imagine all the people

Brazilians

CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor

2016

Brazilians 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.

Brazilian Festival Boston—photos courtesy of Brazilian Women's Group

Introduction

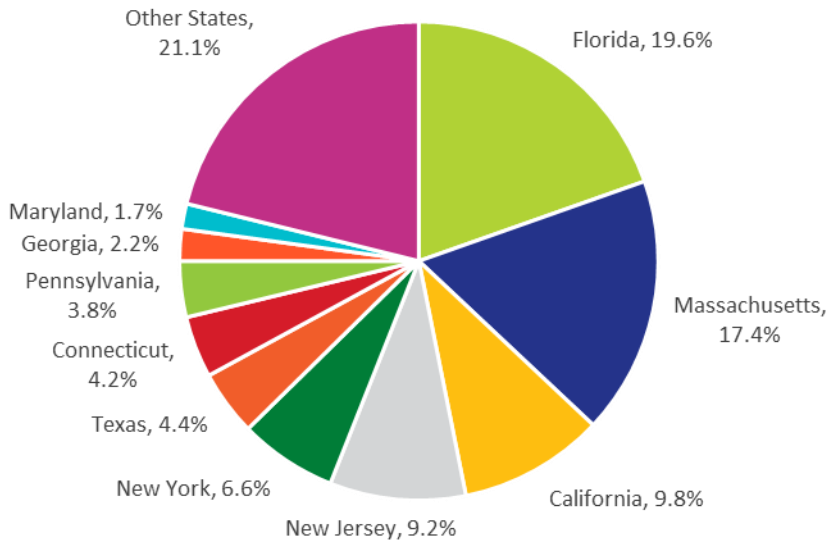
Large-scale migration from Brazil is a relatively recent phenomenon. Brazil has historically been a host country for immigrants from many nations. From the early 19th century to the mid 20th century, Germans, Swiss, Italians, Spaniards, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Japanese and others joined the Portuguese in searching for new opportunities in Brazil.[1]

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 1980s. According to Brazilian demographer, José Alberto Magno de Carvalho, there were up to 2.5 million Brazilians living outside Brazil by 1995.[2] During the early years, immigrants from Minas Gerais dominated the immigration flow to the United States. Now, Goiás, Paraná and Santa Catarina have also become major immigrant exporting regions.

The United States, Japan, Portugal, Spain, and China are the main destinations for Brazilian immigrants.[3] According to the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), there are close to 331,000 foreign-born Brazilians living in the United States, representing 0.8 percent of the country's foreign-born population of 42.2 million.[4]

Massachusetts has the second largest share of foreign-born Brazilians living in the United States (17 percent) behind Florida (20 percent).[5] Other states with large concentrations of Brazilians include California (10 percent), New Jersey (9 percent), and New York (7 percent). Combined, these five states constitute 63 percent of the Brazilian foreign-born population in the United States.

Share of Foreign-Born Brazilian Population by State



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

Brazilian Population in Boston

The Brazilian population in Metropolitan Boston increased rapidly during the 1990s and peaked before the recession of 2008-2009.[6] Foreign-born Brazilians are now less likely to reside in the city of Boston. In 1990, 22 percent of foreign-born Brazilians in Massachusetts lived in Boston. However, by 2000 the percentage dropped to 12, and by 2014, only 5 percent lived in Boston.

Of the close to 57,000[7] foreign-born Brazilian residing in Massachusetts, approximately 2,900[8] reside in Boston. Brazil is the 14th largest country of origin for Boston's foreign-born population in 2014. Overall, foreign-born Brazilians in Boston constitute 2 percent of the city's total foreign-born residents.

Boston's foreign-born Brazilians, though scattered throughout the city, live mostly in the neighborhoods of East Boston (29 percent), Brighton (20 percent), West Roxbury (8 percent), and Dorchester (7 percent).[9]

The U.S. Census Bureau's ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) allows for the detailed socio-economic analysis of specific populations. However, for smaller populations like foreign-born Brazilians 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.

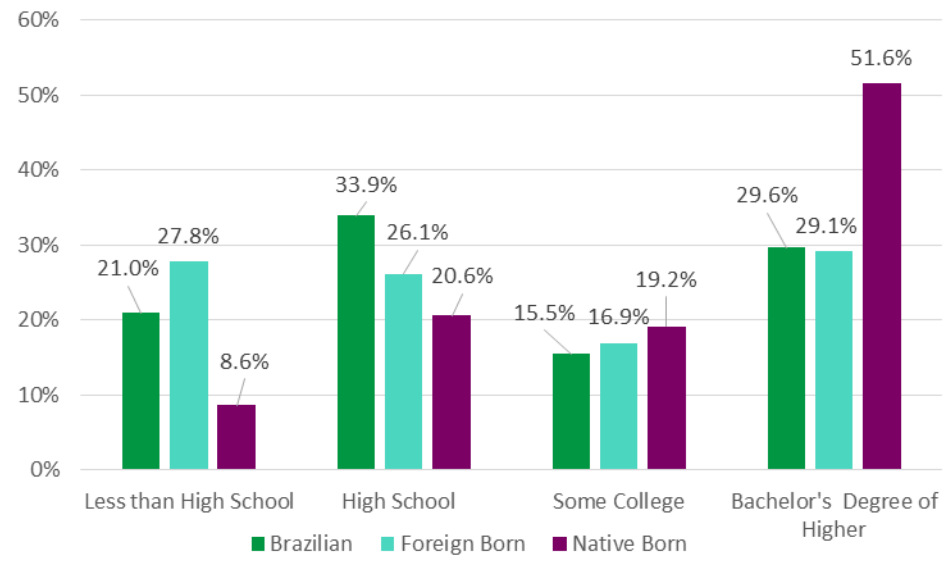
Unlike other foreign born populations in Boston, Brazilians have more males, and 53 percent of foreign-born Brazilians are male compared to 48 percent of all foreign born. More than 47 percent of foreign-born Brazilians are married and 14 percent are widowed, separated, or divorced. Approximately 52 percent of all foreign-born Brazilians are between the ages of 35 and 64, and the median age of the population is 38 years. A greater share of foreign-born Brazilians have arrived in the United States after 2000 (58 percent) compared to all foreign born (43 percent). As a result of this more recent migration, the majority of foreign-born Brazilians (84 percent) are not naturalized U.S. citizens.

Boston is home to 5% of the state's Brazilians—down from 22% in 1990.

Similar to other foreign-born populations in Boston, 21 percent of foreign-born Brazilians age 25 or older lack a high school education and 34 percent have completed high school as their highest level of educational attainment. Approximately 45 percent of foreign-born Brazilians have attended college, with nearly 30 percent having completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 29 percent of the entire foreign-born population and 52 percent of the native born. Only 9 percent of Brazilians living in Boston hold a graduate or professional degree, compared with 14 percent of all foreign-born residents and 22 percent of the native born.

Brazilians in Boston have a high labor force participation rate—86%.

Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Older

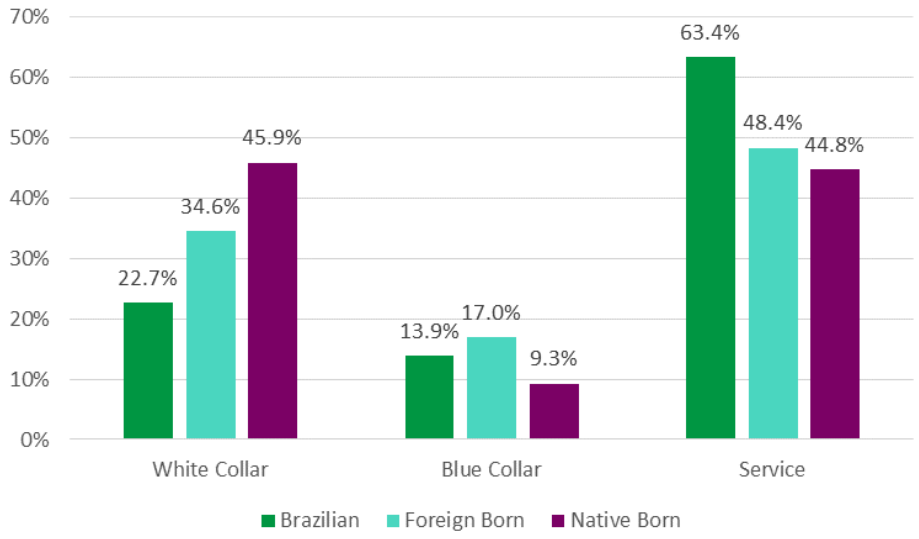


U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

The labor force participation rate[10] of Brazilians is 86 percent compared with 68 percent for all foreign born and 69 percent for the native-born population. Most foreign-born Brazilians living in Boston are employed in service related occupations. They are over-represented in these occupation when compared to all foreign born (53 percent). Of the 63 percent who work in this broad services category, 42 percent work in food preparation and serving occupations and 34 percent work in building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations. Brazilians are under-represented in white collar occupations compared to both the native born and all foreign born. A greater share of foreign-born Brazilians work in blue-collar occupations compared to the native born, but a smaller share compared to all foreign born.

Labor Force

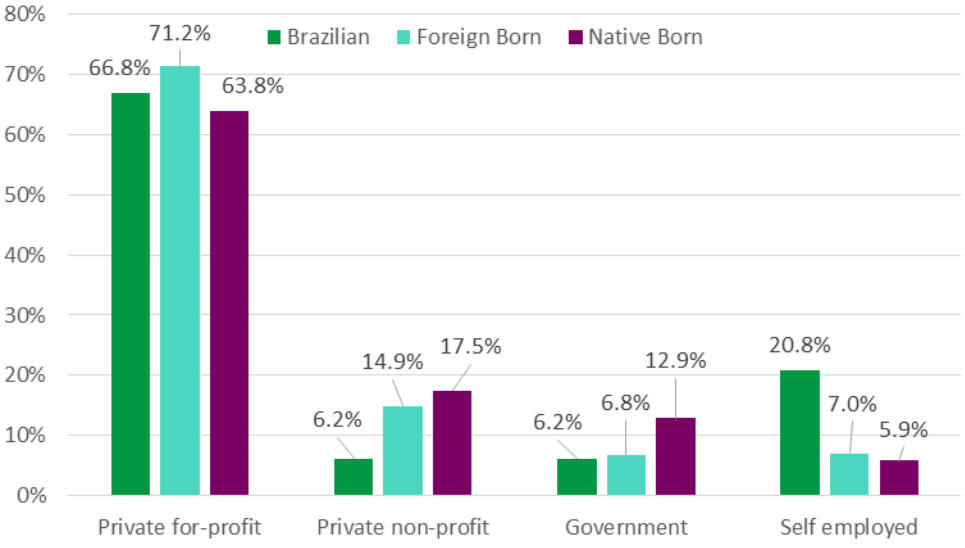
Occupations by Nativity



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

The majority of foreign-born Brazilians in Boston (67 percent) work for a private for profit company, and 12 percent are equally divided between private not for profit organization and the public sector. More than 20 percent of foreign-born Brazilians are self-employed (excluding unpaid family workers); a rate approximately three times that of the foreign- and native-born populations. 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.[11]

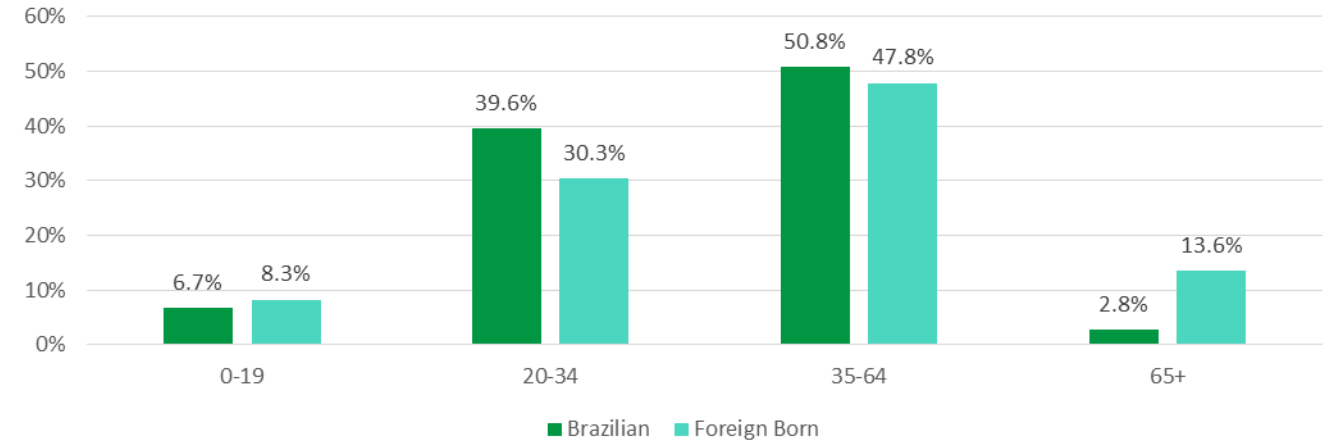
Employment by Type of Employer



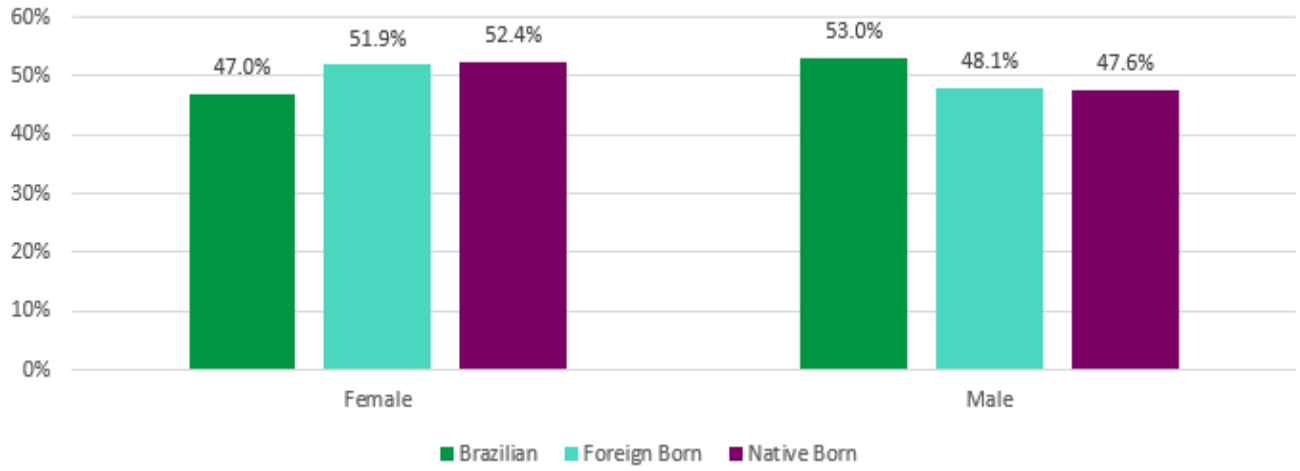
U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

Imagine all the people: Brazilians

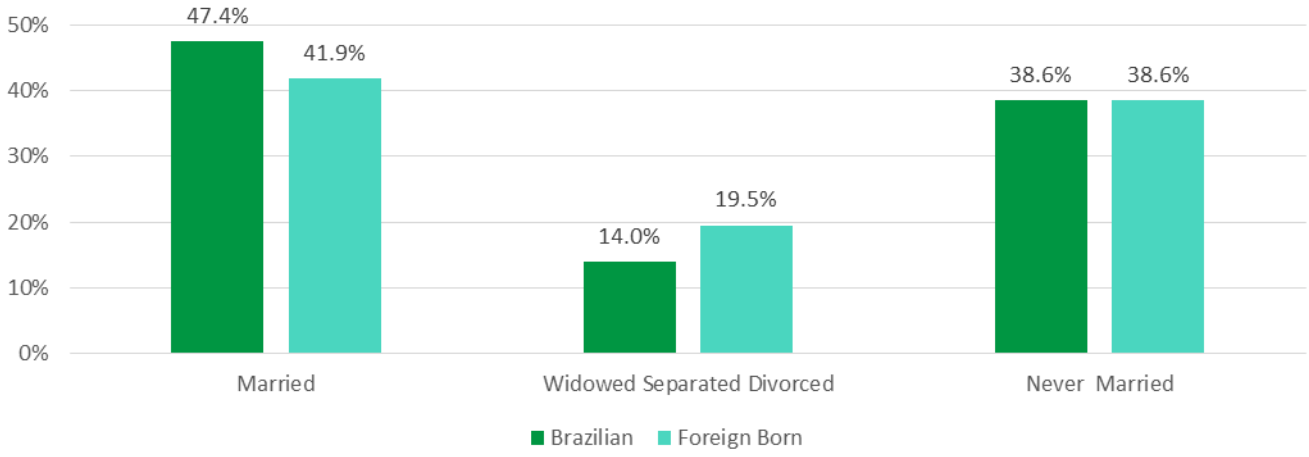
Age



Gender

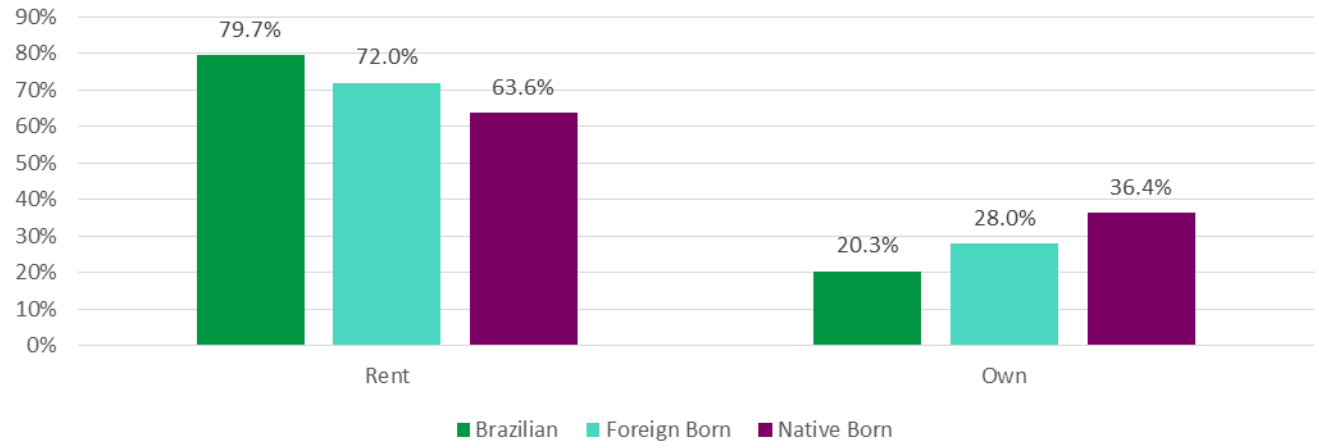


Marital Status

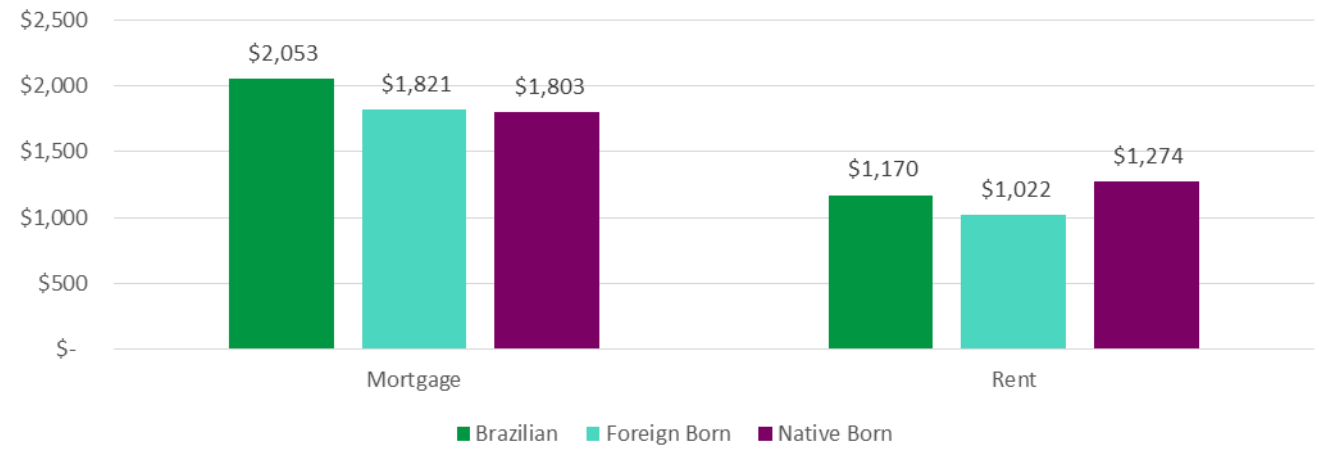


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

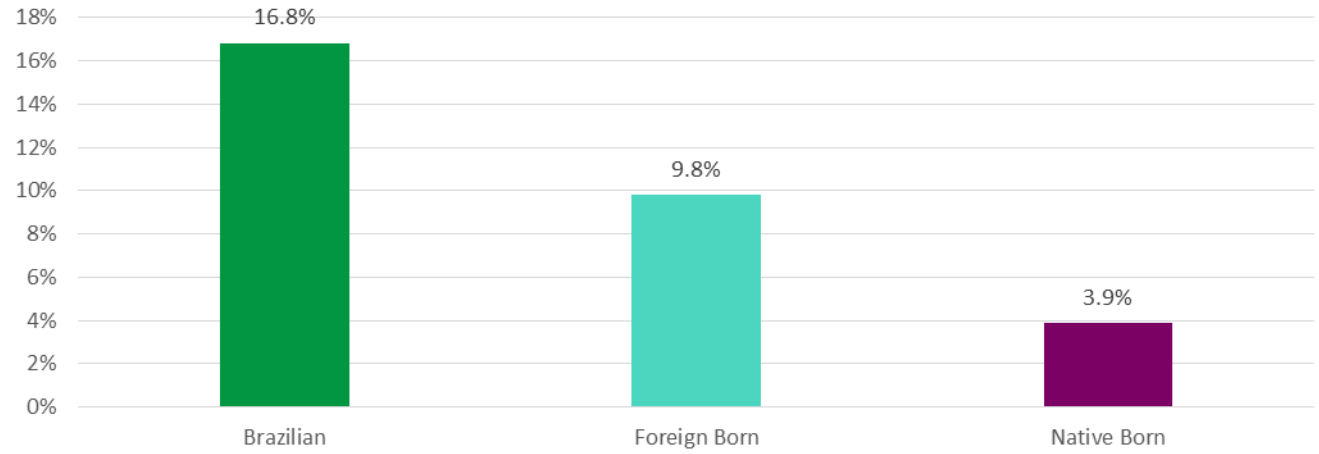
Housing Tenure*



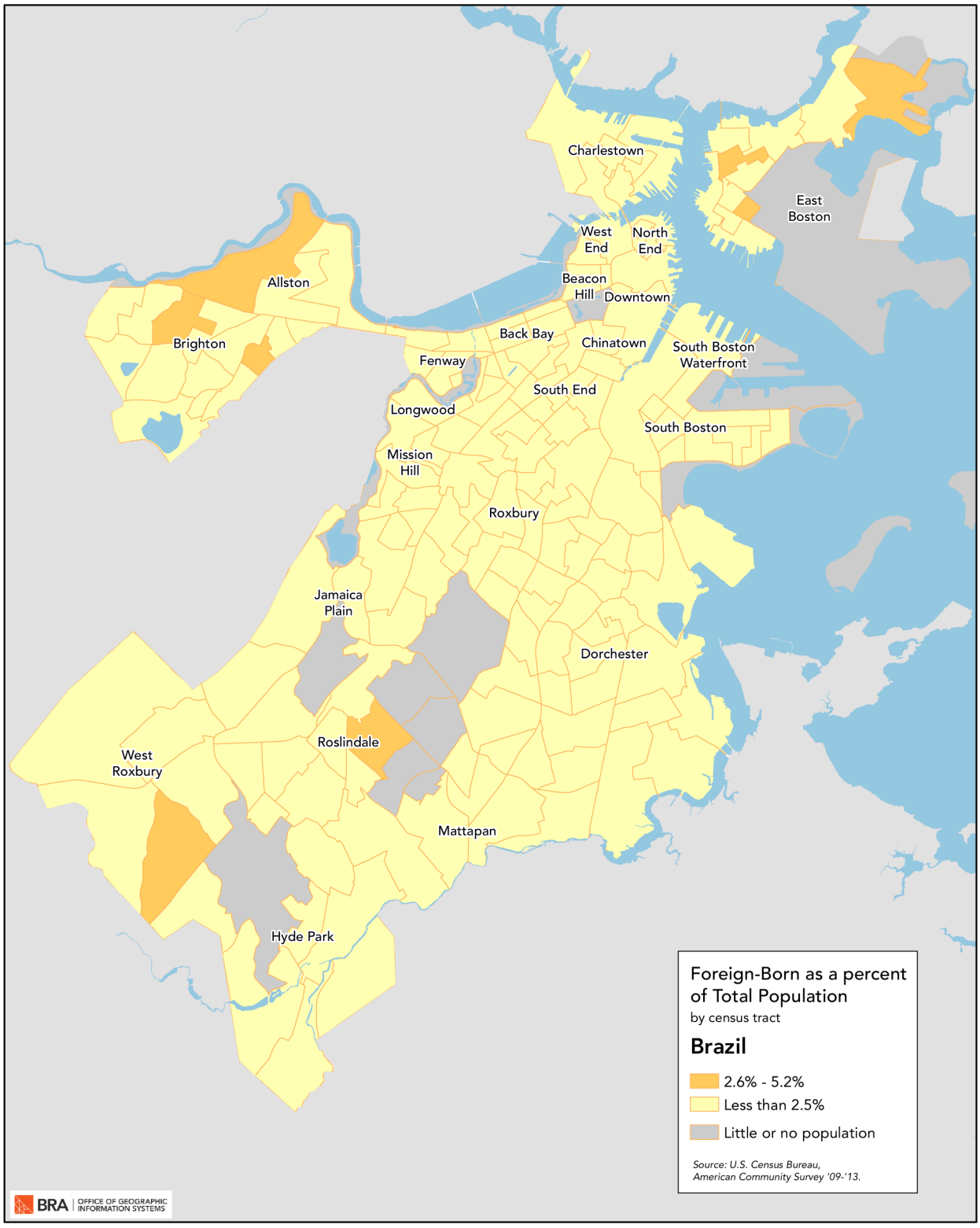
Housing Costs*



Medical Uninsurance



*Housing data are based on the householder's nativity.


Charlestown
East Boston
West End
North End
Allston
Beacon Hill
Downtown
Brighton
Back Bay
Chinatown
South Boston Waterfront
Fenway
South End
Longwood
South Boston
Mission Hill
Roxbury
Jamaica Plain
Dorchester
Roslindale
West Roxbury
Mattapan
Hyde Park
Foreign-Born as a percent of Total Population
by census tract
Brazil
2.6% - 5.2%
Less than 2.5%
Little or no population
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey '09-'13.
BRA | OFFICE OF GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

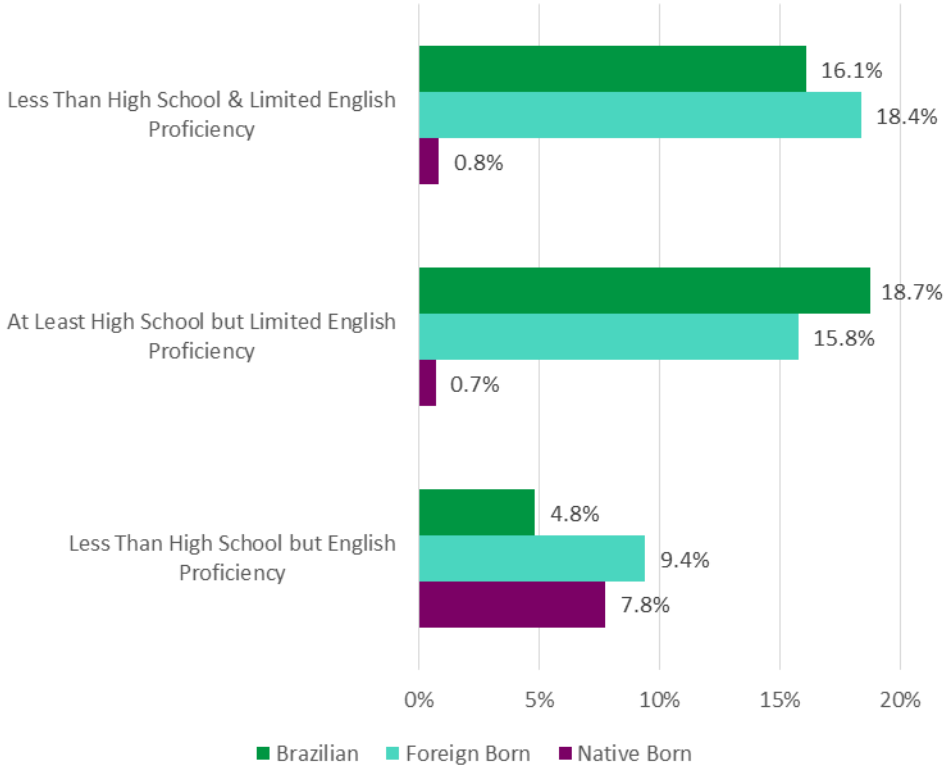
Standard of Living

Approximately 38 percent of foreign-born Brazilians 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 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 2014, a middle class income would be at least $62,920.

Low educational attainment and lack of English proficiency do not appear to be hindering foreign-born Brazilians' standard of living.[12] About 40 percent of foreign-born Brazilians lack either a high school diploma or English proficiency. Only 16 percent of Boston's adult foreign-born Brazilian population lack a high school diploma and have limited English proficiency compared to 18 percent for all foreign born.

38% of foreign-born Brazilians have achieved a middle class standard of living.

Educational Attainment and English Proficiency Population 25 Years or Older



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

Conclusion

Economic Impact

Foreign-born Brazilians contribute to the local economy through their labor and consumer spending. The total value of their economic contributions were estimated using a Regional Economic Model (REMI) that calculated the value of goods and services consumed on each dollar spent. Foreign-born Brazilians in Boston generated total expenditures of $206 million in 2014.[13] These annual expenditures contributed over $152 million to the regional product and generated $7 million in state and local taxes.[14] In total, these expenditures supported 1,100 jobs in the Massachusetts economy.[15]

Campaigning for rights of domestic workers—Brazilian Women's Group

Conclusion

The Brazilian foreign-born population has been declining in Boston since the recession of 2008-2009. Even though foreign-born Brazilians have similar levels of English proficiency to all foreign born, they have higher rates of high school graduation and a higher standard of living compared to other foreign-born populations in Boston. They appear to be earning this standard of living through high rates of self employment.

End Notes

[1]Amaral, E.F. and Fusco, W., *Shaping Brazil: The Role of International Migration*, Migration Policy Institute, 2005.

[2]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).

[3]UNICEF Migration Profiles, 2013.

[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. (2016).

[5]UNICEF Migration Profiles, 2013.

[6]Marcelli, E., et al. "(In)Visible (Im)Migrants The Health and Socioeconomic Integration of Brazilians in Metropolitan Boston," Center for Behavioral and Community Health Studies, 2009.

[7]American Factfinder website Table B05006 reports 55,628 Brazilians in Massachusetts with a margin of error of +/- 6,125 in 2014. The 52,727 estimate reported here was tabulated from 2014 U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample data. Both estimates contain a margin of error due to sampling methodology. For more information on American Fact Finder please see: http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en.

[8]American Factfinder website Table B05006 reports 3,368 Brazilians in Boston with a margin of error of +/- 1,233 in 2014. Lower survey response rates due to language or documentation issues may result in an undercount of the population.

The 2,890 estimate reported here was tabulated from 2014 U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample data for Boston.

[9]2009-2013 American Community Survey, American Factfinder, BRA Research Analysis.

[10]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 foreign born, high rates of solidarity and social capital in some immigrant communities, as well as the opportunity structure encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs.

[12]The Limited English Proficient includes immigrant adults who do not speak English at all or who do not speak it well.

[13]BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc., REMI calculations.

[14]BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc., REMI calculations.

[15]BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc., REMI calculations.

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Martin J. Walsh, Mayor

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FOR IMMIGRANT
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Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of Boston

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