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# Brazilians in the U.S. and Massachusetts: A Demographic and Economic Profile

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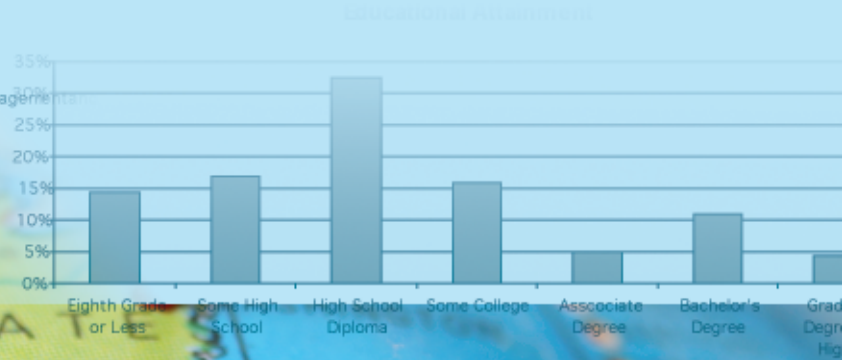
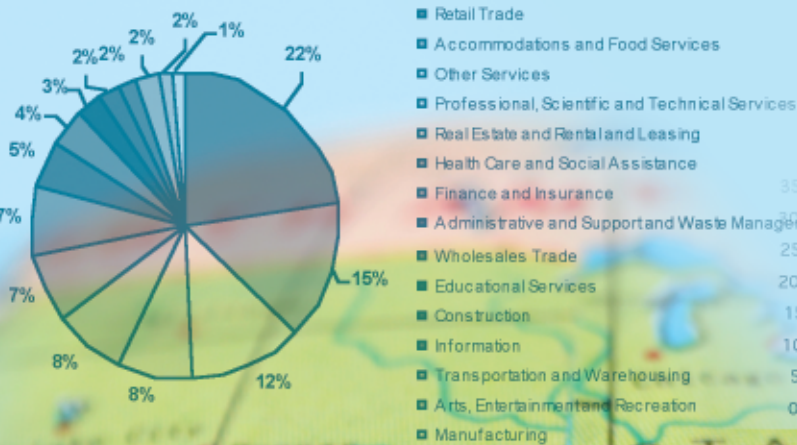
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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy

Share of Total Brazilian Businesses by NAICS



## Brazilians in the U.S. and Massachusetts: A Demographic and Economic Profile

by Alvaro Lima and Eduardo Siqueira\* | November, 2007



## **Brazilians in the U.S. and Massachusetts: A Demographic and Economic Profile**

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*Alvaro Lima and Eduardo Siqueira\**

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## Introduction

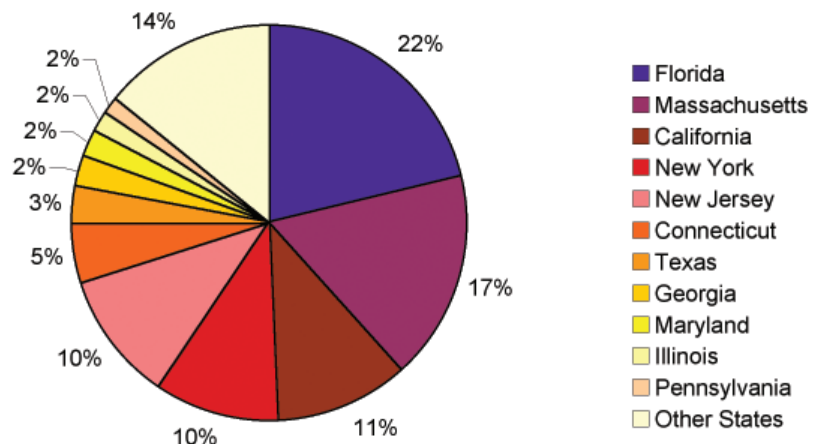
Brazil has long seen itself as a destination for immigrants from across the globe, welcoming the likes of Portuguese, Spanish, German, Russian, Polish, Czech, Japanese, and many other nationalities throughout the twentieth century. Migration out of Brazil is a relatively new phenomenon. It was catalyzed in part by the military coup of 1964, when thousands of Brazilians went into exile (though many of them returned following the amnesty of 1979). Over the last few decades, the search for better economic opportunities has led more and more Brazilians to leave their homeland. Five of Brazil's twenty-six states – Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Santa Catarina, and Paraná – contribute most heavily to the migration stream, but most of the other states are also affected. It is estimated that since 1987, when approximately 300,000 Brazilians lived abroad, emigration has increased by a rate of about 20% per year. Already by 1995, as many as 2.5 million Brazilians lived abroad<sup>1</sup>. Brazil has become an emigrant country with more people leaving the country than coming in.

Drawing on data from the 2000 U.S. Census, this paper traces a demographic and economic profile of Brazilian immigrants in the U.S. and Massachusetts. It is well documented that the U.S. Census undercounts low-income populations and immigrants, particularly the undocumented. The actual size of the Brazilian population is certainly larger than that reported by the Census Bureau. However, statistical breakdowns in this report are based on the 2000 Census, since the number of Brazilians who were counted was large enough to produce meaningful comparisons.

## Brazilians in the U.S.

The 2000 U.S. Census counted 212,636 Brazilian-born people living in the United States, representing 0.7% of the country's entire foreign-born population of 31 million. Florida is the most popular destination for Brazilians coming to the U.S., accounting for 22% of the total Brazilian population in this country. It is followed by Massachusetts (17%), California (11%), New York (10%), and New Jersey (10%). Collectively, these five states account for 70% of the total population of Brazilians who showed up in the 2000 U.S. Census.

CHART 1: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION IN STATES OF LARGEST CONCENTRATION, U.S., 2000

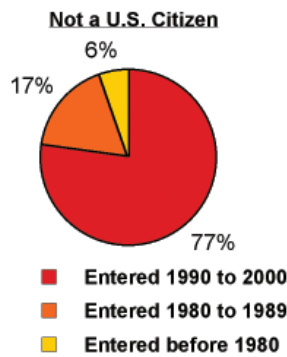
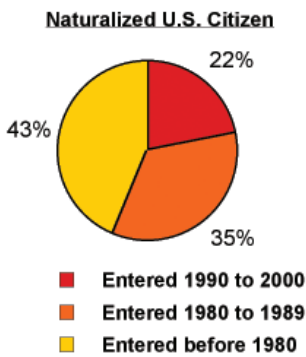
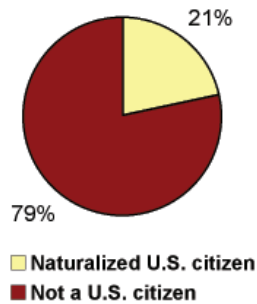


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

An analysis of the Brazilian immigrant population in the U.S., based on the Census figures, reveals that the median age for Brazilian immigrants is 33.7 years. There are slightly more females than males, and over 50% are married. The most common age groups are 25 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years, each of which accounts for slightly more than one-quarter of all Brazilians living in the United States.

Only 21% are naturalized U.S. citizens, whereas the remaining 79% are not citizens. This figure evokes the observations of anthropologist Maxine Margolis, whose 1995 book *Little Brazil*<sup>2</sup> reported that as many as 90% of Brazilians living in the U.S. classify themselves not as immigrants but instead as “just passing through.” More to the point, perhaps, the citizenship figure reflects the fact that the vast majority of non-naturalized Brazilians in the U.S. arrived recently. Of the nearly 167,000 Brazilians who are not U.S. citizens, over 129,000 (77.5%) entered the country between 1990 and 2000; only 28,000 arrived between 1980 and 1990, and 9,500 entered before 1980. For those Brazilians who are naturalized U.S. citizens, a total of 45,575, the reverse is true. Only 9,800 came during the most recent decade (1990-2000), whereas nearly 16,000 entered between 1980 and 1990 and 20,000 came to the country prior to 1980.

CHART 3: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS, U.S., 2000

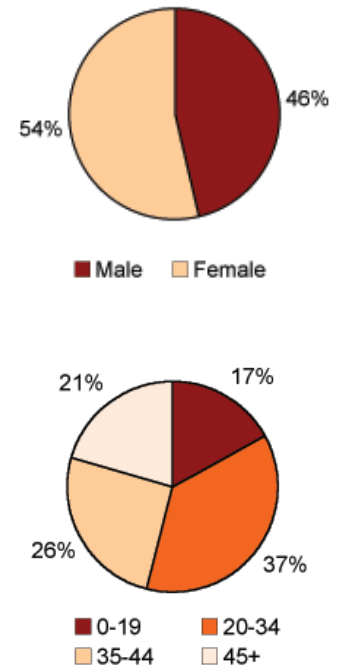


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159), BRA Research Division Analysis

Of the Brazilians in the U.S. who are five years of age and older, a mere 8.7% are classified as speaking “English only” at home, meaning that English is the sole language spoken in the household. However, English proficiency is high. Only about half of all Brazilians, 49.1%, speak English “less than very well.”

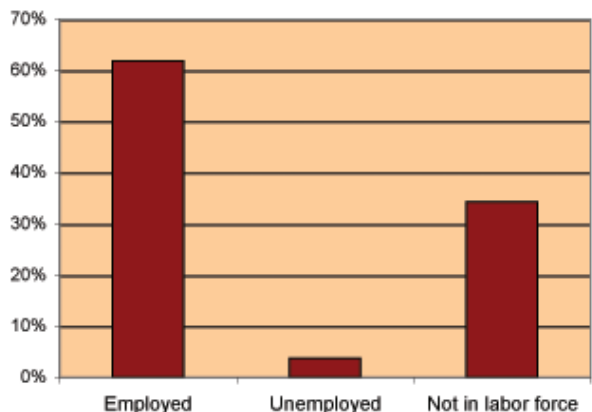
Data from the 2000 Census also show that 61.8% of Brazilians in the U.S. over the age of 16 are employed, while the unemployment rate is 3.7%. Just over 30% (primarily students, retired or disabled people, and full-time parents) are identified as not in the labor force.

CHART 2: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY GENDER AND AGE, U.S., 2000



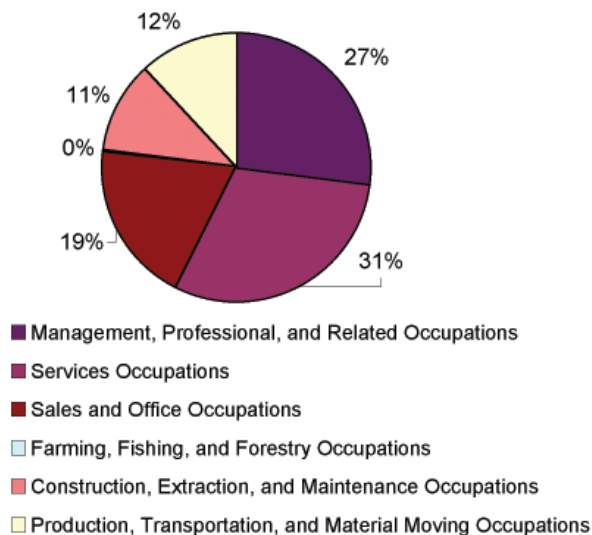
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Public Use Microdata (5%) Sample, BRA Research Division Analysis

**CHART 4: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS, U.S., 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

**CHART 5: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY OCCUPATION, U.S., 2000**

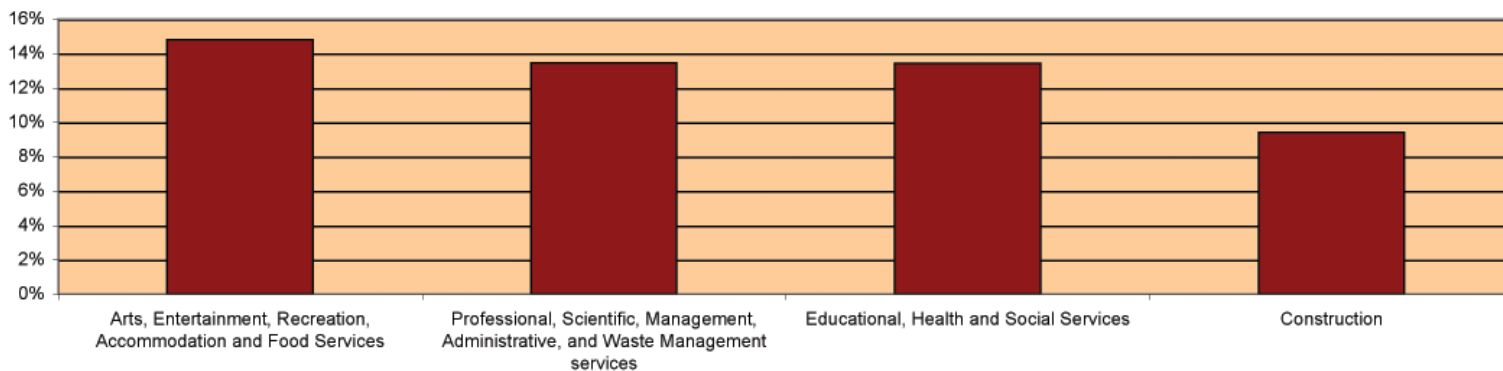


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

The most common occupations among Brazilians are service occupations, which account for nearly one-third of all jobs held by Brazilians (31%). Closely behind are management, professional and other related occupations (27%), followed by sales and office occupations (19%), production, transportation and material moving occupations (12%), and construction and maintenance occupations (11%). Farming, fishing and forestry occupations account for less than 1%.

The industries that employ Brazilians closely correspond to these numbers. The top four industries that Brazilians living in the U.S. work in are 1) arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (employing 14.8% of all Brazilians who have jobs), 2) professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services (13.4%), 3) education, health and social services (13.4%), and 4) construction (9.4%). Other prominent industries on the list include manufacturing (9.3%), retail trade (9.0%), and finance, insurance, and real estate services (5.3%).

**CHART 6: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY THE TOP FOUR INDUSTRIES, U.S., 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159), BRA Research Division Analysis

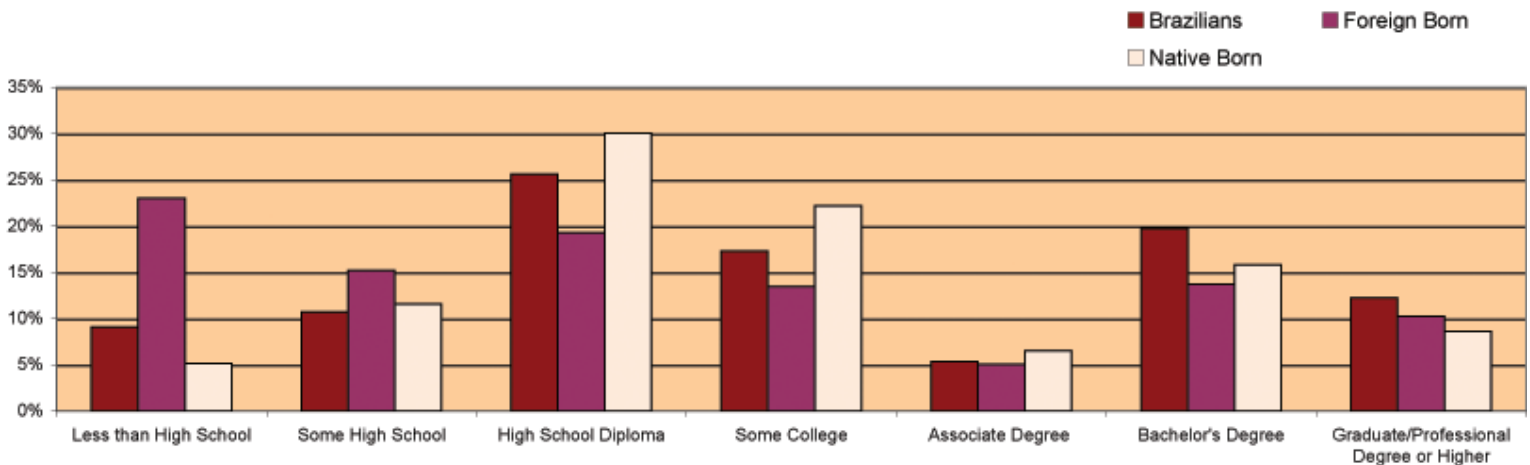
A large proportion of Brazilians working in the U.S. (13%) are self-employed workers, compared to 7% for both the native-born and the overall foreign-born populations. The rest of them work either for private companies (80%) or for government (7%).

Again, according to the 2000 Census, the median household income for the 77,765 households headed by Brazilian immigrants in the U.S. is \$38,570. The most frequent range of income for Brazilian households, however, is slightly higher, with 18% of all households falling in the \$50,000-\$74,999 range. Just over 9% of households earn between \$74,999 and \$99,999, and 10% make over \$100,000 per year. The percentage of Brazilian families living below the poverty level is 14%, and the percentage of Brazilian individuals living below the poverty level is 19%.

As a whole, Brazilians in the U.S. are much more likely to be renters than homeowners, with 68% of households renter-occupied and the remaining 32% owner-occupied.

Among Brazilians in the U.S. aged 25 or older, four-fifths (80%) have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent, while 9% have less than a high-school education and 11% attended high school but did not graduate. More than half (54%) had at least some higher education, nearly one third (32%) had achieved at least a bachelor's degree, and 12% had a graduate or other advanced degree.

CHART 7: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OLDER, U.S., 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159), BRA Research Division Analysis

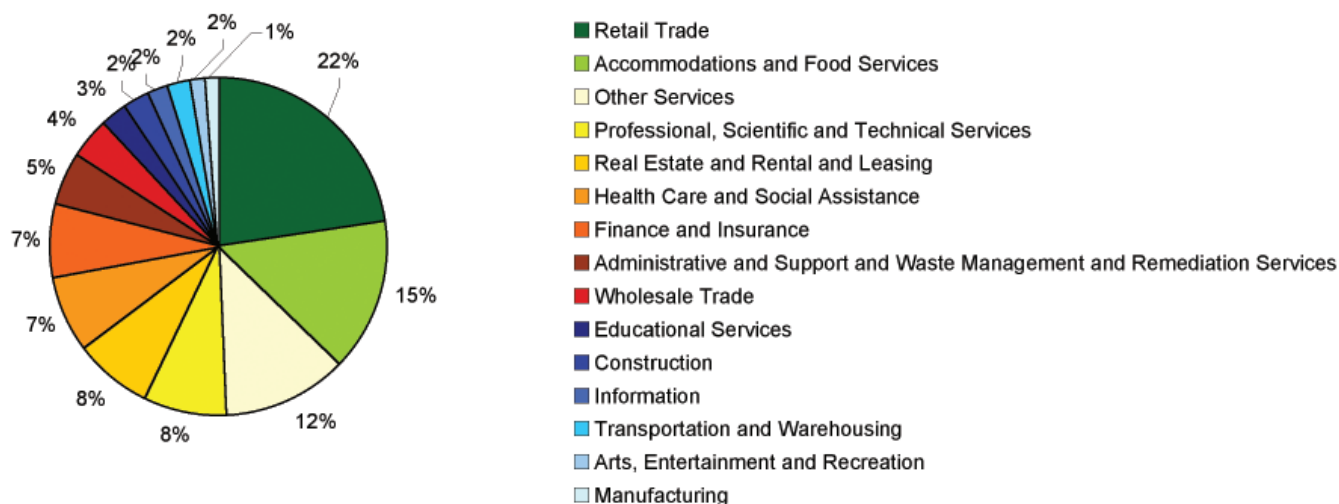
## Brazilians Contribute to the National Economy

Brazilians own more than 3,700 businesses in retail trade, accommodations and food services, and other services.

Massachusetts, with the second largest Brazilian population in the country, is the state with the largest concentration of Brazilian-owned businesses (28%), followed by New Jersey (27%) and Florida (21%).

Brazilian businesses in the U.S. account for annual sales of \$1 billion. They employ more than 10,400 people and contribute a little over \$1 billion to the national product, as well as \$108 million in state and federal taxes. Their economic activity results in the creation of 14,000 indirect jobs.

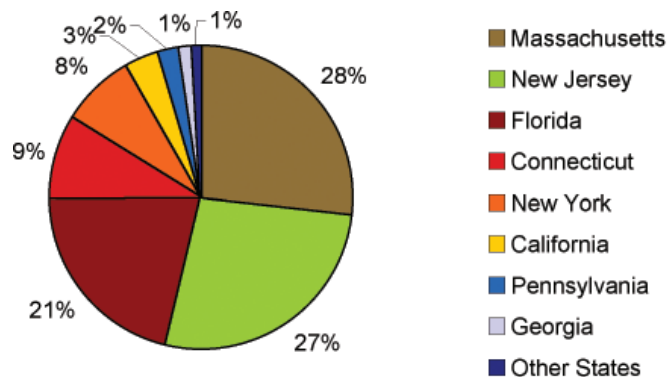
CHART 8: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN BUSINESSES BY NAICS, U.S., 2000



Source: The Brazilian List, BRA Research Division Analysis

Brazilian immigrants further contribute to the U.S. economy through their spending. They spend, from their after-tax earnings, close to \$4 billion annually. These annual expenditures generate a national product of \$8.6 billion and just over \$1 billion in state and federal taxes. This expenditure, in turn, generates another 94,730 indirect jobs in the U.S. economy<sup>3</sup>.

CHART 9: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN OWNED BUSINESSES BY STATE, U.S., 2000



Source: The Brazilian List, BRA Research Division Analysis

### Brazilians in Massachusetts

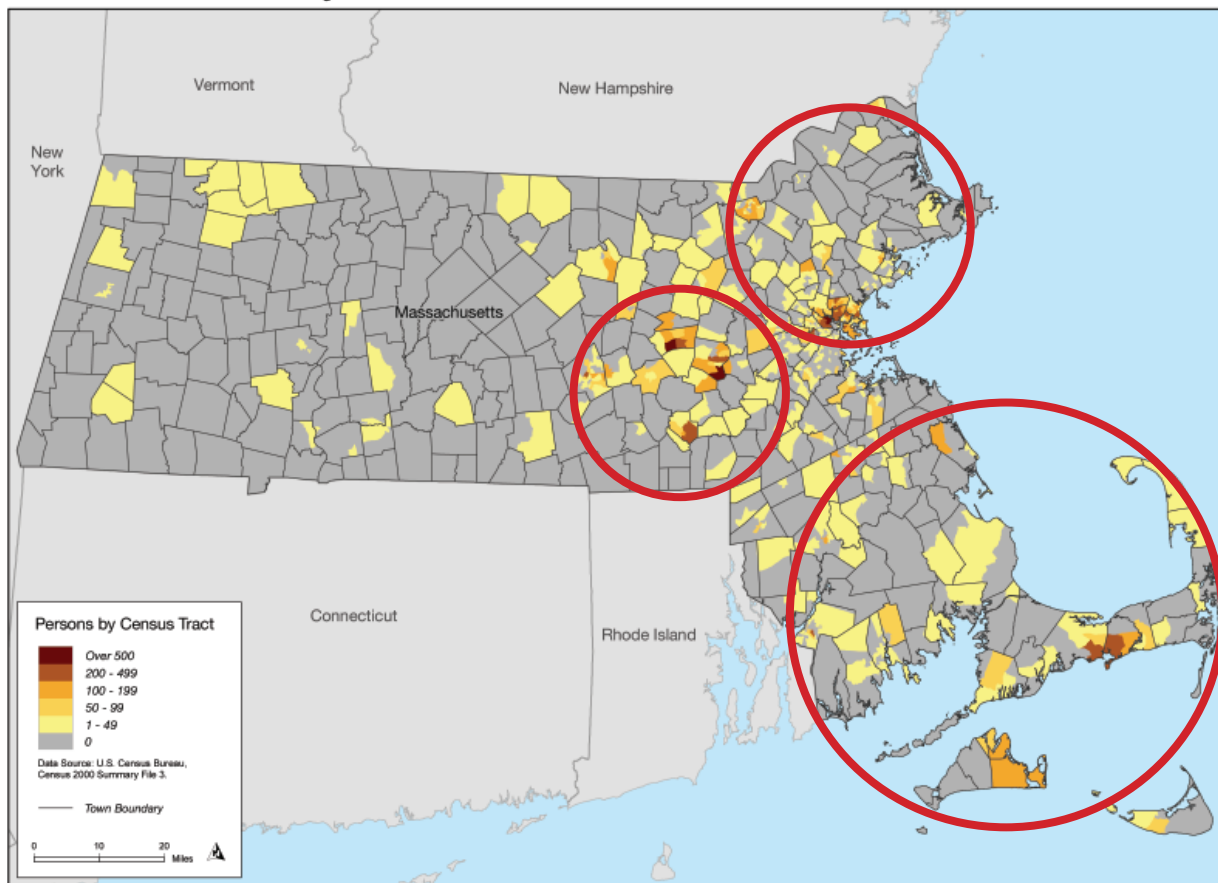
According to the 2006 American Community Survey, Massachusetts is home to approximately 75,000 Brazilians, making it the second most popular destination for Brazilian immigrants in the U.S. According to Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Studies, between 2000 and 2003, Brazilians were 19 percent of all new immigrants to Massachusetts. Currently, Brazilians are the fifth largest immigrant community living in Massachusetts.



An analysis of the Brazilian population by 2000 Census tracts shows that there are three primary regions in Massachusetts in which Brazilian immigrants are likely to settle:

- 1) **Boston and North Shore** – comprising principally the neighborhoods and municipalities of Allston/Brighton, Somerville, Medford, Everett, Malden, Chelsea, and East Boston;
- 2) **Metro West** – where the majority of Brazilians settle in the three communities of Marlborough, Framingham, and Milford;
- 3) **South Shore, Cape Cod, and The Islands** – where the two communities of Barnstable and Yarmouth are popular among Brazilians and where, on the islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket, Brazilians account for a high percentage of the overall foreign-born population.

### Number of Brazilians by Census Tract - Massachusetts

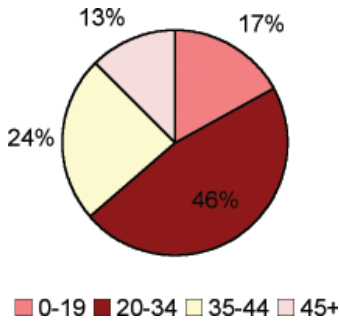


Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, BRA Research Division Analysis, Digital Cartography & GIS

Overall, Brazilians in Massachusetts are slightly younger than the population of Brazilians throughout the United States. The median age is 31, and nearly half of all Brazilians in Massachusetts are between the ages of 20 and 34. Just under 50% are married, and only 15% are naturalized U.S. citizens, below the national rate of 21%.

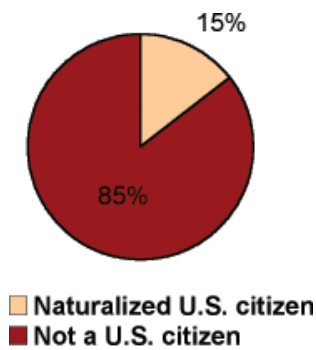
Brazilians in Massachusetts have an employment rate higher than that of Brazilians in the rest of the country, with more than 70% having jobs and approximately 27% not being in the labor force. (The unemployment rate among Brazilians in Massachusetts is about 3%.)

**CHART 10: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY AGE, MA, 2000**



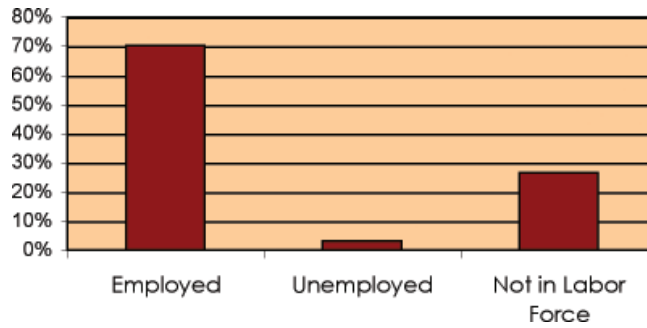
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

**CHART 11: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS, MA, 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

**CHART 12: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS, MA, 2000**

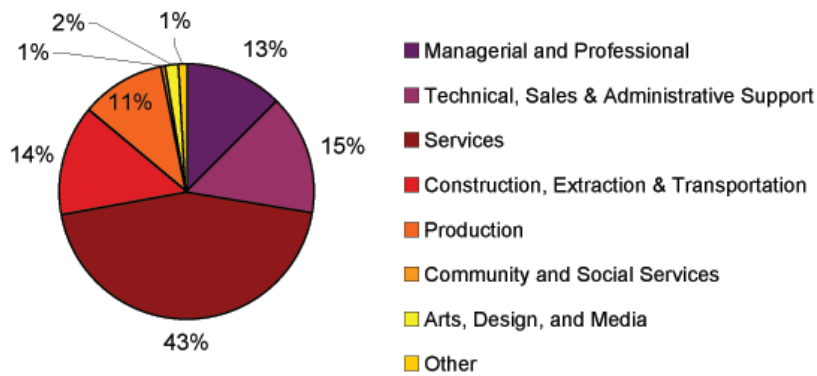


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

The most common occupations are in the service industry, which employs 43% of all Brazilians in Massachusetts – a rate nearly 10% points higher than for the national population of Brazilians. Sales and administrative jobs account for 15% of Brazilians working in Massachusetts, followed by construction (14%), managerial and professional (13%), and production occupations (11%).

Brazilians have a higher self-employment rate in Massachusetts (15%) than in the U.S. overall (13%). As noted earlier, Massachusetts has the largest proportion of all Brazilian-owned businesses in the country.

**CHART 13: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY OCCUPATION, MA, 2000**

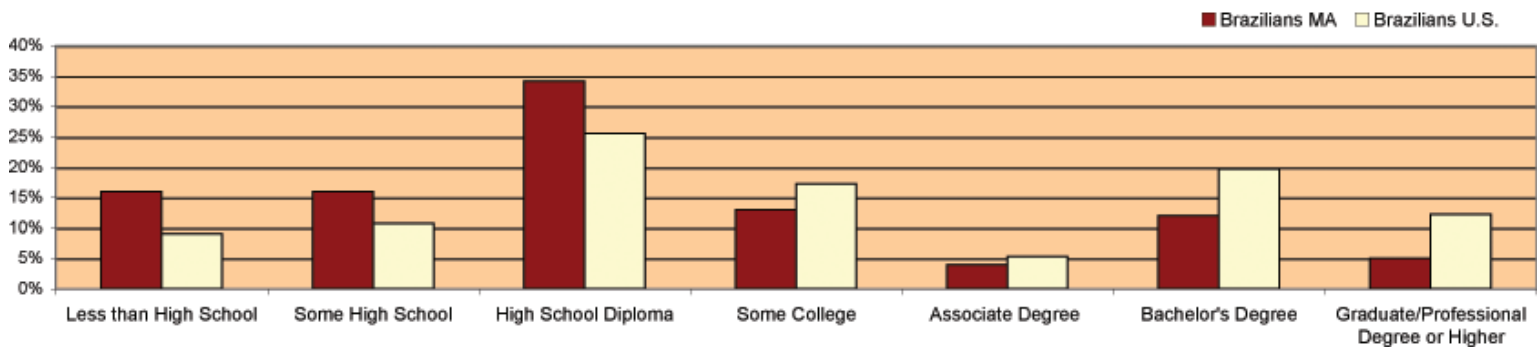


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, BRA Research Division Analysis

Educational attainment for Brazilians in Massachusetts is lower than that of Brazilians in the overall U.S. Slightly over two-thirds of Brazilians over age 25 in Massachusetts had at least a high school diploma, compared to 80% nationally. Only 17% (compared to 32% in the U.S. overall) had at least a bachelor's degree, and 5% (compared to 12%) had a graduate or other advanced degree.

Economic impact is a measure that demonstrates the significant presence of Brazilians in Massachusetts. They contribute more than \$1 billion to the regional product in their annual spending, and over \$295 million in state and federal taxes. These contributions translate into more than 9,500 indirect jobs for the local economy. In terms of entrepreneurship, Brazilian businesses – of which there are more than 1,000 in the state – account for annual sales of \$272 million. These businesses contribute nearly \$179 million to the regional product and

CHART 14: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, MA, 2000



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

\$12.8 million in state and federal taxes. They directly employ 2,756 people and create an additional 1,756 indirect jobs.

A smaller percentage of Brazilians in Massachusetts own their homes than they do nationwide (20%, compared to 32% nationally). However, three out of every 10 homes bought by immigrants in Massachusetts are bought by Brazilians.

Brazilians further contribute to the state through their civic participation. Grassroots organizations such as the Brazilian Women’s Group, the Brazilian Immigrant Center, and the Brazilian American Association (BRAMAS) are very active in the Commonwealth’s political and social life. 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, along with nine monthly magazines.

## Top Three Regions

### I. Boston and the North Shore

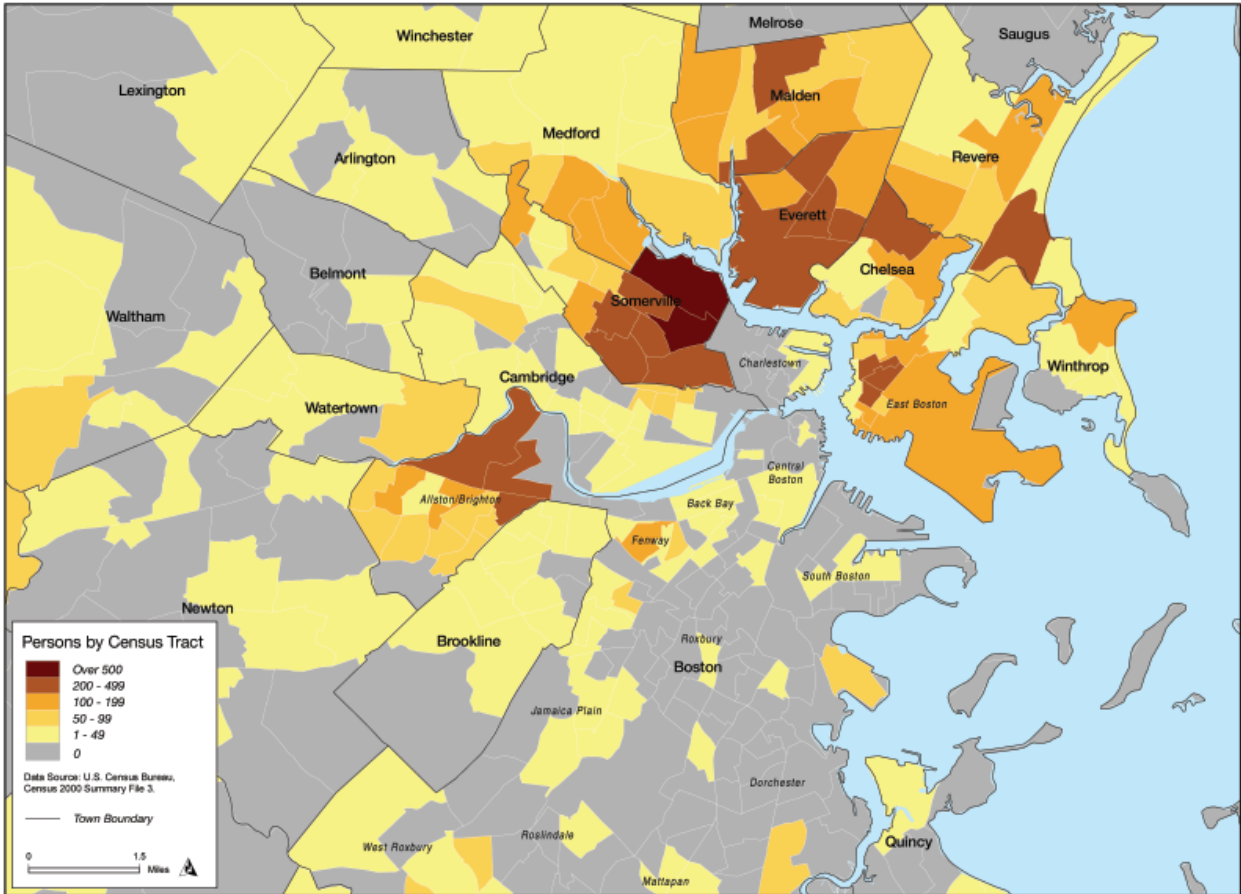
The Boston and North Shore area consists of the City of Boston and towns located on the North Shore. The 2000 Census showed over 17,000 Brazilians living in this area of Massachusetts.

Brazilians in this area are almost equally divided by gender (as are Brazilians statewide), with 51% male and 49% female. The majority of them are married (58%), and half of them are between ages 20 and 34.

As previously noted, Massachusetts has become a predominant destination for Brazilian immigrants only within the past few decades. Not surprisingly, only 16% of Brazilians in this region are U.S. citizens.

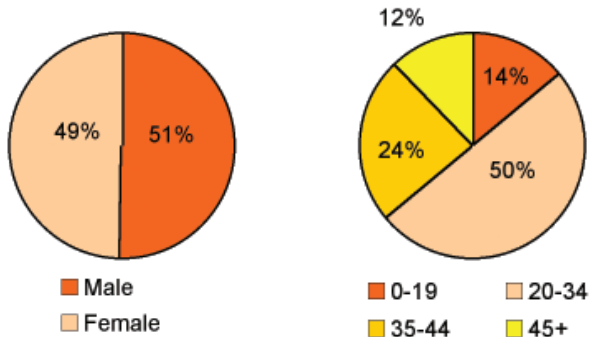
Educational attainment for Brazilians 25 and older in Boston and the North Shore region is slightly higher than for Brazilians statewide. Seventy percent (compared to 68%) have at least a high school diploma, while 19% (compared to 17%) have at least a bachelor’s degree.

## Number of Brazilians by Census Tract - Metro Boston

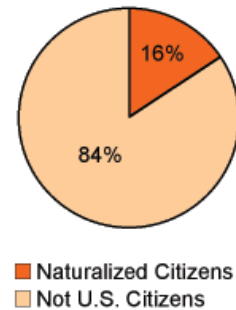


Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, BRA Research Division Analysis, Digital Cartography & GIS

**CHART 15: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY GENDER AND AGE, BOSTON/NORTH SHORE, MA, 2000**



**CHART 16: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS, BOSTON/NORTH SHORE, MA, 2000**

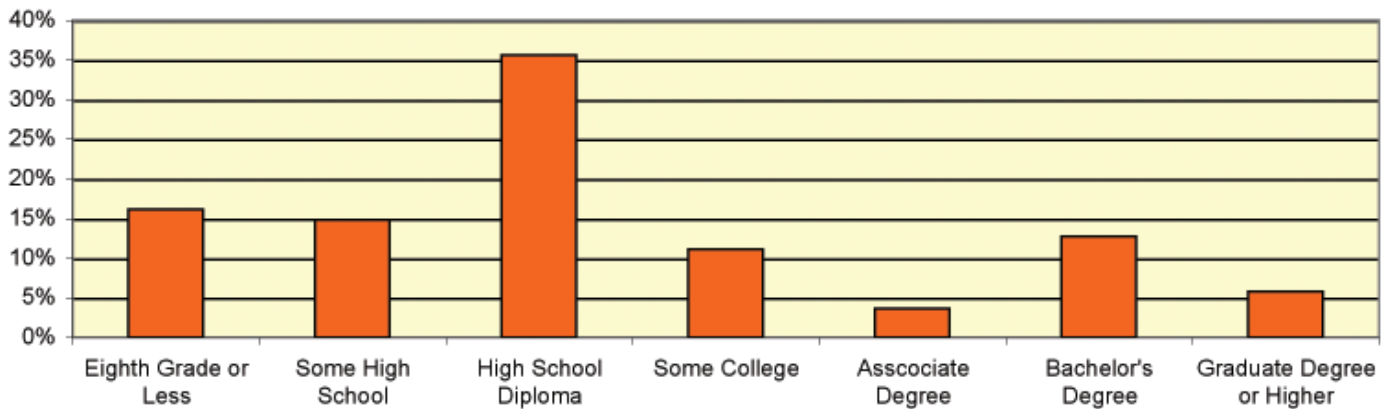


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Public Use Microdata (5%) Sample, BRA Research Division Analysis

The labor force participation rate for Brazilian immigrants in this region is 72% with an unemployment rate of 4%, only a percent higher than for Brazilians statewide.

The largest proportion of Brazilians in this area are employed in services (46%), followed by technical, sales and administration support (16%), construction, extraction and transportation (14%), and managerial and professional occupations (14%).

CHART 17: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OLDER, BOSTON/NORTH SHORE, MA, 2000



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

The majority of Brazilians working in this area work for private for-profit companies (74%). Another 5% work for private not-for-profit organizations. As noted earlier, Massachusetts has the largest proportion of all Brazilian-owned businesses in the country. As a result, it is not surprising that a large proportion of Brazilians in Boston and the North Shore are self-employed (17%). This high self-employment rate is remarkable when compared to the self-employment rate for the City of Boston's overall foreign-born and native-born populations, 4% and 3.7% respectively.

CHART 18: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY OCCUPATION, BOSTON/NORTH SHORE, MA, 2000

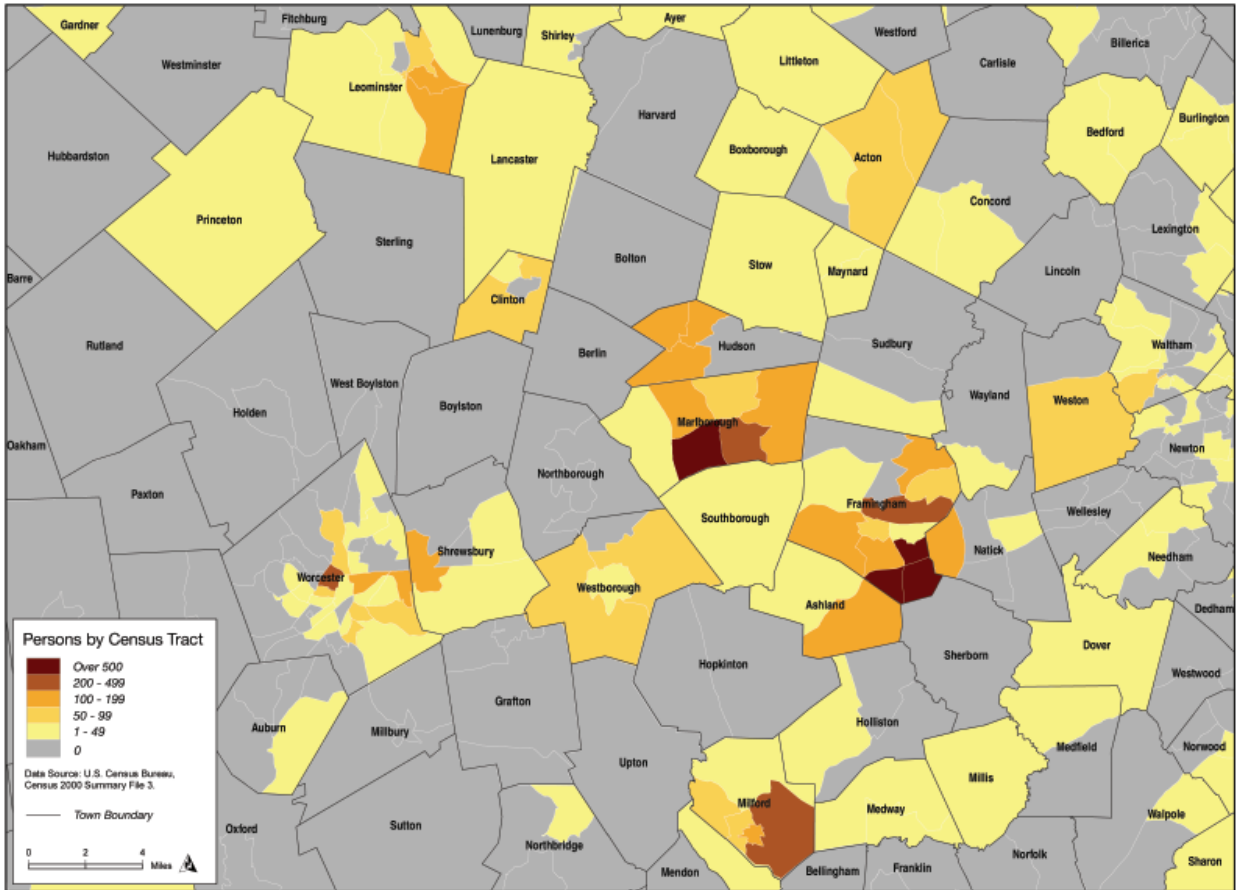


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Public Use Microdata (5%) Sample, BRA Research Division

## II. Metro West Area

The Metro West area is home to almost 12,000 Brazilians, the majority of whom live in the three communities of Marlborough, Framingham, and Milford.

### Number of Brazilians by Census Tract - Boston's Metro West



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, BRA Research Division Analysis, Digital Cartography & GIS

The gender distribution of Brazilians in this region is similar to that of Boston and the North Shore area, and the state in general. Likewise, the majority of Brazilians in this region are married (58%), exactly the same percentage as in Boston and the North Shore. Almost half (45%) are between ages 20 and 34.

Bearing in mind that low citizenship rates are signs of recent immigration, the Metro West area is likely to be home to the most recent Brazilian immigrants. The citizenship rate for this region is the lowest of all three. Only 11% of the Brazilians population in this area have become U.S. citizens.

Educational attainment is slightly lower than in the Boston and North Shore area. Sixty-eight percent of Brazilians 25 and older in the Metro West area have at least a high school diploma (compared to 70% in Boston and the North Shore), and 15% (compared to 19%) have a bachelor's degree or higher.

CHART 19: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY GENDER AND AGE, METRO WEST, MA, 2000

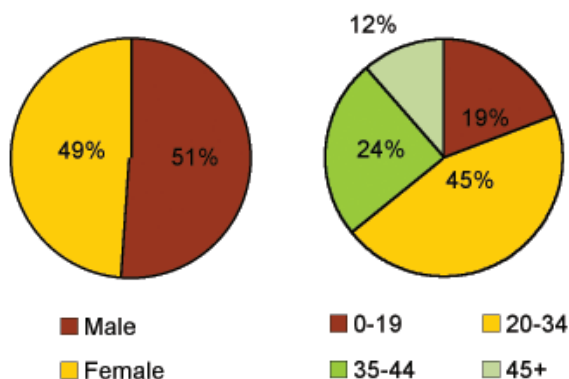
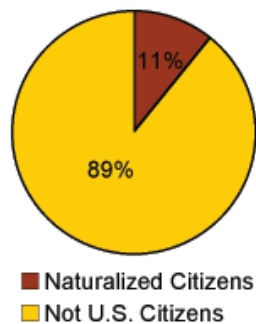
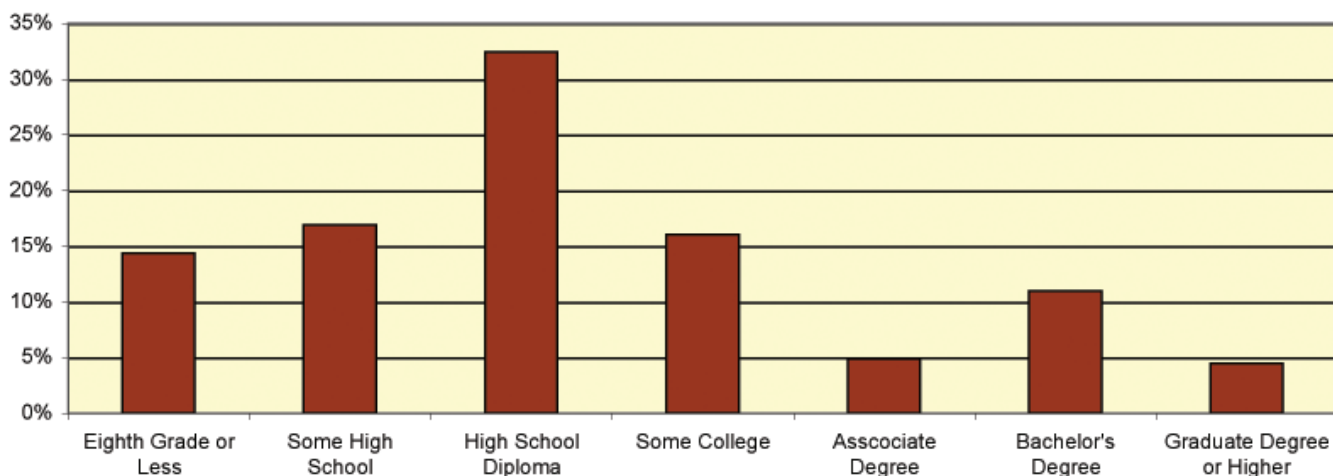


CHART 20: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS, METRO WEST, MA, 2000



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

CHART 21: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, METRO WEST, MA, 2000



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

At the same time, the labor force participation rate for Brazilians in the Metro West area is the highest of all three regions at 76%. The unemployment rate is 5%, a percent higher than that of the other two popular regions and two percent higher than for Brazilians statewide.

Occupational distribution for Brazilians in this area is similar to the other regions and the state overall. The largest proportion of Brazilians in this area are employed in services (43%), followed by technical, sales and administration support (16%), construction, extraction and transportation (13%), and managerial and professional occupations (13%).

As in other areas of Massachusetts, a majority of Brazilians in the Metro West area work for private for-profit companies (78%). Another 3% work for private not-for-profit organizations. The self-employment rate in this area is 15%, somewhat lower than in the Boston and North Shore area.

CHART 22: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY OCCUPATION, METRO WEST, MA, 2000

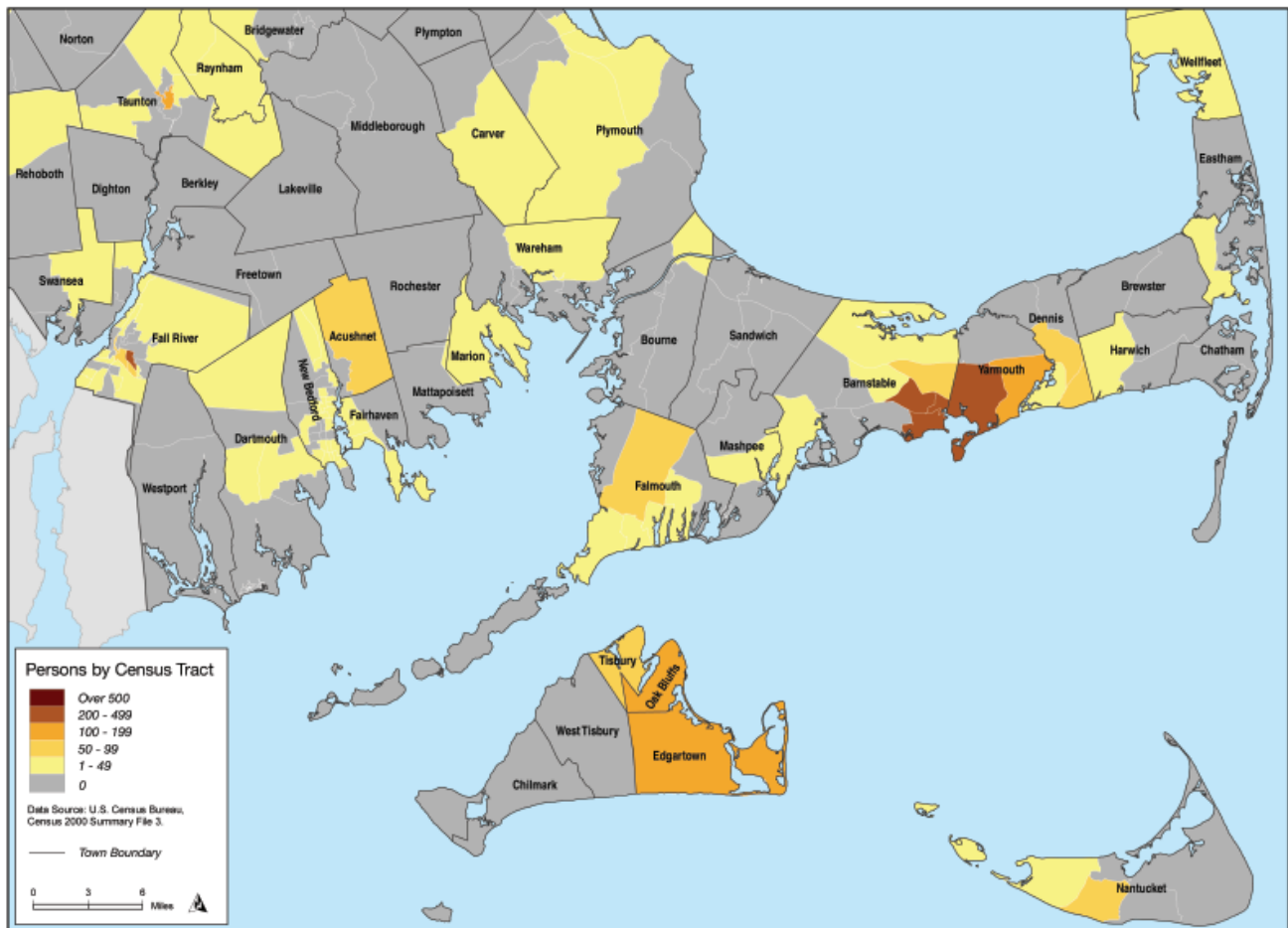


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Public Use Microdata (5%) Sample, BRA Research Division Analysis

### III. South Shore and Cape Cod & Islands

The South Shore, Cape Cod, and the Islands make up the third popular area for Brazilians in Massachusetts. In this area, the two communities with a high concentration of Brazilians are the Cape Cod towns of Barnstable and Yarmouth. Brazilians also account for a high percentage of the overall foreign-born population on the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

### Number of Brazilians by Census Tract - Cape Cod & Islands



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, BRA Research Division Analysis, Digital Cartography & GIS



Over 5,000 Brazilians live in the South Shore, Cape Cod, and the Islands. Most are male (53%), most are married (58%), and slightly less than half of them are between ages 20 and 34 (42%). The citizenship rate for Brazilian immigrants in this area is 19%, a rate higher than in the other two regions and close to the overall 21% figure for Brazilians in the U.S.

CHART 23: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY GENDER AND AGE, SOUTH SHORE AND CAPE COD AND ISLANDS, MA, 2000

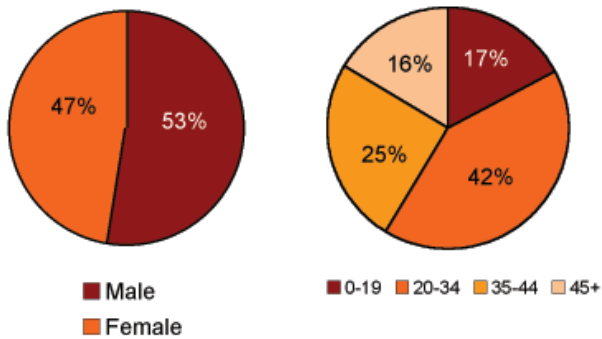
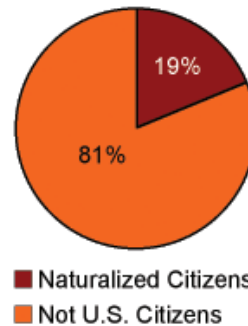


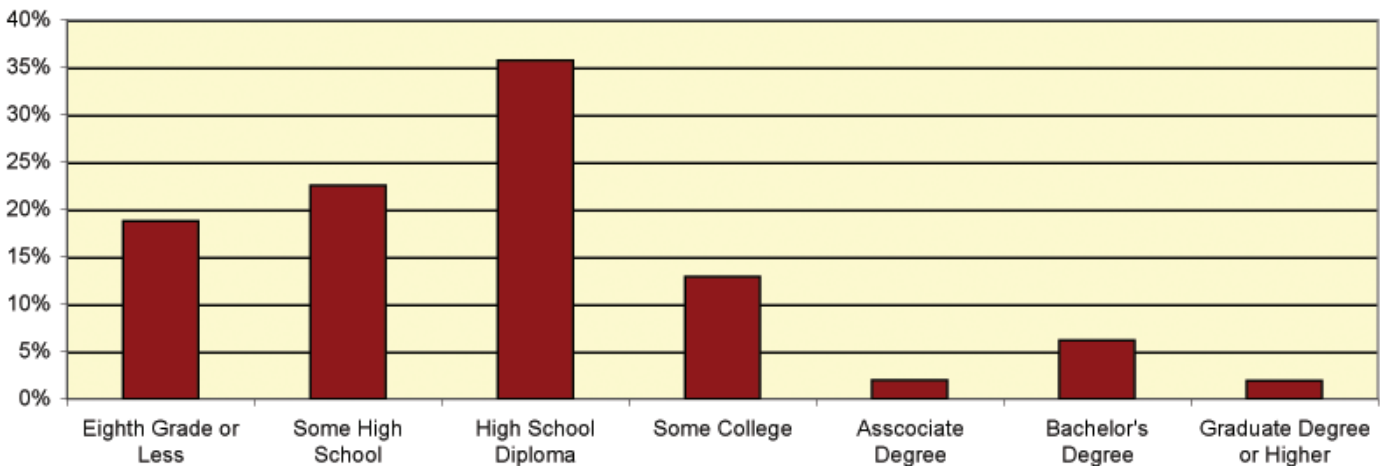
CHART 24: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS, SOUTH SHORE AND CAPE COD AND ISLANDS, MA, 2000



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

Educational attainment for Brazilians 25 and older in the South Shore and Cape Cod & Islands area is the lowest of all three areas. Only 59% (compared to 68% for Brazilians statewide) have at least a high school diploma, and only 8% (compared to 17%) have a bachelor's degree or higher.

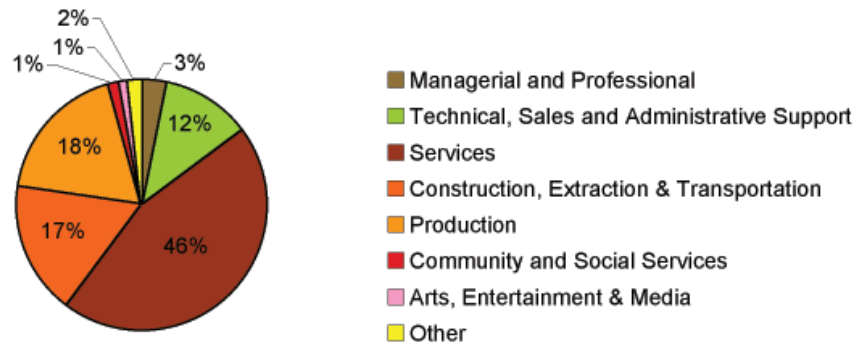
CHART 25: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, SOUTH SHORE AND CAPE COD AND ISLANDS, MA, 2000



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

As noted earlier, Brazilians have a higher labor participation rate in Massachusetts than in the rest of the country. This is true for all three areas including the South Shore and Cape Cod & Islands where 71% of working-age Brazilians participate in the labor force. The unemployment rate in this area is 4%, slightly higher than the statewide Brazilian average of 3%.

CHART 26: DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULATION BY OCCUPATION, SOUTH SHORE AND CAPE COD AND ISLANDS, MA, 2000



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

In terms of occupation, the distribution in this area is similar to that of the other two regions. The most popular occupations for Brazilians in this area of Massachusetts are services (46%). Two other popular occupations are production (18%) and construction, extraction and transportation (17%).

The majority of Brazilians working in the South Shore and Cape Cod & Islands area work for private for-profit companies (84%). Another 5% work for private not-for-profit companies. As the self-employment rate for Brazilians is high in Massachusetts in general, it is not surprising to see a high proportion of self-employed Brazilians in this area, as well (12%).

Thus, the three top regions for Brazilian immigration in Massachusetts show great similarity in the characteristics of the Brazilians who live there. For example, the percentage of employed Brazilians who work in services is 46% in Boston and the North Shore, 43% in Metro West, and 46% in the South Shore, Cape Cod, and the Islands. The only two areas in which there are notable differences are educational attainment (for example, 19% of Brazilians over age 25 in Boston and the North Shore have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 8% in the South Shore, Cape Cod, and the Islands) and citizenship status (lowest in Metro West). In other areas such as age profile, gender ratio, marital status, labor-market participation, and types of employment, the three regions share common patterns.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This estimate is from the Center of Development and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

<sup>2</sup> Maxine L. Margolis, *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>3</sup> REMI Model, BRA Research Analysis.

**The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy**

was established in 1989 at the University of Massachusetts-Boston by the Massachusetts State Legislature at the behest of Latino community leaders and scholars in response to a need for improved understanding of the Latino experience in the Commonwealth. The mission of the institute is to inform policy makers about issues vital to the state's growing Latino community and to provide this community with information and analysis necessary for effective participation in public policy development.

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