

Shaping the Next Generation: Trends Among Oxnard's Young Adult Latina Workforce

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Introduction

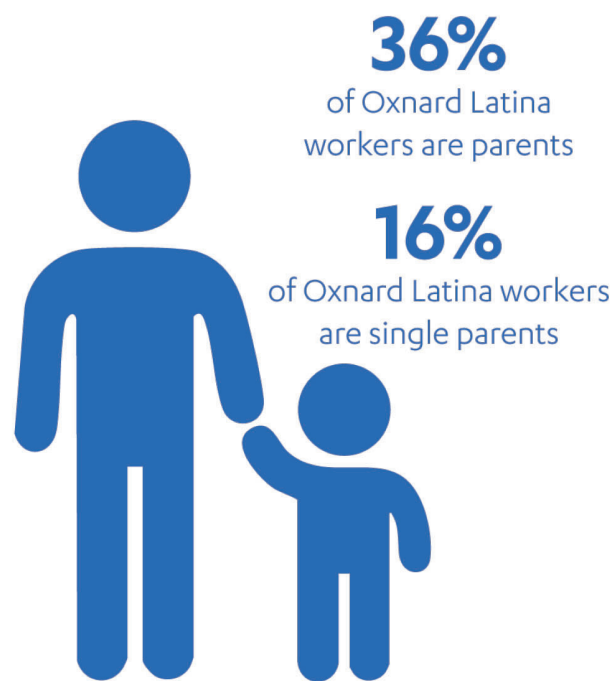
As the most populous city in Ventura County, California, Oxnard offers an economic window into the employment experiences of the region's young Latina workers. Latinas make up approximately 72% of the City's female workforce (U.S. Census Bureau 2023). This research brief centers young adult Latinas (ages 18–34) to illuminate employment trends and propose recommendations that address their unique labor challenges. The following analysis identifies employment patterns among young adult Latina workers in Oxnard, using estimates from the 2019–23 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2023 Thriving Youth Study (TYS). The YYS is a community-engaged survey of Oxnard residents ages 18–34 and provides additional insights into the specific experiences of workers in the City (Terriquez 2024). This research is part of the Latina Futures 2050 Lab, a research and policy initiative focusing on Latinas' experiences in California and beyond. It represents a partnership between the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and the UCLA Labor Center.

First, the brief provides an overview of key demographic features of Latina workers, including immigrant status, languages spoken, and parental status. Next, we highlight trends in young adult Latina worker industries, wages, and work scheduling. Finally, we offer recommendations for strengthening employment opportunities for young adult Latinas to shape the next generation of Oxnard's labor force. The following are key findings from the analysis:

- **More than a third (36%) of young adult Latina workers are parents.** Caregiving responsibilities often create additional challenges for Latina workers, making it difficult for this workforce to pursue stable, well-paying jobs.
- **The majority of young adult Latina workers (62%) only earn \$20 or less per hour.** These low wages reflect the industries where they are most commonly employed, including retail, agriculture, and other service-sector jobs.
- **Over half (55%) of Latina young workers receive their schedules with less than two weeks' advance notice.** This unpredictability makes it harder for Latina workers to manage family responsibilities and limits their ability to plan for education, training, or long-term career advancement.

Who are Latina Workers?

Young Latina workers in Oxnard have unique backgrounds, marked by their immigrant families and parenting responsibilities. At the household level, more than a third of young adult Latina workers (36%) reported being a parent. Moreover, 16% of Latina workers were single parents. This trend is significant because working single parents may experience increased stress and financial precarity due to childcare and caretaking responsibilities (Burden 1986; Sawhill 2022).



Source: *Thriving Youth Study, 2023 (N = 1,156)*

The Latina workforce in Oxnard consists of first and second-generation immigrant networks. Among Latina workers aged 18–34, the majority (71%) are U.S.-born citizens, while 29% are foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau 2023). Among immigrant workers, roughly half (51%) arrived in the U.S. as children, suggesting they are long-time residents of the community (U.S. Census Bureau 2023). Additionally, TYS data shows that 87% of Latina workers come from immigrant families, meaning they or at least one parent was born outside the United States. Given these strong ties to immigrant backgrounds, language plays a significant role in shaping their experiences in the workforce. In the TYS, only 53% of Latina young adult workers reported speaking English, while a large majority (85%) spoke Spanish. These figures suggest that limited English proficiency may impact their access to employment opportunities and professional networks.

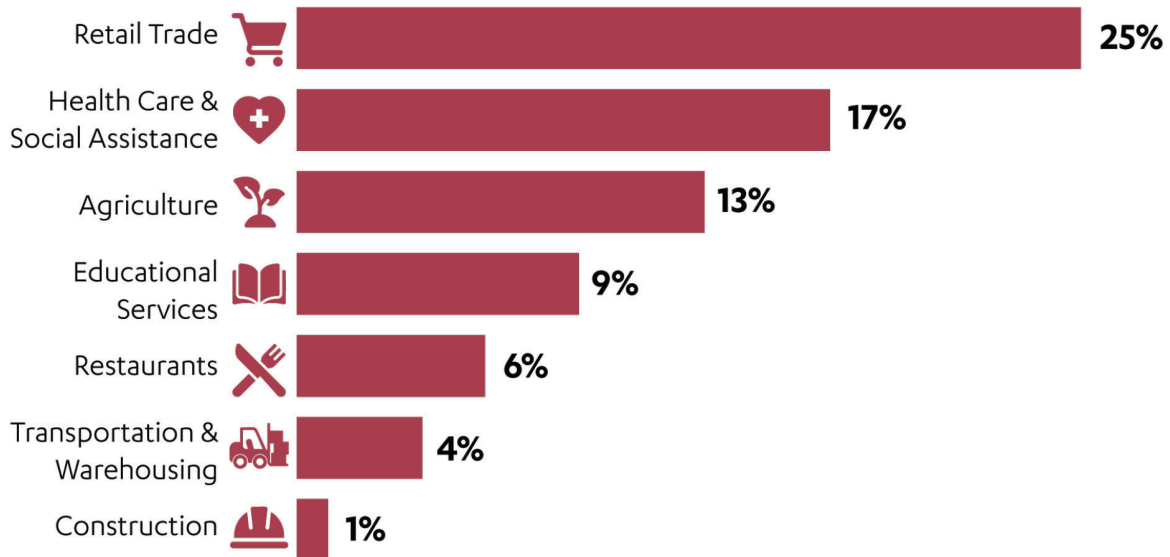


Employment Trends

Differences in Worker Industries Across Gender

According to the ACS, Latinas are primarily employed in service and care industries. A quarter of Latinas work in the Retail Trade sector. Additionally, 17% of Latinas work in the Healthcare and Social Assistance industry and 9% work in Educational Services. Reflecting the region's strong agricultural sector, 13% of young adult Latinas worked in Agriculture. These findings highlight the potential for investing in industries like healthcare and education to help Latina workers access higher-paying, more stable careers.

Top Employment Industries Among Oxnard Latinas Ages 18–34

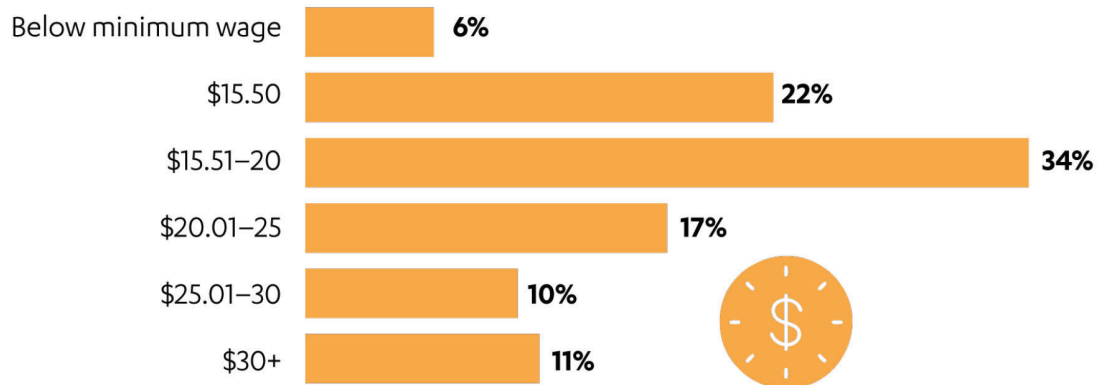


Source: American Community Survey, 2019–23

Low Wages

The TYS asked workers about their hourly wages, and the results show overall low wages among young adult Latinas. Roughly 62% of young adult Latina workers earned \$20 or less per hour. These wages are typical for jobs in the retail and service industries, where many Latinas work. In this study, only 11% of young adult Latinas were found to earn more than \$30 an hour. These wage trends point to barriers—such as gender bias and limited educational and career pathways—that make it difficult for Latinas to advance in the workforce and achieve economic stability (Diaz et al. 2024).

Hourly Wages Earned Among Oxnard Latinos Ages 18–34



Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023 (N=1,156)

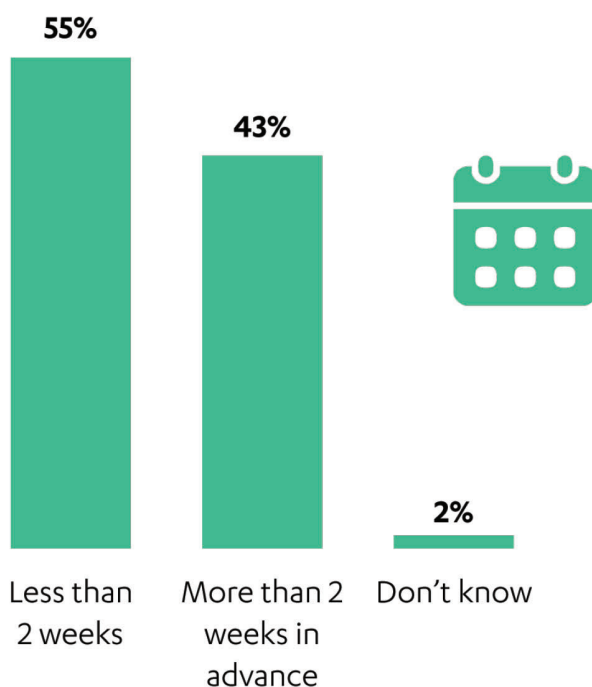


Unstable Work Scheduling

Stable work schedules are essential for a young worker's job security, work-life balance, and overall well-being. However, many low-wage workers face unstable schedules. These workers often don't know from week to week how many hours they will be assigned, making it hard to plan for school, childcare, or paying bills. Research shows that unpredictable schedules can lead to increased stress, health issues, parenting challenges, missed school days, and unstable income (Ben-Ishai et al. 2016). These challenges can be even more difficult for workers who get their schedules sometimes just a day before or even hours in advance (Loustaunau et al. 2023).

According to the TYS, more than half (57%) of Latinas received their schedule less than two weeks in advance. Additionally, 23% of Latinas got their work schedules only one to two weeks before their shift. Meanwhile, about a third of Latinas reported receiving their work schedule less than a week before their shift. Further analysis reveals that many of these workers were primarily employed in the Agriculture, Warehouse/Transportation, and Fast Food/Restaurant industries. Having work schedules in advance is crucial; it allows workers to plan for their future, prioritize their health, and reduce the stress of organizing their personal lives at the last minute (Shaddock-Hernández et al. 2018; Sharma et al. 2021). This is particularly important for supporting Latina workers, who are often parents and students.

When Work Schedule is Received Among Oxnard Latinas Ages 18–34



Source: Thriving Youth Study, 2023 (N=1,156)

Conclusion and Recommendations

This brief highlights the value, contributions, and experienced challenges of young adult Latina workers in the City of Oxnard. Understanding their unique challenges and opportunities is essential to developing strategies that support their professional growth, promote equity, and prepare young Latina residents to thrive in a competitive economy. As this research shows, a closer look at demographics, industry employment patterns, wages, and scheduling reveals key challenges that, if left unaddressed, may limit career advancement for young Latinas. Based on these trends, the following recommendations aim to improve working conditions and strengthen the economic future of young Latina workers in Oxnard:

- **Support for Working Parents:** Extending affordable childcare in the region will help Latina workers balance job and family responsibilities. This is especially crucial for Latina single parents, as accessible childcare enables them to pursue additional career and educational opportunities.
- **Fair Work Schedules:** Passing local legislation can ensure that retail workers get their schedules at least two weeks in advance and receive extra pay if their shifts change unexpectedly. A Fair Work Week Ordinance, already adopted in parts of California like Los Angeles, is essential for protecting workers from unpredictable schedules and holding employers accountable.
- **Strengthening Pathways to Good Jobs:** Expanding access to job training, apprenticeships, and networking events will help Latina workers move into higher-paying careers in growing fields like healthcare and education. Increasing access to on-the-job training allows them to gain valuable experience, increase their earnings over time, and build the skills needed for stable, well-paying careers. Additionally, these opportunities should be accessible to speakers of different languages, especially Spanish and Mexican-Indigenous languages.

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