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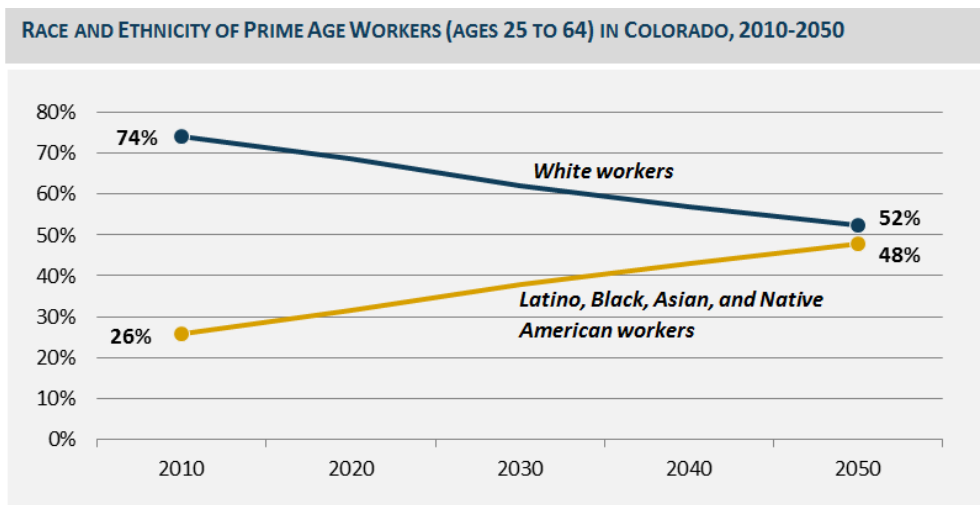
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## Report reveals surprising wage and employment gaps in Colorado

DENVER—First the good news: Colorado is doing fairly well across several job-related measures. Since 2007, the state has gained nearly 271,000 jobs. Meanwhile, Colorado’s median household income finally surpassed the pre-recession level -- reaching \$63,900 last year.

Unfortunately, such good news doesn’t tell the full story about employment and income in Colorado. According to the recently released *State of Working Colorado 2016*, a growing number of Coloradans face wage stagnation, under-employment, race-based income gaps and poverty as Colorado’s cost of living continues to surge upward. Among this year’s findings:

- **Though job creation has been strong in Colorado, overall labor force participation is still below pre-recession levels.** The people most prominently missing from Colorado’s labor force are men ages 25 to 54. Labor-force participation among men of color rose more quickly than for White men during the economic recovery. Those who experience long-term unemployment are more likely than those who experience short-term unemployment to drop out of the labor market.



Colorado State Demographer's Office

- **Race-based economic disparities remain a persistent problem in Colorado.** By 2050, 48 percent of the state’s labor force will consist of people of color – primarily Latino. Median household

income among Latino households increased by 9 percent between 2007 and 2015 but still lags significantly behind White median household income. In 2015, Latino median income was \$46,000 or 65 percent of the White median income of \$70,500.

- **The median hourly wage has fallen or remained flat since the recovery began in 2010.** Economic gains are increasingly concentrated among a small share of high earners in the state. Meanwhile, a growing number of jobs pay less than what's needed to support the health and well-being of most Coloradans. In 2000, an estimated 10 percent of jobs paid less than the self-sufficiency wage. By contrast, that number more than doubled to nearly 21 percent of jobs in 2015. Also in 2015, the median hourly wage in Colorado was \$18.49 – still below the 2007 median wage of \$19.32.
- **Job growth isn't keeping up with Colorado's population growth.** As of September 2016, Colorado's economy had 2.62 million jobs. But to keep up with the state's rapid population growth, Colorado needs to create nearly 118,000 additional jobs or an average of 7,500 jobs a month over the next three years to return to pre-recession employment levels.
- **Involuntary part-time workers remain above historic levels.** Though the share of involuntary part-time workers has dropped steadily since 2010, 15.4 percent of part-time workers said they would prefer a full-time job. That's still slightly above the pre-recession level.
- **A significant number of Coloradans live in poverty.** The report shows that more than one in four households in Colorado can't meet their basic needs without public or private support. Additionally, an estimated 294,000 Coloradans live in "deep poverty." Deep poverty was defined as \$5,885 per year for an individual and \$10,045 for a family of three last year.

Published by [Colorado Center on Law and Policy](#), the annual *State of Working Colorado* collects critical data designed to look beyond broad-based economic indicators to better understand how the economy is functioning for all Coloradans across the income spectrum and throughout the state.

"While Colorado has come a long way since the Recession, too many Colorado families still struggle to pay rent or cover their other basic needs," said Claire Levy, Executive Director of CCLP. "I'm encouraged that Colorado voters recognized that wages are too low and voted to increase the minimum wage, but this report shows there's much more work to be done. We hope *State of Working Colorado* will spur a dialogue between workers, employers, and policymakers on how to give Coloradans the tools they need to reach their human potential so everyone can contribute fully to our economy."

The report, including an executive summary, is available at CCLP's website at <http://cclponline.org/>

*The Colorado Center on Law and Policy is a nonprofit, non-partisan research and advocacy organization that engages in legislative, administrative and legal advocacy on behalf of low-income Coloradans.*