TuSalud

Latinos Are Underrepresented in STEM Jobs

Few Latinos earn degrees in science, technology, engineering and math, and many are paid less when they work in these fields.

September 10, 2021 By Jeanette L. Pinnace

Careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are on the rise and expected to continue to grow over the next 10 years. But without the college education required for employment in these lucrative fields, Latinos and other people of color will be unable to close the STEM job gap between them and their white counterparts, reports Salud America!

STEM occupations include jobs in life, physical and Earth sciences; engineering and architecture; the computer and math fields; and health and medicine.

For its overview on the topic, Salud America! summarized key findings from an inquiry by researchers from the Pew Research Center about the lack of Latinos in the STEM workforce. (Salud America! is a national organization that generates culturally relevant stories based on research to support policy changes to benefit Latinos.)

Investigators found that only small proportions of Latinos work in health (9%), life science (8%), math (8%), physical science (8%), computer (8%) and engineering (9%).

“Black and Latino adults are less likely to earn degrees in STEM than other degree fields, and they continue to make up a lower share of STEM graduates relative to their share of the adult population,” Pew scientists said.

In addition, researchers observed that Latinos employed in these professions frequently earn less than their white peers. “The typical Latino worker in STEM earns about $65,000, or 83% of the typical White worker in STEM,” Pew investigators explained. “Here, too, the gap has widened: In 2016, the Latino-to-White pay gap in the STEM workforce was 85%.”

Salud America! also explored these STEM job disparities as evidenced in findings from a report by the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (UCLA LPPI) that underscore the need for policy changes to help Latinos overcome these inequities.

The UCLA LPPI report recommended that policymakers help resolve the existing problems by

upping the minimum wage, increasing childcare support, mandating pay for employee family leave, augmenting the child tax credit and beefing up programs for education and skills training to support Latinos' entry into more secure high-income occupations.

To learn more about Latinos in the health care field, read "COVID-19 Has Galvanized Blacks and Latinos to Become Doctors."

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