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# Latino Political Leadership in Massachusetts: 2019

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# Latino Political Leadership in Massachusetts: 2019

by Bianca Ortiz-Wythe, MS, Christa Kelleher, PhD, and Fabián Torres-Ardila, PhD

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THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE  
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND PUBLIC POLICY

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UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

# Latino Political Leadership in Massachusetts – 2019

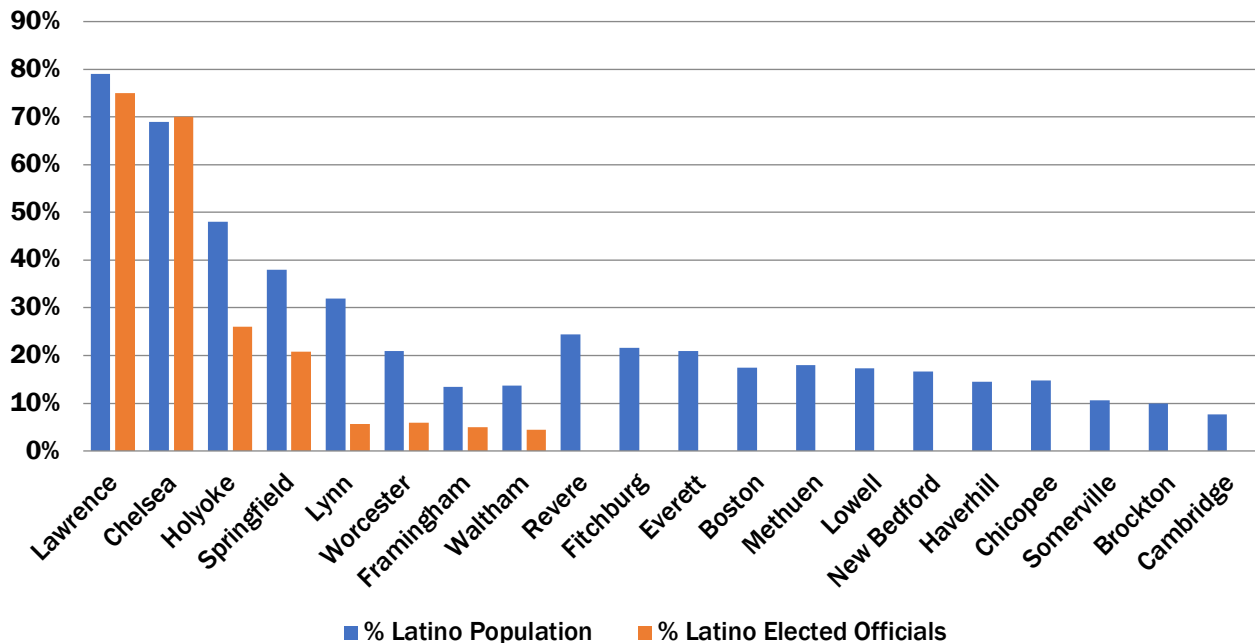
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Fabián Torres-Ardila, PhD, Associate Director, Gastón Institute

## Highlights

1. While Latinos make up an increasing share of eligible voters in the Commonwealth, Latino political leadership at all levels of government is less than proportionate to the Latino population across the state.
2. Despite measurable advances at the municipal level, Chelsea and Lawrence are the only two cities in Massachusetts with political representation on city councils and school committees that is relatively proportionate to their share of Latino residents.
3. There are more Latinos than Latinas serving on city councils, while more Latinas than Latinos are serving on school committees.
4. The most significant Latino leadership gaps persist at the state level and in the state’s congressional delegation.

## Rates of Latino Elected Leadership Compared to Proportion of Latino Population (2019)

Source: Analysis of Elected Officials on School Committees and City Councils in Top 20 Mass Cities with Largest Latino Populations. Gaston Institute



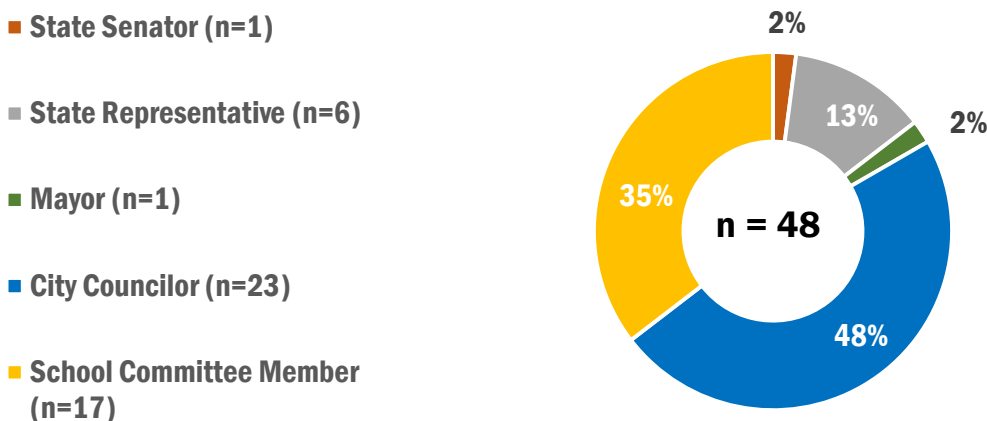
## The Latino Population in Massachusetts

- At about 811,000, the Latino population in Massachusetts is the 18th largest state population nationally. Latinos make up 11.8% of the state's population.
- The median age of Latinos is 27. Close to three out of ten (26.3%) Latinos are younger than 18.
- The median amount of annual personal earnings for Latinos 16 and over is \$24,000.
- The homeownership rate for Latinos is 25%.
- From 2007-2012, Latino small business ownership experienced the largest increase of any minority group at 54.7% (in 2007 it was around 19,410 and in 2012 it grew to 30,022).

## The Latino Electorate in the Commonwealth

- It is expected that by 2035, the Latino population will grow to over 1.15 million, representing 15.3% of the state's population.
- There are 436,000 Latino eligible voters in Massachusetts, representing the 11th largest Latino statewide eligible voter population nationally.
- From 2010 to 2018, the number of registered Latino voters increased by 85.8%, from 134,000 to 249,000.
- From 2010 to 2018, the number of registered Latino voters who vote increased by 268.8% from 48,000 to 177,000.

Figure 1. Latino Political Leadership  
Top 20 Latino Population Cities - Massachusetts



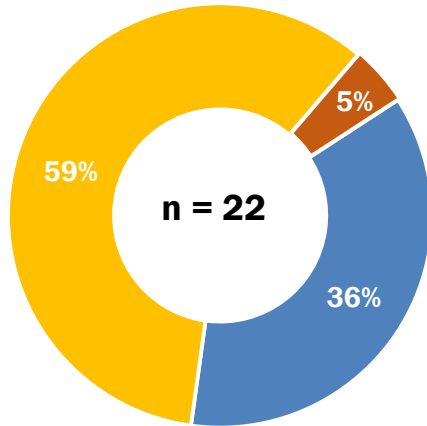
## Political Representation: Key Leadership Positions

There is very limited Latino presence in the State Senate, with one Latina State Senator in office; having five Latinos in the Senate would be proportionate to the statewide Latino population. Six Latinos serve in the 160-member House of Representatives; eighteen would be proportionate. There are no Latinos in the state's congressional delegation.

City councilors and members of school committees account for 83% of all Latinos serving in key elected leadership positions. The top 20 cities and towns with the largest proportions of Latino residents in Massachusetts account for 57% of the Latino population in the state. Among these cities and towns, only eight have at least one Latino and/or Latina elected official serving on the school committee or city council. Of the 369 municipal positions in these 20 cities and towns, Latino elected officials make up 11% of officeholders. In only one city (Lawrence) does a Latino serve as mayor.

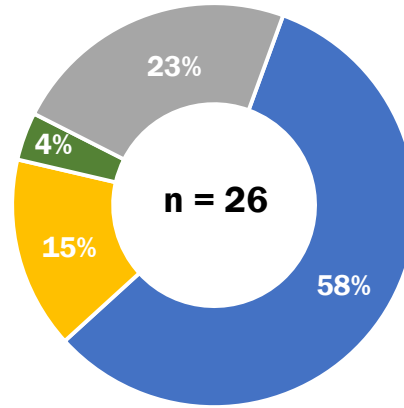
## Political Representation by Gender Public Offices Currently Held by Elected Officials

**Latinas**



- City Councilor (n=8)
- School Committee Member (n=13)
- State Senator (n=1)

**Latinos**



- City Councilor (n=15)
- School Committee Member (n=4)
- Mayor (n=1)
- State Representative (n=6)

### History of Latinas in Elected Office in Massachusetts: 1983-2019

- 62 Latinas have been elected to office in Massachusetts to date.
- The majority of Latinas elected have held municipal offices: 38 Latinas have been elected to school committees and 23 to city councils; three Latinas have been elected to both.
- Voters in 14 cities and towns out of 351 municipalities have elected Latinas.
- Grace Romero was the first Latina elected to office in Massachusetts, winning a seat on the Boston School Committee in 1983.
- Three Latinas have served in the Massachusetts Legislature: two in the House and one in the Senate.
- Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera was elected to the House of Representatives in 1998 and Juana Matias became first Latina immigrant elected to the House in 2016.
- In 2008, Sonia Chang-Díaz became the first and only Latina ever elected to the Massachusetts State Senate. She is still serving.
- No Latinas have ever been elected to statewide constitutional office or to the U.S. Congress from Massachusetts.

## Latino Elected Officials

**Table 1.** Latino elected officials currently serving as mayor or in local governing bodies such as city councils, school committees, and in the Massachusetts Legislature.

Elected Official*	Governing Body	End of Term
<b>Alfaro-Alvarez, Yessenia</b>	Chelsea School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Anderson-Burgos, Juan</b>	Holyoke City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Avellaneda, Roy</b>	Chelsea City Council	11/30/2019
<b>Castellanos, Brian</b>	Lynn School Committee	11/30/2019
<b>Chang-Díaz, Sonia</b>	Massachusetts State Senate (Boston)	2021
<b>Cruz, Manny</b>	Salem School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>De La Cruz, Maria</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>De Peña, Brian</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Feliciano-Sims, Irene</b>	Holyoke School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>García, Judith</b>	Chelsea City Council	11/30/2019
<b>García, Kelly</b>	Chelsea School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Gomez, Adam</b>	Springfield City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Gomez, Homar</b>	Easthampton City Council	11/30/2019
<b>Gonzalez, Adderly</b>	Lawrence School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Gonzalez, Carlos</b>	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Springfield)	2021
<b>Henriquez, Lucia</b>	Chelsea School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Hernandez, Ana</b>	Chelsea School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Hernandez, Julio</b>	Chelsea School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Hurst, Denise</b>	Springfield School Committee	12/31/2021
<b>Lebron-Martinez, Gladys</b>	Holyoke City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Lefebvre, Mildred</b>	Holyoke School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Levy, Ana</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Lopez, Enio</b>	Chelsea City Council	11/30/2019
<b>Moran, Frank</b>	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Lawrence)	2021
<b>Nuncio, Ana</b>	Salem School Committee	11/30/2021
<b>Ordonez, Anastasia</b>	Amherst School Committee	3/31/2019
<b>Payano, Pavel</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Perez, Maria</b>	Springfield School Committee	12/31/2021
<b>Ramos, Orlando</b>	Springfield City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Reyes, Estela</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Rivera, Daniel</b>	Mayor Lawrence	12/31/2021
<b>Rivera, Sarai</b>	Worcester City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Rivera, Marianela</b>	Lawrence School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Rodriguez, Jeovanny</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Rodriguez, Yamir</b>	Chelsea City Council	11/30/2019
<b>Roman, Nelson</b>	Holyoke City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Salas, Elissa</b>	Lawrence School Committee	12/31/2019

<b>Santiago, Jon</b>	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Boston)	2021
<b>Tejada, Luis</b>	Chelsea City Council	11/30/2019
<b>Torres, Edgardo</b>	Framingham City Council	11/30/2019
<b>Tosado, Jose</b>	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Springfield)	2021
<b>Valentin, Jossie</b>	Holyoke City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Vargas, Andres</b>	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Haverhill)	2021
<b>Vasquez, Kendrys</b>	Lawrence City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Vega, Aaron</b>	Massachusetts House of Representatives (Holyoke)	2021
<b>Velez, Jeanette</b>	Chelsea School Committee	12/31/2019
<b>Vidal, Carlos</b>	Waltham City Council	12/31/2019
<b>Vidot, Damali</b>	Chelsea City Council	11/30/2019

*\*Not including other offices such as Register of Probate or other elected positions*

## Data Sources

Data from 20 cities and towns in Massachusetts with the largest Latino populations: Boston (17.5% Latino), Springfield (38.8%), Lawrence (73.8%), Worcester (20.9%), Lynn (32.1%), Chelsea (62.1%), Holyoke (48.4%), Lowell (17.3%), New Bedford (16.7%), Revere (24.4%), Brockton(10.0%), Framingham (13.4%), Haverhill (14.5%), Everett (21.1%), Fitchburg (21.6%), Methuen (18.1%), Waltham (13.7%), Chicopee (14.8%), Somerville (10.6%), Cambridge (7.6%). Source: American Community Survey 2017.

Latino snapshot data from Pew Research’s Hispanic Trends.

Data concerning Latino-owned small businesses collected from Small Business Administration. Available at [www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/Massachusetts.pdf](http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/Massachusetts.pdf).

The Elected Latinas list was initially developed by Ileana Cintrón and updated using the following data sources:

Data collected from town and city clerk websites by researchers from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy; additional data from the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), Women’s Pipeline for Change, EMERGE MA, Massachusetts Women’s Political Caucus, LIPPI at the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts, Massachusetts Secretary of State, [www.mariaslist.net](http://www.mariaslist.net). In addition, *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies and Prospects* by Carol Hardy-Fanta, Jeffrey Gerson (New York: Routledge, 2002).

Latinos in the 2016 Election: Massachusetts. Available at [www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-massachusetts](http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-massachusetts).

2015 American Community Survey estimates provided by UMass Boston’s Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy. Brazilians are included in the estimates.

Demographic growth projection data taken from The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy report “Massachusetts Latino Population 2010-2035”, [scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston\\_pubs/241](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/241).

**Acknowledgment.** We thank Ijeoma Anyanwu, Public Policy Doctoral Student in the McCormack Graduate School’s Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at UMass Boston, for her support to this work.

## **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](http://www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute). Facebook & Twitter: @GastonInstitute.

## **About the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy**

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School conducts policy-relevant research on women's economic security, with a current focus on several issues: pay equity, paid leave, the early care and education workforce, and the elder care workforce. The Center's researchers also study women's political representation and public leadership. All center research explores the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and class; much of the center's work has a particular emphasis on low-wage workers and women of color. To learn more about the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, visit [www.umb.edu/cwppp](http://www.umb.edu/cwppp). Facebook: @CWPPP. Twitter: @CWPPP\_UMB.

## **About Amplify Latinx**

Amplify Latinx is a non-partisan, collaborative movement whose mission is to build Latinx economic and political power by significantly increasing Latinx civic engagement and representation in leadership positions across sectors. Amplify Latinx was launched by the Latina Circle, a Boston-based, non-profit social venture that is advancing Latina leaders across industries into positions of power and influence. To learn more about Amplify Latinx, visit <https://amplifylatinx.co>. Facebook & Twitter: @AmplifyLatinx.



The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston conducts research on and for the Latino population in New England since 1989. Our goal is to generate the information and analysis necessary to develop a more inclusive public policy and to improve Latino participation in the policy-making process.

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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

**Bianca Ortiz-Whyte** is a doctoral student in the Public Policy program and graduate research assistant at the Gastón Institute. Her primary research interests focus on immigration and deportation policy, gender and migration, mixed-status families, and economic inequality. Bianca is currently working on her dissertation proposal which will examine the impact of vulnerability to deportation on Latinx mixed-status families in Greater Boston.

**Christa Kelleher** is the Research and Policy Director of the McCormack Graduate School's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy. She oversees research on women's political representation and leadership, with an emphasis on women of color. She also conducts policy-relevant research related to women's economic security. In 2002, Kelleher began teaching in the center's graduate certificate program in Gender, Leadership, and Public Policy. Christa earned her BA in Political Science from Union College, and an MA in Sociology/Women's Studies and PhD in Sociology from Brandeis University.

**Fabián Torres-Ardila** is the Associate Director of the Mauricio Gastón Institute. Dr. Torres-Ardila holds a PhD in mathematics from Boston University. He has many years of experience providing professional development workshops to STEM teachers who work with English Language Learners. At the institute, Dr. Torres-Ardila conducts research that examines the current issues facing Latino communities, such as Latino participation in the STEM pipeline and socio-linguistic factors in K-12 education. As part of the institute's team, Dr. Torres-Ardila diligently works to ensure that the institute supports the development of Latino community leadership through partnerships with local groups.

