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Latinos in Massachusetts: New Bedford

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

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
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Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: New Bedford

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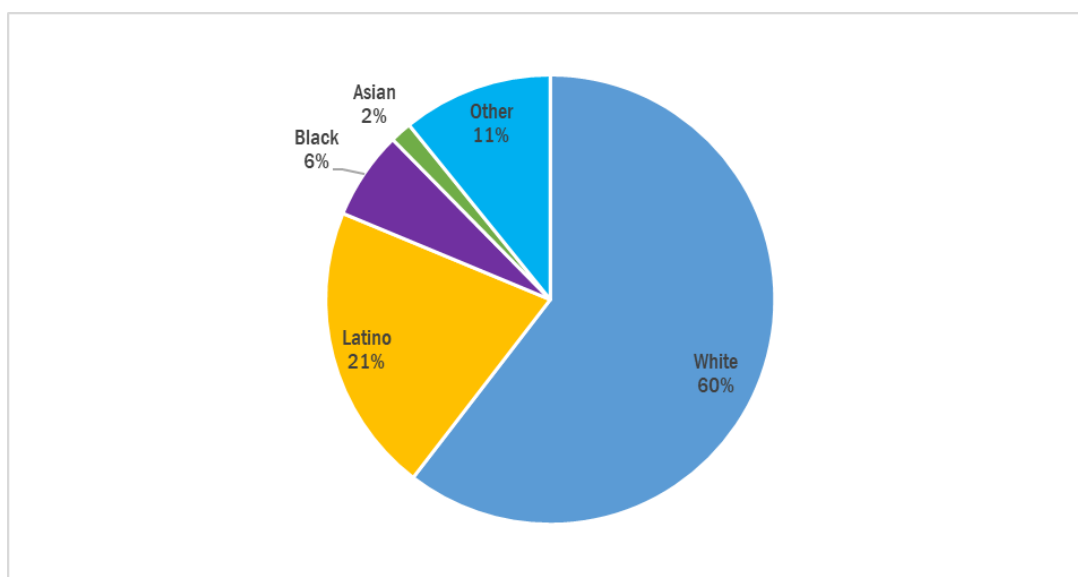
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New Bedford Overview: The Latino Population

New Bedford is home to 19,826 Latinos according to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey. As Figure 1 shows, they represent 21% of the city's population, nearly twice the Latino share of the state's overall population. New Bedford is geographically located in the South Coast region, which has a relatively small share of Latinos (7%). The city is majority White (60%), with Blacks making up 6% and Asians 2% of the city's population.

Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in New Bedford

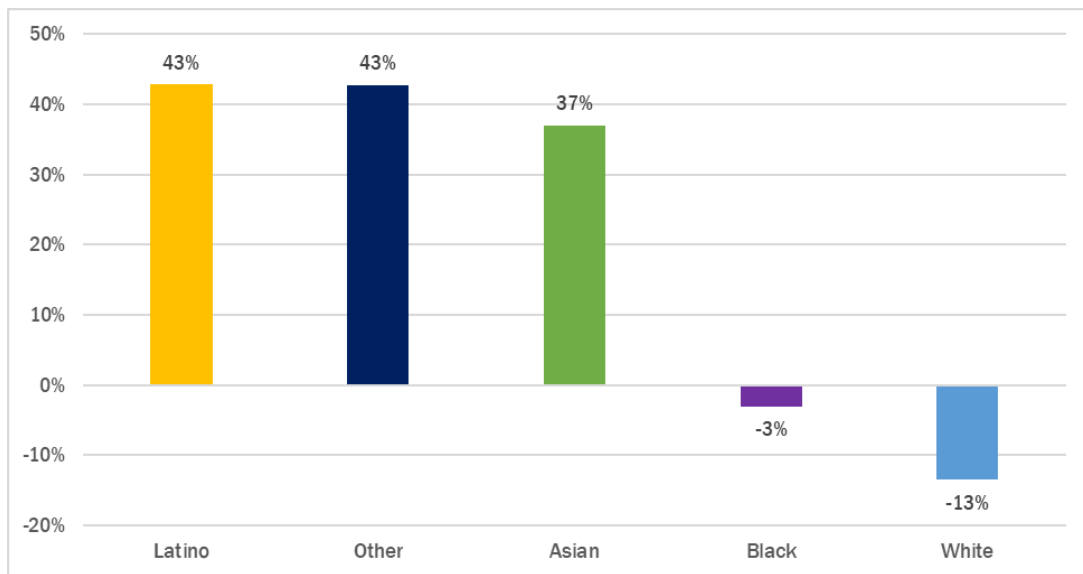


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B03002

Between 2010 and 2019, New Bedford saw an increase in the Latino population from 13,880 to 19,826, representing a 43% increase that was even greater than the statewide 38% Latino increase during this period. The Asian population of New Bedford grew by 37%, while the city's Black and White populations declined by 3% and 13% respectively during this time (Figure 2).

New Bedford has a larger share of its population that is foreign-born than does the Commonwealth overall. New Bedford is 19.8% foreign born, while Massachusetts is 16.8% foreign born. The largest foreign-born populations in New Bedford are Portugal including the Azores Islands (8,431), Cabo Verde (2,392), and Guatemala (1,511). The foreign-born figures do not include people born in Puerto Rico, since Puerto Ricans are automatically U.S. citizens.

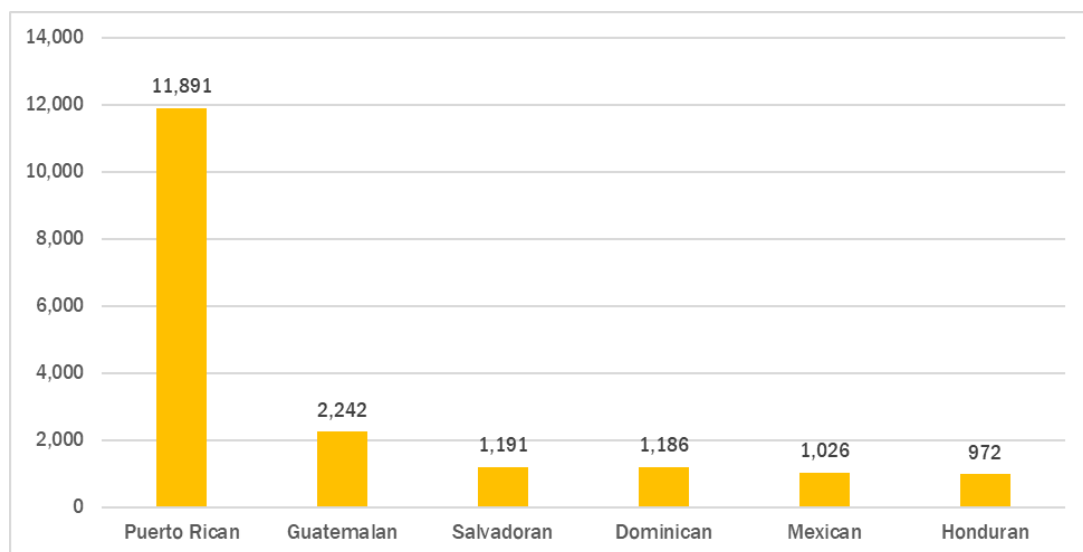
Figure 2: Population Change by Ethno-Racial Group from 2010 to 2019



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

New Bedford, like much of the SouthCoast region, has a large Puerto Rican population. The Puerto Rican population numbers 11,891 (Figure 3). Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, Mexicans, and Hondurans have between 972 and 2,242 residents. Statewide, Puerto Ricans are the largest group, followed by Dominicans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Guatemalans.

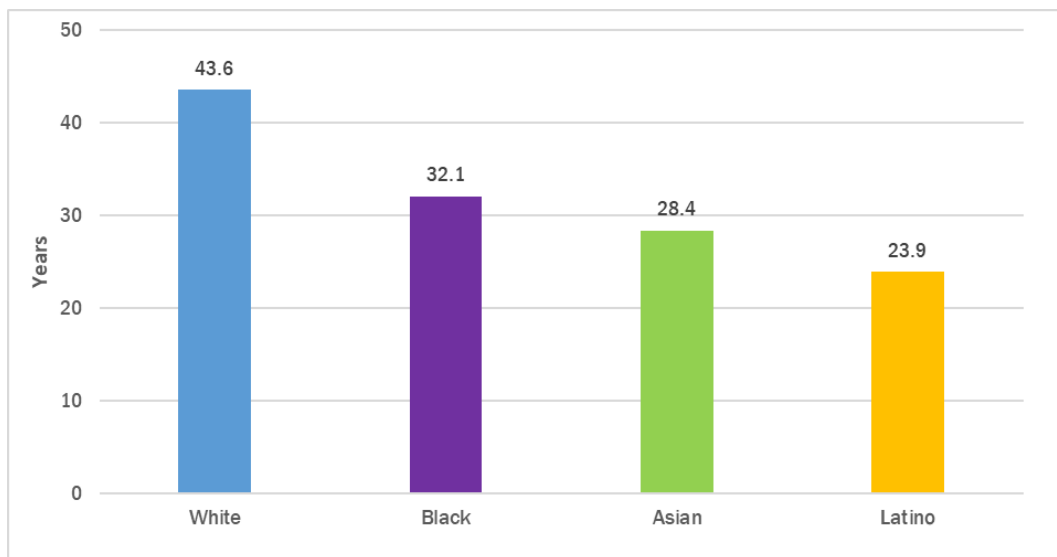
Figure 3: Origins of the Top Latino Populations



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03001

Median Age and Marital Status

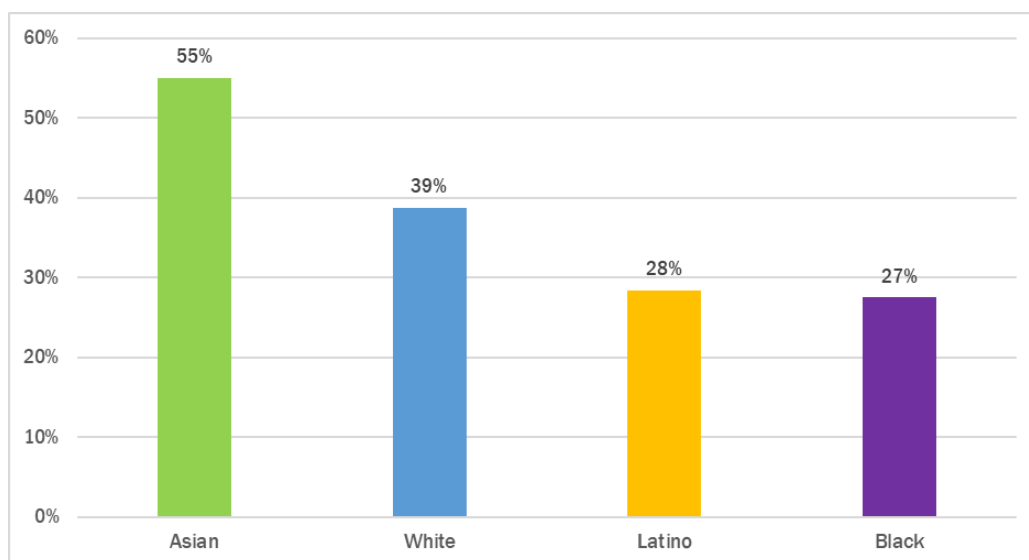
Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B01002

Age demographics vary significantly across ethno-racial groups. Whites are the oldest population both statewide and in New Bedford. The median age for Whites in New Bedford is 44 years, while that of Latinos, the youngest group, is 24 years. (Statewide, the median age for Latinos, at 28 years, is slightly older than in New Bedford.) Blacks and Asians fall between the median ages of the Whites and Latinos in New Bedford (Figure 4).

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



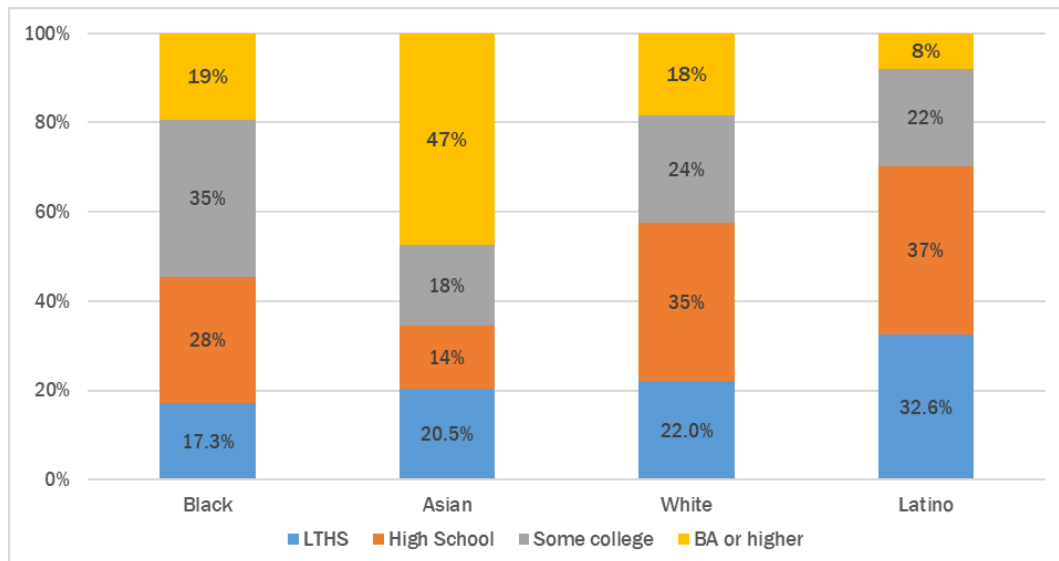
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B12002

The marriage rate in New Bedford for persons 15 and over is 39%, compared to 48% statewide. Likewise, the marriage rate for the city's Latinos, at 28%, is lower than the statewide Latino marriage rate of 33%. Marriage rates in New Bedford are highest among Asians and lowest among Blacks (Figure 5). Only Asians have a higher marriage rate in New Bedford (55%) than statewide (48%).

Education

Similar to other Latino populations across the Commonwealth, Latinos in New Bedford have lower levels of educational attainment than other ethno-racial groups (Figure 6). Nearly a third of Latinos did not complete high school (compared to 29% of Latinos statewide) while only 8% of Latinos in New Bedford have a Bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 20% statewide). In contrast, a relatively large share of the Asian population has a Bachelor's degree or higher (47%). The respective shares of the White and Black populations of New Bedford with a Bachelor's degree or higher are lower than they are statewide for these groups.

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

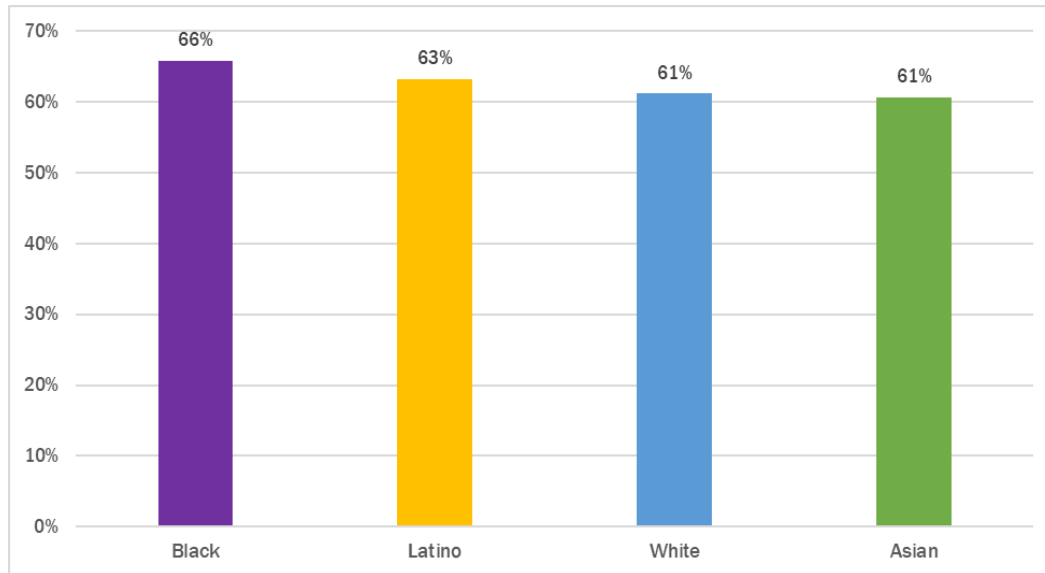


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C15002

Labor Force Participation

Labor force participation in New Bedford is highest among Blacks (66%), and lowest among Asians (61%). The Latino labor force participation of 63% (Figure 7) is lower in New Bedford than for Latinos statewide (70%).

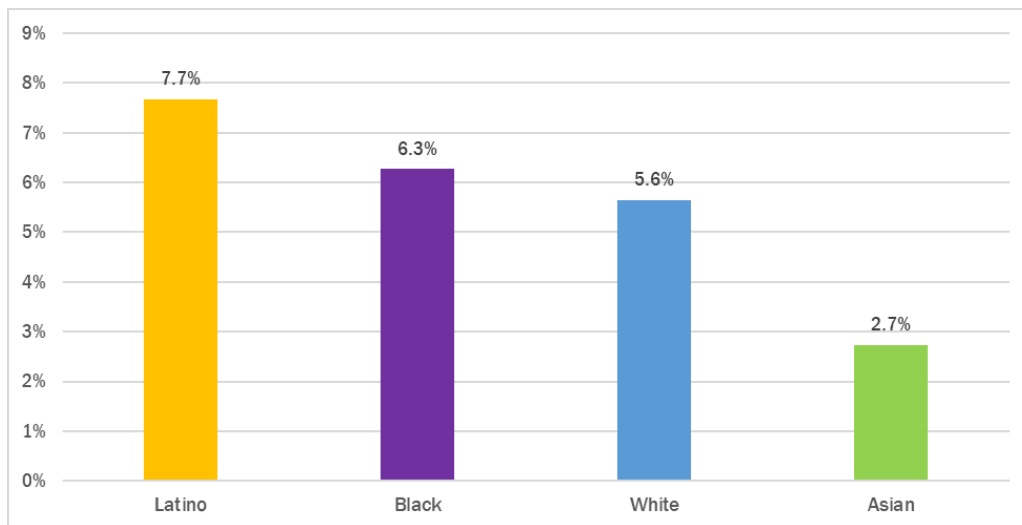
Figure 7: Labor Force Participation among Individuals 16 Years and Older by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C23002

New Bedford is a Gateway City that is noted for high unemployment, which was 6.0% before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Statewide in Massachusetts during this period, unemployment was 4.8%.) The unemployment rate in New Bedford, much as in other parts of Massachusetts, is higher among Latinos. Their unemployment was 7.7%, somewhat higher than statewide Latino rate of 6.0% during this period.

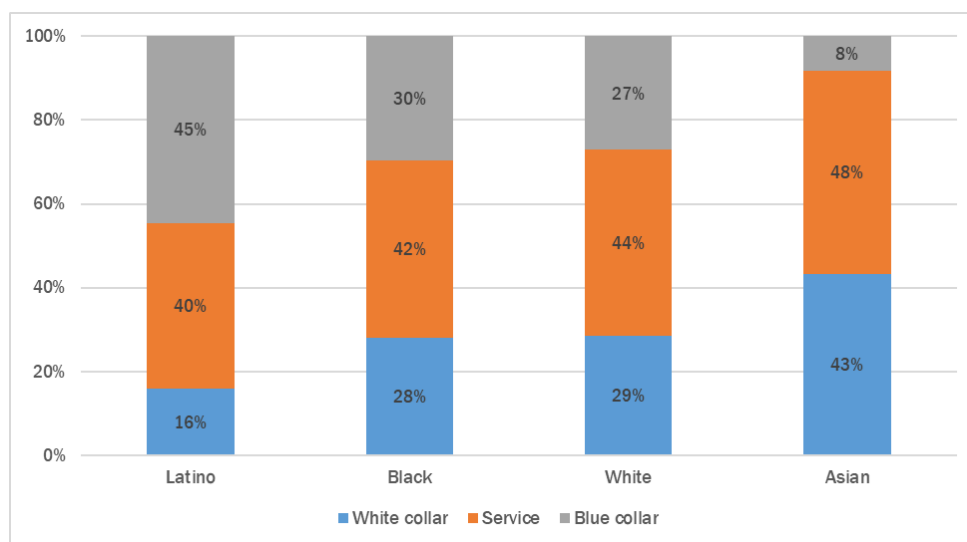
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (ages 16+)



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 16% working in these management and professional occupations. Correspondingly, they are overrepresented in less prestigious types of employment. Nearly half (45%) work in traditional blue-collar areas (natural resources, construction, maintenance, production, transportation, and material moving occupations), while 40% work in service and sales occupations. This distribution of occupations among Latinos differs from their statewide distribution, where 49% of Latinos work in service and sales and 26% work in blue-collar jobs.

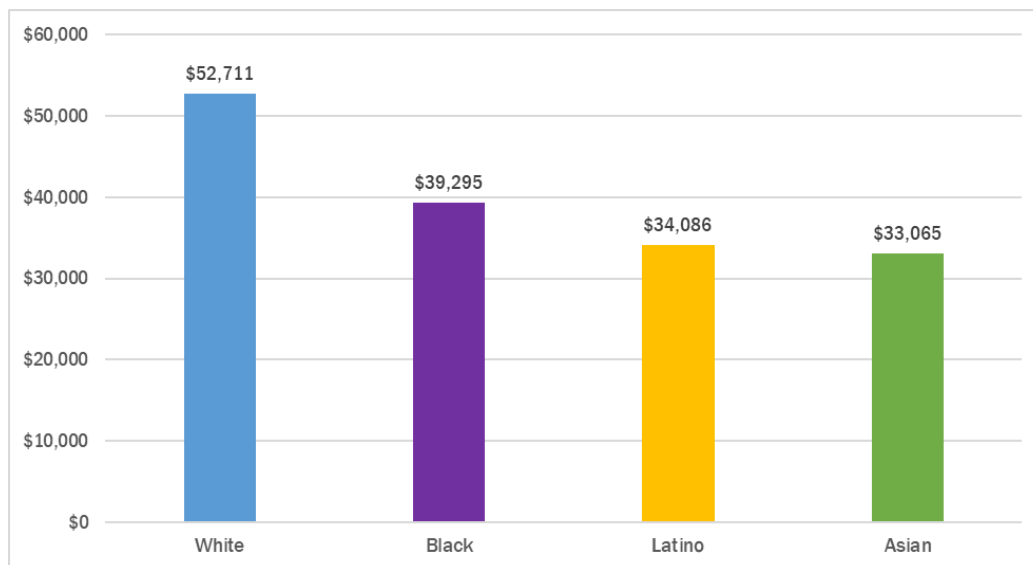
Figure 9: Population Employed by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C24010

Income

Figure 10: Median Household Income by Ethno-Racial Group



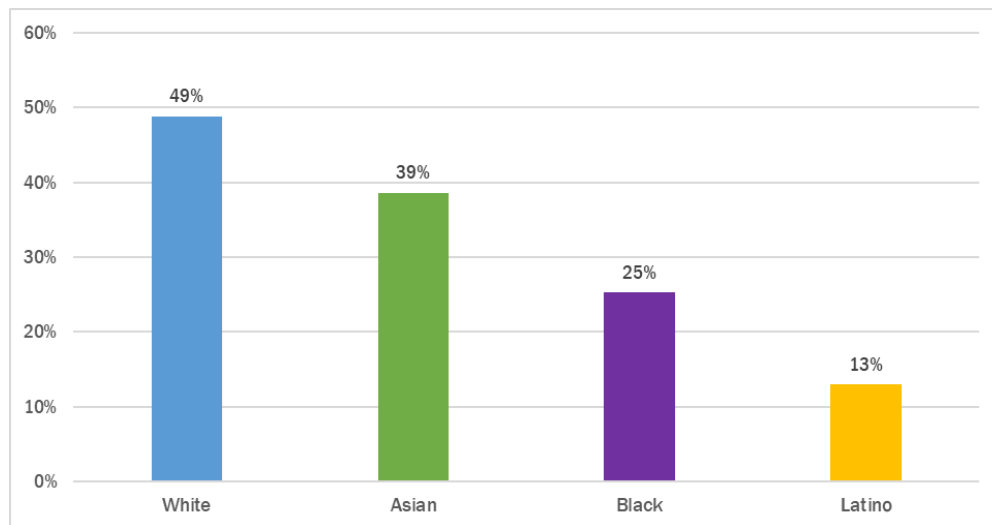
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – S1903

Median household income in New Bedford is \$46,321, compared to the statewide median of \$81,215. Asian households have the lowest income \$33,065 (Figure 10), while White households have the highest (\$52,711). Latinos earn substantially less in New Bedford (where the median is \$34,086) than they do statewide (median \$44,885).

Housing Status and Medical Uninsurance

Homeownership rates vary dramatically in New Bedford. Nearly half of White households own their own homes, compared to just 13% of Latinos. The differential is much greater than for household income shown in Figure 10. Across the state, the Latino homeownership rate is 26%. Thus, the Latino population appears less economically integrated in New Bedford than statewide.

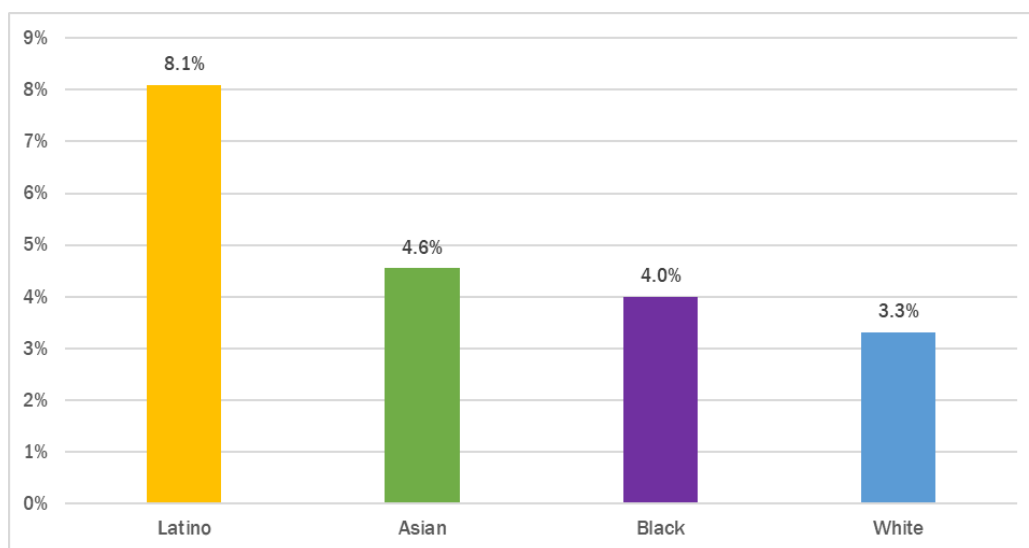
Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B25003

Similar to household income and homeownership, disparities also exist in health insurance coverage rates between New Bedford's major ethno-racial populations. The health uninsurance rate for Latinos is 8.1%, which is higher than the statewide Latino uninsurance rate (5.3%). This lack of coverage may be somewhat surprising, Puerto Ricans are the largest Latino population and should have access to public health insurance if they need it. Many of the 7,900 non-Puerto Rican Latinos are non-citizens and may have a high uninsurance rate. Asians have an uninsurance coverage rate of 4.6%, while Blacks and Whites have the lowest uninsurance rates, of 4.0% and 3.3%, respectively.

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group

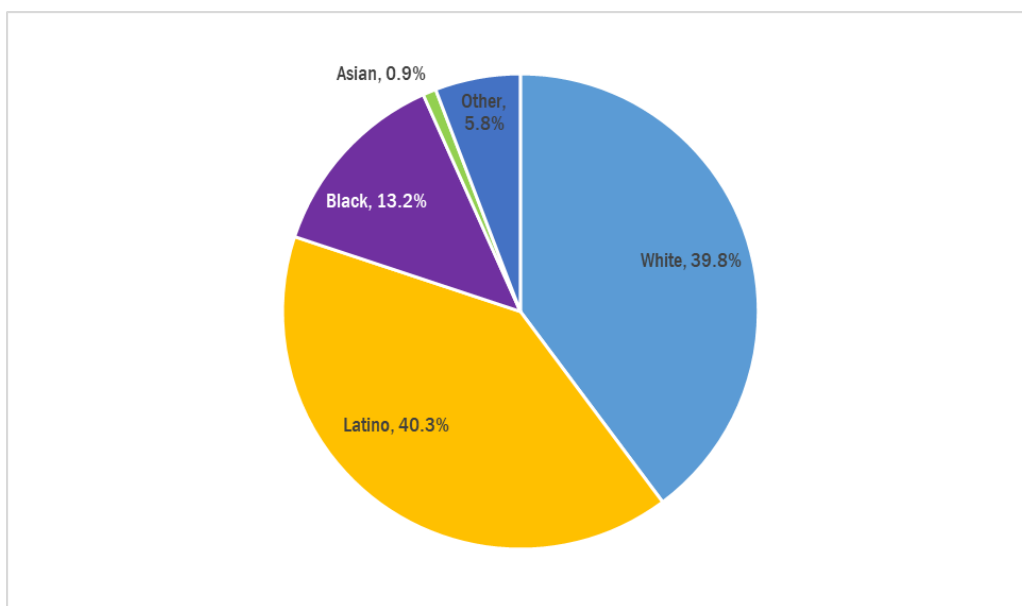


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C27001

Spotlight on New Bedford Public Schools

New Bedford Public Schools are the focus of this next section. New Bedford Public Schools enrolled 12,845 students in school year 2018-2019, and Latinos make up 40.3% of the school population (about twice the Latino proportion statewide, which is 20.8%). The next largest school populations in New Bedford are made up by Whites and Blacks, at 39.8% and 13.2%, respectively. These data are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

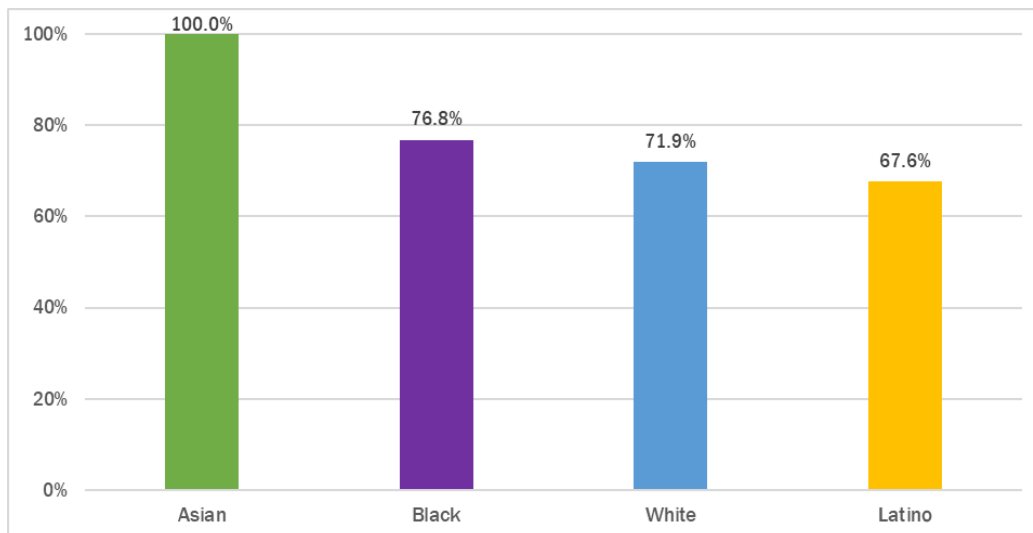
Figure 13: School Enrollment by Ethno-Racial Composition



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

New Bedford Public Schools' four-year high school graduation rate in school year 2015-2019 was 71.9%, notably lower than the state's rate of 88%. Latino students have the lowest graduation rate in the New Bedford Public Schools, 68%.

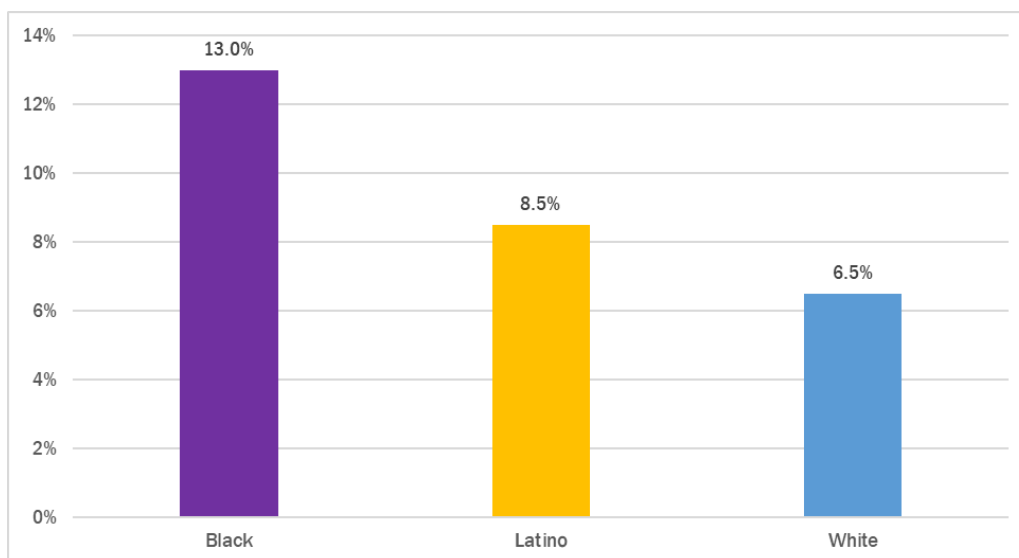
Figure 14: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



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

New Bedford Public Schools' out-of-school suspension rate is 8.4%, much higher than the state's rate of 3.0%. Black students have the highest suspension rate in school year 2018-2019, 13.0%, and Latinos have the second highest rate, 8.5%. The Asian data are not available for New Bedford.

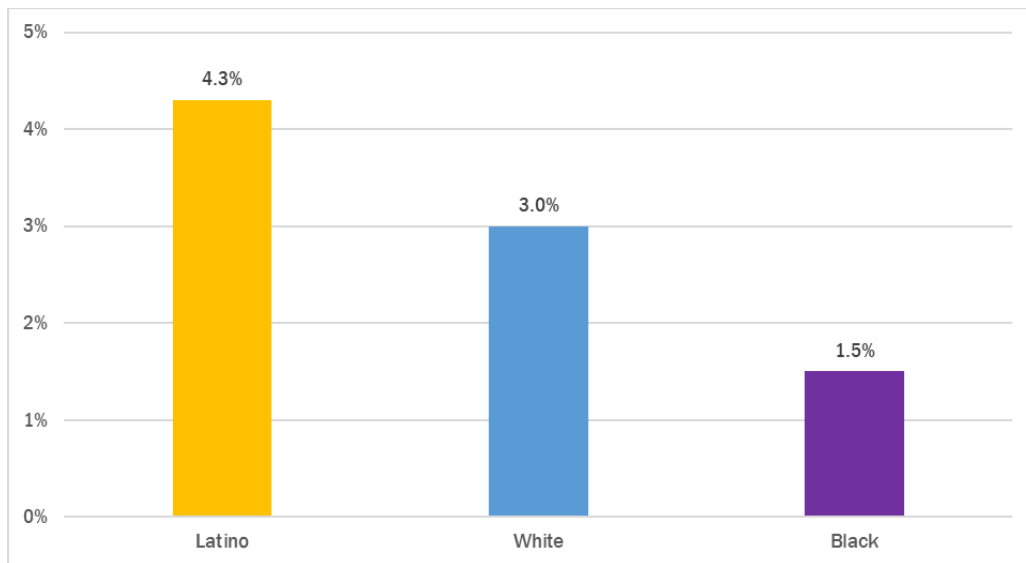
Figure 15: Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethno-Racial Group



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

New Bedford Public Schools' dropout rate is 3.2%, higher than the state's rate of 1.8%. Latino students had the highest dropout rate in school year 2018-2019, 4.3%, and Asian students had the lowest, 0%.

Figure 16: Dropout Rates by Ethno-Racial Group

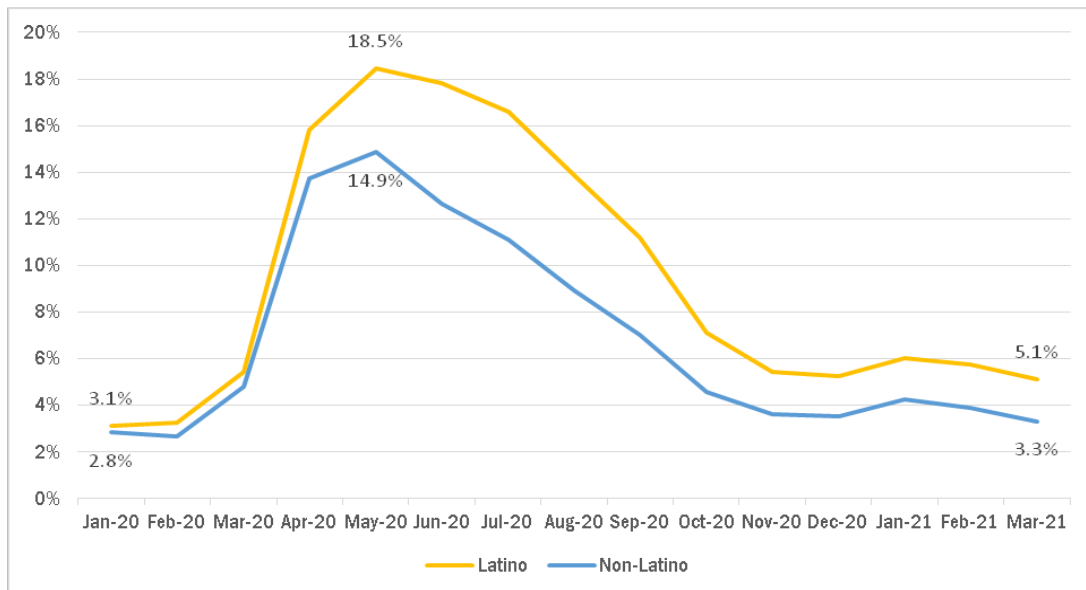


Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Impact of COVID-19

Starting in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit New Bedford, unemployment claims rapidly increased, from a starting point of 3.1% for Latinos. In June 2020, both Latinos and non-Latinos filed high numbers of unemployment claims, their rates rising to 18.5% and 14.9%, 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, standing in March 2021 at 5.1% for Latinos and 3.3% 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.

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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