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Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Lawrence and Methuen

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for
Latino Community Development
and Public Policy

Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas Lawrence and Methuen

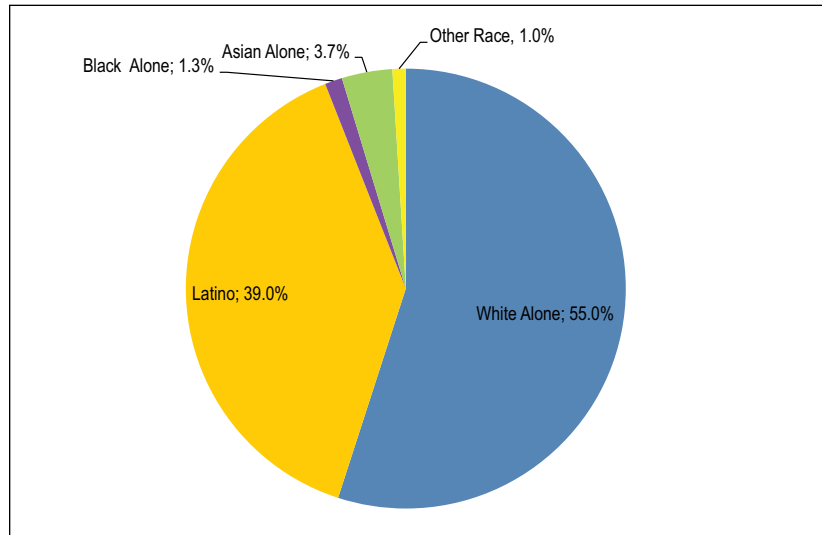
by Phillip Granberry, PhD and Sarah Rustan | September 17, 2010

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in the cities of Lawrence and Methuen. This report is prepared for the 2010 Statewide Latino Public Policy Conference organized by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy. It is part of a larger series that covers fourteen cities, or clusters of cities, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Each report analyzes data from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS's smallest geographic area is a Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) consisting of a minimum census population of 100,000. In the PUMA that includes Lawrence and Methuen, these two cities account for nearly four-fifths of the total population (49% in Lawrence and 29.8% in Methuen) and for 99.6% of the area's Latinos.

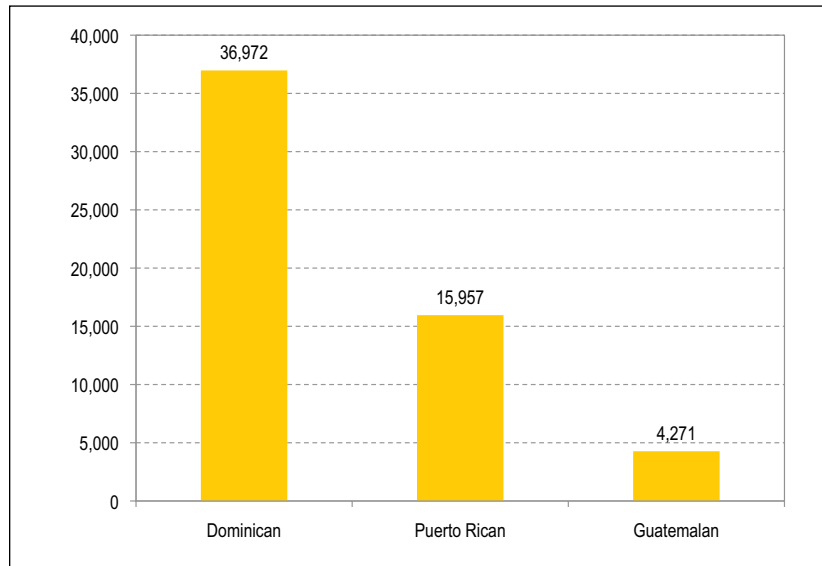


Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



The Lawrence-Methuen area is home to an estimated 60,138 Latinos, who account for 39.0% of the area's population. This represents the highest concentration of Latinos in the state. Whites make up the largest percentage of the population (55.0%), while Asians represent 3.7% and blacks represent 1.3 % of the area's population (Figure 1).

Figure 2: Ancestry of the Top Latino Groups in 2008



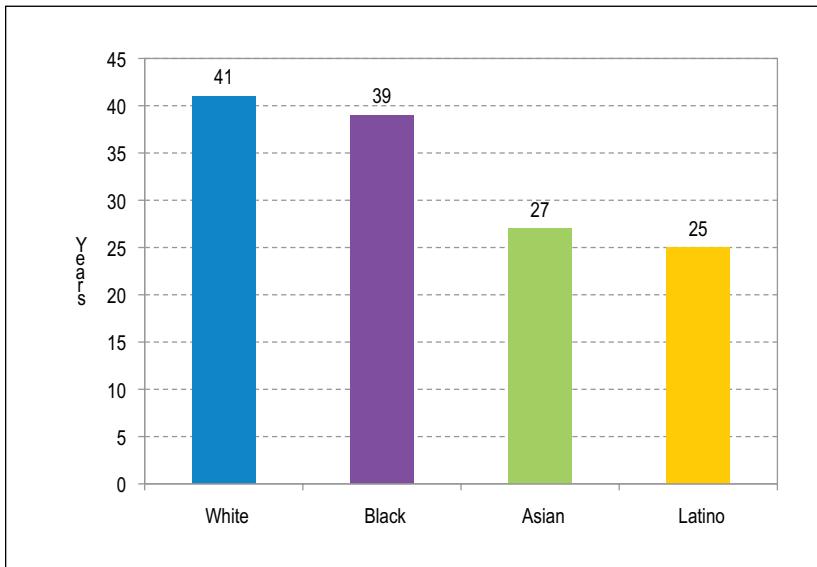
This area's Latino population, centered mainly in Lawrence, is home to the state's largest concentration of Dominicans, whose population is estimated to be 36,972. This strong Dominican presence is shaped by international migration, as this area has a higher percentage of foreign-born residents (25.4%) than the state as a whole (15.2%). Puerto Ricans (15,957) and Guatemalans (4,271) are the other sizable Latino subpopulations.

The rest of this report presents an overview that compares Latinos and their top subpopulations to whites, blacks, and Asians in these cities for selected demographic, economic, and social characteristics¹.

MEDIAN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Figure 3 highlights differences in median age draws attention to the importance of Latinos in the Lawrence–Methuen area. Latinos have a younger median age (25 years) than any other ethno-racial group. This suggests that they 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 2008

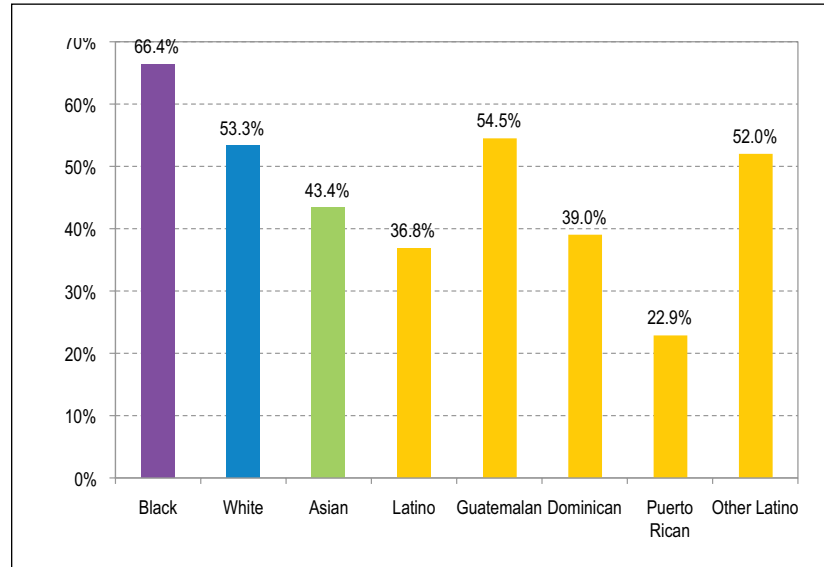


Notes

¹ Because of the smaller size of some ethno-racial groups and Latino subpopulations in the ACS data for Lawrence and Methuen, some demographic and labor force participation estimates have too large of a standard error and have been dropped from this analysis.

The youthfulness of these cities' Latino population may influence its marital status. Figure 4 shows that the marriage rate for Latinos (for persons age 16 and older) is lower than for other ethno-racial groups in these cities. However, the Latino marriage rate of 36.8% is slightly higher than the state-wide Latino marriage rate of 33.6%. Latino subpopulations show wide variation in their marriage rates; a number of factors, including the age of these populations, could be driving this variation.

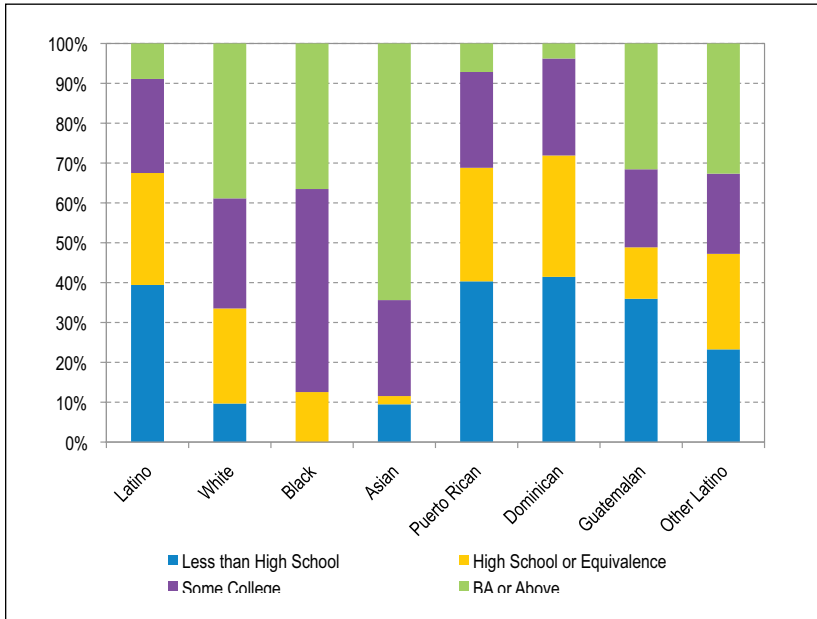
Figure 4: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



EDUCATION

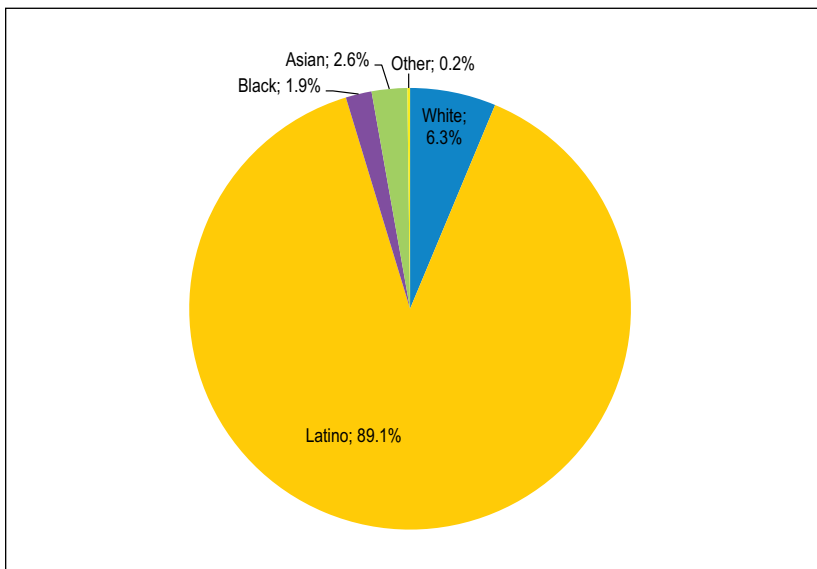
Figure 5 highlights the fact that Latinos have the highest percentage of their population with less than a high school diploma: 39.4%, compared to 12.5% for blacks, 9.7% for whites, and 9.5% for Asians. At the other end of the educational scale, Latinos in these cities have the lowest percentage of their population with at least a bachelor's degree: 8.9%, compared to 64.4% for Asians, 38.9% for whites, and 36.5% for blacks.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008 (Adults 25 Years and Older)



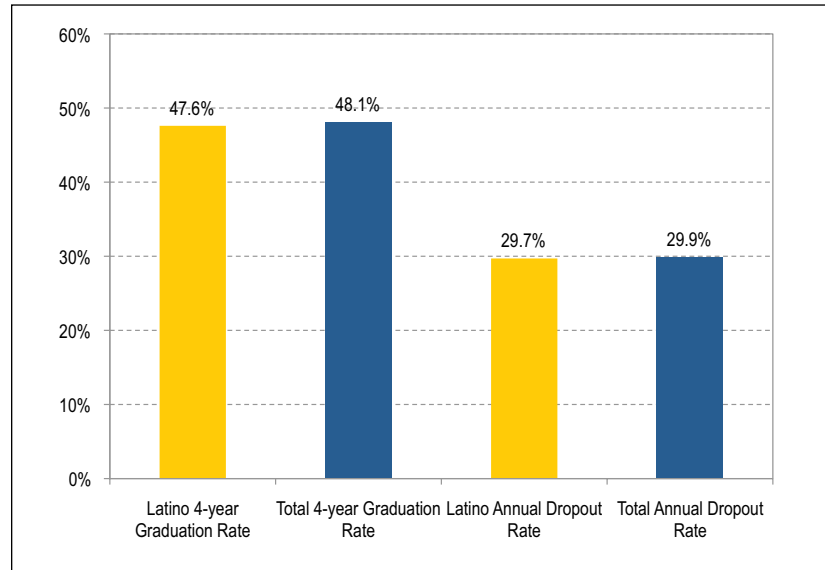
Figures 6A and 6B provide information regarding Latinos in the Lawrence Public Schools and use Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education data. After a 6.9% growth during the 2000s, they made up 89.1% of the student population in the 2008–2009 academic year.

Figure 6A: Spotlight on Lawrence Public Schools by Ethno-Racial Group, Academic Year 2008–2009



Less than half of Latino students (47.6%) graduate in four years and more than a quarter (29.7%) drop out of school. Because the public school population of Lawrence is overwhelmingly Latino, the overall statistics (48.1% four-year graduation rate, 29.9% dropout rate) are very close to the figures for Latinos.

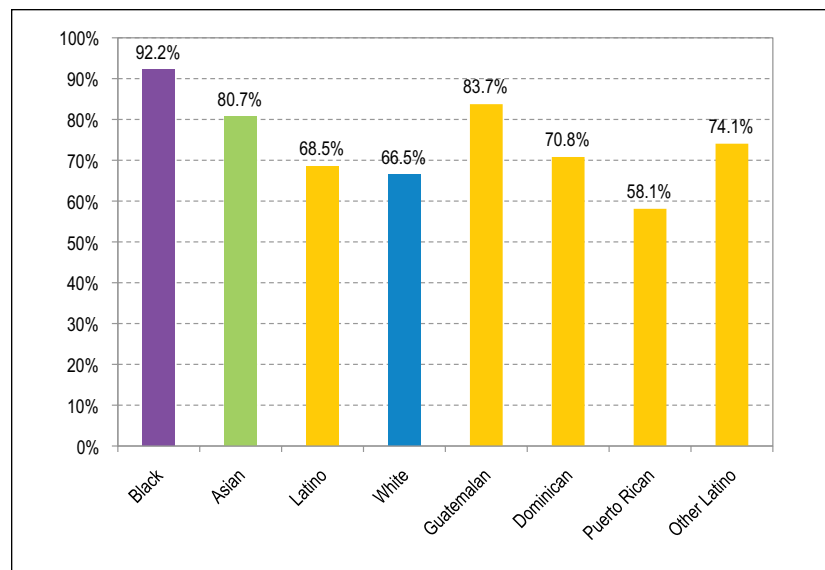
Figure 6B: Spotlight on Lawrence Public Schools by Outcomes, Academic Year 2008-2009



LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Figure 7 shows that Latinos have a labor force participation rate (68.5%) that is less than for blacks (92.2%) and Asians (80.7%) but greater than for whites (66.5%), the other large ethno-racial group. This is despite the lower median age of Latinos shown by Figure 3 which suggests they have more families with young children. Larger numbers of families with young children often result in lower labor force participation rates due to child care needs.

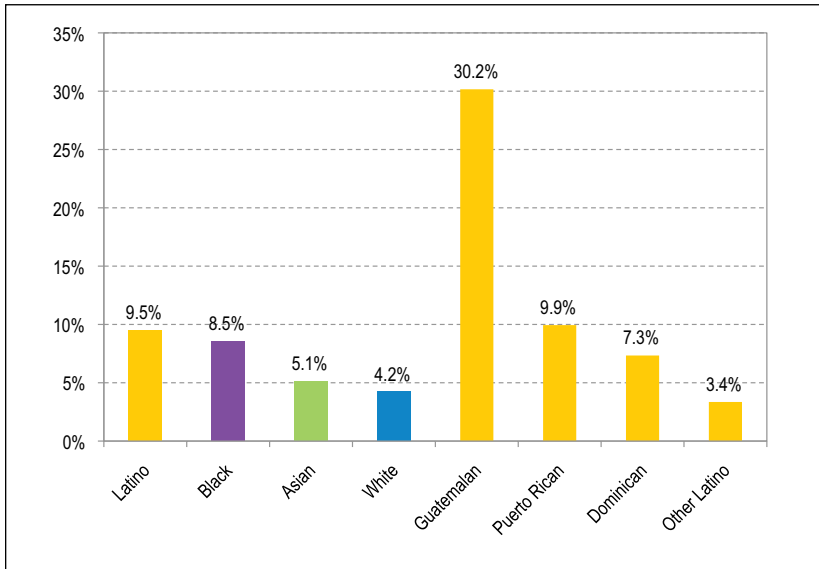
Figure 7: Labor Force Participation by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



The previous labor force participation information suggests that Latinos in Lawrence and Methuen have a strong motivation to participate in the area's economy. However, Figure 8 tells a different and slightly less positive story. The unemployment rate among Latinos in 2008 was 9.5%, which was higher than 8.5% for blacks,

5.1% for Asians, and 4.2% for whites. The smaller Guatemalan population in the area experienced higher unemployment.

Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



Figures 9A and 9B suggest that Latinos serve as complements to other ethno-racial groups in the area's labor market whose members have higher educational attainment. Latinos are overrepresented in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs (farming, construction, production, and transportation). All Latino subpopulations have higher percentages than the total population (23.4%) in these blue-collar jobs (Figure 9B). Correspondingly, as Figure 9A shows, Latinos are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs (professional and managerial).

Figure 9A: Population Employed in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008

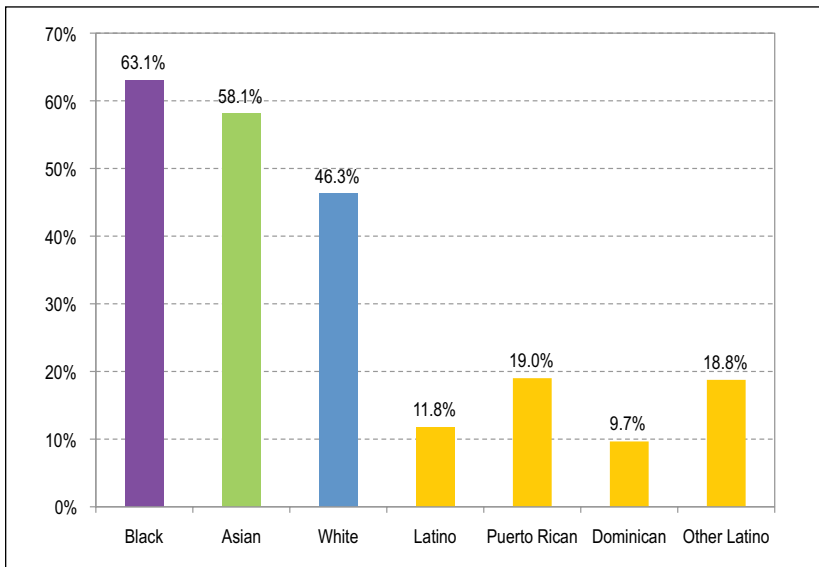
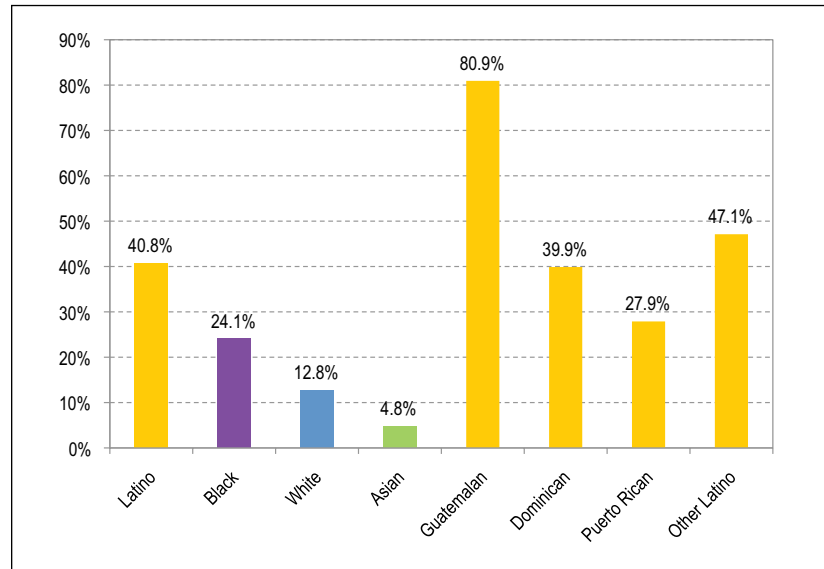


Figure 9B: Population Employed in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



EARNINGS

When examining the wage rates for these occupational categories, Latinos appear to be receiving wages below those of other ethno-racial groups. They earn less than all other ethno-racial groups for their white-collar (Figure 10A) and blue-collar (Figure 10C) employment. However, they earn higher wages than blacks and Asians for their service-sector employment (Figure 10B).

Figure 10A: Hourly Wages in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008

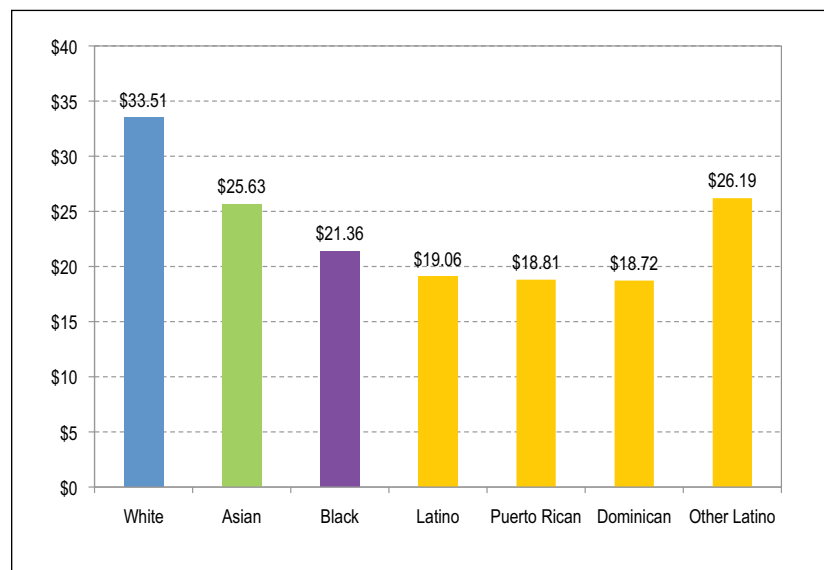


Figure 10B: Hourly Wages in Sales and Service Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008

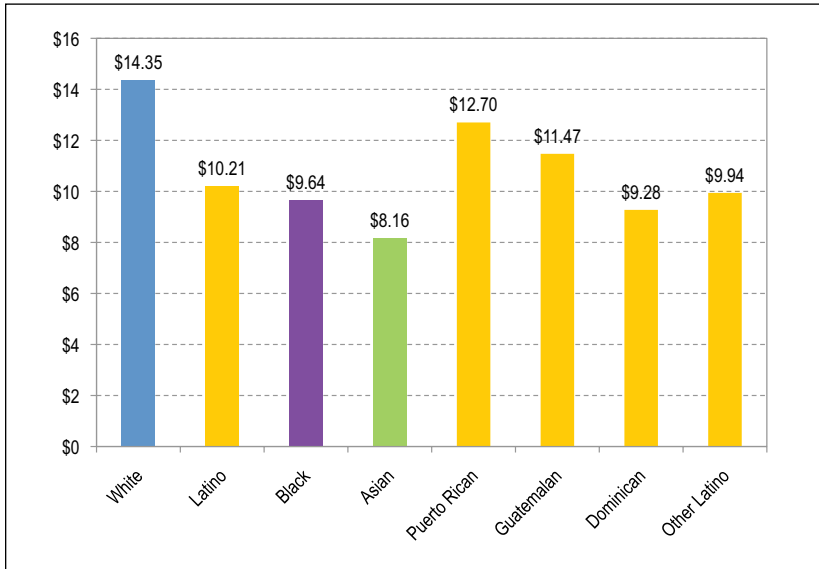
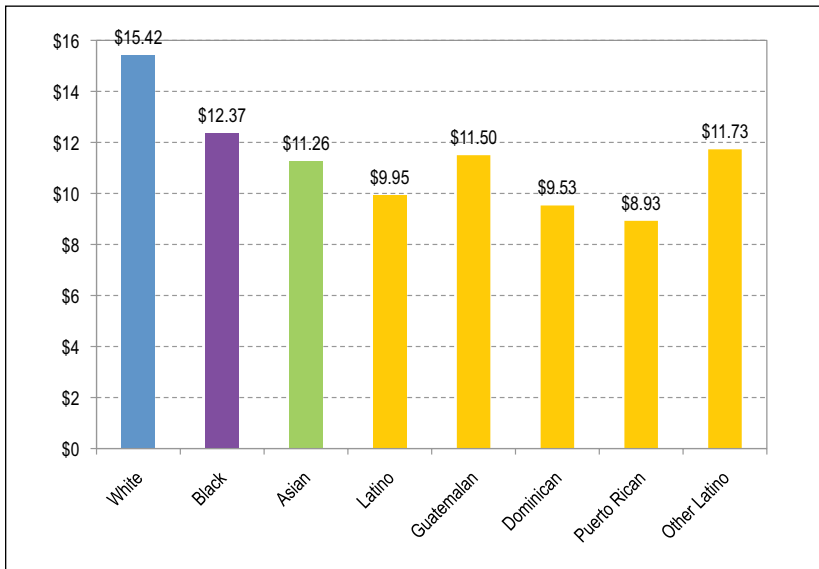


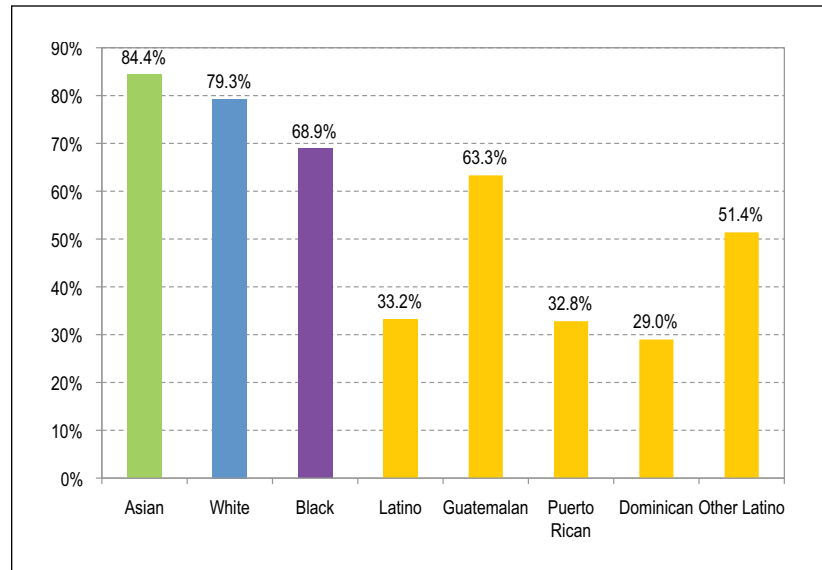
Figure 10C: Hourly Wages in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

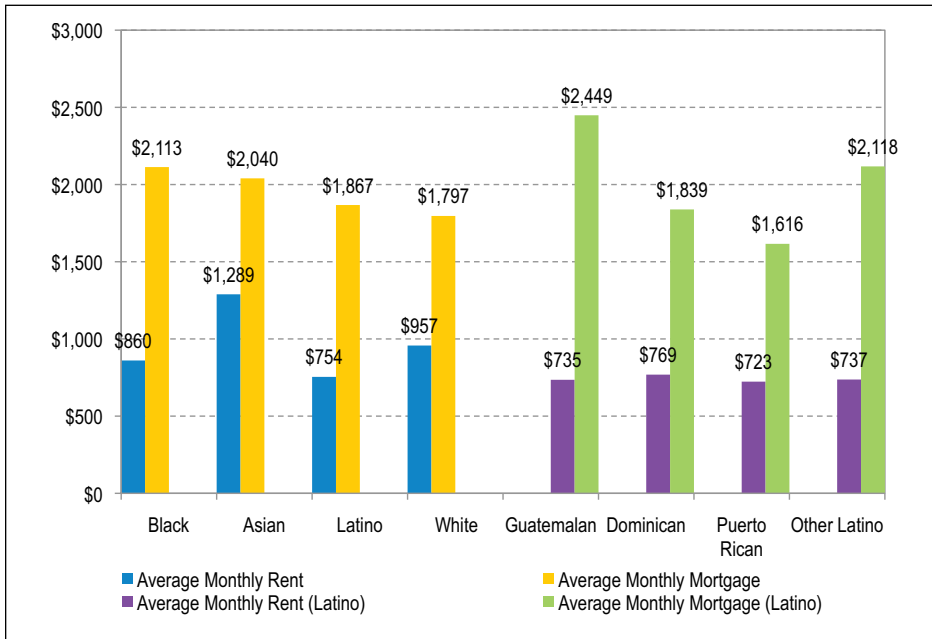
The final measures of Latino participation in Lawrence and Methuen are intended to identify how well Latinos in the area are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Latinos traditionally have low homeownership rates across the country. Figure 13 shows that this trend holds true in this area as they have the lowest homeownership level of any ethno-racial group: 33.2%, which is slightly higher than the state's Latino average of 32.9%. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 11, it is evident that 66.8% of Latinos in the area are renters.

Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



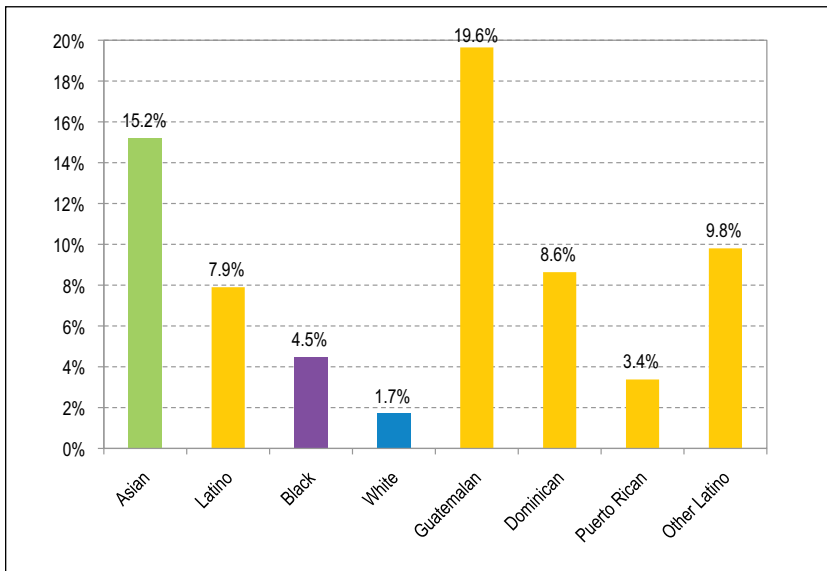
Homeownership is seen in a different light when its cost is analyzed. Having largely become homeowners during the housing bubble of the last decade, Latinos in Figure 12 on average pay \$1,867 monthly mortgages – higher than for whites. At the same time, Latino renters pay the lowest average monthly rents. The combination of high mortgage payments and low rents underlines the fact that Latino homebuyers were disadvantaged by the earlier housing bubble.

Figure 12: Housing Costs by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



The percentage of Latinos in this area who lack medical insurance (7.9%) is lower than the statewide average for Latinos (9.2%). Puerto Ricans, many of whom have access to public medical insurance, have the lowest rates without medical insurance of any Latino population. On the other hand, Guatemalans, who are a newly arriving subpopulation, have the highest rate of uninsurance (19.6%).

Figure 13: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008





The Mauricio Gastón Institute for
Latino Community Development
and Public Policy

The Mauricio Gastón Institute of 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 Massachusetts and selected areas based on an analysis of 2008 American Community Survey data.

The 2008 American Community Survey allowed people to choose their ethnicity and race. Ethnicity identifies a person as Latino or Hispanic. We use the term “Latino” for all of those who self-identify as Latino in response to the ethnicity question. The racial categories are assigned to those who do not identify as Latino. Technically, their designation is non-Latino white, non-Latino black, and non-Latino Asian, though they are often referenced as white, black, and Asian in these profiles.

About the Authors

Phillip Granberry is a social demographer who specializes in unauthorized migrants in the United States. He worked with various community based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. migrants before earning a PhD in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston in 2007. His past research has focused on Latinos in the United States. One part of this research has addressed the formation and use of social capital among Mexican migrants in Los Angeles County, and another part of this research has addressed demographic trends of Latinos in New England. His current research focuses on Brazilian and Dominican migrants in the Metropolitan Boston area. He currently teaches in the Economics Department and is a research associate of the Gastón Institute.

Our descriptive analysis uses both household- and individual-level ACS data to estimate population size and percentages, to compare Latinos to other ethno-racial groups (e.g., whites, blacks, and Asians), and to compare the top ten Latino subpopulations in Massachusetts by ancestry. These are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Brazilians, Salvadorans, Mexicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Hondurans, Peruvians, and Cubans. We use ancestry, based on migration from Latin America, rather than language: a self-identified Latino born in Massachusetts may have ancestors from a Latin American country but speak only English only. Whenever the category “Brazilian” appears in one of the figures, it includes all Brazilians, but the category “Latino” includes only those Brazilians who self-identified as Latino.

After the dissemination of the 2010 United States Census, the Gastón Institute will be updating these demographic profiles. These updates will allow for a better analysis of the Massachusetts Latino populations. We also plan to expand this series by adding analyses of the other New England states and by covering more cities.

Sarah Rustan is a PhD candidate in Law, Policy, and Society at Northeastern University with degrees in cultural management and architecture. Her professional background includes broad experiences in the nonprofit sector, including research as well as nonprofit and cultural management. Her past research has examined diverse topics ranging from charitable giving to women in the workforce. At present she is working on a dissertation exploring the role that nonprofit organizations play in promoting the development of social capital. She currently serves as a Research Associate and Data Analyst for the Gastón Institute and as a Doctoral Fellow at Northeastern University. Sarah’s research interests include demography, community change, and public policy.

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