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# **Latinos in Massachusetts: Dominicans**

by Phillip Granberry, PH.D., and Krizia Valentino

April 2020

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**THE MAURICIO GASTON INSTITUTE  
FOR LATINO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
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## Intro

The Gastón Institute’s 2020 **Latinos in Massachusetts** series focuses on the ten largest Latino populations located throughout the state.<sup>1</sup> In order of size, these Latino populations are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Brazilians,<sup>2</sup> Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Colombians, Cubans, Hondurans, and Ecuadorans. This report analyzes Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data from the 2017 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.

## Abstract

Since the early 1980s, there has been a notable increase in the number of Dominicans in Massachusetts due at first to international migration and later due to nativity. Dominican migration is primarily circular. Dominican migrants embody the notion of transnationalism, that is, they have ties to both the United States and the Dominican Republic. Now after several decades, nearly half of their population is native born. The largest Dominican populations in the state are in Lawrence and Boston. The social and economic analysis that follows paints a mixed picture of their incorporation into Massachusetts. Dominicans have higher labor force participation than others in the state do, even if their wages are comparably lower. A large share of Dominicans are children, and investment in their education can shape their future economic success.

## Dominicans in the Massachusetts Population

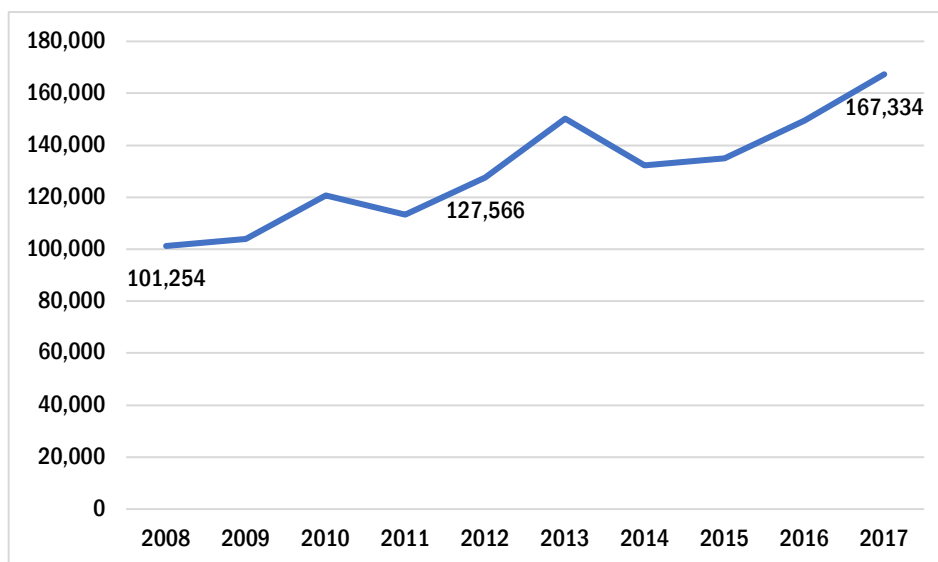
Massachusetts was home in 2017 to 918,565 Latinos, of whom 167,334, or approximately 18%, were Dominican. Massachusetts has the fourth largest Dominican population in the United States (after New York, New Jersey, and Florida). Appendix A maps the Dominicans in the United States, while Appendix B maps 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 2017.) Figure 1 shows that the statewide Dominican population grew by 65% from 2008 to 2017, much faster than the state’s overall Latino growth of 44% during this period. By comparison, the state’s total population grew by 5.6% from 2008 to 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> These reports will not identify Latinos in specific cities and towns, as previous years’ reports have done. Instead, the focus is on the most prevalent Latino ethnic groups statewide.

<sup>2</sup> We use Latino origin and ancestry, based on migration from Latin America, to identify these populations. Thus, Brazilians are included in the category “Latino” although most Brazilians self-report using a racial category – white or black – rather than identifying with the term “Latino.”

**Figure 1: Dominican Population from 2008 to 2017**



Source: 2008-2017 American Community Survey

### ***Nativity***

Foreign-born Dominicans in Massachusetts, who on average arrived in the United States in 2000, composed 53% of all Dominicans in Massachusetts as of 2017. With 47% of their population native born, 77% of Dominicans in 2017 were United States citizens. By comparison, 32% of Other Latinos were foreign born, and 79% of their population were citizens. The Non-Latino population was 14% foreign born, and 94% of their population were citizens.

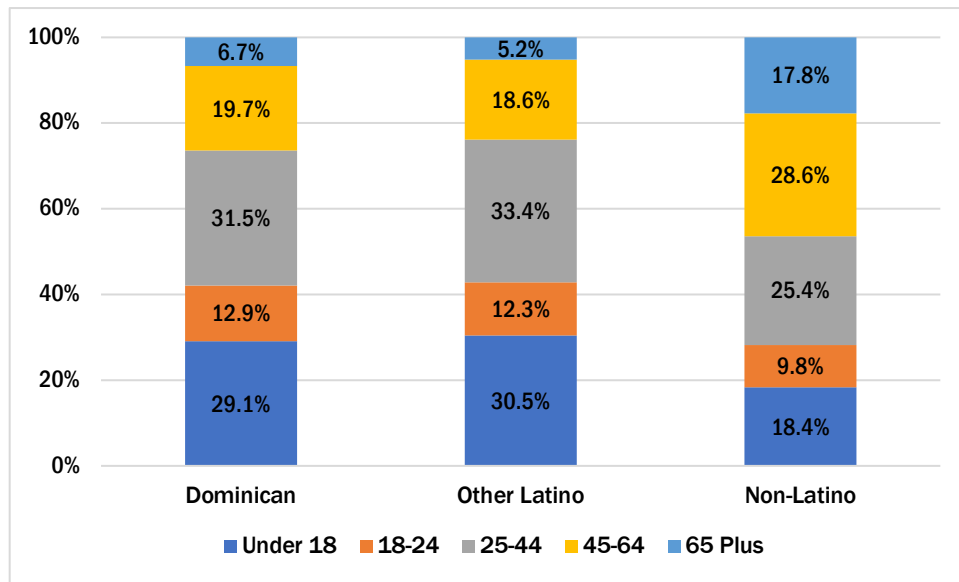
Even though 53% of Dominicans were native-born, 73% of Dominican children in 2017 had at least one foreign-born parent compared to 41% for Other Latinos and 24% for Non-Latinos.

### ***Age Distribution and Marital Status***

The Dominican population in Massachusetts in 2017 had a median age of 29 years, equal to that of Other Latinos but much lower than for Non-Latinos (41 years). Figure 2 shows that 42% of Dominicans were age 24 or younger, a slightly lower proportion as for Other Latinos (43%) though much higher than the 28% for Non-Latinos.

At the same time, the prime working-age years of 25-44 and 45-64 together accounted for a slightly lower proportion of Dominicans (51%) than of Other Latinos (52%) and of Non-Latinos (54%). Non-Latinos had a much higher share of the population 65 and older (18%), compared to 7% for Dominicans and 5% for Other Latinos.

**Figure 2: Age Categories**

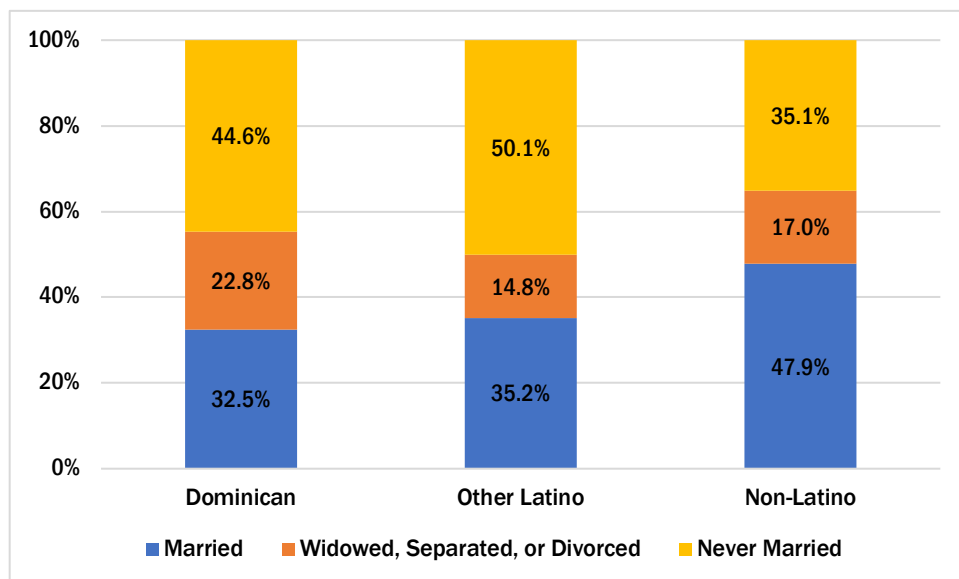


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

### ***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 2017 were slightly less likely to be married (33%) than were Other Latinos (35%) and much less likely than Non-Latinos (48%).

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



Source: 2017 American Community Survey

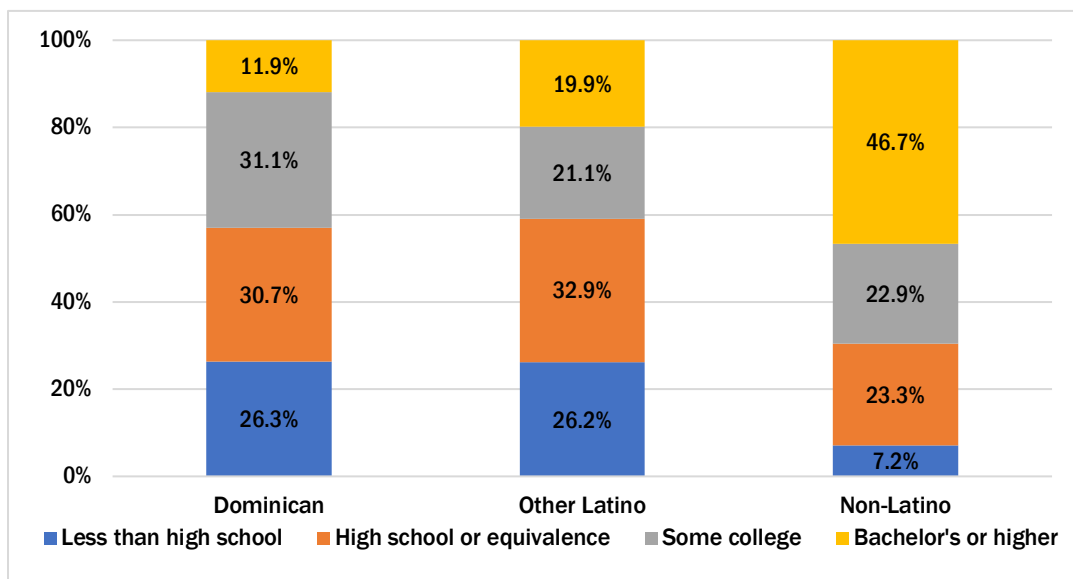
## Education

Latinos in Massachusetts overall have relatively low levels of educational attainment, and Dominicans in 2017 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 (26%) than did Non-Latinos (7%). The proportion of Dominicans with at least a Bachelor's degree (12%) was lower than for than Other Latinos (20%) and much lower than for Non-Latinos (47%).

The ages of 18 through 24 are especially important for obtaining higher education, and only 41% of Dominicans in this age group who had not already earned a Bachelor's degree were enrolled in college in 2017, compared to 48% for Other Latinos and 61% for Non-Latinos.

English language difficulty is often referenced as a reason for low educational attainment. Of the population age 5 and older in 2017, barely half (55%) of Dominicans either spoke only English or spoke it very well. This was a lower proportion than for Other Latinos (68%) and much lower than for Non-Latinos (94%).

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



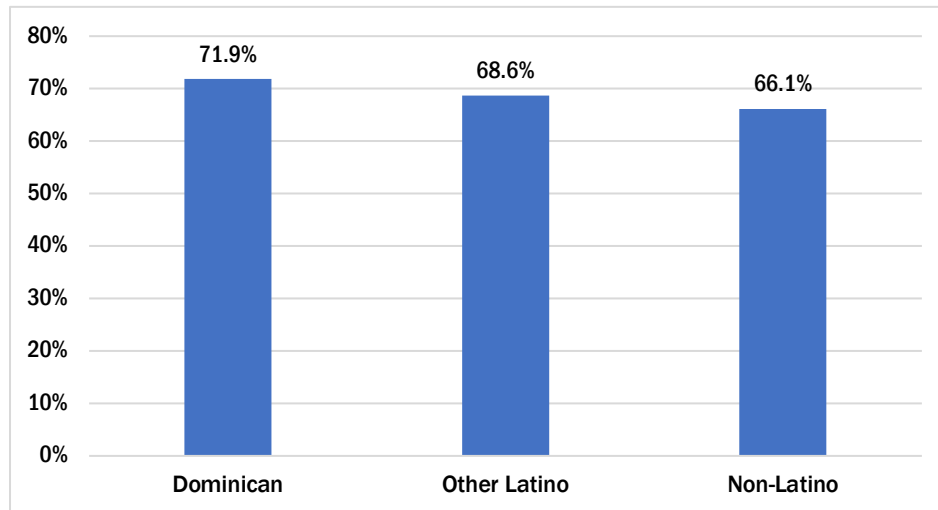
Source: 2017 American Community Survey

## Labor Force Participation

Dominicans had a higher labor force participation rate (72%) than Other Latinos (69%) and Non-Latinos (66%). Among Dominicans, men showed slightly higher labor force participation (75%) than women (69%). Younger Dominicans also showed higher labor

force participation, which was 86% for those ages 25-44. This was similar to Non-Latinos (86%) in the same age group but higher than for Other Latinos (79%).

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

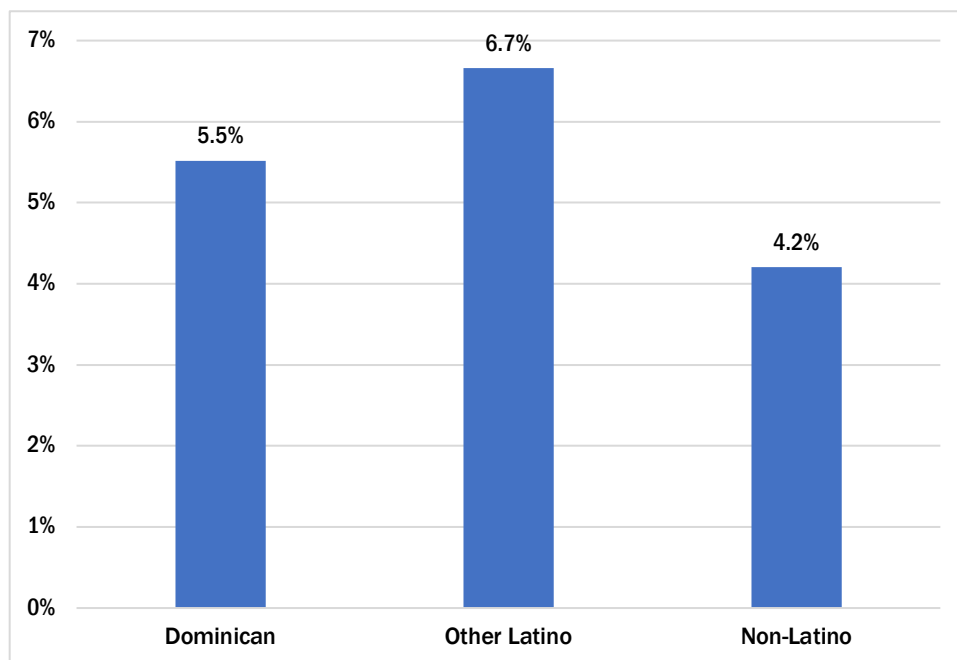


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

### ***Unemployment***

In 2017, the ACS estimated Massachusetts unemployment at 4.5% overall, and 5.5% for Dominicans. As Figure 6 shows, this unemployment rate was between the rates for Other Latinos (6.7%) and Non-Latinos (4.2%).

**Figure 6: Unemployment**

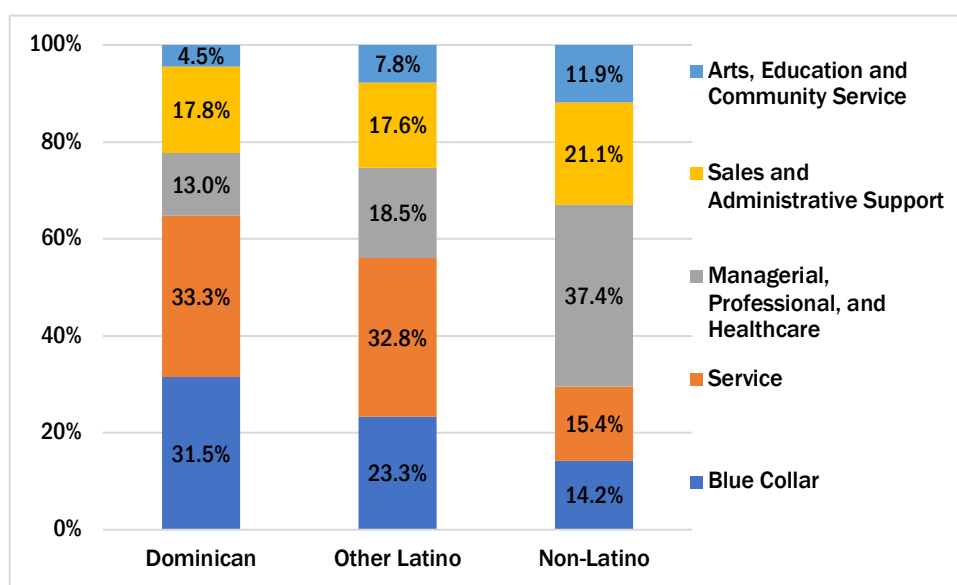


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

## Occupations

Slightly less than 60% of employed Dominicans (and a slightly lower proportion of Other Latinos, 56%) worked in service and blue-collar occupations, compared to less than 30% for Non-Latinos. In contrast, the percentage in managerial and professional occupations was 13% for Dominicans, 19% for Other Latinos, and 37% 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: 2017 American Community Survey

## Wages

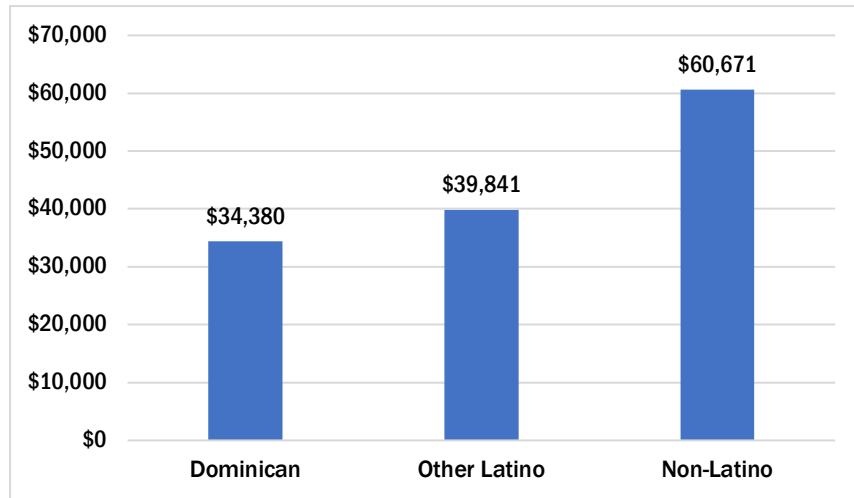
Given the previous labor market and educational information, it is not surprising that Dominicans earn relatively low wages. Full-time Dominican workers in 2017 had a median wage income of \$34,380, which was approximately \$5,000 less than for Other Latinos and \$26,000 less than for Non-Latinos. The 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, 23% of Dominicans were below the poverty threshold. This was identical to the figure for Other Latinos (23%) but significantly higher than for Non-Latinos (8%). Likewise, the poverty rate for Dominican children (30%) was identical to the rate for Other Latino children but far higher than the rate for Non-Latino children (9%).



**Figure 8: Median Wage Income of Full-Time Workers**



Source: 2017 American Community Survey

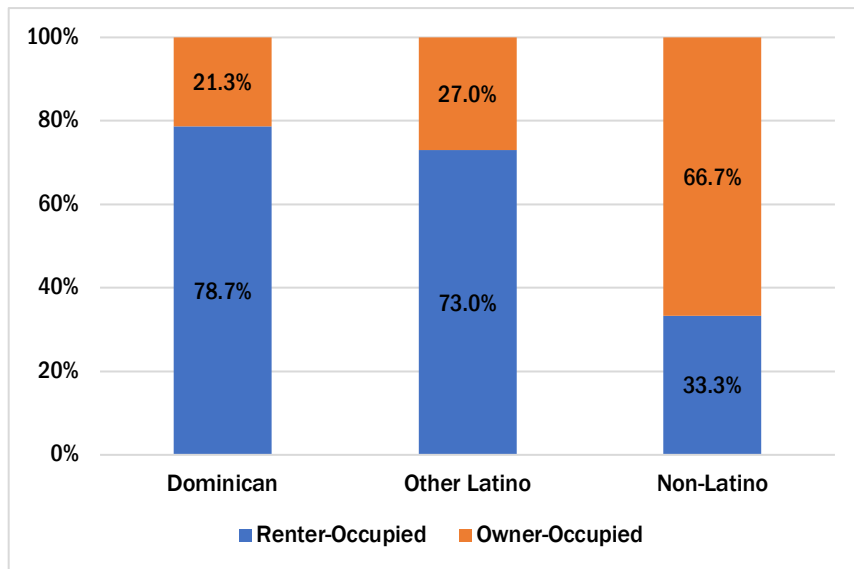
### ***Standard of Living***

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 2017 had a low rate of homeownership: 21%, which means that 79% of Dominicans were renters. This homeownership rate was lower than for Other Latinos (27%) and less than a third of the rate for Non-Latinos (67%).

**Figure 9: Homeownership**

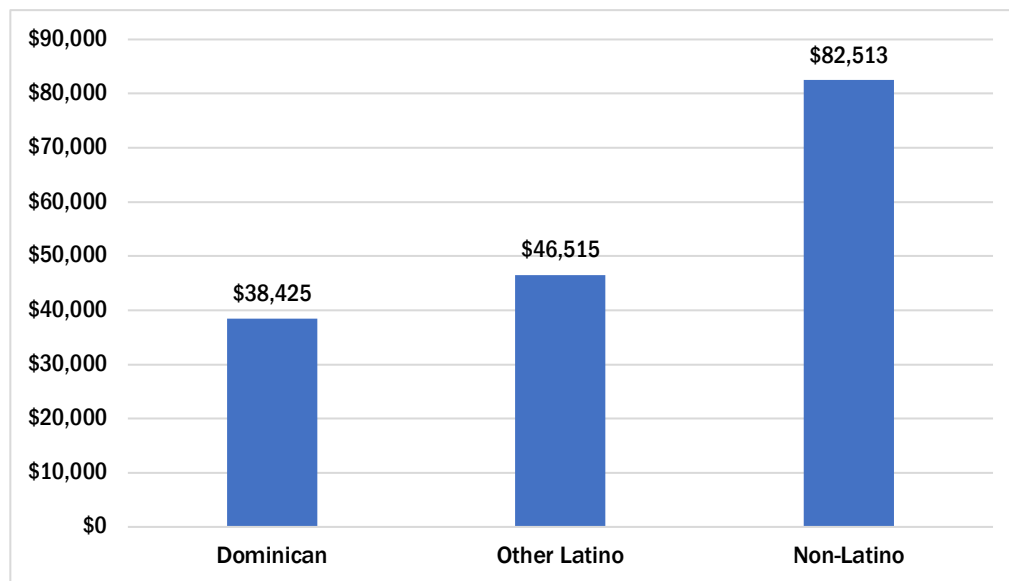


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

## ***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 2017 was \$38,425. This was lower than for the households of Other Latinos (\$46,515) and less than half of the income for Non-Latino households (\$82,513).

**Figure 10: Household Income**

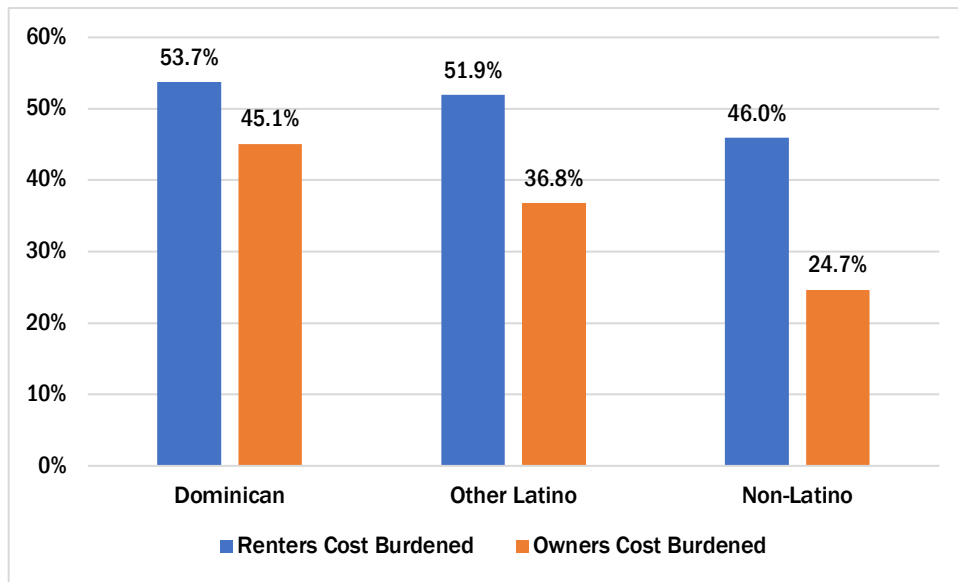


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

## ***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, 47% of all renting households in 2017 were housing cost burdened. This figure was 54% for Dominican households, 52% for Other Latino households, and 46% for Non-Latino households. Among homeowners, 45% of Dominican households were housing cost burdened. This was also higher than for Other Latinos (37%) and Non-Latinos (25%).

**Figure 11: Housing Cost Burden**

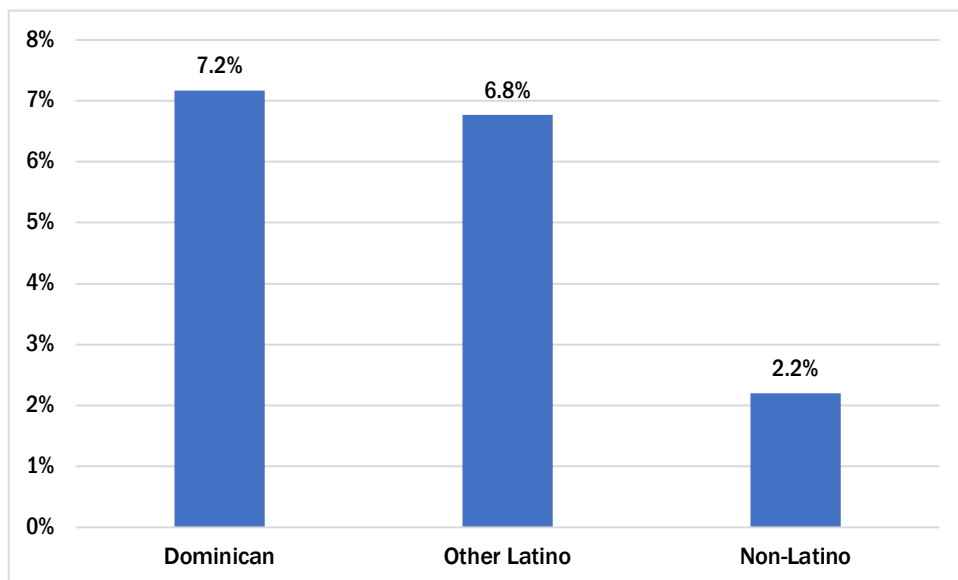


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

### ***Medical Insurance***

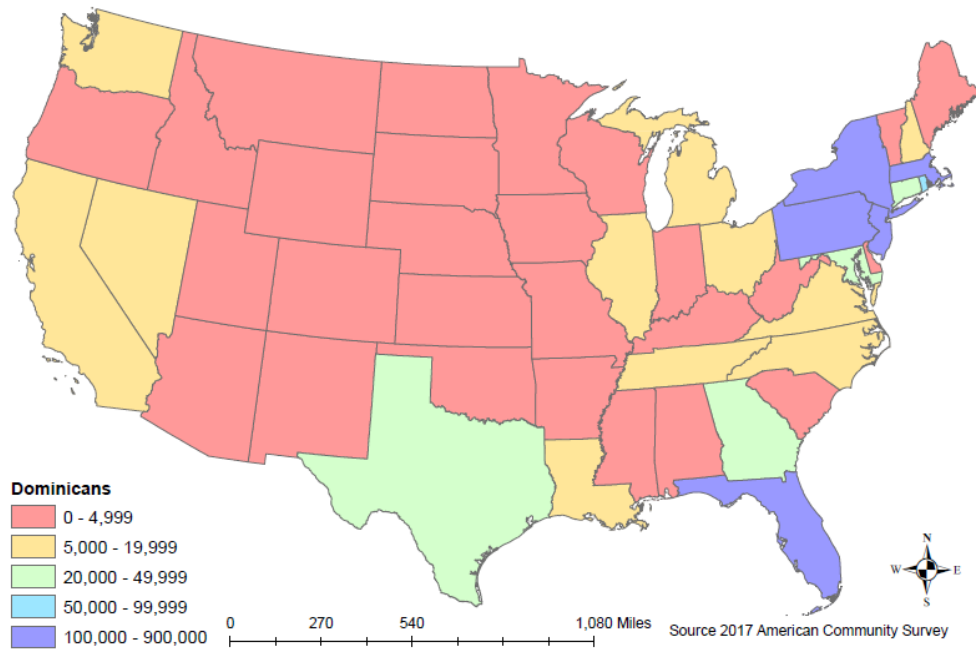
Dominicans, like Other Latinos, had less access to health insurance in 2017 than did Non-Latinos. The percentage of Dominicans who lacked medical insurance was 7.2%, compared to 6.8% for Other Latinos and 2.2% for Non-Latinos. However, among Dominican children, only 2.8% lacked medical insurance, compared to 1.7% for Other Latinos and 1.2% for Non-Latinos.

**Figure 12: Medical Uninsurance**

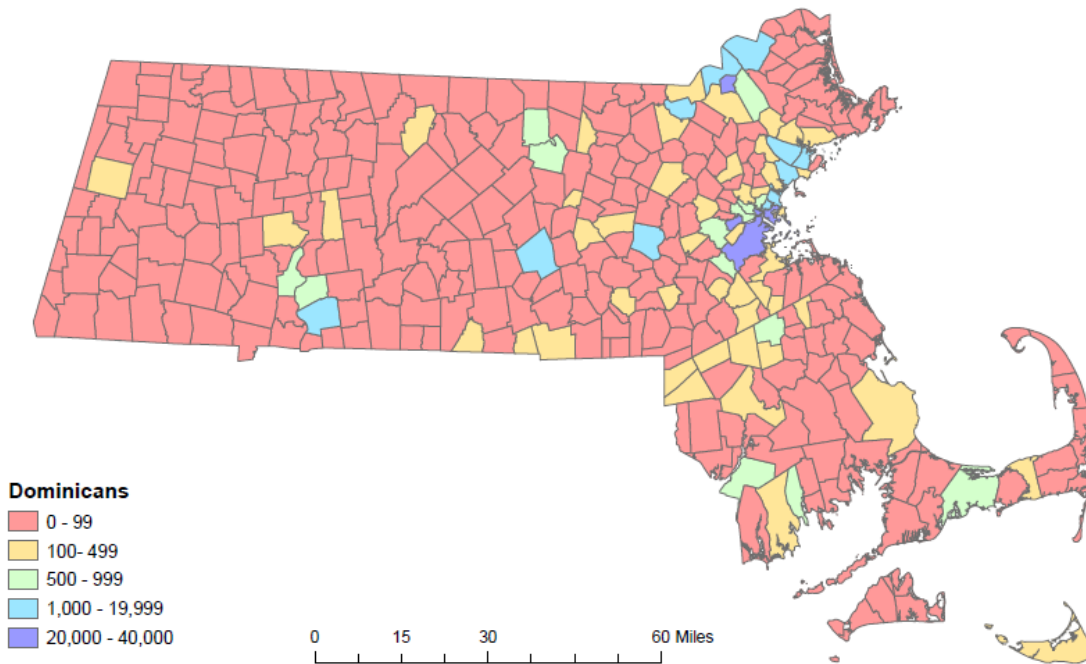


Source: 2017 American Community Survey

## Appendix A: Dominicans in the United States



## Appendix B: Dominicans in Massachusetts



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey, American Factfinder Table: B03001

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April, 2020

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## About the Gastón Institute

Established in 1989, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy was created by the Massachusetts Legislature in response to a need for improved understanding about the Latino experience in the commonwealth. Now in its 30th 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](http://www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute).

One of the goals of the Gastón Institute is to be responsive to the needs of the Latino and policy communities through the research we undertake. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions or requests for specific information.

## About the Authors

Phillip Granberry is a social demographer. He worked with various community-based organizations assisting recently arrived U.S. immigrants before earning a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston. He has published several articles on the accumulation and use of social capital among Latinos and the sexual health communication of Puerto Rican mothers with their children. In addition to his research and teaching in the Gastón Institute and Economics Department at UMass Boston, he is Senior Researcher in demography for the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

Krizia Valentino is a graduate student in the Applied Economics program at UMass Boston, expected to graduate May 2020. She has supported data collection and analysis for a wide range of projects at the Gastón Institute, including a Survey Report for English for New Bostonians and the Latino Non-Profit Mapping Project with Amplify Latinx. In addition to her time at Gastón Institute, she is also a teaching assistant in the UMass Boston Economics department.



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