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Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Lowell

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for
Latino Community Development
and Public Policy



Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas

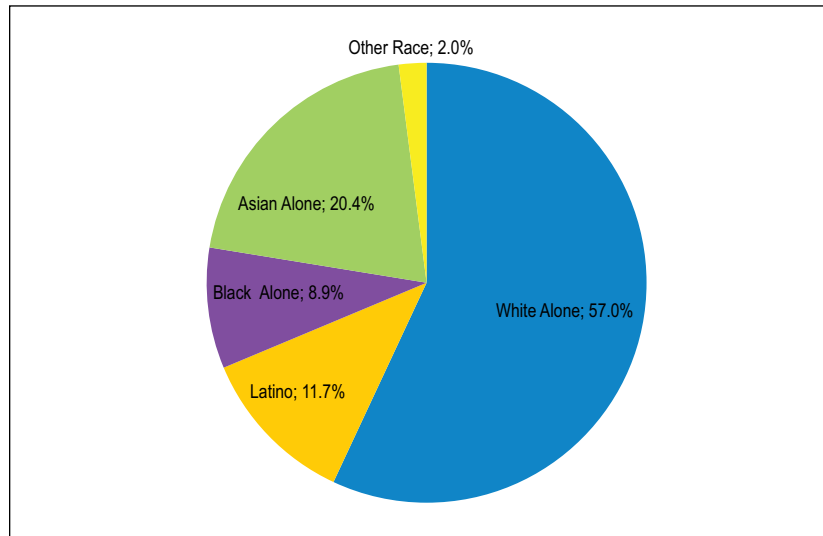
Lowell

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

INTRODUCTION

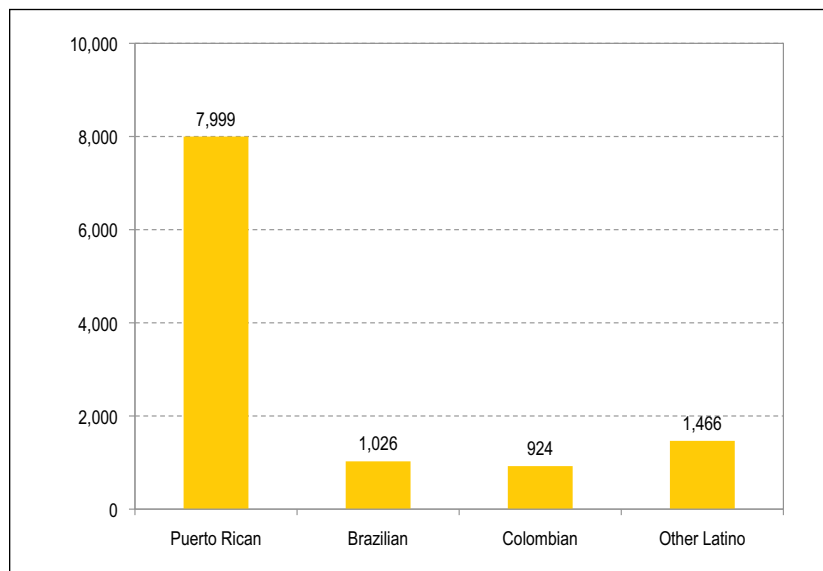
This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in Lowell. This report is prepared for the 2010 Statewide Latino Public Policy Conference organized by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community 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. 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.

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



Lowell is the fourth largest city in Massachusetts and is home to an estimated 11,415 Latinos, who make up 11.7% of the city's population. Whites constitute the largest ethno-racial group (57.0%), while Asians account for 20.4% and blacks represent 8.9% of the city's population (Figure 1).

Figure 2: Ancestry of the Top Latino Groups in 2008



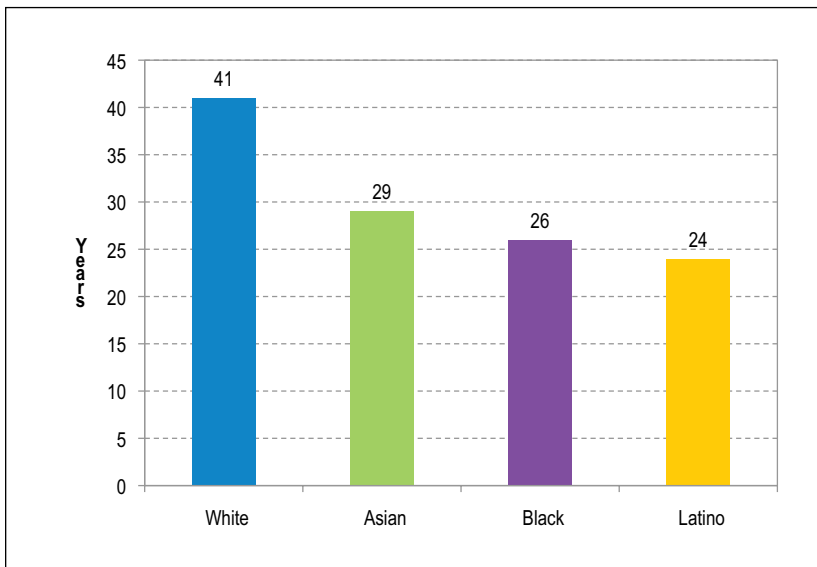
The Latino population in Lowell is driven by Puerto Ricans, who number 7,999. Brazilians (1,026)¹ and Colombians (924) are the other sizable Latino subpopulations. Latinos in conjunction with a large Asian population help give Lowell a proportionately greater foreign-born population (24.4%) than the state as a whole (14.4%).

The remainder of this report presents an overview that compares Latinos and their top subpopulations to whites, blacks, and Asians in Lowell for selected demographic, economic, and social characteristics².

MEDIAN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Figure 3 highlights differences in median age draws attention to the importance of Latinos in Lowell. Latinos have a younger median age (24 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



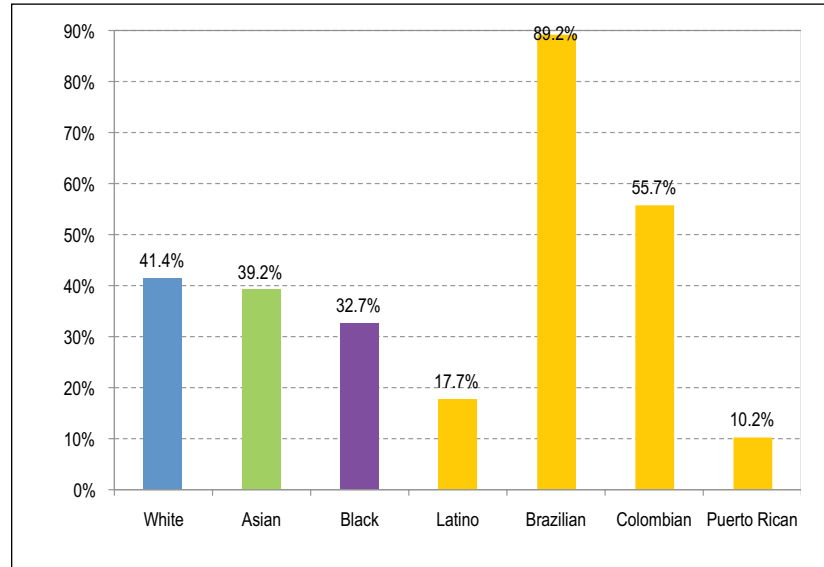
Notes

¹ Most Brazilians in the survey did not identify themselves as Latino. 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.

² Because of the smaller size of some ethno-racial groups and Latino subpopulations in the ACS data for Lowell, some demographic and labor force participation estimates have too large of a standard error and have been dropped from this analysis.

The youthfulness of Lowell's Latino population may influence its marital status. Figure 4 shows that the 17.7% marriage rate for Latinos (for persons age 16 and older) is lower than for other ethno-racial groups in the city. It is also lower 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.

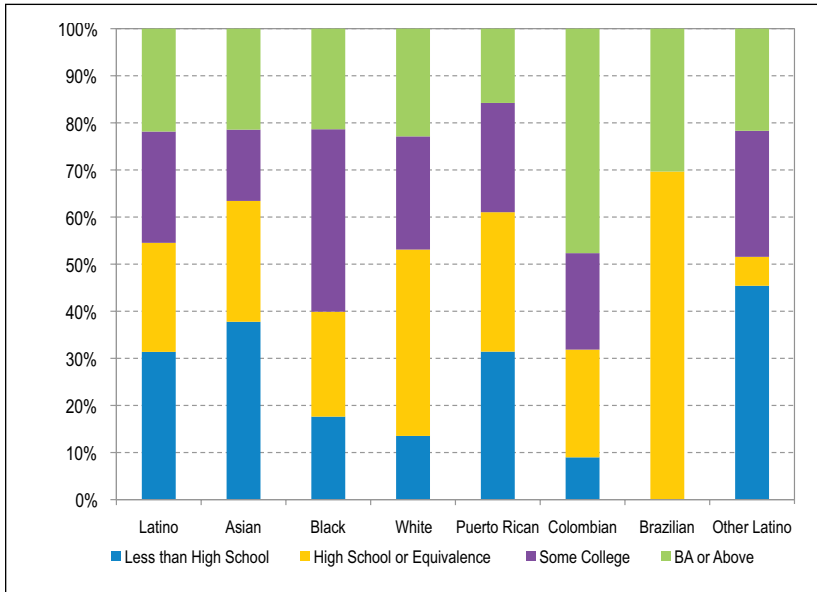
Figure 4: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



EDUCATION

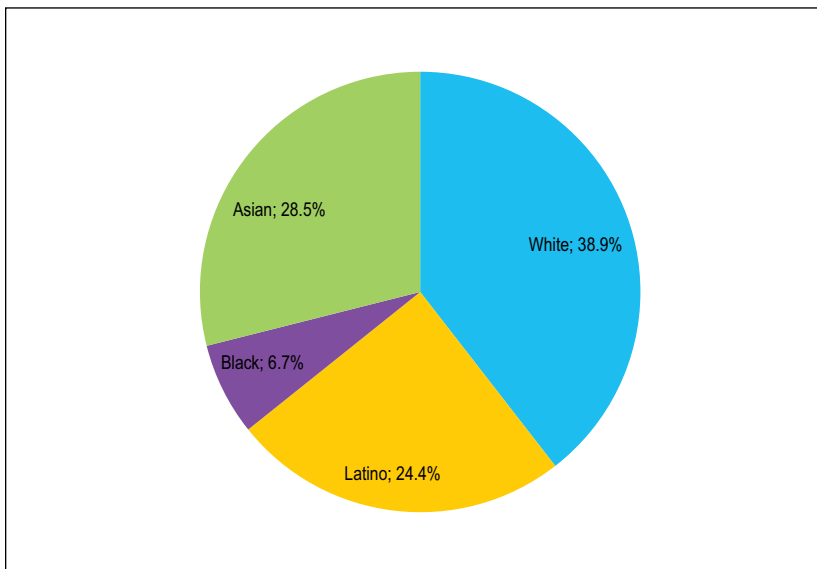
Figure 5 highlights that Latinos in Lowell are earning college degrees at rates similar to other ethno-racial groups: Latinos (21.8%) compared to whites (22.9%), Asians (21.4%), and blacks (21.4%). At the other end of the educational scale, Asians (37.8%) along with Latinos (31.4%) have greater percentages of their population with less than a high school diploma compared to whites (13.5%) and blacks (17.6%).

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



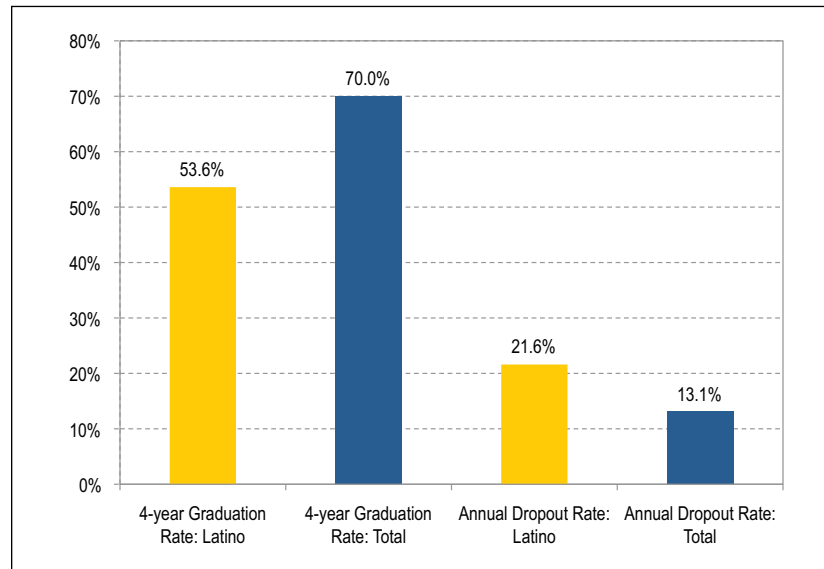
Figures 6A and 6B provide information regarding Latinos in the Lowell Public Schools and use Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education data. The Lowell Public Schools have experienced a 17.7% decrease in student population during 2000s, and the Latino student population has also declined, but at a lower rate of 7.8%. Latinos made up 24.4% of the student population in the 2008-2009 academic year, ranking them below white and Asian students.

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



Slightly more than half of Latinos (53.6%) graduate in four years compared to 70.0% for the total population. Similarly, 21.6% of Latinos drop out of school compared to 13.1% for the total population.

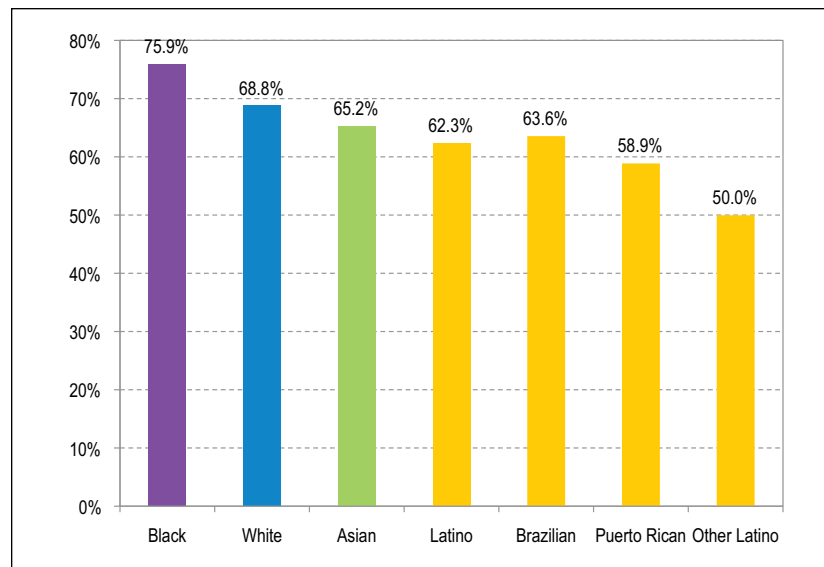
Figure 6B: Spotlight on Lowell Public Schools by Outcomes, Academic Year 2008-2009



LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

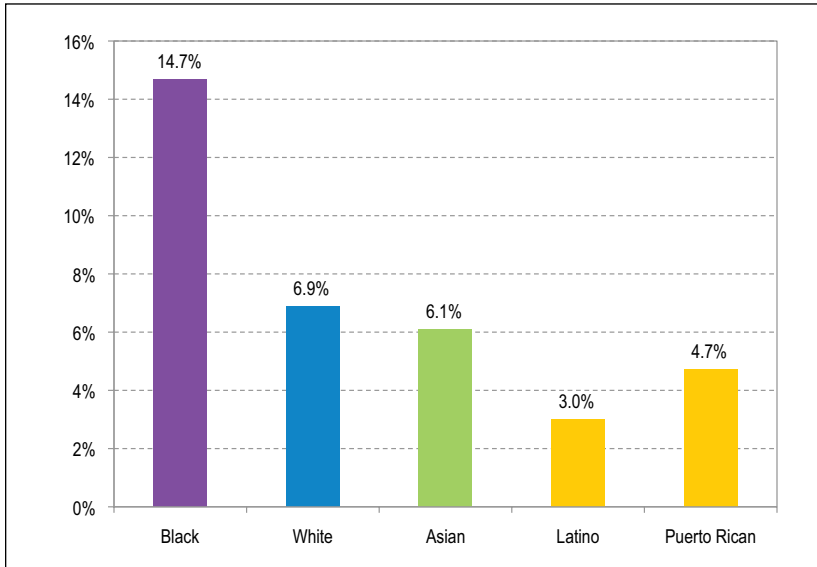
Figure 7 shows that Latinos have a labor force participation rate (62.3%) that is less than for blacks (75.9%), whites (68.8%), and Asians (65.2%). The Latino labor force participation rate for Lowell is lower than among Latinos across the state, who have an overall participation rate of 68.6%. This 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



Even though Latinos have lower labor force participation in Lowell, Figure 8 tells a more positive story. The unemployment rate among Latinos in 2008 was 3.0%, which was lower than for blacks (14.7%), for whites (6.9%), and for Asians (6.1%). Puerto Ricans, the only Latino subpopulation with a large enough population to generate an unemployment rate, also experienced a low unemployment rate of 4.7%.

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



Figures 9A and 9B suggest that Latinos are better integrated in the labor market than they are in other parts of Massachusetts. Latinos have similar percentages of their population represented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs (professional and managerial) compared to other ethno-racial groups in Figure 9A: Latinos (31.0%) compared to whites (34.2%), blacks (30.5%), and Asians (29.1%). Correspondingly, as Figure 9B shows, 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 9A: Population Employed in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008

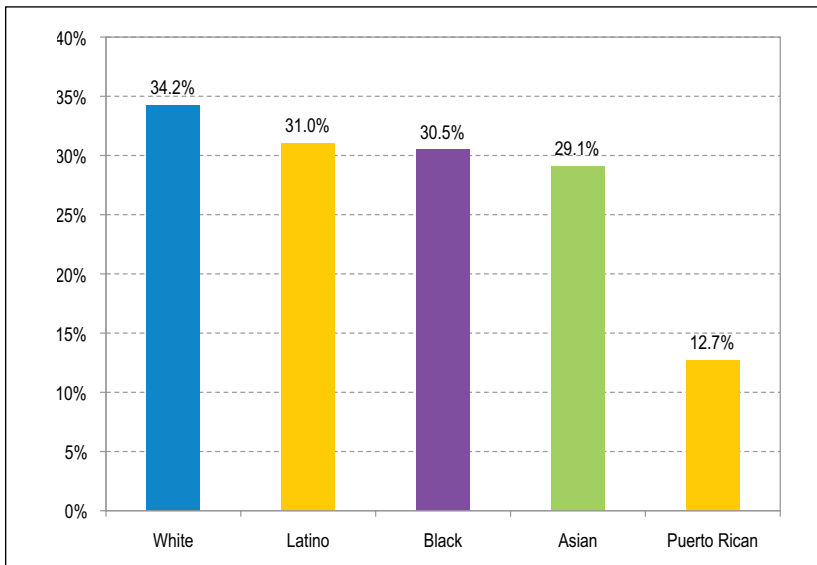
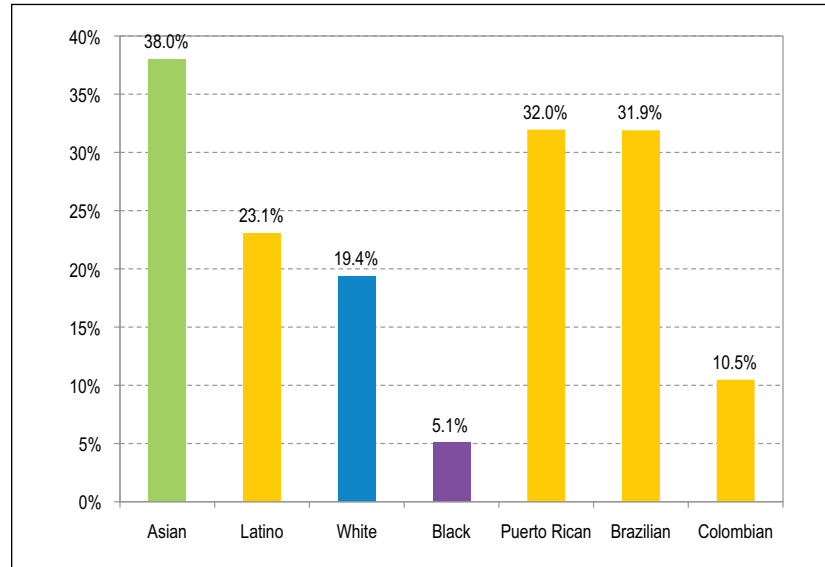


Figure 9B: Population Employed in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



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 service-sector (Figure 10B) employment. However, they earn higher wages for their blue-collar employment than blacks and Asians, but not whites (Figure 10C).

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

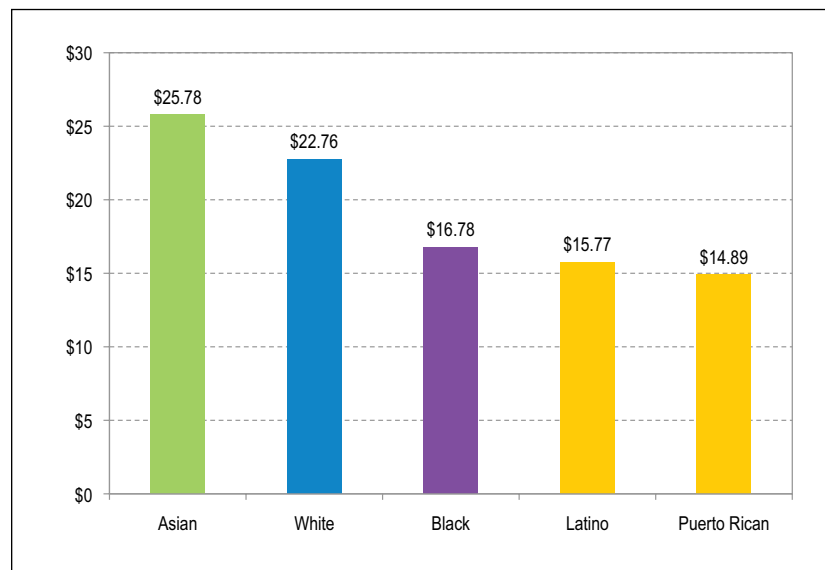


Figure 10B: Hourly Wages in Sales and Service Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008

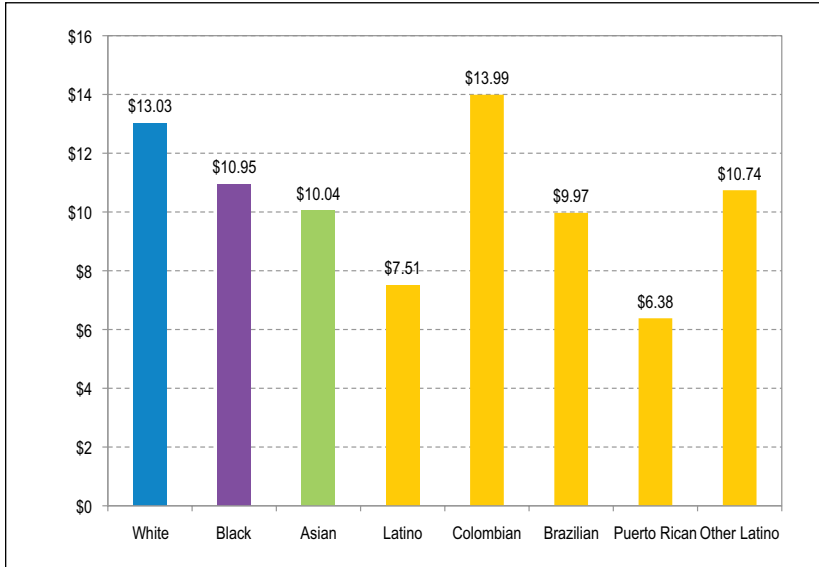
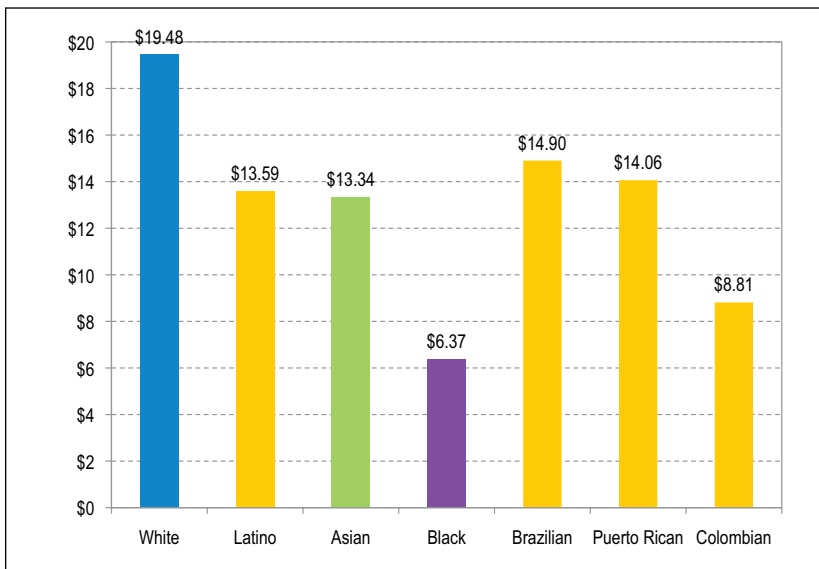


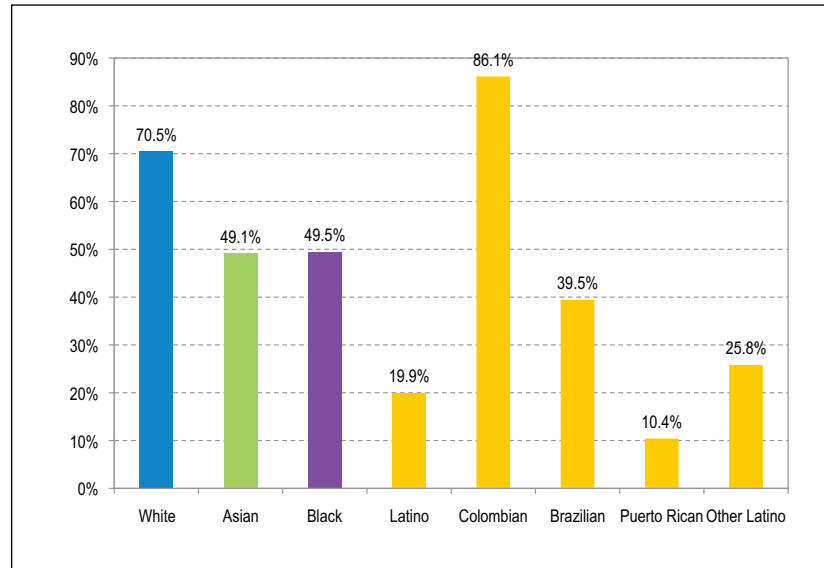
Figure 10C: Hourly Wages in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008



HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

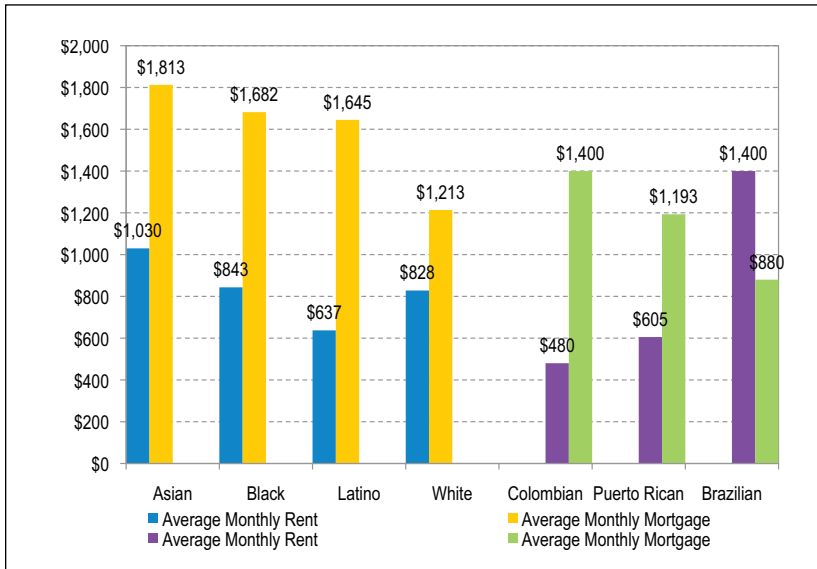
The final measures of Latino participation in Lowell are intended to identify how well Latinos in the city are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Latinos traditionally have low homeownership rates across the country. Figure 13 shows that this trend holds true as they have a 19.9% homeownership rate, lower than any other ethno-racial group. This 19.9% rate is also significantly lower than the state's Latino average of 32.9%. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 11, it is evident that 80.1% of Latinos in Lowell are renters.

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



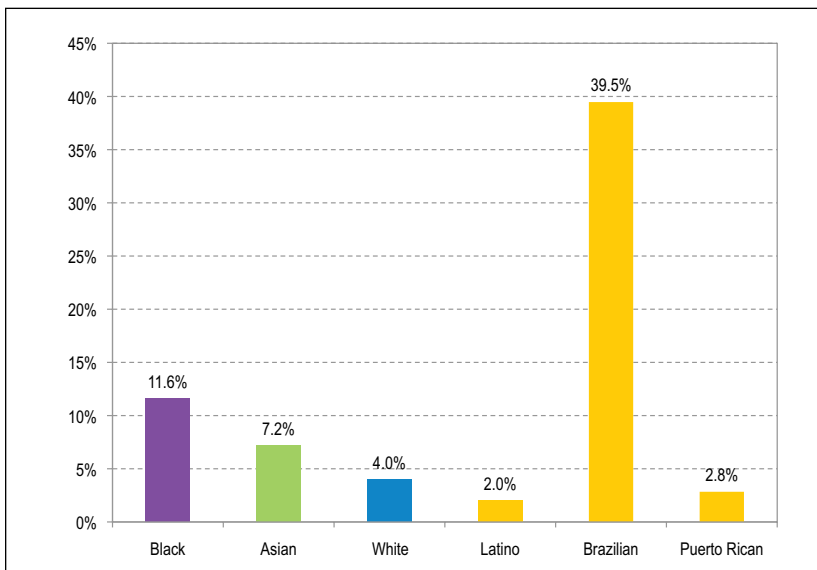
Homeownership is seen in a different light when its cost is analyzed. Having largely become homeowners during the housing bubble of the last decade, Latinos in Figure 12 on average pay \$1,645 monthly mortgages – higher than for whites. At the same time, Latino renters pay the lowest average monthly rents, at \$637. 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 (2.0%) is significantly lower than the statewide average for Latinos (9.2%). Puerto Ricans, many of whom have access to public medical insurance, have the lowest rates of any Latino population without medical insurance (2.8%). On the other hand, Brazilians, who are a newly arriving subpopulation, have a high uninsurance rate of 39.5%.

Figure 13: Medical Uninsurance Rates 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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