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The Mauricio Gastón Institute
for Latino Community Development
and Public Policy

Latinos in Fitchburg | 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 Fitchburg, 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 Fitchburg decreased by 5.1%, and its composition changed substantially. Latinos had a larger numerical growth than any other group, increasing by 1,895 or 47.9%, although both Asians and “some other race” had a higher percent increase. Latinos now represent 15% of the population, an increase of 5.4 percentage points and the largest gain of any group. Fitchburg has the 14th largest population of Latinos in Massachusetts and the 27th largest in the New England states. As a percentage of the total population, the Latino population in Fitchburg ranks seventh in the state.

Table 1

Fitchburg - Growth by Ethnicity							
	2000		1990		Growth		Change in Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Hispanic or Latino	5,852	15.0	3,957	9.6	1,895	47.9	5.4
White	29,414	75.2	34,910	84.7	-5,496	-15.7	-9.5
Black or African American	1,209	3.1	1,183	2.9	26	2.2	0.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	101	0.3	91	0.2	10	11.0	0.0
Asian ^a	1,657	4.2	1,019	2.5	643	63.1	1.8
Pacific Islander ^a	5	0.0					
Some other race	78	0.2	34	0.1	44	129.4	0.1
Two or more races ^b	786	2.0					
Total	39,102		41,194		-2,092	-5.1	

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.

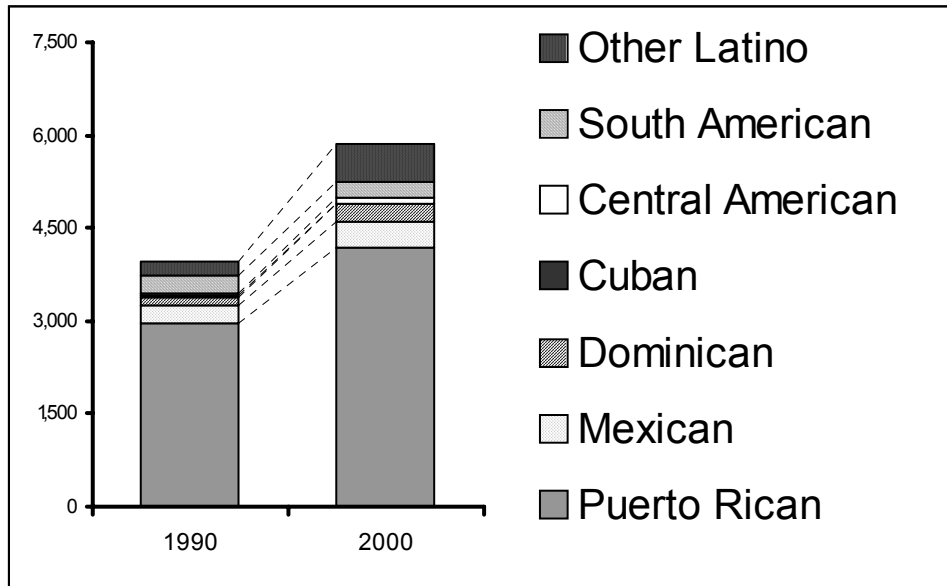
Table 2

Fitchburg - National Origin of Latinos						
	2000		1990 ^a		Growth	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hispanic or Latino	5,852		3,946		1,906	48.3
Mexican	391	6.7	292	7.4	99	33.9
Puerto Rican	4,199	71.8	2,963	75.1	1,236	41.7
Cuban	28	0.5	36	0.9	-8	-22.2
Dominican Republic	288	4.9	113	2.9	175	154.9
Other Central American	69	1.2	37	0.9	32	86.5
Uruguayan	142	2.4			142	
Other South American	136	2.3	303	7.7	-167	-55.1
Other Hispanic or Latino	599	10.2	202	5.1	397	196.5

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

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

Figure 1
Fitchburg - 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 Fitchburg is Puerto Rican, at 71.8%, followed by “Other” Latinos and Dominicans. “Other” Latinos were the fastest-growing population, growing by 196.5%, 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

Fitchburg - Households by Tenure							
Latino Headed Households	2000		1990		Growth		Change in Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total Households	1,670		1,053		617	58.6	
Owners	324	19.4	127	12.1	197	155.1	7.3
Renters	1,346	80.6	926	87.9	420	45.4	

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

Latino-headed households are much more likely to rent than to own their home, 80.6% versus 19.4%, although there has been a 7.3% increase in home ownership since 1990 (see table 3). This is much higher 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, 77.1%, live in family households (see table 4). Married couples with children

represent 27.7% of Latino-headed households, slightly more than the Massachusetts average of 23.3%. Families made up of a single female with children account for 28.9% of Latino households, which is greater than the state average of 7.5%, but less than it was in 1990.

Table 4

Fitchburg - Family Structure						
Latino Headed Households	2000		1990		Growth Percent	Change in Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Families:	1,288	77.1	889	84.4	44.9	-7.3
with related children ^a :						
Married Couple, with children	462	27.7	310	29.4	49.0	-1.8
Female Head, with children	483	28.9	375	35.6	28.8	-6.7
Male Head, with children	95	5.7	62	5.9	53.2	-0.2
without related children:						
Married Couple, no children	162	9.7	89	8.5	82.0	1.2
Single, no children	86	5.1	53	5.0	62.3	0.1
Non-Family Household	382	22.9	164	15.6	132.9	7.3
Total Households	1,670		1,053		58.6	

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.

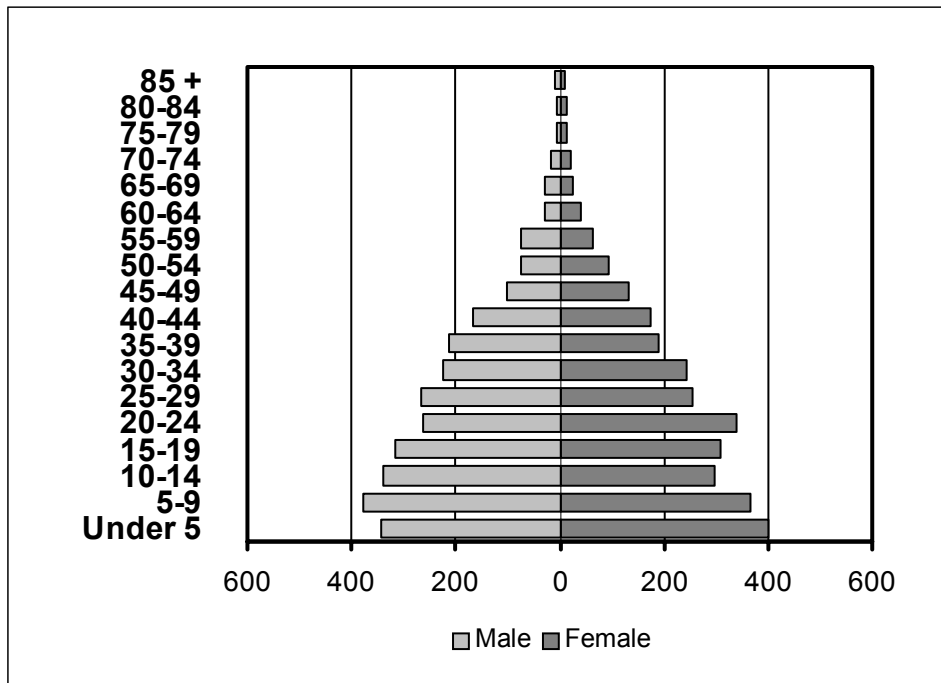
1990(b): 1990 Census Summary Tape File 3 (STF3) Sample Data.

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

Notes:

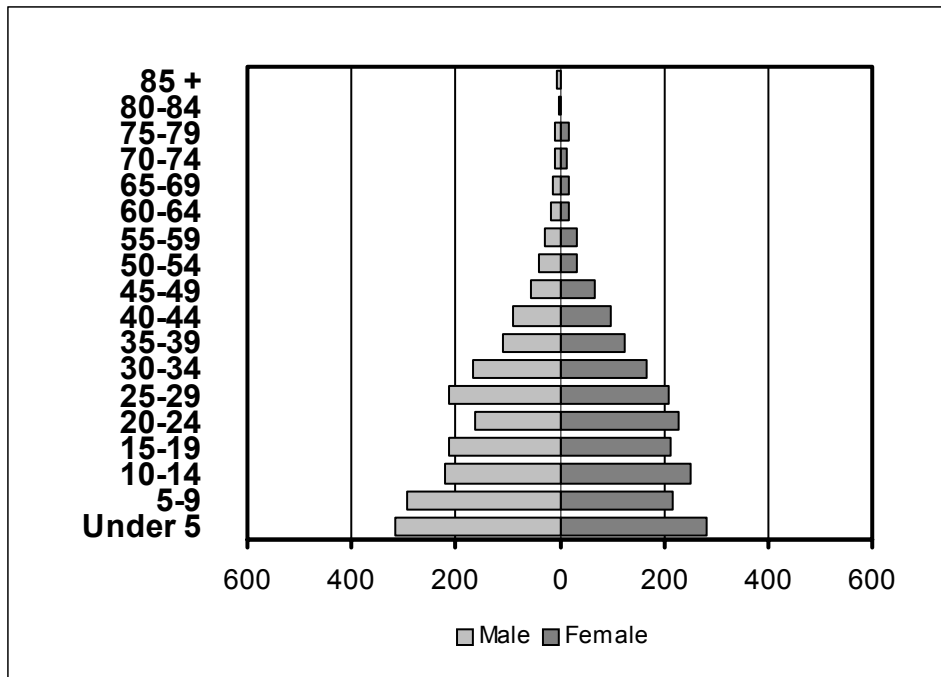
¹ Sample data from 1990 are based on the “Long Form” files. About one person or household in six receives the Long Form Census. The estimates from there do not match the enumerations in the 100% or “Short Form” data. For example there is a 4.5% difference in the total number of Latinos in Massachusetts.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

Figure 2
Fitchburg - Age Profile 2000



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

Figure 3
Fitchburg - Age Profile 1990



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

The age composition of Latinos in Fitchburg 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 Fitchburg and in the rest of the country remains relatively young, it is older than it was in 1990. In 2000, 46.6% of Latinos were younger than 20, just slightly fewer than the 50.6% in 1990 (see table 5). The Latino median age of 21.5 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

Fitchburg - Latinos by Age					
	2000		1990		Growth Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 10 years	1,493	25.5	1,109	28.0	34.6
10-19	1,259	21.5	893	22.6	41.0
20-29	1,123	19.2	812	20.5	38.3
30-39	872	14.9	571	14.4	52.7
40-49	577	9.9	311	7.9	85.5
50-59	306	5.2	136	3.4	125.0
60-69	127	2.2	63	1.6	101.6
70 and over	95	1.6	62	1.6	53.2
Total	5,852		3,957		47.9
Median Age	21.5		19.7		

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

Table 6

Fitchburg - Latino Males by Age					
	2000		1990		Growth Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 10 years	723	25.3	611	31.1	18.3
10-19	653	22.8	431	22.0	51.5
20-29	531	18.5	373	19.0	42.4
30-39	440	15.4	278	14.2	58.3
40-49	268	9.4	146	7.4	83.6
50-59	151	5.3	69	3.5	118.8
60-69	60	2.1	30	1.5	100.0
70 and over	37	1.3	24	1.2	54.2
Total	2,863		1,962		45.9
Median Age	21.1		18.4		

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

Table 7

Fitchburg - Latina Females by Age					
	2000		1990		Growth Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 10 years	770	25.8	498	25.0	54.6
10-19	606	20.3	462	23.2	31.2
20-29	592	19.8	439	22.0	34.9
30-39	432	14.5	293	14.7	47.4
40-49	309	10.3	165	8.3	87.3
50-59	155	5.2	67	3.4	131.3
60-69	67	2.2	33	1.7	103.0
70 and over	58	1.9	38	1.9	52.6
Total	2,989		1,995		49.8
Median Age	21.8		20.8		

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