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Latino Veterans in Massachusetts

by Phillip Granberry, Ph.D., and
Vishakha Agarwal, MPP

November 2021

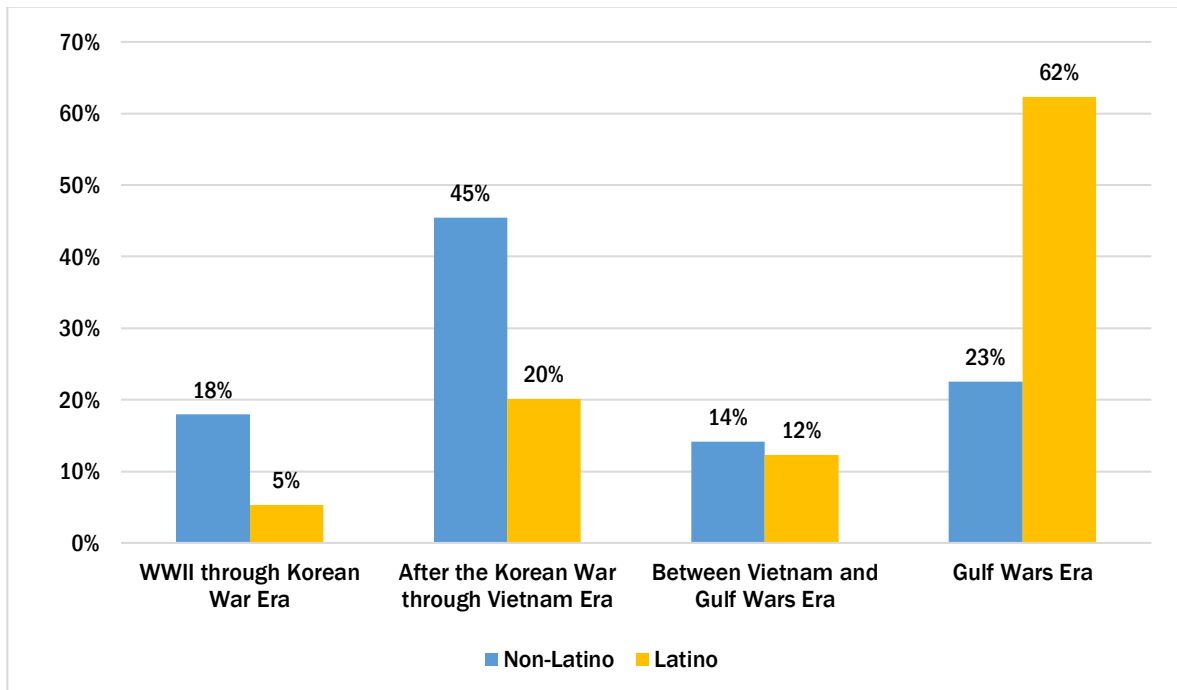
THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY

Latino Veterans in Massachusetts

Among the many types of services that promote the country’s general welfare, military service is among the most noble. People in the military are keenly aware that their service can place their lives at risk so that others keep their economic, political, and social wellbeing. In addition, those with families are aware that hazardous duty pay for deployment in a war zone in no way compensates for the stress placed on their families. This report estimates that 10,674 Latino veterans live in Massachusetts and provides a descriptive comparison to both non-Latino veterans and non-veteran Latinos. These veterans are 1.2% of the Latino population, while non-Latino veterans make up 5.2% of the non-Latino population.

This report provides a profile of Latino and non-Latino veterans in Massachusetts using 2014–2018 American Community Survey data. The population are compared to non-veteran Latinos and non-Latino non-veterans.

Figure 1: Service Era

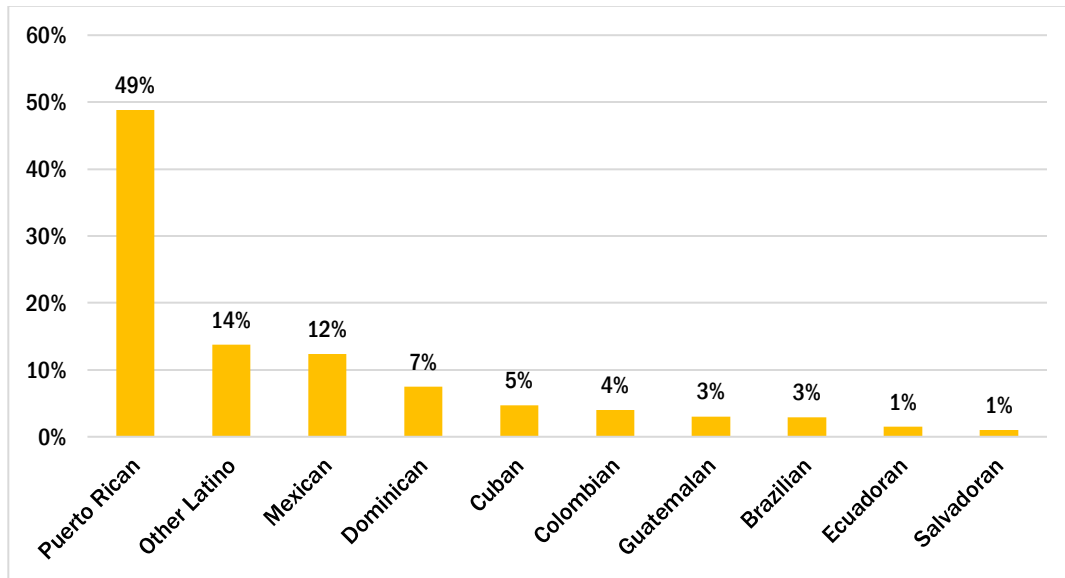


Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

The number and proportion of Latino and non-Latino veterans vary by service era, with the Gulf Wars Era’s Latino veterans representing the largest cohort at 62% (Figure 1). This is related to the Latino population in Massachusetts growing by 212% since 1990. Therefore, only 5.3% of Latino veterans served during the World War II through the Korean War Era, and 20% served during the After the Korean War through the Vietnam

War Era. Non-Latino veterans disproportionately served at higher rates (45%) in the After the Korean War through the Vietnam War Era.

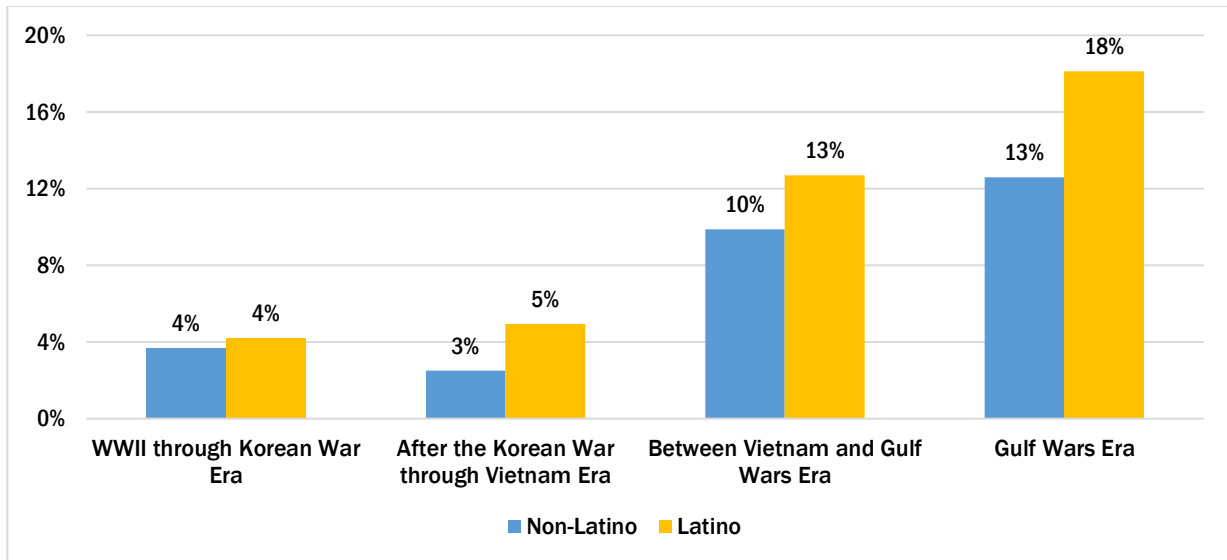
Figure 2: Latino Populations



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

Fully 49% of Latino veterans in Massachusetts are Puerto Rican, while Mexicans make up 12% of Latino veterans (Figure 2). Though not shown here, the share of Latino veterans in military service is correlated with nativity. Over 80% of Latino veterans are native-born (this includes those born in Puerto Rico, as well as a large share of those grouped in the “Other Latino category”), and the share is 96% for non-Latinos.

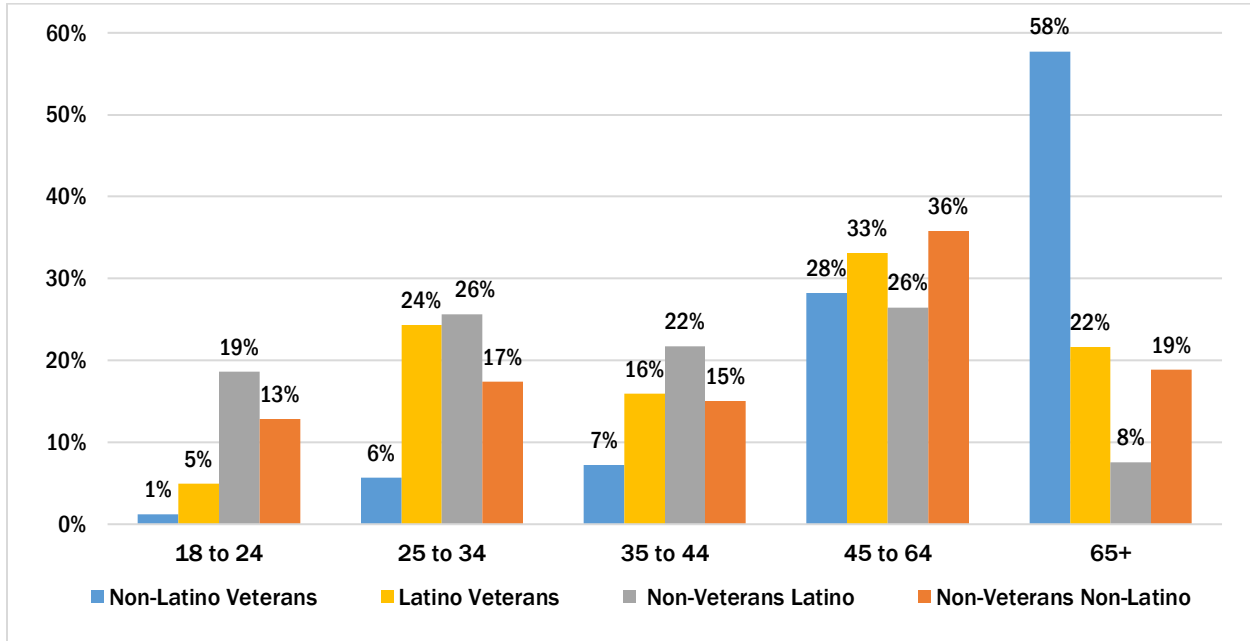
Figure 3: Women Veterans



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

Not until the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 did women obtain permanent status in the United States Armed Forces. Prior to that time, with the exception of nurses, women served only during wartime. In 2019, 15% of the armed forces were women. While women make 6% of non-Latino veterans, Latinas make up 14% of Latino veterans. They made up 18% of all veterans who served during the Gulf Wars Era (Figure 3). Thus, Latinas have been opting for military service to help pay for higher education, as 26% of Latina veterans are enrolled in school compared to 9% of Latino men.

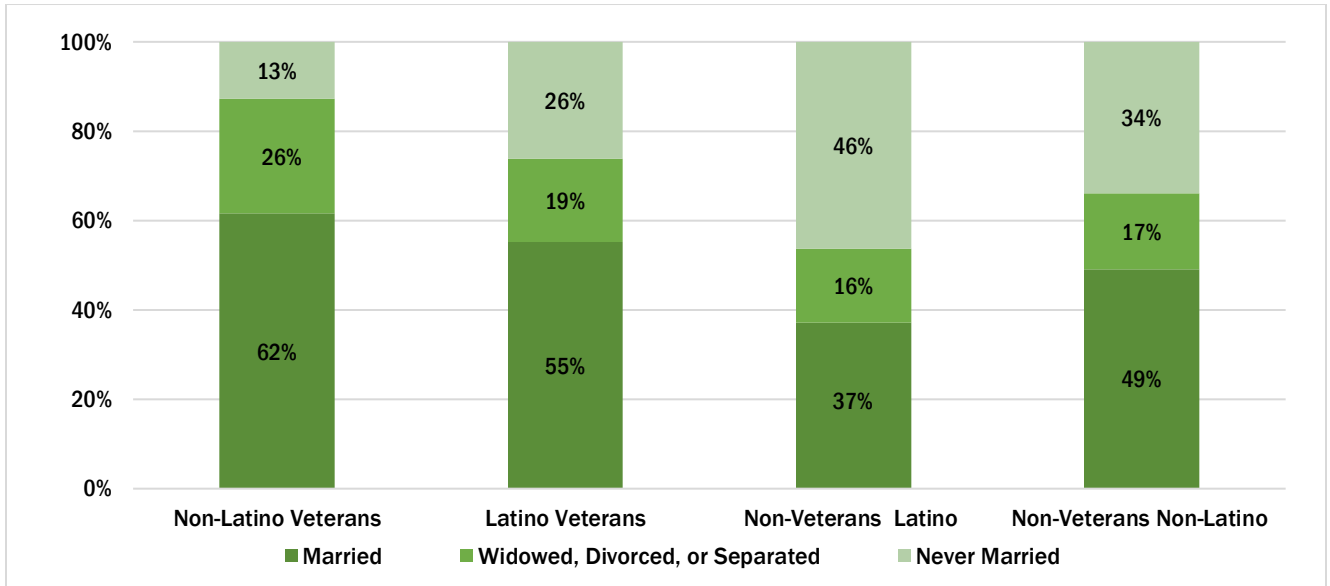
Figure 4: Age Groups



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

As suggested by their more recent military service, Latino veterans are younger than non-Latino veterans are. Nearly 30% of Latino veterans are under 34 years of age, while over 85% of non-Latino veterans are older than 45 years of age (Figure 4). Many of these non-Latino veterans are in need of retirement services, while Latino veterans are contributing to the civilian labor force. In Figure 4, the most striking comparison between veteran and non-veteran Latinos is in the proportion in the 18 to 24 age group (5% for veteran Latinos, 19% for non-veteran Latinos). This youthfulness of the non-veteran Latino population is a factor in the following individual characteristics of this report.

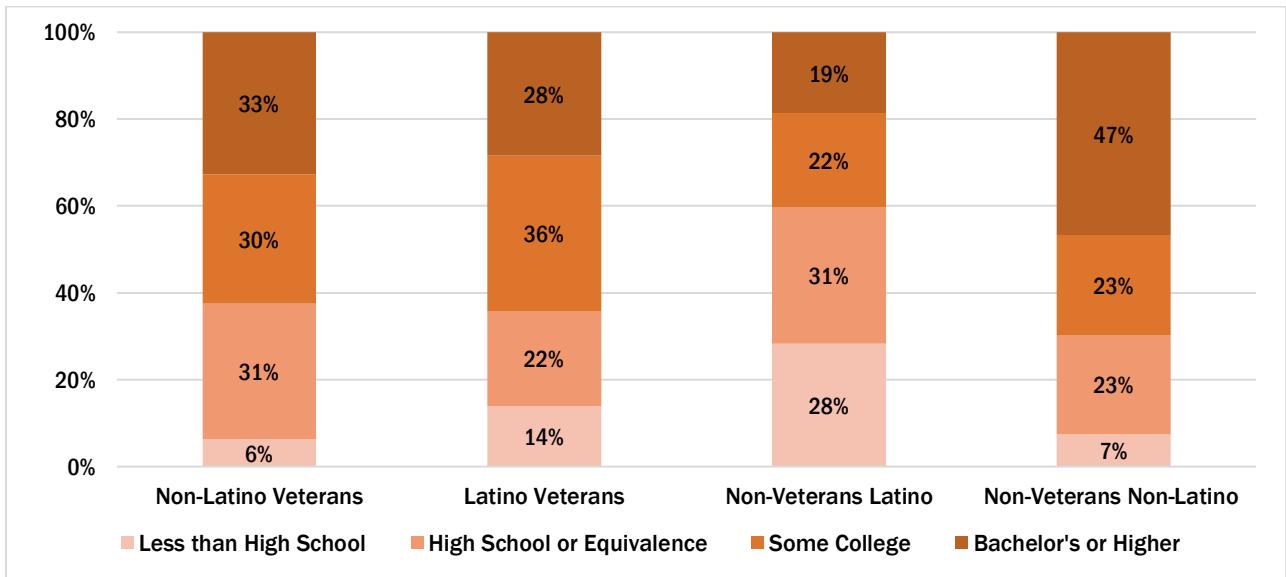
Figure 5: Marital Status



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

In Massachusetts in 2019, approximately 46% of adults were married. As Figure 5 shows, Latino veterans are more likely to be married than Latino non-veterans (55% compared to 37%), while a still higher share of non-Latino veterans were married (62%) compared to Non-Latinos Non-Veterans (49%). Of the non-married population, 13% of Latino veterans and 19% of non-Latino veterans lived alone.

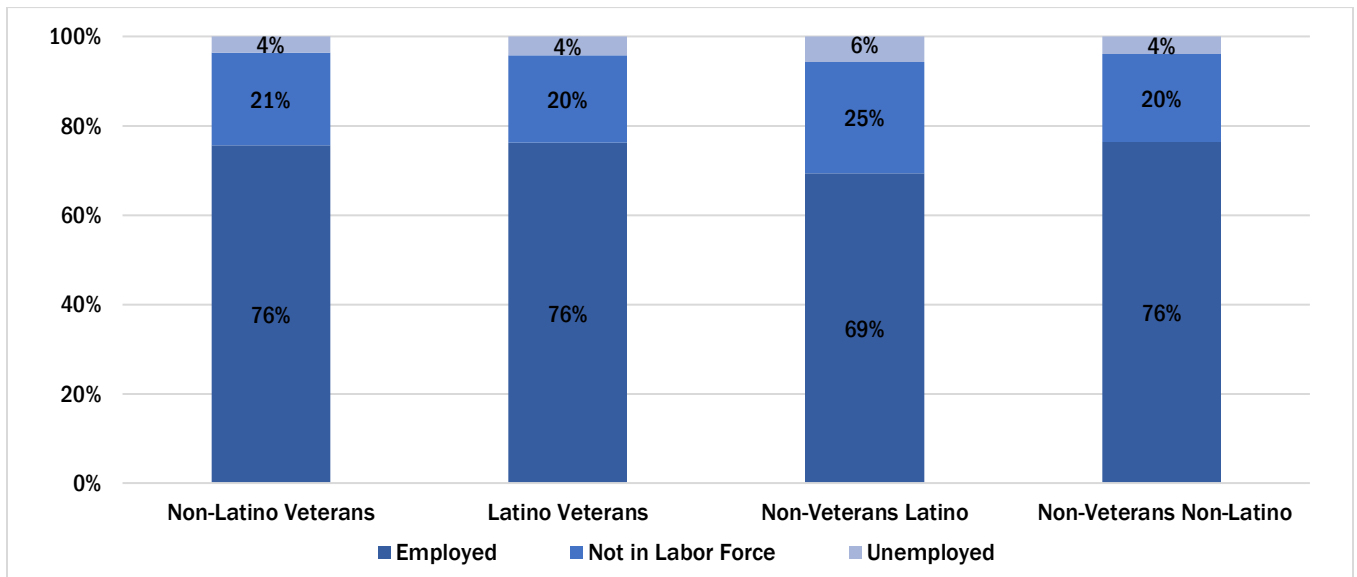
Figure 6: Educational Attainment (ages 25+)



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

Military service provides access to educational services both within the military and upon discharge through the GI Bill. In 2019, 12% of Latino veterans were enrolled in colleges and universities compared to only 3% for non-Latino veterans. As Figure 6 shows, Latino veterans have higher levels of educational attainment than do non-veteran Latinos. Comparing the two Latino groups, 28% of the veterans and only 19% of the non-veterans have at least a Bachelor’s degree. Likewise, 36% of Latino veterans but only 30% of non-veteran Latinos have had some college experience. Non-veterans non-Latino. The educational boost that Latino veterans receive may be related to the financial assistance that military service provides to fund higher education.

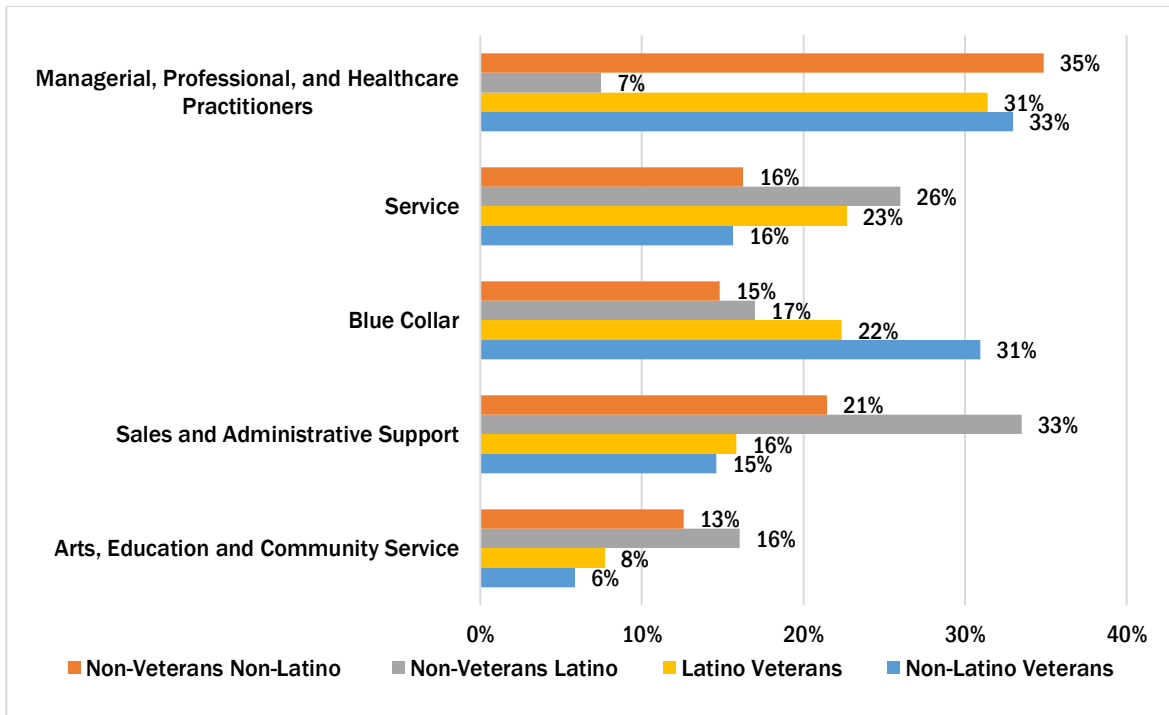
Figure 7: Employment (ages 18–64)



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

The employment rates of three comparison groups in the age group 18 to 64 are quite similar. (The majority of non-Latino veterans are of retirement age and thus those 65 and older are not included in this analysis.) Still, Latino veterans and non-veterans differ in the proportion unemployed prior to the Covid-19 recession: 4.3% for Latino veterans, 5.7% for non-veteran Latinos.) A larger share of non-veteran Latinos were outside the labor force (25%) than of veteran Latinos (20%) (Figure 7).

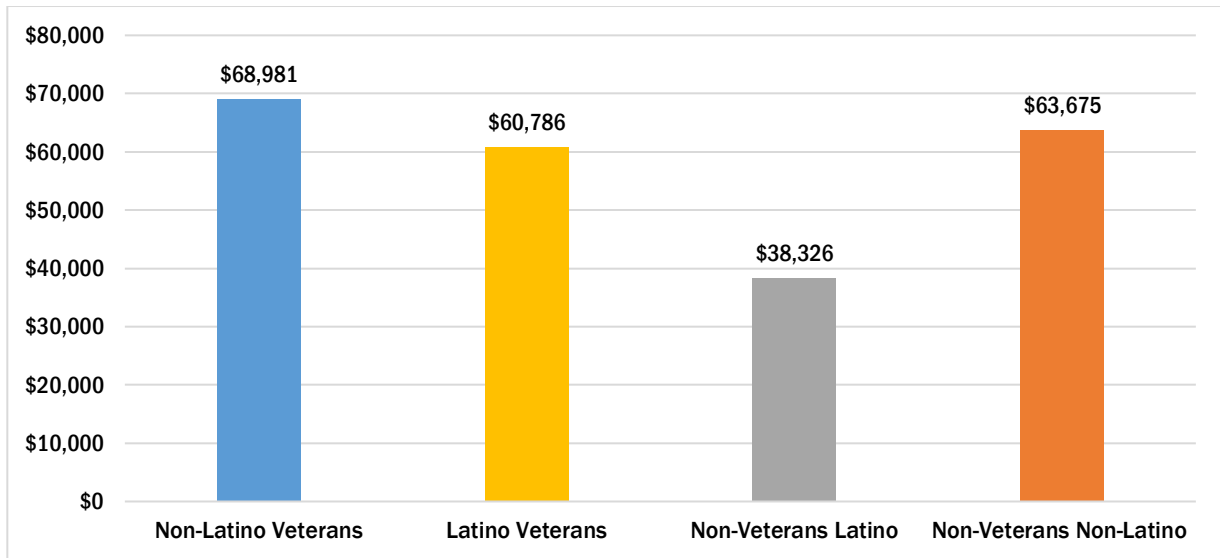
Figure 8: Occupations of Employed Workers



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

Latino veterans’ increased educational attainment helps shape their employment. As Figure 8 shows, nearly a third of Latino veterans work in managerial, professional, and healthcare-practitioner occupations, while only 7% of non-veteran Latinos work in these occupations. This distribution is similar to non-Latino veterans. The share of Latino veterans in blue-collar occupations, 22%, is lower than for non-Latino veterans (31%).

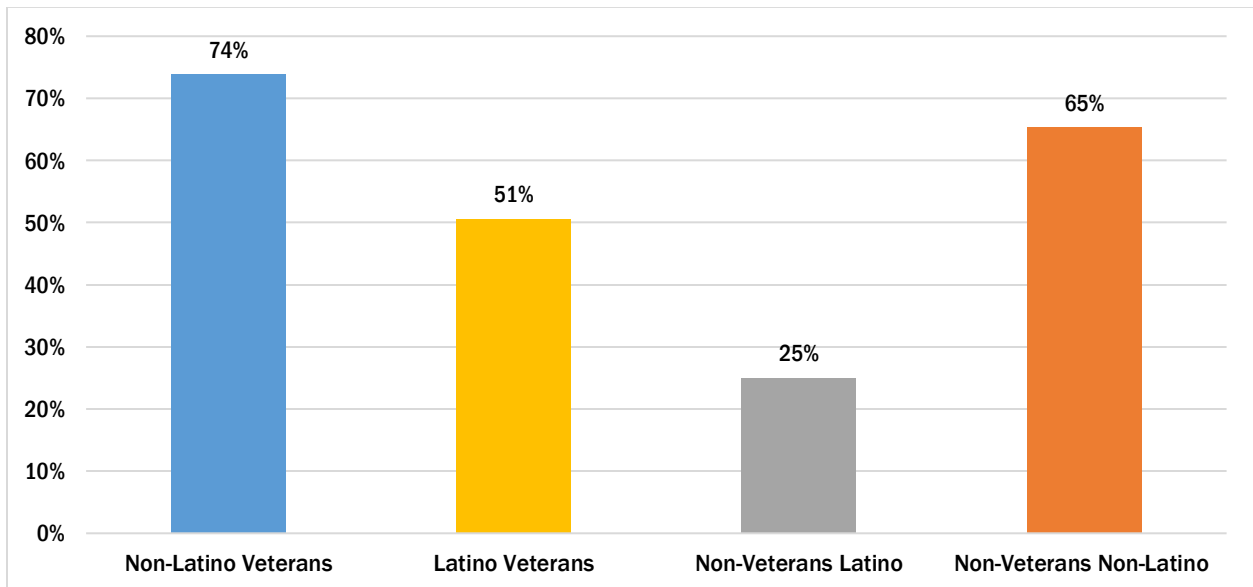
Figure 9: Earnings of Full-Time Workers (ages 18–64)



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

As Figure 9 shows, the median earnings of Latino veterans who work fulltime are slightly lower than non-Latino veterans who work fulltime (\$60,875 compared to \$68,980). This earnings difference is largest among those earning over \$125,000. At the same time, Latino veterans have much higher earnings than non-veteran Latinos, whose median earnings in 2018 were \$38,544 compared to Non-Latino Non-Veterans \$63,675.

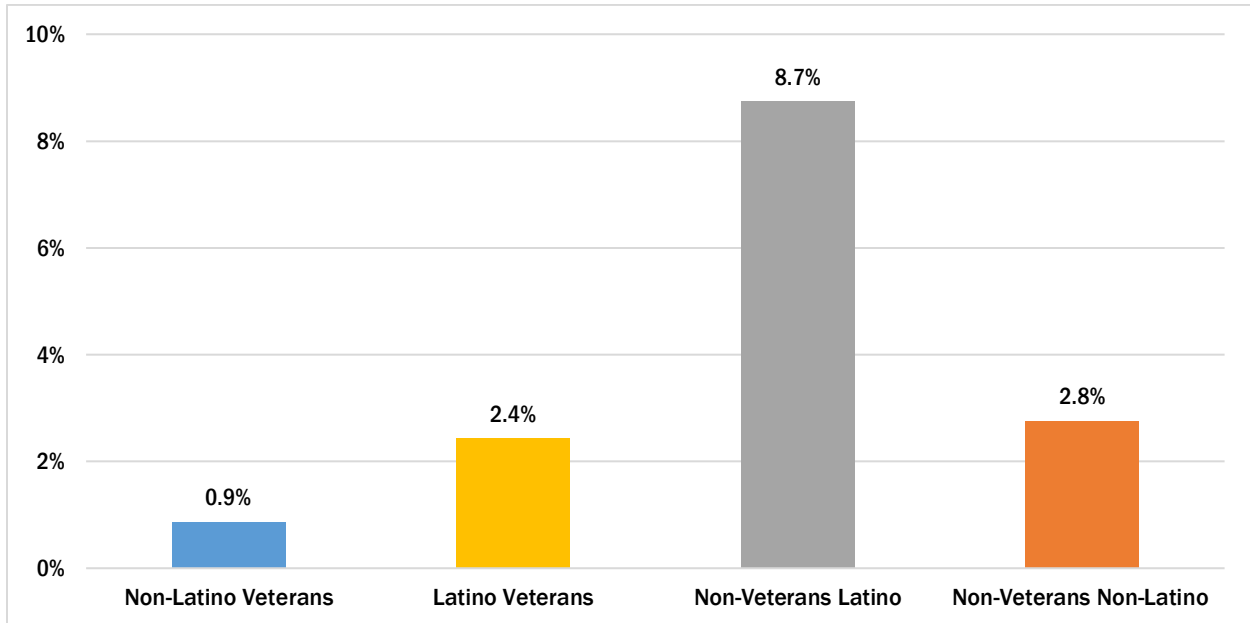
Figure 10: Homeownership



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

Homeownership among Latino veterans, as shown by Figure 10, is higher than the rate for non-veteran Latinos, but lower than for non-Latino veterans and non-Latino non-veterans. Nearly three-fourths of (74%) Non-Latino veterans owned a home as compared to half (51%) of Latino veterans.

Figure 11: Medical Uninsurance



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey

Figure 11 shows that only a small proportion of veterans lack medical insurance, though the percentage is higher for Latino veterans (2.4%) than for non-Latino veterans (0.9%) and non-Latino non-veterans (2.8%). Uninsurance is much more common for non-veteran Latinos (8.7%). Slightly over half of Latino veterans receive their medical care through the Veterans Administration Healthcare System or through TRICARE compared to 38% for non-Latino veterans.

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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