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**New research reveals challenges facing Latinas in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties**

*Wage gaps, education access, and other findings highlighted in new reports produced by UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Latina Futures 2050 Lab, UCLA Labor Center and Cal State Channel Islands*

**May 29, 2025 (Los Angeles, CA)** — Latina workers in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties earn about 50 cents less per dollar compared to a non-Hispanic white man, according to new data analysis released by Latina Futures 2050 Lab and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC).

Results denoting the wage gap come after research teams analyzed the United States Census' American Community Survey and looked at various labor industries. Other researchers conducted qualitative and quantitative research involving thousands of Central Coast Latina and Latino young adults. Research leads included [Veronica Terriquez](#), Latina Futures cofounder and director of the CSRC; [Ana Luz González-Vásquez](#), project director for the POWER in Workforce Development at the UCLA Labor Center; and [Karina Chavarria](#), associate professor of sociology at Cal State University Channel Islands.

"On average men make more than women. However, hourly earnings are especially low for Latinas, who tend to get paid less than other women of color, white women and white men," said Terriquez, a sociologist whose research focuses on youth transitions to adulthood, social inequality, and civic engagement. "This research matters because oftentimes Latinas are unseen, unheard and get concentrated in low paying jobs. These low wages are a serious problem, including here in the Central Coast because unfair wages impact entire communities."

Research was primarily supported through Latina Futures, an initiative housed at the CSRC. Latina Futures builds upon the foundation laid by the California Latino Legislative Caucus's Unseen Latinas Initiative and the Select Committee on Latina Inequities created by the

California State Legislature to address the continued and growing inequality that Latinas experience in economic outcomes, career and leadership opportunities, and educational attainment. Findings were presented at a research symposium on May 3 in Oxnard, Calif.

Focusing on the Latina experience is essential to documenting their livelihoods because **across California 59% of Latinas participate in the workforce**. Latinas have also historically been left out of research studies, creating knowledge gaps for legislators and other authority officials in charge of making and amending laws for all California residents, Terriquez said.

In addition to looking at the wage gap in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, research was also centered among the youth. The report, **“Pursuing Higher Education: Exploring the Gendered Trajectories of Oxnard’s Latina/o Young Adults”** presents findings from more than 2,400 surveys and 70 in-depth interviews conducted in 2023 from the Thriving Youth Study led by the CSRC. Some of the findings include:

- Most teenagers are faced with three major obligations: pursue high school or college degrees, part-time or full-time work to financially contribute to their family, along with home responsibilities that require taking care of younger siblings or aging parents.
- Latinas have significantly high aspirations for going to college, yet too few earn a degree
- Caregiving responsibilities tend to be a gendered experience. Of survey respondents, 70% of Latinas, compared to 62% of Latinos, spent an average of five or more hours each week taking care of family members

The team found that many families are not aware of resources offered by the city or county that can help with care of older parents, for example. Families working long hours also have less time to be involved in their child’s school, Chavarria said.

“Latinas as we know are the heart of the home. Whatever happens to the women of the home, the entire family is impacted,” Chavarria said. “Whatever access and resources we provide to Latinas, is not just for them. It’s for the entire family and the community.”

Offering **childcare** would alleviate some of the time and financial constraints families face, said González-Vázquez, whose team is currently studying Latina childcare workers to better understand their roles, working conditions, and opportunities to improve job quality and develop career pathways that lead to stronger economic outcomes. Early data analysis shows that 17% of childcare workers in California have a bachelor’s degree, compared to 10% of Latina childcare workers.

Another study led by the CSRC and UCLA Labor Center, **“Shaping the Next Generation: Trends Among Oxnard’s Young Adult Latina Workforce,”** harnessed data from the 2023 Thriving Youth and the American Community Survey and found that more than a third of young adult Latina workers in Oxnard are parents; 62% of young Latina workers only earn \$20 or less per hour; and over half of them receive their schedules with less than two weeks advance notice.

For Future Leaders of America, a community-based organization serving the Central Coast and cosponsor of the research symposium, working with youth means creating greater understanding

through data collection and most importantly, cultivating young researchers who gain knowledge, experience and become changemakers.

“It is important for community organizations like Future Leaders of America to build relationships with organizations such as the UCLA CSRC and Latina Futures because we must gather and use our tools and expertise in the path toward mutual liberation and justice for all,” said Iván Vega, associate organizing director at Future Leaders of America. “Community organizations bring the lived experiences and people power, and organizations like the CSRC and Latina Futures bring the academic skills to evolve our lived experiences into data-informed advocacy tools for our work in the community.”

Ventura County Board Supervisor Vianey López (District 5) said she appreciated the reports because they solidified information necessary for the county to identify areas of greater need and support. State Senator Monique Limón (District 21) said she and other California legislators understand the need to bridge existing gaps between policymaking and evidence-based research, which is why in 2022 they allocated \$15 million to UCLA to establish Latina Futures. Limón said she was glad to see representatives from college, city, county and school districts attend the symposium.

“I am grateful for the contributions that our researchers are making to public policy ... you see so many different folks [in the room] at so many different levels who have the ability to work together to coordinate some of the responses to some of these issues, whether its educational, wage earning, childcare, the list really does go on,” Limón said. “The idea is to bring research to the community... bringing folks here who can give us information we can use. That’s the big takeaway.”

Research presentations and reports were supported by the Latina Futures 2050 Lab, the City of Oxnard, the Stuart Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, the McCune Foundation, the Edwin and Jeanne Woods Family Foundation, and the Henry Mayo Newhall Family Foundation.

Find all Central Coast reports on the [UCLA CSRC](#).

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***Latina Futures 2050 Lab**, a research initiative spearheaded by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC), was created in 2022 in collaboration with the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute (LPPI). Funded by a \$15 million California state budget allocation, Latina Futures seeks to increase knowledge and insight through applied policy research on the contours of the economic, political, and social lives of Latinas living in the United States over the next several decades.*

*Founded in 1969, the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) is an established leader in the development of scholarly research on the Chicano-Latino population in the United States. For more information, visit [www.chicano.ucla.edu](http://www.chicano.ucla.edu).*