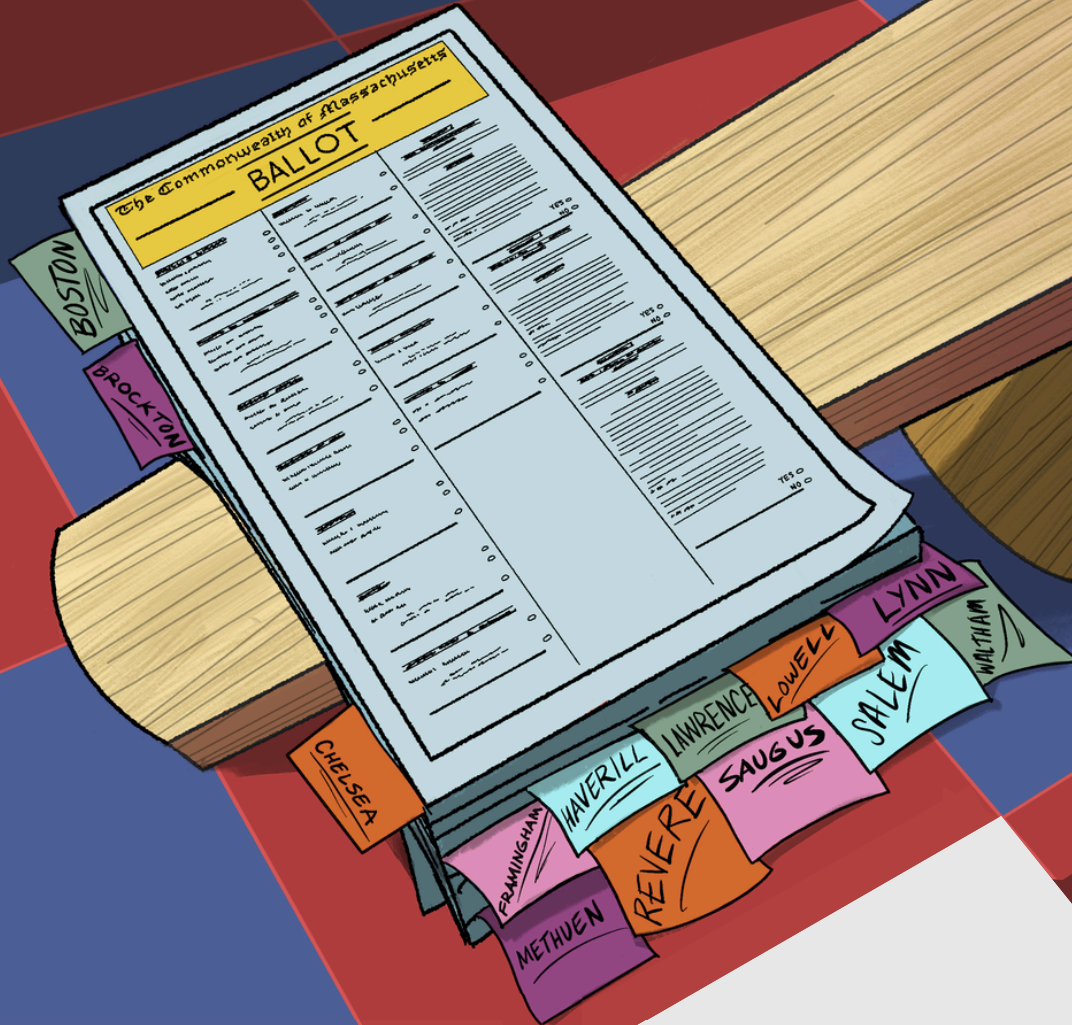




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¡Somos Más!

The Latino Vote and the Strength of Democracy in Massachusetts

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About The Mauricio Gastón Institute

Established in 1989, the Massachusetts Legislature created the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy in response to a need for an improved understanding of the Latino experience in the commonwealth. 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/gaston-institute.

About The Latino Equity Fund

The Latino Equity Fund (LEF) is Massachusetts' only philanthropic fund dedicated exclusively to advancing the Latino community. Since its founding in 2013, LEF has awarded more than \$3.5 million in grants to grassroots organizations across the Commonwealth, including more than \$2.7 million since 2023 alone. As a catalytic force for equity, economic mobility, and civic leadership, LEF harnesses the power of philanthropy, research, strategic partnerships, and advocacy to drive meaningful change. By centering Latinx voices and mobilizing critical resources, LEF is building a more inclusive and just Massachusetts—one where Latinx communities thrive.

University of Massachusetts Boston

The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy

Gastón Institute Publications

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Table of Contents

Section 1. Foreword	1
Section 2. Introduction	3
Section 3. Data for This Report.....	4
Section 4. 2024 Presidential Election in Historical Context	5
Section 4.01. Voter Registration	6
Section 4.02. Voting Among All Latinos and Registered Latinos	7
Section 5. Demographic Analysis by County	10
Section 6. Latino Voting Behavior in 40 Precincts	12
Section 7. Latino Voting Participation in Massachusetts, and the Promise of an Inclusive Multiracial Democratic Nation	14
Appendix A.....	18
References.....	19

List of Figures

Figure 1: Massachusetts Latino Adult Citizen Population, 2000-2024 5

Figure 2: Registered Latinos in Massachusetts Presidential Elections, 2000-2024 6

Figure 3: Citizen Registration in Massachusetts Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2024..... 7

Figure 4: Latino Voters in Massachusetts Presidential Elections, 2000-2024 8

Figure 5: Voting Population in Massachusetts Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2024 8

Figure 6: Share of Citizens Who Voted in Massachusetts Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2024..... 9

Figure 7: Share of Registered Voters Who Cast a Ballot in 19 Precincts with at least 70% Latino Adult Population 12

Figure 8: Share of Votes Cast for Major Candidates in 40 Precincts with at least 70% Latino Adult Population 13

Section 1. Foreword

To anyone familiar with Latino voting patterns, little of what this report has uncovered will come as a surprise. The question of why Latinos vote at such low rates compared with other racial and ethnic groups is difficult to answer with the data available. Nevertheless, many of the constraints highlighted in previous reports from the Gastón Institute—as well as by myriad other scholars and organizations—are evident here as well. These include lower rates of citizenship, a disproportionately young electorate, and comparatively lower levels of education and economic resources. These are structural and, although this report only details some of these variables, it is clear that they have barely budged over the last decade.

Nonetheless, there are three important takeaways that should be highlighted. The first is simply that Latino voters make up an ever-increasing share of the Massachusetts electorate. This has been true for some time, with their share growing in every election this century with a single exception: the 2008 election. Of course, the untapped potential of Latino citizens in Massachusetts is considerably higher. But even if we consider only those who are already voting, their political voice is increasingly difficult to ignore: Latino voters now constitute the largest non-white share of the electorate, at 7.6 percent. This will surely grow in the upcoming years and decades.

That should be encouraging to those who want to see Latinos gain greater political power. But there is another fact that is just as important. Although a large number of Latino citizens still do not vote, voter registration among Latinos has grown faster than actual turnout, which partly explains why their share of the electorate declined slightly from 2020 to 2024. This suggests that, although much remains to be done, Latino voter-registration efforts have had some success in overcoming one of the most important barriers to participation. After all, voting becomes considerably easier once an individual is registered. Some percentage of these newly registered voters will likely cast ballots in future elections, further increasing Latino turnout while also giving candidates and political organizations a greater incentive to mobilize them, especially since they are also registered at a higher rate than other racial and ethnic groups in Massachusetts.

Third, and perhaps most important for state—and increasingly national—politics, this report shows that, far from being a constituency that either party can take for granted, Latinos appear to be a more politically fluid segment of the electorate than some might expect. Even in deep-blue Massachusetts, Latino voters were more willing to cast their ballots for the Republican ticket than they had been in the past, echoing similar shifts elsewhere in the country. Current polling, however, suggests that they may now be moving quickly in the opposite direction. That means as their numbers grow, Latinos will be fundamental in the political decisions of both Massachusetts and the US. Understanding how and why Latino

voters shift between parties is therefore a central question that future reports will address. For now, this report provides a detailed portrait of the Latino electorate in Massachusetts and underscores why it deserves greater attention.

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Section 2. Introduction

Although a record 258,000 Latino voters in Massachusetts cast ballots in 2024, up from 227,000 in 2020, with the Latino share of Massachusetts voters rising from 7.0% to 7.6%, there is still considerable untapped potential. Of all adult Latino citizens (that is, of all those Latinos eligible to vote), only 68.5% were registered, and just 49.6% actually voted. Campaigns to improve Latino voter registration and turnout are needed to improve Latino political representation in Massachusetts.

Demographic and institutional factors help to explain the persistent gap between population size and voting power of Latinos. Specifically, Latino eligibility is constrained by the population's youth and gaps in citizenship status.¹ Nationally, 29% of Latinos are under the age of 18 compared to 22% of the total population. In addition, approximately 19% of the U.S. Latino population consists of noncitizens, including legal permanent residents, temporary visa holders, and undocumented immigrants. Consequently, only about 53% of all Latinos in the U.S. are eligible to vote, compared to 72% of the total population.

Along with age, Latinos' income and educational attainment strongly correlate with lower political participation.² Lower average levels of higher education and lower median household income reduce access to civic resources. Furthermore, because a high percentage of newly eligible Latino voters each cycle are young adults turning 18, a group with historically low turnout across all demographics, overall turnout percentages remain suppressed.

Major political parties historically under-invest in mobilizing Latino voters. Campaigns routinely target "likely voters" with established voting histories. This practice systematically excludes naturalized citizens and youth, creating a cyclical feedback loop where low initial outreach yields low turnout, ultimately reinforcing the gap between demographic presence and electoral influence.³

This report identifies important characteristics of Latinos, including their age, citizenship, registration, and turnout. Because data on Latino voters in Massachusetts are limited, the report highlights opportunities for future qualitative research to understand Latino voters' motivations. The first of several reports on this research will soon follow, examining the ecosystem of Latino-serving civic organizations and the grassroots efforts that support Latino voter turnout.⁴

Section 3. Data for This Report

This report uses both the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2025 Current Population Survey (CPS) to provide demographic and voting characteristics of Latinos in Massachusetts. Both are U.S. Census Bureau surveys with distinct trade-offs in geographic resolution, scope, and frequency. The CPS's November 2025 Supplement is used in this report. The CPS data are a probability sample that produces national and state estimates of the civilian non-institutional population aged 16 and older. The data are generated from replies to survey questions about whether individuals were registered and/or voted in specific national elections. The CPS samples only 60,000 households monthly. It delivers rapid national and state-level labor estimates for labor force statistics. The limited sample on which the one-month supplement used here is based hinders analysis of important characteristics of Latino voters, such as age or Latino origin. The ACS, for its part, uses a probabilistic sample design to produce estimates on a yearly basis by collecting up-to-date socio-economic, housing, and population data. The ACS has a larger sample size, approximately 295,000 households monthly, pooled to 3.5 million for a yearly estimate. This allows it to provide estimates for smaller geographic areas.

It is important to note that neither the ACS and CPS Latino estimates include Brazilians, whom the Office of Management and Budget regulations identify as “some other race.” In Massachusetts according to the 2024 American Community Survey, there are nearly 165,000 Brazilians in Massachusetts. However, over 60% of the population are noncitizens and nearly 24% are children who cannot vote.

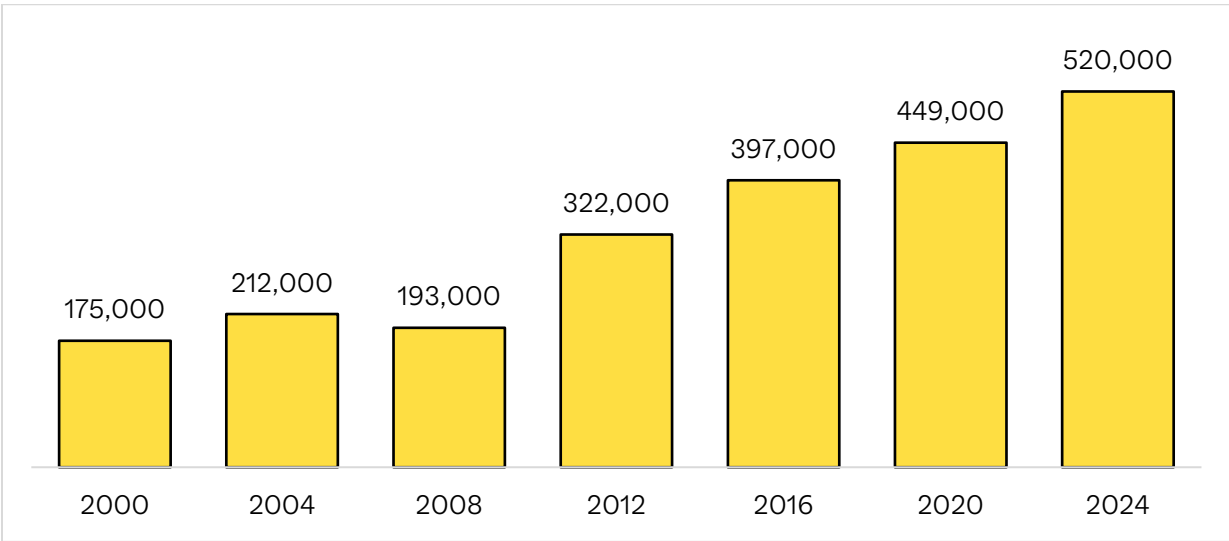
Voting data for 40 precincts that have at least 70% of their 2020 population Latino were collected. These precincts are in Springfield and Holyoke in Hampden County; Lawrence and Methuen in Essex County; and Chelsea in Suffolk County. The data were downloaded from the election departments in these cities and towns. The data included the number of registered voters, voter turnout, and the candidate chosen in the 2024 Presidential Election. The Lawrence election department did not report the number of registered voters in its precincts.

Section 4. 2024 Presidential Election in Historical Context

As explained above, two factors constrain the extent of Latino voting. First, 28.0% of all adult Latinos in Massachusetts are not U.S. citizens according to the 2024 American Community Survey and cannot register to vote. Only Asians have a larger share of noncitizens (32.2%), while 15.9% of Blacks and 2.4% of Non-Latino Whites are noncitizens.

Not only are Latinos less likely to be citizens, but they also have a younger population, with many below the voting age. The median age of Latinos in 2024 was 30 years, compared to 45 years for Non-Latino Whites and 36 years for Blacks and Asians. Taken together, these two voting requirements limit the share of potential voters to 52.1% of the total Latino population in Massachusetts. Non-Latino Whites have 82.8% of their total population eligible to vote, while the share is 66.1% for Blacks and 56.2% for Asians. As Figure 1 shows, the number of eligible Latino voters has grown steadily. The figure of 520,000 for 2024 represents a 197% increase (almost a tripling) since 2000.

Figure 1: Massachusetts Latino Adult Citizen Population, 2000-2024

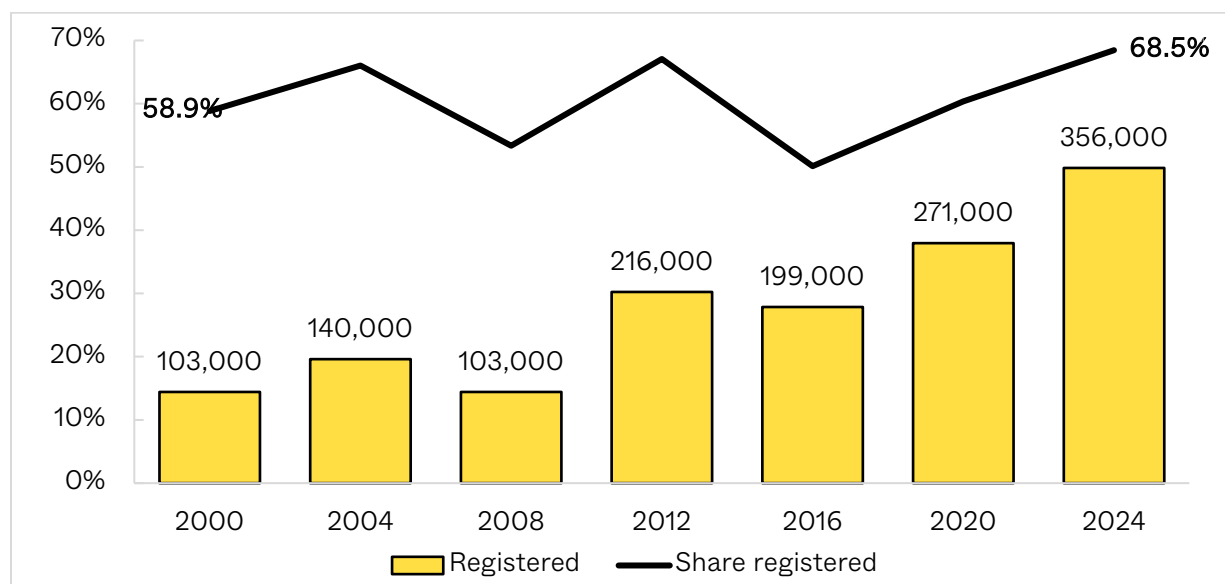


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000-2024

Figure 2 shows voter registration by Latinos in Massachusetts in presidential election years from 2000 to 2024. The solid columns represent the number of Latino registered citizens, while the line above shows the percentage of registered citizens among all adults. Over this 24-year period, the number of Latino registered voters increased by over 245% while the Latino population eligible to vote (adult citizens) increased by only 197%. The increase in Latino voter registration was especially noteworthy between the 2016 and 2024 elections: from 199,000 to 356,000, from 50.1% of voting-eligible Latinos to 68.5%. Leaving aside

2008, when non-response may have lowered CPS estimates,⁵ changes in voter registration may possibly reflect the strength of efforts by community-based organizations to increase the Latino vote. In addition, voting rights activists at the state level have won changes in electoral procedures over recent decades, making registration simpler.⁶

Figure 2: Registered Latinos in Massachusetts Presidential Elections, 2000–2024

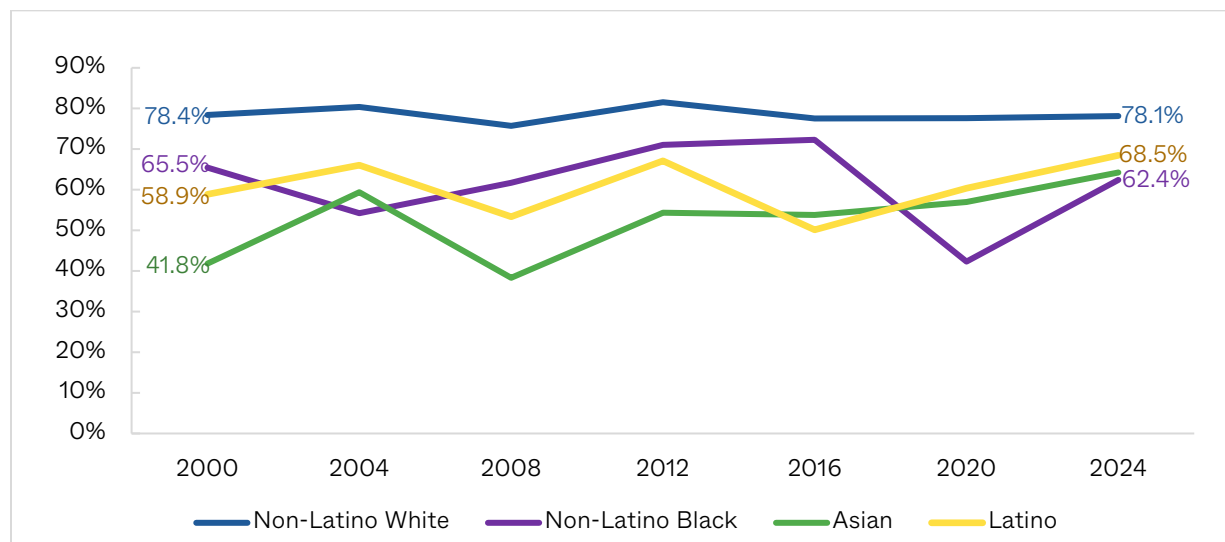


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000-2024

Section 4.01. Voter Registration

The next figure compares voter registration rates among Massachusetts’ racial and ethnic groups across seven presidential election cycles. Figure 3 shows that Latino voter registration fluctuated but reached a historic high of 68.5% in 2024, narrowing though not eliminating, the gap with Non-Latino White voters (which stood at 78.1%). Even with this success, efforts to improve Latino voter registration are needed so that their voting behavior becomes similar to Non-Latino Whites. Over the last election cycle, from 2020 to 2024, the shares of Latino, Black, and Asian registered adults all increased, while the Non-Latino White share remained steady over the years.

Figure 3: Citizen Registration in Massachusetts Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2024

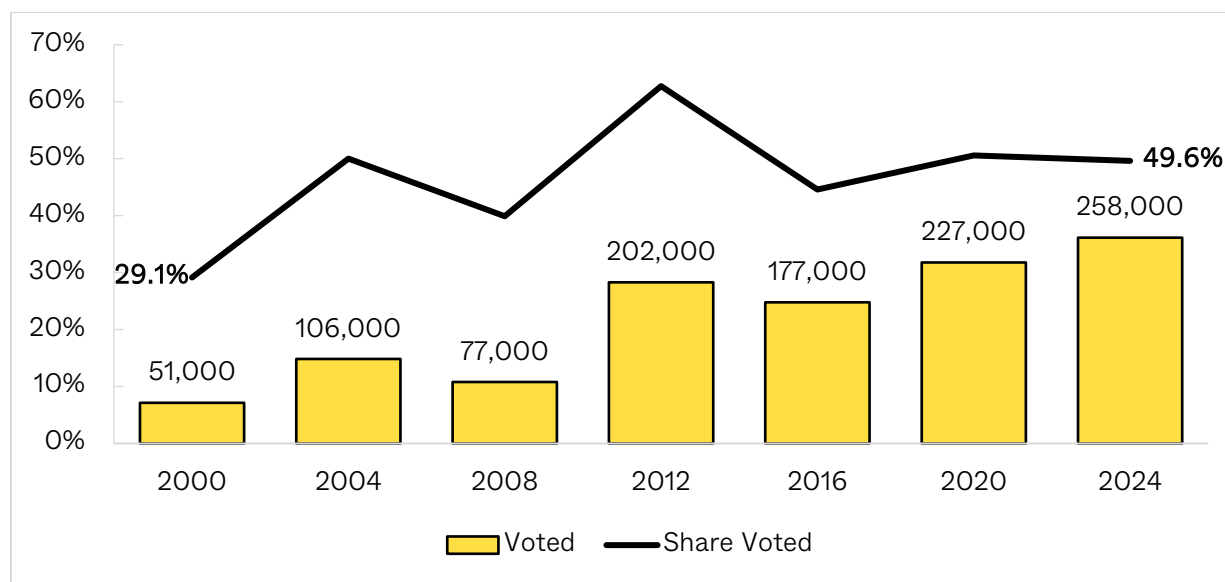


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000-2024

Section 4.02. Voting Among All Latinos and Registered Latinos

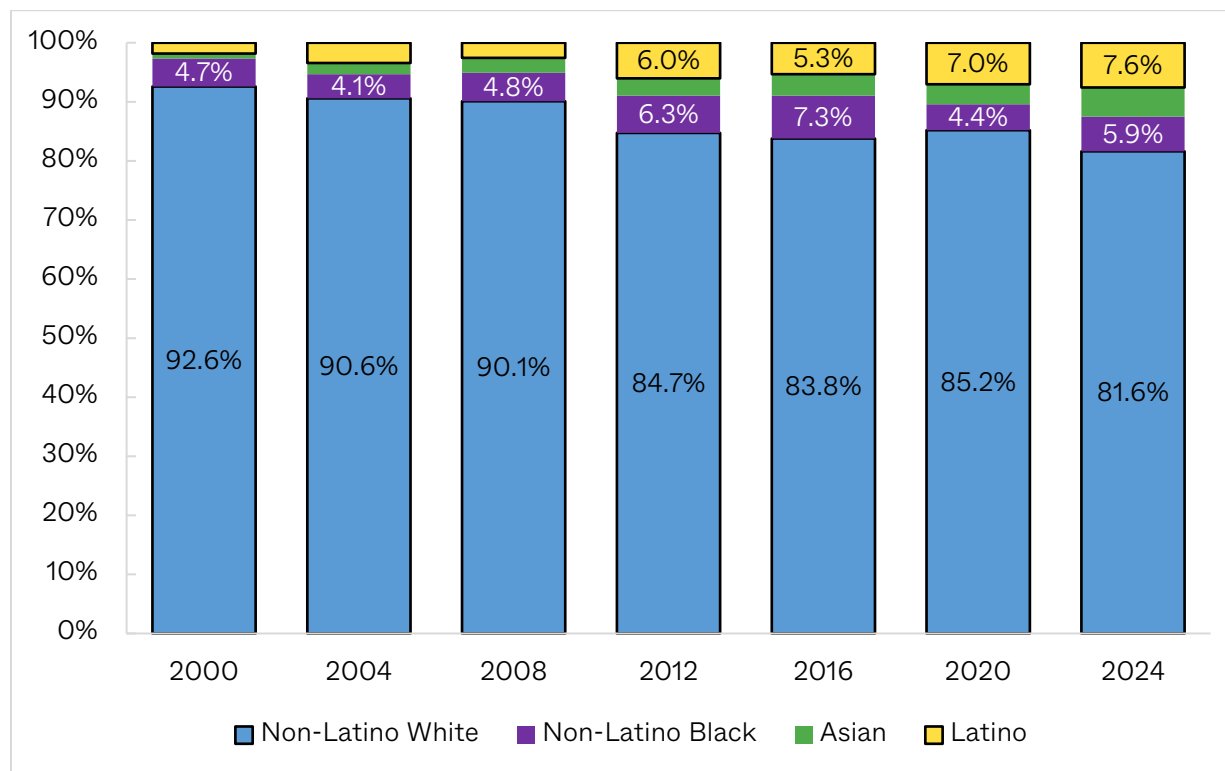
Increasing voter registration is only part of the voting process. Organizing efforts can also increase voter turnout. Figure 4 reports the number of Massachusetts Latinos who actually voted in presidential elections from 2000 to 2024. Over this period, the number of Latino voters increased by over 406%. After a slight decline in Latino voter turnout in 2016, 50,000 additional Latino voters turned out in 2020 and 31,000 in 2024. However, the share of Latinos citizens who voted in 2024 declined slightly to 49.6% from 50.6% in 2020. Despite this modest decrease in the turnout rate, 2024 recorded the largest number of Latino voters in Massachusetts history, with 258,000 Latino citizens casting ballots, second only to that of Non-Latino Whites in Massachusetts. While the turnout rate remained below its previous peak of 62.7% in 2012, the continued growth in the number of Latino voters reflects the expanding size and electoral significance of the Latino electorate in the Commonwealth.

Figure 4: Latino Voters in Massachusetts Presidential Elections, 2000-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000-2024

Figure 5: Voting Population in Massachusetts Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2024

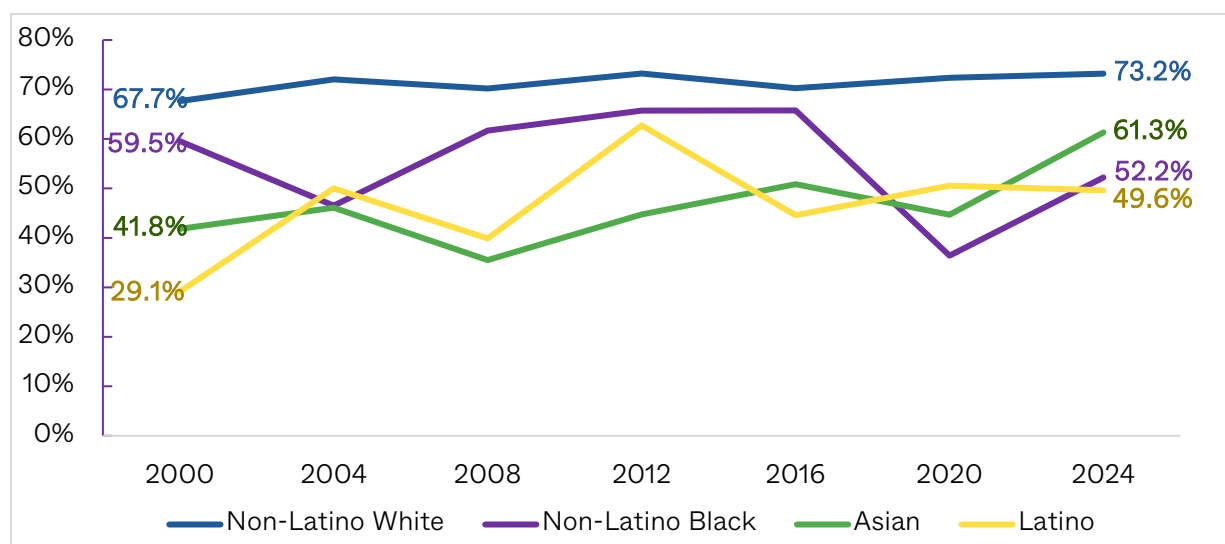


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000-2024

The increase in Latino voting from 2016 to 2024 suggests that Latinos in Massachusetts are continuing to develop their political power. However, this process has its limits because so many Latinos lack eligibility to vote. In 2024, 702,354 adult Latinos resided in Massachusetts, and they made up 12.1% of the state's adult population aged 18 and older, according to the 2024 American Community Survey. However, Figure 5 shows that they made up only 7.6% of voters in the 2024 presidential election. This is an impressive increase from 1.8% in 2000, but efforts to increase the Latino vote can generate stronger political representation among Latinos in Massachusetts.

The share of Latino citizens who voted in 2024 was 49.6% (Figure 6). This voting share was lower than for Non-Latino Whites (73.2%) and Asians (61.3%). However, as previously mentioned, this was part of the record voter turnout in a presidential election for Latinos. This voter turnout was dramatically higher than 29% in 2000, but similar to more recent presidential elections. Asian and Black voter turnout continued to increase, parallel to that of Latinos.

Figure 6: Share of Citizens Who Voted in Massachusetts Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000-2024

Section 5. Demographic Analysis by County

Demographics help explain Latino voting participation. In this section, we examine both the noncitizen Latino population and the youthfulness of the population in three counties with a large share of Latino residents: Hampden, Essex, and Suffolk counties, which together are home to about 54% of all Latinos in the state. (In a later section, we report voting in 40 precincts with at least 70% of their 2020 population Latino. These cities are Springfield and Holyoke in Hampden County, Lawrence and Methuen in Essex County, and Chelsea in Suffolk County.)

- Hampden County's Latino population is mainly composed of Puerto Ricans (80.4%), who are U.S. citizens, followed by Dominicans (6.6%), Mexicans (2.7%), and Guatemalans (1.9%) according to the 2020-2024 American Community Survey. Only 5.8% of adult Latinos in the county are noncitizens, not much higher than the proportion among Non-Latinos (4.1%).
- In Essex County the proportion of noncitizens among Latinos is much greater: 34.5% compared to 4.8% of non-Latinos. Nearly half (47.7%) of Essex County's Latino population is Dominican, followed by Puerto Ricans (18.9%), Guatemalans (9.4%), and Salvadorans (6.1%) according to the 2020-2024 American Community Survey.
- Suffolk County has a slightly lower share of its Latino population that is noncitizen (30.6%), but its noncitizen share of the Non-Latino population is 10.7%. Around one-quarter (23.9%) of Suffolk County's Latino population is Dominican, followed by Puerto Ricans (17.8%), Salvadorans (15.4%), Colombians (10.1%), and Guatemalans (6.4%). For the state overall, 26.0% of adult Latinos are noncitizens, while 7.4% of adult non-Latinos are noncitizens.

Next, we analyze the age structure of these three counties. These shares are reported as a percentage of the total population. In the 2024 presidential election, 74.8% of Massachusetts' population aged 65 and older voted,⁷ while only 45% of the population 18 to 29 voted.⁸

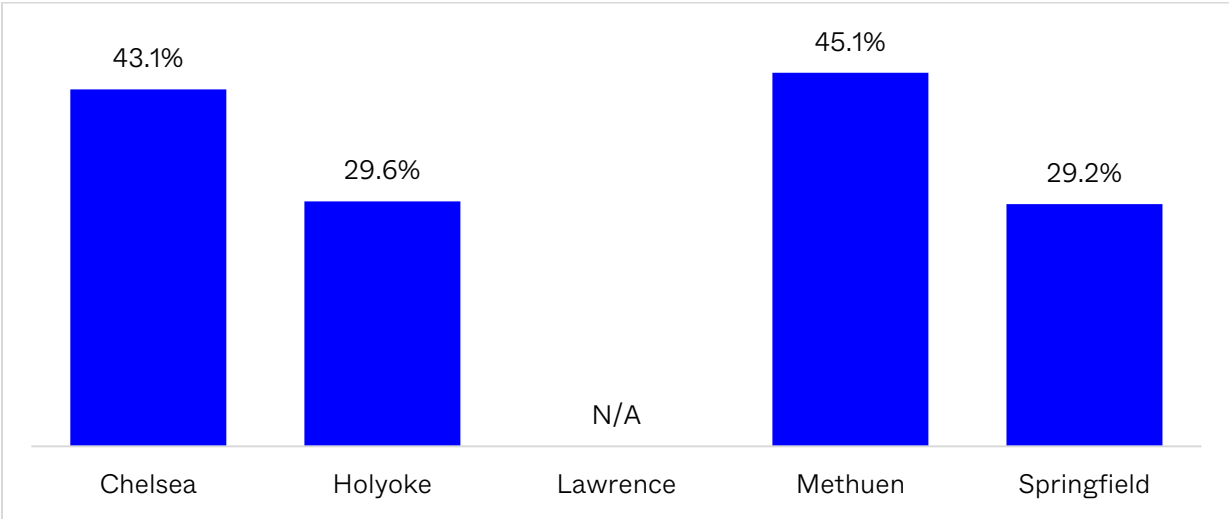
- Hampden County has a median age of 38 years. The Latino population has a larger share of the under-44 population, but among the higher voter turnout age categories, they lag behind Non-Latinos. This difference is most stark among the 65-and-older population: 7.7% for Latinos and 24.2% for Non-Latinos.

- Essex County has a median age of 40 years. Again, the Latino population has a larger share of the under-44 population, but among the higher voter turnout age categories, they lag behind Non-Latinos. This difference is most stark among the 65-and-older population: only 8.0% for Latinos.
- Suffolk County has a lower median age of 33 years due to the large number of colleges and universities in Boston. The differences between Latinos and Non-Latinos are most pronounced among the 18-to 29- and 65-and-older populations. In Suffolk County, Latinos are a smaller share of the population aged 18 to 29, possibly due to their lower share of enrollment in Boston's colleges and universities. The difference within the 65-and-older population in Suffolk is not as stark as in the other counties but is still large: 9.4% for Latinos and 15.1% for Non-Latinos.

Section 6. Latino Voting Behavior in 40 Precincts

Voting data in this section of the report were gathered from the election department websites of Chelsea, Holyoke, Lawrence, Methuen, and Springfield. 2020 Census Redistricting data provided a list of 40 voting precincts in which the adult population was at least 70% Latino. This is for all Latinos because the 2020 Census did not report citizenship status. In the 40 precincts as a group, Latinos made up 81.2% of the adult population. Lawrence Ward B Precinct 2 had the highest share of Latinos at 93.2%. The 21 precincts in Lawrence averaged 83.5% Latino while the seven precincts in Springfield averaged 78.9% Latino, the seven in Chelsea averaged 76.5% Latino, the four in Holyoke averaged 79.1% Latino, and the one in Methuen was 72.8% Latino. The 2020 Census data did not identify the citizenship status of this population, but 2024 American Community Survey data estimate that 74.0% of adult Latinos in Massachusetts are citizens.

Figure 7: Share of Registered Voters Who Cast a Ballot in 19 Precincts with at least 70% Latino Adult Population



Source: Election Department Records

Voting turnout in cities and towns in precincts with at least 70% Latino share of adults in the 2020 Census was consistently below the statewide share reported in the CPS data (Figure 6). Springfield (29.2%) and Holyoke (29.6%) recorded the lowest voting among registered voters, followed by Chelsea (43.1%) and a single precinct in Methuen (45.1%). The overall voter turnout of registered voters was 43.6% in Springfield, 49.1% in Holyoke, 47.2% in Chelsea, and 49.5% in Methuen (Lawrence did not report precinct-level registered voter counts).

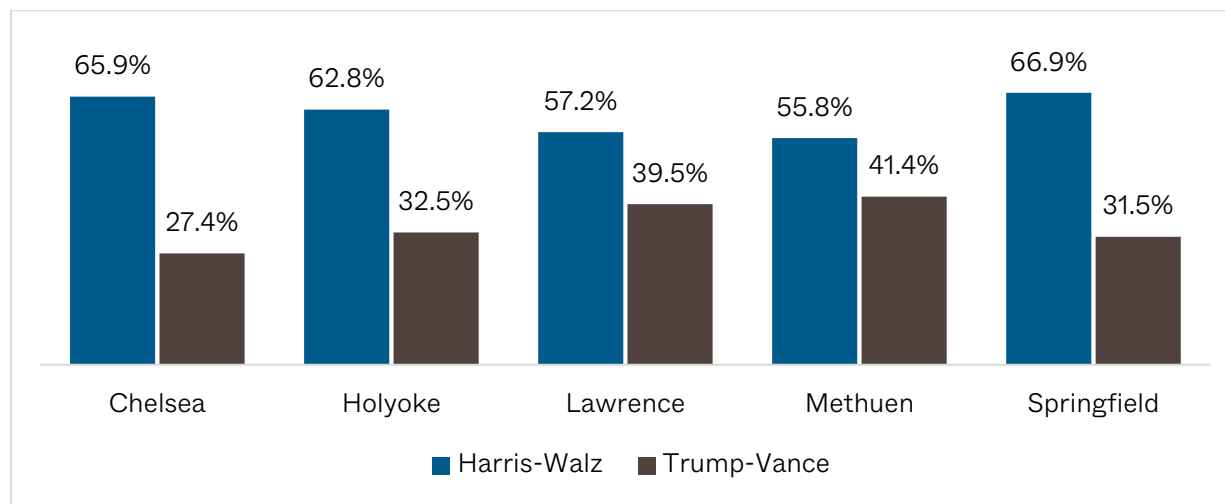
In each of these cities, the overall share of registered voters casting a ballot was higher than in these precincts with a higher proportion of Latinos. The Springfield and Holyoke data

suggest that citizenship alone does not explain the lower turnout observed in these heavily Latino precincts as approximately 94.2% of Hampden County’s Latinos are citizens. Other factors beyond eligibility may be influencing participation and require further examination in a future report. Across the 19 heavily Latino precincts in Hampden County, 19,368 registered voters did not cast a ballot. These findings suggest that turnout was higher in areas with lower concentrations of Latino residents, highlighting a key opportunity: targeted turnout efforts in these cities and towns could significantly boost Latino voting power.

Turnout, however, represents only one dimension of political participation. Examining presidential vote choice reveals a second, subtler finding: precincts with high concentrations of Latino adults did not uniformly follow the statewide voting pattern. Although the overall difference was modest, the variation across cities and towns represents a potentially important shift that calls for closer examination.

In Massachusetts, the Harris-Walz ticket received 61.2% of the vote. In these 40 precincts with a high concentration of Latino voters, Harris-Walz received a slightly lower share (59.9%) of the vote, with significant variation by city and town. Springfield (66.9%), Chelsea (65.9%), and Holyoke (62.8%) had higher shares voting for Harris-Walz, while Lawrence (57.2%) and Methuen (55.8%) had lower shares voting for Harris-Walz than the statewide share.

Figure 8: Share of Votes Cast for Major Candidates in 40 Precincts with at least 70% Latino Adult Population



Source: Election Department Records

Section 7. Latino Voting Participation in Massachusetts, and the Promise of an Inclusive Multiracial Democratic Nation

Voting is one of the most fundamental expressions of democratic participation. In ordinary life, its importance can easily be underestimated or taken for granted. As one of the most direct acts of civic engagement, voting embodies the promise of an inclusive and equal multiracial democracy. In the United States, that democratic project has long moved toward broader inclusion and participation, but never in a linear, smooth, or fully inclusive way.⁹

The expansion of voting rights tells a larger story not simply of participation, but of struggle and active participation as a necessary pathway toward equity, representation, and a more inclusive multiracial democratic nation. But voting expansion and protections, unfortunately, has never meant permanence, and today we can see it how is again under attack, to undermine participation and trust.¹⁰

Since the presidential election of 2016, debates over voting access and election administration have intensified. Claims involving election fraud, foreign interference, noncitizen voting, mail voting, voter identification, election security, and enacting new district boundaries for elected offices have increasingly shaped national and state policy discussions and decision making. These debates have been accompanied by litigation and policy changes involving voter registration, mail voting, redistricting, and the administration of elections.

In that sense, Massachusetts presents a different landscape, one in which state policy has expanded opportunities to participate through early voting, voting by mail, extended registration deadlines, and language access provisions. The state's Vote Act, enacted in 2022, permanently expanded early and mail voting and shortened the voter registration deadline to ten days before an election.¹¹ Massachusetts law also provides bilingual election materials required under federal law, with additional language access provisions in Boston. Most recently the Protect Act in 2026 may help create conditions that support fuller civic participation in voting sites like schools, including voter registration, voter turnout, and broader engagement in democratic life among eligible citizens in immigrant and mixed-status communities.¹²

Increasing voter participation is a challenge for smaller populations within a state like Massachusetts. Our analysis shows that Latino voter eligibility, registration, turnout, and ultimately political influence in Massachusetts are not keeping pace with demographic growth. In addition, these findings suggest both growing participation within the Latino community and significant opportunities for more strategic and targeted engagement.

Latino voter participation and ultimately political influence are growing but are not yet keeping pace with Latino population growth.

Between 2000 and 2024 the number of registered Latino voters in Massachusetts increased from 103,000 to 356,000 and the number casting ballots increased from 51,000 to a record of 258,000. Latinos consequently grew from approximately 1.8% of Massachusetts voters in 2000 to 7.6% in 2024. A closer look to our 2024 numbers, however, shows that approximately: 164,000 adult Latino citizens were not registered. 98,000 registered Latinos did not cast a ballot. Altogether approximately 262,000 Latino citizens did not vote. That's an opportunity.

Latino voter registration has grown substantially since 2000. This evidence is an important sign of progress. At the same time, the data show that significant gaps remain between presence and participation, particularly in communities where Latino residents are most concentrated: Gateway cities. Latino represented 14% of Massachusetts overall population, and 12.1% of its adult population, but only 7.6% of all those who turned out to vote in the 2024 election. The 26 Gateway cities are home to 352,824 adult Latinos, of whom 274,330 or 77.7% are U.S. citizens according to the 2020-2024 American Community Survey. These cities and towns are home to 55.2% of adult Latino citizens in the state. Gateway cities offer us the geographic bridge between demographic change and political power. That's another opportunity.

Our findings showed a slight change in Latino voting trends that deserve special attention in the following cities: Methuen, and Lawrence. This interesting slight change in trends expressed in ratios from the 2024 presidential election, shows that support for Trump-Vance was strongest in Methuen, where Harris-Walz earned roughly 1.35 votes for every Trump-Vance vote. Lawrence followed at 1.45 to 1, while Holyoke and Springfield voted for Harris-Walz by margins of 1.9 to 1 and 2.1 to 1, respectively. Chelsea recorded the largest Harris-Walz advantage among these cities, at 2.4 to 1. Future qualitative research is needed to better understand why the Latino vote varies by different regions in the state and what motivates voter turnout.

A growing population does not automatically produce growing political power. This report appropriately identifies population, citizenship, voting age, registration, and turnout as different factors influencing Latino voting participation. Latinos are younger and more likely than non-Latino whites to be noncitizen. Estimates from this report show that only 52.1% of the total Massachusetts Latino population is currently eligible to vote.

However, Latino voter eligibility looks different county by county. For context, in Hampden County, only 5.8% of Latino adults are noncitizens, compared with 34.5% in Essex County and 30.6% in Suffolk County. These differences help explain why population growth does not

translate uniformly into voting power across regions: counties with higher shares of noncitizens have a smaller share of residents who are eligible to participate in elections.

Understanding electoral participation across Massachusetts requires examining both citizenship status and the conditions that support participation. In Hampden County, where approximately 94% of Latino adults are citizens, turnout among registered voters in the selected heavily Latino precincts remained relatively low in Springfield (29.2%) and Holyoke (29.6%). While this countywide citizenship figure provides context, it does not establish the reasons for these precinct – level turnout patterns. These findings suggest the need to examine other factors that may influence participation, including voter outreach, civic engagement, trust in institutions, socioeconomic conditions, and access to election information. These questions motivate a forthcoming report on Latino Civic Engagement Organizations in Massachusetts, which will examine the presence, distribution, and capacity of civic organizations and their role providing trusted information and opportunities for participation. Building on the voting patterns documented here, that report will broaden the analysis beyond the individual voter to the institutional environment surrounding Latino communities.

These findings raise a question for our communities and elected officials: Does the growing number of Latinos translate into voter registration, voter turnout, and a meaningful voice in the decisions shaping Massachusetts? Strengthening Latino participation is not only about increasing voter turnout. It is also about expanding access to information, civic education, and opportunities for meaningful engagement with the issues, candidates, and policies that affect their communities.

The voting data in this report provide a limited picture of the Latino electorate in Massachusetts and raise many questions that the CPS and precinct data cannot answer. Alongside the planned report on civic engagement organizations, a qualitative future study could help address these questions. This research would include focus groups with Latino voters and eligible nonvoters, as well as key informant interviews in different regions of the state. It could explore motivations and barriers to participation, the information sources residents trust, and how voting experiences differ by age and Latino origin.

A limitation of this analysis is that Brazilian origin alone is not included within the federal Hispanic or Latino category used in ACS and CPS estimates. Given the size of the Brazilian population in Massachusetts, this distinction may limit the visibility of Brazilian communities in discussion of collaboration, coalition-building, and civic engagement across communities that often share common experiences and interests. As a result, the findings presented here should be understood as reflecting the Latino population as defined by federal data standards rather than the full breadth of Massachusetts' immigrant and multilingual communities.

In 2024, the Latino, Black, and Asian communities collectively accounted for 18.4% of the electorate. Viewed through this broader lens, communities of color represent a substantial and growing share of the state's electorate power, underscoring the importance of coalition building for truly inclusive representation and the need to consider demographic changes in conversations about voting rights, civic engagement, and redistricting.

In that sense, increasing Latino voting participation is part of the larger work of strengthening democracy in Massachusetts - an active exercise of inclusiveness and equity that can bring us closer to a representative multiracial democracy.

Appendix A

For Latino communities in Massachusetts, the history of voting rights matters because the legal right to vote does not, by itself, guarantee equitable participation, representation, or political power.

Following the Civil War, Reconstruction reshaped the constitutional foundations of citizenship and political participation. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments abolished slavery, established citizenship and equal protection, and prohibited racial discrimination in voting. Yet liberation on paper did not mean equity in practice. During the Jim Crow era, Black voters faced poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation, violence, and discriminatory registration systems. Subsequent milestones including the Nineteenth Amendment's prohibition of voting discrimination based on sex and the Twenty-Fourth Amendment's ban on poll taxes in federal elections expanded legal protections, although exclusion persisted. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 strengthened federal enforcement against discriminatory voting practices.¹³

This struggle also shaped Latino voting rights. Section 4(e) of the Voting Rights Act prohibited English-language literacy requirements from denying the vote to qualifying U.S. citizens educated in Puerto Rico. In 1966, the Supreme Court upheld this protection in *Katzenbach v. Morgan*. The 1975 amendments later expanded language-access protections for Latino and other language minority voters. For Latino communities in Massachusetts, this history provides an important foundation for examining participation today.

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