



FOREIGN BORN IN BOSTON: HAITIANS

City of Boston Planning Department Research Division

“Imagine all the people” is a series of publications produced by the City of Boston’s Planning Department’s Research Division for the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Advancement. As the East Boston mural above depicts, Boston’s foreign-born communities make numerous contributions to the city’s social, cultural and economic landscape. This series is part of an ongoing effort to celebrate Boston’s foreign-born populations and gain insight into how they shape our city.

OVERVIEW OF HAITIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

The Haitian community in Massachusetts goes back to the late 1950s and early 1960s when Haitians fleeing the dictatorial regime of François Duvalier (Papa Doc) migrated to Massachusetts. Haitian migration increased after the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship and the country became less stable.¹ The accompanying weakness in civil society only increased international migration. Since the late 1990s, Haitians have become more visible in the political fabric of Massachusetts, organizing themselves in ad hoc committees that promote voter education and participation. As a result, two State Representatives and a State Senator of Haitian descent have been elected to the Massachusetts legislature since 2000, and more Haitians are actively pursuing elected office. After a devastating earthquake with its epicenter near

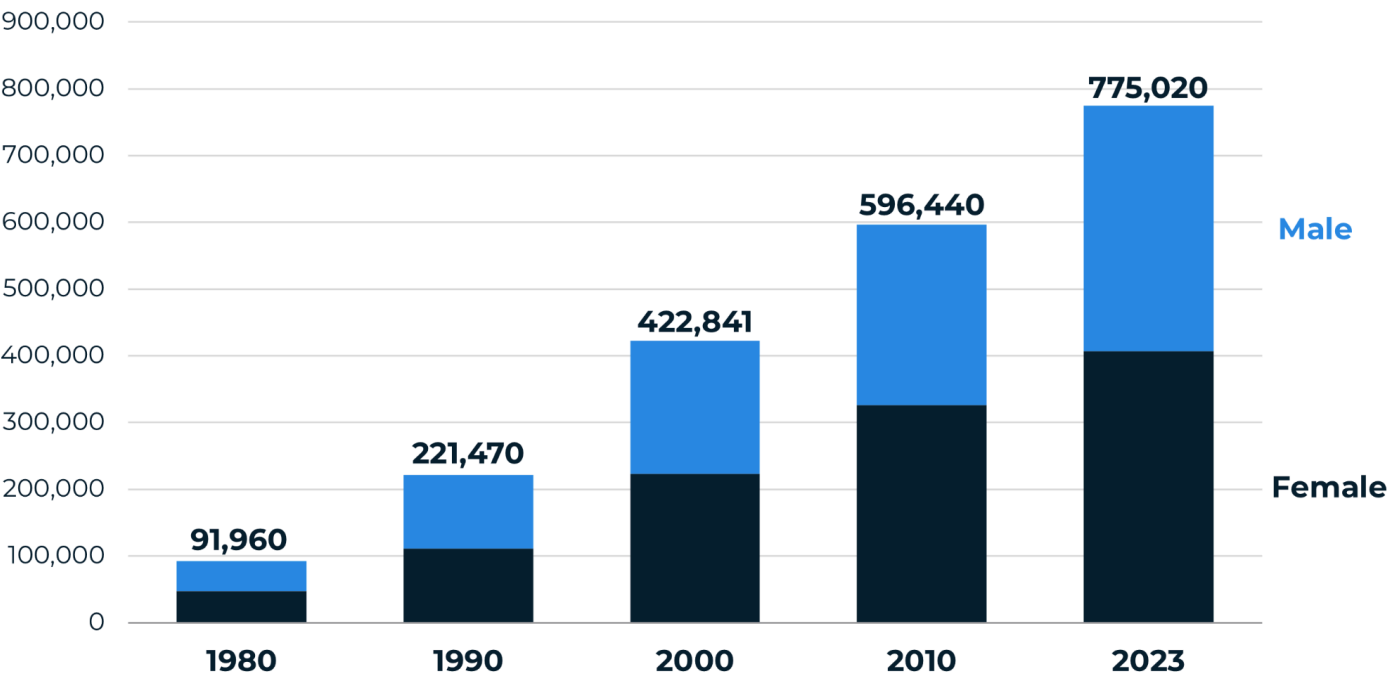
¹ Nwosu, C., Batalova, J., Haitian Immigrants in the United States, Migration Policy Institute (2015)



Port-au-Prince in January 2010, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services granted Haitians Temporary Protected Status (TPS). TPS will expire on Aug. 3, 2025.²

FOREIGN-BORN HAITIANS

Population growth in the U.S. from 1980 to 2023



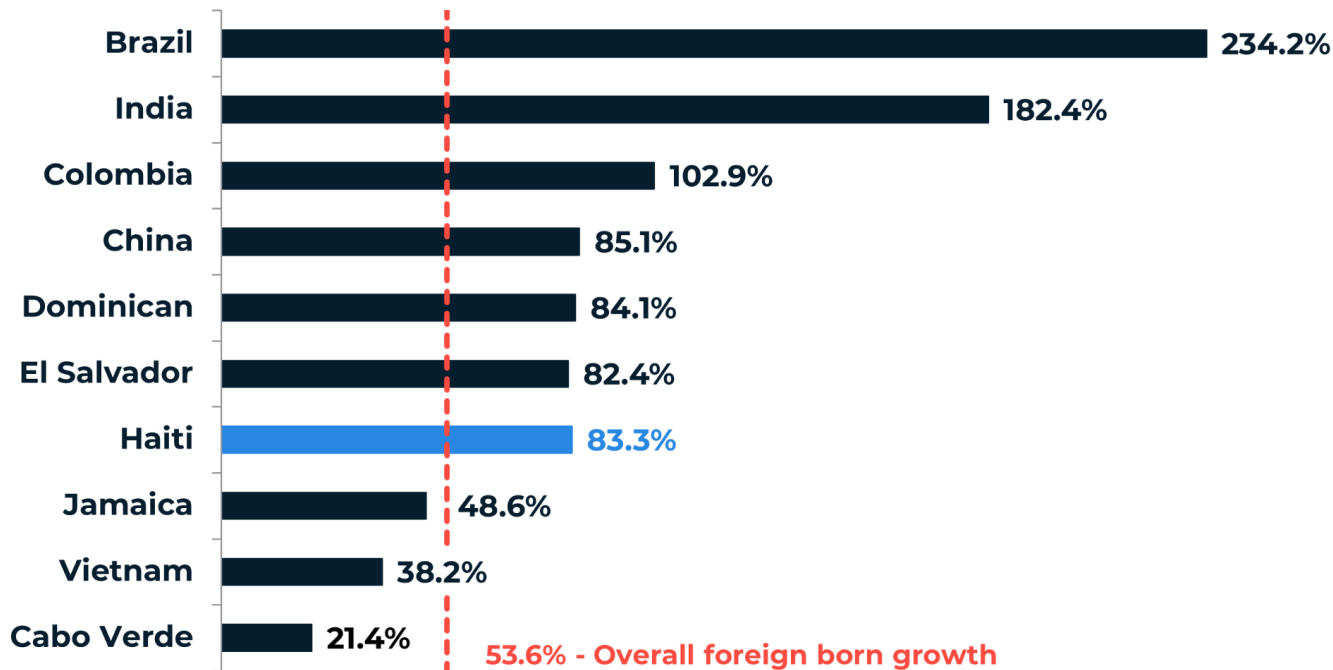
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1980-2000 Decennial Censuses (IPUMS), 2010 and 2023 1-Year American Community Survey (PUMS), City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

² <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-haiti>

From 2000 to 2023, the foreign-born Haitian population increased by 83.3 percent, faster than 53.6 percent for the overall foreign-born population.

INCREASE IN FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

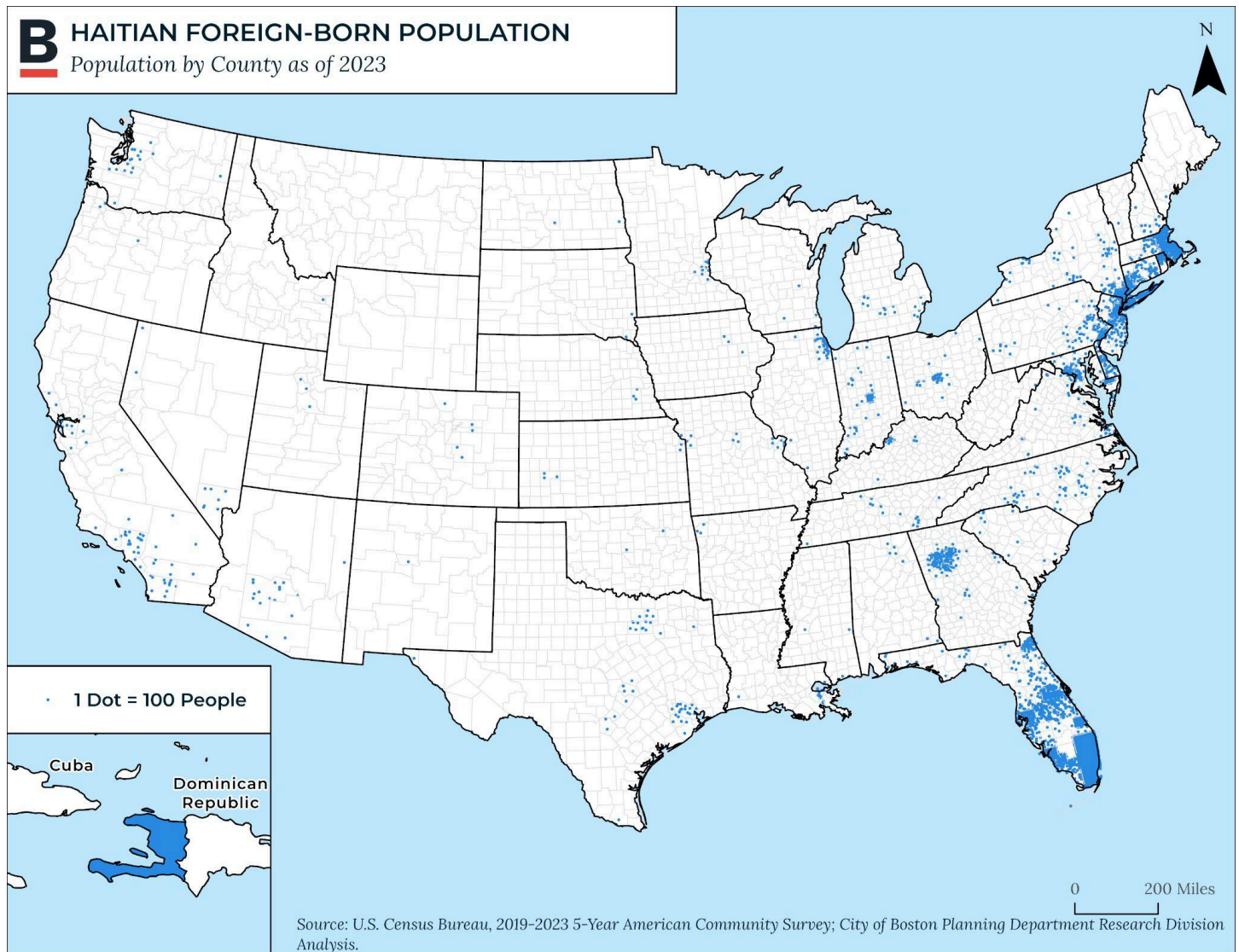
Percent increase in foreign born population in the U.S. from 2000 to 2023



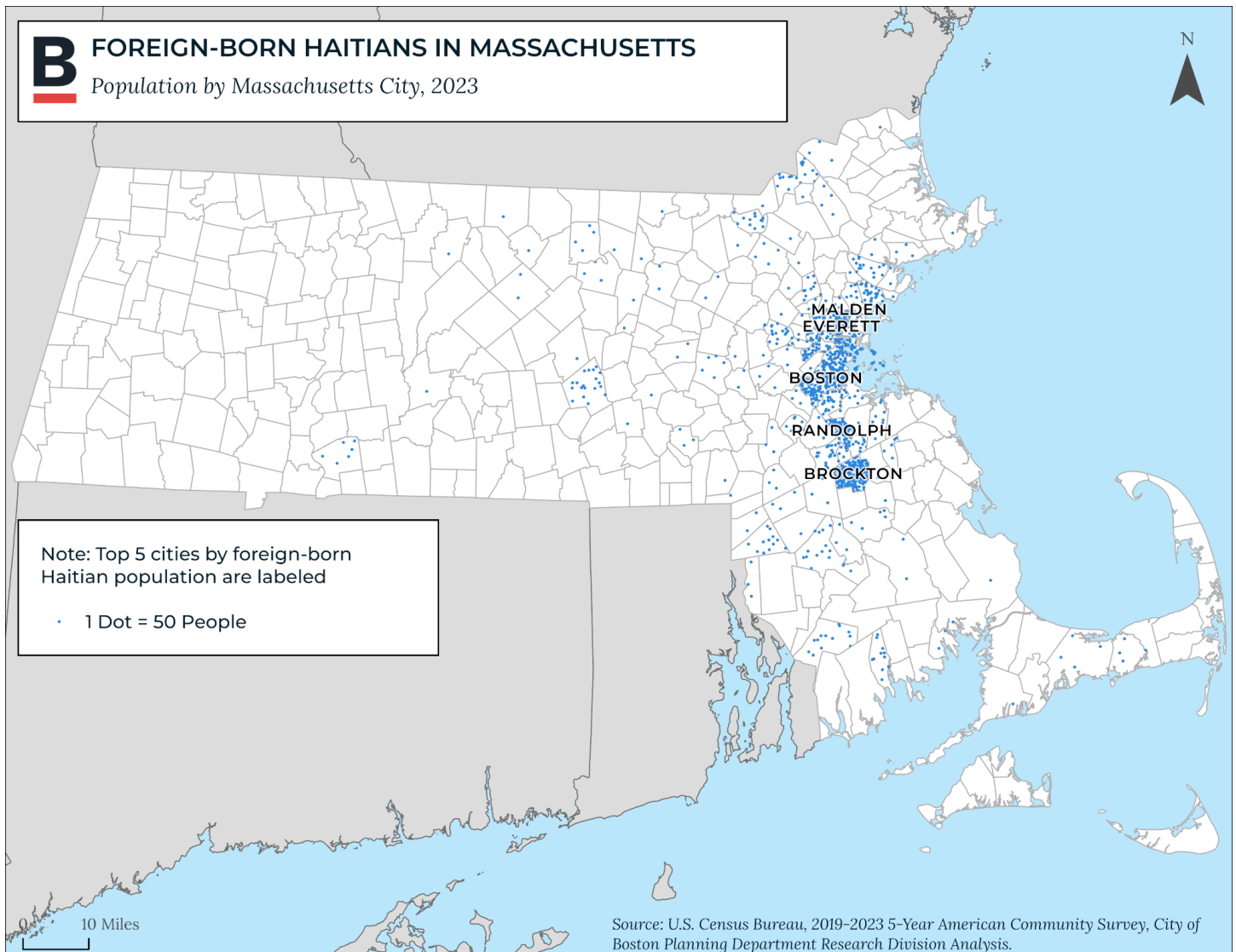
Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis



Estimates from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) show that 775,020 foreign-born Haitians reside in the United States, which has been the leading destination for Haitian emigrants. Other primary destinations include the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Chile, and Brazil. Massachusetts has the third largest foreign-born Haitian population in the United States behind Florida and New York with New Jersey, Connecticut, and Georgia rounding out the top six states.



In Massachusetts, Boston has the largest share of all the foreign-born Haitian population (25 percent) followed by Brockton (18 percent), Randolph (8 percent), Malden (4 percent), and Everett (4 percent).



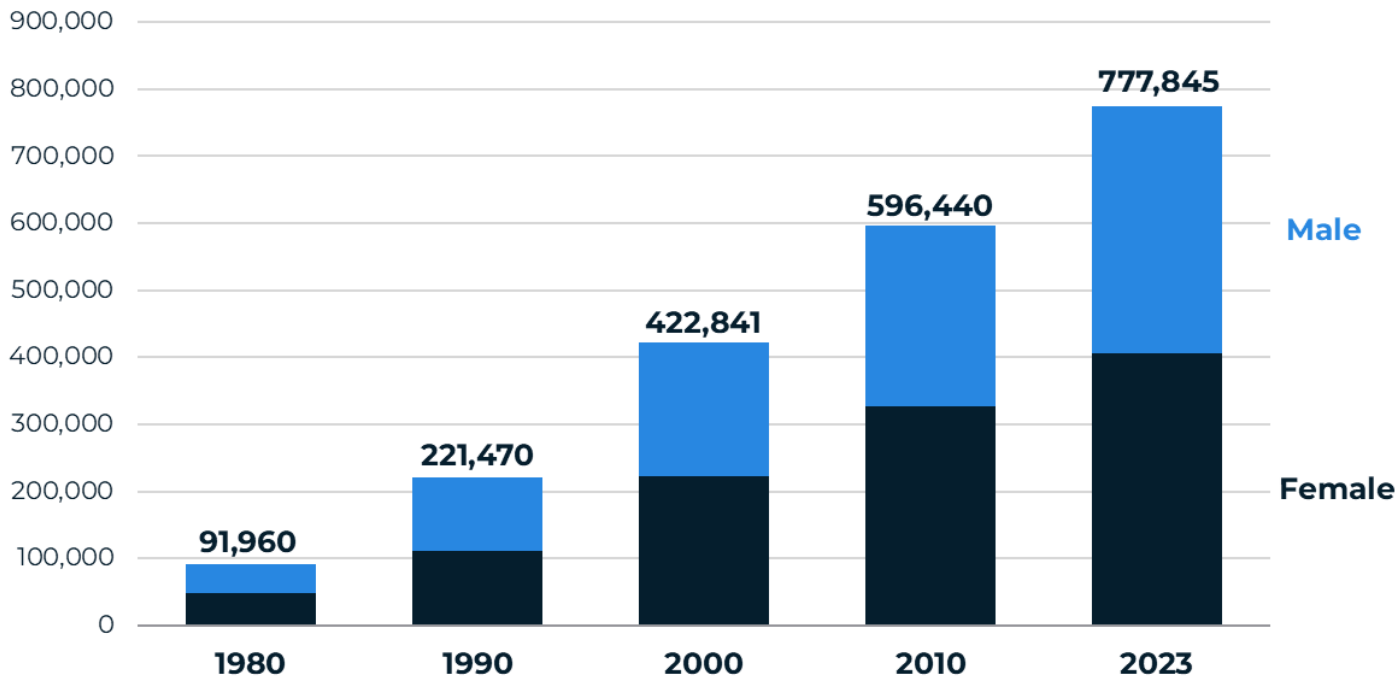
FOREIGN-BORN HAITIANS IN BOSTON

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of foreign-born Haitians in Boston increased significantly between 1980 and 2000, and since then there has seen a slower increase. City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates approximate that 17,616 foreign-born Haitians lived in Boston in 2024. This is a 494.8 percent increase since 1980, but only a 9.6 percent increase since 2000.³

FOREIGN-BORN HAITIANS

Population growth in the U.S. from 1980 to 2023



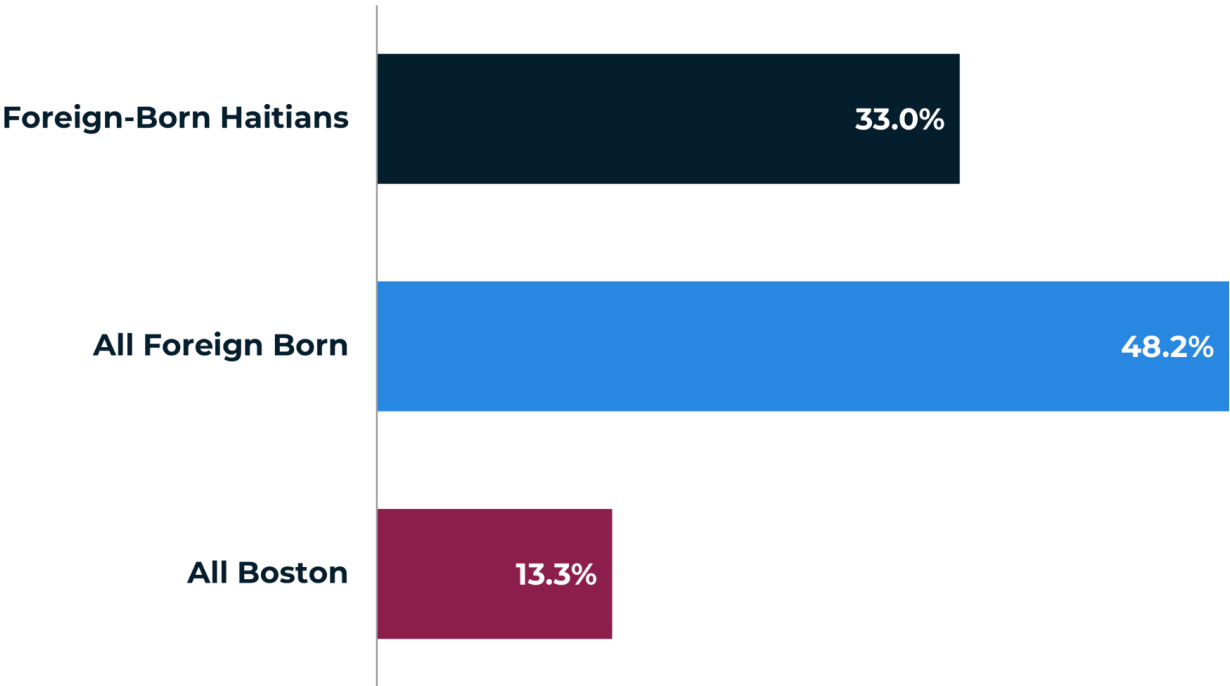
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1980–2000 Decennial Censuses (IPUMS), 2010 and 2023 1-Year American Community Survey (PUMS), City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

³ 1980–2000 Census (IPUMS), 2010 American Community Survey, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division 2024 Population Estimates

As a result of their longer immigration history, the majority of Haitians in Boston are naturalized citizens. The share of foreign-born Haitians in Boston that are not U.S. citizens (33 percent) is lower than the share for the entire foreign-born population.

NON-U.S. CITIZENS

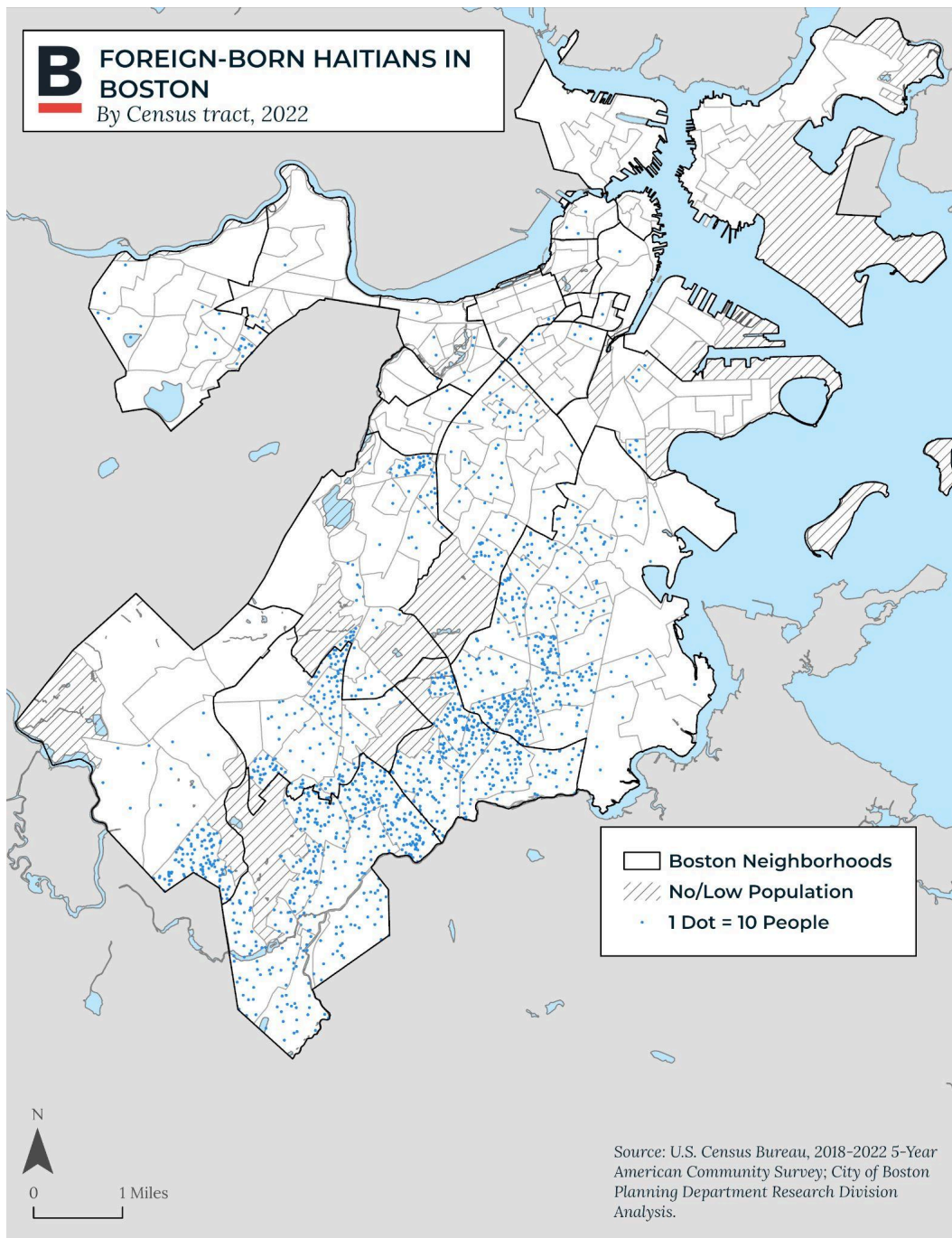
Share of non-U.S. citizens



Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Haitians in Boston originally settled in Dorchester in the 1960s. They benefited from the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group’s efforts in the late 1960s and 1970s to increase Black homeownership in Mattapan.⁴ By the 1980s Mattapan Square was the heart of Boston’s Haitian community.⁵ Today, Haitians predominantly live in Dorchester (25 percent), Mattapan (23 percent), and Hyde Park (22 percent).

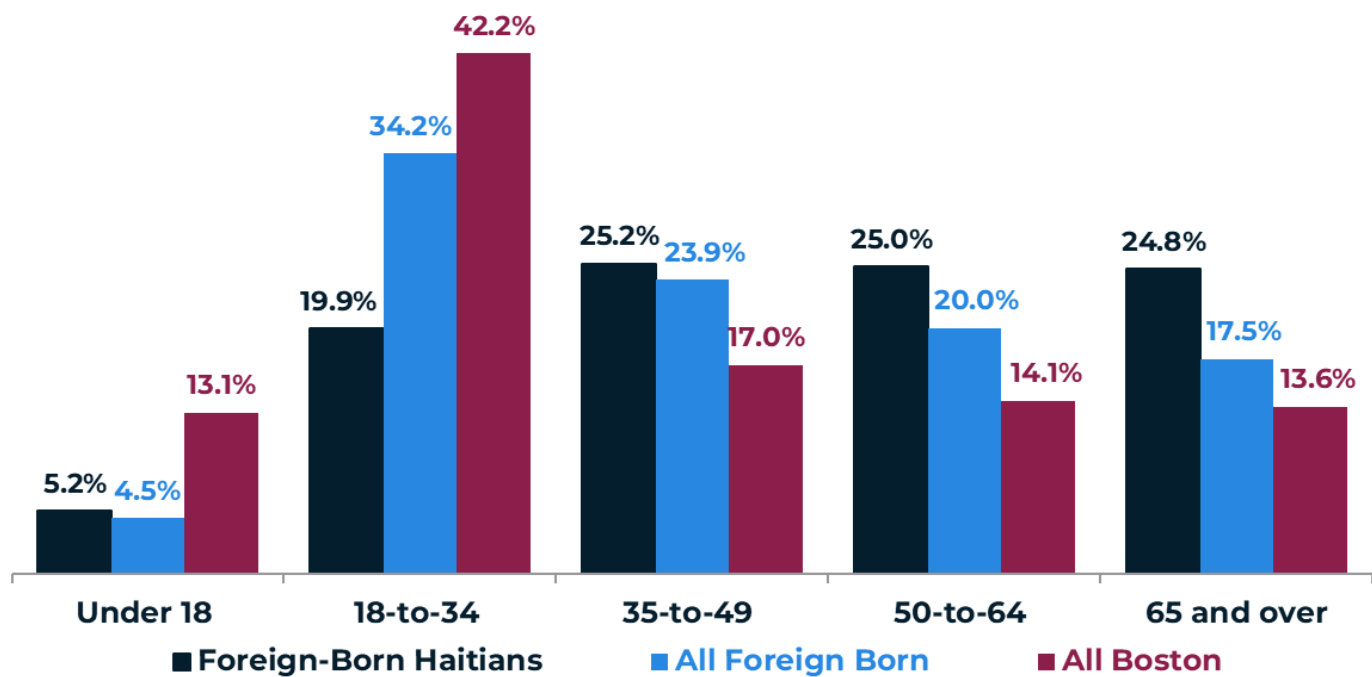
⁴ Levine, H. (2019). The death of an American Jewish community: A tragedy of good intentions. Plunkett Lake Press.
⁵ <https://globalboston.bc.edu/index.php/home/ethnic-groups/haitians/>



Foreign-born Haitians in Boston tend to be older: almost half are aged 50 and older. In all of Boston, over 40 percent of the population is between 18-to-34 years old. This is over double the population share of foreign-born Haitians of that age group.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Share of population by age group



Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

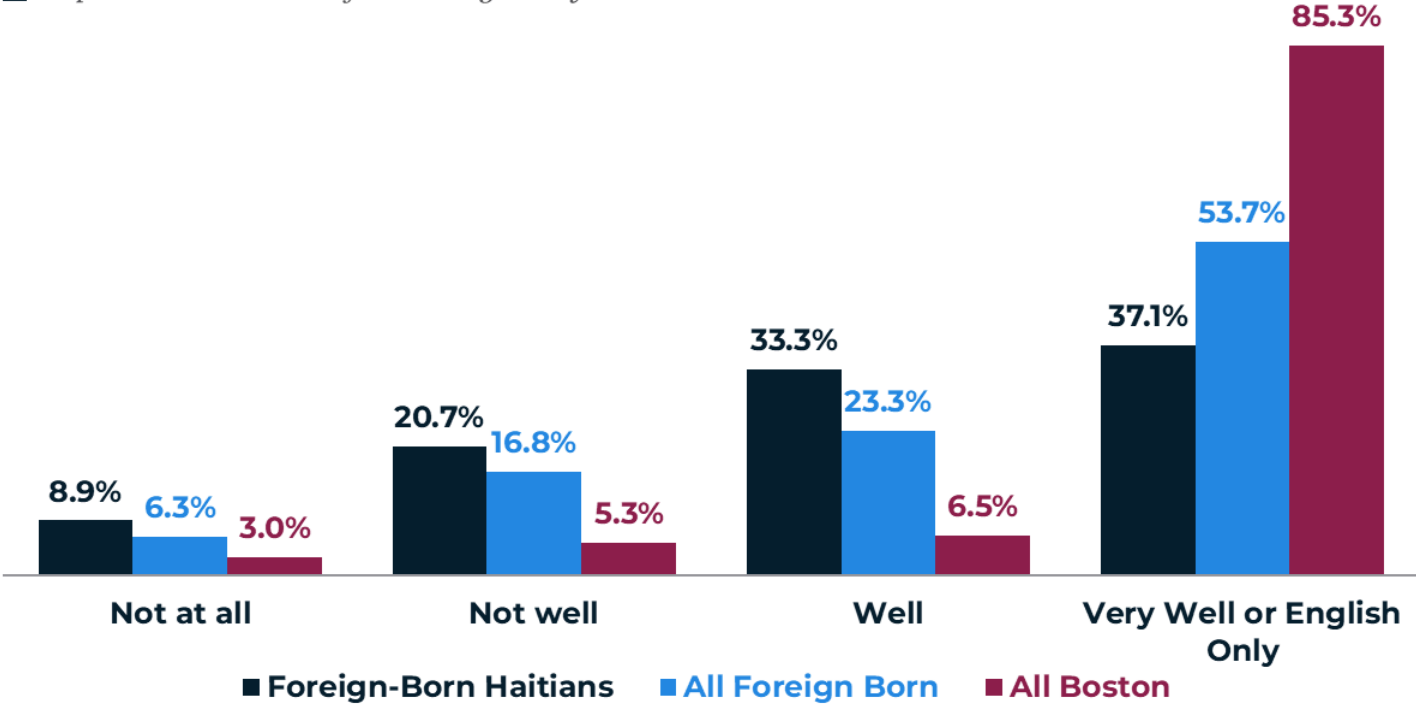


LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Approximately 90 percent of the foreign-born Haitian population speaks Haitian Creole or French at home. Just over 37 percent of the population aged 5 and over speaks English very well, which is lower than the share of all foreign-born individuals with English fluency. Of the foreign-born Haitians, 7 percent speak only English, 87 percent only speak Kabuverdianu at home, 4 percent only speak French at home, and 2 percent only speak Spanish at home.⁶

ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH

Population shares of those aged 5 years and over



Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

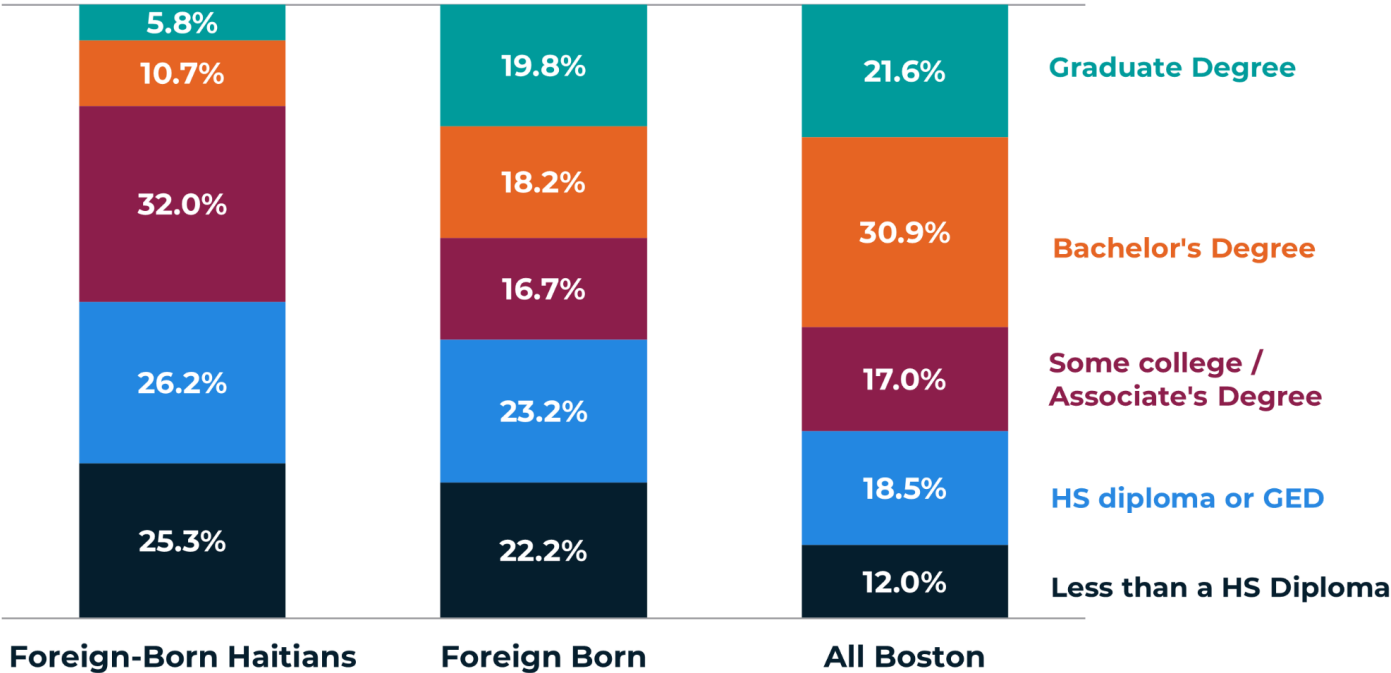
⁶ 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates



A quarter of adult foreign-born Haitians have not completed a high school diploma, and they have a much lower share of individuals with Bachelor's or graduate degrees. Over 50 percent of the total Boston population over the age of 25 has a Bachelor's degree or higher, whereas only 17 percent of foreign-born Haitians do.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Share of population aged 25 years and over

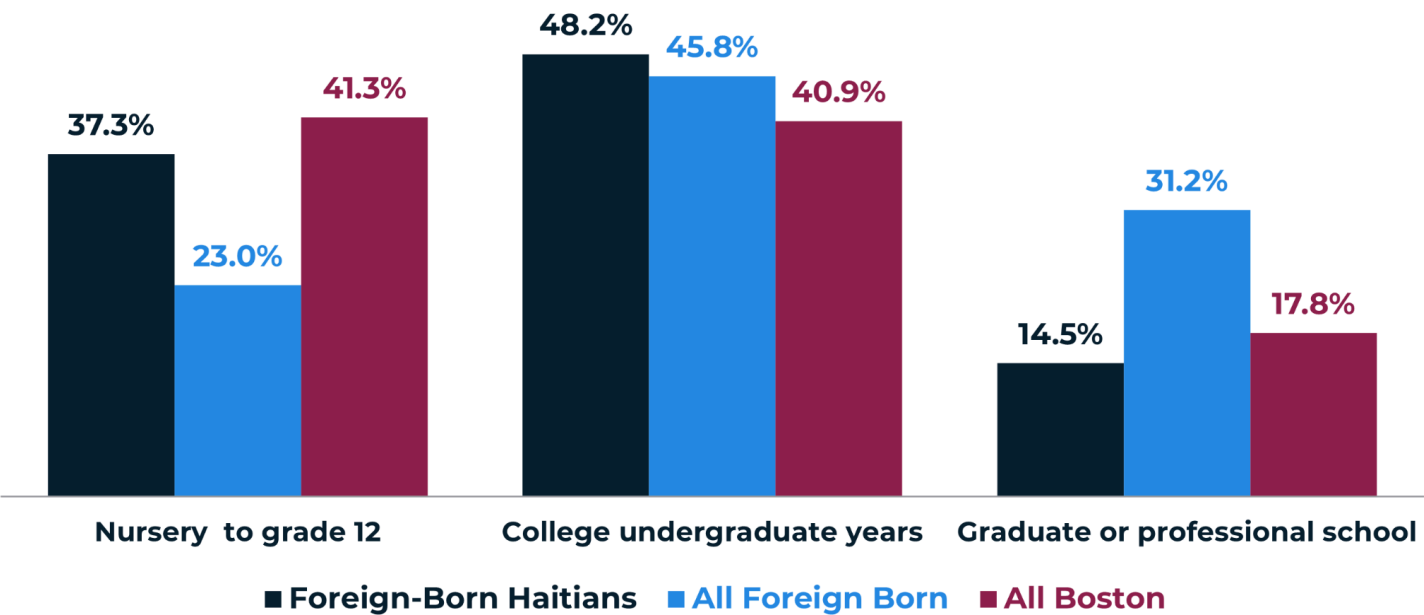


Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Almost half of foreign-born Haitians enrolled in school are in college undergraduate years. This may be due to the high share of other foreign-born individuals who come to the U.S. for educational purposes.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

School enrolled population by level, aged 3 years and over

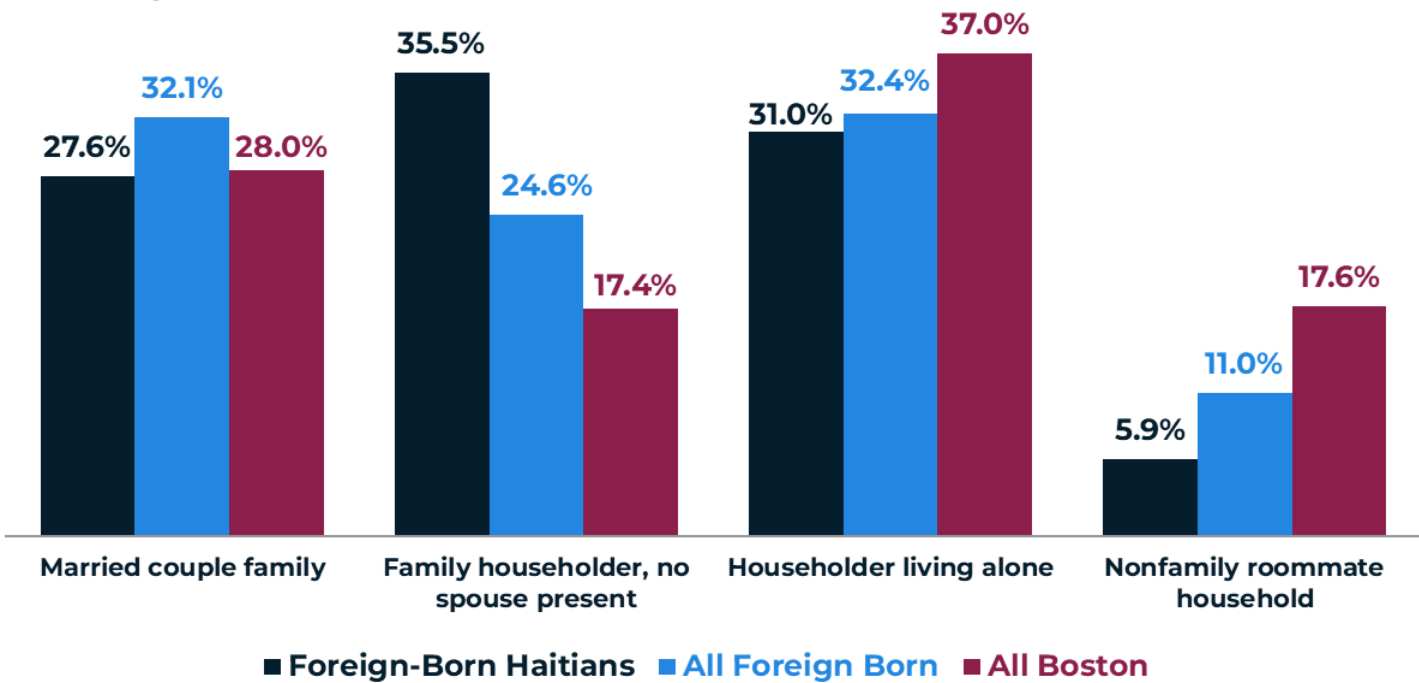


Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

The foreign-born Haitian population is most frequently in family households with no spouse present (36 percent of households), though there is a similar frequency of householders living alone and married couple family households. The share of non-family roommate households within the foreign-born Haitian population is significantly less than that of non-family roommate households in all of Boston.

TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD

Share of households

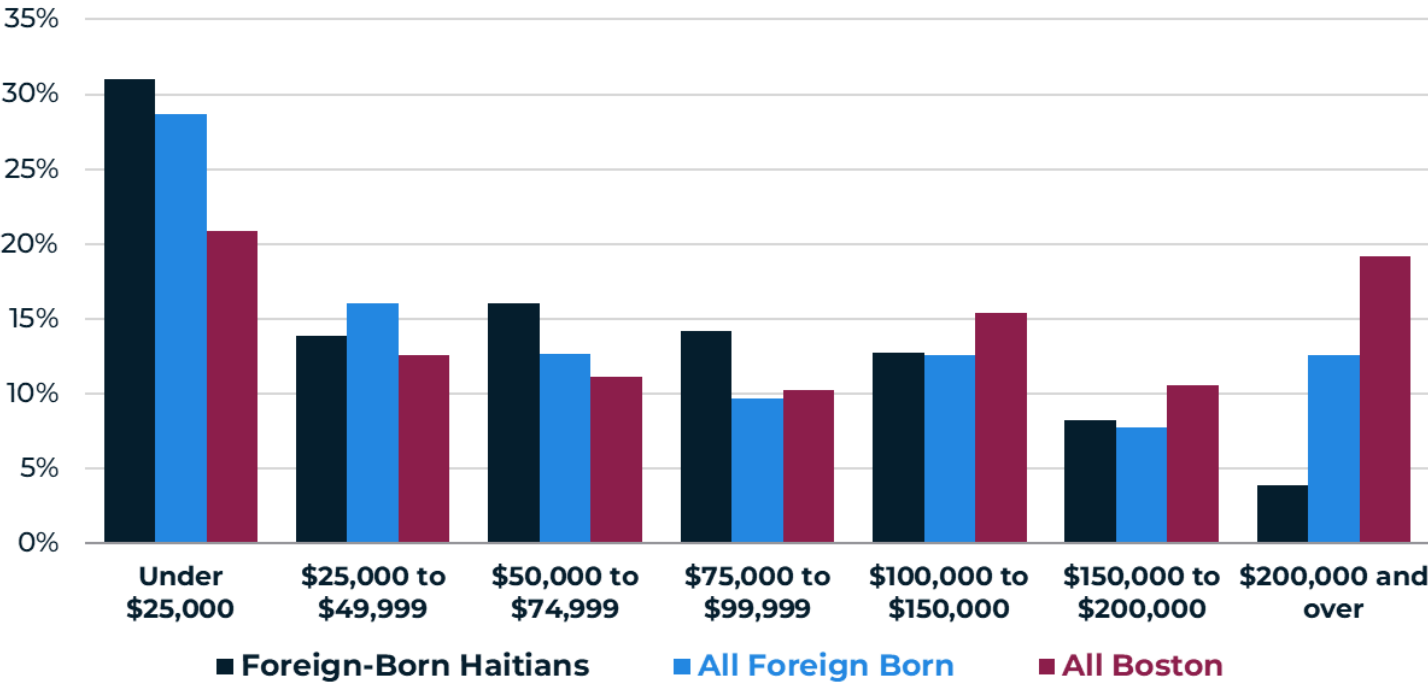


Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Almost 29 percent of Haitian-born householders own their home, a similar share to all foreign born and all Boston households. Only 4 percent of households headed by foreign-born Haitians have an annual household income of over \$200,000. When looking at the entire city, the share is almost 20 percent. The largest share for foreign-born Haitian households is also the lowest income level, with 31 percent of households having an income below \$25,000.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

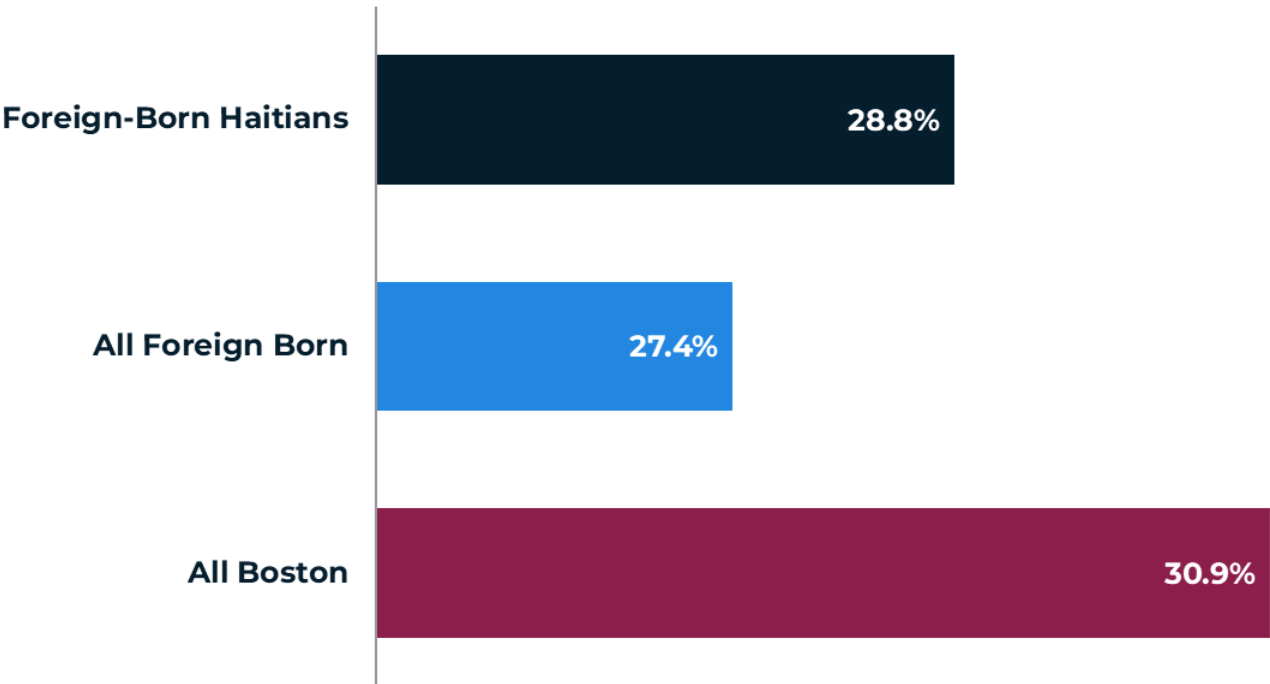
Share of households



Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Foreign-born Haitians have a similar homeownership rate compared to all Boston foreign born and all Boston residents in general. The foreign-born Haitians homeownership rate may be slightly higher than the entire foreign-born population due to earlier efforts to increase homeownership.

OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSEHOLDS
Share of householders that own their residence

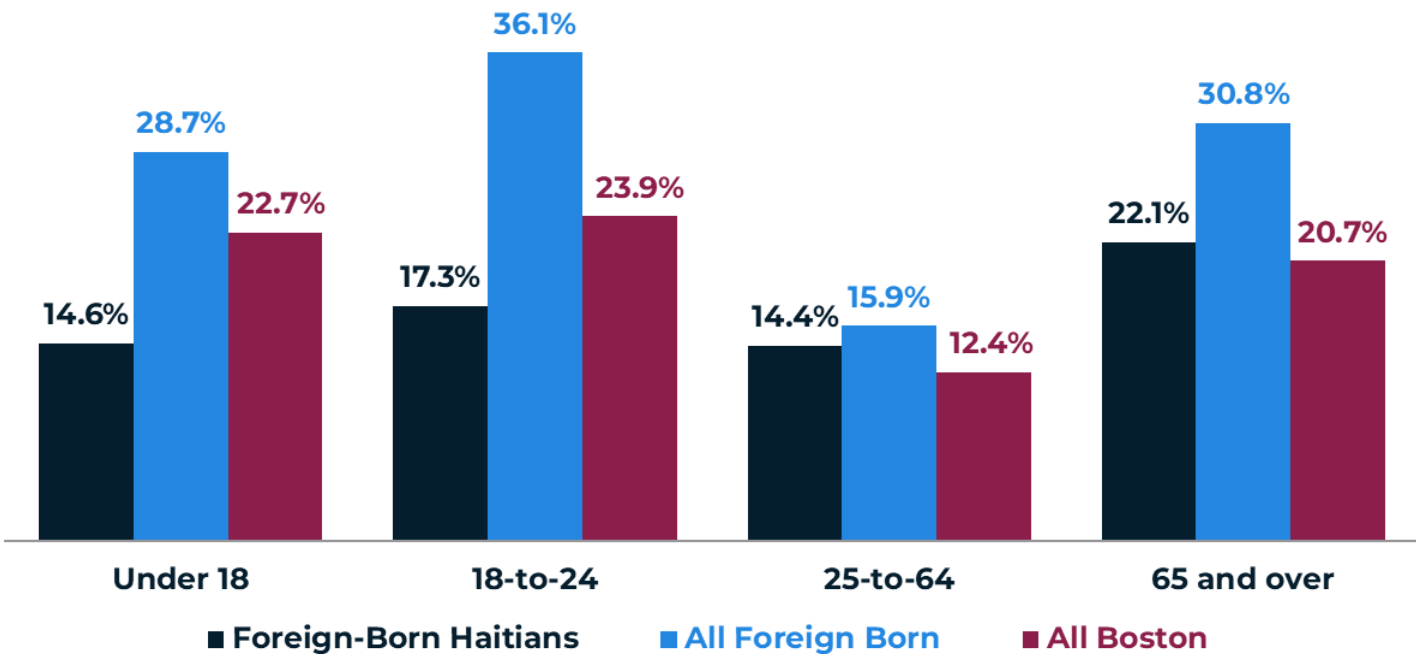


Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

The foreign-born Haitian population under age 25 has lower rates of poverty than all Boston residents, and the population aged 25 and older has just slightly higher rates of poverty.

POVERTY RATES

Share of age group that is living below the poverty line



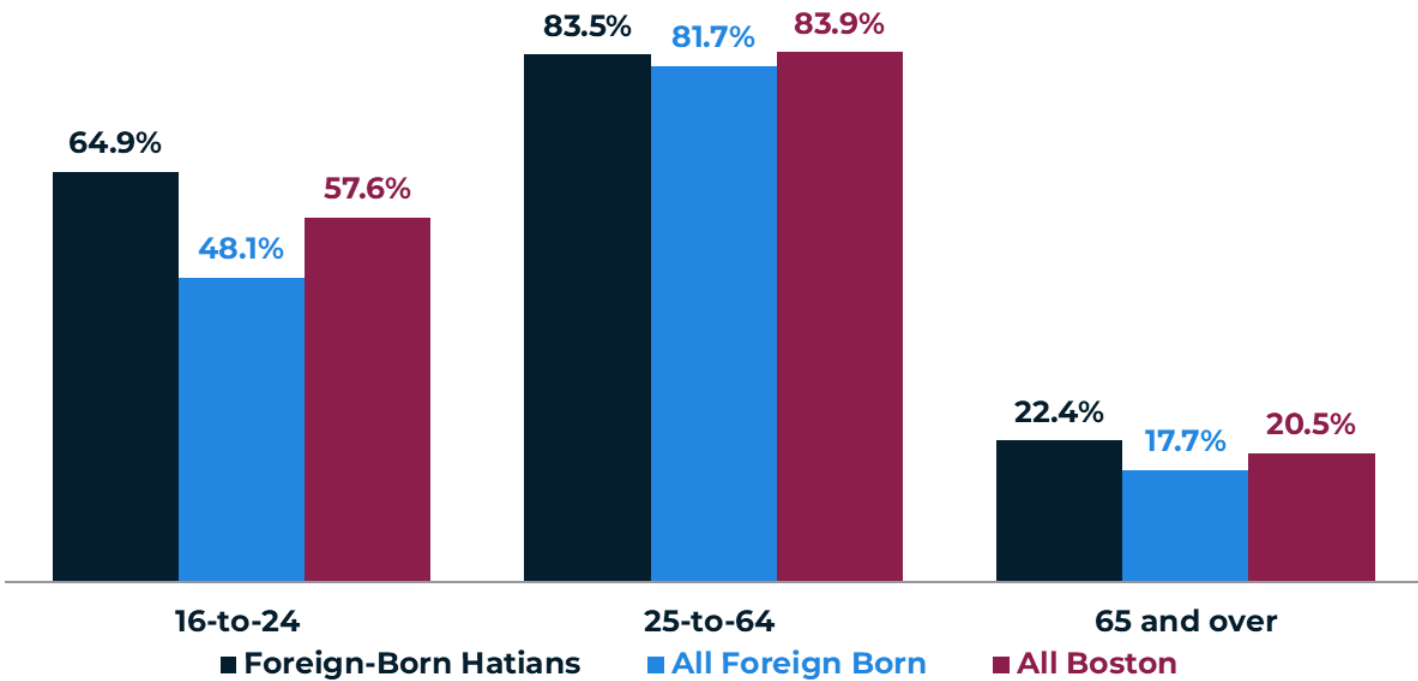
Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

EMPLOYMENT

The foreign-born Haitian population has an overall labor force participation rate of 66 percent. This is slightly higher than that of all foreign-born residents (65 percent) but slightly lower than that of the entire city population (68 percent). Foreign-born Haitians have higher rates of labor force participation at each age group.

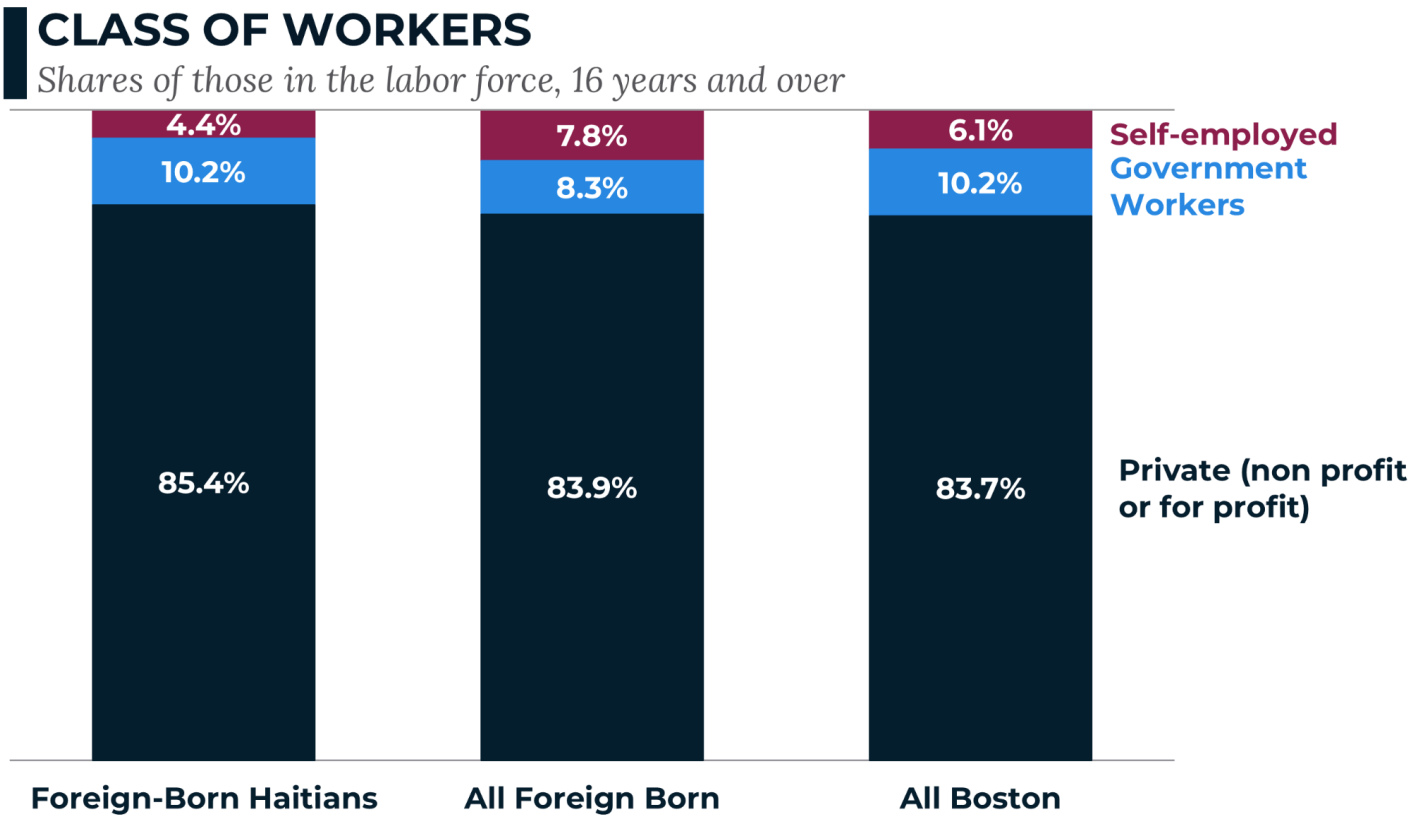
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

Shares of those participating in the labor force



Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Most foreign-born Haitian workers work in the private sector. Only 4 percent are self-employed, a lower share than the overall foreign-born population.

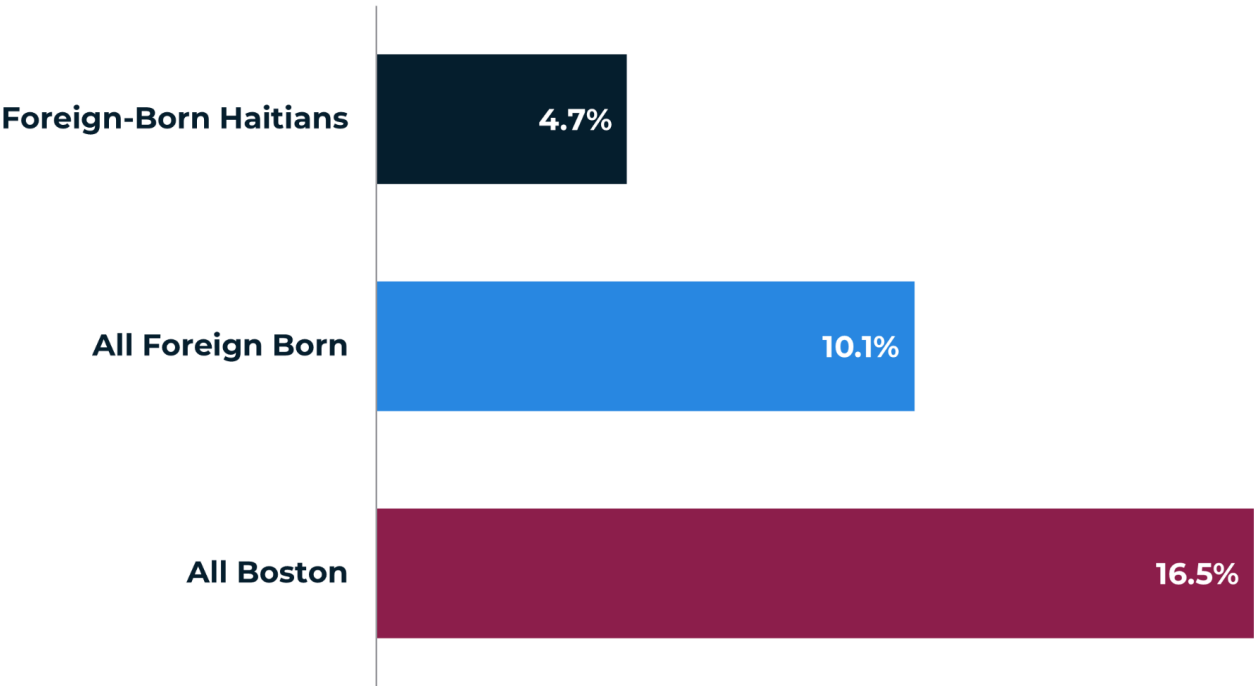


Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Approximately 5 percent of foreign-born Haitians work from home, compared to 17 percent of the whole city population and 10 percent for all foreign born. Foreign-born Haitian increased employment in healthcare support, transportation, and food preparation occupations does not provide opportunities for working from home.

WORKED FROM HOME

Share of those in the labor force, 16 years and over

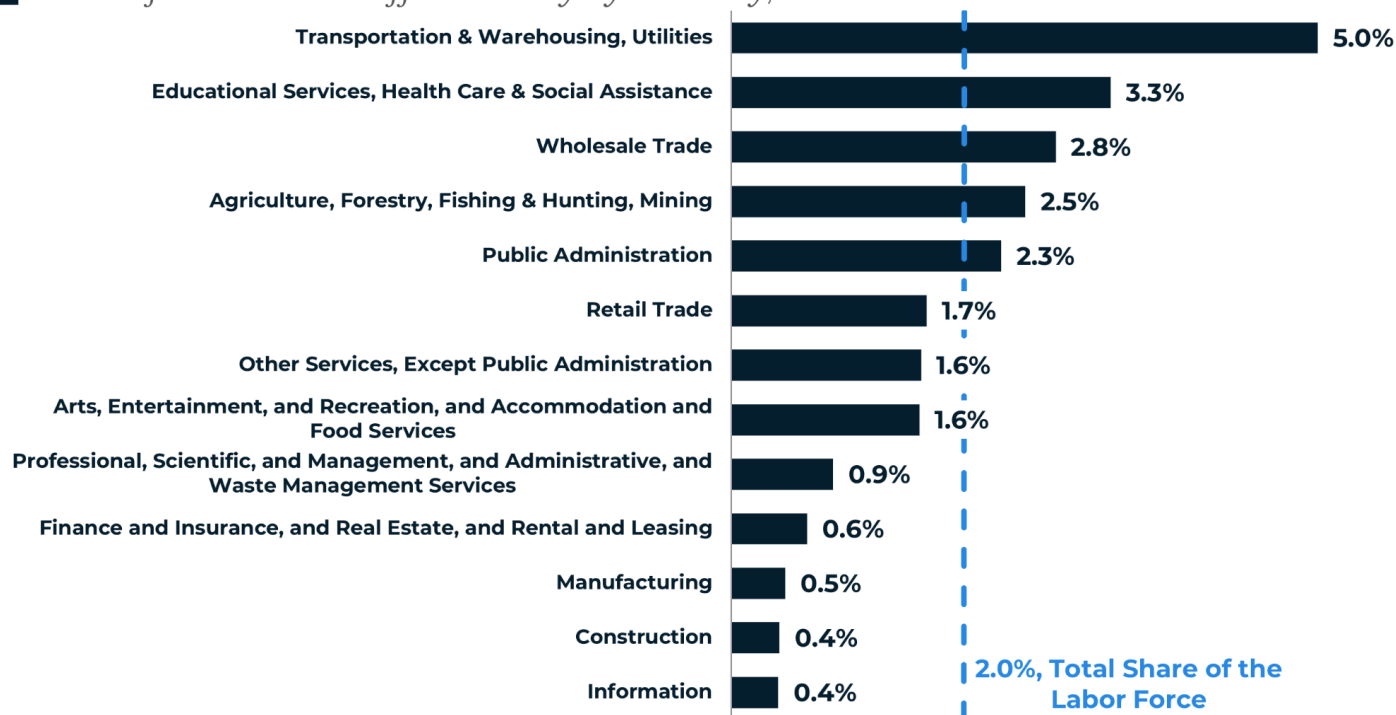


Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Haitian foreign-born workers working in Suffolk County make up 5 percent of transportation, warehousing, and utilities, 3.3 percent of educational services, health care, and social assistance industries, and 2.8 percent of wholesale trade industries. They are underrepresented in certain industries such as finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing (0.6 percent), manufacturing (0.5 percent), construction (0.4 percent), and information (0.4 percent).

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Share of workers in Suffolk county by industry, 2022



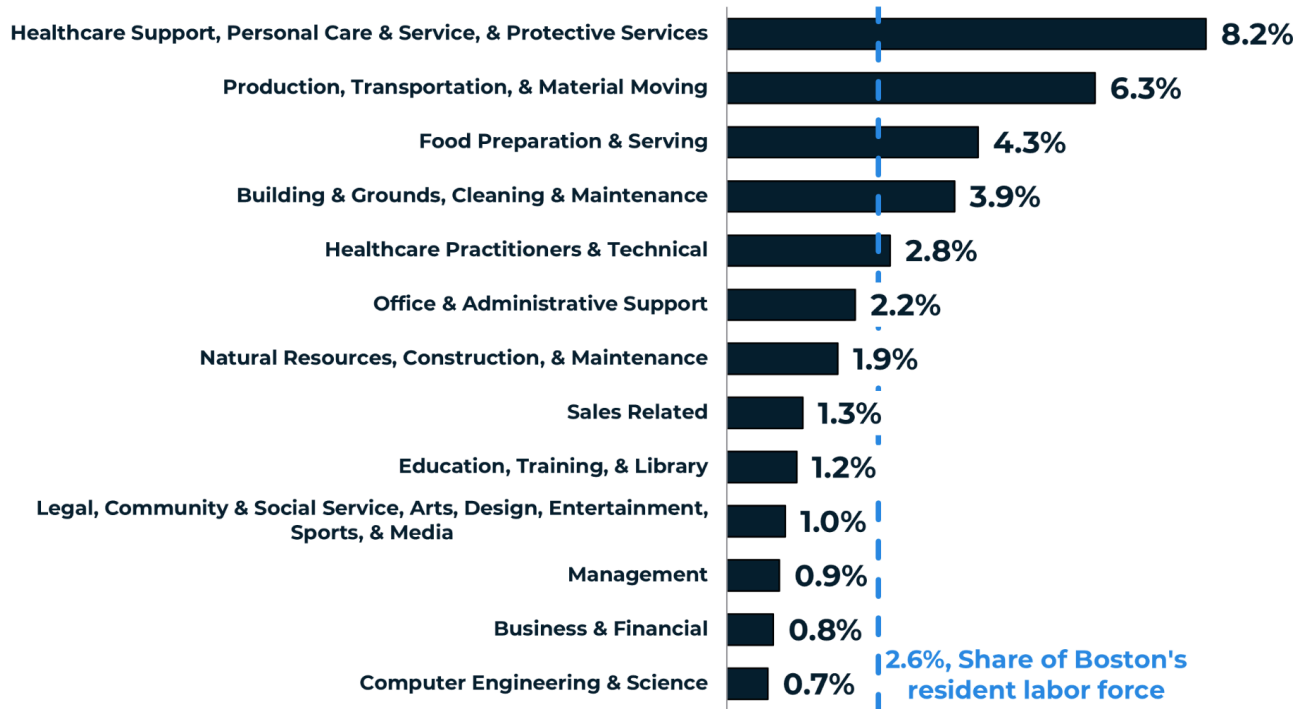
U.S. Census Bureau 2018-2022 5-Year American Community Survey (IPUMS), City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Foreign-born Haitians make up 2.6 percent of the total resident labor force in Boston. They make up 8.2 percent of healthcare support, personal care & services, and protective services and 6.3 percent of production, transportation, & material moving. The foreign-born Haitian population is underrepresented in management, business & financial jobs, and computer engineering & science.



FOREIGN-BORN HAITIAN OCCUPATIONS

Share of Boston's resident labor force, by occupation



Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

STANDARD OF LIVING

Approximately 32.4 percent of foreign-born Haitians have achieved a middle-class standard of living, compared with 43.5 percent of Boston's overall population, and 33.5 percent of all foreign born. A family income four times the poverty line 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 2022, a middle-class income would be at least \$75,600.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Haitian foreign-born workers contribute to Boston's economy. Their labor generates an additional 5,330 indirect and induced jobs in Suffolk County. They contribute 2.4 billion dollars



to Boston’s GCP. Haitian foreign-born workers employed in Suffolk County pay \$55 million in federal income tax and \$33 million in state income tax.⁷

CONCLUSION

Massachusetts is the state with the third-highest foreign-born Haitian population. Within Boston Haitians are the third-largest foreign-born population with 17,616 residents, contributing to the economy and culture within our city. Haitians tend to have higher rates of labor force participation than the foreign-born population overall. Making up 8.2 percent of workers in healthcare support, personal care & service, & protective service, Haitians serve a vital role in enriching Boston’s labor market.

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⁷Research Division estimates using Regional Economic Model, Inc., (REMI), PI+ Massachusetts Regions, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

