Latina/o Communities and Education in North County San Diego
A Research Brief

Spring 2025





About the National Latino Research Center

Founded in 1998, the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) is the only Latina/o-focused applied research center at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and in the California State University (CSU) system.

The mission of the NLRC is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of growing U.S. Latina/o populations through applied action research, training, and greater awareness on the unique needs and dynamics of local communities.

NLRC has developed nationally-recognized research initiatives and projects tailored for Latina/o, immigrant, migrant, farmworker, and bilingual populations living in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Purpose of the Research Brief

The NLRC gathered data from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Education, and California Department of Education to assess the extent of educational disparities in the North County San Diego region.

Current research shows that racialized students continue to experience significant disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes. This research brief provides a portrait of the challenges Latina/o students confront in public education.

Demographic Profile of Latina/o Communities

Latinas/os: “A Mosaic, not a Monolith”

Latina/o communities are a mosaic of histories, cultures, languages, identities that have defined diversity in the U.S.

“A combination of deep historical ties with recent immigration results in great diversity within Latino populations on the basis of national origin, generational status, language, racial and ethnic identification, and socioeconomic status” (Saenz 2010).

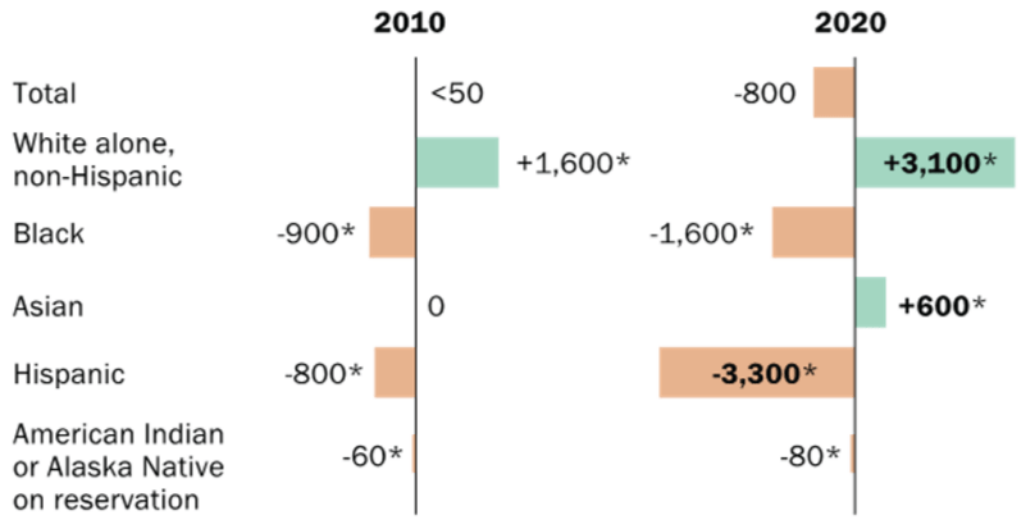


Source: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute

Systemic Underrepresentation

Overcounts and undercounts for racial and Hispanic groups generally grew in 2020

Net overcount or undercount, in thousands



* Error is statistically significant.

Notes: Positive numbers indicate overcounts; negative numbers indicate undercounts. **Bold** numbers indicate a statistically significant change from 2010. Black, Asian and American Indian or Alaska Native include those groups alone or in combination (including Hispanics and non-Hispanics).

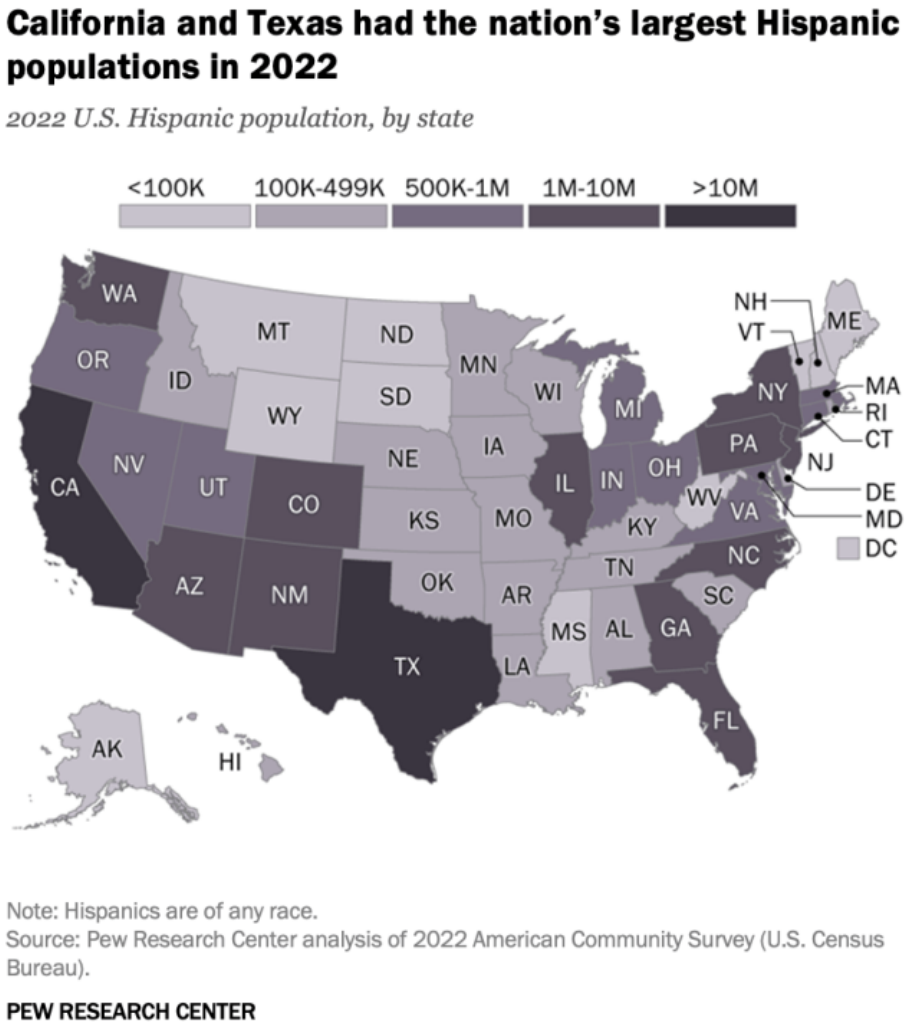
Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on U.S. Census Bureau Post-Enumeration Surveys and P.L. 94-171 census counts by race and Hispanic origin.

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- Latinas/os are systemically undercounted in every decennial census. The undercount of Latinos in 2020 was 4.99%, three times the 1.54% undercount in 2010.
- Children are also among those undercounted. 25.7% (18.8 million) of all U.S. children under the age of 18 were of Hispanic or Latino origin in 2020.
- Census undercounts lead to significant underfunding for children and families. Census data inform the allocation of more than $1.5 trillion annually in federal funds for programs like Medicaid, SNAP, education, infrastructure, and housing.

Source: Pew Research Center

Latinas/os in the U.S.



Latinas/os are the largest contributor to U.S. population growth than any other racial/ethnic group.

Latina/o populations have consistently increased during the last five decades, exceeding 65 million in 2023, comprising about 19 percent of the U.S. population.

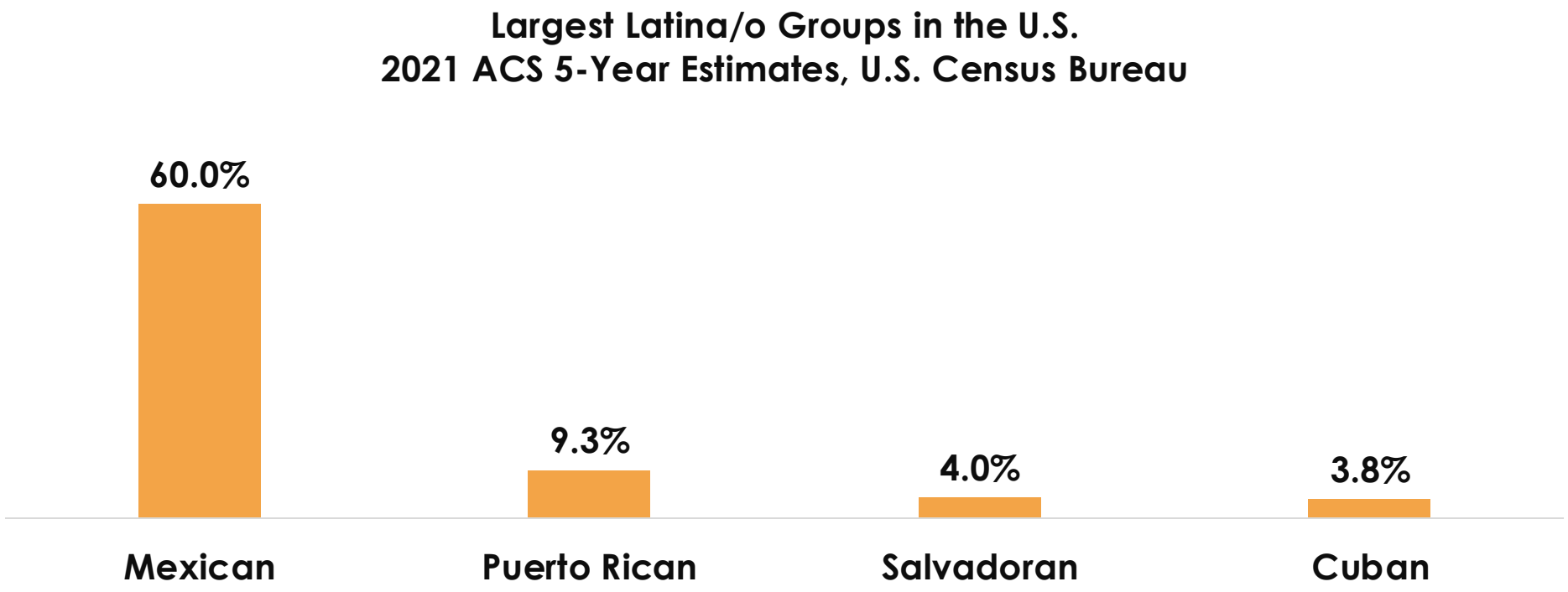
Almost two-thirds of Latinas/os reside in just 5 states: California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Arizona.

California is the most populous state in the U.S., home to over 15 million Latinas/os, comprising 40 percent of the state's population, becoming the largest ethnic group in the state.

Source: Pew Research Center

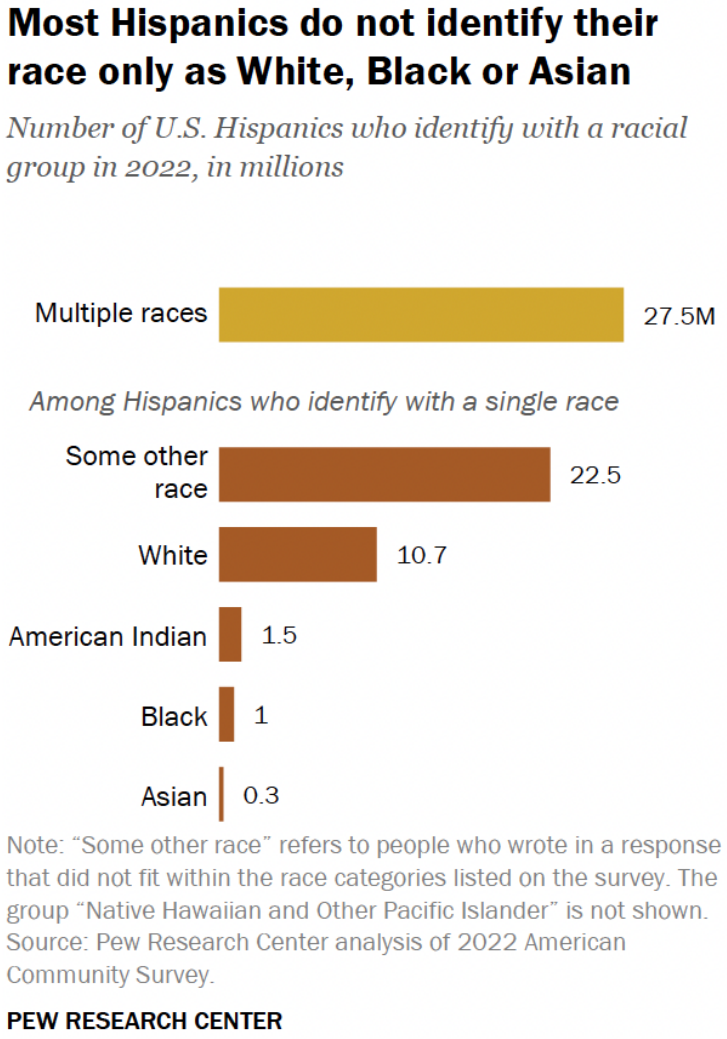
Ethnic Identity

Most Latinas/os identify themselves by their family's country of origin.
60 percent of Latinas/os in the U.S. identify as Mexican.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

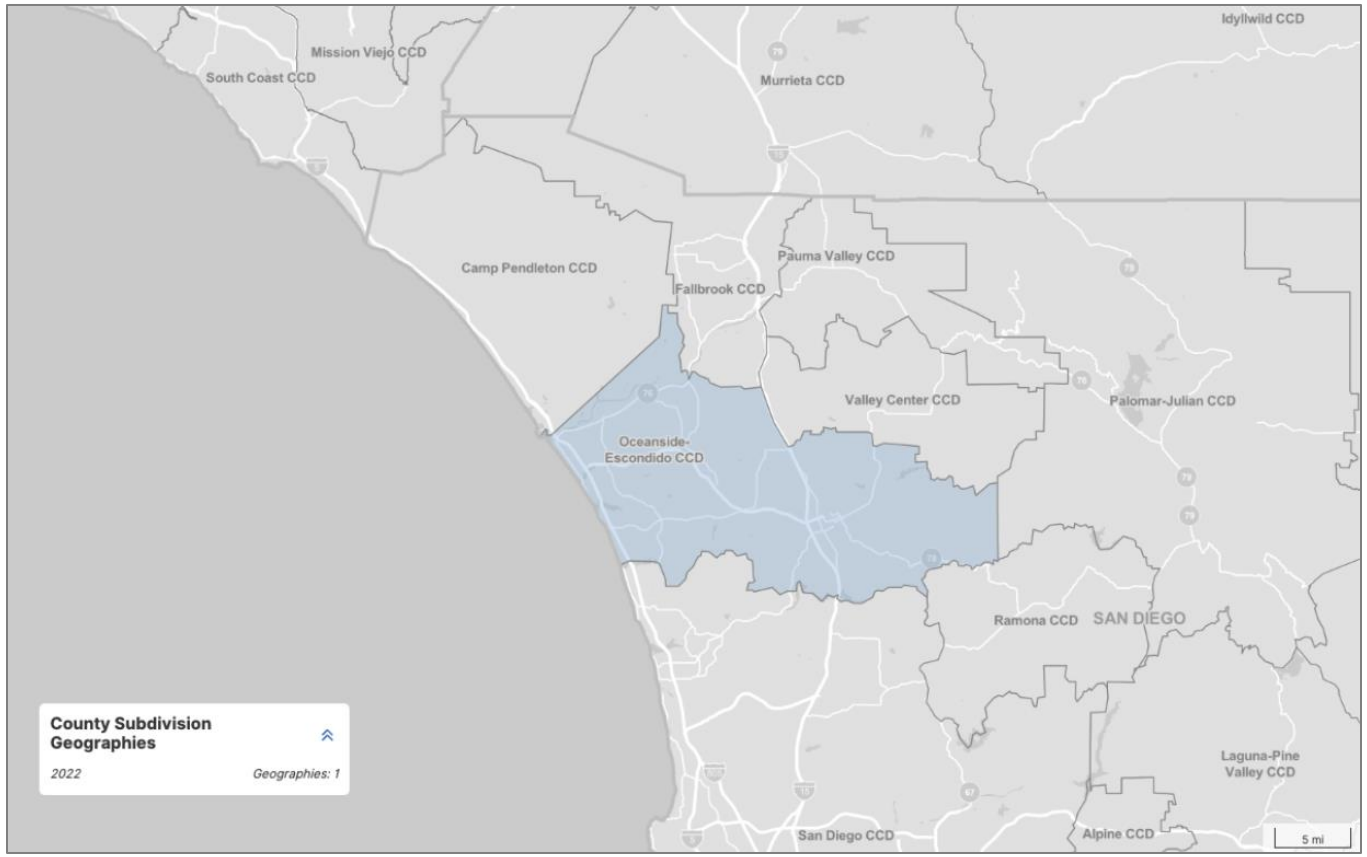
Racial Identity



- Latina/os do not identify with conventional notions of racial and ethnic categorization in U.S. census enumeration.
- Most Latinas/os who choose a single race identify as "some other race."
- More than 27 million Latinas/os in the U.S. identified with "two or more races" in 2022, up from 3 million in 2010.
- Latinas/os were 2.5 times more likely to identify as "multiracial" than "white" in 2022.

Source: Pew Research Center

Latinas/os in North County San Diego



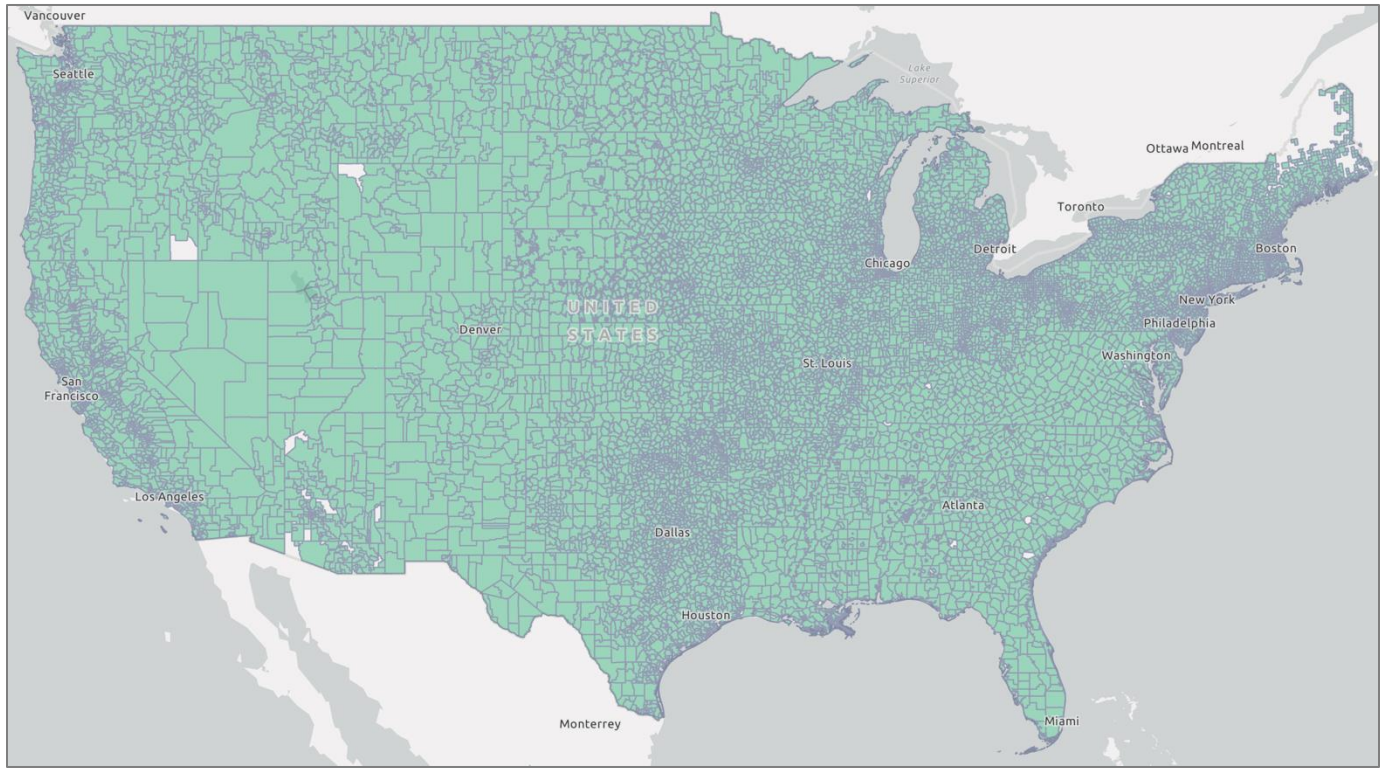
Map of Oceanside-Escondido CCD

- North County San Diego is the second most populous region after the City of San Diego.
- 1 in 5 county residents live in the Oceanside-Escondido Census County Division (CCD) that comprise the cities of Carlsbad, Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido.
- Latinas/os represent the largest share (37.9%) of residents in North County San Diego and a majority in Vista (52%) and Escondido (51%).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

K-12 Schooling

Map of U.S. School Districts

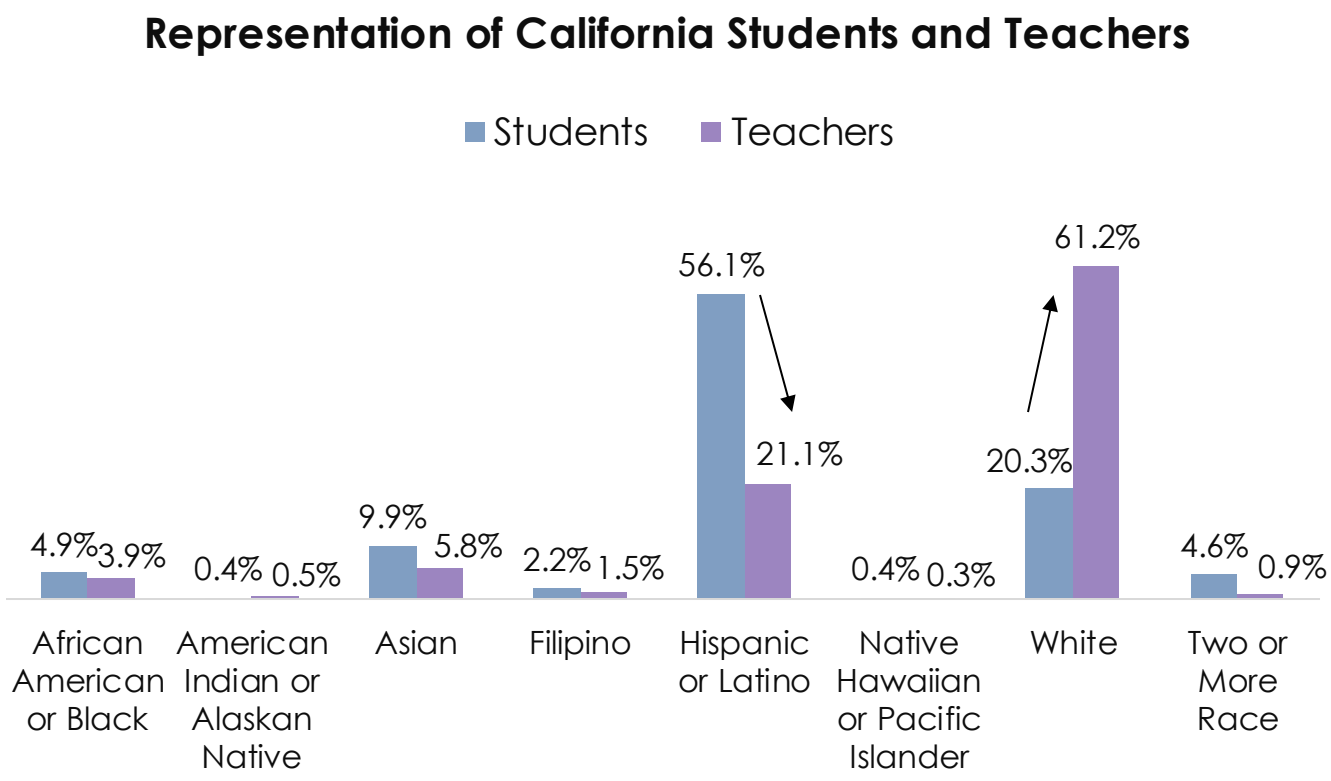


- In 2020, there were 13,318 school districts governing 98,577 public schools of which the majority were in K-8 (71%).
- Between 2012-2022, the enrollment of Latina/o students in public K-12 schools in the U.S. increased from 24 to 29 percent, while White student enrollment significantly decreased from 51 to 44 percent.
- 49.6 million students were enrolled in Pre-K to 12 grade in fall 2022.

White	Latina/o	Black	Asian	Two or more races	American Indian	Pacific Islander
• 22.1 million (44.5%)	• 14.4 million (29.0%)	• 7.4 million (14.9%)	• 2.7 million (5.4%)	• 2.5 million (5.0%)	• 0.4 million (0.8%)	• 0.2 million (0.4%)

Source: Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education

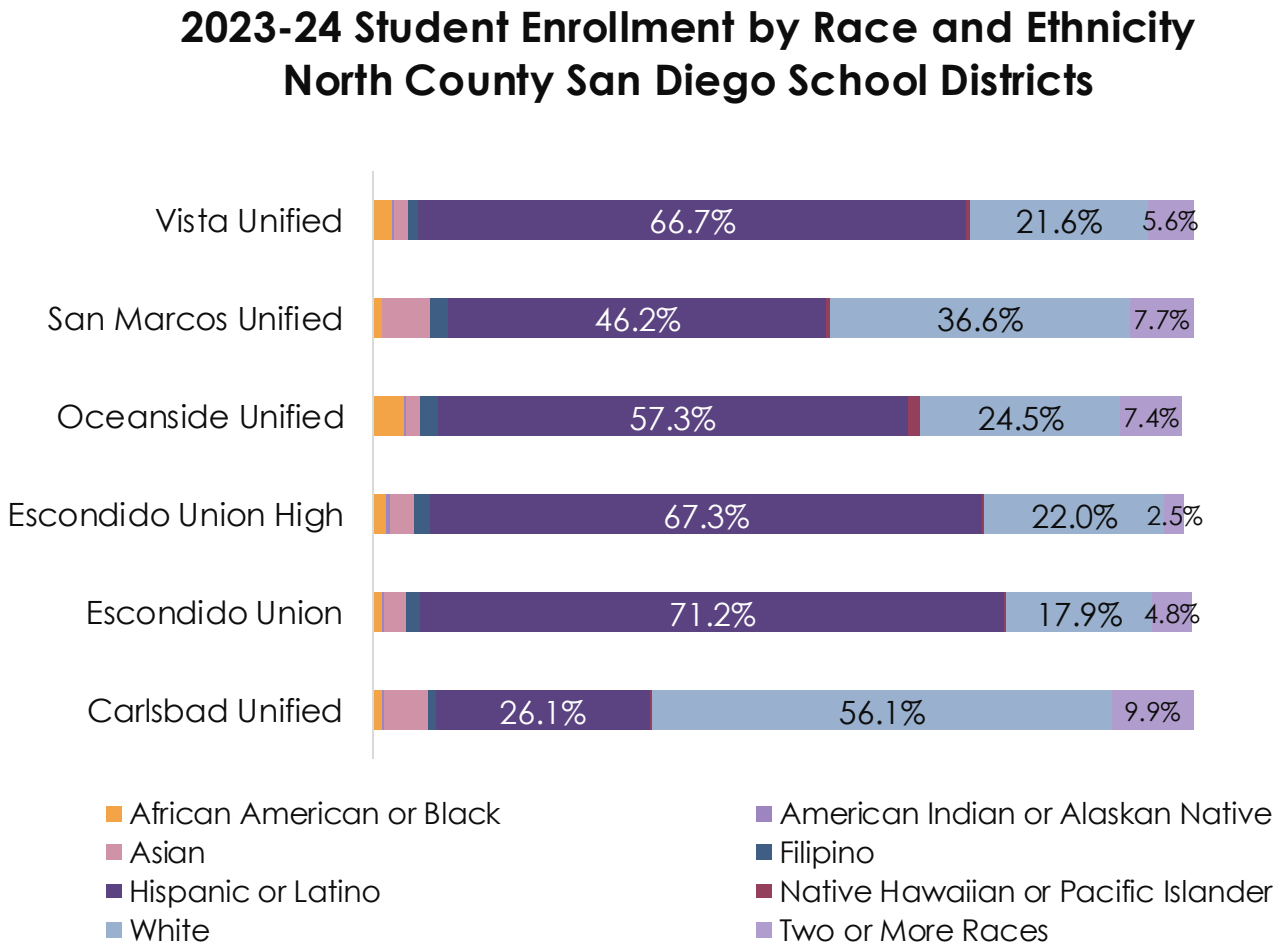
Student/Teacher Representation in California



- In California, 5,837,690 students enrolled in K-12 schools (12% of U.S. students) and over 307,000 teachers served in public schools in 2022.
- Although Latina/o students comprise the largest ethnic group in California schools with 56.1 percent, Latina/o teachers are underrepresented at only 21.1 percent.
- The oppositive is true for their White counterparts of which White teachers are overrepresented at 61.2 percent.

Source: California Department of Education

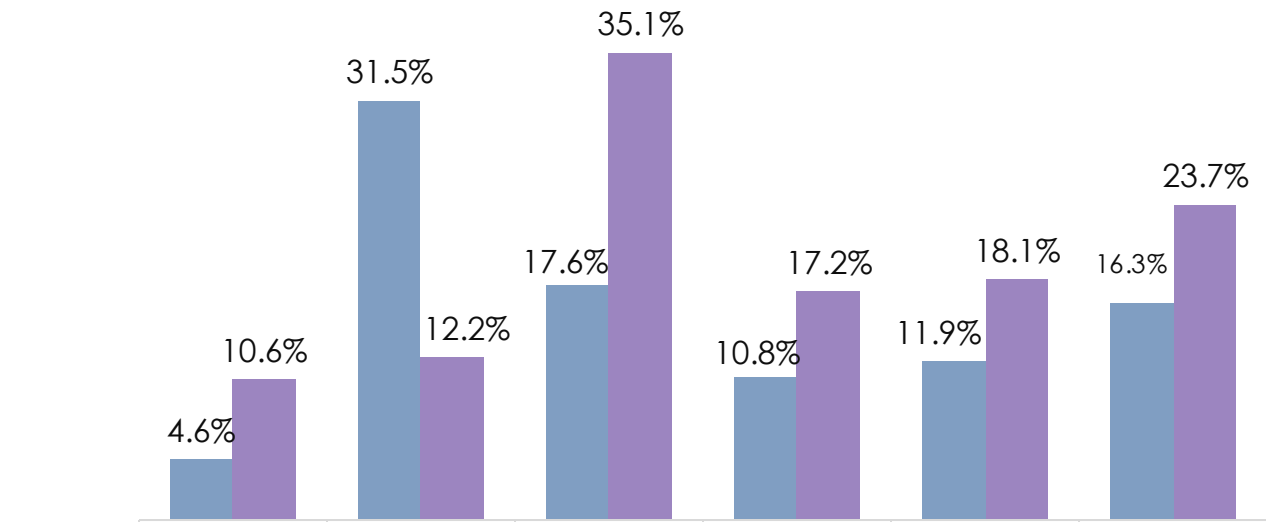
Student Enrollment in North County San Diego



- Local school districts in North County San Diego show comparable student enrollment rates as the state level.
- Latina/o students comprise the vast majority of public-school students in North County San Diego, reaching as high as 71 percent. Only one district (Carlsbad Unified) has a majority White student population.
- The proportion of Latina/o students is even higher at local schools. In most elementary and middle schools, Latina/o students make up over 90 percent of the student population.

Source: California Department of Education

English Learners



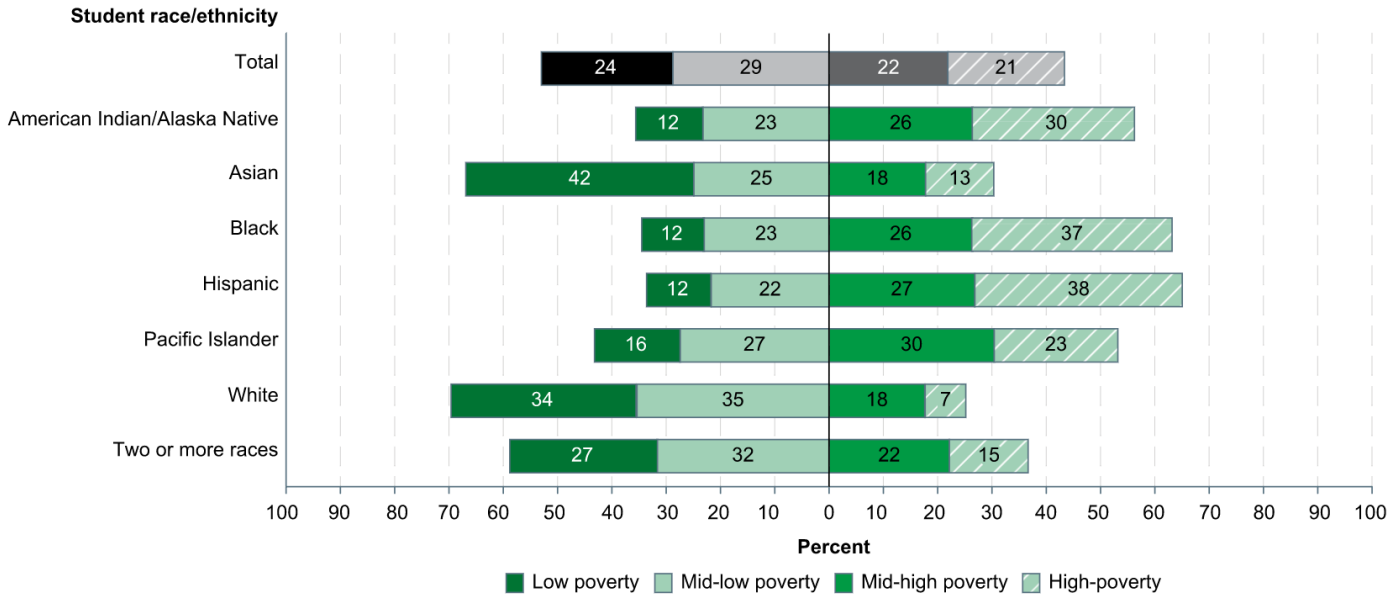
	Carlsbad Unified	Escondido Union	Escondido Union High	Oceanside Unified	San Marcos Unified	Vista Unified
English Learner	4.6%	31.5%	17.6%	10.8%	11.9%	16.3%
Fluent English Proficient	10.6%	12.2%	35.1%	17.2%	18.1%	23.7%

- California has the largest English Learner population in the nation at 21 percent.
- Over one million students in California are English Learners out of 5.3 million nationwide.
- Of the 5.9 million students in California, 19% are English Learners.
- 93% of EL students speak Spanish are their native or heritage language.
- Locally, English Learners comprise over one-third of students in districts like Escondido Union High and almost one in four in Vista Unified.

Source: California Department of Education

Poverty in U.S. Schools

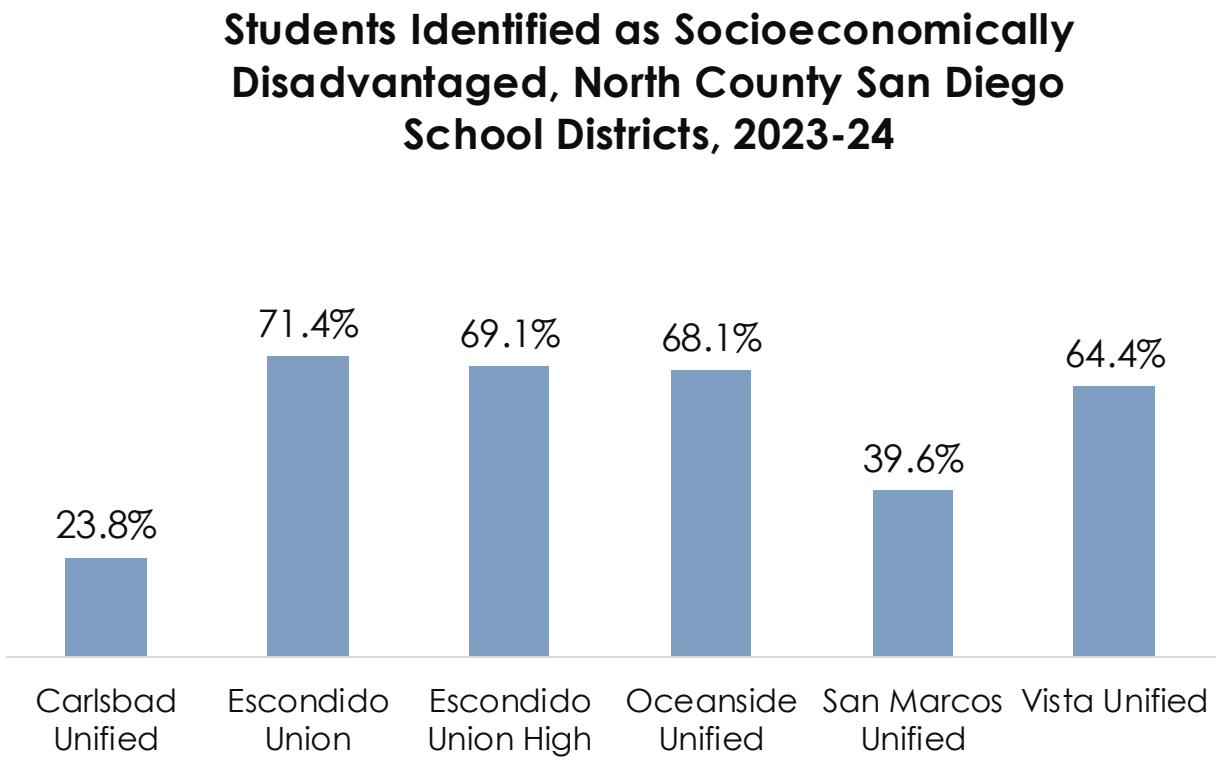
Percentage distribution of public-school students for each racial/ethnic group, by school poverty level, National Center for Education Statistics, 2022



- The 2022 poverty rates were higher than the national average (16%) for children who were American Indian/Alaska Native (30 percent), Black (30 percent), and Latina/o (22 percent).
- Overwhelmingly, Asian and White students attend low-poverty level schools that typically offer more resources, more funding, and better maintained facilities.
- In contrast, Latina/o students are more than twice as likely to attend mid-to-high poverty level schools.

Source: Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education

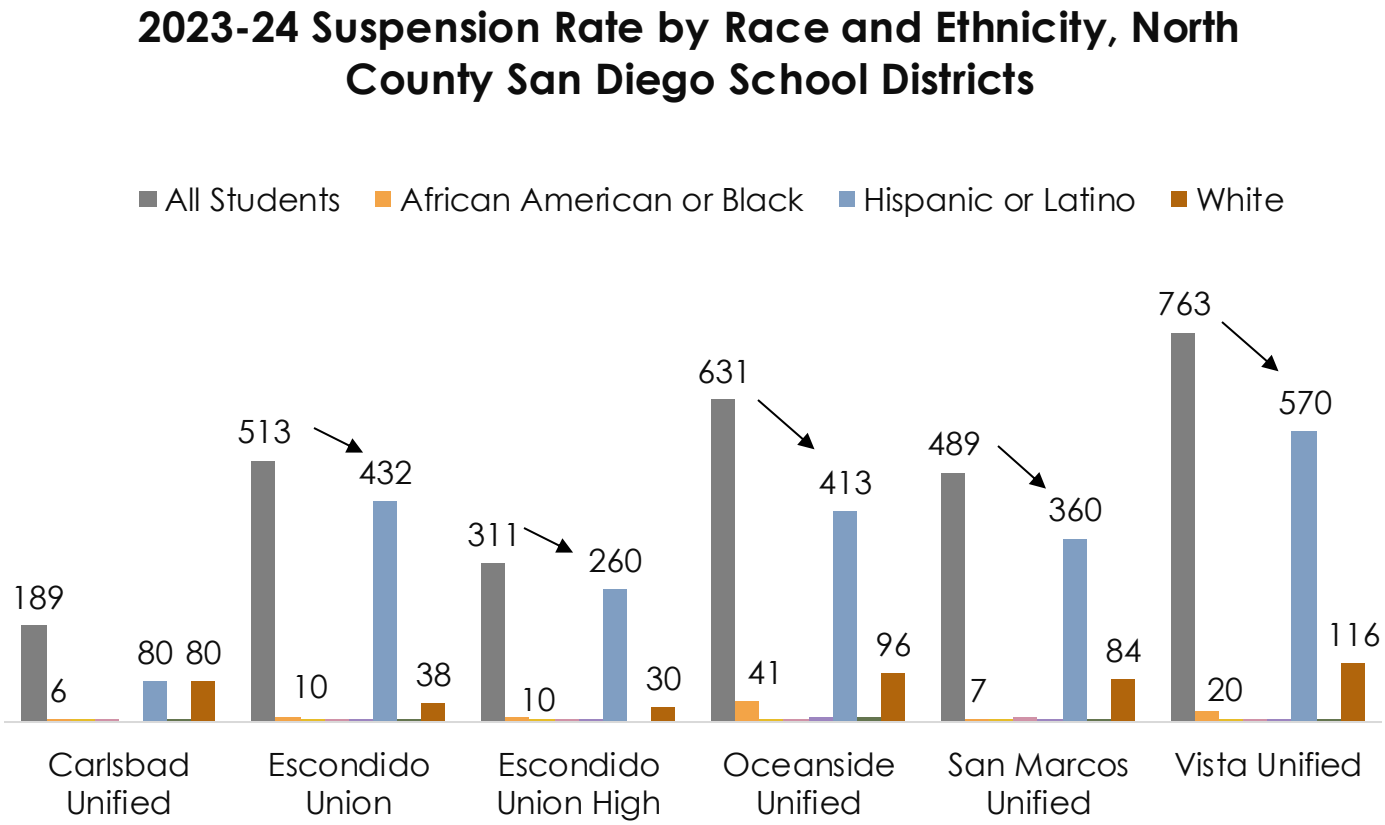
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students



- The California Department of Education defines a student as socioeconomically disadvantaged if they meet at least one of the following criteria: 1) Neither parent or guardian has received a high school diploma; 2) Eligible for or participating in the Free or Reduced-Price Meal (FRPM) program; 3) Eligible for or participating in the Title I Part C Migrant program; 4) Identified as homeless; 5) Foster program eligible; 6) Directly certified for FRPM benefits (e.g., through CalFresh or CalWORKs); 7) Enrolled in a juvenile court school; or 8) Identified as Tribal Foster Youth.
- In 2023-24, most students in North County San Diego school districts were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, reaching over 60 percent of the student population.
- The proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students was lowest in only two districts: Carlsbad Unified (23.8%) and San Marcos Unified (39.6%).

Source: California Department of Education

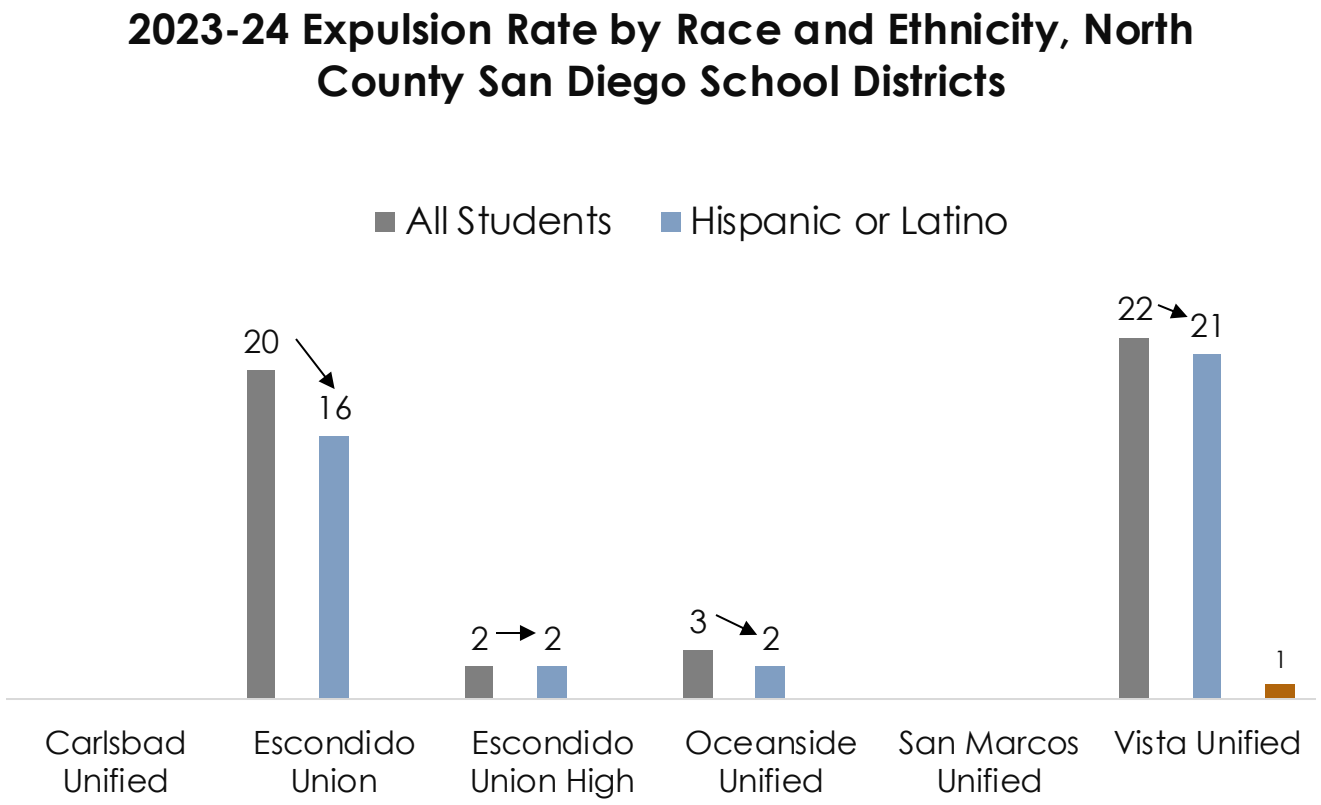
Suspension Rate



- In 2023-24, Latina/o students were overrepresented in suspension rates across school districts in North County San Diego, reaching 75 percent in some school districts.
- Latina/o students comprised the vast majority of suspensions in all school districts (between 65 and 84 percent) except in Carlsbad Unified (42%).

Source: California Department of Education

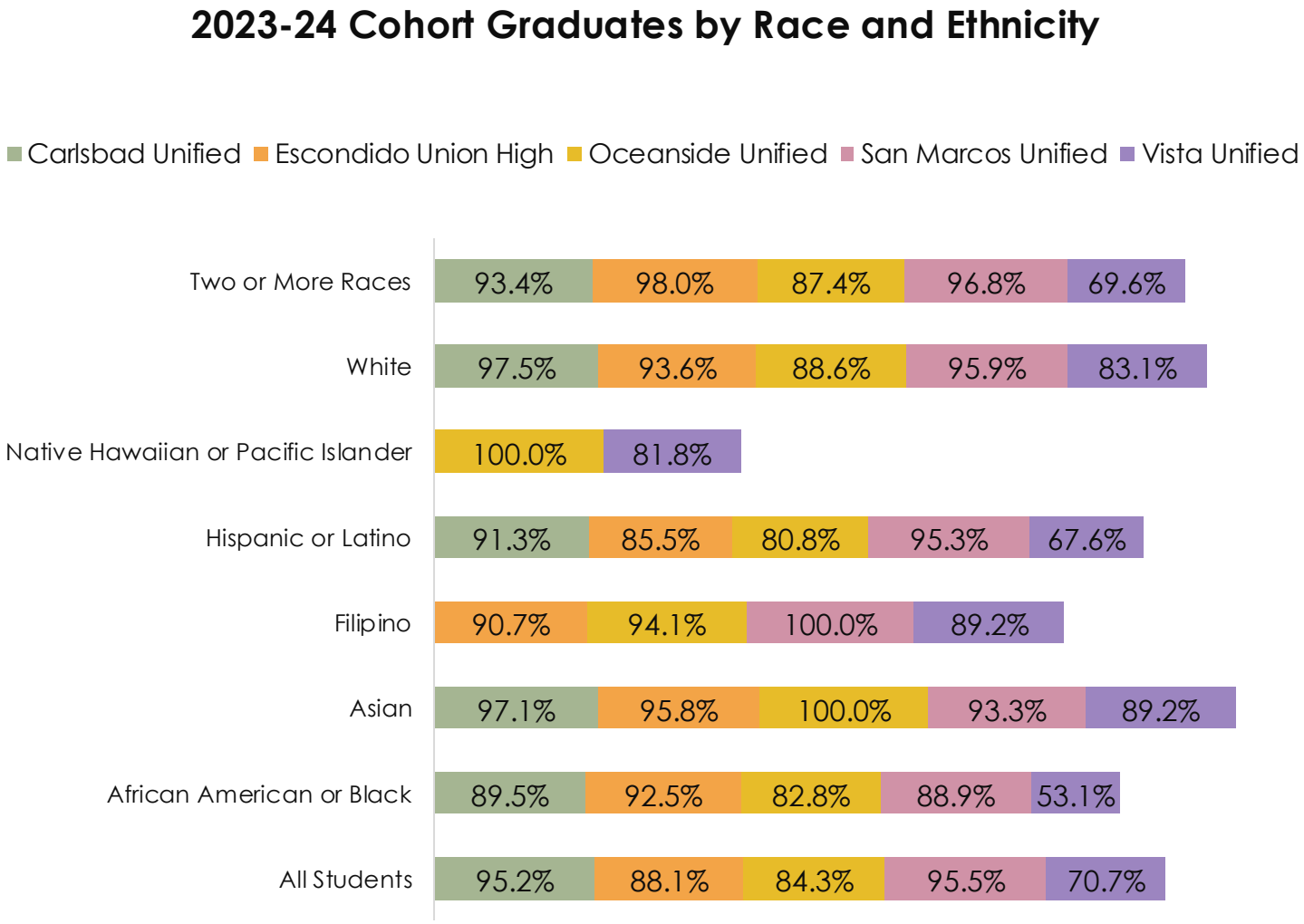
Expulsion Rate



- The number of school expulsions has decreased over time for most students and in most districts.
- Two school districts reported zero expulsions in the 2023-24 academic year: Carlsbad Unified and San Marcos Unified.
- Escondido Union and Vista Unified reported the highest numbers of expulsions in 2023-24.
- Of the school districts that reported expulsion numbers, almost all were of Latina/o students.

Source: California Department of Education

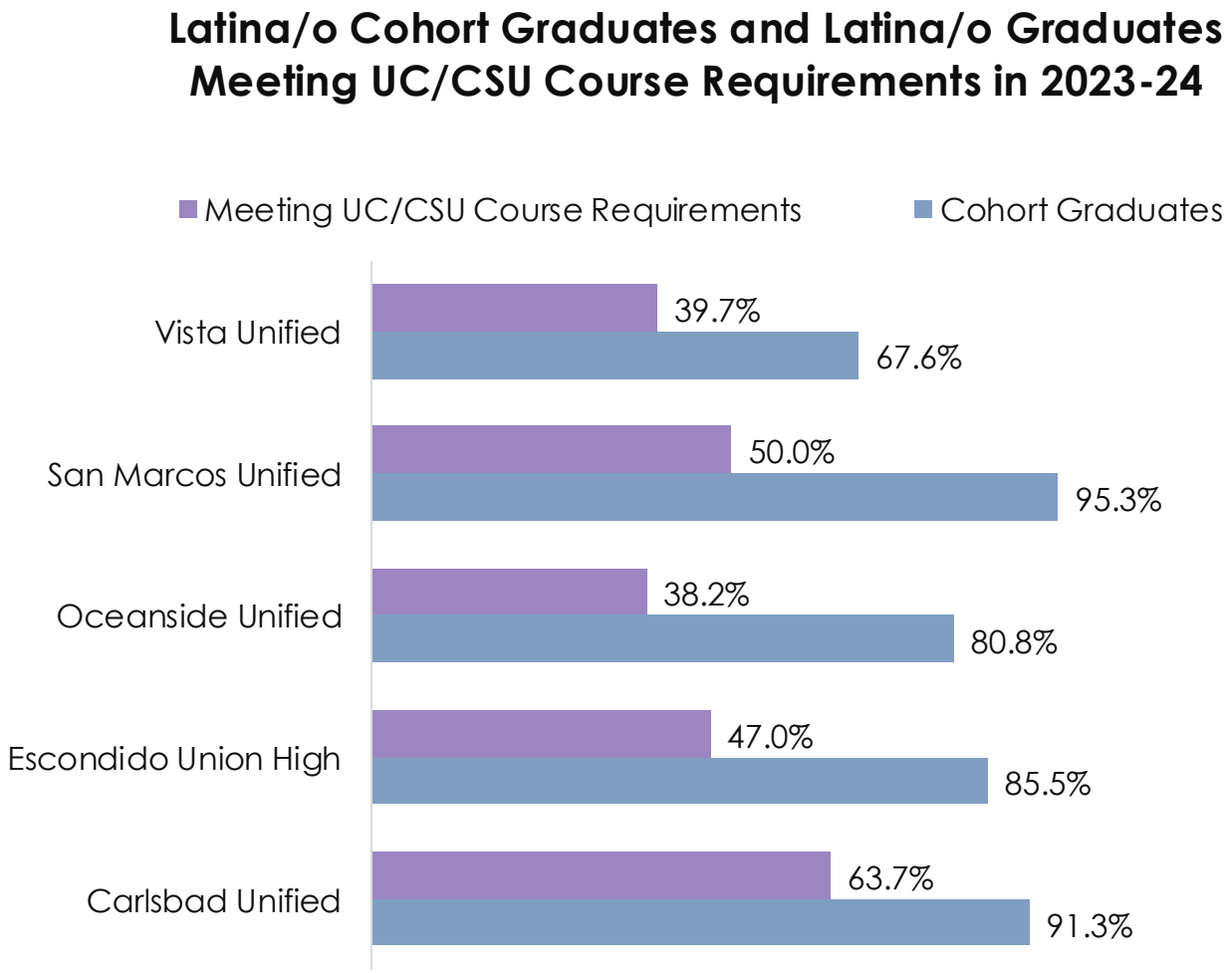
Graduation Rate



- Overall, local school districts show high graduation rates.
- Graduation rates across school districts range between 70 to 95 percent.
- Although graduation rates are relatively high for most students, the graduation rate for Latina/o students is among the top three lowest in every school district.

Source: California Department of Education

UC/CSU Eligibility for Latina/o Students



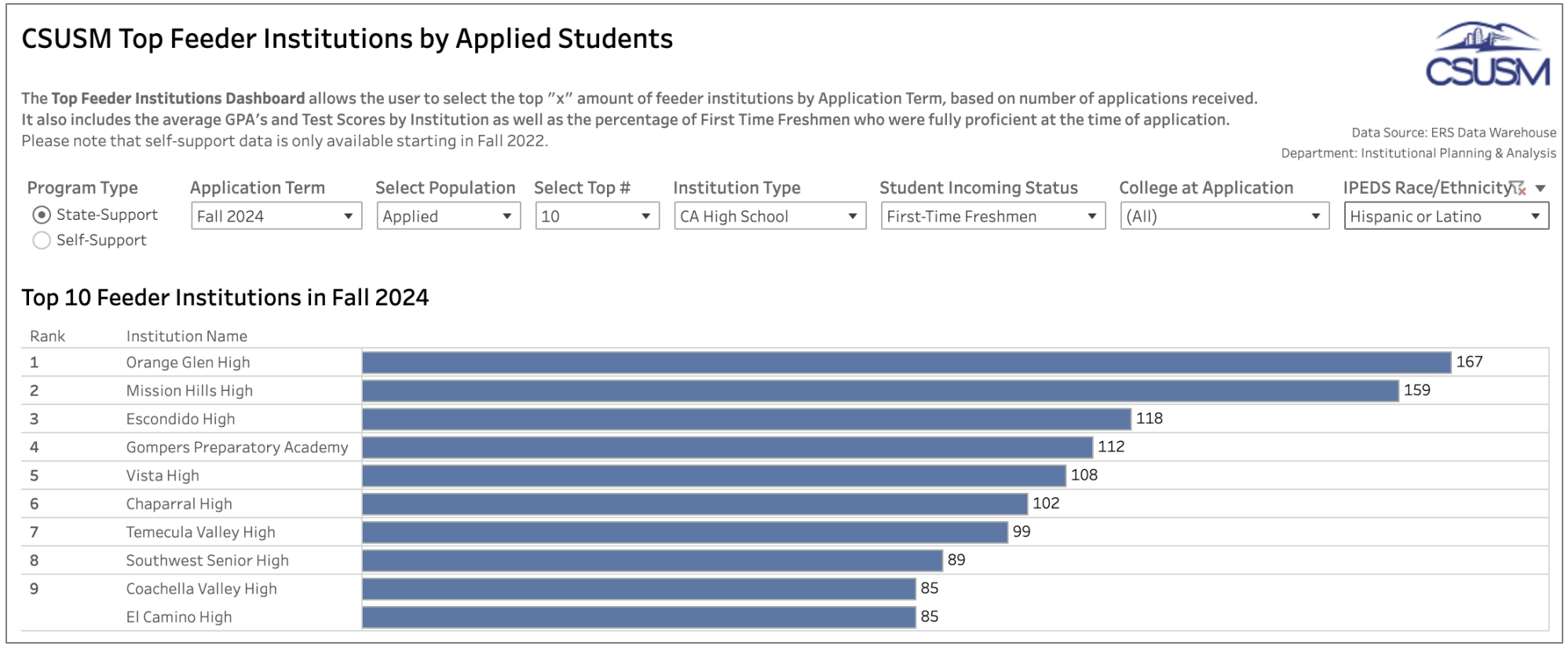
- Although graduation rates are relatively high in most districts, there is a substantial gap between cohort graduates and graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements among most racialized groups.
- Latina/o students are almost twice as likely to graduate without the necessary requirements to attend a four-year university, some of the lowest rates across all school districts.

Source: California Department of Education

Higher Education

CSUSM Top Feeder Institutions

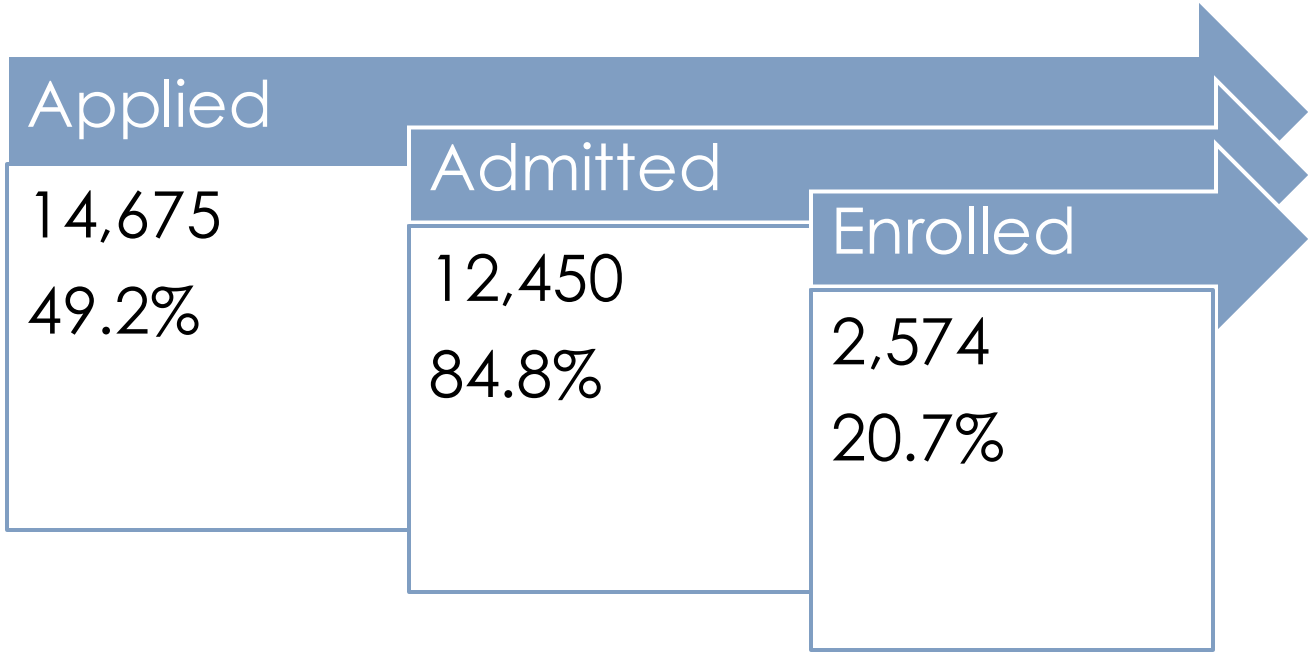
- The image below shows the top ten feeder institutions for CSUSM with the highest number of Latina/o applicants in Fall 2024. Four of the top ten feeder schools are located within the Oceanside-Escondido CCD: Orange Glen High, Mission Hills High, Escondido High, and Vista High.



Source: ERS Data Warehouse, Institutional Planning & Analysis, CSUSM

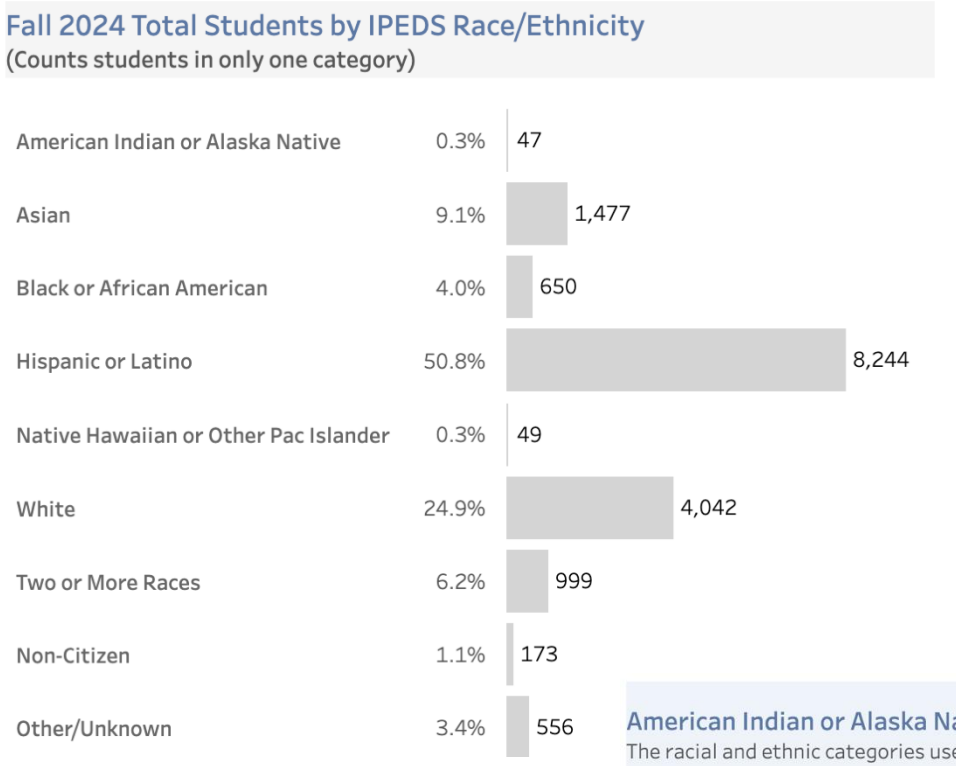
Applied–Admitted–Enrolled

- In Fall 2024, 14,675 Latina/o students applied to attend CSUSM, comprising almost half of the total applicants.
- Of those applicants, most were admitted (84.4%).
- But only just over one in five enrolled at CSUSM.



Source: ERS Data Warehouse, Institutional Planning & Analysis, CSUSM

Ethnic Identity of CSUSM Latina/o Students



- In Fall 2024, there were 8,244 Latina/o students enrolled at CSUSM, comprising 50.8 percent of the student population.
- Of those students, 83.4 percent self-identify as "Mexican."
- Among students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, 16 percent identify as "indigenous Mexican."

American Indian or Alaska Native Student Headcount Detail

The racial and ethnic categories used for reporting are composed of many diverse subpopulations. The below table disaggregates the American Indian or Alaska Native student population by subpopulation indicated on their CSU application.

	Fall 2019		Fall 2020		Fall 2021		Fall 2022		Fall 2023		Fall 2024	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Other American Indian Tri..	218	46.3%	224	51.4%	236	53.4%	182	41.1%	156	30.3%	239	43.0%
Indigenous Mexican							55	12.4%	116	22.5%	89	16.0%
Cherokee							20	4.5%	44	8.5%	32	5.8%

Source: ERS Data Warehouse, Institutional Planning & Analysis, CSUSM

Gender Disparities in CSUSM Students

Enrollment Breakdown

		Fall 2024	
		N	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	Female	26	0.2%
	Male	21	0.1%
Asian	Female	785	4.8%
	Male	686	4.2%
	Non-binary	6	0.0%
Black or African American	Female	326	2.0%
	Male	321	2.0%
	Non-binary	3	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	Female	5110	31.5%
	Male	3116	19.2%
	Non-binary	18	0.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Female	22	0.1%
	Male	27	0.2%
Non-Citizen	Female	87	0.5%
	Male	86	0.5%
Other/Unknown	Female	306	1.9%
	Male	247	1.5%
	Non-binary	3	0.0%
Two or More Races	Female	564	3.5%
	Male	429	2.6%
	Non-binary	6	0.0%
White	Female	2266	14.0%
	Male	1767	10.9%
	Non-binary	9	0.1%

- In Fall 2024, there were more female students of Latino origin than any other group, based on race or gender.
- Latina students surpassed their male counterparts in enrollment by 1.6 times.
- Latina students comprise 63.3% of Latina/o student enrollment.
- Latino male students comprise only 36.8% of total Latina/o students.

Source: ERS Data Warehouse, Institutional Planning & Analysis, CSUSM

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Contributors

We express our gratitude to the NLRC faculty and staff who contributed their expertise in this research brief.

- Dr. Konane Martinez, NLRC Faculty Director, gathered and analyzed CSUSM institutional data, and provided invaluable guidance throughout the research process.
- Luna Prieto and Rosalva Romero Gonzalez, NLRC Researchers, conducted data gathering and analysis of census data.
- Ana María Ardón, NLRC Researcher, gathered and analyzed census and educational data, and prepared this research brief.

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