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### Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Boston

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for  
Latino Community Development  
and Public Policy



## Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas

### Boston

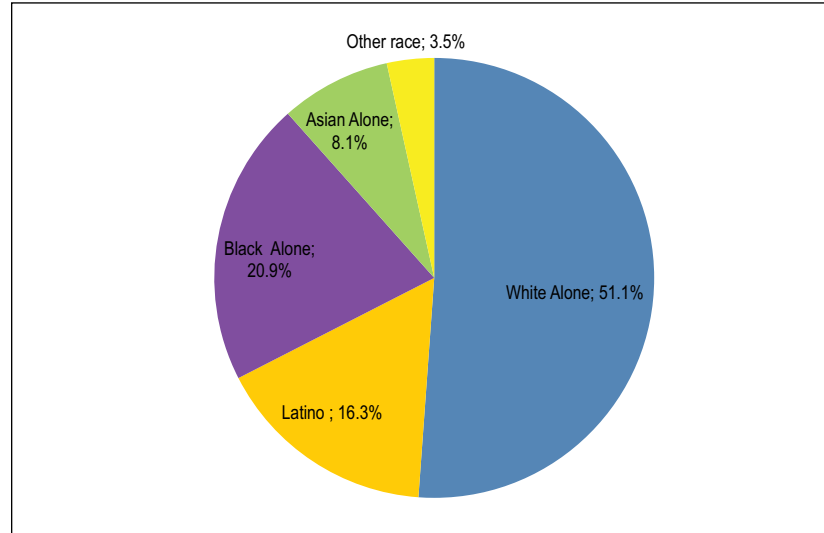
by Phillip Granberry, PhD and Sarah Rustan | September 17, 2010

#### INTRODUCTION

This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in Boston. This report is prepared for the 2010 Statewide Latino Public Policy Conference sponsored by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy. It is part of a larger series that covers fourteen cities, or clusters of cities, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Each report analyzes data from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS's smallest geographic area is a Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) consisting of a minimum census population of 100,000. The City of Boston comprises five PUMAs. By aggregating them for purposes of this report, we are able to arrive at a demographic and economic portrait of Boston's Latino community.

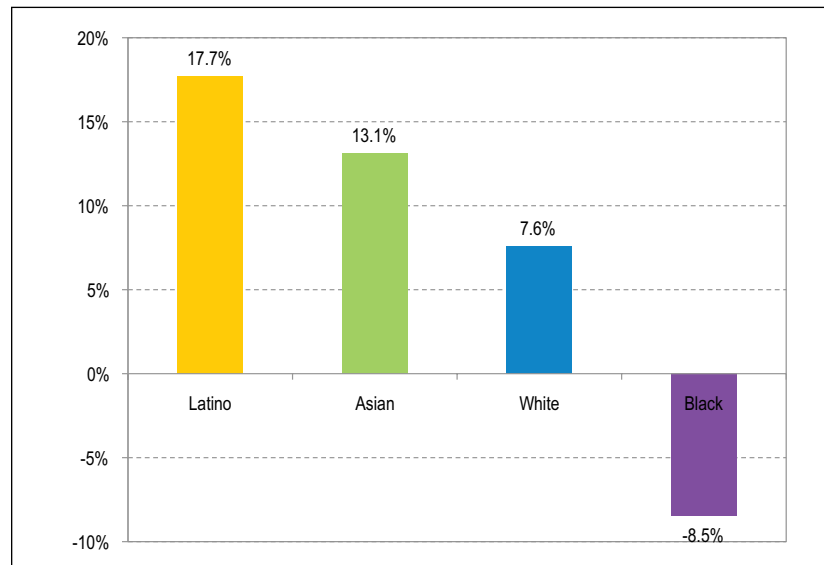
As the largest city in the Commonwealth, Boston is home to an estimated 100,159 Latinos. This represents the largest Latino population in the state, though several other cities have greater concentrations of Latinos. Latinos represent about one-sixth (16.3%) of the city's population, a smaller share than for whites and blacks but greater than for Asians (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in Boston**



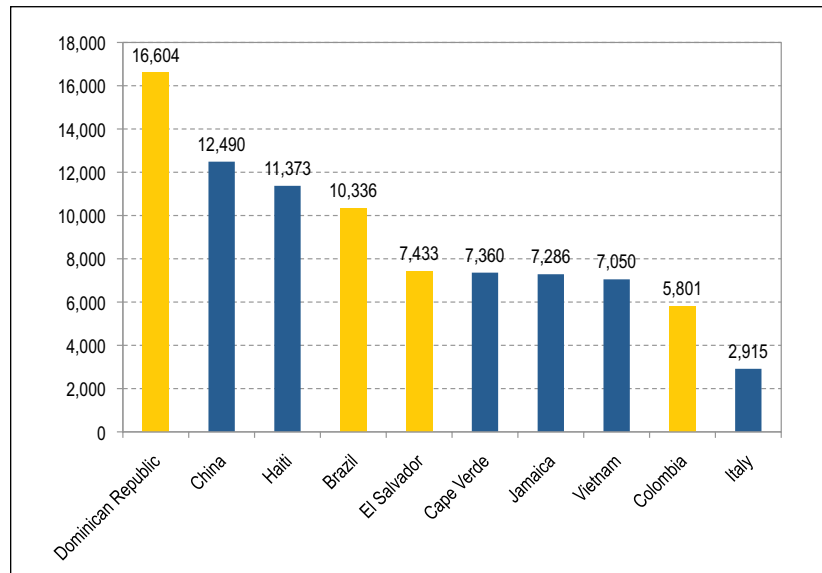
A striking feature of Boston's Latino population is its recent growth. From 2000 to 2008, Latinos represented the fastest growing ethno-racial population in the city; Asians and whites also experienced population growth but not as fast, while blacks experienced population decline.

**Figure 2: Population Growth by Ethno-Racial Group in Boston from 2000 to 2008**



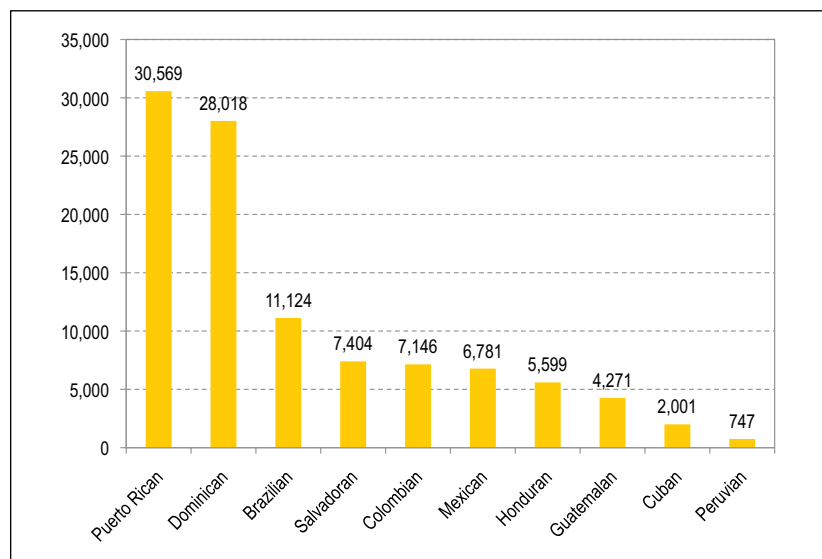
Boston has long been a destination for international migrants, and today it has greater concentrations of foreign-born (26.7%) than the Commonwealth as a whole (14.4%). Dominicans represent the largest foreign-born population in the city, and Latino countries account for four of the top ten sending countries to the city (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Top 10 Sending Countries to Boston in 2008**



When examining the ancestry of Latinos in the city, it is important to note that Puerto Ricans are citizens and included in Figure 4 but not in Figure 3 for foreign-born. Following the statewide trend, Puerto Ricans constitute the largest Latino subpopulation in the city with a population of 30,569, followed closely by Dominicans with 28,018<sup>1</sup>.

**Figure 4: Ancestry of the Top 10 Latino Groups in Boston in 2008**



The rest of this report presents an overview that compares Latinos and their top ten subpopulations to whites, blacks, and Asians in Boston for selected demographic, economic, and social characteristics.

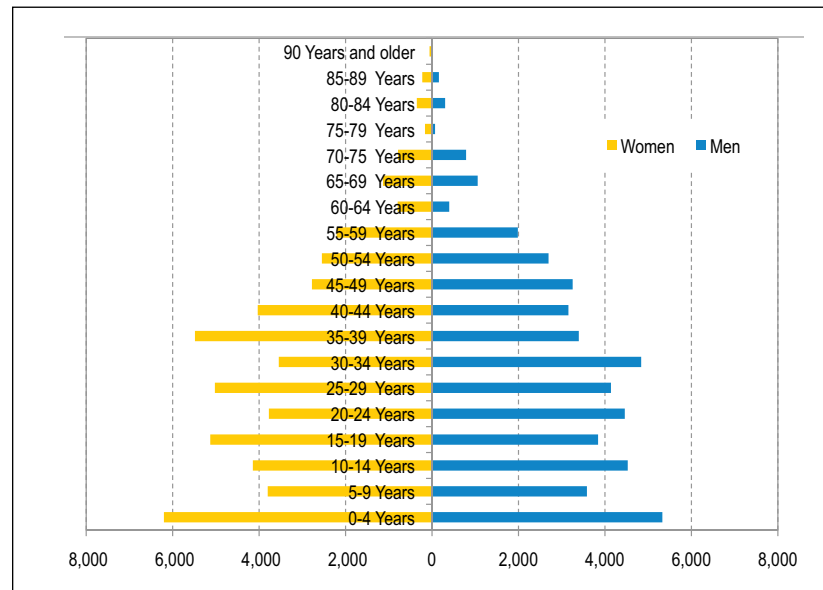
## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Most Brazilians in the survey did not identify themselves as Latino. Whenever the category “Brazilian” appears in one of the figures, it includes all Brazilians, but the category “Latino” includes only those Brazilians who self-identified as Latino.

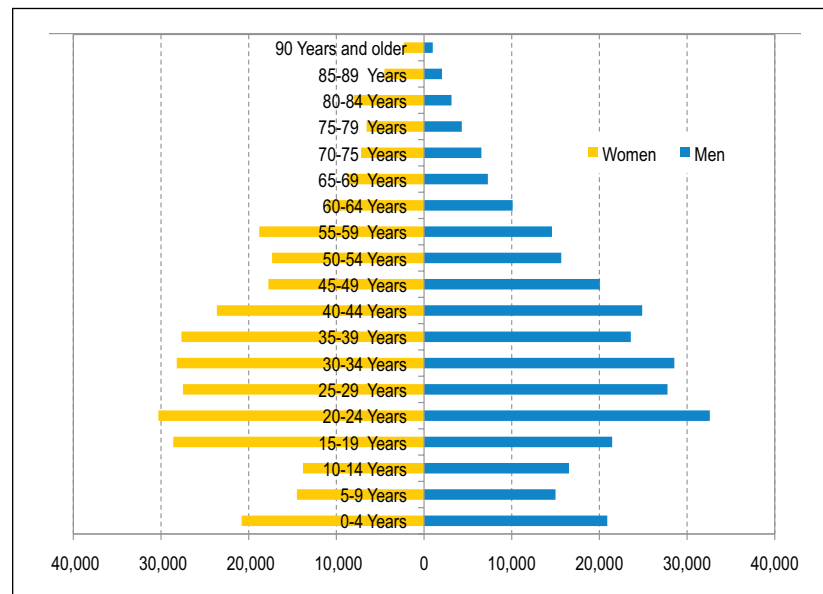
## AGE DISTRIBUTION AND MARITAL STATUS

Figures 5A and 5B highlight age distribution and with Figure 2 present ethno-racial population change, drawing attention to the important contributions that Latinos are making in Boston. With the majority of their population at the younger levels shown in Figure 5A, Latinos will require an investment in the education of their youth. A younger Latino population will contribute economically, socially, and politically in later years as the population as a whole grows older, as shown in Figure 5B. An older population will require younger residents to keep the city's neighborhoods vibrant and maintain a productive workforce, and Latinos are poised to make this contribution.

**Figure 5A: Age Distribution of the Latino Population in Boston in 2008**



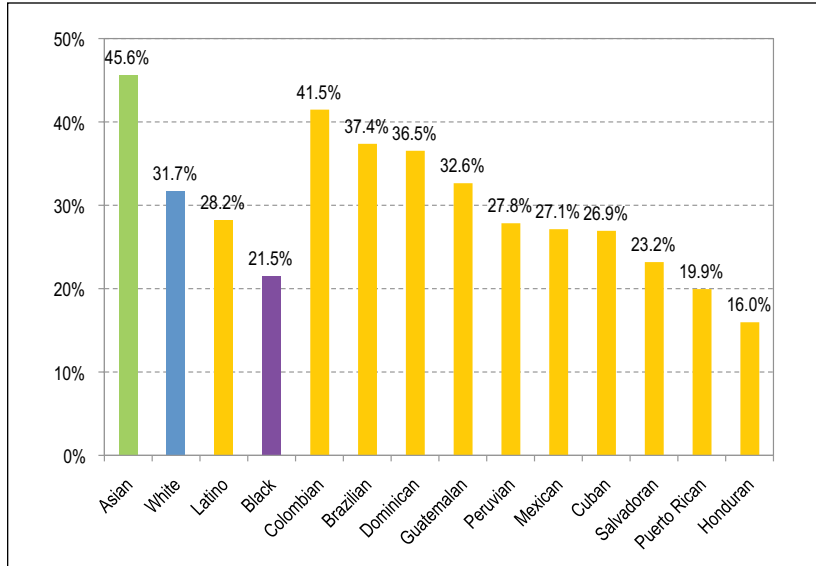
**Figure 5B: Age Distribution of the Total Population in Boston in 2008**



Boston has a younger and possibly more transient population than the state as a whole, and the marital status of its residents reflects these characteristics. The mar-

riage rates shown in Figure 6 (for persons age 16 and older) are lower for all ethno-racial groups in Boston than for the same groups overall in Massachusetts. This is true for Latinos, whose marriage rate is 33.6% statewide and 28.2% in Boston. Latino subpopulations show wide variation in their marriage rates; a number of factors, including the age of these populations, could be driving this variation.

**Figure 6: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



## EDUCATION

Figure 7 highlights the fact that Latinos have the highest percentage of their population with less than a high school diploma: 35.4%, compared to 9.4% for whites, 21.2% for blacks, and 26.6% for Asians. At the other end of the educational scale, Latinos have the lowest percentage of their population with at least a bachelor's degree: 18.4%, compared to 57.2% for whites, 45.7% for Asians, and 18.5% for blacks.

**Figure 7: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008 (Adults 25 Years and Older)**

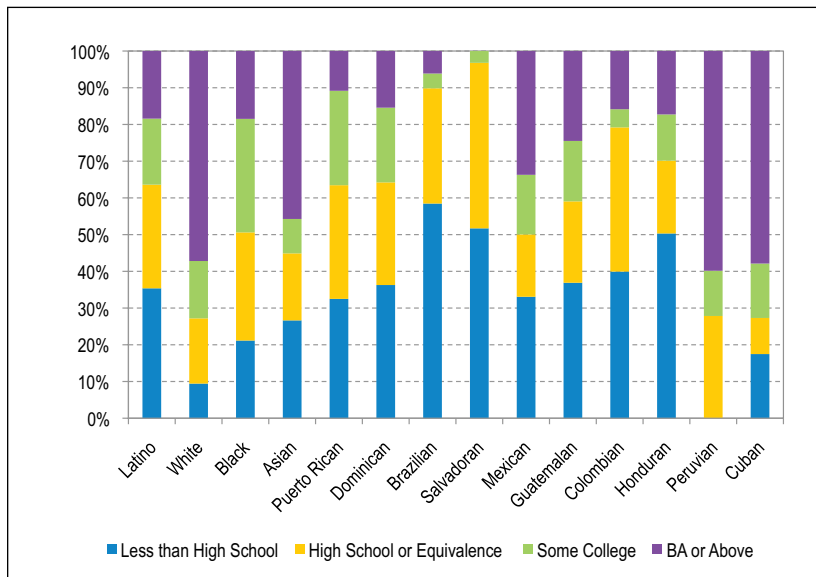
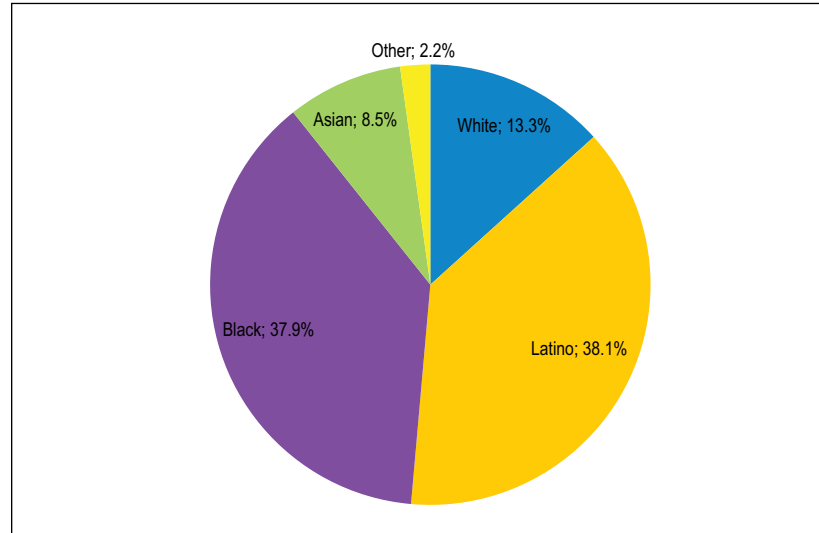


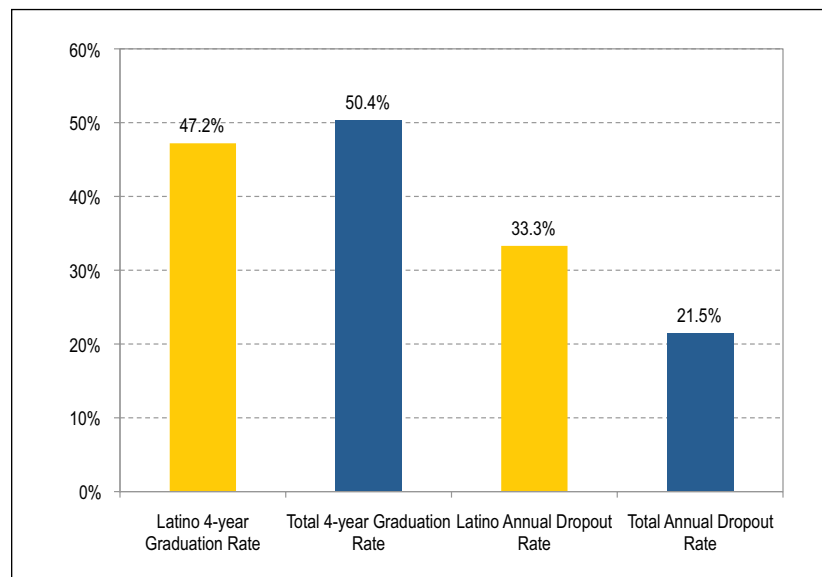
Figure 8 uses data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding Latinos in the Boston Public Schools. Latinos are the largest ethno-racial group. After a 22.4% growth rate since 2000, they made up 38.1% of the student population in the 2008–2009 academic year.

**Figure 8A: Spotlight on Boston Public Schools by Ethno-Racial Group, Academic Year 2008–2009**



Less than half 47.2% of Latinos graduate in four years, compared to 50.4% for the total population. Similarly, a third of Latinos drop out of school compared to 21.5% for the total population.

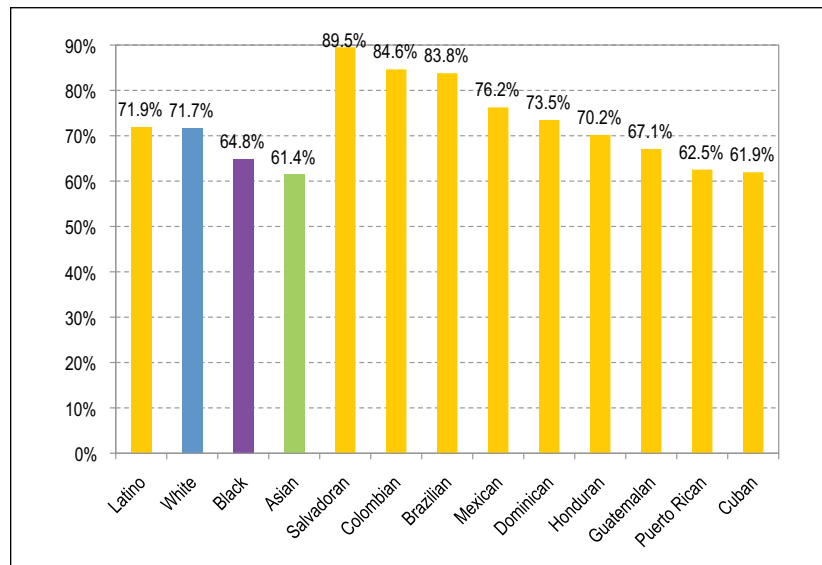
**Figure 8B: Spotlight on Boston Public Schools by Outcomes, Academic Year 2008–2009**



## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

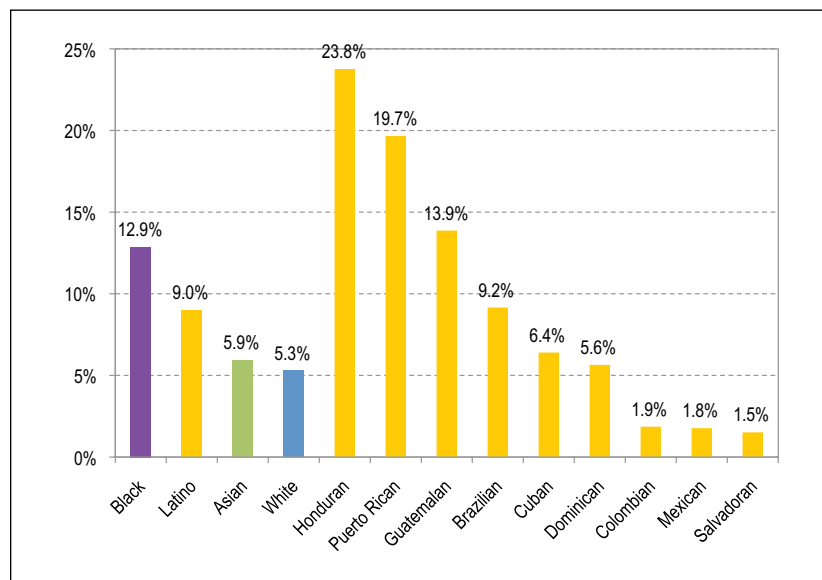
Again suggesting the importance of Latinos to Boston's economic and social well-being, Figure 9 identifies Latinos as having the highest labor force participation rate of any ethno-racial group (71.9%) in the city.<sup>2</sup> This is despite the large proportion of families with children under 18 shown by Figure 5A. Larger numbers of families with young children often result in lower labor force participation rates due to child care needs.

**Figure 9: Labor Force Participation by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008<sup>1</sup>**



The previous labor force participation information suggests that Latinos in Boston have a strong motivation to participate in Boston's economy. However, Figure 10 tells a different and slightly less positive story. The unemployment rate among Latinos in 2008 was 9.0%, which was high for the prosperous Boston economy of 2008. Latinos have shown a wide range in their unemployment rates, ranging from Hondurans, Puerto Ricans, and Guatemalans at the extremely high end and Colombians, Mexicans, and Salvadorans at the very low end.

**Figure 10: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



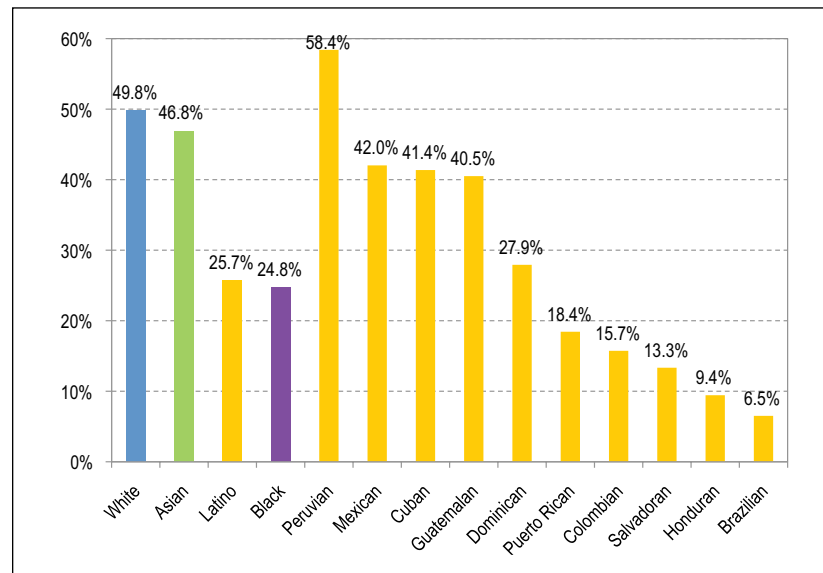
### Notes

<sup>2</sup> Because of the smaller size of some Latino sub-populations in the ACS data for Boston, some labor force participation estimates have too large of a standard error and have been dropped from this analysis.

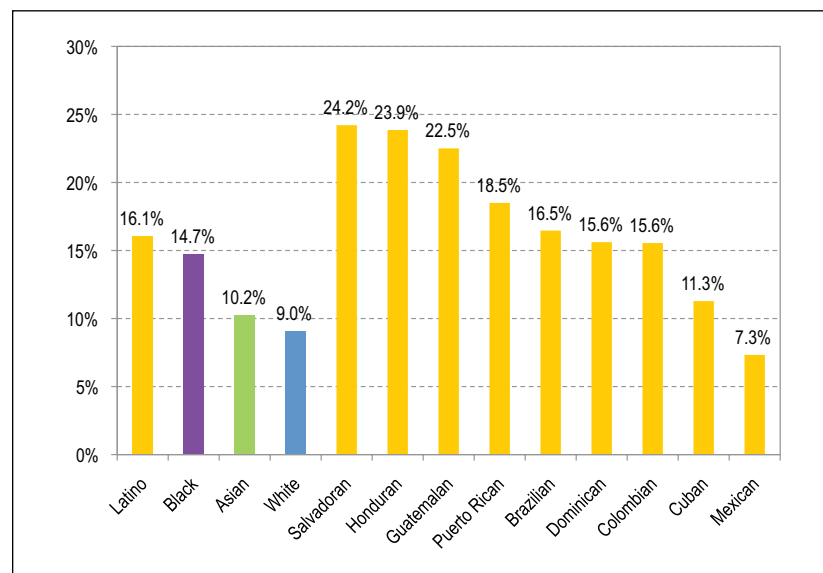


Figures 11A and 11B suggest that Latinos serve as complements to other ethno-racial groups in the Boston labor market whose members have higher educational attainment. Latinos are overrepresented in what are traditionally considered blue-collar jobs (farming, construction, production, and transportation). All Latino sub-populations have higher percentages than the total population (11.5%) in these blue-collar jobs except Cubans and Mexicans (Figure 11B). In contrast, Figure 11A shows that Latinos are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs (professional and managerial). Only 26% of the Latino population works in white-collar jobs, nearly 25% less than white and Asian populations but similar to the black population. Cubans, Mexicans, and Peruvians have greater percentages of their populations in these occupations than the total population (41.0%).

**Figure 11A: Population Employed in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



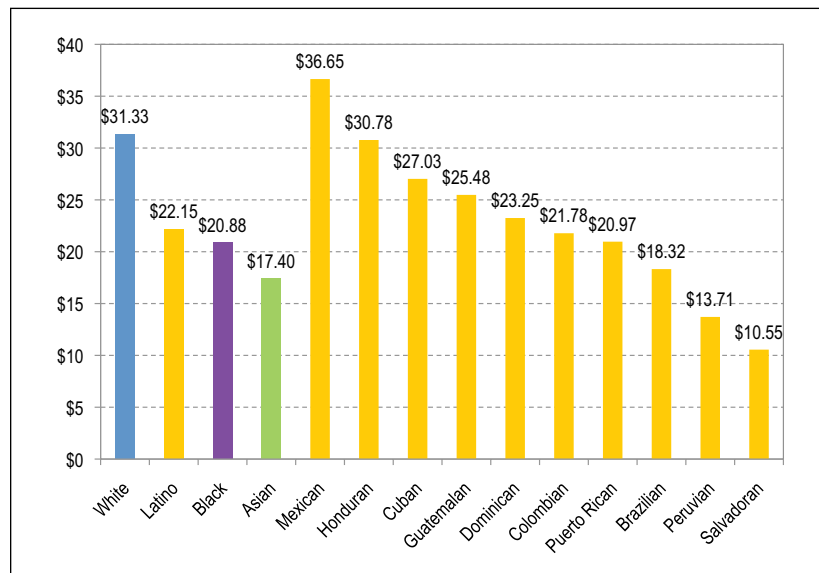
**Figure 11B: Population Employed in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



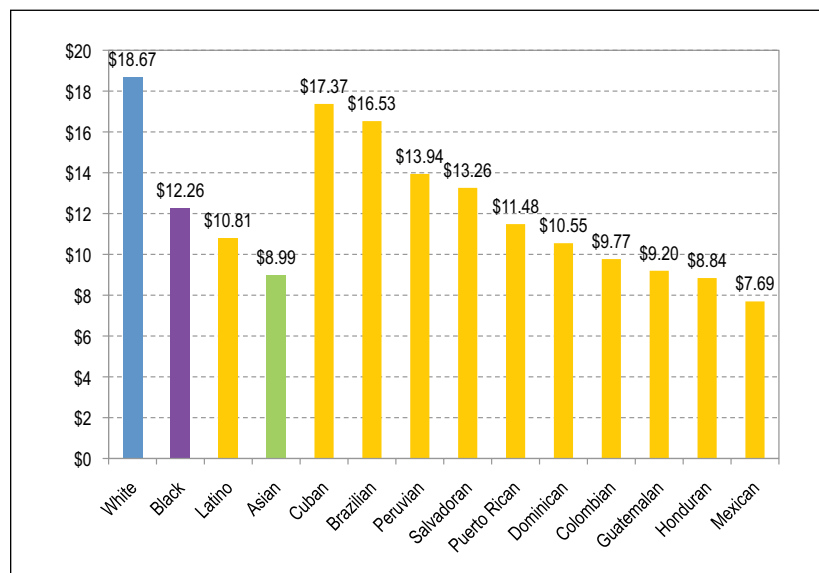
## EARNINGS

When examining the wage rates for these occupational categories, Latinos in Boston appear to be receiving wages similar to those of other non-white ethno-racial groups. They earn higher wages for their white-collar employment (Figure 12A) than blacks and Asians; they earn more than Asians for their service-sector (Figure 12B) and blue-collar (Figure 12C) employment. Mexicans in particular are earning high wages for white- and blue-collar jobs, while Hondurans earn low wages for both their service and blue-collar employment. Whites earn substantially more than Latinos in each employment category. Latinos earn only 71% of white earnings in white-collar employment, 58% in the service-sector, and 62% in blue-collar employment.

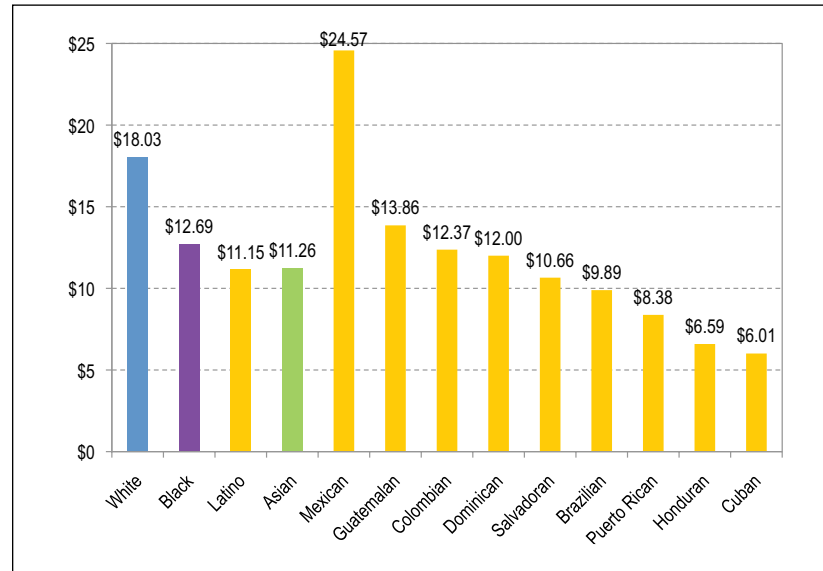
**Figure 12A: Hourly Wages in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



**Figure 12B: Hourly Wages in Sales and Service Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



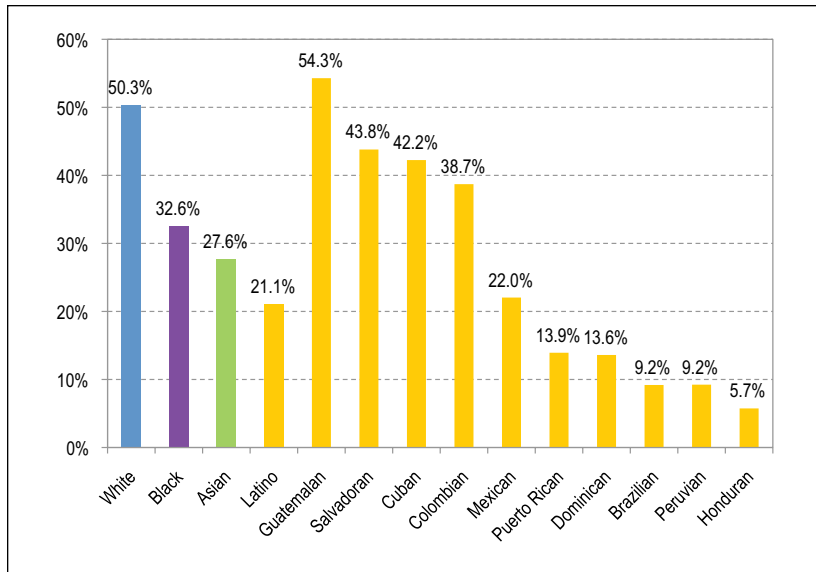
**Figure 12C: Hourly Wages in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



## HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

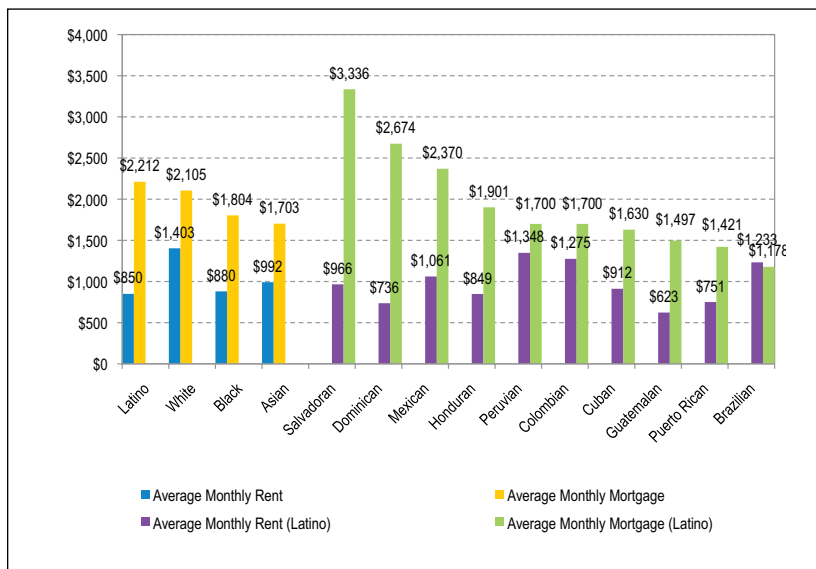
The final measures of Latino participation in Boston are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Boston traditionally has lower homeownership rates than the state as a whole, and Latinos have the lowest homeownership level (21.1%) of any ethno-racial group in the city (Figure 13). This low homeownership rate is being driven by the three largest subpopulations – Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Brazilians – who all have rates below 14%. Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Cubans, and Colombians have homeownership rates near or above the city's average of 39%. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 13, it is evident that 79.9% of Latinos in Boston are renters.

**Figure 13: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group**



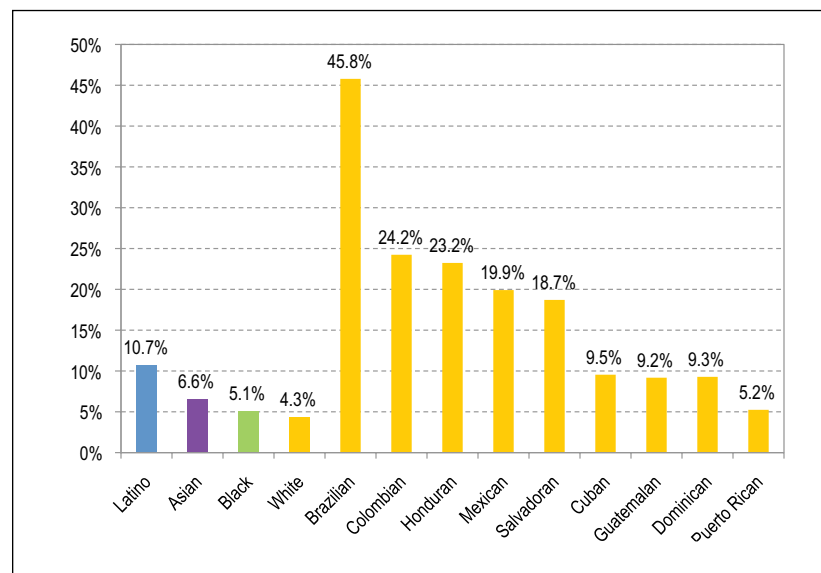
Homeownership is seen in a different light when its cost is analyzed. Having largely become homeowners during the housing bubble of the last decade, Latinos in Figure 14 on average pay \$2,212 monthly mortgages, which is the highest of any ethno-racial group in the city. At the same time they pay an average rent of \$850, lower than for any other group. The combination of high mortgage payments and low rents underlines the fact that Latino homebuyers were disadvantaged by the housing bubble. Salvadorans, Dominicans, and Mexicans pay above-average mortgages, while Brazilians have low mortgages but pay higher rents.

**Figure 14: Housing Costs by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



Similar to state-wide averages, Latinos in Boston have the greatest percentage without medical insurance (10.7%) of any ethno-racial group (Figure 15). Puerto Ricans, who have access to public medical insurance, have the lowest rates of any Latino population without medical insurance. On the other hand, Brazilians, who are a newly arriving subpopulation, have higher rates without medical insurance (45.8%). Previous research has identified that many Brazilians are unauthorized immigrants, and their legal status prevents access to medical insurance.

**Figure 15: Medical Uninsurance by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



### About the Authors

Phillip Granberry is a social demographer who specializes in unauthorized migrants in the United States. He worked with various community based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. migrants before earning a PhD in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston in 2007. His past research has focused on Latinos in the United States. One part of this research has addressed the formation and use of social capital among Mexican migrants in Los Angeles County, and another part of this research has addressed demographic trends of Latinos in New England. His current research focuses on Brazilian and Dominican migrants in the Metropolitan Boston area. He currently teaches in the Economics Department and is a research associate of the Gastón Institute.

Sarah Rustan is a PhD candidate in Law, Policy, and Society at Northeastern University with degrees in cultural management and architecture. Her professional background includes broad experiences in the nonprofit sector, including research as well as nonprofit and cultural management. Her past research has examined diverse topics ranging from charitable giving to women in the workforce. At present she is working on a dissertation exploring the role that nonprofit organizations play in promoting the development of social capital. She currently serves as a Research Associate and Data Analyst for the Gastón Institute and as a Doctoral Fellow at Northeastern University. Sarah's research interests include demography, community change, and public policy.