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Latina Political Leadership in Massachusetts

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Latina Political Leadership in Massachusetts

The Latino Population in Massachusetts: A Snapshot¹

- With a population of about 729,000, Hispanics make up 11% of the state population – the Hispanic population in Massachusetts is the 18th largest state population nationally.
- The median age of Hispanics is 27.
- The median amount of annual personal earnings for Hispanics aged 16 and over is \$24,000.
- Top 5 cities and towns with the largest Latino populations (using 2015 estimates):

Lawrence	76.3%
Chelsea	64.2%
Holyoke	49.4%
Springfield	42.1%
Lynn	35.5%

The Latino Electorate in Massachusetts²

- There are 372,000 Hispanic eligible voters in Massachusetts representing the 11th largest Hispanic statewide eligible voter population nationally.
- The majority (52.8%) of Hispanic eligible voters are female.
- 54% of Hispanic eligible voters are Puerto Rican.

History of Latinas in Elected Office in Massachusetts: 1983-2016³

- 54 Latinas were elected to office in Massachusetts between 1983 and 2016.
- The majority of Latinas elected have held municipal offices.
- Voters in 14 cities and towns out of 351 municipalities elected Latinas to represent their constituents.
- The majority of elected Latinas have served in public office for six years or less.
- Grace Romero was the first Latina elected to office in Massachusetts, winning a seat on the Boston School Committee in 1983.
- In 1999, Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera became the first Hispanic woman to hold a seat in the Massachusetts House of Representatives; Juana Matias became the second in 2016.
- In 2008, Sonia Chang-Díaz became the first Latina elected to the Massachusetts State Senate.
- No Latinas have ever run or been elected to countywide or statewide constitutional office.

Figure 1. Offices Held by Latinas in Massachusetts, 1984-2017

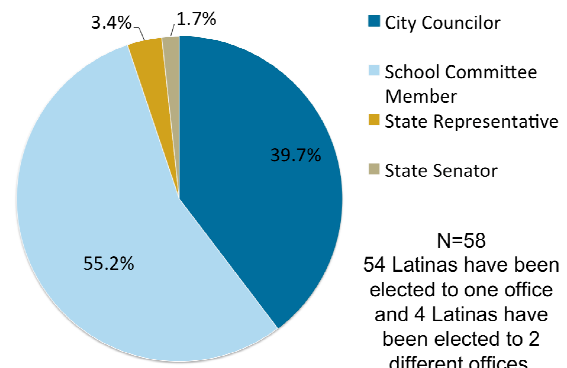


Table 1. Elected Latinas, Massachusetts, 1984-2017⁴

Elected Official	Governing Body	Year(s)
Grace Romero	Boston School Committee	1984-1985
Betty Medina-Lichtenstein	Holyoke School Committee	1986-1993
Sara Garcia	Cambridge School Committee	1986-1987
Doris Cruz	Amherst School Committee	1989-1994
Marta Rosa	Chelsea School Committee; Chelsea City Council	1990-1995; 1996-1997
Hilda Colon	Westfield School Committee	1994-1997
Leticia Ortiz	Chelsea City Council	1994-1995
Ruth Cruz	Holyoke School Committee	1994-1995
Carmen Rosa	Springfield School Committee	1994-1995
Susana Segat	Cambridge School Committee	1996-2001
Claudia Chuber	Salem School Committee; Salem City Council	1998-2001; 2002-2003
Cheryl Coakley-Rivera	Massachusetts House of Representatives	1999-2014
Julia Silverio	Lawrence City Council	2000-2003
Nilka Alvarez-Rodríguez	Lawrence City Council	2000-2009; 2014-present
Gladys Rivera Rogers	Malden School Committee	2002-2008
Mildred Santana	Holyoke City Council	2003-2005
Gladys Lebrón-Martínez	Holyoke School Committee; Holyoke City Council	2003-2011; 2012-present
Lillian Santiago	Holyoke City Council	2004-2007
Lucy Corchado	Salem City Council	2004-2007
Lucía H. Colón	Chelsea School Committee	2004-present
Gilda Ramirez	Chelsea School Committee	2005
Marilyn Vega Torres	Chelsea City Council	2006-2011
Martina Cruz	Lawrence School Committee	2006-2011
Grisel Silva	Lawrence City Council	2006-2011
Melinda Vega	Chelsea School Committee	2008-2011
María Carrasco	Lynn School Committee	2008-2017
Sonia Chang Díaz	Massachusetts State Senate	2009-present
Ana Hernandez	Chelsea School Committee	2010-present
Sandy Almonte	Lawrence City Council	2010-present
Oneida Aquino	Lawrence City Council	2010-2015
Denise M. Hurst	Springfield School Committee	2010-present
Zaida Luna	Springfield City Council	2010-2015
Jeanette Velez	Chelsea School Committee	2011-present
Dolores Thibault-Muñoz	Fitchburg City Council	2012-2013
Jennyfer Cabral	Malden School Committee	2012-2013
Agma M. Sweeney	Westfield City Council	2012-2013
Mildred Lefebvre	Holyoke School Committee	2012-present
Estela Reyes	Lawrence City Council	2012-present
Saraí Rivera	Worcester City Council	2012-present
Francia Vieda Wisniewski	Greenfield School Committee	2013-2016
Rosa Pérez	Springfield School Committee	2014-present
Jossie Valentín	Holyoke City Council	2014-present
Irene G. Feliciano Sims	Holyoke School Committee	2014-present
Hilda Ramírez	Worcester School Committee	2014-2015
Myra Ortiz	Lawrence School Committee	2014-2015
Diana Maldonado	Chelsea School Committee	2015-present
Judith Garcia	Chelsea City Council	2015-present
Kelly Garcia	Chelsea School Committee	2015-present
Damali Vidot	Chelsea City Council	2015-present

Table 1, Continued

Elected Official	Governing Body	Year(s)
Yessenia Alfaro-Alvarez	Chelsea School Committee	2015-present
Juana Escobedo-Bedolla	Fitchburg School Committee	2015-present
Maria Burge	Greenfield City Council	2016-present
Juana Matias	Massachusetts House of Representatives	2016-present
Anastasia Ordonez	Amherst School Committee	2016-present



Sources

- ¹ Demographic Profile of Hispanics in Massachusetts, 2014. Available at www.pewhispanic.org/states/state/ma.
 Latinos in the 2016 Election: Massachusetts. Available at www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-massachusetts.
 2015 American Community Survey estimates provided by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy. Brazilians included in the estimates.
² Latinos in the 2016 Election: Massachusetts. Available at www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-massachusetts.
³ Cintrón, Ileana. 2017 (June). Based on several data sources including Women's Pipeline for Change, town and city clerk websites, EMERGE MA, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, LIPPI at the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts, Massachusetts Secretary of State, masslive.com, www.mariaslist.net, personal communications with Elizabeth Cardona, Gladys Lebrón-Martínez, Jordan Berg Powers, and Georgia Hollister Isman. In addition, *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies and Prospects* by Carol Hardy-Fanta, Jeffrey Gerson (New York: Routledge, 2002).
⁴ Ibid.

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the McCormack Graduate School works to advance women's public leadership through its academic programs, action-oriented research, and public events. All center programs and activities explore the impact of gender, race/ethnicity, and class on policy making and politics.

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