A report from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009*, reveals that just 13 percent of Hispanics over the age of 25 hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 53 percent of Asian-Americans, 33 percent of Whites and 19 percent of African-Americans. This represents an increase of one-half of a percent in B.A. attainment for Hispanics since 2007.

The good news is that Hispanics are more likely to graduate high school and more likely to attend college than ever before. Between 2007 and 2008, the increase in college-going rates of Hispanic high school graduates aged 18-24 was greater than that of their White, African-American and Asian-American counterparts, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Gaps still exist, but as the population of Hispanics grows, the gains are promising, considering the impact a college degree has on earning potential.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, those with a bachelor’s degree earned an average of $58,613 in 2008 while those with a high school diploma earned $31,283. This compares with $21,023 for those without a high school diploma. For those who pursued advanced degrees, the average annual 2008 earnings were $83,144.

A few other statistics of note include:
- Hispanics represented 20 percent of elementary and high school students in 2008.
- Sixty-two percent of all Hispanics had at least a high school degree in 2009, compared to 60.6 percent in 2007.
- Hispanics represented 12 percent of the nation’s college and graduate students in 2008.
- 3.7 million Hispanics aged 18 and older had at least a bachelor’s degree in 2009.
- Seventy-nine thousand four hundred forty Hispanics serve as chief executives. In addition, there are 50,866 physicians and surgeons; 48,720 postsecondary teachers; 38,532 lawyers; and 2,726 news analysts, reporters and correspondents who were Hispanic in 2010.

**Entrance Exams**

In order to get into college, two standardized tests serve to assess college readiness: the ACT and the SAT. According to the ACT College and Career Readiness report, about 47 percent of all 2010 high school graduates in the United States took the ACT during high school, or about 1.57 million graduates. This is up considerably in the last four years, with the number of students taking the ACT increasing by approximately 30 percent from 2006 to 2010, representing a seven percentage point increase of all U.S. high school graduates who took the ACT.

In addition, a growing number of Hispanic U.S. high school graduates have taken the ACT college admission and placement exam. While just 10 percent of ACT test takers were Hispanic in 2010, over the last four years the number of Hispanic students taking the test increased 84 percent over the same time period, from 86,000 to 158,000.

ACT scores for Hispanic students remained essentially the same from 2006 to 2010, hovering between 18.6 and 18.7 over the five-year span, but other data points indicate they are making progress in becoming more college and career ready. Despite these gains, there is still plenty of room for improvement.

Only 68 percent of Hispanic high school students completed at least a minimum core high school curriculum to prepare them for college (defined as four years of English and three years each of math, social studies and science). This compares to 74 percent of White students, 81 percent of Asian-American students and 65 percent of African-American students. This is important to note because data indicate that on average, high school graduates who completed at least a core curriculum earned composite test scores 2.2 points to 3.1 points higher than the scores of students who did not take a core curriculum. In addition, students completing at least a core curriculum were approximately twice as likely to meet or surpass the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in each subject area.

Of all 2010 ACT test takers, just 24 percent met all four College Readiness Benchmarks in English, reading, math and science, which are linked to success in specific first-year college courses, meaning that fewer than one in four were academically ready for college coursework in all four subject areas. For Hispanics, the numbers were even more sobering: just 11 percent of ACT-tested 2010 Hispanic high school graduates met all four of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. The good news is that this
The percent of Hispanic graduates who met or surpassed the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks is the highest in English – 46 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Average ACT Composite Test Scores 2010</th>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ACT

The percent of Hispanic graduates who met or surpassed the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks is the highest in English (46 percent), followed by reading (34 percent), mathematics (27 percent) and science (14 percent). About half of Hispanic high school graduates did not meet any of the four ACT benchmark scores.

Ethnic/racial minority students this year made up 29 percent of all ACT-tested graduates, up from 23 percent in 2006. Hispanic test takers represented the largest increase among all high school graduates who have taken the college admission and placement test since 2006, a sign that plans to attend college are a growing trend among Hispanic students. Another promising sign is that Hispanic ACT test takers were about as likely as their White and African-American counterparts to aspire to a graduate or professional degree, with 43 percent of Hispanics planning that route, 45 percent of Whites and 44 percent of African-Americans.

A publication from the College Board, which conducts the SAT, reports similar findings. Nearly 1.6 million high school seniors in the class of 2010 took the SAT, according to SAT Trends: Background on the SAT Takers in the Class of 2010. Hispanics represented 15 percent of all test takers in 2010, up from 13.5 percent last year and just 8 percent in 2000. Whites comprised 54 percent of all SAT test takers, with African-Americans at 13 percent and Asian-Americans at 11 percent.

The three sections of the test include critical reading, math and writing. Over the last 10 years, scores for Whites have remained flat in critical reading and writing, with a six-point gain in math. Scores for Hispanics have also remained essentially flat in critical reading and writing, with modest gains in math. However, the gap in scores between Hispanics and Whites remains considerable, with about a 75-point gap in critical reading, a 70-point gap in math and a 72-point gap in writing.

Enrollment Rates?

The percentage of American college students who are minorities has been increasing. In 1976, 15 percent were minorities, compared with 32 percent in 2007. Much of the change from 1976 to 2007 can be attributed to rising numbers of Hispanic and Asian-American or Pacific Islander students. During that time period, the percentage of Asian-American or Pacific Islander students rose from 2 percent to 7 percent, and the Hispanic percentage rose from 4 percent to 11 percent. The percentage of African-American students was 9 percent at the beginning of the time period, rising to 13 percent in 2007.

Current data on degree completion and faculty ranks is available from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Associate Degrees

Between 1997-98 and 2007-08, the number of associate degrees earned by Hispanic students almost doubled, from 45,900 degrees to 91,300; the number earned by African-American students increased by 73 percent, from 55,300 degrees to 95,700; and the number earned by White students...
increased by 21 percent, from 413,600 degrees to 501,100 degrees. In 2007-08, African-American students earned 13 percent and Hispanics earned 12 percent of all associate degrees awarded, up from the 10 percent and 8 percent that they earned, respectively, in 1997-98.

**Bachelor’s Degrees**

Between 1997-98 and 2007-08, the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded to White students increased by 25 percent, from 0.9 million degrees to 1.1 million degrees; the number awarded to Hispanic students increased by 86 percent, from 66,000 degrees to 123,000 degrees; and the number awarded to African-American students increased by 55 percent, from 98,300 degrees to 152,500 degrees.

In 2007-08, African-American students earned 10 percent and Hispanic students earned 8 percent of all bachelor’s degrees awarded, up from 10 years earlier when they earned 8 percent and 6 percent, respectively. Approximately 67 percent of Asian-American students, 60 percent of White students, 48 percent of Hispanic students and 42 percent of African-American students graduated with a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent within six years.

**Master’s Degrees**

In 2009, some 7 percent of 25- to 29-year-olds had completed a master’s degree or higher. The percentage of Asian-American students who had attained a master’s degree in 2009, 21 percent, was higher than that of their peers from all other races/ethnicities: 9 percent of White students, 4 percent of African-American students and 2 percent of Hispanic students had attained a master’s degree in 2009. Between 1995 and 2009, the rate of master’s degree attainment increased for White students, from 5 percent to 9 percent; African-American students, from 2 percent to 4 percent; Hispanic students, from 4 percent to 6 percent; and Asian-American students, from 11 percent to 21 percent.

**Doctoral Degrees**

In 2008, 63,712 doctoral degrees were conferred, with 57.1 percent going to White students, 6.1 percent to African-American students, 5.7 percent to Asian-American students, and 3.6 percent to Hispanic students. Ten years ago, only 2.8 percent of degrees went to Hispanic students, for a total of 1,275; the most recent figures available indicate 2,279 Hispanic students earned doctoral degrees in 2008.

**Faculty**

In fall 2007, some 7 percent of college and university faculty were African-American, 6 percent were Asian-American, and 4 percent were Hispanic.

**Looking Ahead**

While Hispanics still lag behind Whites and Asian-Americans in test scores and in degree completion, the modest gains noted in average test scores combined with a significant increase in college attendance and number of degrees awarded bode well for future improvements.