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## Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: New Bedford

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# Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas

## New Bedford

by Phillip Granberry and Mayara Fontes

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE  
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND PUBLIC POLICY

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# New Bedford

This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in New Bedford. 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 New Bedford is part of a larger series that covers cities and towns with a population between 35,000 and 100,000 residents in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with a significant Latino population. Each report analyzes data from the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. We obtained the data from the American Factfinder website in tabular form, and we transformed these data into figures presented in this report.

New Bedford is considered a “Gateway City.” These are midsized (35,000–250,000) cities in Massachusetts that were once industrial centers but have not transitioned economically to the same extent as cities with high-tech industries. They all rank below the statewide average in regard to both household income and educational attainment.

The Census Bureau identifies Latinos through a question that asks respondents to choose either “Hispanic or Latino” or “Not Hispanic or Latino.” Separately, it asks respondents to identify a race. This report uses the term “Latino” to include all those who selected “Hispanic or Latino” on the Census form, regardless of racial designation.

The report compares Latinos, thus defined, to non-Latino whites, blacks, and Asians, based on individuals' racial identification.<sup>1</sup> 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. For example, New Bedford's American Indian population is estimated to be 168 individuals and is not included in most of the figures in this report.

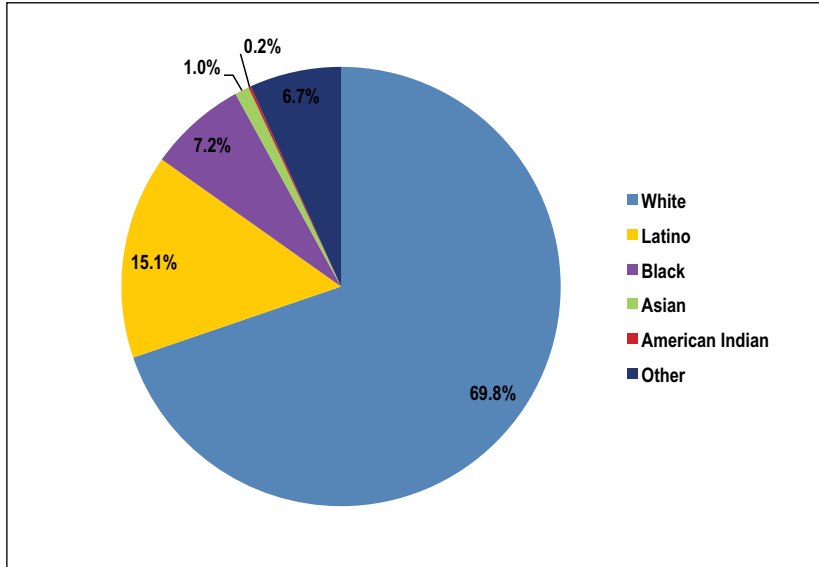
## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Census designation of black or African American alone is referenced as black. The category of Asian alone is referenced as Asian. The category of American Indian and Alaska Native alone is referenced as American Indian. A smaller “other” ethno-racial category is identified for the initial population estimate of New Bedford and this consists of those who identified with multiple race categories or some other race.

## THE LATINO POPULATION

As the sixth largest city of the Commonwealth, New Bedford is home to an estimated 14,028 Latinos. They represent about one-sixth (15.1%) of the city's population, a smaller share than for whites but greater than for blacks or Asians (Figure 1).

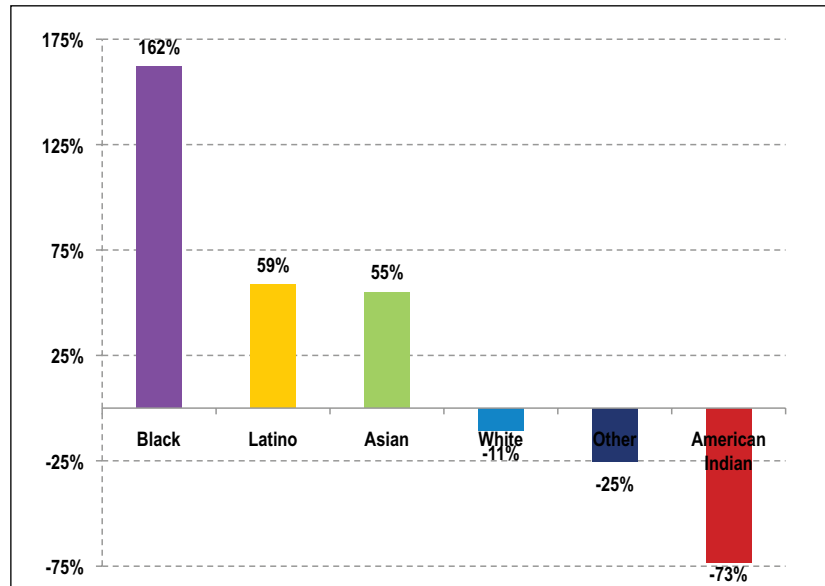
Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in New Bedford



ACS Data - DP05: Demographic and Housing Estimates (2007-2011)

While the overall population of New Bedford remained almost steady (a 1.5% increase) from 2000 to 2011, there were significant differences in the growth of ethno-racial groups, as shown in Figure 2. A striking feature of New Bedford's population change is the growth in its black (162%), Asian (55%), and Latino (59%, higher than the state's Latino average growth of 51%) populations. This is related to the smaller but significant decline in whites (11%), the largest ethno-racial group. Surprisingly, there are sharp declines in the "other" (25%) and American Indian (73%) categories.

Figure 2: Population Change by Ethno-Racial Group from 2000 to 2011

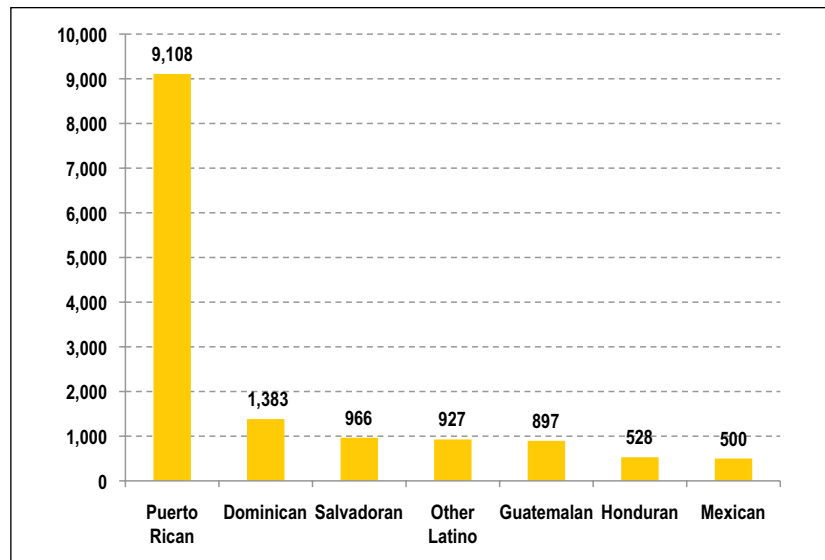


ACS Data - DP05: Demographic and Housing Estimates (2011) and 2000 Census Summary File 1

One of the possible explanations of this population growth is international migration. New Bedford has long been a destination for international migrants, and today it has a greater concentration of foreign-born (20%) than the Commonwealth as a whole (15%).

When examining the origin of Latinos in the New Bedford, it is important to note that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens; they are not included in foreign-born estimates above. Figure 3 shows that Puerto Ricans, with a population of 9,108, constitute by far the largest Latino subpopulation in the city, followed by Dominicans (1,383), Salvadorans (966), Other Latino (927), Guatemalans (897), Hondurans (528), and Mexicans (500). An estimated 927 Latinos are from another country or are classified as “other Latino.”

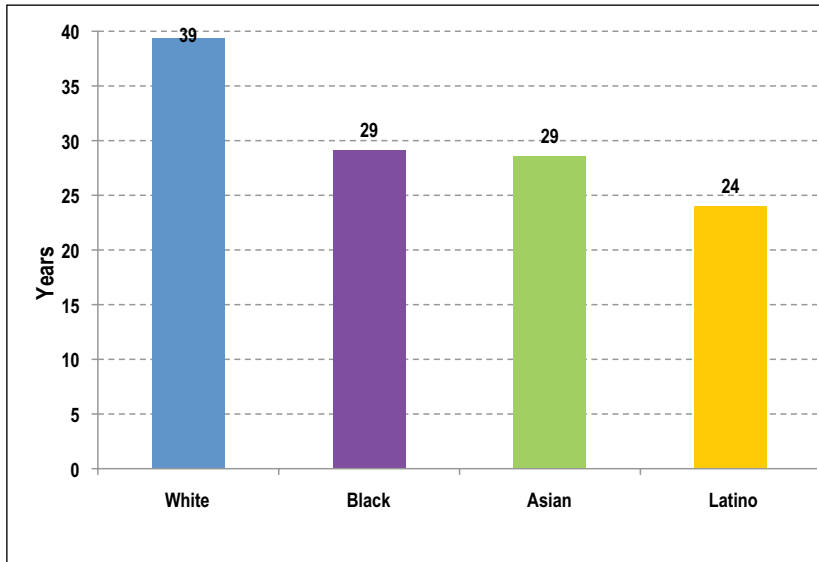
Figure 3: Ancestry of the Top Latino Subpopulations



ACS Data - B03001: Hispanic or Latino Origin by Specific Origin (2007-2011)

## MEDIAN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

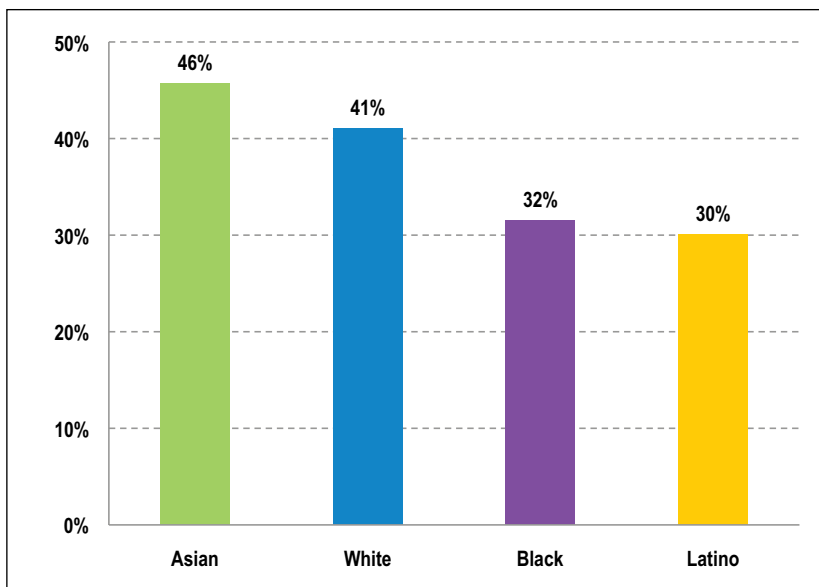
Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group



ACS Data - B01002: Median Age (2007-2011)

New Bedford's Latino population with a median age of 24 years (see Figure 4) is even younger than the statewide Latino median age of 26. Latinos are strikingly young compared to the larger white population (median age of 39 years is almost exactly the same as the state median age of 38.9 years). As addressed in the Gastón Institute's educational report on New Bedford, with half of their population under the age 25, Latinos are disproportionately represented in the New Bedford Public Schools compared to their overall population size (Figure 1). They are also an important population for higher educational institutions in the region, such as the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Bridgewater State University, and Bristol and Massasoit Community Colleges.

Figure 5: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (15 Years and Older)



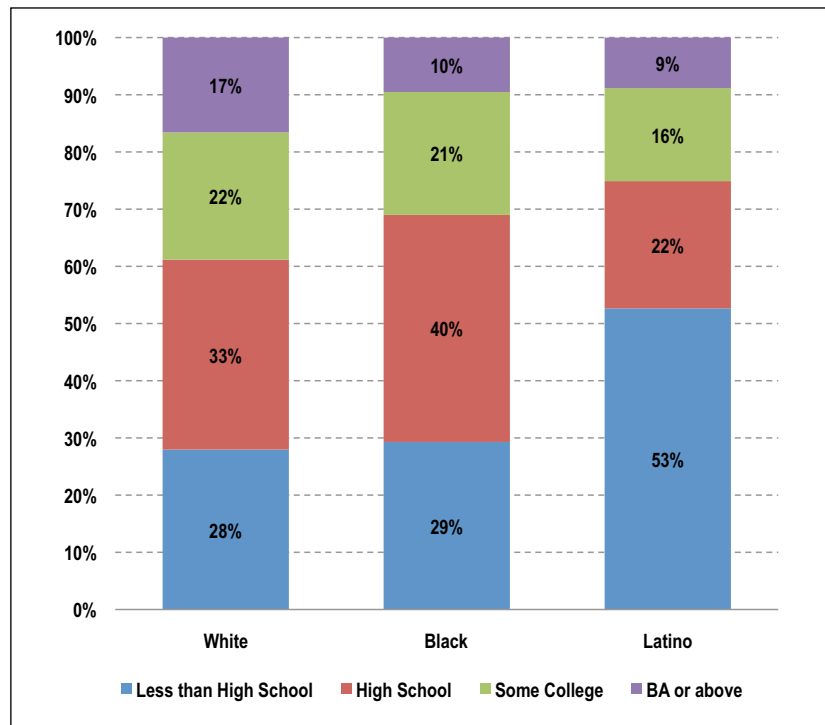
ACS Data - B12002: Marital Status (2007-2011)

The information in Figure 4 appears related to Figure 5. As might be predicted from the youthful Latino population of New Bedford, the Latino marriage rate of 30% (for persons age 15 years and older) is lower than for any other ethno-racial group in the city. This same relationship exists statewide, as the marriage rate is 48% for the entire population but 33% for Latinos.

## EDUCATION

Educational attainment is low citywide in New Bedford: only 17% of residents age 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher compared 39% statewide. Recalling the median age in Figure 4, nearly half of the 14,028 Latinos are not accounted in this educational attainment estimate because their age is below 25. These younger Latinos are in a period of their life set aside for increasing educational attainment, and they can alter the troubling trend highlighted below. Figure 6 shows that Latinos have the highest percentage of their adult population lacking a high school diploma: 53%, compared to 29% for blacks, and 28% for whites. At the other end of the educational scale, Latinos have the lowest percentage of their population with at least a bachelor's degree: 9%, compared to 17% for whites, and 10% for blacks.

**Figure 6: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group (Adults 25 Years and Older)**

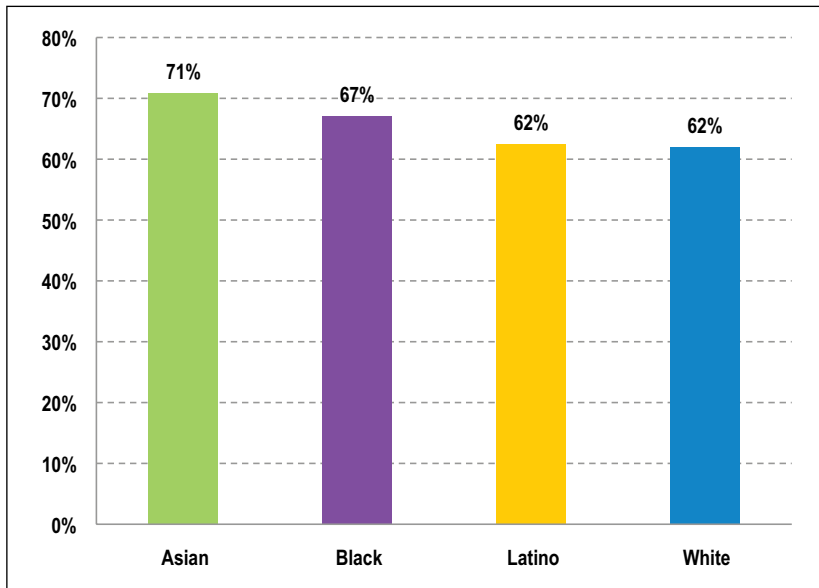


ACS Data - B15002: Educational Attainment (2009-2011)

## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Latinos in New Bedford have a lower labor force participation rate (62%) than Latinos statewide (70%). Both Asians and blacks have higher labor force participation in the city than Latinos, who have a similar labor force participation to whites. Again, this low Latino participation may be related to previously identified characteristics of a youthful population (Figure 4) with lower levels of educational attainment (Figure 6).

**Figure 7: Labor Force Participation among Individuals 16 to 64 Years of Age by Ethno-Racial Group**

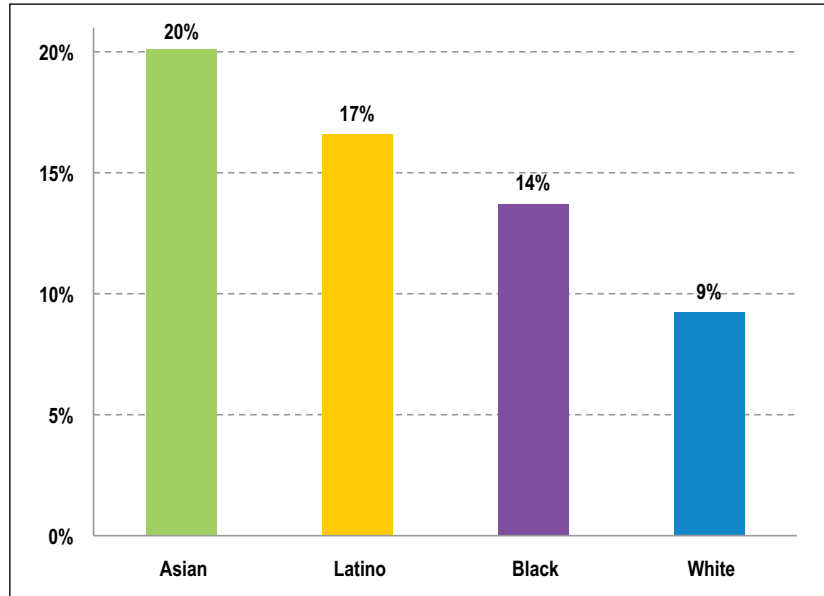


ACS Data - C23002: Employment Status (2007-2011)

The overall unemployment rate in New Bedford (Figure 8) during this period was high: 11%, compared to the statewide unemployment rate of 8%. The high unemployment in the city is consistent with that of other Gateway Cities in the Commonwealth. The differential is even stronger for Latinos, who have a 17% unemployment rate compared with 13% for Latinos statewide. The Latino rate in New Bedford is lower than for Asians, but higher than for blacks and nearly twice that of whites.



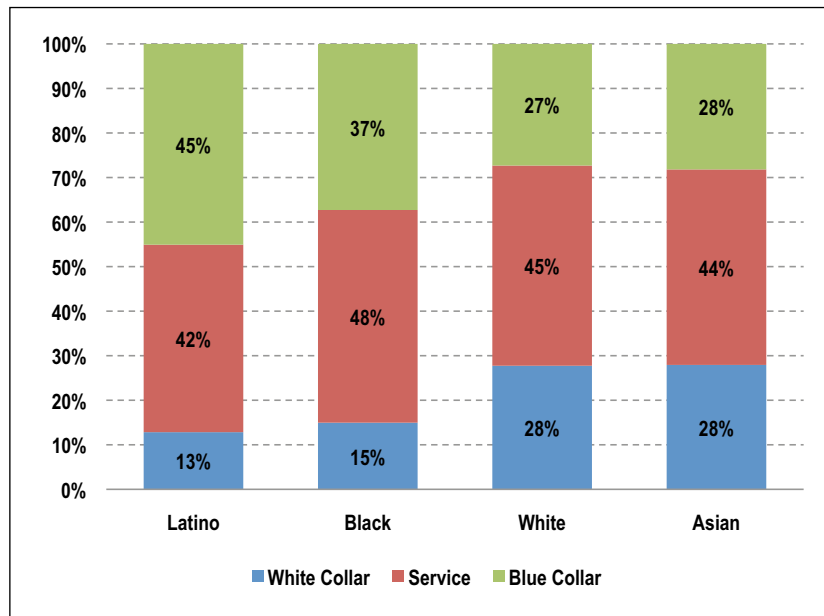
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



ACS Data - C23002: Employment Status (2007-2011)

Figure 9 highlights that Latinos work in traditionally low-wage jobs. Latinos are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs (with only 13% working in these management, business, science, and arts occupations) but overrepresented in the service sector. Forty-two percent work in services and sales occupations and 45% work in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs: natural resources, construction, maintenance, production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

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

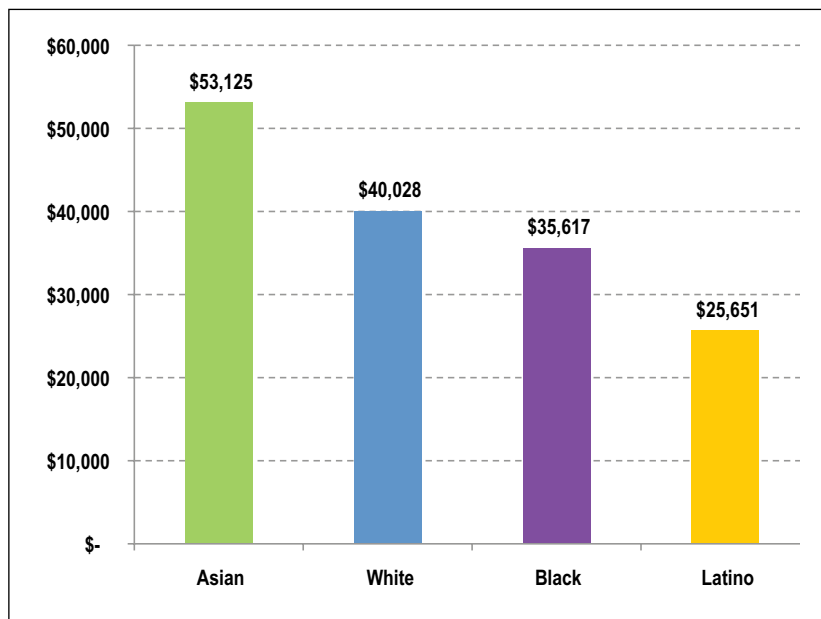


ACS Data - C24010: Occupation for the Civilian Labor Force (2007-2009)

## EARNINGS

Highlighting the economic problems that New Bedford has experienced as a Gateway City in Massachusetts, the median income in New Bedford is \$37,493, which is significantly lower than the statewide median income of \$65,981. As the previous occupational distribution suggested, Latinos in Figure 10 have the lowest median income \$25,651 of any ethno-racial group. This is much lower than the statewide Latino median income of \$33,723.

Figure 10: Median Household Income by Ethno-Racial Group in 2010

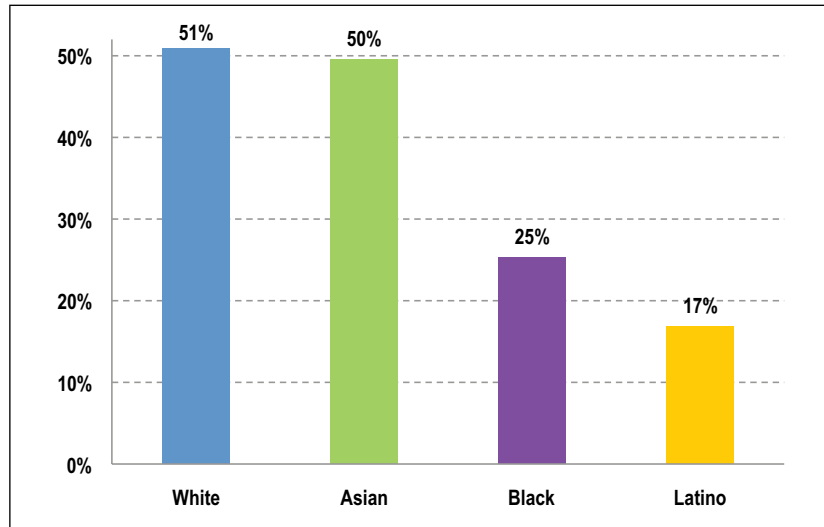


ACS Data - S1903: Median Income in the Past 12 Months (2007-2011)

## HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL UNINSURANCE

The final measures of Latino participation in New Bedford are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. New Bedford traditionally has lower homeownership rates (44%) than the state as a whole (64%), as measured by occupied housing unit. Latinos in Figure 11 have by far the lowest homeownership level of any ethno-racial group in the city at 17%. In comparison, 26% of Latinos statewide are homeowners. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 11, it is evident that 83% of Latinos in New Bedford are renters.

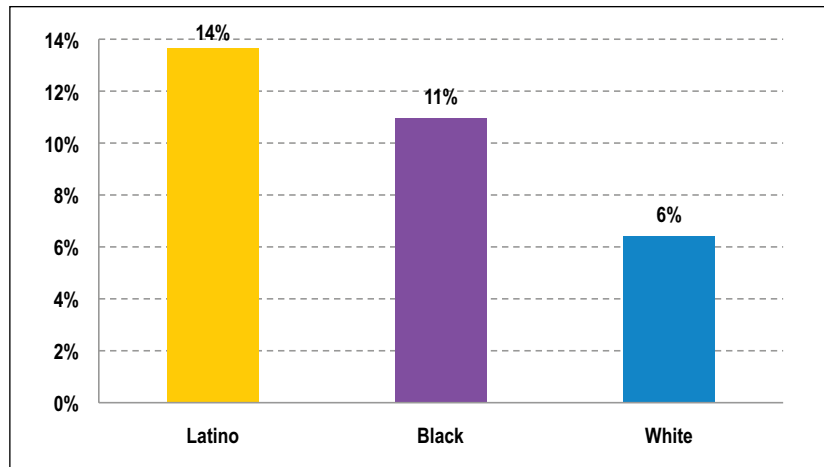
**Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



ACS Data - B25003: Tenure (2007-2011)

New Bedford has higher rates of medical uninsurance (7%) than the statewide average of 4%. Some of this might be attributed to its high concentration of foreign-born residents, since non-citizens have higher rates of uninsurance. No matter what the explanation is, New Bedford has not benefitted from the 2006 Massachusetts health care reform law. In particular in New Bedford, Latinos have the highest rate of medical uninsurance: 14%, compared to 10% for Latinos statewide.

**Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group**



ACS Data - S2701: Health Insurance Coverage Status (2009-2011)

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 American Community Survey (ACS) data.

Our descriptive analysis uses 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.

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.

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