

WORKING HARD, LEFT BEHIND

The Campaign for

College
Opportunity

www.collegecampaign.org

Education as a pathway from poverty to
prosperity for working Californians

OCTOBER 2014

CALIFORNIA'S WORKING FAMILY POPULATION

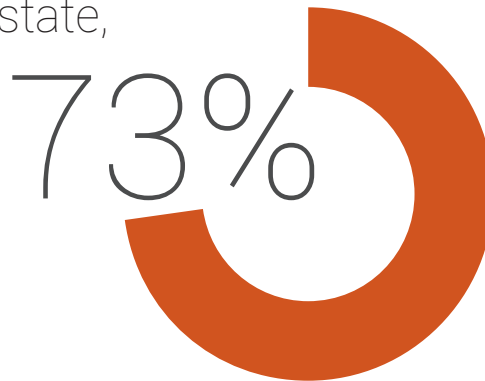
There are **4 million**
working families
in California

more than



are considered
low-income

Of the 1.87 million low-
income families in the state,



are a part of the labor force,
mainly working in low-skill
jobs.

TROUBLING CHANGES BETWEEN 2011 & 2012

Number of
working families



by **5,840**

Number of low-
income families



by **6,600**

Number of working
low-income families



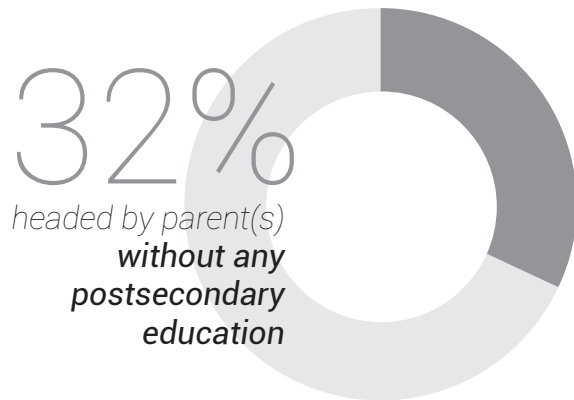
by **10,865**

Source: Working Poor Families Project. Population Reference Bureau (PRB), 2014 analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey
produced by the U.S. Census Bureau.

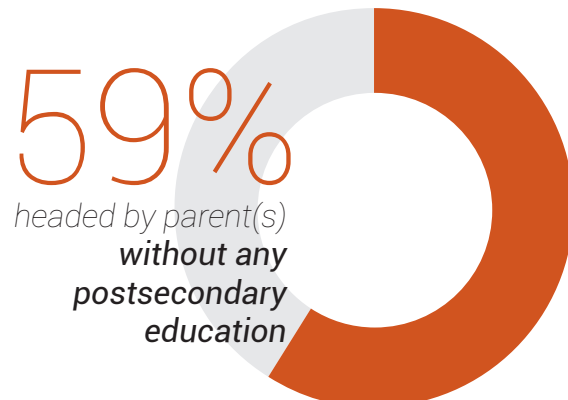
EDUCATION & JOBS

WORKING LOW-INCOME PARENTS HAVE LESS EDUCATION COMPARED TO ALL WORKING FAMILIES

all working families

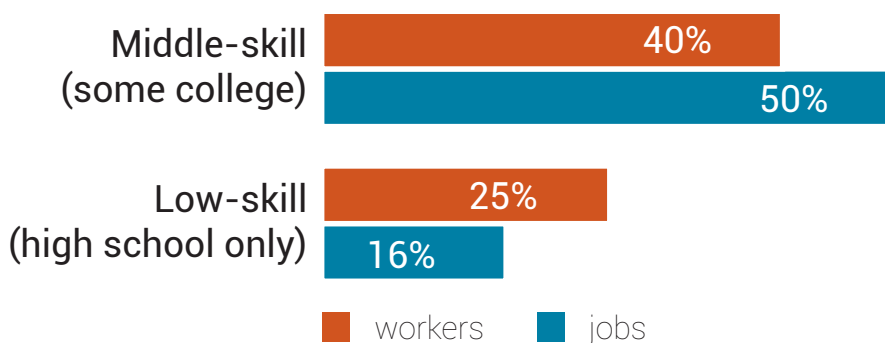


low-income working families



Source: Working Poor Families Project, PBR.

There is a mismatch between the **education/skills California workers have** and **what is currently needed**



Note: Middle-skills jobs require some college, an associate degree, or a certificate; high-skills jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.

Source: National Skills Coalition. (2013). Middle-Skill Job Fact Sheets: California's Forgotten Middle. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/middle-skill-fact-sheets-2014/NSC-California-MiddleSkillFS-2014.pdf>.

California has the largest proportion of undereducated working low-income families of any state. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many of California's working families are stuck in low-wage jobs and barely making ends meet. By 2020 California will have too many low-skill workers and too few middle-skill workers for the state's workforce demands. Not only will more jobs be available to those with some kind of higher education, but also they will be of better quality—jobs that require education beyond high school are more likely to have higher wages, be full-time, permanent, offer medical benefits, and paid time off for vacation and sick days. **Higher education is critical to the success of California's current and future economy and for the personal well-being of its residents.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Improve the **coordination and pathways** among high schools, adult education, two-year colleges, and four-year universities.

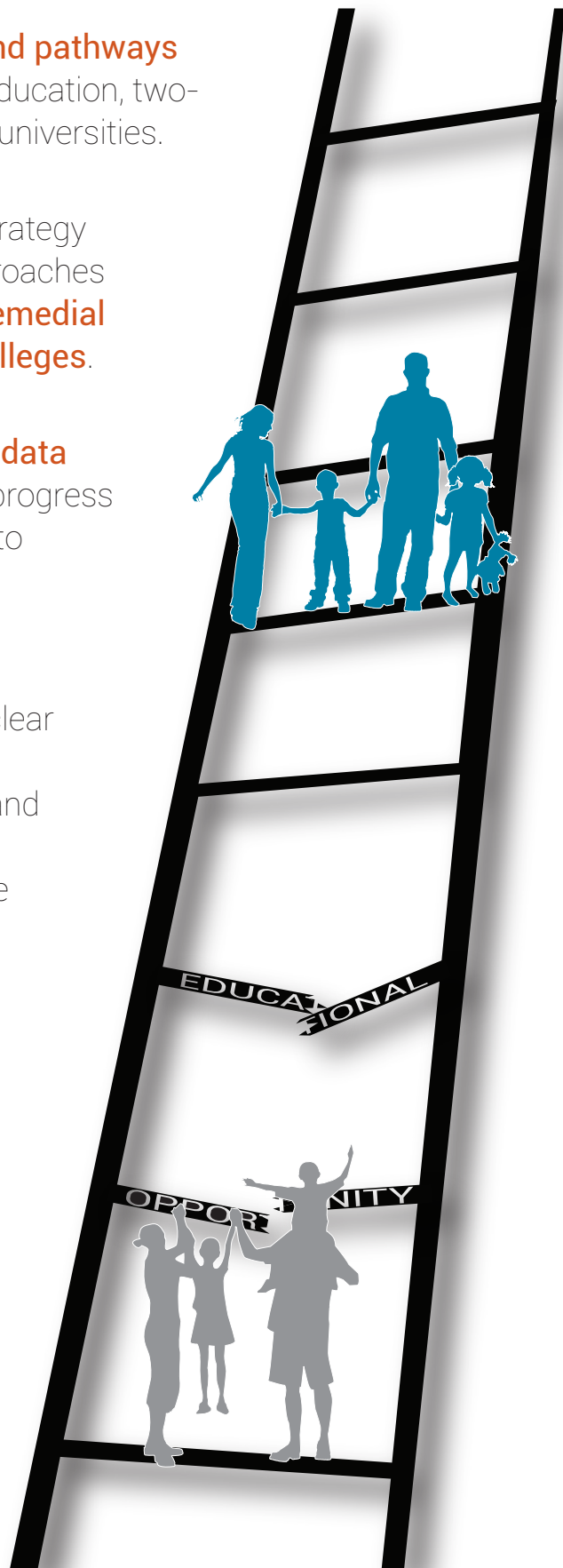
2 Develop a comprehensive strategy that includes innovative approaches to **improve the delivery of remedial education in community colleges**.

3 Develop a **robust statewide data system** that tracks student progress and outcomes from college to career.

4 Create a **public agenda for higher education** that sets clear goals around preparing high school students for college and transitioning adult students into higher education and the workforce.

5 Improve and expand **college financial aid options for non-traditional students**.

6 Prioritize educational resources that support **student success and completion** for low-income students enrolled in college.



ABOUT THIS BRIEF

The Working Poor Families Project is a national initiative focused on state workforce development policies involving: 1) education and skills training for adults; 2) economic development; and, 3) income and work supports. As a partner in the national Working Poor Families Project in California, the Campaign for College Opportunity conducted an in-depth assessment of the economic conditions and state policies affecting working families. In May 2013 the Campaign for College Opportunity released a ground-breaking report entitled *Working Hard, Left Behind* that described how the vast majority of California's low-income community is hard at work but still not moving up the economic ladder. This brief provides an update to that report based on recently released data. For the original full report, please visit www.collegecampaign.org/our-publications.

DEFINITIONS

LOW-INCOME FAMILY: A family with an income below 200% or double the threshold for poverty as defined by U.S. Census Bureau. Double the poverty threshold is used as a proxy for economic "self-sufficiency" or "family living standard", the income a family requires to address basic needs, including housing, food, clothing, health care, transportation, and child care. In 2012, according to the American Community Survey, the poverty threshold averaged \$23,283 for a family of four and thus the low-income threshold for a family of four averaged \$46,566.

WORKING FAMILY: a family with children under the age of 18 in which all members age 15 and over have a combined work effort of 39 or more weeks in the last 12 months, or all family members age 15 and over have a combined work effort of 26 or more weeks in the last 12 months and one currently unemployed parent looked for work in the previous four weeks. Relatedly, the federal government defines family income based on all family members age 15 and over.

METHODOLOGY

This brief uses a combination of data sources from the U.S. Census Bureau, National Skills Coalition, and Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce. Working Poor Families Project data-based Indicators are obtained primarily from the American Community Survey (ACS). This work is done by the Population Reference Bureau on behalf of the Working Poor Families Project. The ACS, annually published by the U.S. Census Bureau, provides a detailed socioeconomic and demographic profile of the U.S. population. The ACS replaces the "long form" of the Decennial Census; the advantage of the ACS is annual collection, as opposed to collection once every ten years through the Decennial Census. Since 2000, the ACS is conducted nationwide with an annual sample of three million households. The most recent WFPF analysis, conducted in February 2014, is based on the Census 2012 ACS, the latest available.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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