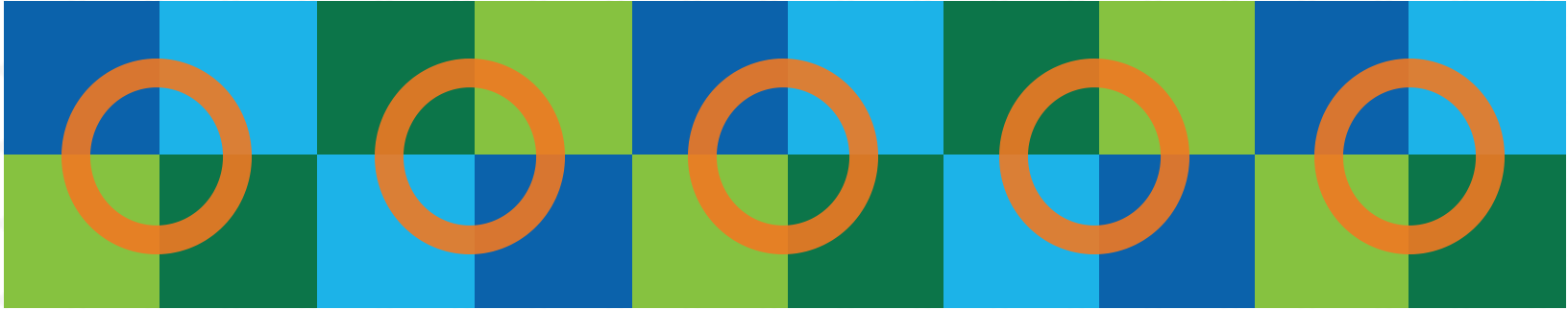
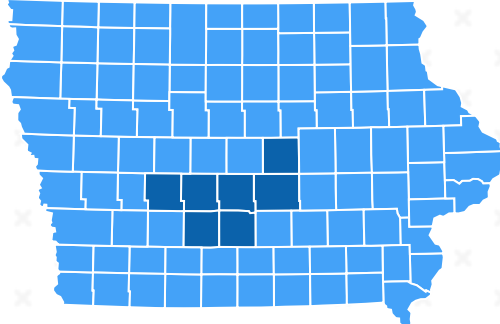


# Nuestro Iowa

Statistics and stories about  
the Central Iowa Latino Community

*December 2021*



Iowa  
Latinx  
Project

nuestro 

Data is an asset that can be used to make our state better. The insight we gain when we really understand our people, their needs, challenges, and strengths, can make a shared vision for a welcoming, thriving future come to life. It is an honor to write the forward for this groundbreaking work of the Latinx Project.

The Iowa Department of Human Rights is the resource in state government that connects Iowans with their government, and, reciprocally, helps government connect with Iowans. Our mandate is to serve Iowans who are historically under-represented in government, with a particular emphasis on those populations with Offices created in Iowa Code. This includes the Office of Latino Affairs, along with the Offices on the Status of African Americans, Status of Women, Persons with Disabilities, Deaf Services, Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and Native American Affairs.

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

This report also delivers beneficial regional input for the Department's state-wide data initiative. It provides information necessary to help government agencies be more responsive to the changing needs of Iowans. It moves us along in determining where to prioritize advocacy and in directing our initiatives with other public organizations to have the greatest positive impact. As you read and learn from the important work of the Latinx Project, we encourage you to keep these things in mind:

1. Having meaningful and trusted data about any population is critical to the work of government. When data is not available, or people are not represented in the existing data, it impacts government's ability to make good decisions. Data helps make people visible.
2. Telling the story of people requires both quantitative and qualitative data. Knowing the numbers, and using qualitative information to understand what the numbers really mean in people's lives, is important. Understanding how people are connected to support systems - families, neighborhoods, organizations, communities, the state we live in - helps us to better deliver the programming that fills in the gaps to help people succeed.
3. Data also allows us to highlight the success of a community and its strengths. Too often, we focus on needs without recognizing strengths and contributions people make.

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

San Wong, Director  
Iowa Department of Human Rights

Sonia Reyes  
Iowa Department of Human Rights  
Office of Latino Affairs

## Latinx Project overview, vision, and mission

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Latino lowans are a highly entrepreneurial, collective-minded subset of the Iowa population – a vital part of the school system, workforce, and community. We are the fastest growing population segment and our contributions to the state make us essential to Iowa's future economy and community. Our state would struggle with stalled economic growth, population decline, and workforce shortages without us. Yet many long-time and new Latino lowans face significant challenges in economic mobility, and we are not fully welcomed in the state. Our youth are particularly key to Iowa's long-term success, yet our state underinvests in Latino youth education and development. Further, we are underrepresented in leadership positions, education, policy and decision making, and many key business sectors.

The Iowa Latinx Project was launched to highlight the contributions of the Latino community in Iowa and to address disparities in income, poverty, education, homeownership, and health. The project explores the current state of Latinos in Central Iowa through the publication of the *Nuestro Iowa* report and dashboard. This research combines statistics and community stories to provide a baseline of information to inform data-driven advocacy and advancement of Latino lowans.

The Iowa Latinx Project is directed by a collaborative leadership team. The all-volunteer team was drawn from across economic and social sectors representing the diversity of Latino leadership in the region. Together, we worked throughout 2021 to analyze the statistics and stories presented in *Nuestro Iowa* and develop strategy to advance our community and our state broadly.

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### **Mission/Misión**

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

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

### **Vision/Visión**

A welcoming state where everyone thrives

Un estado acogedor donde todos prosperen

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## Executive Summary

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

*Nuestro Iowa* (Our Iowa) is a snapshot of the Central Iowa Latino community. Through statistics and community stories, it explores demographic trends, economic contributions, housing, immigration, education, and health. The report includes a community-designed list of priorities for action and a comprehensive list of community assets to aid in forming a data-driven strategy for advocacy and advancement.

The statistics were contextualized by the Latinx Project Team and community members through a series of workshops. Together, the quotes and statistics offer a comprehensive picture of the Latino experience in the six-county Des Moines metropolitan region (Dallas, Guthrie, Jasper, Madison, Polk, and Warren Counties). Adjacent Marshall County was included because of its large Latino population and direct proximity to the metro.

The metro Latino community has grown 13-fold since 1969, comprising 8% of the population. By 2050, the community will grow 128% more, making up 13.4% of the metro (117,200 residents). By contrast, the rest of the metro population will only grow by 17%. The community will by far be the predominant driver of population growth in the overall metro.

About 1,544 Latino-owned businesses generate about \$159.6 million annually in revenue. The community provides over 22,000 workers across all industries and collectively earns nearly \$1 billion annually in the metro.

However, disparities exist in income, poverty, homeownership, education, and health. Compared with the white, non-Latino metro population, median income among Latino households is 33% lower, homeownership rates are 24 percentage points lower, and poverty rates are about 13 percentage points higher.

Closing these gaps would mean an additional billion dollars earned annually, 6,800 fewer residents in poverty, and 3,100 more homeowners.

Only 75% of Latino/a residents aged 19-64 have health insurance coverage compared with 96% of white, non-Latino/a residents. Community members also described the high cost of care, the lack of mental health and dental care access, and the lifelong impacts of these disparities.

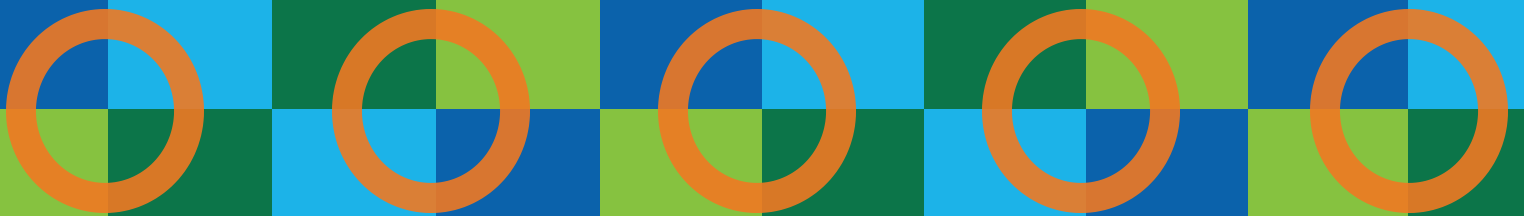
There are wide disparities in educational attainment. About 13.6% of metro Latinos over the age of 25 have completed a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 38.6% of white, non-Latino adults. Over 37% of Latino adults have not completed high school. These education disparities largely explain the gap in income, which in turn largely explains the gap in poverty rates and homeownership. Residents discussed how these topics are interconnected in the lives of adults and youth.

While there has been measurable improvement in high school graduation rates over the last decade, a significant gap still remains, driven by a wide gap in the Des Moines Independent Community School District. Further, about half of Latinx students in Des Moines are not on track for college readiness in math and reading. Reflecting a positive trend, the gap in high school graduation rates in Marshall County has completely closed. Young people in this report shared how they experienced educational gaps and successes as well as thoughts about reaching for college.

Data on health outcomes aren't publicly available disaggregated for Latinos at the county or metro-level. Furthermore, data about the LGBTQ community is lacking for the state. For these reasons, additional health data, COVID effects, and barriers faced by the Latinx queer community cannot be analyzed through statistics, although stories offer insights about these topics in this report.

# Latino Community Overview

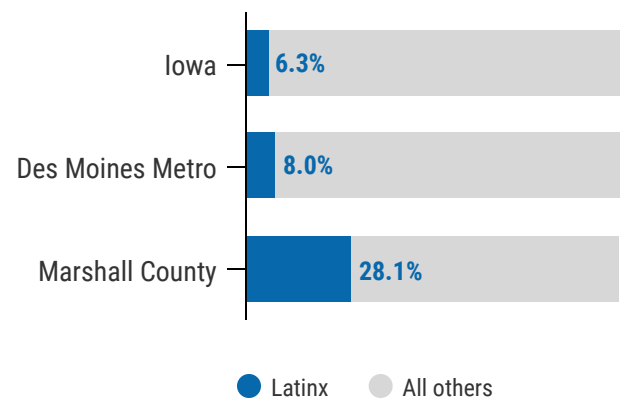
**"It's all these layers that make who we are."  
- High School Teacher**



## Latino community overview

As of 2019, Latinos comprised 6.3% (197,500) of the overall Iowa population, 8.0% (51,600) of the Des Moines Metro, and 28.1% (8,771) of Marshall County.

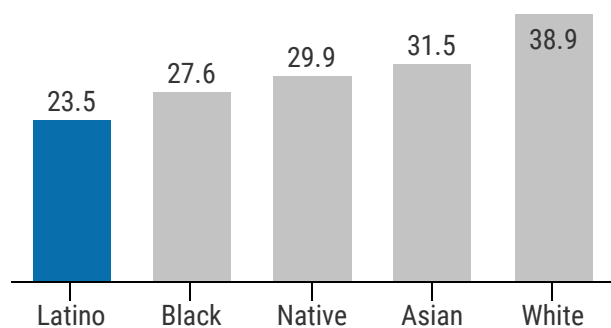
### 2019 Latino population



Half of all metro area Latinos are younger than the age of 23.5, half are older. By contrast, the median age of white, non-Latino residents is 38.9. Over 40% of the Latino population is below the age of 18.

### Latino population skews much younger

Median age by race/ethnicity



Latinos are a significant portion of the Central Iowa population. Community members responded to these statistics with ideas about the importance of youth voices, the community's potential, and the need to take the Latinx population into consideration. Youth voices are important, as they are 40% of the Latinx population.

"I'm proud of some people standing up, especially since we're a younger community. I'm proud that they're showing students that they can be successful."

-High school student

"Those who were born here can do things, achieve big things. That makes a huge difference."

-Cleaning professional

"We have to lead the way, not just for ourselves, but for future generations. To take it to the next level. That's why our parents came here, to give us an opportunity. We need to help them take it to the next level."

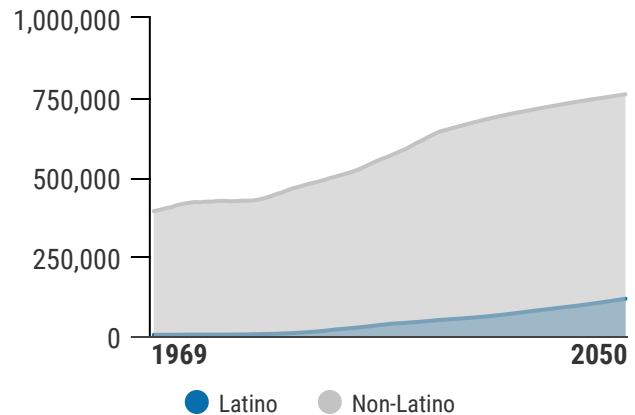
- Entrepreneur, tax preparation

## Overall growth comes from the Latino population

In 1969, the metro Latino population was about 3,600. The population rapidly expanded over 13 fold to about 52,000 in 2019. By 2050, the Latino community in the Des Moines metro region will grow to about 117,200 residents and comprise 13.4% of the population. This represents a population growth of 128% in the next 30 years. By contrast, the rest of the population will only grow by 17%.

This growth is driven by the younger age of the Latino population and net migration from abroad (primarily Mexico and Central American countries) and from other states.

### Latino population is rapidly growing and driving overall metro growth



What will their growing population mean for Latinos/as and for the region? In response to this projected population change, focus group participants shared feelings of optimism, hope, and sometimes pressure to succeed. Wider representation is needed in all professions. Leaders in business, education, government, and philanthropy must recognize and respond to this important change.

"Numbers don't lie. Having these stats means that I can start knocking down doors and say, 'This is the future! What are you going to do?'"

-Junior Ibarra, Collaborative Leadership Team

"As we grow, having representation and jobs is important. We'll have more opportunity to show our culture to other people. We can have more representation in politics, and have policies change to benefit our community."

-High school student, Marshalltown

"More of us, more influence. It will be very impactful."

-College student, Drake University

"I like that our population will grow and be an important part of the state."

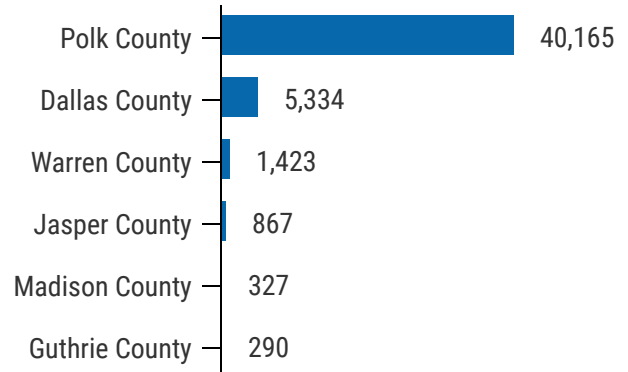
-High school student, Dowling



## Counties of residence

The vast majority of Des Moines metro Latinos live in Polk County, primarily in the City of Des Moines. Large populations also live in Dallas County, centered in the city of Perry. In percentage terms, Latinos represent around 8.4% of the Polk County population, 6.1% of Dallas County, and less than 3% of the remaining Counties in the Metro.

### Most Latinos in the metro live in Polk and Dallas County



### Experiences living across the metro region

"I live in Des Moines for the tranquility. I lived in Mexico City. It's tiring to live in a big city. So much traffic, so many people. I don't have family here. I have family in Chicago. When I arrived in Chicago, it felt like Mexico City. I didn't like it. I thought I wanted to leave the U.S. Then, I came to visit Des Moines, and I loved it here! The tranquility, and the landscape here. I like it very much." (Administrative assistant and translator)

"I like it [in Des Moines] because they are always doing new things, changing things up. Downtown, they're constructing things and building new things. There are new developments. I like agriculture, too. I like to see how things are going." (Cleaning professional)

"My dad and mom were working in Watsonville, California. My mom didn't like it because we were living in a house with fifteen men and I was a baby. They heard an ad on the radio from IBP, now Tyson, in Perry (Dallas County). An ad in Spanish. It said that families are moving to Perry, and that it was an excellent place to raise kids. And just with hearing that ad, they picked up and moved to Perry, Iowa! We arrived in '91." (Entrepreneur, real estate)

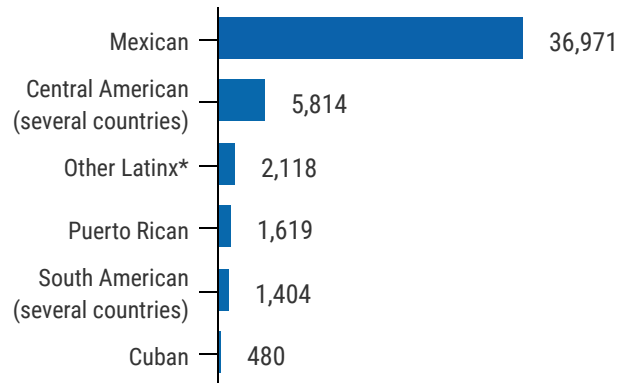
"I am looking to leave Central Iowa. I think about wanting to own a home or where I would like to raise my children if I get married. Culturally and economically it's not sustainable for me here. I don't know. It's hard to unpack that. There is a glass ceiling that exists here and I'm going to reach that. To get where I need to go, I'll need to leave." (Journalist)

## Ethnicity and birthplace

The Des Moines metro Latino community is diverse in terms of ancestry (ethnic origin, "roots" or heritage). While most of the community is Mexican (~76%), there are large populations with ancestry from Central American countries. This includes substantial numbers with Guatemalan (1,378), Honduran (705), and Salvadoran (2,868) ethnic origin. Ecuador is the most common South American heritage (565).

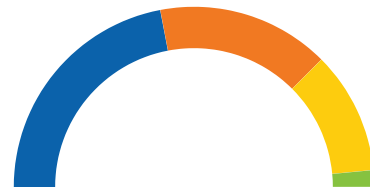
\*'Other Latino' includes estimates of the Latinx population that didn't self-affiliate with one of these communities

### The Latino community is very diverse



Nearly half of Latino Iowans in the metro were born in Iowa (44%), Around 31% are immigrants who were born in another country, while 22% were born in some other US state and migrated to Iowa. Finally, about 3% were born abroad to US citizens.

### Iowa is the predominant birthplace



- Born in Iowa (44%)
- Born abroad (31%)
- Born in other US state (22%)
- Born abroad to US Citizens (3%)

The Des Moines metro Latinx community is diverse in terms of birthplace and ancestry. Individuals' stories of how they arrived in the region revealed many paths across generations.

"I help my parents run their business. My dad is from Michoacán, Mexico, and my mom is from Durango, Mexico. I grew up here. I was born here in Des Moines, born and raised here."

-Entrepreneur, ice cream shop

"I was born in northwest Iowa. My parents are from Mexico. They've been here almost 30 years. I've been in Des Moines for five years."

-Marketing and communications professional

"I'm not an Iowa native. I was born in California, raised on the West Coast. I've been here since 1996. I've lost count! I was basically raised in Des Moines."

-Entrepreneur, tax preparation

"I've lived in Iowa since 2004. I was born in Mexico and was brought to the US when I was 2 and lived in Chicago. I moved to Mexico for 4.5 years when I was 18 to learn Spanish and experience my culture. I was tired of learning about my culture only through library books. In 2004 I moved back to the States. I ended up in Iowa. I've loved it ever since."

-Sales representative

"I lived in Iowa since 2015...I originally grew up in south Texas, which was predominantly Latinx. Moving to Iowa was a drastic change."

-Event planner

"I followed my children's father here when he came to study. I'm from Venezuela."

-Entrepreneur, car sales and private tutoring

# Economics and Workforce

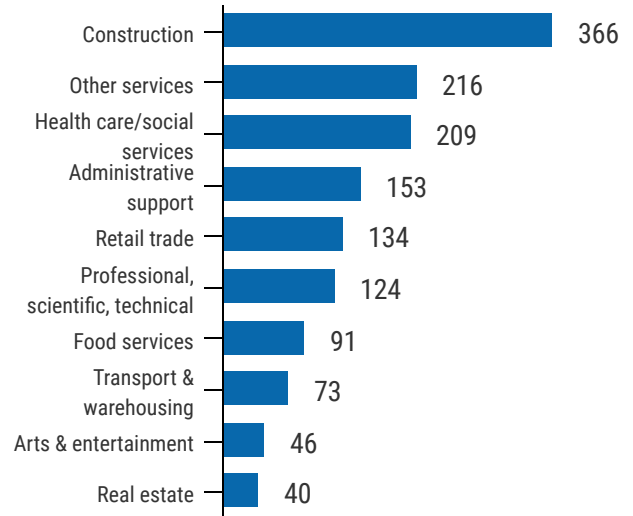
**"I'm proud that wherever they put me, I learn quickly." - Cleaning professional**

# Entrepreneurship

According to the Census Bureau's survey of business owners, there are 1,544 Latino-owned firms in the Des Moines region generating over \$159.6 million in sales. Latino business owners own firms in a variety of industries led by construction firms, health care/social services, administrative support, retail trade, professional services, and food services.

## Latino-owned firms

\$159.6M in total annual sales



Latino entrepreneurs take pride in their success and the services they provide to central Iowa. Social networks, starting small, family collaboration, and having a growth mindset have been key to their success in building their businesses and earning higher wages.

"We began to rent a car saleslot. I began to sell my little cars, \$1500 a car, small deals. We changed locations and started renting from a new place. Broadway was too quiet, not enough customers. Now we've expanded, and I plan to start a second business teaching modeling and etiquette so young girls have confidence and can step up."

- Retail trade

"We've been in business since I was 11. My parents opened the business. It's going to be almost 17 years here soon. We started with a tiny location, the building right over. Once they built this building, we moved over a few years later."

- Food services (ice cream)

"My sister was already doing real estate as an investment on the side. I wanted to take the plunge. I did it, I quit everything. I was really insecure going from 100% salary to commission. I'm sure lots of us can share that feeling. The first year was really rough. Fast forward to today, thanks to the mentorship we've had, I'm 100% debt free, investing in other properties. Investing for cash. A lot of different things."

- Real estate

"I only became an independent business owner as of last year. I had been a tax preparer for 11 years. I worked for two major tax companies, one mom and pop, and an accounting firm. I decided that I want my money. The hourly wage wasn't cutting it. I have kids. It wasn't doing it for me."

-Administrative support (tax preparation)

## Barriers & opportunities as an entrepreneur

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Central Iowa Latino business owners reviewed the statistics on business ownership and reflected on the opportunities that helped them succeed and the barriers that make the entrepreneurial climate more difficult.

Connections and networks are key components to success, while barriers include lack of financial and legal expertise, immigration status, lack of access to credit, and a need for a Latino Chamber of Commerce.

"I hope there can be more successful small businesses. More chance for people to do something they like."  
-Dowling HS Student

### Opportunity Builders

"I saw everything how my dad started his business. Connections mattered. He had a friend who had a palettería (ice cream shop) in Kansas. Dad wanted to start a business. There was nothing like this kind of business in Des Moines. So he got advice and help."

-Family business owner

"What helped me build my business is learning from the owner of where I worked. I listened to all he said. That helped me. I didn't learn any of this in school."

-Tax preparer

"How can we integrate our business into the Anglo community? Latinos are a small niche. How do we expand this to clients who want our business, too? We need to serve the entire Des Moines community."

-Real estate investor

### Barriers

"Although we have united and family oriented values, we still have a divided community. There aren't very many leaders who say, let's get together as business owners and grow. There's a lot of competition, and it's not friendly. There's not a Latino Chamber of Commerce."  
-Real estate professional

"I see as a tax preparer that a lot of people start a business, but they don't realize there are taxes that need to be paid. There's self-employed tax. They don't know the difference between the different kinds of taxes. They just have cash they're paid with. It's important to know the business taxes you have to pay."  
-Tax preparer

"Sometimes Latino businesses don't know how to properly register their businesses. That puts them at a disadvantage."  
-Car sales

"We went to the Small Business Administration to find out how to get the education that I knew we needed. They didn't have any information for me. I had a roofing company, and they said they couldn't help me at all. It turned me off to any resources they could give me because they couldn't tell me anything about construction."  
-Contractor

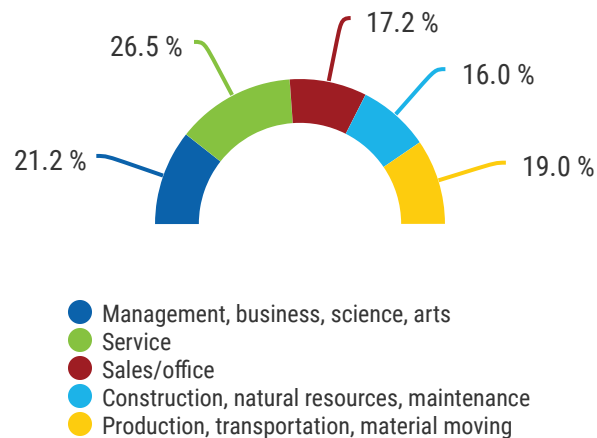
"My family had a business for 26 years in Venezuela. I am a lawyer in my country. I was in the university for 6 years. But here, it's totally different. I never had spoken English before. I started working in restaurants."  
-Car sales

"My dad doesn't enjoy his job. He wanted to make his own restaurant. But you can't do that without being documented."  
-HS student, Dowling

## Jobs by industry

There are over 22,000 Latinos employed in the metro, representing 6.8% of the workforce, earning a total of about \$997M per year, greatly contributing to the metro economy. Nearly 40% of Latino/a workers are in management, business, science, arts, sales, and office jobs. Compared with the overall workforce, Latino/a workers are more likely to be in service, construction, maintenance, production, transportation, and material moving professions and less likely to be in management, business, science, arts, sales, and office professions.

## Employment by industry



## Reflecting on the diversity of work and need for representation

Conversation participants felt that Latino representation in a diversity of industries is important. When this happens, the community can be sure that the professionals with whom they work understand their particular circumstances. Youth gain role models when deciding on a career. At the same time, participants emphasized that all work has importance and dignity. Jobs requiring a college degree should not be valued more than jobs that do not.

"My mentor told me you need all your professionals: You need your CPA, your business lawyer, your family lawyer, your financial advisor. But I will be honest. I try to support my community in all these industries, but there isn't anyone. All of these professionals are white. But I wish I could find a family trust attorney, a tax attorney, who was bilingual. A real estate attorney. There's just one who graduated recently. Access to these professionals, in these industries, we need professionals in these industries."

-Real estate professional

"To help our community advance, make more programs to get into jobs and move into better jobs. Help people learn how they can get into a job."

-Administrative assistant

"Especially as children, we've looked up to big dreams. But people back away from it because we don't have representation of people with our skin color in those jobs, because we don't see people doing jobs like that. Now we have more representation than we used to, but I'd still like to see more representation."

-HS student, North

"It's not negative that we work in these kinds of jobs. These are good jobs. My dad is a mechanic. He has his own business, and it's going well. However, I would like to see more Latinos in office roles."

-Cleaning professional

"Have opportunities to shadow people for a day and learn what people do."

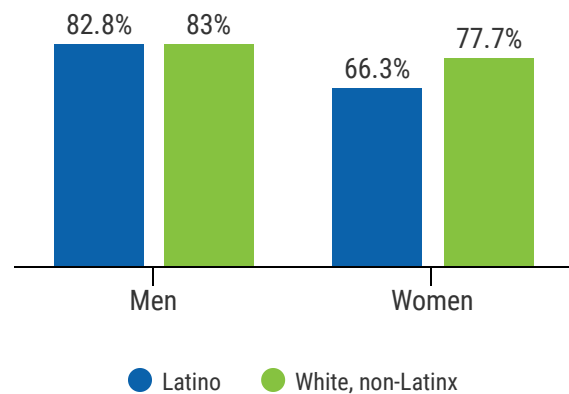
-HS student, Marshalltown

## Gender & employment

The employment rate is defined as the number of civilians ages 16-64 who are employed as a share of all civilians ages 16-64. Latino and white, non-Latino men experience very similar employment rates, while there is about an 11 percentage point gap between Latinas and white, non-Latinas. Among those employed, average weekly hours worked is similar for Latino and white, non-Latino residents.

There is a nine-point gap in labor force participation (people employed or actively looking for work) between Latinas (71.7%) and white, non-Latinas (80.4%).

### Employment rate is similar for Latino and white, non-Latino men, different for women



### Reflections on women, gender, and work

Conversation participants analyzed gender and employment statistics. Latinas may work for money but not have a formal employer, such as selling food or doing childcare; this counts as being employed in these statistics. Some women both work out of the home and take on a large amount of home care. Finally, participants reflected on cultural expectations of women in Latino households. Latina gender roles often include heavy expectations of family caregiving, which create a context that makes paid work more difficult. Others described the strength of women in their families.

"The women that I used to work with were fleeing domestic violence situations. They had to survive. They would cook meals for other people, sell food. They would clean houses. Some of those jobs that were not reported. Not to be found in statistics. They were working for their families. They tried to survive in their situations. What they need to survive are more resources, more education, more people who can help them flee those situations, and more opportunities for sure."

-Nonprofit sector

"My experience with women staying home was very different. The women were all matriarchs. The women in my family were ones with power. My mom raised my sister and I to do things, to not depend on anyone. She taught us how to build things, and change switches in the house. For me it was different. I never heard that women needed to stay home. All the women in my mom's side of the family worked, and they were the ones with all the power. Not the men."

-State agency director

"What did my mother need to thrive? A lot of support and a lot of resources, and just a cultural shift. She was a stay at home mother. That was three or four full time jobs in a way. She was taking care of four children. She was cooking. She was doing laundry. She was attending to cultural expectations of *machismo*. So even though you are working hard in all these aspects, you still don't have a dollar to your name. My mom did do lots of Avon sales and Tupperware. Mary Kay. Trying to do some things to be a little bit independent and earn some money. Not all the money coming from the men. When she finally did start working outside of the house, it was definitely a liberating thing. But it still brought a lot of challenges. She didn't speak English or drive, so she was still dependent on us as a family."

-Marketing and communications specialist

"When I hear that the gap is not as big for men working as for women, it goes to show the male privilege. Even if you're a person of color, if you're a male you still have more privilege."

-State agency director

"I was here alone with my two kids. I worked in a restaurant kitchen. I worked as a waitress, but I gave my 100%. I always gave my very best. Because if I were the owner of a company, I would want my employees to give 100%, like I was giving. One thing led to another, but thankfully, I had the chances. I had an education, so I saw things as momentous opportunities."

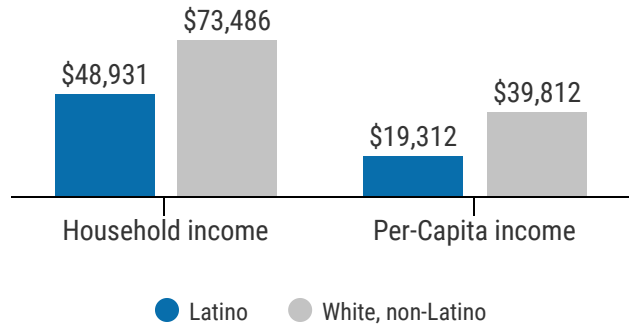
-Entrepreneur, car sales

## Income disparities

Half of all Latino households earned less than \$48,931 per year, half earned more. By contrast, white, non-Latino households earned an average of \$73,486. These differences are fully explained by differences in educational attainment.

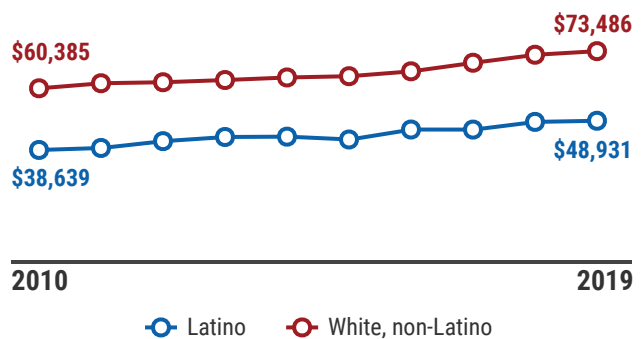
Per capita income is a measure of the amount of money earned per person (total dollars earned/total population). This provides a way to evaluate the overall financial standard of living. By this measure, white, non-Latino residents earn about \$20,500 more per year.

### Disparities exist in income



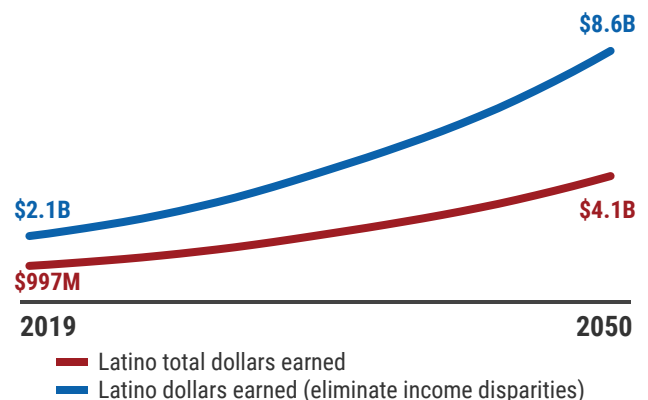
The gap between Latino and white, non-Latino household income has persisted over time. If anything, there is weak evidence that the gap is *growing*. On average, white, non-Latino households earned \$21,746 more than Latino households in 2010 and earned \$24,555 more in 2019.

### Income disparities are persistent



In 2019, Latinos in the metro earned about \$997 million (4% of overall metro earnings), greatly contributing to spending and the tax base in the metro. Eliminating disparities in income would double those earnings, with a typical family earning \$24,500 more annually.

### Eliminating disparities would increase total annual dollars earned by \$4.5B by 2050

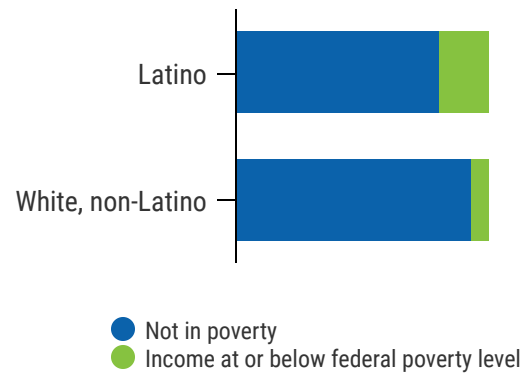




## Income disparities

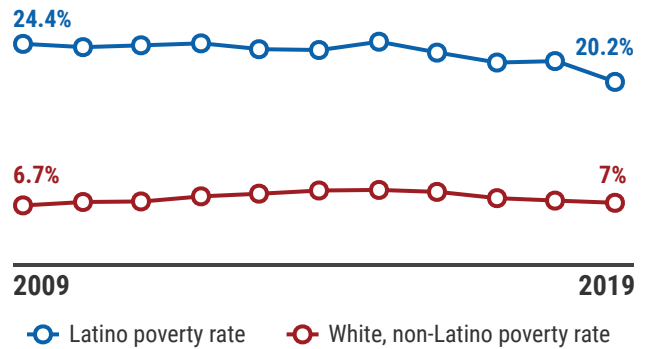
About 20.2% of metro Latinos have incomes at or below the federal poverty level, compared with about 7% of white, non-Latino residents. For a family of four, the federal poverty level is \$26,500. Add or subtract \$4,540 per person for larger or smaller households.

### Disparities exist in poverty rates



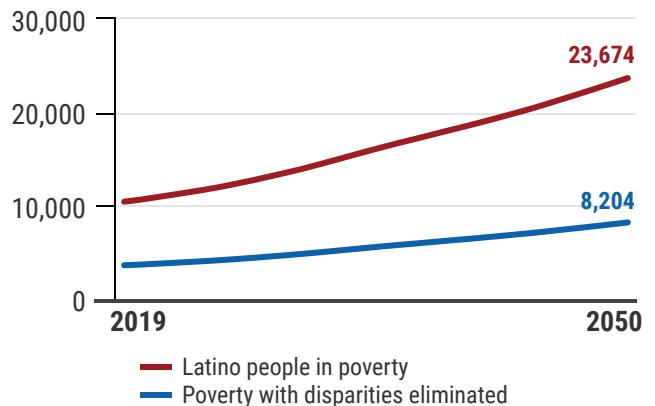
There is some evidence that poverty rates for metro Latinos is declining over time. The gap in poverty between Latino and White, non-Latino residents seems to be closing as well. While about 24.4% of Latinos were in poverty in 2009, about 20.2% were in poverty in 2019.

### Latino poverty rate has been declining



If disparities were eliminated today, there would be 6,800 fewer Latinos in poverty in the metro. By 2050, eliminating disparities would mean 15,470 fewer people in poverty.

### Eliminating disparities would greatly reduce poverty



## Reflecting on disparities

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

### Lived experiences

"We push ourselves more, and earn less. I look white, so I don't think this has happened to me. I have seen it with my parents. My dad worked in a restaurant. And my mom work in a cleaning company. They earned less than the white workers. It's very unfair. They work the same, or more. But earn less." (Graphic designer)

"When you have a gut feeling , it's for some reason. This is why I left corporate America. I did feel the difference in how I was treated. I worked for [a large bank]. I think it took more effort for me to get promoted. Then when I did get promoted, it took me 4 times longer to get trained than any other person." (Sales and marketing)

"You take a job and you accept a salary. A salary is not something my parents had ever seen. My parents were hourly workers, they had never seen a salary. And I realize that I don't have to compare myself to my parents. This is kind of a toxic or weird place to navigate."

- Marketing and communications

### Immigration & language

"One of the biggest obstacles is the language barrier. Education and language. It's English. You are reliant on others if you don't know English."  
(Car salesperson)

"Many companies take advantage of the fact that immigrants don't have papers. They can't complain. For years, they are struggling for a minimum wage for immigrants, but nothing yet. People don't realize they have rights. Even though we don't have documents, we have rights. We can complain. If something unjust is happening, you have to speak up. You have to know your rights." (Cleaning professional)

"There are people like me. I have a profession, but I didn't study here, so I simply couldn't work here in my profession. There are many cases like that."  
(Administrative assistant)

"Someone comes as a lawyer in their own country, and then has to come here and work in a restaurant. There is nothing wrong with working in a restaurant, but when you talk about pay, there's a difference . If they had the opportunity to become citizens, they could use their expertise here." (Car salesperson)

### How to close the gap

"Education. We can't have an engineer's salary if we're not engineers. We need higher education." (Real estate professional)

"When I worked in HR, I saw everyone's salary. People didn't negotiate or sell themselves. If we do the same work, but I earn less, I may not even know I'm losing out. Companies need to change policies to do things like not asking applicants what they need to earn. Some laws need to change around how hiring and negotiations happen." (Real estate professional)

"The law shouldn't apply to some more than others. Where did they get the idea that we are worth less? I want to know how employers justify this? This isn't just. It doesn't have an explanation." (Cleaning professional)

"The head of a Latino company might subcontract, but he doesn't make the big money. How can we get the Latino owner into the position of being the developer?" (Real estate professional)

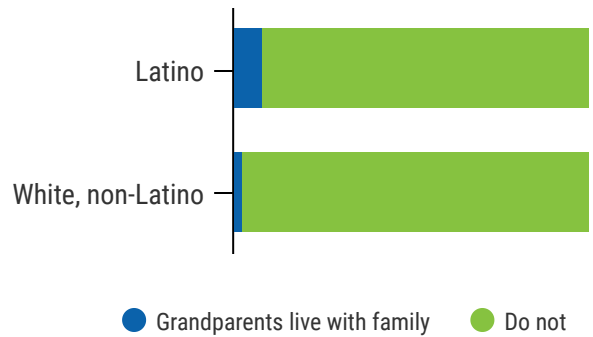
# Housing and Households

**"I went to rent an apartment, but I saw that for the same amount I could buy a house. It was a smart thing to do." - Sales professional**

## Multigenerational households

More Latino households in the metro are multigenerational (defined as grandparents living in family households). Nearly 10% of Latino households fall in this category compared with about 2.5% of white, non-Latino households.

### Latino households are more likely to be multigenerational



### Lived experiences, diverse family settings

"My household is a true Latino household. I have my parents live with me, my sixteen-year-old sister and my 15-year-old four-legged 'child'."

-Sales professional

"I have one son, and he's ten years old. Right now, my living situation is a little fun. We're living with my in-laws until we buy our next home."

-Real estate investor

"I live with my two siblings, my mom and my dad."

-High school student, Marshalltown

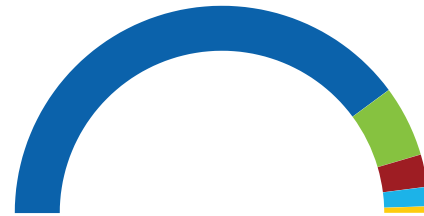
"I lived with my mom, my dad, and brother and sister. I just got my first apartment all on my own, which I like just fine!"

-Financial institution professional

## Households moving in the past year

About 21% of Latino households moved in the last year. Around 11% moved within the same county, but to a different home in Iowa, 5% moved from a different Iowa County, 3% moved from a different state, and about 1% moved from abroad.

### Over 20% of Latino households moved in the last year



- Lived in same house one year ago (79%)
- Moved within same county one year ago (11%)
- Moved from different county in Iowa (5%)
- Moved from different state (3%)
- Moved from abroad (1%)

Why do Latino families move? What are the impacts? Moving can foster openness to new experiences and proximity to family and job opportunities. At the same time, frequent moves can set children back in school and break connections that households need to thrive. Often, families move because housing is unaffordable. This problem is made worse by exploitation experienced by undocumented renters.

"My dad is a fry cook. My mom is a waitress. We moved place to place each year because of jobs. We would move to a town that was predominantly white or predominantly Hispanic. I learned to adapt. It made me good at meeting new people. I like listening to their stories. Then I wanted to travel and know the world. I wanted to connect and learn how different economies work. That's how I found my major."

-College student, Drake University

"You're not protected as a renter. We got a house under contract. Because of the lack of resources and information, we got ourselves into a situation that led us to be foreclosed a year after the contract was signed, leaving us almost homeless at that point. My parents went back and thought, 'we have to look for something else'."

-Graphic designer

"I was undocumented when I moved here. I was low income. It was hard to find an apartment to rent without papers. We had to use fake papers, fake socials...We moved so much. We were low income. When you go get a new contract, they give you special rate. When the year was over, your rate goes up so you get another apartment. We moved so many times because you can't afford the rent increase."

-College student, Grandview University

"Because I had to go from school to school, I would get put in the ESL class. They didn't share the notes between schools to know what I could do. There are intelligent people in the class who can't get out. It's infuriating."

-College student, Drake University

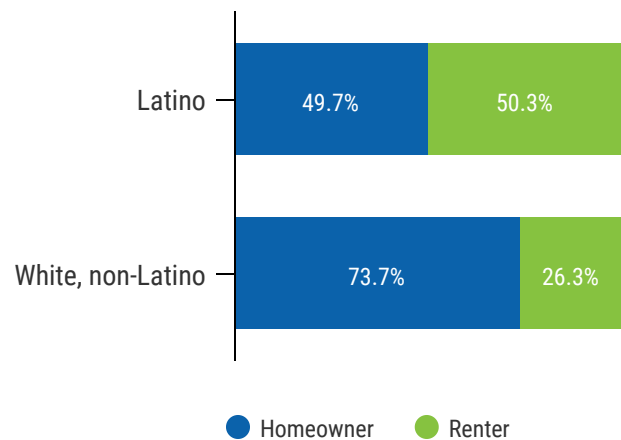
## Homeownership rates and disparities

Many households are able to build substantial wealth through home ownership. In the Des Moines metro, about half of Latinos own their homes\*. While these home ownership statistics are strong, there is a gap compared with white, non-Latinos, among which 73.7% own their homes.

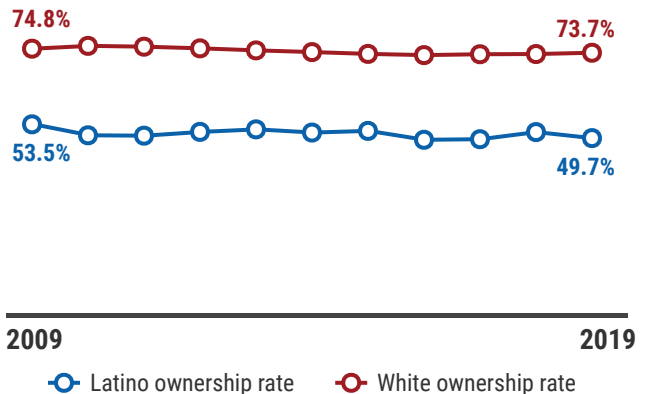
\* Owning free and clear or paying a mortgage or other loan toward a house, apartment/condo, or mobile home.

Home ownership rates for both the Latino and white populations have remained fairly consistent over time, with overall rates slightly lower today compared with 2005-2009 levels. Disparities in homeownership have persisted.

### Disparities exist in homeownership rates



### Homeownership rate disparities consistent



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

"We don't have generational wealth. My dad couldn't write a check to get money to buy the house."

(Journalist)

"I have relatives who are undocumented who are buying a house. They buy on contract. They get taken advantage of. There are so many people who pay for years. When it's paid off, there's no paperwork. These are not recorded."

(Sales representative)

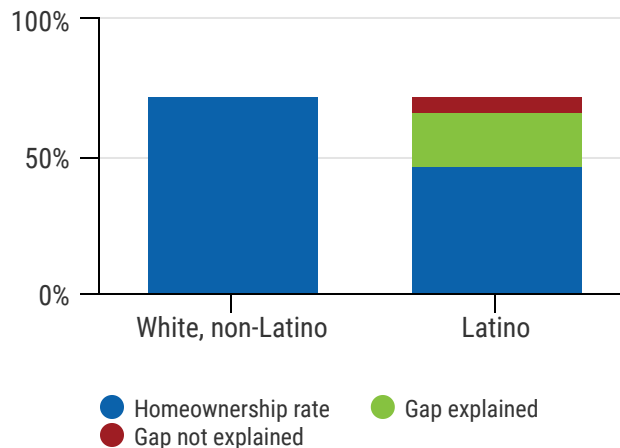
"I helped my mom purchase a home when I was 20 years old. I didn't know anything about the process. I tried to do my own research to help my parents. What they needed to do, having a basic understanding of how to get a loan. It was a struggle. It was hard to find people who spoke Spanish to offer a loan so they could explain it to my parents. There were language barriers and education barriers."

(Marketing & communications coordinator)

## Examining homeownership disparities

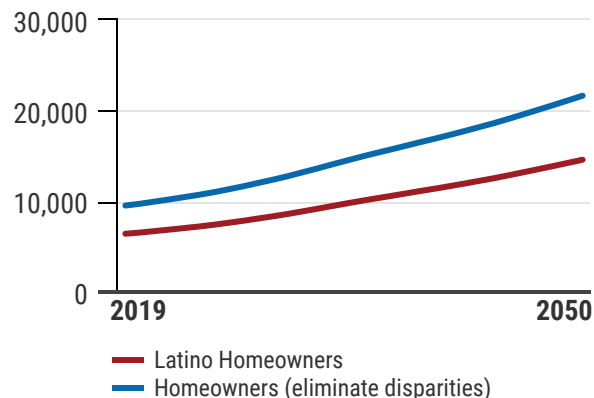
A number of socioeconomic and demographic factors explain the difference in homeownership rates between the Latino community and the non-Latino white community, but the difference can't be fully explained. Households with higher incomes, middle age, and higher educational attainment are all more likely to own homes, while immigrant households (in the US less than 15 years) and households who recently moved are less likely to own homes. These factors combined explain about three quarters of the difference in homeownership rates, while about a quarter of the gap remains unexplained.

### The gap in homeownership rates is mostly explained by socioeconomic and demographic factors



Eliminating disparities in home ownership rates today would mean an additional 3,110 Latino homeowners in the metro. By 2050, eliminating disparities could lead to an additional 7,061 Latino homeowners compared with current projected growth.

### Reducing disparities would mean 7,061 more Latino home owners in the metro by 2050



Latinx Project leadership and conversation participants valued home ownership. Some found the home buying process easy. Others encountered significant barriers to buying a home. They found that owning a home created safety, pride, financial security, and strengthened family ties.

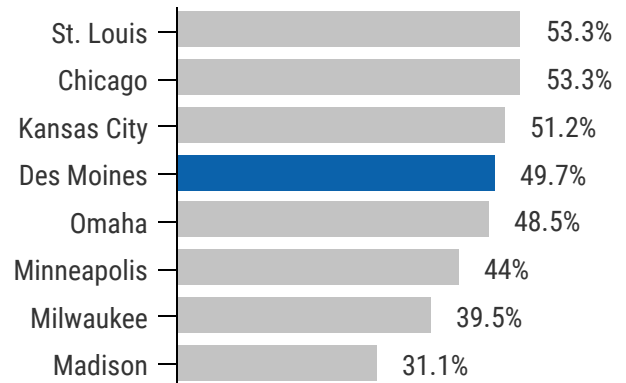
"It's nice to have something of one's own. When you pay rent, you never get that back. It's not all yours when you buy, because you have a mortgage. But, you know that it's going to be for yourself. You can have it and treat it with love."  
(Administrative assistant)

"It was important to buy a home. It was instilled in me because in El Salvador, everyone has a home. My grandpa has a home, and next door is my mom's home. When we moved to Houston, we all lived in the same neighborhood. My cousins, my grandma. I bought my home here in Iowa."  
(Research associate)

## Latino homeownership: Des Moines Metro vs. Midwest peers

Latino homeownership rates are in the top half of peer Midwest metros, ahead of Omaha, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Madison, but a little behind St. Louis, Chicago, and Kansas City.

### Latino homeownership rates are in the top half of peer Midwest metros



Reflecting on these data, real estate and financial professionals attribute Des Moines Metro home ownership rates to the relative affordability of local housing markets and to mortgage accessibility. Credit unions in central Iowa permit loans to holders of ITINs (individual tax identification numbers). Through the ITIN, "the US government allows noncitizens to establish an identity as legitimate taxpayers separate and apart from their immigration status. It offers a vehicle for compliance with legal and financial obligations." (Suro and Findling 2021). Explains one central Iowa realtor:

"Des Moines is allowing families to buy homes with an ITIN. The credit unions are doing something important. I speak with my associates in other areas with a large Latino population. There are ITIN mortgage opportunities elsewhere, but here you can do this with less money down. Your biggest net worth builder is your house. So renters becoming owners is one of the best things you can do for your family. That's something that credit unions are doing for the community here."



# Immigration

**"A path to citizenship would change the entire trajectory." - College student**

# Immigration

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

## Around 16% of Central Iowa Latinos are undocumented

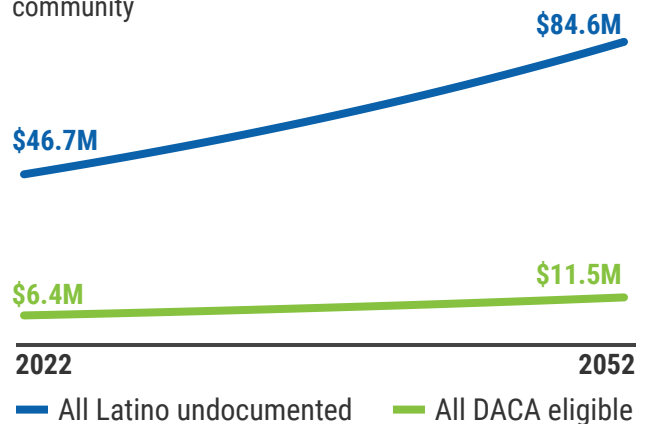


● Undocumented    ● DACA eligible  
● All other Latinos

A pathway to citizenship for Central Iowa undocumented Latinos would open up access to job opportunities, boosting incomes and providing a large stimulus to the Central Iowa economy. This would spur additional demand for goods and services, growing gross regional product and eventually leading to increased wages for all workers. On average, undocumented workers would earn an additional \$5,700/year as a result of citizenship. Full citizenship for all undocumented residents would lead to \$1.9B total additional dollars earned over 30 years. Full citizenship for all DACA eligible would lead to \$270M additional dollars earned over that period.

## Citizenship for undocumented Latinos would boost total income by \$1.9B over 30 years

Additional annual dollars earned in the Latino community



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

"When my parents had ITIN, they didn't have access to services. Americans think, "they aren't paying taxes, they get everything free, they get welfare." ITIN residents are paying taxes without any benefits from social security. This community is paying so much in taxes without any return." (Real estate professional)

"There would better potential for intergenerational wealth. This is something that undocumented immigrants see other people have all around them, but they can't get there." (Journalist)

"Latinos create jobs and income. It makes this country better. The businesses here would make more money, because we'd have more money to spend. More people would be able to travel, visit other places, they would be able to do more. We could bring so much." (Cleaning professional)

"I see people stuck in rural Iowa because that's the only place that will hire them...Immigrants in their own countries are doctors or professionals. Here, they are working in meat packing. It's not to belittle the work. But it's the only option for them. They can't come out of the shadows." (Communications professional)

## Immigration reform: Much more than economics

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

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

"The economic is the last thing that I think of. For me, it would mean my happiness. My tranquility. Not a night goes by, not a day goes by, that I don't worry that something bad will happen."

-Cleaning professional, mother

### How a path to citizenship would matter

"A path to citizenship would improve the lives of children. Children, they themselves don't have a chance of being a child because they have to be an interpreter. They are trying to figure out how to get a mortgage as a teenager. They have to do so much for their parents. It would let our Latinx children have a childhood." (Graphic designer)

"Life security. When my dad didn't have papers, he drove and lived with so much fear and care. The kids go to school worrying about what will happen to their parents. Access to citizenship would give a calm and enable parents to be there for their family. Just the basic needs of safety for your family would be important." (Grandview University student)

"The Dreamers are evidence of why it matters. If you have (legal) status, you have all the possibilities. Dreamers are graduated, they finish their study. And you can drive, help your parents. Achieve education, jobs. You have access to medical care, loans, banking, you can travel without fear. People should see the rest of the country, but you don't because of fear. It's all so important." (Administrative assistant and translator)

"Lots of fear is present. Fear of speaking up, fear of opportunities. Many undocumented people are afraid of going for more. They settle for what's available to them. It's not fair. If there were a path to citizenship, they would seek opportunities. Right now, it's not worth stretching. It's dangerous. They settle." (Nonprofit sector)

### What policy makers should know

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

"Immigrating is a hard thing. There are so many dangers where people come from – cartel dangers, civil war, famine. The Salvadorian war. They had to immigrate. I wish policy makers would understand that it's not immigrants trying to take over. They just need asylum." (Dowling High School student)

"The process to citizenship can take 30 years, and it costs so much." (North High School student)

"Tell policy makers about the kids. About mixed immigration status families. The depression and anxiety they have. The fear. The parents can't drive. The child can't go to school in peace. Are in constant anxiety all the time. It breaks my heart. People think this doesn't affect them in any way. Kids are being affected every day." (Grandview University student)

"Politicians are predominantly white. They don't know what they're doing when they pass the laws. They don't have the experience to know the impact they are having on our lives." (North High School student)

# Education

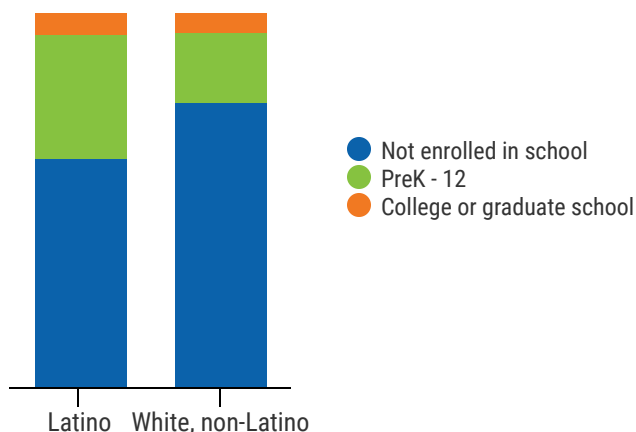
**"I want to be my parents' success story"  
- North High School Student**



## Latinx students are important to Central Iowa schools

About 33% of Latinos are enrolled in pre-K through high school compared with 18.5% of white, non-Latinx residents. About 61% of Latinos are not in school, compared with 76% of white, non-Latinos. These differences are mostly because the Latino population is younger, on average. Among Latinos, 5.8% are college students, similar to proportions of the white, non-Latino population.

### A much greater proportion of Central Iowa Latinos are in school.



Latinx youth are a significant portion of the metro area school age population. To help explain why this matters, high school students from Dowling, Johnston, North, and Marshalltown shared their unique contributions and perspectives.

"I do bring a lot of leadership skills into my school. I help in my school, and I help with the Latinx community outside of school. I do drem sed (a Latino youth entrepreneurship program). I want more people to join. More students need to stand up and be a part of things."

"I work hard in school because of my mom. She has told me that graduation and college is important so we can become someone bigger than who they are. To get a higher paying job. They couldn't do that because they dropped out of school to give us a better life."

"I have one teacher who notices if you're having a bad day. She's there for you. The trusted adult I have is of my ethnicity. That brings us closer together. She understands things that most teachers wouldn't."

"I bring a unique perspective because I'm part of multiple communities. I'm part of the Latinx community, and I'm also part of the LGBTQ+ community. Students like me are important so we can represent these parts of the communities and learn to be a part of the communities."

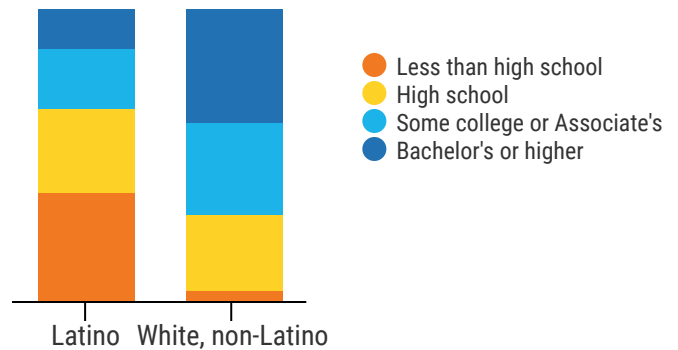
"In my high school, we have a program called Conexión. They do something fun and design something every Friday. It builds awareness of the Latino community. More schools should do programs about Latinos."

"We have a class at North HS where we help younger kids. We're going to start tutoring 5th graders. We're being pen pals for elementary school kids."

## Education disparities

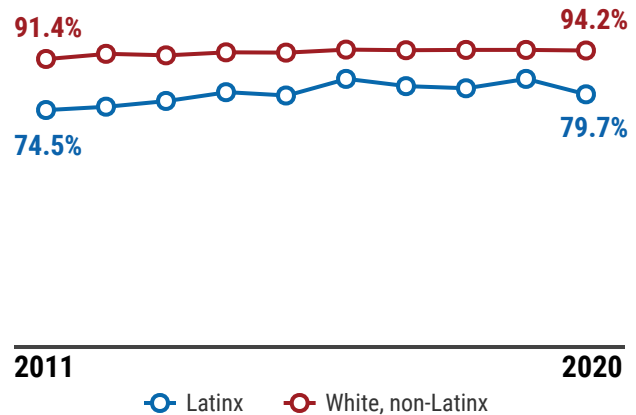
Among metro residents age 25 and older, about 37.2% of Latinos have not completed a high school education, compared with 4% of white, non-Latinos. Around 13.6% of Latinos have completed a Bachelor's degree, compared with 38.6% of white, non-Latino residents. In totality, about a third of Latinos have completed at least some college, compared with about 70% of white, non-Latinos.

### Disparities exist in educational attainment



Within the Des Moines metro, there are significant differences in four-year high school rates between Latinx and white, non-Latinx students. On average, graduation rates are 80% for Latinx students compared with 93.6% for white, non-Latinx students. These differences are largely driven by the Des Moines Independent Community School district, where Latinx graduation rates were 71% in 2020.

### Disparities exist in high school graduation rates, but the gap has closed



The high school graduation rate gap between Latinx and White, non-Latinx youth has closed. However, if more Central Iowa Latinos earned their high school diploma, associate's and bachelor's degrees, their families would have higher incomes, home ownership rates, and wellness. The entire state would benefit through healthier and wealthier communities. Central Iowa Latinos reviewed these statistics and made the following recommendations:

"We need to invest in adult education right now. We can't leave them behind."  
-Parent

"If parents got a path to citizenship, we'd see a decrease in anxiety and depression in parents and students. We would see students do better academically. People don't realize how much parent's status can impact their children."  
-College student

"We need more Latinx teachers. I don't think I've really had a Latinx person as a teacher. I'm pretty sure I don't have any in my school... It might seem like a small change, but it would have a very big impact on the students."  
-High school student

"I'd like to see immersion Spanish classrooms in public schools, too. Let's use our differences to our advantage. I'm not just saying teaching Spanish speakers English. I'm saying teaching English speakers many languages, too."  
- Parent

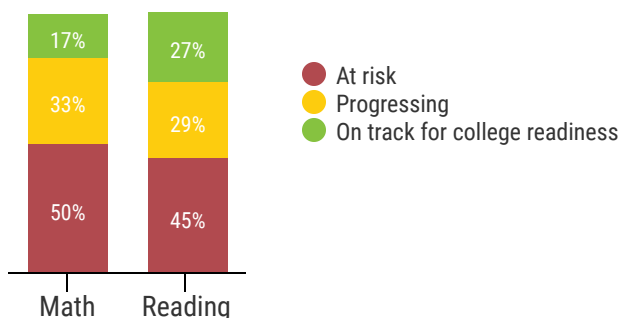
"A program with high school kids teaching little kids would be a great idea. It's not your parents or teachers. Little kids can look up to high schoolers. Have people our age teaching younger kids how to read or do math would have a huge impact."  
-High school student

"Make testing available in different languages. ESL teaching was testing in English and kids got low test scores, but tests were in English that they didn't speak. Just because they don't speak English, the test doesn't reflect their knowledge."  
- College student

## College readiness

How are Latinx students in DMPS are doing at achieving college readiness in grades 2-10? Half of Latinx students are not on track with math, and 45% are not on track with reading. On the other hand, half of Latinx students are progressing or are on track for math. 56% are on track or progressing for reading. By contrast, about 27% of white, non-Latinx students are not on track with reading and about 32% are not on track with math.

### College readiness: About 50% of Latinx youth are progressing or on track.



**"Students knowing how to read at 3rd grade is the greatest predictor if they succeed in college. We put a lot of emphasis on that reading readiness because it matters."**

-Rob Barron, Latinx Project Collaborative Leadership Team and DMPS Board Member 2013-2021

Students work hard to achieve college readiness because they want to make their parents and communities proud. They want to create opportunities for themselves, too. High school students examined college readiness statistics. Latinx teachers, space to study at home, extra help when needed, and removal of immigration status stresses were all important to helping youth reach college.

"It's pretty surprising to see half of students are at risk. Some kids don't have programs to help them out, or parents don't know how to help them. What if teachers are not trying to reach out...and give them the help they need? If their scores are behind, why can't students get extra practice to get up to where they should be?"

-North HS

"I try to stay on top of my goals and do my work at school. I have a planner that I use. I have a space to study at home. If a student has to save work to do for later, and at home you have siblings running around and you don't have a place to work, you fall behind on things."

-Dowling HS

"There are people who aren't comfortable or confident to ask for help. They don't know how to ask the specific question of what they're confused about. There's not trust, so they don't know how to ask the question or get help with the things at home that could be affecting their education."

-North HS

"We need to have things that aren't just memorizing. Could we make better program to help students learn instead of memorization? Could we apply learning in real world problem? That would be more beneficial to get kids to be ready for real world."

-Marshalltown HS

## Thinking about college

Looking at the college readiness statistics inspired students to talk about life after high school for Latinx youth. Two main ideas were the value of college and that barriers discourage college dreams.

Barriers included high college costs, low desire to go to college because of barriers, exclusion from college prep opportunities, immigration status exclusion, and a difficult application and financial aid system.

"My parents didn't go to college, so they didn't know what I should do. Senior year, I spent a lot of time with my best pal Google."

-College student, Drake University

### Why it matters

College is important for me because I want to be my parents' success story. My older brother didn't like school. He didn't try to get a good education. He went straight to the work force. My mom wasn't mad, but she wanted him to continue his education. She didn't want him to follow in my dad's footsteps and work out in the sun. She wanted him to do better. That's why I prioritize education. I wanted to make them proud for coming to the United States and giving me and my brother a better chance at living."

-HS student, Marshalltown

"As first generation graduating and going to college, I'm doing it for myself. And, I feel like I owe it to my parents a little. They risked their lives to give us a better education. They gave up their life in Mexico to come over here and give me another life."

-HS student, Dowling

"College is important because graduation and college have such a big impact in our lives. What kind of jobs we'll have. What kind of future we'll have. That's why our community talks so much about that."

-HS student, North

### Barriers to college

"First generation students don't know how to navigate the system. I remember crying the first time I did FAFSA. I was frustrated and alone. Not every student has a support system. How can high schools help them navigate the system?"

-College student, Grandview University

"Magnet schools bring smart kids together and give them opportunity to network...The other kids don't get that. Only the wealthy kids go to the magnet schools. Central is mostly kids from Roosevelt. Increasing diversity of magnet schools can be improved."

-College student, Grandview University

"My cousins had big dreams, but they can't go to college because their parents can't afford it. They had to stay behind and work in a factory. That's messed up."

-College student, Drake University

"Not a lot of us have opportunities, money, transportation for college. That has a factor in people not wanting to go."

-HS student, North

"Everyone's potential comes at different times. Some people are late bloomers."

-HS student, North

"If they had a path to citizenship, my parents wouldn't be so scared and find more opportunities for me. They wouldn't be so scared for me to go to college."

-HS student, North

"Young people who were brought here from a young age, it would be easier to go to college if they could get citizenship. Then, they could get jobs and not have to worry so much."

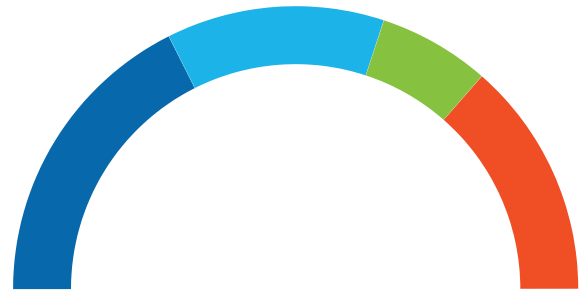
-HS student, Dowling



## Latino college graduates hold wide-ranging expertise

Latino metro residents who've completed college earned degrees in diverse majors. About 35.2% completed degrees in STEM fields, 24.9% in Business, 12.8% in Education, and 27.1% in arts, humanities, or other fields. These degree holders include business owners and workers in the private, nonprofit, and government sectors.

### Latino college grads are well-represented across disciplines



● Science/Engineering (35.2%) ● Business (24.9%)  
● Education (12.8%) ● Arts, Humanities, Other (27.1%)

From the arts and humanities to STEM, Latino college graduates bring a vibrant range of expertise to the Des Moines metropolitan area. How do graduates use their degrees? How do college age Latino/as decide what field to pursue? Understanding these stories can help to build a strong community and labor force.

"I wanted to be an actor, but my dad says 'you have to get a stable job.' I got into marketing and public relations. I love public speaking, and marketing helps me do it more. The unique perspective I can bring is that I speak two languages."

Marketing major, Drake University

"I had a friend who right now, his family is afraid of getting deported or getting attacked by a group of people. Now, I'm wondering how I can do something so no one has to go through that again. Make a small difference if possible. I want to go make laws and change laws, and fight for the rights of people, too."

-Law, politics & society major, Drake University

"I always liked math. I loved math. I knew that whatever I was going to do, it needed to be math. Maybe engineering? But I heard about my career from a friend who was an actuary. It's important for me to be in the field to make sure we don't base premiums off of race. We need to stop doing insurance by zip code."

- Actuarial science major, Drake University

"I got an engineering degree from Iowa State University, then started in the engineering field. Within a few years, I wanted more fulfillment than what the corporate world could provide me. While being an engineer, I started investing in real estate and found a passion in this world. I was able to take a very analytical approach to real estate. I liked the excitement that came with the entrepreneurship aspect of the real estate world. I went from one investment property in 2013 to now owning a portfolio of properties with my business partners and starting another company with a core of local talent that has an educational foundation that helps families buy, sell, invest, and build houses called Ibarra Realty Group. Here in 2021, we are happy to be helping over 300 families per year with their real estate goals and growing."

- Junior Ibarra, Collaborative Leadership Team

"Starting college, I said, 'I will not allow what happened to my parents happen to another Latino.' Just because of the language, people aren't receiving the help that they could get. As a social worker, I think about how I can make a big difference. I can work at the micro level with individuals or at the macro level on policy. I can work with individuals. I enjoy this. I enjoy helping families out, helping them find resources."

- Social work major, Grandview

# Health

**"Now I have a job, and I will have health care for the first time in 17 years."**

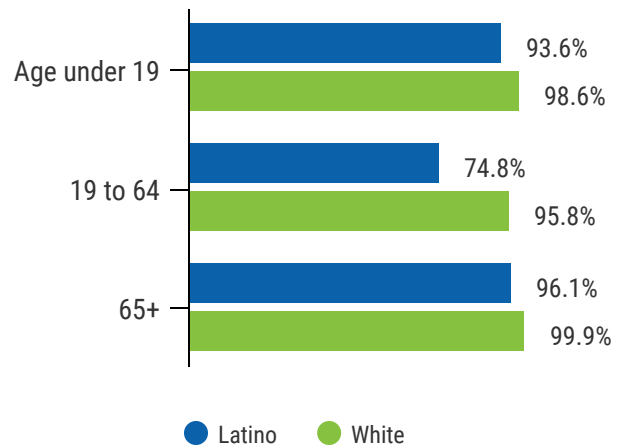
**- Graphic designer**



## Health care access

Within the metro, there are notable disparities in health insurance coverage when comparing Latino and white residents, particularly in the ages of 19 to 64. Within that group, 74.8% of Latinos are covered, compared with 95.8% of white Central Iowans.

### Disparities in health insurance rates



A lack of health insurance coverage creates adverse life experiences for Latinos in the Des Moines metro area. Health insurance rules are confusing, and benefits are difficult to access. Locally, almost all services are offered in English, creating hardships. Inadequate or no insurance can have impacts that last a lifetime.

"A lack of health insurance at the beginning will affect you later. My mom was one of 8 children. Her dad was a sanitation worker. She didn't have dental insurance. Some people see that as a luxury. But now she has to pay a lot of money to get her teeth repaired all the time. Year after year. If she could have gone to the dentist younger, this could have been prevented." (College student, Drake University)

"I work with a lot of businesses who need workers, but they don't value workers to pay them enough. They won't pay for their health insurance. Until we get companies to value workers, we won't get health care." (Entrepreneur, real estate)

"I've been fortunate enough to have had insurance my whole life. My dad got insurance through work. Even though I did have insurance. We tried to never go to the doctor because even with insurance, it was still expensive. My dad had no idea what anything would cost. We know it covers some of the costs, but there's a copay." (College student, Drake University)

"When I was here two or three months, my child got sick. I needed an interpreter. There was no nurse or doctor I could talk to. That felt terrible." (Administrative assistant and translator)

"Today my dad came from the doctor. He told me that even though they're navigating the health care system that's very much broken, he offered his appointment to someone else who speaks even less English than he does." (Graphic designer)

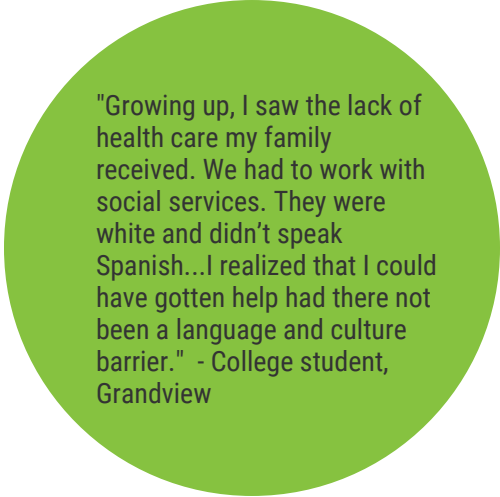
"One challenge we have with clients is being able to explain what is included in health care coverage so the consumer can understand. My mom says, "I don't even know what I'm choosing." It can be harder to understand complexities for a non-English speaker." (Community volunteer and college student, Drake University)

## Health care access

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Community members expressed additional concerns about health care and insurance. They shared stories about the need for culturally competent practitioners and the problem of being underinsured. More Latino health care professionals are needed.

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



"Growing up, I saw the lack of health care my family received. We had to work with social services. They were white and didn't speak Spanish...I realized that I could have gotten help had there not been a language and culture barrier." - College student, Grandview

### Medical insurance access not the only issue

"I didn't go to the dentist a lot because it was very expensive. Even up until high school, my friends would talk about going to the dentist, and I just listened when they talked about it. I only got dental work when the dental bus would come to school." (College student, Drake University)

"You take a risk. For years, I had no doctor. I would go to the clinic when I was sick. I found my current doctor through my mom. This guy seems like a good doctor. On my first visit, I told him I was gay. I was scared. Was he going to say no? He was totally accepting, and said he had knowledge about that. I saw how he treated my mom, so I put my trust in him. He tries his best with a little bit of Spanish." (Sales representative, LGBTQ+ community)

"As a DACA recipient and undocumented family, 2 of 5 in my family have health care. Now I have a job, I will have health care for the first time in 17 years. That is going to be amazing. I got it because of my work. But that leaves my parents as the ones who are unprotected." (Graphic designer, Latina Millennial professional)

"This is a low-income issue. Anyone who is low income, they are not going to buy health insurance because it's so expensive. I skipped health insurance when my kids were growing up and I was a single mom. There was one year I made \$15 over the amount to be able to qualify for health care for my kids. If you make a dollar over, you are out. Anyone who is low income is out." (State agency director, LGBTQ+ community)

"Many Hispanics are without insurance, even though they are working all the time." (Car sales and tutoring, entrepreneurship group)

"I think about access to mental health and therapists. Try to find a brown, queer therapist. I would like to find a brown queer therapist, and there isn't one. There is one who would see me, but the fees are too high. I can't afford it. My insurance doesn't cover it." (State agency director)

## More health data needed

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Disaggregated health data offers complete information to understand the distinct experiences that different groups have in relation to health and wellness. Complete data are needed to fully understand trends. Statistics can show differences within a geographic area based on by race, gender identity, sexual orientation and other social categories to enable the identification of vulnerable populations. It can show the scope of the problem and can make vulnerable groups more visible to policy makers. In writing this report and talking to community members, we identified two important gaps in publicly available data.

### Two missing pieces:

#### 1. Disaggregate data by both place and race/ethnicity

The state of Iowa lacks publicly accessible data on health outcomes disaggregated by both county and race/ethnicity. This means that the Latinx Project was not able to examine Latino health statistics in depth for the five county metro area. The publication of disaggregated data is needed for the public to be able to understand how health issues affect the Latino community in the Des Moines metropolitan region.

**"You shouldn't be able to release a state dashboard without data including Latinos."**

- State agency director

#### 2. Disaggregate data for LGBTQ+ populations

Participants in the LGBTQ+ community conversation talked about how there was almost no information about queer Latinx Iowans regarding housing, employment, education, and health. One participant commented:

**"Not having data about LGBTQ health keeps the federal government from addressing these issues. We are invisible if you are Latinx and queer...Money goes where groups are represented by data. It's like we don't exist. We're not captured in any of it."**

-State agency director

# Marshall County Outcomes

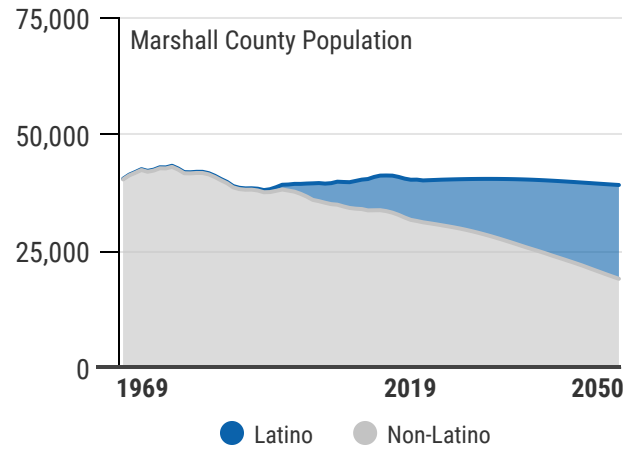
Highlighting the positive outcomes  
observed in Marshalltown data



## Marshall County key statistics

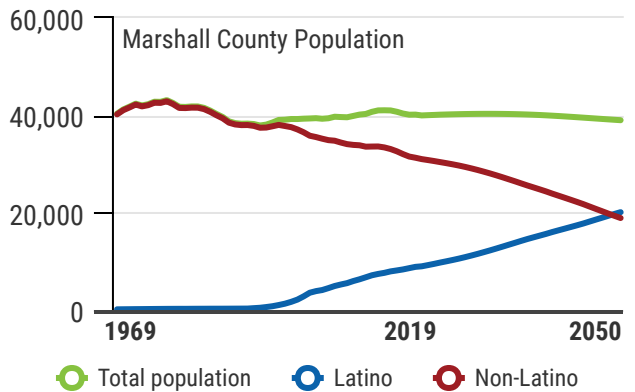
In 1969, there were only about 100 Latinos in Marshall County. By 2019, the community had expanded to around 9,000 and will further expand to become the majority by 2050 with over 20,000 residents.

### The Latino community comprises 28% of Marshall County today and will be the majority by 2050



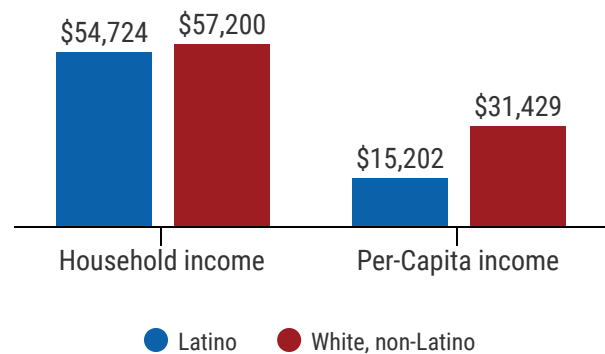
From the 1980s to the mid-90s, the overall population of Marshall County had been in significant decline. In the early 90s, the Latino population began rapidly increasing, completely stabilizing the overall population decline by the late-90s and resulting in population growth through the mid-2010s. The overall population is expected to be stable through 2050. At that point, Latinos will comprise more than half of the overall County.

### The Latino community turned around over a decade of decline in Marshall County



Latino median household income is a little higher in Marshall County while white, non-Latino income is lower compared with the Des Moines metro. Disparities are negligible. Reflecting larger families with young, non-working-age children, the per-capita income for Latino residents is about half that of white, non-Latino residents.

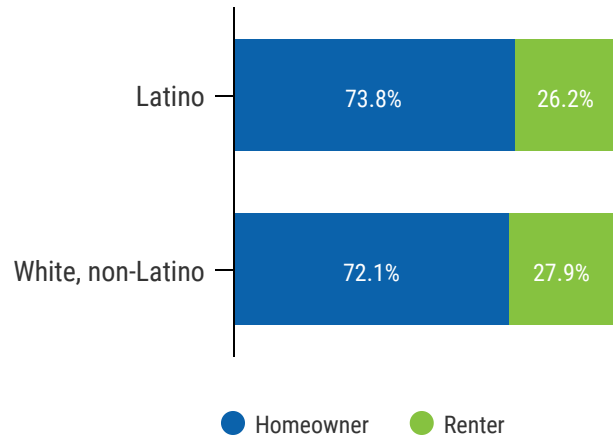
### Smaller gap in income in Marshall County



## Marshall County key statistics

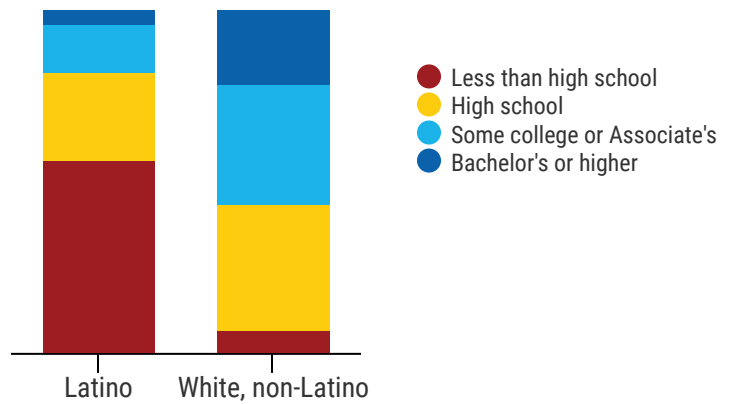
Diverging sharply from the Des Moines metro statistics, there are no gaps in homeownership in Marshall County. Roughly 3/4 of both Latino and white, non-Latino households own their homes.

### No gap in homeownership in Marshall County



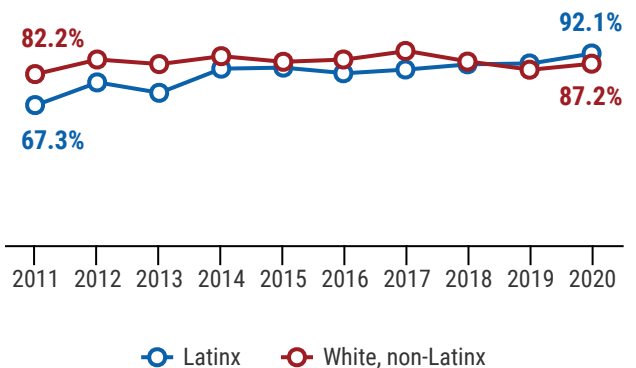
Despite similar incomes and homeownership rates, there are wide gaps in educational attainment. Over 56% of Latino adults in Marshall County have not completed high school, compared with 7% of white, non-Latino adults. Around 4% of Latino adults have completed a Bachelor's degree compared with 21% of non-Latino whites.

### Wide gaps in educational attainment



There's something happening in Marshalltown schools. Over the last ten years, the gap in high school graduation rates between Latinx and white, non-Latinx students has been completely eliminated.

### The gap in high school graduation rates in Marshalltown have been eliminated.



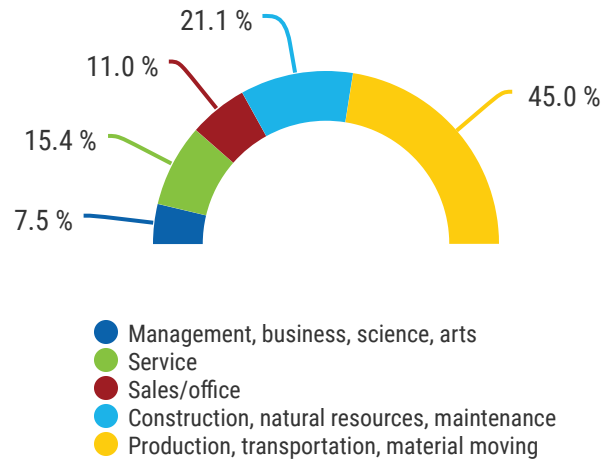


## Marshall County key statistics

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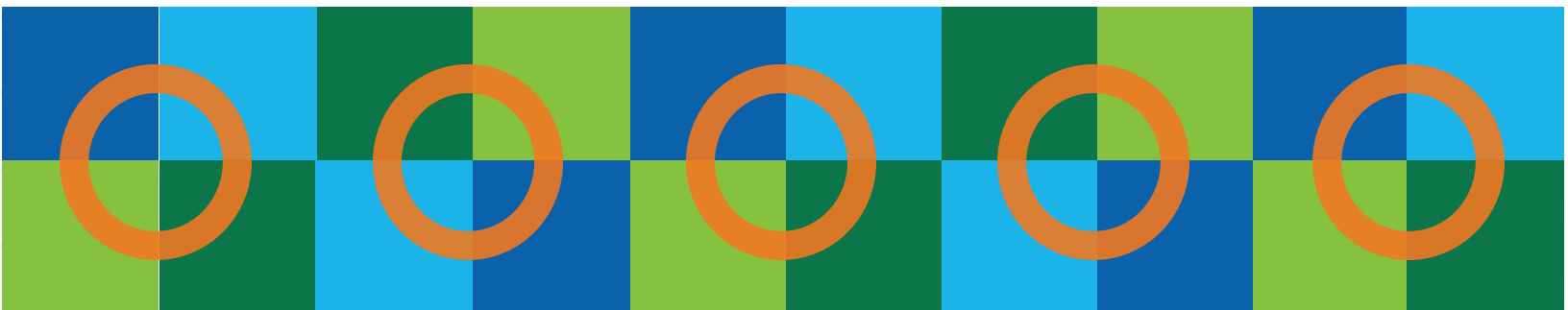
Likely reflecting employment in food production, nearly half of Latino workers in Marshall County are employed in production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

### Marshall County has much higher proportion of production employees compared with the metro



# Sources and Methods

**"I hope we continue to have these kinds of very important conversations with the community."  
- Cleaning professional**



## Sources and methods

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### Sources

<b>Data element</b>	<b>Source</b>
Metro population	American Community Survey 2019 one-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Marshall County population	American Community Survey 2015-2019 five-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Employment, workforce, income, poverty	American Community Survey 2015-2019 five-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Population forecasts	Woods and Poole demographic forecast, Iowa State Data Center
High school graduation rates	Iowa Department of Education
Educational attainment	American Community Survey 2015-2019 five-year estimates, US Census Bureau
Homeownership disparity model data	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2015-2019, US Census Bureau
Income disparity model data	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2015-2019, US Census Bureau
Estimating benefits of citizenship	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2015-2019, US Census Bureau
College readiness	Des Moines Public Schools Data Snapshot
What is the ITIN?	<a href="#"><u>Suro and Findling 2021</u></a>

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### Statistical methods

#### Homeownership model

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

#### Income model

Disparities in income were modeled using linear regression where household income was modeled as a function of ethnicity, age, educational attainment, female head of household, and number of workers. While all of these factors were statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level, educational attainment and age were sufficient to close the gap between Latino and non-Latino white households.

#### Forecasts

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

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

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

### Estimating the undocumented Latino population

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

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

### Estimating the DACA eligible population

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

### Estimating the wage and economic benefits of citizenship

Undocumented workers have limited access to many jobs. A linear regression model was used to estimate the wage increase that would occur resulting from citizenship by regressing the income of Latinos on age, age squared, sex, educational attainment, and undocumented status. This analysis revealed that after controlling for other socioeconomic and demographic factors, undocumented Latino workers earn ~\$5,700 less per year. If all undocumented residents received citizenship, total annual earnings of the Latino community would increase by about \$47M. Projecting this estimate over the next 30 years (incorporating a conservative 2% annual wage inflation) reveals that the Latino community would collectively earn \$1.9B more over the period. Much of this gain would be spent in the central Iowa economy providing further economic benefits including a rise in average wages for all workers, an increase in capital investments, and an increase in the base number of Central Iowa jobs.

### Community analysis & stories methods

Statistics from this report were reviewed by 48 Central Iowa Latinos. Reviewers included the Latinx Project Collaborative Leadership Team and participants in six community story sessions. The Collaborative Leadership Team convened and led six 90-minute story sessions with Latino Central Iowans. Sessions included hourly workers, business owners, high school students, college students, Latina Millennial professionals and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Their thoughtful considerations generated crucial information to contextualize the quantitative data.

In the story sessions, Leadership Team members guided conversations through questions related to the data. What would it mean if Central Iowa's estimated 16,000 undocumented Latinos gained a path to citizenship? What are reasons for the wage gap between Latino and white Iowans? What are the best ways to support Central Iowa's 1,544 Latino owned businesses? How can high schools and students themselves improve college readiness? How do you understand disparities in homeownership, and what can be done? Through careful analysis and incorporation of stories, participants offered insights to guide strategies for future action. All quotes in this report are direct words from story session participants, with minor editing for clarity and length.

Participants in the group said that more conversations of this type would expand understanding among community members and create strong agendas for change.

### Story session participants

Fatima Calderón	Andres Lomeli Cervantes
María Elisa Campos	Josefina López
Juana Colin-Hernández	Jesús López
Isabel Contreras	Pilar Martínez-Reyes
Merced Cruz	Fátima Martínez-Reyes
Diana Echeverria	Daizy Martínez-Soto
Orlando Fuentes	Vannesa Medel Chavarria
Jovita Gómez	Edwin Méndez
Rodrigo González	Leticia Moreno
Jorge Gutiérrez	Agustin Oropeza
Rocio Hermosilla	Sonia Reyes
Jocelyn Hernández	Courtney Reyes
Melissa Hidalgo	Celeste Treviño
Junior Ibarra	Lisette Villalba Torres
Victor Jiménez	One anonymous participant

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

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

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

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

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

## Leadership team and sponsors

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### Collaborative Leadership Team

Dawn Martínez Oropeza**	María Corona
Alejandro Hernández*	Suzanna de Baca
Fernando Aveiga	Barbara Q. Decker
Rob Barron^	Erica Johnson^
Nathan Blake	Frank Dunn Young
Kenia Calderón	Junior Ibarra
Miguel Contreras	Alex Jiménez
Ana Coppola	Noemi Méndez

\*Central Iowa Latinx Project co-leader

^Founding Latinx Project member

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

Team members met as a group and in one-on-ones throughout 2021. Through their review of data, convening of community story sessions, and ongoing collaboration, they have laid the groundwork for action to realize the vision of the project. The project seeks to create data-driven strategies to eliminate disparities and highlight community assets.

### Latinx Project Sponsors

#### Financial support:

The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines  
Mid-Iowa Health  
United Way of Central Iowa  
Delta Dental  
Drake University Slay Fund for Social Justice

#### In-kind support:

Al Éxito  
Drake University

### Consultants

Vandegrift Huting Consulting, LLC  
Joel Huting  
Darcie Vandegrift