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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: Lowell

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

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Lowell

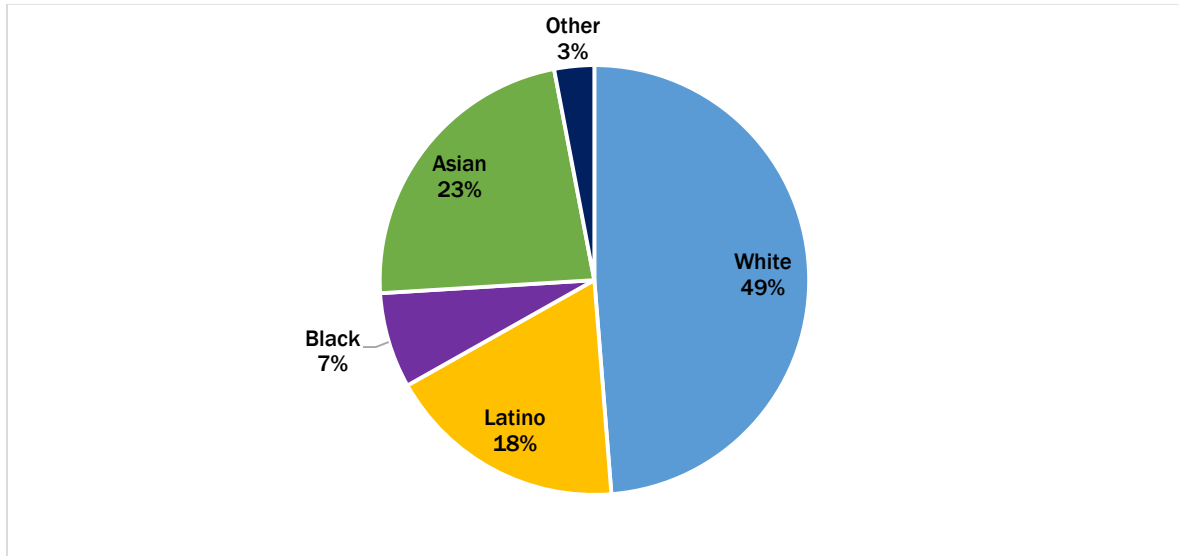
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Lowell Overview: The Latino Population

Lowell is a city of 111,306 residents, who include 20,132 Latinos, or 18% of the city's population. (Across the state, Latino residents make up only 11% of the population.) Lowell has a larger non-Latino White (49%) and Asian (23%) populations, while Blacks and "other" groups compose 7% and 3%, respectively (Figure 1).

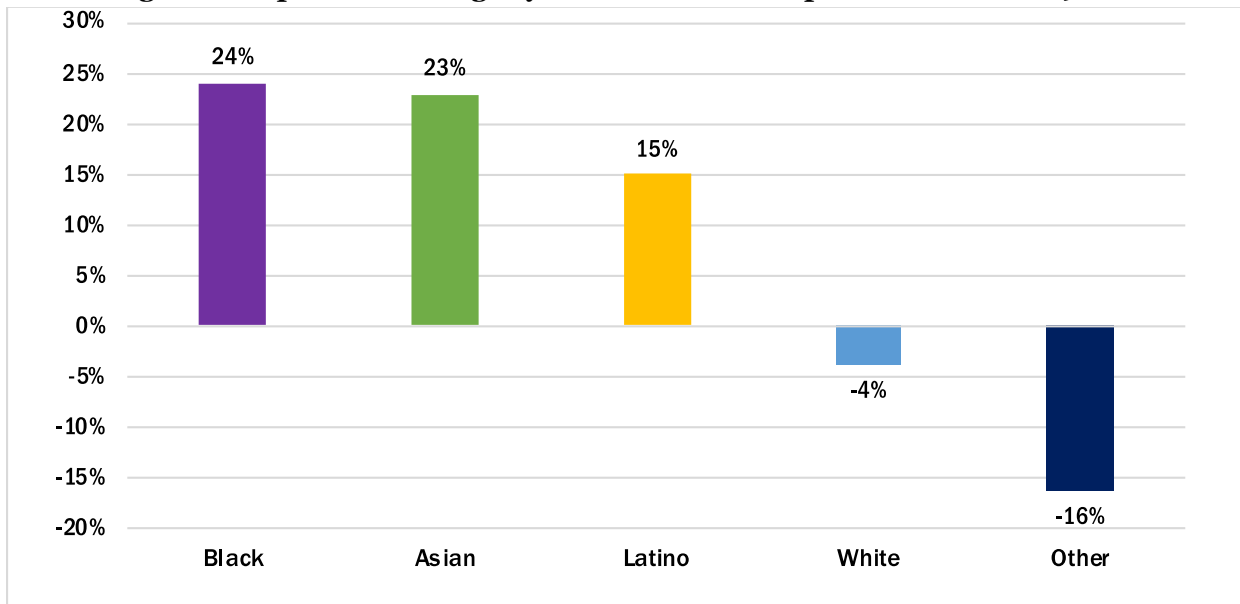
Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in Lowell



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03002

From 2010 to 2019, Lowell's population increased by 6%. Latinos had the third largest population growth as they grew from 17,513 to 20,132, a 15% increase. (This falls short of the statewide Latino growth of 38% during this period.) Blacks and Asians experienced faster population growth (24% and 23% respectively), while Whites declined by 4%.

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

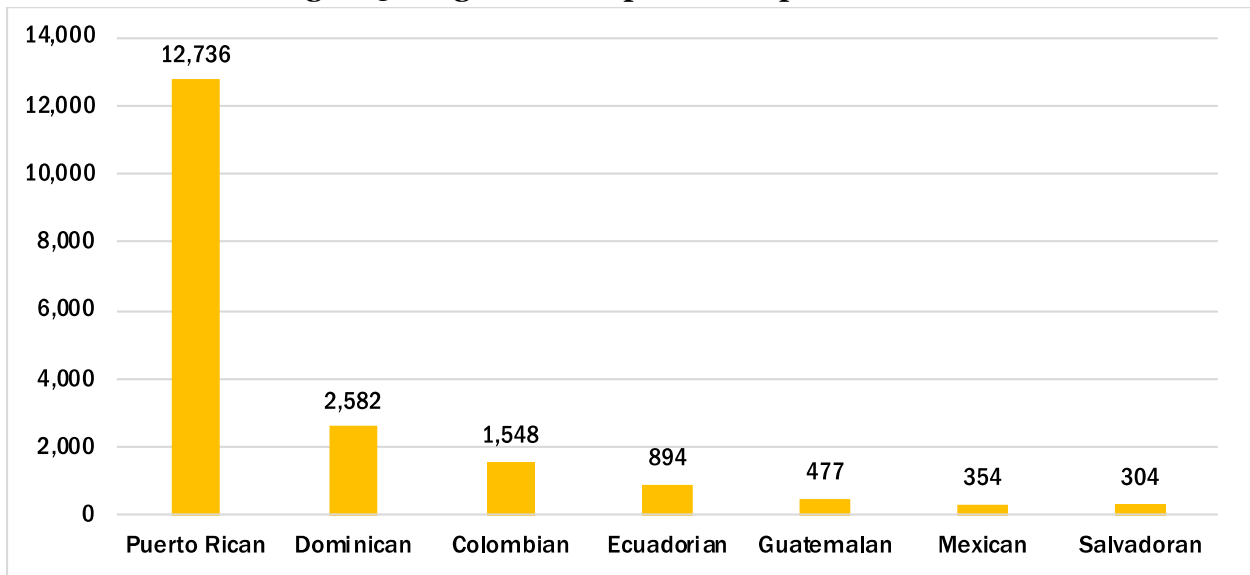


Source: 2006-2010 & 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03002

One of the explanations of Lowell's population growth is international migration. Lowell has long been a destination for international migrants, and today it has a far greater concentration of foreign-born (28%) than does the Commonwealth as a whole (17%). Cambodians (7,643) and Brazilians (3,089) are the largest foreign-born populations in the city. Among Latinos, 22% are foreign-born and 13% are non-citizens.

Puerto Ricans are the largest Latino population, with 12,736 residents. The two other Latino populations that number more than 1,000 residents are Dominicans (2,582) and Colombians (1,548). They are followed by the smaller populations of Ecuadorians, Guatemalans, Mexicans, and Salvadorans (Figure 3). Statewide, the largest Latino populations are Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, followed by Salvadorans, Mexicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Hondurans, Cubans, and Ecuadorians.

Figure 3: Origin of the Top Latino Populations

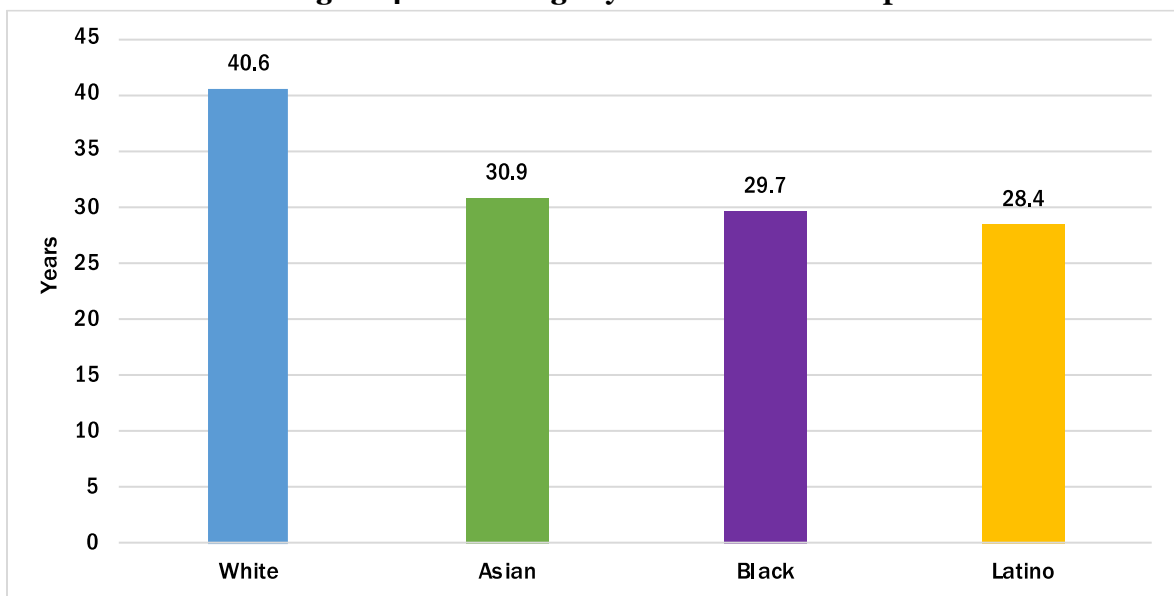


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03001

Median Age and Marital Status

Consistent with statewide trends, Whites in Lowell are the oldest population. While the median age for White is 40.6 years, the median age for all other groups is 31 years or younger. Latinos are the youngest major ethno-racial group in the city, with a median age of 28.4 years. (This is very close to the statewide median age for Latinos, which is 28.1 years.)

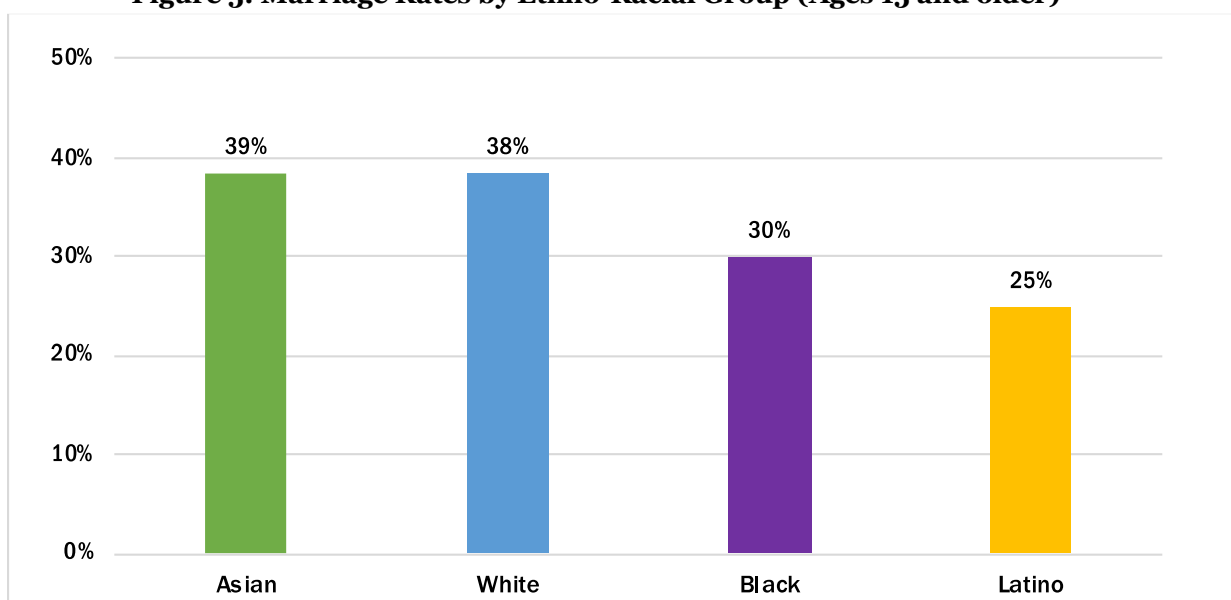
Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B01002

The marriage rate in Lowell for persons 15 and over is 37.9% (Figure 5). It is highest among Asians (39%) and Whites (38%) and lowest among Blacks (30%) and Latinos (25%). Latinos' marriage rate in Lowell is lower than the statewide marriage rate for Latinos, which is 33%.

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

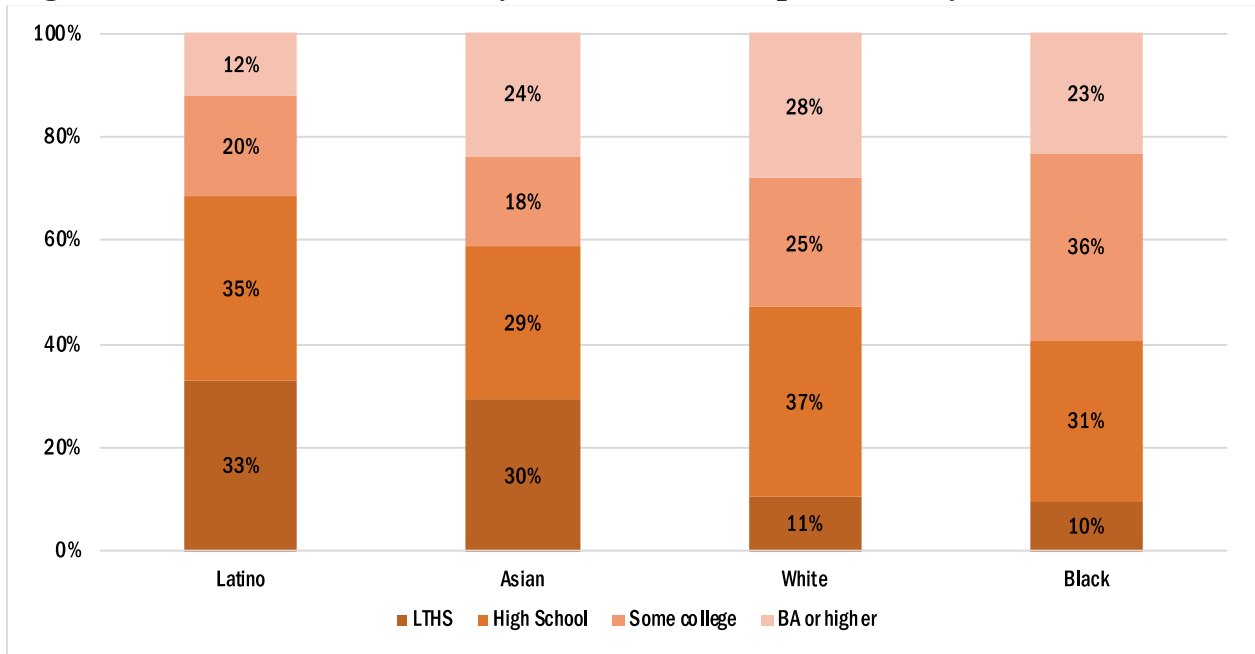


Source: 2015–2019 American Community Survey – B12002

Education

In Lowell, as throughout Massachusetts, a large share of Latino adults have not completed high school. In Lowell this share is 33%, compared to 27% statewide. At the other end of the educational scale, Latino adults in Lowell have the lowest share with a Bachelor's degree or higher (12%) compared to 20% for Latinos statewide. Asian adults have a similar large share without a high school education (30%) but 24% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

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

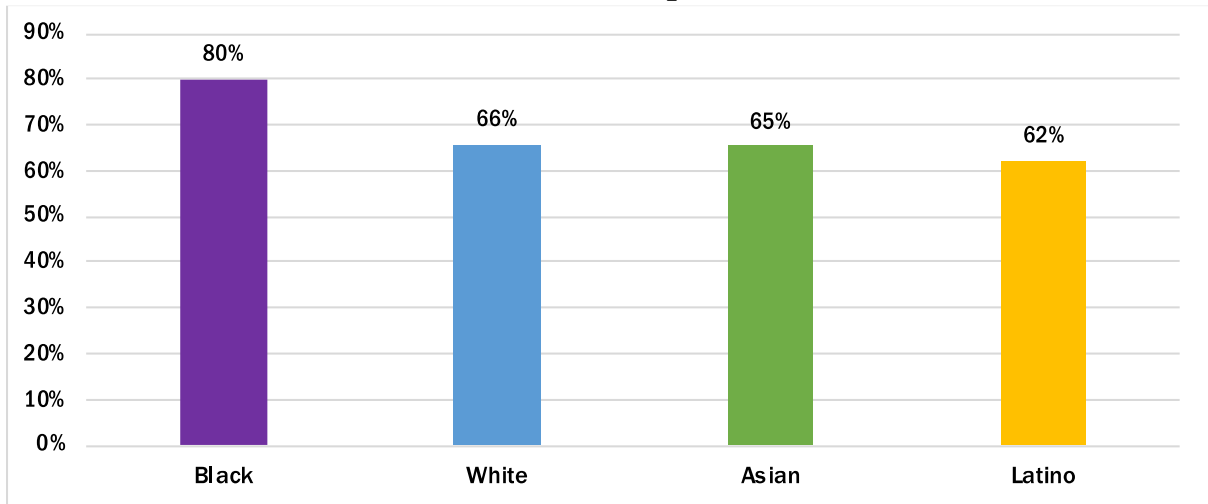


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C15002

Labor Force Participation

In Lowell, Black residents have the highest labor force participation rates, at 80%. The participation rates for White and Asian residents are fairly comparable, at 66% and 65% respectively. Latinos have the lowest labor force participation in Lowell at 62%, which is lower than their statewide rate of 68%.

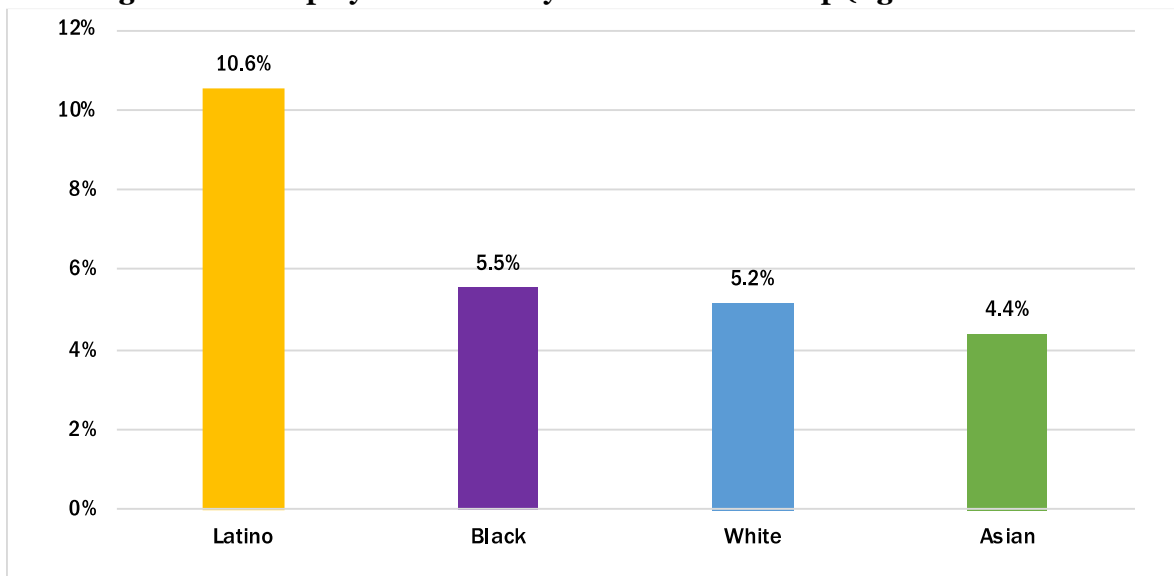
Figure 7: Labor Force Participation among Individuals 16 Years and Older by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015–2019 American Community Survey – C23002

The unemployment rate in Lowell during this period was 5.8%. The rate for Latinos, at 10.6%, was the highest of the city's four major populations, at 10.6%. (Statewide, the percentage of Latinos who are unemployed is a good bit smaller, at 6.0%.) Blacks have the second highest unemployment rate at 5.5%, while the rates for Asian and White residents are around 4% and 5% respectively.

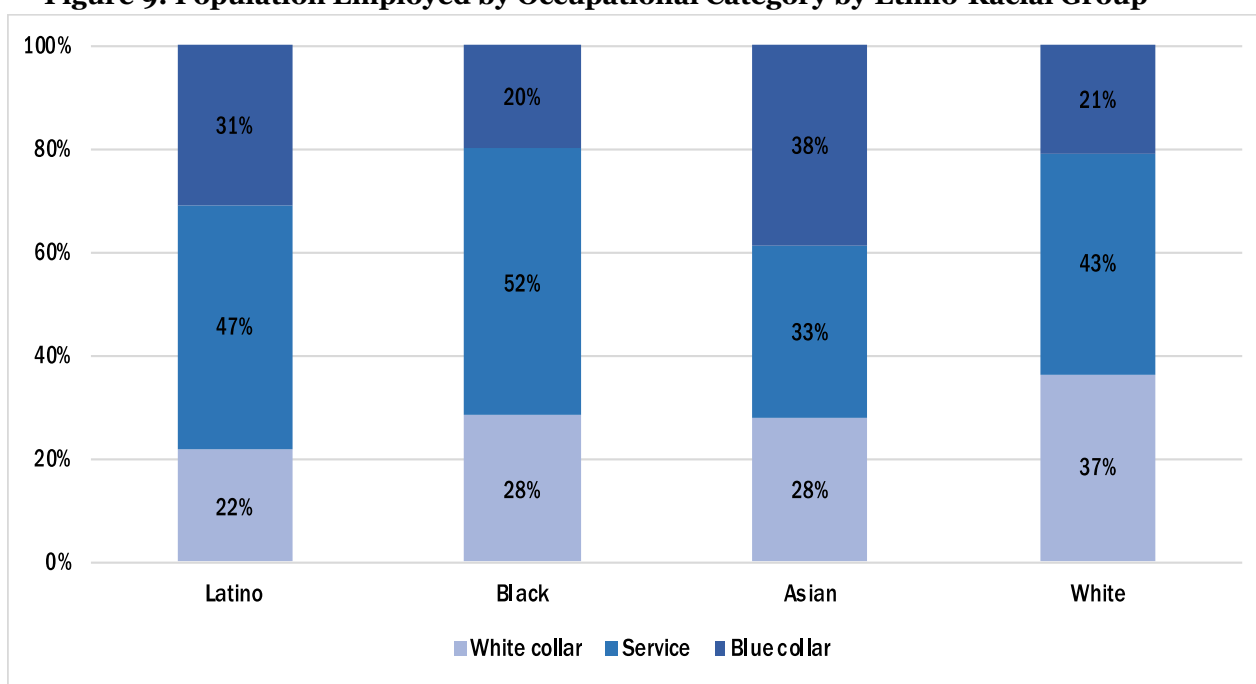
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (Ages 16 and older)



Source: 2015–2019 American Community Survey – C23002

Among those employed in Lowell, Latinos are least likely to find white collar employment, while White workers are most likely to do so (Figure 9). More than a third of Whites currently work in white collar positions, compared to 22% of Latino workers. This contrasts with the statewide share of Latino workers in white-collar jobs, which is 26%. Roughly a quarter of both Blacks and Asians in Lowell fill white-collar jobs. Alternatively, approximately half of Black and Latino workers are in the service sector. Statewide, 49% of Latinos work in these occupations, which is higher than in Lowell. Finally, 31% of Latinos work blue-collar jobs in Lowell, compared to 25% statewide.

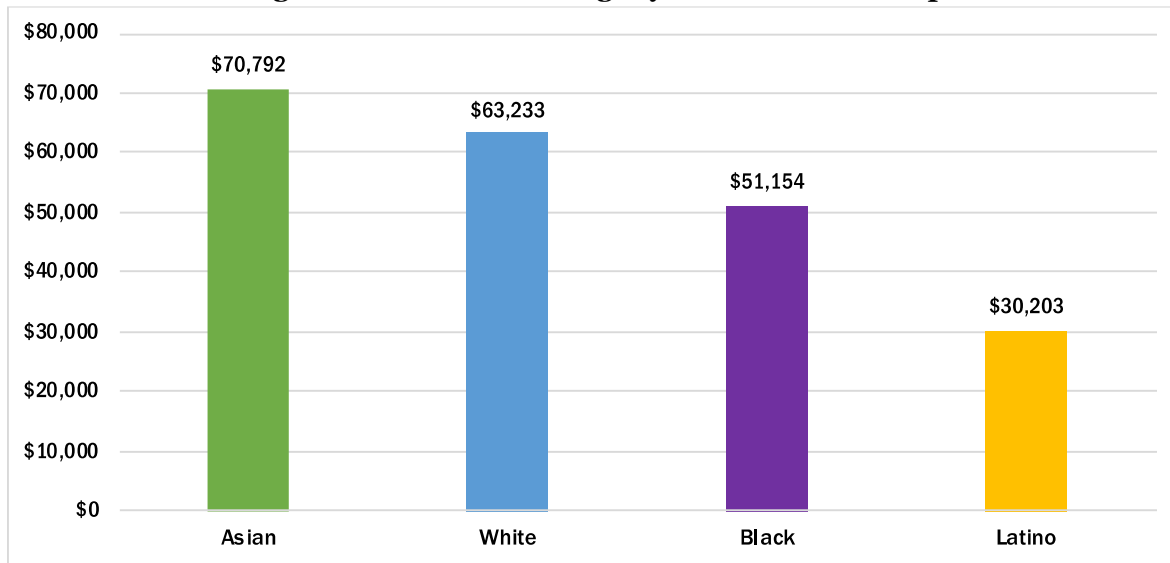
Figure 9: Population Employed by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – C24010

Income

Figure 10: Median Earnings by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015–2019 Year American Community Survey – B19013

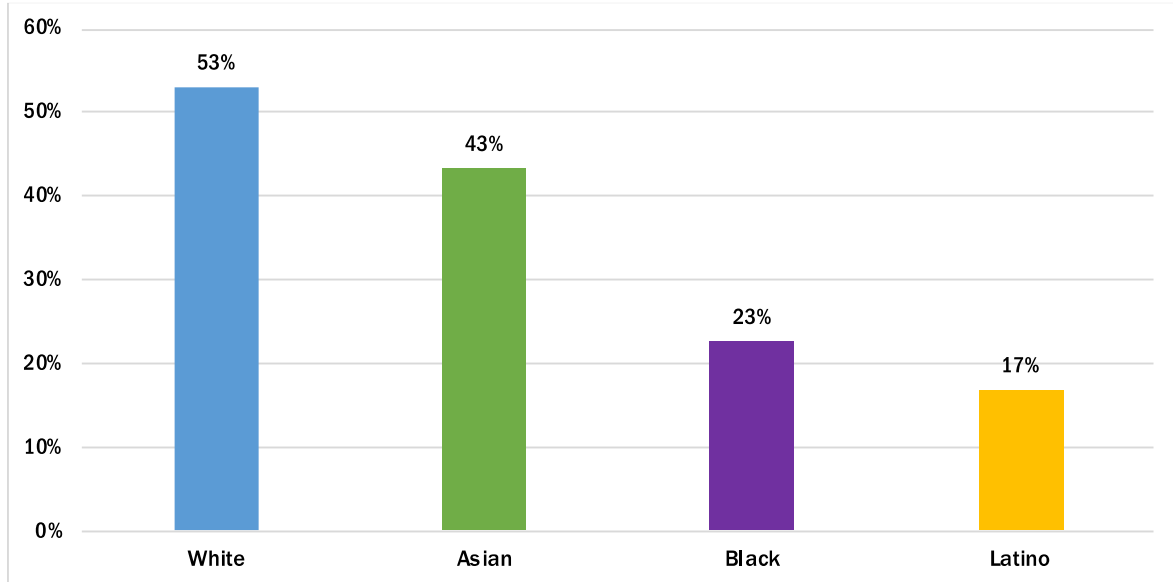
In Lowell, median household income is \$56,878, while statewide it is \$81,215. Within Lowell, Asian households have the highest median income at \$70,792, and Latino households have the lowest (\$30,203—a difference of more than \$40,000 from the White median). However, Latinos in Lowell are more economically successful than those in other parts of the Commonwealth, as the statewide Latino median income is \$44,885. In the middle of the distribution within Lowell, White households take home \$63,233, and Black household income is \$51,154 per year.

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. Homeownership in Lowell varies across the ethno-racial groups.

Latinos in Figure 11 have the lowest homeownership level of any ethno-racial group in the city at 17%, which is lower than the 26% of Latinos statewide who are homeowners.

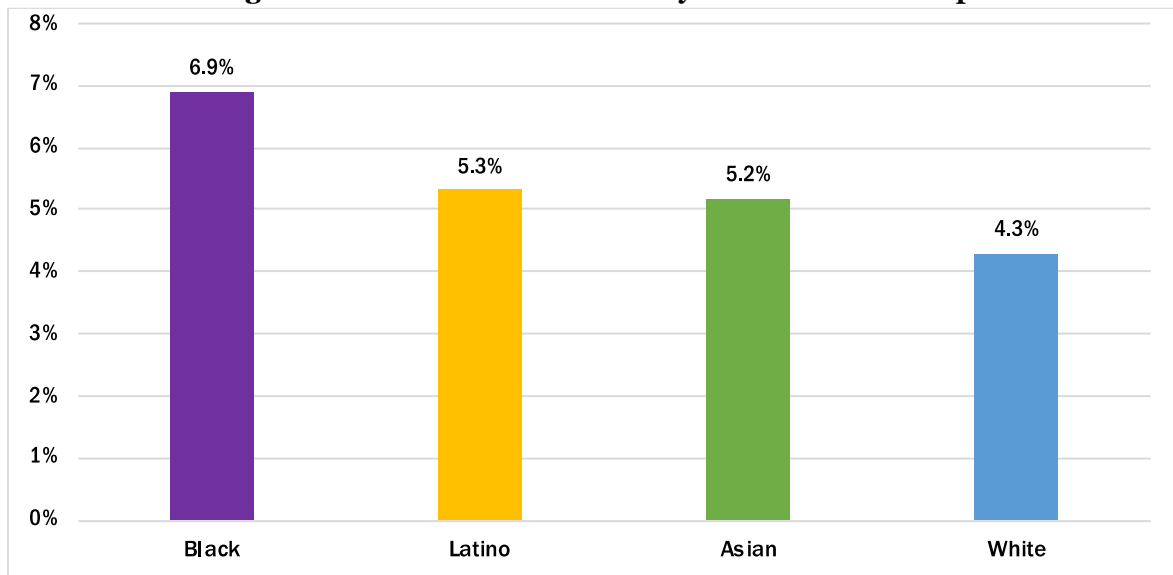
Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015–2019 American Community Survey – B25003

Health insurance coverage in Lowell varies across groups, though not to the degree that other indicators do in the city. The uninsured are most concentrated among Blacks, with an uninsured rate of 6.9%. The Latino uninsurance rate in Lowell is that same as their statewide rate of 5.3%. The lowest uninsurance rate in Lowell is among White residents (4.3%), while that of Asian residents is 5.2% (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group

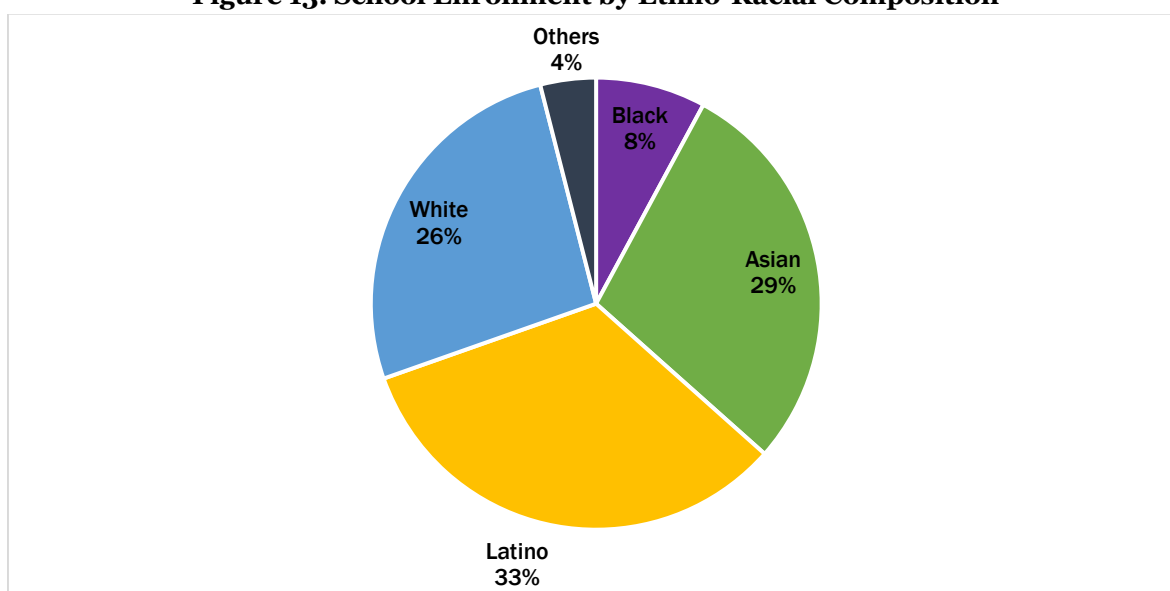


Source: 2015–2019 American Community Survey – C27001

Spotlight on Lowell Public Schools

Lowell Public Schools are the focus of this next section. Lowell Public Schools enrolled 14,548 students in School Year 2018-2019. Latinos make up 33.1% of the school population (as compared to the statewide Latino school population of 20.8%). Asians, Whites, and Blacks are the next largest school populations in Lowell (Figure 13). Though Whites are the largest population in Lowell, the school population is highest among Latinos. These data are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

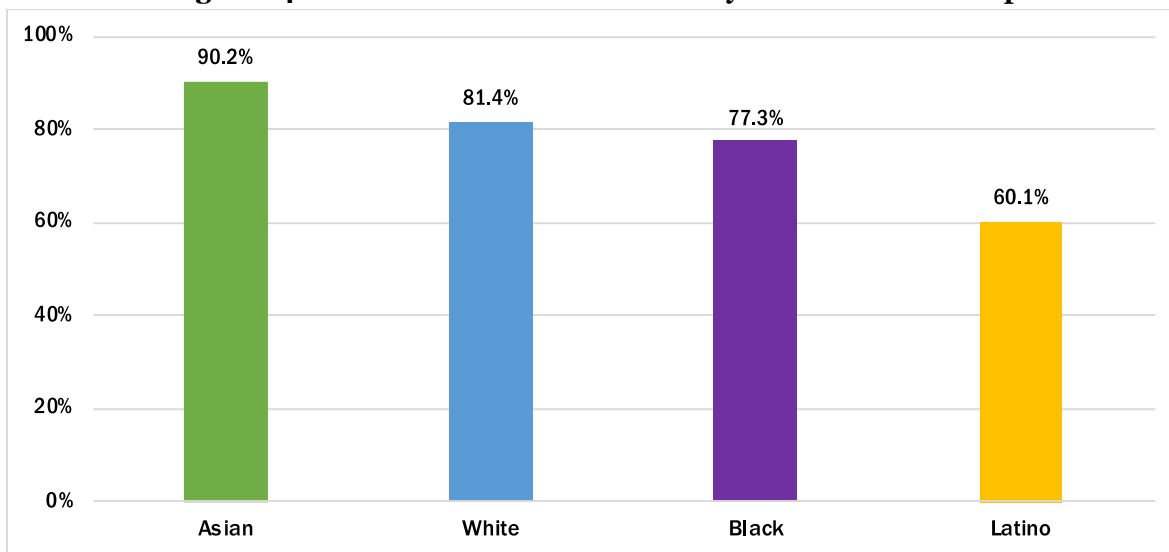
Figure 13. School Enrollment by Ethno-Racial Composition



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

Lowell Public Schools' four-year high school graduation rate in School Year 2018-2019 was 78%, lower than the state's rate of 88%. Latino students have the lowest graduation rate in the Lowell Public Schools, 60% (Figure 14).

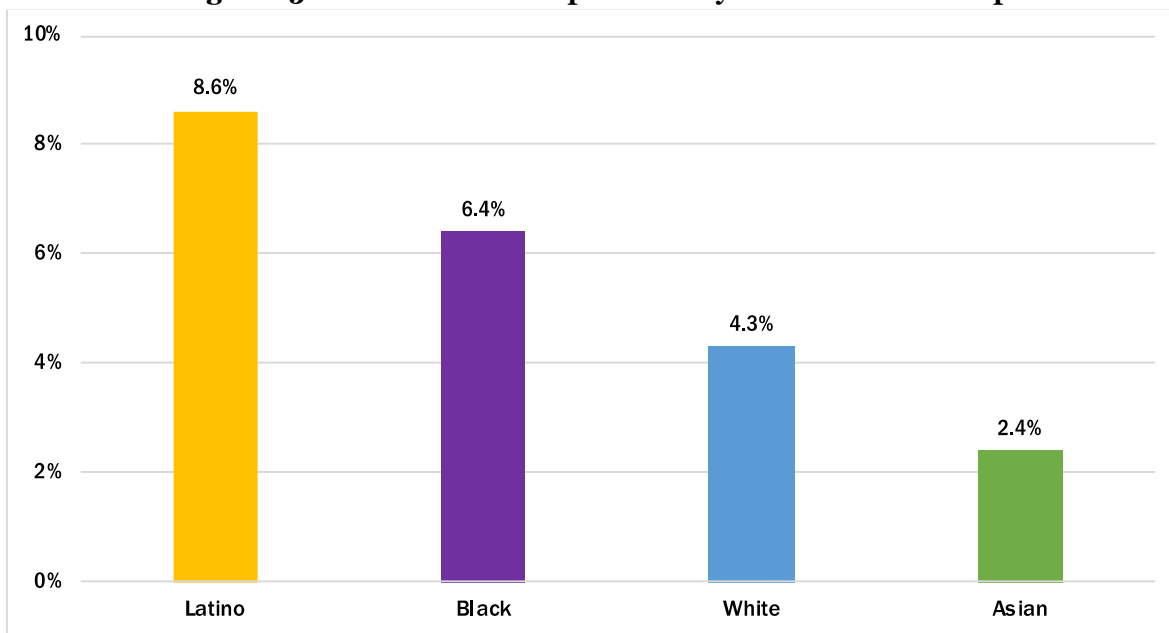
Figure 14: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



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

Lowell Public Schools' out-of-school suspension rate is 5.5%, notably higher than the state's rate of 3.0%. Latino students had the highest suspension rate in School Year 2018-2019 at 8.6%, with Black students having the second highest rate at 6.4%.

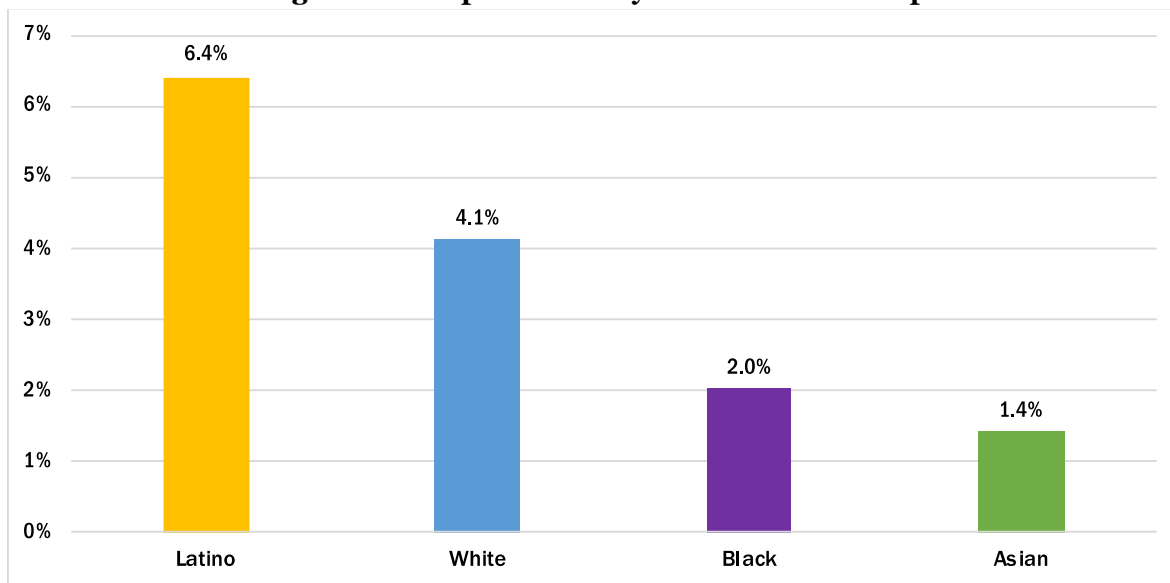
Figure 15: Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethno-Racial Group



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

Lowell Public Schools' dropout rate is 3.7%, about double the state's rate of 1.8%. Latino students had the highest dropout rate in School Year 2018-2019, 6.4%.

Figure 16: Dropout Rates by Ethno-Racial Group

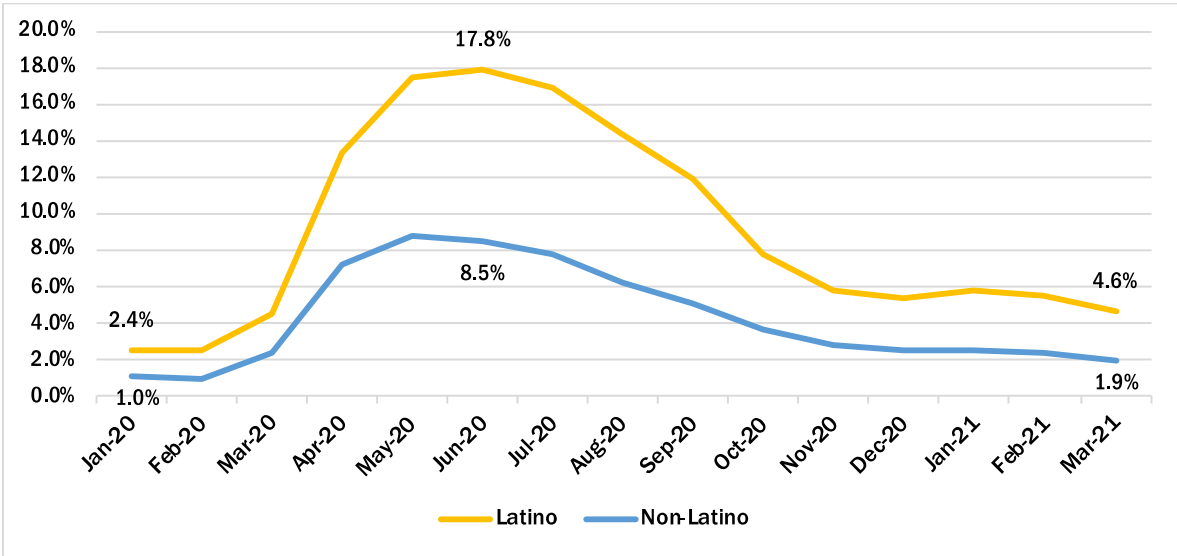


Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Impact of COVID-19

Starting in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit Lowell, unemployment claims rapidly increased, starting in 2020 at 2.4% for Latinos. In June 2020, both Latinos and non-Latinos filed high numbers of unemployment claims, their rates rising to 17.8% and 8.5% 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 4.6% for Latinos and 1.9% for non-Latinos.

Figure 17: Unemployment Claims (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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