



In Pursuit of Equity,
Accountability and Success:

Latino

Students in
Massachusetts Schools

Setting New High School Graduation Requirements in Massachusetts while Supporting Latino Student Success

Equity, Rigor, and Belonging for Latino Students in Massachusetts

**01/22/26
2:00-3:00**

PEAS Steering Committee

Melissa Colón, PhD | Education Faculty | University of Massachusetts Boston;

Nyal Francisco Fuentes | College and Career Readiness Coordinator | Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education;

Mary Jo Marion | Associate Vice President | Worcester State University;

Lorna Rivera, PhD | Director, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy | University of Massachusetts, Boston;

Marta T. Rosa | President | MTR Consulting Services;

Fabián Torres-Ardila, PhD | Associate Director, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy | University of Massachusetts, Boston;

Carmen N. Veloria, PhD | Associate Vice President | Central Connecticut State University

IN PURSUIT OF EQUITY ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUCCESS, LATINO STUDENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS (PEAS)

PEAS is a state-wide collaborative that unites multiple systems and sectors around community, policy, and practitioner-centered solutions to address educational inequities for Latino students in Massachusetts.

VISION: Equity, Accountability and Racial Justice for all Latino students in Massachusetts

MISSION: To work toward equitable and accountable education systems, institutions, and leadership to ensure the success of all Latino students.

GOALS: Centering the Latino student experience to shape, unite, and guide systemic change through research, convenings, informing policies, Charlas with agency and community leaders, and the development of an equity compact.

STRUCTURE: For the next three years the initiative will be housed at Worcester State University. We are seeking partners, allies, and disruptors to actively involve in this work.

Community Norms



WE COMMIT TO
CLARITY



WE COMMIT TO
CANDOR



WE COMMIT TO
ACCOUNTABILITY

Agenda



Welcome, Introductions and Purpose



Data Framing: Setting the Context



Moderated Conversation with Commissioner Martinez



Community Perspectives & Reflection



Commissioner Response & Commitments



Closing & Next Steps



Pedro Martinez, Massachusetts
Commissioner of Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education



Dr. Carmen Veloria, Acting
Director of MASS ED and
Career Opportunities

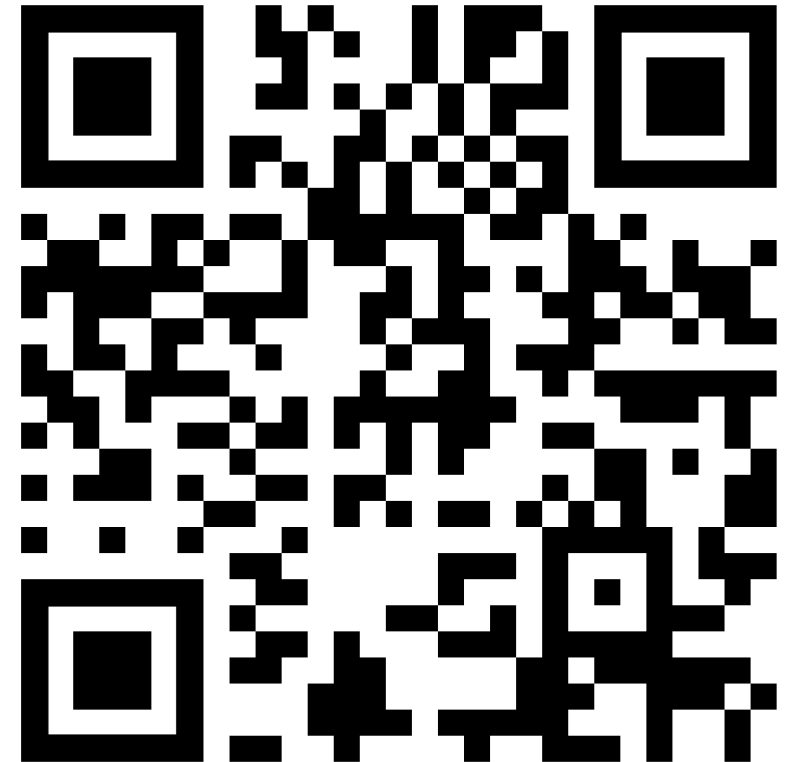


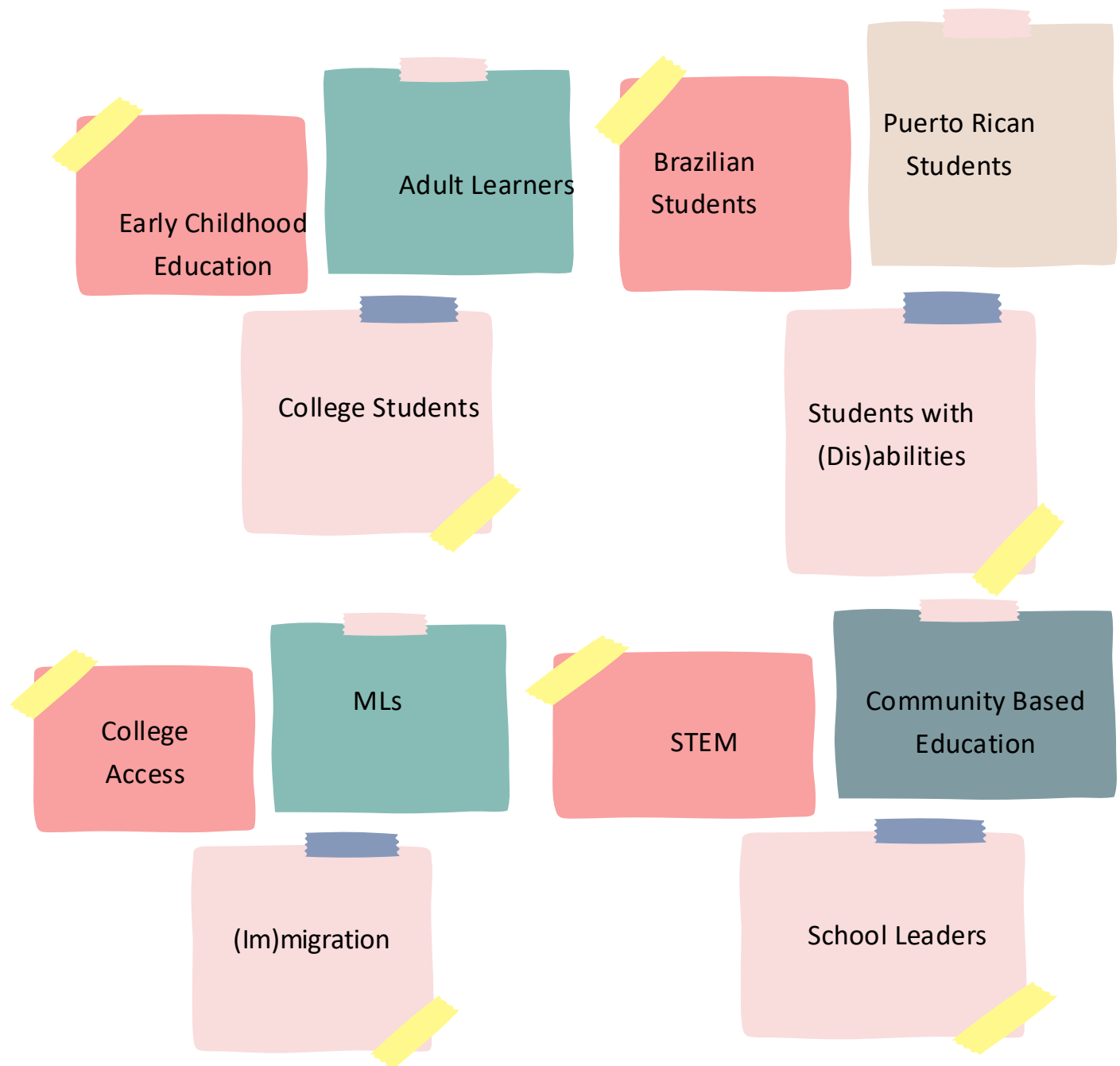
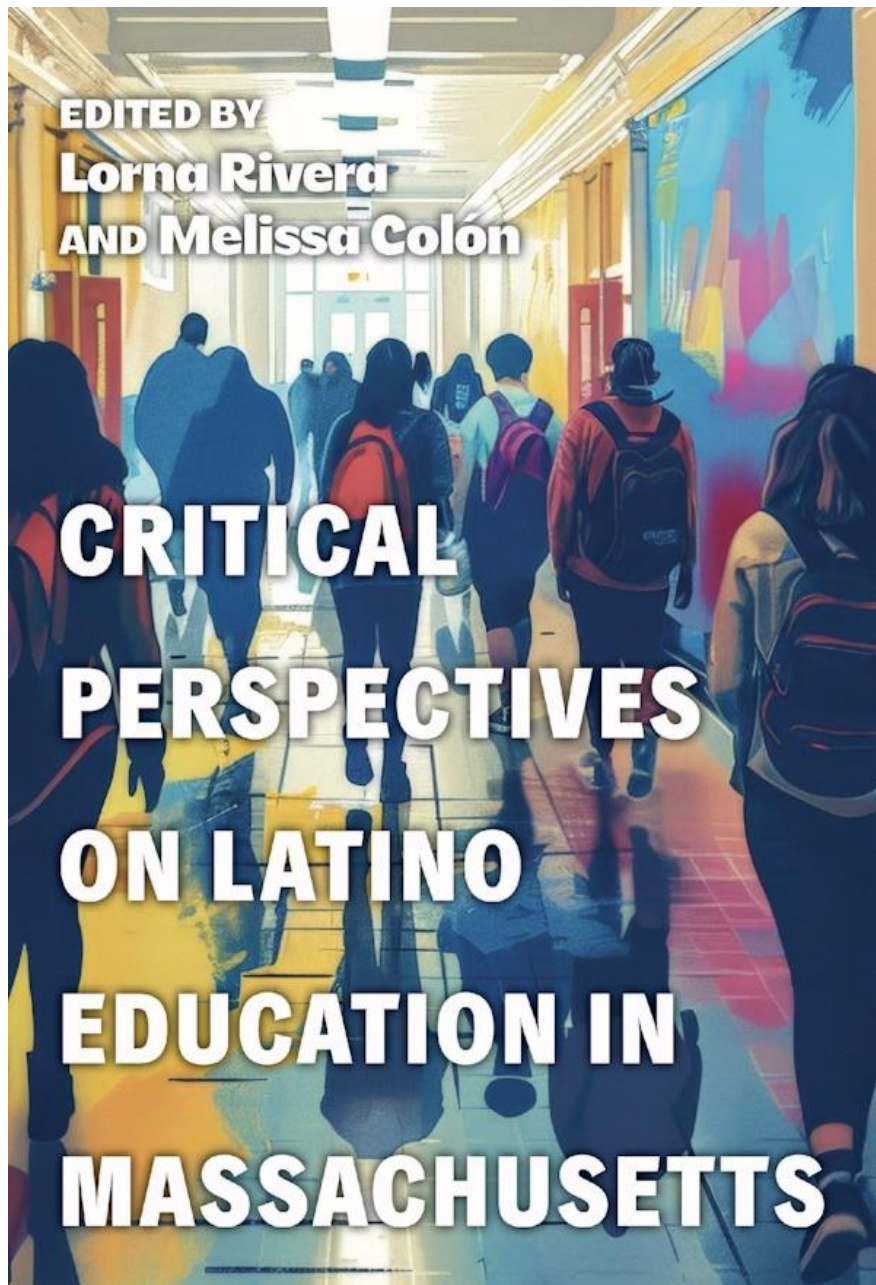
Dr. Lorna Rivera, Director of the
Mauricio Gastón Institute for
Latino Community Development
and Public Policy, University of
Massachusetts Boston

THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & PUBLIC POLICY

Established in 1989 by the MA state legislature, the mission of the Gastón Institute is to inform policy makers and the public about issues affecting the state's growing Latino community and to provide this community with the information and analysis necessary for effective participation in public policy development.

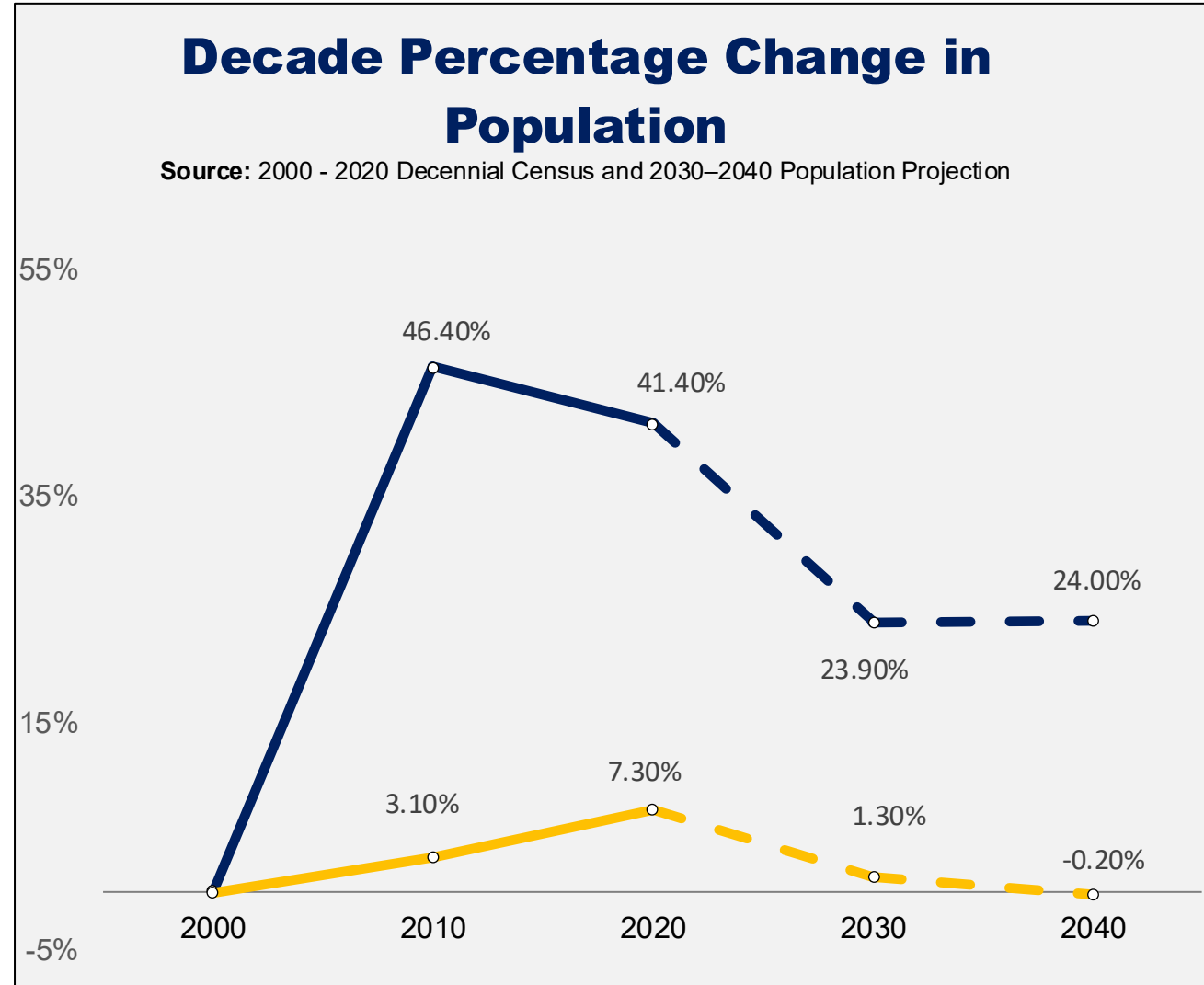
[Access our reports](#)





2040: Latino Population in MA

Actual and Projected Growth of the Latino Population in Massachusetts

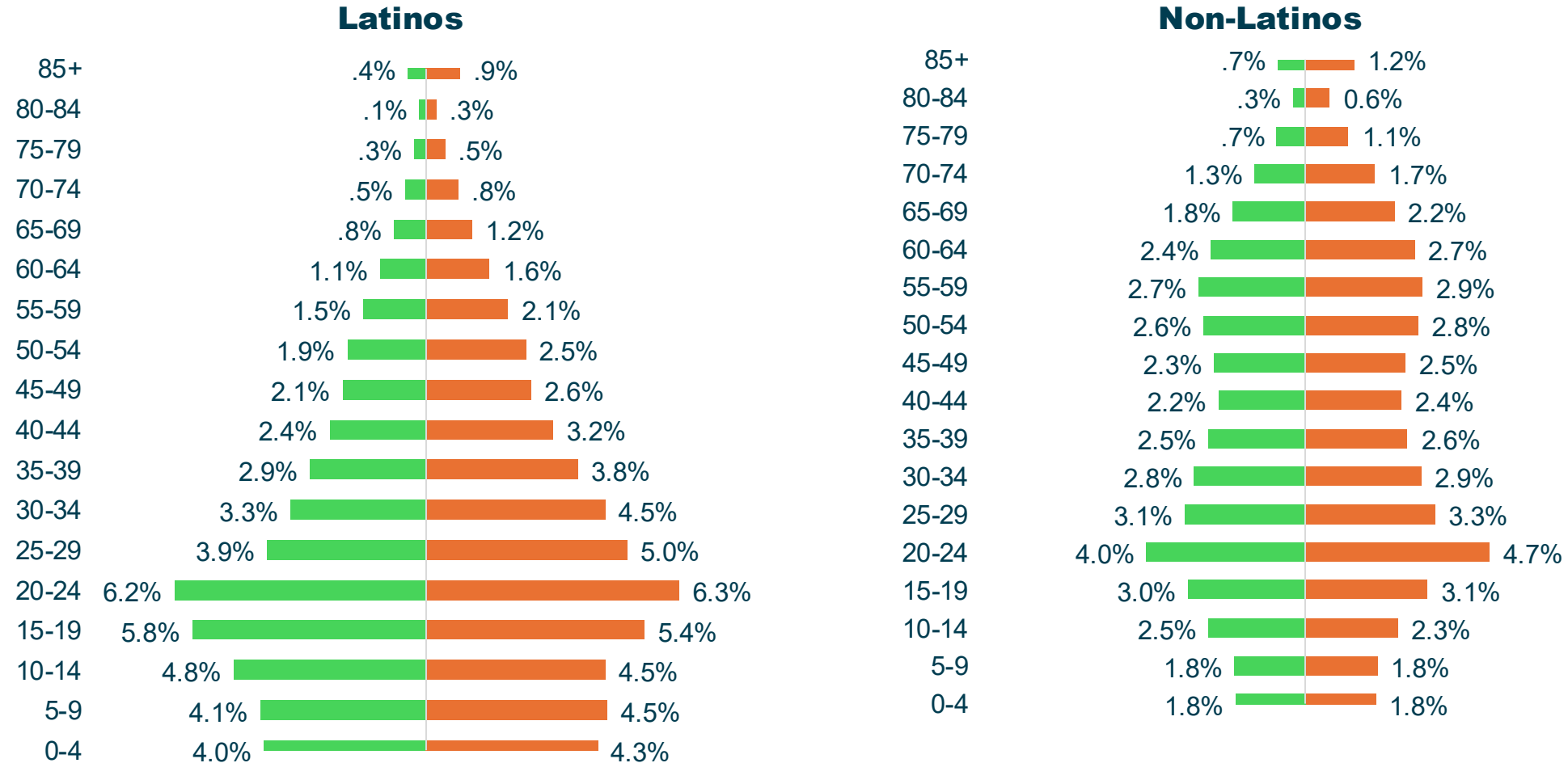


- By 2040, the Latino population in Massachusetts will reach over 1.3 million, approximately **15%** of the total projected population.
- By 2040 Latino population **decade percentage growth will be 24%** compared to almost zero growth for the state population.
- By 2040 Latino population will growth by **51%** compared to **1%** growth rate for the state population.



A Younger Future: Latino Age Demographics in 2040

By 2040, an estimated 60% of the Latino population will be 30 years of age or younger, nearly double the share of the non-Latino population (33%).



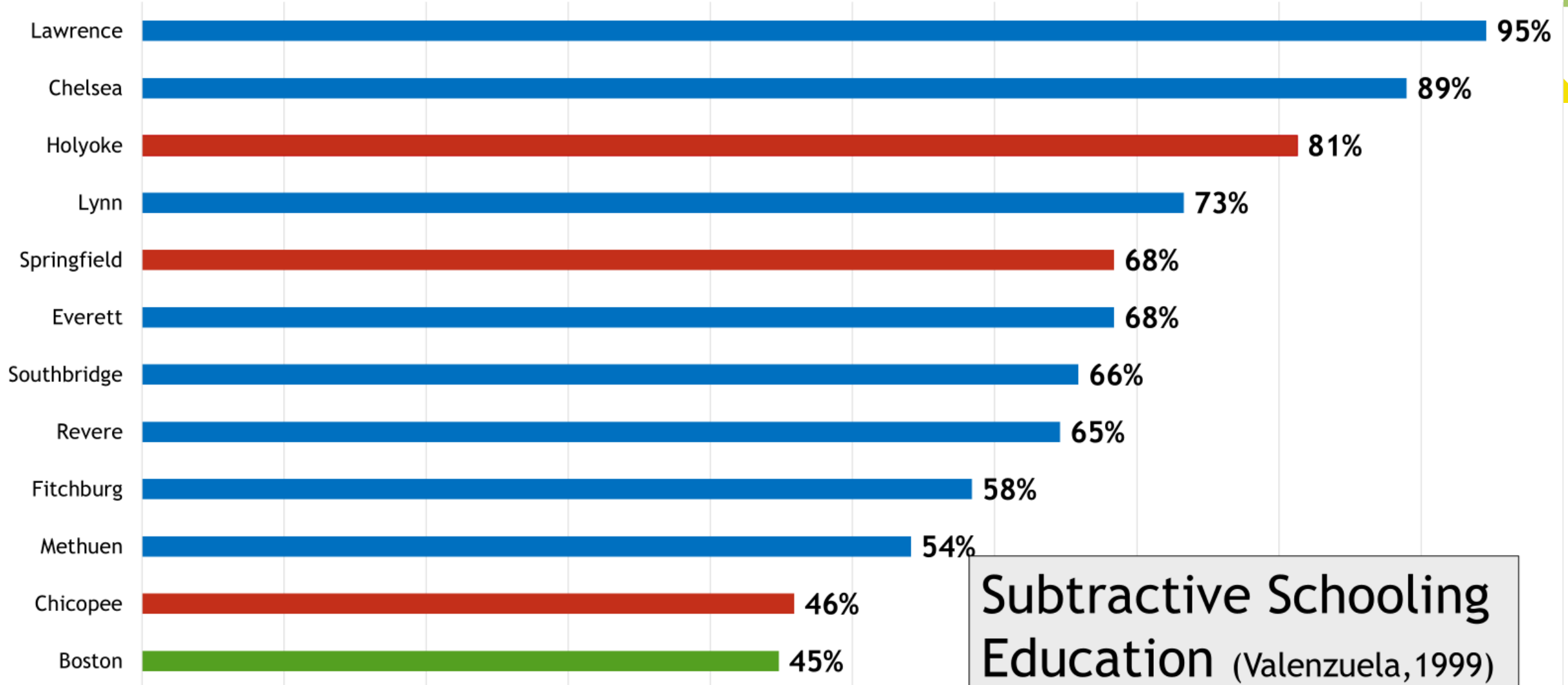
Source: 2000 - 2020 Decennial Census and 2030–2040 Population Projection





In Massachusetts
One out of 4
Public School
Students is Latino

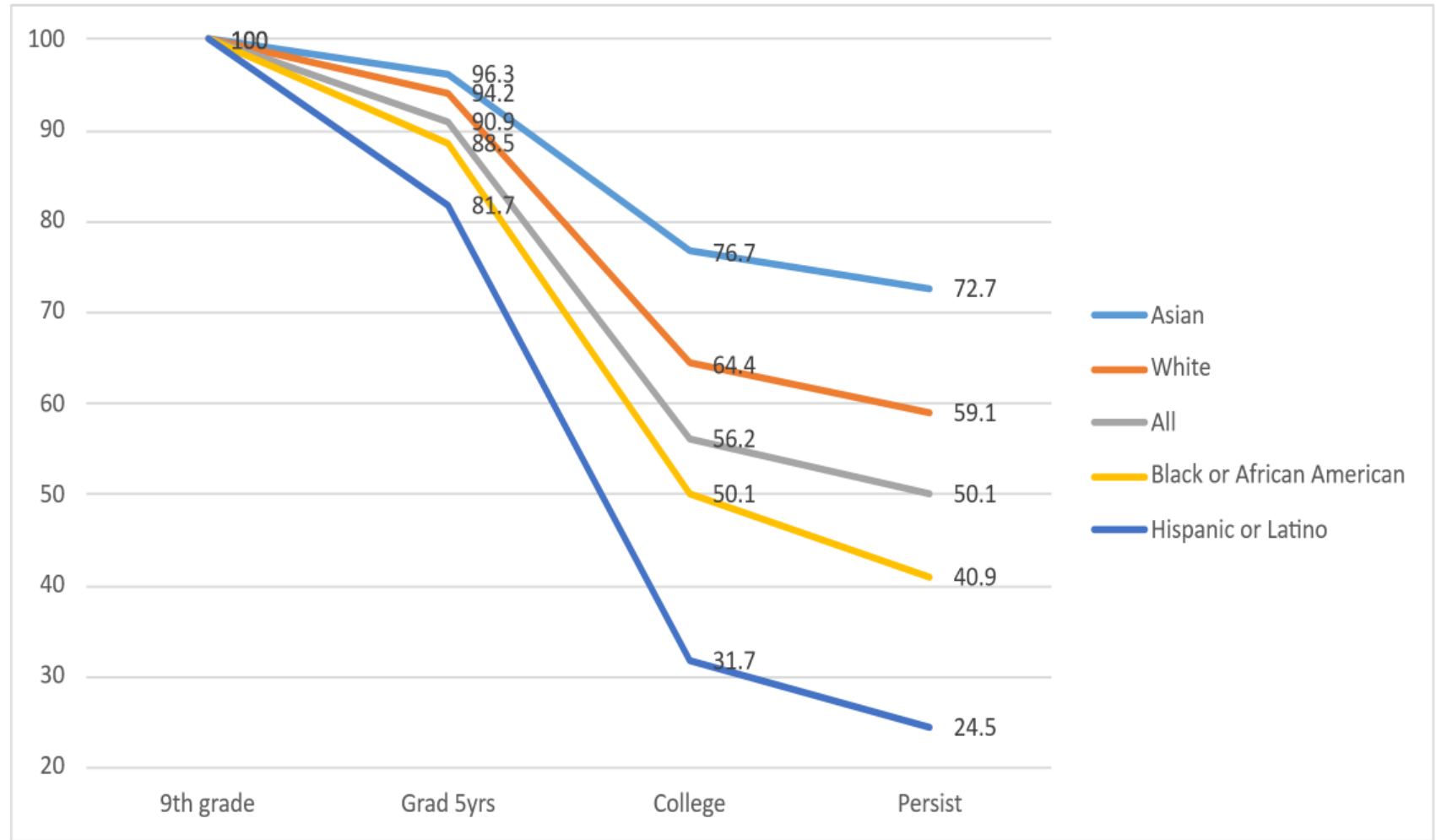
SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH LARGEST HISPANIC/LATINO POPULATION (SY2024-2025)



74,020 Latino HS Students in 2025 (grades 9-12)

- ▶ **26.8% were English Learners**
- ▶ **20.1% were students with disabilities**
- ▶ **70.6% were low income**

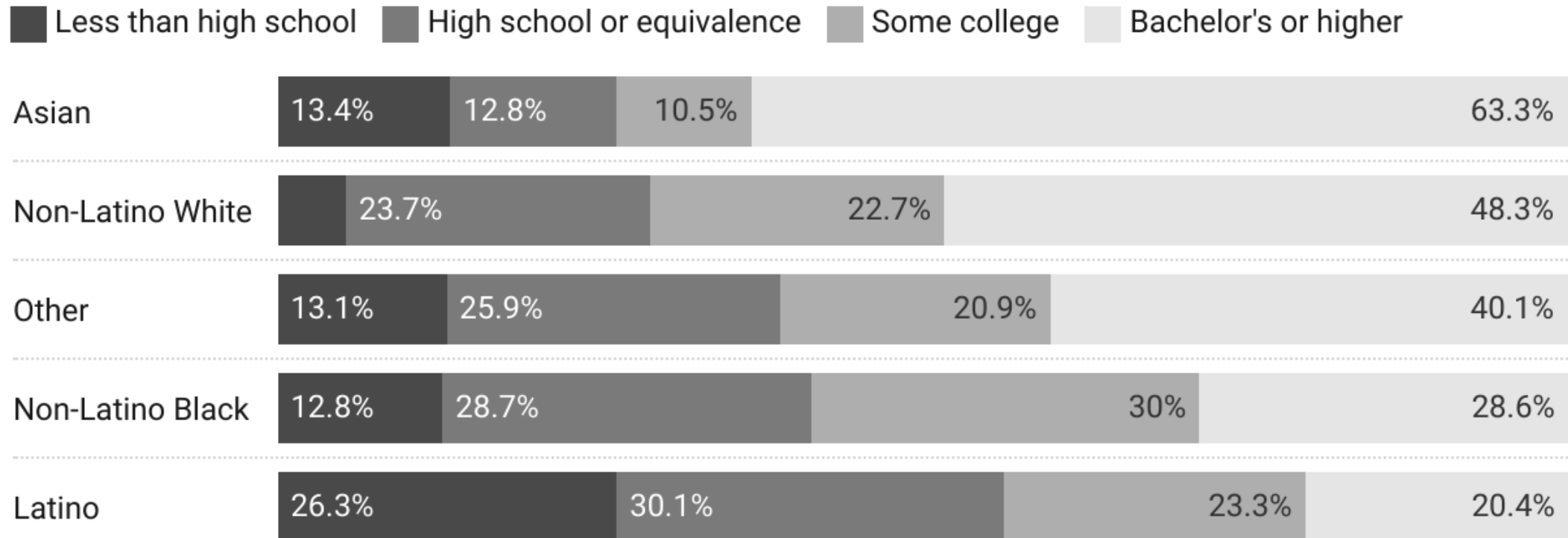
2023 GRADUATE COHORT WATERFALL



Graduation and post secondary education outcomes based on a cohort entering high school in Sept 2019. Enrollment and persistence at any college. Gaps exist all along this pipeline towards completion of post secondary education

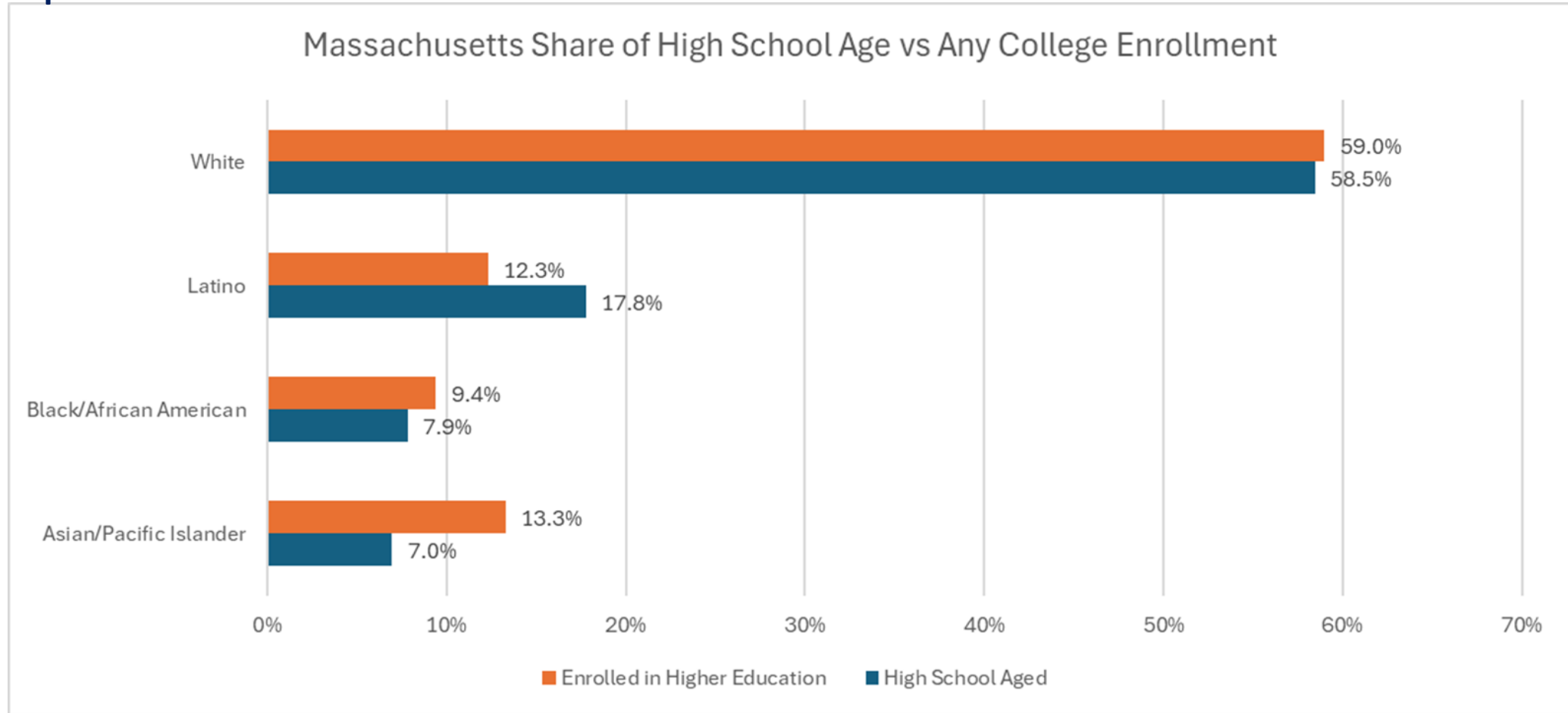
Educational Attainment in MA by Race and Ethnicity

Indicates the highest degree or the highest level of school completed by MA residents. Includes all people age 25+ because not all students earn their degrees in 4 years after high school.



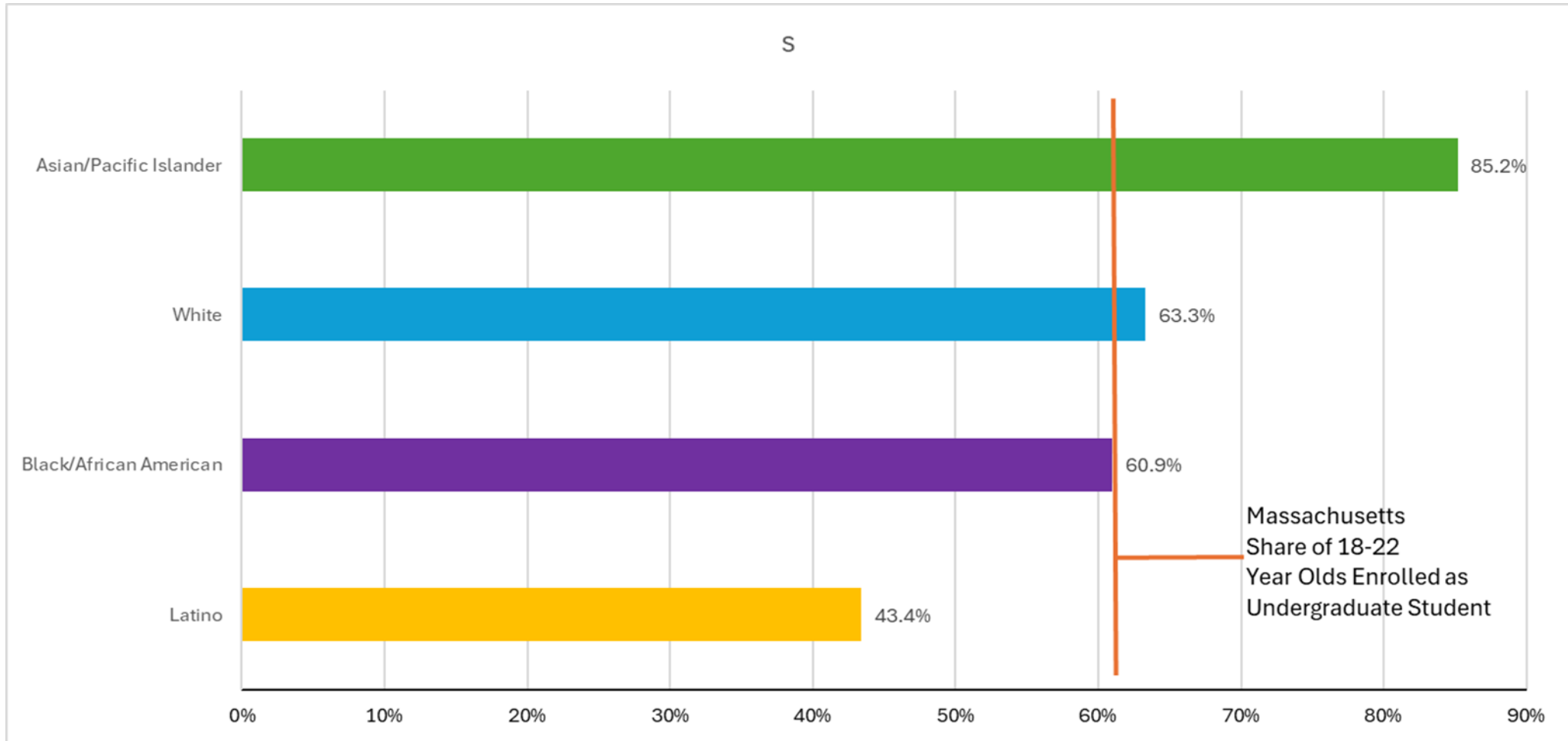
Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Gastón Institute Analysis • Created with Datawrapper

A smaller percentage of Latino high school graduates enroll in higher education compared to their share of the Massachusetts high school population.



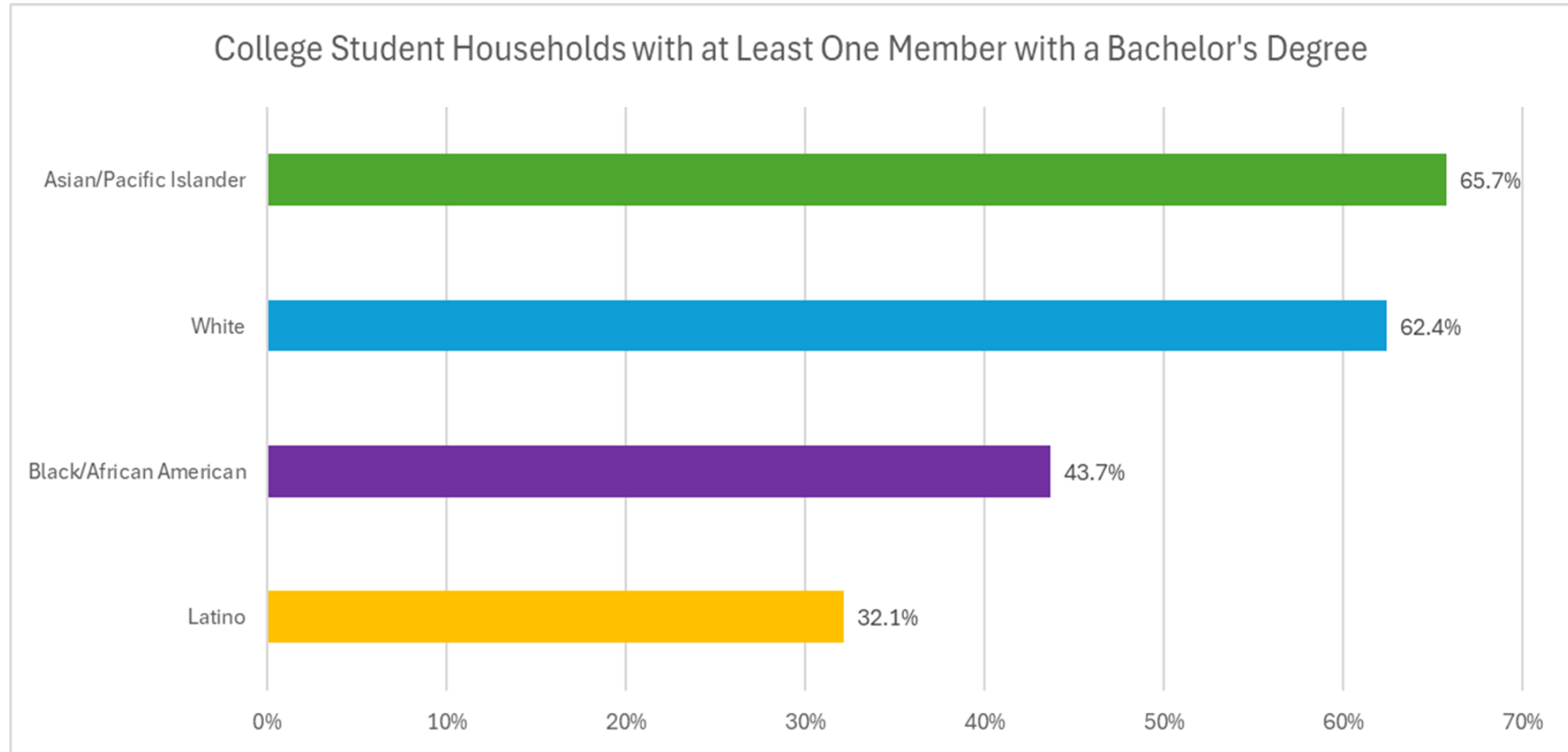
Source: 2022 American Community Survey, Gastón Institute Analysis

Latino young adults in Massachusetts are even less likely to enroll as undergraduate students directly after high school.



Source: 2022 American Community Survey, Gastón Institute Analysis

MA Latino college students are much less likely to have a household member with Bachelor's degree or higher.

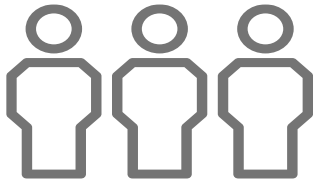


Source: 2022 American Community Survey, Gastón Institute Analysis

Massachusetts HSIs



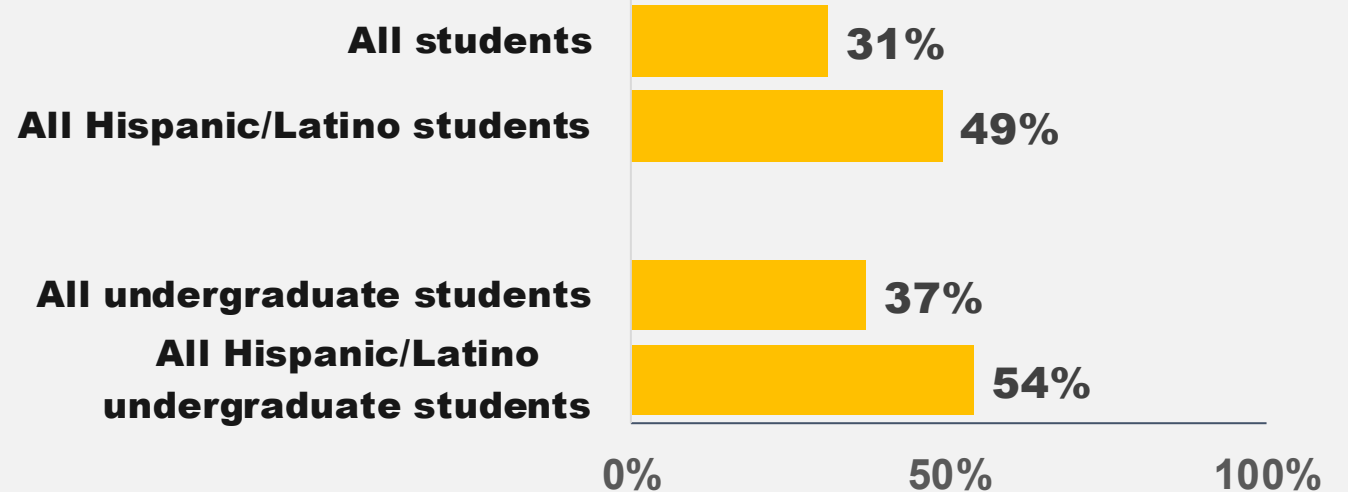
12 HSIs
23 Emerging HSIs




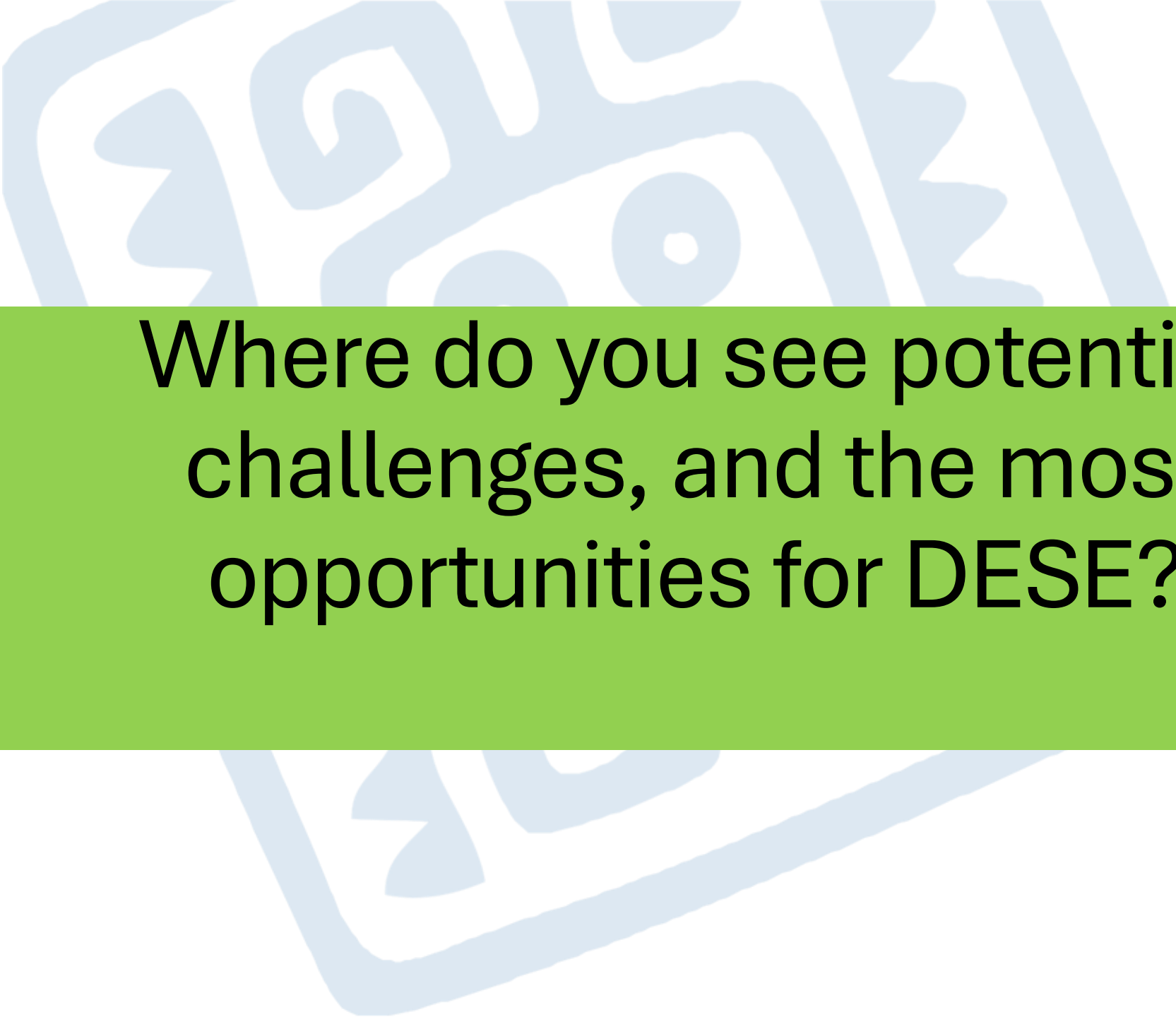
HSIs and Emerging HSIs enroll 149,589 students of which 120,168 are undergraduate students

In Massachusetts, HSIs and emerging HSIs enroll **54% of all Hispanic/Latino undergraduate students**

Percentage of State Enrollment at HSIs and Emerging HSIs

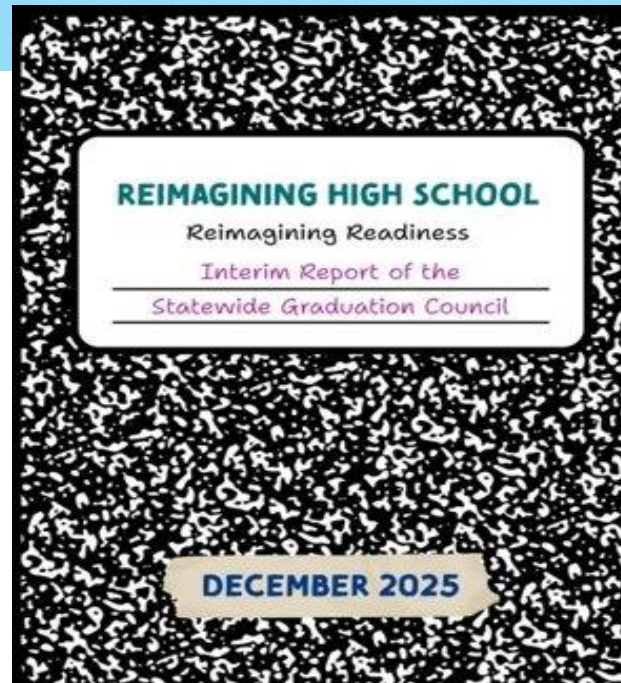


Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment, 2023; Gastón Institute Analysis



Where do you see potential challenges, and the most opportunities for DESE?

Commissioner Pedro Martinez, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Context

The Challenge

- In 2024, Massachusetts voters passed Ballot Question 2, removing MCAS as a graduation requirement.

The Opportunity

- What does it mean to graduate from a high school in Massachusetts? How can we have a rigorous, uniform, and equitable graduation requirement that reflects our shared commitment to preparing all students for college, career, and civic life?

Graduation Council Overview

- Governor Healey established the Statewide Graduation Council through Executive Order 639 to seize this opportunity.
- The Council's charge is to study and make recommendations on a new statewide graduation requirement, including but not limited to the role of assessment, the potential for differentiated pathways to earning the competency determination, and the completion of additional experiences that demonstrate civic, college, and career readiness.

Graduation Council Process Timeline

Spring
2025

Stakeholder
Engagement
Activities

September
2025

Vision of a
Massachusetts
Graduate
Released

December
2025

Interim Report
Delivered to
Governor and
Legislature

June 2026

Final Report
Delivered to
Governor and
Legislature



Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate

Thinkers:

- Academically Prepared
- Creative Problem-Solvers

Contributors:

- Self-Aware Navigators
- Intentional Collaborators

Leaders:

- Responsible Decision-Makers
- Effective Communicators



A Comprehensive Framework

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Students complete **coursework** in subjects that align with admissions requirements for higher education

PROVEN SKILLS

To show that they've mastered the content, students complete **end-of-course assessments** and a **capstone or portfolio**

BRIGHT FUTURES

Students make their own plan for **college or career**, complete the **FAFSA or MASFA**, learn **financial literacy** and earn **seals of distinction**

Key Considerations

Strong Foundations

- Expanded flexibility in MassCore
- Alternatives for certain student populations
- Integration of MassCore and other existing pathways
- Timelines and waivers

Proven Skills

- Determination of courses with EOC assessments
- Role of EOC assessments in graduation
- Equitable pathways for assessing mastery
- Assessment landscape
- Role of capstones and portfolios in graduation

Bright Futures

- Clarity and consistency of process and requirements for plan
- Diversity of paths in MyCAP
- FAFSA/MASFA opt-out process
- Mechanism for developing financial literacy
- Seal selection and logistics

Moderated Discussion

Cluster 1

- Graduation Requirements, Rigor & Equity

Cluster 2

- Language, Access & Academic Opportunity

Cluster 3

- Postsecondary Pathways and Family Involvement

REGISTER HERE!



<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOsVUgmF5EbYdqQq3xulAgWZPk2y6VGnztyjlqLtxHkks4QA/viewform>

THE GASTÓN INSTITUTE AND THE URBAN
EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES
PROGRAM AT UMASS BOSTON PRESENT A:

NIGHT OF SCHOLARSHIP



**Book Talk: *Critical Perspectives of
Latino students in Massachusetts***

Editors and Authors

Dr. Lorna Rivera

Dr. Melissa Colón

February 9, 2026

5:30- 7:00 PM

Campus Center 3540

and via zoom

