

**imagine
all the
people**

Salvadorans

CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor

2016

Salvadorans 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.



Photo: Fernando Bossa

Introduction

International migration of Salvadorans over the last half century has been prompted by socioeconomic problems including inequality, lack of job opportunities, insufficient access to land, and most notably, widespread violence during the country's civil war from 1979 to 1992. Historically, Salvadorans left their country in hopes of finding land and opportunity in neighboring Honduras. However during the 1960s, Honduras launched agrarian reforms that targeted Salvadoran residents—as much 12% of the Honduran population—to quell tension among Honduran agricultural workers. Starting in the 1970s, refugees from war-torn areas of El Salvador sought sanctuary in neighboring countries such as Nicaragua and Guatemala and in the United States.¹ Because the United States was reluctant to grant refugee status to Salvadorans fleeing their civil war, many Salvadorans migrated to the United States without authorized status. The Department of Homeland Security in 2010 estimated that 59 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans in the United States were unauthorized.²

However, after an earthquake in 2001, Salvadorans were granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service has extended Salvadorans TPS until September 2016.

The majority of Salvadorans coming to the United States initially settle in southwestern states such as California and Texas, concentrating in Los Angeles and Houston. Salvadorans already in the United States have begun moving to the east coast in search of employment. Boston has developed a significant Salvadoran population and is now a destination for new Salvadorans migrating to join family members.³ A greater share of foreign-born Salvadorans have arrived in the United States after 2000 (52 percent) compared to all foreign born (43 percent.)

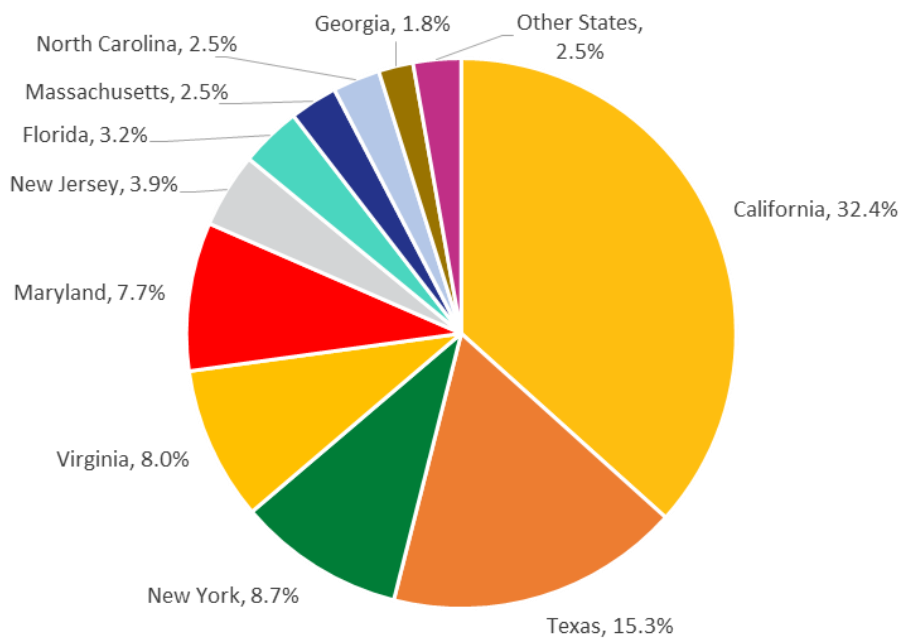
Estimates from the 2014 American Community Survey⁴ (ACS) show that 1,315,474 foreign-born⁵ individuals from El Salvador reside in the United States, which has been the leading destination for Salvadoran emigrants. Other primary destinations include Canada, Guatemala, and Australia.⁶

With 3 percent of the U.S. foreign-born Salvadoran population residing in Massachusetts, the state ranks eighth in its share of Salvadoran migrants. The most popular states for Salvadoran migration are California (32 percent), Texas (15 percent), New York (9 percent), Virginia (8 percent) and Maryland (8 percent).⁷



Photo: Fernandito Bossa

Share of Foreign-Born Salvadoran Population by State



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

Of the estimated 32,361 foreign-born Salvadorans residing in Massachusetts, 10,961 reside in Boston.⁸ El Salvador is the fourth largest country of origin for Boston's foreign-born population in 2014. Overall, Salvadorans in Boston constitute 6.3 percent of the city's total foreign-born residents.⁹ Dominicans have the largest share of the city's foreign-born population, followed by Chinese, Haitians, and Salvadorans.

Boston's foreign-born Salvadorans are concentrated in East Boston, (80 percent). Other neighborhoods with smaller concentrations are Dorchester, Allston, and Jamaica Plain.¹⁰

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

Salvadoran migration has historically been disproportionately female, and 57 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans in Boston are female. Slightly more than 50 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans in Boston are either married (34 percent) or divorced/separated (14 percent) or widowed (2 percent). Approximately 53 percent of all foreign-born Salvadorans are between the ages of 35 and 64, and the median age of the population is 36 years. The vast majority of foreign-born Salvadorans (88 percent) are not naturalized U.S. citizens.

*80% of
Salvadorans in
Boston live in East
Boston*

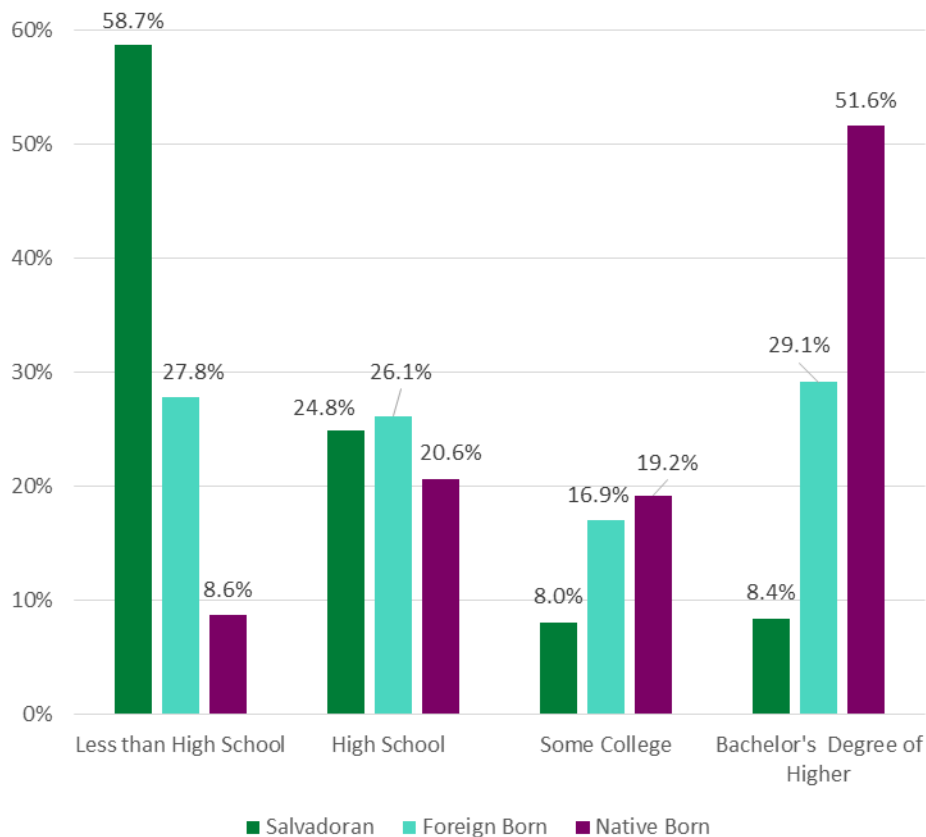
Educational Attainment

Over 58 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans in Boston ages 25 years or older have not completed high school. This share is greater than for all foreign-born residents (28 percent) and over six times the share for the native-born population (9 percent). Approximately 25 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans have a high school diploma as their highest educational attainment.

While 16 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans 25 years or older have attended college, only 8 percent have completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 29 percent of the entire foreign-born population, and 52 percent of the native born. With respect to advanced degrees, only 2 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans living in Boston hold a graduate or professional degree compared with 14 percent of all foreign born and 22 percent of the native born.

Over 58% of adult Salvadorans have not completed high school.

Educational Attainment of Boston Residents 25 Years and Older

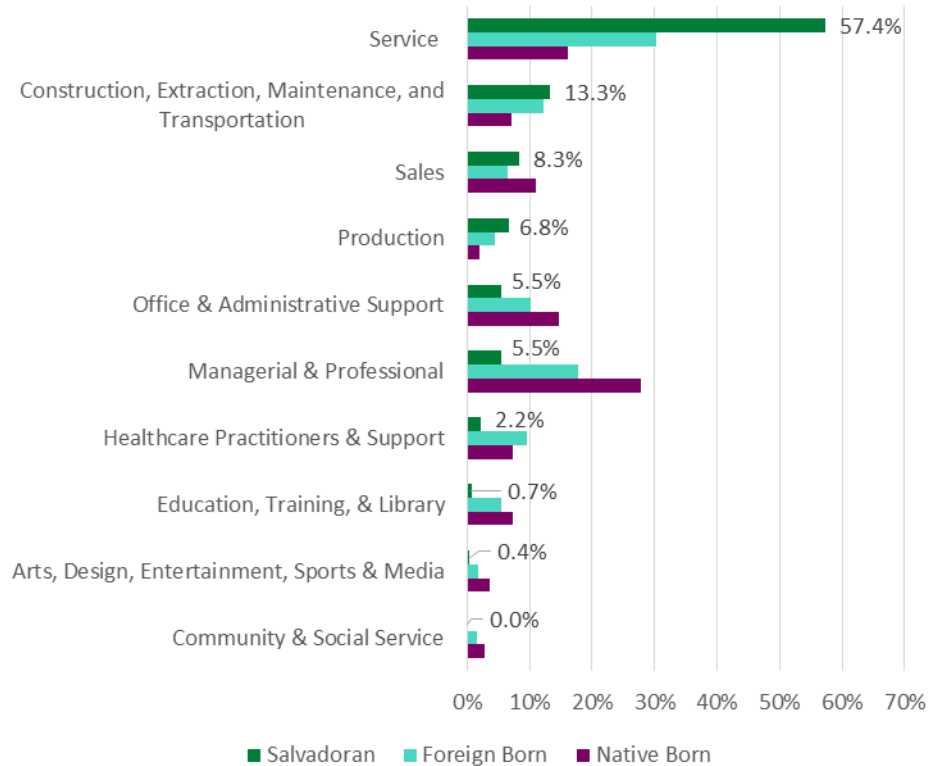


U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

Occupations

Over half (57 percent) of foreign-born Salvadorans in the workforce are employed in service occupations.¹¹ The two next largest occupational categories are construction, extraction, maintenance, and transportation (13 percent) and sales occupations (8 percent). Foreign-born Salvadorans are over-represented in service occupations even when compared to all foreign born in Boston. Within service occupations, 28 percent of all foreign-born Salvadorans work in food preparation and 28 percent work in building and grounds, cleaning and maintenance occupations. Conversely, foreign-born Salvadorans are significantly under-represented in managerial and professional occupations: 6 percent for Salvadorans compared with 18 percent for the total foreign-born population and 28 percent for the native born.

Occupations by Nativity



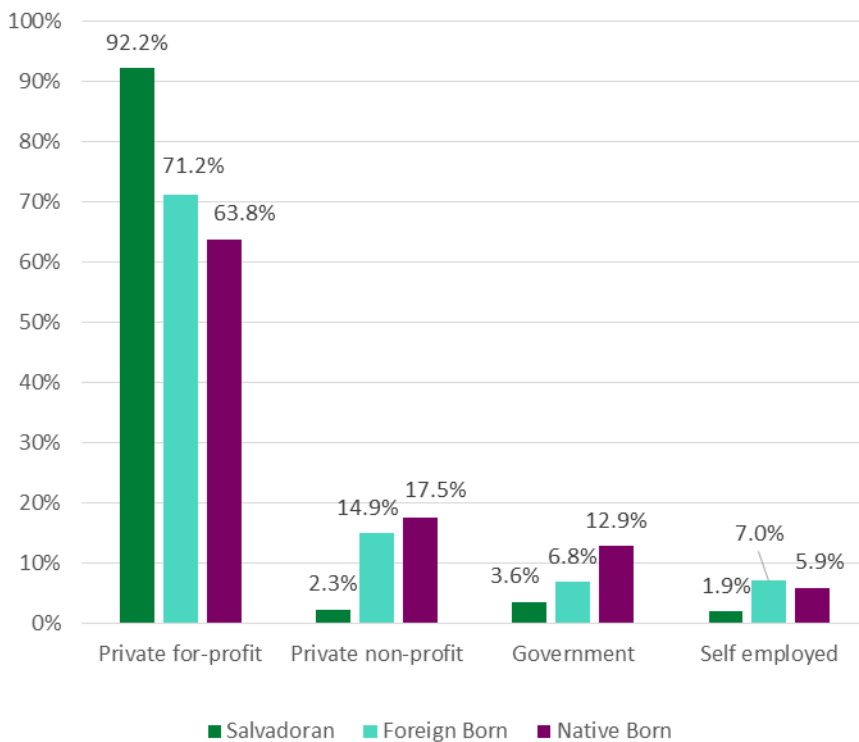
U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

Type of Employment

In total, 82 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans age 16 and over participate in the labor force compared with 68 percent of the total foreign-born population and 69 percent of the native-born population.¹² Compared to others in Boston (excluding unpaid family workers), Salvadorans are less likely to be self-employed--1.9 percent--compared to 7 percent for the total foreign-born population 5.9 percent for the native born.¹³ An estimated 92 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans work for private, for-profit companies. An additional 2 percent work for private, nonprofit organizations, and 4 percent are employed in the public sector (local, state and federal government).

82% of adult Salvadorans are in the labor force and almost all work for private for-profit employers.

Employment Type by Type of Employer



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

Economic Impact

Economic Impact

Foreign-born Salvadorans contribute to the local economy through their labor and consumer spending. The total value of their economic contributions was estimated using a Regional Economic Model (REMI) that calculated the value of goods and services consumed on each dollar spent. Foreign-born Salvadorans in Boston generated total expenditures of \$170 million in 2014.¹⁴ These annual expenditures contributed over \$102 million to the regional product and generated \$5.6 million in state and local taxes.¹⁵ In total, these expenditures supported 735 jobs in the Massachusetts economy.¹⁶



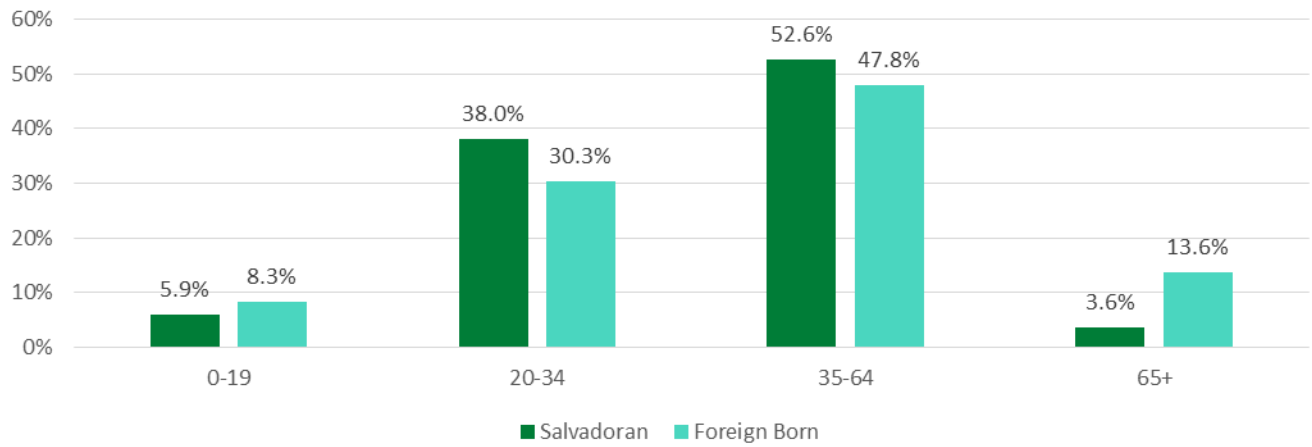
Tesoro Market in East Boston, Kevin Ford



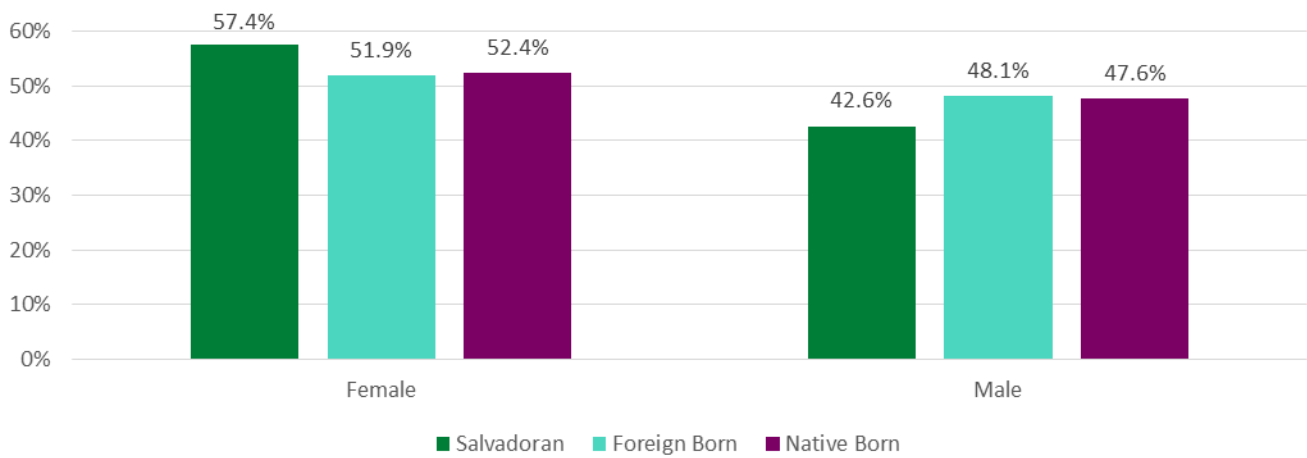
La Hacienda Mexican & Salvadoran restaurant in East Boston

Imagine all the people: Salvadorans

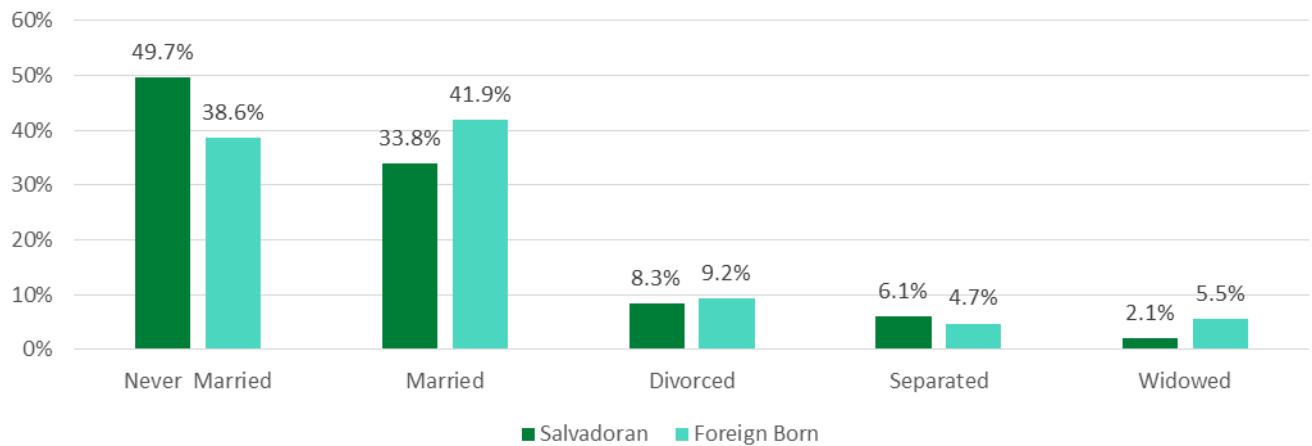
Age



Gender

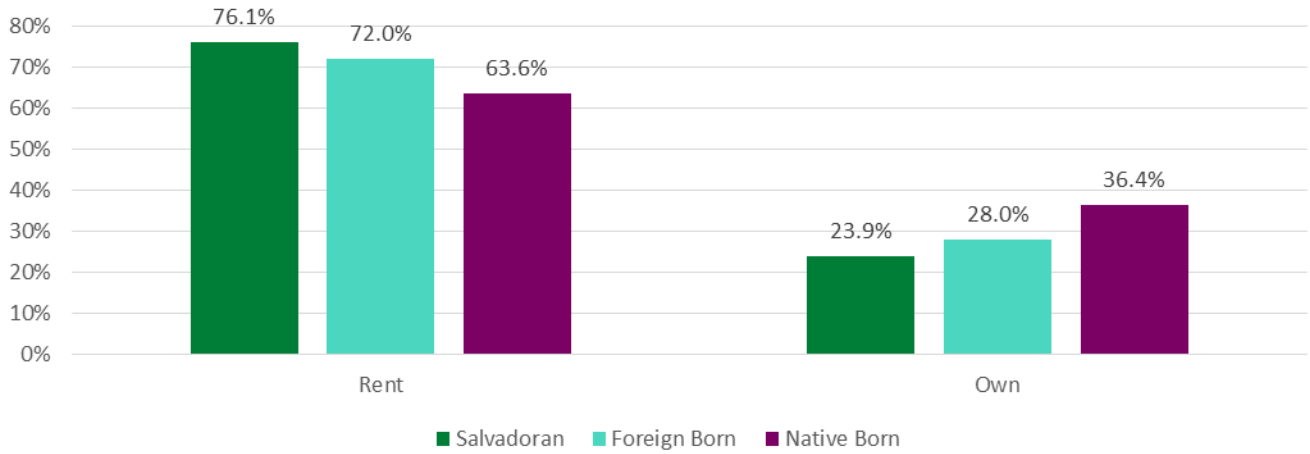


Marital Status

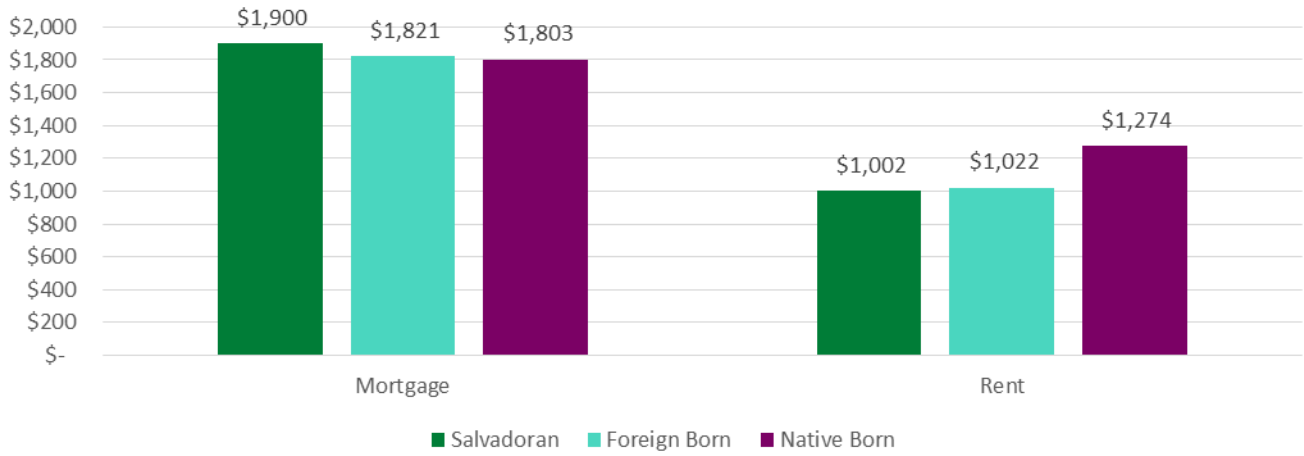


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, PUMS, BRA Research Division Analysis

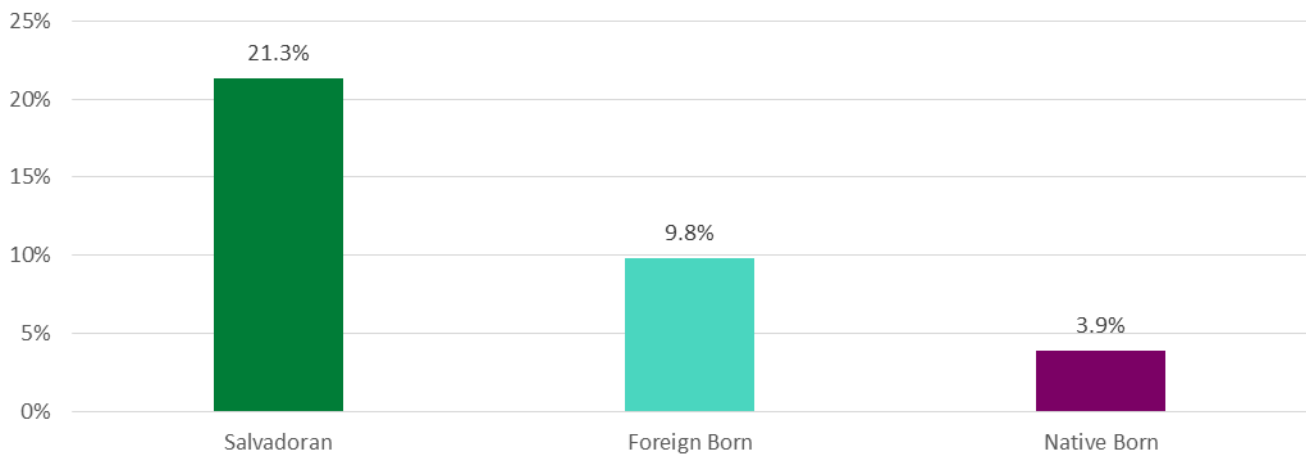
Housing Tenure*



Housing Costs*



Medical Uninsurance



*Housing data are based on the householder's country of origin.

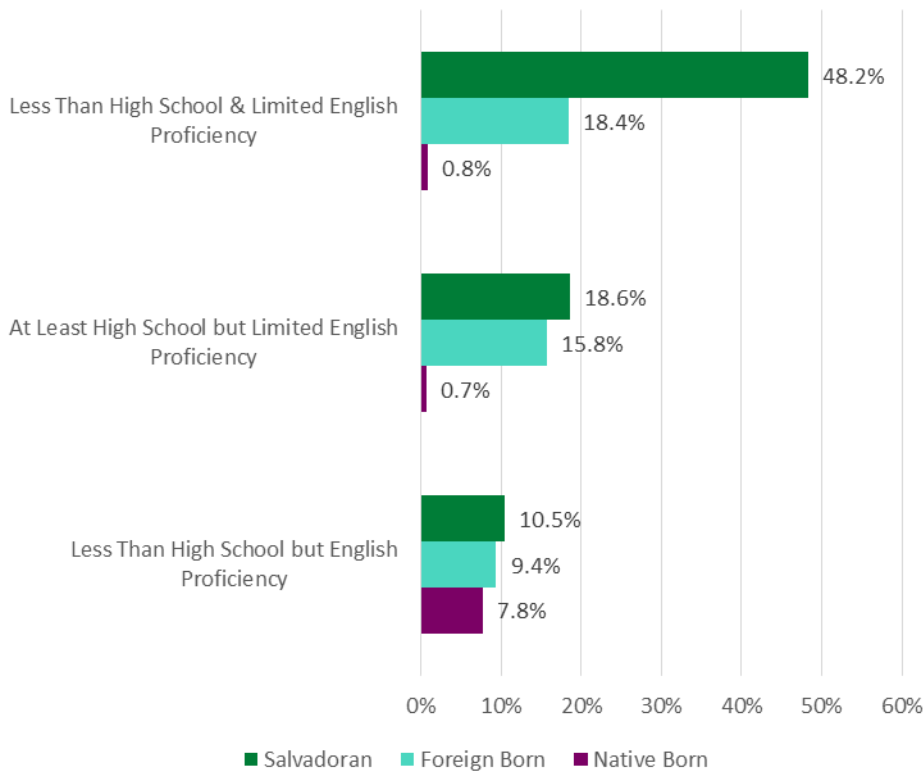
Standard of Living

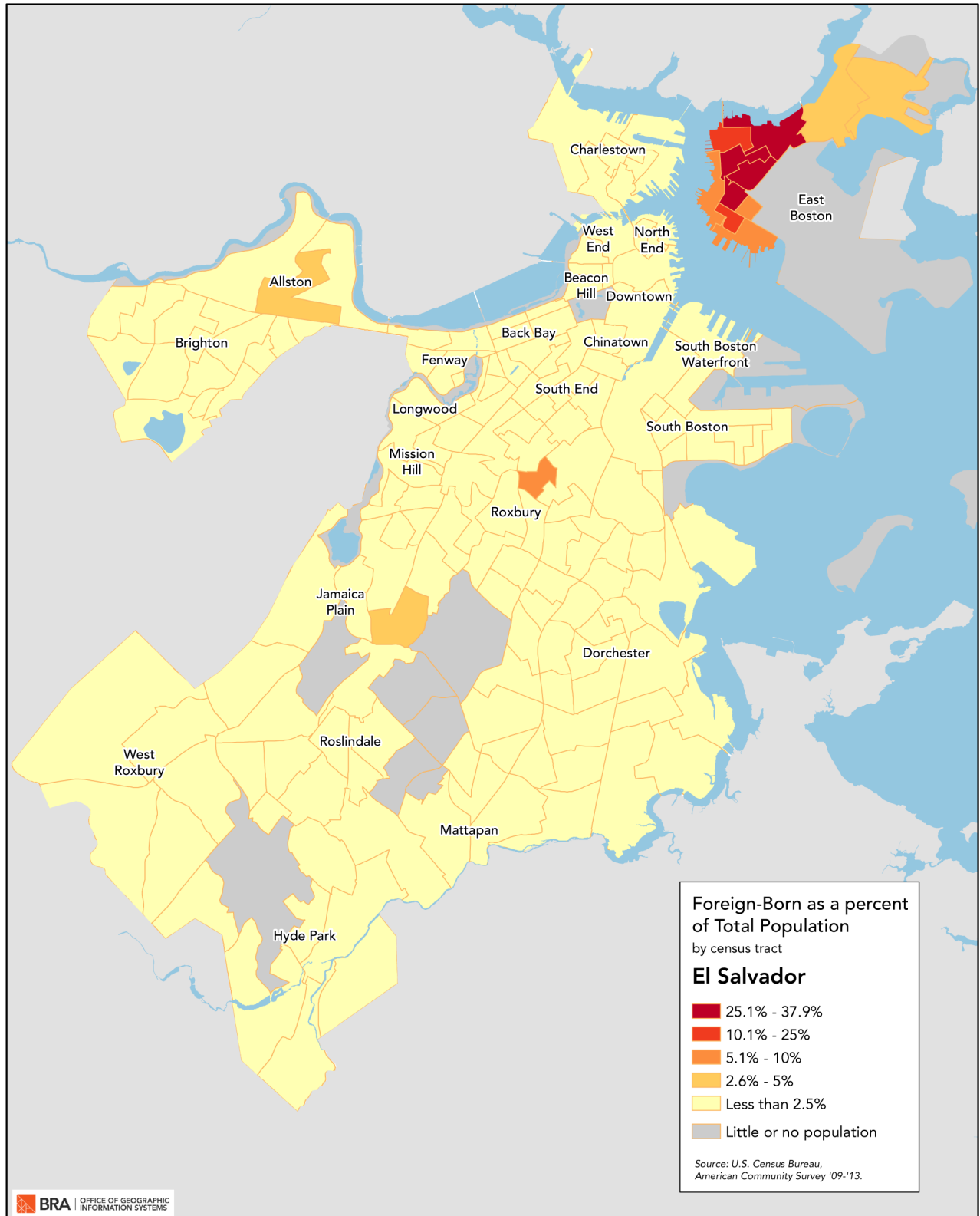
Approximately 14 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans have achieved a middle class standard of living, compared with 45 percent of Boston's native-born population, and 29 percent of all foreign-born. A family income four times the poverty level is used as a proxy for a middle-class standard of living. 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 \$62,920.¹⁷ In contrast, 19 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans live below the federal poverty level compared to 20 percent for the city's population.

Low educational attainment and lack of English proficiency may contribute to Salvadorans' low standard of living. While 18 percent of Boston's adult foreign-born population lacks a high school diploma and has limited English proficiency, the share among Salvadoran-born adults is 48 percent.¹⁸

Only 14% of Salvadorans have achieved a middle class standard of living.

Educational Attainment and English Proficiency





Children of Salvadoran Origin

The 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates 3,176 children in Boston are of Salvadoran origin.¹⁹ Children of Salvadoran origin in Boston are predominately native born – 81 percent. However, 98 percent of Salvadoran children live with foreign-born parent(s). In comparison, 40 percent of all Boston’s children live with only foreign-born parent(s).

Of Salvadoran children ages 5 to 17 with only foreign-born parent(s), just 2 percent speak only English at home, compared to 22 percent for all children with foreign-born parent(s). However, Salvadoran children appear to be learning English as well as Spanish; 70 percent of Salvadoran children with foreign-born parent(s) speak English very well. However, this percentage is less than for all children with foreign-born parent(s), of whom 76 percent speak English very well.

Salvadoran children with foreign-born parent(s) are as likely to live in poverty as all children in Boston. Similar to other children, 29 percent of Salvadoran children with foreign-born parent(s) live below the federal poverty level (\$23,850 for a 4-person household in 2014).



(Photo by Jorge Quinteros via Flickr, Creative Commons License)



Photo: Fernandito Bossa

Even though Massachusetts is not a leading destination for Salvadorans who migrate to the United States, they are the fourth largest foreign-born population in Boston. Foreign-born Salvadorans actively contribute to the economy, culture, and civic life of their new home. Even though foreign-born Salvadorans have lower levels of educational attainment, they have high labor force participation. Many of these jobs are in lower wage food preparation or cleaning occupations; however, Salvadorans are slightly less likely to live below the federal poverty level than others in the city.



Photo: Fernandito Bossa



¹ Gammage, Sarah. *El Salvador: Despite End to Civil War, Emigration Continues*. Migration Policy Institute, 2010.

² Naker, B & Rytina, N., *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population in the United States: January 2012, 2013*.

³ Terrazas, Aaron. *Salvadoran Immigrants in the United States*. Migration Policy Institute, 2007.

⁴ 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. Lower survey response rates due to language or documentation issues may result in an undercount of the population. For more information on the ACS, please see: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html>.

⁵ 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).

⁶ "The Salvadoran Diaspora in the United States," Migration Policy Institute (2015).

⁷ 2014 American Community Survey, American Fact Finder, BRA Research Analysis (2016).

⁸ The ACS's American Fact Finder website reports that there are an estimated 10,969 foreign-born Salvadorans in Boston in 2014. However, ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data for Boston reports a slightly higher estimate of 11,083. Both are population estimates, and contain a margin of error due to sampling technique. For more information on American Fact Finder. Lower survey response rates due to language or documentation issues may result in an undercount of the population. please see: <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html? lang=en>.

⁹ 2014 American Community Survey (PUMS), BRA Research Analysis (2016).

¹⁰ 2009-2013 American Community Survey, American Factfinder, BRA Research Analysis (2016).

End Notes

¹¹ This analysis organizes occupations into 12 categories. Managerial and Professional contains categories of Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations, Business Operations Specialists, Financial Specialists, Computer and Mathematical Occupations, Architecture and Engineering Occupations, Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations, and Legal Occupations. Healthcare Practitioners & Support contains the categories of Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations and Healthcare Support Occupations. Service Occupations contains the categories of Protective Service Occupations, Food Preparation and Serving Occupations, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations, and Personal Care and Service Occupations. Construction, Extraction, Maintenance, and Transportation contains the categories of Construction and Extraction Occupations, Extraction Workers, Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers, and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations. Other categories consisting of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry, Military Specific, and long-term unemployed are excluded.

¹² Labor force participation: 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.

¹³ 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.

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

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

¹⁶ BRA Research Division Analysis, 2014, Regional Economic Model, Inc., REMI calculations.

¹⁷ Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically. U.S. Census Bureau (2016).

¹⁸ Limited English Proficiency includes foreign-born adults who do not speak English well or at all.



CITY OF BOSTON
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ADVANCEMENT

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