



ECONOMIC MOBILITY INDEX

A Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusivity Analysis

Volume 1



WAKE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

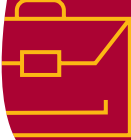


TRIANGLE DIVERSITY
EQUITY & INCLUSIVITY
ALLIANCE

RALEIGH
CHAMBER 



No. 9
The Raleigh Metro's Economic Mobility performance ranks #9 out of the 155 most populous MSAs in the country.



INTRODUCTION

Economic Mobility Index

The Greater Raleigh Chamber is the Triangle's largest business membership organization, comprised of over 1,800 member firms. The Chamber's mission is to build a thriving regional economy, enhance the community's quality of life, and strengthen member businesses.

To achieve these goals, **the Chamber recognizes the necessity of a strong and diverse business community and workforce, ensuring the benefits of growth are shared across the region.**

The Chamber has participated in several Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives to realize this vision. Notably, the Chamber houses the Triangle DEI Alliance. The Alliance believes that pursuing DEI efforts holds significant economic value by unlocking the full potential of the region's workforce, fostering innovation, and boosting productivity.

To guide their economic mobility efforts, the Greater Raleigh Chamber hired Economic Leadership LLC, a research and consulting firm based in North Carolina, to develop an Economic Mobility Index. This index compares the Raleigh metro area with 155 metros nationwide.

The purpose of the index is to provide a data-driven understanding of the economic mobility and opportunities available in the Raleigh metro. The index will also provide a comparative analysis of how the Raleigh metro performs against other peer communities.

A methodology for measuring metro economic mobility performance was developed with the goal of releasing new findings annually. The index focuses on data that measures the economic performance and representation of various diverse populations.

According to the index, the Raleigh metro's Economic Mobility performance ranked 9th out of the 155 most populous metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the country. The index also highlights Raleigh as a top performer in the Southeast region and amongst MSAs with similar demographics.

Data Subindex	Score	Possible Score	Rank
Representation in Leadership	7.5	10.9	30
Economic Opportunity	35.5	48.3	6
Education	13.9	21.1	15
Economic Security	8.6	19.7	110
Total	65.4	100	9

Note: Throughout this report, a lower rank indicates a higher standing. Rankings are x/155.

METHODOLOGY

To develop a list of key performance metrics for measuring the nation's top 155 metros, the teams from Economic Leadership and the Greater Raleigh Chamber first had to define economic mobility in the context of this research. Quantifying and assessing the multifaceted dimensions of economic mobility is a complex task.

Researchers needed to balance what the Chamber wanted to measure with the data available across all MSAs in the nation. The focus was placed on economic performance indicators for diverse populations within each metro area as the guiding principle. The ultimate research goal was to identify where people of diverse backgrounds have opportunities to thrive.

Another key aspect of the index was determining which elements of diversity would be measured. Economic mobility efforts could consider a wide range of demographics, including race, ethnicity, age, immigration status, gender, religion, veteran status, people with disabilities, single-parent households, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, among others. The Chamber aimed to gather comprehensive information on as many groups as possible, with the aspirational goal of ensuring opportunity for all.

Ultimately, creating this index was constrained by the availability, consistency, and comparability of data across the MSAs. Much of this data is collected by public sources like the U.S. Census Bureau and is limited by their methodology. For example, data on the LGBTQ community is challenging to measure because the Census only collects gender data on the two sex categories of male and female. While some Census data is now available on same-sex couples, it remains limited in scope. Most of the data evaluated is from the years 2022 or 2023, with the latest available information used.

For each data point, the raw number is evaluated along with the equity gap and a 10-year growth rate. For example, the mean income for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) is included, along with the gap between BIPOC and white mean incomes and the percent change in BIPOC household income over 10 years. This approach resulted in a total of 89 metrics used to calculate the Economic Mobility Index.

The following questions underpinned the metrics chosen for the index:

- ✓ Are people of diverse backgrounds able to acquire quality jobs and build wealth?
- ✓ Are people of diverse backgrounds building the skills needed for high-wage jobs?
- ✓ Are people of diverse backgrounds rising to positions of leadership?
- ✓ Are people of diverse backgrounds able to build economic security and reduce their risk of financial shocks?

Contents



Map Comparison Metros 4



Management Diversity Index 5



Income 6



Poverty Level 7



Educational Attainment 8



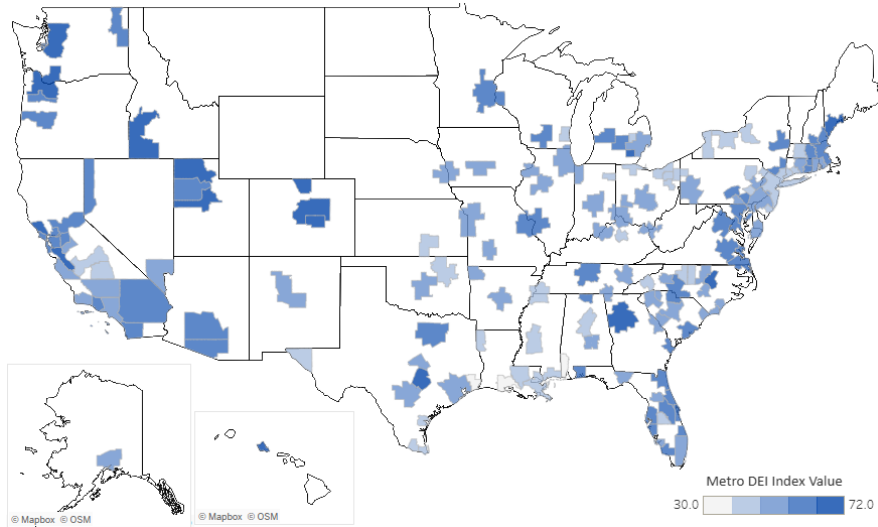
Business Ownership Index 9



Insights 10, 11

ECONOMIC MOBILITY INDEX MAP

ALL METRO AREAS INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS

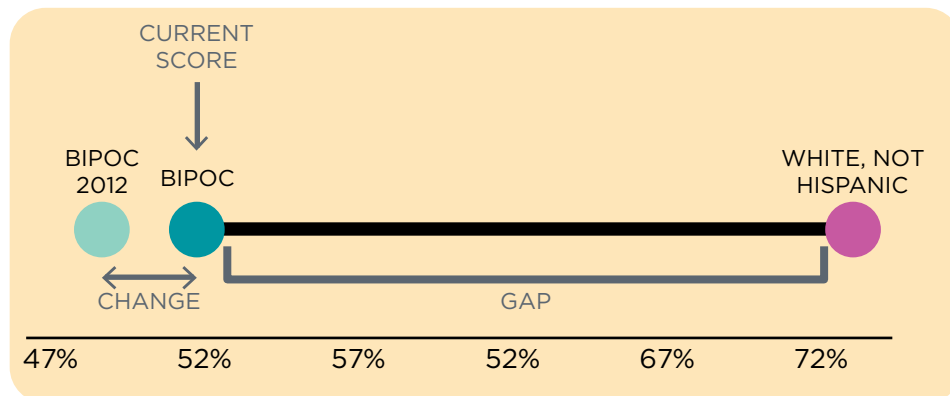


SOUTHEAST U.S. METROS

Metro	Index Value	Rank	Metro	Index Value	Rank
Raleigh, NC	65.4	9	Columbia, SC	52	87
Atlanta, GA	63.8	16	Greenville, SC	51.7	91
Richmond, VA	62.2	21	Durham, NC	51.5	92
Savannah, GA	61.9	22	Chatanooga, TN	50.4	97
Charlotte, NC	53.7	33	Hickory, NC	49.6	101
Nashville, TN	59.1	37	Spartanburg, SC	48.0	108
Virginia Beach, VA	58.9	40	Fayetteville, NC	47.7	111
Charleston, SC	56.4	54	Asheville, NC	46.0	119
Wilmington, NC	55.2	63	Greensboro, NC	44.9	129
Agusta, GA	54.7	66	Memphis, TN	43.6	139
Myrtle Beach, SC	53.2	78	Winston Salem, NC	42.0	145

UNDERSTANDING EQUITY GAP CHARTS

For each data point, we assessed the current score, the equity gap, and the 10-year change rate. For example, the homeownership rate for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) was included, along with the gap between BIPOC and white homeownership, and the percent change in BIPOC homeownership on the past 10 years.



MANAGEMENT DIVERSITY

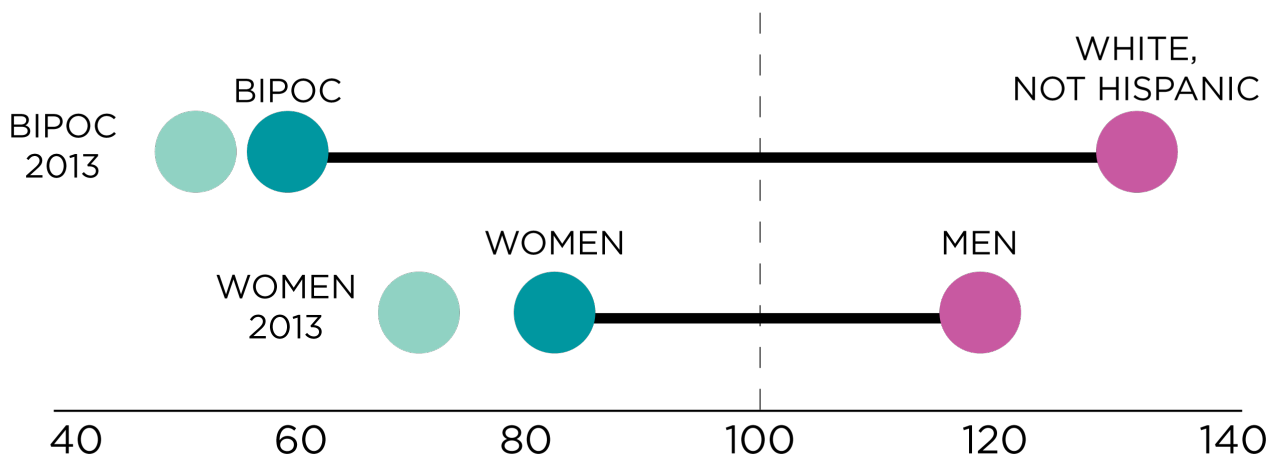
There is a large body of research showing that diversity in management roles fosters innovation and organizational success. Representation at the highest levels also helps younger individuals expand their perceptions of what is possible for them. Management roles offer some of the highest wages and wealth building opportunities in the market. By evaluating the demographic data of management positions, we can determine if people of diverse backgrounds are able to achieve economic mobility in their careers. The demographic data available for management positions included race/ethnicity and gender.

To fairly compare metro areas, the percentage of BIPOC individuals or women in management was compared to the percentage of these groups in the metro's population. This produced an index value where a management index of 100 indicated equal representation in management and the community. If the value was lower than 100, the group was underrepresented in management positions; if higher than 100, the group was overrepresented.

BIPOC workers in the Raleigh metro account for about 24 percent of management positions, while they make up over 41 percent of the community's population. This results in a management index value of 59.2, indicating underrepresentation in management roles for this group. Women in leadership roles scored better than BIPOC workers, but were still underrepresented. Over the last ten years, the management index for BIPOC workers and women workers has increased.

Metric	Value	Rank
Management Index: BIPOC	59.2	95
Management Index: 10-Year Trend BIPOC	+10%	80
Management Index: Women	82.6	18
Management Index: 10-Year Trend Women	+14%	38
Total	65.4	100

RALEIGH METRO MANAGEMENT INDEX SCORE



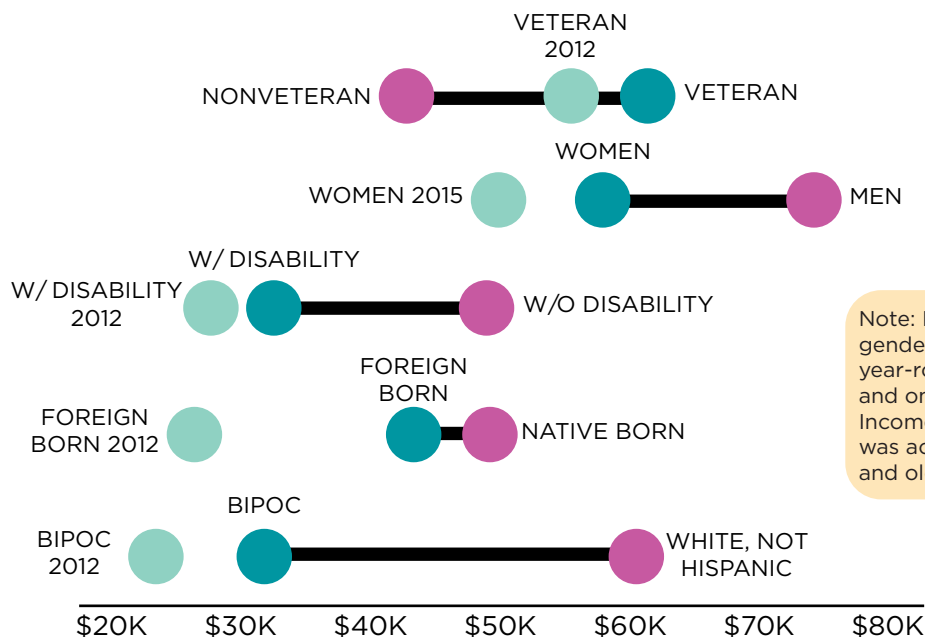
INCOME

To understand if employment was leading to improved wealth outcomes, individual income was measured. Data from the Census on income was used rather than salary information, as the Census includes wages, self-employment earnings, interest, dividends, rental income, retirement benefits, and public assistance in income estimates. This approach helps measure the total economic resources available to an individual. To account for geographic variance in earnings, a cost-of-living-index (COLI) was applied. When comparing data from ten years prior, the consumer price index (CPI) was used to determine the value of real change, reflecting changes in prices over that time. Income data by race was only available as a mean, not a median statistic.

The Raleigh Metro scored well on several household income metrics. Women had the 3rd highest median incomes when adjusted for cost of living, though they still earned over \$15K less than their male counterparts. BIPOC residents in the Raleigh metro earned the 7th highest income when accounting for cost of living. Despite these higher rankings compared to other metros, BIPOC households in the Raleigh metro still earned about \$25k less than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts, with this gap in household income ranking 137th out of 155. Additionally, median income for foreign-born residents increased significantly over the last ten years, even when accounting for inflation during that period.

Group	Metric	Value	Rank	Metric	Value	Rank	Metric	Value	Rank
BIPOC	COLI Mean Adjusted Income	\$32,800	7	Mean Income Gap	-\$25,300	137	Mean Income 10 Yr Real Change	29%	49
Women	COLI Mean Adjusted Income	\$59,600	3	Median Income Gap	-\$15,800	138	Mean Income 10 Yr Real Change	11%	15
Veterans	COLI Median Adjusted Income	\$60,700	4				Median Income 10 Yr Real Change	4%	82
Disability	COLI Median Adjusted Income	\$33,900	9	Median Income Gap	-\$18,100	148	Median Income 10 Yr Real Change	10%	102
Foreign Born	COLI Median Adjusted Income	\$43,900	2	Median Income Gap	-\$2,000	55	Median Income 10 Yr Real Change	45%	2

RALEIGH METRO REAL INCOME ADJUSTED FOR COST OF LIVING



Note: Individual income data on gender was based on full-time, year-round employed persons and only available back to 2015. Income for the remaining groups was across all persons age 16 and older.

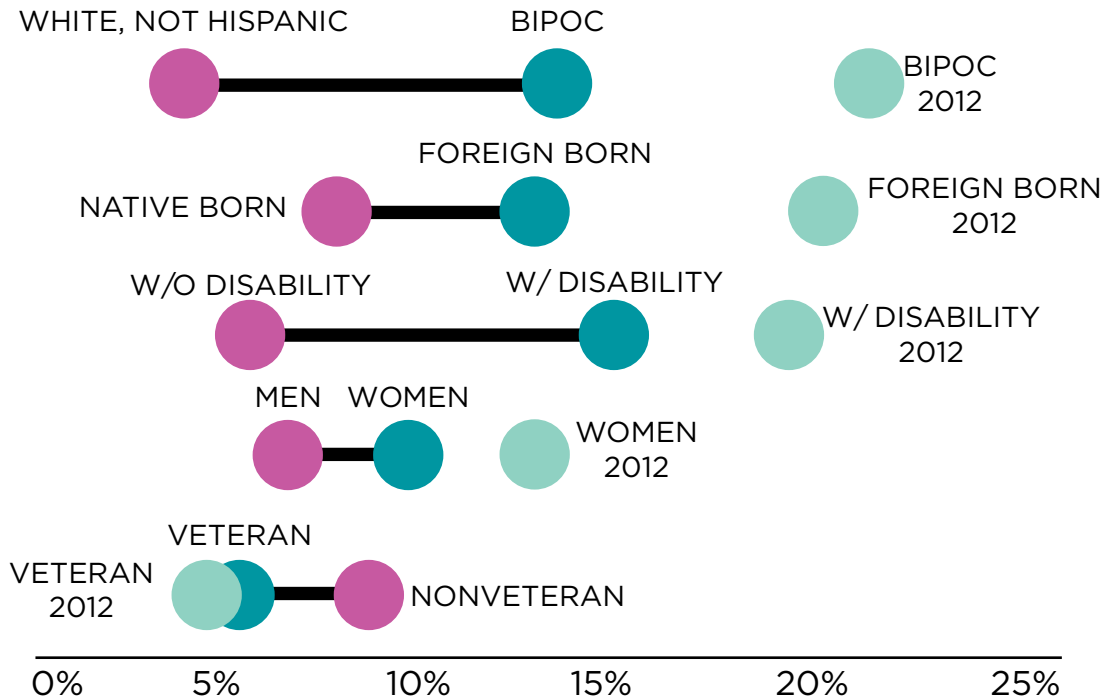
POVERTY LEVEL

To measure a lack of economic security, the percentage of the population living below the poverty level was evaluated. The Raleigh metro ranked in the top 30 for many poverty-related statistics.

Over the last ten years, poverty levels for diverse populations have significantly declined in the area. For example, the 19 percent reduction in the number of people with disabilities living in poverty from 2012 to 2022 was the 9th fastest decline across all the metros studied. However, veterans were the one group that experienced an increase in poverty in the Raleigh metro over the last ten years.

Metric	Value	Rank	Metric	Value	Rank
Poverty: BIPOC	13%	19	Poverty: 10 Year Trend- Veterans	+9%	91
Poverty: Gap- BIPOC	+8%	48	Poverty: Disability	15%	12
Poverty: 10 Year Trend- BIPOC	-36%	26	Poverty: Gap- Disability	+8%	34
Poverty: Women	9%	12	Poverty: 10 Year Trend- Disability	-19%	9
Poverty: Gap- Women	+2%	26	Poverty: Foreign Born	11%	27
Poverty: 10 Year Trend- Women	-26%	19	Poverty: Gap- Foreign Born	+3%	93
Poverty: Veterans	5%	17	Poverty: 10 Year Trend- Foreign Born	-41%	23

RALEIGH METRO PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION LIVING BELOW POVERTY LEVEL



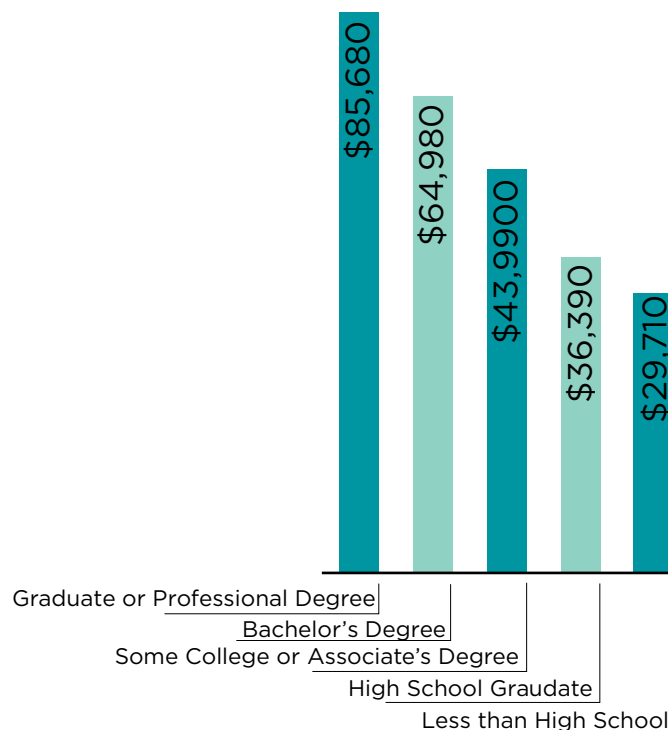
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Postsecondary education is one of the main paths to economic mobility and access to higher wage jobs. The percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher was used to measure the number of people in a metro who are trained for higher paying jobs. A bachelor’s degree or higher was the most common educational attainment delineation presented by the Census for the diverse populations studied in this report.

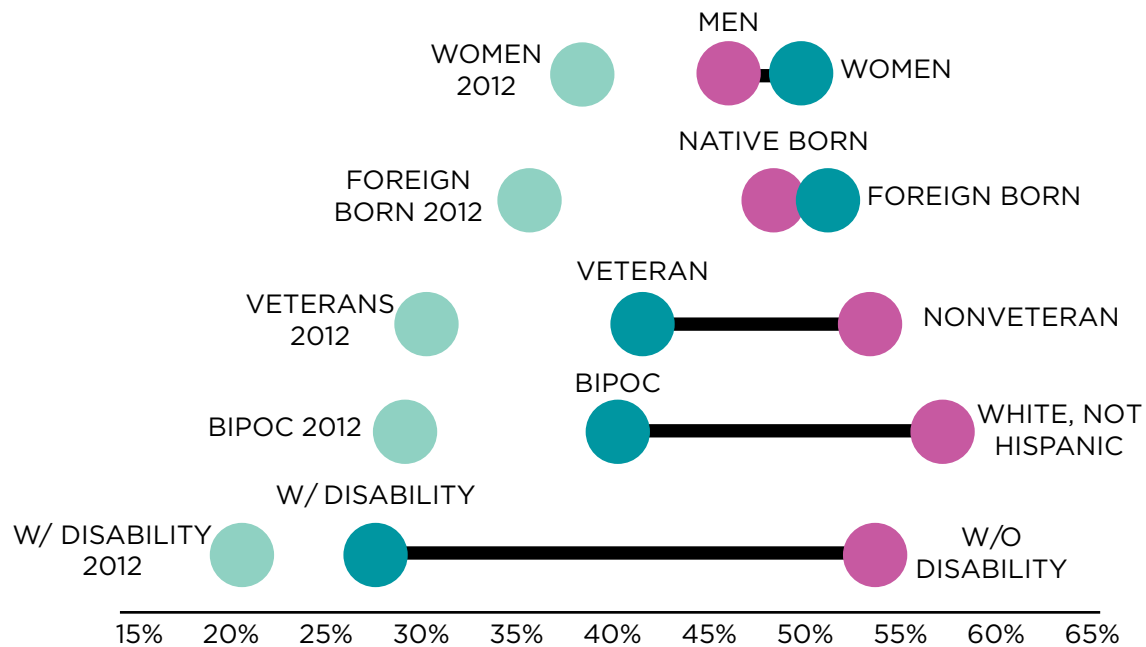
The Raleigh metro had some of the highest levels of educational attainment across all the metros studied. The presence of several prominent postsecondary institutions and the significant role of knowledge-based sectors like life sciences, data analytics, and software likely attract educated workers to the area. However, there is still a significant gap between the BIPOC community and the white, non-Hispanic community. Other groups, like veterans and people with disabilities, also have lower educational attainment than their counterparts.

Group	Metric	Value	Rank	Metric	Value	Rank	Metric	Value	Rank
BIPOC	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	40%	10	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher: Gap	-17%	121	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher 10 Year Trend	+35%	66
Women	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	50%	9	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher:Gap	No Gap	Full Credit	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher 10 Year Trend	+23%	86
Veterans	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	41%	13	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher Gap	-9%	124	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher 10 Year Trend	+19%	43
Disability	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	29%	11	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher: Gap	-25%	149	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher 10 Year Trend	+43%	67
Foreign Born	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	50%	10	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher: Gap	No Gap	Full Credit	Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher 10 Year Trend	+35%	15

U.S. MEDIAN EARNING BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



RALEIGH METRO ADULTS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER



BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Business ownership is a key path toward wealth building. Owning a business creates opportunities to accumulate assets and build equity over time, fostering intergenerational wealth. High levels of entrepreneurial participation across diverse groups in a community are indicative of prosperity. The Census Bureau surveys the nation's business owners annually, collecting their demographic information. Using the most recent survey data from 2021, ownership indexes were calculated based on the percentage of firms owned or equally owned by a minority, woman, veteran, person with a disability, or person born outside of the U.S. These values were compared to the representation of each group in the overall population.

In the Raleigh metro, minority-, women-, and disability-owned businesses were underrepresented. However, businesses owned by foreign-born individuals and veterans were at higher rates compared to their population size. When multiple metros scored above 100 on an index value, they were all considered tied for 1st in the metric and were given the full weighted points for that metric. This approach ensures that metros were not judged on their level of overrepresentation. The Raleigh metro received full credit for the foreign-born business ownership and veteran business ownership indicators. The women-owned business index value was the 36th highest among the 155 metros studied.

Metric	Value	Rank
Business Ownership Index: Minority Owned	54.8	113
Business Ownership Index: Woman Owned	76.4	36
Business Ownership Index: Veteran Owned	108.5	Full Credit*
Business Ownership Index: Disability Owned	25.2	68
Business Ownership Index: Foreign Born Owned	114.9	Full Credit*

Note: If a metro had an index value greater than 100, than it was given "full credit" for the metric, the equivalent of tying for 1st in the rankings

INSIGHTS

The Economic Mobility metro index measured 89 data points for 155 metros in the U.S., assessing the performance of diverse populations on topics such as household income, employment, and education. The index prioritized high performance values and small or no gaps between demographic groups, while giving smaller credit to metros that are improving their statistics. Using this methodology, the Raleigh metro earned 65.4 points out of a total 100, ranking 9th out of the 155 most populated MSAs in the country. Regionally, the Raleigh metro is a leader in economic mobility performance. The data demonstrates several strengths for the Raleigh metro.

TOP RANKINGS FOR RALEIGH MSA

Metric	Value	Rank
COLI Adjusted Median Income - Foreign Born	\$43,900	2
Median Income - 10- Year Real Change - Foreign Born	+45%	2
COLI Adjusted Median Income - Women	\$59,600	3
COLI Adjusted Median Income - Veterans	\$60,700	4
COLI Adjusted Mean Income - BIPOC	\$32,800	7
Poverty - 10-Year Trend - Disability	-19%	9
COLI Adjusted Median Income - Disability	\$33,900	9
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Women	50%	9
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - BIPOC	40%	10
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Foreign Born	50%	10
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Disability	29%	11
Poverty - Women	9%	12
Poverty - Disability	15%	12
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Veterans	41%	13
Median Income - 10- Year Real Change - Women	+11%	15
Adults with BA or Higher - 10-Year Trend - Foreign Born	+35%	15

The Raleigh metro ranked in the top 30 for 29 metrics and within the top 15 for 16 metrics. The metro scored well in incomes for diverse populations, particularly when adjusting for the cost of living. Additionally, the Raleigh metro has high rates of educational attainment, indicating that the population possesses the skills needed to acquire higher-paying jobs. The metro also ranked in the top 15 for low levels of poverty among women and people with disabilities. Furthermore, the Raleigh metro showed positive trends in many of the metrics included in the index, indicating progress in key areas.

The research also highlights opportunities for the Raleigh metro to improve its economic mobility performance. Most of the lowest rankings for the metro were related to gap measurements, indicating that diverse populations are not performing as well as other groups in the region. Significant gaps exist between BIPOC and white, non-Hispanic individuals in health insurance, mean income, and educational attainment. The employment gap between women and men was the 135th highest out of 155 metros. Several of the lowest rankings for the metro were related to health insurance coverage.

BOTTOM RANKINGS FOR RALEIGH MSA

Metric	Value	Rank
Health Insurance Coverage - Gap - Foreign Born	-19%	111
Business Ownership Index - Minority Owned	54.8	113
Homeownership Rate - 10-Year Trend - Women	0%	117
Health Insurance Coverage - Gap - BIPOC	-9%	118
Health Insurance Coverage - Disability	93%	118
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Gap -BIPOC	-17%	121
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Gap -Veterans	-9%	124
Homeownership Rate - Gap - Women	-13%	126
Educator & Administrator Index - Men	50.2	129
EPOP - Gap - Women	11	135
Mean Income - Gap - BIPOC	-\$25,300	137
Median Income - Gap - Women	-\$15,800	138
Median Income - Gap - Disability	-\$18,100	148
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher - Gap -Disability	-25%	149

Many economic development and community organizations have economic mobility goals and measure their regional data. The Raleigh Chamber has commissioned this innovative, first-of-its-kind metro analysis to evaluate not only how its own metro is performing, but also how that performance compares to the rest of the country. The findings from this index can help guide our efforts in determining where resources should be allocated and which public policies to champion. It can also serve as a benchmark to ensure our progress aligns with other major metro areas across the country.

This research highlights several areas where the Raleigh metro is performing well compared to other top metros. Additionally, this report reiterates opportunities for growth and improvement for the diverse populations living in the Raleigh metro. The insights gained from this analysis will be invaluable in shaping strategies and investments to enhance outcomes in the region for all our citizens. This analysis was run by Skylar Elliott Casey and Ted Abernathy of Economic Leadership LLC.



Contact Us

Office Location

800 S. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC 27601

Web

raleighchamber.org | raleigh-wake.org | triangledei.org

Phone

919.664.7000

