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### Latinos in Massachusetts: Chelsea

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A large, stylized geometric pattern in shades of blue, featuring concentric squares, circles, and zig-zag lines, reminiscent of traditional Aztec or Mayan designs, serves as the background for the top half of the page.

# Latinos in Massachusetts: Chelsea

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

December 2021

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE  
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**Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Chelsea**

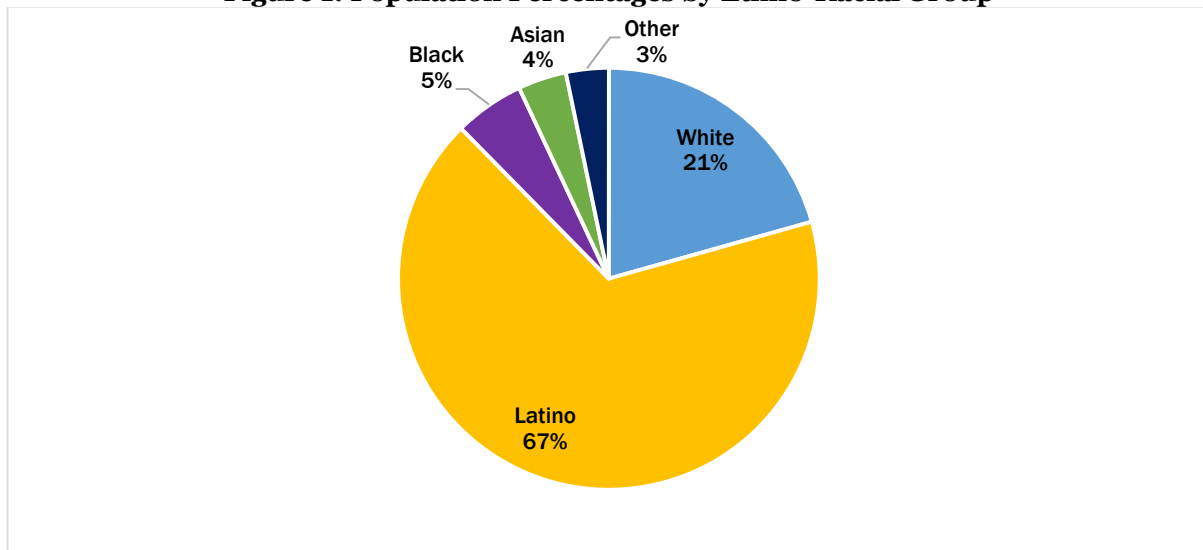
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University of Massachusetts Boston

## Chelsea Overview: The Latino Population

Chelsea is home to an estimated 26,794 Latinos according to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey. They represent two-thirds (67%) of the city's population (Figure 1). Only Lawrence, which is 81% Latino, has a larger share of its population Latino than Chelsea does. Whites are the next largest ethno-racial group with 21% of the population. Blacks and Asians each make up less than 5% of city's population. The Latino share in Chelsea is also larger than Latinos' statewide share, which is 11%.

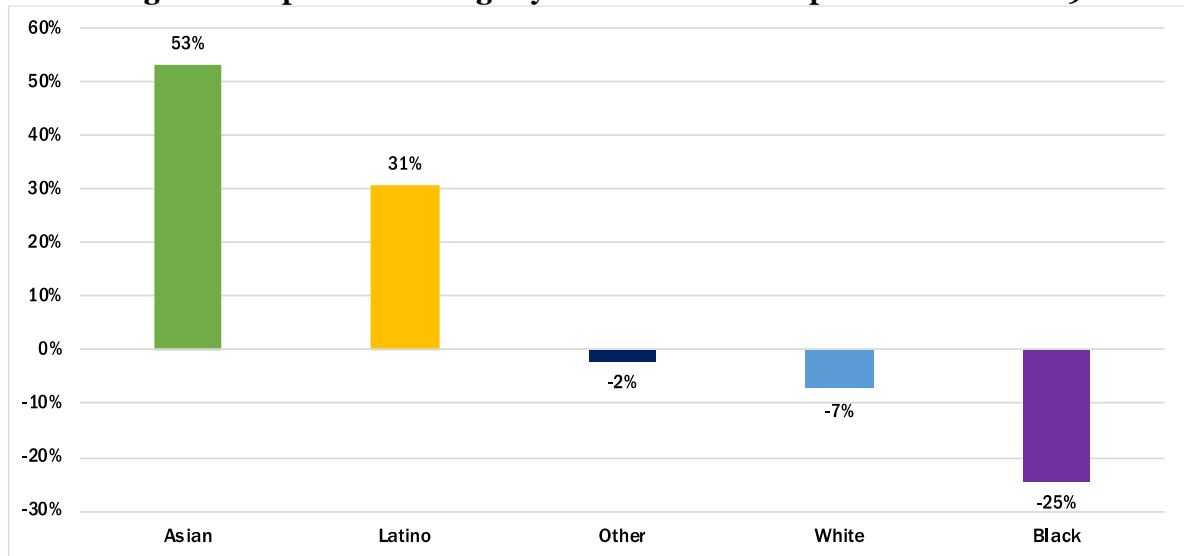
**Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community – B03002

Between 2010 and 2019, Chelsea saw an increase in the size of the Latino population, from 20,489 to 26,794, representing a 31% increase (Figure 2). However, this is lower than the statewide Latino growth of 38% during this same period. The smaller Asian population grew by 53%, while the city's White population declined by 7%, and the Black population declined by 25%.

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

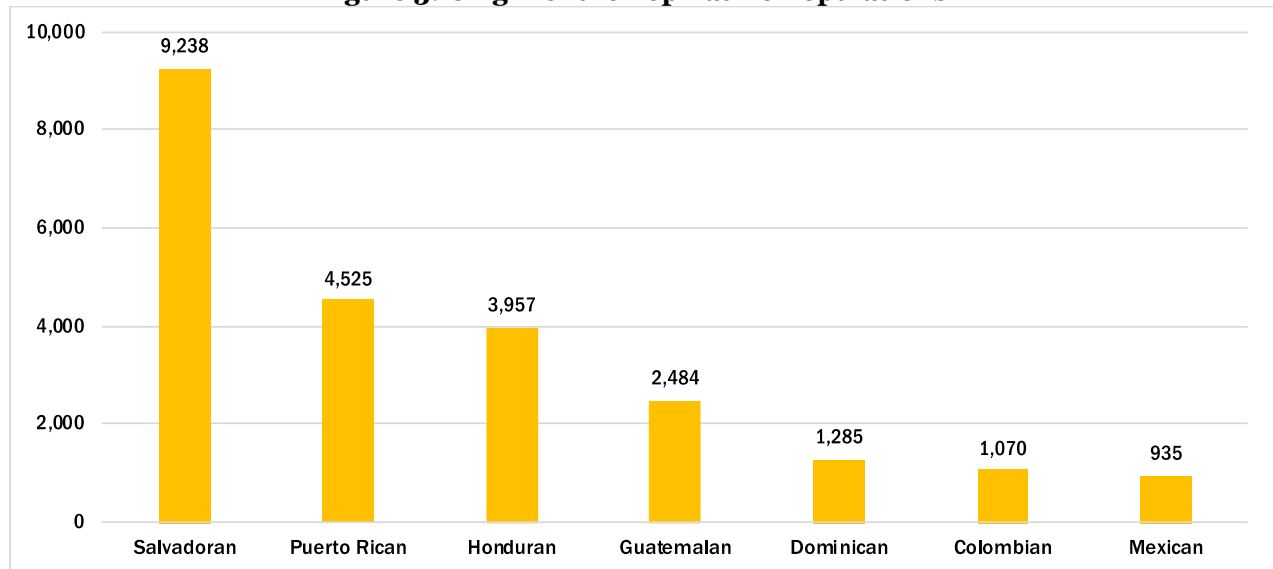


Source: 2006-2010 & 2015-2019 American Community Survey– B03002

Figure 3 shows that Salvadorans, with a population of 9,238, constitute the largest Latino subpopulation in the city, followed by Puerto Ricans (4,525), Hondurans (3,957), Guatemalans (2,484), and Dominicans (1,285). Statewide, Puerto Ricans are the largest group, followed by Dominicans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Guatemalans.

Chelsea has a much larger share of its population that is foreign-born than does the Commonwealth overall. Chelsea is 45% foreign-born, while Massachusetts is 17% foreign-born. Among Latinos, 54% are foreign-born and 40% are non-citizens.

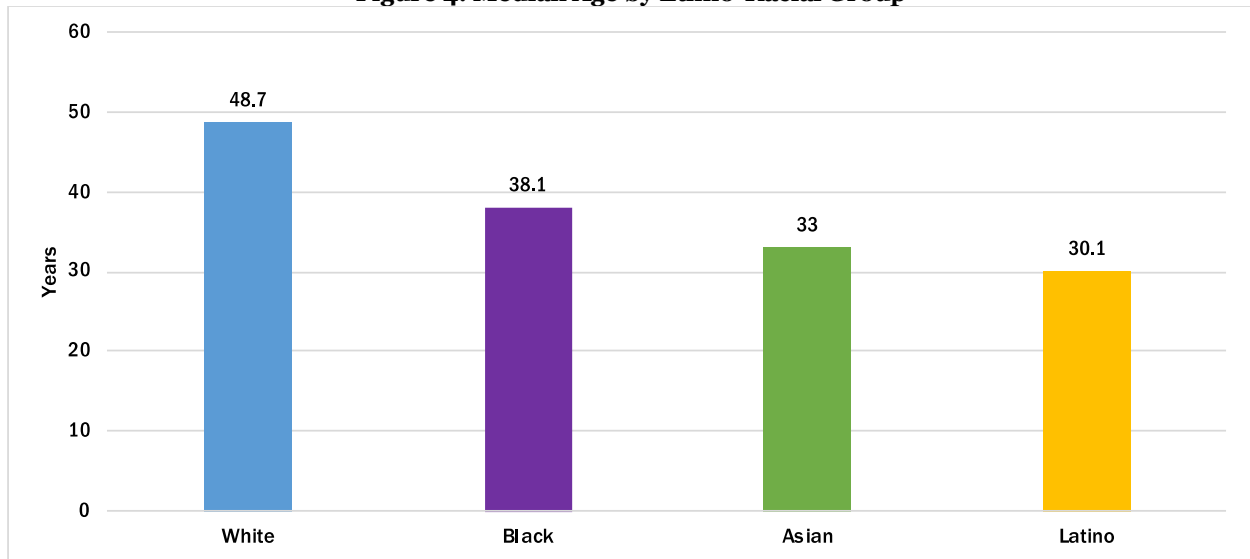
**Figure 3: Origin of the Top Latino Populations**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03001

## Median Age and Marital Status

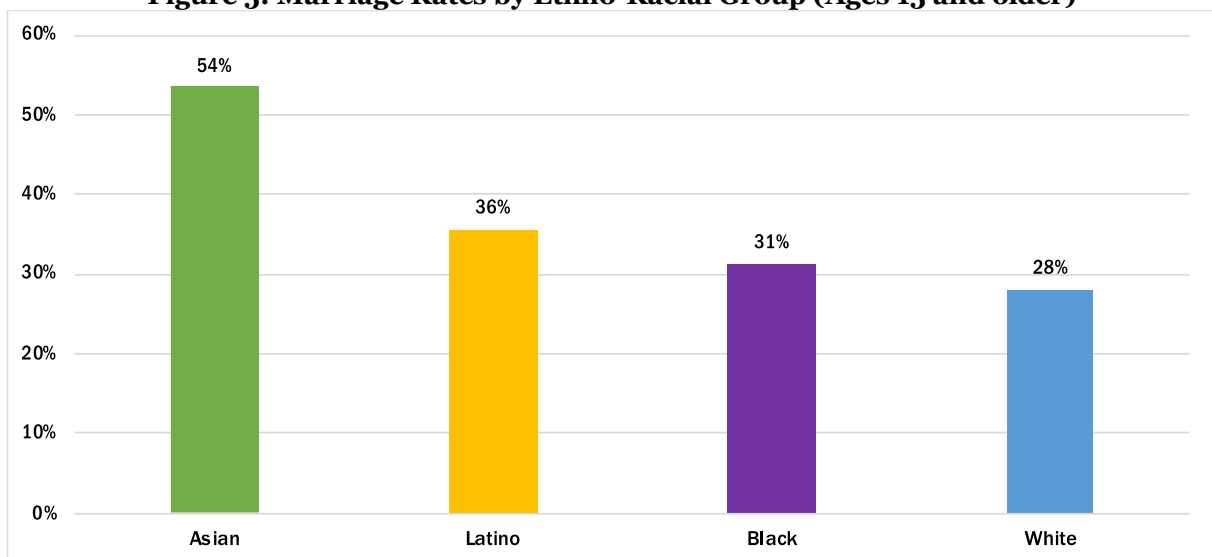
**Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B01002

Age demographics vary significantly across ethno-racial groups. Chelsea's Latino population has a median age of 30.1 years. Across the state, the median age for Latinos is slightly younger than in Boston, at 28.1 years. As shown in Figure 4, Latinos in Chelsea are much younger than the city's White (48.7 years) and Black (38.1 years) populations, and closer in age to Asians (33 year).

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



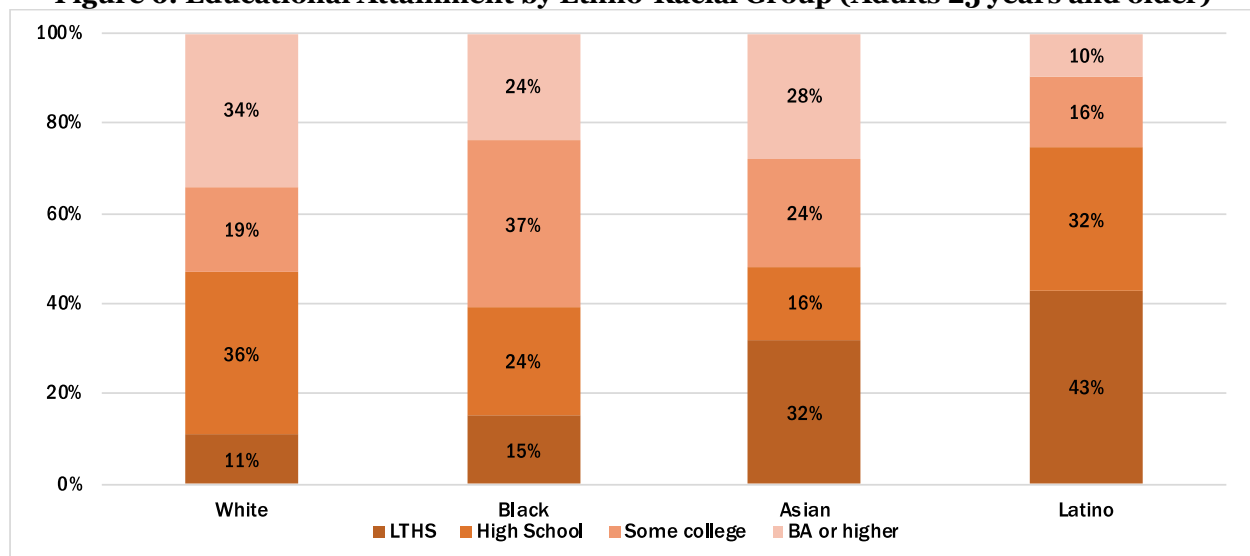
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B12002

The marriage rate in Chelsea for persons 15 and over is 34% compared to 48% statewide. As shown in Figure 5, the marriage rate among Latinos is 36%, which is much lower than for Asians but higher than for Blacks and Whites. The Latino marriage rate in Chelsea is slightly higher than for Latinos statewide (33%).

## Education

The average educational attainment in Chelsea is lower than in Massachusetts overall. In Massachusetts 44% of the population age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 18% in Chelsea. As Figure 6 shows, Latinos have a lower percentage of their population with at least a bachelor's degree: 10%, compared to 34% for Whites. The statewide rate for Latinos is 20%. At the other end of the educational scale, Latinos have a higher percentage of their adult population lacking a high school diploma: 43%, compared to 11% for whites and 15% for blacks. The statewide rate for Latinos lacking a high school diploma is 27%.

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

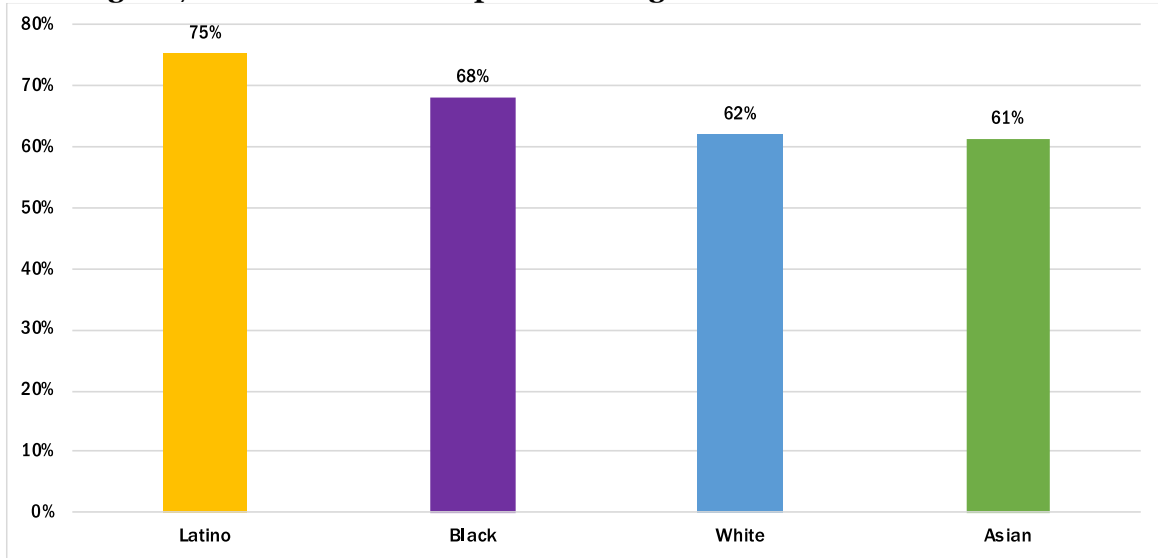


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C15002

## Labor Force Participation

Even with their lower levels of educational attainment, Latinos' labor force participation suggests their importance to Chelsea's economic and social wellbeing. In Figure 7, Latinos in Chelsea have a higher labor force participation rate (75%) than other ethno-racial groups in the city. The statewide Latino labor force participation rate is slightly lower at 68%. This Latino labor participation is somewhat surprising because of identified characteristics of a youthful population (Figure 4) with lower levels of educational attainment (Figure 6), which could hinder labor force participation.

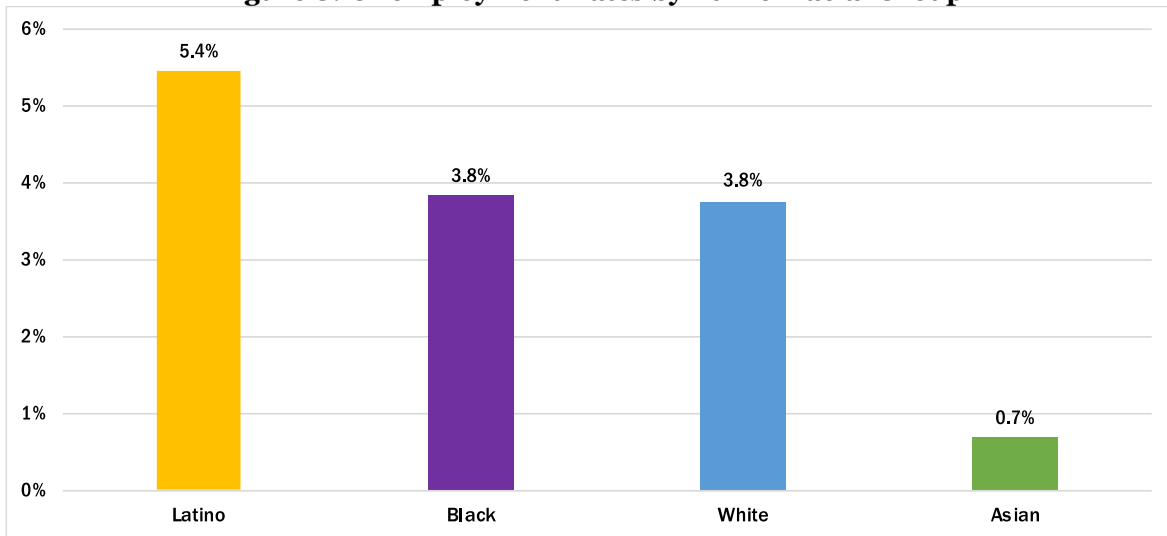
**Figure 7: Labor Force Participation among Individuals 16 Years and Older**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C23002

The above information suggests that Latinos in Chelsea have a strong participation in Boston's economy. However, Figure 8 tells a less positive story. In the 2015-2019 ACS data, before the COVID recession, the unemployment rate in Chelsea was 6.0%. Latino unemployment rate was 5.4% (Blacks and Whites had 3.8% unemployment rates) and higher than for Latinos statewide (6.0%). Statewide in Massachusetts during this period, unemployment was 4.8%.

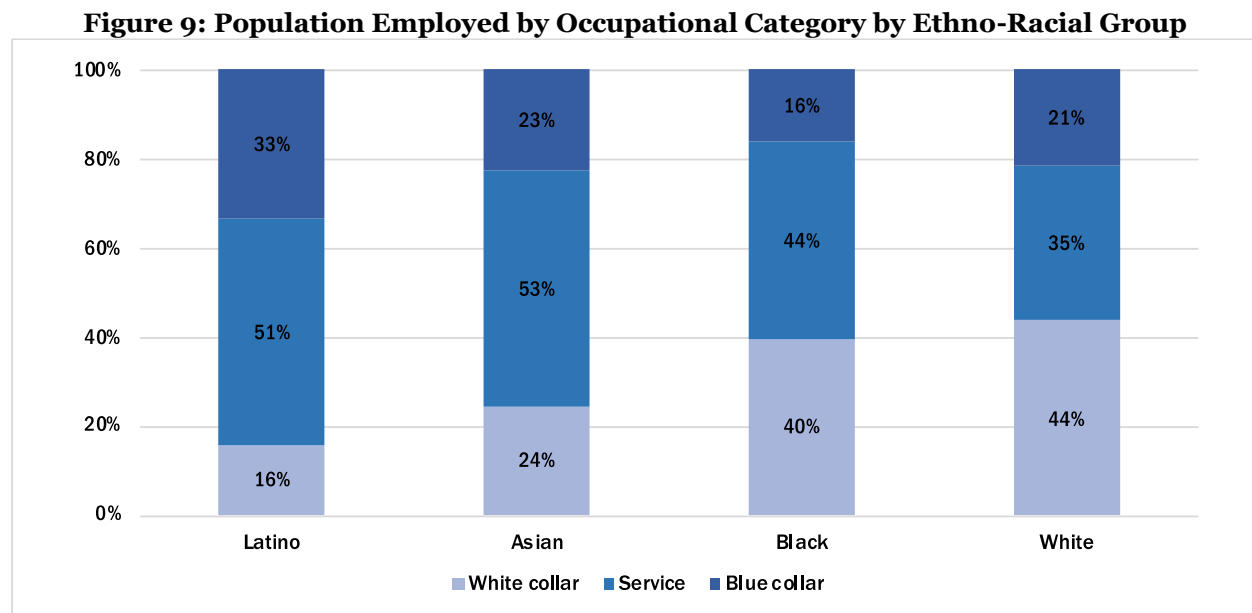
**Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



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 the service sector, with 51% working in services and sales occupations, and in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs, with 33% working in natural resources, construction, maintenance, production, transportation, and material moving occupations. This distribution of the occupations among Latinos is similar to their statewide distribution, where 49% of Latinos work in service occupations and 26% work in blue-collar jobs.

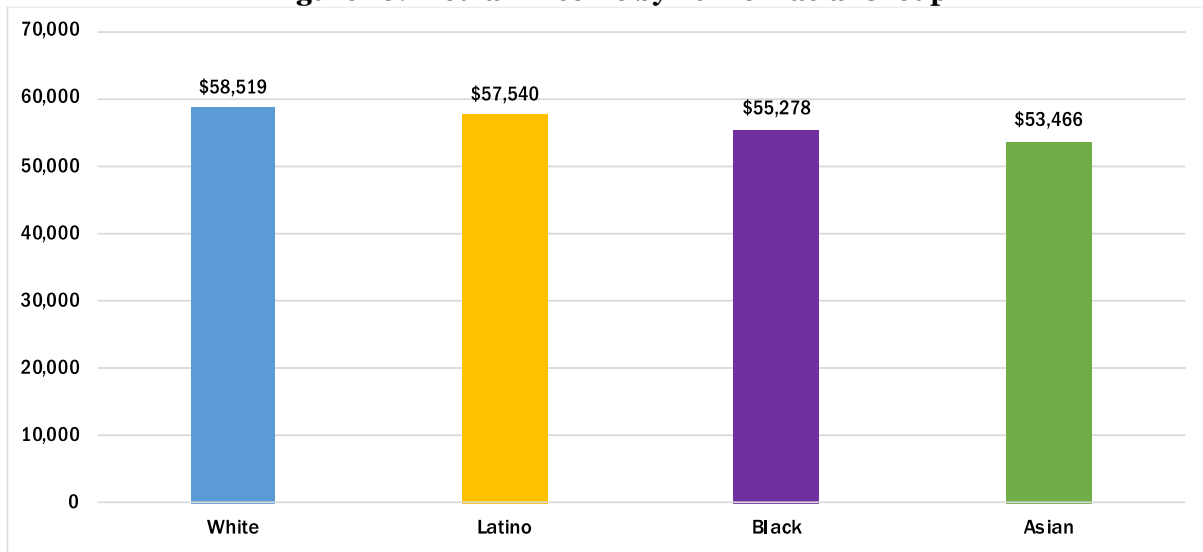


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C24010

## Income

Highlighting the economic problems that Chelsea has experienced as a Gateway City in Massachusetts over the last several decades, the city's median household income is \$56,802, which is lower than the statewide median income of \$81,215. Even though Chelsea has lower median household income, it is more equally distributed. Latinos in Figure 9 have the second highest median income (\$57,540) behind Whites (\$58,519). Latinos in Chelsea are more economically successful than those in other parts of the Commonwealth, as the statewide Latino median income is \$44,885 during this period.

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

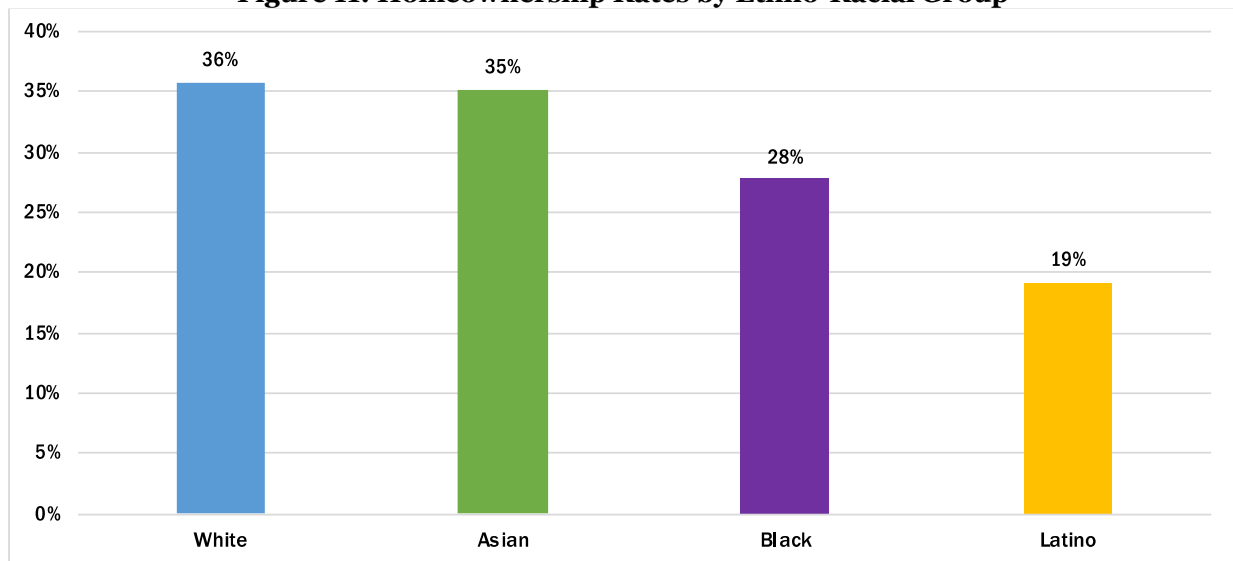


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B19013

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

The final measures of Latino participation in Chelsea are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Chelsea has a lower homeownership rate (26%) than the statewide rate (62%) as measured by occupied housing units. Latinos in Figure 11 have the lowest homeownership level of any ethno-racial group in the city at 19%, and this is lower than the 26% of Latinos statewide who are homeowners.

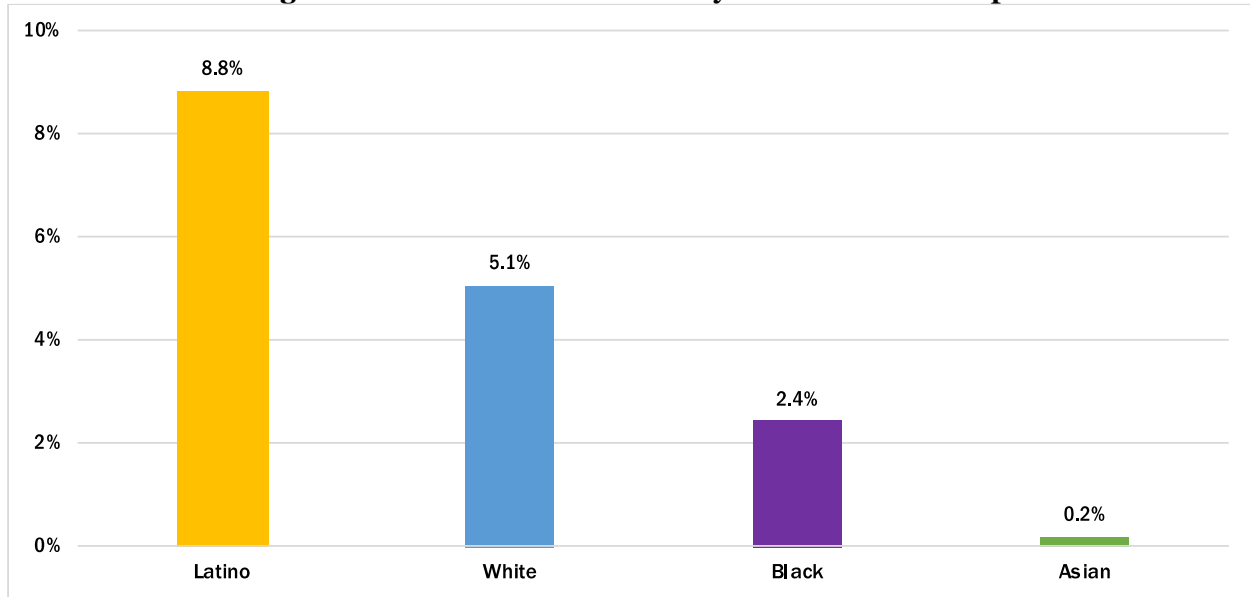
**Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B25003

Chelsea has a higher rate of medical uninsurance (7.4%) than the statewide average of 2.7%. Some of this might be attributed to its higher concentration of non-citizen residents, who have the highest rates of uninsurance. Figure 12 shows that Latinos have the highest rates of medical uninsurance in Chelsea: 8.8%, which is higher than the rate of 5.3% for Latinos statewide.

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

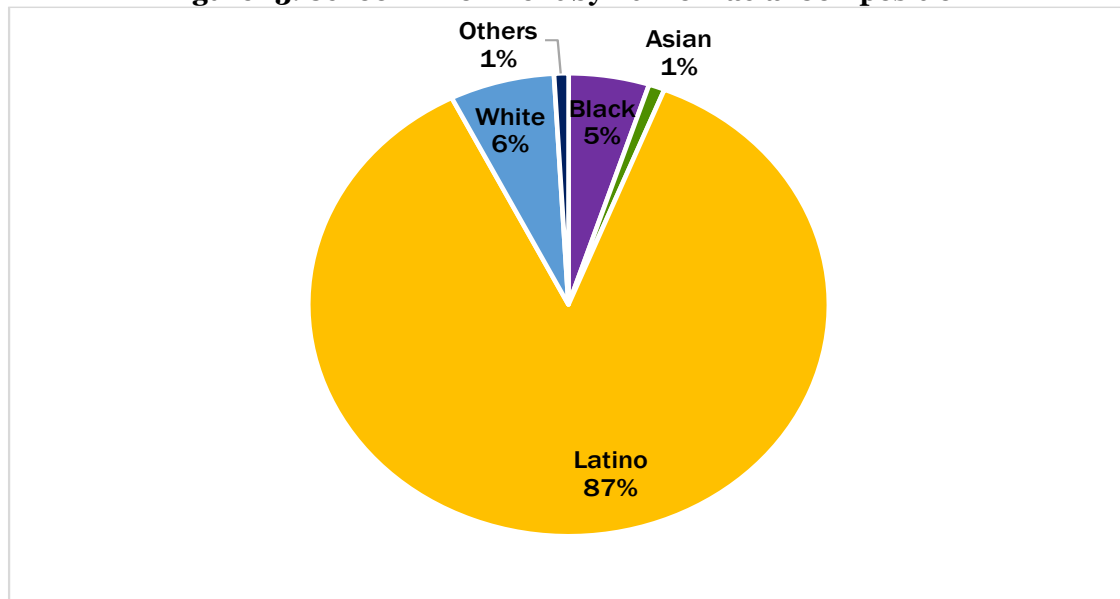


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C27001

### ***Spotlight on Chelsea Public Schools***

Chelsea Public Schools is the focus of this next section. Chelsea Public Schools enrolled 6,088 students in School Year 2018-2019. Latinos make up 86.6% of the school population (Figure 13), which is about four times the Latino percentage in the statewide school population. Chelsea has a young Latino population, a good indicator of why Latinos make up the largest share of public school students. These data are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for school year 2018-2019.

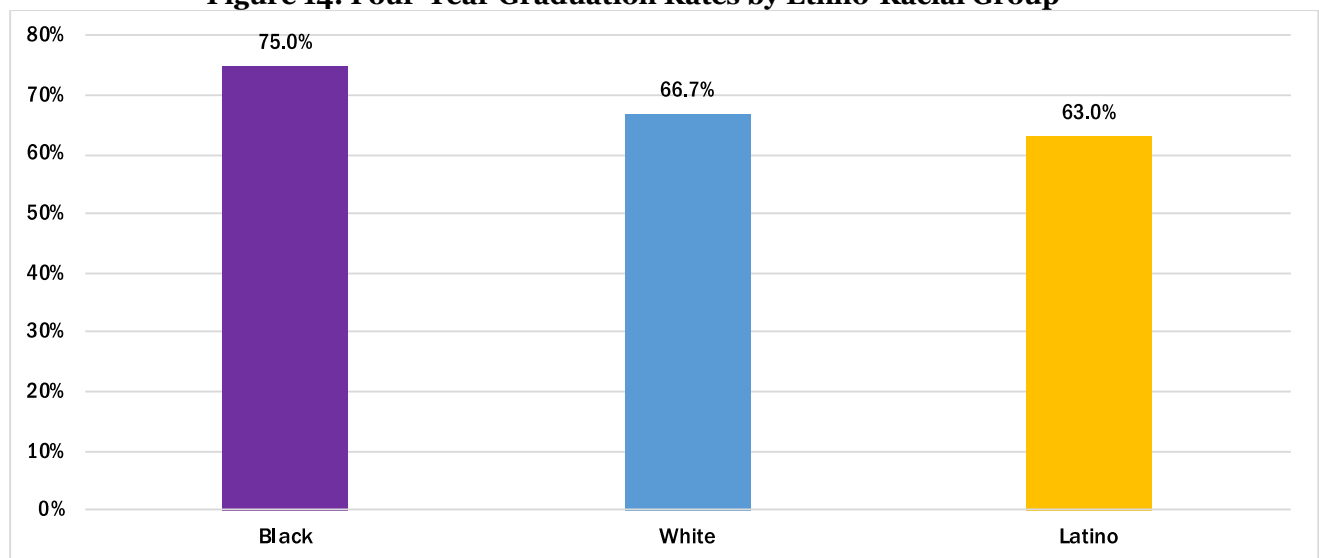
**Figure 13. School Enrollment by Ethno-Racial Composition**



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

Chelsea Public Schools' four-year high school graduation rate in School Year 2018-2019 was 64.1%, much lower than the state's rate of 88%. Latino students have the lowest graduation rate in the Chelsea Public Schools, 63%. Data are not reported for Asian students.

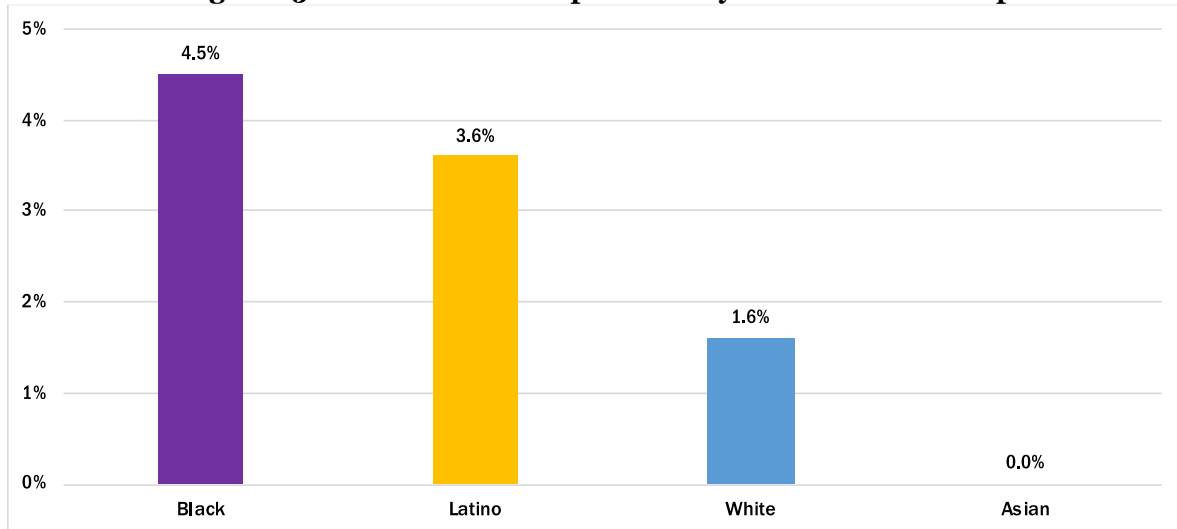
**Figure 14: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



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

Chelsea Public School's out-of-school suspension rate is 3.5%, somewhat higher than the state's rate of 3.0%. Black students have the highest suspension rate in School Year 2018-2019, 4.5%, and Latinos have the second highest rate, 3.6%. Data are not reported for Asian students.

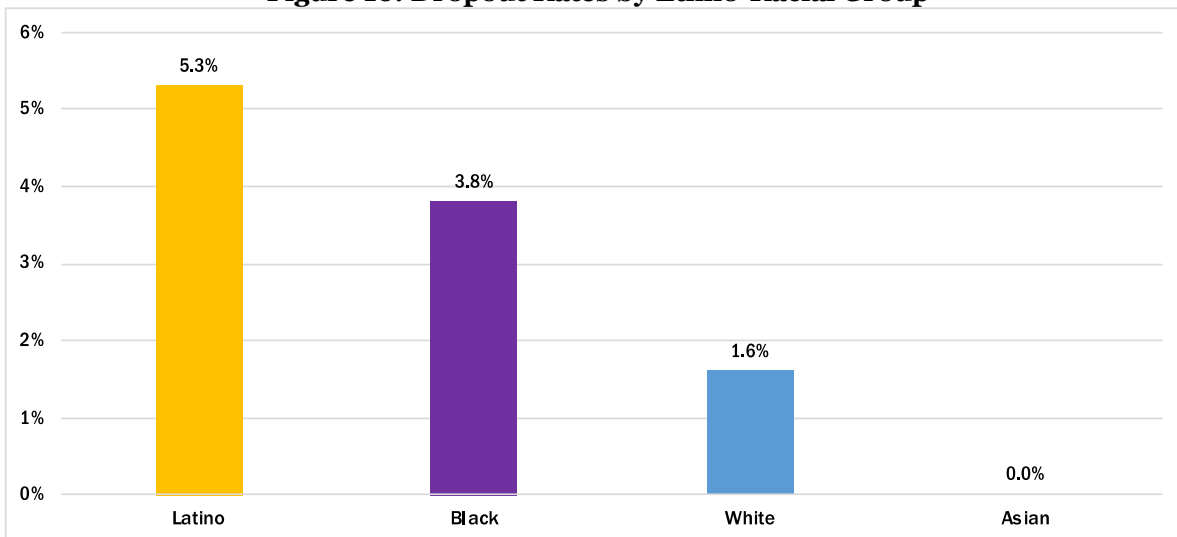
**Figure 15: Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethno-Racial Group**



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

Chelsea Public School's dropout rate is 5.0%, and this is higher than the state's rate of 1.8%. Latino students had the highest dropout rate in school year 2018-2019, 5.3%.

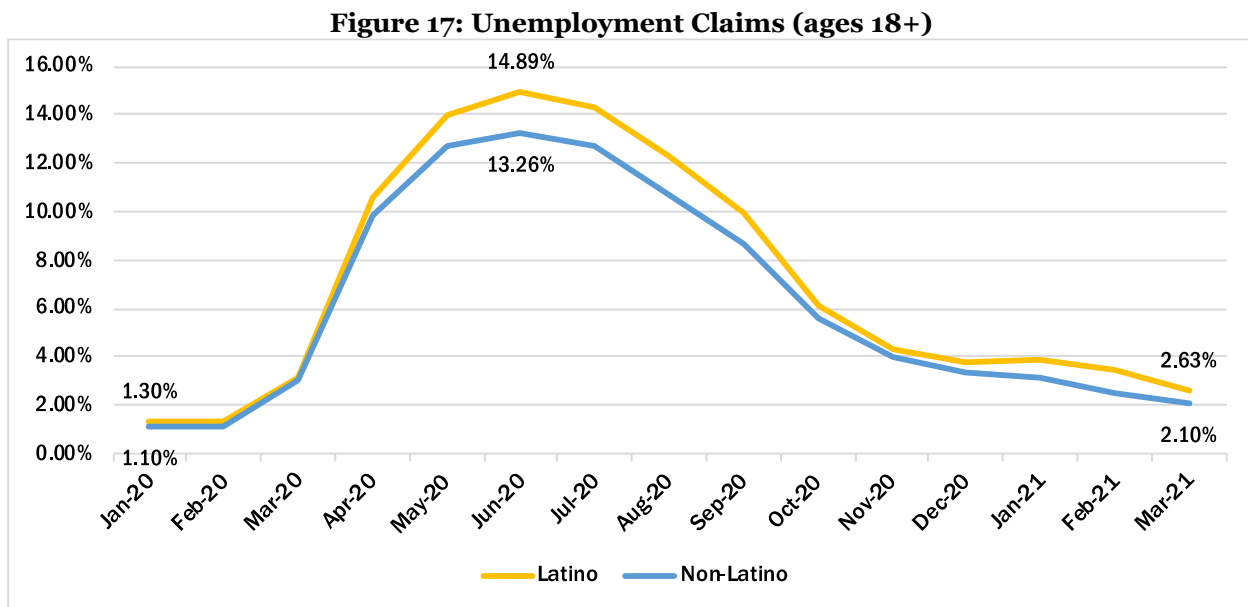
**Figure 16: Dropout Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



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

## Impact of COVID-19

Starting in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit Chelsea, unemployment claims rapidly increased, from a low point of 1.3% for Latinos. In June 2020, both Latinos and non-Latinos filed high numbers of unemployment claims, their rates rising to 14.9% and 13.3%, 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 2.6% for Latinos and 2.1% for non-Latinos.



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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