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Latinos in Massachusetts: Lawrence

by Phillip Granberry, Ph.D., and
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Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Lawrence

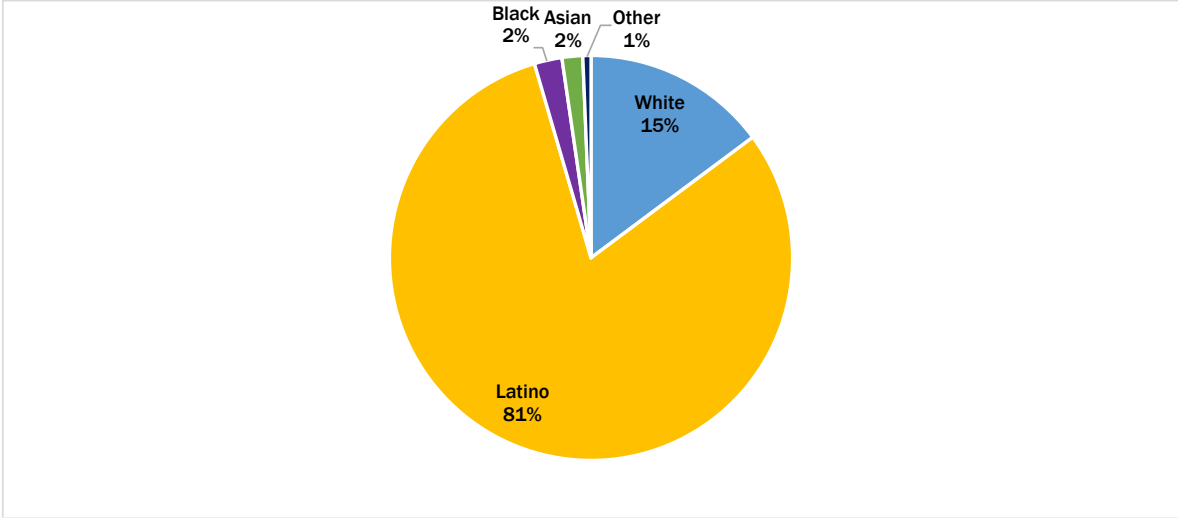
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Lawrence Overview: The Latino Population

Lawrence, Massachusetts is a city of 79,942 residents, of whom 64,463 or 81% are Latino according to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey. While Boston has a larger Latino population, Lawrence has the largest share of Latino residents of any city or town in Massachusetts. The second largest group in the city is Non-Latino Whites, who make up 15% of the population. Blacks and Asians account for 2% each, while the “other” group makes up 1% of the city’s population (Figure 1). The Latino share in Lawrence is significantly larger than Latinos' statewide share, which is 11%.

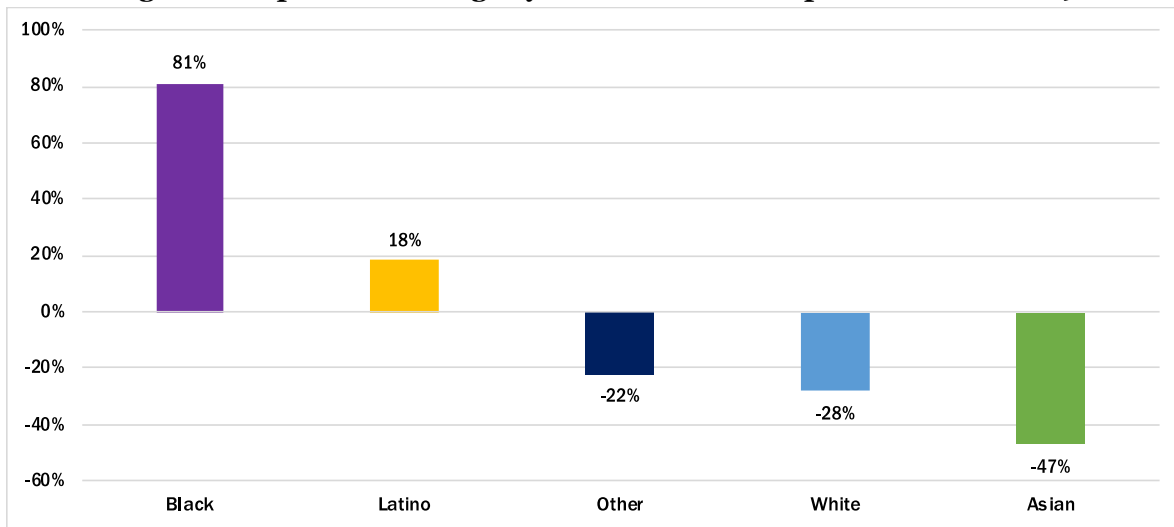
Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in Lawrence



Source: 2015-2019 American Community – B03002

From 2010 to 2019 Lawrence’s overall population increased by 6%, while the number of Latinos grew by 18%. (Statewide Latino population grew by 38% in this period.) Only the much smaller Black population had a steeper increase (81%). All other major groups decreased in size, with the larger White population declining by 28% and Asians by 47%.

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

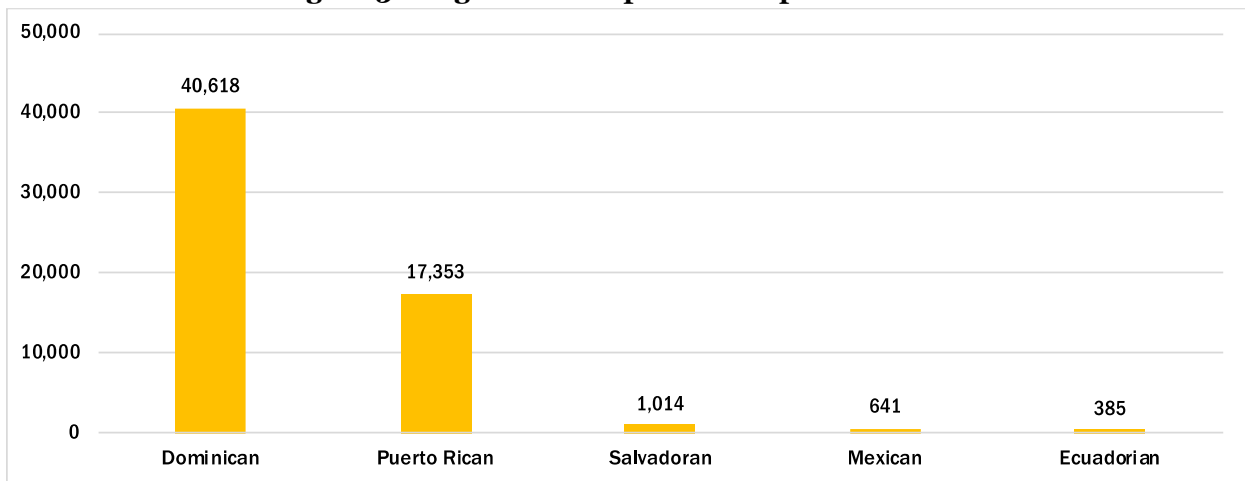


Source: 2006-2010 & 2015-2019 American Community Survey– B03002

The Latino subpopulations in Lawrence are similar to the state overall, in that Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are the largest populations. However, while Puerto Ricans outnumber Dominicans statewide, in Lawrence the reverse is true. The next largest groups, after the Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Ecuadorians (Figure 3).

Lawrence has a much larger share of its population that is foreign-born than does the Commonwealth overall. Lawrence is 41% foreign-born, while Massachusetts is 17% foreign-born. Among Latinos, 46% are foreign-born and 25% are non-citizens.

Figure 3: Origin of the Top Latino Populations

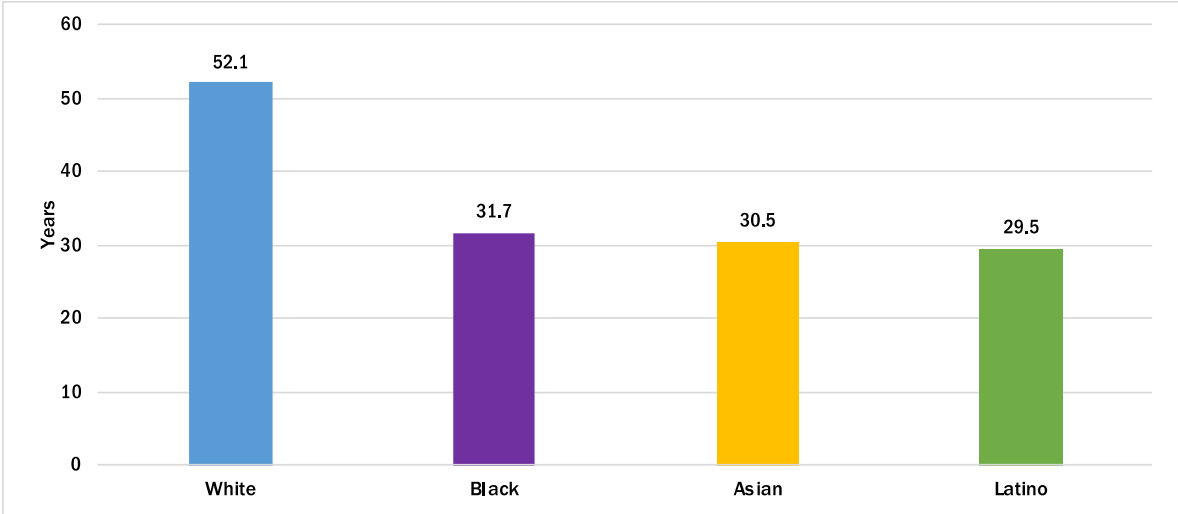


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03001

The median age in Lawrence is 32.3 years, but it varies significantly across ethno-racial groups. Whites are the oldest group in Lawrence and in Massachusetts, with a median age of 52.1 years in the city, while that of Latinos, the youngest group, is 29.5 years (Figure 4). The median age for Latinos statewide, at 28.1 years, is slightly younger than in Lawrence.

Median Age and Marital Status

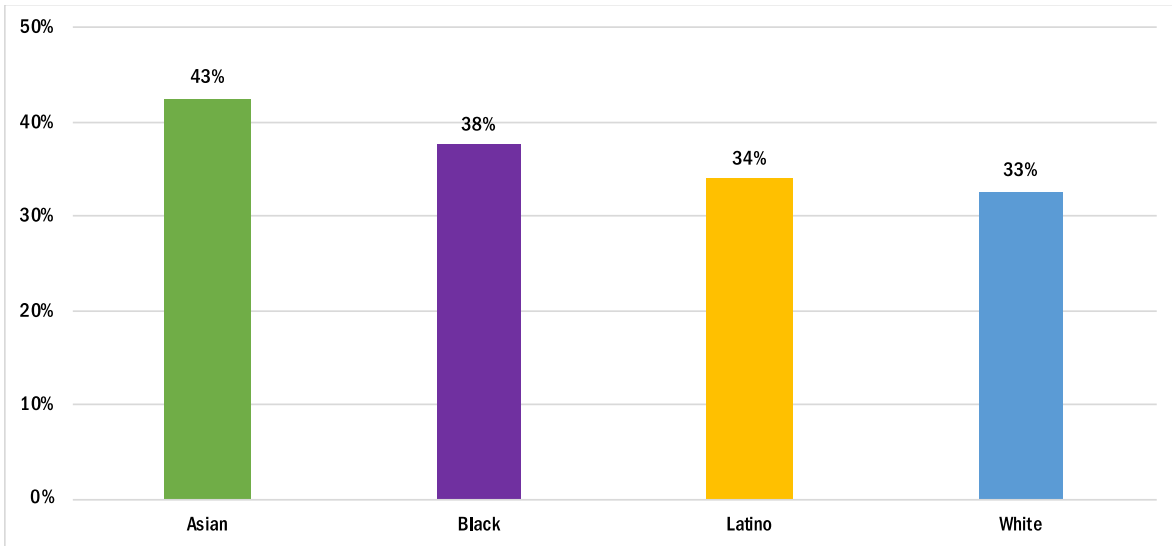
Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B01002

The marriage rate in Lawrence for persons 15 and over is 34% compared to 48% statewide. Asians in Lawrence have the highest marriage rate 43% (Figure 5). The marriage rate for Latinos is 34%, almost exactly the same as their statewide marriage rate of 33%.

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

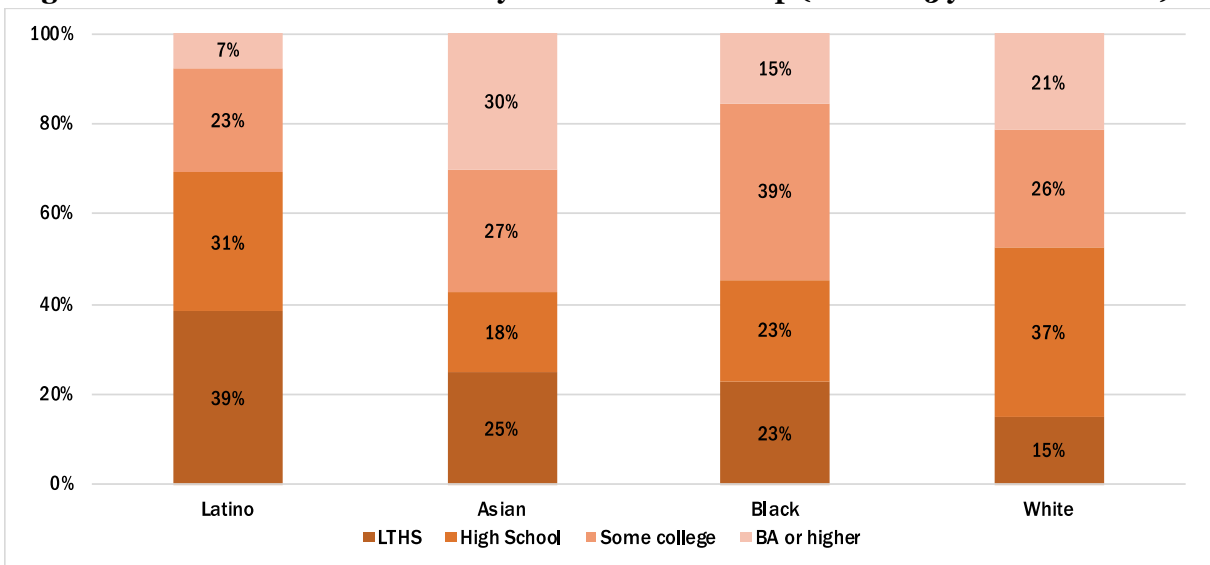


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B12002

Education

In Lawrence, Latinos have the largest share of residents who did not complete high school (39%). Whites have the lowest less-than-high-school (LTHS) rate at 15%. Degree holders, on the opposite end of the spectrum, are most heavily concentrated in the Asian (30%) and White (21%) populations. Latinos with a bachelor’s degree or higher account for only 7% of Latinos 25 years and older in Lawrence, only a third of the 21% figure for Latinos statewide.

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

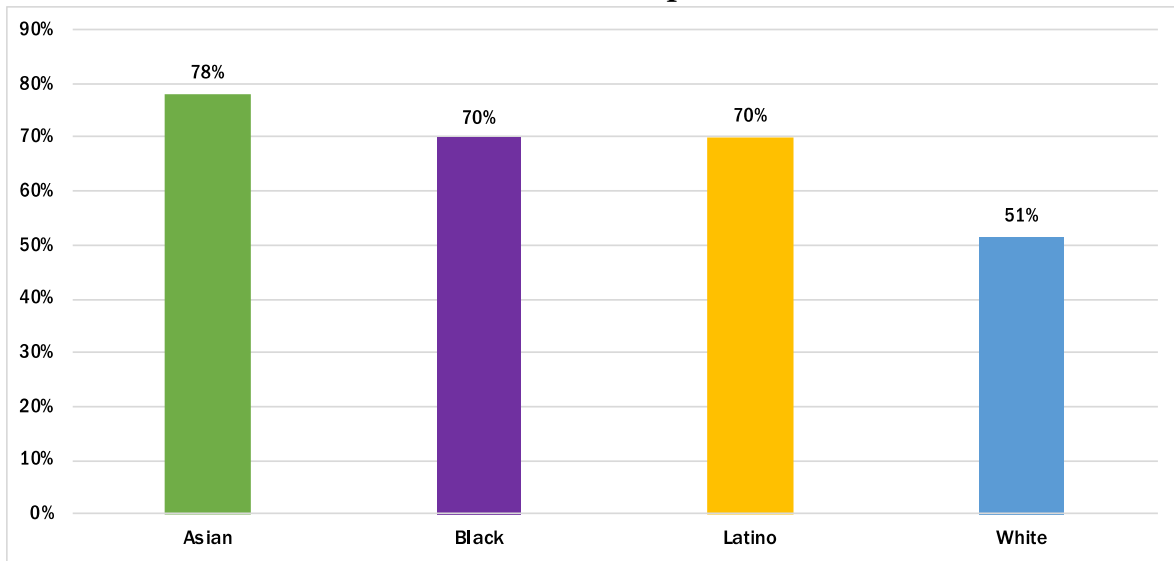


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C15002

Labor Force Participation

Labor force participation in Lawrence is highest among Asians at 78% (Figure 7). Latino and Blacks follow with similar rates, at 70%. The older White population has a labor force participation rate of 51%. Statewide, 67% of Latinos participate in the labor force.

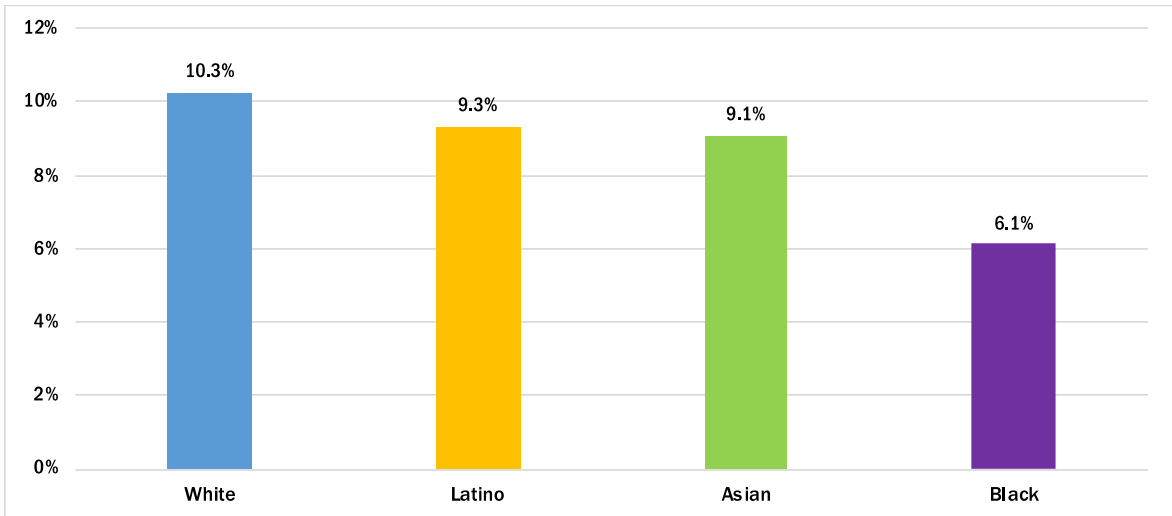
Figure 7: Labor Force Participation among Individuals 16 Years and Older by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C23002

The unemployment rate in Lawrence was 9.3% during this period, almost twice the state's rate of 4.8%. Whites had the highest unemployment rate (10.3%) followed by Latinos and Asians (9.3% and 9.1%) respectively. The Latino unemployment rate in Lawrence was well above the statewide Latino rate of 6.0%.

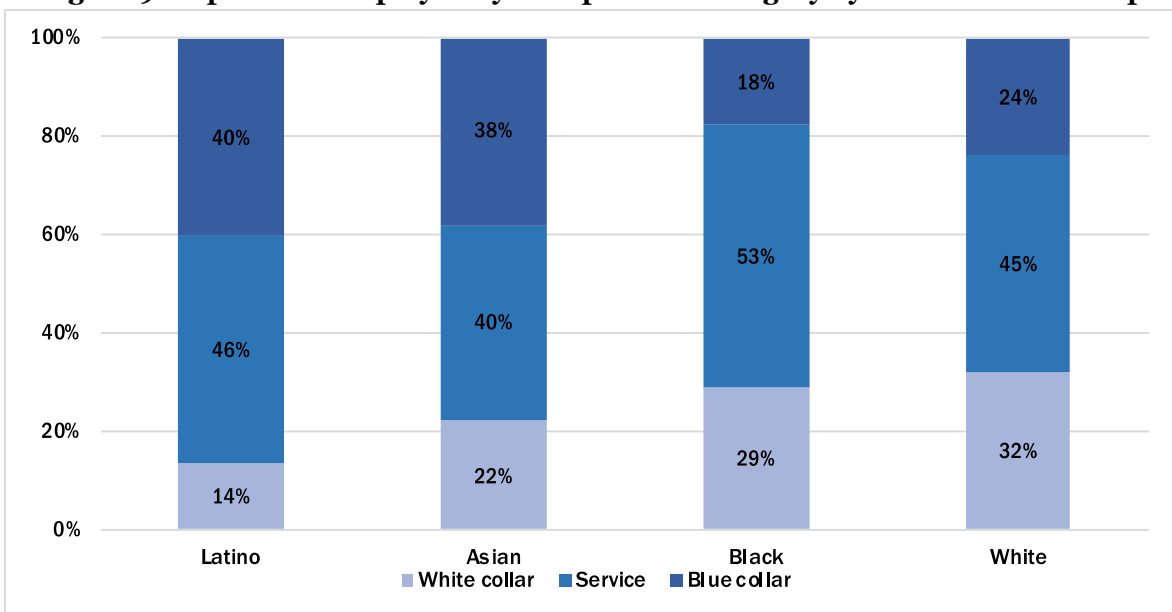
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (ages 16+)



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C23002

Figure 9 shows that Latino workers in Lawrence are least represented in white-collar positions (14%). This pales in comparison to the statewide figure for Latinos of 25% working in white-collar jobs. Latinos have the largest share of workers in the service sector (46%) and blue-collar jobs (40%). This distribution of the occupations among Latinos is fairly similar to their statewide distribution, though a higher percentages of Latinos work in service occupations (and a lower percentage in blue-collar occupations) statewide than in Lawrence.

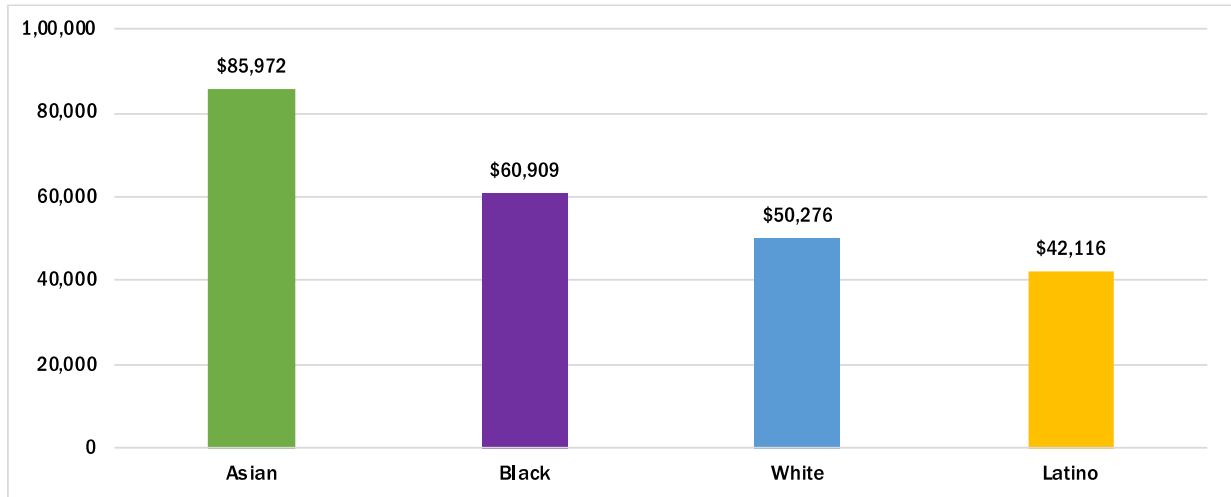
Figure 9: Population Employed by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C24010

Income

Figure 10: Median Earnings by Ethno-Racial Group



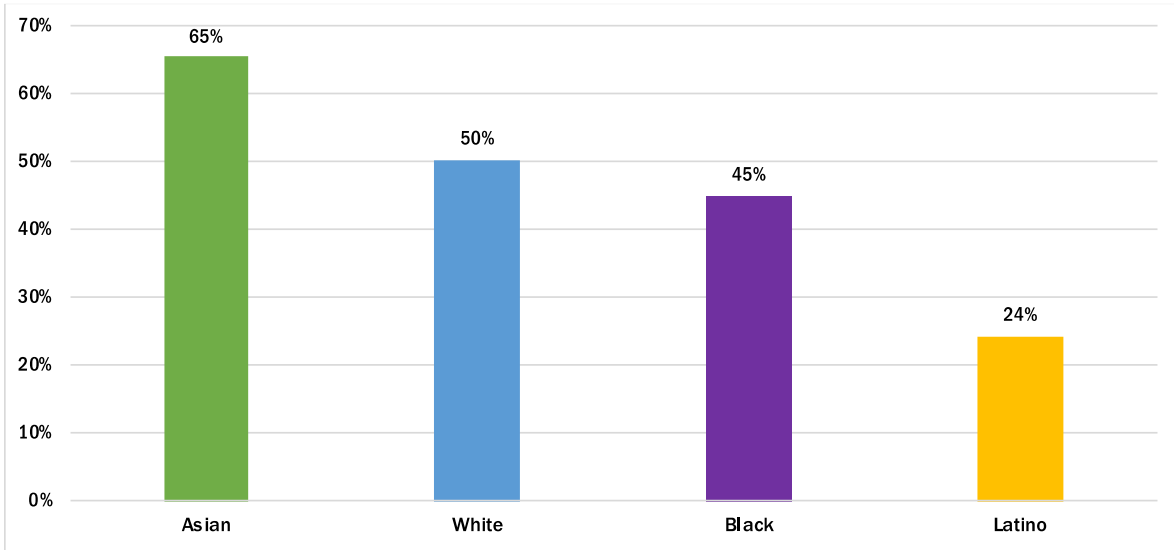
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B19013

Lawrence’s median household income (\$44,613) is barely half the statewide median, which is \$81,215. Figure 10 shows that Latino residents have the lowest median household income (\$42,116, slightly lower than the statewide Latino median of \$44,885). Asians have the highest median household income (\$85,972) in the city.

Housing Status and Medical Uninsurance

Like in many other cities and towns across the Commonwealth, homeownership rates vary significantly in Lawrence by ethno-racial groups. At the high end, Asian residents have a homeownership rate of 65%, compared to Latino residents, who have the lowest ownership rate, 24%. Statewide, the Latino ownership rate is 26%. Whites and Blacks have ownership rates that fall between those of Asian and Latino residents, with Whites owning at a rate of 50% and Blacks at 45% (Figure 11).

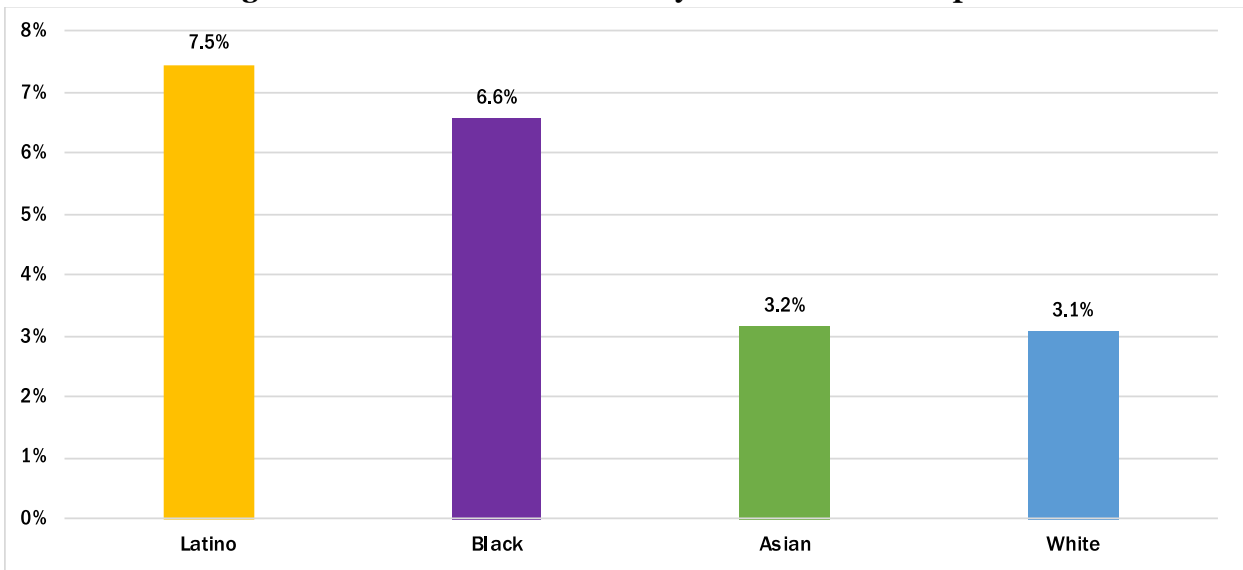
Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B25003

Latinos in Lawrence are more likely to lack health insurance than any other group in the city. Latinos' uninsurance rate is 7.5%, compared to 6.6% for Blacks, 3.2% for Asians, and 3.1% for Whites (Figure 12). Across the state, the Latino uninsurance rate is 5.3%.

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group

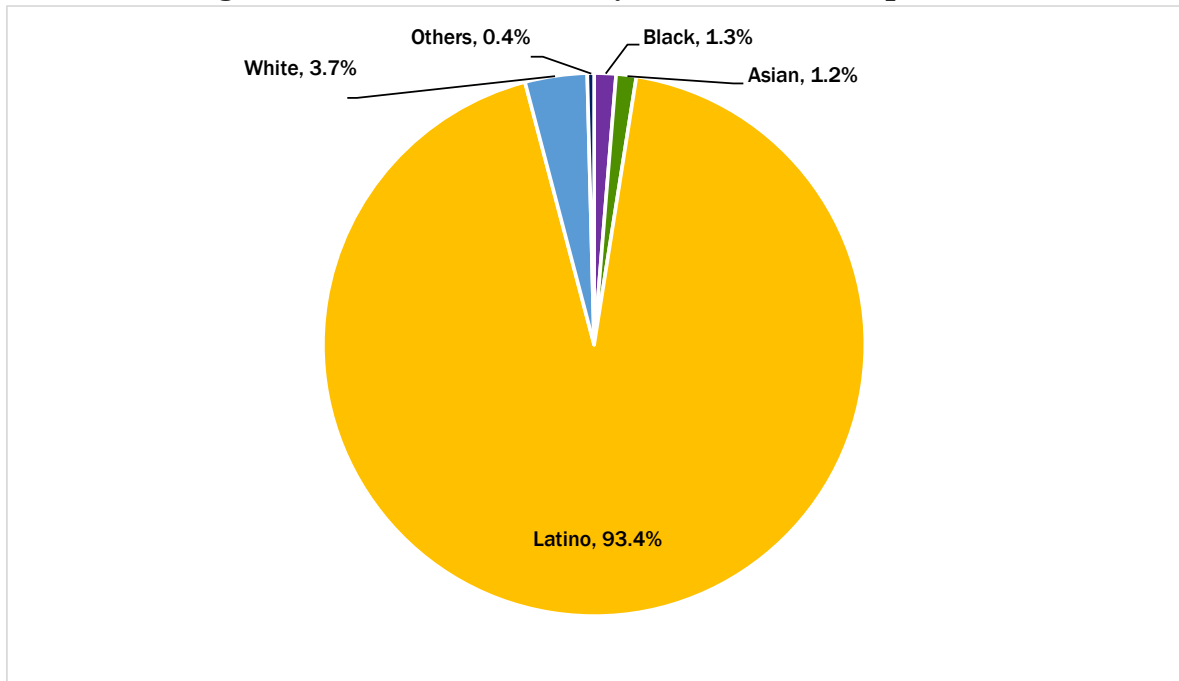


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - C27001

Spotlight on Lawrence Public Schools

Lawrence Public Schools is the focus of this next section. Lawrence Public Schools enrolled 13,658 students in School Year 2018-2019. Latinos make up 93.4% of the school population (Figure 13), which is the largest share of Latinos in any school district in the state. These data are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

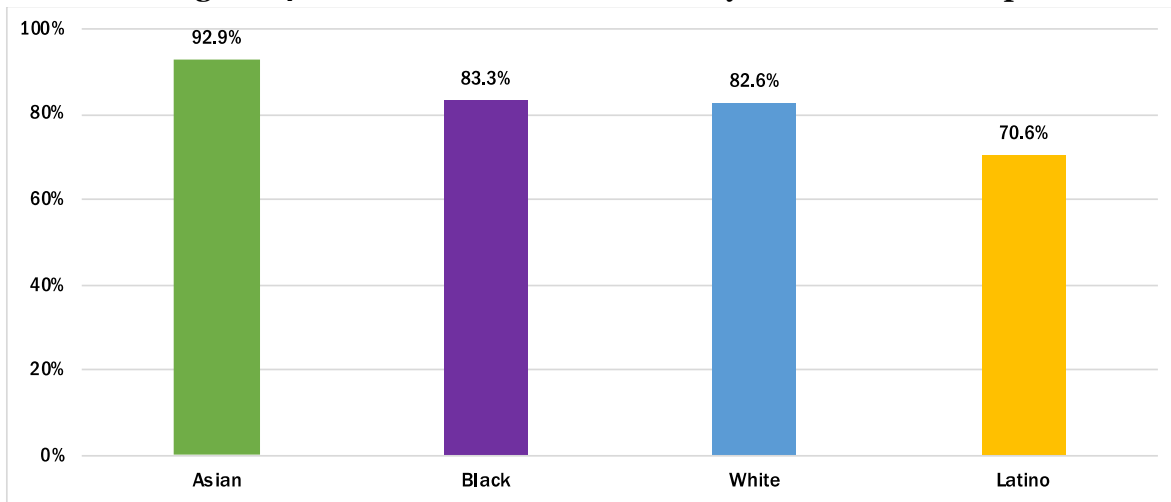
Figure 13. School Enrollment by Ethno-Racial Composition



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

Lawrence Public Schools' four-year high school graduation rate in School Year 2018-2019 was 71%, much lower than the state's rate of 88%. Latino students have the lowest graduation rate in the Lawrence Public Schools, 71%.

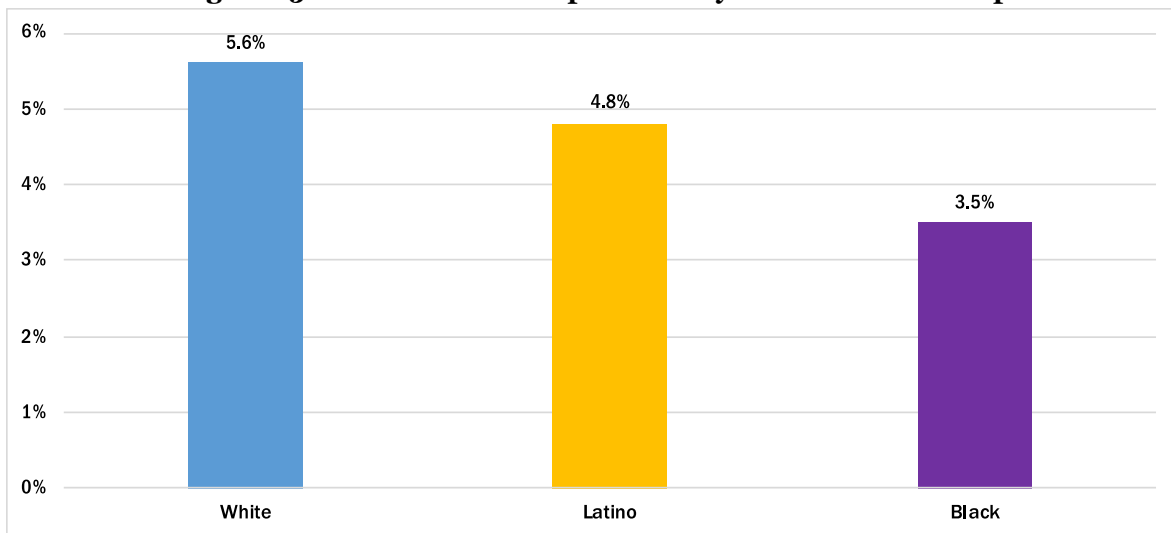
Figure 14: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



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

Lawrence Public Schools' out-of-school suspension rate is 4.7%, which is higher than the state's rate of 3%. White students have the highest suspension rate in School Year 2018-2019 at 5.6%, and Latinos have the second highest rate at 4.8%.

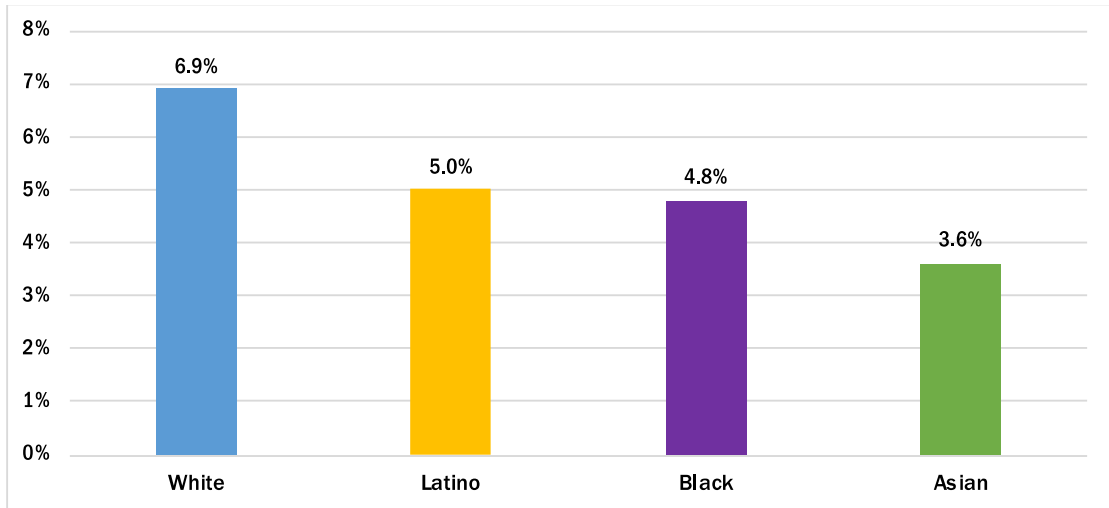
Figure 15: Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethno-Racial Group



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

Lawrence Public Schools' dropout rate is 5.0%, much higher than the state's rate of 1.8%. White students had the highest dropout rate in School Year 2018-2019 at 6.9%, and Latino students had the second highest at 5.0%.

Figure 16: Dropout Rates by Ethno-Racial Group

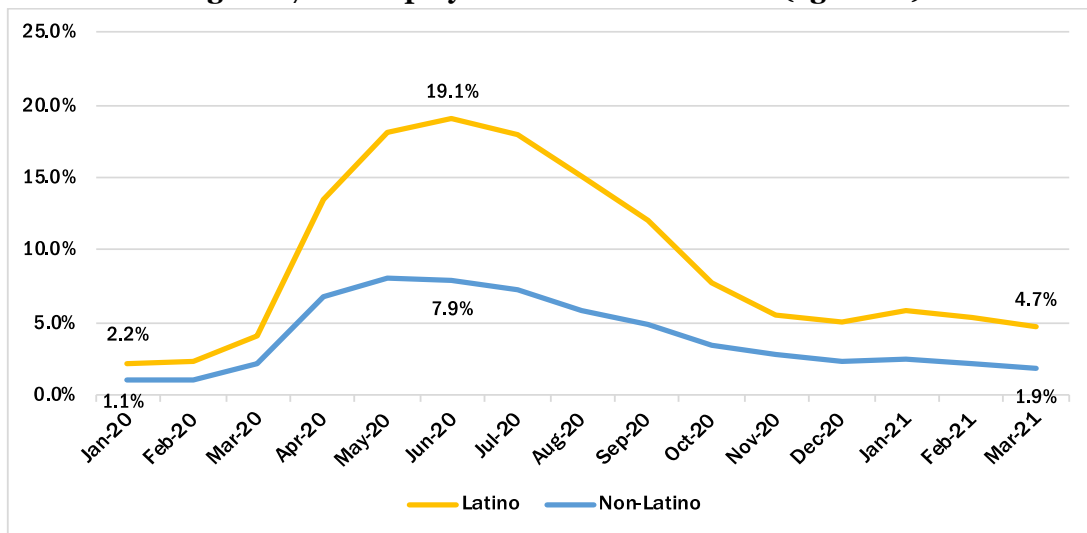


Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Impact of COVID-19

Starting in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit Lawrence, unemployment claims rapidly increased, starting the year at 2.2% for Latinos. In June 2020, both Latinos and non-Latinos filed high numbers of unemployment claims, their rates rising to 19.1% and 7.9%, respectively. The shares of unemployment claims 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 4.7% for Latinos and 1.9% 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.

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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