

**imagine
all the
people**

Vietnamese

CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor

2016

Vietnamese in Boston

"imagine all the people" is a series of publications produced by the Boston Redevelopment Authority for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement. The series provides a comprehensive profile of Boston's diverse immigrant communities and their numerous contributions to the city's social, cultural and economic landscape. It is part of an ongoing effort to celebrate immigrants and gain insight into how they shape our city.



Dorchester Tet Celebration and Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce
Mayor's Office Photos



The first significant wave of Vietnamese immigrants to the United States came in 1975 following the end of the Vietnam War and the collapse of the government of South Vietnam. The vast majority of Vietnamese who came to the United States in the years that followed came as refugees fleeing persecution and political oppression. Many who had worked for the U.S. government or were otherwise associated with the U.S. involvement in the war were evacuated by the military.

The hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who emigrated during this time were ultimately spread throughout the United States through the U.S. government's Refugee Dispersion Policy, which sought to provide better opportunities for refugees and lessen the impact of populations arriving in one place by securing voluntary sponsors (often in the form of nonprofit organizations or churches) to assist them.

However, following this initial dispersion many Vietnamese immigrants in the United States relocated and gravitated toward states such as California and Texas, which have had the largest concentration of Vietnamese immigrants since the early 1980s.¹

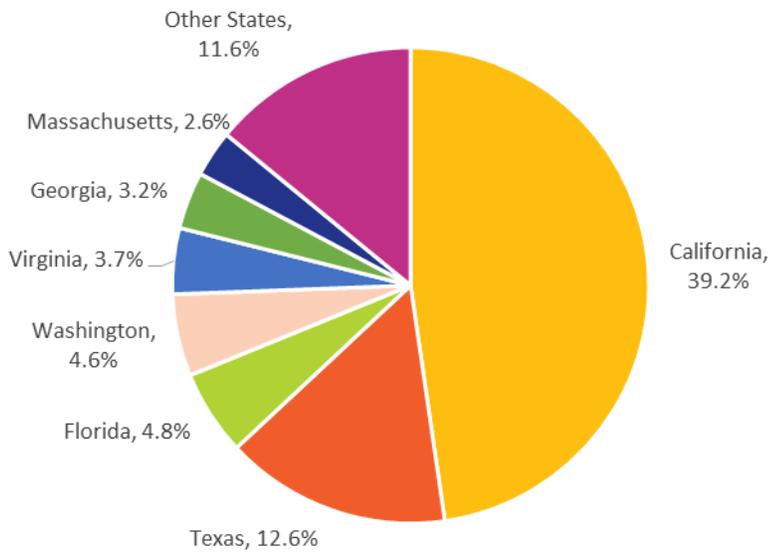


Deval Patrick signs a law allowing ballots to be translated into Vietnamese and Chinese. — Isabel Leon

With 3 percent of the U.S. foreign-born Vietnamese population residing in Massachusetts, the state ranks seventh in its share of Vietnamese migrants. The most popular states for Vietnamese migration are California (40 percent), Texas (13 percent), Florida (5 percent), and Washington (5 percent).⁵

Estimates from the 2014 American Community Survey² (ACS) show that 1,291,807 foreign-born³ individuals from Vietnam reside in the United States, which has been by far the leading destination for Vietnamese emigrants. Other primary destinations include Australia, Canada, and France.⁴ A smaller share of foreign-born Vietnamese have arrived in the United States after 2000 (32 percent) compared to all foreign born (43 percent).

Share of Foreign-Born Vietnamese Population by State



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division

Of the estimated 33,271 foreign-born Vietnamese residing in Massachusetts, 9,403 reside in Boston.⁶ Vietnam is the fifth largest country of origin for Boston's foreign-born population in 2014. Overall, Vietnamese in Boston constitute 6.2 percent of the city's total foreign-born residents.⁷ Dominicans comprise the largest share of the city's foreign-born population, followed by Chinese, Haitians, and Salvadorans.

Nearly three-quarters of Boston's foreign-born Vietnamese live in Dorchester. Other neighborhoods with smaller concentrations are East Boston, Mattapan, and Brighton.⁸

The U.S. Census Bureau's ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) allows for the detailed socio-economic analysis of specific populations. For smaller populations like foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston, a 5-year sample is required to limit variation due to sampling error. The analysis that follows uses 2009-2013 ACS PUMS data.

Similar to other foreign-born populations, the Vietnamese female population (52 percent) is slightly larger than the male population. More than 71 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston are either married (54 percent) or divorced/separated (13 percent) or widowed (4 percent). Approximately 64 percent of all foreign-born Vietnamese are between the ages of 35 and 64, and the median age of the population is 43 years. The majority of foreign-born Vietnamese (67 percent) are naturalized U.S. citizens.

The largest group of Vietnamese in the United States is in California.

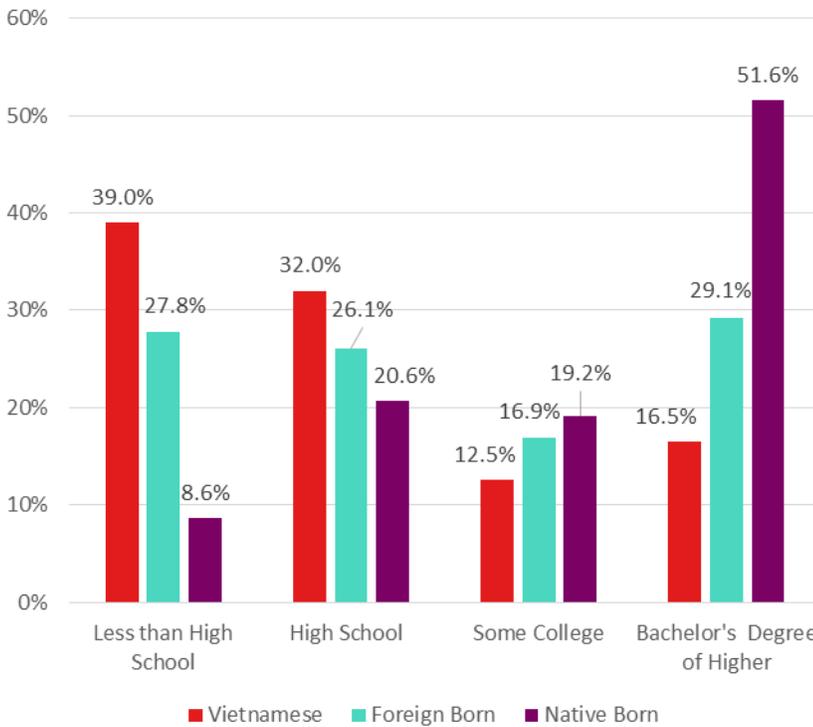
Educational Attainment

Approximately 39 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston ages 25 years or older have not completed high school. This share is higher than all foreign-born residents (28 percent) and over four times the share for the native-born population (9 percent). Approximately 32 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese have a high school diploma as their highest educational attainment.

While 29 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese 25 years or older have attended college, only 17 percent have completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 29 percent of the foreign-born population, and 52 percent of the native born. With respect to advanced degrees, only 4 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese living in Boston hold a graduate or professional degree compared with 14 percent of all foreign born and 22 percent of the native born.

39% of adult foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston have not completed high school.

Educational Attainment of Boston Residents 25 Years and Older



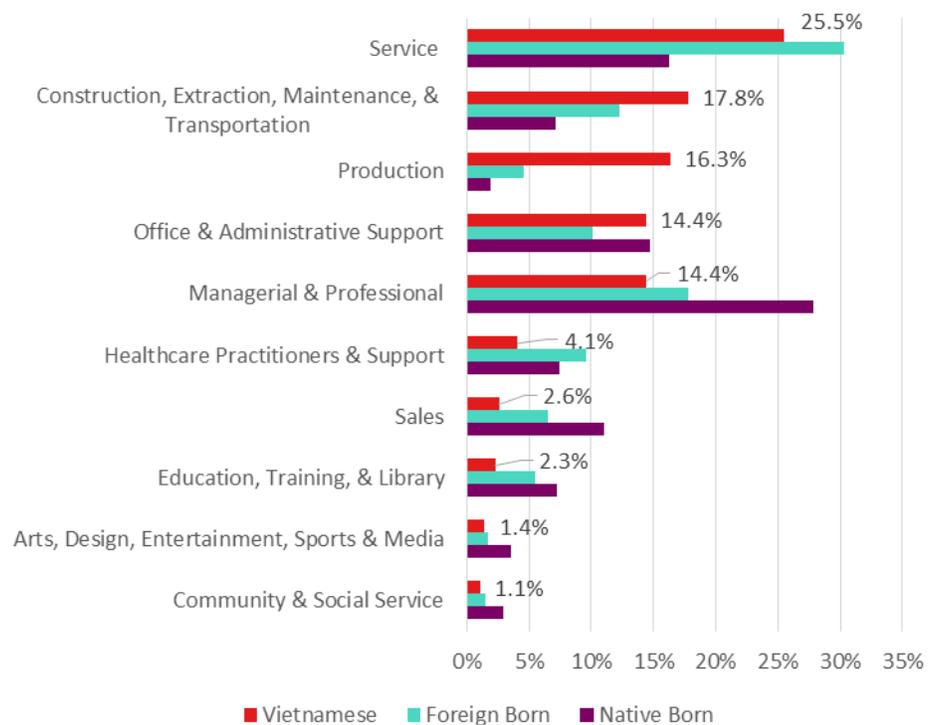
U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

Occupations

Over a quarter of foreign-born Vietnamese in the workforce are employed in service occupations.⁹ The next two largest occupational categories are sales and construction, extraction, maintenance, and transportation (18 percent) and production (16 percent). Foreign-born Vietnamese work in a more diverse set of occupations compared to other foreign-born populations.

However, similar to other foreign-born populations, Vietnamese are under-represented in managerial and professional occupations: 18 percent for Vietnamese compared with 18 percent for the total foreign-born population and 28 percent for the native born.

Occupations by Nativity



U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

Employment Type

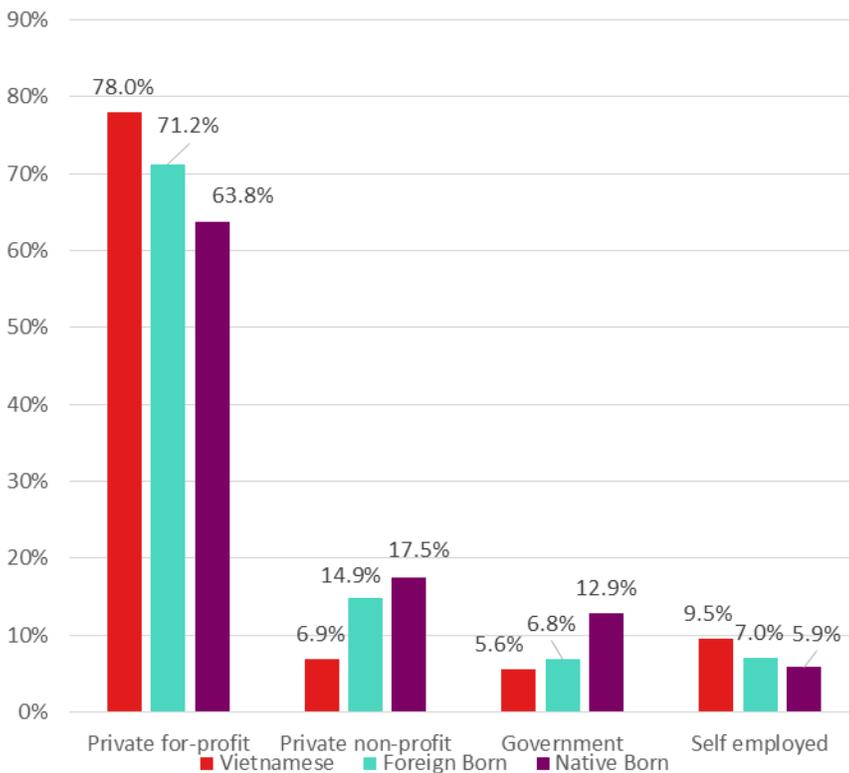
In total, 63 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese participate in the labor force compared with 68 percent of the total foreign-born population and 69 percent of the native-born population.¹⁰

Excluding unpaid family workers, Vietnamese are more likely to be self-employed--9.5 percent--compared to 7.1 percent for the total foreign-born population and 5.9 percent for the native-born population.¹¹

An estimated 78 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese work for private, for-profit companies. An additional 7 percent work for private, nonprofit organizations, and 6 percent are employed in the public sector (local, state and federal government).

Self employment is more common among Vietnamese in Boston than among other foreign-born and native-born populations.

Employment Type by Type of Employer



U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division

Economic Impact

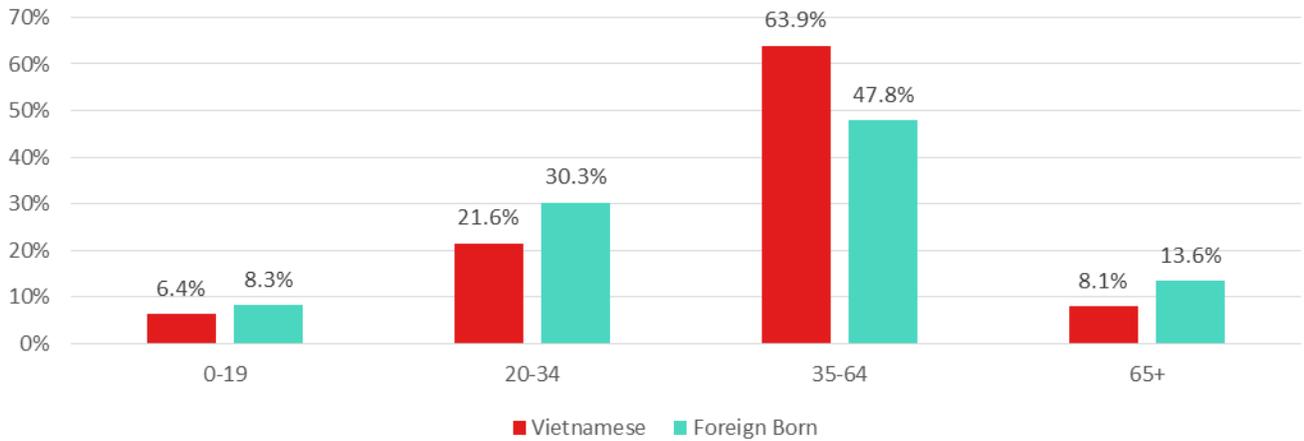
Foreign-born Vietnamese contribute to the local economy through their labor and consumer spending. The total value of their economic contributions was estimated using a Regional Economic Model (REMI) that calculated the value of goods and services consumed on each dollar spent. Foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston generated total expenditures of \$172 million in 2014.¹² These annual expenditures contributed over \$103 million to the regional product and generated \$5.6 million in state and local taxes.¹³ In total, these expenditures supported 745 jobs in the Massachusetts economy.¹⁴



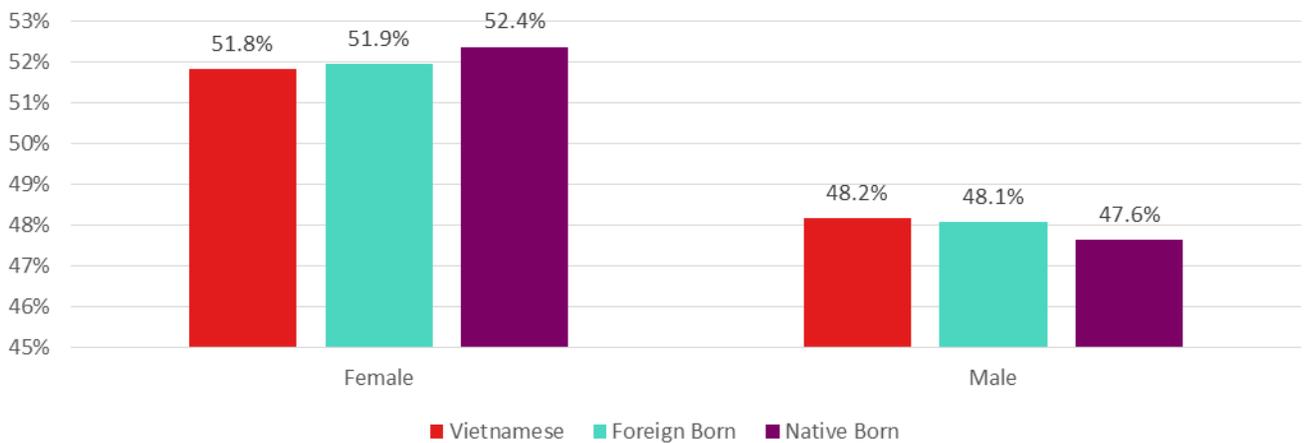
Firecrackers, photo courtesy of Viet-Aid & Vietnamese Restaurant in Dorchester, Phillip Granberry

Imagine all the people: Vietnamese

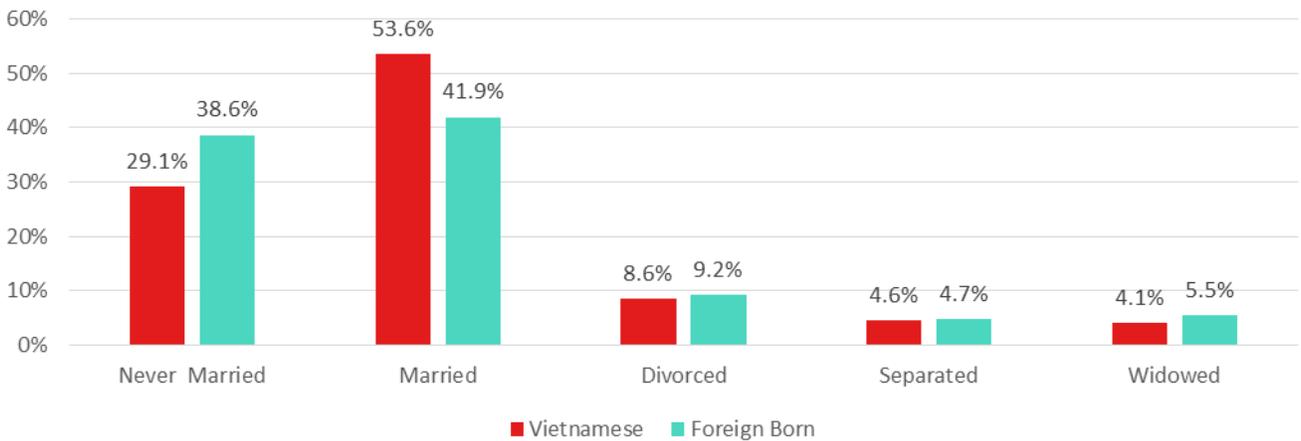
Age



Gender

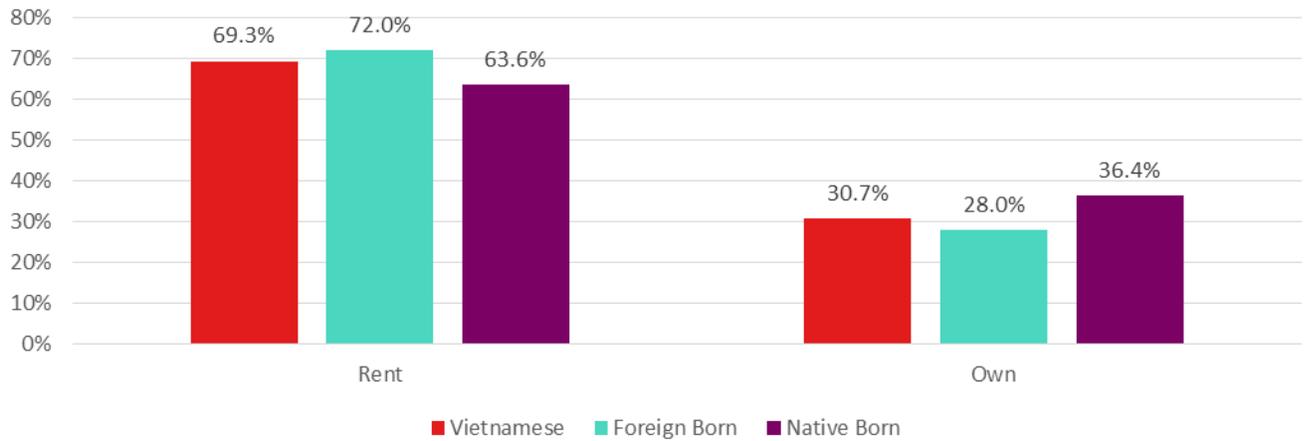


Marital Status

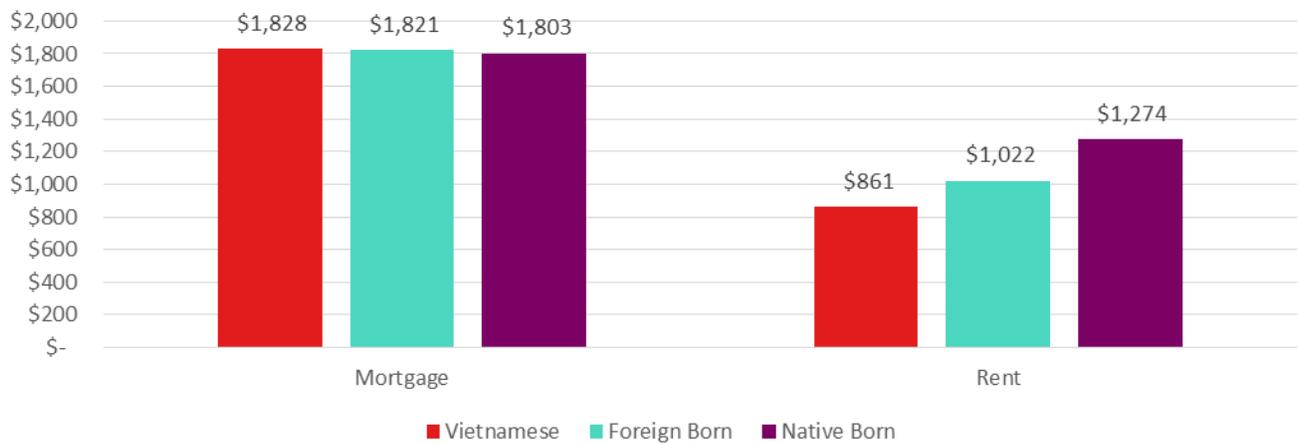


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

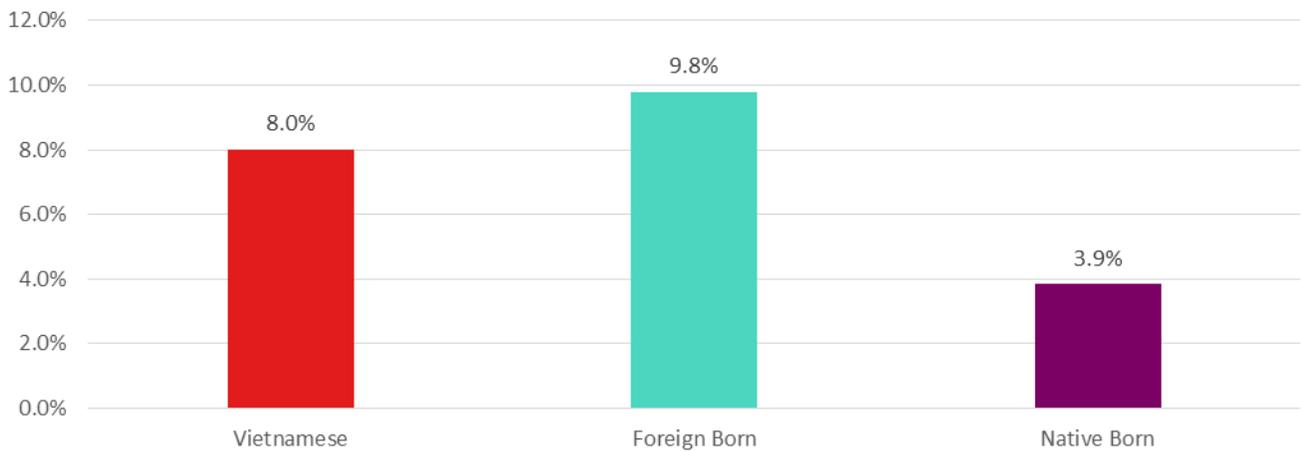
Housing Tenure*



Housing Costs*



Medical Uninsurance



*Housing data are based on the nativity of the householder.

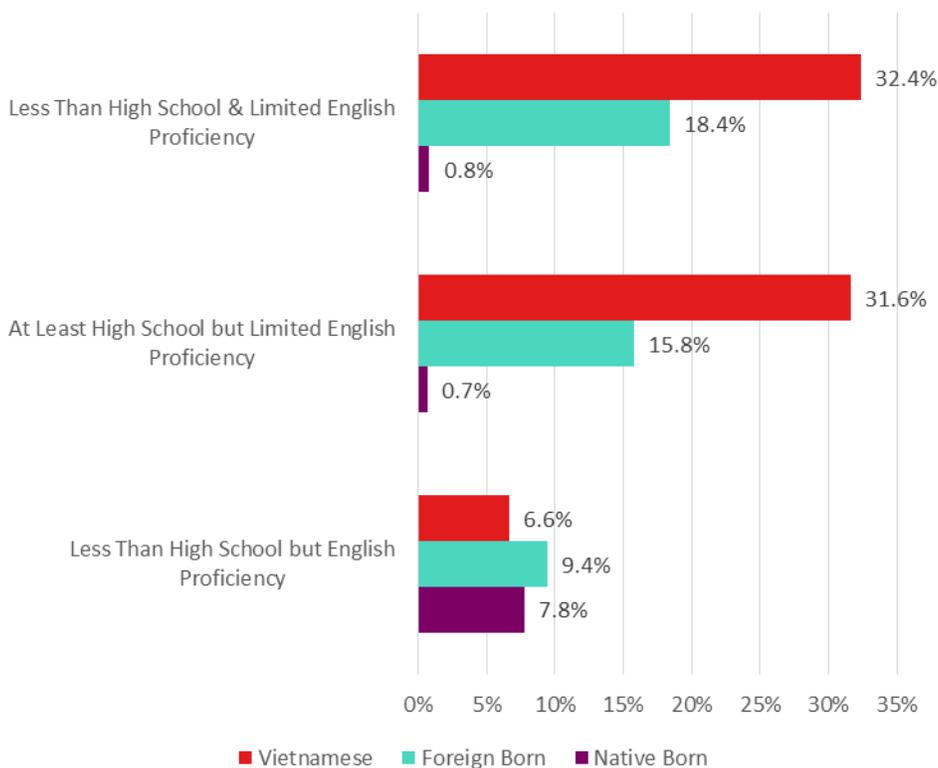
Standard of Living

Approximately 18 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese have achieved a middle class standard of living, compared with 45 percent of Boston’s native-born population, and 29 percent of all foreign-born. A family income four times the poverty level is used as a proxy for a middle-class standard of living. The actual income needed to achieve this standard depends on the size and composition of the family. For a two-person family in 2014, a middle class income would be at least \$62,920.¹⁵ In contrast, 31 percent of foreign-born Vietnamese live below the federal poverty level compared to 20 percent for the city’s population.

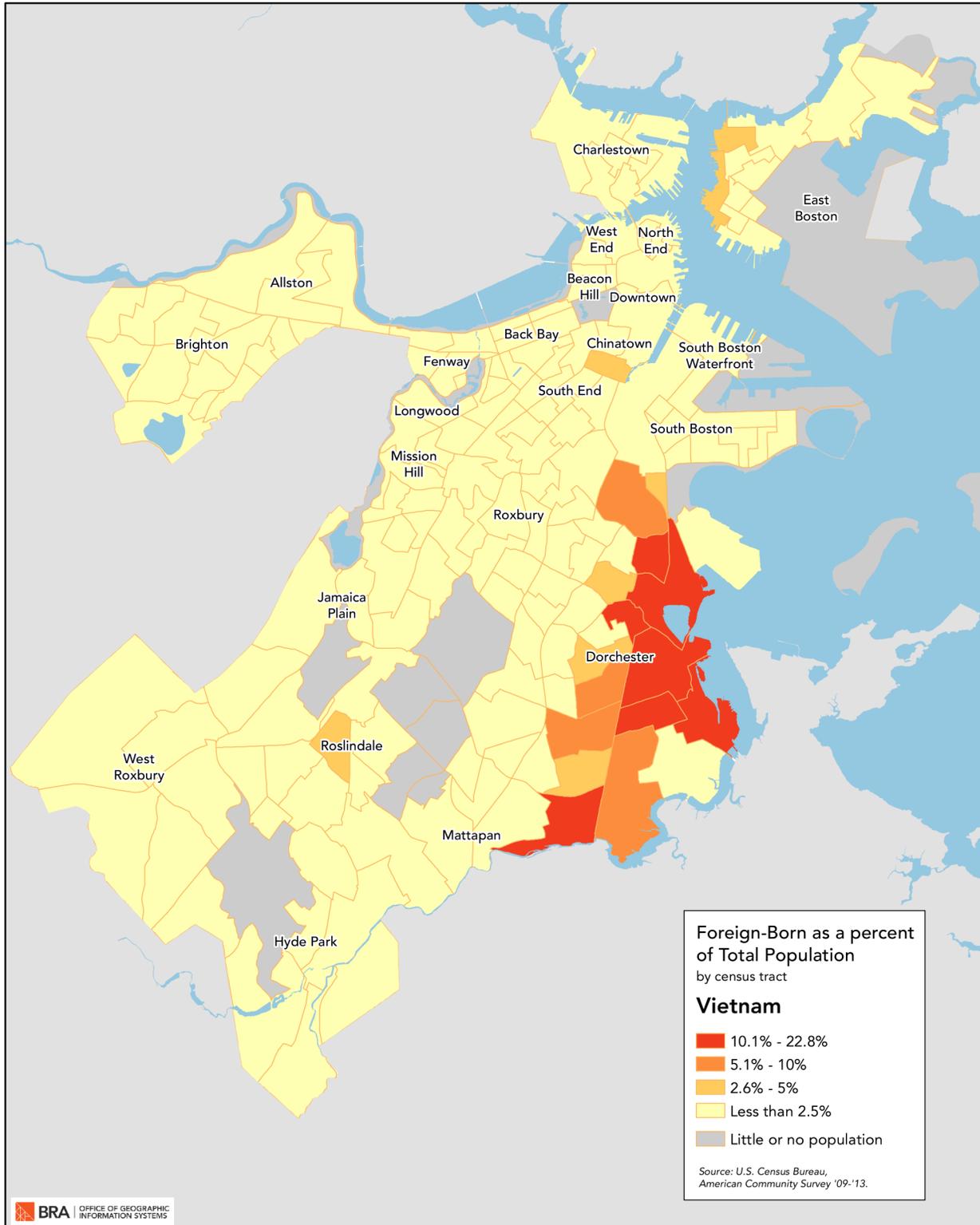
Low educational attainment and lack of English proficiency may contribute to Vietnamese’ low standard of living. While 18 percent of Boston’s adult foreign-born population lack a high school diploma and have limited English proficiency, the share among Vietnamese-born adults is 32 percent.¹⁶ Over half of foreign-born Vietnamese lack a high school diploma or English proficiency or both.

71% of adult foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston lack a high school diploma, English proficiency, or both.

English Proficiency Population 25 Years or Older



U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis



Children of Vietnamese Origin

The 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates 2,549 children in Boston are of Vietnamese origin.¹⁷ Children of Vietnamese origin in Boston are predominantly native born – 84 percent. However, 90 percent of Vietnamese children lived with foreign-born parent(s). In comparison, 40 percent of all Boston’s children lived with only foreign-born parent(s).

Of Vietnamese children ages 5 to 17 with only foreign-born parent(s), about 6 percent speak only English at home, compared to 23 percent for all children with foreign-born parent(s). However, Vietnamese children appear not to be learning English as well as other populations, - 61 percent of Vietnamese children with foreign-born parent(s) speak English very well. This percentage is lower than for all children with foreign-born parent(s), of whom 76 percent speak English very well.

Vietnamese children with foreign-born parent(s) are more likely to live in poverty. 43 percent of Vietnamese children with foreign-born parent(s) compared to 28 percent of all children in Boston were below the federal poverty level (\$23,850 for a 4-person household in 2014).



Au Co My Gala, photo courtesy of Viet-Aid

Even though Massachusetts is not a leading destination of Vietnamese who migrate to the United States, they are the fifth largest foreign-born population in Boston. Foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston contribute to the economy, culture, and civic life of Boston, especially in Dorchester. Foreign-born Vietnamese labor force participation is less than other foreign-born populations and over half of adults lack either a high school diploma or English proficiency. As a result, Vietnamese have greater shares of their population living below the federal poverty level than others in Boston.



Vietnamese American Community of Massachusetts Tet Celebration

¹ Rkasnuam, H. & Batalova, J., Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States, Migration Policy Institute (2014).

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. 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. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Research Division, (2016).

⁴ Rkasnuam, H. & Batalova, J., Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States, Migration Policy Institute (2014).

⁵ 2014 American Community Survey, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2016).

⁶ The ACS's American Fact Finder website reports that there are an estimated 9,403 foreign-born Vietnamese in Boston. The margin of error is +/- 2,548. However, ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data for Boston reports a higher estimate of 10,865. Both are population estimates, and contain a margin of error due to sampling technique. Lower survey response rates due to language or documentation issues may result in an undercount of the population. For more information on American Fact Finder please see: <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>.

⁷ 2014 American Community Survey, PUMS data, BRA Research Analysis (2016).

⁸ 2009-2013 American Community Survey, American Factfinder, BRA Research Analysis (2016).

⁹ This analysis organizes occupations into 12 categories. Managerial and Professional contains categories of Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations, Business Operations Specialists, Financial Specialists, Computer and Mathematical Occupations, Architecture and Engineering Occupations, Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations, and Legal Occupations. Healthcare Practitioners & Support contains the categories of Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations and Healthcare Support Occupations. Service Occupations contains the categories of Protective Service Occupations, Food Preparation and Serving Occupations, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations, and Personal Care and Service Occupations. Construction, Extraction, Maintenance, and Transportation contains the categories of Construction and Extraction Occupations, Extraction Workers, Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers, and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations. Other categories consisting of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry, Military Specific, and long-term unemployed are excluded.

End Notes

¹⁰ Labor force participation: 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, 2016.

¹¹ 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.

¹² BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc.,

¹³ BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc.

¹⁴ BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc.

¹⁵ Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically. U.S. Census Bureau (2016).

¹⁶ Limited English Proficiency includes foreign-born adults who do not speak English well or at all.

¹⁷ The U.S. Census defines origin as “the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States.



Vietnamese altar, photo courtesy of Viet-Aid



CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh, Mayor



MAYOR'S OFFICE
FOR IMMIGRANT
ADVANCEMENT

Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of Boston



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