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### Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Lowell

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# Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas

## Lowell

by Phillip Granberry, PhD, Sarah Rustan, MA, and Faye Karp, MS

January, 2013

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE  
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND PUBLIC POLICY

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# Lowell

This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in Lowell. It reflects a commitment by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy to provide periodic updates on the growing Latino population in Massachusetts.

The report on Lowell is part of a larger series that covers fourteen other cities, or clusters of cities, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Each report analyzes data from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data are analyzed by Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA), which consists of a minimum population of 100,000 and is the smallest geographic area publically available for individual-level analysis. Lowell is a large enough city that it constitutes a PUMA by itself. The ACS thereby enables us to arrive at a demographic and economic portrait of Lowell's Latino community.

Since ACS data is collected from a sample of the population, there is some variation associated with each population estimate. In the bar graphs in this report, the 'I' that accompanies each bar represents the confidence interval for that estimate; we expect that another sample would generate an estimate within this interval 95% of the time.

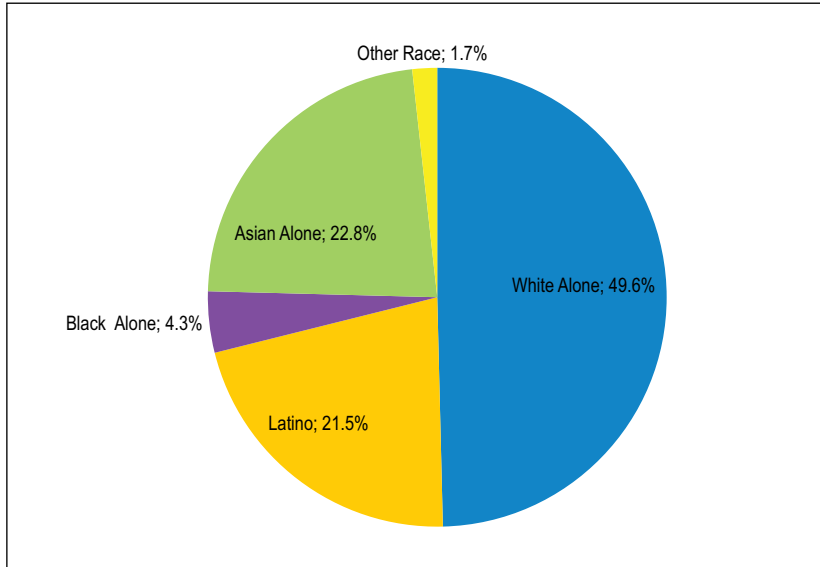
In this report, Latinos are compared to non-Latino whites, non-Latino blacks, and Asians for selected demographic, economic, and social characteristics. The number of ethno-racial groups included in a particular analysis may vary; each ethno-racial group is included in the analysis only when the observed sample size is large enough to produce reliable population estimates.

Lowell is the fourth largest city in Massachusetts and is home to an estimated 23,001 Latinos, who make up 21.5% of the city's population. Whites constitute the largest ethno-racial group (49.6%), while Asians account for 22.8% and blacks represent 4.3% of the city's population (Figure 1).

## Notes

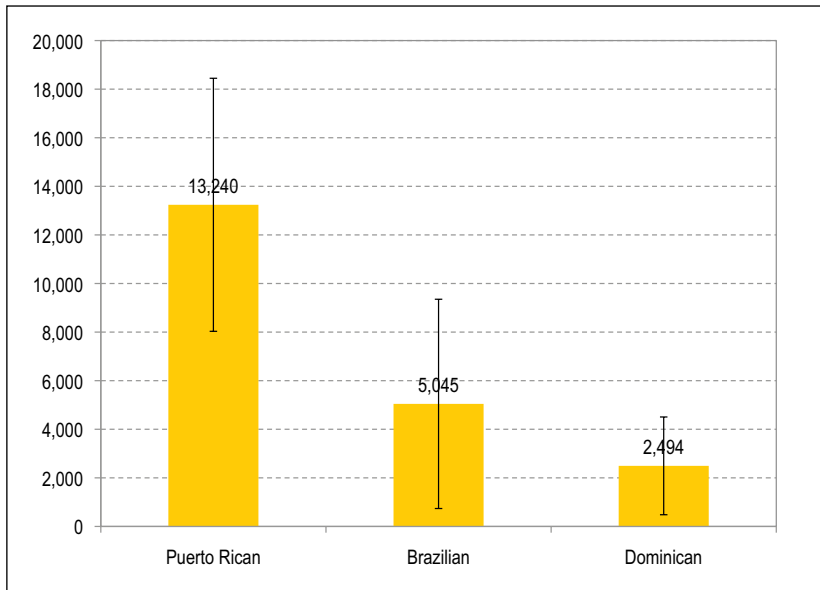
<sup>1</sup> This report uses the census designations of Hispanic or Latino origin and ancestry based on migration from Latin America to estimate the number of Latinos. Thus, Brazilians are included in the category "Latino," though most Brazilians self-report in the ACS using a racial category (e.g., white, black), rather than identifying with the term "Latino."

**Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



The Latino population in Lowell is driven by Puerto Ricans, who number 13,240. Brazilians (5,045), and Dominicans (2,494) are the other sizable Latino subpopulations; these three groups make up 90.1% of the city's Latino population. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, but the other Latino groups in conjunction with a large Asian population help give Lowell a proportionately greater foreign-born population (24.0%) than the state as a whole (14.9%).

**Figure 2: Ancestry of the Top Latino Groups in 2010**

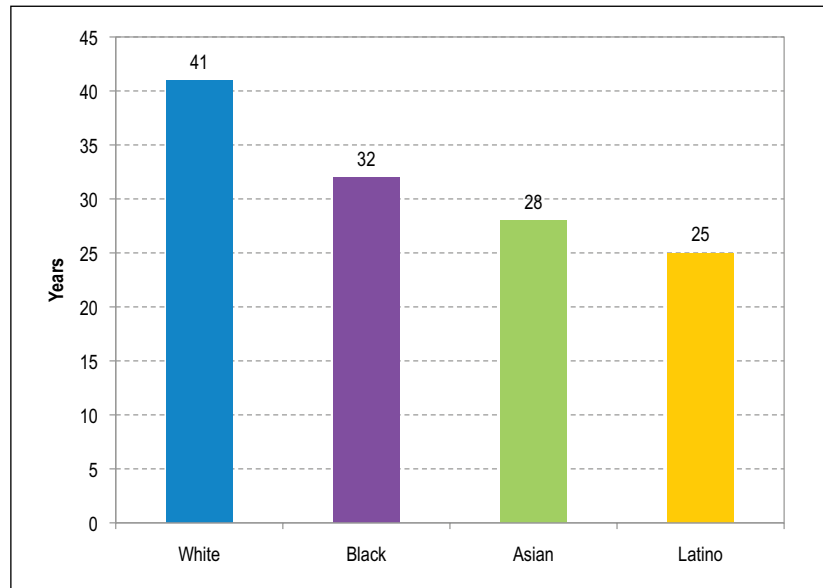


The rest of this report presents an overview that compares Latinos to whites, blacks, and Asians in this city for selected demographic, economic, and social characteristics.

## MEDIAN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

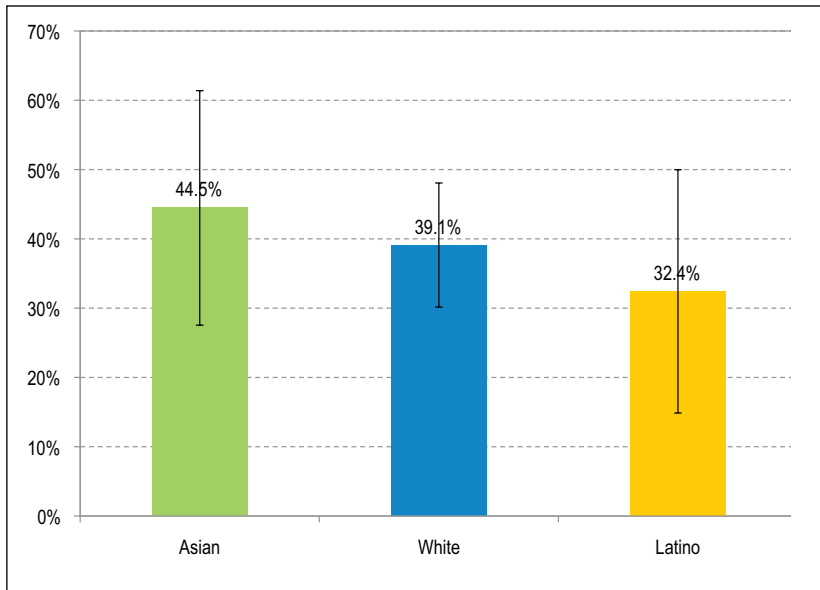
Figure 3 highlights differences in median age, drawing attention to the importance of Latinos in Lowell. Latinos in Lowell have a younger median age than statewide (25 years compared to 27 years) as well as all other ethno-racial groups in Lawrence: 41 years for whites, 32 years for blacks, and 28 years for Asians. This suggests that Latinos have more families with younger children and will require an investment in education of their youth; however, these younger Latinos will contribute economically, socially, and politically in later years as an older white population ages and retires. This older population will require younger residents to keep these cities' neighborhoods vibrant and maintain a productive workforce, and Latinos are poised to make this contribution.

**Figure 3: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



The youthfulness of the area's Latino population may influence its marital status. The marriage rates shown in Figure 4, covering all persons age 16 and older, are lower than for Asians and whites in Lowell. Statewide, the Latino marriage rate is 35.4% in comparison to 32.4% in Lowell.

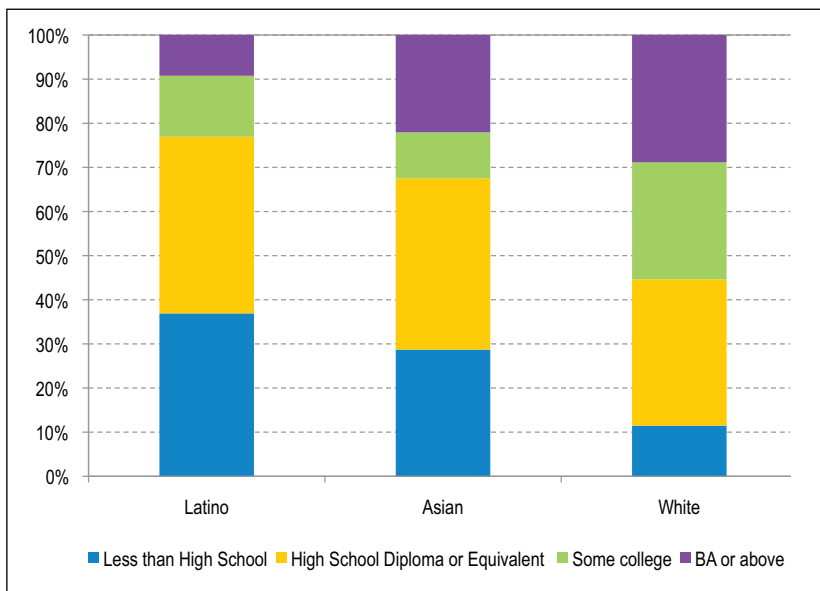
Figure 4: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010



## EDUCATION

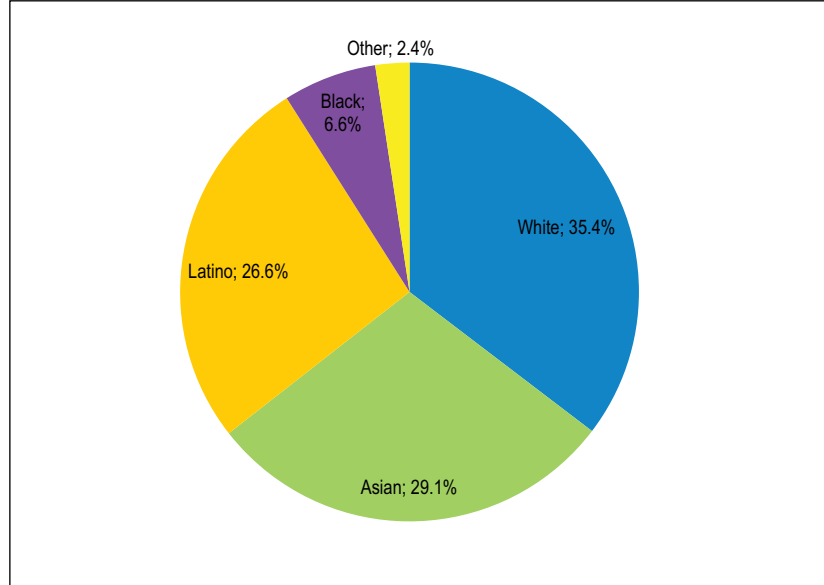
Figure 5 highlights the fact that Latinos have the highest percentage of their adult population lacking a high school diploma: 36.9%, compared to 28.7% for Asians and 11.5% for whites. At the other end of the educational scale, Latinos in Lowell have the lowest percentage of their population with at least a bachelor's degree: 9.2%, compared to 22.1% for Asians and 28.9% for whites.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010 (Adults 25 Years and Older)



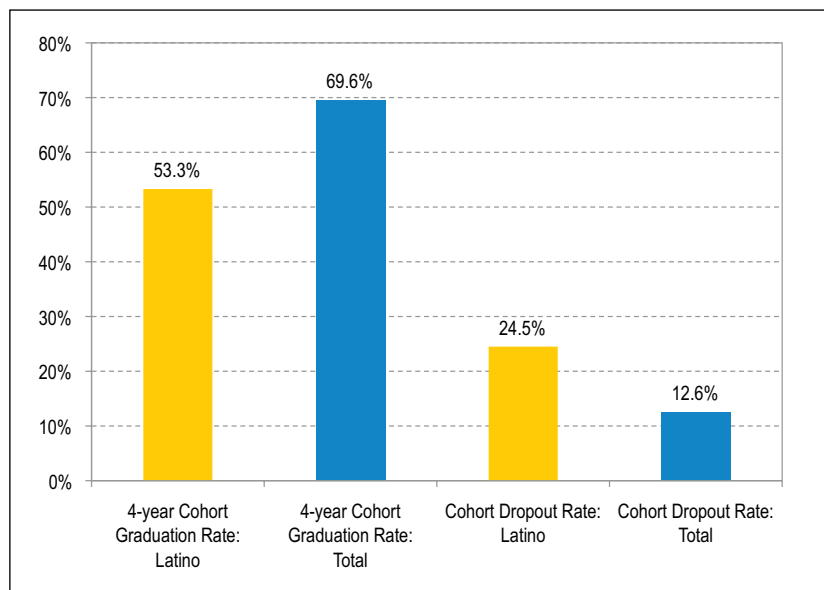
Figures 6A and 6B provide information on Latinos in Lowell Public Schools, using data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Latinos represented 26.6% of total student enrollment during the 2010–2011 school year.

**Figure 6A: Snapshot of Lowell Public Schools by Ethno-Racial Group, School Year 2010–2011**



Latinos in Lowell Public Schools lag behind the total population in academic success. Just over half of Latino students (53.3%) graduated from high school in four years compared to 69.6% for the total student population. Similarly, 24.5% of Latinos who entered their freshman year in the 2006–2007 school year dropped out of high school and did not return or get a GED, compared to 12.6% of the total population.

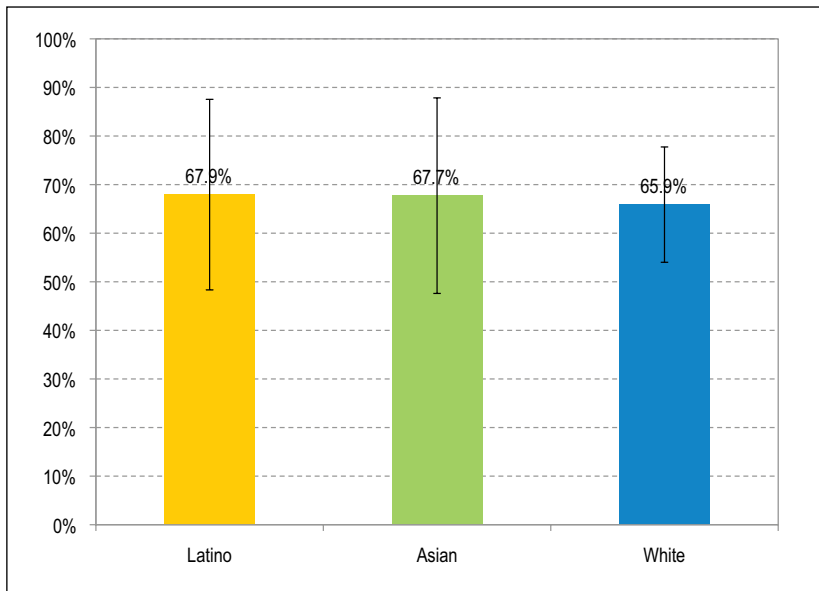
**Figure 6B: Snapshot of Lowell Public Schools by Outcomes, School Year 2010–2011**



## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Figure 7 shows that Latinos have a labor force participation rate of 67.9% in the area, which is almost as high as the statewide Latino average of 68.1% and again suggests the importance of Latinos to the economic and social wellbeing of the region. This is despite the younger median age of Latinos shown by Figure 3, suggesting they have more families with young children, which typically aligns with lower labor force participation rates due to caretaking needs.

**Figure 7: Labor Force Participation by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



Along with their relatively high labor force participation in Lowell, Figure 8 tells a positive story for Latinos in the labor force. Their unemployment rate in 2010 was 10.7%, which, though higher than for other ethno-racial groups, is lower than the statewide Latino unemployment rate of 15.2%.

**Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**

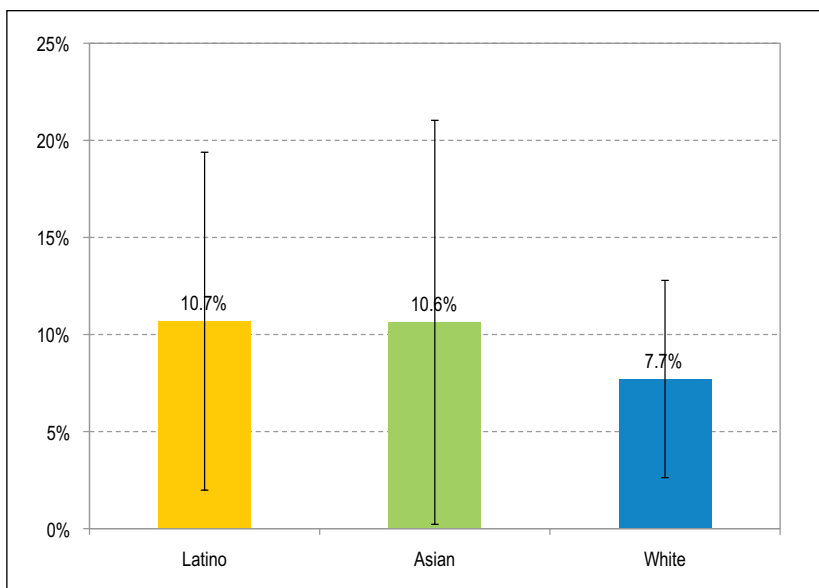
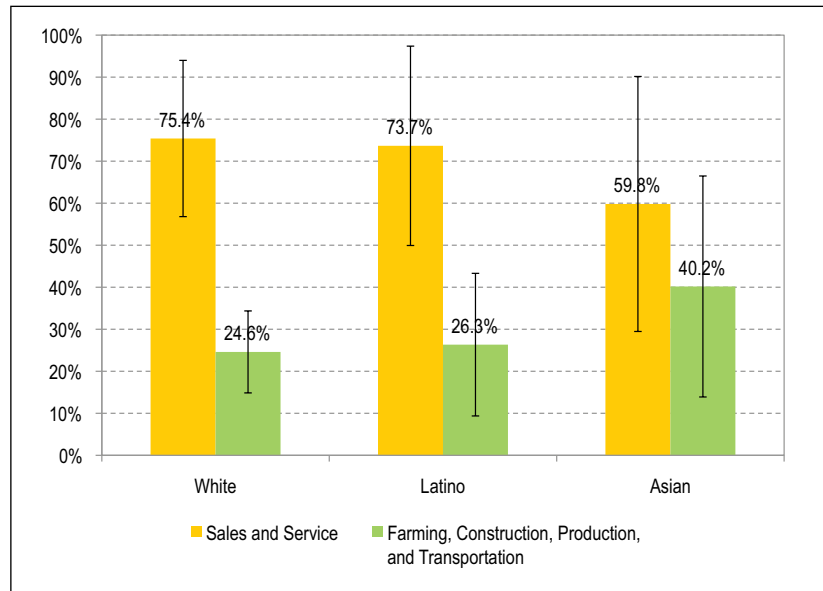




Figure 9 suggests that Latinos in Lowell are better integrated into the labor market than they are in other parts of Massachusetts. Latinos have similar percentages of their population represented in sales and service occupations compared to other ethno-racial groups: 73.7% for Latinos, 75.4% for whites, 59.8% for Asians. Correspondingly, Latinos are not overrepresented in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs (farming, construction, production, and transportation), as they are in other parts of Massachusetts.

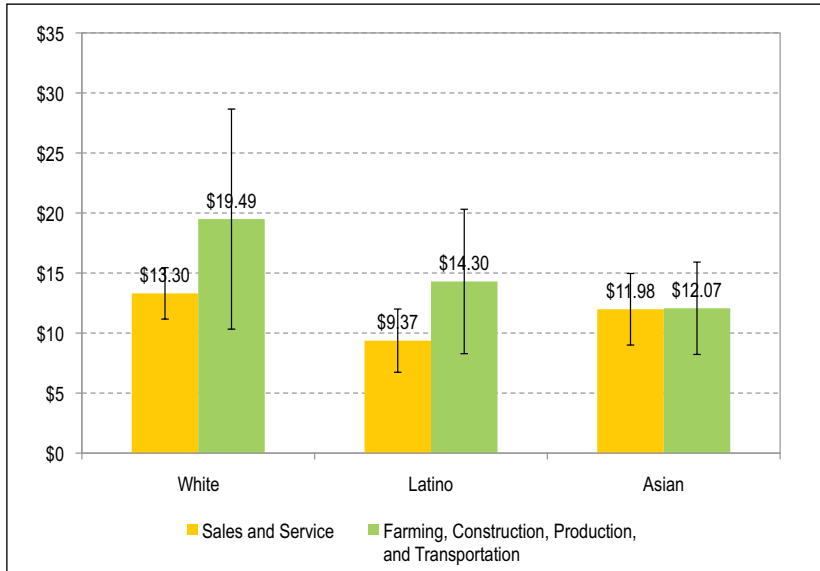
**Figure 9: Population Employed by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



## EARNINGS

When examining the wage rates for these occupational categories, we see that Latinos appear to be receiving wages below those of other ethno-racial groups. As shown in Figure 10, they earn less than both whites and Asians for their service-sector employment, while for blue-collar employment they receive lower wages than whites, but more than Asians.

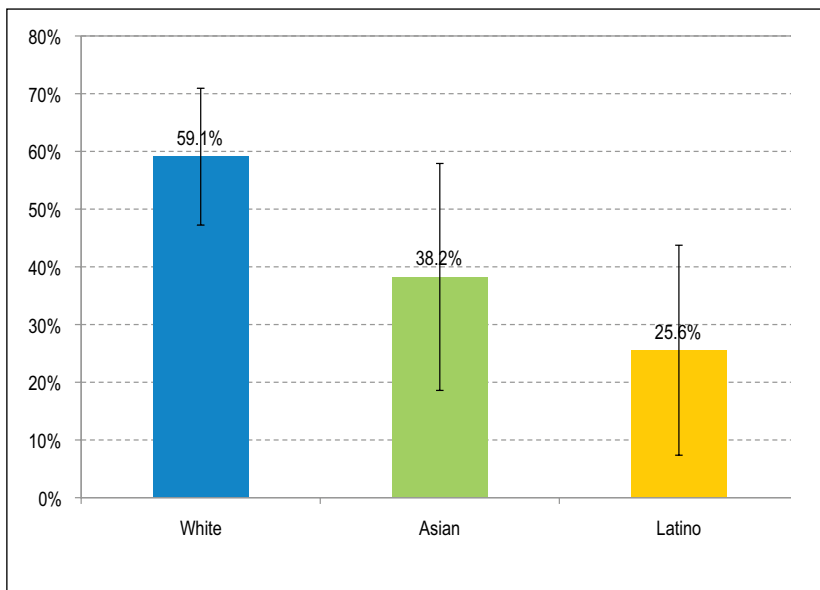
**Figure 10: Hourly Wages by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



## HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

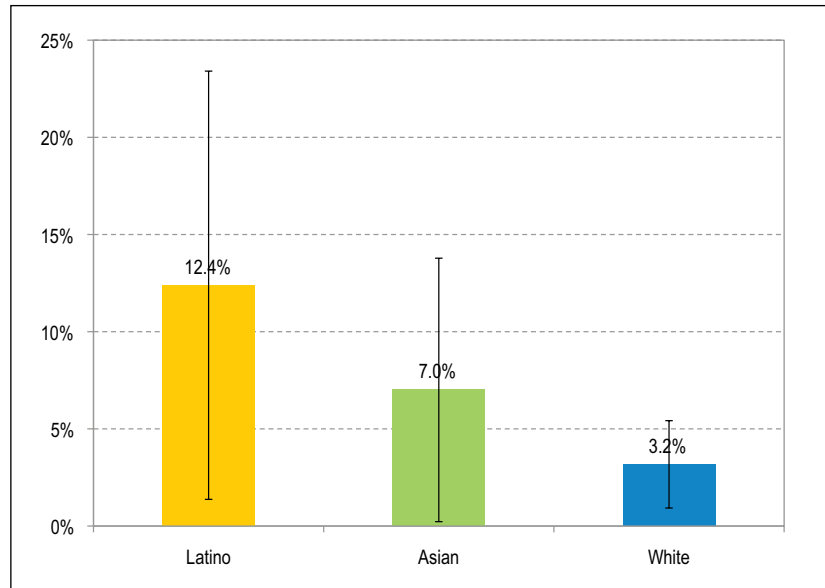
The final measures of Latino participation in Lowell are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Latinos traditionally have low homeownership rates across the country. Figure 11 shows that this trend holds true for these cities, where Latinos have a low homeownership rate of 25.6%. This is lower than the statewide Latino rate of 25.7%. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 11, it is evident that 74.4% of Latinos in these cities are renters.

**Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



The percentage of Latinos in this area who lack medical insurance (12.4%) is higher than for Asians (7.0%) and for whites (3.2%). The statewide Latino uninsurance rate is 11.6%, and the higher Latino uninsurance rate in Lowell may be related to the greater percentage of Latinos who are foreign-born in comparison to statewide.

**Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010**



The **Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston** conducts research on and for the Latino population in New England. Our goal is to generate the information and analysis necessary to develop more inclusive public policy and to improve Latino participation in the policy making process. In an effort to present vital information about Latinos to diverse audiences, the Gastón Institute has produced this series of demographic profiles for selected Massachusetts areas based on an analysis of 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) data.

Our descriptive analysis uses both household- and individual-level ACS data to estimate population size and characteristics in order to compare Latinos to other ethno-racial groups. Technically, these groups are designated as non-Latino whites, non-Latino blacks, and non-Latino Asians though they are often referenced simply as “white,” “black,” and

“Asian” in these profiles. Although many Brazilians do not self-identify as Latino or Hispanic, the ‘Latino’ category does include the Brazilian population in this report series.

The Gastón Institute plans to update this series of demographic profiles for selected Massachusetts areas every five years upon release of American Community Survey data. A similar report series examining Latino populations at the city level is planned for the 2015 Gastón Institute public policy conference. In addition, demographic profiles highlighting Latino sub-groups will be produced on an ongoing basis.

One of the goals of the Gastón Institute is to be responsive to the needs of the Latino and policy communities through the research we undertake. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions or requests for specific information.

## About the Authors

**Phillip Granberry** is a social demographer who specializes in immigrants in the US. He worked with various community-based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. immigrants before earning a PhD in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston. He has published several articles on the accumulation and use of social capital among Mexican migrants and the impact of welfare and immigration policy reform on Latinos in Massachusetts. Currently a Research Associate for the Gastón Institute, he also teaches courses on international migration and urban affairs for the UMass Boston Economics Department.

**Faye Karp** specializes in conducting research that helps organizations improve programs serving low-income, Latino, and English Language Learner youth. She holds an MS in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston. As a Research Associate and Project Manager at the Gastón Institute, she worked with the Boston Public Schools Office of English Language Learners to develop policy guidelines for the district’s Two-Way Bilingual programs.

**Sarah Rustan** is a PhD candidate in Law and Public Policy at Northeastern University, with previous degrees in architecture (BA) and cultural management (MA). Her professional background includes broad experience in the nonprofit sector including research, development, and management, and her dissertation explores the role that nonprofit arts organizations play in community development and social organization. She currently serves as a Research Associate and Data Analyst for the Gastón Institute.

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