

# SCC COE Regional Webinar Opportunities and Strategies to Support Adult Learner Success

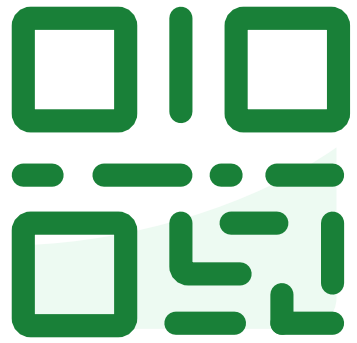
April 2026



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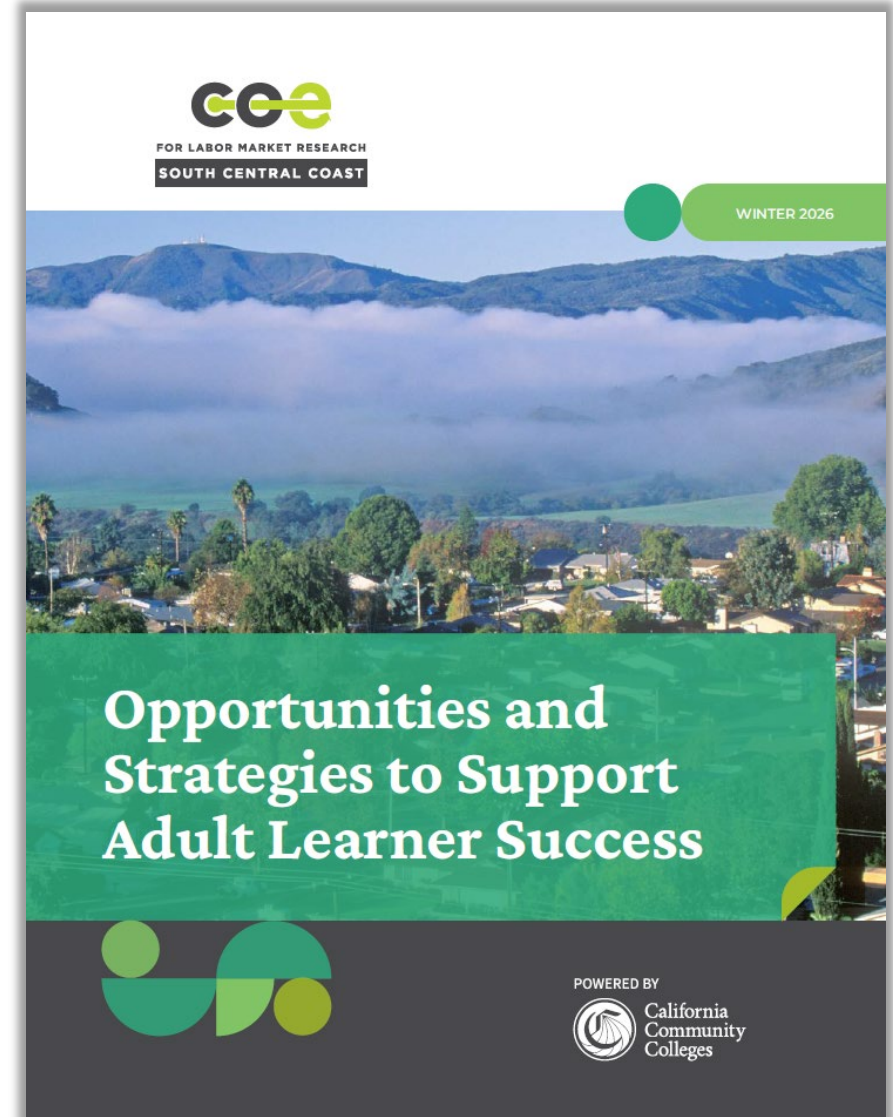
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# Opportunities and Strategies to Support Adult Learner Success

- Examines adult population characteristics
- Identifies advancement occupations for adults currently employed in Low-Quality jobs
- Analyzes barriers adult learners face alongside evidence-based strategies to address them.
- Findings highlight the importance of intentionally engaging adult learners to expand economic mobility across the SCC Region.



# Agenda

- ▶ Welcome, Introductions, and COE Overview
- ▶ Adult Population Demographics
- ▶ Potential Advancement Occupations for Adult Learners
- ▶ Barriers for Adult Learners and Strategies to Address Them
- ▶ Limitations and Areas for Future Research
- ▶ Conclusion and Discussion



# Welcome, Introductions, and COE Overview



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH  
**SOUTH CENTRAL COAST**



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California Community Colleges



**How familiar are you with SCC  
Center of Excellence (COE)  
reports and resources?**

# South Central Coast Center of Excellence



**Jacob Poore**

SCC COE Director

[jacob.poore@canyons.edu](mailto:jacob.poore@canyons.edu)



**Ashley Kernan**

SCC COE Research Manager

[ashley.kernan@canyons.edu](mailto:ashley.kernan@canyons.edu)



**Janneth Najera**

SCC COE Research Manager

[janneth.najera@canyons.edu](mailto:janneth.najera@canyons.edu)



FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH

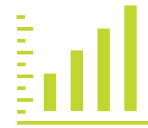
**SOUTH CENTRAL COAST**

We aspire to be the leading source of workforce information and insight for California's community colleges.



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH

The COE provide **quality labor market data and information** to help colleges with:



Assessing labor market needs



Reviewing career education programs



Investing in new career education programs



Grant program planning and investment

# COE Team



<https://coecc.net/regions/>



**4**  
Counties

**8**  
Community Colleges

**2.2 M+**  
People

**79,000+**  
CTE Students  
(2023-24)

# South Central Coast Region

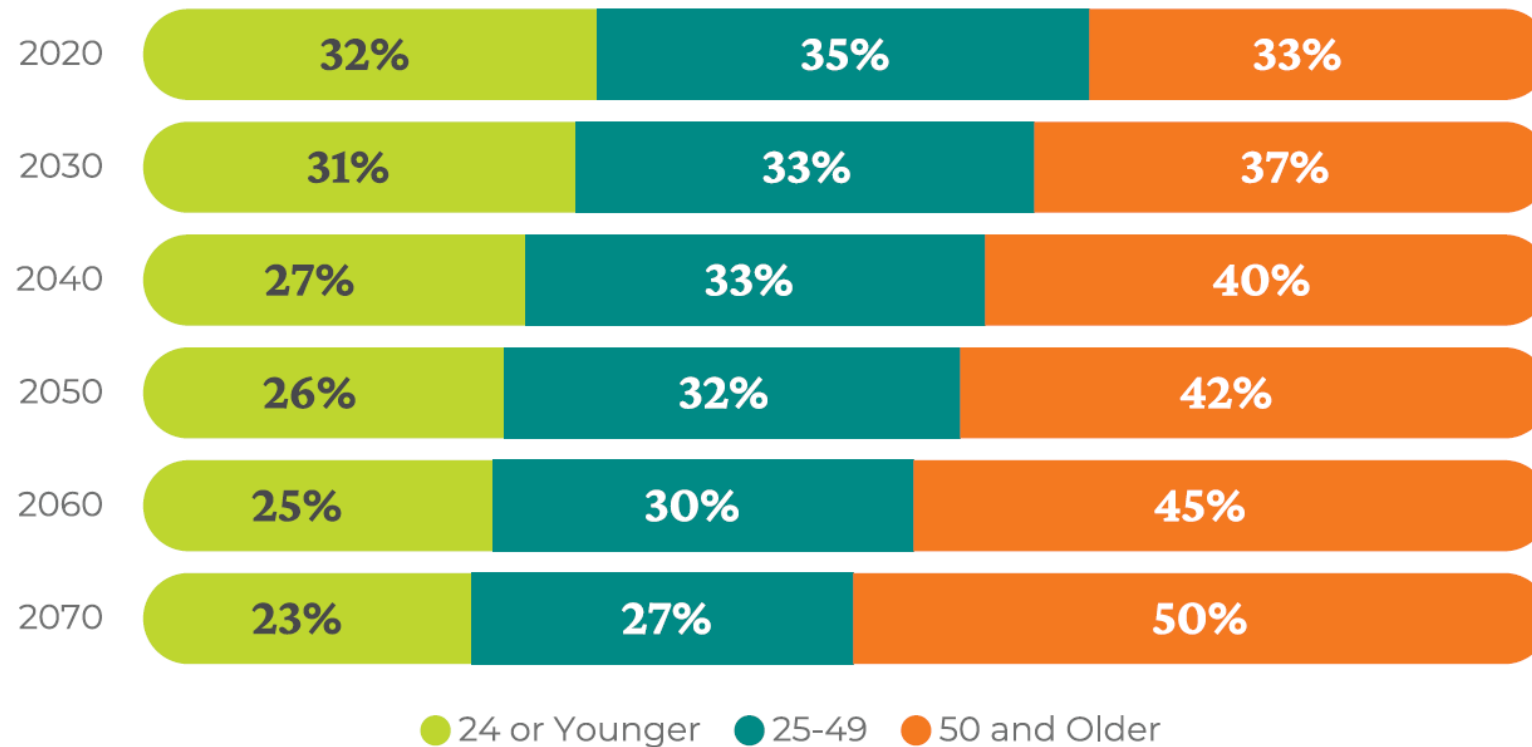
# Adult Population Demographics

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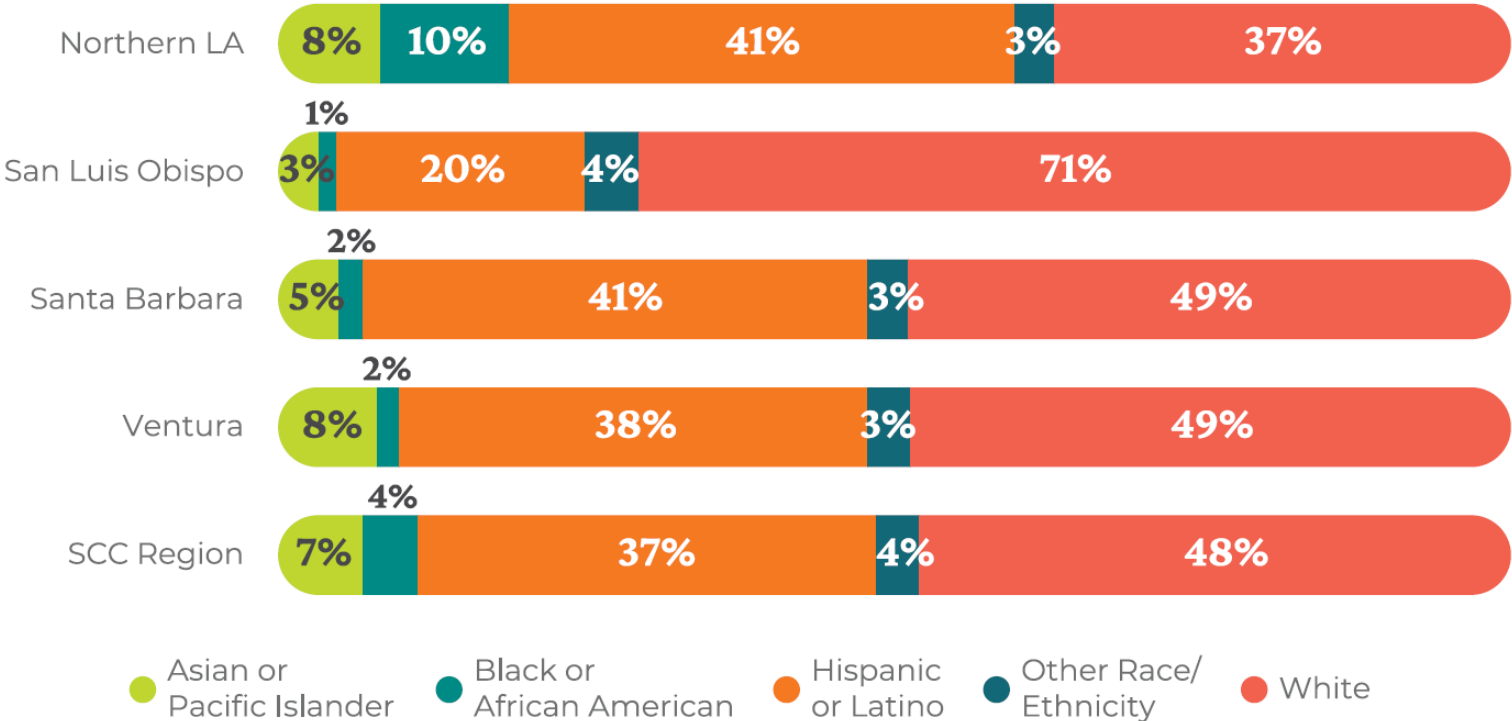
# Demographics are Destiny: The Aging Population

Exhibit 1: Projected Percentage of Population in California by Age Group, 2020 to 2070



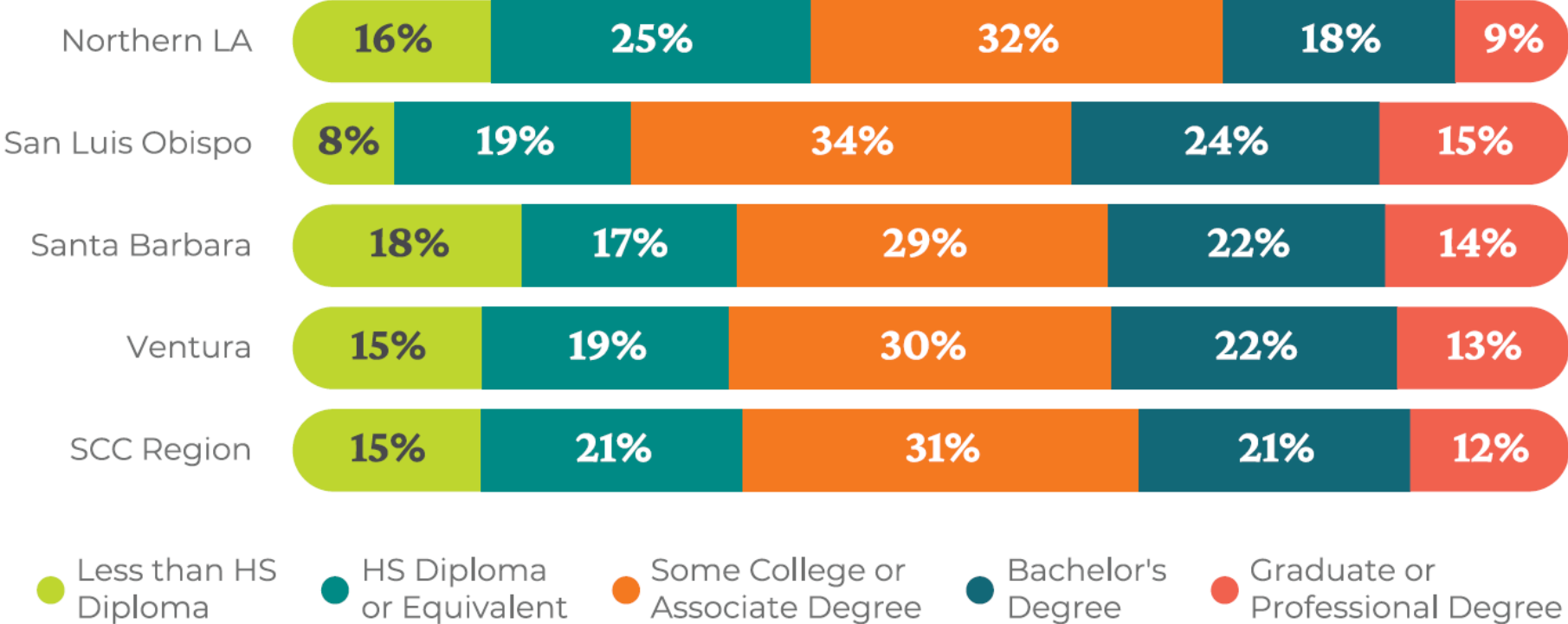
# Adult Population Demographics: Race and Ethnicity

Exhibit 2: Race and Ethnicity of Adult Population



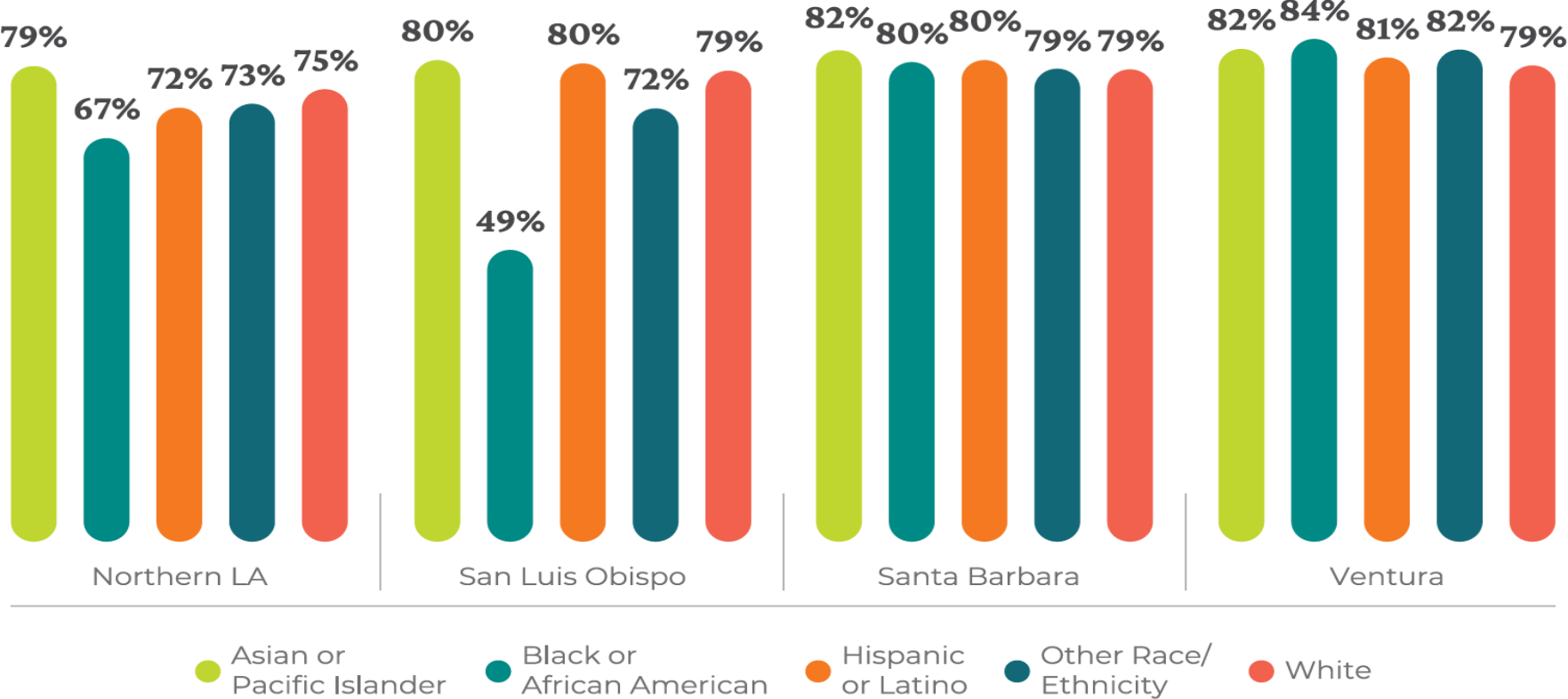
# Adult Population Demographics: Educational Attainment

**Exhibit 4: Educational Attainment**



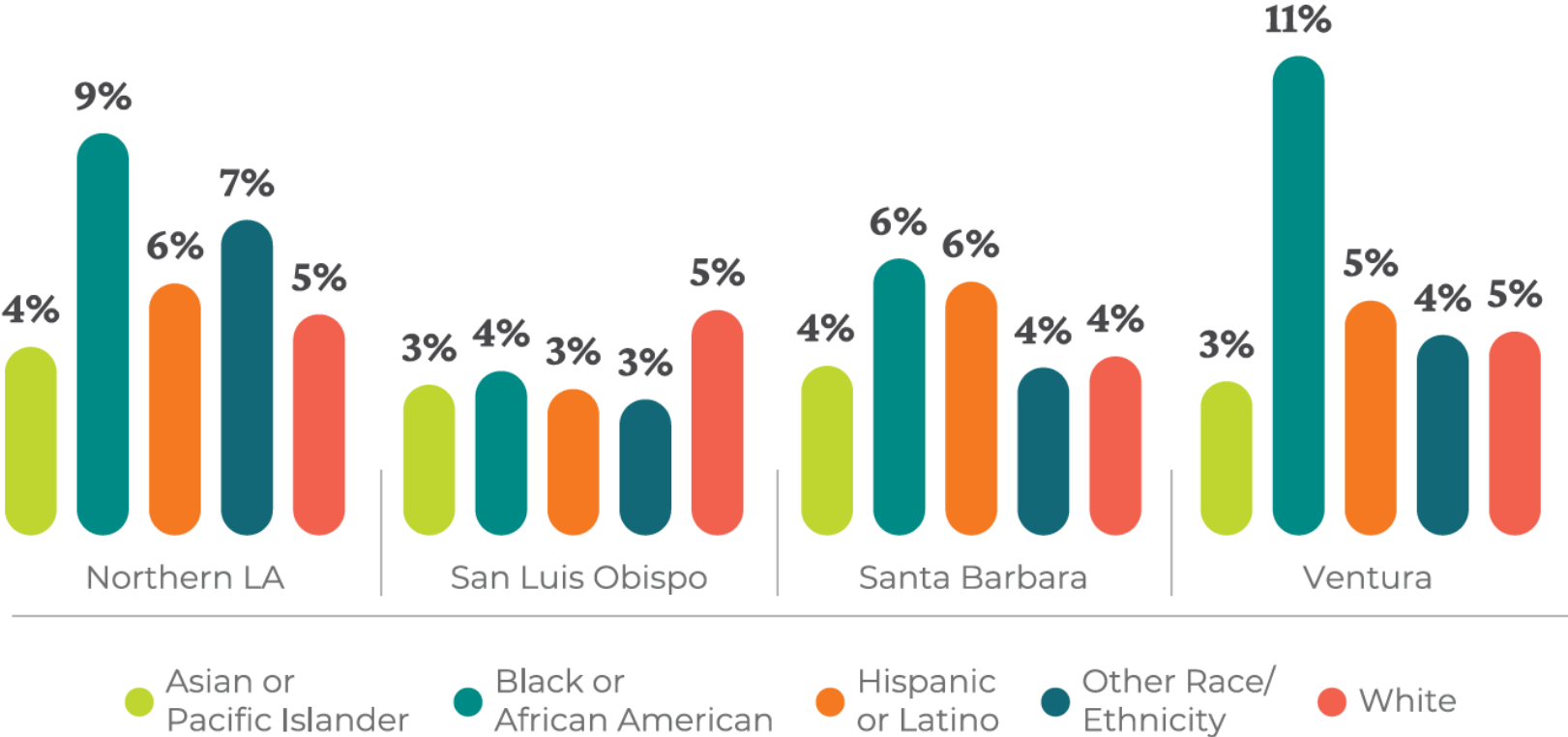
# Adult Population Demographics: Labor Force Participation

Exhibit 5: Labor Force Participation Rate



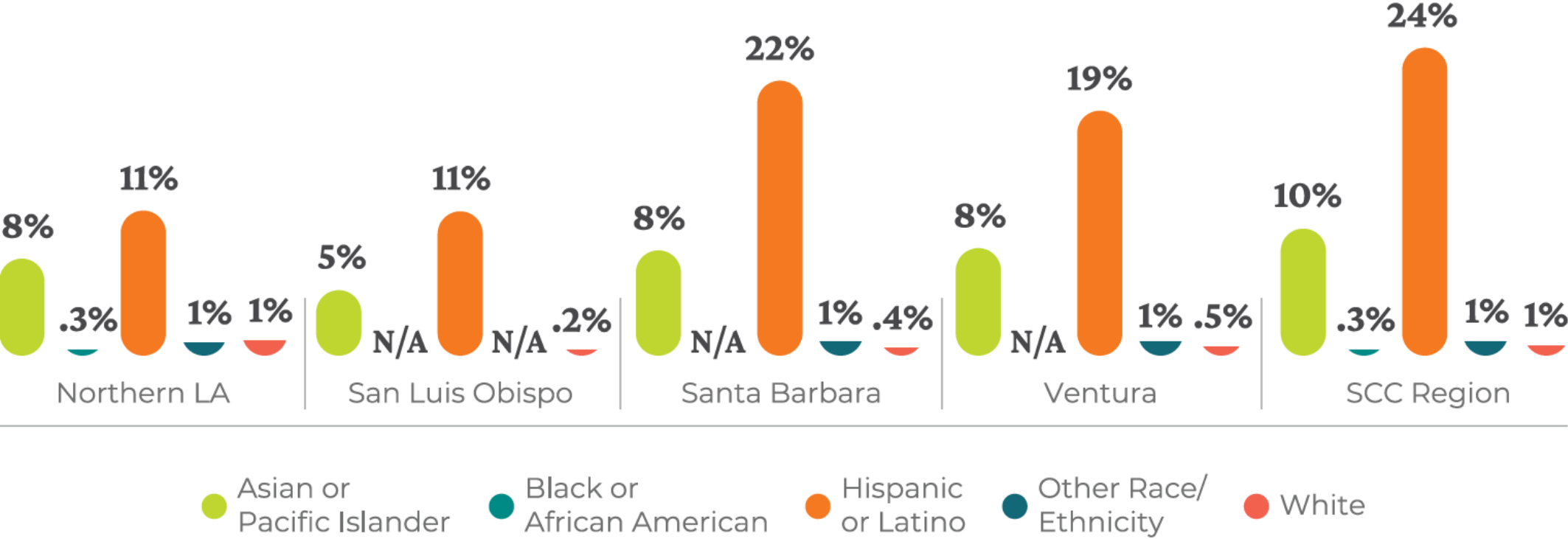
# Adult Population Demographics: Unemployment Rate

Exhibit 6: Unemployment Rate



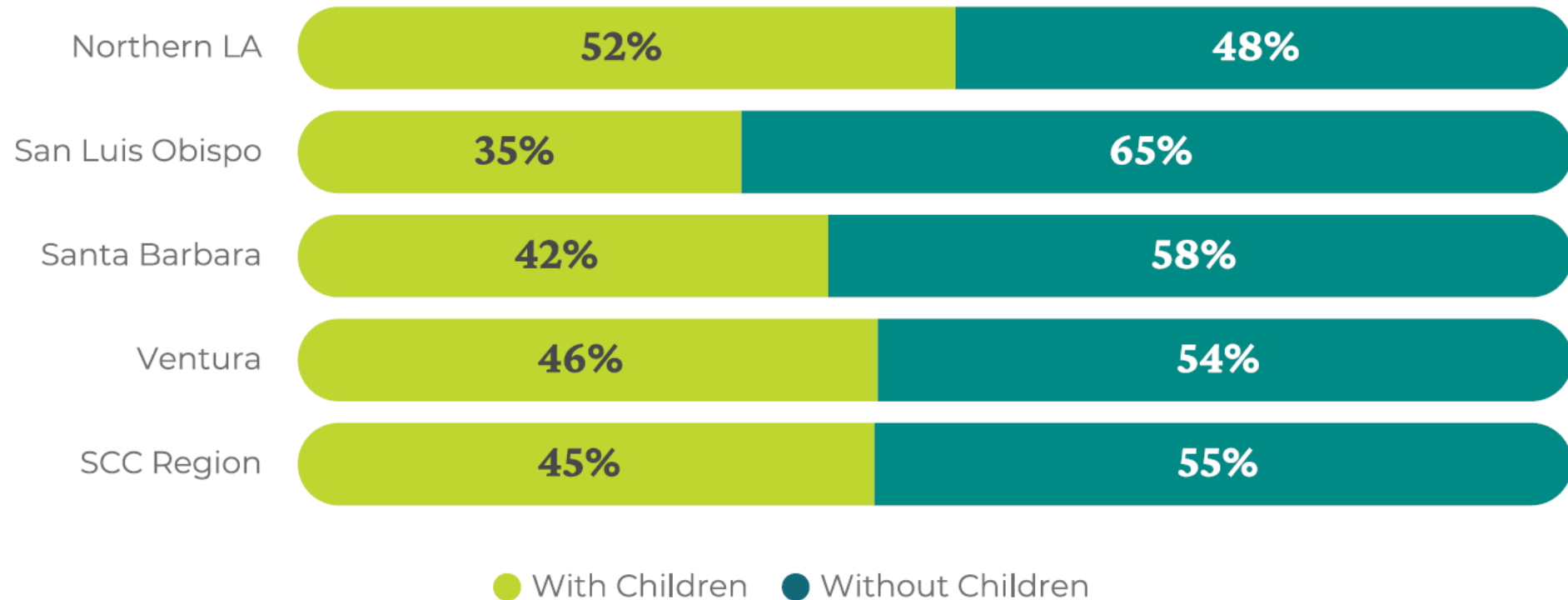
# Adult Population Demographics: English Proficiency

Exhibit 7: Limited English Proficiency



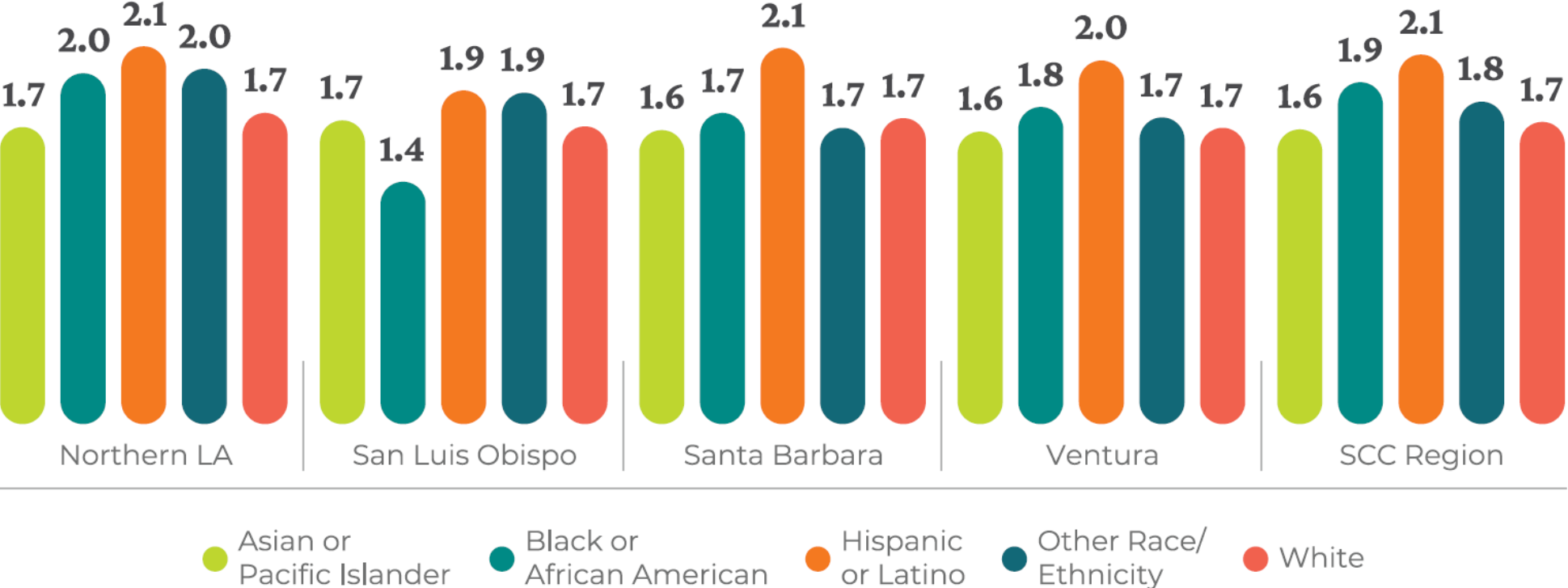
# Adult Population Demographics: Adults with Children

**Exhibit 10: Percentage of Adults With and Without Children**



# Adult Population Demographics: Adults with Children

Exhibit 11: Average Number of Children for Adults With Children



# Identifying Potential Opportunities for Adult Learners

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# SCC COE Job Quality Definitions

## High-Quality Occupations

- These occupations are in-demand, provide good wages and benefits, and are typically more stable compared to other occupations.

## Medium-Quality Occupations

- These jobs often provide steady employment but with mixed outcomes in terms of wages and demand.
- While they may not offer the same level of compensation or upward economic mobility as High-Quality occupations, many of these jobs serve as important entry points into the labor market or as stable employment options for workers with a variety of education and experience.

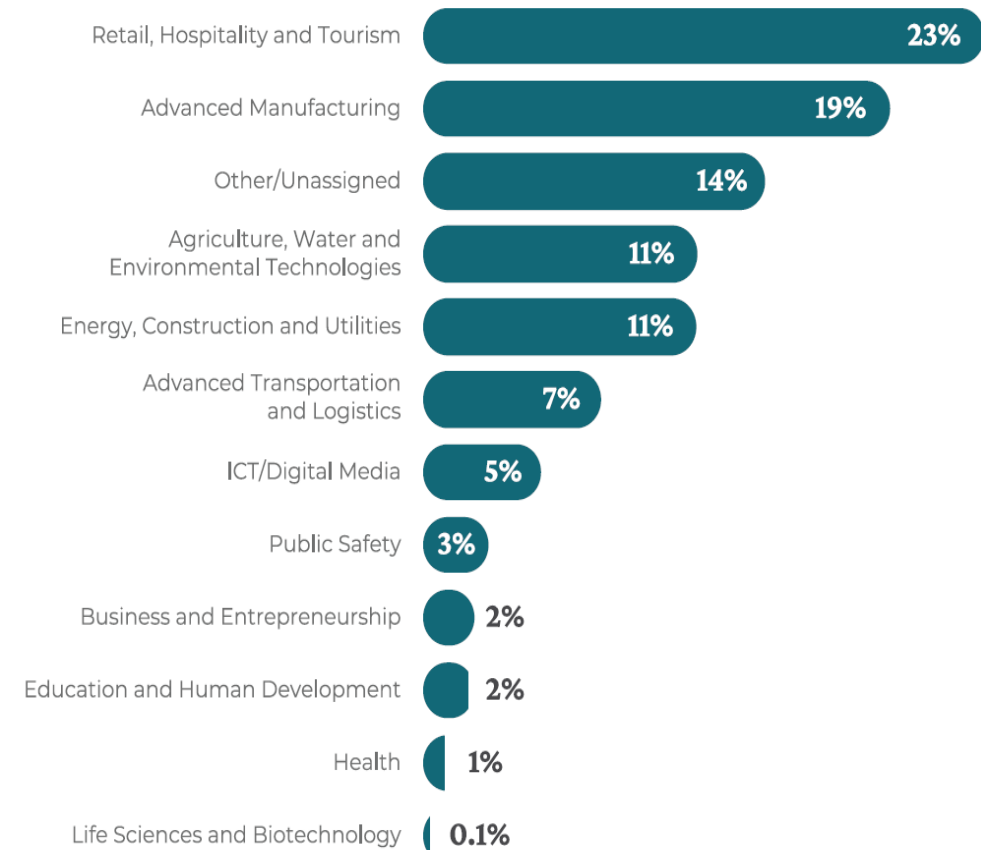
## Low-Quality Occupations

- These occupations play an important role as entry points into the labor market and as accessible employment opportunities for many workers, but do not typically offer the same long-term financial security and career mobility as higher quality occupations.

# Adult Workers in Low Quality Occupations

- Adult workers account for 14% of employment in Low-Quality occupations
- Of the 14% of adult workers in Low-Quality occupations:
  - › 23% are in Retail, Hospitality and Tourism
  - › 19% are in Advanced Manufacturing
  - › 14% are in the Other/Unassigned sector
- Nationally, “only 43 percent of workers in low-wage occupations leave low-wage work” over a 10-year period.
- Targeted training and reskilling programs could help these workers break the cycle of low-wage job transitions.

Exhibit 12: Percentage of Adult Workers in Low Quality Occupations by Sector



# Identifying Potential Advancement Occupations Through Labor Market Data

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## Advancement Occupations are:

- **Middle-skill:** occupations that typically require more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree.
- **Medium- or High-Quality:** occupations that meet the criteria to be considered Medium-or High-Quality based on the SCC COE's analysis of occupations in the South Central Coast Labor Market Landscape.
- **Meet at least two of the following three criteria in the SCC COE's Job Quality Framework**
  - › **Demand:** at least 34 projected job openings through 2029.
  - › **Living Wage:** entry-level wages that meet or exceed the SCC Region Self-Sufficiency Standard living wage of \$25.12 per hour.
  - › **Employer-Sponsored Health Coverage:** more than 65% of workers in the occupation have employer-sponsored health coverage.

# Advancement Occupations

**Exhibit 13: Comparison of Labor Market Data for Low-Quality and Advancement Occupations**

Data Point	Low-Quality Occupations	Advancement Occupations
2024 Jobs	102,886	175,521
2024–2029 % Change	(0.1%)	2%
Avg. Annual Openings (Demand)	17,460	18,683
Typical Entry-Level Wage	\$17.56	\$28.07

## Key Data Points



# Below Living-Wage Advancement Occupations

**Exhibit 14: SCC Region Community Colleges with Training Programs for Below Living Wage Advancement Occupations**

Occupation (SOC)	Avg. Annual Openings (Demand)	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25th Percentile)	AHC	AVC	COC	CC	MC	OC	SBCC	VC
Office Clerks, General (43-9061)	1,944	\$18.73	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive (43-6014)	1,170	\$21.10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Customer Service Representatives (43-4051)	1,056	\$18.81	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks (43-3031)	1,043	\$22.18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nursing Assistants (31-1131)	930	\$20.15	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Security Guards (33-9032)	928	\$17.69	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Medical Assistants (31-9092)	865	\$20.98	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (41-1011)	766	\$19.11	✓		✓	✓				
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (43-6013)	696	\$21.29	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓

# Below Living-Wage Advancement Occupations

**Exhibit 14: SCC Region Community Colleges with Training Programs for Below Living Wage Advancement Occupations**

Occupation (SOC)	Avg. Annual Openings (Demand)	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25th Percentile)	AHC	AVC	COC	CC	MC	OC	SBCC	VC
Receptionists and Information Clerks (43-4171)	693	\$17.57	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (41-4012)	580	\$24.76	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Social and Human Service Assistants (21-1093)	429	\$21.71	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education (25-2011)	387	\$18.02	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers (51-9061)	369	\$20.13								
First-Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers (45-1011)	352	\$18.19	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors (53-1047)	294	\$23.34		✓				✓		

College name abbreviations used in the table above: AHC = Allan Hancock College, AVC = Antelope Valley College, COC = College of the Canyons, CC = Cuesta College, MC = Moorpark College, OC = Oxnard College, SBCC = Santa Barbara City College, and VC = Ventura College.

# Below Living Wage Advancement Occupations: Health Spotlight

## **In-Demand Health Occupations for Advancement:**

- Throughout CCCs, 80% of students that complete health pathways start with either short-term certificates for nursing assistants, medical assistants, and emergency medical services, or a long-term certificate in licensed vocational nursing.
- Training for these occupations can be completed relatively quickly.
- With additional education, adult learners could obtain credentials to advance to higher-level positions such as nurses.

Nursing  
Assistants  
(31-1131)

Medical  
Assistants  
(31-9092)

# Below Living Wage Advancement Occupations: Artificial Intelligence Impacts

## AI-Exposed Occupations for Advancement:

- These occupations are highly exposed to AI, suggesting that AI can conduct tasks conducted by workers in these jobs.
- According to a recent study by the Brookings Institute, clerical and administrative workers have high AI-exposure and lower adaptive capacity to transition to a new job with their current skillset
- Community colleges should consider the potential impacts of AI on these Advancement Occupations as they engage with potential adult learners.

Office Clerks,  
General (43-9061)

Secretaries and  
Administrative  
Assistants, Except  
Legal, Medical, and  
Executive (43-6014)

Medical Secretaries  
and Administrative  
Assistants  
(43- 6013)

Receptionists and  
Information Clerks  
(43-4171)

# Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations

**Exhibit 15: SCC Region Community Colleges with Training Programs for Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations**

Occupation (SOC)	Avg. Annual Openings (Demand)	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25th Percentile)	AHC	AVC	COC	CC	MC	OC	SBCC	VC
General and Operations Managers (11-1021)	1,366	\$35.81	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Registered Nurses (29-1141)	1,060	\$51.89	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers (43-1011)	774	\$27.99	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers (33-3051)	421	\$47.08	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Electricians (47-2111)	385	\$25.97	✓	✓		✓				✓
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers (47-1011)	385	\$32.65	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses (29-2061)	367	\$32.46	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters (47-2152)	307	\$26.01	✓							
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers (51-1011)	299	\$27.21							✓	
Administrative Services Managers (11-3012)	155	\$40.79	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations

**Exhibit 15: SCC Region Community Colleges with Training Programs for Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations**

Occupation (SOC)	Avg. Annual Openings (Demand)	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25th Percentile)	AHC	AVC	COC	CC	MC	OC	SBCC	VC
Dental Hygienists (29-1292)	115	\$52.95						✓		
First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives (33-1012)	73	\$72.30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians (29-2034)	73	\$39.47	✓	✓			✓		✓	
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers (49-9051)	70	\$40.08	✓	✓		✓				✓
Respiratory Therapists (29-1126)	49	\$42.68		✓						
First-Line Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers (33-1021)	49	\$47.50	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Detectives and Criminal Investigators (33-3021)	38	\$47.88	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Computer Network Architects (15-1241)	36	\$47.36	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (29-2032)	30	\$41.21	✓		✓				✓	
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay (49-2095)	21	\$40.33	✓	✓		✓				✓
First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers (33-1011)	20	\$55.53	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Avionics Technicians (49-2091)	18	\$39.57		✓		✓				
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists (29-2035)	14	\$39.23	✓		✓				✓	

# Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations

**Exhibit 15: SCC Region Community Colleges with Training Programs for Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations**

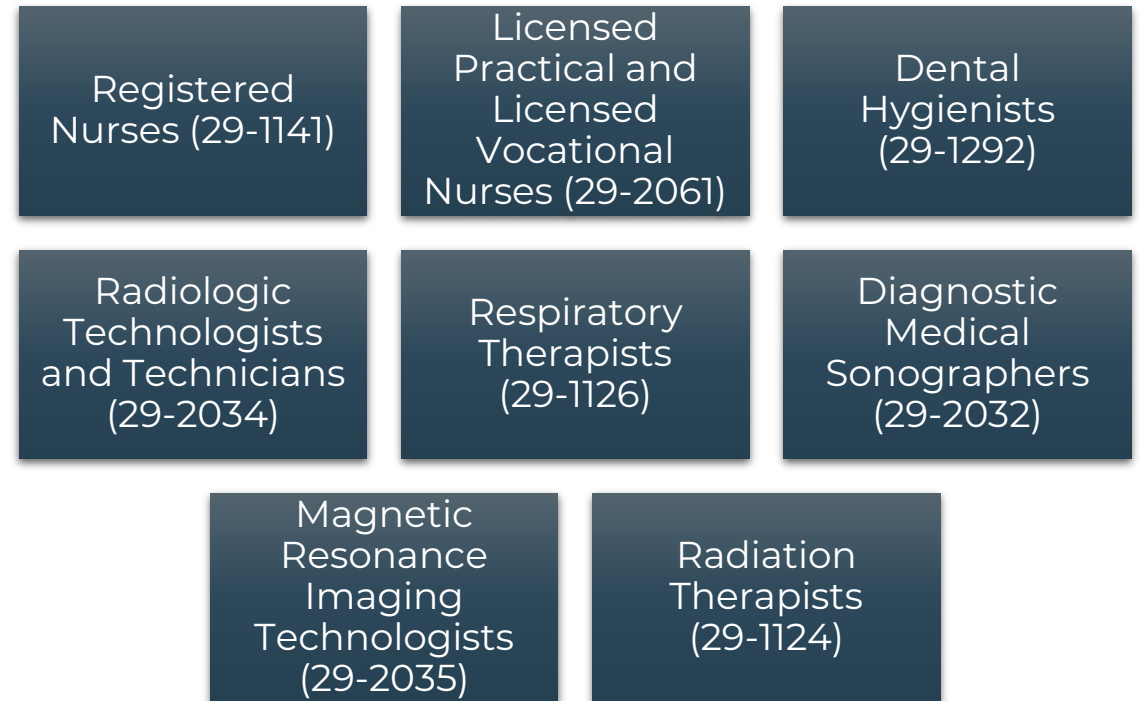
Occupation (SOC)	Avg. Annual Openings (Demand)	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25th Percentile)	AHC	AVC	COC	CC	MC	OC	SBCC	VC
Fire Inspectors and Investigators (33-2021)	13	\$41.28	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Air Traffic Controllers (53-2021)	13	\$52.20								
Elevator and Escalator Installers and Repairers (47-4021)	7	\$38.97								
Postmasters and Mail Superintendents (11-9131)	6	\$51.18								✓
Nuclear Power Reactor Operators (51-8011)	6	\$51.00								
Power Distributors and Dispatchers (51-8012)	5	\$48.02					✓			
Radiation Therapists (29-1124)	4	\$60.69	✓						✓	
Gas Plant Operators (51-8092)	2	\$51.62								
Transit and Railroad Police (33-3052)	0	\$43.45		✓	✓					

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# Above Living Wage Advancement Occupations: Health Spotlight

## In-Demand Health Occupations for Advancement:

- Throughout CA, 70% of community college students in high-value health programs are adult learners. (PPIC)
- Despite high rates of enrollment for adult learners, they found that family responsibilities, childcare, and finances can create barriers to starting or completing these programs. (PPIC)
- Examples of these programs include registered nursing, licensed vocational nursing, radiological technology, respiratory therapy, and dental hygiene.



# Barriers for Adult Learners and Related Strategies

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# Financial Barriers and Financial Aid Eligibility

## Context

- Nationally, 56% of adult learners who stopped out of programs did so for monetary reasons.
- For adults not currently enrolled in higher education, financial aid was cited as the second most important factor in motivating them for enrollment

## Barriers

- Financial aid policies and institutional practices are largely structured around continuous enrollment and linear academic progression.
  - Satisfactory Academic Progress
  - Lifetime eligibility limits
  - Complex recertification processes

“Adult learners’ perspectives on financing their current educational pursuits are often formed by their previous postsecondary experiences in which they may have exhausted available grant dollars or taken on loan debt without ending up with a credential of value, or a credential of any kind.” -CAEL

# Strategies to Address Financial Barriers and Financial Aid Eligibility

## Fees and Holds

- Reduce or eliminate excess student fees, removing transcript holds for former students that are reengaging with education but owe small balances.

## SAP Rules

- Revisit SAP rules to ensure that they are not adding additional penalties for returning adult learners.

## Targeted Outreach

- Proactively engage adult learners and conduct targeted financial aid outreach while also training financial aid advisors on adult-learner specific barriers such as SAP, assessment of prior learning, and full-time versus part-time enrollment and its impacts on financial aid.

# Scheduling

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## Context

- Adult learners are highly motivated to complete postsecondary credentials but must balance education alongside employment, caregiving, and other responsibilities that limit their availability for traditional course schedules.
- When courses are offered primarily during standard daytime hours, follow fixed semester lengths, or lack predictable scheduling patterns, adult learners are more likely to stop out or reduce enrollment intensity.

# Strategies to Address Scheduling

## Shorter Options

- Offer shorter academic terms such as eight-week courses, evening and weekend scheduling, hybrid and online modalities, and predictable course sequencing that allows students to plan around work and family commitments

## Multiple Entry and Exit Points

- Programs that offer multiple entry and exit points further reduce risk by enabling adult learners to pause and reenter education without losing momentum or accumulated progress

## Clear Pathways and Program Maps

- Coherent pathways, clear program maps, and advising that integrates academic planning with labor market information can help improve persistence and completion



# What scheduling and advising practices has your campus implemented?

# Prior Learning

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## Context

- Limited or inconsistent recognition of prior learning can require adult learners to repeat coursework in areas where they already possess substantial professional or life experience, increasing time to completion and overall cost.
- Enrollment, advising, and onboarding processes are often fragmented across departments, requiring adult learners to navigate complex systems with limited guidance.

# Strategies to Address Prior Learning: CPL

## Structured CPL Support

- Some colleges have addressed the complexity of portfolio-based assessment by creating structured CPL support systems that provide advising, documentation guidance, and faculty coordination

## Integrate CPL in Marketing and Advising

- Ensuring that CPL opportunities are well publicized, consistently applied, and embedded in advising practices is essential to maximizing its benefit for adult learners.

## Credit for Prior Learning in the SCC Region

Across the SCC Region, community colleges use Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) to enable students to earn college credit for knowledge and skills they have already acquired through non-traditional avenues such as work experience, industry certifications, military training, standardized examinations (e.g., CLEP, AP, IB), or student-created portfolios. However, a review of SCC community college websites shows that each college has a slightly different process, intake/interest form, and/or policies.

For example, to pursue CPL at Cuesta College, students must be enrolled and in good standing, complete a Comprehensive Student Education Plan, and petition for assessment through the appropriate academic division; faculty review determines whether prior learning outcomes align with specific course objectives, and approved credit is transcribed on the student's academic record just as if the coursework had been completed through enrollment.<sup>56</sup>

Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura colleges have a publicly available CPL petition,<sup>57</sup> while College of the Canyons<sup>58</sup> and Santa Barbara City College<sup>59</sup> have publicly available interest/inquiry forms that students must submit. At Allan Hancock College, CPL policies are outlined Board Policy 4235<sup>60</sup> while Antelope Valley Colleges CPL polices are included in the academic policies section of the college catalog.<sup>61</sup>



# What stage of implementation is Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) on your campus?

# Cultural and Attitudinal Barriers

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## Context

- Cultural and attitudinal barriers within campus environments that are oriented toward traditional college-age students may create barriers for adult learners.
- Adult students not only commonly express different classroom experiences and needs than traditional age students, but they are also often underserved and marginalized in campus interactions and supports that assume traditional student roles

# Strategies to Address Cultural and Attitudinal Barriers

## Messaging and Marketing

- Reframe institutional messaging to include adult learners.

## Adult Learner Pedagogy

- Provide professional development for faculty and staff on adult learner pedagogy and inclusive practices.

## Student Engagement

- Design student engagement opportunities that reflect adult learners' schedules, responsibilities, and strengths.

# Enrollment Practices

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## Context

- Traditional Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is largely designed around recent high school graduates and assumes full-time, continuous enrollment
- Adult learners are often part-time and may be re-enrolling in higher education or enrolling for the first time.

# Strategies to Address Enrollment Practices: Adult SEM

## Adult SEM

- Targeted outreach and messaging that speak to adult learners' motivations and goals.
- Onboarding processes that reduce administrative complexity.
- Advising models that integrate academic planning with labor market information and flexible scheduling.
- Early alert systems that identify risk factors tied to work-life disruptions rather than academic performance alone.

Effective adult-focused SEM requires cross-departmental collaboration among admissions, financial aid, academic affairs, workforce partners, and student support services.

When implemented holistically, SEM allows colleges to shift from reactive, compliance-driven enrollment practices to proactive systems that anticipate adult learners' needs



**What tactics does your college utilize to assist adult students with enrollment, onboarding, and retention?**

# Conclusion, Implications for Practice, and Discussion

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# Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This study provides an overview of:

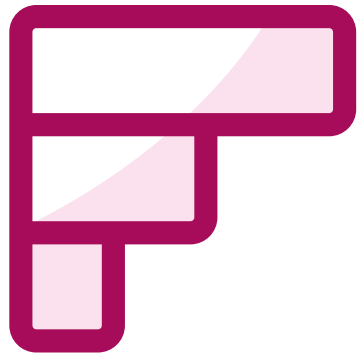
- Adult population characteristics
- Potential Advancement Occupations
- Barriers to adult learner success in the SCC Region.

This study DOES NOT:

- Fully capture the lived experiences, motivations, and decision-making processes of adult learners.
- Assess potential pathways and source occupations for Advancement Occupations.
- Examine the current state of strategies that SCC Region community colleges may already be using.

Future research could include:

- Incorporation of adult learner voices through surveys, focus groups, interviews and other community-engage research.
- Co-designing pathways based on community research and labor market data.



# Which challenges are impacting your campus the most?

THANK YOU!

# South Central Coast Center of Excellence

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**Jacob Poore**

SCC COE Director

[jacob.poore@canyons.edu](mailto:jacob.poore@canyons.edu)



**Ashley Kernan**

SCC COE Research  
Manager

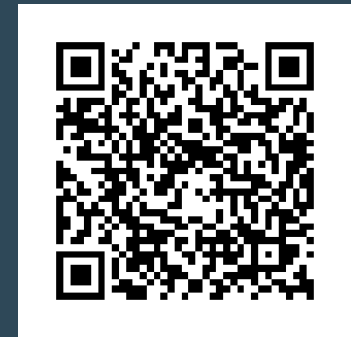
[ashley.kernan@canyons.edu](mailto:ashley.kernan@canyons.edu)



**Janneth Najera**

SCC COE Research  
Manager

[janneth.najera@canyons.edu](mailto:janneth.najera@canyons.edu)



FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH

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