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Latinos in Massachusetts: Dominicans

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LATINOS IN MASSACHUSETTS: Dominicans

**Phillip Granberry, PhD., Michelle Borges, MA., &
Florita Coto Tristán, B.Sc.**

Foreword by Daliza Nova, MBA. Amplify LatinX.

January 2025



THE MAURICIO GASTÓN INSTITUTE
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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Foreword

When I arrived in the United States at the age of six, with my parents and two older brothers, I never imagined the profound journey that awaited us. It was 30 years ago, yet I remember that first day of school like it was yesterday. I stepped onto the big yellow bus, clutching a piece of paper with my classroom assignment, unable to speak or understand a word of English. When I got off, I relied solely on pointing to that paper to navigate my way. That moment marked the beginning of a life filled with resilience, adaptation, and responsibility.

As children of immigrants, we grew up wearing many hats. We were translators for our parents, travel agents scheduling their trips, and companions at their appointments. We navigated systems and advocated for our families in ways other children didn't have to. But that experience shaped us, gave us strength, and built a resilience that defines our community. I often marvel at the strength and courage it must have taken for my parents to uproot their entire lives to seek a better future for us. Their sacrifices imbued us with an eternal sense of responsibility—a drive to make something of ourselves, to honor their courage.

Like so many Latinos, my family came here in pursuit of the “American Dream,” a promise of opportunity, freedom, and a better life. For me, that dream became a reality, in part thanks to the programs and opportunities that helped shape my future: a bilingual advanced work classroom in elementary school, attending an exam school, and then college. Reflecting on the data in this report, I realize how truly fortunate I am. I represent a smaller percentage of Dominicans in Massachusetts who have attained these academic achievements. This understanding fills me with both gratitude and a sense of purpose.

You may ask, “Why focus on Dominicans in this study?” The answer is simple: we are a significant part of the Latino population, but Latinos are not a monolith. Even among Dominicans, our experiences are diverse and nuanced, shaped by unique challenges and opportunities. This report captures those complexities, providing invaluable insight into the state of Dominicans in Massachusetts—our strengths, our struggles, and the paths forward.

The data presented here is not just a collection of statistics; it is a roadmap of opportunity. It highlights areas where we can grow—education, employment, housing, and healthcare—and invites us to reflect on what we can do to build a brighter future. For me, this study is a call to action, a reminder of the work that remains to be done, and a celebration of the resilience and potential of our community.

I invite you to read this report with an open heart and mind. Let it inspire you to understand and advocate for the Dominican community in Massachusetts. Together, we can turn this data into progress, ensuring that the dreams of every Dominican child who steps onto that big yellow bus can become a reality.

With deep gratitude,



Daliza Nova, MBA.

Head of Development & Strategy

Amplify LatinX

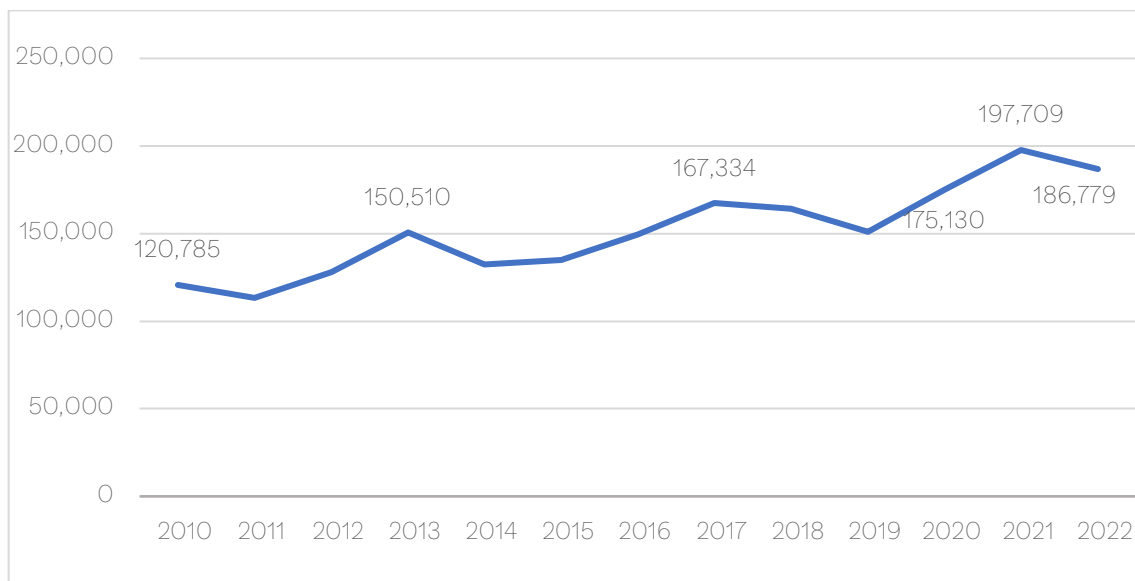
Latinos in Massachusetts: Dominicans

The Gastón Institute's 2024 Latinos in Massachusetts series includes this statewide report on the Dominican population in Massachusetts. This report analyzes Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Our descriptive analysis uses both household- and individual-level data to estimate population size and percentages and to compare Dominicans to Other Latinos and Non-Latinos in the state.

Dominicans in the Massachusetts Population

Massachusetts was home in 2022 to 1,044,506 Latinos¹, of whom 186,779, or approximately 17.9%, were Dominican. Massachusetts has the fourth largest Dominican population in the United States (after New York, Florida, and New Jersey) and make up 7.7% the country's Dominican population. Appendix A maps the Dominicans in the United States, while Appendix B maps the Dominicans by cities and towns in Massachusetts. Lawrence has the largest Dominican population followed by Boston, Lynn, Methuen, and Worcester. (These five cities between them had 69% of the Dominican population in the state in 2022.) Dominicans are a fast-growing population in Massachusetts. Figure 1 shows that the statewide Dominican population grew by 54.6% from 2010 to 2022, much faster than the state's overall Latino growth of 44.4% during this period. By comparison, the state's total population grew by 6.4% from 2010 to 2022. However, nationally the Dominican population increased more rapidly over this time period. Overall Dominicans increased by 59.3% from 2010 to 2022.

Figure 1: Dominican Population in Massachusetts from 2010 to 2022



Source: 2010-2019 and 2021-2022 American Community Survey and 2020 Decennial Census

¹ This estimate includes 139,211 Brazilians.

Nativity

Foreign-born Dominicans in Massachusetts, who on average arrived in the United States in 2006, composed 53.5% of all Dominicans in Massachusetts as of 2022. With 46.5% of their population native born, 75.9% of Dominicans in 2022 were United States citizens. By comparison, 29.1% of Other Latinos were foreign born, and 81.7% of their population were citizens. The Non-Latino population was 15.7% foreign born, and 93.5% of their population were citizens.

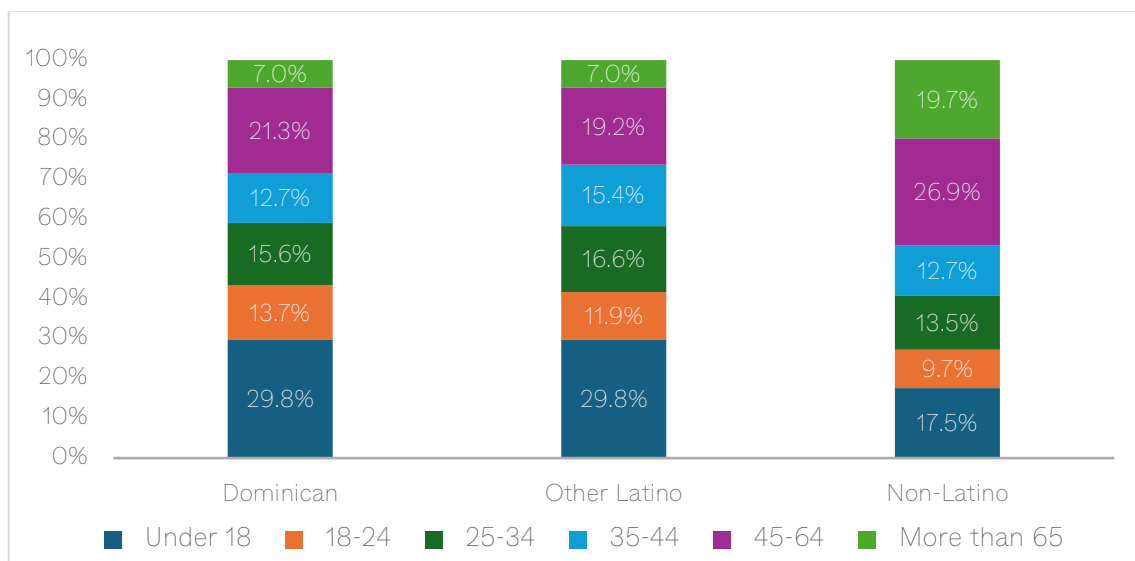
Even though 53.5% of Dominicans were native-born, 67.3% of Dominican children in 2022 had at least one foreign-born parent compared to 42.4% for Other Latinos and 29.7% for Non-Latinos.

Age Distribution and Marital Status

The Dominican population in Massachusetts in 2022 had a median age of 28 years, two years younger than of Other Latinos but much younger than for Non-Latinos (42 years). Figure 2 shows that 43.5% of Dominicans were age 24 or younger, a slightly lower proportion as for Other Latinos (41.7%) though much higher than the 27.2% for Non-Latinos.

At the same time, the prime working-age years of 25-to-64 together accounted for a slightly lower proportion of Dominicans (49.5%) than of Other Latinos and Non-Latinos (51.3%). Non-Latinos had a much higher share of the population 65 and older (19.7%), compared to 7.0% for Dominicans and Other Latinos. Dominican contribute to Massachusetts' population growth both through international migration and nativity.

Figure 2: Age Categories

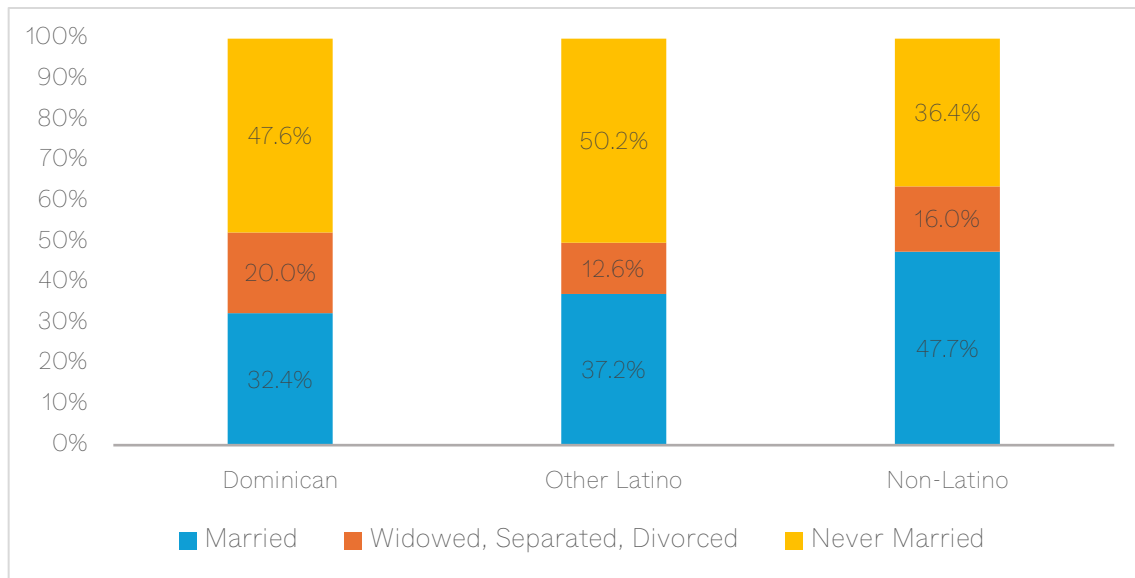


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Marital Status

The Dominican population's youthfulness is a likely factor contributing to its relatively low marriage rate. Figure 3, covering all ages 15 and older, shows that Dominicans in 2022 were slightly less likely to be married (32.4%) than were Other Latinos (37.2%) and much less likely than Non-Latinos (47.7%).

Figure 3: Marriage Rates of the Population 15 Years and Older



Source: 2022 American Community Survey

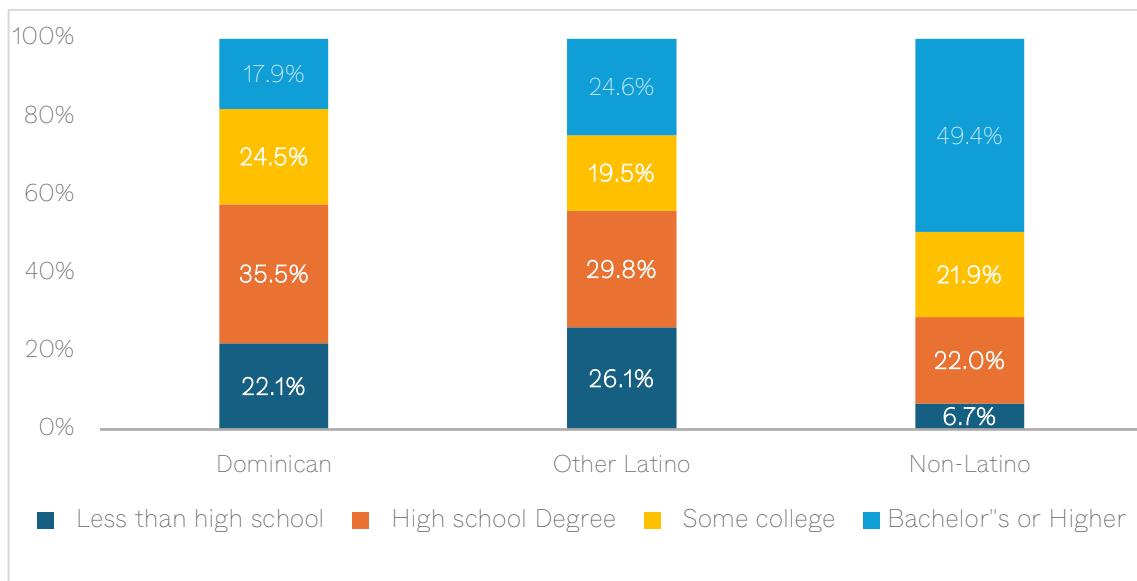
Education

Latinos in Massachusetts overall have relatively lower levels of educational attainment, and Dominicans in 2022 followed this pattern. Figure 4 shows that Dominicans and Other Latinos had much higher shares of their 25-and-older population with less than a high school diploma 22.1% and 26.1% respectively than did Non-Latinos (6.7%). The share of Dominicans with at least a Bachelor's degree (17.9%) was lower than for than Other Latinos (24.6%) and much lower than for Non-Latinos (49.4%).

The ages of 18 through 24 are especially important for obtaining higher education, and only 38.3% of Dominicans in this age group who had not already earned a Bachelor's degree were enrolled in college in 2022, compared to 33.5% for Other Latinos and 57.3% for Non-Latinos in the state.

Limited English language proficiency is often referenced as a reason for lower educational attainment. Of the population age 5 and older in 2022, more than half (54.0%) of Dominicans either spoke only English or spoke it very well. This was a lower proportion than for Other Latinos (68.7%) and much lower than for Non-Latinos (93.3%).

Figure 4: Educational Attainment of the Population 25 Years and Older

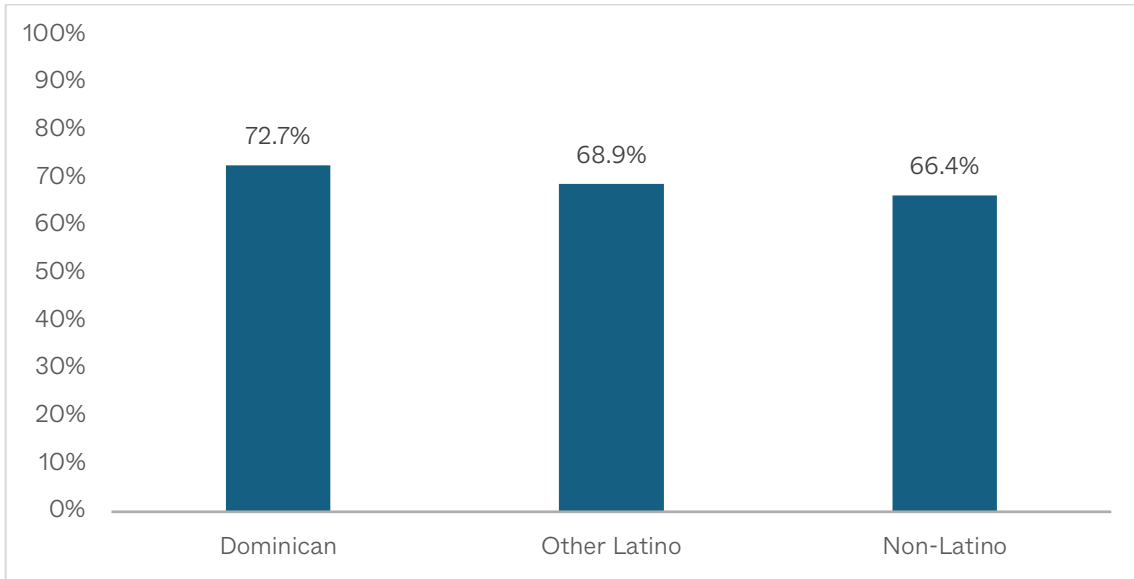


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Labor Force Participation

Dominicans had a higher labor force participation rate (72.7%) than Other Latinos (68.9%) and Non-Latinos (66.4%). Among Dominicans, men showed slightly higher labor force participation (74.2%) than women (71.6%). Younger Dominicans also showed higher labor force participation, which was 84.3% for those ages 25-44. This was slightly higher than for Other Latinos (82.1%) but less than Non-Latinos (87.9%) in the same age group.

Figure 5: Labor Force Participation of the Population 16 and Older

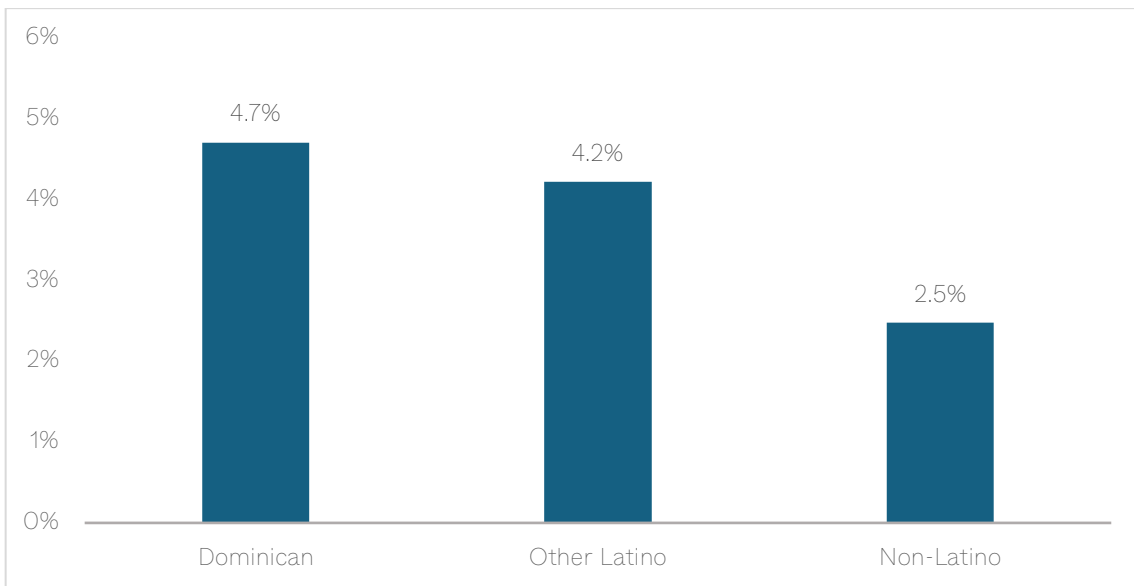


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Unemployment

In 2017, the ACS estimated Massachusetts unemployment at 4.0% overall, and 4.7% for Dominicans. As Figure 6 shows, this unemployment rate was between the rates for Other Latinos (4.2%) and Non-Latinos (2.5%).

Figure 6: Unemployment

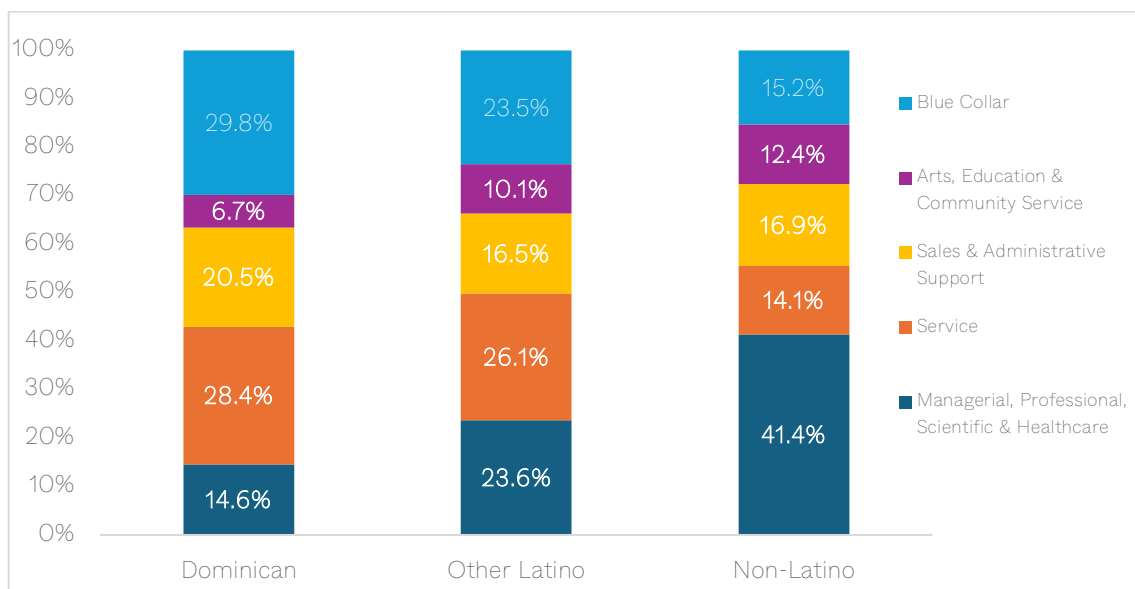


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Occupations

Slightly less than 60% of employed Dominicans (and a lower share of Other Latinos, 49.5%) worked in service and blue-collar occupations, compared to less than 29.3% for Non-Latinos. In contrast, the percentage in managerial, professional and health care occupations was 14.6% for Dominicans, 23.6% for Other Latinos, and 41.4% for Non-Latinos. These discrepancies suggest that Dominicans and Other Latinos, with lower average levels of educational attainment, fill segments of the labor market that are very different from those of Non-Latinos.

Figure 7: Occupational Distribution of Employed Workers



Source: 2022 American Community Survey

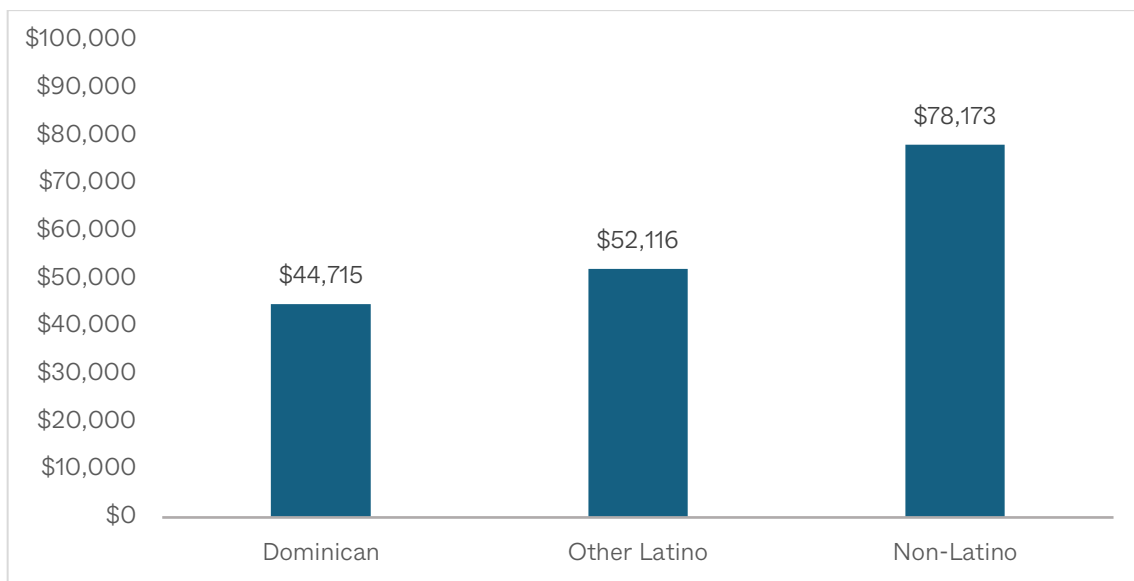
Wages

Given the previous labor market and educational information, it is not surprising that Dominicans earn relatively low wages. Full-time employed Dominican workers in 2022 had a median wage income of \$44,715, which was approximately \$7,000 less than for Other Latinos and \$33,000 less than for Non-Latinos. The overall wage income disparity between Latinos and Non-Latinos persisted when broken down by nativity, age, and educational attainment.

Poverty

With their higher unemployment and lower wage income, 20.0% of Dominicans were living below the poverty threshold. This was similar to the share for Other Latinos (19.9%) but significantly higher than for Non-Latinos (9.0%). Likewise, the poverty rate for Dominican children (27.3%) was more similar to the rate for Other Latino children (22.5%) but far higher than the rate for Non-Latino children (6.6%).

Figure 8: Median Wage Income of Full-Time Workers



Source: 2022 American Community Survey

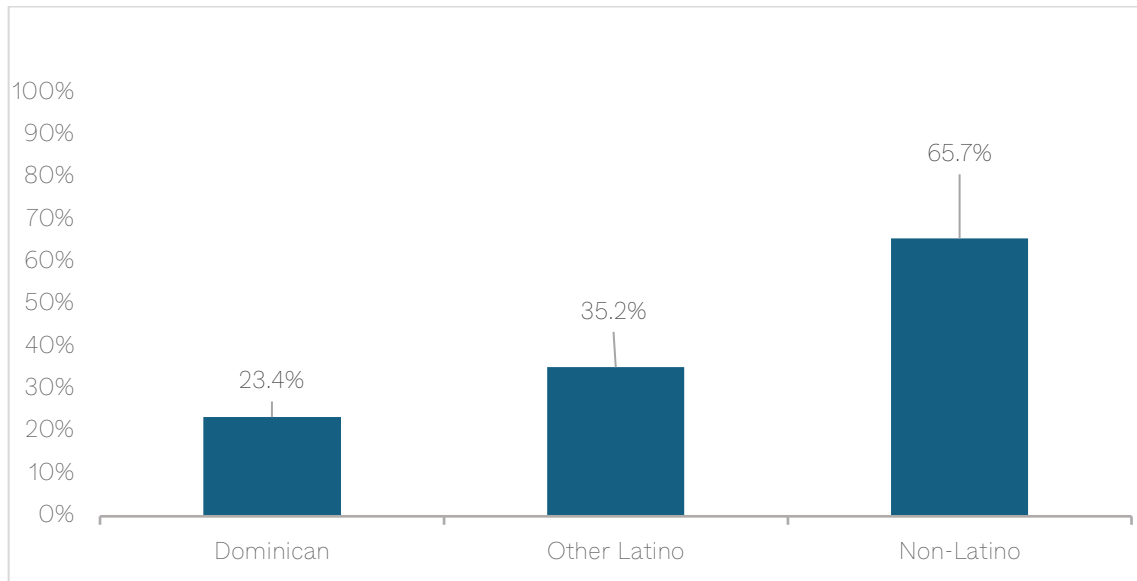
Standard of Living

The final measures of Dominicans' participation in Massachusetts are projected to identify how they are rewarded for their economic, social, and political participation. We look at homeownership, household income, housing costs, and medical insurance.

Homeownership

Dominicans in 2022 had a lower rate of homeownership: 23.4%, which means that 76.6% of Dominicans were renters. This homeownership rate was lower than for Other Latinos (35.2%) and nearly a third of the rate for Non-Latinos (65.7%).

Figure 9: Homeownership

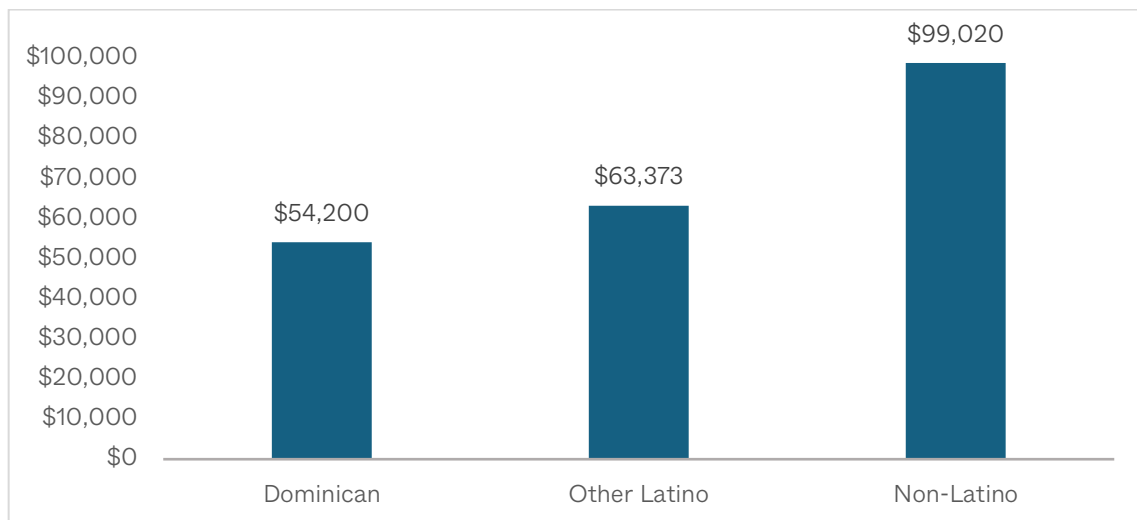


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Household Income

Household income is another aid in assessing a population’s standard of living. It accounts for the incomes of all people ages 15 years or older occupying the same housing unit, regardless of relation. Dominicans’ median household income in 2022 was \$54,200. This was lower than for the households of Other Latinos (\$65,373) and nearly half of the income for Non-Latino households (\$99,020).

Figure 10: Household Income

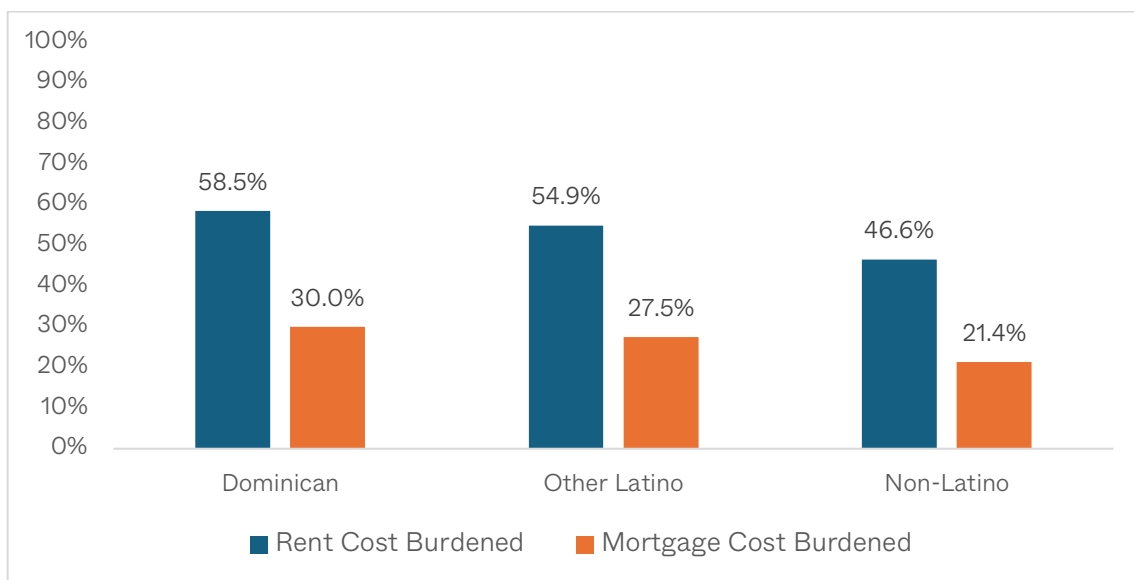


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Housing Cost Burden

A housing cost burdened household spends more than 30% of its monthly income on a rent or mortgage payment. In Massachusetts, noted for its high housing costs, 51.6% of all renting households in 2022 were rent cost burdened. This share was 58.5% for Dominican households, 54.9% for Other Latino households, and 46.6% for Non-Latino households. Among homeowners, 30.0% of Dominican households were housing cost burdened. This was also higher than for Other Latinos (27.5%) and Non-Latinos (21.4%).

Figure 11: Housing Cost Burden

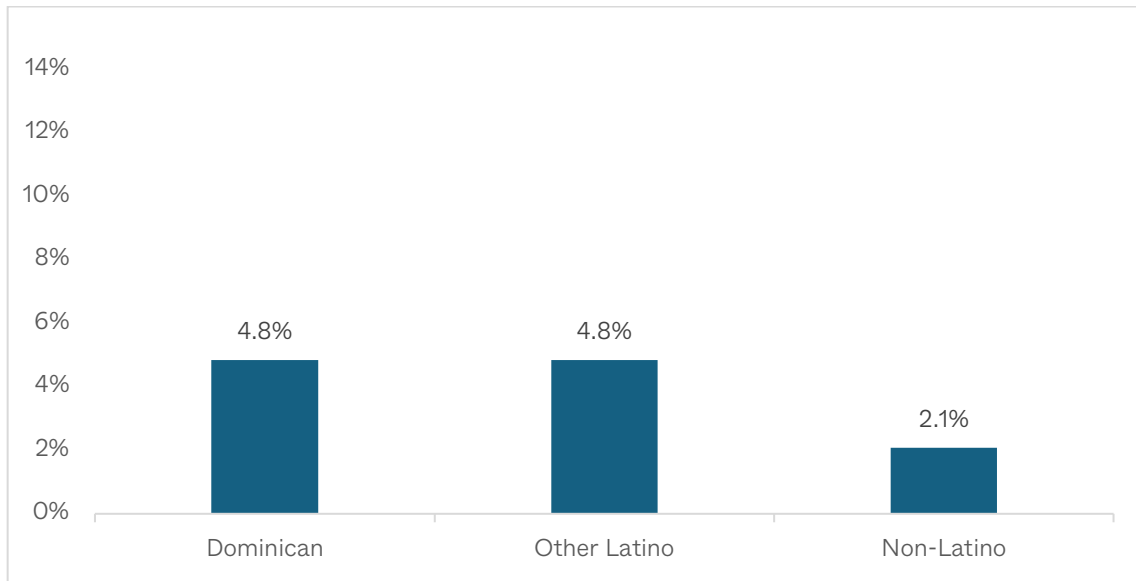


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Medical Insurance

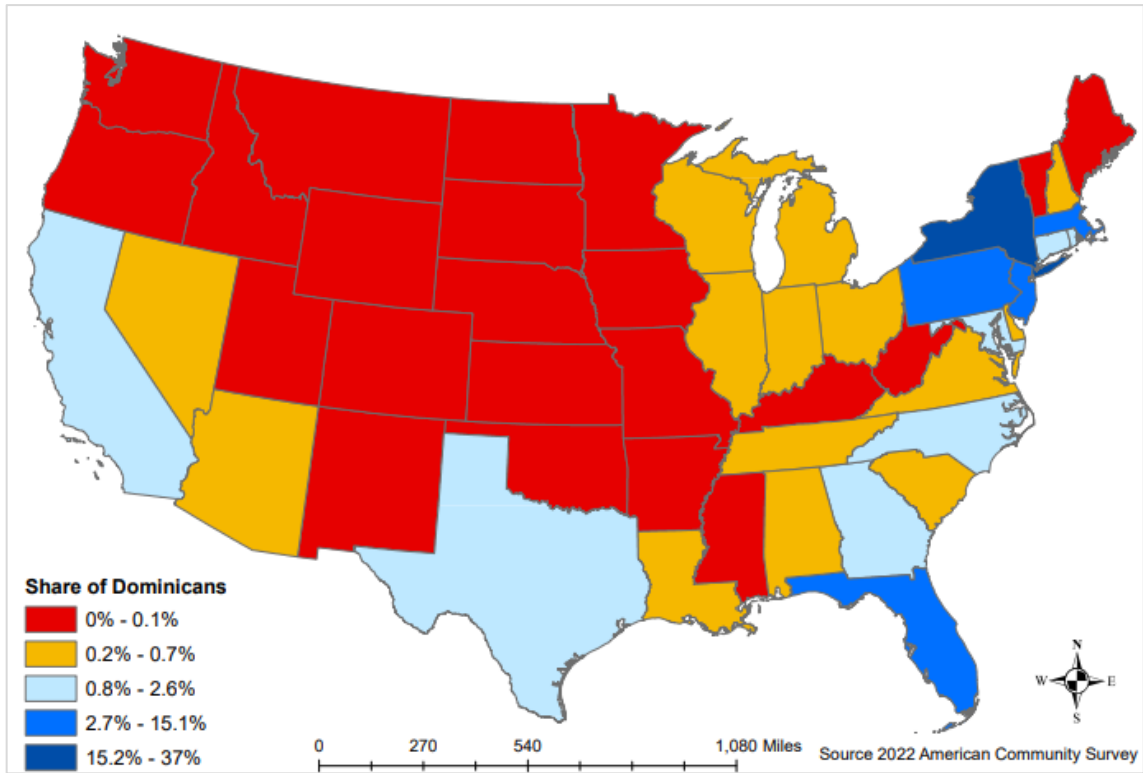
Dominicans, like Other Latinos, had less access to health insurance in 2022 than did Non-Latinos. The share of Dominicans and Other Latinos who lacked medical insurance was 4.8%, compared to 2.1% for Non-Latinos. However, among Dominican children, only 0.9% lacked medical insurance, compared to 2.3% for Other Latinos and 1.2% for Non-Latinos.

Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance

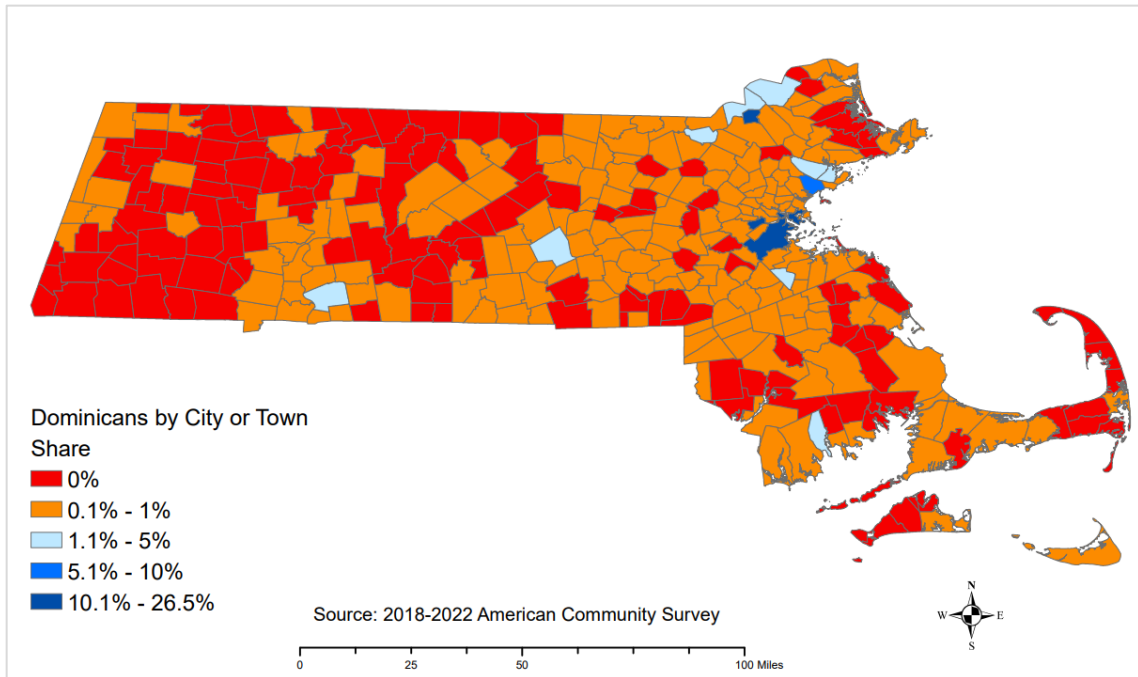


Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Appendix A: Dominicans in the United States



Appendix B: Dominicans in Massachusetts



About the Institute

Established in 1989, the Massachusetts Legislature created the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy in response to a need for an improved understanding of the Latino experience in the commonwealth. Now in its 34th year, the Gastón Institute continues its mission of informing the public and policymakers about issues vital to the state's growing Latino community and providing information and analysis necessary for effective Latino participation in public policy development. To learn more about the Gastón Institute, visit www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute.

About the Authors

Phillip Granberry is a social demographer specializing in immigration in the United States. He worked with various community-based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. immigrants before earning a Ph.D. in Public Policy. His research focuses on the accumulation and use of social capital among Mexican migrants and the impact of welfare and immigration policy reform on Latinos in Massachusetts. He is currently a senior research associate for the Gastón Institute. He teaches in the Economics Department at the UMass Boston, where he teaches courses on international migration and metropolitan area economic development.

Michelle Borges holds a Master's degree in Applied Economics from the University of Massachusetts Boston and works as a research assistant at the Mauricio Gastón Institute. In the past, she has contributed significantly to research projects conducted by the UNESCO Chair on Women Development and Culture and Levy Economics Institute. Her research interests span Labor Economics,

Development Economics, Immigration, and Feminist Economics.

Florita Coto Tristán is currently pursuing a Master's of Business Administration at the University of Massachusetts Boston, holds a Bachelor's in Statistics from the University of Costa Rica, and works as a Graduate Research Assistant at the Mauricio Gastón Institute. She brings experience in research and statistical consulting across private and public sectors.

Daliza Nova as the Head of Strategy and Development for Amplify LatinX, she is responsible for the strategic direction of the organization, raising funds, and developing new initiatives that contribute to the economic sustainability of the nonprofit. Her educational background includes an Executive MBA from Hult International Business School, with studies in London and Dubai, and a degree in Economics from Hampshire College, focusing on community development and aiding underserved populations.

