

# GLOBAL GREATER BOSTON

*Immigrants in a  
Changing Region*

BOSTON  
INDICATORS

IRI Immigration  
Research  
Initiative

FEBRUARY 2024

PART I:

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

PART II:

**ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

PART III:

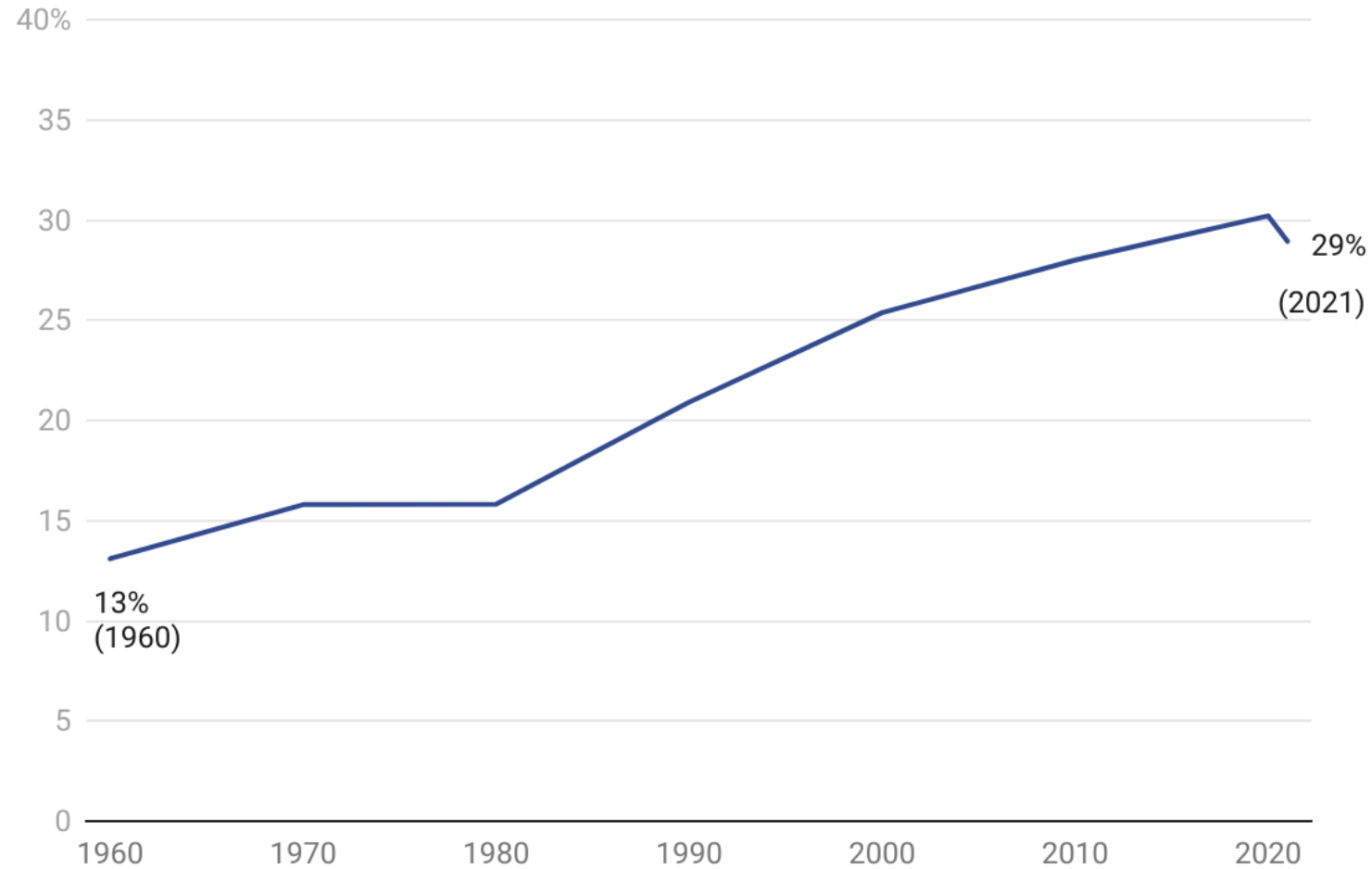
**IMMIGRATION PATHWAYS**

TYPE	Temporary visa holders	Green card holders	Naturalized citizens	Asylees and Refugees	Undocumented	Temporary Statuses	TYPE
EXPLANATION	<p>Tourists, workers, students, and exchange visitors may enter the U.S. on visas, of which there are more than 80 types. Some visas are temporary (<a href="#">nonimmigrant</a>) and do not lead to permanent status in the U.S. The Visa Waiver Program allows tourists and business travelers from certain countries to travel to the U.S. without a visa for up to 90 days.</p>	<p>Green card holders are also known as lawful permanent residents (LPRs). Green card holders can apply for renewal of their Green Card, typically every 10 years, though their status does not expire when their card expires. They may be eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship after a few years. Immigrants commonly obtain green cards through sponsorship by family, employment, refugee or asylum status, as a survivor of trafficking, domestic violence or a serious crime, or the diversity visa lottery.</p>	<p>A naturalized citizen is a former green card holder who applies for and is granted citizenship after meeting specific criteria, including length of residency, and passing an English and civics test.</p>	<p>Asylees and refugees obtain legal status in the U.S. based on a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. People who are already in the U.S. may apply for asylum, and refugee status is granted to people who apply and are approved from abroad. Both statuses are eligible for a green card after one year.</p>	<p><a href="#">Undocumented immigrants</a> are foreign-born individuals whose presence in the U.S. is not currently authorized by the federal government. They may have entered the U.S. without inspection, overstayed their visa, or obtained a status that expired.</p>	<p>Some immigrants may be granted or enter the US with a temporary status that protects them from deportation and, in many cases, allows them to obtain work authorization. Examples include temporary protected status (TPS), humanitarian parole, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, classification as a Special Immigrant Juvenile, U Visas, and T Visas.</p>	EXPLANATION
EXAMPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A tourist applies for and receives a B-2 visa to vacation in the U.S.</li> <li>➤ A student applies for and receives an F visa to study at a U.S. university.</li> <li>➤ A temporary agricultural worker applies for and is granted an H-2A visa to come to the U.S. for seasonal employment.</li> <li>➤ An engineer is sponsored by a U.S. company with an H-1B visa to come to the U.S. for specific skilled work.</li> <li>➤ A tourist from a country that's part of the Visa Waiver Program submits and receives approval under the Electronic System for Travel Authorization to travel to the U.S. for vacation without a visa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A person marries a U.S. citizen and applies for a green card through marriage.</li> <li>➤ A worker with an H-1B visa applies for and is granted an adjustment of status to a green card after being sponsored by an employer.</li> <li>➤ After one year with refugee status, a person applies for and receives a green card.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A person who has resided in the U.S. with a green card for at least five years applies for and is granted citizenship.</li> <li>➤ A person who obtains a green card through a U.S. citizen spouse applies for and is granted citizenship after three years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A person fleeing persecution in their home country who enters the U.S. without documentation applies for and eventually receives asylum.</li> <li>➤ A person trying to escape persecution in their home country applies for and receives refugee status and then enters the U.S. for resettlement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A tourist to the U.S. with a temporary visa stays beyond the date authorized by the U.S. government upon arrival.</li> <li>➤ A person fleeing their home country crosses a U.S. border without lawful documentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A person fleeing Haiti arrives in the U.S. without federal authorization, and the U.S. government later decides to grant Temporary Protected Status to people who came from Haiti before a certain date.</li> <li>➤ A child who came to the U.S. with their family without documentation who meets certain conditions was later granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.</li> <li>➤ A child who experienced abuse enters the U.S. without documentation is granted Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.</li> <li>➤ A person who entered the U.S. without documentation becomes a survivor of a crime and is granted U nonimmigrant status.</li> <li>➤ A person who entered the U.S. without documentation is a survivor of human trafficking and is granted T nonimmigrant status.</li> </ul>	EXAMPLES

*PART I:*

## **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

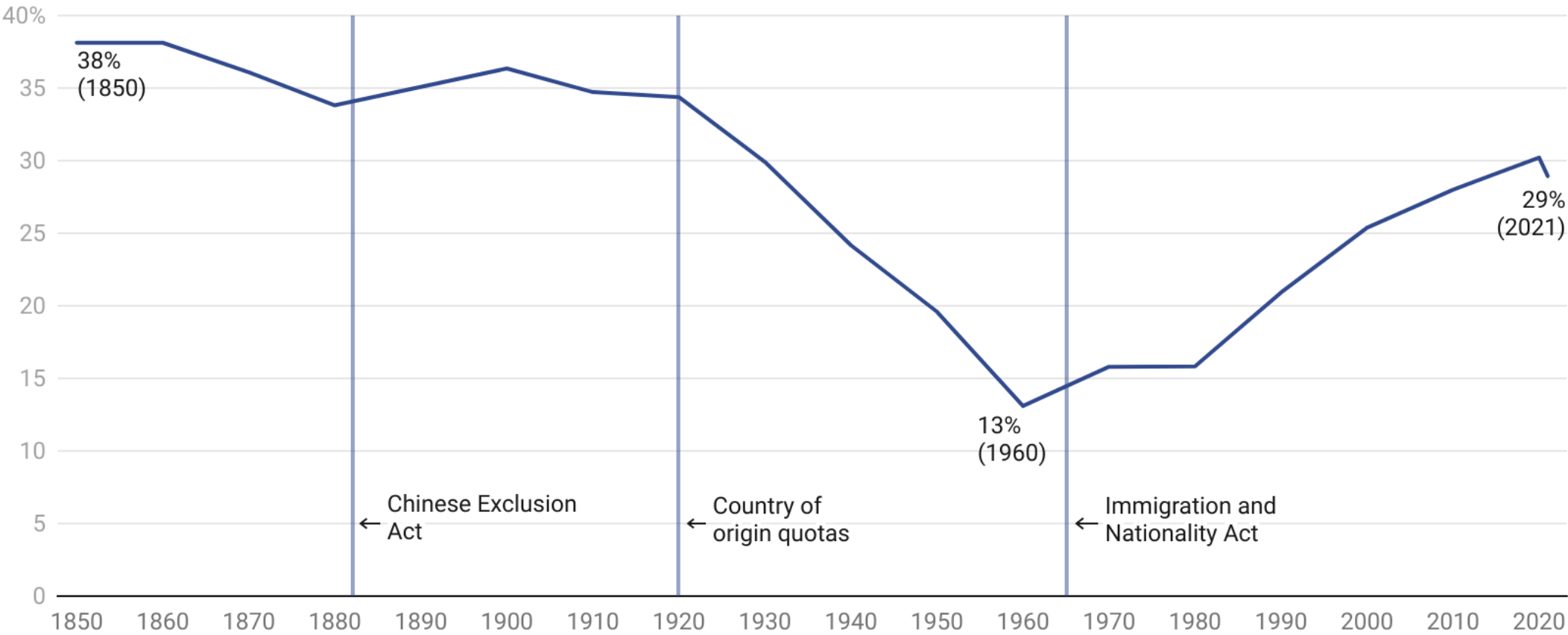
## Foreign-born share of Boston's population, 1960-2021.



*Note: We use Boston rather than Greater Boston here due to more consistent administrative boundaries though census years.*

Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1850-2000 U.S. Decennial Census, IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org). 2001-2021 1-year ACS; Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990" (Working Paper no. 29, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999).

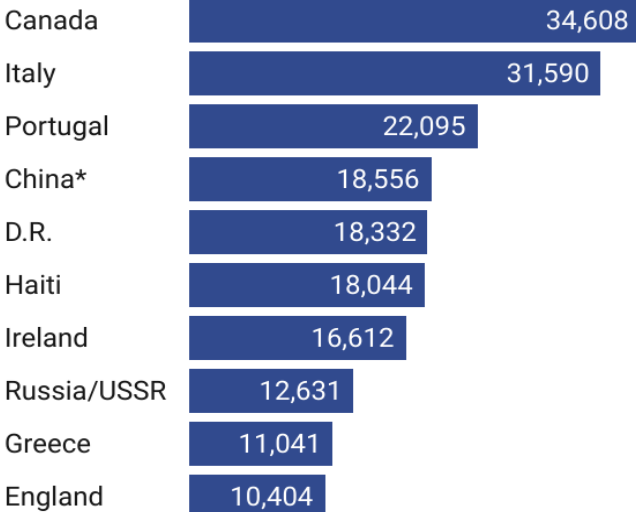
# Foreign-born share of Boston's population, 1850-2021.



*Note: We use Boston rather than Greater Boston here due to more consistent administrative boundaries though census years.*  
Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1850-2000 U.S. Decennial Census, IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org). 2001-2021 1-year ACS; Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990" (Working Paper no. 29., U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999).

Top ten countries of origin of Greater Boston's foreign-born population.

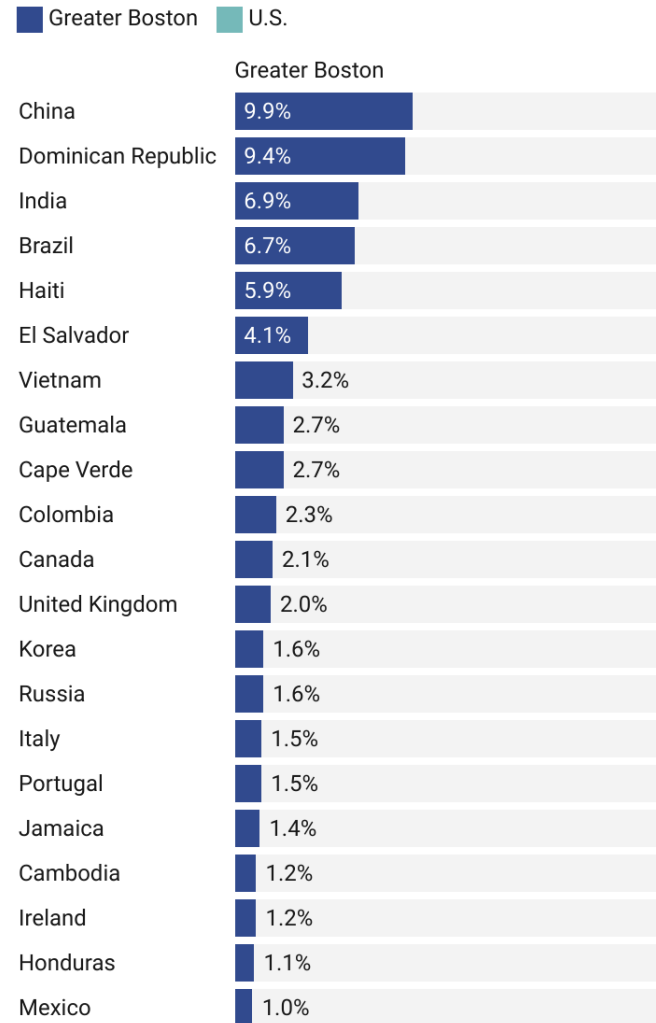
1990



**In 1990, six of the top 10 countries of origin were from Europe...**

## Greater Boston's largest immigrant groups are different from the largest immigrant groups to the U.S. overall.

Share of total foreign-born population for Greater Boston and U.S. of Greater Boston's top 21 countries of origin. 2021.



Note: China excludes Hong Kong and Taiwan and United Kingdom includes Crown Dependencies.

Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: Table B05006 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

# New arrivals to Greater Boston by country of origin, 2022.

Five top countries of origin arrival estimates.

■ Brazil ■ Dominican Republic ■ China ■ India ■ Haiti

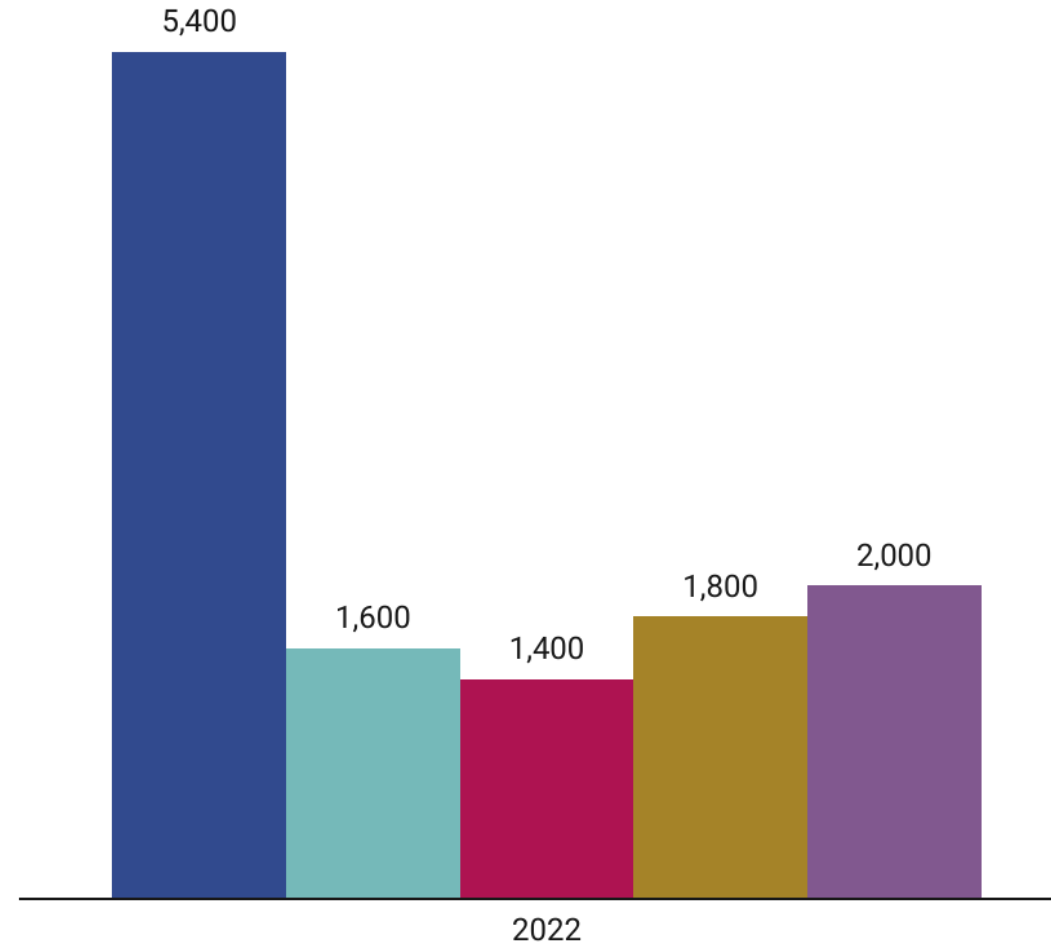


Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: ACS IPUMS 2021 5-year estimates.



# New arrivals to Greater Boston by country of origin.

Five top countries of origin arrival estimates by decade preceding each U.S. census since 1980, plus 2022 arrivals alone.

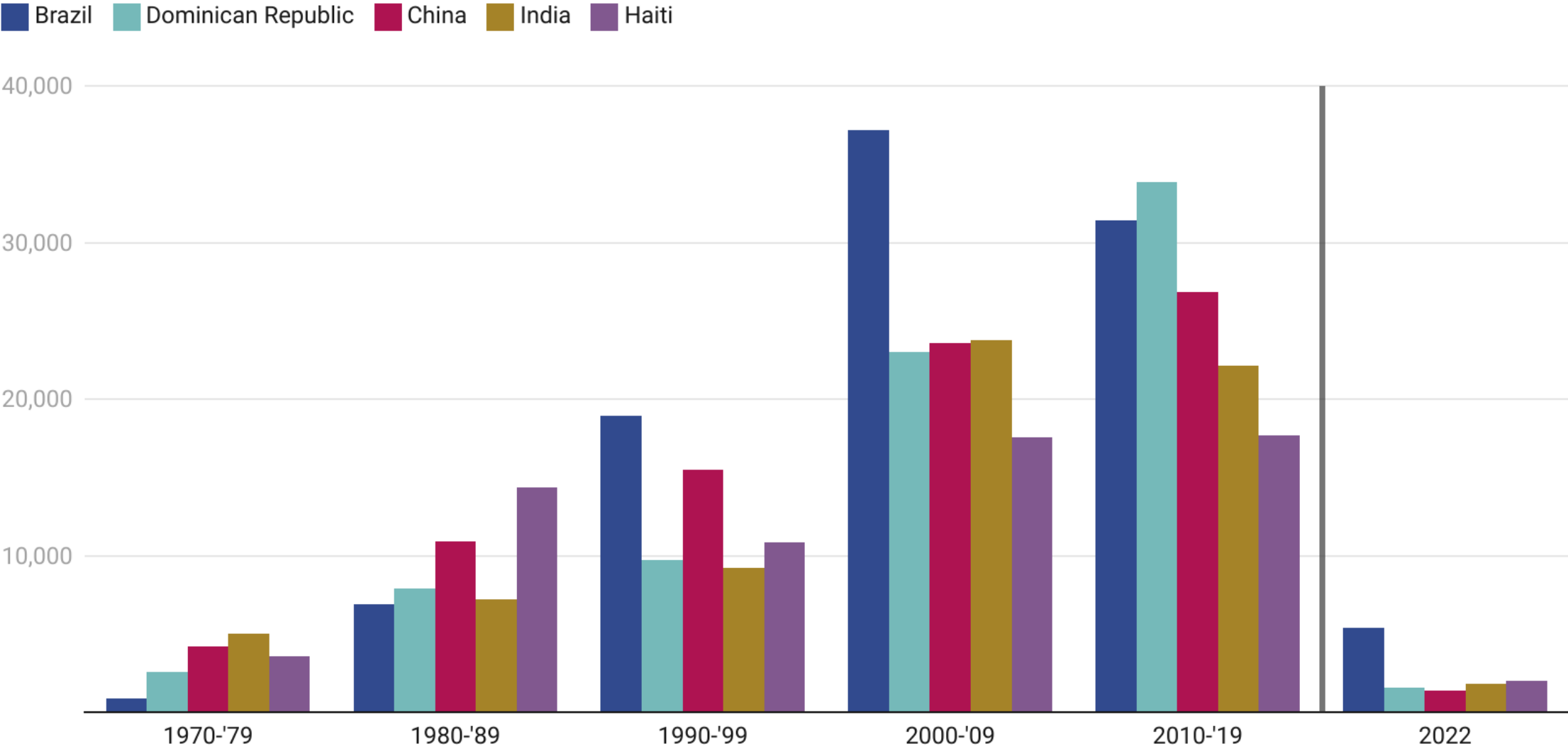
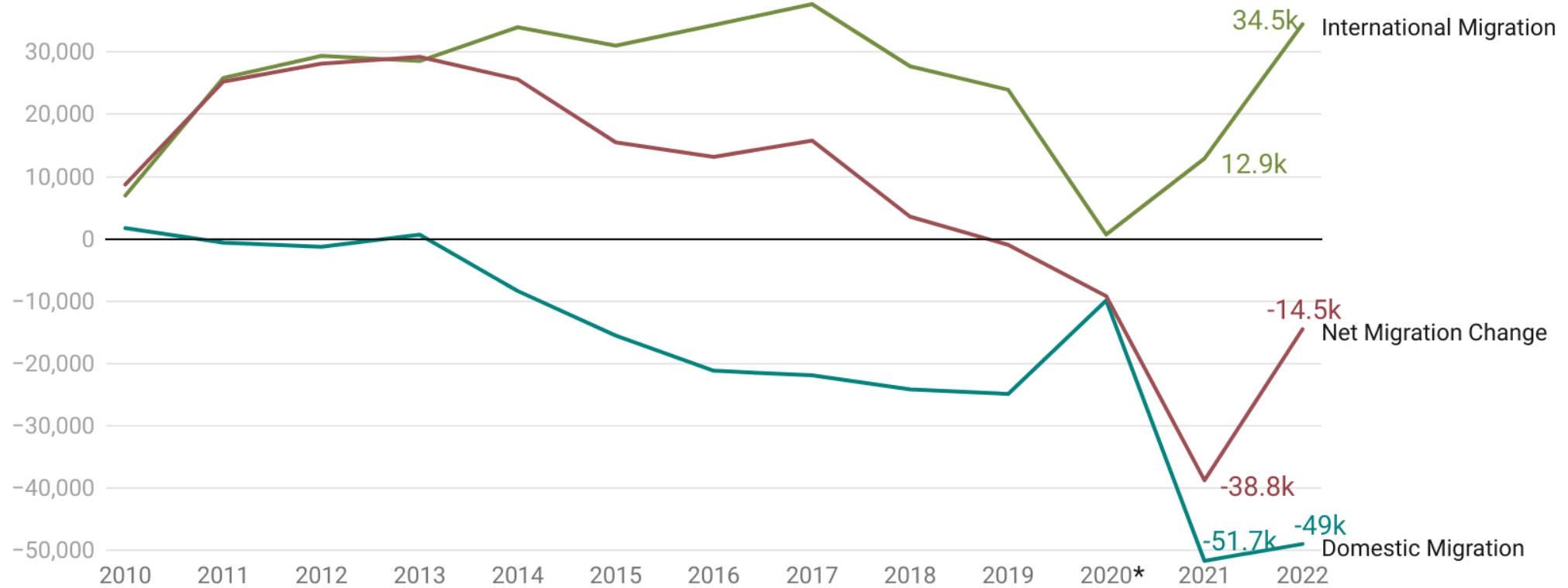


Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: ACS IPUMS 2021 5-year estimates.

# Immigration to Greater Boston has helped offset population losses from domestic moves to other parts of the US.

Net migration to and from Greater Boston.

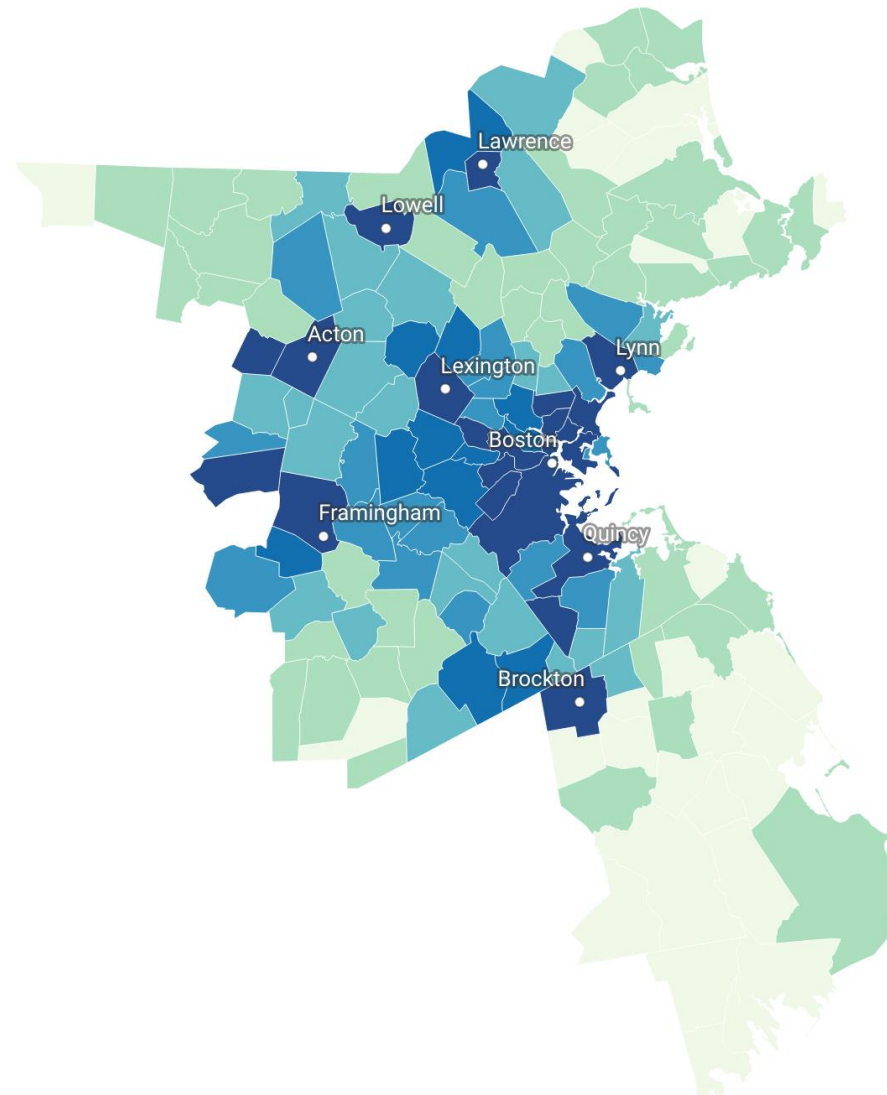
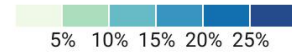


Note: Population estimates restart each census year (in 2010 and 2020), and thus should not be viewed as a continuation of the previous 10 year estimates. Five-county definition of Greater Boston includes Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Plymouth Counties.

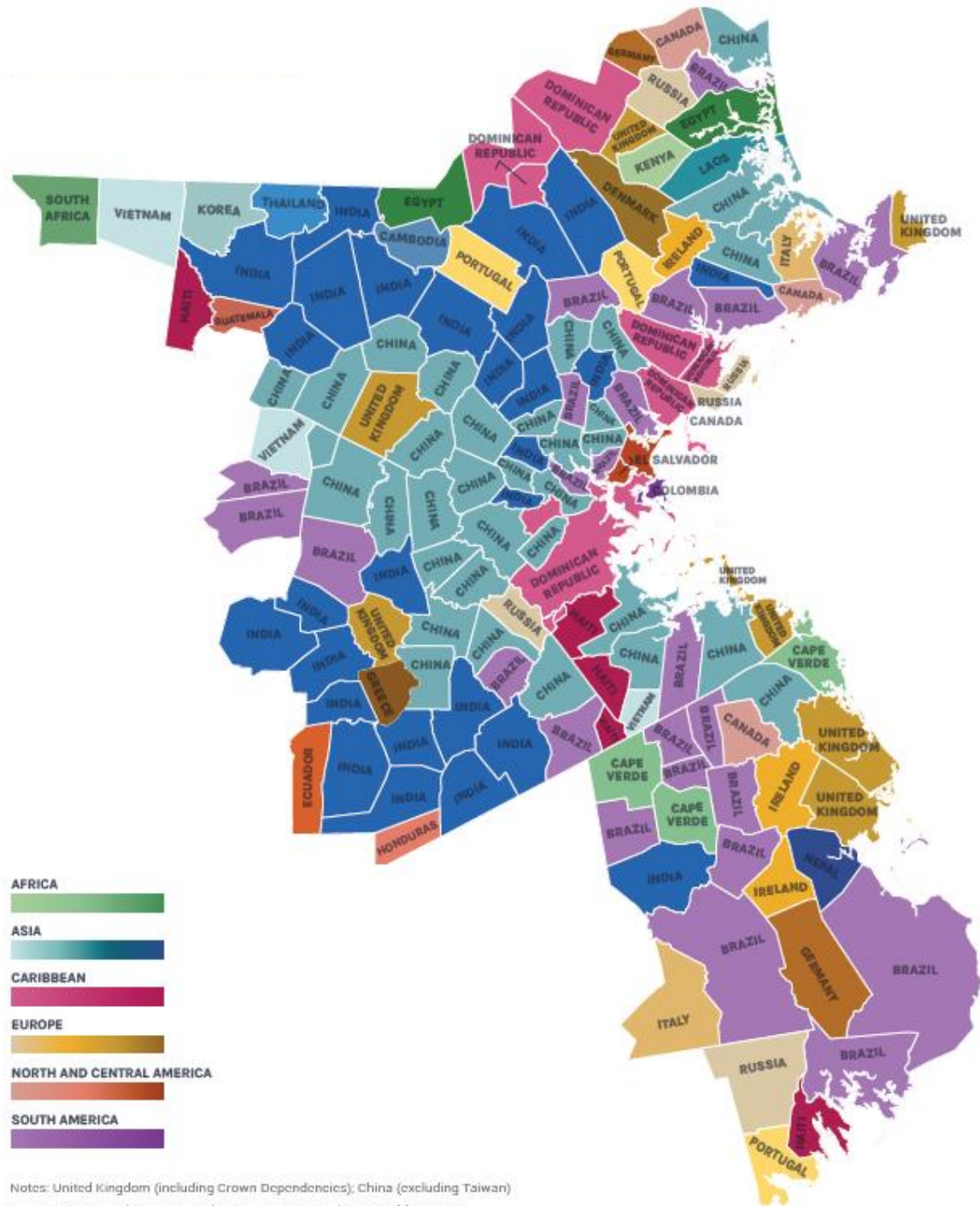
Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: Population Estimates Program

## Immigrant populations are growing in suburbs outside the urban core.

Share of residents that were born outside of the United States by city/town. 2017-2021.



# Top immigrant group by Greater Boston municipality.



Notes: United Kingdom (including Crown Dependencies); China (excluding Taiwan)

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5 year Estimates Table B05006

*PART II:*

**ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

# Immigrants in Greater Boston's economy.

Immigrant share of population, labor force, business owners, and Main Street business owners in Greater Boston

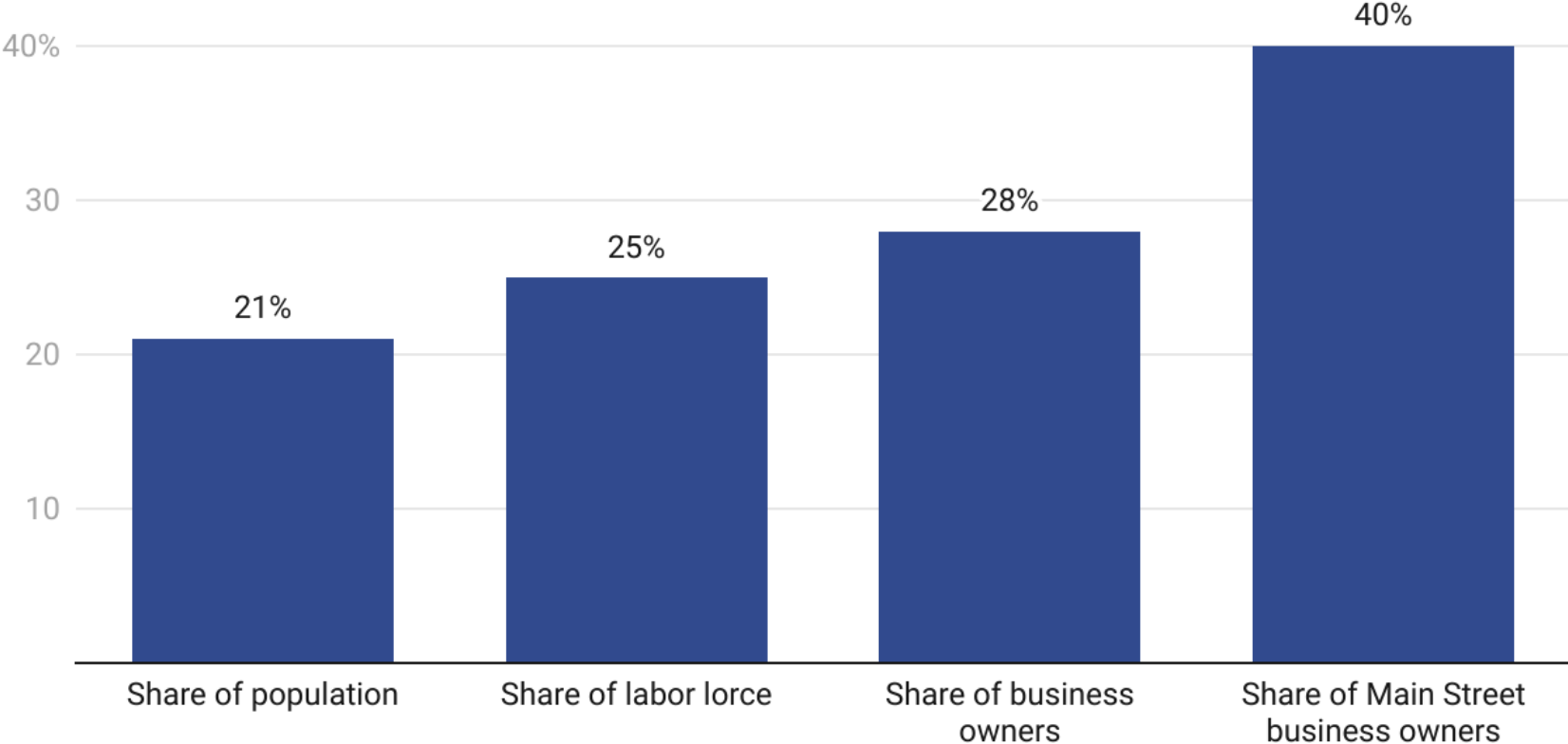
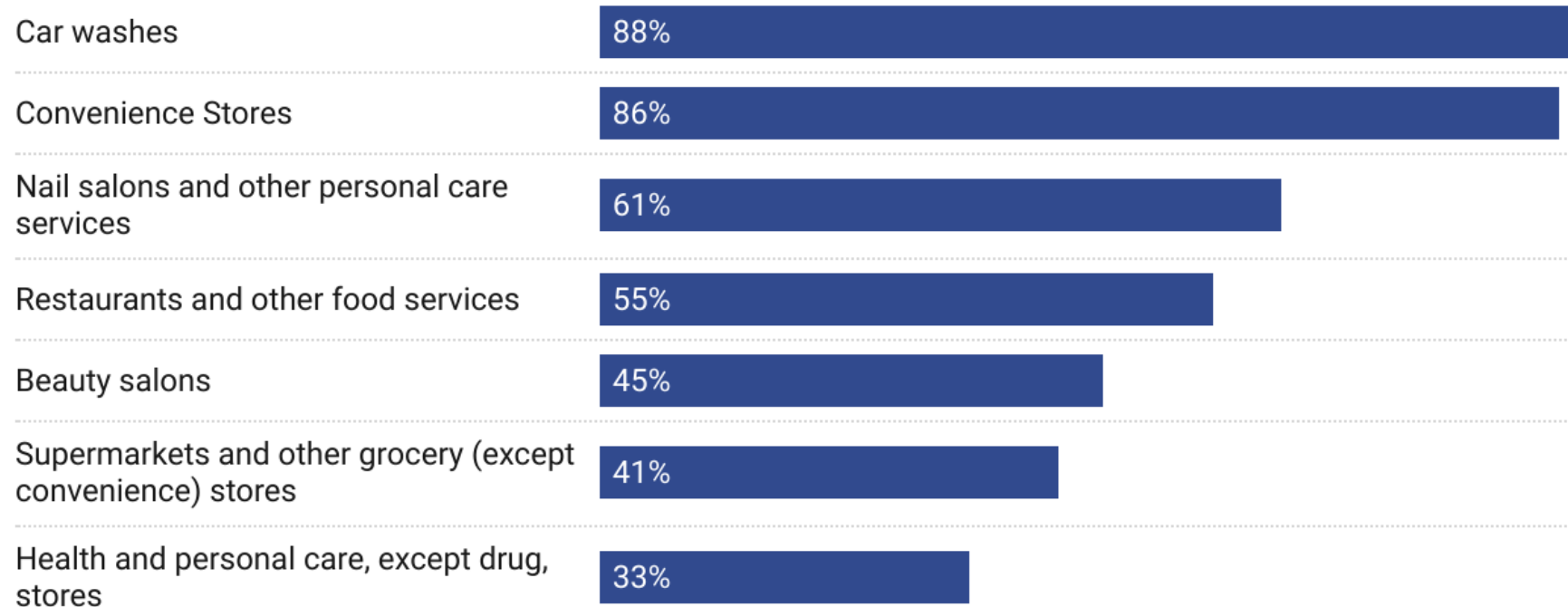


Chart: Immigration Research Initiative • Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Sample

## Immigrants on Main Street.

Percentage of Main Street businesses in each industry that are owned by immigrants.



*Showing only the most commonly owned Main Street businesses in Greater Boston.*

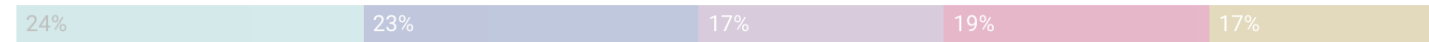
Chart: Immigration Research Initiative • Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Sample

## Greater Boston's immigrant population is highly educated.

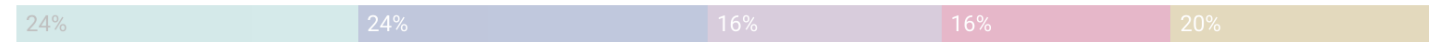
Education level of foreign-born population 25 years or older in 12 metropolitan statistical areas with largest overall population, sorted by graduate degree. 2022.

■ Graduate or professional degree
 ■ Bachelor's degree
 ■ Some college or associate's degree
 ■ High school graduate (includes equivalency)
 ■ Less than high school graduate

Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area



San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA Metro Area



**Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH Metro Area**



Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area



Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI Metro Area



New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area



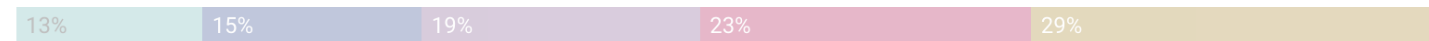
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area



Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX Metro Area



Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ Metro Area



Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL Metro Area



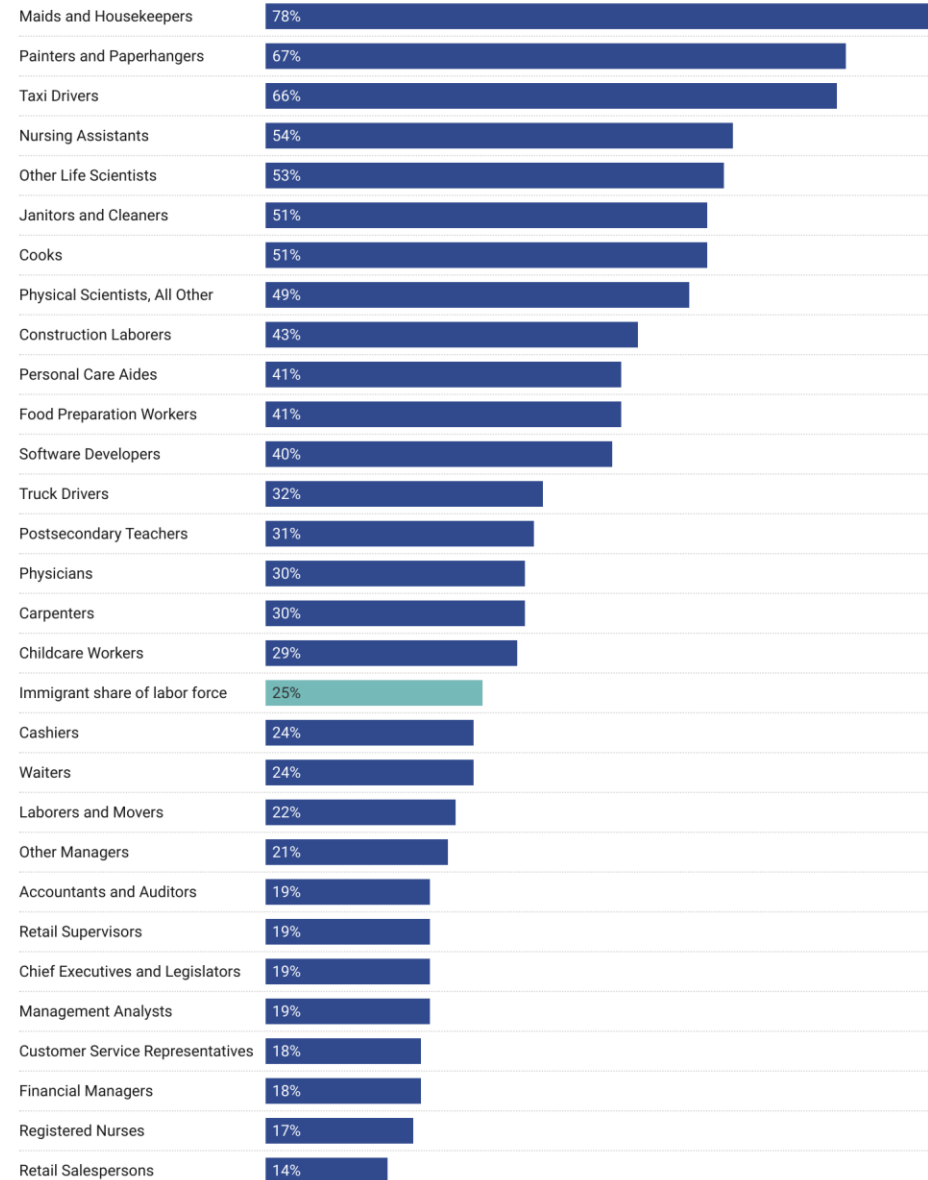
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA Metro Area





## Immigrants work in all sectors of Greater Boston's economy.

Share of all workers in each occupation who are immigrants.



Note: Includes top 30 Census-defined occupational categories among immigrants in Greater Boston with at least 5,000 immigrants.

Chart: Immigration Research Initiative • Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Sample

# Sorting Individuals in Low-, Middle-, and Upper-Wage Categories

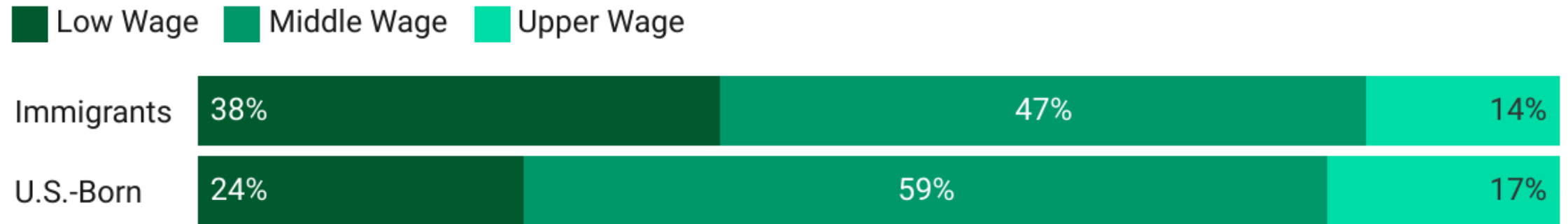
<b>Earning Range</b>	<b>Income</b>
Low Wage	Less than \$49,000
Middle Wage	\$49,000 - \$146,000
Upper Wage	More than \$146,000

*This analysis sorted full-time, year-round workers into earnings categories based on their reported wages*

Source: ACS 2021 5-year Sample

# Most Immigrants Earn Middle Wage or Better

Showing the percentage of full-time, year-round workers in each earnings category

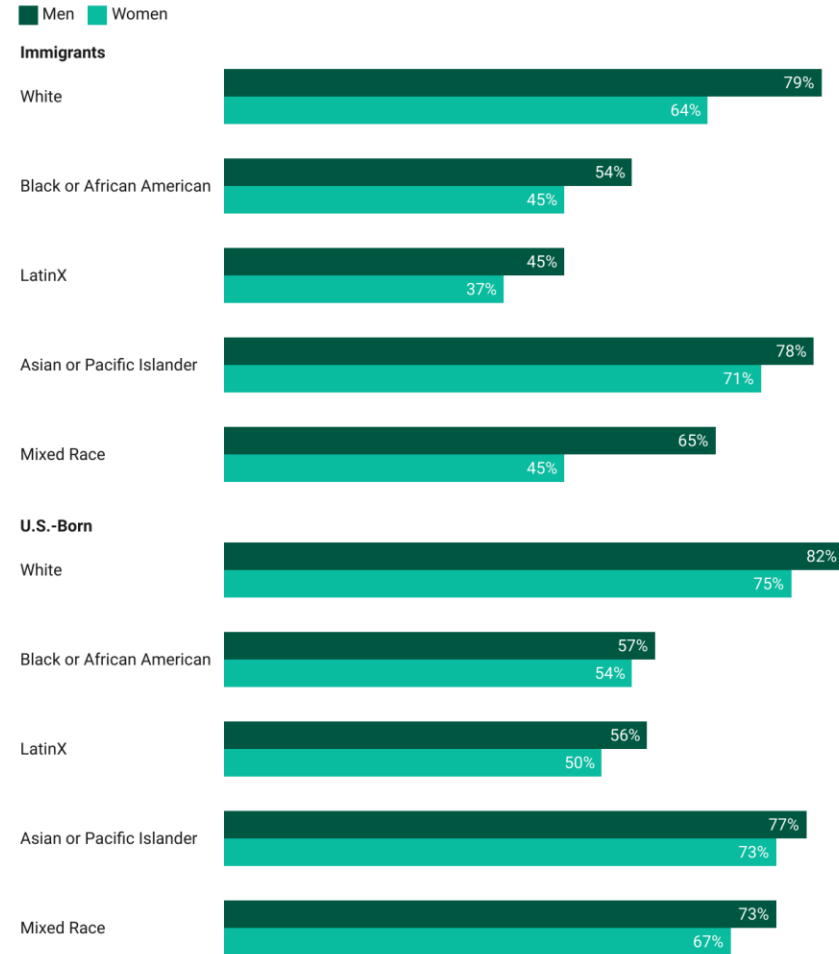


*In this analysis, "Low Wage" describes anyone whose reported earnings were less than \$49,000 per year. "Upper Wage" consists of individuals making more than \$146,000 annually. Those in the "Middle Wage" group made between \$49,000 and \$146,000*

Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Sample

## Race and Gender Play a Role in Determining Economic Outcomes

Showing the percentage of full-time, year-round workers making more than \$49,000 per year by race, gender, and nativity



Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Sample

# Wages of immigrants increase the longer they live in the U.S.

Median wage for immigrants by years spent in the United States.

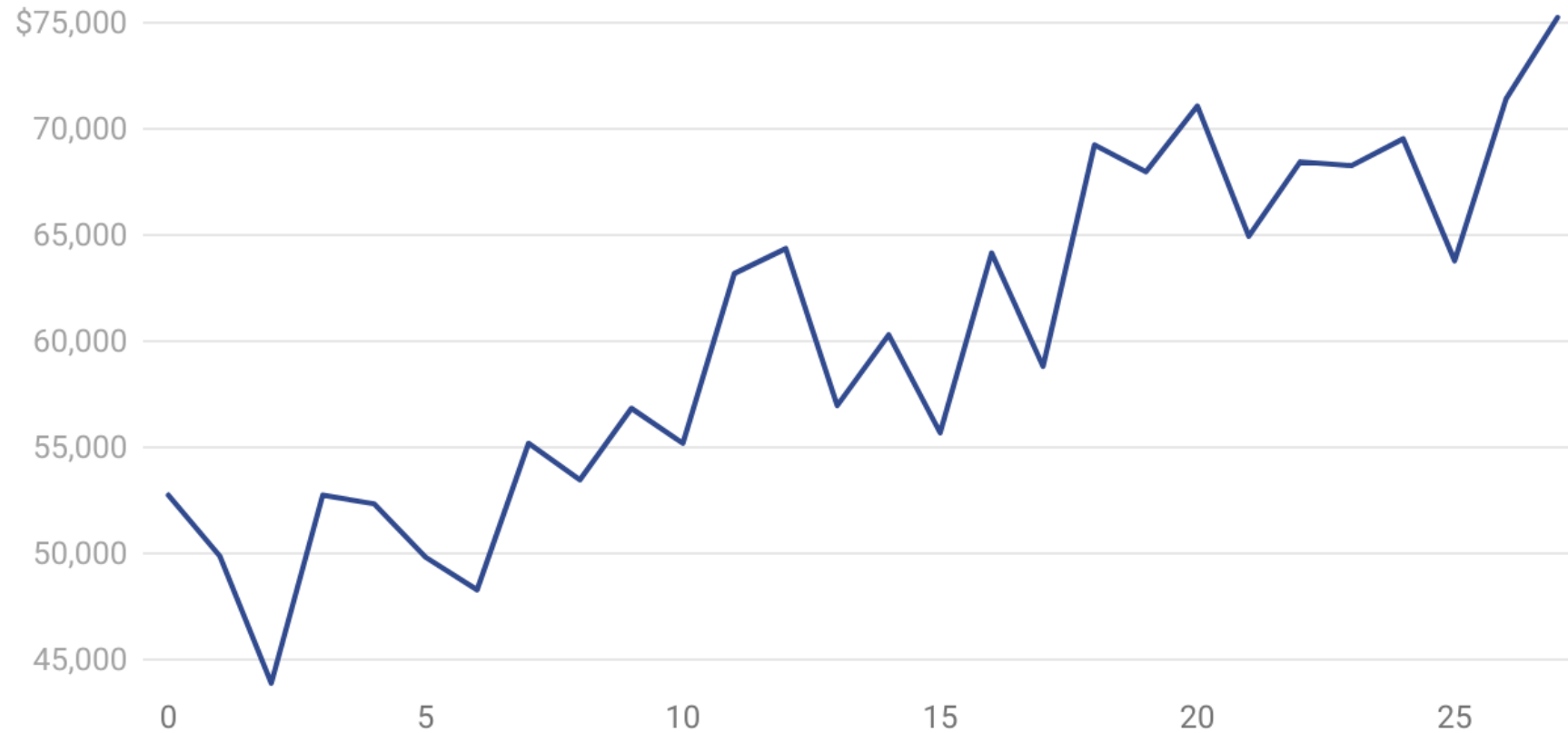


Chart: Immigration Research Initiative • Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Sample

## Incomes rise by the second generation in every state, and they're highest in Massachusetts.

Median personal income among first and second generation immigrants in the states with the highest concentration of first and second generation immigrants. Sorted by income for second generation immigrants. 2022.

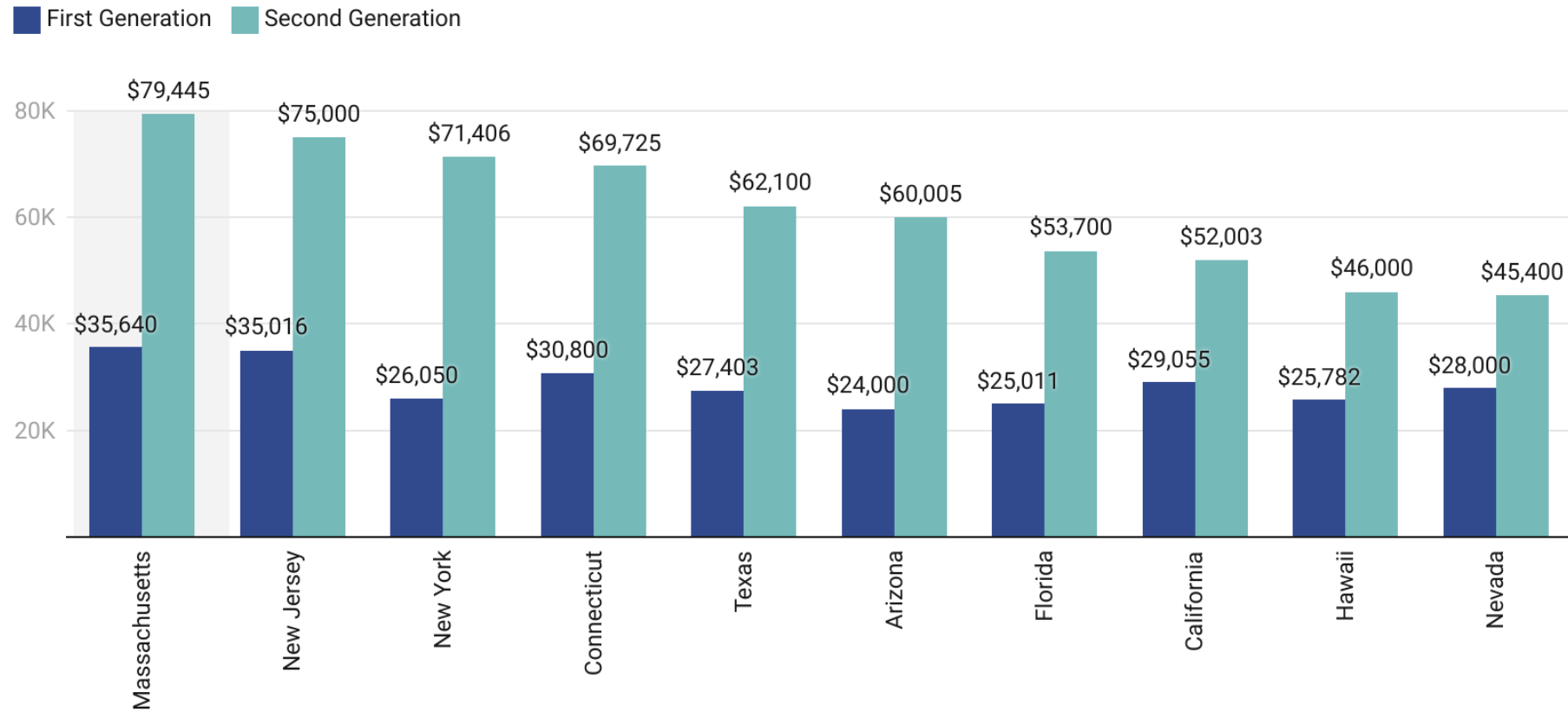


Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: CPS ASEC 2022



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# Reflections: Crafting a Positive Narrative

**Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition**

February 14, 2024

# MIRA Coalition

- **Policy Advocacy (State & Federal)**
  - Tuition Equity, Language Access, Safe Communities Act, and more!
- **Programs:**
  - Citizenship legal assistance
  - Shelter-based services
  - Americorps NAIP
- **Civic Engagement**
  - Voter registration
  - New American Changemakers Program
- **National Coalitions**





# New Arrivals

- Significant increase in new arrival population in the past 2 years
- New humanitarian programs:
  - Uniting for Ukraine
  - Cuba/Haiti/Nicaragua/Venezuela parole program
  - Afghan parolees
- Arrivals from the border:
  - Individuals and families seeking protection at the southern border
  - 3,600 families in Massachusetts' Emergency Assistance shelters

# Reflections

- The power of myth-busting data → crafting a positive narrative
- Strength of diversity of immigrant population
- Leveraging data to advance policies that acknowledge contributions of immigrant communities



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Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

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