

**DOMINICANS IN THE UNITED STATES:  
A SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE, 2000**

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**1. Summary of Findings**

This research report presents the first detailed study of the socioeconomic status of the Dominican population of the United States. Using information recently provided by the 2000 U.S. Census of Population, the study concludes that:

- (1) The Dominican population in the United States rose from 520,121 in 1990 to 1,041,910 in 2000, making it the fourth-largest Hispanic/Latino group in the United States, after Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. It is estimated that, at current population growth rates, the Dominican population will overtake the Cuban population before the year 2010, making it the third largest Hispanic/Latino population in the country.
- (2) The major source of Dominican growth continues to be immigration. Between 1990 and 2000, close to 300,000 Dominicans migrated to the United States on a net basis.
- (3) Besides substantial immigration, the Dominican population born in the United States rose sharply in the 1990s. There were 394,914 Dominicans born in the U.S. residing in the country in 2000. This constitutes one out of every three Dominicans.
- (4) The largest concentration of Dominicans continues to be located in the state of New York, but there has been a significant spread to other states in the last decade. The state of New York was host to 617,901 Dominicans in 2000; followed by New Jersey, with 136,529; Florida, with 98,410; Massachusetts, with 69,502; Rhode Island, with 24,588; Pennsylvania (13,667); and Connecticut (12,830). There were also budding Dominican communities in almost every region of the country, from Alaska to Hawaii.
- (5) New York City continues to dominate the location of Dominicans in the United States. The Dominican population of New York rose from 332,713 to 554,638 between 1990 and 2000. Dominicans are currently the second largest Hispanic/Latino population of New York, following Puerto Ricans. But the Puerto Rican population in the City declined substantially in the last decade. If current population growth trends continue, Dominicans will overtake Puerto Ricans as the largest Hispanic/Latino population of the City within the next ten years.
- (6) The greatest concentration of Dominicans in New York continues to be in Manhattan, where one out of every three Dominicans in the City resided in 2000. But just as the population has spread throughout the country, Dominican New

Yorkers have also spread throughout the City. The Dominican population in the Bronx is now almost as large as that in Manhattan, with 32.7 percent of all Dominicans. There has also been substantial growth in Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island.

- (7) The expanding Dominican population outside New York City has reduced the proportion of Dominicans in the City from 73.4 percent in 1980 to 65.1 percent in 1990 and 53.2 percent in 2000. Following New York City, there are major Dominican populations in the City of Lawrence (Massachusetts), where 22,111 Dominicans reside, the City of Paterson (New Jersey), with 19,977 Dominicans, Providence (Rhode Island), with 19,915 Dominicans, and Boston (Massachusetts), with 19,061 Dominicans. The cities of Jersey City, Passaic, Perth Amboy and Union City in New Jersey also have substantial Dominican populations, as do the City of Yonkers in New York, and Miami in Florida. Many other cities all over the country have smaller, but rapidly growing Dominican populations.
- (8) The mean annual per-capita household income of the Dominican population in the United States was \$11,065 in the year 1999. This was about half the per-capita income of the average household in the country that year. It was also significantly lower than the per-capita income of the Black/African American population and even slightly lower than the income of the average Latino household.
- (9) There is substantial variability in the socio-economic status of Dominicans in various parts of the United States. Among the most populous states, Dominicans in Florida had the highest per-capita household income, equal to \$12,886 in the year 1999. By contrast, Dominicans in Rhode Island had the lowest average per-capita income, equal to \$8,560 in the year 1999.
- (10) In New York City, the average per-capita income of Dominicans was below the average for the United States. The poverty rate of 32 percent among Dominican New Yorkers was the highest of the major racial and ethnic groups in New York. The overall poverty rate in New York in 1999 was 19.1 percent, while it was 29.7 percent for the overall Hispanic/Latino population.
- (11) A high proportion of Dominican families in poverty consist of female-headed families, with no spouse present. In 2000, as much as 38.2 percent of Dominicans in New York lived in this type of family, compared to 22.1 percent for the overall City. Close to half of Dominican female-headed families in New York City were poor, more than twice the poverty rate for other households.
- (12) Despite the low relative socioeconomic status of Dominicans in New York City, their income displayed significant growth in the 1990s, rising by close to 16 percent in the decade (adjusted for inflation). The overall increase of per-capita income in the City in the decade was 9.2 percent, but both the Black/African American population and the overall Hispanic/Latino population in the City had lower income growth rates. The White population in the City displayed a growth of over 20 percent in per-capita income.
- (13) The labor force participation rate of Dominicans is lower than that for the rest of

the population. In 2000, it was approximately 64 percent for men and 53.1 percent for women. The figures for the overall U.S. workforce are 72.7 percent and 58.5 percent, for men and women, respectively.

- (14) The unemployment rate of Dominican women and men in 2000 greatly exceeded that of the overall labor force in the United States. In 2000, Dominican men had an unemployment rate of 7.8 percent, compared to an overall unemployment rate of 3.9 percent for men in the country. Among women, the Dominican unemployment rate was 10.7 percent in 2000, compared to 4.1 percent in the country overall.
- (15) Despite the comparatively high unemployment rates of Dominicans, these rates declined sharply between 1990 and 2000. In New York City, for instance, the male and female unemployment rates among Dominicans were 15.7 percent and 18.4 percent, respectively, in 1990. These dropped to 8.9 percent and 13.1 percent by 2000.
- (16) The comparatively high unemployment rates of Dominicans in New York City are connected to a painful long-term switch in the employment of the Dominican labor force from manufacturing to other sectors. In 1980, close to half of the Dominican workforce was employed in manufacturing. This declined to 25.7 percent in 1990 and to 12.4 percent in 2000.
- (17) The Dominican labor force is very young and mostly unskilled. Only 17.3 percent of Dominicans in the United States have managerial, professional and technical occupations, about half the proportion for the overall United States. As a result, the average earnings of Dominican men and women are substantially lower than those of other workers in the nation.
- (18) The overall educational attainment of Dominicans in the United States is among the lowest in the country. In 2000, 49 percent of Dominicans 25 years of age or older had not completed high school and only 10.6 percent had completed college. By contrast, less than 20 percent of the American population had not completed high school in 2000, and 24.4 percent had finished college.
- (19) But the educational situation of Dominicans varies enormously when decomposed by immigrant status. Although the educational attainment of Dominican immigrants is very low, the situation for U.S.-born Dominicans is sharply different.
- (20) The Dominican second-generation in the United States has educational indicators that suggest a remarkable acquisition of human capital over the last 20 years. This differs from the overall situation of U.S.-born Hispanics/Latinos, whose educational indicators are substantially worse than those for Dominicans. In 2000, close to 60 percent of all Dominicans born in the United States with 25 years of age or older had received some college education, with 21.9 percent completing a college education. By contrast, among U.S.-born Mexicans, only 13.3 percent had completed college, and 12.1 percent of U.S.-born Puerto Ricans had finished college.
- (21) The explosive increase of the educational attainment of U.S.-born Dominicans is

reflected in the experience of Dominican New Yorkers. For U.S.-born Dominicans in New York, the proportion who attained some college education rose from 31.7 percent in 1980 to 42.8 percent in 1990, and to 55.1 percent in 2000.

- (22) Dominicans have school enrollment rates that are higher than those for other minority groups. In New York City, Dominican high school retention rates are substantially higher than for the overall Hispanic/Latino population, and for women, they approach the average New York City high school retention rate.
- (23) There were 111,553 Dominican children enrolled in the New York City public school system. This constitutes 10.4 percent of the New York City school student body in 2000. Among public college students in New York City, 8.5 percent are Dominicans, exceeding the proportion among Puerto Ricans, which was 7.7 percent in 2000.

This report presents a mixed picture of the Dominican population of the United States. On the one hand, Dominicans have among the lowest per-capita income in the country, comparatively low labor force participation rates, high unemployment rates, and low earnings. On the other hand, Dominican income and employment indicators did improve significantly in the 1990s, and the Dominican second-generation appears to be accumulating vast amounts of human capital, increasing its educational attainment very rapidly. Therefore, despite facing considerable challenges in its remarkable growth during the last twenty years, the prospects for the future look bright for Dominicans in the U.S.