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### Latinos in Massachusetts: Fall River

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A large, stylized geometric pattern in shades of blue, featuring concentric squares, circles, and zig-zag lines, resembling a traditional textile or architectural motif.

# **Latinos in Massachusetts: Fall River**

by Phillip Granberry, PH.D., and Vishakha Agarwal

October 2021

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE  
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
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10/01/2021

**Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Fall River**

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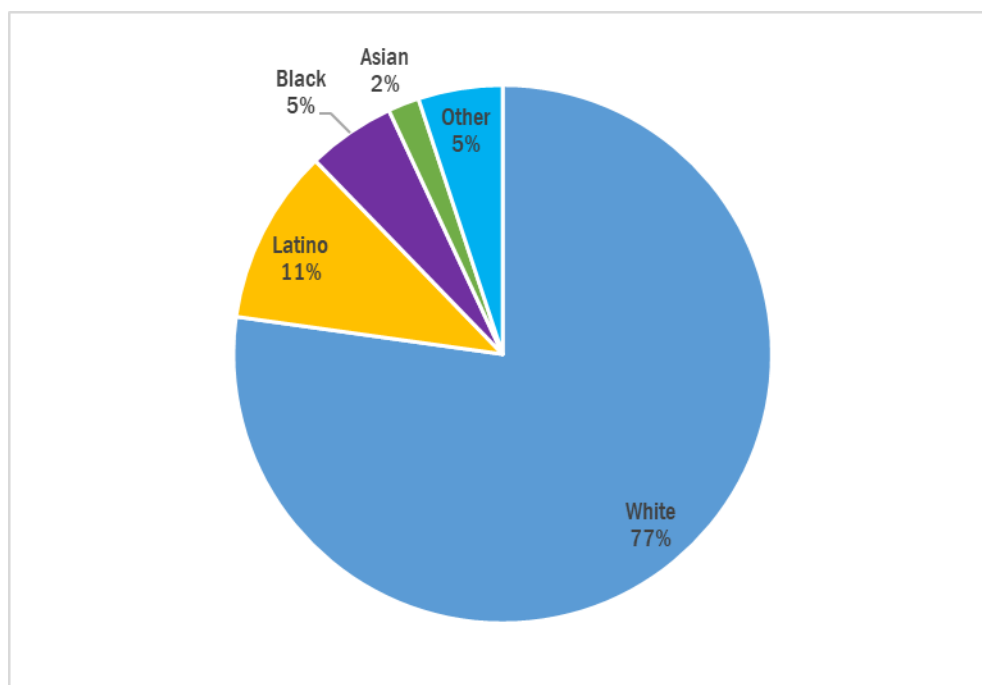
Vishakha Agarwal

University of Massachusetts Boston

## **Fall River Overview: The Latino Population**

Fall River is home to 9,420 Latinos according to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey. They represent 11% of the city's population (Figure 1)—the same percentage that Latinos constitute in the state's overall population. Fall River is geographically located in the SouthCoast region, which has a relatively small share of Latinos (7%). The city is majority non-Latino White (77%), with Blacks making up 5% and Asians 2% of the city's population.

**Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in Fall River**

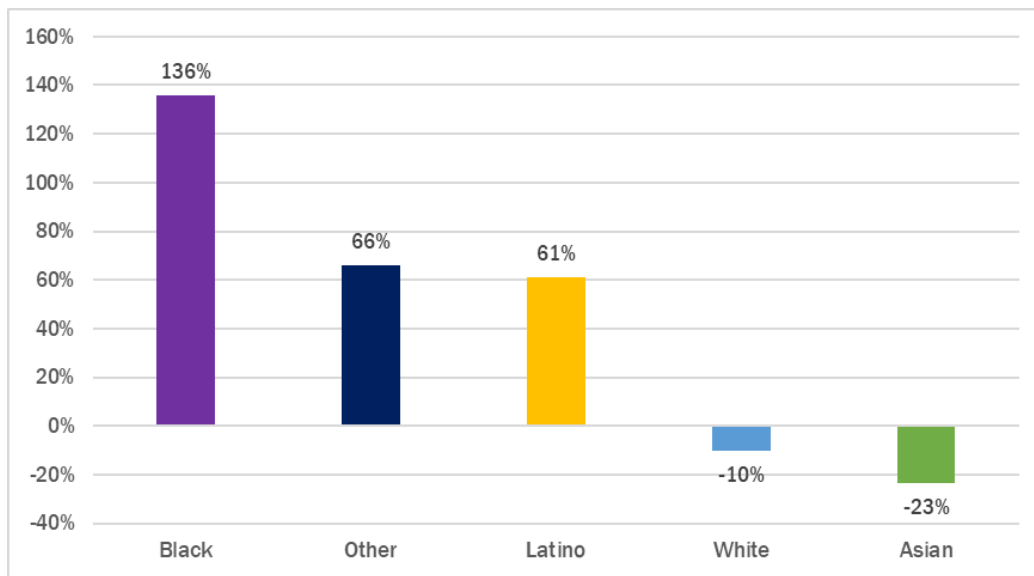


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B03002

Between 2010 and 2019, Fall River saw an increase in the Latino population from 5,842 to 9,420, representing a 61% increase. (This growth of Latinos in Fall River outpaced their growth statewide, which was 38% during this period.) The smaller Black population of Fall River grew by 136%, while the city's White population declined by 10% and its Asian population declined by 23% (Figure 2).

Fall River has a larger share of its population that is foreign-born than does the Commonwealth. Fall River is 20% foreign-born, while Massachusetts is 16.8% foreign-born. The largest foreign-born populations in Fall River are from Portugal (including the Azores Islands for a total of 11,249) and Brazil (1,460).

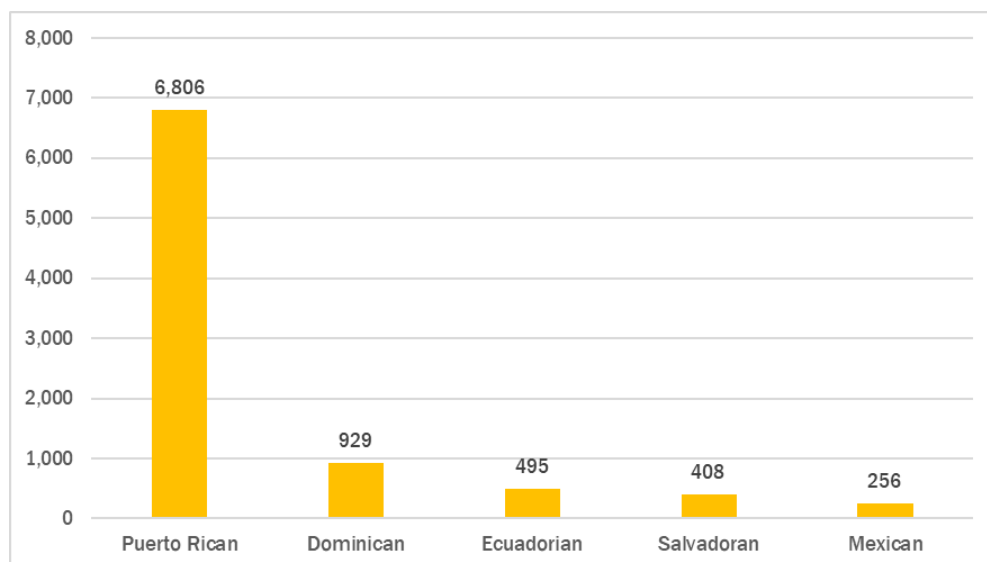
**Figure 2: Population Change by Ethno-Racial Group from 2010 to 2019**



Source: 2006-2010 & 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03002

Fall River, like much of the South Coast region, has a large Puerto Rican population. The city is home to 6,806 Puerto Ricans (Figure 3). Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Salvadorans, and Mexicans are the next largest Latino groups. Statewide as well, Puerto Ricans are the largest Latino subpopulation, followed by Dominicans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Guatemalans.

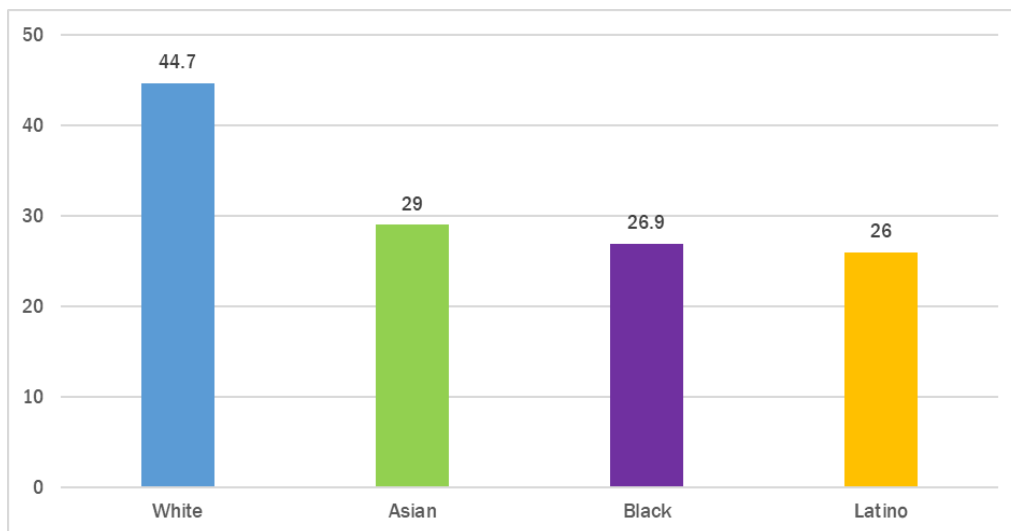
**Figure 3: Origins of the Top Latino Populations**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03001

## ***Median Age and Marital Status***

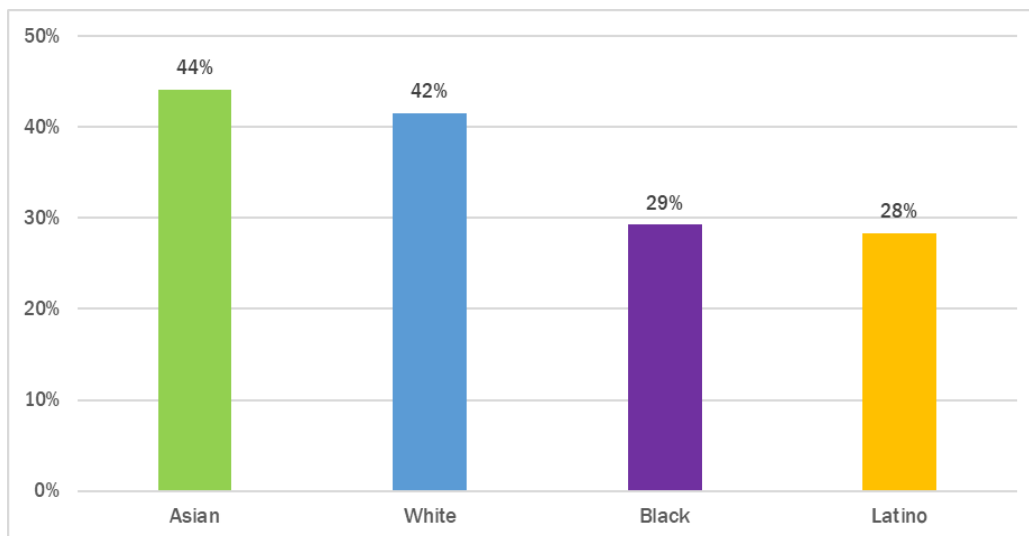
**Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B01002

Age demographics vary significantly across ethno-racial groups. Whites are the oldest population both statewide and in Fall River. The median age for Whites in Fall River is 45 years, while that of Latinos, the youngest group, is 26 years (compared to 28 years for Latinos statewide). Blacks and Asians fall between the median ages of the Whites and Latinos (Figure 4).

**Figure 5: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (Ages 15 and older)**



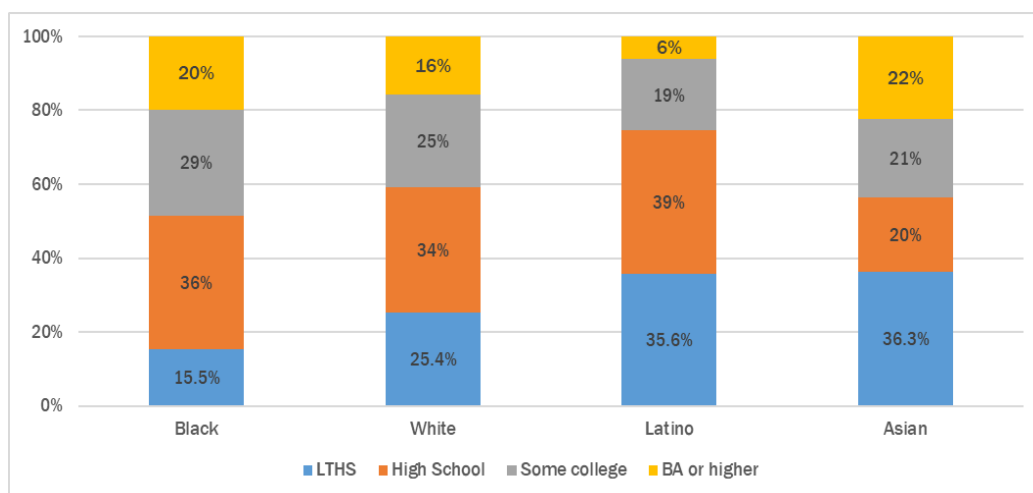
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B12002

The marriage rate in Fall River for persons 15 and over is 42% compared to 48% statewide. Marriage rates are highest among Asians and lowest among Latinos in Fall River (Figure 5). The marriage rate for Latinos is 28%, which is lower than their statewide marriage rate of 33%.

## ***Education***

Similar to other Latino populations across the Commonwealth, Latinos in Fall River have relatively low levels of educational attainment. About 36% of Latinos have not completed high school (LTHS) compared to 29% of Latinos statewide. On the opposite end of the spectrum, only 6% of Latinos have a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 21% of Latinos statewide. Asians have a large share of their population with a Bachelor's degree or higher in Fall River, while both Whites and Blacks have smaller shares of their population with a Bachelor's degree or higher than they do statewide.

**Figure 6: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group (Adults 25 years and older)**

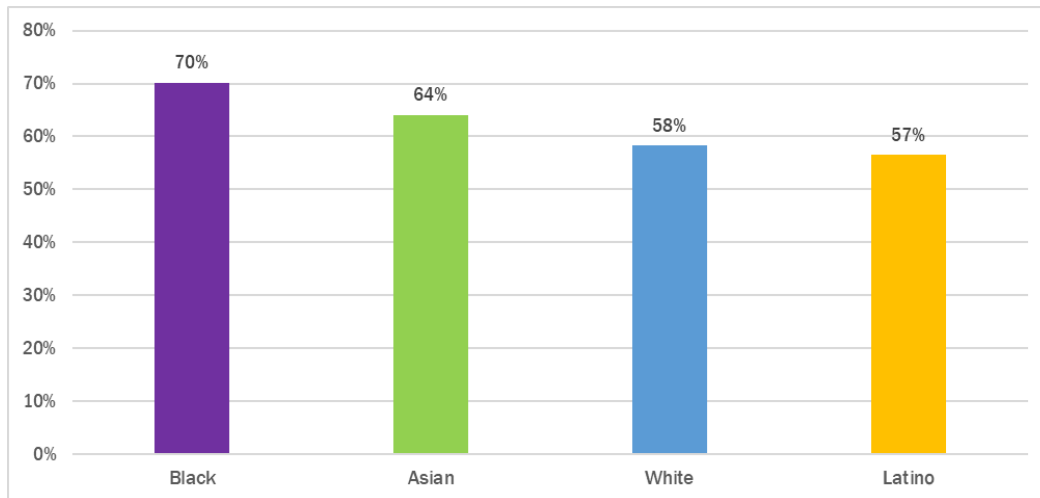


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C15002

## ***Labor Force Participation***

Labor force participation in Fall River (59%) is lower than for Massachusetts overall (68%). It is highest among Blacks (70%) and lowest among Latinos (57%). (See Figure 7.) Latino labor force participation is lower in Fall River than for Latinos statewide (70%).

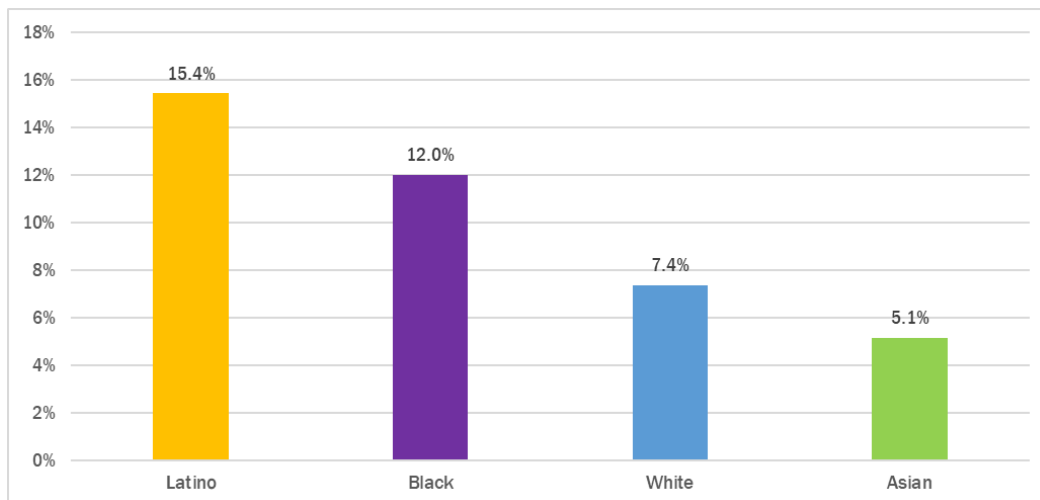
**Figure 7: Labor Force Participation among Individuals 16 Years and Older by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C23002

Fall River is a Gateway City that is noted for high unemployment, which was 8.3% before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (compared to 4.8% for Massachusetts overall). The unemployment rate in Fall River, much as in other parts of Massachusetts, is higher among Latinos. Their unemployment was 15.4%, which was higher than the statewide Latino rate of 6.0% during this period.

**Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (ages 16+)**



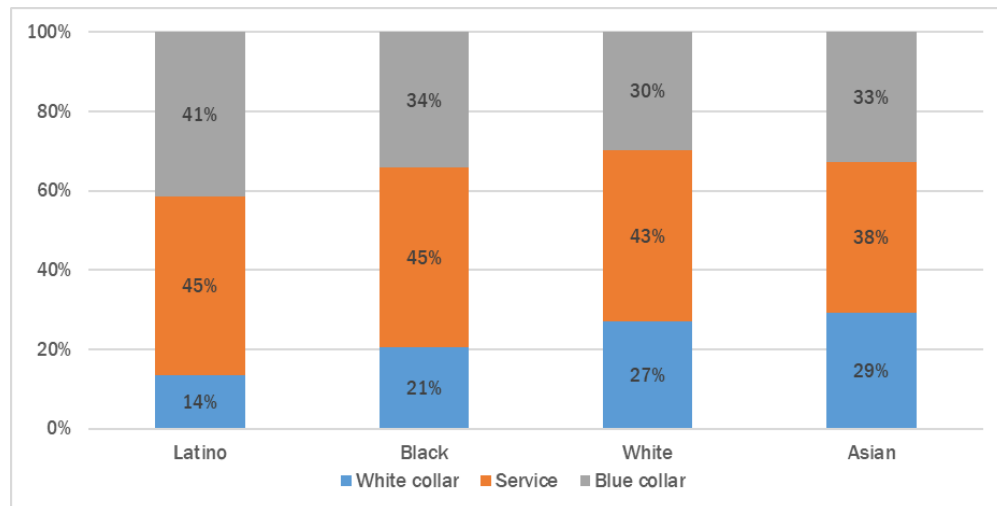
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C23002

Figure 9 highlights that Latinos work in traditionally low-wage jobs. Latinos are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs, with only 14% working in these management and professional occupations. Correspondingly, they are overrepresented in less prestigious occupations. Nearly



half (45%) work in services and sales occupations, and 41% work in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs (natural resources, construction, maintenance, production, transportation, and material moving occupations). This distribution of the occupations among Latinos is somewhat similar to their statewide distribution, where 49% of Latinos work in service and sales and 26% work in blue-collar jobs.

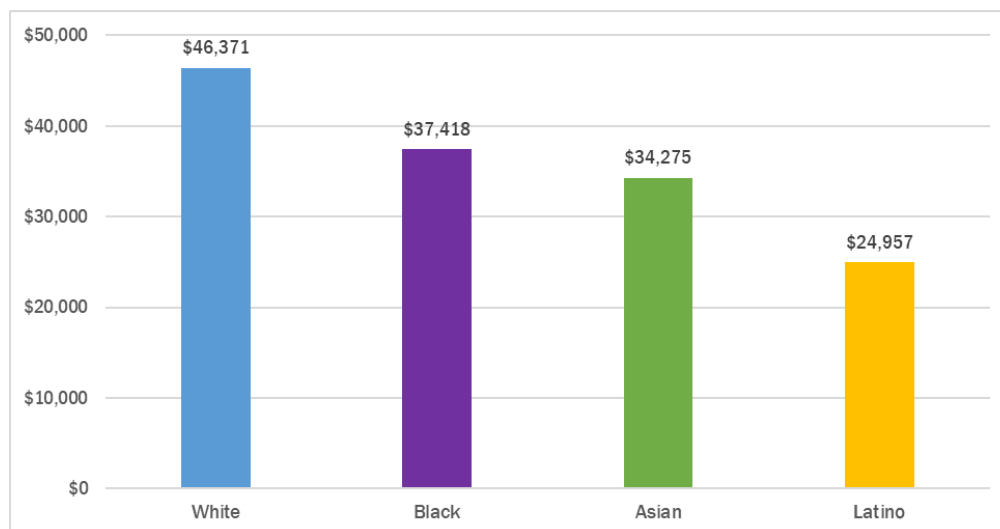
**Figure 9: Population Employed by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C24010

## ***Income***

**Figure 10: Median Household Income by Ethno-Racial Group**



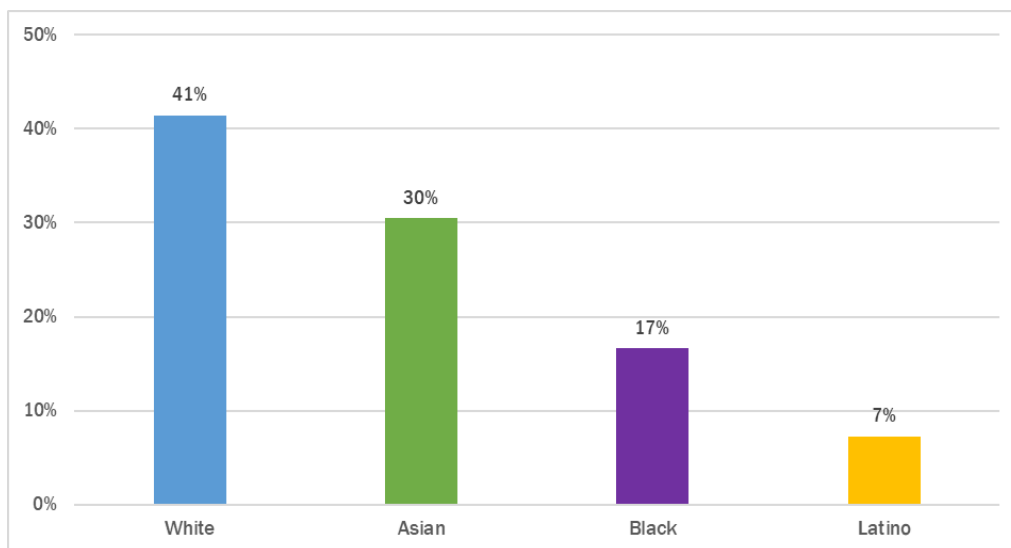
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – S19003

Highlighting the economic problems that Fall River has experienced as a Gateway City in Massachusetts over the last several decades, the city's median household income is \$43,503, which is much lower than the statewide median income of \$81,215. Latinos in Figure 9 have the lowest median income (\$24,957), lagging behind Whites (\$46,371), Blacks (\$37,418), and Asians (\$34,275). Latinos in Fall River are less economically successful than those in other parts of the Commonwealth, as the statewide Latino median income was \$44,885 during this period.

### ***Housing Status and Medical Uninsurance***

Homeownership rates are low in Fall River but vary dramatically between groups. Whites have the highest ownership rate (41%), Latinos have by far the lowest (7%). Across the state, the Latino homeownership rate is 26%. Thus, Fall River's Latino population stands out for its low rate of homeownership.

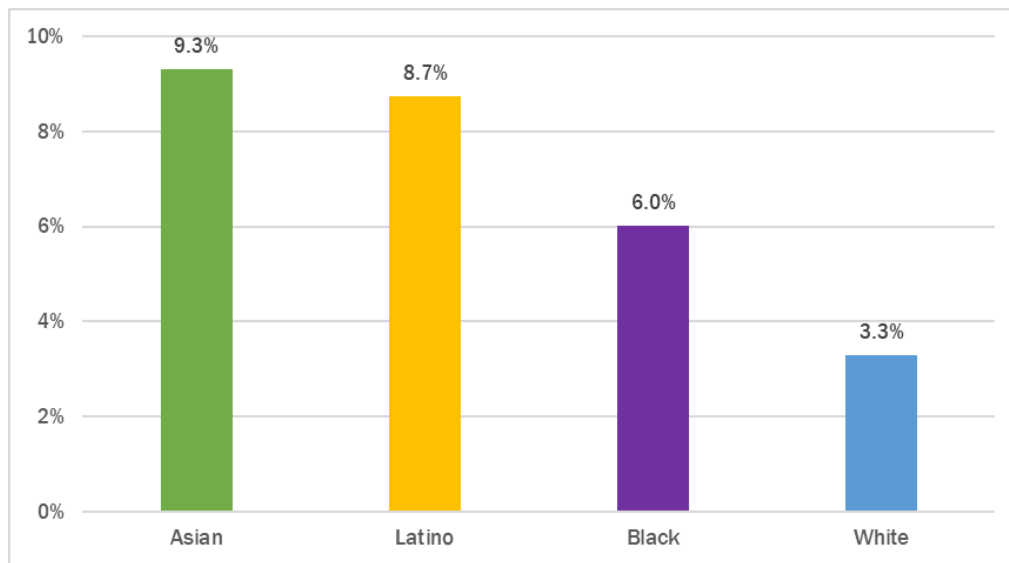
**Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B25003

Disparities exist in health insurance coverage among these populations. The uninsurance rate among Latinos is 8.7%, much higher than the statewide Latino rate (5.3%). This lack of coverage is somewhat surprising because Puerto Ricans, as citizens, should have access to public health insurance if they need it. The 2,500 non-Puerto Rican Latinos in Fall River may have a high uninsurance rate.

**Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group**

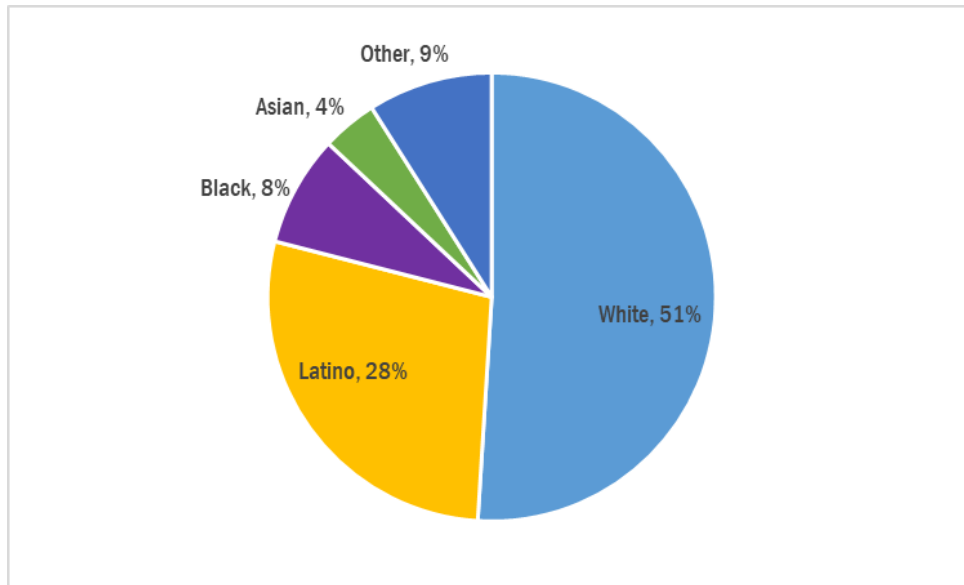


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C27001

### ***Spotlight on Fall River Public Schools***

Fall River Public Schools is the focus of this next section. Fall River Public Schools enrolled 10,120 students in School Year 2018-2019, and Latinos make up 27.5% of the school population, slightly higher than the Latino percentage statewide. At 51%, Whites make up the largest school population in Fall River. Though Latinos in Fall River are among the smaller ethno-racial groups, they are also among the youngest, which could explain the school enrolment rate among Latinos. These data are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for School Year 2018-2019.

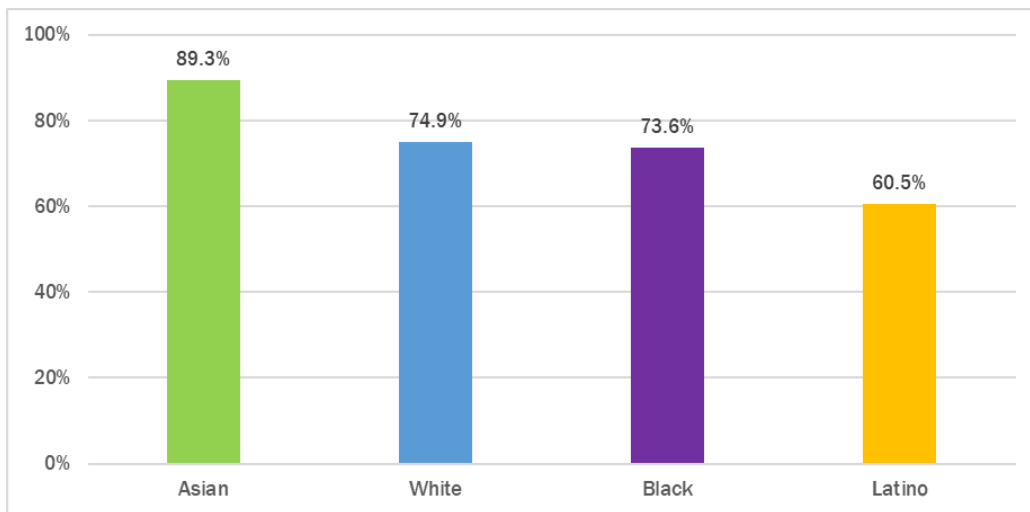
**Figure 13. School Enrollment by Ethno-Racial Composition**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Fall River Public Schools' four-year high school graduation rate in School Year 2018-2019 was 72%, lower than the state's rate of 88%. Latino students have the lowest graduation rate at 61%.

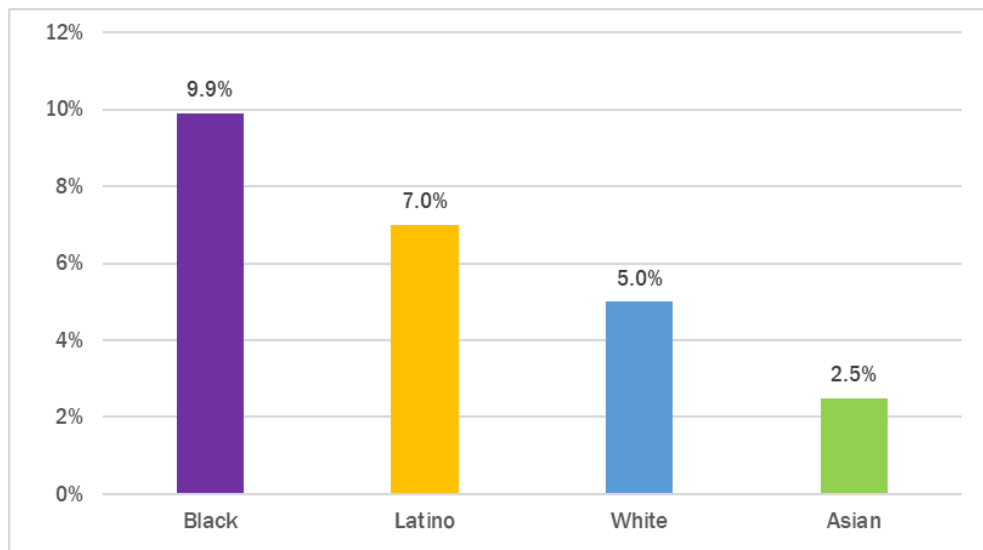
**Figure 14: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Fall River Public Schools' out-of-school suspension rate in School Year 2018-2019 was 6%, twice the state's overall rate of 3%. Black students had the highest rate (9.9%) and Latinos the second highest (7.0%). Fall River has the fourth largest percentage of out-of-school suspension rates among Latinos in the state.

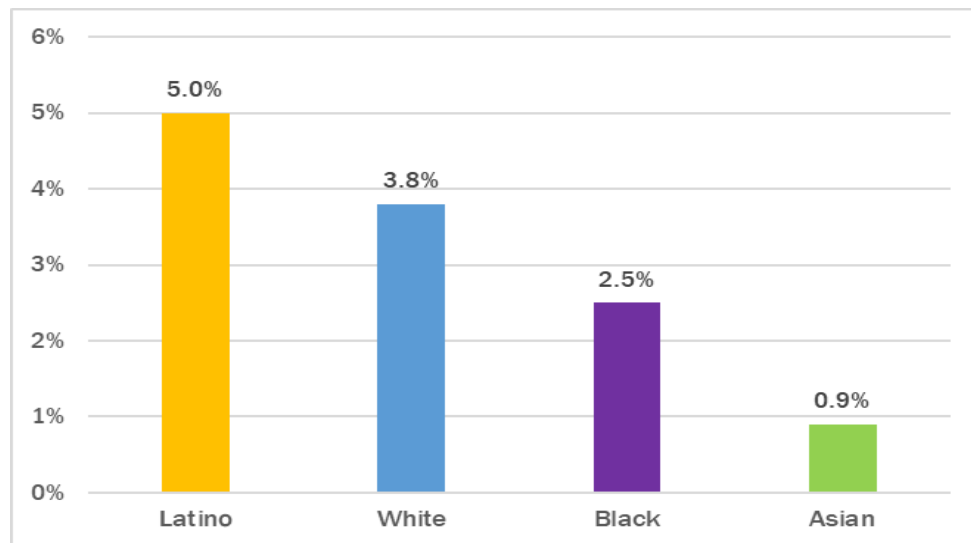
**Figure 15: Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Fall River Public Schools' dropout rate is 3.7%, which is higher than the state's rate of 1.8%. Latino students had the highest dropout rate in School Year 2018-2019, 5.0%, and Asian students had the lowest, 0.9%.

**Figure 16: Dropout Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



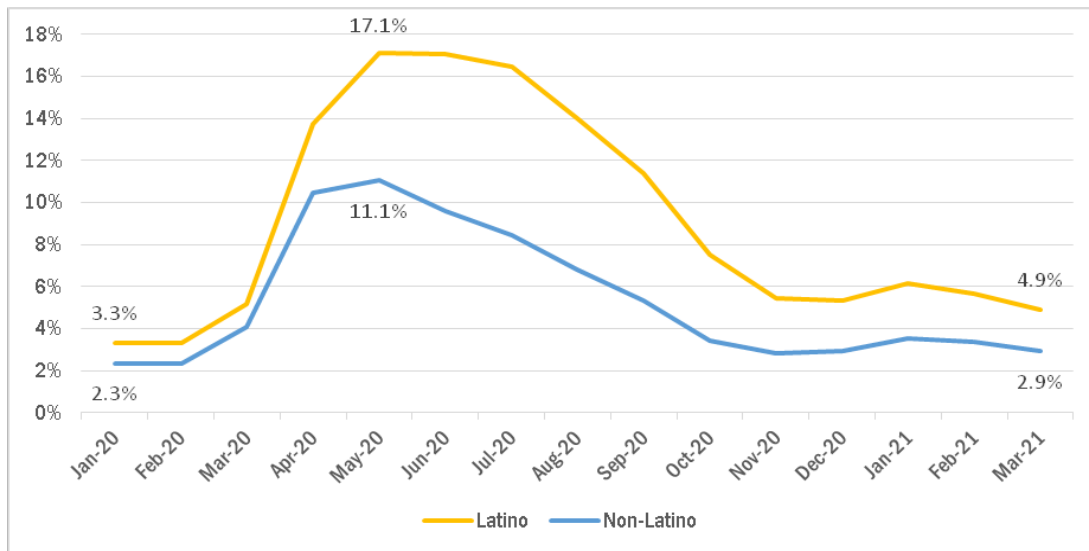
Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

### ***Impact of COVID-19***

Beginning in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit Fall River, unemployment claims rapidly increased, from a starting point of 3.3% for Latinos. In June 2020,

both Latinos and non-Latinos filed high numbers of unemployment claims, their rates rising to 17.1% and 11.1%, respectively. (These percentages are calculated by dividing the number of reported claims by the population age 18 and older.) From that peak, there was a mostly steady decline in the unemployment claims among both groups, which in March 2021 stood at 4.9% for Latinos and 2.9% for non-Latinos.

**Figure 17: Unemployment Rates for Latinos (ages 18+)**



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development

## About the Gastón Institute

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).

One of the goals of the Gastón Institute is to be responsive to the needs of the Latino and policy communities through the research we undertake. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions or requests for specific information.

## About the Authors

Phillip Granberry worked with various community-based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. immigrants before earning a Ph.D. in Public Policy from UMass Boston. He has published several articles on the accumulation and use of social capital among Latinos and the sexual health communication of Puerto Rican mothers with their children. In addition to his research and teaching in the Gastón Institute and Economics Department at UMass Boston, he is Senior Researcher in demography for the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

Vishakha Agarwal is a Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy in the McCormack Graduate School at UMass Boston. Vishakha's research focuses on children's everyday classroom experiences, well-being, and education. Her dissertation examines how interactions between teachers and students and among students impact students' classroom experiences and, in turn, informs their subjectivity. She also holds a Bachelor's of Science (Research) in Economics from Shiv Nadar University, India, and a Master's of Science in Public Policy from UMass Boston.



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