

**imagine
all the
people**

Brazilian

immigrants in Boston

CITY OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

New Bostonian Series

August 2007
June 2009—Revised Edition

imagine all the people: Brazilian immigrants in Boston

Large-scale migration from Brazil is a relatively recent phenomenon. Indeed, Brazil has historically been a host country for immigrants from many nations. From the early 19th century to the mid 20th century, German, Swiss, Italians, Spaniards, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Japanese and others joined the Portuguese in searching for new opportunities in Brazil.

After the military coup of 1964, thousands of Brazilians went into exile. Although most of these exiles returned to Brazil after the amnesty of 1979, the number of economic emigrants grew in the 1980's. According to a Brazilian demographer, José Alberto Magno de Carvalho, Director of the Center of Development and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, there were approximately one to 2.5 million Brazilians living outside Brazil by 1995.¹



The United States, Paraguay and Japan, are the main destinations for Brazilian immigrants.² According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey³ (ACS), there are close to 343,000 Brazilians living in the United States representing 0.9 percent of the country's foreign-born population of 37 million.⁴ During the early years, immigrants from Minas Gerais dominated the immigration flow to the U.S. Now, Goiás, Paraná and Santa Catarina have also become major immigrant exporting regions. Today, at least sixteen Brazilian states contribute to the migration stream.



imagine

one in two

Brazilians in

Boston are

between the

ages of 20

and 34.

population

population share

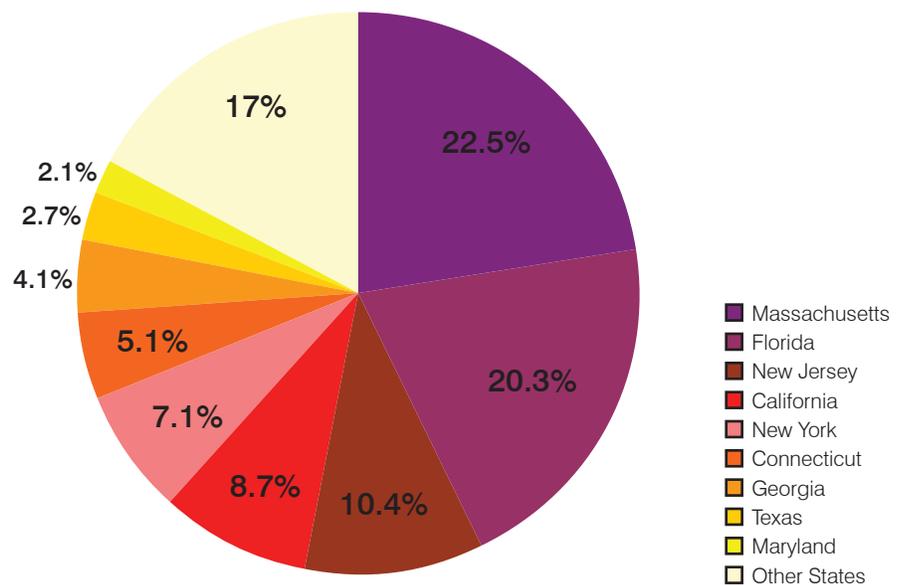
The majority of Brazilian immigrants to the United States live in metropolitan regions. Massachusetts (23%) ranks first followed by Florida (20%). Other large concentrations of Brazilians include New Jersey (10.4%), California (8.7%) and New York (7.1%). Combined, these five states constitute 69 percent of the total foreign-born population from Brazil in the United States.

In 2007, almost 77,000 Brazilians resided in Massachusetts accounting for 8.4 percent of the State's total immigrant population.⁵ This share is increasing rapidly and fuelled by the recent inflow of Brazilian immigrants. Between 2000 and 2003, Brazilians made up 19.1 percent of all new immigrants coming to Massachusetts.⁶ Massachusetts is now the primary U.S. destination for Brazilian immigrants (27%) followed

by Florida (15%), California (10%) and New York (4%), which is reflected in the fact that Brazilians are now the fastest growing immigrant community in Massachusetts.⁷

There are an estimated 6,822⁸ Brazilians living in Boston.⁹ While we can look at the most recent ACS for estimating the total Brazilian population, the most reliable cross-tabular data for relatively small groups, such as the foreign-born communities in Boston is the 2000 Census¹⁰. According to the 2000 Census, most Brazilians were male (53%), single (45%), and 50 percent of them were between the ages of 20 and 34 – a greater proportion of young adults than in the general population (33%). Fifteen percent of resident Brazilians were U.S. citizens by naturalization.

Share of Brazilian Population by State



Source: ACS 2005-2007, BRA Research Division Analysis

educational attainment

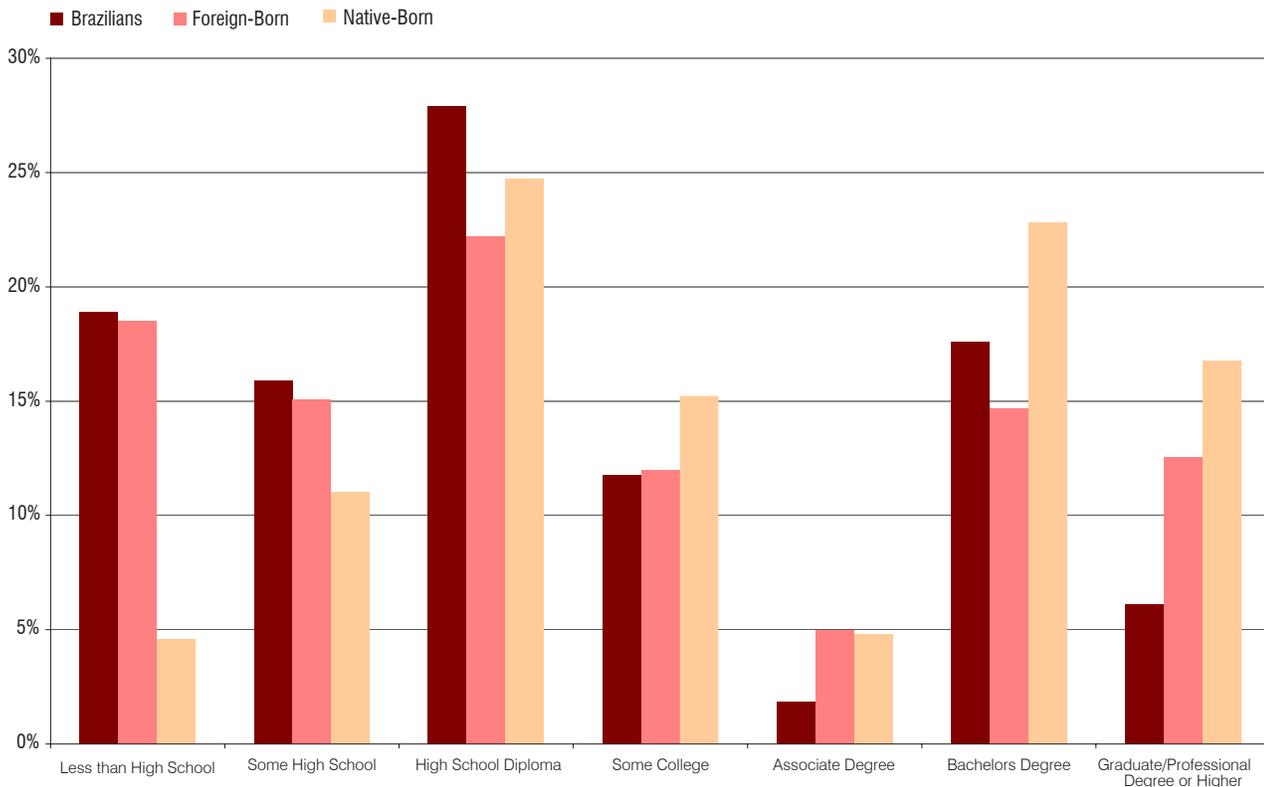
Although many Brazilians living in Boston have not completed high school¹¹, more than a quarter (28%) of Brazilian immigrants have received a high school diploma with no further schooling. Approximately 38% of Brazilian immigrants have attended college, with 24% having completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 27% of the entire foreign-born population and 40% of the native-born. With respect to advanced degrees, only 6% of Brazilians living in Boston hold a graduate/professional degree or higher, compared with 12% of all foreign-born and 17% of the native-born.



imagine

*Brazilians
are more likely
to hold a
high school
diploma than
both the foreign-
born and
the native-born
population.*

Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Older



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

occupations

occupations

Most Brazilians living in Boston are employed in the following occupations: services (42%), technical, sales and administrative support (19%), construction, extraction and transportation (13%), managerial and professional (14%) and production (6%).

Brazilians are over represented in service occupations compared to native (15%) and foreign-born (24%) populations. They are over represented in construction occupations relative to the native-born and foreign-born populations (8% and 10% respectively). And, they are over represented in the arts, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations (4%) relative to both the native (3.6%) and the foreign-born (2%). Brazilians are under represented in all other occupations. They are least represented in managerial and technical occupations.

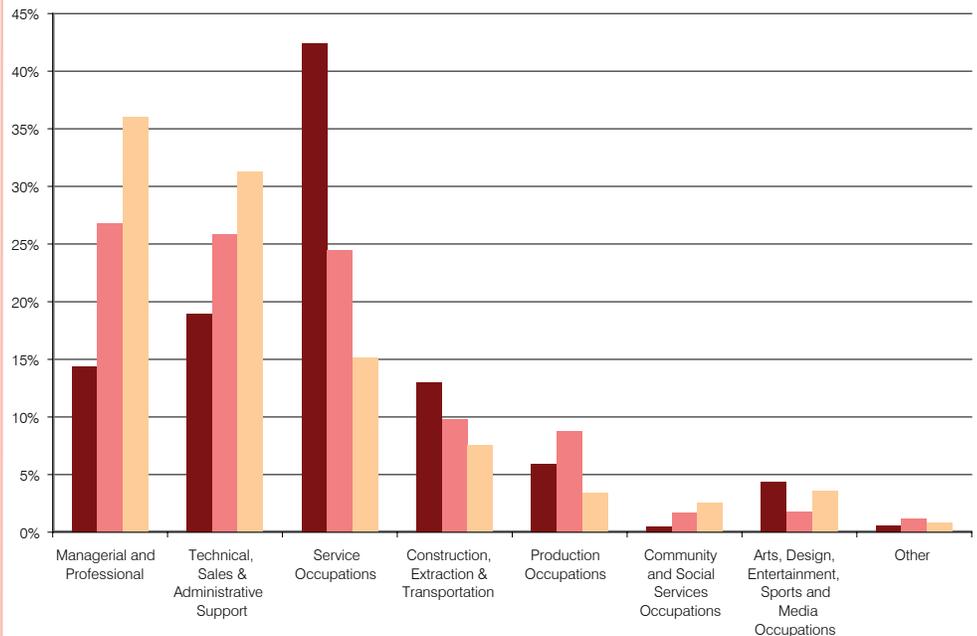
A little over two-thirds of Brazilians in Boston are employed. The labor force participation rate¹² of Brazilians is 75%, compared with 63% for the rest of the population. The unemployment rate among Brazilians is 3% compared to 7.2% citywide.¹³

This high rate of labor force participation and low unemployment rate is not uncommon among immigrants and reflects a common reason for immigrating, namely to secure income through employment.

The majority of Brazilians working in Boston (61%) work for a private for profit company. Another 5% work for a private not for profit organization.

Occupations for Population 25 Years and Older

■ Brazilians ■ Foreign-Born ■ Native-Born



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

imagine

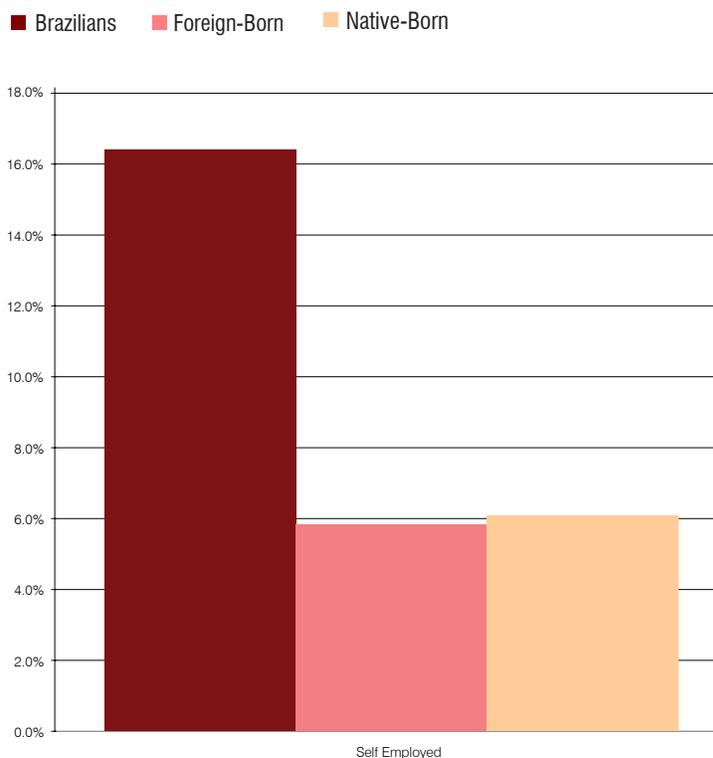
More than 16% of Brazilians are self-employed, a rate almost three times that of other foreign-born and more than double that of the native-born population.

self-employed

More than 16 percent are self-employed; a rate almost three times that of the foreign-born population and more than double the self-employment rate of the native-born population.

Such a high self-employment rate may be explained by high rates of financial capital among Brazilians as well as the fact that they emigrated from a country that also has a high self-employment rate.¹⁴

Share of Self Employed Workers



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

imagine

More than 342,732
Brazilians live in
the U.S.

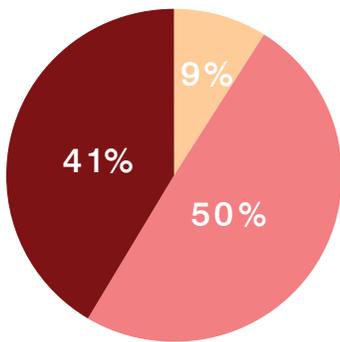
Main destinations for
Brazilian immigrants:

- U.S.
- Paraguay
- Japan

Major Brazilian emigrant regions:

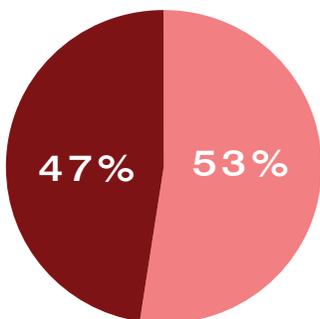
- Minas Gerais
- Goiás
- Parana
- Santa Catarina

Brazilians by Age



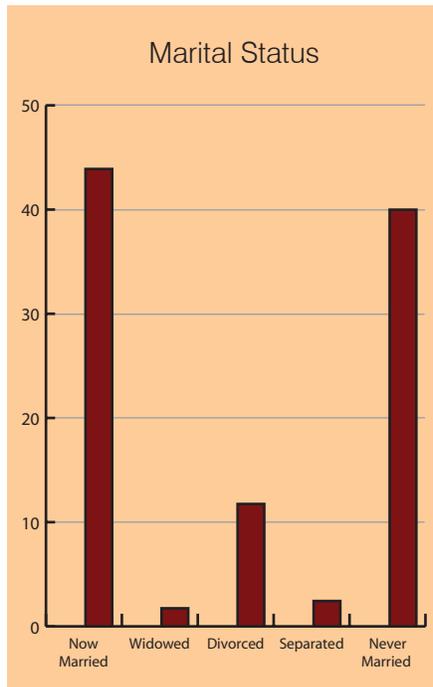
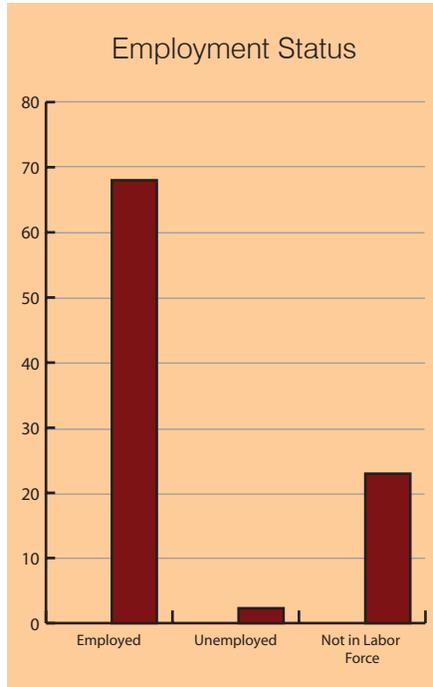
0-19 20-34 35+

Brazilians by Gender



Male Female

6,822 Brazilians in Boston



occupations

- 13%** construction, extraction, and transportation
- 43%** services
- 15%** managerial and professional
- 19%** technical, sales and administrative support
- 6%** production
- 4%** arts, design and media

contributing

\$132 million
annual spending

\$157 million
to the gross state product

\$38 million
in state and federal taxes

1,733 direct and indirect jobs
for the local economy

entrepreneurship

annual sales

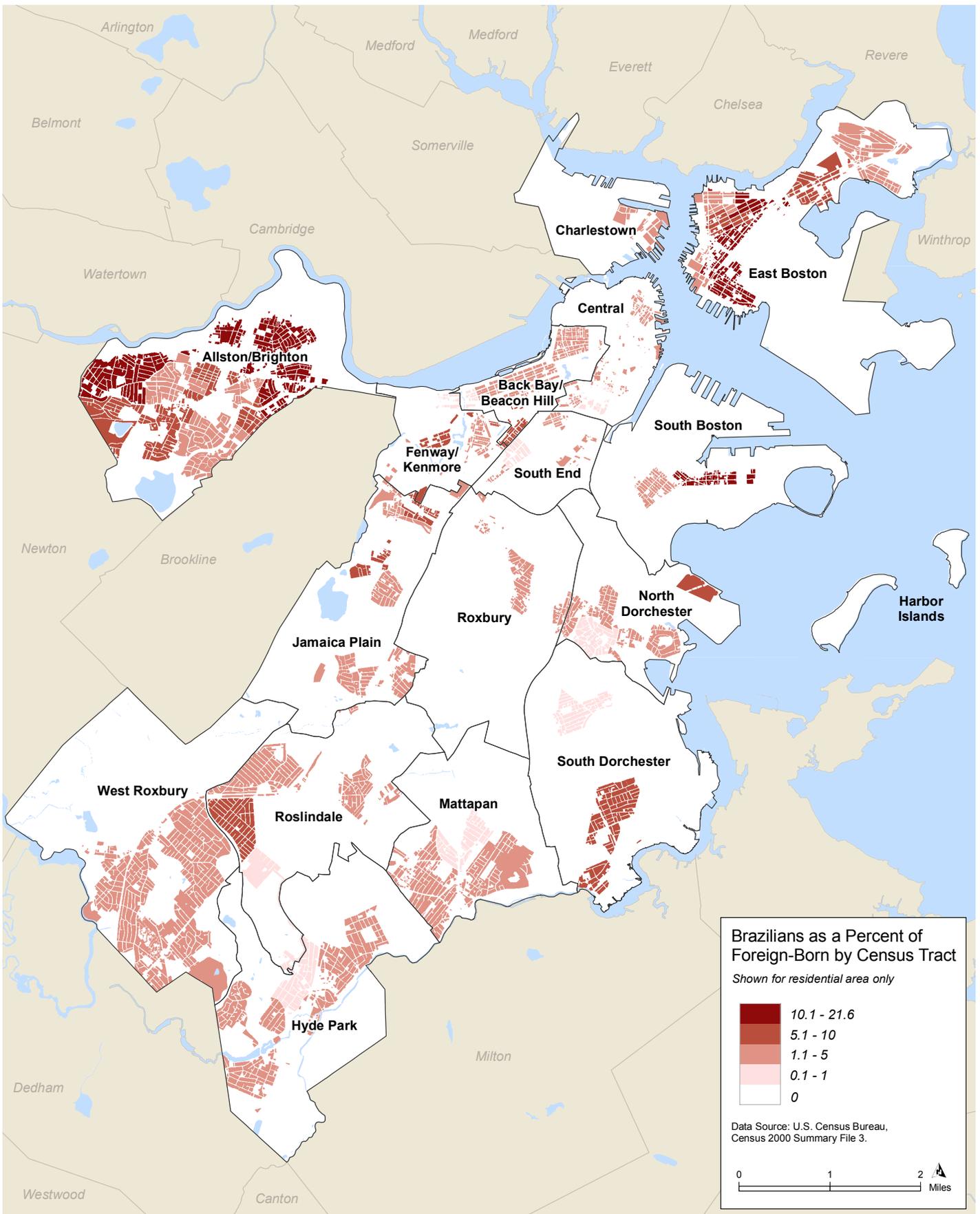
\$40 million

business ownership

150 small businesses

homebuying

Brazilians bought
3 out of 10 homes
sold to immigrants in
Massachusetts



contributions

entrepreneurship

Brazilians contribute to Boston's economy through entrepreneurship. As noted earlier, Brazilians have a very high self-employment rate. They own more than 150 small businesses in the greater Boston area, specializing in restaurants, grocery, travel and insurance among other industry sectors.



Combined, these businesses represent more than \$40 million in annual sales, employ more than 400 people¹⁵ and contribute \$24 million to the regional product, \$2 million in State and Federal taxes¹⁶ and 253 indirect jobs. Collectively, these businesses contribute a total of 653 direct and indirect jobs to the region.

Despite these contributions, only 21% of Brazilians have achieved at best a middle class standard of living¹⁷, compared to 47% of Boston's native-born population and 29% of all adult foreign-born.

spending

Brazilian immigrants further contribute to the local economy through their labor as well as through their spending. For example, for every 10 homes sold to immigrants in Massachusetts in 2005, three were purchased by Brazilians making them the largest home buying group, second only to the Chinese.¹⁸

The total value of their contributions is estimated using a regional economic model (REMI) that calculates the value of goods and services consumed on each dollar spent.

Brazilians spend, from their after tax earnings, nearly \$132 million in Boston, annually.¹⁹ These annual expenditures generate a regional product of \$133 million in local spending and \$36 million in State and Federal taxes.²⁰ This expenditure in turn, generates 1,080 indirect jobs. in the local economy.²¹

Beyond the contributions Brazilian-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 \$10.4 million each year. This breaks down to an average of approximately \$342 per month sent back by each Brazilian household²². This trend is also witnessed throughout the U.S. and beyond, with Brazilians living abroad contributing more than \$4.25 billion, or 0.4% of GDP, to Brazil's economy 2006.²³

standard of living

Only 20.6 percent of Brazilians have achieved a middle class standard of living compared to 38% of Boston's native-born population and 25% of all foreign-born.²⁴

A combination of factors may contribute to Brazilians poor standing. In part, this may reflect the effect of the barriers to opportunity that non-recognition of foreign qualifications presents to Brazilian workers. There is a high rate of low educational levels and English proficiency among Brazilians. For example, while 45% of Boston's adult foreign-born population either lacks a high school diploma or has limited English-speaking skills, an already high proportion, rates among adult Brazilians living in Boston are substantially higher at 59.3%.²⁵

civic engagement

Brazilians further contribute to the city's economic and social life through their civic participation. Grassroots organizations such as the Brazilian Women's Group and the Brazilian Immigrant Center are very active and have celebrated their tenth anniversaries this year.

In addition, Brazilian press and media are establishing a permanent presence in the U.S. In the metropolitan Boston area, Brazilians produce fourteen newspapers with a weekly distribution of 20,000 issues and nine monthly magazines with a distribution of 12,000. They also support two of the largest Brazilian television networks transmitting directly from Brazil on a daily basis.²⁷

*Collectively,
Brazilians
contribute
\$157 million
to the economy,
pay \$38 million
in taxes, and
create 1,733 direct
and indirect jobs.*

Distribution of Education and English Proficiency²⁶ in the Brazilian Population (25+)

Education/English Proficiency	# of Brazilian	% Brazilian	% Foreign-Born	% Native-Born
Lack H.S. Diploma & English Proficient	417	12.3%	16.9%	14.5%
Lack H.S. Diploma & Limited English Proficiency	793	23.4%	17.2%	1.1%
Have H.S. Diploma & Limited English Proficiency	801	23.6%	11.3%	0.7%
Lack H.S. Diploma or Limited English Proficiency	2,011	59.3%	45.4%	16.3%

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

endnotes



- 1 The Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute registered the statistical "absence" of 1,379,928 Brazilians between the ages of 20 and 44 from the 1991 Brazilian Census, a fact that can only be explained by emigration. Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE) (2000).
- 2 World Bank, Research and Data, Remittances Data 2007 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Brazil.pdf>
- 3 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>
- 4 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. (2005).
- 5 American Community Survey, 2005-2007, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2009).
- 6 Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). *The Changing Face of Massachusetts*.
- 7 Brazilian population estimates vary widely. For example, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that in 2001 there were between 800,000 and 1.1 million Brazilians living in the United States. Cited in Margolis, Maxine L. (2005). *Involving the Brazilian Diaspora in Brazilian Studies: Brazilian Immigration to the United States*. Department of Anthropology, University of Florida.
- 8 The ACS's American Fact Finder website reports that there are an estimated 6,731 Brazilians 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. For more information on American Fact Finder please see: http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en
- 9 As mentioned earlier, ACS data is subject to sampling error. While our adjusted estimate using the 2005-2007 ACS for foreign-born Brazilians in Boston is 6,822, the margin of error for this statistic at the 90% confidence interval is $\pm 2,071$. Meaning, the actual population size of Brazilians in Boston is likely to be between 4,751 and 8,893. Throughout this report we will report the adjusted population estimate provided by the 2005-2007 ACS for foreign-born Brazilians in Boston. These population counts are estimates, however.
- 10 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 Brazilian community, while using the 2005-2007 adjusted ACS estimate to express the total population.
- 11 The proportion of Brazilians with less than a high school education (34%), is equal to that of the foreign-born population and much greater than the native-born (16%). U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.
- 12 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).
- 13 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.
- 14 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.
- 15 Lima, A. (1997) *Brazilian Businesses in Greater Boston*. Boston: Consulate General of Brazil (Boston)
- 16 Brazilian-owned businesses generate \$0.426 million in State income taxes, \$0.025 million in State sales taxes paid, and \$1.5 million in Federal income taxes. BRA Research Division. (2009). *Regional Economic Model, Inc. REMI calculations*.
- 17 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*.
- 18 Moraes, C. (2005). *Brazilians Bought 3 out of 10 Homes Sold to Immigrants in Massachusetts*. Metropolitan Brazilian News, Edition 242, Year V, 09/30/05 to 10/06/05.
- 19 Total gross income of Brazilians totaled \$177 million in 2004. Adjustments were made for remittances assuming a monthly transfer of \$342 per household. This amount is in accordance with estimates made by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Marcuss, M. (2005). *International Remittances: Information for New England Financial Institutions*.
- Remittances are another way Brazilians have an economic impact, and in this case, on the Brazilian economy. In 2004, Boston's Brazilians sent back to Brazil \$10.9 million in remittances. Worldwide, in 1995, Brazil received a total of \$2.9 billion in remittances. International Monetary Fund. (2000). *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook*.
- 20 Brazilians generate \$7.4 million in State income taxes, \$2.1 million in State sales taxes paid, and \$26.5 million in Federal income taxes. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Research Division. (2009). *REMI calculations*.
- 21 BRA Research Division. (2009). *REMI calculations*.
- 22 Orozco, M. (2002), *Remittances, Costs, and Market Competition*, presentation of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.
- 23 World Bank, Research and Data, Remittances Data 2007 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Brazil.pdf>
- 24 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*.
- 25 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.
- 26 Ibid
- 27 Galvão, H. M. (2002). *The Brazilian Community of New England: An Economic Profile*.



CITY OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino
Mayor



Publication: 610-2



Mayor's Office Of New Bostonians
Cheng Imm Tan, Director

Produced by the BRA Research Division

Alvaro Lima, *Director of Research*
Martina Toponarski
Nanette Dyer Blake
Mark Melnik

For more info:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdr/pdr.asp>

Map by the Digital Cartography & GIS

Alla Ziskin

Brazilian Immigrant Center

139 Brighton Avenue Suite 7
Allston, MA 02134
tel: 617.783.8001
fax: 617.783.4010
www.braziliancenter.org

Center for the Immigrant Worker

68 Central Square
East Boston, MA 02128
tel: 617.569.0006
fax: 617.569.8440
e-mail: ctbeua@yahoo.com.br

Brazilian Women's Group

1060 Broadway
Somerville, MA 02144
tel: 625.6600, Ext. 6064.
e-mail: heloisa@verdeamarelo.org

Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS)

569 Cambridge Street
Allston, MA 02134
tel. & TTY: 617.787.0557 • 800.232.7725
fax: 617.779.9586