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Latinos in Massachusetts: Brazilians

by Phillip Granberry, PH.D., and Krizia Valentino

April 2020

**THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY**



Intro

The Gastón Institute’s 2019 **Latinos in Massachusetts** series focuses on the ten largest Latino populations located throughout the state.¹ In order of size, these Latino populations are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Brazilians,² Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Colombians, Cubans, Hondurans, and Ecuadorans. This report analyzes Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Our descriptive analysis uses both household- and individual-level data to estimate population size and percentages and to compare Brazilians to Other Latinos and Non-Latinos in the state.

Abstract

Early Brazilian migration to Massachusetts traces itself to the 1970s, and large-scale migration began in the mid-1980s. Though earlier Brazilian migrants settled in Boston and Somerville, by 1990s Brazilians had begun to disperse to Framingham and other cities and towns across the Boston metropolitan area and on Cape Cod. Brazilians have a large unauthorized population and have few avenues to obtain citizenship. Due to their precarious legal status in the United States, many believe that the American Community Survey (ACS) estimates used for this report undercounts the Brazilian population. In 2015, the Brazilian Consulate in Boston estimates 350,000 Brazilians living in their jurisdiction while this report estimates 109,786 Brazilians living in Massachusetts in 2017. These ACS data are the most comprehensive and thus provide the best estimate of demographic, economic, and social characteristics of Brazilians in Massachusetts.

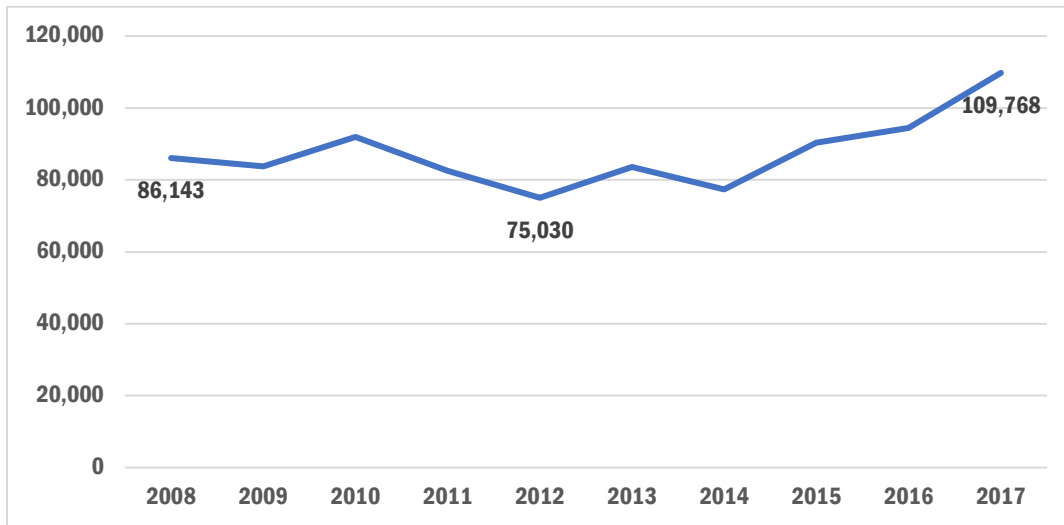
Brazilians in the Massachusetts Population

Massachusetts was home in 2017 to 918,565 Latinos, of whom 109,786, or approximately 12%, were Brazilian. Massachusetts has the second largest Brazilian population in the United States behind only Florida. Appendix A maps the Brazilians in the United States, while Appendix B maps the Brazilians by cities and towns in Massachusetts. Framingham has the largest Brazilian population in 2017 followed by Everett, Boston, Lowell, and Marlborough. (But these five cities between them had only 31% of the Brazilian population in the state, showing considerable dispersal.) Figure 1 shows that the statewide Brazilian population grew by 27% from 2008 to 2017, while the state’s overall Latino population grew by 44% during this period. In comparison, the state’s total population grew by 5.6% from 2008 to 2017.

¹ These reports will not identify Latinos in specific cities and towns, as previous years’ reports have done. Instead, the focus is on the most prevalent Latino ethnic groups statewide.

² We use Latino origin and ancestry, based on migration from Latin America, to identify these populations. Thus, Brazilians are included in the category “Latino” although most Brazilians self-report using a racial category – white or black – rather than identifying with the term “Latino.”

Figure 1: Brazilian Population from 2008 to 2017



Source: 2008-2017 American Community Survey

Nativity

Foreign-born Brazilians in Massachusetts, who on average arrived in the United States in 2004, composed 74% of Brazilians in Massachusetts in 2017. With this large share of foreign born, it is not surprising that only 45% of Brazilians were U.S. citizens. By comparison, 30% of Other Latinos were foreign born, and 83% of their population were citizens. The Non-Latino population was 14% foreign born, and 94% of their population were citizens.

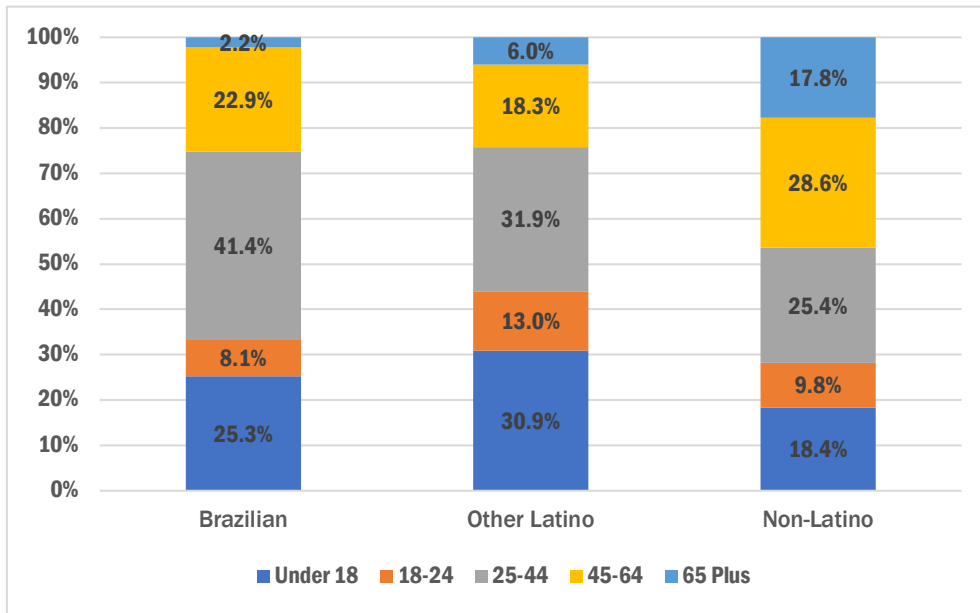
Even though about one-fourth of Brazilians were native-born as of 2017, 92% of Brazilian children had at least one foreign-born parent compared to 42% of Other Latinos and 24% of Non-Latinos.

Age Distribution and Marital Status

The Brazilian population in Massachusetts had a median age of 33 years in 2017, older than for Other Latinos (28 years) and much younger than for Non-Latinos (41 years). Figure 2 shows that 33% of Brazilians were under age 25, a proportion somewhat closer to that of Non-Latinos (28%) than of Other Latinos (44%).

At the same time, the prime working age years of 25-44 and 45-64 together accounted for a notably higher proportion of Brazilians (64%) than of Other Latinos (50%) and of Non-Latinos (54%). Non-Latinos had the largest share of the population 65 and older while Brazilians had the smallest share.

Figure 2: Age Categories

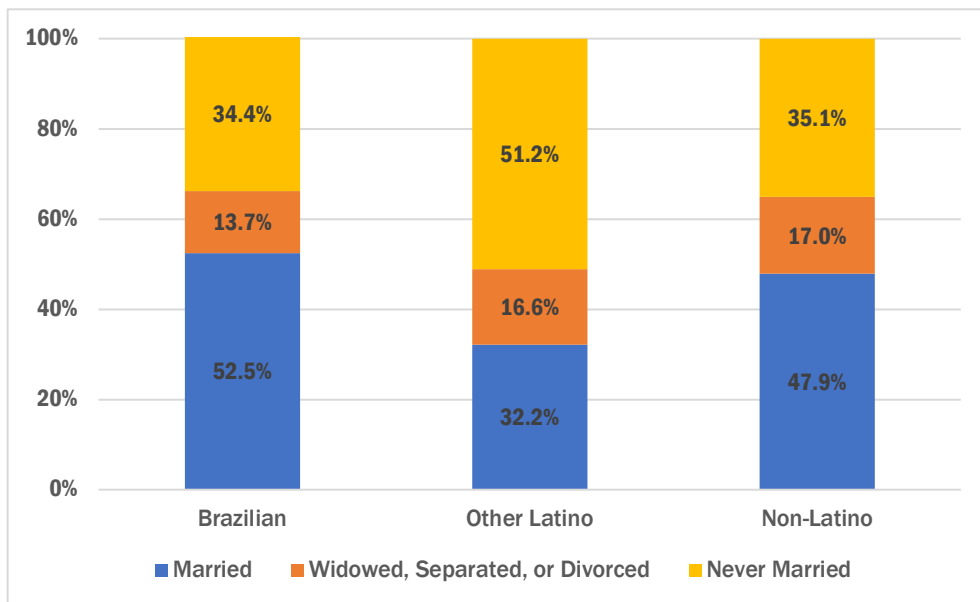


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Marital Status

The Brazilian population was older than Other Latinos, and this is a likely factor contributing to their higher marriage rate. Figure 3, covering all ages 15 and older, shows that Brazilians in 2017 were more likely to be married (53%) than were Other Latinos (32%) and even Non-Latinos (48%).

Figure 3: Marriage Rates of the Population 15 Years and Older



Source: 2017 American Community Survey

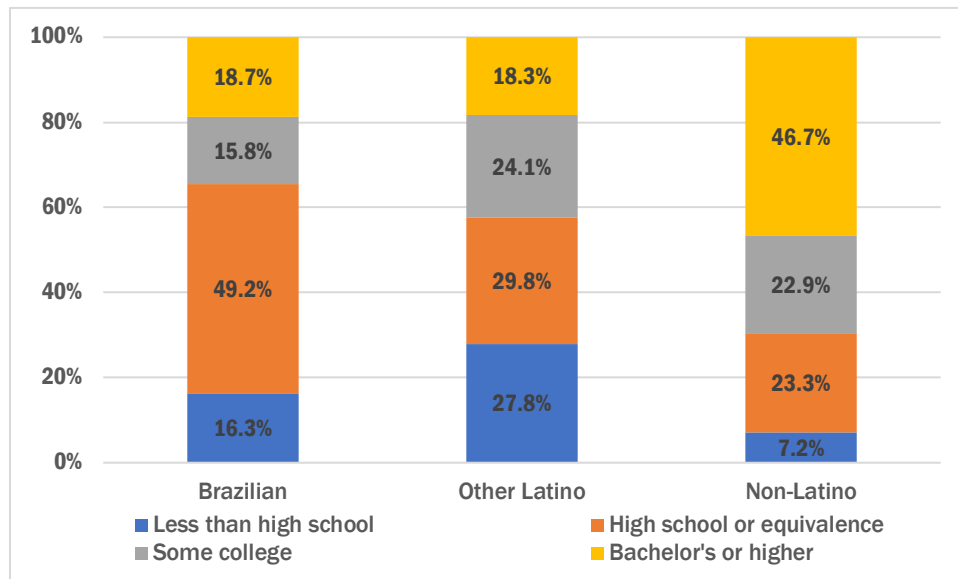
Education

Latinos in Massachusetts overall have relatively low levels of educational attainment, and Brazilians in 2017 followed this pattern. Figure 4 shows that Brazilians had the largest share of their population with a high school diploma: 49%, compared to 30% for Other Latinos and 23% for Non-Latinos. Correspondingly, Brazilians, as well as Other Latinos, had much lower shares of their population with at least a Bachelor's degree (19% and 18% respectively) than Non-Latinos (47%).

The ages from 18 through 24 are especially important for obtaining higher education. Only 25% of Brazilians in this age group who had not already earned a Bachelor's degree were enrolled in college in 2017, compared to 40% of Other Latinos and 61% of Non-Latinos.

English language difficulty is often referenced as a reason for low educational attainment. Of the population age 5 and older in 2017, fewer than half (46%) of Brazilians either spoke only English or spoke it very well. This was a notably lower share than for Other Latinos (68%) and Non-Latinos (94%).

Figure 4: Educational Attainment of the Population 25 Years and Older

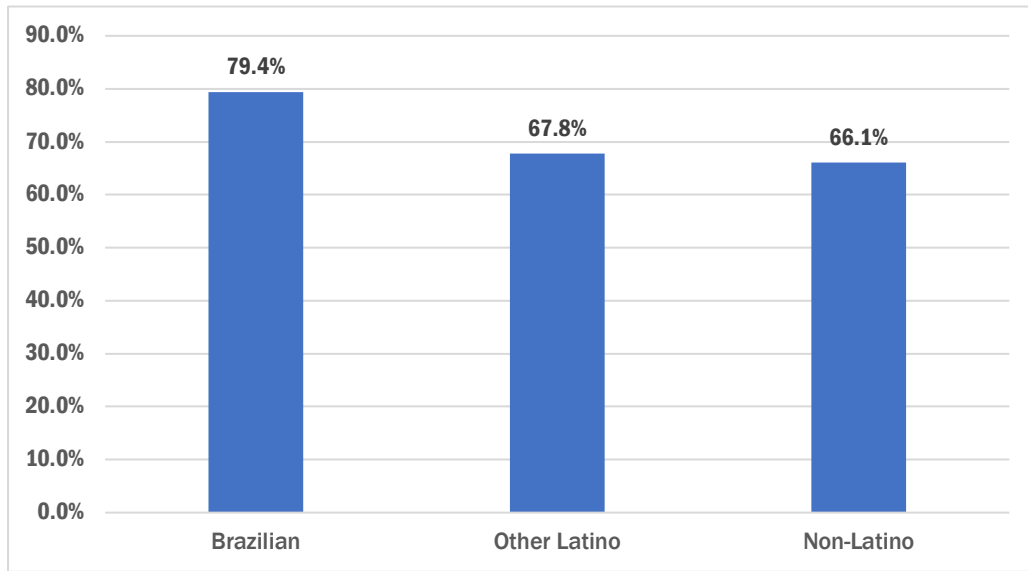


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Labor Force Participation

Brazilians had a higher labor force participation rate (79%) than Other Latinos (68%) and Non-Latinos (66%). Among Brazilians, men had a higher labor force participation (86%) than women (72%). Older Brazilians had higher labor force participation, which was 88% for those 45-64. This was higher than for Other Latinos (70%) and Non-Latinos (79%).

Figure 5: Labor Force Participation of the Population 16 and Older

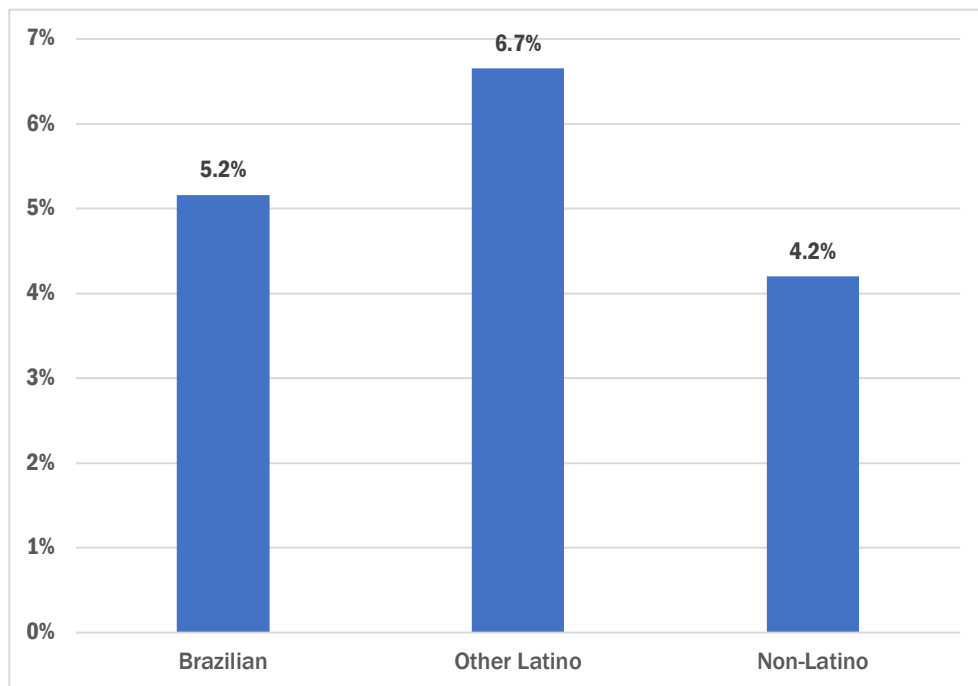


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Unemployment

In 2017, the ACS estimated Massachusetts unemployment at 4.5%. With their higher labor force participation, Brazilians had an unemployment rate of 5.2%. This unemployment rate was between the rates for Other Latinos (6.7%) and Non-Latinos (4.2%).

Figure 6: Unemployment

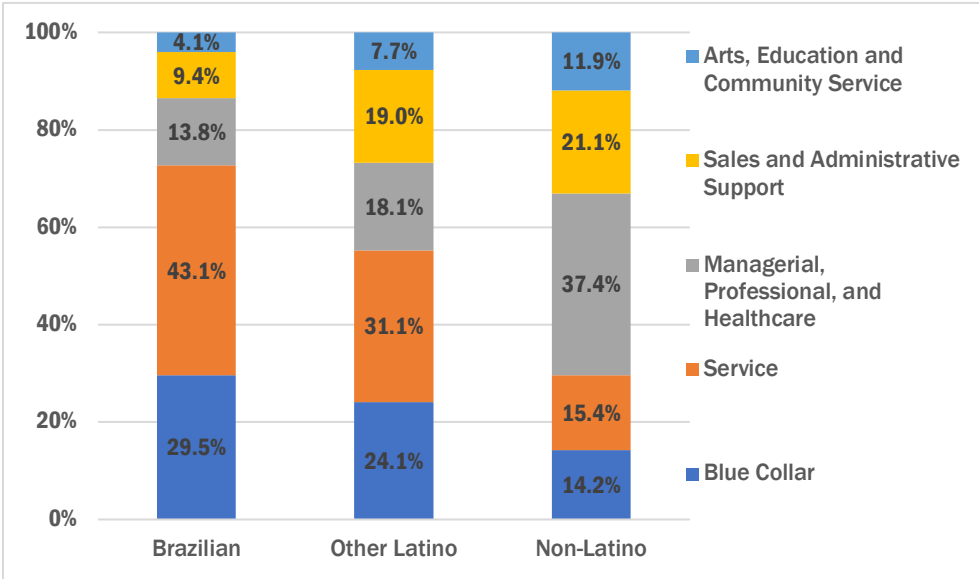


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Occupations

Over 72% of employed Brazilians (and a lower proportion of Other Latinos, 55%) worked in service and blue-collar occupations compared to less than 30% for Non-Latinos. In contrast the percentage in managerial and profession occupations was 14% for Brazilians, 18% for Other Latinos and 37% for Non-Latinos. These discrepancies suggest that Brazilians and Other Latinos, with lower average levels of educational attainment, fill segments of the labor market that are very different from those of Non-Latinos.

Figure 7: Occupational Distribution of Employed Workers



Source: 2017 American Community Survey

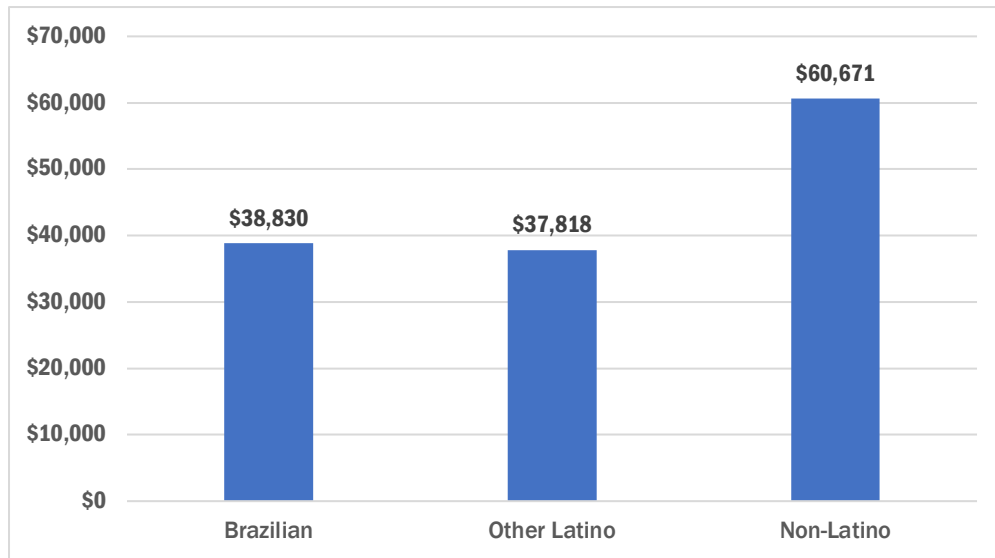
Wages

Given the previous labor market and educational information, it is not surprising that Brazilians earn relatively low wages. Full-time Brazilian workers in 2017 had a median wage income of \$38,830, which was approximately \$1,000 more than for Other Latinos but \$22,000 less than for Non-Latinos. The overall wage income disparity between Latinos and Non-Latinos persisted when broken down by nativity, age, and educational attainment.

Poverty

With their relatively low wage income, it is somewhat surprising that only 9% of Brazilians in 2017 were below the poverty threshold, barely higher than the rate for Non-Latinos (8%) and well below the rate for Other Latinos (25%). This low poverty rate is related to many Brazilian households having several wage-earning adults. Only 8% of Brazilian children lived below the poverty threshold compared to 33% for Other Latino children and 9% for Non-Latino children.

Figure 8: Median Wage Income of Full-Time Workers



Source: 2017 American Community Survey

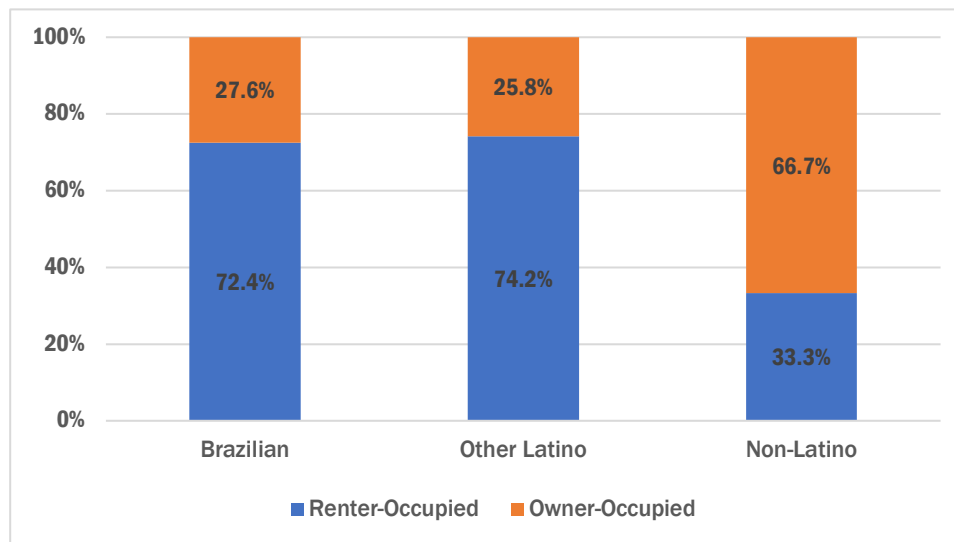
Standard of Living

The final measures of Brazilians' participation in Massachusetts are projected to identify how they are rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. We look at homeownership, household income, housing costs, and medical insurance.

Homeownership

Brazilians in 2017 had a low rate of homeownership: 28% which means that 72% of Brazilians were renters. This homeownership rate was slightly higher than for Other Latinos (26%) but less than half of the rate for Non-Latinos (67%).

Figure 9: Homeownership

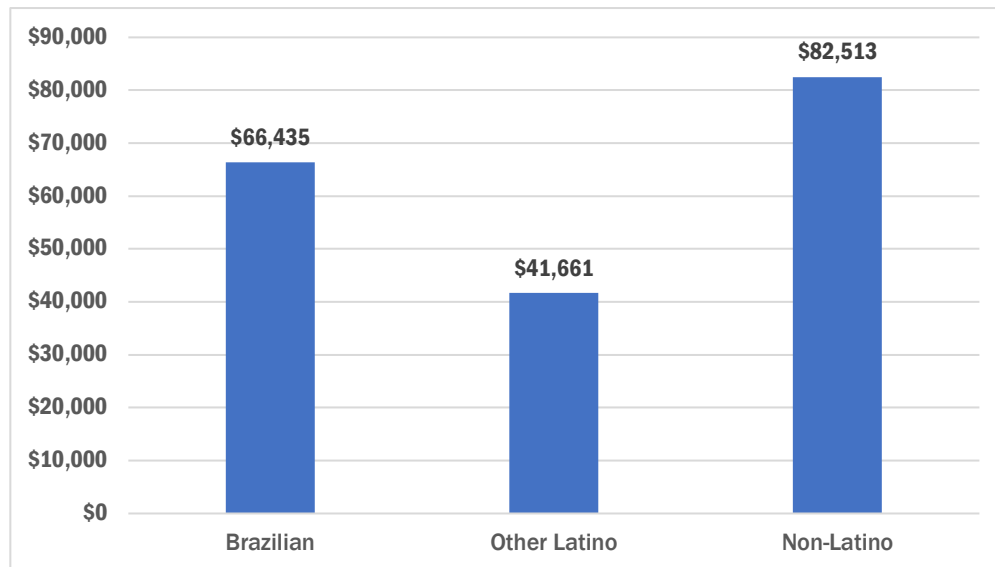


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Household Income

Household income is another aid in assessing a population’s standard of living. It accounts for the incomes of all people ages 15 years or older occupying the same housing unit, regardless of relation. Brazilians’ median household income in 2017 was \$66,435. This was much higher than for the households of Other Latinos (\$41,661), although lower than for the households of Non-Latinos (\$82,513). Given Brazilians’ relatively low wage income, it reflects a larger household size.

Figure 10: Median Household Income

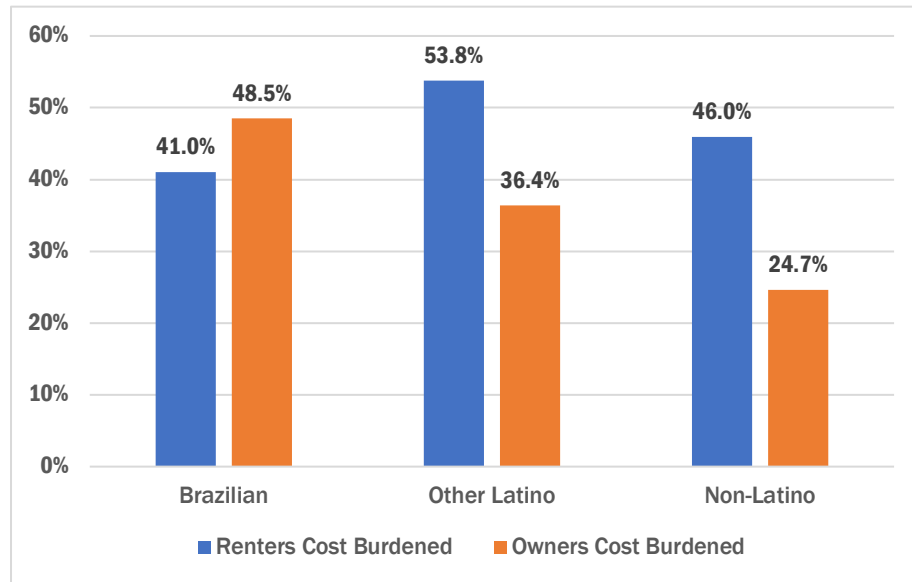


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Housing Cost Burden

A housing cost burdened household spends more than 30% of its monthly income on a rent or mortgage payment. In Massachusetts, noted for its high housing costs, 47% of all renting households in 2017 were housing cost burdened. This figure was 41% for Brazilian households, 54% for Other Latino households, and 46% for Non-Latino households. Among homeowners, 49% of Brazilian households were housing cost burdened. This was higher than for Other Latinos (36%) and Non-Latinos (25%).

Figure 11: Housing Cost Burden

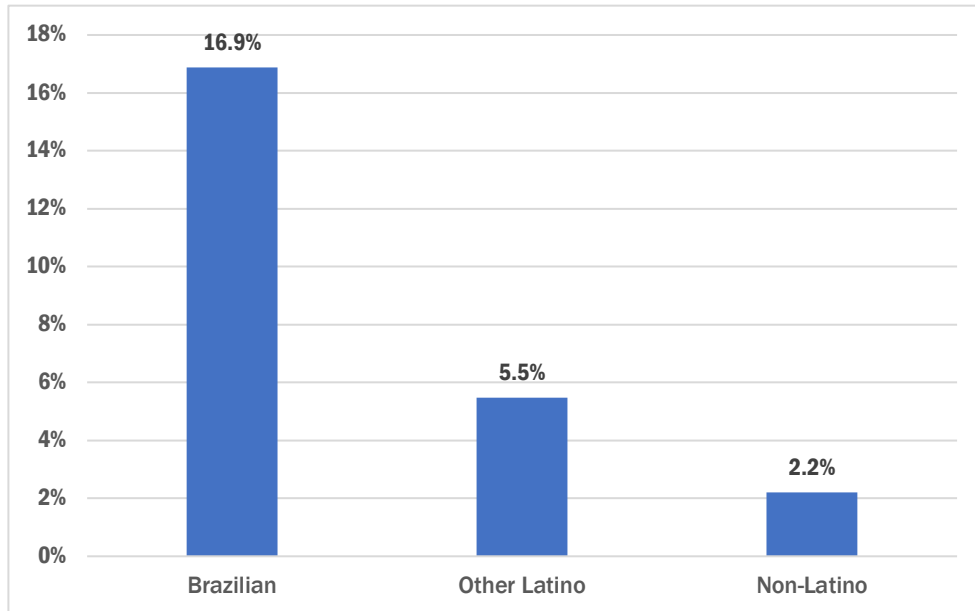


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Medical Insurance

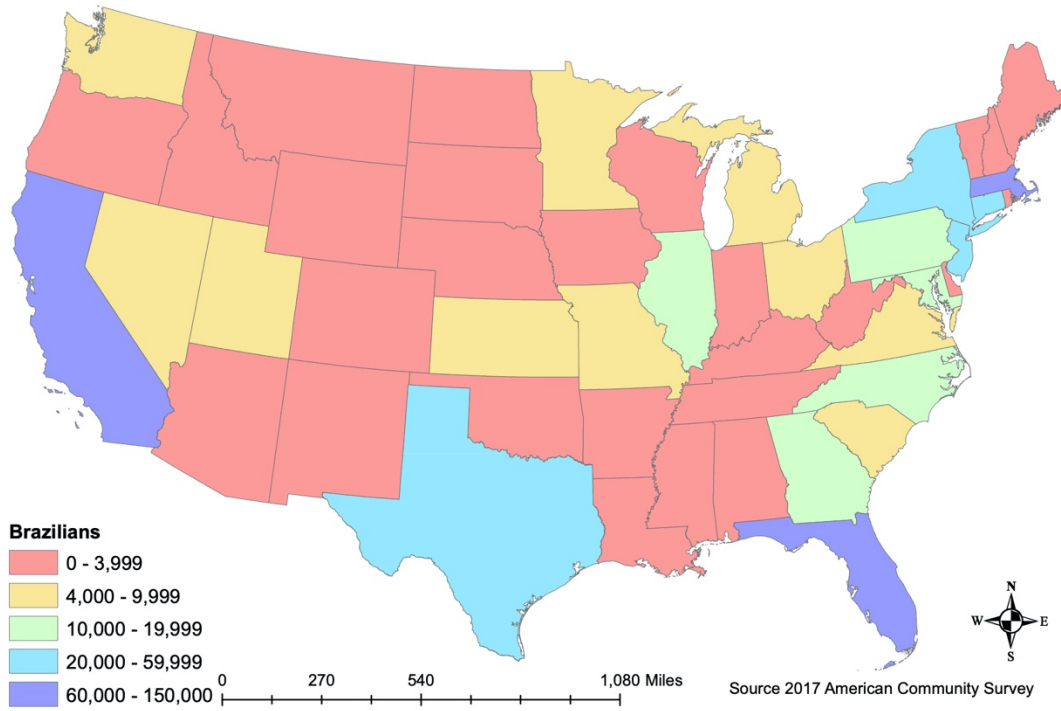
Brazilians had high rates of medical uninsurance in 2017. Nearly 17% of all Brazilians lacked medical insurance. This was much higher than for Other Latinos (6%) and Non-Latinos (2%). The same trend holds for Brazilian children, as 4% lacked medical insurance compared to 2% for Other Latinos and 1% for Non-Latinos.

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance

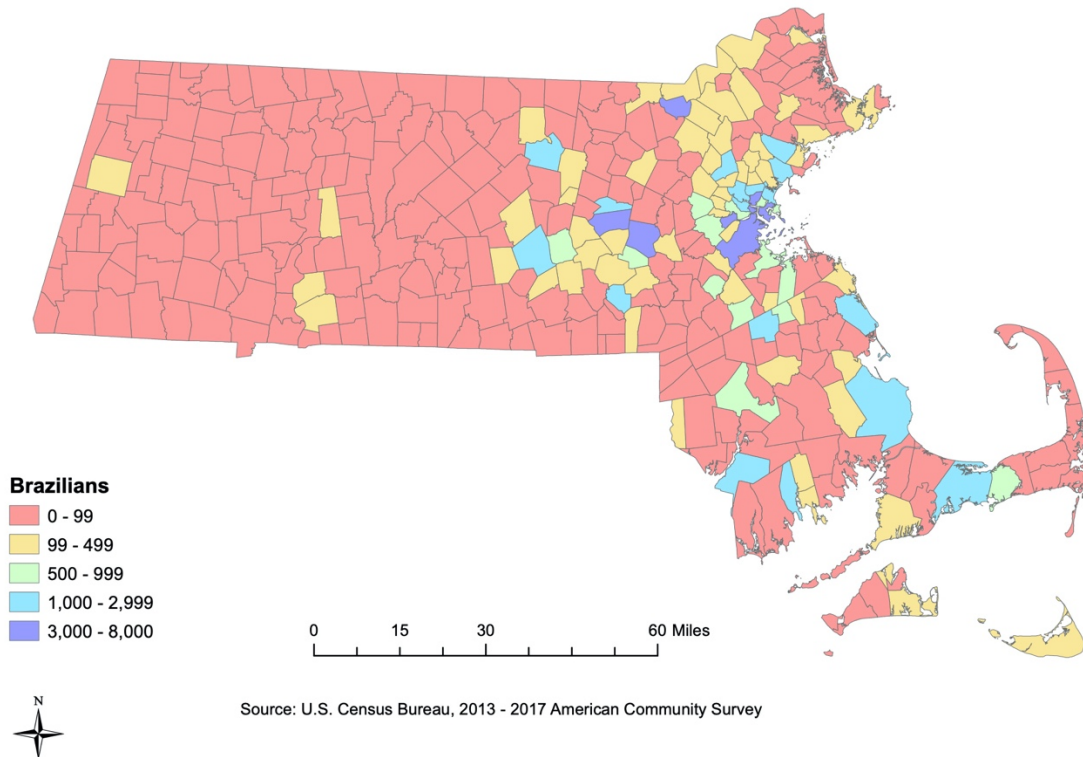


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Appendix A: Brazilians in the United States



Appendix B: Brazilians in Massachusetts



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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.

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

Phillip Granberry is a social demographer. He worked with various community-based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. immigrants before earning a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts 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 in the Gastón Institute and Economics Department at UMass Boston, he is Senior Researcher in demography for the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

Krizia Valentino is a graduate student in the Applied Economics program at UMass Boston, expected to graduate May 2020. She has supported data collection and analysis for a wide range of projects at the Gastón Institute, including a Survey Report for English for New Bostonians and the Latino Non-Profit Mapping Project with Amplify Latinx. In addition to her time at Gastón Institute, she is also a teaching assistant in the UMass Boston Economics department.



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