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### Latinx Political Leadership in Massachusetts

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# Latinx Political Leadership in Massachusetts (2020)

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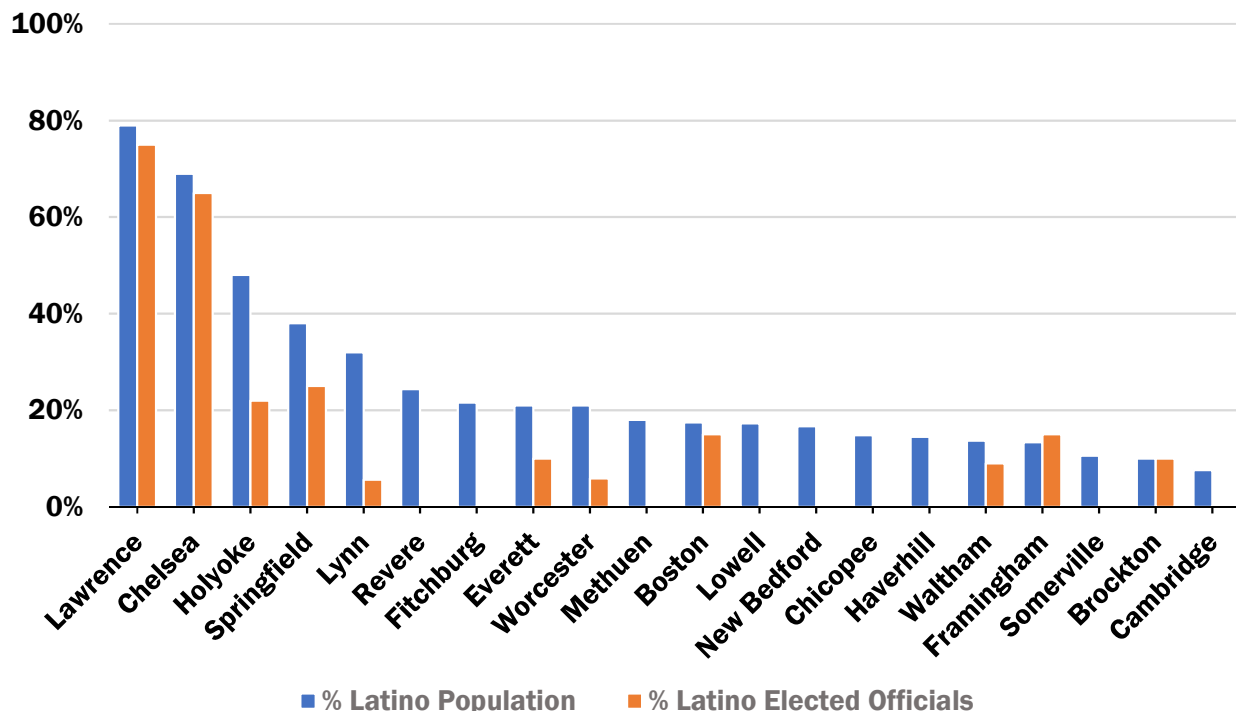
**Fabián Torres-Ardila, PhD, Associate Director, Gastón Institute**

## Highlights

- Latinx comprise an increasing share of eligible voters in the Commonwealth, yet Latinx political leadership at all levels of government is less than proportionate to Latinx populations across the state. With 70 Latinx individuals holding seats in local elected bodies and in the MA Legislature, the most significant leadership gaps persist at the state level and in the state’s congressional delegation.
- Currently, an equal number of Latinas and Latinos serve on city councils in the top 20 Latinx cities, while more Latinas than Latinos are serving on school committees.
- Brockton, Chelsea, Framingham, and Lawrence have political representation on city councils and elected school committees that is relatively proportionate to their share of Latinx residents.

### Figure 1. Rates of Latinx Elected Leadership Compared to Proportion of Latinx Population (2020)

Source: Analysis of Elected Officials on School Committees and City Councils in Top 20 Massachusetts Cities with Largest Latinx Populations. Gastón Institute



## CURRENT OFFICEHOLDING: The Difference a Year Makes

The top 20 cities and towns with the largest proportions of Latinx residents in Massachusetts account for 57% of the Latinx population in the state. Among these cities and towns, half have at least one Latino and/or Latina elected official serving on the school committee or city council. Of the 369 key municipal elected positions in these 20 cities and towns, Latino elected officials make up 11% of officeholders.

In only one city (Lawrence) does a Latino serve as mayor.

Since 2019, there has been an 18.4% increase in Latinx representation from 49 to 58 (including local and state-level officeholders.) Latinas saw the largest increase in representation in city council officeholding.

Even with an increase in local officeholding over the past year, Latinos remain under-represented in most governing bodies at all levels of government.

Everett, Boston, and Brockton now have Latinx electeds serving on city councils.

Latinx representation increased in five cities and towns that are not among in the Top 20 Massachusetts Cities with Largest Latino Populations.

According to The Victory Institute, four Latinx electeds identifying as LGBTQ currently serve in local office.

### The Latino Population and Electorate

At about 811,000, the Latino population in Massachusetts is the 18th largest state population nationally. Latinos make up 11.8% of the state's population.

The median age of Latinos is 27 years. Close to three out of ten (26.3%) Latinos are younger than 18 years.

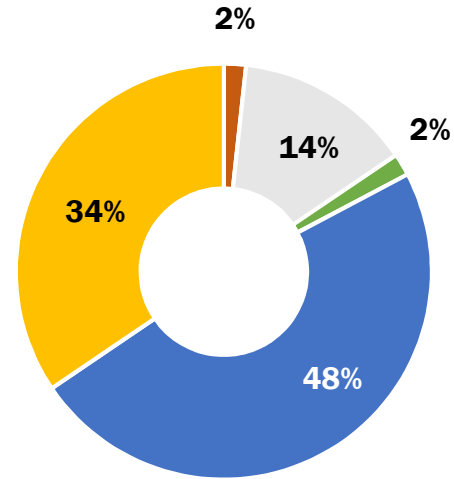
It is expected that by 2035, the Latino population will grow to over 1.15 million, representing 15.3% of the state's population.

There are 436,000 Latino eligible voters in Massachusetts, representing the 11th largest Latino statewide eligible voter population nationally.

From 2010 to 2018, the number of registered Latino voters increased by 85.8%, from 134,000 to 249,000.

From 2010 to 2018, the number of registered Latino voters who vote increased by 268.8% from 48,000 to 177,000.

Figure 2. Latinx Political Leadership in Top 20 Latinx Population Cities (N=58)



- State Senator (n=1)
- State Representative (n=8)
- Mayor (n=1)
- City Councilor (n=28)
- School Committee member (n=20)

## Political Representation: Disparities Amidst Some Advances in Key Leadership Roles

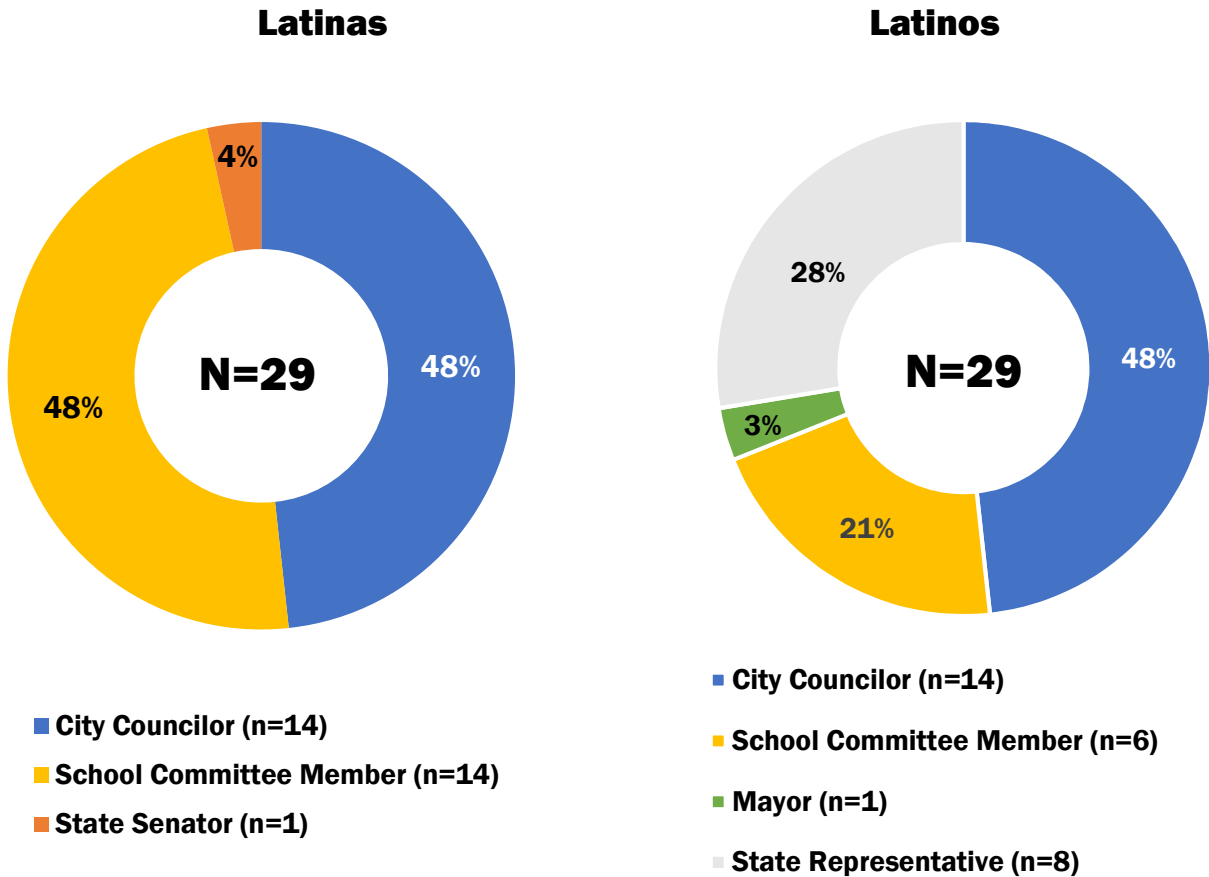
City councilors and members of school committees account for 87% of all Latinx serving in key elected leadership positions in the twenty communities with the largest Latinx populations.

There is very limited Latinx presence in the State Senate, with one Latina State Senator in office; having five Latinos in the Senate would be proportionate to the statewide Latinx population. Eight Latinx individuals serve in the 160-member House of Representatives; eighteen would be proportionate.

There is no Latinx representation in the state’s congressional delegation.

More than double the number of Latinas are serving in office today (33) compared to six years ago (14 were serving in 2014).

**Figure 3. Gender Breakdown in Local and State Legislative Offices: Top 20 Latinx Cities**



## **Latinas in Elected Office in Massachusetts: Some Historical Context**

*The following selection of years offers a snapshot of several key historical advances but is not inclusive of all years nor of all elected officials to be noted. Documentation of advances and a fuller historical record is in development.*

- 1983** Grace Romero was the first Latina elected to office in Massachusetts, winning a seat on the Boston School Committee
- 1998** Cheryl Coakley-Rivera was elected to the House of Representatives and the first LGBTQ Latina elected to the Massachusetts Legislature
- 2008** State Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz became the first and only Latina ever elected to the Massachusetts Senate
- 2016** Juana Matias became the first Latina immigrant elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives
- 2019** Julia Mejia became the first Afro-Latina elected to the Boston City Council

**Table 1.** Latinx electeds currently serving as mayor or in local governing bodies such as city councils, school committees, and in the Massachusetts Legislature.

<b>Elected Official*</b>	<b>Governing Body</b>
<b>Alba, Joshua</b>	<b>Lawrence School Committee</b>
<b>Alfaro-Alvarez, Yessenia</b>	<b>Chelsea School Committee</b>
<b>Almeida-Barros, Marcony</b>	<b>Everett School Committee</b>
<b>Anderson-Burgos, Juan</b>	<b>Holyoke City Council</b>
<b>Arroyo, Ricardo</b>	<b>Boston City Council</b>
<b>Avellaneda, Roy</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>
<b>Basilio Shepard, Margareth</b>	<b>Framingham City Council</b>
<b>Bueno, Kyle</b>	<b>Fairhaven School Committee</b>
<b>Castellanos, Brian</b>	<b>Lynn School Committee</b>
<b>Chang-Díaz, Sonia</b>	<b>Massachusetts State Senate (Boston)</b>
<b>Cruz, Manny</b>	<b>Salem School Committee</b>
<b>Da Silva, Carlos</b>	<b>Hingham School Committee</b>
<b>Davila, Victor</b>	<b>Springfield City Council</b>
<b>De La Cruz, Maria</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Devers, Marcos</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Lawrence)</b>
<b>Diaz Jr., Ramon</b>	<b>Westfield School Committee</b>
<b>Dominguez, Domingo</b>	<b>Salem City Council</b>
<b>Feliciano-Sims, Irene</b>	<b>Holyoke School Committee</b>
<b>Fernandez, Raul</b>	<b>Brookline Select Board</b>
<b>Fernandez, Roberto</b>	<b>Brookline School Committee</b>
<b>Garcia, Judith</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>
<b>Garcia, Kelly</b>	<b>Chelsea School Committee</b>
<b>Gomez, Adam</b>	<b>Springfield City Council</b>
<b>Gomez, Homar</b>	<b>Easthampton City Council</b>
<b>Gonzalez, Kristen</b>	<b>Northfield School Committee</b>
<b>Gonzalez, Carlos</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Springfield)</b>
<b>Guzman, Jonathan</b>	<b>Lawrence School Committee</b>
<b>Henriquez, Lucia</b>	<b>Chelsea School Committee</b>
<b>Hernandez, Ana</b>	<b>Chelsea School Committee</b>
<b>Hernandez, Libby</b>	<b>Holyoke City Council</b>
<b>Hurst, Denise</b>	<b>Springfield School Committee</b>
<b>Infante, Cassandra</b>	<b>Lawrence School Committee</b>
<b>Jimenez-Rivera, Roberto</b>	<b>Chelsea School Committee</b>
<b>Lebron-Martinez, Gladys</b>	<b>Holyoke City Council</b>
<b>Lefebvre, Mildred</b>	<b>Holyoke School Committee</b>
<b>Levy, Ana</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Lopez, Enio</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>
<b>Martins, Stephanie</b>	<b>Everett City Council</b>

<b>Matos, Enrique</b>	<b>Lawrence School Committee</b>
<b>Mejia, Julia</b>	<b>Boston City Council</b>
<b>Mendes, Rita</b>	<b>Brockton City Council</b>
<b>Moran, Frank</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Lawrence)</b>
<b>Nuncio, Ana</b>	<b>Salem School Committee</b>
<b>Payano, Pavel</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Paz, Jonathan</b>	<b>Waltham City Council</b>
<b>Perez, Maria</b>	<b>Springfield School Committee</b>
<b>Pichardo, Rafaela</b>	<b>Lawrence School Committee</b>
<b>Ramos, Orlando</b>	<b>Springfield City Council</b>
<b>Rand, Estelle</b>	<b>Beverly City Council</b>
<b>Reyes, Celina</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Reyes, Estela</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Rivas-Mendes, Cynthia</b>	<b>Brockton School Committee</b>
<b>Rivera, Daniel</b>	<b>Mayor of Lawrence</b>
<b>Rivera, Natasha</b>	<b>Maynard School Committee</b>
<b>Rivera, Sarai</b>	<b>Worcester City Council</b>
<b>Rodriguez, Jeovanny</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Rodriguez, Yamir</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>
<b>Santiago, Jon</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Boston)</b>
<b>Santiago, Marisol</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>
<b>Sena, Danillo</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Action, Ayer, Boxborough, Harvard, Lunenberg, Shirley)</b>
<b>Sousa, Priscila</b>	<b>Framingham School Committee</b>
<b>Stewart-Morales, Cesar</b>	<b>Framingham City Council</b>
<b>Tosado, Jose</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Springfield)</b>
<b>Vargas, Andres</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Haverhill)</b>
<b>Vasquez, Kendrys</b>	<b>Lawrence City Council</b>
<b>Vega, Aaron</b>	<b>Massachusetts House of Representatives (Holyoke)</b>
<b>Vega Maldonado, Melinda</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>
<b>Velez, Jeanette</b>	<b>Chelsea School Committee</b>
<b>Vidal, Carlos</b>	<b>Waltham City Council</b>
<b>Vidot, Damali</b>	<b>Chelsea City Council</b>

*\*Not including other offices such as Register of Probate or other elected positions*

## Data Sources and Notes

Boston Indicators. Changing Faces of Greater Boston: A Report from Boston Indicators, the Boston Foundation, UMass Boston, and the UMass Donahue Institute. (2019).

<https://www.bostonindicators.org/reports/report-website-pages/changing-faces-of-greater-boston/changing-faces-of-greater-boston-report>

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[https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp\\_pubs/59](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs/59)

Pew Research Center. Latinos in the 2016 Election: Massachusetts. Available at

[www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-massachusetts](http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-massachusetts).

The Victory Institute. <https://victoryinstitute.org>

2015 American Community Survey estimates provided by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy. Brazilians are included in the estimates.

Demographic growth projection data taken from The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy report "Massachusetts Latino Population 2010-2035", [scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston\\_pubs/241](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/241)

Data from 20 cities and towns in Massachusetts with the largest Latino populations: Boston (17.5% Latino), Springfield (38.8%), Lawrence (73.8%), Worcester (20.9%), Lynn (32.1%), Chelsea (62.1%), Holyoke (48.4%), Lowell (17.3%), New Bedford (16.7%), Revere (24.4%), Brockton (10.0%), Framingham (13.4%), Haverhill, (14.5%), Everett (21.1%), Fitchburg (21.6%), Methuen (18.1%), Waltham (13.7%), Chicopee (14.8%), Somerville (10.6%), Cambridge (7.6%). Source: American Community Survey 2017.

Self-identified information on racial and ethnic backgrounds of elected officials provided through survey data from UMass Boston's Massachusetts Representation Project: Diverse Leadership for a Diverse Commonwealth. With survey administration ongoing, the list of Latinx electeds provided in Table 1 is preliminary until all survey responses are received from elected officials.

Please note that the Boston School Committee is appointed, not elected, and therefore not included in data analysis presented. Brazilians are counted in population data provided and also included among electeds based on self-identified information provided through survey data from the UMass Boston Massachusetts Representation Project: Diverse Leadership for a Diverse Commonwealth.

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, "Latina Political Leadership in Massachusetts" (2014). [https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp\\_pubs/33](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs/33)

The Latina Electeds list initially developed by Ileana Cintrón was updated using the following:

Data collected from town and city clerk websites by researchers from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy; additional data from the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), Women's Pipeline for Change, EMERGE MA, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, LIPPI at the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts, Massachusetts Secretary of State, [www.mariaslist.net](http://www.mariaslist.net). In addition, *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies and Prospects* by Carol Hardy-Fanta, Jeffrey Gerson (New York: Routledge, 2002).



## **The Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy**

Established in 1989, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy was created by the Massachusetts Legislature in response to a need for improved understanding about the Latino experience in the Commonwealth. Now in its 30th year, the Gastón Institute continues its mission of informing the public and policymakers about issues vital to the state's growing Latino community and providing information and analysis necessary for effective Latino participation in public policy development. To learn more about the Gastón Institute, visit [www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute](http://www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute). Facebook & Twitter: @GastonInstitute.

## **Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy**

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the McCormack Graduate School works to advance women's public leadership and the public policies that make a difference in the lives of women, particularly low-income and women of color. Through its award-winning graduate certificate program, policy-relevant research, and public forums, it works to ensure that the voices, expertise, and experiences of women are valued and included in civic discourse and the policymaking process. Utilizing both an anti-racist and intersectional approach, addressing ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, immigrant status and other identities, the center works across sectors, including health, education, employment, among others, to increase access and opportunity for women and families and inform policy analysis to ensure economic, social, and political equity and justice for all.

Visit: [www.umb.edu/cwppp](http://www.umb.edu/cwppp). Facebook: @CWPPP. Twitter: @CWPPP\_UMB.

## **The Massachusetts Representation Project: Diverse Leadership for a Diverse Commonwealth**

Supported by a UMass Boston Public Service Grant, a major project has been launched at UMass Boston to develop a data dashboard to document racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in electoral leadership in Massachusetts. The project is a collaboration between the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture, Institute for Asian American Studies, and Institute for New England Native American Studies.

Visit: [https://www.umb.edu/cwppp/research/ma\\_representation\\_project](https://www.umb.edu/cwppp/research/ma_representation_project)

## **Amplify Latinx**

Amplify Latinx is a non-partisan, collaborative movement whose mission is to build Latinx economic and political power by significantly increasing Latinx civic engagement and representation in leadership positions across sectors. Amplify Latinx was launched by the Latina Circle, a Boston-based, non-profit social venture that is advancing Latina leaders across industries into positions of power and influence. To learn more about Amplify Latinx, visit <https://amplifylatinx.co>. Facebook & Twitter: @AmplifyLatinx.