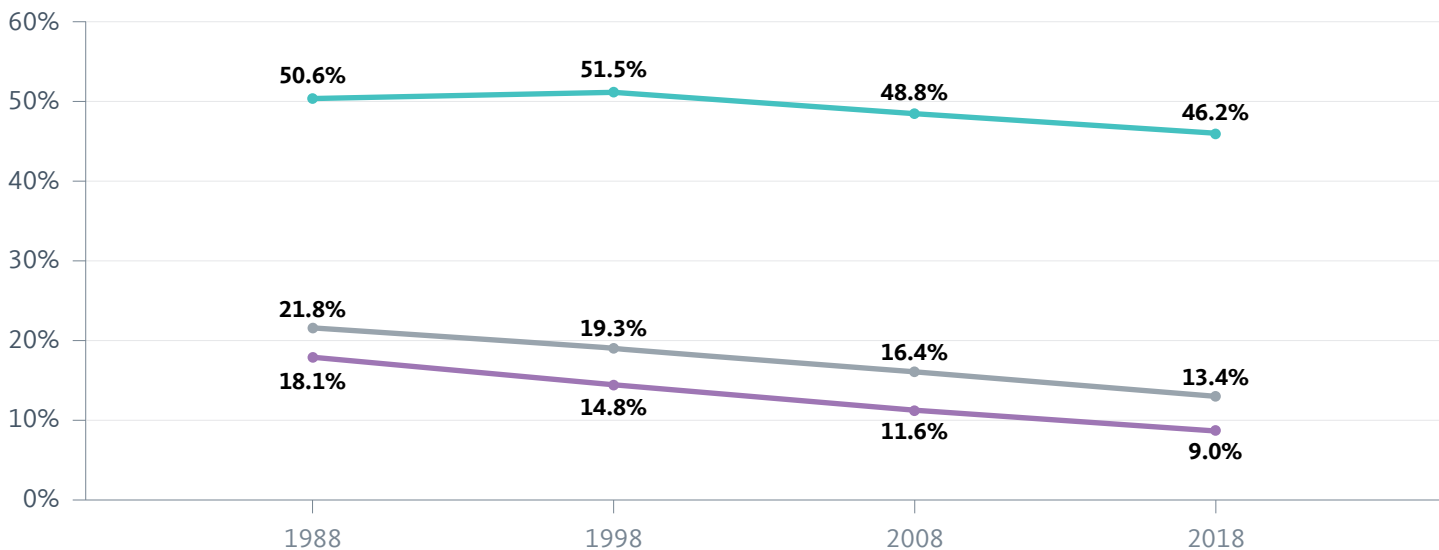
**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes civilian noninstitutionalized householders ages 25-64 who worked during the year prior to the survey. Receipt of cash assistance or SNAP benefits is based on anyone in the household receiving them during the year prior to the survey. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average. Data for Native American households cannot be included because of small sample size.

SNAP benefits or cash assistance programs are often intended to provide relief to households who are experiencing moments of financial instability, such as temporary unemployment. However, a sizable share of working families in Chicagoland also rely on these programs to make ends meet. Economically insecure working Black households are most likely to use cash assistance or SNAP benefits (around 51 percent), compared to just 21 percent of their White peers.

## Union membership has declined since 1988.

### Union Membership by Sector, Chicago Metropolitan Region, 1988-2018

- Private sector
- Public sector
- All

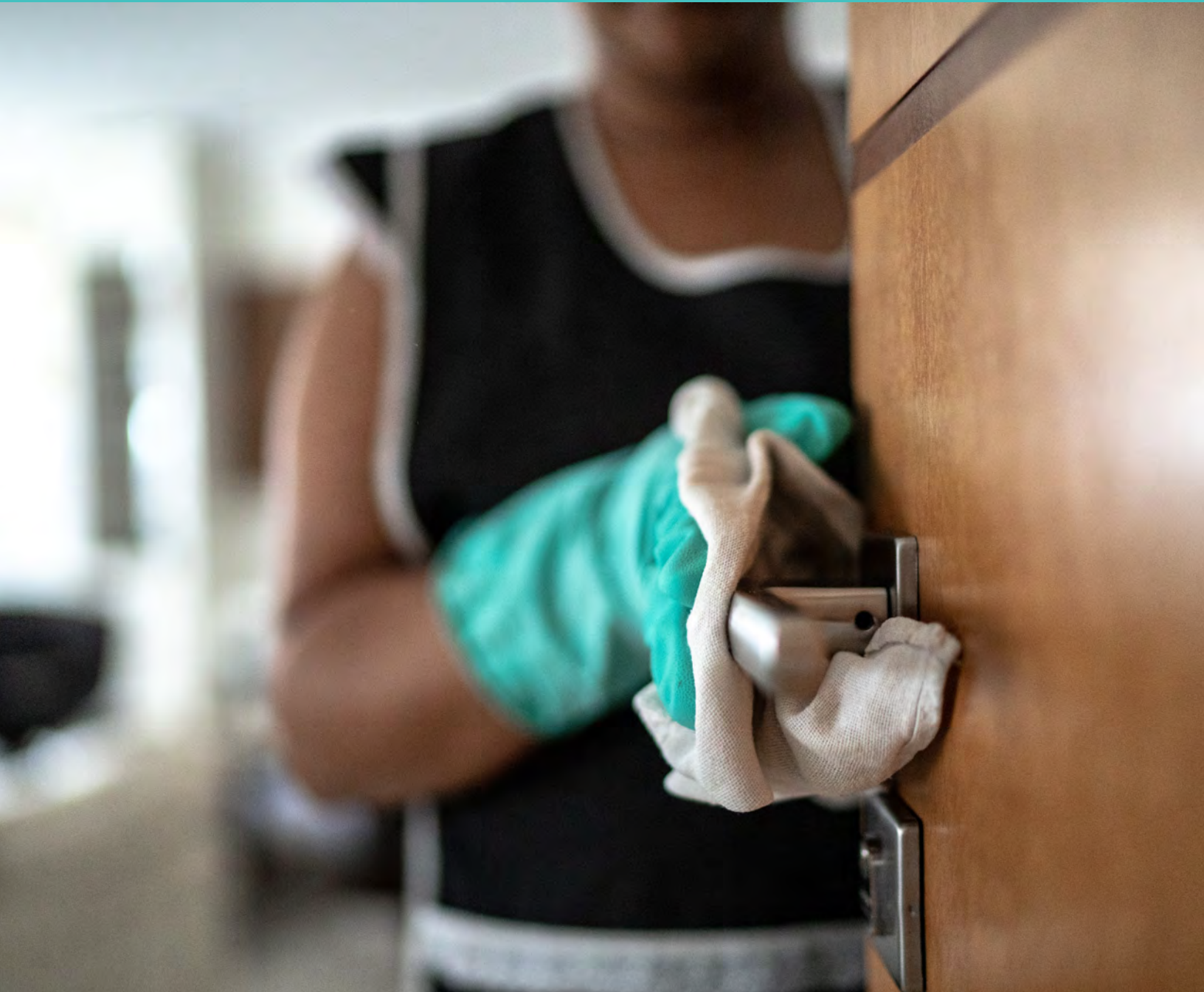


**Source:** Authors' analysis of data from Unionstats.com. **Note:** The particular set of counties included in the data for the Chicago metropolitan region varies over time, but always includes the key counties of Kane, Kendall, Cook, Dupage, McHenry, Will, and Lake Counties.

Chicago has long been known as a “union town,” but unionization has been on the decline across sectors since 1988. Between 1988 and 2018, the rate of private sector unionization in Chicagoland was cut in half, from 18 percent of workers to 9 percent. The public sector also saw union membership decline by a more modest 9 percent, from about 51 percent to 46 percent.

## 10.0

# THE WAVERING COVID-19 RECOVERY IS LEAVING WORKERS OF COLOR BEHIND

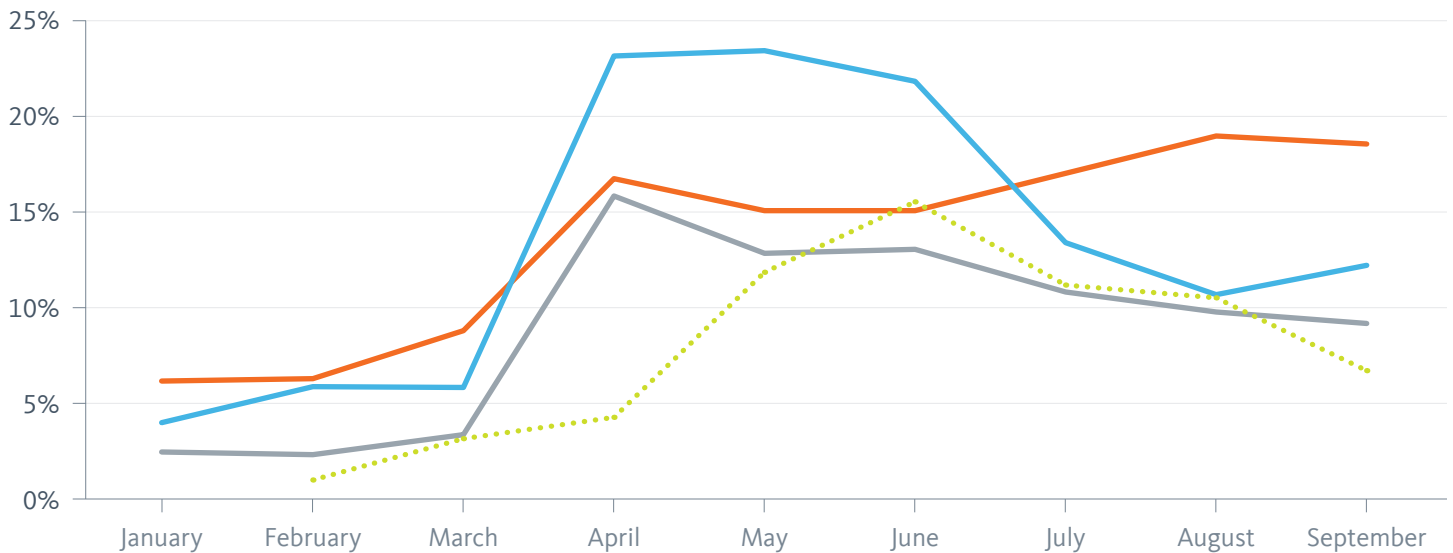


In the midst of Covid-19, the labor market remains turbulent. The unemployment rate in the Chicago region reached 18 percent in May of 2020 and has since dropped to 8 percent in October. The early recovery has also unfolded unevenly across the labor market. Considering the racial stratification of different occupational groups in the region, these gaps have significant consequences for racial economic equity.

## Black and Latinx workers have experienced higher unemployment rates through the pandemic.

### Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity, Chicago Metropolitan Area, January to September 2020

- White
- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander



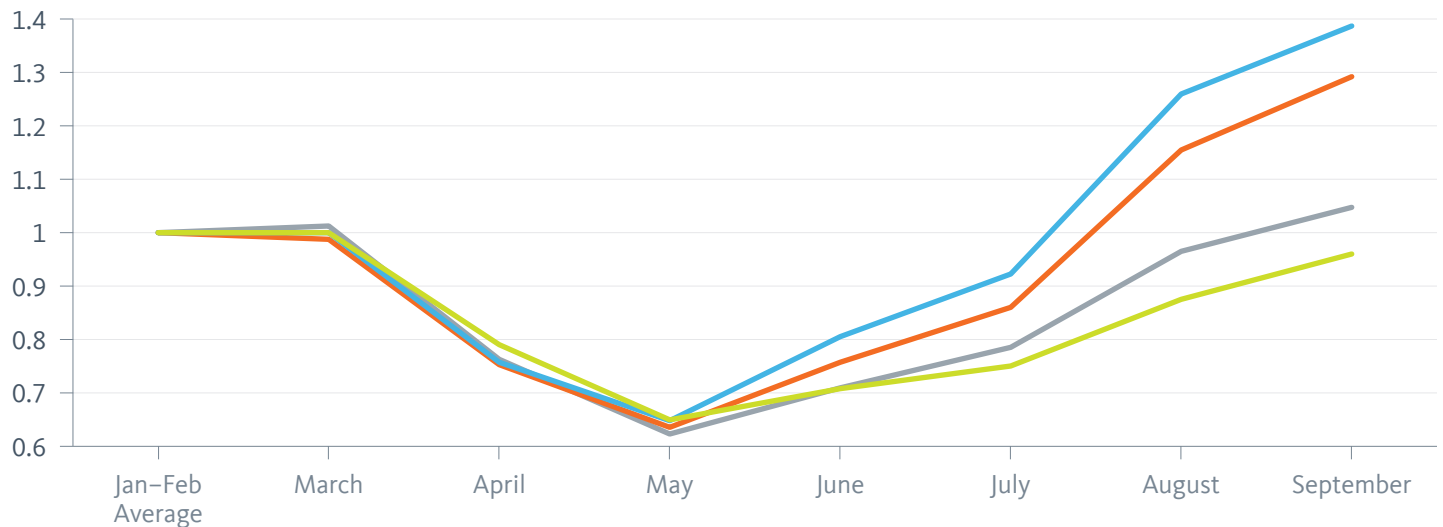
**Source:** Unemployment estimates for the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area from the Current Population Survey (CPS) microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Dotted line denotes a two-month rolling average of unemployment rates due to small sample size.

Unemployment rates rose for all workers in the Chicago region during 2020, peaking at 12.8 percent for White workers in April, 23.5 percent for Latinx workers in May, 15.5 percent for Asian workers in June, and 19 percent for Black workers in August. The jump in unemployment was steep for Latinx workers but has since come down, whereas the unemployment rate for Black workers has not dropped. As of September, the unemployment rate remained very high among Black workers at 18.6 percent, and high among Latinx workers at 12.2 percent. In comparison, the unemployment rates for White and Asian workers as of September dropped to 9.3 percent and 6.7 percent respectively.

## Online job postings for positions held by Black and Latinx workers prior to the crisis are recovering more quickly than for those held by White workers.

### Job Postings Relative to April Baseline by Pre-Crisis Occupational Demographics (Race/Ethnicity), Chicago Metropolitan Area, March–September 2020

- White
- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander



**Source:** Authors' analysis of Burning Glass job posting data (January–September 2020), with job postings allocated according to occupational race and ethnicity characteristics from 2018 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA.

The chart above shows how employment recovery would have been allocated to different racial and ethnic groups if recovering jobs went proportionately to the workers who held those jobs pre-crisis. This chart uses job postings data to measure the change in demand over 2020 for jobs relative to the beginning of the year.

In the Chicago area, the unemployment rate spiked and has remained high for Black workers, while White and Asian workers have returned to work more quickly. However, online job posting demand is returning most quickly for jobs that tend to employ Black and Latinx workers.

There is a range of possible explanations for the concerning divergence between the stubbornly high unemployment rate for Black workers and the return in demand for the jobs where they have historically been employed. The possibilities include:

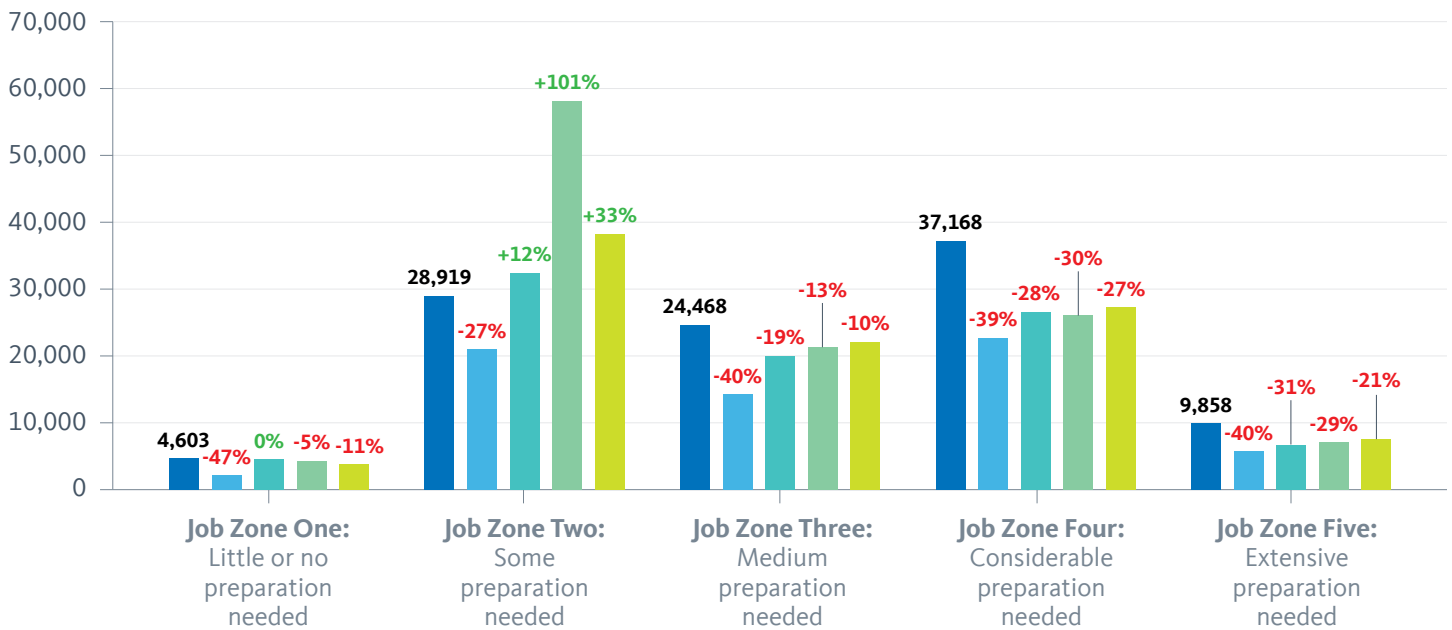
- White and Asian workers may have more access to professional social networks that facilitate employment.
- Black and Latinx households may face greater difficulty working or job-seeking from home. This could be due to factors such as lower rates of computer ownership and internet access, slower internet speeds, or higher rates of overcrowding.
- White and Asian workers may have been placed on furlough or temporary layoff rather than permanently laid off at higher rates, and the return in demand for these jobs would not be evident in online job postings.
- Discrimination in hiring may be more pronounced during the pandemic.
- An up-credentialing effect where employers increase credential requirements, such as degree requirements, necessary for a job because they can afford to do so due to high rates of unemployment, increasing the likelihood of hiring a White or Asian worker.

These effects underscore the compounding nature of racial inequities—in times of economic crisis, systemic inequities are exacerbated.

**The early labor market recovery has been concentrated in jobs that require the least preparation and training. Postings for jobs that require greater preparation remain down significantly from the February baseline.**

**Monthly Job Postings by Degree of Preparation Required, Chicagoland Region, February to October 2020**

- February
- April
- June
- August
- October



**Source:** Authors’ analysis of Burning Glass Technologies data on monthly job postings, using O\*NET occupational classifications. **Note:** For more information on job zone definitions, see <https://www.onetonline.org/help/online/zones>.

In Chicago, demand for jobs requiring some to moderate preparation—such as limited work experience, a high school diploma, or vocational training—has returned more quickly than demand for jobs that require either extensive preparation or no preparation at all.<sup>21</sup> Chicago’s recovery is led by lower wage work, relative to the median Chicago worker with an annual income above \$55,000. This trend highlights the immense importance of many jobs that require little formal preparation, such as frontline care workers, gig workers, production workers, and service workers, which have kept the economy afloat.

Meanwhile, demand for jobs that require considerable preparation (e.g., a bachelor’s degree) or extensive preparation (e.g., a bachelor’s degree and significant specialized skills or experience, or an advanced postsecondary degree) remains down 27 percent and 21 percent, respectively, compared to February 2020. Workers in jobs that require greater experience and education are often more insulated from economic volatility than other workers, but the decreased demand for new jobs at this level is an issue for people now entering the market for these jobs (e.g., recent college graduates), and it suggests that workers laid off from these jobs may be forced to accept “underemployment”—taking jobs for which they are overqualified—as a way back into employment.

## 11.0

# ACCELERATING AUTOMATION PUTS WORKERS OF COLOR AT RISK



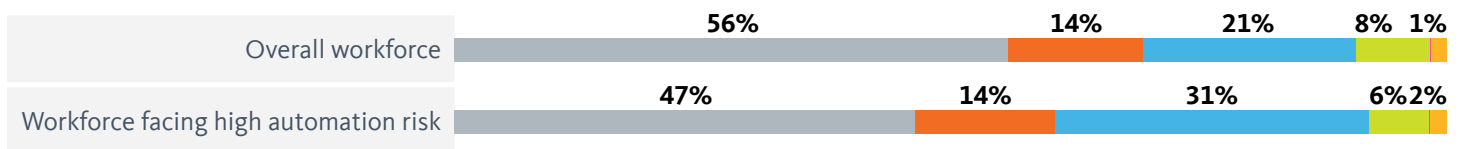
Automation, digitalization, and computerization are on course to radically transform work and jobs in the United States. Certain occupations will become obsolete; others will be profoundly changed, expanded, or combined; and technological advancement, especially in artificial intelligence, is likely to create entirely new roles across industries and fields. Some of these processes cannot be reliably predicted, but given the current trajectory of automation-driven job change, it is clear that people of color are at increased risk of job disruption that may push them into more precarious, marginalized work or displace them from the labor market altogether.

Automation risk is best calculated in terms of the likelihood of computerization of the underlying tasks that make up a given occupation, which can lead to worker displacement.<sup>22</sup> Very few jobs consist entirely of tasks that can be computerized,<sup>23</sup> but most occupations include enough automatable tasks to be considered at risk of automation. The national average risk is about 52 percent, indicating that about half of job tasks performed by the US workforce can be automated.<sup>24</sup>

## Latinx workers are particularly overrepresented in automation-vulnerable jobs.

### Automation Risk by Race/Ethnicity, Chicago Metropolitan Region, 2018

- White
- Black
- Latinx
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Mixed/other



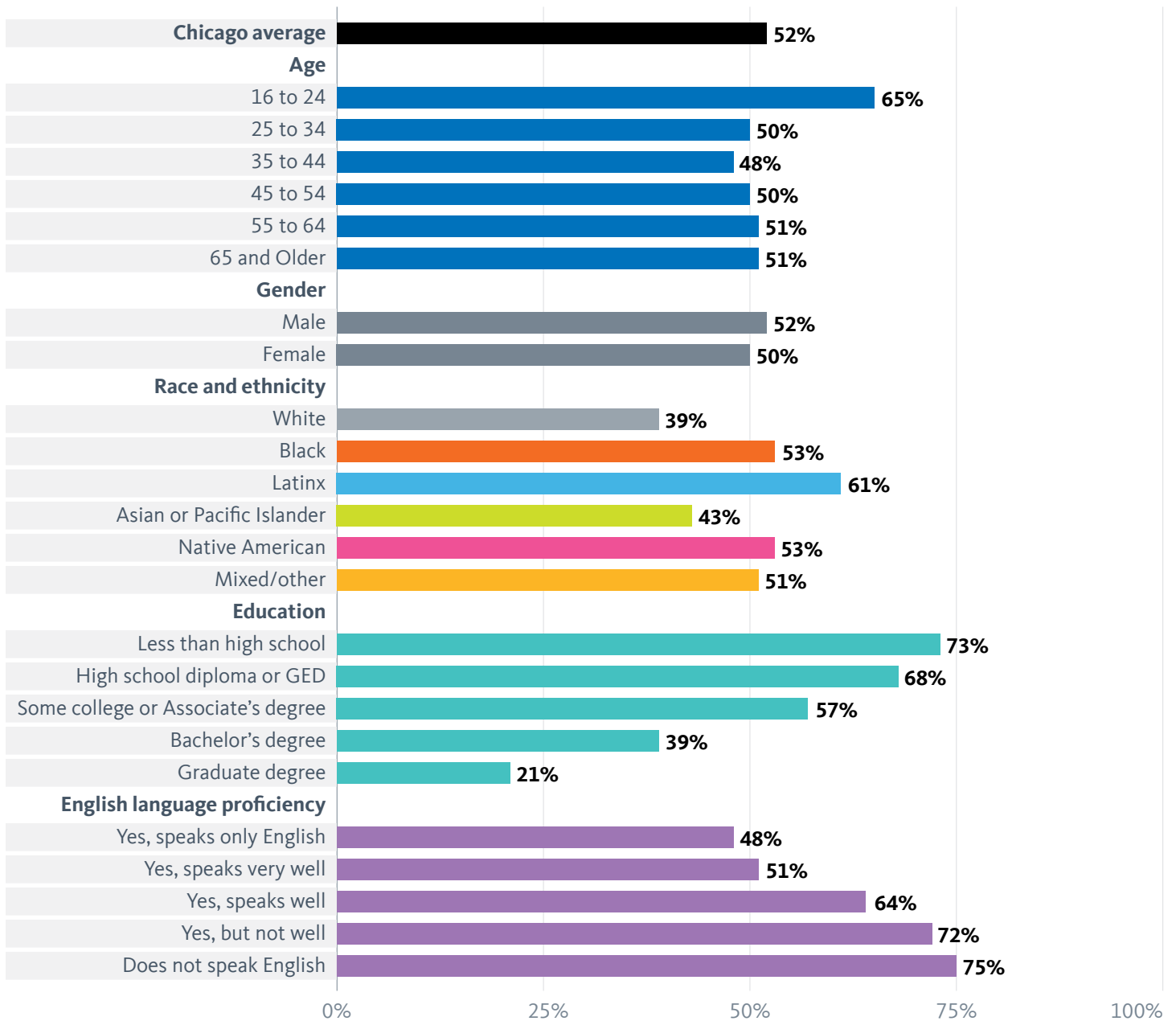
**Sources:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA and automation scores from "The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?" (Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, 2013). **Note:** Universe includes the employed civilian noninstitutionalized population age 16 or older.

Automation is a threat to employment growth in the Chicago region. The risk of automation is acute for Latinx workers, who are overrepresented in jobs susceptible to automation. White workers in the Chicagoland region constitute 56 percent of the workforce, but only 47 percent of workers in jobs with high automation risk.

Inversely, Latinx workers make up 21 percent of the workforce overall but 31 percent of automation-vulnerable workers. The concentration of workers of color in jobs with elevated automation risk is projected to continue over time.

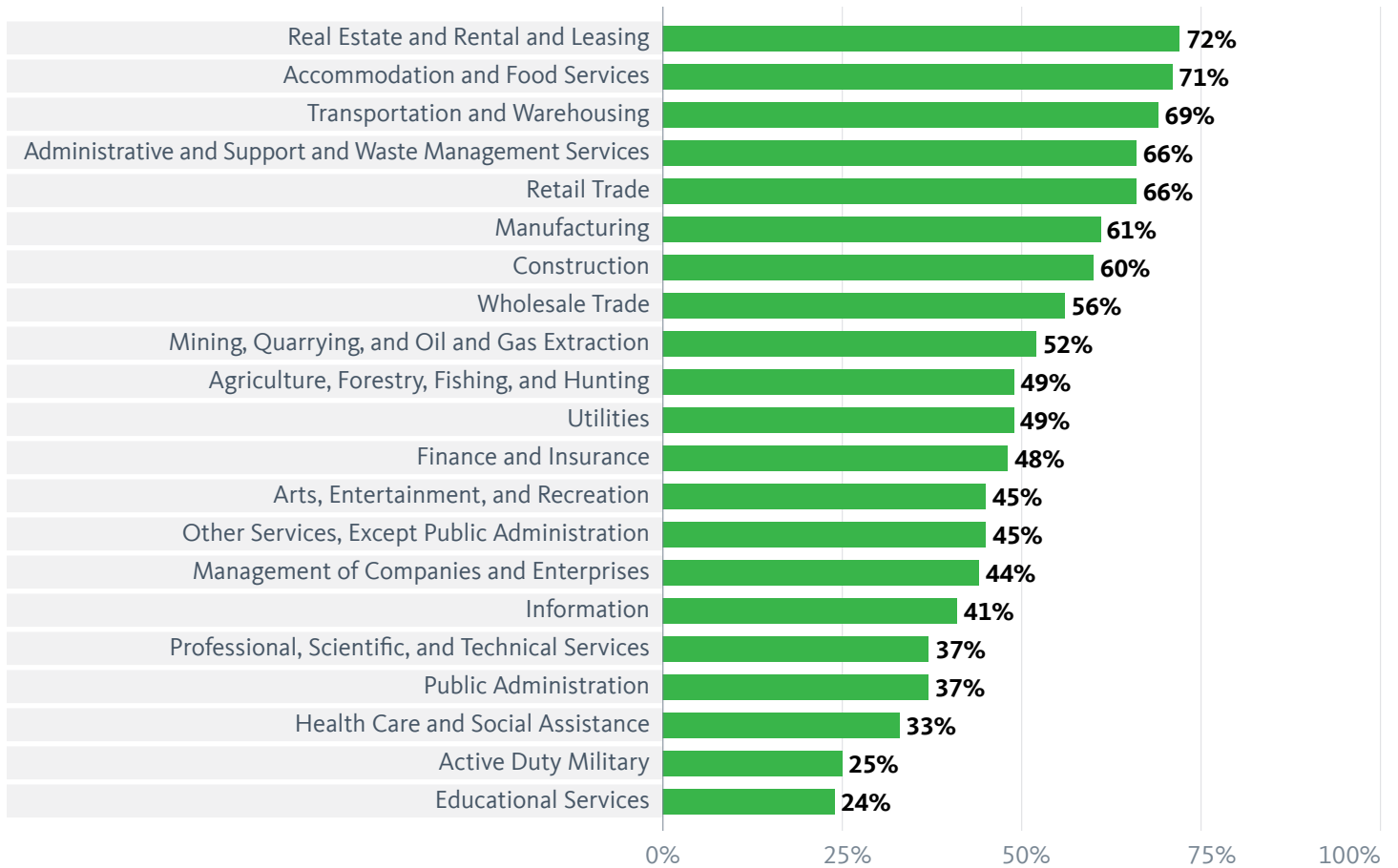
**Workers of color, those with less than a high school diploma, and non-English speakers are most vulnerable to automation-driven job disruption.**

**Automation Vulnerability by Worker Characteristics, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 2018**



**Sources:** Occupation-level automation scores from “The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?” (Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, 2013), and worker characteristics from 2018 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA.

## Automation Vulnerability by Industry, Chicago Metropolitan Region, 2018



**Sources:** Occupation-level automation scores from “The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?” (Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, 2013), and industry characteristics from 2018 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA.

In addition to race and ethnicity, a variety of other worker characteristics correlate with high automation risk. English language is associated with automation resiliency: workers who speak English will face a third less automation risk compared to workers who do not speak English, a difference of 24 percentage points. Increasing educational attainment is another pathway to jobs that enjoy automation resiliency. The degree that affects the greatest level of change is a bachelor’s degree. Bachelor’s degree holders face a third less automation risk—a difference of 18 percentage points—compared to workers with some college experience or an associate’s degree. Black workers are 14 percentage points more likely than White workers to be affected by automation, while Latinx workers are at 22 percentage points.

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## A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION IN CHICAGO



Policymakers, employers, educators, training providers, and community-based organizations all have important roles to play to advance workforce equity in Chicagoland and ensure that workers are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow with the skills, supports, and access they need to fully participate and thrive in the emerging economy. A racial equity agenda to transform workforce ecosystems—centering the needs of the most impacted to maximize benefits for all—is the key to advancing a lasting recovery and a resilient future economy. This will require both private and public investment, and action to dismantle systemic racism and reimagine high-quality jobs and equitable talent development as a social good.

As the data in this report illustrate, workforce development is inextricably intertwined not only with community and economic development strategies but also with housing, criminal justice, transportation, childcare, and other issues. Achieving workforce equity will require coordination, collaboration, and population-level solutions across multiple systems.

Workforce stakeholders in Chicagoland should be engaged in upstream issues related to planning and investment in broad public initiatives, and creating spaces for experts in other fields to contribute to transformative workforce efforts. Traditional workforce development activities—education, training, job placement programs, among others—remain a priority. Ensuring adequate resources for these functions is critical to removing barriers to entry and advancement in the labor market. And as the region continues to diversify, racial equity strategies should be embedded throughout the workforce system to ensure that all residents can connect and contribute to the economy.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities in both health and the economy, a cross-cutting racial equity agenda for the region's workforce should be the cornerstone of an inclusive recovery for a thriving Chicago economy in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Policymakers, employers, educators, training providers, and community-based organizations all have important roles to play to ensure that workers are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow with the skills, supports, and access they need to fully participate and thrive in the emerging economy. Our recommendations for designing and activating such a racial equity agenda include the following.

## **1. Elevate and amplify worker voice and worker power.**

A workforce equity agenda for Chicago must center the wisdom, voice, and advocacy of workers themselves. This could include supporting outreach and communications strategies to educate workers about their basic rights and remedies, supporting advocacy efforts to protect workers from retaliation and implement just-cause termination standards, and providing resources and capacity building for various forms of worker power building. Such efforts should be implemented in close partnership with labor organizations, employers, business organizations, and policymakers, and should include engaging with unions around advancing racial equity in their own practices and advancing the role of organized labor in the public workforce development system.

## **2. Use sector-based workforce development strategies to build pathways into good jobs for workers of color.**

Sectoral partnerships can be a powerful lever for advancing workforce equity, because they provide a collaborative space for funders, employers, education and training providers, and workforce intermediaries to adopt a systems-change approach. With an explicit focus on racial equity, sectoral strategies focused on building career pathways between entry-level jobs and high-quality target occupations can help to close the good-jobs gap for workers of color, meet the emerging needs of employers, and buoy the regional economy as a whole.

Programmatic approaches within sector-based planning should include well-resourced job-training grants, expanded apprenticeship programs, and subsidized employment opportunities designed with specific equity targets to ensure that they benefit people of color and disadvantaged job seekers. Neighborhood-based career services that engage local businesses should be expanded in communities of color. The first table below shows health-care occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree where workers of color are overrepresented; the following table shows target occupations that provide good jobs in the Chicago region. Health-care sector strategies should prioritize transitioning the workers represented in the first table into the jobs represented in the second table, opening entry-level jobs to sustain the development of equitable talent pipelines.

## Select health-care occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree but have job-quality deficits, by number of workers of color, 2018

Occupation	Workers of Color	% Workers of Color	% Black	% Latinx	% Asian or Pacific Islander	% Native American	% Mixed/Other
Personal care aides	26,965	73%	40%	16%	16%	<1%	1%
Nursing assistants	24,231	72%	42%	19%	10%	<1%	1%
Medical assistants	8,888	62%	20%	38%	3%	<1%	1%
Home health aides	8,307	74%	46%	18%	8%	<1%	3%
Pharmacy technicians	4,347	51%	14%	18%	18%	<1%	1%
Dental assistants	4,152	53%	8%	35%	8%	1%	2%
Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians	3,532	46%	15%	11%	18%	<1%	2%
Massage therapists	2,610	32%	10%	15%	6%	<1%	1%
Other healthcare support workers	2,358	66%	34%	18%	14%	<1%	<1%
Dental hygienists	1,639	20%	1%	9%	10%	<1%	<1%
Medical records specialists	1,535	47%	21%	13%	12%	<1%	2%
Phlebotomists	1,480	70%	33%	26%	9%	<1%	2%
Veterinary technologists and technicians	1,360	40%	9%	11%	17%	<1%	3%
Surgical technologists	1,067	61%	22%	22%	14%	2%	1%
Orderlies and psychiatric aides	757	72%	39%	13%	13%	<1%	7%
Opticians, dispensing	542	27%	17%	7%	2%	<1%	<1%
Medical transcriptionists	356	38%	21%	6%	11%	<1%	<1%
Pharmacy aides	282	73%	16%	23%	30%	<1%	4%
Veterinary assistants and laboratory animal caretakers	261	38%	2%	29%	<1%	<1%	7%

**Sources:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the employed civilian population age 16 or older.

## Select health-care occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree and provide good jobs, by number of workers of color, 2018

Occupation	Workers of Color	% Workers of Color	% Black	% Latinx	% Asian or Pacific Islander	% Native American	% Mixed/ Other
Registered nurses	37,231	44%	13%	8%	21%	<1%	2%
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	10,129	72%	44%	16%	11%	<1%	1%
Radiologic technologists and technicians	1,900	41%	9%	15%	16%	<1%	1%
Miscellaneous health technologists and technicians	1,886	58%	24%	17%	14%	<1%	2%
Emergency medical technicians	1,024	24%	10%	10%	1%	<1%	3%
Respiratory therapists	971	37%	10%	4%	19%	<1%	3%
Diagnostic medical sonographers	818	43%	12%	16%	15%	<1%	<1%
Physical therapist assistants and aides	797	31%	6%	9%	15%	<1%	<1%
Psychiatric technicians	776	63%	40%	4%	19%	<1%	<1%
Dietetic technicians and ophthalmic medical technicians	502	76%	23%	29%	15%	<1%	10%
Magnetic resonance imaging technologists	368	44%	11%	7%	15%	<1%	11%
Cardiovascular technologists and technicians	354	32%	10%	2%	20%	<1%	<1%
Occupational therapy assistants and aides	159	33%	24%	6%	3%	<1%	<1%
Radiation therapists	93	34%	17%	<1%	18%	<1%	<1%

**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the employed civilian population age 16 or older.

Workforce intermediaries can also pursue activities to support job seekers navigating sector-based pathways by reducing information asymmetries (providing detailed information on job characteristics including expected salary, typical benefits, and work conditions); facilitating job matching in partnership with employers; and providing or subsidizing critical support services like childcare and transportation.

Beyond career advancement and mobility, sectoral partnerships also provide an ideal platform for engaging employers and other stakeholders around specific workforce solutions related to credentialing and skills-based hiring, stackable credentials, and best practices for embedding equity into recruitment, promotion, and retention strategies.

### **3. Improve job quality and economic security for workers of color.**

Closing the good-jobs gap for people of color while raising the floor on all low-wage work is an essential milestone for advancing workforce equity. To transform existing low-wage jobs into high-quality jobs will require strong public policy solutions such as one fair wage (eliminating sub-minimum wages for certain occupational groups), guaranteeing access to paid sick leave, ensuring fair scheduling, expanding access to affordable health care and other benefits, preventing wage theft, protecting workers' rights, and dismantling barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated or justice-involved residents. Workforce funders and intermediaries can support and participate in advocacy efforts to promote good-jobs policies that will have a population-level impact.

Even short of broad policy remedies that cover all employers and workers, public employment and spending policies can exert strong and indirect upward pressure on job quality in the private sector. For example, public-sector living wages and prevailing wage laws and equitable contracting and procurement policies for the cities and counties in the Chicago region could help to support the creation (or upgrading) of good jobs targeted to workers of color and other disadvantaged job seekers.

### **4. Develop strategies to close racial gaps in the social determinants of work.**

Successful workforce outcomes depend on more than job training and placement. Access to affordable support systems, such as childcare and transportation, and to safe and affordable housing that allows workers to take advantage of employment opportunities, are essential components of workforce equity. But for many people in the Chicago region, rising housing costs and racial and economic segregation produce geographic isolation and concentrated poverty, cutting communities off from economic opportunity and the supports that workers need in order to thrive. Transit development investments have been largely concentrated in already well-resourced areas, leaving many low-income neighborhoods and communities of color disconnected from schools, jobs, services, and other assets in the region. And, in the context of Covid-19, closing the digital divide has taken on a new urgency.

The workforce system alone cannot meet all of the existing need for supportive and wraparound services; yet these supports are essential to fostering higher educational attainment and labor-market advancement for workers of color. By investing in navigation and case management services and expanding the childcare, housing, transportation, and support resources to which workforce system partners can refer, funders and workforce intermediaries can help ensure that residents can understand, access, and utilize existing services and benefits more efficiently. The workforce system also has an important role to play in designing and advocating for policy solutions to expand childcare, housing, and transportation investments, and to ensure that racial equity is centered in those efforts.

Other formal barriers to employment that disproportionately disadvantage people of color can also be remedied by both public policy and employer practices such as “fair chance” employment policies designed to ensure that job seekers with criminal records are not unfairly disadvantaged. Similarly, occupational licensing agencies should examine and, where appropriate, revise or eliminate requirements that prohibit justice-involved individuals from holding professional licenses. Bonding and insurance programs can be used to mitigate perceived risks of employment of individuals who have been involved in the justice system. Employers should be restricted from using credit checks in hiring decisions, as credit scoring tends to both reflect and reinforce racial inequities in the economy.

An equitable Chicagoland workforce will be one in which racial income gaps are eliminated, all jobs are good jobs, and everyone who wants to work has access to family-supporting employment. Achieving this vision will require high-impact, large-scale, cross-system efforts to dismantle barriers and cultivate racial equity in education and training, hiring and advancement, and the social determinants of work that support positive economic outcomes for workers and families. Good jobs and inclusive growth are the foundation of an equitable economy. Amid the economic uncertainty of the current moment and the projected scale of technological transformation in the not-too-distant future, targeted strategies to improve job quality and ensure equitable access to safe and stable employment are essential to an equitable future of work and a thriving, inclusive economy in the Chicago region.

## 13.0

# METHODOLOGY

The analysis presented here draws from two key data sources: the 2018 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA and a proprietary occupation-level dataset from Burning Glass Technologies expressed at the six-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) level. While detailed sources and notes are included beneath each figure in the report, here we provide additional information on these two key data sources and methods used for the analysis of “good jobs,” “automation risk,” and income/GDP gains with racial equity in the workforce. Unless otherwise noted, all data reflects a custom Chicagoland region, which includes Cook, Dupage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties in the state of Illinois.

The ACS is the largest annual survey of US households administered by the US Census Bureau, collecting a wealth of socioeconomic and demographic information. It is released in both a “summary file” format which includes a limited set of summary tabulations for a wide variety of geographies as well as a “microdata file” which includes individual-level responses for the survey and affords an analyst the flexibility to create custom tabulations. These files also come in both 1-year and 5-year versions, which cover about 1 and 5 percent of the US population, respectively. We utilize the 5-year sample of the microdata to achieve a larger sample size, and we use the version released by IPUMS USA because it has been harmonized to be more consistent over time and augmented with many useful variables.

Unless otherwise noted, the ACS microdata is the source of all tabulations of demographic and workforce equity metrics by race/ethnicity and nativity included in this report. Also, unless otherwise noted, racial/ethnic groups are defined such that all groups are non-Latino (excluding those who identify as Hispanic or Latino), leaving all persons identifying as Hispanic or Latino in the “Latinx” category. The term “US-born” refers to all people who identify as being born in the United

States (including US territories and outlying areas), or born abroad of at least one US citizen parent, while “immigrant” refers to all people who identify as being born abroad, outside of the United States, of non-US citizen parents. The ACS microdata was aggregated to the detailed occupation level and merged with data from Burning Glass Technologies to conduct the “good jobs” and “automation risk” analyses that appear in the report.

The proprietary data from Burning Glass Technologies is based on job postings by collecting data from close to 50,000 online job boards, newspapers, and employer sites daily. Burning Glass then de-duplicates postings for the same job, whether it is posted multiple times on the same site or across multiple sites. Finally, Burning Glass applies detailed text analytics to code the specific jobs, skills, and credentials requested by employers. The equity gap for good jobs was calculated using occupation characteristics from the ACS (employment and average salary), Burning Glass data models (typical education requirements advertised on job postings and metropolitan area occupational employment projections), and the automation risk associated with each occupation from the 2013 paper, “The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?” by Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne.

The income and GDP gains with racial equity in the workforce are based on a methodology used for the “Racial equity in income” indicator on the National Equity Atlas. That analysis estimates aggregate income and income per person for the population ages 16 or older, by race/ethnicity, under the status quo, and under a hypothetical scenario in which there is no inequality in age-adjusted average income and employment by race/ethnicity. That is, it assumes that all racial/ethnic groups have the same average annual income and hours of work, by income percentile and age group, as non-Hispanic Whites. The aggregate income gains are then used to estimate the gain in GDP by applying the percentage increase in aggregate income (for all racial/ethnic groups combined) to actual GDP as reported by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

For the income and GDP gains with racial equity in the workforce analysis included in this report, we replicated the same methodology used in the National Equity Atlas but restricted it to the working-age population (ages 25–64). Care was taken to ensure that the percentage (and total) gain in GDP we estimate is based on the percentage gain in overall aggregate income (i.e., for the population ages 16 or older) that we would expect if there were racial equity in income for just the population ages 25–64.

# 14.0 NOTES

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## 15.0

# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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