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Latinos in Massachusetts: Worcester

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

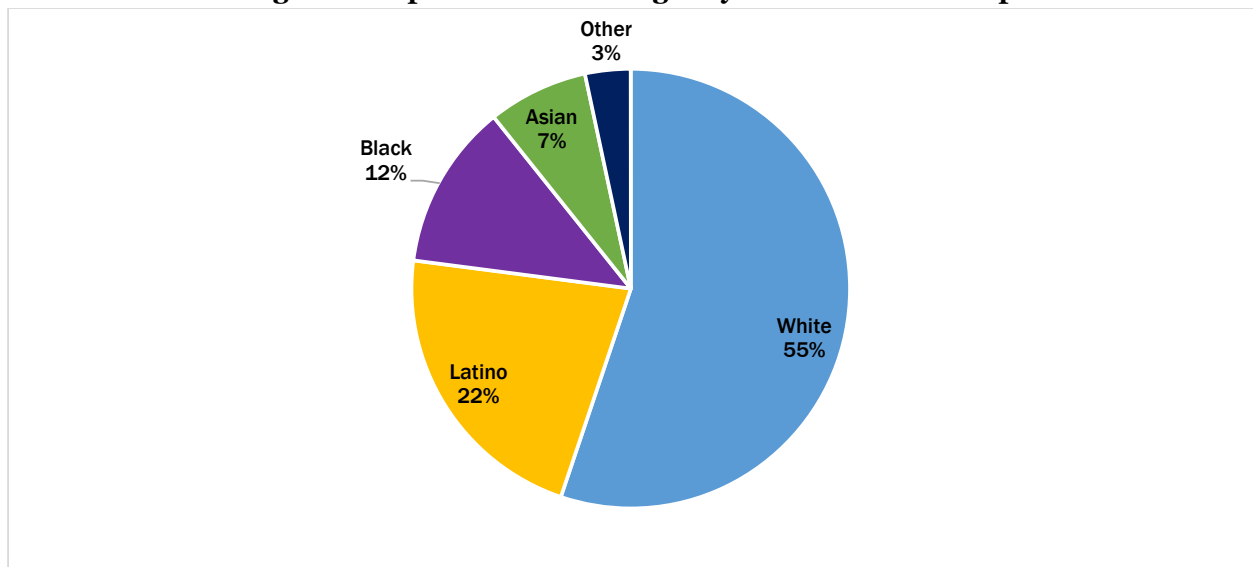
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Worcester Overview: The Latino Population

Worcester, the second largest city in Massachusetts, is home to an estimated 40,510 Latinos, who make up 22% of the city's population. Whites constitute the largest ethno-racial group (55%), while Blacks (12%) and Asians (7%) are the other ethno-racial group in the city (Figure 1). The Latino share in Worcester is larger than Latinos' statewide share, which is 11%.

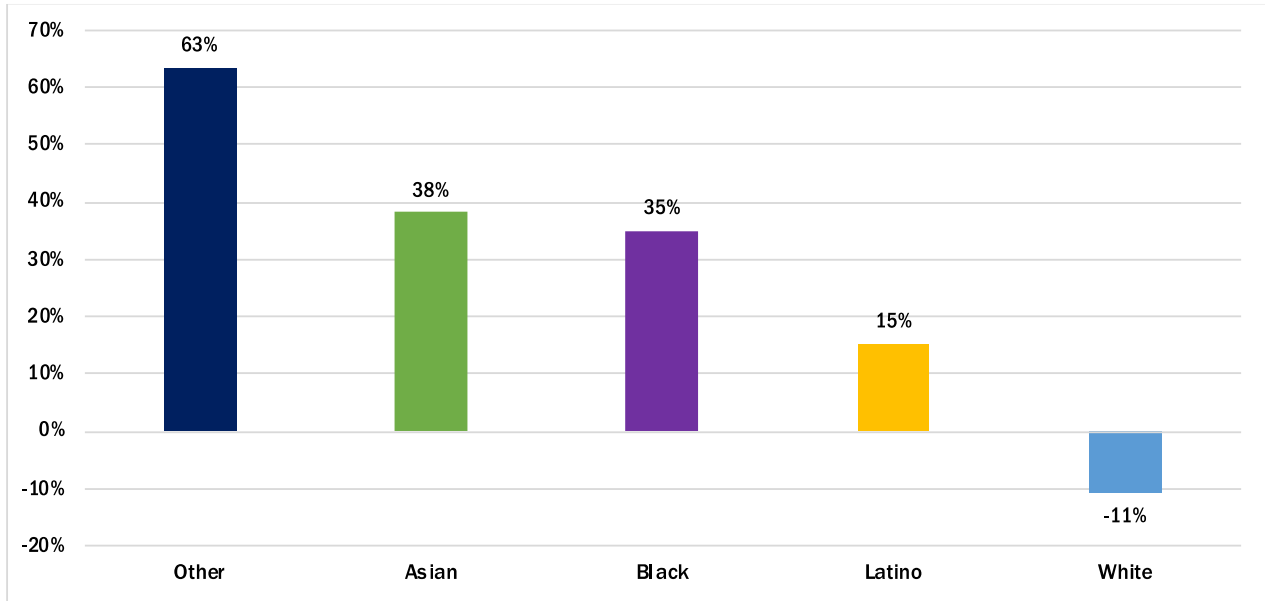
Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03003

A striking feature of Worcester is the changing composition of its population. Even as the city's overall population increased by 3% from 2010 to 2019, the Latino population increased by 15% while the White population declined by 11%. The growth of the Latino population in Worcester is slower than that of Latinos statewide, who experienced an increase of 38% during this period. In Worcester there was also a 35% increase in the Black population.

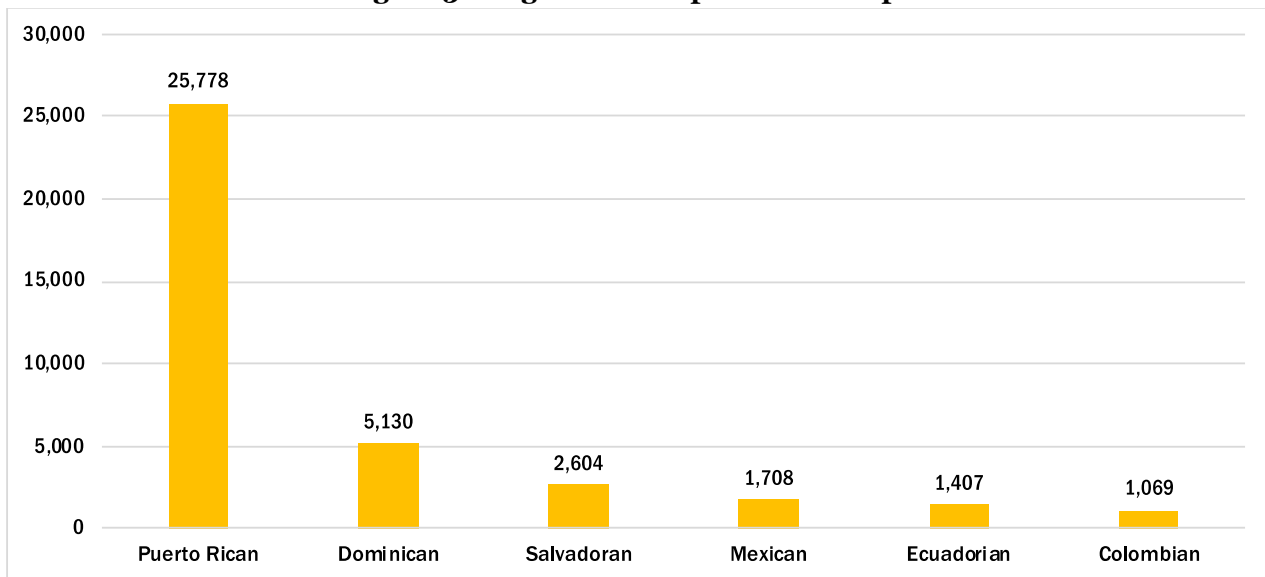
Figure 2: Population Change by Ethno-Racial Group from 2010 to 2019



Source: 2006-2010 & 2015-2019 American Community Surveys –B03003

The Latino population in Worcester is diverse in its origin but driven by Puerto Ricans, who number 25,788. Dominicans (5,130) and Salvadorans (2,604) are the next largest Latino populations. (Statewide, the largest Latino populations are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Guatemalans.) Although Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, other Latino groups help give Worcester a proportionately greater foreign-born population (21%) than the state as a whole (17%). Latinos have a similar share who are foreign-born (18.8%) and 10% are not citizens.

Figure 3: Origin of the Top Latino Groups

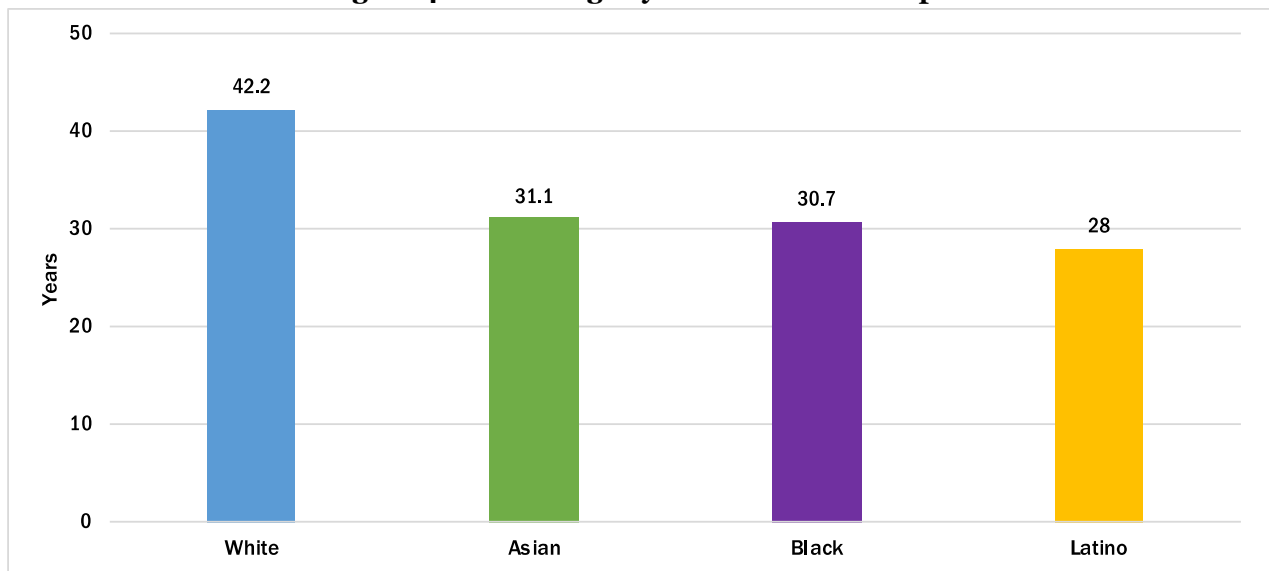


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B03003

Median Age and Marital Status

Age demographics vary significantly across ethno-racial groups in Worcester. Figure 4 shown an important demographic contribution that of Latinos contribute to Worcester. The median age in Worcester during this period is 34.7 years. Latinos in Worcester have the same median age (28 years) as Latinos statewide. Latinos in Worcester have a lower median age than Blacks (30.7 years), Asians (31.1 years), and Whites (42.2 years).

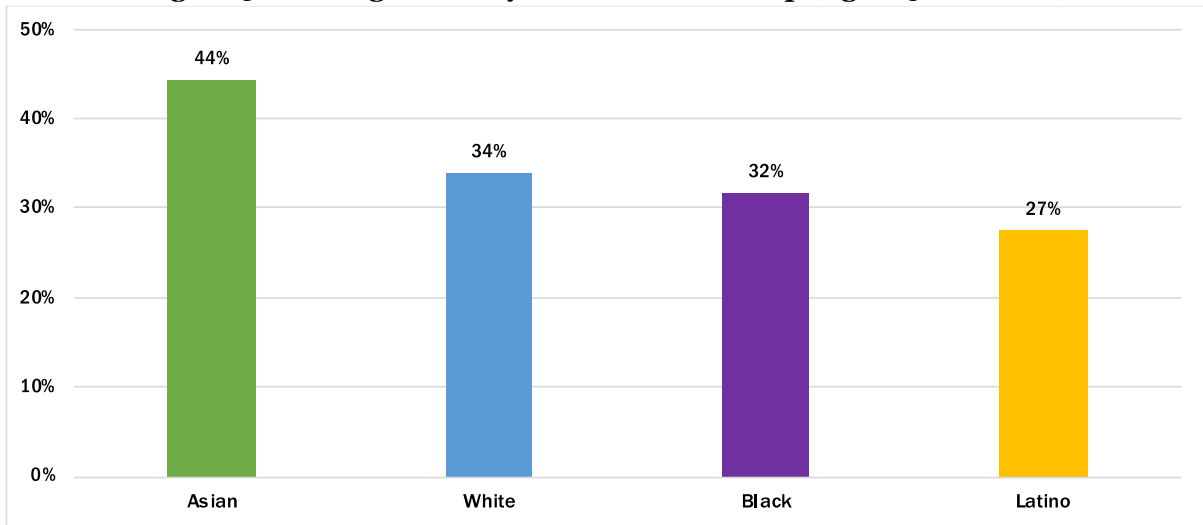
Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B01002

The marriage rate in Worcester for persons 15 and over is 33% compared to 48% statewide. The youthfulness of Worcester’s Latino population may influence marriage rates within the community as well. The Latino marriage rate (27%) shown in Figure 4 is lower than for Whites, Blacks, and Asians. Statewide, the Latino marriage rate is higher (32%).

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

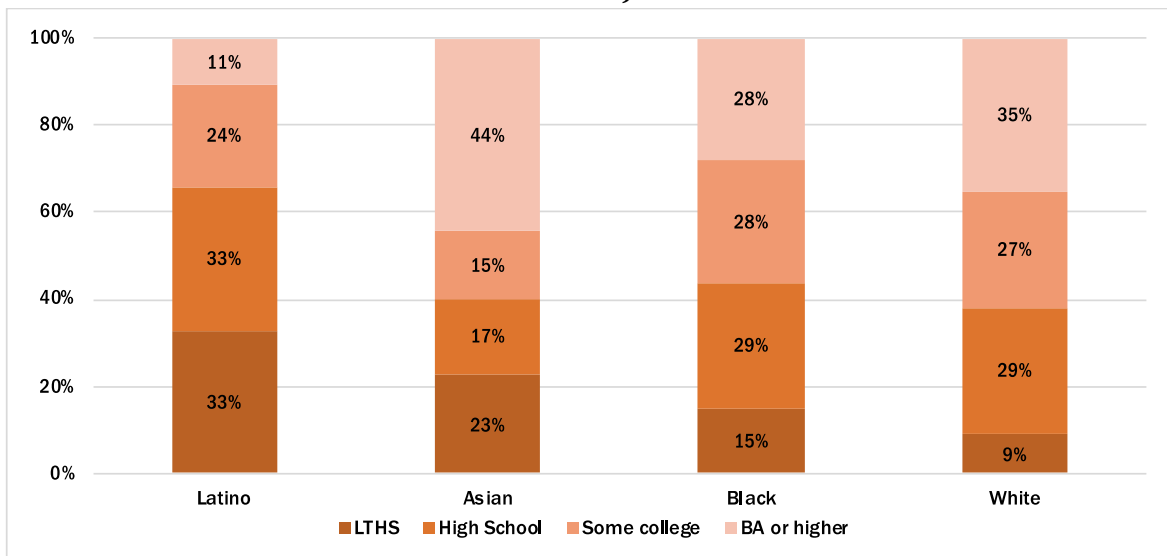


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey – B12001

Education

Figure 6 highlights the fact that Latinos have a large share of their adult population lacking a high school diploma: 33%, compared to 9% for Whites, 15% for Blacks and 23% for Asians. The statewide rate for Latinos lacking a high school diploma is 27%. At the other end of the educational scale, Latinos have the lowest share of their population with at least a Bachelor’s degree: 11%, compared to 28% for Blacks, 35% for Whites, and 44% for Asians. Statewide, 20% of adult Latinos have at least a Bachelor’s degree.

Figure 6: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group in 2015 (Adults 25 years and older)

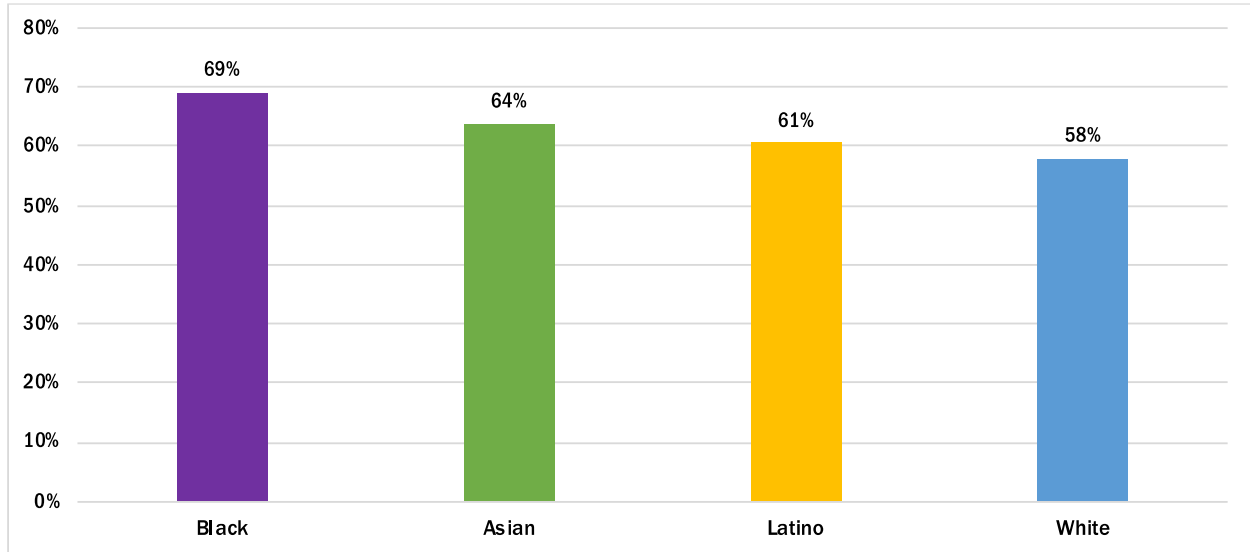


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B15002

Labor Force Participation

Figure 7 shows that Latinos have a labor force participation rate of 61%. This is higher than for Whites (58%), but lower than for Blacks (69%) and Asians (64%). This labor force participation rate is lower than the statewide Latino rate of 67%.

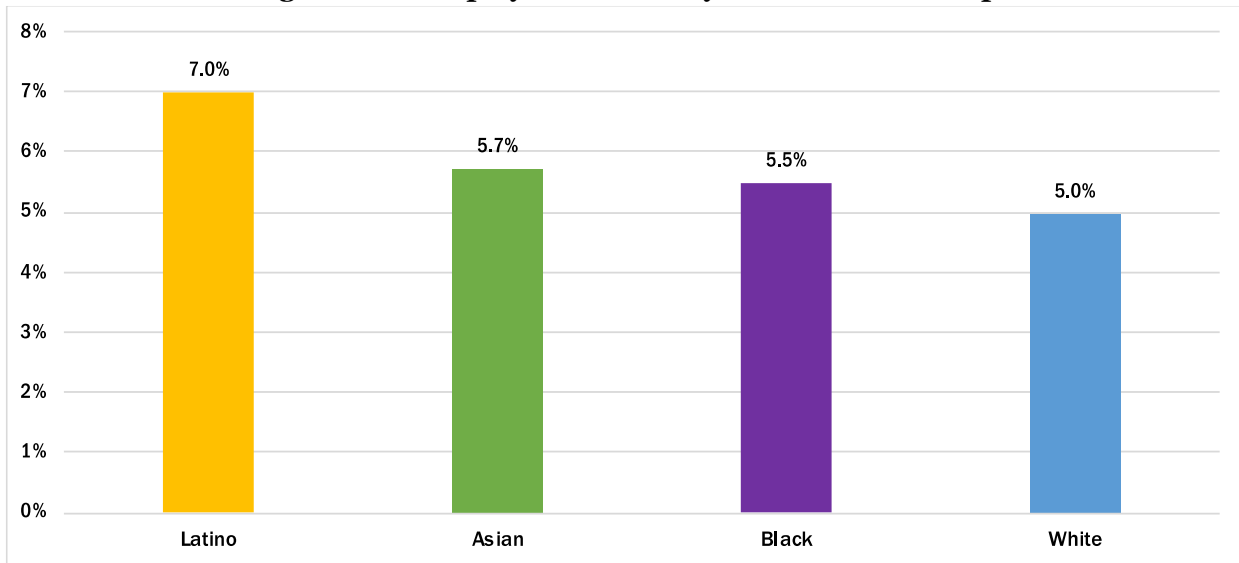
Figure 7: Labor Force Participation by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - C23002

The unemployment rate for Worcester during this period was 5.6%. Figure 8 tells a similar and even less positive story for Latinos in the labor force. The unemployment rate among Latinos during this period was 7.0%, which is the highest of the ethno-racial groups in Worcester. This rate is higher than the statewide Latino unemployment rate of 6.0% during the same period.

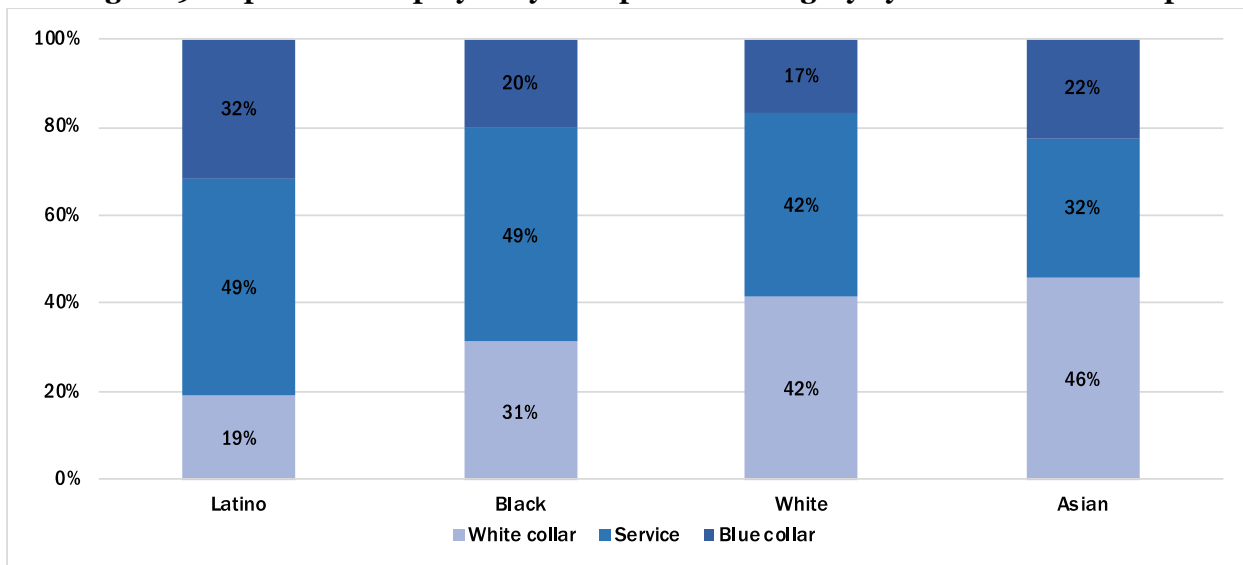
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - C23002

Figure 9 suggests that Latinos serve as complements to other ethno-racial groups in the Worcester labor market whose members have higher educational attainment. Latinos are overrepresented in service (49%) and blue-collar (32%) occupations. Correspondingly, only 19% of Latinos work in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs (professional and managerial). Statewide 26% of Latinos work in white-collar jobs, 49% work in service jobs, and 25% work in blue collar jobs.

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

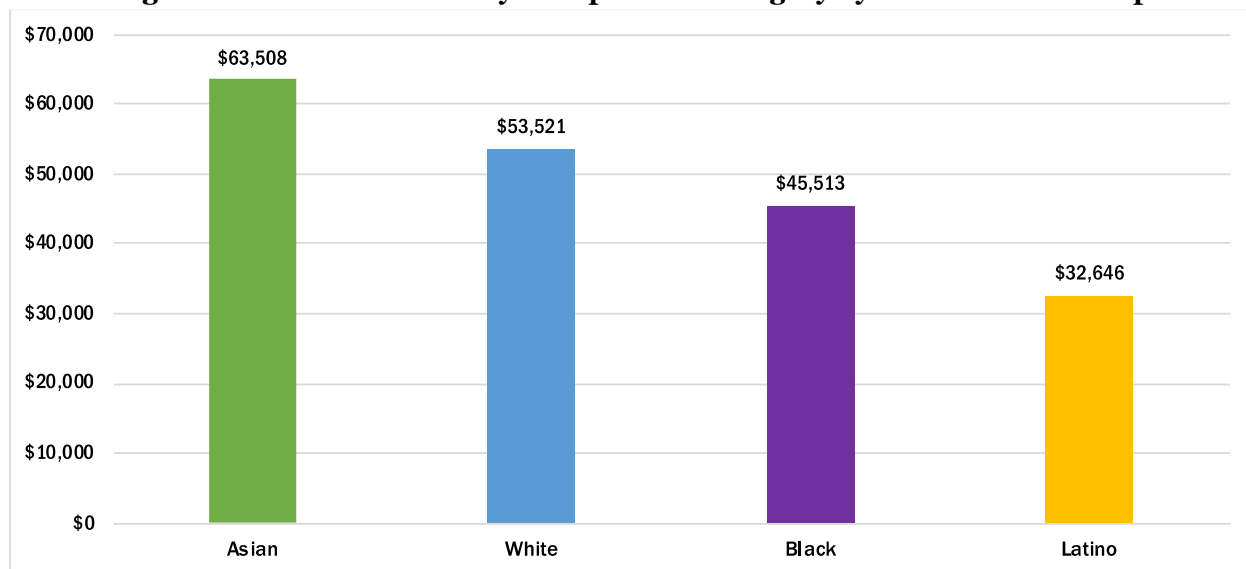


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - C23002

Income

Worcester's median household income during this period was \$48,139, which is lower than for the state, \$81,215. When examining income, we see that Latinos in Worcester have the lowest median household income (\$32,646) compared to the other ethno-racial groups (Figure 10). Latinos in Worcester are also more economically disadvantaged than Latinos in other parts of the Commonwealth, as the statewide Latino median household income is \$44,885 during this period.

Figure 10: Median Income by Occupational Category by Ethno-Racial Group

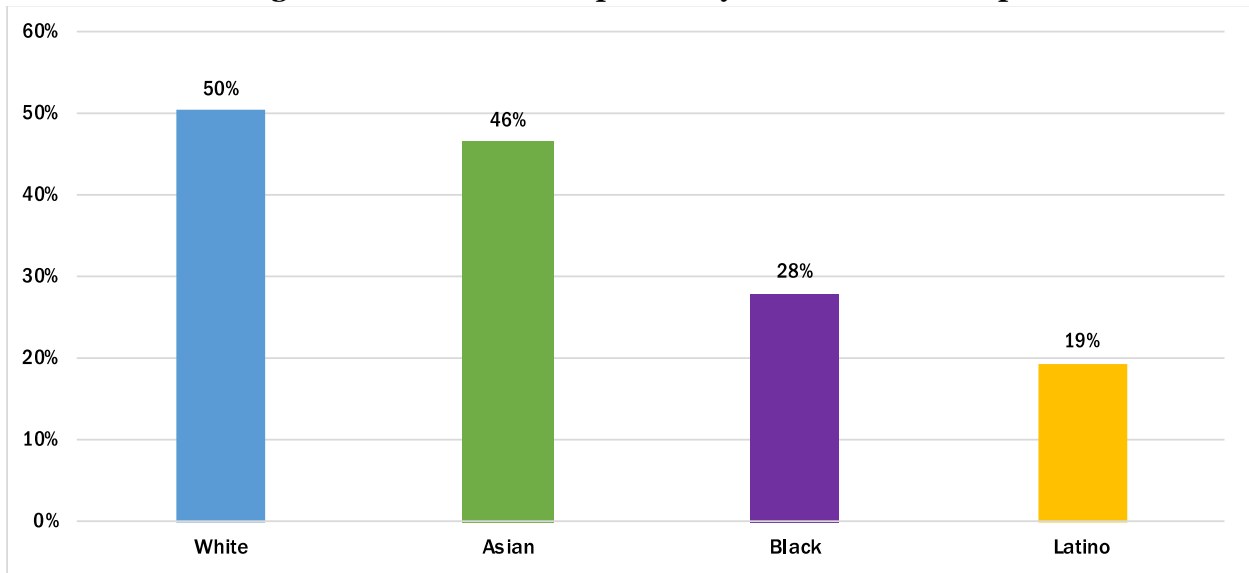


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - S1903

Housing and Medical Insurance

The final measures of Latino participation in Worcester are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Latinos traditionally have low homeownership rates across the country. Figure 11 shows that this pattern holds true for Worcester, where Latinos' homeownership level (19%) is lower than for other ethno-racial groups in the city. This homeownership rate is also lower than the statewide Latino rate of 26%.

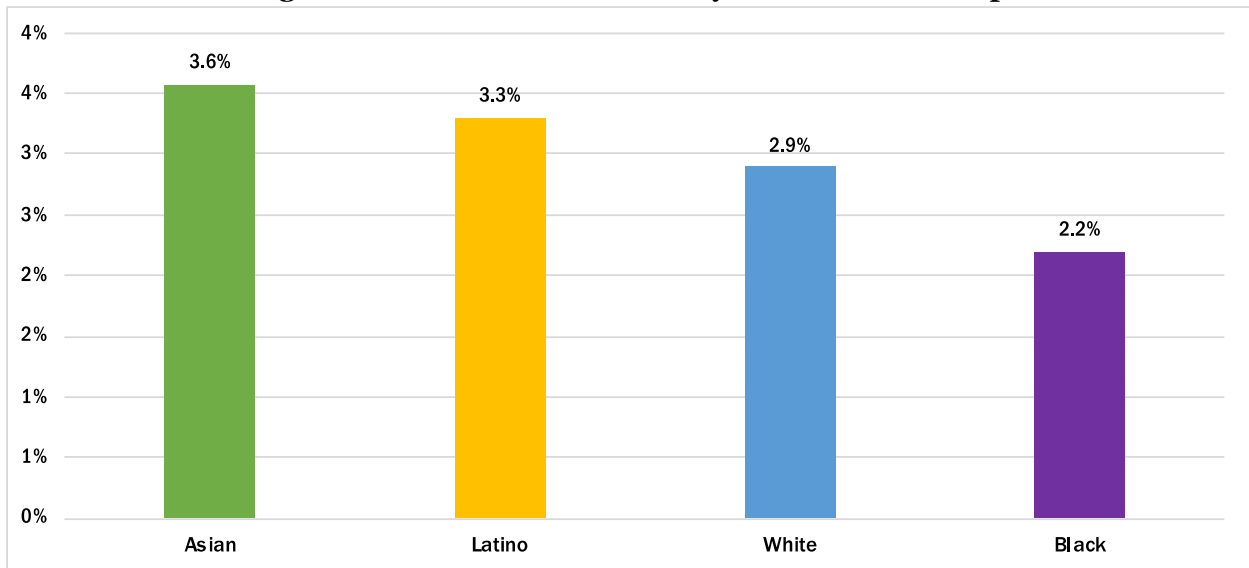
Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B25003

Figure 12 below shows that the share of Latinos in Worcester lacking medical insurance (3.3%) is lower than for (Asians 3.6%) but higher than for Blacks (2.2%) and Whites (2.9%). Statewide, the medical uninsurance rate among Latinos is 5.3%. The greater share of Puerto Ricans who have access to public health insurance due to their citizenship may account for lower uninsurance rates in comparison to the statewide Latino share.

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group

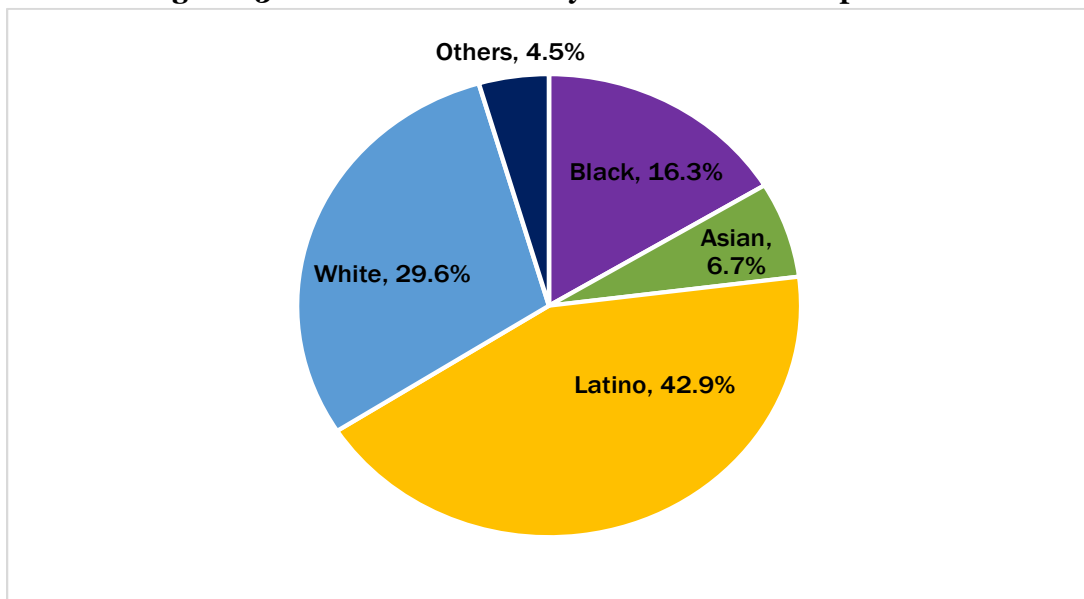


Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey - B27001

Spotlight on Worcester Public Schools

Worcester Public Schools are the focus of this next section. Worcester Public Schools enrolled 25,415 students in school year 2018-2019, with Latinos making up 43% of the school population (Figure 13). This was much higher than the statewide Latino student population of 20.8%. Whites (30%) and Blacks (16.3%) are the next largest ethno-racial groups that make up the school population in Worcester. These data are from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the School Year 2018-2019.

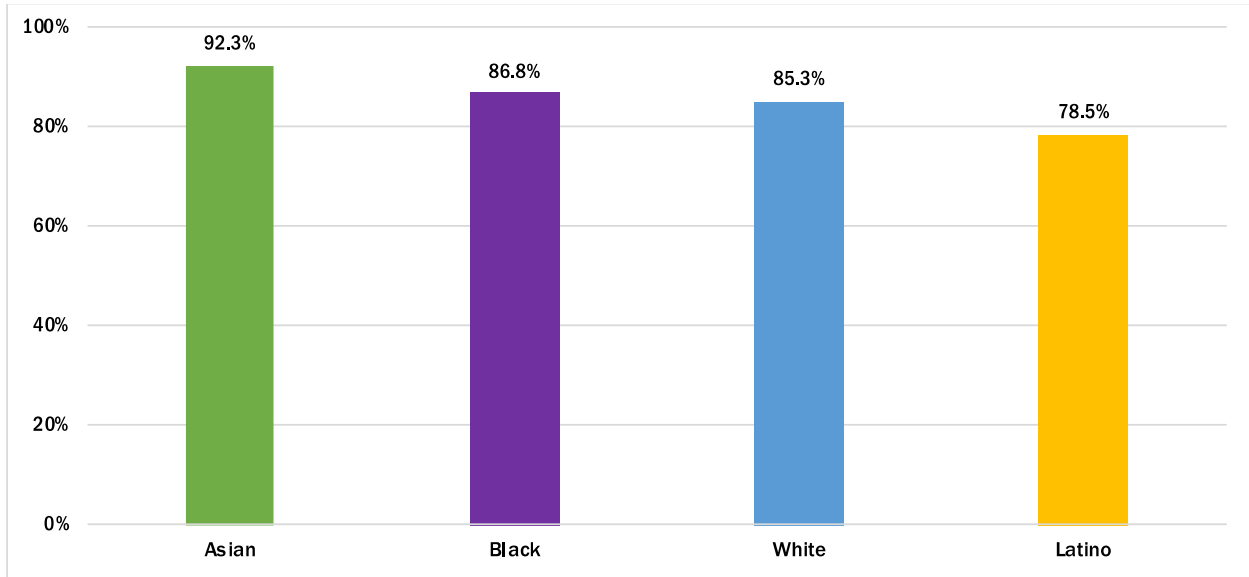
Figure 13. School Enrollment by Ethno-Racial Composition



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

Worcester Public Schools' four-year high school graduation rate in School Year 2018-2019 was 83.6%, which was lower than the state's overall rate of 88%. Latino students have the lowest graduation rate in the Worcester Public Schools, 78.5%.

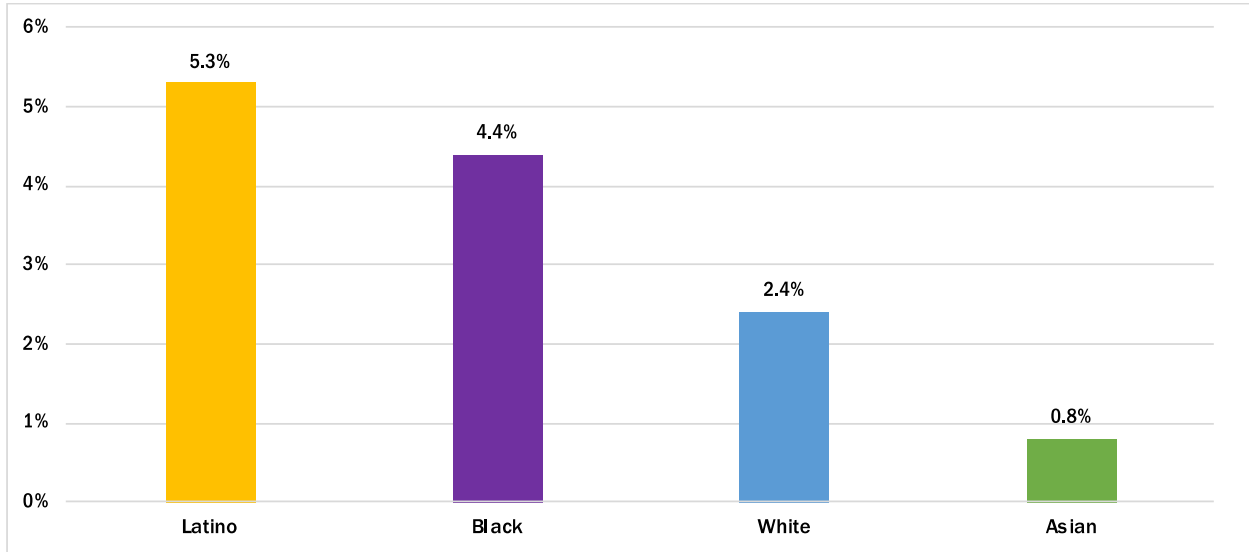
Figure 14: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



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

Worcester Public Schools' out-of-school suspension rate is 4.0%, higher than the state's overall rate of 3.0%. Latino students had the highest out of school suspension rate in School Year 2018-2019, 5.3%.

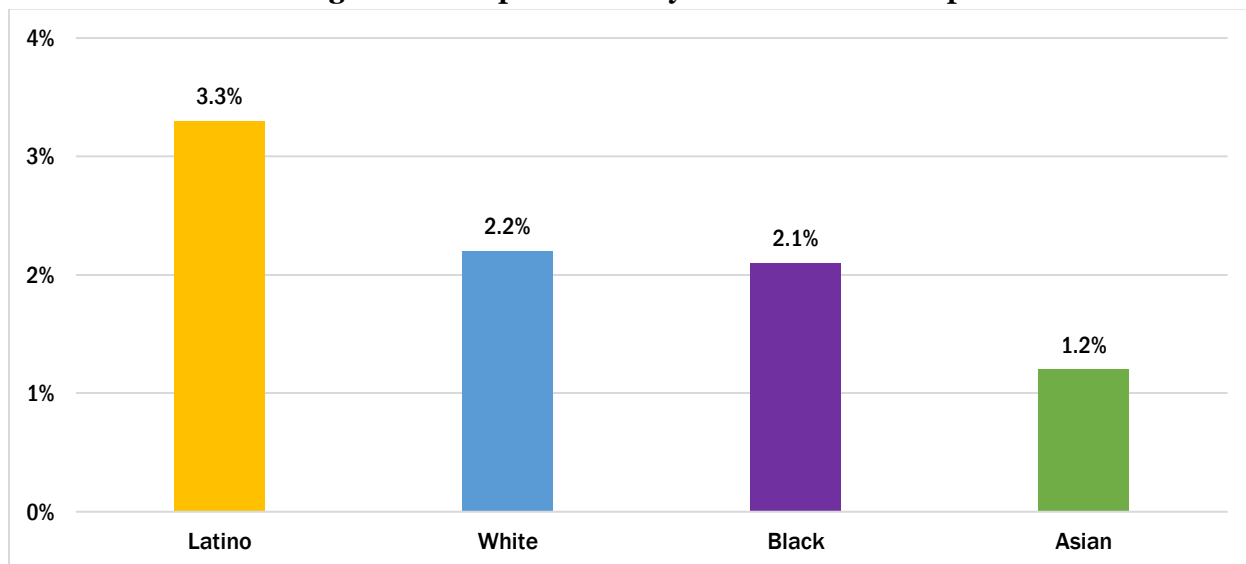
Figure 15: Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethno-Racial Group



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

Worcester Public Schools' dropout rate is 2.6%, higher than the state's overall rate of 1.8%. Latino students had the highest dropout rate in School Year 2018-2019, 3.3%.

Figure 16: Dropout Rates by Ethno-Racial Group

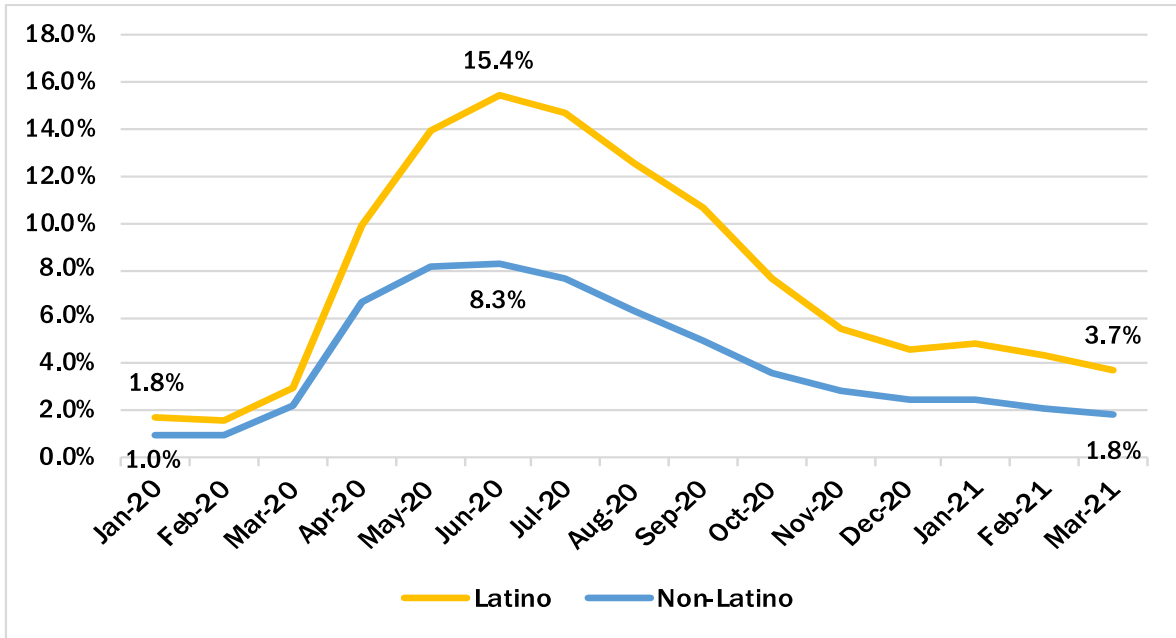


Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, SY 2018-2019

Impact of COVID-19

Starting in March 2020, when COVID-19 hit Worcester, unemployment claims rapidly increased, from a low point of 1.8% for Latinos at the beginning of the year. In June 2020, both Latinos and non-Latinos filed high numbers of unemployment claims, their rates rising to 15.4% and 8.3%, 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 3.7% for Latinos and 1.8% 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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