On the Frontlines: Automation Risks for Latino Workers in California
Legislative One-Pager

What we did: UCLA LPPI analyzed the California Latino workers most vulnerable to routine automation, the use of technology to perform repetitive tasks without human intervention.

How we did this: We linked an analysis of jobs vulnerable to automation with the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.[1] We then analyzed California workers in the 20 occupations with the most workers and a high probability of automation.

A note on "high-risk" jobs: "High-risk" occupations are highly vulnerable to automation and employ the most people, but they are not the only jobs susceptible to automation. Additionally, a job susceptible to automation is not often entirely replaced by technology. Instead, workers in these jobs may experience significant changes in tasks, responsibilities, and job quality.[2]

Findings

1. **In 2022, over half of the 4.5 million California workers employed in high automation risk occupations were Latino,** a rate higher than Latinos' share of the state's overall workforce (38%).

Figure 1: Employed CA Workers by Ethnicity and Automation Risk, 2022

Legend: Latino, Non Latino

High-Risk CA Workers: 48% / 52%
All Employed CA Workers: 62% / 38%
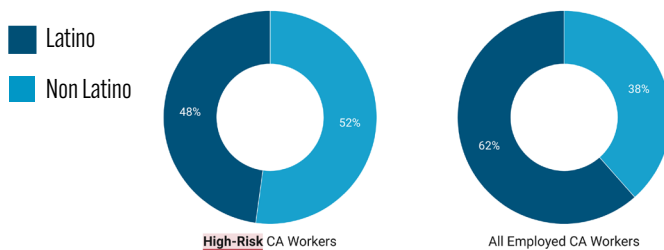
2. **California Latino workers in high-risk jobs face several structural barriers, including elevated noncitizen, limited English proficiency, and high school incompletion rates.**
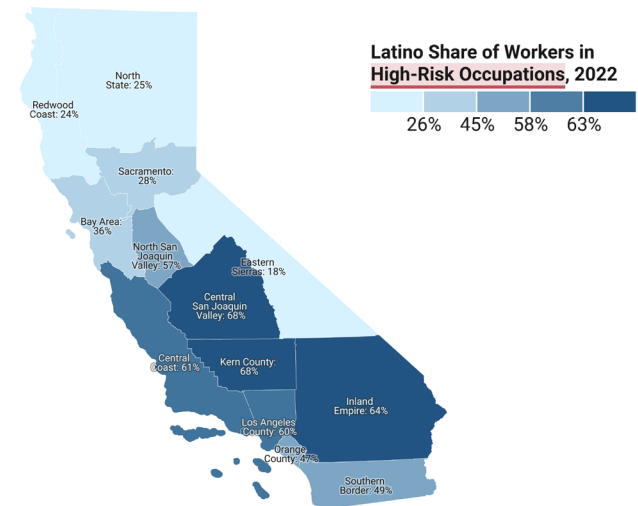
Figure 2: Selected Socioeconomic Indicators for CA Latinos in High-Risk Occupations, 2022

Noncitizen	32%
Limited English Proficiency	37%
Less than a High School Diploma	38%

3. **22% of California Latino workers in high-risk occupations are between ages 16 and 24.** Less than half of these young workers are enrolled in school, meaning these jobs are less likely to be temporary arrangements for young Latinos.

4. **High automation risk workers in the Central Valley and Southern California are more likely to be Latino than those in the rest of the state.**

Figure 3: Latino Share of Workers in High-Risk Jobs by Subregion, 2022

Latino Share of Workers in **High-Risk Occupations**, 2022: 26% 45% 58% 63%

North State: 25%
Redwood Coast: 24%
Sacramento: 28%
Bay Area: 36%
North San Joaquin Valley: 57%
Eastern Sierras: 18%
Central San Joaquin Valley: 68%
Central Coast: 61%
Kern County: 68%
Los Angeles County: 60%
Inland Empire: 64%
Orange County: 47%
Southern Border: 49%

5. **Over one in five California Latinos in high automation risk jobs do not have access to high-speed internet at home, hindering opportunities for digital upskilling.** Over half of employed Latinos had little to no digital skills, compared to almost one-third of U.S. workers.[3]

Policy Recommendations

1. **Increase investment in workforce development programs, using a strong equity lens and focusing on employees in high automation risk occupations.** California policymakers should consider:

   a. Providing targeted programs and support for workers at different stages of the lifespan for an inclusive economy;

   b. Increasing funding for the California Employment Training Panel Incumbent Worker Training Program to assist employers in upgrading the skills of workers in high automation risk occupations;

   c. Reducing barriers for noncitizens to receive workforce development training by clearly designating more funds without immigration eligibility requirements;

   d. Increasing recruitment of nontraditional students—especially Latino male workers—to improve their formal education levels, digital skills, and general competencies for upward career mobility; and

   e. Continuing to fund Cross-Systems Analytics and Assessment for learning and skills attainment with more disaggregated data to assess the equity and efficacy of current programs.

2. **Equip Latino workers with the digital access and skills they need to succeed.** California policymakers can do so by:

   a. Ensuring the Digital Equity Act block grants fund access to broadband internet, digital devices, and skills; and

   b. Monitoring the implementation of the Digital Equity Plan to ensure its effectiveness in reaching Latinos and other technologically underserved communities.

3. **Ensure workers have a say in when and how technology is developed and implemented by:**

   a. centering worker empowerment in the development and adoption of automation and AI technologies; and

   b. strengthening the right to organize and collectively bargain

   California policymakers should establish norms for technological implementation among the Fast Food Council's core priorities, and create an Automation and Worker Development Council in the Department of Industrial Relations.

4. **Provide robust and timely safety nets for workers by reforming Unemployment Insurance (UI).** California policymakers should broaden UI's taxable wage base by moving to a forward-financing mechanism that brings in more revenue than it pays out during low unemployment periods. Policymakers should also extend UI coverage to all workers, including self-employed, part-time, and noncitizen workers.

About UCLA LPPI: The UCLA LPPI addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunities for all Americans.

Endnotes

1 Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, "The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?" *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 114 (2017): 254-280.

2 James Manyika, Susan Lund, Michael Chui, Jacques Bughin, Lola Woetzel, Parul Batra, Ryan Ko, and Saurabh Sanghvi, *Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: What the Future of Work Will Mean for Jobs, Skills, and Wages* (New York, NY: McKinsey Global Institute, November 2017), available online.

3 Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, "Applying a Racial Equity Lens to Digital Literacy" (National Skills Coalition, Washington, DC, April 21, 2020), available online.