



COLORADO

Department of
Higher Education

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State announces new attainment numbers; shows overall increase plus growth among most minority groups
New methodology to calculate minority group attainment ensures smaller margin of error

DENVER – March 21, 2019: The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) today announced the statewide attainment rate increased from 56.2 percent in 2018 to 56.9 percent in 2019, measured by the number of adults ages 25-34 who have earned a credential beyond a high school diploma. The new data also shows promising gains among Coloradans of color.

“We’re thrilled that more Coloradans are answering the call to gain the knowledge and skills they need to meet the demands of our vibrant economy,” said Dr. Angie Paccione, executive director for CDHE. “We will continue to work hard with our colleges and universities on programs that move the dial on student success—including concurrent enrollment, our master plan goals and our work on equitable attainment for all—to ensure every student in the state has access to a postsecondary option that allows them to pursue the occupation of their dreams.”

The 2019 attainment numbers mark an adjustment in the data set used to calculate attainment among Coloradans of color ages 25-34. This year is the first year CDHE is using U.S. Census **five-year** Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files. For years 2018 and prior, CDHE relied on U.S. Census **one-year** PUMS data.

“Using a five-year snapshot ensures a smaller margin of error and less variability in attainment from year to year among our minority groups, many of which have a small population size in Colorado,” said Dr. Lauren Ramsay, chief strategy and research officer at CDHE. “Using a more reliable calculation helps us prioritize the programs and initiatives that will get more Coloradans to and through a postsecondary path of their choosing.”

In late 2017, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education released a strategic plan, [Colorado Rises](#), which reaffirmed a 66 percent statewide attainment goal by 2025. The plan emphasizes increasing student completion and closing equity gaps for African American and Black; Latinx and Hispanic; and American Indian and Alaska Native students as key strategies to boost postsecondary success.

Colorado has significant gaps in educational attainment when measured by race and ethnicity. The share of Colorado’s white majority population that has earned a credential (63.5 percent) is more than twice that of Latinx and almost 1.5 times the share of African Americans and Black Coloradans.

In 2019, the following ethnic groups saw an increase in attainment:

- Latinx attainment grew from 27.2 percent to 28.6 percent
- African American and Black attainment grew from 38.5 percent to 40.3 percent

American Indian/Alaska Native attainment dropped from 34.8 percent to 33.2 percent. Attainment rates among this group tend to fluctuate due to its small population size.

Lumina Foundation recently released their [national](#) and [state](#) reports on attainment for adults ranging in age from 25 to 64, showing an increase in Colorado from 55.7 percent to 56.5 percent. Although this rate is among the highest in the country and nearly 10 percent higher than the national figure—47.6 percent, according to Lumina Foundation—Colorado has some of the largest disparities in higher education equity by race.

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