

Foreign-Born Latinos in Massachusetts



by Phillip Granberry, PhD

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Phillip Granberry is a social demographer who specializes in unauthorized migrants in the United States. His research addresses the demographic trends of Latinos in New England and the formation and use of social capital among Mexican migrants. He currently teaches in the Economics Department and is a research associate for the Mauricio Gastón Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

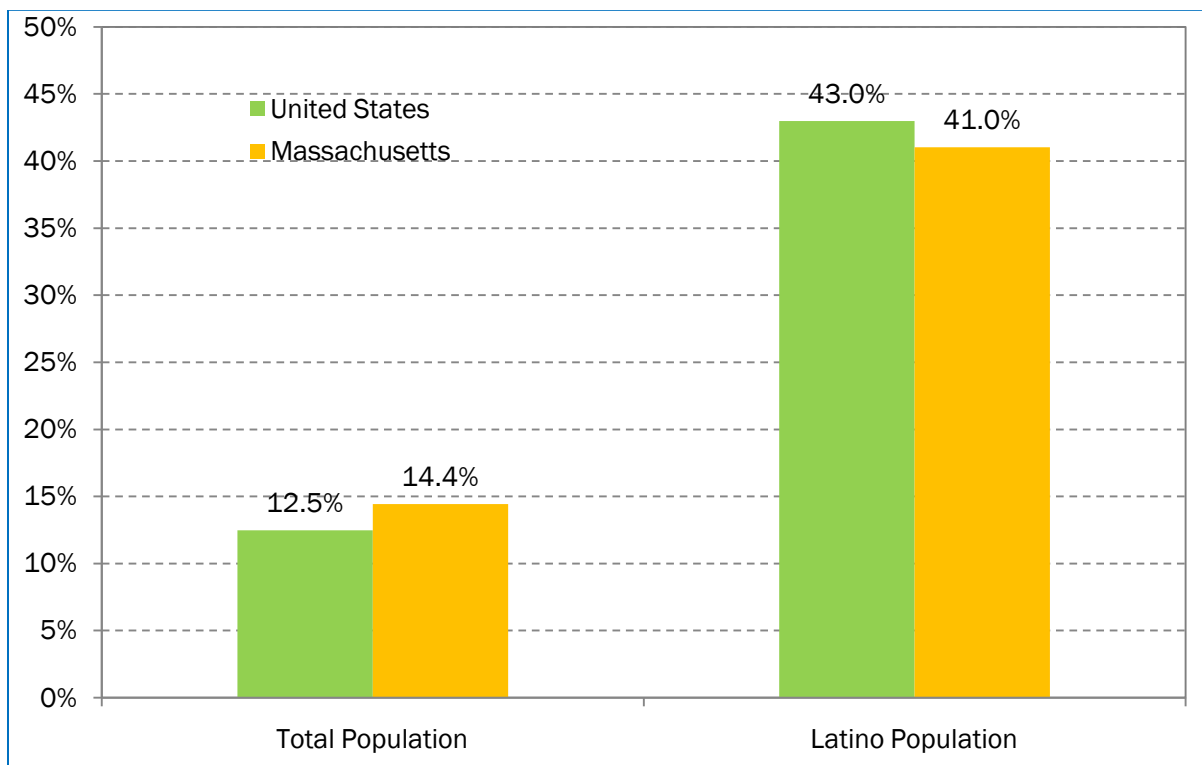
This report was edited by Jim O'Brien.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a descriptive snapshot of selected demographic, economic, educational, and social indicators pertaining to foreign-born Latinos in Massachusetts. This report was 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 Latinos in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and in fourteen of its largest cities with the greatest concentrations of Latinos.¹

Even though Massachusetts has a greater percentage of foreign-born residents (14.4%) than the United States as a whole (12.5%), a lower percentage (41.0%) of Latinos in Massachusetts are foreign-born than in the United States as a whole (43.0%). This is partly due to the fact that Puerto Ricans, who number around 225,000 in the state, are US citizens by birth. They comprise over a third of all Latinos (35.7%) in the state, and a majority (60.4%) of the state's US-born Latino population.

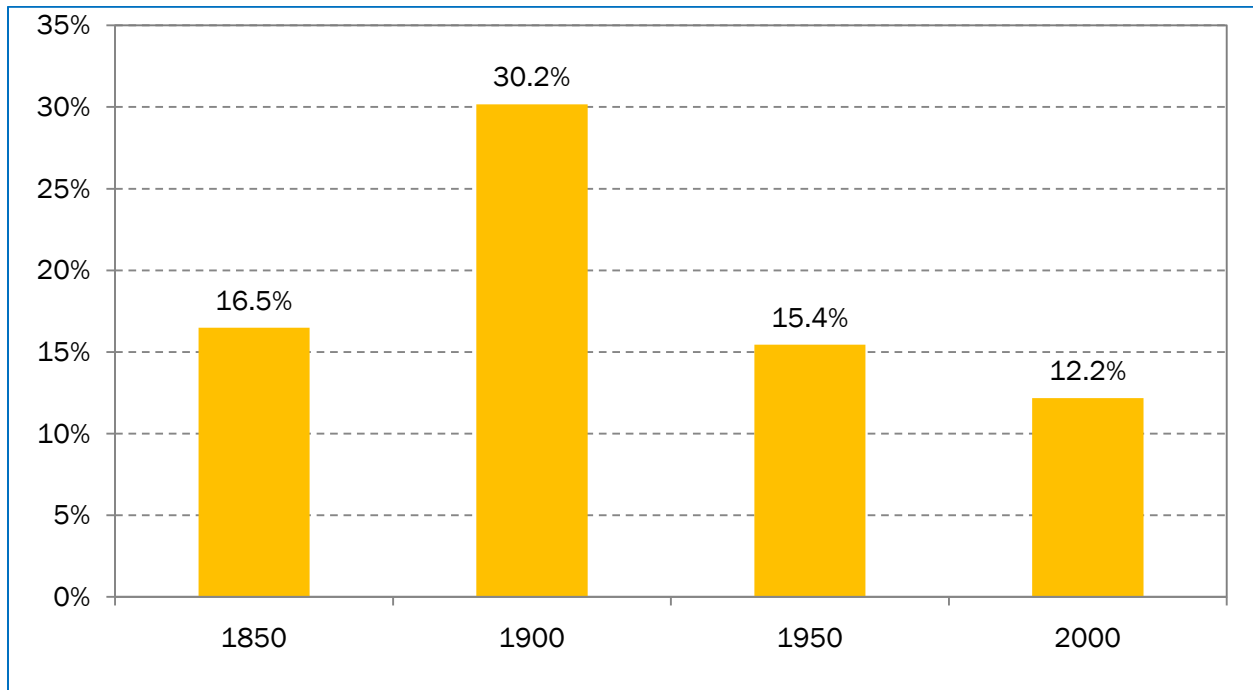
Figure 1: Percentages of the Foreign-Born Population in Massachusetts and the United States



¹ The 2010 Statewide Latino Public Policy Conference reports analyze data from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the US Census Bureau. This report uses the census designation of ancestry, based on migration from Latin America, to estimate the number of Latinos. Thus, Brazilians are included in the category "Latino," though most Brazilians self-report in the ACS using a racial category (e.g., white, black), rather than identifying with the term "Latino."

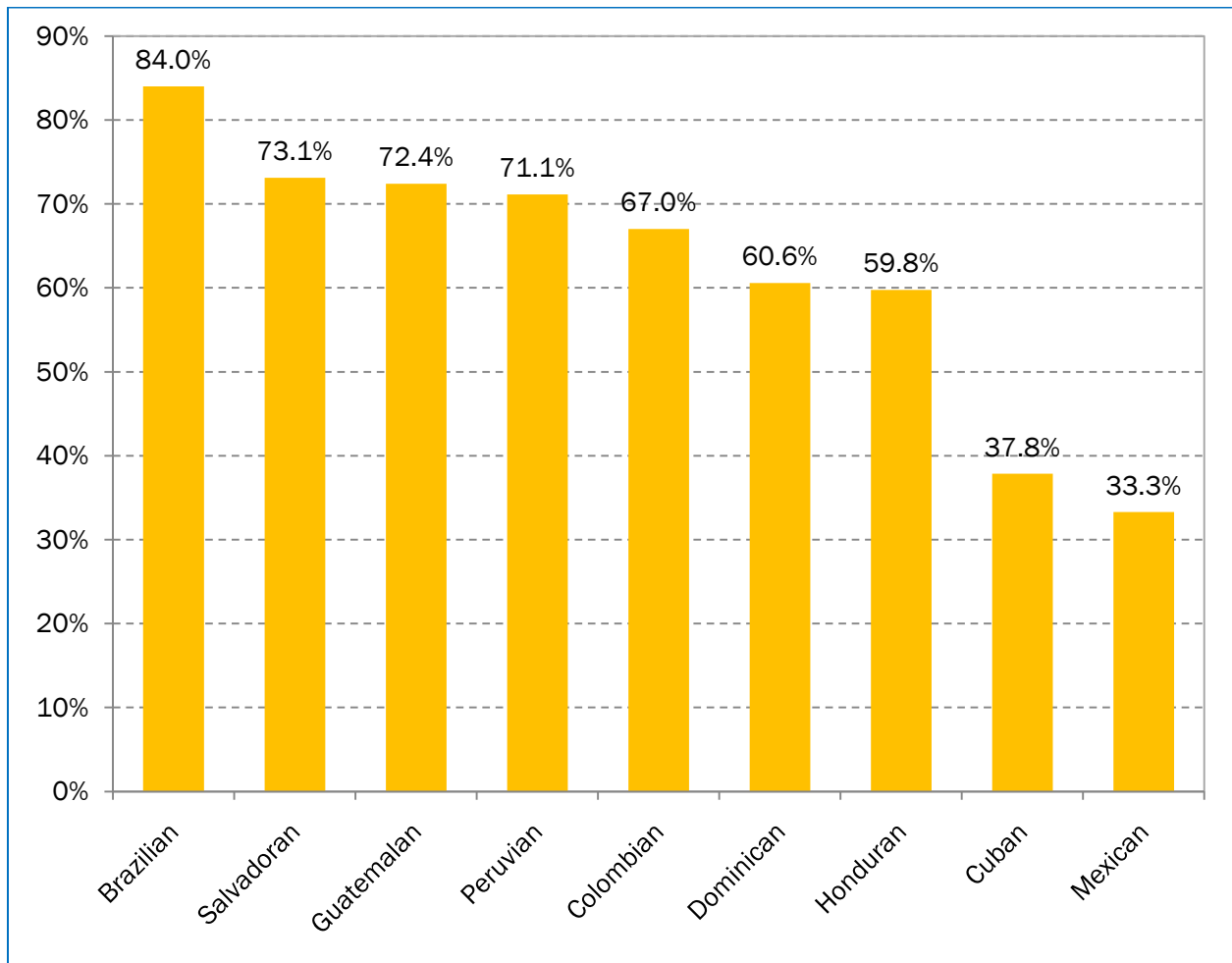
Placing this present analysis in a historical perspective reminds us that in 2000, Massachusetts had the lowest concentration of foreign-born residents at any time since 1850 (Figure 2). The foreign-born population increased slightly from 2000 to 2008 (12.2% to 14.4%), but it is still small compared to earlier times in our history.

Figure 2: Historical Perspective on Massachusetts' Foreign-Born Population



There are frequently patterns to international migration, which have led scholars to identify that different populations migrate from specific countries based on unique historical circumstances. Therefore, the percentages of the foreign-born from any one country are influenced by a variety of factors that shape the stock and flow of migrants. As this would predict, the top Latino subpopulations in the state experience wide variation in their foreign-born composition due to these factors. The newer arriving Brazilian population is over 80% foreign-born (Figure 3), while only a third of the more historically established Mexican and Cuban populations is foreign-born.

Figure 3: Percentages of Foreign-Born Among Latino Subpopulations

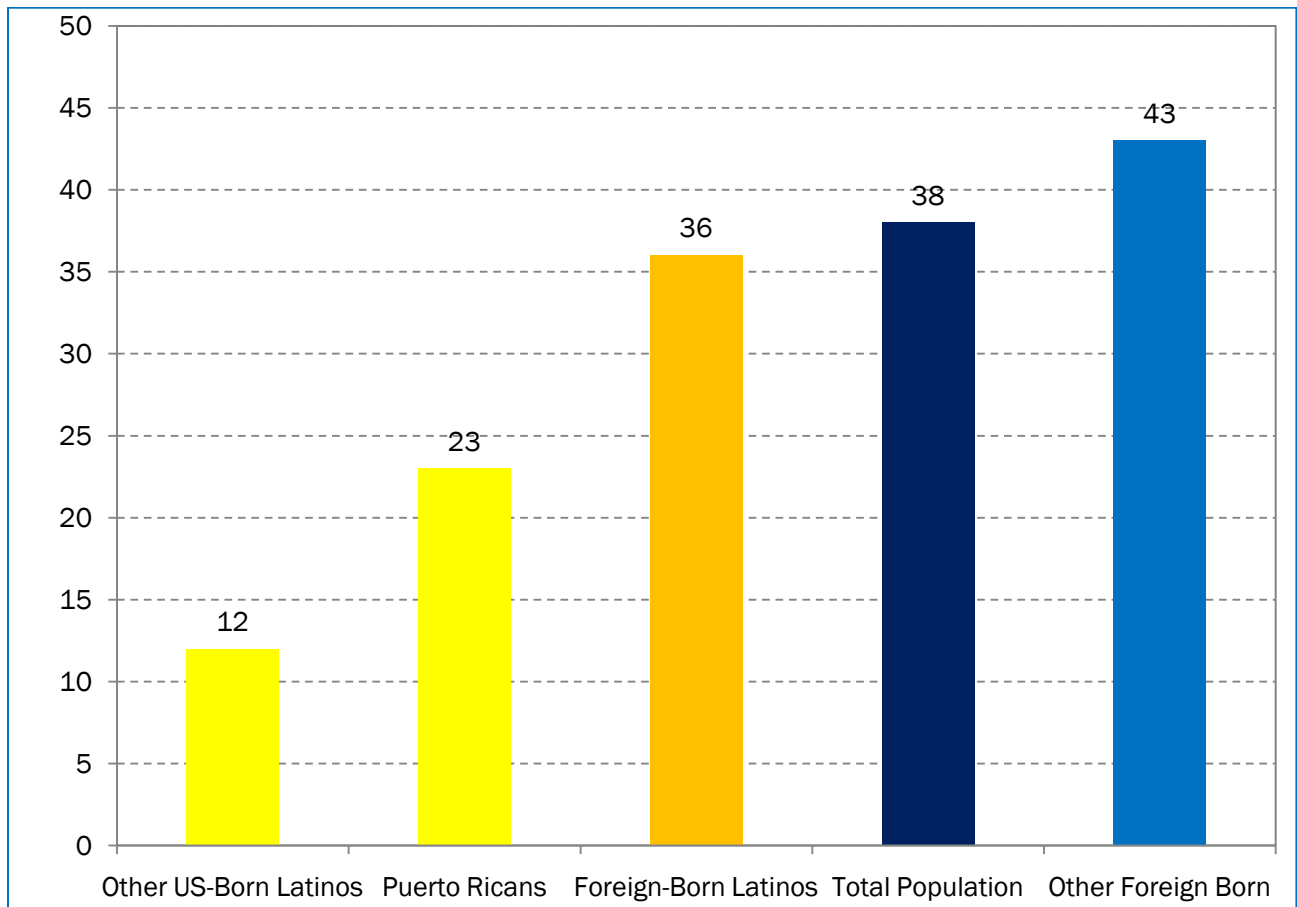


The remainder of this report presents an overview comparing foreign-born Latinos to other foreign-born populations, the total population, and US-born Latinos, who are divided into Puerto Ricans and other US-born Latinos for selected demographic, economic, educational, and social characteristics. In examining outcomes among foreign-born Latinos in Massachusetts, some may choose to compare this population to US-born Latinos with whom they share a common ancestry. Others argue it is best to compare foreign-born Latinos to other foreign-born individuals with whom they share a common migratory experience. This report makes both comparisons in addition to comparisons with the total population. As previously mentioned, the majority of the US-born Latino population in Massachusetts consists of Puerto Ricans, who may have been born either in Puerto Rico or in the continental United States. As a group, they are experiencing many outcomes differently than U.S.-born children of foreign-born Latinos. Thus, this report separates these two US-born populations for this analysis. Future research should examine these outcomes for Puerto Ricans, because this Latino subpopulation will play an increasingly important role in the state's economic, social, and political future.

AGE DISTRIBUTION AND MARITAL STATUS

Figure 4 highlights the effect of international migration on the median age of the Latino population. Foreign-born Latinos have a median age (36 years) similar to the total population (38 years) but less than other foreign-born (43 years). However, US-born Latinos are much younger, with a median age of 23 years for Puerto Ricans and 12 years for other US-born Latinos, who appear to be children of foreign-born Latinos. This age profile suggests that both US-born Latino populations have more families with younger children than other demographic groups and will require an investment in their education; however, these younger Latinos will contribute economically, socially, and politically in later years as other demographic age-groups transition through the labor market and retire. In contrast, foreign-born Latinos more closely reflect the median age of the total population. This suggests that they are contributing to the economic welfare of the state through their current labor force participation (Figure 7).

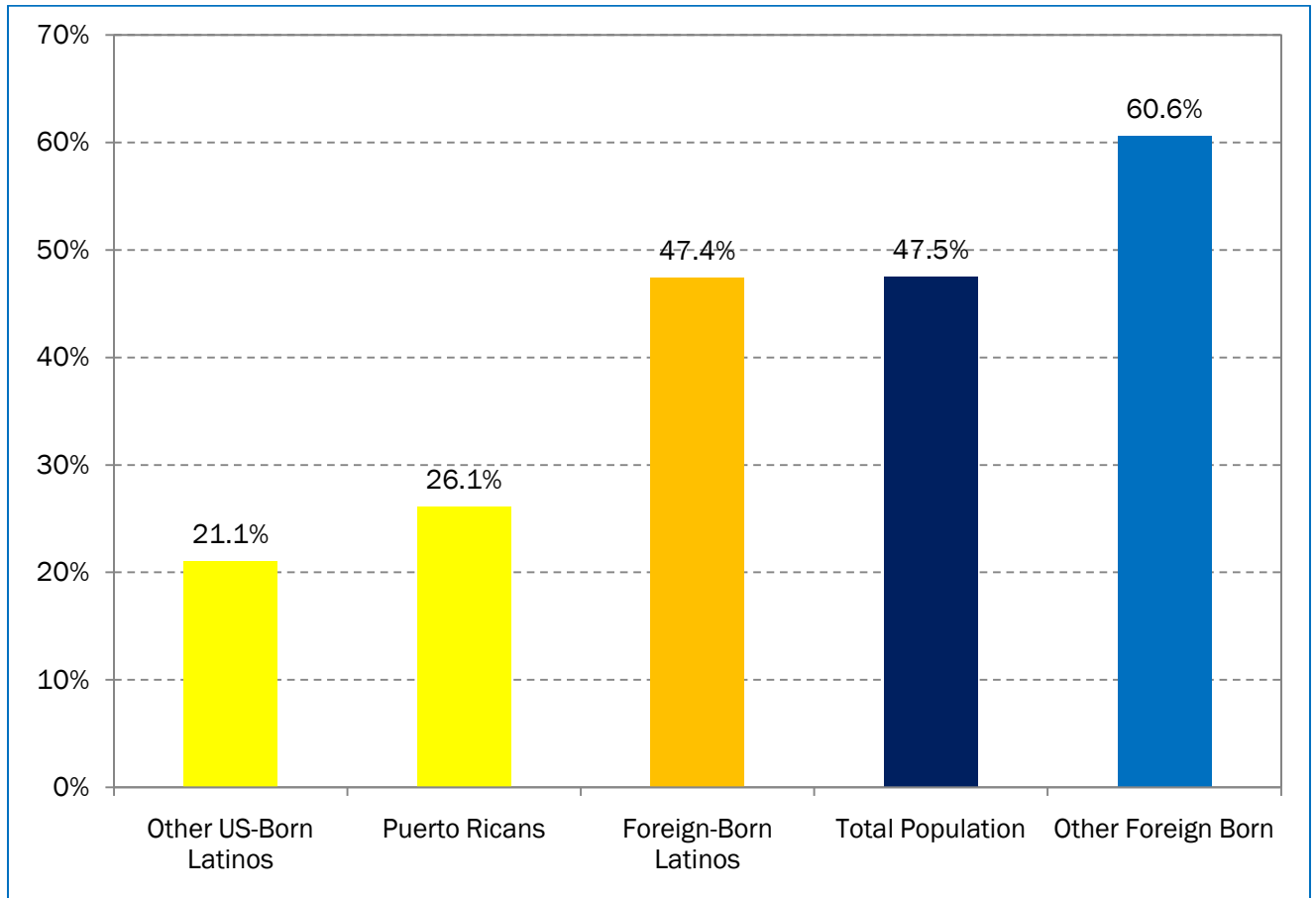
Figure 4: The Median Age of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest



The marriage rate of foreign-born Latinos (47.4%) is similar to the total population (47.5%) but lower than other foreign-born (60.6%) in Figure 5. Across all ethno-racial groups, the 16 and 34 age cohort is delaying marriage and family formation (Mather and Lavery, 2010). Because US-born Latinos are

disproportionately younger, with greater proportion of their population in this age-group, they would be expected to have lower marriage rates. The data confirm this with a marriage rate of 26.1% for Puerto Ricans and 21.1% for other US-born Latinos.

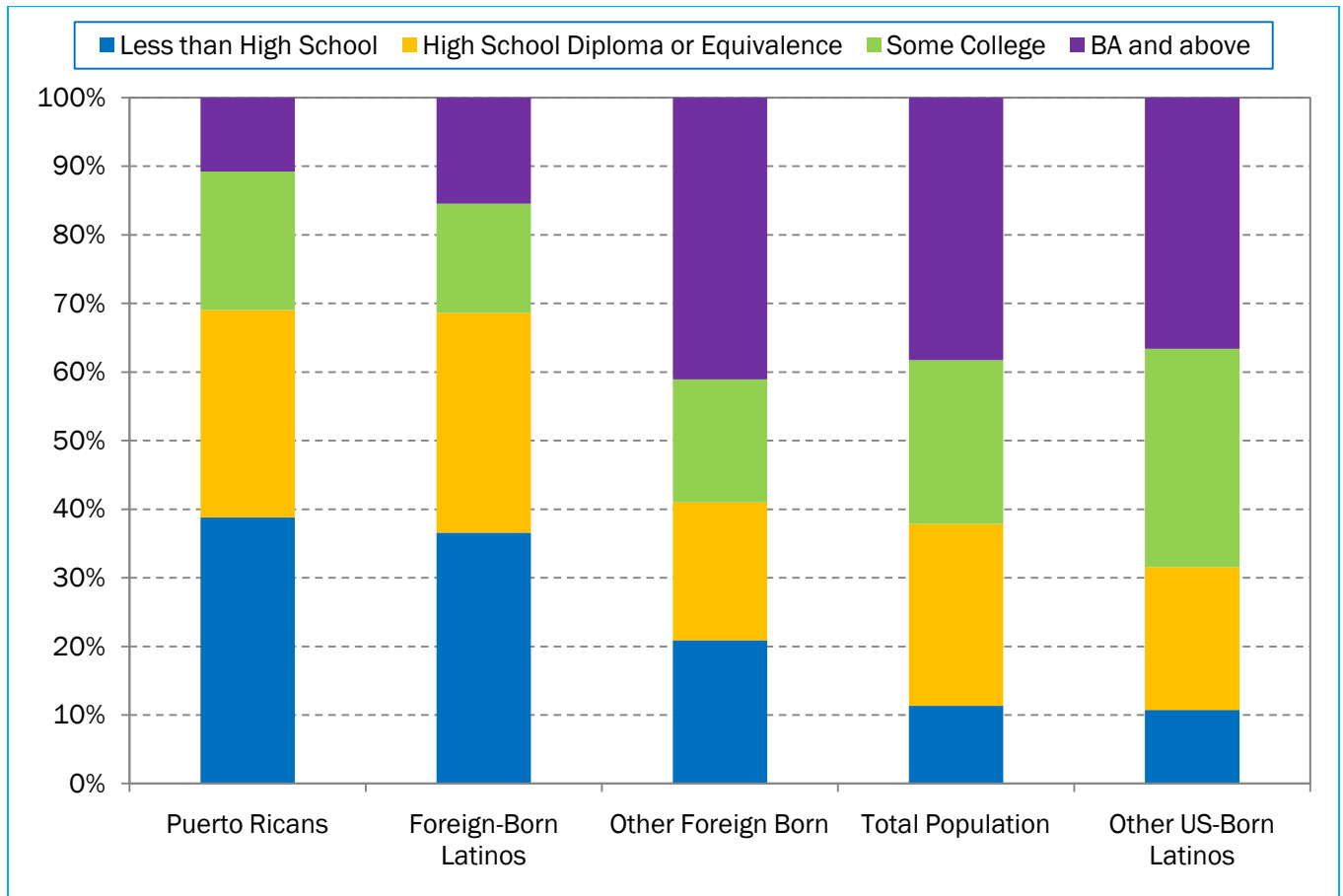
Figure 5: Marriage Rates of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest (Persons Age 16 Years and Older)



EDUCATION

Figure 6 highlights that Puerto Ricans (38.8%) and foreign-born Latinos (36.6%) have the highest percentage of their population with less than a high school diploma (the blue section of the columns in Figure 6). At the other end of the educational scale, Puerto Ricans and foreign-born Latinos (10.8% and 15.5%) have the lowest percentage of their population with at least a bachelor's degree. Educational attainment is thus an area with similar outcomes between foreign-born Latinos and Puerto Ricans. Thus, we see mixed benefits from US citizenship for educational attainment, as Puerto Ricans are experiencing outcomes similar to those of foreign-born Latinos.

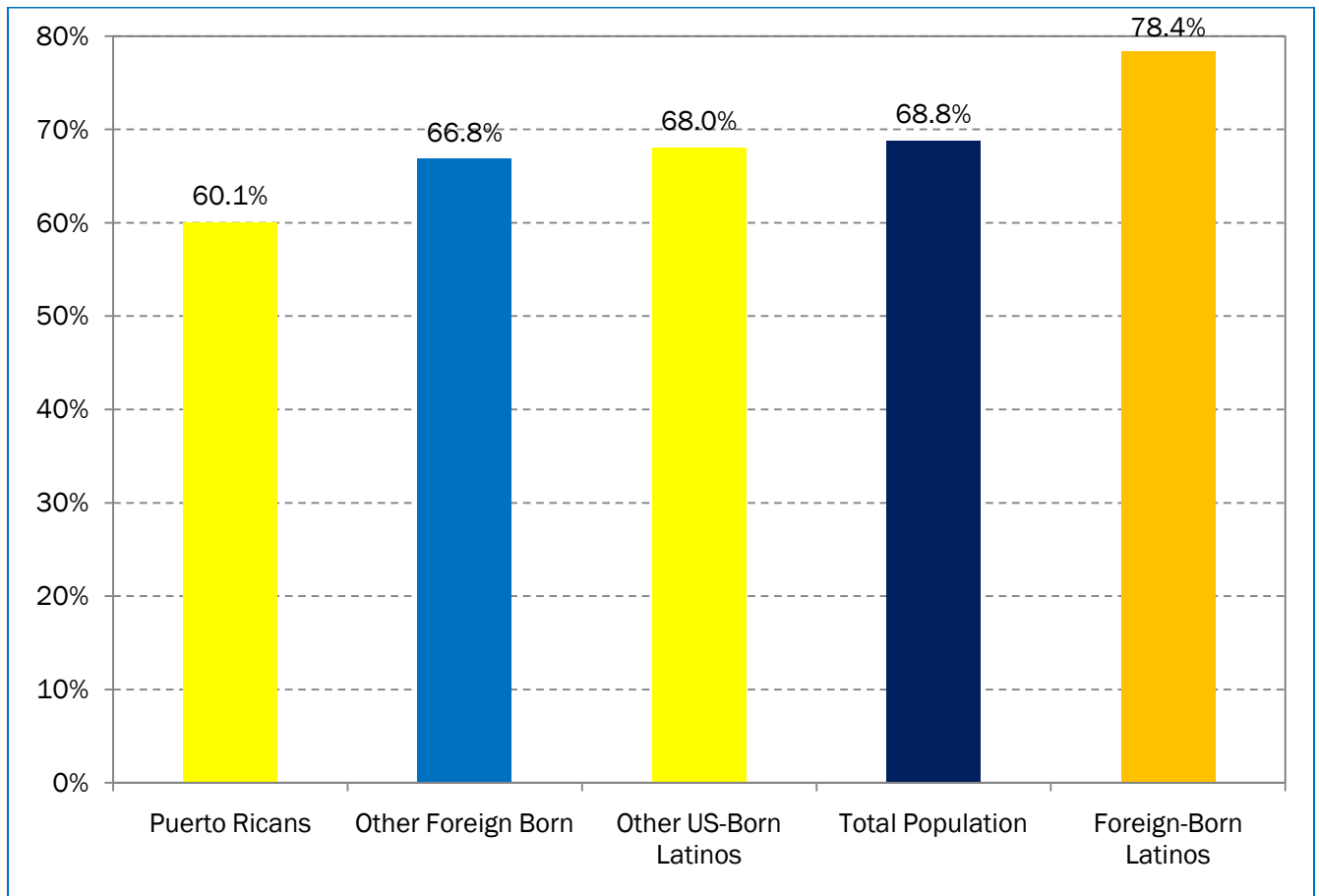
Figure 6: Educational Attainment of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest (Adults 25 Years and Older)



LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

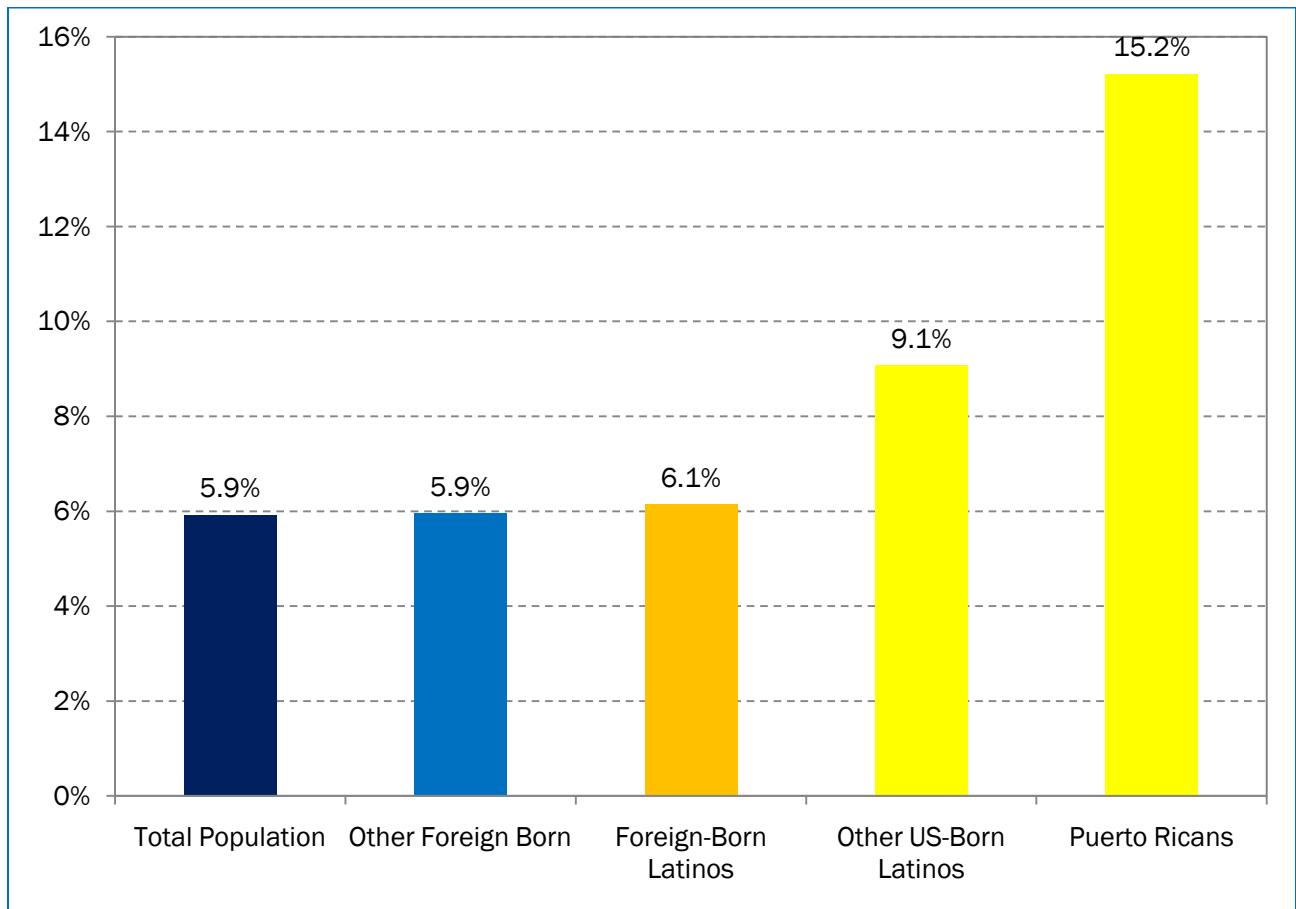
Again suggesting the importance of foreign-born Latinos to Massachusetts' economic and social wellbeing, Figure 7 identifies this segment of the Latino population as having the highest labor force participation rate (78.4%) than other demographic groups in the state, even higher than other foreign-born (66.8%) and the total population (68.8%). Despite the young median age of other US-born Latinos (Figure 4), their labor force participation rate is 68.0%, but the other younger demographic group, Puerto Ricans, have the lowest labor force participation rate (60.1%).

Figure 7: Labor Force Participation of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest



The previous labor force participation information suggests that foreign-born Latinos in Massachusetts have a strong motivation to participate in the state's economy. Figure 8 further supports this analysis with an unemployment rate (6.1%) that was similar to the total population as well as the non-Latino foreign-born segment (5.9%) in 2008. However, other US-born Latinos' unemployment rate was higher (9.1%), and the Puerto Rican rate was significantly higher (15.2%).

Figure 8: Unemployment Rates of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest



Figures 9A and 9B, taken together, suggest that both foreign-born Latinos and Puerto Ricans serve as complements to other demographic groups in the Massachusetts labor market whose members have higher educational attainment (Figure 6). Figure 9A shows that these two groups are underrepresented in what are traditionally considered white collar jobs (professional and managerial), while Figure 9B shows that they are overrepresented in what are traditionally considered blue collar jobs (farming, construction, production, and transportation). These figures also suggest that other US-born Latinos with their higher educational attainment (Figure 6) are competing as substitutes with other demographic groups in the labor market for white collar jobs. This trend seems to foretell successful integration of other US-born Latinos into the Massachusetts labor market, but has the potential to place Puerto Ricans on a continued downward socioeconomic trajectory. The causes of this occupational imbalance are beyond the scope of this report, but warrant further investigation.

Figure 9A: Populations Employed in Professional or Managerial Occupations

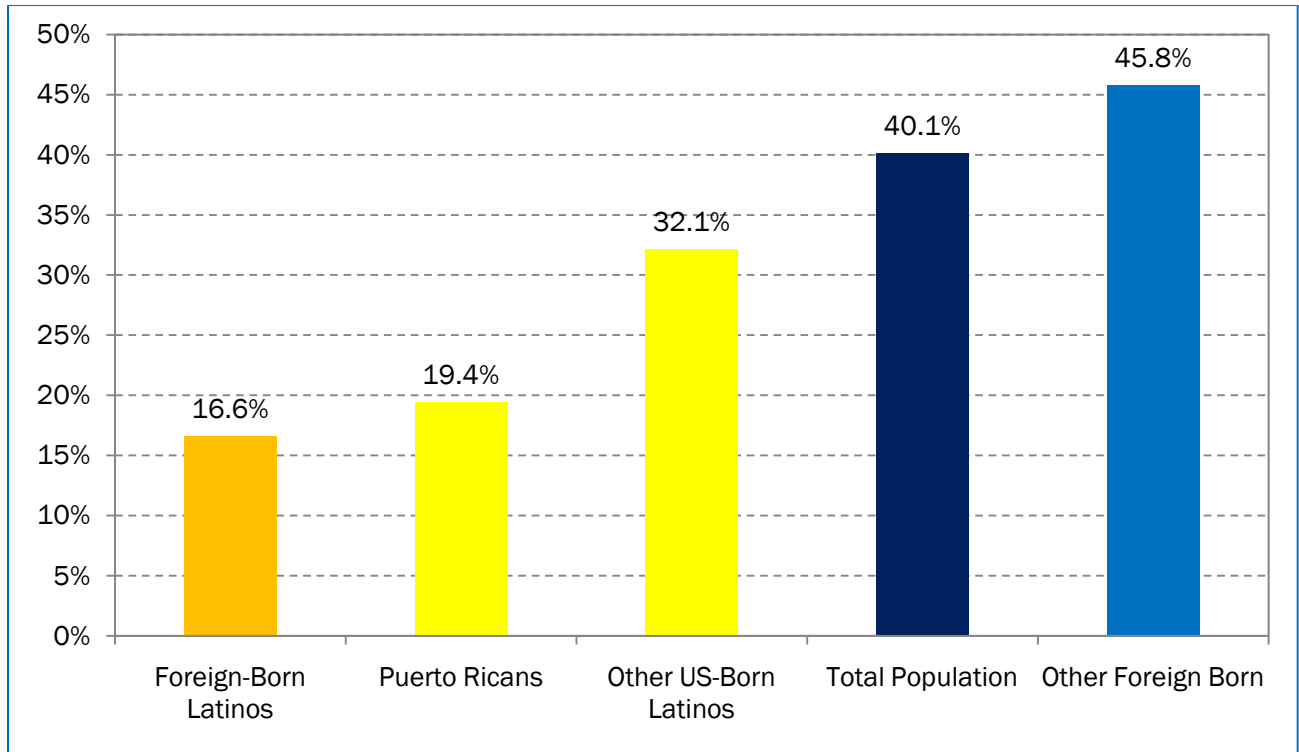
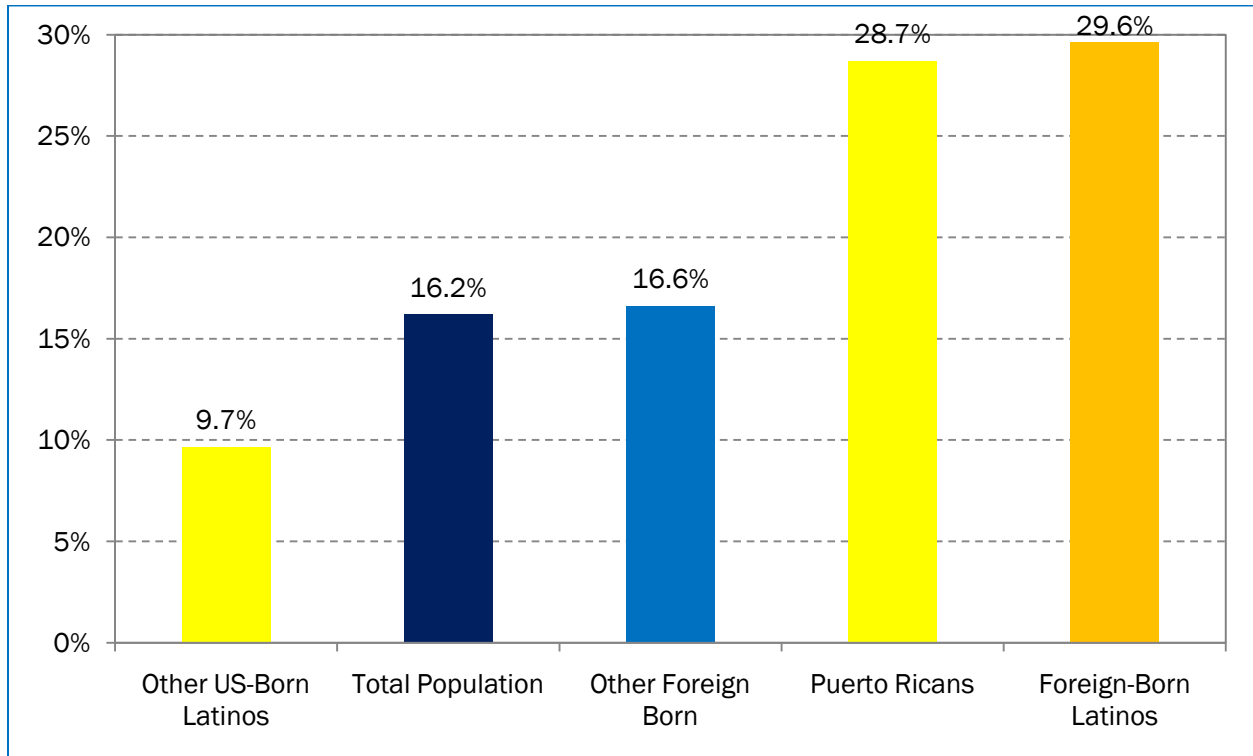


Figure 9B: Populations Employed in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations



EARNINGS

When examining the wage rates for these occupational categories, all Latino groups receive the lowest average hourly wages. Surprisingly, foreign-born Latinos earn slightly higher wages for service (Figure 10B) and blue collar (Figure 10C) employment than do both their US-born Latino counterparts. This is not the case with white collar employment (Figure 10A) where other US-born Latinos earn nearly four dollars more per hour than foreign-born Latinos.

Figure 10A: Hourly Wages in Professional or Managerial Occupations

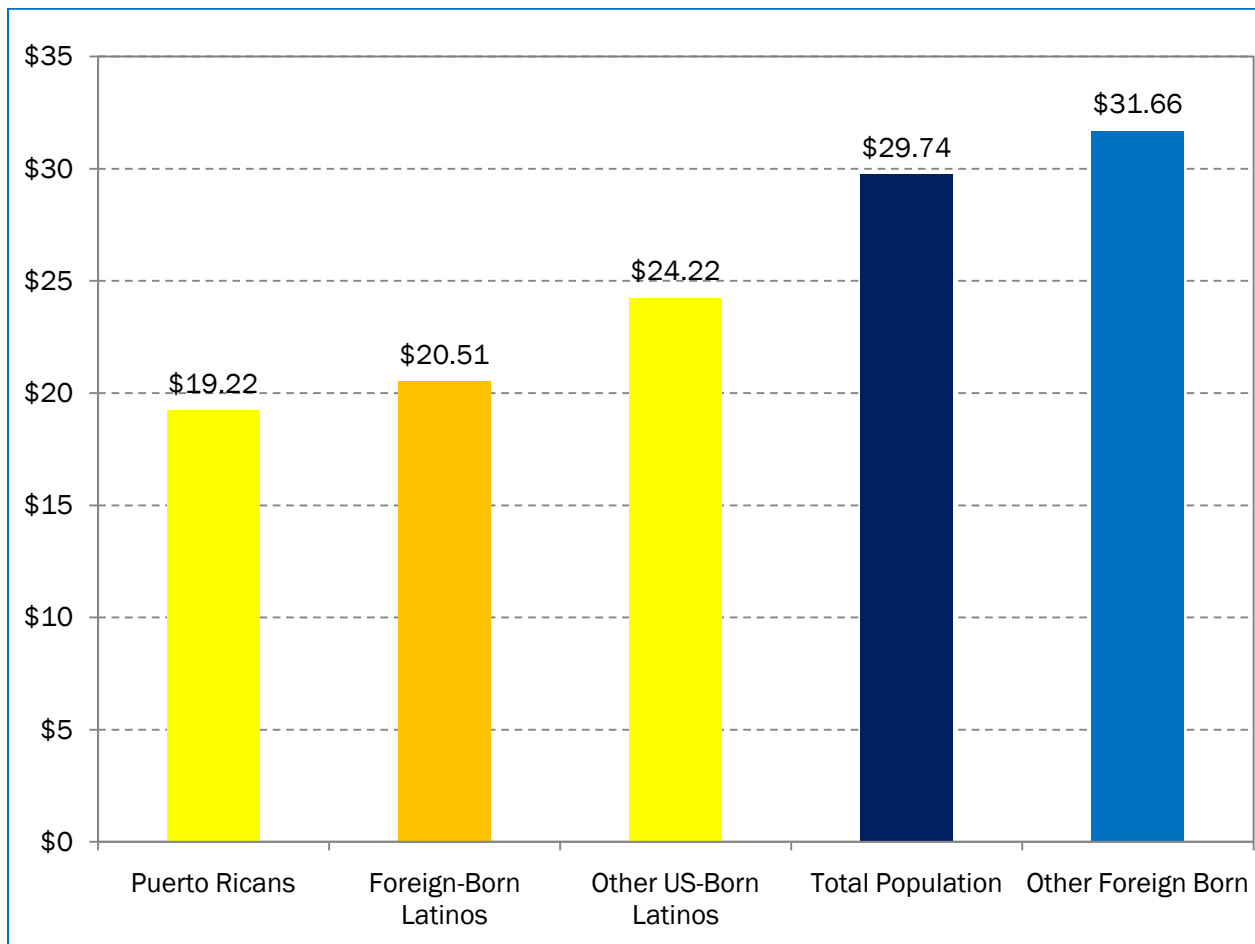


Figure 10B: Hourly Wages in Sales and Service Occupations

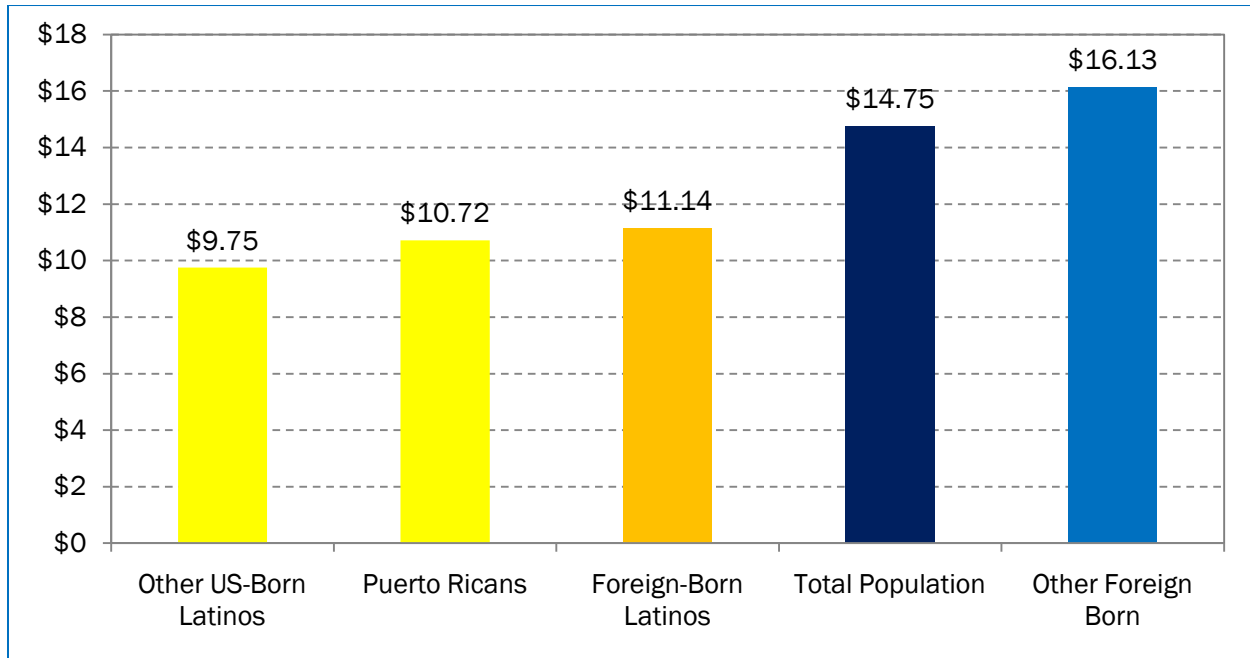
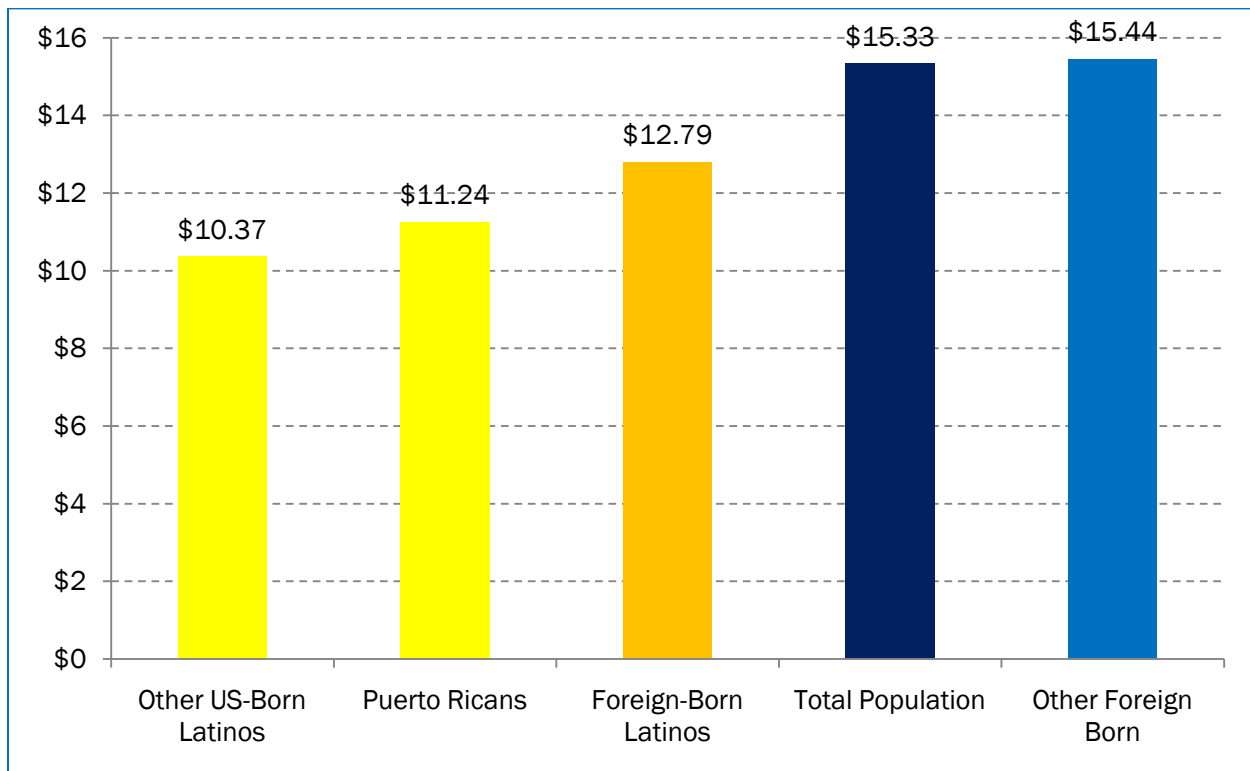


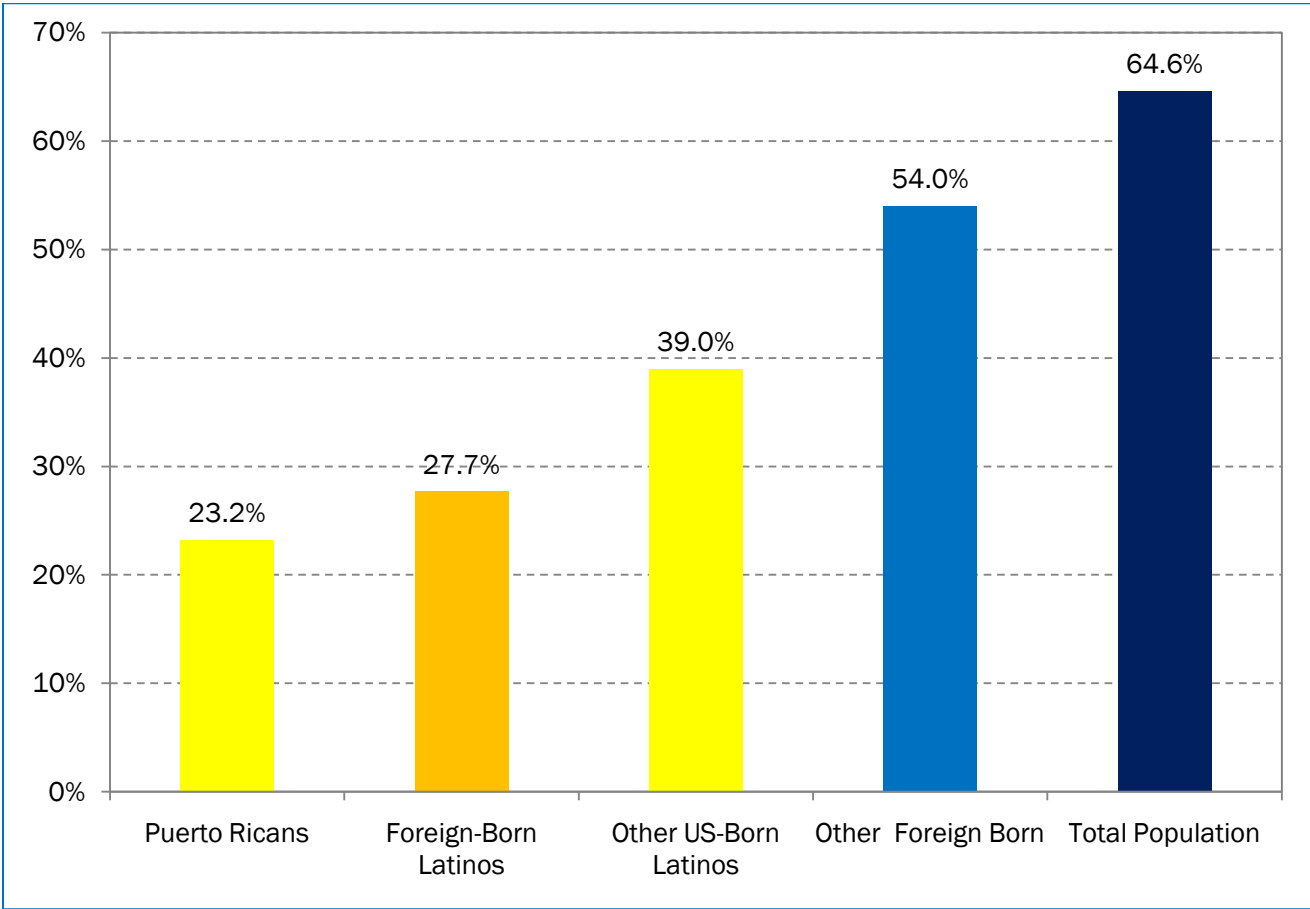
Figure 10C: Hourly Wages in Farming, Construction, Production, and Transportation Occupations



HOUSING STATUS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

The final measures of foreign-born Latinos' participation in Massachusetts are intended to identify how well they are being rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. Across the United States, Latinos have low rates of homeownership, and foreign-born Latinos in Figure 11 have a homeownership level (27.7%) that is greater than only Puerto Ricans. As expected, other US-born Latinos have a higher homeownership rate than their other socioeconomic characteristics predict. As a complement to these percentages in Figure 11, it is evident that 72.3% of foreign-born Latinos in Massachusetts are renters. Therefore, due to the high cost of housing in Massachusetts (Figure 12), housing policies related to affordable rent may be more important in the short run for foreign-born Latinos than policies to increase their homeownership.

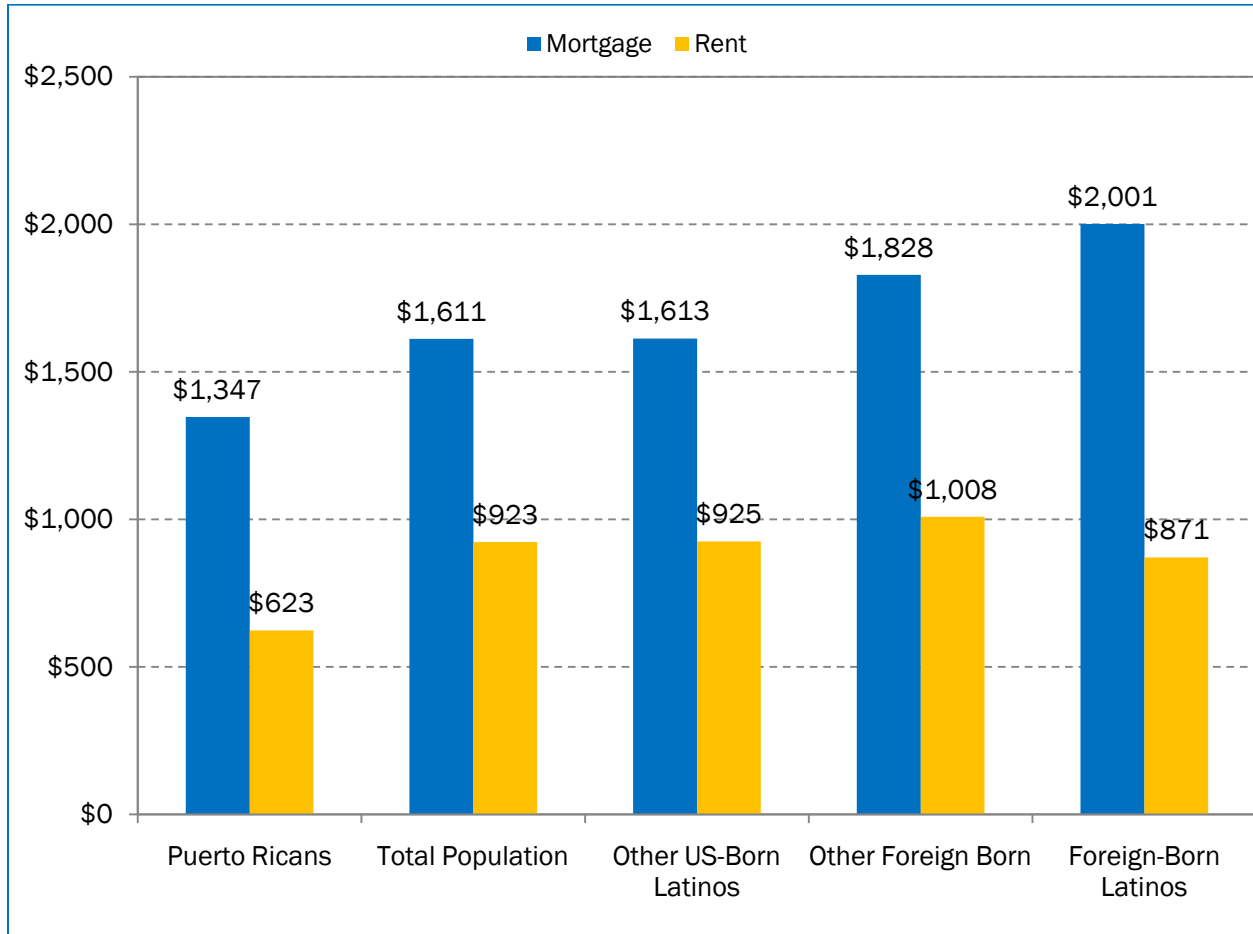
Figure 11: Homeownership Rates of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest



Homeownership is seen in a different light when its cost is analyzed. Having largely become homeowners during the housing bubble of the last decade, foreign-born Latinos in Figure 12 on average pay \$2,001 monthly mortgages, which is the highest of any of these demographic groups. The alternative is somewhat better for foreign-born Latinos, as their average rent (\$871) is lower

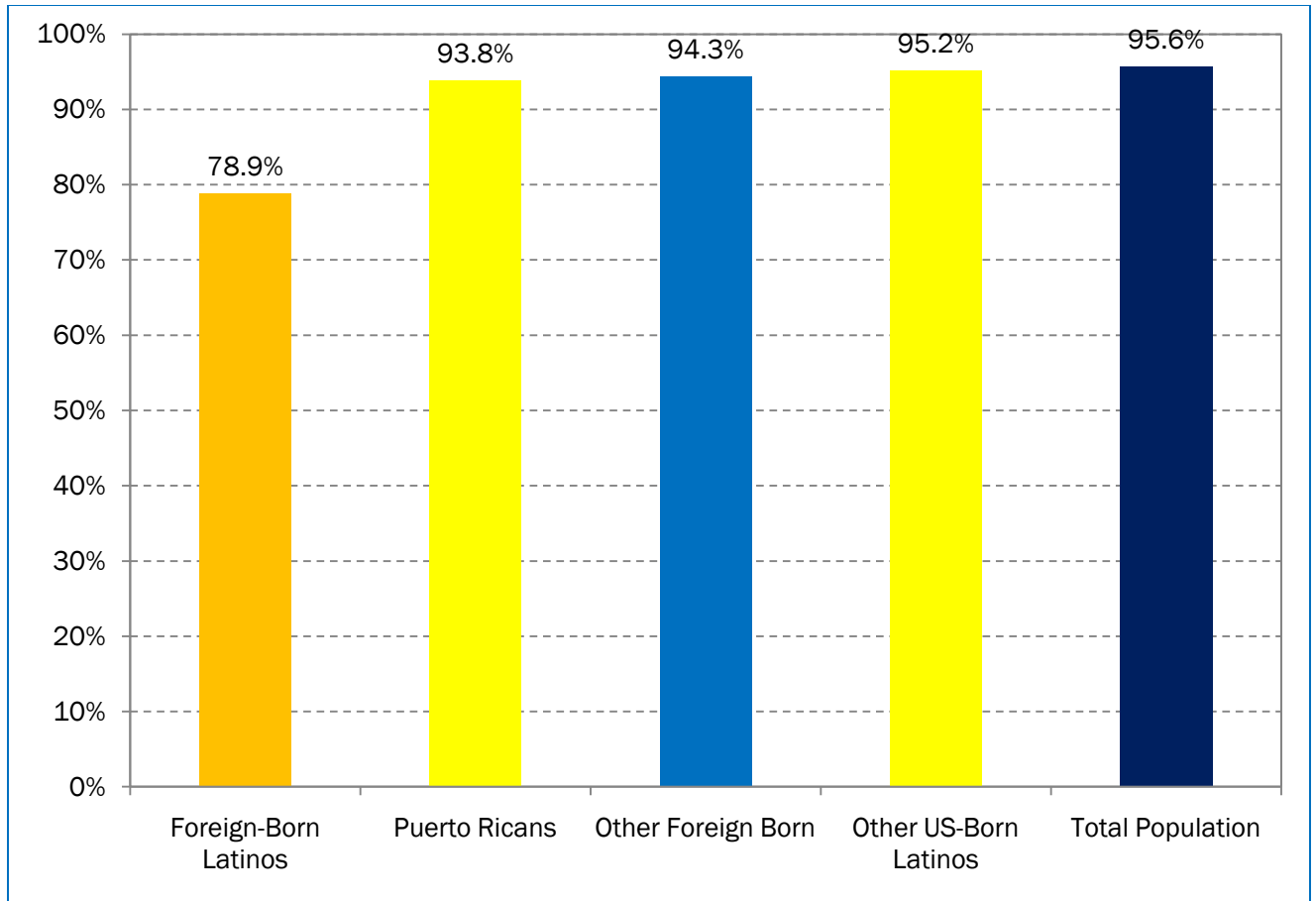
than all but Puerto Ricans. These high mortgage payments underline the fact that foreign-born Latino homebuyers were disadvantaged by the housing bubble earlier in the decade.

Figure 12: Housing Costs of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest



Nativity appears to play a significant role in access to medical insurance. Foreign-born Latinos have the lowest rate of medical insurance (78.9%), even lower than Puerto Ricans (93.8%) and other foreign-born (94.3%). Other US-born Latinos (95.2%) access medical insurance at rates similar to the total population (95.6%). This may be an artifact of both the Massachusetts medical care policy that rewards citizenship, and the Latino population in Massachusetts for whom some subpopulations have high rates of unauthorized migrants (Marcelli et al., 2009).

Figure 13: Medical Insurance Rates of Foreign-Born Latinos and Other Populations of Interest



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