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Second-Generation Latino Immigrant Assimilation in Massachusetts

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Second-Generation Latino Immigrant Assimilation in Massachusetts

Phillip Granberry & Mary Jo Marion

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Foreword

Second-Generation Latino Immigrant Assimilation in Massachusetts is an eye-opening report. Some 216,964 of Latinos in Massachusetts are second-generation immigrants, a full 25% of all Latinos in Massachusetts. According to the report, this population has exceeded upward mobility expectations compared to other second-generation immigrant populations.

Their journey has been marked by resilience. When compared to other second-generation immigrants, Latinos come from less educated and poorer households. However, in Massachusetts they have made education gains against pervasive achievement and opportunity gaps. Increased educational attainment among second-generation Latinos has resulted in advanced occupational opportunities, with nearly a quarter working in higher paying business and scientific occupations.

This progress affirms the need to continue to invest in education and poverty-reduction programs that are equitable. Equally important, this progress speaks to the inherent strength of Latino culture and families. Strength that when taken as a whole and combined with smart public policies produces socioeconomic gains.

The report identifies factors that impede social and economic factors for second-generation Latinos. These include household poverty and low college enrollment rates. The road ahead for second-generation Latino immigrants is still precarious. However, as the report demonstrates, when we work to remove barriers to success, Latino immigrants will rise to the occasion in even greater measure.

Mary Jo Marion

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Second-Generation Latino Immigrant Assimilation in Massachusetts

Approximately one-fourth of Latinos in Massachusetts are second-generation immigrants. This population is defined as having at least one foreign-born parent. Massachusetts has 216,964 second-generation Latino immigrants, which ranks fourteenth among states. However, second-generation Latinos represent a 25.5% share of all Latinos in Massachusetts, and this share ranks 35th among states. In comparison, 37.8% of all Latinos in California are second-generation immigrants. This lower share in Massachusetts is because Puerto Ricans, the largest Latino population in the Commonwealth, have birthright citizenship and therefore are not considered foreign-born.

The foreign-born have many reasons for migrating, but their children's future success is a strong motivation in migrating. Foreign-born Latinos have lower educational attainment and earn lower wages compared to other foreign-born in Massachusetts.¹ Considering the socioeconomic status of their parents, it is surprising that many second-generation Latino immigrants have socioeconomic outcomes similar to the larger population in Massachusetts. This report examines a variety of characteristics among second-generation Latinos in Massachusetts to explore how they compare to other populations in the state: foreign-born, Non-Latino second-generation, and third-generation and above—the rest of the state—residents. Second-generation immigrants' success depends on their ability to integrate or assimilate within the broader society. Assimilation theory has been adapted over the last 100 years and traces itself to the early work of Robert Park, whose focus was primarily on race relations. Park developed a four-stage classical assimilation process: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.² Milton Gordon further developed assimilation theory. His straight-line approach consisted of distinct stages that followed the acquisition of culture and language. First comes structural assimilation (close social relations with the host society), followed by large-scale intermarriage; ethnic identification with the host society; and ending prejudice, discrimination, and value conflict.³ Assimilation is seen as a melting pot, in which settlement houses assisted in making America's heterogeneous society more homogeneous.

¹ Granberry, Phillip, "Foreign-Born Latinos in Massachusetts" (2011). *Gastón Institute Publications*. 35. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/35

² Robert E. Park, "Our Racial Frontier on the Pacific," *Survey Graphic*, LVI:3 (May 1, 1926), pp. 192-196.

³ Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. Oxford University Press.

A challenge to this melting-pot view came first from Glazer and Moynihan, who demonstrated that not all groups assimilate. Their focus on Blacks and Puerto Ricans who did not assimilate in New York in the early 1960s broadened assimilation research beyond the melting pot.⁴ By the 1990s, classical assimilation theory, which developed from the migration period of 1880 to 1910, was being rejected. The experience of newer-arriving immigrants who came from all regions of the world was different from that of immigrants from a century before. Gans highlighted how assimilation was more “bumpy-line” than “straight-line” for many immigrant populations.⁵ In addition, Alba and Nee expanded the discussion of the assimilation process and focused on the role of external institutions in the assimilation process.⁶ Building on this newer assessment of assimilation theory, Portes and Zhou develop a more nuanced understanding of assimilation through a segmented approach.⁷ In segmented assimilation, they posit that different immigrant groups assimilate into different segments of society. Immigrants' socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds can undergo different degrees of assimilation and have different levels of social mobility. They suggest three possible outcomes for the second generation: upward assimilation, downward assimilation, and upward mobility combined with persistent biculturalism. For the second generation, structural factors that their parents encounter play a significant role in the degree to which they integrate into society. For example, where the immigrant resided before migration can affect their assimilation and the outcomes of their children. Those from urban settings may assimilate more quickly in the United States than those migrating from rural areas. In addition, structural factors in the United States influence assimilation. Inequalities play a role in assimilation. For example, Immigrant children who reside in areas with better K-12 educational resources are more likely to have better outcomes and experience upward mobility. Thus, second-generation immigrants can be exposed to either downward or upward social mobility because of forces in their parents' country of origin and inequality in the United States.

This segmented assimilation provides a lens to view the experience of second-generation Latino immigrants in Massachusetts. Similar to other immigrant children in the United States, Latino children in Massachusetts experience both individual and social factors that hinder and advance their transition to adulthood.⁸ If these second-generation Latino immigrants did not migrate to Massachusetts as children, they

⁴ Glazer, N., & Moynihan, D. P. (1963). *Beyond the melting pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Massachusetts Inst. Technology Pres.

⁵ Gans, H. "Second-Generation Decline: Scenarios for the Economic and Ethnic Futures of the Post-1965 American Immigrants," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15(2).

⁶ Alba, R. & Nee, V. *The International Migration Review* Vol. 31, Issue 4, (Winter 1997): 826-874.

⁷ Portes, Alejandro, and Min Zhou. 1993. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530: 74-96.

⁸ Suárez-Orozco, C. & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2001) Harvard University Press.

faced the repeal of bilingual education across the state⁹ that resulted in fewer students reaching the highest level of English language proficiency. During this transition, Latinos overall suffered substantial declines in their educational achievement.¹⁰ Even though Latino students in Massachusetts have experienced an increase in their academic achievement due to education reform over the past 20 years, the achievement gap has persisted.¹¹ Many second-generation Latinos also experienced federal policies that placed restrictions on immigrant access to social welfare benefits based on their parents' legal status.¹² In addition, Latino children are more likely to grow up in cities and towns outside of the Boston urban core that did not experience the state's more recent economic transformation.¹³ As a result, many children in Massachusetts not only lag behind Non-Latino children in educational outcomes but also in many health outcomes as well.¹⁴

In exploring the many challenges that second-generation Latino immigrant children face in Massachusetts, this report uses 2021 Current Population Survey (CPS) data to assess their social and economic integration. The CPS is a monthly household survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is similar to the American Community Survey but has a smaller sample population. The CPS does include college dorms but excludes those in the military, correctional facilities, and nursing homes. The most significant difference between the CPS and the ACS is that the CPS samples approximately 60,000 households annually, while the ACS samples 3.5 million households. Thus, the CPS has more statistical variation in its estimates. However, the CPS has one advantage: it asks for the birthplace of a respondent's parents and thus allows for creating a second-generation estimate. This report identifies 216,964 second-generation Latino immigrants in Massachusetts. It compares their outcomes to various demographic and socioeconomic factors to Non-Latino second-generation immigrants, the foreign-born, and the rest of Massachusetts (sometimes referred to as third-generation immigrants or beyond). Second-generation immigrants have at least one foreign-born parent. Slightly more

⁹ Capetillo-Ponce, J, "The Vote on Bilingual Education and Latino Identity in Massachusetts" (2003). Gastón Institute Publications. 129. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/129

¹⁰ Karp, F. & Uriarte, M. (2010). "Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Massachusetts: A Focus on Latino/a Students" Gastón Institute Publications. 159. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/159

¹¹ Lavan, Nicole and Uriarte, Miren, "Status of Latino Education in Massachusetts: A Report" (2008). Gastón Institute Publications. 133. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/133

¹² Uriarte, M, & Granberry, P. (2004) "When They Need Help the Most: Public Services for Immigrants," *New England Journal of Public Policy*: Vol. 20: Issue 1, Article 17.

¹³ Mattos, T., Granberry, P., & Agarwal, V. (2022). "¡AVANCEMOS YA!: Persistent Economic Challenges and Opportunities Facing Latinos in Massachusetts." Gastón Institute Publications. 281. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/281

¹⁴ Granberry, P., Alvarez, A., Agarwal, V., & Torres-Ardila, F. (2021). "A Portrait of Latino Children: The Gap with Non-Latinos in Massachusetts." Gastón Institute Publications. 266. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/266

than three-quarters of them have two foreign-born parents, but 24% have one foreign-born parent.

Figure 1: Massachusetts Population by Immigration Generation

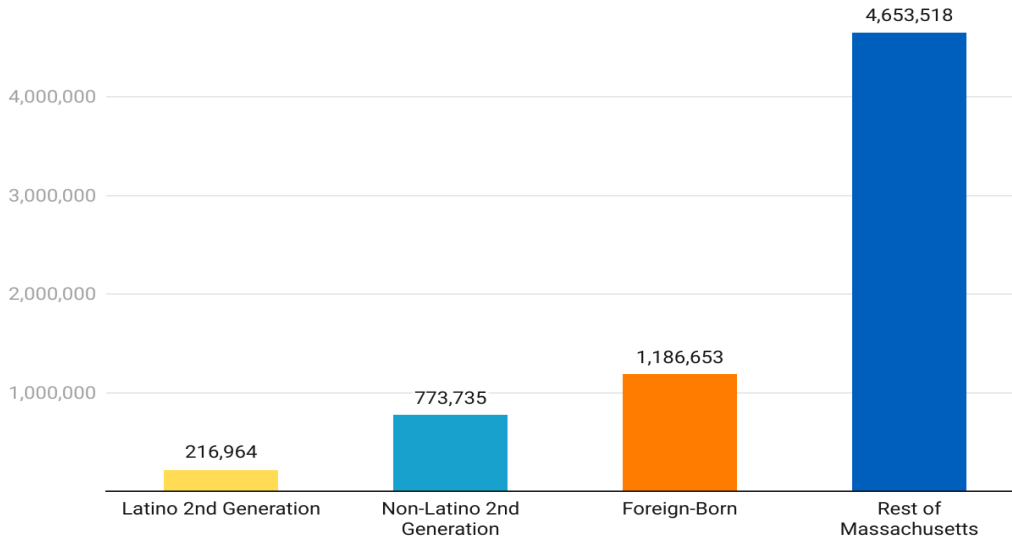
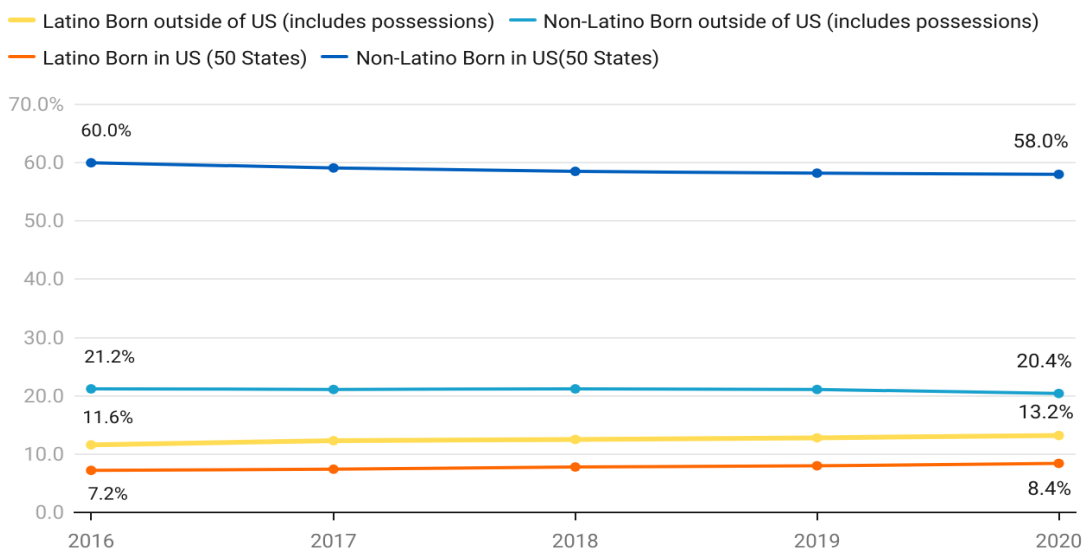


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

Massachusetts in 2021 had approximately 991,000 second-generation immigrants, who made up 14% of the state’s population. Of them, more than a quarter (216,946) were Latinos, representing 3% of the state’s population. The foreign-born compose a larger population in the state, with over 1.1 million residents, or 17% of the state’s population. The "Rest of Massachusetts" category represents the vast majority, with over 4.6 million residents or 68% of the population.

Figure 2: Nativity in Massachusetts by Ethnicity and Nativity of Mother



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Even though Non-Latina women account for a larger share of births, both native- and foreign-born experienced a decline of 10% in the share of births from 2016 to 2020. Latina women, who account for approximately 14.9% of women of childbearing years, account for 21.2% of births in 2020. Latina women born outside the US, including Puerto Rico, gave birth to a larger share, 13.2%, representing a 6% increase from 2016-2020, while Latina women born in the 50 United States experienced a 9% increase in births.

Figure 3: Age Categories

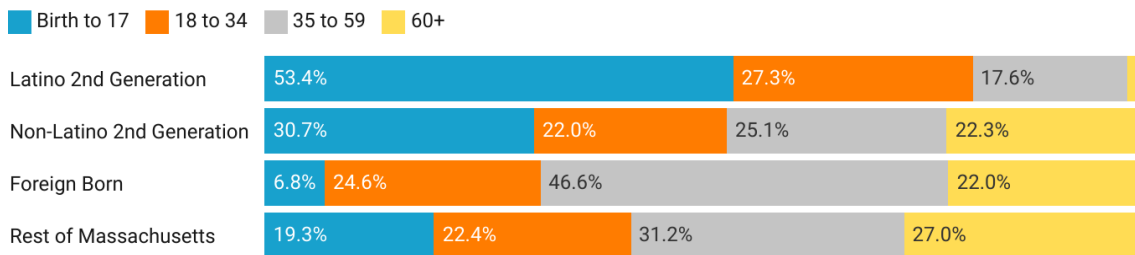


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

The increasing nativity of births among foreign-born Latina women highlights the relative youthfulness of the second-generation Latino population. Even compared to the Non-Latino second generation, over half of the population is under the age of 17. Thus, the education of second-generation Latino children is of the utmost importance. However, in Massachusetts, the heavily Latino Lawrence, Holyoke, and Southbridge public school districts have been in receivership over the last ten years, suggesting that Latino children may not be receiving adequate preparation to participate fully in the Massachusetts labor force as adults. In addition, although Latino children across the state have made progress compared to other ethno-racial groups, but an educational gap persists. (It should be noted that state educational data does not allow for the identification of second-generation immigrants.)

Figure 4: Race and Ethnicity of Second-Generation Immigrants and their Share of the Population

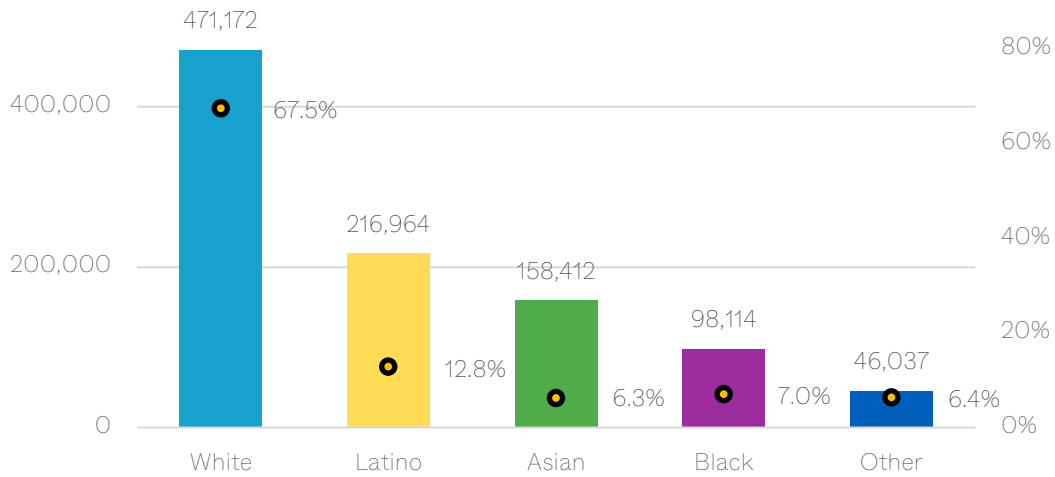


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Microsoft Excel

Over time, this increased number of births to foreign-born Latinas contributes to Latino second-generation immigrants' constituting 21% of all second-generation immigrants, a much larger share of the population than would be expected by Latinos' share of the total population (13%). This is also the case for Asian and Black second-generation immigrants, while the opposite is the case for second-generation White immigrants, who are only 48% of all second-generation although Whites make up 68% of the total population. More recent immigration has dramatically influenced the race and ethnicity of Massachusetts' population. Because the 1924 Immigration Act significantly reduced immigration and eliminated immigration from most non-European countries, and the 1965 Immigration Act increased immigration from all countries, over 90% of second-generation immigrants older than 60 years are White, while only 2% are Latino. In contrast, 33% of second-generation children are Latino and only 25% are White.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment

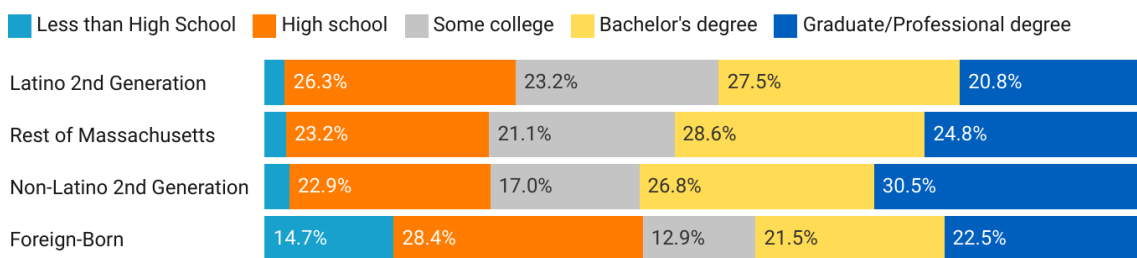


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

Immigrants frequently stress the importance of education to their children as a motivation for their migration. In Massachusetts, second-generation Latinos are having educational success. Educational attainment data are estimated for the population ages 25 years and older to allow for more than four years to obtain higher education credentials. Thus, this is a smaller population consisting of 32,219 Latinos. Second-generation Latinos, with 48.3% having at least a Bachelor’s degree, have educational success similar to that of the Non-Latino second generation, 57.3%, and close to that of the Rest of Massachusetts population, 52.7%.

However, we see a different story when examining the school enrollment of second-generation Latino immigrants ages 18-24 typically associated with college attendance. Approximately two-thirds of this population is not enrolled in school. This is in contrast to Non-Latino second-generation immigrants, of whom only 40% are not enrolled and 46% for the Rest of Massachusetts. In addition, Latino students have higher attendance at community colleges and lower four-year college graduation rates, which suggests some of this non-enrollment can be explained by the fact that Latino students who enroll do not have educational success. Therefore, Latino high school students must receive support to facilitate their academic success as previous second-generation Latino immigrants have.

Figure 6: School Enrollment of 18-24 year olds

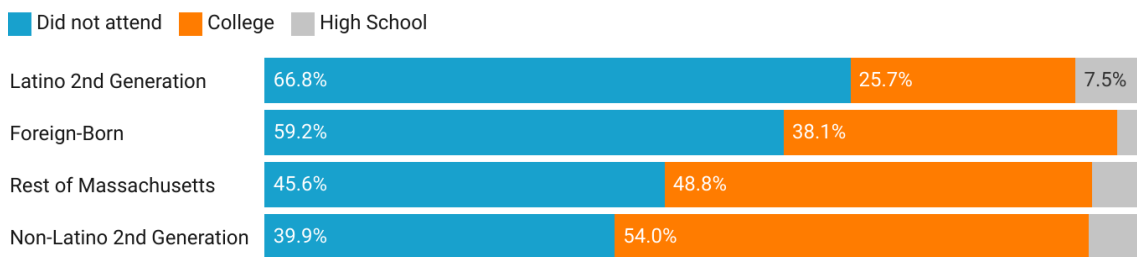


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

With their increased educational attainment, second-generation Latino immigrants experience less occupational segregation than Latinos typically experience in the Massachusetts labor force. For example, nearly a quarter work in higher paying business and scientific occupations compared to only 13% of Latinos in the 2016-2020 American Community Survey. In addition, 19% of second-generation Latino immigrants work in sales. In contrast, only 12.7% work in traditionally blue-collar construction, maintenance, production, and transportation occupations.

Figure 7: Occupations

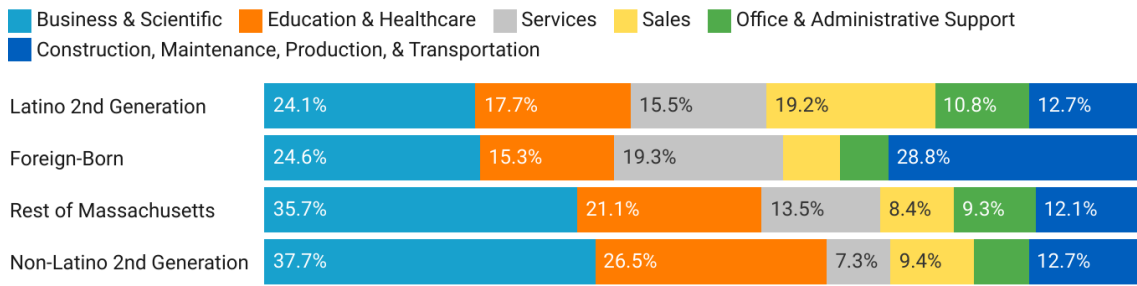


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

The distribution of total personal income among second-generation Latino immigrants highlights the segmented assimilation. The median total personal income of full-time workers in Massachusetts, according to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey, is approximately \$60,000. Second-generation Latino full-time workers are younger. Therefore, their lack of years in the labor market and fewer years to accumulate income from their investments would lower their expected total personal income compared to other groups. In fact, 18.4% have a total personal income of below \$25,000. This trend points to some difficulty obtaining higher-paying employment. By comparison, Non-Latino second-generation immigrants have only 3.7% of their full-time workers with this income level. In addition, the foreign-born have a lower share, 14.1%, in this income category. On the other end of the segmented assimilation spectrum, nearly 20% of full-time second-generation Latino immigrants have a total personal income above \$100,000. The previously identified occupational distribution, with nearly a quarter of employed second-generation Latinos working in business and scientific occupations, suggests that with their higher level of educational attainment, this population can earn higher wages when they compete with other workers in these more competitive occupations.

Figure 8: Total Personal Income

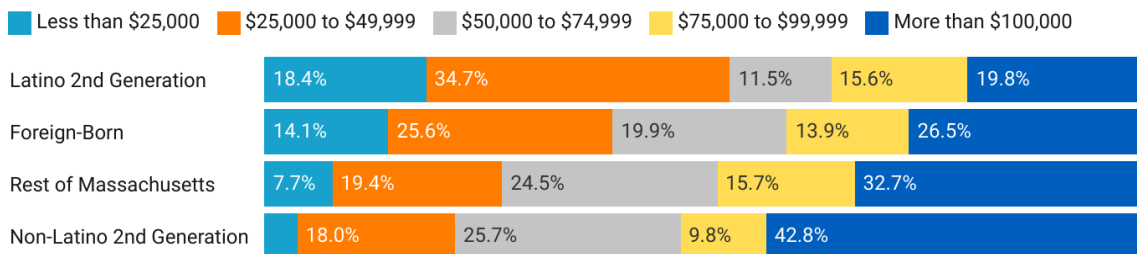


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

Their age profile shapes the homeownership of second-generation Latino immigrants. Only 10% of second-generation Latino immigrants are age 43 and above.

Non-Latino second-generation immigrants have a higher homeownership rate than the Rest of Massachusetts. As second-generation Latino immigrants age over the next decade, it will be important to monitor if their homeownership rate increases, similar to that other populations in Massachusetts.

Figure 9: Homeownership

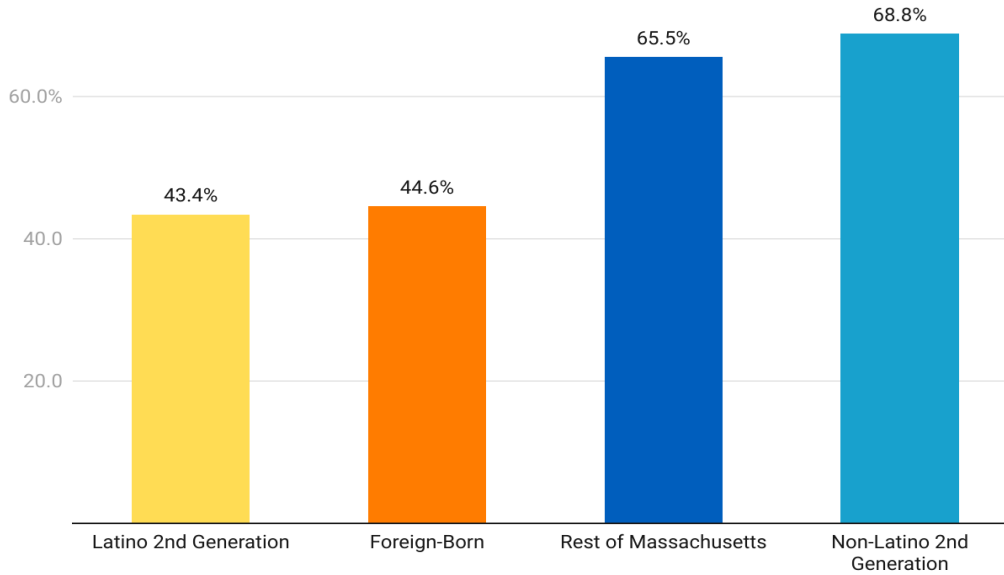


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

Even if second-generation Latino immigrants have a younger age profile, their share living in poverty suggests that segmented assimilation is occurring. With nearly 12% of second-generation adult Latino immigrants living in poverty, some downward assimilation occurs. Family households with children place financial stress on these families. Second-generation Latino children live in households with at least one foreign-born parent, and their poverty rate of these parents is higher at 17.5%, similar to the rate for all foreign-born in Massachusetts.

Figure 10: Adult and Child Poverty

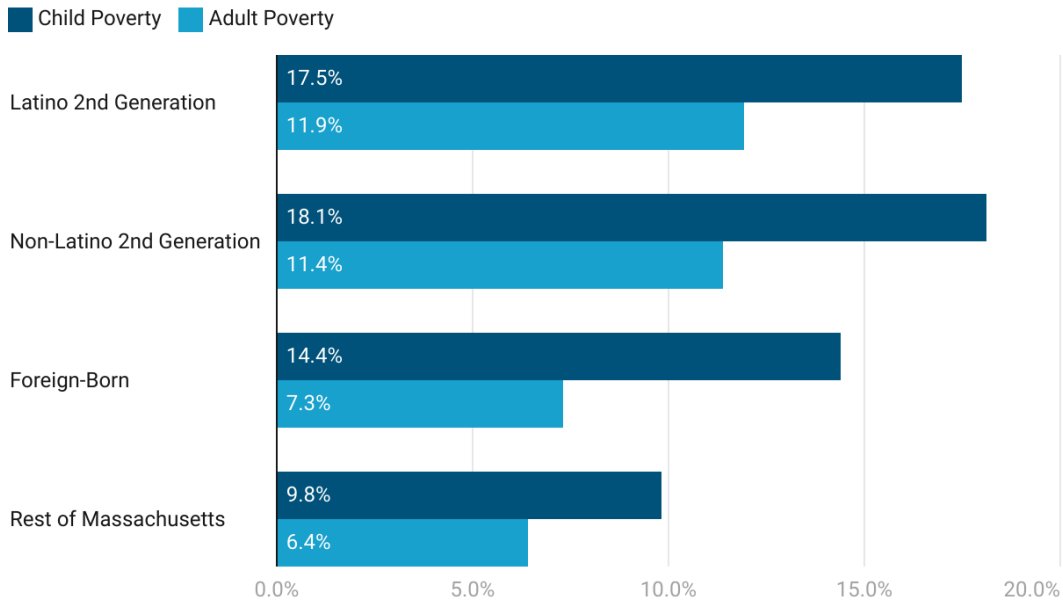


Chart: Gastón Institute · Source: 2021 Current Population Survey · Created with Datawrapper

Considering the overall socioeconomic integration of all Latinos in Massachusetts,¹⁵ second-generation Latino immigrants appear to be experiencing segmented assimilation in various socioeconomic characteristics. They have educational outcomes similar to other second-generation immigrants and work in similar occupations. However, because of their young age—only 18% are over age 35 compared to 47% of Non-Latino second-generation immigrants—their limited time in the labor market could contribute to their lower personal income and homeownership. With most second-generation Latino immigrants being under age 18, there is reason to be concerned about these children's future. They have experienced the Great Recession and are transitioning through COVID-19. Massachusetts has the opportunity to provide the educational resources to assist these children. However, this report finds that second-generation Latino immigrants aged 18-to-24 are half as likely to be enrolled in college as Non-Latino second-generation immigrants. Therefore, it is imperative that school districts with large Latino populations in Boston, Springfield, Lawrence, Worcester, and Lynn that have an enrollment of more than 10,000 Latino students pay careful attention to enhancing these students' educational success. In addition to preparation in high school, another hurdle is higher education cost. The Hildreth Institute is an example of community leaders working together to address higher education funding for

¹⁵ Mattos, T., Granberry, P., & Agarwal, V. (2022). "¡AVANCEMOS YA!: Persistent Economic Challenges and Opportunities Facing Latinos in Massachusetts." Gastón Institute Publications. 281. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/281

Latinos in Lynn, Chelsea, and Boston.¹⁶ With the passage of Ballot Question 1 in 2022, Massachusetts has addition public educational funding. The UMass system is poised to provide for the higher educational success of second-generation Latinos in the state. Second-generation Latino immigrants in Massachusetts have faced many challenges over the past 30 years. As these data demonstrate, they have risen to the occasion and are making critical socioeconomic contributions to Massachusetts. It is important that the large number of second-generation Latino immigrants under age 18 be enabled to follow in their footsteps.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Michelle Borges, a Research Assistant at the Mauricio Gaston Institute, for her support in preparing the charts and formatting the report.

¹⁶ <https://hildreth institute.org/>

About the Institute

Established in 1989, the Massachusetts Legislature created the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy in response to a need for an improved understanding of the Latino experience in the commonwealth. Now in its 34th 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 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 at the Gastón Institute and Economics Department at UMass Boston, he is Senior Researcher in demography

for the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

Mary Jo Marion is Associate Vice President for University and Community Engagement at Worcester State University. As part of the Academic Affairs Division, she oversees the John J. Binienda Center for Civic Engagement, Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the Latino Education Institute. She co-developed and helps oversee the Early College Worcester initiative. Ms. Marion was also the Associate Director of the Mauricio Gastón Institute

for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Education Policy analyst for Unidos. She leads and serves on a number of commissions and task forces for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the city of Worcester. Mary Jo immigrated to the United States from Bolivia and committed much of her professional life to advance policies to improve life opportunities for Latinos in the United States.



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