

**imagine
all the
people**

Colombian

Immigrants in Boston

imagine all the people: Colombians in Boston

Though emigration from Colombia has been a significant social force dating back to the 1960s, when it was primarily economically motivated, it has increased markedly in recent years due to political turbulence and instability in Colombia. It is estimated that between 1996 and 2003, 1.6 million Colombians left their home country and did not return. Nearly half of this number migrated between 1999 and 2001, which corresponded with both a significant drop in Colombia's gross domestic product and a surge in its unemployment rate. By 2001, unemployment reached 18% in urban centers, where the bulk of Colombians reside. Another contributing factor to emigration from Colombia are the increasing acts of violence targeting civilians in the country's decades old civil conflict over territorial control, particularly over coca-growing regions. The situation surrounding this conflict has both displaced thousands of people and acted as a catalyst for thousands more to leave the country.



Venezuela and the United States have long been the most popular destination for Colombian emigrants and continue to be so today. Florida, because of its close proximity to Bogota, has been a natural destination for many Colombians arriving in the United States. From there Colombians have begun to disperse nationally, with significant numbers moving up the east coast to New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts.¹



CITY OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

New Bostonians Series
March 2011

*39% of Colombians
are between the
ages of 20 and 34.*

population

population share

Results from the 2005-2007 American Community Survey (ACS)² show that there are approximately 584,000 foreign-born individuals from Colombia living in the United States.³ Besides the U.S. and Venezuela, other population global destinations for Colombian immigrants are Spain, Ecuador, Panama and Canada.⁴

The top destinations for immigrants from Colombia moving to the U.S. are the states of Florida (which accounts for 34% of the country's Colombia-born population), New York (18%), New Jersey (12%), California (6.6%) and Texas (5.7%). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts ranks sixth, comprising 3% of the country's total Colombian population.⁵

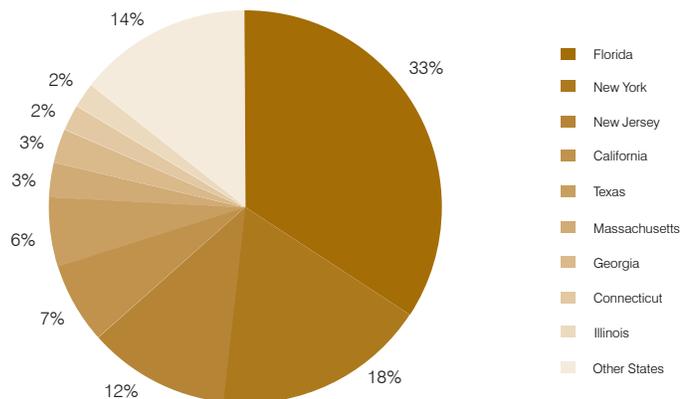
There are over 7,200 Colombians living in Boston.⁶ According to the 2005-2007 ACS, Colombians make up the seventh-largest share of immigrants in Boston - about 4.3%.⁸ Comparatively, the Chinese constitute the largest segment of the city's foreign-born population (8.6%), Haitians (8.5%) rank second and the Dominican Republic rank third (7.9%). The other top countries of origin among

Boston's foreign-born population include Vietnam, El Salvador, Cape Verde, Jamaica Brazil and Mexico.¹⁰

According to the 2000 Census, Boston's Colombian immigrants, though scattered throughout the city, are mostly concentrated in the neighborhood of East Boston, where 58% of the city's foreign-born Colombians reside. There are also significant numbers of foreign-born Colombians in Allston-Brighton and Jamaica Plain.

While we can look at the most recent ACS for estimating the total Colombian population, the most reliable cross-tabular data for relatively small groups, such as the foreign-born communities in Boston in the 2000 Census.¹¹ In 2000, 51% of Colombian immigrants in Boston are male. Over 60% of all Colombian immigrants in Boston are either married (49%) or divorced/separated (13%). Close to 39% of all Colombians in Boston are between the ages of 20 and 34. The vast majority of Colombian immigrants (80%) are not naturalized U.S. citizens; 20% are citizens by naturalization.

Share of Colombian Population by State



Source: ACS 2005-2007, BRA Research Division Analysis

educational attainment

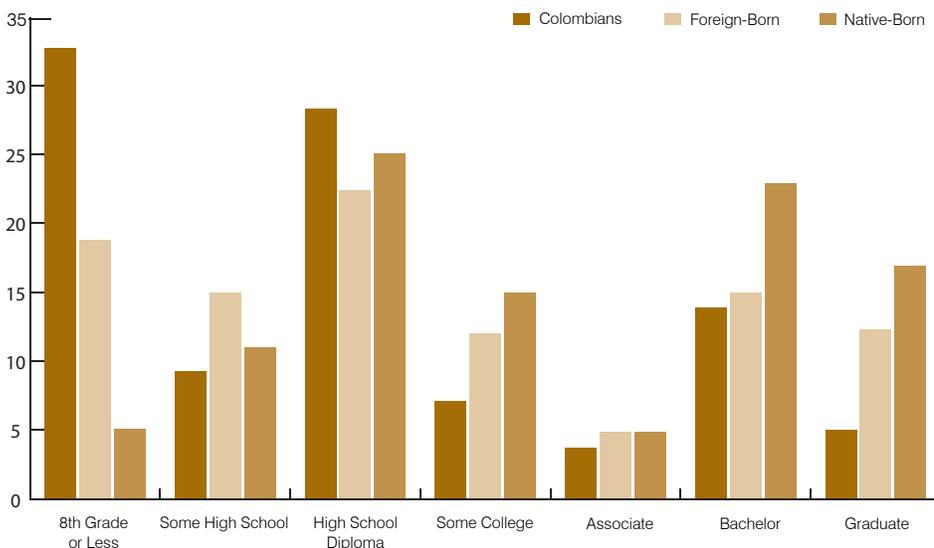
Forty-two percent of Colombians in Boston have not completed high school. This percentage is higher than that of all foreign-born residents (34%) and more than double the proportion for the native-born population (16%). More than a quarter (28%) of Colombian immigrants have received a high school diploma with no further schooling.

Of the 40% of Colombian immigrants to have attended college, 19% have completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 27% of the entire foreign-born population and 40% of the native-born. With respect to advanced degrees, only 5% of Colombians living in Boston hold a graduate/professional degree or higher, compared with 12% of all foreign-born and 17% of the native-born.

Fifty-eight percent of Colombian immigrants have received at least a high school diploma.



Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Older



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5%, BRA Research Division

occupations

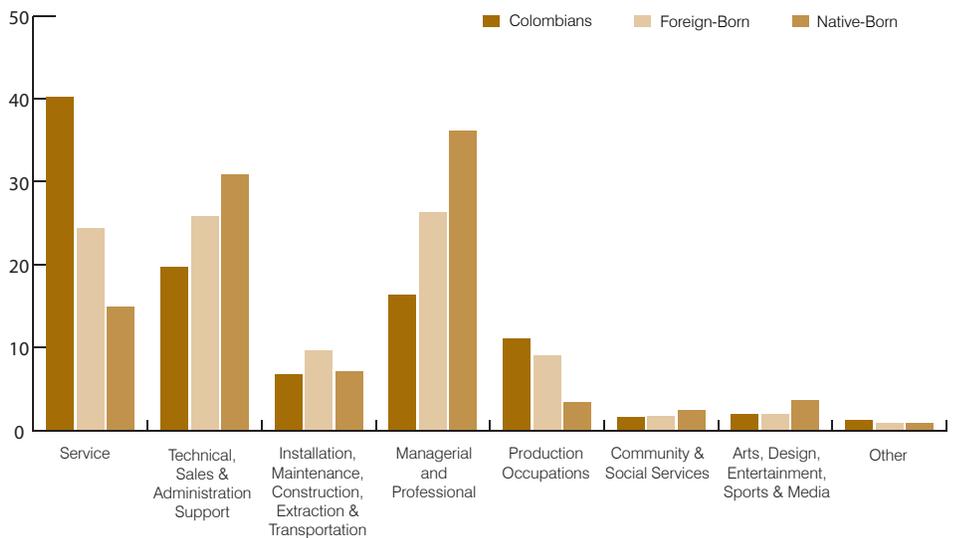
Over 40% of Colombians residing in Boston who are in the labor force work in service occupations.¹² The next highest occupational category is technical, sales and administrative support occupations (19%), followed by managerial and professional occupations (17%) and production occupations (12%).

Colombian immigrants are over-represented in service occupations, which accounts for only 25% of jobs for all foreign-born workers. The high level of participation in service occupations is likely driven by the relatively low levels of educational attainment among Colombians in Boston. Conversely, Colombians are underrepresented in managerial and professional occupations when compared with the overall foreign-born workforce, 26% of whom work in managerial and professional positions, and in technical, sales and administrative support occupations, which also comprise 26% of Boston's foreign-born workforce.

In total, 57% of Colombian immigrants participate in the labor force, compared with 60% of the total foreign-born population and 65% of the native-born population.¹³ The unemployment rate among the Colombian-born labor force in Boston is 7%, similar to the unemployment rate among the overall foreign-born labor force (7.1%) and about one percentage point lower than the rate among the native-born population (7.8%)¹⁴.

An estimated 55% of Colombia-born immigrants in Boston work for a private, for-profit company. An additional 4.6% work for a private, nonprofit organization. A total of 3.8% are employed by the public sector (local, state and federal government).

Occupations of Boston's Colombian Population

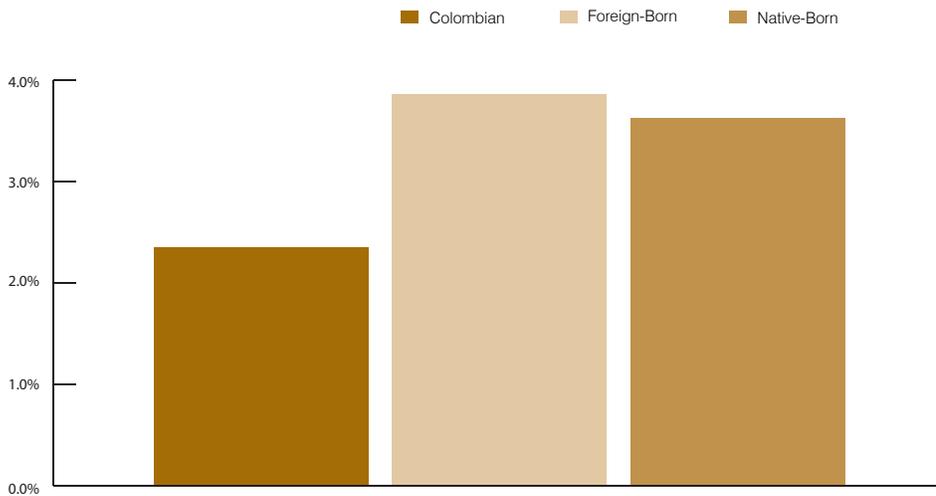


Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5%, BRA Research Division

self-employed

An estimated 4.3% of Colombian immigrants in Boston are self-employed. This compares with a rate of 5.8% for the entire foreign-born labor force and 6.1% for the native-born labor force.¹⁵

Share of Self Employed

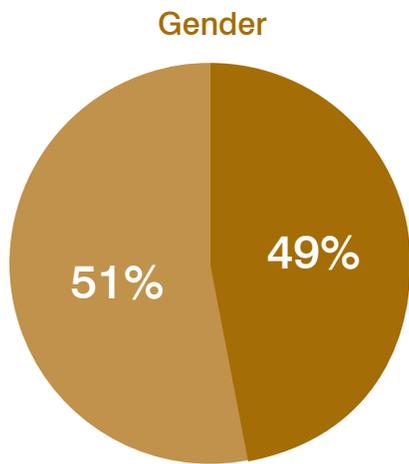


Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5%, BRA Research Division

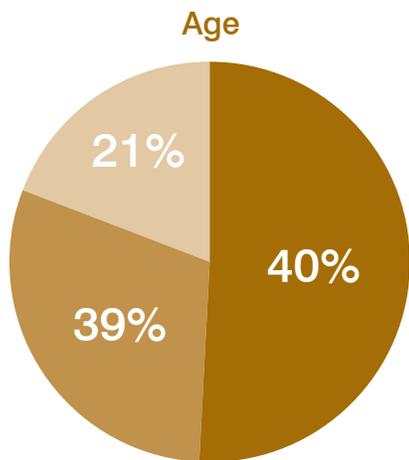


More than 584,735
Colombians live
in the U.S.

Main destinations for
Colombian immigrants:
U.S
Venezuela
Spain



Female
Male



0-19 20-34 35+

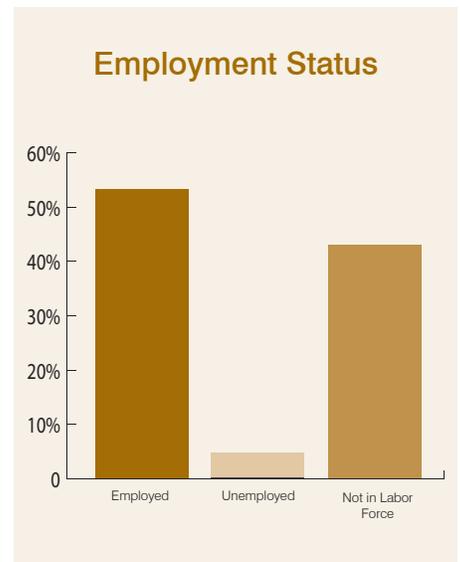
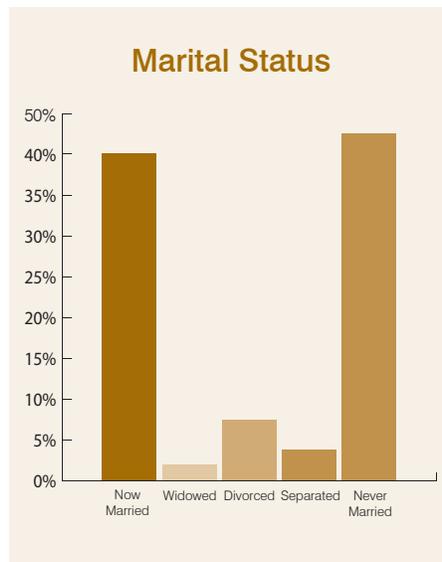
7,174 Colombians in Boston

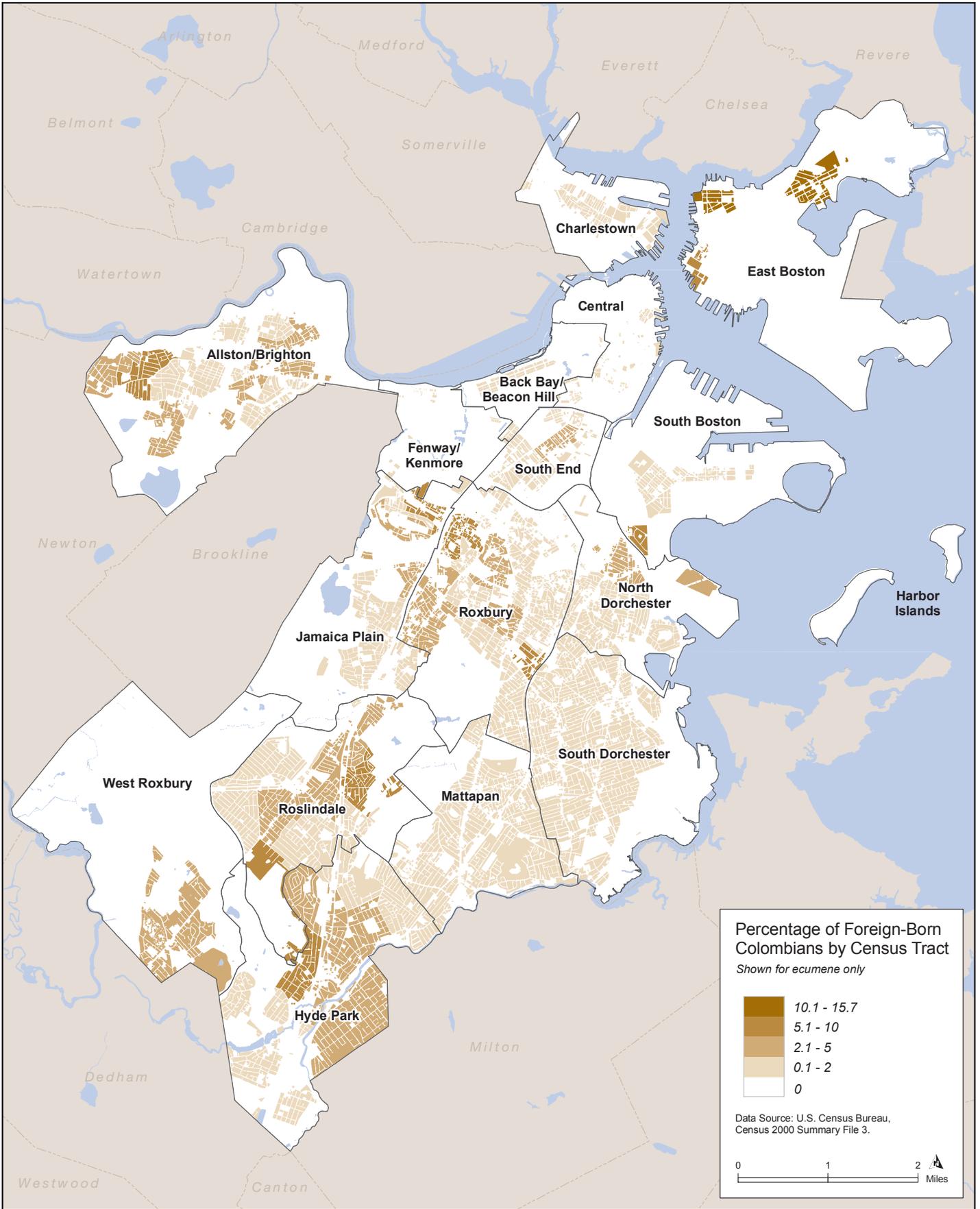
OCCUPATIONS

- 40% Service
- 19% Technical, Sales & Administrative Support
- 17% Managerial & Professional
- 12% Production
- 7% Installation, Maintenance, Construction, Extraction & Transportation
- 2% Other
- 2% Community and Social Services
- 1% Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media

CONTRIBUTING

- \$133 million**
annual spending
- \$124 million**
to the regional product
- \$35 million**
in state and federal taxes
- 1,084 indirect jobs**
for the local economy





imagine

Consumer spending on the part of Boston's Colombian immigrants generates \$124 million in gross state product, \$35 million in taxes, and 1084 indirect jobs.

spending

Colombian immigrants contribute to the local economy through their labor and subsequent consumer spending.

The total value of their contributions are estimated using a Regional Economic Model (REMI) that calculates the value of goods and services consumed on each dollar spent.

Colombian immigrants spend, from their after tax earnings, over \$133 million in Boston annually.¹⁶ These annual expenditures contribute over \$124 million towards the gross state product and almost \$36 million in state and federal taxes.¹⁷ In total, these expenditures indirectly support 1,084 jobs in the Massachusetts economy.¹⁸

Beyond the contributions Colombian-born immigrants living in Boston make to the city, state and national economies, they continue to play a vital role in the economy of their home country by sending back remittances of over \$8 million each year. This breaks down to an average of approximately \$256 per month sent back by each Colombian household.¹⁹ This trend is also witnessed throughout the U.S. and beyond, with Colombians living abroad contributing \$3.93 billion, or 2.9% of GDP, to Colombia's economy in 2006.²⁰



standard of living

Approximately 16% of Colombians have achieved a middle class standard of living,²¹ compared with 38% of Boston's native-born population and 25% of all foreign-born.



Education and English Proficiency in the Colombian Population (25+)²²

Education/English Proficiency	# of Colombian	% Colombian	% Foreign-Born	% Native-Born
Lack H.S. Diploma & English Proficient	485	15.6%	16.9%	14.5%
Lack H.S. Diploma & Limited English Proficiency	830	26.7%	17.2%	1.1%
Have H.S. Diploma & Limited English Proficiency	596	19.2%	11.3%	0.7%
Lack H.S. Diploma OR Limited English Proficiency	1911	61.5%	45.4%	16.3%

U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5%, BRA Research Division



¹ From the Global Migrant Origin Database at the Development Research Center on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty: http://www.migrationdrc.org/research/typesofmigration/global_migrant_origin_database.html

² The ACS is a yearly survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau intended to allow communities to see how they are changing in the years between decennial censuses. The ACS is based on a sample of the population. While the data in this document are reported as specific numbers and percentages, all results from the ACS are subject to sampling error. The data in this report are from the 2005-2007 ACS 3 year averages. These data are the combination of 3 distinct years which reduces the level of sampling error. For more information on the ACS, please see: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html>

³ The "foreign-born" population includes all people who are born outside the U.S., naturalized citizens, and non U.S. citizens. The "native-born" population includes all people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Island Areas and persons born abroad by American parents. BRA Research Division. (2009).

⁴ World Bank, Research and Data, Remittances Data 2007 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Colombia.pdf>

⁵ American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009)

⁶ American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009)

⁷ The ACS's American Fact Finder website reports that there are an estimated 7,271 Colombians in Boston. However, the American Fact Finder website reports a total population for Boston that is lower than the currently accepted population total for the city (600,980 compared to 608,352 respectively). We adjusted the total number of immigrants in each group in order to account for lower total number of Bostonians estimated by the ACS. While our adjusted estimate using the 2005-2007 ACS for foreign-born Colombians in Boston is 7,271, the margin of error for this statistic at the 90% confidence interval is $\pm 1,472$. Meaning, the actual population size of Colombians in Boston is likely to be between 5,799 and 8,743. Throughout this report we will report the adjusted population estimate provided by the 2005-2007 ACS for foreign-born Colombians in Boston. These population counts are estimates, however. For more information on American Fact Finder please see: http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

⁸ American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009).

⁹ There are community leaders and local activists who dispute U.S. Census statistics suggesting they undercount the immigrant population. While this may be true, it is difficult to estimate how this varies from community to community. As a result, the Census is still the most reliable source for understanding basic demographic characteristics.

¹⁰ American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009)

¹¹ Cross tabulations of the ACS for relatively small groups can lead to making generalizations about subsections of that group from a very small sample and may not be reliable. As a result, in this report we will use 2000 Census data for all cross-tabulations of the Colombian community, while using the 2005-2007 adjusted ACS estimates to express the total population.

¹² The current research breaks all occupations into one of eight general categories: managerial and professional occupations; technical, sales, and administration support occupations; service occupations; installation, maintenance, construction, extraction, and transportation occupations; production occupations; community and social service occupations; arts, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations; and other occupations. Managerial and professional occupations include business operations; computer

and mathematical; education, training, and library; architecture and engineering; financial operations; legal; healthcare practitioner and technical; management, professional, and related; and life, physical, and social science occupations. Technical, sales & administration support occupations include healthcare support; office and administrative support; and sales and related occupations. Service occupations include building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; food preparation and serving related; personal care and service; and protective service occupations. Installation, maintenance, construction, extraction & transportation occupations include installation, maintenance, and repair; construction; extraction; and transportation and material moving occupations. Other occupations include fishing and hunting, and forest and logging workers; military specific occupations; and occupations not elsewhere classified. The three remaining categories - production occupations; community and social service occupations; arts, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations - are each occupational groups unto themselves.

¹³ Defined as the share of the working-age population that is either currently employed or seeking work. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2005).

¹⁴ These unemployment data are from the 2000 Census. It should be noted that unemployment rates are subjected to a much greater level of fluctuation over time than the other demographic data in this report.

¹⁵ There is no agreement among researchers regarding the reasons for variations in the self employment rates among different immigrant groups. Reasons cited include human and financial capital of individual immigrants, high rates of solidarity and social capital in some immigrant communities, as well as the opportunity structure encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs.

¹⁶ Total gross income of Colombians totaled \$175 million in 2007. Adjustments were made for remittances assuming a monthly transfer of \$256 per household. This amount is in accordance with Orozco, M. (2002), Remittances, Costs, and Market Competition, presentation of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

¹⁷ Colombians generate over \$7 million in state income taxes, \$2 million in state sales taxes paid, and more than \$26 million in federal income taxes. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Research Division. (2009). REMI

calculations.

¹⁸ BRA Research Division. (2009). REMI calculations.

¹⁹ Orozco, M. (2002), Remittances, Costs, and Market Competition, presentation of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

²⁰ World Bank, Research and Data, Remittances Data 2007, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Colombia.pdf>

²¹ A family income four times the poverty line is used as a proxy for the middle-class standard of living. The actual income needed to achieve this standard depends on the number of people in the family. For a two person family the income would need to be at least \$44,856, which is at the 43rd percentile for all families. Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). The Changing Face of Massachusetts.

²² The Limited English Proficient includes immigrant adults who do not speak English at all or who do not speak it well. The English Proficient includes immigrant adults who speak only English, speak it very well or speak it well. In MassINC's The Changing Face of Massachusetts report, the authors used these same definitions, but labeled the two categories language challenge and no language challenge, respectively.



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Boston
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Map by the digital Cartography & GIS

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