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# Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas: Cambridge

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for  
Latino Community Development  
and Public Policy



## Latinos in Massachusetts Selected Areas

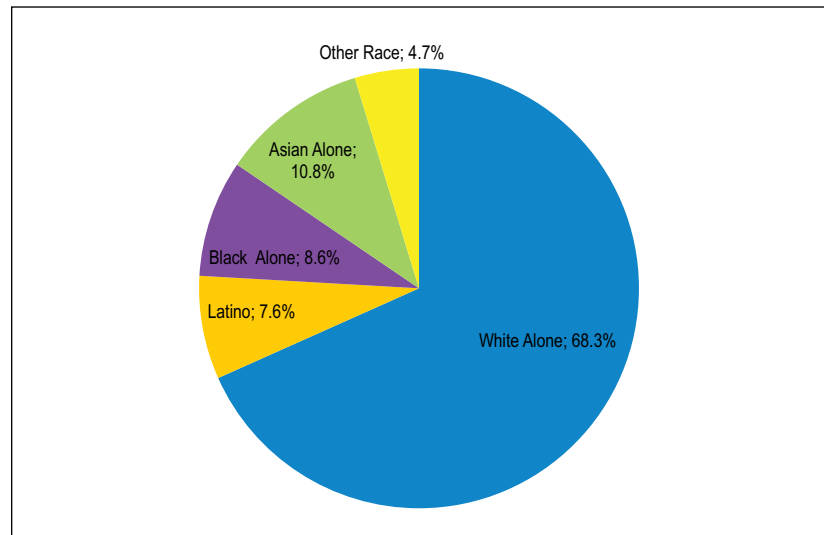
### Cambridge

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

#### INTRODUCTION

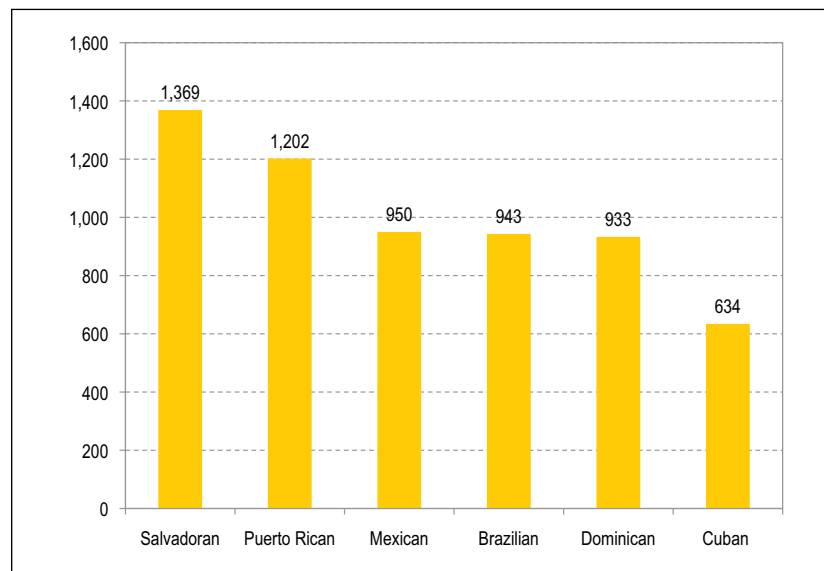
This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected economic, social, educational, and demographic indicators pertaining to Latinos in Cambridge. This report is prepared for the 2010 Statewide Latino Public Policy Conference organized by UMass Boston's Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community 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. Cambridge is a large enough city that it constitutes a PUMA by itself. The ACS thereby enables us to arrive at a demographic and economic portrait of Cambridge's Latino community.

**Figure 1: Population Percentages by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



Cambridge is home to an estimated 7,353 Latinos, who make up only 7.6% of the area’s population. Whites constitute the largest ethno-racial group (68.3%), while the Asian population accounts for 10.8%, and the black population accounts for 8.6% of the population (Figure 1).

**Figure 2: Ancestry of the Top Latino Groups in 2008**



Cambridge is noted for its diverse Latino population, which is led by Salvadorans (1,369) and followed by Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Brazilians<sup>1</sup>, Dominicans, and Cubans. Latinos help give the Cambridge a proportionately greater foreign-born population (23.1%) than the state as a whole (14.4%).

The remainder of this report presents an overview that compares Latinos and their top subpopulations to whites, blacks, and Asians in Cambridge for selected demographic, economic, and social characteristics<sup>2</sup>.

**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.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the smaller size of some ethno-racial groups and Latino subpopulations in the ACS data for Cambridge, some demographic and labor force participation estimates have too large of a standard error and have been dropped from this analysis.

## MEDIAN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Figure 3 highlighting differences in median age draws attention to the importance of Latinos in Cambridge. Cambridge has a lower median age than other cities. Latinos' median age of 27 years is slightly less than that of blacks, whites, and Asians. This suggests that Latinos have more families with younger children and will require an investment in education of their youth; however, these younger Latinos will contribute economically, socially, and politically in later years as other ethno-racial groups age and retire. This older population will require younger residents to keep Cambridge's neighborhoods vibrant and maintain a productive workforce, and Latinos are poised to make this contribution.

**Figure 3: Median Age by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**

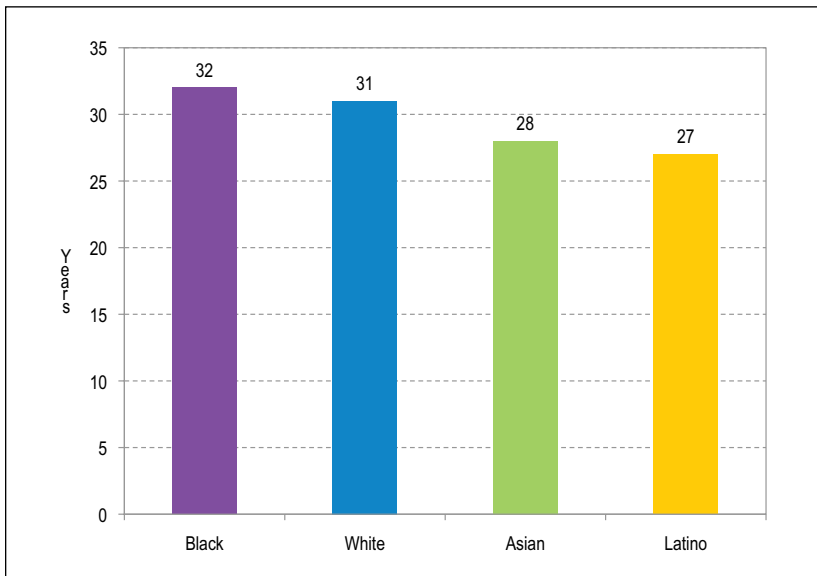
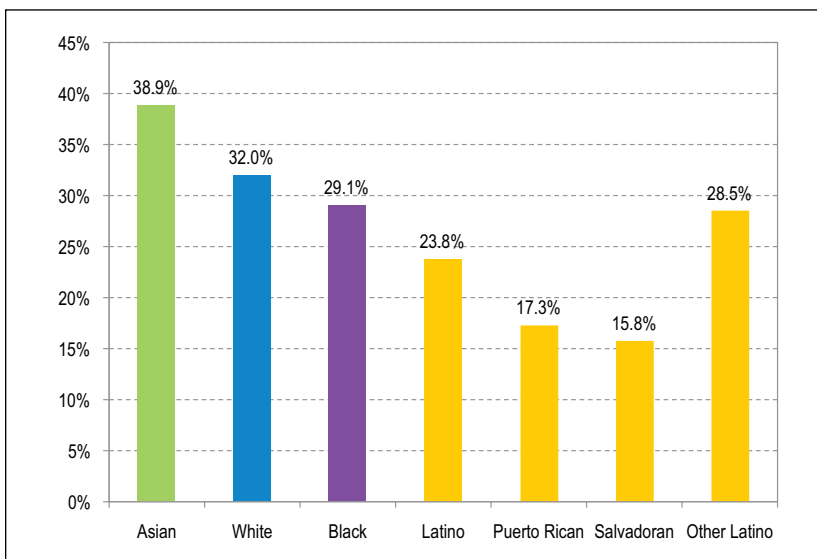


Figure 4 shows that the 23.8% marriage rate for Latinos (for persons age 16 and older) is less than all other ethno-racial groups. Latino subpopulations show some variation in their marriage rates; a number of factors, including the differing ages of these populations, could be driving this variation.

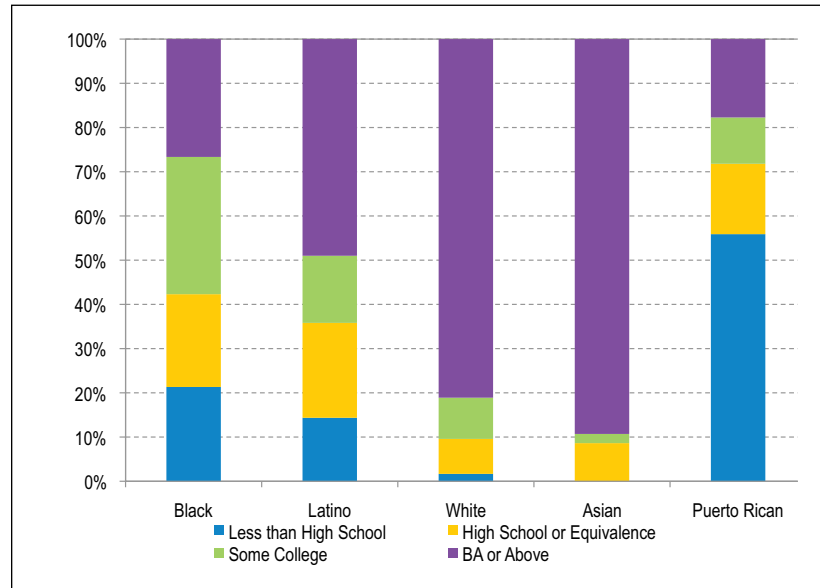
**Figure 4: Marriage Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



## EDUCATION

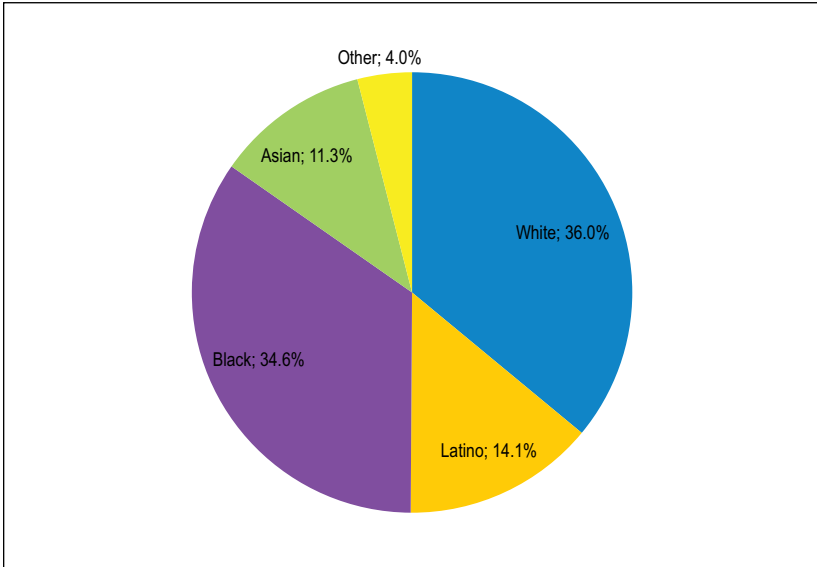
Figure 5 highlights the fact that Latinos in Cambridge have higher educational attainment than those in other areas of the state. They have a lower percentage of their population who lack a high school diploma than blacks: 14.4%, compared to 21.3%. However, this is not consistent across all subpopulations as 55.7% of Puerto Ricans lack a high school diploma. At the other end of the educational scale, nearly half of Latinos in Cambridge have at least a bachelor's degree: 49.0%, compared to 89.3% for Asians, 81.1% for whites, and 26.7% for blacks.

**Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008 (Adults 25 Years and Older)**



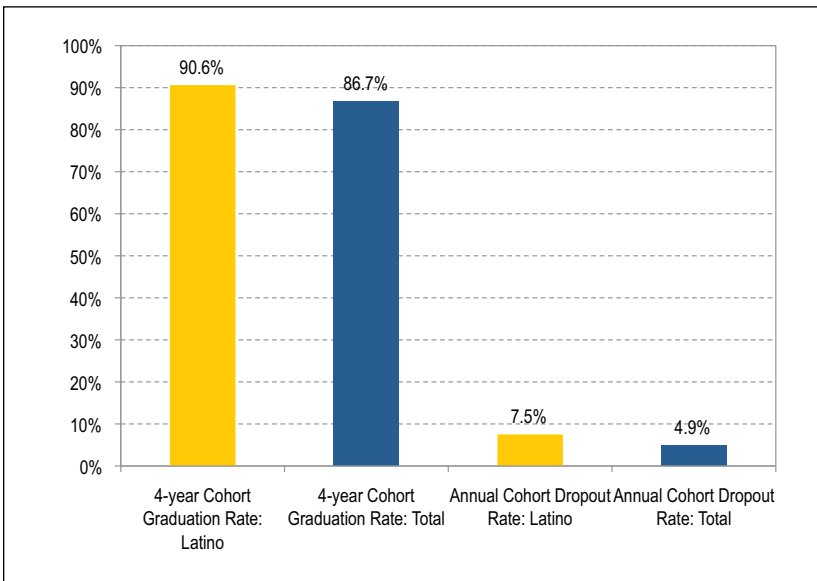
Figures 6A and 6B provide information regarding Latinos in the Cambridge Public Schools, based on data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. After an 18.8% decrease in the Latino student population during the 2000s, they made up only 14.1% of the student population in the 2008-2009 academic year, higher than for Asian students but much less than for whites and blacks.

**Figure 6A: Spotlight on Cambridge Public Schools by Ethno-Racial Group, Academic Year 2008-2009**



Latinos in Cambridge Public Schools are achieving academic success. Nearly 90.6% of Latino high school students graduate in four years compared to 86.7% for the total population. However, their 7.5% cohort dropout rate is higher than the 4.9% rate for the total population. These Latino student graduation and dropout rates show a striking improvement compared to other school districts analyzed for these reports.

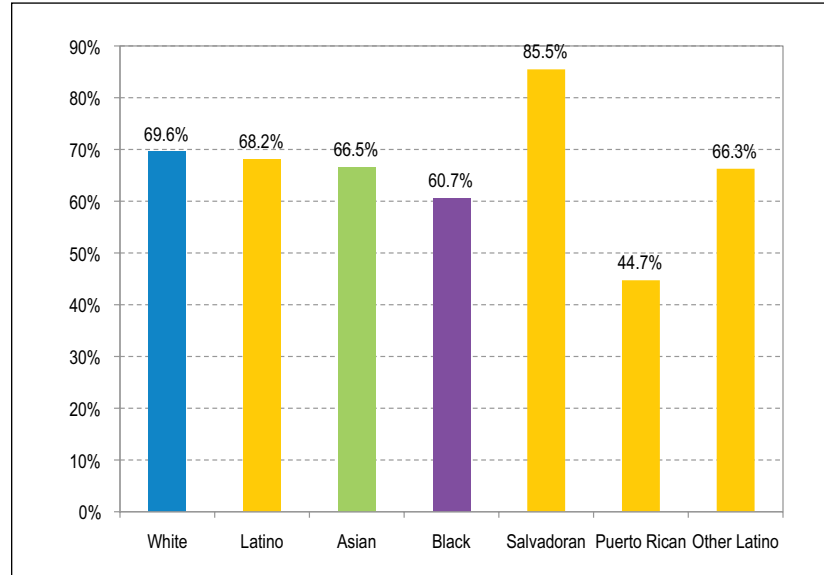
**Figure 6B: Spotlight on Cambridge Public Schools by Outcomes, Academic Year 2008-2009**



## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

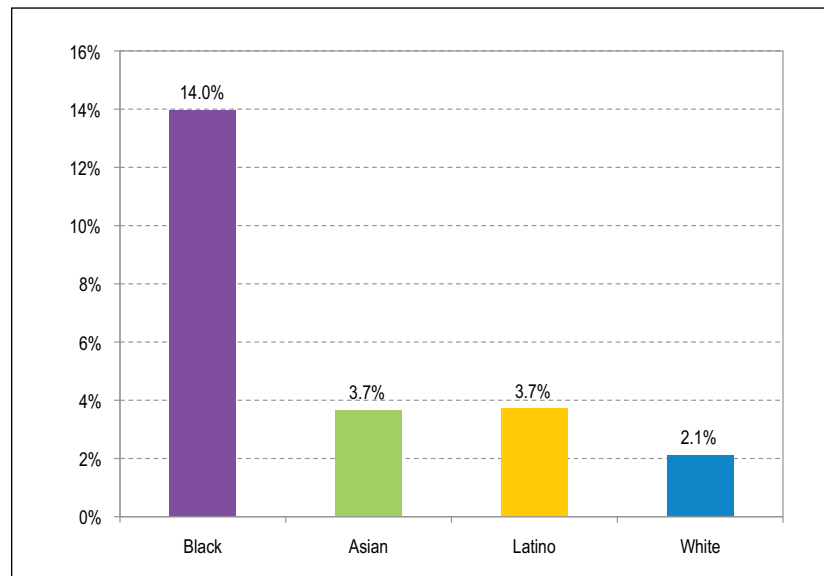
Latinos' labor force participation (68.2%) is comparable to whites (69.6%) but greater than Asians (66.5%) and blacks (60.7%) in Cambridge (Figure 7). As is found in other parts of the state, Salvadorans have high labor force participation (85.5%).

**Figure 7: Labor Force Participation by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



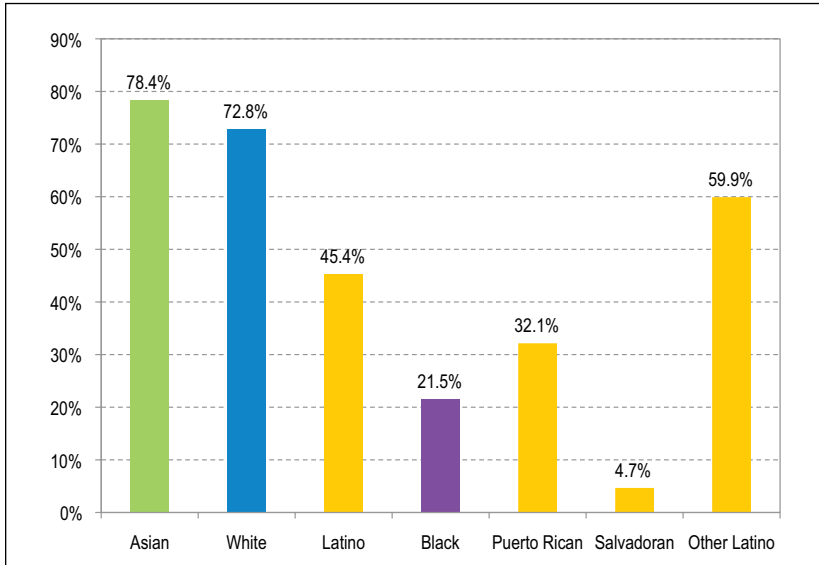
Even though Latinos have a labor force participation in Cambridge that is similar to their statewide average, Figure 8 tells a more positive story about their employment. The unemployment rate among Latinos in 2008 was 3.7%, which was lower than for blacks (14.0%) and comparable to Asians (3.7%) and whites (2.1%).

**Figure 8: Unemployment Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**

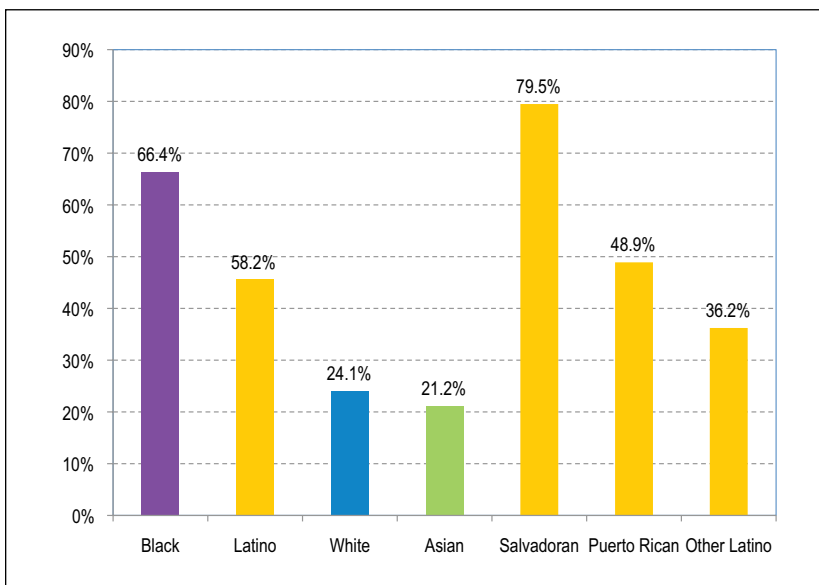


Figures 9A and 9B suggest that Latinos serve as complements to whites and Asians but are competing with blacks for jobs in the area's labor market. This trend is found in few areas of the state and may be related to Latinos' higher educational attainment in Cambridge. Latinos and blacks are strongly represented in what are traditionally considered service-sector jobs (Figure 9B). Correspondingly, as Figure 9A shows, Latinos and blacks are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white-collar jobs (professional and managerial).

**Figure 9A: Population Employed in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



**Figure 9B: Population Employed in Sales and Service Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**

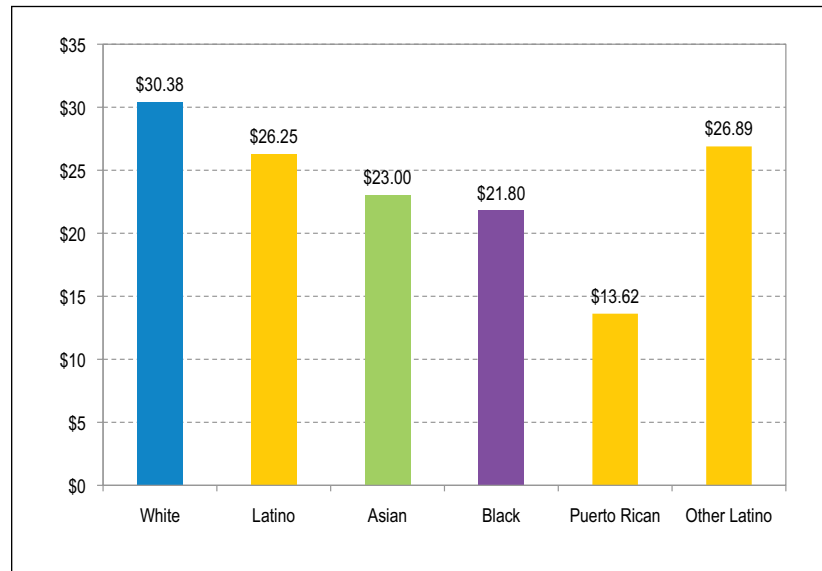




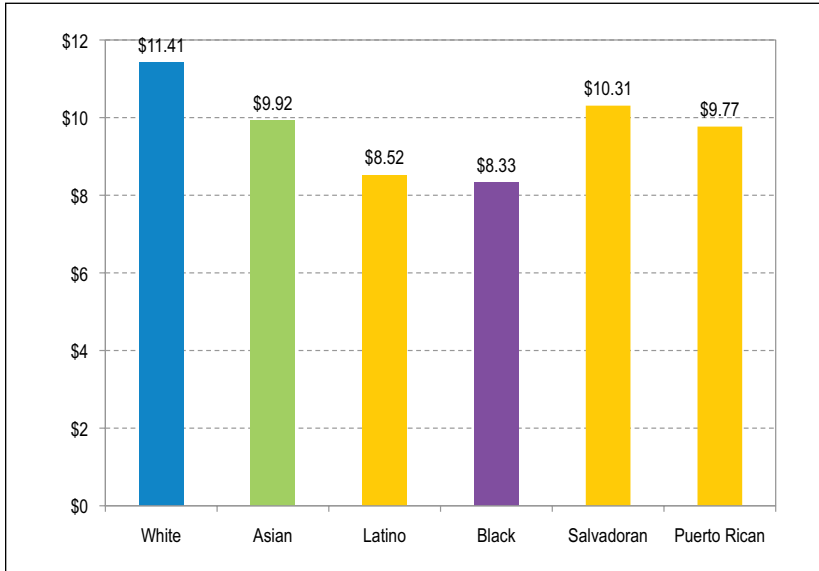
## EARNINGS

When examining the wage rates for these occupational categories, Latinos generally appear to be receiving wages below those of other ethno-racial groups. They earn less than whites but more than Asians and blacks for their white-collar (Figure 10A) employment. They earn lower wages than whites and Asians for their service-sector (Figure 10B) and less than blacks for their blue-collar (Figure 10C) employment.

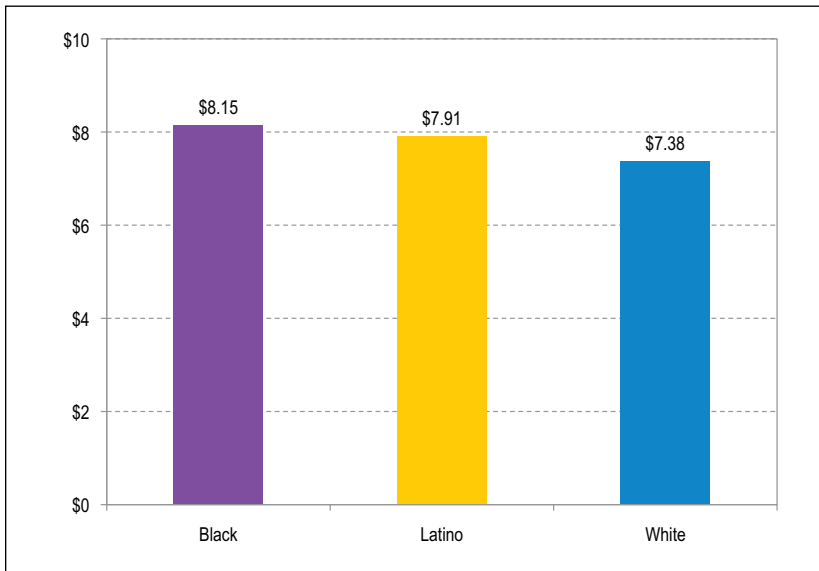
**Figure 10A: Hourly Wages in Professional or Managerial Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



**Figure 10B: Hourly Wages in Sales and Service Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



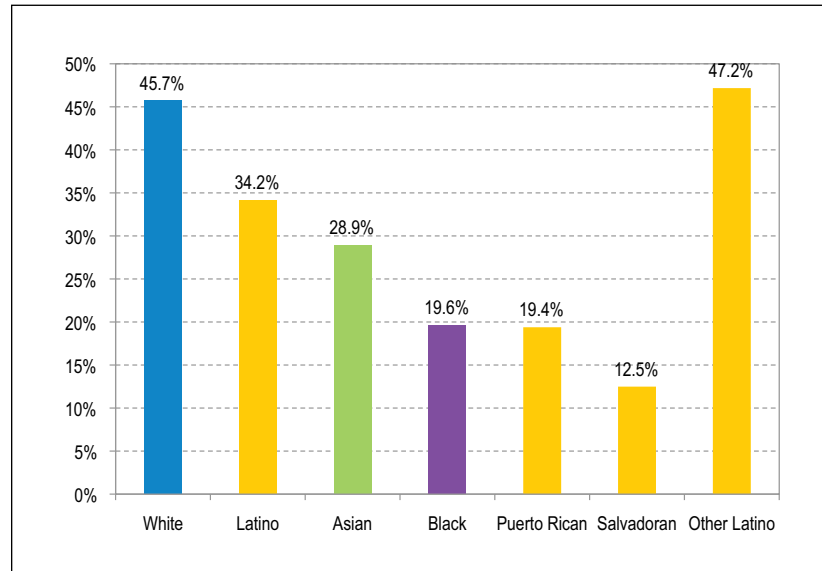
**Figure 10C: Hourly Wages in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



## HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

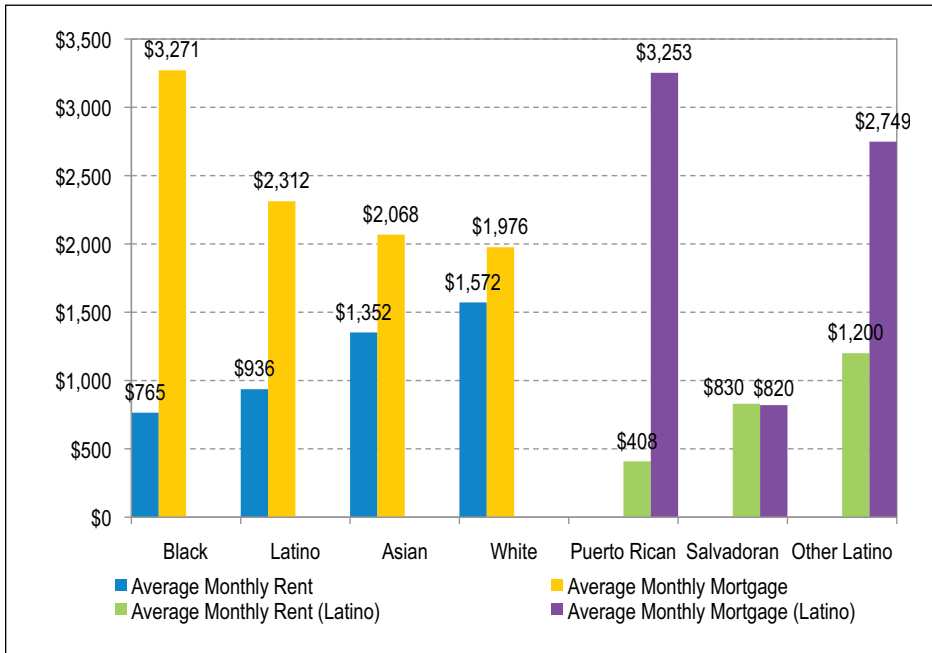
The final measures of Latino participation in Cambridge are intended to identify how well Latinos are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Latinos traditionally have low homeownership rates across the country. Figure 11 shows that this trend holds true in Cambridge: the 34.2% Latino homeownership rate, while slightly higher than the 32.9% statewide average for Latinos (and greater than for Asians and blacks in Cambridge) is lower than for whites. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 11, it is evident that 65.8% of Latinos in Cambridge are renters.

**Figure 11: Homeownership Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



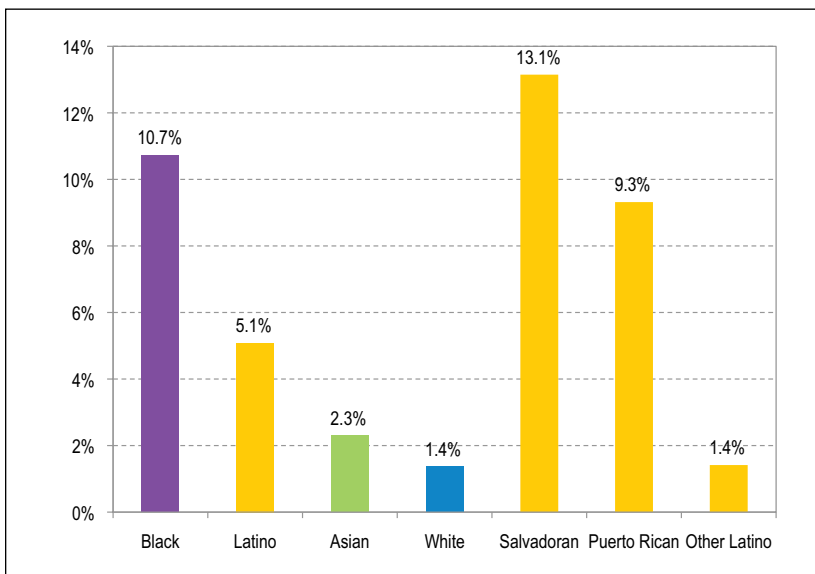
Latinos living in Cambridge face high housing costs. Having largely become homeowners during the housing bubble of the last decade, Latinos on average pay \$2,312 monthly mortgages – greater than whites and Asians, but less than blacks (Figure 12). At the same time, Latino renters pay low average monthly rents (\$936) above only blacks. The combination of high mortgage payments and lower rents underlines the fact that Latino homebuyers were disadvantaged by the earlier housing bubble.

**Figure 12: Housing Costs by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**



The percentages of Latinos who lack medical insurance (5.1%) is less than blacks in Cambridge and lower than the Latino statewide average of 9.2%. Salvadorans and Puerto Ricans have higher levels of their population without health insurance.

**Figure 13: Medical Uninsurance Rates by Ethno-Racial Group in 2008**





The Mauricio Gastón Institute for  
Latino Community Development  
and Public Policy

The Mauricio Gastón Institute of the University of Massachusetts Boston conducts research on and for the Latino population in New England. Our goal is to generate the information

and analysis necessary to develop more inclusive public policy, and to improve Latino participation in the policy making process. In an effort to present vital information about Latinos to diverse audiences, the Gastón Institute has produced this series of demographic profiles for Massachusetts and selected areas based on an analysis of 2008 American Community Survey data.

The 2008 American Community Survey allowed people to choose their ethnicity and race. Ethnicity identifies a person as Latino or Hispanic. We use the term “Latino” for all of those who self-identify as Latino in response to the ethnicity question. The racial categories are assigned to those who do not identify as Latino. Technically, their designation is non-Latino white, non-Latino black, and non-Latino Asian, though they are often referenced as white, black, and Asian in these profiles.

### 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.

Our descriptive analysis uses both household- and individual-level ACS data to estimate population size and percentages, to compare Latinos to other ethno-racial groups (e.g., whites, blacks, and Asians), and to compare the top ten Latino subpopulations in Massachusetts by ancestry. These are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Brazilians, Salvadorans, Mexicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Hondurans, Peruvians, and Cubans. We use ancestry, based on migration from Latin America, rather than language: a self-identified Latino born in Massachusetts may have ancestors from a Latin American country but speak only English only. 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.

After the dissemination of the 2010 United States Census, the Gastón Institute will be updating these demographic profiles. These updates will allow for a better analysis of the Massachusetts Latino populations. We also plan to expand this series by adding analyses of the other New England states and by covering more cities.

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.

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