

**imagine
all the
people**

Dominican

immigrants in Boston

CITY OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

New Bostonian Series

June 2009

imagine all the people: Dominicans in Boston

The fall of General Rafael Trujillo in 1961 marked a major turning point in the history of the Dominican Republic as a nation and unleashed waves of migratory movements of its citizens. Over the last four decades, the Dominican Republic has seen continued migration of its residents from the countryside to urban areas through the Dominican Republic and, eventually, abroad to other nations.¹

Migration of Dominicans into the United States has primarily been fueled by a stagnant economic environment and to some extent unstable political circumstances (particularly during the 1960s). These conditions and a large demand for unskilled labor in the northeastern cities of the U.S. during the 1960s, translated into the



migratory phenomenon experienced by Dominicans today. Dominican migrants have formed deep-rooted, culturally rich communities in New York, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico, with fast-growing populations in other states like Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.



Photo by H. Fernando Bossa/Fernando's Hideaway/El Show De Fernandito

population

imagine

*Nearly 30% of
Dominicans
in Boston
are between
the ages of
20 and 34.*

population share

Results from the 2005-2007 American Community Survey² (ACS) show that there are approximately 744,540 foreign-born³ individuals from the Dominican Republic living in the United States. The U.S. is by far the leading destination for Dominican immigrants, with other primary destinations including Spain, Italy, Venezuela, the Netherlands Antilles, and Haiti.⁴

The vast majority of immigrants from the Dominican Republic moving to the U.S. settle in the Northeast, which accounts for approximately 82% of the foreign-born from the Dominican Republic.⁵

Massachusetts ranks fourth (7.5%) in states with the highest percentage of foreign-born residents from the Dominican Republic. The most popular states for Dominican immigrants are New York (54%), New Jersey (14%) and Florida (11%). Together these four states comprise nearly 87% of the total foreign-born population from the Dominican Republic living in the United States.⁶

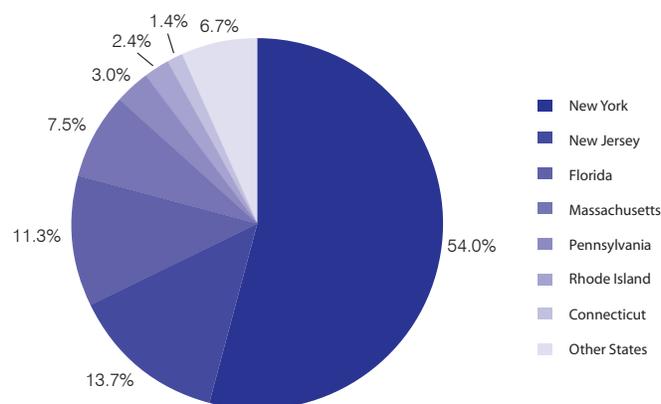
Of the close to 56,000⁷ Dominicans spread throughout Massachusetts⁸, 13,386 live in Boston⁹.¹⁰ The Dominican Republic is third to China

and Haiti in the top countries of origin for Boston's foreign-born population. Overall, Dominicans in Boston constitute just under 8% of the city's total foreign-born residents.¹¹

According to the 2000 Census, Boston's Dominican-born immigrants, though scattered throughout the city, live mostly in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain and Dorchester. Other concentrations reside in South Boston, Roslindale, Mattapan, Charlestown and the South End.

While we can look at the most recent ACS for estimating the total Dominican population, the most reliable cross-tabular data for relatively small groups, such as the foreign-born communities in Boston is the 2000 Census¹². In 2000, fifty-five percent of Dominican immigrants in Boston are female. More than 60 percent of Dominican immigrants in Boston are either married (39%) or divorced/separated (24%). Nearly 30% of all Dominican Bostonians are between the ages of 20-34. Over half of all Dominican Bostonians are over the age of 35. The vast majority of resident Dominicans (73%) are not naturalized U.S. citizens.

Share of Dominican Population by State



Source: ACS 2005-2007, BRA Research Division Analysis

educational attainment

Slightly less than half of Dominicans in Boston have not completed high school. This figure is higher than that of all foreign-born residents (34%) and over three times the proportion for the native-born population (16%). More than a quarter (28%) of Dominican immigrants have received a high school diploma with no further schooling.

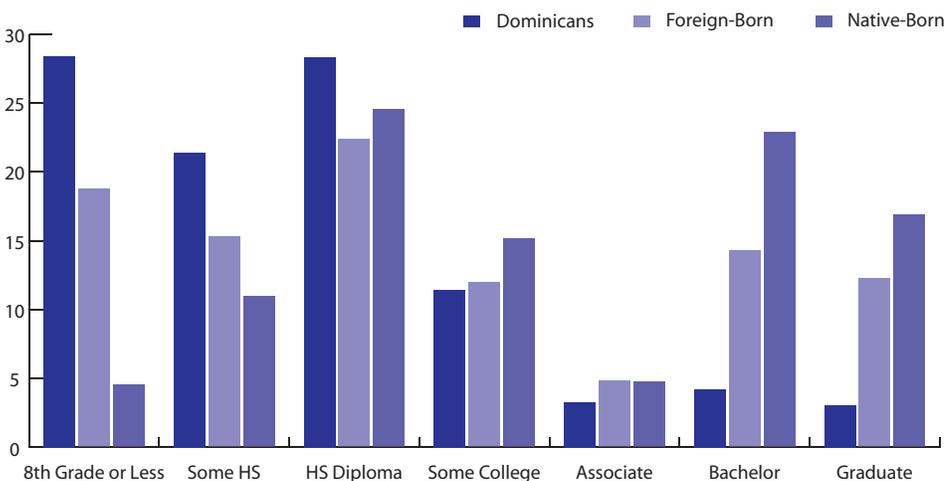
While 22% of Dominican immigrants have attended college, only 7% have completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 27% of the entire foreign-born population and 40% of the native-born. With respect to advanced degrees, only 3% of Dominicans living in Boston hold a graduate/professional degree or higher, compared with 12% of all foreign-born and 17% of the native-born.

Twenty-two percent of Dominican immigrants have at least some college education.



Photo by H. Fernando Bossa/Fernando's Hideaway/El Show De Ferandito

Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Older



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata (PUM) 5% Sam le BRA Research

occupations

occupations

Nearly half (45%) of the Dominican workforce in Boston work in service occupations.¹³ The next highest occupational category is technical, sales and administrative support occupations (25%), followed by construction, extraction and transportation occupations (9.4%) and managerial and professional occupations (8.9%).

Dominican immigrants are over-represented in the services occupations, which accounts for only 25% of jobs for the total foreign-born workforce. This high level of participation in service occupations is likely driven by the low levels of higher education among Dominican immigrants.

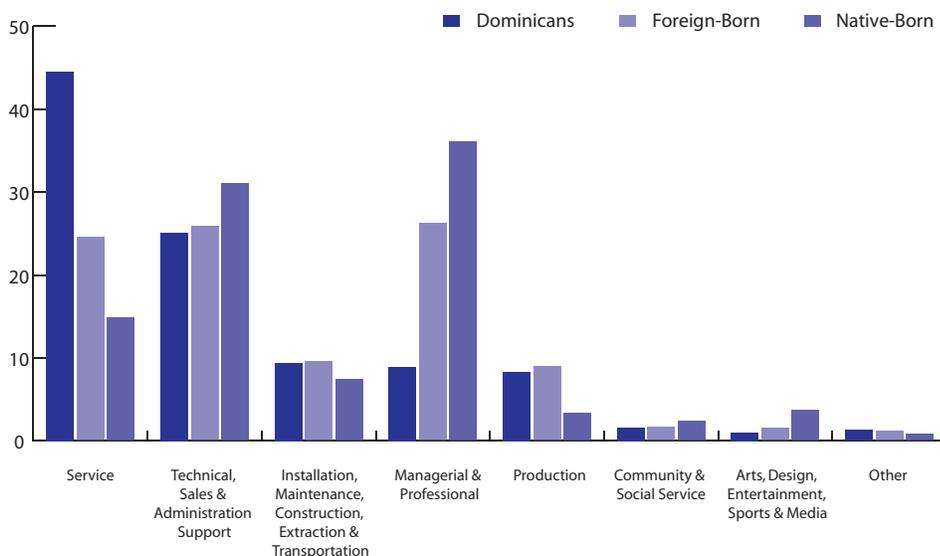
Conversely, Dominican immigrants in Boston are significantly under-represented in managerial and professional occupations (8.9% for Dominican immigrants compared with 26% for the overall foreign-born population).

In the technical, sales and administrative support category, representation of the Dominican population (25%) is similar to that of the entire foreign-born (26%), but below that of the native-born (31%).

In total, 60% of Dominican immigrants participate in the labor force compared with 60% of the total foreign-born population and 65% of the native-born population.¹⁴ The unemployment rate among Dominican-born immigrants in Boston is at 8.7%, higher than that of all foreign-born (7.1%) and the native-born (7.8%).¹⁵

An estimated 59% of Dominican-born immigrants in Boston work for private, for-profit companies. An additional 7.5% work for private, non-profit organizations. A total of 7.6% are employed in the public sector (local, state and federal government).

Occupations of Boston's Dominican Population



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

self-employed

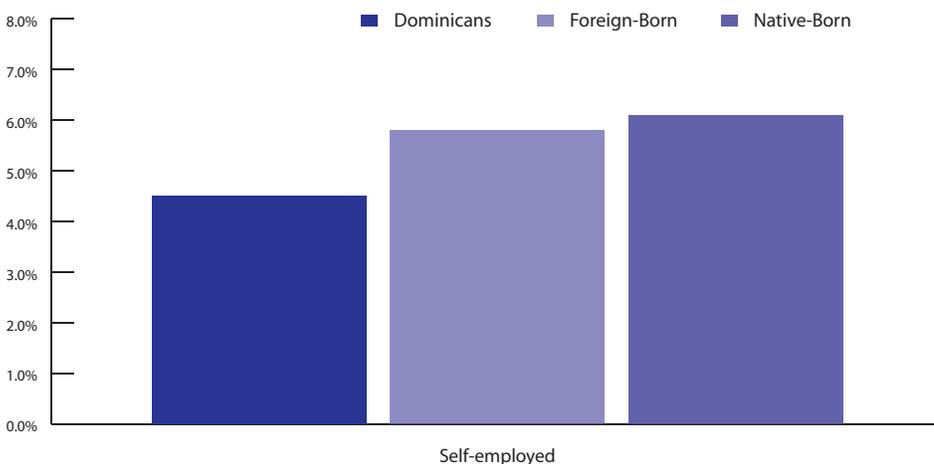
An estimated 4.5% of Dominican immigrants in Boston are self-employed. This compares with rates of 5.8% for the entire foreign-born population and 6.1% for the native-born population¹⁶



Photo provided by Tony Barros

Self employment among Dominicans in Boston is less than in both the foreign-born population and native-born population.

Share of Self-Employed



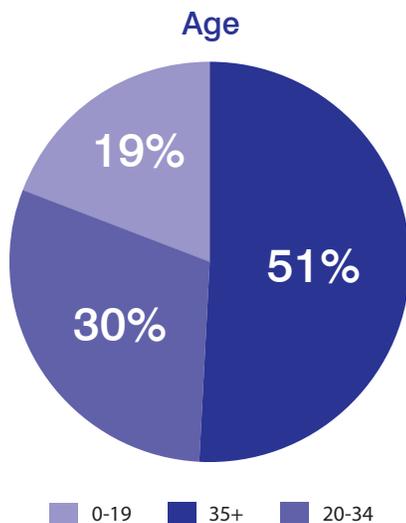
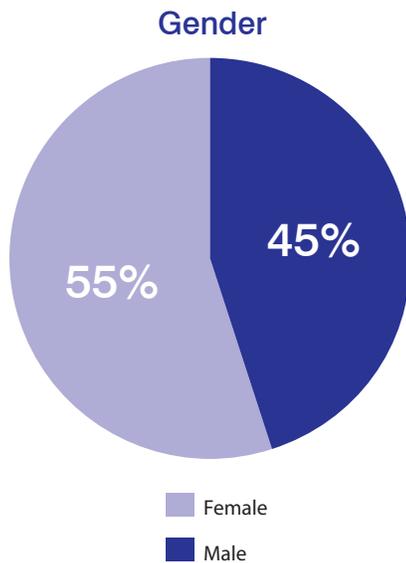
Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata (PUM) 5% Sample, BRA Research

imagine

More than 744,540
Dominicans live
in the U.S.

Main Destinations for Dominican Immigrants:

- U.S.
- Spain
- Italy



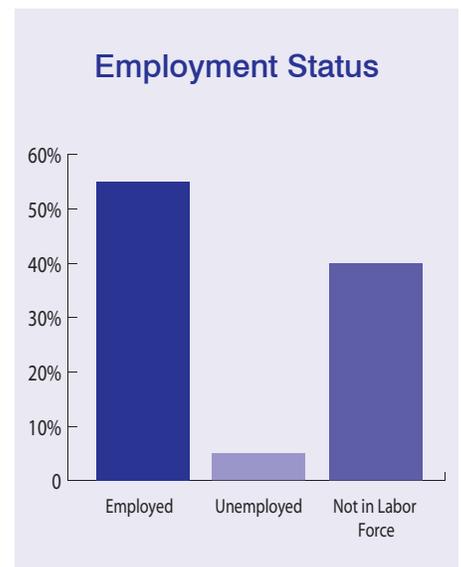
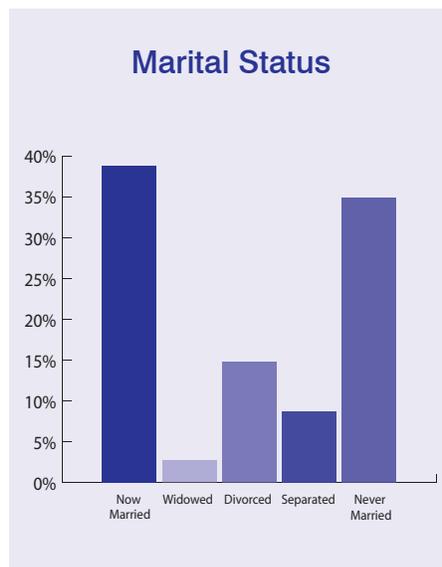
13,386 Dominicans in Boston

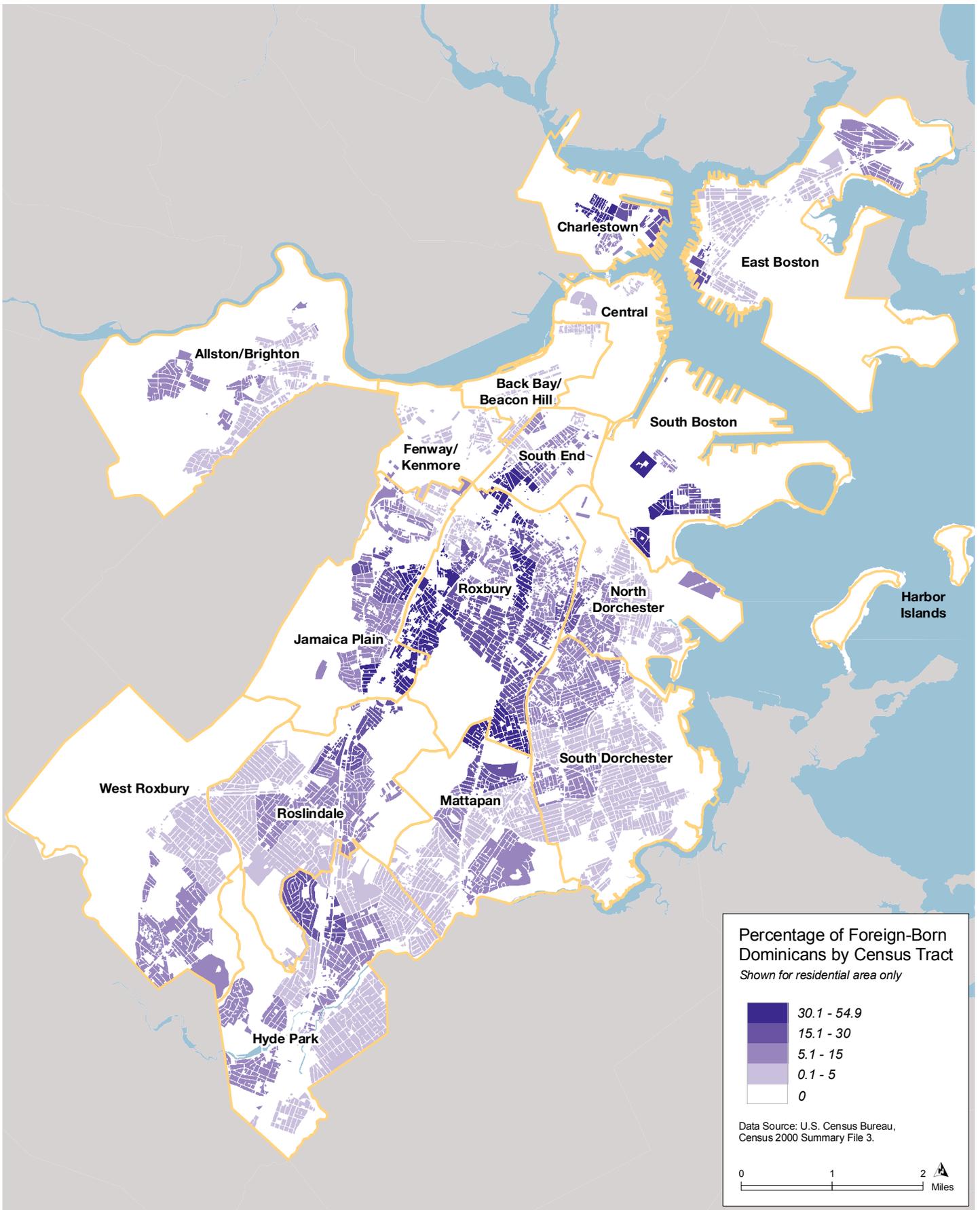
OCCUPATIONS

- 45%** Service
- 25%** Technical, Sales & Administrative Support
- 9%** Installation, Maintenance, Construction, Extraction & Transportation
- 9%** Managerial & Professional
- 8%** Production
- 2%** Community & Social Services
- 1%** Other
- 1%** Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media

CONTRIBUTING

- \$193 million** annual spending
- \$180 million** to the regional product
- \$52 million** in state and federal taxes
- 1,572 indirect jobs** for the local economy





imagine contributions

spending

Dominican immigrants contribute to the local economy through their labor and 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.

Dominican immigrants spend, from their after tax earnings, nearly \$193 million in Boston, annually.¹⁷ These annual expenditures contribute over \$180 million to the gross state product and generate nearly \$52 million in state and federal taxes.¹⁸ In total, these expenditures indirectly support 1,572 jobs in the Massachusetts economy.¹⁹

Beyond the contributions Dominican-born immigrants living in Boston make to the local economy, they continue to play a vital role in the economy of their home country by sending back remittances of \$12.2 million each year. This breaks down to an average of approximately \$200 per month sent back by each Dominican household.²⁰ This trend is also witnessed throughout the U.S. and beyond, with Dominicans living abroad contributing more than \$3.04 billion, or 10% of GDP, to the economy of the Dominican Republic in 2006.²¹



standard of living

Fewer than 10% of Dominicans have achieved a middle class standard of living²², compared with 38% of Boston's native-born population and 25% of all foreign-born.

A combination of factors may contribute to Dominicans low standard of living. One is the low educational attainment levels and lack of English proficiency among the Dominican population, as seen in the table below. While 45% of Boston's adult foreign-born population either lacks a high school diploma or has limited English-speaking skills, the rate among Dominican-born adults is significantly higher at 69.8%.



Photos by H. Fernando Bossa/Fernando's Hideaway/El Show De Fernandito

civic engagement

In terms of civic engagement, the Dominican population is active in politics, both locally and abroad. Locally, there are organized groups committed to mobilizing Dominican voters at local, U.S. and Dominican elections. One reason why Dominican political participation is so remarkable is the legislation passed by the Dominican government in 1996 that allows Dominicans to have dual citizenship, including children born abroad (outside of the Dominican Republic) to Dominican parents. The Dominican government also approved an electoral reform package allowing migrants the right to vote and to run for office, as well as those individuals who are naturalized American citizens of Dominican descent.²⁴ This awareness and willingness to fortify the political process for Dominicans both here and abroad demonstrates a deep commitment to civic participation.



*Collectively,
Dominicans
contribute
close to \$193
million to the
state economy,
pay over \$51
million in taxes
and support 1,572
indirect jobs.*

Distribution of Education and English Proficiency²³ in the Dominican Population (25+)

Education/English Proficiency	# of Dominican	% Dominican	% Foreign-Born	% Native-Born
Lack H.S. Diploma & English Proficient	1,533	16.6%	16.9%	14.5%
Lack H.S. Diploma & Limited English Proficiency	3,054	33.0%	17.2%	1.1%
Have H.S. Diploma & Limited English Proficiency	1,862	20.1%	11.3%	0.7%
Lack H.S. Diploma or Limited English Proficiency	6,449	69.8%	45.4%	16.3%

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

end notes



- 1) Sagas, E., Molina, S., Dominican Migration: Transnational Perspectives, 2005, pp. 1-4
- 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. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Research Division, (2009)
- 4) World Bank, Research and Data, Remittances Data 2007 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/DominicanRepublic.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) American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009).
- 8) According to MassInc, between 2000 and 2003, Dominicans made up 4.7% of all new immigrants to Massachusetts. Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). The Changing Face of Massachusetts.
- 9) The ACS's American Fact Finder website reports that there are an estimated 13,207 Dominicans 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 Dominicans in Boston is 13,386, the margin of error for this statistic at the 90% confidence interval is $\pm 1,849$. Meaning, the actual population size of Dominicans in Boston is likely to be between 11,537 and 15,235. Throughout this report we will report the adjusted population estimate provided by the 2005-2007 ACS for foreign-born Dominicans 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
- 10) There are community leaders and local activists who dispute 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.
- 11) American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009).
- 12) Cross-tabulations of the ACS from relatively small groups can lead to making generalizations about subsections of a 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 Dominicans community, while using the 2005-2007 adjusted ACS estimate to express the total population.
- 13) 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.
- 14) 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, 2005.
- 15) These unemployment data are from the 2000 Census. It should be noted that unemployment rates are subjected to a much greater level of fluctuation, varying from quarter to quarter, than all of the other demographic data in this report.
- 16) 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.
- 17) Total gross income of Dominicans totaled \$253.8 million in 2007. Adjustments were made for remittances assuming a monthly transfer of \$199 per household. This amount is in accordance with estimates made by Orozco, M. (2002), Remittances, Costs, and Market Competition, presentation of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. BRA Research Division Analysis, 2009, Regional Economic Model, Inc. (REMI) calculations.
- 18) Dominicans generate \$10.6 million in state income taxes, \$3 million in state sales taxes, and \$38.1 million in federal income taxes. BRA Research Division, 2009, REMI calculations
- 19) BRA Research Division, 2009, REMI calculations
- 20) Orozco, M. (2002), Remittances, Costs, and Market Competition, presentation of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.
- 21) World Bank, Research and Data, Remittances Data 2007 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/DominicanRepublic.pdf>
- 22) 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 be at least \$44,856 which is at the 43rd percentile of all families. Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). The Changing Face of Massachusetts.
- 23) 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.
- 24) Levitt, P. (2001). The Transnational Villagers. Los Angeles. University of California Press.



CITY OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino
Mayor



Boston
Redevelopment
Authority

John F. Palmieri, *Director*
Alvaro Lima, *Director of Research*



Mayor's Office of New Bostonians
Cheng Imm Tan, *Director*

Produced by the Research Division

Alvaro Lima
Mark Melnik
Jeremy B. Thompson
Nanette Dyer Blake

With a special thanks to Tony Barros

Publication: 610-4

Map by the Digital Cartography & GIS
Alla Ziskin