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Latinos with Disability in Massachusetts

By: Philip Granberry
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THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Latinos with Disability in Massachusetts

Authors: Phillip Granberry & Vishakha Agarwal

A disability, as defined by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), is an individual’s physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Data from the 2016-2020 American Community Survey identify six disability types: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulty. In Massachusetts, approximately 108,000 Latinos have one or more of these disabilities compared to 738,000 Non-Latinos. This report examines demographic and economic characteristics of Latinos and Non-Latinos with disabilities in Massachusetts.

Figure 1: Share of Population with at least One Disability by Race and Ethnicity

Disability by Race & Ethnicity

The graph displays the percentage of Massachusetts residents that report one or more disabilities by race and ethnicity.

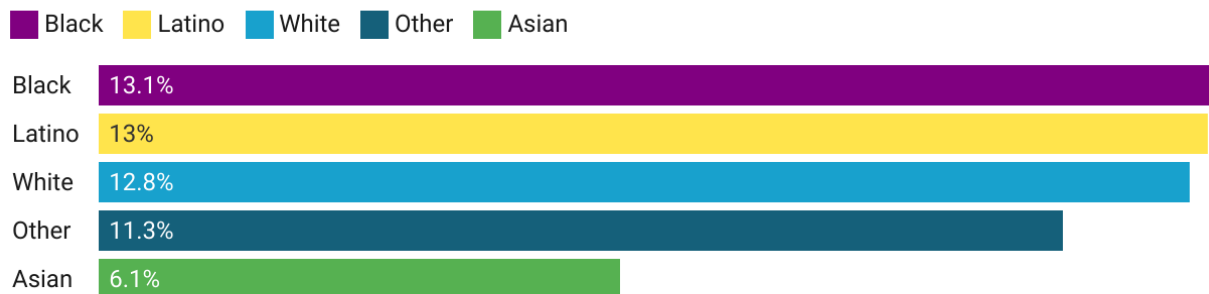


Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1 shows that 13.0% of the total Latino population have at least one disability. This proportion is similar to the corresponding figures for Blacks (13.1%) and Whites (12.8%), though higher than for Asians (6.1%). Because other than for Asians, the share of the population with at least one disability is similar, the remainder of the report will combine the Non-Latino races, of whom 12.2% have a disability, and compare them to Latinos.

In both groups, females are more likely to have a disability than are males: the percentage of

Latinos with one or more disability who are females (52.4%) is very close to the proportion of Non-Latinos with a disability who are females (53.1%).

Figure 2: Age Categories of Disabled Population by Ethnicity

Disability by Age Cohorts

This graph displays the percentage of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latino with one or more disabilities by age cohorts.

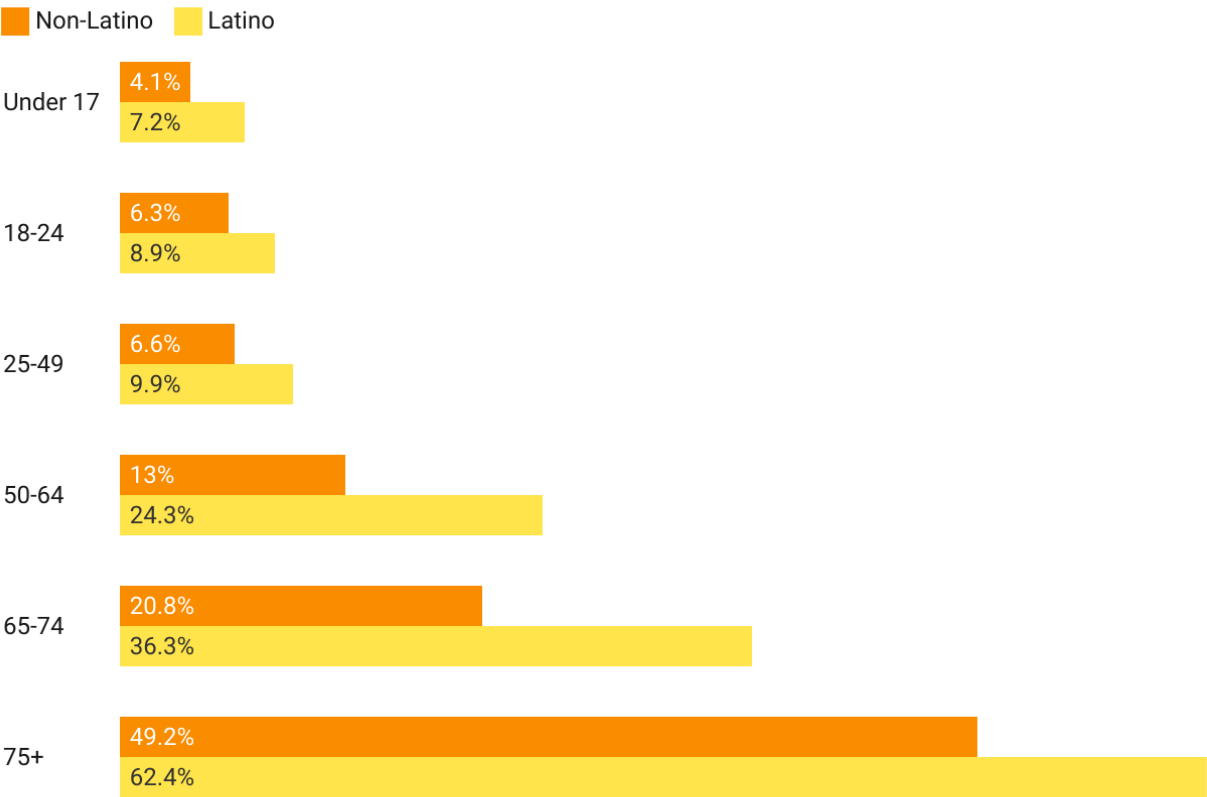


Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Even though disabilities can be congenital, they increase with age. The Latino median age in Massachusetts in 2020 was 28 years compared to 41 years for Non-Latinos. For example, only 19% of Latinos are 50 years or older compared to 40% of Non-Latinos. Over the next generation, Latinos will age into these older cohorts. As the Latino population in Massachusetts ages, disability will become an increasingly important public policy issue because those with disabilities require reasonable accommodations.

The share of the population with a disability increases with age. This aging trend helps explain

why females are more likely to have a disability than males, since females live longer. Latinos of all age categories are more likely to have a disability; however, the difference is most striking for those in the age brackets 50-64, 65-74, and 75+. Of Latinos aged 65 to 74, 36.3% have a disability compared to 20.8% of Non-Latinos; similarly, and 24.3% of Latinos aged 50 to 44 years have a disability compared to 13% of Non-Latinos.

Occupational segregation could play a role in the relatively high incidence of disabilities among older Latinos. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a federal income supplement program that is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income. Those who work or have worked in production, transportation, and material moving account for 30% of SSI recipients, followed by buildings and grounds and cleaning and maintenance (14.5%), office and administrative support (13.1%), food preparation and serving (9.6%), and personal care (6.2%).¹ More men have a disability than women in the workplace², but accumulating years of demanding physical work, such as for a home health aide, could increase the risk of becoming disabled among women. Previous research by the Gastón Institute has highlighted this occupational segregation in relationship to wages, and Latinos are disproportionately employed in many of these occupations that cause physical injuries.³

¹ Hemmeter, J. (2009). "Occupations of SSI Recipients Who Work" Social Security Bulletin, Vol. 69(3).

² Reville, R., and Schoeni, R. (2004). "The Fraction of Disability Caused at Work." *Social Security Bulletin* 65 (4).

³ Granberry, P., (2020). "Latinos in the Labor Force." Gastón Institute Publications. 248.

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Figure 3: Disability Type by Ethnicity

Disability Type

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with each of six disability classifications.

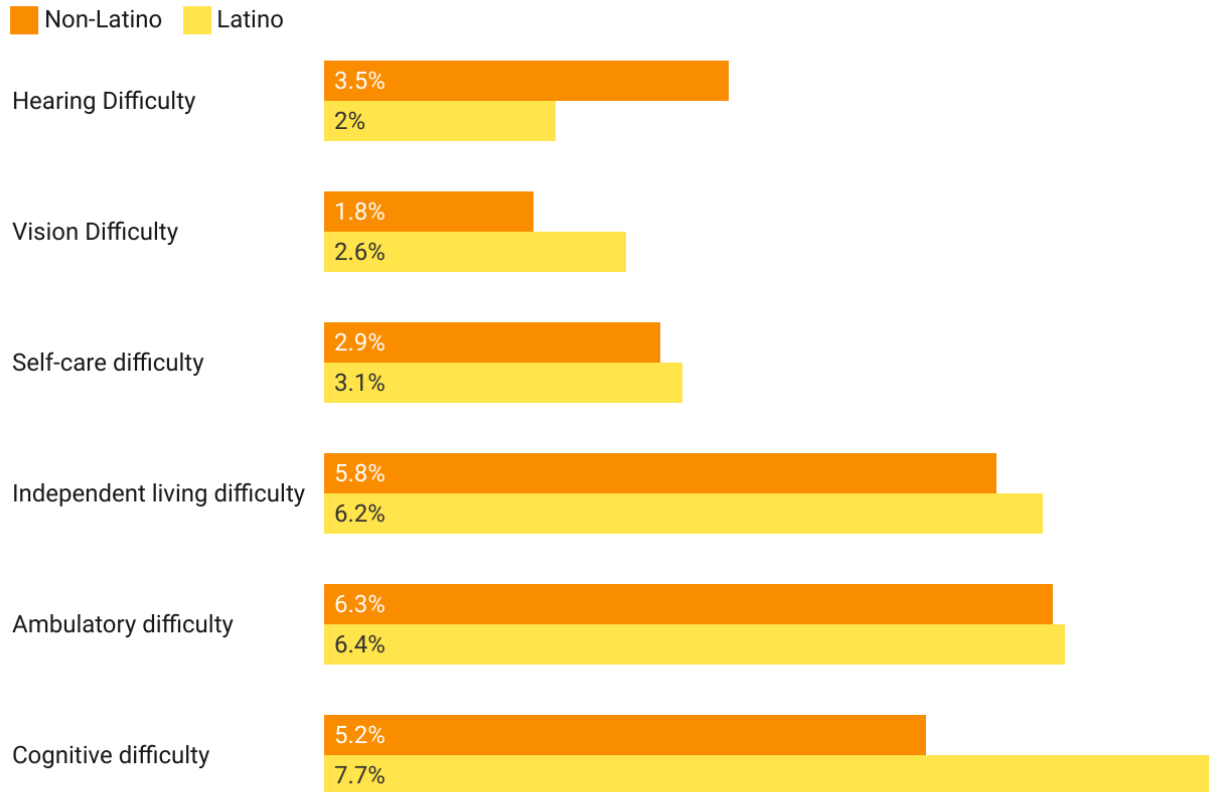


Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3 presents the six types of disability identified in the ACS. The share of Non-Latinos with hearing difficulty is larger than Latinos (not surprisingly since a much higher proportion of Non-Latinos than of Latinos are in the older age brackets). The most considerable difference between the ethnicities is in cognitive difficulty. Figure 4 shows that the share of Latinos with cognitive disability compared to Non-Latinos increases significantly at age 50.

Figure 4: Cognitive Disability by Ethnicity and Age

Cognitive Disability by Age

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with a cognitive disability by age cohorts.

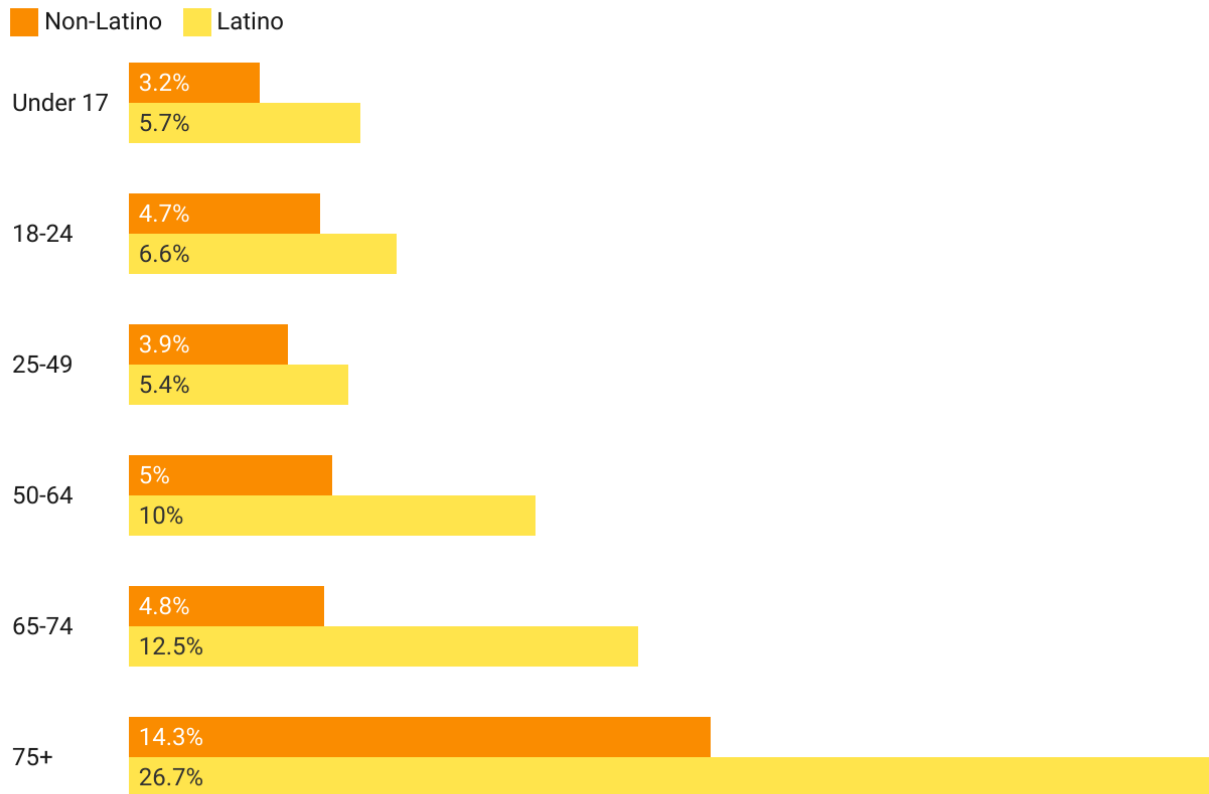


Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Even with reasonable accommodation, people with disabilities face many challenges. The following section examines educational, economic, and other well-being outcomes of people with disabilities.

Figure 5 shows the share of the people with disabilities for five educational attainment categories. In this analysis, the share represents those with a disability of the population aged 18 and older within each educational credential. At each level other than Associates Degree, a higher proportion of Non-Latinos than of Latinos have one or more disabilities. The difference is most striking among those who graduated from high school but went no further: Over one-fifth (21.0%) of Non-Latinos in this group have at least one disability compared to only 13.9% of Latinos. Latinos in school could be less likely disadvantaged by formal disabilities than by unequal

treatment, or Latinos with disabilities during their K-12 education receive less help in their education. This disparity requires further investigation.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Ethnicity, aged 18 and older

Disability by Educational Attainment

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with a disability within each of five levels of educational attainment.

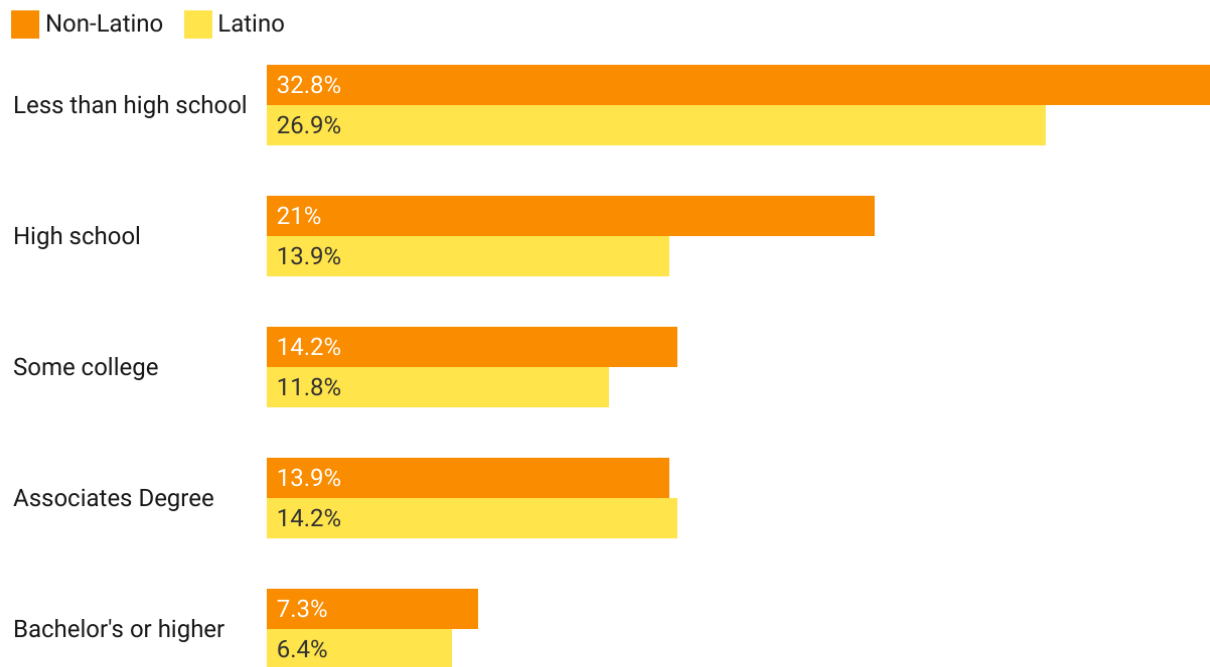


Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

The vast majority of the population aged 16 years and older with a disability are not in the labor force (Figure 6). This share is slightly higher for Non-Latinos than for Latinos. At the same time, Latino workers with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed. These shares should not be confused with an unemployment rate, which is the number of unemployed people divided by the number of people in the labor force.

Figure 6: Labor Force Status by Ethnicity

Disability by Labor Force Status

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with a disability by their labor force participation.



Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

The lack of employment increases the risk of poverty for people with a disability. As a comparison, Latinos are nearly three times more likely to live in poverty in Massachusetts than Non-Latinos. However, Latinos with a disability are only twice as likely to live in poverty compared to Non-Latinos with disabilities: 37.6% of Latinos with a disability live in poverty compared to 16.3% of Non-Latinos (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Poverty Status by Ethnicity

Disability by Poverty Status

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with a disability who are living in poverty



Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

With their lower income and lower rates of employment compared to Non-Latinos, Latinos are more likely to receive public assistance income or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Those receiving this income (Figure 8) are correlated with those in poverty. The average amount of this income for those receiving public assistance or SSI is \$7,825 for Latinos and \$9,094 for Non-Latinos.

Figure 8: Public Assistance Income by Ethnicity

Disability by Public Assistance Income or SSI

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with a disability who receive public assistance income or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) two forms of governmental income transfer programs.



Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Compared to other states, Massachusetts has lower shares of its population without health insurance. This is true for those with disabilities, as Figure 9 shows that only 2.6% of Latinos with disabilities lack health insurance compared to 1.6% of Non-Latinos. This is because the public health insurance market provides over three-quarters of both Latinos and Non-Latinos with health insurance.

Figure 9: Health Insurance Type by Ethnicity

Disability by Health Insurance Coverage

This graph displays the percentages of Massachusetts Latinos and Non-Latinos with a disability who have public, private or no health insurance.



Chart: Gastón Institute • Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

This report shows that Latinos and Non-Latinos in Massachusetts in 2020 have similar shares of the population with at least one disability. However, because the median age of Latinos is 28 years compared to 41 years for Non-Latinos, this share is likely to increase as Latinos age. Currently, Latinos aged 65 years and older are 40% more likely to have a disability than Non-Latinos. This trend could be related to the labor force participation of Latinos who work in occupations requiring strenuous physical activity. This report also finds that Latinos are more likely than Non-Latinos to have cognitive difficulty, which increases with age. Because much of the care for people with dementia occurs in the home, it is essential to develop support for Latino family members of people with dementia who provide much of this care.

About the 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 33rd 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.

About the Authors

Phillip Granberry is a social demographer specializing in immigration in the United States. He worked with various community-based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. immigrants before earning a Ph.D. in Public Policy. His research focuses on the accumulation and use of social capital among Mexican migrants and the impact of welfare and immigration policy reform on Latinos in Massachusetts. He is currently a senior research associate for the Gastón Institute. He teaches in the Economics Department at the UMass Boston, where he teaches courses on international migration and metropolitan area economic development.

Vishakha Agarwal is a researcher concerned with equitable quality education for all. Vishakha completed her Ph.D. in Public Policy in 2022 from the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her research centers on the systems that give rise to social and educational inequalities and the experiences of individuals, especially children, that are most impacted. Vishakha's work focuses on schooling processes and practices, children's education, and their subjectivities – perceptions of self and sense of school belonging. Vishakha also holds a Master's in Public Policy from UMass Boston and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from Shiv Nadar University in India.



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