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Latinos in Somerville, Massachusetts

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute
for Latino Community Development
and Public Policy

Latinos in Somerville | Massachusetts

by Daniel W. Vasquez, Research Associate

The Mauricio Gastón Institute of the University of Massachusetts Boston conducts research on and for the Latino population. A goal is to generate the kind of information and analysis necessary to develop sound 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 a series of basic demographic profiles for the states and selected cities of New England, based on the United States Census 2000.

Census 2000 data include changes in the way people were counted. The most significant change is to allow persons to select more than one race, creating a new multiracial category of “two or more races,” but meaning people may not be included in the race with which they most identify. There was, however, no way to choose more than one ethnicity; one must choose either Latino or not. Throughout this profile, numbers reflect Latinos of all races, or non-Latinos by race, with persons of two or more races counted separately. All categorizations are based solely on self-identification. All of this complicates comparisons between 1990 and 2000 data. However, the concepts are similar enough to make trends and patterns clear.

In Somerville, the general population changes from 1990 to 2000 were similar to national and state trends. The population of people of color — African Americans, Asians, Latinos, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders — grew at a higher rate than did the population of non-Hispanic Whites, which actually shrank (see table 1). The total population of Somerville increased by 1.7%, but its composition changed substantially. Behind Asians, Latinos had a larger numerical growth than any other group, increasing by 2002 or 41.8%, although both “some other race” and Asians had a higher percent increase. Latinos now represent 8.8% of the population, an increase of 2.5 percentage points and the largest gain of any group behind Asians. Somerville has the thirteenth largest population of Latinos in Massachusetts and the 26th largest in the New England states. As a percentage of the total population, the Latino population in Somerville ranks 18th in the state.

Table 1

Somerville - Growth by Ethnicity								
	2000		1990		Growth		Change in Percent	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Hispanic or Latino	6,786	8.8	4,784	6.3	2,002	41.8	2.5	
White	56,320	72.7	64,287	84.4	-7,967	-12.4	-11.7	
Black or African American	4,868	6.3	3,982	5.2	886	22.3	1.1	
American Indian and Alaska Native	128	0.2	104	0.1	24	23.1	0.0	
Asian ^a	4,972	6.4	2,791	3.7	2,214	79.3	2.8	
Pacific Islander ^a	33	0.0						
Some other race	1,197	1.5	262	0.3	935	356.9	1.2	
Two or more races ^b	3,174	4.1						
Total	77,478		76,210		1,268	1.7		

Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a).

Note: Growth figures will not balance due to the new multiracial category.

^a 'Asian and Pacific Islander' was split for the 2000 census. Growth and changes reflect combined total.

^b There was no equivalent category in the 1990 census.

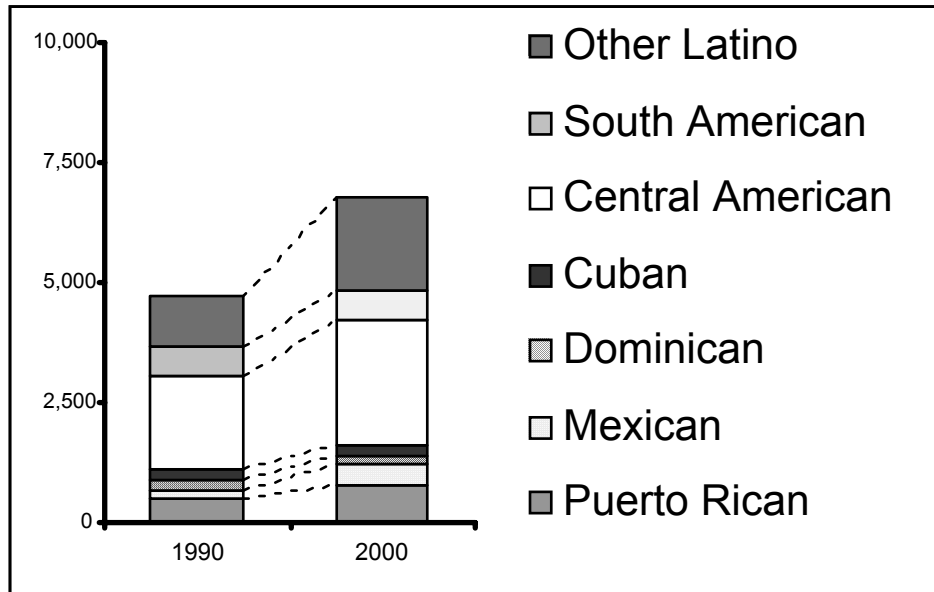
Table 2

Somerville - National Origin of Latinos						
	2000		1990 ^a		Growth	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hispanic or Latino	6,786		4,716		2,070	43.9
Mexican	464	6.8	148	3.1	316	213.5
Puerto Rican	776	11.4	499	10.6	277	55.5
Cuban	173	2.5	205	4.3	-32	-15.6
Dominican Republic	173	2.5	268	5.7	-95	-35.4
Salvadoran	2,075	30.6	1,354	28.7	721	53.2
Other Central American	561	8.3	558	11.8	3	0.5
Colombian	219	3.2	227	4.8	-8	-3.5
Other South American	379	5.6	408	8.7	-29	-7.1
Other Hispanic or Latino	1,966	29.0	1,049	22.2	917	87.4

Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(b).

^a 1990 figures for nationality are from sample data only and differ from population counts.¹

Figure 1
Somerville - Growth and Change of the Latino Population



Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a).

All Latino national-origin groups grew significantly between 1990¹ and 2000. The largest group in Somerville is Salvadoran, at 30.6%, followed by “Other” Latinos and Puerto Ricans. Behind Mexicans, “Other” Latinos were the fastest-growing population, growing by 87.4%, a trend seen across the U.S. (see table 2 and figure 1). A person is counted as “Other” if they write in “Spanish” or give an answer that can’t be assigned to a particular nationality (such as “Latino”), or if they identify more than one origin, or leave the answer blank. Future scholarly studies may better describe the composition of this category. The detailed breakdown of Central and South Americans is available at the Census Bureau’s American Fact Finder service, online at: factfinder.census.gov.

Table 3

Somerville - Households by Tenure							
Latino Headed Households	2000		1990		Growth		Change in Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total Households	1,810		1,363		447	32.8	
Owners	319	17.6	204	15.0	115	56.4	2.7
Renters	1,491	82.4	1,159	85.0	332	28.6	

Latino-headed households are much more likely to rent than to own their home, 82.4% versus 17.6%, although there has been a 2.7% increase in home ownership since 1990 (see table 3). Still, this is much lower than the state average of 61.7%. Although there has been a small growth in the proportion of non-family households, it is still true that most Latinos, 68.7%, live in family households (see table 4). Married couples with children

represent 30.3% of Latino-headed households, slightly more than the Massachusetts average of 23.3%. Families made up of a single female with children account for 12.2% of Latino households, which is greater than the state average of 7.5%, but slightly greater than it was in 1990.

Table 4

Somerville - Family Structure						
Latino Headed Households	2000		1990		Growth Percent	Change in Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Families:	1,244	68.7	936	68.7	32.9	0.1
with related children ^a :						
Married Couple, with children	549	30.3	372	27.3	47.6	3.0
Female Head, with children	220	12.2	154	11.3	42.9	0.9
Male Head, with children	90	5.0	66	4.8	36.4	0.1
without related children:						
Married Couple, no children	242	13.4	214	15.7	13.1	-2.3
Single, no children	143	7.9	130	9.5	10.0	-1.6
Non-Family Household	566	31.3	427	31.3	32.6	-0.1
Total Households	1,810		1,363		32.8	

Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a).

^a Own or related children under 18 only.

Data Sources:

All available at American Fact Finder [online service]: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>
U.S. Census Bureau:

2000: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) 100% Data.

1990(a): 1990 Census Summary Tape File 1 (STF1) 100% Data.

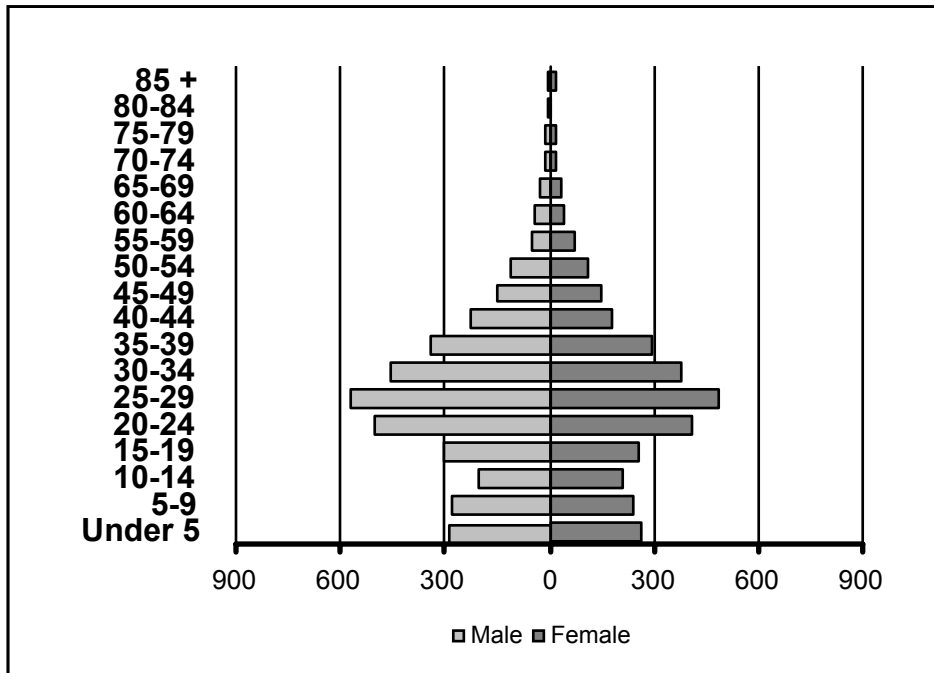
1990(b): 1990 Census Summary Tape File 3 (STF3) Sample Data.

1992: 1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics. Washington DC: GPO.

Notes:

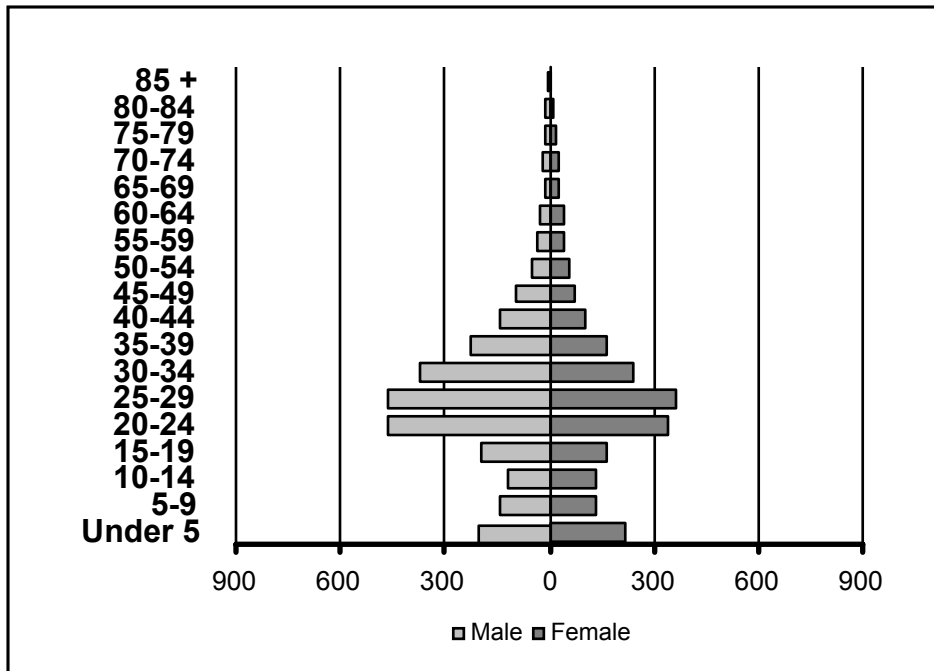
¹ Sample data from 1990 are based on the “Long Form” files. About one person or household in six receives the Long Form Census. The estimates from there do not match the enumerations in the 100% or “Short Form” data. For example there is a 4.5% difference in the total number of Latinos in Massachusetts. There are sources of error in any census or survey, however the estimates here are accurate enough to note trends and patterns.

Figure 2
Somerville - Age Profile 2000



Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a), 1992.

Figure 3
Somerville - Age Profile 1990



Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a), 1992.

The age composition of Latinos in Somerville has changed. There has been an increase among all age groups, but especially among those in the middle years. Even though there are many more children, the overall Latino population is maturing (see figures 2 and 3).

While the Latino population in Somerville and in the rest of the country remains relatively young, it is even younger than it was in 1990. In 2000, 30.5% of Latinos were younger than 20, just slightly greater than the 27.7% in 1990 (see table 5). The Latino median age of 27 is much younger than the overall Massachusetts median age of 36.5. Women still tend to be older than men, but the gap closed during the 1990s. In addition to becoming relatively older, both Latinos and Latinas became less concentrated in the 20-29 age group (see tables 6 and 7).

Table 5

Somerville - Latinos by Age					
	2000		1990		Growth Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 10 years	1,090	16.1	705	14.7	54.6
10-19	977	14.4	621	13.0	57.3
20-29	1,961	28.9	1,636	34.2	19.9
30-39	1,475	21.7	1,005	21.0	46.8
40-49	696	10.3	422	8.8	64.9
50-59	343	5.1	189	4.0	81.5
60-69	145	2.1	105	2.2	38.1
70 and over	99	1.5	101	2.1	-2.0
Total	6,786		4,784		41.8
Median Age	27.0		26.4		

Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a), 1992.

Table 6

Somerville - Latino Males by Age					
	2000		1990		Growth Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 10 years	578	16.1	358	13.7	61.5
10-19	509	14.2	317	12.2	60.6
20-29	1,066	29.7	929	35.6	14.7
30-39	796	22.2	596	22.8	33.6
40-49	371	10.3	243	9.3	52.7
50-59	163	4.5	88	3.4	85.2
60-69	69	1.9	38	1.5	81.6
70 and over	38	1.1	40	1.5	-5.0
Total	3,590		2,609		37.6
Median Age	27.0		26.5		

Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a), 1992.

Table 7

Somerville - Latina Females by Age					
	2000		1990		Growth Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 10 years	512	16.0	347	16.0	47.6
10-19	468	14.6	304	14.0	53.9
20-29	895	28.0	707	32.5	26.6
30-39	679	21.2	409	18.8	66.0
40-49	325	10.2	179	8.2	81.6
50-59	180	5.6	101	4.6	78.2
60-69	76	2.4	67	3.1	13.4
70 and over	61	1.9	61	2.8	0.0
Total	3,196		2,175		46.9
Median Age	27.1		26.2		

Sources: Census Bureau: 2000, 1990(a), 1992.