



A STRONGER NATION

In California, postsecondary learning builds the talent that helps us rise



A policy brief from Lumina Foundation



California

The need to increase postsecondary attainment — the number of Americans who hold degrees and other high-quality credentials — has never been clearer. State leaders are responding to the growing global demand for talent by setting goals and enacting policies to increase attainment. Like Lumina Foundation, states have come to understand the scope of the effort required. Much is left to be done, but real progress is being made through the efforts of those who are committed to assuring that millions more Americans benefit from postsecondary education.

Lumina began reporting the attainment rate (associate degree and higher) in 2008. That year, the rate in California stood at 38.6 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 40.2 percent.

However, the degree attainment rate doesn't tell the whole story. Lumina has always said that other postsecondary credentials — including certificates and certifications — should count toward national and state goals for attainment, with one important caveat. To count, non-degree credentials should be of high quality, which we define as having clear and transparent learning outcomes leading to further education and employment.

This year, for the first time, we have nationally representative data on the number of Americans who hold high-quality postsecondary certificates; we now feel confident we can count these credentials toward attainment goals. In states, we are able to use estimates from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce on the number of residents who hold high-quality certificates as their highest earned credential. In California, 7 percent of residents between the ages of 25 and 64 hold a high-quality certificate. This brings the state's overall postsecondary attainment rate to 47.2 percent.

As the data in this report make clear, increasing overall attainment is not the only challenge California faces. There are also significant gaps in attainment that must be closed. While current systems work very well for many students, more postsecondary credentials must be earned by Americans who, by definition, are *post-traditional* learners. Compared with current students, they will be older; more will be African-American, Hispanic and Native American; and they will have lower incomes. Most will be first-generation students. The data in this report show the extent of the attainment gaps in California by race and ethnicity.

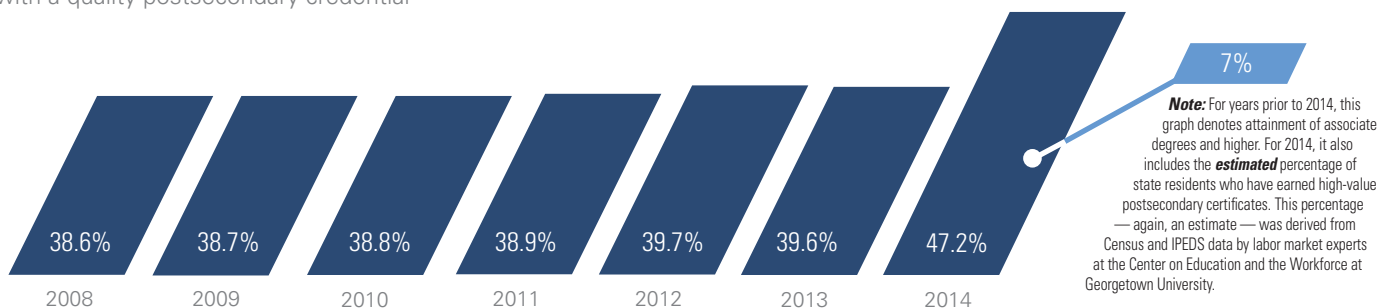
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Our analysis shows that California has not set a goal that meets Lumina's criteria; we urge state leaders to do so.

There is much more that states can do to increase attainment. It begins with assuring that all prospective students, including working adults, have access to affordable programs that lead to quality credentials. State policies such as outcomes-based funding can encourage colleges and universities to direct resources to approaches that increase student success. States can also help assure that students get full recognition for *all* of their learning — whether it was obtained in an institution, in the military or on the job — and can apply it to further education and credentials.

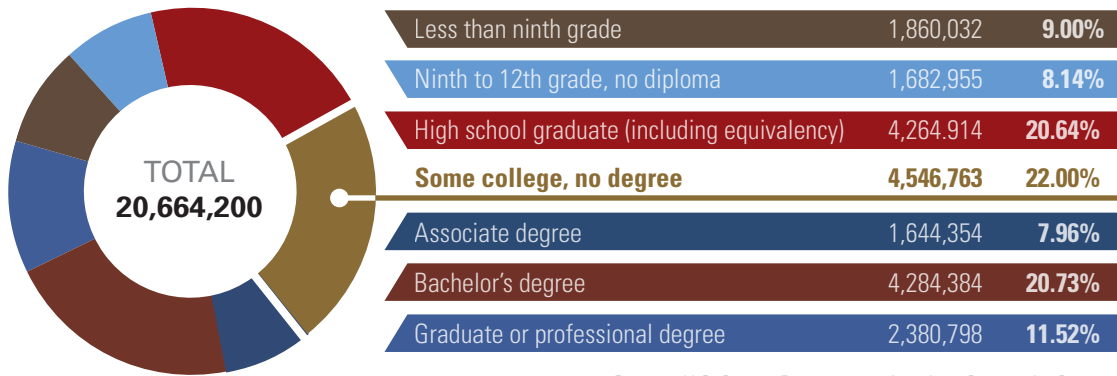
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

Tracking the trend

Percentage of the state's working-age population (25-64) with a quality postsecondary credential



Levels of education for California residents, ages 25-64

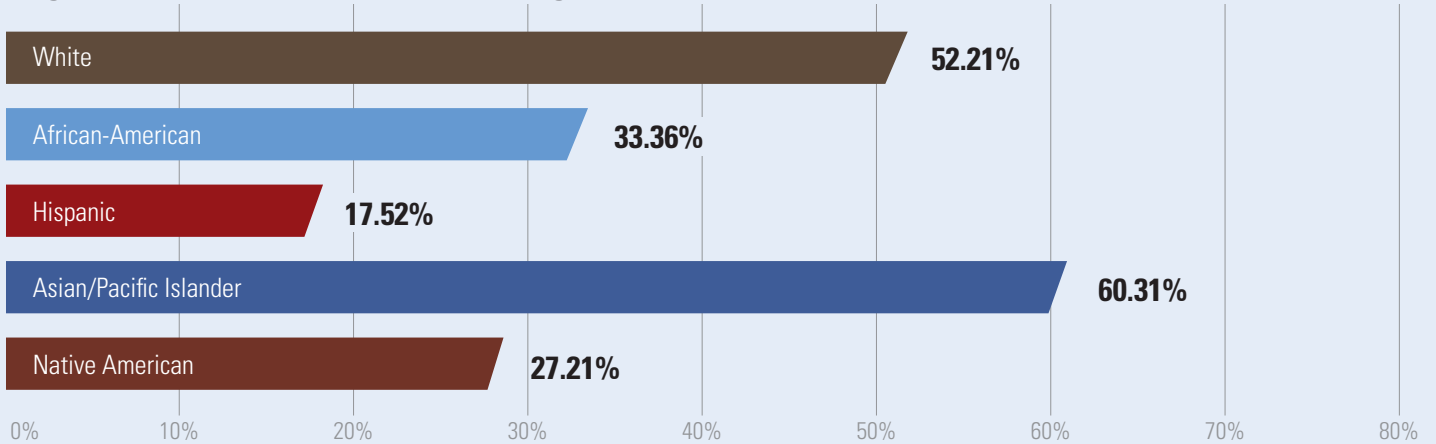


Estimated attainment of certificates: **7%**

Note: The accompanying pie chart does not account for residents who have earned high-value postsecondary certificates. The percentage above – admittedly, an **estimate** – aims to fill that gap. To calculate this percentage, labor market experts at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce used Survey of Income Program Participation 2008 Wave 12 data (2012) and data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2014.

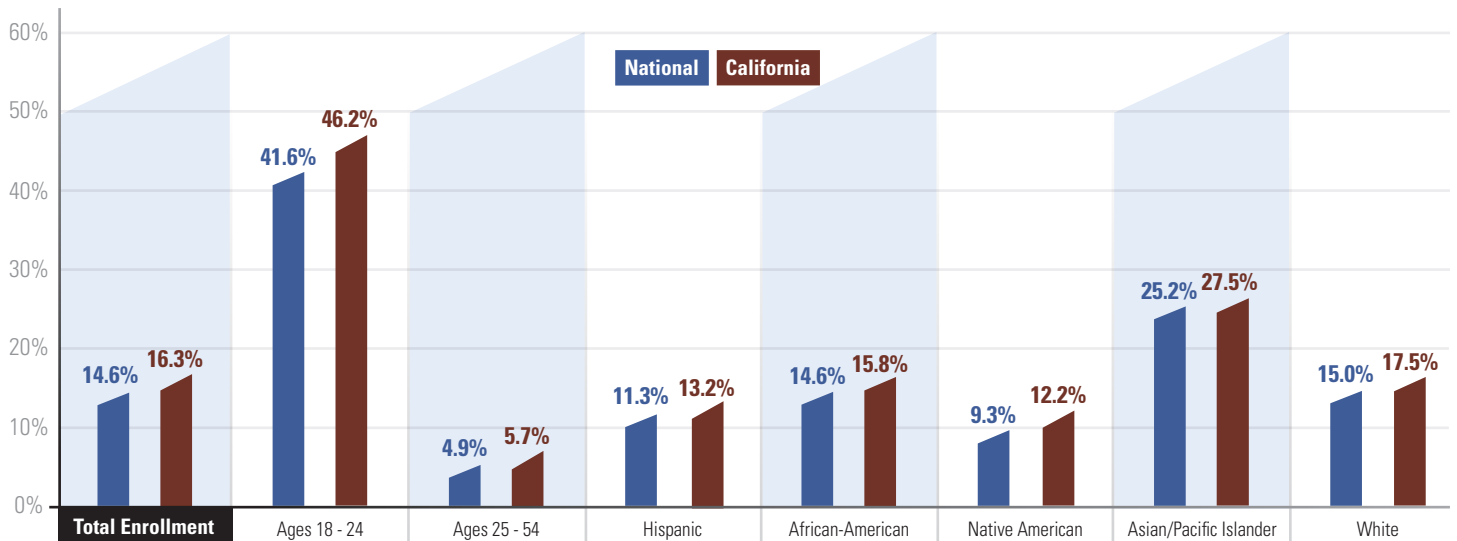
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey

Degree-attainment rates among California residents (ages 25-64), by population group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, 2013, and 2014 American Community Survey One-Year PUMS Files

College enrollment among California residents, ages 18-54



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey One-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Note: These percentages reflect the enrollment of non-degree-holding students, ages 18-54, at public and private, two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions

Percentage of California residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Alameda	51.02	Glenn	22.31	Marin	61.67	Placer	49.12	San Mateo	54.83	Sutter	29.28
Alpine	37.76	Humboldt	37.19	Mariposa	30.68	Plumas	33.34	Santa Barbara	38.70	Tehama	22.00
Amador	28.33	Imperial	21.78	Mendocino	29.21	Riverside	28.04	Santa Clara	56.54	Trinity	32.02
Butte	35.60	Inyo	30.13	Merced	20.37	Sacramento	38.49	Santa Cruz	46.02	Tulare	20.73
Calaveras	30.56	Kern	22.40	Modoc	31.26	San Benito	27.48	Shasta	32.07	Tuolumne	27.69
Colusa	23.85	Kings	20.64	Mono	43.82	San Bernardino	27.20	Sierra	34.48	Ventura	41.14
Contra Costa	48.32	Lake	26.21	Monterey	29.29	San Diego	45.25	Siskiyou	34.22	Yolo	47.61
Del Norte	22.46	Lassen	22.13	Napa	40.78	San Francisco	62.71	Solano	34.15	Yuba	23.99
El Dorado	43.67	Los Angeles	37.77	Nevada	44.27	San Joaquin	27.58	Sonoma	41.20		
Fresno	27.84	Madera	21.24	Orange	46.06	San Luis Obispo	41.05	Stanislaus	24.13		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-14 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an equitable, accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.