

University of Massachusetts Boston

ScholarWorks at UMass Boston

Publications from the Center for Women in
Politics and Public Policy

Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy

6-2021

Latinx Political Leadership in Massachusetts (2021)

Leyi Andrea Perez

Fabián Torres-Ardila

Christa Kelleher

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), [Public Policy Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)



THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Latinx Political Leadership in Massachusetts (2021)

Leyi Andrea Perez, Research Assistant, Gastón Institute

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

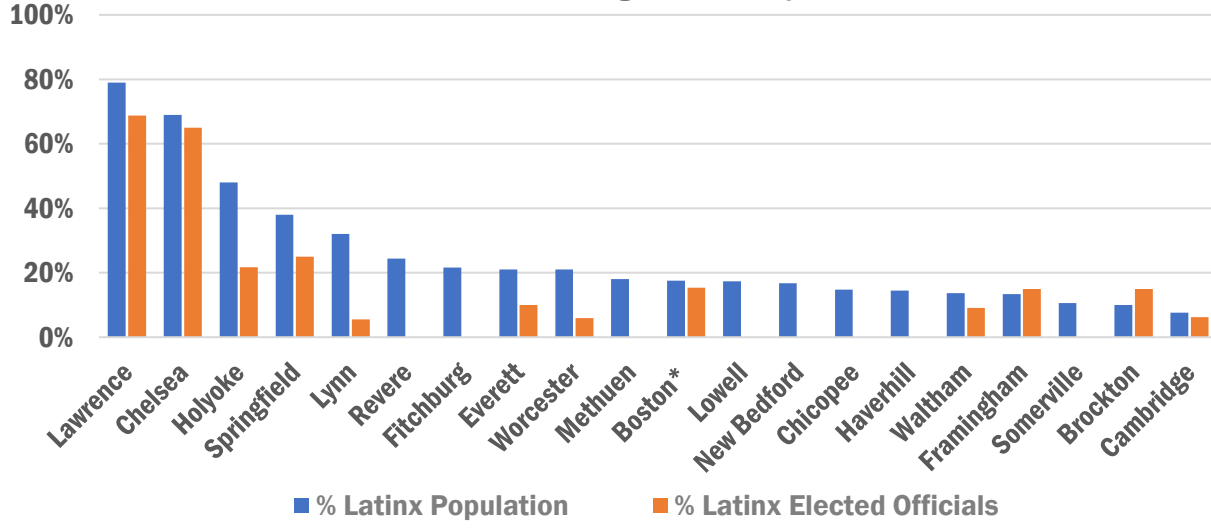
Christa Kelleher, PhD, Research and Policy Director, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

Highlights

- As an increasing share of eligible voters in the Commonwealth and with relatively robust voting rates according to 2020 Presidential election data, **Latinx are increasingly politically active as voters** yet Latinx political leadership at all levels of government is less than proportionate to Latinx populations across the state.
- **Since 2019, there has been a 43.8% increase in Latinx representation** from 48 to 69 (including local and state-level elected positions.) Even with an increase in officeholding over the past two years, Latinx remain underrepresented in most governing bodies at all levels of government.
- **With 68 Latinx individuals holding 69 seats in local elected bodies and in the Massachusetts Legislature**, the most significant leadership gaps persist in the state legislature and in the state's congressional delegation, as well as in statewide office and other key elected roles.
- Currently, **more Latinos (N=17) than Latinas (N=15) serve on city councils**, while **more Latinas (N=17) than Latinos (N=11) serve on school committees**.
- **Of the 68 Latinx individuals currently in office, 33 are female and 35 are male**, indicating near-gender parity in overall officeholding, with substantial gender differences among Latinx in terms of office type, such as in the state legislature where more Latinos (N=7) than Latinas (N=1) serve in office.
- Brockton, Cambridge, Chelsea, Framingham, and Lawrence have local political representation that is relatively proportionate to their share of Latinx residents.
- Candidate data is needed to understand factors contributing to limited Latinx representation at the local and state levels in Massachusetts, as well as in other elected positions such as county offices and in the Congressional delegation.

Figure 1. Rates of Latinx Elected Leadership Compared to Proportion of Latinx Population

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

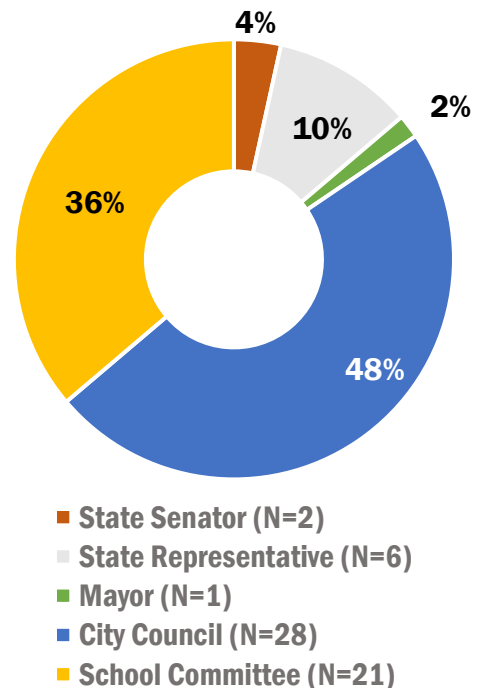


* Boston School Committee members are appointed, not elected, and not included in calculations here.

Top 20 Cities and Towns: Representation Trends

- 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, just over half have at least one Latino 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, Latinx elected officials grew slightly from 11% of officeholders in 2020 to 13% in 2021.
- While there are currently 57 Latinx officeholders (in the top 20), one person holds two seats (Adam Gomez serves on both the Springfield City Council and in the Massachusetts Senate), and only one serves as mayor. Lawrence’s Acting Mayor Kendrys Vasquez is Dominican American.
- In addition to the top 20 Latinx-population cities, a number of municipalities have Latinx electeds, such as Beverly, Boxborough, Brookline, Easthampton, Fairhaven, Hingham, Maynard, Salem, and Westfield, as indicated in Table 1.

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

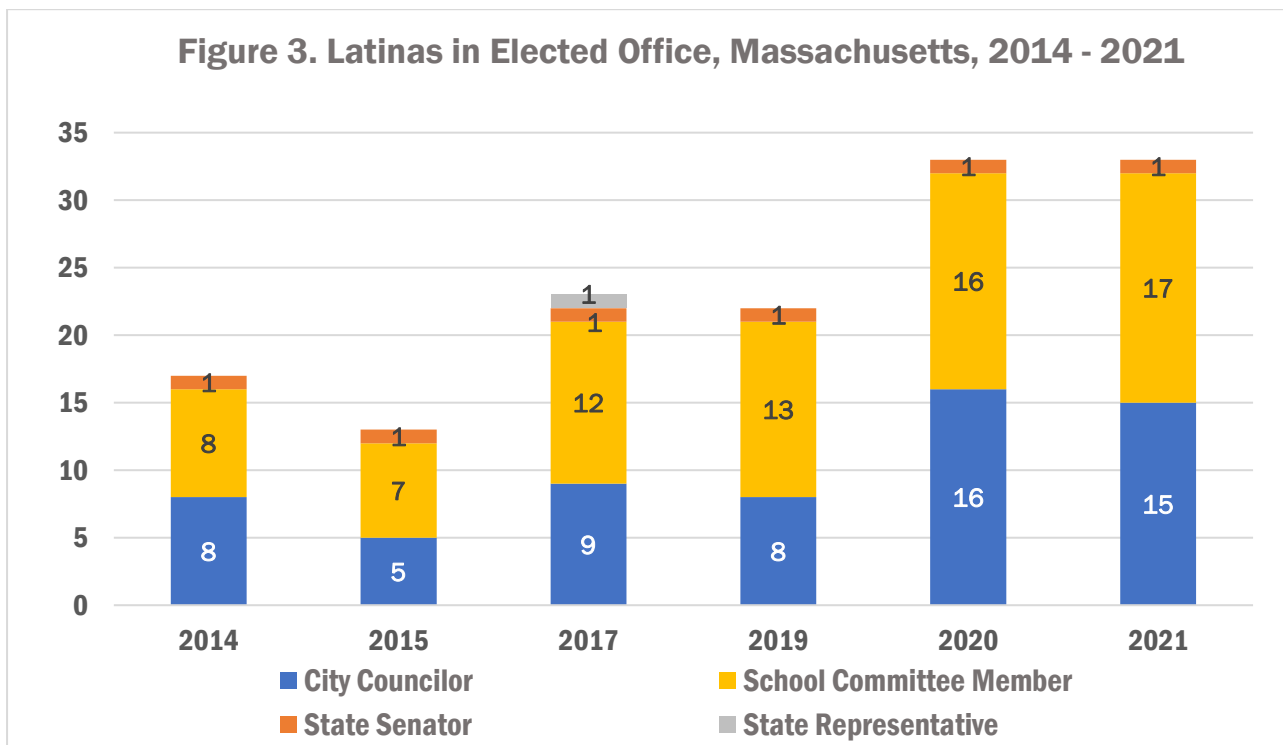


The Massachusetts Legislature

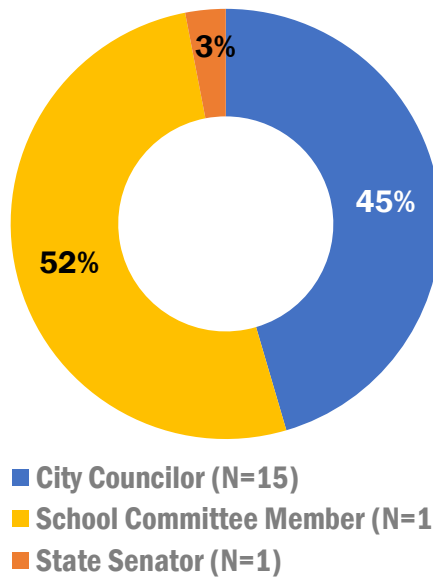
- Losing one seat in the Massachusetts Legislature in the 2020 election, Latinx representation in the legislature from 2020 to 2021 decreased slightly from 4.5% to 4%. Six Latinx individuals serve in the 160-member House of Representatives; eighteen would be proportionate. No Latinas serve in the Massachusetts House.
- There is very limited Latinx presence in the State Senate, with two Latinx State Senators in office; having five Latinx individuals in the Senate would be proportionate to the statewide Latinx population.

Gender Breakdown

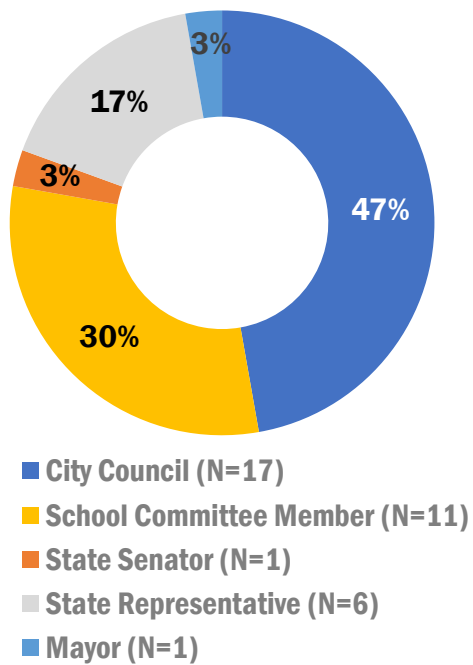
- As indicated in Figure 3, nearly double the number of Latinas are serving in office today (N=33) compared to seven years ago. According to available data, 17 Latinas were serving in 2014 and there has been considerable growth in city council representation since then.



**Figure 4. Latina Elected Officials
in Massachusetts, 2021**



**Figure 5. Latino Elected Officials
in Massachusetts, 2021**



The Latinx Population and 2020 Voting Trends

- At 636,000, the Latino population in Massachusetts is the 18th largest state population nationally. Latinos make up 11.5% 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.
- In the 2020 presidential election year, there were 449,000 Latino citizen residents in Massachusetts, including citizens of voting and non-voting age.
- From 2010 to 2020, the number of registered Latino voters in the state doubled, from 134,000 to 271,000 making Latinx voters the second largest voting population of all racial and ethnic subgroups in the state.
- Over the same period, the number of registered Latino voters who voted increased by 373% from 48,000 to 227,000, comprising approximately one half (50.7%) of the total Latino citizen population in 2020.
- There is no regular, systematic collection of standardized data on racial and/or ethnic identity of electoral *candidates* in Massachusetts. The lack of electoral candidate data makes it difficult to verify if the increase in Latinx voting participation aligns with increased Latinx officeholding.

Table 1. Latinx electeds currently serving as mayor, on local governing bodies such as city councils and select boards, school committees, and in the Massachusetts Legislature. Only those who self-identify as Latino/a or Latinx are included in this list.

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

Mendes, Rita	Brockton City Council
Moran, Frank	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Lawrence)
Nuncio, Ana	Salem School Committee
Payano, Pavel	Lawrence City Council
Paz, Jonathan	Waltham City Council
Perez, Maria	Springfield School Committee
Pichardo, Rafaela	Lawrence School Committee
Ramos, Orlando	Springfield City Council
Rand, Estelle M.	Beverly City Council
Reyes, Celina	Lawrence City Council
Reyes, Estela	Lawrence City Council
Rivas Mendes, Cynthia	Brockton School Committee
Rivera, Natasha	Maynard School Committee
Rivera, Sarai	Worcester City Council
Rodriguez, Jeovanny	Lawrence City Council
Rodriguez, Yamir	Chelsea City Council
Rojas Villarreal, Jose Luis	Cambridge School Committee
Santiago, Jon	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Boston)
Santiago, Marisol	Chelsea School Committee
Sena, Danillo	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Action, Ayer, Boxborough, Harvard, Lunenberg, Shirley)
Shine, Nora	Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee
Sousa, Priscila	Framingham School Committee
Stewart-Morales, Cesar	Framingham City Council
Thompson, Jeffrey	Brockton City Council
Vargas, Andres	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Haverhill)
Vasquez, Kendrys	Lawrence Mayor
Vega Maldonado, Melinda	Chelsea City Council
Velez, Jeanette	Chelsea School Committee
Vidal, Carlos	Waltham City Council
Vidot, Damali	Chelsea City Council

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

Data Sources and Notes

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

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

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

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, "Profiles in Leadership: Women of Color Elected to Office in Massachusetts" (2021).

https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs/6

Ortiz-Wythe, Bianca; Kelleher, Christa M.; Torres-Ardila, Fabián; Gaston Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston; and Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, "Latinx Political Leadership in Massachusetts (2020)" (2020).

https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs/60/

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

www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-inthe-2016-election-massachusetts.

2020 Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html>

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" (2019).

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 primarily through survey data from UMass Boston's [Massachusetts Representation Project: Diverse Leadership for a Diverse Commonwealth](#). 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.

Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy

Established in 1989, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at UMass Boston 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. Facebook & Twitter: @GastonInstitute.

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at UMass Boston's 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. Facebook: @CWPPP. Twitter: @CWPPP_UMB.

The Massachusetts Representation Project: Diverse Leadership for a Diverse Commonwealth

A multi-disciplinary team at UMass Boston is developing a data dashboard on elected leadership in Massachusetts with a focus on racial, ethnic, and gender disparities. 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

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.