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Phillip Granberry

Vishakha Agarwal

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Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Somerville

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

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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Phillip Granberry

University of Massachusetts Boston

Vishakha Agarwal

University of Massachusetts Boston

Introduction

This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in Somerville. It reflects a commitment by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy to provide periodic updates on the growing Latino population in Massachusetts. The report on Somerville is part of a larger series that covers cities and towns with a population of at least 35,000 residents in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with a significant Latino population. Each report analyzes data from the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. We obtained the data from the Census Bureau in tabular form, and we transformed these data into figures presented in this report.

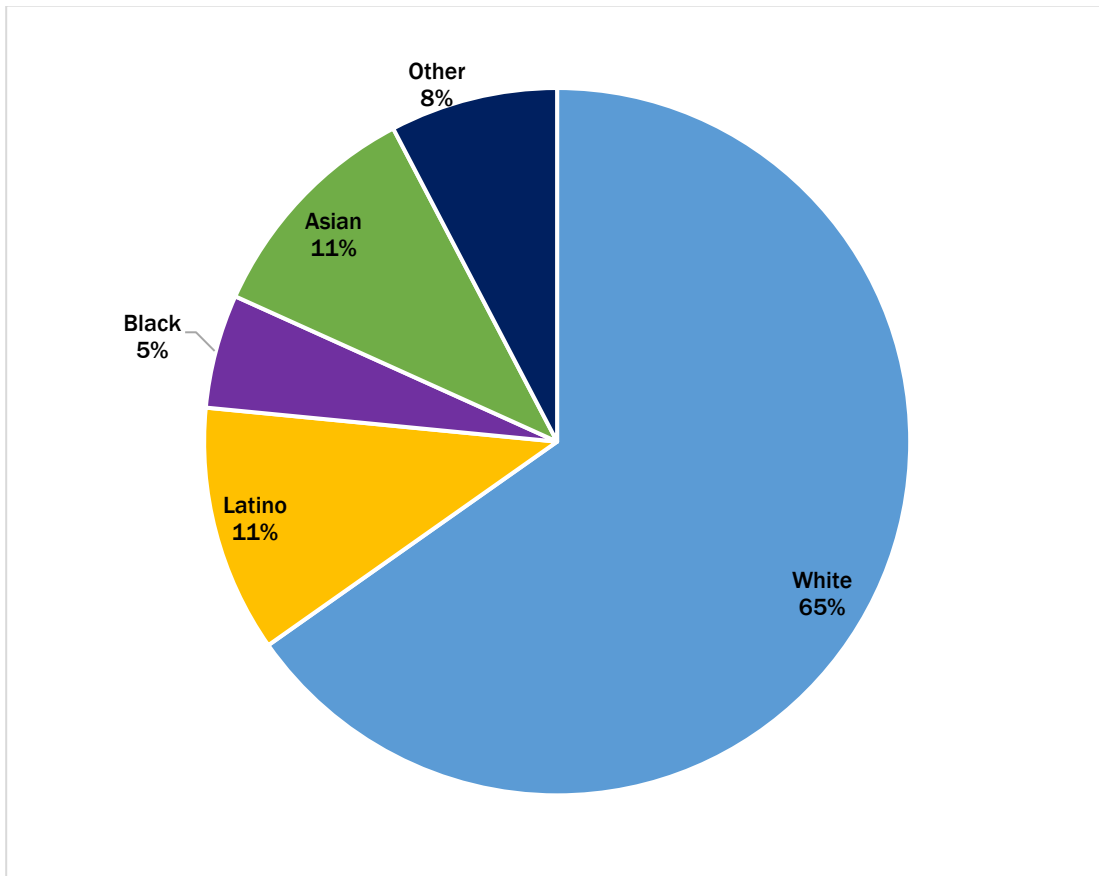
The Census Bureau identifies Latinos through a question that asks respondents to choose either "Hispanic or Latino" or "Not Hispanic or Latino." Separately, it asks respondents to identify a race. This report uses the term "Latino" to include all those who selected "Hispanic or Latino" on the Census or ACS form, regardless of racial designation. The report compares Latinos, thus defined, to Non-Latino Whites, Blacks, and Asians, based on individuals' racial identification. The number of ethno-racial groups included in a particular analysis may vary each ethno-racial group is included in the analysis only when the observed sample size is large enough to produce reliable population estimates.

The Gastón Institute strives 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 Somerville.

Somerville Overview

With a total population of 81,045, Somerville is home to an estimated 9,159 Latinos according to the 2020 Decennial Census (Figure 1). They represent 11% of the city's population, the same share as for Asians. This share is much smaller than for Whites (65%) but larger than for Blacks (5%). In addition, 1,662 foreign-born Brazilians live in Somerville, and the Census classifies Brazilians in the "Other" category.

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



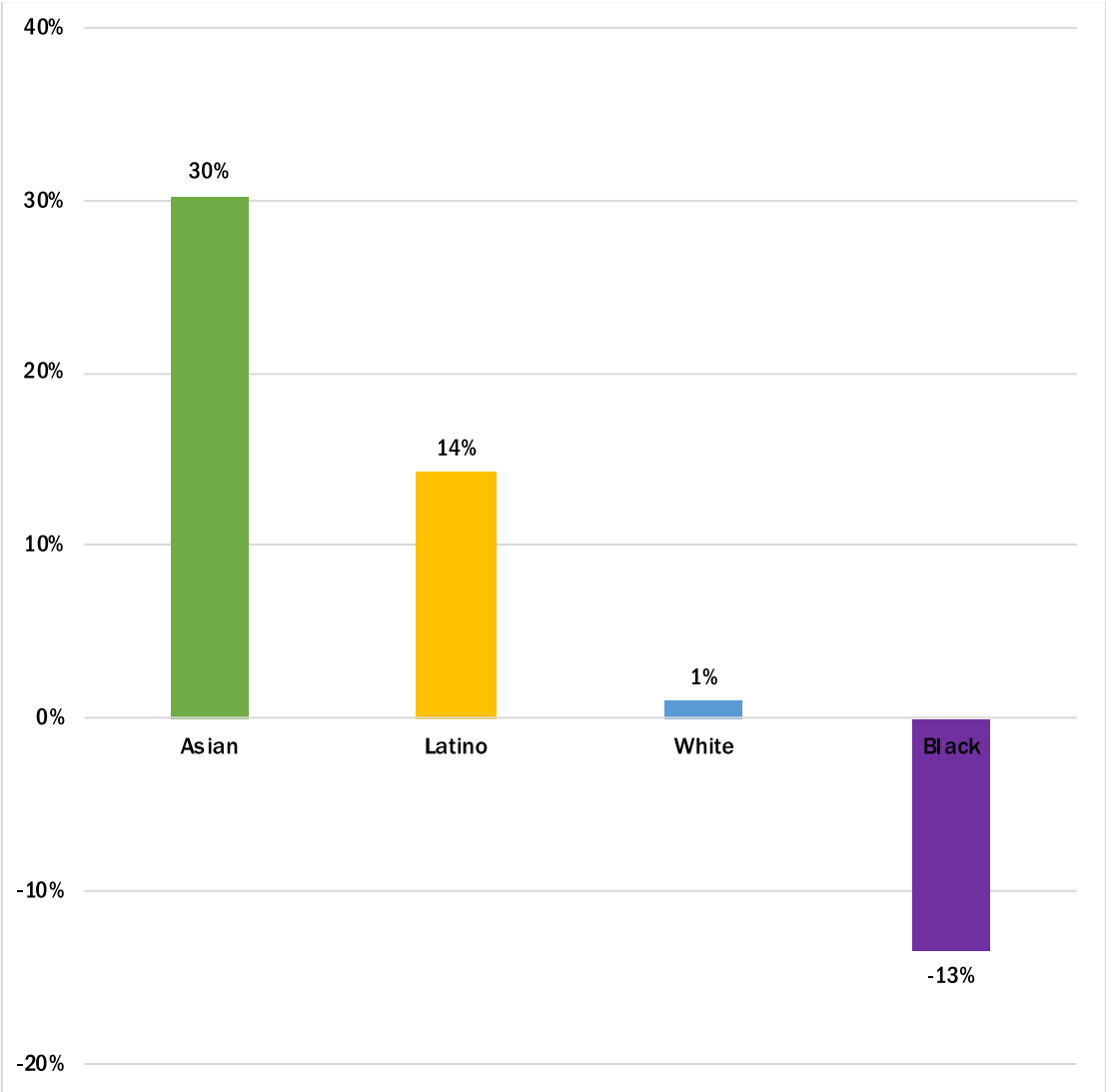
Source: 2020 U.S Census

A striking feature of Somerville is its changing population. From 2010 to 2020, Asians (30%) and Latinos (14%) experienced strong population growth in the city, while Whites grew only slightly (1%) and Blacks underwent a 13% population decline (Figure 2). Still, the Latino population in Somerville grew more slowly than Latinos statewide, who experienced an increase of 41%.

The remainder of this profile uses 2016-2020 American Community Survey data in order to analyze the demographic and economic characteristics presented in this profile.

Somerville has long been a destination for international migrants, and today it has a greater concentration of foreign-born (24%) than the Commonwealth as a whole (17%). This is especially the case among Latinos. In Somerville, 52% of the Latino population is foreign-born, which is higher than the Latino statewide share (32%).

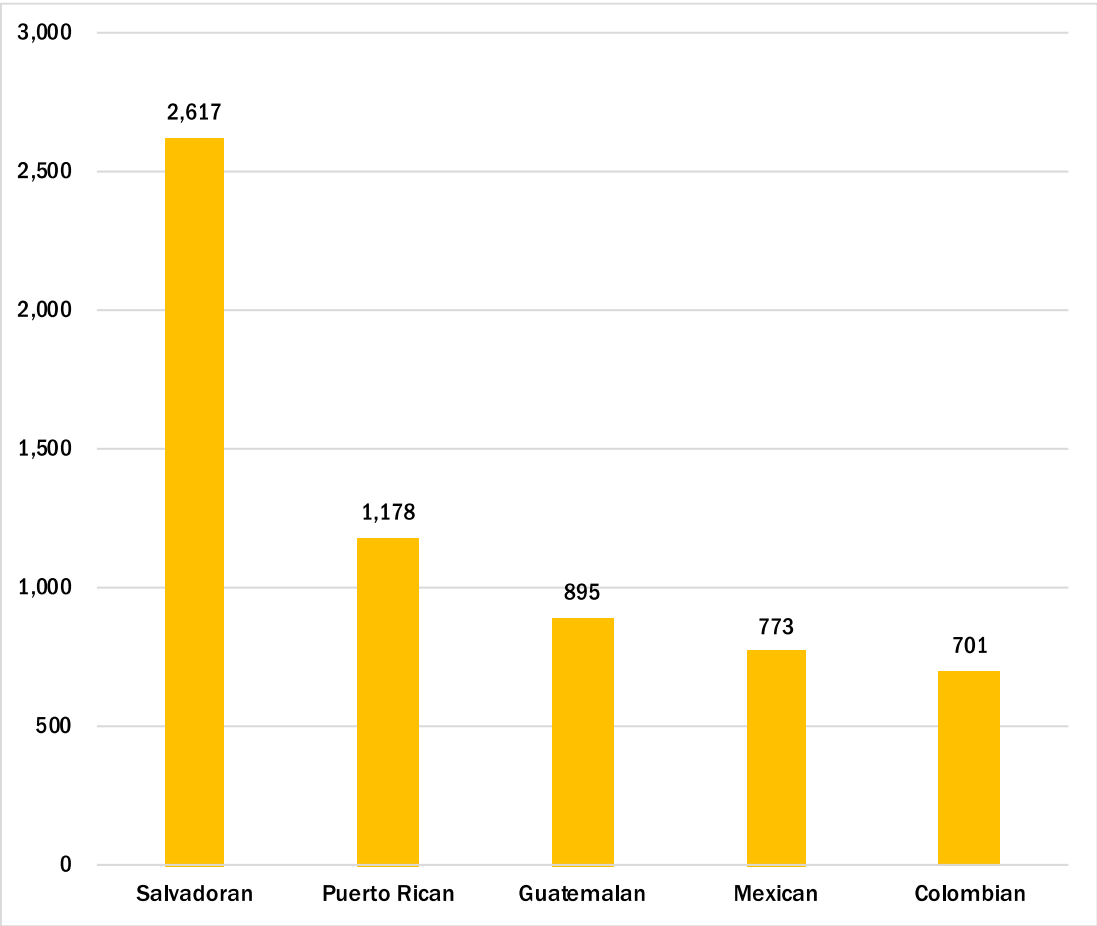
Figure 2: Population Change by Ethno-Racial Group from 2010 to 2020



Source: 2010 & 2020 U. S. Censuses

When examining the origin of Latinos in the Somerville, it is important to note that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens; they are not included in foreign-born estimates in the preceding paragraph. As Figure 3 shows, the largest Latino subpopulation in the city consists of Salvadorans (2,617), followed by Puerto Ricans (1,178), Guatemalans (895), Mexicans (773), and Colombians (701). Statewide, the five largest Latino populations in Massachusetts in order of size are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Guatemalans.

Figure 3: Origin of the Top Latino Populations

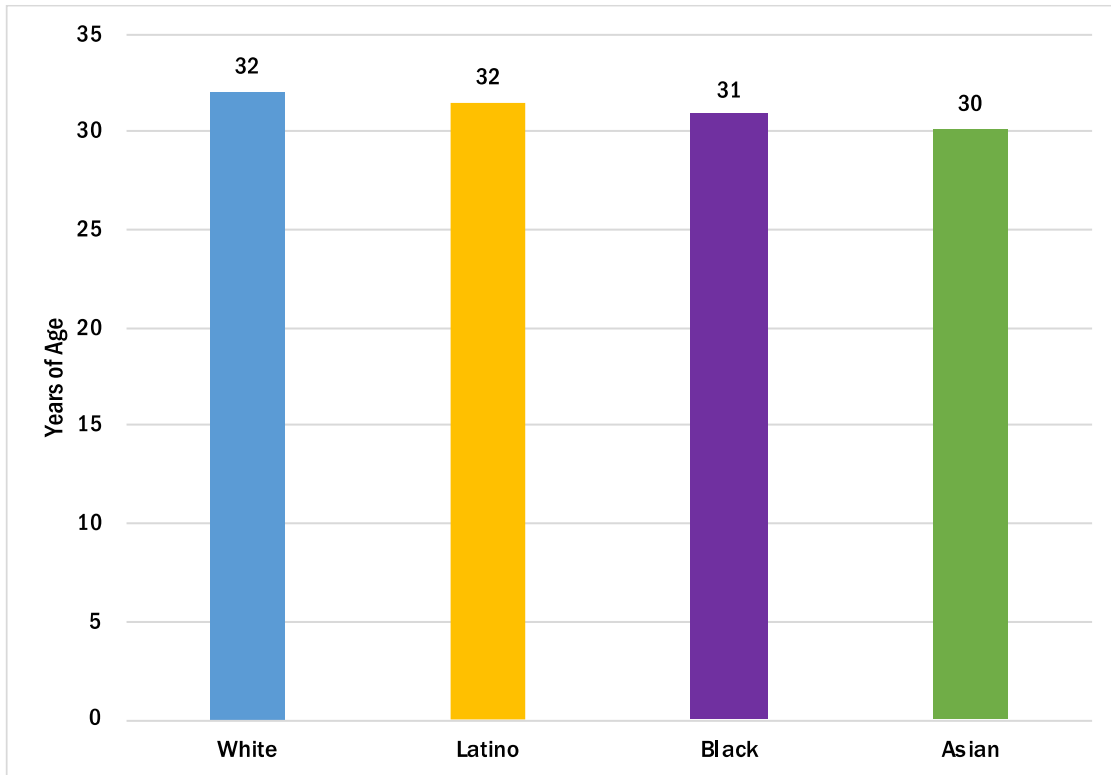


Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

MEDIAN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Somerville has a younger population (31.5 years) than Massachusetts overall (40 years). Somerville Latinos, with a median age of 31.5 years, are older on average than the statewide Latino median age of 29 years. As Figure 4 shows, all of Somerville’s ethno-racial groups have strikingly similar median ages.

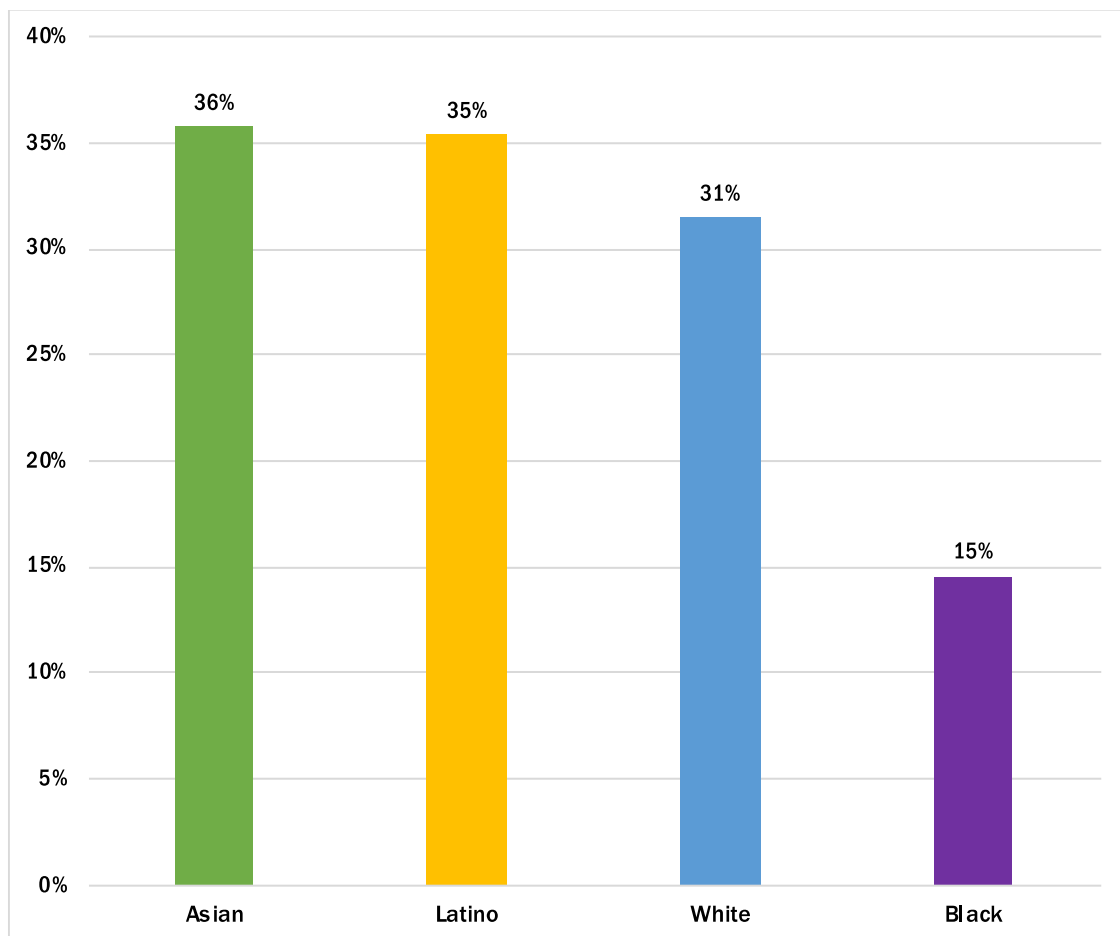
Figure 4: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

With its younger population, it is not surprising that the marriage rate for persons 15 years and older in Somerville is 32%, which is much lower than the statewide rate of 48%. The Latino marriage rate of 35% in Somerville is lower than for Asians (36%), but higher than for Whites (31%) and Blacks (15%). The statewide Latino marriage rate is 33%.

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

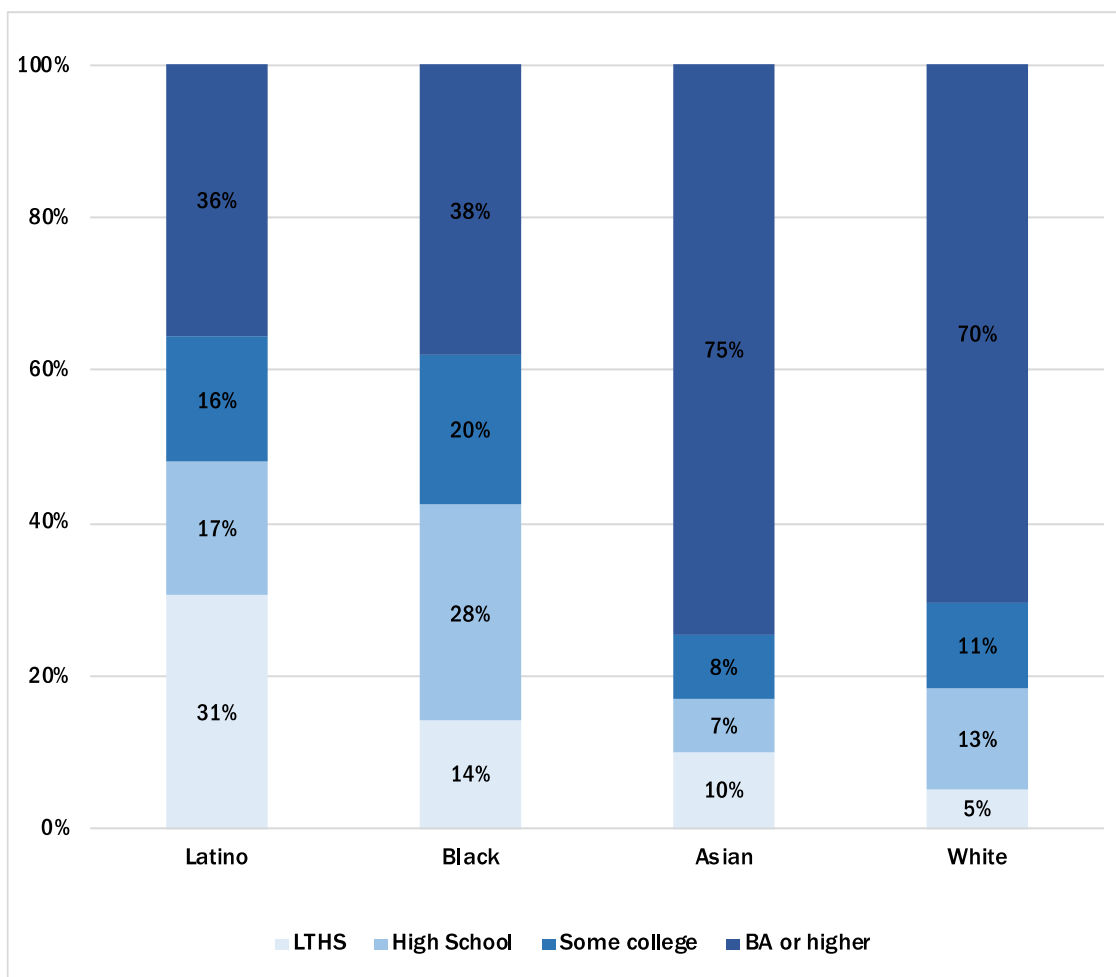


Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The overall educational attainment in Somerville is high, with 66% of residents age 25 or older having a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 45% statewide. Latinos have the lowest share of their population with at least a bachelor's degree at 36%, compared to 38% for Blacks, 70% for Whites, and 75% for Asians. The statewide rate for Latinos is 21%. At the other end of the educational scale, Figure 6 also shows that Latinos have the highest share of their adult population lacking a high school diploma at 31%, compared to 14% for Blacks, 10% for Asians, and 5% for Whites. The statewide rate for Latinos lacking a high school diploma is 28%.

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

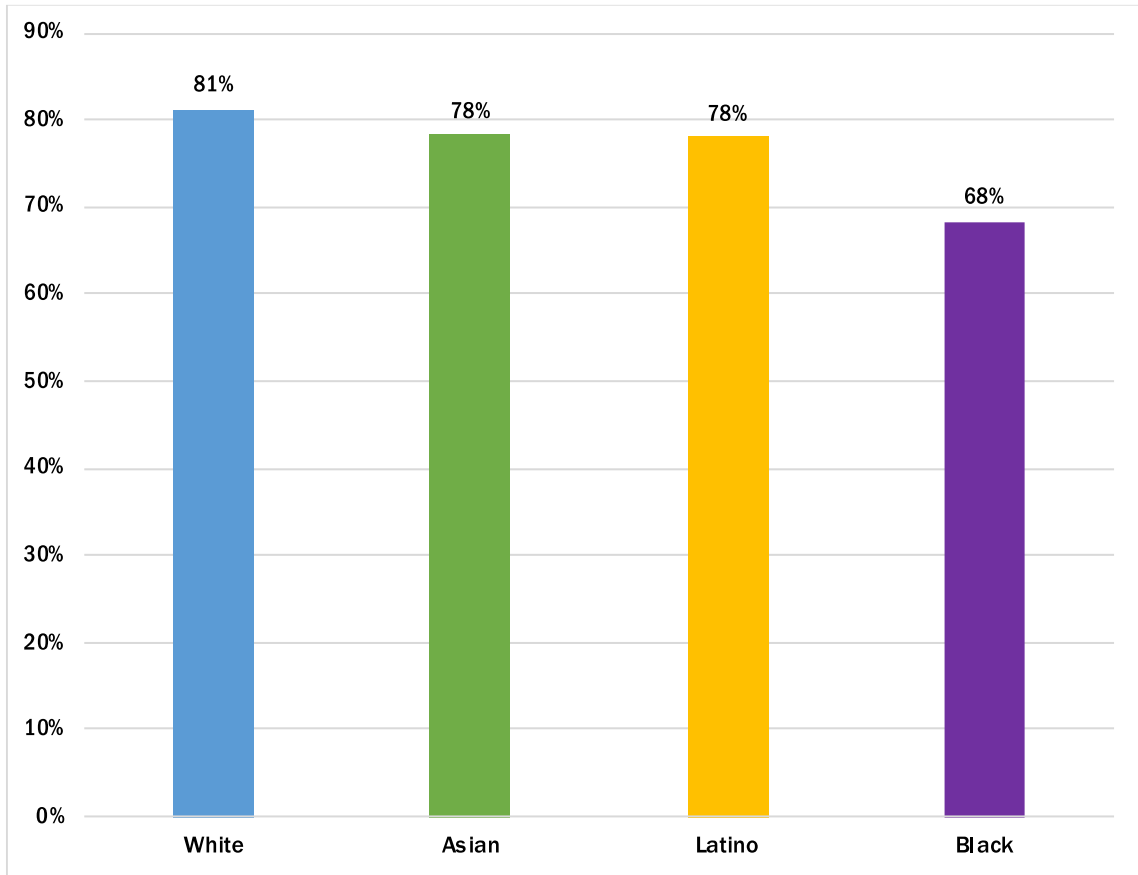


Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The labor force participation rate in Somerville is 80%, which is higher than for the Commonwealth overall (67%). Likewise, Somerville’s Latinos have a higher labor force participation rate (78%) than Latinos statewide (69%). As Figure 7 shows, Whites have the highest labor force participation in the city (81%), with Asians (78%) having a similar rate and Blacks trailing at 68%.

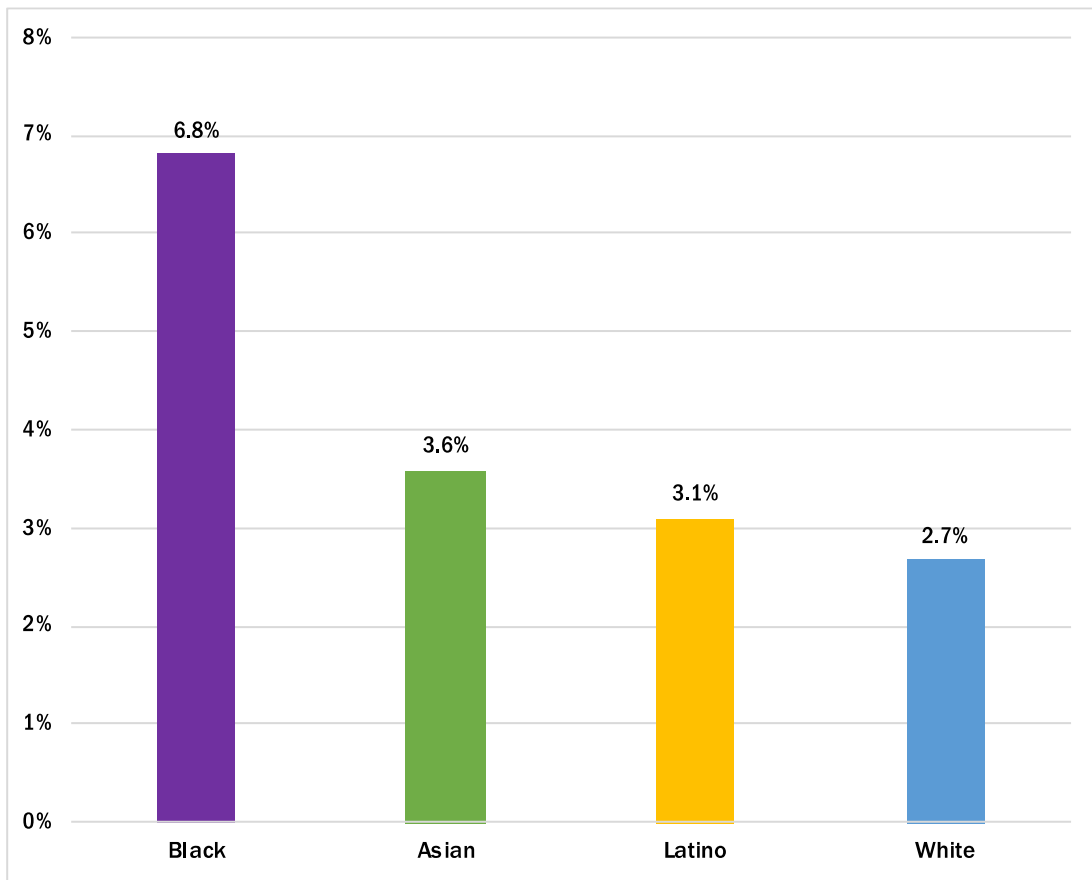
Figure 7: Labor Force Participation by Ethno-Racial Group (ages 16 and older)



Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

The overall unemployment rate in Somerville during this period was a low 3.0%, compared to the statewide unemployment rate of 5.1%. The Latino unemployment rate in Somerville of 3.1 % is lower than for Blacks (6.8%) and Asians (3.6%) but higher than for Whites (2.7%). Latinos in Somerville who participate in the labor force fare better than Latinos statewide, who during this period experienced a 8.3% unemployment rate.

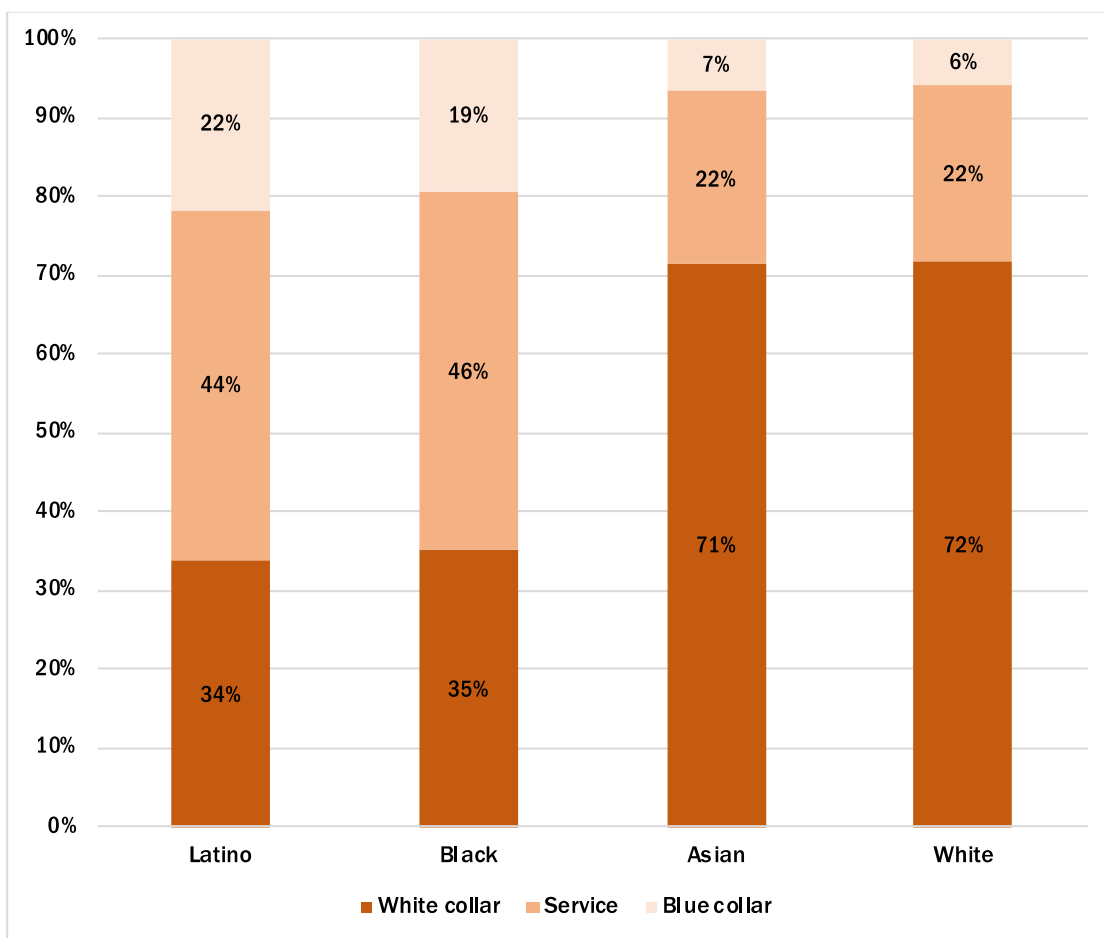
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group (ages 16 and older)



Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

Figure 9 highlights the fact that Latinos work in traditionally low-wage jobs. Latinos are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs with 34% working in these management, business, science, and arts occupations (compared to 72% for Whites and 71% for Asians). Nearly half (44%) of the employed Latinos are in service and sales occupations, compared with 22% for Asians and 22% for Whites. Blacks have a similar occupational distribution to Latinos: 19% are in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs and 46% in sales and service. For Latinos across the state, this distribution is 28% white-collar, 47% service, and 25% blue-collar.

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

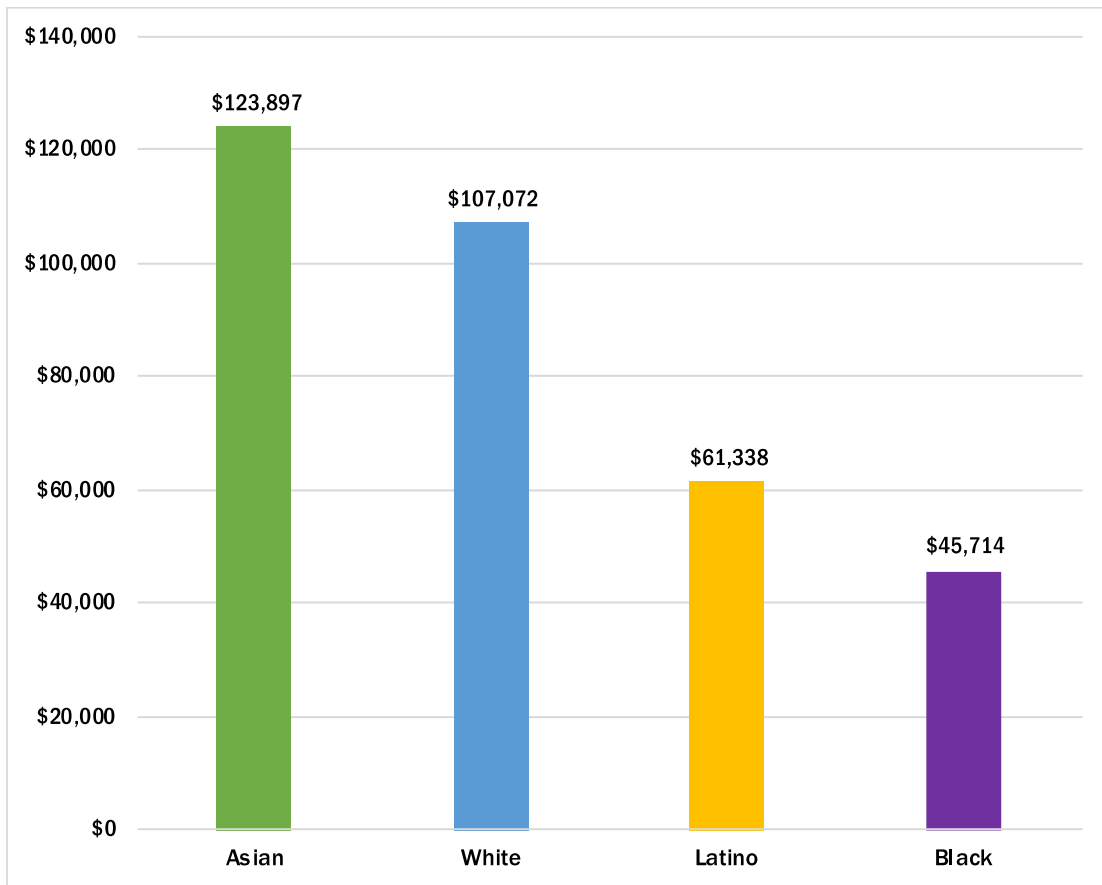


Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Somerville’s median household income is \$102,311, which is significantly higher than the statewide median income of \$84,385. Latinos in Figure 10 have the second lowest median income (\$61,338) of any ethno-racial group in the city. However, Latinos in Somerville are more economically successful than Latinos in other parts of the Commonwealth, as the statewide Latino median household income is \$48,450.

Figure 10: Median Household Income by Ethno-Racial Group in 2020

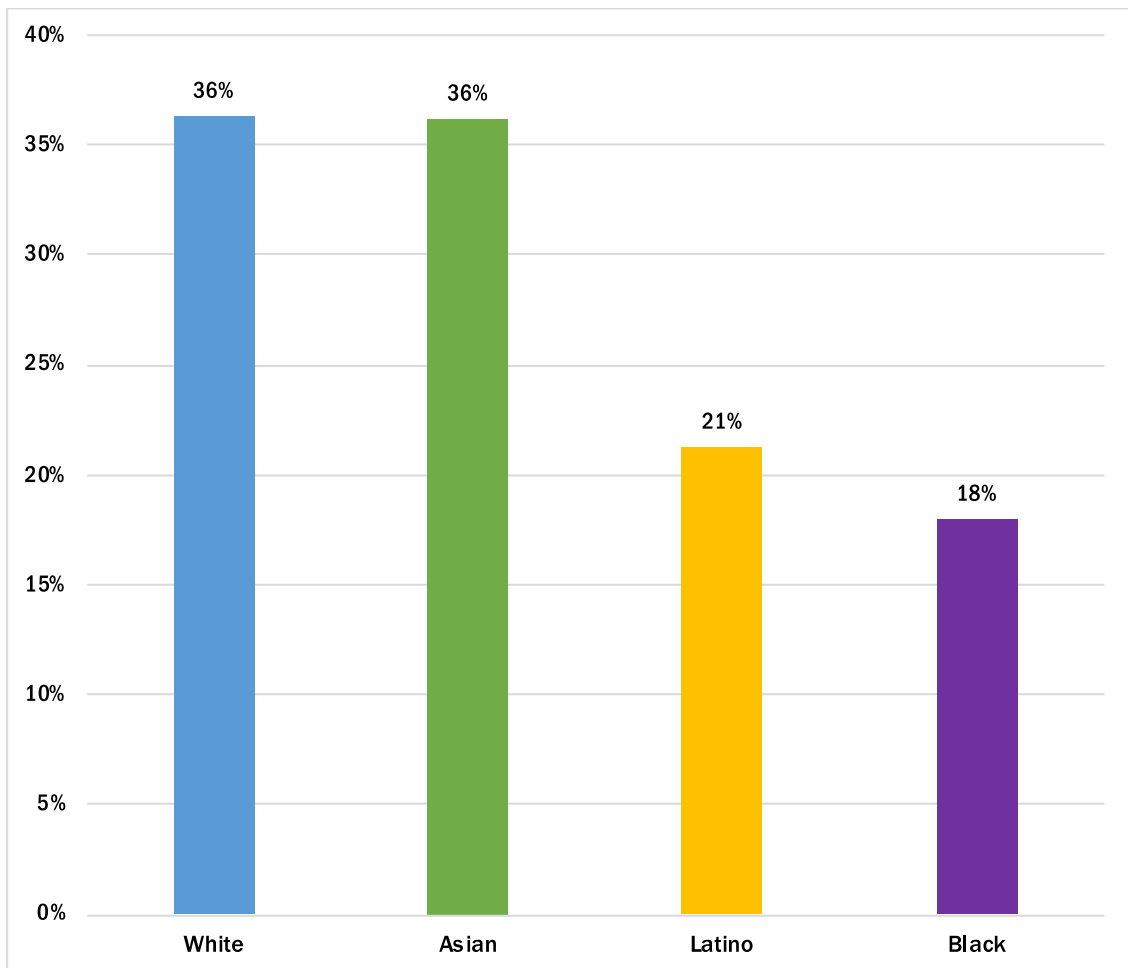


Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL UNINSURANCE

The final measures of Latino participation in Somerville are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Somerville has a lower homeownership rate (34%) than the statewide rate (63%) as measured by occupied housing units. As shown in Figure 11, Latinos have a 21% homeowner rate, and this is lower than the 28% of Latinos statewide who are homeowners. Latino homeownership in the city is lower than for Asians and Whites (36%), but higher than for Blacks (18%).

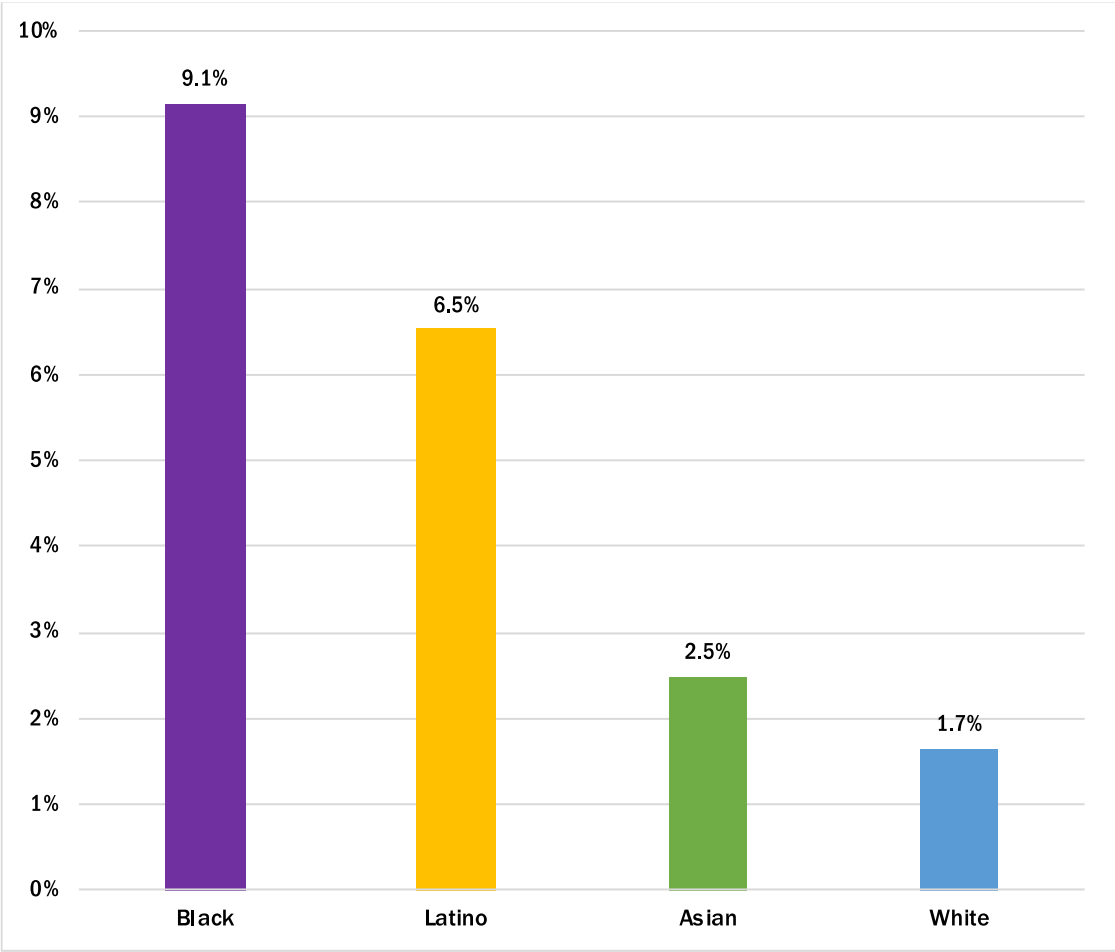
Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

Somerville has a similar rate of medical uninsurance (2.7%) as the Commonwealth overall. Figure 12 shows that Latinos have the second highest rates of medical uninsurance in Somerville at 6.5%, which is higher than the Latino statewide rate 5.6%. Only Blacks (9.1%) have a higher rate of uninsurance in Somerville, while Asians (2.5%) and Whites (1.7%) have lower rates.

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group



Source: 2016–2020 American Community Survey

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 recently earned a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the McCormack Graduate School at UMass Boston. Vishakha's research focuses on students' everyday classroom experiences, violent school discipline, and student engagement. Her dissertation takes an ethnographic approach and examines how interactions between teachers and students and among peers impacts students' learning outcomes and, shapes their perceptions of self and sense of school belonging.



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UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute | @GastonInstitute
gastoninstitute@umb.edu | 617.287.5790