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## Leveraging Data for Policy Change: A Descriptive Analysis of Latino Men's Postsecondary Enrollment and Degree Attainment Patterns in Texas

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**Abstract:** This study examines the educational outcomes of Latino men in Texas by conducting a descriptive policy-focused disaggregate analysis of longitudinal data from the *8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* and the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS). Based on our analysis, we provide context and understanding of the progress made towards meeting the goals set forth in 60x30TX, a statewide higher education plan led by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Our findings reveal educational equity disparities by looking at the postsecondary

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enrollment and degree/certificate completion patterns of Latino men in Texas. In addition, we provide an analysis of differences in educational equity disparities across various regions of the state. We share policy planning implications informed by practitioner input to better contextualize our findings.

**Keywords:** educational policy; longitudinal statewide data; Latino men; postsecondary outcomes

**Aprovechar los datos para el cambio de políticas: Un análisis descriptivo de los patrones de matriculación postsecundaria y obtención de títulos de los hombres latinos en Texas**

**Resumen:** Este estudio examina los resultados educativos de estudiantes Latinos en Texas a través de un análisis que desagrega datos de una base de datos longitudinales del Estudio Longitudinal de Cohorte de 8º Grado y el Sistema Integrado de Datos Postsecundarios (IPEDS). Con base en nuestro análisis, brindamos contexto y comprensión del progreso realizado para alcanzar las metas establecidas en 60x30TX, un plan de educación superior estatal dirigido por la Junta Coordinadora de Educación Superior de Texas. Nuestros hallazgos revelan disparidades en la equidad educativa al observar los patrones de inscripción postsecundaria y finalización de títulos/certificados de los hombres latinos en Texas. Además, proporcionamos un análisis de las diferencias en las disparidades de equidad educativa en varias regiones del estado. Compartimos las implicaciones de la planificación de políticas informadas por los aportes de los profesionales para contextualizar nuestros hallazgos.

**Palabras-clave:** política educativa; datos estatales longitudinales; hombres latinos; resultados postsecundarios

**Alavancando dados para mudança de políticas: uma análise descritiva dos padrões de matrícula e graduação de homens latinos no Texas**

**Resumo:** Este estudo examina os resultados educacionais de estudantes latinos no Texas por meio de uma análise que desagrega dados de um banco de dados longitudinal do Estudo de Coorte Longitudinal da 8ª Série e do Sistema Integrado de Dados Pós-Secundários (IPEDS). Com base em nossa análise, fornecemos contexto e compreensão do progresso feito para atingir as metas estabelecidas no 60x30TX, um plano estadual de ensino superior liderado pelo Conselho de Coordenação do Ensino Superior do Texas. Nossas descobertas revelam disparidades na equidade educacional ao observar os padrões de matrícula no ensino superior e conclusão de diploma/certificado para homens latinos no Texas. Além disso, apresentamos uma análise das diferenças nas disparidades de equidade educacional em várias regiões do estado. Compartilhamos as implicações para o planejamento de políticas informadas pelas contribuições dos profissionais para contextualizar nossas descobertas.

**Palavras-chave:** política educacional; dados longitudinais do estado; homens latinos; resultados pós-secundários

## Leveraging Data for Policy Change: A Descriptive Analysis of Latino Men's Postsecondary Enrollment and Degree Attainment Patterns in Texas

In 2015, the state of Texas adopted an ambitious higher education policy agenda, 60x30TX, which called for 60% of the 25- to 34-year-old population to hold a certificate or degree by 2030 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2016a). The plan was adopted by the state to help meet future educational and workforce needs as well as to hold institutions accountable for meeting key completion goals. To this end, the state has made available various longitudinal data tools to keep track of annual benchmarks, including the ability to track cohorts of eighth-grade students as they move through the education pipeline.

As we have observed in national data, Latinx/a/o students in Texas have made substantial enrollment and degree attainment gains in postsecondary education (Sáenz et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2018). However, the educational outcomes of Latino men have continued to lag behind their other-race and other-gender peers (Sáenz et al., 2016). The THECB, a state agency responsible for providing leadership and coordination for Texas higher education, has published “Data Insight” briefs highlighting gender and race disparities for postsecondary degree completion in Texas (e.g., Warren & Cullinane Hege, 2018). These briefs provide essential context and data to assist policymakers and administrators in making evidence-based decisions that ultimately benefit all students. At the same time, policy-driven briefs – as well as other empirical studies – remain very scarce, particularly for aiding researchers, policymakers, and administrative leaders with sufficient data about the educational outcomes of Latino men (Ryu et al., 2021). Moreover, there is a growing need within the field of higher education to be more intentional as it relates to interpreting and utilization of data to ensure equitable student success (Rios-Aguilar, 2014).

Keeping this context in mind, we examine the educational outcomes of Latino men in Texas by conducting a policy-focused disaggregate analysis on gender, race, and regions of the state using longitudinal data from the *8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* and the *Integrated Postsecondary Data System* (IPEDS). Furthermore, we provide more context and understanding of the progress made towards meeting the goals set forth in 60x30TX, with a special focus on Latino men. The following research questions guided our study:

1. What educational equity disparities can we identify when looking at the postsecondary enrollment and degree/certificate completion patterns of Latino men in Texas?
2. How do these educational equity disparities, if at all, differ across various regions of the state?

### Definition of Key Terms

As exemplified by Ryu and colleagues (2021), specifically for conducting research focused on educational outcomes of Latino men, we provide definitions of key terms. We used the term “Latinx/a/o” to refer to people of Latin American and Caribbean descent that reside in the United States, including but not limited to AfroLatinx/a/o, undocumented/DACAmented, and formerly incarcerated students. For data reporting accuracy, we used the term Hispanic for referencing data on Latinx/a/o students that were collected using this term (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). Similarly, we used the term “male” for referencing students (regardless of race and ethnicity) that self-identified as male as reported by the datasets that we used.

For policy advocacy purposes, we used the term “men” to refer to all student groups that identified as men for the purpose of including students who do not ascribe to non-binary gender

identity markers, and could have been excluded from these datasets (e.g., trans\* men). We acknowledge that many datasets – particularly large statewide datasets – often fall short of providing accurate options for participants to disclose their identities, especially as it pertains to demographics such as race, ethnicity, and gender identity (Garvey et al., 2019). Thus, as an effort to strive towards more inclusive and culturally/racially representative approaches for data collection, we made an effort to use terms that maintain the integrity of our data while being mindful of the identities and communities that could have been missing in these datasets.

As informed by the *8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* data, we used the term degree/certificate completion to refer to completion of any postsecondary credential, including a certificate, associate's, and bachelor's degree. Our analysis does not include completion of any degree/certificate beyond bachelor's degree. Lastly, we used the term “two-year” and “four-year” colleges to refer to community colleges and bachelor's degree granting institutions, respectively. Although we realize that the terms “two-year” and “four-year” can be inherently misleading about the actual time that is required to complete a degree/certificate at these institutions, we used the terms for accuracy purposes and for reporting our data.

## Policy Background

To answer our research questions, we situate this study within the literature by providing an overview of prominent educational policy issues in the state of Texas. This overview is vital to provide context about key policies that are shaping the educational landscape for minoritized student populations, including Latino men. Texas is a fast-growing state, and its population resembles the demographic trends of many other fast-growing areas of the country, with Latinx/a/os driving most of the population and workforce growth (Pew Research Center, 2018; Saenz, 2010). In addition, we provide an overview of the policy research focused on Latino boys and men for the purpose of identifying gaps in the literature that could aid policymakers and administrators to better advocate for this student population.

### The Texas Context: Statewide Postsecondary Education Policy

At the start of this century, Texas launched its initial 15-year higher education plan — “Closing the Gaps by 2015” led by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). This plan received strong support from the state's educational, business, and political communities in order to significantly increase enrollment and graduation rates for low-income students and students of color (THECB, 2016). As a result, institutions of higher education in the state have responded by focusing on increasing college access and completion.

Some studies on the “Closing the Gaps by 2015” have reported that the plan was successful in encouraging Latinx/a/o students to attend postsecondary education, and suggest that other states could use it as a blueprint for incentivizing higher Latinx/a/o student enrollment. For example, a study by Tajalli and Ortiz (2017) found that the plan provided significant financial incentives for institutions to recruit Latinx/a/o students. Tajalli and Ortiz asserted that public universities in Texas launched extensive outreach programs aimed at providing financial aid to low-income students, as well as accepting more dual enrollment courses. According to the authors' analysis, these incentives provided more pathways for Latinx/a/o students to enroll in postsecondary education. Although still small in comparison to the size of the total Latinx/a/o population in the state, the “gradual improvement in enrollment is a step in the right direction” (Tajalli & Ortiz, 2017, p. 339).

After “Closing the Gaps by 2015,” Texas continued to address the needs of its workforce, communities, and citizens by establishing a new higher education plan launched by the THECB,

60x30TX (“60 by 30 Tex”). The new strategic plan sets college completion goals within Texas and leading states in four areas: educated population, completion, marketable skills, and student debt. Specifically, the plan set a goal that at least 60% of Texans (ages 25-34) will have a certificate or degree by 2030, with numeric goals set by racial/ethnic group and gender. As such, this plan underscored how the demographic changes affecting Texas will impact the state’s higher education system, particularly with the Latinx/a/o population increasing to 52% in 2030.

The college affordability issue is very salient in the context of Texas higher education because tuition at four-year universities in Texas has remarkably increased since 2003 (Flores & Shepherd, 2014). Consequently, the sharp tuition increase might have adversely impacted students and their families, especially low-income students and students of color who rely on financial aid and loans to pursue the college education they deserve. In 2003, the 78th Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 3015, which allowed the governing boards of public four-year institutions to set their own tuition rates. Following tuition deregulation in 2003, tuition charges at Texas public institutions increased by 138%—or an average of 92% after adjusting for inflation—from 2003 through 2017 (THECB, 2018a, 2018b). Compared to the rest of the nation, recent data show that undergraduate tuition, fees, room, and board for public institutions rose 28% between 2008-09 and 2018-09; the annual dollar price is estimated to be \$18,383 for publics (NCES, 2021)

Similar to other states, the two-year sector in Texas higher education was criticized for low persistence and completion rates. Thirty-seven percent of students who begin at a Texas public community college has earned any post-secondary credential six years after initial enrollment (THECB, 2019). To improve institutional performance and college completion rates, the 83rd Texas Legislature in 2013 adopted a performance-based funding (PBF) model for the state’s 50 community colleges. Referred to as the Student Success Points Model, the PBF model is designed to reward community colleges for improvement in student achievement (e.g., complete math development education, complete 15 semester hours, degree/certificate awarded, transfer to university). Unlike PBF models in some other states (e.g., Tennessee, Ohio), Texas PBF model does not directly intend to facilitate academic progress and degree attainment among groups such as first-generation, low-income, students of color, and Texas community colleges may have a strong incentive to increase the total number of success points achieved by each student that enrolls (Gándara, 2019; McKinney & Hagedorn, 2015). Given the racial/ethnic diversity in Texas, the college completion goal of 60X30TX may not be achieved without significantly improving completion rates among community college students, especially racial/ethnic minority students and low-income students.

### **Policy Research on Latino Boys and Men**

To understand how state-level policies impact the educational outcomes of Latino men, it is helpful to review extant policy research focused on this student population. Higher education researchers have begun to disaggregate and analyze longitudinal statewide data to provide a more holistic picture of the educational outcomes of Latino men in the form of research digests and policy briefs (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2018; Sáenz et al., 2019). These data and policy analyses provide a fuller data treatment on how Latino men perform across regions of the state, including areas of the state that are often overlooked by policymakers (e.g., border regions). In addition, these analyses provide data points about various stages of their academic trajectories, including high school completion, postsecondary enrollment, and degree completion. While these type of research analyses are helpful to policymakers and practitioners to make data-informed decisions, these data applications are scarce (Loeb et al., 2017; Rios-Aguilar, 2014).

Closely related to data-driven policy work in education, the early work of Sáenz and Ponjuán (2009) on Latino men in higher education explains the empirical and theoretical groundings of why policies and educational systems have not been able to adequately support the educational outcomes

of Latino men. According to the authors, “simple-minded and culturally laden explanations” too often perpetuate deficit thinking and policymaking about what is best to support the educational trajectories of Latino men (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009, p. 55). Thus, as suggested by their piece, it is important to avoid a “cultural deficit paradigm” (p. 55) and instead, apply an asset-based approach when conducting policy-focused research designed to advocate for Latino men. An asset-based policy approach steers away from asking what Latino men are “lacking” and instead, puts the onus on systems, policies, and institutions that have consistently failed student populations that have been minoritized by race, gender, and class (Rodríguez et al., 2018). This asset-based research approach has been applied by several scholars to study topics on Latino men, such as promising practices for community college administrators, biases and prejudices in K-12 schooling, and persistence among high-achieving undergraduates (e.g., Campos, 2013; Pérez II, 2017; Pérez II & Taylor, 2016).

Understanding the pivotal need to conduct asset-based and data-driven policy research on Latino men, this study seeks to make policy-focused and consumable research available to practitioners and policymakers who have the agency to enact systemic change in our educational policies and practices. In the last decade, Latinx/a/o students as a whole have made historical gains in postsecondary enrollment and degree attainment outcomes in Texas and the rest of the country (*Excelencia in Education*, 2019; Snyder et al., 2018). While this is a step in the right direction to ensure more equitable and proportional racial representation in higher education, there is still a significant attainment gap between Latinx/a/o students and the overall adult population (Santiago et al., 2017). In 2016, approximately 24% of Latinx/a/o adults had completed a postsecondary degree or credential, “compared to 39% of all adults nationally and in Texas” (Santiago et al., 2017, p. 3). Therefore, it is imperative to conduct more policy-focused research that looks at how outcomes differ among Latino men across not only regions of the country but across regions of the state. Using longitudinal data can provide various touchpoints for broadening our understandings of Latino men throughout their educational journeys (Loeb et al., 2017). This research seeks to document unseen educational gaps among Latino students and to suggest policy implications that are timely and appropriate for the region.

## Methodology

We used two different sets of data to examine the educational outcomes of Latino men in Texas, enrollment and degree completion specifically. We used both sets of data to answer our research questions in their entirety, specifically by looking at both institutional-level data and student-level data. To look at institutional-level data, we used the *Integrated Postsecondary Data System* (IPEDS). To look at student-level data, we used the *8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study*. In what follows, we explain how we used each data set and how they contributed to our analysis by providing different types of disaggregated data about the educational outcomes of Latino men (and other racial subgroups) in Texas.

### Data Sources

We used institutional-level data from the IPEDS to explore educational trends of college enrollment and degree attainment. The institutional-level dataset from IPEDS includes fall enrollment—which is the enrollment at an institution in the Fall— and completion—the numbers of postsecondary certificates and degree awarded for a year—records for all public two-year and four-year institutions in Texas from 2000-2019. We used disaggregated IPEDS data on college enrollment by gender and race to show each proportion of total and freshman male college students for three racial groups such as Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in Texas public two-year and four-year sectors.

Specifically, we used IPEDS data to gain additional data that were not available through the *8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study*, such as number and percentage of total enrollment of the racial groups we selected for our analysis in both two-year and four-year sectors in Texas. In addition, we also used disaggregated IPEDS data on degree completion by gender and race to present each proportion of certificate and bachelor's degree completers for the three racial groups. To supplement our use of IPEDS data, we used data on bridged-race population from in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Wide-Ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (CDC WONDER) to identify the numbers and proportions of Texas population aged between 18 and 34, broken down by gender race. These data were useful for us to make comparisons about how educational outcomes for various racial groups were commensurate (or not) with the total population of the state.

We also accessed statewide, longitudinal, student-level data from the THECB, the *8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study*. The *8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* tracked students over an 11-year period to determine the percentage of Texas' eighth grade students who eventually achieved any postsecondary certificate or degree from a Texas college or university, or who may still be enrolled in a Texas two-year or four-year institution after 11 years (THECB, 2016b). We used these data because it provides disaggregated data of race and gender for all 20 regional Educational Service Centers (ESC) in Texas, which cannot be found in other longitudinal data sets.

In 1965, the Texas Legislature authorized the State Board of Education to establish 20 regional Educational Service Centers (ESC) that gather data and support local school districts within the state (Sáenz et al., 2018). We identified and used eight ESCs serving border (i.e., Edinburg, Midland, El Paso) and urban (i.e., Austin, Fort Worth, Houston, Richardson, San Antonio) regions in Texas. We chose these eight ESCs because combined, they represent the largest percentage of students in the state as they include the most populated metropolitan centers of the state (i.e., Houston, DFW metroplex, Austin, and San Antonio). In addition, we included ESCs that include border and geographically isolated regions as they are often left out or overlooked in major policy discussions in the state (Martinez et al., 2018). By using this longitudinal dataset, we examined college enrollment and degree/certificate completion by ESCs to look at Latino men student success across key regions of the state.

Lastly, as scholar-practitioners, we utilized our findings to consult with practitioners from the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color (Consortium) to inform our policy recommendation toward the end of this paper. This practice is consistent with educational research that encourages using underestimated practitioner knowledge for the purpose of advancing equity-focused work in higher education (Bensimon, 2007). The Consortium is a statewide initiative focused on advancing the educational outcomes for boys and males of color across the P-16 pipeline. The institutional relationships we have established with representatives lend insights to the practices, programs, and policies that are tailored to boys and men of color, particularly African American and Latino men in Texas. We used our findings to conduct separate meetings with Independent School District (ISD) and community college administrators. This practice for seeking practitioner knowledge (Bensimón, 2007) allowed us to gain more insights for explaining our descriptive findings within the context of their institutions and regions of the state.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Descriptive Analysis***

In a guide by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) for effectively approaching descriptive analysis in education, Loeb and colleagues (2017) argue that most policy-focused research is descriptive. According to Loeb and colleagues,

“the goal of quantitative description is not deep understanding of personal perspectives of a phenomenon, but a more general understanding of patterns across a population of interest” (p. 1). Furthermore, descriptive analysis is also “simplification of data” (Loeb et al., 2017, p. 1). This does not mean using generic tables of summary statistics, but instead identifying and explaining the conditions and circumstances of a “phenomenon or patterns in data that have not previously been recognized.” (Loeb et al., 2017, p. 1). As a result, we used descriptive analysis to not only identify enrollment and degree completion patterns for Latino men, but to underscore inequities across regions of the state through a policy lens. This analysis led us to generate mechanisms and intervention strategies for practitioners and policymakers to address educational inequities, particularly for Latino men in highly underserved areas.

### ***Critical Quantitative Inquiry***

In addition to using a descriptive analysis approach, we were careful about asking research questions that intentionally looked at educational equity disparities, with a special emphasis on Latino men. As such, we operationalized Rios-Aguilar’s (2014) approach to critical quantitative inquiry through several steps.

First, due to the large size of the state, a critical quantitative inquiry approach allowed us to “unmask inequities” that Latino men experience in different regions in Texas (Rios-Aguilar, 2014, p. 98). As equity-minded scholar-practitioners, we leveraged Rios-Aguilar’s (2014) approach to critical quantitative scholarship to further examine Latino men in overlooked regions across the state to inform current and future “policy efforts to reduce inequities” (p. 99). This meant that we used longitudinal disaggregated data to answer how educational outcomes of Latino men differ by various regions of the state, as well as to avoid a “one size fits all” approach for policy making purposes. More specifically, because Texas is a large state with rich cultural and racial diversity, we deviated from making deficit or shortsighted assumptions about Latino men as a student subgroup.

Second, Rios-Aguilar’s approach helped us maintain an asset-based mindset for translating research into equity-focused policies and practices. Namely, instead of disaggregating data by race, gender, and region of the state to point out what students and regions are “lacking” or “not doing well,” we used our analysis to draft policy recommendations that place the emphasis on systems and policies rather than the individual or marginalized communities (Campos, 2013). This meant that we did not ascribe to “blaming” regions, leaders, or educational sectors about failed policies and practices. Instead, we used data to ask critical questions that strive to promote data-informed policies across the state that acknowledge cultural and regional differences.

Third, during our analysis of the data, we intentionally ask ourselves about the ways in which we can use descriptive analysis for the purpose of policy advocacy for practitioners and policymakers and avoid “unnecessary dichotomies” and “circular thoughts” to better support the educational outcomes of Latino men (Rios-Aguilar, 2014). This approach centered research, knowledge, beliefs, and experiences held by policymakers and practitioners – which is often underestimated (Bensimon, 2007) – to offer practical policy implications to better serve Latino men specific to the Texas context (Campos, 2013; Martinez et al., 2018).

### **Limitations**

This study, like all studies, has limitations worth noting. While the *8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* tracked every student who started eighth grade in a Texas public school in 2006, the longitudinal tool did not include educational outcomes for students from private Texas high schools, out-of-state high schools, as well as students who had earned a GED or had been home-



schooled. In addition, the data did not capture the important trend of moving out of state to attend college. Furthermore, variables included in this dataset are limited, and it does not provide statistical explanation or background for these students' educational experiences and behaviors.

In terms of race categories, the *8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* only includes White, African American, Hispanic, and "Others." Because we wanted to include data on groups outside of the ones listed, we contacted the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to inquire about which racial groups were included in the "Others" category, as well as to understand why data were aggregated this way. We learned that because these data were made publicly available, data on numerically smaller racial groups (e.g., Asian, multiracial) were not included to protect student data anonymity, especially in regions of the state where these racial groups are heavily underrepresented. Thus, because it is unclear which racial groups were included in the "Other" category, we decided not to use these data in our analysis.

## Findings

We were interested in examining educational equity disparities by looking at the postsecondary outcomes of Latino men in Texas. Specifically, our analysis focused on enrollment and degree/certificate completion. We discuss the following findings: (1) The total enrollment composition of Latino men has consistently increased over time compared to other male racial subgroups, which is especially pronounced in the community college sector; (2) Although Latino men enroll at higher percentages in community colleges, degree completion, particularly for bachelor's degrees, has not kept up with the state's Latinx/a/o population growth; (3) Border ESCs of El Paso and Edinburg show higher than average Latino male enrollment and degree/certificate outcomes than other ESC regions and the statewide Hispanic male average.

### **Finding #1: The total enrollment composition of Latino men has consistently increased over time compared to other male racial subgroups, which is especially pronounced in the community college sector**

The number and proportion of Latino male students' total enrollment at public four-year institutions in Texas has considerably increased in the last two decades. As presented in Table 2, in 2000, a total of 161,694 male students enrolled in public four-year institutions in Texas, and this number has increased by almost 50% between 2000 and 2018. About 45% of total enrollment at public four-year institutions in Texas were males, and the proportion has remained consistent over the years (see Table 1). Most importantly, we found that the total enrollment number and proportion of Latino men in at Texas public four-year institutions dramatically increased from 30,185 and 8.5% in 2000 to 85,038 and 15.7% in 2018. By contrast, the percentage of White male total enrollment has declined from 27.6% in 2000 to 16.8% in 2018, and the percentage of Black males enrolled at Texas public four-year institutions has remained fairly constant within the same period of time.

Shifting our attention to college enrollment in the public two-year sector, we found that the proportion of total enrollment at Texas public two-year colleges for Latino men has also increased between 2000 and 2018. This is worth highlighting because the proportion of enrollment of all males in Texas public two-year sector has remained constant yet underrepresented within the same period. As presented in Table 3, similarly to what we saw with four-year enrollment, Latino male total enrollment at public two-year colleges has increased by about 80% between 2000 and 2018, from 180,578 to 326,574, respectively.

**Table 1**

*Number and Percentage of the Texas Population Aged between 18-34 by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*

Race	2000		2003		2006		2009		2012		2015		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Latino male	1,090,375	20.3	1,187,588	21.1	1,260,295	21.6	1,342,231	22.0	1,426,089	22.1	1,506,767	22.1	1,580,902	22.5
White male	1,237,374	23.0	1,229,869	21.9	1,221,040	21.0	1,248,744	20.4	1,296,762	20.1	1,335,226	19.6	1,329,548	18.9
Black male	316,889	5.9	327,493	5.8	351,795	6.0	369,839	6.0	408,583	6.3	446,127	6.6	478,260	6.8
Total male	2,754,192	51.2	2,870,586	51.1	2,967,991	50.9	3,107,109	50.8	3,294,771	51.0	3,480,495	51.1	3,599,686	51.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,376,585</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,621,805</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,825,726</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,114,629</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,459,829</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,806,016</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,032,407</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: CDC Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemiologic Research, 2000 to 2018.

Note: Table presents bridged-race population estimates produced by the U.S. Census Bureau in collaboration with the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and released by NCHS.

**Table 2**

*Number and Percentage of Total Enrollment at Public 4-Year Institutions in Texas by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*

Race	2000		2003		2006		2009		2012		2015		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Latino male	30,185	8.5	36,031	9.7	40,668	10.5	47,003	11.3	60,179	13.3	73,733	14.7	85,038	15.7
White male	98,578	27.6	95,696	25.7	95,960	24.7	95,328	23.0	93,605	20.6	92,760	18.5	91,102	16.8
Black male	14,861	4.2	16,739	4.5	18,010	4.6	20,379	4.9	21,317	4.7	22,013	4.4	23,314	4.3
Total male	161,694	45.3	167,815	45.2	175,355	45.1	188,784	45.6	207,335	45.7	226,415	45.1	241,559	44.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>357,158</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>371,646</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>389,121</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>414,196</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>454,032</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>502,384</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>541,873</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey, Fall 2000 to Fall 2018.

**Table 3***Number and Percentage of Total Enrollment at Public 2-Year Institutions in Texas by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*

Race	2000		2003		2006		2009		2012		2015		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Latino male	52,965	12.7	64,581	11.9	75,851	13.1	94,817	13.5	117,230	15.7	129,703	17.5	141,882	18.3
White male	94,659	22.8	115,800	21.4	114,913	19.8	124,155	17.7	118,117	15.8	112,818	15.3	106,022	13.7
Black male	18,666	4.5	23,347	4.3	25,299	4.4	33,115	4.7	38,983	5.2	37,922	5.1	36,332	4.7
Total male	180,578	43.4	224,010	41.4	239,053	41.3	295,593	42.2	310,961	41.6	319,336	43.2	326,574	42.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>415,772</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>541,032</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>579,492</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>699,910</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>746,787</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>739,661</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>775,687</b>	<b>100</b>

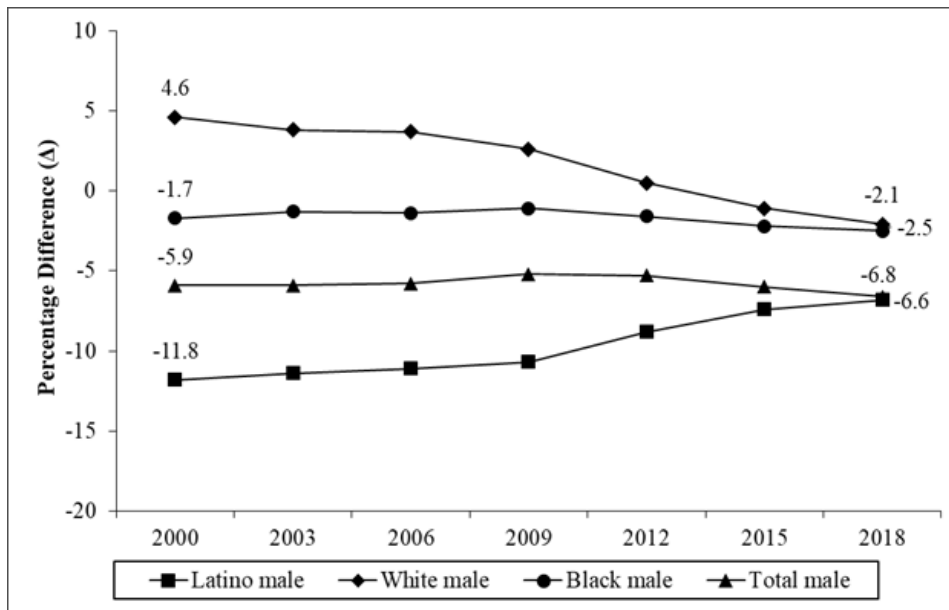
*Source:* IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey, Fall 2000 to Fall 2018

Broken down by race and gender, IPEDS data showed that the proportion of Latino male total enrollment at Texas public two-year colleges has increased from 12.7% in 2000 to 18.3% in 2018. In addition, Latino male two-year college enrollment number in 2018 was 2.7 times larger compared to Latino male two-year enrollment number in 2000. On the other hand, similar to the four-year sector, enrollment for Black men in Texas public four-year colleges has remained fairly constant between 2000 and 2018 proportionately with the state's population, while the number of Black men two-year college enrollment has increased by 100% from 2000 to 2018.

To put these enrollment numbers into context, it is important to provide comparisons between the total Texas population and college enrollment over the same period of time, especially by disaggregating by race. Figure 1 provides the percentage differences between Texas population ages 18 to 34 and public two-year college enrollment trends broken down by gender and race. In 2000, the data suggests Latino men were considerably underrepresented in both in the two-year and four-year public sectors in Texas. Specifically, the proportion of Latino men in Texas population aged 18 to 34 was 20.3% but the proportion of Latino men in total enrollment at Texas public four-year institutions was only 8.5%, which is 11.8 percentage points below the representation of Latino men in Texas population aged 18 to 34. In the same year, Black men public four-year college enrollment rates in Texas was 1.7 percentage points lower than Black men representation in the Texas population. By contrast, White men were overrepresented in 2000.

**Figure 1**

*Percentage Difference between Texas Population and Total Enrollment at Texas Public 4-Year Institutions by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*



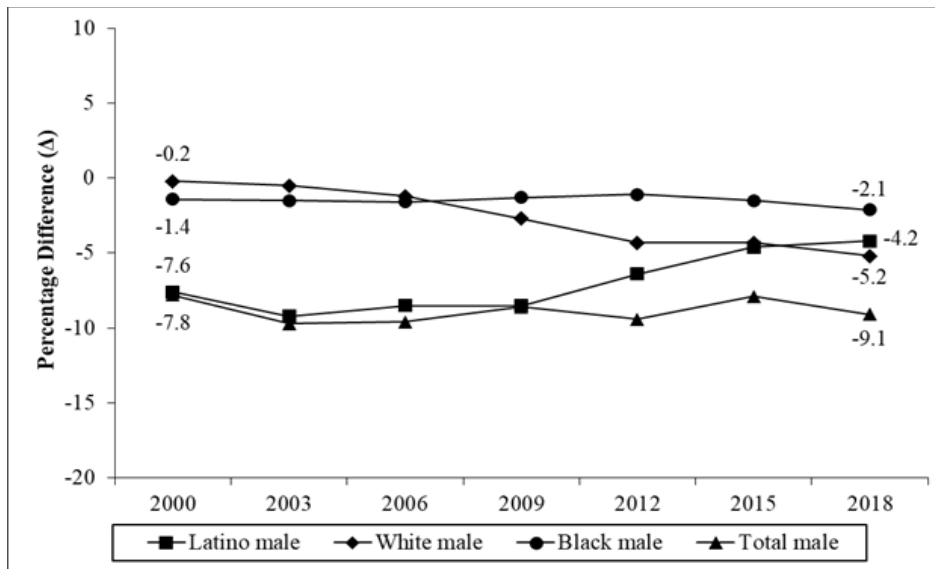
Source: CDC Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemiologic Research, 2000 to 2018; IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey, Fall 2000 to Fall 2018.

Note. Figure presents the percentage differences ( $\Delta$ ) in the proportions of all males and three racial male subpopulations—Latino male, White male, and Black male—between Texas population and Texas public 4-year college enrollment.

Figure 2 offers another glimpse at the persistent proportion gaps between Texas population and college enrollment for Latino men and their male peers. In 2000, the proportion of Latino men in Texas public two-year college enrollment was 7.6 percentage points lower than that of Texas population aged 18 to 34. Compared to the total population, Latino men in the Texas public two-year sector remained underrepresented between 2000 and 2009. However, as seen in the data, two-year college enrollment patterns for Latino men have improved since 2009. At the same time, there are still improvements to be made, and within the 2018 data, we found that Latino men in Texas public two-year colleges are under enrolled by 4.2 percentage points compared to the Latino male Texas population aged 18 to 34. Similar to the Latino male proportion difference in four-year sector, the Latino male proportion difference in two-year sector has decreased by 3.4% from 2000 to 2018.

**Figure 2**

*Percentage Difference between Texas Population and Total Enrollment at Texas Public 2-Year Institutions by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*



*Source:* CDC Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemiologic Research, 2000 to 2018; IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey, Fall 2000 to Fall 2018.

*Note.* Figure presents the percentage differences ( $\Delta$ ) in the proportions of all males and three racial male subpopulations—Latino male, White male, and Black male—between Texas population and Texas public 2-year college enrollment.

### **Finding #2: Although Latino men enroll at higher percentages in community colleges, degree completion, particularly for bachelor's degrees, has not kept up with the state's Latinx/a/o population growth**

In addition to the overall increase of college enrollment of Latino men in Texas at both public two-year and four-year institutions over time, these increases have not been consistent with the rapid population growth of Latinx/a/os in the state. Even though substantial gains have been made in the past two decades, as previously explained in Figures 1 and 2, Latino male college enrollment remains underrepresented considering the state population makeup. This is a significant finding considering the goals set by 60X30TX, signaling that there is considerably more work to do to close the educational achievement gaps (THECB, 2016).

In terms of degree attainment rates, Latino male degree attainment has risen sharply over time, especially in the two-year sector. As shown in Table 5, the percentage of associate degrees awarded to Latino men has gone from 8.3% in 2000 to 16.2% in 2018, a 95% increase. At the same time, when looking at the percentage of bachelor's degree awarded (see Table 4), the percentage increase is more modest, from 7.6% in 2000 to 12.5% in 2018, about a 65% increase. This is a noteworthy pattern because it highlights the degree/certificate completion gaps that exist between the two-year and four-year sectors for Latinx/a/os in postsecondary education, as also documented by other scholars (e.g., Crisp & Nuñez, 2014; Gándara et al., 2012).

**Table 4**

*Number and Percentage of Bachelor's Degree Awarded from Texas Colleges and Universities in A Given Year by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*

Race	2000		2003		2006		2009		2012		2015		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Latino male	4,408	7.6	4,910	7.6	5,946	8.1	7,295	8.9	8,863	9.8	11,542	11.5	14,219	12.5
White male	16,258	27.9	17,170	26.6	18,348	25.1	19,560	23.9	20,091	22.3	20,416	20.3	20,736	18.2
Black male	1,456	2.5	1,727	2.7	2,028	2.8	2,503	3.1	2,904	3.2	3,513	3.5	3,806	3.3
Total male	24,764	42.5	27,124	42.1	30,140	41.3	33,745	41.3	37,298	41.4	42,199	42.0	47,255	41.4
<b>Total</b>	58,306	100	64,475	100	73,010	100	81,792	100	90,160	100	100,389	100	114,171	100

Source: IPEDS Completions survey data, 1999-2000 to 2017-2018.

**Table 5.**

*Number and Percentage of Associate Degree Awarded from Texas Colleges and Universities in A Given Year by Racial Group of Male Students (2000-2018)*

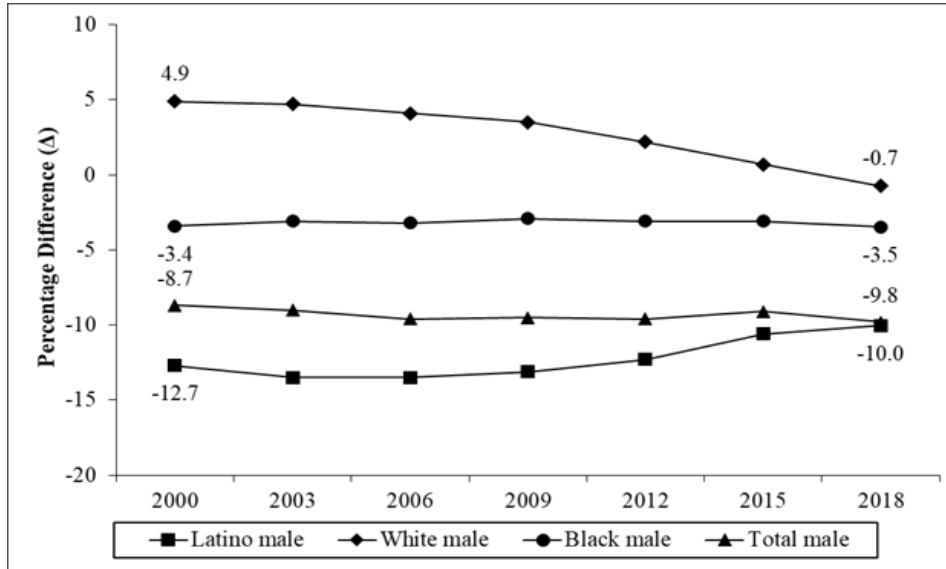
Race	2000		2003		2006		2009		2012		2015		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Latino male	1,948	8.3	2,760	9.5	3,453	9.6	4,048	10.0	7,319	12.5	10,382	14.3	14,285	16.2
White male	5,227	22.2	6,076	20.8	6,868	19.1	7,283	18.1	9,109	15.6	11,361	15.7	12,773	14.5
Black male	1,243	5.3	1,420	4.9	1,502	4.2	1,766	4.4	2,440	4.2	3,223	4.5	3,754	4.3
Total male	9,035	38.3	11,024	37.8	13,051	36.3	15,105	37.4	21,798	37.3	28,326	39.1	35,403	40.1
<b>Total</b>	23,583	100	29,162	100	35,942	100	40,344	100	58,475	100	72,368	100	88,326	100

Source: IPEDS Completions survey data, 1999-2000 to 2017-2018.

Figure 3 shows the percentage difference between the Texas population and baccalaureate degrees conferred by male racial groups from 2000 to 2018. Latino male bachelor’s degree completion rates have slightly increased but remains proportionally under the state population growth (-12.7 in 2000 to -10.00 in 2018). Black male percentage difference has remained almost flat (-3.4 in 2000 to -3.5 in 2018). White male percentage difference has gone from being overrepresented (4.9 in 2000) to slightly underrepresented over time (-0.7 in 2018).

**Figure 3**

*Percentage Difference between Texas Population and Bachelor’s Degree Conferred by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*



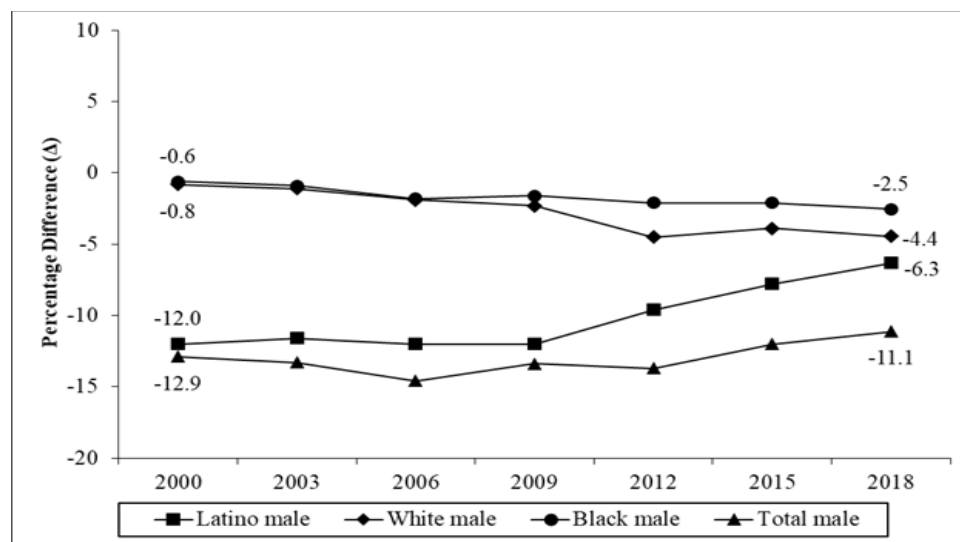
Source: CDC Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemiologic Research, 2000 to 2018; IPEDS Completions survey data, 1999-2000 to 2017-2018.

Note. Figure presents the percentage differences ( $\Delta$ ) in the proportions of all males and three racial male subpopulations—Latino male, White male, and Black male—between Texas population and bachelor’s degree conferred in Texas.

Figure 4 shows the percentage difference between the Texas population and associate’s degrees conferred by racial group of men from 2000 to 2018. Commensurate with the male Texas population, Figure 4 shows more robust gains for Latino men than any other racial group over time. This trend highlights the accelerated growth of degrees conferred to Latino men in the 2-year sector, particularly when compared to their Black and White male peers. Both Black and White men have slightly decreased, underscoring the importance of taking a closer look at states’ population growth trends and the work of community colleges in narrowing the educational achievement gaps, particularly across various racial groups and across regions of the state. The net finding takes a closer look at how these patterns can vary from region to region.

**Figure 4**

*Percentage Difference between Texas Population and Associate Degree Conferred by Racial Group of Males (2000-2018)*



*Source:* CDC Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemioic Research, 2000 to 2018; IPEDS Completions survey data, 1999-2000 to 2017-2018.

*Note.* Figure presents the percentage differences ( $\Delta$ ) in the proportions of all males and three racial male subpopulations—Latino male, White male, and Black male—between Texas population and associate degree conferred in Texas.

### **Finding #3: Border ESCs of El Paso and Edinburg show higher Latino male enrollment and degree/certificate rates than other ESC regions and the statewide Hispanic male average**

Coupled with the increase of Latino male students' total enrollment at public two-year sectors, and Latino male student degree attainment rates at both public four-and-two-year institutions not reflecting the state's Latinx/a/o total population growth, the findings show slightly higher than average enrollment and completion rates in border ESCs for Latino men.

As highlighted in Figure 5, for the ESC border regions of El Paso and Edinburg, the percentage for Latino men enrolled at two-year colleges were 35% and 34% respectively, 3 percentage and 4 percentage points higher than the statewide percentages for all men and Latino men at 32% and 30% respectively. A similar enrollment pattern is reflected at four-year institutions, and the statewide male enrollment percentage at four-year institutions is 18%. Both El Paso and Edinburg regions show 19% for Latino male student enrollment, 1 percentage point higher than the statewide percentage for male student enrollment. Further, the four-year college enrollment rates for Latino men in the border regions are significantly higher when compared to 12% for statewide Latino enrollment rates.

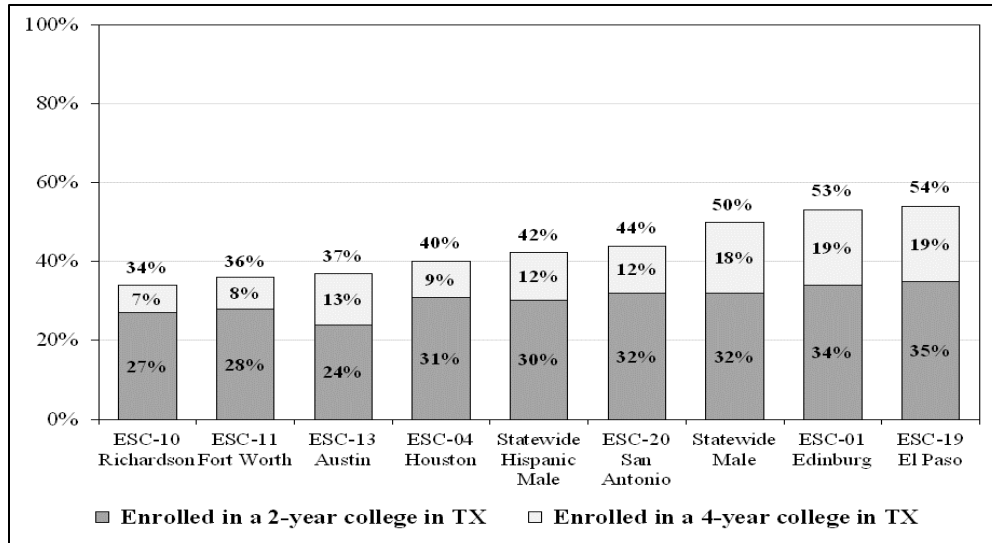
Similar to enrollment patterns that demonstrated urban and border ESC regional differences, our data showed urban ESC regions lagging behind the state and border regions in degree/certificate completion. For example, as shown in Figure 6, the statewide degree/certificate percentage for male students is 17%. Degree/certificate completion rates for ESC urban regions of Richardson, Austin, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio are lower than the 17% completion rates of statewide male students. The difference in degree attainment percentage for Latino men in urban ESC regions is about two times lower than the statewide average of men. The border ESC regions of El Paso and Edinburg continue to have higher percentages than urban ESC regions and the statewide Hispanic



male average, but they are still slightly lower than the statewide average for all males (14% and 16%, respectively, as compared to 17% for all male statewide average).

**Figure 5**

*Enrolled in Texas Two-Year and Four-Year Institutions, Latino Male Eighth- Graders by Select ESC Regions – FY 2006 Eighth Grade Cohort Tracked through FY 2017*

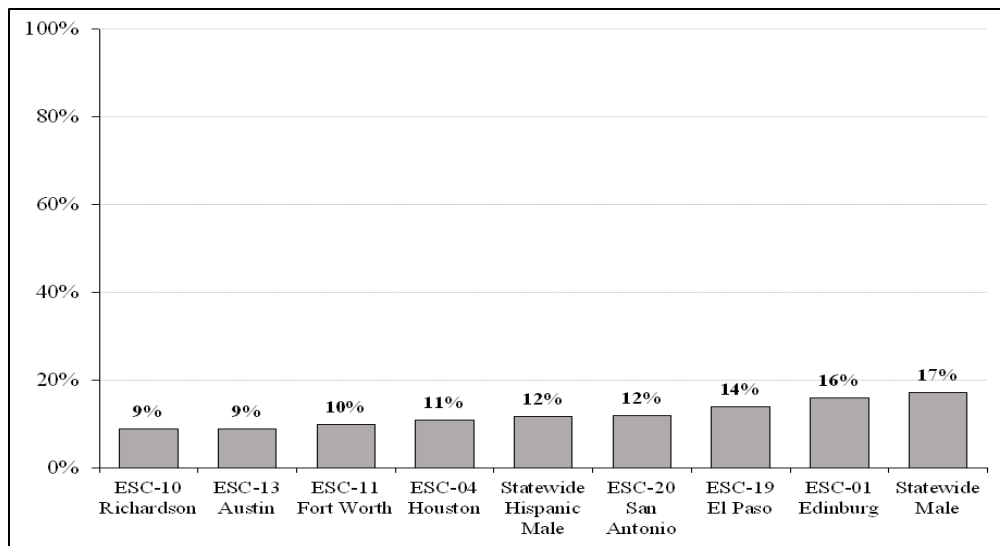


Source: THECB 8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study, FY 2006 Cohort

Note. 73,486 Latino male students in Texas began 8th grade in 2006. Enrollment at for-profit colleges or out of state institutions were not included. ESC = Education Service Center.

**Figure 6**

*Earned Certificate/Degree in Texas, Latino Male Eighth-Graders by Select ESC Region – FY 2006 Eighth Grade Cohort Tracked through FY 2017*



Source: THECB 8th Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study, FY 2006 Cohort

Note. 73,486 Latino male students in Texas began 8th grade in 2006. Degree attainment from for-profit colleges or out of state institutions were not included. ESC = Education Service Center.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine educational equity gaps by looking closely at postsecondary outcomes of Latino men in Texas. This analysis was made possible as a result of having access to a robust state education data system. Specifically, having access to publicly available longitudinal data tools from the *8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* allowed us to analyze data by race, gender, and regions of the state through a policy-focused lens (Loeb et al., 2017; Rios Aguilar, 2014). Thus, it is important to note that having access to these types of state-level disaggregated datasets is vital for researchers, educational systems, and policymakers to make equity and policy-focused decisions about student outcomes.

The descriptive analysis unveiled that postsecondary enrollment rates – especially in community colleges – for Latino men in Texas community has steadily increased since 2000. However, the degree/certificate completion rates are not proportionate with the Latinx/a/o population growth over time. For policy purposes, especially for 60X30TX, it is important to focus more closely on strategies and interventions towards degree/certificate completion, particularly within the four-year sector as an effort to level the playing field.

When looking at data by ESCs, we learned that educational outcomes of Latino men were higher than average in border regions (i.e., El Paso & Edinburg), especially compared to the statewide Hispanic male average and our selected urban ESCs. Our analysis also led us to see that postsecondary outcomes for Latino men are not consistent across the state, with some regions performing better than others. Tied to our research questions, understanding how these educational inequities differ across ESCs by looking at racial male subgroups can serve as a starting base for reexamining our collective approach for improving educational outcomes in large states like Texas. Namely, because educational outcomes do vary by region of the state, it is critical *not* to ascribe to a “one-size-fits-all approach.” Instead, we recommend identifying region and district-specific mechanisms and implementations (which can be implemented through plans such as 60X30TX) that contribute to closing educational inequities more effectively. This is where relying on practitioner knowledge – coupled with disaggregated data – from administrators from these regions could also make a significant difference (Bensimón, 2007).

There were also several key takeaways worth highlighting for the purpose of enacting policy change. First and central to this study, postsecondary enrollment for Latino men in Texas has seen substantial gains over the years. In terms of statewide policy education planning, this serves as evidence that prior plans such as Closing the Gaps by 2015 have had an impact on improving educational outcomes for Latinx/a/o students to a certain degree (Tajalli & Ortiz, 2018). Thus, maintaining (and expanding) incentives featured by Closing the Gaps by 2015 (e.g., outreach programs aimed at providing financial aid to Latinx/a/o students, dual enrollment) are certainly worth considering to achieve the goals set by 60X30TX. However, our research suggests that these incentives could be even more impactful if they are tailored to the specific needs of ESCs. For example, are there specific regions of the state where we should be more proactive about promoting financial incentives (e.g., TEXAS Grant, dual enrollment) for minoritized student populations as we get closer to achieving the goals of 60X30TX? These are the types of questions that could only be answered by taking a closer look at disaggregated data, which is precisely what this study sought to do.

Second, our findings show that Texas is not much different than national data trends on Latinx/a/o college enrollment (Snyder et al., 2019), specifically with Latino men choosing community colleges over bachelor’s degree granting institutions as their entry point to postsecondary education. Studies have shown that tuition for four-year colleges in Texas has

remarkably increased over time, especially following tuition deregulation in 2003 (Flores & Shepherd, 2014; THECB, 2018a, 2018b). Therefore, it is important for statewide policy plans such as 60X30TX to take a closer look at key interventions in the four-year sector, especially since it is likely that tuition in the four-year sector will continue to rise unless we see different policy legislation. Policy efforts must also be focused on developing stronger transfer pipelines between educational sectors. This means that bachelor's degree granting institutions must proactively reexamine their policies and practices to develop a transfer receptive culture (Del Real Viramontes, 2021; Jain et al., 2011) and clear articulation agreements that prioritize historically minoritized student populations.

Third, our findings allowed us to see differences in educational patterns across regions. Specifically, border regions of Edinburg and El Paso showed slightly higher enrollment rates in both the community college and bachelor's degree granting sector. This is important since policy discussions around border regions are often overlooked in major statewide policy discussions (Martinez et al., 2018). Studies suggest that border and geographically isolated areas have the tendency to have higher levels of cross sector collaboration (Burmicky et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2018). Cross sector collaborations tend to promote college-going culture and more pathways to college (e.g., transfer programs). For example, Burmicky and colleagues (2019) asserted the prevalence of dual enrollment opportunities in border regions like South and West Texas regions, which are geographically isolated. Some of these areas also have a high concentration of Early College High School (ECHS) programs, which foster higher levels of collaboration between institutions (Martinez et al., 2018). In fact, these initiatives have been recognized by *Excelexencia* in Education through their *Seal of Excelexencia* awards (e.g., El Paso Community College ECHS program), and have also been attributed to some of the success we have seen with the implementation of Closing the Gaps by 2015 (Tajalli & Ortiz, 2018).

As a result, administrators and policymakers should look more closely into these initiatives for drafting policies and programs that are tailored to specific regions and address racially minoritized student populations. Furthermore, administrators should explore the institutional and cultural contexts that influence these programs and initiatives. For instance, what cultural norms and/or practices foster a college-going culture in these parts of the state and how can they, if at all, be implemented across other regions of the state (e.g., urban regions)?

Lastly, consistent with prior research, our findings also underscored the importance of conducting policy-focused disaggregate analysis of data to get a firm grip on the latest educational data trends (Loeb et al., 2017; Sáenz et al., 2018). Policy efforts centered on racial equity within the P-20 educational pipeline should be at the forefront of the legislative agenda, particularly since 60X30TX has already set goals specific to increase outcomes for Latinx/a/o and African American communities, in addition to the economic challenges (e.g., unemployment) that these populations have experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak (Saenz & Sparks, 2020). This research also showed the imperative need to conduct disaggregate data analyses using state-level data and other federal datasets (e.g., NCES), which are often hard to access for policymakers and administrators to make data-driven policy-focused decisions (Loeb et al., 2017).

## **Implications for Educational Policy Planning**

Based on our findings, we share key educational policy planning implications that emerged from our analysis. We break down these implications by the following policy planning sections: (a) Implications for P-20 educational pipeline; and (b) Implications for legislative agenda.

It is important to note that these recommendations were based on our data exploration of longitudinal data and practitioner knowledge. During the process of developing these recommendations, we met separately with Independent School Districts (ISDs) and community college administrators from the Consortium to gain insights from student-facing practitioners and administrators. We believe the practitioner feedback we received from these administrators strengthened our recommendations. Thus, the following policy implications stem from our ongoing scholar-practitioner Consortium work addressing educational disparities for Latino men across the P-16 educational pipeline.

### **Implications for P-20 Educational Pipeline**

We share two implications regarding the P-20 educational pipeline: (a) expanding curricular and co-curricular opportunities for Latino men; and (b) cultivating cross-sector partnerships and collaborations across regions.

#### ***Expand curricular and co-curricular involvement opportunities addressing specifically Latino men's educational and career aspirations.***

Both the data and Consortium stakeholders have taught us that the educational needs of Latino men vary tremendously depending on the region. For example, given the data showed that college enrollment patterns were higher than average in the border regions, we looked closer at the El Paso Community College (EPCC) and Early College High School (ECHS) initiative, a Consortium partner. This initiative provides an opportunity for students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate degree in four years. This initiative not only focuses on recruiting predominantly Latinx/a/o students, but also economically disadvantaged, first-generation, and English Language Learners students, acknowledging the various needs of their students and the region. This initiative has boosted high school graduation rates above the national average (approximately 24%), and the vast majority (approximately 74%) move onto attaining an associate's degree (*Excelexencia* in Education, 2019). Because EPCC is in a more geographically isolated location (e.g., West Texas), they are deliberate about offering programs such as ECHS to equip students with the necessary levels of education and skills to be successful and meet the workforce needs in their region. While understanding that early college high school programs also have their limitations and shortcomings (Martinez et al., 2018), this initiative has yielded positive results for the region of El Paso.

Furthermore, EPCC also offers a great academic and personal support model for serving Latino men. For instance, according to an upper-level administrator at EPCC, the Tejano Empowerment Network (TEN) is an initiative specifically focused on raising awareness of the educational disparities for young men of color in higher education. While open to all students, this initiative leverages students, faculty, and staff who are committed to improving the educational outcomes for young men of color. TEN has provided countless opportunities for Latino men that include but are not limited to peer networks, mentorship, access to speakers, and professional and career development. While TEN happens to be a program in the border region of El Paso, we acknowledge there are many other men of color programs and initiatives doing similar work in the state (e.g., San Antonio College Men Empowerment Network (SACMEN)<sup>1</sup> and the Men of L.E.G.A.C.I.<sup>2</sup> at the University of Houston – Downtown). These initiatives underscore the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about SACMEN, see <https://www.alamo.edu/sac/experience-sac/campus-life/getting-involved/clubs-and-organizations/men-empowerment-network/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information about Men of L.E.G.A.C.I, see <https://www.uhd.edu/academics/humanities/minority-male-success-programs/Pages/men-of-legaci.aspx>

importance for educational institutions to create men of color-specific support spaces and programming to address their academic and social needs, and research asserts that these programs are critical for institutions to develop more capacity building for recruitment, enrollment, and persistence of men of color (Brooms et al., 2018; Huerta, in press).

***Cultivate robust stakeholder cross-sector collaborations and partnerships that suit the needs of the region and their students***

In addition to learning about the impact of men of color initiatives such as EPCC's ECHS and men of color specific support spaces, we have also learned about the importance of developing strong relationships with various stakeholders, particularly across educational sectors (Sáenz et al., 2016). For example, some ECHS students complete their associate degree during their junior year and take courses towards their bachelor degree at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) while still in high school. Furthermore, many of our Consortium partners have shared that the success of their initiatives is often due to the strong partnership between the ISD's and higher education institutions. Developing strong collaborative partnerships allows for these institutional and community partners to integrate policies and practices that provide students with more effective support that suits their educational and career aspirations. For instance, in addition to cultivating strong ties between local ISDs and UTEP, EPCC is also working to build relationships with the local business community. This strategy allows for widening their approach beyond the classroom for serving Latino men, as well as for diversifying the ways in which institutions can advance educational and workforce needs of their region, a key component of statewide initiatives such as 60x30TX.

That being said, we have learned that collaborations can look differently depending on the region. For geographically isolated areas such as El Paso and Edinburg border regions, strong cross-sector collaborations tend to happen more organically due to their interdependence with one another. For example, the RGV Focus<sup>3</sup> works collaboratively with education agencies in the surrounding counties of the Rio Grande Valley (i.e. Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, & Willacy) to improve educational outcomes across the region. For urban regions, these collaborations do not always happen organically, and in some cases, it requires greater coordinating efforts. Thus, it is critical to developing partnerships that suit the specific needs of the students, employers, and various stakeholders within the region.

**Implications for Legislative Agenda**

It is important to highlight that the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been catastrophic for the educational pipeline, especially among low-income and racially minoritized students (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020). Furthermore, trends in postsecondary enrollment have fluctuated tremendously since the pandemic outbreak, and recent data show that enrollment for Latinx/a/o students is in a deep decline in both the community college and bachelor's degree granting sectors (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). As a result, to highlight where these data trends are being magnified the most for racially minoritized students, it is more critical than ever before for state agencies to invest in disaggregating data by race and gender, especially as it pertains to achieving the goals set by 60X30TX.

Given this context, the following implications are tailored to administrators and policymakers looking to advance the educational outcomes of Latino men through legislation.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about RGV Focus, see <https://www.edtx.org/rgv-focus/home>

### ***Higher Education Enrollment: Community Colleges and Technical Colleges***

Given the volatile state of the economy, postsecondary enrollment is expected to fluctuate dramatically over time. Although community colleges typically see enrollment gains during economically recessionary times, much has changed under the pandemic, and community college presidents have made enrollment their highest priority (Kim, Krishnan, Law, & Rounsaville, 2020). Legislative agendas often prioritize long-term budget needs, but close attention to community college and technical college enrollment should be emphasized during times of uncertainty.

Specifically, legislative efforts should be aimed towards funding the development of workforce training programs, retooling, and acquisition of new skills and certifications, as well as programs at the associate degree or higher, that match emerging market needs and opportunities (e.g., healthcare, digital services pharmaceutical, eCommerce). Broadly speaking, community colleges and technical colleges are uniquely positioned to sustain the type of training and credentialing needed to ensure smoother reentry into the workforce for Latino men who were disproportionately affected by the residual effects of the pandemic (Saenz & Spikes, 2020). Due to high unemployment rates, Latino men are likely to postpone their educational plans to attend to work demands and family needs (Carnevalis & Fasules, 2017). Thus, funding to incentivize community college and technical college enrollment to acquire workforce training is more critical than ever before, as well as developing stronger transfer pathways and articulation agreements (Del Real Viramontes, 2021). Coordinating appropriate funds towards curriculum redesign, workforce success, retooling, and career development and placement should be a part of the state support budget formula.

### ***Dual Enrollment, Early College High School Programs, & Transfer Pathways***

More coordinated and transparent efforts between educational sectors (i.e., K-12, community colleges, & bachelor's degree granting institutions) can provide greater opportunities for Latino men to persist through the P-16 educational pipeline. As previously mentioned, initiatives such as Early College High School (ECHS) programs and dual enrollment have shown to provide more opportunities for students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate degree within four years (*Excelexencia* in Education, 2019). More timely coordination for these initiatives should be at the forefront of legislative agendas, particularly to ensure more efficient time-to-degree and to plug students back into the workforce. Furthermore, K-12 schools are experiencing drops in enrollment, particularly among low-income communities of color, as a result of the pandemic. Issues such as lack of infrastructure, remote instruction, and limited access to technology have made it more difficult for low-income communities of color to thrive in this environment. As such, students that need these initiatives the most may not be able to have access to them any time soon. While understanding that ECHS also have their limitations and shortcomings (Martinez et al., 2018), these initiatives have the potential to yield promising results if coordinated well.

Furthermore, more legislative efforts should be aimed towards addressing barriers caused by lack of centralized efforts between the K-12 and postsecondary sectors, particularly for dual enrollment. While dual enrollment has the potential to facilitate smoother entry to postsecondary education and college success, more information needs to be made available to students about how their participation in dual enrollment impacts their long-term financial aid, college and career planning, and workforce development. Existing policies are currently not doing enough to incentivize dual credit enrollment and continuation of additional courses (Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2020). Overall, more transparency and predictability with dual enrollment and ECHS should be at the forefront of legislative efforts.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study provided an opportunity to disseminate disaggregated state-level data to highlight more nuanced approaches for advancing the educational outcomes of Latino men across the education pipeline. Access to robust state education data systems such as the *8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Longitudinal Study* made it possible for us as researchers to conduct an equity-focused state-level analysis on the educational outcomes of Latino men. Thus, it is important to urge state and educational agencies (e.g., coordinating boards) across the country to continue to make data like these publicly available to educational sectors (e.g., K-12), researchers, and policymakers. As we work towards meeting the goals set by 60X30TX, this is of great importance for administrators and policymakers to make equity-focused, data-informed decisions about student outcomes.

While several educational researchers have focused on studying Latino men in postsecondary education using large-scale datasets, this study provided a closer look at the educational outcomes of Latino men various regions within the state by using student-level statewide data. Through our research and our work with the Consortium, we have learned that using statewide data for highlighting nuanced educational patterns for Latino men is highly valuable to local and state policymakers, educational agencies, and institutions. These stakeholders (e.g., practitioners, policymakers) often rely on these data to make decisions about their schools, organizations, institutions and establish new policies. Furthermore, it enables stakeholders with current and valuable benchmarking data that are not always available because of time limitations or lack of personnel/staff to disaggregate data in innovative ways. This study shed more nuanced information about the educational outcomes of Latino men in Texas in ways that are not always accessible to everyone (Loeb et al., 2017).

Lastly, this study sought to promote collaboration by bringing practitioner knowledge to these policy implications (Bensimón, 2007). By virtue of having access to the Consortium, we were able to receive feedback about our recommendations through administrators and practitioners who work with Latino men in Texas. In addition, our discussion named specific examples of programs and initiatives across the state tailored to Latino men and/or men of color populations. These programs and initiatives have in many ways paved the way for other schools and administrators who are also willing to address educational disparities in their regions. Through our work with the Consortium we have learned that institutions desire to collaborate with one another to find effective solutions to larger issues. Therefore, we believe this study aimed at cultivating more efforts towards cross-sector and statewide collaborations to increase awareness about male of color educational disparities (Rodriguez et al., 2018; Sáenz et al., 2016) and support other statewide efforts to meet goals set by 60x30TX.

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